ALMINE RECH

Ali Cherri
Soul Witness

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For the first time, several of Ali Cherri's (b. 1976, Beirut) major bodies of work are gathered. Spanning audiovisual works, sculpture, watercolour drawings, and installation, the exhibition *Soul Witness* explores how institutions of power — the nation-state, the military and even the museum — shape the ways history is constructed and remembered.

'Soul Witness' traces an arc from the individual body under authority to the monumental structures — both material and ideological — that enforce it. Isolated figures, guardians, and mourners sit alongside dismembered statues andfragile hybrid creatures. Each asks which stories are preserved, which are erased, and who has the power to decide.

✌✌✌Cherri's work often begins with the body in a state of suspension: watching, waiting, never quite at ease, as the site where larger political forces are inscribed. One such body is that of the soldier, who appears in two ✌of the artist's ✌most recent installations. These soldiers are not presented as monumental heroes but as fragile, often isolated, individuals caught in systems of surveillance and discipline. In his new film *The Sentinel* (2026), a French recruit drifts betweenthe ordered routines of the barracks and nightly encounters that destabilise his place within the military order.

Other works in the exhibition combine mud with bronze, marble, or found stone fragments. These material juxtapositions reverse traditional hierarchies: the "fragile" mud undermines the "permanent" bronze, suggesting a shift in power away from imperial symbols towards more vulnerable, human registers. Cherri often incorporates archaeological fragments acquired from markets and auctions into hybrid sculptures, returning displaced objects to a form of public display. In doing so, he draws attention to how museums frame artefacts, stripping or reshaping their meanings in line with national and colonial narratives.

Curator: Helena Kritis