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A Stage of Her Own: Georgia Sagri

by Alex Gartenfeld

Earlier this summer at Lower East Side gallery On Stellar Rays, artist Georgia Sagri (born Athens, 1979) spent nearly a month executing her imagination of the banal rituals of an immigrant car sales person. For Sagri's show "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is," the artist outlined a circle on the gallery's floor, and during hours of operation she did laps around the demarcated space, acting according to prepared instructions, projected on the wall via a PowerPoint presentation. Sagri's sales pitch was aggressive at times; sometimes it involved crawling into the fetal position, or growling for minutes like an aroused feline. As the performance advanced, Sagri hit her stride with certain parts and experimented with others. The script itself was absurd, filled with childlike calls and response; even so, the performance was unpredictable.



"The Invisible Ones," performed February 28 at Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London. Image courtesy the artist.

Sagri's performance is fairly literal about the themes of exchange that the work is intended to embody. The title, "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is" doesn't suggest so much the substitution of currency for communication as it does the inevitability of such a substitution. Viewers may have been invited to buy or partake in a product, but Sagri quite evidently was only selling her time in the gallery; ultimately, her antics sought to de-sublimate the uncomfortable assessment of value in a performance piece.

Tonight, Sagri performs "The Invisible Ones" at The Kitchen, curated by Matthew Lyons but first completed at Anthony Reynolds Gallery in London. Again, the show involves the terms under which performance artist and performance spectator make a contract for viewership. "The Invisible Ones" is inspired by Buster Keaton, Bruce Lee, and colorful Apple iPod commercials, which Sagri links for the looming presence of "an invisible enemy." The piece takes the rough form of a fight scene. Says Sagri, "You don't call invisible someone that doesn't exist. You call invisible someone that cannot be seen." The exhibition lasts four hours, although there are two junctures for entrance, at 6 and 8 PM. And, the artist is eager to warn, "each performance depends on how long each viewer would stay film and watch."

Sagri uses basic technologies for the humor and feel in their premature decrepitude. For her performance, the artist used an old PC to project her PowerPoint—admittedly her own, but she also owns a more recently issued Apple laptop. This time the technical elements are even more basic, comprising only a stereo system, two sets of sound-activate spotlights, and one camera.

Sagri rehearses only by preparing the elements for the performance. The emphasis, she says, "is no attempt at some kind of virtuosity"; and while the performance lives on in video, Sagri doesn't play a role for an imagined atemporal audience. Instead, Sagri envisions an other in the audience activated by a script: "The moment of the performance is not an end or a beginning but a fragment of reality, a gelatin, a four-dimensional image." At four hours, the experience might prove exhausting for all parties—but it won't last forever.

Georgia Sagri performs "The Invisible Ones" tonight. RSVP is required. The Kitchen is located at 512 West 19 St, New York.