

Xaviera Simmons

THE KITCHEN

512 West 19th Street

June 22, 2016–July 29, 2016

Don't take the stairs to Xaviera Simmons's show in the second-floor galleries, as it starts in the elevator. A video titled *Islands* (all works cited, 2016) plays on a monitor mounted above the doors. One looks up in order to look down at the ocean, a single shot of choppy water. The short loop is a fitting introduction to this transporting multimedia exhibition in which seductive images of water and sun-soaked terrain, their locations never identified, become symbols for an abstract site. Simmons's "island" is metaphorical and mediated, much as "the body" is, a parallel emphasized by the pronounced erotic juxtapositions favored by the artist. For example, *Two Minutes One Second Seven Frames* features alternating footage of ripped, jock-strapped go-go boys undulating in a club and a clip of waves—a swimmer's rhythmic strokes in the distance breaking the cerulean surface. In the photograph *Red (Number One)*, a woman, shot in front of majestic cliffs, holds a bulletin-board-like grid of photos, selections from the artist's collection of Jamaican dancehall-culture images that depict daggering, a newish kind of dance known for its stylized simulations of sex acts.



Xaviera Simmons, *Red (Number One)*, 2016, color photograph, 48 x 60".

Simmons refers to such indexical image-boards as "maps," and the large-scale text-based *Saturated*, a white-on-black sculptural work, further elucidates her interest in the term. An edited stream of phrases culled from maps reveals the lush repetitive language—speculative, poetic, colonial, and scientific—used to describe land and bodies of water. And the show itself is a kind of map—the "foundation for a unique choreographic score," the press release states, for a future performance that will, no doubt, reflect Simmons's eye for evocative combinations of pedestrian movement, nightlife culture, and the natural world.

— Johanna Fateman

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