

Art in America

November 2004



Coco Fusco: *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert*, 2004, single-channel DVD, dimensions variable; at The Project.

REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS

Coco Fusco at The Project

Coco Fusco's latest effort, "a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert," is an extraordinarily adept take on the history of racial politics in the U.S. and the harsh realities of global capitalism in the information age. The exhibition comprised three thematically related projects. A video projection, *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert* (2004), was on view in the main gallery along with "Sittings," four contact sheets of images taken with a spy camera. *Dolores from*

10 to 10 (2002), a three-monitor video display, was installed in the gallery's reception area.

As the centerpiece, *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert* was perhaps the most evocative and layered work in the show. The video recounts the two-month search and subsequent prosecution in 1969-70 of activist and philosopher Angela Davis. The title refers to one of the aliases attributed to her in the course of the FBI manhunt. Esthetically, the video is a rich pastiche of both cinematic and artistic references—most notably to Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* (1962)—as it overlays black-and-white newsreel footage, photographic stills, and close-ups of newspaper headlines. Interspersed throughout are staged reenactments of Davis under surveillance, punctuated by insertions of clips from various

Hollywood films, such as *The Conversation* (1974), starring Gene Hackman as an FBI agent and surveillance specialist. In a voice-over that is part confessional, a fictitious male agent eerily recounts the government-sanctioned spying on Davis. He speaks about the noble cause of the agency, surveillance technology and the physical beauty of Davis's blackness.

Based on actual events, *Dolores from 10 to 10* explores the brutal exploitation of female labor. The video—its title perhaps an allusion to the classic Agnès Varda film *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1961)—similarly follows the actions of a female protagonist. The piece restages the 12-hour interrogation of a maquiladora laborer accused of attempting to unionize workers. Originally per-

formed by Fusco and Ricardo Dominguez at Helsinki's Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art and shown via live Internet feed, the work was displayed here in video form to simulate closed-circuit television. Viewers watch Fusco's drawn-out questioning and intermittent idleness as she is deprived of food, water and telephone access.

The success of these works resides in their marriage of artistic and historical references, as well as their examination of the relationship between oppression and technology, voyeurism and surveillance.

—D.C. Murray