



**MAJA**  
ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

**Gilbert Halaby**  
Apogee Of Light

Gilbert Halaby

# Apogee Of Light

Essay by  
Giovanna Dalla Chiesa

MAJA  
ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

In collaboration with





*Synthesis*, 2023  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
200 x 250 cm | 78 ¾ x 98 7/16 in

## Gilbert Halaby's “*est-ethics*” Art

Giovanna Dalla Chiesa

There is something quite extraordinary about Gilbert Halaby's personality: where elegance, simplicity, truth, and loyalty to his own principles are at ease with his commercial acumen, *esprit bon vivant* and serendipity.

His story is well worth being told.

After having studied archeology, Gilbert Halaby left his native Lebanon where with every step one runs the risk of stumbling over ancient Roman ruins, or those of other civilizations, and landed in Rome. In his heart of hearts, he concealed a dream: that of becoming a painter. As a child he would witness the miracle of creation when he would ever so cautiously spy on his father's friend who would paint in complete solitude.

In Rome, in the openness of the Eternal City, where the many diverse cultures embraced by the Roman Empire were forged together to give rise to the extraordinary richness that characterizes it, the roots of which were also present in Lebanon, made itself apparent presenting him with countless opportunities. The same opportunities that the citizens of Beirut had benefited from as a colony of the empire, including the exemption from paying tax. Indeed, Rome offered him a status of privilege and freedom, which would distance him from the tragic scenarios of a war-ravaged homeland and reunite him with a mythical era, where the mosaic of those cultures had finally been recomposed.

The pragmatism that arose from the need to explore different art-related fields, such as the financially rewarding fashion and design (from which he



*A Yellow Dawn, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
60 x 50 cm | 23 5/8 x 19 1/16 in

eventually moved away) was accompanied by an unwavering desire to continue learning. This ensured an ongoing journey of self-growth, characterized by the refinement of his observation and introspection skills, made possible by his effective time management.

Gilbert's life took shape quite naturally, moving forward on two parallel tracks: one dedicated to practical living and the other to a contemplative existence. Occasionally, these two tracks intersect, progressing at a calm pace, allowing events to unfold spontaneously.

Aren't these the ideal prerequisites for aligning our innermost feelings in the right perspective with our surroundings?

Day after day, Gilbert Halaby has laid the foundations to break the chains of cause and effect, dictated by time, shifting into a timeless dimension where past and future are not seen as separate entities but rather as coexisting, side by side. It is a metaphysical state where the subject encounters *the other*, as if looking at his own reflection in the mirror.

Simone Weil contemplated: "culture is teaching how to pay attention".

Gilbert Halaby is a keen observer, he has sharpened his senses in order to go beyond, finding himself in others. Every place in his fairytale universe represents all places, everything represents all things ad infinitum, like pursuing the multifaceted archetype that resides in the fibres of our being, pulsating with our very existence. Every tree, every home is now and always simultaneously near and far, surrounded by an enduring yet indescribable aura. It represents the home and the tree that belongs to each one of us. A sacred matter. Not an icon, nor simply an image, but a symbol. In this way, we can feel it within ourselves with devotion and foresight, even before encountering its physical likeness. In other words, these elements suggest the path and direction to embark upon our quest.

It is hardly surprising therefore, that these are the reasons why people of all extractions and cultures are increasingly recognizing his success.

In an age where nothing seems to have meaning – not even human life – where one cannot know the origin of anything, Gilbert Halaby conveys the



*You Made Me Run After You*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in

essential – that which is purely necessary – with forms even a child would know how to decipher because they awaken the primordial root toward which all our inclinations naturally gravitate.

These minimalist forms evoke the Greek landscape, to which Halaby is attached almost as much as he is to Italy, albeit differently, where even the temples lack grandiosity and are built on a more human scale. The outline of a house is typically accompanied by little more than a tree and an animal – a goat or donkey – intrinsically associated with said landscape. In Greek, the words for painting and writing share the same root. Thus the distinctive palette, uniformly laid in Halaby's canvases, is as much “written” as it is painted, in that the mark-making is in itself of significant importance.

