TN
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May 2026

Celebrating Art Dubai at 20

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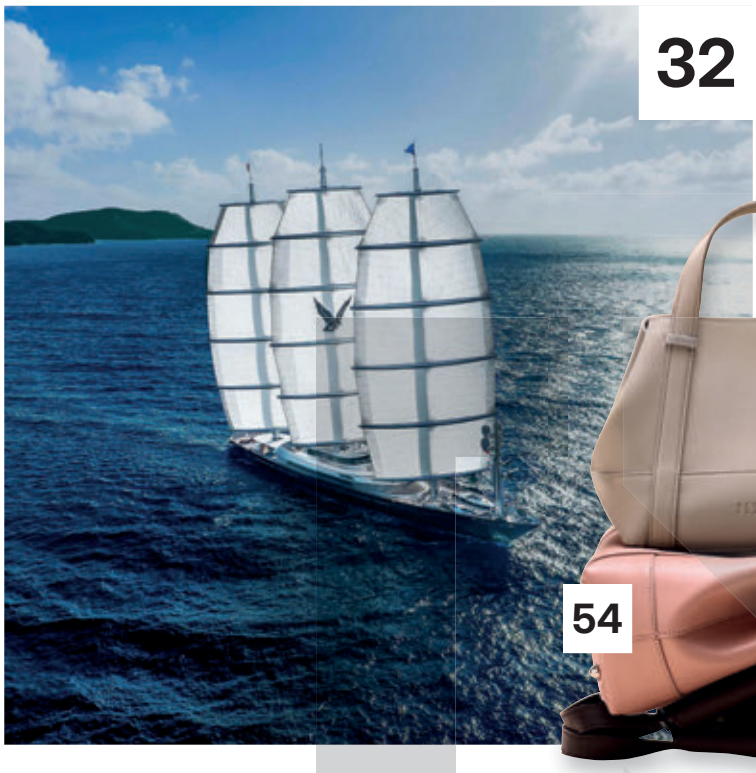

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Magazines are always slightly out of time. Planned weeks ahead, they arrive into a world that has often shifted beneath them. As always, this issue was conceived and constructed in a different moment, yet as it meets you, I can still be certain that it finds itself in the centre of something stable: the idea of an ecosystem and what it takes to build one that lasts.

That is, in many ways, the story of Art Dubai as it celebrates its 20th edition. Anniversaries tend to invite nostalgia, but what's striking about Art Dubai is not how much has changed, but how much has been built around it. What began as a fair – a moment on the calendar designed to draw attention – has, over two decades, become something more embedded. Galleries plan their year around it. Collectors travel for it. Institutions have grown in parallel. Artists have found visibility through it. It has shifted from event to infrastructure. This year's special edition feels even more representative of the solidity of this infrastructure – delayed a mere month by the goings-on in the region that have pushed many other events to the back end of the year.

You feel that nurturing quality of the ecosystem most clearly in artists such as Hashel Al Lamki – this month's cover profile – whose work resists the kind of immediacy that fairs often reward. His practice is slow, research-led, and rooted in landscape and geology, concerned with layers rather than surfaces. Yet, it is precisely this kind of work that a maturing ecosystem can nurture.

The idea of continuity runs through other corners of this issue. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi speaks to the precarity of the current moment in the region through a work presented in 1939, but also using the painting as a point of hopefulness for resolution.

Even in fields that sit adjacent to art, the parallels are clear. Beirut's L'Atelier Nawbar puts a new spin on a long-running family business amid the instability of the country around it. Our look at Savile Row's new generation shows a similar recalibration – not a rejection of tradition, but a reworking of it for a different cultural context.

At Watches & Wonders in Geneva, that evolution is clearly visible in the shifting conversation around women's watches, where joyful excess is the word of the day. Elsewhere, the Ineos Grenadier Trialmaster x LeTech model trades on a certain fantasy of autonomy – the idea that you can keep going when the road runs out. The Jumeirah Maltese Falcon superyacht offers a different kind of escape, an invitation-only experience at the intersection of old-world charm and technical innovation.

What this issue returns to is what the latest Art Dubai edition ultimately represents – the opposite of the fragmentation that feels common today. It is a celebration of the slow work of connection. Of building something that allows artists, writers, patrons, gallerists, designers, thinkers and the public to exist in dialogue. Beyond the fair itself, that dialogue continues.

If there is a unifying thread here, it is this: culture is not a moment. It is a process. Celebrating what has been achieved is always nice, but I'm more excited about what has been set in motion.

Nasri Atallah

The National

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Dior
Dior

A house in miniature

Dior takes one of its most recognisable signatures and scales it down, transforming the Medallion chair into an objet d'art that balances heritage and whimsy, writes **Sarah Maisey**

Anyone who has stepped inside a Dior boutique will likely be familiar with the Medallion chair, its distinctive oval-back silhouette serving as the house's signature seating. With delicately turned legs, a softly rounded oval back and upholstery in toile de jouy or watered silk, it was introduced by Christian Dior himself to bring a touch of Louis XVI classicism into his boutiques. The house founder also used it as seating for Dior's fashion shows, embedding it early into the visual language of the house.

More than 75 years on, the chair has become a recurring motif within Dior lore, its smooth oval form quietly threaded through the brand's identity. It has appeared most recognisably as a label across several perfumes – from the original Miss Dior perfume in the 1960s and Dior Poison in 1985, which featured an oval label on its distinctive green marbled box, to Miss Dior Chérie in the mid-2000s.

Now, in a gesture that feels both reverent and playful, creative director Jonathan Anderson has reimagined the Medallion chair in miniature, transforming it into a whimsical key ring. The familiar oval is echoed across a number of pieces, including a gold ring, earrings and pendant necklaces, now also featuring a dove perched within the oval and entwined with a ribbon. The key ring is offered in several finishes. As a gold version, upholstered in faux pink suede, or in silver with pale grey corduroy, and with "Dior" embroidered in crisp lettering across the chair back. There are more modern versions too, with "Dior" seemingly handwritten in stitch on the upright section, and bows sketched on the seat. All are finished with a metallic ribbon bow.

Rendered in miniature, it allows its owner to carry a fragment of Dior history, while remaining discreet enough to retain an if-you-know-you-know quality. The chair itself is instantly familiar, even if not everyone can quite place why.

This is, of course, not the first time the chair has been reinterpreted. In 2021, Dior invited 17 designers to rework it for an exhibition in Milan, including Oki Sato of Nendo Studio, India Mahdavi and Tokujin Yoshioka. The following year, Philippe Starck offered his own interpretation for the Dior by Starck installation at Salone del Mobile.

At a time when brands are under constant pressure to assert their identity in an increasingly crowded landscape, the Medallion chair offers a lesson in restraint.

A true house code reinforces its identity without ever tipping into overexposure. It is a delicate balance at the best of times, yet Anderson, only two seasons into his tenure at Dior, appears to be navigating it with notable ease.

A version of the key ring with "Dior" seemingly handwritten in stitch on the back of the chair

Soft power

Two seasons in, Louise Trotter is refining Bottega Veneta with a measured hand, proving that restraint can be the house's most powerful statement, writes **Sarah Maisey**

For Bottega Veneta's autumn/winter 2026 collection, creative director Louise Trotter, above, produced a sharply tailored collection, with nipped waists and broadened shoulders, opposite page

In an industry forever chasing the next fleeting thrill, Louise Trotter's arrival at Bottega Veneta last year felt less like a reset and more like something predestined. Rather than erasing the work of her predecessors, Trotter chose to build on it, using continuity as part of her evolution. Two seasons in and her vision is revealing itself further.

With a résumé shaped at Carven, Lacoste and Joseph, Trotter is one of fashion's steady hands and a designer trusted to distil rather than disrupt. Her appointment at Bottega Veneta, the Italian house synonymous with understated luxury and insouciant ease, felt reassuring because her level head and tailoring skills were a natural fit for the Bottega customer, who looks for individuality mixed with Italian know-how.

Known for her intellectual approach to fashion and skill at tailoring, Trotter has skilfully guided the house beyond Matthieu Blazy – who departed Bottega Veneta for Chanel – towards something familiar, yet looser and more wearable.

Where Blazy favoured whimsy, Trotter has pivoted towards precision, even with her staging. While her predecessor offered playful animal-shaped chairs, Trotter opted to seat her audience on jewel-toned Murano glass blocks, made by Milanese design studio 6AM, anchoring her debut collection in artisanal gravitas.

Inevitably, that first collection became an exploration of what Bottega Veneta does best, beginning with its defining Intrecciato braided weave, introduced by Bottega co-founder Renzo Zengiaro in 1975. Returning to the hand-woven interlocking pattern's earliest, finer iteration, Trotter reworked it into detached leather collars, languid shirts, hip-slung denim and razor-slim belted trench coats, all softened into something supple, almost louche.

While silhouettes leaned towards volume – ballooning trousers and oversized tailoring – the real focus sat in the surfaces emerging from the atelier. Womenswear appeared as halos of ostrich feathers, dense knitted tops slung past one hip and a floor-length, handwoven leather cape that took 4,000 hours to complete.

Leather was reimagined as wrap skirts and tank tops, silk crumpled into slip dresses, while a note of 1980s excess ran through exaggerated belted coats paired with high-waisted trousers, and crisp pinstripes for men. Accessories followed suit: scarves and bags trailed fibres in their wake, and the house's famed Lauren clutch – named after actress Lauren Hutton, who carried the original in the famous film *American Gigolo* (1980) – was stretched into new, elongated proportions.

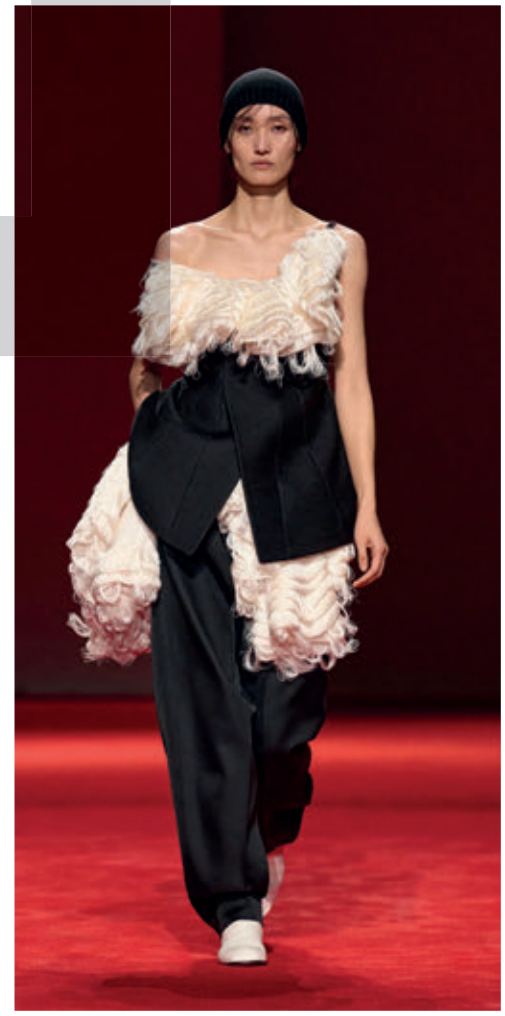
The debut was also marked by Trotter's use of recycled fibreglass, engineered into skirts, tops and coats that shimmered with movement, turning garments into kinetic, sculptural forms.

For autumn/winter 2026, she sharpened the narrative. If her debut was a study in surface, her second outing leaned into clarity and control. Tailoring sculpted the body through nipped waists and broadened shoulders, while jackets were reimagined as peplum tops or wrapped and belted into effortless skirts.

There was a new practicality here too, but never at the expense of detail. Trousers arrived woven from ribbons of leather and something light and fluffy, to become almost soft-focus, while a men's checked coat, rendered in delicate strips of woven leather in shades of cognac and bitter chocolate, spoke of craftsmanship at its most refined. Despite being a winter collection, overall, it felt lighter and less constricting as Trotter listened to the day-to-day needs of her clientele.

There was room for play, too. Leaning into Bottega Veneta's more eccentric instincts, Trotter introduced mini coats and dresses in fur-like fabrications that felt youthful, even mischievous.

As befitting the storied house of Bottega Veneta, Trotter's version doesn't shout, but is confident, composed and entirely assured of its place.



BOTTEGA VENETA

Crafted under pressure

Against a backdrop of uncertainty in Lebanon, sisters Dima and Tania Nawbar are creating jewellery that is meant to be returned to, as **Sarah Maisey** finds out

In Beirut, contradiction is part of the fabric of life. Beauty and volatility exist side by side, and the city's deep-rooted creativity has grown under pressure. It is here that sisters Dima and Tania Nawbar have built L'Atelier Nawbar, a jewellery maison that blends emotional expression with commercial enterprise. "We wanted to make jewellery that you could wear anywhere on the street," explains Dima from the Lebanese capital. "Not put in a safe and never see."

Their philosophy was shaped by growing up in London. Hailing from the Nawbar family, which has made precious jewellery in Beirut and London since 1891, the sisters found an unlikely starting point via UK high-street brand Topshop. Although flimsy, its accessories offered something the sisters hadn't seen in fine jewellery – casual ease.

This was in stark contrast to their upbringing. The sisters were raised among diamonds and other gems, with holidays spent sourcing stones from India. Yet the more precious a piece, the less wearable it seemed. "Every birthday and Christmas, we were given diamonds," Dima says. "We'd look at each other and think: 'Where are we going to wear these?'"

For Dima and Tania, despite the obvious beauty, grand jewellery felt disconnected from modern life, as if it "doesn't fit into our world today any more", explains Dima. They sought a chic alternative to pieces that felt too formal and too conspicuous. Their solution was simple – keep the materials, change the attitude.

When the sisters took over the family business in 2010, they dismantled conventional practices. They introduced vibrant-coloured enamel and hand-carved stones to add warmth. Designed with layering in mind, the idea was to allow customers to accumulate pieces over time, and to create jewellery that was as fun as it was beautiful. "People wouldn't understand what we were doing," Dima says. "We broke all the rules".

They went further still. In their Beirut boutique, a workshop was built in full view, sweeping away the secrecy normally surrounding jewellery. Like a chef working in the centre of a restaurant, artisans worked within the sight of clients. "We wanted to show the roughness, the work and the process that goes into the actual making." Dima explains.

"We still use the old techniques. We haven't gone into mass production," she adds. The easy route would have been to head to somewhere such as Hong Kong, or get machines that can churn out a piece in seconds. "But you feel it. They really have no soul."

L'ATELIER NAWBAR

Tania, far left, and Dima Nawbar favour pieces that can be stacked

Instead, every piece is lovingly handmade in Lebanon, even amid the drones of war. It is an approach that feels distinctly Lebanese. The country's creative energy – from restaurants and art to fashion and jewellery – is inseparable from the instability that shadows it. Conflict, economic uncertainty and the ever-present threat of violence form the backdrop to daily life.

And yet, paradoxically, this fragility fuels a sense of urgency. "The instability causes a drive to do things spontaneously," says Dima. "We don't know how long peace is going to last, so let's get things moving."

That immediacy lends the brand a certain agility. Unlike other houses, bound by factory production cycles in far-off countries, L'Atelier Nawbar works closely with its craftspeople, all of whom are based in Lebanon. This allows designs to evolve quickly and ideas to be tested in real time.

But this intimacy also exposes a quieter crisis. As older artisans retire, fewer young people are entering the trade, drawn instead to more stable professions. The erosion of these skills poses a threat to the ancient traditions the Nawbars are seeking to preserve. "We support as many workshops as we can," Tania explains. "We have our main workshops, but we feed other workshops with work to help them to survive."

For the sisters, jewellery is much more than adornment. It is intimate, worn against the skin and shaped by the body itself, through movement and even skin chemistry.

"It's an extension of yourself," says Dima. "Maybe it's an heirloom, or maybe it's something you bought with your first paycheck or when you broke up with someone. These are things that you keep on your skin and that you feel naked without."

Their pieces are designed accordingly. The Bloop Moon ring – a delicate arc of 18k gold and coloured enamel edged with white diamonds – offers a discreet flash of colour only the wearer can see. The Pillar bangle, made in 18k gold with bold tones of turquoise, lapis or onyx with bands of white diamonds, is made to be stacked around the wrist. Pendants and rings include the Diamond Sun Dawn Stoned, a disc of mother-of-pearl decorated with stones such as orange citrine or green topaz with a sunburst of white diamonds. There is the faceted shape of the Mini Heart pendant in rose gold, enamel and diamonds, as well as the tubular form of the Warrior Star Seed, in 18k gold inlaid with lapis and studded with diamonds. All have been designed to be slowly built into a personal collection.

