



Reza Derakshani. The Breeze at Dawn

9 Mar — 23 Apr 2016 at Sophia Contemporary Gallery in London, United Kingdom



Reza Derakshani, *Hunting the Ecstasy*, 2015, oil on canvas, 180 x 250 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary

Opening on 9 March 2016 in London's Mayfair, Sophia Contemporary is a new gallery 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 will present 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. Whilst Derakshani's practice is grounded in Iranian artistic traditions, his dynamic brushstrokes reveal the influence of the textured surfaces from Western abstract art movements. The fusion of Eastern artistic traditions and contemporary art movements from the West create an idiosyncratic oeuvre at the confluence of civilizations.

The artist became engrossed in Abstract Expressionism while living in New York and was soon associated with the revival of painting in the USA and Europe in the 1980s through the Neo-Expressionist style. Whilst being loosely affiliated to the movement and evolving in New York artistic circles with fellow artists and friends Francesco Clemente, Shirin Neshat, Alessandro and Cy Twombly, the experience of emigration led Derakshani to reconnect with his Iranian roots. 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.

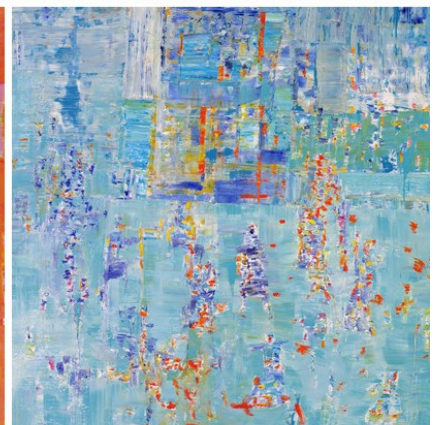
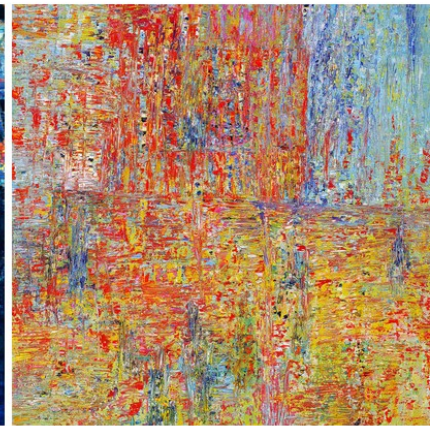
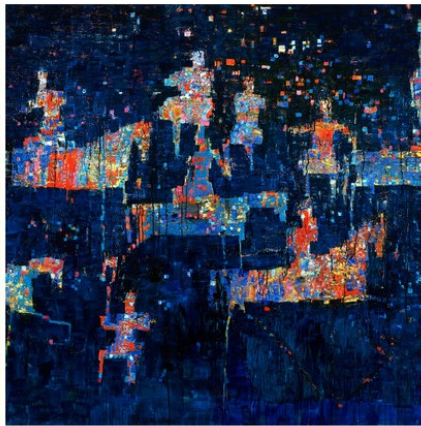
The Breeze at Dawn will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an introduction written by Norman Rosenthal, independent curator and former Exhibition Director of the Royal Academy of Arts.

Sophia Contemporary Gallery

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday 10am - 6pm
 Saturday 11am - 5pm
 Closed on Sunday



Captions

1. Reza Derakshani, Hunting the Sunshine, 2015, oil on canvas, 198 x 224 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary
2. Reza Derakshani, Hunting the Night, 2015, oil on canvas, 198 x 224 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary
3. Reza Derakshani, Garden Party at the Red Castle, 2015, 198 x 178 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary Gallery
4. Reza Derakshani, Blue Hunting, 2015, oil on canvas, 152 x 183 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary Gallery
5. Reza Derakshani, Sunset Hunting, 2015, oil on canvas, 198 x 224 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary Gallery
6. Reza Derakshani, Dancing Red at the Blue Party, 2015, 182