

A detailed charcoal or pencil sketch of a dense urban street scene, likely in Beirut. The drawing is characterized by intricate, overlapping lines and shading, creating a sense of depth and complexity. In the center, a figure is visible, possibly a person walking or standing amidst the structures. The overall composition is busy and textured, capturing the essence of a crowded city environment. The text 'HALA EZZEDDINE' and 'PORTRAIT OF BEIRUT' is overlaid in the upper right quadrant.

HALA EZZEDDINE
PORTRAIT OF BEIRUT

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PORTRAIT OF BEIRUT

The why of landscape

a glancing projection carves
and caresses
presses buildings, renders sky.

Always half
eye
that is soft contact
light into dark,
a becoming that is
always
half
eye

The skies in the paintings and drawings of Hala Ezzedine are calm, and yet perhaps the most expressive aspect of her work. These images are landscape because the existence of sky asks what else can they be.

Only one drawing, rendered in sanguine on wood, diverges from the compositional format that includes the calm slices of pink, grey and blue that tell the viewer to look up, that the air is there. Here, the sky is given up in favour of a wholly internal place, cave, wall, surface, moving closer to abstraction, with no marker of land, no interior demarcation of space.

These are places inside places
depth and more depth.

A sky the place for the eye to rest

Although these works exist only just within the world of perspective, hovering as they do between abstraction and recognisable form, they are landscapes, and so retain the possibility of the viewer entering the scene. Yet, the subject remains resolutely obtuse, fleeting. And so, if there was another word for landscape, use that name.

A suggested centre
draws the eye to a dark remembering
details of a building half seen then,
what is half seen now.

What is landscape but
the muted darkness
that delineates road from wall

a glancing projection that carves and caresses
presses buildings, renders sky.

The landscape idea, from its European roots, is understood as rooted in the shape of a place, a landskip, 'skip', 'scape', and then shape, of the land. This initial concept of landscape holds a sense of an emergent perspectival seeing, rather than the flat, two-dimensions seen in earlier works. It also marks an art historical shift towards the description of the building blocks of our environment, the sea, sky, buildings, rocks and grounds, for example, as significant in their own right, rather than as merely useful backgrounds for human subjects.

Landscape remains a deceptively simple art. An emerging depiction of place as it appeared to the eye was in reality much more subjective than its name suggests. Landscape imagery has, from its inception, contained myth, symbolism and dreams all encased in the comforting vision that is the perspective view, and the feeling of static reality that it provides. In the lineage of the impressionists, including such renowned luminaries of the Lebanese oeuvre as Omar Onsi, working some two hundred years after the emergence of the landscape ideal, landscape emerges as a place of pure subjectivity, the perception of a place as experienced through the artist. For Ezzedine, her cityscapes forgo the shape of the world for its volume, depth and space.

Order is important here. A considered yet intuitive distribution of colour and tone lights up her sense of place, the interplay of an internal structure emerging from inside the artist, and an eye to the physical world, the city of Beirut. A towering ruin inside and out, a babel, a mythology in itself.

A muted painting, acrylic on paper, shows the glancing, dancing nature of the work most clearly. A central tower in grey is incrementally more peaceful in colour and tone as it reaches sky, the pastel palette shifting to bright highlights of golden yellow to the left and bottom of the paper. But it is the peace of the tower in the sky that the eye is first taken, before being thrown down towards a dark menagerie of forms, almost circling, below.

This throwing down of the eye is felt again and again in the mark-making of her pencil drawings, which, in their strength and masterful employ of tonal range and weight, appear to enjoy a more expansive freedom than the paintings. Bright highlights are created through the rubber while sharp, dark staccatos fire across the composition, punctuated by feathered streaks. One image describes a partial submergence, a feeling of a city rising or slipping under water or ice. The lines that might denote ground in this composition are left undefined - what is on the ground is also inside, half in and half out. The composition becomes an enclosure and the city busts forth, uncontained.

The power of these drawings lies in the ability to retain the clear character of a defining three-dimensional urban space while at the same time staying connected to the mark as a character in its own right.

She wants to dedicate a line
strings

-A blast

Here, enter fully the memory and dream scape
the darkness of the street a contrast in the light of the sky

surprising that this is daylight,
the streets seem dark, as if it must be night.

It is impossible to separate Beirut from these works. The streets outside of the gallery lean in just this way, impossible they are still standing, that such fragile, vibrant lines can hold up a city. There is not a street that looks this way to the eye, but there are streets that feel this way to the mind.

From first glance there is tension in the drawings and paintings of Ezzedine, and directness. The attempt to render the city of Beirut is perhaps fated to result in contradiction, a series of tangled and competing forces. There is life in these works, sea and sky and fallen light and dark.

Growing up in the direct aftermath of Lebanon's civil war in the Beqaa to the south of Beirut, Ezzedine's Lebanon is one that necessarily holds conflict. This is an art of tension, balance, perhaps of compromise, movement, contradictory charges that are core to the artist and her work.

There is destruction also, the very darks hold the lighter areas, the towering, sometimes too large forms of the tower can be flesh coloured, moving. This is the chaos after a blast, perhaps the blast, but before the dust settles, yet somehow stable, grounded. The destructive energy is also force, energy, movement.

