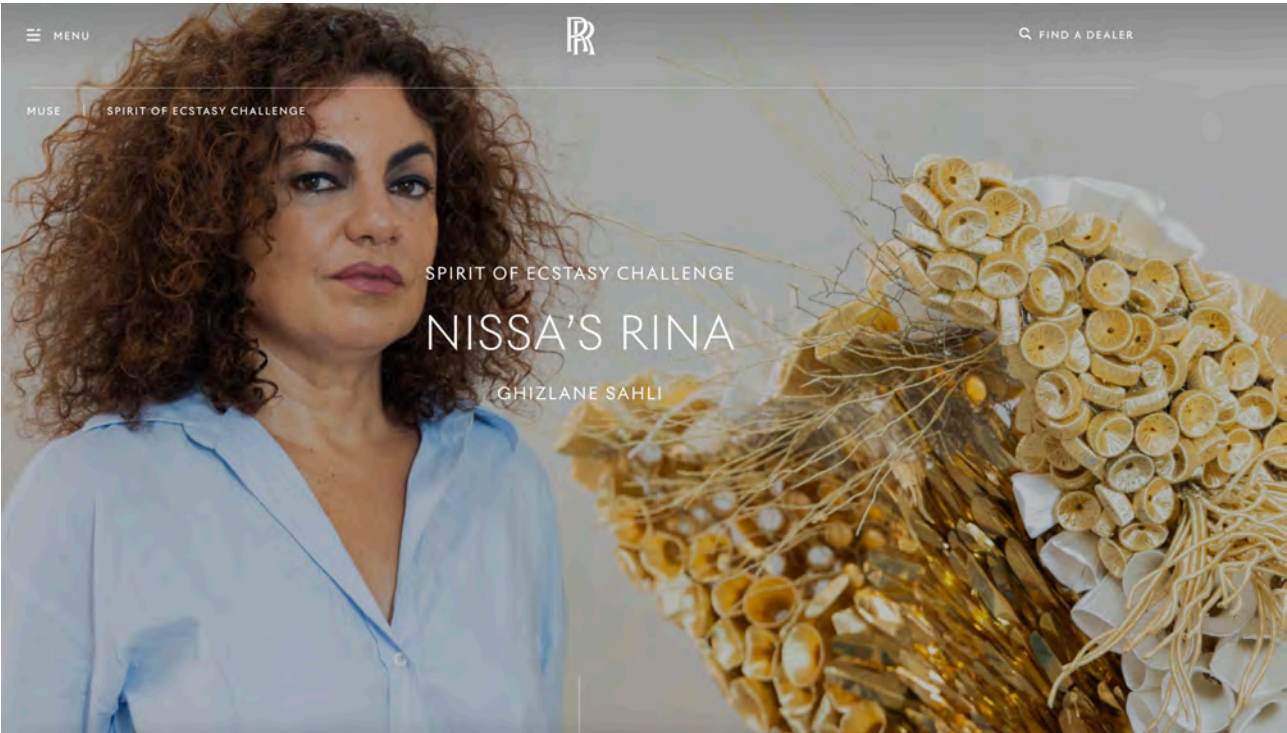


SPIRIT OF ECSTASY CHALLENGE

NISSA'S RINA

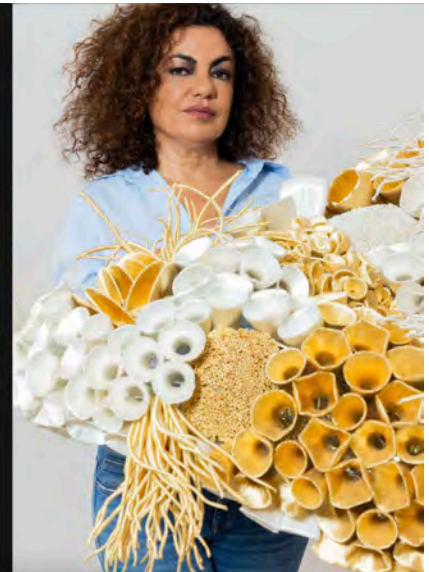
GHIZLANE SAHLI



Resembling two triumphant wings about to take flight, Ghizlane Sahli's winning artwork for the Spirit of Ecstasy Challenge is a joyous celebration of femininity and freedom, and an ode to the rich history of textile in Morocco.



Ghizlane Sahli, 2022, Nissa's Rina (Woman's Song), for Muse, The Rolls-Royce Arts Programme, photo by Adnane Zemama.



The sculpture is composed almost entirely of recycled materials: plastic bottles, metal armatures, aluminium and copper embellished with gold leaf and gold thread purchased from the artisans in Marrakech's Medina. Aided by her own studio of artisans, Sahli has employed her usual technique of cutting up bottles and wrapping them in thread, building up each element into wing-like structures that reference Rolls-Royce's Spirit of Ecstasy figurine.

The piece has been designed to be suspended at eye-level so that viewers can fully appreciate its intricate craftsmanship of not just the wings but also the body of the structure. Displayed in a spotlight, the gold elements of the piece shine, offering an iridescent symbol of rebirth and regeneration.



