TN
The National's Luxury Lifestyle Magazine
October 2025

Meet Zegna's Alessandro Sartori

Travel to Alaska, the Last Frontier

SailGP makes its way to Abu Dhabi

Crack open the world's rarest books

Saudi Arabia honours Arab women artists

The reinvention of Abeer Nehme

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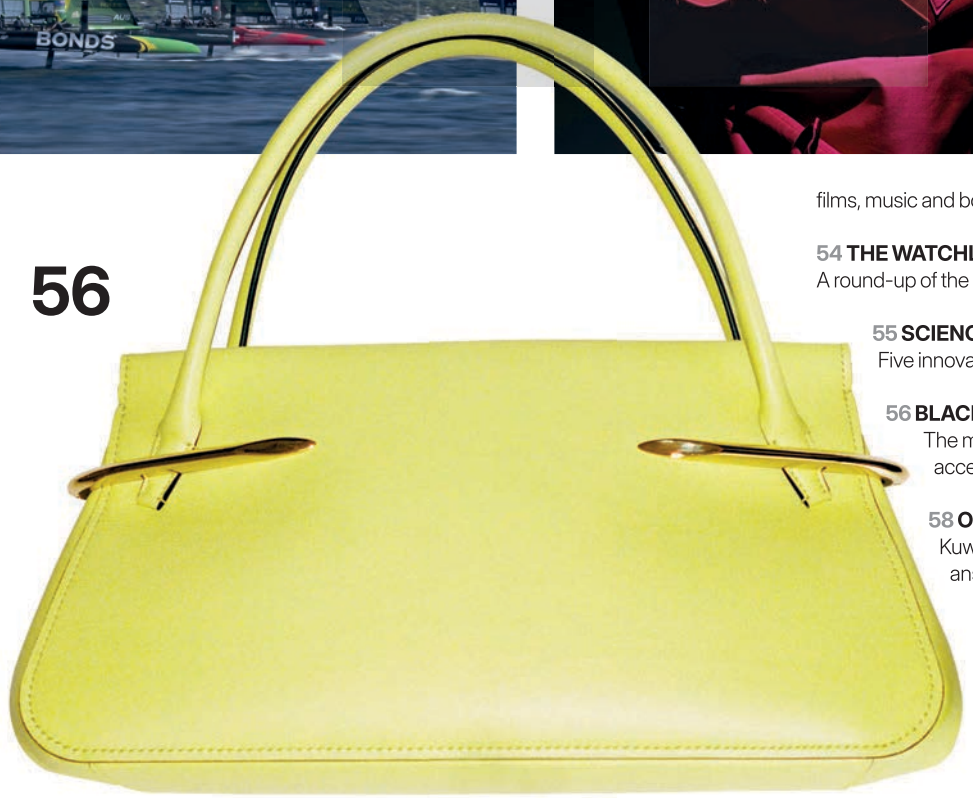
CONTENTS

48

30

16



56

Podcasts

culture bites

A lively conversation focused on the arts scene in the UAE and the ever-evolving landscape of global entertainment

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The National

EDITOR'S LETTER

The word magazine, as I often like to remind people, comes from the Arabic word makhzan, meaning a storehouse. It is meant to be a place to store information. My job every month is to make sure that I have collected enough in this little storage room of ours to keep you interested, informed and entertained.

When this is working at its best – and to mix my metaphors slightly – the magazine becomes a conversation of everything stored within it. A gathering of voices, ideas and obsessions that reflect the world we live in and the futures we might create. With this issue of *TN*, we wanted to stretch that conversation across borders, disciplines and generations, to explore how culture takes root, reinvents itself and refuses to stand still.

We begin with music. Our cover story finds Abeer Nehme at a moment of reinvention – a classically trained and virtuosic Lebanese singer stepping boldly into pop. Her journey is both deeply personal and emblematic of an Arab cultural scene that is constantly balancing tradition and transformation. Elsewhere, celebrated Palestinian oud player Adnan Joubran speaks candidly about grief, Gaza and the impossibility of separating art from humanity.

This question of continuity echoes throughout the issue. Alessandro Sartori, artistic director at Zegna for about a decade, tells us how the future of menswear lies not in reinvention, but in refinement. Rare books, whether a *Harry Potter* first edition or a signed Hemingway, show us how ink and paper can turn into legacy assets. In Saudi Arabia, Ithra and Barjeel Art Foundation collaborate to celebrate the enduring power of Arab women artists. And Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, in his column, asks what museums in the Middle East might teach us about ourselves through the work of painter Omar Onsi.

Elsewhere, at SailGP, boats now fly at 100kph above the water, turning sailing into a global spectacle – with Abu Dhabi hosting the season's finale. Saint Laurent returns to Marrakesh, while Chanel looks to the stars for its high jewellery inspiration. Palestinian designer Ayham Hassan brings a brave new perspective to fashion, and closer to home, a new generation of UAE-born restaurants prove that Middle Eastern flavours can always be reimagined. And I rediscover the joy of ridiculously fun little hot hatches in the Mini John Cooper Works.

We travel to Alaska, the Last Frontier, wander through the Bukhara Biennial in Uzbekistan, and round up the films, books and music worth owning in a digital age where so much vanishes too quickly. And as always, we close with One Last Thing, where, this month, Kuwaiti musician and scholar Ghazi Al Mulaifi, whose words of wisdom – "Don't take it too seriously, just do your best"– really stuck with me this month. I hope you enjoy what we've put together in our storehouse in this issue, we did our best.

Nasri Atallah

The National

Editor Nasri Atallah **Deputy editor** Sarah Maisey **Art director** Gerald Du **Creative director** Nick Donaldson **Picture editors** Olive Obina, Scott Chasserot **Sub-editors** Aarti Jhurani, Panna Munyal **Contributors** Dana Alomar, David Tusing, Evelyn Lau, Hayley Kadrou, Faisal Al Zaabi, Francesca Fearon, Josh Sims, Katy Gillett, Razmig Bedirian, Saeed Saeed, Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, William Mullally

For marketing and partnership opportunities, contact Mireille Puskulian on mpuskulian@thenationalnews.com. For advertising and commercial opportunities, contact Shakeel Shaikh on 055 454 5911 or shakeel.shaikh@eng-futuremedia.com

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The National

SAINT LAURENT

The art of autonomy

Saint Laurent heads back to Marrakesh for its latest campaign, drawing on the colours, codes and 1980s silhouettes of Yves Saint Laurent's enduring legacy, writes **Sarah Maisey**

When Yves Saint Laurent bought Villa Oasis and Jardin Majorelle in Marrakesh in 1980, he could not have foreseen how, 45 years later, it would inspire the label that bears his name.

For autumn/winter 2025, creative director Anthony Vaccarello returns to the Moroccan city that shaped the maison's founder. The winter campaign was shot in Jardin Majorelle, the blues, ochres and marigold yellows forming the garden's backdrop for the latest collection. It marks the first time the house has staged a campaign there since Saint Laurent's death in 2008.

Since taking over, Vaccarello has mined the brand's rich heritage, revered in France for reframing how women dressed. With the archives at his disposal, he reinterprets the codes that made YSL famous. Four designers have led the house since Saint Laurent stepped down in 2002: Tom Ford, Stefano Pilati, Hedi Slimane and Vaccarello.

This season, he revisits the 1980s power shoulder. Funnel-necked coats with squared-off lines, shiny PVC dresses and leopard-print tops with exaggerated pads, and slouchy leather jackets with rounded shoulders all nod to the decade's energy. With its emphasis on female autonomy, the 1980s are fertile ground for Vaccarello.

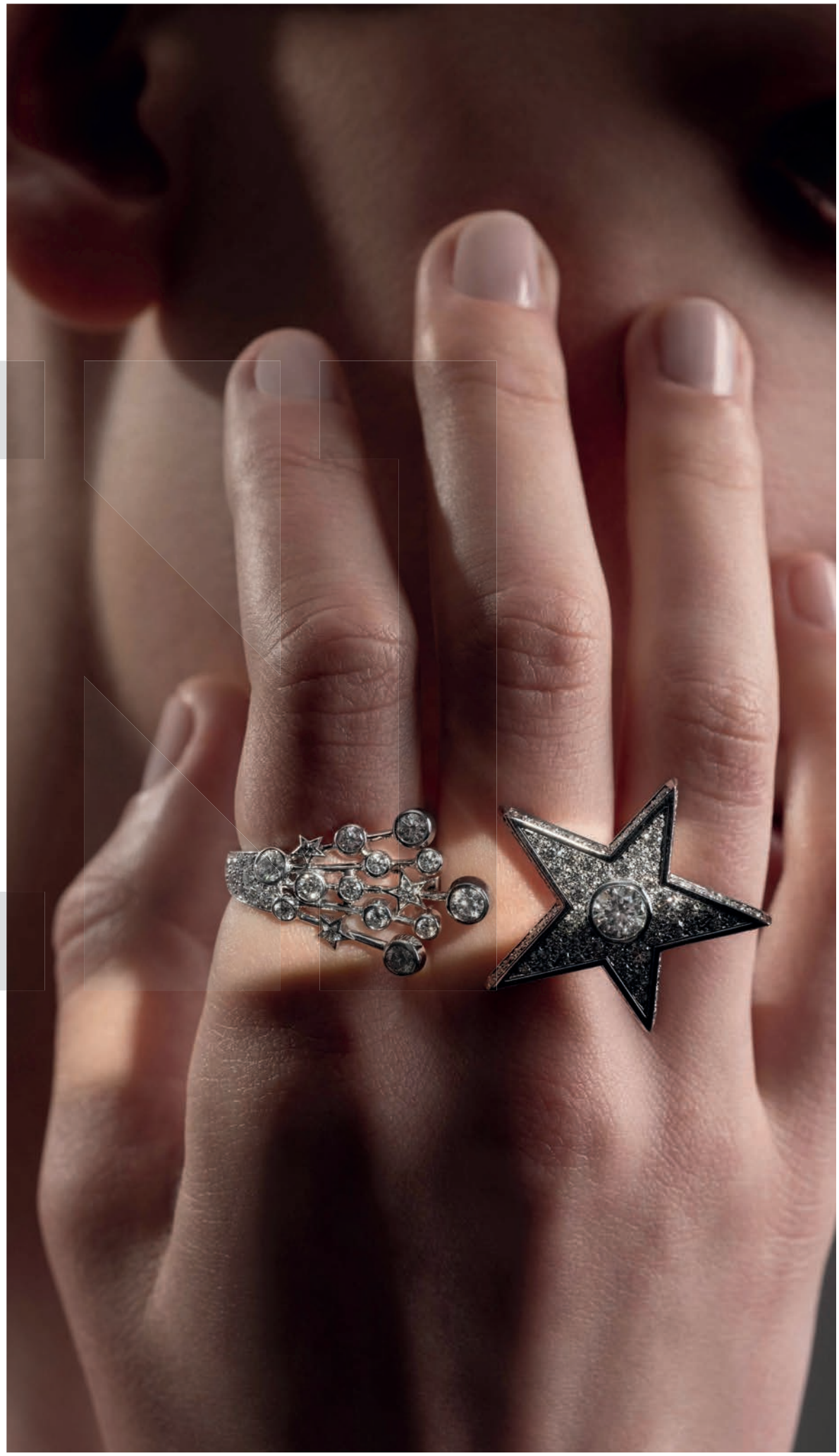
Colour, another YSL hallmark, was also shaped by Marrakesh. "Morocco gave me colours," Saint Laurent often said. From his first visit in 1966, the sunsets, patterns and pigments transformed his work, shifting it towards a softer, more sensual boldness.

Now, in a full circle, Vaccarello pays homage by returning to Marrakesh and the house YSL once saved from ruin. Originally owned by artist Jacques Majorelle, the villa is painted in Majorelle Blue, a cobalt shade lifted from Berber tiles.

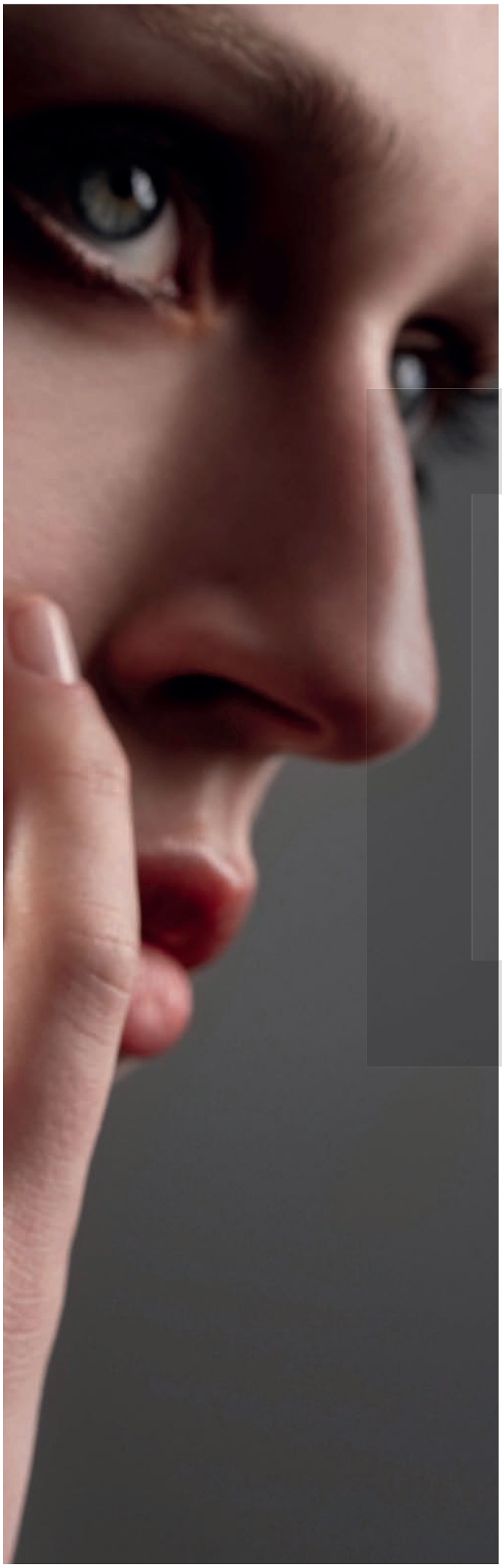
Photographed by Drew Vickers with collages by Arnaud Michaux, the campaign brings the brand back to the city that shaped it. Described by the house as "radical and electric, without nostalgia", Vaccarello's vision reworks the past for the future.

Celestial style

Sarah Maisey discovers Chanel's latest Reach for the Stars high jewellery collection



CHANEL



The high jewellery collection offers pieces centred on three symbols: the lion, above, comets, left, and wings

Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel's instinct for modernity continues to shape the maison that bears her name, more than five decades after her death in 1971.

Nowhere is her mantra of effortless elegance more vividly expressed than in Chanel's high jewellery collections, where noble metals and precious stones are transformed into jewels that appear to capture both light and air via a beautiful alchemy.

A visionary decades ahead of her contemporaries, Gabrielle understood instinctively that a couture house should create a fragrance – resulting in the epoch-defining launch of Chanel No 5 in 1921 – and also offer its clients rare jewellery to complement its clothes.

Her 1932 Bijoux de Diamants collection, the only diamond high jewellery she designed, not only shifted an industry, but also set the template for everything that followed. Today, timeless Chanel emblems are woven through impeccable jewels with the lightest of touches.

About a century on from that first collection, Gabrielle's ethos of simplicity remains the maison's guiding star. Under Patrice Leguéreau, director of Chanel's jewellery creation studio from 2009 until his untimely death in late 2024, that spirit finds new expression in Reach for the Stars. The maison's latest collection orbits three enduring symbols: the lion (Gabrielle's astrological sign), comets and stars, which she once declared as "eternally modern"; and wings, a metaphor for the lightness and freedom she so prized.

The pieces are nothing short of celestial. In the Comet collection, the Dreams Come True necklace is a cascade of white diamonds, like a meteor shower falling from the neck, while the Five Stars double rings capture the drama of a shooting star – one finger is crowned with a luminous star, while the other is trailing its comet tail.

The colour palette draws inspiration from the cosmos itself, from dark space to a blazing dawn, rendered in white diamonds paired with black spinels, orange garnets, pink sapphires, and the cool brilliance of blue sapphires.

The Wings chapter unveils a strikingly modern tiara, now renamed as a "head jewel", its outstretched wings framing a glittering pear-cut diamond.

Within Lion, the Strong as a Lion double ring is a true expression of craftsmanship. Its asymmetry blends the majestic feline's face with astral motifs, with a domed, skeletonised lion rendered in white gold and diamonds, sitting opposite a brilliant-cut 3.04-carat fancy light yellow diamond star.

This piece, which brings together architecture and lightness to create a unique jewel, took 376 hours of work.

Such pieces owe their weightless radiance to the fil couteau or knife-edge thread setting, in which each stone rests on the slimmest possible band of metal, as if suspended in air. Demanding and meticulous, it is a setting that epitomises Chanel's savoir-faire and technical ability in the service of beauty.

CHRIS WHITEOAK / THE NATIONAL

A quiet revolution

Zegna's artistic director Alessandro Sartori tells **Sarah Maisey** how the future of menswear lies not in reinvention, but refinement

Since taking the helm as artistic director of Zegna in 2016, Alessandro Sartori has been quietly redefining the modern man's wardrobe, beginning with the suit. In 2020, he reworked it for a world gripped by the pandemic, creating hybrids that bridged practicality and comfort, introducing a studied louche that still runs through Zegna's spring/summer 2026 collection, unveiled at Dubai Opera in June.

"To me a suit is a combination of matching top and bottom," says Sartori. "That could be a classic jacket with classic pants, or a classic jacket with oversized pants – it is a suit." Case in point, in Dubai he sent out relaxed Nehru-collar tunics with loose trousers, button-front blouson jackets with pleated trousers and a patterned silk shirt with matching shorts – all crafted with precision and care.

