

VOGUE

ARABIA

SPRING SUMMER 2022

Arabia's star
architect
**ALINE ASMAR
D'AMMAN**
reigns over Venice

The return of
**SALONE DEL
MOBILE**



VOGUE

ARABIA

حياة



ملف
DOSSIER

INSIDE THE WORLD'S MOST CHARISMATIC HOMES
جولة داخل أفخم المنازل على مستوى المنطقة

Photography JEREMY ZAESSINGER

Crown in the

Style AMINE JREISSATI

From Venice to Lake Geneva,
Arabia's star architect Aline
Asmar d'Amman is fast
becoming one of the most
sought-after authors of new
and old-world luxury

Words CATERINA MINTHE

Coat, accessories
Chanel: vintage jewelry,
Eleuteri: rings,
Selim Mouzannar
Aline Asmra D'Amman
at the Galleria Giorgio
Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro





“Venice is one of the rare places in the world where childhood fantasies still resemble a living dream in adult life”

A Riva putters gently down the Rio de Noal. Mist rises off the canal; the air is heavy and humid. Onboard, a woman dressed in black peers out from under her wide-brimmed hat and fixes her gaze ahead. The neo-gothic facades of the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli dominate. Speaking a mélange of French and English, peppered with Italian, she explains that the palace was built by Filippo Calendario and was the private home of the illustrious Italian families Donà, Giovannelli, and the Duke d'Urbino, art patrons beholding the most sophisticated aesthete. It had undergone a major renovation in the 19th century by the great Venetian architect Giovanni Battista Meduna. Now, it is she, Aline Asmar d'Amman, and her team who have embarked on a total renovation, breathing new life into its halls decorated with faded floral frescos and gilded doors framed by cherubs and goddesses to welcome guests to the first Orient Express Hotel, due to open in 2024. “It’s like turning the pages of the precious book of time,” says d’Amman, removing her hat and sweeping her blonde locks off her face. “It is diving into an ageless romance yet sensing the energy of today,” she murmurs, as much to herself as to the ghosts who have documented Venice’s past — Marcel Proust, Joseph Brodsky, John Ruskin, and Philippe Sollers — their printed words searing its history like the heavy stones that remain.

“I discovered Venice in literature in the founding years of adolescence, when one awakens to the first thrills of love and the sense of Romanesque,” recalls d’Amman, her hazel eyes glassy at the memory. “Flesh and stone, a mirage, and an architectural marvel. It’s one of the rare places in the world where childhood fantasies still resemble a living dream in adult life.” Serenissima’s lagunes swept her off her feet as a young adult, traveling with her beloved before the birth of their two sons. “I couldn’t imagine a more theatrical stage to celebrate the glory of architecture and the mystery of love, a combination of two rare miracles,” shares d’Amman. “I remember the feeling of total escapism and sensually layered sophistication, the sparkle of sequin-like stones, cut to shine

in the sun, unreal magical light from the air to the ground, drapes and shadows vibrating with the reflections of the canal waters where the stone-laced facades are duplicated in an endless aquatic movement. Such an overdose of beauty experienced at once marks you forever.” The architect recalls her surprise at the feeling of familiarity with an idealistic landscape — for the triple arched facades, the clover rose windows, the ogive vaults, and arabesque motifs composed with intricately sculpted medallions, hauntingly resembled those from her birth country, Lebanon. Here, the air of the orient is fragrant. D’Amman furthers, “At the crossroads of cultures between the opulence of the Arabian sceneries and the vibrating reminiscence of the Byzantine empire, Venice incarnates a fantasized Levantine past. It is one witnessed somehow in the memorable homes of grandparents and loved ones, in the living details of Beirut’s glorious eclecticism. It’s not only familiar architecture, it’s the surrounding sensorial ambience, the inimitable touch and feel of a velvety silk sofa, the ornate delicatessen of heavy wood cabinets, the finesse of tinted glass, and the abstract echo of the thousand-and-one nights. The strangeness of this mixed orientalist exuberance speaks the language of my Lebanese soul on insular Italian grounds.”

