

Sacha Abou Khalil | Writings | Agial Art Gallery

[India Stoughton](#) Posted [28 February, 2018](#)



Selections highlights stand-out exhibitions, including an exploration of Beirut's complexity, a new history of Palestine in Khalil Rabah's nomadic

museum and the political cartoons that catalogue half a century of regional turmoil.

The best writers can draw vivid images in the minds of readers, bringing characters and worlds to life. But they still say that a picture is worth 1,000 words. In Writings, Serbia-born Lebanese artist Sacha Abou Khalil played with the relationship between literature and art, creating eerie, hyperrealist portraits of characters who at first glance might be anyone, but whose true identity lies in the title of each painting.

Basing each character on a friend or family member who agrees to model for him, Abou Khalil brings the novels of authors including Franz Kafka, Jack Kerouac and Vladimir Nabokov to life. In *The Road*, he evokes Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer-Prize winning novel about a father and son journeying through a post-apocalyptic wasteland in a simple image of a boy swathed in a red hoodie, running a toy car along the edge of a table. With eyes fixed on the toy, as though shutting out the rest of the world, the image evokes something of the bleakness of McCarthy's narrative, in which food and warmth are scarce and cannibals roam the dead grey world in search of prey.



The Trial I, (Franz Kafka, 1925),

The Trial II captures a young man in a rumpled shirt, clutching a long stick in both hands and staring straight up at the viewer with clear blue eyes, as though demanding answers. Equally arresting and disturbing is his portrait of *Lolita*, in which a young girl dressed in jeans and trainers, her blond hair falling around her shoulders, leans back against a red sofa, on which a man in jeans and hoodie lounges, his face hidden. By placing real people into iconic roles, Abou Khalil gives these tales an immediacy and

Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm, 2017



On the Road II, (Jack Kerouak, 1957), Oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm, 2017

impact that brings them into a new era and locality, ultimately emphasising the universality of their themes, hinging on concepts such as youth, innocence, death and freedom.

Featured image: Lolita, (Vladimir Nabokov, 1955) – Oil on canvas, 90 x 80 cm – 2017.

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