

LEILA HELLER.

SORAYA SHARGHI

BEYOND THE REALM

March 4th - April 17th, 2021



Slay the Dragon, 2018, Acrylic and gold leaf on canvas, 44 x 78 in

NEW YORK, Thursday, March 4th — Leila Heller is pleased to announce *Beyond the Realm*, the solo exhibition of contemporary artist Soraya Sharghi. In a bold display of color and concept, Soraya's show looks to navigate the role of power in society, exploring themes regarding the function of icons.

What does an icon look like in the 21st-century? Sharghi answers this question with one answer: "Power. To me, they are powerful -- the battle to gain power, and to win it back once power is lost." Soraya achieves her vision through a meticulous process of reusing and recycling imagery, altering the visual foundation of her work until she is left with an original figure, steeped in history, and proudly nude. Unashamed in their femininity, uninhibited in their color, and immense in size, her figures are delicately placed in the center of the canvas, combating, with great success, their vivid, immensely detailed backgrounds.

Soraya showcases an appreciation for art history uncommon in much of contemporary art, where artists recall symbolism of the past to form a necessary dialogue within the context of the present. Her efforts underline the value of art as a medium crossing several cultural

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boundaries, bringing the notion of comparative mythology, or what Carl Jung once called “the collective unconscious” into the public forum of the gallery space.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Soraya Sharghi is an Iranian artist living and working in New York City. Sharghi creates works in diverse media, such as painting and sculpture. Her artistic aim is to create new myths and narratives using ancient mythology including Persian mythology, revolving around power. She does not see her process as emulating the scenery of these tales, but instead molds them to serve her purpose and creates extraordinary or supernatural beings. Sharghi collaborates across the history and myth and connects them with her today personal imaginary world, creating new stories with her new characters while personally reaching for a universal language that creates dialogues spanning different social and political contests. Sharghi holds a BFA in painting from Soore Art University in Tehran, and an MFA from San Francisco Art Institute in San Francisco, California. (After she graduated, she started teaching in SFAI public education. She taught studio classes with the subject of personal mythology in Painting and sculpture.)

She has received several awards and residences including MFA Fellowship from San Francisco Art Institute, the Murphy & Cadogan Contemporary Art Award, the Graduate Fellowship Alternate Award from Headlands Center for the Arts, finalist for Tournesol award and Blau Gold Fellowship. Residencies including The Post Contemporary and Brush Creek foundation for the Arts. Her work has shown locally and internationally such as CICA Contemporary Museum (Czong Institute for Contemporary Art) in Korea, Today Art Museum in China, MOAH Museum in Los Angeles, Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio, Andrea Schwartz Gallery and SOMArts in San Francisco, Aaran Gallery, Mah Gallery and Fair International Film Festival in Tehran, Iran among others. She will be a resident at the Philip Mill Foundation Residency this coming summer.

ABOUT LEILA HELLER 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.

For more information, images and prices, please contact ella@leilaheller.com