



## ATHIER *AFTER DENUATION*

6 April – 27 May 2017

Opening reception: Thursday, 6 April from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Artist in conversation with Dr. Bahaa Abudaya: Thursday, 6 April at 7.30 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *After Denudation*, the solo exhibition of painter Athier Mousawi.

### About the Show

Curated by Dr. Bahaa Abudaya, a scholar of modern and contemporary Arab art, *After Denudation* highlights new paintings by the artist that take microscopic images of sand as a starting point for a reconsideration of spatial identity and the natural and man-made phenomena that shape it. Continuing his exploration of abstraction as a means of recording reality, specifically shifts in space

and time, Athier also places an emphasis on form in his latest body of work, using the physical characteristics and structure of the canvas as visual devices.

Fascinated by the rapid growth and development that have transformed the Gulf, Athier takes the urban development of desert terrains as the basis for a detailed investigation of the intricate workings of nature, particularly its inbuilt system of generation, erosion, and replenishment. The artist's latest series contrasts the natural processes that occur in the formation of these environments with the ongoing expansion of cities.

In the context of Athier's works, the concept of denudation denotes the damage to timeless landscapes that has resulted from massive building projects. His compositions suggest that as the natural cycle of the desert has been disrupted, however, there is hidden structure within the sand — the very nothingness itself — that is revealed, showing intricacy and design when magnified. The artist depicts forms inspired by these sand particles alongside the abstracted debris of formed cityscapes, what he refers to as 'the organic versus the mechanical,' in riotous asymmetrical compositions. In doing so, he offers an alternative view of desert sprawl, as the efforts of humankind have yet to achieve the splendour of nature. The unusual shapes of his raw linen canvases encourage these scenes to explode into space, as the beauty and power of sand — something so unassuming — remains uninhibited.

#### About the Artist

In recent years Athier's work has centred on posing unanswerable questions against undefined answers, forming a visual narrative between the two. Since completing his MA from Central Saint Martins in London, the subject of much of his work has been Iraq and his diasporic relationship to his foreign homeland, as well as the concept of *nostalgic referencing* in how we idolise and remember our past, present, and future. Of the main constructs used in Athier's painting, the initial response is that of scale and colour, which guide the viewer through his multidimensional compositions. Symbolism in these large-scale paintings is weaved through layers of fluid figurative forms and hardedge geometric shapes.

Born in 1982, Athier lives and works between Paris, London, and Istanbul, and holds a graduate degree in Communication Design with Illustration from Central Saint Martins, UK. Athier's selected solo and group exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2016); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2016, 2013); Nest Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2014); Edge of Arabia, London, UK and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2013); Cuadro Fine Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2013); National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2011); The Royal Academy, London, UK (2011); Tashkent International Art Biennale, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (2011).

#### Exhibition Facts

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Regular Hours: Mon-Fri: 10.00 am to 8.00 pm, Sat: 12.00 to 6.00 pm

Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, Across from Beirut Marina

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