

CRITICS' PICKS

Chicago

ARTFORUM

Desirée Holman

ASPECT/RATIO
119 N Peoria, Unit 3D
January 30–March 7

Bay Area artist Desirée Holman mashes 1960s sci-fi, nineties New Age ideology, and posthuman technology in her solo show "Sophont." The first room of the gallery features two air-brushed portraits of auras, titled *Aura, Annie Besant* and *Aura, Buckminster Fuller*, both 2014, for the historic figures depicted. A large pencil-and-gouache drawing of a man wearing an ad hoc colander-cum-telepathic-hat, titled *Time Traveler*, 2013, hangs nearby. These strange portraits set the stage for Holman's two-channel video installation *Close Contact*, 2013, in the next room.

Beginning with a flat screen tilted slightly above the ground beside a viewing bench, this small digital interface changes smoothly and imperceptibly from gray to orange to green. Overhead, a soundscape by Angel Deradoorian of the band Dirty Projectors accompanies the video with a mix of human voices that phase into more mechanistic repetitions of various and vaguely recognizable electronic machines. Another large screen on the facing wall is consumed by a tumultuous Rorschach of painterly, saturated colors that shift continuously. It's beautiful, but not quite benevolent—discrete patches of pixels shudder with every change of color like rapidly growing bacteria, as the sound and video engulf the viewer in a dreamlike sequence. It seems as if a face might appear in the large video, just as a seated Buddha almost congeals in the middle of color until suddenly—hilariously—a carefully drawn bug-eyed alien emerges, fulfilling for a moment the desire to see something coherent only for it to vanish again.



Desirée Holman, *Close Contact*, 2013, two-channel video installation, color, sound, 20 minutes.

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— Caroline Picard