"You don't have to buy it all at the same time. One piece after the other also creates this drama," Dima says.

Unusually, customers are also encouraged to return, even years later, to rework a pendant or change a colour. Most things are possible, Dima explains, and they are always happy to have the conversation. "We want you to continue wearing these pieces. We don't want you to just put them in the safe.

"We're lucky because we have the liberty of making or changing things around on the spot. We don't have to go Thailand and wait," she adds.

After years of hard work, including facing scepticism about a brand hailing from Lebanon, L'Atelier Nawbar is now stocked at some of the most influential retailers such as Harrods, Net-a-Porter and Bloomingdale's, along with regional platforms including Ounass and That Concept Store. "Being from this part of the region has definitely made it much harder for us to prove ourselves internationally. It was hard to get to where we are." Still, the sisters have never been tempted to take the easy route by jumping on trends, but instead remain guided more by instinct than strategy. "Nothing about our brand is deliberate," says Tania. "And we get in trouble with the consultants. They tell us we need a plan, but we follow our gut."

It is, perhaps, this refusal to conform – coupled with a deep respect for craft – that gives the brand its distinctive resonance. Each piece carries not only the mark of the artisan who made it, but also the imprint of a place, a family and a way of seeing the world.

"Everything that we do is a double-edged sword," explains Dima. "We love Beirut and we love Lebanon, and we love being part of it. And I don't know if we would have been able to have such a distinct DNA if we were from anywhere else, because Lebanon is about contradictions and so is our jewellery."

And in an increasingly homogenous world, being able to draw on the chaotic energy of Beirut – where nothing is ever entirely certain – to create pieces filled with beauty and joy, may just be the most valuable thing of all.

The fragrance that can activate joy

With its new Supercharged collection, French house Initio Parfums Privés pushes scents beyond aromas and into the territory of neuroscience, to trigger measurable emotional responses, writes **Katy Gillett**

For a decade, Initio Parfums Privés has been asking a question most fragrance houses miss: what if a scent could do more than smell good? What if it could act on the brain, shifting something fundamental within each of us? What if it became emotional?

Since its founding in 2015, the niche French house has built its reputation on functional fragrances – scents engineered not only to be worn, but also to act on the mind. Its collections have explored desire, confidence and well-being, each one rooted in molecular science, formulated with precise ingredients selected for their olfactory and neurological impact.

Now, with Supercharged, Initio turns its attention to arguably the most vital emotional territory of all: joy. A complex, interconnected system of pathways, our sense of joy regulates pleasure, engagement and vitality, shaping how we live, connect and thrive. It benefits our health, acts as an active longevity factor, reinforces social bonds and allows individuals to cope better with challenges, rebounding from adversity.

It's not an insular experience, either. Research has shown that happiness spreads across social networks up to three degrees of separation. When one person experiences genuine joy, their close connections have up to a 25 per cent higher chance of feeling it too. Yet, a 2022 global study found that 45 per cent of people report not having felt genuine joy in more than two years. One in four can no longer clearly recognise what joy feels like at all.

For the brand, this was the trigger point and the undercurrent that underpins the new collection. "If fragrance can act on emotional states," the brand's philosophy runs, "then joy had to be explored as a force that moves beyond the individual – into connection, vitality and shared well-being."

THE BREAKTHROUGH

The science-backed Supercharged collection launches with two fragrances – Sugar Blast and Wild Rush – each one a distinct expression of joy. Sugar Blast is a warmly expansive and euphoric ambery gourmand of lavender,

Sugar Blast and Wild Rush, opposite, are both created to spark joy, from the ingredients used to the packaging motifs and colourways

coconut, vanilla, praline, rum, cashmeran and ambroxan. Wild Rush is its counterpart, an aromatic fougère of bergamot, lavender, vanilla, caramel, red fruits, sandalwood and patchouli.

It's all built around a proprietary innovation called the Joydrop Complex, which is a molecular system unlike anything previously used in fine fragrance.

Its creation began with a scientific insight: joy doesn't originate from a single molecule; it emerges from the synchronised activation of several neural signals within the brain's reward and emotional circuitry. Stimulate one pathway and you produce a fleeting sensation, but activate several simultaneously and you get something much more enduring.

The molecules within Joydrop were chosen and validated through direct brain activity measurement for their ability to stimulate the specific neurological pathways associated with pleasure and energy. Embedded at the core of each Supercharged fragrance, the complex generates what Initio calls a measurable emotional signature – scent as a functional trigger of aliveness.

To validate the approach, Initio partnered with DSM-Firmenich, the world leader in olfactory innovation, to co-develop a neuro-olfactive research protocol, the first of its kind in the fragrance industry. Rather than testing isolated ingredients, the protocol measured the complete fragrance formula, capturing how all components interact.

Three simultaneous dimensions were recorded: neurophysiological response (brain signals, heart rhythm and skin reaction via EEG, ECG and galvanic skin response); behavioural response (AI-driven analysis of posture, micro-expressions, vocal modulations and breathing patterns); and conscious verbal response (how participants described and mapped their emotional experience).

Together, these three layers produced a multidimensional scientific portrait of joy in motion. The conclusion was that joy leaves a measurable trace in the brain – and fragrance can literally put it there.

Thus, the act of wearing a fragrance is no longer about self-expression, but about recharging – and activating a whole new state of being.

DUAL EXPRESSION

Each fragrance in the Supercharged collection maps to a distinct emotional frequency. Sugar Blast captures a warmly playful register of joy, which is why a vibrant orange marks its identity on the bottle.

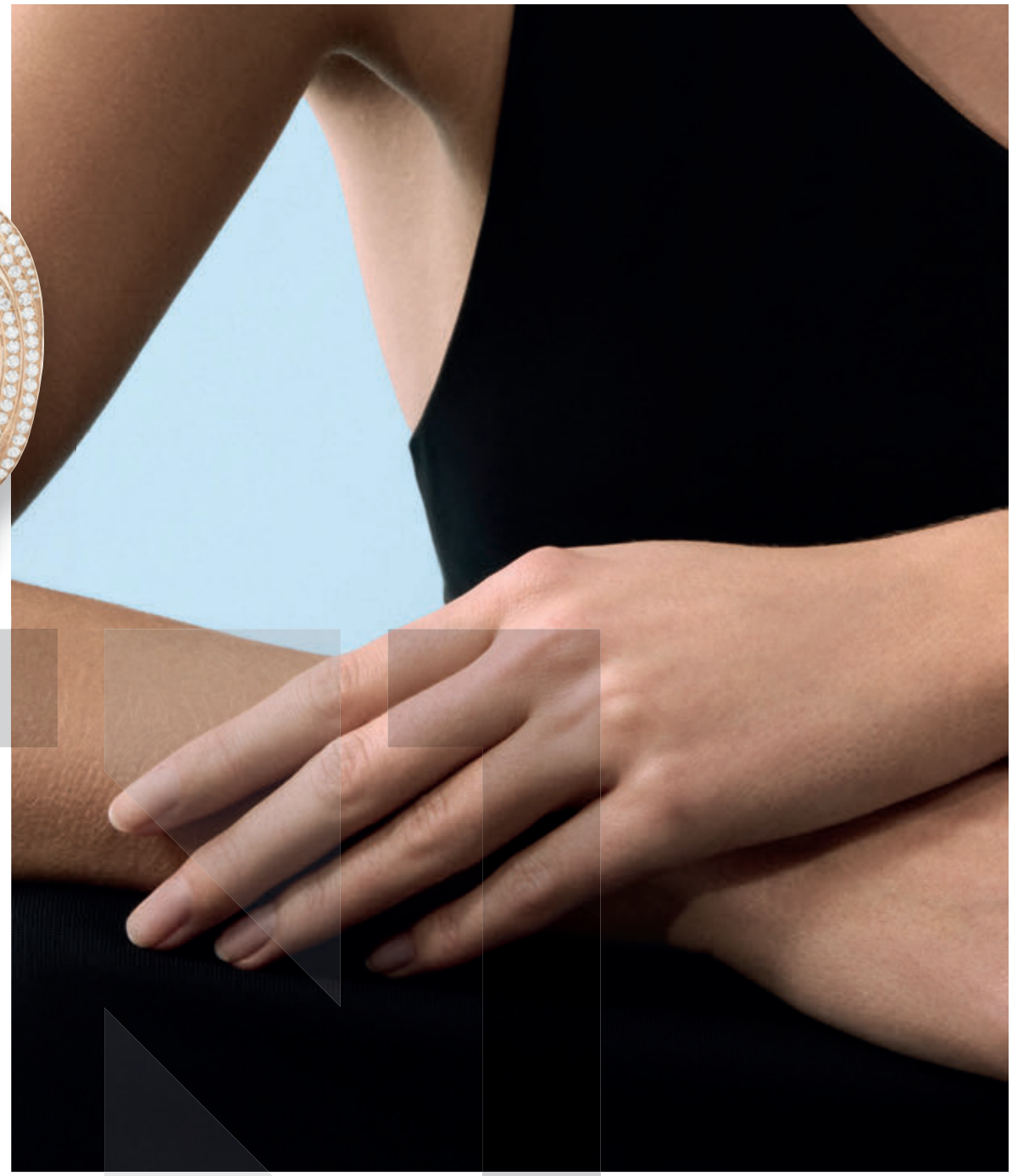
Neuroscientific testing confirmed a strongly positive emotional response, with the brain registering the experience as deeply pleasurable – the kind of stable activation producing joy that's more uplifting than fleeting.

Wild Rush, meanwhile, is immediate and assertive. It activates confidence and drive, with brain activity measurements showing strong emotional engagement paired with forward momentum. That's why this bottle comes in electric blue.

The bottles carry the collection's philosophy into visual form. Initio's famed diamond signature – the emblem that has appeared across every release since 2015 – breaks free from its frame on the Supercharged packaging, extending beyond the bottle and the outer case. The transparent glass amplifies the sense of intensity within.

It's a very deliberate gesture. It says: joy, by its very nature, cannot be contained. But now, perhaps, it can be controlled.

This content was created by TN Magazine in partnership with Initio Parfums Privés



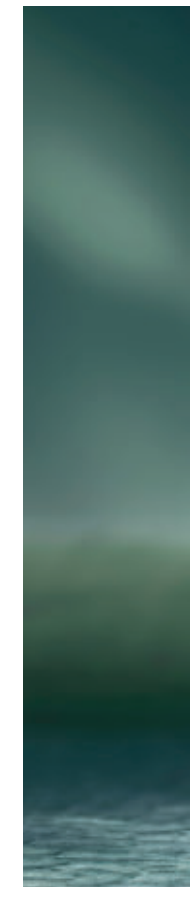
Francesca Fearon heads to Geneva, where the world's leading watchmakers turn up the volume, pairing mechanical ingenuity with high jewellery flair in a season defined by excess in women's watches

The theatre

The watch world sets out to dazzle each year at the Watches & Wonders trade fair in Geneva, and last month's event was no exception. The leading names in watchmaking gathered for their annual presentations, showcasing the latest in innovation and precision craftsmanship. Despite a volatile geopolitical backdrop and tariff uncertainties, it proved a bumper year, with Audemars Piguet returning to the salon after a long absence, as well as a roster of celebrities, including Roger Federer, George Russell and Usher, joining thousands to take in the finest in horology.

Technical innovation remained front and centre. IWC Schaffhausen unveiled its Pilot's Venturer Vertical Drive, designed for space habitation and destined for the commercial space station Haven-1, while Bremont's Supernova Chronograph is set for a one-way trip to the moon later this year, embedded in Astrolab's Flip Rover. Alongside these headline-grabbing feats came a slew of new Worldtimers and Jumping Hour complications. Yet, as ever, technical ambition was matched by aesthetic indulgence, with brands leaning into a distinctly maximalist mood, especially for women's watches.

Many watchmakers have deep roots in jewellery – among them Chopard, Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Chanel and Piaget – and aesthetics remain as crucial as the complications within. As such, gold, diamonds and métiers d'art craftsmanship were deployed with abandon.



# of time

Watchmakers, including Piaget, H Moser & Cie, Chopard, Bvlgari, Chanel and Jaeger-LeCoultre, lean into a maximalist mood at this year's Watches & Wonders

Jaeger-LeCoultre's Reverso featured hand-painted enamel scenes inspired by nature in Japan and Hawaii, while Vacheron Constantin's Egérie Moon Phase Spring Blossom paired a pleated mother-of-pearl marquetry dial with hand-painted calfskin straps.

Piaget delivered perhaps the purest expression of maximalism: a statement-sized gold cuff watch engraved with its signature Décor Palace motif, set with diamonds and centred on an opal dial – a clear nod to the house's 1960s mastery of hard stone dials. More restrained, though no less intricate, the Limelight Gala featured orange enamel over a snakeskin-engraved dial, framed by cognac diamonds.

Chanel leaned into its couture heritage with the Noeud de Camélia secret watch cuffs, offered with either diamond-set or embroidered bugle-beaded bow straps, both in limited editions. A secret ring watch concealed beneath a diamond echoed a similar high jewellery gesture at Piaget, where a cabochon stone hides the dial. Under the direction of Arnaud Chastaingt, Chanel also introduced a charm bracelet with a Première watch attachment, though the focus remains on the J12, reimagined this year with playful Coco Game motifs, including charms of Mademoiselle Chanel herself.

Elsewhere, Cartier – always a watchmaker with a jeweller's eye – doubled down on gold and diamonds in its Baignoire collection, introduced in 1958. This year's iteration incorporated the Clou de Paris motif, rooted in the 1920s and central to the Clash de Cartier line. The sculptural Myst de Cartier stood out for its interplay of spiralling diamonds and black lacquer, as well as its innovative clasp-free bracelet, which uses concealed springs to slip seamlessly over the wrist.

Gem-setting took centre stage at Bvlgari, Van Cleef & Arpels and Chopard in their cocktail watch offerings. Van Cleef revisited its Ludo model with the Ludo Secret, updating the 1949 interpretation of the original 1934 design. A gold briquette bracelet with sapphire pavé crescents opens at the touch to reveal a mother-of-pearl dial – a discreet flourish designed to delight.

Bvlgari brought its signature exuberance to the Serpenti Aeterna, set with a mix of vibrant gemstones requiring 60 hours of meticulous setting. Moving away from the familiar Tubogas coil, the new Serpenti adopts a sleek hinged bracelet, with diamond-fringed versions offering a more restrained take. Chopard's L'Heure du Diamant continued this balance between opulence and restraint, pairing a matte black onyx dial with a bezel set with 4.40 carats of diamonds – a study in contrast.

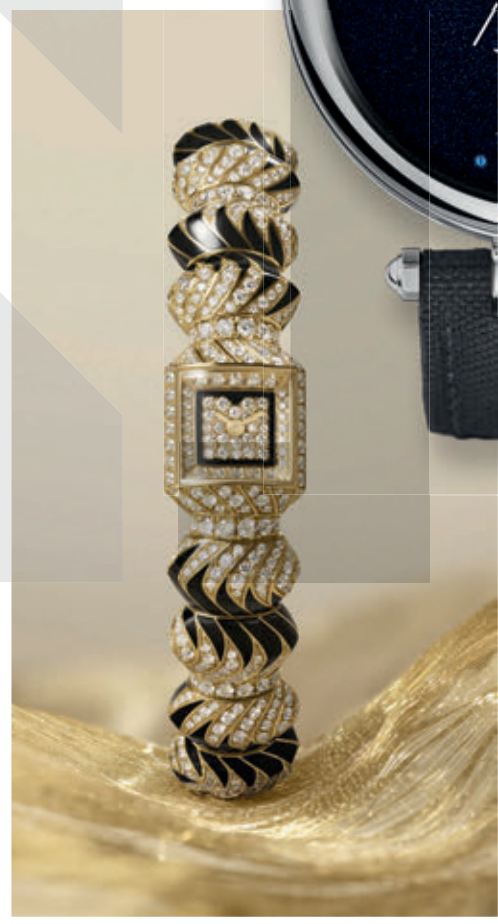
For all the decorative flourish, there remained a strong appetite for minimalism. Parmigiani Fleurier's Tonda PF line exemplified this with clean, subtly coloured dials concealing complex mechanics. The Tonda PF Chronograph Mystérieux features a mono-pusher chronograph with two additional hands, while new pink-toned dials – Alta Rosa and Arctic Rose – proved among the salon's quiet successes.

