

DELENG/2014/59909  
JUNE-JULY 2024, ₹200

# Harper's BAZAAR INDIA

THE REINVENTION ISSUE

ANASUYA  
SENGUPTA

A Star  
is Born





*Cartier*





IGA ŚWIĄTEK, ROLAND-GARROS



CARLOS ALCARAZ, WIMBLEDON



JANNIK SINNER, AUSTRALIAN OPEN



STEFANOS TSITSIPAS, ROLAND-GARROS



COCO GAUFF, US OPEN



## IN THE SERVICE OF VICTORY

**Tennis is about recognizing one's opponents.** The one across the net but also the one within. Game after game, ground after ground, one has to resist, resume, reinvent one's game to redefine the lines. **For it is only in the face of adversity that victory derives its true measure.**

*#Perpetual*



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# GUCCI

Alia Bhatt, Milan

*Eyewear, Spring Summer 2024*  
by David Sims





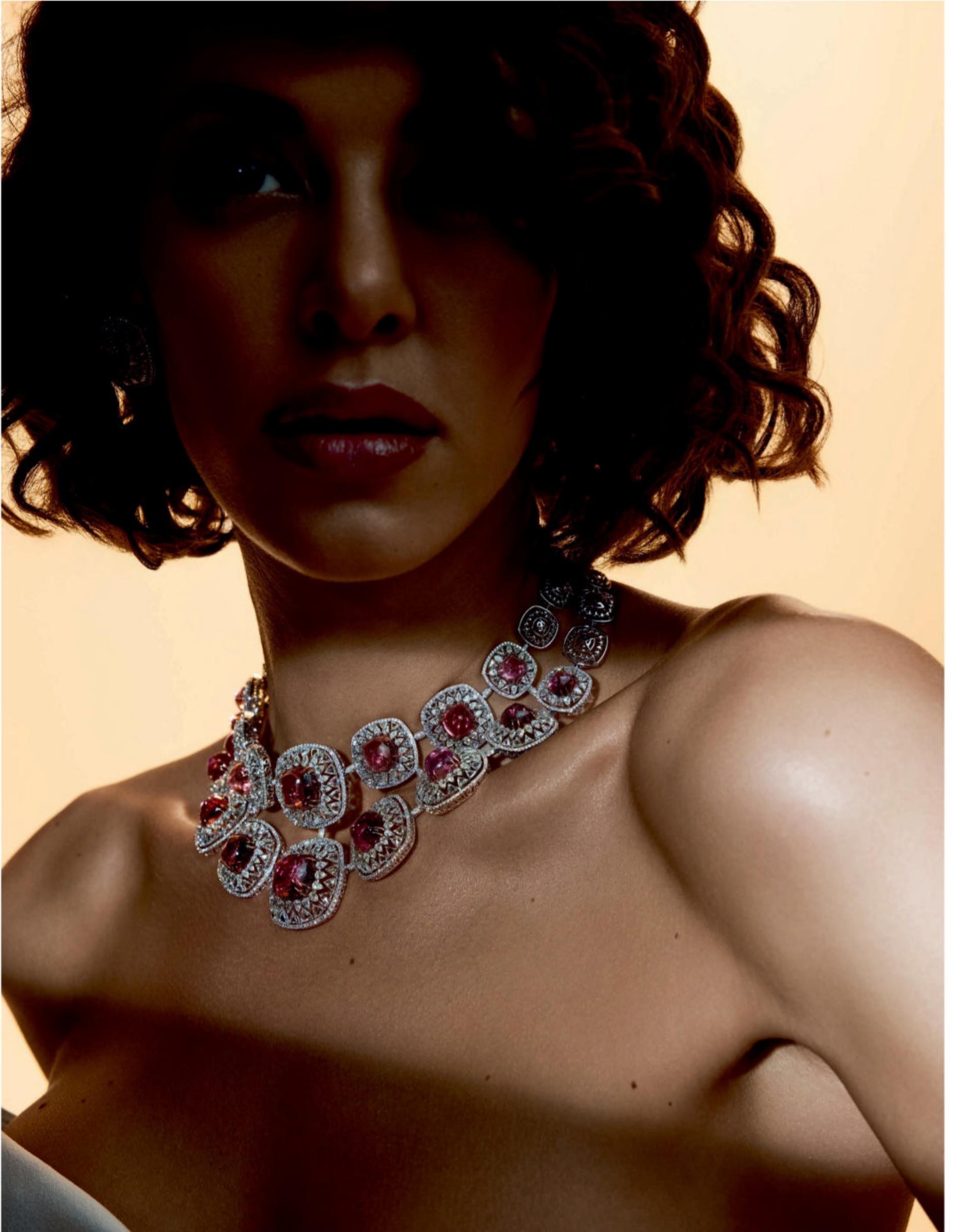
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OMARA

# C O N T E N T S

JUNE-JULY 2024



Zayn Malik



Violet Chachki

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JUNE-JULY 2024

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## Cover Look

**On the cover:** Anasuya Sengupta is wearing a white swimsuit; metal, resin and strass gold, pink and crystal ring, all **Chanel**; and earrings, own

Photographer: Bikramjit Bose; Styling: Priyanka Kapadia; Hair and Make-up: Mitesh Rajani; Assistant Photographer: Tushar Tara; Assistant Stylist: Humaira Lakdawala; Fashion Assistant: Iram Halai; Editorial Coordinator: Shalini Kanojia.

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Kiran Rao



Models showcase péro's collection

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Marine 9518 stainless steel watch with sunburst blue dial, Breguet, price on request

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# EDITOR'S LETTER

By the time you read this, I would have completed a year at *Bazaar India*—365 days of reinventing and reimagining not just the magazine, but myself as well. Every issue feels both like an adventure and an exam—constantly learning, improvising, and navigating through your feedback. We may not always get it right, but we learn and strive to make it better.

Reflecting on this special issue, I must be honest: a month ago, I didn't know much about our cover star Anasuya Sengupta. But I remember being captivated by a candid photo of her laughing on Instagram. Soon after, she became the first Indian to win the Best Actress award at the Cannes Film Festival for her debut film, *The Shameless*. She's not your regular red carpet attendee or part of the well-oiled PR machinery yet, but she won hearts with her confidence and charisma, reinventing the whole system for us in one go.

We shot with Anasuya on a cloudy morning on Mumbai's Juhu Beach. She exuded joy like no other, giving us a glimpse into her personality and making a rather gloomy day shine in her glory.

This month has been busier than usual for us, but it's been an absolute joy. Our digital cover stars, Violet Chachki and Zayn Malik, are both well-known celebrities in their own right. A common thread that ties the two is their passion to reinvent themselves. While Violet does it daily, transforming into her drag persona, Zayn has chosen a path that defies the typical life of a pop icon.

As you flip through the pages ahead, we hope you'll find something that both catches your eye and intrigues your mind—be it our feature on how women are repurposing their wedding jewellery and clothes after divorce as an exercise in empowerment, our take on beauty drips, the know-how of investing in a vintage jewellery item, or our curated list of the season's top trends.

I hope our features inspire you to chase a dream, learn something new, shop or voice opinions, after all Oscar de la Renta once famously said, "Every day you have to reinvent yourself." And while you do so, always remember to be kind.

Love and light,  
Rasna

*Rasna Bhasin*

EDITOR  
HARPER'S BAZAAR INDIA

## ON RASNA'S RADAR



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** *Once Upon a Time: The Captivating Life of Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy* by Elizabeth Beller, Gallery Books, ₹2,146; All of Me Eau De Parfum, Narciso Rodriguez, ₹4,790; Wavy metallic leather mules, Aquazzura, price on request; Pomegranate Sheen Lip Oil, 82°E, ₹1,500; Airstream™ Straightener, Dyson, price on request; Le 54 Chain Bag, Christian Louboutin, price on request.

# GEMFIELDS



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NIRJA DUTT,  
WRITER

“While I am constantly enamoured by all the talented individuals surrounding me, it is my father who truly keeps me inspired on a daily basis. Be it his constant in-the-know state of mind, humorous way of passing pearls of wisdom, or the will power that can cut through glass—I am in awe of his perpetual positive attitude and how he reinvents his way of life to match the reality.”



AKANKSHA KAMATH,  
WRITER

“Reinvention is such an underrated term. To start over, rethink, redo, and recalibrate is a privilege no one should take lightly. To me, reinvention is what Navya Naveli Nanda is doing with her time, energy, and platform.”

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ON  
REINVENTIONS  
THAT HAVE  
INSPIRED  
THEM

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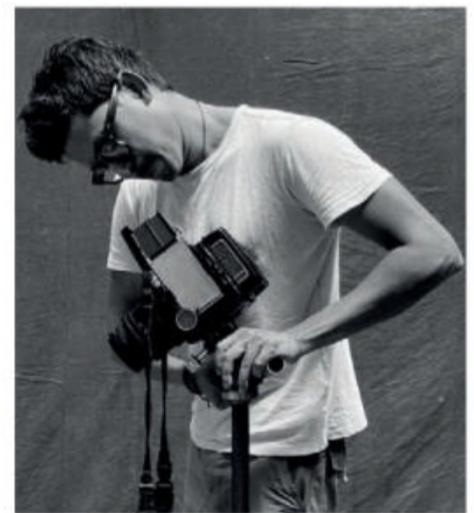
BARRY RODGERS,  
WRITER

“I wouldn’t call it a reinvention, but Julia Fox’s tenacity is impressive. She started under Kanye West’s shadow but has steadily found her footing. With her bold fashion, confident sexuality, and complete disregard for the establishment, she’s made her own rules, turning herself into a bona fide star. I don’t think she’s going anywhere anytime soon.”



RICHA GOYAL SIKRI,  
WRITER

“For me, it’s the entire gemstone industry—the lapidary workers and gemstone cutters. I can spend hours watching them take stones, which look like coloured pebbles from the ground, and transform them into precious, collectible gems. That continues to inspire my work every single day.”



BIKRAMJIT BOSE,  
PHOTOGRAPHER

“Anthony Bourdain. Maybe calling it a reinvention is a stretch, but from being an unknown chef to a best-selling author, to a world renowned travel documentarian, he reshaped his life and career as he went along adding new feathers to his cap. He did not leave his past behind but built on it.”

# BAZAAR

## STYLE

Tartan check coat and pearl necklace, both Vivienne Westwood; patent leather pumps, Roger Vivier

### BRIGHT SIDE

Into the fantastical world of péro; three homegrown labels committed to circular fashion; and Kartik Research debuts at Paris Fashion Week.

PHOTOGRAPHS: LINDA LEITNER. STYLING: RUPANGI GROVER

# SERVING ELEGANCE



Mini Rocking  
Horse Bag,  
Burberry

Echoing Burberry's enduring equestrian legacy, the Mini Rocking Horse Bag evokes the memories of the beloved childhood toy it's named after.

IMAGE COURTESY: THE BRAND; DIRECTION: JACOB MCFADDEN

# DRESS TO PLAY

Tennis courts are the new runways and uniforms are in the spotlight. It's time to remodel your wardrobe, one pleated white skirt at a time.



Ralph Lauren

1. Gabriel Jacket, Varley, ₹13,200 approx; 2. Tennis Bracelet, Tiffany & Co., price on request; 3. Wimbledon Cable-knit Cotton Jumper, Ralph Lauren, ₹16,700 approx; 4. Downtown Leather Sneakers, Prada, price on request; 5. Capucines East-West Mini Bag, Louis Vuitton, price on request; 6. Bailey Pearl Headband, Jennifer Behr, ₹37,200 approx.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS AND GETTYIMAGES.COM. COMPILED BY SILVIA SACHDEV

# TWO TO TANGO

Make an impressionable double act  
with this flirtatious twin-heel from  
Jacquemus' Les Sculptures  
S/S'24 Collection.



Les Doubles  
Sandals,  
Jacquemus

PHOTOGRAPHY: EFRAIM EVIDOR. STYLING: CHARLOTTE MARSH-WILLIAMS

# WHISTLEDOWN'S CLOSET

Featherington's style has caught the attention of the ton. Choose from feminine silhouettes and dramatic details to make way into the regal era.



1. Floral-embellished midi dress, Miu Miu, price on request; 2. Cardinale Corset, Vivienne Westwood, ₹ 2,97,000; 3. Allegra Necklace, Bulgari, price on request; 4. Tabi Ballerinas, Maison Margiela, ₹83,000 approx.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS AND GETTYIMAGES.COM. COMPILED BY SILVIA SACHDEV

Marc Jacobs

Gucci

# LOOK THIS WAY

All eyes are on the charm of Gucci's eccentric and distinctively adorned accessories.



Metal necklace with palladium finish and eye motifs in coloured resin, Gucci

# INDIE COOL

Our choicest picks from the homegrown brands we are in love with.



Verandah



1. Enamel link huggy hoops, Misho, ₹4,120; 2. Flower crochet bag, Naushad Ali, ₹8,000; 3. Adonis Hand-dyed Leheriya Trench Coat, Moonray, ₹38,400; 4. Gamcha dual boxers, 145east, ₹2,000; 5. Ikat loafers, Banjaaran, ₹4,999.

W H Y D O N ' T Y O U . . .

# ...Do whatever that floats your boat?

Cruise to your destination in style  
with sunset-hued slippers.

*By RIA SINGH*

PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL ZAK; STYLING: CRYSTALLE COX

Ballet pumps, Miu  
Miu, price on  
request



MIA GOTH IN MAXXXINE

## WATCH...

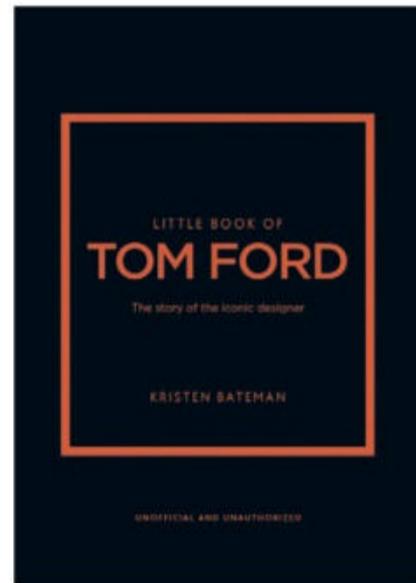
### MAXXXINE

Following the success of *X* (2022) and *Pearl* (2022), Ti West returns with the third instalment of his horror trilogy. In '80s Hollywood, Maxine Minx, an adult film star and aspiring actress, survives a massacre and continues to chase her dreams. When she lands a major role, a mysterious killer stalks her, leaving a trail of blood that threatens to reveal her dark past.

## READ...

### LITTLE BOOK OF TOM FORD

An illustrated exploration of the industry titan Tom Ford, this book by Kristen Bateman tells the story of a designer, film director, and a fashion maverick. It charts his incredible success at Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, and his eponymous label, which resonates with celebrities and fashion fans worldwide.



## DOLL UP WITH...

### KYLIE COSMETICS

In collaboration with the House of Beauty, Kylie Cosmetics has now made its debut in India. The awaited collection features Kylie's best-selling matte and velvet lip kits, along with new essentials like Precision Pout Lip Liner, Kylash Volume Mascara, and much more!



## GET READY FOR...

### OLYMPIC GAMES

The XXXIII Olympiads will kick off on July 26, 2024 in Paris with a procession of boats, carrying athletes and officials from over 200 countries down the Seine River in France. In the Olympics history, it will be the first time that the opening ceremony will be held outside the main stadium.



## WEAR...

### GIORGIO ARMANI SI

Giorgio Armani has introduced an elevated rendition of its iconic fragrance, Si, with a redesigned bottle and a heightened olfactory profile. Crafted with exquisite glassmaking expertise and embellished with a golden logo, the brand delivers a sensorial journey that captures the essence of contemporary femininity.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS AND GETTYIMAGES.COM

# WORK IT

It's time to ditch the drab formals and mix it up with a creative flair.



1. 30 Montaigne Choker, Dior, price on request; 2. Logo ribbed tank top, Versace, ₹20,000 approx; 3. Panthère de Cartier Watch, Cartier, price on request; 4. Wool grisallie mini skort, Gucci, price on request; 5. Puzzle Fold Tote, Loewe, price on request 5. Satin high-heeled mules, Prada, price on request.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS. COMPILED BY SILVIA SACHDEV

# RETRO CHIC

This summer, turn to your grandpa's wardrobe for fashion inspiration.  
Vintage and classy is the way to go.



Loewe

1. 80s Monocolor pilot sunglasses, Gucci, ₹ 33,686 approx; 2. Indigo hickory-stripe twill overall, Ralph Lauren, ₹60,420 approx; 3. Clemence Notebook, Louis Vuitton, price on request; 4. Reversible saddle belt, Dior, price on request; 5. Ohval Small Shoulder Bag, Valentino, ₹2,70,000 approx; 6. Crochet cap, Prada, price on request.



Heartsong collection  
by péro (photo credit:  
the brand)

# HANDMADE WITH LOVE

On a visit to péro atelier, we take a closer look at designer Aneeth Arora's methodical madness and craft-centric ethos as the brand turns 15.

*Words by SHIVPRIYA BAJPAI*  
*Photographs by SHREYARORA*

In the middle of June, on a sweltering afternoon, I made my way to the péro atelier in Patparganj, Delhi. A bright red letterbox next to the entrance felt like a portal of sorts, and before I could comprehend anything, I was transported to a wonderland—or should I say ‘péroland’ where I cribbed less about the Delhi heat for the next few hours. Quirky clay figures lined the window, a wall with heart-shaped souvenirs (gifted by clients all over the world), a stack of catalogues of old and new collections in one corner, the signature péro dolls, an expansive library packed with books of varied interests—this is where all the magic unfolds, I was convinced.

Aneeth Arora, the founder of péro, is one of the best storytellers of the Indian fashion industry. From the clothes she makes to the shows and campaigns she conceives, trust her to blur the lines between reality and fantasy. Arora’s design vocabulary and visual presentations are synonymous with vintage, quirk, and nostalgia. It’s no less of a mystery how she blends effortless elegance with exaggerated prints, patterns, proportions, and intricate surface ornamentations—often breaking gendered boundaries of dressing. “I have never called myself a fashion designer, and till date we stay true to the fact that we design textiles, and then make clothes for people at péro. We have always made clothes that are comfortable, not necessarily tailored for an occasion but made to feel special throughout the day. In fact, I was also labelled the culprit for introducing anti-fit into fashion because my clothes were neither body-hugging silhouettes nor had embellishments on them. The first line that we ever did was naturally dyed, hand-woven textiles from India. The only embellishment was a handmade button which had ‘péro’ embossed on it,” recalls Arora.

Adding to her methodical madness, Arora is known to be extremely private but not reclusive.



A library at the péro atelier

# S T Y L E



Heartsong collection on display

In contrast to the exuberant brand identity, she politely refuses to put herself in the spotlight—you will be denied photographs and videos of her. “Why should one person bag the limelight? It’s a collective effort, and I don’t think an individual should take the credit. Of course, I am the spokesperson of the brand, and I love talking about the hard work that everybody puts in. But I never felt the need to be known as the face of the brand,” explains Arora.

Earlier in March, I approached Arora’s team to share a sketch, and was informed that the brand doesn’t make one. “Even as a student at NIFT (Mumbai), when we were asked to draw a croquis or make a fashion illustration, I never related to the manipulation of the human body. I’ve always been very tactile with the process. It all began when I was travelling to the villages as a student. I would appreciate someone’s attire and humbly request them if they could lend me their clothes, as I wanted to study. Or I would buy them a new one and take their old piece. Since I was always interested in how those clothes were made, a sketch wasn’t enough to construct, there’s only so much detail one can express. Similarly, a péro garment has a lot of details—whether it’s the inside seams or a little heart somewhere. How much can a sketch incorporate within itself?” the designer asks a rhetorical question.

Being an avid collector, Arora brings back textiles, costumes, and pieces of clothes from her travels. These form



Hand-embroidered details

the foreground of her research process. “We analyse these clothes on the table and decide how to cut it. Sometimes when I don’t have these pieces, I turn to the books in my library. We study a garment, and then do a *péro* take to see how we can manipulate it. The whole approach has always been very hands-on, where a piece or a visual is on the table and we brainstorm on how to make it the *péro* way. I have never felt that I’m missing sketching, especially because my job is also not about just sitting at a table. It encompasses looking at things, making changes, and coming up with solutions. I rather enjoy the process. I’m extremely unapologetic about it, and stand by the ideologies—we are not going to be photographed, we don’t do sketches, and we don’t make moodboards,” Arora tells *Bazaar India*.

The brand believes in the two extreme worlds—one is to be consistent with what they have established as a brand, the other is to keep their minds open, and be ready to offer something fresh to their patrons. Inspiration can be anything for Arora, be it a button, a colour or a painting. “For instance, while conceptualising the Heartsong collection, the only thing that I knew was we were going to work with vintage French textiles. Some of the processes are extremely rigorous, and we follow

“We are not going to be photographed, we don’t do sketches, and we don’t make moodboards.”

them religiously. Whereas, towards the end of it there’s a childlike take on things and (we) don’t follow rules. There’s at least two months of research that goes into deciding a theme, and we work two years in advance for any collection. Since we

follow an extensive process—researching, designing our textiles, and then applying embellishments to it—people observe a certain kind of consistency in the product. Take the *péro* button—it’s a different colour every time. The trim on the scarf changes every season. We do checks but innovate every time. There are floral elements, but we take a different flower each season. We work with the same craft clusters because they are also going from strength to strength with us. They’ve reached the stage where they understand

the brand language and deliver within our philosophy.” For Arora, chaos and control coexist, and her patrons see that consistency in what she does.

A tour of the atelier cements Arora’s inventive, yet methodical approach—I closely observe a *karigar* making a floral *khaka* (drawing intricate motifs on a butter paper) which is then handed over to another artist, who paints over the *khaka* as per the colour mandate. On achieving the desired result, the motif is then printed on the choice of textiles and gets ready for the next step—surface



Accessories from the Heartsong collection

# S T Y L E



Khaka-making in progress



A *karigar* paints on the *khaka*

“We have always made clothes that are comfortable, not necessarily tailored for an occasion but made to feel special throughout the day.”



Surface ornamentation in process

ornamentation with intricate embroidered techniques. The textile is then tailored into a garment and goes through other stages—hemming, adding buttons, cleaning, and ironing. There are necessary checks at every step of the process to ensure the quality of the finished garment.

The Spring/Summer’24 collection of *péro* called *Heartsong*, is transportive of an idyllic French countryside and pays homage to the concept of slow living. Taking inspiration from vintage French textiles, the collection features relaxed, yet timeless silhouettes in French linen, hand-woven cottons, gabardine, taffeta silks, chanderi, and mashru. Classical techniques like hand-painted vintage floral prints, lace, toile, mesh, and cotton, classic petit point embroidery, beaded detailing, and cross stitch, form the highlight. Arora’s choice of flower *Camellia*, ‘the flower of love’, is depicted through weaves, prints, embroidered bullion knots, hand crocheted surface ornamentations, and buttons.

Although *péro* uses pure textiles in ethical ways and recycles fabric waste, the core definition of sustainability for the brand is about creating sustainable livelihood. This got established back during Arora’s NID (Ahmedabad) days, on her travels to the villages and times spent with craftspeople to understand their thought process. She elaborates, “When we started the label, it was a conscious attempt to appreciate their craft and provide more work, season after season. I felt this to be my responsibility as a designer where I had to work with the same skill set and the craftspeople, but challenge myself and the design team to create something unique with the same cluster. We have grown to be a team of about 5,000 people, and keep adding new craft clusters every season, but also

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Voice & Data

हन्दी मैगज़ीन

समय पत्रिका साधनापथग हलकषमी उदयइंडिया नरिगधाम मॉडरन खेतीइंडिया टुडेदेवपुत्र  
कुरकिट टुडेग हथोभा अर्नाखीहनिदुस्तानमुक्ता सरतिा चंपकप्रतियोगिता दरपण सक्सेस मरि  
सामान्य ज्ञान दरपण फारम एवं फूड मनोहर कहानियां सत्यकथा सरस सललि स्वतंत्र वार्ता लाजवाब आउटलुकसचची शकिषावनति  
मायापुरी रूपायन उजाळा ऋषा पुरसाद जोश रोजगार समाचार जोश करंट अफेयर्स जोश सामान्य ज्ञान जोश बैकग और एसएससी  
इंडिया बुक ऑफरकिरइसपरक् तमिल  
राजस्थान रोजगार संदेश राजस्थान सूजससखी जागरण अहा! जदिगी बाल भास्कर योजना कुरकषैन्  
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The signature péro dolls at the atelier

continue to work with the older ones. Since we have also diversified into different sections like home, kidswear, and menswear, we are able to absorb all these skill sets and build a sustainable model.”

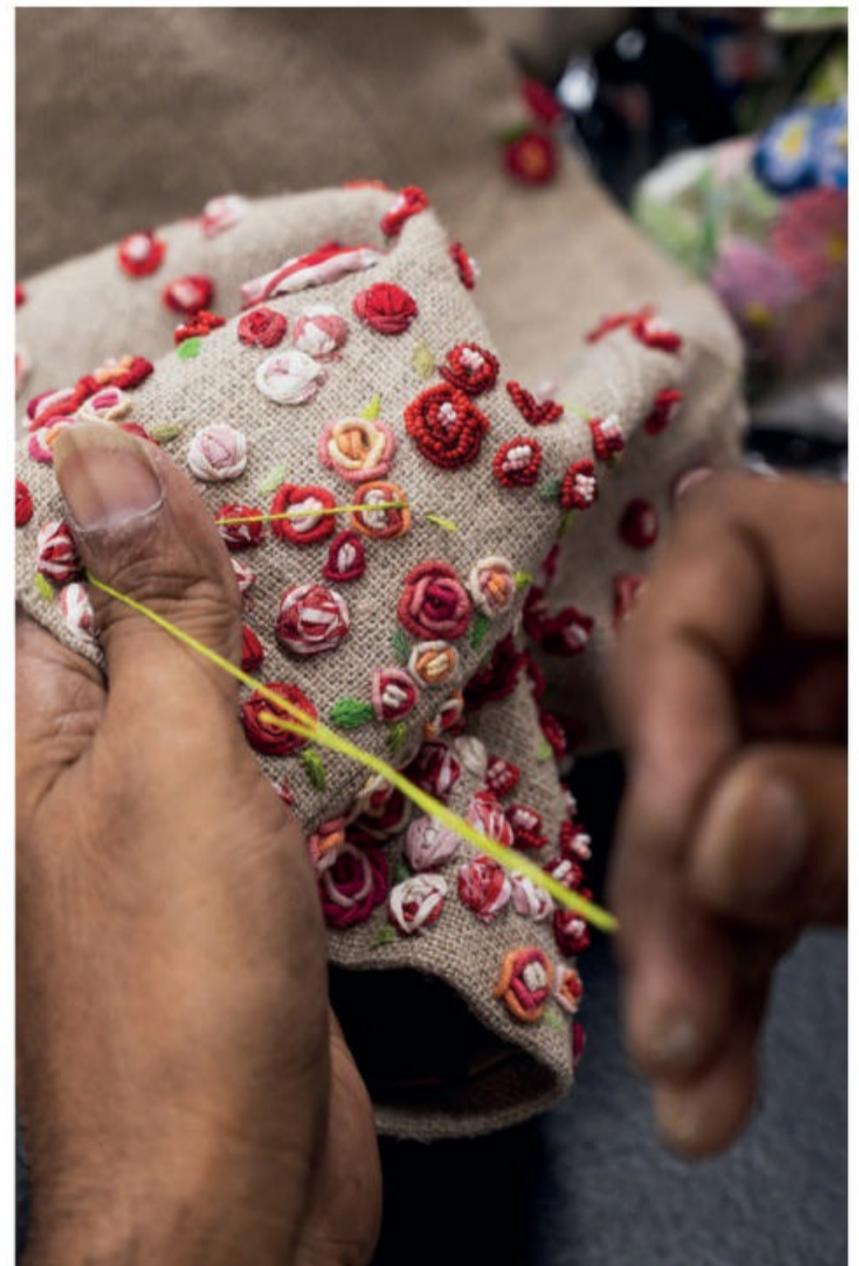
The craft cluster of péro is spread across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, to name a few, and all of these states are engaged with the brand through the craft that is significant to that region—from ikkat in the south of India, gamcha checks and jamdani from West Bengal, to chanderi and maheshwari from Madhya Pradesh. “It’s not restricted to textiles; our buttons are made in Rajasthan. There are nuns in Kochi who do laces and petit points for us. We also collaborate with Afghan refugee women who specialise in crochet work,” shares Arora. While every region in India stands for a particular textile or a craft, none of the péro garments screams of a particular technique from a region. “It’s always a sum total of every little thing that goes into its making. Eventually, it helps us to create a product that is a mix of a lot of Indian techniques, but is not an ethnic product. It’s a global product that makes sense anywhere in the world,” explains Arora.

For péro, offering traditional crafts to the world for 15 years bring a sense of achievement when international patrons look at a bandhni garment and identify the technique by its name. But that’s not enough for Arora. “I feel that we have a long way to go because India is still identified with embroideries. There is so much more that the country has to offer. We’ve just begun and all eyes are on us. There is a lot more scope now than it was 10 years back, because Indian designers, a lot of them have gone global, and people are seeing a lot of our traditional techniques. I feel that if we work together with craftspeople and present the most refined offerings to the world, people will start identifying almost all Indian crafts. And that will be the day to feel that we have made a global impact.”

So, what’s next for péro? I ask. “We are looking forward to working on an international collaboration very soon. I can’t reveal much about it now. But all I can say is that it’s going to be a big one for us. And apart from that, we are working to have a retail space to call our own soon,” Arora signs off. ■



A tailor works on a garment



Embroidery in process

S T Y L E

Tweed cape, Chanel

# UNDER THE SUN

Vibrant colours, elevated textures, and dramatic structures come out to play at leisure.

*Photographs by LINDA LEITNER  
Styling by RUPANGI GROVER*



Chiffon pleated jacket, Burberry

# S T Y L E



Leather striped dress, skirt, scarf and Cha-Cha Mules; all Bottega Veneta



Perforated leather crop top and circle skirt; both Hermès



Organza dress, Erdem;  
patent leather pumps,  
Roger Vivier



Natura Lace Patch Mini Dress, Zimmermann

# S T Y L E



Small Clam Bag, Bottega Veneta



Stretch silk double satin shirt, shearling high waisted trousers, and brushed suede sandals, all Loewe

# S T Y L E



Cropped cardigan, Fendi;  
Moth Light Denim Jeans,  
Rahul Mishra; patent leather  
pumps, Roger Vivier



Marina Chain Necklace, Gucci

Model: Antara Naidoo at Premier Model Management; Make-up: Sunn Seo; Hair: Chiaki Morimoto;  
Assistant Photographer: Lina Mendoza; Fashion Assistant: Aditi Patil; Handprinting: Quentin Krüger.

S T Y L E

# WONDER YEARS —

For four decades,  
Marc Jacobs has made fashion that  
is personal, urgent, and era-defining.  
“Once I knew what I loved,” he says,  
“I just couldn’t get enough of it.”

*Story by STEFF YOTKA*  
*Photographs by GRACE AHLBOM*  
*Styling by CLARE BYRNE*





(From left) Valerie Scherzinger in Spring 2024, Ugbad Abdi in Spring 2011, Jessica Stam in Fall 2003, and Alek Wek in Spring 2001. All clothing and accessories, Marc Jacobs

**M**arc Jacobs, the fashion brand, has been in business for 40 years, but Marc Jacobs, the person, now 61, has been dreaming of fashion for much longer.

“You know how people say to count sheep in order to fall asleep?” Jacobs asks. “Well, I used to imagine myself folding this coveted red Lacoste corduroy shirt, literally putting it face down and folding it into thirds.” He mimics folding a shirt, recalling his bedtime ritual as a 12-or-13-year-old, when he was living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with his grandmother Helen. “That was the vision in my head. That was my sheep.”

We are sitting in his white office in Soho. A photo of svelte, nude Jacobs circa 2009 hangs on one wall, and opposite it on the ground, leaning against a bookshelf, is an image of grungy, sweater-clad Jacobs circa the mid-’90s, lounging on a bed with stylist Venetia Scott and directors Sofia Coppola and Zoe Cassavetes. In the middle is 2024 Jacobs, with a sleek bob, silver nail polish, a Carhartt hoodie, Saint Laurent jeans, and Cactus Plant Flea Market Nikes.

One could wonder, within this triptych, which is the real Marc Jacobs? And these are only a handful of the permutations over the years. There is also the 15-year-old fashion-obsessed stock boy at the influential ’80s Manhattan boutique Charivari. There is the brooding young designer captured in an etching by Elizabeth Peyton and the bombastic nude hunk captured on film by Juergen Teller. He has been the consummate showman taking a bow after presenting a spectacular collection in Paris for Louis Vuitton, where he served as creative director from 1997 to 2013, as well as the shy designer peeking out after a twee Marc Jacobs one in New York. Is he the Jacobs who dressed as a gigantic pigeon at his Christmas party? Or the one who walked Kate Moss up the steps to the Met Gala in a tux? Maybe the real Jacobs is the pearl-necklace-wearing bookworm who appears on his Instagram these days, paging through *In Cold Blood* in the Frank Lloyd Wright–designed home he shares with his husband, Charly Defrancesco, in Rye, New York.

The answer, of course, is that he is all of them. “The transformation or the reinvention, I think, is the essence of what I’ve always loved about this,” Jacobs says from across his desk.

Jacobs’s relentless, perpetual state of evolution, fueled by a ravenous curiosity, is what has made him one of the most thrilling designers of our lifetime. What remains constant throughout every iteration and every collection is an unbridled love for fashion and a formidable drive to keep creating.

“When he does a collection, I think he almost lays down and cuts his heart open for it,” says the designer Anna Sui, who is a close friend. “There’s that much put into every collection and that much that he’s trying to express and share with everybody.”

That emotionally raw, heart-on-the-floor passion translates viscerally to his designs. Jacobs is one of few designers in New York making clothes that are about an idea or evoking a feeling rather than solving a need in your closet. He responds to what inspires him and, in turn, creates clothing for a more inspiring life.

As instinctive as Jacobs’s design process is—he describes it as “a force field at work, where it’s sending you this thing, and then that triggers something else, and that thing triggers something else, and you get to wherever you’re going”—his career has become an industry playbook, a template that fashion brands are still learning from (and copying) to this day.

When Jacobs graduated from the Parsons School of Design in 1984, he was hired immediately by the man

who would become his longtime business partner, Robert Duffy, to design Sketchbook, a contemporary line. The pair founded Marc Jacobs the same year. “I didn’t really see myself as going to work for anyone,” he says.

