

WWD

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Weathering the Storm

LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton showed resilience in 2024 with its key fashion and leather goods division curtailing its declines.

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The Evolution of DVF

CEO Graziano de Boni talked to WWD about taking its global business operations back in-house and keeping the brand relevant for today's woman.

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Early Work

An auction of Martin Margiela's pieces from 1988 to 1994 billed the highest amount ever achieved at a fashion auction in France.

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Over the Rainbow

Chanel celebrated the 110th anniversary of its couture division at the Grand Palais Tuesday with a huge set of double Cs and a collection prepared by its studio team that plumbed house founder Coco Chanel's love of color, from pastel shades to primary hues. "Chanel is not just about black and white," said fashion head Bruno Pavlovsky. *For more on the Paris couture, see pages 4 to 8.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KUBA DABROWSKI



EXCLUSIVE

Inside the Middle East's First Five-star Train

Lebanese architect Aline Asmar d'Amman unveiled her designs with WWD for the Dream of the Desert train.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

MILAN — Lebanese-born architect Aline Asmar d'Amman said growing up she was “bathed” in the poetry of 13th-century poet Rumi, who described the desert as a “wide emptiness, a peace without understanding it.” She never thought that one day she would help people experience that sort of wonder, in an age of modern luxury travel.

On Tuesday, she shared her designs with WWD for the Middle East's first five-star train. The Dream of the Desert train developed with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Saudi Arabia's Railways and Italy's Arsenale will allow luxury travelers to experience a privileged view of the desert.

After garnering notoriety in fashion as the founder of the Culture in Architecture studio, which worked with Karl Lagerfeld on several projects, including the design of luxury suites for the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, she's now playing a small but significant role in helping Saudi Arabia achieve its Vision 2030. This is her first train and she proudly said it's a sustainable project in the sense that she used existing Italian wagons owned by Arsenale Group.

“It's a wonderful thing to immerse

into a world of dynamic stillness and spiritual mystique that is the desert. Saudi Arabia's pristine natural beauty and the very distinctive feeling of immensity and silence, of wildness and wideness, only tamed by the Bedouin tradition of journeys with patience, appeals to another kind of travel today,” she said, adding that slow travel is all about embracing layers of culture and enriching humanistic values, which Saudi Arabia is only now ready to share on a global level.

This milestone marks a significant step forward in redefining luxury rail travel in the region and is the result of a close partnership between SAR and Arsenale, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, the Saudi Tourism Authority and the Center for Development Authorities Support.

In 1947, the first railway between Dammam and Riyadh was inaugurated. Established in 2006, SAR is the owner and operator of the North Train Railway Network, which is propelling the vision of sustainable passenger and cargo transport. In 2017, the North Train passenger services was launched, followed by the Haramain high speed railway in 2018.

Saudi heritage elements feature inside the Dream of the Desert, as Asmar d'Amman said she spent hours looking at the details of a Saudi facade, the intricate textile weavings, the wood carvings, the oil lamps whose light diffuses a cinematographic mood, interpreting these



Aline Asmar d'Amman and her Culture in Architecture Studio's designs for Dream of the Desert.

in a delicate modern lens, adapted to the train space and constraints.

“Not forgetting the astounding Stendhal syndrome [a condition of awe upon the discovery of great masterpieces] at the discovery of Hegra, Hail, Al-Ula and other untouched beauties,” she mused of the train that includes world-class suites and a restaurant enhanced with modern touches from the lamp shades' belt detail to the wood carving elegant motif inspired by the gypsum motifs in the central region. The suites, she said, are characterized by rich wood marquetry, luxurious upholstery, sensual lighting and bespoke furniture.

In the reception area, the bar and the lounge, textile weaving and geometric patterns feature prominently. The bar design is inspired by the ancient architecture of the Al-Ula site of Hegra, the city of Madain Salih, interpreted in modern patterns and design.

The train is also punctuated by wood sculpted panels in signature green patina, inspired by the Saudi Arabian seaside city

of Jeddah's iconic facades.

In and around the worlds of fashion and hospitality, Asmar d'Amman's fame is growing.

Last year, she was the first guest of the Reading Room at 7L, the bookstore, library and publishing house founded by Lagerfeld that was acquired by Chanel in 2021.

She designed the Le Petit Salon, a private event space within in Le19M, Chanel's hub for craftsmanship on the edge of Paris.

She is also working on the Arsenale on another project: The Orient Express Hotel Palazzo Donà Giovannelli Venice.

