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DIGITAL By Paul McLoughlin

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Hamra's Heydays Return



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Beirut's Hamra Street has a reputation for being a hub for all that is cool in Lebanon so it was only natural that emerging Lebanese designer Nadine Mneimneh picked this spot for her first atelier-showroom. 'It was important for me to be in a dynamic area. Hamra is multicultural, multigenerational and it's crowded at all times of the day. I come from this area and couldn't think of any other neighborhood to start off.'

Housed in a converted cinema, the atelier-showroom is a comfortable mix of vintage treasure chests converted into coffee tables and inviting contemporary wooden benches. It is airy enough for inspiration yet brimming with Mneimneh's boho-minimalist dresses, a signature that has made her one of the most exciting designers in Lebanon at the moment.

Studying the room she exclaims, 'I conceived the space alone. I wanted it to have a rough feel, somewhere between rustic and industrial. The furniture is made from recycled wood pallets and almost everything is mounted on wheels to keep the configuration flexible. The walls were painted in white to bring maximum light. I barely used colours, but I always have flowers on my tables to add a joyful vibe.'

It was in this space that Mneimneh conceived her latest line, called the capsule collection which will be the first of a series which comes under the theme 'definition.' It captures soft grey fabrics cut to a relaxed fit that creates a sense of timeless chic. The designer explains more: 'Garments can be evocative of our stories, our moods, or just things we accumulate to reach our ideal self image. This capsule tells my own story.'

It is reminiscent of the golden days of Hamra Street, yet it appears these times are returning to Hamra with a number of young talented designers setting up shop here. This is reflected in the clothes too: 'It includes elements of urbanity, looseness and understated elegance define the core aesthetics. The shapes are basic but cut in refined linen and summer wool. The colours are kept dark to complement the timeless silhouettes.'

It is likely that there will be more ideas developed from this space Mneimneh says: 'Moving into my new atelier is the major change. I have built up my own nest which I hope will be the source of many projects to come. Lots of ideas are boiling into my head, now I have the space to experiment as opposed to working from home with all the constraints it involved.'

Photographer: Supplied



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