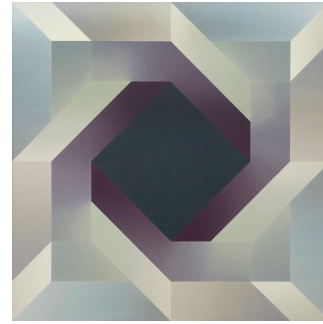


PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
 Alserkal Avenue, Street 8
 Al Quoz 1, Dubai
 Gallery Hours:

T: +971.4.3236242
 F: +971.4.3236243
 Sun-Thu: 10:00am-6:00pm
 Sat: 12:00pm-6:00pm



Samia Halaby: Five Decades of Painting and Innovation

19 February - 30 April 2014

Artist Talk & Book Signing: Wednesday, 19 February at 7:00-8:00pm

Opening reception: Wednesday, 19 February, from 8:00 - 10:00pm

Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (Al Quoz) is pleased to present *Samia Halaby: Five Decades of Painting and Innovation*, the first major retrospective to be organized for the renowned artist. Curated by art historian Maymanah Farhat, this comprehensive survey will feature over fifty works of art, representing every period of the artist's oeuvre and the many creative experiments and breakthroughs that have resulted.

Inspired by the logic of the artist's recently rereleased eponymous monograph, *Five Decades of Painting and Innovation* highlights Halaby's critical pursuit of furthering abstraction and its rootedness in materialist philosophy, and thus includes paintings, drawings, prints, computer-generated kinetic works, and hanging sculptures. Visible in such varied works as *Third Spiral* (1970), *Blue Trap in a Railroad Station* (1977), *Worldwide Intifada* (1989), and *Pyramid* (2011) is the artist's radical approach to the historical progression of formalism in international art, which, she has argued and demonstrated, should parallel the technological advancement of mankind, including the general development of societies, while reflecting principles found in nature. Central to this theoretical treatment are nonobjective strategies that attempt to examine and communicate physical properties as they are experienced in reality, namely the relationships of light and color that create depth, volume, and movement, the numbers and rhythms constituting the growth of forms, and the continuous state of motion, or space and time, defining the fourth dimension. What this has meant is that each successive series of painting over the span of fifty years of work has served as the site of observation, scientifically-informed analysis, and an engagement with pre-modern forms of abstraction, mainly Islamic art, alongside a reconsideration of the lessons of seminal modern art movements—from Impressionism to Abstract Expressionism.

Since the 1960s, Halaby has worked and exhibited throughout the United States, where she eventually settled in New York in 1972 while teaching at the Yale School of Art. The artist's retrospective will chronicle the early phases of her career, which were spent in the American Midwest where she studied under several notable artists, while also mapping the ways in which the artistic and political happenings of New York have informed her practice to this day. Halaby's importance as a pioneer of contemporary abstraction in the Arab world will also feature prominently, as she has remained a significant figure in the region's art scene through numerous exhibitions, institutional collections, teaching residencies, and independent scholarship.

The artist's regular participation in local art scenes, from Damascus to Dubai, which began early on in her career, has simultaneously led to profound intellectual ties and friendships with

a wide range of Arab artists, writers, and activists—exchanges that have thrived amidst the many variables of regional culture while nurturing her experiments and extending her influence.

In addition to the work on show, there will be a book signing of the new monograph entitled *Samia Halaby, Five Decades of Painting and Innovation* and an artist talk at the opening event on 19 February.

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

Born in Jerusalem in 1936, Samia Halaby is a leading abstract painter and an influential scholar of Palestinian art. Recognized 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, Institute du Monde Arab, the British Museum, and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. Halaby was the first fulltime 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 categorized 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, the artist's second monograph *Samia Halaby, Five Decades of Painting and Innovation* was published by Booth-Clibborn Editions.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria's burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as well as the launch of initiatives like The Young Collectors Auction, have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio and creative haven for artists who remain in the war-torn city. In early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 19 February – 30 April, 2014

Location: Ayyam Gallery Dubai (Al Quoz), Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

Tel: +971 4 3236242

Email: dubai@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com

For press information and artwork images, please contact press@ayyamgallery.com or call +971-4-3236242.