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'THE HARVEST' BY DALIA BAASSIRI AT GALERIE JANINE RUBEIZ BEIRUT

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When The Season Returns I, 2023, Acrylic, wall paint collected from Fayyad Building (post-Beirut Explosion), graphite, paraffin wax (post-Harissa Prayers), threads, organza fabric, archival glue and varnish on canvas, 90 x 52cm

Galerie Janine Rubeiz presents the opening of Dalia Baassiri's second solo show titled 'The Harvest' from June 12, until July 12, 2024. The artworks were produced during Baassiri's residency at Ashkal Alwan in 2023.

For the past three years, the Baassiri has collected various elements, primarily wall fragments from the Fayyad Building facing the port of Beirut after the explosion but also burnt candles left post-prayers in Harissa, and broken tree branches scattered across Beirut's streets, intentionally cut to make charcoal for shisha smokers. The artist views these items as embodiments of 'vulnerability.' Stored in boxes, they await the changing seasons. Once mature, they are spread around her studio, allowing them to tell their stories after long periods of silence.



When The Season Returns XII, 2023, Acrylic, graphite, paraffin wax (post-Harissa Prayers) and varnish on canvas, 60 x 80cm

Through the process of assemblage, the fragments transformed into compositions that revealed their intrinsic properties, occasionally blending with other elements. At times, they coalesced into a single entity.

Baassiri has been obsessively in search of fragile entities with significant stories, considered the raw materials of her work. Upon discovery, these objects are given new, solid lives by embracing their delicacy and strengthening them with adhesives. This obsession raised questions for the artist: Is vulnerability contagious? Do we become a product of our environment? Does living daily in an unstable setting like Lebanon make us particularly attuned to fragments and ruptures? Is the artist constructing a self-portrait through these clusters of broken pieces, or is this desire to preserve and merge a form of adaptation?

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When The Season Returns VI, 2023
Acrylic, wall paint collected from Fayyad Building (post-Beirut Explosion), graphite, threads, hot glue sticks, organza fabric, archival glue and varnish on canvas, 53 x 61cm

ABOUT DALIA BAASSIRI

Dalia Baassiri, born in Sidon in 1981, is a Lebanese visual artist. She holds a BS in Graphic Design (2003) from the Lebanese American University, Beirut, and an MA in Fine Art (2012) from Chelsea College of Arts, London. Growing up during the Civil War, Baassiri explores her identity with a country in constant conflict. Her interdisciplinary work, spanning drawing, painting, and sculpture, finds refuge in the domestic sphere. Her art interrogates the familiar elements of home, from dust to walls.

Her work has been exhibited globally at venues like Mathaf (Doha), Galerie Janine Rubeiz (Beirut), Art Dubai, and Venice's Arsenale Nord. Her solo shows include "Wiped Off" (2017) and "The Harvest" (2024). Baassiri has received awards from Fabriano, Maraya, and the Lebanese Web Design, and her sculptures have been finalists at the Celeste Prize (London) and Arte Laguna Prize (Venice). She has held residencies at Kempinski (Berlin), Siena Art Institute (Italy), Residency Unlimited (Brooklyn), Sculpture Space (Utica), Fallani Venezia, Espronceda Institute (Barcelona), and Ashkal Alwan (Beirut).

Location: Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut

Dates: 12 June – 12 July, 2024

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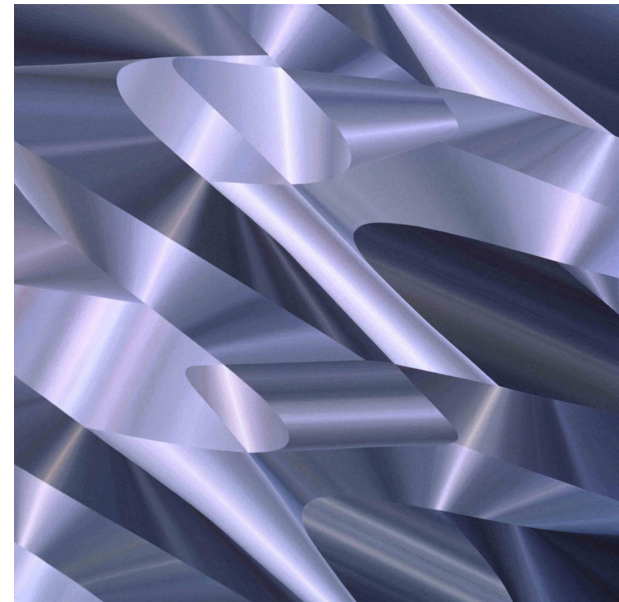
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This article appeared in Being Samia Halaby Issue #68 dedicated to spotlighting the journey of Samia Halaby, a Palestinian-American artist whose resilience shines through despite challenges like the cancellation of a significant exhibition at Indiana University. Halaby's remarkable year, marked by global exhibitions and well-deserved acclaim, underscores her ability to transcend borders with art that prompts reflection on themes of identity, belonging, and social justice, serving as a bridge across cultural divides.