H Moser & Cie continued to refine its Streamliner collection, introducing smaller 28mm and 34mm models in steel, with either a frosted silver dial or a burgundy fumé finish, all powered by self-winding movements. At Bovet, a design team with an average age in the early thirties was tasked with creating a Gen Z proposition to mark the 10th anniversary of the 19Thirty line. The result is a sleek, unisex 42mm stainless steel watch with an off-centre dial and pared-back indices, offered in matte blue, green or sparkling black.

Gucci, meanwhile, offered a playful counterpoint with the Gucci Play – a quartz bangle watch reviving a 1980s design. Its six interchangeable ceramic bezels allow the wearer to shift colour and mood with ease, tapping into fashion's current nostalgia for the decade.

Finally, Audemars Piguet revisited its history with the Neo Frame Jumping Hour, a minimalist black-and-gold rectangular design that departs from the complexity of the Royal Oak. Jumping hours were a speciality of the maison between 1924 and 1951, and a 1929 model provided the inspiration for this contemporary interpretation, which pairs vintage cues with a thoroughly modern movement.

From maximalist jewellery statements to pared-back technical elegance, this year's Watches & Wonders offered something for every sensibility, and was a reminder that in watchmaking, innovation and expression continue to evolve in tandem.



Gemstones, precious metals and métiers d'art craftsmanship in pieces by Van Cleef & Arpels, Chopard, Cartier, Bovet, Parmigiani Fleurier and Jaeger-LeCoultre

Technical ambition was matched by aesthetic indulgence, with brands leaning into a maximalist mood for women's watches

The making of Hashel Al Lamki

Raised in Al Ain and shaped by histories and experiences that stretch from the Gulf to North America to East Africa and beyond, the celebrated Emirati artist traces his practice through landscape, material and memory

Words: **Nasri Atallah**
Photographer: **Aqib Anwar**

There is a blessing in finding a particular kind of certainty that arrives early and never quite leaves. For Hashel Al Lamki, it came in the form of a nursery school drawing – a sheet handed out, coloured in, returned with a star and a simple verdict from a teacher: 'You're good at this.' It is the sort of minor childhood affirmation many might forget. Al Lamki didn't. In many ways, he built a life around it.

"It was just one of those moments," he says. "I still remember it."

What followed was not so much a decision as a continuation. Growing up in Al Ain, in public housing built for Emirati families, Al Lamki says art was not necessarily a prescribed path. At the time, there were no ecosystems to plug into, no institutions laying out a route from childhood aptitude to professional practice. Art classes at school were limited to once a week, and by grade six, they disappeared entirely, recounts Al Lamki. For most, that would have been the end of it.

For Al Lamki – whose art now sits in collections such as Barjeel Art Foundation and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi – it was just the beginning. "I went to my dad and said: 'This is the situation. I'm not getting enough of this," he recalls. What he asked for next was unusual: a private art tutor. In a household where academic support was typically reserved for maths or science, it landed as something of a surprise. "They didn't really get it," he says with a smile. "My siblings needed help with physics. And here I was, asking for art classes at home."

His parents found him a teacher anyway. The arrangement lasted until Al Lamki finished high school. Looking back, he recognises it for what it was – a quiet but decisive endorsement. "They were very supportive, especially my dad," he says. "He came from a completely different upbringing, he was very corporate, but he was so supportive."

The space came soon after. In the architecture of those government-built homes, kitchens would often be moved out of the main house to accommodate for the realities of family cooking. That left a surplus room inside the house. Al Lamki claimed it. "I didn't even know what I

Hashel Al Lamki's art sits in the collections of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah


REMEMBER
YOU ARE
DREAMING

was doing," he says. "I just turned it into my studio." There is a kind of consistency to the way he describes his childhood. While others asked for toys or, later, cars, his own requests were narrowly focused. "I never asked for an Atari or a bicycle," he says. "All I wanted was art supplies." In the absence of dedicated stores in Al Ain at the time, he improvised by heading to bookshops with small creative sections and made occasional trips to Dubai, where better materials could be found.

If ever there were an alternative path to Al Lamki's life, one where he isn't an artist now considered one of the UAE's most celebrated, it was never seriously tested. "I don't know," he says now, on the cusp of turning 40. "Sometimes I ask myself: 'Did I ever try doing something else? Would I be good at something else?'" The question hangs for a moment before he answers it, but it is clear to me that he knows the answer. "This made sense. I felt comfortable. I studied it. I became good at it. And it still satisfies me for now."

The route to formal education was not as straightforward. In 2007, the UAE offered few viable options for someone intent on pursuing art at a higher level. Scholarship applications did not come through the first time. A brief stint in the family business followed, less a detour than a holding pattern. "They told me: 'You need to find something to do. You can't just stay in this gap year.'"

> **My father came from a completely different upbringing, he was very corporate, but he was so supportive**

Al Lamki enrolled at UAE University in Al Ain. It did not last long. Within the first term, a professor intervened. "He looked at me and said: 'What are you doing? I can see where your passion is.'" The intervention proved decisive – much like that early encouragement at nursery – leading to a connection with the cultural attaché at the American Embassy and, eventually, to an exploratory programme linked to State University of New York in upstate New York. "I took everything," he says of the academic options laid out in front of him. "Drawing, video, graphic design, colour theory." The confirmation was immediate. "I was like: 'Yes. This is it."

As happy as he was, nearby New York City exerted a gravitational pull. Upstate, he realised, was not the place he had imagined. "It was a few hours away," he says. "I knew I needed to be there." The next step led him to Parsons School of Design, part of The New School, where the curriculum offered both structure and freedom. Core studio classes anchored the programme, but electives allowed for drift, which in Al Lamki's case proved formative.

"At the time, it felt extremely random," he says. "I took pattern-making, natural dyeing and lighting." In retrospect, those choices read less like

An intervention by a professor at UAE University led to a connection with the American Embassy attaché and ultimately helped Al Lamki enrol in an exploratory art programme in New York

Al Lamki's work is often discussed through the lens of materiality and landscape, but its conceptual core is more personal and anchored in lineage

digressions and more like early indicators of a practice that would resist singular definition. Before heading to the US, his understanding of art had been narrow. "In my mind, art was painting," he says. "That's it." Parsons dismantled that assumption. Performance, installation, material experimentation all entered the frame.

"You're 18 or 19, you're in New York, you're porous, you're a sponge," he says. Museums, galleries, the constant openings and conversations: the city did what it has done for generations of young artists – it expanded the field of possibility. More importantly, it reframed the terms of engagement. Art was no longer a medium, but a way of thinking.

If that period provided the tools, the content would emerge later and closer to home. Al Lamki's work today is often discussed through the lens of materiality and landscape, but its conceptual core is more personal, anchored in a lineage that while rooted in the Emirates, stretches beyond it. "My great-grandparents were involved in the Spice Route," he says. "They left Oman and lived in Zanzibar." It is a history shaped by movement – across the Gulf, East Africa – and interrupted by rupture. The 1964 revolution in Zanzibar forced a dispersal; family members scattered across Egypt, London and the Gulf. His father arrived in the UAE in 1965, working for BP before the country's unification.

"I was born decades later," Al Lamki says, "but it's part of my story." He employs a term I had not come across before to describe part of what his practice explores: spice punk. At its simplest, it is a rejection of singular, western-centric narratives in favour of something more networked and fluid, with roots in South Asian literature. At its most ambitious, it is a way of reimagining cultural exchange itself. But it feels like less a manifesto than a working framework, an attempt to articulate these overlapping geographies and histories.

"Thanks for mentioning that," he says when spice punk is brought up. "It's something I'm really passionate about. These routes weren't just about trade. They were about knowledge, connections, exchange. The connection was much deeper than we think today." What interests Al Lamki is not nostalgia, but continuity, the idea that these histories remain active, if obscured, beneath the surface of contemporary identity.

The landscape of Al Ain provides a parallel narrative. Jebel Hafeet, the mountain that dominates the city's horizon – visible from rooftops, the site of family gatherings, a fixed point in an otherwise shifting context – has been a constant presence in his life and his artistic practice. It was only later, through conversations with geologists and his own research, that he came to understand its formation: the collision of the African and Asian tectonic plates. "It felt like a self-portrait," he says of the mountain. Al Lamki's work often operates in that space where personal history, geological time and cultural memory intersect. "Every time I dig deeper, there's more," he says. "It's like adding a layer, but also shedding one."

Materially, this manifests in a practice that is deliberately grounded. Al Lamki works with what is available – reclaimed textiles, natural pigments,

When I was younger, I never asked for an Atari or a bicycle. All I wanted was art supplies


DALTON

The artist will exhibit a new work at Art Dubai, taking place this month at Madinat Jumeirah

found objects – not out of necessity, but as a philosophical position. "I'd rather work with what already exists," Al Lamki says, "than trying to create something from scratch." The process is intuitive rather than strictly conceptual. "In the studio, it's not like this," he says, gesturing towards the neatness of the space. "It's more emotional. You follow something and it starts to make sense."

In recent years, his work has taken him further east. Residencies, biennials, exhibitions in South Korea, China and Singapore have opened up new lines of inquiry. "It started with one show," he says. "Then it led to another, and another." Over time, the pattern became clearer. The cultural affinities between the Gulf and parts of Asia – coastal life, trading histories, shared sensibilities – offered an alternative axis, one that felt more aligned with his own interests than the established western circuit.

"I think I wanted to look in a different direction," he says. "There are connections there that feel very familiar." There is also, he admits, a more personal undercurrent. "Maybe it's grief," he says. The word is offered carefully, without elaboration, but it resonates with the broader trajectory of his work – a search for grounding, for context, for a way of situating oneself within a longer, less linear history. Something almost ancestral.

That search unfolds against the backdrop of a rapidly changing UAE. Over the past two decades, the country's cultural infrastructure has expanded apace, with platforms such as Art Dubai – where Al Lamki will exhibit a new work this month – playing a central role. Al Lamki's own relationship with the fair mirrors that evolution. "I first went as a visitor," he says. "Then I was part of programmes, then showing with a gallery, then through non-profit work." The progression is not unusual, but in his case it underscores a deeper point: the ecosystem has grown in tandem with the artists it supports.

> **Art Dubai is more than just a fair. It's a community. It's very brave that they still kept it this year**

"It's more than just a fair," he says. "It's a community." The emphasis is telling. While the commercial dimension remains, what he values most is the convergence. That annual moment when artists, curators, collectors and institutions occupy the same space, exchange ideas, take stock.

This year's event, reshaped and rescheduled in response to broader uncertainties, has sharpened that sense of collective purpose. "It's dynamic," he says. "It's very brave that they still kept the fair." His own contribution is still being constructed when we speak. "It's community-based," he says of the piece, which emerges from artisan-led work resulting from a recent residency.

What matters, he suggests, is less the finished piece than the act of participation. "It's about contribution. About belonging." In a year framed by disruption, the decision to proceed carries symbolic weight. For Al Lamki, that symbolism aligns with a broader, more personal trajectory. The questions he is asking now – about origin, connection, the validity of inherited knowledge – are not easily resolved. Nor, it seems, is resolution the goal. "I think I'm getting closer," he says. "But there's always more."

Above, Norton & Sons now offers sportswear
Right, Davies & Son became the first Savile Row tailor to show at Pitti Uomo last year
Far right, Henry Poole's reefer jacket comes courtesy of Gore-Tex

The changing face of Savile Row

Josh Sims heads to London's most traditional address, where streetwear-inflected tailoring and high-street collaborations prove that heritage can be a living thing

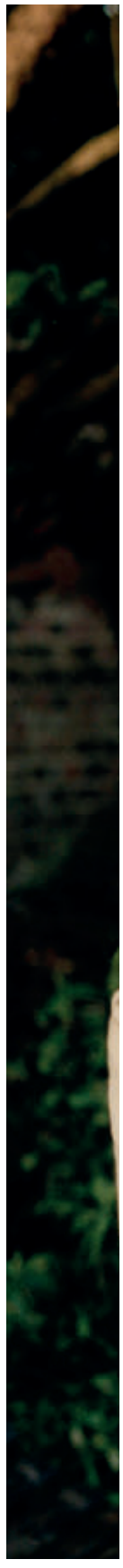
NORTON & SONS; GETTY IMAGES; HENRY POOLE; CLOTHSURGEON; RICHARD JAMES

Anyone looking for a 1950s-style varsity sweatshirt might consider the new 1821 Label, a collection of classic casual sportswear. The strange thing is that you will need to go to Savile Row, arguably the world capital of men's bespoke tailoring, to pick it up.

Indeed, 1821 comes from Norton & Sons, favoured tailor of Fred Astaire, Cary Grant and King Juan Carlos of Spain, which was founded 205 years ago. Alternatively, pop into a Mango store, and you'll find a capsule collection of soft contemporary tailoring devised by Savile Row newbie label Richard James – established merely 34 years ago.

"The perception of Savile Row can sometimes be that it's rather dusty – there's always those conversations about 'the death of the suit' and

Above, Clothsurgeon offers bespoke clothing with a streetwear twist Left, Richard James has created a capsule for high-street brand Mango



so on. But, really, Savile Row has never stood still," says Toby Lamb, brand director for Richard James, which has also devised collections with the performance sports brand Castore. "It's been more about quiet innovation. And, actually, there's more innovation on Savile Row than I think there's been in 40 years, all of which is giving it more reach and credibility," Lamb adds.

That doesn't only include more of the street's historic stalwarts – the likes of Huntsman, expanding into ready-to-wear and quickly making it a quarter of its business. "To me, that shows there is still a clear understanding of what Savile Row quality is, that younger customers get their clothing from here and not from often comparably priced designer brands," says managing director Taj Phull.

It also means the kind of offbeat collaborations that would have been scoffed at not long ago, are now possible. Henry Poole – Savile Row's oldest bespoke tailor at 220 years old – has, for instance, worked on projects with Adidas, Canada Goose and, for its new reefer jacket, with technical fabric specialists Gore-Tex. Such collaborations "raise eyebrows to start with", Simon Cundey, Henry Poole's managing director concedes, "but they give you a certain dynamism. They need to be fun."

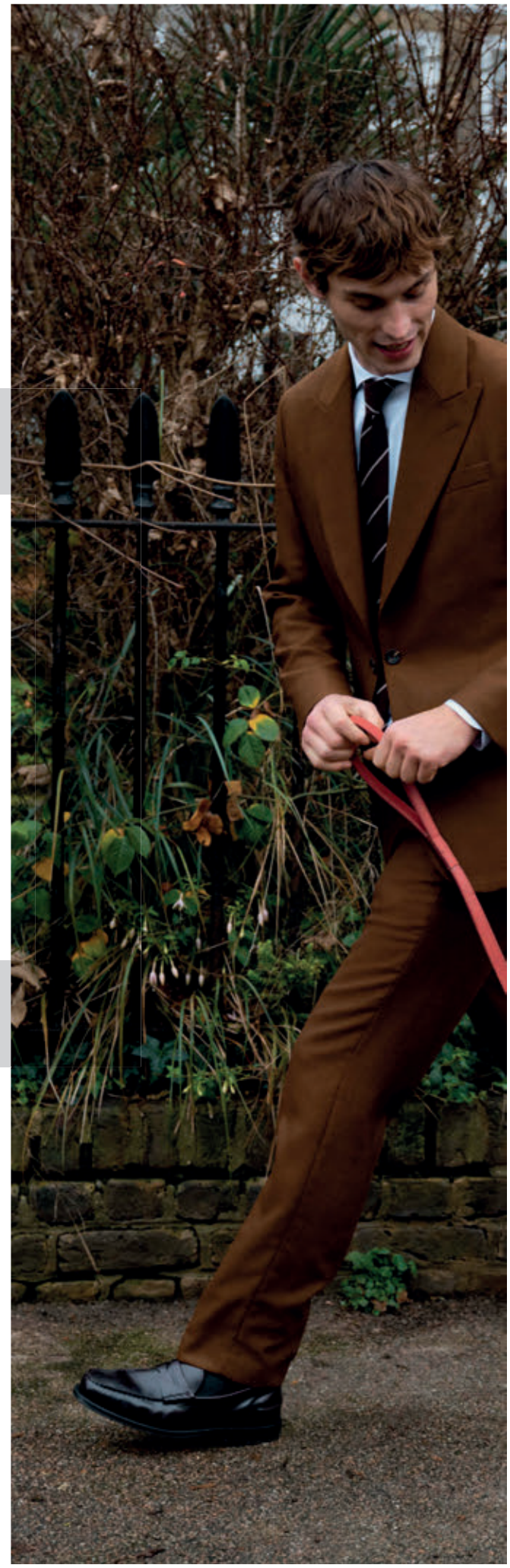
Besides, the reality is not as rigid as Savile Row's image as a place to acquire buttoned-up formalwear might suggest. Cundey says historically, Savile Row made a well-heeled gentleman's entire wardrobe, not just the formalwear for which it became famous. Today's more fluid aesthetic, as well as an emphasis on separates is, in a way, a return to form.

