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BEIRUT BLING

Meet the jewellers who are giving
Lebanon's capital city a whole new reason to shine.

By LUCIE MUIR

During its annual design week in June, Beirut's creatives showed their latest jewellery, furniture and fashion collections at venues ranging from the poolside at the luxurious Le Gray Hotel to the independent boutiques located in the up-and-coming Mar Mikhael neighbourhood. The event also featured a series of workshops and culminated in a two-day design conference at the American University. This gave designers from the region and abroad a platform to discuss a broad range of creative topics. Now in its second year, the founders of Beirut Design Week, Maya Karanouh and Doreen Toutikian, have one goal: to make Beirut the new design capital of the Middle East. Judging by the following clutch of bespoke jewellers, this design hotspot is definitely one to watch.

RosaMaria

Rosy Abourous, the designer behind the RosaMaria Jewellery label, handcrafts signature cluster rings from silver and gold. She then tops them with precious stones including rubies, sapphires and rose-cut diamonds. The rings are designed to be worn one on top of the other on the same finger. The same goes for the designer's silver pendants, which are made with quartz, diamonds and topaz.

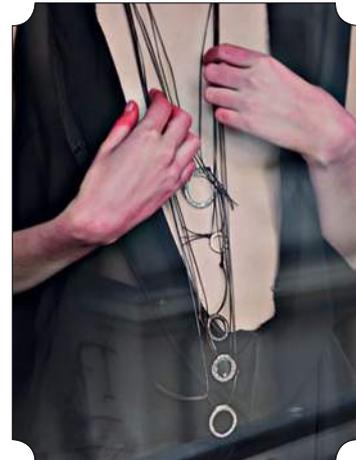
The jewellery designer's Beirut store, a fashion boutique-cum-art gallery, is housed in the industrial Mar Mikhael neighbourhood. "This area in particular is attracting

"You have to have thick skin to work here. We are very resilient. We never resign ourselves to giving up."

some really interesting designers and long-term investors, which in Beirut says a lot," Abourous points



Clockwise from above:
Abourous; silver and gold Olympe pendants; silver Beenu & Carrie rings.
Facing page: silver and gold Dhalia rings.



out. Her designs can also be found in select stores around the globe, including Russia, Japan and the UK.

Having worked in Beirut all through the civil war in the 1970s, Abourous has plenty of advice for young designers setting up shop here today.

"You have to have thick skin to live and work here," she says. "We are very resilient. We never resign ourselves to giving up."

www.rosamariajewellery.com



Nada Zeineh

In her rooftop showroom overlooking downtown Beirut, jeweller Nada Zeineh is busy putting the final touches to an ornate necklace. The delicate floral shapes are made using a decorative technique in which fine gold leaf is applied to metal.

"I love working with gilded brass as opposed to gold all the time," says Zeineh. Elsewhere in the collection, the designer looks to Islamic civilisations for inspiration.

The Lebanese jeweller founded her label in 2004. Before that, she trained as an architect, which could explain why so many of her pieces boast a geometric edge.

"It is hard for international buyers not to be put off by what they read about Beirut. But this is a place where work gets done. We have great materials and artisans right on our doorstep. Everything we create here is pretty incredible."

