

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

*'Flames Beneath The Flowering Sky'*

By

Behrang Samadzadegan



*Khosrow, 2024, Watercolor on cotton paper, 131 x 83 cm*

Dubai, UAE – Leila Heller Gallery is delighted to announce the upcoming solo exhibition by Behrang Samadzadegan, titled *'Flames Beneath The Flowering Sky'* opening on 14th November 2024.

*'Flames Beneath The Flowering Sky'* delves into the complex intersection of fantasy, literature, and the socio-political landscape of the Middle East. "Where I stand, blossoms bloom, besieged by ceaseless fire", Initially inspired by classic romantic tales, Behrang Samadzadegan's tableau now diverges into the current events of the Middle East, where the night sky blazes with missile trails, and homes are warmed by the conflagrations of war; yet flowers flourish and hope prevail.

Behrang Samadzadegan believes painting draws reality to fiction, using Persian Miniature Painting to explore fantasy, literature, and contemporary concerns while challenging the biases of historical and literary narratives. The coincidental surfaces of watercolor and geometric structures, juxtaposing arbitrary and controlled movements, along with the incorporation of familiar and unfamiliar elements in the process of drawing an indefinable conceptual landscape, conquer the image's limitations. By pushing the boundaries of narrative through the lens of Persian Miniature Painting, he creates a dialogue between the past and present.

Behrang's deep connection to Iranian painting continually informs his artistic vision. This influence is evident in his storytelling propensity, his vibrant color palette, geometrical compositions, limited depth, peculiar perspective, and certain elements such as the flames. This idea is best represented in Behrang's flares, which reference *The Fire*

*Ordeal of Siyavosh* and *The Ascent of Muhammad to Heaven (Mi'raj)*. In Behrang's appropriation of flames, the figures are absent, leaving an inferno for today's Muslim nation. Likewise, where Siyavosh emerges triumphant in the *Shahnama*, Behrang's painting shows only fate-determining flames, rapaciously consuming his triumph. Behrang Samadzadegan entwines themes of fantasy, literature, and socio-political issues through the lens of Persian Miniature Painting, daring to dismantle the prejudiced perceptions of historical and literary imagery. In the act of painting an elusive conceptual landscape, he transcends mere representation. Behrang's exploration of flames and flowers illuminates the multiplex interplay between historical narratives and contemporary realities in a region marked by both conflict and hope.

'Flames Beneath the Flowering Sky' invites viewers to engage with the dynamic intersection of history, fantasy, and the present, reflecting on the enduring power of art to transcend conflict and inspire hope.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Behrang Samadzadegan was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1979. He received a BFA from the Tehran University of Arts, and an MFA from TTU (Tehran Tarbiat Modares University). Behrang's work ranges from highly symbolic pieces to arrangements of stuffed-toy sculptures, to various sizes of drawings and paintings, to installations that restage ritual or historical narratives. The subject matters of his works are drawn from images and narratives of contemporary Iranian history, which he combines with fictional stories and the aesthetics of painting. His goal, however, is not to represent historical narratives. The image of history, he believes, is a personal matter created under the influence of visual and aesthetic stereotypes; a combination of confusion, chaos, and a futile quest for reaching unattainable truth. Similarly, throughout his work, he pursues hierarchies and systems that distort the representation of information and the consciousness; systems such as politics, aesthetics, and history that can empty and sterilize contexts and create arbitrary hierarchies that cause confusion and eliminate the possibility of recording and expressing the truth. As he sees it, this system also governs the creation of art, and it does not intend to reach a destination or find a way to redemption; the only thing that remains is a search for an alternative way and finding a new hope to get out of the turmoil and crisis. Thus, his creative process is influenced by the past, paralleled by the experience of living in the present.

#### ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over four 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, Central Asian, Southeast Asian 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 16,000 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. In addition to presenting a dynamic exhibition schedule, Leila Heller Gallery actively organizes shows with world renowned curators, hosts educational panels and film screenings, and produces catalogs and books with scholarly essays. Each year the gallery participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects as a platform for exploring new conversations within a wider context of galleries, artists and institutions. Gallery artists have consistently participated in international museum exhibitions and biennials, and are included in leading institutional collections worldwide.