

# MASQUERADE

AUG / SEPT  
2013



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BAH	4BHD
OMAN	4OMR
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Youssef Nabil's  
Encapsulated Time

Designing for Women:  
Naeem Khan

Istanbul's Gezi Park Protests

Sanctity by Ahd Kamel

Gilan's Opulent Encounters



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٩٧٣-١٧١٣١١.. قطر: ٩٧٤-٤٤٥٠٧٠٨ علي بن علي للساعات والمجوهرات  
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# MASTHEAD



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**MEERA ASHISH** experiences the luxurious spas of The Dorchester and the Four Seasons London in *Sumptuous Spas on Park Lane* (page 146). Ashish is a journalist and writer from London, who has written for publications including *Conde Nast Traveler* to *Harper's Bazaar*. A former travel columnist for *Gulf News*, Ashish is now writing her first novel. Her interest in philanthropy led her to establish the Next Generation Schools in Uganda ([nextgen-schools.org](http://nextgen-schools.org)), an NGO in Uganda, which partners with government schools in disadvantaged rural communities to raise education standards. Ashish received her BA in Economics, Politics and International Studies from Warwick University, after which she did a Post-graduate degree in Journalism at the London School of Journalism.



The enrapturing designs of Dubai-based designer Reem Al-Banna are captured by **SARAH BLADEN** (page 76). Bladen is a freelance journalist who lives in Dubai. She writes regularly for *The Telegraph*, *Arts and Life at The National* and *YogaLife*. She received her BA in European Studies from Royal Holloway, University of London and a Postgraduate degree in Journalism from University of the Arts in London. During her five year stint as editor of *OK! Middle East*, Sarah interviewed a long list of celebrities including Dita Von Teese and Antonio Banderas, as well as fashion personalities like Roberto Cavalli, Diane Von Furstenberg, Henry Holland and Kenzo Takada.

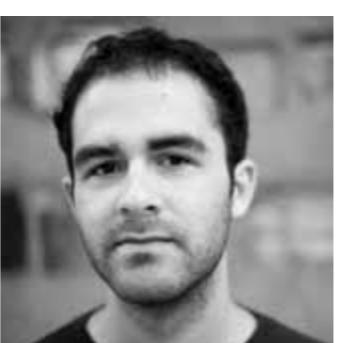


**SARAH HASSAN** profiles renowned Indian fashion designer *Naeem Khan* (page 72) as well as provides the styles for this issue's *City Style Guide* (page 64). Hassan is a New York City-based writer, editor and cultural critic. Her work has appeared in *Treats!*, *ArtWrit*, *Coilhouse* and *The Herald*, a monthly magazine published in Pakistan, in addition to cataloguing Orientalist works of art for Bonhams auction house. An accomplished performer, she has served on the guest faculty for the dance department at Sarah Lawrence College, where she received her bachelor's degree. Hassan is also a former Peace Corps volunteer in Mongolia where she taught English classes in a small town on the Siberian Border.



In *The Thief: Hotel Art Redefined* (page 168) **NATHALIE SALAS** explores the intriguing hotel art collection of Oslo's The Thief. Salas is a freelance writer and marketing consultant based between London and Asolo, Italy. She started her career in the banking industry working in marketing and communications for global banking institutions in London and Dubai. After becoming freelance, she continued to work for clients in the Middle East, UK and Italy helping small businesses improve their marketing and branding on an international level. Her move to Italy sparked her passion for hospitality and boutique hotels. Combined with over 15 years of global travelling, her travel site *Perfect Boutique Hotel* was created to capture all of her hotel experiences in one place. Salas also regularly contributes to *Boutique Hotel News*.

The origins and current nature of the *Gezi Park Protests* are documented by Istanbul-based American journalist **JUSTIN VELA** (page 44). Vela is a regular contributor to *The National*, *The Washington Post* and *The Telegraph*, among other international publications. He's worked in a number of countries around the world, including Syria, Armenia and Turkmenistan. Vela received a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and Journalism from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington in the USA. He previously worked for emerging markets magazine *Business News Europe* (BNE) as a correspondent from Turkey.



Also writing in this issue  
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Shanthy Chloe Nambiar  
and Donna Miller.

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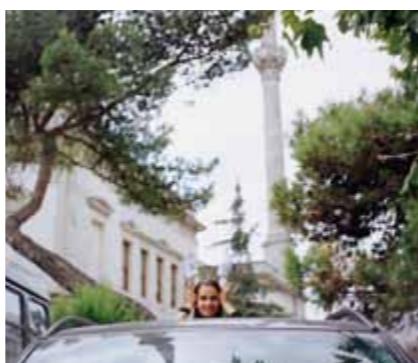
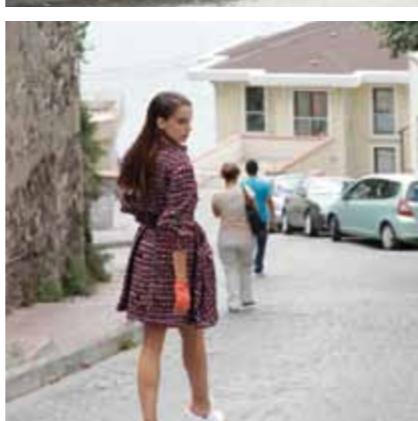
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# the EDITOR'S LETTER



In his treatise *De Officiis* (*On Duties*) Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Rome's greatest statesman and philosopher, highlights the meaning of diversity by stating that all human beings are the same insofar as they all have the ability to reason, but at the same time are all diverse because, as they can observe through their reason, there are great differences in the bodies of human beings and even greater differences in their "spirits" or minds (*animi*). We humans all share in reason, but our natural talents, both physical and mental, are quite diverse.

We often focus on the similarities that bind a people together, but why not focus on the diversities that can also unify them? During a time when the outbreak of war seems to cover every inch of Middle Eastern soil, diversity - whether it is political, religious, cultural, ideological or societal - seems something that should hardly be celebrated. Rather, it should be condoned. Isn't it easier to be confined to what we already know - to what is already recognizable and readily understood? Venturing outside our limits only inflicts fear and pain. As someone once told me, the Middle East will always be tense. And tense it seems destined to be. But the tenseness doesn't have to be feared; it can be celebrated. The diversity of the Middle East is also what unifies, colors it and makes it rich in heritage, history and creativity today and across the ages.

Diversity is echoed through this edition of *Masquerade*. In this issue's Unmasked section we cover *Sanctity*, Saudi filmmaker Ahd Kamel's acclaimed film that tackles an often unseen side of Saudi society. For a country that still doesn't have a cinema of its own, Kamel's film explores the reality for a recently widowed and pregnant woman in Jeddah with highly poignant artistry - looking at diversity in a society where one would least expect to see it. The section also documents the recent Gezi Park protests in Istanbul and how its origins over an environmental question

has since propelled into a larger debate relevant to the greater region.

There are also pieces on Palestyle, a UAE-based fashion brand dedicated to helping women in Palestinian refugee camps; Doha-based Lama El-Moatassem's brand Toujouri; Dubai-based designer Reem Al-Banna's Reemami and renowned Indian-American designer Naeem Khan whose enrapturing designs for women symbolize a harmonious blend of Eastern and Western style. Such a marriage is once again evoked through Youssef Nabil's powerful photographs - a continuous and fervent mix of the artist's Egyptian homeland, love of cinema and international personalities that shape contemporary culture. Coverage on the Middle East at this year's Venice Biennale sings a similar note - the artist's works in the Pavilions represented - a record eight for the Middle East and the largest to date ever exhibited from the region - profess the region's diversity in artistic representation captured in an often edgy, at times even crude and yet resoundingly deep, manner.

This issue also highlights the city of Istanbul - the magical post on the Bosphorus whose Asian and European sides meet each other every day in a remarkable layering of historical and contemporary monuments. Our photo shoot explores the visual beauty of this historical meeting place whose very nature was built through a diverse layering of different peoples across time.

This is what philosopher Nayef Al-Rodhan would call "cultural vigor." For him, cultural vigor is the cultural resilience and strength that is derived from exchanges between various cultures and sub-cultures around the world. For Al-Rodhan, cultural vigor is what will help humans to not only survive, but prosper. And long live that! ♦

R.A. Proctor



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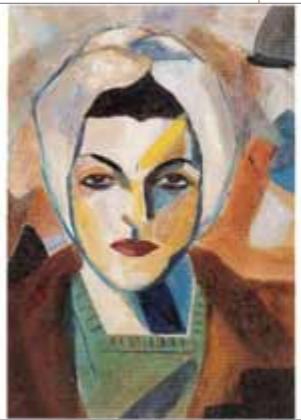
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# LETTERS to the EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR,

I noted that the visual arts featured prominently in the last issue of *Masquerade*. From the importance of art education to the developing art scene in Iraq, as well as several reviews on exhibitions such as the Saloua Raouda Chocair retrospective at the Tate Modern, the last issue seemed to have much more of a focus on the Modern and Contemporary art scene than previous editions of the magazine. Why is this and why are the visual arts so important to *Masquerade*?

Kathy, Abu Dhabi



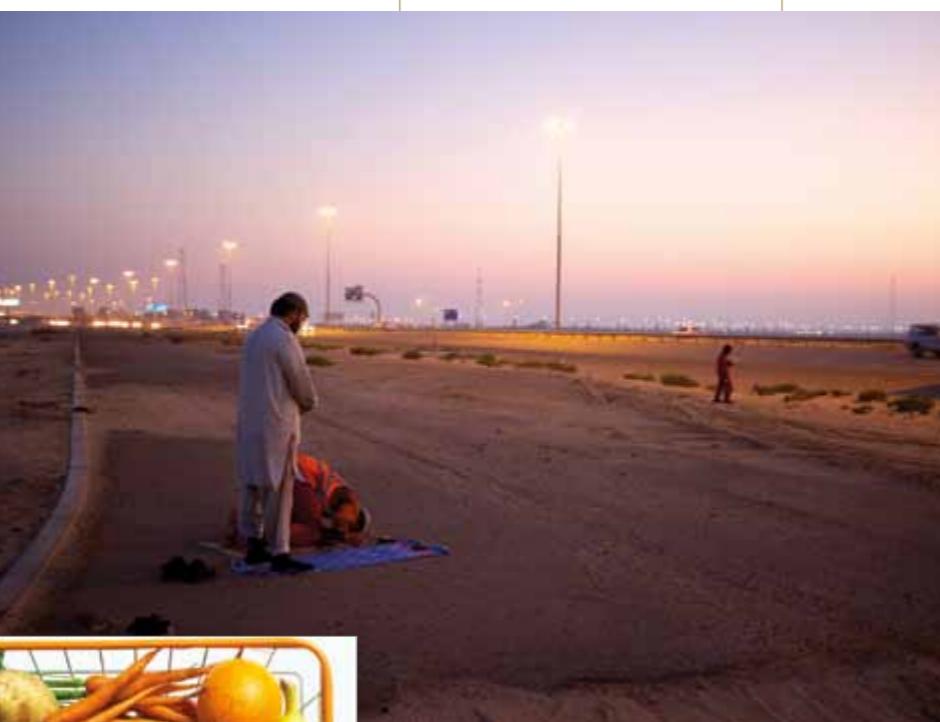
DEAR EDITOR,

I was surprised to see the piece *Highway Prayers* in your last issue. The photographs were beautiful, but lifestyle magazines in the region usually do not touch upon religion. Can you explain your choice of including such a piece in *Masquerade*?

Samia, Beirut

DEAR KATHY,

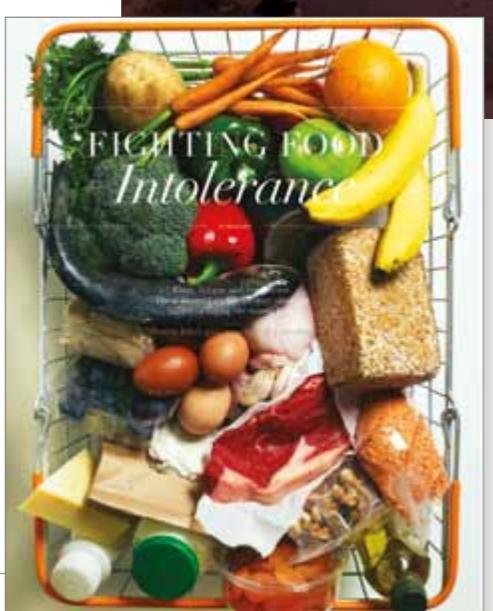
The visual arts have always played a significant role in *Masquerade*. We believe that art is a universal truth that unites people from all corners of the globe while providing a forum in which universal emotions and thoughts can be expressed. Moreover, we think that the visual arts, like fashion, help to better understand what is taking place within a specific culture during a certain time. More often than not, the cultural zeitgeist of a people can be felt through the creations of its artists who reflect the sentiment of the times. Also important to note is the role that art education can play in fostering a more just and free society. The visual arts, in their many facets, are hence a crucial component of *Masquerade* and one that we feel consistently helps to build dialogue across cultures.



DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you so much for including the article on food intolerance in your last issue. Reading the author's experience made me wonder about my own body and inspired me to have a food intolerance test done. Low and behold, I found I had a severe gluten intolerance. I had no idea, especially since a few slices of whole-wheat toast were a breakfast staple for me. Since eliminating gluten from my diet I have more energy and am much less bloated.

Lisa, New York

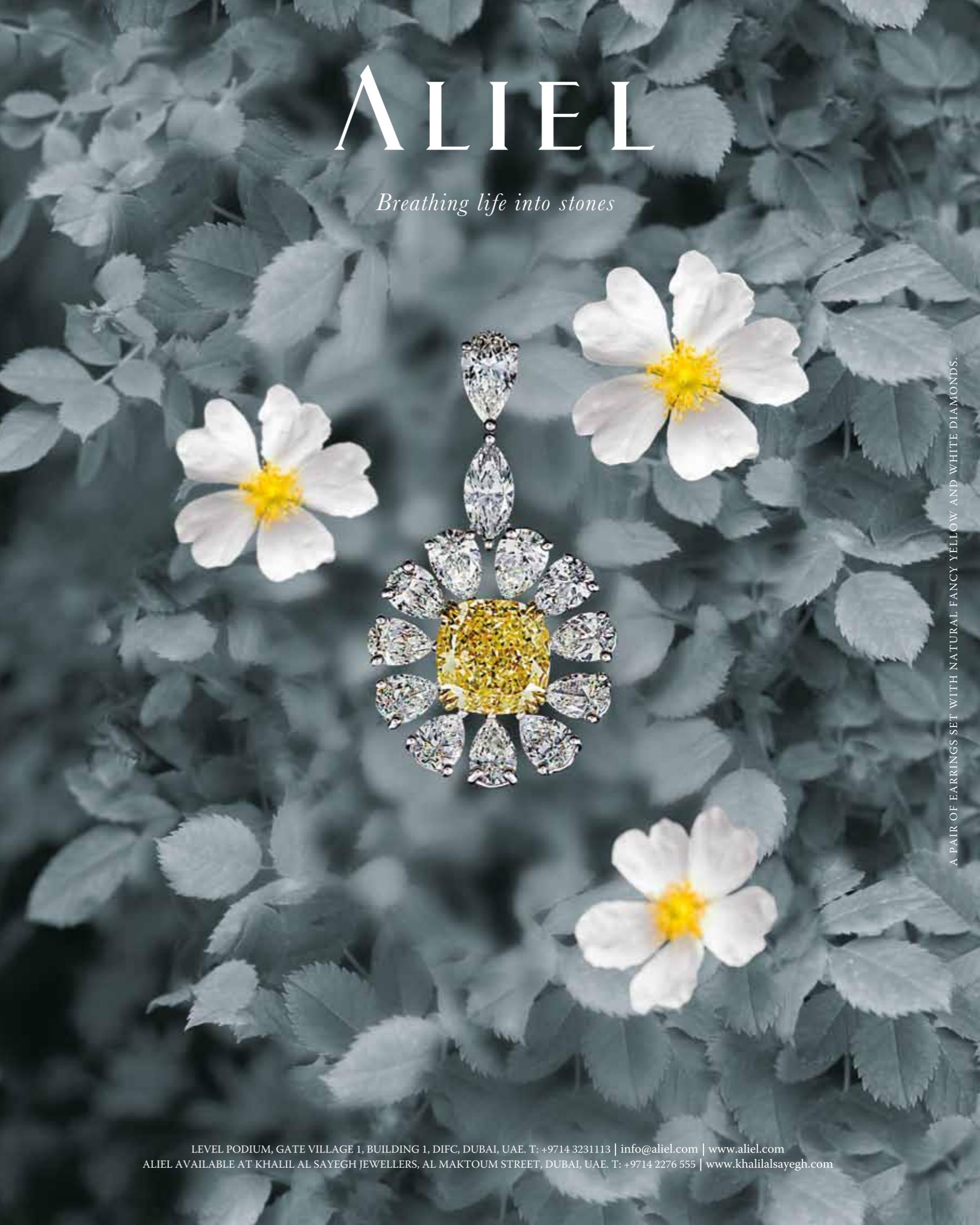


DEAR LISA,

Thank you for sharing your story with us! We are so glad our article inspired you to pursue better wellness for yourself. In today's world where so much of the food surrounding us is processed and full of preservatives and extra additives, more and more people are developing intolerances. We encourage everyone to try a food intolerance test; it can only lead to better health.

DEAR SAMIA,

We are glad you enjoyed the striking photographs as much as we did. We feel that especially during the holy month of Ramadan, the call to prayer is a special moment since it is a time when all Muslims come together in a communal act of worship, regardless of ethnicity, race, class or age. Such devotion, especially set against the beautiful backdrop of twilight in the UAE, deserves to be touched upon.



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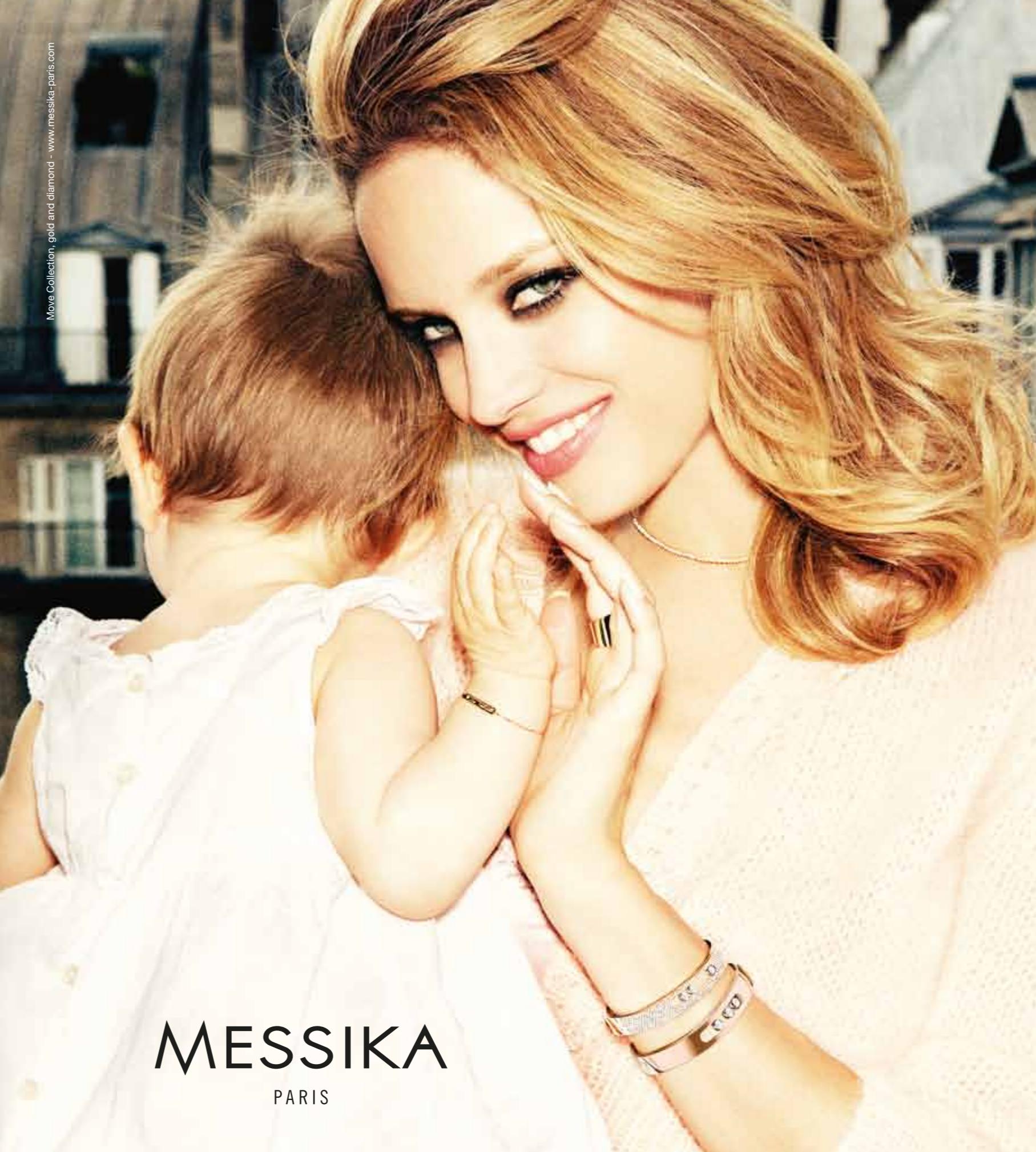
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MODEL Alicia Medina  
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# SOUK

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LUXE LIST

MUST HAVE:  
CAROLINA HERRERA'S MATRYOSHKA BAG

GOOD LUXE:  
PRADA RESTORATION

GOOD LUXE:  
MARIO TESTINO FOR MATE ON NET-A-PORTER



# LUXE LIST

Our selection  
of inspirational items.

By Cassidy Hazelaker



26



## CRUCIANI FOULARD

Following the success of its bracelets, pashminas and handbags, Cruciani has recently launched a line of foulards. The silk scarves are available in two sizes and range in colors from cool electric blue and plum to warmer orange and bright red. The pattern on the scarves mimics the famous Cruciani macramé lace bracelets through references to four-leaf clovers, hearts and butterflies.

[cruciani.net](http://cruciani.net)

## MIU MIU PUMPS

Miu Miu's new line of pumps transitions from the end of summer to the beginning of autumn. Available in a diverse color palette ranging from neutral hues to bicolor combinations, the shoes are crafted from sophisticated suede or patent. Both kitten heel and platform models feature gros grain or patent bows. The pumps are playfully sharp and the pointed toe gives the foot a slender silhouette.

[miumiu.com](http://miumiu.com)

## MICHAEL ROBERTS LINENS

Style and fashion director of *Vanity Fair*, Michael Roberts, has teamed up with the Bennison Fabrics owner and director Gillian Newberry to hand print some of Roberts' exquisite illustrations onto linen to produce the new Cut-Out Collection. His graphic collages, printed in the trademark superior manner of Bennison, are sure to make a striking addition to any home interior.

[bennisonfabrics.com](http://bennisonfabrics.com)



## MONA DI ORIO EAU ABSOLUE

The latest addition to Les Nombres d'Or collection, Mona di Orio Eau Absolue is a dynamic fragrance available exclusively at Harvey Nichols Dubai. The scent boasts a citrus background containing bergamot, mandarin and clementine splashed with the epicurean spice of pink peppercorn. The fragrance then transitions to earthy, floral notes, with a nuanced scent of geranium and dry vetiver, and closes with a stronger musc, invoking the spirit of the Mediterranean.

*Available at Harvey Nichols Dubai.*

## NADA SAWAYA PIZZO CLUTCH

One of Lebanese designer Nada Sawaya's latest pieces, this cute clutch is made from French calf, which is laser cut in Italy. An example of fine European quality with an artistic flair from the East, the sides of the clutch depict a floral and lattice motif that fasten with a metallic gold handled-zip. Available in gold, silver, black, off-white and taupe.

[nadasawayacom](http://nadasawayacom)



## TOD'S SATIN SMOKING SLIPPERS

Contemporary style and classic comfort combine in the newly released satin striped smoking slippers from Tod's. Crafted from silky striped satin with leather piping and a flexible rubber sole, these slippers are cozy enough to wear while lounging at home yet sturdy enough to wear outdoors. The subtly elongated toe gives the shoes a finely tailored look. They are available in blue, black and pink.

[todsc.com](http://todsc.com)

## FRATO LAMP

At once elegant and trendy, this lamp by Frato mixes minimalism with opulent embellishment. The sleek base of the lamp is formed from two small cylinders, supporting an oversized metallic gold and brass colored lampshade. A delicate arabesque pattern fills the lampshade from which hangs a gold-plated ostrich egg with a chocolate-brown tassel and beads.

*Available at Harvey Nichols Dubai.*



## ROBERT WAN TAHITIAN PEARL NECKLACE

Tahitian pearls are famous worldwide for their spectacular luster, impressive quality and range of colors. Robert Wan, known as the 'Emperor of Pearls,' has spent three decades assembling these jewels of the sea into elegant, chic pieces. Part of Wan's Divas collection, this pearl necklace features many shades of silver, green and gray and is the result of years of harvests to find dazzling pearls with diameters over 15 millimeters.

[bloomingdales.com](http://bloomingdales.com)

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## GUCCI LIMITED EDITION KEFFIYEH

Available in flagship stores across Kuwait, UAE and Qatar, this limited edition Gucci keffiyeh combines luxury material and craftsmanship with Middle Eastern flair. A traditional red Arabian keffiyeh pattern is juxtaposed with a green and red rendition of Gucci's iconic stripe and logo. Made from lightweight material, the keffiyeh is breathable and protects from the sun without trapping too much heat.

[gucci.com](http://gucci.com)

## VERSACE VANITAS TIMEPIECE

All of Versace's iconographic elements are fused together in this latest addition to the Vanitas accessories collection. The enamel dial is strewn with studs and diamonds while the rose gold bezel is engraved with a Greek key motif. The watch features a Swiss-made, quartz Ronda 762.3 movement, and comes with changeable straps; one in super-soft leather and the other embellished with studs.

[versace.com](http://versace.com)

## HOGAN SHOPPER

September is always a frenzied month, with people returning to their routines after the summer holidays. This sleek Hogan shopper is the perfect grab-and-go bag, with a spacious interior to conceal all your daytime accessories, big or small. The shopper is made from mole gray suede with red leather handles and comes with a red shoulder strap for hands-free convenience.

[hogan.com](http://hogan.com)

## NARCISO RODRIGUEZ PERFUME AMBER MUSC EAU DE PARFUM ABSOLUE

In this new fragrance, Narciso Rodriguez reinterprets the original For Her Musc in an oriental way. This new perfume mixes musc with amber and oud, resulting in an opulent, sensual fragrance, which seeks to demonstrate the sophistication, restraint, and impeccable taste that Rodriguez admires in the Middle Eastern woman.

[narcisorodriguez.com](http://narcisorodriguez.com)

## ISHARYA CUFF

Inspired by Indian motifs and colors, the designers of Isharya seek to infuse the vibrancy of Bollywood with quality craftsmanship. This alluring cuff bracelet is formed of geometric circular designs stacked together. Made from 18-carat gold plated brass, it complements both casual day attire and chic eveningwear.

[saksfifthavenue.com](http://saksfifthavenue.com)



## LIMITED EDITION MARNI NECKLACE

Made exclusively for Dubai, this limited edition Marni necklace channels Marni's traditional use of bold colors with flirtatious designs. Featuring three small pendants suspended from a golden choker, the necklace closes with a black satin tie. The piece sits prominently around the neck and is sure to enhance delicate collarbones.

[marni.com](http://marni.com)

## ASIATIDES URN

Paying homage to Asian culture, Asiatides is a Parisian-based company dedicated to importing and designing Asian-style creations. This statement-making urn is crafted from gold ceramic with a sharkskin-textured effect. The upper rim, feet and lid feature brass dragon details, which add depth to the classic design.

*Available at Harvey Nichols Dubai.*

## ROLLS-ROYCE PICNIC SET

Dining al fresco gets a luxury makeover with the Rolls-Royce picnic set, which contains a full service of flatware and stemware for four people. All pieces are finished in polished aluminum, veneer and leather. The picnic set is one of the projects of the Bespoke Program, which is led by an in-house design and engineering team that creates customized products for Rolls-Royce clients.

