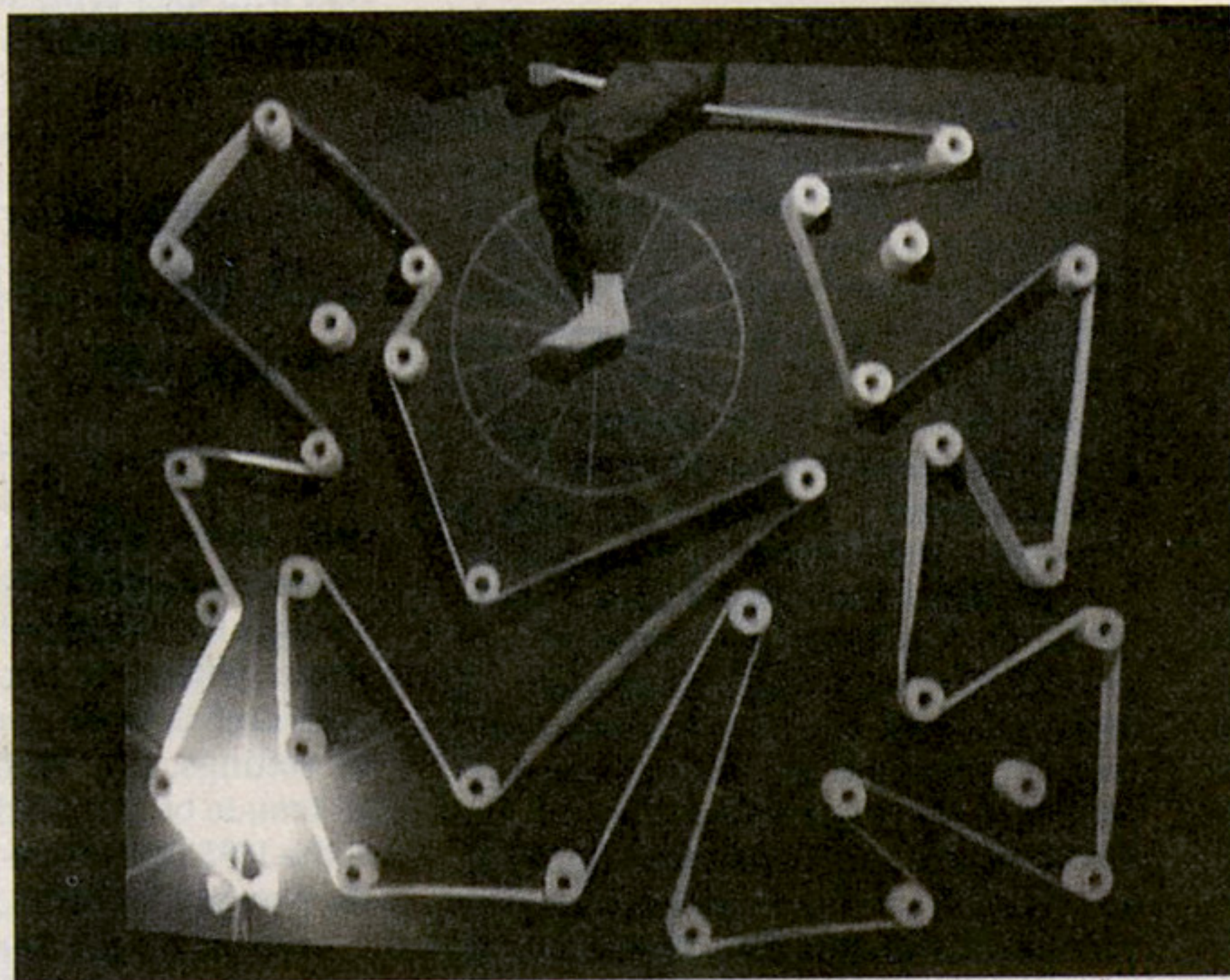


Art in Review



BARBAD GOLSHIRI/THOMAS ERBEN GALLERY

Pedal power: Barbad Golshiri's video "Jxalq," part of an exhibition at Thomas Erben featuring contemporary Iranian artists.

'Looped and Layered'

A Selection of Contemporary Art From Tehran

Thomas Erben Gallery
526 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through next Friday

The timing is right for this exhibition and the several others in the city featuring work by contemporary Iranian artists. Erben doesn't pretend to supply more than a sampling, but it's a savory and varied one, fairly discreet in its political commentary and calculated exoticisms, though there's some of each.

Siamak Filizadeh ornaments digital prints of contemporary fig-

ures with exquisitely colored figures from miniature painting. Wrestlers in a video by Sadegh Tirafkan seem, as usual in this artist's work, locked in some archaic ritual. A sardonic painting from Khosrow Hassanzadeh's "Guys in the Hood" series depicts the artist's friends and family in the style familiar from government murals of Iran-Iraq war martyrs. A woman wearing a head scarf and smoking a cigarette in Amirali Ghasemi's digital "Coffee House Series" has the flesh of her exposed arms and face — protectively? censoriously? — whited out.

No image of the body feels more politically loaded, though, than an amazing photomontage by Ramin Haerizadeh, who was born in 1975. Part of his "Men of Allah" series, the picture is made up of images of a partly nude, partly silk-swathed, extensively tattooed and bearded male figure that has been kaleidoscopically fragmented and recombined to form a pair of figures lounging around a cross-dressed harem.

Mr. Haerizadeh's brother, Rokni, three years younger, is an exuberant painter of half-abstract satirical scenes in a Surrealist mode. Drawings by the 20-something Mohsen Ahmadvand, of men in business suits and Safavid helmets, suggest roots in political cartooning, while the ink and watercolor drawings of the young Ala Dehghan, one of only two women in the show (the sculptor Bita Fayyazi is the other), look like dream versions of everyday life.

The same could be said of two small ink pieces by Farshid Maliki, an influential artist of an older generation who was Rokni Haerizadeh's teacher. His work has a genuine sweetness, as does Shahab Foutohi's video of a window-tapping, pay-attention-to-me cat. My favorite, though, is a video projection by Barbad Golshiri of what appears to be an impressive belted machine powered by a foot-pedaled wheel. In reality the contraption is made from unrolled toilet paper and does absolutely nothing but look original and intriguing. And that's enough. I hope to see more of Mr. Golshiri in New York soon.

HOLLAND COTTER

526 West 26th Street
4th floor
New York, NY 10001
www.thomaserben.com
info@thomaserben.com