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AÏDA RUILOVA'S "I'M SO WILD ABOUT YOUR STRAWBERRY MOUTH"

-Susannah Tantemsapya

Aïda Ruilova's first solo show in Los Angeles, "I'm so wild about your strawberry mouth," – on view through May 4 at Kayne Griffin Corcoran – intertwines a powerful narrative, marrying sex, pornography, the male gaze, beauty, violence, crime, death, and humor. Its title is taken from the German version of actor Klaus Kinski's "notorious" autobiography.

"Klaus plays an unreliable narrator in the story of his life," explained Ruilova. "Reality seems out of proportion in his confessional voice..."

Encompassing the space are altered posters from the 1974 French softcore erotic film, *Emmanuelle*, including its various racial spin-offs. The 25 works on paper are partially covered with shapes and eyes, revealing more, and adding a sense of mystery.

“I had been collecting the posters for awhile, through posters shops and eBay. I purposely started focusing on collecting posters that had more photographic elements in them. The black pools I painted was a way to cut up the image, add another narrative that was like a void... I’ve only seen a few of the Emmanuelle films, all on YouTube. I was more interested in the advertisements’ exploitation of the figure and its relationship to propagating the identity of the franchise film.”

Ruilova’s debut sculpture, *Diamond Bed*, sits at an angle in the middle of the room. It’s unbelievably jarring to see this shiny, knife-like version of a bed of nails.

“The bed is considered a space for meditation, rest... but the form this bed takes, it was important to me (that) the bed (is) shifted on the viewer, it changes depending on how the light hits it.”

Finally, there is a 45-minute video project called *Head and Hands* featuring filmmaker Abel Ferrara, perhaps best known for making *The Bad Lieutenant*.

Ruilova constructs a loose narrative, jumping chronology, repeating dialogue to blur reality and fiction under Ferrara’s storytelling. He delights in a nostalgic jaunt through the gritty, underground of 1970s New York: paying homage to the drug dealers, whores, hustlers and the like. Moderated by New York art critic, Alissa Bennett, Ferrara is prompted to discuss the death of controversial polymath Pier Paolo Pasolini. This conversation eventually leads to what his own death would look like.

“I asked Abel to speak about Pier Paolo Pasolini, and coincidentally he had just finished a script that focused on Pasolini’s last day and his life. Pasolini’s death was a starting point for my video. Abel speaks about the events that surrounded Pasolini’s death and through that he reveals more about himself... The images Abel is able to conjure with just his head and hands, he allows us to visualize within his own image. The Emmanuelle drawings also play with this idea of depth within an image – multiple frames.”

Aïda Ruilova was born in Wheeling, West Virginia in 1974. Her first museum survey exhibition was organized by the Aspen Art Museum and St Louis Contemporary Museum of Art and traveled to the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Cleveland MOCA and New Orleans Museum of Contemporary Art. Her work has been included in the Venice Biennial, the Whitney Biennial and the Berlin Biennial and she was a nominee for the 2006 Hugo Boss Prize. She currently lives in New York.