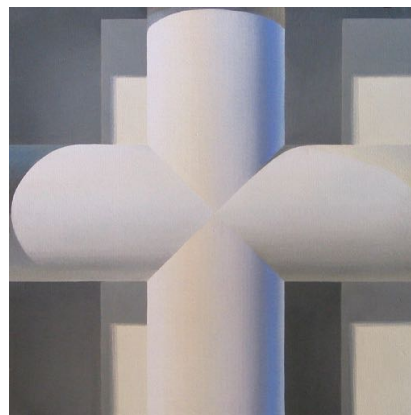


PRESS RELEASE

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Samia Halaby: Painting from the Sixties and Seventies

18 May – 18 July 2015

Opening reception and book signing: Monday, 18 May at 6:00pm

Samia Halaby in conversation with Maymanah Farhat: Tuesday, 19 May at 1:00pm

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *Painting from the Sixties and Seventies*, the forthcoming solo exhibition of pioneering Palestinian artist Samia Halaby. Widely recognised as an innovator of abstraction and a leading painter from the Arab world, Halaby will exhibit a selection of works from the initial period of her oeuvre. The nearly two-dozen paintings on display will offer a rare look into her artistic development by charting several groundbreaking experiments across diverse bodies of work. The exhibition will mark the first time that such a seminal collection of Halaby's paintings is shown in Europe.

Included in the solo show are examples from the artist's Geometric Still Life (1966-70), Helixes and Cycloids (1971-75), and Diagonal Flight series (1974-79), which furthered her approach to the depiction of reality through abstraction by establishing formal properties that allude to principles found in nature. In doing so, the artist relies on form to stimulate sensory experiences, allowing viewers to recognise what is familiar in their immediate environment. The works on display demonstrate Halaby's methodical investigation into a materialist treatment of art, which emphasises establishing aesthetic theories through scientifically informed experimentation.

Analysing properties of light as it shines on various objects, Halaby produced the Geometric Still Life series within a few years of graduating from the University of Indiana with a Master of Fine Art degree. Focusing intensely on how we perceive boundaries when representing three-dimensional objects, Halaby makes edges almost disappear treating them with accuracy but relying on formal properties such as local colour and shading to communicate depth and volume, while examining the importance of shadows. Over the course of several works, she arrived at an approach that she describes as 'visual conjugation,' through which reality is deconstructed to essential elements then reconstructed as a series of formal properties in abstraction. In the series that followed, Halaby focused on the implied movement, depth, and light that can be rendered through various techniques such as: the plotting of forms on graph paper; the interactions of colour; the potential for illusionistic space with gradations of light; and later the suggestion of infinite space with diagonal lines of various widths and lengths derived from the study of cylinders and the horizon.

About the Artist

Born in Jerusalem in 1936, Samia Halaby is a leading abstract painter and an influential scholar of Palestinian art. Recognised as a pioneer of contemporary abstraction in the Arab

world, although based in the United States since 1951, she has exhibited throughout the region and abroad and is widely collected by international institutions, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art (New York and Abu Dhabi); the National Gallery of Art, Washington; the Art Institute of Chicago; Institut du Monde Arabe, the British Museum; and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. Halaby was the first full-time female associate professor at the Yale School of Art, a position she held for nearly a decade during the initial part of her career when she taught at universities across the United States. In addition to a renewed interest in her oeuvre recently, historians of new media are currently re-evaluating Halaby's experiments with computer-based painting in the 1980s, which she created programs for and performed live at Lincoln Center and the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York and categorised as kinetic art.

Her writings on art have appeared in *Leonardo*, *Journal of Arts, Sciences and Technology* and *Arab Studies Quarterly*, among others, while her independently published survey *Liberation Art of Palestine: Palestinian Paintings and Sculpture in the Second Half of the 20th Century* (2002) is considered a seminal text of Palestinian art history. In 2014 Booth-Clibborn Editions published the artist's second monograph, *Samia Halaby: Five Decades of Painting and Innovation*.

Selected solo shows for the artist include the travelling retrospective, *Five Decades of Painting and Innovation*, Beirut Exhibition Center (2015) and Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2014); in addition to exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery London (2013); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2010); Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2008); and Sakakini Art Center, Ramallah, Palestine (2000). Halaby has been featured in recent group shows at the National Academy of Arts, New York (2015); The Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi (2014); Broadway 1602 gallery, New York (2014); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2009); and the Metropolitan Museum of Tokyo (2004).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation, managing the careers of a diverse roster of established and emerging artists from the Middle East. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut, Dubai, and London, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art by introducing the dynamic art of the region to a global audience. With its widely respected multi-language publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also spearheaded recent efforts to document the region's art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 18 May – 18 July 2015

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