

Soft Edge of the Blade Vol. 3

Date: Nov 11 - Jan 8, 2025

Curated by Mamali Shafahi

Artists: Reza Aramesh, Pooya Aryanpour, Fereydoun Ave, Andisheh Avini, Maryam Ayeen and Abbas Shahsavari, Homa Delvaray, Reza Derakshani, Mehdi Farhadian, Bitā Fayyazi, Marcos Grigorian, Ghasem Hajizadeh, Morteza Khosravi, Farideh Lashai, Meghdad Lorpour, Farrokh Mahdavi, Ardeshtir Mohasses, Bahman Mohasses, Mehrdad Mohebbati, Arash Nazari, Shirin Neshat, Nicky Nodjoumi, Farah Ossouli, Peybak, Morteza Pourhosseini, Mohammad Piryaee, Behrang Samadzadegan, Mamali Shafahi.

Zaal Art Gallery and Leila Heller Gallery join forces to proudly presents "Soft Edge of the Blade Vol. 3", on view from November 10 to January 8 at Gallery 2, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai.

The exhibition is curated by Mamali Shafahi and includes works by Reza Aramesh, Pooya Aryanpour, Fereydoun Ave, Andisheh Avini, Maryam Ayeen and Abbas Shahsavari, Homa Delvaray, Reza Derakshani, Mehdi Farhadian, Bitā Fayyazi, Marcos Grigorian, Ghasem Hajizadeh, Morteza Khosravi, Farideh Lashai, Meghdad Lorpour, Farrokh Mahdavi, Ardeshtir Mohasses, Bahman Mohasses, Mehrdad Mohebbati, Arash Nazari, Shirin Neshat, Nicky Nodjoumi, Farah Ossouli, Peybak, Morteza Pourhosseini, Mohammad Piryaee, Behrang Samadzadegan, and Mamali Shafahi.

Following acclaimed exhibitions at Frieze No.9 Cork Street (London, 2022) and Zaal Art Gallery (Toronto, 2023), "Soft Edge of the Blade" returns for its third edition; this time in Dubai. Continuing its inquiry into the many faces of violence, the series turns its gaze to a region where its very existence and nomenclature, like the very notion of "the Middle East", has been shaped through a vocabulary of conflict. But here, in this third act, the exhibition proposes something quieter, more persistent: what if the violence we fear is already within us; codified in language, tradition, memory, and even beauty?

This edition marks the most expansive iteration yet, bringing together artists whose practices span painting, sculpture, photography, and hybrid media, each approaching the theme of violence from a distinct angle. The mood oscillates between the symbolic and the visceral, the intimate and the public. Their inquiries touch on memory, history, censorship, language, ornament, domesticity, rupture, resistance, and beauty.

The outlook is not limited to the more obviously visible "state" violence of war or political oppression. The intended scope is broader and more subtle, extending to numerous insidious forms of "soft" violence affecting us today: migration and diaspora, identity and gender, patriarchy and family, the impact of the complexities of history on the day-to-day life of Middle Easterners at home and/or abroad, and the use of language—such as on social media—to disparage or oppress. "Soft Edge of the Blade" allows audiences to continue exploring the region's contemporary art scene, with a focus on powerful themes of relevance and interest to global audiences.

As in previous volumes, "Soft Edge of the Blade Vol. 3" draws attention to forms of violence often overshadowed by events within a febrile region whose name—"the Middle East"—has come to be associated with ferocity, especially in how it has been portrayed and discussed by the media. Going beyond visible violence, it poses questions: How does violence manifest softly? Do we even know that it has taken place? Do we need someone to point it out? Aren't we creating it by talking about it? Works on view open the way for viewers to contemplate violence in its different embodiments, the diversity of ways it affects individuals, and the many interpretations it engenders.

Following the project's footsteps, "Soft Edge of the Blade Vol. 3" continues to engage audiences with the questions at its core. It is more interested in asking than in answering—in the spirit of Elie Wiesel, who once asked: "Could it be... that questions are more important than answers? After all, we have learned from history that questions unite people. It is the answers that divide them."