

Photosynthetic Forms

26 November 2024 – 31 January 2025



"No one's relationship with nature is pure and simple. Nature isn't pure and simple, either"

Waddington Custot Dubai is delighted to present Marc Quinn's solo exhibition, *Photosynthetic Forms*. The exhibition serves as an exploration of humanity's complex relationship with nature and our environment, which we remain fundamentally a part of. Playing with scale and materiality, Quinn is able to draw out the balance that exists between us and nature, revealing how almost everything in the world today has been manipulated and influenced by human desire.

Our relationship to nature is often one of control, from gardening to agriculture, we tame nature to serve our wants and needs. The bonsai tree, in the form most know it, is a tree restricted to a miniaturised scale through human intervention. Normally, the size and shape of a tree is formed by its natural surroundings - its exposure to light, shade and nutrients. A bonsai is instead shaped by humans, for the pleasure of its baroque meanderings. Quinn's *Held by Desire (Cloud Garden)* is a bronze portrait of a bonsai tree, which is in fact a sculpture of a sculpture, seemingly natural but created by human intention.

Works such as *Light into Life (The Morphology of Forms)*, *Light into Life (The Release of Oxygen)* depict enlarged orchid varieties created in reflective stainless steel, alongside the palm-leaf *Singularity (Sabal)*. These works reflect both the viewer and their surroundings, becoming analogue screens, activated by their audience. These screens are unlike those we use in our phones, that take us away from ourselves. Instead, these sculptures embody us in our environment and encourage us to be here, now.

Similarly, the *NATURENOW* series depicts nature through digital lens, comprising paintings of screenshots made through a phone, that are then overlaid with fractured glass. When one can see anything and everything, whether real or artificially generated through a phone screen, Quinn emphasises the role played by technology in mediating our experience of the world around us.

Quinn's *Our Botanic Selves (Reflected)* (*Happy Tree*) and (*Pacific Yew*) sculptures further make tangible the hidden threads that connect us to our environment. Inspired by herbarium samples of cancer fighting drugs - these wall hanging sculptures are again made of polished stainless steel. With this series Quinn wanted to tell the story of humanity's reliance on nature and celebrate how constructive and productive our relationship with plants can often be.

Objects of nature have always been attributed symbolic meaning by humans and for this exhibition, plants become the material for revealing what makes us human, reflecting our desires, histories and beliefs and reinforcing the importance of our relationship with nature, that we are all connected.

BIOGRAPHY

Marc Quinn (British, born 1964) is a leading contemporary artist. He first came to prominence in the early 1990s, when he and several peers redefined what it was to make and experience contemporary art. Marc Quinn makes art about what it is to be a person living in the world – whether it concerns Man's relationship with nature and how that is mediated by human desire; or what identity and beauty mean and why people are compelled to transform theirs; or representing current, social history in his work. His work also connects frequently and meaningfully with art history, from Modern masters right back to antiquity.