

GHIZLANE SAHLI

La Mer(e), Origine du Monde....

February, 14th > March, 14th 2020

The David Bloch Gallery is delighted to present the second solo exhibition of GHIZLANE SAHLI in Marrakech on Friday February 14, 2020.

Two years after his first exhibition "Histoires de Tripes", the Moroccan artist will present a new series of exclusive works - bas reliefs, sculptures and drawings.

These two years have allowed her to acquire international recognition.

His work - exhibited in many galleries in Europe and United States (Paris, London, Milan, Frankfurt, Lugano, Florida....) - has integrated prestigious and museum collections (MUCEM in Marseille, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, MoCa in Brescia and at MACAAL in Marrakech).

This exhibition entitled "La Mer (e), Origine du Monde" will take place during the Contemporary Art fair 1.54.



Mer(e), Origine du Monde

On the exhibition 'Mer(e), Origine du Monde' by Ghizlane at the David Bloch Gallery, Marrakesh

Ghizlane Sahli uses the word ‘alveoli’ to describe the tips of plastic bottles, which she meticulously wraps with vegetable silk thread assisted by craftswomen, to form modular units she assimilates to the cells of living organisms. The alveoli became one of the marks of her sculpture precisely because the artist turned them into a rule of work, a kind of accretionary measure of composition, inspired by the growth of organic forms. Practically speaking, the alveoli method does apply a reproduction principle at the very heart of her creative process, so that the cyclic repetition of the gesture composes with the spatial repetition of the forms, towards an equilibrium which the work alone holds the secret.

During her first formal attempts¹, Sahli's work has appeared more as an inventory of our coexistence with objects, and less as a disguised ecology that would align her indiscriminately among the artists of Recycled Art². In her most recent iteration, 'Mèr(e), Origine du Monde' at the David Bloch Gallery, Marrakesh, new variations support the artist's interest in the idea of the metamorphosis of matter. This notion underpins the transformations taking place within the very subject she deals with.

The New Materials of a Unifying Whole

Among these variations, Ghizlane Sahli started with a change in chromaticity, such that the silk now glows with an electric blue, as opposed to the vivid red that dominated the previous compositions. This way, the splenic grasp that characterized 'Histoires de Tripes' is now replaced with a feeling of serenity and a sense of calm. Then she introduces new materials. The gesture that lined the cone-shaped alveolar modules with silk is now supplemented here and there with objects that this same gesture—which has since gained autonomy—leaves uncovered according to its own law. Copper wire, transparent plastic tubes, pieces of used CDs, wool, burns from fire, or even ink dyeing, are all part of a meticulously orchestrated internal metamorphosis.

In fact, a keen observer of Sahli's work might question the meaning of these variations in relation to previous exhibitions or, conversely, be left with a feeling of déjà-vu, thus risking being misled as to the intention behind the pieces on display. Yet, given the visibly punctilious work of all her hands³, it is the sign and not the material that needs to be examined, the measurement and not the quantity, it is time that is at stake. In other words, Ghizlane Sahli's work alludes to the fact that what presided over her work previously, continues to prevail today. That all the discontinuities within her work, whether small or large, are underpinned by the same impetus, by the same circular, meditative and infinite gesture. In short, that the introduction of new materials testifies to a desire to encompass new parts—animal here, mineral there—into a unifying whole. What appears to the eye as a renewal of form actually conceals a larger order.

Sea/Mother

By naming this exhibition 'Mèr(e), Origine du Monde' Ghizlane Sahli, operates a change of scale within the very topic of her work. Her research used to carry on the infinitely small; it now turned into an exploration of the infinitely large. The visions of guts, cells, and human bodies evoked by her previous 'Histoires de Tripes' have given way to the vastness of great marine ensembles. It would be difficult to avoid the feeling of immersion in front of the seashell white in her pieces; or at the sight of some her tree-like vivid shapes, whilst being mesmerized by the floating undulation of some strange underwater-like outgrowths. David Bloch Gallery re-enacts a reminiscence of the coral reef, or at least exhibits fragments of it. It would be equally difficult to believe that these objects did not grow here, one cell after another within the exhibition space.

As a storyteller, Ghizlane Sahli reminds us how much the symbolism of the sea is linked to that of the mother, namely through homophony and the 'maternal' acronym of 'M.o.m' ('Mèr(e), Origin du Monde') which she establishes as a titling principle for her experiments. As if each piece was born from a

¹Notamment lorsqu'elle faisait du collectif Zbel Manifesto, Marrakech Biennale 5, Histoires de Tripes.

²We call Recycled Art any creative artwork made from repurposed. And we draw attention to the diversity of its orientations.

