

GALLERIES | CATE MCQUAID

Videos between time and timelessness

Suara Welitoff stills and reverses time by manipulating old film and video footage. Jettisoning narrative and calling attention to throwaway moments, she creates images weighty with meaning. Her remarkable show, organized by independent curator Susan L. Stoops at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, features a dozen plangent and unsettling recent videos.

Several spotlight text borrowed from film subtitles and intertitles. In one, the words "I want to tell you something" run on a loop. They glimmer iridescently and throb, as if trembling in anticipation.

"Yet to be titled" dwells on a scrap from "A Report on the Party and the Guests," Czech new wave filmmaker Jan Nemeč's 1966 satire about power and how people bend to accommodate totalitarianism. In it, a man blows out candles, a symbol of time passing. The man blows, the candles snuff, smoke flies. Then the smoke reverses direction, and the flames reappear. The black-and-white scene jarringly turns fiery orange and red, then repeats.



COURTESY OF ARTIST AND KRAKOW WITKIN GALLERY

SUARA WELITOFF: RIGHT NOW THIS MOMENT

At School of the Museum of Fine Arts
at Tufts University, 230 The Fenway,
through April 6. 617-627-0047,
smfa.tufts.edu/events-exhibits/galleries

Drilling down into such moments, Welitoff takes us into an eternal present. That can be a blessing or a curse. Recent works drawn from 50-year-old films that are uncomfortably pertinent today seem ominous.

"Everything is different," one of the few color videos, features an agonizingly slow-motion clip from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1969 film about xenophobia, "Katzelmacher." A man and a woman cling to each other in a stairwell. Welitoff bleaches the image so dark passages are a toxic orange and all else is smeared white. It's silent until we hear footsteps, a woman's voice, a piano, all filled with portent.

Welitoff's videos place us on an edge between time and timelessness. Some are nearly as still as a painting, their whispering shifts made potent by their quietude. Others heighten awareness of time as a loop, and the way we get stuck in our own patterns. History repeats itself, and our worst impulses trip us up again and again. Even so, these works suggest, if we look closely enough into the interstices, we will find something new.

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