[rollsroycemotorcars.com](http://rollsroycemotorcars.com)

## FERRAGAMO GANCINO TIMEPIECE

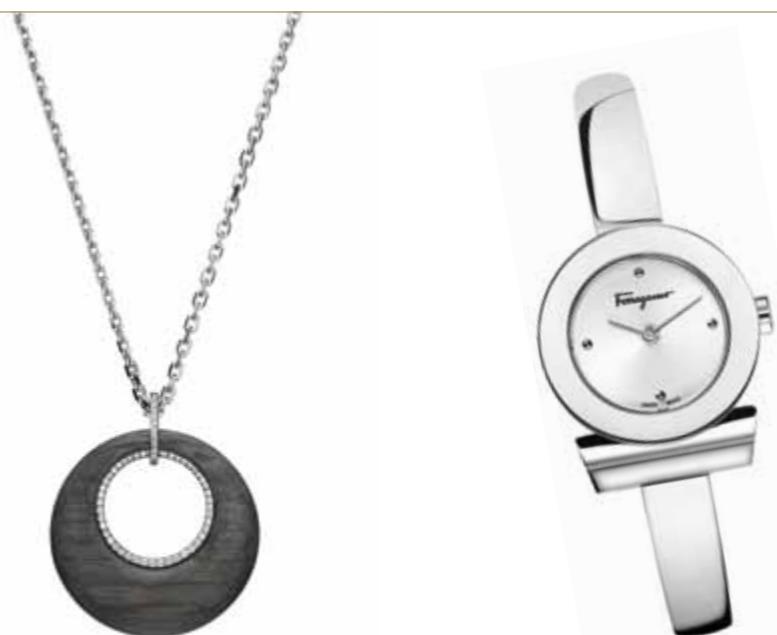
This timepiece is at once delicate and sleek, with a simple, elegant watch face perched upon a slender bangle. The Ferragamo Gancino Timepiece features a Swiss-made, Ronda 751 quartz movement. The dial is made of silver with a guilloche finish, while the strap/bracelet features a jewelry buckle. The timepiece is available in IP rose gold or steel.

[ferragamo.com](http://ferragamo.com)

## ADLER ECLIPSE PENDANT

Inspired by the shadow of the moon as seen during an eclipse, this pendant encapsulates the darkness of a shadow and the brightness of light. This latest release from Adler is a fine marriage between lightweight, durable carbon and delicate diamonds set in 18-carat white gold. The unique matte finish and organic lines embedded within the carbon make this piece stand out.

[adler.ch](http://adler.ch)



MUST HAVE:

# CAROLINA HERRERA'S MATRYOSHKA BAG

By Cassidy Hazelbaker

An iconic child's toy  
serves as the inspiration for  
this season's must-have.



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Matryoshka, the original name for the stackable wooden Russian dolls, is the inspiration for Carolina Herrera's newest handbag series of the same name. A traditional Russian doll contains five identical pieces in varying sizes. Each piece is small enough to fit inside the last. Herrera's Matryoshka collection follows suit, with bags available in five sizes ranging from oversized to handbag. Each can stand alone or complement a different size when carried together. The slouchy bag gives a relaxed look to any outfit, while the soft leather renders the bag comfortable to carry. The bag's roomy interior has plenty of space for makeup, phones and other accessories. The watercolors and gouache that are used to paint the dolls serve as the color palette for Herrera's Matryoshka bags, while vibrant primary colors are found in contrast with neutral beiges and creams. Our favorite is the bold red crocodile, which adds a splash of color to any outfit and transitions easily from summer to fall. ♦

[carolinaherrera.com](http://carolinaherrera.com)



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GOOD LUXE.

# PRADA RESTORATION

By Cassidy Hazelbaker

Fondazione Prada collaborates with Fondo Ambiente Italiano on restoration projects in Italy. Cassidy Hazelbaker reports.

In honor of the new Prada store opening in Bari, Fondazione Prada will team up with Fondo Ambiente Italiano to complete two restoration works on heritage pieces in Italy. The first is to restore a well in the abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate that is located near Lecce in Southern Italy. The abbey was built in the 12th century while the well found in its courtyard opposite the cloister was constructed during the late 16th century. The well's outdoor location and subsequent exposure to the elements throughout the centuries has led to structural fractures and the erosion of the decorative sculpting. The abbey was run by the Byzantine Basilian monks and was one of the principal religious centers in Southern Italy at the time. The property was later given to the Hospital of the Incurables in Naples, where the surrounding land was used in the production of olive oil while the abbey was abandoned.

The second project is the restoration of a 15th century polyptych by Antonio Vivarini, one

of the most well-known Venetian artists. The polyptych was comprised of 10 panels, of which five remain. Depicted on these panels are Christ in Lamentation, Saint Louis of Toulouse, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint John and Saint Anthony. The painting style reflects a mixture of Gothic and Renaissance characteristics, with widespread use of gold in the backgrounds. The oxidized paints that were used originally have diminished with time. The surface of the works will be cleaned and the colors restored to their original splendor, while missing pieces will be filled in using a micro integration process.

The well's restoration is expected to finish in 2014, with the opening to the public taking place in 2015, while the polyptych restoration is ongoing and should be completed by December, informs Alessandra Varisco, Director of Marketing for the Fondo Ambiente Italiano.

"Having a high-profile brand as a sponsor definitely helps in communication and in raising awareness," Varisco says. "We had much

attention from the public after the collaboration announcement."

The Fondo Ambiente Italiano, known in English as the Italian National Trust, was founded in 1975 to promote respect and appreciation for Italy's heritage, art, history and traditions. Headquartered in Milan, the organization seeks to raise awareness of cultural assets among all ages, and leads restoration and conservation projects of places and objects that are subsequently shared with the public. Responding to appeals from local communities, the organization refers cases to government institutions. The Fondo additionally raises funds to sustain its projects as well as to maximize participation from the public.

Fondazione Prada was founded in 1993 by Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli as PradaMilanoArte, an exhibition space dedicated to contemporary sculpture. In 1995, the organization was transformed to Fondazione



*The Fondo Ambiente Italiano raises funds to sustain its projects as well as to maximize participation from the public.*

Prada, widening the areas of focus to art, photography, cinema, design, and architecture. Concentrating less on presenting exhibitions, the foundation centered on the production of site-specific projects of innovative and imaginative artists. The foundation has since expanded its portfolio to include urban projects and culture.

The collaboration between such a high-profile brand and the Fondo Ambiente complements the prestigious house's design aesthetic and reflects the brand's recognition of its proud heritage, which should be promoted to future generations. In the boardroom as on the catwalk, Prada leads by example once again for a winning combination. ♦



All images courtesy Prada and Fondo Ambiente Italiano unless otherwise specified.  
For more information visit [fondazioneprada.com](http://fondazioneprada.com)

Opposite: Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate. Photography by Loretta Martella.

Above: The new Prada store in Bari.

Above Center: Antonio Vivarini. Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate Polyptych. Circa 1467. Tempera on wood.

Below: The well in the Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate. Photography by Francesco Franciosi.

# MARIO TESTINO *for* MATE ON NET-A-PORTER

By Cassidy Hazelbaker

Renowned fashion photographer Mario Testino's not-for-profit organization MATE has teamed up with Net-a-Porter. Cassidy Hazelbaker reports on MATE's exploration of Peruvian heritage and the desire to give back.

Mario Testino has indeed made quite a name for himself in the fashion industry. Chosen by the late Princess Diana for her 1997 *Vanity Fair* photo shoot, he also photographed Prince William and Kate Middleton on the occasion of their engagement. He has conducted photo shoots for a plethora of high-profile models, performers and celebrities, and his work has been featured in *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, among other prestigious publications.

Testino is no stranger to the red carpet, yet his life started from more humble beginnings in his hometown of Lima, Peru. In 2012, he founded MATE, a not-for-profit organization that promotes the art of Peruvian artists locally and internationally. In June, he launched a line of caftans, handbags and jewelry available exclusively on the online retail portal Net-a-Porter.

Testino's collection features many vibrant images and colors, inspired by his Alta Moda photograph series of Peruvians wearing traditional attire from the mountainous Cusco region. The collection presents abstract sections from the exhibition, converted into clothing or accessories. "The Mario Testino for MATE collection is so special because it offers our customers the unique chance to own and wear a piece of Testino's inspiring work," explains Holli Rogers, Fashion Director, Net-a-Porter. "As well as silk and cotton blend kaftans, silk scarves, tote bags and clutches there is fabulous jewelry designed by Vicki Beamon with a modern take on Peruvian craft. It is clear Testino's Alta

Moda is a true labor of love and we feel very privileged that he has allowed us such exclusive access to his work."

The photographer's clothing and accessories line is certainly unique. Every item is a statement piece, championing the vivacity of Peruvian heritage through the materials and

Net-a-Porter has shipped the items to over 60 countries so far, with many pieces already sold out. Neither quality nor luxury is lost in the collection since jewelry is gold plated and adorned with Swarovski crystals.

Perfect to pack along on upcoming summer holidays, the soft cotton and silk blends are as comfortable to wear as they are trendy. "The variety of product means you can opt for a vibrant clutch for that subtle approach to summer accessorizing or a beautiful kaftan for the ultimate in statement beachwear," adds Rogers.

While this is not the first philanthropic venture with which Net-a-Porter has been involved, the Mario Testino for MATE collection is close to Net-a-Porter's heart. "We always strive to offer our customers newness and product with a strong point of difference. When this is coupled with the chance to support such worthwhile causes we relish the opportunity and know that our customers will be extremely responsive," says Rogers. The collection seamlessly blends the glamour of the world's top A-listers with whom Testino has worked with the lesser-known culture and traditions of rural Peruvians. It has generated much buzz in the fashion and art worlds, and is sure to be the start of many more dynamic things to come. ♦

*"The use of color and print in the collection is truly striking."*

Holli Rogers, Fashion Director, Net-a-Porter

color combinations used. He mixes glamour and pride into traditional Peruvian patterns and designs. In an industry where new names pop up daily and well-known personalities often dabble overwhelmingly in a variety of fields, Testino's initiative deserves a moment in the spotlight. "This is the first time Mario Testino has collaborated with a retailer on a fashion line and that alone immediately created buzz ahead of the collection launching on Net-a-Porter. The use of color and print in the collection is truly striking," says Rogers.

Launched in time for summer, the token season of bright colors and bohemian ensembles,

All images courtesy Net-a-Porter.  
For more information visit [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com)



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## UNMASKED

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BEHIND THE VEIL:  
FINDING FREEDOM THROUGH TRADITION

WHAT MATTERS THE MOST

PALESTYLE:  
FASHION WITH A SOCIAL EDGE  
AHD KAMEL AND HER SANCTITY

GEZI PARK PROTESTS

فَوْلَادُونْ



BEHIND THE VEIL:

# FINDING FREEDOM THROUGH TRADITION

By Al Meem

How can an Arab woman find individual freedom in a communal society?

Al Meem answers by talking about her journey towards liberalism.



It is not a simple task to align the expectations of traditional Arab parents with the social norms of the Western world. I am American born and raised with first generation parents who believe traditional Arab culture is the right path to societal education. We are taught at home that we belong to the Arab community, while socially we are molded to fit our surroundings. This ambiguous lifestyle leaves us torn between pleasing our parents and rejecting their influence to live by our own beliefs.

Like many Arab women who make their way to the GCC for a better life, the only way I could tear through my parents' objections to be independent was to give them a valid reason for my familial separation. When it comes to valid reasons for Arab females to journey across countries, it comes down to marriage. Thus, marriage ambiguously becomes the path to freedom.

Marriage legitimizes a female's travels because it secures her safety, financial future and the future of her family. It is set to secure her from obscene possibilities such as dating. Dating is assumed to lead to pre-marital relations and illegitimate pregnancy; this mentality of exercising sexual control over women stems from a time when there was little education. Marriage also assures parents that their daughter is taken care of. However, the idea that a woman's security comes from her family and her husband is no longer a standard for modern life where education is available. An educated woman can be secure even if she is independent.

My story began when a relative referred me to a man from my home country. I began speaking with him and soon he started mentioning marriage in all of our conversations. A few months later, it was time to say yes or no to an engagement because my parents believed I

would have had enough time to make up my mind. If I said yes, they would formally speak to his family.

I was a college student who believed in tradition – that is until I delved deeper into the mindset of this man. His views matched that of my parents' generation. I found myself upset about his way of thinking and by my parents' demands that I get engaged. I also realized I was far from ready to tie the knot. We got engaged, but I found myself constantly looking for a way out of a wedding that everyone insisted be held that summer. I never admitted to not wanting to go through with the marriage until we left each other. I replaced my longing for freedom with the idea of legitimizing love through tradition. I was shocked when relatives told my parents that it was inappropriate for me to be alone in another country with my fiancé. To them, it was unheard of for a girl to do such a thing

because she needs the protection of her family. They believe that a man and a woman left alone cannot prevent temptations. To Arabs, it's a disgrace to have anyone question the girl to be anything less than 100 percent pure because this is the man's proof that she is his property and was never the property of another. Moreover, it was the gossip my parents were most afraid of; their beliefs were dictated by what Arab society deemed proper.

I learned that the best way to avoid becoming flustered over another generation's ideals was to live on my own. I fell out with my ex-fiancé after I secretly moved in with him. It was then that we finally came to address the issues that we did not see eye to eye on. We were incompatible, but I held on. Denial makes for an unhealthy relationship and it exists even in Western societies. However, for me, ending the relationship meant involving my entire family.

I decided that I needed to find out what I wanted in life before I got married and spent a lot of money on a larger-than-life wedding. Marriage would bring with it the pressure to have kids. I was 22 and had just graduated from college. I had just started my career. I had just gained my independence. I knew I had to be selfish before I became selfless.

Our relationship and talks centered on the wedding and we did not have much time to get to know each other. I realized I could either accept tradition or let go and follow my own path. I was a headstrong, independent, modern woman who was scared to admit that I was different from my society and family; that is until I came to Dubai and discovered that I was not the only one in such a quandary.

Living in the USA, I witnessed Arab Americans fighting to preserve their culture because of the

negative sentiment towards Arabs and Islam in the media. When I moved to Dubai, I found a new way of thinking among Arab youth. Many of them are in the middle of clannish wars in the name of religion and political ideals. Many more are afraid to break cultural and religious barriers set by their parents. Young Arabs are changing with the times through education and experiences abroad. They are more and more seeking alternative answers to tradition and societal norms. Exposure is key to breaking a person's resistance to change.

My experience has allowed me to live independently. I am now convinced that my passion for freedom should not be repressed for the sake of my family's happiness and tradition. ♦

Share your thoughts by dropping me a line at [almeem@masquerademag.com](mailto:almeem@masquerademag.com)



# WHAT MATTERS THE MOST

Expectations of parents change as they deal with the growth of a child. Through unexpected challenges, what was once important takes second place to what matters most.

Donna Miller finds solace.

Jumpy and uncomfortable at my desk, I consider a third tea run in under an hour. An empty page glows on the computer screen, mocking my resolve to complete an important political speech that is already overdue. Missed deadlines mark a writer as unprofessional. Before the birth of my son Jack, my mania for producing on-time work was notorious. I am now 17 years into parenting a son who is a churning mix of difficult behavior and wildly varying mood swings. Once sacrosanct, deadlines and the other hallmarks of perfection compete in a daily battle for balance between professional and family obligations. Shutting down the computer for the night, I mentally plan a quick dinner and a long night of writing.

Arriving home, I discover Jack pacing near the front hallway. "How was your day?" he asks with unexpected buoyancy. At over six feet tall, his presence in the tiny foyer throws a shadow across my five-foot frame.

"Fine," I say, tripping over the outstretched body of his cat as I make my way to the kitchen. "What's happening?" I already know there is trouble. There is always trouble.

"Nothing's happening. I was kicked out of school. It's not a big deal." Jack grabs the car keys and tosses them in the air repeatedly, catching them before they hit the ground. He heads for the front door.

"To whom?" I ask.

"What?" He will not turn around.

"To whom is it not a big deal to be kicked out of

school? It is a big deal to me. It will be a big deal to your father."

"Mooommm." Jack draws this word out to four-syllables of disgust.

"I have to go to work." He rushes through the house and is outside before I can form any more words.

I take refuge near the kitchen sink. Jack's lifetime of bad news has taught me to find a neutral spot to think before reacting. Forcing myself to move, I take the steps to my second floor office. Powering the computer to life, incoherent lines of dialogue appear that must be a measured, persuasive message, ready for camera, by early morning. Overwhelmed with fatigue and almost certainly with self-pity, I slip to the floor, content to rest on the yellow and blue carpet I purchased when I got married because it made me smile.

My days had not always ended in self-imposed exile under my desk. I loved being a writer.

Diligence and luck helped me to move forward in the work I cherished. Early years in policy analysis lead to an 11-year stint as a New York State Director for children's advocacy programs, and then to my growing assignments as a political speechwriter. Throughout my career, colleagues took family leave when their children were born at various intervals. I was the resident non-parent, a role I assumed with purpose. There was nothing in the way to prevent my life's rhythm dancing from deadline to deadline. My husband and I carved out time for season theatre tickets and extended vacations. Friends with children envied our freedom and spontaneity.

If I regretted the absence of a child, I was prudent with this information: never risk opening a wound that could not be healed. We made our marriage work, succeeded as professionals and contributed to our communities. By my late thirties, it was clear that biological children were not to be a part of our future. We considered pharmaceutically assisted pregnancies offered by science. But, it was too late for experimentation, and I couldn't face more disappointment. Instead, we sought an adoption.

From my cozy carpet retreat I hear the grandfather's clock chime through the silent house. When the last chime stills at 7 o'clock, I recall the distant hum of other machinery located near a hospital bed. I am cradling the young woman who is lying there. Only hours before, she had given birth to the baby who is now our son. Stationed at the edge of her bed, I make quiet promises to love this child forever and ever, no matter what. In a few days, I would leave her for the last time, carrying our child as well as all of the excitement and expectations of a new mother.

Adoption catapulted my husband and me into the joy and uncertainty of parenting. Like most new parents, we had not a clue about what would shape the years that followed. We were blessed with a son. We were playing catch-up, happily fulfilling the dreams we missed during nineteen years of childless marriage. Everything seemed possible.

We could not have foreseen the emotional problems and complexity of delayed growth that lurked within Jack's system. By the time he was five years old, our son's list of childhood disabilities included every nuance from failure



*Left: A miner's child in Scott's Run, West Virginia.*  
Image courtesy U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

to violent behavior. None of the physicians, counselors or teachers ever solved the problems. Time did not heal him, or even expose us to better answers. Our prescription never varied: get all the help we could and love him without reservation. It was very tricky, and we have faltered more than once.

Artists know about the phenomenon of centuries-old paintings that bleed through the newer oils laid down on the surface of the same canvas. It is called pentimento, or revealed painting. I sought to master this technique as the interlocking layers of Jack's flawed biology swept across the canvas of our lives. I put up a good fight throughout the years of erratic school attendance and distressing behavior that spilled too quickly into exhausting family conflict. I was nearly delusional in my attempt to bring order to the chaos that robbed each day of time and happiness. The results of this misguided task were always a disaster. Still, I tried burying the messy, disorganized world of our seriously compromised child beneath the polished surface of my imaginary functional family. *Pentimento*.

Finally pulling myself off the floor, I think about the recent scene in the kitchen. Soon I would have to acknowledge that Jack was leaving high school after years of under-achievement, abandoning my last thread of hope for a purposeful future for him. The doors to graduation and further education seemed locked forever. I knew I would need a few more weeks to fully capitulate to this new loss. What now? What happens now that Jack is home with no structure, no direction? Will I give up my own future? Will I stop writing the words I had hoped to write; abandon the work that has nurtured my life and given me purpose?

In time, the creativity and tenaciousness I had utilized to weave my stories and write my speeches helped me map a new journey. After a few months, we found a school for Jack where he could focus on educational goals and emotional health. I left my job two months after Jack started school in deference to the 80 mile round trip we made together each day to Jack's new program. It was his last hope to reconcile the demons of disability that haunted his young life, and I wanted to be with him. I used the drive time to celebrate love and to practice patience in supporting the child we had wanted for so long. I slowly created a new life to protect my sanity and do the work I needed to as a writer. I began freelance writing and now teach memoir to young adults. It is not the life I wanted. But, my work is satisfying, although lacking the energy and drive of public service. I am writing a book about our family's journey that may help others who struggle to maintain equilibrium between external forces and the dreams that feed our souls. Jack finally finished high school, and some unfamiliar determination has propelled him to start college.

Not long ago, I was working on my book at home when Jack stuck his head around the corner of my door.

"I went to the wrong class this morning." He is laughing so I know he is dealing with this ubiquitous freshman nightmare.

"What are you going to do?" My voice is even, my eyes on the computer screen.

"Not a problem. I'll make it up." He moves over my chair for a kiss, aimed at my forehead. He

misses my face and changes his focus to the screen, reading what's on the page.

"I can't believe you are still writing that book. Am I in the nursing home yet?"

"No, you're in college."

"Like today in college?"

"Uh huh, like that."

"You're never going to finish that if you keep following me around." He smiles into my eyes. Seeing something I can't translate; he laughs. This is the sweetest sound I know. I watch as his long form slips through my door and I hear him take the steps, probably three at a time. He is yelling at me from near the front door.

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"I love you, Mom. I need cotton shirts. Get the soft ones. I hate the scratchy ones."

"OK, I'll see."

"Oh, and the cat threw up down here. Could you get it? I'm late."

Blending work and family life is like stitching a quilt. Crazy patterns of coming together and falling apart mix equally with the saturated hues of despair and hope. For all the missed stitches, the jarring colors and the times I completely lost sight of the design, a beautiful comforter has now emerged. It's a good place to be, a good place to write my new story. ♦

# PALESTYLE: FASHION WITH A SOCIAL EDGE

High-end UAE-based fashion brand Palestyle is dedicated to helping women in Palestinian refugee camps. Cassidy Hazelbaker reports.



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When I enter the door of the Palestyle office, I am struck by the sense of calm. Samples of handbags and embroidery abound, highlighted by the brightly colored walls behind them. The sunny day is matched by the warmth of Palestyle founder Zeina Abou Chaaban's smile as she ushers me in.

Palestyle was started by Zeina and her brother, Ahmed. Despite coming from a corporate background with limited fashion business knowledge or contacts, Zeina felt the need to start a company that would help women in her native Palestine. Having always been charmed by the intricate patterns of Palestinian embroidery, she decided to incorporate the craft into a luxury fashion line. After two years of preparation, Palestyle was launched in 2009, and is now stocked in stores such as Bloomingdale's, House of Fraser and Sause across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. The line features embossed leather clutches, bags, leather accessories, jewelry, clothing and shoes.



"Embroidery is a dying art form in Palestine," explains Zeina. "By incorporating it into a luxury line, we are trying to make it trendy to increase demand." She tells me about the significance of certain patterns. Embroidery depicting trees, valleys and nature scenes is typically Northern Palestinian, whereas images of tents and symbols of more arid landscapes originate from the South. Married women traditionally embroider using red thread, while their unmarried counterparts use blue thread. "Women are very attached to their surroundings," she continues, describing how there is a nostalgia for better times and how women continue to embroider not just for the beauty of their work, but also to spread the love of their culture and heritage.

Palestyle employs women living in the Baqa'a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. Depending on the project, around 60-100 women are employed at a time. Palestyle works with a local NGO on the ground to select women who already have refined embroidery skills. Their work is incorporated into clothing, while Palestyle's handbags, made from genuine leather and featuring heartwarming phrases in Arabic calligraphy, are crafted in neighboring Lebanon. By providing the refugee women



Palestinian refugee women embroidering for Palestyle.

with income-generating jobs, Palestyle enables women to expand their traditional family roles. The women become role models to younger generations who are inspired to preserve the heritage of embroidery as well as to work hard to learn skills to increase their earning potential. The general morale of the women and their families, who often live in dire conditions, is greatly increased by their involvement in the business.

In 2011, Palestyle started a campaign to plant olive trees, a national symbol, native crop and historical icon of peace in Palestine. For each clutch sold, 15 trees were donated to farmers. A total of 255 trees were planted, which generated significant extra revenue for the farmers. This year, Palestyle is conducting a project to repair

and replace old and broken water tanks in the Baqa'a camp. The mission to bring clean water to the camp is currently ongoing and has already reached more than 4,000 refugees.

Though Palestyle makes a huge impact on the women it employs as well as the surrounding community, it is primarily a luxury fashion and accessories line. Ahmed is the Creative Director, and takes his cues from the major fashion weeks to incorporate colors and designs which are on-trend. "Our target age is ladies from 23 to 45, and though we like all our pieces to be vibrant, glamorous and luxurious, we also want them to be practical with multiple uses," says Zeina. By combining quality materials with superior craftsmanship, Zeina and Ahmed ensure that all Palestyle products channel a contemporary twist on Middle Eastern heritage while maintaining the caliber expected in luxury circles.

Palestyle is currently in the process of expanding to retail outlets in North America. There are plans to launch a men's line soon, as well as a collection of accessories for the home. When asked about her future hopes and dreams for the fashion line, Zeina enthusiastically returns to the Palestyle's original mission of empowering Palestinian refugee women while producing a leading social fashion brand. So far, so good! ♦

For more information visit [palestyle.com](http://palestyle.com)



Palestinian woman planting an olive tree.



Olive trees planted by Palestyle.

All images courtesy Palestyle.

*"Embroidery is a dying art form in Palestine, by incorporating it into a luxury line, we are trying to make it trendy to increase demand."*

Zeina Abou Chaaban

# AHD KAMEL AND HER SANCTITY



Saudi film director Ahd Kamel delves underneath the surface of traditional society in Saudi Arabia in her film Sanctity. Adnan Z. Manjal reports from Jeddah.

When you think of Saudi Arabia, you think of luxury, construction and development, comfort and money. You might also think of women who are dependent on men and stripped of basic rights. You will not be completely wrong with these assumptions.

However, there is more to it than that. Under the surface, there are issues that are more appealing and appalling about the lives of women in Saudi Arabia. Saudi film director Ahd Kamel took it upon herself to scratch beyond the surface through the many layers of her country's society to reveal what lies beneath. Ahd comes from Jeddah, a metropolitan and cosmopolitan city on the Red Sea. She studied film directing and acting in the USA before settling in New York for 14 years. She recently returned to Jeddah. After several acting roles in independent films,

she released her directorial debut, Sanctity, a short film that she also wrote and acted in as the protagonist. "The film's title is about the sanctity of life, aside from the already known concepts of sanctity such as the sanctity of women, orphans or houses," explains Ahd. The film - about Areej, a pregnant, young Saudi widow who will endure anything to protect her unborn child - is based on personal experience and some true stories in Saudi Arabia. "In Saudi Arabia, we have the unmarriageable kin and the legal guardian. Women and men are equal, but they must take control of their lives," says Ahd. "The film asks a question which personally baffles me: What would a woman do if she finds herself without a man?"

The film starts with a segregated funeral; the men are outside and the women are inside in a

slum somewhere in the south of Jeddah. It takes place in a poor house, where there is barely any essential furniture and what exists is worn-out. This is a vignette of poverty that is not known to those outside Saudi Arabia. In fact, one could easily argue that even locals living in the north or western part of the city are unaware of the state of these major slums. As she takes out the garbage the next morning, the widowed protagonist is confronted by a nosy neighbor who reminds her she is mourning. That means she should not leave the house under any circumstances nor should other men see her as dictated by Islam.

The story unfolds as her brother-in-law asks for money owed to him by her husband. There is no proof, but he demands she gets a job and pay him back.

She later meets a young boy wounded on the streets. She takes him in, feeds him and offers him to spend the night on her couch. She discovers that he is of Yemeni origin, an orphan and stateless, without any legal citizenship in

Saudi. For a woman to host an unrelated male alone in her house is certainly not something she would want to brag about - discretion is mandatory. The boy returns the favor by buying her groceries the next morning and she continues to keep him off the streets. She later finds out that he makes a lot of money by selling drugs on the streets while posing as a flower boy.

The film deals with sensitive subjects that your average Saudi might not want to confront. These issues include women's freedom and independence, the rise of unemployment, stateless residents with no rights or protection, rampant drug dealing in the major slums, and the disorganization of government functions. This last topic is demonstrated in a key and memorable scene, in which a group of women gather in front of the social security offices to claim money from the state, which is supposedly their right, only to be told that "the system is down." These women travel great distances, with drivers or taxis, to claim state aid. Ahd is herself an orphan. Growing up, her older brothers were a tremendous influence on her. She had to be



dependent on them for everything. For even the smallest yet essential matters, legally they needed to be either present or sign for it.

"Our society is quite Victorian, in the sense that you are supposed to go outside, get educated, and come back to follow tradition," says Ahd. "I think people should have the choice, and for those who had the chance to live and learn outside, they should be able to bridge the gap. If we are the educated and privileged of our society, we need to pay more attention - attention to those who make up the fabric of our society, and be able to look over those high-caved fences that we build around our private lives. We need to turn the eye inwards rather than outwards, what do we want the world to see us as, as opposed to what we really are."

*"Our society is quite Victorian, in the sense that you are supposed to go outside, get educated, and come back to follow tradition."*

Ahd Kamel



Another theme the film deals with, although cautiously portrayed, involved the protagonist, her accidentally exposed thigh and the young boy. That was bound to attract ignorant and unnecessary criticism from a society that would rather focus on an exposed thigh rather than the real issues the film explores. To not address this theme (an unmarried Saudi woman with a young unrelated man living in her house) would be like ignoring the presence of an elephant in a room. That is not what Ahd is about.