³Referring to her hands and those of his four embroiderers.

genitrix⁴ located both here and far away. The mother and the sea share a common role as receptacle and matrix of life. On the one hand, we do know that among the Great Mother Goddesses (Isis, Gaia, Rhea, Hera, Demeter, Ishtar, Astarte, Kâli, etc.), there is not one who is not simultaneously the goddess of fertility. On the other hand, the sea incarnates the dynamics of life as the source and destination of everything. It is therefore in response to the matrix of life that Sahli's gesture mimics the cycles and repeats itself in a spiritual manner. In this exhibition, the artist seems to remind us that at the basis of everything lies a universal principle possibly sustained by a divine foundation. So, the current change of scale in her subject matter actually introduces a cosmocentric vision that would encompass the microcosm and the macrocosm, the infinitely small and the infinitely large.



⁴Genitrix: Latin word for 'biological mother'.

A visual vocabulary of life

We⁵ have the feeling that in Ghizlane Sahli’s ‘Mèr(e), Origine du Monde’, the mother has been used as an archetype, i.e. as a mental image inherited from our earthly history. ‘Mother’ is for instance a universal archetype of care, kindness and shelter. By associating it with the no less powerful symbol of the sea, Sahli underlines its residual dimension, that is the fact that it stems from the collective subconscious. The latter seemed critical for us in attempting to grasp the work of Ghizlane Sahli. All of her experiments resemble a visual lexicon of life in the broadest sense: water, motherhood, the universe, creation, femininity, the living, the plants, minerals, animals, etc.. Her artistic creations have no other inspiration than Creation itself, of which she tends to make an inventory. In her own words, illustrating with a concerted gesture of her fingers, she emphasized: "I started from the smallest to the largest scale. And the idea of the sea has been in my mind for a long time and chronologically way before ‘Histoires de Tripes’." In other words, seized by a sense of totality, the artist draws an inventory of its manifestations as she feels them, turning the déjà-vu into a kind of déjà-rêvé (‘already dreamt’). Sahli who, like nature, design in one go and without any preparatory sketches, replays the principle of the living through emotion. Her gesture bears the trace of life, which she offers as a celebration of forms to the visitor it may concern.

If the artist has been moved by volumes of images of human bodies, coral reefs and other marine super-organisms she looks into, her personal experience remains her most direct source of inspiration. In her early years of experiencing motherhood, Ghizlane Sahli’s current studio was used as a performance playground for her children at Christmas time. There was a theatre stage, a mezzanine, a slide, a silver stage curtain plus another red velvet one in the background. At each performance, the room was assiduously decorated and the actors were dressed in costumes. All in all, a serious play! It is in this place that Sahli’s works develop and abound today, as if fueled by those years of playful motherhood.

Sahli, Goethe and Courbet

A sort of chiasmus⁶ therefore occurred in the artist’s personal life: a creative woman’s vision now proliferates where a procreator lived her maternity in front of her offspring. Faced with these works, may the viewer pay attention to the threads dripping, having in mind the fluid time that Ghizlane and her embroiderers invest together in a joint effort, like a gift or a prayer. May they think of the decorative twists and turns of her sculptures. As everything seems to be in motion in the show, each piece forms the pattern of a larger lace, and sketches the possible contours of the Eternal Feminine, in the sense of the German playwright J. W. von Goethe. At the very end of his second *Faust* (1832), Goethe had Marguerite, then concerned about the fate of Faust’s soul, say: “Come, rise to higher spheres—Sensing your presence, he will follow!” To which the Chorus Mysticus proclaimed, "Woman, eternally, Show us the way." Chances are the feminine in Ghizlane Sahli’s work, like the feminine in the Goethe’s Eternal Feminine, embodies this call to transcendence, i.e. a sublimated desire. The metamorphosis at play in her work is fuelled by a similar energy, which happens to be fundamentally feminine. Indeed, only the feminine could stretch an arc between the cells and the ocean, or articulate the aqueous space of primary childhood and the aquatic space of our primary origins. We also owe to the feminine, the uncanny familiarity between the amniotic sac in which each of us "burgeoned"—long before we knew reading—and the muffled murmur of an aquatic immersion.

Finally, in this theatre of forms identified a variation on the theme of the *Origin of the World* (1866), the emblematic work by the French historical painter Gustave Courbet. Although Sahli maintained the similarity of the title, she seems to have rejected the piece’s raw eroticism and its sexuality devoid of cosmic density. Against Courbet’s straight realism, the Moroccan artist suggests abstraction. Where Courbet posed the question of the gaze and the image, Sahli poses that of the gesture and the soul. In other words, by describing femininity, maternity and the sea as entangled notion, the exhibition ‘Mèr(e), Origine du Monde’ recalls an artistic practice in which sexuality is a conductor of the creative energy, and not merely a figurative model or sitter.

Untitled — Soukaina Aboulaoula, Yvon Langué
Marrakesh, January 2020.

⁵As authors of the text.

⁶A rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form. We use it metaphorically.



M.O.M. #007 – Silk on plastic and metal - 103x100x27cm - 2020

For any request for additional information, HR visual, biography etc : contact@davidblochgalerie.com

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