



David Zink Yi, *De adentro y afuera* (From inside and out), 2002, still from a three-screen video installation, 9 minutes 30 seconds.

BERLIN

DAVID ZINK YI
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How do you make a salsa song? David Zink Yi reveals the deceptively easy steps behind the music with his new video installation *De adentro y afuera* (From inside and out), 2002. The Peruvian artist, who is based in Berlin, traveled to Cuba, wrote a set of lyrics, and asked Havana musician Leonardo Varela Poey to compose a salsa song to go with them. Instead of presenting the final composition, Zink Yi shows how the salsa is built up from a *clave*, or basic rhythm, which first crystallizes in the casual movements of the composer's body before it is played by a band. Treating the body as an instrument, the artist presents close-ups of Varela Poey—hands tapping a wood block, mouth singing the lyrics, and feet dancing steps—in three projections around the gallery. While the sounds fill the space, the work remains fragmented since visitors cannot hear the final orchestrated score nor see the composer's entire body. The *clave* becomes the key to a complex structure that remains missing.

With Zink Yi's lyrics—*De nuestra isla / al mundo salió la clave* (From our island / to the world came the *clave*)—the work may appear an almost romantic homage to

the Cuban *timba* salsa, which has developed in relative isolation from cognate forms elsewhere. While exploring this history, Zink Yi focuses on how the body both experiences and expresses a musical idiom. Playing a salsa through the body of its composer is an attempt not to individualize a collective practice but to capture moments of transition—from inside and outside. As the salsa moves from Zink Yi's lyrics to Varela Poey's composition, it passes from a text to music and through several body parts. Of course, one must add the many bodies that carried on the salsa tradition and then consider paths from Africa to the Americas along with the histories of slavery, colonization, and even socialism. In Zink Yi's work, the body emerges as a highly adept interpreter in a Babel of musical—and cultural—references, capable of picking up a tune with the ears, mimicking it with the fingers, and using it to move the feet. Indeed, Zink Yi seems to underscore the distances this cultural form has traveled by separating the projections; since all the screens cannot be seen from one position, the spectator must move to see them and thus embodies the *clave* as displacement. Here, technology is used not merely as a recording device but as a means of making bodies move—contrary to video's promise to transport the sights of the world so that viewers can stay put.

Ultimately, Zink Yi captures a tension between written and oral cultures and raises a troubling question: Is the body archive indispensable or pathological? Of course, Freud saw hysterics as pathological interpreters, capable of translating their traumas into any body part and shifting their symptoms around without missing a beat.

Ironically, the "talking cure," however efficacious for the hysteric, would render oral cultures mute, because they have only the body to record and transmit history. Literate cultures can afford to silence their bodies because they have books and computers. While literacy stands opposed to orality, music has prospered in both cultures. Moving from the lyric to the *clave*, Zink Yi's salsa plays their oppositions in creative—and symptomatic—ways.

—Jennifer Allen