"In order to speak to a new generation, it's important Savile Row continues its journey with a greater sense of modernity – not least because we have people working here who are super-talented, and we need to let them run with that talent," says Cundey. "It's true that sometimes the not-so-traditional can cause a sense of outrage on the Row, but you need new ideas."

Take, for example, the opening four years ago of Clothsurgeon, offering bespoke clothing with a streetwear twist. "Savile Row has always been pushed forward through these moments of rebellion," says Rav Matharu,

Clockwise from far left, Huntsman is expanding into ready-to-wear; Knatchbull is Savile Row's first tailor catering to women; and Henry Poole is Savile Row's oldest tailor at 220

There's more innovation on Savile Row than there has been in 40 years, all of which is giving it more reach and credibility



Right, Clothsurgeon is founded by London College of Fashion alumnus Rav Matharu Far right, Richard James designs balance craftsmanship with a contemporary aesthetic

founder and London College of Fashion alumnus. “Think of tailors like Edward Sexton or Tommy Nutter in the 1960s. They’re needed to bring in more contemporary ideas for a younger audience that’s always at risk of becoming more oblivious to Savile Row and its importance.”

It’s not just about a younger audience, either. Two years ago, Knatchbull, Savile Row’s first all-female tailoring business catering to women, was relaunched. “It’s important to periodically blow some of the dust off Savile Row, but not all of it because its rich heritage is very much part of its appeal,” stresses founder Daisy Knatchbull, who brought the brand’s first trunk shows to the Middle East at the end of last year. “But there’s an understanding on Savile Row that a shopfront for women here can only be a good thing.”

Johnny Allen, head of bespoke tailoring at Davies & Son, says: “Sometimes Savile Row can be just seen as classy – something to aspire to. But sometimes it comes across as fuddy-duddy, which is why anything that moves it beyond being old-fashioned, that makes it more approachable, more intriguing and more energised is positive.” Established in 1803, Davies & Son became the first Savile Row tailor to show at Pitti Uomo, arguably the world’s leading trade show for menswear. There, it unveiled a collection designed in collaboration with Satoshi Kuwata, the LVMH Prize-winning Japanese fashion designer and one-time Davies apprentice, applying his distinctive, origami approach of ironing and cutting folds into the patterns to allow the resulting jackets to fold flat, akin to a kimono.

“That’s been brilliant for us,” adds Allen. “Suddenly, we’re seen as forward-thinking and it’s bringing a lot of customers, who might not have considered Savile Row before.”

As Kuwata notes, Savile Row has long been used to working with designers behind the scenes to assist on the tailoring elements of their collections – Anderson & Sheppard does for Wales Bonner, for example – but rarely, if ever, is there a shared billing. Huntsman struggled to get recognition for its work on designer Demna’s debut couture show for Balenciaga three years ago, but more recently, made a deserved splash with a collection devised with designer Daniel Fletcher. Could it be that, while Savile Row could never – and should never – be brash, it is now finding a new confidence, a new voice?

“The fact is all these efforts are, on the one hand, about spreading the word of Savile Row, but on the other, a means for it to stay relevant, as it must,” says Lamb. “It’s about exploring new ways to express the Savile Row guiding principle of craftsmanship. The question is always: How far to push it?”

Suddenly we're seen as forward-thinking, bringing in customers who might not have considered Savile Row

The shape of wind

Under Jumeirah's ultra-private Privé Collection, the Maltese Falcon enters a new chapter where radical engineering meets a rarefied escape. Sarah Maisey sets sail

Approaching the superyacht Maltese Falcon by tender from the Spanish isle of Mallorca feels almost cinematic. With a distinctly theatrical flourish, her three masts stand against the crisp blue Mediterranean sky, like something from a bygone century.

Only as I draw closer does the illusion resolve itself. This is not a historical revival, but one of the most technically ambitious sailing yachts ever constructed, still as arresting today as when she first launched in 2006.

Now, under the aegis of Jumeirah Group's ultra-exclusive Privé Collection, the Maltese Falcon is entering a new, by-invitation-only era. It joins other Jumeirah experiences, such as the private 4.8-hectare Thanda Island set within the Tanzanian Shungimbili Island Marine Reserve, which offer an entirely new level of access and exclusivity.

This partnership is a natural progression for the hotel group famous for its own nautical links. As the company behind the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab, as well as the cresting wave outlines of Jumeirah Beach Hotel and Marsa Al Arab, having one of the most distinctive and noteworthy superyachts in the world is a logical addition to its portfolio.

It is not available to just anyone, however. Starting at a cool €490,000 (Dh2 million) per week during the low season, and rising to €580,000 (Dh2.5 million) in peak season, this is aimed at those who appreciate the finer things in life, alongside the familiar touchpoints of their favourite hotel. Only VIP guests will be invited to book, making my own visit all the more remarkable.

The Maltese Falcon is famous in her own right, of course. Commissioned by the late American venture capitalist Tom Perkins, she was always meant to be more than a conventional yacht – doubling as an exploration of what advanced engineering and design could be when applied to sailing. Freed from the confines of tradition, the result is one of the most radical sailing vessels ever built.

The innovation is focused around the DynaRig system – later renamed the FalconRig – developed in collaboration between Dykstra Naval Architects and designer Damon Roberts. Three free-standing carbon-fibre masts rotate independently, standing 57 metres tall. The horizontal yards to which the sails are attached are deeply curved, while the sails themselves are stored within the mast, unfurling in a controlled sequence at the touch of a button. It is this trio set-up that makes the Maltese Falcon so instantly recognisable on the water.

While the yacht is engineered for simplicity and intuitiveness – Perkins once declared he could "teach any sailor how to handle her in five minutes" – he had to wait for technology to catch up with his vision.

Only as lightweight carbon fibre became available – better able to deal with the huge stresses his mast would have to endure – could the Maltese Falcon come to life. Unsurprisingly, the yacht has bagged 18 design awards since she was launched.

Once the sails are unfurled, they span about 2,400 square metres, creating a continuous aerodynamic surface with up to twice the efficiency of other sail configurations. As they unfold, a giant falcon emblem is revealed.

Every detail has been thought through – from sails unfolding in individual sequence to reduce strain, to masts that turn in place, giving captain Pierfrancesco Cafaro fingertip control when tracking the wind. As we navigate the Mallorca coastline, he steers the yacht via tiny turns of a dial, which seems disconcertingly low-key. Forget a captain hauling on a spoked wheel, today's technology means that everything is handled via dials and buttons that would not look out of place on a supercar dashboard. I don't know what I was expecting, but it was certainly not this.

So much technology begs the question of what happens if the power goes out. Cafaro is clearly used to the question, and takes time to outline how everything runs from three huge generators, with only two used at any given moment, to always keep a reserve. Should all three fail, a fourth generator will kick in.

The superyacht had arrived from the Caribbean days before we boarded, and the manner of her arrival shows her true size and capability. While small yachts are packed up for the Atlantic crossing to be transported on larger ships, at 88 metres, the Maltese Falcon can handle the crossing alone.

Traversing the Atlantic twice a year, Cafaro has tales of both giant waves and perfect conditions. During one crossing, he explained the beauty of being under sail for 19 days.

Between November 2022 and April 2023, the Maltese Falcon underwent an extensive, six-month refit at the Lusben shipyard in Italy, where the original dark interior of black and red was replaced with a warm palette of caramels, sands and beige.

The new, softer tonal register includes honey-coloured wood polished to a high shine, next to slubby linens and raw silks for a complex textural language. The exterior was also lightened from black to a Perini blue, to better complement the silver superstructure.

The pleasingly curved lines of the yardarms are echoed throughout the interior too, most notably as the rounded wooden walls and doors, which can be opened and closed at the touch of a button, to expand or enclose a salon or dining room as required.

The Maltese Falcon is a rare mix of the romance of sailing and the precision of modern engineering

At the centre of the yacht is a three-deck atrium, which is anchored by a spiral staircase with reinforced glass floors that allow daylight to filter down to the core of the vessel. It connects the full beam master bedroom on the top deck, as well as to the gym and spa treatment rooms below.

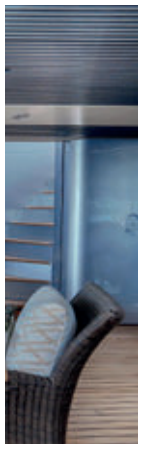
Carefully curated artworks add a sense of home from home, opting for character over banality, such as the poster-sized photograph of Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page on stage circa 1972, or an antique painted Japanese screen that doubles as a discreet door. In the main salon, coffee-table books and Sicilian Teste di Moro ceramics frame a baby grand piano, lending the effortless feel of a floating summer house. Discreet Jumeirah touchpoints are everywhere – from the scent diffusers to the crisp, practical staff uniforms.

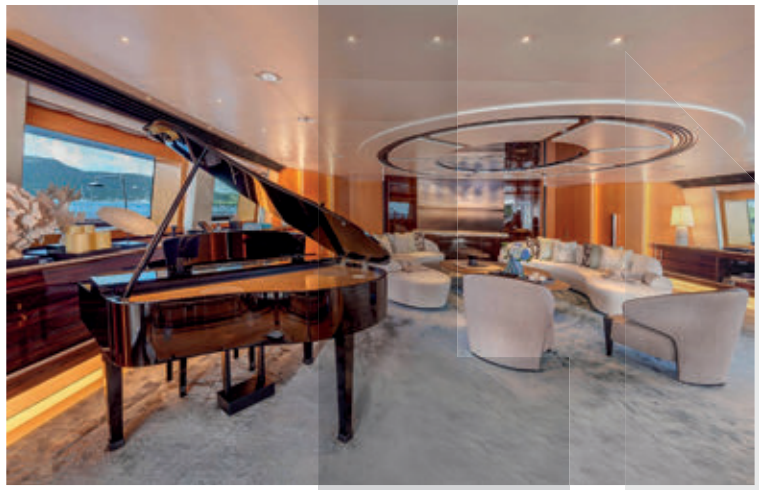
Able to accommodate 12 guests, the suites are generous and well appointed. The master suite has its own deck, complete with a deck bed that can be angled to follow the coastline, while other guests can lounge on decks both fore and aft, lazing on hammock-strung beds.

Guests can choose where the fine dining meals are served – on the deck, or perhaps the dining room – as well as if dishes are prepared by a Jumeirah chef or the yacht's own chef, trained to exacting culinary standards.

A crew of 19 tends to all aspects of life on board – from navigation and engineering to hospitality and recreation. Their work is largely invisible, yet essential in maintaining a seamless experience. Tables are silently laid and coffee magically appears, while baskets of sunscreen always seem to be at hand. A bar on

JUMEIRAH





deck means mocktails and juices are available at any time, while snacks are never far away.

Then there are what the crew refer to as "the toys" – jet skis, diving gear, kayaks, stand-up paddle-boards and eFoils designed for fun on the sea. There are even underwater scooters for that *Thunderball* James Bond moment.

The yacht has three tenders, which are lifted into and out of the water via a clever crane in one of the masts, and whisk guests to and from shore, to enjoy local eateries or take in the nightlife. If the guests prefer to stay on-board, one deck transforms into a cinema, with the film projected on to the sails.

The rhythm of life on board is a reflection of the season. Winters are spent in the Caribbean, tracing a route between Antigua, St Barts, and the Bahamas, while summers shift to the Mediterranean, the Italian coastline, the French Riviera and the Spanish Balearics. The Maltese Falcon also travels further east to Croatia, Montenegro, Greece and Turkey.

As a jumping-off point to the yacht in the Med, guests can make the most of other Jumeirah properties, such as the Spanish clifftop Jumeirah Mallorca, which overlooks Port de Sóller, or the Jumeirah Capri Palace on the Italian isle of Anacapri.

The Maltese Falcon, even amid the upper tier of superyachts, is a rare mix of the romance of sail and the precision of modern engineering. Her rehaul ensures she is equipped with state-of-the-art systems, while the experience of the captain and his crew ensures every detail is anticipated without compromise.

To step aboard is to encounter a form of luxury that is reserved for a select few. Interestingly, her interior is less about accumulation than chic individuality, and more aligned with a familiar, much-loved space that happens to float.

The following day, as we admired her from the Mallorcan coast, we watched people stop to photograph her. Some may have recognised her, others perhaps not, but we were all drawn to her most enduring quality: not of flashy spectacle, but of something timelessly elegant made seaworthy.

Clockwise from far left, a master suite on the Maltese Falcon; captain Pierfrancesco Cafaro; a crew of 19 tend to all aspects of life on board; guests can dine on the deck of the yacht; the main salon houses a baby grand piano; and guests can lounge on decks both fore and aft

First Sitting

From limited-time menus to hot new openings, Hayley Kadrou rounds up all the culinary news you need to know

JODHPUR BAR & KITCHEN
Dishes from India's Blue City arrive in the UAE by way of Jodhpur Bar & Kitchen. The restaurant offers an immersive dining experience rooted in Marwari cuisine in a palatial setting. Recommended dishes include royal mirchi vada, Nargis koftas and daal baati churma – a Rajasthani speciality of spiced lentils and sweet crumbled wheat – plus spice-led drinks. The venue also offers live music during the dinner service at the weekends.
Hyatt Place Dubai, Al Mina

HIGH SOCIETY
Summer is drawing close and, with it, our window to alfresco dining. To make the most of the still-cool evenings, High Society has introduced Soirée d'Été, a weekend rooftop experience. A DJ and saxophonist set the tone, while guests can redeem their entry on food and drinks as they move between sunbeds, pool and terrace.
The Lana, Business Bay, Dubai

ISABEL MAYFAIR ABU DHABI
A slice of London has landed in the UAE capital. The first international outpost of Isabel Mayfair offers dishes such as caviar French toast, lobster rigatoni and red berry pavlova that have been reinterpreted for the region, alongside signature dishes such as beef croquetas, côte de boeuf and cacio e pepe.
The Galleria Al Maryah Island, Abu Dhabi

THE CHEF'S COUNTER
Some culinary dishes come with Michelin stars, others from a supermarket salad bar – but what happens when the two meet? Spinneys has the answer with The Chef's Counter, a concept that invites homegrown chefs to showcase their dishes in-store. Names including Jun's Kelvin Cheung and Gabriela Chamorro of Girl and the Goose have already stepped behind the counter to serve up their specialities.
Across the UAE

GERBOU
There's a new head chef at Gerbou. Ninad Salvi, who brings 20 years of experience to the table, will now don the white hat at the homegrown Emirati restaurant. Salvi started his training in Mumbai before moving to roles in Jeddah and at Dubai spots Flow Kitchen, Little Miss India and Eunoia by Carine. So what can regulars expect? More of what they already know and love – modern dishes influenced by traditional Emirati flavours – but with the promise of a "menu evolution", à la Salvi.
Nad Al Sheba 1, Dubai

SAADIYAT BEACH CLUB
Executive chef Jaswant Panwar is keeping things fresh with a seasonal menu update at this popular beach club in Abu Dhabi. Spanning Middle Eastern, pan-Asian and European influences, the menu includes dishes such as Arabic lentil soup, Korean chicken burger and Russian honey cake.
Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

CAFE DU PORT
The latest opening from Bar du Port pairs water views with great coffee and French-Mediterranean flavours, best enjoyed from the Dubai Harbour spot's rooftop terrace. On the menu are healthy options such as chia pudding and acai bowl, plus desserts, such as creme brûlée and opera cake.
Dubai Harbour

DUBAI RESTAURANT WEEK
The citywide event takes over Dubai's dining scene until May 17. More than 100 restaurants will serve standout menus at Dh125 for lunch and Dh250 for dinner. As the event grows each year, more Mena's 50 Best and Michelin-recognised names join the line-up, including Gaia, 11 Woodfire, Sexy Fish, Rhodes W1, Akira Back and Chez Wam.
Various locations across Dubai

JODHPUR BAR & KITCHEN; THE LANA – DORCHESTER COLLECTION; ISABEL MAYFAIR; CAFE DU PORT; AKIRA BACK

There's a particular genre of television that finds you once you become a father in your forties: dad TV. Stoic men of few words make hard decisions in vast landscapes. Problems are solved with grit, silence and the occasional well-placed stare. Much of it comes courtesy of someone such as Taylor Sheridan, and if you spend enough time in that world, something curious begins to happen.

