



## Petra Cortright's Desktop Dolls

*"Niki, Lucy, Lola, Viola" is on view through Sept. 12 at Depart Foundation, 9105 W. Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, [departfoundation.com](http://departfoundation.com)*



The artist Petra Cortright, whose show "Niki, Lucy, Lola, Viola" opens at Depart Foundation in Los Angeles today.

*Credit*

*Elise Gallant*

The artist Petra Cortright has always committed her work to screens — she's best known for her short webcam videos, which meld selfie technique with performance art, and for her "digital paintings" (on aluminum) and animations — and the screens keep getting bigger. The Santa Barbara, Calif.-born artist now shares a studio building in El Sereno (the easternmost neighborhood of Los Angeles) with her husband, Marc Horowitz, and Parker Ito. But regardless of where she plugs in her computer, she's at home: Cortright has been making and showing work on the Internet since 2007, years before it was a medium comprehensible to many aficionados of analog art.

Eight years later, Cortright is opening a show of large-scale projections filling L.A.'s Depart Foundation, called "Niki, Lucy, Lola, Viola." These women's names allude to strippers whose real identities are unknown; their bodies and moves have been motion-captured for Virtuagirl, a PC program Cortright has been toying with since 2009. The service provides users with ambient pornographic entertainment-cum-companionship, in the immaterial form of a customizable array of women who can be programmed to strut the desktop and grind to the base of the monitor as perpetual screensavers. For the works on view in "Niki, Lucy, Lola, Viola," Cortright has manipulated the Virtuagirls, along with open-source screensaver software, to situate the



strippers in uncanny environs. “A big part of my work is hunting for source materials,” Cortright says, citing inspiration like Pinterest and her hero Martha Stewart, but also more “ratchet softwares” like this one.

When visitors step into the exhibition, the largest of three screens is deep lime and populated by digital women in various stages of larger-than-life lap dances. These are the screensaver ladies blown up and stuck into a green-screen vacuum. The two other projections feature fewer naked women, adrift in sparse, oneiric environments that are as teasingly evocative of locative themes — a tumbleweed on a dusty rose screen, seagulls on a powder-blue one — as the girls’ outfits are of titillating professions. “I’m trying to go about these in a nonjudgmental way,” Cortright explains. “Before, when I was putting the girls into these specific environments, I think part of me was trying to save them or something — taking them out of some dude’s computer and into a farmland or something. I’ve been thinking about it more, and I don’t have the right to do that; I don’t know anything about these women. Maybe they’re super happy with this career.” Outside the foundation, five flags emblazoned with portraits of the performers fly above the door — so all can see that this summer, the Sunset Strip has one more destination for live(ish) nude girls.

A video from “Niki, Lucy, Lola, Viola.” *Petra Cortright*