

GHIZLANE SAHLI

P O R T F O L I O

Ghizlane Sahli embroiders, sculpts, installs, draws and paints. She recounts an inner, organic journey, carried by a universal dimension. Drawing on ancestral techniques and the craftsmanship of the women artisans around her, she develops her contemporary ideas by playing with materials, scale and volume.

Together, they create three-dimensional embroideries from waste materials collected by the artist, from which she extracts what she calls the “alveolus.” The alveolus, a piece of plastic waste covered in silk threads, is the elementary particle of Ghizlane Sahli’s work. It is the atom that constitutes matter, the cell whose accumulation and proliferation give rise to the work. Ghizlane uses thread to weave and celebrate the subjects that inspire her: the human body in its universality, and the female body in its intimacy.

She draws on metaphors rooted in nature to develop her ideas, express her inner world and convey her emotions. A pure emotion, stripped of all religious, social or educational conditioning. Ghizlane Sahli thus takes pleasure in transforming matter, exalting it and imbuing it with meaning.



LA MUJER VIVA, 2026
Embroidery, wool, wire, collage, and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on linen canvas.
180 x 76 cm



Born in 1973. Lives and works in Marrakech.

Collections

Victoria and Albert Museum, Londres, Royaume-Uni

Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakech, Maroc

Collections privées internationales

Publications (selection)

2024

« The Wake, L'éveil, le sillage, xàll wi » Catalogue de la 15e édition de la Biennale de l'Art africain contemporain

2023

Catalogue d'exposition « (28x4) Et la Sève fut... », Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON

« Les Carnets de la création : Ghizlane Sahli », coédité par Solidarité Laïque / Éditions de l'œil

« Étendre la démocratie Liban, prédation, chaos. », Multitudes, n° 90, Associations Multitudes

Catalogue d'exposition « chimères », Fondation Blachère

2022

Catalogue d'exposition « Les MétamorFoses. », Musée des Arts et Métiers

Ateliers d'Art, n°158, édité par Les Éditions Ateliers d'Art de France

2021

Catalogue d'exposition « La clairière d'Eza Boto », édité par Les éditions Vus d'Afrique

2018

Catalogue d'exposition « OR », coédité par MuCEM / Éditions Hazan

« LUMIÈRES MAROCAINES », Fouad Laroui, édité par Langages du sud

Résidences / Residences (sélection)

2026

MALIDOMA POPENGUINE, Popenguine, Sénégal

2025

Biennale International de Sculpture de Ouagadougou (BISO), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

2023

Fondation Donwahi, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Fondation Blachère, Apt, France

Solidarité Laïque, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso et Porto-Novo, Bénin

2022

Solidarité Laïque, Dakar, Sénégal

2021

Biennale International de Sculpture de Ouagadougou (BISO), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

2020

La Cité des arts, Paris, France

Expositions personnelles / Solo shows

2025

- « The flow that weave us » - Galerie Le Sud, Zurch, Suisse
- « Et la Sève fut...» - Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON Bruxelles, Belgique

2023

- « (28x4) Et la Sève fut... » - Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON, Paris
- « 28xX...Porto Novo » - La grande place, Porto Novo, Bénin
- « 28xX... Ouagadougou » - Lwili Résidence, Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso

2020

- « La Mer, Origine du Monde...» - David Bloch Gallery, Marrakech, Maroc

2019

- « Histoires de tripes » - Sakhile&Me Gallery, Francfort, Allemagne
- Recent works - Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Suisse
- « Histoires de Tripes » - Chapitre II - Sulger Buel Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni

2018

- « Histoires de Tripes » - David Bloch Gallery, Marrakech, Maroc

2017

- « Genesis » - Institut français. Rabat, Maroc

2016

- « Incubation » - Riad Denise Mason, Institut français. Marrakech, Maroc

Expositions collectives / Group shows

2026

- «Layered becoming», Wujud Foundation, Aqaba, Jordanie
- «House of galleries», The Franckfort Art Experience, Frankfort, Allemagne

2025

- «Regard intemporel : des pharaons à aujourd’hui», Fondation Boghossian, Bruxelles, Belgique
- «15 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES» - HAUS KUNST MITTE, Berlin, Allemagne
- « ELLE x Artcurial : 80 ans d’engagement pour les femmes», Osaka, Bangkok, New-York, Paris

2024

- « Sur le papier », Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON, Paris, France
- « Biennale de Dakar, IN 2024 », Ancien palais de Justice de Dakar, Sénégal
- « Devenir... Une épopée humaine », Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON - Jardin Tropicale, Dakar, Sénégal

2023

- « Les fleurs du mal » - Maison Guerlain, Paris, France
- « Memoria » - Mohamed VI Museum, Rabat, Maroc
- « Spirit of Exstasy challenge » - Rolls Royce, Shanghai, Chine
- « (UN)Common Threads » - Alserkal Avenue. Dubaï, Émirat arabes unis
- « Performing Bodies » - Lakum Art Space, Riyadh, Arabie saoudite

2022

- Rolls Royce Spirit of Exstazy challenge opening show - Cromwell Place, Londres, Royaume-Uni

- « MétamorFose » - Musée des Arts et Métiers, Paris, France
- « L’Art est un jeu Sérieux » - MACAAL museum, Marrakech, Maroc
- « Breaking Boudaries » - Firetti contemporary Gallery, Dubaï, Émirat arabes unis

2021

- « Praxis of change » - Firetti contemporary gallery, Dubaï, Émirat arabes unis
- « La Clairière d’Eza Boto » - Musée de l’Orangerie, Rouen, France
- « Là où il y a la mer... » - CAC Passerelle, Brest, France

2020

- « The Inner Garden » - Galerie Loft, Casablanca, Maroc
- « Maison de force » - Galerie Aeden, Strasbourg, France
- « When the globe is home » - Gallerie delle Prigione. Fondation Benetton, Treviso, Italie
- « The future is female » - Sulger Buel Gallery. London, Royaume-Uni

2019

- « Africa now » - MO.CA Museum, Brescia, Italie
- Group show - David Bloch Gallery, Marrakech, Maroc
- The black Sphinx » - Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italie

2018

- « The Shrine with Zbel manifesto collective » - Fondation Jakober, Palma de Mallorca, Espagne
- « L’OR » - MUCEM Museum, Marseille, France
- « Second Life » - Zbel Manifesto. MACAAL Museum, Marrakech, Maroc

2017

- Group show - David Bloch Gallery. Marrakech, Maroc
- « Incubation » - Institut Français. Rabat, Maroc

2016

- « The others » - Kech Collective. Turin, Italie
- « Arkane » - Anciens abattoirs de Casablanca, Casablanca, Maroc
- « Incubation » - Institut Français. Riad Denise Masson. Marrakech, Maroc

2015

- « Femmes et religions » - L’Uzine, Casablanca, Maroc
- « Lumieres » - Fondation Tazi, Casablanca, Maroc
- « Metamorphose » - Féminin Pluriel. Dar Bellarj, Marrakech, Maroc

Foires et biennales / Fairs and biennales

2025

- « Présences animistes, mémoires vivantes» avec Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON - AKAA, Paris
- Biennale International de Sculpture de Ouagadougou (BISO), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

2024

- Biennale de Dakar, Sénégal
- 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Galerie CHRISTOPHE PERSON, Marrakech, Maroc

2022

- Istanbul Contemporary, Firetty Contemporary, Istanbul, Turquie
- 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Sakhile&Me Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni
- EXCEPTIONS D’AFRIQUE, Grand Palais, Paris, France

2021

Biennale International de Sculpture de Ouagadougou (BISO), Koubri, Burkina-Faso
1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Primo Marella Gallery, Marrakech, Maroc

2019

Artissima Fair, Primo Marella Gallery, Turin, Italie
Biennale International de Sculpture de Ouagadougou (BISO), Burkina-Faso
1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Primo Marella Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni
Geneva Art Fair, Primo Marella Gallery, Genève, Suisse

2018

VOLTA Art Fair, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Bâle, Suisse
1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Primo Marella Gallery, Marrakech, Maroc

2016

Biennale de Marrakech, The Cave. Kech'collective, Maroc

«For me, the
alveoli embody
cells that,
through their
multiplication,
become beings.
They are the
very origin
of bodies and
individuals.»



Vue de l'exposition «Regards intemporels : des pharaons à aujourd'hui», 2025, Fondation Bhogossian, Bruxelles, Belgique
©Silvia Capparelli
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art contemporain



LA MUJER VIVA, 2026
 Embroidery, wool yarn, wire, collage and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on linen canvas.
 180 x 76 cm

LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...

THE FLOWS THAT WEAVE US...