You begin to think you should know how to fix things. That you should be able to read a landscape, to drive across it and survive it. You start to imagine, however faintly, what your role might be if the world tilted off its axis. And, inevitably, you begin to think about the kind of car that version of you would drive.

If you were building a vehicle for the end of days – or at least for the version of yourself that believes it might be coming – it would look something like the Ineos Grenadier Trialmaster x LeTech model.

It is an extreme off-road variant of the standard Grenadier, which it should be said, is no softie. The vehicle trades unapologetically in the visual language of the great off-roaders – the Land Rover Defender and the Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen chief among them – borrowing their boxy silhouettes and their implied promise of dominion over the natural world. There is a romance to that form, one that suggests capability first, with comfort lurking somewhere further down the list.

But what's striking is that the Grenadier isn't just a tribute act. Spend time with it and it reveals itself as something more self-assured and less nostalgic than its influences might suggest. It doesn't so much reference the past as reassert a set of values that have largely disappeared from modern car design.

For example, while the car is comfortable, it does not coddle you. This is not a vehicle that flatters you on the motorway. At 140kph, it feels noisy, upright and faintly resistant to the idea that it should be there at all. But to judge it on those terms is to misunderstand the brief entirely. The Grenadier has not been engineered for smooth tarmac and long-haul cruising. Everything about it – from its ladder-frame chassis and solid beam axles on the standard model (and the portal axle kit on the LeTech) to its permanent four-wheel drive and locking differentials – is optimised for what happens when the road runs out.

Off-road, both versions come authoritatively into their own. The standard car feels unflustered over loose sand and broken terrain, its long suspension travel soaking up punishment without fuss. There is a mechanical honesty to the way it moves – you feel the weight, the grip, the articulation – but it never feels overwhelmed. It encourages a more deliberate kind of driving. In rocky terrain or steep inclines, it leans into its engineering: low-range gearing, robust underpinnings and the sense that it has been built to endure.

Then there is the LeTech version, which takes that baseline and pushes it into something far more extreme. Developed with German off-road specialists, it introduces portal axles that dramatically increase ground clearance, effectively lifting the car without compromising

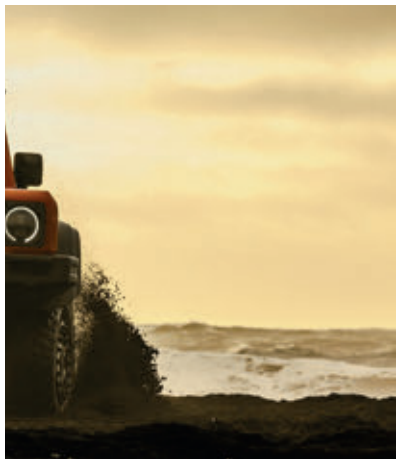
INEOS

When the road ends

A vehicle built for extreme off-roading, Ineos Grenadier Trialmaster x LeTech feels well-suited for the UAE, where overlanding is a weekend ritual. By Nasri Atallah

suspension geometry. The result is a vehicle that can traverse obstacles that would stop most SUVs cold – deeper ruts, sharper rocks more aggressive inclines. Add to that a lifted suspension set-up, reinforced components, larger all-terrain tyres and a visual stance that borders on the militaristic, and you begin to understand why the model's website has to specify that it is "road legal".

Where the standard car is capable, the LeTech is made for the hardened enthusiast. It is built for the kind of terrain most owners will never fully explore, but that's beside the point. Its existence reinforces the idea that the Grenadier platform is designed with headroom – that there is always more it can do.



There is a romance to the boxy silhouette, one that puts capability first

Where the standard Ineos Grenadier is capable, LeTech is made for hardened enthusiasts

The story behind it only reinforces that sense of purpose. Jim Ratcliffe, the founder of Ineos, is not, on paper, a car manufacturer. He is, however, one of Britain's wealthiest industrialists, with interests spanning everything from petrochemicals to sport – including stakes in the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team and Manchester United FC.

When Land Rover announced the end of the original Defender, Ratcliffe reportedly tried to acquire the tooling to keep it alive. Refused, he opted for the more ambitious route: to build a spiritual successor from the ground up.

That intent is visible in the details. Open the bonnet and the BMW-sourced engine sits within a bay that feels accessible. The thinking is simple – if something goes wrong, you should be able to reach in and fix it yourself. It's a philosophy that extends into the cabin, where physical switches dominate the dash and an overhead console adds a faintly aviation-like aura. It is tactile, deliberate and refreshingly analogue in a market that has largely defaulted to glass screens and haptic guesswork.

There is, too, a sense that the car is designed to be personalised to a degree that most modern vehicles discourage. Mounting points run along its body, inviting modification and addition. The LeTech version – lifted, armoured and visually unmissable – pushes that idea to its logical extreme, a reminder that the Grenadier is less a finished product than a platform for a certain kind of life.

And it is here that the car feels well-suited to the UAE. This is a place where overlanding is not a niche hobby, but a weekend ritual – where convoys head out towards the dunes of Al Badayer or the desert beyond Liwa, where the idea of self-sufficiency still carries weight. The Grenadier fits neatly into that culture. Not as a luxury object, but as a tool that understands the landscape it's being dropped into. It has the range, the durability and, crucially, the character to feel at home in a place where you can veer off the road and into adventure.

The most telling moment during my time with the car came, unexpectedly, on an ordinary stretch of road by the beach in Dubai. A restored 1970s Defender driven by an older gentleman in a crisp kandura approached from the opposite direction. As we passed, the driver glanced across, paused and offered a small, approving nod. It felt, in its own quiet way, like a benediction.

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi ON ART

The King of Tyre and Solomon's Envoys Sign a Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighbourliness (1939) by Blanche Daoud Ammoun

BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION

The year 1939 was a peculiar one. It brought the world together in Flushing Meadows, New York, for the World's Fair, where more than 60 countries gathered to present the best of what they had to offer. It was also, sadly, the year the Second World War began. In the midst of that uneasy convergence, a young Lebanese woman, Blanche Daoud Ammoun (1912–2011), presented her vision for her country and for the wider world through a series of four murals titled *The Phoenician Treaties*, of which only two are known to survive today.

In one of them, *Le Roi de Tyr et les Envoyés de Salomon Paraphent un Traité D'amitié et de Bon Voisinage*, Ammoun depicts a seated monarch, likely Hiram I, who ruled between 969 BC and 947 BC, receiving diplomatic emissaries from King Solomon's court. Through his policies, Hiram is remembered as a ruler who pursued peace with neighbouring civilisations, expanded trade and oversaw Tyre's rise as a major Mediterranean commercial hub.

The background is dense with cross-cultural references. At the far left, a woman supports a baby, likely Baal-Eser I, Hiram's son. Nearby stand two deer, symbols of fertility and connection to the natural world in Phoenician culture. One is being fed, the other sleeps – a quiet reflection of peace and serenity. A woman dances while another plays the flute, and two men, likely merchants, stand to one side, suggesting Hiram's outward-looking trade policies. Behind the king rises a structure, or cella, identified by Lebanese historian Charles H Al-Hayek as the maabed – a temple at the Phoenician site of Amrit, in present-day Tartus, Syria. Within it sits a deity, right hand raised in blessing.

Ammoun, an illustrator and writer, was deeply rooted in the history of the Levant. She studied law at L'université Saint-Joseph in Beirut and later adopted the hyphenated surname Lohéac-Ammoun following her marriage to a French officer in 1944.

Hiram and Solomon's realms were bound by proximity. There were tensions over frontiers, but none escalated into conflict. Peace, as Ammoun's mural suggests, requires leadership that privileges diplomacy over impulse. Trade can reinforce it. France and Germany, after all, went to war three times in less than a century; today, through their interdependence within the European Union, they enjoy one of the longest periods of shared prosperity in their history.

History offers other examples of such leadership. Konrad Adenauer, assuming power in the aftermath of the Second World War, set Germany on a new course, rejecting the bunker mentality that had led it to ruin. Others faced starker choices. Japan's Emperor Hirohito asked his people to "bear the unbearable" to secure "a grand peace for all generations". He commanded immense loyalty; had he urged continued resistance, many would have followed. But he chose peace.

Peace after conflict, however, is rarely easy or equitable. It demands compromise, often of the kind many are reluctant to make. This is where leadership matters most – not only to decide, but also to persuade, to bring a nation towards difficult concessions in the name of a longer horizon.

The new Iranian supreme leader is today in a position not dissimilar to Hirohito. Here is a lifelong leader whose country just endured conflict and who commands a great deal of authority due to his role embodying the nation's ideology. In the face of all this and of personal loss, he has a choice to make. Embrace peace with neighbours, like Hiram and Hirohito did, ushering a prosperous future for his nation, or adopt a bunker mentality that history has shown will likely lead to uncertain consequences. Which path will he choose?

> **Peace after conflict is rarely easy or equitable**

Holding the Art Dubai at i

As the fair marks a milestone, an adapted edition shaped by local galleries, collectors and deeply the event is embedded in the creative community it helped define, writes

Art Dubai has helped catapult a number of galleries and artists on to the international circuit

PAWAN SINGH / THE NATIONAL

line 20

l institutions shows how
s **William Mullally**

For nearly 20 years, Art Dubai has been one of the pillars around which the region's cultural scene has grown.

Now, in a moment of regional uncertainty, the fair is being carried forward by that same ecosystem: galleries that built their calendars around it, collectors who asked for it to continue, institutions that developed alongside it and artists whose visibility grew through the platforms Art Dubai helped create.

"This is something we're doing together as a community," says Benedetta Ghione, executive director of Art Dubai Group. "It is not the fair we had planned. But the spirit of Art Dubai, and what really matters about it, absolutely comes through. In a way, it has been distilled into an even more pure and visible form."

The adapted event, taking place at Madinat Jumeirah from May 15 to 17, is smaller than the original April fair, but still substantial in scale. "At the heart of Art Dubai, there has always been this idea of building a platform and a gathering moment that would garner international attention," Ghione says. "But equally important was building roots, using the platform as an engine, not as a circus that pops up and goes away and comes back the following year.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, tours Art Dubai 2024 with Benedetta Ghione, executive director of Art Dubai Group

"The ability to move ahead with an adapted edition comes from exactly that. It comes from exhibitors who have been with us for years, if not decades, and for whom the fair is a critical and sustaining commercial force," Ghione adds.

When the fair launched in 2007, it was called Gulf Art Fair. Dubai's art scene was taking shape around a small number of galleries, collectors and institutions, while the wider region still lacked a major international fair. Its founders, John Martin and Ben Floyd, saw that absence as an opening. "When I came to Dubai, it struck me that there are 600 art fairs around the world and not one in the Middle East," Floyd said in 2007.

Martin, a London gallerist, saw Dubai's geography as part of the proposition. By 2008, after Gulf Art Fair had been renamed Art Dubai, much of the work was still in raising awareness globally. "A lot of our job is getting international collectors and press coming to the fair," he told *The National* at the time.

In those early years, the duo saw Dubai as a place where art markets that often moved separately could be brought into the same conversation. "We seem to be attracting more and more people from a hugely wide geography," Martin said in 2008. "It gave Indian galleries the chance to meet American collectors, and European galleries to meet collectors from Russia and the Far East. So this is a great meeting point for people to come together into a dialogue."

Ghione was not part of the team in the first years, but she sees that original impulse as central to what the fair has become. "The beginning story is John and Ben," she says. "The seed of that story has remained very much in our DNA: seeing Dubai as a place of opportunity."

Culture is the first to get hit in a crisis, but it's also what people turn to for recovery

As the city changed, the fair changed with it. More galleries opened, collectors became more engaged and institutions developed, while artists from the region began to receive wider attention after years of being left out of the international canvas. "There was this driving force of being in dialogue with our city and with the opportunities it represents," Ghione says. "The other through line has been a constant concern with how we make this relevant. How do we not become just another art fair? Evolving as the city has evolved, and becoming a centre of discovery where you can see art from all over the world under one roof, has been critical."

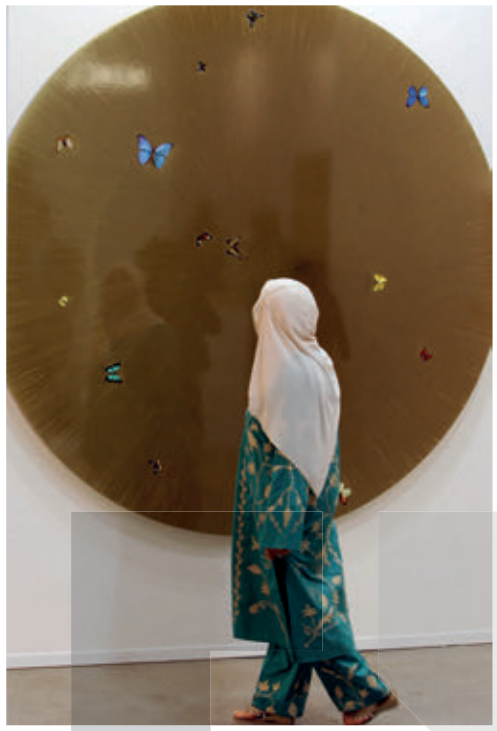
Over time, the fair's work expanded beyond the booths. Global Art Forum gave a public platform for debate and ideas. Campus Art Dubai supported artists and cultural practitioners through education and mentorship. Art Dubai Modern created space for long-underappreciated modern art from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. The Dubai Collection brought privately held works into a public framework. "There has been a constant sense of acknowledging the structural needs and investing in them along the way," Ghione says of the initiatives.

Programmes grew as the UAE's wider cultural infrastructure expanded, from Sharjah's institutions and Alserkal Avenue to Jameel Arts Centre, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Barjeel Art Foundation and the forthcoming Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Around them, the local scene became increasingly able to frame its own histories, rather than waiting for recognition to arrive from elsewhere. International interest in Arab art has grown, but Ghione says the understanding remains uneven, especially around modern and contemporary histories that have long existed outside the dominant art-world map.

WAM; ART DUBAI

Above, a large-scale work by Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui at Art Dubai in 2010

Far left, this year's pared-back event will still feature 45 local and international galleries
Left, Art Dubai has been held at Dubai's Madinat Jumeirah for 20 years



Right, Art Dubai began life as the Gulf Art Fair in 2007 before being renamed a year later Far right, Palestinian artist Laila Shawa at the event in 2010

Art Dubai has been one of the places where that reassessment has taken visible form. Through its contemporary gallery programme and Art Dubai Modern, the fair has helped bring artists such as Etel Adnan, Dia Al Azzawi, Samia Halaby, Mounirah Mosly, Adam Henein, Maliheh Afnan and Moustafa Fathi in front of collectors, galleries and institutions in a distinctly regional context, placing them centrally within a broader story that had too often been treated as peripheral.

"I don't think any artistic movement would want to be understood only through an outside eye and outside validation," says Ghione. "There is still incredibly uneven representation internationally. There are still very few institutions focused solely on Modern and Contemporary Arab art, and there is still a complete lack of understanding that this is not a recent discovery," she continues. "When you look at work from the 1940s and 1950s, it was present in dialogue and wired into the global conversation – not following someone else, but running in parallel tracks, or sometimes ahead of western counterparts. I don't think we've scratched the surface of telling those stories."

