

Ruth Samaai has brought her South African training to Bahrain, where she's made a serious statement with her breathtaking head-dresses



UT FROM A DIFFERENT CLOTH

ONE OF THE BEST PARTS ABOUT THE EMERGING

fashion industry in Bahrain is that it provides a platform for a new generation of designers to not only make their mark, but to help develop what is still a very young design industry. From showing at Fashion Week to opening new stores, there is a league of young fashion designers quickly rising through the ranks in Bahrain, and turning our heads as they do so. So when we were invited into the creative spaces of four of the region's hottest talents, we were there quicker than they could say, "Mind the mannequins!" ▶

We at Team *Grazia* have all harboured secret dreams of being internationally acclaimed fashion designers at one stage or another. Here, we meet four women who actually took the plunge!

RUTH SAMAAI, 24, SOUTH AFRICAN

Ruth has resided in Bahrain for two years since moving from her native Durban, South Africa. She makes intricate head-dresses for special events

TELL US YOUR EARLIEST FASHION MEMORY

A pair of bright, multi-coloured floral trousers, with fruit on them gathered at the waist and taped at the hem. My mother made them for me – I loved them even though they looked like a table cloth.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE FASHION DESIGN?

From an early age I loved to draw and make clothes for my dolls – I was always attracted to art and unusual textures. When I was in primary school my parents enrolled me in art classes because of my passion for drawing. By the time I got to secondary school, art led to fashion design.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE FOR FASHION IN BAHRAIN?

To own my own label, do what I love for a living, and to see the happiness of people when they feel good in one of my designs.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU THE MOST?

My inspiration is not specific – it comes from many things, from the shapes of buildings to flower petals, depending on what theme I am going for. My designs accentuate a woman's form so the female silhouette is a large part of my inspiration.

WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN STYLE?

My style is somewhat old fashioned with elements of drama. My pieces are easy to wear and although many have intricate and detailed hand-work, the idea is to be effortlessly glamorous.

HOW DO YOU SEE FASHION EVOLVING IN BAHRAIN?

Young designers need a platform, a place for their ideas to come alive, and initiatives like Fashion Week will encourage aspiring designers to step out of their creative closets. In Bahrain, I see traditional elements being merged with contemporary styles.

WHAT DOES BAHRAIN'S FASHION SCENE SAY TO YOU?

Bahrain is rich with stylish individuals. These days, people are starting to look out more for unique pieces rather than something from a big brand in a mall.



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NOORA HASSAN ABDULGHANI, 25, BAHRAINI, FOUNDER OF N COUTURE BY NOORA ABDULGHANI

Emerging from business school at Bentley University in the United States, Noora's design hobby blossomed into her brand, N Couture. Coupled with her perfectionist nature and a general dissatisfaction with what the market had to offer, Noora decided that she would like to pursue fashion design on a wider scale

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST FAVOURITE OUTFIT?

It was a white lace dress with some coloured scattered spots – I wore it to kindergarten.

SO WHY FASHION DESIGN?

My mum used to gather my sisters and me at a very young age to sketch outfit designs for each one of us, allowing us to add our own touches. Later, I was repeatedly approached by women asking who my clothes were designed by. This admiration was the sign I needed to decide that I would like to pursue fashion design.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST FASHION DREAM?

My ultimate ambition is to carve my name in the fashion world as a well-recognised fashion designer on both a local and international scale. I will not settle for less than Paris, London and Milan's runways!

WHO IS YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION?

Every woman with a beautiful personality, extraordinary self-confidence, courage, determination, and the knowledge of how to embrace her femininity is the all-time inspiration for my designs. To pull off dressing like a diva you must have some of these qualities, if not all!

WHAT'S YOUR VERDICT ON BAHRAIN FASHION?

The Bahraini fashion scene is fast becoming an attraction for designers locally and regionally and is now receiving extraordinary focus by the media across the globe. Bahrain is undeniably taking huge steps towards becoming a prestigious fashion capital.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE

My designs are drawn from a prestigious red-carpet theme. My haute couture line consists of high-end luxurious, classy and sexy gowns that are designed using unique combinations of elegant sparkles, layers, volume, and moderate tails.

Noora Hassan Abdulghani knew she had something special when women would stop her in the street to ask about the style of her clothing, which she had designed herself



KHATOON NASRALLA, 23, AND KAMEELA NASRALLA, 24, BAHRAINI

Sisters Khatoon and Kameela grew up in a family that breathed fashion. They ran a tailoring shop which drew them into fashion from the cradle. Khatoon studied multimedia design in the UK and is the main design force behind the brand Lune Couture, while Kameela, who also designs, studied business to enable her to manage the business professionally

WHAT'S YOUR FIRST EVER FASHION MEMORY?

Khatoon: My mum designed a dress for my sister and I for Eid when we were five and six years old. It was simple but very elegant, suiting our ages, and the fabric was French.

Kameela: The first dress I designed for myself was when I was nine – it was a long, red dress that everyone loved.

SO, WHY FASHION?

Khatoon: Although my mum was very busy with her tailoring shop she taught us how to stitch, make patterns, crochet and embroider. As teens we drew designs and worked on them with the tailors, then we started to design for our family and friends. So building our brand followed on from there.

WHAT WILL YOUR 'I'VE MADE IT' MOMENT BE?

Kameela: Our dream is to build a brand with two sections – wedding and party dresses and casual clothes. Our plan is to give our customers great designs that are simple, stylish, elegant, well-designed and unique.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRAINING

Khatoon: The four years I spent in the UK helped me develop my design skills and to determine my style and way. I learned the rules of designing and applied it very well to fashion. Also,

« *We've only heard about one fashion school here and it is new. We would love it if a fine international fashion school were to open a branch here in Bahrain* »

living in the UK, where style is very important, allowed me to always be up-to-date on what is new in fashion. Moreover, I took a lot of on-line courses which helped me to develop myself and build my portfolio.

HOW DO YOU RATE FASHION DESIGN SCHOOLING IN BAHRAIN? IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE?

We've only heard about one fashion school here and it is new. We would love it if a fine international fashion school were to open a branch here in Bahrain.

WHO'S YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION?

Khatoon: Valentino.

Kameela: Elie Saab.

IS BAHRAIN FASHION EVOLVING?

Kameela: There's been a revolution in fashion in recent years in Bahrain, and we're very happy that Bahraini people care about this fabulous and important art. The best part is that the media cares a lot about fashion in Bahrain.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE

Khatoon: Lune couture is where you can buy a ready-made dress or let us design a custom one just for you. Our designs are simple, stylish and elegant. ■

Khatoon and Kameela Nasralla are sisters intent on making a statement on the Bahrain fashion scene. And it's working!