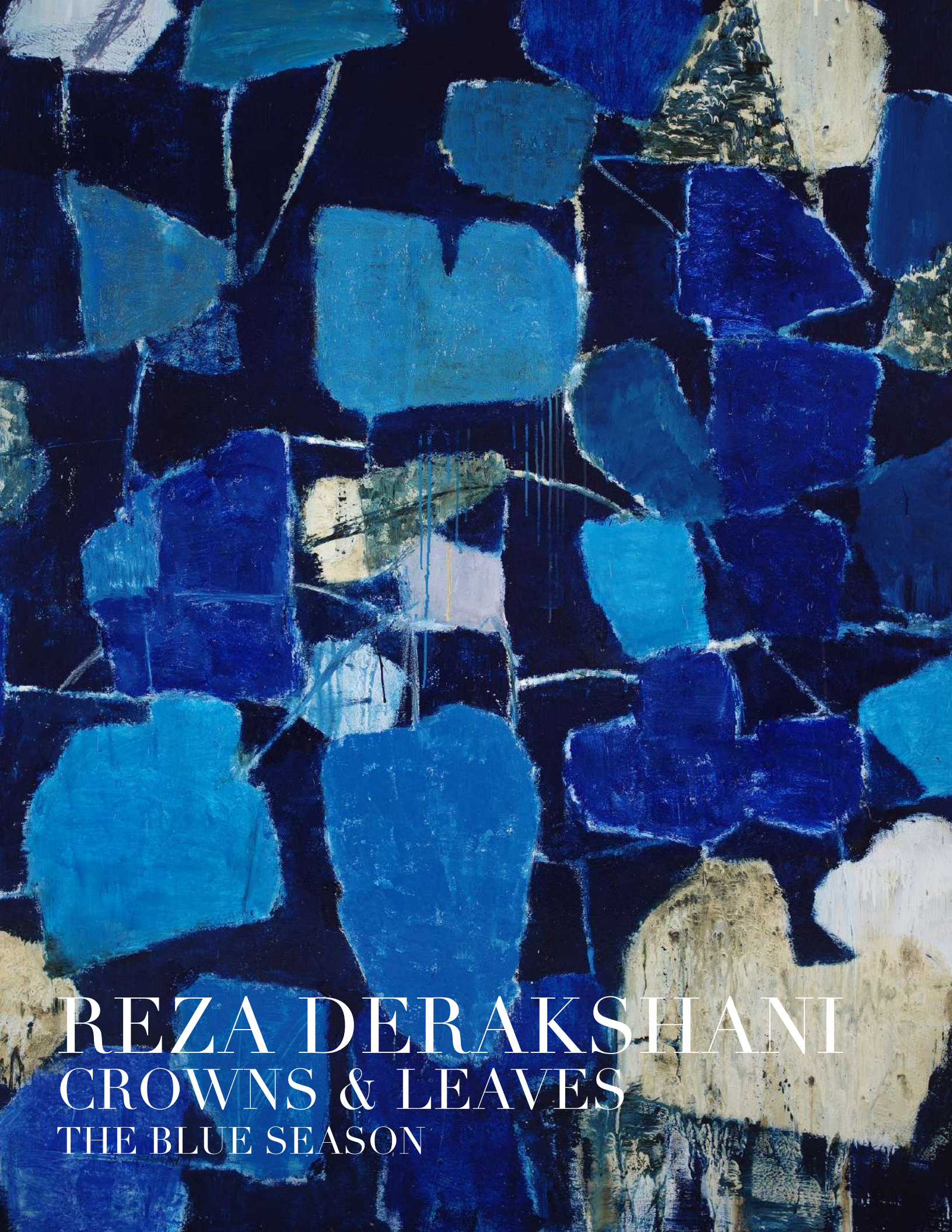




REZA DERAKSHANI
CROWNS & LEAVES
THE BLUE SEASON

Published on the occasion of the exhibition
Crowns & Leaves: The Blue Season
October 25 - December 5, 2025

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REZA DERAKSHANI

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THE BLUE SEASON

October 25 - December 5, 2025

Leila Heller Gallery presents Crowns & Leaves: The Blue Season, an exhibition of new paintings by Iranian-American artist Reza Derakshani. Marking his first solo show in New York in over five years, the exhibition gathers three major series: Day and Night / Fig Leaf, Rain / Day, and Crowns. Each is a meditation on memory, identity, and transcendence. Across these bodies of work, Derakshani channels his lifelong pursuit of a visual language where history and modernity are one. The color blue has a rich history in Persian culture and beyond, oftentimes representing tranquility, nobility and divinity. Blue also recalls the flow of the Caspian Sea and the towering presence of minaret rooftops. This exhibition explores the “Blue Season,” its associations, and invites us to look closer.

“Creating beauty is nothing less than the political screams we hear through art today [...] my main goal is to create work that is unique and timeless.”

