

# Planting New Roots

Contemporary Iranian Art in the 21st Century



Farideh Lashai



Mohammad H Emad



Samira Alikhanzadeh



Reza Lavasani

Dar Al-Funoon Gallery Kuwait

January 5 -17, 2008



# C u r a t o r ' s   N o t e

**Planting New Roots: Contemporary Iranian Art in the 21st-Century**  
Politically and historically, Iran has varying evocations for the world. Culturally and artistically, it usually recalls the floral divans of its poets, and the miniatures, calligraphy and turquoise mosaics of its art and architecture. Contemporary Iranian art, however, has reached beyond these moulds, laying its groundwork in various styles and phenomena such as Abstract Expressionism, Conceptualism, or global themes. The results are uniquely modern works.

This exhibition presents the work of four contemporary Iranian artists. Their influences—although rooted in their indigenous cultures—are universally global concerns. Their work severs ties with its past, and categorically refuses labels of Eastern or Western art.

Farideh Lashai's landscapes, though nostalgic whispers of her native Gilan, are deeply rooted in "the European tradition of romantic landscape painting and the Post-Impressionist emphasis on the solidity of color."

Mohammad Hossein Emad's struggles with the discrepancies of a rapidly modernizing and synthetic era are transferred to his choice of materials: wood and metal represent tradition and modernity, their hollowed-out forms seeking compassion and conciliation with the world.

Samira Alikhanzadeh's conceptual use of found photographs of women and children, printed and overlaid with paint and mirror-work allude to the issues of existence, identity and time.

And Reza Lavasani's study of philosophy and mysticism has led him to his particular understanding of "man and his inner needs." He strives to bring peace and tranquility to humankind, forging universal symbols with the aim of drawing closer to the heart's truth and the mind's reality.

These artists transgress borders at a pace as rapid as the modernity and globalization which affects their works so deeply, and in which they plant their roots. It is my great pleasure to present their work at the Dar Al-Funoon Gallery, and I thank Lucia Topalian for her important role in promoting Middle Eastern art in the region.

