

SAMIA A. HALABY

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December 27, 2023

Pamela Whitten, President,
Indiana University

Dear President Whitten,

A retrospective exhibition of my work at Indiana University's Eskenazi Museum, titled "Centers of Energy" was scheduled to open February 10th, 2024. Unexpectedly, I received a letter informing me that the exhibition is canceled. What makes this sudden decision perplexing is that for over two years the Museum has put impeccable effort into arranging this show, including the recent confirmation of a performance of my kinetic painting, planned for the opening day.

Indiana University is an institution that I have held in high regard. It is my alma mater as a graduate student, and I spent several years as a professor and was awarded tenure. Nostalgia about my years as a student at Indiana University and Michigan State University is recounted in my unpublished book, *Aesthetic Autobiography*, which I have made available to both institutions' curators, since another version of this retrospective is being presented at Michigan State University.

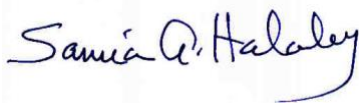
The unexpected nature of the notice belies the long interaction and agreement both written and verbal between me, the curators, and museum staff. It is upsetting to me that a show which has been costly to me, the university, and outside funding organizations has been dismissed without an opportunity to understand the issues behind this sudden, one-sided decision.

Equally distressing, is that this notice coincides at a time when Palestinian civilians are being massacred, starved, and displaced by the millions in Gaza; in what is one of the largest human rights catastrophes this century. Nearly every country in the UN, all major human rights organizations, and a majority of Americans want to see a ceasefire. I as a Palestinian, who was born in Jerusalem and survived the Nakba at age 11 in 1948, and someone who has for decades engaged in activism and advocacy for the life, safety, and self-determination of my people, what is being inflicted on the people of Gaza carves a deep wound. As a Palestinian and woman artist practicing in the United States, I am not a stranger to racism and sexism of the art world. As I and Palestinians everywhere are experiencing tremendous grief we turn to our friends.

I am asking that the abrupt cancellation of the show at Eskenazi Museum be reconsidered, and the show continue as has been contractually agreed upon and so carefully planned these past two years. I would be glad to meet with the President and/or the Provost to help clear any misunderstanding. I suggest we consider this a bump along the long road to genuine accomplishment. Wisdom and foresight should guide us in this situation as our decisions on this project will have art historical ramifications.

Additionally, if the show is definitely canceled, I formally request a written explanation from the Eskenazi Museum of Indiana University as to why this show was canceled. In lieu of any explanation, I and many others in the University community, the country, and the world are left to draw their own conclusions.

I await your answer with sincere hope that wisdom will guide us all,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Samia A. Halaby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samia A. Halaby
Painter

PS: This same communication is being sent to the following three individuals at Indiana University:

Rahul Shrivastav, Provost and Executive Vice President

David Breneman, Director, Eskenazi Museum

Elliot Josephine Leila Reichert, Curator of Contemporary Art, Eskenazi Museum

Furthermore, courtesy copies of this letter will be sent to the Michigan State University administration and curator due to their collaboration in this project of two retrospectives.

Recipients are:

Thomas Jetschko, Provost, Michigan State University

Judith Stoddart, Vice Provost for University Arts and Collections

Steven Bridges, Director the Broad Art Museum

Rachel Winter, Assistant Curator, the Broad Art Museum