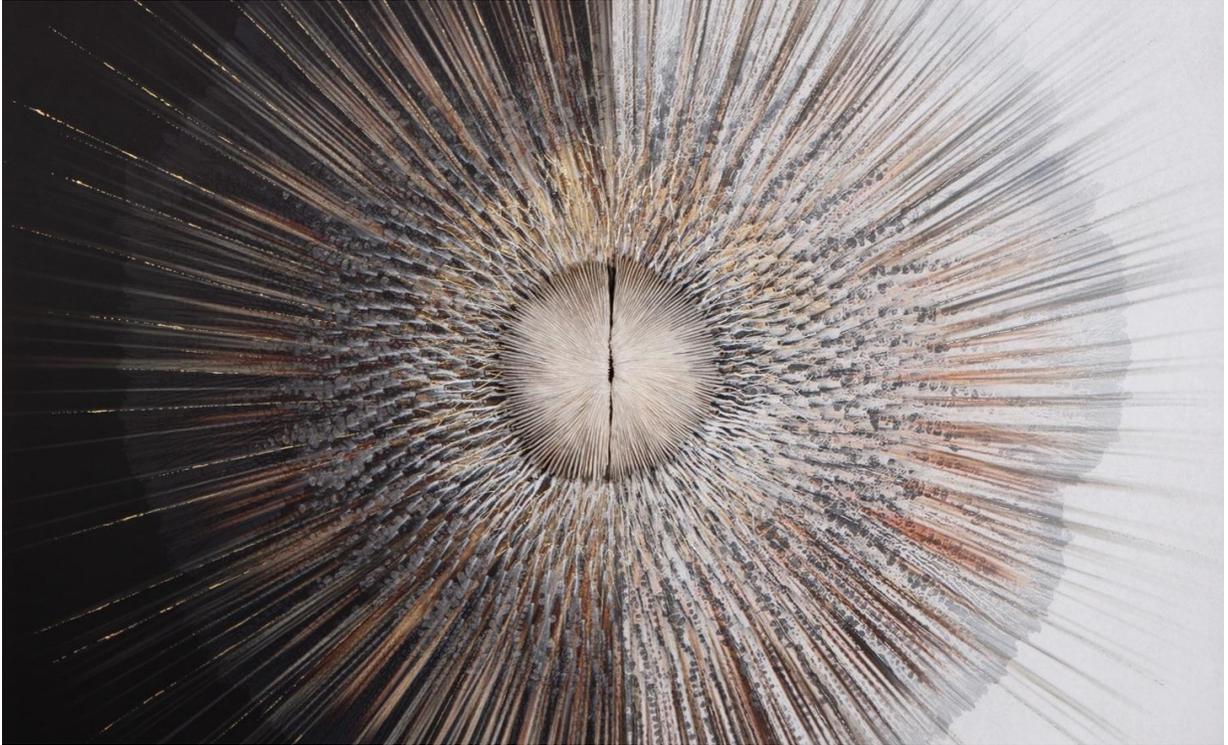


## LEILA HELLER.



New York, NY – Leila Heller is pleased to announce “Cosmic Dance” by Diaz & Hengst, on view in New York from June 8th to to July 21st. In this debut exhibition of Antonio Diaz and Stefan Hengst, two different mediums- ceramics and printed/painted imagery- are brought together in a series of large-scale installations.

Inspired by their long term relationship that spans over 27 years, the artist duo explore their correlation as artists for the first time in “Cosmic Dance”, an exhibition of recent collaborative works. The exhibition was initiated by Leila Heller after she visited the artist duo’s studio in Chelsea. Seeing their works for the first time in one space, she recognized an artistic dialogue happening between the two, an exchange the artists call  $1 + 1 = 3$ . The combining effect of two individuals who know each other well was coming together seamlessly through their art. The result is a sum greater than their separate effects.

In “Cosmic Dance”, various sized ceramics by Antonio Diaz and printed/painted imagery by Stefan Hengst are fused, blurring the distinction between 2D and 3D. Their work presents a hybrid holistic dimension, and is a visual exploration of their creativity, the relationship between the two, and the world at large. The works relate to all parts of the universe, and the artists’ place within it. It can be seen as an ongoing dance with life itself, hence the exhibition’s title.

The exhibition delves into the mystery of how, coming from very different places, they found each other in New York City. And then, just as tiny particles — atoms, molecules, electrons or photons — they impacted one another in the universe where they created their own ‘bubble of existence’. The artists see this as a process of constantly forming and reforming together. How they are held in a space for a given period of time, evolving and creating in an ever-changing moment, to form their own quantum entanglement and cosmic dance.

# LEILA HELLER.

*"The universe bursts into existence from life, not the other way around as we have been taught. For each life there is a universe, its own universe. We generate spheres of reality, individual bubbles of existence. Our planet is comprised of billions of spheres of reality, generated by each individual human..."* -Robert Lanza

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Antonio Diaz is a ceramic artist, working in New York City. Growing up in Barcelona, he was fascinated with shape and form, and expressions of sculpture emerged at a young age.

After 30 years in the craft of hair styling, as a form of sculpture, Diaz is proud to explore a new creative expression, marking a journey back to his original inspiration, and the allure that made him fall in love with sculpture all those years ago.

His ceramic pieces are the synthesis of a life-long relationship with the creative process. They stand as a testament to the journey Diaz takes with his art; the clay, the molecules, the hand-building all remain visible within the texture of each finished product. The esthetic is in the imperfection itself; in the fact that one sets out to create something perfect, but winds up with something even more beautiful.

Every sculpture is a different statement; a different process; a different experience. It's shapes and beauty in a living dynamic, first between the piece and the artist - then between the sculpture and the owner.

Because the clay has a mind of its own, Diaz likens each finished work to a collaborative constellation: part clay, part artist. Diaz works toward an immersive form of creativity with endless expressive potential, from conception to finished piece - ever-evolving and entirely unique.

As a graphic designer and artist, Stefan Hengst sees objects as shapes, lines, and forms with surfaces upon which to tell stories. Walls or objects can act like a second skin where we can project images and narratives: whether it is the stark white walls of an art gallery, or a weathered fresco — walls do talk. And when we listen and look past the exterior, we can translate the interior messages and reach a bigger audience.

His installations and murals function as a screen in which personalized ideas are projected and imprinted. Stefan is drawn to architectural and natural textures that invite the viewer to engage with the works. Three-dimensional textures and elements are often added to his work to make them dimensional experiences. It is the possibilities of adding various materials to his prints that lead him in new creative directions.

Hengst's work as a designer and artist spans more than 30 years. Dutch-born and raised, he lives and works in New York.

## 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 [ella@leilaheller.com](mailto:ella@leilaheller.com)