

An abstract painting by Gilbert Halaby titled "Sonnet V". The composition is dominated by large, bold, organic shapes in a rich palette of orange, red, green, and purple. A central vertical axis divides the work, with a white and light green area on the left and a dark brown and olive green area on the right. The brushwork is visible, giving the painting a textured, expressive quality.

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ABU DHABI

MARIE JOSE GALLERY

GILBERT HALABY

“SONNET V”

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invite you to experience

SONNET V

GILBERT HALABY

5 - 15 JUNE 2025

MARIE JOSE GALLERY, 16 VICTORIA GROVE,
SOUTH KENSINGTON, LONDON, W8 5RW



SONNET V

Sonnet 5 compares nature's four seasons with the young man's life stages. Although the seasons are cyclical, his life is linear, and hours become tyrants that oppress him because he cannot escape time's grasp. Time might "frame / The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell," meaning that everyone notices the youth's beauty, but time's "never-resting" progress ensures that this beauty will eventually fade.

In an extended metaphor, the poet argues that because flowers provide perfume to console people during the winter, it is natural for the youth to have a child to console him during his old age. Without perfume from summer flowers, people would not remember previous summers during the long, brutal winters; childless, the young man will grow old alone and have nothing to remind him of his younger days.

Shakespeare didn't realise that his children were his words, and the summer that left us is everything he wrote. I would like to believe that summer or the youth that I will leave behind is my art.

The exhibition is composed of four sets of canvases depicting the four seasons and the round, two-meter-diameter Sonnet V canvas depicting the youth with the sonnet in his hand.

The first set of four round canvases, each 1 meter in diameter, personifies the seasons. The two major seasons, winter and summer, are personified by San Sebastián for the death in winter and Bacchus for the joy during summer. Two poets personify the

minor seasons by linking the seasons with their words: Rimbaud for spring and Rilke for autumn.

The second set of four square canvases, 150 x 150 cm, depicts my olive groves and the transformation of nature and its colours through the seasons. The presence of the only home in this exhibition during spring metaphorically represents humans blossoming in our natural habitat away from the cement and concrete jungles.

The third set of four rectangular 60 x 50 cm canvases depicts the sibyls announcing the seasons. The sibyls are depicted as the trunks of the olive trees, mothers to all of us since the first mother to humans is nature. It is Her that dictates the rhythm of our lives, the transformation of the tender passage that surrounds us, and the bodies that carry us through the voyage of our seasons. In Spring and Autumn, there are two sibyls: a Mother teaching her daughter how to blossom and then how to hold the fruits of nature to those who deserve them.

The fourth set of four square canvases, 40 x 40 cm, is a poem of metaphysical light. The presence of the shade in the early vision of life and the discovery of the most potent light in its last stages. A friend and collector told me that when she saw this set, she saw in every one of the four of Dante's voyages through hell, purgatory and Paradise.

- Gilbert Halaby

*"I would like to
believe that summer
or the youth that
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is my art"*

GILBERT HALABY

THE GEOMETRY OF MEMORY: ON THE PAINTINGS OF GILBERT HALABY

There are artists who emerge early and burn quickly, and then there are those whose work feels slow-brewed by time—like tea steeped in memory. Gilbert Halaby belongs to the latter. Though he began painting as a child in Dhour El Choueir, Lebanon—at the improbable age of four—he only held his first exhibition in his homeland in 2023. This choice, deliberate and almost ceremonial, reveals something essential about Halaby: his art is an act of return.

To see Halaby's paintings is to read an autobiography in a language only he can fully decipher. But one need not know the grammar to feel its weight. His canvases, shaped by colour-blocks and bold, flat geometries, echo the fields of his childhood—poppies stretching across valleys under the insistent Levantine sun. The hues are never random. They carry both light and shadow, rooted in the geography of memory. There's a tenderness in the way he treats space—houses reduced to forms, yet vibrating with unspoken stories. He paints homes not as shelters, but as questions: What occurred within these walls? Who lived, left, or vanished?

Halaby writes in his Sonnet V letters: "I long to belong to a place that existed only in the hours before waking." This longing spills into his paintings. His late start—at least in the eyes of the formal art world—has been less a delay and more a distillation. Time has not dulled him but clarified him. His brush moves with the confidence of someone who has seen many cities, spoken many languages, but still listens most intently to the silence between things. There is a humility in the simplicity of his forms—squares, lines, roofs, windows—but also a rigor.

Each painting feels like a pause. A held breath. The kind of stillness one encounters not before action, but after it—when reflection takes over. It's this introspective quality that renders his work autobiographical without being narrative. Each canvas functions as a self-portrait, not of the face, but of the inner architecture.

