

# Two Moderns from the Middle East: Reza Derakshani and Alfred Basbous



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Hong Kong, October 2017 – For the first time in Asia, Sotheby's is excited to present an exhibition dedicated to Middle Eastern art, Two Moderns from the Middle East: Reza Derakshani and Alfred Basbous, which will be on display at Sotheby's Hong Kong Gallery from 3 to 17 November 2017. The exhibition is guest-curated by international art advisors Arianne Levene Piper and Eglantine de Ganay-d'Espous, in association with Sophia Contemporary Gallery and the Alfred Basbous Foundation.

Over the past decade, Middle Eastern art has gained increasing recognition on the international stage. As such, it has started to catch the attention of Asian collectors, whose tastes have diversified beyond the traditional Asian arts. In response to the region's growing interest, Sotheby's will bring to Hong Kong works by two iconic Middle Eastern artists: Reza Derakshani (b. 1952), one of Iran's most celebrated living artists, and Lebanese-born

modern sculptor Alfred Basbous (1924-2006). The selling exhibition will offer for sale 15 new oil-on-canvas works by Reza Derakshani and 12 bronze and marble sculptures by Alfred Basbous.

Patti Wong, Chairman of Sotheby's Asia, said: "As the world's leading art business, Sotheby's is committed to developing new collecting genres and introducing them to a broader audience through our global platform. This autumn, we are delighted to work with international art curators Arianne Levene Piper and Eglantine de Ganay-d'Espous to stage our first Middle Eastern art exhibition in Hong Kong. Bringing together two remarkable talents from Iran and Lebanon, this exciting exhibition will offer Asian collectors and international buyers an unprecedented opportunity to discover the beauty of Middle Eastern art first hand."

Arianne Levene Piper and Eglantine de Ganay-d'Espous, guest curators of the exhibition, expressed: "Over the last few years there has been a marked growth in interest for Middle Eastern art from collectors in Hong Kong and Mainland China; the idea of a show of Middle Eastern [Art](#) in Hong Kong therefore came about quite naturally. Our continuous involvement in exploring artistic talent from lesser-known regions has allowed us to identify two exceptionally gifted artists, Reza Derakshani, one of Iran's most enchanting and established painters, and Alfred Basbous, a pioneer of modernist sculpture in Lebanon. The exhibition will offer collectors from the region a unique opportunity to experience a hand-picked selection of their very best works that simply radiate beauty."

### **REZA DERAESHANI: 'THE MASTER OF RED'**

Grounded in Iranian artistic traditions, Derakshani's dynamic brushstrokes reveal the influence of Western abstract expressionism. This fusion of the Middle East with contemporary art movements from the West creates an idiosyncratic and beautiful body of work and a confluence of cultures. The artist is renowned for his bold hues and textured surfaces. The works on exhibit demonstrate his iconic use of red as well as more

sober and nuanced compositions in grey, earthy tones, broken up by strong brushwork to create poignant neo-expressionist compositions with Fauvist overtones, and show the artist's particular brand of joie de vivre.

## **ALFRED BASBOUS: MODERNIST PIONEER**

The exhibition also presents 12 of Alfred Basbous' bronze and marble sculptures - both abstract and figurative - from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Widely acknowledged as the major pioneer of modernist sculpture in the Middle East, Basbous set himself on a path of constant exploration of the relationship between form and materials. Nurturing organic lines, he experimented with figurative and abstracted elements of the human figure, in particular the female body. Drawing influence from Jean Arp, Constantin Brâncuși and Henry Moore, sculptures from Basbous are alive with a spirit that is free from all constraint, expressing the sensuality and purity of the human form. Carved in stone and bronze, the sinuous lines by Basbous speak of the simplicity and the grandeur of a human journey, forming a unique sculptural language of their own.

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Reza Derakshani (b. 1952)

Born in 1952 in Iran, Reza Derakshani is a painter, poet, musician and performance artist. Graduating from the University of Tehran in 1976, Derakshani furthered his studies at the Pasadena School of Art in California, before returning to Iran to teach at his alma mater as well as the School of Decorative Arts. At the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in 1983, he once again left the country and began his years living abroad.

During his stays in New York and Italy, Derakshani became engrossed in abstract expressionism and befriended the likes of Cy Twombly, Francesco Clemente, Alessandro Twombly and Shirin Neshat. Moving on from pure abstraction, Derakshani then devised his personal artistic style, blending abstract and figurative elements. He is also well known for his experimental use of materials, including gold and silver paste, tar and

sand, among others.

Acknowledged as one of the most important contemporary Iranian artists, Derakshani has his work featured in many public art collections including the British Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Furthermore, he has been showcased in numerous publications such as the NY Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Art Newspaper UK and Russia, National Paper UAE, Gulf News, BBC Radio, to name a few.