

ELLE ARABIA

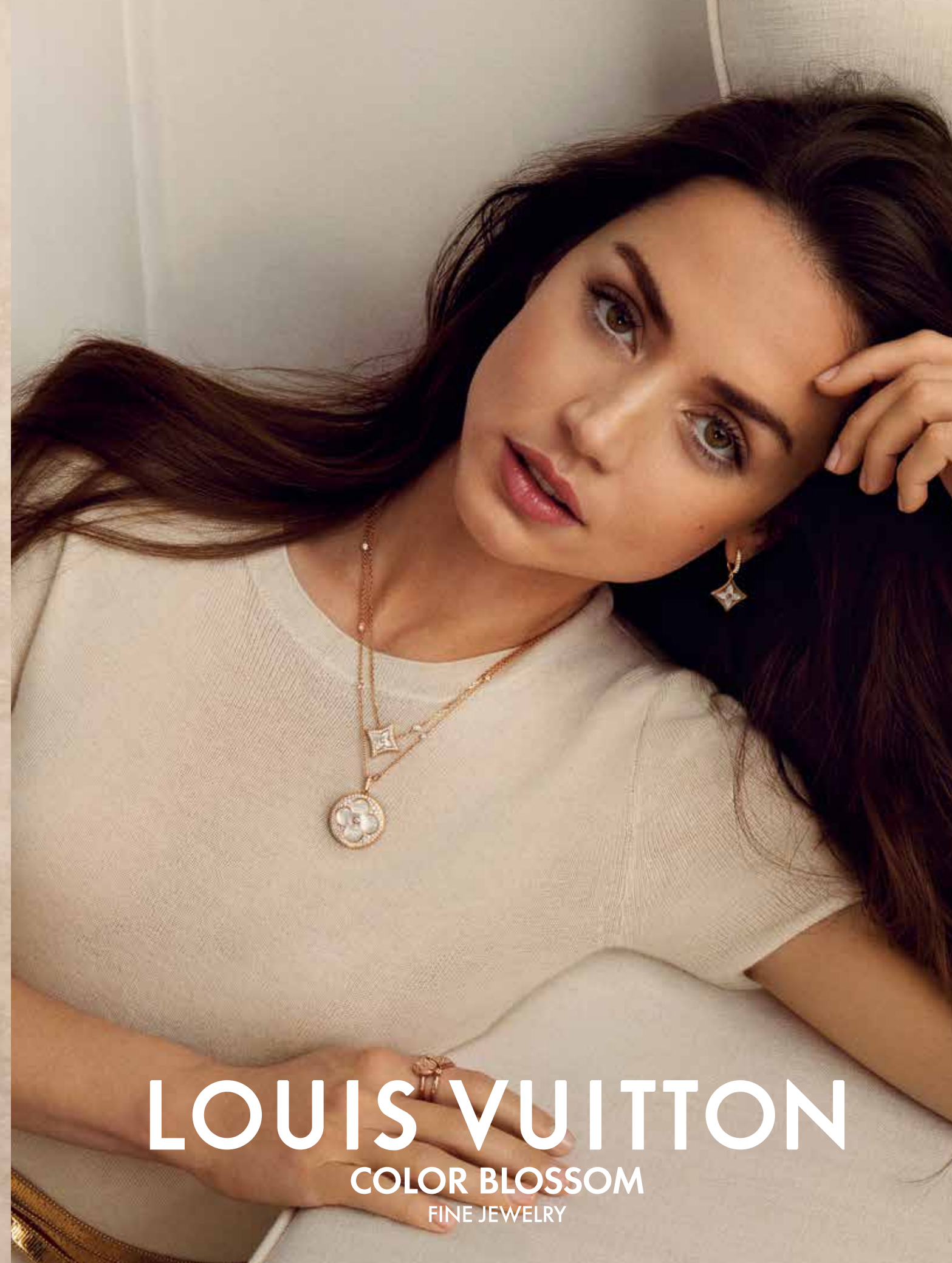
APRIL 2026

UAE DHS 30



From here, forward

CHOOSING TO STAY, CREATE AND RISE



LOUIS VUITTON
COLOR BLOSSOM
FINE JEWELRY



Radar

14 SEA STATE
On the water with Victoria Gonzalez, APM Monaco's latest collection moves between Art Deco lines and twisted pavé forms

30 TRUE FORM
Tod's Spring/Summer 2026 keeps it all about leather, spotlighting signature pieces from the Gommino to structured bags with a polished, easy finish

Jewelry

36 PLAY IT SHARP
Cartier's Clash de Cartier collection combines rose, yellow and white gold with chalcedony, onyx, diamonds and dyed agate

44 SACRED DESIGN
Eugenia Bruni, Creative Director of Pasquale Bruni, speaks to ELLE Arabia about the emotional connection between a woman and the jewels she wears

46 IN HER OWN LIGHT
Maya Aboul Hosn has always owned the spotlight — but this year, she's letting us see what lies beyond it. From new roles to refined dreams, she reflects on risk, refinement, and stepping into her next chapter

Features

54 COVERSTORY: FROM HERE, FORWARD
In a moment defined by uncertainty, they choose presence over retreat. From the UAE, these six women are creating, building, and holding space for what comes next driven by resilience, purpose, and an unshakable sense of self. They open up to ELLE Arabia about navigating the weight of the present, finding strength in staying, and shaping the future from where they stand

64 TAKING SHAPE
Four Saudi women shaping culture, design, business and entrepreneurship today, each building with purpose, perspective and a strong sense of place

68 IN HER WORDS
Caroline Faraj, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of CNN Arabic, reflects on four years of Her Story, a platform giving Arab women the space to speak with depth, clarity and authorship

Fashion

70 LIGHT PLAY
Dior RTW Spring–Summer 2026 leans into a sunlit, carefree mood where light layers, washed denim and house signatures — from the Bar jacket to the Medallion belt and Cape slip easily into a warm-weather rhythm

80 BLACK ON WHITE
Crisp, graphic, and effortlessly chic, the monochrome duo proves that sometimes the strongest statement comes from keeping things beautifully simple

90 PALM ROYALE
Desert hues, retro lines and sun-drenched glamour — the season's most stylish escape comes dressed in vintage resort cool

Beauty

100 FULL VOLUME
Dior pushes its signature floral into richer territory with J'adore Intense by Perfume Creation Director Francis Kurkdjian

104 SOFT FOCUS
Minimal, modern, and effortlessly sensual, Narciso Rodriguez reimagines musc for a new kind of confidence.

106 BELOW THE SURFACE
With Un Jardin sous la Mer, Hermès perfumer Christine Nagel expands the House's ParfumsJardins collection

Gourmet

108 SWEET SHIFT
With Keto Kartel, Maria Galabova rethinks indulgence through a structured, globally minded approach to sugar-free patisserie, where European craft meets a more considered way of living

110 PRETTY IN PASTRY
In his latest book, "La Pâtisserie de Jeffrey Cagnes" (Solar Editions), the pastry chef reimagines classics with an unexpected twist

Lifestyle

120 DESTINATION: THE JEDDAH EDITION, KSA
A new address in Jeddah brings the brand's pared-back luxury to the Red Sea coast

121 BALANCING HEALTH & HARMONY
Haya Bitar, a leadership and personal transformation expert, ontological coach and art therapist, offers a candid take on her work, her approach to holistic wellbeing, and how she helps others navigate burnout

125 IN BETWEEN LINES
Emirati artist Sarah Alagroobi reflects on the crossroads of culture, identity, and discovery. Her work invites viewers to encounter the hidden self, as she probes Arab identity through a cross-cultural lens





GIARDINI SEGRETI

PASQUALEBRUNI
EST. 1961

EMBRACING 65 YEARS OF LOVE

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CARRY ON... A PLAYFUL MIX OF STATEMENT BAGS THAT BRING A LIGHTER MOOD TO ANY DAY. BOLD, CHARMING, AND DEFINITELY DESIGNED TO BE NOTICED!

Holding Ground

There are moments when words feel heavier than usual. This April is one of them. The world around us is unsettled, and yet, within these pages, there is a quiet insistence on moving forward gently, but with purpose.

On our cover, six women – Hajer Abdullah, Lama Jouni, Hala Kazim, Zahra Abdalla, Dima Ayad, and Faia Younan – come together in a shared moment. They are not stepping away from the present, but choosing to stand within it, creating, building, and continuing, even when certainty feels out of reach. Across the issue, that same spirit unfolds, each bringing her own perspective, her own rhythm, her own way of holding steady. In conversations with women shaping culture and business, in CNN Arabic's Her Story platform marking four years of giving women space to speak in their own words, and in the quieter journeys of artists, chefs, and thinkers redefining what it means to create with care.

There is, too, the rhythm of the season. Spring arrives quietly, then all at once. In fashion, it shows up in lighter layers and an ease that is carefree yet architectural. In jewelry, it becomes more personal with pieces that hold meaning and memory. Beauty leans softer, closer to the skin, while scent drifts between worlds, from gardens beneath the sea to florals that deepen and evolve.

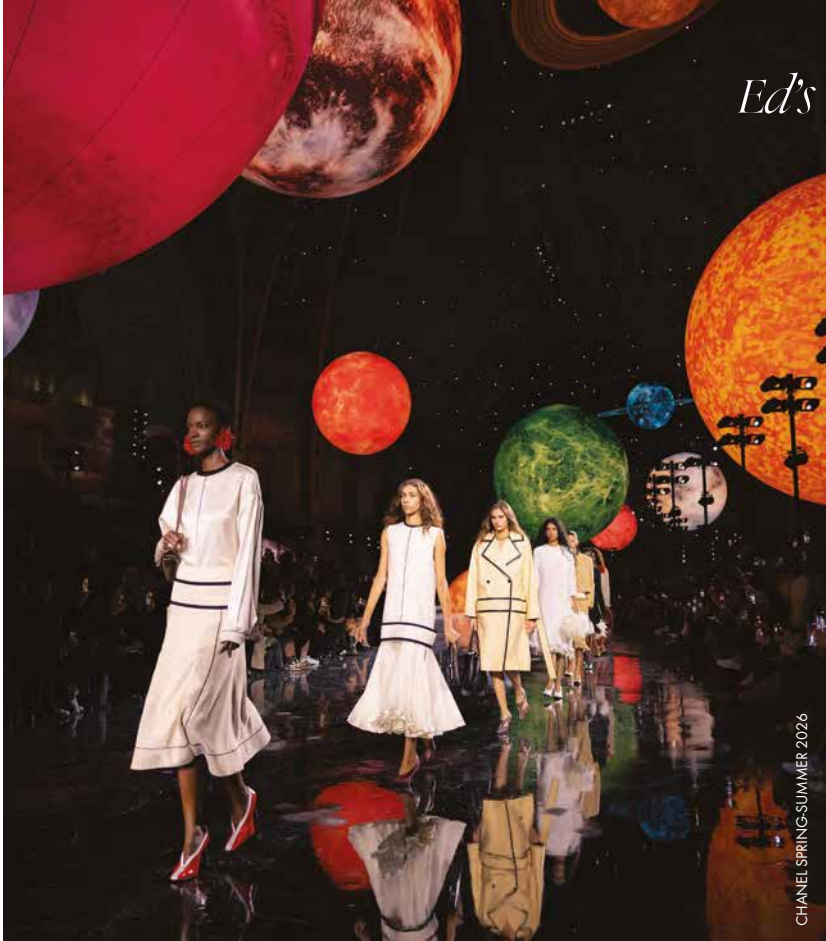
What this issue holds most of all is not escape, but continuity. A reminder that even in uncertain times, there is still room for beauty, for thought, and for looking ahead however softly to what comes next.



Dina Spahi
dina.spahi@ellearabia.com

In Orbit

LOOKING TO THE SKIES, AND BEYOND... OFF-WHITE LEADS WITH A QUIET, WEIGHTLESS FEEL, CUT THROUGH WITH A SINGLE FLASH OF RED



1. RÔHE 2. CHLOÉ 3. GIVENCHY 4. MARNI 5. SAINT LAURENT 6. VALENTINO 7. MARQUES'ALMEIDA



The Bag

A new structured tote by Bottega Veneta, the Barbara in yellow Intrecciato balances clean lines with a soft, tactile finish, defined by its paneled body and subtle Brass Vibrato hardware. Easy to carry by hand or on the shoulder, it keeps things sharp without feeling rigid.



The Sautoir

Marking 130 years of the Monogram, Louis Vuitton introduces a Color Blossom sautoir in deep blue sodalite, set in gold and diamonds. Newly added to the line, the stone is sculpted into the Monogram flower using a complex carving technique that enhances its depth and tone.



The Timepiece

The Gucci 25H features a 40 mm white gold case with a skeleton dial set with baguette sapphires, revealing the flying tourbillon movement beneath. Part of the house's 2026 high watchmaking releases, it is finished with a blue alligator strap.

ELLE

radar

HEAT RISING...
Sun-washed
tones of yellow,
rust and burnt
orange sweep
through the Saint
Laurent Summer
2026 collection,
bringing warmth
to the house's
sharp tailoring
and fluid
silhouettes.

In the Mix...

FROM NEW COLLECTIONS TO CREATIVE
COLLABORATIONS, THE PIECES AND PROJECTS CATCHING
OUR ATTENTION THIS MONTH.

SAINT LAURENT SUMMER26

Everybody's Wearing... Retro Athleisure

Old-school sport gets a polished refresh, with track jackets and jersey-clad pieces leading the charge – equal parts nostalgic and effortlessly put-together.



Fashion Memo

A CURATED ROUNDUP OF THE BEST NEW FASHION AND NOTE WORTHY PIECES TO PAY ATTENTION TO NOW!



1. PANE 2. SIMONA ROCHA 3. ACNE STUDIOS 4. FARM RIO 5. ADIDAS 6. CHLOË

Trending...

Ballet Sneakers

A softer alternative to your usual kicks, balancing slim soles and delicate lines with just enough sport to ground them; consider this your cue to step lightly!

Cult Buy

A reworked bucket bag with attitude, the Pivot pairs sculptural curves with bold Medusa hardware and a slick chain detail; polished, directional, and unapologetically Versace.



New Kid on the Block

Aimé Leon Dore finally turns its attention to womenswear and it's been worth the wait. Expect the same downtown cool, now reworked with softer silhouettes and an effortless, throw-it-on appeal.



LAUNCHMETRICS SPOTLIGHT



I Spy

Jacques Marie Mage just dropped its latest limited-edition eyewear collection, and it's giving collectible energy. Handcrafted, highly exclusive, and rooted in storytelling, this is fashion with substance (and serious resale potential).



Coveted Collab

WHO: UNIQLO X JW ANDERSON
WHAT: Your everyday basics, but with a wink – think preppy staples, unexpected colour hits, and just enough personality to make getting dressed feel less predictable.

SEA *state*

On the water with *Victoria Gonzalez*, APM Monaco's latest collection moves between *Art Deco lines* and twisted pavé forms, where chokers, bangles and statement drops bring a polished edge to *sunlit dressing*

Producer & Photographer AMER MOHAMAD
Stylist RHIA KAPOOR

Statement Art Deco Drop Earrings, Art Deco
Pave Choker, Lumiere Pave Choker, Art Deco
Adjustable Necklace. APM Monaco
Jacket, Chanel



Torsade Pave Hoop Earrings, Torsade Pave Chokers in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Rose gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold. APM Monaco Dress, Norma Kamali



Torsade Pave Hoop Earrings, Torsade Pave Chokers in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Rose gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold. APM Monaco Suit, Jacquemus

Torsade Pave Hoop Earrings, Torsade Pave Chokers in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Rose gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold. APM Monaco
Suit, Jacquemus



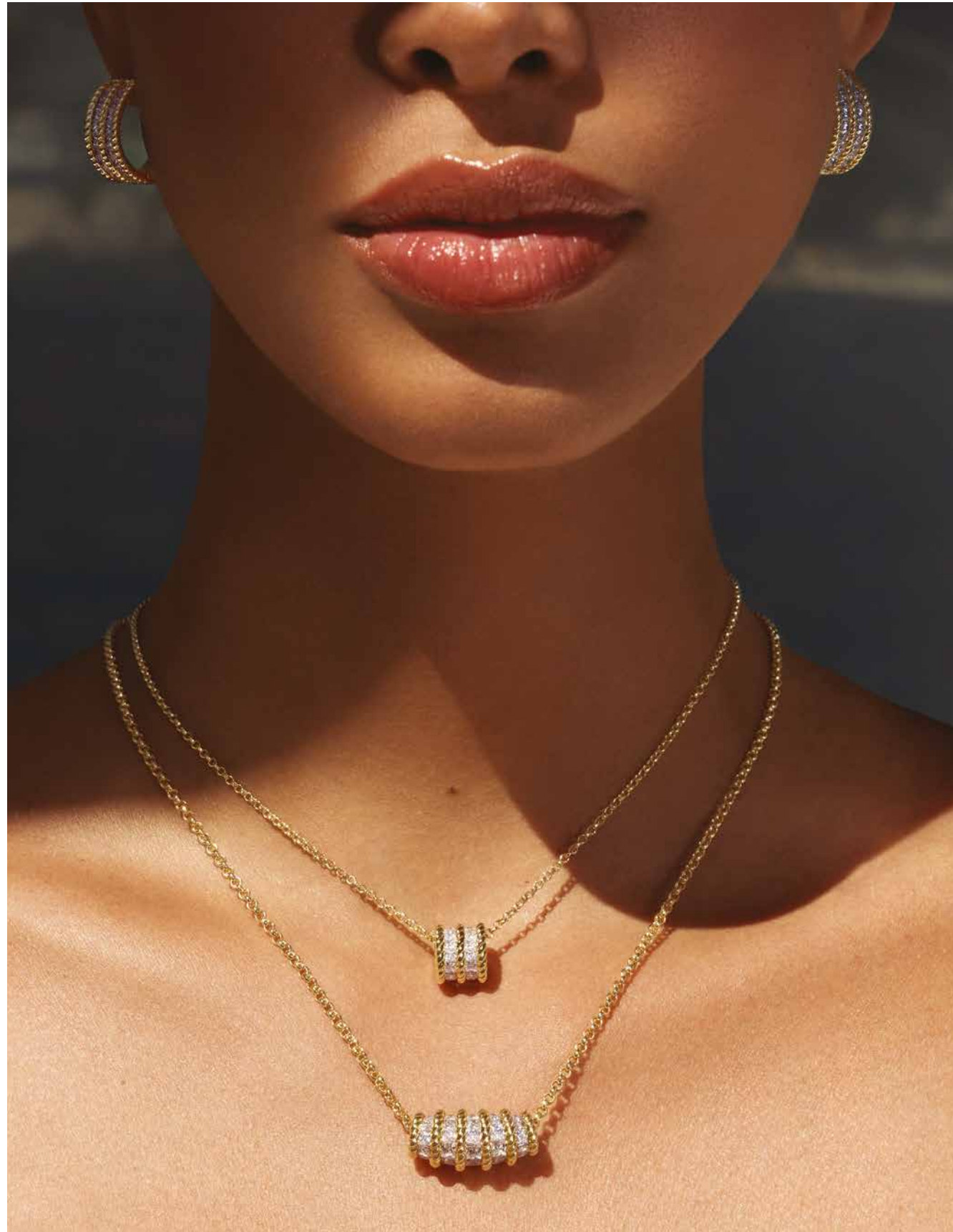
Accessories



Torsade Pave Chokers in Silver.
APM Monaco

Accessories

Torsade Pave Hoop Earrings, Torsade Adjustable necklaces. APM Monaco *Suit, Jacquemus*



Torsade Pave Hoop Earrings, Torsade Pave Chokers in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Gold, Torsade Pave Bangles in Rose gold, Torsade Pave Ring in Gold. APM Monaco *Dress, Norma Kamali*

A NEW DIRECTION...

