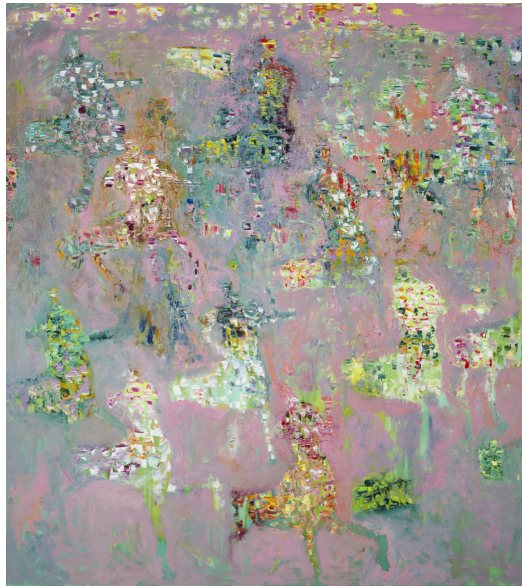


LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

*'I PAINT YOUR GRACE,
I PAINT YOUR PAIN,
I PAINT LOVE'*

By

Reza Derakshani



Hunting The Soul , 2025 , Oil On Canvas, 200 x 180 cm

Dubai, UAE – Leila Heller Gallery is delighted to announce the upcoming solo exhibition by renowned Persian-American artist, Reza Derakshani, titled *'I Paint Your Grace, I Paint Your Pain, I Paint Love'* opening on 17th March, 2025.

'I Paint Your Grace, I Paint Your Pain, I Paint Love' , unveils a compelling selection of never-before-exhibited works that delve into themes of memory, identity, and transformation. Marking his first solo exhibition in half a decade, the show presents artworks from three of his acclaimed series: *The Hunt / Riders, Day and Night / Fig Leaf*, and *Migration / Grey Zone*. In these works, past and present converge, offering a rare glimpse into Derakshani's artistic vision where form, color, and narrative intertwine in a profound exploration of the human experience.

Derakshani's work bridges Persian artistic traditions with personal and socio-political themes. His *Hunting* series, inspired by Persian miniatures and poetry, reflects both medieval grandeur and memories of his childhood in northeastern Iran. Horses, a recurring motif, symbolize freedom, their elongated forms emerging through intricate layers of color. More than a literal chase, the hunt serves as a metaphor for humanity's endless pursuit of meaning, power, and transcendence.

The *Day and Night / Fig Leaf* series similarly explores the dualities that shape human existence, light and darkness, presence and absence, ornamentation and ambiguity. These paintings weave together Persian metaphors of paradise, where lush garden imagery evokes communal gatherings and the afterlife. Derakshani's expressive

brushstrokes, bold colors, and luxurious metallic paints create a visual tension between materiality and transcendence, positioning his craft as both an aesthetic and spiritual endeavor.

Derakshani reflects on displacement, cultural identity, and modernity through his *Migration / Grey Zone* series. Shaped by his movement across artistic and geographic landscapes, his work embodies a deep engagement with the Western canon. Despite encountering its masterpieces later in life, his artistic development was profoundly influenced by the rich cultural environment of pre-revolutionary Iran. His work blends abstraction and figuration to explore the fluidity of belonging, memory, place, and identity. The turtle, symbolizing migration and endurance, and subtle cartographic references to Iran evoke a nostalgic and complex relationship with homeland.

Reza Derakshani's ability to interweave historical symbolism with contemporary expression solidifies his position as a master artist. His work is an ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation, personal history and collective memory. '*I Paint Your Grace, I Paint Your Pain, I Paint Love*' invites viewers into a space where painting is both poetic and political, a site of beauty and existential contemplation.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

A pivotal figure in contemporary art, Reza Derakshani has established a legacy that spans decades, with works housed in major institutional and private collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; British Museum, London; Museum Gunzenhauser, Germany; and State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

Born in 1952 in Sangsar, Iran, Derakshani is a painter, musician, and performance artist. He graduated from the University of Tehran in 1976, continued his studies at Pasadena School of Art, and later taught at the University of Tehran before leaving the country in 1986.

His art reflects the intersection of his diverse experiences, with a deep engagement in both Eastern and Western artistic traditions. As a musician he has performed at festivals like the Brooklyn Museum and Montreux Jazz Festival, and now resides in St. Petersburg, Russia.

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.