Blood and the menstrual cycle are essential to the various stages of gestation. They speak directly to the notion of life. The alveoli, which here represent cells, multiply to become living beings: they give rise to bodies and individuals. This sense of a natural process unfolding is reflected in Ghizlane Sahli's creative practice itself. The work seems to guide its own evolution through a kind of organic dialogue. It grows in seemingly "random" ways, like a living organism proliferating. The unexpected turns, mistakes and visual accidents that arise during its creation are seen as meaningful and embraced with trust and openness.

While creating her first works in Africa alongside the women in the workshop, conversations revolved around blood, menstruation, liquid and flow—female fluids in all their forms. One particularly evocative word emerged during the creative process: sap. It resonated deeply with the artist, symbolically bringing together all female fluids. Today, this idea of sap finds an echo in her observation of plant life, particularly the growth of banana plants, papyrus and bamboo. The way they unfurl and regenerate fascinates Ghizlane Sahli, nourishing her reflections on cycles, vitality and the organic power of the living world.



LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...002, 2026
 Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk
 thread on linen canvas.
 150 x 120 cm





LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...003, 2025
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk
thread on linen canvas.
70 x 100 cm

LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...001, 2026
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk
thread on linen canvas.
100 x 70 cm





LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...004, 2025
 Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk
 thread on linen canvas.
 150 x 120 cm



LES FLUX QUI NOUS TISSENT...004, 2025
détails

BISO 2025

Between nature and woman, the work weaves a breath of life.

The traditional woven wrap becomes an organic skin through which the fluids of the world flow. The alveoli—plastic waste embroidered with silk thread—are cells whose proliferation gives rise to matter. The bronze cocoons, embodying the cowrie shell, the vulva and the seed, evoke metamorphosis, fertility and the pulse of life. Here, matter breathes, gives birth and connects, dissolving boundaries to allow a space of exchange and transformation to emerge.



PAGA, 2025
Lost-wax cast bronze, woven wrap, plastic waste wrapped in
silk thread, wool yarn and wire.



"THE STRIPS"

DAK'ART BIENNALE 2024

Applying to the Dakar Biennale for the first time in 2024, Ghizlane Sahli was selected by its artistic director, Salimata Diop, to take part in the official exhibition.

For the occasion, she created a large-scale installation, returning to the immersive worlds she had developed with the Zbel Manifesto collective.

Since the beginning of her practice, the Moroccan artist has repurposed and recycled materials to explore nature, its observation and its preservation. Here, she affirms her ethical and aesthetic commitment to a necessary return to origins, tracing plant life from germination to bloom.

Ghizlane Sahli presents a new work that seeks to care for and heal our troubled minds. From the body's red, life-giving sap, she has turned to the sap that nourishes nature itself. For her, green is an essential colour, the colour of origins. The green of chlorophyll, of photosynthesis, of the plants that surround us in our daily lives, is vital to our survival. For Ghizlane Sahli, it also symbolises rebirth, healing and progress. Her embrace of green is, in fact, a response to a sense of urgency.



Marrakech. 12 September 2023.

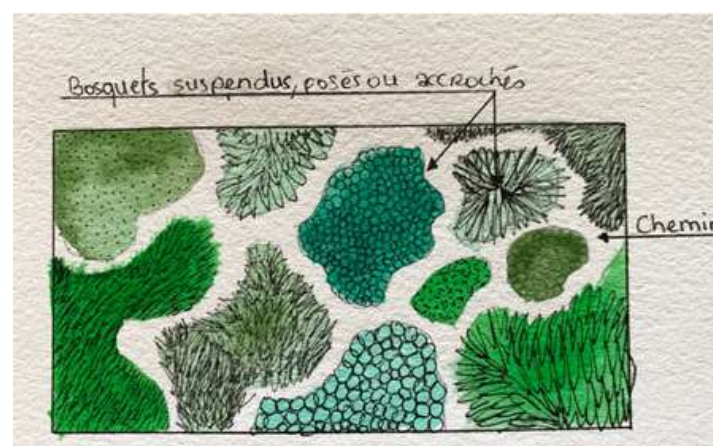
Four days after the earthquake, I am still in shock. The tremors were terrifying. We thought it was the end, but we are alive! Marrakech is almost unscathed, apart from a few very old buildings in the medina that were destroyed. In the mountains, where all the houses are built of earth, the villages are devastated. Now is the time for solidarity.

We must rescue, shelter, care for and feed the survivors. It was against this backdrop that I created these works... I want to speak of humanity, universality and love. I want to speak of gardens rediscovered, of an Eden, a kind of paradise. Flowers seem increasingly essential to me now. They transcend the ordinary; they are no longer commonplace. I want to shout it from the rooftops.

Ghizlane Sahli



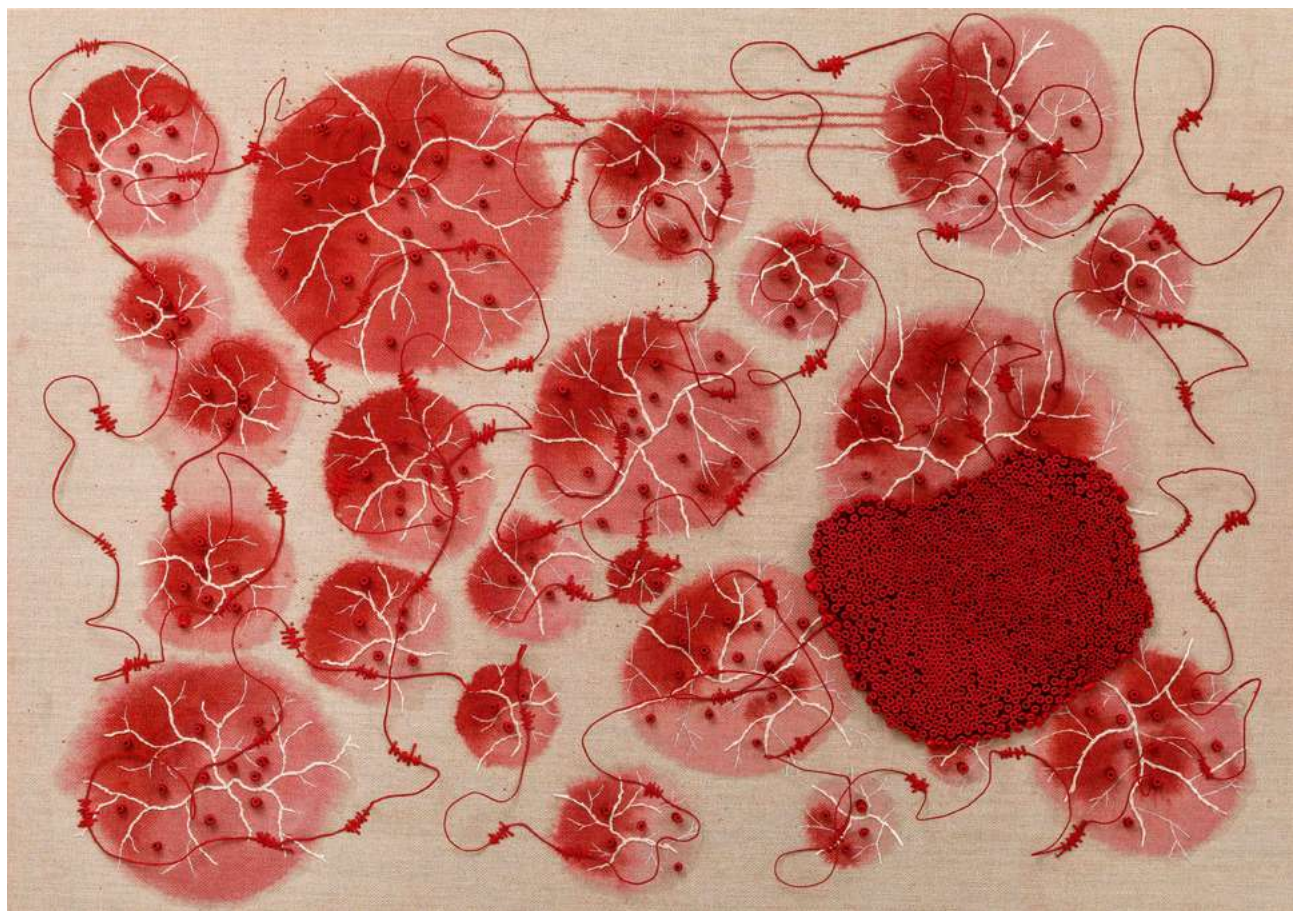
Visitors then wander through the Roots, the Stems, the Flower and the Garden. To experience this physical connection with the earth, they are asked either to remove their shoes and carry them throughout the installation, putting them back on at the exit, or to wear protective shoe covers.



ET LA SÈVE FUT...

AND THERE WAS SAP...

Organic materials that seem to have sprouted, ripened and grown in profusion, breaking through whatever physical barriers might have been imposed on them in an attempt to contain them: Ghizlane Sahli's work unfolds in a proliferation of substances—natural, synthetic, hybrid—that evokes the life of cells, bodies and the ocean depths, as well as the chemical compounds within them, the plastics they now contain. Her practice thus inhabits an ambiguity between the animate and the inert, the raw and the transformed, the living and the vanished, all intertwining and spreading into new terrestrial and marine forms.



