

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

REZA DERAKSHANI

Silence of the Night

Sand Paintings

September 6 – October 6, 2012

Opening reception: Thursday, September 6, 6 to 8 pm



Reza Derakshani, *Peacock Throne*, 2012, Black sand and enamel on canvas,
80 x 70 in / 203 x 178 cm

New York (August 28, 2012) – Leila Heller is pleased to present *Silence of the Night*, a solo exhibition of 10 large-scale sand paintings plus an installation by the visual artist and musician Reza Derakshani, on view at Leila Heller Gallery, located at 568 West 25th Street, from September 6 through October 6, 2012. A catalogue, featuring an essay by Negar Azimi, Senior Editor of *Bidoun* magazine, will be published to accompany the show.

Reza Derakshani is internationally recognized and lauded for his fearless exploration of form and style. His works are known for their monumental scale, and their embodiment of poetry and lyricism, each cast in an ongoing array of materials that include oil, tar, gold and silver leaf, enamel, glitter, soil and sand. Inspired both by his cultural heritage and the international contemporary movements, Derakshani often highlights the beauty and the splendor as well as the sinister side of a politically tumultuous country.

Silence of the Night marks a significant turn for Derakshani. Rather than highlighting land and culture by using vibrant colors, lyrical imagery and words, the artist now employs a strict palette of mostly black and white, and applies limited mediums of sand, soil, and enamel. “These tableaux,” as Negar Azimi writes in the catalogue essay, “communicate a vast emptiness, a void, and even, in the darkest moments, death.” This new body of work acts as a memorial to the transience of nationhood and home. Persian Iconography-- roses, nightingales, the *Shiro o Korshid* (an ancient symbol of national dignity, power and light), the Peacock Throne, the map of Iran --rendered in black sand, act as an embodiment of mourning and as a commemoration of a land and culture that once was.

Azimi explains: “It was in 2010, after a trip into the Emirati desert, that Derakshani was again struck by sand’s simultaneous tangibility and ephemerality. It was literally everywhere and everything, but also in its infinite nature, frustratingly ungraspable. Experimenting with industrial-grade black sand grains in his studio some weeks later, he began to throw them onto canvases coated with paste, finding that some would stick, while the rest fell to the floor. Herein was a game of chance inflected with the logic of loss, of stripping down, of truth. Whatever sand would remain at the end of this process was inevitably revealing—and formed the basis of the pieces assembled here.”

Peacock Throne, 2012, resembles a shadow of a throne, looming like a dark ominous cloud. Sketched in its center is the outline of a skull embedded with remnants of a dome design. The Peacock Throne was known for its extravagance, beauty, and embodiment of cultural pride. However, in Derakshani’s work, the throne enshrouded with black sand and soil and embossed with a poisonous skull, is stripped of all vibrancy and any notion of livelihood, resembling the loss of this culture.

Reza Derakshani was born in Sangsar, in the northeast of Iran. He currently lives and works between the USA and the UAE. Derakshani studied visual arts both in Iran and the US. His work has been exhibited and collected worldwide.

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For more information, please contact Lauren Pollock at Lauren@leilahellergallery.com or call 212-249-7695.

Press Contact:

Ricky Lee, Ricky@leilahellergallery.com

Ally Mintz, Ally@leilahellergallery.com