Halaby is also a writer, and often, his exhibitions are accompanied by text—fragments, poems, letters. He doesn't treat words and images as separate languages, but as twin threads of the same voice. His visual and verbal idioms are intimately tied. In fact, one senses that he builds his own vernacular—an alphabet that nods to influences like Etel Adnan, yet remains insistently his own. Like Adnan, Halaby understands the expansive potential of restraint: a few well-placed colours, a concise sentence, a precise silence.

And there is, always, that clarity of light. The Levantine light—not soft, but searing. It exposes more than it comforts. It is under this light that Halaby paints and remembers. His palette, vibrant but never excessive, seems to try and hold that brightness, to bottle it into permanence. There is a devotional quality to this—the kind of reverence that comes from distance, or perhaps from exile. In a world that so often demands speed, relevance, immediacy, Halaby's work dares to move differently. It is both ancient and modern, both local and exilic. It is work that doesn't shout, but lingers. Like a letter that arrives long after it was sent, carrying the scent of a place, a mood, a season.

In the end, Gilbert Halaby's paintings offer us a proposition: that to paint is to remember, and to remember is to reimagine. Each canvas is a house of return. A reconstruction—not of facts, but of feelings. Through colour and form, Halaby invites us into a home we might have once known, or might still be building.

-Roxane Zand -

My dearest boy,

Someone once told me to paint my worst fears. How startled I was by the idea. You must know, my boy, that when you reach my years, you won't care about what others want to see in your work—maybe they want to see their fears—but what you care about is making your heart happy by painting what makes it happy.

Your fears, my boy, are left behind. You shall metabolise all the scars with every breath and sunrise. Your fears are but dissolute memories under a bright sun, the sun of your tomorrow. To every dark desire, reply with colours and light, and paint what is most precious to your heart—words and poems.

While I write these words that the light of our Levantine Sun will deliver to you under the olive tree, the strokes of my brushes are painting sonnets and poems. You and I, my dearest, can't help but translate beautiful words into poems of colours on eager and welcoming canvases. Stories of the imaginations and visions of beloved poets are weaved into our metaphysical utopia, where the light rhymes and the prose becomes a poem. That, my boy, will make your heart happy and remind everyone that fears and shadows are part of days long gone and ought never to weigh on your heart.

Know, my boy, that you shall always learn in life, and you shall meet a marvellous teacher who will introduce you to the greatest magician, a poet who transformed words into horizons where you and millions of mortals gaze. Shakespeare, my boy, is the magician that will

accompany you in this poem of light that you shall enlighten. "Sonnet V" – this sonnet is the passage of time from summer to winter, youth to decay. Shakespeare insists on the need to bring a child into the world; that's his recipe to save one's summer. Alas, Shakespeare's son and daughters left this existence; his words were the only summer he left behind. And you and I, my boy, shall leave our canvases, our eternal summer in the hope that the hearts of some mortals will be illuminated for centuries to come. I wrote these words two years ago, my boy; please keep them safe in your heart and do as they say:

"Read all you can write.

Caress your heart with ideas of the sublime, but never forget to water your thoughts. Walk the words of your favourite minds to the sea, but bathe in your own melodies of waters and observe the Sun sailing past with a poem from your lips.

Read all you can plant sunshine into the hearts of humans."

Know that your every breath, my boy, will be metamorphosed into words on paper and colours on canvases. Never cease to see the light because it is always there for you and keep listening to your heart because all your answers are etched on its walls.

I kiss your hands, shoulders and forehead and wish you only light.