The work is far from complete, but Art Dubai has helped create the conditions in which more of it can happen from within the region. Through the fair, its programmes and the institutions it has worked alongside, galleries and artists have found routes into conversations that were once hard to access. "It's been the fair that has catapulted a lot of galleries on to the international circuit," Ghione says. "It has also been a moment of rediscovery for practitioners and artists who didn't get there the first time around because the platform didn't exist."

Art Dubai has curated habits of gathering that extend well beyond fair week

As the fair moved from a special event planned long in advance to one assembled around the demands of the moment, the conversations became more practical.

Dunja Gottweis, director of Art Dubai Fair, says the team first spoke to galleries, collectors and partners about whether an adapted fair should happen at all. "There was so much support, but also the wish for us to go ahead with something, to show resilience and to continue to be a platform," Gottweis says.

"What struck me is how many galleries feel committed to Art Dubai. They feel like this is their fair, whether they're from the UAE or beyond. Gallery representatives were saying: 'We want to be part of this. We want to show up. We need this in the region.'"

The original 2026 event had been expected to include about 110 presentations. The special event will have more than 45 presentations, most of them drawn from the galleries that had already been accepted for the original fair. The terms had to change as well. Gottweis says Art Dubai returned booth fees to galleries to help with cash flow, as well as introducing a risk-sharing model similar to the one it used during the pandemic. Galleries that did not want to take part this year could roll their participation over to next year.

"If you sell a work, half of the revenue goes to us and the rest you keep until the booth fee is paid off," she says.

For the galleries that remained, the question became what could be brought, what could be made here and what felt right for this time. "In a moment like this, you pivot to something that is meaningful, but also logistically possible," Gottweis says. "You have to look at both."

The programme has also been shaped around gathering. It will include a major presentation from the Dubai Collection, a curated exhibition from Barjeel Art Foundation, moving image works with Alserkal Avenue and the 20th Global Art Forum.

Large-scale installations will be placed across the site, including works by artists including Khalid Al Banna, Rashid bin Shabib and Ahmed bin Shabib, Kevork Mourad and Sudarshan Shetty.

Alexie Glass-Kantor, executive director of curatorial at Art Dubai Group, says the programme was rebuilt around the idea of "things we do together. We've had to reimagine Art Dubai from beginning to end," she adds. "It's a different moment, a different time."

With free entry supported by Dubai Culture, the fair will also be more accessible to the public. "We want people to come and spend time with the galleries and the community," Glass-Kantor says. "We want them to feel welcome."

That sense of gathering sits alongside the commercial fragility behind cultural production. Many galleries make more than half of their annual turnover during the event, Glass-Kantor says, while many artists supported through the platform come from places heavily affected by the current situation.

"Culture is often one of the first things to get hit in a crisis, but it's what people turn to for recovery," she says. "It's what people turn to for education, language, continuity, renewal and healing. Supporting culture through circumstances of transformation is really important."

That is something Art Dubai has been building towards for 20 years. Around that market, it has helped curate programmes, audiences, careers and habits of gathering that now extend well beyond the fair week.

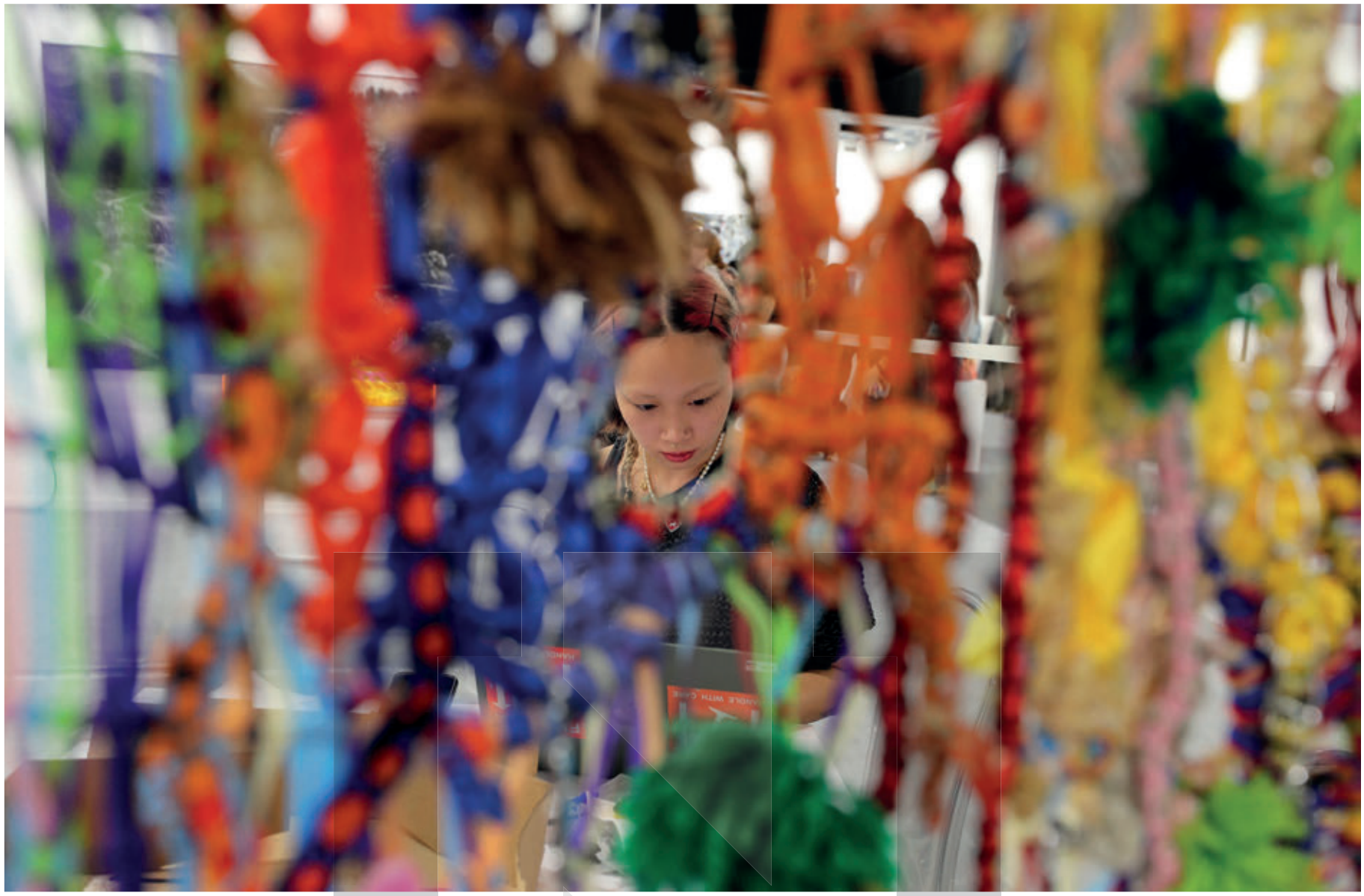
"Ultimately, we have grown with our city," Ghione says. "Art Dubai has Dubai in it, and as a platform and a programme, it will only be as good as our cultural scene. There are very few contexts where a private enterprise born as a commercial vehicle would have been able to work with such longevity in the non-commercial field, and affect change in the way our programmes have."

This month, that history will be visible in a fair reshaped by the network around it. "This is not a decision made in a silo by people in a meeting room," Ghione says. "The decision to go ahead came from constant consultation and co-thinking with our partners, galleries, institutions and collectors.

"In the end, there is this feeling that this thing is everyone's thing. And on that basis, it is taking place."

Art Dubai is at Madinat Jumeirah from May 15 to 17

AFP; THE NATIONAL



Top, Yeo Workshop from Singapore showcases a vibrant tapestry of Southeast Asian cultures at Art Dubai 2024
Above, a Ladies Day preview in 2017
Left, works by German artist Andre Butzer on display in 2019

Art Dubai is free to enter this year, in a bid to make it more accessible to residents and tourists

FIGHTING FOR THE FORGOTTEN

Fresh from winning the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Algerian novelist Said Khatibi reflects on language, memory and the struggle against cultural amnesia. By **Saeed Saeed**

Among the many congratulatory messages Said Khatibi received after becoming the second Algerian novelist to win the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, one, in particular, stood out: a video from a rural village on the outskirts of Algiers.

"It was this lovely woman who told me she was part of an all-women book club, reading *Swimming Against the Tide*," Khatibi says. "When they heard I won the award for the novel, they celebrated by sharing halwa when they met. That was probably even more satisfying than winning the award itself."

More readers and book clubs beyond Algeria will soon encounter Khatibi's work. Part of the prize for *Swimming Against the Tide* will go towards an English translation, while his 2023 Sheikh Zayed Book Award-winning novel *The End of the Desert* will also be out in English in the coming months.

More than a sentimental gesture, the author says the book club's response touched on several of the questions at the centre of his work: the place of women in Arabic storytelling, the role of novels in confronting Algeria's tumultuous history and what it means for literature to find readers in a country where, as he puts it "there are more football stadiums than libraries".

He hopes the award, with its international profile and $50,000 prize, will bring overdue visibility to Algerian literature in Arabic, which he says has long been overshadowed by assumptions about the country's francophone identity.

"We have really rich Algerian literature, but for a long time, it did not receive recognition in the Arab world or in the media," he says. "For many decades, Algeria was seen as a country with a literature that belonged only to France. That is why this prize means so much. It gives a chance not only to me, but also to other Algerian novelists who prefer to write in Arabic."

That tension between Arabic and French is not abstract in the author's life. Khatbi grew up in what he says was a familiar environment for many Algerians of his generation: a household where his father did not read Arabic, and where the newspapers and the books at home were all in French.

However, rather than pushing him away, that absence of Arabic deepened his attachment to the language.

"I developed a deep love for Arabic because it was something I missed," Khatbi explains. "If I had been born in a house where Arabic books were everywhere, maybe it would have felt ordinary. But when you miss something, you fight to have it."

A growing command of the language also gave him a form of freedom. "When you start writing, you are afraid of patriarchal control, of someone checking everything you say," he says. "I was happy because I was writing in a language my father did not understand. I could say what I wanted."

As a teenager, he began absorbing Arabic through poetry, especially the work of Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani.

"Well, that began for a more practical reason," he says with a chuckle. "My real education in his work started as a way to impress girls at school. It was something all the boys knew: quote a few lines of Qabbani and you had a good chance of getting their attention."

Later, at university, Khatibi began translating French novels into Arabic for pleasure. In hindsight, he says, it was less a professional exercise than an apprenticeship disguised as play.

He would tackle well-known works such as *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, while also reshaping them as he went.

"It was a game. I would translate the novel, then change the characters, change the ending, change the plot. I did not even know whether they had already been translated. I was doing it for pleasure," he says.

"Later, I realised I was learning a lot about characterisation and narrative. For example, in Camus's novel, which is set in Algeria, a Frenchman kills an Arab. At one point, I changed the plot and imagined the Arab killing the Frenchman. I wanted to see what could happen if the story turned another way."

That instinct to re-examine history also informs *Swimming Against the Tide*. Set in the spring of 1990, a month before the elections that preceded Algeria's civil war, the novel begins with a respected ophthalmologist accused of poisoning her husband.

But the inquiry opens into a wider investigation of how the brutality of the civil war was preceded by smaller cruelties, compromises and tragedies. "My question was not what happened. We can find that in archives and in other books," he says. "My question was why it happened. Why did violence come from inside Algerian society?"

My question was not what happened – we can find that in archives – but why

For Khatibi, the crime at the centre of the novel is more allegorical than personal. "In reality, it is a crime against a country," the author explains. "This character is symbolic and everybody is suspected. All Algerians, in one way or another, are suspected of participating in what led to the civil war during those 10 years."

He argues that Algerian literature still has unfinished work to do in reckoning with what is referred to as the Black Decade – the civil war from 1992 to 2002, which is estimated to have claimed 200,000 lives – particularly as public memory of the period has often been suppressed.

"It became forbidden to talk about this period in literature, cinema and theatre," he says. "They want to erase memory, maybe in the hope that forgetting is useful. Because if you do not forget, you will judge them. You will ask why it happened. And they know they made mistakes."

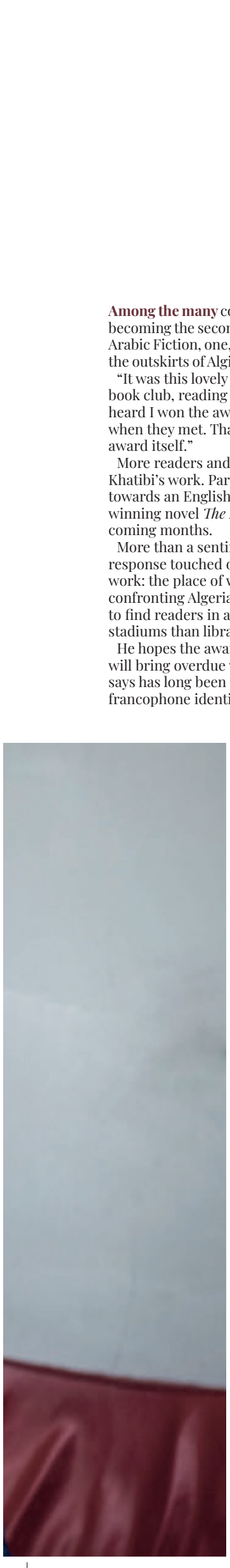
That is why, for Khatibi, who has published five novels, fiction is never a form of escapism. "When I write, I feel I am fighting against amnesia," he says. "Everything risks being forgotten, and I am trying to keep the memory of the country alive. There is a beautiful country and beautiful people, but there are those who want to erase everything. I am fighting that forgetting."

That kind of recognition can only last, however, if there is a reading culture strong enough to receive it. Khatibi says Algeria has strong contemporary writers, but too few libraries outside major cities and too little serious investment in building a wider literary culture.

"Algeria has various ministries that can support this, but it feels they prioritise building more football stadiums than libraries," he says. "It is the same with cinema and theatre. We have the material. We have literature and the arts. But we do not have the connection."

In that sense, the significance of *Swimming Against the Tide* lies in finding readers despite those conditions.

"The appetite for serious Algerian fiction is there," Khatibi explains. "The bigger challenge is building the cultural life that allows it to grow and continue."

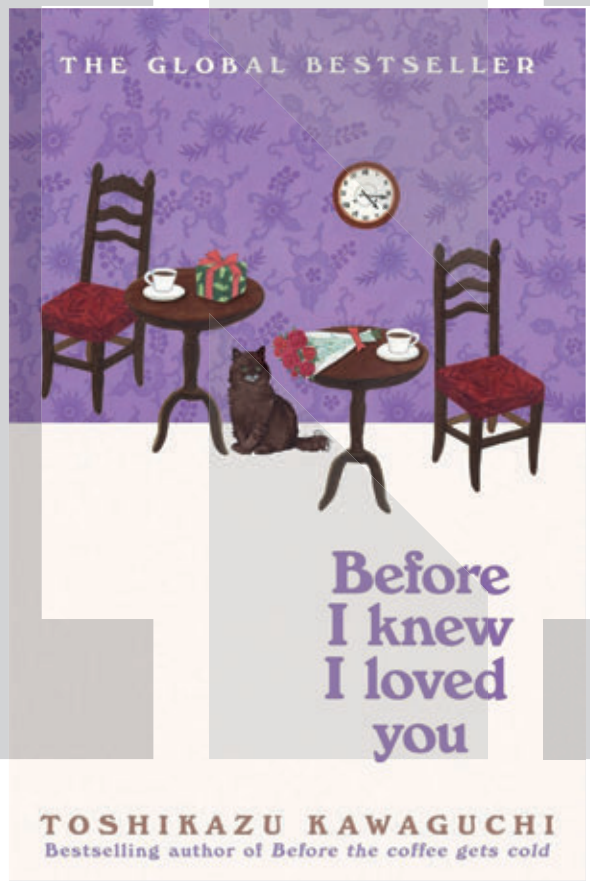


IPAF

Said Khatibi hopes the award brings overdue visibility to Algerian literature in Arabic

MAKE IT LAST

In a world of viral sensations and disposable media, here is our team's selection of physical media that deserves to be enjoyed slowly and thoughtfully



BEFORE I KNEW I LOVED YOU BY TOSHIKAZU KAWAGUCHI (PAN MACMILLAN)

When my book club needed a light read, they picked *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, Toshikazu Kawaguchi's 2016 novel set in a Tokyo cafe known for its time-travelling magic. Each chapter follows a different character navigating a strict set of rules to revisit the past, with a sentimental thread throughout. It wasn't for everyone, but I liked its pick-up-and-put-down format – perfect for an airport bag – and the fact that the author has built a series around the same premise. His latest, *Before I Knew I Loved You*, which explores the eternal potential of love, lands in May. I'll be ordering it for myself, plus extra copies for friends.

