

FINANCIAL TIMES

# HTSI

1 APRIL  
2023

## THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN FASHION?

An exclusive interview  
with MARTA ORTEGA PÉREZ,  
the Inditex chair



PLUS

KNOCKOUT GNOCCHI  
GÉRALD GENTA REBORN  
MARO GORKY'S TUSCAN HAVEN  
MY LIFE ON OZEMPIC  
INSIDE THE SPITFIRE REPAIR SHOP



# THE FIX

Right, from top:  
NADA GHAZAL  
gold and  
sapphire Baby  
Malak ring,  
£2,950. GAELE  
KHOURI gold,  
bronze and  
sapphire  
ring, \$5,300



JEWELLERY

## LEBANON SHINES ON

Out of crisis, a diaspora of makers are forging new paths. By *Vivienne Becker*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BILLY BALLARD**  
STYLING BY **BENJAMIN CANARES**

**W**hether in Beirut or scattered across the diaspora, a new wave of Lebanese designer-jewellers are digging deep into their rich heritage and the psyche of their crisis-torn nation, building a vibrant and often avant-garde visual language that is fast winning an international following.

This new generation isn't going in for the usual romanticised cultural references or storytelling. Nor do they want to belong to a "group"; instead, they each, in their own way, weave together the influences and layers of civilisations that make up the Lebanese cultural identity – including Phoenician, Byzantine, Roman, Ottoman and French.

These creators have instigated a genre of more casual jewellery that was previously unknown in Lebanon, says

designer Nada Ghazal.

### **"JEWELLERY CULTURE IN LEBANON REACHES BACK CENTURIES"**

designer Nada Ghazal. "There is a big jewellery culture in Lebanon, reaching back centuries, but brands are generally classic, formal, and the concept of a designer-jeweller does not really exist. Jewellery is generally passed from generation to generation." After a 10-year career in advertising, Ghazal launched her brand in 2004 with just 20 jewels crafted herself, depicting the "organised chaos" she found

"There is a big jewellery culture in Lebanon, reaching back centuries, but brands are generally classic, formal, and the concept of a designer-

jeweller does not really exist. Jewellery

is generally passed from generation to

generation." After a 10-year career in

advertising, Ghazal launched her brand in

2004 with just 20 jewels crafted herself,

depicting the "organised chaos" she found



## THE FIX



NOOR FARES gold, amber, amethyst, aquamarine, carnelian, citrine, tourmaline, moonstone, pink hex, quartz and tanzanite Rainbow necklace, £9,500

in Beirut after living and working in Dubai. The jewels sold instantly at a private show. Soon after, a political crisis hit, followed by a national crisis almost every year since. By 2012 the economic situation had prompted her to look outside Lebanon and she launched internationally in 2019.

Edgy yet ageless, her style gives expression to memories and emotions generated by Beirut, her enduring muse, the city that she had fled with her family in the '80s during the civil war. Shapes and silhouettes are sculptural, with gemstones embedded in gold and seemingly scattered at random, as if growing out of the metal. She says: "The challenge has made us fight more as designers. What we have been through is painful, but the pain brings creativity and forces us to use our imagination." All of Ghazal's jewellery is made in Beirut, in a new atelier that was built after the 2020 port explosion destroyed her old workshop entirely.

Selim Mouzannar's newly rebuilt workshop is equipped with the latest technology, light-filled modern workrooms and drawers of gemstones: as a trained mineralogist, these are his speciality. He fuses Lebanon's multitude of influences with his own love of historical references, including what he calls "Anglo-Saxon values". From his signature Ottoman-inspired Beirut rose-diamond clusters, he moves into the art deco-flavoured Rose de France collection, set with hexagonal centre stones framed in baguettes, and the newest Aïda collection of guilloché enamel jewels. "My identity is very open. I'm not trapped in one culture," he explains. "This open-



NADINE BARBEY rose-gold, diamond, turquoise gemstone and lapis lazuli Nefertiti cuff, POA



DINA KAMAL gold and marquise-cut diamond Marquise earrings, POA



NADA GHAZAL gold blossom ring, £6,792



SELIM MOUZANNAR rose-gold, diamond, orange enamel, sapphire and spessartine garnet Aïda bracelet, \$109,500

GAELE KHOURI gold and black-diamond Divergence earrings, £7,250

mindedness helped me to connect to so many different influences, to find the right balance between cultures and civilisations."