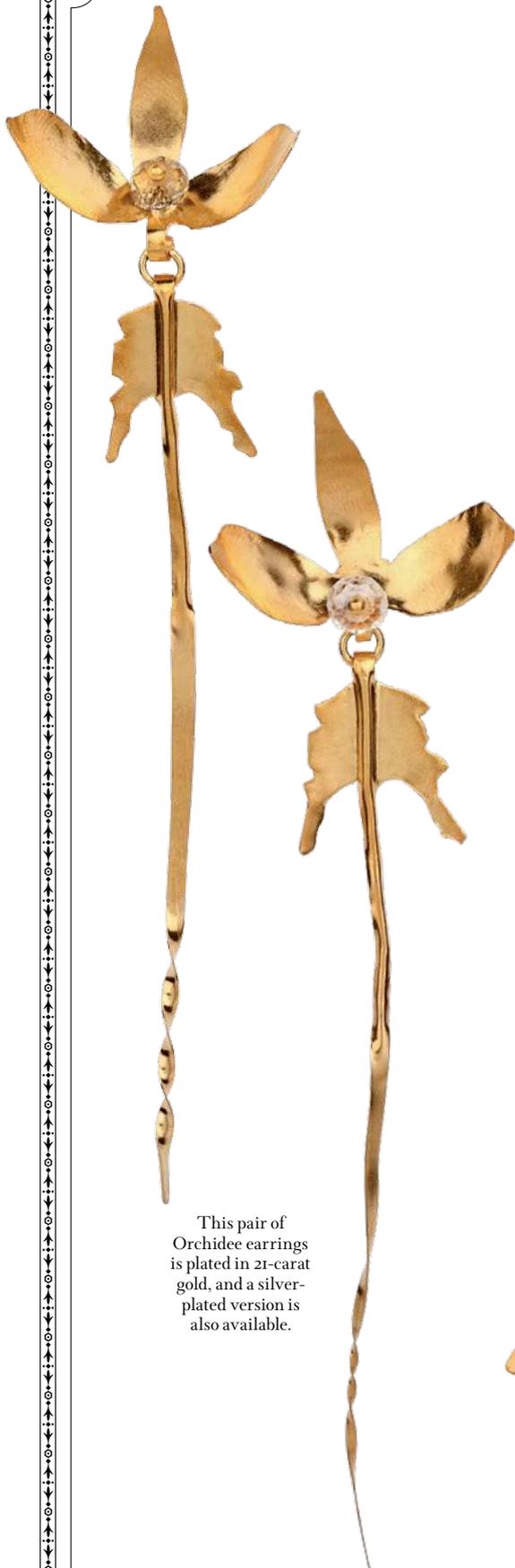
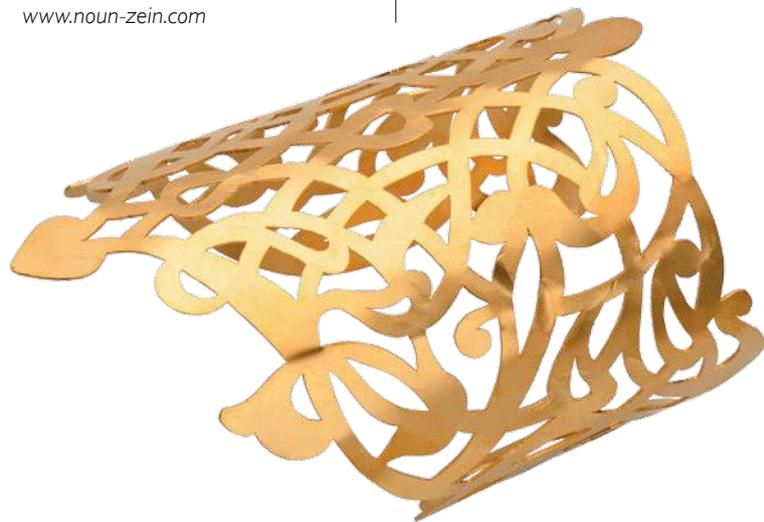
www.noun-zein.com



"We have great materials and artisans right on our doorstep. Everything we create is pretty incredible."



Clockwise from top:
Zeineh; Floralie earrings;
Arabesque cuff bracelet.



This pair of Orchidee earrings is plated in 21-carat gold, and a silver-plated version is also available.



Ghazal opened her second boutique at Beirut Souks, an upscale mall, in December 2010.

Nada G

Nada Ghazal's passion for jewellery-making is clear as she shows off the delicately tooled pieces from her latest collection. Each ring, earring and bracelet is handmade by local craftsmen.



tourmalines, combining them with 18-carat gold and diamonds. This can be seen in a series of limited-edition rings that feature tiny lizards cast from gold. Other show-stopping pieces include the Matrix ring, a geometric lattice weave made from thin strips of 18-carat gold. www.nadag.com

She has experimented with tourmalines, combining them with 18-carat gold and diamonds.

Ask this jewellery designer what makes her tick and she responds: "I'm intrigued with the connection between jewellery and emotions, the way in which my own feelings can translate into pieces."

Since launching her first collection in 2004, she has experimented with semi-precious



Clockwise from above left: Ghazal; oval Malak rings in 18-carat gold with diamonds; one-off Crawl ring featuring an 18-carat gold lizard on a tourmaline.