Halaby's artistic evolution reflects a decades-long commitment to creativity and innovation. Her early exposure to the visual richness of Palestinian art laid the groundwork for a career marked by exploration and experimentation. Her journey took a transformative turn when she pursued her art education in the American Midwest during the 1950s, immersing herself in the shifting cultural landscape of the United States. Inspired by the geometric abstraction and vibrant colours of Palestinian visual arts, Halaby's earliest work was rooted in her identity. Abstraction, in its purest form, became her language, devoid of the influences of Western art theory and movements. However, as she delved deeper into her artistic practice, Halaby's technique began to evolve, influenced initially by the meticulous detail and luminous colours of Dutch painting. Her embrace of abstraction quickly expanded with an almost scientific approach, incorporating technological tools into her creative process. This intersection of art and technology allowed her to push the boundaries of traditional mediums, creating dynamic compositions that challenged the status quo. Throughout her career spanning over six decades, Halaby remained steadfast in her commitment to forging her own path, eschewing the gaze of professors and critics to explore her unique artistic vision. Her style, characterised by bold colours, intricate patterns, and geometric forms, defies easy categorisation, embodying a fusion of influences and ideas. What follows offers readers a highly detailed, scholarly perspective on her artistic journey, inviting them to delve into the thought process behind each brushstroke and composition. As she recounts her experiences and reflections, she provides invaluable insights into the complexities of the creative process and the enduring power of artistic expression. Halaby's artistic journey is a reflection of broader social, economic and technological changes and the transformative potential of art in a rapidly changing world, and also, the world's transformative effect on the evolving practice of art.

HELIXES AND CYCLOIDS



Aluminum and Steel, 1971, o.c., 66 x 66 in (167.5 x 167.5 cm).

In downtown Cincinnati where I spent my first years in the US and where I went to college and where my parents lived, a school friend and I discovered an old building that was five stories high and full to the brim with dusty old books and magazines. The owner let us wander freely and most often we were the only clients. I found a section on old perspective and engineering books as well as books on the art of building heating vents. I purchased a good amount based on their fascinating illustrations. These books in combination with my new love of graph paper led me to the fascination of plotting curves. The helix became my new passion and I decided to plot it on a cone rather than a cylinder. I plotted two conical helices, one on a small cone inside a large cone that had also received a helix. I joined the two helixes running down their cones by projecting a surface between them. My old books said that it was a helicoid. My foray into helixes and graph paper led to many plottings overlaid over one another. I would then select a part that looked to be a good painting. I would then paint the areas using

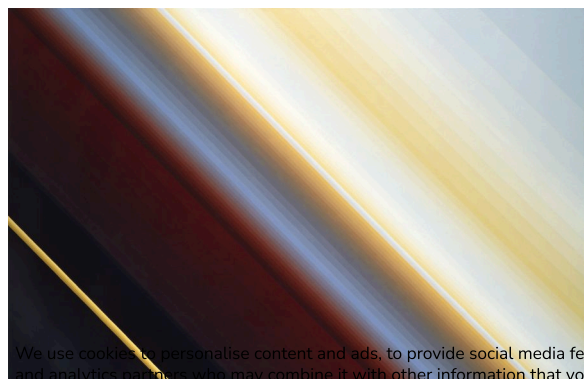
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positive division of the space. Each area would compete to be in the front. After my fascination with the helix began to wane, I tried cycloid curves, but in effect the fascination had run its course, and I was ready to move forward. But there was something else in the Helix series, something that I had remembered from my education about light and reflectivity. This was the challenge of using shading to make illusions of metallic surfaces. Shiny metals have always held fascination for us humans. The fact that they were the only materials that were selective in their highlights gave them a unique presence in the world of things we see. Being selective means that they did not reflect all the rights they received evenly. As an example, gold is the only material the highlights of which are yellow. A shiny plastic surface would have highlights that are white. The illusion of bent metallic surfaces in the helix series gave them a unique attraction. In the case of *Aluminums and Steel*, 1971, the shading of the areas of the painting were imitations of a steel or aluminium sheet of metal that I had in the studio. Thus, by imitating a bent metallic surface, I was reflecting the room around me, a throwback to the painting *Mirror Sphere*, 1968.



Mediterranean, 1974, 48 x 66 in, (122 x 167.5 cm).

