

ArtReview



List Projects 35: Pap Souleye Fall

MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge 30 July – 29 November

For years, Pap Souleye Fall has chronicled themes of overconsumption, digital capture and technological hypervisibility through the exploits of DEAD PIXEL, a character named after the permanently dark dots that sometimes result from screen malfunctions, whose bodily senses were extracted by his nemesis, THE DATA COLLECTOR. Fall's fictional universe unfolds across exhibitions and performances that weave together recurring visual motifs, aspects of their personal life and references to West African aesthetics and history, particularly those of Senegal, where they were raised before relocating to the United States. When performing as DEAD PIXEL, they don a crudely stitched full-body chroma-key-green garment adorned with imitation pearls. The garment mimics the motion-capture suits used to film visual effects in movies and games. At MIT's List Center, parts of one of Fall's suits are sutured into a patchwork of green tattered fabric trailing up a wall. A green arm protrudes from the stitching like an avatar caught in the dimensional breach between digital and physical realms.

In a room-size installation titled *NOMANISANISLAND REDIRTRENDER* (2026), a ramshackle lattice of giant 'matchsticks' – wooden stems tipped with papier-mâché

heads – houses found objects and humorous curios tenuously metabolised with c-clamps into the scaffolding alongside past artworks (notably portions of a gargantuan peanut, an agricultural commodity forcibly cultivated during colonial Senegal that became a vital cash crop after independence). Below Fall's DEAD PIXEL suit is a small figure-eight formed by cowrie shells that resembles both a peanut and an infinity symbol, calling to mind the presumption of limitless growth that fuels capitalist consumption and the history of shell money as legal tender in West Africa. Near Fall's rickety scaffolding are dozens of 'books' composed of richly illustrated wooden blocks that hinge open to reveal pixelated drawings. Many bear enigmatic texts on the legacies of colonial power: 'EMPIRE RISE; EMPIRE FALL', reads one; 'INVISIBLE TO WHOM', reads another. These codices nod to the speculative worldbuilding of comics and manga, which often allow readers to project power fantasies, contend with historical trauma and imagine better alternatives.

Fall's installation gives presence and vitality to scrapped objects, invisible digital infrastructures and subjugated histories of colonialism, war and enslavement. Found everyday materials are transformed with

playfulness and glee: an inflatable Santa dressed in military camouflage is repapered in blue, lime and forest-green swatches; a dollhouse atop the structure is layered in spandex; the structure's multicoloured wooden beams appear held together by tape. Despite all the wit and whimsy, Fall's maximalist materialism underscores a dark reality: that capitalism's seemingly immaterial digital infrastructures yield tangible waste. Fortunately, it is possible for discarded digital media to be inscribed with new meanings; see, for example, the elaborate pixel-art drawings Fall scratched into screens recovered from e-waste sites. These etchings depict the variations on the recurring iconography of their saga, including the palm trees of Senegal, the peanut and DEAD PIXEL posing with limbs outstretched, reunited with body parts symbolising the senses captured by THE DATA COLLECTOR. At a time when digital systems promise seamless immersive experiences, the work here reminds us that imagining a world beyond totalising structures of capture is perhaps a matter of embracing the glitches in these systems, where the seams between lived reality, digital simulation and speculative worldbuilding begin to fray. *Gee Wesley*



List Projects 35: Pap Souleye Fall, 2026 (installation view).
Photo: Mel Taing. Courtesy the artist