

The Banyan Tree **Mervat Allam**

27 March - 20 April 2019

Gypsum is pleased to present "The Banyan Tree", a solo show by Cairo-based painter Noonie Allam. "The Banyan Tree" is a series of meticulous and illustrative acrylic paintings and drawings that portray cyborg creatures, combining dramatic compositions of industrial and machine parts juxtaposed with human organs, botanical elements and cellular forms. The work depicts the metamorphosis of the inanimate into the organic and vice versa. The result is a complex hybrid, possessing a character and a life of its own, demonstrating an evolutionary process through interconnectedness.

The work is based on images sourced from manuals, books, magazines, internet searches and photographs taken by the artist at sites of interest. Executed in bold and vibrant colors, these assemblage paintings resemble the visual language of advertising in reference to a current temporality and draws from a broad genre of contemporary digital art.

The title of the series refers to the banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*), which is characterized by roots that mature into thick, woody trunks that can become indistinguishable from the primary trunk with age. It represents a notion of interconnectedness at a molecular level that informs this whole project. The artist's research works through an extensive body of literature on mechanization and philosophy, from Newton to Descartes and Duchamp in the arts. In rejecting the absolutism of most canonical theories, Allam chooses to adopt a holistic approach to the questions surrounding the governance and perception of relations between man, technology and nature, and goes on to explore their inseparable evolution on a visual and formal level.

Bio

Mervat Allam (b.1982), graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Art from the American University in Cairo in 2004. Her work has been shown at Sharjah Art Gallery, AUC, Cairo, Ubuntu Gallery, Cairo, Palace of Arts Zamalek, Cairo, Goethe Institute, Cairo, and Akhenaton Gallery, Cairo. Her paintings are in the collections of The American University in Cairo and the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art. Allam lives and works in Cairo, Egypt.