Years of travel as a child and later as an architect, working in Beirut and Paris and, in time, on projects across the world — Geneva, Singapore, Lake Como, London, Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — opened her heart and mind to the richness of diversity, historical symbols, and the importance of cultural bridges. “Ones that connect past and future

OPPOSITE
Blazer, **Chanel**;
skirt, **made-to-measure**; earrings,
Eleuteri; shoes,
Amina Muaddi
Inside Palazzo Donà
Giovannelli, future
home of Orient
Express Hotel.
The wall features
hand-painted vases
with family crests
of the Donà and
Giovannelli families



Palazzo Donà
Giovannelli's Piano
Nobile ballroom,
a 19th century
addition by architect
Meduna with neo
baroque ornaments
and stuccos
celebrating love and
music. The opulent
historical salon was
commissioned by the
Duke d'Urbino for the
wedding of his son to
Princess Farnese

**“Such an overdose of
beauty experienced at
once marks you forever”**



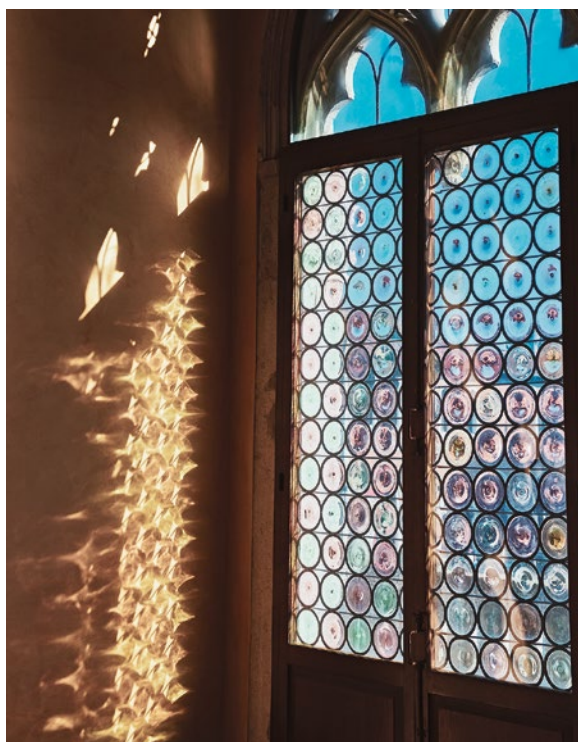
Scarf, **Dries van
Noten**; ring, **Elie
Top**; cuff, **Marie
Khouri**; ring, **Selim
Mouzannar**;
bracelet, **Rabih
Kayrouz**



OPPOSITE AND PREVIOUS PAGE
 Aline Asmar d'Amman at the Palazzo Donà
 Giovannielli **THIS PAGE** The Ca' d'Oro, the gothic "Golden House" built in the 1500s features the art collection of Baron Giorgio Franchetti. Venetian Heritage foundation will fund a general renovation of the Museum Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro. Aline Asmar d'Amman is a supporting member of Venetian Heritage

