

RIBAL MOLAEB  
BECOMING LIGHT

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## Notes in the Air

Lebanese painter and classical musician Ribal Molaeb is primarily concerned with the play of air and light, his painterly attention caught by a deep observation of the sky, viewed directly from the vast panoramas that surround his home and studio in the mountains of Lebanon, the village of Baissour. Perched high on what feels like a summit, his vision is taken by the vastness of the sky, a rhythmical composition in which he seeks to describe aspects of his highly attuned aural and visual landscapes.

While the recent paintings of Molaeb appear deeply rooted in the Lebanese landscape there is a universality to his paintings that belie such specificity, a deeply felt colour palette that is perhaps psychological as much as it is based in external vision. Born and raised in Lebanon, and trained under the tutelage of his father, the acclaimed Lebanese painter Jamil Molaeb, Ribal moved as a young adult to Salzburg, then Vienna and later Zurich, Switzerland. Now moving between Lebanon and Switzerland, and with a developing artistic presence in Japan, he continues his focus on air, sky, the particularity of atmosphere. Seemingly untethered, his paintings are reminiscent of musical notes heard rather than seen, atmospheric in the aural as well as in a visual sense.

Often untitled, there are yet sporadic markers in Molaeb's titles that indicate a general relationship with place, and with time. While Lebanon is the de facto geography that he describes, his work asks a more personal question about place and relations. There is a sense in which the depth and particularity of Molaeb's landscapes prompt the viewer to consider themselves and their places. What is the feeling of a particular place, its rhythm and its colours, from where exactly does noon appear in just this way, what is the pace of its arrival, and from which place might this particular sunset be seen. And so, instead of seeing only the artists' view, the viewer is asked to explore their own relationship with light and movement, the particular feeling of morning wherever they are, how the sun rises on their own balcony, from a favourite window, how it feels when the darkness falls away at the beginning of the night.

The bright light of noon is an experience common to all humanity, wherever one happens to be, whatever the circumstances. Noon is bright, dawn is emerging, night falls. The speed, colour and rhythm at which these daily events occur is the change that occurs.

Molaeb's paintings are images of movement, observations of the changing sky as it shifts from day to night, un hurried from day to day, season to season. Sweeping across the canvas, his brushstrokes at times apparent, the paint is hurried and yet delicate, capturing what is before him with the vastness of nature translated to the large scale that he has chosen.

There is an almost hyper-real quality to the colours that he depicts, and his vision is a reminder of the vibrancy of the sky, the world, if one really looks, pays attention, describes.

*As I write about Ribal Molaebe I am outside, situated in a village in Lebanon surrounded by mountains. From memory I think that my view is quite different from Ribal's. While I look out towards a mountain range, trees and houses dotting the surface of the land, Ribal sees only sky, he is that high. I shift my gaze, look up, try to forget the land underneath. With a focus on the sky the eye settles differently, blue against blue, and the subtlety of the experience is instantly defined. A cloud moves across the scene, creating an edge. In fact, in the absence of hard edges I am particularly drawn to this slowly drifting line. It is rare for the eyes to have the opportunity or the motivation to rest without an edge, perhaps if one is lying on the ground looking up, or looking out at sea. And yet this is Ribal's view, an almost edgeless vision.*

These skies are groundless, appear that way, and yet there is almost always a darker aspect towards the ground of his canvases, a reminder of earth, edge, even as it is clear this this element too is rolling, transforming with the light. Sound emerges, the memory of music grounded in a particular tradition, the complex formality, rhythmic and undulating crescendos and decrescendos of the classical form.

Molaebe is a prolific worker, creating sweeping strokes of colour across large canvases depicting the sky as it shifts from light to dark and the depth of colour that he observes between. Yet, if observing the sky is his painterly passion then Ribal has another that is perhaps of equal importance. A professional musician, he has spoken of the way in which his musical interest has profoundly shaped his artistic vision, noting that his artistic focus 'lies in the interplay and equilibrium of lines, forms, and colour gradations', a trait that he considers influenced by his background in classical music.

