

EGO

Fables from the House of Ibaan

By Krishna Purohit

The first part of Ranbir Kaleka's exhibition Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage 1 at Bose Pacia is a careful negotiation between the precision of the waking world and the fluid quality of dreams. His mixed media installations utilize canvas and video projections to create surreal world in which a single moment becomes an epic.

The show features three works, which vary in their cinematic range and complexity. From the cryptic "Man with Cockerel -2" to the highly involved "Fables from the House of Ibaan: stage 1," Kaleka delivers a narrative trio that breaks the threshold between art and its audience.

The exhibit's namesake is a large installation, which features a man pensively seated at a table. Flanked only by a milk jug and votive candleholders, the static image serves as the front piece for a projected film. The central scene unfolds in an airy hallway amidst the easy domesticity of a central family unit. The son runs in and out of the plane, as the mother carefully refills the symbolic glass pitcher. This sense of comfort is quickly tempered by Kaleka's deft handling of time. The artist disassembles and reassembles the viewer's sense of space by playing with the concept of indoor versus outdoor. Also, his rich attention to detail underscores the work's sublime quality and transports the viewer into a suspended realm.

Initially named "The Jug" and created for the Khushii's India on Canvas 2007 fundraiser, the work draws its influences from the minutiae of daily life.

"It was formed by the rhythms of the house," Kaleka said in an interview with Barbara London at Bose Pacia. "Also, because so little happened, everything was very acute."

In a similar vein, He Was a Good Man dismantles the boundaries further. Built off a former piece titled Man Threading Needle, the

principal act unfolds heedless of world moving behind it. Ultimately, the industrious threader departs for his “final journey” and slowly solidifies from a moving figure to grisaille. Kaleka creates a self-reflective work that encompasses art and audience, through superimposed shadow figures that dismissively comment on the man’s portrait. The work’s wry tone tests the conventional methods of studying art and life. The surprising sensation of the brain shifting gears to accommodate a moving man and then image is almost palpable when looking at the piece.

Kaleka’s directorial ability to slow down the passage of time and readjust modes of thinking is the key to his art.

“His work is interesting,” Rebecca Davis Associate Director of Bose Pacia explains. “Instead of his video being inspired by video, it is inspired by cinema. The way he tells stories draws you in.”

By freely employing cinematic touches, the artist invites the viewer to come in and experience the entire weight of a single moment in minutes. Black and white shots leave behind a surprising sense of nostalgia, given the work’s short duration. A la film noir, large shadows and focused light mark his exhibit.

The overall effect is akin to seeing a silent film and simultaneously attempting to argue Plato. The exhibition challenges the viewer to process its multi-layered visual information and then reach beyond it for enigmatic implications.’

The second part of Kaleka’s exhibit at Bose Pacia opens September 2008 and will feature paintings by the artist.

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