

## Engram

### Samy Elias

28 February - 28 March, 2021

Gypsum is pleased to announce Engram, a solo show by Samy Elias. Samy Elias's series of mixed media on wood panels starts with found images of iconic photographs and paintings, compositions that we immediately recognize as familiar forms that have created our collective consciousness of image-making. However, through Elias's work, one is unable to discern the details; he blurs an image and manipulates it to an abstraction of its origins. In a way, he attempts to do away with sources, and compels the viewer to interact liberally with historical references of classical portraiture and landscape, creating a complex moment of recognition and speculation. These are images that surround us in mass reproductions, museum retrospectives and stock images on the internet; they form our ideas of beauty and what we deem sublime.

The laborious process starts with each piece as a direct print or an image transfer to a carefully selected and treated wooden panel. The image is then sanded down and scraped away from the surface to be painted over with acrylics and water colors. This process is repeated until the image completely dissolves into the wood grain. The surface then becomes an integral part of the painting. Through this rigorous working and reworking of the image, it breaks down into a ghostly impression. And in creating that tentative space for an alternative viewership, Elias invites us to revisit our romantic notions of these forms and identify the ways we would choose to supplement their faded features.

#### BIO

Samy Elias is an artist, collector, and entrepreneur. He holds a diploma in Finance and the Art Market from Sotheby's Art Institute, a BA in Art Vision and Economics from the American University in Cairo, and an MA in Design Studies from Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design. Early on in his career, Samy won the Youth Salon Egyptian National Competition held at the Cairo Opera House. Since then, he has organized talks about design in various spaces around Cairo, including the Goethe Institute and British Council, and has lectured at The American University in Cairo. Samy has taken part in the Cyfuniad 2001 in Barmouth, Wales, a residency organized by Liverpool Hope University and exhibited his work in the Public Art Exhibition, Townhouse Gallery, Akhenaton Gallery and the Goethe Institute.