

Art in America

December 2000

Habib Kheradyar at Pierogi 2000

Habib Kheradyar, a 40-year-old artist from Los Angeles, achieves complex visual effects through ingeniously simple means. For this exhibition, with little more than fabric, wire and five slide projectors, he created a cast of looming characters—apparitions, you might call them—that lingered in the mind long after one left the gallery.

Hanging near the entrance to the show, a single abstract wall piece acted like a signpost, at least in terms of process, for what lay beyond. *Untitled (Mauve and Gray)* consists of two flat panels, each covered in sheer fabric of the titular colors and implanted with a single bent wire. The wires stretch the fabric so taut as to create rippling moiré-like patterns that seem to pulsate and glow, depending on the light and the viewer's position. A bit decorative, perhaps, but not merely so: Kheradyar effectively imitates modernist painting here, and he doesn't even dirty a brush.

The main attraction was the gallery's darkened central space, where five large panels, similarly stretched with colored fabric, were placed around the room. Here Kheradyar made his first foray into figuration, simply by projecting a single human image onto each panel. These life-size "portraits" also shimmered with moiré effects, now taking on the look of spirit auras or visual equivalents of the subject's personal energy.

Kheradyar chose to depict not just anyone, but art collectors based in L.A. (The artist runs the L.A. gallery Post.) Titling each work with a collector's name, he dubbed the ensemble "L.A. Art Court," suggesting a sort of new breed of court painting. Still, if the artist intended the piece as an homage, it seemed a strange one. Viewers could walk around the room and inspect these folks, but to meet them face-to-face meant stepping between the slide projector and the fabric panel. At a certain distance from the wall, the viewer's shadow completely obscured the collector's image, and the nameless and faceless gallery-goer became the subject of the picture.

Surrounded by Kheradyar's shifting, hypnotic effects, we might well ask if these portraits aren't also fun-house mirror

reflections of ourselves. Are we standing, confident and relaxed like *Alan Power* (collector of emerging artists' work), or lost in thought like *Clyde Beswick* (an early supporter of Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy)? There's something to be said for making patrons, who usually reap the end products of an artist's effort, into a

kind of raw material—acted upon (and altered) not only by the artist but by viewers themselves. Kheradyar implies that the gaps among all our roles in this art-world game may be smaller than we imagine, and that the patterns that surround us can constantly dissolve and change.

—Sarah Schmerler

Habib Kheradyar: Installation view of exhibition, showing slide projections on fabric, 2000; at Pierogi 2000.