Founded in 2020 by Paolo Barletta and Annabel Holding, Arsenale is an Italian company operating in the luxury hospitality sector, with the aim of enhancing the Italian tourism industry. The company is structured around two main divisions: The Hospitality Hotel and Resort division, which designs and manages hotel properties in collaboration with iconic luxury brands, such as Soho House, as well as the Orient Express.

EXCLUSIVE

Nina Magon on Becoming a Global Brand

The Houston-based interior designer talked to WWD about fashion and interiors collaborations, Nina Magon-branded residences and what could be her first skyscraper project.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

PARIS — Houston-based designer Nina Magon is aiming high — up to 40 stories high to be exact. Her design firm recently purchased a three-acre parcel of land that lies within the 42-mile loop formed by the city's Interstate 610 freeway. Magon told WWD that her team is working on a project for the development of what could be her first branded high-rise condo building that would bring fashion and luxury to the forefront.

“By integrating local art and sustainable practices, I want to create a landmark that resonates with the community, fosters social interaction and elevates the standard of luxury living. This project will not only redefine the skyline but also offer a unique lifestyle experience that reflects the vibrant spirit of Houston,” she contended.

At a Women&Design dinner hosted by Maison&Objet under the chandelier ceilings of Paris hot spot restaurant Baronne, Magon talked about the challenges women face in juggling family and running a business and how a development project of this magnitude is unique for a female-led business. Earlier that day at a talk on retail spaces during Maison&Objet, she told the crowd that the industry needs to change its narrative.

“Development in the U.S. is kind of a big boys club. It's very difficult for a female to enter in as a developer in the U.S. and I don't think I can name one woman who leads a very strong development company in the U.S.,” she said.

In June 2024, Magon was appointed U.S. ambassador for top French design fair Maison&Objet, pinpointing her as an industry figure who helps propel women in design.

Magon, who founded her studio in 2008, said she has had to break down barriers one at a time: first because she's a woman and second because she hails from a minority — Indian — background, which has been an uphill climb in arenas where European males dominate the interior design industry.

Today, her diverse roster of clients ranges from high-end residential firms, big companies like Saks Fifth Avenue, Martha Stewart, Bergdorf Goodman and Balmain Paris, to heritage artisan brands like Sahrai, a luxury rug-maker in Milan founded in 1830.

Currently in the throes of rebranding Nina Magon Studio as a global firm, she recently cut the ribbon on her first residence project, a \$20 million luxury townhomes project fully developed and designed with the studio's modern-meets-old-world flair from start to finish. Four units have already been completed and listed on the market. The residences are located in Houston's Memorial area.

The townhomes are the first residences developed by a design firm to hit the city's landscape. Prices start at \$1.2 million. There are many opportunities in Houston. The city is currently awaiting its first

branded residential project, the St. Regis residences, which broke ground in 2023. The property on 102 Asbury Street will feature 93 homes starting at \$2.4 million.

“This rebrand goes beyond a new logo, it will impact the design industry as a whole, redefining what it means to be a luxury design firm,” she claimed, noting that the town houses marked a major shift in the studio's development capacity.

Magon was born in Canada and raised in Houston, and hails from a traditional Indian family. After graduating from Southern Methodist University with a degree in finance and economics, she opened an exclusive lingerie store. “I wanted to compete with Victoria's Secret,” she reminisced, adding that she began embarking on private interior design projects for friends before opening her own design studio in 2008.

At Maison&Objet in Paris, Magon said all Nina Magon Studio's designs are unique. “None of them look the same,” she said adding that she has consistently pondered how to make spaces different for each of her clients from the start.

“Bold means doing something very different than everyone else is doing, pushing the edge,” she said.

She currently has her eye on home collection collaborations with fashion brands, as well as hoteliers in global cities where she hopes to open offices: Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the UAE and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In particular, she has already embarked on private projects in Abu Dhabi, the world's richest city when measured by the assets held by sovereign wealth funds.

“Things are booming there,” she

Nina Magon



said of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Riyadh. “Additionally, a diverse clientele comprised of expatriates and affluent locals creates varied design opportunities, and the increasing focus on eco-friendly practices aligns with global trends, appealing to conscious consumers.”

Last year she combined the worlds of high fashion and interior design in the Mandarin Oriental Residences in Beverly Hills when she, furniture expert Adrian Duenas, owner and chief executive officer of luxury furniture showroom BeDesign, and Balmain decked out a penthouse apartment. This highlighted her fashion potential, especially in key design markets like India.

“We want to unite our brand with the biggest names in fashion in every country where we have a presence,” she said.