Simindokht Dehghani  
J Manouchehri Art Exhibitions  
January, 2008





# R e z a L a v a s a n i

Born 1962, Tehran, Iran

**Education:** BA Fine Arts, Tehran University

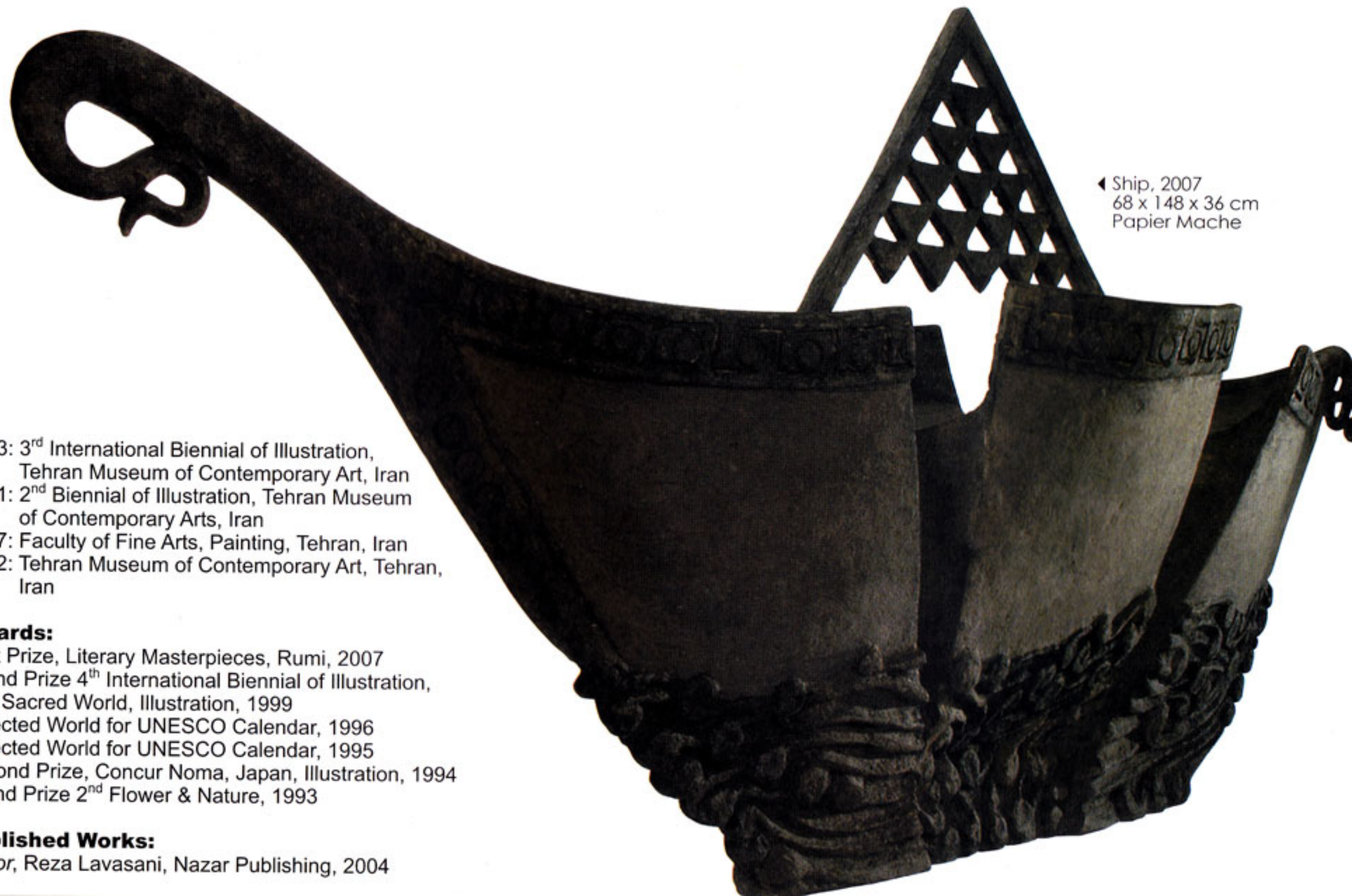
**Select Solo Exhibitions:**

2007: Assar Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2006: Tarrahan Azad Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2005: Mah Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2004: Assar Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2003: Elahe Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2003: Iranian Artists' Forum, Tehran, Iran  
2002: Aria Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2001: Barg Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2001: Tarahan Azad Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
1999: Barg Gallery, Painting & Sculpture, Tehran, Iran  
1994: Aria Gallery, Tehran, Iran

**Select Group Exhibitions:**

2007: Assar Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2007: Nar Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
2007: Numa, Japan  
2006: Bangladesh Biennale, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
2006: Mexico Art Academy, Mexico City, Mexico  
2005: Bratislava Biennale  
1999: 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Graphic Design, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran  
1999: 4<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of Illustration, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran  
1999: 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial of Sculpture, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran  
1997: 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Graphic, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran  
1994: Concur Noma, Tokyo, Japan





◀ Ship, 2007  
68 x 148 x 36 cm  
Papier Mache

1993: 3<sup>rd</sup> International Biennial of Illustration,  
Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran  
1991: 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial of Illustration, Tehran Museum  
of Contemporary Arts, Iran  
1987: Faculty of Fine Arts, Painting, Tehran, Iran  
1982: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran,  
Iran

**Awards:**

First Prize, Literary Masterpieces, Rumi, 2007  
Grand Prize 4<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of Illustration,  
The Sacred World, Illustration, 1999  
Selected World for UNESCO Calendar, 1996  
Selected World for UNESCO Calendar, 1995  
Second Prize, Concur Noma, Japan, Illustration, 1994  
Grand Prize 2<sup>nd</sup> Flower & Nature, 1993

**Published Works:**

*Mirror*, Reza Lavasani, Nazar Publishing, 2004





◀ Icarus, 2007  
51 x 43 x 20 cm  
Papier Mache



The world is changing far too rapidly for Reza Lavasani. In response he is reintroducing us to universal symbols and mythological legends: papier-mâché creations made to resemble ancient sculptures and refer to the past. He uses paper, his material of choice in its recycled form to recreate ancient symbols. This contrast in material and time is an important factor in Lavasani's work; his sculptures appear to be heavy and of stone when they are in fact light and of paper, they appear to be ancient artifacts when they are new and updated versions of antiquated signs, symbols and ethereal forms.

Trilogy, 2006 ▶  
60 x 41 x 13 cm  
Papier Mache







Mythical Oud, 2006 ▶  
53 x 126 x 23 cm  
Papier Mache



With these forms, Lavasani goes to battle with the modern age; his weapons are forms humankind can identify with: women, horses, birds, heavenly musical instruments and triangles created in stony-like appearances. Historically these symbols have universal meanings and for Lavasani, they are also the manifestations of the human form in search of meaning.





The feminine represents sublimated desire and Divine Beauty. The horse, the noblest conquest of mankind, represents speed, dignity and the senses. It has a destiny intertwined with its rider passing from night and death to day and life overriding the discontinuity of our lives and deaths. Birds are the link between Heaven and Earth, representing the soul, angels and higher forms of being. In the Koran and in poetry, birds are used as symbols of the immortality of the soul. Musical instruments represent the means of touching the secret harmony of the world. Triangles, depending on their direction, have varying meanings, however the most common are the male and female states and fire and water.





