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SOPHIA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY OPENS IN MAYFAIR

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Sophia Contemporary gallery has launched in London's Mayfair and is showcasing contemporary art of the Middle East and Iran, alongside contemporary Western art. Founded by Vassili Tsarenkov, Lali Marganiya and Lili Jassemi, the gallery's inaugural exhibition showcases a series of new paintings by the artist Reza Derakshani, one of the most celebrated living Iranian artists.

Derakshani currently presents new works from a number of ongoing series, including the Hunting, Pomegranate and Garden Party series, as well as two large paintings from a new Calligraphy series, which have never previously been exhibited.



After experimenting with pure abstraction, the artist devised his personal artistic style blending abstract and figurative elements. This synthesis materialises beyond the visual impact of the works, notably in the socio-political themes that Derakshani explores. In this exhibition he brings together nostalgic reflections on the history of his Iranian identity with contested notions of migration, displacement and modernity.

Renowned for his bold and dynamic use of colour, in the Hunting series the artist layers an abstract landscape with the recognisable motif of horse riding hunters. The figurative subject matter is reminiscent of the rich artistic traditions of Persian miniature painting and calligraphy, while the abstract use of vibrant colours reveals the artist's spiritual inspiration grounded in the millenary tradition of Persian poetry.



The new paintings in the series continue in the trademark vivid and expressive style of his earlier works and are executed in oil on canvas. For this exhibition the artist also experiments with glitter, tar and gold paste.

The Breeze at Dawn will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an introduction written by Norman Rosenthal, independent curator and former Exhibition Director of the Royal Academy of Arts.

Reza Derakshani: The Breeze at Dawn 9 March – 23 April 2016
Sophia Contemporary Gallery (11 Grosvenor Street, London, W1K 4QB) UK

[Picture credit: Installation view of Reza Derakshani The Breeze at Dawn at Sophia Contemporary Gallery, photography by Julija Svetlova]