Lightness, clarity and alignment are the new life goals for model and entrepreneur Victoria Gonzalez. As she develops the pioneering wellness members' venue Vista Club in South Africa, the Venezuelan entrepreneur and partner of international DJ Black Coffee speaks to Elle Arabia about purpose, stillness and mindful moments.

Victoria, tell us where we find you in your life today? I'm 29 now and in recent years I've felt a natural shift toward building something more personal and meaningful in my life, which has been really exciting. I'm trying to take a more mindful approach to luxury.

Do you feel you're at a landmark stage in your life? This moment feels right because after intense research on wellness and healthy living I now have clarity. I understand what I value, how I want to live and what I want to build long term.

This is more than a business to you, isn't it? Yes, it's deeply personal. I feel it's a reflection of my journey and of choosing to live with more awareness and intention.

Can you describe that journey so far and how your upbringing has shaped you? I was born and raised in Venezuela and studied publicity and marketing. Shortly after graduating I began working as a model in cities like Milan, Istanbul, London and Madrid. Ever since I was young, I always dreamt of becoming a global citizen and participating in a global economy.

How did this nomadic modelling career influence your thinking? Living in different places at a young age deeply shaped my creative sensibility. I saw beautiful places, each with their own energy, but I often felt a sense of disconnection. Very few places truly allowed me to slow down and feel grounded. I found myself searching for spaces where wellbeing and daily life could exist in harmony. Over time, that feeling became clearer. I did not just want to find those spaces, I wanted to create one that reflected a more conscious way of living. For me, Vista Club is a social and wellness members' club rooted in nature and community.

How do you want people to experience the club?

Vista Club is conceived as a complete environment where different aspects of wellbeing come together in a natural way. Members can move between physical training, yoga and pilates, guided practices such as breathwork and sound healing, and restorative experiences like the hammam. There are also spaces designed for pause and connection including a members' lounge and a garden that provides a grounded moment in the city. Vista becomes part of your lifestyle, not just a destination.

What makes Vista Club different from a luxury gym? It brings together physical wellbeing, mental clarity, and social connection in a way that feels seamless and considered. Traditional gyms focus on performance and private members' clubs focus on status. Vista is about balance. It's a space where wellness feels natural, social connection feels genuine, and luxury feels quiet and considered rather than loud.

Why did you choose to launch in Johannesburg? It felt instinctive. There is a strong creative energy there, and a sense that something new is emerging. For me, Africa represents depth, culture and opportunity. It is a place where you can create something meaningful that remains connected to its surroundings and community.

What does a member feel when they enter Vista Club? There is an immediate shift to something more aligned with a slower, more conscious pace. I want people to leave feeling reconnected with their mind and body and with a clearer sense of how they want to move through life.

For the recent birthday party of her partner Black Coffee, Victoria wore jewels by APM Monaco, the fashion-forward brand based in the south of France. Victoria wore two stunning necklaces and a ring from the Hiver collection for the warm and welcoming party in Cape Town in March. Worn by F1 driver Charles Leclerc and actress Eva Longoria, APM Monaco brings a simple yet elegant edge to style.

TALENT: VICTORIA GONZALEZ; PHOTOGRAPHER: AMER MOHAMAD; PHOTO ASSISTANT: LAURENCE MOOKKOTI; STYLIST: RHIA KAPOOR; STYLING ASSISTANT: DOLAR DEBBIE; HAIR/MAKEUP: MANUEL LOSADA; LOCATION: SOUTH AFRICA



*Radar*BRANDON
MAXWELL

DOLCE &
GABBANA

JENNIFER
BEHR

PETALS AT PLAY

FLORALS ARE IN FULL BLOOM
- ROMANTIC, LIGHT, AND
QUIETLY JOYFUL. CONSIDER
IT YOUR DAILY DOSE OF
HAPPINESS, STITCHED IN SILK
AND CHIFFON.

SIMKHAI

REIKE NEN

VALENTINO

LAUNCHMETRICS SPOTLIGHT

ELCE

L'IDÉE

RIXO

RABANNE

GANNI



RODARTE

MAGDA BUTRYM

STAUD

VIBI VENEZIA

RABANNE

LEON

Spring Notes...

Light green and blush florals feel fresh, modern, and easy to wear now.



GIANVITO ROSSI



PATOU



JACQUES MARIE MAGE



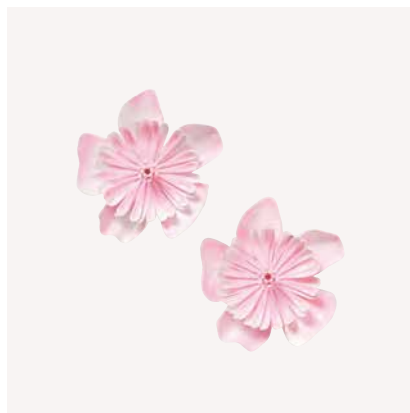
ALÉMAIS



SIMONE ROCHA.



SAINT LAURENT



CHLOÉ



EMILIA WICKSTEAD



ALAMEDA TURQUESA

ELLE

accessories

COUTURE CURVE
Dior reimagines a 1952 silhouette through Jonathan Anderson's Cigale bag, where sculpted lines, a softened bow detail, and supple calfskin translate Christian Dior's iconic dress into a modern, everyday piece.

Blue "Dior Cigale" Bag
Photographer: Diala Bassatne



Carry On...

BAGS, SHOES AND SMALL DETAILS SET THE TONE THIS MONTH, BALANCING SHAPE, TEXTURE AND A SENSE OF EASE THAT FEELS RIGHT FOR NOW

STRING ME ALONG

SOFT, SLOUCHY, AND CINCHED JUST SO — THE NEW DRAWSTRING FEELS MORE HEIRLOOM DUST BAG THAN CASUAL POUCH. CRAFTED IN SUPPLE LEATHER AND WORN CLOSE, IT'S UNDERSTATED, A LITTLE NOSTALGIC, AND VERY NOW.



1. PRADA 2. VALENTINO 3. BOTTEGA VENETA 4. ETRO 5. GANNI

- 1. GUCCI 2. OUR LEGACY 3. CHLOÉ
- 4. CINQ A SEPT 5. ISABEL MARANT
- 6. SIMON MILLER 7. BOTTEGA VENETA
- 8. GOLDEN GOOSE 9. ANCIENT GREEK SANDALS



RETRO CLOGS

A '70S ICON STEPS BACK IN — ALL BOHEMIAN EASE, WOODEN SOLES, AND THAT EFFORTLESS, JUST-THREW-THIS-ON ATTITUDE THAT MAKES SPRING DRESSING FEEL CAREFREE AGAIN.

Tod's Metal Dots Loafers



Photographer DIALA BASSATNE

TRUE FORM

*Tod's Spring/Summer 2026 keeps it all about leather, spotlighting signature pieces from the Gommino to structured bags with a *polished, easy finish*.*

Tod's T Timeless Bag





Tod's Metal Dots Bag

PHOTOGRAPHER DIALA BASSATNE





MARKET PLACE:

HOW GREEN DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?

Keep, Calm, Carry on... ...and have some tea

Dior Maison brings a softer note to the table with Champs de Tulipes, a new collection inspired by the house's spring-summer 1953 Haute Couture line. Rendered on Limoges porcelain and finished with 24-karat gold, the floral motif appears across plates, serving pieces, and tea sets in four shades.



This month we look to Nature to find some peace of mind



1. LOEWE, CUCUMBER 2. VOLUSPA, NOBLE FIR GARLAND 3. DYPTIQUE, FIGUIER 4. DOLCE & GABBANA, SICILIAN NEROLI AND LEMON



Eye Spy... A Green Scene

FLORALS TAKE ON A BRIGHTER, PUNCHIER EDGE IN VIVID GREENS, CUTTING THROUGH WITH A CRISP, GRAPHIC FEEL.

ELLE

jewelry

Spring in Flight... Van Cleef & Arpels introduces the Lucky Spring butterfly in yellow gold, set with lapis lazuli, blue and green agate, and white mother-of-pearl. Here, the butterfly takes the form of a clip, placed among the collection's existing floral motifs with a lighter, more fluid feel.



In Full Bloom...

FLORAL MOTIFS AND LIGHT, EXPRESSIVE PIECES DEFINE THE SEASON'S JEWELRY



Photographer MOZ
Creative Director & Stylist ASHH

PLAY *it* SHARP

Top To Bottom, All Cartier
Jewelry: Clash De Cartier
Earrings in Rose Gold and
Green Dyed Agate, Clash
De Cartier Necklace in
Rose Gold, Clash De
Cartier Ring in Yellow
Gold, Clash De Cartier
Ring in Yellow Gold

*Cartier's Clash de Cartier collection combines rose,
yellow and white gold with chalcedony, onyx,
diamonds and dyed agate, where rounded forms
meet sharper edges in a bold contrast*

Top To Bottom, All Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Chalcedony, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold and Chalcedony, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Rose Gold And Onyx, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Rose Gold and Diamonds



Top To Bottom All in Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold



Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate



Top To Bottom, All Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold



Top To Bottom All Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold



Top To Bottom, All Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold and Red Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold and Onyx, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold and Green Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Bracelet in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Rose Gold and Red Dyed Agate, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold, Clash De Cartier Ring in Yellow Gold



PHOTOGRAPHER: NOZ, CREATIVE DIRECTOR & STYLIST: ASHIL, HAIR: BETTY BEE, MAKEUP: MABO, TALENT: ERA © MABO MODELS, LOCATION: BICKBOSS STUDIOS

Jewelry



Top To Bottom, All Cartier Jewelry: Clash De Cartier Earrings in Rose Gold and Onyx, Clash De Cartier Necklace in Rose Gold, Clash De Cartier Necklace in White Gold and Diamond



VIP - MANDALA

Your jewelry often feels less like adornment and more like energy made visible. Do you think of jewelry as something spiritual? Energy and soul are the invisible currents that breathe life into every gesture of my creativity. I believe that human beings are woven of energy, and that when the energy of a jewel meets the energy of the one who wears it, a quiet alchemy takes place: two forces recognizing one another, touching, and gently lifting each other higher. From this mystery arises an energy that loves, heals, and illuminates, an unexpected beauty that is at once fragile and powerful. This is why I believe women are divine: because within them lives something sacred, something that belongs to the unseen.

When you begin designing, do you start with a drawing, a symbol, or a feeling? Creation is a miracle, especially when one surrenders to true creativity: to intuition that precedes thought, to sensations that move through the body, and to emotions born in silence. Gold, alive in my hands, becomes a guide. Sometimes the drawing gives birth to the form; other times the form itself calls to be before it is even imagined. Perception comes before meaning, which reveals itself later, like a secret whispered by time.

The latest Pasquale Bruni creations are rooted in the heart chakra and the idea of embrace. How has the Maison's vision of feminine power evolved? This year, my path takes root in the heart chakra. It is an ancient calling, one I began listening to in my early studies in 2015, and one I now feel the need to fully honor, in a time that asks for presence, listening, and feeling. The green energy of Anahata is a breath that reconnects us to nature. I am pulled toward the wildest greens, those uncharted hues where tones wander, meet, and dissolve into each other. In that raw truth, the heart opens and finds its reflection. This is a year to return to embracing. The embrace runs through all the collections, one that does not restrain but liberates. Born from the study of the anatomical jewel, it is living, fluid, and enveloping, capable of following the body and inviting it to feel itself. Within this intimate space, feminine

SACRED DESIGN

Eugenia Bruni, Creative Director of Pasquale Bruni, believes a jewel is far more than adornment. Guided by nature, energy, and the quiet power of the heart, she speaks to ELLE Arabia about the spiritual language behind her creations and the emotional connection between a woman and the jewels she wears.

power evolves. It is a quiet, continuous growth. The jewel accompanies and leads us further, guiding us toward higher knowledge while never losing the lightness of childhood.

Nature has always been central to Pasquale Bruni — flowers, moons, gardens, spirals. Is nature your inspiration, or is it something closer to memory or prayer? Nature is memory and prayer at the same time, and so much more. It is my greatest teacher. My first teacher was my father; then nature arrived, and it was she who made me free. Through her paths, she taught me what creation truly is and the strength that resides in the act of creating. My concept of prayer is to pause and listen, universal love, and the meditation on that love. The elements of creation are also prayer: the moon, the flowers, the stars,



EUGENIA BRUNI



ROSINA

FIGLIA DEI FIORI

BON TON

the spirals that allow this love to enter and flow out. The spiral holds a sacred symbol, the universe in motion, love given and returned, the invisible embrace that surrounds us.

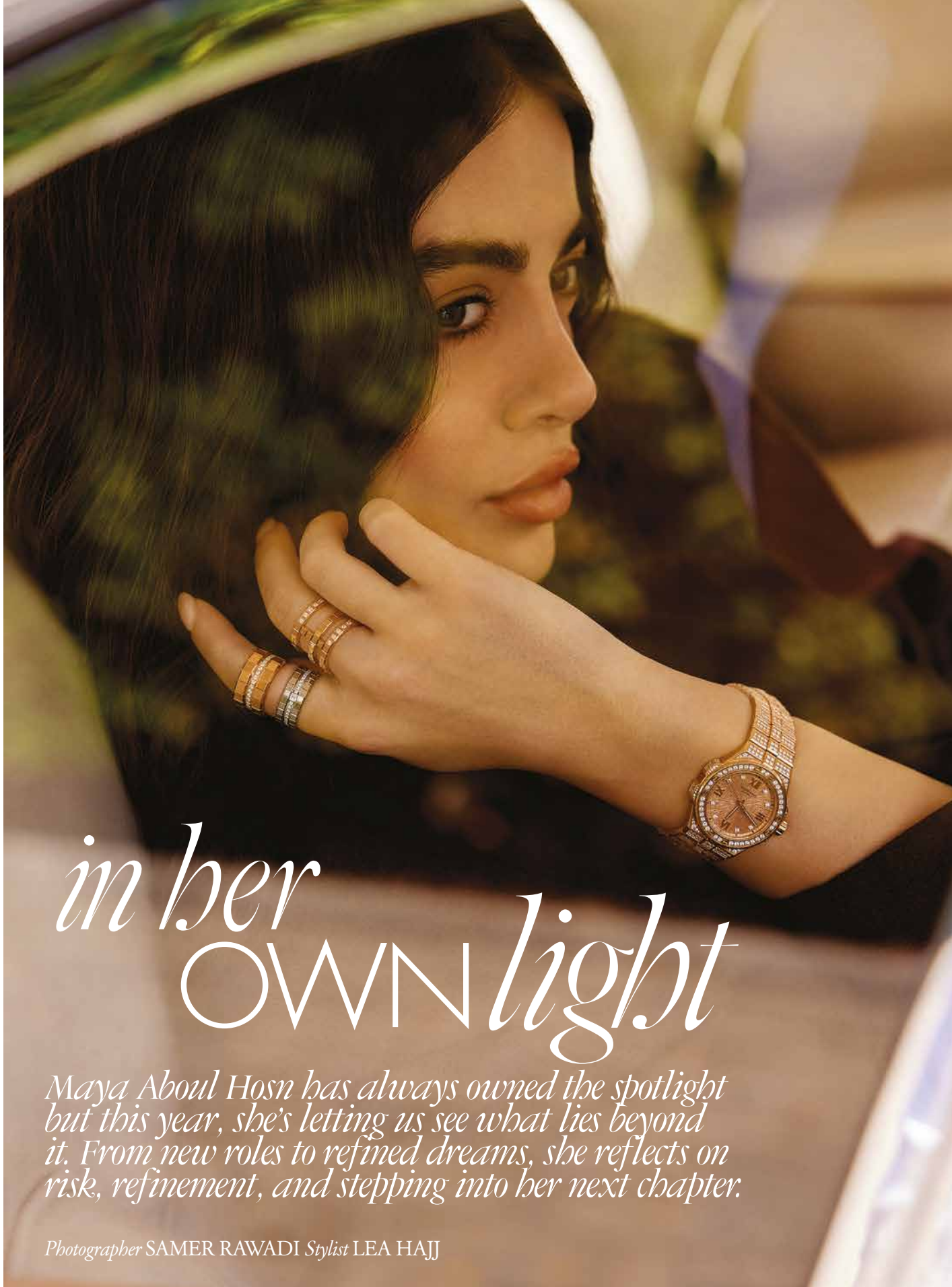
There is a sensual, emotional intimacy in Pasquale Bruni jewelry that feels deeply feminine. How do you translate an inner feeling into a physical object? Yes, there is deep sensuality and intimacy, and for this I feel profound gratitude. More than anything else, this is what makes us truly unique today. This too is a journey: years of research and study to arrive at this intimacy, through listening to anatomy, energy, and emotion, while allowing the process to remain free. Throughout this path of growth, what I felt most strongly was the desire for women to rediscover their own gestures, the love for themselves, and their femininity. Through a jewel that embraces them, that dresses the body, that allows them to feel themselves.

In this new Pasquale Bruni chapter, certain pieces feel almost architectural in spirit, like small sanctuaries worn on the body. Do you see the collection's star jewels as places of protection, rather than simply objects of beauty? The jewel is a temple. A temple of emotions, a temple of wonder. It holds every feeling: joy, as well as those deeper and more intense ones, because they are real, authentic emotions.

This is also reflected in the facets of the stones. Many of our gemstones are cut in the shape of an eye, because the eyes do not lie, and within them all emotions can be found. The jewel is also a temple of wonder, because every emotion, even the most radiant or the most intense, represents the truest part of life and should always be welcomed with awe, reverence, and love for life itself.

Among all the jewels in the new collection, is there one piece that feels closest to your own inner state at this moment in life, almost like a self-portrait in precious form? Within each collection lives a state of the soul, or a fragment of it. An invisible bond runs through them all, a silent fil rouge that connects them and allows them to speak to one another. This is why the collections can be worn together, naturally intertwining like chapters of a single story. Mandala is a labyrinth of emotions, a return to the center. Bon Ton is also a return, finding one of its deepest expressions in amethysts, a stone of intense personality, the queen of gemstones, capable of revealing who we are. In its cut, Bon Ton is both flower and gaze: an eye opening to the light and to the world. This inner journey continues in the Venus Topaz version, a stone that tells a story of deep, ancestral love for the ocean, a Venus rising from the waters, carrying new light within her.

