



Tamara Al Samerraei, Entry, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 41 x 41 cm (framed)

THE CHEATING HAND OF RANDOMNESS

16 December 2020 - 31 January, 2022

Opening Reception on the 16th of December, 7-9pm

Gypsum is pleased to present *The Cheating Hand of Randomness*, a group exhibition showcasing work created at the juncture of chance and intentionality. Featuring painting, film and photography by Tamara Al Samerraei, Basim Magdy and Cyrus Mahboubian, the exhibition takes as its thematic thread the common methodological approaches of the artists, whose practices involve varied iterations of spontaneous gathering, and deliberate assembly. In making way for liminality in their art-making, the artists allow for a relational and responsive creative process to emerge, one that emphasizes material agency, and is perhaps more suited to our current moment of collective uncertainty. A preoccupation with vast landscapes devoid of human inhabitants further connects the artworks, which seemingly reflect a post-anthropocene world, at times brooding and melancholic, at others playful and serene.

In a series of ten new, small-scale acrylic on canvas paintings, Tamara Al Samerraei engages in a minimalist rendering of alien landscapes. Vast vistas display opaque pools, fiery orange accents settle on jagged rocks, while veins of red snake across ethereal plains. Created in parallel with Al Samerraei's work on larger scale paintings, these landscapes are executed on leftover canvas scraps. They embody a formal experimentation that sees the artist work outside of a pre-planned schema, allowing for a more genuine, uninhibited process to emerge, unhampered by the artist's expectations.

In his film *M.A.G.N.E.T* (2019) Basim Magdy creates a world in which the grounding force of gravity goes berserk, intensifying its unrelenting pull on objects towards the earth's underbelly, and pulling humanity — doomed to repeat its errors under the guise of progress — to a future fate eerily reminiscent of the present. In this atemporal world, forgotten monoliths carry messages from distant ancestors, while roaring magma portends ecological and financial disaster for a society unburdened by memory, weighed down by shortsightedness. Like much of the artist's work, the film is comprised of material shot during Magdy's travels, which is then assembled outside the confines of a linear filmic narrative. Accompanying the film is a new painting by Magdy — *The Man who Stole a Bone from the Sahara Confronted by the Shadow of War* — inspired by the unfortunate tale of a German paleontologist's early 20th century excavation in Egypt, and executed in the artist's signature fluorescent hues.

Cyrus Mahboubian presents a sequence of delicately grafted minute black and white polaroid composites, reflecting forested, shadowy terrains. The attentively selected frames are captured during Mahboubian's otherwise unplanned countryside walks, whose meandering routes the artist sees as a meditative resistance to the demands of urban living, and the clamour of technological ubiquity. Often pulling from his preexisting archive for the creation of the composites, the artist merges and juxtaposes fragments of standalone images to create gossamer, diptych worlds.

The exhibited works foreground material agency, spotlighting the role of the artists' chosen medium as an active participant in their artmaking. Whether through the grainy, painterly qualities of Super 16mm film used by Magdy, the scarcity of the polaroid film stock used sparingly by Mahboubian, or the smaller scale demanded by the canvas scraps of Al Samerraei, the availability and physical properties of their chosen materials exert a tangible influence on each artist's process, subjecting the results to another layer of chance and conditionality.

BIOS

Tamara Al Samerraei (b. 1977, Kuwait) is a painter whose art practice is derived from photography. Her work is characterised by a dark playfulness, diffusing melancholy throughout the familiar and familial spaces it often portrays. Al Samerraei holds a BA in Fine Arts from the Lebanese American University in Beirut, where she lives and works.

Al Samerraei has shown her work in solo exhibitions at Beirut's Marfa' Projects and Agial Art Gallery, as well as at Gypsum, Cairo. She has participated in group and duo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova + MSUM in Ljubljana, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, Rome's MAXXI museum, Sharjah Biennial13, Kuwait's Sultan Gallery, Beirut's Homeworks 7, Beirut Art Center, Paris' Institut Du Monde Arabe, Munich's White Box, Kiel's Fladernbunker, and Kuwait's Dar Al Funoon.

Basim Magdy (b. 1977, Assiut, Egypt) is an artist and filmmaker with an eye for the satirical and a taste for the absurd. Known for his painterly manipulation of analogue film and his poetic, ambiguous texts, Magdy's work reflects a deep preoccupation with excavating fictitious pasts and imagining dystopic futures, utilising references ranging from contemporary advertising jargon to science fiction tropes.

His work is in the collections of MoMA Museum of Modern Art, New York, Guggenheim, New York, MCA Museum of Contemporary Art and the MoCP Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, as well as Paris' Centre Pompidou and Fondation Louis Vuitton, the Deutsche Bank Collection, Sharjah Art Foundation, Mathaf: Museum of Modern Arab Art, Doha, ARTER, Istanbul, among others.

Cyrus Mahboubian (b. 1986, London) is known for his contemplative approach to photography and continued use of analogue materials, especially polaroid. He has stated that his intentionally slow process is a response to technology's increasing influence in our lives.

Mahboubian's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows internationally, including 'Fotografia Europea' festival, Italy, and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. His first book, VISCERA, was published in 2019 with the book launch hosted by Sotheby's. He has led workshops at Tate Britain and The Photographers' Gallery. His studio is based in St. James's Park, Central London.