Mythical Oud, 2006 ▶  
28 x 112 x 36 cm  
Papier Mache



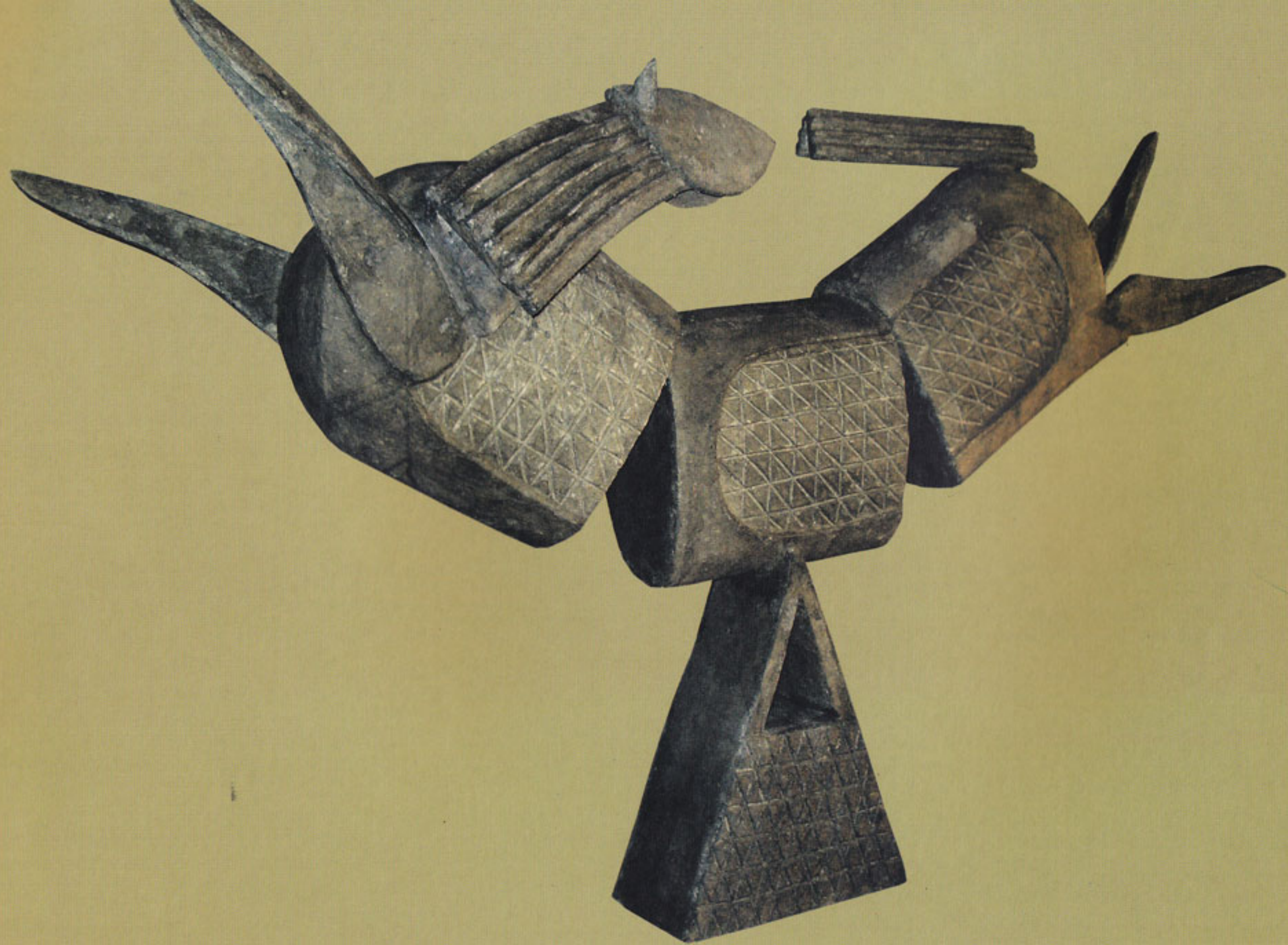


With such meanings and connotations, Lavasani engages in dialogue with viewers. His study of philosophy and mysticism has led him to his particular understanding of the concept of time, man and his inner needs. Mythology, sociology, religion and history have all had an influence in the development of his ideas and his art. He strives to present man with resources to be able to be at peace with himself and his surroundings. Modern life distances us from nature and reality; "reality and truth manifest themselves in the intellect and the heart and comprise the attributes which create mankind."

► Horse, 2007  
95 x 157 x 33 cm  
Papier Mache

◄ Lady and Her Horse, 2007  
64 x 96 x 25 cm  
Papier Mache









◀ Untitled, 2007  
140 x 80 cm  
Mixed Media on Canvas