Born in 1952 in Sangsar, a small village in northeastern Iran, Derakshani is a painter, poet, musician, and performance artist whose multidisciplinary background informs every stroke of his paintings. He studied at the University of Tehran and later at the Pasadena School of Art, eventually teaching in Tehran before leaving in the mid-1980s. His journey has taken him across continents (Italy, New York, and now between studios in Saint Petersburg, Texas, and Istanbul). Derakshani’s works are held in public collections including the British Museum, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

From early on, Derakshani sensed that his art must bridge worlds.

“Art has always been the most personal means of self-expression through both my abstract and representational works.”

In his paintings, Derakshani resurrects symbols and stories from Iran’s cultural fabric. Medieval poetry, classical literature, miniature painting and sacred architecture all appear visually and symbolically in his work and at a time when many of those traditions face suppression or erasure. Working in rich iconographic registers, he unites figural presence and abstract fields of color to create a space of emotional resonance and layered meaning.

In his Day and Night / Fig Leaf series, Derakshani engages dualities (light and darkness, presence and absence, paradise and exile) channeling both the ornament of Persian gardens and the ambiguity of a shared, lived experience. Though visually rich and ornamental, these paintings are deeply existential: expressing, in the artist's words, a full and often "ambiguous" view of life. His early exposure to Russian literature (steeped in metaphor and moral complexity) further informs his approach, bridging cultural traditions between East and West. This openness to influence is reflected in his resistance to being narrowly defined:

"I don't like to be categorised in a certain way. It's a big world. You don't want to define yourself too narrowly and get stuck."

In his Crown series, Derakshani addresses displacement, exile, and the shifting sands of identity. The recurring turtle motif evokes endurance and nomadic persistence; faint cartographic references to Iran link him to a homeland both cherished and transformed. Here, the collision of abstraction and figuration mirrors the disjointed, layered nature of memory.

"Merging the essence of my cultural heritage together with the multifaceted 20th century art, I tried to find my own language [...] where it bypassed my perceptions and stimulated the inner senses."

Throughout the exhibition, Derakshani's paintings start a dynamic dialogue between tradition and innovation, the personal and the collective, stillness and movement. In Crowns & Leaves: The Blue Season, painting transcends mere image-making. It becomes ritual, remembrance, and resistance. Derakshani invites us into a world where color, form, and symbol unite, and where every brushstroke reads like a whispered prayer and a bold statement at once.

A crown of sapphire,
soft as sighs
Woven with honor, bright as sunrise.
It's quiet weight, A whispered pride,
forever.

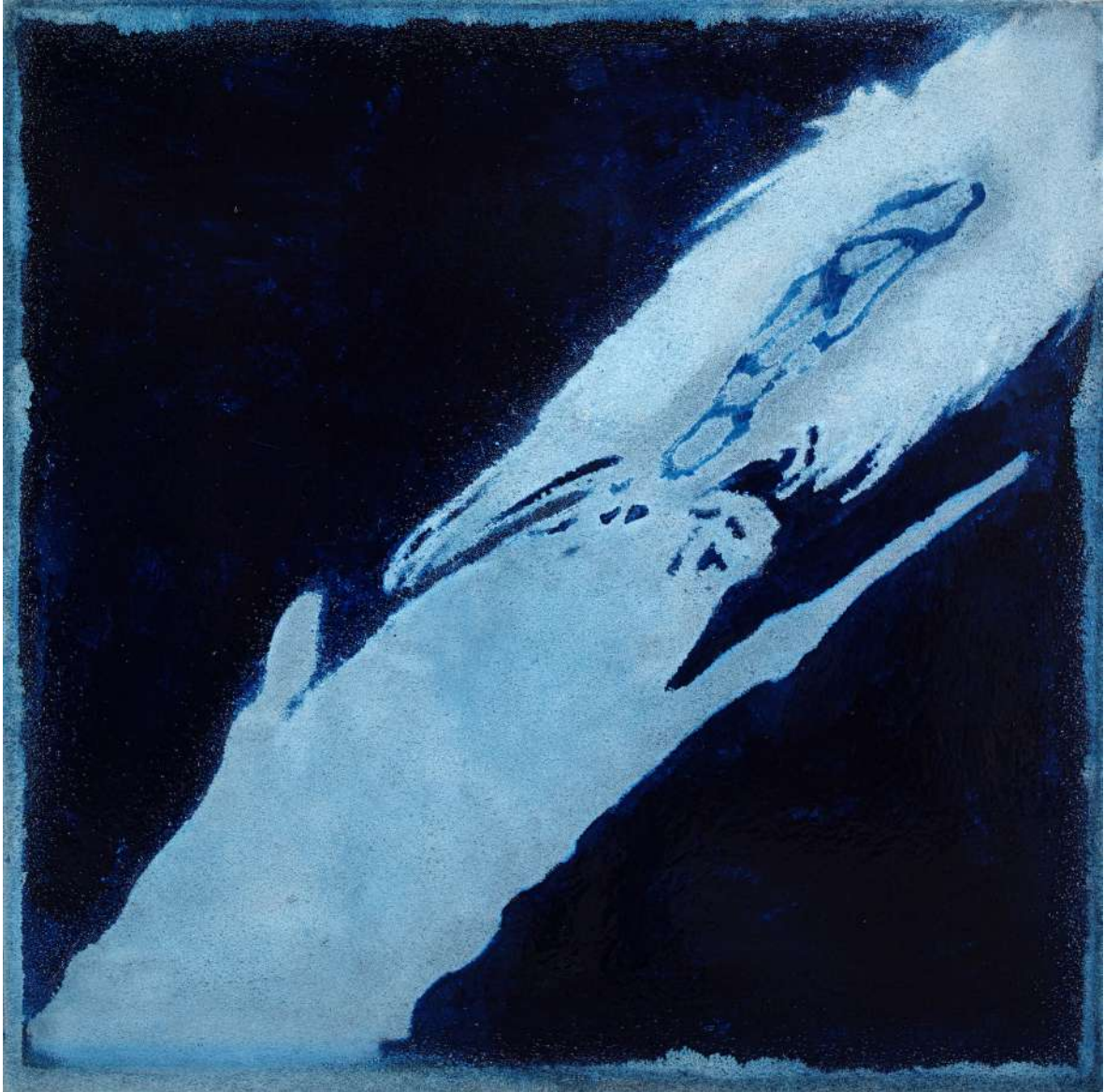
Beneath the shadow of the ancient fig tree,
The night turns blue
Rain drips like verses, cool and true
Leaves shiver,
catching silvered tears
while moonlight hums through ancient years.