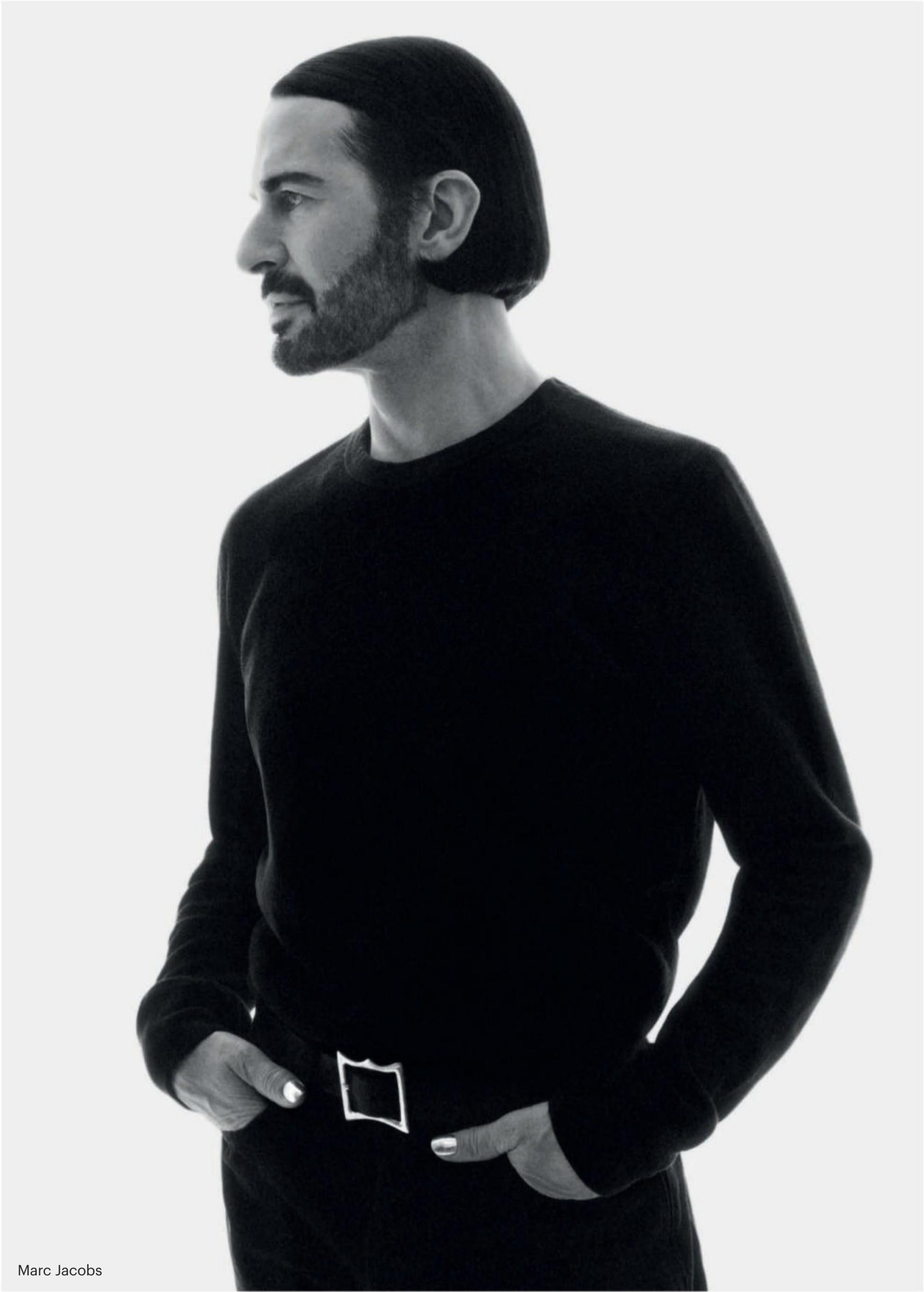
Jacobs did, of course, go on to work for others—first at Perry Ellis, where his successful four-year run as creative director is overshadowed by the infamous 1992 grunge collection that got him fired. And then at Louis Vuitton, the jewel in the crown of LVMH founder, chairman, and CEO Bernard Arnault’s empire, where Jacobs became the first American selected to lead a French luxury brand.

“Like John [Galliano] at Dior, Marc was a risk Mr. Arnault took,” says Sidney Toledano, the former president of LVMH Fashion Group. (LVMH owns a majority stake in Marc Jacobs.) The risk paid off; plucking designers from independent brands and seating them at the throne of European heritage labels is now a common practice.

At Vuitton, Jacobs collaborated with artists like Stephen Sprouse, Takashi Murakami, and Richard Prince, inviting them to tweak and twist the classic LV Monogram. The results were wildly successful (the Sprouse Speedy bag is now a coveted grail) and set a new standard for luxury branding.

“From his generation of designers, for me, he’s one of the best,” Toledano says of Jacobs. “The work he did at Vuitton, it was groundbreaking. He brought the ready-to-wear, the fashion spirit, the creativity.”

“Reinvention is the  
essence of what I’ve always  
loved about fashion.”



Marc Jacobs

# S T Y L E

Other Jacobs hallmarks that became de rigueur industry practices: launching a little-sister or diffusion line (Jacobs started Marc by Marc Jacobs in 2001 and its successor, Heaven by Marc Jacobs, in 2020) and—his most influential calling card—stacking a starry front row with the most important musicians, actors, directors, and artists of the time. This is something others covet and build whole marketing strategies around, but Jacobs does it easily, since most of the time they are simply his friends.

“Marc is my family,” says Lil’ Kim, who has known Jacobs for 20 years. Their friendship, born at a fashion show, has taken them from “eating strawberries in Marc’s studio” to the Met Gala, but Kim remembers Jacobs’s generosity and support during her “darkest and hardest times”. He was there for me before a lot of people who I thought would be, and I will forever take that with me,” she says. “He threw this big, lavish party for me, and he made the T-shirt line Marc Loves Kim.... I will forever hold him on a pedestal.”

For all his success, and considering the impact of his approach to fashion, Jacobs insists that he “never did a show or designed a collection to be commercial.” (While Toledano won’t comment on brand figures, he will say the Marc Jacobs brand “is strong.”) “Some of them may have been more commercial than others,” Jacobs concedes, “but I think what happened, especially once the Vuitton thing started, was getting into the idea of a theatrical experience.” He points to a Fall 2020 Marc Jacobs show choreographed by Karole Armitage as a personal favourite and one of his most realised collections; it cycled between mod ’60s dresses vaguely evocative of Jackie O, punkish plaids, and majestic minidresses made of metallic tinsel. “It wasn’t a presentation of clothes you need,” he says of his overarching ethos. “It was the telling of a story you might be interested in seeing. That was the big difference.”

The kind of kismet Jacobs seems to stumble into time and time again can seem implausible—almost blessed, as though through the sheer might of believing a teenager was able to simply will his dream of becoming a globally famous fashion designer into a reality.

“Once I knew what I loved, I just couldn’t get enough of it,” says Jacobs. “People always say, when you learn a new word, then you start hearing it all the time. It was a similar thing with experience and fashion. The more I loved fashion, the more fashion people were drawn to me and I was drawn to them. I had such a voracious appetite for what I loved.”

What Jacobs has loved has been the lifeblood of his

brand since day one. Where other designers may try to capture a mood in the zeitgeist, dress a certain type of woman with a wardrobe, or respond to market desires for specific items, Jacobs’s collections are powered wholly by love. If you’re never chasing trends, the greater the chance to create them or even shift the whole mood of fashion, which Jacobs has done over and over again.

Think of the gentle rounded collars and nipped-waist blouses from Fall 2004, a nod to the screen sirens Jacobs loves, and the sensual but prim dress of the artist Rachel Feinstein, who is a friend. Think of his Fall 2012 homage to fashion journalist Lynn Yaeger’s eclectic style by way of Jamiroquai or the Fall 2015 nod to the strictness of Diana Vreeland’s hell-red living room, imagined with tight waists and seductress knee-high boots. Both the Penn State Blue Band and Sonic Youth have performed on his runways, and his inspirations range from the sullen teen superhero Violet from *The Incredibles* (Fall 2005) to the rebellious punk spirit of Vivienne Westwood (Spring 2023). To follow Marc Jacobs’s design history isn’t just to learn about fashion but to learn about the

people, art, and ideas that move Jacobs himself. These collections are not the result of some Q1 strategy session or tallied up on a line sheet.

As Jacobs’s fashion shows were evolving into megawatt theatrical productions, so was his star rising in popular culture. You could pinpoint 1998 as the beginning of

Marc Jacobs the celebrity: He won Womenswear Designer of the Year at the VH1 Fashion Awards, one of the earliest collisions of fashion and popular culture. Winona Ryder wore one of his dresses to the highly publicised trial that stemmed from a 2001 shoplifting incident, helping put Jacobs’s designs in front of a growing celebrity-obsessed audience. By 2005, his Stam bag, a quilted leather hobo shape named for model Jessica Stam, was on the arms of the most paparazzied It girls, like Lindsay Lohan and Beyoncé. His campaigns and front rows took on a more A-list quality too: Victoria Beckham spilled out of a shopping bag for a 2008 ad; Miley Cyrus brooded on a beach for the brand in 2014. Things came full circle when Kendall Jenner made her runway debut during Jacobs’s sleek, neutral-toned Fall 2014 collection. In 2016, she was joined on Jacobs’s catwalk by Lady Gaga.

Off the runway, Jacobs had become so entrenched in pop culture that in 2007, this magazine transformed Jacobs, alongside Karl Lagerfeld and Donatella Versace, into a Simpsons character. (It’s now tattooed on his left bicep.) The filmmaker Loïc Prigent followed him for

“People always say, when you learn a new word, then you start hearing it all the time. It was a similar thing with fashion.”



From left: Stam in Fall 2006, Abdi in Spring 2013, Wek in Fall 2002, and Scherzinger in Spring 2024. All clothing and accessories, Marc Jacobs

months to produce the revealing and sentimental documentary *Marc Jacobs & Louis Vuitton* in 2007. By 2010, his personal life was chronicled by *Page Six* and he was just as likely to get papped on vacation as the A-list stars who wore his clothes.

“I remember there were a couple of things that were very hurtful that were written about me when I was very down and I was not in a good place,” he says. Jacobs has been open about his struggles with addiction and stints in rehab. “That’s part of the price that you pay when you put yourself out there and you make yourself known and you make your thoughts known and your feelings known.”

“There were terrible times,” recalls Sui. “There were times when we were all worried, but I never felt that he wasn’t going to survive it.” Why? “Fashion is absolutely what he loves,” she says. “I think he can’t help himself.”

“I’m in a good mood today,” Jacobs says, smirking at me, “so I think I have a very positive attitude, and I can see things as being just amazing, like, ‘This is incredible. How did we do that? How have we done this for 40 years?’”

It’s not just that he’s “done this” for 40 years that’s impressive; it’s that 40 years later, he’s still as voracious, passionate, and creative as he was on day one. His recent Spring 2024 collection blew up many of his design signatures into doll clothes. There are the safari jackets of Spring 2015, now plumped and padded, the tracksuits of Fall 2017 supersized and extra long or shrunken into miniatures and studded with Heaven crystal bears. The prom dresses from Spring 2006 and the surreal lingerie looks of Spring 2008 return in topsy-turvy proportions alongside a hulking version of the Venetia bag. It’s not just a rehash; there are new belted board shorts, rollneck sweaters with tugged-front shoulders, and dementedly lovely bejeweled and pailletted dresses that look like a cross between the wardrobes of Diana Ross and Polly Pocket.

“Marc Jacobs is a legend,” says Sui. “That’s what every designer strives for, that signature or identity—an icon of the brand. I think that he’s established so many icons of his brand that will carry on forever.”

Since at least 2016, Marc Jacobs has attached the hashtag #gratefulnothateful to nearly all of his Instagram posts.

The hashtags are as much for Jacobs as they are for his

followers—a reminder to embrace positivity first and foremost. Because it’s not that Jacobs never gets frustrated or angry or wants to throw in the towel.

“Oh, that happens constantly,” he says, laughing. “It happened just as much earlier on as it does now. There’s some pain and suffering involved in doing this.”

He remembers how he felt after the Spring 2008 show started particularly late and received a lot of flak. “I was like, ‘We’ve been working for six months to make a seven-minute show that you’re going off about because it’s 45 minutes late. Do me a favor: Stay home.’” (Since that show, which started two hours late, Jacobs’s shows have become known for starting precisely, to the minute, on time.)

But in 2024, rather than kvetch, Jacobs wants to just focus on the good stuff. “I check myself and think, ‘You should be grateful. Be grateful that you have good friends. Be grateful that you get to eat well and you get to see these things and be a part of this world,’” he says. “That’s where that hashtag comes from.”

“There’s this great expression that my shrink came up with,” he continues. “I was like, ‘I just don’t know why I do this. Just so much goes wrong, and it’s depressing,’ and whatever. He was like, ‘Well, you do it for those transcendent moments of joy.’ He said that, and then we’ve all used that expression around

“There’s some pain  
and suffering involved  
in doing this.”

here.” Jacobs gestures across his office to his attendants, many of whom have worked with the designer for decades. “This is what that transcendent moment of joy is: It’s like that moment where all the pain and all the suffering and all the confusion and all the insecurity and everything negative goes away and you’re left with ‘This is why I do this. This is really good.’”

He glances away at a Birkin bag stuffed with silver Balenciaga ballet flats that he will change into after our meeting for dinner with Sui and Warhol superstar Jane Holzer. His Saint Laurent smoking jacket is in the car, waiting for him, unwrinkled. After dinner, he’ll decamp back to Rye with his husband for a night of reading.

“I’m really lucky that I get to do this. I’m really lucky that even though they’re few and they’re far between, those transcendent moments of joy keep coming. So no matter how much I bitch, moan, and complain, and just want to give up, then something happens,” he says. “And I just think, ‘Wow’.” ■

Models: Ugbad Abdi, Valerie Scherzinger, Jessica Stam, and Alek Wek; Hair: Dylan Chavles for Oribe; Make-up: Jen Myles; Manicures: Natalie Pavloski for Chanel; Casting: Anita Bitton at the Establishment.

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# A SPANISH SPIN

Louis Vuitton's Cruise 2025 collection is a testament to elevated artistic expression.

By *VAISHNAVI NAMBIAN*

**L**ouis Vuitton's Creative Director for women's collection, Nicolas Ghesquière's decade-long tenure at the luxury label has taken us to architectural wonders around the globe. And this year, he turns to Park Güell in Barcelona, a Unesco World Heritage site where whimsical architecture blooms like wildflowers, for his latest Cruise 2025 collection. This venue, a masterpiece by architect Antoni Gaudí, perfectly echoed the show's blend of designs that celebrate the culture and architectural beauty of Spain.

Inspired by iconic Spanish artists like Velazquez, Goya, and Zurbarán, Ghesquière delivered a collection that clubbed the maison's timeless codes with modern influences. The show opened with a parade of tailored, neutral ensembles adorned with straw hats and mirrored racing shades, abstracting a grounded, yet lavish spirit.

Ghesquière explored a more architectural self this time, playing daringly with LV's signature silhouettes, adding more volume, and emphasising on black, white, and neutral hues. The opening look was a minidress, resembling natural fibres, with a crisp white lapel. The collection reflected a dynamic contrast of LV's travelling spirit and Spain's vibrant style. Flowing silk dresses mirrored Gaudí's organic curves, shiny sequins reflected his signature mosaics, and sharply tailored jackets showcased the maison's dedication to its own style and the artist's distinct design vocabulary. Wire hooks added a sense of structure and texture, emphasising, as Ghesquière puts it, "it's quite dressed up; there's nothing casual about it."

If clothes define a collection, the ambience sets the right mood for the show. Now imagine a fashion show tailored



A model at the LV Cruise 2025 collection showcase

to Park Güell's undulating curves with Louis Vuitton's A-listed audience like Jennifer Connelly, Regina King, and Sophie Turner. Set designer James Chinlund masterfully weaved the seating into organic forms, blurring the lines between nature and meticulously crafted luxury. The electronic pulse of Gary Numan's *Music for Chameleons* intertwined with the operatic drama of Malcolm McLaren's *Madame Butterfly*. It's a perfect metaphor for the collection itself—a harmonious mix of the rigorous spirit of Louis Vuitton and the passionate heart of Spain. ■

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show in Paris

# MENSWEAR GETS A TWIST

Right after his show at Paris Fashion Week, *Bazaar India* catches up with designer Kartik Kumra about his new collection and plans for the future.

By *JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY*

Just hours after showcasing his Spring 2025 collection at Paris Fashion Week, designer Kartik Kumra exudes his usual calm. Far from a college project, Kartik Research is all grown up now. When asked how this collection was born, he dives right in, “The inspiration for this season was the election cycle and the socio-political flux. Governance and authoritarianism were constantly on my mind. I wanted to create something that offered a bit of escape and hope.” Over the past four months, Kumra immersed himself in documentaries about pilgrimages, analysing and observing the uniforms people wear on these journeys. “From the idea of uniforms,” he continues, “we also explored the concept of modern Indian workwear—what it means and where it’s headed.” Photographs and vintage documents spanning the Indian subcontinent filled his mood board. “There was a Quentin de Briey series on Ladakh, in particular, that really captivated me.”

This collection, a lovechild of optimism and experience, overflows with thoughtful pieces that resonated strongly on the PFW runway. Kumra used block prints on silk, and handloom cotton decorated with embroidered chintz prints. The show also included exclusive pairs of embellished Converse sneakers. “We landed the opening slot this time, a huge improvement from last season! A good spot always makes a difference,” Kumra reflects.

After the collection was ready, came the whirlwind of assembling the creative team—models, stylists, and the whole crew. “I spent the past few days managing castings, fittings, and pulling everything together. It truly came down to the wire,” recalls Kumra. The venue for the show was Le Philanthro-Lab, a 15th-century building in the heart of Paris. “It was a beautiful old French building, right across Notre Dame,” Kumra describes, “with stunning natural light.”

Immediately after fulfilling orders from his previous show, Kumra plunged into crafting this one. But the core values remained the same—no use of electricity and a tight focus on sustainability. “We stayed true to our approach of reinterpreting and reimagining Indian craftsmanship, but this time with a strong focus on tailoring—soft shoulders and loose, boxy silhouettes.” His excitement is palpable as he discusses working with artisans across more than a dozen Indian states, specifically the handloom linens he developed in Madhya Pradesh. “My favourite look was number 6,” he beams, “the yellow embroidered jacket! It took forever to make, and it turned out beautifully.” While workwear served as the foundation, a touch of whimsy permeated the collection, retaining the signature eccentricity of Kartik Research pieces. “But wearability remains paramount,” Kumra assures.

Despite a global pandemic and a change of name, Kumra’s eponymous brand is thriving. He is putting a cultured twist on menswear like no one else. Only two-and-a-half-years into full-time designing, Kumra already boasts a presence alongside global brands on major luxury e-commerce platforms. Additionally, he opened a store in Delhi’s Greater Kailash II just a couple of months ago. From being a new kid on the block to garnering an LVMH prize nomination and dressing A-listers, Kumra’s journey has been remarkable and only on the rise. “As a designer, you pour your time, effort, and resources into your creations. Showcasing them in the best places, with the most discerning eyes on them, becomes a priority. Paris offers that.” While acknowledging the long road ahead for success in India, Kumra is set on New York (apologies, Mumbai) for his next store opening. ■



(Top) Models in Kartik Kumra’s collection; and Kartik in action at PFW

# LOVE LETTER TO LONDON

Held at the iconic Tate Modern, Gucci Creative Director Sabato De Sarno's Cruise 2025 collection creates a fresh narrative that reflects the brand's legacy and the city's vibrant culture.

*By SONAL VED*



Alia Bhatt at the Gucci Cruise 2025 show

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND

**I**t was a rainy start to the day—a classic London welcome. But, as we entered Tate Modern, where works of artist Paul Klee and painter David Hockney hang next to each other, it transitioned into a warm, all-embracing evening with Gucci Creative Director Sabato De Sarno's creations for his debut Cruise collection 2025 on display at the iconic Turbine Hall. The show and the venue had a special meaning, after all, Gucci and London have a shared history. Brand Founder Guccio Gucci, who worked at The Savoy as a porter in 1897, was deeply inspired by London's vibrant and diverse culture and took these influences back to Italy where he launched the luggage label in 1921. This ultimately set the foundation and shaped the identity of the global fashion house we know today. "I owe a lot to this city [London], it has welcomed and listened to me," said De Sarno, whose personal connection to the city played a role in selecting the venue.

#### **AS THE CURTAINS GO UP**

The industrial architecture of the Turbine Hall was partly transformed into a green space filled with ferns, foliage, and moss using approximately 10,000 plants. This set-up suggested themes of transformation—creating an intriguing intersection of natural and urban elements. But that wasn't its sole purpose; the set-up highlighted Gucci's commitment to sustainability and community engagement. On cue then, after the show, the plants were donated, as part of the House's collaboration with the non-for-profit organisation, Grow to Know.



Gucci Creative Director  
Sabato De Sarno



Models showcase  
Gucci's Cruise  
collection in London

# S T Y L E



The Turbine Hall doubles up as a green space for the event



Models at the show

De Sarno's debut Cruise collection featured some of his signature styles interspersed with Gucci's heritage and ample London motifs. From the embroidery of common daisies that grow as wildly in the parks of the city as bougainvillea in South Delhi, to the shirts, denims, and trousers featuring strings of long tube beads, symbolising London's favourite companion, the rain. The nuances were not so subtle, including British symbols like tartans.

The collection brought together contrasts—rigour and extravagance, English essence and Italian accents, workwear and street style with high fashion, and so on. The result? Tailored short coats with soft flower motifs, 3D laser-cut organza, and hand-moulded sequins with chiffons, ruffles, and lace completed with models in Horsebit ballerinas.

### FASHION, ART, AND HISTORY COME TOGETHER

A look at the brand's recent collections, and you will see how the convergence of fashion and art is increasingly becoming Gucci's love language. Remember its former collaborations with painter Yuko Higuchi, visual artist Coco Capitán, and illustrator Ignasi Monreal? The Cruise Collection 2025 was no different.

Tate Modern, one of the popular attractions for tourists and art enthusiasts alike, has showcased the brilliant works of Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Andy Warhol, to name a few. Known for its blend of art, design, and fashion, the building provided the perfect backdrop for highlighting the interplay between tradition and innovation. "Tate Modern is the perfect cross-section to narrate the city's essence, with its great Turbine Hall that welcomes and gathers everyone," De Sarno said.

### FOR THE LOVE OF LONDON

Last year, the House presented its Cruise collection in Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul, chosen for its historical value and symbolisation of tradition and modernity. In the case of London, this time, the brand's historical ties to the city were a big factor. De Sarno used his memories of the city—the people he met, and the places he visited—to create a fresh narrative that reflects Gucci's legacy and the city's vibrant culture.

By choosing Tate Modern as the venue, De Sarno aimed to capture the essence of London as a cultural and creative hub, reflecting the city's dynamic spirit and its influence on Gucci's identity.

But the partnership does not end with the Cruise show. Gucci has entered a three-year collaboration with Tate Modern to promote Tate's work among young creatives and foster growth and commitment among the community. Additionally, Gucci will also lend support to the Electric Dreams exhibition, which will be unveiled in the fall this year at Tate. ■

# S T Y L E



# FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Three homegrown labels at the forefront of circular and ethical fashion.

*Words by RIA SINGH*

*Illustration by SHRADHA SWAMINATHAN*

**T**he sale season is upon us, and everything in my life currently reminds me of that—be it my colleagues, my Instagram feed, or YouTube ads; you never miss the big and bold “SALE” signs. And why not? After all, we all love a good deal. But amid these constant reminders, I can’t help but wonder what happens to all the clothes we buy but hardly wear and end up tossing away.

An article in *The Guardian* recently points out that the Atacama Desert in Chile is now dubbed as a “global sacrifice zone” for discarded fast fashion. Heaps of clothes are dumped there, totalling 60,000 tonnes, and shockingly, none of them are defective. A similar problem exists in Kenya, which is one of the main destinations for secondhand clothes exported from the US, as reported by *The Washington Post*.

It’s undeniable that fashion holds immense value in our lives, and that probably explains why the global fashion industry today is worth a staggering \$2.5 trillion (₹2.5 lakh crore, approximately), because no one wants to go “out of fashion.”

However, this obsession comes at a high cost. The United Nations (UN) reports that the fashion industry is responsible for 8 per cent to 10 per cent of global emissions, more than aviation and shipping combined. Cotton alone uses 2.5 per cent of the world’s farmland while synthetics like polyester consume 342 million barrels of oil annually, according to a report in *BBC*. Dyeing processes use 43 million tonnes of chemicals per year, and this industry is one of the largest water consumers globally, contributing to environmental crises like the drying of the Aral Sea in Central Asia.

As the fashion industry’s impact on pollution, water scarcity,

carbon emissions, human rights, and gender inequality grows, the need for circular fashion is clear. While one could argue that sustainability has been gaining momentum since 2019 with many brands moving towards eco-friendly practices, the 2024 Circular Fashion Index report by Kearney reveals that the fashion industry, despite making progress, still struggles to fully embrace circularity.

Triggered by this information, I started looking for homegrown labels, which not only prioritise circularity but also strive to address issues of human rights and gender equality.

My first interaction is with 25-year-old Ashay Bhave, founder of Thaely that means ‘bags’ in Hindi. Thaely makes vegan and recycled footwear and tackles plastic waste. “Before the brand, I invented ThaelyTex—a unique leather replacement made using 100 per cent plastic bags. We wanted to keep our Indian origin in mind while conveying the message of our product,” shares Bhave as he explains the brand’s name.

Inspired by his mother’s involvement in waste management, Bhave focuses on sustainability in production. “For a product to be truly sustainable, the production has to be circular,” he says. “We prevent plastic from ending up in landfills and oceans and ensure they never become part of the waste cycle again with our returns programme.” Thaely’s returns programme incentivises customers to return old footwear of the brand for discounts on new purchases, allowing the label to refurbish or recycle the shoes.

The footwear and accessory design graduate from Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, ensures that materials like recycled plastic bags, bottles, and rubbers are both durable and

“For a product  
to be truly  
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(Clockwise from far left): Women forage for bast fibre and gather wild edible greens; Pochury Naga women from Meluri town in Phek district weave hand-spun indigenous cotton; Margaret Zinyu works with Khamniungan artisans on different fibres



(Left to right): Thaely's Black Raven Reflex boots and White Stork Reflex boots; Blood Red and Sky Blue Y2K Pro sneakers; Thaely Y2K Pro box made of recycled paper embedded with basil seeds and dyed with waste coffee grounds

Reconstructed couture range from Grandma Would Approve that was showcased at circular design challenge at Lakmé Fashion Week



IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS

comfortable. “These materials are engineered into highly durable textiles and parts, and each model rigorously tests the wearability before production. Our shoes are as durable as traditional sneakers with the added benefit of being recyclable,” he adds. Despite being in business for years, they haven’t received any pair for replacement, exclaims Bhave.

From shoes made from plastic bags to a brand offering vintage restoration, upcycling, customisation, and heritage preservation; enters the brand Grandma Would Approve. “We make one-of-a-kind garments unique to their owners. Our circular design practices ensure nothing goes to waste. We reuse vintage garments to mend existing ones, focus on quality over quantity, and repurpose scraps into buttons and panels. Even the smallest fabric waste is collected and used as filling for winter jackets,” says Priyanka Muniyappa, who is the design head and manages production for the brand.

Over the last 13 years, the brand has built a personal rapport with around 50 vendors from whom they source materials. “This is dead stock,” says the NIFT (Bengaluru) graduate about the clothes that fill the warehouses of these vendors. “This has been sitting here for 30-50 years. During sourcing, we spend a week per warehouse, meticulously segregating and selecting garments. After washing, they’re sent to our studio and organised in our fabric library,” Muniyappa says sharing the details of the process. The upcycling process involves examining garments for defects, removing stitches, and preparing the fabric. “We replace damaged parts, remove stains, and restore the garment from a stripped-down version.”

In the reconstruction process, the label creates unique wearable art pieces. “We combine 10 to 15 garments, sketch designs, and our pattern master and I plan the pieces, which can take about 12 days and sometimes involve 100 panels. These pieces are for fashion shows and international showcases,” says Muniyappa. Despite challenges, Grandma Would Approve is committed to zero waste, and circular, artistic fashion. “I wanted to change this cycle and introduce something made with love, fair pay for artisans, and no environmental depletion. That’s my relationship with my brand and team—it’s very personal and intentional.”

My next interaction is with Margaret Zinyu, a Kohima native and founder of Woven Threads—a design initiative that crafts high-end loin loom textiles using sustainable materials and a

zero-waste manufacturing process based on indigenous knowledge systems. An alumna of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, Zinyu’s fascination with nature and traditional crafts laid the foundation for her future in design. “The lush landscapes and traditional crafts of Nagaland instilled in me a deep appreciation for texture, colour, and form,” she says. “Textile design is not just about creating beautiful fabrics; it’s about telling stories, preserving heritage, and fostering sustainable practices.”

Woven Threads exemplifies the power of aligning professional pursuits with a deeper purpose. “By tapping into the rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship of the community, we have developed collections that resonate with a mindful consumer base and empower the custodians of these practices,” informs Zinyu. The brand has empowered women weavers in Nagaland to contribute to their household’s economic stability.

“The loin loom, or body-tension loom, is practised in Northeast India and around the world. It features a strap fixed to one end, worn around the weaver’s waist, while the other end is anchored, making it portable and unique.” Zinyu highlights two non-timber forest products: wild orange rhea plant and Himalayan stinging nettle, valued for their colour, strength, and cultural significance. Known locally as Elloinui [bast fibre], these plants are integral to the Khiamniungan community’s rich weaving traditions.

Zinyu’s design initiative was recently featured at the 2023 Serendipity Arts Festival, highlighting Nagaland’s traditions and showcasing cultural richness and environmental sustainability.

For Zinyu, more than aesthetics, it’s about a holistic approach to design that considers environmental, social, and economic impacts. “Through innovative, eco-conscious practices and empowering local communities, we can shape a more sustainable future, one design at a time,” she says. All Woven Threads products are hand-woven and hand-stitched, using fabric directly off the loom with minimal or zero waste.”

So, the next time, you find yourself tempted by irresistible sales, consider

the broader consequences of your fashion choices. The clothes we buy have a profound effect, and by choosing brands committed to circular, sustainable, and ethical practices, we can make a meaningful difference in fostering a healthier planet for future generations. ■

**“I wanted to change this  
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S T Y L E

# FRESH TAKE

A new crop of homegrown fashion labels are making a case for refreshing ideologies, one stitch at a time.

By *SHIVPRIYA BAJPAI*

Models  
in Love  
is a Verb  
collection  
by Inca

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS

**I**n the age of heightened awareness, fashion is under constant scrutiny, with pertinent questions being raised on its intent and impact. It is imperative to look beyond fleeting trends and challenge the status quo. The emerging vanguards of fashion are rising to the occasion with authentic creative expressions, deep rooted ethos, and profound connections. The new crop of homegrown brands are making a case for refreshing ideologies, one stitch at a time. For instance, Delhi-based designer Ashita Singhal's label Paiwand pays homage to the lost culture of mending clothes through upcycling processes. "When textile waste arrives at our workshop, it undergoes a meticulous transformation journey. First, it's carefully sorted, washed, and ironed to prepare it for its new purpose. Then, using innovative design techniques, the waste is skillfully cut into strips and joined together, forming the foundation for our unique textiles," explains Singhal who showcased her winning collection, City Blues, at Lakmē Fashion Week (LFW) in March.

Singhal's weavers come from Delhi, Pilkhuwa (Uttar Pradesh), and Panipat (Haryana). "We identify artisans whose skills and expertise align with our design vision. Whether it's handloom weavers, embroiderers, or patchwork artisans, we seek out individuals who are masters of their craft and share our passion for sustainable fashion. We engage in open dialogue and exchange ideas to co-create unique and meaningful textiles," she adds. At Paiwand, the collaborative process with artisans not only results in beautifully crafted textiles, but also strengthens communities, preserves cultural heritage, and promotes sustainable livelihoods.

### **AT THE HEART OF IT**

For Amit Hansraj, the brand Inca (short for 'incarnation') was conceived in Delhi during the pandemic, and reflects the idea that "we are made of different moods and emotions". "I find it interesting how life curates things for you without any deliberate action. The so-called exotic doesn't excite me because it's designed to impress. I'm more intrigued by things that involve human intervention. My brand reflects this—it's about comfort and versatility. You can wear my clothes at home and easily transition to a meeting without changing," shares the stylist-turned-designer.

While Inca is only three-years-old, Hansraj has created a distinct design vocabulary and made his debut this year at the LFW. He challenges the traditional ideas of garment construction with his free-flowing silhouettes and elements of drapery that transcend gender and size. "I'm not a trained designer, so my skills in pattern making are limited. My naivety and ignorance make my clothes unique. The clothes take the shape of the wearer's body. Most pieces in



Koh pashmina kurta set by ituvana

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City Blues collection by Paiwand showcased at LFW

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND

my collections fit across sizes. Inclusivity wasn't a conscious decision, but rather a natural outcome of my design process. Similarly, if I made size-specific clothes, imagine the amount of pieces I would have to produce. By creating capsule collections and avoiding pattern making, I achieve better sell-throughs and significantly reduce wastage. It's an integral part of my approach to sustainability," explains Hansraj.

### FROM THE DEPTHS OF IMAGINATION

Ankur Verma's love and admiration for his grandmother profoundly influenced the birth of his Delhi-based brand, Til. "She had an endearing belief in the significance of bodily marks like *til* (a mole), particularly those on the hand, which she associated with prosperity—a notion that held a special place in her heart," he recalls. Founded in 2022, Til represents Verma's interpretation of a surreal reality, where dreams and inspirations meld into tangible forms. "Inspired by the play of lines in our body textures—freckles, moles, wrinkles—I translate these elements into artworks, incorporating them into prints and embroideries that capture the essence of personal stories and experiences. Each piece from Til reflects this fusion of personal narrative with artistic vision, inviting others to connect with the depth and beauty inherent in the textures of life itself," he elaborates.

The seamless fusion of uncompromising quality with unwavering authenticity sits at the heart of Til's vision. "We strive to offer affordable luxury, making it accessible for everyone to indulge in the exceptional experience of wearing our creations. Our approach to the fashion industry is not about revolutionising it, but rather elevating it with our unique perspective. Sustainability is integral to our ethos; we repurpose waste materials through innovative techniques like patchwork and craft accessories, breathing new life into every piece," Verma adds.

### THE ART OF STORYTELLING

At ituvana, founder Lylah Shaw is inspired by her natural surroundings, and imbibes Balinese and Indian traditions into her designs. "Itu' means 'the' in Indonesian, 'vana' means 'forest' in Hindi, and 'ultimate bliss' in Sanskrit, encouraging the discovery of individual style through self-expression using the finest natural fabrics," explains Shaw who splits her time between Bali and Delhi. Free sizing, functionality, and comfort are the three indispensable aspects of her design language. "I like to think of our silhouettes as 're-wearable statement pieces', crafted with artful construction and versatile nature. For example, our signature dhoti pants can be styled in multiple ways and can even be worn as a dress."

When asked about the concept of innovation in fashion, Shaw adds, "To me, compassion is innovation. It's about embracing a holistic approach that considers the well-



Karashi Quilted Top with Drape Trouser, Til

being of individuals, communities, and our planet. Our signature stitch is a time-honoured *kantha* handwork, rooted in ancient times. We adapt these techniques to create contemporary clothing, blending the old with the new. We also recently transformed luxurious heirloom pashmina shawls into everyday wear. Our label is designed to be trans-seasonal with silhouettes and fabrics that work all year round. For day wear, we choose organic cotton or linen, and for evening wear, we choose silk." For Shaw, fashion is more than just clothes. Her favourite part comes after designing—shooting the brand campaigns where she collaborates with the most talented creatives in the country. "Each 'scene' or campaign tells a story, encouraging evolution and conscious living. Through films, we inspire change and promote conscious living, sharing stories that resonate with our values," she tells *Bazaar India*. ■

SEASON'S DIAMOND

*Bridgerton* star Nicola Coughlan has taken centre stage as the face of Skims' latest campaign. Photographed by Elizaveta Porodina, Coughlan highlights the comfort and flattering designs of the shapewear and clothing brand's Soft Lounge collection. The dreamy, pastel-toned images echo the aesthetic of her character, Penelope Bridgerton, in the show. This campaign combines high fashion with Coughlan's charm, reinforcing Skims' reputation for enhancing style and comfort in diverse settings.



