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## Artist Antin's Installations Span Time, Weaving Fictional Life Into Real History

Eleanor Antin's "Loves of a Ballerina" blurs the lines between fiction and history, art and life, amusement and serious inquiry.

In her three impressive and engaging installations and assorted photographs, drawings and text on view at Installation (930 E St.) through April 24, Antin assumes the persona of Eleanora Antinova, a former dancer with the Ballet Russe. In the most dazzling of the installations, Antinova can be seen starring in a trilogy of short silent films projected inside a grand but dilapidated movie palace.

Antin has adopted the conventions of the silent screen in her melodramatic films, exaggerated tragicomic tales of love. We see the films from outside the theater by peering through the round windows in the front doors, over the silhouettes of the imaginary audience inside. Once we pass through the theater's exotic arches and huddle in its doorway, scattered snowflakes at our feet, we have entered Antin's fiction, so convincing is the sense of place she has created.

Antinova appears again in films projected onto the windows of a life-size railroad car, where she uses her seductive grace as a ballerina to pirouette from one compartment to another, keeping two suitors tantalized and perplexed at once. And finally, in the mirror of a reconstructed backstage dressing room, we see Antin's face for the first time in color, a contemporary woman surrounded by the aged accoutrements of her assumed character.



VINCE COMPAGNONE / Los Angeles Times

One of Eleanor Antin's works on display at Installation gallery.

A costume, a fan, a slipper and a trunk labeled with foreign destinations all coalesce to define an environment and a time distant from the pensive face in the mirror. A dusting of artificial snow covers this and the other two scenes as if it were a veil of nostalgia, a gentle reminder that the scene is a product of memory and imagination.

Numerous contemporary artists, like Antin, are examining how women form their identities, influenced by conventions and stereotypes perpetuated in the arts or mass media. But unlike others, such as photographer Cindy Sherman, who assumes a different character in each of her self-portraits, Antin's self-conscious role-playing is extremely involved and comprehensive, "a real-life performance, not a masquerade," she has written.

Antin, who works primarily in video and performance and teaches art at UC San Diego, draws upon her early training as an actress to stretch her identity across genders, races and eras in her various roles. In "Recollections of My Life With Diaghilev, 1919-1929," a printed work excerpted and displayed here, she effectively weaves her fictional life into real history.

Through these delightful memoirs, littered with tidbits about "the Maestro," and accompanied by sketchy illustrations, Antin implants herself nearly seamlessly into another time and place. History is deftly manipulated in her hands, but throughout this provocative exhibition, Antin also shows how easily we are manipulated by history.