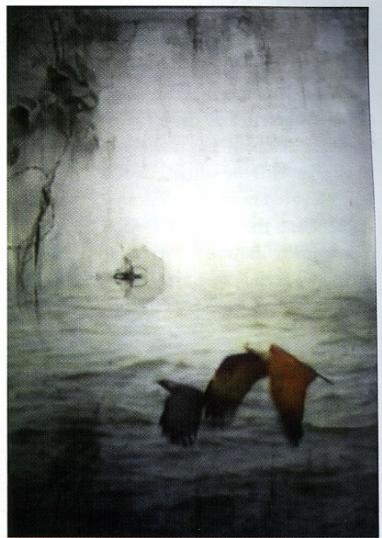




RANBIR KALEKA — *Man with Cockerel - 2* (2002) Video stills. Courtesy Bose Pacia Gallery, New York.



complexities of her dream, speaking in both Arabic and French, viewers navigate between the two languages and the English subtitles in order to follow the mother's persistent efforts to ascertain whether it was really a dream or a fantastical tale. Saneh's reactions to her mother's doubts range from humorous reassurance to a reprimanding tone. Her mother clearly finds the dream entertaining, despite her daughter's demanding an interpretation. She then articulates a Jungian response of a possible collective dream about her daughter's repressed thoughts concerning urban life and Lebanon's political quagmire, which the artist is experiencing in actuality.

After providing her analysis, the mother bursts out laughing and demands a cigarette break. Her spirited character, in contrast to Saneh's meticulous storytelling, demonstrates a reversal of the parent-child roles. Here, it is the daughter who entertains her mother with her vivid imagination in a tale that leaves both mother and viewers puzzled as to whether the dream actually ever took place or is just a fantastical tale conjured up by the artist in sync with her theatrical vocation. ■



LINA SANEH — *I Had a Dream, Mom* (2006) Video stills. Courtesy the artist.

NEW YORK

Ranbir Kaleka: Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage - 1

BOSE PACIA GALLERY

BETH CITRON

At first glance, the three works in "Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage - 1" could be mistaken for exquisite oil-on-canvas paintings or straightforward examples of video art. In reality, Ranbir Kaleka's inventive installations straddle both mediums. The artist manipulates video to echo the sensation of softened realist paintings and often projects the resulting footage onto partially completed canvases mounted on the gallery walls. Trained in London as a painter, Kaleka (SEE AAP 57) subsequently forayed into multimedia. Although he continues to rely on many conventions of figuration and narrative painting, he frequently reworks his pieces years after their debuts.

Man Threading a Needle, conceived



in 1999 as Kaleka's first multimedia installation, begins with a partially painted canvas portraying a close-up of a man squinting in concentration. A slow-moving video is projected onto the canvas, showing his hands shifting with the needle buried in them. The abstract background deliberately and meticulously morphs with each frustration as he ultimately fails to thread the needle. The video has a holographic quality, as subtle flickers of light bring the painting to life. Kaleka has stated that the man represented is the local carpenter who stretches his canvases, a reference that draws attention to the artist's subversion of demarcated mediums.

Kaleka's most frequently seen video, *Man with Cockerel - 2* (2004), was projected onto a translucent screen hung from the ceiling so that the viewer could experience the video from both front and back. Set in a gentle pond, the video shows a man capturing a cockerel, only to have both figures fade out sequentially, escape and reappear again. The pond acts as a central horizon line, creating a mirror effect on its surface that doubles much of the work's imagery and enriches the overall visual effect. Though strictly a video work, *Man with Cockerel* displays delicate painterly details executed with sublimity as Kaleka renders the figures with refined, precise lines and limits the narrative to deliberate movements. This creates structured compositions reminiscent of the pictorial space of painting.

