

# Time Out

## New York

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Untitled (Presence)

### “Elad Lassry, Untitled (Presence)”

★★★★★

**The Kitchen**, through Oct 20 (see Chelsea)

Two handsome young men meet our gaze with half smiles in one of Elad Lassry’s latest photos, and questions abound. Are they lovers? Brothers? Friends? Sci-fi automatons in their weird matching uniforms? As it turns out, they are dancers, who, along with other professionals from American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet, took part in a three-

rather, it was how representational conventions differ between still and moving images. The results, seductive if somewhat ambiguous, echo through the exhibition here.

Lassry has carefully arranged the work in the gallery within a series of framed viewpoints, starting with a small archway at the entrance, and concluding with a wall topped by wavelike forms that allow glimpses of the photographs beyond. The effect suggests a combination of installation and theater. A film featuring jittery, dancing wooden

partial fragments of reality. Old headshots of actors (a sympathetic clown, an overenthusiastic starlet) as well as photos of flowery porcelain are interesting enough, but they lack the tension between the real and represented that gives the portraits of performers their charge.

Lassry’s dance consisted of carefully choreographed moments that seemed too fleeting to fully contemplate, despite repeated gestures meant to slow the pace down. And while his newfound

### Michael Rakowitz, *The Breakup*

★★★★★

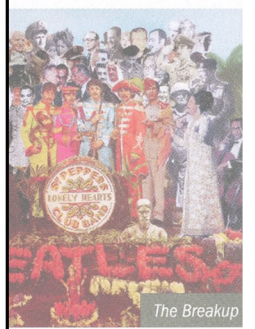
**Lombard Freid Projects**, through Oct 17 (see Chelsea)

You might not expect the saga of the Beatles to cast a light on the troubled history of the Middle East, but Michael Rakowitz’s quirky, brilliant installation (based on a 2010 radio broadcast by the artist in Ramallah on the West Bank) does exactly that. That program serves as the soundtrack for *The Breakup*, which centers on four vitrines containing suggestively juxtaposed ephemera. A vintage map of a divided Jerusalem sits next to a novelty map of the Beatles’ Liverpool; a bit of stone from the Western Wall is paired with a piece of brick from the Cavern Club. A Beatles fan-club Christmas newsletter from 1967 is placed next to a Christmas card from the same year, sent by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the former president of Egypt.

Similarly, four colorfully silk-lined shadow boxes displaying Middle Eastern military medals abstractly evoke the John, Paul, George and Ringo on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper’s*. Handwritten notations on the glass equate the Fab Four’s split with the dissolution of the United Arab Republic, the short-lived union between Egypt and Syria.

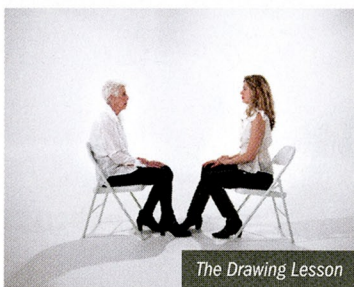
The fanlike obsession with trivia verges on conspiracy theory, but it all makes a kind of manic

itty rock stars behaving feign nations, and vice Rakowitz alludes to present-ns dashed by internecine s with a video that cuts Beatles’ 1969 concert Abbey Road recording footage of a Palestinian ring Beatles covers on a rooftop. The music toward the Dome of n a way that’s both d heartbreaking. R. Wolin



The Breakup

### Alix Pearlstein, “The Drawing Lesson”



The Drawing Lesson

★★★★★

**On Stellar Rays**, through Oct 21 (see Lower East Side)

Two videos on adjacent walls dominate Alix Pearlstein’s current exhibit. In both *Moves in the Field* and *The*

*Drawing Lesson*, performers dressed in black and white silently interact against white backdrops. The term *moves in the field* refers to figure skating choreography, and in the eponymous piece, the actors mill around without touching each other in a way that’s random yet mesmerizing. The work’s oppositional psychology is reflected not only in the actors themselves—who are black and white, old and young, male and female—but also in the manner in which they abruptly shift between attraction and avoidance. At one point, a woman gazes into the face of another as the latter looks away. The wish to connect is palpable, and the failure to do so seems inevitable—not sad, really, just a fact of life.

*The Drawing Lesson* takes its title from a 1734 painting by Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, and its austere setup—actors sitting stiffly in white chairs in a white room—belies a significantly warmer tone. The camera circles the players steadily, repetitively, like an animal stalking its prey. As they go from a group of four to a group of three, then two and, finally, just one, the actors watch each other intently until the camera catches their eyes and they begin to follow it as it cycles around. As faces come fully into view, traces of pleading or longing become subtly apparent. The desire to be seen, to be known, as well as to see and to know, permeates the otherwise empty room, filling it with pathos and beauty.—Jennifer Coates