



# *THORNS IN BLOOM*

MOHAMED ABUSAL

21 September - 6 October 2016

غاليري زاوية  
ZAWYEH GALLERY

The spiny bodies of Mohamed Abusal's cacti emerge from the canvases of *Thorns in Bloom* full and soft, like bodies ripe with sleep. As unique as the individuals who gaze at them, these are not staid botanical drawings that aim to capture the essence of a plant species, nor are they still-life drawings of static arrangements. These are living portraits, and give the sabra a new artistic vocabulary.

Showcasing a variety of techniques through several different painting studies, the exhibit gathers luscious watercolour sketches on squares of paper beside striking and fluorescent acrylic on oversize canvas. Bold and subtle, heavy with fruit or light with papery blossoms, some silhouettes take almost human shape. The paintings variously evoke a man's ribcage, the curve of a woman's breast; soft folds of green flesh protected by a sheen of at times invisible thorns.

Abusal, who developed the paintings first as a technique of meditation, paints the cactus like it has never been seen. The works reveal a true study of form. Markedly different from his widely shown photography and installation-based exhibits—which make bold and incisive political commentaries—the cacti reveal first a sensitive artist's eye, and beneath a reflection on the politics of Palestinian symbol.

To look at the works the plants come alive, their flowers open, they grow plump with water. Figured alone, in shared pots, lined up on a sill or a balcony ledge, or seen close-up, the colour and diversity of a single plant is on display, and Abusal's artistry in full bloom.

Nora Parr  
September 2016

**Mohamed Abusal** (b. 1976, Gaza) began his career with daring and intensity coming onto the scene in 2000 with a rush of works that have yet to cease. In 2005 Abusal was awarded the Charles Asprey Prize for Contemporary Art, and his works continue to garner critical attention. Though his style has been refined through self-study and a number of international workshops, Abusal's works retain their early urgent edge.

At play in Abusal's projects—which variously combine installation, video, photography and painted works—are questions of technology and the permissible. He mixes the fantastic with the everyday, always with the aim of critical commentary on contemporary life in his native Gaza.

In “Metro in Gaza” (2012) works imagined a series of seven underground stations that would connect Gaza City to Jerusalem to Rafah and the north. “Shambar” (2013) find the light in Gaza's blackouts, with stunning photographs that capture the vibrant homes and shops where the city comes to life; be it by candle light, generator, or streams of illuminated holiday garlands.

Abusal has exhibited at Al-Mamam Foundation in Jerusalem, and the French Institute in Gaza, Ramallah, and Nablus. Outside of Palestine Abusal has had several solo exhibitions in France, the US, UK, Australia, and Dubai. He is a co-founder of the contemporary art collective, Eltiqa.



*Thorns and Flowers II*, 2016, oil & oil bar on canvas, 126 x 170 cm







*Jawdat's Garden I*, 2016, oil & oil bar on canvas, 134 x 184 cm



*Morning Glory*, 2014, oil on canvas, 90 x 70.5 cm



*Dancing Queen*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 70.5 cm





*Baby Cactus*, 2016, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm, triptych



*Raouf's Balcony*, 2015, oil on canvas, 110 x 86 cm





*Thorns and Flowers*, 2014, oil on canvas, 205 x 205 cm  
Left page: detail





*Samar's Garden*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 105 x 80 cm





*Nora's Garden*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 105 x 80 cm



*Mughrabi's Garden*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm



*Jawdat's Garden II*  
2016, acrylic on canvas, 192 x 149 cm



*Return*  
2012, acrylic on canvas, 123 x 75 cm



*Laila*  
2012, acrylic on canvas, 123 x 80 cm



*Cactus at Dawn*  
2012, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 79 cm



*Nostalgia*  
2012, acrylic on canvas, 123 x 80 cm





*Thorns in Bloom*, 2015-2016, watercolour on paper, 30 x 21 cm / 34 pcs









*Enduring Love*

2016, acrylic on canvas, 192 x 150 cm





*Spring*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 70 cm



*Cluster*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 55 cm



*Misk*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 124 x 104 cm



*Sweets*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 105 x 125 cm



*Motherhood*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 95 x 70 cm





غاليري زاوية  
ZAWYEH GALLERY

7A Al Zahra St., Al-Bal'o  
Ramallah, Palestine  
+970 2 2426486 | +970 597 994997  
anani.ziad@gmail.com  
[www.zawyeh.net](http://www.zawyeh.net)

