



## Nadine Mnemieh

Nadine Mnemieh, Beirut

From business to fashion, Nadine Mnemieh made a brave leap of faith when she flew out to Milan to take a design course at the Istituto Marangoni, almost the moment she'd graduated. 'I instantly knew that this was it; that I wanted to work in fashion and be with people who share my passion,' she says. Fashion for Mnemieh was an interest that soon ripened to an 'addiction' after she began burning the midnight oil at Esmod Beirut's night courses when she became bored with her business degree at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Later it developed into a day job working in retail management, visual merchandising and styling until she graduated with a second bachelor's degree from AUB in fashion design and pattern making.

Mnemieh's ready-to-wear line for women is 'tailored in high quality fabrics and muted colours to create a loose and minimal silhouette hinting of femininity, timelessness and sober elegance.' It is the patterns of the dresses which are perhaps Mnemieh's most noticeable signature with bright checkered plaids, vibrant tones and multihued lines that suggest a story or a folktale behind each piece. 'I am a fashion designer but I also see myself as an artisan,' she tells us. 'I choose to develop and produce all garments myself and I put a piece of my heart into every garment. This handmade touch is important to me because it adds an emotional value to the garment, and this way I am sure of the quality I am delivering.' She says this is something she wants her clients to personally experience when they wear a Mnemieh piece.

This feeling could be a moment in history, a personal expression, a trait or sometimes a chapter in Mnemieh's life. 'I'm very respectful of traditions and oriental values,' she points out, 'and this is why you won't find anything offensive or ostentatious in my collections. This sobriety or reserve may also have something to do with my upbringing in Paris.' The Paris she has in mind is the capital of the 1990s 'with its melancholic grey light, grunge music and refined androgyny.' It is the magic of spontaneity and escape that she seeks in her next collection, which will move way from the colours that marked her last line and forward in a more minimalist direction. 'Dance will be the theme of my next collection, with the concept of body expression, movement, fluidity.' Her goal is to continue working in the same spirit and eventually, in the coming months and years, she plans to open an atelier showroom in Beirut with an extra pair of hands for assistance.

She is, she says, also grateful for the assistance she received

### THE STARCH FOUNDATION

Each year, the Starch Foundation selects four to six young designers and guides them through all stages of designing their own collection which is then displayed at the Starch Boutique for one year. Following this, a new set of students starts the programme and the cycle continues.

The programme also helps equip designers with the business skills they will need to establish a fashion label. Starch teaches students lessons in communication, marketing, branding and press skills; all fundamental requirements of the modern fashion houses

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in setting up her label, from Rabih Kayrouz and Tala Hajjar with the Starch Foundation that gave her brand its first major step up into the fashion world. In her opinion, Beirut has the potential to be the most promising city for young fashion designers in the region, but it still needs 'more soul' and a wider range of fashion houses based in the city, moving away from haute couture to urban and street wear.

'It has to be a natural evolution. Will the Middle East one day be as attractive as Paris, New York, Milan or London as a place to study fashion? It's way too early to tell. I don't think it's a matter of financial capacity, but rather the surrounding environment. I see the lack of authenticity as a major weakness. I don't want to seem too harsh but we still need to make a lot more effort.'

Nevertheless, Mnemieh believes that with the support of more established designers in the Beirut, such as Kayrouz, there is still more potential in this city than in many others.



#### Quick Questionnaire

**Where did you study?**

Esmod Beirut

**Famous brands you've worked with?**

Gardem, Zara, Mango, Hugo Boss

**Designing for how many years?**

Seven years

**Best strength?**

I take good care of my clients

**Where are your designs most popular?**

Lebanon and Kuwait

**12 month plan?**

To continue with my collections

**Who's the next 'one-to-watch'?**

Rabih Kayrouz



01 The checked symbol represents the patterns on  
Nadine Mnemieh's summery dresses