Despite the importance of colour and other representational elements in his art, in several small paintings from the series “Une Comédie Romaine” (2023) the mark appears to take on the role of the protagonist. Indeed, it is the only element that underlines the focus, the trajectory and the path of the characters.

The apparently anecdotal approach which appears to guide the artist would not be as evocative nor as vivid if his ability to abstract from any ornamentation were not written in the essence of the appearances, in an ever-changing yet still scenario, as if etched in the passing of time. In doing so he avoids the temptation of resorting to caricature when dealing with narrative choosing instead to lead us back to the stories portrayed in fifteenth-century altarpieces.

Modern art has learned from the ancients the importance of observing the essence of the visible and exploring the boundaries of the invisible. The Cubists, found inspiration in the “profile” of the Egyptians, while abstract painters were drawn to the canon of Byzantine icons. In their pursuit, they recognized that writing and the alphabet, as symbolic systems, diverge significantly from our conventional understanding of “reality”. The highest spirituality has never sought to be represented; on the contrary, it transcends it.



*Waiting For Our Return, 2023*  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
100 x 130 cm | 39 3/8 x 51 3/16 in

It is interesting to note that it was the Phoenicians, a Semitic population that inhabited present day Lebanon, who invented the first phonetic alphabet, consisting of 22 characters. Vowels and other sounds were later added to those characters by the Greeks.

Therefore, it is not surprising that writing has always accompanied Gilbert Halaby's paintings, as he uses it as a dual tool to reveal his approach to the rest of the world. The poetic fragments found in the catalogue of the "Domus Berytus" exhibition at the Beit Beirut Museum (March 2023) not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the artist's soul, even though they are completely independent from the paintings, but they also echo the images. In each exhibition the artist has found a magnificent literary and psychological tool in the form of a letter dedicated to his adolescent self, which, as well as creating a dialogue between past and present, also defines his own universe, providing an indirect method of establishing a stronger connection with the solitary dreamer that resides within him.

Written words add a voice to visual experience.

The vibrancy of the voices in the pictorial cycle of "Domus Berytus" resembles a silent noise that spreads like a wave around the evanescent images. It evokes powerful desires and a nostalgic allure that draws every trace into the distance.

In this current stage, his oeuvre "Apogee of Light" represents the apogee of another dream, this time with a perspective: not just a house, but an olive grove.

Gilbert Halaby spent his childhood playing among the ruins of a temple surrounded by olive trees, and it was only a matter of time before he recreated the conditions to rediscover that harmony between culture and nature, an equilibrium that has always nourished him.

Creation needs to restore the delicate balance between our perception of the world and our lifestyle.

These olive trees, traversed by light and split in half inside the walls of a house, as does nature when she forcefully reclaims the spaces Man has attempted to steal from her, are a promise of future.

Many of Gilbert Halaby's verses seem to encourage humanity towards a higher expression of life, promoting peace and understanding, culture and coexistence among all humans. From the simple strokes of his paintings we not only derive harmony and beauty but also an ethical sentiment.

His aesthetic is literally "East-thetic". His small icons are *exempla*<sup>1</sup>, like his entire life, meaning that they can be taken as an example for all.

*Upskill your eyes to metamorphose into a better poet,  
To scrutinize the beauty in other poems.  
To take delight in what other souls left behind.  
Upskill your soul*

By Gilbert Halaby

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<sup>1</sup> *Exemplum* (pl. *exempla*) is the short version, used in the Medieval literature, of a didactic and moralizing topic, a narration that seeks to provide a model of moral and ethical conduct to learn from.

## L'arte est-etica di Gilbert Halaby

Giovanna Dalla Chiesa

C'è qualcosa di straordinario nella personalità di Gilbert Halaby dove eleganza, semplicità, verità e fedeltà ai propri principi si trovano a proprio agio con *esprit bon vivant*, senso della circostanza felice e insieme della transazione e del commercio.

