

# A Rare Bird

T-shirts haven't changed, sculptures still aren't wearable and **Rayya Morcos** finds it all ridiculous. The Bird on a Wire designer looks forward to the day you can buy her square t-shirts and functional artwork at the mall.



Photo credits: Rany Hajj

## How did Bird on a Wire begin?

It started as a whimsical box for me to play in. I was working at [Maison] Rabih Kayrouz, happy in my bubble and having fun making experimental pieces for friends. Then, in 2009, Rabih suggested I launch a square t-shirt I designed. I ended up selling a lot of them.

## How did you go from designing t-shirts to launching your own collection?

I learned most of what I know from Rabih, but it was serious fashion. I'm more like, 'let's have fun with design.' When I left last year, I didn't want to launch bits and pieces here and there; I was more interested in taking one idea and doing something with it. And I'm not restricted to fashion and jewellery, I just happened to start with this.

## Has this project been in development since you left Maison Rabih Kayrouz?

It was supposed to launch last October but I postponed to March. It took a while to develop all the technologies, like how to program the nitinol and get it from abroad. I think every designer should look into technology. Every aspect of our lives has technology in it except clothing.

## What exactly is nitinol?

It's wiring in the dresses that can bend and come back to its original shape. You give it the shape you want with heat or electricity. I programmed the nitinol

with White sur White and Cyrille Najjar, who introduced me to it. I told him I had a dilemma: I wanted the dresses to be worn so I couldn't use normal boning or wiring because it wouldn't keep its shape.

## Where do you find inspiration?

I'm obsessed with dancing, expressing yourself with your body. I was reading Michel Foucault's 'Le Corps Utopique' (The Utopian Body) and was inspired by the idea of inventing your own space and living it. Then, when I saw Lois Greenfield's photographs of dancers, all the puzzle pieces fell into place. My pieces are like dancing sculptures but practical. I want to be able to wear a sculpture and it's ridiculous to not be able to.

## So how practical is the collection?

Very, you can wear it on a daily basis. But it's a balance between practicality and innovation. You have to give and take.

## Do runway trends influence your designs?

I don't even look at fashion shows.

## Who do you design for?

I'm designing for the woman, and eventually man, who wants to say something. Every artist or writer or poet or photographer wants to show an idea and inspire someone. I would love to be the kind of person who knocks on your door and says, 'Hey, what about this?' and just have a

different perspective. Any person who's up for different ideas is probably my client.

## Do you see any of your designs, years from now, as mass-market collections?

I'd love to be the next Zara, to be everywhere and take over the world. I don't mind being generic. This is the 21st Century and the t-shirt is still the same cut. It's ridiculous, in my opinion. If the square shirt becomes the next t-shirt, that'd be awesome. I've already had someone copy my design.

## How do you feel about that?

[Laughing] So what? At least I got to someone.

## How does it feel to be launching a collection that's all your own?

It's scary; I've never done anything like this before. But I don't take it too seriously. As Rabih used to tell me, 'We're not saving lives, we're making clothes.'

## Where do you see yourself a year from now?

Honestly, I don't know. I'm open to anything but I would like to not be a struggling artist.

## What do you wear on a typical day?

I think what I wear is normal, but I've been hearing a lot that it's very eccentric, as if I'm dressed for a wedding or a party. But I'm not someone who would wear sequins, not even at parties. I do like volume, though.

## Why the name?

I wanted to reflect the scene of a bird sitting on a wire, just thinking, seeing people around it and interacting. That's exactly how I feel, looking at things around me and questioning. At the same time I really didn't want it to be my name because I'd love to do collaborations – this can be my idea and someone else's – and eventually sell it and start another project. Bird on a Wire is not me: I'm a person, the brand is something else.

## Bird on a Wire

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