

“1967” at Locks Gallery Experiments With Political Facts and Fiction

The multi-channel video installation is mesmerizing.

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Posted January 25, 2012

An arsenal of swaying Chinese women sing in unison while a bevy of North American blondes shake their tennis skirts and shimmy their “I must, I must, I must increase my bust!” sweaters. A cluster of grazing chickens bobbing their heads might even be said to be doing the chicken. At first glance, Nadia Hironaka’s and Matthew Suib’s 1967 at Locks Gallery looks like a first-rate dance-a-thon. Reprising footage from state-sponsored demonstrations, the multi-channel video installation combines shots from world expos in Montreal and Shanghai, YouTube clips of protests and scenes from obscure Chinese films and Jean-Luc Godard’s *La Chinoise* to create a literal dance revolution mash-up.



Sensory overload: The panorama at Locks Gallery keeps you watching long enough to suss out a narrative.

This visually and aurally chaotic presentation wraps seamlessly around the gallery—a mesmerizing panorama that keeps you watching long enough to suss out a narrative: that amidst all these smiling state-bots, one is not like the others. A travelogue unfolds via a single wall projection, and subtitles inform us that the narrator is traveling to the Montreal Expo, where—if her politically radical name-sake, Veronique, in Godard’s film is any indication—she will assassinate the wrong person. Her plane takes off and gray clouds rush in. Although this channel delivers the most straightforward narrative, it has the least visual punch—a smart move that forces viewers to tear themselves away from the glitz of official pageantry in order to follow the drab developments of real-world politics.

With a clear and liberally cited debt to experimental filmmaking, references to film history abound in 1967. Due to the wonky angles of the projectors, activity in the gallery is caught on camera. Shadows of the viewer’s legs are cast onto every surface, effectively joining our movements with those of the dancing masses. Multiply the number of visitors (and shadows) in the space and the installation takes on a funhouse feel that tips its hat to the hall of mirrors in Orson Welles’ *The Lady from Shanghai*. As in Welles’ film, an assassination plot structures both *La Chinoise* and the loose narrative of 1967, such that when we finally see Veronique’s target, we wonder from which direction the bullet may fly.

All of this footage is often cleverly spliced together (and no matter where you turn, you're never far from the barrage of montage). Through a doorway in a borrowed Godard scene, we see the exercises of a communist rally cut from an utterly different source: footage from the 2010 Shanghai Expo, which is sometimes blurred with scenes from films made during China's Cultural Revolution. A timeless score seems to unite musical communists from every conceivable era, each shaking a leg for a different revolution.

While cautioning against the effects of official ideology on individual bodies, Hironaka and Suib also rib the historical failure of political hero-worship. When it comes to identifying a great leader and the target of Veronique's aggression, we see a rooster in a lace frock framed in the crosshairs of a sniper's muzzle. On the subject of revolutionary verve, then, Hironaka and Suib come down in approximately the same place as Godard (although a bit late, for comic effect): When it comes to metaphorical assassination, they suggest we may be aiming at the wrong targets.