FOR THE LOVE OF FASHION



A CINDERELLA STORY

Luxury footwear and accessories brand Jimmy Choo has named Gauravi Kumari as its new brand ambassador for India. "Jimmy Choo is synonymous with exceptional craftsmanship and glamour. I have always loved wearing Jimmy Choo," wrote the member of the Jaipur royal family in an Instagram post. Jimmy Choo has two boutiques in Mumbai and is targeting strong growth in India.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY: BHA TAMBEKAR



## HUES OF SOLACE

The Resort 2024 Collection by AMPM is a harmonious blend of subtlety and minimalism, showcasing earthy tones like tea green, pineapple, and tan, paired with flowy silhouettes. This collection invites you to pause amidst the chaos and embrace comfort with its breathable fabrics—perfect for a scorching summer day or a relaxing beachside retreat. Designed to help you declutter from the commotion, it embodies leisure and encourages you to savour life’s simple moments.

## CONFLUENCE OF TWO WORLDS

Renowned contemporary Indian occasion wear label Payal Singhal has teamed up with tech-enabled American sneaker brand, Endstate, to launch a limited-edition sneaker collection that seamlessly blends Eastern and Western influences with elegance and innovation. Inspired by traditional ornate metal embellishments of ancient tribes, these sneakers feature asymmetric lacing—a signature detail from Singhal. It is exclusively available as a limited edition through Endstate’s website and at Payal Singhal’s boutique in New York.



## THE ACT OF GIVING

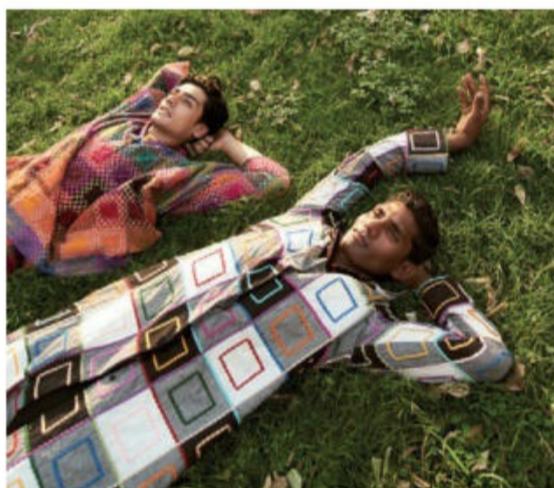
Aulerth, a brand known for consciously crafted jewellery, has unveiled its latest creation: The Altruist Kada Bracelet, designed by JJ Valaya. This exquisite piece embodies the powerful concept of “towards selfless service,” reminding us of the profound impact of giving. Inspired by the Sikh community’s belief in selfless service, Aulerth has partnered with CRY (Child Rights and You) and will donate the net proceeds from each sale to support the education and empowerment of girl children.

## LOVE IS LOVE

Couture designer Mayyur Girotra made history with his Ride to Pride collection, showcased at the New York City Pride 2024. The collection symbolised inclusivity, freedom, pride, self-acceptance, and change—a sartorial expression empowering the LGBTQIA+ community to feel seen, heard, and safe.

Speaking to *Bazaar India*, Girotra said, “Returning to New York to showcase my latest collection feels like a homecoming.

It’s an honour to be part of such an inclusive event again.” This year, he integrated traditional embellishments like Kutch patchwork, kantha stitch, and custom prints with globally inspired silhouettes. High-waisted pants, trench coats, and oversized shirts were paired with lehenga skirts and saris. Showcasing his support for the LGBTQIA+ community on an international platform holds deep significance for Girotra. “I hope people take away empowerment and inspiration from my designs—fashion as a powerful medium for change, challenging societal norms, and boldly expressing true selves,” he signed off.



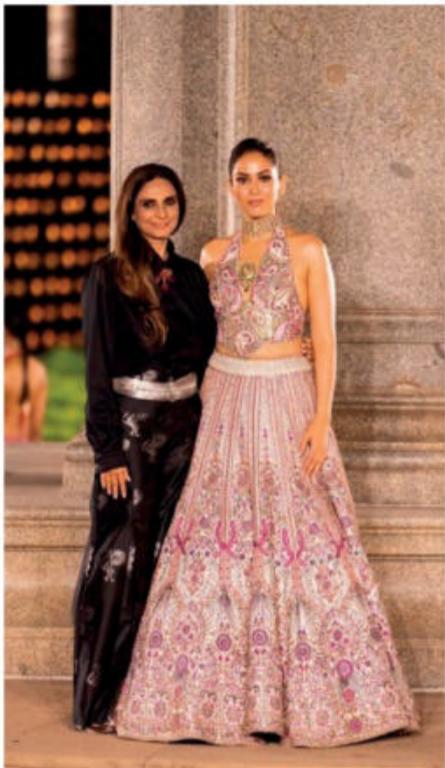
## THE RED-SOLED CHAIR

French fashion designer Christian Louboutin and his long-time friend, and interior designer Pierre Yovanovitch have collaborated to create a remarkable collection of nine limited-edition clam chairs. The legs of each chair are uniquely adorned with Louboutin’s iconic red-soled heels. The collection also features five nude chairs, celebrating Louboutin’s renowned nude footwear line. This collaboration pays homage to femininity and haute couture, seamlessly merging these two distinct realms.



## A NEW CHAPTER

Calvin Klein has appointed Veronica Leoni as its new creative director—the first female designer to hold this position at the brand. Calvin Klein has been designer-less since Raf Simons exited in late 2018. Leoni is set to debut her inaugural collection at the New York Fashion Week next year. In 2022, Leoni launched her own label, Quira, which propelled her to become a finalist for the 2023 LVMH Prize.



## REIMAGINING RUNWAYS

Renowned fashion label JADE by Monica and Karishma presented their new collection, Legacy of Deft Hands, in Mumbai last month. The collection, in collaboration with the JSW Foundation, empowers artisans and preserves India's cultural heritage using indigenous fabrics. The line honoured the invaluable skills of the local artisans. It offered women from remote India an opportunity to showcase their artistry globally.

## NEW KID ON THE BLOCK



Fashion e-tailer Urbanic has launched a new brand, Savana, to tap into Gen Z customers. It will offer clothes, accessories, and jewellery. It will cater to both premium and budget-conscious fashion lovers. Savana's collection will aim to empower young women and promote sustainable fashion, said brand founder James Wellwood.

# CRAFT & COUTURE

Celebrating 15 years of Akaaro, designer Gaurav Jai Gupta talks about the brand's philosophy, his latest collection, and future plans.

**F**ifteen years ago, Delhi-based designer Gaurav Jai Gupta launched Akaaro, a label that believed in seasonless design. Since then, it has been consistent with its philosophy. "We've not really changed the vocabulary or looked at trends. So, I think we have grown our base slowly and steadily," says Gupta. For him, the journey has been way more than just numbers. "I think the industry has really matured between then and now. Earlier, we were sort of a niche brand. But there is much more awareness today, which gives us a lot more confidence."

Gupta is a trained woven textile designer from London.

When he moved back to India, everyone was focusing on the traditional embroidered body of work. "And, here I was with all woven textiles—something very simple and minimal," he recalls. But innovation has been a driving force from the very first day. The brand experiments with Indian textiles by developing original fabrics and makes pieces that are both timeless and edgy. Gupta says they have been having fun with it lately. "We've really worked on our styling now. Earlier, the focus was largely on the textile side of it."

Akaaro is also minimising its footprint on the environment. Its latest collection, Moonrise, epitomises the ethos of sustainable couture craft. For this collection, Gupta and his team transformed discarded materials into vibrant, textured fabrics reminiscent of Wes Anderson's cinematic palette. "A lot of yarn is left after every season, and we don't throw anything away. That was a trigger point."

Gupta has also looked at the aspect of functionality. His collection for the Lakmē Fashion Week in Mumbai this year is a case in point. It was modern, urban, and sustainable. "There was something in the air that day. I was backstage. So, I honestly have no idea how people felt when they saw the collection, but I think it was a very special show. It was extremely well received," he tells *Bazaar India*.

As Akaaro looks to the future, Gupta remains tight-lipped about upcoming plans but hints at expanding their couture offerings. "Finally, I think we will be launching our bridal saris that people can cherish as heirloom pieces," he adds. ■



# REIMAGINING WELLNESS

RESET, a premium holistic wellness brand, is championing a proactive approach to health through daily rituals aimed at holistic wellness.

**A**t the heart of RESET is its 'Dose of Good' ethos, a synergy of science and design that reveals itself in its product range, overall wellness strategy and a pledge to infuse goodness in all aspects of our lives. More than products, the offerings of RESET are enablers of a lifestyle dedicated to well-being that seamlessly integrates into daily routines, with a diverse product range and packaging that is designed to inspire people on their wellness journey. The brand believes in weaving wellness within daily rituals that enrich our lives.

RESET Founder Saransh Chaudhary, President, Consumer Healthcare, Venus Remedies, emphasises that wellness is deeply personal. "Our extensive product lineup is crafted to facilitate each person's journey to health and happiness. 'Dose of Good' is our promise of a scientifically backed wellness experience as we focus on combining pharmaceutical precision with natural healing to offer a wonderful

wellness experience which transcends physical benefits to provide mental well-being too."

The brand covers a spectrum of wellness needs, including pain relief, mental wellness, sleep quality and detoxification. Grounded in the scientific legacy and quality commitment of Venus Remedies, which has over 100 patents to its credit, RESET's innovations in product development set it apart.

For instance, RESET Ultra Potent Gel, a patented pain management solution that eases muscle and body aches associated with today's fast-paced lifestyle, is perfect for post-workout recovery or to simply unwind after a taxing day. Then there are RESET Ashwagandha + Melatonin Gummies, a vegan, gluten-free delight that combines stress relief with sleep support to make bedtime a relaxing ritual. RESET Herbal Detox Candy is another unique patented modern-day elixir, which cleanses the body with a potent blend of herbs and antioxidants, supporting liver detoxification and Blood purification.



The product range by RESET

## Beyond products

RESET dedicates significant effort to raising awareness about often overlooked lifestyle concerns, such as chronic neck stiffness, liver health and sleep quality, aiming to address their root causes. To achieve this, the brand has developed a unique user flow that diagnoses these issues through an AI-powered quiz, trained by experts in relevant fields. Believing that every wellness journey is unique, the quiz provides personalised advice for a holistic approach, ensuring that you have a wellness partner that truly understands and supports your lifestyle needs. Expanding its array of wellness wonders, the brand's upcoming Yoga Range is tailored to meet the specific needs of yoga enthusiasts, further extending RESET's comprehensive health solutions. This addition again underscores RESET's commitment to a 'Dose of Good'. "With our new visual identity, expanding product range and technology innovations, we hope to empower our patrons at every step of their quest for holistic wellness," adds Chaudhary, reflecting on the brand's ethos.



Apple Cider Gummies by RESET



Ultra Potent Gel by RESET

## Good for you, good for the planet

RESET's commitment to sustainability and empowering consumer choices ensures each product meets high efficacy standards and connects deeply with a wellness-minded community. The brand responsibly sources materials and partners with FSC-certified vendors for sustainable packaging, contributing to a healthier planet.

The 'Dose of Good' ideology extends beyond the design language featuring a calming colour palette to practical, planet-benefitting choices. RESET uses glass bottles and ceramic jars instead of plastic, underscoring their environmental responsibility. This ideology resonates in every consumer interaction, from the calming logo visuals to the emotionally resonant colour palette, encouraging a healthier lifestyle.



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Harper's  
**BAZAAR**  
INDIA

# BAZAAR

ACCESSORIES



Tempête De  
Neige clutch,  
Roger Vivier

## SWEET HARMONY

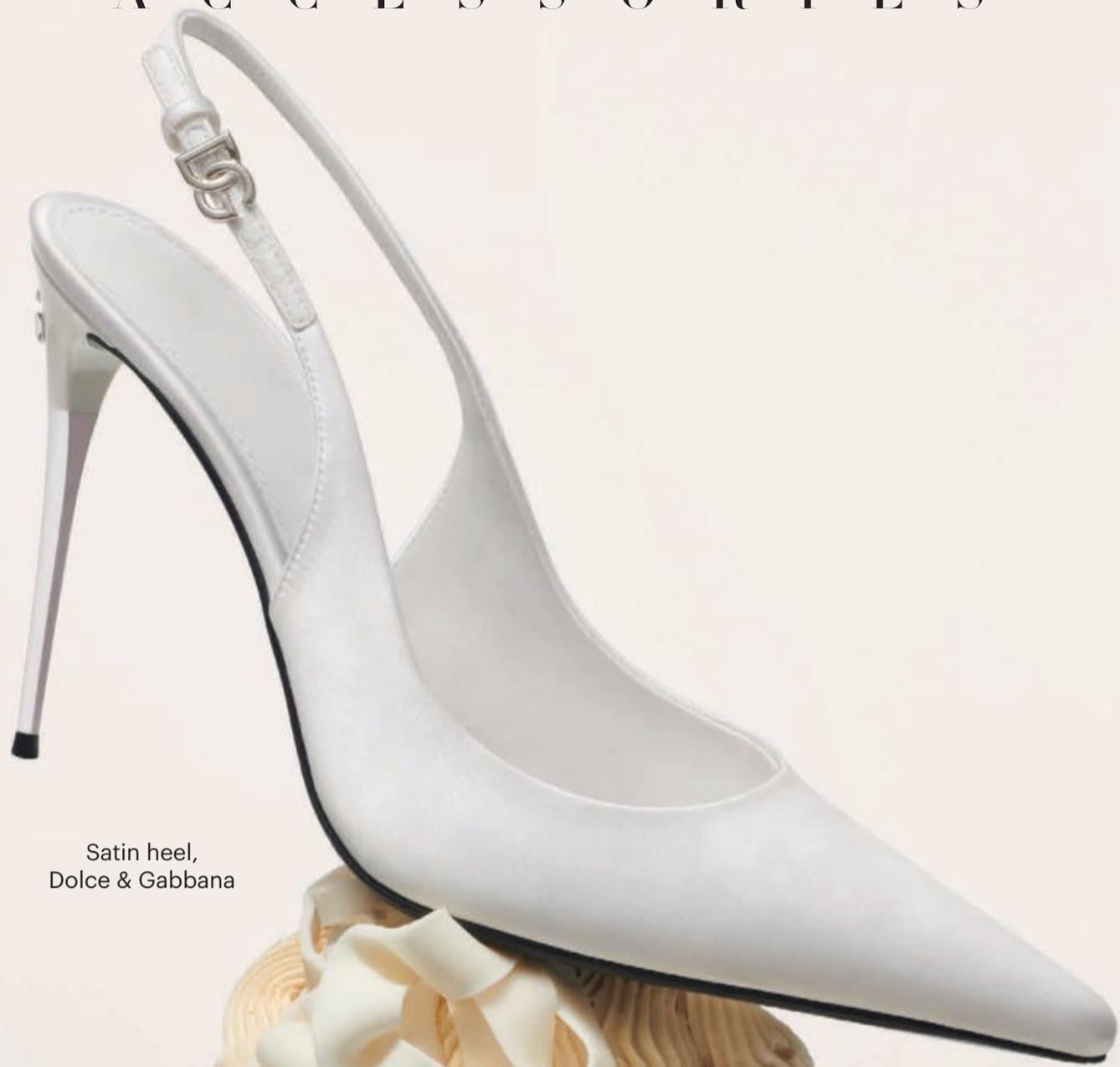
Chic details in white and off-white shades create a delightful blend in summer accessories.

Photography by *BELA BORSODI*

Production by *REBECCA GLAVURTIC*

Food Artist: *SOPHIA STOLZ*

# A C C E S S O R I E S



Satin heel,  
Dolce & Gabbana

# KNIFE'S EDGE

The spotlight shifts to the humble toe—now dubbed as fashion's latest obsession—with an assertive design that has character.



1. Melbourne Embellished Glossed Crinkled-Leather Pumps, Bottega Veneta, ₹1,26,790 approx; 2. Rali 75 Bow-Embellished Leather and Raffia Pumps, Jimmy Choo, ₹76,230 approx; 3. Corintia Suede Mules, Manolo Blahnik, ₹75,420 approx; 4. Bow Tie Leather Pumps, Aquazzura, ₹ 60,245 approx.

COMPILED BY: RIA TAMBEKAR. IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS

A C C E S S O R I E S



Cuff,  
Chanel

# SITTING PRETTY

Pearls speak a collective desire for softness and comfort. Add this classic mix of polish and pop to elevate your style.



1. 14-karat Gold pearl bracelet, Mateo, ₹96,800 approx; 2. Gold tone and pearl necklace, Jil Sander, ₹1, 54,450 approx; 3. 14-karat gold pearl earrings, Sophie Bille Brahe, price on request; 4. VLogo Signature Metal and Pearl Ring, Valentino Garavani, ₹34,400 approx.

A C C E S S O R I E S



Mini Dior  
Jolie Top  
handle bag;  
and D-bow  
Necklace,  
both Dior

# HANG IN THERE

Equal parts functional and stylish, this crossbody strap is the trick to finding your perfect style.



1. Tabby Mini Shoulder Bag 20, Coach, ₹54,500; 2. Padded Cassette Leather Crossbody Bag, Bottega Veneta, ₹3,48,100 approx; 3. Paula's Ibiza Cutout Leather Herringbone Shoulder Bag, Loewe, ₹1,17,930 approx; 4. Mustard Tan Nani Bucket bag, Sabyasachi, ₹1,40,000 approx.

A C C E S S O R I E S



Allknots Woven  
Leather Hobo bag,  
Valentino Garavani

# YES, OF COURSE

Looking for crochet, raffia, and embossed leathers? You're at the right place. These valuable investments will serve you well in the transitional months to come.



1. Ryan Small Appliquéd Logo Trimmed Faux Raffia Tote, Alexander Wang, ₹1,96,250 approx; 2. Pacoïo Medium Leather Bucket Bag, Rabanne, ₹1,58,600 approx; 3. Small Lady Dior My ABCDior Bag, Dior, price on request; 4. T Timeless Shopping Bag, Tod's, ₹2,64,000 approx.

A C C E S S O R I E S



Bag, Loro Piana

# HOLD ME TIGHT!

Handbags have evolved over the decades, but the timeless, sturdy hand-held companions make you feel anything but weighed down.



1. Le Calino Leather Top handle Bag, Jacquemus, ₹1,06,3210 approx; 2. Large Galleria Floral Appliqué Bag, Prada, ₹9,24,750 approx; 3. Pink Swarovski Pearls Embroidered Clutch, Tarun Tahiliani, ₹54,900; 4. Sardine Viscose Top Handle Bag, Bottega Veneta, ₹34,8080 approx.

# OPEN WATER

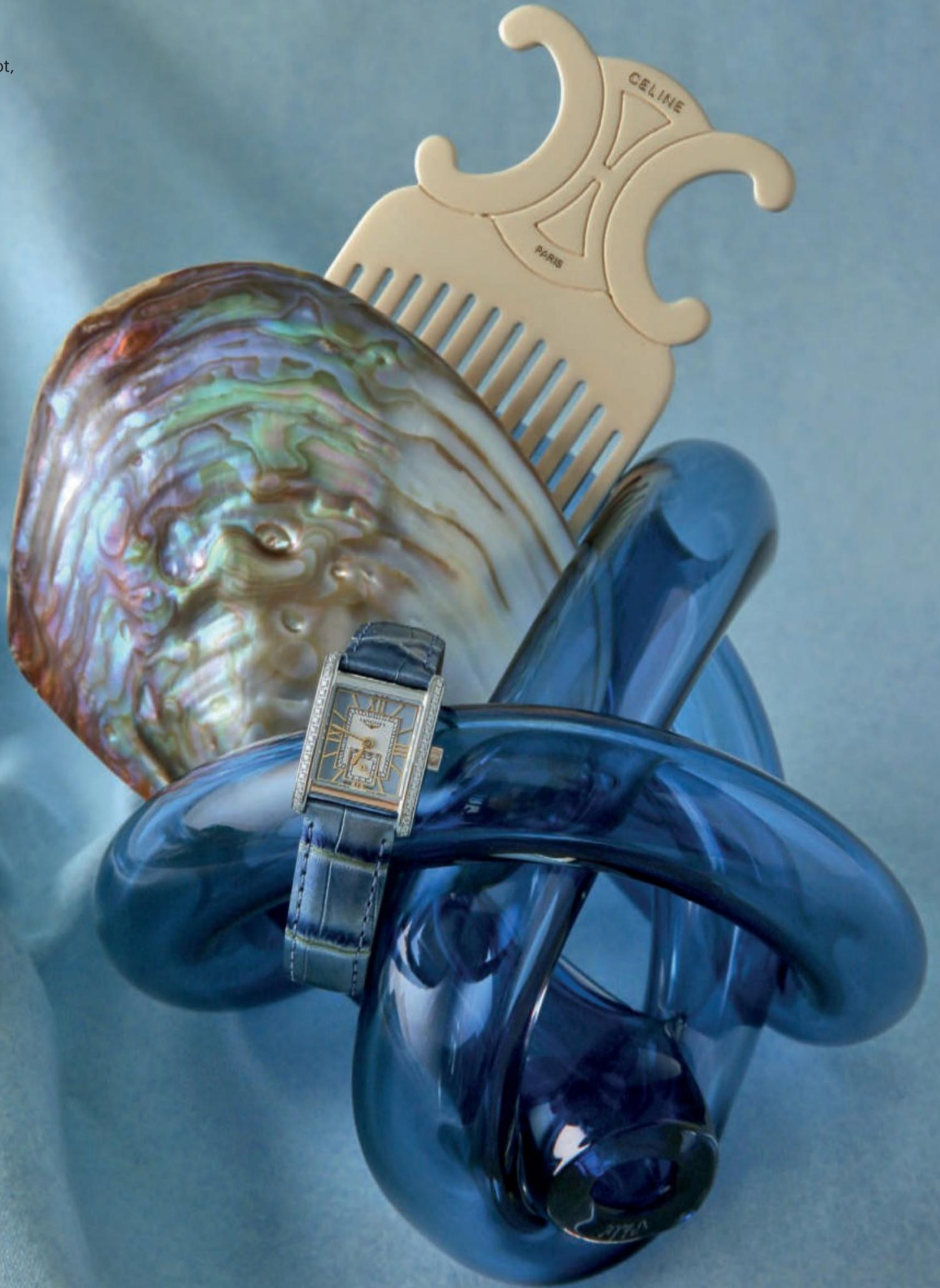
Keep it light and breezy with a host of ocean-inspired essentials.



GG Rubber-effect Large Duffle Bag, Gucci; comb, Zara Home

*Photography by NURIA SERRANO  
Production by CLAUDIA LAUKAMP*

Mini Dolcevita Blue  
Dial Watch,  
Longines; Triomphe  
Hair Comb in  
Acetate Ivoire,  
Celine by Hedi  
Slimane; glass knot,  
SkLO X Incasa



# A C C E S S O R I E S



Lady Dior My  
ABCDior Bag and  
Metal Dioriviera  
Necklace, both Dior;  
stoneware volcano  
vase, Borgia Conti

Seamaster Aqua  
Terra Steel Watch  
with Rubber  
Bracelet, Omega;  
metal tortoise-  
mount magnifying  
glass, Becara



# A C C E S S O R I E S



Logo pearl earrings with gold trim, Chanel

Galleria Leather  
Bag, Prada; resin  
coral, Borgia Conti



# A C C E S S O R I E S



Oyster Perpetual 36 Steel Watch with Celebration Motif, Rolex; vintage glass ashtray, Incasa; metal earrings and bracelet, both Schiaparelli

(Left) Resin wave-shaped earrings, and long painted resin earring, both Giorgio Armani



# A C C E S S O R I E S



Oyster charm in resin and other accessories on the rope, all Loewe; glass paperweight, Borgia Conti

Suede loafers,  
Wander Matelassé  
Nappa Leather Hobo  
Bag, and rope and  
nylon bracelets, all  
Miu Miu



Clémante Burgevin Blachman



# MAKING OF A MÉTIER

At Hermès, Clémante Burgevin Blachman, the creative director of fashion accessories, strikes an artful truce between ergonomic design and timeless beauty.

*By AKANKSHA KAMATH*

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLY VANDERPERRE; IMAGE: COURTESY THE BRAND

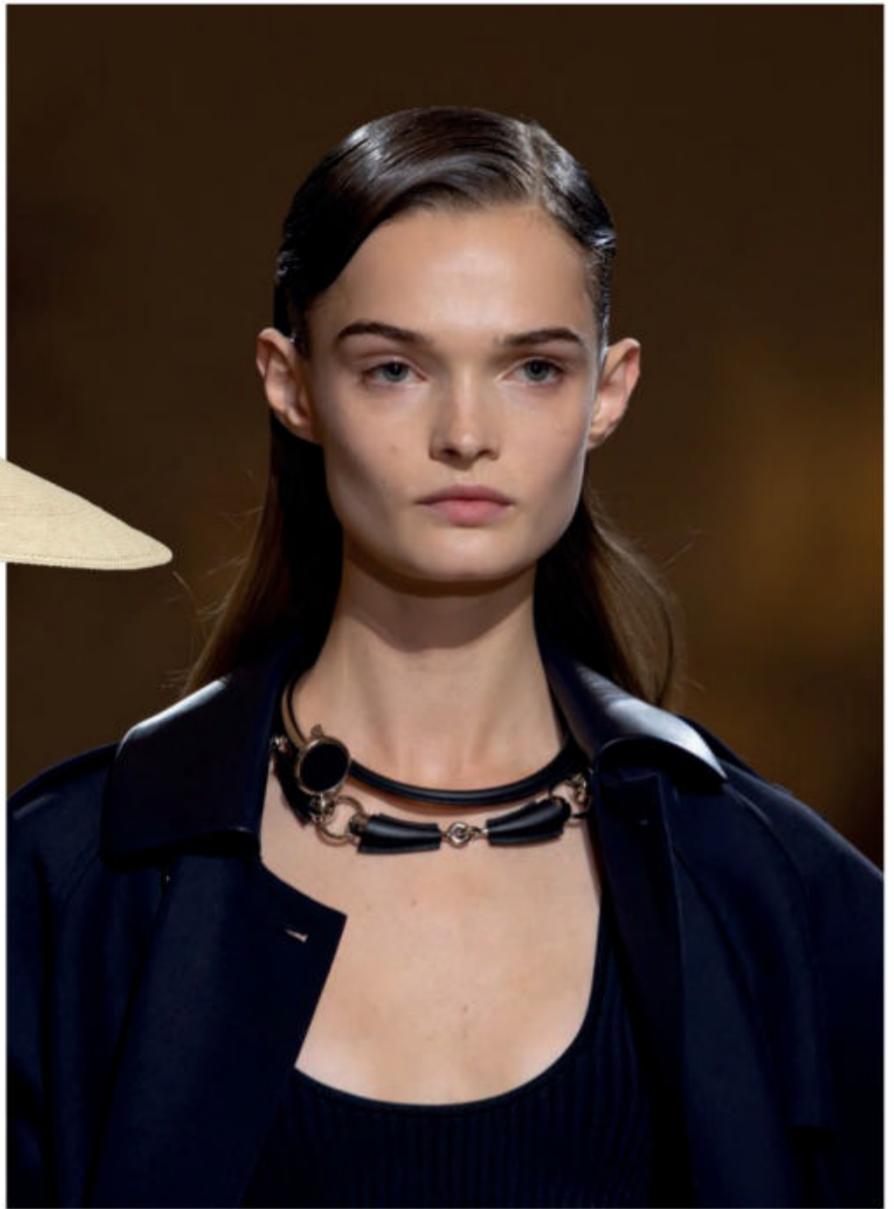


**A**n object is designed and brought into the world to do two things. First, provide its wearer with the sheer satisfaction of looking at it, i.e. the transcendent joy experienced when an object is a reminder or a totem of more effervescent times. And the second, to serve its purpose—its basic need for existence, whatever that may be, big or small.

In the hallowed halls of Hermès' fashion accessories métier—where its fashion jewellery, hats, and belts are made, both these functions are met, and a third is discovered. The honouring of the House's codes and its long lasting legacy in the art of object-making, according to creative director of the pieces, Clémence Burgevin Blachman.

Burgevin Blachman's rise to the chair in 2022 is one that is riddled with unlikely possibilities. She's quick to say so herself. She did not study fashion, but literature. She left a career in publishing to follow her instinct into fashion. After a stint as the creative director of BETC, an advertising agency, where she reimagined the visual identity of the institutional and iconic Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Burgevin Blachman met Raf Simons and began working with him at Calvin Klein as the head of design for the home division. Here, she brought to life her early instruction in the world of objects learned close at home from her antique dealer and art loving parents. Followed by working with Pieter Mulier for his first two collections at Alaïa.

"It is about coming with your own foundations of culture and taste, and blending it with the purpose of the House," she says from her room in the Paris atelier where 16 métiers of the House work in synchronicity across collections. "I've always been fond of objects and decorative arts, and Hermès is a true House for the object itself." An exciting object/jewellery from the new Spring/Summer 2024 collection inspired by the spirit of the Faubourg—Hermès' iconic and oldest building in Paris that celebrates its centenary this year—is the whimsical bracelet in printed enamel



(Clockwise from top left) A hat in brisa panama and printed silk; and models showcase the accessories from Hermès S/S'24 and F/W'24 collections, respectively

and gold metal with the 'Funny Ice Cream' print that was originally seen on a silk Carré.

“At Hermès, there has always been a sense of poetry and fun. If you think about the first fashion accessories that were created at Hermès, it was a cuff—The Collier de Chien, which was part of a famous collection that was inspired by a dog collar.” She explains of the simple ingenuity of designing a cuff from a dog collar—the brilliance, whimsy, as well as subversive nature of that.

The Faubourg bracelet also features the horse motif, a nerve centre of the brand that started as a harness workshop back in 1837. “It may be expected, but I didn’t realise prior to my arrival at Hermès that how much access there is or the richness of the environment around the horse as an animal. For instance, the equipment, the figure of the horse, the role it was playing in the economy, in terms of the craft around it, whether it was the carriage, the saddle, the harness...”

Colour, too, is examined with an almost forensic lens. Burgevin Blachman reveals that meetings were held with the in-house gardener of the rooftop garden at the flagship store to understand and discuss the colours of the garden, the plans, and then come up with the perfect shade of white inspired by one of the flowers residing in the urban plantation.

The true ‘aha’, or as Burgevin Blachman calls it, “Touché, we did it,” moment comes when you see the fashion accessories—hats, belts, jewellery, et al.—punctuate a look to perfection. Not a comma or clasp out of place. You see these at the shows—a dust-pink leather look broken at the midriff with a chameleonic belt harnessed together with a bridle as an ode to Hermès’ history. Or with a baseball hat placed as a

cavalier addition but on closer inspection revealing depths of detail in its use of materials (cashmere) and shape (although baseball, twisted to look more like a riding cap). “We design objects that have the elements of beauty, desire, function, and a timeless spirit. So, even if it’s hats, we’ll make it in the Hermès way. You will not find a piece of plastic at the back to close it...we take the same care in making it as every other object of the House.”

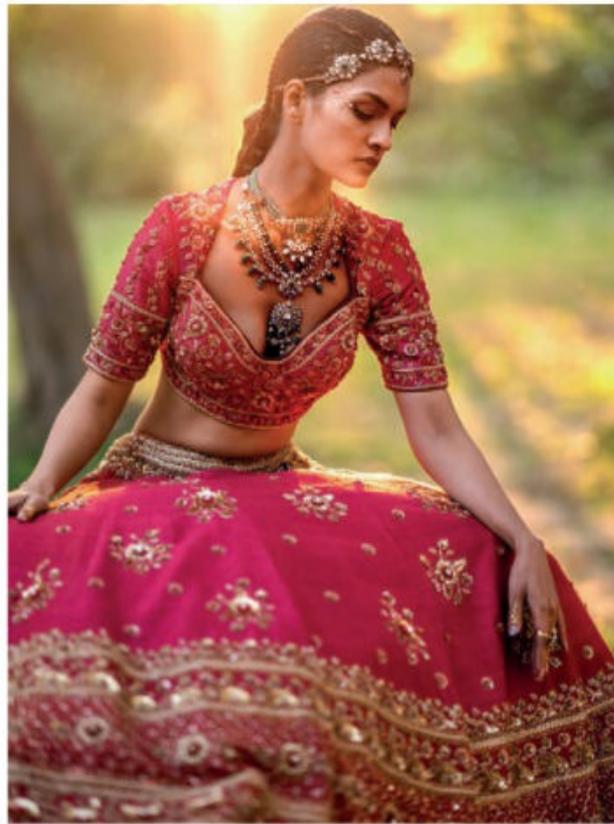
Her favourite pastime when not putting pen to paper or designing new objects for the métier? Going through the Instagram accounts of her clients to see what they’ve done with an object she created or how they have styled it. “It amazes me, I love it. There’s the freedom to do whatever you want with them. They are just amazing objects that can go through time. There’s no diktat of trends, you can be free to do whatever you want with how you style them, and that is a thing of beauty.” ■



(Right) A model showcases an accessory at the runway; (below) earrings and bracelets from the S/S’24 collection



PHOTO CREDIT: STUDIO DES FLEURS; AND GASPER RUIZ LINDBERG. IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND



(Left to right) An ensemble depicting the iconic rangkat weave; the heritage bridal collection; and a Parsi gara sari by Talking Threads

# WEAVING CRAFT AND CULTURE

Talking Threads—a celebration of heritage and craftsmanship.

A distinguished bridal and evening couture brand, Talking Threads is deeply anchored in Indian craftsmanship and artisanship. The brand seamlessly blends tradition with contemporary elegance. The bridal couture line preserves and evolves heritage Indian thread crafts, and its evening line creates modern, global designs on the foundational excellence of Indian artisanship.

## Revival of Craft Heritage

While the designs explore a multitude of Indian craft techniques spanning metallic and thread work, the atelier specialises in the intricate thread crafts of Parsi gara and kashidakari and metallic crafts of zardozi and tilla. The design and artisanal collaborations in these crafts form the backbone of the brand's bridal and heritage collections.

## Global Appeal

The masterful detailing of Indian artisanship finds a global audience through the brand's evening line of corsets, bustiers, jackets, gowns, and tuxedos. The skillful zardozi and gara artisans adeptly bead surfaces in glamorous compositions involving crystals, pearls and metallic embellishments. The evening line is a future forward exhibition of the famed Indian artisanship skills and knowhow.

