

Aïda Ruilova, "Come to Life"

Salon 94, through Jan 9 (see Uptown).

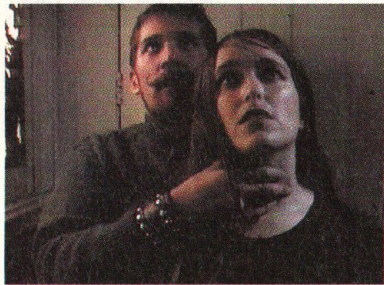
For its inaugural exhibition, Salon 94 (in collaboration with Artemis Greenberg Van Doren Gallery) is debuting new work by New York video artist Aïda Ruilova. Viewers may feel a bit like houseguests in Jeanne Greenberg's chic living room of a gallery space, smartly furnished with sofas and a fireplace. (Salon 94, located in the

dealer's own home, is open Wednesday and by appointment only.) In contrast to the posh setting, Ruilova's installation of seven short-format videos—playing on monitors of varying sizes scattered throughout the main gallery and entryway—conjures up a sort of hippie horror house of endless corridors, forbidden rooms and secret cellars. The long-haired, zombielike characters who populate these videos appear to be either trapped in this place or sealed off, Waco-style.

Crouching on the floor, hanging from the ceiling, chanting in corners, Ruilova's actors are glimpsed in rapid, precisely edited cuts. But unlike the music-video format these works both target and subvert, the sound here is also spliced. The continuous looping of these sometimes synchronized, sometimes colliding segments produces a jarring, autistic rhythm as audio and video from the different moni-

tors interact. Ruilova's subjects address her handheld camera with varying degrees of urgency and indifference, but remain ultimately untouchable in their ecstasies, which seem to fall somewhere between Antonin Artaud's *Theater of Cruelty* and satanic rites (by way of B-horror movies).

Through her well-aimed, lightning-fast edits, Ruilova summons forth a mysterious shut-in world that emerges from the cracks of a splintered mise-en-scène. These are gasped, spit and hyperventilated shots. Pulverizing real time, then stringing it back together as "magickal" action, Ruilova's "cinema" is aesthetically and ethically at odds with, say, Doug Aitken's commercially engineered, smooth space-time continuum. If the experience of viewing most contemporary video art feels a lot like window shopping, visiting this show at Salon 94 is more like stumbling upon a coven of psychedelic witches.—*John Kelsey*



Aïda Ruilova, *Ah-ah-ah*, detail, 2002.