The film was shot in a district called Al-Hendawea (one of the areas in Jeddah where more than 100 people died during the devastating floods of 2009). It was the perfect location to demonstrate the reality of

*"People do not have a complete image of Saudi society; they think we all live in welfare and luxury, as if we do not have poverty or slums."*

Ahd Kamel



that tells their story, and even under the very limited budget we had, they were happy to get paid," she says. "I didn't look for another actress to play the role," Ahd says about her character, "because I knew it was hard to find a young Saudi actress who could do it."

Mohamed Osman, who played the young drug dealer Ali, was a shining character in the film. It was his first time in front of a camera, as well as the first time he talked to a woman (Ahd Kamel) without the presence of her "guardian." For a first timer, he was quite exquisite.

A character Ahd would love to play is Mary Magdalene, a religious figure in Christianity and arguably one of the most important women

a haphazard and neglected side of the Saudi community. It was shot in seven days, under a very tight budget with few experienced actors. "I have never visited these places before, but I've always heard about them," Ahd admits. "People do not have a complete image of Saudi society; they think we all live in welfare and luxury, as if we do not have poverty or slums." The real-life stories the film crew heard from families living in that district ultimately influenced the short film, each providing an intricate thread that composed the thirty-minute feature to the ambient background music of Jónsi and Alexi.

The extras were quite keen on participating (even if the women insisted that the only way they would appear on film is if they were covered). "They were happy to be part of a film



of the New Testament after Mary, the mother of Jesus. She traveled with Jesus and was with him during his crucifixion and resurrection. But this is obviously a character never mentioned or recognized in Islamic history. So why would she be so inspiring for Ahd? "She is a fascinating character. While it is commonly known that she might have been a whore who later repented, she became one of the most pivotal figures in Christianity. Historically, if a woman were to be part of any of this she would have to be a virgin - completely unattainable. Mary Magdalene's character created a huge shift in the way women have been perceived throughout history – there is room for repentance. For me to play her would be an amazing opportunity."

Sanctity was featured as part of the official competition at the Berlin Film Festival, winning an award at the Doha Tribeca Film Festival

2012. It has been screened at Ayyam Gallery in Beirut; the Gulf Film Festival, where it won second prize; the Bird Eye View Film Festival in London and Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris.

I did not know what to expect when I heard about a Saudi woman directing, writing and acting in her own film. But after watching Sanctity and meeting Ahd Kamel, I can tell you that Saudi Arabia is full of raw talent; talent that is taking advantage of the great age of technology and globalization. While she never claimed the role, Ahd is a sign of hope for people who are still trying to find the best way to express themselves without reservation and for the betterment of their humanity. ♦

All images courtesy Ahd Kamel and Bizibi Productions.

*After watching Sanctity and meeting Ahd Kamel, I can tell you that Saudi Arabia is full of raw talent; talent that is taking advantage of the great age of technology and globalization.*



# GEZI PARK PROTESTS

By Justin Vela



The recent Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, which began as peaceful demonstrations by activists opposing the creation of a park in the city's Taksim Square, have grown to a widespread revolt directed at Turkey's governing and Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party. Justin Vela reports from Istanbul.

Billowing clouds of tear gas, spewing water cannons, and flying rubber bullets are the new sights of central Istanbul.

Every few days, usually at least twice a week, anti-government demonstrators turn out to march, and riot police respond, dispersing them down the side streets off Istiklal, a long pedestrian shopping avenue situated in the heart of the centuries old city.

It is not only the demonstrators who are affected by the conflict. Tourists, the elderly, young children, and other passersby all flee the chaos. Suit-clad businesspeople band together to find ways home from work that avoid Taksim Square, the most common flashpoint.

Though they vary in size and intensity, these protests have occurred frequently since late May, when the Turkish government moved to destroy Gezi Park, a small, green space adjacent to Taksim. The intensity with which police attacked a small sit-in of environmental demonstrators there brought thousands of other citizens out onto the streets across the country.

The nature of the demonstrations quickly evolved from being about Gezi Park and its trees to a nation-wide protest against Turkey's firebrand Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Erdogan faced opposition even from unexpected corners. For instance, 25-year-old Ayse Bulut was once not active in politics nor did she protest in the streets of Istanbul. Bulut, who is dark-haired and met me wearing a simple, long, blue dress, said she dreamed of a career in Turkey's flourishing film industry. While she never supported the AKP, she described a comfortable life in a middle-class neighborhood on the outskirts of Istanbul, with friends she said were "hipsters." Before the Gezi protests, she considered herself apolitical, both because she did not understand politics and because she was scared to speak about it.

"Before the Gezi protests my family and I were really scared to talk about politics with someone we didn't know," Bulut said. "We have a little bit of fear about saying bad things about the government."

## A FAMILIAR TUNE

Bulut's story is not unique in Turkey, where thousands of young people are detached from politics and intimidated by the government, but at the same time yearn for a better future.

This detachment is due to a feeling of powerlessness. Since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the country's military has overthrown four governments. Civil violence in the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent security crackdown enforced a message that

the Turkish state rules its citizens, even if the country is nominally a democracy.

Gule Can, 32, described how her parents were active in politics until her father was jailed for three years following a military coup in 1980. "My father was tortured so much he was almost dead at one point," said Can, a sociology student. Afterwards, her parents warned her about politics. "They did not want me to experience the same way."

Even if she was to join a political organization of some kind she was dissatisfied with the options. "I think there were many people like me in the demonstrations. They want to change the system, but they are not part of any movement," said Can.

Yet for thousands of usually apolitical Turkish citizens, the plan to destroy Gezi Park, the subsequent police violence, and heavy-handed government rhetoric against the protesters served as the perfect catalyst to bring them out onto the streets and demand change in Turkey.

Erdogan insulted the protesters by calling them "capulcu" or marauders and sought to discredit them as a "minority."

Several political parties and unions also took part in the protests, but unaffiliated citizens dominated the streets.



<sup>52</sup> "No one called us to Taksim; we were there very instinctively," said Bulut.

She described dodging tear gas canisters and the charging riot police with her friends during the first days of the protests. The government was so surprised by the intensity and determination of the protests that the police were ordered away from Taksim. The protesters took over the square and Gezi Park, setting up tents to "occupy" the space.

"In Taksim and Gezi Park I did not feel like a soldier of Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk.] I felt if there was a spirit there, it was of a typical person," said Bulut, adding that this was the first protest she ever attended.

The majority of the country still supports Erdogan and the AKP. However, deviating from a focus on joining the European Union (EU), following a turbulent foreign policy in the Middle East, and forcing controversial development projects in Istanbul and other cities around the country angered a significant segment of Turkish society.

Erdogan, who came to power in 2003, was also beginning to "intervene" in the lives of everyday people, going as far as intimidating the media into self-censorship.

"Pressure on media bosses to fire critical voices has certainly grown," wrote Amberin Zaman, a Turkish journalist who was fired from her job in April because of columns critical of Erdogan's policies, in an email.

"The sacking of a slew of prominent (and not so prominent) journalists deemed hostile to the government has led to self-censorship among those concerned about getting the sack as well."

Bulut said the government had gone too far. "I felt that they have hands everywhere. They have their hands on the media, on business and universities and schools and everywhere."

Cihan Baysal, of the Taksim Platform, an organization opposed to the demolition of Gezi Park, said, "If it hadn't been at Gezi it would have been somewhere else."

But no one expected the simmering anger and resentment to spill onto the streets in such a way. A social experiment never before seen in Turkey took place with Kurds, nationalists, the secular and the religious, individuals who were all opposed to the government, living in the park together for several weeks in a communal setting.

While the police eventually forced the demonstrators out of the park in mid-June and

closed it until 8 July, there is a feeling that a new opposition movement was born.

While they are still deciding how best to carry forward the energy inspired by the protests, now, the anti-government protesters meet regularly in different neighborhoods around Istanbul for "forums" where they discuss their next steps.

An Istanbul court ruled in June that the government-proposed renovation of Gezi Park would not serve the public good. The government is appealing the decision, but the experience has already taught people like Can that it is possible to fight the state and win. "They did not want to give that space to the protesters and we got it," she said.

#### FOR A CAUSE

This same desire to rebel against a more dominant power is what drove demonstrations that unseated long-standing regimes across the Middle East and North Africa in recent years.

However, the protests in Turkey are very different from those in the Arab Spring countries. The Turkish government watched aghast as Egyptian protesters moved to demand Mohammad Morsi's ouster and have the military step in to overthrow him just after the Gezi Park demonstrations.

But Erdogan remains popular with the masses in Turkey and has enough control over the military that a similar scenario is not possible.

"We all want democracy for a better life and control of our own lives," said Bulut, describing the similarities between the protests in Turkey and others throughout the Middle East.

The protests in Turkey showed how many people had lost face in Turkey's "zero problems" foreign policy, which sought to create strong ties with its neighbors, especially those in the Middle East, said another protester named Asmin Can. "It created questions in people's minds about the soundness of government decisions."

A 23-year-old Syrian woman named Rana who joined the protests said that the main difference was that in Turkey the police use tear gas. In Syria, Turkey's southern neighbor, police "directly" attack protesters with guns. "They were protesting, but not like the protests [in Syria] I know," Rana said. "They were so happy everything was so open for them, it was so free."

Currently, there are more than 400,000 Syrian refugees living in Turkey. Most of them love the Turkish government, she told me, however, Rana questioned Erdogan's policies.

Her motivation for protesting Erdogan was Syria. She does not like how the Turkish government opened its borders to anyone who wanted to fight the regime of Bashar al-Assad, including al-Qaeda affiliated militants.

She described how she was once traveling in an Istanbul subway with her cousin. Hearing them speak Arabic, a man came up to them and said he was from Libya and that he was on his way to Syria. "Inshallah, we will fight and kill Assad," he said.

Rana's entire family opposes Assad. But she said, "We don't need this to happen because [the Libyan man] is a terrorist and the Turkish government opened the borders for terrorists, for al-Qaeda...they steal our farms, our petrol, our everything." She admitted that some of the Turkish demonstrators also angered her because they preferred Assad to Erdogan, simply because he professed to be secular and a leftist.

Still, she continued to go out onto the streets of Istanbul for nearly every protest. "I don't need Erdogan to play with Syria anymore," she said.

#### STRENGTH IN THE MASS

In the end, the Gezi Park protests follow the same pattern of "people power" seen elsewhere

in the greater Middle East, even if officials will not admit it.

Municipal officials spent weeks planting flowers and fresh grass in Gezi Park after the demonstrations. It is hard to see how the park will be demolished now. "We got the park back," said Can, the sociology student.

The protests never risked sparking civil war as in Syria or toppling Erdogan. Hundreds were arrested, thousands injured, and five people killed. But the protests inspired a new generation to take part in politics and engage with society, which can only be better for Turkey's future.

And there is hope. "Gezi Park will make things better in Turkey over the long run," said Can. ♦

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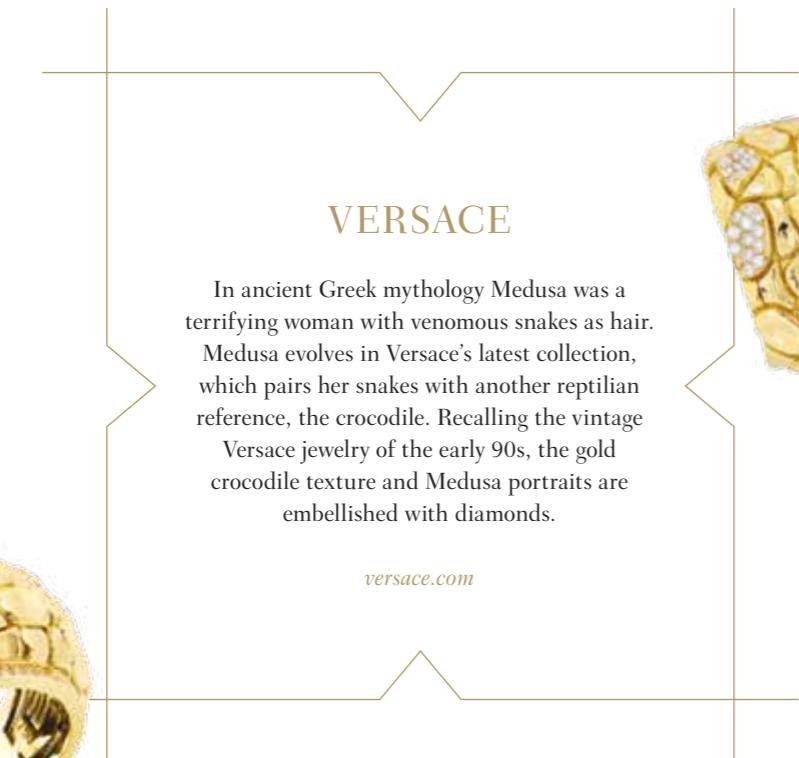
# DECADENCE

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STATELY JEWELS  
OPULENT ENCOUNTERS  
METAMORPHOSIS:  
L'ECOLE VAN CLEEF AND ARPELS  
FROM LE BRASSUS TO THE MIDDLE EAST:  
AUDEMARS PIGUET



# STATELY JEWELS



## VERSACE

In ancient Greek mythology Medusa was a terrifying woman with venomous snakes as hair. Medusa evolves in Versace's latest collection, which pairs her snakes with another reptilian reference, the crocodile. Recalling the vintage Versace jewelry of the early 90s, the gold crocodile texture and Medusa portraits are embellished with diamonds.

[versace.com](http://versace.com)



Above Left: Medusa Crocodile Ring made with diamonds (.469 carat) set in 18 carat yellow gold.

Above Center: Medusa Crocodile Bracelet made from diamonds (.3763 carat) set in 18 carat yellow gold.

Above Right: Medusa Crocodile Earrings made from diamonds (.588 carat) set in 19 carat yellow gold.

Images courtesy Versace.



## BULGARI

In tribute to the charismatic celebrities of the Golden Era of the 50s and 60s, the Diva collection features the world's rarest colored gems, iconic of Bulgari, arranged with the irresistible allure of these classic personalities. This matching bracelet, earrings and necklace set features amethysts, rubellites, peridots and *pavé* diamonds, set in pink gold.

[bulgari.com](http://bulgari.com)

Above Left: Diva pink gold necklace with amethysts (28.35 carats), rubellites (18.75 carats), peridots (20.95 carats) and *pavé* diamonds (6.40 carats).

Above Center: Diva pink gold bracelet with amethysts (7.50 carats), rubellites (8.60 carats), peridots (9.30 carats) and *pavé* diamonds (3.10 carats).

Above Right: Diva pink gold long earrings with amethysts (10.25 carats), peridots (5.50 carats), rubellites (8.55 carats) and *pavé* diamonds (1.65 carats).

Images courtesy Bulgari.



## CHANEL

The Sous le Signe Du Lion collection pays homage to Coco Chanel and her astrological sign, Leo. Set in diamonds as majestic as the lion itself, the brooch, earrings and watch from the collection feature fancy-cut white diamonds set in white gold and platinum. The watch contains 1,530 diamonds, while the earrings have 450 diamonds while the brooch features a pear-cut diamond (6.4 carat).

[chanel.com](http://chanel.com)



Above Left: *Lion Vénitien* earrings in 18 carat white gold set with 450 brilliant-cut diamonds (2.6 carats) and 4 pear-cut diamonds (1 carat).

Above Center: *Lion Royal* brooch in platinum set with diamonds with one pear cut diamond (6.4 carat).

Above Right: *Lion Mosaique* watch in 18 carat white gold; 1,530 fancy-cut diamonds (17.9 carats) and 2 pear-cut diamonds.

Images courtesy CHANEL Fine Jewelry.



## BOUCHERON

Resembling a question mark, Boucheron's Fleur du Jour necklace is formed of a stalk of round diamonds leading to a nine-petal flower of white gold and diamonds. Beneath it, a detachable peony-shaped brooch represents the shadow of the diamond flower. The Khepri ring pays homage to the ancient Egyptian sun god, depicted as a scarab pushing the sun before it. A symbol of rebirth, it is thought to bring protection to the wearer.

[boucheron.com](http://boucheron.com)



Above Left: *Khepri* ring in white gold set with an oval cabochon sapphire (0.70 carats), green fancy mother-of-pearl (2.95 carats), a fancy rock crystal (4.62 carats) as well as round tsavorites, sapphires and diamonds.

Above Center: *Fleur du Jour* necklace in white gold set with a pear-shaped diamond (1.01 carats), rose-cut and round diamonds (18.20 carats) and its *Fleur du Jour* brooch in white gold set with five pink fancy tourmalines (86.97 carats), rose-cut and round diamonds (6.37 carats) and pink round sapphires (2.75 carats).

Images courtesy Boucheron.

# OPULENT ENCOUNTERS

Renowned Turkish jewelry house Gilan imbues its contemporary creations with the opulence of the Ottoman court. Rebecca Anne Proctor meets the House's founder Muharrem Gilan in Istanbul to learn how the brand marries Turkish heritage with the country's colorful present.

The intricate designs and impeccable craftsmanship of Turkish jeweler Gilan tell narratives reminiscent of 15th century Istanbul. From Topkapi Palace, Hagia Sophia to Istanbul's romantic gardens, each piece of Gilan jewelry is imbued with architectural and cultural references that reflect back on Istanbul's rich and diverse heritage. They pay reverence to a time past by preserving it within a present day jewelry creation.

#### ETHNIC CROSSROADS

Gilan was founded in 1980 in Istanbul by brothers Muharrem and Ferhan Gilan. While born in Bursa, Turkey, the ethnic heritage of the brothers stems from Kosovo in former Yugoslavia, where their family originated. The name Gilan itself references a town by the same name in former Yugoslavia which was once under control of the Gilan family. In Bursa, the

brothers grew up surrounded by creativity and followed the artistic precedence of their great grandmother who was a head seamstress for the Ottoman Court and created customized dresses for the Pashas.

While they dreamt big, the initial stages of the brand were challenging. Muharrem and Ferhan set about designing jewelry in a 1.5 square-meter workshop in Bursa, Turkey until they finally opened their first boutique in the Akmerkez shopping center in Istanbul in 1994, known as one of the country's most prestigious shopping malls. In 2001, the brand opened its first international location in New York and has since been readily expanding with boutiques now found in Paris, Moscow and Baku. Now in the USA for over 10 years, Gilan can also be found at department stores Bergdorf Goodman New York and Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman

*"Our mission is cultural preservation. The DNA of Gilan is Istanbul. Our creative team is inspired by the history and heritage of Istanbul."*

Muharrem Gilan

Marcus locations in Beverly Hills, Boston and Chicago.

Despite Gilan's steady rise to become one of the world's most esteemed jewelers, the House continues to maintain its Turkish roots through its superior design. "Our mission is cultural preservation," says Muharrem. "The DNA of Gilan is Istanbul. Our creative team is inspired by the history and heritage of Istanbul." Home to three empires, Istanbul is not only positioned as a geographical crossroads between East and West, it carries references to a past that has always merged numerous cultures together and now expounds upon a fascinating and avant-garde present. "Every piece created by Gilan has a story behind it," he adds. "There is a legend in every piece." In addition, Gilan never outsources its creative work; all the design and manufacturing is done within the company. "I don't want Gilan to be perceived as a mass brand," says Muharrem. It certainly is not. The charming and refined ambiance that one encounters when they enter Gilan's boutique reinstates the brand's commitment to the upkeep of its family heritage and craftsmanship.

#### JOURNEY TO DREAMS

Daring, young, vibrant and ultra feminine designs are what Gilan has become known for.

They can be spotted on celebrities worldwide from Salma Hayek to Penelope Cruz. Moreover, the House believes in the magic of natural stones. Gilan has hence revived the historical rose-cut diamond. The unique dome shape of the cut relays a sense of mystery and romance as well as evokes ancient love stories and emotional responses. Oftentimes Gilan will incorporate the natural state of gemstone directly into its setting thus preserving its innate power.

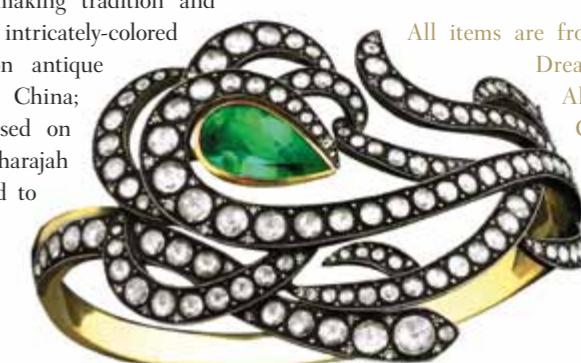
Entitled Journey to Dreams, Gilan's latest collection celebrates the history of one of the most celebrated passages of all time: the Silk Road. Renowned as a vital gateway to the East and one that introduced ancient Eastern traditions to the West, the Silk Road provides the inspiration behind Gilan's new collection in the form of historical motifs and folklore. The collection is inspired by four Oriental legends and myths: the Grand Pheasants, objects that have been considered status symbols since antiquity; the Mystery of Silk, which references the illustrious silk-making tradition and is replete with intricately-colored butterflies found on antique pieces from ancient China;

the Love Fairy, based on the story of the Maharajah in India who wished to

marry his orphaned niece to one of his three sons and the Magical Spices, which are playful and colorful jewelry pieces inspired by the aromas and colors of oriental spices.

Gilan's own journey to dreams has been fulfilling and the future holds great promise. "I want to expand the brand more throughout the Middle East, especially the Gulf," says Muharrem. "Distinguished families from the Gulf know of the major jewelry brands, but they are now looking for something different – something which prompts the imagination." Heritage, superior craftsmanship and beauty – these are the qualities that Gilan offers and ones which provide an undeniable link between the historical past of Turkey and the country's modern day present – connecting a variety of styles, philosophical and historical ideas and cultures within a stunning piece of jewelry. But Gilan goes beyond just the embellished gemstone. As Muharrem says, "These creations are not just beautiful to look at – they have souls." ♦

All items are from the Journey to Dreams Collection.  
All images courtesy Gilan.



# METAMORPHOSIS: L'ECOLE VAN CLEEF AND ARPELS

Parisian jeweler Van Cleef and Arpels has launched a series of educational initiatives providing awareness between the fields of fine jewelry and contemporary design. Rebecca Anne Proctor reports on the House's new breadth of artistic scholarship.



*"The school is open to everyone; the only prerequisite is that you learn."*

Marie Vallanet-Delhom, President of L'ECOLE Van Cleef and Arpels

Fine jewelry, visual art and design – these three disciplines carry much similarity in terms of artistic craftsmanship. Renowned Parisian jeweler Van Cleef and Arpels had this in mind when it launched Métamorphose, a design initiative between the House, Tashkeel and Design Days Dubai to support artists in the GCC. The partnership calls regional artists and designers to submit artworks that embody the process of transformation. The winner is then awarded a week's trip to Paris where they take courses at L'ECOLE Van Cleef and Arpels.

This year's winner was Emirati engineer and Product Development Manager with Etisalat, Salem Al-Mansouri. Outside of his working hours, he uses his computer engineering skills to create innovative designs. Al-Mansouri was selected for his piece Mimicry, a series of 3D printed sculptures depicting the various stages in the metamorphosis of a butterfly. The competition took place in March and was open to artists and designers living in GCC countries. They were invited to submit artworks based on the theme of Metamorphosis, a subject inspired by the design philosophy behind the Maison's jewelry items such as the Zip necklace that can be worn as a zipper and a bracelet.

"I have always considered myself a multidisciplinary designer who viewed design as a medium-agnostic discipline, and my time at L'ECOLE affirmed that view in me, in the sense that design, of jewelry or otherwise, is essentially the intellectual process of solving a visual and functional problem through the manipulation of a medium," says Al-Mansouri.

The weeklong course provided Al-Mansouri with the opportunity to attend lectures and practical workshops on many different aspects related to jewelry design. "I even had the pleasure of taking apart a mechanical watch before reassembling it again from scratch; a process I found very rewarding," he says.

## DEFENDING HERITAGE

Located on the place Vendôme in an 18th century town house that embodies French artistic style, L'ECOLE Van Cleef and Arpels was established

in 2012 with the aims to shed light on the Maison's little-known world of jewelry and watch making. It is led by 23 instructors including art historians, artisans from the High Jewelry workshops - the Maison's Mains d'Or™, as well as gemologists and jewelry experts. Of utmost importance for the school is its vision of sharing the heritage of Van Cleef and Arpels as well as the artistic craft of jewelry making.

"Our students select us," says Marie Vallanet-Delhom, President of L'ECOLE Van Cleef and Arpels. "The school is open to everyone; the only prerequisite is that you learn. Our purpose is to open our arms to this very secret world of high French jewelry and watch making – which until recently was very much closed to the public." She cites examples of students including a 50-year-old mother who had never been to place Vendôme and whose three daughters gifted her courses at L'ECOLE for her 50th birthday present, to a couple from Hong Kong vacationing in Paris who wanted to learn more about jewelry-making as well as an expert diamantaire.

However, L'ECOLE is more than just a training ground for those wishing to gain a behind-the-scenes experience into jewelry making at Van Cleef and Arpels; the institution is dedicated to the universal world of jewelry. "It's not a professional school; it's not the GIA (Gemological Institution of America)," says Vallanet-Delhom. "L'ECOLE provides everyone with the possibility to elevate their personal level of taste and jewelry through the lens of people who have created the art."

## AN ARTISTIC MARRIAGE

The desire to give something back combined with initiatives such as Métamorphose offer exceptional creative avenues and ones that dialogue across artistic disciplines and cultures. "Design treads a thin line between art and function, a fact that is perhaps most salient in jewelry design," says Al-Mansouri. "To me, it is of extreme importance that a designer is able to come up with functionally correct, visually appealing pieces with sound artistic merit. Jewelry designers have been attacking the quintessential design problem for centuries, and



in the most poetic, mechanical manner. I believe that any designer, especially a multidisciplinary one like me, can benefit from following the jewelry designer's path greatly." *Aller plus loin* or "to take it farther" as one would say in French is what L'ECOLE prides itself on even after its students walk away from its doors. "We are a school for everyone – person who doesn't know anything about jewelry and also a diamantaire, a specialist in diamonds," proclaims Vallanet-Delhom. "We hope L'ECOLE ultimately makes lives more beautiful and creative." ♦



# FROM LE BRASSUS TO THE MIDDLE EAST: AUDEMARS PIGUET

By Cassidy Hazelbaker



Switzerland is the home country to many of the world's most prestigious watch brands. It seems the serene lakes, flower-filled meadows and pine-covered mountains of the country are the ideal setting to develop the grand complications found in haute horlogerie. For fine watchmaker Audemars Piguet, however, its link to the country runs even deeper. Cassidy Hazelbaker examines the past and present of Audemars Piguet.

Nestled in a beautiful corner of the Joux Valley, not far from the French border, lies the small town of Le Brassus. "It feels like an enchanted, mystical valley," says Tim Sayler, Chief Marketing Officer of Audemars Piguet. The valley's climate and conditions were not conducive to agriculture, so early inhabitants were forced to develop a craft to earn a living given that farming was not sustainable. Inhabitants of Le Brassus began working with metal, which, over time, developed into watch making. Many local residents are master

watchmakers; the profession has been passed down from generation to generation in the town and thus the art of horlogerie has become inextricably intertwined with Le Brassus.

It is from this atmosphere that in 1875 Jules Louis Audemars and Edward Auguste Piguet established Audemars Piguet in order to further their passion for complex timepieces. Its first watch for women was created in 1883, just eight years after the launch of the brand. At the time, it was not considered socially appropriate for a woman to wear a wristwatch, thus Audemars Piguet

Piguet's location in Le Brassus has a huge impact on nearly everything we do. The place is a part of the company; it is part of the history, part of the value, and part of the craftsmanship. Even the corporate catalogue is a deep green, which is a reflection of the nature and the forest," says Sayler. It is the company's origins, heritage and inspiration that are drawn from Le Brassus' surroundings that differentiate it from other brands. "While we have this great history and heritage, we are forward thinking, progressive and contemporary," he adds. "Audemars Piguet is inspired by the past, but always wants to look towards the future."

## FOR LADIES, PAST AND PRESENT

Though Audemars Piguet is often thought of as a brand for men, it has a long-standing history of women's timepieces. Its first watch for women was created in 1883, just eight years after the launch of the brand. At the time, it was not considered socially appropriate for a woman to wear a wristwatch, thus Audemars Piguet



designed brooch and pendant timepieces. For these pieces, very small movements of less than 23 mm were developed. The traditional roles of women were challenged during the First World War as they stepped in to fill the gap in many work places while the men were away. Audemars Piguet's first wristwatches for women were developed in 1913, and were mostly miniature unique Art Deco pieces set with gems.