Ribal's paintings ask the viewer to consider the fluid nature of the world and its specificity. Perhaps the type of music that also inspires him is evident here, a form of attention that is rooted in a particular rhythm, resting momentarily and moving again, alighting once more on a gentle note or colour and then transforming into the new.

The paintings of Ribal are paintings of light, but more than this they are paintings of internal space, a limitless psychological landscape that speaks to sound as well as to vision. The pace of the paintings is rhythmical, an ordered series of spaces that speak of a fluid yet ultimately tethered relationship to place and world.

Amy Todman  
Beirut, December 2025



## SKY series

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**Blue 1**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Blue 2**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**White**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



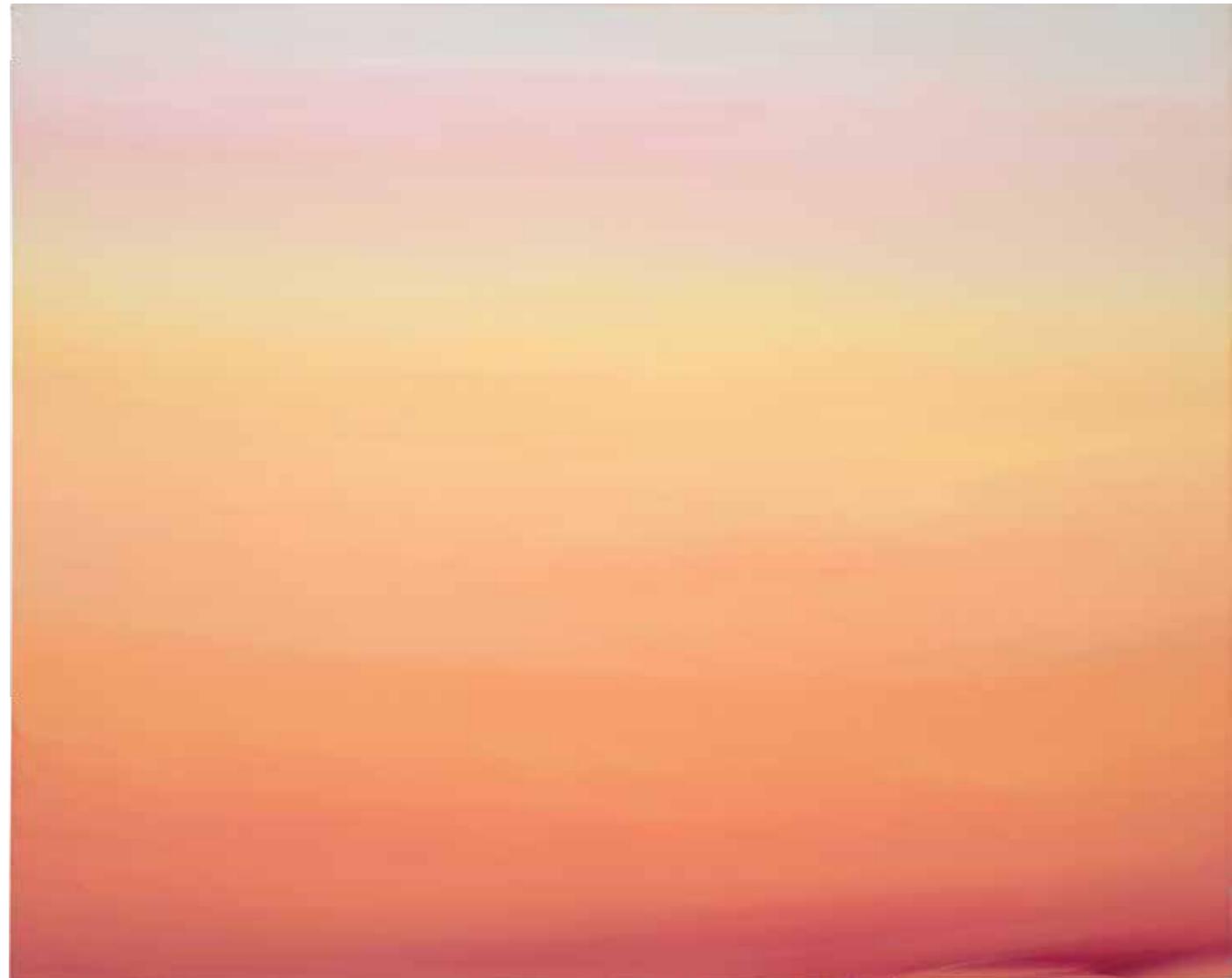
**Blue 3**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Early Afternoon**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Late Afternoon**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Sunrise**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Sunset**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Pink**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025