## Rich, Cultural Symbolism

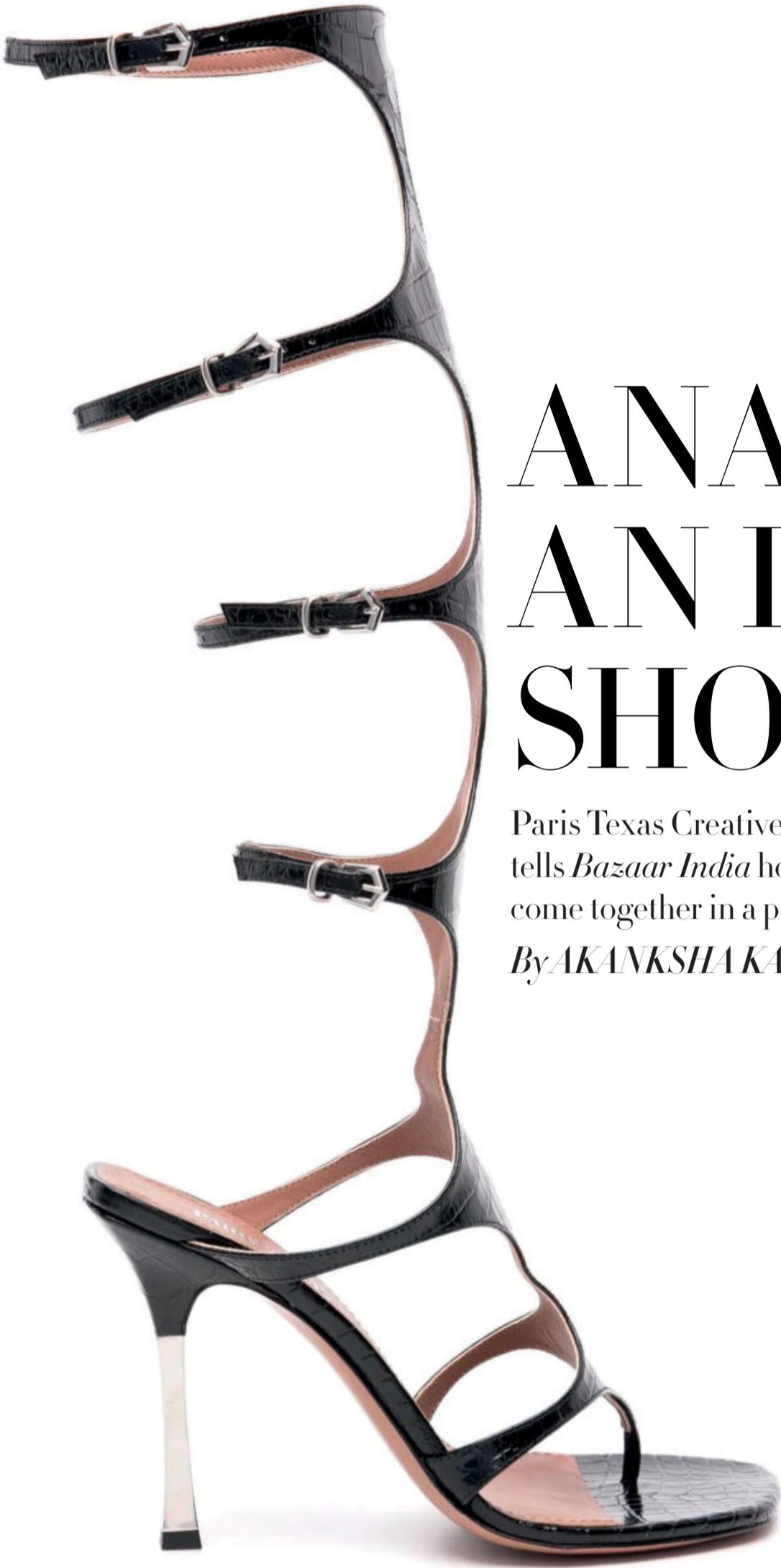
Central to the brand's identity, is the emblem of our national bird, peacock that epitomises India's grace, charm, and cultural richness. The exquisite bird resonates with the ethos of Talking Threads—representing beauty, rejuvenation, immortality, splendour, and luxury.

## Artistic Fusion

From rich artisanal embroidery techniques of Parsi gara, zardozi, handloom artistry of rangkat weave, to colour crafts of bandhej and leheriya—the artistic fusion across the bridal and evening couture line is a renewal force that breathes new life into ancient techniques and skills. The fusion of Parsi gara with zardozi, the modern adaptation of the rangkat weave, the explorations of bandhej with zardozi and tilla, demonstrate the intrinsic theme in the designs.

## Pearl's Artistic Vision at The Helm

The brand's bridal and evening collections are directed under the creative leadership of the visionary Pearl Uppal. Through her designs, she delivers a nuanced balance of opulence and minimalism, of tradition and modernity. Her designs adhere to clean lines and use of negative spaces to amplify the embellished artistry. Florals and celestials are the mainstay of Pearl's craft. She finds beauty in her wearer, and pushes the boundaries of couture through customisation and personalisation.



# ANATOMY OF AN IT-GIRL SHOE

Paris Texas Creative Director Annamaria Brivio tells *Bazaar India* how the bold and the beautiful come together in a perfectly crafted pair of boots.

By *AKANKSHA KAMATH*

**K**endall Jenner, Gigi Hadid, Hailey Bieber, Emily Ratajkowski, and Kylie Jenner. Dare you to name a more iconic and influential quintet of celebrities in the cultural zeitgeist as we know it today. These women, and their shoes, bags, clothes, jewellery, sunglasses, and even boyfriends make seismic waves on the newsreels every day. And when a celebrity like Beyoncé decides to release her album cover wearing a brand, you can hear the cash registers ringing worldwide. Paris Texas, a Milan-based shoe brand, founded by Annamaria Brivio in 2015, is that rare breed of cult brand status that proliferates popular culture and consciousness to become a ubiquitous wardrobe must-have.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND



Annamaria Brivio

But what makes a cult brand? Deep research and a healthy dose of internet sleuthing later, I can share that it takes more than a game of algorithms and perfectly placed celebrity sightings to make a brand reach cult status. For Brivio, who is a former seasoned buyer and stylist, as well as co-founder of multi-brand retailer Barragan dedicated to identifying emerging labels globally, and giving them a platform, instinct plays an important role.

“It takes a robust brand DNA to create a label of the future,” explains Brivio over a phone call from her showroom in Milan. “Of course, staying abreast of trends is important, but it is equally vital to be true to one’s core values. Ultimately, it’s not just about having an attractive product, it is about embodying its essence and identity.” And of course, Paris Texas has this in plentitude.

The brand takes its name from the two distinct personalities it evokes—‘Paris’ aka elegant, delicate with a certain je ne sais quoi, and ‘Texas’ for its bold, sensual, and boisterous exuberance. In a shoe that looks like the Rosalia Texas Cowboy Boot decorated with delicate white roses, or a chunky yet delicate platform in a python embossed effect. Or in the shape and form of the brand’s latest collaboration with photographer and model Nadia Lee Cohen. “It was very important for us to work with an artist like Nadia because she is the true essence of what Paris Texas is. She is feminine, but also very hard and strong at the same,” says Brivio. ■

## A WOMAN’S DESIGNER

Brivio shares her notes on building a shoe wardrobe grounded in style and craft.



### The Cioccolato Stiletto

“I firmly believe that every woman’s shoe wardrobe should encompass timeless pieces that exude both iconic style, and essential functionality. This is something that is epitomised by our Cioccolato Stiletto boots.”

### The Lidia Mule

“A classy, yet alluring, late-night style really rounds out a wardrobe.”



### The Dallas Boot

“For me, Paris Texas is an attitude. You can wear a very elegant shoe, but with a Texan attitude. For instance, the daytime Dallas ankle boots that are best paired with denim.”



# MAKINGS OF AN ICON

The Gucci Horsebit 1955 bag is a nod to gender-neutral fashion.

By *SHUBHANGI JINDAL*

**G**ucci's iconic Horsebit 1955 bag has maintained the 'it' bag status since its debut in 2020. It has gone through multiple iterations, highlighting contemporary design sensibilities blended with impeccable craftsmanship, that stand as a testament to the brand's inclusive approach. Although the world is still quite narrow in terms of what we see as a man's bag, Gucci in many ways has invigorated the space a little. The Horsebit bag's timeless elegance and functionality appeal to modern men who appreciate fashion-forward, yet classic, pieces. Gucci's commitment to unisex fashion further solidifies the Horsebit bag's place in a man's wardrobe, seamlessly integrating into a variety of styles—from tailored suits to relaxed streetwear. This investment piece reinvents itself in many colours, sizes, and materials, including leather, precious leather, and GG canvas, among others.



The Gucci Horsebit 1955 bag is a timeless exploration of how the luxury brand's DNA has been shaped and reshaped by the visionaries at its helm. Instantly recognisable by its signature double ring and bar motif, the gold-toned Horsebit hardware was initially seen on a pair of loafers in 1953. From here on, it became an iconic Gucci symbol, paying homage to the brand's equestrian heritage.

Gucci's attention to detail doesn't just end with the elegance of its design; the brand also has a strong point of view on how the Horsebit 1955 bag is meant to be carried. The offering includes everything from an original rectangular top-flap shoulder bag with an adjustable strap to a dome-shaped top handle. Not coddled, but easily clutchable as it is to throw over your shoulder for maximum aerodynamics (we know you have multiple things to do and your bag shouldn't slow you down). Smart, simple, and sophisticated—the luxury bag boasts an ultra-chic silhouette that seamlessly epitomises both form and function. ■

# BAZAAR

## JEWELS & WATCHES

Bracelet, Dolce & Gabbana Alta Gioielleria



PHOTOGRAPHS: SEBASTIAN LAGER; SET DESIGN: RAFAEL MEDEIROS; ACCESSORIES DIRECTOR: MIGUEL ENAMORADO

## DARING VISION

Audacious designs and exemplary craftsmanship are reimagined for everyday elegance.



# OUT OF THE LEAGUE

Intricate details and opulent designs offer a rare combination of mystery and splendour.

*Photographs by SEBASTIAN LAGER*

*Set Design by RAFAEL MEDEIROS*

*Accessories Director: MIGUEL ENAMORADO*

Necklace, Graff



Soleil Contraste Necklace, Chanel High Jewelry

# J E W E L S

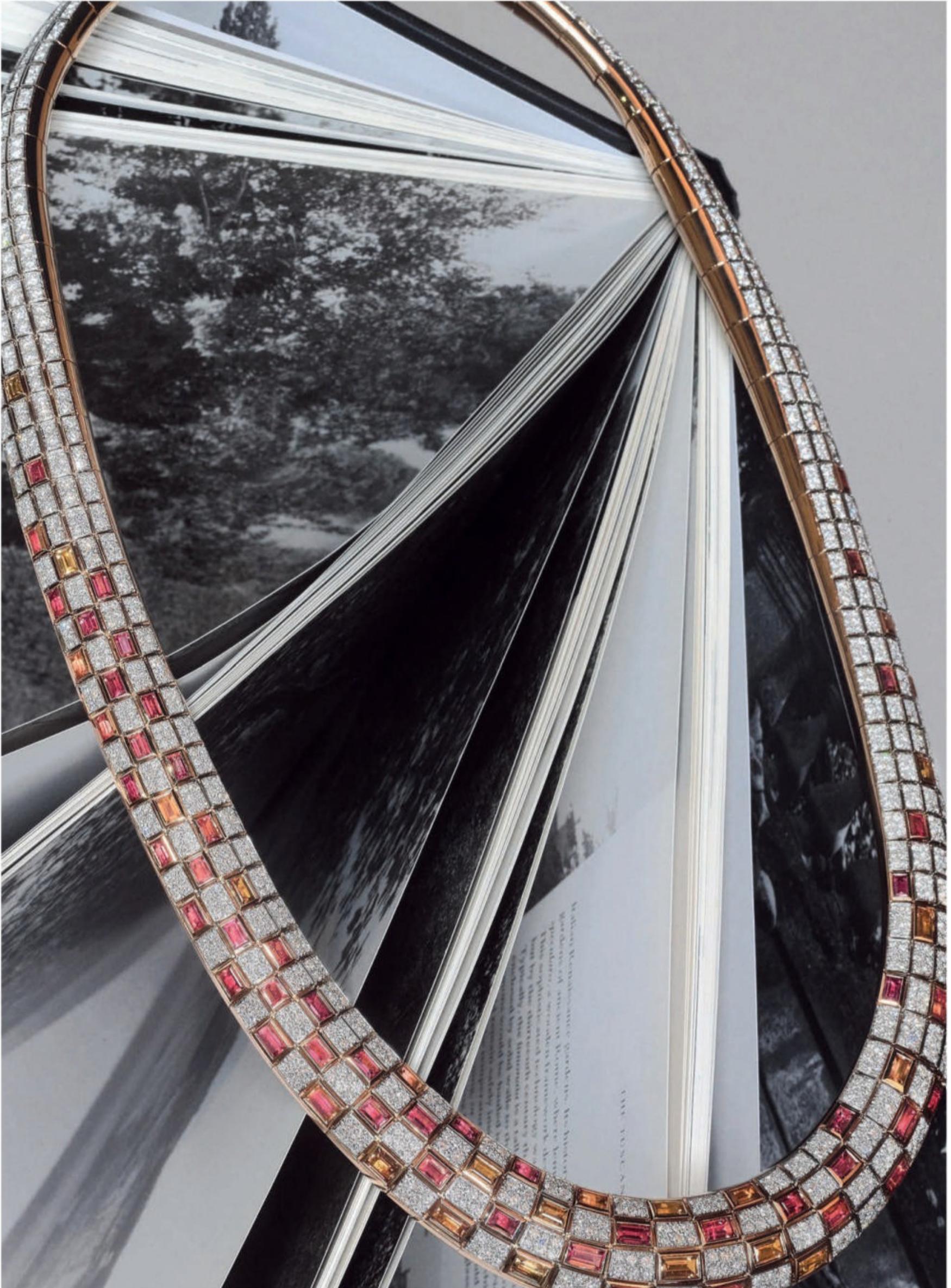


Saphir Celeste Ring, Van Cleef & Arpels



Silva High Jewelry Necklace, Piaget

# J E W E L S



Deep Time High Jewelry Skin Necklace, Louis Vuitton



Délicat Necklace, Dior Fine Jewelry

# J E W E L S



Libre bracelet, Cartier



Necklace, Armani Privé Haute Joaillerie



# A PIECE OF HISTORY

The renewed interest in vintage and antique jewellery reiterates its timeless elegance.

*Bazaar India* decodes the know-how of investing in one.

By *RICHA GOYAL SIKRI*



The allure of vintage and antique jewellery has been steadily on the rise. Post-pandemic, it has drastically surged even on the global stage. Various factors contribute to this trend. Some point to the escalating price of gold, which has made jewellery manufacturing more expensive, while others highlight the sourcing challenges faced by jewellers because of mining and supply chain disruptions during the pandemic years. These practical considerations have undeniably fuelled the increased demand for vintage and antique pieces.

Yet, beyond these pragmatic reasons, vintage jewellery offers consumers the chance to acquire an exquisite piece of history. Whether it's a double-clip platinum brooch from 1925, adorned with the most beautiful diamonds, or a tiara previously worn by royalty, each piece encapsulates a timeless story, making it a truly unique treasure.

The term 'antique' usually refers to jewels that are over 100-year-old, whereas 'vintage' may have different connotations. Some consider jewels post 1925 till the eighties deserving of the title 'vintage'. Others use the term only for old jewels that are of top quality but are not antique pieces.

One of the biggest challenges when buying vintage and antique jewels is authenticity. The best safeguard against fraud is due diligence. "A good place to start is with the book *Understanding Jewellery* by David Bennett and Daniela Mascetti or the online platform by the same name," says Singapore-based Brenda Kang, the founder of Revival Jewels & Objects. "This would give you an idea of the timelines and jewellery styles," she explains, adding "but not help you learn authentic versus fake. That will require handling jewels, training your eye over time, and learning through experience. For that, I would also suggest visiting museums and jewellery viewings by auction houses to understand better before you consider purchasing one." Cultural differences influence buying behaviour and preferences. Kang explains that Asian buyers ask questions like, "Will this piece retain value down the road?", "Could I get my money back in 30 years?" In her experience, most (if not

all) European or American buyers buy because they want to feel or look good with that jewel, or to mark milestones, or for gifting. They rarely ask questions like "what is the per carat price for this?"

While it is important to consider the intrinsic value of a jewel, one must not view it solely as the sum of its parts. Fourth-generation vintage and antique jewellery specialist of the globally renowned Faerber Collection, Ida Faerber explains, "Take the jewel in your hand and observe it from all angles. Jewellery can often be a matter of feeling; something tells you if you will like it or not. That, for me, is the first thing beyond signatures." Additionally, she states that commercial-grade jewels tend to be uncomfortable and poorly finished, whereas the high quality ones are well-finished on both sides. "A piece of jewellery should feel soft on your skin, like a fabric in your hand when it's well made," Faerber explains.

Although jewellery is akin to a miniature work of art, most buyers don't perceive it the way they view a painting or a sculpture. When does the design and craftsmanship of a jewel supersede the intrinsic value of gold, diamonds, and gemstones? Faerber points towards 19th century jewels as a great example of craftsmanship, carrying more weight than the quality of the old-cut diamonds used during the period. Another exception to the "intrinsic value focus" would be the creations of French jeweller René Lalique from the Art Nouveau period. Lalique's jewellery, made with low-value gems and glass, can sell for over a hundred thousand dollars because of the exceptional design and craftsmanship. Well-crafted pieces from the collections of renowned jewellery houses, such as Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels, also transcend the materials used for the pieces themselves.

The only way to truly understand the real value of a jewel or gemstone is not to buy but to sell. Internationally, websites of auction houses such as Sotheby's, Christie's, and Phillips are a great place to research prices. In India, websites of AstaGuru and Saffronart openly share prices from past auctions.

Jay Sagar, a jewellery specialist with AstaGuru, explains, "There's always been an allure with certain buyers in

**"A piece of jewellery should feel soft on your skin, like a fabric in your hand when it's well made."**

Emerald, rock crystal, and diamond pendant necklace, Cartier, 1912

# J E W E L S

India to own vintage and antique jewellery with provenance. In the past, trusted family jewellers facilitated the private sale and purchase of antique jewels. Now, with auction houses, this client base has increased. Because of online bidding, people in any corner of India can confidently bid for and possibly buy fine antique jewellery vetted by specialists. Many first-time buyers are bidding because they trust the authenticity of the jewel. From my perspective, the Indian jewellery market is enormous, and there is a tremendous opportunity for growth.”

Benoît Repellin, the worldwide head of jewellery at Phillips, shares his guidelines for buying vintage and antique jewels. “Always aim to buy the best quality piece within your budget. Quality in jewellery is paramount, and understanding it requires asking detailed questions. Auction houses like Phillips provide access to experts who can not only offer opinions and guidance but are also well-versed in the current market trends and the historical context of the pieces, helping you make informed decisions. The auction house fully catalogues and describes each jewel. You can request condition reports that offer further in-depth detail about the piece you’re interested in. These reports help you understand the exact condition of the jewellery, ensuring there are no surprises.”

Among vintage and antique jewellery, some are regarded as blue-chip assets. “Vintage jewellery offers the charm of one-of-a-kind pieces and handmade craftsmanship,” says Hong Kong-based jewellery specialist Gilles Zalulyan from Palais Royal. “However, not every vintage piece will have exceptional design or quality. Like all art forms, different artistic movements throughout history had varying levels of talent among artists. When buying vintage jewellery, look for dealers with extensive inventories of signed pieces. This shows their experience and dedication. There has been an increase in counterfeit items in the last few years, particularly in the US, London, and in auctions.”

Sometimes, what makes a jewel collectible goes beyond intrinsic value and craftsmanship. Kang explains this with an example. “If we are talking about stones, Old Mine or European Cut diamonds were not popular 30 years ago. Few wanted the lumpy asymmetrical-cut diamond with a big culet (or hole) visible in the middle. But this has changed with contemporary designers, such as JAR, and other antique dealers, opening our eyes to the beauty and rarity of old-cut diamonds. For vintage jewels, it can also be quite trend-driven, but rarity, innovation, workmanship, signature (who made it), and beauty are key points to consider.” ■



(Clockwise from top) Antique emerald necklace; diamond, sapphire brooch crafted as a feather, Chaumet; a pair of gold and diamond brooches, Van Cleef & Arpels, circa 1940; a Cartier ring (Panthère Set)



# INTERLOCKING HERITAGE & ELEGANCE

Gucci's new fine jewellery collection revives a 1960s classic.

*By SHUBHANGI JINDAL*

**G**ucci has come a full circle and is now delving into its signature roots with the launch of the Interlocking Fine Jewellery collection. Initially designed as a tribute to the Maison founder, Guccio Gucci, the interlocking G-motif has been a cornerstone of the brand's heritage since the 1960s. It symbolises the label's audacious creativity and exceptional craftsmanship. Abstract elements of the iconic emblem, prominently placed within a circular charm adorned with exquisite gemstones, act as a refined framework. It highlights the meticulous design and harmonious aesthetic of the collection.

The mood of the campaign embodies a sense of timeless beauty and sophistication, while the allure of vibrant gemstones creates a captivating contrast. New additions to the collection feature three distinct sets of jewellery, each spotlighting a different gemstone: onyx, green agate, and

mother-of-pearl. The richness of black onyx elegantly contrasts with yellow gold, and the playful combination of green agate blended with pink gold adds a touch of whimsy. A luxe version crafted in mother-of-pearl, paired with pink gold, and embellished with diamond pavé offers a compelling blend of opulence and magnificence. Each set includes two rings with a choice of 12mm or 17mm disc charms, along with a bracelet, delicate studs or hoop earrings with a pendant, and a necklace featuring a 12mm ornament.

For those seeking statement pieces, two necklaces with larger 27mm medallions in onyx and mother-of-pearl provide a striking finish to any ensemble. Infusing each jewellery piece with a blend of heritage and contemporary elegance, these magnificent creations represent the pinnacle of Gucci's identity by reaffirming the brand's status as a leader in the world of fine jewellery. ■

J E W E L S

# A NEW JEWEL IN THE CITY

Step into a world  
of exquisite  
craftsmanship and  
enduring beauty at  
the new Tiffany & Co.  
store in Mumbai.

By *JISHNU  
BANDYOPADHYAY*

Hardware  
Necklace by  
Tiffany & Co.

**M**umbai received an upgrade with the grand opening of the iconic Tiffany & Co. store at Jio World Plaza. The new boutique marks the luxury jewellery brand's first foray into the city, bringing a touch of the label's New York legacy and timeless elegance to India's fashion capital. The launch, held on May 8, was star-studded with the likes of Ranveer Singh, Karisma Kapoor, Khushi Kapoor, Neena Gupta, Masaba Gupta, Babil Khan, and Vedang Raina, among others on the guest list. The event unveiled a stunning space bathed in muted earthy tones with the signature hits of Tiffany blue, instantly recognisable to jewellery aficionados worldwide.

The store's interior pays homage to the brand's iconic Fifth Avenue store, featuring modern fixtures alongside glittering accents that create a stellar atmosphere, and the jewels are always there to invite you in. Stepping in is like entering a world of exquisite craftsmanship and enduring beauty. A dazzling array of pieces—from the

legendary Tiffany Diamond to the ever-popular Schlumberger collection—line the walls and display cases. The boutique also houses a curated selection of engagement rings, wedding bands, necklaces, bracelets, and timepieces—each a testament to Tiffany's commitment to exceptional quality and design.

As cocktails flowed, along with groovy beats by DJ Anushka Menon, *Bazaar India* caught up with Ranveer Singh, the Tiffany man. "I have been a friend of the House for quite some time now, and it's a great honour because it's a brand with such an illustrious legacy. It represents the apex of elite craftsmanship in the world of high jewellery, luxury and fashion," said Singh. When asked about the flagship store in New York, the re-opening of which he also attended, the actor added, "It was almost overwhelming! It's no wonder that it has become a tourist destination for those visiting the city. It's cemented in folklore. Cut to, here we are in my hometown!"

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND

The arrival of Tiffany & Co. in Mumbai underscores a significant development in the Indian luxury market. It caters to a growing segment of discerning consumers who appreciate brands with a story to tell, as well as to a younger generation who are drawn to the brand's contemporary collections and evolving identity. With its commitment to sustainability and ethical sourcing practices, Tiffany and Co. resonates with environmentally conscious consumers as well.

For the Tiffany event, Singh, who is known for his eclectic style and love for jewellery, was dressed in an ivory white Gaurav Gupta set matched perfectly with a waistband and white stilettos, with a diamond necklace, of course. But, for him, it's nothing new. "Men have been adorning jewellery since time immemorial," he reminded us. When asked about his own personal favourites from the Tiffany collection, his answer came instantly. "I love the 'Bird On A Rock'. I also love Pharrell's [Williams] new collection for Tiffany, and the way he's used black is so cool. It's a departure from the conventional Tiffany aesthetic."

Jewellery is a form of expression and self-love, feels Singh. His own favourite pieces are very close to home. "Apart from my wedding ring and my platinum engagement band, my mother's diamond earrings or my *nani's* pearls are my favourite pieces to go back to. The vintage timepiece that my father-in-law gifted me on my 30th birthday means a lot to me as well."

Beyond the sparkling jewels, the store offers a personalised shopping experience. Staff members are available to guide customers through the vast collection, helping them find the perfect piece to mark a special occasion or simply add a touch of style to their everyday lives. Whether you're a long-time admirer of Tiffany & Co. or a new kid on the block, this store is a must-visit. ■



(Clockwise from top right): Actor Ranveer Singh tries on a Tiffany bracelet; singer-actor Shibani Akhtar tries a necklace; fashion designer and entrepreneur Masaba Gupta at the launch event; the interiors of the boutique at Jio World Plaza; and actor Karisma Kapoor at the store

**I**t's a sign of the times when Rolex comes out with a watch that boasts 322 grams of 18-carat yellow gold for the first time in their sporty Deepsea collection. While this is a clear case of vanity over function (although the watch promises legibility and absolute waterproofness at 12,800 ft below sea level), they aren't far behind from Omega who has also added a Speedmaster 38 in gold with diamonds, plus Piaget has resurrected their iconic Polo 79 for their 150th anniversary all in yellow gold. As much as I'd like to believe it's all a coincidence, there is clearly more to the story.

The precious material was a mainstay for the world of horology until stainless steel took over somewhere between the '70s and '80s, boasting sturdy staples for your everyday wear. The material change dramatically dropped prices for watches and led to long-lasting creations that housed the finest movements. And while this phenomenon is still very prevalent, the surge of precious metals all over again is undeniable. Earlier this year, Bulgari launched its collection for 2024 titled 'Time is Gold', aptly prompting its long-time love affair with gold, and reimagining its most iconic creations in the lustrous metal. "In the quest to capture timelessness, is there any substance that surpasses gold—so precious, mystical, and legendary—in its embodiment of eternal elegance?" Bulgari CEO Jean-Christophe Babin asks a rhetorical question. "As an allegory of the sun, gold resonates with timeless splendour and warmth, symbolising both the enduring luminance and the rich legacy of civilisations that have long cherished its radiant allure—an ideal conduit for the horological emotions crafted by the daring Roman Maison."



TIME  
IS  
GOLD

Gold watches, especially in its yellow avatar, has taken the centre stage, again.

By *NIRJA DUTT*



(This page, from top): Actor Liu Shishi wears the Speedmaster 38 Watch, Omega; Bvlgari Watch, Bulgari; and Oyster Perpetual Deepsea Watch, Rolex; (Opposite page): Reflection de Cartier Watch, Cartier



Theatrically radiant, the idea that yellow gold is having a moment stretches far beyond the fact that it's such an enticing material that has captivated audiences for decades on end. One label that has never shied away from dreaming in yellow gold is Cartier. In fact, this year, the brand illustrated not only how the material is worthy of high, fine watch-making, but how it can be reimagined as a polishing marvel through their latest collection Reflection de Cartier. The cuff-style watch hybrid pinnacles at the top of your wrist reflecting the dial on the opposite opening with its high polish surface. But this is just one of the many examples from the house that has enamoured its customers. Long-time lover of Cartier and Miam Patisserie Founder Bani Nanda reflects, "As a little girl, I was attracted to yellow gold. I never wanted faux stonework or silver when I'd buy bracelets or rings in my teenage years. I love the way yellow gold sits on my skin and stands out. The rose gold trend always upset me, and I'm happy to see it die down. I also invest in gold year on year, maybe I am stereotypically Indian. I am still saving for an all-gold watch, and I currently wear a steel and gold dual tone Panthère de Cartier—the watch of my dreams."

True to form, Nanda makes an important point—investing in gold has been a part of India's culture since one can remember. As I delved deeper to understand if this mindset cascades borders, I checked in with one of the industry's favourite women in horology—Laetitia Hirschy, the founder of Kaaviar PR and the co-founder of Watch Femme. She assuringly chimed in, "Yellow gold has always held a cherished place in India's cultural and jewellery heritage, symbolising prosperity, purity, and timeless elegance. Its resurgence in luxury watches is not just a trend but a natural progression in a market that reveres gold. Recent studies show that India alone accounts for nearly 25 per cent of the world's gold demand, with a significant portion dedicated to fine jewellery. As demand for luxury watches increases in India, it comes as no surprise that a big portion of that demand is going towards yellow gold watches. It reaffirms their status as both a statement of luxury and a connection to heritage, as well as the perfect accessory to combine with yellow gold jewellery they already have in their wardrobe."

As my cobwebs convert to clarity—the more I look around, the more I see it. Think Tudor's latest Black Bay 58 or Vacheron Constantin's Overseas, or Hublot Classic Fusion Original—all embodying the sunshine metal with utmost reverie, crafting a compelling narrative for those who want to make a statement that is all yellow. ■



The Victoire Necklace

# GILDED HISTORY

With its new high jewellery collection, Louis Vuitton explores the 100 years following the French Revolution.

*By ANJALY SABU*

**T**he Paris Olympics has put the spotlight on France once again. While the nation rallies for what is surely to be another historical moment, Louis Vuitton has marked the occasion with the launch of its latest high jewellery collection—Awakened Hands, Awakened Minds. Unveiled in Château Saint-Maur in St Tropez in attendance of guests including actors Phoebe Dynevor and Urassa Sperbund, the collection explores the 100 years following the French Revolution (1789) and culminates in the Universal Exposition (1889).

Set to be the sixth collection by Louis Vuitton’s artistic director of watches and jewellery, Francesca Amfitheatrof, Awakened Hands, Awakened Minds attains singular status in the Maison’s history by being the first to feature a tiara,

fully traceable rubies, and a yellow LV monogram star-cut diamond. The collection boasts 220 masterpieces spread across 13 themes, some of which are yet to be revealed.

The first chapter, Awakened Hands, includes 11 themes and 100 pieces. It highlights the end of the imperial rule in France and the rise of the country’s savoir-faire legacy. “Craftsmanship became the currency of this country. It is the birth of France’s Art de Vivre, and the birth of what we know as luxury today,” says Amfitheatrof.

The five themes of the first chapter embody the crafts. The floral lace-like patterns worked into low-relief wood form the basis for ‘Splendour’—the first theme—and feature Mozambican diamonds that are fully traceable, thanks to blockchain technology. The V-style detailing and cord-like fringing recall the ropes used to hoist the iconic

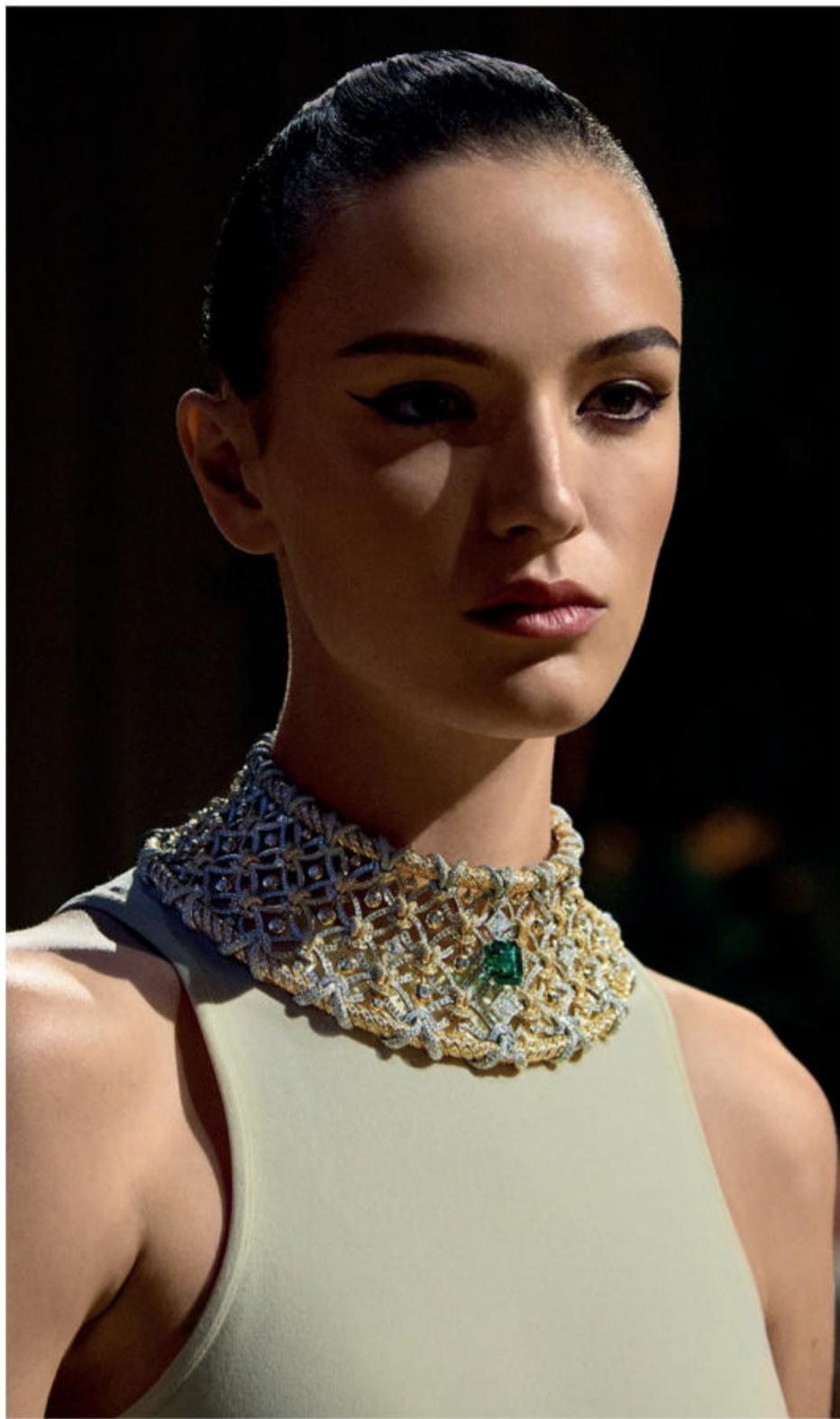
trunks of the Maison in ‘Séduction’, a sinuous platinum and yellow gold necklace set with one of the collection’s most significant stones—a 12.92-carat Zambian emerald. It’s a celebration of textiles and passementerie expertise attached to the particular era echoed further in ‘Phenomenal’, which replicates the intricacy of interwoven fabrics with its yellow gold and platinum body. The tiara is the central piece in ‘Elegance’, a diamond-only theme that applies the French technique of *En tremblant* in jewellery making, which produces a trembling effect in the piece.

The collection’s second chapter, Awakened Minds, signifies a shift towards the future. In its ‘Perception’ theme, mechanisation and geometric patterns take centre stage, symbolising the rapid pace of industrialisation in the 1850s. The ‘Gravité’ necklace of the eponymous theme, set with a trio of royal blue Kashmir sapphires in alternating sizes, encapsulates the groundbreaking experiment that confirmed the earth’s rotation around the sun. ‘Optisme’ captures the spirit of Paris in the era, condensed into a refined choker that plays with reflections. The momentous discovery of rail travel paved the way for the design of ‘Vision’, hewed with yellow gold, platinum and set with yellow sapphires.

The ultimate symbol of Paris, which decisively altered its skyline, is the Eiffel Tower. No wonder it plays muse to the penultimate theme of the collection, ‘Victoire’. A necklace, which resembles the Eiffel but upside down in the collection, invites wonder, furthermore for the detachable 15-carat drop of LV flower monogram that can be worn as a ring.

Awakened Hands, Awakened Minds concludes in 1886 with the presentation of the Eiffel Tower to the world, an icon of modernity and innovation symbolic of the century for France. The Cœur de Paris necklace, featuring a 56.23-carat diamond, encapsulates this vision. “Imagine you are standing underneath the Tour Eiffel and looking up,” explains Amfitheatrof. “You’re really looking up at the heart of Paris.” Set with the collection’s most important stone, christened ‘The Cœur de Paris diamond’, the necklace is rightfully the heart of the collection.