Audemars Piguet's most iconic watch, the Royal Oak was first launched in 1972 as a men's watch. It was considered big, bold, and unusual in that it was made of steel, which was treated and polished like a precious metal. Four years later, the women's version was introduced and it continues to be one of Audemars Piguet's most popular women's models. "By now women have appropriated the same codes for themselves and today the Royal Oak is just as much an icon for women as for men," states Sayler. Overall, 25 percent of Audemars Piguet's watches globally are women's watches.

The Audemars Piguet headquarters in Le Brassus contains a private museum displaying vintage pieces from the history of the brand. "We are constantly referring to the archive to be reminded of past ideas and to ensure consistency with the code of the brand," says Sayler. "Watches are always influenced by social trends." Some trends come and go, while some are repeated in a later era. Always a constant, however, are superior mechanical movements and premium quality. All indexes are in gold, even if they are treated in a way which masks the gold. Such details are integral to preserving the integrity of the brand.

## AUDEMARS PIGUET IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In 1982, Audemars Piguet established a partnership with Ahmed Seddiqi and Sons. The brand's presence in the Middle East has been growing ever since. There are currently seven boutiques in the region, making it the region with the strongest presence for the brand.

"As a luxury brand we are driven by elegance and craftsmanship but also characterized by a strong character. Both men and women from the Middle East have a passion for this aspect of the brand and our products. Middle Eastern clients tend to go for bold, architectural pieces," says Sayler.

When asked about the brand's female clientele, Sayler declares, "Middle Eastern ladies love diamonds!"

Audemars Piguet is one of the few watch brands who ensure that their products feature exclusively internally flawless diamonds, which reinforces their dedication to extreme quality.

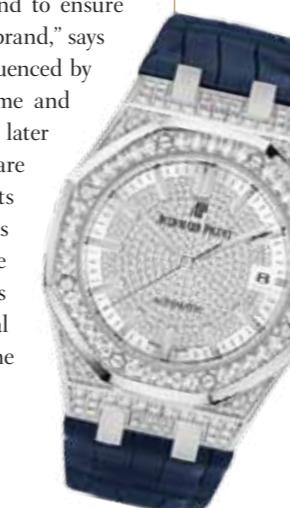
## GIVING BACK

The Audemars Piguet Foundation was started in 1992. The foundation draws back to the company's roots in

Le Brassus, where the beautiful forest is enjoyed and appreciated by the local community. "The founding family wanted to enable other people worldwide to also be so fortunate to experience and preserve nature," explains Sayler. The foundation supports global forest conservation and sustainable development around the world. While encouraging reforestation, it also promotes an educational angle so that future generations will understand the importance of nature to our rapidly changing planet.

So far, it has financed 75 projects in 34 countries in collaboration with renowned organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund. Each watch sold contributes to the foundation's funding.

Audemars Piguet is a unique brand; each of its watches constitutes part of the larger story. "Audemars Piguet is for people who want to wear their watches, not store them in a safe," concludes Sayler. With products which are elegant and fashionable externally, precisely engineered internally, and contribute to an environmentally responsible cause, the brand has no place but on the wrists of its loyal clients. From a small Swiss town to glamorous capital cities around the world, an Audemars Piguet timepiece is a reliable accessory in any setting. ♦



*Opposite Page:* A master watchmaker examines a timepiece-in-progress.

*Above Left:* An assortment of classic antique Audemars Piguet women's timepieces.

*Above Right:* Winter in Le Brassus.

*Left:* Royal Oak Ladies' Timepiece.

All images courtesy Audemars Piguet.  
For more information visit [audemarspiguet.com](http://audemarspiguet.com)



# CITY STYLE GUIDE

By Sarah Marie Hassan

When the summer comes to a bittersweet and balmy close, the fashion world turns to a somber, slightly dangerous palate of dark neutrals and metallics to liven up those early nights and chillier days.

With this issue's City Style guide, we take inspiration from the first stars and sirens of the silent screen who spoke volumes through their trademark style and remarkable talent.

Whether you are a fresh-faced gamine, bobbed debutant or smoldering showgirl, expect the coming months to have a flair for the dramatic. Floor-sweeping gowns, bejeweled accents and heart-stopping heels make the transition from day to evening as swift as the click of a movie camera; living in black and white has never been so vibrant!



Russell Patterson. *Where there's smoke there's fire.*  
Circa 1920's. Drawing: india, red and brown inks,  
with watercolor on illustration board. 45.1 x 59.2 cm.  
Image courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

## DAYTIME



## NIGHTIME



Louise Brooks in Hollywood in 1931.  
Image courtesy Gamma- Keystone and Getty Images.

## LOUISE BROOKS

A small-town girl from Kansas who became a chic, bobbed sensation thanks to her turn on the silver screen in *A Girl in Every Port* and *Beggars of Life*, Louise Brooks epitomized the cool flapper and vampy comedienne. A former Denishawn dancer who 'loathed' Hollywood, Brooks' style was imitated by American women throughout the 1920's because of her liberating haircut and sweet-and-naughty style of ropes of pearls, boyish haberdashery and tiny, party dresses paired with kitten heels.

Striped top APC  
High waisted A-line skirt MIU MIU  
Bow-embellished gloss loafers LANVIN  
Clutch OLYMPIA LE-TAN

Tiered pleated taffeta dress LANVIN  
Beverly Pumps GUCCI  
Pearl headband MIU MIU  
Textured leather box clutch SOPHIA HULME

## DAYTIME



Pola Negri in 1931.

Photography by Sasha. Image courtesy Hulton Archive and Getty Images.

## NIGHTIME



## POLA NEGRI

The smoldering Polish actress, ballerina, author and singer who started a wave of fashion trends that are still relevant today, Pola Negri set the standard for imported, continental talent in early Hollywood. A lover of both Charlie Chaplin and Rudolf Valentino, Negri turned heads in femme fatale roles both on-and-off the screen as one of the richest actresses working for Paramount; a star not only in her adopted America, but native Poland and Germany as well. Her vampish style was filled with luxe textures, from her lacquered nails to her fur stoles and silk turbans.

## DAYTIME

Lillian Gish circa 1922.  
Image courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

## NIGHTTIME



## ILLIAN GISH

Lillian Gish, with her cascading curls and milk-white skin, was dubbed "The First Lady of American Cinema" and immortalized in box-office hits such as the controversial Birth of a Nation and Duel in the Sun. Along with her sister Dorothy, Lillian starred in many films by the director D.W. Griffith, one of the most important people in her professional and personal life. With a career that spanned more than seventy years and garnered her dozens of awards, Gish was one of the most important women of early American film. Lace dresses, sweet detailing and pearly pinks call to mind this beloved innocent of the silver screen.

Leather pencil skirt JOSEPH  
Blouse HELMUT LANG  
Anouk patent leather pumps JIMMY CHOO  
Snake-effect bag JEROME DREYFUSS

Embellished silk chiffon gown GUCCI  
Tribute patent leather pumps SAINT LAURENT  
Juniper tulle briefs AGENT PROVOCATEUR  
Cabaret gold-dipped onyx and agate necklace ROSANTICA  
Skull clutch ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Patis metallic pants PAUL and JOE  
Top MARC BY MARC JACOBS  
Kitty slippers CHARLOTTE OLYMPIA  
Lily shoulder bag MULBERRY

Studded patent leather flats VALENTINO  
Dress BAND OF OUTSIDERS  
Sally clutch CHLOE  
Darla briefs AGENT PROVOCATEUR

## DAYTIME



## NIGHTIME



## ALLA NAZIMOVA

Simply known as 'Alla,' Russian-born Alla Nazimova brought one of the most famous seductresses to life on the silent screen with her title role in *Salome*, where she played a biblical princess crowned in strands of pearls and white peacock feathers. Throwing outlandish parties at her Hollywood mansion, known as "The Garden of Allah," along with rumors of her wild sexuality, Nazimova became an idol for free living in the censored age of films. A glamorous gypsy, Alla's style ruled in fringed shawls, blousy tops and perfectly rimmed eyes.

Alla Nazimova circa 1935.  
Image courtesy Hulton Archive and Getty Images.

Cape ALEXANDER MCQUEEN  
Jumpsuit VALENTINO  
Shark's tooth slippers GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI  
Cuff HERVE VAN DER STRAETEN

Sequined silk chiffon gown JASON WU  
Earrings ERICKSON BEAMON  
Clutch BOTTEGA VENETA  
Python pumps GIANVITO ROSSI

## DAYTIME



Theda Bara circa 1910.  
Image courtesy Popperphoto and Getty Images.

Print stretch jersey dress ETRO  
Sandals SOFIA WEBSTER  
Sunglasses THIERRY LASRY

## NIGHTIME



## THEDA BARA

One of the earliest sex symbols and original Cleopatra, Theda Bara - a scramble of 'Arab Death' - was known as 'The Vamp' during the silent era. With her kohl-lined eyes and serpentine crown, Bara was a risqué sensation dripping in sheer and sequined gowns in *Cleopatra*, a role that immortalized her in the pantheon of high fashion and early cinema. Though many of her films were lost to a fire, Bara's style is best remembered as a mixture of metallics, high drama and her signature smoky eye. ♦

Gown ROLAND MOURET  
Two-textured pump SAINT LAURENT  
Delphinus crystal head piece JENNIFER BEHR

# FALL Couture Défilé

By Rebecca Anne Proctor

From CHANEL to Dior and newcomer Iris van Herpen, the Paris Haute Couture Autumn/Winter 13 shows proved to be startling creative encounters and ones that prompted the question: *what are we looking for?*

Rebecca Anne Proctor reports.



Alexandre Vauthier

A great whoop of color, artistic performance and statement-making gowns defined Paris Haute Couture Autumn/Winter 2013. Great credit goes to Karl Lagerfeld of CHANEL for his startling stage set and Raf Simons of Dior's culturally-influenced creations as well as newcomer Iris van Herpen, whose highly sculptured illuminated kimono-styled dresses pestered between haute couture and avant-garde kitsch.



## THREE DIMENSIONAL

Structured architectural forms were found on a variety of garments. Lagerfeld's embroidered knitwear, for example, was interestingly set in a 3-D structure on embellished fabrics – a method that pushes the boundaries of modern textile techniques. Of note were the designer's pert caps, which were worn daintily on the back of the model's head. Newcomer to Haute Couture Dutch designer Iris van Herpen incorporated 3-D printing and laser cutting to create her fashions. This season, she used metallic and shell-like structures to surround the upper body on her kimono-like dresses replete with fragile cutout patterns. Van Herpen also toyed with what happens to the human body when it is altered by surgery and scaring through her pierced silicon dresses. Rubber chickens even protruded from the shoulders of one dress in a creation more akin to a provocative work of Contemporary art than that of a fashion show.

There were also the show stopping gowns of Alexis Mabille and Stéphane Rolland – each comprised of luminous tulle that added a touch of baroque flair and extravagance. Spectacular, radical and pristine are all adjectives that describe this season of Haute Couture.



## PERFORMANCE ART

When has a fashion show not been a performance? Music, lights, performers and costumes are all part of the traditional runway spectacle. This season, however, a few designers took their shows a step further to heighten the ideology behind their fashions. Viktor and Rolf built a Japanese stone garden where models dressed in black dresses became stones themselves as they flitted around their surroundings. At the Raf Simons show for Dior, the designer divided his collection into four geographic areas: Europe, Asia, America and Africa suggesting different cultures and their links to Dior. The designer also asked four photographers to interpret the clothes with the images placed onto the walls of the space of the show thus creating a visual dialogue between the actual runway and the photographer's interpretations. At once bold and magical, the collection boasted a startling array of various styles resulting from Simons' myriad of artistic influences, including the late Contemporary artist Mike Kelly. Always in with a bang, for the CHANEL show Lagerfeld set his collection against the backdrop of a modern cityscape framed by a decrepit Parisian theatre. Models dressed in his structured textile outfits came out on stage as if from alarm creating a stark contrast between the refinement of Lagerfeld's couture and the purposeful decay of the stage set.

## MAJESTIC EMBROIDERY

Antique and Renaissance themes showcased at the Valentino show where models graciously walked down the runway in attire made of mosaic prints, velvet, black chantilly lace and Elizabethan brocade. At once dreamy and magical, the show attested to the limitless possibilities of craftsmanship to resurrect historical attire and reappropriate it with something new. Designers Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli looked to secret gardens, ancient mosaics and romantic flower paintings for inspiration. A similar sentiment was found at the Maison Martin Margiela show which intriguingly featured models with their faces hidden behind colored fabric and bedazzled masks made of shimmery beads and tiles. Concentration was thus led to the 19th century embroideries, twenties fabrics and fifties petticoats that the Maison used for its fall couture collection. In a veritable ode to craftsmanship, a delicate Art Nouveau curtain was found chain-stitched with a regal floral pattern on a pink satin evening dress.♦

# DESIGNING WOMEN: NAEEM KHAN



He has designed gowns for the likes of Michelle Obama and Brooke Shields. Indian designer Naeem Khan is renowned for his opulent and lavish dresses that have won the hearts of women all over the world. Sarah Hassan reports from New York.

Naeem Khan knows his woman. The Mumbai-born designer affectionately refers to his muse as 'The First Lady of the World,' and has her squarely in mind when conjuring up his latest show-stopping gown or bold set of separates that have made him a global sensation in the fashion world and one of India's most successful exports. Known for his figure-flattering gowns cut in rich fabrics and bedecked in luxurious detail, Naeem Khan has made his name synonymous with 'glamour' for the fashion-forward set.

to welcome Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The First Lady's dress created quite a sensation and heaps of praise on the Internet. The designer became the third-most frequented person searched on Google that day, joining the fashion-frenzied ranks of Jason Wu, whose fame rocketed after Mrs. Obama wore a white gown he designed to the Inauguration Ball.

Even if glamour and the world of high society have been the playground of Khan for three generations; fashion is not merely a fancy – it

*"I think about what happens when she walks down the stairs, the balance on her hip and what the sleeve will do when she puts her right hand out."*

*Naeem Khan*

In between one of his many business meetings of the day, Khan took my call from his New York office to explain how he makes a piece as unique and interesting as the client who wears it. "She is a celebrity, a society member, a royal dignitary, a successful business woman," he says, "and I think about what she would like to wear, what her needs are and how she dresses. Everything is considered during the layout, the cut and length of the fabric. I think about what happens when she walks down the stairs, the balance on her hip and what the sleeve will do when she puts her right hand out." Attention to individual sizes and shapes have made Khan a beloved designer of choice among some of the world's most exciting and powerful women, from Eva Longoria, Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Brooke Shields and First Lady Michelle Obama – who wore a stunning strapless sequined gown with hand-hammered silver appliqués custom designed by Khan to a state dinner at the White House

runs in the family. His father and grandfather ran textile workshops in Mumbai famous for their handmade embroidery – whose 3,000 year-old techniques are used on the contemporary dresses of Khan – and outfitted prominent members of Indian society, including members of the royal family of Mumbai. Growing up on Peddar Road in a large, happy household, Khan recalls his childhood with intense fondness, speaking of his devoted parents, school sports and lots of friends – an upbringing that has made him a 'different type of person,' more satisfied and more at ease. "India was chaotic, rich and opulent," says Khan, "and I take those concepts and marry them with very clean lines. I am interested in making an item of clothing that lasts – something that can be worn twenty, thirty years down the line and inherited from one generation to the next." This immediate influence and exposure to the world of fashion has fascinated Khan since childhood. After years





*"India was chaotic, rich and opulent, I take those concepts and marry them with very clean lines."*

Naeem Khan

of learning "through osmosis" at his family's side, Khan accompanied his father on a business trip to New York to meet the legendary designer, Halston, when he was just twenty years old. Halston saw Naeem as a possible liaison between his New York office and the Khan's Bombay workshop and set up the would-be-FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) student as his formal apprentice. What Khan received was the greatest education the fashion world could offer.

Working alongside Halston, who could sometimes be difficult, Khan gained insight not only into how to cut, mold and drape fabric, but how to treat employees and run a business. The Halston subculture consisted of a glittering cast of characters – Andy Warhol, Elizabeth Taylor, Liza Minnelli and Truman Capote – and Khan met and worked with many of them, even designing costumes with Minnelli, whose sparkling touch is no doubt echoed in the sequined, disco-inspired dresses that sweep the floor on a contemporary Khan runway.

Though uninterested in "impressing the editors" and more concerned with making clothes that "work" when it comes to presenting a collection, Khan has undoubtedly made his mark in the world of high fashion, according to debutantes, critics, celebrities and dignitaries alike. The evolution of his clothes have seen dramatic detailing, luxurious textures and vibrant color cut into classic, form-fitting silhouettes that still leave room for mystery. From revolutionizing the staple of Indian dressing, the sari, by experimenting with fabric and line, to the Barefoot Contessa-inspired ball gown skirts and colorful Flamenco dresses of 2012, to the crystal beaded collars, black cut-out satin, flowing Grecian jersey, embroidered caftans and deco-inspired detailing of his 2013 collection, Khan consistently mixes the traditional with the current, drawing influences from art, food, architecture, history, and of course, the playful attitude of his native country. "My Indian influence come naturally," he explains. "You see women in the fields wearing saris of turquoise and pink, there are no boundaries, art follows that chaos, and the kitsch and feel of India consistently inspires me. Where the heart leads – I let it go."

Khan's dresses, like the designs of Oscar de La Renta, Zuhair Murad, Badgley Mischka and other red carpet favorites, seem to empower the models

and women who wear them. For his current collection, Khan took cues from the opulence of the Byzantine Empire, designing bejeweled stand-up collars, satin dresses impressed with medallion fringe and gowns that hug the waist and flow from beaded bodices fit for any would-be empress. The effect is both dramatic and accessible: Khan is extremely conscious of the cultures his clients live in, and tailors his collections to meet the needs of those cultures.

When he is creating for a client in the Middle East, for example, the cut of the neckline, the hem of the skirt take on more than an aesthetic importance: "Modesty is an enormous factor when dressing these women," he explains. "They do not want to reveal too much. I think about them first." Unlike many designers who considered themselves artists above all, Khan is more self-aware and extremely business savvy; he understands the need to design collections that are interesting and exciting as well as collections

that will sell. "I want a woman to put on one of my gowns and feel amazing," Khan says. "I know my woman – she isn't a size 2, she has children, she lives well."

Living well is a mantra in the Khan household. Married to the successful jewelry designer, Ranjana Khan, with whom he has two children, the designer counts cooking among one of his favorite pastimes, and revels in throwing the perfect party, from setting the table to preparing the meal surrounded by family and friends. "Cooking is like fashion," he explains. "It's a mixture of tastes; it involves all the senses and how creative you can get with your palate and the anticipation of the outcome."

When describing a typical day – which is normally anything but typical – Khan admits to being an early bird, waking up around 5:30-6am and starting his day with a cup of tea before making a round of international calls. After a light breakfast, he heads to his office where his duties are primarily focused on design. He works on his drawings for ready-to-wear, couture and individual commissions, and holds a number of meetings throughout the day. Lately there have been a lot of events. "I know the 'lifestyle' of my clients," Khan chuckles. More recently Khan attended Fashion Week in Miami, a favorite city of his where he has a second home, and hosted a party and viewing of Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorfs at SoHo House with Linda Fargo complete with a fashion show and a QandA. The future seems just as exciting, with a bridal collection in the works and forays into more consumer-marketed collections. He is working with online shopping site HSN, echoing the collaborations of his contemporaries with outfitters such as HandM and Target. "It's an exciting time, I have a very full and fun life," Khan admits.

This full and fun life is the product of Khan's tenacity and belief in, above all, always being a satisfied person. He credits his humble attitudes to his unique heritage, which taught him at an early age to be thankful for what you have and to live well within your means. "You have to work hard and you have to have talent to make it – nothing is going to be handed to you – but you always maintain your kindness." What could be more timeless than that? ♦

For more information visit [naeemkhan.com](http://naeemkhan.com)



*"I want a woman to put on one of my gowns and feel amazing."*

Naeem Khan

# HOME GROWN TALENT



The Palestinian fashion designer behind Reemami, a Dubai-based label that boasts playful, whimsical pieces, ideal for sun-kissed days, meets Sarah Bladen to discuss how she got her big break and which stars she'd love to dress.



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Every so often, a designer bursts onto the fashion scene with a refreshingly individualist take on dressing-up. Besides being effortlessly stylish, Reema Al-Banna is strikingly attractive and it is no wonder she has bagged several best-dressed awards in the region. Still, it is her steely determination, creative flair and jeunesse sans frontières attitude that has got her to where she is today.

The 26-year-old former graphic designer, who lives in Sharjah, pursued her appetite for fashion while still doing her day job by enrolling in a two-year course at Esmod, the French fashion institute in Dubai. "It was a hectic time," recalls Al-Banna. "I would finish work at 6 pm and rush to university so I wasn't late for class and study until 10 pm. I didn't mind being busy 24/7 and not even having time to scratch my head because I was doing something I loved."

The turning point occurred when Al-Banna entered a 'design a dress' competition for S\*uce, the UAE's award-winning lifestyle boutique. "That was an amazing moment," she says. "Getting recognized by one of the most influential boutiques in the region pushed me to pursue my dream and start Reemami. They made me feel like my collection already had a home and were very supportive in guiding me through my first steps in the industry," she says.

And so in 2010, the fashion brand Reemami was born. Brimming with unpredictable, well-tailored pieces, often in sunshine-worthy hues, Al-Banna's label certainly stood out from the crowd. While the colors packed a punch, the unusual cuts gave it a luxe appeal.

According to the founder of Reemami, the kind of woman who will feel comfortable in her designs

is someone "who loves to be different – a woman who is young at heart, daring and attractive in a subtle way." Reemami isn't for those who simply wish to follow the catwalk trends. When it comes to her own dress sense, Al-Banna says, "My style is versatile. It's very much based on how or what I feel that particular day. I am fond of elegant pieces with unexpected cuts –and I might mix them with chunky heels and big necklaces. If I had to sum up my style in one way, I would say it is experimental. I can go from bohemian to a classic monochrome look in the same day."

Her fall collection is a nod to the 50s with a contemporary twist. "I played with metallic leather, metallic laces and used them in very girly silhouettes while introducing some new cuts," she explains. For example, the Reemami capes come in pink and blue metallic.

In her upcoming spring collection, you can bet your bottom dirham that there will be many luminous, colorful garments.

Like many designers, Al-Banna gets her inspiration from everything she sees, experiences and feels. "I'm particularly inspired by art and photography," she admits. "I love the American artist Jeff Koons, who is known for his reproduction of banal objects. I'm also a

big fan of Annie Leibovitz, I think she's an amazing portrait photographer. There's also the wonderful fashion photographer Patrick Demarchelier."

When it comes to film, Al-Banna is in awe of Baz Luhrmann (film director, screenwriter, and producer) whose work she thinks is magical.

When the Palestinian go-getter isn't busy sketching designs, she's likely to be found in a yoga studio or horse riding. And when she goes on a city break, she loves to seek out vintage fashion. Here in the UAE, she likes hanging out with her friends at Circle in Dubai. "I love their delicious salads but for a proper feast we go to Aprons and Hammers," she says. At night time, she adores La Petite Maison in DIFC and Teatro.

In addition, when it comes to dressing up for a night out on the town, Al-Banna is adamant that wearing ill-fitting clothes is a real fashion faux-pas. "I don't like women who wear too much make-up or have tattooed eyebrows," she admits.

At the top of Al-Banna's dream list to dress is Michelle Obama and Kate Middleton. She would also be over the moon to see Solange Knowles, Alice Dellal, Olivia Wilde or Zoe Saldana wearing her designs.

To make it in the cut-throat fashion industry, Al-Banna, who aspires to make her label an international success, believes that originality is crucial. "Besides being innovative, I think being competitive and persistent are vital if you want to survive," she says. Moreover, if anyone possesses such qualities, it is certainly she. ♦

Reemami is available at S\*UCE and Valleydez in the UAE. For more information visit [reemami.com](http://reemami.com)

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## TREASURE CHEST

Qatari brand Toujouri has been delivering its cutting-edge designs to the international stage for the last several seasons. Rebecca Anne Proctor speaks with the brand's Founder Lama El-Moatassem about the innovative way in which Toujouri merges aesthetic and cultural influences from the Middle East and the West.

Determined, steadfast and passionate, Lama El-Moatassem has high standards. The founder of Qatari fashion label Toujouri has worked to ensure that her brand receives the international recognition that it deserves. And she's done it. For the last several seasons, Toujouri can be found presenting at international and regional fashion weeks. But more than the brand's impressive rise onto the worldwide fashion circuit, it's the meaning behind Toujouri's innovative designs that sets it apart.

In Arabic, Toujouri translates to mean treasure chest – a meaning that is synonymous with the multitude of aesthetic interpretations of travel and culture that the brand adheres to. Vintage textiles, rich embroideries, brocades, modern design as well as the traditional Arabic kaftan inspire El-Moatassem in her creations. Garments are made for the modern woman with an international outlook and an ease for moving between different cultures. These are in the form of elegant and free-flowing kaftan-like dresses that at once elegantly drape across as well as hug the wearer's form.



## INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

For a Middle Eastern fashion designer, El-Moatassem gained most of her experience from studying and working in Europe. She launched Toujour's first collection after she completed studies at London's Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and London College of Fashion as well as stints with Chloe and Matthew Williamson. Regardless of her European exposure, the collection she launched drew heavily from El-Moatassem's Palestinian heritage.

"In our culture, and especially in the gulf, there really hasn't been much of a fashion culture," says El-Moatassem. "When I left Qatar to study in the UK there were hardly any fashion brands or even boutiques. The idea of a fashion designer back then was limited to being a dressmaker, a seamstress and a tailor – being a fashion designer didn't seem so practical." But after working and studying in Europe, the designer said she reached a point when she was in conflict with two worlds: the West and the Middle East. She cites how she would at times come across designers in Europe who didn't want to be considered "Middle Eastern" and this idea didn't feel right to her. "I wanted to go back and see for myself the change that was happening in the region and I also wanted to take part in it," she says. "I wanted to finally find a way to merge my experiences of living abroad in Europe with my Middle Eastern heritage."

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But returning to Qatar wasn't easy. El-Moatassem tells how when she came back she would go to stores and see how they designed things and would feel ashamed. "These were not things I wanted to wear," she says. "I wanted to create garments that I could be proud of and this led me to my mission: create a product that could bridge the two worlds of East and West."

Head strong and determined, El-Moatassem launched Toujour in 2009 at the Vendome Luxury Trade Show in Paris. At the time, the brand was the only Middle Eastern label taking part in the show. "I launched in Paris at the time because there was no event in the Middle East that I wished to be associated with," she says.

But launching Toujour when El-Moatassem did was also considered risky. "When I launched my collection in 2009, most people thought I was mad because we were in the midst of a recession and no one was buying," she says. "It was a tough period to be launching something new – but in my head it was also the best time because you could see the real reaction of buyers as you were trying to test the market."

And test the market and succeed she has. Toujour's enrapturing creations are now stocked in the likes of Harrods of London; Harvey Nichols and S'uce in Dubai; the Designers' Lounge in Kuwait and also in the brand's flagship store located on The Pearl Island in Doha, Qatar.

## A DREAM BOUTIQUE

When El-Moatassem decided to launch her own boutique, the Middle East was her obvious choice. Qatar provided an opportunity to take part in a market that is still young and quickly growing. In just a few years Doha has developed into a burgeoning hub for art and culture and is hence a pivotal place to be in which to further develop the brand.

The same quality-driven desire to give her brand international recognition also prompted her to collaborate with renowned architect Peter Marino on the Toujour flag ship store in Doha. Marino has become the designer of choice for a multitude of luxury fashion brands including CHANEL, Louis Vuitton, Dior and Fendi. El-Moatassem was determined to make it work even when Marino suggested he create the concept for the store only if she found bigger premises. Persistence paid off and she was invited to meet with the designer in New York and he agreed to take on the project.

Once again, the boutique needed to pertain to El-Moatassem's international vision for Toujour. The meaning behind the brand's name is evoked through a design that both hides and reveals the various collections - a concept achieved through moving screens that also serve to create a VIP area in the store. "The boutique needs to reflect the quality of the designs it showcases," she says. Like Toujour, everything in the boutique is customized. The marble is honed and the screens are hand painted – there's even a textured wall where each block is hand molded, a part which took three months to create with the help of an expert artisan. The entire space plays with ideas of color and texture within a neutral space echoing once again the designs of Toujour.