A regal pulse,
The crown of sapphire,
carried through the silence of the night.

Blue rain, blue crown, blue honor,
Shadow of the fig tree
quiets my soul.

Reza Derakshani

Falling Crown, 2025
Mixed media on canvas
48 x 48 in | 122 x 122 cm





Night Figs, 2025
Oil and enamel on canvas
78 x 55 in | 200 x 140 cm

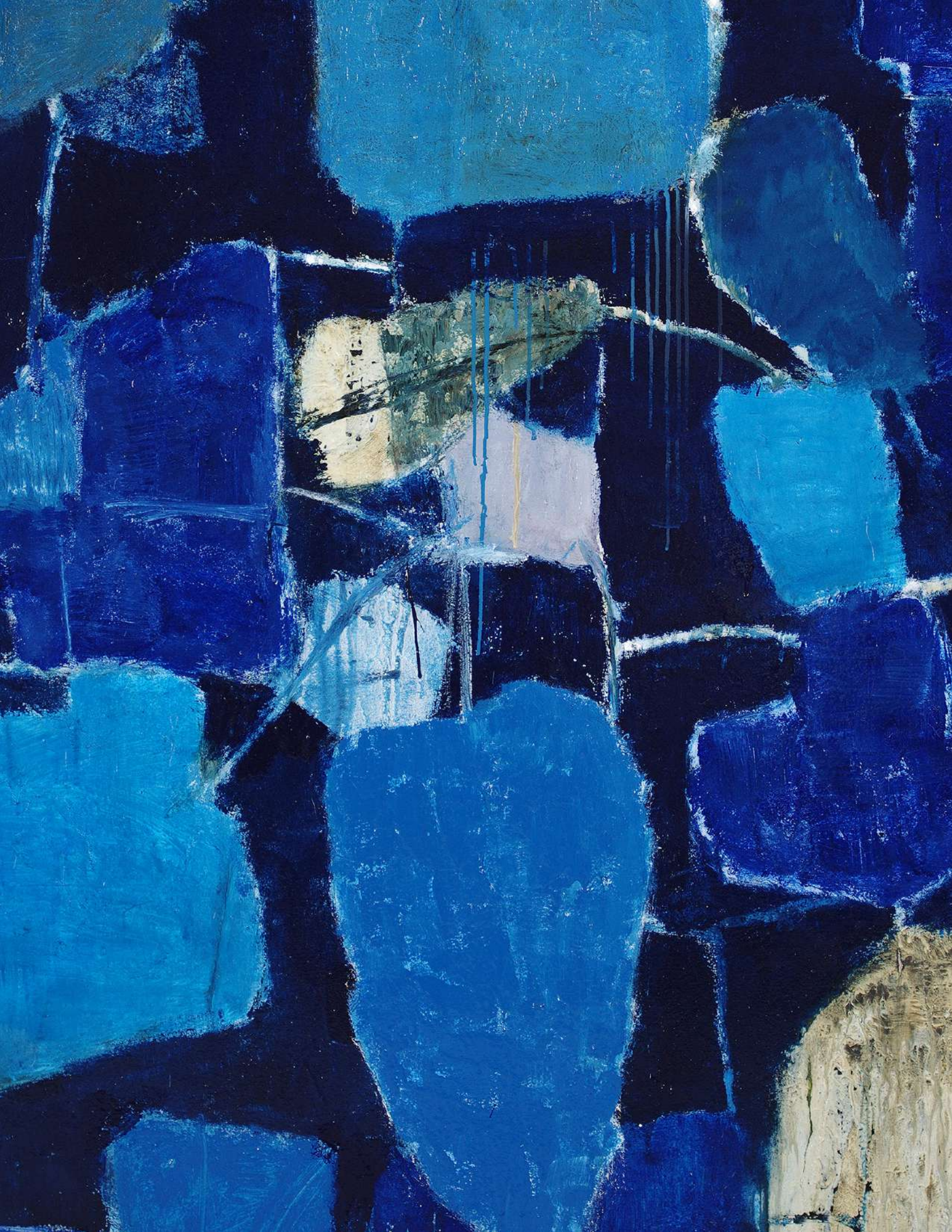
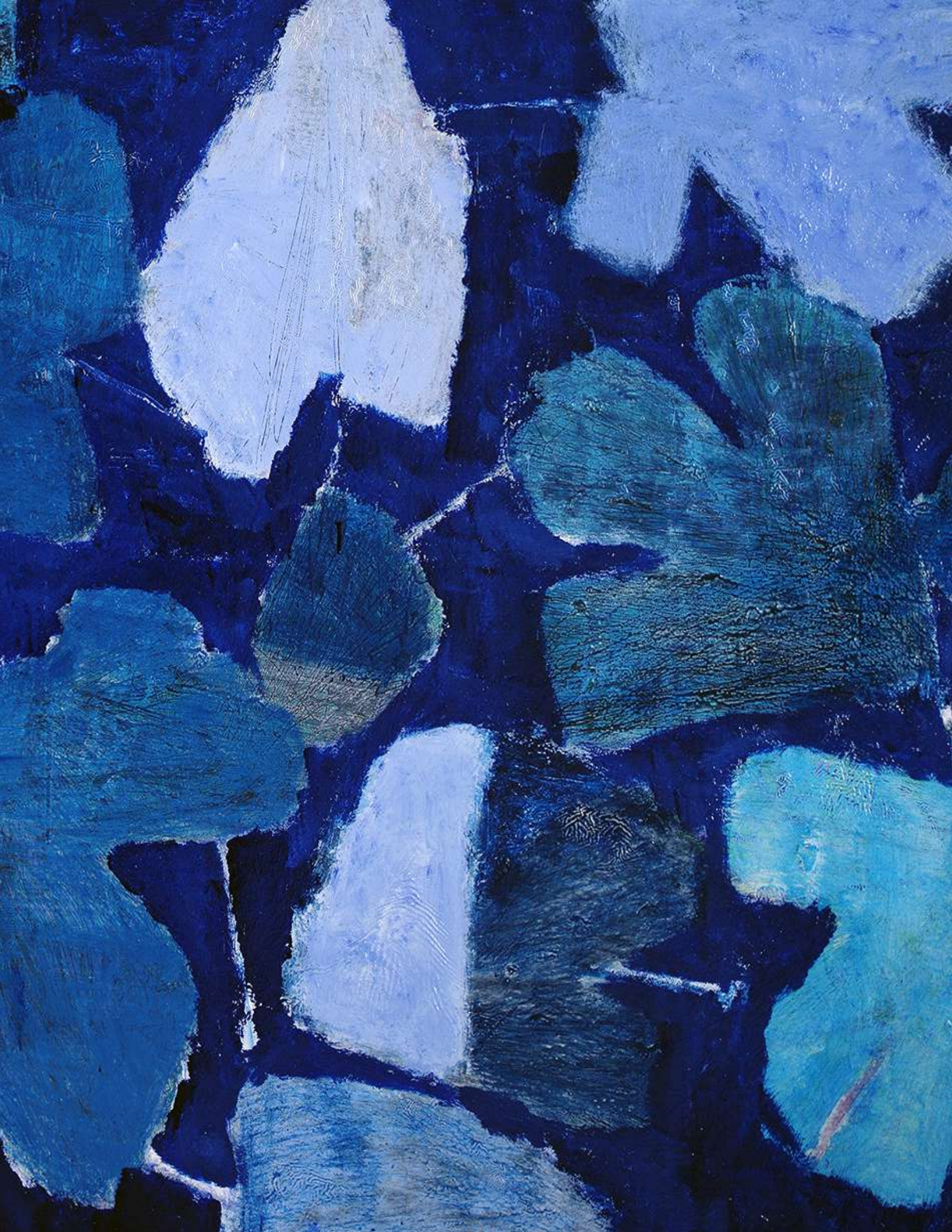