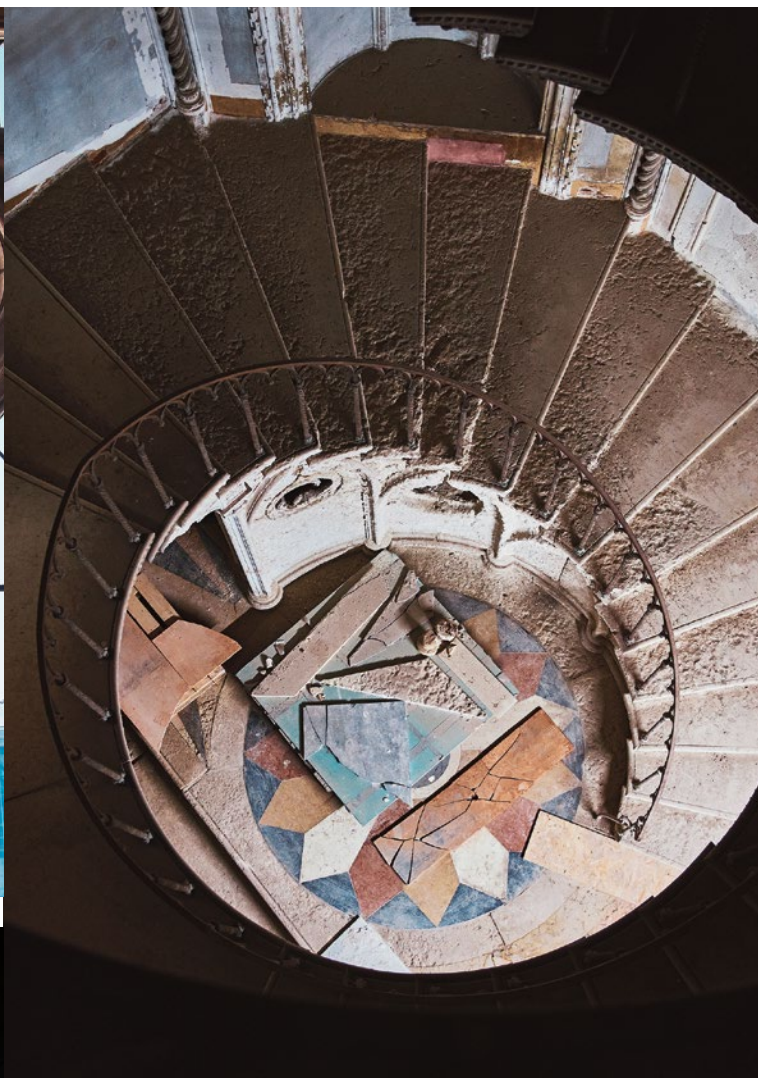
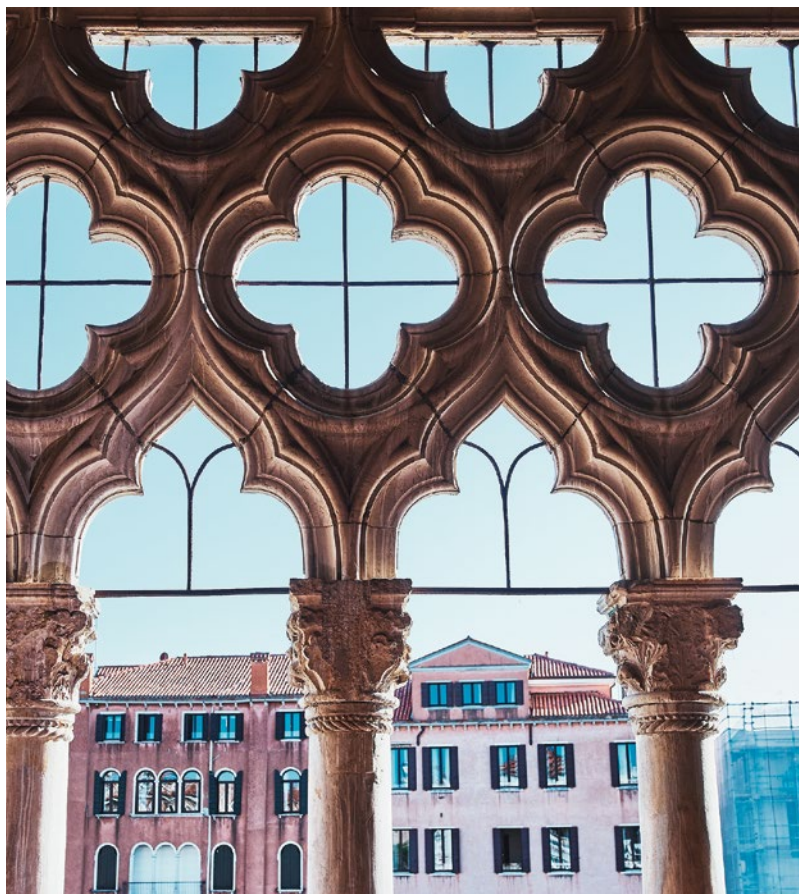


Aline, wearing a Chanel coat and Céline by Phoebe Philo sunglasses, on a Riva boat **BELOW** Light streams through the window at the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro **TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM RIGHT** Inside the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli



Coat, accessories
Chanel; leggings,
top, **Wolford**; vintage
jewelry, **Eleuteri**;
rings, **Selim**
Mouzannar;
shoes, **Prada**
Inside the Galleria
Giorgio Franchetti
alla Ca' d'Oro





Coat, accessories, **Chanel**;
leggings, top, **Wolford**;
vintage jewelry, **Eleuteri**;
rings, **Selim Mouzannar**;
shoes, **Prada** Inside the
Galleria Giorgio Franchetti
alla Ca' d'Oro



A balcony at the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro **LEFT** A spiral staircase at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli **FAR LEFT BELOW** A line by the balustrade at the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro

and enrich others with cross-fertilization,” she affirms. “I’m a deep believer in the power of beauty to elevate the soul, more than ever in this particular moment in the world, when creativity can save us from reality, transcending materiality, and raising our awareness about the importance of conservation, heritage, and a more humanistic approach for tomorrow.” It is no surprise, then, that d’Amman was selected as the architect for the scenography of the Lebanese Pavilion at the current Art Biennale, creating an egg formation representing hope for her country’s rebirth. Her aesthetic foundations lie in seeing beauty in ruins and tense contrasts between the precious and the raw. “I was deeply influenced by the Phoenician heritage and the glorious magnificence of the Greco-Roman temples dating back to 5,000 years before Jesus Christ — a first glimpse of Italian glory since a very early age,” she says.