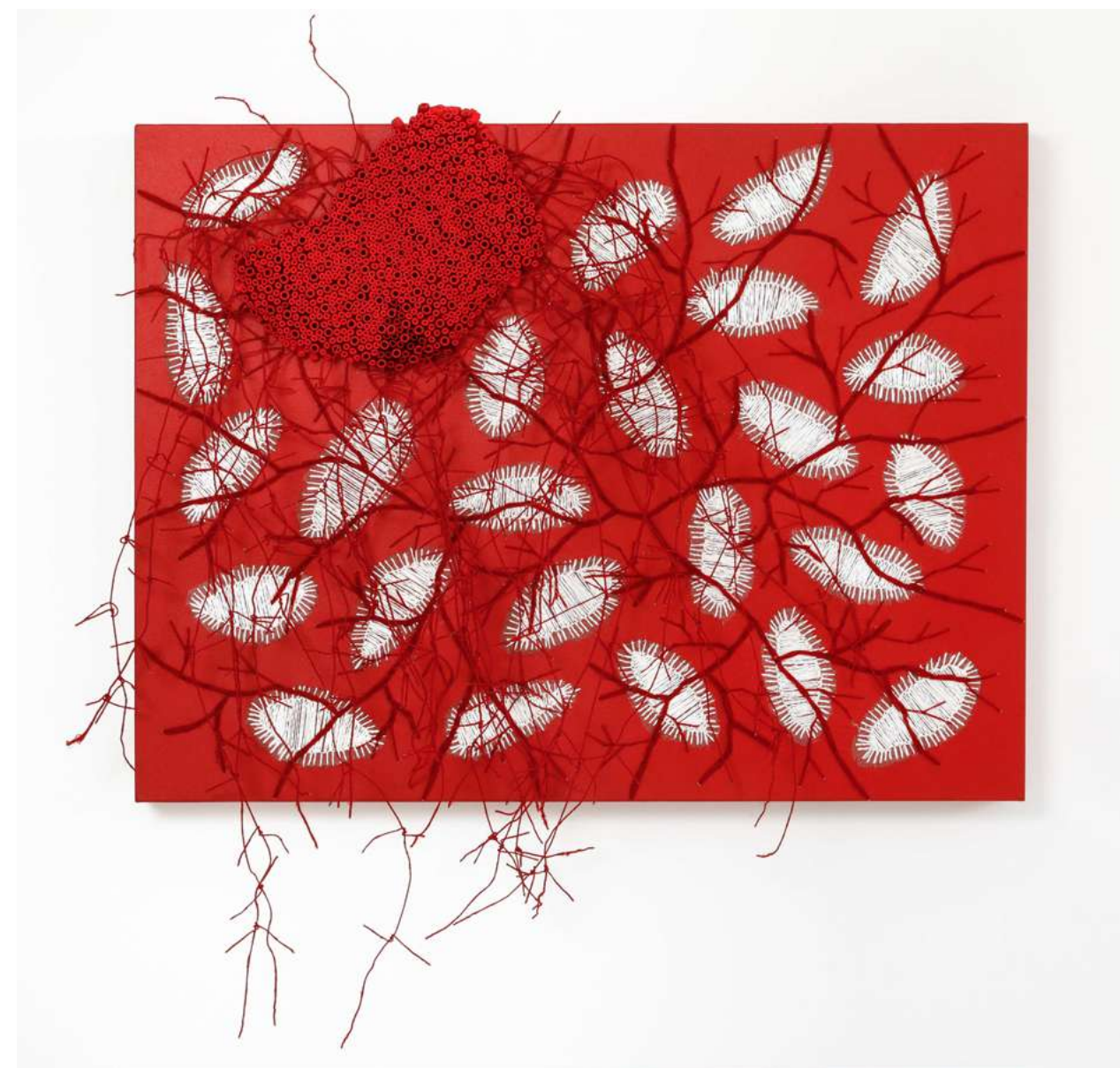
ET LA SÈVE FUT...001, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
70 x 100 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...002, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
70 x 100 cm



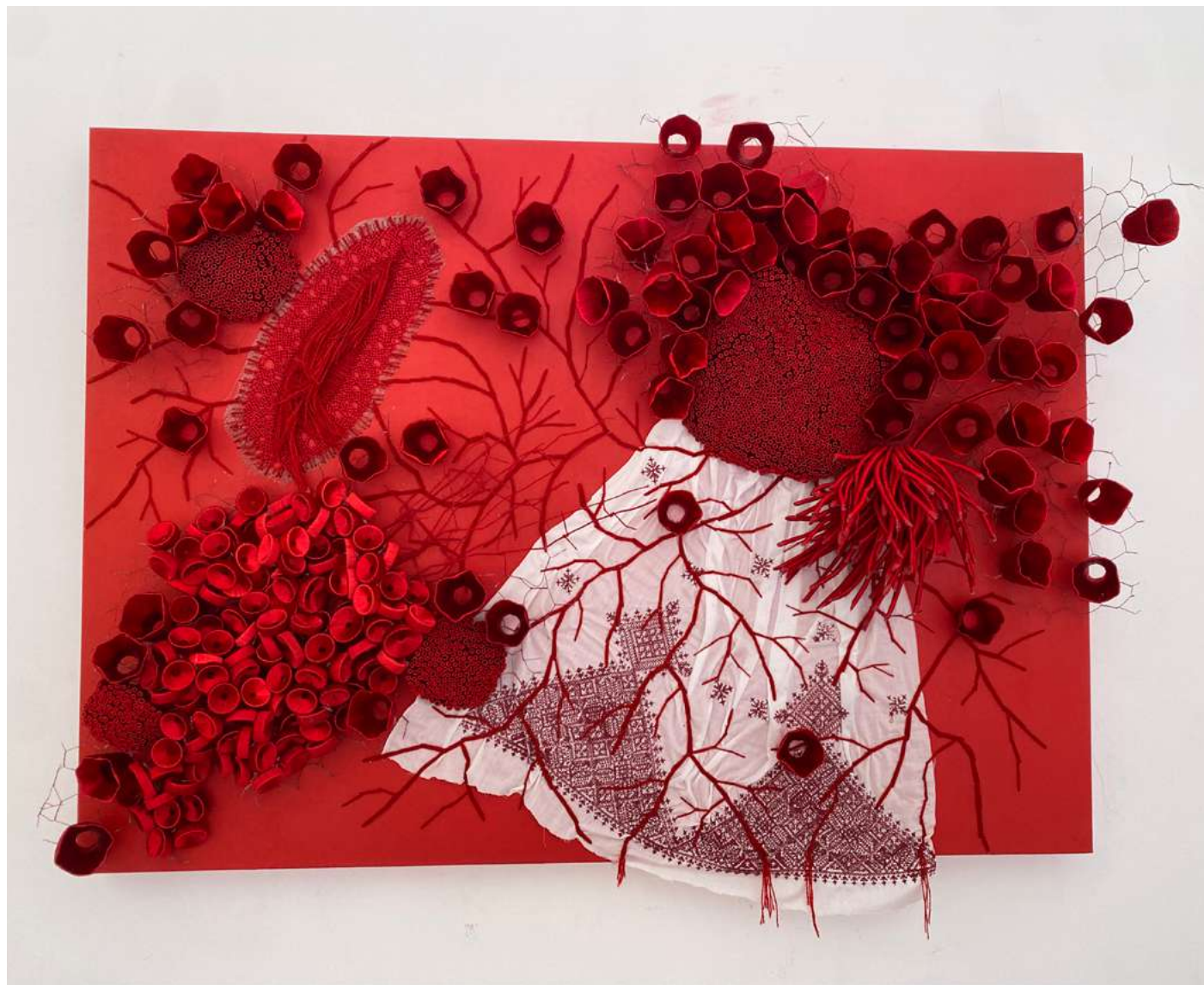
ET LA SÈVE FUT...003, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
70 x 100 cm