If a single Pasquale Bruni jewel could whisper something to a woman in a difficult moment, what message would you want it to carry? Hold me close to your heart and remember to love yourself. I am light, you are light, let us blossom as one.



in her OWN light

Maya Aboul Hosn has always owned the spotlight but this year, she's letting us see what lies beyond it. From new roles to refined dreams, she reflects on risk, refinement, and stepping into her next chapter.

Photographer SAMER RAWADI Stylist LEA HAJJ



Left page: Alpine Eagle Ethical Rose Gold Timepiece with Diamonds, Ice Cube Ethical Gold Rings & Ice Cube Ethical Rose Gold Earrings, All Chopard Full Look, Fay Ezzat

This page: Alpine Eagle Ethical Yellow Gold Timepiece with Diamonds, Ice Cube Ethical Gold Bangles & Ice Cube Ethical White Gold Hoops, All Chopard Full Look, Tom Ford



Alpine Eagle Ethical Yellow Gold
Timepiece with Diamonds, Ice
Cube Ethical Gold Bangles & Ice
Cube Ethical White Gold Hoops,
All Chopard
Full Look, Tom Ford



Jewelry



You've grown up in front of the camera — but who is Maya when the lights are off and no one's watching? When the lights go off, Maya doesn't switch personas. She's the same woman, grounded, intuitive, and real just without the performance. What people see on camera is simply a louder version of who she already is in private. No masks, no contrast... just the same heart, the same values, and the same presence, whether anyone's watching or not.

You've lived in front of the camera for years as a host. What was the exact moment you knew you had made it? I knew I had made it the day I stopped chasing validation and when I felt the people's love without asking for it. When strangers spoke to me with familiarity, when support stayed even in silence, and when the connection went beyond the screen. That's when it became real, not because I was seen, but because I was trusted.

Live television is unpredictable by nature. What's the funniest or most unexpected moment you've had live on air? Live television is unpredictable and that's part of its charm. One of the funniest moments was when my earpiece suddenly cut off live on air. Add to that a burst of laughter over something completely random, and for a few seconds nothing was planned anymore. We laughed, I improvised, and the show kept flowing. Those moments remind you that live TV isn't about perfection it's about presence and quick instinct.

Let's talk about your role in Bel Haram — without spoilers, what did this project teach you about yourself, beyond the role itself? Bel Haram taught me more about myself than I expected. Beyond the role, it was a real challenge because it was

Ice Cube Ethical Rose Gold High Jewelry Necklace & Ice Cube Ethical Gold Rings, All Chopard Full Look, Fay Ezzat

my first experience in drama. It pushed me outside my comfort zone and forced me to trust myself in a completely new space. I learned patience, vulnerability, and how to let go of control. It wasn't just about acting; it was about discovering a different strength within me, quietly, honestly, and with a lot of growth along the way.

What did 7 Dogs — and working with Monica Bellucci — teach you about how big you're allowed to dream? It completely shifted my sense of scale. Beyond expanding how big I'm allowed to dream; I learned something even more important from her: how humility and kindness coexist with greatness. Watching how caring, present, and respectful she is with everyone on set reminded me that true success is quiet, grounded, and human. That experience didn't just raise my ambitions it refined them.

When people watch these two projects in 2026, what do you hope they discover about Maya the actress that they've never seen in Maya the host? I hope they discover courage. Not the courage of being comfortable on camera, but the courage to try something completely new, stepping into acting, into drama and action, and allowing myself to be seen without control. Honestly, I see them as two meaningful experiences that pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me discover something new in myself.

Your style always feels polished but never overdone. How would you describe your fashion personality in three words? Effortless. Intentional. Timeless.

Do you get dressed based on mood, occasion, or instinct? Mostly instinct. My mood and the occasion matter, of course, but instinct always leads. It's that quiet sense of what feels right in the moment. When something feels aligned, it shows, and that's when style feels most authentic to me.

What's one piece in your wardrobe you could never part with and why? Honestly? I don't have just one piece. I love my wardrobe as a whole, and I'm not ready to give anything away. Every item carries a mood, a memory, or a version of me. I dress with intention, and each piece

earned its place so parting with them would feel like letting go of moments, not clothes.

2026 feels like a big chapter. Outside of work, what are you protecting more fiercely these days — your time, your peace, your privacy... or something else? My mental health more than anything else. I've learned that without it, nothing else truly works, not success, not creativity, not love. I'm more mindful of my boundaries, my triggers, and my need for rest and clarity. Protecting my mental health is how I stay grounded, present, and true to myself in this new chapter.

What's something you do daily that keeps you grounded, no matter how busy life gets? What keeps me grounded is reminding myself to pause. In the rush to always do more and be better, I consciously stop, acknowledge my effort, tell myself I'm doing great, and take a moment to breathe. That daily pause helps me stay present and balanced, no matter how busy life gets.

What's something you do purely for joy — no audience, no outcome, no pressure? I gravitate toward psychological and sci-fi films. They give me a sense of escapism while still stimulating my mind, allowing me to dive into complex emotions and imagined worlds. It's something I do purely for enjoyment, with no pressure, no audience, and no reason beyond loving the experience.

Outside of work, what hobby or passion might surprise people? I am fascinated by small human details, conversations that are not planned, places that are not famous, and moments that are not staged.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SAMER BAWADI, STYLIST: LEA MAU, HAIR: AUREZA, MAKEUP: SERBY, TALENT: MAYA AZOU, HOSN, VIDEOGRAPHER: YASSIN FATA



Ice Cube Ethical
Rose Gold High
Jewelry Necklace
& Ice Cube Ethical
Gold Rings,
All Chopard
Full Look, Fay Ezzat

From here, forward

In a moment defined by uncertainty, they choose presence over retreat. From the UAE, these women are creating, building, and holding space for what comes next—driven by resilience, purpose, and an unshakable sense of self. They open up to ELLE Arabia about navigating the weight of the present, finding strength in staying, and shaping the future from where they stand.

Photographer SAM EL RAWADI

Creative Director & Stylist DANIEL STAPLE & LEA EL HAJJ



HALA KAZIM

LIFE EDUCATIONAL COACH

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn't seeing? I think the world can see, it's just that some people don't want to admit it. The UAE is already out there, showing what it is. We're transparent about what we do, about the country, about the achievements. It's all visible. So it's not that people don't see it, it's that they choose not to.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead?

I think the UAE, in the way it treats people, really gives you the courage to do your best. It feels like the country wants you to succeed - it pushes you to achieve. I was actually talking to Paolo, the hairstylist at my salon, Chalk, and he said something that really stayed with me: when you come to Dubai, it pushes you to be successful. And I think that applies to everyone, Emirati or not. You naturally want to do better, to build a better life, because the UAE gives you the environment to do that. It offers you the possibility of that kind of life, and that shapes how you think, how you work, and how you move forward.

There's a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? I think resilience, right now, looks like consistency and believing that things will move forward. There's something very special about the UAE. It always comes back stronger. It doesn't get discouraged. There's something almost magical about this country; when there are challenges, they acknowledge them, learn from them, and move towards something better. If you look at its history, every time, it comes back stronger than before. And I believe this time will be no different, just as Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed has said.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the UAE outward? I think women, we are part of a much bigger story. I am one of so many incredible women who came before us, who are here with us now, and who will come after us. If there's anything I would want someone to feel, it's that if I did it, they can do it too. That's the goal. Because the path has already been paved by my mother, my grandmother, and the generations before them. And now, it's our turn to continue that and shape what comes next.



Full Look, Hala's Own

DIMA AYAD

FASHION DESIGNER

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn't seeing? What the world isn't seeing is the human continuity behind the headlines. There's a tendency to reduce this region to moments of crisis or tension, but what exists alongside that is resilience in its most real, everyday form. People continue to show up, to build, to create, to lead businesses, raise families, and support one another. There is also a deep sense of faith in our region, in this nation, and in its leadership. A quiet but unwavering belief in where we are and where we are going. The love people have for this place, and the unconditional faith in its future, is something that isn't always visible from the outside. This region is not defined by a single narrative. It's layered, complex, and deeply human. And within it, there is a constant forward motion that deserves to be seen just as much as anything else.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead? Living in the UAE has shaped me in ways that go far beyond business. It has made me believe in dreams coming true; not as an idea, but as something tangible. There is a mindset here where excelling isn't exceptional, it's part of everyday life. That energy pushes you to think bigger, to move faster, and to constantly evolve. It has also made me feel supported in my ability to be creative. There's an openness here, a willingness to embrace ideas, to build, and to try that allows you to express yourself fully without limitation. But beyond that, it has shaped how I lead. The UAE is built on diversity: different cultures, perspectives, and ways of thinking, and that naturally teaches you to be more adaptable, more aware, and more intentional in how you work with people. It's also given me a strong sense of responsibility. When you live in a place that offers so much opportunity and stability, you feel a duty to contribute meaningfully, not just take from it. That balance of ambition, creativity, and responsibility is something I carry into everything I do.

There's a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? Resilience, to me, is not loud. It's innate. It's this inner armour. It is not about big statements or dramatic moments. It is about consistency. It is about waking up on the days when things feel uncertain, and still choosing to move forward.



Dress, Dima Ayad;
Shoes, Mugler

It is also rooted in a deep belief and trust that things will work out in the end, even when you do not yet see how. Challenging times are inevitable, but they shape you in ways nothing else can. They force you to learn, to adapt, and to grow. Over time, you realise that the discomfort is part of the process, and that embracing it, rather than resisting it, is what allows you to become stronger. Resilience is accepting those moments, learning from them, and continuing to show up, better each time. More importantly, it is doing all of that without losing your sense of self.



FAIA YUNAN

SIGNER

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn’t seeing? What I feel is happening - not just here, but across the region and anywhere affected by this kind of turbulence - is that it’s acting as a reminder. A reminder that what unites us is so much stronger than what divides us. It also brings us back to gratitude. In a world that moves so fast - where we’re surrounded by consumerism, comparison, and constant noise - moments like this remind us to appreciate the simplest things: safety, food, being with our loved ones, having a roof over our heads. It really puts into perspective how many blessings we have, and how connected we are through our shared humanity. That’s what stays. That’s what truly matters - love, connection, and being there for one another. The headlines may feel divisive, but they only tell a small part of the story. There’s so much more happening beneath them, something far more human, and far more unifying.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you

do but how you think, create, or lead? I recently moved here, but before that I was living between Sweden and Lebanon. I’ve always spent a lot of time in the UAE, so it already felt familiar, which is exactly why I chose to move here now. What I really love about the UAE is its cosmopolitan nature - how people come together, especially within the creative world. As an artist, I feel like it’s a land of opportunity and dreams. When I think of Dubai, I think of something vibrant; I see colors, energy. It’s also a place where there’s a real sense of respect and coexistence between cultures. And for me, culture is everything - it’s what makes us human, what stays and carries through time. Being in a place like this, where different cultures are respected and shared, opens doors to learn, to grow, and to evolve as a person.

There’s a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? For me, that is the definition of resilience: to continue building and creating. Because creating is the opposite of destruction, of war - it’s life versus death, light versus darkness. Throughout history, it’s always culture that survives. The songs, the dances, the food, the storytelling, the stories we inherit from our grandmothers. I’m Syrian, from a country that has been torn by war for over a decade, and part of an ancient heritage that has existed for thousands of years. What has stayed with us is culture. What my grandmother passed down, and what was passed down to her - the food, the melodies, the traditions - these are the things that remain. You can destroy buildings, change borders, shift everything, but these things are intangible. And this is where the role of women, of mothers, becomes so important. This is how we preserve, how we continue, how we resist. These are the things no one can take away from us.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the UAE outward? I feel like this is a time for us to come together and hope becomes our strongest force in moments like this. When everything is going well, we don’t really think about hope. But in difficult times, it’s what carries us. It’s what pushes us to keep creating, to keep thinking about tomorrow, even when we don’t know what’s coming. That’s the power of hope, it comes from faith in the unknown. And I think women play such an important role in that. As I said before, we preserve culture, we tell stories, we pass things down. Sometimes it’s in the smallest ways - a conversation, a question, a bedtime story - but those things stay and shape how people think and feel. I’ve noticed that sometimes we bring a different perspective, one that’s more emotional, more connected and I think we need more of that, whether in everyday life or in bigger conversations. For me, music is how I express that. Recently, I asked my followers what they were feeling, and I received thousands of responses. I realized people, across different countries, were feeling the same things. So I turned their words into a song and it felt like we created something together. And in that moment, it really showed me how connected we all are, even in uncertainty. That connection, that shared feeling, is what gives me hope.

HAJER ABDULLAH

TV PRESENTER

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn’t seeing? I moved to Dubai from London in 2018, and I never looked back. Since then, Dubai has felt like home and I think that’s something every person who moves here feels, even if it’s hard to explain to the outside world. You only really understand it once you’ve lived here, built something here. What I would really love for people to see, especially in the current situation, is how united everyone here is. The headlines don’t reflect the reality. Dubai remains safe, and the UAE government has done everything it can to protect its residents not just Emiratis, but everyone, regardless of where you’re from, your religion, your background, or your culture. What matters is the safety of the people who live here. Dubai is home. And I really hope people outside can see beyond the noise and filter what they’re hearing. It’s home for so many of us, and many of us have chosen to stay - not because we have to, but because we want to. If we didn’t feel safe, we could leave. And I think that says everything.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead? I came to Dubai with a dream to become a news anchor, a TV presenter. And honestly, if I hadn’t moved here, I don’t think that would have happened as quickly - if at all - in a city like London. Within about a year and a half, I was already on television, going live as a news anchor. I don’t think many places in the world could have offered me that kind of opportunity so early on. Through Dubai, I’ve met people from so many different backgrounds. It’s helped me build a network, but also understand myself better - my capabilities, my potential, and how to use everything I came here with. Everything I’ve learned, through school, through life, I’ve been able to shape it and use it to grow both personally and professionally.

There’s a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? Resilience, to me, looks like peace. It looks like calm. I haven’t been panicking about the situation, even though a lot of people around me have been more aware and concerned. For me, resilience has really been about staying grounded. I think many of us come from different backgrounds, but in moments like this, there’s something that unites us and that’s the need to stay calm. Because in situations like this, panic only creates more fear, and fear leads to reactions that don’t really help. The best thing you can do is remain calm and trust that things will be okay. For me, that’s what resilience looks like right now - just staying calm.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the UAE outward? I think the UAE - and the region in general - has faced so many challenges in the past. And if there’s one thing I know, it’s that it always comes out stronger. We’ve seen this before. This isn’t the first difficult situation the region has gone through; there have been wars, pressures, and constant challenges. There’s also a lot of pressure on Dubai because people see it as this futuristic, perfect city, an urban hub where everyone is living this



Full Look, Ezzat

beautiful life. But the reality is more layered than that. This moment has shifted things for many people. Still, if I’m certain about anything, it’s that Dubai will come back stronger and so will its people. We saw it during COVID, how quickly it adapted and moved forward. Dubai always evolves, it always finds a way to come back in a new, even better version. And I’m honestly excited to see how it will rise again this time.

LAMA JOUNI

FASHION DESIGNER

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn't seeing? When it comes to the UAE, I don't think the world fully sees just how safe we feel here. There's a real sense of comfort and trust; you don't feel the need to question things or constantly look over your shoulder. I've never lived somewhere where I knew so little about the politics or what's happening behind the scenes, and yet felt completely at ease with that. For once, I don't feel the need to know everything I simply trust that we're being taken care of. And I'm very confident in how the UAE will respond. I don't think it will bounce back in the same way; it will come back even stronger. Time and time again, when challenges happen here, the UAE takes them as an opportunity to grow and move forward.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead? It's really shaped my whole perception of how safety should feel, honestly. And it's not just about safety

- it's comfort, it's peace of mind. I hate to use the word "nervous system" because it's everywhere right now, but it truly showed me what that should feel like. I think we've mistaken it as normal to constantly be exposed to everything around us (so much noise, so many negative things) and still be expected to perform and stay productive. But here in the UAE, I've tried to adopt that feeling into everything. I feel very safe, very comfortable. I don't have to think so much about logistics or overcomplicate things; everything is so facilitated in a way that allows you to just focus on creating, progressing, and working on yourself. And it's changed how I want everything else in my life to look. My relationships, my family, my friendships - everything. That same level of safety and trust, I now feel like I need it in every aspect of my life, the same way I have it here. It's really taught me what safety should feel like.

There's a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? For me, it's about not stopping - just continuing. That's always been my default. I was actually having this conversation yesterday. I love what I do so much that I find myself waking up every day and simply continuing to do it. When you love something deeply and truly stand by it, you naturally become resilient.

You keep showing up regardless of what's happening around you. I think that's how resilience is built. If more people were doing what they love, they would find themselves practicing resilience without even realising it. You just wake up and do it whether it's bringing you money, whether it's hard, whether you can see the outcome or not. It's really about continuing, no matter what especially in the face of everything happening across the region.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the UAE outward? What gives me hope is seeing people like me - creatives, people building businesses, people with families - adapt and figure things out. In the beginning, everyone was afraid. People were staying home, some were leaving, there was a lot of uncertainty. But now, you can feel that shift; people are adapting, they're calmer, they're finding their rhythm again. And like I said before, the UAE has proven many times that it knows how to bounce back and not just bounce back, but come back stronger. In a way, it's similar to my own character. I've always felt that in moments of hardship, I come back even stronger than before, and I see that same energy here. That's what gives me comfort, and that's what keeps me hopeful.



Full Look, Lama Jouni

Full Look, Ralph Lauren



ZAHRA ABDALLA

CHEF/AUTHOR

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn't seeing? What's missing is the human part of it all. The quiet moments. The way people are actually holding each other up day to day. It's not dramatic or loud, but it's constant. It's checking in on someone without a reason, sending food, making space for each other, being present. That's the part I wish people could see, because that's what's real.

How has living and working in the UAE shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead? Living and working in United Arab Emirates has shaped how I see the world in a very grounding way. It's made me more open, more aware, and more understanding of how different we all are, but also how similar we are at the core. You learn quickly that nothing is built alone here. Everything is layered with people, cultures, stories. It's made me more intentional in how I create and how I lead, but also more human in how I connect.

There's a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? Resilience, for me, isn't something I think about in big terms. It's in the everyday. It's waking up and choosing to continue, even when things feel heavy or uncertain. It's showing up for my family, for my work, for my community, even if I don't have all the answers. It's not perfect, and it's not always strong, but it's consistent.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the UAE outward? What gives me hope is honestly the people around me. The way this community has shown up, quietly but powerfully. There's something very real about the support here, it's not for show. It's in the small gestures and the bigger ones, and everything in between. It reminds you that you're not alone in any of this. And I think from here, women are shaping something very different. Something more connected, more collaborative, more honest. Not just building for themselves, but for the people around them. There's a sense of responsibility in that, but also a lot of hope.