Hayley Kadrou, deputy features editor

LEGO BATMAN: LEGACY OF THE DARK KNIGHT (WARNER BROS GAMES)

Some characters never really leave the spotlight, and Batman is one of them. *Lego Batman: Legacy of the Dark Knight,* a new video game, leans into that longevity, blending humour with affectionate nods to several eras of the character's history. The action-adventure title is the fourth instalment in the *Lego Batman* series. It features an original story inspired by films and other media from across the *Batman* franchise. Played from a third-person perspective, the game moves between combat-driven sequences and puzzle-solving scenarios, keeping the pace varied throughout. Available on PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo Switch, the game feels less like pure nostalgia and more like a continuation of Batman's enduring presence in popular culture and one that proves even Gotham's darkest stories can still have room for fun.

Evelyn Lau, assistant features editor

STRAY DOG BY AKIRA KUROSAWA (CRITERION COLLECTION)

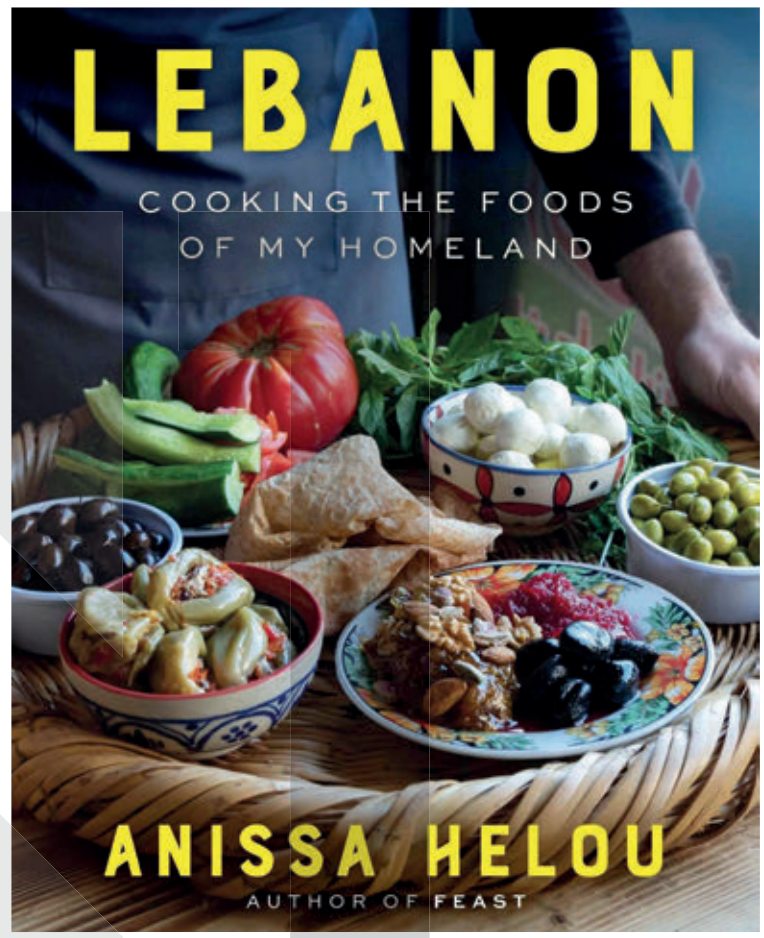
Some films carry a reputation long before you ever sit down to watch them. They arrive with a certain weight, built on decades of discussion and quiet reverence. Akira Kurosawa's *Stray Dog* is one of those titles, often cited as an early landmark, but just as often admired from a distance. Released in 1949 and set during a sweltering Tokyo summer, the film follows a young detective, Murakami, searching for his stolen gun, a loss that quickly becomes personal. At his side is Sato, a seasoned investigator whose calm approach offsets Murakami's urgency. Their pairing may feel familiar now, but it is widely seen as one of the earliest examples of the buddy cop dynamic, long before the genre became a Hollywood staple. What unfolds is part police procedural, part character study, with Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura delivering performances that still feel strikingly modern. Kurosawa captures the city with a restless energy, using heat and postwar unease as a constant pressure. For many, *Stray Dog* has existed more as a reference point than something to return to. This new 4K release from Criterion offers a chance to change that, making a strong case for physical media as both preservation and rediscovery.

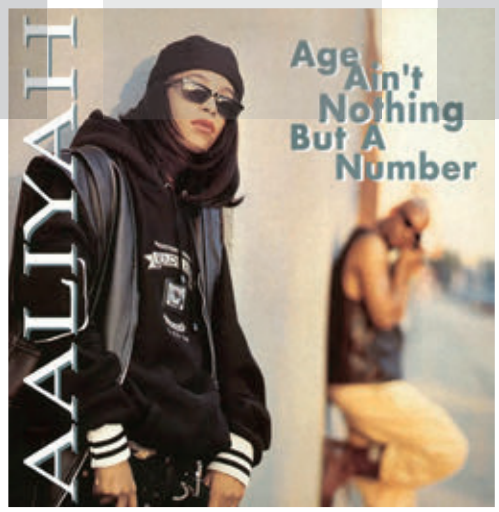
Faisal Al Zaabi, gaming journalist

LEBANON: COOKING THE FOODS OF MY HOMELAND BY ANISSA HELOU (HARPER COLLINS)

This title promises to be a very personal taste of Lebanon by Anissa Helou, the chef and food writer behind *Feast: Food of the Islamic World*. I really enjoy treating cookbooks like novels, pouring over recipes and their images, before picking out a good few to try, and I can't wait to sample some of Helou's greatest hits. With more than 160 recipes, the book promises to be a "deeply personal tribute to the cuisine of her birthplace", punctuated with cultural history and intimate storytelling. The recipes demonstrate Lebanon's culinary diversity, with recipes from its coastal towns, mountain villages and vibrant cities. Dishes I can't wait to try at home include baked fish with tahini and coriander, as well as semolina cake.

Farah Andrews, head of features





AGE AIN'T NOTHING BUT A NUMBER BY AALIYAH (SONY MUSIC)

Released in 1994, Aaliyah's debut album returns on vinyl this month, bringing back the record that introduced her signature butter-smooth sound to the world. She was only 15 when this album was released. Featuring standout tracks such as *Back & Forth*, *At Your Best (You Are Love)* and the title song, the release captures the laid-back grooves and vocals that defined an era, alongside Aaliyah's youthful energy that feels far beyond her years. This edition also includes the bonus track *The Thing I Like*, originally featured on the soundtrack of the action-comedy film *A Low Down Dirty Shame*, starring Keenen Ivory Wayans and Jada Pinkett Smith.

David Tusing, assistant features editor

THE WATCHLIST

David Tusing unpacks this month's slate of must-watch releases, including book adaptations and the final outing for an uncompromising Marvel vigilante

1 REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES NETFLIX
Based on Shelby Van Pelt's bestselling novel, this heartfelt drama follows a grieving widow who forms an unlikely bond with a giant Pacific octopus at the aquarium where she works, as well as a young man who comes to town in search of family. As connections deepen, long-buried secrets begin to surface, turning a quiet story of loss into one of healing, friendship and unexpected second chances. Oscar-winning actress Sally Field plays Tova, the widower, while Lewis Pullman takes on the role of the new-in-town Cameron. Alfred Molina voices the octopus, Marcellus.
■ May 8

2 THE PUNISHER: ONE LAST KILL DISNEY+
Jon Bernthal reprises his role as Frank Castle in what is being positioned as a final outing for Marvel's most uncompromising vigilante. In this Marvel Special Presentation, picked up years after Castle was in hiding, he is forced to confront unfinished business and the consequences of his past. The series leans into a darker, more grounded tone than the first two seasons, which were streamed on Netflix.
■ May 12

3 OFF CAMPUS PRIME VIDEO
Following HBO's hugely successful *Heated Rivalry* set around ice hockey, Prime Video has adapted Elle Kennedy's bestselling romance series, which revolves around the lives of an elite ice hockey team. This ensemble drama follows a group of college students as they navigate relationships, ambition and identity both on and off the ice rink, blending romance with humour and coming-of-age tension. Season one will centre on the romance between quiet songwriter Hannah Wells (Ella Bright) and Briar University's all-star hockey athlete Garrett Graham (Belmont Cameli).
■ May 13

4 WEAPONS OSN+
A major box-office and critical hit, *Weapons* arrives on streaming following Amy Madigan's Oscar-winning performance at the centre of a mystery that unsettles an entire community. The film begins with the disappearance of 17 children from the same classroom, who vanish on the same night at the exact same time. As the investigation slowly unfolds, buried secrets and shifting perspectives begin to blur the line between truth and perception.
■ May 15

5 MAXIMUM PLEASURE GUARANTEED
APPLE TV
In this dark comedy series, *Orphan Black* star Tatiana Maslany takes on the role of newly divorced mom Paula who, convinced she has witnessed a crime, begins her own investigation. Her "mission" leads her down a dangerous rabbit hole of blackmail and murder, while she's navigating her way through a custody battle, as well as an identity crisis. Other cast members include Dolly De Leon, Jake Johnson, Jon Michael Hill and Charlie Hall.
■ May 20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STANDOUT SYSTEMS

From vintage-inspired speakers to a floating turntable, **Faisal Al Zaabi** rounds up electronics that double as decor

In a category long dominated by black rectangles and discreet boxes, consumer electronics are increasingly being designed to stand out rather than blend in. Televisions, speakers and turntables are now often shaped by the same considerations as furniture and art, with form, material and presence carrying as much weight as performance.

The shift reflects changing expectations of the home, where technology is no longer tucked away from sight, but integrated into carefully considered interiors.

1 **SAMSUNG THE FRAME 65" QLED 4K TV**

Samsung's The Frame is among the clearest examples of design-led consumer tech. When not in use, the screen switches to an art mode, displaying paintings or photography with a matte finish designed to reduce glare and mimic the look of paper. Customisable bezels allow it to be styled like a framed artwork, shifting easily between minimalist and more traditional interiors.

It addresses a familiar problem. Televisions tend to dominate a room visually, even when they are switched off. By turning the screen into something closer to a curated artwork, The Frame shifts the focus from concealment to display. The television becomes part of the room's composition, rather than an interruption to it.

- From Dh5,100

2 **TANNOY PRESTIGE WESTMINSTER ROYAL GR SPEAKERS**

Where The Frame is designed to integrate, Tannoy's Prestige Westminster Royal GR speakers take the opposite approach. Large and handcrafted, they draw on mid-20th-century design, with polished wooden cabinets and horn-loaded drivers that echo both vintage hi-fi systems and traditional furniture.

They are not intended to disappear into a space, and occupy the role of a statement piece rather than a conventional audio system. The scale and craftsmanship position them as long-term objects, treated less like consumer electronics and more like collectible design.

In an era of compact, wireless speakers, the Prestige Westminster Royal GR stands apart by embracing size and visibility, recalling a time when hi-fi systems were central to the living room.

- Dh96,600 per pair

3 **AUDIO-TECHNICA 'HOTARU' FLOATING TURNTABLE**

Audio-Technica's floating turntable pushes the idea further, treating playback as a visual experience. The design features a levitating platter and integrated lighting that shifts in tone, creating a soft glow around the unit.

Named after the Japanese word for firefly, the "Hotaru" turntable leans into atmosphere as much as function. Playing a record becomes a moment to watch and hear, with the device operating as a kinetic centrepiece.

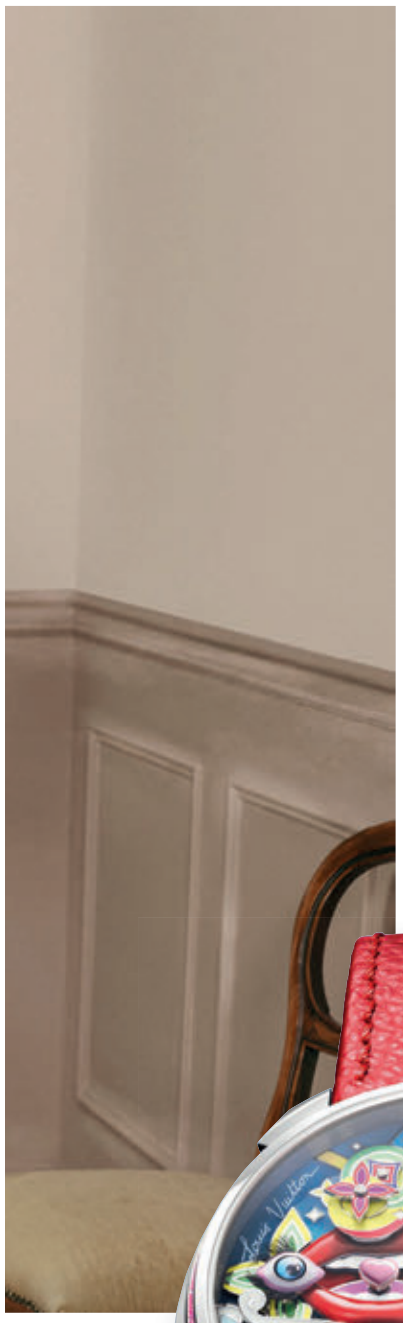
Turntables have long carried a sense of ritual, from placing the needle to flipping a record. Hotaru builds on that, turning the process into something more immersive and expressive. It reflects how analogue formats continue to inspire new forms of design, even as digital technology dominates everyday listening.

- Dh42,900

MIU MIU
Palestinian-American model Gigi Hadid returns to front Miu Miu's campaigns for its Wander and Arcadia bags. Photographed by Steven Meisel for summer 2026, Hadid appears gamine within a colourful apartment setting – by turns poetic, creative and playfully confrontational – showcasing the brand's signature quilted matelassé leather. Introduced in 2022, the crescent-shaped Wander bag quickly became an It piece, with demand continuing to build season after season.

BLACK BOOK

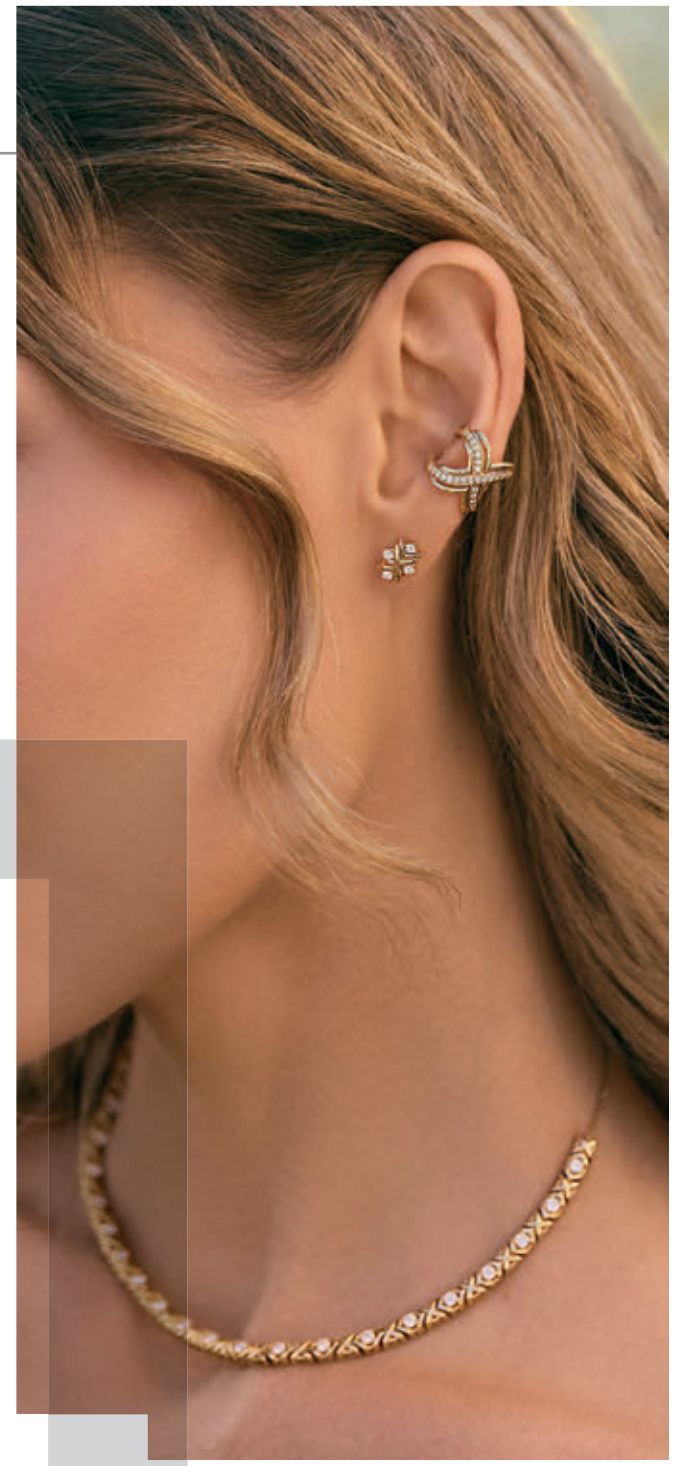
Our round-up of the most interesting and noteworthy arrivals in the world of fashion, beauty and interiors



CASSINA
Bored with your living room? Add some colour, a la Cassina. Delivering high-end design since 1927, the Italian maison knows a thing or two about interiors. Colour, it suggests, brings warmth and individuality – the key is to layer it around modern and heirloom pieces. The marigold vibrancy of Utrecht XL Outdoor Chair by Gerrit T Rietveld, or the cool blue of the Mon-Cloud Sofa by Patricia Urquiola, will make a room pop while adding serious style credentials. Then sit back and enjoy.

