



THE NEW YORKER



ART

IBRAHIM EL-SALAH

March 1 2016 - April 24 2016

The enigmatic, hybridized forms of this Sudanese painter, whose dancers and totems are partially informed by the swooping lines of calligraphic Arabic, have recently captivated curators and historians working on a more global history of modernism. (Born in 1930, he now lives in England; in 2013, he became the first African artist to receive a retrospective at the Tate Modern.) His paintings of faceless women, made on cardboard by filling in the composition's negative space, pay an evident, even obsequious homage to Matisse. But a striking six-panel painting, a quorum of curvaceous totems the color of burnished copper, is bound to shatter some longstanding assumptions about where in the world modern art flourished.

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