



Aida Ruilova, *You're Pretty*, 2000.  
DVD in color with sound track. 36 seconds.

## AÏDA RUILOVA

### WHITE COLUMNS

According to the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, it is cinema more than any other art that enhances and prolongs a meager dose of time, but I suspect many

of us think of music as the essential art of remolding duration and distorting the regularities of the clock. Aida Ruilova draws on both: Her conception of video is indebted more to the montage-based aesthetic of cinema than to painting or sculpture, in which so much video work remains tacitly rooted, and she uses images of things like records and musical instruments not only to mention sound itself but also to draw our attention to the way her pieces are musically structured—somewhere between trip hop and drum 'n' bass, maybe, making rhythm both hypnotic and assaultive. The narrative elements are there mostly to get cut up and then deployed in repetitive, rhythmic sequences whose effect is somehow as much tactile—one might even say percussive—as visual. She is a musician, after all (a member of an experimental noise-rock band called Alva), and her bio (as brief as one of her artworks) names as many CD releases and music videos as exhibitions.

A friend of mine, a heavy-metal fanatic, once described his ideal musical experience this way: It should approximate the sensation you'd have during the split second between the time you saw an atomic bomb falling and the moment you were vaporized, and it should stretch that out for about three minutes. Showing simultaneously on two adjacent monitors, the four color DVDs recently on view (in the gallery's "White Rooms" exhibition series) clock in at well under that for the bunch of them, but they similarly seem to spasmodically expand their little shards of time toward some exquisitely torturous limit. *Oh No* (all works 2000) is built up around shots of a young woman's face as

she variously grunts, moans, shrieks, or murmurs the phrase that gives the work its title, intercut with views of (presumably her own) bare legs and feet as she walks on the necks and bodies of a series of electric guitars lying on the floor and with close-ups of the instruments themselves—all accompanied by the agonized sounds of scrunching guitar strings. Through repetition, *Oh No*'s sense of angst or trepidation reveals an underlying longing for destruction. *You're Pretty*, an even creepier piece, takes advantage of the same kind of alternation: A long-haired, half-naked guy in glasses hugs an amp in a dark basement while repeating the phrase "you're pretty" in a disturbingly infantile drawl; in quick counterpoint we see (and, in amplified sound, hear) him scraping the face of an LP across a cement floor and a rough brick wall—an odd sort of painful caress. (The sickening sound of the record being ruined is enough to induce shudders in anyone with the vaguest recollection of the Age of Vinyl.) The other two pieces, *Beat & Perv* and *Hey*, run more elaborate variations on similar patterns, becoming correspondingly more opaque. But they all make you feel like you've undergone far more than either their brief allotted time or the rudimentary components out of which they're constructed can quite account for. There's a bit of Pipilotti Rist's delphic giddiness to all this, and more than a bit of Bruce Nauman's pugnacity—even an echo of the stuttering phrases scrawled across Suzanne McClelland's early paintings—but these works are funny, grating, and irruptive in their own exhilarating way.

—Barry Schwabsky