This unified vision underpins everything produced by the Italian house, made "by tailors, using the old rules of slow, careful construction, with specific techniques", he says. The same expertise goes into every garment, whether suiting or something casual. "I use the same techniques, the same tailors, the same rules, the same know-how to produce a pair of shorts or a beautiful cashmere blouson."

Sartori's history with the brand stretches back to 1989, when he joined Z Zegna. In 2007, as creative director, he presented its first menswear collection in New York. After five years leading Berluti, he returned to Zegna in 2016.

Now nine years into his tenure, Sartori has developed a signature touch that is light, enquiring and intent on redrawing boundaries of excellence. "There is a perception that sportswear should be done faster or with less quality," he says. "Why? Classic tailoring offers many beautiful finishes and details. This is what we do."

His creative freedom comes from one extraordinary advantage: Zegna's vertical integration. The house owns every stage of its production process – from sheep to shop – and Sartori calls it his secret weapon. "I'm very lucky because the restaurant I cook for has a garden full of everything, and also a grocery and a bakery. We can design fabrics and yarns, giving a huge possibility of many different layers and solutions." That control, he explains, gives his team rare and precious freedom. "We are able to express ourselves beautifully."

Zegna fabrics are the stuff of fashion lore. Leather is sliced into strips fine enough to knit, or transformed into a washable version. Silk is spun into suits that weigh barely 300 grams. Linen is mixed with paper and cotton to create entirely new materials. Not every attempt succeeds. "There are things I would never show, that are impossible to wear or impossible to touch," Sartori admits. Yet the freedom to try yields results that verge on the sublime. "That waffle weave in paper, linen and cotton? I mean, it's a revolution."

Such alchemy takes time. Sartori and his team begin work on each new collection nine months in advance. For the winter 2026 collection, set to debut in January, the process began in March. "By July, the whole studio will be working on the winter season."

Trials of a new cloth are already under way. "It might not work, but we are trying a new cashmere and paper fabric for winter, replacing linen and cotton and adding cashmere. It's literally like cooking," Sartori says with a laugh.

Part of the process lies in balancing fibre weight. Too heavy and the cloth feels mundane; too light and it falls apart. Fibre width is measured in microns (one millionth of a metre). Human hair averages 50–100 microns, while standard wool suiting runs 17–19, cashmere 14–15, and baby cashmere about 13. Last year, Sartori pushed his team to create something new. "I wanted to create a tension between two completely different fibres. So I said: 'Let's go for cashmere and paper.'"

Describing it as a "fantastic idea", he says, the test now is to make it viable, with paper cellulose spun together with 14-micron cashmere. "If we use a fibre too fine, we will lose the project because it's too fragile. I am anxious to see it because it would be fantastic."

Sartori's skill lies in making such cutting-edge fabrics look effortless. "These creations are very difficult to understand unless you have the

Alessandro Sartori, above left, with singer James Blake in Dubai. Zegna's latest collection, left, includes Nehru-collar tunics and button-front blouson jackets

know-how, but for customers it's only important from a perspective of being timeless."

Just as his suits have evolved, so has Sartori. When he first returned to Zegna, he felt pressured to chase trends, and then the pandemic forced a reset. "In 2020, we decided to change format. I was one of the designers who every season needed to do 'fashion'."

He recalibrated, focusing instead on what Zegna already excelled at. "We have decided to be comfortable within our perimeter, and instead of designing outside of that box, we're going deeper. It's a different vision. You can design out of your framework, or you can say: 'I will stay inside it and explore the layers.' And that is what we did."

This philosophical shift has brought cohesion. "The 2025 silhouettes will work with the silhouette of 2026, of 2027, and so on, because they are all layers of the same aesthetic."

That continuity extends to place. Showing in Dubai rather than Milan, Sartori argues, reflects global shifts in how people live post-pandemic. "Monte Carlo used to be seasonal. Now it's a year-round residence." The same is true of Dubai. "Years ago, Dubai was about visitors, but now it is about people living here."

Today, Zegna's UAE clientele spans India, Italy, the US, Singapore, Turkey and beyond. "It's one of the most cosmopolitan communities in the world," Sartori says. "And one of the most discerning."

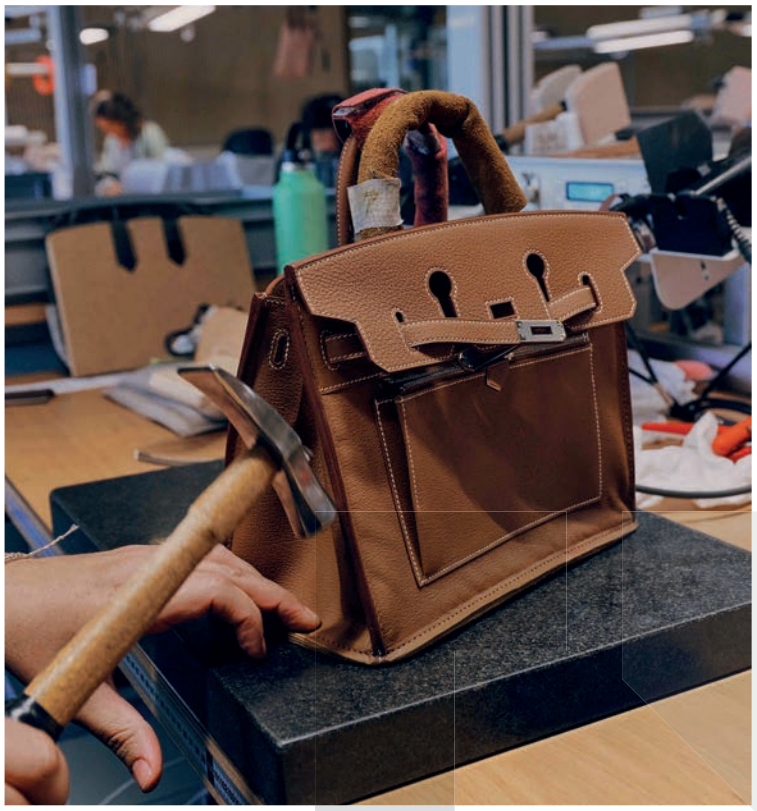
At the Villa Zegna event in Dubai, Sartori appeared at three daytime engagements dressed in head-to-toe black – an irony for a designer celebrated for his mastery of colour. "I'm a colourist, I love purple, aubergine and deep green, but if I wear these, I can't see the colours. To accurately see the colours, you must be neutral."

Ultimately, it is that discerning eye that drives him. Not headlines, not trends, but the quiet pursuit of something lasting. "Ours is a story that is undeniable, as one of the chicest and most elegant of men's fashion," he says. "Others may try and copy us, but they only see the outcome. They don't know how we got from A to Z, they don't have the Zegna recipe."

Freedom of creation

Sarah Maisey sits down with Guillaume de Seynes, sixth-generation family member and executive vice president of Hermès, to discuss the importance of family instincts, obsession with quality and giving artisans free rein

HERMES



Above, Guillaume de Seynes, executive vice president, Hermès. Above left, a Birkin bag handcrafted at the maison's new workshop, opposite page, in L'Isle-d'Espagnac

Guillaume de Seynes and I sit on a train speeding its way back towards Paris. De Seynes has just cut the ribbon at the opening of his family-owned company Hermès's 24th artisanal workshop in France.

"We are sustainable by essence," he explains. "My grandfather, Robert Dumas, was once asked for his definition of luxury. And he said a luxury object is one that you can repair. It says everything."

The new leather workshop in L'Isle-d'Espagnac in south-west France, has been built to sustainability gold standards. On the site of a former airfield, the 5,800-square-metre building was designed by Bordeaux firm Guiraud-Manenc using largely local materials: Charente stone cladding, poplar and red cedar framing, earth and straw insulation. A planted roof and 1,800 square metres of solar panels top it off.

It signals Hermès's commitment to Made in France and will eventually house 260 artisans producing small leather goods, as well as Birkin and Kelly bags. "We've now reached a more industrial size, with more than 7,000 people involved in making leather goods," says de Seynes.

Yet, scale hasn't changed the maison's backbone: savoir-faire. "We keep the artisanal ways of making things. We stick to the size of the workshops, and don't go over 300 people, because beyond that it's not the same family spirit."

Today's workshops are open-plan, light-filled spaces where mostly women craft each bag from start to finish. "One man, one bag. It's now more one woman, one bag, but when I was a child, it was only men."

Despite the modern aspect of the facility, de Seynes resists any innovation in the production process. "We still believe each piece is made by one person, because this is where the artisanal aspect resides. If not, people would be doing handles or finishing edges all day long. We have decided once and forever we won't go in that direction."

That decision lengthens the infamous waiting lists, but also preserves desirability. "Scarcity is not a policy or goal for us. It's a result of being dedicated to maintaining the highest level of quality. Each bag has a personal mark, so every bag is identifiable."

Sometimes those marks reappear decades later. "We have stories of artisans now in repair, repairing one of their own bags. Once, my cousin Axel [Dumas, executive chairman] was giving a speech when a woman showed a rare violet crocodile bag to an artisan. The artisan said: 'I think I made your bag.' And everybody was crying. My cousin was making his speech, and nobody was listening, because they were all with these two ladies," he says.

This commitment is formalised through L'Ecole Hermès des savoir-faire, founded in 2021. The 18-month training course, recognised by the French Ministry of Education, ends with a CAP diploma.

"For the first six months, students learn the basic gesture of leather-work, and in the second are learning a specific model, generally the Kelly bag. For the final six months, they are in the workshop to learn and really catch the exact quality requirements. After 12 months, they have a permanent job."

Young people are drawn to the promise of long-term careers. "In Paris or Lyon, you'll find people with 35 or 40 years in the company," he says.

Walking through the new site, the calm is striking: the smell of wax, the quiet rhythm of tapping hammers, personalised workstations. Quality requirements are strict, but artisans manage their own days.

Hermès's expansion comes as the luxury sector faces criticism over price hikes and alleged declining quality. But de Seynes is unshaken. "The whole philosophy – that we have continued to transmit and respect generation after generation, even as the size of the company has completely changed – is always the same. First, the obsession for quality; quality of the materials and quality of the know-how.

"Second is freedom of creation. Not marketing, but true creation. Nobody in this company has the title 'director of marketing'. It doesn't exist. When we propose our objects, we try to offer the best possible quality. And this has a cost. My grandfather used to say: 'Hermès objects are not expensive, they are costly.' And this means a lot. It means that we never set a marketing price [the maximum price a market will tolerate]. We just look at our costs and we add a nice margin. This approach is very deep in our culture."

Prices reflect hours of work and premium materials. A Kelly bag, for example, uses 36 pieces of leather. One calf skin may yield only two perfect panels. Offcuts are turned into wallets or whimsical objects for the Petit H line. "The best possible leather, the best possible metallic parts, finished by hand, 16 to 18 hours of artisanal work – I think customers know there is a real value to the product," he says.

Resale values seem to prove him right: Hermès bags consistently outperform rivals at auction. But de Seynes cares more about integrity in production. This pursuit of perfection extends beyond leather. "Hermès has never been about just saving money. For example, we use beautiful cashmere from Nepal, because of the specific way of weaving which is very different from Italy or France, and gives a different personality. It's not because it's less expensive."

Supplier relationships are similarly scrutinised. "We keep things close. We try to have long-term relationships. Some have been with us for 80 years. In silk, I'm working with someone whose father worked with my uncle, and his grandfather with my grandfather. As long as the quality is there, we continue." Wrongdoing, however, ends partnerships instantly. "We stop immediately. There is no second chance."

As one of the few remaining family-run fashion houses in an industry of conglomerates, Hermès benefits from continuity at the top. "In the executive committee, we have three cousins. We are really close, and we've been raised in the same spirit," says de Seynes. It is little wonder the spirit of excellence has been intact since 1837.

The subverted stitch

Sarah Maisey speaks with Palestinian graduate Ayham Hassan about embracing his culture, going viral and witnessing a genocide from afar

The Central Saint Martins graduate fashion show in London – an annual hot ticket thanks to alumni such as Alexander McQueen and John Galliano – was fraught with tension this year. Sponsored by L'Oréal, whose links to Israel have drawn criticism, the show attracted protests outside the venue.

Inside, Palestinian student Ayham Hassan sent out his graduation collection, Im-Mortal Magenta: the colour that doesn't exist. Exploring the reality of being a Palestinian under occupation, the looks were bound by a punchy magenta tone, with patterns and motifs from traditional tatreez, hand-embroidered by women in the West Bank.

Speaking by phone from London weeks later, he explains the title. "Magenta is a very happy colour. It's a colour our mind makes up. It literally doesn't exist." A light wavelength anomaly, according to The Royal Institution, magenta appears when red and blue cones fire, but green does not. For Hassan, this peculiarity felt like an apt metaphor for the Palestinian state, existing yet denied. "For me, [magenta] became like a shield, a protection or a second skin, and these beautiful embroideries and motifs are a second skin to protect you in this horrible war."

Born in Ramallah, Hassan says his path to London had a touch of kismet. His flair was spotted by a tutor at Birzeit University, who urged him to apply to Central Saint Martins. Despite the odds – only 50 students chosen from more than 3,000 – he won a place. Then came the battle to raise the fees. A crowdfunding plea was reshared by model Bella Hadid, picked up by *Dazed* magazine, and drew a brand sponsor to cover part of his costs. Grateful for the kindness of strangers, Hassan is also painfully aware of the disconnect between studying fashion amid Israeli violence.

"How can I talk about a genocide in a fashion collection? How can I approach such a thing? You can imagine how frustrating and sad it is to be a Palestinian experiencing it in London. I could not be creative. We all thought it would finish after three months," he says. Only by channelling his fury and helplessness into design did something shift. "I realised that history repeats itself, and I need to look at the past and address it in reality, as well as this whole concept of modern displacement."

His work became a broadcast of "our reality as Palestinians, the genocide and ethnic cleansing, as well as the horrific things that happen to us on a daily basis". Strong silhouettes mixed with vibrant pink became metaphors for hope. "I don't need to do claustrophobic clothes, I don't need to do sad things," he says. "I need to show the beauty of Gaza, of Palestinians, and the beauty of just the fact that we are resilient and resistant to this horrific thing."

AYHAM HASSAN

Through his collection, Ayham Hassan aims to show the beauty of Gaza. Pieces include strong silhouettes in rich magenta tones, left; a scarf knitted by his mother with motifts of bullets and flowers, opposite page; and traditional accessories, below

Raw and powerful, his final collection tackled identity head-on. A lightweight magenta top with extra-long sleeves is knotted at the sternum, paired with a full skirt layered under gossamer netting and finished with a head covering banded in pink – inspired by lost Palestinian majdal silk, its know-how erased by the Nakba. Protective motifs, hand-embroidered by women in Ramallah, edge the scarf. Elsewhere, a glossy cerise dress ties at the hip, its stiff collar covered in geometric designs. A chunky pink and grey scarf knitted by Hassan's mother carries motifs of bullets and flowers, worn over a shredded, shroud-like dress. Another knitted piece is made of 500,000 rubber bands, nodding to slingshots once used by Palestinian children against tanks. An oversized quilted jacket covered in tatreez patterns offers both armour and embrace, paired with an asymmetric crinolined skirt that keeps the viewer literally and figuratively at arm's length.

This final look was chosen for Thread Memory: Embroidery from Palestine at the V&A Dundee, curated by Rachel Dedman to mark Dundee's 45-year twinning with Nablus. Hassan's graduation show went viral, covered by British versions of *i-D* and *Vogue*. The buzz endures. "It was a beautiful way for me to end this journey, and it was incredible to see *British Vogue* unapologetically mention Palestine and genocide without censoring. It's just a huge, huge achievement for me as a designer."

Now seeking investors, Hassan also won the British Fashion Council x Net-a-Porter and Mr Porter Education Fund award, which he hopes will help him establish a London studio and create more work for women in the West Bank. He was also awarded the L'Oréal Prize, but declined it on moral grounds. "I cannot have this on my conscience," he says. It was bittersweet. "Do you know who was picking the people? Daniel Lee, creative director of Burberry. So it was incredible to be recognised."

His collection, Hassan hopes, reframes a wider narrative. "It was questioning the whole fashion education system. It was questioning everything. I mean, I was the only Arab, Muslim and Palestinian student in the whole year of 140 students. It was very major to get accepted, but it has been a really, really difficult journey."

At the degree show, as protests raged outside, Hassan's models – many from the Palestinian diaspora – spontaneously wrote "Free Palestine" and "Divest Now" on their hands, raising them as they walked the runway. "It wasn't planned," Hassan says. "It was something they wanted to do. That moment turned the show into something far bigger than fashion."

The Lebanese singer speaks with **Saeed Saeed** about risk, reinvention and why pop is as demanding as tarab

REINVENTING ABEER NEHME

What does it mean for an Arab singer shaped by classical and sacred traditions to pivot into popular music?

In a region where audiences stay fiercely loyal to the artists they grew up with and the sounds that shaped them, Lebanese singer Abeer Nehme is testing whether that pivot can happen on her own terms – embracing a contemporary pop sound while holding on to the sophistication that first set her apart.

Nehme's decision to expand rather than retain is more instinctive than commercial. "I am still trying to understand if it was a fear I was trying to break or curiosity I was trying to satisfy," she says from Beirut.

"But an artist or, really, any creative person thrives by being adventurous, and I thought it was time to stretch out, show people and myself that I am not one who can be put in only one place. So now, I want to embrace everything: different songs, music videos. I want to do it all and maybe show others that you can do this without sacrificing any of your integrity."

The rewards have matched the risks. Nehme is experiencing the most successful period of her nearly two-decade career, sparked by the 2022 release of *Bi Saraha*. That single, followed by *Men Baadak* and *Sadde'ni Nsitak*, has amassed about 100 million YouTube streams and repositioned her as a top-tier artist – drawing in new listeners while confirming her appeal to the curious on the margins.