El-Moatassem is committed to improving the reputation of fashion coming out of the region. Her designs are a vehicle for change. Toujour's trademark kaftan, for example, is a means to share traditional style through modern cuts and fabrics. "I want to appeal to the West while also staying relevant to Middle Eastern style," says El-Moatassem. "I think it is time for the Middle East to wake up and be proud of what they have." ♦

For more information visit [toujour.com](http://toujour.com)



*On Toujour's trademark kaftan:*

*"I want to appeal to the West while also staying relevant to Middle Eastern style. I think it is time for the Middle East to wake up and be proud of what they have."*

Lama El-Moatassem

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# FASHION

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ENRAPTURING ENCOUNTERS

PLUSH RADIANCE

ISTANBUL DREAM

PERA PALACE GETAWAY





# Enrapturing Encounters

Black and white visions of dazzling jewelry creations create enrapturing encounters. Ornate, serene and elegant, these gems endow the wearer with a hauntingly refined and otherworldly quality.

PHOTOGRAPHER Pierre dal Corso  
ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER Adeline Gauvain  
*Special thanks to Studio ZERO, Paris*

STYLIST Jessica Santini  
ASSISTANT STYLIST Giulia Querenghi  
HAIR Olivier lebrun @B Agency  
MANICURE Kamel @B Agency  
MAKE-UP Corine Gues @B Agency  
MODEL Zoi Aggeliki @ouimanagement



Double-breasted tailor jacket MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA  
White gold Berber earrings with 7 rings and 256 diamonds (1.12 carats) REPOSSI



Monsieur waistcoat DSQUARED2  
Super kaiser shirt DSQUARED2  
Miss Jazz gray chine pants DSQUARED2  
High jewelry watch in white gold set with 237 diamonds (7.85 carats) CHOPARD  
Hyppolite bracelet in white gold set with diamonds and sapphires BOUCHERON



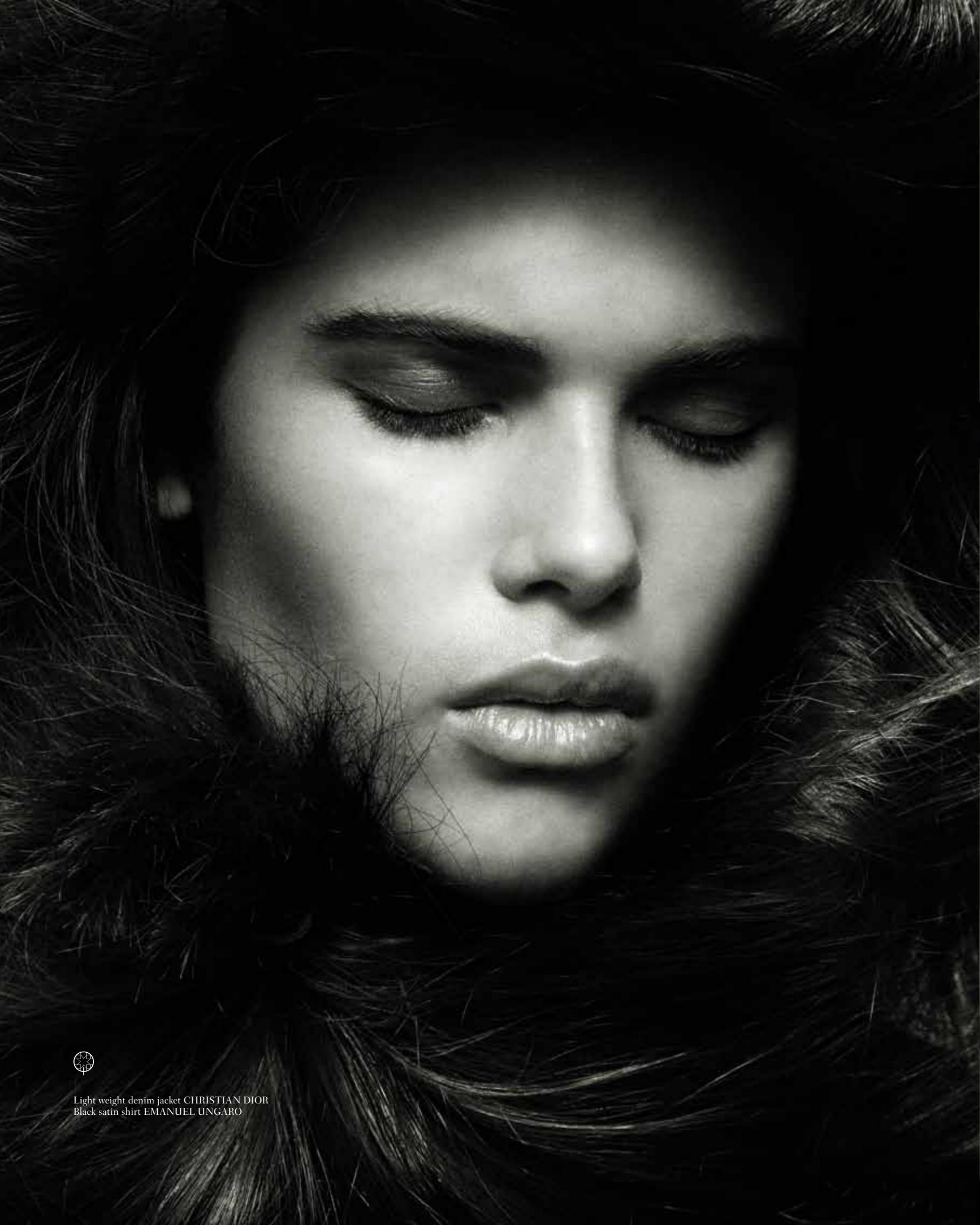
Black jacket with sewn designs in gold and blue GUCCI  
18 carat rhodium-plated white gold set brooch with 249  
brilliant-cut diamonds (4.8 carats) CHAUMET  
High jewelry earrings in white gold with a set of 120  
diamonds (11.8 carats) CHOPARD



Black leather dress GUY LAROCHE  
Small horizontal python clutch MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA  
*Left hand:* ring in 18 carat white gold set with a pear-cut diamond  
(2.5 carats) and 80 brilliant-cut diamonds (3 carats) from the  
Plume de CHANEL collection CHANEL FINE JEWELRY  
*Right hand:* two butterfly between the finger ring in yellow  
sapphires, snowflake ring in yellow gold and snowflake  
bracelet in yellow gold all VAN CLEEF and ARPELS



Blue strapless jumpsuit VALENTINO  
Black coat VERSACE  
Envoutant sillage necklace in white gold set  
with diamonds BOUCHERON  
Gomitolo ring in white gold with diamonds DAMIANI



Light weight denim jacket CHRISTIAN DIOR  
Black satin shirt EMANUEL UNGARO



Black cotton jumpsuits VIKTOR and ROLF  
Accroche Coeur bracelet in white gold set with  
diamonds BOUCHERON  
Sophia Loren necklace in white gold and  
diamonds DAMIANI



Long satin dress LANVIN  
Head jewel in 18 carat gold set with 832 brilliant-cut  
diamonds (14.5 carats) from the Plume de CHANEL  
collection CHANEL FINE JEWELRY



Half jacket with satin details JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER  
Turtleneck sweater in merino wool black EMANUEL UNGARO  
High jewelry necklace in platinum (55 grams), one diamond briolette  
(4.76 carats - faint yellow VVS2), 1 diamond briolette (3.06 carats -  
faint yellow SI1), 14 diamonds briolette (11, 14 carats - blancs),  
494 round diamonds (12, 66 carats blancs) CARTIER



Monsieur waistcoat DSQUARED2  
Super Kaiser shirt DSQUARED2  
“Wilson” Garrett Leight Sunglasses GARRETT LEIGHT at MARC LE BIHAN PARIS  
“Voie Lactée” brooch in 18 carat white gold set with two central diamonds (1 and 2 carats) and mounted on flexible white gold threads set with brilliant-cut diamonds CHANEL FINE JEWELRY  
Serpent Bohème earrings in white gold set with diamonds BOUCHERON



Turtleneck sweater in merino wool black EMANUEL UNGARO  
Ring Joséphine band in white gold paved with brilliant and baguette-cut diamonds CHAUMET  
Ring Joséphine Crown in white gold and diamonds CHAUMET  
Miss Dandy watch in stainless steel and diamonds, Swiss mechanical self-winding movement CHAUMET



White pipeline shirt BARBARA BUI  
Big bow tie FRANCESCO SMALTO  
Earrings in platinum, white gold and diamonds (1.87 carats) CARTIER  
Lotus between the fingers ring in white gold and diamonds VAN CLEEF and ARPELS



Black satin dress ELIE SAAB  
Hat stylists own  
High jewelry earrings in white gold and set with 320 diamonds  
(62.69 carats) CHOPARD



# PLUSH RADIANCE

Subdued hues of brown and red combine with sleek leather, fur, wool and silk to create warm and elegant ensembles. For fall, these looks capture sophistication, warmth and mystique.

PHOTOGRAPHER Pierre Dal Corso  
ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER Aaricia Varanda  
STYLIST Sophie Clauzel  
ASSISTANT STYLIST Bianca du Château Ruinart  
MODEL Meghan Wiggins @ IMG  
MAKE-UP Jean Charles Perrier @ Backstage Agency  
HAIR Mike Desir @ B Agency Paris



*Previous Page:*  
Brown Patent Jacket and Skirt MASHA MA  
Nude Hight Heels LANVIN

*Opposite Page:*  
Brown and Pink Sequinned and Printed Dress MISSONI

*This Page:*  
Red Léopard Printed Dress ALEXIS MABILLE  
Black and Léopard Prints Messenger Bag  
CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN



*Opposite Page:*  
Bordeaux Dress GUCCI

Bordeaux Boots JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER

*This Page:*

Bordeaux Silk Tunic with Velvet Prints and Bordeaux  
Leather Leggings Bordeaux Boots JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER



Opposite Page:  
Nude Velvetress LANVIN

This Page:  
Navy Green Silk Top, Fur Jacket,  
Skirt and High Heel Boots ELIE SAAB



*Opposite Page:*  
Black and Mustard Printed Coat with Fur Collar MISSONI

*This Page:*  
Black Embroidered Bodysuit with Metal Neck Collar ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER  
Black Pants, Leather and Pony Belt Details LIE SANG BONG  
Red Leather Bag with Metals Details ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER



*This Page:*  
Black and White Polka Dot Wool Top,  
Skirt, Leather Belt and Boots ALAÏA  
Tights WOLFORD

*Opposite Page:*  
White Dress with Sky Blue and Silver  
Embroidery VALENTINO



# ISTANBUL DREAM

We spend a day becoming acquainted with the majestic city of Istanbul. The Blue Mosque, the Bosphorus and Topkapi Palace among other sites serve as the perfect backdrop in which to showcase fall's upcoming trends of sleek leather, embellished fabrics and intricate embroidery.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Michèle Bloch-Stuckens

ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER

Rohman Benidris

STYLIST

Mélanie Perego

HAIR AND MAKE-UP

Giulio Panciera

MODEL

Alicia Medina @ Marilyn Agency Paris

POST-PRODUCTION

Stéphanie Herbin



This page:  
Satin jersey dress DSQUARED2  
Velvet clutch GIORGIO ARMANI



*Left Page:*  
Sequin coat PRADA  
Multi facets earrings PATRICK MOULIN  
Leather belt GIORGIO ARMANI

*Above:*  
Embroidered dress with feathers and strass DRIES VAN NOTEN  
Gray ring SWAROVSKI by SHOUROUK  
Leather and strass stilettos GIORGIO ARMANI



*This Page:*  
Tweed coat CHANEL  
Lace dress SAINT LAURENT  
Leather mitt GLOVE STORY  
Python belt and boots AZZEDINE ALAIA



*This Page:*  
Silk top with varnished suspenders GIORGIO ARMANI  
Varnished leather skirt and white (and black) leather glove CHANEL  
Sunglasses CULTLER AND GROSS

*Right:*  
Asymmetric dress JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER  
Wood bracelet ROGER VIVIER  
Leather stilettos CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN





*This Page:*  
Satin bustier and skirt with 1958 Warhol Female Head figure CHRISTIAN DIOR  
Crystal earrings SWAROVSKI

*Left Page:*  
Lace dress ELIE SAAB  
Crystal necklace MONSIEUR HONORÉ<sup>®</sup>  
Crystal bag ROGER VIVIER  
Lace stilettos NINA RICCI  
Left Page:  
Lace dress ELIE SAAB  
Crystal necklace MONSIEUR HONORÉ<sup>®</sup>  
Crystal bag ROGER VIVIER  
Lace stilettos NINA RICCI



*This Box*  
Black and gold armor jacket SAINT LAURENT  
Long silk dress with leather details HERMÈS

# PERA PALACE GETAWAY



PHOTOGRAPHER Michèle Bloch-Stuckens

ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER Rohman Benidris

STYLIST Mélanie Perego

HAIR AND MAKE-UP Giulio Panciera

MODEL Alicia Medina @ Marilyn Agency Paris

POST-PRODUCTION Stéphanie Herbin



Velvet dress AZZEDINE ALAIA

Golden earrings with quartz ROSANTICA at L'ECLAIREUR

Velvet python bag with strass bracelet VIKTOR and ROLF

Python belt and boots AZZEDINE ALAIA

A stay at the lavish Pera Palace Hotel in Istanbul is a lesson in modern Turkish history. The hotel was built in 1892 for the purpose of hosting passengers from the Orient Express.

The building's interesting mix of Art Nouveau, Oriental and Neo-Classical design provides a fascinating backdrop for opulent gowns and fine fabrics of satin and velvet.





Above:

Embroidered chiffon dress NINA RICCI

Strass earrings and large ring MAWI at L'ECLAIREUR

Right Page:

Butterfly printed dress with strass details LANVIN

Crystal earrings SWAROVSKI by SHOUROUK

Silver metal cuff LOUIS VUITTON

Satin and strass embroidered sandals WALTER STEIGER





Velvet dress RALPH LAUREN  
Enamel cuffs, bracelet and brooch CHANEL



Above:  
Satin bustier dress VIKTOR and ROLF  
Silver métal cuff and leather clutch LOUIS VUITTON  
Pony leather stilettos CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN  
Right Page:  
Silk top and pants BOTTEGA VENETA  
Golden strass bracelet ELENA MEYER  
Golden cuff with rectangle strass VIVEKA BERGSTROM







### CLARINS BEAUTY FLASH BALM

For a face pick-me-up in a flash, this beauty balm ticks all the right boxes. An instant fix to eliminate the signs of fatigue, it moisturizes, tightens, brightens and smoothens – containing rice starch to diffuse lines and wrinkles whilst restoring a youthful glow. Wear alone, under makeup, or layer on thickly and leave for 10 minutes for a miracle-working mask.

Available at all Clarins counters.



### BOURJOIS LITTLE ROUND POT BLUSH

Travelling can leave skin looking tired and worn, so put some color back in those cheeks with a Bourjois blush. Celebrating 150 years of their Little Round Pots, these new blushers are better than ever. Complete with a handy brush to ensure easy application, there are shades to suit every skin tone and complexion. Simply dust on the apples of your cheeks to cheer them right up.

Available at Faces.

### HEAVEN BODY FIRMING MOISTURIZER

Overindulged on your holiday? Fear not, for the Heaven Body Firming Moisturizer is here to give your body a nourishing boost. It not only hydrates and plumps, but also alleviates parched skin and maintains elasticity to tone and tighten. Softly scented with rose and sandalwood, you will be left feeling firmer and silky smooth in no time.

Available at NStyle.



### CHANEL

### LE JOUR DE CHANEL, LA NUIT DE CHANEL, LE WEEKEND DE CHANEL

With our busy lifestyles, CHANEL recognizes the need to re-set our skin as its biological rhythms become desynchronized. This summer sees the launch of CHANEL's new super skincare system - three products that work together to create a 24/7 care program. Le Jour De CHANEL, formulated with jasmine extract, works to reactivate and allows skin to adapt to its environment and external stress whilst creating radiance and luminosity. At night (when skin is most active), La Nuit De CHANEL works to recharge, repair and protect with soothing Frankincense and plumping hyaluronic acid. Its calming notes of rose will aid relaxation and will turn you into a true sleeping beauty. The final step, used once a week, is Le Weekend De CHANEL, which gently purifies to renew skin and prepare it for the next weekly cycle.

Available at all CHANEL counters.



### THIS WORKS IN TRANSIT NO TRACES PADS

Whether you want to freshen-up or wipe away the day, these natural pads contain antibacterial Mint Water and Sweet Almond Oil to cleanse - working to moisturize and defend the skin's barrier thanks to a powerful blend of repairing plant oils. Part of This Works' new 'In Transit' range, they've been specifically formulated for glamorous globetrotters – restoring the skin's pH levels while refreshing and restoring to give rapid radiance.

Available at [thisworks.com](http://thisworks.com).



# BEAUTY BAZAAR TRAVEL

By Frankie Rozwadowska

Travelling can take its toll on the body and mind, so be sure to look your best every step of the way with these jet-setting gems.



### JO MALONE TRAVEL CANDLE

For a piece of home on the go, Jo Malone's travel candles are just the ticket. Try Red Roses, with its sweet, floral scent. It helps balance the mind and will leave you uplifted and relaxed wherever you go.

Available at Jo Malone boutiques.



### ELEMIS QUIET MIND TEMPLE BALM

When you really need to unwind and switch off, roll on the relaxation with this soothing temple balm. Containing a powerful blend of essential oils, it will de-stress the body and mind while promoting harmony, tranquility and relaxation. Massage into the ear lobes, back of the neck and temples, breathe in deeply and let your worries melt away.

Available at Bloomingdale's, The Dubai Mall, Debenhams Mirdiff City Centre.



### ACQUA DI PARMA IRIS NOBILE TRAVEL SPRAY

Transport yourself to the Amalfi Coast with the Acqua Di Parma Iris Nobile fragrance. Crystal clear top notes of bergamot, Chinese anise and mandarin sit on a base of oak musk, patchouli and creamy vanilla – while at its heart lies a rich floral bouquet of iris and ylang-ylang. A sumptuous, seductive scent in a chic leather travel spray – you will smell sublime at all times.

Available at Harvey Nichols, Mall of the Emirates and Bloomingdale's, The Dubai Mall.



### TOM FORD NEROLI PORTOFINO BATH BAR

A classic soap with a Tom Ford twist, this beautifying bath bar creates a creamy lather to cleanse and keep skin soft and smooth. Lightly scented with the crisp, classic eau de cologne notes of his Neroli Portofino fragrance, Ford perfectly captures the sophistication of the Italian Riviera in a sublime soap. Indulgent ingredients include grape seed oil, olive fruit oil and date seed extract.

Available at Paris Gallery stores, Harvey Nichols, Galleries Lafayette, Bloomingdale's.

## BOBBI BROWN LONG-WEAR EVEN FINISH COMPACT FOUNDATION



Finally, a fuss-free foundation that promises complete coverage and stays put for 12 whole hours. Perfectly portable with sponge applicator in tow, it is enriched with vitamins and antioxidants to protect skin while providing a natural, lightweight finish. Oil-free, it is breathable and flexible - all in one convenient compact. Clever.

Available at all Bobbi Brown Counters.

## BLISS TRIPLE OXYGEN INSTANT ENERGIZING EYE MASK



In just 15 minutes, puffy eyes and under-eye shadows will be no more with this energizing eye mask. Releasing three forms of oxygen to the eye area, it works to brighten, de-puff and hydrate. With four pairs per box, it comes in individual sachets so you can pack as many as you need. The perfect answer to perky peepers.

Available at Debenhams.



## CRÈME DE LA MER THE MIST

The ultimate way to refresh and revitalise, this hydrating mist comforts and soothes skin that is lacking luster. Made with magnetically charged waters and enriched with marine and botanical extracts, vitamins and minerals, it visibly uplifts and revives lethargic and dehydrated skin that has been submitted to undue stress. It can be used anytime, anywhere, for instant rejuvenation – so spray away.

Available at all Crème de La Mer counters.



## ESTÉE LAUDER PERFECTLY CLEAN TRIPLE-ACTION CLEANSER/TONER/ MAKEUP REMOVER



Save precious time and space with Estée Lauder's Perfectly Clean – a cleanser, toner and makeup remover all rolled into one. Using a high-performance advanced formula, it is infused with skin-caring botanicals including vitamin and mineral rich blue algae to calm, moisturizing and balancing zinc PCA to comfort, and milk thistle to detoxify and promote protection. Used on dry skin, it transforms from airy foam into a silky oil to glide on and remove impurities - leaving you completely clean.

Available at all Estée Lauder counters.



## REDKEN POWDER REFRESH

Create that just-washed feeling and keep hair looking fresh with this dazzling dry shampoo. Without leaving residue and suitable for all hair types and colors, it's formulated to absorb excess oil and to extend the life of your blow dry – transforming your tresses from day-old to refreshed and revived in a quick shake and spray. In addition, works wonders for creating volume from the roots.

Available at all L'Oréal Professionnel Salons.

## DIOR VERNIS TIE AND DYE NAIL LACQUER AND DIOR DISSOLVENT ABRICOT

A classic red nail enhances any outfit, so be sure to invest in Dior's Tie and Dye before any trips your talons may take. Saturated with color, it is an energizing hue sure to create a vibrant, bold statement. There is also the brand new Dior Dissolvent Abricot (available from September) which comes in a pretty, portable 50ml bottle - ensuring easy polish removal free from acetone. It also nourishes, hydrates, strengthens and instantly revives whiteness and shine.

Available at all Dior Counters.

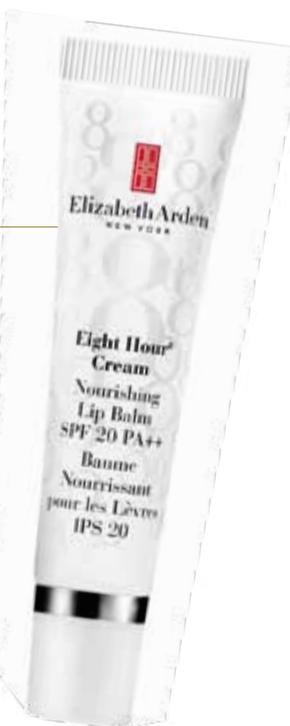


## GUERLAIN TERACOTTA 4 SEASONS TAILOR MADE BRONZING POWDER



One bronzer, four shades. Tailored to suit every complexion and color, Guerlain's new bronzing powder allows you to create your own unique and personal shade depending on your current skin tone or surrounding climate. Dust across the cheekbones, forehead and nose to create that effortless, sun-kissed glow, or sweep along the jawline and under the cheeks for dreamy definition. Provides year-round bronzing beauty.

Available at Paris Gallery, Harvey Nichols, Bloomingdale's and Sephora.



## ELIZABETH ARDEN EIGHT-HOUR CREAM NOURISHING LIP BALM SPF 20

Elizabeth Arden sees the arrival of a new addition to its iconic Eight Hour range with the Nourishing Lip Balm SPF 20. A moisturizing, glossy formula, it enhances your natural lip color while enriching your smile with eight vitamins, minerals and nutrients – hydrating and protecting for the perfect pout. Have a skin irritation, redness or a burn? It can be used on that too. An all-round remedy.

Available at Harvey Nichols Dubai. ♦

# WORLDWIDE WELLNESS

By Frankie Rozwadowska

Ever wondered how Japanese women appear not to age and Brazilians have amazing beach bodies? Well wonder no more, for we have travelled the globe in search of the secrets that keep the women of the world looking and feeling their very best.

From Brazil to Morocco, India to Japan – here are our top four finds from afar.



## BRAZIL AÇAI – THE BEAUTY BERRY

The Kiehl's Açaí Damage Repairing Serum is an ultra-concentrated formula that has penetrated and absorbed quickly to repair tone, texture and elasticity damage caused by oxidation, sun damage and external stresses - all with a smoothing, light moisturization.

Available at Bloomingdale's, Harvey Nichols and Kiehl's, The Dubai Mall.



## MOROCCO ARGAN OIL – THE HAIR HERO

Try Redken's new All Soft Argan-6 Oil – enriched with Argan Oil, it has instantly absorbed (meaning no nasty, greasy residue) to nourish, strengthen, protect, and improve elasticity – leaving locks luminous and luxuriously silky.

Available at L'Oréal Professionnel accredited Salons

Used for centuries by the Berber women of Morocco, Argan Oil has become a modern-day beauty must-have. Produced from the kernels of the Argan Tree that grows in semi-arid conditions in southwest Morocco, it is one of the rarest and most expensive oils on the market. No surprise then that it is being dubbed the 'liquid gold' of the beauty industry and is now one of the most sought after ingredients for skin and hair products around the world.

Brazilians are known (and envied) the world over for their beauty, bodies and, of course, booties. So if you too want to look like Gisele (well, almost) then you need to make sure Açaí features in your diet and skincare. These dark purple Amazonian berries were used by indigenous tribes to treat ailments and to provide nutrition (they are crammed with antioxidants, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, protein and omega fatty acids). They are now found in cosmetics around the world, and in almost every smoothie being sipped by a Brazilian beauty, due to their healing and highly powerful properties.

Not only are they amazing anti-agers, Açaí berries fight free radicals and inflammation due to the powerful antioxidant anthocyanin (of which it has the most out of any other food) and they're nearly 1000 times higher in antioxidants than any other fruit or vegetable. If that was not enough, they boost immunity; raise the metabolism and aid digestion. These berries may be small, but they come with some seriously big beauty benefits.

Containing 80 percent-unsaturated fatty acids, it works wonders on healing skin ailments including acne, eczema and burns. It also prevents stretch marks, is an anti-inflammatory, has sun-protective and disinfectant properties, and can protect against premature aging. With high levels of Vitamin E and antioxidants, Argan Oil helps to neutralize free radical damage - a key function in today's world where we are over exposed to pollution and harmful chemicals. It also keeps hair and skin soft thanks to its high levels of sterolins that reduce inflammation and promote moisture retention.

If that was not enough, Argan Oil has the power to transform tresses by restoring, renewing and repairing. It stimulates growth, improves hair elasticity and hydrates to leave locks smooth and soft. Thanks to Omega 9 and Omega 3, it also helps strengthen hair by rebuilding its protein structures.



### INDIA TURMERIC – THE SKIN SPICE

Spice it up with 3Lab's Hydrating-Vita Cream, a vitamin-rich moisturizing gel packed with potent antioxidants, essential nutrients and vitamins, and (of course) Turmeric. Works a dream on dehydrated skin – replacing dryness and moisture loss with hydrated healthiness.

*Available at Bloomingdale's, The Dubai Mall*

Turmeric is not just the secret to the perfect curry; it is also the key to perfect skin. A natural anti-inflammatory loaded with antioxidants, it is used in natural medicine to fight heart disease, reduce the risk of blood clots, slow the progression of Alzheimer, and fight free radicals and cell damage to prevent cancer. It is one super spice.

Used for thousands of years by Indian women, not only in cooking but also in their beauty regimes, Turmeric plays a vital role in the Indian wedding tradition of Haldi - where both the bride and groom are covered with a paste made of Turmeric the night before the big day. A natural emollient, antibacterial and antiseptic, it helps reduce signs of aging, fights blemishes, reduces pigmentation and evens and brightens the complexion – making it the perfect pre-event skin savior.

Fast becoming one of nature's most in-demand ingredients in skincare, even actor Thandie Newton declared Turmeric her "secret weapon" – revealing she mixes the spice in with her products to add a beauty boost. Therefore, for a flawless face, Turmeric is the ticket.



### JAPAN COLLAGEN – THE WRINKLE REMOVER

If boiling up beef is not quite for you, try the Pure Gold Collagen Drink. Containing hydrolyzed collagen derived from fish, hyaluronic acid and a host of vitamins – it packs up to 20 times the punch of a collagen pill.

*Available at Planet Nutrition, The Dubai Mall*

Famed for their smooth skin and youthful complexion, the Japanese are always inventing new, innovative (and sometimes bizarre) ways of keeping young and beautiful. In addition, although collagen was used in anti-aging products for decades, how it is used is seriously changing. Most of us think of collagen coming in fillers or pills, but in Japan, it is now being consumed as a drink. Women across the country are boiling beef and chicken tendons to make their own beauty-boosting beverage. Unlike creams which work solely on the epidermis (outer layer of skin), ingesting an ingredient works from the inside out to target the deeper layer of skin (the dermis).

Collagen is a protein that gives skin structural support and is key in maintaining firm, supple skin. It slows the formation of fine lines and wrinkles, improves elasticity and helps retain moisture. The good news is we naturally produce collagen. The bad news is that as we get older we produce less of it. Therefore, it is no wonder the Japanese have developed yet another helping hand to keep them young and beautiful. ♦

# AMOUAGE FATE LAUNCH

By Rebecca Anne Proctor

A scent that centers on the predetermined principle of human destiny, Amouage's latest fragrance Fate is at once mysterious and enrapturing. Rebecca Anne Proctor discusses the philosophy behind the House's latest edition with Amouage Creative Director Christopher Chong during the perfume's launch in Muscat.