MARYAM ALI

ARTIST

Right now, the region is being defined by headlines. From where you stand, what feels most important that the world isn't seeing? As a Kuwaiti singer, what feels most important to me is the quiet creativity we foster here. In Kuwait, we are a people who bend but never break; we stay flexible, and we make every single day count. We write our own history, and we refuse to be defined by our circumstances.

How has living and working in the GCC shaped not just what you do but how you think, create, or lead? Living and working in Kuwait has deeply shaped how I think, create, and lead. I'm driven by a commitment to making art that outlives me, ensuring that history never forgets the resilience, strength, and hard work of Kuwait and the entire GCC. I create because I believe our stories matter, and I'm proud to be part of a region that dares to build its future.

There's a quiet strength in continuing to build, create, and show up. What does resilience look like to you, in real terms? Resilience, to me, is about showing up every day in Kuwait, even when the world doesn't see us. It's in the way we keep creating, building, and pushing forward. Here, we don't just survive - we thrive, and we lead by example, especially for the generations to come.

In the face of everything happening across the region, what gives you hope today and what kind of future do you believe women like you are shaping from the GCC outward? As a Kuwaiti, I never lose hope. Every day is a new gift from God, and despite the challenges, I believe deeply in the future we are building. Our women in Kuwait and across the GCC are strong, visionary, and determined - we are not waiting for change; we are creating it. From here, we are shaping a future rooted in resilience, creativity, and pride, one that will be felt far beyond our region.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SAM EL BAWADI, CREATIVE DIRECTOR & STYLIST: DANIEL STARRIE / LEA EL HAJI, HMUTEAM: SAFVAT CASSIN, AIDA GLOW, SARA YUNUS & KHANING THAZIN



DIMA: Dress & Jacket, Dima Ayad; Shoes, Mugler; ZAHRA: Coat, Ash Aalia; Shirt, COS; Skirt, Marina Rinaldi; Heels, Giuseppe Zanotti; HALA: Full Look, Her Own; FAIA: Dress, Elisabetta Franchi; LAMA: Suit, Kristina Fidelskaya; Heels, Malone Souliers; HAJER: Maxi Shirt, Iyma; Pants, L'Agence; Heels, Malone Souliers

Taking Shape

Four Saudi women shaping culture, design, business and entrepreneurship *today*, each building with purpose, perspective and a strong *sense of place*

PRINCESS ABEER AL-FAISAL AL-SAUD

FOUNDER, NUUN JEWELS — a London-trained gemologist creating high jewelry inspired by Saudi heritage and global influences.

What family traditions did you cherish growing up? The family tradition I cherish the most is gathering together for any and every occasion. The strong connection we maintain is what I truly cherish, love, and continue to hold close to my heart.

How did the women in your family influence your understanding of elegance? I was fortunate to grow up surrounded by incredibly elegant and fashion-forward women who also have a deep respect for heritage and tradition. Because of that, I can't single out just one person, the women in my family have collectively shaped my perspective and have all been role models in different ways.

What are you celebrating right now? I'm celebrating creativity and diversity across different forms of art, as well as the remarkable progress women have made within our community. It's important for me to highlight both artistic expression and the evolving role of women, because both represent growth, identity, and cultural richness.

What guides your creativity as a designer? My love for my culture is what truly guides me. There is so much beauty, depth, and artistry in our heritage, and it constantly inspires my designs.



"I TRANSLATE FEELINGS BY DRAWING FROM MEMORIES, CULTURAL REFERENCES, TEXTURES, AND VISUAL ELEMENTS THAT EVOKE A CERTAIN MOOD OR EXPERIENCE"

beautiful. They carry stories, craftsmanship, and a timeless aesthetic that strongly influence my work.

How do you translate emotions into design? For me, design is already a form of storytelling. Emotions are intangible, but design gives them a physical presence. I translate feelings by drawing from memories, cultural references, textures, and visual elements that evoke a certain mood or experience.

What part of Saudi identity inspires you most? I'm deeply inspired by architecture and traditional textiles. Every region has a distinct visual identity, and that diversity of design and cultural expression is incredibly inspiring to me.

ACROSS FASHION, JEWELRY, VENTURE CAPITAL AND CULTURAL CONSULTANCY, A NEW RHYTHM IS TAKING SHAPE. THESE WOMEN ARE NOT SIMPLY PART OF THE CONVERSATION, THEY ARE DIRECTING IT. ROOTED IN HERITAGE YET FORWARD-FACING IN APPROACH, EACH BRINGS A DISTINCT VOICE TO WHAT IT MEANS TO BUILD, LEAD AND CREATE NOW.

It's a source of creativity and identity that I always carry with me in my work.

How do you retain authenticity while exploring new ideas?

For me, there is no line or limitation. I focus on being authentic to myself, trusting my creativity, and thinking beyond trends. By allowing myself to think outside the box, I naturally find my way toward creating something truly unique.

What sparks your creativity the most?

Traditional patterns and historical architecture are a major source of inspiration for me. There is an incredible sense of artistry in our cultural designs, and our traditional textiles are exceptionally

AMAL DOKHAN

MANAGING PARTNER, SANABIL 500 GLOBAL — a venture capital leader investing in and scaling high-growth startups across the region.

What are you celebrating right now? I'm celebrating a shift in power, from participation to influence and impact. Saudi women today are not just joining the economy, they are allocating capital, building companies, shaping policy, and defining what leadership looks like for the next generation. What excites me most is not just the progress itself, but the pace. We are compressing decades of change into a few years.

What is your philosophy on leadership? My philosophy is simple: clarity over popularity, discipline over noise, long-term impact over short-term wins. Leadership is about making hard decisions early and standing behind them. In venture capital, you don't get paid for following consensus, you get paid for having conviction before others see it.

What routines help you maintain clarity? One of my key routines is working out daily, weight lifting, resistance training, and reformer. It helps maintain focus and calm. I also protect time to think, not just react. I question assumptions constantly and stay anchored in fundamentals.

How has your identity shaped your leadership? It has given me a dual strength, resilience and relational intelligence. Saudi women today lead at the intersection of tradition and transformation. That teaches you how to navigate complexity, build trust quickly, and lead through change.

What lessons from your upbringing shaped you most? One lesson stands above all: your name travels faster than your success. Protect it. In venture, reputation compounds like capital. I was also raised to believe that leadership is accountability, not entitlement.

"LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT MAKING HARD DECISIONS EARLY AND STANDING BEHIND THEM. IN VENTURE CAPITAL, YOU DON'T GET PAID FOR FOLLOWING CONSENSUS, YOU GET PAID FOR HAVING CONVICTION BEFORE OTHERS SEE IT"



How do you balance culture and leadership? I don't believe in balance as a perfect equilibrium, I believe in alignment. Cultural values like loyalty, respect, and long-term relationships make us stronger leaders and investors.

What leadership lessons define your journey? Conviction is a leader's currency. People determine outcomes. Patience is a strategic advantage. What I never compromise on is integrity, fairness, and disciplined judgment.

Your advice to young entrepreneurs? Build trust from day one. Relationships matter. And remember, leadership is not about waiting for opportunity, it's about stepping into it before you feel ready.

MARRIAM MOSSALLI

FOUNDER, NICHE ARABIA — *a cultural consultancy shaping brand narratives; also founder of Under The Abaya and the Saudi Style Council, championing local creatives, especially female founders.*

What is your earliest memory of fashion? My earliest memory of fashion is not of a brand or shopping trip, but of the women in my family. I remember watching my mom get ready while I sniffed her make-up brushes, a habit she still laughs about. Chanel No.5 is the scent of womanhood for me, of feminine mystique and confidence.

What are you celebrating right now? I am celebrating momentum. Saudi women are no longer asking for space, we are building it. I celebrate the creative directors, founders, athletes, policymakers, and young girls who now grow up seeing possibility as the norm. Progress in Saudi Arabia is no longer symbolic, it is inevitable.

What values helped launch your career? Integrity and hospitality. In Saudi culture, your word is your bond. Relationships are sacred. Business is never just transactional, it is rooted in trust and consistency. That principle has guided every partnership I've built.

How does Saudi Arabia's cultural evolution inspire you? What inspires me most is that we are no longer consuming narratives, we are producing them. I see my role as ensuring Saudi creatives are not just participants in global conversations, but the authors of them.

What value guides your decisions today? Community. I believe success is collective, especially for women. When one of us succeeds, we all do. Through initiatives like the Saudi Style Council, the goal is always to build ecosystems that champion local creatives, especially female founders.

Your dream for Saudi creatives globally? My dream is for Saudi designers to be recognized not as

emerging or regional, but simply as global participants. I want to see them alongside legacy maisons and at global decision-making tables.

A tough lesson you've learned? Not everyone will understand your vision at the beginning. When you are building something that does not yet exist, resistance is natural. I learned to detach from validation and attach myself to purpose.

Three lessons from your journey? Protect your reputation more than your revenue. Build long-term equity, not short-term ROI. Stay culturally rooted, even when scaling globally.

SARA ABUDAWOOD

FOUNDER, YATAGHAN — *a design studio translating Saudi heritage into contemporary objects through storytelling and form.*

What are you celebrating right now? I'm celebrating consistency. Over the years, I've learned that vision isn't something you announce, it's something you gently shape. Yataghan grew in those in-between moments, the ones no one really sees, but that define everything. So this year, I'm celebrating that quiet resilience, the ability to keep moving forward with purpose, and to stay true to what you believe in, even when it would have been easier not to.

What personal family values or traditions help you in your professional life? I was raised with a strong sense of responsibility towards family, towards your name, and how you carry yourself in the world. There's a quiet discipline in that. You learn that what you build reflects where you come from and what you stand for. That mindset naturally carried into my work. It shaped how I lead, how I design, and how I protect what I've built with care, consistency, and a deep sense of accountability.

How do you blend history and heritage with a contemporary twist?

I don't approach heritage as something to modernise, but as something to reinterpret. The starting point is always a story, a lived experience, a memory, a cultural meaning. From there, it evolves through architecture, symbolism, and form. At Yataghan, I translate these elements into cleaner lines and balanced proportions that feel relevant to how we live today. It's about preserving the essence while refining the expression.

How does storytelling play out in your process? Storytelling is the starting point of everything I create. When I draw from centuries-old traditions, I'm not trying to replicate them, I'm trying to understand what they carried, in terms of emotion, lessons, and values. The design becomes a continuation of that story. Each piece becomes a bridge between where we come from and how we choose to express ourselves now.

What does your research process look like? My process unfolds in two parts, inspiration and research. Inspiration is instinctive and emotional, coming from travel, photography, or moments that stay with me. Research is more structured, studying architecture, patterns, and cultural context. The most important part is refinement, knowing what to keep, what to simplify, and what to let go of.

How has your identity shaped your work? It has shaped my work in a very instinctive way. Growing up in Saudi Arabia, I was always aware of the balance between tradition and modernity, between what is preserved and what is evolving. That duality stayed with me.

Your advice to young women entering design? Start before you feel ready. Design is not about having all the answers, it's about being willing to explore, to experiment, and to keep refining your perspective over time. Confidence doesn't come first, it comes from doing the work.

"STORYTELLING IS THE STARTING POINT OF EVERYTHING I CREATE. WHEN I DRAW FROM CENTURIES-OLD TRADITIONS, I'M NOT TRYING TO REPLICATE THEM, I'M TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY CARRIED, IN TERMS OF EMOTION, LESSONS, AND VALUES"

Left: SARA ABUDAWOOD,
Right: MARRIAM MOSSALLI



In Her Words

Caroline Faraj, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of CNN Arabic, reflects on four years of Her Story, a platform giving Arab women the space to speak with depth, clarity and authorship.

For Caroline Faraj, storytelling begins with listening. Shaped by moments of upheaval and the quieter work that follows, her approach has stayed focused on whose voices are heard and how they are held. Here, she speaks about the experiences that shaped her and the responsibility she continues to carry.

"I have always believed that storytelling carries responsibility, but that belief was crystallized during the early days of the Arab Spring. As history unfolded in real time, I wasn't only reporting the news, I was bearing witness to deeply human moments shaped by uncertainty, loss, and hope - moments when answers were scarce and listening mattered more than speaking.

That period forced me to slow down, to pay closer attention, and to ask whose voices were being amplified and whose were quietly being overlooked. I still carry that question with me. It continues to guide both my storytelling and my leadership today.

That same awareness led, in 2022, to the creation of Her Story, a CNN Arabic initiative focused on raising the voices of Arab women creating an impact in their local communities. For years, I had felt a gap in the media landscape: Arab women were present, but often not centered within their own narratives. Their achievements were framed through limits rather than depth.

I wanted to create a space where women could speak in their own voices, on their own terms, and be seen in their full complexity. Her Story became about legacy and mentorship - about honoring women shaping today while opening doors for those shaping tomorrow. At the beginning, I didn't know whether it would resonate. I only knew it was necessary.

Her Story has grown into a platform featuring more than 200 women from across the Arab world, as well as online storytelling workshops, reaching over 500 women and equipping them with the confi-



"TO YOUNG ARAB WOMEN EVERYWHERE:
STAY FOCUSED. THE BEST IS YET TO COME"

dence and tools to tell their stories authentically, in their own voices.

One of our ongoing challenges has been protecting nuance in a fast-paced media environment, resisting the urge to flatten women's stories to fit trends or expectations. Expanding the range of voices we feature, and seeing the platform resonate across generations, has been among its defining milestone. Her Story has become a living archive of women's leadership and lived experience.

Being a woman has shaped how I lead newsrooms - by listening first, valuing inclusion, and striving for balance. I prioritize trust, collaboration, and integrity, while remaining mindful of the unseen labor that sustains strong teams. That perspective extends to the next generation of Arab women storytellers, who continue to inspire me with their fearlessness and authenticity. As they take up new platforms, my hope is that they protect depth and craft, remembering that the most enduring stories are rooted in care, intention, and lived truth.

ELLE

fashion

MIMI MOMENT
Carolina Herrera's Mimi bag draws on a personal archive, reworking a small, lipstick box into a structured top-handle shape, finished with a polished polka-dot clasp and a clean, architectural line that moves easily from day to night.

In Frame

A SHIFT IN MOOD AND SILHOUETTE PLAYS OUT, WHERE STYLING, MOVEMENT AND ATTITUDE COME TOGETHER WITH A LIGHTER TOUCH



Light

Photographer SAMER RAWADI
Creative Director & Stylist POLINA SHABELNIKOVA



Blue "Petit Trèfle" Bucket Bag

Play

Dior RTW Spring–Summer 2026 leans into a sunlit, carefree mood where light layers, washed denim and house signatures – from the Bar jacket to the Medallion belt and Cape – slip easily into a warm-weather rhythm. New-season bags and shoes bring in a playful edge with pretty bows, pastel hues and reinterpreted codes.

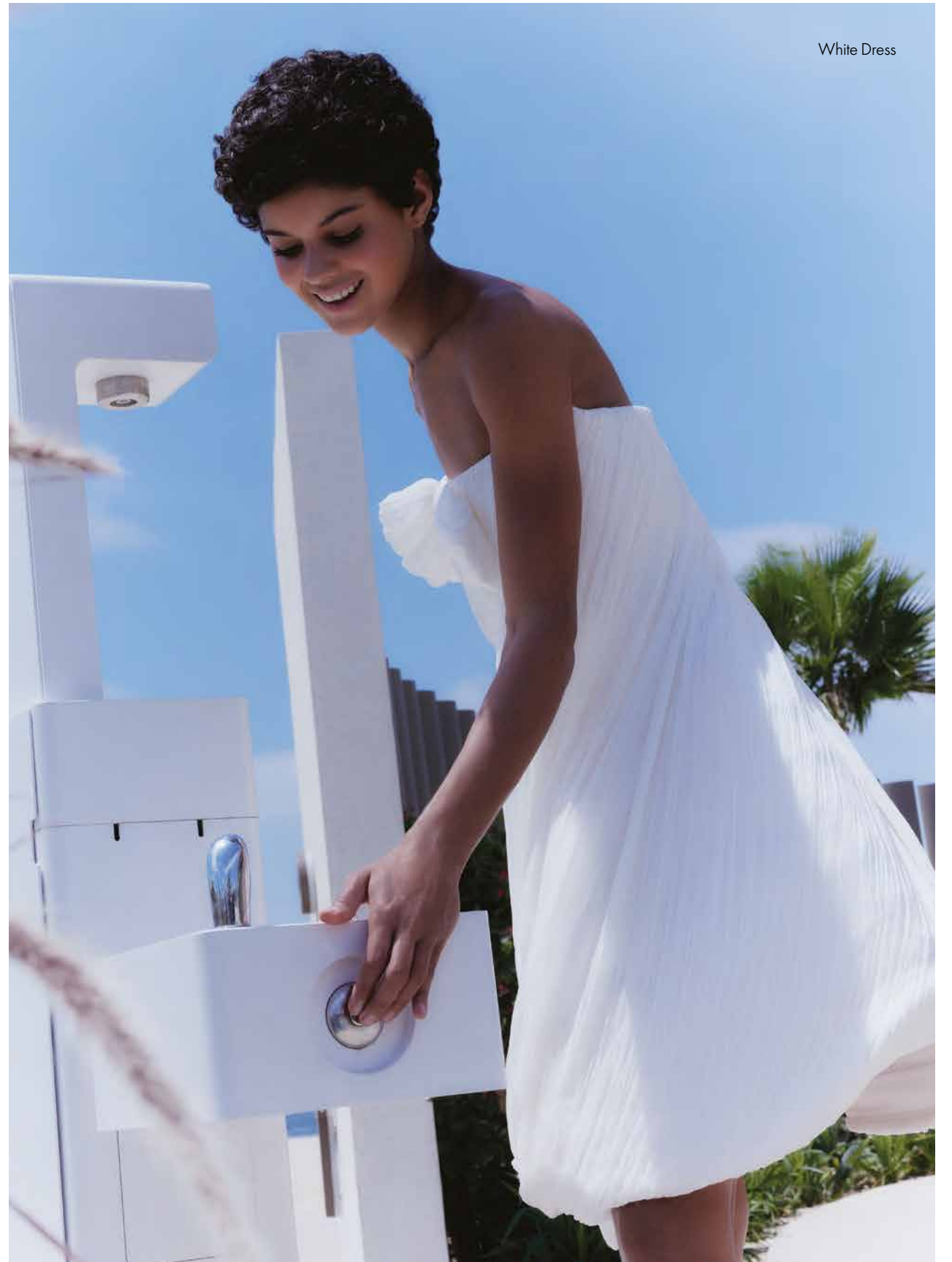
Pink & Green Cape, Blue Shirt,
Beige Vest, Denim Skirt, Black "Dior
Medallion" Belt



White Bar Jacket, Pink Denim Skirt, Pink "Dior Bow" Pouch



White Dress



Olive Green Cropped Jacket,
Olive Green Pleated Skirt





Blue "Dior Bow" Sandals



Blue Shirt, Olive Green Skirt, Blue
"Petit Trèfle" Bucket Bag



Yellow "Dior Crunchy" Bag

PHOTOGRAPHER: SAMEER BAWADI, CREATIVE DIRECTOR & STYLIST: POLINA SHABENIKOVA, HAIR: SARTYAH CASSIM, MAKEUP: MANUEL OSADA FOR DIOR BEAUTY, TALENT: LANA @ FASHION LEAGUE



White Cape, White Jeans, Black "Dior Medallion" Belt, White Daisies "Lady Dior" Bag, White "Dior Aurore" Mules

Photographer ARTHUR DELLOYE
Stylist MARINE CHAUMIEN

BLACK ON WHITE

*Crisp, graphic, and effortlessly chic, the monochrome duo proves that sometimes *the strongest statement comes from keeping things beautifully simple**

Wool and silk top and trousers, cotton shirt, multi-buckle belt in calfskin leather and metal, 'New Luggage' bag in lambskin leather, thick brass chain bracelet & brass rings, Celine



Jacket, Ferragamo;
Acetate glasses, Valentino;
"Solstice" pendant
necklace & earrings in
gold-plated metal and
wood, Goossens



Coat, skirt, bodysuit, leather
hobo bag & calfskin heels,
Chloé. Gold metal earrings,
Isabelle Toledano

Silk and lace nightdress and bra, silk pyjama jacket & faux fur
slippers, Dolce & Gabbana; "Clash" rings in rose gold, onyx and
red agate, and "Clash" bracelet in yellow gold, Cartier



A woman is shown in profile, facing right. She is wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat with a black band. Her outfit consists of a white lace jacket over a white polo shirt and a white skirt. She is also wearing small hoop earrings and rings.