On the cover: Mattias coat, Dh6,592, Noon by Noor. Le Cadeau shoes, Dh3,654, Mach & Mach. Top; and tights, stylist's own
This page: Oversized double-breasted blazer, Dh13,955, Ferragamo

This page: Ruffled silk chiffon dress, Dh6,950, CH Carolina Herrera. Double Bow shoes, Dh4,447, Mach & Mach
Opposite page: Beaded gown, Dh4,150, Ralph Lauren. Zamalia jacket, Dh2,920, Noon by Noor

Each song carries its own quiet daring: the electronic percussion bubbling beneath the strings in *Sadde'ni Nsitak*, or the elongated, almost ethereal melodies of *Men Baadak*, a composition so assured it seems content to simply envelop you in its hazy emotions rather than chase an easy hook.

The balance so far is close to pitch-perfect – as much modern pop as it is rooted in the classical orchestrations and lyrical explorations of tarab. It has welcomed first-time fans without alienating those who have followed her across a career of eclectic releases.

Nehme's 2009 album, *Aroma of My Prayer,* offered a contemporary take on liturgical traditions drawn from Syriac, Byzantine and Armenian sacred music. In 2012, came *Ethnopholia*, a documentary series that took her across various countries to document and perform folk traditions in their original settings, from Indian ragas to Greek chants.

Such projects, alongside collaborations with Lebanese composers Marcel Khalife and Jean-Marie Riachi, revealed what would become central to Nehme's pop work: an instinct to meld styles without losing their relative essence. The Aga Khan Music Awards recognised this in 2019, naming her a finalist and calling her an "all-styles specialist".

Nehme is in no way disavowing those pursuits, she notes. They all brought her to this creative juncture. "All the classical work, the studies, the journeys, the music I listened to, it all left something in me," she says. "That is exactly what brought me here. I could not have arrived at this point if I had started elsewhere. When you have the whole package, when you know your voice in all its aspects, when you have heard a lot and tried a lot, you become able to choose better."

When you get it right, an ordinary song can be elevated immediately

That depth of knowledge – the training, the experiments, the endless styles she has explored – can raise its own doubts. Nehme admits some anxiety before her latest foray into Arabic pop. The thought lingered: could all this variety blur her identity, leave her skilled in everything but defined by nothing? She notes

the opposite has happened. Instead, the new chapter has allowed her to embrace her fresh sound with a studied curiosity, realising that pop music is a craft of its own.

"Each style requires a way of singing," Nehme says. "I cannot sing a pop song in a tarab style, nor the opposite. But whatever I sing, people must know it is me. Each song takes you somewhere … it is like cooking, everything needs the right spices. Less salt, more salt, but it has to taste like you."

That palette was refined early in the family home in the mountainous town of Tannourine in northern Lebanon. The radio was banned, and cassettes filled the house instead, stacked on shelves, kitchen tables and near players, featuring the giants of the Arabic music canon: Umm Kulthum, Fairuz, Mohammed Abdel Wahab, Wadih El Safi and Majida El Roumi.

"My dad had this thing about the radio – that it would just play songs that were at a lower musical level. Because of that, we never touched the dial as kids," she recalls. "If we were going to hear music, he wanted us to listen to works of quality so we could really appreciate the art form for what it is."

That sense of quality essentially seeped into her by osmosis. According to her mother, Nehme began composing songs with "strange and wonderful stories" at the young age of three. By six she was singing regularly, and by nine, she had memorised Syrian singer Asmahan's entire repertoire – a feat that she recalls as "a challenge, but never impossible".

When you express something that can affect people, it is a beautiful thing to do

This grounding, backed by a degree in Oriental Singing from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, where she also studied the qanun, gave Nehme a breadth few Arabic singers carry. Still, she admits feeling boxed in at times. "People sometimes put me in a certain place because of the academic side," she says. "But the musicologist you are referring to – well, I left her in the classroom."

She chuckles, though the point is serious: the rigorous training is there, but she refuses to be defined by it.

This page: Wool sweater; skirt; and faux fur stole, prices on request, all from Miu Miu. Faith pumps, Dh2,299, Jude. Tights, stylist's own
Opposite page: Pyjama top; and skirt, prices on request, both from Prada

This page: Print silk chiffon top, Dh2,520; and taffeta midi skirt with sash, Dh3,340, both from CH Carolina Herrera. Date mules, Dh1,909, Jude.
Opposite page: Cashmere silk column dress, Dh15,240; belt, Dh2,612; and gloves, Dh2,294, all from Tom Ford

Nehme applies that discipline now to her pop work. Arabic popular music, she notes, is a team sport. "It is meant to sound effortless, but from my experience with songs like *Men Baadak*, the fact that they seem deceptively simple doesn't make them easy to perform," she says. "The importance of nailing the right arrangement – the vocal melodies, the harmonies, the way the lyrics land – is huge. When you get it right, an ordinary song can be elevated immediately. That's why you have to work well with the composer, the producer and the writer. They create the foundation and give the song its direction and shape."

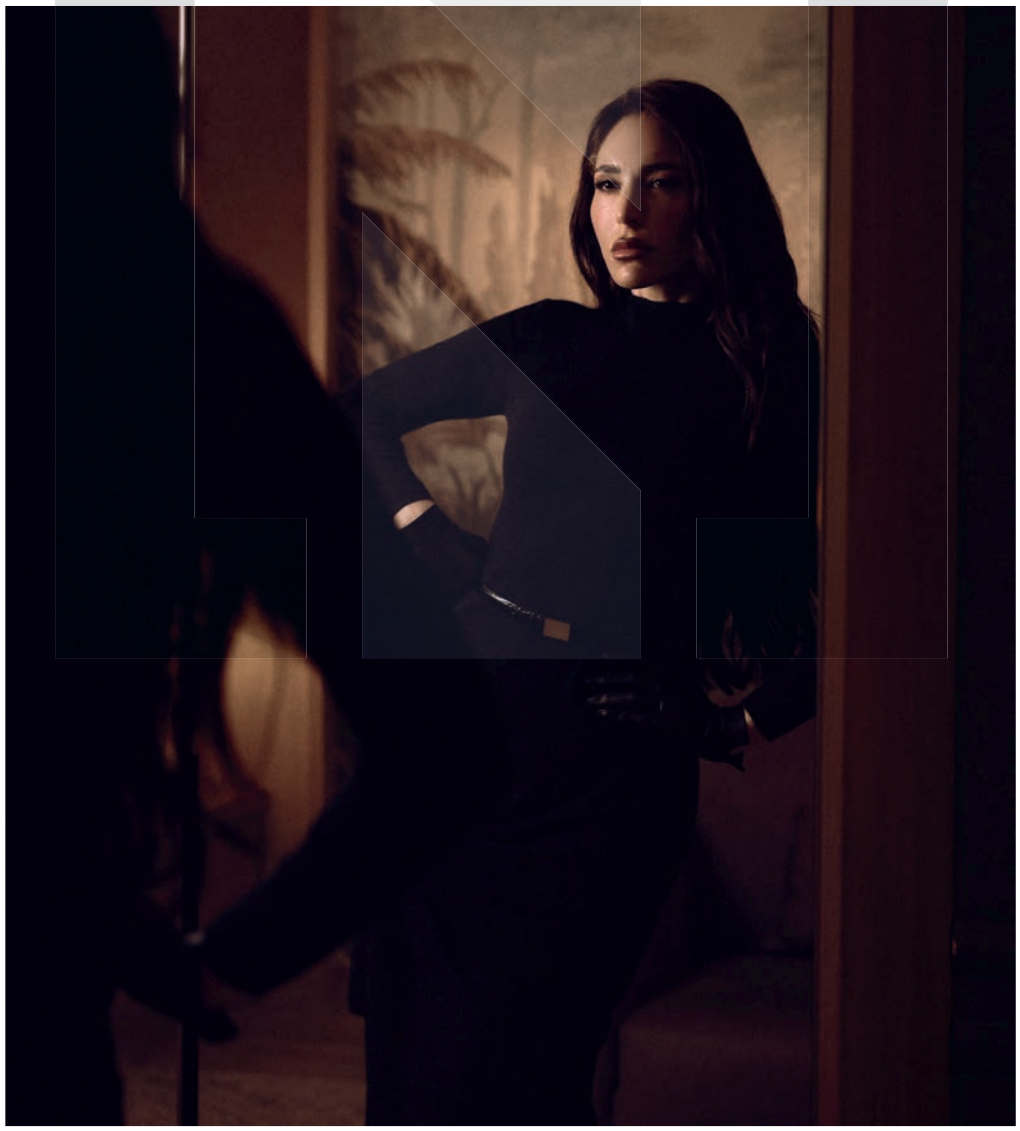
Nehme is aware of the growing constraints of the genre. "We are living in an age where everything is being sped up, so no one is really able to sit down and listen to a song for 10 minutes any more," she says. "Everything has to be delivered within three minutes. That doesn't make the music less beautiful – you just maybe have to search more to find the right songs. Each era has its own artists, its own sound."

Judging by the growing momentum, Nehme is capturing the moment. An artist once on the fringes of modern Arabic music, she is now defining her own path, carrying the quality and precision of a classically trained singer still curious about what else the art form can offer.

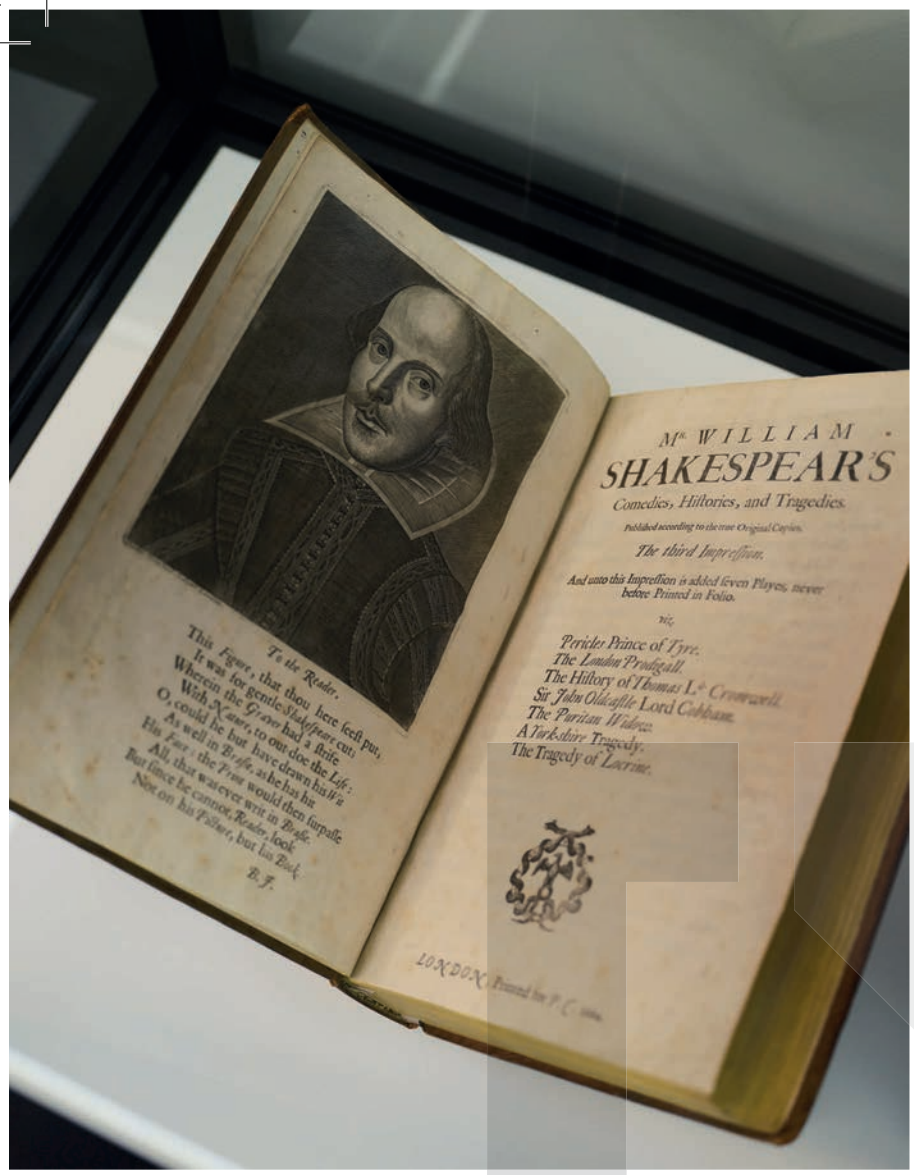
"Music is a language of healing, humanity and ultimately of dialogue. How beautiful that you deliver this just by opening your mouth and singing melodies that can touch people no matter where they are in the world," Nehme says.

I want to show others that you can do this without sacrificing your integrity

"I always wanted to reach out and touch the hearts of as many people as I can, and I feel that I am ready to do this in the biggest way possible now. And why not? When you can express something that can affect people, it is a beautiful thing to do. It is magic."



FASHION DIRECTOR: **SARAH MAISEY** PHOTOGRAPHER: **LARA ZANKOUL** STYLIST: **PATILE TACHJIAN** MAKE-UP ARTIST: **HAWRAA DOUKAK** HAIRSTYLIST: **REMAH JAMMOUL** NAIL TECHNICIAN: **LAURA SAAD AT HAREM BEAUTY LOUNGE** EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: **SAMER FLEIHAN** PRODUCTION HOUSE: **FIFTEEN O FIVE** LINE PRODUCER: **JEANNE KARAM** ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER: **CESAR ABDELHAK** LOCATION MANAGER: **JAD NEHME**



Bound for fortune

From Hemingway to Harry Potter, the world of rare books turns ink and paper into investment assets – where a signature can mean the difference between pocket change and a small fortune, writes **Josh Sims**

PETER HARRINGTON RARE BOOKS

Far left, the Shakespeare Third Folio, believed to have been published in 1663-64
Left, Peter Harrington Rare Books was founded in London in 1969

Alex Warren is holding a copy of James Bond novel *Thunderball*, which comes with a price tag of Dh118,000. This, he says with a laugh, reluctantly counts him out as a possible customer. But why this price, when a new edition could be bought for, say, Dh44? Because it is signed by author Ian Fleming and, in the world of rare books, that makes all the difference.

"Rare doesn't necessarily mean old," explains Warren, founder of Zerzura, the UAE's first and only dealer in rare books. "People assume that a mid-19th-century set of Shakespeare would be worth a lot, but it's not because so many were printed. In contrast, the 1997 first edition of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* [only 500 copies, 300 of which went to public libraries] was extremely limited."

On that note, if you happen to have one of those on your shelf, you could magic up a major payday. Four years ago, when a first edition of the same book sold at auction, the auctioneers enthusiastically described it as "so very near pristine, it's surreal to hold". It sold for $471,000.

That was perhaps because condition greatly boosts the value of a rare book. You want as close to original and untouched condition as possible, because even a single missing page is enough to make an otherwise valuable book more or less worthless. And with *Harry Potter* being a children's book – sorry, post-teen Potterheads – they tend to get battered.

"Most people find it bonkers that even having a dust jacket or not can make a big difference – after all, it's just a piece of paper, and one often designed to be thrown away," says Michael DiRuggiero, founder of New York's Manhattan Rare Book Company. "A first-edition *Great Gatsby* is a few thousand dollars without its dust jacket. With its dust jacket, it's $300,000."

But condition is not the only criteria that drives up prices. Anything that adds to the volume's uniqueness – an inscription of note, for example – does so too. Take, for example, a first-edition copy of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. Autographed, it might fetch Dh30,000; inscribed, Dh60,000; inscribed to someone connected to the author, Dh100,000; and inscribed to someone to whom the book is dedicated, Dh1,000,000.

Pom Harrington, owner of London's rare book dealer Peter Harrington, once sold a copy of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* inscribed by the author to George Eliot, who would become another giant of English literature, for about Dh1.4 million. "Regardless of to whom the inscription is made, it personalises the book. It means the author has handled it," Harrington says. "But when you have two names like that involved, it's fantasy stuff."

But while deep-pocketed bibliophiles might increasingly look on rare books as a burgeoning investment option – easy to store, easy to enjoy and, in shaping culture, arguably more impressive than cars, watches or even contemporary art – it's not all about big money.

Harrington says that a beautiful, leather-bound 19th-century book of poetry, a first-edition Roald Dahl or a later edition PG Wodehouse, for example, are all buyable for less than Dh500. And this from a man who once had the rare privilege of selling a First Folio – the first collected edition of 36 of Shakespeare's plays, only 232 copies of which are known to survive, with most of these being with institutions or in museums. It sold to a private collector for £6.25 million.

"We always advise people to simply buy what they love and the best copy they can afford," he says. "That way, as with stocks and shares, there's a good chance that when it comes to selling the book, someone else will like it too. Most people buy not to sell, of course, but it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge that someone who does spend a lot of money on a book doesn't also have its investment value in mind."

Not that a return is guaranteed. Demand for certain books, as is the case for any other cultural artefact, is somewhat a product of the times. Anthony Trollope is considered, by turns, a great novelist of the Victorian era, but was also permanently in Dickens' shadow. Other authors, such as Dr Seuss or CS Lewis, for example – have seen their standing blighted,

An edition of The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, below left, is one of the coveted titles on offer at Peter Harrington Rare Books, which has outposts in London and New York

PETER HARRINGTON RARE BOOKS

if temporarily, by politically correct concerns. DiRuggiero suggests that you'll likely need a portfolio of rare books – 50 or more – to come out on top over time. "Taste in books can be influenced by all sorts of factors. A TV or movie adaptation can bring a book a new relevance," he adds. "When the *Lord of the Rings* movies came out, first-edition Tolkien jumped hugely in value, so if you're looking to make a return, it can pay to keep an eye on what is happening in culture."

