

**Reza Derakshani:
My Wicked Persian Carpet**

29 October – 3 December

Opening: Tuesday, 29 October, 2013, 6 – 8 PM

New York, New York (September 26, 2013) – Following its much-touted launch in September 2013, Taymour Grahne Gallery presents new works by Iranian painter, musician and performance artist Reza Derakshani. Expanding on previous investigations of ornamentation and abstraction, “My Wicked Persian Carpet” incorporates the artist’s newfound experimentation with materials such as glitter to consider ongoing themes of life and death, faith and fear, love and revulsion, beauty and viciousness, light and darkness. Flat colorfields and a lack of perspective, always a signature component of Derakshani’s compositions, meld tradition and political references into highly textured, jewel-like paintings. The series derives its raw strength from an uncomfortable contrast—deceptively beautiful, almost hedonistic decorative qualities cut with bleak, apocalyptic manifestations of death—a result that is hypnotically and universally unsettling.



Born in the rustic countryside of Sangsar, Iran, Derakshani’s detailed observation of the natural world is apparent in his work, as is his inspiration from Persian art and folkloric traditions; the imagery of gardens, epics, and miniatures is a critical part of his visual narrative. After leaving Iran in the aftermath of the revolution, Derakshani incorporated influences of Western modernist painting and Persian motifs to develop a visual language of his own, which richly and often piercingly addresses the challenges of calling multiple places home, and the complexity and trauma of modern Iranian cultural history.

This latest series was motivated by Derakshani’s return to his native country, where, disappointed by what he saw after decades living overseas, a commentary on the state of Iran today has manifested itself in “My Wicked Persian Carpet.” However, as Scott Indrisek writes in his essay accompanying the exhibition catalog: “Defining Derakshani as a political painter would be reductive—shrinking his oeuvre into little more than an extended, anguished salvo against a regime—and it’s more interesting to note the unavoidable ways that such concrete realities are instead ingested, and transformed, by the artist.”

This is echoed by Derakshani himself, who explains: “I’ve long tried to steer clear of politics, but it’s always been there in the background, and I see the Persian carpet as a symbol of Iran itself. It is something that Persians are proud of, a traditional art that can be absolutely magnificent, yet perhaps we hide behind these traditional symbols. We have huge problems in Iran which we need to face.” Nowhere is this more evident than in the work from which the exhibition derives its name: a grinning blue skull stares at the viewer, floating on a thickly layered reworking of the familiar pattern of Persian carpets. Others, such as *My Lovely Nuked Red Carpet* (2013) continue the theme; the patterns more are subtle, yet through a pixelated haze the rich purple mushroom cloud of a sparkling nuclear reaction takes centre stage, dominating the canvas.

Skulls are at the forefront here, a leitmotif in this series, although they have made prior appearances in Derakshani's work. Works such as *Searching for God!* (2013) and *A Rainbow for Every Life* (2013) isolate this memento mori, a macabre reminder of our own mortality suspended in a shimmering sea. And yet, for Derakshani, rather like the Mexican Day of the Dead, there is as much celebration in these skulls as there is a reminder of our own fragility, the cycle of life and death. "By adding glitter, in a way, it makes these skulls beautiful," says Derakshani, "it brings them to life and turns them into a celebration, an affirmation of life."

In the lower gallery, Derakshani will present a series of smaller works inspired by Persian miniatures. Traditional manuscript illustrations have been an obsession of Derakshani's since the late 1980's, and this latest body of work leans further towards abstraction. With disjointed – almost hallucinatory – figures and coded hints towards an underlying narrative, the paintings present a fractured retelling of the beloved tragic love story of Shirin and Farhad or the epic *Shahnameh*, while simultaneously echoing more recent incidents of violence, political upheaval, and social dislocation.

About Taymour Grahne Gallery

Taymour Grahne Gallery seeks to foster a diverse, international program of groundbreaking contemporary art, with a special foundation in contemporary the art of the Middle East region. Working collaboratively with curators and critics, the gallery is committed to cultivating emerging talent and supporting established artists from around the world.

Taymour Grahne Gallery is situated in the heart of Tribeca in a landmarked 4,000 square foot space designed to accommodate a dynamic public events program organized in conjunction with the gallery's exhibitions and related publications. Widely recognized for creating the most comprehensive and widely read blog dedicated to contemporary art from the Middle East, gallery founder Taymour Grahne brings a special foundation and specialization in Middle Eastern and North African art. Exhibiting artists include: Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Noor Ali Chagani, Reza Derakshani, Daniele Genadry, Nermine Hammam, Hassan Hajjaj, Mohammed Kazem, Sanaz Mazinani, Ciarán Murphy, Nicky Nodjoumi, Farah Ossouli, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Walid Siti, and Camille Zakharia.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

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Join the conversation on social media by linking to @TaymourGrahne and using the hashtag #RezaDerakshani