A rich and powerful blend of frankincense, oakmoss, rose and leather combine in Fate, Amouage Creative Director Christopher Chong's latest fragrance. Launched June 13 in Muscat at the Amouage Perfume Factory, through the mystifying force of scent the fragrance relays the meaning behind its make-up: a human being's constant battle with the unknown – with fate. Amouage fragrances are known for their ability to challenge convention, and Fate does exactly that. In reference to the scent, Chong states how the narrative of the fragrance "does not pre-ordain the characters' fortune, but instead sets them free into the world, where their fates await them."

Chong himself is not someone who has always readily followed conventions. A variety of creative interests and unexpected educational pursuits make up his background. The perfumer, who is an immigrant originally from Hong Kong and raised in New York, obtained his first degree in Comparative Literature from Fordham University. In order to support himself through school he started his own modeling agency that worked primarily with editorial after which he moved to London to pursue an MA in Literature, Languages and European Thought. At the same time, Chong also took several courses at the London College

of Fashion as well as began training as a Lyric Baritone in order to follow his passion for opera.

Chong's current post as Creative Director of Amouage was itself a chance encounter and one that makes use of his diverse experiences, especially his love of music, when creating his perfume. Of his work as a perfumer he says, "It is bottling art and emotions." And the emotions come from the narratives he endows to each scent. "There's always a story to be told," he tells me in Muscat. "I've tried to take the brand to a more daring level." Names such as Honour, Interlude, Lyric, Epic and Jubilation are just a few of the titles that Chong has chosen to grace his fragrances, all of which proclaim that there is a hidden tale behind the fragrance and one which the wearer becomes readily a part of. Chong currently works with leading perfumers in Grasse, Paris, Geneva and New York to create new fragrances, which echo his artistic breadth and challenge convention.

Fate for woman comprises spicy accords setting a mysterious mood of the unexpected, while the base features a rich blend of frankincense, oakmoss and leather. Fate for man includes fresh notes of citrus, absinth and sharp ginger with a woody accord in the base of cedar wood, sandalwood,

musk, liquorice and tonka bean adding an intense rendering of the uncertain.

The fragrance is encapsulated within Amouage's elegant clear glass crystal bottles with rainbow undertones and the House's iconic gold-plated cap with aurora borealis-inspired Swarovski crystals. The bottles are placed within intriguing keepsake kaleidoscopic purple-toned boxes with gold foil, each of which represents different interpretations of fate. "The philosophy of Fate remains wrapped in obscurity," says Chong. "I wanted to celebrate the power of mystery and end the narrative without a defined conclusion." And he has done so. ♦

*For more information visit [amouage.com](http://amouage.com)*





# THE SIN

By Frankie Rozwadowska

*Hi. My name is Frankie and I am a sugar addict. I have been clean for precisely 14 days, 3 hours and 7 minutes, and I can tell you now – it has not been easy.*

*Sounds like I am talking about an illegal substance, right? Well I may as well be. Just like drugs, sugar is unbelievably addictive. There is a reason it is in every food – it keeps you hooked.*

Ever intended to eat ‘just one cookie’ or ‘just a square’ of chocolate, only to end up eating most, if not all of it? Exactly. This seemingly innocent substance causes heart disease, obesity, diabetes, depression, high blood pressure, chronic fatigue, hypoglycemia, ADD, dental cavities, yeast infections, weakened immune systems... you get the gist. Sugar? I hear you cry? That delicious, sweet-tasting treat we enjoy in the form of fluffy pink-iced cupcakes, creamy ice cream and crunchy candies. Yes, that is the one. Just Google ‘dangers of sugar’ and you will soon believe me.

However, it is not just in the obvious chocolates and sweets; sugar is in pretty much in everything. Don’t believe me? Go look in your cupboards and your fridge. Pick up that pasta sauce or box of cereal – I can almost guarantee sugar is in there. Check your bread, salad dressing, and seemingly healthy ‘fruit juice’. Yes, it is probably hiding in them too. Sugar is cheap and easy to produce. It leaves you wanting more and can be added to anything and everything; a manufacturer’s dream.

Despite being added to food, sugar gives us nothing and in fact robs us of the goodness our bodies need. The process of refining it involves extracting the juice from the sugar cane plant, which is then thickened through a boiling process before the syrup is removed. It is then washed and filtered, dried, packaged and pumped into our food – by which point, any fiber, vitamins, minerals or enzymes have been destroyed. Leading Nutritionist and Health Food Expert, Rashi Chowdhary, strongly advises her clients to limit their daily sugar intake to just two teaspoons. “Too much sugar robs your body of essential nutrients, and foods that contain too much sugar are mostly ‘empty calorie’ foods, which means they have very little or no nutrients in them. You feel that unmistakable sugar high and then you are hit with a post sugar slump. Subjecting your body to a constant sugar rush all day keeps your insulin levels high that is the major contributor to a whole lot of metabolic disorders, like polycystic ovaries and weight problems.”

If that has not convinced you enough of the sinful side of sugar, how about the fact that it not only feeds your ever-growing waistline, but also cancer. At the time of writing this,

scientists from the University College of London revealed that through experimenting with MRI scanners sensitized to specifically look for glucose (a form of sugar) in the body, they were able to see cancer tumors feeding from it – consuming twice as much glucose than normal, healthy cells. This side to sugar also worries Chowdhary, who told me “a high sugar diet provides a conducive environment for cancer cells to grow. They multiply rapidly which requires a lot of energy, and that is why cancer cells love sugar. So the more sugar you eat, the higher your risk. The pancreas responds to high sugar levels by secreting insulin, and high levels of insulin put you at greater risk of developing breast cancer.”

I made the decision to not eat anything that contained added sugar for two whole weeks and see what happened. Although the decision was one of the hardest things I have ever done, I can honestly say the last 14 days have changed my life.



If I had needed any more convincing, Rashi’s wise words did the trick. I knew I had a problem when I actually could not pass a supermarket without having to buy at least one chocolate bar, or I would spend all day thinking about the Ben and Jerry’s sitting in the freezer – only to then go home and eat the whole tub. After a meal, I had to have something sweet, and if there were sugar anywhere near me – I would eat it. All of it. My extreme sweet tooth meant I was always lethargic and lacking in energy (but I could not sleep), my skin was dull and I started getting breakouts, I was putting on weight and finding it hard to lose it, and I was feeling miserable. Enough was enough. Sugar and I had to break-up, or I was going to end up a fat, moody, spotty sociopath. Therefore, I made the decision to not eat anything that contained added sugar for two whole weeks and see what happened. Although

the decision was one of the hardest things I have ever done, I can honestly say the last 14 days have changed my life.

First step was to rid my kitchen of anything remotely processed (or not) that contained added sugar. This (unsurprisingly) was almost everything. I then replaced my baking books with body bibles The Clean and Lean Diet and The Clean and Lean Diet Cookbook – a plan developed by über health king James Duigan. It consists of little to no sugar and the sweet treats it does allow are all in the forms of natural sugars – fruit, dairy etc. James has trained superstars around the world, including Elle MacPherson, David Gandy and Rosie Huntington-Whitely, so I had no doubt that he knew his facts.

Asking him to describe sugar in three words, James replied “not so sweet.” According to the Clean and Lean plan, sugar is the most toxic substance you can put into your body – making us fat, tired, unwell and wrinkled. Consuming sugar is a habit we seriously need to break. James recognizes that in today’s day and age, one of processed foods and ready meals, this is not an easy feat. “Sugar has a similar effect on the brain to pain-killing drugs like morphine. It produces an instant feeling of pleasure, calm and satisfaction, making it incredibly addictive. Many people turn to something sugary for energy – and technically, it is a form of energy, but a bad type. Yes you will get a quick burst after eating a chocolate bar, but about ten minutes later you’ll feel even more tired than before.”

When asking James his advice on how to curb my cravings and finally kiss goodbye to the sweet stuff, one interesting tip he gave me was not to use sugar as a reward. “Oh I’ve had a bad day, I deserve a chocolate bar,” “I was so good and only had a salad for lunch so I can totally have that cake.” Sound familiar? We are all guilty of it. We often turn to sugar for comfort or to reward ourselves for something – when in fact, it will most likely make us feel even worse shortly after eating it. James suggested I buy myself a beauty treatment or a new book instead – at least they were not going to make me fat and ill!

He also told me to consume asparagus, whole grains, and to increase my chromium intake from foods like eggs, nuts and include more



Sugar? I hear you cry?  
That delicious, sweet tasting  
treat we enjoy in the form of  
fluffy pink-iced cupcakes, creamy  
ice cream and crunchy candies.  
Yes, that is the one. Just Google  
'dangers of sugar' and you  
will soon believe me.



Frosted cupcakes with colorful sprinkles.  
Image courtesy Magnus Manske.

protein from nutrient-rich dark meats (beef, lamb, chicken legs) to suppress my sweet tooth. If I really, really had to have something sweet, I was to have a piece of fruit with a handful of nuts (the protein stops the natural sugars in fruit from hitting your blood stream so fast) or a small piece of organic, dark chocolate – which is actually good for you in small doses as it's packed with antioxidants. Some good news at last.

I will not lie or sugarcoat the truth (no pun intended) but giving up added sugar is by no means easy. For the first few days I felt great, heaps of energy and I barely thought about it. Nevertheless, by day four I was seriously struggling. At a friend's barbecue, I ended up with a piece of meat on a plate and that was it. The buns, condiments (ketchup, mayo, mustard) and cheese slices all contained sugar. I also had to apologize for not eating the apple pie and putting them all off their dessert while I watched them eating it – staring, mouth open, and practically salivating all over the table.

However, amazingly, once you allow the craving to pass – you realize that actually, you do not

#### Fourteen days later and I am sleeping like a baby.

My skin is visibly brighter  
and clearer, my energy levels  
are high, my stomach  
is flatter and there is a  
new spring in my step.  
I feel like a different  
person, and all from saying  
see-ya to sugar.



really want it, you just think you do. There was also having to put up with people passing off what I was attempting as being nothing of importance. "Oh I could so do that, that's

nothing. Giving up sugar, how hard can that be?" I soon shut them up after asking them to tell me everything they had eaten that day, to then inform them that if they were I – they could not have eaten any of it.

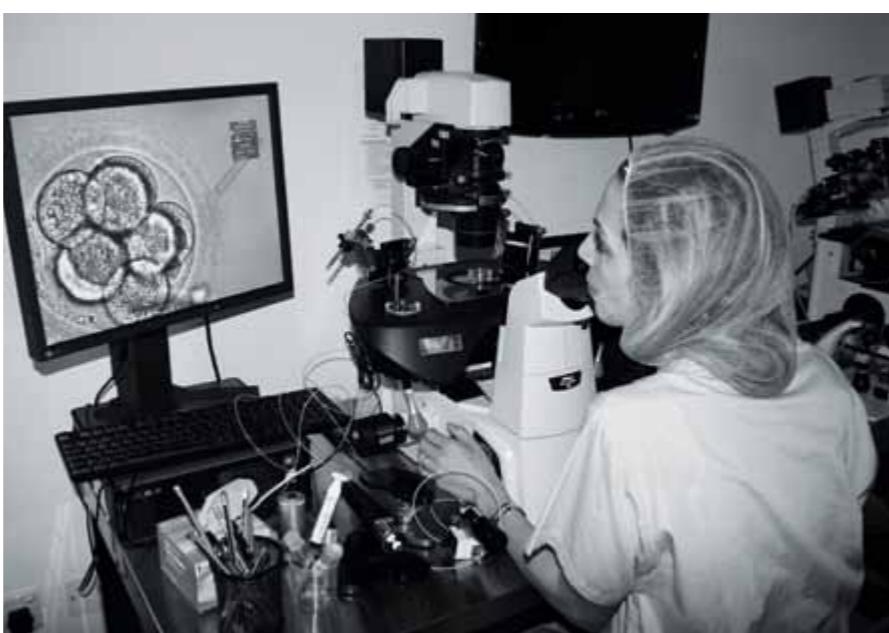
Fourteen days later and I am sleeping like a baby. My skin is visibly brighter and clearer, my energy levels are high, my stomach is flatter and there is a new spring in my step. I feel like a different person, and all from saying see-ya to sugar. I am sure I will slip up now and again and give in to the temptation of a Dairy Milk or a Mojito (I am only human), but right now – I could not think of anything worse. That sure is sweet. ♦

For an appointment with Rashi Chowdhary or for more information, visit [rashichowdhary.com](http://rashichowdhary.com)

James Duigan's *Clean and Lean Diet* and *The Clean and Lean Cookbook* are available from Kinokuniya, The Dubai Mall.

# THE INCREASE OF IVF IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By Cassidy Hazelbaker



Infertility affects couples all around the world. The UAE is home to one of the world's leading IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) centers, which helps women overcome infertility to achieve pregnancy. Cassidy Hazelbaker reports on IVF treatment and its reception in the Middle East.



Above: A lab practitioner performing analysis on embryos in petri dishes.

Above: A lab practitioner evaluating the growth of an embryo.



Above: The Fakih IVF Office in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

For many women worldwide, having a baby is the most precious gift of life. Infertility, however, is an obstacle that prevents many couples from conceiving naturally. Infertility is caused just as often by factors from the male side as from the female side, and sometimes results from incompatibilities between both male and female partner. "People often think that infertility is caused because someone is incomplete," states Randa Modad, Brand Communications Manager for Fakih IVF. "It's not the case though. Infertility can be corrected with a little extra push."

The extra push Modad refers to is In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), which is a process that allows a woman's egg to be extracted, fertilized and then reinserted into her uterus. More often than not, this procedure results in full-term, healthy babies that are delivered normally. The procedure is not entirely guaranteed to work, but for many it is worth trying. "IVF keeps hope alive," says Modad.

After two years of trying to conceive, Quelle Taylor turned to IVF. "The first treatment didn't work but three weeks after the second attempt, I was pregnant," she said. Taylor recently delivered healthy twins in the UAE. The treatment often requires perseverance, but the end result makes it all worth it.

In a region with such a family-oriented culture, IVF is becoming increasingly popular among couples who have difficulty conceiving. There is a growing awareness of infertility treatments and demand has increased as acceptance of treatment becomes more commonplace. "In the past, people were shy about the treatment. But now it is no longer taboo. Before, people didn't want to come in the front door of the office; they wanted the privacy of coming in by the back entrance. Now, couples chat freely with other couples in the waiting room," says Dr. Michael Fakih.

"I don't have any problem talking about it. I like to tell people- I like to spread the word," says Taylor. "Now people are feeling more open to IVF and hearing so much about it encourages them to try it themselves if they have trouble conceiving."

Fakih IVF is the region's premier medical center in the field, with 25 years of presence in the UAE. The center was founded by Dr. Fakih, a Lebanese-American, who is responsible for over 10,000 IVF deliveries and who has developed a unique technique for screening embryos. However, Fakih IVF offers more than just fertilization. It offers 100 percent guaranteed gender selection, for those who wish to balance their families with a child of a certain gender. It also offers testing for hereditary diseases in the chromosomes of an embryo whose parents are at high-risk to pass on such diseases.

IVF clinics provide services not just to couples wishing to procreate at the moment, but also to those who would like to preserve the possibility of future conception. IVF facilities allow cancer patients, who may be rendered sterile from cancer treatment, to freeze their eggs or sperm in order to use at a later date. IVF also helps to extend fertility, with the option for an aging woman with a lower egg count to freeze eggs to replant later, at a time when pregnancy is more fitting for her.

IVF in the Middle East has been rapidly gaining attention from both Middle Eastern clients and those visiting from abroad. "The majority of our clients are from the Middle East, India, Nigeria and Ethiopia," informs Modad, "but we get clients from all over the world, from New York to Denmark to Australia." Difficulty conceiving is truly universal and such 'conception tourism' shows to what lengths some couples will go in order to make their dream of a baby come true. ♦

For more information visit [fakihivf.com](http://fakihivf.com)



Above: Dr. Michael Fakih

All images courtesy Fakih IVF

# *Sumptuous* PARK LANE *Spas*

*By Meera Ashish*

It is one of the most exquisite and expensive streets in London, filled with some of the oldest and most luxurious hotels that the city has to offer, sandwiched between Hyde Park and Mayfair.

Meera Ashish explores two opulent spas located close to one another on this famous stretch of Park Lane.

## THE DORCHESTER

I was taken through to one of the nine therapy rooms with white walls and an incredibly soft heated bed.





## FOUR SEASONS PARK LANE

Floor to ceiling windows on all sides revealed the verdant landscape, trees and shrubs, sprinkled with some of the landmarks of the city.



## FOUR SEASONS PARK LANE

Sitting at the private coffee table in the Sky Suite atop the Four Seasons spa gave me the chance to marvel at the beauty of Hyde Park, of London, on a hot summer's day – the perfect introduction to the Hyde Park Awakening treatment in which I was about to indulge. Floor to ceiling windows on all sides revealed the verdant landscape, trees and shrubs, sprinkled with some of the landmarks of the city. I sipped on Jasmine tea and had some fruits as I awaited the therapist. While my sister left to begin her Golden Glow Scrub, my therapist Lucia began mine with a foot ritual, soaking my feet in Neroli Bath Oil, then scrubbing with a Botanical Scrub by the Organic Pharmacy containing sugar, calendula and bamboo. I then moved to the bed, where she scrubbed my body with the same Botanical Scrub, and I floated in and out of sleep inhaling the delicious lemon zesty scent. The back, neck and shoulder massage thereafter was a calming end to the entire treatment, though I wasn't sure if I finished feeling more awakened or calmed. Either way, I was elated to have had the treatment and looking forward to the using the rest of the spa.

I then sat in a dark relaxation pod, reading a magazine and helping myself to cranberries and nuts, while flicking through the music options. Then the sublime sauna overlooking the park and buildings from yet another angle, followed by the very suave looking Jacuzzi with a curvaceous metal bed. Later in the afternoon, once this entire ritual was finished, we made our way down for afternoon tea. A most delectable and rewarding ending to the soothing day – there was everything from truffle cream cheese and cucumber sandwiches on cranberry bread to flavorful wholegrain scones with clotted cream and jam and a selection of fifty different teas. It was certainly a delectable end to a rejuvenating start.

For more information visit [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)

## THE DORCHESTER

At the Dorchester, I started off with scones and tea in the grand, opulent setting of the marble and gilt Promenade. I then made my way down one floor to the spa of this famous hotel, an entire escape from the busy lobby upstairs and from the streets of London.

I was pleasantly greeted by pearl chandeliers and chilled rose water sprinkled with a few rose petals, and a distinct, even slightly sweet taste of rose. I passed through the lavish yet cozy relaxation room, with perfectly dimmed lights, fabric-swathed walls, deep blue velvet sofas and chaises in each corner. At the center, there were matching blue sheer silk drapes, a spread of nuts and dried fruits, and magazines.

I was taken through to one of the nine therapy rooms with white walls and an incredibly soft heated bed. Sujani, my therapist, used Relax Deep oil made of chamomile, sandalwood and patchouli by Aromatherapy Associates, a strong scent that instantly calmed and soothed me. She used elbows and her hands to tackle the knots and tough areas on my back. I could have continued for much longer, but I now had the swanky relaxation room to look forward to - read, snooze and drink more rose water. And so I did exactly that – well, everything except for snooze, followed by a long bout in the steam room. Underground this spa might be, but it is a dazzling art deco gem, not quite like any other.

For more information visit [thedorchester.com](http://thedorchester.com) ♦

All images courtesy The Four Seasons, London  
and The Dorchester, London.





# THE *Secret* SIDE OF SPF

By Frankie Rozwadowska

As porcelain skin becomes once again fashionable, SPF is now more important than ever. Frankie Rozwadowska takes a look at the pale trend.

They say that trends come back in fashion, and that is certainly the case when it comes to tanning. Just as it was back in the 16th century (when women used lead to create a whiter than white complexion), sales of skin whitening creams are rocketing and pale is in. More and more stars are gracing red carpets looking perfectly porcelain; just look at Nicole Kidman, Cate Blanchet, Anne Hathaway and Kristin Stewart – there is not a hint of bronze or a whiff of fake tan on these leading women.

Therefore, more and more of us are doing all we can to avoid the effects of the sun, be it via large hats, cover-ups, or the use of an SPF. We are overwhelmed by campaigns telling us to protect ourselves from harmful rays, to wear sunscreen and a high SPF and to reapply it often. But recent developments show that SPF is not quite what it seems. We all assume that as it offers protection from harmful rays (which cause sunburn, premature aging and skin cancer) it must be good for us. We proudly slather it on thickly and frequently. Still, it could be doing just as much harm as the sun itself. It is time to reveal the secret side of SPF.

To many of us, an SPF is a number we rely on to tell us how long we can stay in the sun before we start to burn and cause damage, and how high a level of protection we are receiving from our sun-cream or skincare product. What it does not tell you, however, is that this number only refers to UVB rays – not UVA. Although UVB's are arguably more harmful and are the biggest cause of malignant melanoma skin cancer, the ozone layer absorbs most of them before they reach us, which means that 90-99 percent of what hits us are UVA. So next time you reach for that tropical smelling bottle, make sure it is a broad spectrum SPF that will keep both UVB and UVA rays at bay.

There is also the issue of high factor SPF's. We are talking 50+, like Neutrogena which has gone so far as to claim that theirs are SPF 100. This instantly makes you think you are receiving almost 100 percent sun protection, right? Wrong. Moreover, many of us are making this deadly mistake. High factor sunscreens give a false sense of security, resulting in less reapplying, more time in the sun, and more burning and harmful damage. The US Food and Drug Administration have even proposed a ban of labels higher than SPF50+, stating that they are "inherently misleading." There is no such thing as a 100 percent protective SPF, nor is it the case that an SPF 15 is twice as effective as an SPF 15. In fact, an SPF 15 blocks 94 percent of UVB rays, while

You should also indulge in natural ingredients from your diet.

Red foods rich in lycopene, e.g. tomatoes, grapefruit and watermelon can help reduce sunburn by up to 33 percent as they absorb free radicals and prevent DNA damage - so eating red can stop you turning red!

Other sun-fighting foods are citrus fruits, foods rich in Omega 3 Fatty Acids (oily fish, walnuts, and flaxseed), green tea, leafy greens and dark chocolate (great news). Eating your sun protection? What a bright idea.



an SPF 30 blocks 97 percent. So next time you look at the number, really look at what it means.

SPF confusion aside, there is also controversy surrounding the ingredients. Yes, sun-creams often bring back nostalgic memories of holidays with their tropical, summery scents, and they leave skin feeling soft and smooth – but there are hidden dangers lurking beneath these beautiful beach bottles. In fact, it has been reported that over half of retail ready sunscreen products may actually increase the speed at which malignant cells develop and spread skin cancer. Scary. This is predominantly due to the inclusion of Vitamin A, or its derivatives, which are used in skincare as an antioxidant to slow down aging. Again, sounds great, right? Wrong. When exposed to the sun, Vitamin A can contribute to the cause of cancerous tumors due to its photo carcinogenic properties.

The Environmental Working Group conducted laboratory tests that resulted in tumors and lesions developing 21 percent faster after the use of Vitamin A laced sunscreens vs. vitamin free creams. So look out for Retinyl Palmitate (a derivative of Vitamin A) or the vitamin itself when selecting your sun-care.

Also, check the back of the bottle for Oxybenzone – an active chemical ingredient used to absorb ultraviolet light. It's easily absorbed into the skin, which means it penetrates into the dermis – a problem if the research showing that it can promote cancer in cells by disrupting hormones is true. Labeled another toxic ingredient in sunscreens, the EWG advises you to add this to your list of things to avoid. Dr. Lamees Hamdan, founder of luxury, natural skincare brand Shiffa Dubai, argues for avoiding chemicals in our cosmetics, especially since we are subjected to them in all aspects of our lifestyle. "In a world where most things are packaged and chemical, why shouldn't our skincare be natural? The skin absorbs what is put on it." She also believes that avoiding chemical ingredients allows our bodies to function better, stating that natural ingredients "get absorbed better and therefore work better to give more effective results. More importantly, they're excreted easier by your body so there's no heavy build up internally and no over loading your liver and kidneys."

You should also indulge in natural ingredients from your diet. Red foods rich in lycopene, e.g. tomatoes, grapefruit and watermelon can help reduce sunburn by up to 33 percent as they absorb free radicals and prevent DNA damage - so eating red can stop you turning red! Other sun-fighting foods are citrus fruits, foods rich in Omega 3 Fatty Acids (oily fish, walnuts, and flaxseed), green tea, leafy greens and dark chocolate (great news). Eating your sun protection? What a bright idea.



Cleanser, toner, white tea, and eye remedy from Shiffa, Dubai.

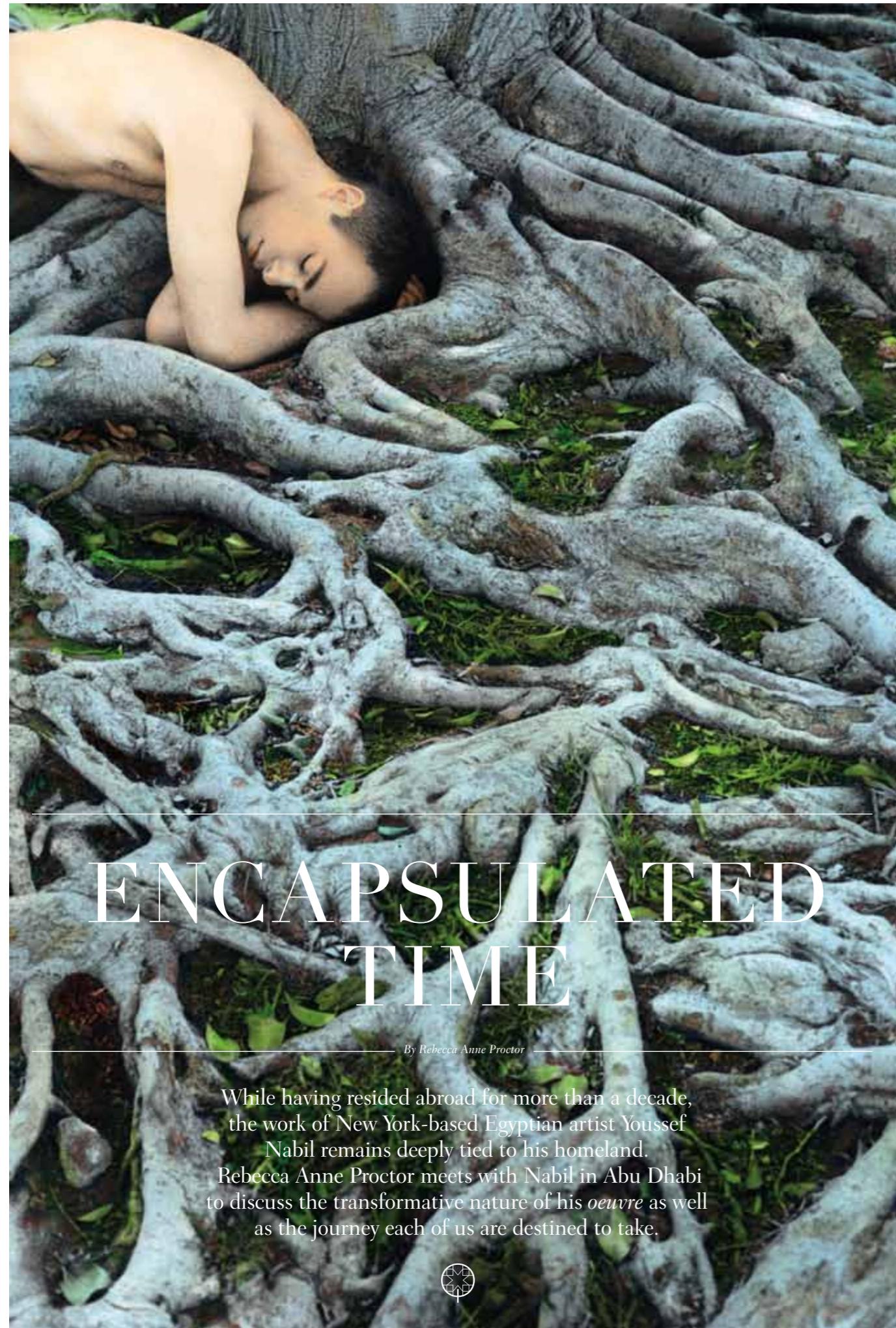
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# ENCHANTMENT

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ENCAPSULATED TIME  
THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE VENICE BIENNALE  
ART OF PROTEST: VISUAL ARTS FESTIVAL DAMASCUS  
IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHELLO





# ENCAPSULATED TIME

By Rebecca Anne Proctor

While having resided abroad for more than a decade, the work of New York-based Egyptian artist Youssef Nabil remains deeply tied to his homeland. Rebecca Anne Proctor meets with Nabil in Abu Dhabi to discuss the transformative nature of his *oeuvre* as well as the journey each of us are destined to take.