Gaelle Khouri was born in Beirut and grew up in war-torn Tripoli, before studying and working in New York. She returned to Beirut to learn about jewellery and launch her own collection in 2017, but the financial situation forced her to move to Dubai in early 2020. Now she travels to Lebanon every two months to work with her artisans, and she is staunchly committed to keeping production local, believing that the same level of craftsmanship doesn't exist outside the country.

She employs Lebanese and Armenian artisans in her Beirut atelier to craft her provocative, hauntingly poignant jewels. She tells how her latest collection, La Trahison de l'Objet, was created in direct response to what she describes as Lebanon's "financial fallout and ugly consequences borne by its people" and explores the dualities within Lebanon and the intersection of opposites, particularly individualism and belonging.

**QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY ARE WHAT** drive Dina Kamal's conceptual designs, and what persuaded her to change course from architecture to jewellery when she created her original Pinky ring in 2010. Born and raised in Beirut, she left Lebanon for the US aged 15 and trained and practised as an architect in Washington DC, before moving back to Beirut in 1998 and launching her design practice there in 2010. She had always intended to make London her "second base", but moved there permanently after the explosion in 2020. Her atelier remains in Beirut, and she travels there every few months to work with her artisans.

The signet ring Kamal designed to be worn on the little finger is now her signature. She has since expanded her jewellery repertoire with a series of powerful, graphic experimental jewels, and many of her concepts, such as the Jellyfish pin inspired by a medal, evolved from bespoke commissions. While she draws on her Lebanese heritage, she dips into a multiplicity of other influences. "You inherit everything you're exposed to," she says. "I try not to belong to one group. Instead I aim for a global, universal language. I play with ideas, theoretical concepts, trying to find a balance between sacred and mundane, humble and bold." Right now, she's thinking about how we will perceive jewellery in the future as "tools" of personal transformation.



NADINE GHOSN rose-gold, jade and diamond Pencil bracelet, \$22,680

Noor Fares, who is based in London and founded her brand in 2009, focuses on eastern mysticism, mingling talismanic symbols with geometric patterns of Middle Eastern architecture features. She works on both one-of-a-kind jewels and collections, the latest being Prisma, harnessing the psychedelic power of light to meld an array of gems and minerals, including green

amethyst, rutile quartz, rose and smoky quartz.

**"YOU INHERIT EVERYTHING YOU'RE EXPOSED TO"**

Further afield, Nadine Beydoun-Barbey is from a family of diamond merchants – her parents

married in Beirut before moving to Australia. She drew on Nefertiti, the famous Egyptian queen, for her jewellery brand. Pieces in strong, clean, graphic lines of polished gold, set with vibrant lapis and turquoise, are designed for stackability and maximum glamour. Beydoun-Barbey explains: "The collection is about the life cycle, death and rebirth. It's part of the DNA of the Lebanese people to accept circumstances and rebuild again and again within one lifetime. They're adventurous, independent and not afraid to take risks, or to go it alone."

By contrast, the jewels of the US-born Nadine Ghosn, who is of Brazilian-Lebanese descent, are arrestingly playful: rings shaped as hamburgers, Lego blocks of carved agates, bracelets of linked gold paperclips or a curved pencil tipped with a gem-set eraser. Capturing the joy, purity and creativity of childhood, she dares to debunk the seriousness of fine jewellery by putting a positive spin and pop-art energy into one of her nation's oldest traditions. "I had no background in jewellery, no experience, so no limitations either," says Ghosn. She spent months in Beirut, watching and working with craftsmen, before going on to study gemology at GIA and launch her first collection in 2016.

She feels her nonconformist style comes from her peripatetic life, but that her Lebanese heritage has given her resilience, determination, the courage to go against the flow and, above all, the determination never to take no for an answer. Like the Lebanese, she says, who in the face of trauma and crisis keep moving forward. ■ **HTSI**

## WATCHES

### Bet on black

Eight timepieces that look to the dark side. By *Tim Auld*



DIOR La D de Dior Black Ultramatte, £5,800



CHOPARD Alpine Eagle Cadence 8HF, £18,500



BLANCPAIN Fifty Fathoms Tech Gombessa, £24,700



TAG HEUER x PORSCHE Carrera Chronograph Orange Racing, £5,850



PATEK PHILIPPE Alarm Travel Time Ref 5520P-001, £226,660



HERMÈS rose-gold and titanium H08, £14,000



HUBLOT Classic Fusion Takashi Murakami Rainbow, £45,000



OMEGA Speedmaster Super Racing, £10,700