## **ENCOUNTERS—ONGOING**

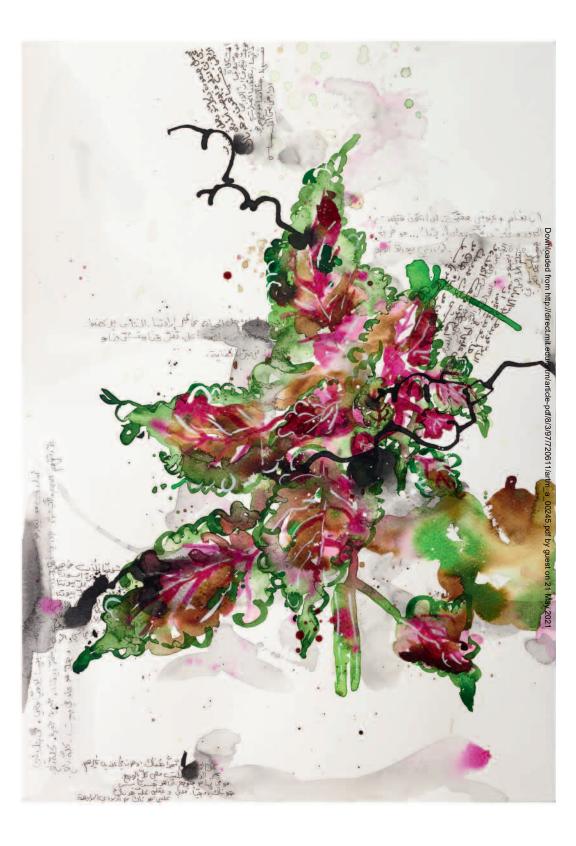
HIBA KALACHE

The series of drawings *Encounters*—*Ongoing* stems from chance meetings on leisurely road trips around the mountains of Lebanon. The drawings act as markers of my conversations with landowners, farmers, and people directly working in the fields.

The formal particularities of drawing, and specifically the use of ink washes, allows for an approach that is both intuitive and intentional. This approach reproduces the spontaneity of these accidental or brief exchanges with people who have a vested interest in Lebanese land. Each conversation is represented by a simple tree branch or a fragment of a (flowering) plant belonging to the site and moment the encounter took place. These fragments index encounters in which farmers shared their stories, experiences, or relationship to the land and its borders. Excerpts from our exchanges are also handwritten in Arabic on the picture plane.

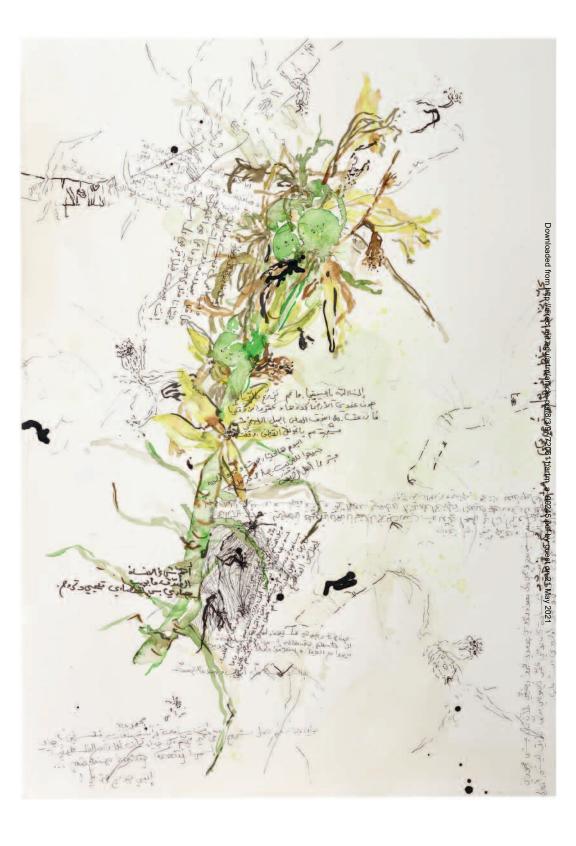
In the directness of the creative process, and the abstraction of the conversations, this project alludes to, and yet blurs, the sectarian divisions upon which the ownership of land is based, as well as the present geopolitical context. What I share is the marking of unplanned encounters through representations of fragmented personal accounts along specific terrains and borders.















