

frieze

Issue 113 March 2008

EVENTS

performa07, New York City, USA



Aida Ruilova, *The Silver Globe* (2007)

Who would have thought Nathalie Djurberg's demented claymation world, if it spilt into three dimensions, could seem like our own? Wearing a scarlet uniform decked with medals and epaulettes, Djurberg screened *Untitled (Working Title Kids & Dogs)* (2007), her 50-minute tour de force, at the Zipper Theater, to a live accompaniment she cooked up with Pascal Strauss and her frequent collaborator Hans Berg. In the video's first section starving children in military attire battle a pack of stray dogs – including a fluffy poodle and a wolfhound that sniffs its own butt – in a De Chirico-esque piazza. The fate of these adorably scruffy armies is both hilarious and sad: as in the real world, grenades and guns lead only to explosions of gore and escalate to suicide bombings. Later the maimed are tended at a hospital staffed by buxom nurses who puke on seeing their injuries and then administer enemas and labour to reattach limbs. In addition to watching the film one needed to listen to the humans off-screen, who wrestled, fed each other or wrapped faces in gauze. Throughout, balloons squeaked as rats scuttled on-screen; a munched carrot

simulated a bone; poured water approximated blue clay tears; a typewriter provided the rat-a-tat-tat of gunfire and squeezed ketchup bottles the sound of gushing blood.

Wartime violence was a more sober theme in 'Remains To Be Seen' (2007), a trio of evenings hosted by Carolee Schneemann. At Electronic Arts Intermix, where she showed works she said had been 'rejected, neglected or lost', Schneemann recalled making art under the shadow of the Vietnam War, describing how in gathering props for the complex, haunting group performance *Snows* (1967) she scavenged from the heart of American culture to reflect ghostly horrors – collecting sparkling 'bouquets and boughs' that were discarded department-store Christmas decorations and finagling aluminium foil from Reynolds Metals Company (then involved in weapons production) by claiming she needed foil to teach blind children tactile sculpture. Shot by Alphonse Shilling, the documentary footage evokes the 'relentless bombing' that inspired the piece. More light-hearted were the hilarious cooking-show spoof *Americana I Ching Apple Pie* (1972/1997) and *Mop Mop* (1997), a tape of an impromptu minuet Schneemann danced with a mop when a job interview went sour. The Anthology Film Archives programmes included the landmark Kitch's Last Meal (1973–6), preserved in the original Super-8 vertical double-projection format, and an array of works new and old, including a restoration of the lushly erotic domestic idyll *Fuses* (1965–7).

Of course, many younger performance artists are indebted to Schneemann's visceral use of her own body and her refusal to be limited by others' attitudes to female beauty. Aïda Ruilova is among them, although she lacks the wily playfulness that animates much of Schneemann's work. *The Silver Globe* (2007) at The Kitchen was a moodily dramatic collaboration with choreographer Caitlin Cook, Ian Vanek of Japanther and Dan Seward of Bunnybrains. Music, dance and rough sculptural props mingled with original video and excerpts from the hallucinatory 1970s' sci-fi flick of the same title by Polish director Andrzej Zulawski, in which a moon mission yields a new tribalistic society. Despite Ruilova's knack for channelling dark energies – the counterpoint between the video footage and her gestures was compellingly eerie – her sometimes comically sepulchral vision was ultimately more hollow than Djurberg's childlike horrors.

Kristin M. Jones