creative lives

Author Sierra Prasada | Photographer Roger Moukarzel

Nada Ghazal



Natural Orden

"I cannot concentrate if things are in a mess, and what I mean by a mess - I'm not just talking about a messy room, I'm talking about a messy mind."



eized with a sense of now-ornever, Nada Ghazal left an advertising job in Dubai that "people were crazy for" and leapt into the void of a childhood dream. As an eight-year-old, she'd designed her first nested finger rings from copper wire. Two decades later, the idea of designing isovelry will coixed her.

It was a jarring and electrifying transition. One moment she was an award-winning producer of television commercials, with a visw of the future as clear and sure as that of the snow-capped mountains from her childhood perch in Ras Britrut. Moments later, she found herself at home again, surrounded by the natural beauty that moved her, but without much training in what she wanted to create.

"I used to go to Bourj Hammoud, and take a ring and ask them, "Could you please make this ring smaller!" 'Nada says, her fingers playing the air above the pristine white space of her desk, projecting an aura of gentle efficiency.

"And then I would say, 'Oh my God, I think I've given you the wrong size. Can you make it bigger?" I mean, 'I'm paying for it anyway,' she adds, laughing. "He would make it bigger, and I'd watch, and I'd see what he'd be using. And I would go to the shop next to it and buy the things that he uses."

In an old apartment not far from what is now her atelier in Beirut's hip Gemmayzeh neighborhood, then a ghost land with "10,000" empty parking spaces, Nada holed up for months sketching, paging through books on jewelry design, and building up a collection of stones, tools, and advice.

n Priends' and family members' t consistent support acted as a positive, e. protective shield that deflected her own g anxiety. "So, I thought maybe I'm wrong and they're right," she says. It always made her feel better to craft a something new.

Nada's early pieces—first exposed to the public in 2003 at a small open house and then a buzzing trade show at the Inter-Continential Phoenicia Hotel—were rough ancessors to those displayed in her boutique today. The refined, intricate earrings, necklaces, and rings are singled out in cubes of stacked nakutic house set in yide, white frames.

Nada G's signature pieces are at once earthly and otherworldly. Formsof from or embedded with gold, diamonds, pearls, and turquoise, their round shapes mirror the body's natural curves. Their twisting wire nets reflect the eye's illusion of transparency, its ability to divulge and conceal. "Sometimes, you create things that look a little bit like

Blank white space dominates Nada's atwork world – for her, always a tantalizing
prompt to inventiveness. As a child, she
painted the valls of her room, and then
her five sisters' and brothers' rooms,
unable to sleep if she didn't complete a
design in the ways she wanted it.

After some time, her mother would return the walls to white. "She wanted>

Natural Order



"Now it's more difficult... I can't just wait for a specific mood to create, because it became my work."

>to encourage me, and wanted me to feel that it doesn't matter even if I make a mess out of it," Nada explains.

A family trin to New York City turned a

motion of talent into a practical plan that pat Nada on a collision course with the commercial world. Dazzde dby the abundance of huge signs and billiboards looming over the city's jam-packed streets, their peecise lines promising comforting order, their emphatic messages crying out, 'Beholdt' to consumers, Nada decided that someday she too would build a brand.

By that time, Nada's family had resettled in Jeddah, Saudi Arabis, far from Lebanon's Civil War and its cruelties. For Nada, that meant a strict English boarding school thousands of miles away in Kent and an unexpected window on the world via bundreds of young women of more than 20 different nationalities.

The daughter of a country increasingly known only by starkly brutal headlines, Nada brought with her its cultural gifts. Her new roommate, a Scottish girl, was reluctant to accept the sweet that Nada offered, because she said she had nothing to give in return.

That night, Nada remembers that she lay in bed thinking about this new arena and who she was in it. "In the mountains, you have doors open and people share everything, and if you find a tree that has, like, figs, you just take it from the tree without asking," she reflects. "It was very natural for me just to offer her something."

When she turned 14, the family moved back to a divided Beirut and a warweary people. Free of the homesickness that had shadowed her for years, Nada registered the changes in her homeland with shock. "Everyone dressed the same, everyone talked the same, everyone had the same haircut," she son;

She still sometimes feels like a visitor on a guest in her own country. Being Lebanese itself turned out to require the same poised self-assurance masking the same deliberate thinking that she viside as a designer, painstakingly making a series of insy decisions that add up to an inevitable-seeming whole.

Doubts must be resolved before they give way to creativity and focus, she says." I cannot concentrate if things are in a mess, and what I mean by a mess—I'm not just talking about a measy room. I'm talking about a measy mind." Sealing lunchtime hours in the empty art room at her Kent boarding school Naida drews trength from the purity and

Now she draws strength from the natural wonders of Lebanon – the sea, the landscape, and the sounds she's heard since childhood in her parents' mountain village.

In the disorder of nature, she finds a mirror for the mysteries of creativity, but not the firm foundation of method and discipline that it requires. "I used to need to be in a specific mood to be able to draw or paint," she says. "Now it's more difficult... I can't just wait for a sew-tife mood to create, because it



became my work."

She often designs at night, because it is quiet and the tasks she shoulders as the manager of her business slip away with the daylight. Ideas she doesn't directly sketch or note down quickly disappear as well.

Once Nada has decided on the theme for a collection, she begind selsigning the individual pieces. Then, together with a earm of three goldsmiths, they build the models for each new piece, ber teammates were surprised, she says, that she doesn't often make change to be her original vision as the design for each necklare, carring, and rings to each necklare, carring, and rings to matter or elsows rootish.

Nada's choice of theme, the character of each design, and the materials she prefers reflect her emotions and environment. During and after the 2006 July war, she noticed that she had begun to favor drop stones, necklaces that evoked prayer beads, and defined borders where previously there had been none.

The world has an unpredictable touch. Nada returned to Lebanon for family, but her siblings now all live in the Gulf. In war and peace, she's chosen to make her own small family at home – she married in 2007 and had her first child two years later.

Nada's career began with a dream born from the hubbub of a new-world city, and someday, she wants to see that dream establish itself in London, Tokyo, and of course. New York. In a way, she's still that young girl paused on a crowded street, taken with the moment,





