

# PORTFOLIO



NEWSMAKER

## AIDA RUILOVA

"IT'S AN EXPANDING EMPIRE of stuff nobody cares about anymore, but I find the images so beautiful," says Aida Ruilova about the *Emmanuelle*-related film posters that she's been collecting for her most recent body of work, on view from March 23 at **Kayne Griffin Corcoran** in Los Angeles. The New York artist found herself transfixed by the advertisements for flicks derived from the original 1974 French pornographic film. Her exhibition "I'm So Wild About Your Strawberry Mouth" will include about 25 of these posters, to which Ruilova

has applied dense rectangles and squares with curious pairs of eyes peeking out from the thick black paint. She'll also show an experimental documentary about filmmaker Abel Ferrera, director of *Bad Lieutenant* and *King of New York*, among other films.

**Scott Indrisek:** *Why Emmanuelle?*

**Aïda Ruilova:** It's not so much about the films but rather the aesthetics of these erotic drawings and the fact that there's been this unending cutup from it, all these B-versions that spawned off the original: *Emmanuelle*

*2: The Anti-virgin, Emmanuelle and the White Slave Trade.* These advertisements for the movies have a particular aesthetic to them. I started trying to find ones that were more photographic, with a certain pre-Photoshop look. The printing techniques are really interesting too: low-budget, crummy, you see more graininess. But it's nice because it's like someone put on a soft focus, Vaseline on the lens. *Emmanuelle* is essentially the story of a bored housewife who has all these erotic adventures. But there are other films that were made in the



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mid to late '70s—*Immoral Tales* and *The Story of O*—that fall within the same genre, and the posters have very similar aesthetics.

I started inserting these other film posters that have the same kind of visual narrative.

**SI:** You've added these black squares, rectangles, and circles to the image, with mysterious eyes inside them.

**AR:** It's definitely playing off of Minimalism and Ad Reinhardt. I love the black paintings. And the eyes give this kind of fake interior to the flatness of the shapes. It becomes more cartoony. It's the simplest way to create a narrative in a black space without showing anything.

**SI:** Where do you find the actual posters?

**AR:** I'm finding crazy stuff on eBay, like ones for *Black Emanuelle*. But in a lot of them Emmanuelle's not black; she's Latino or Thai. It's really colonial. I have some *Yellow Emmanuelle* images; they're all Asian. It's really politically incorrect. There's one for a movie called *The Hot Lips of Emmanuelle*. It's almost horrible, kind of disgusting, but kind of sexy, too. There's a love and repulsion with them at some point.

**SI:** Can you tell me a bit about your 2010 short film, *Goner*, in which a woman, Sonja Kinski, is brutalized by a mysterious, invisible attacker?

**AR:** I've never made a film where there was so much control in order to create a certain effect on the viewer. When shooting violence, it's extremely mapped out. For me it was this exercise: I want to create this feeling in the viewer. How do I do this, in the very archetypal way a horror film does but just give the viewer the money shot, which is what everybody always wants when going to see these films. There was nothing scary about *making* it; it's extremely

mechanical to create that effect in the viewer.

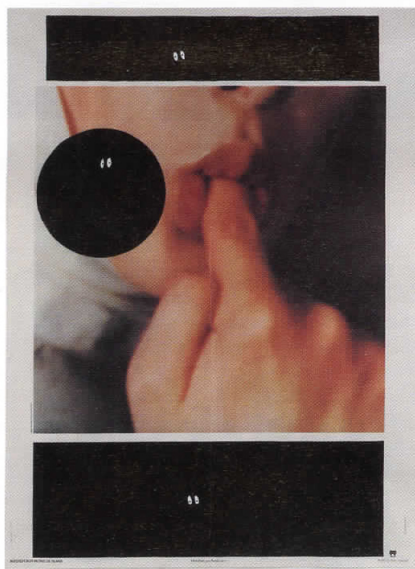
**SI:** With *Goner* and also *Meet the Eye* [2009], your film starring Raymond Pettibon and Karen Black, were you taking the idea of what could be an entire feature and squeezing it into a short?