Somewhat disappointingly, the title work, *Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage - 1* (2007) does not extend the technical or illusory achievements of the earlier two works. In this video projected onto canvas, a man is seated in the foreground with a

milk jug that fills and empties as passing episodes of his life are portrayed in the background hall. The video is projected so that it demands that the viewer stands across from it nearly the length of the gallery, a distance that makes it difficult to engage with the work. His sensitive, multi-layered work requires an installation as precise as the imagery itself. A related, follow-up exhibition is forthcoming, and viewers can hope for canvases as rich and ruminative as Kaleka's videos. ■

NEW YORK

Laleh Khorramian: I Without End

SALON 94 FREEMANS

MURTAZA VALI

Serendipity lies at the heart of Laleh Khorramian's varied practice, which includes painting, drawing and animating. The Tehran-born artist first paints in oils and ink on glass and then carefully transfers the image to non-porous paper to create monoprints. The outcomes are unpredictable, and the resulting abstractions have densely textured and mottled surfaces that suggest surrealistic, underground worlds. After identifying pictorially suggestive passages of paint and adding details by hand, Khorramian uses the prints as settings and raw materials for her animated odysseys. In "I Without End," her second solo show at Salon 94 Freemans, Khorramian continued to mine the potential of her signature technique while fruitfully, fearlessly and patiently allowing

accidental occurrence to guide her.

Some Comments On Empty And Full (2008), a six-foot-tall relief collaged together from monoprints, extends Khorramian's images into space. With a palette of blacks, browns and ochres, its vertical orientation and amassed craggy rock formations suggest landscapes encountered in both Chinese ink painting and Persian miniatures. Embedded within the cavernous networks, scratched-in details look like prehistoric paintings, while occasional opaque patches filled with illegible scribbles resemble the graffiti one encounters in a city's subterranean spaces.

A comparable equipoise between chance and control guides the exhibition's centerpiece. The three-channel video *I Without End* (2008) is the third of five planned stop-motion animations, each structured around the primal elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether. In the video, Khorramian stages a series of beautifully lit erotic encounters between pairs of human figures cut out of orange peels, their fluid contours and natural curl recalling the mannered figuration of Persian miniatures. The peels' surface texture evokes skin, while the simple androgynous figures allow these intimate moments to be read as both universal and mythic. The scenes unfold in a dollhouse interior of weathered walls punctuated with radiant stained glass, a romantic refuge floating beyond reality, history and time.

Accompanied by a low drone that suggests space flight, the video opens with abstracted close-ups that resemble a glowing sun or a molten lava flow. The images set the mood; less the frisson of adolescent passion than the slow, deep

burn of mature love. Somewhat paradoxically, it is the peels' gradual decay that animates the figures. They curl towards and cradle each other, embracing tenderly but awkwardly, with movements that are measured but unexpected. Arching their backs they thrust against each other only to whither away, as ecstasy eventually leads to a desiccated death. Khorramian's startling film pulses with the sort of melancholic eroticism described by French archivist-philosopher Georges Bataille and the encounters captured embody the many nuances of *la petite mort*.

Khorramian's earlier videos followed their named protagonists on epic, open-ended adventures. In contrast, *I Without End*, as its first-person title suggests, is a self-contained soliloquy, an existential meditation on the textures of intimacy and the transience of life and love. ■

NEW YORK

Ardesir Mohassess: Art and Satire in Iran

ASIA SOCIETY

MAYMANAH FARHAT

Ardesir Mohassess' first American retrospective provided a startling look into a current of dissent that has traversed Iranian art and culture throughout its numerous political upheavals and ever-shifting modern social landscape. Curated by artists Shirin Neshat and Nicky Nodjoumi and divided into two periods of the artist's work, 1976-1979 and 1980-2000, the exhibition presented nearly 70 black ink-on-paper drawings. Although it is evident that Ardesir, who has lived in New York for the past three decades, has taken inspiration from the rich details of Iranian miniature paintings, the works' satirical elements and political overtones—such as the caricatures of tyrannical leaders and the vivid renderings of tragic imagery—recall formative Western artists such as Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya.

Taken from the series "Life in Iran," the drawings that comprised the first section of the exhibition are bold and arresting. In *The men bent in prayer to God and the government airplanes arrived* (1977), two dozen men lying face down in prayer are shown dead, having been shot by a crude warplane flying overhead. Soldiers with machine guns sit facing forward in the airplane, indifferent to their victims. The warplane is dilapidated and bulky, its massive form clumsily shaped, yet each element is precisely outlined. In contrast, the men below are rendered with fine



LALEH KHOARAMIAN — *I Without End* (2008) Video still. Courtesy Salon 94 Freemans, New York.