But if making money on them isn't easy, why do people buy these dusty old tomes, as we might see them, especially in this increasingly shiny digital age? Warren argues that it's because books have an appealing, deeply human tangibility – akin to the allure of vinyl albums perhaps, and sometimes carry added historic import too. "I think it's precisely because the UAE is such a new country and everything feels so futuristic that it drives a hunger for old things – they command a premium," he says.

Nostalgia is a factor too – with the UAE's broadly younger audience seeking out rare editions of "subversive" books, such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, as well as books that defined their youth, including Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho.* Even style can be a factor. "People think that a certain book just looks good on display at home," Warren says, "which doesn't bother me at all."

Add in a growing accessibility – the internet providing all the knowledge a fledging book collector might need, plus access to sales worldwide – and it's comforting to know that, even as studies suggest that reading for pleasure is in decline, there's still at least an appreciation for the physical object. Unfortunately, that too is something the unscrupulous will take advantage of. While a printed book is very hard to fake, a signature is much less so.

"You need experience or expert advice to tell the difference," Harrington warns. He has, he says with a laugh, seen too many books signed by Winston Churchill – even for that most enthusiastic signer of books. Harrington explains that Churchill had a consistency of signature over time until he had a stroke in 1953 – "so beware a 1940s signature in a 1950s book".

The condition of a book and anything that adds to its uniqueness drives up prices

But once you have your dream book in your hands, keep it there. If it's not a First Folio, don't be precious about it, DiRuggiero advises.

"When we're trying to make a sale, we want customers to hold these books, because that's so central to their enjoyment. And you really should enjoy even your rare books," he says. "Storage is more of a problem – keep them out of strong sunlight and don't get them wet. But otherwise read your first edition like any other book. And no, you don't need to wear white gloves while you do so. In fact, don't – you're more likely to tear the pages that way."

RACING ON

There is no engine. SailGP boats rely on wind and pedal power to exceed 100kph, racing in stadium settings with big-brand sponsorship, stellar investors and a growing global audience. Sponsored by Rolex, the series has the adrenalin appeal of Formula One, but instead of million-dollar cars, it is raced on water in one-design foiling boats. Like F1, the season finale will be held in Abu Dhabi in November.

The idea came from former America's Cup winner and Oracle founder Larry Ellison, and Sir Russell Coutts, one of the sport's greatest sailors. They envisioned a league of high-speed foiling catamarans competing in top venues worldwide. The first season launched in 2019 with six teams and five events. It has since expanded rapidly to 12 national teams and 12 events this year, growing to 14 teams and 13 events in 2026. This year's championship opens in Dubai and closes in Abu Dhabi.

Rolex backed the concept as title sponsor from the start. "We are very fortunate that from day one Rolex has supported us," says Andrew Thompson, managing director at SailGP. "That was hugely validating for us."

Rolex's ties to sailing run deep, embodied by its Yacht-Master collection and its name on famed offshore races such as the Fastnet, Middle Sea and Sydney Hobart. "For almost a century, Rolex has been synonymous with achievement across the world's most iconic sports, including nearly 70 years of involvement with sailing," says Arnaud Boetsch, director of communications and image at Rolex. He sees SailGP as "a trail-blazer, representing precision, teamwork and innovative technology. It's a shared vision to push boundaries and inspire future generations."

Sir Ben Ainslie, chief executive and co-owner of the Emirates GBR team and a Rolex testimonee, adds: "Rolex is a big investor in sailing and has been a real advocate for the sport. This is a newish sports league, and to have someone like Rolex come in and take title sponsorship is a huge commitment for 10 years."

Emirates backs the GBR team, while Mubadala Capital sponsors the Brazilian team

A lead sponsor in F1 until last year (now succeeded by Tag Heuer), Rolex is pivoting more towards environmentally friendly sports such as tennis, cycling, golf and equestrian disciplines.

The league has attracted some of sailing's biggest names: Ainslie, multi-time America's Cup champion Jimmy Spithill, last year's America's Cup winner Peter Burling and Olympic champion Tom Slingsby. Hollywood

THE EDGE

With boats flying above the water at 100kph, SailGP is transforming the sport into a global spectacle. Backed by Rolex and fuelled by Hollywood investors and Middle East support, the league is rewriting the rules of the sport and bringing its finale to Abu Dhabi.
By **Francesca Fearon**

has joined too: Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman became co-owners of the Australian Bonds Flying Roos in June, while former F1 champion Sebastian Vettel has invested in the German team. "It's an incredible milestone for us and our sport," says Slingsby.

For Ainslie, SailGP represents a turning point for sailing. "It was quite traditional, and now these foiling boats have completely transformed it and we can see it as a commercially viable league," he says. "In terms of demographic, the audience is getting younger and that is critical, like you see in *Drive to Survive*. That's why you see these races last for 10 minutes with boats racing at 100kph."

There is jeopardy, he adds, with mid-race dismastings not uncommon. "You can be one of the real top-performing teams, but it doesn't take much for it to all go wrong," says Emirates GBR strategist Hannah Mills, who is also a double Olympic champion.

The F50 catamarans – 15-metre one-designs built in Southampton from composites similar to F1 car shells – are leased to teams. "They are exactly the same; however, teams can change some of the settings on the boat to how they want to sail them," explains Thompson. "They are impressive feats of technology – they are complex and there's crashes, thrills and spills."

To make races accessible, SailGP invested in broadcast innovation, using on-screen overlays to show course boundaries and boat tracking. Hawk-Eye, used in tennis, ensures boats remain within boundaries or face penalties. "We certainly see this as a racing product people can understand," says Thompson.

The Middle East is central to SailGP's growth. Emirates backs the GBR team, while Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Capital sponsors the Brazilian team, led by the fleet's only female driver, Martine Grael. "Bringing events to the Middle East has been something that we have targeted from the start, and support of big partners in Dubai and Abu Dhabi has been invaluable," says Thompson.

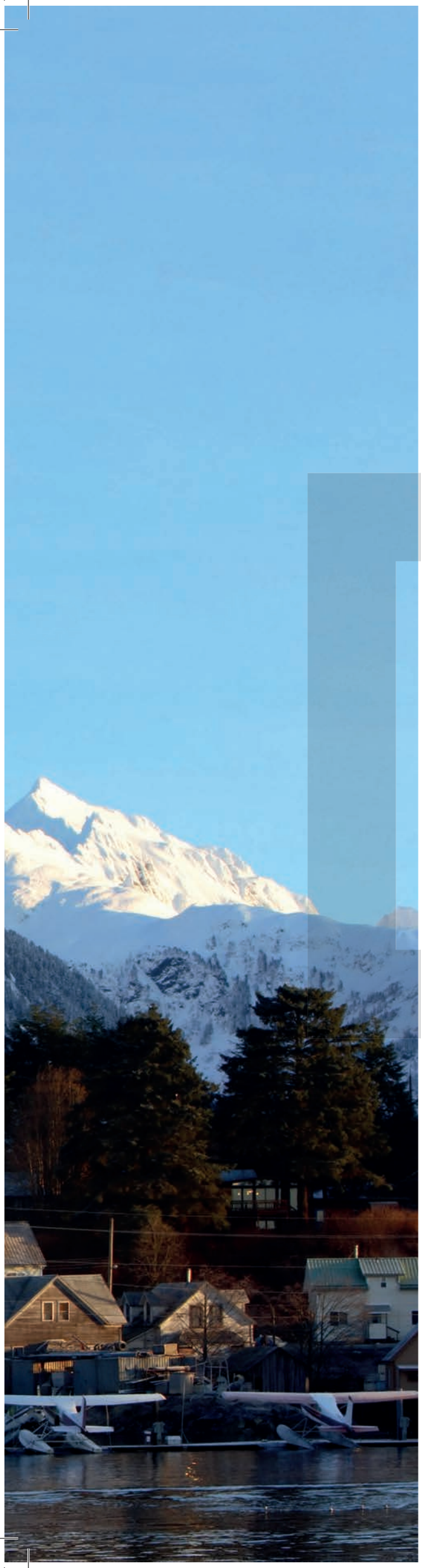
Conditions here are unique, notes Spain SailGP team's strategist Nicole van der Velden. "It is a beautiful place to sail, but because of the heat, the wind doesn't push as much as in a venue where the wind is colder. This changes the feeling on-board, but there are really nice thermic winds that kick in the afternoon. And unlike many other venues," she adds, "it's nice and warm."

Clockwise from main, a SailGP race in Saint Tropez last month; Rolex Oyster Perpetual Yacht-Master 40; and Martine Grael for Mubadala Brazil SailGP team

SAILGP; ROLEX

Life at the Last Frontier

Hayley **Kadrou** hops off a cruise liner to explore the cities dotted along Alaska's coast



GETTY IMAGES; NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

Left, the city of Sitka. Above, the Norwegian Bliss cruise ship docks along the coast

Home to about three million lakes, the tallest peak in North America and the world's largest temperate rainforest, Alaska is vast and enthralling. It has more glaciers and a longer coastline than the other US states combined and, at more than 1.7 million square kilometres, it dwarfs them all.

Setting sail from Seattle in high summer, NCL's Norwegian Bliss cruise ship skirts the Pacific Northwest coast, docking several times along the way. For a few hours at a time, I dip into the state's various cities, getting just a quick hit before being whisked away again.

This style of travel feels quite unlike the way I usually see the world, but there is something poetic about exploring destinations like so. Plus, even if you were to spend months exploring Alaska's unique landscape, you'd still barely scratch the surface.

Instead, I move between Sitka, Juneau, Icy Strait Point and Ketchikan, piecing together a picture of life in the Last Frontier.

SETTING THE SCENE IN SITKA

"One to eight." That's the ratio of brown bears to people in Sitka, our bus driver announces as we trundle towards the centre. The city, charming and compact, has fewer than 9,000 residents, yet it is still the 11th most populous in Alaska. By the time I'm dropped off at Harrigan Centennial Hall, with signs of human life all around, I'm not overly worried about running into a bear.

Soft clouds drift across blue skies above the green mountains that frame Sitka as I wander into town. My first stop is a quick detour off Lincoln Street – the bustling artery of downtown – at Highliner Coffee for something warm to sip. The pastries are baked fresh and the barista proudly notes that the beans are air-roasted locally.

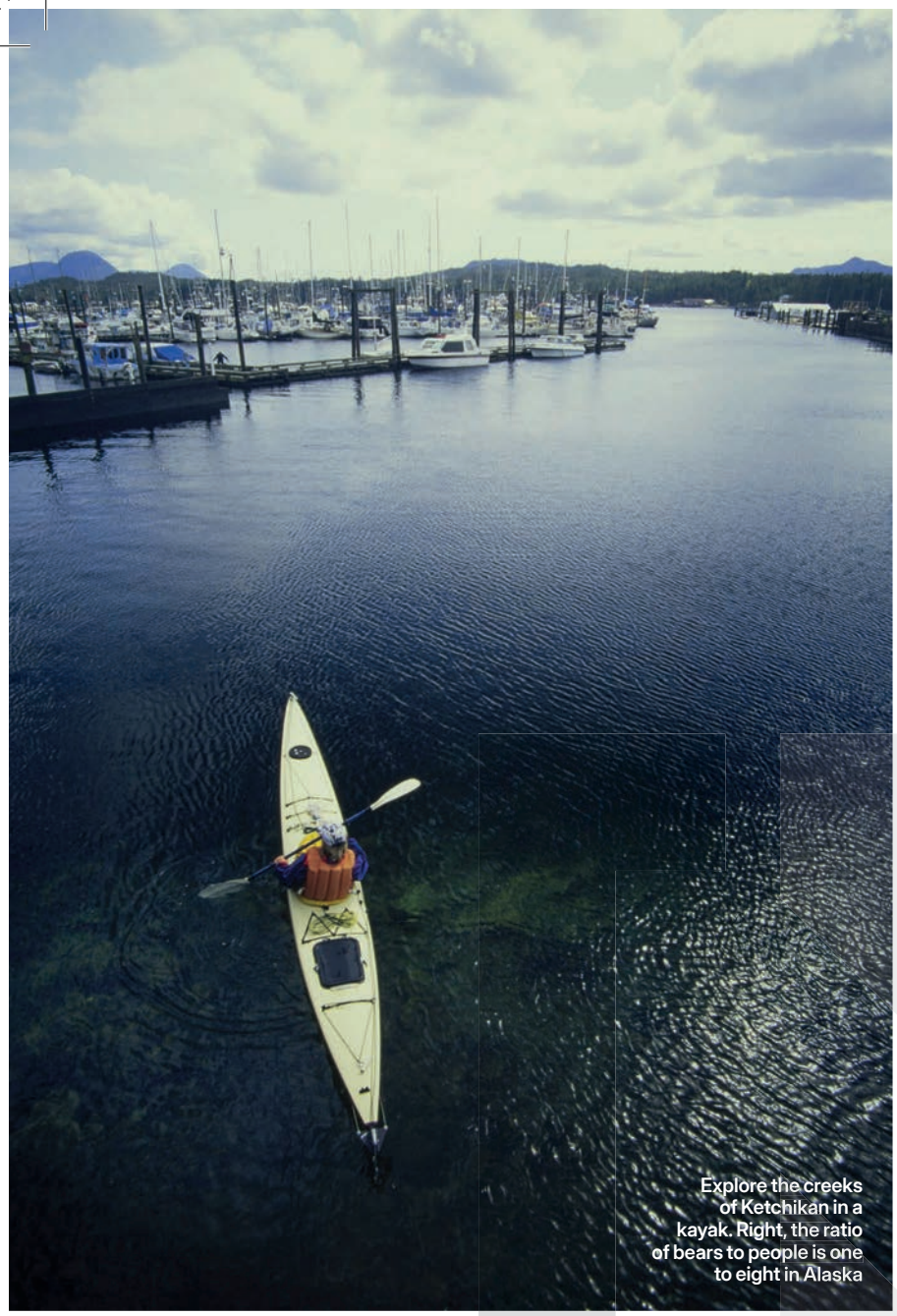
Foamy flat white in hand, I tour the shops on foot – many selling art and jewellery made by Alaskan artisans, one specialising in soaps using local ingredients. There's also Sitka Bazaar, dutifully luring in souvenir-seeking tourists with trinkets.

Down a side street, I pass St Michael's Russian Orthodox Cathedral and make my way to Totem Square, where I settle on a patch of grass. In front of me rises a 12-metre totem pole, behind me stands the Russian Bishop's House, now a museum. Within this small radius, Alaska's layered history and indigenous traditions sit densely side by side.

Colonised by Russia in the 18th century, Alaska was later sold off to the US in 1867 for $7.2 million. But for thousands of years before that, it was inhabited by indigenous people – who still represent the highest percentage of the population anywhere in the country.

FINDING MY BEAR-INGS

Several hours later, I find my way to my tour group's meeting point, ready to get stuck into Alaska's nature. We take a scenic boat ride – delightfully interrupted by sea lion spotting and bald eagle watching – to Camp Coogan Bay, stopping off at a historic 1920s float house to change into wellies before heading into the Tongass National Forest to follow an old



Explore the creeks of Ketchikan in a kayak. Right, the ratio of bears to people is one to eight in Alaska

logging road towards Eureka Falls. Logging was once key to the Alaskan economy, but has reduced drastically in the past few decades, in part due to environmental preservation.

As we arrive at camp, a trail leader asks us not to wander too far while he sets up a fire to roast marshmallows. I am still able to explore the surrounding flora relatively freely. It's not until a few days later that I think about bear safety again.

"In 21 years leading tours, we've never had to shoot," a new group leader tells me as we embark on a wilderness hike at Icy Strait Point. "But today might be the day." Now I'm listening.

Fortunately for our group, he is recounting a hike from the week earlier. "I was walking backwards, grabbing spruce tips, when one woman said she'd spotted a bear. I turn around and it was just there, about a quarter of a football field away and no less than 500 kilograms. As I'm explaining how we've never had to use a shotgun on a coastal brown bear up here, I hear the clickety-clack of a shotgun bolt," he says, recalling how the group's armed sweep swooped up beside him.

"It stared at us all, then just kind of lost interest and went into the bushes," he adds somewhat anticlimactically. For the rest of their hike, though, the group is told to sing loudly. I don't spot any grizzlies during my trip, but I do learn that noise and travelling in numbers is one of the best ways to keep them at a distance. Also, making eye contact is a no-no and running away is possibly the worst thing you can do.

With the animals outnumbering the humans threefold here, it's a reminder that we're stepping into their territory as we hike to another abandoned logging road through the wilds of Chichagof Island – home to the densest population of bears in the world.

BEARDS, BONSAIS AND BLUE SKIES

"It was used to make diapers in primitive times," our guide tells a fresh mix of cruisers the next day in Ketchikan. "Nowadays, it's mainly used as a fire starter." He is referring to Old Man's Beard – real name Usnea longissima, a lichen that earned its nickname thanks to its wispy white-beige shade and vinelike texture.

Although its absorbency and antibiotic properties are interesting, it's more striking because of what its existence indicates. "You can only find it where the air quality is 95 per cent pure or more," the guide tells us.

I'm not sure how his percentages translate on the official Air Quality Index, yet the point is conveyed all the same; Alaska's unique environment makes for a fascinating ecological landscape, as I'm shown in snippets during my travels.

An hour earlier, I found myself at the bow of a 11-metre canoe with 19 others, oaring my way through a mountainside lake. At the group leader's behest, we veer right towards a tiny island, where he enthusiastically jumps from the vessel as soon as it hits shallow water.

"You see these little plants? Well, they're actually trees. You know, people spend many years making bonsai trees, but it happens naturally here just because of the resources," he explains.

High rainfall and minimal soil creates a ground texture "like a huge sponge", which makes for ideal conditions for the dwarfed trees to grow. Long daylight hours, 24 hours a day in some stretches, is another of Alaska's quirks, which can result in the growth of giant vegetables around the state.

I don't get to see any, but I do taste-test sweet salmonberries straight from the branches, named so for their light pink hue, which are native to the west coast of North America.

