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A Mix Tape of Music-Based Videos

By on Monday, February 5th, 2007 at 8:00 am.



On the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Dutch artist Jeroen Offerman is singing Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven.' He's singing it backwards. As everybody knows, the song in reverse is all about devil worship--though it takes a moment to notice, watching the video of his uncanny performance, because the movie is running backwards in its own right, rendering the lyrics more-or-less intelligible again. Welcome to the strange and spectacular underground of artist-generated music videos--a realm as far removed from the eye candy of MTV as machinima is from 'Toy Story'--and the subject of a mesmerizing show curated by Berin Golonu and Julio Morales at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Inside a hipster-luxe viewing pod, custom designed by Seattle architect Kyu Che, viewers can lie down for hours, collectively browsing a global selection of world-class music-driven video art. The works range from Singapore artist Ho Tzu Nyen's over-the-top rendering of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' as a courthouse melodrama to Los Angeles artist Eamon Ore Giron's sound-bending experiments with record players and blowtorches. The underlying thesis here is that there are no underlying theses: Without market pressures (yet) from Hollywood or Chelsea, each collaboration is sui generis. And given the DIY origins of the medium, and the mix tape inspiration, audience participation is naturally part of the show, through an online version of the exhibit on YouTube to which everyone can contribute. 'Underplayed' runs through March 4 at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. - Jonathon Keats

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