

# SELECTIONS

ARTS / STYLE / CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

#39



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## THE COST OF CONFLICT

Iranian artist **Reza Aramesh** shows works that seek to convey the true human cost of war and violence at Dubai's **Leila Heller Gallery**

by Yasmina Nysten

Artist Reza Aramesh was born in 1970 in Ahwaz, a small town in Iran, where he grew up desperately dreaming of an unfamiliar and exhilarating world miles away from this perceived enclave. The sanctuary he found in his grandparents' garden was soon transformed into a nightmare when the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980, replacing his clear, star-filled skies with dark smoke and warplanes. This memory was the original act of violence and oppression that solidified his artistic prerogative.

At 15, Aramesh was New York-bound, excited at the prospect of big-city life. In an unexpected turn of events, his trajectory was shortened as the plane had to land in London, where they told him that he could not proceed with his journey because of the problematic relationship between Iraq and America. So Aramesh he settled in London, where he earned an MA in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths University in 1997.

Working in photography, sculpture, video and performance, Aramesh has held many performances and exhibitions in institutions including London's Barbican Centre, the Tate Britain and the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. He has also explored the use of more daring and unconventional places to showcase his work, such as public squares and nightclubs.

Some of his "Actions," as the artist likes to call his pieces, consisting of enigmatic humanoid sculptures in a variety of materials, including bronze, can be seen at Dubai's Leila Heller Gallery until January 4, 2017.

Aramesh draws from a deep well of historical knowledge in art, culture and film that he has cultivated throughout his life. His work exemplifies his understanding of man's intrinsically violent nature and voices his protest against the ways it is promulgated through mass media. He chooses images of wars and violent events to magnify the greater issue into an individual subject, stripping to its very essence what would otherwise be an ambiguous visual portrayal of a war with no personal ends.

There is an overall numbing effect that the barrage of public imagery bestows upon us all. Aramesh takes it upon himself to isolate individuals or small groups of people from those pictures, and then decontextualises them, in order to show viewers the full scope of the human cost of conflict. In his work, the human body finds simple, poetic contortions, caused by the unresolved burdens of mankind. ■

**REZA ARAMESH** continues until January 4, 2017, at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai



*Action 137: 6:45pm,*  
3 May 2012, Ramla,  
2014, polished marble,  
136 x 35 x 35 cm