WATCHING OUT FOR WHALES

I'm not the only one interested in the fresh cuisine on offer. While bears and sea lions will be feasting on wild salmon, whales are on the hunt for herring. "The whales are migrating from Hawaii right now because it's feeding season, and they haven't eaten since October," our captain tells us as we sail down Point Adolphus one early morning, on the quiet lookout for humpback whales.

"They eat about 3,000 pounds of food every single day – which is almost the same as what you guys are getting through back on your cruise ship, right?" he adds, the well-rehearsed line receiving its expected laughs. "Their throats are actually only about the size of a grapefruit, so they can't eat other fish here."

Waiting for telltale signs of a whale soon becomes a sport. Spot a puff of steam, reach for my binoculars and stay focused until they resurface to give punters a show. When somebody sees a tail flip, audible "ohhs" and "ahhs" echo across the boat.

I join one whale-watching experience on my whistle-stop tour, but it's not the only time I see the magnificent mammals. I later find out that this is not down to my own good fortune – it's almost impossible not to spot a whale in the area at this time of year

UP CLOSE WITH GLACIERS

Glaciers feel like the main event, so I sign up for a double dose: a five-hour boat expedition and a 75-minute seaplane tour once we arrive in Alaska's isolated capital Juneau.

First up is the seaplane, where we're literally granted a bird's eye view of Juneau Icefield. We pass over the crystal waters and vibrant greenery, spotting mountain goats and flowing waterfalls. Beautiful as they are, there's nothing quite like soaring over the glaciers, our pilot talking us through their unique characteristics.

We fly over the Taku Glacier, recognised as the deepest and thickest alpine and temperate glacier known in the world. We also tour several outlet glaciers, meaning they originated from an ice sheet, which look like frozen rivers from the skies.

Hints of blue tease through the surface cracks, but I'm surprised each glacier has a greyish tint from above. The pilot explains this hue can be due to ash from wildfire, algae on the surface or just dust and pollution settling on top.

Later that day, I come within metres of the Dawes Glacier, this time at sea level. From this angle, it's bright white spliced with azure blue. Being so close to these natural formations, so essential to our ecosystems, and so telling of Earth's history and future all at once, is mesmerising – even if it was the first and only time I needed an extra thermal jacket during my adventure.

In this moment, I feel both at the heart of the Last Frontier and just tapping at its edge. It's a feeling that stays with me as my week comes to a close. While there's more left to explore than I could manage in a lifetime, even this brief snapshot of Alaska is enough to keep me charmed for a long time.

Chichagof Island in Alaska is home to the densest population of bears in the world

GETTY IMAGES

HOT HATCH CONFIDENTIAL

Nasri Atallah rediscovers the joys of small cars that pack a big punch with the Mini John Cooper Works

BMW GROUP

The newest Mini John Cooper Works has a Go-Kart Experience Mode for razor-quick shifts and a sharpened throttle response

One of the perks in my line of work is that I get to drive some of the world's most spectacular cars. Ferraris, Bentleys, Aston Martins. I often wonder what my neighbours think when I pull up in one of those roaring beasts – they must assume I got lucky in crypto.

These machines are wondrous: heritage and adrenalin, power-distilled into metal and carbon fibre. And yet, if I'm completely honest, I am never happier than when I slip behind the wheel of a slightly ludicrous hot hatch.

My first car in the UAE was a temperamental Abarth 595 Competizione. I loved that car with foolish devotion. Every time I walked past it, my heart lifted. It had personality, character and, most importantly, it was unassuming to the casual observer.

In time, life evolves. I became a father. Now I drive a sensible Jeep. It's reliable. It gets the job done. But it does not make my pulse catch when I return to it after an errand. You know what does? The new Mini John Cooper Works.

To the uninitiated, the Mini JCW looks like any Mini – retro lines, compact proportions, Union Jack tail-lights and cheeky British charm. But "just another Mini" it is not. Think of it as the Jack Russell of cars: small, wiry, alert and packed with pent-up nerve endings.

The latest generation Mini John Cooper Works – named after the famed British racing driver and engineer who helped lead Minis to racing success in the 1960s – is a technical marvel, a tightrope act between city liveability and track-edge mischief. Under its hood sits a 2.0-litre inline-4 turbocharged engine, factory-tuned by JCW, producing 231 horsepower and a stout 280Nm of torque. That torque bump is meaningful – especially in mid-range, it changes the car's character, making overtaking easier and making the car feel livelier in everyday driving.

There is no longer an option for a manual transmission in the 2025 JCW – it comes with a 7-speed dual-clutch automatic (DCT) as the only choice. The car accelerates from 0 to 100kph in about 6.1 seconds, which might not seem like much in the era of electric cars with breakneck acceleration, but in the JCW, you feel the acceleration coursing through its machinery. Top speed hovers around the mid-240kph mark.

The driving modes in this Mini are called Experience Modes, and the one I head straight to is Go-Kart. Switch it on and the car chirps: a tiny "woohoo". At first I wonder if I just imagined it, but no – the car is as excited as I am. In Go-Kart mode, shifts are razor-quick, throttle response is sharpened and the electronics let the car dance closer to the edge. There's even a shift in the central display screen: torque, grip, cornering g-forces all come alive.

The suspension is more aggressive than the base Mini's. Spring and damper tuning, along with a more rigid chassis,

make this JCW feel far more planted. Brembo brakes come as standard, giving the confidence to exploit that little engine. It even features an electronically locking front differential, which helps get the power to the ground when the front wheels are asked to do too much.

Supercars might make you feel important; hot hatches make you feel happy. Now, I'm not complaining about getting to review some of the worlds most exotic cars, but at a certain point, behind the wheel of vehicles that cost more than a family home, you begin to crave something that reconnects you with the primal joy of driving. Something cheeky, that's both discreet and a bit too much – with go-faster stripes down the bonnet.

When you show up somewhere in a Mini, people don't pay you undue attention. Yet, they don't know. They don't see the grin creeping across your face as the Go-Kart mode wakes. They don't hear that tiny woohoo distilled through the legend of a 1960s racing icon.

If life is too often about restraint – jobs, responsibilities and expectations – driving something so unapologetically eager feels like an act of rebellion. It reminds you that pleasure need not be grandiose.

So here is my confession, in full: Rolls-Royces and Porsches and McLarens are marvellous. But if I could own only one car, it would be something like this Mini JCW. Because it doesn't pretend. It doesn't posture.

In Go-Kart mode, as the world blurs just at the edges and you feel the torque coil behind your seat, if you close your eyes (carefully), you might swear you're in *The Italian Job*. You might believe you're forever a teenage joyrider. The neighbours, parked innocently across the street, won't know it. And that's precisely how it should be: a mischievous secret between you and the road.

Rooted at home

These Dubai-born restaurants pay homage to Middle Eastern flavours and culture in the most inventive ways, writes **Katy Gillett**

Flaky, buttery, golden phyllo pastry dipped in a rich, zingy muhammara topped with aromatic herbs. A fresh mushroom omelette stuffed with gooey, oozing Akkawi cheese. Juicy Wagyu beef kebab topped with sour cherry and crispy pine nuts, inspired by the flavours of Aleppo. It can be hard for restaurants in a city like Dubai to stand out from the crowd, but the ones behind these creative dishes are managing to do just that.

With more restaurants per capita than any other city in the world – except Paris – Dubai's food and drink scene can be cutthroat. Beloved, celebrity-backed names flood the market, from New York's SushiSamba to London's Zuma, but a collection of local restaurateurs are also holding their own with their home-grown venues and menus influenced by the region's rich tapestry of flavours.

Here are five new restaurants that pay homage to the Middle East.

GERBOU

Art meets gastronomy in this villa in Dubai's residential Nad Al Sheba 1 neighbourhood, where traditional Emirati cuisine has been given an inventive modern upgrade. Gerbou is a collaboration between contemporary arts and design hub Tashkeel, established by Sheikha Lateefa bint Maktoum, and Atelier House Hospitality, a local company that creates bespoke dining experiences.

The design pays tribute to the Emirates with every flourish. From the custom-made stonewear to the plates that were designed by Sheikha Lateefa herself, each piece of crockery is a respectful nod to Emirati life and nature, whether that's migrating flamingos, falcons or the resilient dromedary. Meanwhile, the menu not only honours sustainability, seasonality and locality, but every dish also has been crafted with respect to tradition and an eye on the future, a reflection of the city.

This is where you'll find that Akkawi cheese and mushroom omelette we mentioned, alongside creamy burrata with sticky dates on fresh sourdough or sweet balaleet for breakfast. Expect homemade pickles, steaming khubz and fries sprinkled with salona spices. For mains, there are gourmet versions of traditional dishes such as harees, thareed and margooga, but also international options influenced by regional flavours, including bao bun lamb shawarma and crispy chicken paratha.

SUFRET MARYAM

In 2023, Palestinian-Jordanian chef Salam Dakkak was ranked Mena's Best Female Chef for her work at casual Levantine eatery Bait Maryam. Recently, she cemented her culinary legacy even further by opening a big sister, Sufret Maryam, which sets out to elevate those flavours from its cosy, homely spot in Wasl 51, Jumeirah. Everything here is authentic, Levant-inspired and true to its roots.

Dakkak has taken staple dishes that have been passed down through generations and made them worthy of an upmarket restaurant in Dubai. Breakfast dishes include shakshooka, manoushe zaatar and fatet hummus, while mezze spans shankleesh, molokhia bel zeit and hummus bil lahme, to name a few.

There are also raw delicacies, such as Tarsheeha, a meat dish from Dakkak's village. As for mains, La'Moshet Maryam is the most elaborate dish you'll find at Dh380; a tender, slow-cooked lamb shoulder marinated with the chef's special spices.

This restaurant is more than just about food. It's the story of a woman and her roots, and that love she has for her heritage shines through in every bite.

THREE BROS

Where the Orfali brothers – Mohammad, Wassim and Omar – earned global recognition with fine dining fusion at Orfali Bros, including taking the number one spot on Mena's 50 Best Restaurants in 2023 and 2024, their latest venture Three Bros takes a decidedly more casual approach. This playful 22-seater sits right next to their Michelin-starred flagship in Wasl 51, a retro-styled space featuring deep maroon walls, patterned monochrome flooring and bronze wall sculptures of the brothers themselves, with an open kitchen and a wood-fired pizza oven taking centre stage.

The menu won't be governed by a single culture, but is what the brothers affectionately call "Dubai cuisine" – a fusion of Mediterranean simplicity, French precision and the rich traditions of Syria, from where the siblings hail. Think croquettes made with 18-month Comté cheese and truffle mayo, pidza (a pizza-pide hybrid), morel chawanmushi, as well as Wagyu kebab with sour cherry, a nostalgic nod to their Syrian roots.

This is food that's serious without taking itself too seriously, proving sometimes the smallest spaces hold the biggest flavours.

MIDDLE CHILD

Beirut-born chef Lynn Hazim, the creative force behind food blog No Soup For You, has opened her first restaurant in Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz. Taking inspiration from the oft-overlooked middle sibling (Hazim herself is a middle child), she's flipped middle child syndrome on its head by creating a space that's playful, personal and entirely original in Dubai's saturated restaurant scene.

This isn't just another cafe – it's actually three concepts wrapped into one: a communal table

and open kitchen where strangers can bond over shared bites; a cookbook corner for those of us who get excited about new recipe collections; as well as a gourmet grocery stocked with speciality ingredients you didn't know you needed.

The food philosophy is all about keeping it satisfying, creative and approachable, with balanced flavours and a hefty sprinkle of salt (in a good way). This is comfort food at its most comforting, elevated through community – just what this region does best.

PIEHAUS

From the team behind 21grams, the beloved Balkan bistro that's earned three consecutive nods on the Michelin Bib Gourmand list, comes Piehaus, a speciality pie shop and cafe in Alserkal Avenue that celebrates traditional phyllo pastry.

The Scandinavian-inspired space mixes sleek metal surfaces with playful pops of red, anchored by a gigantic glowing moon in the middle of the room. It's very Alserkal Avenue.

The focus here is on the kinds of pies that are often at the heart of Balkan cuisine – think flaky phyllo dough wrapped around savoury fillings such as cheese, spinach or potato, and sweet versions layered with pumpkin, apples or cherries. But they also pay homage to the region by incorporating muhammara, burnt aubergine hummus, caramel tahini and cardamom sugar.

These are hearty beasts – crispy and flaky on the outside, soft and doughy within. It's a simple menu, impossible to resist.

Clockwise from right, braided goat's cheese, honey and thyme pie from Piehaus; khobez al bait from Sufret Maryam; confit potato from Gerbou; morel chawanmushi from Three Bros; and pappardelle bolognese from Middle Child

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi ON ART

Bedouins a l'Atelier (1934) by Omar Onsi

A 1934 painting by Lebanese artist Omar Onsi depicts a woman, perhaps a mother, resting her hands on a young boy's shoulders before a set of artworks. The barefooted boy, about nine or 10, wears a jacket and traditional Arab headdress. He stares – curious, perhaps – at a canvas, of which only the left side is visible to us. Are they visitors to the studio or sitters summoned by the artist? Regardless, warmth radiates between them. One imagines the mother asking her son what he sees, or the boy turning to her with a question of his own.

When was the last time you visited a museum with a loved one or by yourself? Various studies estimate that only between five and 20 per cent of people visit museums solo, underscoring that exhibitions are most often shared experiences.

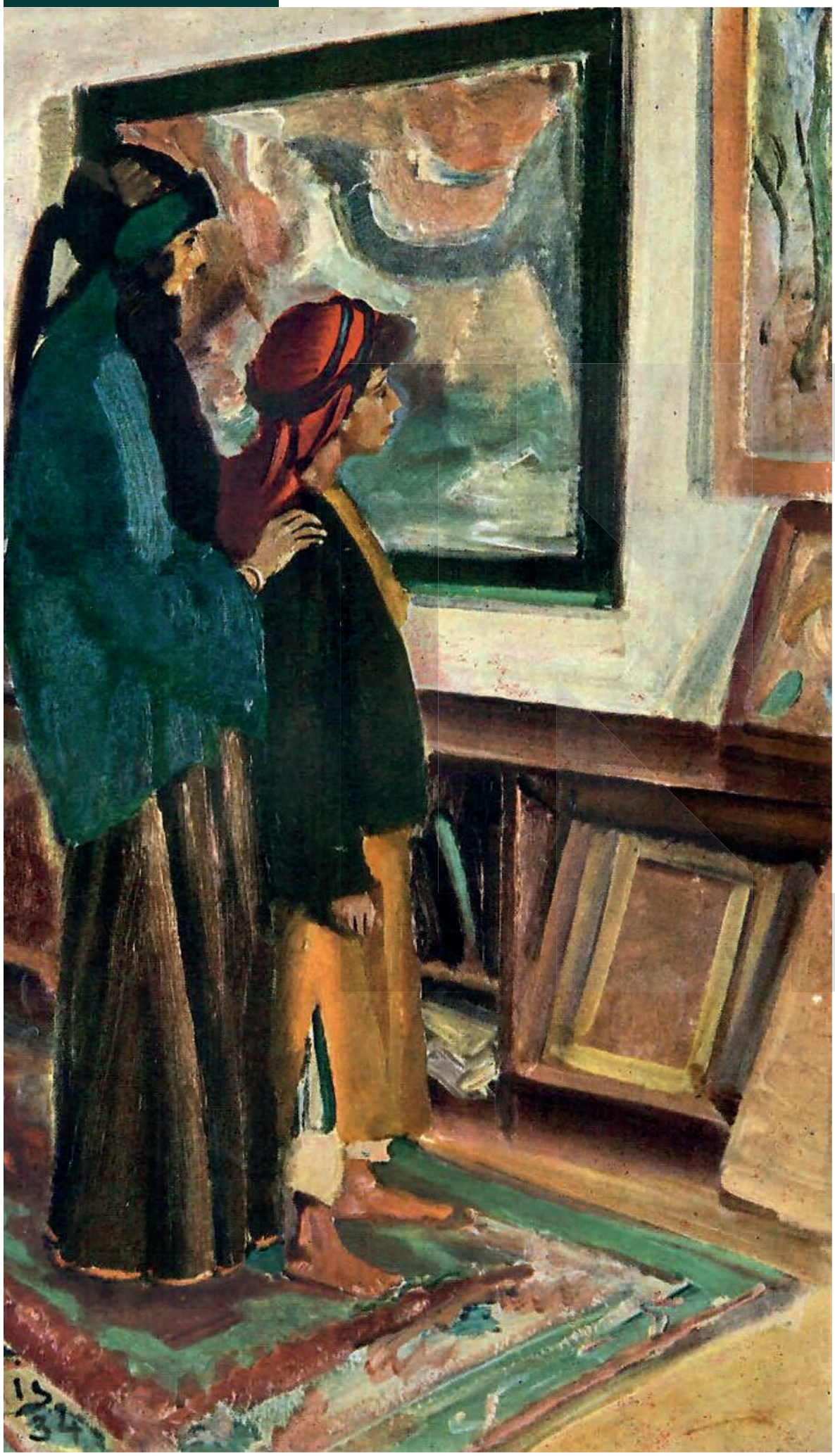
Growing up in the UAE of the 1980s, museums were rare. But by 2025, the landscape has transformed. Next month, Dubai will host the first-ever meeting of the International Council of Museums in the Arab world, drawing thousands of experts to the city for 10 days of debate and exchange. But what is the role of museums in our region? Are they static exhibition spaces? Or living, adaptive entities shaped by their environment and audiences?

Museums have deep roots in some regional cities – Cairo's Museum of Islamic Art opened in 1903. Yet in recent decades, institutions have also suffered damage or looting, from the Iraq National Museum and the National Museum of Sudan to Gaza's collections under bombardment. At the same time, Arab states have invested heavily: Louvre Abu Dhabi, Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art, the reopened Iraqi and Beirut National Museums, and the much-anticipated full opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum next month. Last year, Louvre Abu Dhabi welcomed 1.4 million visitors and Saudi Arabia's Ithra 1.2 million. Even partially open, the Grand Egyptian Museum already attracts more than 4,000 visitors daily. Still, these efforts will only reach their potential if locals – not only tourists – make museums part of their lives.