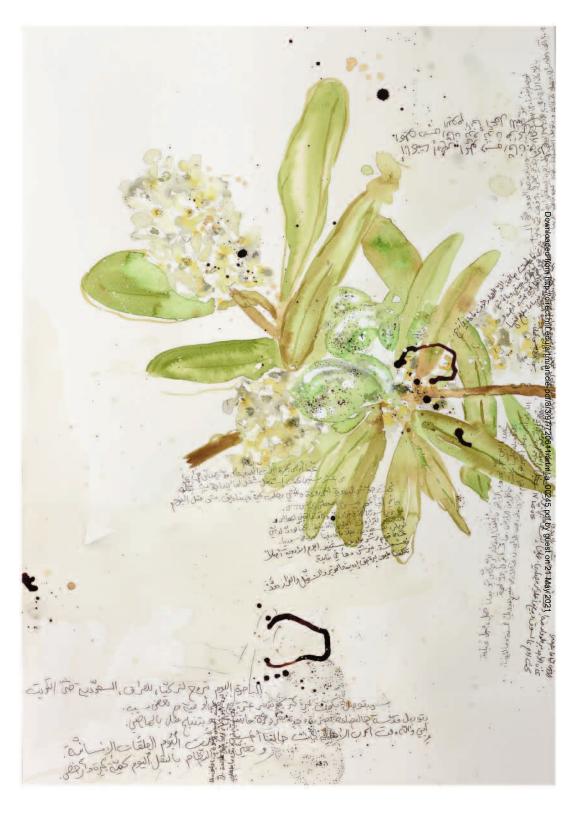


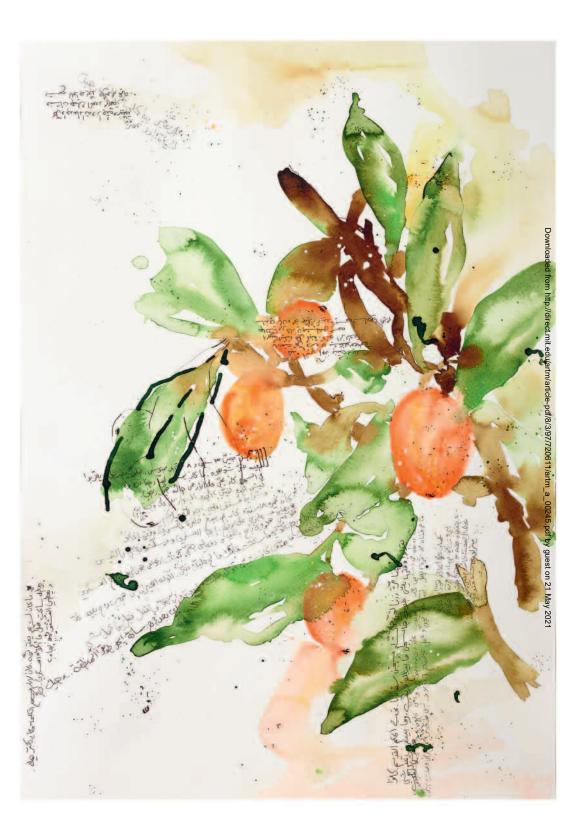
















- I am a 'khenseh', an illegal. yes, I can walk freely, go anywhere and I carry fear
- I sleep with my eyes open. once you have crossed and you live outside your land, there is no rest
- 3 the Kounaisseh village is self-sufficient. we carry arms for selfprotection. we are the front face of the 'Resistance' and Sayyid Nasrallah
- 4 one of the daughters was so beautiful—a Turkish lieutenant had his eye on her. my great-grandparents came down from the highest mountains, the Cedar Mountains
- 5 the new maps are wrong and no one dares to speak up. my neighbor took 320 meters of my land and built on it without my permission
- 6 what I dislike about farming is that nobody will pay me back my losses. my three other brothers chose to become car mechanics
- 7 merchandise piled up and imports stopped. but not the bananas! bananas come only from our land
- 8 villagers eat, drink and satisfy all their needs from their lands. without a line, people would slaughter one another
- 9 I got attached to the land here in *Jwar el Hoz*, as much as to my native land in *el Raqqah*
- we have actually been stripped of our rights here, as well as there. we are waiting silently for 'el faraj', for a miracle to happen
- when roads open between us and our neighbor, all will resolve. today, Saudi Arabia is sending us carrots
- 12 he had six girls and did not want to give them away to any men from Tripoli, let alone from Beirut. even if we do not see borders, we feel them and we live them
- 13 we only needed to buy red meat from the butcher. when one's field stops giving, it feels like one has lost a child
- 14 he should not have opened his mouth. he should have listened to the military and given him the pistachios. we visited him once in *Sidnaya* prison
- 15 'Allah' is great and is on our side. cherry trees are very strong around here
- I do not want to live a separation. the soil here and there is 'one'; it is my only consolation and connection to the other side
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