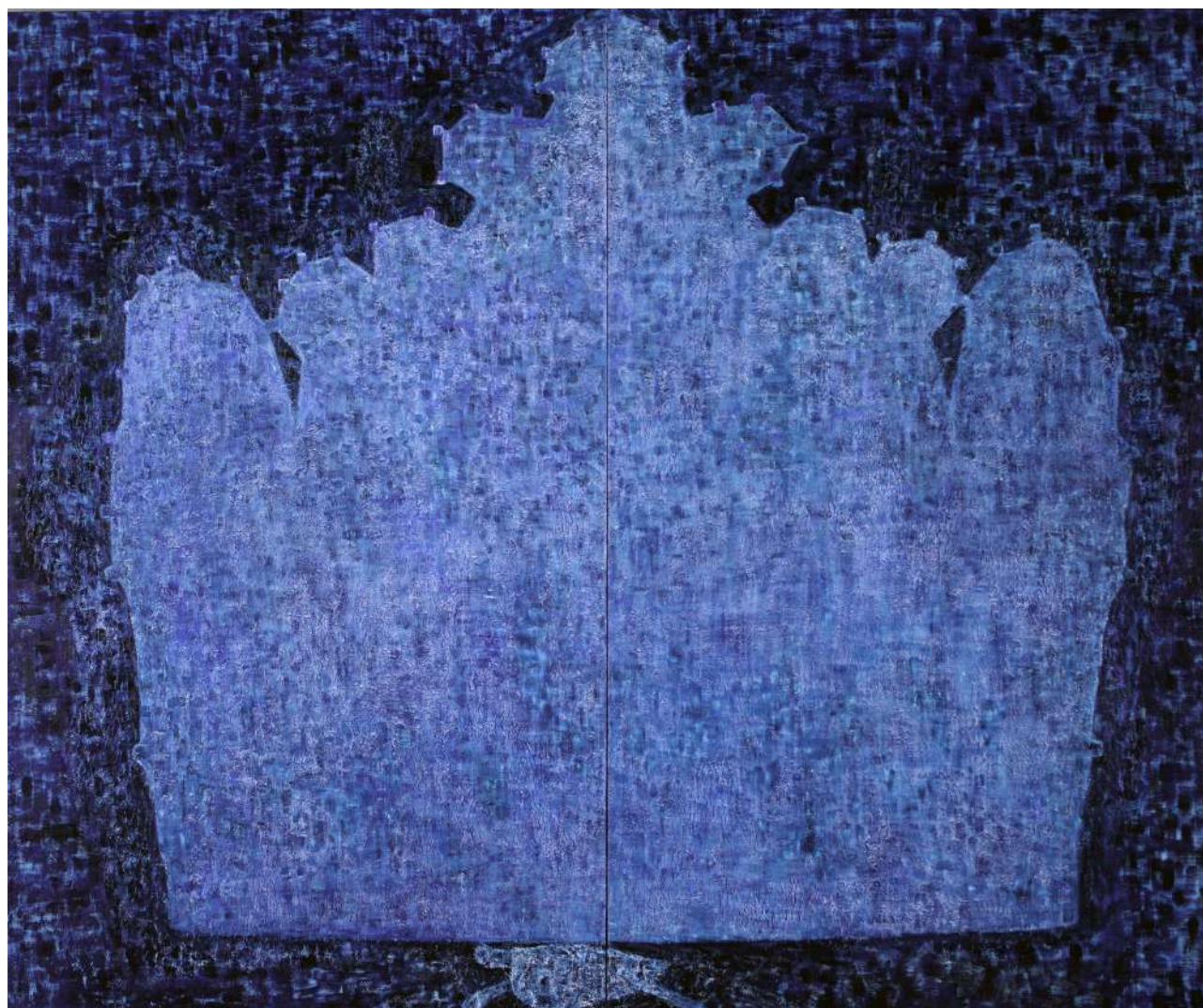
Fig Night Blue, 2025
Mixed media on canvas
60 x 96 in | 152 x 244 cm