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A couple embraces. They stare lovingly into each other's eyes until they part. A group of Egyptian men in traditional dress are then seen huddled together and juxtaposed to a group of veiled women as if to emphasize the culture from where the protagonist, the man who was seen during the first scene of embrace, comes. And then the desert unfolds and sunlight fills the endless terrain of sand and he reappears dressed in a white cloth as if he had awakened from some dream and journeyed to another beautiful yet otherworldly place. He sees a woman wearing a veil with beams of light radiating from her figure as she gestures to him. In the next image they both reappear. His body, still wrapped in a white loincloth, is draped over her arms in a powerful stance almost identical to Michelangelo's *Pietà*; her long white veil flows out from either side as she gazes at the body she holds in her arms. In the final scene, the protagonist rows a boat in the middle of a big and vast blue sea. He rows and rows until he disappears and all that is seen is the enrapturing blue of the endless sea and the nothingness that now permeates it.

These scenes are from Egyptian artist Youssef Nabil's eight minute film *You Never Left*. The piece was shot with actors Fanny Ardant and Tahar Rahim and set in an allegorical 'other place' that is a metaphor for a lost Egypt. In it, the artist confronts what it means to leave his homeland, which he left just 10 years ago in 2003. The film reveals the permanent oscillation between a longing for other places and the constant nostalgia for what was once known.

*Opening Page: Self-portrait With Roots. Los Angeles. 2008. Hand-coloured gelatin silver print.*

But even more pertinent is the theme of life and death. *You Never Left* depicts a haunting self-portrait of the artist and the parallel between self-imposed exile and death.

## TRANSFORMATION

Egypt remains one of the most pivotal references in Nabil's work. "I never really left Egypt," says the artist. "I always link my work back to Egypt." Born in Egypt in 1972 and now based in New York, Nabil grew up in Cairo watching movies filmed during the golden age of Egyptian cinema. This glamorous world of black and white film was filled with melodrama and extravagant and imaginative stage sets. "The work I am doing is about an Egypt that doesn't exist anymore; it references the movies I watched as child that were made during the forties and fifties," says the artist. "I want to keep this era alive in my mind and so I have put it in my work."

In 2003, Nabil was invited to Paris for an artist's residency from the French Ministry of Culture. The city pleased him so much he ended up staying for three years and to this day continues to print his photographs there. While Nabil originally wanted to be a movie director, he decided instead to work as a photographer. He began in Cairo photographing a wide variety of subjects and caught the attention of famed

photographer David Lachapelle who was taken by the young artist's ability to imbue drama and sensuality within his work and hired him as his local assistant then moved to work with him in New York in the early nineties. Other early

stints included working with Mario Testino in Paris and of special note, his close friendship with Armenian-Egyptian photographer Van Leo, who specialized in studio portraits of renowned Egyptian actresses of the fifties and sixties and was to have a special influence on the artist.

Depictions of people, especially of female actresses and movie stars, are symbolic of the artist's *oeuvre*. Catherine Deneuve, Youssra and Rossy de Palma are just a few of the renowned cinematic names that have acted as subjects for Nabil's photography. "These are all people who mean something to me," says the artist. "I agree with their work and I want them to be part of what I am doing. Youssra is a big star in Egypt and the movies she chose to do are particularly poignant to me and to my country." Nabil also photographs artists, writers as well as people he might meet just once. Art world greats such as Tracey Emin, Louise Bourgeois and Julian Schnabel also grace his photographs. "It's the idea behind the person that is more important than the person or even his or her face," he says.

Nabil's new body of work takes on a transformational and highly-personalized approach to the idea of change: that which is taking place within his homeland and within himself. "I need to accept the fact that we also change like the country we call home," says the artist. Entitled *Time of Transformation*, the works in his most recent show at The Third Line in Dubai presents three new series that explore the notions of transition and change. "The works

*Above Top: Fanny Ardant and Tahar Rahim in You Never Left #1. 2010. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.*

*Above Below: Transformation #1. Marina Abramovic. New York 2011. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.*

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Above:

- 1: *The Last Dance #I.*  
Denver, 2012. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.
- 2: *The Last Dance #II.*  
Denver, 2012. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.
- 3: *The Last Dance #III.*  
Denver, 2012. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.
- 4: *The Last Dance #IV.*  
Denver, 2012. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.

in the show are about personal transformation," says Nabil. Once again made in the artist's characteristic technique of hand-painted silver gelatin photographs, each series references an Egypt that is rapidly transforming as well as his desire to encapsulate within his work an Egypt that might soon be no more.

The *Veiled Women* series presents women from the fields of art, music and cinema, all wearing the Mediterranean veil. "The series depicts three ideas: the separation of what women are wearing from that of men, the differences between non-Muslim and Muslim dress and also, the idea that the veil has been worn historically by various cultures within the Mediterranean world," explains Nabil. "I wanted to photograph images of people from cinema that I love but wearing the veil in the way I like." Featured in the series are Charlotte Rampling, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Fanny Ardant, Anouk Aimée and Marina Abramovic – women who would not normally be seen wearing the veil. Nabil hence provides an allegory for a religious and cultural ornament in contrast with its present day connotations.

Transformation is again explored through the medium of dance in *The Last Dance* series of four sets of 12 photographs. The works are made of multiples images of belly dancers dressed in gold costumes and caught in the midst of movement. So in trance are the dancers that what is captured appears to be but abstract whirling forms from afar; closer inspection will reveal the dancer's legs thus professing the sensual nature of the art form. "For me, one of the most beautiful things about Egyptian culture is its belly dancers," says Nabil. However, the new sexual connotation given to the dancers has meant that the once revered cultural dance is now being shamed and is vanishing." When the artist was in New York he learned that 12 places for belly dancing had been closed. "I was very upset," he says. "It really killed me to see something – an art so close to

our culture - be hurt." Nabil explains how he wanted to speak about the idea of struggling through the series. "You see one leg and then it completely disappears," he says. "I wanted the dancer to resemble a butterfly. She is trying to dance against death – she is trying to resist death and the dance is her last before she dies."

In the third series, entitled *Transformation*, the artist has Isabelle Huppert and Marina Abramovic each pose in seven stages. Their expressions range from passive to reactionary and dramatic. They ultimately explore the changes that are taking place within the artist himself. "The panels are about personal transformation," says Nabil. "I just wanted them to act and transform in front of the camera. Marina ended up screaming while Isabelle was softer and transformed in her own way." And while his subjects explore their own sense of transformation, Nabil does too and it is related back to Egypt and also back to the meaning of life.

#### RESURRECTION

Many of Nabil's self-portraits profess loneliness, longing and death. In *Self-Portrait with Roots* taken in Los Angeles in 2008, the artist lays curled up amidst the long roots of a tree. It's as if he lies caught between time and space – belonging to no one but himself. "I wanted to do this self-portrait when I saw these huge roots next to where I was staying in Los Angeles," he says in a conversation with Marina Abramovic. "I kept passing by every day and every time I saw it, I thought about Egypt. I thought about my roots and where I come from. I never thought I would miss my country that much when I left in 2003, because it was not easy for me when I decided to leave." The roots of the tree protect him and also bar him from all that is around him; he is neither here nor there – at once fragile yet safe.

In both *Say Goodbye Self-Portrait, Alexandria* and *Self-Portrait, Essaouira*, the artist has his back to the viewer and overlooks a body of water.

He seems at once removed and yet a part of the world in front of him. Calm, composed and yet seemingly aloof, in both works there is a sense of sadness and also of farewell.

Death plays a big role in Nabil's work. It is a subject that has haunted the artist since he was a young child. He recounts how he was once watching a film on television with his mother and inquired about the actors in the film only to be told that 'everyone was dead.' "I was in love with these beautiful yet dead people – people who didn't belong to our world anymore," says Nabil. "This discovery wasn't easy for me. I soon realized that some time in the future I wouldn't be here anymore. I woke up thankful each day for another opportunity to live and prayed that I would go first as I would hate to see those I loved die before me."

Such ideas permeate his relationship with cinema. "Life is like the cinema," says Nabil. "There is a beginning and an end to each film, but when we go to the movies we don't know how long it will last or the true plot; it comes and goes and then it ends like life." There's a beauty in surrendering to the idea that we will all end, all die one day. Encapsulated within Nabil's cinematic and photographic works are all remnants of a time that will come no more. Locked forever in the photographic frames are the beautiful renderings of people whose presences are but preserved by art. These moments that Nabil has photographed have already died. But they live on in the afterlife of how the viewer sees them in their own present moment. "I think there is a message in living," Nabil adds. "I think you should live with a certain awareness that we are living, but also passing on." Acceptance of this statement gives freedom in the present moment; it helps supersede the idea of the end and once that is done then we might resurrect and learn to live again. ♦

All images courtesy The Third Line, Dubai.  
For more information visit [thethirdline.com](http://thethirdline.com)



From Left to Right:

- Say Goodbye Self-portrait, Alexandria*. 2009.  
Hand-coloured silver gelatin print.



*Self-portrait, Essaouira*. 2011.  
Hand-coloured gelatin silver print.

From Left to Right:

- Isabelle Huppert*  
Paris, 2012. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.

- Alicia Keys*  
New York, 2010. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.

- Catherine Deneuve*  
Paris, 2010. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.

- Charlotte Rampling*  
Paris, 2011. Hand-colored gelatin silver print.

# THE MIDDLE EAST *at the* VENICE BIENNALE

By Rebecca Anne Proctor



The 55th edition of the Venice Biennale saw the largest number of Middle Eastern Pavilions to date. Rebecca Anne Proctor surveys the participants.

The Venice Biennale, one of the art world's most prestigious events, has returned once again to showcase the world's artists within the national pavilions that were established when the event was initiated in 1895. A few firsts of this year's event include the appointment of the Biennale's youngest ever curator, Massimiliano Gioni. The Italian curator presented *The Encyclopedic Palace*, an impressive maze of artworks by over 150 artists from 37 countries spanning the last century situated within the Central Pavilion in the Giardini. The show was inspired by Marino Auriti's 1950s project of the same name that sought to unite all of mankind's achievements within a single structure. Gioni has ambitiously tried to do the same and in so doing has proposed another way of categorizing the Biennale's traditional nationalist structure. As Gioni so rightly stated during the Biennale's press conference, "The experience of beauty is

not recognizing a form, but recognizing oneself as part of a community."

And a growing community the 55th edition of the Biennale is. Another first were the largest number of Middle Eastern Pavilions – a record eight. First timers Kuwait and Bahrain joined Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and the UAE as well as several collateral projects including Edge of Arab's *Rhizoma: Generation in Waiting; Otherwise Occupied*, an event showcasing works by Palestinian artists Aissa Deebi and Bashir Makhoul; *Love Me, Love Me Not*, a project presenting works from Azerbaijan and its neighboring countries and also *Breath*, a powerful installation by Iranian Shirazeh Houshiary that reveals the evocative chants of Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Islamic prayers juxtaposed with images that capture the expanding and contracting breath of the

vocalists. The greater presence of the Middle East at this year's Venice Biennale recognizes the region's increasing impact and participation within the worldwide art community.

## LEBANON

Lebanon's second participation presented the exhibition *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* showcasing the work of Akram Zaatar and curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath. The show features a 35-minute video that tells the story of an Israeli fighter pilot who was told to bomb a school in Saida – a school that had been founded by the artist's father during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. As the story goes, the fighter pilot refused and instead dropped the bombs into the Mediterranean. Zaatar learned of this powerful tale of compassion when he was a teenager and found out years later that it was indeed true. Such a poignant story resonated with viewers, many of whom had tears in their eyes as the piece concluded.

[apeal-lb.org](http://apeal-lb.org)

"The experience of beauty is not recognizing a form, but recognizing oneself as part of a community."

Massimiliano Gioni



## TURKEY

Curated by Emre Baykal, the Turkish Pavilion showcases *Resistance*, a five-channel video installation by Ali Kazma. Upon entry, the audience is confronted with Kazma's impactful large scale videos presenting the human body during various interventions including being tattooed, during eye surgery, wrestling and an autopsy. The works aim to depict how these various techniques and intrusions to the human body also liberate it from its own restrictions while also, and quite evidently, resist against its total freedom. At once shocking and physically alarming, *Resistance* also places the body within a variety of socio-cultural contexts to capture how one intrusion might defined differently depending on the context in which it is placed.

[pavilionofturkey.iksv.org](http://pavilionofturkey.iksv.org)

## BAHRAIN

The Kingdom of Bahrain's first time at the Venice Biennale after winning the Golden Lion for its participation in the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2010, presents the exhibition *In a World of Your Own* presenting the work of Mariam Haji, Waheeda Mallulah and Camille Zakharia – two Bahraini female artists and a Lebanese artist. Commissioned by HE Sheikha Mai, the show presents work in a variety of media including photography, collage and drawing and seeks to capture the diversity of the art scene in Bahrain as well ponder ideas related to post-colonial nationalism and identity politics during a transformative time for the Gulf.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

For the UAE Pavilion's third participation and its first to present a solo show, Emirati artist Mohammed Kazem presents a powerful installation in the form a large circling screen of deep blue sea. Commissioned by Dr. Lamees Hamdan and curated by the Guggenheim's Reem Fadda, *Walking on Water* reflects back on an experience the artist had when he was once lost at sea during a fishing trip. Kazem accidentally fell into the water and it took nearly half an hour before his companions returned to save him. At



once beautiful and alarming as well as highly experiential, the work reflects the human fear of being lost. It also echoes the rich sea landscape that encircles the United Arab Emirates and is a staple point of the young country's heritage.

[uaeavpavilion.org](http://uaeavpavilion.org)

## KUWAIT

Kuwait's inaugural participation featured a presentation of two major works by sculptor Sami Mohammed and a new photographic series by Tarek AL-Ghoussein. Commissioned by Mohammed Al-Asoussi of the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters and curated by Ala Younis, National Works presents works that reinterpret the country's "symbols of grandeur" as expressed by Younis. On display are Mohammed's two bronze sculptures depicting Sheikh Abdallah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1951–1965) and Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1965–1977) as well as the *K-Files* photographic series by Al-Ghoussein capturing various sites in Kuwait including schools, stadiums, architectural projects and also the Kuwait stock market – some of which are in the process of being constructed while others are falling down and abandoned.

The pieces on display highlight the country's modernization project.

[kuwaitpavilion.com](http://kuwaitpavilion.com)

## SYRIA

Under the title of Cara Amica Arte or Dear Art Friend, for its Pavilion the Syrian Arab Republic reach out to 17 artists from around the Mediterranean who through their work establish political, cultural and artistic connections during a time of conflict. Curated by Duccio Trombadori, the show brought together works mainly by Italian artists in addition to Syrian painter Nabil

Al-Sammam and other artists from around the Mediterranean. The works were united through the variety of pop and metaphysical art, but viewers will be sad not to find work that better captures Syria's vibrant art scene.

## EGYPT

Works by Egyptian artists Khaled Zaki and Mahomed Banawy made up Treasures of Knowledge at the Egyptian Pavilion. On display are bronze, steel and granite sculptures and mosaics in resemblance to the country's symbolic ancient sarcophagi and Sufi figures. Zaki, who was also the curator of the exhibition, relays the exhibition's aim to visualize man's historical quest for knowledge.

## IRAQ

Commissioned with the support of Tamara Chalabi from The Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq (RUYA) and Vittorio Urbani, Curator Jonathan Watkins assembled this year's Iraq Pavilion. Housed in a Palazzo on the Grand Canal in a home-like ambiance are the works of 11 Contemporary Iraqi artists living and working inside Iraq. A bedroom made of cardboard by the WAMI artist collective as well as bullet-proof cars, tanks and blood are found within the cozy atmosphere. It is the first time the artists show outside their country and the works on display reveal a people marred by the last few years of war, but also one with great hope.

[theirraqpavilion.org](http://theirraqpavilion.org) ♦

Facing Page: Jamal Penjweny. *Saddam is Here*, 2009-2010. C-print. Variable dimensions. Image courtesy the artist and RUYA Foundation.

Above: A video still from Akram Zaatar's *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* at the Lebanon Pavilion. Photography by Federico Sutera.

# ART OF PROTEST: VISUAL ARTS FESTIVAL DAMASCUS

By Shanthi Nambiar



The Visual Arts Festival Damascus provides a platform for Middle Eastern artists to use digital media to reflect on political and social conflict.

This year the festival took place in Istanbul. Shanthi Nambiar explores the determined spirit of the artworks presented.



*"Presenting the artwork of Syrian artists is a way to highlight the amazing creativity of Contemporary artists, hidden until recently."*

Delphine Leccas

Blurred landscapes, Anatolian folklore, guns and images of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad locking hands with the devil greeted visitors at the month-long Visual Arts Festival Damascus held at DEPO in Istanbul, Turkey. There, the artists from the Arab world and Turkey use the digital medium to raise awareness about human rights, identity, social crises and conflict. The works on display signal an easy crossover between art and activism.

The Syrian artworks join more than two dozen pieces - videos, digital photography, animation, digital work printed on paper, etching and interactive installations - that tell stories about upheavals, displacement, propaganda, and social and political issues in Egypt, Turkey, the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Algeria and elsewhere in the Middle East. The range is varied, both in subject and in emotion; themes include a young female Arab and marching soldiers. Still, these are not artists looking to shock and many of the pieces fail to capture the brutality of war and dislocation; which is to say you will not find references to blood, body parts, nudity, religious criticism or a Damian Hirst-inspired shark-in-a-box.

Since its launch in Damascus in 2010, the Visual Arts Festival Damascus has presented a platform for artists to discuss contemporary visual arts and facilitated meetings between those in Syria, neighboring Arab countries and their international peers. The uprising in Syria in 2011 changed the format of the arts festival and forced its organizers to move locations. In 2012, the International Film Festival

Rotterdam as part of the Power Cut Middle East program hosted the exhibition. This year's festival opened at DEPO with an exhibition, screenings, a roundtable and a workshop during the weekend of June 14 to June 16 in Istanbul.

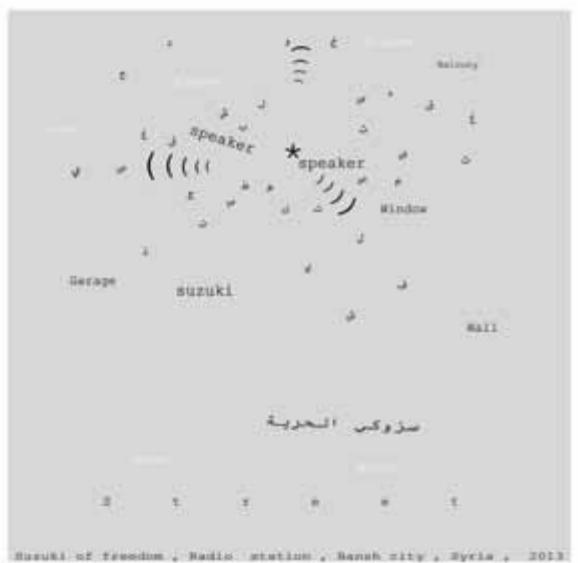
The exhibition is the brainchild of Delphine Leccas, a Paris-born woman who spent 14 years in Syria as a cultural manager and independent curator. Leccas lived in Damascus from 1998 to 2011 and was for seven of those years responsible for the cultural program at the French Cultural Centre (CCF) in the city, including starting the first international photography and video festival *Les Journées de la Photographie* (2001-2007). In 2008, she co-founded the AIN Association to support Contemporary art.

"Presenting the artwork of Syrian artists is a way to highlight the amazing creativity of Contemporary artists, hidden until recently," says Leccas, who was co-curator of the Biennial Mediterranea 16 in 2013 and directed a publication on Syrian artists, *Syrie, l'art en armes* (La Martinière Edition, Paris). "The best way to talk about Syria and its people is through art and culture," says Leccas.

The shadow of civil war continues to haunt Syria as Assad unleashes fighter jets and SCUD missiles against pro-independence rebels, civilians and entire cities. The more than two years of fighting has killed thousands of Syrians, including women and children, and created a widening humanitarian crisis that has spilled over into neighboring countries. More than 3 million of Syria's 23 million people have been forced from their homes and refugee camps have mushroomed in neighboring nations such as Jordan and Turkey, according to estimates from the United Nations and the State Department. The United States and other Western countries have called for Assad to step down. Still, the conflict shows no signs of easing.

The most startling digital art on display were inspired by the Syrian conflict. Syrian artist Akram Al-Halabi's *Cheek* is a digital piece printed on paper that shows a collection of Arabic letters and Blood scrawled in English. Since the start of the revolution in Syria, Al-Halabi has posted pictures on social networks from videos that he finds on the Internet, commenting on these with individual words. These words are supposed to replace pictures that depict the horror in the country. At the far right corner of the digital piece is printed the words "Bread and blood Massacre Halfaya, Hama, Syria, 23.12.2012."

Social issues appear to be the thread that holds together the Damascus arts festival. A few days before the opening of this year's exhibition in Istanbul, protests erupted in Turkey. What started as a peaceful sit-in by a group of activists



Clockwise from left to right:  
Nadia Kaabi-Linke, *No*, 2012, Two channel video installation.  
Baris Eviz, *Lost*, 2012, Video. 3 minutes and 37 seconds.  
Artikisler Wastedworks Video Collective, *An Ankara Resistance*.  
Photography by Timo Kaabi-Linke.

Artikisler Wastedworks Video Collective, *An Ankara Resistance*.  
Deniz Uster, *69*, 2012, HD film. 29 minutes and 30 seconds.  
Bir Ankara Direnişi, 2012, Video.

Akram Al Halabi, *Cheek*, 2013, Digital works printed on paper.  
Series of 15, Variable dimensions

opposing the development of a park in the city's Taksim Square soon grew into widespread anger across the country toward the governing elite led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party. Thousands of people streamed into Taksim Square and other cities such as the capital Ankara over several weeks - defying the government's orders to stay at home. In response, the government sent riot police armed with tear gas and water cannons to crackdown on demonstrators. The violent crackdowns were further evidence for many Turks of Erdogan's authoritarian rule and it signaled growing disenchantment among students, environmentalists, artists and activists over the government's economic and social policies.

Organizers of the Visual Arts Festival Damascus had to cancel a performance scheduled for the final night of the three-day opening session because of the demonstrations in Istanbul. The protests affected the festival "a lot," said Leccas. "We changed the roundtable and invited Turkish artists involved to take part" in the discussions and canceled the performance "because the area was under gas and too dangerous for the audience and for the artists." In addition, people from the Turkish art scene and the media were at Gezi Park every day, she says.

The on-going fight for rights in Turkey and the Arab world has clearly influenced the works of many young artists in the region. Conflict, religion and freedom of speech often provide fodder for great works of art. While these issues often collide in the conservative Muslim world, artists here are now more often producing works that touch on such controversial issues.

In Kuwaiti-born Basma Alsharif's *Farther Than The Eye Can See* video, a woman retells a story of Palestinians being forced to leave Jerusalem. The video shows a trail of smoke in the form of a circle against a blue sky. The story progresses backwards in time and through various landscapes. The video recalls through words a place that no longer exists.

The festival's curators – Leccas and Charlotte Bank – have written short, illuminating comments about the visual artwork in the exhibition. Their words help provide meaning to

The on-going fight for rights in Turkey and the Arab world has clearly influenced the works of many young artists in the region. Conflict, religion and freedom of speech often provide fodder for great works of art. While these issues often collide in the conservative Muslim world, artists here are now more often producing works that touch on such controversial issues.



individual videos and installations and offer an absorbing narrative of the present and past in the Arab world. "The search for new definitions of social and geographical identities and roles, the need to create new notions of belonging and a general turn towards centering the human experience within artistic practice are all themes that are very present," write Bank and Leccas in the program notes of the festival.

Tunisian artist Nadia Kaabi-Linke's *No*, a two channel video installation, was commissioned by the Liverpool Biennial in 2012. It shows a choir of Tunisian citizens inside an Anglican Church in Tunis and a chanting mouth.

According to the program notes, the installation presents "the asymmetrical conversation between a crowd, without power despite their numbers, and the individual but impersonal voice of authority." The work focuses on the rigorous visa process that many Tunisians have to endure to enter the UK, and draws a parallel between these contemporary regulations and the Holy Inquisition.

Kaabi-Linke, who shuttles between Tunis and Berlin, participated at group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the 54th Venice Biennial.

Despite the chaos that engulfs many parts of the Arab world, artists from the region have persevered and created works that are an enduring testament to the power of images.

Leccas was determined not to let the conflict in Syria scuttle the exhibition and remains passionate about the important role it plays in showcasing young talent from the region. "It keeps the festival created in Damascus alive and the works of the artists as well," she says. ♦

All images courtesy Visual Arts Festival Damascus unless otherwise specified.

The Damascus Visual Arts Festival ran until 14 July. For more information visit [delphineleccas.org](http://delphineleccas.org)

# IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHELLO

By Rebecca Anne Proctor

At the recently inaugurated Louis Vuitton Cultural Space in Venice, the exhibition *Where Should Othello Go?* positions a Contemporary artwork alongside a 19th-century masterpiece in an original ode to the city of Venice.

Rebecca Anne Proctor reports.



Pompeo Molmenti. *The Death of Othello*. 1879.  
Oil on canvas. 244 x 430 cm.

Two artworks face each other. One is an 1866 oil painting entitled *The Death of Othello* by 19th-century Venetian artist Pompeo Molmenti and the other is *Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green*, an audio, visual installation created by American Contemporary artist Tony Ousler. The two are purposely situated in contrast; the neoclassical rendition of the story of one of Shakespeare's greatest protagonists seems quite out of place when seen opposite to Ousler's eerie multimedia reinterpretation of the same story. But on second thought and after much conceptual investigation, the two are more similar than their aesthetic surfaces render.

Curated by Hervé Mikaleff and Modern art historian Adrien Goetz, the show revolves around the piece by Molmenti, which is on loan from the Ca' Pesaro Museum and has been restored with support from Louis Vuitton. The painting depicts the last scene of Shakespeare's tragedy, when Othello, the black Moor of Venice, realizes how his jealousy has led him to kill the innocent Desdemona. As soon as he does, he kills himself with his own sword.

The show also marks the inauguration of the Louis Vuitton Cultural Space in Venice, which coincided with the opening of the city's 55th edition of the Biennale Internationale of Contemporary Art. The space follows the brand's other five cultural centers (Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Taipei and Singapore) in artistic vision and cultural outreach.

Located just outside of St. Mark's Square in the Maison Louis Vuitton, which recently opened in its current location this past April, the Louis Vuitton Cultural Space is dedicated to working in tandem with Contemporary art and Venetian heritage. This unique coupling between present day art creation and historical works of art provide a new way of observing the present and the past. This cultural exchange has been made possible through a partnership between Louis Vuitton and Venice Foundation for Civic Museums - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia (MUVE). The French Maison will support the restoration of artworks belonging to the MUVE Foundation's heritage and in return, the MUVE will lend artworks to the Louis Vuitton Cultural Space that will be juxtaposed with Contemporary works of art.

**WORLDS IN SYMBIOSIS**  
*Where did Othello Go?* is the first example of the Louis Vuitton Cultural Space's unique project of juxtaposing

Contemporary art with historical masterpieces. When approached to create a work to mirror Molmenti's 19th century masterpiece, Ousler said he "immediately fell in love with the piece and the implicit historical chain reaction" that could be made. When one stands in front of Ousler's *Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green* installation, they become even more aware of the inherent classicism of Molmenti's painting.

The painting depicts the last scene of Shakespeare's tragedy, when Othello, the black Moor of Venice, realizes how his jealousy has led him to kill the innocent Desdemona. As soon as he does, he kills himself with his own sword.



But the work's contemporary counterpart also refers to the story of Othello – just through other means. The piece combines videos and colored glass forms sculpted by Murano glassblowers that reference the emotional symbolism of the colors in the tragedy of Othello. There's the red of Desdemona's assassination; black for Othello's dark skin color; green for his jealousy and also the final blackness to capture the color of Othello's soul after he kills Desdemona and then himself. Ousler's piece highlights the psychological traits and emotions of the famous Shakespearean play in a modern day rendition. The video, which is positioned on the wall, amidst the colored Murano glass forms, features three black men dressed in military garb in a narrative resembling



*Where Should Othello Go?* runs until 24 November. For more information visit [louisvuitton.com](http://louisvuitton.com)

that of a gangster rap video. "I'm working with colored glass projection screens inhabited by figures: bubbles of isolated psychological space vying for dominance and power," says Ousler in an interview with Mikaleff. "The heavy master narrative and melodrama are almost on the level of an action movie. The flow of the painting and the blood and the pain and morality all woven together is so thick that I wanted to focus on a few elements. Jealousy, misunderstanding, personal narrative structure – there is so much to work with here."