Encountering a local artist's work or a cultural artefact is never a solitary act; it anchors identity, nurtures belonging and fosters a more informed, proud citizenry. It also helps residents understand the histories of the places they call home, forging bonds across generations. As Onsi's painting suggests, museums ignite curiosity – a trait essential to childhood and just as vital in adulthood. Visits should not be confined to school trips, but woven into everyday life. For their part, museums must continue to evolve – better storytelling, interactive quizzes, competitions and active social media strategies all strengthen engagement.

Research suggests Gulf citizens are more inclined to visit museums abroad than at home. A 2022 Visit Britain survey found that three of the top 10 reasons Gulf travellers visit the UK are cultural – including a trip to museums and galleries, which ranked fifth. But are we as eager to explore our own institutions? Next time you plan to meet a friend, instead of suggesting a cafe, consider Louvre Abu Dhabi, the top floor of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library or the Sharjah Art Museum. Such settings enrich conversation visually, mentally and culturally, while supporting the cultural ecosystem and helping it grow beyond the annual pilgrimage.

MAY MANSOUR EL ONSI



Museums ignite curiosity – a trait that is just as vital in adulthood as it is essential to childhood

Palestinian musician Adnan Joubran is a solo artist and is also part of the fraternal group Le Trio Joubran

The haunting of Adnan Joubran

The celebrated oud player speaks with **Saeed Saeed** about Gaza, grief and how his music can no longer escape his politics or his humanity

"How are you, really?"

It was a question in an email from Lebanese pianist Rami Khalife, son of revered composer Marcel Khalife, that stopped Adnan Joubran in his tracks. As a solo artist and part of the fraternal group Le Trio Joubran, the musician has been processing wave after wave of grief on the road and in the studio. And the email – received amid the devastation of Gaza, where more than 66,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel – elicited, even demanded, a pause.

Speaking from his home in Paris, Joubran admits there is no answer. "It is tough not only for me as a Palestinian, but also I think for all of us as human beings," says Joubran, who performed as part of the Together for Palestine benefit concert held last month at London's O2 Arena, with Brian Eno, Damon Albarn and Faraj Suleiman among many others.

For two decades, Joubran has carried the joy and burden of being a Palestinian artist – celebrated in concert halls worldwide as part of Le Trio Joubran with his brothers Samir and Wissam. They've recorded with Coldplay, collaborated with Roger Waters, spent years touring with Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and referenced his writing in their own recordings.

What began as an odyssey to present Palestinian music and culture, stripped of politics, has become anything but. For the past two years, every song and every stage has been fiercely channelled through Palestine's struggle for self-determination.

"At the beginning, we were refusing to be called political. We were frustrated, like, why do you call us political? We are just musicians. But now, we cannot avoid it," Joubran says. "The tragedy is too big and the silence is too dangerous. As Palestinians, even if we want to be just musicians, we cannot. The responsibility is there, and we have to carry it."

That responsibility has also reshaped his experience of the live circuit. Invitations from European festivals and concert halls that once welcomed the group have now significantly dried up. "Many concert halls refuse to welcome any Palestinian musician because they are scared of showing their belonging to the Palestinian cause," Joubran says. "Even though those theatres want to welcome us purely for our music, they're not capable of doing it."

Hence the significance of the Together for Palestine concert, co-organised by British composer Eno alongside Khaled Ziada, founder and director of the London Palestine Film Festival, as well as British film and TV producer Tracey Seaward. For Joubran, its importance is clear: "This gathering of artists served as a resounding declaration that we can no longer remain silent," he says. "It was a call to action, a demand for justice for the Palestinian people, for the protection of journalists' lives and freedom of expression, and for an end to the ongoing humanitarian crisis."

The event, which raised more than $2 million, marked another opportunity for Joubran to collaborate with Eno, who is a long-time supporter of the Palestinian cause, and whom he views as a hero. Eno has been publicly outspoken on Palestine for years, from co-founding the organisation Artists for Palestine UK in 2015 to creating sound installations at Banksy's Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem.

That multidisciplinary approach, Joubran says, has made each meeting with Eno educative. "I sit down and just listen to him telling me things," he says. "I remember one day Brian called me and said: 'Adnan, can you come? I'm working on a melody that I need your help with on a percussion part.' And it was so amazing, just spending the day with him in his studio, feeling how we work similarly at times."

Joubran's craft was honed as a child in the family home in Nazareth. His father, Hatem, is a luthier, and his mother, Ibtissam Hanna Joubran, is a singer. With his brothers already performing as a duo, Joubran was the last to join, enamoured by their stories of touring abroad. He composed the trio's first piece, *Hawas*, which featured on the group's 2005 debut album, *Randana*.

We cannot avoid being political. The tragedy is too big, the silence too dangerous

A key motif throughout the trio's work is the poetry of Darwish, a former collaborator. Following the famed poet's death, the group used his recorded readings in their music, or had them recited by others such as Pink Floyd co-founder Waters, who appeared on *Carry the Earth* from the trio's 2018 album *The Long March*.

"It was amazing to just go in his house and watch him make us pasta and bring his guitar and play something," Joubran recalls. "I filmed him reciting Darwish at [famed London studio] Abbey Road and from the first take, I had tears on my face. It was as powerful as it could be. Just spot on."

That sense of intimacy flows into Joubran's next album, *At Surface*, already trailed by the haunting track, *Before & After*. Its ambient soundscapes and plaintive, almost sputtering oud lines are meant to resemble a life changed by war. Along with the London show, the sounds form part of the answer to Khalifa's email about Joubran's state of mind.

"That is hundred per cent engaged music, purely made for my healing process. I think art is not here to answer questions, but to ask them. Being direct now is a social and human responsibility," he says.

"As artists, our responsibility lies not in impressing, but in expressing, moving and motivating people to take action. The stage is the safest place," he adds. "My safe place is the music. Where there are no barriers, no judgment."

Listen to Saeed Saeed's full conversation with Adnan Joubran on The National's podcast Tarab, available wherever you get your podcasts

ALAMY

Uzbek city Bukhara was an important hub on the ancient Silk Route

GETTY IMAGES

RECIPES FOR BROKEN HEARTS

Though international in scope, every artwork at the Bukhara Biennial was made with the help of artisans from the ancient city and its surrounding regions in Uzbekistan.

This single – and strictly adhered to – condition is shrewd. By tying every piece to local craft traditions, the new biennial – which opened last month – grounds itself firmly in Bukhara. It also solidifies its identity from the outset, an achievement that takes many similar events years of meandering and experimentation to accomplish.

The city's history certainly helps. Bukhara has long cast a rippling influence in Central Asia and beyond. It was a hub in the Silk Road, a cultural crossroads. Its bazaars were vital in the trade of silk, spices and textiles. Its madrasas, particularly during the Samanid golden age of the 9th and 10th centuries, established the city as an intellectual centre rivalling Baghdad. Under the Shaybanid and Janid dynasties of the 16th and 17th centuries, Bukhara's skyline blossomed with domed structures, whereas others continued to be reworked and reappropriated.

The city bears this storied history plainly, etched in the blue tiles of its arches and its overlain facades.

Bukhara isn't only a backdrop for the biennial, however. As one of Uzbekistan's most symbolic artistic projects, the event aims to position the storied city as a cultural platform for local audiences and international visitors.

The cultural district underwent a meticulous restoration process in preparation. Many of the old structures, long closed off to the public, were rehabilitated partly with the biennial in mind.

Under the direction of Lebanese architect Wael Al Awar, asphalt roads were reworked as tessellated brick walkways, cars were diverted and the cafes and restaurants redesigned. Even the lighting was overhauled, with minimal lampposts to highlight the architecture without overwhelming it.

"Our aim has been twofold, to protect the historical fabric and to give the spaces a new, useful life," Gayane Umerova, chairperson of Uzbekistan's Art and Culture Development Foundation, said during her opening speech. "In partnership with international experts, including Unesco, we have focused on reactivating our most treasured landmarks as places for making, learning and exchange."

Razmig Bedirian heads to Uzbekistan's first Bukhara Biennial, which captures the true spirit of artistic exchange

> We have focused on reactivating our most treasured landmarks as places for making, learning and exchange

That spirit of exchange and cross-cultural interpretation is evident throughout the biennial. Unlike many art events or initiatives where collaborations are left vague, every work names and credits the artisans alongside the artists. The authorship is clear.

Through Bloom and Decay is likely to be one of the first works visitors will encounter at the biennial. A chandelier of medicinal flowers, suspended from the interior dome of the bazaar, can be considered the first of the three-part installation – even though the biennial's curation and layout make it difficult to pinpoint an exact starting point.

Developed by Tashkent artist Munisa Kholkhujaeva in collaboration with Anton Nozhenko, the work draws on Ibn Sina's medicinal plant studies and ancient Central Asian rituals to trace the cycle of life, death and renewal. As mentioned in the guide book – an essential resource for visitors as none of the works are accompanied by plaques – the piece was also inspired by the practices of Tillaev Abdu Mubinjon. a local herbalist in Bukhara's bazaar.

Spanning several biennial sites, *Through Bloom and Decay* continues as a healing tea room in Gavkushon Madrasa, then as metallic cubes etched with plant imagery at Rashid Madrasa. Together, they nod towards the biennial's cyclical curation. Its Ibn Sina influences, meanwhile, resonate with the large theme of the biennial: Recipes for Broken Hearts.

"The title comes from the national dish of Uzbekistan," says Diana Campbell, artistic director of the biennial. "It's called plov. There's a myth that Ibn Sina, who is the father of modern medicine and who is from Bukhara, invented this rice dish to cure the broken heart of a prince who couldn't marry the daughter of a craftsman.

"A biennial cannot heal the many, many heartbreaks of the world. I think we're living in very heartbreaking times, but maybe it can help heal certain problems in the art system, which I think are unfair crediting of makers versus ideators."

The culinary resonance of the biennial's theme is manifested in several works. Indian artist Subodh Gupta's installation, *Salt Carried by the Wind*, which is placed outside the Ayozjon Caravanserai evokes the bonds and poetry of shared meals. The work is made from mass-produced enamelware common in Uzbek homes, remnants of Soviet-era cooking utensils.

In form, it responds to the nearby Magoki Attori mosque, which was once a Zoroastrian temple, and later a synagogue and carpet museum. Inside, the pavilion is decked with tableware made in collaboration with Uzbek ceramicist Baxtiyor Nazirov. The juxtaposition sets artisanal craft against industrial form. The installation itself is only one facet of the work. Gupta himself cooks and serves food there, turning the kitchen into a performance and its meals into a ritual.

Egyptian artist Laila Gohar's work also focuses on food and the way it brings people together. Her installation *Navat Uy*, developed with Ilkhom Shoyimkulov, uses the traditional Central Asian rock sugar as a building material. The pavilion is walled by long strands of navat, which are gradually melting as grape syrup to the ground. This erosion brings to mind the knowledge and tastes that risk being lost, particularly when considering how navat was largely superseded by industrial sugar.

While the aforementioned artworks are presented in the district's public spaces, several are interspersed within its historic structures. These include the caravanserais. Built in the 18th and 19th centuries, the roadside inns once housed merchants and served as centres of trade in dishware and tobacco.

At the entrance of the Ayozjon Caravanserai, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur draws on the Shireg ritual, in which molten pewter is poured into water to reveal latent fears. The Mongolian artist recalls his own childhood encounters with the ritual, adapting by casting pewter on to canvas, which is then embroidered by Uzbek suzani maker Sanoat Abduraximova and displayed over the arched recesses of the facade.

Further inside the caravanserai, Wael Shawky turns to Bukhara's legacy as the Copper City, or Madinat al-Sufriya. The Egyptian artist, whose work often explores the intersection between myth and history, collaborates on his installation with artisan Jurabek Siddikov. Their copper panels draw from the vibrancy and storytelling of Persian and Central Asian manuscripts.

While one part of their untitled work hangs from a wall and bears the bordered designs often found in the illuminated manuscripts, the other features tiled copper panels, from the centre of which sprouts a palm tree, perhaps implying how history, like craft, branches forward and upwards from deep roots.

The biennial continues at the Gavkushon Madrasa, a 16th-century centre of learning in Bukhara with its library, prayer hall and many rooms. One of the event's most awe-inspiring works are presented here.

Blue Room was created by Bukharian ceramic artist Abdulvahid Bukhoriy. The installation decks the former prayer hall of Gavkushon Madrasa entirely with handmade tiles glazed with a deep blue derived from plants. At its centre hangs a brass and copper sculpture created with coppersmith Jurabek Siddikov. The chandelier-like installation incorporates imagery of algae, fish and flowing water.

"One of my deepest concerns is reviving blue ceramics, not by replenishing what's lost, but by using ancient techniques to shape something entirely new," Bukhoriy said in a statement about the work. "In tradition, we find not endings, but beginnings."

The final section of the biennial unfolds at the Rashid Madrasa, a former school from the 18th century. The artworks here come as ways to heal and process heartbreak.

Palestine is represented here, in the only artwork that utilises materials from outside Uzbekistan. *Standing by the Ruins IV* is the latest in the series by Saudi-Palestinian artist Dana Awartani, previous iterations of which were exhibited at Art Dubai.

Installed in the courtyard of the Rashid Madrasa, the work recreates floor patterns from Gaza's Hamam al-Sammara, demolished in 2023, using clay from Palestine. Collaborating with Uzbek ceramicist Behzod Turdiyev, Awartani restores its lost motifs, reflecting on the destruction of cultural heritage through both material and craft.

"Every project is, in essence, a process of mending a broken heart," Awartani says in a statement about the work. "The heartbreak is embedded in the material itself – in the earth, in the soil – which those of us living in exile and diaspora can never fully possess."

The strong Arab representation at the biennial extends to beyond its core venue. *On Weaving*, the inaugural Musalla Prize winner, first unveiled at the Islamic Arts Biennial in Jeddah earlier this year and then displayed at the Venice Architecture Biennale, is now being presented near the famous Ark of Bukhara, a fort built in the fifth century. Specifically, it has been set up near the west gate of Kalyan Mosque.

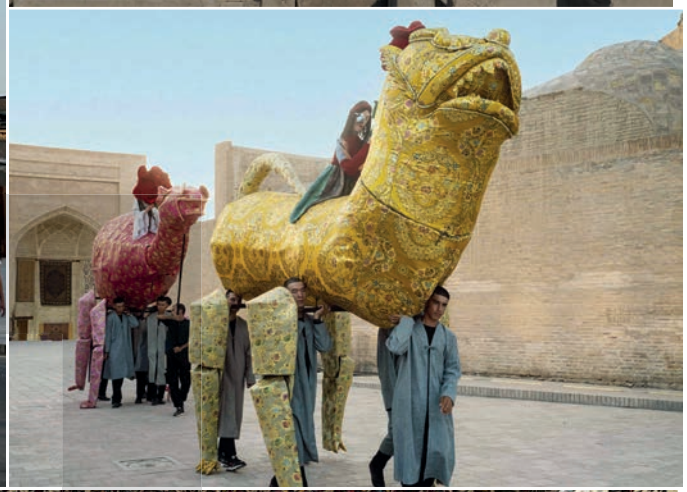
The site is fitting given the nature of the installation. *On Weaving* is the result of a collaboration between East Architecture Studio, the UK engineering firm AKT II and Lebanese visual artist Rayyane Tabet, who is best known for his sculpture. The project reimagines a communal prayer space as a modular structure built from recycled palm-tree waste. It comprises stacked cubic forms, with panels walled with thin vertical weaves, which have been naturally dyed in vibrant blues, yellows, reds and greens.

The rugs that have been fitted in the prayer areas have also been woven and dyed using a similar approach. The mud floor is left unfinished, instilling an earthy and welcoming atmosphere in the space.

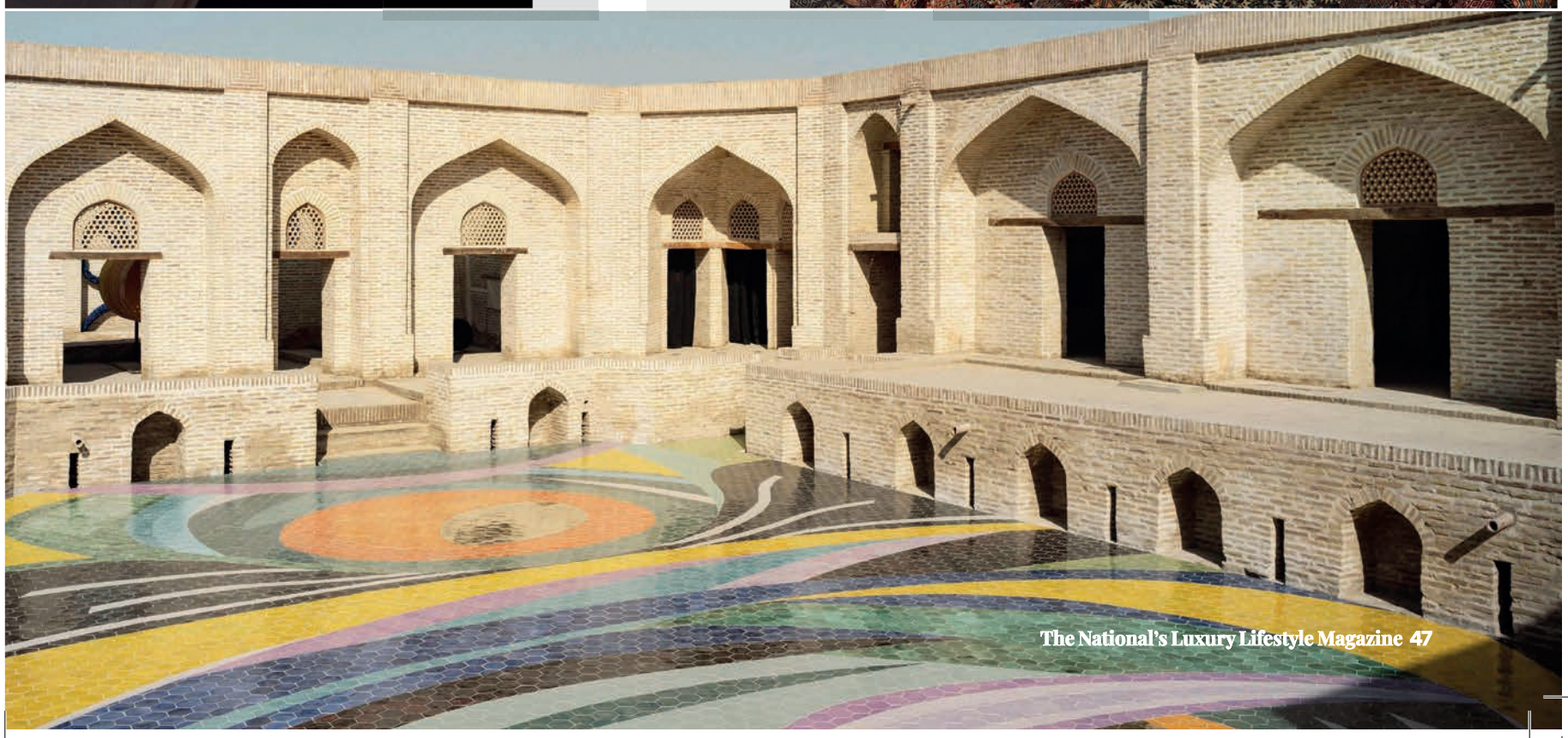
The work may be displayed outside the main venue of the biennial, but it elegantly echoes the event's ethos of bringing the past to the present through craft and collaboration.