Every Blue Day Journey, 2025
Mixed media on canvas
48 x 48 in | 122 x 122 cm



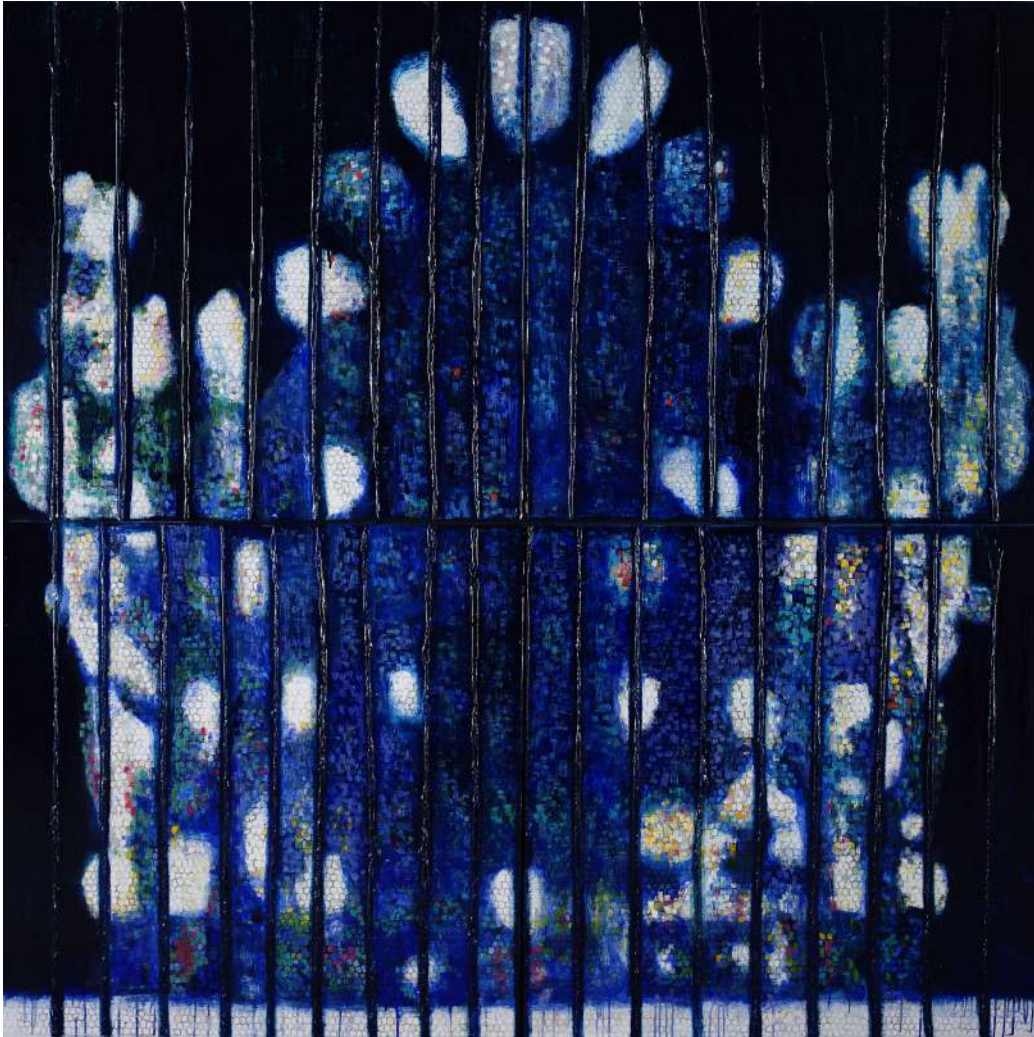
Through the Night, 2025
Oil on canvas
78 x 94 in | 200 x 240 cm



Sacred Butterfly, 2025
Oil and gold paste on canvas
72 x 60 in | 183 x 153 cm



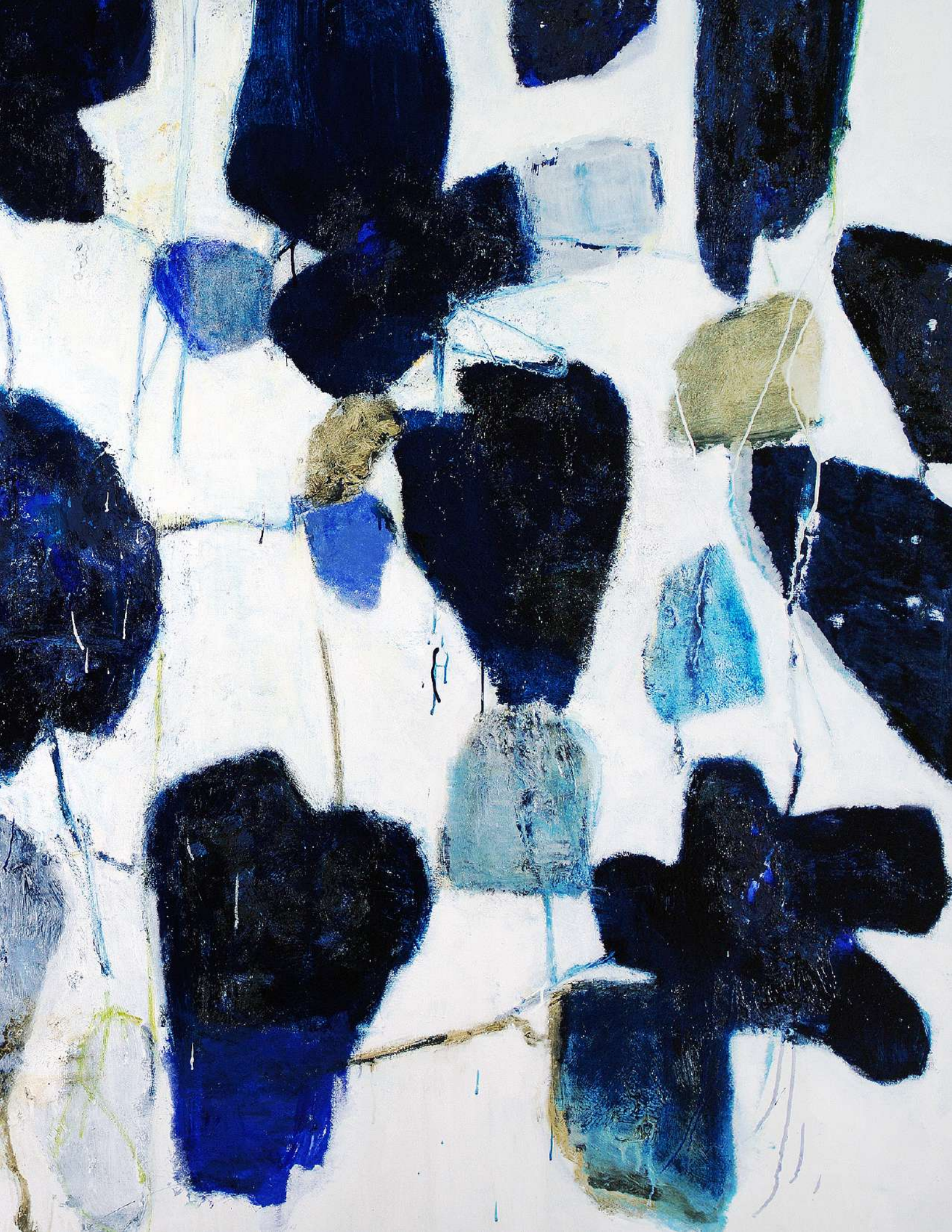
Untitled, 2025
Mixed media on canvas
78 x 78 in | 200 x 200 cm