Jacket, polo shirt & skirt in lace and technical cotton, Fendi; Straw hat, loro piana; Small "Clash" hoop earrings in rose gold and onyx, and "Clash" rings in rose gold, onyx and red agate, Cartier

A woman with short, curly brown hair is looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket over a white cotton poplin shirt with a large, white bow tied at the neck. She is also wearing a black leather skirt, a black leather belt with a gold buckle, and large, ornate earrings. She has her hands in her pockets, wearing gold bangles and a bracelet.

Calfskin leather perfecto jacket, cotton poplin shirt, bull leather skirt, vegan leather belt, cobbler leather heels, sheer tights, earrings, bangle & bracelet in patinated metal, Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello

Wool suit jacket, Giorgio Armani; 'Waldorf' cotton poplin pyjama shirt, Candice Fauchon; Technical cotton trousers, GUESS; Leather and gold metal belt, Dior. Socks, Calzedonia; Patent leather brogues, Repetto; Pearl necklace and gold cuffs, Dinh Van; Metal lighter, S.T Dupont; Ceramic pendant, Marine Chaumien (personal); 'Ellipse' ring in rose gold and white mother-of-pearl, rose gold baguette ring & rose gold baguette ring with white diamonds, Ginette Ny



Wool coat, Maxmara; Wool and viscose jacket & trousers, Loulou De Saison; Goatskin leather brogues, Repetto; Metal glasses, Bottega Veneta



PHOTOGRAPHER: ARTHUR DELOYE; STYLIST: MARINE CHAUMIEN; FASHION DIRECTOR: ALEXANDRA BERNARD @ ELLE INTERNATIONAL; MODEL: BETTY SCHUPP @ FORD MODELS PARIS; HAIR: KAZUE DEKI @ CALLISTE AGENCY; MAKEUP: SALOI JEDDI; LIGHT ASSISTANT: IGOR KNEVEZ; DIGITAL TECHNICIAN: AUBANE DESPRES; STYLIST ASSISTANTS: AMBRINE MAROUANI - LAURINE MARTOCCHIA; PRODUCER: YANNICK SELVA @ ELLE INTERNATIONAL

PALM ROYALE

*Desert hues, retro lines and sun-drenched
glamour – the season's most stylish escape
comes dressed in vintage resort cool.*

Photographer PETER GEHRKE *Stylist* ELISSA CASTELBOU

Jacket, Louis Vuitton;
Hat, Veronica Marucci
Chapeaux; Earrings,
Marc Deloche



Dress, Chloé;
Hat, Maison Ola;
Sunglasses, Aude
Herouard; Earrings,
Tetier Bijoux



Dress & shoes, Loewe





Dress, Shoes & Earrings Celine



Top, Atelier Soven; Skirt,
Tights, Bag, Earrings &
Scrunchie, Patou



Swimsuit, Eres; Pants & Hat, Loro Piana; Necklace, Justine Clenquet

PHOTOGRAPHER: PETER GERHKE; STYLIST: ELISSA CASTELBOU; FASHION DIRECTOR: ALEXANDRA BERNARD; ELLE INTERNATIONAL; MODEL: MIRTE ROOZE; HAIR & MAKEUP: JULIA KRAEMER; PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT: JACOPO PELOSO; STYLIST ASSISTANT: ALEXANDRA LEFÈVRE; PRODUCER: YANNICK SEVA; ELLE INTERNATIONAL; LOCATION: SHOT @ VILA 48 AUEZUR

ELLE

beauty

IN THE AIR...
The latest addition to the Elixirs collection, Aire Sutileza Elixir builds a floral-musky scent around notes of pear, bergamot, and lemon that open into orange flower, jasmine sambac, and magnolia. Anchored by vetiver, sandalwood, and musk, the fragrance carries the house's signature Loewe Accord - an exclusive note inspired by the resinous Spanish Rockrose.



Fresh Faces...

WE TURN TO THE SEASON'S NEWEST LAUNCHES, BACKSTAGE IDEAS, AND SMALL DISCOVERIES SHAPING HOW WE WEAR MAKEUP, SCENT, AND SKINCARE RIGHT NOW



Cult buys

Charlotte Tilbury expands its Pillow Talk universe with a fresh, bloom-inspired drop. Think the new Blush Balm Lip Tint for a dewy, just-pinked flush, paired with the Beauty Soulmates Palette—your shortcut to soft-focus skin and effortless glow. Fronted by Middle Eastern talent Yusr Al Khalidi, it's natural beauty, the Pillow Talk way.



Swipe & go

If glow is the goal, consider this your shortcut. Milk Makeup's Jelly Shimmer glides on with color-flipping pearls that catch the light from every angle. One swipe and skin looks glossy, dewy, and instantly lit.



Prada Flush

As blendable as a cream and as durable as a powder, the new Prada Touch delivers that soft, just-pinked flush in seconds. Tap it onto cheeks, lips or lids for an easy monochrome moment, the kind of polished, throw-it-on beauty Prada does best.



LAUNCHMETRICS SPOTLIGHT

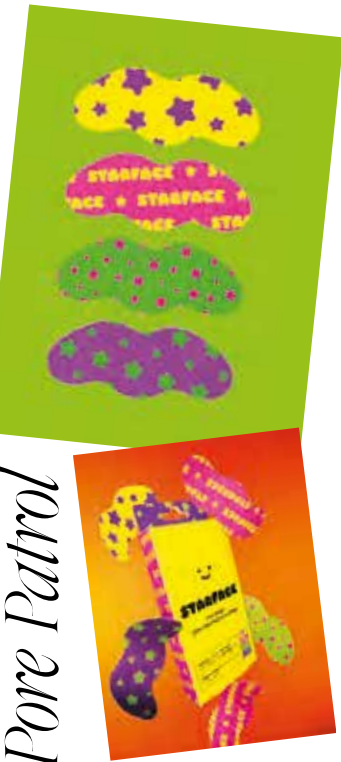
Lip Service

The secret to a perfect lip? A great liner and a seriously good balm. Kylie Cosmetics delivers both with new cool-toned Precision Pout Lip Liners and the cult Lip Butter in a delicious Butter Cake scent. Sculpt, swipe, and enjoy the kind of glossy, hydrated pout everyone's chasing.



PRECISION POUT LIP LINER, KYLIE COSMETICS

Pore Patrol



Blackheads, consider this your warning. Starface's new Star Strips give the classic pore strip a playful glow-up, lifting away pore buildup while staying true to the brand's signature star-shaped charm. Skincare that works, and looks cute while doing it.



Sabrina Carpenter's fragrance wardrobe just got a little more handbag-friendly. The pop star has unveiled mini versions of her fan-favorite scents, perfectly sized for slipping into a clutch or carry-on. Small in size but big on charm, they're proof that good things really do come in tiny bottles.

BEAUTY SHOPPING LIST

GOOD SKIN DOESN'T START AT THE SERUM, IT STARTS FROM WITHIN. FROM COLLAGEN-PACKED JELLIES TO GLOW-BOOSTING SUPPLEMENTS AND HYDRATION HEROES, THESE INSIDER-APPROVED WELLNESS ESSENTIALS ARE THE NEW BEAUTY MUST-HAVES.



Health Nag Collagen Jelly Think collagen, but make it snackable. These convenient jelly sticks deliver a daily dose of collagen designed to support skin elasticity and that lit-from-within glow — no powders or mixing required.



Cymbiotika Glutathione + Elderberry Consider this your glow guardian. Cymbiotika's liposomal glutathione supports skin brightness and detoxification, while elderberry brings an extra immunity boost — beauty and wellness in one powerful hit.



Humantra Electrolytes Hydration, upgraded. Humantra's electrolyte blends help replenish essential minerals and keep your body properly balanced, the kind of inside-out support your skin (and energy levels) will thank you for. The new Black Cherry flavour? Fresh, tangy, and dangerously easy to drink.



Full volume

Dior pushes its signature floral into richer territory with J'adore Intense by Perfume Creation Director Francis Kurkdjian, unveiled in Beverly Hills with a high-energy night that blurred the line between launch and after-dark spectacle

THE SHIFT

This is J'adore, but dialled all the way up. Francis Kurkdjian takes the house's most recognisable floral and pushes it to its peak, where petals feel saturated, almost edible, and the scent melts straight into skin. With Rihanna as its face, J'adore Intense is a deeper and warmer take with a honeyed edge that lingers longer than expected

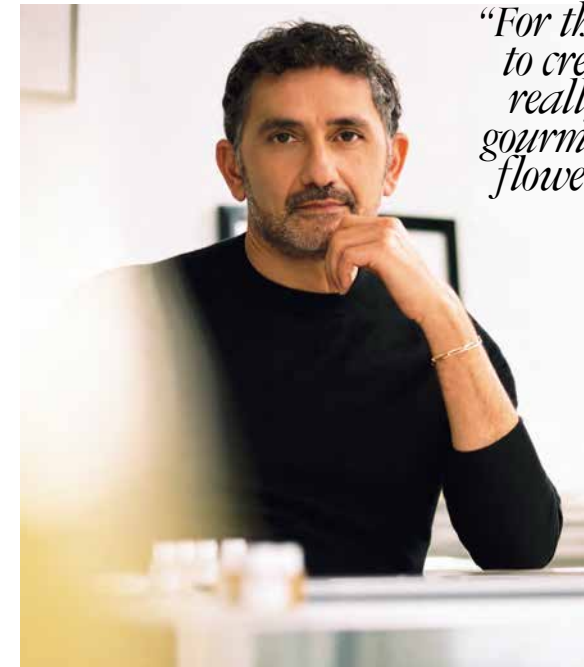
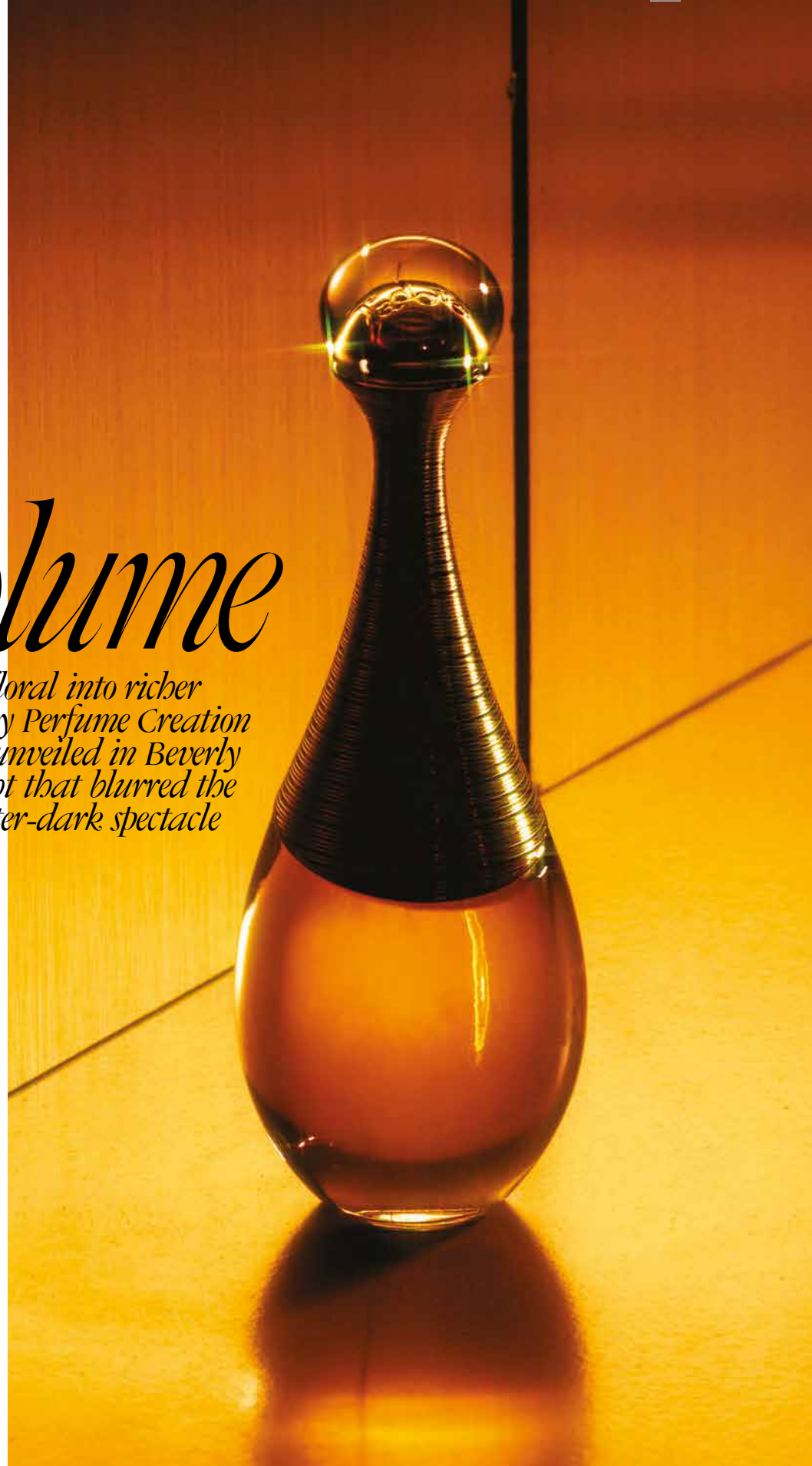
THE MOOD

Think florals at their most heightened just before they turn. There's a ripeness here, where jasmine shifts towards apricot, rose softens into something almost edible, and ylang-ylang carries a sunlit warmth that sits close to the skin. This is not a reinvention, it's a push further towards density, texture and a more tactile kind of scent that feels rounded.

THE SCENT, UP CLOSE

- Jasmine, warmed into apricot tones
- Rose, softened and slightly sweet
- Ylang-ylang bringing a solar hit
- Sandalwood and vanilla, smooth and close

"This is a floral at full volume: lush, rounded and built to stay"

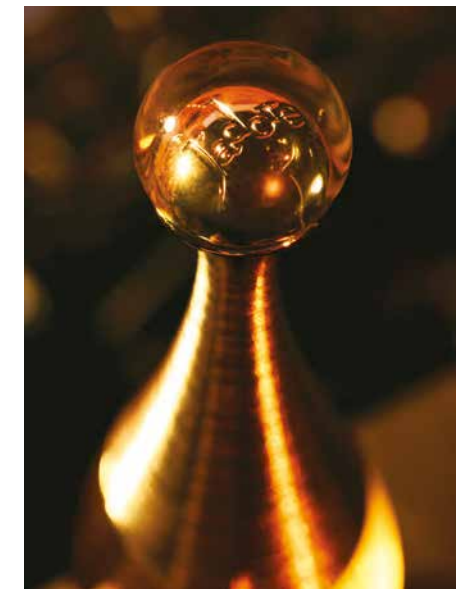


"For this new intense concentration, I wanted to create a honeyed floral nectar that was really sensual and rounded, colorful and gourmand, as though all the color-saturated flowers were revealing new irresistible and addictive intensity"

Francis Kurkdjian

THE BOTTLE, REWORKED

An absolute icon, the J'adore amphora has the timeless curves of the figure 8 silhouette created by Christian Dior in 1947 for the New Look revolution. This time, it has the same iconic shape, but lighter – literally. The gold bead at the neck sharpens it just enough, like a final piece of jewelry.



IN CONVERSATION...

With FRANCIS KURKDJIAN, Perfume Creation Director

ON RETHINKING A CLASSIC "I wasn't looking to reinvent it completely, but to push it further. I wanted a fragrance that feels immediate, something that wraps around you from the first moment, with a softness that is also very present." ON SHAPING THE COMPOSITION "It became about volume and curves. I wanted to 'round' the structure, to give it a more tactile, almost physical quality on the skin. It's less linear, more enveloping." ON THE IDEA OF INTENSITY "Intensity doesn't mean heaviness. It's about saturation, bringing the flowers to their peak, just before they transform. That's where they're the most expressive, the most addictive." ON FEMININITY NOW "There's no contradiction anymore between being sensual and being independent. This fragrance reflects that – something confident, generous, and very natural in its expression."



INSIDE CLUB J'ADORE

THE MOOD: HIGH-ENERGY, SLIGHTLY CHAOTIC, AND INTENTIONALLY OVER THE TOP

In Beverly Hills, Dior hosted CLUB J'ADORE, a one-night celebration shaped by music and atmosphere. DJ sets blended into a live piano performance, carrying the evening through a space lined with reflective gold surfaces and high-gloss finishes. Guests drifted easily from room to room as the energy built over the course of the night. A mix of film, music, and fashion gave the crowd its edge: Yuko Araki, Harriet Herbig-Matten, Nicole Wallace, Lana Condor, Skai Jackson, Alexandra Shipp, and Jurnee Smollett among them, alongside Dior's wider circle and industry insiders. Francis Kurkdjian moved through it all, joining conversations and staying closely connected to the moment.

THE ONLY CLUB THAT MATTERS? THE ONE WHERE YOU SHOW UP FOR YOURSELF. FEED YOUR BODY RIGHT, AND EVERYTHING ELSE LEVELS UP.

