

BEIRUT CRADLE OF FASHION

The new generation is in. Starch, the Saifi Village boutique created by Rabih Kayrouz in 2008 to launch promising young designers, is back to shine the spotlight on six up-and-coming Lebanese talents. In its two years of existence, Starch has provided a platform for young designers to showcase their work and to receive guidance on developing and promoting their collections.



Nadine Mneimneh

Nadine Mneimneh, 27, says that her first prêt-à-porter collection, *Softly Lay Me Down on the Weeping Ground*, was inspired by romanticism and a woman's psyche. Mneimneh obtained a BA in design and patternmaking from Esmod in Beirut and a certificate in styling at Milan's Istituto Marangoni. "I think patternmaking is such an important part of design. The great designers of our time are experts in patternmaking techniques," says Mneimneh, whose designs boast menswear fabrics and sometimes resemble Japanese costumes.



Margherita Abi Hanna

Margherita Abi Hanna (nickname: Ghita) creates leather accessories and quirky jewelry pieces under the Margherita label. The 30-year-old Abi Hanna branched out into fashion by attending the Domus Academy in Milan, where she earned a Master's in accessory design. For her debut fall/winter 2010-11 collection, titled "Smock Pack," Abi Hanna devised handbags and accessories with a three-dimensional ethic. "While designing, I had in mind a bold, fearless woman with a distinctive personality, so I hope any woman with a desire to stand out will be attracted to my designs," she says.



Emily Cremona

Established in 2009 by young designers Deena Cremona Wassef and Rouba Emily Mouawad (both 22), Emily Cremona offers an avant-garde, fresh take on womenswear. "The *Du Fleur* collection embraces the dark side of women and plays on the concept of surrealism," says Wassef of the current collection, which is inspired by poetic literature and theatrical garments. The clothes embrace a sense of dark, elegant, royal glamour, embodying masculine and feminine touches. "We don't design for shrinking violets, we dress dreamers and dandies," adds Wassef.