

Samia Halaby (Palestine, b. 1936)

Born in Jerusalem in 1936, Samia Halaby is a leading abstract painter and an influential scholar of Palestinian art. Although based in the United States since 1951, Halaby is recognised as a pioneer of contemporary abstraction in the Arab world.

Halaby began her career in the early 1960s, shortly after graduating from Indiana University with a MFA in Painting. While teaching at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1964, she travelled to the Eastern Mediterranean as part of a faculty research grant and studied the geometric abstraction of the region's Islamic architecture, which has continuously factored into her work. During this time, Halaby launched a series of experiments that would initiate a career-long investigation of the materialist principles of abstraction: how reality can be represented through form.

Also influenced by the abstract movements of the Russian avant-garde, Halaby works with the conviction that new approaches to painting can redirect ways of seeing and thinking not only within the realm of aesthetics but also as contributions to technological and social advancement. This underlying notion has led to additional experiments in drawing, printmaking, computer-based kinetic art, and free-from-the-stretcher painting.

Halaby has been collected by international institutions since the 1970s, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art (New York and Abu Dhabi); Yale University Art Gallery; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; Cleveland Museum of Art; Institut du Monde Arabe; and the British Museum.

From the 1960s until the late 1980s, Halaby taught at universities throughout the United States. She was the first full-time female associate professor at the Yale School of Art, a position she held for a decade. Her noteworthy contributions to American academia include a groundbreaking undergraduate studio art program that she introduced to art departments throughout the Midwest.

Selected solo shows for the artist include Ayyam Gallery (2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015); Birzeit University Museum, Ramallah (2017); Beirut Exhibition Center, Lebanon (2015).

She has participated in recent group shows at Grey Art Gallery, New York City, USA (2020); Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, Palestine (2019); Ayyam Gallery (2017, 2018); Katzen Art Center, American University Museum, Washington, USA (2017); Palestine Museum, Birzeit, Palestine (2017); Galerie Tanit, Munich, Germany (2017); The School of Visual Arts, New York, USA (2017); Zürcher Gallery, New York, USA (2016); 3rd Qalandiya International Biennial (2016); Darat Al Funun, Amman (2015); the National Academy of Arts, New York (2015); The Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi (2014); Broadway 1602, New York (2014); and Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2009).

Halaby's writings on art have appeared in *Leonardo: Journal of Arts, Sciences and Technology*, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, and *Arab Studies Quarterly*, in addition to edited volumes, 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 2017 Schilt Publishing released Halaby's *Drawing*

the Kafr Qasem Massacre while Palestine Books Inc published *Growing Shapes: Aesthetic Insights of an Abstract Painter*. In 2014 Booth-Clibborn Editions published the artist's second monograph, *Samia Halaby: Five Decades of Painting and Innovation*.

Samia Halaby's recently released book, *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre* (Schilt Publishing, 2017) has been shortlisted for the prestigious Palestine Book Awards.