

ARTILLERY



Tom Friedman, One Minute Egg, ©Tom Friedman, courtesy of the artist, Lühring Augustine, New York, and Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles.

TOM FRIEDMAN

Parrasch Heijnen Gallery

by Jody Zellen ·
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At first glance it appears as if there is nothing there. Then the eye is drawn to a faint shadow on the gallery wall. A silhouette appears, then it is gone. Where did this shadow come from? Is it an illusion? The answer is that the image on the wall is a faint projection, one of many barely visible moving images created by Tom Friedman for this exhibition, "Ghosts and UFOs: Projections for Well-Lit Spaces."

Among the works (all short projected loops dated 2017) are One Minute Egg, a white egg-shaped oval that wobbles to and fro as if in a pot of boiling water; Pong, a rendition of one of the earliest arcade games, consisting of two vertical bars and a small square bouncing back and forth between them; Wall, an uncanny

image of a hand pressing against fabric as if trapped behind the gallery wall; Kite String, two wavering lines crossed in the middle that simulate the movement of the back side of a kite fluttering in the sky; and Guardian, an image of a small silhouette walking back and forth along the top of the opening in the wall that leads from one room to another. Most of the pieces project white light onto white walls, creating subtly captivating and ephemeral impressions. The few works in color include Sun, an undulating and glowing yellow/orange ball, and Dotted Line, which is the most charged work on view. Here, Friedman has isolated the heads of the last 14 U.S. presidents, presenting them as a horizontal line of gesticulating and squirming circles that comprise an ongoing continuum of silent talking heads.



Tom Friedman, Kite String (2018), ©Tom Friedman, courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles.

Friedman is best known for obsessive, impeccably crafted, witty sculptures where he often painstakingly replicates mass produced objects using everyday materials; for example, Untitled (1999), where nine “Total” cereal boxes were cut into small squares and combined to make one large box that was entirely handcrafted to approximate the original.

His often humorous pieces evoke a sense of wonder. Whether working in video or sculpture, Friedman is interested in questioning perception. Is what you see what you think you see? The idea of creating projections for a bright room is absurd, as projected imagery all but disappears in a well-lit room. But this is Friedman’s point. Rather than create objects, he presents a suite of moving images that are barely visible. They are ephemeral and ambient, there and not there. As in his previous exhibitions, Friedman has filled the gallery with that which is recognizable and iconic—the sun, an egg, pong, U.S. presidents—yet showcases them in unpredictable and innovative ways. The videos in “Ghosts and UFOs: Projections for Well-Lit Spaces” avoid materiality; ever-changing forms, they defy objecthood while simultaneously alluding to a fleeting physical presence.