

Slavs and Tatars

Simurgh Self-Help

4th February – 4th April 2025

The Third Line is pleased to announce *Simurgh Self-Help*, our third solo exhibition with the artist collective Slavs and Tatars. This exhibition presents a new body of work inspired by Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne - Département des Aigles* (1968-1972), one of the most influential works of conceptual art of the 20th century. In *Simurgh Self-Help*, Slavs and Tatars embark on an inventive 'translation' of the eagle through the lens of Simurgh, a mythical bird deeply rooted in Turkic and Persianate folklore, Sufi traditions, and the literature of the Caucasus and Central Asia.



Slavs and Tatars, Rabbit's Blood, 2025, woollen yarn, 400 × 300 cm

Gallery One is dedicated to exploring the mythology of Simurgh, a winged creature often depicted with the body of a peacock and the head of a dog. Simurgh is both female and male, though most frequently portrayed as female, and is said to have witnessed the destruction of the world three times over. The exhibition juxtaposes the eagle and the Simurgh to offer a speculative history, presenting an alter-ego

for contemporary societies dealing with dilemmas about national identity and nationalism. Through this 'translation', Slavs and Tatars expand Broodthaers' critique to include the often-overlooked region of Central Asia and the Caucasus, an area historically situated between fading empires - Russian, Ottoman, and Persian - and contemporary revanchist forces. If the eagle serves as a repository for nationalism and empire, rooted in geopolitical concerns, the Simurgh evokes an empire of senses and a dominion of the otherworldly, bridging the affective and the extractive.

In Gallery Two, the exhibition pivots to explore melons as Central Asian repositories of value, knowledge, and world-building. Writing, central to Slavs and Tatars' practice, appears in the texture of melon skins and within the pages of books. Here, the melons, depicted as glass lamps or mirrors, tell the story of the region via flora, rather than fauna.

Slavs and Tatars have long been drawn to the peripheries of knowledge, the edges of belief systems, and the margins of rituals - places where syncretism and hybridity thrive. Today, however, they also seek to activate and redeem what unites us, as much as what distinguishes us.

Simurgh Self-Help is the first significant new body of work by Slavs and Tatars since *Pickle Politics* (2016-2023). Following its regional debut at The Third Line, works from the exhibition will travel for solo presentations at Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany, and Frac Pays de la Loire, France, in 2025.

About Slavs and Tatars

Slavs and Tatars is an art collective devoted to an area East of the former Berlin Wall and West of the Great Wall of China, termed Eurasia. Their practice is primarily based on three activities: exhibitions, books, and lecture-performances. Since its inception in 2006, the collective has shown a keen grasp of polemical issues in society, clearing new paths for contemporary discourse via an idiosyncratic form of knowledge production including popular culture, spiritual and esoteric traditions, oral histories, modern myths, as well as scholarly research with a particular focus on cultures marginalized by Russian and Soviet imperialism. With a heady mix of high and low-brow humor, the artists turn to sculptures, installations, and text to excavate and explore a geography that is equally imagined as it is political. In 2020, Slavs and Tatars opened Pickle Bar, a Slavic aperitivo bar-cum-project space a few doors down from their studio in the Moabit district of Berlin, as well as a residency and mentorship program for young professionals from the region.

The collective's work has been exhibited at major museums and biennials internationally, including Tate Modern, London, UK; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland; 58th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; 10th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE; 8th Berlin Biennial, Berlin, Germany; 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece; 9th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea; and currently at the 2nd Islamic Art Biennial, Jeddah, KSA.

Their work has also been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2012); Secession, Vienna, Austria (2012); Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, US (2014); Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (2015); NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2015); Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, USA (2016); Salt, Istanbul, Turkey (2017); Albertinum, Dresden, Germany (2018); and most recently MHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium (2023) and Basement Roma, Rome, Italy (2023).

Their works are in important public and private collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Pinakothek der Modern, Munich, Germany; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland; Re Rebaudengo Foundation, Turin, Italy; and the Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE, among others.

About The Third Line

Founded in 2005, The Third Line is a Dubai-based gallery that represents contemporary artists locally, regionally, and internationally. With over 19 years of dedicated commitment to the arts, it has become a pioneering platform for established talent and emerging voices from the region and its diaspora, building a dynamic program that explores the diversity of practices in the region.

In addition to its exhibitions, The Third Line engages in the production of art publications in English and Arabic and hosts numerous non-profit, alternative programs that add to the discourse on art, film, music, and literature in the region.

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Anuar Khalifi, Bady Dalloul, Farah Al Qasimi, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Jordan Nassar, Kamran Samimi, Laleh Khorramian, Lamya Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Nima Nabavi, Poursan Jinchi, Rana Begum, Sahand Hesamiyan, Sara Naim, Sarah Awad, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Sophia Al Maria, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Vian Sora, yasiin bey, and Youssef Nabil.

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