Louis Vuitton’s Awakened Hands, Awakened Minds collection is a testament to the Maison’s enduring legacy and its innovative spirit. Each piece pays homage to the rich history of French craftsmanship and sets a new standard for the future of high jewellery. This collection is a celebration of the past, a reflection of the present, and a glimpse into the future of luxury. ■

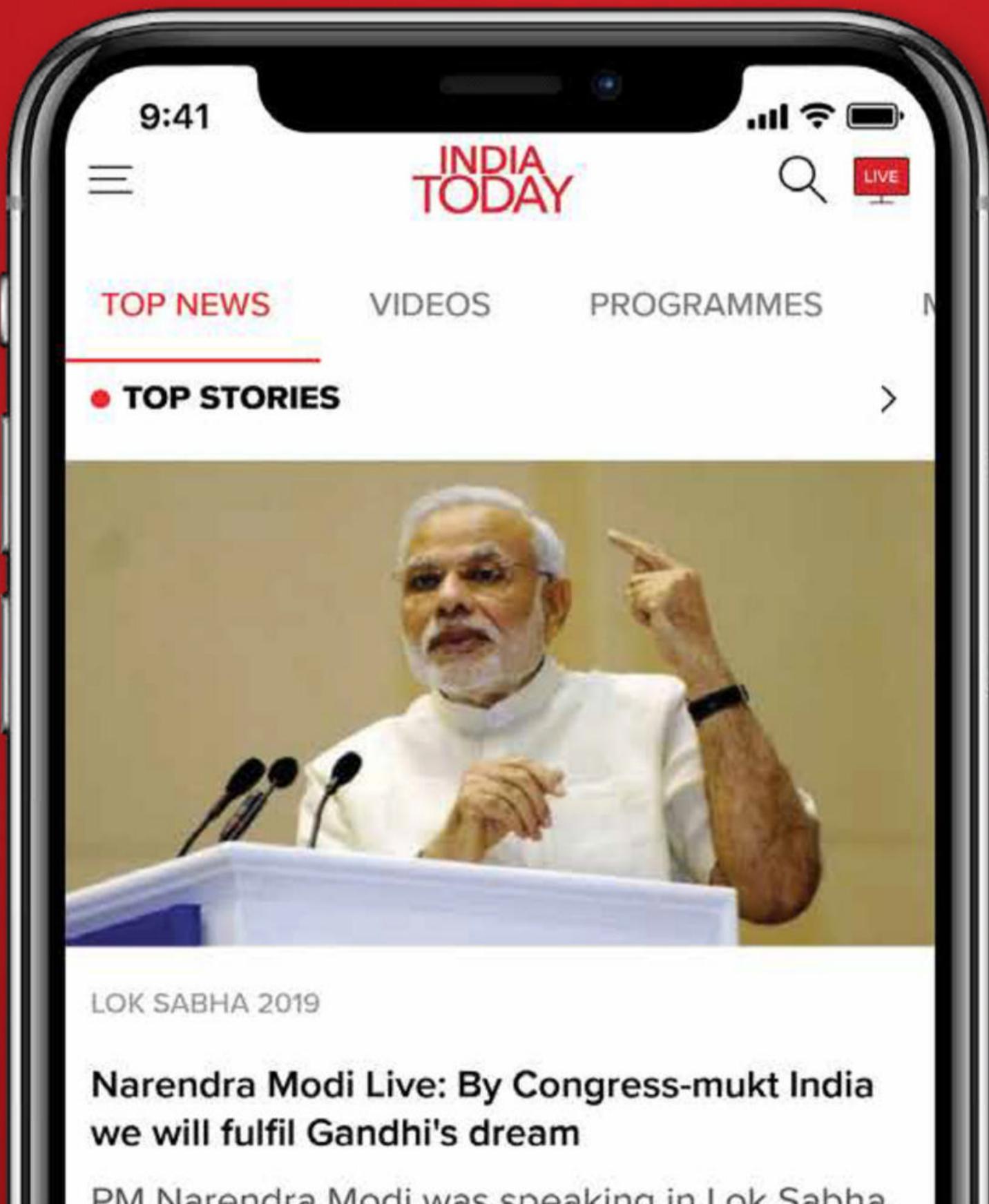


(Top) A platinum and yellow gold necklace set with one of the collection’s most significant stones—a 12.92-carat Zambian emerald; the making of the Cœur de Paris necklace

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# BAZAAR

VOICES



## FIND YOUR WAY

Four film directors talk about their craft and what inspires them, and how women are repurposing items from their wedding trousseau after divorce.

ILLUSTRATION BY SHRADHA SWAMINATHAN

# V O I C E S



Sari, Raw Mango; and jewellery, Hanut Singh

# DIRECTOR'S CUT

Four filmmakers, who are shaping the future of Indian cinema, talk to *Bazaar India* about their craft and what inspires it.

Words by *JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY*  
Photography by *AMITAVA SAHA*

Kiran Rao embodies a versatile creativity that defies routine, yet thrives on meticulous planning. Her journey is marked by a commitment to storytelling that transcends genres and borders, resonating deeply with a global audience. “I don’t have a fixed process or creative routine,” Rao confesses. “I do different things on different days, depending on what stage of writing or production I’m in.” This fluid approach underscores her adaptability, where each day unfolds with diverse tasks—reading, researching, or immersing herself in still photography and music for inspiration.

Photography holds a special place in Rao’s creative arsenal. “I look at still photography for inspiration, especially for mood, colour palettes, and lensing,” she explains. Music, too, plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for her narratives, often guiding her towards the right emotional undercurrents. Rao’s workday typically begins with focused reading—whether it’s scenes to be shot or research materials. From there, she dives headfirst into the demanding rhythm of shoots, where days stretch into intense 15-hour production. “For me, film-making is about communicating ideas,” says Rao. Central to her process is soliciting feedback from diverse audience groups at various stages of editing. “I value feedback on how the communication is working,” she emphasises, integrating these insights while editing her films towards their final cut.

Her commitment to artistic integrity is unwavering. “It’s important for me to retain my artistic voice while telling whichever story I feel driven to tell,” Rao states. This ethos guides her across all creative decisions—from narrative choices to casting and the visual language of her films. As a storyteller, Rao recognises the need for innovation. “Audience tastes have evolved to be more varied and eclectic,” she observes. This awareness motivates her to explore diverse genres—from thrillers and fairy tales to horror and comedy—each offering a new canvas for her narrative exploration.

Her openness to exploring unfamiliar genres and international collaborations underscores her ambition to push creative boundaries. Collaboration forms a cornerstone of Rao’s journey, notably with her former husband, actor-producer Aamir Khan. “We enjoy working together,” she remarks warmly.

Inspired by the impact of Korean cinema and television, Rao admires their ability to blend cultural specificity with universal appeal. “I am particularly interested in how the film and television industry in Korea has engaged such a huge international audience,” she reveals, expressing a desire to embark on similarly resonant projects from around the world. In essence, Rao emerges as a visionary filmmaker driven by curiosity, innovation, and a profound desire to craft stories that transcend borders.

## KIRAN RAO

“It’s important for me to retain my artistic voice while telling whichever story I feel driven to tell.”  
—Kiran Rao

As a filmmaker, Kabir Khan deftly navigates the intersection of politics and humanity, infusing his films with meticulous research and a commitment to authenticity. “When I made the shift from documentary to mainstream cinema, I tried to blend the two,” says Khan. “At the time, talking about politics was a taboo in mainstream films. But I am glad that the three films that I started off with, my producers gave me that opportunity to explore complex political situations. All three films had a political backdrop, with a story that also connected to a larger audience.” For Khan, film-making is deeply personal. “I feel filmmakers ultimately make the films they want to watch,” he reflects. “You should create for yourself, because you don’t really know the other. All you can trust is that people will find the honesty. Sometimes it will do numbers, sometimes it won’t.”

One of his most acclaimed works, *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), exemplifies Khan’s ability to blend political themes with poignant human stories that do well with the masses. “*Bajrangi Bhaijaan* was a massively political film, but people saw the human connection within it all. That was a win,” Khan remarks proudly. Central to Khan’s film-making process is rigorous research and attention to detail. “Fiction is always rooted in what already exists in the real world. I always bring in elements from the real world that catch my eye; and that always helps. I am very committed to maintaining historical accuracy; you have to be. For me, research is paramount.”

Navigating the complexities of historical accuracy is a challenge Khan embraces with dedication. “We, as a country, are not very good at archiving information properly,” he observes. “When I reached out to journalists for *83* (2021), they didn’t have copies of their own articles. Lords opened up their archives for me, and that

changed the game. You can take creative liberty, but not with facts. You can dramatise within that and build the narrative you want.” Detail-oriented to the core, Khan emphasises the importance of veracity in every aspect of his films. “For example, if you notice Roger Binny bowling, every time he bowls his rolled-up sleeves open up, and he rolls them back up again for the next ball,” he points out. “We tested 12 different fabrics to find the one that would do that. That level of detailing you have to go into; otherwise, people will say that you’re not being true to the story, especially the ones who care deeply.”

Over the years, Khan has gravitated towards narratives that blend scale with emotional depth and societal relevance. “The reason why I moved away from documentary film-making was because I wanted to explore larger-than-life storytelling,” he explains. Reflecting on his creative journey,

## KABIR KHAN

Khan talks about the importance of thorough preparation and a deep understanding of socio-political contexts. “I have never made a film

and later thought I should have made it differently. I have to be sure about what I am making; I have to be convinced myself. I have to sit down and understand the socio-political context that I am placing my film in, so that if anyone comes to me later and tells me a random fact about the situation I am basing my film on, I can always confidently say that I know every single detail and more.”

As he continues to explore new narratives and challenge cinematic norms, Khan’s films promise to provoke thought, evoke emotions, and leave a lasting impact on the audience. Embracing the organic flow of storytelling, Khan understands the need for authenticity in each narrative he crafts. “Every story, in a certain way, demands its own treatment. You have to go with that organically without resistance. If you don’t, that’s when you become dishonest.”

“The reason why I moved away from documentary film-making was because I wanted to explore larger-than-life storytelling.”  
—Kabir Khan



# V O I C E S



# JASMEET K REEN

Storytelling is a quest for authenticity, feels Jasmeet K Reen. “The reason one wants to tell out-of-the-box stories when starting out is to get noticed,” the film-maker reflects. “But fundamentally, as an artiste, you need to connect with your viewer, and I am always searching for the ‘truth’.” This search for authenticity permeates every aspect of Reen’s creative process, akin to losing oneself in the haunting melody of a *shehnai* or the profound beauty of poetry—moments where time stops, and emotions stir.

Reen’s pursuit is rooted in connecting with viewers through narratives that resonate with emotions. “I write my scripts first as a writer, and then rewrite them from a director’s perspective,” explains Reen who made her directorial debut with *Darlings* (2022). “But in that process, I am always searching for authenticity.” Whether scouting locations or capturing spontaneous moments on set, Reen’s keen eye for ‘truth’ allows her to recognise and enhance the nuances that breathe life into her stories. “Whether telling a story with a message or experimenting with form, my goal is to make films with which people can connect,” Reen emphasises. But she also deftly employs her skill of balancing the commercial aspects of film-making without compromising

artistic integrity. “For me, movies are about exploring the human condition and bridging fiction and reality. Making characters relatable is key to making a film accessible, regardless of its scale,” she asserts.

The evolving landscape of cinema, particularly with the advent of online streaming and advancements in VFX and computer graphics, excites Reen. “There’s now more appetite for regional and world cinema,” she observes. “I am eager to explore how VFX can open new avenues in storytelling.” During the filming of *Darlings*, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Reen embraced these tools to transform her vision into reality, leveraging green screens to create immersive environments seen through the characters’ windows.

Despite her achievements, Reen holds herself to a rigorous standard. “I am very hard on myself,” she admits. “When things don’t go as planned, I reflect on how I could have done better. But some things are beyond our control; all I can do is stay true to my voice and give my best.” This relentless pursuit of excellence drives Reen forward, shaping her into a director known for her dedication to authenticity and emotional resonance in storytelling. Reen’s journey exemplifies a filmmaker whose passion for ‘truth’ and connection defines her cinematic voice.

“Making characters relatable is  
key to making a film accessible,  
regardless of its scale.”  
—Jasmeet K Reen

## KABIR MEHTA

When Kabir Mehta decided to venture into film-making after college, he faced a dilemma. In Mumbai, he had multiple paths to consider: mainstream Bollywood, arthouse films—though he found them hard to connect with—and the allure of advertisements, which held little interest for him. His true passion lay in creating a compelling film, yet he felt somewhat adrift. Determined to forge his own path with limited resources, he “sort of stumbled upon” his first short.

“Both *Sadhu in Bombay* (2017) and *Buddha.mov* (2017), and even *Class* (2023) for Netflix, were a culmination of my experiences in my 20s,” Mehta reflects. “During my travels, I encountered a fascinating ascetic in Varanasi. It sparked an idea: what if you placed this endearing yet somewhat misogynistic sadhu in an urban setting, transforming him into a blue-collar shaman?” Developing the portrait of the sadhu for his debut short, Mehta drew parallels between asceticism and film-making. “Filmmakers, too, can be biased, manipulating reality for their own ends. I sensed that tension would make an intriguing film while allowing me to explore my relationship with Mumbai.”

With his distinctive, self-evident style, Mehta expanded his format. “During a spontaneous trip to Goa to film a cricket tournament, I found myself interacting extensively with 27-year-old cricketer Buddhadev Mangaldas,” he recounts. “I was surprised by Buddha’s awareness of the camera, way before the social media boom. He envisioned a high-octane, MTV-style feature on a sports celebrity

while I aimed to explore his masculinity juxtaposed with technology.” The collaborative process and sense of authorship fascinated Mehta, leading to a film that largely fictionalised Mangaldas’ life. “And *Class* emerged as a by-product of these projects.”

Mehta’s passion lies in crafting immersive, experiential films and series that trace personal journeys. “I really enjoy character studies and portraiture,” he admits. As a filmmaker who can both shoot and edit, Mehta typically operates without a large crew. However, *Class* presented a different challenge. “I was brought in for *Class* due to my stylistic approach. Growing up in Delhi, I had encountered the privileged demographic that the series aimed to authentically portray, with a keen eye for design and sophistication. *Class* helped me marry my work with something bigger and more commercial.”

Undecided between independent film-making and larger studio productions, Mehta finds appeal in both for distinct reasons. “My independent films allow for a more intimate relationship with the camera, like that of a painter with a brush. Larger productions tap into the grand tradition of cinema, I think—go big or go home—a blend of art and commerce that is deeply rooted in cinema’s DNA.” Mehta reflects on his early work, which he now considers somewhat nihilistic. “The world craves more life-affirming art, and perhaps I do too,” he muses, embarking on a journey to infuse his unique twist into his future projects. ■

“I was brought in for *Class* due to my stylistic approach. It helped me marry my work with something bigger and more commercial.”

—Kabir Mehta



Samantha Ruth Prabhu  
in her repurposed  
wedding dress by  
Krésha Bajaj



# I DO (NOT)!

Many women are overcoming the stigma around divorce, using repurposed rings and wedding gowns to challenge archaic notions that hold them back.

*By PRAACHI RANIWALA*

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND

There's a scene in the season 2 premiere of popular television show *And Just Like That* where Carrie Bradshaw pulls out the Vivienne Westwood wedding dress she wore when Mr Big left her at the altar, and wears it again to the Met Gala many years later. "And just like that, I repurposed my pain," she says of it.

It seems that many real-life women are now singing in Bradshaw's tune. Take for instance, model Emily Ratajkowski, who sent the internet in a tizzy when she coined the term "divorce rings" with a post on Instagram this March. Following her split with her husband Sebastian Bear-McClard, Ratajkowski worked with jewellery designer Alison Chemla—founder and creative director of the brand Alison Lou who designed her famous *Toi et Moi* engagement ring—to remodel it. She got it remade into two separate pieces: a pear-shaped solitaire pinky ring, and a princess-cut diamond flanked by trapezoid stones. "I would like there to be a perspective that allows space for the fact that leaving a relationship is often a remarkable and brave act. I really would like to see single moms or women starting over for the first time in a terrific way—find some kind of solace in the idea that they're not failures for leaving," Ratajkowski had told *The New York Times*.

Chemla admits there have been many requests for similar rings following the celebrity's post. "Jewellery is so personal and typically connects to a memory. Being able to revive such a piece, and give it a new story and life, is so special," she added.

While these pieces may serve as a tangible reminder of a broken relationship, women today are determined to overcome the stigma around divorce, choosing to display their courage in severing ties that have possibly run their

course. "It's one way to take your power back after a separation," feels Chemla. There are more examples of women who are repurposing their wedding jewels and clothing as an exercise in empowerment. Singer Rosalía has been wearing her former engagement ring as an earring, and actor Sophia Bush repurposed her wedding dress for a Beyoncé concert after her split with Grant Hughes.

Closer home, actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu—who was married to fellow actor Akkineni Naga Chaitanya—worked with her wedding dress designer, Krésha Bajaj, to give it a new lease of life. The white tulle from her bridal gown was dyed into nude and black, and used for the new outfit's corset and structural skirt, respectively. The original gown's boning was retained, and the beads were used along the slit of the new design. "The cancan and floral embellishments are becoming part of something else," adds Bajaj, who created this as part of her bespoke service, *La Soirée*, that repurposes couture. "It was a beautiful opportunity to redesign her [Samantha's] wedding gown into something that's more wearable for her today," says the designer.

Luxury fashion influencer Hanna Khan wore a dramatic Elie Saab gown for her wedding in 2021. While she has split with her husband, she is holding on to this custom couture as an heirloom. "I won't cut it up for a new outfit because of the sheer craftsmanship that went into making it. All my other wedding outfits were designed by my sister, designer Ohaila Khan, and I am excited to repeat these in the future," Khan adds.

Utsav Parasrampur, a partner at Amarkosh Jewels, admits that the concept of divorce rings is fairly new in India. "Divorce can still be seen as a taboo. Here, many couples return the ring to their ex after the end of a

marriage. But when the relationship has been difficult, I see how this concept can be a metaphorical signal of starting over on a clean, confident slate," he says.

Khan admits that she chose not to look at her wedding ring for two years because of the unpleasant memories associated with it. But she is now considering remodelling it into something new to reflect her current state of mind. "It will bring me closure too. These decisions are so personal and subjective. And women should be allowed to make them without the fear of any judgement," she signs off. ■



Hanna Khan in her Elie Saab wedding gown; and designer Krésha Bajaj who gave actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu's wedding dress a new lease of life

PHOTO CREDIT FOR HANNA: RECALL PICTURES

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# BAZAAR

AT WORK



## SECOND ACT

Look beyond the conventions and explore the nuances of reinventing your career.

ILLUSTRATION BY SHRADHA SWAMINATHAN



# TO NEW BEGINNINGS

*Bazaar India* decodes how to navigate a midlife career change.

*By MALIKA HALDER*

**F**or many of us, turning 40 is a major milestone. It's an age that comes with a plethora of expectations and pressure to have found 'success'. Defined by a mix of maturity, experience, and a growing sense of self-awareness, the 'midlife' period often prompts a reassessment of personal goals and ambitions. However, this decision can be both daunting and liberating. In a rapidly evolving job market, the concept of a lifelong career is increasingly seen as a relic of the past. More people now than ever are finding themselves contemplating a significant career change in their late 30s or 40s. But in India, changing careers at midlife represents more than a shift in employment—it requires courage to defy societal norms, resilience to navigate challenges, and clarity of purpose to pursue one's dreams.

### THE WHY OF IT

What's common between Arianna Huffington, Falguni Nayar, and Stan Lee? All three showed the world that it's never too late to embrace change and pivot your career to a new direction. Huffington's life is a story of the possibility of reinvention. In 2005, at the age of 55, she created the *Huffington Post*, rewriting the rules of print media for a digital world. Nayar, on the other hand, quit her job as a managing director to become an entrepreneur at the age of 49. She founded India's leading e-commerce platform for beauty products, Nykaa, in 2012. Lee created his first comic, *The Fantastic Four* (1961), at the age of 39. He went on to create the legendary Marvel Universe in his 40s.

People change careers for many reasons. It could be stagnation, boredom, or the lack of challenge. "People who have worked for more than 10 years in an industry are usually the ones who have this sudden realisation that they don't want to be doing what they've been doing for a long while. This arises from multiple places and it's majorly from a need of change," says career coach Dhairya Gangwani.

New Delhi-based counselling psychologist Divija Bhasin explains that change is the only constant in everyone's lives. "As circumstances change, people also evolve. Sometimes that means they stop getting satisfaction (financial or emotional) from their careers, and that's when they decide to change it," she adds.

Bhasin—who is also the founder of The Friendly Couch, an organisation that offers therapy—says that midlife career change is ought to be seen as a new beginning. "People who change their careers midlife are often perceived to be confused or immature. Being stable is considered the key to a good career. But stability is only good if you are content with where you are. Being in a career that makes you

unhappy can feel draining and affect your mental health," she warns.

### NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

Let's face it—changing careers can be intimidating at any age. You might leave behind a professional networks, social connections, your reputation, and skillset. All of this is magnified when you're in your 40s, having worked hard to establish yourself and with more responsibilities to consider.

Gangwani suggest that before one contemplates a career change at midlife, they need to consider the potential obstacles, such as ageism, financial risks, and the emotional toll of leaving a long-established career. She adds that one has to be 100 per cent sure that they don't want to continue what they are doing. "It is only then your mind will be open to explore other opportunities."

Bhasin recommends having a back-up plan. "The most important thing would be to ensure you have monetary resources to be able to live comfortably, and without completely changing your lifestyle overnight if you quit your job, as there might be a chance that you won't be earning for a while," she reminds us.

Both Gangwani and Bhasin say upskilling and being practical is key to a smooth career change. "Talk to people who are in the industry where you want to move to," suggests Gangwani. Understanding one's strengths, passions, and values is crucial, she adds. "It is important to highlight that you have transferrable skills. You have to drive the narrative in that direction and concentrate on the efforts you are taking to move to a new domain."

### UNBOX YOURSELF

According to a study published in *The International Journal Of Ageing And Human Development* in 2021, a midlife career change often result in a positive emotional outlook, despite the challenges. According to a LinkedIn report published in 2023, a whopping 64 per cent of people in the age group of 45-54 are looking to switch jobs. But Gangwani reminds us that when you switch careers, your ability to learn new skills and pick up new habits is put to test. "So, be open and ready to pick up new things," she suggests.

It is quite possible to start a new career at 'midlife' albeit it might take some extra effort. But it's never too late to set new personal and professional goals, and live a more meaningful life.

Here's to new beginnings! ■



# BAZZAAR <sup>Harper's</sup> INDIA

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# BAZAAR

## TALKING POINT

A mural, titled *Diaspore*, by Aravani Art Project at the Arsenale Exhibition Pavilion for the Biennale Arte 2024 in Venice



## CREATIVE REALM

Meet the artists from the Indian diaspora who make a mark at the Venice Biennale 2024; Gulam Mohammed Sheikh talks about his solo exhibition after two decades; and singer Arooj Aftab on reshaping perceptions about South Asian culture.

IMAGE: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM

The 60th Biennale Art 2024 in Venice



# STATE OF THE ART

From powerful patrons to groundbreaking contemporary artists—the South Asian diaspora steals the spotlight at the Venice Art Biennale.

By *SHUBHANGI JINDAL*

For the landmark 60th edition, La Biennale di Venezia, aka the Venice Art Biennale, explores the theme of ‘foreignness’ through various approaches, fostering dialogue and exchange. Titled *Stranieri Ovunque—Foreigners Everywhere*, it is curated by Adriano Pedrosa, the first South American, openly queer curator in the history of the Biennale Arte. “Wherever you go and wherever you are, you will always encounter foreigners—they, we, are everywhere,” Pedrosa explains. “No matter where you find yourself, you are always truly, and deep down inside, a foreigner.” His show, spread across the Giardini and Arsenale venues, highlights art from historically marginalised communities, with a strong representation of the Global South.

The curator’s presentation, Historical Nucleus, located in Giardini della Biennale houses the artworks of India’s master modernists—pioneering abstractionists Ram Kumar and SH Raza, the iconoclastic Bombay progressive FN Souza, surrealist Bhupen Khakhar, primitivist-

IMAGE: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM

## The exhibition includes 12 Indian artists—a record, and quadruple the amount that showed at the previous Biennale.

modernist Jamini Roy, prolific painters Amrita Sher-Gil and B Prabha. The contemporary section spotlights the work of the Bengaluru-based, women-led art collective, Aravani Art Project, which features a mural composed of cis and transgender women embodying the idea of inclusivity, acceptance, and identity. The Biennale represents a culmination of decades of artistic excellence with the ability to blend traditional techniques with modern sensibilities, seamlessly.

Although India once again lacks a pavilion at the La Biennale di Venezia, the international exhibition includes 12 Indian artists—a record, and quadruple the amount that showed at the previous Biennale. Over the years, Indian representation at the Venice Biennale has been multifarious, marked by a diverse array of talent. From prolific artists such as Paresh Maity and Sonal Ambani to legacy creators like Manu and Madhvi Parekh, and renowned patrons like Kiran Nadar—Indian artists have left an indelible mark on the Biennale's storied history.

### EXPLORE THE COSMIC GARDEN

Head to the Salone Verde—Art & Social Club to walk through the Collateral Event of the 60th La Biennale di Venezia curated by Maria Alicata and Paola Ugolini. Cosmic Garden brings together a stunning range of works by two of India's national award-winning senior contemporary artists, Manu and Madhvi Parekh, along with the evolution of their practice into a collectively created third interdisciplinary medium—hand embroidery. The collection is presented through the crafted works of master textile artists of the Chanakya School of Craft and its creative director Karishma Swali. “Being selected for the 60th International Art Exhibition is a profound honour, acknowledging the significance of Indian hand embroidery on a global stage. The intersection of art and craft in Cosmic Garden showcases embroidery as both a meditative art form, and a social and artistic practice, bridging the traditional and contemporary realms,” Swali shares.

According to her, Cosmic Garden “encapsulates the spiritual and cultural dialogue portrayed in the artwork, emphasising the dynamic potential of Indian hand-embroidery as an art form.” This carefully curated series of works embraces a multidisciplinary approach, and seeks to re-evaluate the mutual relationship between

women and handcraft techniques, transcending the confines of domesticity by bringing hand embroidery into the public sphere. Working with husband-wife duo Manu and Madhvi Parekh “has been enriching”, says Swali. “Madhvi Parekh's artwork, rooted in village life and fantasy, is interpreted using primitivist expression and traditional embroidery techniques. In contrast, Manu Parekh's modern abstractions inspire us to explore chants through the thread, capturing his paintings' vibrancy and cultural depth.” These interdisciplinary works go beyond conventional boundaries to conjure an artistic language firmly rooted in communal cultural histories. “This union celebrates diverse cultural energies, offering a unique perspective rooted in contemporary expression. Our exhibition symbolises a space where traditional crafts meet modern art, fostering a deeper appreciation for our shared human experience,” she concludes.

### INTO THE ARCHIVES WITH THE ROOTED NOMAD

India's creative excellence at the Biennale pays homage to one of the most famous modernist painters dubbed “India's Picasso”, in a show at the Magazzini del Sale in Dorsoduro, presented by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art. “One of the driving missions of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art is to raise awareness about Indian and South Asian artists around the world and to make art accessible to diverse audiences. This first-time 360-degree immersive experience created around an Indian artist who was known as a people's painter will be a prime attraction, unveiling the artist's dream and desires through moving images and soundscapes. It is a labour of love for India's most compelling modernist, who I admired greatly and with whom I enjoyed a long



Genesis, a bronze sculpture, by Paresh Maity

friendship,” says KNMA Chairperson and Founder Kiran Nadar.

Curated by KNMA Director and Chief Curator Roobina Karode, the part-exhibition and part-immersive experience titled, *The Rooted Nomad*, reaffirms MF Husain’s enduring impact on the art scene. “The exhibition blends intimate viewing and kaleidoscopic relay, highlighting Husain’s artistic journey, prolific works, and interdisciplinary approach to art. The immersive component, creatively crafted by Visioni Eccentriche, draws on nearly 160 works from the KNMA collection, seamlessly integrating motion graphics, live action, choreography, and sound design,” shares Karode. The chosen title juxtaposes contrasting ideas to reflect Husain’s complex artistic persona and captures his contribution to modern art, drawing from mythologies, art traditions, and literature. “This aligns with the Venice Biennale’s theme that explores diaspora, migration, displacement, and exile, paying tribute to the pioneering artist’s legacy and India’s cultural richness as a rooted nomad in the world of art.”

## **GENESIS BY PARESH MAITY**

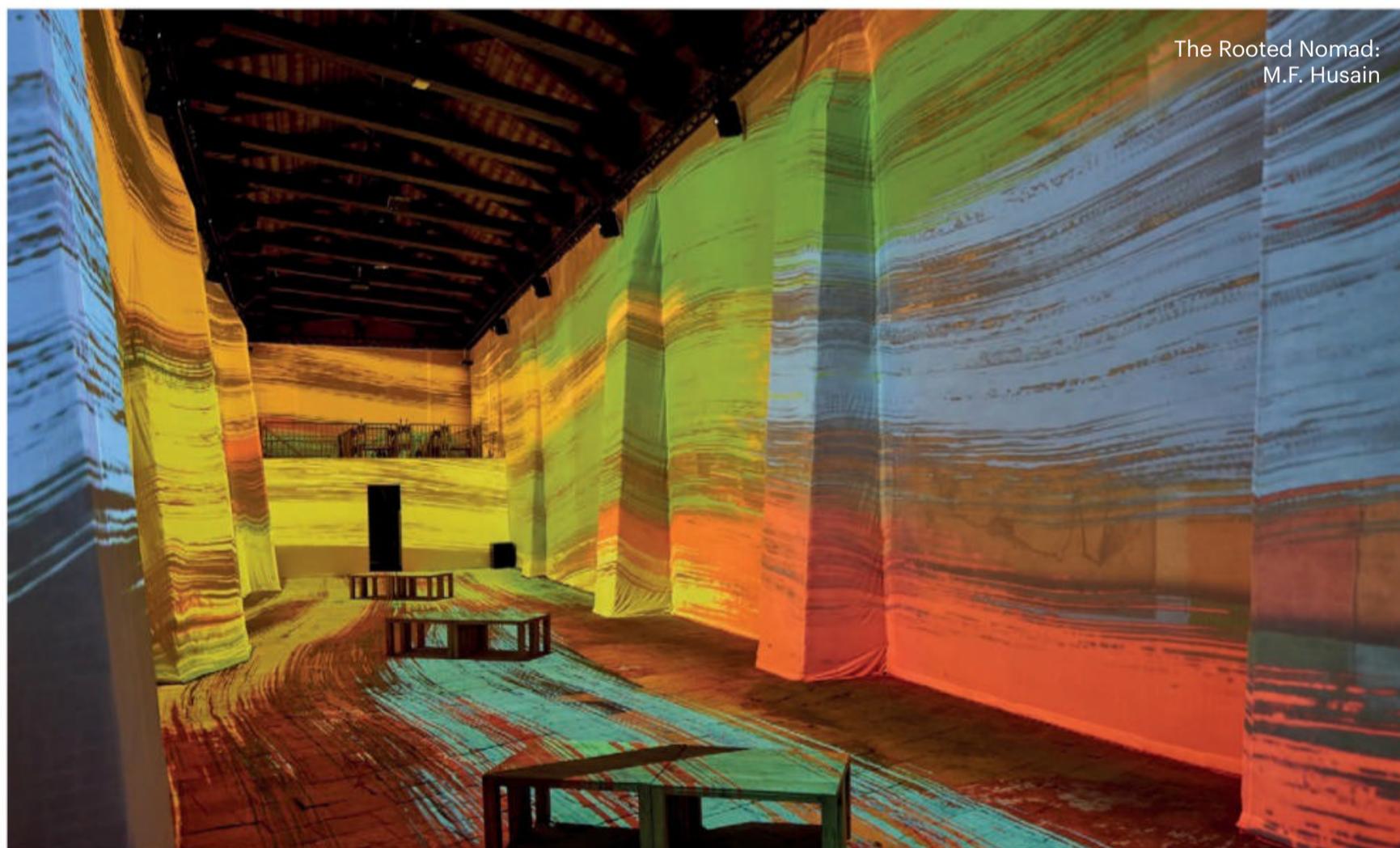
Another section of the main exhibition, *Nucleo Storico*, features creative speculations on modernism. India’s prolific painter Paresh Maity’s bronze sculpture, *Genesis*, presented by Delhi-based Art Alive Gallery at the Marinaressa Gardens is also part of *Personal Structures*—a biennial contemporary art exhibition organised by the European Cultural Centre. “I envisioned *Genesis* as the

origin of the universe, the inception of the world, and its evolution, with the main conceptual framework rooted in the idea of a united world with societal balance at its core. I created the geometric form to visualise the different energies that constitute the world, and then introduced the pendulum—a metaphor for universal balance stemming from the perception of unity and harmony,” shares Maity.

With *Genesis*, Paresh Maity aims to explore the concepts of life and balance in an ever-evolving world, proposing that different energies come together in harmony, where all boundaries and limitations diminish, allowing the world to become a united space for growth. Maity adds, “This year’s Biennale theme explores the multiplicity of identities and beliefs. With globalisation at its peak, people are migrating more, resulting in displaced identities and potential disparities in societal balance. *Genesis*, conceptualised and rooted in the idea of balance, captures that very essence through the metaphor of the pendulum.”

## **SLINGS & ARROWS OF OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE BY SONAL AMBANI**

A bull riddled with crimson arrows brings sculptor Sonal Ambani’s bold statement on gender pay gap to the Venice Biennale. Part of the *Personal Structures* exhibition, the artist’s installation, titled *Slings & Arrows of Outrageous Fortune*, delves into the broader implications of patriarchy and male hegemony in social spheres. “Inspired by Claudia Goldin’s Nobel Prize-



The Rooted Nomad:  
M.F. Husain

IMAGE: COURTESY KIRAN NADAR MUSEUM OF ART

winning work on income inequality, the piece features a powerful stainless steel bull adorned with major world currencies. As the bull charges towards a circular target, it symbolises patriarchal structures that valorize male dominance. Red arrows piercing the bull represent relentless efforts to challenge these systemic biases, while the target signifies the unified goal of achieving gender equality,” explains Ambani.

The theme of this year’s La Biennale di Venezia revolves around societal issues and fosters a deeper understanding of collective experiences, focusing on the interconnected nature of identity. *Slings & Arrows of Outrageous Fortune* captures this essence by addressing the pervasive issue of gender inequality. “The sculpture invites viewers to reflect on their role in perpetuating or challenging these norms, presenting a universally resonant issue through powerful symbolism and evocative imagery. It is a privilege to be a cultural ambassador for the diverse artistic heritage of India. This opportunity allows me to bring attention to important socio-economic issues, through the lens of Indian artistry and perspective. While it is a global issue, my voice is one among many, and it is remarkable to be part of the larger discourse,” says Ambani.

#### **A DEEP DIVE INTO ARAVANIART PROJECT’S DIASPORE (2024)**

Indigenous artists seem to be at the heart of Nucleo Contemporaneo—one of the main segments of the Biennale. Especially noteworthy is the work by Aravani Art Project. Their monumental mural, titled *Diaspore*, presented at the Arsenale Exhibition Pavilion for the Biennale Arte 2024, marks the 10th anniversary of India’s recognition of transgender individuals. The theme

of the Biennale resonates deeply with their experiences, as they navigate a world where acceptance of their identities has often made them feel like foreigners in their own bodies and societies.

“Through vibrant colours and multifaceted imagery, our mural explores representations of trans bodies and nature, shedding light on the processes of transition, dysphoria, and acceptance experienced by transgender individuals. The artwork also features portraits of five transwomen from our collective, each depicting their unique journey through gender diaspora, symbolising personal growth. From Shanthi’s peaceful transition symbolised by blooming flowers to Jyothi’s liberation from emotional cages, each portrait tells a story of resilience and empowerment. Our signature style of

colourful and geometric patterns helps convey emotions visually, while symbols like flowers and leaves pay homage to our collective members who couldn’t join us in Venice,” shares Aravani Art Project’s founder and creative director Poornima Sukumar.