Bukhara Biennial is running until November 20

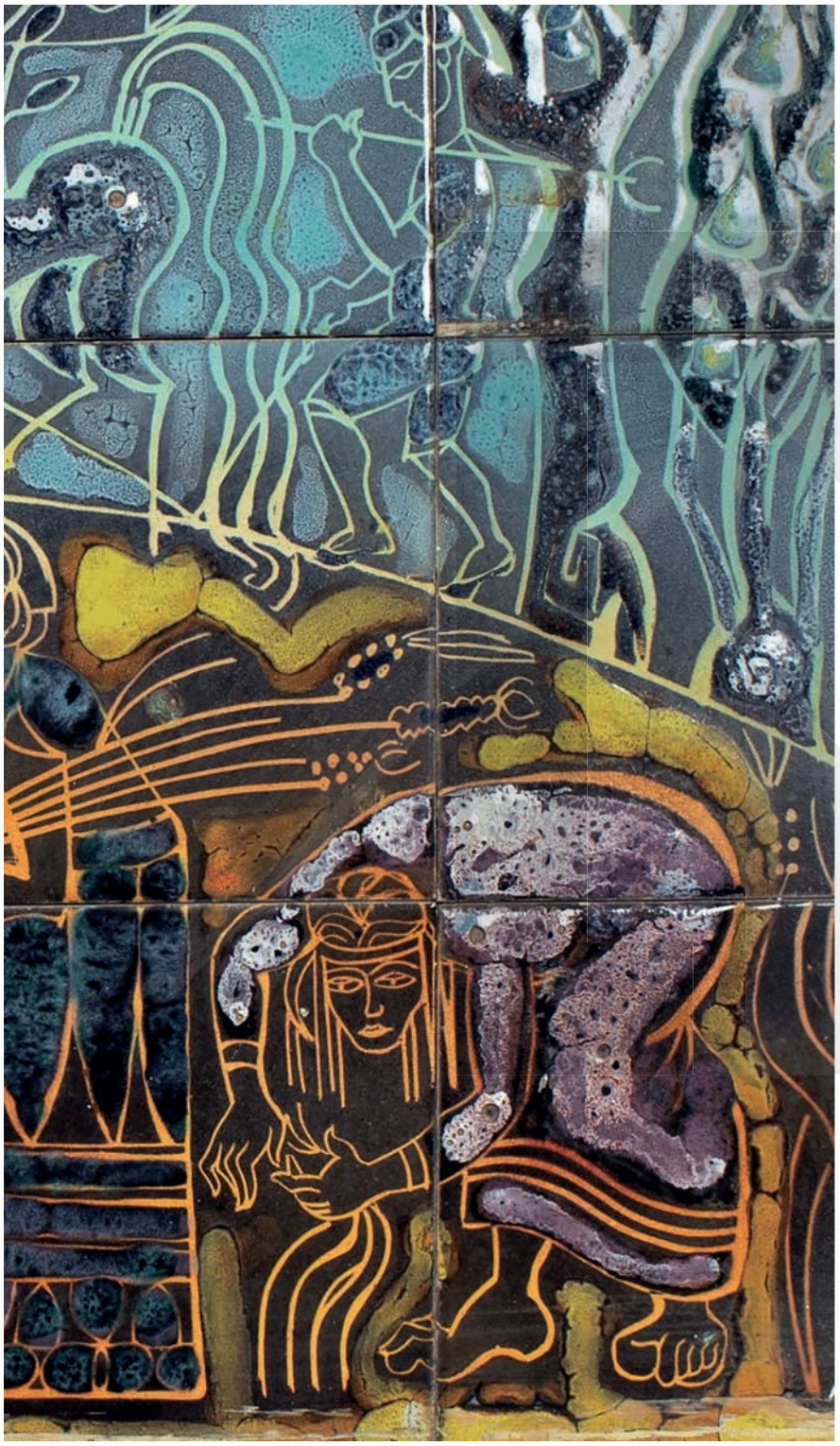
RAZMIG BEDIRIAN / THE NATIONAL; ADRIEN DIRAND; BUKHARA BIENNIAL



Clockwise from above, On Weaving by East Architecture Studio, AKT II, and Lebanese artist Rayyane Tabet; Close by British artist Antony Gormley with Temur Jumaev; Safar by Bangladeshi artist Kamruzzaman Shadhin with Zavkiddin Yodgorov; Salt Carried by the Wind by Indian artist Subodh Gupta with Baxtiyor Nazirov; an untitled work by Brazilian artist Marina Perez Simão with Bakhtiyar Babamuradov; and Kinships and Cosmologies by Kuwaiti artist Samah Hijawi with Ahmad Arabov and Makhfuza Salimova



Agriculture (1964) by
Tunisian-French artist
Fela Kefi-Leroux



BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION

HORIZON IN THEIR HANDS

The craft-rooted practices of female Arab artists are in focus at a collaborative exhibition between Ithra museum in Saudi Arabia and Sharjah's Barjeel Art Foundation, writes **Razmig Bedirian**

The zigzagging patterns of rural Moroccan art brim over the frame in Fatna Gbouri's canvases; Vera Tamari depicts daily life in Palestine using ceramics, with her figures, women with clay jugs, seemingly stepping out from the reliefs; while Mounirah Mosly embeds Saudi textile fragments into paint and works with palm-tree fibre.

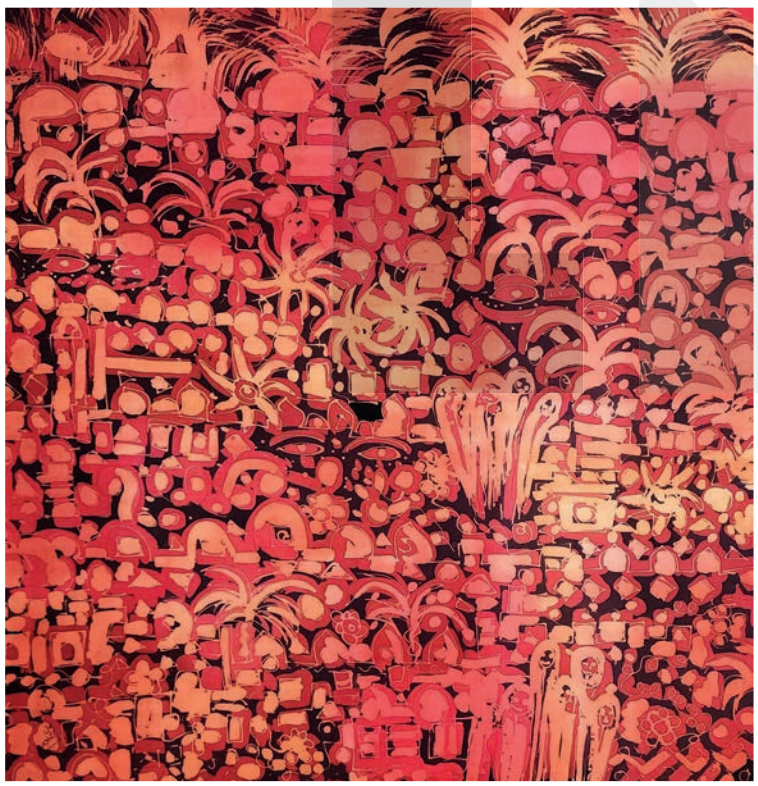
For years, such work was dismissed by many institutional settings, treated as secondary to painting and sculpture. But the way female Arab artists embraced craft, particularly in the third quarter of the 20th century, was sharply reflective of the geopolitics of the time.

The region was emerging from colonial rule, and embracing its handicrafts and artistic traditions was a means of asserting cultural identity. Ultimately, these artists helped cement modernism on local terms. They unravelled traditional boundaries of what can and should be considered art.

Horizon in their Hands, Barjeel Art Foundation's first exhibition in Saudi Arabia, showcases these contributions in collaboration with King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture – Ithra. Taking place in the centre's museum, the exhibition brings together 50 artists from across the Arab world, whose work from the 1960s to 1980s helped shape the region's visual and cultural narratives.

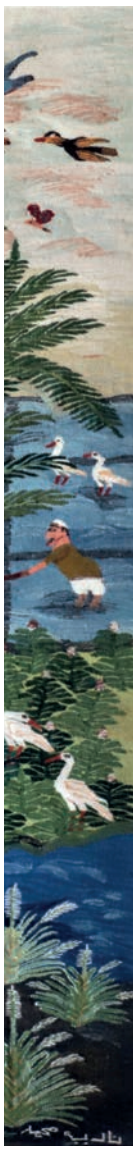
Paintings by Safeya Binzagr document Saudi traditions, Emirati artist Najat Makki deftly incorporates henna into abstract compositions, textiles by Safia Farhat draw on Tunisian heritage, while batik silks by Saudi's Mona Al Munajjed explore the intersection between art and craft. The works together show how mediums dubbed as decorative and relegated to craft helped propel Arab modernism.

This exhibition represents a shared commitment to amplify narratives that have often been overlooked in modern art history



BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION; MONA AL MUNAJJED; GETTY IMAGES

Above, Palms and Fields Tapestry (2021) by Egyptian artist Nadia Mohammed
Left, Dreams Come True in Saudi (2022) by Mona Al Munajjed
Opposite page, King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture – Ithra, in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia



"This exhibition represents a shared commitment to recover and amplify narratives that have often been overlooked in modern art history," Suheyla Takesh, director of Barjeel Art Foundation, said during her speech at the exhibition's opening.

"At the heart of this endeavour is a celebration of the women artists from the Arab world. Their contributions between the 1960s and the 1980s continued to shape the contours of modernism, but sadly, too often they remain underrepresented in the stories we tell about art."

Curated by Remi Homs, the exhibition grew out of Barjeel Art Foundation's ongoing drive to increase the representation of female artists in its collection.

"It started after our show in the US called Taking Shape, focusing on the development of abstraction from the Arab world," Homs says. As the team was putting together a list of the artworks for the 2020 exhibition, they found there was an under-representation of women. "This led to the process of taking more time to research and to find new names."

That initiative reached a declarative high point earlier this year, with an exhibition at Sharjah's Maraya Art Centre. Titled Nadia Saikali & Her Contemporaries, it exclusively presented works by women artists in the Arab world, showcasing the strides they made in abstract art in the 20th century. Beirut was a focal point of the exhibition, showing the role the city played as a hub for female artists from across the region.

Horizon in Their Hands highlights another commonality. "We wanted to show that there are so many connections to be made," Homs says. "There are so many things to unpack. The easiest way to proceed would have been to have the top 50 women artists from the Barjeel connections, but we wanted something more academic."

The role of craft became evident. Artists across the Arab world, particularly women, began utilising traditional techniques and handicrafts in novel ways. The results were varied and moulded by specific cultural, political and personal influences.

Sometimes, there were overlaps. The exhibition highlights these connections eloquently. Makki's henna and acrylic *Window* (1987) is displayed beside Jumana El Husseini's *Marriage* (1974), which also makes use of henna and subtly evokes the significance of the material in matrimonial celebrations.

As Tamari depicted Palestinian women at work with her 1974 ceramic relief, Tunisian artist Fela Kefi-Leroux was also working with the same material, such as in her glazed and tiled work titled *Agriculture* (1964).

Then there were those who were rethinking the possibility of crafts alongside emerging technologies. Saikali's *Geodesic Landscape* (1972) was scoffed at when it was first exhibited, but the light sculpture, a convex work within which translucent panels glow with a polychrome vibrancy, is now considered as a visionary statement piece by the Lebanese artist. Egyptian-French author Joyce Mansour, meanwhile, took another route, using discarded metal and mixed media to create forms reminiscent of human organs.

The diversity is present even within a specific genre. Tapestry works, for instance, include Farhat's famous *The Bride* (1963), a woven work that depicts a Tunisian woman in traditional wedding attire.

But there are also examples from Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre, an institution in Giza, Egypt, dedicated to preserving tapestry-making, with works depicting flora and fauna such as Nadia Mohammed's *Garden Plants* (2021) and the wonderfully meta Reda Ahmed's *Wool Yarn Dyeing at the Centre* (2004).

Al Munajjed's silk works, meanwhile, take a wholly different approach, applying the ancient batik technique, where wax-resist dyeing is used to make intricate patterns, to depict the urban landscape of old Jeddah, with vibrant, kaleidoscopic patterns that leap from the silk.

"There is a great diversity to the techniques," the curator explains. "For me, I knew all the textiles within the collection, but then there were all these techniques that I wasn't very knowledgeable in. It was amazing to see curatorially."

The exhibition's curation draws from Ithra's curving and cohesive architecture. The core thread of the exhibition touches upon the rapid modernisation of cities in the Arab world, such as with Egyptian artist Zeinab Abdel Hamid's *Popular District* (1956), a painting that shows a newly installed tramway in juxtaposition with traditional carts and street vendors. It then moves to explore how artists were reclaiming local craft practices and revisiting Islamic art legacies.

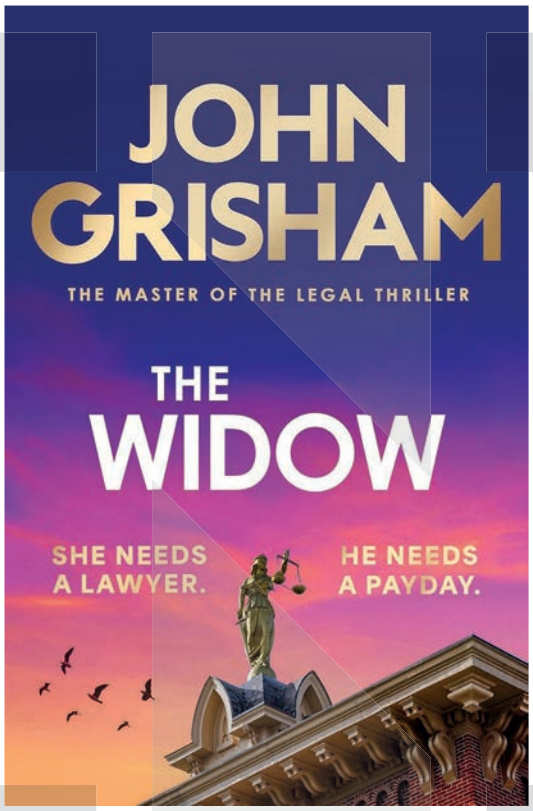
Breakout spaces, meanwhile, delve into the works and techniques of artists such as Binzagr, Al-Munajjed, Farhat, as well as the Wissa Wassef Art Centre. "We wanted to have a free-floating curation," Homs says. "Visitors can see the exhibition however they want, understand different points of entries and these complex relationships."

Farah Abushullaih, head of Ithra museum, says Horizon in their Hands directly responds to Ithra's mission of "preserving legacies, amplifying diverse voices, and inspiring dialogue between past, present and future. Through this institutional collaboration that foregrounds under-represented narratives in Arab art, this exhibition is set to become a milestone in Ithra's mission of nurturing creativity and cultural dialogue across the region and beyond."