È una storia che merita di essere raccontata, la sua.

Poco più che ventenne, Gilbert Halaby giunge a Roma dal suo Libano, dove a ogni passo accade d'inciampare nelle rovine romane o di altre antichissime civiltà, dopo aver studiato archeologia. Nel cuore custodisce un sogno, quello di essere un pittore. Sin da bambino ha assistito al miracolo della creazione spiando il padre di un'amica dipingere in solitudine. A Roma, nell'*apertura* della città definita *eterna*, dove le molteplici culture accolte dall'impero romano, hanno potuto integrarsi costituendo la straordinaria ricchezza che la caratterizza, le radici di quello che, nel Libano delle origini, era ugualmente e nobilmente presente, si è fatto vivo e denso di opportunità, le stesse di cui i cittadini di Beirut godevano come colonia romana, quando con molti altri benefici erano esentati dal pagamento delle tasse. Roma ha potuto incarnare in questo modo, per lui, la condizione di privilegio e di libertà che avrebbe allontanato i tragici scenari di un paese percorso nell'attualità sempre dalla guerra e ricongiungerlo a un'epoca mitica, dove il mosaico di quelle culture si è finalmente ricomposto.

Al pragmatismo, dettato dalla necessità di dedicarsi ad attività limitrofe a quelle dell'arte - come il design e la moda, sicuramente più redditizie, da





*Untroubled, 2023*  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
200 x 240 cm | 78 ¾ x 94 ½ in

cui poi si allontanerà - senza incorrere mai in scelte troppo rigide, si è accompagnato il desiderio di non smettere mai di studiare per continuare una formazione, ancora oggi in itinere, affinando capacità di osservazione e di riflessione, secondo una gestione opportuna del tempo, per poterle attuare.

La vita è andata a disporsi con naturalezza, in questo modo, su due binari paralleli: quello della vita pratica e quello della vita contemplativa, incrociando a tratti un binario con l'altro, ma a passo lento, senza obiettivi preordinati, lasciando accadere le cose.

Non è forse già questo il requisito ideale per situare ciò che avvertiamo dentro di noi, nella prospettiva giusta a incontrarlo anche fuori di noi? Giorno dopo giorno, Gilbert Halaby ha messo le premesse per rompere quella concatenazione temporale che lega causa a effetto e progressivamente è venuto a porsi in una dimensione fuori dal tempo, dove il prima e il dopo non sono più percepiti come distanti fra loro, ma invece come compresenti e sullo stesso piano, l'uno vicino all'altro. Una condizione di natura metafisica, dove il soggetto incontra l'*altro*, secondo una rifrangenza speculare, come guardandosi dentro a uno specchio.

Simone Weill rifletteva: “cultura è educazione all'attenzione”.

Gilbert Halaby ha osservato molto, ha allertato i suoi sensi ad andare più lontano, incrociando sé nell'altro. Ogni luogo, nel suo universo di fiaba, è tutti i luoghi, ogni cosa è tutte le cose infinitamente, come rincorrendo l'archetipo che, molteplici, riposa dentro le fibre del nostro essere e palpita con la nostra stessa esistenza. Ogni albero, ogni casa è ora e sempre, prossimi e distanti al tempo stesso, avvolti in un'aura indimenticabile, ma indicibile: è la casa, è l'albero di ognuno di noi, una volta per tutte, una volta per tutti. Una questione sacra. Non un'icona, o una semplice immagine, ma un simbolo. Per questo, ancora prima di vederne l'effigie, siamo in grado di coglierla dentro di noi con devozione e preveggenza che suggeriscono, semplicemente, l'alveo e il canale in cui immergersi per orientarsi e intraprendere il viaggio.

Non sorprende, allora, che queste siano oggi le ragioni del successo che gli



*Corinthian II*, 2023  
dittico | diptych  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in

stanno tributando persone di estrazione e culture totalmente diverse con crescente considerazione.