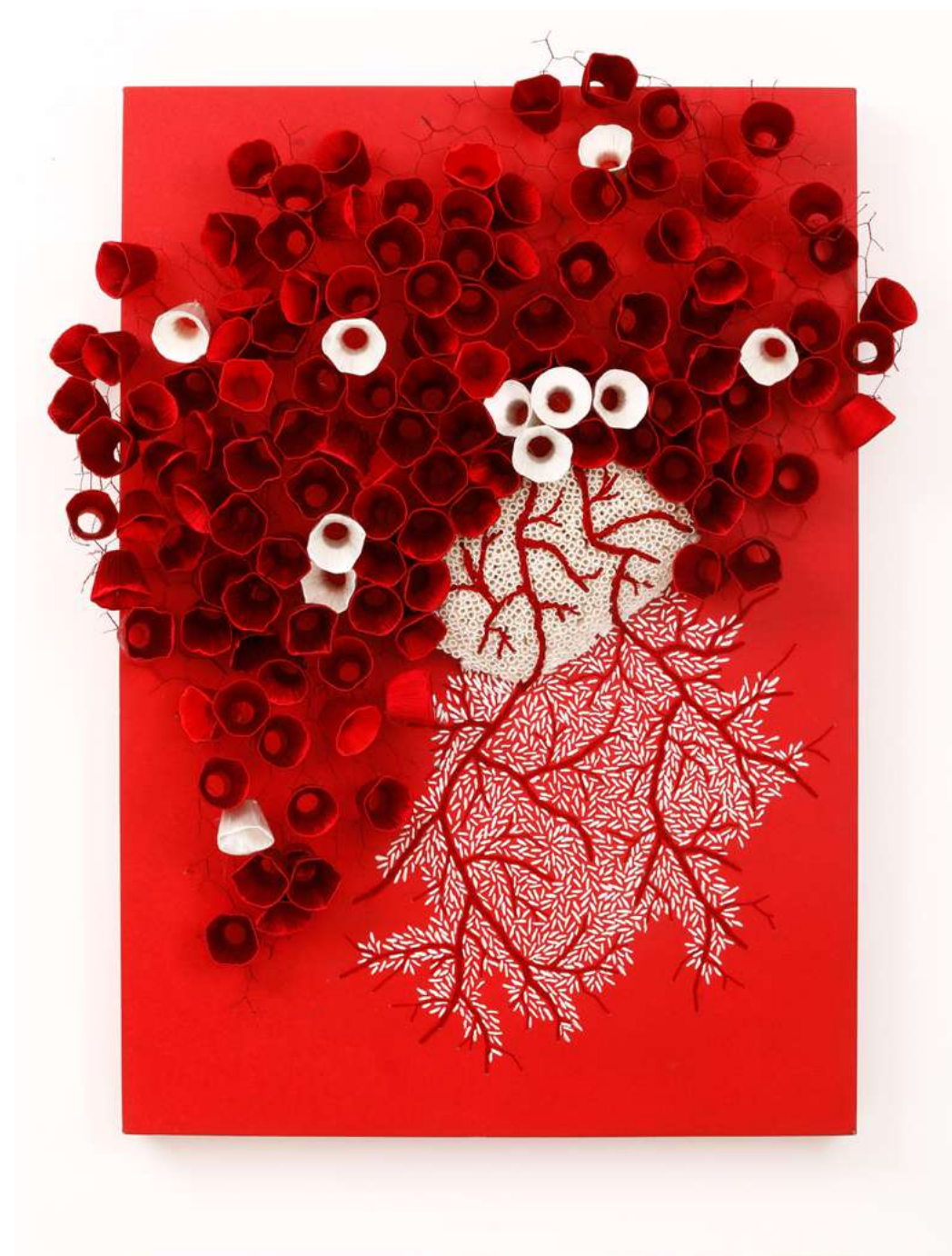
ET LA SÈVE FUT...007, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
70 x 100 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...005, 2023
Silk embroidery on plastic waste mounted on wood.
58 x 86 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...009, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
91 x 116 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...006, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
100 x 70 cm

Cyclical Expanses

Organic materials that seem to have sprouted, ripened and grown in profusion, breaking through whatever physical barriers might have been imposed on them in an attempt to contain them: Ghizlane Sahli's work unfolds in a proliferation of substances—natural, synthetic, hybrid—that evokes the life of cells, bodies and the ocean depths, as well as the chemical compounds within them, the plastics they now contain. Her practice inhabits this ambiguity between the animate and the inert, the raw and the transformed, the living and the vanished, all intertwining and spreading into new forms.

[...] terrestrial and marine. In autumn 2023, she created a series of blood-red works—a “sacred” red, as the artist herself describes it—in which the alveoli evoke corals and seaweed as much as bodies, their flesh, their ceaseless movements and their sometimes cyclical expanses. “We ourselves are sea, sand, corals, seaweed, beaches, tides, women swimming, children, waves, seas and mothers,” write Hélène Cixous and philosopher Catherine Clément tell us. We ourselves are water, flow and pores, but also viscosity, bodies and resistance, and Sahli's work guides us through these complementary sensations. [...]



ET LA SÈVE FUT...004, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
170 x 120 cm

The encounters with women's collectives campaigning, among other things, to break the silence surrounding menstruation extend the exploration of cells, bodies and fluidity that runs through Sahli's work. The energy and spontaneity of these encounters—from Dakar to Porto-Novo, via Ouagadougou and Cotonou—unfold in a collective work consisting of four panels of 28 sheets of paper each, ultimately signed by Ghizlane Sahli. Begun during a residency at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris, the work subsequently drew its material—and perhaps also spiritual—resources from these cities across West Africa. Through the stories of dozens of women met along a predetermined route, through the generosity of their exchanges and, in particular, the sharing of intimate accounts of menstrual cycles, this sap gradually takes shape, forming a mosaic whose variations reflect the individuality of each participant's unique bodily experience.

Ghizlane Sahli has long engaged with questions of intimacy, particularly her own feelings and private life as a Muslim woman. In this work, her practice is amplified by encounters with so many narratives that echo her own or diverge radically from it. The alveoli she works with—whose Latin root denotes small cavities, and whose forms clearly echo what is termed female genitalia—give way here to thread and white paper as a support, both expressing urgency: the urgency felt by these women, whose work—in community organisations, in activism and beyond—is essential to their communities; the urgency of the

workshop, of finding a project attentive to each woman's life; the urgency of a collective artistic endeavour shaped by Sahli's experience, bounded by the span of a week and the space of the workshop; the urgency of celebrating these stories together.

In forms that might be seen as paralleling the thinking of cultural historian Astrida Neimanis, the work may itself be asking: "I ask us: what happens to feminism, to its theories and practices, when we invite our bodies to become expanses of water—when we invite ourselves to become bodies that flow, stream, drip and run, that move across space and time, that form pools of matter and meaning?"

Olivia Fahmi



Installation view of "Timeless Gazes: From the Pharaohs to the Present", 2025, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium.
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Fondation Gandur pour l'Art contemporain

ET LA SÈVE FUT...II

AND THERE WAS SAP...II

Since the beginning of her practice, the Moroccan artist has transformed matter to explore nature, its observation and its preservation. In 2024, she reaffirms her ethical and aesthetic commitment to the need for a return to origins through an exploration of plant life and the female cycle.

“I want to speak of humanity, universality and love. I want to speak of evergreen gardens, of an Eden, a kind of paradise. Flowers seem increasingly essential to me today. They transcend the ordinary; they are no longer commonplace. I want to make that known.”

From the red blood of the body, Ghizlane Sahli has turned to the blood of nature. For her, green is an essential colour, the colour of origins, but also a symbol of transformation, echoing the cycles of the female body. The mysteries of what takes root in the earth, what grows and unfolds, are a constant source of fascination for Ghizlane Sahli.



ET LA SÈVE FUT II...003, 2023
 Embroidery, paint, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread
 on canvas.
 120 x 170 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...008, 2023
 Embroidery, paint, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread
 on canvas.
 170 x 120 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...006, 2023
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canva
50 x 60 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...007, 2023
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canva
50 x 70 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...008, 2023
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canva
170 x 120 cm



ET LA SÈVE FUT...008, 2023
Embroidery, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canva
170 x 120 cm

ET LA SÈVE FUT...008, 2023
Embroidery, paint, wool yarn, wire and plastic waste wrapped in silk thread on canvas.
170 x 120 cm

