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ALINE ASMAR D'AMMANFRANCE, LEBANON
cultureinarchitecture.com

As a regular collaborator of the late Karl Lagerfeld, architect Aline Asmar d'Amman has close links with fashion. She maintains a strong relationship with Chanel, and has recently created Le Petit Salon, a private events space, at Le19M, the brand's hub for craftsmanship outside Paris. It's furnished with designs made by artisans working in the building. In Venice, Asmar d'Amman is restoring Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as the new Orient Express Hotel. "I'm driven by the conviction that beauty can change the world, or at least make us change worlds," she says.

Below: a tapestry by Bokja for Hôtel de Crillon. Opposite page, from top: Siyadi Pearl Museum in Bahrain by Anne Holtrop; Karim+Elias' Iota II installation

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BOKJA LEBANON *bokja.com*

"Craftsmanship has always been, and will continue to be, our focus," says Huda Baroudi, who co-founded Bokja alongside Maria Hibri in 2000. "We strive to keep it alive, while collaborating with artisans to find new approaches." Combining vibrant fabrics and diverse techniques is key to making the Beirut-based collective's pieces so recognisable. Commissions come from across the globe, with fantastical works making an appearance in Azza Fahmy's new high-jewellery boutique in Riyadh, and a tapestry inspired by Beirut's public gardens adorning London's Meat The Fish restaurant. "Each Bokja piece becomes a vessel, bringing to the surface issues of a local identity – and its impermanence," says Hibri.



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ANNE HOLTROP BAHRAIN, THE NETHERLANDS*anneholtrop.nl*

Architect Anne Holtrop is known for his fascination with striking material effects. Recently, he has renovated the historic Siyadi Pearl Museum in Muharraq, Bahrain, adding a new gallery incorporating textured plaster and silver-leaf finishes. "Silver is a very responsive material, and in the region's salty air, it will patinate and darken," Holtrop explains. "My work centres on the relationship between matter and space, under the influence of climate and geology; I am interested in the process all matter undergoes from one state to another."

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Photo: Chloé Le Reste (Aline Asmar D'Amman); Tomaso Lisca (Nebras Aljoaib)

NEBRAS ALJOAIBSAUDI ARABIA *nebrasaljoaib.com*

"The most exciting thing about design in Saudi Arabia right now is how we are all looking to our past for inspiration," says Riyadh-based interior designer Nebras Aljoaib, who since 2015 has been creating exclusive homes and hospitality concepts in the Kingdom. "From spatial blocking to decoration, we are dialling into our heritage rather than just importing trends." Aljoaib's route to incorporating Saudi culture involves extensive use of noble materials, from brass to rich stones and textiles. For an upcoming project, she is developing marble furniture in collaboration with Artemest's master craftspeople in Tuscany.

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KARIM + ELIAS UNITED ARAB EMIRATES *karimelias.com*

Dubai duo Karim + Elias – aka Karim Tamerji and Elias El Hage – are leading the revival of rammed-earth construction with their geometric objects sculpted from desert sand. The pair enhance the material with warm pigments, shaping it using custom moulds. Earlier this year, they presented From This Earth in Diriyah, KSA, a series of screens constructed from 1,400 handcrafted spheres. As part of November's Tanweer Festival, they unveiled The Desert Relic: this permanent installation in the town of Mleiha, an archaeological treasure in Sharjah, features totemic sculptures scattered throughout the landscape.

