Frieze Abu Dhabi 2026
November 19th – 22nd 2026



Farideh Lashai, Untitled; 1970; oil on canvas; 70.5 x 100 cm.

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present a solo retrospective of Farideh Lashai (1944–2013) at Frieze Abu Dhabi 2026, in the Modern Booth, C19. Bringing together works spanning several decades and multiple media, the presentation traces the evolution of one of the most significant figures of Iranian modernism and a practice in which abstraction, landscape, memory and narrative continually intersect.

A painter, writer, translator and thinker, Lashai developed a multidisciplinary practice in which painting remained a constant point of departure. Across more than five decades, she moved between abstraction and representation, landscape and memory, stillness and movement, continually expanding the possibilities of the painted image.

At the foundation of Lashai's practice was an enduring engagement with the natural world. Trees, branches, flowers and landscape recur throughout her work, yet nature was never simply a subject to be represented. Instead, it became a means through which Lashai explored colour, gesture, form and perception, gradually transforming observed landscapes into an increasingly abstract and deeply personal visual language.

The presentation brings together a substantial selection from Lashai's Tree Series, alongside works from her Vase Series, Miniature series and other works on paper. Within the Tree Series, dense woodland scenes constructed through vigorous vertical strokes sit alongside radically spare compositions in which trunks, branches and fragments of foliage are reduced to fluid gestures against expanses of open paper. The Vase Series shifts this investigation toward still life, while the Miniature series introduces graphite alongside oil, extending her experimentation with line, texture and the relationship between drawing and painting.

In her later practice, Lashai expanded these investigations into installation, animation and moving image. Projected imagery appears across painted surfaces, allowing compositions to become sites of movement, recollection and narrative. Recurring motifs - including the rabbit, moonlit water and references to cultural figures such as Charlie Chaplin and Umm Kulthum - introduce layers of personal and collective memory while engaging broader ideas of displacement, history and poetic resistance.

Rather than marking a departure from painting, Lashai's moving-image works expand concerns already present within her earlier practice. Gesture, open space, fragmented forms and shifting landscapes become activated through light and time, allowing images to appear and disappear across the painted surface. The Frieze Abu Dhabi presentation creates two distinct but interconnected environments: a darkened space dedicated to projected moving-image works and an adjacent presentation tracing Lashai's painterly development through works on

paper and large-scale compositions. Together, the works illuminate more than five decades of artistic development and position Lashai as a singular voice within modern and contemporary Iranian art.

Lashai's works are held in major international collections including Centre Pompidou, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the British Museum and Sharjah Art Foundation

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Farideh Lashai (1944-2013) was an Iranian artist, writer and translator whose multidisciplinary practice encompassed painting, writing, installation, animation and video. She studied German literature and attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, later working in crystal design at Riedel Studios and Rosenthal in Germany. Throughout her career, Lashai developed a distinctive visual language in which landscape, abstraction, literature, memory and history intersected. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is represented in major institutional and private collections around the world.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over four decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western, Central Asian, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European, and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 16,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East. In addition to presenting a dynamic exhibition schedule, Leila Heller Gallery actively organizes shows with world renowned curators, hosts educational panels and film screenings, and produces catalogs and books with scholarly essays. Each year the gallery participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects as a platform for exploring new conversations within a wider context of galleries, artists and institutions. Gallery artists have consistently participated in international museum exhibitions and biennials and are included in leading institutional collections worldwide.