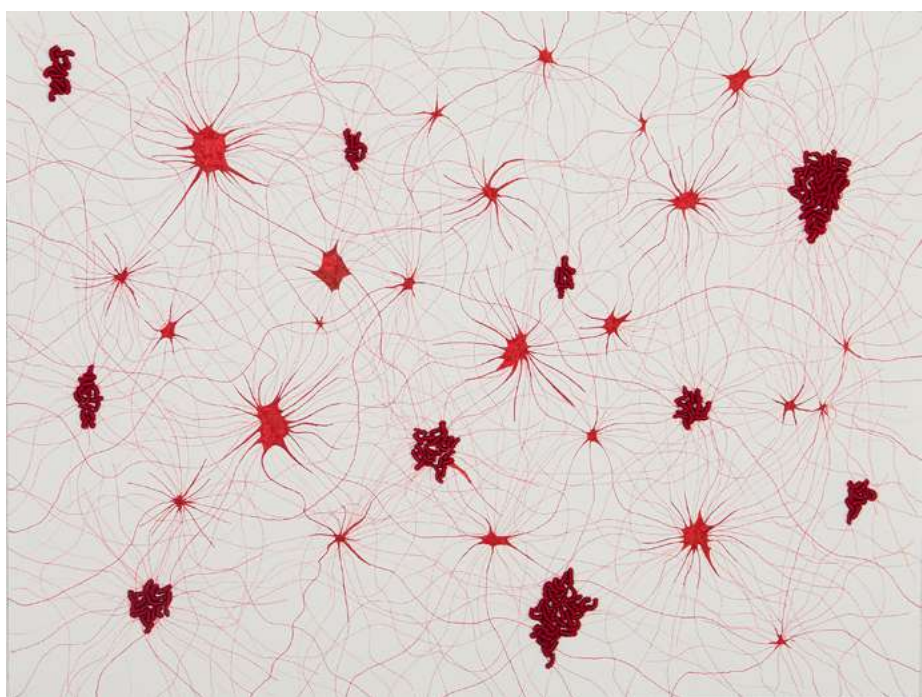
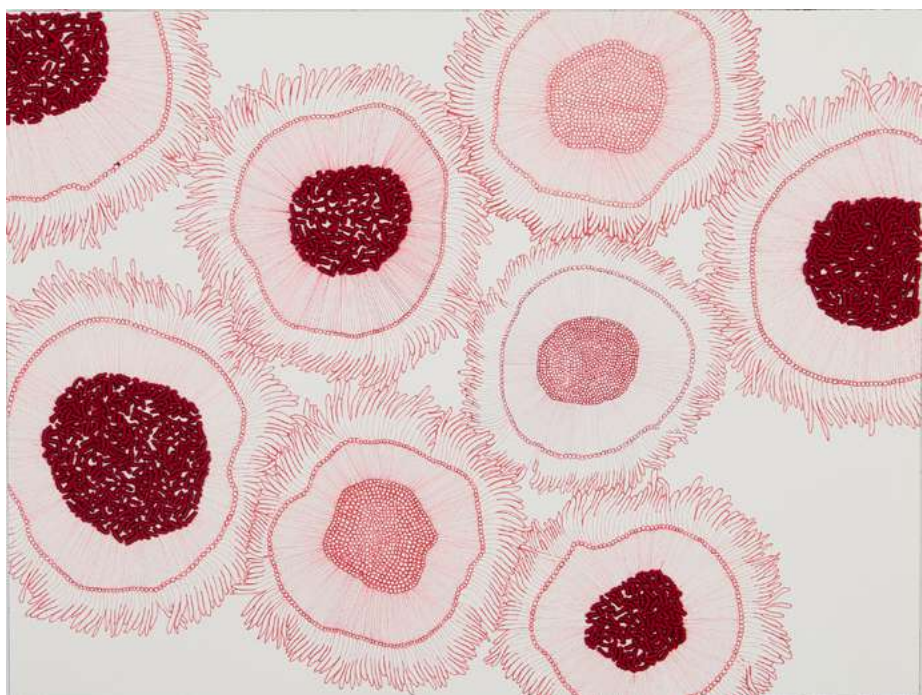


HISTOIRES DE TRIPE

TALES FROM THE GUT

In “Tales from the Gut”, Ghizlane Sahli invites us on an inward, organic journey in which the body becomes a terrain for profound reflection on the human condition. Taking up a universal theme, the artist leads us beyond appearances and aesthetic conventions, inviting us to contemplate what is usually concealed, rejected or deemed unworthy of our gaze.

The intestine, the viscera, the internal tissues—elements belonging to the innermost intimacy of living beings—become the starting point for a meditation on our shared humanity. Far from provoking unease, they reveal the intricate beauty of life, the fragility of bodies and the invisible bonds that connect all beings. Ghizlane Sahli thus transforms what might be perceived as repulsive into poetic material, opening a space in which we can look beyond our preconceptions.



HISTOIRE DES TRIPES D, 2022
Ink and embroidery on Arches wove paper.
31 x 41 cm



HISTOIRE DES TRIPES D, 2022
Ink and embroidery on Arches wove paper.
30,9 x 22,9 cm



HISTOIRE DES TRIPES D, 2017
Ink and embroidery on Arches wove paper.
30,9 x 22,9 cm



HISTOIRE DES TRIPES D, 2017
Ink and embroidery on Arches wove paper.
30,9 x 22,9 cm



HISTOIRE DES TRIPES D, 2017
Ink and embroidery on Arches wove paper.
30,9 x 22,9 cm



HT004, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
120 x 150 cm



HT008, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
d. 131 cm



HT024, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
122 x 180 cm



HT016, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
81 x 81 cm



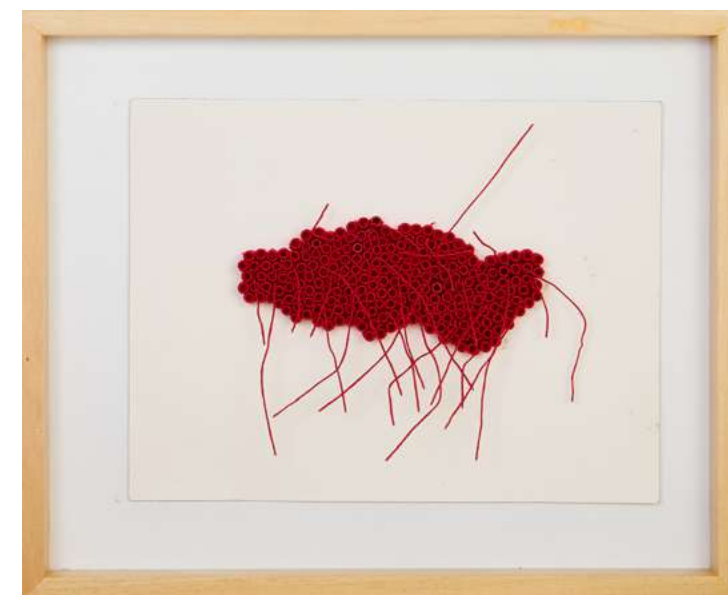
HT002, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
150 x 124 cm

