

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

Reza Derakshani: A Feast of Colour

BY ROKANE ZAND | 14 MAR 2016

LONDON - For those who know him, Reza Derakshani is as amiable and popular as his artworks. A quiet man with a number of talents – from poetry to music to performance art – Reza is celebrated wherever he goes. After a brief but well-deserved hiatus following a year of five shows around the world, the artist has re-emerged with the birth of a new gallery in London. Sophia Contemporary Gallery, founded by Vassili Tsarenkov, Lali Marganiya and Lili Jassemi, was inaugurated on 8 March with a solo show of vibrant abstractions drenched in colour and texture by Reza Derakshani.

REZA DERAKSHANI, *SPRING HUNT*, 2015, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SOPHIA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

The Breeze at Dawn as this show is aptly called, brings together 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 which have never previously been exhibited. Grounded in Iranian artistic traditions, Reza's dynamic brushstrokes reveal the influence of Western Abstract Expressionism. This fusion of East with contemporary art movements from the West creates an idiosyncratic body of work at the confluence of civilizations.

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REZA DERAKSHANI, *HUNTING THE ECSTASY*, 2015, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SOPHIA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

Above all the artist is a colourist. Renowned for bold and dynamic hues, his abstractions give glimpses of a horse here, a rider there, a split pomegranate that harks back to traditional motifs and miniatures. It is clear that in the artist's consciousness are deeply embedded native inspirations. The most recent series – some as new as 2016 – show experimentation with glitter, tar, and gold paste. Works from earlier series have been acquired by various institutions including the British Museum, New York's Metropolitan and the Tehran Museum of Art.



REZA DERAKSHANI, *HUNTING PINK*, 2015, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SOPHIA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

I asked him what was significant for him in this re-emergence of a new show, and with characteristic modesty he replied that it was for him a return to roots as well as a foray into new territory. Reza's art speaks best for itself in its dazzling colours and layered textures. If nothing but to feast your eyes, a visit to this new show is compulsory.

Reza Derakshani: The Breeze at Dawn, the inaugural exhibition at Sophia Contemporary Gallery, 9 March – 23 April 2016 www.sophiacontemporary.com