

ArtReview

INTERNATIONAL ART & STYLE

JULY 2005 VOLUME LVI \$4.90

Aïda Ruilova

4 May-4 June
Greenberg Van Doren Gallery,
New York (+1 212 445 0444,
www.gvdgallery.com)
Review by Adam Mendelsohn



I often have a major problem with video art. It tends to be so heart-wrenchingly dull. Rarely, if ever, do I see video art that deals either with the material itself or demonstrates even the slightest consideration to such basic concerns as light, form or space. Digital film, video and celluloid are in fact different materials, each with very distinctive qualities and possibility. No matter how hard you try to convince me, acrylic is not oil just as a shitty little synthesizer is not a grand piano. What is more interesting is when artists coax unique qualities from each material, amplifying their differences rather than relying on the context of the gallery or claue to ratify it as art.

For 'Let's Go', her exhibition at Greenberg Van Doren, Aïda Ruilova has created two pieces: mini films, shot with Hi-8 video and edited at home in her bedroom, set on endless loops. The first, *Countdowns* (2004), is a movie consisting of two separate frames projected into the corner as a largish diptych. Your eyes bounce from left to right, tennis-match style, to follow it. A sequence of moving images depict various tableaux: a melting numeric birthday-cake candle, someone in soggy stripy underwear, a hunched-over figure with the number nine graffitied on the wall behind her, a person running up a sand dune with a number five written into the sand and the words 'hee hee hee' resting on the edge of the dune. What is some healthy ocular exercise is also a sequential countdown from 10

to one, as the title makes clear. At the end of the countdown, nothing explodes or begins; it just starts up all over again. Each number, whether written in the sand or in the form of a burning candle, is an impermanent representation. Eventually the candle will burn away and the sand will erase the rendering.

The second piece, which is installed as separate vignettes (*Let's Go, Uh Oh, Um, OK, Alright*, 2004-05), succeeds in making you spin around the gallery like a ding-dong. Shot up close and in colour, the sequences are largely made up of people dressed in black leather jackets against white, architectural backgrounds. The models, people whose faces we never fully see, hiccup out the noises of the titles. Although they remain stationary, the camera whips around them, creating sharp angles and fragmentary perspectives. Tight editing makes for staccato, paradiddle rhythms with manic boxing-ring bell noises. It's more amphetamine-jumpy than cokehead-crazy.

Working within tight parameters, Ruilova deals with complex realisations about temporal concerns and does a lot with very little. The works, like their titles, are direct and to the point without becoming tidy packages or, worse, riddles. Avoiding a start-middle-end kind of thinking, Ruilova performs a cool magic trick; making video loops is a way to cheat the inevitability of decay, and 'Let's Go' is a convincing illusion.

Above: Aïda Ruilova, *Uh Oh*, 2004, DVD with sound, 19 secs, video still, detail