

it is difficult to discern which body part you are looking at or whom it belongs to. These compositions create enigmatic, exquisite bodies of their own. Although Dasgupta's explicitly sexual works are somewhat sensational by virtue of their content, they are not lurid or tawdry; in fact, they might even have some of the finesse and grace of French films when it comes to portraying sexuality.

Dasgupta also adroitly explores the darker and mortal aspect of the body and one of the most memorable images is of a body covered in a white sheet with its motionless feet sticking out. Is this a dead person on a bed or someone sleeping? The disturbing photograph provides no answers. Another great work is a close-up of a foot with its lines and spots clearly perceptible, the wear and tear on the foot a grim reminder of the inevitable decline of the body.

If the body is the protagonist of the show, the other main characters are white sheets and pillows, which, like the body, expressively convey a range of moods and emotions. In the photograph of the female hand touching intimate parts hidden by a sheet, the swelling material is like a seductive tease or protector of secrets, and in the picture of the man wrapped in a sheet, the fabric has an ominous, shroud-like quality.

Although the show is generally a good one, there are moments when Dasgupta, who also works as a fashion photographer, seems to transport the skills required to create the slick and posed pictures demanded in the fashion world to this body of work, which is unfortunate. For instance, the photograph of a good-looking, well-built man—lying naked on a bed with a big erection while he is holding a cigarette in his right

hand and gazing sultrily at the camera—belongs more in a racier version of *Vogue* than in this show.

Priya Malhotra

Ranbir Kaleka at Bose Pacia

In an art world filled with numerous hybrids of medium and material, Ranbir Kaleka, a well-regarded Indian artist who has participated in several international exhibitions including the *2005 Venice Biennale*, stands out because he creates unique and mesmerizing entities that are much more than just clever blends of painting and video. In two of the three works in this show, video projections animate the immobile surface of a painted canvas, livening it up with motion, sound, and additional imagery. At the beginning of *Man Threading a Needle*, you see a black-and-white painting of an older, working-class man trying to thread a needle, and then, slowly, the filmed image of the same man is beamed onto his painted form, and his skin acquires color, he stirs, and moving images of things like water and hands start to perk up the previously still background. Similarly, in *Fables from the House of Ibaan: Stage 1*, a painted canvas of a man seated at a table in his home appears at the start: a few moments later, he becomes animated and blinks, the candles inside the colored candleholders on the table flicker, and his wife appears and fills the jug in front of him with milk.

All this, of course, is very intriguing. But Kaleka, who ingeniously maneuvers painting and video to dislodge your suspension of disbelief and reveal the construction of his illusions, makes it even more interesting. In the middle of *Fables from the House of Ibaan: Stage 1*, the filmed persona of the main character gets up and takes the animated jug of milk with him, leaving behind his and the empty jug's painted forms. The filmed man departs from the scene but the projector continues to shower different

images such as a child, a fire, and a door opening around the painted man in a fascinating juxtaposition of still and moving images. Towards the end of *Man Threading a Needle*, the filmed man freezes into a black-and-white painted form and seems to be in a train as moving semi-abstract images of a landscape pass by, and then, at the very end, the video completely dies down and all you see is the immobile painting.

The narrative in Kaleka's works might be hard to follow, but that doesn't take away from the fact that they are serenely surreal and imbued with a mystery so exquisite that you wouldn't want to uncover it. Time moves languorously and dreamily in the show, lulling the viewer into a meditative state where the videos, the longest of which is just under six minutes, seem very lengthy. Yet, because images nimbly flutter in and out of them, they also feel very ephemeral, and one of the most captivating qualities about the works is this dual sense of time.

The most poetic of the show's three works is *Man With Cockerel*, a video projected onto a sheet of suspended Plexiglas that resembles a hanging scroll. There is no painting in this piece, but it is very painterly, bringing to mind traditional Chinese paintings because of its scroll-like display, predominantly black-and-white tones, and fluid fineness. The work, as the title suggests, features a man in a water body holding a cockerel that routinely tries to escape. This image repeatedly appears and disappears. Also, a heron walks into the water, a boat goes by, and, to add some color to the black-and-white scene, a multi-hued bird flies above and cobalt blue thunder bursts fleetingly from the sky. The result is a wonderfully atmospheric, completely eccentric and utterly hypnotic piece of art, and a triumphant bringing together of the painterly and the cinematic by Kaleka.

Priya Malhotra



Ranbir Kaleka, *Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage-1*, 2007-2008, single-channel video projection with sound on 45 x 60 inch painting, acrylic on canvas, edition of 3. Courtesy of Bose Pacia, New York.