Nell'epoca, dove nulla pare più avere un senso - neppure la vita umana - dove di nessuna cosa è possibile conoscere l'origine, Gilbert Halaby comunica l'essenziale - ciò che è puramente necessario - con forme che persino un bambino saprebbe decifrare, perché risvegliano la radice primordiale verso cui ogni nostro orientamento si dirige, secondo un tropismo naturale.

L'economia di queste forme evoca quella del paesaggio greco, cui Gilbert Halaby è legato almeno quanto lo è all'Italia, anche se in modo differente. Lì persino i templi sono privi di magniloquenza e a misura d'uomo. Al profilo di una casa non si accompagna in genere molto di più di un albero e di un animale - capra o asino - dotato dell'opportuna legatura. D'altra parte, in greco, pittura ha la stessa radice di scrittura. E infatti, il colore locale, a campiture uniformi, nella pittura di Gilbert Halaby, è "scritto" quanto dipinto, nel senso che il segno ha in essa un'importanza decisiva.

In alcuni piccoli quadri del ciclo *Une Comédie Romaine* (2023) il segno è protagonista persino a dispetto del colore - pur tanto importante nel suo lavoro - come di qualsiasi altro schema di rappresentazione. Anzi è l'unico elemento a sottolineare l'inquadratura, l'andamento e il percorso dei personaggi.

L'aneddotica apparente che in questa serie romana sembra guidare il pittore, non sarebbe così fragrante e neanche tanto icastica da evitare tentazioni bozzettistiche nell'affrontare un racconto - che sembra riportarci invece alle storie delle predelle d'altare del quattrocento - se la capacità di astrarre da ogni orpello, non fosse scritta nell'essenza delle apparizioni - in uno scenario sempre mutevole, ma al tempo stesso fermo e come inciso nello scorrere del tempo.

Svuotare, arrivare allo scheletro del visibile e al limite dell'invisibile è quanto i moderni hanno appreso dagli antichi - il "profilo" degli egiziani, secondo i cubisti, o il canone delle icone bizantine, per i pittori astratti - l'alfabeto e la scrittura sono codici che non hanno quasi nulla in comune con ciò che chiamiamo "realtà". La spiritualità più alta, non ha mai cercato la rappresentazione, al contrario, fa astrazione da essa.

È curioso pensare che l'invenzione del primo alfabeto fonetico, costituito da 22 segni, sia attribuito ai Fenici, la popolazione di ceppo semitico che abitava il Libano. A quei segni, i greci aggiunsero le vocali e poi altri suoni.

Dunque non c'è da stupirsi che la scrittura accompagni da sempre la pittura nel comportamento di Gilbert Halaby, che ne fa ora il doppio registro su cui orchestrare il proprio modo di offrirsi al resto del mondo. Non solo i frammenti poetici - come nel catalogo della mostra *Domus Berytus* al Beit Beirut Museum (marzo 2023) – ampliano la conoscenza dell'animo dell'artista, benché totalmente autonomi dai dipinti, facendo eco alle immagini, ma l'autore ha trovato un magnifico espediente letterario e psicologico, dedicando una lettera al sé stesso adolescente in occasione di ogni mostra che, oltre a stabilire un dialogo tra presente e passato, circoscrive il suo universo, suggerendo la forma indiretta per entrare più profondamente in contatto con questo sognatore solitario.

La scrittura è la voce che si aggiunge all'esperienza visiva.

Nel ciclo pittorico *Domus Berytus*, la vibrazione di questa voce, simile a un suono silenzioso, si espande a onda intorno alle scarse immagini, suggerendo la forza di un desiderio, il richiamo di una nostalgia che risucchia nella lontananza ogni segno.

L'attuale tappa "Un apogeo di luce" corrisponde al coronamento di un altro sogno, questa volta in prospettiva: non solo una casa, ma un bosco di ulivi.