Horizon in their Hands is at Ithra Museum, Saudi Arabia, until February 14

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



THE WIDOW BY JOHN GRISHAM (HODDER & STOUGHTON)

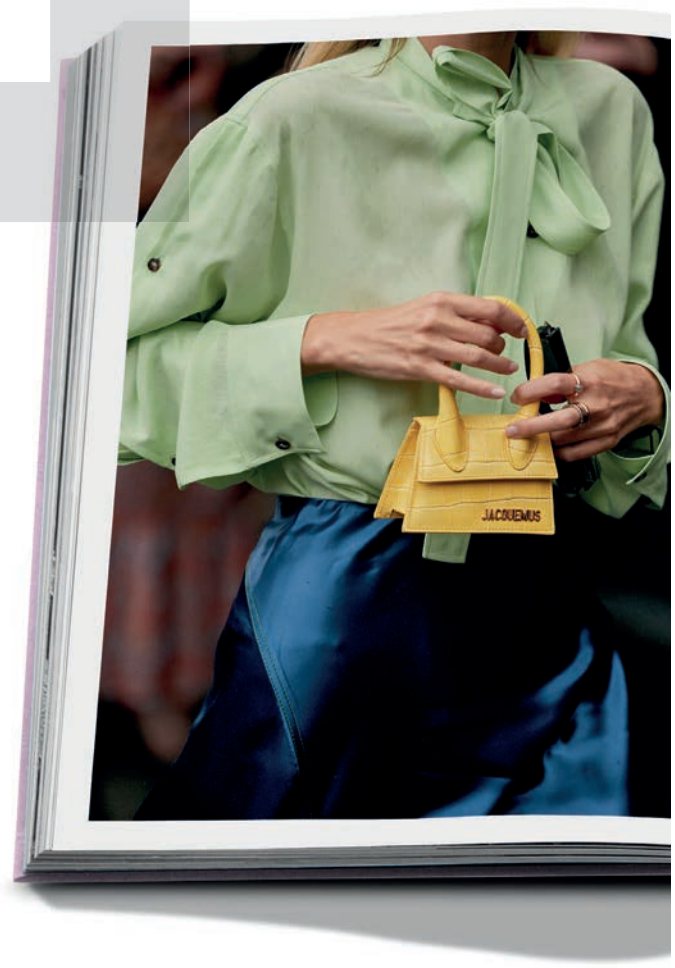
John Grisham, the undisputed master of the legal thriller, is back with something new – his first-ever whodunit. *The Widow* takes all the sharp turns of his courtroom dramas and adds the locked-room intrigue of a classic murder mystery. At its centre is Simon Latch, a small-town lawyer in rural Virginia, barely scraping by as his marriage falls apart. His luck seems to change when Eleanor Barnett, an elderly widow with a hidden fortune, hires him to rewrite her will. Suddenly, Simon has the richest client of his career and a chance at redemption. But what looks like an opportunity, quickly twists into a nightmare. Eleanor's story begins to fray, strange accidents follow, and when she ends up in hospital after a crash, the secrets surrounding her wealth come into question. Then Eleanor is dead, and Simon is accused of murder. With circumstantial evidence mounting, he finds himself fighting for not only his reputation, but also his freedom, forced to unravel the truth before the jury delivers a verdict that could end his life.

Nasri Atallah, TN Magazine editor

BETTER DAYS BY YELLOWCARD (BETTER NOISE MUSIC)

American rock band Yellowcard has released *Better Days*, the lead single and title track from their 11th studio album, out on October 10. Known for early-2000s hits such as *Ocean Avenue, Lights and Sounds, Way Away* and *Only One*, the band worked with Travis Barker on the record, with the Blink-182 drummer contributing on every track. The song reflects Yellowcard's renewed focus since their 2022 reunion, pairing upbeat energy with lyrics about growth and resilience. For those who grew up with their music, the new album carries a strong sense of nostalgia.

Evenly Lau, assistant features editor



TRICK 'R TREAT LIMITED-EDITION STEELBOOK 4K (ARROW VIDEO)

Since its 2007 release, Michael Dougherty's *Trick 'r Treat* has cemented its status as a Halloween classic. What began as a cult favourite has steadily grown into essential October viewing. Dougherty – who went on to direct *Krampus* and *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* – assembled a cast including Anna Paquin, Brian Cox, Dylan Baker and Leslie Bibb for a series of interwoven stories unfolding over one Halloween night. At the centre is Sam, the small but sinister figure who enforces the holiday's rules and has since become a modern horror icon. The film endures for its blend of genuine chills and a playful spirit, capturing Halloween's essence in a way few others can. This October, *Trick 'r Treat* returns in a 4K Blu-ray steelbook edition – definitively presenting one of contemporary horror's most beloved seasonal tales for both long-time admirers and new audiences.
Faisal Al Zaabi, gaming and social media writer

CHAT ISKANDARIA BY FAIRUZ (WEWANTSOUNDS)

While Fairuz's experimental and adventurous later-career collaborations with her late son Ziad Rahbani have received increasing attention in recent years, her reputation was first established through the classical Arabic arrangements of Ziad's father, Assi Rahbani, and his brother, Mansour. With her 1987 album *Chat Iskandaria*, Fairuz returned to her Rahbani Brothers roots at the height of her powers, and the result is one of the best recordings of her career. In a remastered first-ever vinyl pressing, courtesy of French label Wewantsounds, her vocal work is superlative and crystal clear (unlike recordings in this vein from decades earlier), and the lush orchestral arrangements are often hypnotic. A breathtaking must-have for Fairuz fans.
William Mullally, arts & culture editor

THE BOOK OF ICONIC BAGS (ASSOULINE)

Our obsession with handbags isn't fading anytime soon, and luxury publisher Assouline is acknowledging that with its latest title: *The Book of Iconic Bags*. Created in collaboration with Fashionphile, the US e-commerce platform for pre-owned luxury bags and accessories, the book spotlights 25 of the most influential designs of all time. Chosen not only for their craftsmanship and beauty, but also for their cultural relevance, investment potential and enduring mystique, the selection ranges from Hermès's record-breaking Birkin and Kelly to Carrie Bradshaw's beloved Fendi Baguette, the Dior Saddle and viral newcomers from Bottega Veneta and Loewe. Complete with striking imagery, rich histories and expert insights, the volume celebrates bags that have shaped the fashion landscape, shining a light on a product often described as the holy grail of luxury accessories.
David Tusing, assistant features editor

THE WATCHLIST

Spooky season is here, bringing a line-up of thrillers and horror movies worth sinking your teeth into. **David Tusing** lists the top Halloween flicks for the month

1 THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10 (NETFLIX)
Based on a 2016 book by Ruth Ware, the film stars Keira Knightley. She plays Lo Blacklock, a journalist who, while aboard a luxury yacht on assignment, witnesses a person being thrown overboard. When she raises an alarm, she's told by everyone she must have dreamt it, as all passengers are accounted for.

Despite not being believed by anyone, she continues to look for answers, putting her own life in danger. The excellent cast includes Guy Pearce, Hannah Waddingham, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and David Ajala.

■ October 10

2 MURDAUGH: DEATH IN THE FAMILY (DISNEY+)
The disturbing saga of the Murdaugh family was chronicled in Netflix's six-part 2023 documentary *Murdaugh Murders: A Southern Scandal*. Family patriarch Alex, on trial at the time, was later sentenced to life without parole for killing his wife and son.

Now Hulu is retelling the family's story in a much-anticipated drama, starring Jason Clarke as Alex and Patricia Arquette as his wife, Maggie. Born into wealth, the Murdaughs wielded influence over judges, police and even jurors in the courtroom, which explains why many other deaths that were linked to them were swept under the carpet.

Arquette won an Emmy in 2019 for another Hulu show based on a true crime story. In *The Act*, she played Dee Dee Blanchard who, for years, successfully convinced family, friends and a host of medical professionals and charities that her daughter Gypsy Rose suffered from leukaemia and muscular dystrophy, and had a mental age of seven.

■ October 15

3 TOGETHER (CINEMAS)
Real-life married actors Dave Franco and Alison Brie star in this horror film about a couple who move to the countryside in an attempt to mend their broken relationship. There, they encounter a supernatural force who begins to physically fuse them together, as the story delves into themes of codependency and intimacy.

Together has received rave reviews from critics, with Rotten Tomatoes saying Franco and Brie are "at the top of their game" in the film.

■ October 16

4 GOOD FORTUNE (CINEMAS)
It's not all darkness and gore this month. Aziz Ansari makes his directorial debut in this comedy starring Keanu Reeves as a "budget" guardian angel, Gabriel. After Gabriel's well-meaning but ultimately disastrous decision to swap the lives of a poor man (Aziz Ansari as Arj) and a rich man (Seth Rogen as Jeff), he loses his wings and crashes in with the now-poor Jeff, as he tries to rebuild his identity. Sandra Oh, Keke Palmer and Sherry Cola also star.

■ October 16

5 DOWN CEMETERY ROAD (APPLE TV+)
Oscar-winner Emma Thompson plays a private investigator in this thriller based on Mick Herron's 2003 book of the same name. The story begins when a house explodes in a quiet Oxford suburb and a girl disappears. Neighbour Sarah Tucker (Ruth Wilson), who becomes obsessed with finding the missing girl, enlists the help of Zoe Boehm (Thompson). The duo soon find themselves caught up in a conspiracy, where they discover people who were believed to be dead are still among the living.

■ October 29

NETFLIX; DISNEY+; NEON; LIONSGATE; APPLE TV+


1


2


3


4


5

SCIENCE OF CALM

Dana Alomar rounds up five innovations designed to help restore and recharge

1 SOUNDCORE SLEEP A20 BY ANKER
Designed for overnight comfort, the Soundcore Sleep A20 earbuds are slim and secure enough to be worn even by side sleepers. They feature two modes: Bluetooth for streaming and Sleep Mode for built-in masking sounds that can play all night.

With up to 14 hours of playback per charge (and 80 hours with the charging case), plus access to customisable soundscapes on the accompanying app, they provide a discreet solution for peaceful rest.

- From Dh661

2 MOONBIRD
Moonbird is a handheld breathing coach that expands and contracts in your palm, guiding you through slow, steady breathing exercises.

Its tactile rhythm encourages calmer, deeper breaths to help reduce stress and improve focus. Paired with a companion app that offers guided sessions and biofeedback, it delivers meditation and relaxation training in a pocket-sized form, without the need to look at a screen.

- From Dh770

3 THERABODY RECOVERYAIR PRO
Therabody's RecoveryAir Pro massage boots use dynamic air compression to accelerate muscle recovery and improve circulation.

With customisable pressure settings ranging from 20 to 100 mmHg, fast 60-second inflation and deflation cycles, as well as several preset and manual modes, the system delivers a deep, restorative massage experience for the legs and feet. Rechargeable and portable, it is designed for both athletes and wellness enthusiasts seeking faster, more effective recovery at home.

- From Dh4,770

4 NEUROVIZR
A wearable brain fitness device that uses light and sound stimulation to support cognitive performance, stress reduction and restorative sleep, the NeuroVizr is designed to enhance brain health through targeted neuro-activation patterns – blending neuroscience with consumer wellness.

A lightweight device, it comes with an app that features a library of more than 100 multisensory sessions, which are all included with purchase. With hundreds of light and sound sessions to choose from, users can enjoy a sensory experience without any spoken instructions.

- From Dh2,200

5 TECKWAVE'S URBANGLOW INFRARED SAUNA
The UrbanGlow Full Spectrum Infrared Sauna brings spa-level therapy into the home. Using near, mid and far infrared wavelengths, it delivers gentle heat that supports circulation, detoxification and relaxation.

Built with premium wood and glass for a sleek, modern finish, it serves as both a wellness tool and a statement piece – an immersive sanctuary for body and mind.

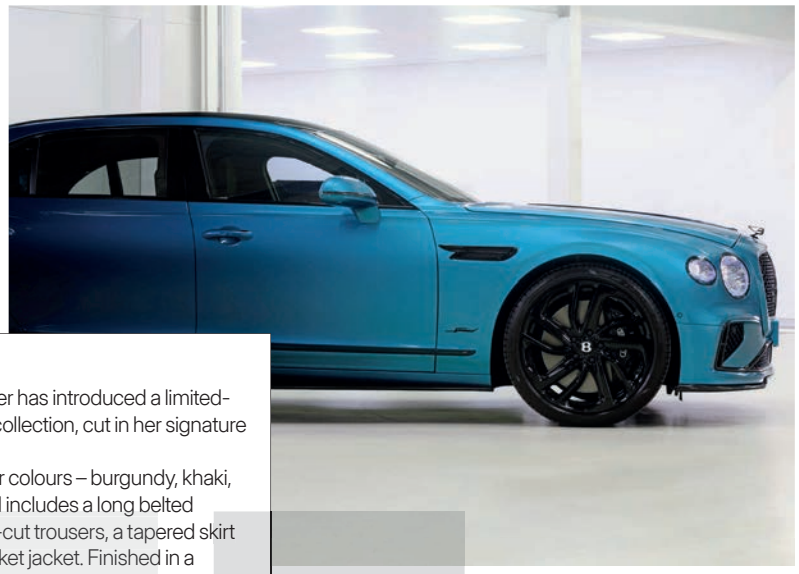
- From Dh15,000

GIANVITO ROSSI
For its autumn/winter collection, Italian shoe house Gianvito Rossi has reimagined its famed Gianvito 105 in a spectrum of vibrant tones.

A signature style for the brand, the stiletto is defined by its sleek 105mm heel and sharp pointed toe, crafted by hand in Italy. This season, it appears in matte suede, refreshed in a palette of new colours, transforming a classic into a modern showstopper.

BLACK BOOK

Our round-up of the most interesting and noteworthy arrivals in the world of fashion, fragrance, accessories and automobiles



DIMA AYAD

The Lebanese designer has introduced a limited-edition vegan leather collection, cut in her signature oversized silhouettes.

The range spans four colours – burgundy, khaki, brown and black – and includes a long belted trench, a gilet, straight-cut trousers, a tapered skirt and a boxy patch-pocket jacket. Finished in a mock-croc texture with a rich, leather-like sheen, the pieces are designed for those seeking cruelty-free staples for autumn dressing.

"This collection represents what autumn means to us in Dubai," says founder and designer Dima Ayad. "I wanted to create leather staples that feel timeless and effortless."

BENTLEY

Bentley has unveiled its new Ombré by Mulliner paint finish on the four-door Flying Spur sedan.

In addition to hand-building its cars, the British marque now offers an exclusive gradient that blends two colours along the bodywork, with the Flying Spur shifting seamlessly from metallic Topaz Blue to Windsor Blue. The process takes more than 60 hours and the expertise of two specialist paint technicians, resulting in a colour transition so subtle it is almost imperceptible. Other ombré combinations include Tungsten Grey to Onyx Black and Sunburst Gold to Orange Flame, with further options coming soon.

BALENCIAGA

Balenciaga has unveiled its first perfume collection in decades, inspired by a fragrance the house originally launched in 1947.

Long thought lost, a few samples were unearthed in the archives, forming the basis of this new homage to founder Cristóbal Balenciaga. The collection comprises 10 distinct scents, each bearing an unexpected name, from To Be Decided and No Comment to Le Dix – literally "The Ten", a reference to the couture house's first address. Presented in bottles with handwritten style labels, each refillable flacon is finished with a hand-tied ribbon and priced at Dh1,175.

GIVENCHY

First unveiled on the autumn/winter 2025 Givenchy by Sarah Burton runway, the Pinch Bag draws inspiration from the folding, cutting and pinching techniques of handicraft that spark fresh ideas.

Crafted in natural-grained box leather, the design resembles an envelope, its folds held in place by curved, gold-finished brackets. With its sharp yet rounded silhouette, the Pinch is offered in three sizes and a crisp palette of black and ivory, gold and silver, alongside seasonal shades of deep red and acid yellow. The medium and small versions of the bag feature a concealed mirror – a discreet touch of utility.

ONE LAST THING

Ghazi Al Mulaifi

Ghazi Al Mulaifi has been introducing Kuwaiti pearl diving music to a new generation through his jazz-fusion band Boom.Diwan. In addition to releasing *Live in the Khaleej*, a collaboration with Grammy Award-winning Afro-Cuban pianist Arturo O'Farrill, and leading the ensemble at European festivals and on stages including the Lincoln Centre in New York, Al Mulaifi is a musicologist at NYU Abu Dhabi, where he has spent years reviving and reimagining this cultural tradition.

We sat down with him and got him to answer our One Last Thing questionnaire.

What is your favourite time of day and why?
Three or four in the morning, when everybody's asleep. It's quiet, I can think, and it feels peaceful.

What is your favourite restaurant anywhere in the world?
Raku in New York City. It doesn't exist any more, but it was a neighbourhood sushi spot where you always felt at home.

When was the first time you realised your parents were human?
I don't know when the first time was.

What do you want to be when you grow up?
A musician. I don't want to grow up, really. I want to keep dreaming, my feet on the ground and my head in the clouds.

Do you have any hidden talents?
I'm a mean cook.

What is your favourite book?
The Path is the Goal. It's based in Tibetan philosophy and says life's journey is the goal, not the destination.

What type of music can't you stand?
Anything shallow, anything cutesy and music that's generally not good.

What puts you in a bad mood?
People not being kind. I take it personally, even if it has nothing to do with me.

What can you not live without?
Music and family.

Dream dinner guests?
Miles Davis and Ravel.

Sitting on the sofa or out with friends?
On the sofa. It's impossible to get me out sometimes.

What smell takes you straight back to childhood?
The smells of my family and food.

What food takes you back to childhood?
Food from my family, for sure.

Which city do you love but would hate to live in?
New York City. I love it, but it's very difficult to live in.

> I want to keep dreaming, my feet on the ground and my head in the clouds

Can you play a musical instrument?
I can kind of play guitar, kind of sing and kind of play percussion.

Have you ever been on a motorcycle?
Yes, I've owned motorcycles. At this point I'm not allowed to have one, but they're a beautiful symbol of freedom.

Any words to live by?
Don't take it too seriously, just do your best.

Biggest pet peeve?
People being late and unprepared. That's probably coming from a musical perspective.

Do you believe in aliens?
Yes. It's self-centred to think we're the only intelligent beings in the universe.

What is your favourite Arabic word?
Harta – it means being fed up or tired.

The most niche thing you watch on YouTube?
That Pedal Show. It's a guitar show and I've watched it for years; the people there even know who I am.

How do you take your tea?
Arabic tea with sugar and saffron.

What makes you cry?
Beauty makes me cry. Nature makes me cry. Good music makes me cry. Watching my son grow up makes me cry.

What do social algorithms think you're interested in?
On my personal account, mountains, snowboarding, cooking and humour.

TikTok or Instagram?
Instagram. I'm an old guy.

What is it about you that would surprise most people?
That I can be painfully shy. Those who know me, know me – but I'm profoundly private.

What was the last thing you did for the first time?
Exploring a new trail on a mountain I've been going to for 10 years.

As told to Saeed Saeed

RINA SRABONIAN

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