*Diaspore* reflects the artist’s commitment to representing the trans community with pride and authenticity. The backdrop for the work reflects a world rife with multifarious crises concerning the queer rights movement and existence of people across countries, nations, territories, and borders, highlighting differences and disparities conditioned by identity, nationality, race, gender, sexuality, freedom, and wealth. In this panorama, Sukumar believes, the expression, ‘Foreigners Everywhere’, has several meanings—“it signifies encountering foreigners wherever you go, and the feeling of being a foreigner deep down inside, regardless of your location.” ■

## The theme for this year revolves around societal issues and fosters a deeper understanding of collective experiences.



*Slings & Arrows of Outrageous Fortune* by Sonal Ambani

# WEAVING ON CANVAS



*Kaarawaan*, acrylic on canvas, 2019-2023

Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, who returns with a solo exhibit in Mumbai after 20 years, talks about the making of an artist.

By *JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY*

**F**or more than six decades, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh has been a weaver of worlds. Not on a loom, but on canvas, and with words as fine as threads. He is a painter, a poet, and a writer who sees time not as a linear path, but as a shimmering fabric where past, present, and future intertwine. *Bazaar India* sits down with the 87-year-old for a conversation at his exhibition at Mumbai's Chemould Prescott Road, titled *Kaarawaan and Other Works*, organised in association with Delhi-based Vadehra Art Gallery.

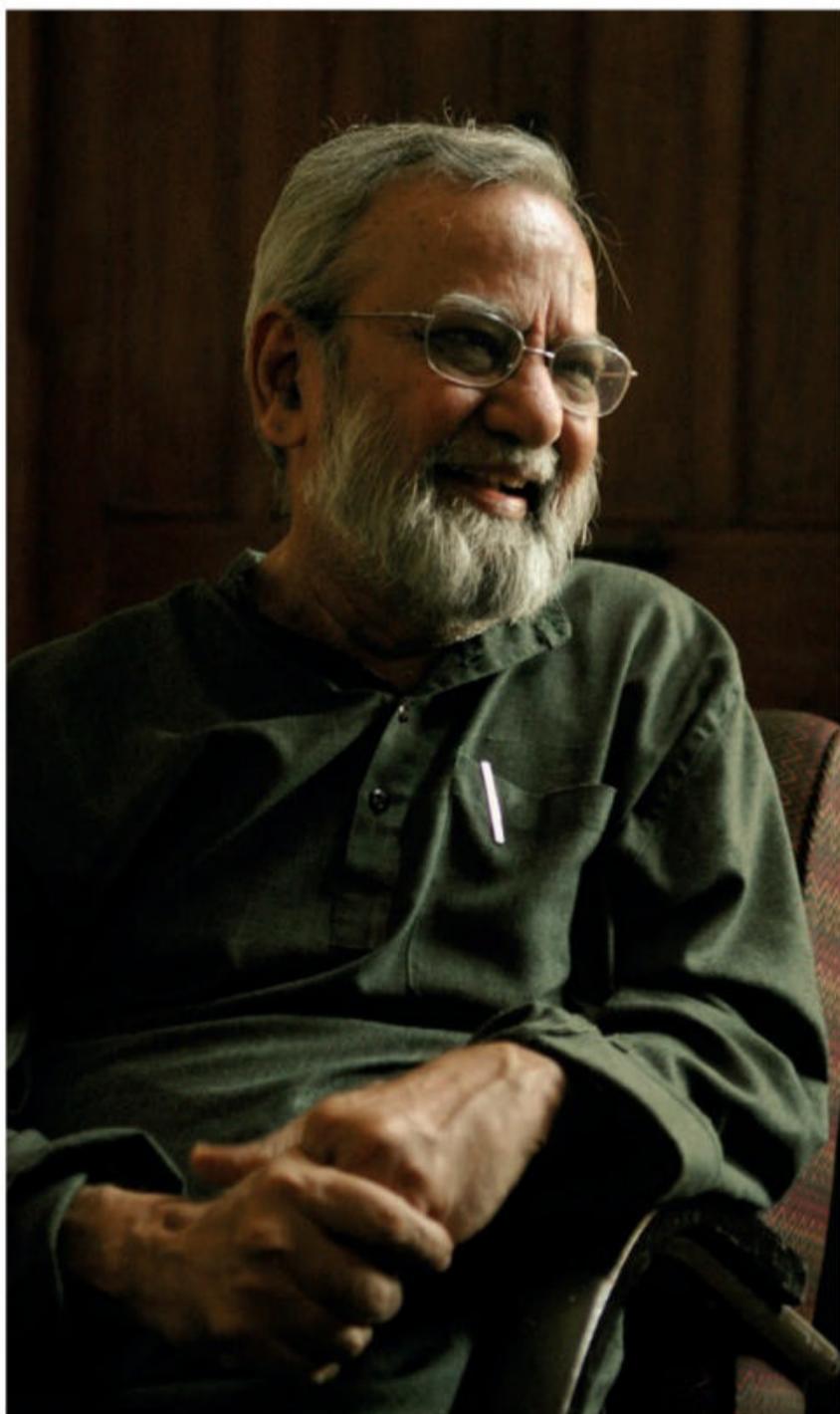
**Harper's Bazaar: Your early work explored the subconscious. How has your art evolved?**

**Gulam Mohammed Sheikh:** It is difficult to put down in a few words what transpired in a career of over 60 years. A series of changes took place over time depending upon the change of location, and changing contexts: historical, social, political, and personal, all together necessitating changing perspectives. During the early '60s, when I began my professional life as a painter, an image of a solitary horse preoccupied me: it was quite different from MF Husain whose horses were

timeless whereas my horse was an animal harnessed to a tonga drawn from my childhood experiences. In the late '60s, I sought magical encounters in the elements of landscapes depicting trees rising over mountains alongside images of erotic play. What transpired in subsequent periods is too complicated and rather long to describe. Your comment about the role of the subconscious is not off the mark, but I would add that it was a conflation of the conscious, of social and historical awareness with the subconscious that perhaps guided those works.

**HB: But you have had your disagreements with the purely abstract. What made you focus on a socially reactive figuration in your art?**

**GMS:** I do not reject any mode of work, including abstraction. In fact, I came quite close to abstraction in the early days of experimentation following the horse series but found it to be a cul-de-sac, so I reverted to figuration. But that was a personal choice,



Gulam Mohammed Sheikh

not a judgmental priority. Creating art with the socio-cultural context in mind was an early lesson I learnt while studying at Fine Arts College in Baroda. Awareness of the changing social and political scenario I witnessed in the '60s propelled me to act. How can an artist act? They can act by incorporating seminal issues, and respond through their practice.

**HB: Do you think art can help us decode or shift the politics of the country?**

**GMS:** The function of art is not to decode politics, nor does it claim to change society; what it does is to make you think about issues at stake. It can lead you to a degree of contemplation. Works of Max Beckmann and George Grosz on the pre-Holocaust days still inspire contemplation about violence in our societies. I have felt the urge to paint political events like the Emergency (*Speechless City*, 1975-77) or periods of intense communalism (*City for Sale*, 1981-84).

**HB: Tell me more about other artists who have influenced your work.**

**GMS:** I feel influenced by all great art including Indian, Western, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Turkish, and so on. I am most moved by the murals of Ajanta, and feel deeply inspired by the paintings of Mughal masters like Bishan Das, Basawan, and Daswant. I find the bold spontaneity of Nana or Mitharam and Chokha from Rajasthan dazzling. The magic of Basohli and the poetic insights of Pahari painters Manaku and Nainsukh are totally rapturous. I love Giotto for reasons quite different from my admiration for the other early Renaissance masters, like Piero della Francesca. In Sieneese paintings of the 13th century, artists like Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Sassetta, and Simone Martini come close to my heart. I enjoy Japanese Makemono, and Kakemono screens, and I admire Utamaro and Hokusai, Chinese scrolls with works of Chao Meng Fu and Ma Yuan. Among the moderns, Max Beckmann, Rene Magritte, Pierre Bonnard, and Pablo Picasso top the list. All these and many others are sources I continue to tap into, and often integrate into my work.

**HB: How does your experience studying in London play into your artistic identity?**

**GMS:** The three years I spent at the Royal College of Art were most enjoyable. My monthly interactions with teachers like Peter Blake and Sandra Blow, and the lectures of Peter de Francia were stimulating and exciting. Its location provided me with an opportunity to browse and savour Indian painting in the Victoria and Albert Museum situated next door, to which we had direct access from the painting studio. It was a great time being in the "swinging London" of Beatles and Rolling Stones, when liberal winds of change swept the English society. I loved visiting the great museums,

especially the National Gallery. Besides, London became a stepping stone for travelling to France and other destinations full of great art in Europe, especially Italy which I roamed from north to south by hitch-hiking. In a way, my cultural preferences were formed in those three years in England.

**HB: Ah! Is that why many of your paintings have journeys and maps?**

**GMS:** Maps are an offshoot of my insatiable wanderlust which came to me from childhood. Maps in some ways approximate real-life wanderings, so there is great fun in making maps. Not only does it involve unexpected delights, it also leads to unexplored discoveries. Thus, in looking for a world map, I found Ebstorf Mappa Mundi (Ebstorf map of the world) made in medieval Europe which engaged me to conduct visual traversals by erasing borders and opening new vistas by inserting new sites. Over the last two decades, I have made more than two dozen versions of my Mappa Mundi, both digitally and in paint.

**HB: Along with maps, the idea of memory too seems to be present in your paintings...**

**GMS:** Memory is central to my practice as a painter and a writer. I negotiate memory to deal with a conflation of the past with the present or, in other words, to simultaneously live multiple times in tune with the reality of living in India. We experience the existence of feudal times in Rajasthan, the Sangam period comes alive in the great Chola temples, and Lucknow arouses the musical and other legacies of Avadh, hence the sense of living in multiple times and cultures is deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche. Memory allows you to enter the world of others as you enter the minds of artists like Basawan and Daswant perceiving the folios of *Akbarnama*. Memory lets you find yourself in Flanders, watching the images of peasant life Breughel painted. Each of these experiences may be an uplifting one in different ways.

My memoir, *Gher Jataan* (Going Home), written in Gujarati is a journey of living in multiple memories of time and creating new ones.

**HB: You are a great writer as you are an artist. What lets you express yourself better? Words or visuals?**

**GMS:** I live simultaneously in the world of words and the world of visuals, and see no conflict in being with them. Each has its own place in my mind. Both express who I am, neither claiming to be superior or inferior. They often overlap but at other times go their separate ways. I journey with both as they move in and out of their respective territories or when they coincide. The world of visuals makes greater demands on your time as a physical act of painting may take months or years



*Dus Darwaze*, casein on canvas, mounted on board, 2019-2024



*Majnun in the Forest and Tree of Sleep*, acrylic on board, 2019-2023

to complete a work, whereas prose or poetry live in shorter spells of time in the initial stages, but in the end, they too demand extended time for re-writing, quite often so in my case.

**HB: As a prominent figure in Indian contemporary art for decades, how do you see Indian art evolving in the future?**

**GMS:** I see three to four generations of artists practising in front of me, each one engaged in their own world. The changing course of contemporary Indian art has witnessed artists devoted to painting alone to those who have espoused digital media, including the moving image, performance, and installations. There is a marked feature in the rise of women artists in substantial numbers, even artist couples practising in their individual modes. I find the work of several young and mid-career artists most exciting and inspiring. Obviously, I see a great future for art!

**HB: You have made a comeback with a solo show after 20 years. What is it all about?**

**GMS:** The *Kaarawaan* encapsulates my journeys in multiple dimensions; it straddles times of the past quoting Kabir and Ramanuja, and it also brings artists of historical and modern periods shoulder to shoulder. The image of the boat borrowed from an 18th century



*Conference of Birds*, acrylic on board, 2023-2024

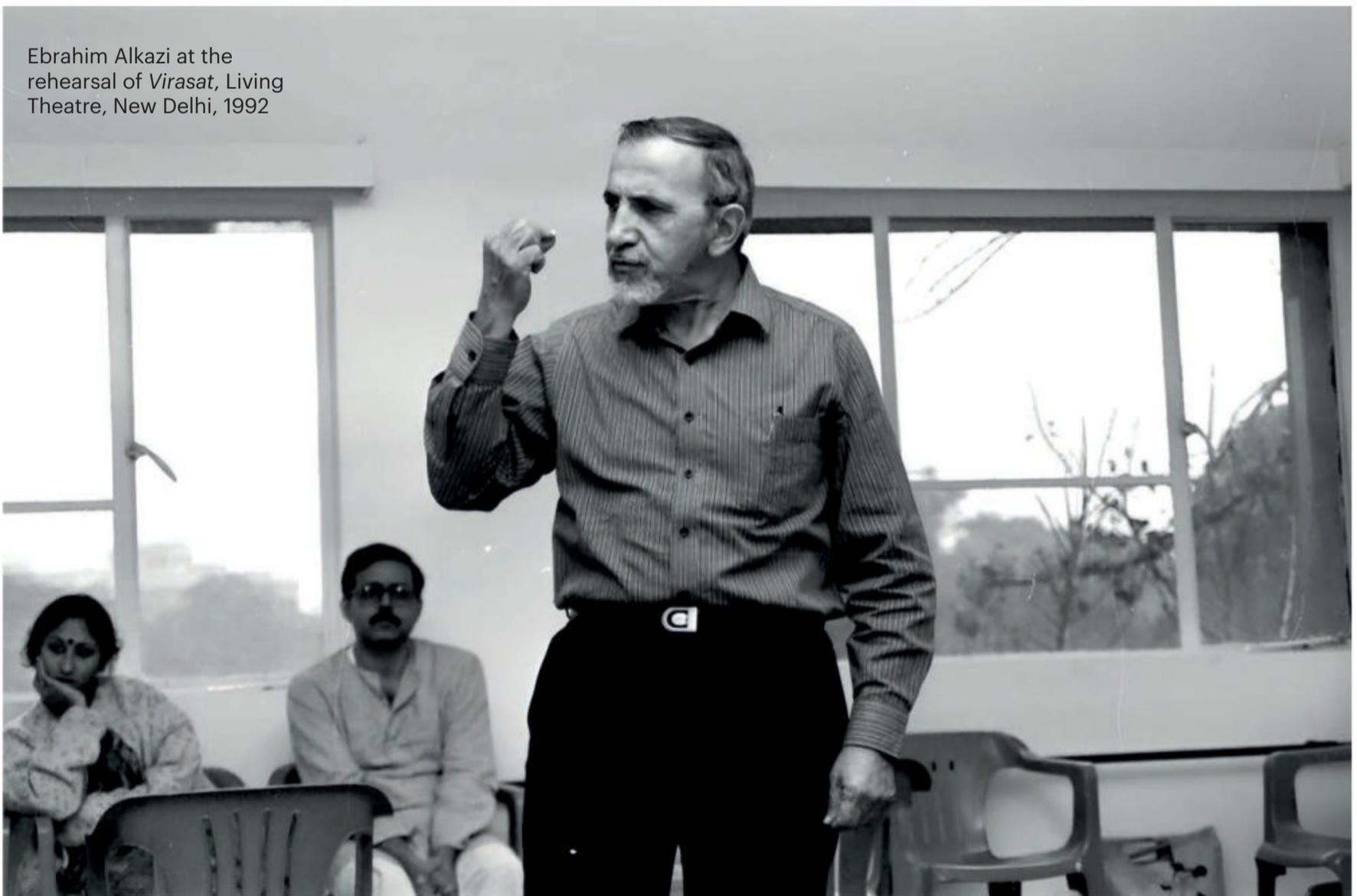
painting of Nainsukh sails into the future. It is an attempt to pack a world of memories and living to embark on an unknown voyage. At one level, it is the world of an artist but it also invites every viewer to join in, so in a way it is a collective journey. The exhibition involves panels painted in front and back—besides the large canvas of *Kaarawaan*—inviting viewers to connect the two or see them as individual entities. All these deal with lived times, dreamscapes, singular and multiple times, artist's time, and viewers' time. The three *Kaavads*—*Deluge*, *Water*, *Life*—open in eight directions with 50 images in a single work, not attempted so far. The *City Blues* is a lament upon mindless constructions pushing the poor in further corners. The *Kaavad Gandhi* is both an epitaph and an assertion of his continued presence amongst us. ■

# PORTRAIT OF A THEATRE ICON

Amal Allana on her biography of her father, Ebrahim Alkazi, chronicling his life and the challenges he faced as the director of the National School of Drama.

*By RIA SINGH*

Ebrahim Alkazi at the rehearsal of *Virasat*, Living Theatre, New Delhi, 1992

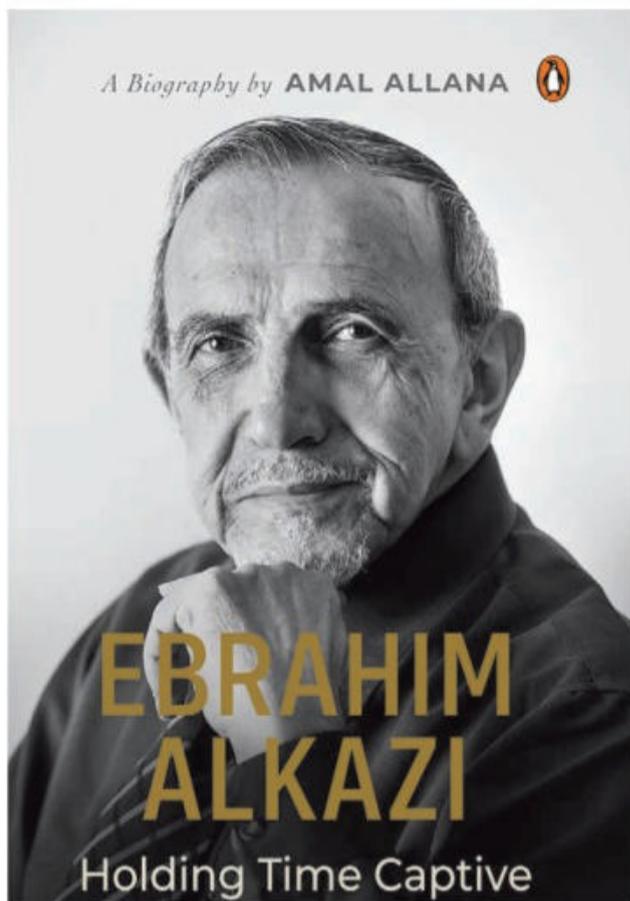


In the annals of Indian theatre, few names resonate as powerfully as Ebrahim Alkazi. Often hailed as the “father of modern Indian theatre”, Alkazi’s contributions are immeasurable. With her biography, titled *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive*, his daughter and author Amal Allana celebrates a life dedicated to the pursuit of artistic excellence and the relentless quest for cultural enrichment.

Born in Pune in 1925 to a Bedouin trader father and a Kuwaiti mother, Alkazi’s journey in theatre began with the English language theatre group led by Bobby

Padamsee. Alkazi’s story is one of passion, perseverance, and profound influence.

Describing her father as “focused”, Allana shares the story behind the title of her book. “I had been considering several alternatives as the title but then, serendipitously, on the day my father passed away I was looking through his papers,” recalls Allana. A small piece of paper fluttered out of his diary, and she found a couple of lines penned by her father with a shaky hand that talked about how it would be to “hold time captive”. This was when Allana decided the book title. Besides the literal meaning, she adds, “my father



The cover of Amal Allana's book

intended this phrase to be open to multiple interpretations, which made it intriguing.”

Allana, deeply immersed in theatre like her father, remembers how their house served as her father's studio and workplace ever since she was born. “Furniture would be pushed aside, and rehearsals took place right there,” she reminisces. Her father involved her in all his activities. “I was cast in plays, I made posters, ushered people to their seats, and helped with costumes.”

In 1947, Alkazi went to England to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. Despite receiving accolades from the English Drama League and the British Broadcasting Corporation, and being offered career opportunities, he decided to return to India. In 1954, he established his own theatre unit, bringing a professional and technically advanced approach to theatre, encompassing stage management, character development, lighting, and props. A few years later, he relocated to Delhi and assumed the directorship of the National School of Drama—a role he held until 1977.

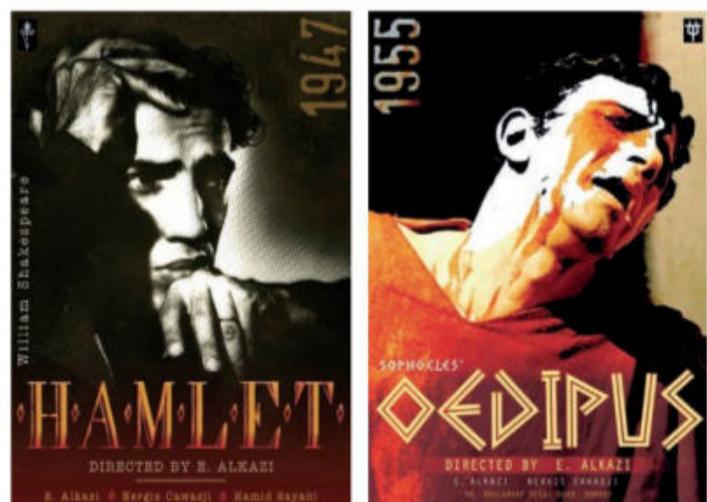
This role, however, was not without challenges. Allana explains that from the late 18th century, playwriting and theatre companies evolved into commercial enterprises in cities like Bombay and Calcutta. Indians enthusiastically embraced modern theatre because it was based on the new concepts of Western proscenium theatre, both in staging and writing. They were partially indigenising theatre to create “novel kinds of operatic forms like *sangeet nataks*, which developed in languages like Urdu, Bengali, and Marathi,” she says.

However, after Independence, the usage of Urdu declined as Hindi was proposed as the national language.

Since none of the plays were available in Hindi, Allana states, “Alkazi rapidly enriched Hindi theatre by getting plays translated into the language. Newly written plays in Marathi, Bengali, and Kannada were also translated into Hindi.” Alkazi built open-air and studio theatres, and ensured regular performances every weekend. This effort cultivated a theatre-going habit among the Delhi audience, putting Hindi theatre on the map.

One might assume that Alkazi's time in England influenced his plays upon his return to India, but Allana disagrees. “Even though Alkazi's plays in the early years included a large number of Western works, they were carefully selected for themes that could relate to the circumstances prevalent in India at that time.” She further clarifies, “Whenever Alkazi analysed a play for his actors, he always made them understand the deep connections these plays had to their own country and society.”

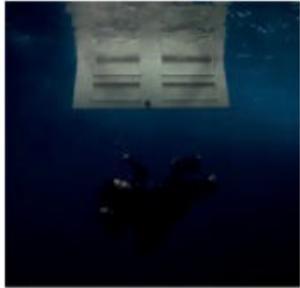
Despite the significant contributions of Alkazi, information about his life and achievements remains sparse. “No theatre critic or historian settled down to understand where Alkazi's thinking and approach stemmed from. He was creating ‘performances’ and teaching theatre as a ‘performance’ rather than as ‘dramatic literature’, explains Allana. “Theatre direction in the way Alkazi practised was a relatively new concept in 1950s. He was part of the first generation of Indian theatre directors.” No wonder, his legacy continues to inspire future generations. ■



(Clockwise from top): Amal Allana at the opening of the Yayoi Kusuma show at CICA, 1989; a poster of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, directed by E Alkazi; and a poster of Hamlet by Shakespeare, directed by E Alkazi

## ON MY PLAYLIST

Grammy-winning artiste Arooj Aftab tells *Bazaar India* how night became her creative companion.



HIT ME HARD AND  
SOFT—BILLIE EILISH



JASMINE SANDLAS



DEIRA—MC ABDUL  
and SAINT LEVANT



BOMBA ESTÉREO



After her 2021 hit ‘Vulture Prince’, Grammy-winning artiste Arooj Aftab is back with her new album ‘Night Reign’ (2024). Often included in the ‘sad girl’ genre, her music is more than just emotional vibes. ‘Night Reign’ blends genres like alternative, folk, and jazz. “The genre part starts to lose relevance in the face of an entirely new style of music,” says Aftab, who has studied jazz at the Berkeley School of Music, California. She is known to experiment with forms such as Indie rock, among others. “There’s so much more. It’s so broad now,” she exclaims.

The album is a reflection of Aftab’s 15 years in New York and her commitment to staying true to herself. The album has nine songs, of which *Aey Nehin* is her current favourite. Though the album features multiple artistes like Cautious Clay, Moor Mother, Chocolate Genius, Petros Klampanis, and Maeve Gilchrist, the protagonist is one—the night. “It’s a common cliché that artistes really thrive at night. But so much is true. It’s a beautiful time that sums up the day and gives you this beautiful canopy, under which you can have a whole range of emotions. And that’s where it took off,” explains the 38-year-old singer and composer. Aftab says she makes music that she wants to hear. “It’s without any ulterior motive. And I think that it is this honesty and integrity that touches a lot of people.”

Born in Saudi Arabia to Pakistani parents, Aftab spent her adolescent years in Lahore. She says the city has always inspired her. “I think there was a lot of romance in the city, especially in the ’90s when I was growing up there,” recalls Aftab. She was on a search for a sound that would honestly represent how South Asian music has integrated with different cultures from across the world. Aftab says it’s no longer a shock when you put a tabla and a saxophone together. “Our realities have become more integrated than they ever were.” The Pakistani-American singer has had unusually complementary influences. When asked if there is one quote that she lives by, the singer resonates with Michael Jackson. “I’m going to dig and dig, and push my music as far as I can,” she says, quoting Jackson.

Given her multi-city upbringing, it is obvious that Aftab has grown up with many musical influences. “When I heard Susheela Raman [British musician] for the first time, I felt it is going somewhere. It was very impressive.” Some other names would be Zakir Hussain, jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, and saxophonist Stan Getz.

Asked what success means to her, Aftab says, “It’s hard to define it because the definition keeps changing. For me, the biggest win is this new sound which I was able to create and have been chasing for the last 20 years. When you are recognised for the things that you want to be known for, it tastes like success.” ■

BY **PRIYANKA KATHURIA**

# THE TURNING PAGE

These five books are what you need to open up to a new world and embrace possibilities.

By *RIA SINGH*

The essence of transformation, as echoed by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, lies in the belief that, “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.” And truly so, in our life’s journey, many of us often find ourselves searching for the ‘why’. These recommendations, I hope, will remind you of your capacity to adapt and redefine your lives, embracing the transformative power of change.

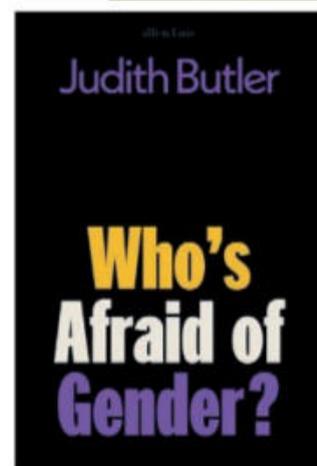
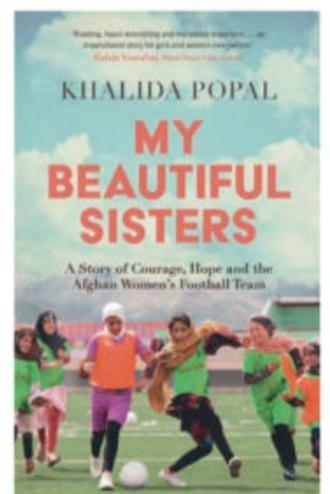
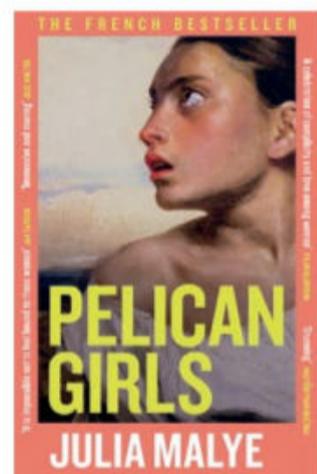
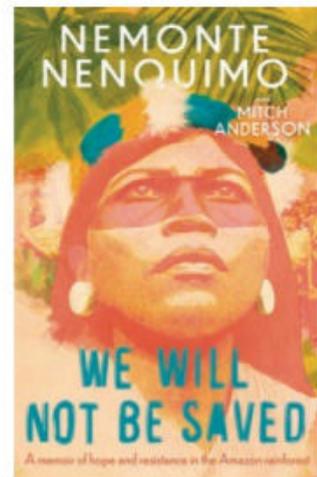
Starting the list with the autobiography of Khalida Popal, the former captain of the Afghanistan national women’s football team. *My Beautiful Sisters* is a compelling tale of hope in dark times. Fleeing Taliban rule when she was a child, Popal’s family sought refuge in Pakistan. When she returned to Afghanistan, football empowered her and her teammates. However, advocating for women’s rights in sports endangered her life, forcing her to seek asylum in Denmark. It was in Denmark where she exposed abuse by the president of Afghanistan’s Football Federation, prompting international rescue efforts for her teammates.

The next book blends magical realism with a pointed critique of patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. In Shahina Rafiq’s collection of stories, *The Menstrual Coupé*, releasing on July 26, she masterfully uses wry humour and cold objectivity to satirise the dominant patriarchal society. Rafiq’s narratives intertwine nightmares and dreamscapes, creating a unique world where women navigate both harsh realities and surreal dream worlds with remarkable ease, striving to reclaim control over their lives.

*We Will Not Be Saved*, written by Nemonte Nenquimo, is the first memoir by an indigenous tribal leader in the Amazon who fought Big Oil to preserve her tribe’s territories and thousands of acres of pristine rainforest. For this memoir, she partnered with her husband, Mitch Anderson, digging into generations of oral history, challenging racist notions about indigenous people, and revealing a life story as rich, harsh, and vital as the Amazon rainforest itself.

*Pelican Girls* by Julia Malýe is a bold, thrilling, and intimate exploration of female friendship, identity, and desire. Set in Paris in 1720, The Hospice of La Salpêtrière is overrun with ‘difficult’ women. Meanwhile, in America, French settlers are in desperate need of wives. In response, the asylum compiles a list of women of childbearing age to be sent to New Orleans. Among these women are three distinctive characters: a sharp-tongued woman, an accused abortionist, and a rumoured madwoman. As they voyage across the ocean, unaware of the harsh realities that await them, the story follows their adventures in the wild and beautiful land they are destined for.

For the final title in this list, *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* by Judith Butler, an American philosopher and gender studies scholar, asks what exactly is so disturbing about gender. Butler confronts the attacks on gender, carefully examining how it has become a phantasm for authoritarian regimes, fascist formations, and trans-exclusionary feminists. This book is a galvanising call to build a broad coalition with all those who struggle for equality and fight against injustice. ■



# READY FOR INDIA

The *Emily in Paris* actor Lucien Laviscount says he is keen to collaborate with SS Rajamouli, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, and Rajkumar Hirani.

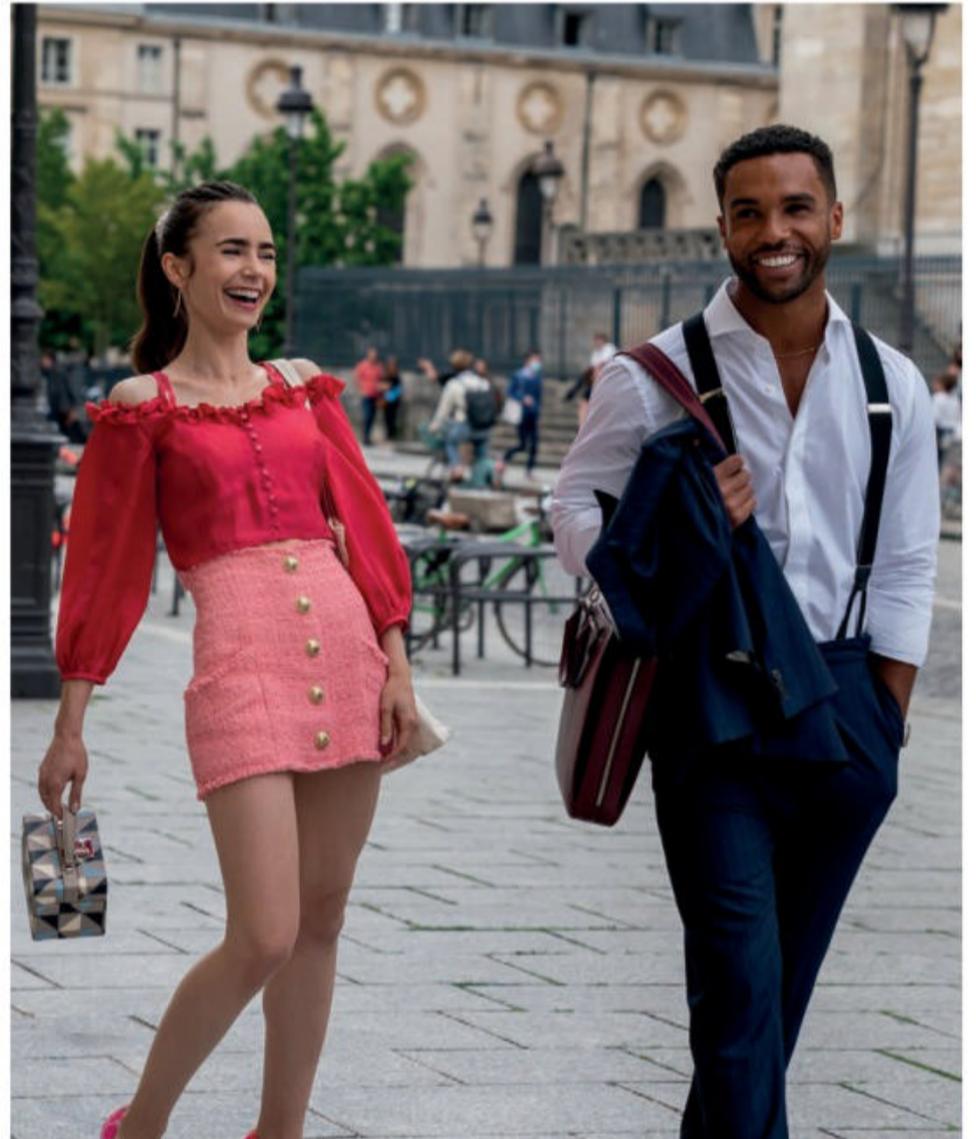
By *PRIYANKA KATHURIA*

**B**ritish actor Lucien Laviscount, who became a global heartthrob after playing Alfie in the Netflix series *Emily in Paris* (2020), now has an India connect. As the protagonist in Disney's upcoming film, *Wicked Wickets*, Laviscount will embark on an adventure to India. The film is about a washed-out baseball superstar whose career takes a downward spiral when he is ousted by the league. Starring Dev Patel and Sir Ben Kingsley, the story hits close to home, as Laviscount's character, Randy Montero, is introduced to cricket after a chance encounter with an Indian student. In an exclusive conversation with *Bazaar India*, Laviscount talks about Indian cinema, his favourite fashion brands, and what fans can expect from his character in the fourth season of *Emily in Paris*, the first part of which will premiere on August 15.

**Harper's Bazaar:** What do you think of Indian cinema? Are there any Indian actors/directors you would like to collaborate with?

**Lucien Laviscount:** Indian cinema boasts a unique richness and flavour that distinguish it from the rest of the world, whether it is the adventurous spirit, romantic narratives, high-octane action sequences, or a fusion of all these elements. I am particularly keen on collaborating with SS Rajamouli, given his exceptional work in *RRR* and the stellar performance delivered by NT Rama Rao Jr. Furthermore, the contributions of luminaries such as Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Vishal Bhardwaj, and Rajkumar Hirani in the industry are nothing short of invaluable, each offering a true gift to the world of cinema.

**HB:** You have gained immense popularity for turning up the heat in *Emily in Paris*. What can we expect from Alfie in the fourth season?



A scene from *Emily in Paris*

**LL:** I can't reveal too many details at the moment, but in season four, viewers can expect to see a more sensitive side of Alfie. Staying true to the signature style of *Emily in Paris* where resolutions are never straightforward or simple, Alfie will have to navigate complex situations and take important decisions.