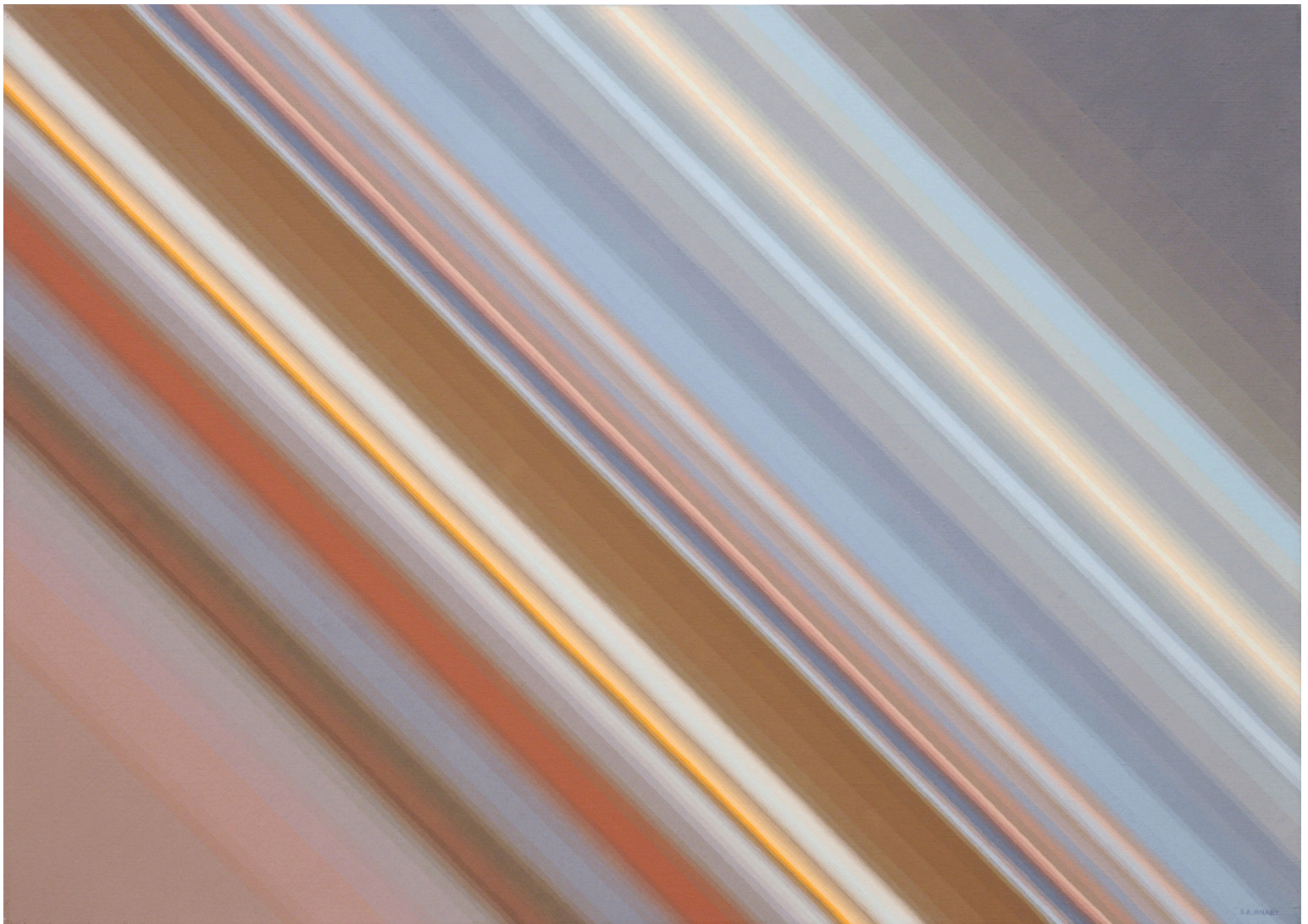
DIAGONAL FLIGHT



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Saturn, 1977, o.c., 66 x 90 in (7.5 x 228.5).

