

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

REZA DERAQSHANI

EMANATIONS

November 18, 2019 - March 8, 2020



Reza Derakshani, *Indigo Hunt*, Oil on Canvas, 120 x 200 cm, 47.24 x 78.74 in

Exhibiting in the UAE for the first time since 2013, Leila Heller is proud to present a semi-retrospective of Persian-American artist Reza Derakshani in “EMANATIONS,” including works from the artist's personal collection, the Hunting Series, and Garden Party Series. In his paintings, Derakshani recalls forgotten tales and symbols of Iran’s cultural heritage, at a time where traditions and practices are under threat and often outlawed. Through a rich iconography drawing from medieval Persian poetry, classical literature, miniature painting, and sacred architectural sites laden with meaning, Derakshani’s work celebrates both ornamentation and color fields, as the artist finds a space for figural representation in abstract aesthetics.

“EMANATIONS” marks Derakshani’s recent return from Russia after his retrospective at the State Russian Museum in St Petersburg, and immersion into the country’s visual landscape. With Russian culture and literature heavily incorporated into his early education, Reza Derakshani’s return is twofold, as the artist notes the parallels between Iran and Russia’s ornate and metaphorically heavy classical cultural backgrounds.

In the Hunting Series, Derakshani recalls ancient Persian manuscript paintings that depict the authoritative hunting scenes of the Royal Court. Decontextualized, and removed from intended prey or targets, the manipulated figures transcend narratives of power, hunting indefinitely as they blur into canvas and fade from memory. In the Garden Party series, Derakshani interprets traditional metaphors for heaven and the afterlife, where families communally gather and feast under tents in vivid and idyllic gardens.

Magic realism appear in the Derakshani’s work, as subtle manifestations of nostalgic and ambivalent reactions to exile and alienation. Growing up in Sangsar, in a nomadic family in the Iranian mountains, the artist was enveloped in folklore and the natural world from a young age that strongly imprinted his conscience. As an

I-87, Alserkal Avenue, PO Box 413991 Al Quoz 1, Dubai, UAE | Tel: +971 4 3216942 | www.LeilaHellerGallery.com

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

arts student of University of Tehran in the 1970s, he was able to access modern masterworks in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Now removed, works by masters of abstraction such as Francis Bacon, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock greatly informed Derakshani's practice. Moving to California to continue his studies at the Pasadena School of Art, Derakshani returned to Iran to teach at the University of Tehran, only to leave again in 1983.

Inserting subjectivity through expressive brushstrokes, while gracefully interweaving strong colors, textures, and luxurious metal paints, Derakshani's paintings often mimic poetry and music. For the artist, painting is a spiritual process that allows for a return to physicality and beauty, in a rejection of the irony that often permeates contemporary painting.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1952 in Sangsar, a small village in the North East of Iran, Reza Derakshani is a painter, musician and performance artist. Graduating from The University of Tehran in 1976, Derakshani continued his studies at Pasadena School of Art, going on to teach at the University of Tehran before leaving the country in 1986. Reza Derakshani's work is featured in many public art collections including the British Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the State Russian Museum; the Museum Gunzenhauser, Germany; the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and numerous private collections worldwide. Derakshani also performed as a musician at festivals such as the Brooklyn Museum and the Montreux Jazz Festival among others. He now spends his time in St Petersburg, Russia.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

Press Inquiries: For more information, images and prices, please contact clemence@leilahellergallery.com