

Samia Halaby

After nearly 60 years of identifying the essentials of abstraction, the prolific Samia Halaby is considered to be a trailblazer in contemporary abstract art internationally. In her renowned paintings—which have been collected by international museums since the 1970s—Halaby draws inspiration from nature and historical movements such as early Islamic architecture and the Soviet avante-garde.

Displaced from Palestine in 1948 with her family when she was eleven, Halaby was educated in the American Midwest at a time when abstract expressionism was popular but female abstract painters were marginalized.

Halaby believes that new approaches to painting can transform our ways of seeing and thinking, not only within aesthetics, but also as a way to discover new perspectives for advances in teaching, technology, and society at large. This conviction has inspired her to pursue additional experiments in drawing, printmaking, computer-based kinetic art, and free-from-the-stretcher painting.

Her work has exhibited in galleries and is housed in private collections throughout the world. Halaby is collected by many museums such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art (New York and Abu Dhabi); Cleveland Museum of Art; Institut du Monde Arabe; and Birzeit University (Ramallah). She is represented by Ayyam Gallery (Beirut and Dubai).

Interest in Halaby's work has grown significantly over the past decade within the Arab and Western art scenes, as her paintings both expand the tradition of Islamic geometry and modern painting and introduce non-western contributions to modernism in New York and London.

In addition to her prolific career as an artist, Halaby is also heralded as an innovative thinker, educator, and activist. Halaby's writings on art history, pedagogy, and aesthetics have appeared in numerous publications over the last three decades. Her 2002 survey, *Liberation Art of Palestine*, is a seminal text of Palestinian art history. Halaby has published two books within the past year: *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre*—recipient of a 2017 Palestine Book Award—and *Growing Shapes: Aesthetic Insights of an Abstract Painter*. As an educator, Halaby introduced a groundbreaking undergraduate studio art program to art departments throughout the Midwest and was the first full-time female associate professor at the Yale School of Art for nearly a decade. A New York-based advocate, Halaby has also been organizing for causes concerning class, race, and Palestine since the 1970s.

When she steps away from the galleries and international art shows, Samia retreats to her TriBeCa studio, where she enjoys pretending that she is a recluse in a cave, or a lone sailor in a deep submarine. She has been known to emerge from her studio (typically after 6pm) to drag any and all willing participants to her favorite Thai restaurant down the street. In addition to her substantial art world following, Samia has fun interacting with her budding following on Instagram.