**Red**  
Oil on canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 2025

**Sun (overleaf)**  
Oil on canvas | 200 x 350 cm | 2023





**Morning**  
Oil on canvas | 90 x 160 cm | 2025



**Noon**  
Oil on canvas | 90x160 cm | 2025



**Light Blue**  
Oil on canvas | 90 x 160 cm | 2025



**Deep Blue**  
Oil on canvas | 90x160 cm | 2025



**Red**  
Oil on canvas | 90 x 160 cm | 2025



**Sunset**  
Oil on canvas | 90x160 cm | 2025



**Sunset 2**  
Oil on canvas | 90 x 160 cm | 2025



**Sunset 3**  
Oil on canvas | 90x160 cm | 2025



**Turquoise**  
Oil on canvas | 90 x 160 cm | 2025



**Green**  
Oil on canvas | 90x160 cm | 2025

## MOUNT LEBANON series

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Oil on canvas | 90 x 120 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 90 x 120 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 90 x 120 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 90 x 120 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 90 x 120 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 70 x 100 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 70 x 100 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 70 x 100 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 60 x 80 cm | 2025



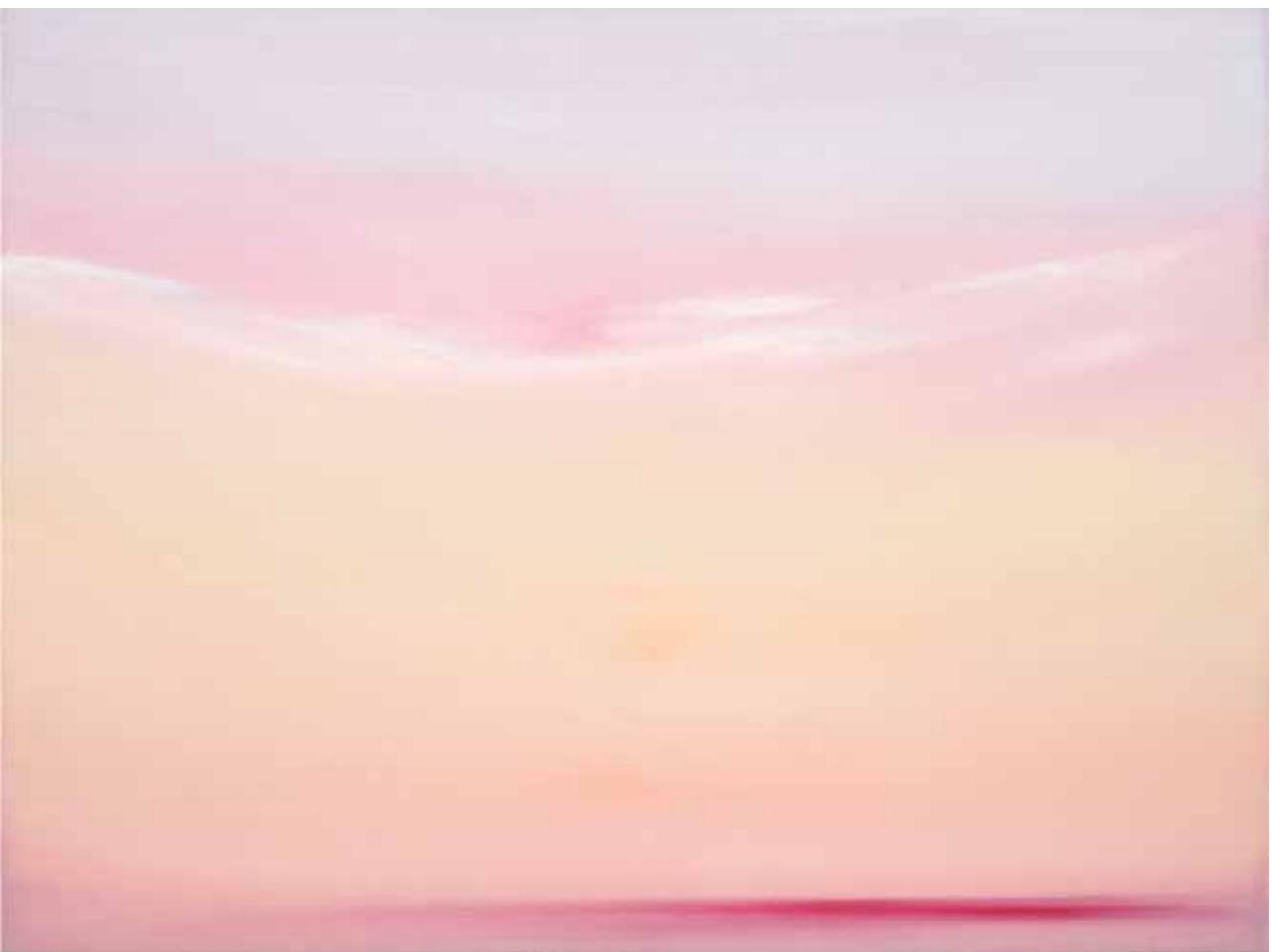
Oil on canvas | 60 x 80 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 60 x 80 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 60 x 80 cm | 2025