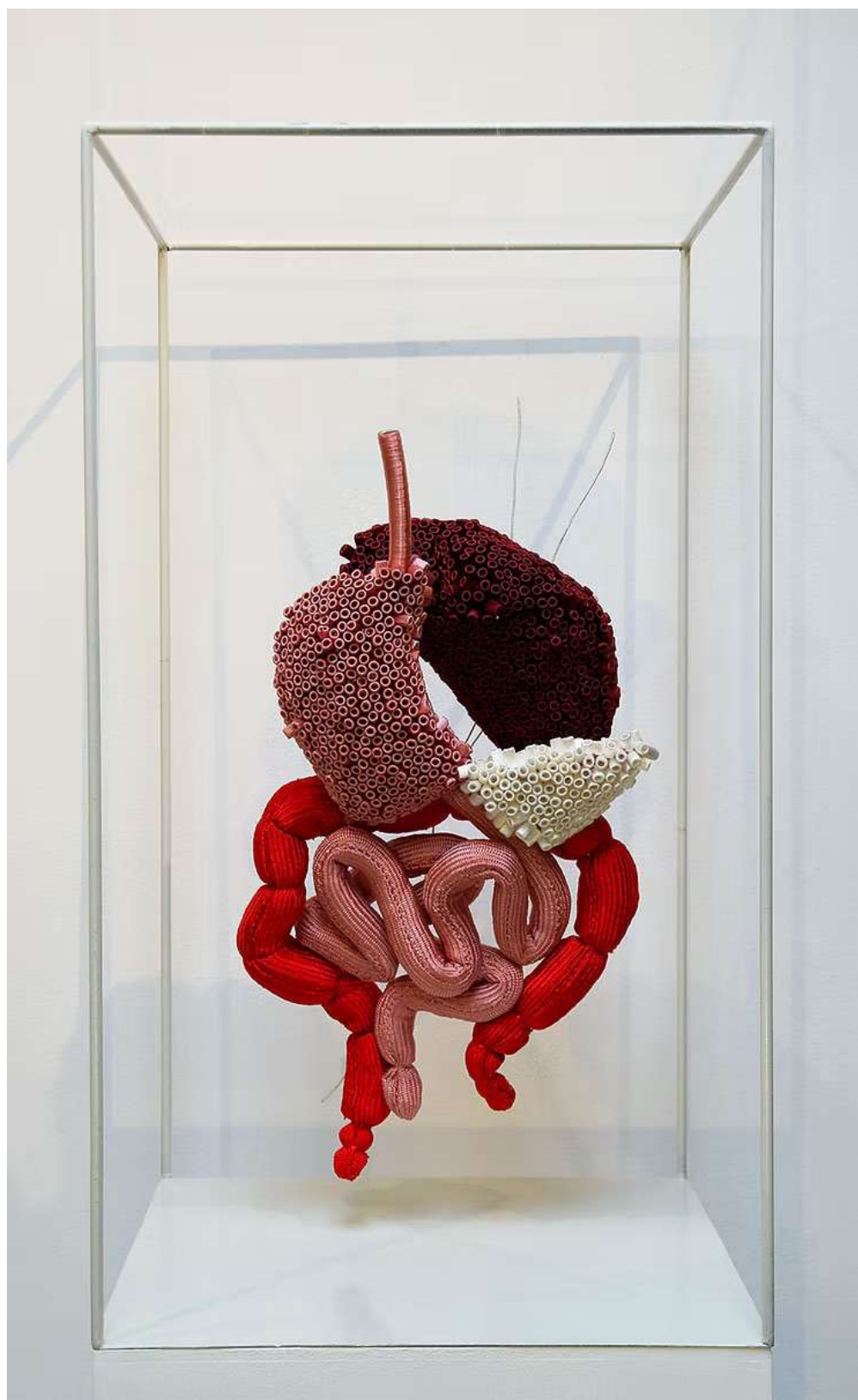


HT010, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
91 x 121 cm

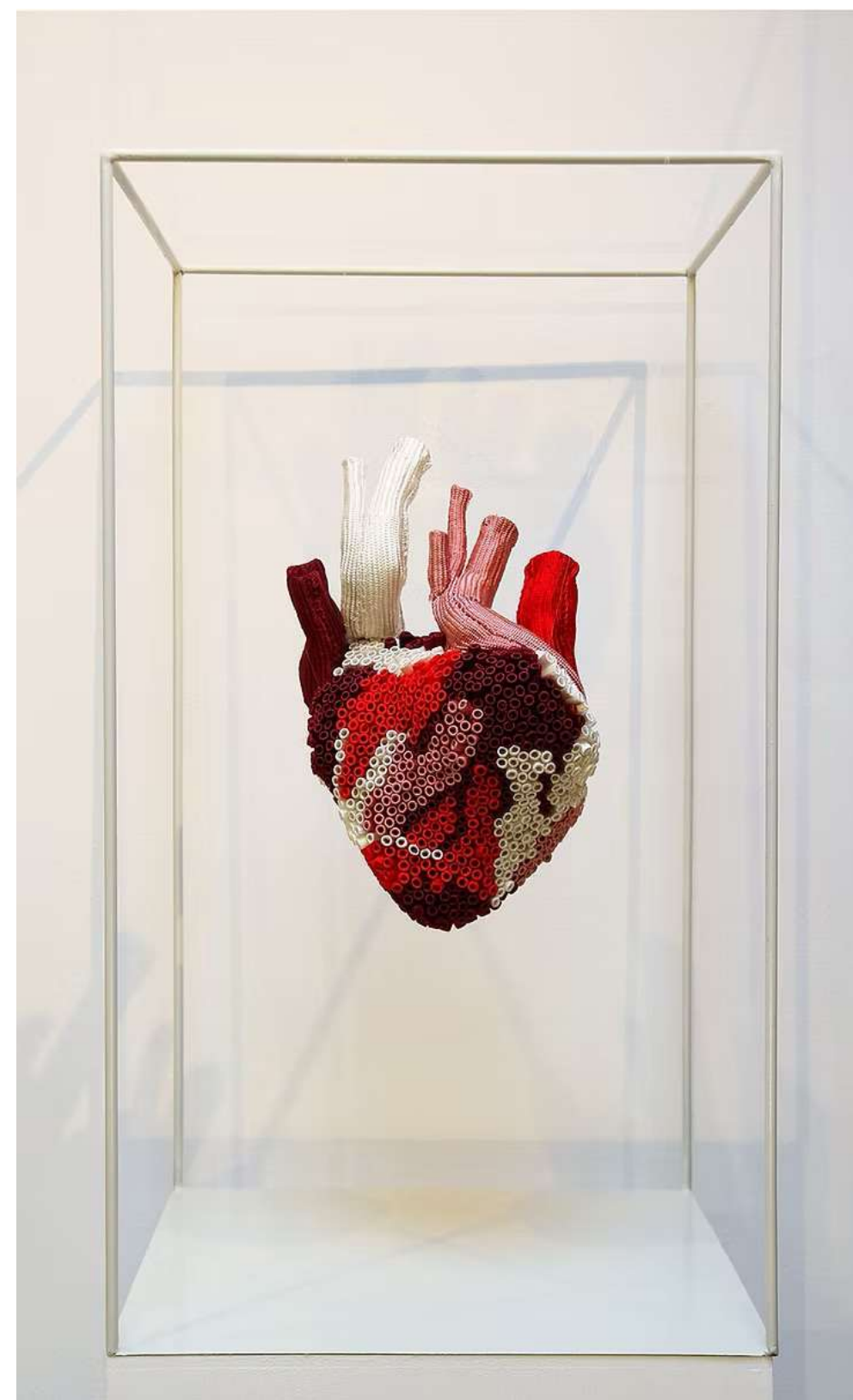


HT019, 2018
Silk thread, wire and plastic waste on wood panels.
d. 160 cm





HTV001, 2017
Silk thread on plastic waste.



HTV003, 2017
Silk thread on plastic waste.



LA MER(E), ORIGINE DU MONDE

Through a series of bas-reliefs, sculptures and drawings, Ghizlane Sahli immerses us in the fragile, teeming world of marine corals. Drawing parallels between women and the sea, her work explores forms of resistance, metamorphosis and interdependence. The works evoke porous, living bodies, shaped by time and currents, in which matter becomes memory and language. Between vulnerability and strength, this series celebrates threatened ecosystems, both marine and human.



M.O.M 021, 2020
Silk thread and wool yarn on plastic waste and metal.
102 x 75 x 37 cm

M.O.M 001, 2020
Silk thread and wool yarn on plastic waste and metal.
115 x 130 x 27 cm