**AR:** Compressing it. I was always drawn to films like Louis Malle's *Black Moon*, where the whole thing feels like a weird dream. There's a narrative to it, but it's not in the classical, logical sense. With some of those videos I tried

to put the viewer in a space where they're not sure exactly what's going on, but they still want to watch.

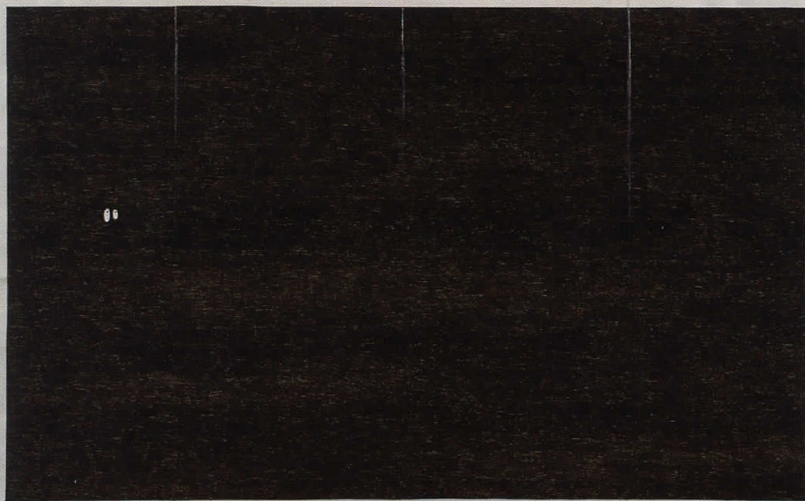
**SI:** Let's talk about the new film, the portrait of Abel Ferrara. How did your relationship come about, and did you initially plan on a documentary-style work?

**AR:** I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with him, but I'd been a fan of Abel's for a long time. My last few projects had much higher, more





# Kayne Griffin Corcoran



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LEFT:  
*The Beast*, 2013.  
Pencil and oil on  
paper, 66 x 50 in.

BELOW:  
*Emmanuelle*,  
2013. Pencil and  
oil on paper,  
58 x 42½ in.

OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT:  
*Behind Convent  
Walls*, 2013.  
Pencil and oil on  
paper,  
35 x 26½ in.

*Immoral Tales*,  
2012. Pencil and  
oil on paper,  
33 x 23 in.

cinematic production values. I just started shooting Abel alone, with a sound guy. I wanted him to talk about Pier Paolo Pasolini's death, his last day. I know Abel had this love for Pasolini. He later revealed to me that he'd written a script for a feature film that was all about Pasolini's last day; he wanted Willem Dafoe to play him. So we started shooting in a room, once a month. And the subjects we discussed started with Pasolini's death, the crime scene, what happened. From there, Abel unfolded through Pasolini's death. Initially I asked Abel how he would direct his *own* death scene. He's very superstitious, so I don't think he liked the idea of that.

**SI:** What was it that drew you to Abel's films?

**AR:** He comes out of such a specific time frame: the late '70s, post-hippie, post-punk era in New York. His early films start off as exploitation and horror and then slowly become more like psychodramas about these antiheroes, a nostalgic way of looking at

the city: gamblers, prostitutes, cops. I see Abel in all of them; he's this romanticized version of these deadbeats. And he's a performer in some respects, a real-life character. He can talk for hours, creating images and places.

**SI:** Did you edit the footage so that it has a linear logic?

**AR:** I decided to edit it in a way that a lot of my other works are edited, so that at the beginning you're not sure what's going on and why he's telling you some of these stories. But the fuller picture comes into view as you keep going. It has a circular logic, baiting the viewer. My attention span is horrible—my works before have been no more than 10 minutes long—but I could keep watching Abel talk.

**SI:** Could you envision collaborating with him in the future—working on a film, for instance?

**AR:** I never expected this relationship to be what it's been. It's definitely open with Abel. I love him. He's crazy, but I'm crazy too, so we're all good. MP