Oil on canvas | 60 x 80 cm | 2025

## About Ribal Molaeb

Born in Baissour, Lebanon, in 1992, Ribal Molaeb moved to Salzburg at the age of 17 to study at the Mozarteum University Salzburg.

He later continued his studies in Vienna at the University of Music and Performing Arts, where he received his Master's degree in Arts with distinction. After relocating to Zürich, Switzerland, Ribal was appointed artistic director of the "SUMITO" Art and Music Association.

Since early childhood, he had worked as an assistant to his father, the acclaimed artist Jamil Molaeb. In 2015, he founded the Molaeb Festival for Chamber Music and Fine Arts.

Ribal's paintings have been exhibited with prominent galleries and institutions in cities including New York, Tokyo, Fukuoka, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amman, Beirut, London, Paris, Antibes, Madrid, Amsterdam, Geneva, Basel, and Zürich.

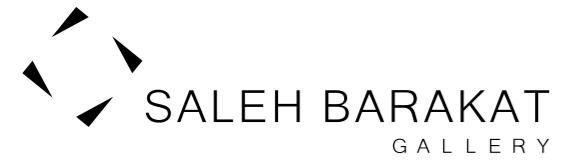
Recent solo exhibitions include Artifact (New York, 2025), Mizoe Art Gallery (Fukuoka, 2025), Mizoe Art Gallery (Tokyo, 2025), Galerie Esther Woerdehoff (Geneva, 2022), and Galerie Claude Lemand (Paris, 2021).

Among his participations in international art fairs, he presented a solo exhibition at Volta Basel Art Fair (2024) and Zürich Art Fair (2024), and was featured at Art Paris (2022), Contemporary Istanbul (2025), and Art Fair Asia Fukuoka (2025).

A painting by Ribal has been acquired by the Museum of Arab Art in Paris (IMA).

Currently living and working in Zürich, Switzerland, Ribal is represented by Saleh Barakat Gallery in Lebanon and Mizoe Art Gallery in Japan.





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Saleh Barakat Gallery Beirut | Justinian St. | Clemenceau

Beirut | Lebanon

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

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