

TimeOut New York

October 6–12, 2005

ART

Dara Friedman The Kitchen, through Oct 22 (see Chelsea).

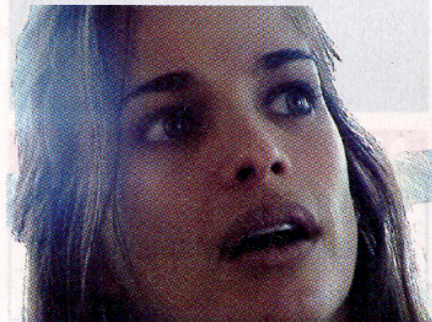
The “he said, she said” narrative is elevated to aggressive spectacle in Dara Friedman’s powerful new video installation, *Sunset Island*. A man and a woman, tightly framed and isolated on two separate screens, ask a series of questions that range from the mundane (“Did you put gas in the car?”) to the existential (“What will become of us?”). Each question serves as its own short scene as the characters appear in different poses, outfits and settings within the same sprawling, empty house.

As in her earlier works such as *Romance* (2001) or *Bim Bam* (1999), which was shown in the 2000 Whitney Biennial, the German-born, Miami-based artist applies avant-garde film strategies—non-linear structure, an interest in the mechanics of the medium—to her own demanding yet

playful style. There is no narrative progression to *Sunset Island*. Instead, the series of rapid-fire questions, which ricochet between the characters, repeated with different emphases, coalesces into a portrait of the daily life of two seemingly frustrated and trapped people.

Lest viewers mistake the parallel interrogation for a two-way conversation, Friedman has the actors address their queries directly to the camera, monologue-style. The couple’s questions don’t seem to reflect their relationship in particular, but rather seem drawn from a larger investigation into the nature of romance and communication. It is an inquiry that is never resolved; the characters float in and out of synch but never connect. In one telling line, the man asks: “What do I have in common with you?” Pausing to make an *O* with one hand, he continues: “A big zero.”

—Lauren Cornell



Sunset Island