NARCISO RODRIGUEZ
The Pure Musc Blanc from Narciso Rodriguez is a feminine scent shaped by depth, subtlety and purity. Created by master perfumer Sonia Constant, it layers luminous white florals over the house's signature musk. It opens with sparkling aldehydes, ginger and Calabrian bergamot oil, moving into a heart of musk, creamy white flowers and jasmine, before settling into cedarwood, oakmoss, amber and a soft trace of vanilla extract.

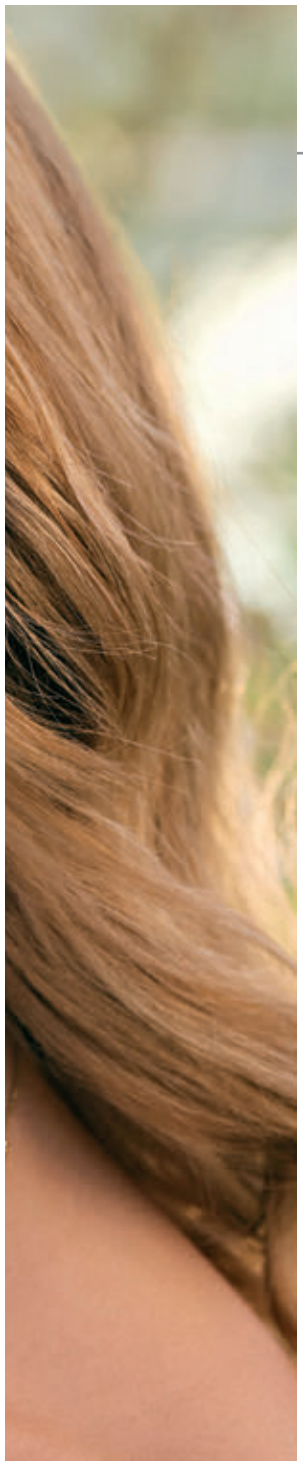
LOUIS VUITTON
Looking to push its own watchmaking expertise, Louis Vuitton introduces the Tambour Taiko Arty Automata. Its 42-millimetre white-gold case houses a one-minute tourbillon at six o'clock, while seven automata elements bring the dial to life in vivid champlevé enamel. The multi-tiered dial is built from 20 components, animated by 1970s-inspired sunburst tie-dye motifs. Bright, playful and mechanically complex, it features a tourbillon bridge shaped as a peace sign, with the word "Love" picked out in vivid pink.

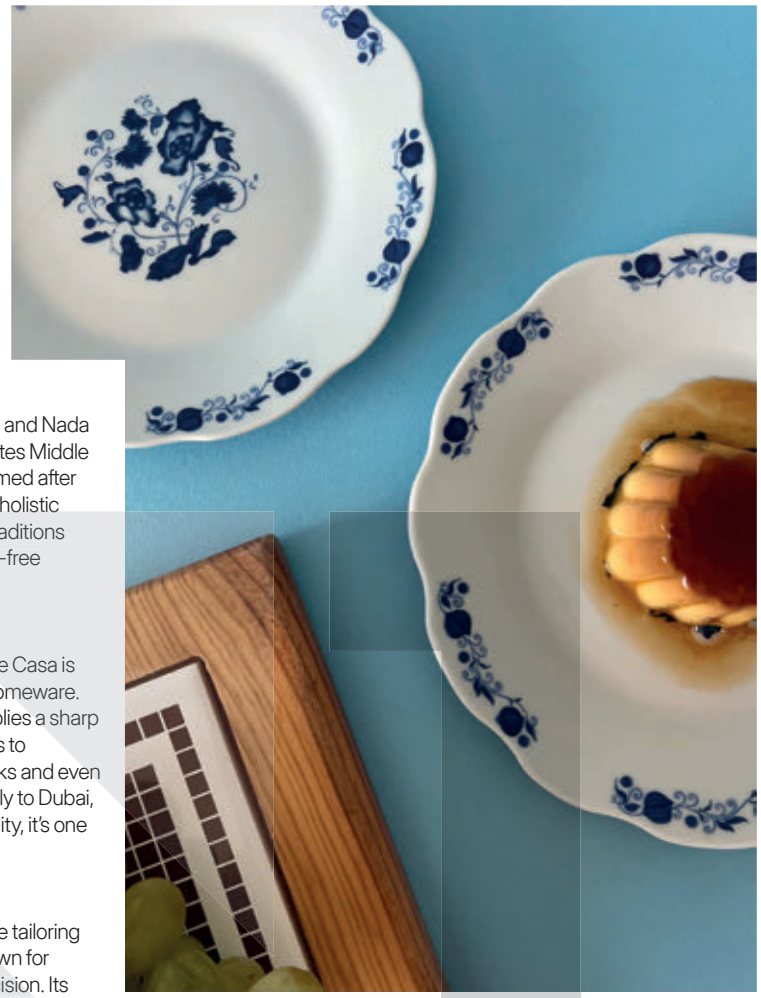


PUMA X JIL SANDER
The latest collaboration between Puma and Jil Sander delivers the K-Street, the German shoemaker's most streamlined trainer yet. A minimalist hybrid, it pairs an upper drawn from an archival Puma spiked track shoe with a sole inspired by karate – the source of its name. Available in a choice of two materials, it comes in beige or bronze suede, or electric blue nylon with contrasting suede accents. The Puma leaping cat sits at the heel, while a tab on the upper carries Jil Sander typography.

LIBERTE
The latest venture from Syrian-born, Abu Dhabi-raised entrepreneur Saada Domloge, Liberté Fine Jewels, joins her portfolio alongside Fabula Fine Jewels and Ellevens sunglasses. Focused on vintage-inspired design, the brand debuts with the Nostalgia collection, featuring earrings and a three-quarter tennis necklace in 18k gold and diamonds.

VALENTINO
Nodding to its haute couture codes, the maison's new summer sunglasses blend bold shapes with technical precision. Oversized squares, modern cat-eyes and narrow wraparounds come in tortoiseshell, black and white, creamy white and, of course, the signature Valentino red. A couture finish comes via the V logo, cut directly into the arms or





SAAF
Launched in Dubai by Nabaa Alatrakchi and Nada Hassan, this homegrown brand celebrates Middle Eastern beauty rituals and heritage. Named after the Arabic word for "clean", Saaf takes a holistic approach to skincare, blending family traditions and personal experience with chemical-free formulations rooted in the city.

TANGERINE CASA
A homegrown Dubai start-up, Tangerine Casa is emerging as a destination for vintage homeware. Founded by stylist Amy Armitage, it applies a sharp eye to pre-loved pieces – from ceramics to mismatched plates, glasses, candlesticks and even egg cups. For now, delivery is limited only to Dubai, but for one-off pieces with real personality, it's one to watch.

PESERICO
Founded in Italy in 1962 to showcase the tailoring of Maria Peserico, the brand is now known for functional pieces defined by Italian precision. Its latest arrival, the Itinera bag, launched last month. Roomy and practical, it comes in mini and maxi sizes in leather or canvas. Designed for versatility, its supple corners allow it to expand into a spacious shopper or fold into a compact city bag.

ONE LAST THING

Adel 'Big Bird' Anouche

Adel "Big Bird" Anouche is a professional fighting games athlete representing the UAE, as well as a standout on the international *Street Fighter* circuit.

Born in Algeria and raised in Abu Dhabi, he is widely regarded as one of the world's top competitors, known for his mastery of characters such as Ken and Rashid. He now competes for Japanese esports organisation Reject and is backed by Red Bull.

A leading figure on the region's fast-growing esports scene, Anouche continues to compete globally while inspiring a new generation of players. We sat down with him for a quick-fire round of questions for One Last Thing.

What is your favourite time of the day and why?
I don't want to sound unproductive, but I'd say when I sleep. Other than that, when I go to the gym and practise *Street Fighter*.

What is your favourite restaurant anywhere in the world?
That's a very difficult question. But if I had to pick one, there's a restaurant in Dubai called Madfoon Al Sadda.

When was the first time you realised your parents were human?
That's a very weird question, but I think I understand what you mean. Maybe when I was about 16 or 17. That's when I started understanding how the world works. Before that, my only concern was school. But once I started travelling, getting involved in fighting games and speaking to older people, my perspective expanded earlier than expected. That's when I realised my parents were human.

What do you want to be when you grow up?
I haven't really decided yet. But within the fighting game community or esports, I would want to be remembered in a good way. I'd like to leave a good story or legacy, something the next generation can look up to.

Do you have any hidden talents?
No, I don't think so.

Your favourite book?
I don't read books.

What type of music can't you stand?
This might sound a bit harsh, but Egyptian music.

What puts you in a bad mood?
I feel like I'm the kind of person who doesn't tolerate stupidity. I hate it when people act stupid just for the sake of it.

What can you not live without?
My mum.

Dream dinner guests?
That's very difficult. I don't really look at celebrities like that. Why would I want to have dinner with a random person? But if I had to answer, I'd say Cristiano Ronaldo. Speaking to him would probably be very helpful.

Sitting on the sofa or out with friends?
Before I would say going out with friends, but recently, I feel like I'm starting to enjoy my time alone more. So now, sitting on the sofa.

What smell takes you straight back to childhood?
The smell of a new CD. When I open the case and smell it, that takes me straight back to childhood.

What food takes you back to childhood?
Probably Hardee's.

Which city do you love but would hate to live in?
Tokyo.

Can you play a musical instrument?
No. Unless you count an arcade stick as a musical instrument.

> I'd like to leave a legacy, something the next generation can look up to

Have you ever been on a motorcycle?
No.

Any words to live by?
I think the phrase I use most often is "what goes around comes around".

Biggest pet peeve?
Chewing loudly.

Do you believe in aliens?
I believe there is more out there that we don't know about.

What is your favourite Arabic word?
I don't have one.

The most niche thing you watch on YouTube?
I think fighting games are considered somewhat niche.

How do you take your tea?
I'm not a tea person.

What makes you cry?
The last time I teared up was when I got sixth at Evo [game tournament]. So I would say heartbreaks.

What do social algorithms think you're interested in?
Gym videos, sometimes politics, depending on what's happening in the world, as well as fighting games.

TikTok or Instagram?
I like both, but if I want to doomscroll, TikTok. Instagram feels very behind. Whatever I watch on TikTok, I end up seeing a week later on Instagram.

What about you would surprise people?
I'm not sure, I'd need more time to think about that.

What was the last thing you did for the first time?
Probably eating octopus in Tokyo last year. I'm not a big fan of seafood, but I tried it just to see what it was like.

As told to Faisal Al Zaabi

RED BULL


RedBull

اصنع في الإمارات
MAKE IT
IN THE EMIRATES

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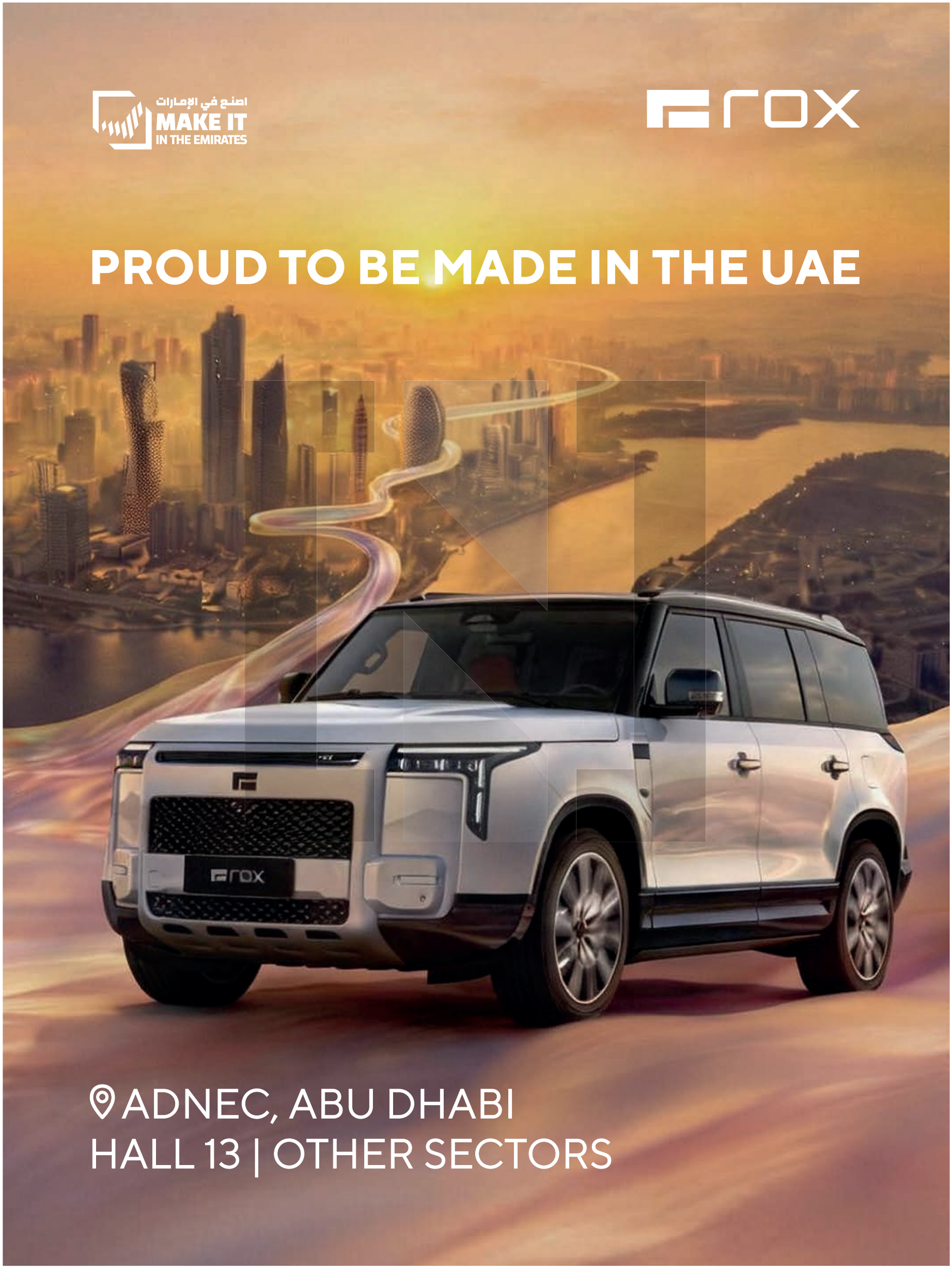
PROUD TO BE MADE IN THE UAE



ADNEC, ABU DHABI
HALL 13 | OTHER SECTORS