Labels for products in the collage:

- HIGH-VIBES RAW DARK CHOCOLATE, COSMIC DEALER
- TOASTED COCONUT
- HEALING SPIRIT SOAK, WILDER BOTANICS
- LIPOSOMAL NAD+ CAPSULES, NAD+ AT HOME
- ROSE POWDER, ANIMA MUNDI
- SUPPLEMENTS, LYMA
- WILD COLLAGEN, ANCIENT + BRAVE
- MOON SKIN, DEPURAVITA
- NOBLE COLLAGEN, ANCIENT + BRAVE
- NATURAL MARINE COLLAGEN SACHETS, VIDA GLOW
- DAILY SYNBIOTIC SEED

Arabic text: العربية للعود

Arabic text: العود

Arabic text: Arabian Oud

ELLE

by Arabian Oud

THE ART OF ARABIAN PERFUMERY MEETS FASHION

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Soft focus



There's something quietly powerful about a scent that doesn't need to announce itself. The kind that lingers softly, sits close to the skin, and somehow says everything without saying too much. That's exactly the energy behind the latest launch from Narciso Rodriguez: for her PURE MUSC BLANC eau de parfum intense, a fragrance that feels less like an accessory, and more like a second skin.

At its core, this is a study in contrast. Clean, yet deeply sensual. Light, but undeniably present. Imagine the crispness of freshly laundered white cotton meeting the warmth of bare skin, that delicate tension between purity and intimacy becomes the fragrance's signature mood. It's not about excess or drama; it's about restraint, and the kind of confidence that comes with it.

Built around the house's iconic musc heart, the scent unfolds in layers that feel both familiar and elevated. There's an airy brightness at first - soft, almost luminous - before giving way to a floral heart that feels creamy rather than sweet. Jasmine appears, but not in the traditional sense; here, it's diffused, glowing, and wrapped in a veil of white florals that never overwhelm. The base is where things deepen: woods, amber and a touch of vanilla create a lingering trail that feels warm, enveloping, and quietly addictive.

What makes PURE MUSC BLANC particularly compelling is its versatility. It wears like a whisper during the day - clean, polished, effortless - but come evening, it reveals a more intimate, almost magnetic side. It's the kind of fragrance that invites closeness, drawing people in rather than projecting outward. And for those who like to personalise their scent wardrobe, it layers seamlessly with the original PURE MUSC, enhancing its softness while adding a new depth and intensity.

Visually, the bottle mirrors the mood perfectly. Minimal, architectural, and rendered in a creamy white tone, it feels like an object of calm in a chaotic world, understated, but impossible to ignore. It's fragrance as design, as much as it is scent. Fronted by model Angelina Kendall and captured through the lens of Mario Sorrenti, the campaign leans into this idea of "quiet intensity", a woman who doesn't chase attention, but naturally commands it. There's a sense of stillness, of confidence, of knowing exactly who you are.

In a world that often equates louder with better, PURE MUSC BLANC offers a refreshing alternative. It's intimate, elevated, and deeply personal. The kind of scent that doesn't just sit on the skin, but becomes part of it.

*Minimal, modern, and effortlessly sensual,
Narciso Rodriguez reimagines musc for a new
kind of confidence.*



Below the Surface

WITH UN JARDIN SOUS LA MER, HERMÈS PERFUMER CHRISTINE NAGEL EXPANDS THE HOUSE'S PARFUMS-JARDINS COLLECTION, TRANSLATING THE CORAL GARDENS OF TAHA'A INTO A COMPOSITION OF TIARE FLOWER, TAMANU NUT AND MINERAL ACCORDS THAT SHIFT THE IDEA OF A MARINE SCENT



TIARE © JEAN-MARIE BINET

Christine Nagel has led Hermès' olfactory direction since 2016, shaping a body of work that prioritizes memory, place and material over trend. Hermès' Parfums-Jardins series – conceived as "olfactory strolls" – now reaches its 7th chapter with Un Jardin sous la Mer, a fragrance inspired by the lagoon of Taha'a in French Polynesia. Rather than following the expected codes of marine perfumery, Nagel builds something quieter and more immersive: a landscape of coral, light and vegetation, expressed through mineral notes, creamy white florals and sun-warmed woods.

Un Jardin sous la Mer imagines a garden beneath the ocean. What was the very first emotion or image that inspired this fragrance? The first image that inspired this fragrance was seeing a tree covered in the tiare flower. As a child, one always has dreams of princess dresses and tiaras, and as I grew up, I wanted to travel to the most beautiful places in the world. One day, my husband booked tickets for us to Tahiti, and when I arrived, I fell in love with the place. The beautiful island and the incredible blues of the ocean, the sky, and the birds. It is an island where there is very little pollution, along with many other beautiful elements. I also discovered coconuts, which are very different from the ones we see in other countries or cities. Even the tamanu nuts had an amazing woody scent, which I felt would be wonderful to add to a fragrance. Materials are always at the heart of creating emotion, and this was a very personal emotion behind the fragrance. In short, I really took my time to construct

it by traveling, discovering, and truly putting my heart into it. Mineral notes, tiare flower, and tamanu nut form the heart of this composition. What drew you to these specific notes, and what story do they tell together? The garden fragrances are extremely pleasant because the top note is always fresh. Nature is the best source of inspiration and where the ingredients come from. Harvesting, attention to groundwork, corporate social responsibility, teamwork, paying the right price for materials, these all matter. The freedom I have in working this way is remarkable.

Please tell us more about your experience. Did the inspiration come first or was it the other way around? Yes, that's absolutely the case. Hermès operates differently. I used to be a corporate perfumer, working within different constraints – costs, deadlines, and so on – but with Hermès, it is different. I had to find a fragrance from within myself, from a personal memory. Once I found that story, I expressed it through my personality and the Hermès style. Both go hand in hand. As I mentioned, materials are at the heart of everything, so I took the time to find the right ones, request specific types of extraction, and take the time I needed to develop the perfume, this is the ultimate freedom. I presented it to Pierre-Alexis Dumas, Artistic Director of Hermès, who has always approved my perfumes, which I am proud to say. Then the



process begins: bottling, naming, the color of the packaging. This is why Hermès perfumes feel so coherent.

Taha'a and its lagoon are central to this story. What does this place represent for you emotionally? This was something I had dreamt of, it was a dream to be on this journey, and I'm already looking forward to going back. I don't think these things happen by coincidence. I have met so many people who have their own memories of Tahiti.

This scent feels almost blue in mood.

Do colors guide you when you imagine and compose a fragrance? When we start thinking about colours, we usually have a meeting where all of this is discussed, and it's a wonderful gift to be able to tell the story beautifully. This perfume is very easy to wear as it's fresh, with a salty note inspired by the ocean.

At Hermès, fragrance often feels like storytelling rather than trend-driven creation. How does this philosophy shape the way you work with notes and materials? I love it. It is a tremendous gift to work for a House with

such a rich history across so many areas. It's a heritage one always wants to be part of. No creation exists without memory, and this is the best advice to follow. Would you like to tell us something coming soon to our Middle East region? I am very fond of this region, the people and the culture. Here, many fragrances are not alcohol-based, and this was my first area of interest. I am generally scared of horses, but one day I met one and, when I smelled her neck, I was deeply moved by the scent. I thought that one day I would create something from that

moment. I had the emotion, the idea, and was ready to begin my journey for Oud Alezan. My source of inspiration comes entirely from the Middle Eastern region.

THE 7 FRAGRANCES IN THE HERMÈS PARFUMS-JARDINS COLLECTION

- Un Jardin en Méditerranée (2003)
- Un Jardin sur le Nil (2005)
- Un Jardin après la Mousson (2008)
- Un Jardin sur le Toit (2011)
- Le Jardin de Monsieur Li (2015)
- Un Jardin sur la Lagune (2019)
- Un Jardin sous la Mer (2026)

ELLE

gourmet

A NEW STANDARD... Maria Galabova approaches patisserie with precision, balancing craft, taste, and a more considered way of eating.

At the Table...

A CLOSER LOOK AT THOSE RESHAPING HOW WE EAT, HOST, AND THINK ABOUT FOOD TODAY

Sweet Shift

WITH KETO KARTEL, MARIA GALABOVA RETHINKS INDULGENCE THROUGH A STRUCTURED, GLOBALLY MINDED APPROACH TO SUGAR-FREE PATISSERIE, WHERE EUROPEAN CRAFT MEETS A MORE CONSIDERED WAY OF LIVING

There's a quiet precision to the way Maria Galabova speaks about food. Not as a trend, or even a category, but as a system. One shaped by discipline, culture and a deep understanding of how people live and choose. Before Keto Kartel, her world was diplomacy, policy and international strategy. Today, that same mindset underpins a brand that approaches indulgence differently, one that delivers the pleasure of exceptional patisserie while aligning with a more thoughtful, health-conscious lifestyle. The result is not about restriction, but about redefining what a sweet treat can be, and how it fits into everyday life.

From a distinguished diplomatic career in Belgium and Bulgaria's Ministry of Economy to launching a wellness empire in Dubai; how has your background in international relations and strategic planning shaped the global vision and identity of Keto Kartel? My background in diplomacy played a key role in shaping how I think. It made me a strategic thinker and gave me a strong global mindset. In that field, you're trained to think beyond borders, to understand cultures, and to approach everything with structure and intention.

That mindset directly influenced how I built Keto Kartel. From the beginning, it was never just about creating a product, it was about building a brand with a clear vision and a structured foundation. I always saw it as something global, not only local. We approach the business in a very strategic way. It's market-driven, designed to scale, and built on understanding culture and consumer behavior before anything else. So today, Keto Kartel is not just a dessert brand. It's a system. It's built with intention, with structure, and with a long-term vision, not by coincidence. That foundation comes directly from diplomacy and policy for sure. **You come from a family of medical professionals, yet you chose to champion health through lifestyle rather than conventional medicine. How do you define the intersection between inner vitality and outer luxury in your sugar-free and gluten-free creations?** I come from a family of doctors, so I was raised with a very clear understanding of how deeply what we consume shapes how we feel, think, and function. Over time, I found my own expression of that through lifestyle and everyday choices. With Keto Kartel, the intention was to create something that feels exceptional first. Something people genuinely desire, built on standards that respect how you want to feel.

This is for people who expect more. People who value taste, but also pay attention to how they live and what they choose to indulge in. Health sits within that standard. It becomes part of a more considered and sustainable way of living. What we've created is a way of indulging that feels elevated, complete, and aligned with that mindset.

Keto Kartel is known for using expert European artisans to hand-craft products in the UAE. How do you ensure that the artisan soul of European baking remains intact while strictly adhering to the rigorous scientific standards of the keto lifestyle? This is actually exactly what defines

Keto Kartel. We preserved the soul of European craftsmanship, the texture, the richness, the emotion behind it, and reworked what sits underneath. Our approach to ingredients is deliberate. Each element is selected for how it performs in taste, texture, and balance. From the chocolate to the way sweetness is achieved, everything is chosen to deliver the same depth and satisfaction you expect from exceptional patisserie.

In the world of high-end patisserie, indulgence is often linked to compromise. With your brand's mission of guilt-free essentials, how are you redefining the concept of a sweet treat? Indulgence should feel complete in every sense. Taste, texture, and the overall experience all come together in that moment. With Keto Kartel, we approached it with a different mindset. We're here to create something people genuinely enjoy, without attaching emotions like guilt or restriction to it. We don't believe in telling people how they should feel about food. We focus on creating something that feels exceptional, built with carefully selected ingredients and a clear standard behind it.

With ambitious plans to expand into the GCC and major European capitals like Paris, Monaco, and Geneva - and your alignment with UAE Vision 2030 - what is the biggest challenge in scaling a hand-crafted luxury brand while maintaining its bespoke quality? For us, it's never been about volume it's about control. We scale very intentionally. The biggest challenge is maintaining consistency and quality while growing, especially when your brand is built on craftsmanship and detail. So production becomes the core focus. As we expand into new markets, our priority is not to grow fast, but to grow right, without ever compromising the identity of the brand. Because in luxury, consistency is the real signature. It's not about quantity, it's about quality. **You've stated that children and adults alike should be able to celebrate life's moments without compromising their health. As a visionary mother and entrepreneur, how do you see Keto Kartel transforming the way families celebrate their milestones in the next decade?** This is very personal for me, especially as a mother. Some of the most meaningful moments are the simple ones,

sitting together, celebrating something small, sharing something beautiful at the table. Those are the things children grow up remembering.

And for me, it also matters what they grow up around. The standards they're exposed to from the beginning, what feels normal to them, what they come to expect without even questioning it.

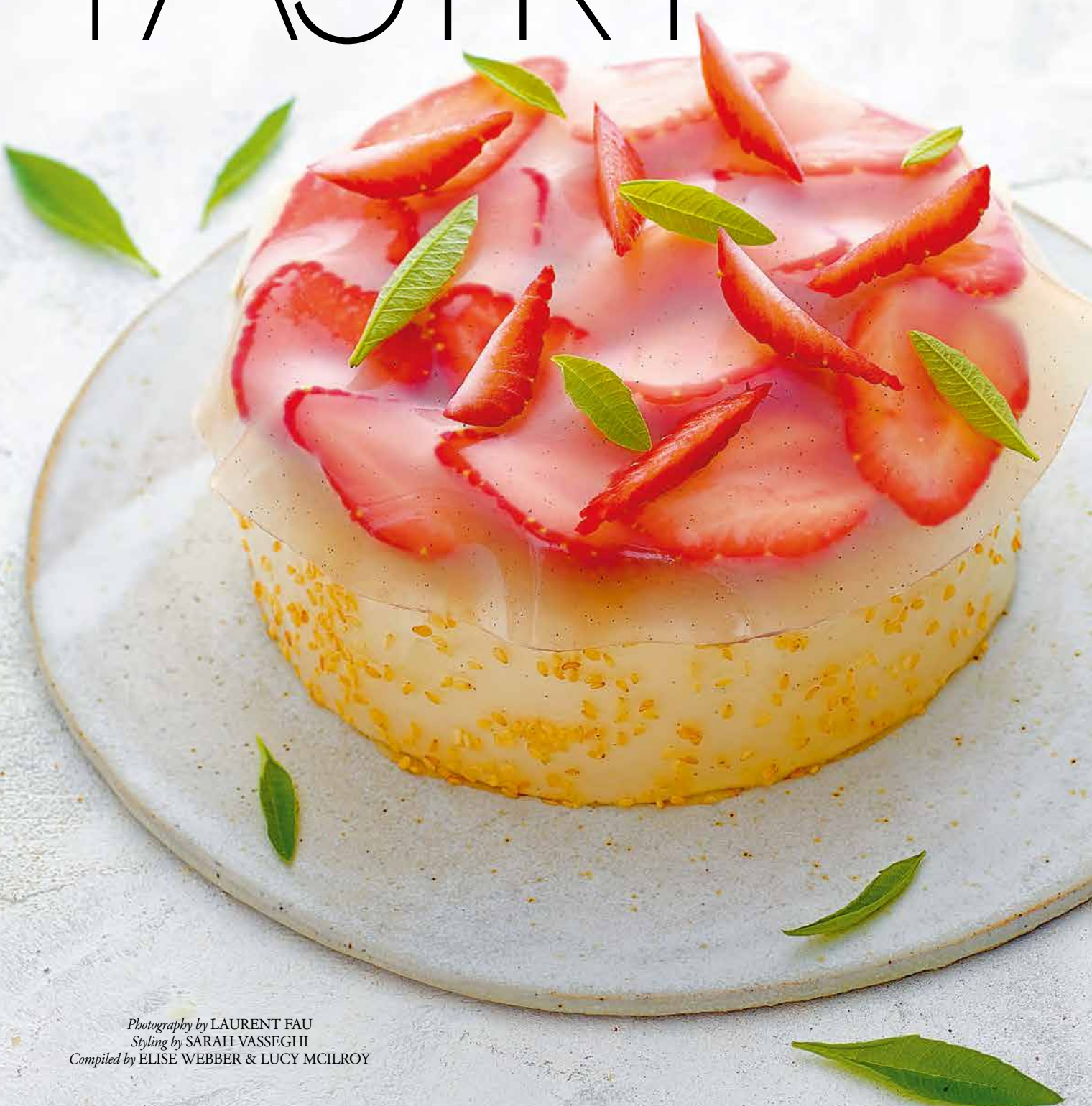
When those standards are there early on, there's nothing to change later. It just becomes part of how they live, how they choose, how they experience things.

I want Keto Kartel to be part of that. Something families reach for naturally, something that feels special, but also feels right. So over time, it becomes part of how you celebrate, how you gather, how you create those moments together. It becomes something you enjoy fully, and naturally come back to.



"THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY WHILE GROWING, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR BRAND IS BUILT ON CRAFTSMANSHIP AND DETAIL"

Pretty in PASTRY



Photography by LAURENT FAU
Styling by SARAH VASSEGI
Compiled by ELISE WEBBER & LUCY MCILROY

A FEAST FOR THE EYES, THESE *DESSERTS* ARE AS REFINED AND INVENTIVE AS A COUTURIER'S CREATION. IN HIS LATEST BOOK, "*LA PÂTISSERIE DE JEFFREY CAGNES*" (SOLAR EDITIONS), THE PASTRY CHEF REIMAGINES CLASSICS WITH AN UNEXPECTED TWIST: A *CRAZY ST HONORÉ* IN A PURPLE GOWN OR A FIG ROLL AS DELICATE AS A DRAPÉ. *TO DIE FOR!*

Fraisier

SERVES 4-6.
PREPARATION TIME: 1 HOUR 45 MINS.
BAKING TIME: 15 MINS.
REST TIME: 21 HOURS 15MINS.

EQUIPMENT

Circular mold (14cm diameter and 4.5cm height)
• Circular mold (12cm diameter)
• Ring cutter (16cm diameter) for the veil
• Mold (30cm x 40cm) • Stencil paper • Rhodoid®
• Cooking thermometer

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE GANACHE

160g + 300 g cream (35% fat)
• 15 fresh verbena leaves • 2 vanilla pods
• 6g gelatine sheets
• 90g white chocolate buttons

FOR THE TRANSLUCENT VEIL

20g caster sugar • 10g NH pectin
• 5g agar-agar • 1 vanilla pod •
400g water • 30g honey
• 14g gelatine mass

FOR THE STRAWBERRY FILLING

100g strawberry purée • 1/2 vanilla pod
• 10g caster sugar • 2g NH pectin
• Lime zest to taste • 8 strawberries

FOR THE VANILLA BISCUIT

270g softened butter • 230g caster sugar
• 390g eggs • 135g ground almonds
• 180g flour • 10g baking powder • 1 vanilla pod
• 150g grapeseed oil

FOR DECORATION

Fresh vervain leaves • 500g fresh strawberries

METHOD

FOR THE GANACHE

1 In a saucepan, bring 160g of cream to the boil with the verbena leaves. Add the vanilla seeds, and leave to infuse for 15 minutes, covered. **2** Bring to a simmer again, blend and sieve. Pour it over the gelatine and white chocolate buttons in a mixing bowl. Mix and add 300g cream and blend. **3** Cover with cling film and set aside for 12 hours in the fridge.