Gilbert Halaby ha trascorso la propria infanzia giocando fra le rovine di un tempio circondato da ulivi, non poteva tardare ancora a creare le condizioni per ritrovare quell'unità tra cultura e natura di cui si è sempre nutrito.

La creazione ha bisogno di ristabilire un'armonia tra la nostra concezione del mondo e il nostro sistema di vita.

Questi ulivi, attraversati dalla luce, tagliati a metà dentro le pareti di una casa, come accade quando la natura si riappropria con forza di spazi che l'uomo ha cercato di sottrarle, sono una promessa di futuro.

Non sono pochi i versi con cui Gilbert Halaby sembra spronare l'umanità,

verso una più alta espressione di vita nella pace e nella concordia, nella cultura e nella convivenza fra gli uomini. Dalla parsimonia dei suoi segni, non si ricava semplicemente armonia e bellezza, ma anche un sentimento etico. La sua estetica è, letteralmente, est-etica. Le sue piccole icone sono degli *exempla*<sup>1</sup>, come tutta la sua vita che, infatti, può davvero essere presa ad esempio.

*Upskill your eyes to metamorphose into a better poet,  
To scrutinize the beauty in other poems.  
To take delight in what other souls left behind.  
Upskill your soul*

scrive Gilbert Halaby.

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<sup>1</sup> *Exemplum* (pl. *exempla*) è la forma letteraria breve, tipica della letteratura medievale, di argomento didattico e moraleggiante, dove la vicenda narrata vuole avere valore "esemplare" di modello di condotta etica.



*Gazing*, 2023  
 olio su tela | oil on canvas  
 80 x 120 cm | 31 ½ x 47 ¼ in

Rome, February 6, 2024

*My dearest boy,*

*You are still at the early stages of this beautiful journey.*

*Someone called it an "Apogee Of Light".*

*You are still making slow strides towards your colourful light.*

*A day shall come when you will look back and rejoice in the tale you weaved. It's a colourful one, but be sure to look closely and notice that other hands are weaving it with you. The hands of precious humans who will accompany you on this marvellous voyage.*

*Many preach to be wary of others; I tell you, keep some of them dear in your heart for they shall be your pillars.*

*There will be an exceptional person beside you always, and simply the thought of having him beside you shall gift you the certitude to paint your life in light, and your canvases too.*

*I believe this letter will reach you while you are playing in the tender shade of the wondrous olive trees in the north.*

*Unbeknownst to you, one day you shall have your olive trees. They shall hold your hand and take you back to knock on the doors of the dreams you are dreaming now. You shall paint them, my boy.*

*You shall paint their roots and yours intertwined deep into the soil of our Odyssey. You shall paint them in colours only the birds can see, and you shall paint them so your dreams become the fragrances that shall fill the world with goodness upon opening that door.*

*Your ancestors brought this magnificent tree to the shores where I now stand.*

*This tree became a treasure and the source of life for countless generations.*

*This tree gifted these humans their humanity and encouraged them to build their homes beside her. This is when the magic was born. When humans started taking care of the tree that took care of them.*

*You see, my boy, we are nothing without nature, without our trees, without their green leaves and the gentle shade they bestow on us.*

*No lover's kiss is more tender than the kiss in their shade.*

*No lover's words are more heartfelt than the ones pronounced under their blessings.*

*No lover's love has the same magnitude as the one that blossoms around them.*



*In Good Company*, 2023  
 olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
 oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
 50 x 60 cm | 19 1/16 x 23 5/8 in

*I wrote this to you the other day so you don't lose your way when your arms become more robust and your sight sharper:*