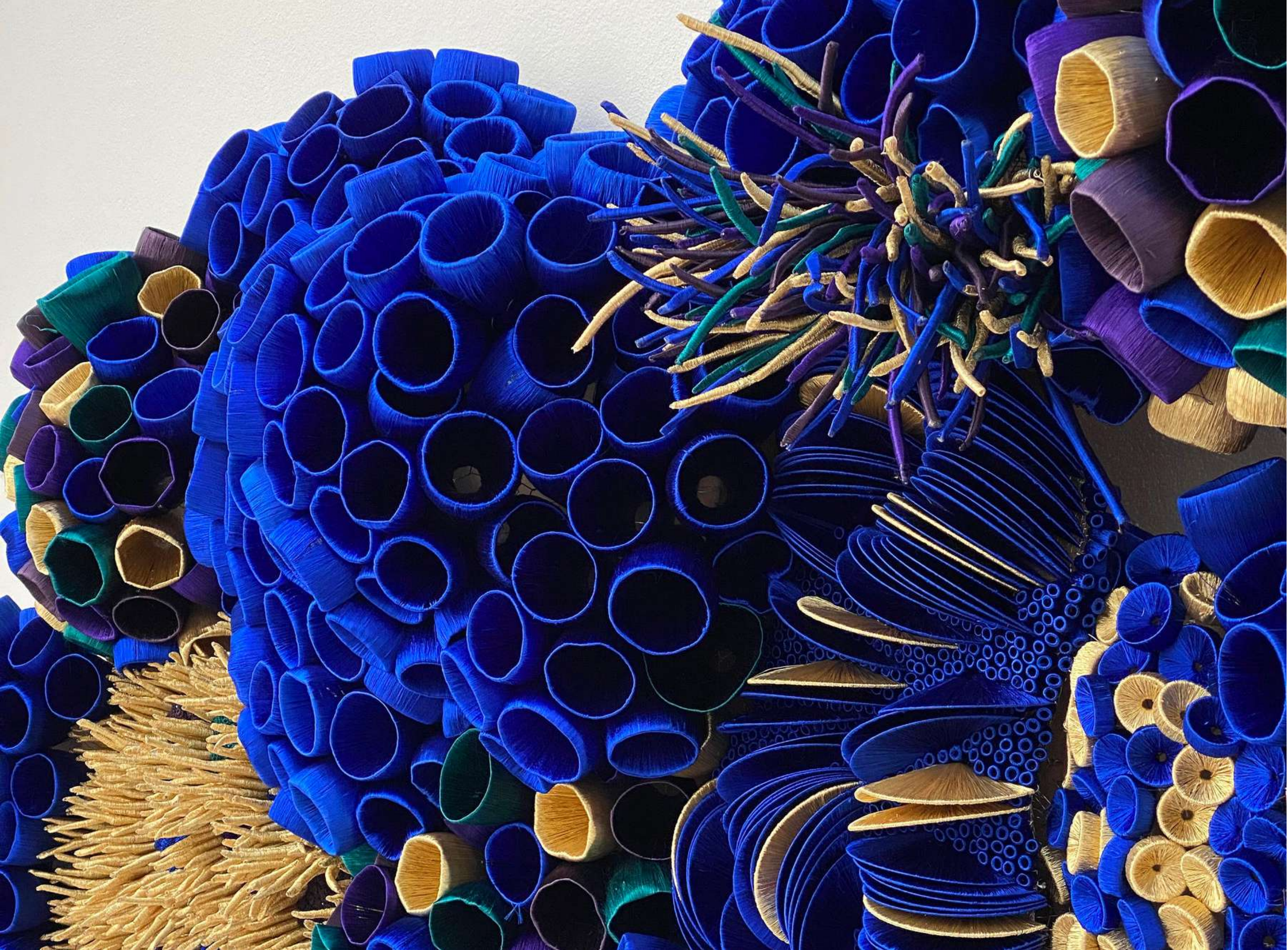




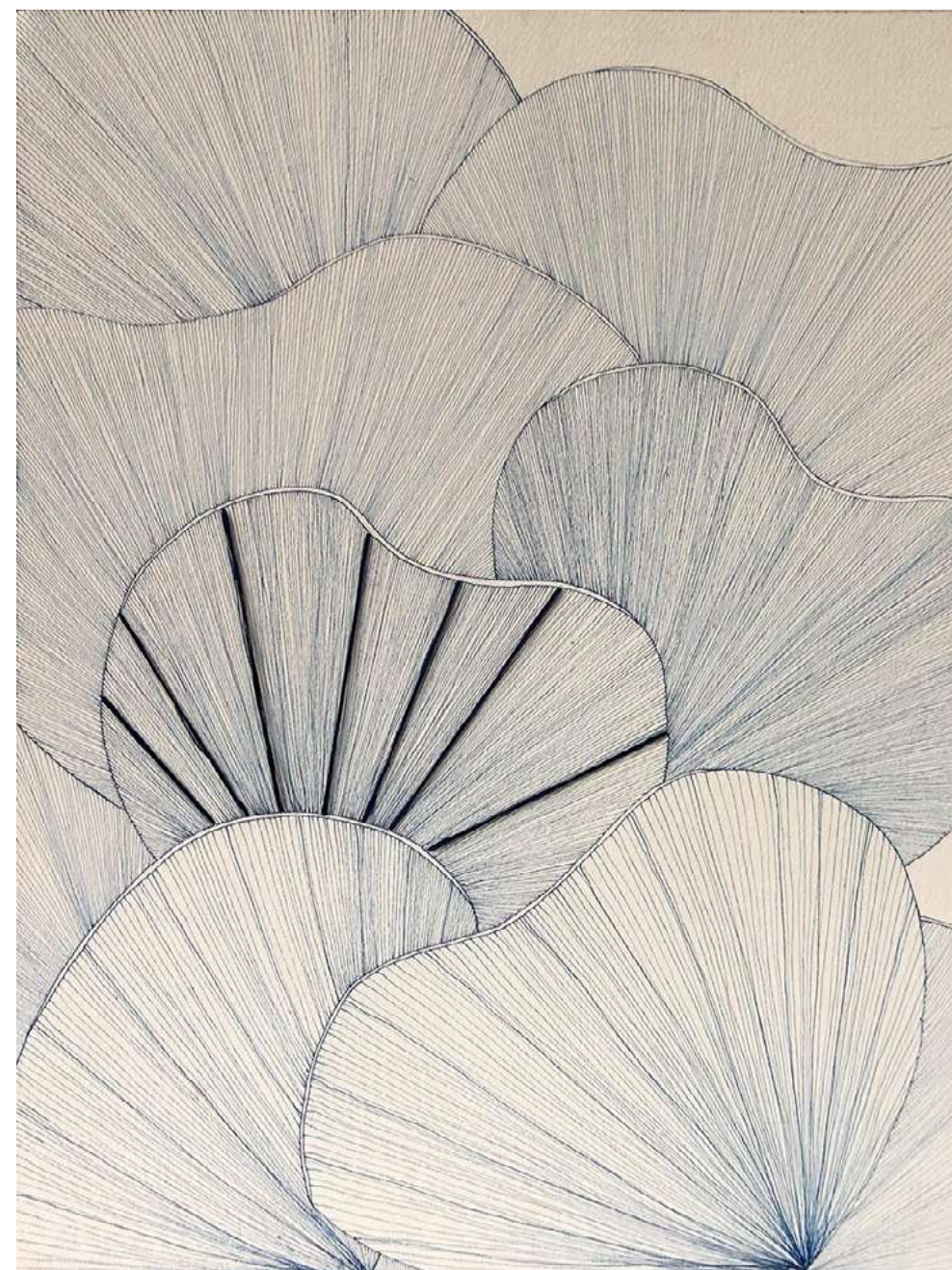
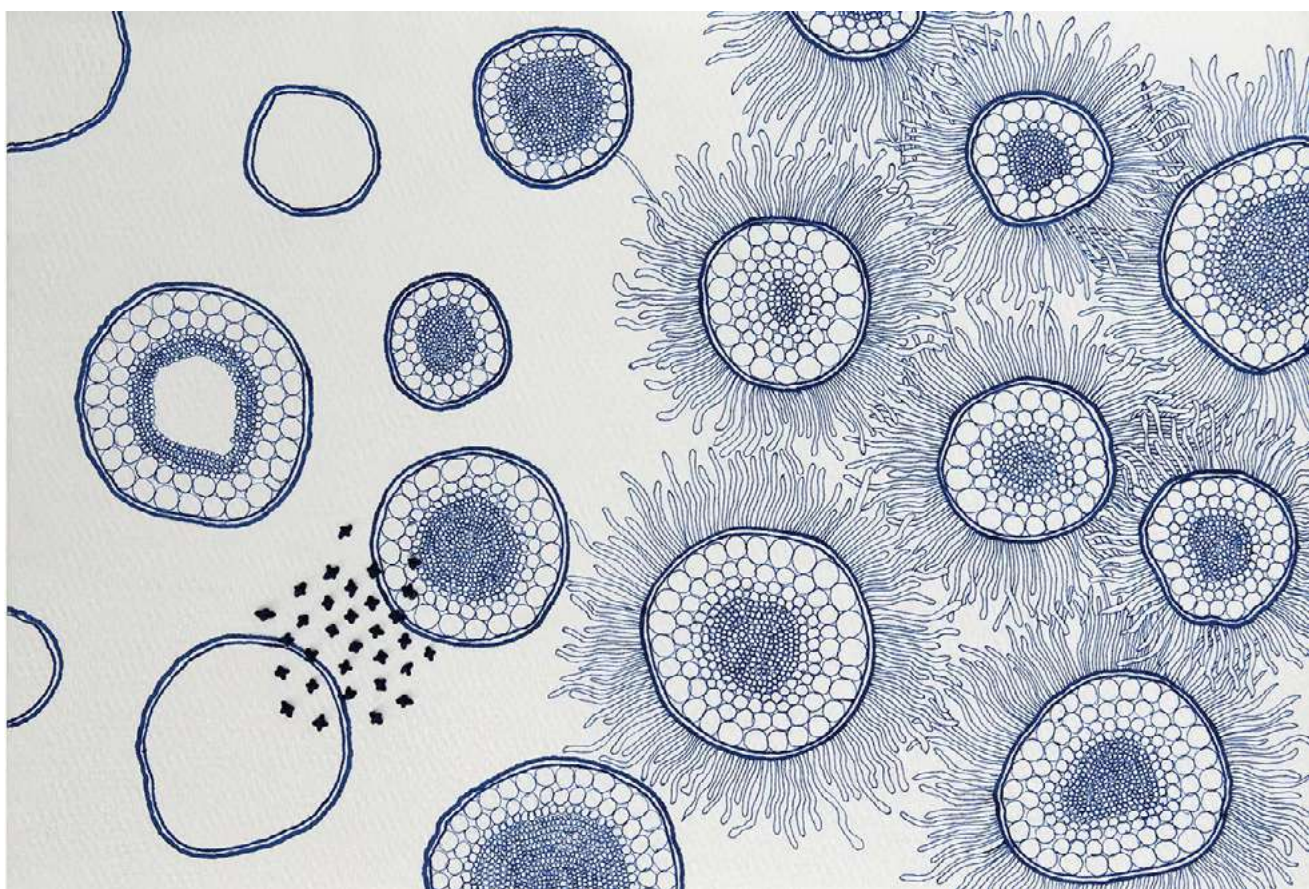
M.O.M 007, 2020
Silk thread and wool yarn on plastic waste and metal.
103 x 100 x 27 cm