FOR THE TRANSLUCENT VEIL

1 Mix half the sugar with the pectin, agar-agar and the vanilla seeds. **2** Bring the water to the boil with the remaining sugar and the honey. Pour in the previous mixture slowly, stirring constantly. **3** Leave to cool in the pan until the temperature drops to 58-59°C, then pour the mixture evenly into a flat container lined with greaseproof paper: the layer should be 4mm thick. **4** Once cooled, cover with cling film and refrigerate until ready to use.

FOR THE STRAWBERRY FILLING

1 In a saucepan, boil the strawberry purée and the seeds from the half vanilla pod. Add the mixed sugar and pectin, then a little grated lime zest, and blend. Leave to cool at room temperature. **2** Slice the strawberries 1cm thick. Arrange them in a 12cm diameter circle, then cover with the strawberry jelly. Leave to set in the freezer for 3 hours.

FOR THE VANILLA BISCUIT

1 Preheat the oven to 175°C. Whisk the butter and sugar until the mixture turns pale. **2** Add the eggs, ground almonds, then the flour and baking powder, sifted together. **3** Then, add the oil and the vanilla seeds, and mix. Pour the mixture into the mould (30 x 40) and bake for 14 minutes. **4** Remove from the oven and cut out a 14 cm diameter disc.

TO ASSEMBLE

1 Line the inside of the 14cm diameter ring with a strip of Rhodoid®. Fill it halfway with the vanilla- verbena ganache. Add the strawberry insert, then the vanilla biscuit. Top with ganache and smooth to cover the edges. Leave to set for 4 hours in the freezer. **2** Place halved strawberries on top. Cut a 16cm diameter disc from the vanilla veil and place it carefully on top. **3** Decorate with a few verbena leaves and leave to defrost for 2 hours in the fridge before serving.

Fig Rolls



SERVES 10.
PREPARATION TIME: 2 HOURS.
BAKING TIME: 25 MINS.
REST TIME: 6 HOURS 45 MINS.

EQUIPMENT

10 Circular dough cutters (12cm diameter).

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PASTRY DOUGH

12.5g fresh yeast • 350g T45 flour
• 40g caster sugar • 8.5g salt • 11g honey
• 135g softened butter • 625g water

FOR THE GLAZE

1 egg • 1 tbsp. of single cream (30% fat content)

FOR THE VANILLA CREAM

500g milk • 120g caster sugar • 4 vanilla pods
• 100g egg yolks • 40g plain flour • 30g cornflour

FOR THE FIG CONFIT: 20g caster sugar • 200g fresh
figs • 1 vanilla pod • 6g pectin (available from baking
supply shops)

FOR DECORATION: 10 fresh figs • Butter

METHOD

FOR THE PASTRY

1 Crumble the yeast into a stand mixer and add the sugar, salt, honey, softened butter and cold water. **2** Knead for 3 minutes on the lowest speed, then 8 minutes on the second highest speed. **3** Roll out the dough and shape into a 15 x 30cm rectangle. Leave to rest for 1 hour in the fridge. **4** Using a rolling pin, roll out the butter on a sheet of baking paper into a square shape with 15cm sides. Leave to rest for 1 hour in the fridge. **5** After resting, place the square of butter on top and fold it evenly into the dough. Make incisions in the sides and roll out the dough lengthwise until 7mm thick, and give it a double turn. Cut the dough open on the sides. Set aside in the fridge for 2 hours. **6** Roll out the dough width wise to a thickness of 8mm and give a single turn. Cut the sides of the dough open and set aside in the fridge for 2 hours.

FOR THE VANILLA CREAM

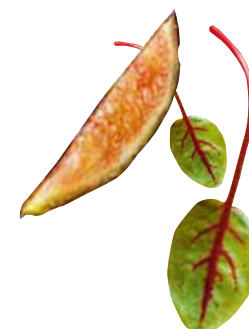
1 In a saucepan, bring the milk to the boil with half the caster sugar, the vanilla seeds and empty pods. **2** In a mixing bowl, whisk the egg yolks with the remaining sugar until pale. Sift in the flour and cornflour. Pour a little boiling milk over the mixture and whisk. **3** Remove the empty vanilla pods before pouring everything back into the saucepan. Boil for 3 minutes, whisking vigorously. **4** Transfer the cream to a container, cover with cling film and set aside in a cool place for 2 hours. Put into a piping bag.

FOR THE FIG CONFIT

1 In a saucepan, mix half the sugar with the seeds and the figs. Bring to the boil, then stir in the remaining sugar mixed with the pectin. Bring to the boil again and mix. **2** Leave to cool before transferring to a piping bag.

TO ASSEMBLE

1 Remove the dough from the fridge and roll it out to a thickness of 3mm to form a rectangle 15cm wide and 45cm long. Spread the vanilla cream on top, then place on the halved fresh figs. Roll the dough tightly. Cut into 10 pieces each 4cm wide. **2** Place the rolls in buttered ring moulds. Leave to rise at room temperature for 45 minutes. **3** Preheat the oven to 170°C. Place the rings on a baking tray and bake for 25 minutes. **4** After 10 minutes, remove the moulds. Once cooled, add a spiral of vanilla cream, some fig confit and fresh fig quarters.



Lime Tart

SERVES 6-8.
PREPARATION TIME: 2 HOURS. RESTING
TIME: 14 HOURS.
BAKING TIME: 3 HOURS 40 MINS.

EQUIPMENT

14cm diameter ring • N°12 piping nozzle • N°10
piping nozzle

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE LIME GANACHE: 3g of gelatin sheets
• 330g of creme (35% fat) • 90g white chocolate
• 75g lime juice

FOR THE SWISS MERINGUE

35g egg whites • 70g caster sugar

FOR THE SWEET PASTRY

100g softened butter • 100g icing sugar
• 60g egg yolks • 250g T45 flour • 2g salt • 1 egg (for
glazing) • Hazelnut powder • Crushed hazelnuts

FOR THE CONFIT

50g caster sugar • 100g lime juice • 1 vanilla pod
• 4g NH pectin • 3g fresh basil • 20g olive oil

FOR THE LIME CREAM

1g gelatine leaves • 195g eggs • 145g caster sugar
• 165g lime juice • Zest of 4 limes • 290g butter

FOR THE HAZELNUT CRUST

30g softened butter • 30g brown sugar
• 40g ground hazelnuts • 30g plain flour • 1g salt

FOR DECORATION

Basil leaves • Lime zest • Icing sugar



METHOD

FOR THE LIME GANACHE

1 Rehydrate the gelatine in cold water for 10 minutes. **2** In a saucepan, bring half of the cream to the boil, then pour it in thirds over the white chocolate and drained gelatine. Mix well until smooth. **3** Pour in the rest of the cold cream and the fresh lime juice. Blend, cover with cling film and refrigerate for 12 hours.

FOR THE SWISS MERINGUE

1 Place the egg whites and caster sugar in a mixing bowl set over a bain-marie and whisk the mixture by hand until it reaches 43°C. **2** Transfer the meringue to the stand-mixer and whisk at maximum speed until cool. Preheat the oven to 110°C. **3** Using a piping bag with a No. 12 nozzle, pipe small mounds onto a lined baking tray. Bake for 3 hours.

FOR THE PASTRY

1 Mix the softened butter and icing sugar until creamy, then add the egg yolks, sifted flour and salt. **2** Knead the dough by spreading it thinly with your hand on the work surface and set aside for at least 1 hour in the fridge. **3** Preheat the oven to 160°C. Roll out the pastry to a thickness of 2 to 3mm between two sheets of baking paper. **4** Line the tin, add baking beads and bake for about 15 to 20 minutes. Leave to cool. **5** Once the tart base has cooled, remove it from the tin. Egg wash the inside and outside then sprinkle with ground hazelnuts. Bake again for about 10 minutes at 160°C.

FOR THE CONFIT

1 In a saucepan, mix half the caster sugar, the lime juice, and the vanilla seeds. Bring to the boil, then stir in the rest of the sugar, mixed with the pectin. **2** Bring to the boil again, blend and leave to cool. **3** Once the confit has cooled and set, add the chopped basil and olive oil, mix and set aside for at least 1 hour in the fridge.

FOR THE LIME CREAM

1 Rehydrate the gelatine in cold water. **2** In a saucepan over low heat, mix the eggs, caster sugar and lime juice until it thickens. **3** Remove from the heat and add the drained gelatine, grated zest and cubed butter. Blend well and set aside in the fridge for at least 2 hours.

FOR THE HAZELNUT CRUST

1 Preheat the oven to 160°C. Mix everything until the dough is crumbly. Spread it out on a lined baking tray and bake for 12 minutes.

TO ASSEMBLE

1 Pour the lime cream onto the cooled tart base, then cover with a layer of lime, basil and olive oil confit. Whisk the lime ganache. **2** Using a No. 10 piping bag, pipe dots of ganache over the entire tart. Add a few drops of lime confit, basil leaves, grated lime zest, a few pieces of hazelnut crust and meringues. Dust with icing sugar.



Pineapple & Coriander Tart

SERVES 8.
PREPARATION TIME: 1 HOUR 45 MINS.
RESTING TIME: 12 HOURS.
FREEZING TIME: 3 HOURS.
BAKING TIME: 30MINS.

EQUIPMENT

Circular pastry cutter (26cm diameter)
• Circular cutter (22cm diameter)

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE GLAZE

500g water • 300g caster sugar
• 600g lemon juice • 1 vanilla pod • 30g NH pectin

FOR THE ALMOND PASTE

125g softened butter • 125g caster sugar • 125g almond powder • 100g eggs • 1 vanilla pod
• 25g flour • 5 coriander sprigs

FOR THE PASTRY

Approx. 1.2kg of puff pastry

FOR THE PINEAPPLE AND CORIANDER JELLY

5g gelatine sheets • 1/2 pineapple • 240g water
• 50g caster sugar • 1 vanilla pod • 240g pineapple purée • 3 coriander sprigs, finely chopped

TO ASSEMBLE

Butter • Coriander • Fresh pineapple

METHOD

FOR THE PASTRY

1 Boil the water with half of the sugar and lemon juice, the vanilla seeds and the pod. **2** In a bowl, mix the rest of the sugar with the pectin and add to the former mixture. Bring to the boil for 2 to 3 minutes. Mix off the heat and sieve. **3** Refrigerate for at least 12 hours.

FOR THE ALMOND PASTE

1 In a bowl, mix the butter, sugar, and almond powder until smooth. Add the beaten eggs little by little and then whisk the whole mixture. Add the vanilla seeds, flour and the chopped coriander.

TO BAKE

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C. Cut a 28cm diameter disc out of your pre-prepared, uncooked puff pastry and leave to rest for 1 hour in the fridge. **2** Place a greased 26cm diameter ring on a lined baking tray. Place the pastry disc inside the ring, then pipe the almond cream over it. **3** Bake for about 30 minutes and then leave to cool.

FOR THE JELLY

1 Rehydrate the gelatine sheets in a large bowl of cold water for 15 minutes. Peel the pineapple and cut into cubes. **2** In a saucepan, bring the water to the boil with the sugar, seeds, and split vanilla pod. Poach the pineapple cubes in this syrup over a low heat. **3** In another saucepan, gently heat the pineapple purée. Add the gelatine and poached pineapple cubes, then the chopped coriander. **4** Cover a 22cm diameter ring with cling film, then pour in the mixture. Place in the freezer for 2 hours.

TO ASSEMBLE

1 Brush a thin layer of neutral glaze over the pineapple and coriander jelly disc. **2** Place on top of the puff pastry and decorate with pineapple cubes and a few coriander leaves. Serve immediately.

©LAURENT FAU FOR "LA PÂTISSERIE DE JEFFREY CAGNES", SOLAR EDITIONS



Meet the Chef!

Paris-born Jeffrey Cagnes discovered his passion for pastry at 15 during his first internship with Pascal Caffret (Meilleur Ouvrier de France). He went on to join Maison Stohrer - the oldest patisserie in Paris - rising from apprentice to commis chef before returning years later as Executive Chef. In 2021, he opened his own patisserie in the 17th arrondissement, followed by a second on Rue Montorgueil a year later. Committed to sharing his craft, Cagnes also hosts weekly workshops for beginners and seasoned amateurs alike.

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acrylic on panel, Sarah
Alagroobi

Walk This Way...

TO SEE THE PLACES, MUSIC, AND BOOKS THAT WILL WHISK YOU
TO ANOTHER PLACE AND TIME

© SARAH ALAGROOBI

The Jeddah Edition, KSA

A New Address in Jeddah brings the brand's pared-back luxury to the Red Sea coast



THE LOWDOWN

The Jeddah EDITION marks the brand's 20th global outpost and its first property in Saudi Arabia. Positioned along the Jeddah Corniche, beside the Yacht Club and Marina and along the Formula 1 circuit, the hotel reflects the city's evolving identity where historic trade routes and contemporary ambition meet. Designed by international studio Yabu Pushelberg, the low-rise property takes visual cues from a sleek superyacht, fitting naturally into its marina surroundings. Inside, the brand's signature approach of clean lines, warm woods and sculptural art sets the tone.

ROOMS & SUITES

With just 52 rooms and 11 suites, the hotel feels intimate rather than expansive, offering views across either the Red Sea or the nearby Grand Prix track. Guest rooms follow EDITION's understated aesthetic, with travertine bathrooms, oak panelling and



soft neutral tones complemented by black-and-white photography of historic Jeddah. Two penthouses raise the scale, with generous terraces overlooking the marina. Elsewhere, a rooftop pool deck, spa, gym and several social spaces are designed to move easily from day to evening.

FOOD & MOOD

At the center of the culinary offering is Maritime, the hotel's signature restaurant by chef Cédric Vongerichten, blending French techniques with Asian flavours and regional ingredients. The lobby lounge and terrace transition from relaxed daytime settings to lively evening gathering spots, reflecting the rhythm of Jeddah's waterfront nightlife. On the fourth floor, a rooftop pool deck brings a Mediterranean-style beach club feel to the property, with shaded cabanas, sunbeds and sweeping views over the marina and Red Sea. Nearby, a compact spa offers a menu of facials and massages using Natura Bissé products, alongside three serene treatment rooms designed for privacy and quiet retreat. A well-equipped gym completes the wellness journey.



Balancing Act

Home Rituals: I love starting my day with coffee in silence, it grounds me. I also light incense to shift the energy of a space and I always have calming music, often piano or frequency sounds, playing softly in the background. **Workplace Mindfulness:** I stay present and organized, with clear structure in my day and mindful breaks in between. I also keep a "ghost list" of lingering tasks and tackle them with a timer; clearing mental clutter and creating space to focus more intentionally. **Inspiring Book:** I really resonated with The Untethered Soul by Michael A. Singer (2). It's a gentle yet powerful guide to creating more space, clarity and ease within yourself.

Art Therapy

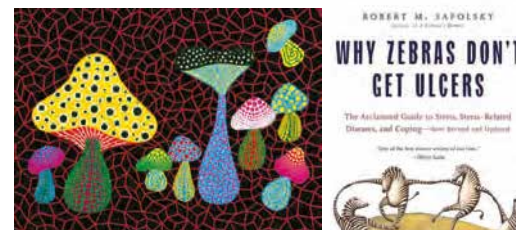
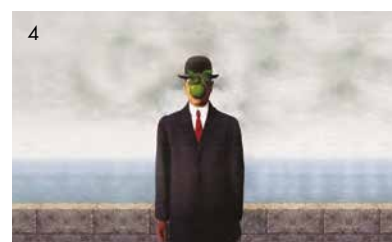
Inspiring Artist Yayoi Kusama (3). Her work feels both immersive and emotional, exploring repetition, identity, and the subconscious. **Artistic Practices:** Art became a way to access my inner truth. I practice a "draw, write, read" method – expressing visually, journaling, then reflecting – which has become a powerful, ongoing form of release and self-awareness. **Paintings:** I really resonate with The Son of Man by René Magritte (4) and The Swing by Jean-Honoré Fragonard. The Son of Man reflects the parts of us that stay hidden, even from ourselves. It reminds me how layered we are as people. The Swing feels completely different. It's light, free, joyful. It brings out that side of us that just wants to feel alive and unrestrained.

Local Escapes

Homegrown Businesses: I love supporting local brands like Maison Tini for its creativity and thoughtful design for children. I also enjoy The Broth Lab and Bateel, both reflect quality, intention and a strong sense of local identity. **Favorite Café:** Lazy Cat is a favorite of mine. It has a calm, cozy atmosphere that makes it easy to slow down and be present. **Staycation Destination:** I love escaping to Hatta for its nature and stillness or The St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort for a more refined, coastal retreat. Both offer a perfect reset in different ways.

Balancing Health & Harmony

Haya Bitar, a leadership and personal transformation expert, ontological **coach** and **art therapist**, offers a candid take on her work, her approach to **holistic wellbeing**, and how she helps others navigate burnout while staying connected to **what matters**.



Mind & Body

Fitness Routine: Movement is essential — it's a form of meditation. I walk one to two hours daily, strength train four times a week, and stretch regularly through yin yoga or simple movements. I also incorporate physiotherapy. **Wellbeing Secret:** For me, it's about awareness, knowing when to push forward and when to pause. I practice centering by tuning into my body and staying present. **Current Read:** Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers by Robert Sapolsky (5). It beautifully explains stress through both science and psychology. It reminds you how deeply the mind and body are connected, and why slowing down truly matters. **Skincare Heroes:** Hydration is key (1) – I love ceramides and peptides to support the skin barrier. I'm also a fan of treatments like Moxi and micro needling. Above all, sun protection is non-negotiable. I never leave home without my oversized visor, no matter how dramatic it looks.



Play

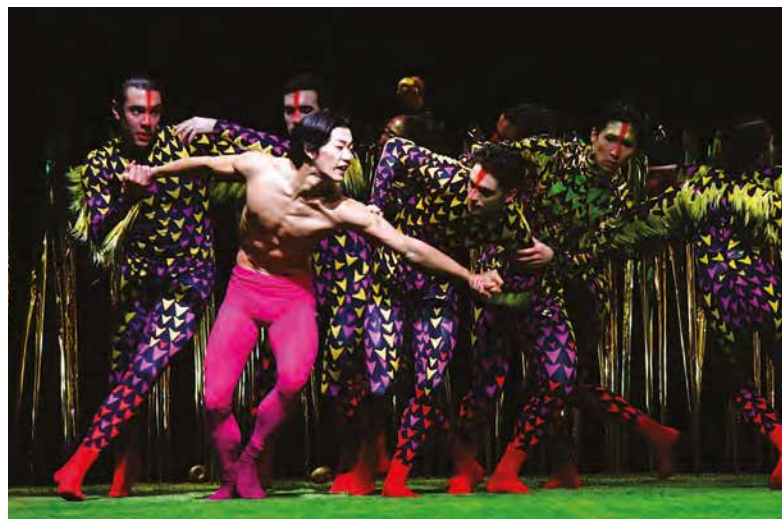
**WHATEVER'S CLEVER!
BY CHARLIE PUTH**

The change in pace might call for a feel-good anthem to match the transition into the new season. Coming in with the spring breeze, Whatever's Clever! is a masterclass in soulful, rhythmic pop that will be on repeat for your morning drives. The track carries Puth's signature technical precision, something we can't get enough of. Just roll down the windows and hit play on this one.