**HB:** Your one memorable moment from the set.

**LL:** A co-star forgot their lines during an emotional scene. Instead of calling for a cut, they improvised the dialogue and that transformed the scene. It was a reminder of the magic that can happen on set, and the importance of being open to unexpected moments while filming.

**HB:** What part of your job do you love the most? Any advice to aspiring actors?

**LL:** There are countless aspects of working as an actor that I find truly fulfilling. But for me, it's all about the sense of belonging that comes with being part of a team. Collaborating with a crew, and collectively



weaving a narrative that sparks conversations and resonates with audience, are incredibly rewarding. Embodying the essence of the script, and embracing vulnerability in front of the lens where there's no room for pretence, offer a unique sense of liberation. My advice to aspiring actors is to dedicate themselves to the craft, stay present in the moment, and above all, remember to enjoy the process.

**HB: As you have earned a name for yourself in the fashion landscape, which designer do you admire?**

akin to the adventurous spirit of someone like Indiana Jones. While my aspirations may evolve in the future, delving into the world of academia and sharing the stories of the past excite me at this moment.

**HB: Lastly, any message for your fans in India?**

**LL:** I'm excited to explore your incredible country! If anyone has suggestions on things to do and places to visit, please feel free to share your recommendations with me! ■

**LL:** Lately, I've found myself drawn to the luxurious designs of Dolce & Gabbana. Versace never fails to make an impression with its bold style, Saint Laurent radiates timeless elegance, Gucci brings a fresh twist to classic looks, and Armani epitomises sophistication. When it comes to streetwear, H Lorenzo and Amiri catch my eye, and Rhude has become a staple in my wardrobe.

**HB: How do you think the relationship between cinema and fashion has evolved with the exponential rise of social media?**

**LL:** Social media has undeniably provided a platform for fashion in cinema to gain recognition in ways previously unattainable. It has facilitated greater collaboration between designers and costume designers in the film industry, offering a more accessible avenue for sharing insights, exploring creative possibilities, and seizing new opportunities.

**HB: If you could be anything other than an actor/producer, what would it be and why?**

**LL:** As of now, I envision myself as a history professor,



# GAME ON!

Indian video games, with their fluid storytelling and incredible graphics, are finding their feet in a landscape dominated by international players.

*By BARRY RODGERS*

IMAGE COURTESY: STUDIO OLEOMINGUS

For almost half a decade now, there's been a concerted effort to support homegrown talent—from fashion to beauty, and even video games. The clarion call to produce local has never been more pronounced. In fact, I stumbled upon an article from 2020 that chronicled how the creators of *Raji: An Ancient Epic*, one of India's most renowned video games, faced immense challenges in securing funding for their project. They experienced so many rejections from prospective investors that they nearly advised their team to seek other employment opportunities. Ultimately, they were awarded an Unreal Dev Grant by Epic Games. The grant programme, established in February 2015, is a \$5 million (₹40 crore approximately) fund for studios and promising developers.

*Raji* stood out for the significant attention it garnered as a game developed in India and appreciated in Western markets. Last year was significant for Indian developers as well as how Indian culture was portrayed in video games. In March 2023, Xbox unveiled a programme aimed at assisting “underrepresented creators”, selecting *The Palace on the Hill* by Indian developer Niku Games as one of the beneficiaries. In May, Sony introduced a similar initiative to support up-and-coming game developers, especially in India. And then in July, Toronto-based Visai Games released *Venba*, which has been praised for its portrayal of Indian immigrants in Canada and the experiences of the Indian diaspora.



This page (top) and Opposite Page: Screenshots of *The Hand You Are Dealt: Improvising the Archive*. Created for International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation, Guelph, 2023; (Above): Screenshot of *A Museum of Dubious Splendors*. Created as part of an Arts Practice Grant from the India Foundation for the Arts, Bengaluru. And, for display at the Rejoinders exhibition, Cardiff.

## FOR THE CULTURE

Closer home, in Chala (Gujarat), Studio Oleomingus, is best known for building short single-player narrative games and video game-based installations, where they explore the intersections of postcolonial writing and interactive fiction. Some of the famous works by this independent game and art practice studio run by Dhruv Jani and Sushant Chakraborty include *It Takes A Long Time To Grow A Mountain*, which plunges players into the depths of time, inviting them to unearth forgotten narratives and challenge preconceived notions of the past. Situated within the rugged splendour of the Western Ghats, this multi-level maze offers an immersive exploration through time, mythology, and nature. It uncovers the complex histories and forgotten tales that shape our landscapes. As players traverse the labyrinth's intricate passages, they discover excerpts from a diary written by a daring explorer who documented these lands before the borders of Gujarat and Maharashtra were officially established.

There's also the intriguing *A Museum of Dubious Splendor*, which is a collection of short stories about prosaic objects and spurious histories, each written in the manner of a colonial etiological tale. It is an irreverent examination of worth and possession, aggrandisement and accumulation, the violence of objects, and the obfuscation of time. But most of all, it is an attempt to subvert our reverence for the hoard of a colonial archive. Studio Oleomingus created this with support from the India Foundation for the Arts & Technicolor.

“Much of our work is an attempt at turning the simulated worlds of video games into possible sites of protest and reparation. Our fascination with the plural and discordant possibilities of using hypermedia as a form of record emerges from the belief that privilege withdraws from us the right to consume our own histories. That some stories from the fissures of society and time will simply not be told until the violence of their recollection and the absurdity of their form is accommodated in the method of their telling,” says Jani.

## GROWING PAINS

However, despite the stellar work being done by a handful of Indian developers, there is an obvious void in the support these developers receive in terms of grants or an educational infrastructure model that isn't backed by exorbitant tuition fees. New Delhi-based Karan Singh, who enjoys gaming and has been following the growth of India-made video games closely, believes game development in India is “on the rise” and values events like IGDC [India Game





Screenshot of *A Museum of Dubious Splendors*. Created as part of an Arts Practice Grant from the India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore. And, for display at the Rejoinders exhibition, Cardiff.

Developer Conference] that facilitate networking and discussions with investors and publishers across the country. He also stresses the importance and reach of the mobile gaming market in India, noting that “many Indian studios are involved in art, 3D modelling, VFX, and programming for major global publishers”. When asked if this detracts from game development within India, he disagrees, arguing that the experience gained by Indian graphic designers and technical artists working with “big international studios” actually enhances the local industry and leads to more funding opportunities.

Mumbai-based brand consultancy founder Fabian Rodrigues, who is an avid gamer too, believes world markets such as the US, Japan, and South Korea are way bigger compared to India. Despite this, Indian developers are increasingly forming innovative teams abroad. “The industry in India faces numerous challenges, mainly financial and recognition related. A prime example is PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds (PUBG), which enjoyed significant popularity in India, reflecting the dominance of international entities in the market,” he says. Adding that there’s also the cultural perception of video games in India, which is not looked at in the best light, especially in smaller cities and town, where parents think it’s a waste of time if their children engage in playing video games, almost discouraging them from pursuing game development as a viable career option.

## ON A POSITIVE NOTE

*Project Madras* also stands out as a noteworthy addition to the indie video game landscape. Developed by Royston Cinemo and a small team in India, this semi-linear, open-world game immerses players in the vibrant and culturally rich city of Chennai.

What sets the game apart is its focus on cultural references and meticulous attention to detail. Players can explore iconic locations such as the Marina shore and the bustling Mount Road, and encounter cultural figures like actor Rajinikanth and cricketer MS Dhoni. This creates a virtual tour of Chennai’s most famous spots, blending entertainment with education. The inclusion of missions within this open-world setting gives players a sense of purpose, resulting in a comprehensive and engaging gaming experience.

While these games may not be mainstream yet, the developers’ approach to gaming has garnered them the right attention, blending the cultural with the functional, and a side of Indian history. ■



Tahir Sultan

## THE MAN BEHIND THE MAVERICK

Tahir Sultan, the Kuwaiti-Indian philanthropist of wearable and culinary art, comfortably weaves the influences of both the cultures into his work.

*By MALIKA HALDER*

**W**hen I walked into Makaan, a concept store designed by fashion designer and chef Tahir Sultan in Jaipur, a brooding vibe welcomed me. But once I climbed down the flight of stairs to the store's basement and entered what seemed almost like a secret dungeon of treasures, I was awestruck by the offerings—antique brass sculptures, Naga panels, hand-thrown crockery, bespoke candles, and embroidered cushions. But the ones that stood out were the 350-year-old huge earthen clay pots. “They were used on the trade routes. They look beautiful in both hotel and landscape projects,” informs Sultan.

Makaan was born out of a feeling, says Sultan. “There was something inside of me that kept pushing me to open a store. I soon realised that depending on walk-ins was not the correct business model. I started supplying key pieces to interior decorators, and Makaan became a store where people looking to decorate their homes came to find unique pieces,” he adds. The designer says his collection at Makaan is sourced from India and the Far East. “The whole idea was to take tribal and vintage furniture, and artefacts, and make them cool. A lot of what we sell is almost impossible to find,” says Sultan.

The half-Kuwaiti-half-Indian philanthropist of wearable and culinary art says evocative pieces attract him. “They invoke a beauty that does not fall within the confines of what one would describe as conventional or normal,” he explains. Sultan adds that he looks for beauty where others would not even see it. “I had a client walk into Makaan and ask why I had metal rusted sewage pipes on display, he didn’t realise they were one of my favourite installations in my store,” he shares. The collection at Makaan reflects his deep respect for his heritage while embracing the avant-garde. What sets Sultan apart is his ability to merge traditional Middle Eastern elements with contemporary global trends. Sultan launched his eponymous label in 2008, quickly gaining recognition for his distinctive approach to design. His collections are known for their meticulous craftsmanship, innovative use of materials, and a signature style that combines opulence with modernity. Sultan’s designs often feature bold silhouettes, intricate embroidery, and a play of textures that reflect his dual cultural influences. But Sultan says he does not try to balance anything. “My inherent sense of style/design is influenced by the past and the present, the beautiful, the ugly, and the banal.”

Born into a culturally rich family in Kuwait, Sultan says his early exposure to various forms of art—from the intricate designs of Islamic architecture to the vibrant hues of traditional Middle Eastern attire—played a crucial role in shaping his aesthetic sensibilities. His interest in art took him to Florence where he studied Renaissance art history, photography, interior design, and modern art history. Sultan then went on to study fashion design at Central Saint Martins. “This decision saw me move back to India and work in the fashion industry for two years. It was at the time Sabyasachi was starting out and India was an entirely different place,” says Sultan who had interned with Alexander McQueen and John Galliano—two opportunities that created the foundation for his future work.

Sultan has been a global citizen, and the world is his oyster. The designer-chef says his visit to Maasai Mara in Africa impacted him a lot and so did working with Gond artists in Madhya Pradesh, and observing glass blowers in Venice. Asked about the influence of diverse culture on his upbringing, Sultan says, “being from two countries allowed for an added cultural, social, and gastronomical richness which I am privileged to have been exposed to. I think who I am is a sum total of two culture’s collective history.” Sultan moved to Jaipur in the middle of the pandemic, and made it his home. “It is the most fun and vibrant city in India right now. It’s the Marrakesh of the East with a melting pot of bohemian, creative people who are immersed in different fields making it super interesting,” says Sultan who has been visiting the Pink City since 1998.

Describing himself as “a fun-loving maverick who wears many proverbial creative hats”, Sultan says he loves reading, dancing till dawn, working out like a fiend, and working for exceptionally long hours. Sultan’s multifaceted interests extend to the culinary realm, and he loves hosting

dinners. Well, his love for food was more than evident when I enquired about his growing up years. “On one of our sojourns as a child, I remember having the best baked potato my brother and I ever tasted in our lives, and whose memory is

forever etched as our own international benchmark,” recalls Sultan. The other things that he remembers from his childhood are the fresh fish on the beaches of Komodo and the large pizza slices in New York. “As a kid I couldn’t get over the size of a New York slice, as an adult I can’t get over how much gluten and wheat is in it!” laughs Sultan.

The culinary artist says his food business stems from the exchange between Arab and Indian cultures. “Before the discovery of oil, a lot of Arabs lived in Bombay,” Sultan begins his history lessons. “They brought with them an entire vocabulary of food, using spices, which were introduced to them by Bedouin traders and seafaring dhow captains. The spices came from the Levant, from Persia, and from India, and these combined with local ingredients, like meat and fish, built up a repertoire of what is today known as the Gulf cuisine.”

Sultan’s work—be it in the realm of fashion or culinary world—is a celebration of cultural heritage and modern creativity. For this year alone, he has plenty of plans. “My 2024 goals are to open a cafe above Makaan, grow my interiors business, start a website, and find a way to spend at least six months a year in another country,” he smiles. ■

“Who I am is a sum total of two culture’s collective history.”

**IF YOU'RE INTO SCI-FI...**

...Watch this three-hour film inspired by Hindu mythology. Directed by Nag Ashwin, *Kalki 2898 AD* is set in the post-apocalyptic world. It is only the first installment in the planned *Kalki Cinematic Universe*. The mission is to save *Kalki*, the unborn child of *SUM-80* [the name of the character played by *Deepika Padukone*]. Released on June 27, the multi-starrer film also has actors *Amitabh Bachchan*, *Prabhas*, *Kamal Haasan*, *Vijay Deverakonda*, *Dalquer Salman*, and *Disha Patani*, among others.



Image credit: India Today



An artwork by Ali Akbar PN

**THREE ARTISTS, ONE GALLERY**

Three solo exhibitions by artists *Ujjal Dey*, *Bholanath Rudra*, and *Ali Akbar PN* are currently on display at *Emami Art Gallery* in *Kolkata*. *Dey* stands as both a contemporary textile artist and a dedicated researcher, while *Rudra* is a master draughtsman and watercolourist, known for his technical prodigy. *Ali Akbar PN* is a contemporary artist whose artworks are centred around memory, myth, mobility, and heritage. The exhibitions will run till August 20.

**BAZAAR BUZZ**

All that is trending in the art, entertainment, and culinary world.  
By *PRIYANKA KATHURIA*



A painting by MF Husain

**A COLLECTOR'S DELIGHT**

Last month, international auction house *Saffronart* held its summer online auction that included approximately 130 artworks by prominent modern and contemporary South Asian artists. These included early paintings by *SH Raza*, *Ram Kumar*, and *MF Husain*, as well as artworks by *Gulam Mohammed Sheikh*, *FN Souza*, *Nalini Malani*, and *Arpita Singh*.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS



Image credit: IMDb

## NEW SHOW

*After Bridgerton, it's time for another period drama! The Decameron, set in 1348 Florence in the backdrop of the Black Death [the bubonic plague pandemic that hit Europe from 1346 to 1353], is a dark comedy inspired by a collection of short stories of the same name. The series will explore themes of class, power, and survival. Produced by the creators of Orange Is the New Black, the Netflix show is likely to release on July 25.*



## BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

*The Brooklyn Museum is gearing up to celebrate its 200th anniversary with a year-long line-up of special events, exhibitions, and programmes from October. In November, the museum will host an immersive exhibition, titled Solid Gold, that will showcase gold from around the world. It will feature over 400 gold objects, ranging from fashion and jewellery, to paintings and sculptures. Visitors will learn about the origins, artistic techniques, and expert craftsmanship of goldsmithing. Curated by Matthew Yokobosky, with Catherine Futter and Lisa Small, the exhibition will be on view from November 15, 2024 to July 6, 2025.*



## NOSTALGIC COLLECTION

*VegNonVeg, a homegrown streetwear and sneaker brand, has launched its Spring/Summer 2024 collection that will remind you of the carefree summer holidays in hill stations. Inspired by the iconic architecture and surrounding forests of Shimla, the collection is a blend of classic and modern elements. From printed tops showcasing Shimla's scenic beauty to versatile denim and tailored bottoms for everyday wear, each garment will take you down the memory lane.*



## METAL MASTERY

*Designer Vikram Goyal has announced the launch of Viya, a distinctive lifestyle brand. His design philosophy draws inspiration from the diverse elements of Indian history, myths, and fables. Crafted with attention to detail, the debut collection feature tables, chairs, vases, trays, lighting, along with a range of soft furnishing. The brand's expertise lies in brasswork, stone inlay, cane, and rope techniques. Block printing, screen printing, and hand embroidery also find a unique language through motifs and colours.*

## SPICE BLEND

*This summer, indulge in chef Anubhav Moza's latest menu at Sly Granny in Khan Market, New Delhi. Featuring culinary delights such as Shish Tawook Broccoli, Roots and Halloumi, Herb-crusted Salmon, and Candied Pumpkin, one can experience the mastery of flavours and texture in every dish.*

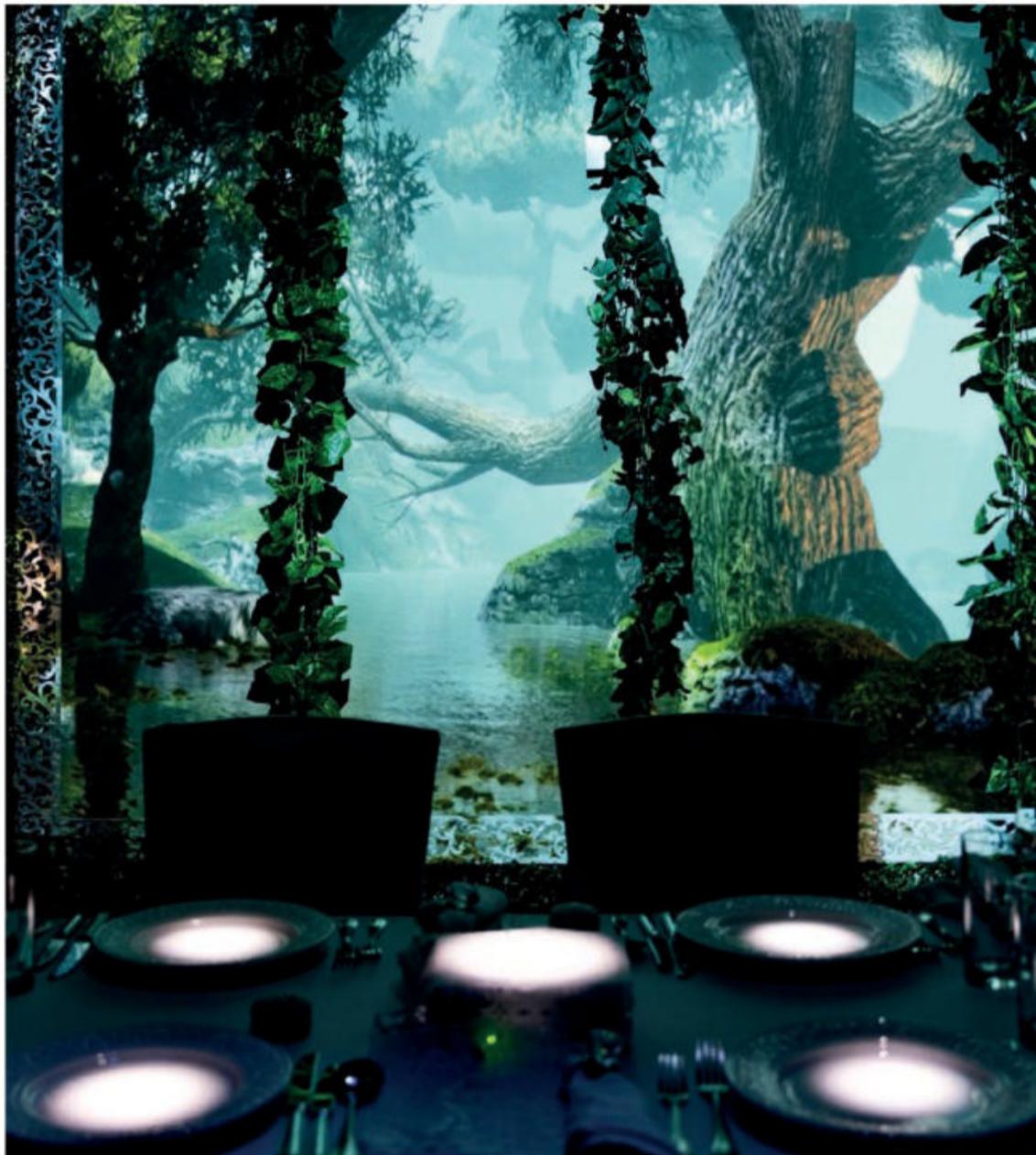


## A CELESTIAL JOURNEY

*Embark on a cosmic journey with artist Divyaman Singh as he unveils The Divine Elements Volume Two, at the Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. With this exhibition, Singh invites one to contemplate their place in the universe. Curated by Shahzada Khurram, the exhibition will run till July 8.*

## FOOD MEETS ANIMATION

*The Ritz-Carlton, Bengaluru, is hosting an immersive dining experience that combines food with animation. Named Dinemation, it combines a seven-course contemporary menu with 3D visuals, image mapping, and storytelling. Diners are introduced to The Banquet of Hoshena, a whimsical storyline where they need to help the queen find her lost king. Each course begins with a skit as the tabletop transforms into a fantasy land. The animation is accompanied with music and sound effects to elevate the culinary experience. This unique encounter promises to evoke all your senses.*

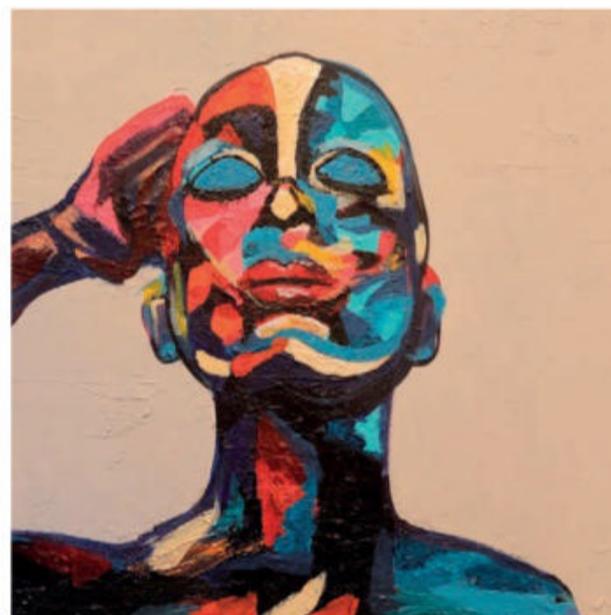


## BACK TO CHILDHOOD

*Inside Out 2, a sequel to the 2015 movie, should be on your weekend watch list, if you have not seen the film yet! This Disney-Pixar animation movie has crossed the \$1-billion milestone at the global box office within 19 days of its release. The film focuses on Riley's [the name of the main character in the movie] encounter with new emotions as puberty unleashes its troubles.*



Image credit: Disney-Pixar



## NEW ARTIST ON THE BLOCK

*Twenty-four-year artist Rayna Aarya is presenting a solo exhibition, titled The Colourful Mirage, at the Gallery Art and Soul in Worli, Mumbai. Using vibrant colours to convey her emotions, Aarya aims to introduce non-traditional art to a broader audience. Conceptualised during the lockdown period, she was inspired by her visits to art galleries in Amsterdam and London. The exhibition is on display till July 13.*



# MOONBEAMS IN A TEA CUP

Nestled in the Himalayas, Makaibari, a century-old tea brand, deeply intertwines with the rhythms of nature and the celestial dance of the cosmos.

The story about the moon and Makaibari is steeped in cosmic rhythms and tea. On clear nights when the full moon casts its ethereal glow and tides rise, Makaibari's farmers believe that the air's heightened oxygen and energy levels imbue the tea leaves with a delicate, smoother flavour. Crafted by hand and semi-fermented, Silver Tips Imperial stands as a rare gem, produced in small, exclusive batches. Plucked only four to five times during the season, it takes 200kg of leaves to make 50kg of processed Silver Tips Imperial tea.

The enchanting ritual of full moon tea leaves plucking at Makaibari celebrates nature's abundance and the timeless bond between humans and the land. A reminder of the interconnectedness of all things and the beauty that lies in the simplest moments. Beneath a moonlit sky, amidst the misty embrace of the Himalayas, each sip of Darjeeling Full Moon tea becomes a journey—a voyage of discovery that transcends time and space. ■

Surrounded by misty valleys, Makaibari's tea gardens flourish amidst nature's bounty, untouched and thriving for more than 160 years. Home to indigenous flora and fauna, Makaibari tends to its teas with a reverence for nature's artistic hand, fostering a biodiverse ecosystem where over a thousand living species thrive.

Makaibari is dedicated to growing and harvesting forest-nurtured teas, with no constraints on yields. With a sprinkle of ancient agri-wisdom from all corners of the world, Makaibari has mastered the art of harmonising with nature.

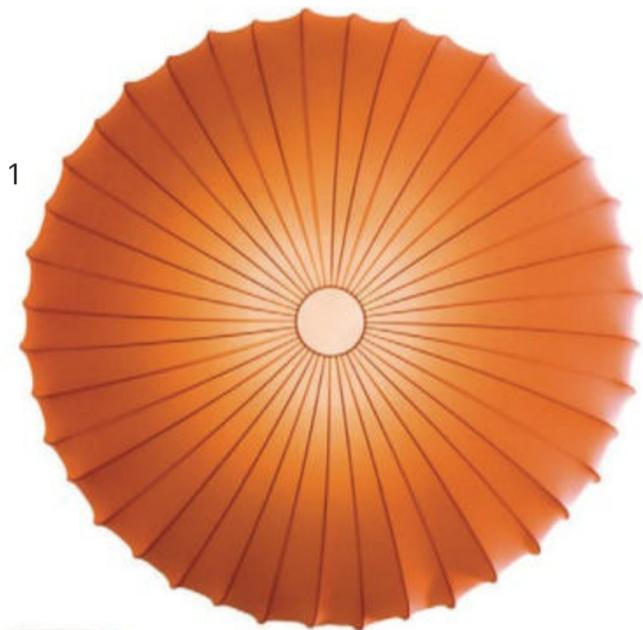
Founded in 1859, Makaibari holds the distinction of being not only the oldest tea estate in Darjeeling but also the world's pioneer in biodynamic tea farming. Drawing inspiration from the movements of celestial bodies, Makaibari follows a cosmic calendar set to the rhythm of stars, moon, and planets for optimal time for tea leaf plucking during the harvest season—from March to October.



(Top left) An assortment of tea by Makaibari; and tea leaves plucking ritual at the estate

# A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Connect with nature as you furnish your home with earthy accents.



IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS, GETTYIMAGES.COM. COMPILED BY SILVIA SACHDEV

1. Bell-muse by Axolight, available at IDS by Innovative Design Group, price on request; 2. Periodic Peace Ceramic Planter, The White Teak Company, ₹11,700 approx; 3. Pink ikkat cotton cushion, Ritu Kumar, ₹2,900; 4. Monti Coffee Table, West Elm, ₹54,300 approx; 5. Bianca Accent Chair, Bay Window, ₹80,833 approx; 6. Laszlo Ivory Boucle Loveseat, Ross Cassidy, price on request.

# THE ART OF HOSTING

From intimate dinner parties to extravagant weddings, F Six Events' Creative Director and Founder Ira Singh shows us how to throw the perfect party.

By *SHUBHANGI JINDAL*



IRA SINGH

virtual Zoom parties and intimate home events. The success inspired me to scale the company. As a creatively inclined person with a background in architecture, I felt equipped to visualise and create events from an experiential perspective.

**HB: How has the taste of the modern Indian couple evolved over the years?**

**IS:** Modern Indian couples now aim to provide unique experiences to their guests, with a strong focus on minute details. They are more experimental with design, embracing new ideas.

**HB: What is F Six Homes and the creative process behind curating artisanal home décor?**

**IS:** F Six Homes is a collaboration between me, my mother Dimple, and my fiancé, Imaan. Inspired by Balinese and Sri Lankan aesthetics, we noticed a gap in the Indian market for similar design philosophies. Our creative process is inspired by natural, sustainable materials, and Indian craftsmanship, aiming to create timeless, locally crafted pieces.

**HB: What are the characteristics that make a successful event designer?**

**IS:** Endless passion for your work is paramount.

**HB: What's next for F Six Events and Homes?**

**IS:** For F Six Homes, we hope to open a retail store. Currently, we operate by appointment and online sales. With regard to F Six Events, we are exploring expansion ideas, though these plans are still in progress. ■

**B**ringing people together is what Ira Singh does. With F Six Events, she wants to shift the focus on creating authentic connections and meaningful memories. Here's more from our conversation.

**Harper's Bazaar: What is the idea behind F Six Events?**

**Ira Singh:** In an industry filled with talented designers, we aim to stand out by interpreting events in unconventional ways. The idea is to be a design-driven company specialising in events that require creative, out-of-the-box thinking with meticulous attention to detail.

**HB: Why did you decide to enter this industry?**

**IS:** I stumbled into this space during Covid, organising

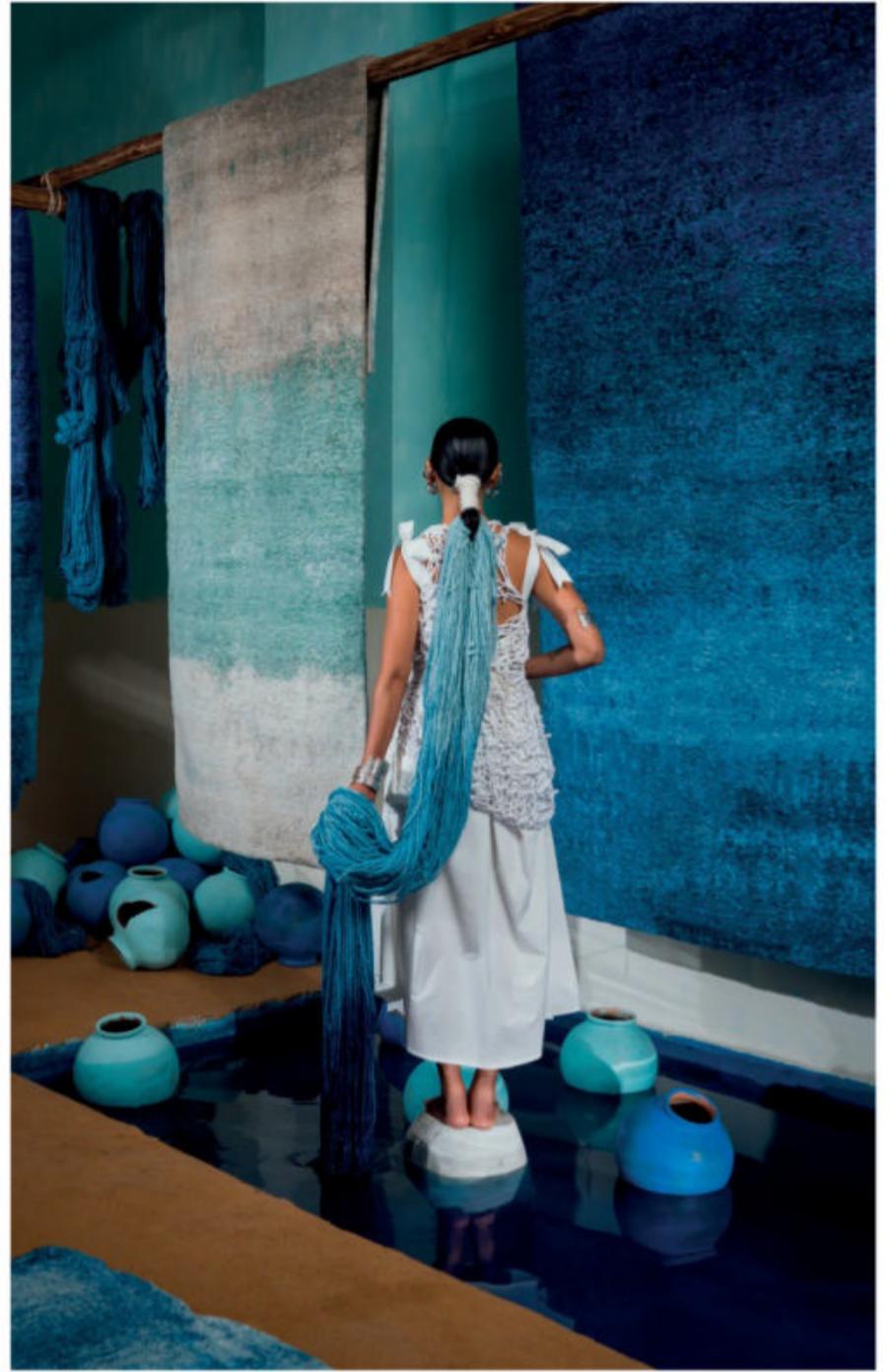


## CRAFTED LEGACY

Obeetee, the iconic brand, is known for its exceptional craftsmanship, unmatched quality, and a commitment to preserving traditional techniques of carpet weaving.

In the world of luxury home décor, few names evoke the same level of reverence as Obeetee. The brand's story is one of passion and dedication, of skilled artisans pouring their hearts and souls into every hand-woven rug. From the finest materials to the intricate details, every aspect of an Obeetee carpet is an evidence of the brand's continued pursuit of excellence. Obeetee's commitment to sustainability and heritage has made it a leader in the industry, and its rugs remain the standard for discerning homeowners and designers alike.

In an era of mass production and fleeting trends, the brand holds its ground as the oldest and the largest rug manufacturer in India with the nation's most notable designer collaborations. The Proud to Be Indian (PTBI) collection features the works of prominent fashion designers including Tarun Tahiliani, Shantnu & Nikhil, Raghavendra Rathore, JJValaya, and Abraham & Thakore. In addition, the brand is set to launch their latest and perhaps the biggest collection in 2024. It will bring together top designers to create an exceptional collection showcasing India's cultural heritage globally.



(Left to right) Forest Hand-knotted Woollen And Silk Rug By Anita Dalmia; The Chroma Collection by Tissage

The brand's retail presence across major cities in India, including its latest store in Bengaluru, offers a glimpse into the world of luxury and fine finishing. With plans to expand to Pune and Ahmedabad in 2024, Obeetee is poised to cater to the growing demand for high-quality carpets and home décor.

Beyond its commercial success, Obeetee has also made a significant impact on the preservation of traditional crafts. The Craft Stories project brings together artisans from across the country to revive traditional crafts, providing a platform for them to showcase their skills and sustain their craft. These designs will be given names and will be a part of the wide range of carpets and cushions that the brand offers.

Under the leadership of visionary Rudra Chatterjee, chairman, Obeetee, and Angelique Dhama, president, Obeetee Retail, it has become a socially responsible and environmentally conscious brand, dedicated to preserving India's cultural heritage. As the brand continues to evolve, its commitment to quality, craftsmanship, and legacy remains consistent like no other, making it a leader in the world of hand-woven rugs. ■

# FROM FARM TO FORK

*Bazaar India* talks to CAARA to know more about the brand's easy dining delivery, high quality ingredients, and the recipe behind their delicious meals.

*By RIASINGH*

Dining space at CAARA +  
Pure Living in Khan Market



**T**hey say the way to someone's heart is through their stomach, and we wholeheartedly agree. Great food not only sustains us but also creates lasting memories—a philosophy at the core of CAARA. What began as a catering venture has now flourished into three distinct branches: restaurants, catering, and easy dining. *Bazaar India* talks to the founders Ambika Seth and Alice Mirabel Helme to know about their secret recipe for success.

**Harper's Bazaar: How did CAARA come into being, and what was the vision behind it?**

**CAARA:** The brand started when Seth and Helme met in Delhi. Helme was into restaurant consultancy and Seth was leading a grassroots chemical-free vegetable growing programme. It was a meeting of passions. The ethos, then and now, hasn't changed: quality ingredients!

**HB: How important is local sourcing for you?**

**C:** Sourcing locally is a big part of what we do. India has a lot of fantastic produce, and we invest time and diligence to understand the food chain. If we can't get the quality that we usually get from our local produce, we turn further afield.

