

I Without End, 2008,
three-channel video projection,
6 min 35 sec, edition of 5.
Courtesy the artist
and Salon 94, New York



LALEH KHORRAMIAN: I WITHOUT END

SALON 94 FREEMANS, NEW YORK

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Skin. This is what Laleh Khorramian's seductive time-lapse video *I Without End* (2008) will make you think of, not least because skin is what is pictured there – although perhaps not the form or kind of skin that most immediately comes to mind. Working from an anecdote told by Louise Bourgeois about her father's sometimes cruel comparisons of the esteemed artist to the fragile, two-dimensional figures he'd carve from peels of fruit, Khorramian captures two orange peels cut into cartoonish but unmistakably intertwined human figures, whose desiccation over time results in a remarkable series of subtle, sensual and sexual movements. Of course, it is ironic that such amorous displays should unfold, quite literally, through surfaces that are waltzing towards decay, but skin (of any kind) has always demonstrated itself to be an organ bigger and more complex than our thoughts, or our senses, give it credit for.

But the organ of size and complexity to which *I Without End* points, I firmly believe – which is to say, that organ so often entered into metaphor as the 'skin of reality' – is film itself. Granted, Khorramian is working in digital video, to which one can object that film is really only either an aging relative or a fortunate pre-adaptation, but the time-lapse photography animating *I Without End* is without doubt a child of film's mechanical heritage, of that 'spatialisation of time', the consciousness of which only comes with holding a strip of celluloid impressed by 24 frames and realising that what you have in your hand is nothing more, and nothing less, than a second.

So it's all the more impressive that what Khorramian delivers is, at bottom, a skin flick. And this is not merely a comment on the content of the piece. What we are witness to is highly conventional cinematography, played out to the point of melodrama: the warm raking light, the close-ups, the sumptuous interior, the languid music. It could be a commercial for your latest impotence treatment, for all we know.

And the strange thing is that what saves *I Without End* from such a kitschy pump-and-dump scheme is exactly the stuff that nearly condemns it. Khorramian's grasp of the conventional is very acute. The scenes she constructs and the careful editing (not to mention the short running time) demonstrate a cautious awareness of her audience. Though staged, we don't feel set up. There is no 'gotcha' moment, just a thoughtful, well-executed and somewhat – for lack of a better word (but acknowledging its full semantic spectrum) – touching display. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*