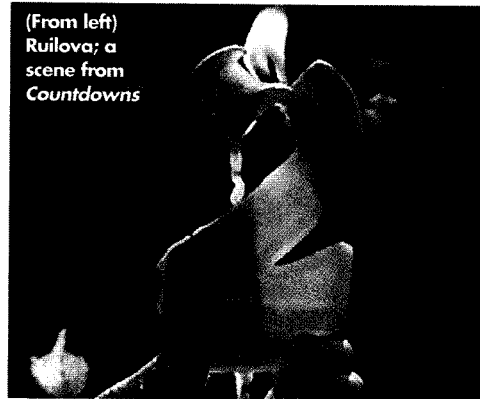


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(From left)
Ruilova; a
scene from
Countdowns

Making a Scene

Video artist Aida Ruilova is drawing critical attention with her darkly engaging short films

Avant-garde video artist Aida Ruilova's punk-rock approach to her work—embracing the classic as well as the cult—is earning the Manhattan transplant critical praise and prime gallery placement. In December, queen-bee collector Rosa de la Cruz projected one of Ruilova's works onto her home during "Art Basel Miami Beach," and this month the

30-year-old has two solo gallery shows (May 4–June 4 at Greenberg Van Doren Gallery in New York and through May 28 at Franklin Art Works in Minneapolis). With influences ranging from European horror films to 1980s death metal from Tampa, where she grew up, Ruilova splices gestures and sounds in her short, looping videos with the rhythmic precision of a DJ. "Aida pushes the hysteria of the horror genre to a ridiculous extreme," says curator Debra Singer, who featured Ruilova in the 2004 Whitney Biennial. "There's a disconcerting emotional polarity—dark and funny, twisted and kitsch—and you're not sure how to react." Ruilova's newest piece, *Countdowns*, is a double-projection, double-soundtrack video featuring aggressively zooming images of numbers inspired by the counting games on *Sesame Street* and by postapocalyptic films. "Countdowns usually end with a payoff," she says, "but this one never ends. It echoes the city's anxious psychology since 9/11. You want to escape, but you can't." —REBECCA CASCADE