SPIRIT OF ECSTASY CHALLENGE

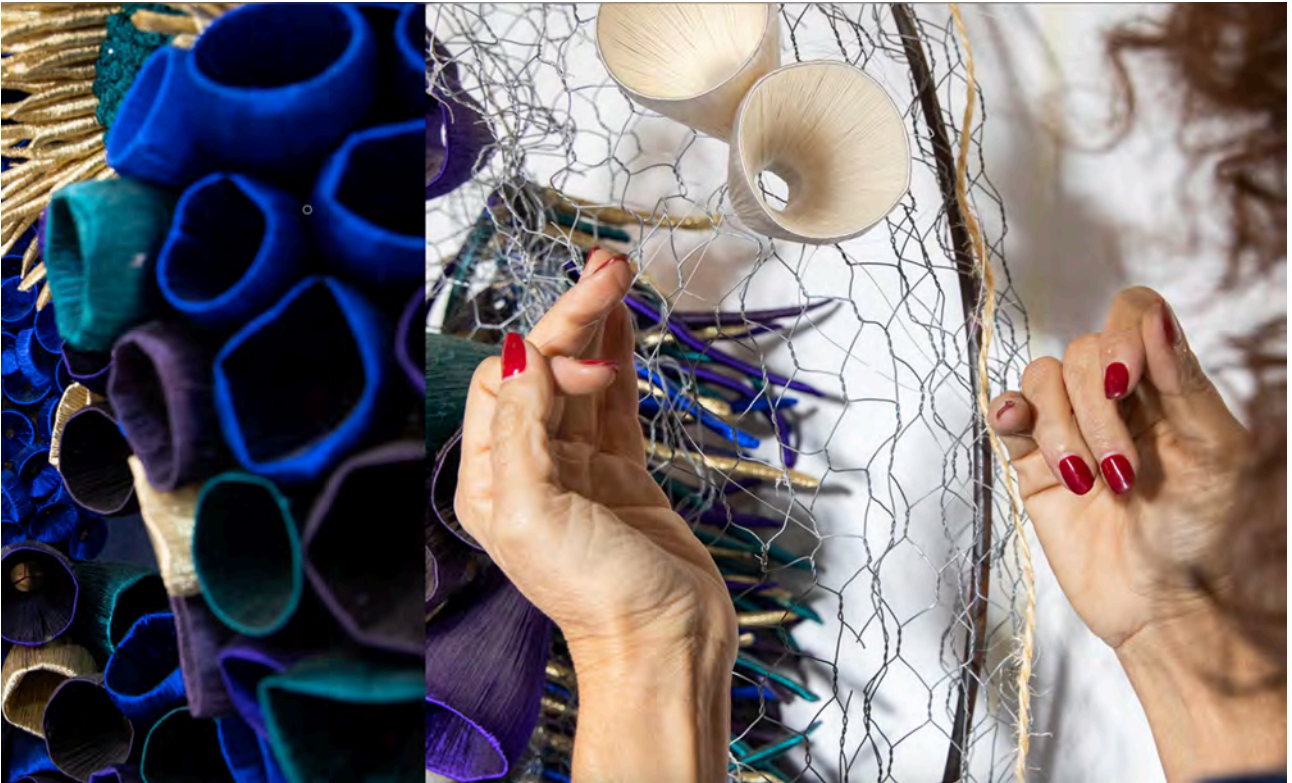
GHIZLANE SAHLI

Ghizlane Sahli was in the medina in Marrakesh one afternoon drinking from a plastic bottle when a revelation hit her. For a week she had been searching for a material she could wrap in silk thread to create a giant butterfly for her first presentation at a contemporary art foundation. 'It was my first real artwork...I knew I wanted to cover something with silk,' the Moroccan artist recalls. 'And I was obsessed with circles because I wanted something very organic and I wanted something to repeat the same shape.' Then she noticed the bottle she was holding.

In the hands of Sahli and the local artisans she works with, throwaway items gain new life as beautiful, intricate creations. She combines their knowledge of traditional textile techniques with her own contemporary style to create bold abstract works. Her signature is 'The Alveoles', vivacious sculptures composed of cellular shapes sewn together to resemble bodily forms. These three-dimensional organisms almost pulsate from the walls from which they hang, displaying an attention to space and volume which the artist traces back to her architecture studies in Paris.

A number of decisive experiences led to Sahli pursuing a full-blown career in art. Upon returning to Morocco and settling in Marrakesh, the busy mother-of-four opened a studio and ran a successful children's clothing brand for seven years. In 2012 she had the chance to create a dress made from salvaged materials for a local arts magazine, which pushed her to commit fully to artistic creation.

That same year she co-founded the Zbel Manifesto collective – 'Zbel means waste in Arabic' – which was later invited to create work for the Marrakech Biennale in 2014.



Ghizlane Sahli, photo by Adnane Zemmama

Sahli has since exhibited in galleries, fairs and biennales across Africa and Europe. She sees her recycling as a spiritual process, the bottles' transformation from waste to art a transformative act: 'It's like a rebirth...We collect the bottles, we wash them and then I start cutting, cutting, cutting. It's always the same gesture...It's like meditation, like a trance.'

Through her collaboration with artisans, Sahli draws from the rich textile traditions of her country, adapting them by playing with scale, form and materials: 'It's about trying to express very contemporary ideas, but with ancestral techniques.'

This blend of the traditional and the contemporary strikes at the heart of the Spirit of Ecstasy Challenge. 'I am very honoured to take part,' says the artist, whose proposal was directly inspired by the iconic figurine. 'The fact that it's a woman's body with wings! It's just something that corresponds to me at this time of my life... The woman, the body, the wings, the perfection, the attitudes, it's all exactly what I'm looking for now.'