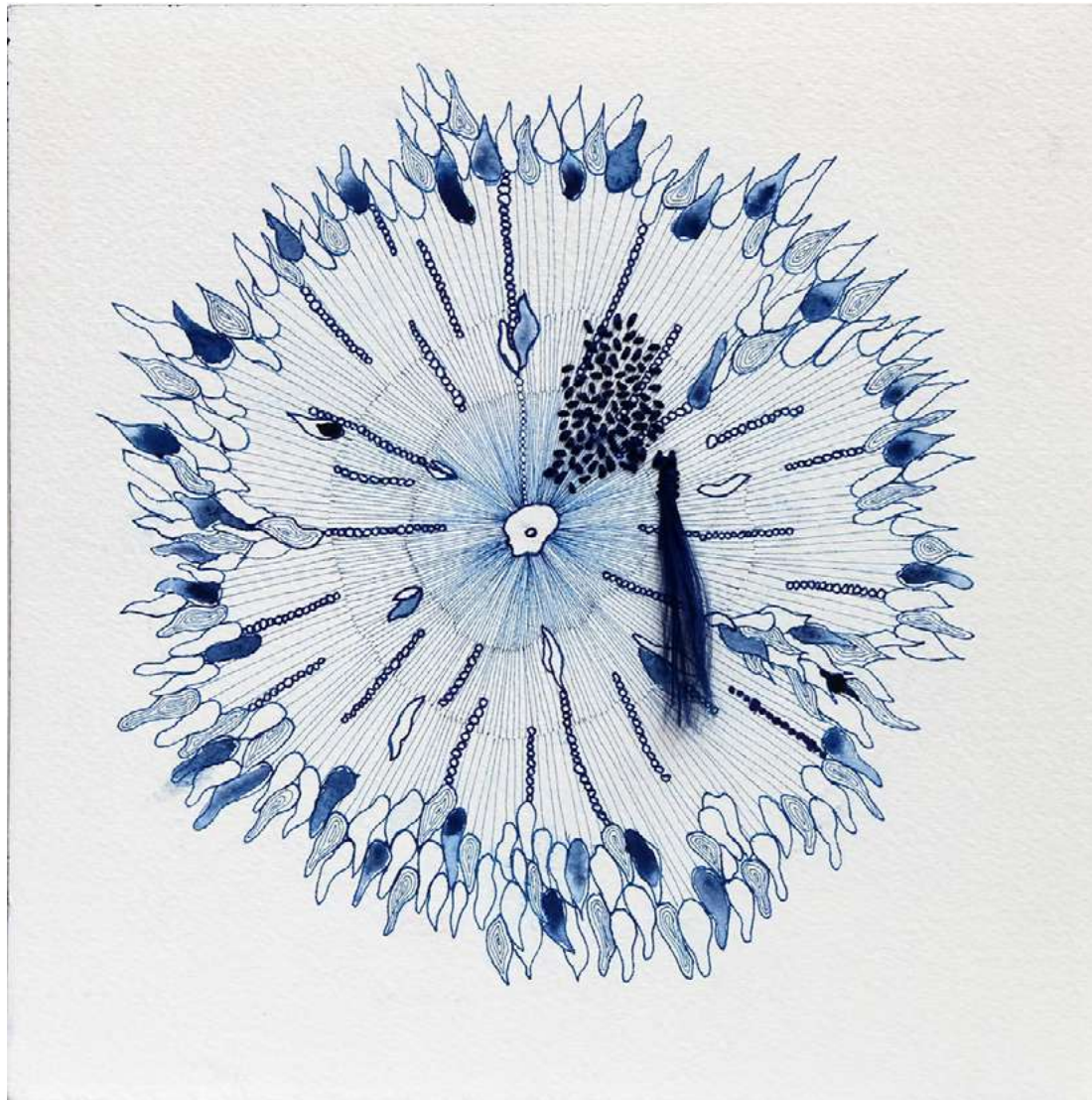


M.O.M 013, 2020
Silk thread and wool yarn on plastic waste and metal.



M.O.M 014, 2020
Silk thread and wool yarn on plastic waste and metal.
117 x 200 x 38 cm





SANS TITRE, 2020
Ink on paper.



SANS TITRE, 2020
Ink on paper.

INTERVIEW WITH

STÉPHANIE PIODA

Red is a recurring thread running through your work. Has it become your signature colour?

I find it the perfect colour for talking about the female body. My work, however, is in no way intended as rebellion, protest or provocation. Quite the opposite: for me, it is more a form of celebration. At the Fondation Blachère, for example, I created an installation featuring a pair of bridal trousers with red wool yarn spilling from them, connected to a large canvas, also painted red, across which alveoli made from waste materials wrapped in silk thread proliferate. For me, these trousers represent both a woman's virginity and her sacred power. In Moroccan tradition, although this is very rare today, the sheet or trousers are displayed after the wedding night as proof of the young bride's virginity. I used a garment that had been worn and embroidered by a young woman who gave it to me. In another work, a liquid gushes

from a slit in a sheet, spreading like a network of blood vessels or sap flowing through a leaf. There is something sacred about it, something connected to life and the eternal feminine.

Does this blood carry a double meaning, representing both menstruation and the loss of virginity?

Blood and the menstrual cycle are important elements in the different stages of gestation. So this is very much about life, too.

The alveoli, which to me represent cells here, multiply and become living beings: they give rise to bodies and individuals. This sense of something natural unfolding is reflected in the creative process itself. The work guides me, and there is a kind of dialogue: I go wherever

it wants to take me. There is something very organic about it. I have this sense of a living organism proliferating. Even when I make mistakes or things emerge that I had not planned, I tell myself there must be meaning in them and that I need to accept them. I believe in the process and trust it.

When I first began creating works in Africa with the women in my workshop, we initially talked about blood, menstruation, liquid, flow and female fluids. When I posted a work in progress on Instagram, a friend wrote a text that moved me deeply, in which he spoke of sap and women. He had found the word that resonates with me and brings all these female fluids together. That word, sap, speaks to me even more today. I am obsessed with the way the banana plants, papyrus and bamboo on my terrace grow. I watch them, fascinated by the growth of their leaves. My next work will definitely

be green. The word "sap" is the perfect link. I love the idea of speaking about "women's sap", this sacred, nourishing fluid that gives life, before moving on to the sap of nature.

You incorporate embroidery, which is more than simply a technique associated with women. In Morocco, garments are embroidered with particular symbolic motifs for different occasions. Does your choice of this technique also bring a cultural dimension to your work?

I work with women embroiderers, and one in particular, Najat, who has been with me from the beginning. We have a wonderful relationship based on respect, love and trust. I try to bring my contemporary ideas to life through the precious traditional techniques she practises. I play with scale, volume and materials. This idea of universality is very important to me in my work.



Through my work, I aspire to convey human emotions free from any religious, social or cultural “pollution”. But I am also deeply attached to traditions. I like the idea of a woman being a virgin when she marries. I find it very romantic that she has saved herself for the man she wants to spend her life with, the man she loves. At the same time, I want women to be free to make their own choices about their bodies.

Are the two compatible?

I think so! Traditions provide a foundation on which to build a sense of self, giving us points of reference and an identity. For many people, especially those who come from oppressive societies, freedom is associated with anarchy, with the absence of rules. But true freedom means respecting others, which implies a certain framework. For me, having traditions is essential to being free.

Are you a feminist?

Of course! Defending women’s rights and freedoms is instinctive for me; it is part of everything I do. I have boundless admiration for all those women—Simone de Beauvoir, Fatima Mernissi, Simone Veil and Nawal El Saadawi, among others—who devoted their lives to securing the rights we enjoy today. But I don’t like the word “feminist”. I wish the word we used to describe these exceptional women, and all the women who fight every day to defend our rights and freedoms, were “feminine”. I often say, “I’m not a feminist, I’m feminine.” I love being a woman, and I don’t feel inferior to a man because I am one. I have my own distinct qualities, and my strength also lies in my femininity.

Does beauty have a place in your work?

I want beauty and poetry. I want to tell beautiful stories, even when they deal with subjects that are raw and difficult. The first time we exhibited in Ouaga, an elderly Muslim man came up to me. I had gone a little far: there was a bucket of red paint left over from dyeing the threads, and I threw its contents against a large white wall, where the paint spread into a huge red stain. To me, there was something quite violent and provocative about it, which felt unlike me and made me uncomfortable. But this elderly man had tears in his eyes and said very warmly, “Thank you, madam. Thank you for addressing a subject that matters, one we are never allowed to talk about, and for doing so in such a poetic way.”

I was deeply moved. Talking about menstruation is taboo in Burkina Faso. But girls need us to talk about it. Many don’t go to school when they have their periods. And when they first start menstruating, many tell no one for months, or even years. They are seen as dirty and, now that they can bear children, as a danger to society. So I said to myself, we are going to talk about it, and I splashed the wall with paint. I was shocked by this taboo.

Back home in Morocco, when I got my first period, a ceremony was held for me. I was made up and dressed in beautiful clothes. I looked at my reflection in a bowl of milk scented with orange blossom water and ate a date, symbolically ensuring that I would remain beautiful throughout my life. I experienced that milestone and transition in a very beautiful way.



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