

AÏDA
RUILOVA

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ONE OF THE most intriguing aspects of Edgar Allan Poe's writings is the process by which his heroes undergo an analysis of their own obsessions and get polished off with a highly finished style. In much the same way that his work managed to capture a very personal yet collective mood during the mid-nineteenth century, Aïda Ruilova's single channel videos are built upon a stream of images that provide links to oblique relationships. Employing the cinematic device of montage, her work explores the gap between an individual's psychological state and a neurosis shared by all who live in the increasingly nebulous world of the "global village." The rapid jump-cuts in her short videos ei-

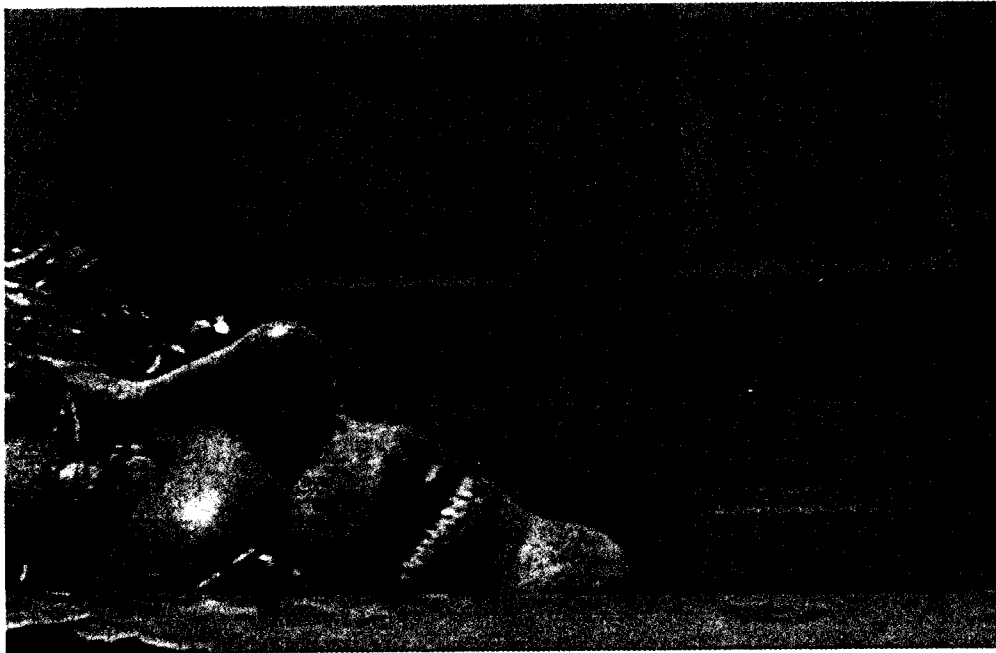
ther combine music or allude to musical sounds, creating narratives that are strangely familiar yet steeped in obscure symbolism. For Ruilova, a New York-based artist, her interest in music lies in the gap between the audio and the visual, at times forcing the viewer to "visualize" sound.

In *You're Pretty* (2000) — featured last year alongside several other videos in the project room of White Columns — a shirtless, long-haired man is in a basement hugging an amplifier while repeating the words "you're pretty" in a creepy voice. This image repeatedly interrupts two other scenes: the man grunting and scraping a record across a floor and a stone wall. The sounds emanating from this series of actions are used to create the "music" for the piece, adding to the claustrophobic and unsettling atmosphere of the interior space. *Hey* (2000), an equally psychologically charged work, recently shown at PS1, is composed of rapid images of a middle-aged woman in a house hanging between a staircase and a floor, suggesting a momentary suspension between two worlds. Ruilova creates a sense of motion in the accompanying scenes by integrating the woman's rhythmic cries with the noisy scraping of her fingernails along the banister. In the most recent two channel video, *Ah-Ahh-Ah* (2001), the poetic nuances that lingered in earlier works become more complex, taking the audience to a different level of engagement. A man and a woman are seen, inside a house, slowly chanting in unison the title of the work. Reminiscent of professional voice training, the hypnotizing couple chants and laughs as if possessed. Their actions create an uneasiness as it becomes clear that they are neither living nor dead but in a constant state of flux.

Peeling back the layers of Ruilova's work one can find a mixture of Gothic and B movie horror with traces of a bittersweet coating. Her visual style is clearly influenced by Eisenstein's filmic techniques in the fracturing of time, empowering the viewer with the tools to come up with their own conclusions. In balancing her work, Ruilova skillfully manages to merge the opposing strategies of another filmmaker, Tarkovsky, who concentrated on "filming a psychology of mind-states, remembrances, ambiances, and other-worldliness." Prevalent in her work is a critique of the psychosis that includes a sense of isolation, self-destruction, and absurdity. Roger Corman, the King of B movies, best summed up this feeling when he said, "I eventually worked out a theory... that horror, sex, and laughter are all connected in strange ways."

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Aïda Ruilova was born in Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1974. She lives and works in New York. Selected exhibitions: 2001: "Special Projects," P.S.1, New York; "Casino 2001," S.M.A.K., Gent (Belgium); 2000: "Collectors Choice," Exit Art, New York; "White Room," White Columns, New York; 1999: "Lifer," Cardozo School of Law, Rove, New York; "Hi-8," Museu Nacional de Historia Natural, Estrela, Lisbon.



From top: *Hey*, 2000. Videostill; *Ah-Ahh-Ah*, 2001. Videostill
Courtesy Greenberg and Van Doren, New York.