It’s this centuries-old and richly layered beauty that d’Amman aspires in order to seduce guests of the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli. Her work reads like a storybook that carries an “artful message of love and excellence from Venice to the world.” Today’s travelers seeking unique emotional experiences rooted in the culture of the local community, while longing for the feeling of being elsewhere, exoticism, and nomadic refinement, will find repose among d’Amman’s work.

It resonates with the ethos of her Paris-based firm, Culture in Architecture, which she founded more than 12 years ago. “We seek to create spaces with an intense resonance through storytelling, interior design, and art curation,” she says of her company, which has been commissioned for projects like Le Jules Verne, the restaurant inside the Eiffel Tower helmed by three-time Michelin-star-winning chef Frédéric Anton, grands appartements in the Hôtel de Crillon in collaboration with Karl Lagerfeld, and, increasingly, remarkable Italian addresses.

Italy has been on d’Amman’s map for decades. She considers the country a world landmark for its outstanding architectural legacy, exceptional artistic activity, and specific craftsmanship, which constantly feed her work. “I wouldn’t be the architect I am today without my countless trips to Carrara, Versilia, Vincenzo, and Venezia in quest of stone marvels. Wandering in the most exciting and unexpected marble landscapes, from grottos to mountains in the Tuscan region, selecting blocks for our interior design projects. Stopping by Murano for mind-blowing glass textures and shades, hopping to Florence for silks and scents, diving behind secret doors where time has stopped but the best artisans are still crafting dream details,” enthuses d’Amman, with her signature optimism that makes her voice sing. She recalls with fondness her trips through Rome, Pompei, and the Vatican, in search of fountains, columns, and noble architectural features, materializing a modern idea of mythology for a limited-edition collection with Lagerfeld of functional sculptures developed for the Carpenters Workshop Gallery. Now,


she is making her solo debut furniture line, set to show in New York and Paris this September with gallery The Invisible Collection. “I like the idea of concrete poetry,” she says. “How to transform and transcend physicality into emotional substance in a materialistic world. The more poetic it is, the more true, is my motto.” Of course, there’s always a feminine and feminist silver lining to the work. “My first furniture collection is dedicated to women; a tribute to strong femininity and the natural continuity of my primal obsession with marble, the gift from the mother of all, Earth.”

The architect walks with haste. Her vertiginous heels, a distinctive trademark, echo through the grand halls and her long coat billows behind her. Despite her small frame, there is no mistaking she — whose name means noble and bearer of light — is a giant among men. D’Amman will work through ten hours of meetings before returning to her family in Paris that same night. Insatiably thirsty for life, it is not rare for her to host haute cuisine dinners at home, or animate literary meet-and-greets among her fellow iron ladies. For some, these physical and mental voyages are portholes to different realms. To d’Amman, the Lebanese-Italian soul is one world anchored by the spirit of the sea. “We speak fast with our heart and our hands. We mix love for food and fashion with passion for architecture, high craft, and the blue hues of the Mediterranean,” she enthuses, before turning her full attention to the drafting papers laid out before her. She observes them like a mother looking at her newborn child, pronouncing, “It is a fertile land for the imagination and the ideal place for the making.”





Coat, **Chanel**; bracelets, **Selim Mouzannar**; earrings, **Eleuteri**; ring, **Elie Top**; ring and bracelets, **Selim Mouzannar**
At the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli

A woman with long brown hair is seen from the back, standing on a balcony. She is wearing a black long-sleeved dress with intricate lace detailing on the sleeves and a long, flowing sheer black veil that cascades down the balcony. The balcony has a decorative wrought-iron railing with a repeating arch pattern. In the background, there is a large arched window with stained glass in shades of blue and green, set within a stone wall with classical architectural details like columns and arches.

Dress, **Chanel**;
jewelry, **Selim**
Mouzannar; shoes,
Amina Muaddi
At the Palazzo
Donà Giovannelli

Production
Sam Allison

Special thanks to
Galleria Giorgio
Franchetti alla Ca'
d'Oro, Venetian
Heritage, Veneto
Regional Directorate
for Museums, and
the Italian Ministry
of Culture. And
to Palazzo Donà
Giovannelli home
to the future Orient
Express Hotel, part
of the world-leading
Accor group, Mr.
Paolo Barletta
and the Italian
hospitality group
Arsenale S.p.A.
Venetian Heritage
is a not-for-profit
organization
supporting cultural
projects with the
aim to increase
awareness of the
legacy of
Venetian art