There is movement, as if entering another world, as if moving through a computer game, one that can be explored and known, but that is never quite one's own. The why of landscape,

always half
eye
that is soft contact
light into dark,
a becoming that is
always
half
eye



Beirut | Sanguine on wood | 50x70cm | 2023

Amy Todman 2024



Rooftop Scene

Acrylic on canvas | 120x120 cm | 2022



Before Purple Sky

Acrylic on canvas | 150x150 cm | 2023



Warm Horizon

Acrylic on canvas | 95x125 cm | 2023



El Murr Tower and the Adjacent Building
Acrylic on canvas | 160x200 cm | 2021



Trees in Mar Elias

Acrylic on canvas | 150x150 cm | 2023

April in Beirut

Acrylic on canvas | 160x200 cm | 2022





Greenspace

Acrylic on canvas | 150x150 cm | 2021



Surrounding Holiday Inn
Acrylic on canvas | 200x200 cm | 2023



Untitled

Acrylic on carton | 50x70 cm | 2022 (above)

Acrylic on wood | 50x70 cm | 2023 (below)



Untitled

Acrylic on canvas | 50x70 cm (above) | 2021

Acrylic on canvas | 60x40 cm (below) | 2021



Day and Night
Acrylic on canvas | 200x210cm | 2022

Downtown in Between
Acrylic on canvas | 160x180 cm | 2022





Mar Mkhayel, The Facade Facing The Sea I
Acrylic on canvas | 140x160cm | 2022



Mar Mkhayel, The Facade Facing The Sea II
Acrylic on canvas | 180x210cm | 2022



Blue Road

Acrylic on canvas | 210x210cm | 2023



Storm

Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2021



4 August
Pencil on carton | 150x250 cm | 2021



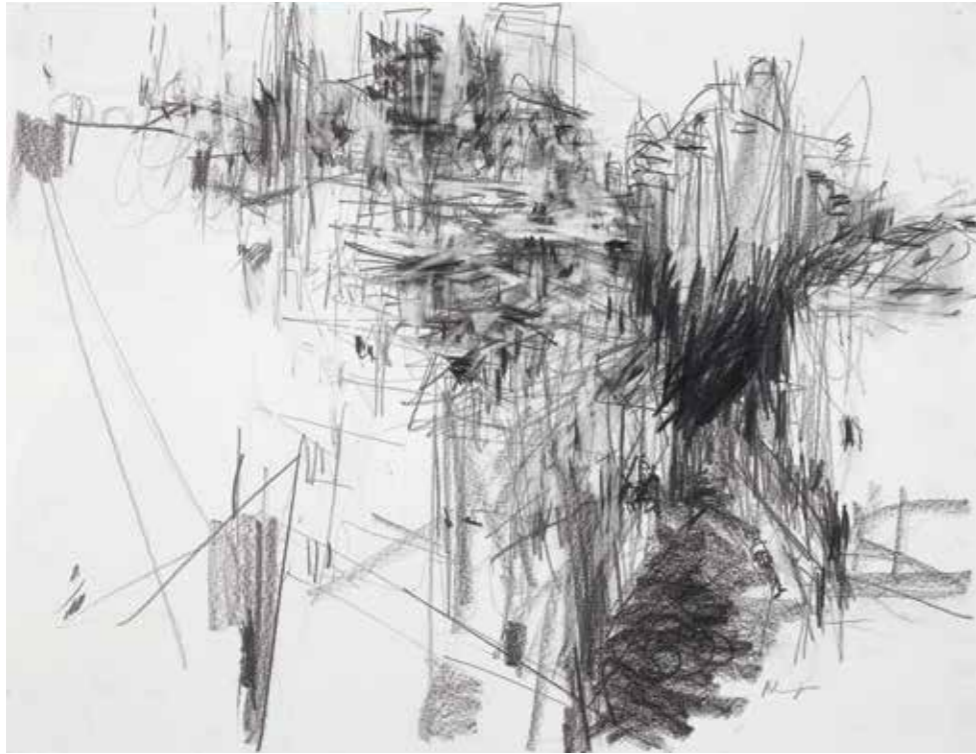
Vistas of the City
Pencil on carton | 150x150cm | 2022



Zaiytunay Bay
Pencil on carton | 150x150cm | 2021

Mar Mkhayel, The Facade Facing The Sea III
Pencil on carton | 160x150cm | 2021





Untitled
Pencil on carton | 50x70 cm each | 2023



Road
Pencil on carton | 50x50cm (above) | 2023



City Side
Pencil on carton | 75x103 cm (below) | 2022

About the Artist

Hala Ezzedine (born. 1989, Aarsal) received both Bachelor and Masters degrees in fine arts from the Fine Arts Institute at the Lebanese University, in 2009 and 2014 respectively. Since graduating she has been the recipient of a number of distinguished prizes and awards. In 2015 she was awarded the prestigious Boghossian Prize for Painting and in 2016 the Génération Orient First Prize, L'Orient Le Jour, Beirut. In 2019 she was recognised by the emerging artist prize of the 33rd Salon d'automne of Sursok Museum, Beirut and in 2021 was awarded the best first-time solo exhibitor for the 'gallery' magazine prize. Between 2022 and 2023 she participated in a six month art residency at the Cité Internationale des arts Paris and in August-September 2020 the artist Residency of the Analix Forever Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland.

Her first solo exhibition was held in 2018 at Agial gallery, Beirut, followed by a second also at Agial titled 'In Search of Light' in 2020. In 2019 she was a participant in the 33rd Salon d'automne of Sursok museum, Beirut, Lebanon and in 2018 was a participant in the CAB International Art Symposium 4, Amman, Jordan. In September 2021 she participated in the "LUMIERE DU LIBAN" exhibition at the Arab World institute and in the same year was a participant of "THE WOUNDED ART" - "L'ART BLESSÉ" at Villa Audi.



SALEH BARAKAT GALLERY

صالون البركات

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