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CRITICS' PICKS

Berlin

Aïda Ruilova

GALERIE GUIDO W. BAUDACH
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Sound is a key feature in the works of Aïda Ruilova, a former noise-punk musician. Here, five quick and choppy videos from 1999 are staged as one installation. Running in a loop, each film is projected onto a different wall, outlining the dimensions of the gallery as sound reverberates throughout it. Ruilova deftly compresses abbreviated gestures into vivid situations—not quite narrative but lucidly evocative nonetheless. Each video forms a trenchant vignette, and together, they are both elliptical and claustrophobic.

Beat & Perv (all works 1999) is maybe the most rhythmically "catchy" work. The artist rocks back and forth in front of a propped mirror that reflects her bruised face. "Beat, bu-beat, bu-beat . . . beat perv!" she repeats as if it were a mantra. The musicality is constructed out of thumps and thwacks, as well as through iconography: Frames showing a single drum and knees swaying about suggest the gambols of a backup band for the disturbing lead vocal.

You're Pretty features a long-haired, bearded, and shirtless male in a dark basement. Obsessive and frantic, he alternates between hugging an amplifier while cooing the work's titular phrase and scratching a record playing on the floor until its screech mixes with his howling. It's an almost-comic remark on pop culture's pairing of black-metal antics with portrayals of horror and rituals.

Ruilova's films are compellingly obscure. Joining low-budget horror-movie aesthetics with rhythmically repetitive noise, she lulls the viewer into deep enthrallment, which augments the works' sense of dread. But what might we be scared of? Domestic interiors, mirrors, compulsive actions, and distilled gestures produce the inner tension. The editing techniques—short clips and abrupt jump cuts—reference cinema history, as when the heaving bosom in the work *Hey* signals a frightened female about to be the victim in a murder scene. It's as if fragments of videos from our collective cultural memory were lodged within Ruilova's works—scenes and frames from films we've seen but can no longer identify.



Aïda Ruilova, *Do It*, 1999, color video with sound, 31 seconds.

— Hili Person