Gilbert Halaby



Gilbert Halaby
SONNET V, 2025
 Oil on Canvas
 200 cm Diameter



Gilbert Halaby
Spring Rimbaud, 2024
 Oil on Canvas
 100 cm Diameter



Gilbert Halaby
Winter, Saint Sebastian, 2024
 Oil on Canvas
 100 cm Diameter



Gilbert Halaby
Autumn, Rilke, 2024
 Oil on Canvas
 100 cm Diameter



Gilbert Halaby
Summer
Bacchus, 2024
 Oil on Canvas
 100 cm Diameter



Gilbert Halaby
Winter, 2024
Oil on Canvas
150 X 150 cm







Gilbert Halaby
Spring, 2024
Oil on Canvas
150 X 150 cm



Gilbert Halaby
Summer, 2024
Oil on Canvas
150 X 150 cm







Gilbert Halaby
Autumn, 2024
Oil on Canvas
150 X 150 cm



Gilbert Halaby

Winter, 2025

Oil on Canvas

60 X 50 cm



Gilbert Halaby

Spring, 2025

Oil on Canvas

60 X 50 cm



Gilbert Halaby
Summer, 2025
 Oil on Canvas
 60 X 50 cm

Gilbert Halaby
Autumn, 2025
 Oil on Canvas
 60 X 50 cm





Gilbert Halaby
Winter, 2025
 Oil on Canvas
 40 X 40 cm

Gilbert Halaby
Spring, 2025
 Oil on Canvas
 40 X 40 cm



Gilbert Halaby
Summer, 2025
Oil on Canvas
40 X 40 cm



Gilbert Halaby
Autumn, 2025
Oil on Canvas
40 X 40 cm



Gilbert Halaby
Study of Sonnet V, 2024
 Oil on Wood
 50 X 60 cm

Gilbert Halaby
Study of Siant Sebastian, 2024
 Oil on Canvas
 50 X 40 cm



*"Without perfume
from summer flowers,
people would not
remember previous
summers during the
long, brutal winters"*

GILBERT HALABY

B. 1979

Gilbert Halaby, born in 1979, who grew up in Lebanon and studied in Beirut, has drawn and painted since he was a child. Captivated by the beauty of the natural landscape in Mount Lebanon, he would spend long hours playing in the woods amid the olive and pine trees signal natural forms which, to this day, influence and play a profound role in his art. His aesthetic eye first drew him to the artistry of fashion. After studying archaeology at the Lebanese University in Beirut, he went to Rome and was instantly captivated, calling that first encounter un coup de foudre.

In 2003, he moved to the Eternal City and opened a jewellery and handbag store near the Pantheon. In 2010, the Maison Halaby brand launched its first women's collection; in 2016, Halaby opened his accessories boutique of specially made leather handbags at Via di Monserrato 21. As much a cultural salon as a boutique, where the artist keeps a library of contemporary and historical authors and philosophers and entertains his friends, it has become a global cult destination. But with art as his first love (and clearly a talent his clients appreciated: the paintings and watercolours he hung on the boutique's walls were swiftly bought up, and more requested), much of his time is now spent painting at his studio, a few steps away from the Maison on Via di Monserrato 123.

Entirely self-taught as a painter, Halaby's style has been honed over the past six years, in which he has dedicated himself daily to painting in his studio. Gilbert Halaby debuted in March 2023 with his solo exhibition titled "Domus Berytus", which took place at Beit Beirut Museum in the Lebanese capital. His second Solo took place in his adoptive city, Rome, under the title of: "Une Comédie Romaine" - at Maja Arte Contemporanea (June 2023). His third solo - "Will You Wait For Me Under That Pine Tree?" - opened in January 2024 in Abu Dhabi at ArtBooth. His Fourth Solo - "Apogee Of Light" - Opened in March 2024 in Palm Beach at Maja Arte Contemporanea's first gallery popup. In October 2024 - he opened another solo exhibition "The First Harvest" at the IAMY museum of Hydra, Greece.

Halaby's works are featured in prestigious private collections and are part of the permanent collections of the Malvina Menegaz Foundation in Castelbasso, Italy; the Kinda Foundation in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and the Lebanese Presidential Contemporary Collection.

ARTBOOTH

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Emerging from over a decade of experience in the art field, Roger El Khoury founded Artbooth Gallery in 2019 with the aim of creating a cross-cultural bridge between artists, audiences, and collectors globally. We consider ourselves to be beyond borders since it is the original concept of Artbooth Gallery where we used to host pop-up exhibitions across the world.

Artbooth opened its first physical gallery space in Abu Dhabi, known as the cultural hub of UAE and pursues its mission through a diverse range of thematic exhibitions. Over the years the gallery has curated numerous solo and collective shows, showcasing artworks spanning various mediums and the gallery actively participates in Art Fairs in order to support both young and well established artists.

Embracing the power of creativity and artistic talent, Artbooth launches its presence in the bustling heart of Seoul, South Korea acclaimed as the rising art hub of Asia. Pioneering as the inaugural Middle Eastern Art Gallery in Asia, Artbooth aspires not only to cultivate a vibrant artistic community but also to spearhead global cultural exchange, aiming to establish itself as a cornerstone in the realm of arts and culture.



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Services include fine art sales consultancy, second market art sales, archiving collections and curating exhibitions.



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An abstract painting featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes in a variety of colors including dark brown, teal, orange, green, red, and purple. The composition is layered and textured, with a central vertical axis. The text is overlaid on the central part of the painting.

ArtBooth

ABU DHABI | SEOUL

MARIE JOSE GALLERY