

Another fantastic show by a well-known artist was Punjabi-born Ranbir Kaleka's marriage-transmutation really-of painting and video at Bose Pacia gallery. In *Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage 1*, a painting hung on the wall with a video projected onto it; Kaleka created a living tableau of a man sitting, contemplating life at his table while three candles of red, yellow, and blue flicker occasionally at his side. A house's life passes behind him as he thinks, creating a space between real world and allegorical presence. In a jolt to the viewer the man then gets up: the stilled image suddenly moves (in the video) while continuing to sit where he always has (in the painting). He comes and goes during various events of his lifetime, then sits again for a long time, until one is comfortably sure he is a fiction, an allegory, a stand-in admonishing that "this is not real, but it could have been, it could be."

Watching the work creates a sense of uneasiness, but also presents an exciting defense of painting: of its irreplaceability and relevance as an art medium. When asked for his definition of painting, Kaleka replied, "The mark can become a body or a bird or an evocative surface. It doesn't hide the fact that it is an artifact, it is an invention. Painting is aware of its thingness. What excites me is the magic that a mark has to become things."

Kaleka's methodology was not enough to make the piece this good, however. Rather, it was the existential coupling of painting/video to contemplation/action, paralleling the idea that one participates or doesn't in his own life: as painting provides the opportunity of a long gaze, a time-frozen contemplation, it is action, the movement of the video, that creates the life worth contemplating. Each alone cannot a life make. And then, as any great piece of work is liable to do, the mind believes a reality it did not know existed.

—by **Alexander Boldizar and Michelle Swayne**

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