Every Blue Night, 2025
Mixed media on canvas
60 x 96 in | 152 x 244 cm







Every Blue Day & Every White Night, 2025

Oil and enamel on canvas

71 x 118 in | 180 x 300 cm



Blue Rain Fig Day, 2025
Oil and enamel on canvas
78 x 55 in | 200 x 140 cm



Blue Rain Fig Night, 2025
Oil and enamel on canvas
78 x 55 in | 200 x 140 cm

ABOUT THE ARTIST

BIOGRAPHY

Painter, musician, and performance artist Reza Derakshani was born in Sangsar, in the northeast of Iran. He grew up in a large black tent on the top of a mountain, surrounded by horses and fields of blue and yellow wildflowers. Reza's early fascination with the constellations of light made by moonbeams shining through tiny holes in the tent led him from the study of mathematics in high school to the study of visual arts in Tehran and the U.S.

The long and circuitous path of Derakshani's artistic and geographic journey eventually brought him to New York City, where he lived and worked for sixteen years. He later moved to Italy, then returned to Tehran for seven years before leaving his homeland once again in 2010 and settling in Dubai. A few years later, he relocated back to the United States. Derakshani currently lives and works between Austin, USA, and St. Petersburg, Russia.

Derakshani's first solo exhibition, at the age of nineteen, was held at the renowned Ghandriz Art Gallery in Tehran. Following this auspicious debut, he participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions at other leading galleries. His work has since been widely exhibited and collected internationally.

Derakshani's passion for beauty and his nuanced perception of the light and dark of the world have found expression in many different forms—from music, graphic design, book illustration, film animation, and calligraphy to studies in both traditional and Western classical visual arts. Yet it is within contemporary painting that he has found true liberation and fulfillment as an artist. The challenging techniques, innovation, and mental stimulation inherent to contemporary art have led him to create a meditative solitude that results in pure freedom of self-expression. Reza's work, known for its diversity and originality, has gained recognition for its fearless exploration of form and style, and for the skill and vision necessary to merge an unbending tradition with a wild contemporary spirit.

A vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, composer, and performer, Derakshani does not limit his musical journey to giving concerts but integrates his music with his visual art. His performances often accompany his exhibitions, evoking the sensation of painting with sound.

Derakshani's work has been widely recognized in the media, on television and radio, and in publications such as The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, International Herald Tribune, L'Unità, The Juilliard Journal, Le Parisien, Toronto Star, Artforum, New York Artspeak, The Montreal Gazette, Mirror, Tandis Art Magazine, Herfeh: Honarmand, Art in America, Tamasha, Farhang va Zendegi, Bonny Film, Corriere della Sera, East Hampton Magazine, Canvas, Harper's Bazaar, and others. His appearances include ABC TV, RAI TV, WNYC, WKCR, WKUT, WKPN, NPR, VOA, KPFC, Dubai One TV, BBC Channel 4, FIP, and RFI (Radio France), among others.

