

Adeela Suleman
The Rising Crescendo
of the Band Baja
New Works

14 October – 6 November 2026

Private View:
Tuesday 13 October 2026, 6–8 pm

Artist Walkthrough:
Saturday 17 October 2026, 3 pm

Grosvenor Gallery
35 Bury Street
London SW1Y 6AU



Grosvenor Gallery, in collaboration with Canvas Gallery, Karachi, is delighted to present *The Rising Crescendo of the Band Baja*, an exhibition of new works by acclaimed Pakistani artist **Adeela Suleman**, on view from **14 October to 6 November 2026**.

In this new body of work, Suleman turns her attention to the exuberant spectacle of the South Asian **Band Baja**. Drummers, trumpeters and uniformed bandsmen appear amid dense forests, flowers, foliage and wild animals, creating scenes that are at once celebratory, theatrical and strangely dreamlike.

The band walla is a familiar presence at weddings and public celebrations across the subcontinent: brightly dressed, highly visible and inseparable from the noise and excitement of the procession. Suleman removes these figures from their expected surroundings and places them within richly imagined landscapes. The implied clamour of drums and brass instruments is held within the silence of the image, lending the works an underlying sense of anticipation and unease.

Behind this familiar spectacle lies a more complex history. Brass and ceremonial bands were employed across the British Empire as expressions of military order and imperial authority. In India, however, their music, instruments and public spectacle were absorbed into local culture and given new meanings. Martial rhythms and processions could become expressions of collective identity and, within the independence movement, instruments of mobilisation and resistance. Suleman's *Band Baja* therefore carries histories of both **ceremony and authority, celebration and defiance**.

This tension between **beauty and disturbance** has long been central to Suleman's practice. Drawing on South Asian decorative traditions, miniature painting, textiles and metalwork, she

uses seductive surfaces to explore themes of violence, memory and power. Flowers, birds and idealised landscapes may initially appear lyrical, only to reveal darker narratives on closer inspection.

Material plays a fundamental role in this effect. Suleman's distinctive repoussé works are made from sheets of metal hammered from the reverse to create raised reliefs and then worked from the front to refine their detail. **The hardness and permanence of copper and brass are transformed into intricate, highly ornamented surfaces** populated by birds, flowers, foliage, animals, armour and weapons. In this new series, the metals take on an added charge, echoing the gleam of brass instruments, the polish of insignia and the pageantry of the band itself.

The exhibition also includes **a textile work combining appliqué, hand and machine free-motion embroidery on Atlas Jamawar Banarasi, Katan/Poth silk, brocade Kimkhwab, crystal and zari tassels**. Rich in texture, pattern, and colour, the work extends Suleman's longstanding interest in craftsmanship, ornament, and labour, while drawing on textile traditions associated with ceremony, luxury, and dress across South Asia.



Detail from the tapestry *The Rising Crescendo of the Band Baja*, 2025-2026

The textile broadens the historical scope of the exhibition by drawing connections between the independence movements of **India and Ireland** and the circulation of anti-colonial ideas between

the two countries. These links were formalised in the early 1930s through the Indian-Irish Independence League in Dublin.

Within the work, Suleman brings together figures and symbols associated with colonial power and resistance, including **Annie Besant, General Reginald Dyer and Bhagat Singh**, alongside motifs such as the **Irish shamrock and the Indian lotus**. Their presence weaves together histories of empire, nationalism and self-determination, while extending the artist's use of decorative beauty as a vehicle for more complex political and historical narratives.

Bands traditionally announce an arrival, accompanying wedding processions and transforming the street into a temporary performance space. Here, however, there is no obvious destination. The musicians appear suspended within the landscape, marching towards something unseen. The title, *The Rising Crescendo of the Band Baja*, heightens this sense of anticipation: the music seems to be building and approaching, even as the image itself remains silent.

These new works continue Suleman's exploration of contradiction — **celebration and uncertainty, ornament and violence, beauty and brutality, authority and resistance** — while introducing a vivid new cast of performers into her visual world.

About the Artist

Adeela Suleman (b. 1970) is one of Pakistan's leading contemporary artists. Based in Karachi, her multidisciplinary practice encompasses sculpture, metalwork, installation, textiles and works on paper. Her work is recognised for combining elaborate craftsmanship and ornamental beauty with themes of violence, mortality, political history and collective memory.

[Please follow this link for the press kit.](#)

For more information, please contact the gallery:

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