Ousler's work also responds to Venetian heritage. "The subtitle of Othello, The Moor of Venice, shows you the incredible importance of the black figure in Venice," says Ousler. "It's hard for an outsider to really come to any major conclusions about this except that there is obviously a polemic of the 'other' in operation, then and now." Centered around the figure of Othello, this unique Molmenti/Ousler encounter prompts one to realize the sharp similarities as well as contrasts between the two works and most importantly, what they represent. "The play and all of its sad twists and turns is central. It has a special relevance to us in the USA today with all the returning veterans," says Ousler. "The subplot is the impossible reconciliation of disparate forces of masculine and feminine, the 'beast with two backs': violence and peace."

When the exhibition finishes, Molmenti's *The Death of Othello* will return to its home in the Ca' Pesaro museum. Ousler's work will likewise be taken down and the brief dialogue between the two Othellos – contemporary and old, will be no more. So what did this short courtship signify? Ousler's characters rap intriguing commentary that reflects on the theme of Shakespeare's renowned tragedy. "It has been said that we have almost an anatomical need for repeated exposure to tragedy and violence as a means of avoiding it,"

says Ousler. And by stating it, Ousler seems to do just that – prompt the viewer as does Shakespeare in his play, to take heed of certain actions. This is what the brief meeting between Shakespeare, Molmenti and Ousler shows: how a major work of art can live eternally across time, recycled visually and intellectually to continue to educate and mesmerize. ♦

Tony Ousler. *Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green*. 2013.  
Audio-visual installation. Variable dimensions.  
All images courtesy Louis Vuitton.

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## SERENDIPITY

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THE THIEF:  
HOTEL ART REDEFINED

ISTANBUL:  
THE ORNAMENT OF TURKISH HERITAGE

THAI ESCAPADE  
ON DIVERSITY

The logo consists of stylized blue Arabic calligraphy. The characters are fluid and artistic, with varying line weights and ink saturation. The word 'سلیمان' (Sleiman) is written in a cursive, flowing script, with the final 'ن' (nun) having a distinct vertical stroke.



# *The THIEF: Hotel Art Redefined*

By Nathalie Salas

A visit to The Thief Hotel in Oslo results in an intriguing array of Contemporary art. Nathalie Salas reports.



Another art hotel. Yes, we have read about so many hotels that promote themselves as the place to stay for those who love everything about art. However, most of the time they are hotels that just happen to have art in them – a kind of afterthought that usually ends up looking like a dog's dinner. With art, there needs to be passion: A deeply rooted desire to bring art to the forefront of everything, and a willingness to add an element of risk into the mix.

You could call Petter A. Stordalen a risk taker. He is one of Scandinavia's most successful business persons, worth – according to the Forbes World's Billionaires list – an estimated \$1.2 billion. Named as the most successful strawberry seller in Norway at the age of 12, his talent for business and entrepreneurship has helped him to successfully build a large portfolio of property development investments, including 170 hotels under his Nordic Choice Hotels group. When Stordalen was asked whether he wanted to develop a hotel on Tjuvholmen (Thief Island), a new cultural and urban development in Norway's capital of Oslo, he knew that it needed to be different from the majority of mid-size chain hotels that already existed in the city.



The consequential opening of The Thief hotel earlier this year has been the result of Stordalen's creative vision to not only make art the catalyst of the hotel experience, but to create a synergy with the arts and culture lifestyle that has been cultivated on the island. It is ironically located on Thief Island – once a home to criminals and shady dealings, and now a power center for Contemporary art and good city living at the water's edge.

*"Art is what defines the experience of The Thief."*

Petter A. Stordalen



"Art is what defines the experience of The Thief," says Stordalen, "and all of this hard work has truly come from the heart." Conveniently, the hotel's next-door neighbor is the Renzo Piano-designed Astrup Fearnley Museum of Contemporary Art. Therefore, it made perfect

sense for Stordalen to become the sole sponsor of the museum, making The Thief possibly the only hotel in the world that has dedicated itself to Contemporary art through this form of collaboration.

To go one step further, Stordalen appointed the renowned Swedish art historian, Sune Nordgren, as The Thief's curator. Mostly known for his time as the director of the National Museum in Oslo, Nordgren has assembled a combination of art for the hotel, using works from Stordalen's own personal collection, as well as art borrowed from Astrup Fearnley. "The term 'hotel art' has been associated with bad taste, mass production and random positioning," says Nordgren. "Redefining hotel art is about giving the guests quality experiences, using reflection and perhaps changing their perception of reality for a brief moment."

Whether it is contemporary, controversial or both, art at The Thief is geared for viewing by guests. Each of the 119 rooms, including six junior suites, is decorated with carefully curated individual art that has been curated by Nordgren. They include works by a number of leading artists from around the globe, including Sir Peter Blake, Magne Furuholmen, Kjell Nupen and

Left: A view of Richard Prince's 1999 inkjet on canvas work *Cowboy - The Horse Thief* in the Thief's lobby.  
Image courtesy of Studio Dreyer Hensley.

Above, left to right: Charlotte Thii-Evensen. *Untitled*. Three screen video installation, 2011. Location: Entrance of hotel restaurant Fru K.  
Images courtesy of Charlotte Thii-Evensen.



With art, there needs to be passion: A deeply rooted desire to bring art to the forefront of everything, and a willingness to add an element of risk into the mix.

Christopher Jenssen. "We chose from established international artists and the best Norwegian ones, primarily in photography and graphic art," explains Nordgren. Standard bad-taste porn-on-demand has also been replaced with art-on-demand and interactive themed maps that take guests on a curated tour of the neighborhood's design, architecture and art, as well as alternative Oslo culture, creating another dimension to the positive experiences at the hotel.

The Thief cost more per room to build than any other hotel in Scandinavia. This definitely shows in its impressive design and quality, which is based on well-balanced interaction between local Scandinavian design and international preferences. Each room has its own balcony and guests are treated to custom-made 'his n' her' woolen slippers as well as extremely warm and luxurious bathrobes that were created by the Norwegian fashion designer Maggie Wonka.

Of particular attention is the Apparatjik suite. It is not the biggest or the most posh of suites, but it is certainly the quirkiest. "Treating guests like rock stars and rock stars like guests is why we invited super band Apparatjik to give them free reign in designing one of our suites," says Stordalen. A collective of international music artists – formed in 2008 by Jonas Bjerre of the Danish band Mew, Guy Berryman of Coldplay, Magne Furuholmen of a-ha and music producer Martin Terefe – Apparatjik is not only a group of talented artists, but also über-experienced hotel guests. "We wanted to design a space which would make the person staying there smile and shake their head a little at the same time," says band member Furuholmen. In addition, as it is well known that rock stars can trash hotel



*"Redefining hotel art is about giving the guests quality experiences, using reflection and perhaps changing their perception of reality for a brief moment."*

Sune Nordgren



rooms in periods of excess, Apparatjik has done just that in their own distinct way.

There are shining disco-ball textiles, pixel-patterned blankets and a roof-mounted projector showing Apparatjik's video art on the bed. If that wasn't enough of a clue, then the disco balls in the bathroom and lounge leave you in no doubt about who is responsible for the interiors. The suite is also decorated with eight prints signed by the super group.

Every flat surface, niche, corridor and elevator in The Thief has been used to create a sensory impression for guests. Even before entering the hotel, a cast-iron sculpture by Antony Gormley lies as if in a prostate prayer position, aligned towards the direction of Mecca. Once inside the lobby, there is a towering cowboy taming his horse by American artist and photographer Richard Prince. It depicts the ideology of American masculinity and portrays substance, strength and fearlessness.

Even in the elevators, guests are entertained for a brief moment by British visual artist Julian Opie. These exclusively made animated films feature Joo Yeon contemplating her imminent wedding and Italian female entrepreneur Marina Deserti gracefully poised in a purple shawl.

Positioned in the entrance of Fru K, the hotel's restaurant is a thought provoking video installation by Norwegian artist Charlotte Thiis-Evensen. Aestheticizing the concept of individual freedom, Thiis-Evensen displays three Somalian sisters taking their hijab on and off. Representing a crucial turning point in their lives, these women are faced with a genuine choice of whether they should continue to wear their hijabs, knowing the consequences that this choice will have on them as they enter adulthood. Although there is no intended moral or political message, this work of art certainly illustrates the ongoing social debate surrounding the wearing of the hijab within Muslim communities across the globe.

The art experience at The Thief has been carefully curated. What is more is that the works on display heighten the viewer's curiosity as well as play with the concept of unpredictability through a continuous exchange of artworks with its next-door neighbor, the Astrup Fearnley Museum. The fast-moving modern traveler, searching for 'something different,' will certainly find it here – a hotel stay that provides at once the intrigue and enchantment of a work of Contemporary art. ♦

For more information visit [thethief.com](http://thethief.com)

*Left:* Peter Blake. *World Tour Norway - Norwegian Dancers with Native Americans.* Collage 2012. Location: Oslo Suite.  
Image courtesy of Studio Dreyer Hensley.

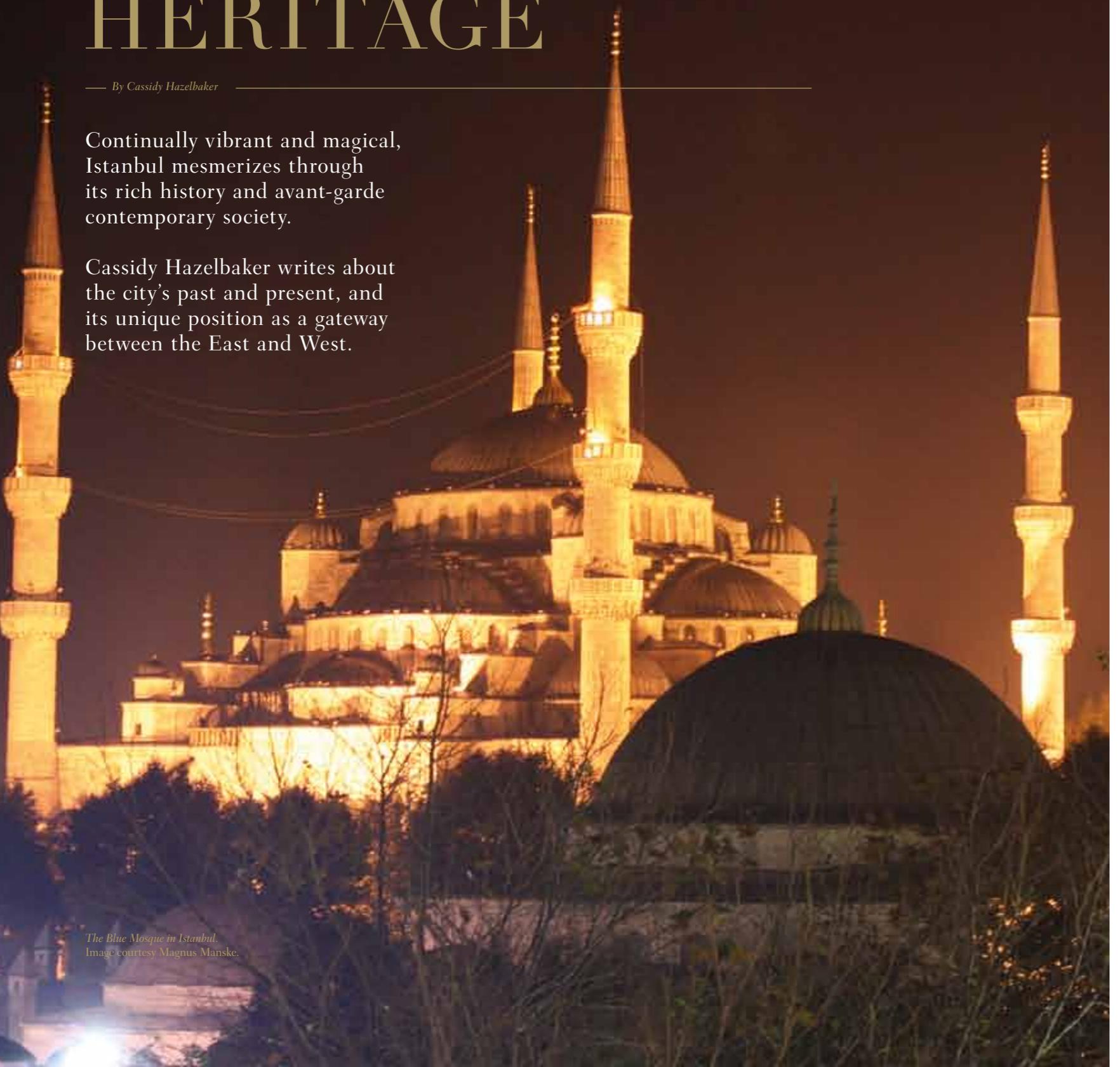
*Above:* Sune Nordgren, Art Curator.  
Image courtesy Sune Nordgren.

# Istanbul: THE ORNAMENT OF TURKISH HERITAGE

— By Cassidy Hazelbaker —

Continually vibrant and magical, Istanbul mesmerizes through its rich history and avant-garde contemporary society.

Cassidy Hazelbaker writes about the city's past and present, and its unique position as a gateway between the East and West.



The Blue Mosque in Istanbul.  
Image courtesy Magnus Manske.

The French writer Alphonse de Lamartine once stated, "If one had but a single glance to give the world, one should gaze on Istanbul." De Lamartine, who wrote the book History of Turkey in 1854, was referencing Istanbul's beauty and heritage. Without a doubt, Istanbul is one of the most inspiring and invigorating cities in the world. The city is host to a plethora of architectural gemstones, such as the Hagia Sofia and the Blue Mosque. From Topkapi Palace, one can delight in the view of both the Bosphorus and Marmara Sea. It is easy to get lost in the bazaars, which offer fabulous sweets, spices, art objects and textiles from all over Asia, or to take in a summer breeze while strolling in one of the city's many flower-strewn parks. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Istanbul is one of the top five most-visited cities in the world. Today's Istanbul is set for a vibrant and dynamic future, anchored by an equally rich and magnificent past.

## BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Istanbul straddles the Bosphorus, literally encompassing the border between Europe and Asia and occupying the gateway between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. Such a strategic location in terms of land and water access has made Istanbul, formerly known as Constantinople, one of the most coveted cities in history. It has been the capital of four empires - Roman, Latin, Byzantine, Ottoman - and the subject of fierce battles between warring kings who sought to rule the city.

For centuries, Istanbul was a bastion of Christianity. Its location at the Easternmost point of Europe played a large role in the expansion of the religion, as the Byzantine Empire passed along beliefs and knowledge farther East. Numerous saints and venerated figures resided in Turkey, including Saint Peter and the Virgin Mary, who spent her final days in Western Turkey. For a thousand years, Hagia Sofia was the largest church in the world. However, in 1453 Mehmed II led the invasion of Constantinople and declared the city the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The control of such an important city cemented Ottoman power and marked the transition of the Ottoman state into an empire. Istanbul was quickly converted into a jewel of an Islamic city, with many awe-inspiring churches undergoing quick makeovers to relaunch as equally awe-inspiring mosques. Under the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul continued to flourish and thrive as a mix of cultures and religions.

Having changed hands so many times, Istanbul

retains influences and traces from each segment of its history and blends them into something uniquely Istanbulian. Though in many ways its position as head of the Ottoman Empire drew it closer to the East, it is impossible to deny the influx of European influences, from the design of its lush green parks to the architecture of its governmental buildings. Furthermore, elements of Istanbul's distinct style spread throughout the Ottoman Empire during its 600-year existence and many artistic and architectural styles seen today while walking down the streets of Cairo or Beirut can be traced back to Istanbul.

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In 1896, a film screening took place in Istanbul, only one year after the first public debut of film technology in Paris. Though the film industry was slow to take off in Turkey, today's Turkish soap operas are very popular in many regions of the Middle East and serve to diffuse Turkish culture and traditions.

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"On the meeting point of  
two worlds, the ornament of  
Turkish homeland, the treasure  
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cherished by the Turkish nation,  
Istanbul has its place in the  
hearts of all citizens."*

Nearly a century later,  
these words are still true.



## CROSSROADS

Istanbul was a key location along the Silk Road, which has rendered it a crossroads for social, cultural, religious and ethnic exchange. Its bazaars flourished as merchants came from both East and West to exchange goods. With material objects came the transmission of knowledge and information.

Even after the arrival of silkworms to the Mediterranean and the subsequent demise of silk importation, Istanbul remained an important trade route. While for many Istanbul was a stopping point in a great journey, some travelers chose to settle permanently within the great city, which created a diverse melting pot full of the languages, customs, and beliefs of people both from the East and West of the city.

Artists from all over Turkey, Europe and the Middle East flocked to Istanbul, which became a cultural hub for the region. Poetry from the Ottoman Empire was some of the finest, partly due to Persian influence on the Empire's predecessors, the Seljuk Turks. Calligraphy was also a highly celebrated art form, as was carpet weaving, which is still prevalent today. Another tradition left over from the old trade routes was that of the meddah, or coffeehouse storytellers, who would travel and perform fictional and nonfictional stories.

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## MODERATE MODERNITY

1923 was a pivotal year for Turkey, as the Republic of Turkey emerged from the post-First World War disintegrated Ottoman Empire. The Republic's first leader, Mustafa Kemal, abolished the sultanate and introduced many reforms in order to transition the country from the former Muslim empire to a secular state. Basing Turkey on the European secular model, he introduced a new constitution, reformed the judicial and legislative branches of government, and devised new economic policies. He reduced taxes upon peasants and built thousands of new schools to promote education, which was made compulsory for children. The Turkish Parliament later bestowed the honorary surname Ataturk (Father of the Turks) upon the President, by which he is now commonly known. Ataturk is widely praised by historians and contemporary politicians, who credit him with designing the modern Turkish state and rendering it a regional powerhouse and political leader. Though some criticize his approach to religion, many proclaim Turkey's balance of secularism with Islam that is practiced widely by its citizens is an ideal model for its surrounding Muslim neighbors.

Though the administrative capital of Turkey was moved from Istanbul to Ankara with the founding of the Republic of Turkey, Istanbul has retained the position of a capital for culture, tourism and history. As Ataturk once stated, "On the meeting point of two worlds, the ornament of Turkish homeland, the treasure of Turkish history, the city cherished by the Turkish nation, Istanbul has its place in the hearts of all citizens." Nearly a century later, these words are still true.♦



# THAI *Escapade*

By Rebecca Anne Proctor

An escapade to Thailand's Golden Triangle, Chang Mai and Bangkok allows for exploration of a vibrant culture. Rebecca Anne Proctor reports on some of Thailand's most underexposed attractions.



Dreamy, superb and otherworldly with a confluence of different cultural layers, Thailand certainly makes for an adventurous and culturally intriguing expedition. But while the beach front resort areas of Koh Samui and Phuket seem to attract the majority of Thailand's tourists, the less recently explored areas of Chiang Mai and the Golden Triangle are quickly becoming destinations in their own right for their lush tropical surroundings, historical attractions and adventurous edge.

Both Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai were at one time capitals of independent northern kingdoms founded in the 13th century: Chang Mai was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom and Chiang Rai of the Mengrai dynasty. They spent centuries annexed by nearby Burma and were then taken over by Thailand, Chiang Mai in 1774 and Chiang Rai in 1786. These regions are also fascinating for the fact that they are still home to a number of ethnic hill tribes. Thus the area's intriguing history, its close kinship with neighboring Burma and its extreme beauty makes this part of Thailand feel almost like a fantasy – as if you'd gone back in time to some lost and forgotten world to explore its heavenly contents and mesmerizing sites.

## THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

We arrived at the Four Seasons Tented Camp by a traditional long tail boat that took us through the legendary Mekong River, where Northern Thailand, Myanmar and Laos meet. The river is one of the most important waterways in Asia as well as the twelfth longest in the world. Since the 1920s and up until recently, the area had become known as one of the most extensive opium-producing areas in Asia. The quick boat ride welcomed a sense of adventure and intrigue; the area was so far away and exotic that one easily felt as if they had gone back in time. Upon arrival into the tropical jungle where the Tented Camp was located, we were immediately greeted by several elephants. Young and old, they raised their tusks at first in a cheerful greeting before we were told by their trainers, known as Mahouts, to feed them. We watched as they once again raised their tusks at the site of the bananas we held in hand. Such a site was but a taste of what was to come at the Tented Camp.

We were soon whisked away to our rooms that were in the form of temporary abodes for 19th century adventure expeditions. Hand-crafted furniture, hardwood floors and traditional thatched roofs made up our "tents" complete with a large copper bathtub for two. Surrounded by the lush and vibrant nature of South East Asia and the many elephants of the elephant rehabilitation reserve, the Tented Camp is the

type of jungle retreat you would dream of as a child or read of in books.

Thailand at its dreamiest, this is a place that will resonate immediately with the adventure traveler searching for something they have yet to experience –something at once otherworldly and exotic. The Tented Camp will also appeal to the luxury traveler. While understated and unlike no other five-star retreat, the hotel offers a spectacular experience that whisks one away from the high-sprawling standards of the luxury hotel to something simpler, restorative and more in tune with nature.

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Only 15 tented rooms make up this mystical and secluded retreat perched up on the hillsides of the bamboo jungle. The hotel also shares the area with an elephant rehabilitation reserve, which is one of its most popular attractions. We were joined each day by the elephants at breakfast, which took place at Nong Yao Restaurant serving Thai, Laotian, Burmese and Western cuisine. They happily munched away as we relished in our local specialties. Day trips included a Golden Triangle excursion where we explored local temples, small shops and gazed from afar at nearby Laos and Myanmar, both of which are reachable by boat.

In addition to the hotel's ravishing surroundings, the Mahout Training or elephant trekking is one of the camp's most memorable experiences. In partnership with the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, the Four Seasons directly sponsors elephants living on the grounds next to the camp, each of which was purchased from its owner. Until recently, elephants in Thailand were used for hard labor such as logging and also as tourist spectacles where they'd often be beaten and mistreated. Here the elephants have a better life.

Within each tent is the traditional 'mahout-in-training' outfit comprising wide jean pants, a shirt and a colorful sash. An early morning excursion to meet the elephants dressed in such garb was a new experience. We were trained by

professional mahouts, given proper commands of how to steer an elephant forward, background and around when perched from up on its back. My elephant was in her mid fifties and one of the older ones at the camp. She was also known to be stubborn and rebellious. "She's my favorite," said one of the Mahouts as I climbed on her back. He told me the story of how she once tore away from the long chains in which they place the elephants in order to cross the river into nearby Myanmar. He laughed as if admiring her steadfast nature. Then there was the story of how she and another elephant at the camp, who had been brought from Japan where she was working in the circus, remembered each other from when they were teenagers. "They are inseparable," said the Mahout. Such a touching story resonated as I rode on top of my elephant and into the river below. Highly sensitive animals these elephants were – who knows how different they really are to human beings on a cognitive level.

After the intense morning of elephant trekking, a 90-minute Mahout Recovery Treatment at the hotel's spa rekindled tired and sore muscles. I was led to one of the spa's two rooms in the form of an open-air platform overlooking the jungle valley below. It was an intensely beautiful experience to be surrounded by so much luscious wildlife. At once dreamy and otherworldly, it was like a brief trip back in time or to some fictional place one only reads about in books – just like the experience of the Golden Triangle and the Four Seasons Tented Camp.

## CHANG MAI

Known as the largest and most culturally significant city in Northern Thailand, Chang Mai has recently gained much attention for its artist communities, many of which are frequented by international visitors. The city is the capital of Chang Mai Province and a former capital of the Kingdom of Lanna (1296–1768).

We arrived at the Four Seasons Resort Chang Mai, a hotel set across 20 acres in the Mae Rim Valley overlooking Doi Suthep Mountains range and surrounded by mountains and paddy fields. Beautifully conceived in Lanna Kingdom style blending the regional cultures of Burma, India and China, the resort is made in the form of a Thai village with 98 Lanna-style pavilions, residences and villas surrounding a working rice farm, each decorated with Thai art and inclusive of an outdoor sala. The resort also includes three and four storey private residences that are built to resemble Thai and Burmese temples. They boast rich interiors of fireplaces, gabled buttresses and polished teak floors. Recreational activities include the Summit Green Valley

Country Club and the Royal Chiang Mai Golf Resort as well as two tennis courts.

Of the resort's special features is the fully-equipped cooking school that comprises a team of 40 full-time gardeners and working water buffalos to maintain the rice paddies as well as an organic kitchen farm and landscaped gardens. A special cooking class led by Chef Pirun Pumicome boasted some of the best food of our trip. Under his watchful gaze and charming instruction we learned how to cook Thai specialty dishes including Tum Taeng Poo Nim (Spicy Cucumber Salad with Soft Shell Crab); Pla Kra Phong Sam Rod (Deep Fried Baby Sea Bass with Three Flavors Sauce) and Spicy Coconut Soup with Prawn and Galangal – all dishes that I planned to cook again once back in Dubai.

An excursion out into the city of Chiang Mai led us to visit the Buddhist temple of Wat Phra Sing that houses the important Buddhist statue: the Phra Buddha Sihing. Young Buddhist monks walked around outside the entry way as did other families and children. Once inside the temple an aura of calm and contemplation permeated the air as we paid our respects to the Phra Buddha Sihing. Afterwards a trip to the nearby marketplace revealed a busy ambiance as women and children quickly seized up their ingredients needed to prepare the day's meal. As a traveller, it was easy to be in awe of the array of produce and little trinkets - from fresh fruit to food, clothes and handmade jewelry as well as the incredible diversity of shoppers. It was a colorful depiction of the diversity of life in Chang Mai.

## BANGKOK

Bustling Bangkok is a jolt to the senses after days spent in the exotic ambiance of Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai. We were brought to our new place of lodging: the Four Seasons Bangkok. The hotel is conveniently located within the heart of the city and features traditional Thai architecture replete with hand-painted silk ceilings, a grand lobby and beautiful gardens.

Of note when one first enters the hotel are the building's incredible murals. When the Four Seasons opened in 1983, Thailand's most renowned painters, sculptors and craftsmen were invited to assist in the creation of a new art form: Thai ceiling frescos made in watercolor and raw silk. Khun Dan Wongprasat, the architect behind the design and survival of the traditional arts in the hotel conceived the remarkable ceiling painting in the hotel lobby. At a length of more than 700 meters in total, each ceiling in the main and mezzanine floor

is decorated with large mandala-type paintings designed and executed by the late Acharn Paiboon Suwannakudt, one of Thailand's foremost painters who unfortunately did not live to see the end of the masterpiece he worked so hard to create. His children, who are artists themselves, assisted in its completion. ♦

At once mesmerizing and dramatic, the murals are divided into 19 major sections depicting startling hand-painted silk mandalas, Buddhist symbols, adapted Sung dynasty floral patterns and traditional Thai mythological and astrological animals in a wondrous outburst of creativity, Thai heritage and myth.

The Four Seasons is located in the Ratchaprasong shopping and entertainment district and a short walk outside provides access to a variety of museums, shops and other cultural attractions. But more than anything else, it is the colorful street life that easily attracts and prompts the imagination in this busy town. Street peddlers selling snacks are juxtaposed with high-class Thais who wear their designer garb in an elegant manner. Nearby luxury megamall Siam Paragon is set in glass and steel and houses luxury brands like CHANEL, Louis Vuitton and Gucci in addition to a Kinokuniya bookstore and a variety of gourmet cafés and restaurants. After perusing the multitude of luxury brands, other nearby cultural attractions such as the Wat Benchamabophit (Marble Temple) known for its main chapel built in white Carrara marble from Italy and the Grand Palace, formerly the seat of the king, his court and government until 1925 as well as home to the famous Emerald Buddha, provide an enlightening historical contrast to modern day Bangkok and all of its fascinating cultural layers.

From the exotic and lush jungles of the Golden Triangle to the chaotic city of Bangkok, our trip took us full circle from Thailand's more hidden wonders to its bustling metropolis. Highlighted from such a brief stay was but a taste of the country's many facets, which so easily left me wanting to discover more and unravel Thailand's many hidden treasures.

A particular story that resonated was that of Jim Thompson, the American businessman who helped revive the Thai silk industry during the 1950s and 1960s and who famously and without a trace, disappeared. To this day it is not known what happened to Thompson. The biggest police hunt in Malaysian history reportedly went after Thompson following news of his disappearance. Speculation regarding his work as an undercover CIA agent joined other stories making him the continuous subject of socio-political debate. But

what remains are his wondrous silk scarves, a luxury item in their own right, and ones that are renowned for their beauty and cultural heritage throughout Asia. His creation, like Thailand itself, is born of much mystery, intrigue and splendor – elements that will cause the traveler to keep returning to this special place filled with countless wonders. ♦

For more information on the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation visit [helpingelephants.org](http://helpingelephants.org)

For more information on the Four Seasons properties in Thailand visit [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)



# ON DIVERSITY

“

THERE ARE NOT MORE THAN FIVE PRIMARY COLOURS, YET IN COMBINATION THEY PRODUCE MORE HUES THAN CAN EVER BEEN SEEN.

”

Sun Tzu  
*The Art of War*



Roger Vivier

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