

## Looming Landscapes

Hala Ezzeddine paints portraits of individual children she has come to know and teach in her hometown of Aarsal in the Bekaa region of Lebanon. A majority of her students are refugees who have fled across the border with the eruption of the Syrian war. Rather than studies of isolated personages, she frames her figures within a desolate landscape. On one hand, the relationship between the human figure and nature is maintained by a distinction between foreground and background, but on another, the landscape looms into the foreground and engulfs the figure. Her brushstrokes gesture toward a total abstraction, cutting through the figure and melting it into the textual flatness of the canvas. However, the figure remains prominent in the center of the painting. Out of the fusion of 19th century realism and mid-20th century high modernism, Ezzeddine paints a nature which is subject to the material conditions brought about by human activity – she paints a nature which belongs entirely to our contemporary world.





