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NouvelleBox

Darren Hildrow in Conversation with: Nada Ghazal



Nada Ghazal is a Lebanese fine jeweller known for striking organic shapes adorned with precious and semi-precious gems that often come set in brushed 18 karat gold. Headquartered in Beirut, her jewels are in essence intensely personal and convey universal emotions, allowing the wearer to embrace the as part of their own story. Her designs can be found in Dover Street Market, Twist and Objet d'Emotion. Nada's background in advertising and branding gave her a head start when it came to founding her eponymous brand in 2004. Over the years, she has been widely recognised for her achievements, including in

2020 when Forbes Middle East named her as one of the top five female entrepreneurs behind Middle Eastern brands. In conversation with Darren Hildrow, Nada discusses the devastation caused by the August 2020 blast in Beirut and how it killed and hurt so many and destroyed her workshop and retail outlets. She also touches on how the disaster gave rise to a spirit of endurance that filled her with awe, inspiring new work founded on the urge to rise-up and renew.

What inspired you to start making jewellery?

Watching my grandmother weave her intricate needlework first sparked my love for artisanship when I was six years old. I would use the needle and thread to create bracelets and rings and adorn myself with them. I knew back then that I wanted was to be an artist and to share what I'd created with the world.

What is your ethos as a designer?

I strongly believe in creating unique jewellery for the global woman who searches for pieces that reflect her personality and bring out her individuality. It's all about jewellery with an identity that stands out from the generic. Besides being distinctive, authentic, and timeless and creating **hand** crafted, meticulously pieces, it is so important to create jewellery that has a story so that women can connect to the pieces.



Where do you find your inspiration?

My designs are a true reflection of my emotional sense, of my immediate surroundings and what invariably moves me. I am touched by everything I see and everyone I meet. I notice little things. It could be the icicles that hung down the windowsill in my parent's mountain house on a chilly winter's day, the organic movement of the trees when the wind dances with them or reflections behind glass. So, talking to myself, and digging deep into my soul is what kickstarts my ideas. I also think visiting and living in many countries has played a role in how I think about design and has led to Nada Ghazal fine jewellery having a global feel.

What impact has the last year had on you as a designer?

The year 2020 was a very difficult one globally. But much more so for the Lebanese. The country had so much political and social unrest. Our currency was devalued to less than 20% of its value. Our money was, and still is, blocked in our banks under capital control. It was also the year which changed the face of Beirut, my muse. The August 4 Beirut Blast killed more than 200 people, injured more than 6,000 and destroyed half of the city, including our retail outlets, workshop, and offices. However, 2020 was also the year that saw Nada Ghazal Fine Jewelry launch internationally with more than eight stockists in the US and Europe. So, I had to garner all my strength to keep going both emotionally and financially, because for me giving up meant that I was giving up on Beirut. My designs reflected this with the Baby Malak Flourish Collection, which is inspired by the need to rise-up and bloom and the Fuse Rock which is about standing tall as in the face of adversity.



Nada Ghazal's store was left devastated by the August 4th Beirut Blast in 2020

Over the last year, what have you done to adapt to such challenging times?

With our main retail outlets closed, we had to shift our focus to wholesale, use marketing to support our retailers, also strengthen our presence through our e-commerce platform.

What lessons have you learned from the last year?

In an ever-changing and evolving world, to be successful you need to be adaptable and agile. In retail, it can be especially difficult when your brand is international, and countries are each dealing with their own issues and legalities. But you must keep abreast of these matters, to ensure you are doing your brand justice and bringing your customers the best possible products and shopping experiences. I know many entrepreneurs that are understandably wary now, and there'll be fewer people willing to take a chance on a new business venture, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, now more than ever, people need to believe in their own capabilities and ideas. The economy can be re-started by creativity and advancements, so people shouldn't be afraid to pursue their own ambitions.



Do you see new technologies, such as CAD/CAM, potentially taking the place of traditional craftsmanship?

I believe that one can always innovate using the latest technologies to streamline some elements of the production process. However, craftsmanship is and will continue to be at the heart of what we do.

What attracted you to becoming associated with NouvelleBox?

I found that NouvelleBox is a great route to market for designers to showcase their creations to retailers. Unlike other marketplaces it focuses specifically on jewellery. It also has a great team.

Why do you think community is so important within the jewellery industry? How do you see your relationship with retailers?

It is a great way to meet designers and learn from their experience and a place to be introduced to and to build stickier relations with retailers. I believe in a partnership with retailers because the success of one party is reflected on the other. Despite the current virtual relationship with our retailers, we work actively to support and build a strong partnership with them.



What do you do to promote your work to both customers and retailers?

We participate in international shows that provide retailers with access to our work. We also like to involve an international sales and PR agency to help promote us with the right retailers for the brand. We are also available on most social platforms, which is a great help for advertising to customers regionally as well as around our retailer locations.

How important is sustainability to you as a designer?

It's very important to us. Firstly, we source our material ethically. Secondly, we support our community by creating job opportunities locally, specifically through employing women and therefore enhancing the local economy by bringing in highly needed international currency.



'How important is networking, be it physical or online, for you as a designer?'

experiences, hence they're part of a story which is both personal and universal. It's a story with which I aspire to connect with women around the world to help make it their story too.

How do you think the jewellery industry has been able to deal with the last year, is it time for the industry to become nimbler and more adaptable?

Agility is very important for any business nowadays and the jewellery industry is no different. Retailers, designers, and suppliers need to find better routes to market and to create a wider array of media to showcase their products and reach their consumers.

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