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Takeshi Murata

RATIO 3

903 Guerrero

January 13–February 26

Mario Bava's classic 1960 Italian horror film, *Mask of Satan* (aka *Black Sunday*) is the almost unrecognizable source for Takeshi Murata's hallucinatory new video, *Untitled (Silver)*, 2006. The sole work in the New York artist's first solo show, this absorbing, ten-minute, black-and-white piece reveals Murata's formidable skill at wrangling pixels into swirling patterns that move at a poetically trippy pace. With the judicious eye of a film director, the artist finds moments in Bava's film where '60s goth queen Barbara Steele seemingly floats through ornate interiors, and, using sophisticated code-based image processing—the details of which may elude all but the most serious programmers—Murata veils her darkly remote beauty with layers of visual distortion and digital degradation (all overlaid with an ambient electronic sound track composed by Robert Beatty and Ellen Mollé). At times, the images bring to mind Glenn Brown's melting Old Master-style portraits, and the encoded randomness also has John Cage computer connections. But Murata's particular genius is an almost alchemical ability to transform forgotten relics of pop culture into dazzling jewels.

—Glen Helfand

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Wangechi Mutu

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

151 Third Street

December 16–April 02

Abuse of power comes as no surprise, as Jenny Holzer so lucidly put it some twenty-five years ago, and it remains a fitting slogan for the current geopolitical climate. Wangechi Mutu's skin-toned collages and body-referencing installation addresses the same subject—misused authority—with a range of heated corporeal references. Her site-specific installation, titled *The Chief's Lair Is a Bloody Mess*, includes two substantial collages, a series of sculptures, and wall works, and manages to address the dour tenor of the times by including wine bottles that drip their contents to the floor in blood-like splatters, infusing the gallery with earthy odors and Catholic subtexts. The bottles are suspended above a series of early American chairs with grafted-on leg



Still from *Untitled (Silver)*, 2006.



Bloody Old Head Games (detail), 2005.

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