WATCH SEE PLAY

*WITH CALENDARS A BUZZING,
THESE ARE THE NOTEWORTHY
HAPPENINGS CAUSING A BUZZ
AT THE MOMENT*



See

**THE FIREBIRD / PETRUSHKA
AT DUBAI OPERA**

We don't know if you've heard, but ballet and theatre are firmly back on the agenda. Not that they ever left our little Watch, See, Play pages... From April 24-26, Dubai Opera brings something truly remarkable to the stage. This double bill of The Firebird and Petrushka is more than just a ballet; it's a cultural journey that feels both timeless and breathtakingly vibrant. Consider it the perfect recipe for a beautiful night out, and a chance to soak up world-class artistry in the heart of Dubai.

COMPILED BY SWATI JAIN

Watch

RUNNING POINT (SEASON 2)

There's one thing I can safely confess: if Kate Hudson's in it, I'm watching it - no questions asked. That's exactly how I fell into a full Running Point season one binge. Created by Mindy Kaling's production house, the series throws Hudson into the deep end as a woman suddenly put in charge of a professional sports team, with zero experience and everything to prove. Chaos? Guaranteed. Also starring Brenda Song, Max Greenfield and Justin Theroux, it's sharp, addictive, and exactly the kind of midweek escape you'll end up finishing in one sitting.



Listen

NORMAL GOSSIP

Times like these, when real-life stakes feel a little too high, call for something lighter. Enter Normal Gossip, a podcast built on pure, unfiltered joy. It serves up juicy, strange, and delightfully low-stakes stories from people you don't know, but will immediately be invested in. It's like listening in on a conversation, only with all the details revealed. If you appreciate the art of a perfectly told origin story (even if it's about a neighborhood dispute), consider this your cue to keep your headphones close for every new episode drop.

Follow

THREE WOMEN TURNING MINDLESS SCROLLING INTO
SOMETHING MORE MINDFUL...



ALEXANDRA VENISON
@Alexandravenison

Alexandra has evolved from a beauty editor to a digital tastemaker, one that never ceases to inspire. Channeling her good energy, she's taken a leap as a coach into meditation, sound healing and immersive resets.



DINA GHANDOUR
@Wellnesswithdina

Dina is the heartbeat of the local yoga and wellness community. She has created a sanctuary for mindful movement that goes beyond the mainstream, focusing on empowerment and finding your own pace.



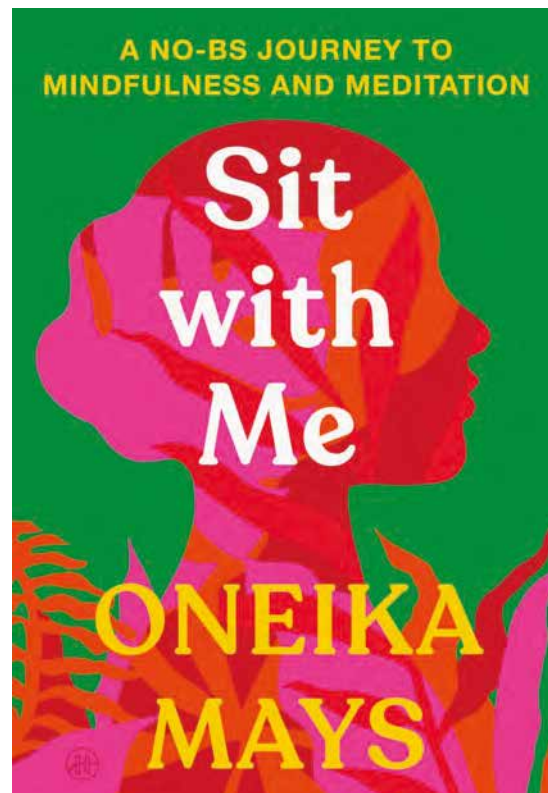
LANA ALMULLA
@Lunaroniyari

A nutritional therapist, Lana takes a holistic approach to wellbeing. Her philosophy goes beyond food, guiding her audience toward a more intuitive and balanced way of living.



READ

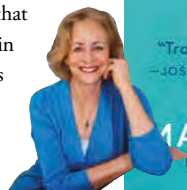
TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND CLEAR SOME SPACE ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND — IT'S TIME TO FIND YOUR CENTER THE BEST WAY WE KNOW HOW: THROUGH A GOOD BOOK.



QUIET STRENGTH

by Margaret Cullen

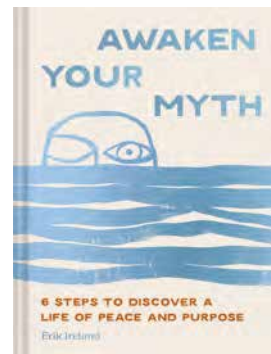
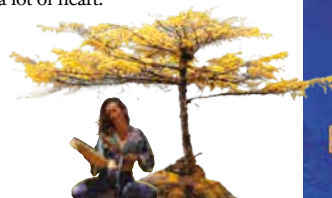
We're living through complicated, often overwhelming realities, from climate change and political division to global conflict, many of which lie beyond our control. It's no wonder they can leave us feeling powerless, disconnected, or quietly bitter. This book is a beautiful meditation on finding peace, and feeling truly alive, through the power of inner stillness. It explores how to love more deeply and openly by first connecting to that reservoir of strength within yourself. If your soul is craving something refined, reflective, and spiritually grounding, consider this your invitation.



SIT WITH ME: A NO-BS JOURNEY TO MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

by Oneika Mays

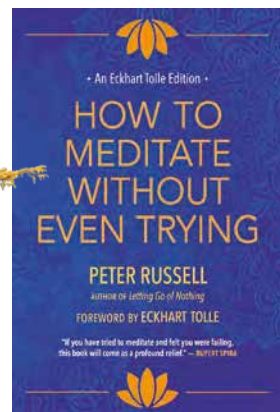
Whether it's "that's a really stupid idea" or "no, he's a moron and you deserve better," everyone needs that friend who tells it to you straight. Oneika Mays is exactly that. She delivers a refreshingly honest take on the messy side of mindfulness. This isn't about perfect silence, it's about acknowledging the noise and choosing to sit with it anyway. Think of it as a modern guide for anyone craving a more grounded, no-nonsense approach to mental clarity. Meditation, but with grit and a lot of heart.



AWAKEN YOUR MYTH: 6 STEPS TO DISCOVER A LIFE OF PEACE AND PURPOSE

by Andrea Balt

Because we're thinking of everyone, this one's for those who like a little structure with their soul-searching. The book lays out a sharp six-step roadmap, less vague wandering, more intentional growth. This isn't just about relaxation; it's about transformation. By diving into your own personal "mythology," you begin to align your daily actions with a deeper sense of purpose. Intellectual, empowering, and the perfect companion for anyone firmly in their introspective growth era.



HOW TO MEDITATE WITHOUT EVEN TRYING

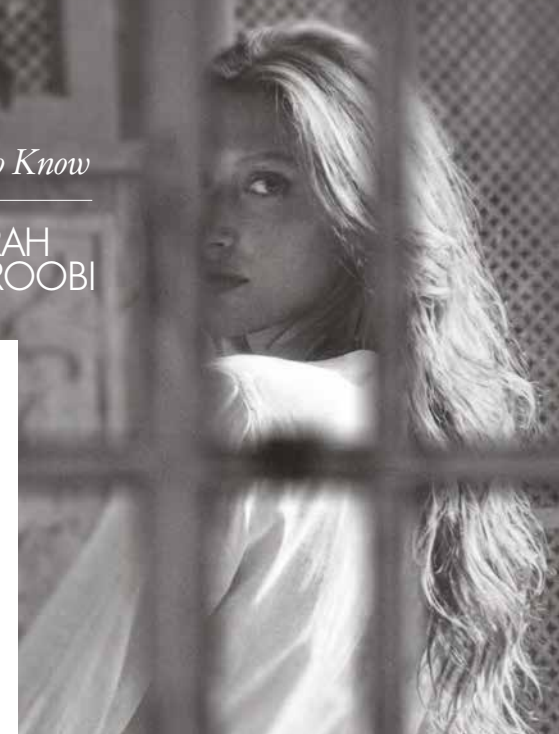
by Peter Russell

Peter Russell distills decades of teachings into a simple truth: the harder we try to meditate, the more we get in our own way. Calm isn't something to chase; it's something that unfolds when we stop striving for it. Through everyday examples and effortless practices, he shows how to find moments of peace while walking, eating, or even stuck in traffic. It's practical, slightly irreverent, and written for the skeptic who wants the benefits of meditation without the "woo-woo." Although, personally, I don't mind a little woo-woo.

COMPILED BY SWATI JAIN

Artist to Know

SARAH ALAGROOBI



From top to bottom: THE BLUE BENEATH US 2025, ACRYLIC ON WOOD PANEL 150X120N CM; SLIT, 46X61 CM ACRYLIC; BEHIND HER EYES, 50X40 ACRYLIC ON CANVAS



IN BETWEEN LINES

Emirati artist **Sarah Alagroobi** reflects on the crossroads of culture, identity, and discovery. **Her work invites** viewers to encounter the hidden self, encouraging a reading beyond the **visible surface** of materiality and influence, as she probes **Arab identity** through a cross-cultural lens.

Art can be a form of therapy. It invites self-reflection, offers new ways of seeing others, and challenges preconceived notions by asking us to look beyond what is immediately visible. Alagroobi's creative practice is grounded in this kind of introspection. "I've always been drawn to what I think of as the 'fringe', the edges where things don't fully settle. I'm interested in both conceptual and physical intersectionality, how identities, geographies, and visual languages meet and sometimes resist one another," she says.

At the Memoryscape exhibition in Abu Dhabi, Alagroobi joins six contemporary Arab artists exploring how surroundings and histories shape identity. Each artist turns inward, drawing from personal memory to build a visual language that invites reflection. For Alagroobi, this process becomes a way of uncovering the hidden self through lived experience. "That can look like Arab identity against Western identity, borders against place, figuration against abstraction, or even the tension between conformity and a more contrarian existence. What interests me isn't resolving those oppositions, but staying within them, understanding what it means to exist in that in-between space and how we choose to express ourselves from there," she explains.

Her work is shaped by an ongoing awareness formed during her upbringing across Arab countries. As a multidisciplinary artist, researcher, and educator, she draws from personal experience to create work that resonates within a wider cultural context. "When you grow up within a multicultural environment, especially one that constantly blends and overlaps identities, it becomes harder to locate yourself clearly within it. So my work naturally became a kind of ongoing inquiry," she reflects.

Deeply personal yet widely relatable, Alagroobi places emphasis on process over subject. Her work is defined by layering, carving, and uncovering, with an openness to unpredictability. "I allow for unpredictability," she says. "I let the material respond, I let accidents happen, and I follow those moments instead of correcting them. That tension between something intentional and something intuitive is where the work really exists." This balance mirrors the conceptual space she explores, where themes such as land, belonging,

conformity, and rejection are approached through a constant negotiation between control and instinct. Her early years also shaped this instinctive approach. As a child, she sought ways to express her inner thoughts and make sense of her place in the world. That impulse continues to inform her work today. "The way I work now, especially the dreamlike and sometimes almost psychedelic quality of the work, feels like an extension of that early instinct," she shares.

Three key works offer insight into her evolving narrative. Behind Her Eye explores femininity as layered and in motion, resisting fixed definitions. The Tiles Were Black and White reflects on a deeply personal visit to Syria, where she mourned the loss of family matriarchs. "I see it as a reflection of grief, but also inheritance, how memory is carried, distorted, and reassembled over time," she notes. In Slit, layered surfaces guide the viewer through a space shaped by tension. "There's a kind of tension between rupture and continuity. It connects to the feminine body, not literally, but in how it is experienced, perceived, and often fragmented. The slit becomes a way of thinking about exposure and concealment at the same time."

The questions Alagroobi raises extend beyond the personal into a broader cultural context. They resist easy answers. "What exists beyond what is visible, beyond what is allowed, and who gets to decide where those boundaries are?" she asks. It is a question that lingers, inviting reflection long after the work has been seen.

The 'Memoryscape' exhibition at Artbooth gallery Abu Dhabi features the works of Gilbert Halaby, Hanibal Srouji, Hussein Baalbaki, Richard Hearn, Soraya Abu Naba'a, and Sarah Alagroobi. It runs until April 26, 2026.

BY ODEIA MATHEWS



Aries

20 MARCH - 19 APRIL

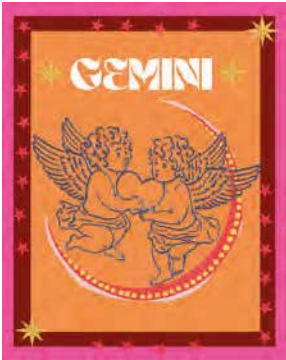
The return of Mars to your own sign for the first time since 2024 will re-energise you completely. No longer content to wait on events, you are eager to take the initiative and make things happen the way you want. The world has changed in recent months, so you must find your way as you go along; but you won't mind that. The important thing, as you know, is to make a start and to be moving again.



Taurus

20 APRIL - 20 MAY

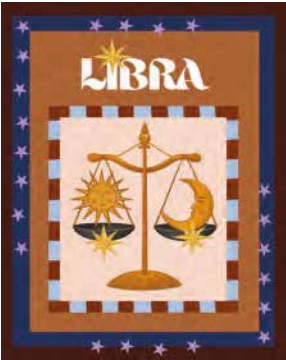
There has always been one option that you have kept in reserve, a sort of emergency plan in case none of your other ideas worked out. Looking at it now, you realise that it is out of date, and it would tie you to the past rather than help you move forwards. Do you really still want it? If you do, then you must use it in the next few weeks; but it might be better just to let it go.



Gemini

21 MAY - 20 JUNE

Lots of doors will open and close in the next few weeks, so it's important to know which ones you want to go through. If there are too many possibilities to choose from, then start by rejecting all those you have been through before; this time you need something new and different. Then reject those that you know you won't like. There will be one left standing.



Libra

23 SEPTEMBER - 22 OCTOBER

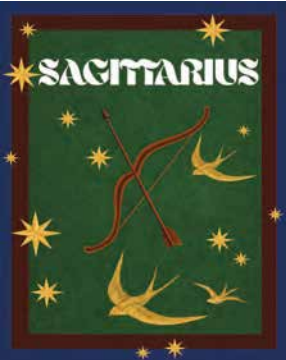
It's good to be passionate about a new project, but not if it means you lose your perspective. Whatever this is, it is making you feel that you have truly found your role, or your destined path. It's possible. But, as is so often the case, the real driving force here is a new romance; if you took that away, would you still want to devote your life to your new venture? If you're honest, probably not.



Scorpio

23 OCTOBER - 21 NOVEMBER

The first of this year's changes to the foundations of your life is happening now. It's very easy, with everything falling into place just as it should, without stress or conflict. You may not even notice it, which would be better still. You are often suspicious of things that go well, but this time there is really no need. Moments of doubt to ignore around the 13th; push forward in the days that follow.



Sagittarius

22 NOVEMBER - 20 DECEMBER

Are you underachieving? Although you are meeting all the goals you have set yourself, there are clear signs that you may have set the bar too low. You can go much higher, or further, than you are allowing yourself. The next few months will give you the best opportunities in years to expand your horizons and do more than you ever thought possible. Make your dreams reality



Cancer

21 JUNE - 21 JULY

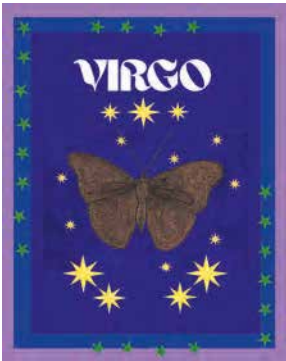
This month is all about confidence. You are in a position of authority now. Don't be afraid to take big decisions; if you follow through with firm actions and you genuinely believe that what you're doing is right, all will be well. Nor should you restrict yourself to simply performing your tasks. Extend your reach, and if given the chance to do something different, take it.



Leo

22 JULY - 22 AUGUST

Meeting up with someone you used to be close to shows that there's still some heat between you, and you find each other as attractive as ever; but you have gone in different directions recently, and your beliefs and values are now very different. A part of you thinks that you could ignore that, and for a short-term affair, you could be right; but for anything more serious, it wouldn't work.



Virgo

23 AUGUST - 22 SEPTEMBER

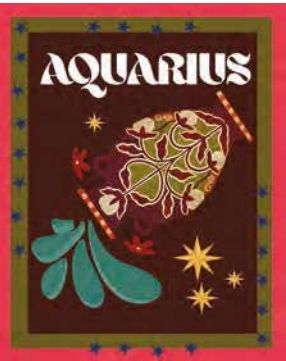
All great books start with a blank canvas. As you turn the page to start a new chapter of your life, it may seem very empty. In fact, the opportunities are limitless, all provided by Neptune, the most inspirational yet least clearly defined of all the planets. If you feel better with some structure rather than empty space, then add some of your own - but keep it loose and large scale. Give yourself room to grow.



Capricorn

21 DECEMBER - 19 JANUARY

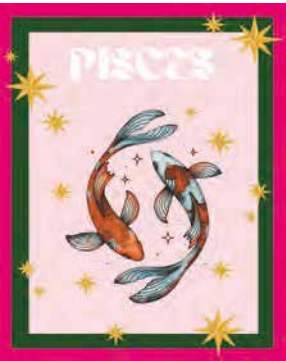
Making plans, or promises, only goes so far; it's only when you make an actual commitment that things get serious, especially if it is a financial one. You are ready now to make a substantial investment in your own future, but naturally you are a little nervous. Have no fear: this will be the foundation of your progress and prosperity for years to come.



Aquarius

20 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY

It's rare for you to put emotion before intellect, but you'll do something totally unexpected simply because it feels right at that moment. You get a chance to re-assess your action and its consequences a few days later, and you will see that you did the right thing, so all is well. You were lucky. Nonetheless, it feels good to know that you can be passionate and impulsive sometimes, doesn't it?



Pisces

19 FEBRUARY - 19 MARCH

The next few weeks offer some of the most gloriously romantic moments of the entire year. But they are also extravagant, and you know that you cannot afford to live your whole life at that level. Serious discussions will be needed and separating emotional issues from financial ones. For most people, money is easy to deal with, and emotions are hard - but for you, it's the other way round.

1



2



3



4



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6



7



Step into it

LATELY, IT'S THE SNEAKERS DOING ALL THE TALKING – COLORFUL, EASY, AND JUST THE RIGHT KIND OF ENERGY FOR DAYS THAT FEEL A LITTLE LIGHTER

1. LOEWE 2. BOTTEGA VENETA
3. BALenciAGA 4. FENDI
5. ONITSUKA TIGER X VERSACE
6. MIU MIU 7. DRIES VAN NOTEN



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