By 1977, the series of paintings based on plotting curves inspired a question. I had been shading not by pushing colours into each other but rather by breaking the surface into stripes based on the implied structure. I was applying narrow bands of colour one after the other in graduated light and colour, that is gradually changing both the level of light and colour in each consecutive stripe. This fascination with metal and how to shade took me back to explorations during the Geometric Still Life series. I asked, would we see a round cylinder if we shaded it perfectly but did not allow the top and bottom ellipses to appear in the painting? In pedestrian description: if a pipe ran from one end of the painting to the other and we saw no circular joints on it, would we see it as cylindrical volume? The result was fascinating in that we did not see it as perfectly cylindrical but also its actual size became relative as there was nothing else in the painting to indicate relative measure. The space of the Diagonal Flight series could be infinitely large or small. By challenging and exploiting perspective, I had ambled backwards into abstraction. Now I had experience and knowledge and began to think of space in ways that transcends the finiteness of a geometric still life. I always remember my love of the sea by the side of which I grew up in Yafa and Beirut, my sense of freedom in standing at the edge of the water looking at the blue waters of the Mediterranean and moving my eyes to the sky and knowing that no one owned that expanse, that it was free space for me to fly in. So now, I had to select a direction for the diagonal that I was using. I saw a group of children playing at being aeroplanes flying in the sky and took note of how they zoomed about arms spread horizontally like wings, voices singing engine sounds. When they turned, they banked diagonally imagining themselves aeroplanes, they mostly favoured their right arm. It was these children playing that guided my choice of direction hoping my viewers would feel like flying into the space of a painting arms spread like wings.



Copper and Brass, 1976, o.c., 30 x 42 in
(76 x 107 cm).

DOMES OF THE ROCK AND ARABIC ART

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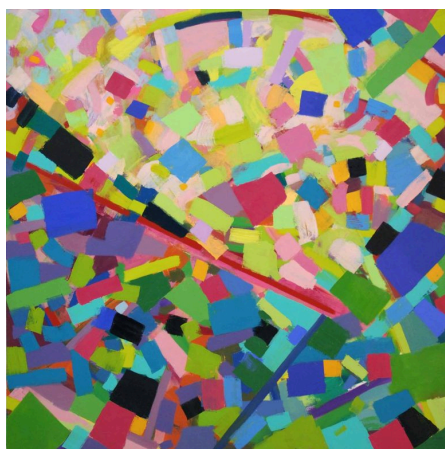
One or Two Pink, 1980, o.c., 48 x 66 in (122 x 167.5 cm).

The Diagonal Flight series seemed so perfect, such a glorious conclusion from a 15 year-long exploration into how we see that took me from careful illusions of concrete objects to relativity of space and depth. I had stumbled into abstraction backward it now seems to me though in practice it was an earnest exploration that moved forward. My first dry period ensued, and I did not really know what to do with my determination to extend an original idea for a lifetime. I wandered here and there with some hints of time and motion beginning to appear in my work. The Diagonal Flight series always seemed about unapproachable high speed. Finally, the logic of abstraction in historic Arabic art, the art of the mosques and Palaces of the Feudalist age of the Arabs penetrated my aesthetic consciousness and I returned to my admiration of the inlaid marble panels of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem that I had seen in 1966. Thus in 1980, after a year of confusion, assurance returned when I decided that I would adopt the compositional principles of mediaeval Arabic panels of inlaid marble, wood, stained glass, or stone. I decided to allow the rectangle to give birth to every shape in the painting. The rectangle of the painting, its frame, was no longer a window through which I would look at the world but rather a panel that received ideas gleamed with our eyes and processed in our thoughts. In One or Two Pink, 1980, there remains some shading from previous periods, but shapes were now being filled by textures to imitate the way different patterns of marble met to define a boundary without a line between them. Electric Bulbs, 1981, follows an earlier practice in the series where circles were used in place of squares. Each of the two circles filled a square that would be defined by the sort side of the rectangle; while the diagonal cylinder was created by casting forty-five degree lines across the surface from two corners of the rectangle.



Electric Bulbs, 1981, a.c.,
35 x 44 in (89 x 112 cm).

AUTUMN LEAVES AND CITY BLOCKS



Fan Tail, 1982, o.c., 60 x 60 in (152 x 152 cm).

In 1975, while still living in New Haven, I found myself enchanted by Autumn leaves and did an extensive study of them. The combination of fascination and extensive effort capturing their visual message formed a substantial part of my aesthetic understanding. The scope and intensity of the study, processing and sifting through important insights, and how they interconnected with later insights, finally asserted themselves during the early 1980s. Painting is the top feeder in the ecology of my aesthetic thought, the lion that demands the greatest effort on all levels of practice. Abstraction was now clearly my direction and with absolute clarity I gave up both shading and perspective. I was on my way to something completely contemporary and completely related to nature. Something

Fan Tail, 1982, was the actual arena where the individual brush marks that had been limited to single areas in the Dome of the Rock series, began to fly free of their boundaries and activate the entire surface. But this idea remained dormant and came to full fruition in the following period, the Growing Shape series. Down West Broadway in the Evening, 1983, is the quintessential example of the Autumn Leaves and City Blocks series. It was inspired by my walking down West Broadway in Tribeca, my neighbourhood, in the evening when suddenly the traffic lights down the avenue all turned red at the same time. The brown atmosphere of the building and the bright red of the lights created sensations some of which I captured in this painting.

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