*Grasp my eyes today,  
 So you can scrutinise my beloved trees  
 Inviting you with every elated leaf,  
 To come and crouch in their shade;  
 To wake up from the cloudy dream;  
 To their slow rhythm;  
 To their tenderness and pure love;  
 To the humanity you lost, surrounded by stratified stones;  
 To the understanding and the simplicity you abandoned,  
 surrounded by the noise of others;  
 To the shores of harmony that you forgot,  
 blinded by the multitude of false expectations;  
 To the absolute freedom that you mistook for the imposed one;  
 To nature, yours and everyone's only home.  
 Can you see the beauty now?  
 I shall take them back, hoping they willed in your heart  
 The seed of sight,  
 The seed of patience,  
 The seed of harmony and,  
 The seed of love.  
 Plant them, my dear,  
 Plant them so tomorrow a tender heart can rejoice in their kind shade,  
 So, you leave behind the sole source of a compassionate and harmonious humanity.*

*Voilà, An Apogee Of Light, my boy, can only become your light when you return to nature.*

*Hug your trees for me, my boy, and one day, you shall hug their descendants here.*

*May you always be surrounded by light.*

*Gilbert Halaby*

*The Fisrt Harvest*



*Everyone's Dream, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
60 x 50 cm | 23 5/8 x 19 1/16 in



*Harmony*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
50 x 60 cm | 19 1/16 x 23 5/8 in



*Mother*, 2023  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
150 x 150 cm | 59 x 59 in



*Steadiness, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 30 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*The Sun Will Always Shine, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 30 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in





*The Morning Of The Harvest*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in



*Family*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
60 x 50 cm | 23 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in



*The Celebration, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15 ¾ x 11 ¾ in



*Rooted, 2023*  
olio su tavola | oil on wood  
30 x 24 cm | 11 ¾ x 9 7/16 in



*Horizon, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in



*Roots, 2023*  
olio su tavola | oil on wood  
60 x 50 cm | 23 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in



*There Is Always A Blue Sky  
Over The Dark Clouds, 2024*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
60 x 50 cm | 23 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in



*Towards The Blue, 2024*  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
100 x 130 cm | 30 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 51 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in

*Home*



*A Colourful Solitude, 2023*  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
150 x 150 cm | 59 x 59 in



*A Good Neighbour*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Melody*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*In Love, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 30 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*The North, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Strength, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 40 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Sunset On My Island, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
50 x 60 cm | 19  $\frac{1}{16}$  x 23  $\frac{5}{8}$  in





*Serenity, 2023*  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
100 x 150 cm | 39 3/8 x 59 in



*Under A Pine Tree, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 40 cm | 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in



*Sunny, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
60 x 50 cm | 23 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in



*Seaside, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 40 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*A Sunny Dream, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 30 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in

*Silhouettes*



*Alberto, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in



*Alessandro*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15 ¾ x 15 ¾ in

*Enzo II*, 2023  
olio su tela | oil on canvas  
120 x 80 cm | 47 ¼ x 31 ½ in





*Nikos, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Federico, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in

*Une Comédie Romaine*



*Fellinopolis, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Messaging For A Council, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
30 x 40 cm | 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in



*Our Father Browne, 2023*  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  in





*8 & 1/2*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 30 cm | 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in



*A Game Of Backgammon with Soraya*, 2023  
olio su tela applicata su cartoncino  
oil on canvas applied on cardboard  
40 x 40 cm | 15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in



Gilbert Halaby at Maja Arte Contemporanea, Rome 2024

## Biography

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 jewelry 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 historic 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 every day 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.

Gilbert Halaby

*Apogee Of Light*

March 7 - April 7, 2024

Curator

Daina Maja Titonel

Maja Arte Contemporanea

Via di Monserrato 30 – 00186 Rome, Italy

T. +39 338 5005483

[www.majartecontemporanea.com](http://www.majartecontemporanea.com)

[info@majartecontemporanea.com](mailto:info@majartecontemporanea.com)

[@majartecontemporanea](https://www.instagram.com/majartecontemporanea)

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Casa Branca Atelier

2410 Florida Avenue, West Palm Beach, Florida

[casabranca.com](http://casabranca.com)

Texts

Giovanna Dalla Chiesa

Gilbert Halaby

Translation and editing in English

Natalia Dodi Migliorini

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Giorgio Benni

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