

# ARTFORUM

## Primary Photographic

by Brian Droitcour,  
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People like to call digital images immaterial, a figurative description evoking specters who can appear in space of their own accord. But data can't be beheld without the twofold vessel of a file format and a device that can read it. A better metaphor might be liquid. Water is the central figure in Kate Steciw's *The Swimmer*, 2011. A pool's blue ripples warp a woman's body, and the image is distended across six floor mats. They form an asymmetrical crest that stretches across one wall and onto the floor, where it gathers dirt from viewers' shoes. Steciw ordered the rugs from an ordinary online print-on-demand service, the kind a mom might use to put a photo of her kids on a mug. Even as printed photographs grow relatively scarce, printed objects have become commonplace. The exhibition's title, "Love My Way," highlights Steciw's choice to divert the tools of sentiment toward a heightened sensuality: The rug's soft tactility opposes the wetness of the photographed pool in a way that makes you want to reach out and touch it. Like the veneer of fake brushstrokes applied to prints to make them catch light like paintings, the brush mat of fibers asserts the acquired objecthood of Steciw's printed images.

below  
*Kate Steciw, Exercises in Spatial Mnemonics, 2011,*



In *Exercises in Spatial Mnemonics*, 2011, a smile, a chandelier, pine branches, car headlights, and other things are stretched beyond recognition and frozen on the surface of thin wooden planks. Like sticks cast in a divination ritual, the pieces are splayed at various angles along the walls. The coloring and lighting of the photographs, distorted in the fluidity of Photoshop, lose connections to their origins and become properties of the solid planks and the patterns they form in the room. Besides being Steciw's first solo exhibition in New York, "Love My Way" inaugurates a series of exhibitions in the storefront of a digital print shop, and lends substance to the labor performed in back.