EDUCATION

1976. B.A. in Visual Art, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
1978. Visual Arts, Pasadena School of Art, California, USA

EXHIBITIONS

2012. Silence of the Night, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
2019–2020. Emanations, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2020. The Shadow of a Fig Tree Quiets My Soul, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
2022. Night Conveys the Light, Every Day and Every Night, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025. Paint Your Grace, I Paint Your Pain, I Paint Love, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2019. Empty House Party, Setareh Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany
2019. Emanations, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2017. Black Water, Setareh Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany
2017. Birth of a Collection I: Reza Derakshani, 28 Fine Arts, Dubai, UAE
2016. The Breeze at Dawn, Sophia Contemporary Gallery, London, UK
2014. Reza Derakshani, Opera Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
2013. My Wicked Persian Carpet, Taymour Grahne Gallery, New York, USA
2013. Reza Derakshani, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, London, UK
2012. Everyday & Every Night, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
2012. Black Sand Paintings, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
2012. The Armory Show, Leila Heller Gallery and JAMM Art, New York, USA
2011. Reza Derakshani, Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, Lebanon
2012. Circus of Life, Dar Al Funoon Gallery and JAMM Art, Kuwait City, Kuwait
2010. Reza Derakshani, Osborne Samuel Gallery, London, UK
2009. Reza Derakshani, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
2009. Circus of Life, AB Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
2008. Reza Derakshani, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
2008. Beyond the Darkness, Khak Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2007. Reza Derakshani, XVA Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2007. Reza Derakshani, Seyhoun Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
2005. Reza Derakshani, Assar Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2003. Reza Derakshani, Caterina Pazzi Arte Moderna e Contem-

poranea, Rome, Italy

1994. Reza Derakshani, Galleria Il Punto di Svolta, Rome, Italy

1994. Reza Derakshani, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

1993. Reza Derakshani, Lawson Gallery, Seattle, USA

1992. Reza Derakshani, Nour Foundation Gallery, New York, USA

1992. Reza Derakshani, Seyhoun Gallery, Tehran, Iran

1971. Reza Derakshani, Ghandriz Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2019. Art Paris Art Fair, represented by Podgorny Robinson Gallery, Paris, France

2019. Art Cologne, represented by Setareh Gallery, Cologne, Germany

2019. 10–20–30, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020. The Atlas of My Dreams, Galerie Nicolas Flamel, Paris, France

2019. Collector 3, Artibition, Tehran, Iran

2018. In the Light of Spring, Podgorny Robinson Gallery, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

2018. Free Sale, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2018. The Moments, Galerie Nicolas Flamel, Paris, France

2017. Artmonte-Carlo, Setareh Gallery, Monaco

2017. Dallas Art Fair, Sophia Contemporary Gallery, Dallas, USA

2017. The Armory Show, Setareh Gallery, New York, USA

2017. Art Stage Singapore, Sophia Contemporary Gallery, Singapore

2016. Voyage à Travers l'Iran, Foundation Behnam Bakhtiar, France

2013. Heavenly Paradise, AB Gallery, Vienna, Austria

2013. Art of Iran, Opera Gallery, Dubai, UAE

2012. The Rule and Its Exception, Debora Colton Gallery, Houston, USA

2011. Reza Derakshani, Mah Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2010. Made in Iran, Opera Gallery, Dubai, UAE

2010. Tehran–New York, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA

2009. L'Iran Sans Frontières, Galerie Almine Rech, Paris, France

2009. Routes II, Waterhouse & Dodd, London, UK

2009. Khosrow and Shirin Series, Dar Al Funoon Gallery, Kuwait City, Kuwait

2008. Just Paper, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA

2008. Hope, Focus Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE

2005. Reza Derakshani, Mah Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2003. Assie Mennegini Gallery, Rome, Italy

1979. Lorry Dunn's Gallery, Long Beach, USA

1977. Thumb Gallery, London, UK

1976. Mehr Gallery, Tehran, Iran

SELECTED MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

2016. Reza Derakshani – Retrospective, The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia

2016. Museum Exhibition, Chemnitz Art Collections, Germany

2015. Shattered Mirror, Shattered Music, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

2013. Renoir to Damien Hirst, Seoul Art Center, Seoul, South Korea

2013. Reza Derakshani: Retrospective, The Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE

2011. Show Off!, The Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE

2010. Hope!, Palais des Arts et des Festivals, Dinard, France

2009. Iran Inside Out, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA

2008. The Colour of Love, Farhangsara Cultural Centre, Tehran, Iran

2004. Gardens of Iran: Ancient Wisdom – New Vision, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran

2003. 6th Tehran Contemporary Painting Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran

2003. Reza Derakshani, Niavaran Palace Cultural Centre, Tehran, Iran

2002. Retrospective, House of Artists, Tehran, Iran

1995. Reza Derakshani, Montclair State University, Montclair, USA

1994. Reza Derakshani, Anzio City Hall, Anzio, Italy

1976. Tehran University Gallery, Tehran, Iran

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The British Museum, London

Museum Gunzenhauser, Germany

The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

The Salsali Private Museum (SPM), Dubai

Leon Black Collection, New York

Pasargad Museum, Tehran

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran

Trudie Styler & Sting Collection, London

Mirella Haggiag Collection, Rome

Numerous private collections worldwide



LEILA HELLER GALLERY.