**HB: What kind of produce do you grow in CAARA Farms? How do you ensure the produce is free of chemicals?**

**C:** It's important for us to get the correct organic seeds. Our soil has been free of chemicals for over 15 years. Our vegetables and herbs are essentially organic, but we call them chemical-free because we don't believe in organic certification. Fresh herbs are always on the top of our list. We love heirloom varieties of broccoli and tomatoes as well!

**HB: What inspired “Cook With CAARA At Home”, and how has it been received by your customers?**

**C:** Both Helme and Seth have big families with children, and they love delicious food. But there’s never enough time. The “Cook With CAARA At Home” is about our product range. They take everyday easy meals such as a sandwich or eggs, or salads and make them really delicious. Now who doesn’t love that?!

**HB: How does the Easy Dining Delivery & The Pantry service work, and what sets it apart from other food delivery services?**

**C:** This is us giving access to our larder and bakery. People use it for their weekly shop, and we use it for their Friday night catering. This is our customer’s one-stop easy shop. We’re very customer focused with our food delivery service. Quality ingredients and customer focus with a chef on hand is what sets us apart.

**HB: What are the challenges have you faced in maintaining your commitment to preservative-free and handmade products?**

**C:** The main issue we face with regard to the products is shelf life. Take our pesto for example: it’s completely fresh and chemical-free which also means that it’s without those nasty preservatives, therefore it’s shelf life is short. We recommend putting a layer of olive oil



Eggs Benedict

on top every time you use it. This seals out the oxygen and increases its shelf life!

**HB: What is the vision behind integrating CAARA’s culinary expertise with PHL home décor at the Khan Market?**

**C:** Making shopping easy. You can get their lovely ranges with our products—making gifting easy and fun.

**HB: Can you describe the atmosphere that patrons can expect when dining at Khan Market?**

**C:** Smart, European, yet relaxed!

**HB: What are some of the signature dishes and home décor items that highlight the synergy between CAARA and PHL?**

**C:** One of the key trademarks of our collaboration with PHL is that we jointly worked on a beautiful tablescape for the restaurant using their beige porcelain collection accented by their green lettuce leaf side plates. We also use their cutlery and linen for a complete dining experience which will keep changing when new collections are created, so our guests can experience the products and see how it can make for a beautiful table set up. Apart from our signature dishes, we have roasted sweet potato with sour cream and harissa sauce, the creamy cacio e pepe ravioli with white wine and Parmesan cream, and a family secret recipe of the Helme’s coriander and wild forest honey mustard lamb chops.

**HB: What are your future plans for CAARA?**

**C:** We’re always changing the menu via our seasonal specials. Our focus is always on the food, and that won’t change. We’re now doing more wedding catering pan India which is exciting. Our next big plan is a restaurant outside Delhi...but you’ll have to wait and see. ■



CAARA Founders Alice Mirabel Helme and Ambika Seth



Zodiaque Long  
Necklace  
Cancer, Van  
Cleef & Arpels,  
price on request

## CANCER

MAY 22-JUNE 21

*July is the month to take charge and make things happen. Don't wait for things to come to you. This is a great time to pursue your goals and progress towards your long-term vision with all that you've got. It's also the time for romance and passion. Whether you're in a new relationship or have been together for years, make an effort to keep the spark alive.*

*Karmic tip: Be open to receiving*

## ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 20

You may find yourself taking on a leadership role or being given more responsibility at work. This is a great time to show off your skills and prove your worth. July is the month for you to build strong connections too. Whether in a romantic or professional relationship, take the time to listen to the other person and understand their perspective.

Karmic tip: Be tolerant

## TAURUS

APRIL 21-MAY 21

Career-wise, July is the month for testing new waters. Don't hesitate to step out of your comfort zone and grab a new opportunity. You are sure to stumble upon a fresh approach. It is also the right time to nurture the connections you already have. Spend time with your loved ones and show them you care.

Karmic tip: Be gentle with yourself

## GEMINI

MAY 22-JUNE 21

You may find yourself juggling multiple projects or responsibilities at work. While this can be challenging, it's also an opportunity to show off your skills. In terms of relationships, July is the time for communication and understanding. Take time to hear the other person out, and try to slip into their shoes. This will help you avoid misunderstandings.

Karmic tip: Let go of the past

## LEO

JULY 24-AUGUST 23

At work, you may find yourself in the spotlight. This is a great time to make a name and push yourself a little. Don't be afraid to take centre stage and shine. Whether a romantic relationship or a professional one, take the time to get to know the other person. This will help you create a strong foundation for the future.

Karmic tip: Trust yourself

## VIRGO

AUGUST 24-SEPTEMBER 23

Career-wise, July is the month for attention to detail and precision. Take the time to double-check your work and make sure everything is perfect. This is a great time to focus on tasks that require a high level of accuracy and attention. July is the time for forgiveness and understanding in your relationships. If there have been any misunderstandings, take the time to talk things through.

Karmic tip: Be discreet

## LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 24-OCTOBER 23

You may find yourself in a position of power at work. Use this influence wisely and make decisions that benefit everyone. This is a great time to think about the long-term consequences of your actions, and make choices that will lead to success. In terms of relationships, July is the time for adventure and excitement. Try something new and exciting with whoever you're feeling close to.

Karmic tip: Be decisive

## SCORPIO

OCTOBER 24-NOVEMBER 22

It is the month of hard work and dedication. Put in the effort and you will see results. Don't be afraid to go above and beyond what's expected of you. This is a great time to push yourself and see what you're truly capable of. In relationships, July is the time for honesty. Be open and upfront with your partner, and avoid keeping secrets.

Karmic tip: Don't take things too seriously

## SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 23-DECEMBER 21

At work, you may find yourself leading the ship. Sit with yourself, be sure of your vision, and use this influence wisely while making the most of it. Be prepared for your relationships to be tested as people might get on your nerves, and someone from the past could linger on your mind. Trust your instinct and stick to the script.

Karmic tip: Don't overthink

## CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 20

You may find yourself at a crossroads in your career. Don't be afraid to take charge and make decisions, even if they're tough ones. Your natural sense of responsibility and practicality will serve you well. In your relationships, you might find that a friend or loved one is looking to you for advice or support. Be there for them, but also make sure to set boundaries.

Karmic tip: Avoid self-guilt

## AQUARIUS

JANUARY 21-FEBRUARY 19

At work, don't be afraid to take risks and try something completely new. In your personal life, you may find that a loved one requires some extra attention. Take the time to show them how much you care.

Karmic tip: Be grounded

## PISCES

FEBRUARY 20-MARCH 20

Focus on communication and collaboration. You have a natural ability to bring people together, remember to use it to your advantage. In your relationship, you may find that your partner is seeking more emotional intimacy than usual. Be vulnerable with them.

Karmic tip: Just be

PREDICTIONS BY **DRTAMANNA C**

# BRIDES TODAY



E X C L U S I V E



## ALL THE INSPIRATION

Visit **BridesToday.in** for all the beauty, fashion, and planning advice for your Big Day

White swimsuit, **Chanel**



# IT'S ANASUYA'S WORLD

# IN HER OWN TIME

Anasuya Sengupta has finally arrived! The actor talks to *Bazaar India* about portraying Renuka on screen, queer activism, and why she does not strategise too much.

*Photographs by BIKRAMJIT BOSE*  
*Styling by PRIYANKA KAPADIA*  
*Words by JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY*



Anzu Blazer Dress, **Lovebirds**





(This page) Dress, **Moonray**; Circle of Life Earrings in silver, **Lovebirds**  
(Opposite page) Wool, tweed red jacket from the 2023/24 Métiers d'art Collection; metal, glass pearls and resin gold and pearly white necklace, both **Chanel**

**T**here is something about Anasuya Sengupta—the actor who made history by becoming the first Indian to win the Best Actress award in the Un Certain Regard category at Cannes this year for her role in *The Shameless*, directed by Konstantin Bojanov. When I meet her for the first time, she is in an embellished Chanel swimsuit, which blends against the cloudy Mumbai sky like a chameleon. It's 7 AM. Juhu Beach is still a little chilly from the downpour last night. Bikramjit Bose loads a fresh roll of film into his camera, and calls her by a name that tells you they've known each other since their 20s. She smiles an all-knowing smile between shots, as the waves crash against her thighs. A smile that knows something that you haven't discovered yet. Sengupta moved away from her favourite city years ago, but her feet hold onto the ground with an undebatable familiarity. The water helps the sand pile up on her toes. They've been waiting for her, and she has finally arrived.

This is Sengupta's first cover shoot, but she's no stranger to the cameras, the lights, and the collective excitement. Through her unique sense of style that she has held on to in her appearances at Cannes and other press tours since, she's got closer to the world of fashion than ever. Her character in *The Shameless* too holds on to some very fashionable fits while on the run, thanks to costume designer Parul Sondh, lending an exquisite sartorial complexity to Renuka. "Here I am, shooting for *Bazaar India*, not something I had ever anticipated. I've been in films for so many years, tucked away far behind the scenes. I am pleasantly surprised at how much I am enjoying this. It feels like I really belong here," she chuckles. Sengupta grew up in a standard liberal Bengali home in Kolkata, with a healthy dose of school plays, books, music, drawing lessons, and elocution competitions. "Slowly and steadily it started getting a bit more formalised," she recollects. "I joined theatre troupes in the city. We were building an artists' community there while being friends, it was magical." As she was finishing her literature degree at Jadavpur University, she was determined to become a writer. "The 17-year-old me felt like that was too far-fetched so I wanted to start as a journalist."

As per plan, she graduated and started her first job at a magazine, only to be thrown headfirst into the world of

filmmaking. "There was an Indo-Australian film being shot in Kolkata, and a friend of mine asked me if I wanted to work as an AD [assistant director]. I didn't even know what an AD was! My friend said it requires assisting the director, but if I am good at it, it could be much more." Sengupta walked into her boss' office the next day and told him that she wanted to work in films, and couldn't come back to work. "I told him I could come back after the film was done, but for now he had to let me go. And that was that." Around the same time, she was cast in *Madly Bangalee* (2009) by Anjan Dutt. "He had reached out to the theatre group I was working with. Six of us from that group got in." It was all sort of working out, but she wanted to leave Kolkata, as much as she loved it there, to broaden her horizons. And so she did.

"I was 21, and I was confident that my work was ammo enough to move to Mumbai. My older brother was already there, working in advertisements. I wanted to act, but even then there were other things I wanted to learn." With starry eyes, Sengupta hopped from auditions to rehearsals when she realised it wasn't viable enough to survive in the city of dreams. "I remembered, I was also an AD! I quickly picked up a film and AD-ed for a few years after. I didn't strategise too much, which in hindsight helped me be open and fluid about the work that I was taking up." This proverbial take-it-as-it-comes mindset got her in the art department of Deepa Mehta's *Midnight's Children* (2012), with a six-month shooting schedule in Sri Lanka. Before she knew it, she was heading an art production team at 26. "The acting thing got sidelined, but it never left my mind. Something told me to let it happen when it does. I didn't know the time would only come 15 years later."

Mumbai was supposed to be fantastic for a creative like Sengupta, but it was also stifling on days. "I was trying to find different avenues to express myself. I wanted to say a bit more, and feel a bit more." That's when she started playing around with the idea of leaving the city. "You don't work in films and just walk out of Mumbai. I was very nervous and scared. But with a supportive family and a tight circle of friends as encouragement, I left." She moved to Goa in 2020, with nothing on the cards. And that's when Konstantin Bojanov reached out to her. "I tried to convince Konstantin how bad an idea this was. I didn't even have headshots. Despite all my efforts to self-sabotage, he wanted me for the role. I read the

*"I tried to convince Konstantin how bad an idea this was. I didn't even have headshots. Despite all my efforts to self-sabotage, he wanted me for the role. I read the script for The Shameless in one sitting—top to bottom. I immediately knew I had to do it. I felt like I was ready."*



Silo Knit Set, **Lovebirds**; earrings, own



Vivenda Drape Front Dress, **Christopher Esber**



Denim dress with bold fuchsia accents from F/W'24 collection, Sculpt, **A FEW Rahul Mishra**

Only  
when  
something  
moves me,  
will I  
do it.



Black and white, double-sided virgin wool blend coat with herringbone motif, **Dior**



Denim bustier and trousers, **Saaksha & Kinni**

Hair and Make-up: Mitesh Rajani;  
Assistant Photographer: Tushar Tara;  
Assistant Stylist: Humaira Lakdawala;  
Fashion Assistant: Iram Halai;  
Editorial Coordinator: Shalini Kanojia

script for *The Shameless* in one sitting—top to bottom. “I immediately knew I had to do it. I felt like I was ready.”

In *The Shameless*, Sengupta’s character, Renuka is emotionally taxing to watch, let alone embody. A sex worker on the run is the most reductionist description of Renuka that one can offer. It was difficult, of course, but what superseded it was how much she loved doing it. “Right from the get-go, I could see through her. I saw her tenderness, I saw her pain, and I saw her for who she really was. She is an unlikely queer feminist icon, and just like you, I was so emotionally exhausted knowing her story that I felt the need to step up. I felt protective of Renuka, I wanted to stand up for her, and I was rooting for her through and through. It’s almost like I wish I could have done more for her.” Sengupta saw it as an honour to have the opportunity to give a character like this her best performance yet. She had been preparing for this role all along.

Bojanov, who had read a story about Devdasis in William Dalrymple’s *Nine Lives* and bought the rights to the book, didn’t know what he wanted to make out of it. He set out to film a documentary with the Devdasi women in Karnataka. It was easier said than done and he quickly realised this was probably not going to work, and that’s when he decided to fictionalise it. “He sat with it for years,” says Sengupta, “and he has met a Renuka, heard about a Devika. I met him for the first time when I travelled to Nepal for filming. He is this Bulgarian gentleman in his late fifties... there was barely any ground of commonality between us. But I was very quickly able to grasp what he was trying to do, and why.”

Renuka is not only a queer character, but one from a social strata that queer activism in India often overlooks. “We never wanted to box it in. For us, it was a story of a person who has been a victim of extremely unfair circumstances. More importantly, it was a story about love. I am a heterosexual woman married to a man, but that doesn’t mean my heart shouldn’t bleed for the struggles of a queer person. It must.” Even though Sengupta approached the character with as few labels as possible, she was completely aware of the representation it offered. “We didn’t want to over-categorise Renuka. Not to say that I don’t understand the importance of categorisation. I understand why most marginalised communities need to be over-divisive in order to fortify themselves better. I just wish it didn’t have to be this way.”

When Sengupta won the Best Actress award at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, she walked up to the stage with teary eyes, and said, “We don’t need to be queer to fight for equality. We don’t need to be colonised to know that colonising is pathetic. We just need to be decent human beings.” Sengupta’s life changed forever at that exact moment. When I ask her if she ever anticipated this win, she laughs aloud. “I wouldn’t dare! How? For me, it was more than enough that we were selected, and going to Cannes.” *The Shameless* was screened early on at the festival. Sengupta had initially planned to stay only for the screening and fly back. “When I was planning the trip, I don’t know what made me decide to stay till the end. It wasn’t because I was hoping to win an award—I had never been to any major film festival before. How many production designers get to go to such festivals?”

Sengupta recalls that the response to the film was amazing. “I kept whispering to Konstantin, ‘I think we made a good film. Everyone seems to love it.’” People started coming up to her on the streets, complimenting her on her performance. And even then, with all the personal gratification, it felt deeper, and larger. This win was bigger than her, it was about so much more. It was a win for a mishmash of identities, and more than anything it was a win for independent cinema. “Soon it was the end of the festival, and Payal’s [Kapadia] film, came in and won—and all of them are my dear friends. Her film [*All We Imagine As Light*] was an utter masterpiece. That elevated my joy.” All eyes were on this pool of Indian filmmakers. “Everyone thought we were a cool bunch, and all we wanted to say was that we are! We have always been!”

With an Indian release of *The Shameless* in the works, Sengupta is already onto other things. “I am taking my time, and trusting my gut as usual. That will probably never change!” Scripts and films are waiting to have her, not to mention the gazillion interviews, shoots, and events she has lined up. Then she has her art, and her unending list of behind-the-scenes jobs that she’s exceptionally good at. By the time we have got our last few shots, the day has gone by. The Mumbai sky is an unamused shade of vermilion, as if aware that it’s time for Sengupta to go back home, to her husband and cat in the 105-year-old Portuguese villa in Siolim. But the bunch of ivory clouds that float by know, as well as I do, that she will be back for more. In her own time. ■

*“For us, it was a story of a person who has been a victim of extremely unfair circumstances. More importantly, it was a story about love. I am a heterosexual woman married to a man, but that doesn’t mean my heart shouldn’t bleed for the struggles of a queer person. It must.”*

Zayn Malik has been in the making for a while now. The singer gets candid about his music, life away from the city, and becoming a father. He talks to *Bazaar India* about his refreshed focus on the best things that life has to offer.

*Photographs by MICHAEL SCHWARTZ*

*Styling by JASON REMBERT*

*Words by RASNA BHASIN*

# New DIRTY

Royal blue modern sherwani from Mijwan Collection, paired with a shirt, both by **Manish Malhotra**; earrings and rings, both **Bernard James Jewelry**

# TIQON

U p until this story and cover shoot, the only thing Zayn Malik and I had in common was our birthday. We were born on the exact same day, month, and year, and I always wondered if we had any similarities. After a remote photoshoot and interview—where I powered through a few espresso shots to stay awake for a 4 AM Zoom call (IST) while Malik effortlessly switched outfits and charmed everyone on set—I realised we do share one trait: we both love being around people as much as we love our me time.

Malik, known for his chart-topping hits and his quintessential boyish mystique, has over the years morphed from a boy band heartthrob with a winning smile to a solo artist with a sound as sexy as it is sophisticated. He's traded the bubblegum pop beats for a musical universe that's daring, soulful, and undeniably Zayn. He is a trendsetter whose effortless demeanour has redefined style just as the perfect *Bazaar Man*. He is also a philanthropist who uses his platform to champion causes he believes in. And recently, he's stepped into the beautiful world of fatherhood. Yet Malik, in all his multifaceted brilliance, is only just entering a new era.

The former One Direction member has a new solo album—'Room Under the Stairs'—in which he has mixed R&B with Americana and folk music while paying homage to his Pakistani roots. This is Malik's first project under a new label, Mercury and Republic Records. This shift signifies a return to creative control, with Malik taking the lead on production along with collaborator Dave Cobb. This album has been coming for a long time. "It started when I wrote *Alienated* about six years ago. I wrote something I didn't know I had in me," the *Pillowtalk* singer says. "Once I unlocked that potential and realised I liked where the sound was headed, I wanted to create more. I think my daily environment helped shape the music I created and made it easy to embrace."

Leaving behind the cycle of churning out new tracks, Malik has turned to creating slowly and steadily. Back with his fourth studio album after a two-year hiatus, he has learnt how to take out more time to live a little, and put more of himself into his work, with a constant fan base that has always been there to support him through thick and thin. There is some sort of a spring in his step, a self-aware tone to his voice. Even on set, there is a sense of contentment and peace radiating from him. He carries a Manish Malhotra as delicately and suavely as a pair of shorts and flannel shirts that he regularly prefers.

Malik has only become more transparent with his followers, taking them with him on a journey. He's grown up with us, and in a way, we have grown up with him. "My relationship with my fans is ever-changing for the better as is every relationship in my life. I'm growing and learning," he admits. "I wouldn't be where I am today without them." But Malik is an artist who has mostly had a very private becoming. Even though the 31-year-old believes that the support of his fans has been the biggest ingredient in his making (and he doesn't forget to mention he's beyond thankful for them), Malik has been winning a battle to redefine himself without being limited to what people expect of him.

He's surer and simpler than ever, far away from the boy with the effortless strand of hair falling across his forehead. Even though he recently performed at his first gig in about eight years, his pre-show prep is a no-nonsense brushing of teeth. "No quirky or unusual rituals. I did a soundcheck and hung out with my friends until it was time to get on stage," says Malik. The singer's new album mimics this same stripped-down aura. Hearty vocals stand out through guitar strums, creating just the right kind of mood for an introspective joyride. He's hidden away from appearances and interviews for a good reason. Malik has been up to something brilliant.

None of the tracks in his new album has a co-singer. "I wrote the lyrics for 12 out of the 15 songs, I co-produced it, and I'm extremely proud of it. I didn't feel it required another artiste to tell my story right now." But, it's not like he has never enjoyed working with other artistes. Malik remembers being inspired by Australian singer and songwriter SIA. "She's just an incredible artiste overall. I worked on *Dusk Till Dawn* and sent it over to her. She elevated it and made it what it is today. I have so much



Embroidered emerald green bandhgala set, **Manish Malhotra**;  
shoes, **Christian Louboutin**; watch, **Breitling**



Velvet blazer in Swarovski and Bugal bead embroidery, paired with quilted shirt inside, both **Manish Malhotra**; ring, **Mateo**; shoes, **Christian Louboutin**



Rings, **Bernard James Jewelry**



Full look, **Amiri**; shoes, **Christian Louboutin**; earrings and rings, **Bernard James Jewelry**

Hair: Kenneth Cairns; Make-up: Lynda Esparza; Editorial Coordinator: Shalini Kanojia; Fashion Assistant: Victor Allen Jr.; Tailor: Sylvio Rouberto Kovacic; Production: Farago Projects

reverence for her vocals, serenity, production, dedication, and everything she does regarding her artistry. She's the best across the board." But this album is all about him, and that is what makes it even more special. It is Malik's undoubted comeback to the spotlight. "I'm always working on projects, and this is the first of many. 'Room Under the Stairs' is a record that I'm really close to and passionate about. It was my journal, my perspective, and my story." As he says these words, I find him very different from the 17-year-old who auditioned on *X Factor*. His last two EPs haven't done the best they could have, and he's aware of that. Malik relishes that in his new era, he's ready to be less elusive, he's all prepped up to offer as much of himself as he possibly can with full conviction.

Malik is much calmer now—four years of fatherhood has made the pop star much more patient. "It goes by fast!" he almost seems to complain. "Being a father has only inspired me and made me a better human. My daughter is my whole life and has given me purpose." As a father, Malik is keeping his daughter closer to nature, and teaching her to be grounded. At only three, Khai Hadid Malik remembers lyrics, and is known to ask people, "is my baba singing?" whenever a song plays.

Malik feels all grown up, a little too much maybe. A long shot from the English air of Bradford, Malik now lives on a farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania—a riverine escape that has become home for the musician. He loves gardening with his daughter and takes her for tours of the vegetable patch. He still stands out with his tattoos and charisma, and his style has found base too. "I don't care what section my clothes are from as long as they fit right, and I like them! I enjoy expressing myself through clothing," says Malik. His music is in line with his new buzz cut and obsession with patina jackets. "You don't have to stay in one genre or limit yourself to a specific style. You can always switch it based on how you're feeling, and express yourself." Malik, whose dream raid might have been located at a high-end designer store once, now looks back at a time when all he wanted were the clothes his uncle had. "He always had the sickest jackets and tracksuits!" he recalls.

You can tell by the lyrics of his new tracks that this new-found maturity is real and substantial. You can understand the nurturing it has taken to get to this place, to write lines like, "*Think it's so suss/ain't one to make a fuss/I don't need any medals/Please give me one more day of happiness.*" The *Birds On A Cloud* singer says self-care and self-expression are reflections of one's mental health, and he's been focusing on finding that next day of happiness. He uses fashion sometimes to switch the mood of the day too. "If I'm having a bad day, I dress myself up to feel better," says Malik. "If we can use fashion as a tool to feel better, why not?"

I can't help but feel excited for this new Malik and all that he will give us. More so because he constantly reassures that we will see more of the star now, in his new avatar. Malik can't wait to get on stage and sing his heart out. "I think my next goal, both personally and professionally, is touring again and having a good balance of being on the road and at home." And the tour is going to be all about him, just like the album. "I've never done a solo tour and it's a big step, but I'm ready and I'm thankful that everyone has been so patient. It's time!" ■

*"I don't care what section my clothes are from as long as they fit right, and I like them! I enjoy expressing myself through clothing. You don't have to stay in one genre or limit yourself to a specific style. You can always switch it based on how you're feeling, and express yourself."*



# FINDING PRIDE IN ART



From winning RuPaul's Drag Race and walking on runways to being the first international drag artiste to perform in India, Paul Jason Dardo a.k.a Violet Chachki has done it all. The performer talks to *Bazaar India* about their Atlanta roots, trouble with routine, and undying love for Rekha.

*Photographs by*  
**TARUN KALYANI**

*Styling and Creative Direction by*  
**GOPALIKA VIRMANI GURWARA**

*Words by*  
**JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY**

Outfit, **Rajesh Pratap Singh**  
Art: *Broken White* by Nikhil Chopra

**V**iolet Chachki is a mirage. On a torrid day in Delhi, the drag superstar is a blinding combination of poise and grandeur at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art. The camera can barely keep up as she slips in and out of Raw Mango, Shivan & Narresh, Bloni, and Rajesh Pratap Singh ensembles. Before you know it, she blends in with the art that surrounds her. From Subodh Gupta's 'Orange Thing' made of brass, steel and plastic, to Anish Kapoor's 'Mirror', a misty void painted on aluminium, Chachki embodies it all and makes it her own. When Martha Fiennes' art film *Yugen* is projected on her, she looks like a mob wife from a Japanese cyberpunk hit. I am barely surprised that she does it all with such ease. Chachki knows exactly what she wants, and how she wants it. She is violently professional, yet horribly fun, on set.

When I sit down with her for this story, Chachki is out of drag and back in their new apartment in Los Angeles. It's a lazy morning and they cuddle with their sphinx cat, Eugene Ziegfeld Chachki, under a baby pink blanket. As someone who's grown up watching her iconic lipsync to Lucian Piane's *Too Many Daddies* on [reality TV show] *RuPaul's Drag Race*, I try my best to keep calm. I show her some pictures from the shoot, and she is quite impressed. "It's amazing!" she squeals, "The museum with all the art, and the outfits were so gorgeous and modern. I got to get into a lot of Indian fashion that I hadn't experienced before." Coming to India is always exciting for her, she tells me. And this time was no different. "I feel like I get immersed in such a different culture that feels larger than life. It's almost like escapism for me. I have such an amazing time when I am in the country. And there are so many deities, and gods, and goddesses, and stories, and narratives, and history, and architecture, the craftsmanship, the fashion, the clothes...I mean coming from the US, it is such a breath of fresh air. I enjoy it so much."

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Paul Jason Dardo's artistic journey began with a fashion design dream at the Savannah College of Art and Design. However, the allure of the stage proved stronger, and at 19, Violet Chachki sashayed into the world, with a name inspired by the character played by Jennifer Tilly in the film *Bound* (1996) and the playful Yiddish word *tchotchke*, meaning trinket. Chachki's drag is a captivating blend of high fashion and edgy burlesque. Her runways on *Drag Race*, where she emerged victorious in season seven, were a masterclass in avant-garde aesthetics. Think couture gowns that defy gravity, make-up that pushes the boundaries of beauty, and a fierce sense of confidence that could melt glaciers—not to mention her otherworldly corsets. "Atlanta is very pageant-oriented. It has a historically

rich drag scene. Charlie Brown, Lady Bunny, RuPaul... Atlanta was the mecca for drag in the South growing up. A lot of queer people would come to Atlanta because it is one of the big central cities, and a haven for queer people. And with that a haven for the art of drag to prosper. A lot of my experience in drag, and fashion, comes from trans women of colour who dominated the scene in Atlanta."

But Chachki never thought she'd make it this far from her hometown, to India. "When I first came here, I was limited in my perspective, and a little apprehensive. I didn't delve into the history, of how the anti-queer laws were a result of centuries of colonisation." Keshav Suri, the founder of Keshav Suri Foundation [KSF] and the Executive Director at The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, took it upon himself to tell her about the roots of queerness that India has always been home to. "Keshav is an educator. He taught me so much about the culture before the colonial laws, how they came to be, and how there has to be a fight to push them back. How people in positions of power have not necessarily spoken about this in the past, and how he wants to use his voice, and his platform, to help the community."

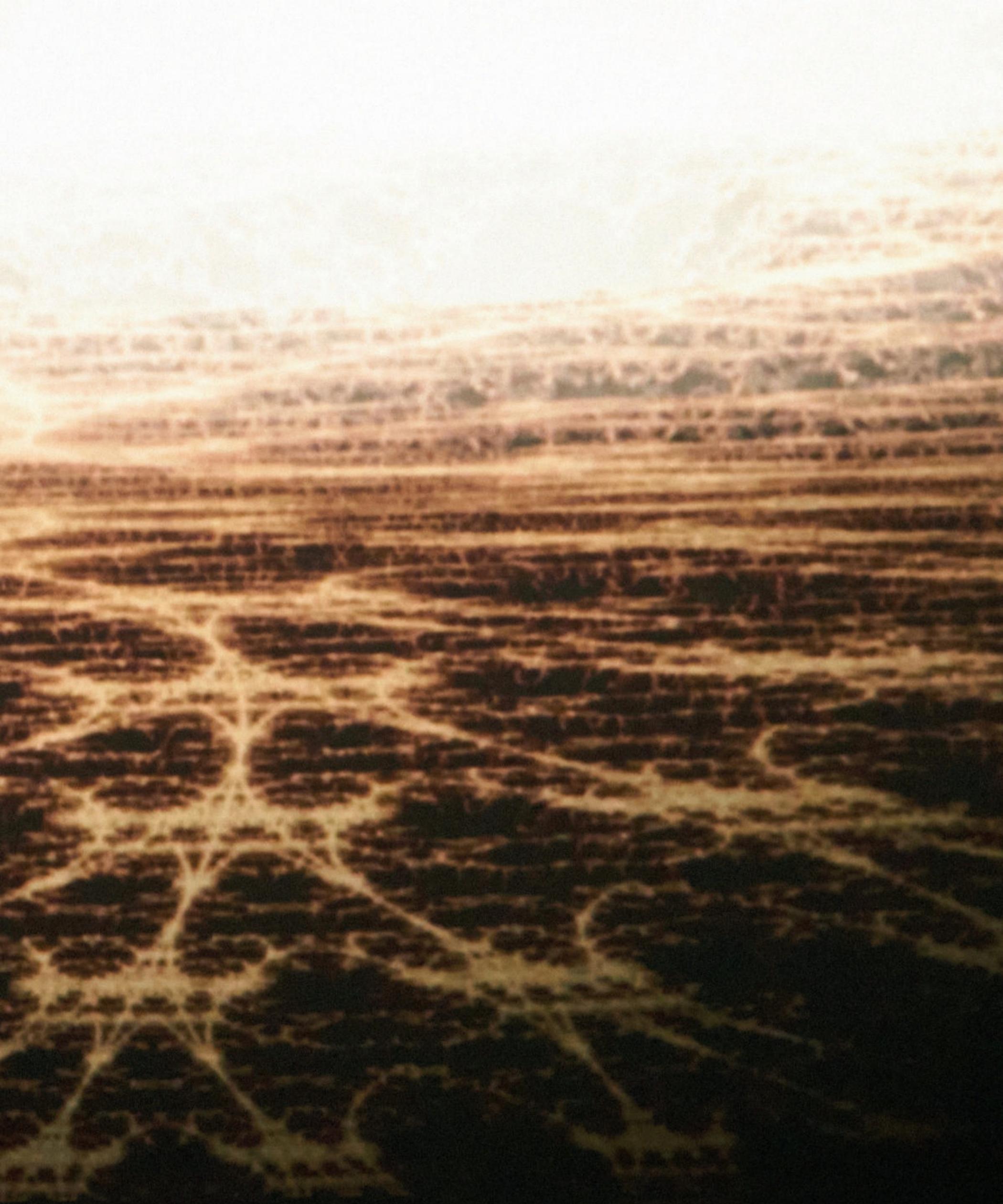
Chachki and Suri forged a friendship rooted in activism, rendered stronger by their love for building safe spaces. "To grow up in a conservative culture, and to decide to fight it—I just have so much respect for that." On her trip to India where we shot this cover, Chachki visited the Naz Foundation's LGBTQ+ Centre along with the Keshav Suri Foundation team; the centre is the first of its kind in India. KSF along with NGOs like Naz provide shelter, food, mental health aid and employment to queer people and support the art of drag through the Kitty Su and Kitty Ko nightclubs in Mumbai and Delhi. "It's so cool to witness drag grow and bubble in these places," Chachki tells me excitedly. And she is right. The drag scene in India is stronger and more creatively diverse than ever, with a plethora of queens making the art form go mainstream. "When I first came to India around 2017, I found most of the drag to be so minimal. But I remember thinking, so many people here must need this outlet, just like I did when I was young. When I came back this time—it had grown so much! In scale, production, ability, and refinement. It has been amazing to witness."

Along with her many visits to India, Chachki's own art has evolved too, along with her identity. Dardo, the person behind the meticulously crafted persona, identifies as genderfluid, using both she/her and they/them pronouns. Drag, for Chachki, has become the most powerful tool for self-exploration, with the feminine being the constant point of inspiration. "Strong feminine figures always light a fire in me. May that be my mother, my grandmother, Betty Paige, Dovima, or Dita Von Teese. And illustrations even! Some of



Outfit, **Raw Mango**; jewellery, **Eurumme**  
Art: *Orange Thing* by Subodh Gupta





Outfit, **Raw Mango**; jewellery, **Simran Chhabra Jewels**  
Art: *Yugen* by Martha Fiennes



Outfit, **Shivan & Narresh**;  
jewellery, **Shri Paramani Jewels**  
Art: *Mirror* by Anish Kapoor

*“When I first came to INDIA around 2017, I found most of the DRAG to be so MINIMAL. But I remember THINKING, so many PEOPLE here must need this OUTLET, just like I did when I was YOUNG. When I CAME BACK this time—it had GROWN so much! In scale, production, ABILITY, and REFINEMENT. It has been AMAZING to witness.”*



Outfit, **Bloni Atelier**  
Art: *Mona Shayari* by Dayanita Singh

my favourite illustrators—Gene Billbrew, Eric Stanton, and John Willie—are always drawing these empowered women. Sometimes they are dominatrixes, sometimes they are just confident, strong, well-dressed women, and other times they are drag queens. I think I always look to people who use femininity as a tool, as a weapon, to navigate life and harness power.” Chachki has used femininity to be comfortable in her masculinity, and the art of glamour to figure out where she stands between the two. Someone she’s returned to draw inspiration from is the Bollywood legend Rekha. “The fashion that Rekha wears in *Madam X* (1994) is eternally on my mood board. Rekha is so gorgeous! The way she moves, and the drapes she wears. Even the make-up she puts on is so powerful and sensuous. I am inspired by her all the time, and always in love with her.”

Chachki’s distinct sense of style, and knowledge of global fashion references, have garnered attention from all the right people. She has been a regular at Mugler, Schiaparelli, and Lanvin shows. Even though her modelling career has only been on the rise, she is very serious about seeing herself as an artiste first. “I have grown up with Tumblr and stolen magazines from Barnes and Noble. I have gone on to work with models and performers, and there is a difference. I would consider some models as performers in the way that they work. But there are a lot of models who are, unfortunately, coat racks. They are not even interested in the industry they are in. Some models don’t even look in the mirror before they go on the runway, they don’t even think about what they’re doing, and what the theatre of fashion demands.” Chachki is about giving what the designer and their creations need from her, from the right pose to the correct look. “I could never imagine getting dressed in somebody’s art, somebody’s work, their brand and vision, and not thinking—Okay, how does this look best? How should I walk? How should I pose? What emotions does this evoke? I am always approaching things as a performer.”

Through fashion’s trenches, Chachki has carved a niche as a recording artiste and content creator. Her music explores a darker, more industrial sound, a sonic counterpoint to the dazzling persona she presents on stage. But she admits that her Spotify is all over the place. “I have so much Bollywood music on there! I have oldies, I have pop, goth, new wave, industrial, a lot of 80s synth, Kim Petras, and there’s even a

few country songs. I have Missy Elliot, Ludacris, and Outcast—just the craziest mashup.” Growing up with a drummer dad, Chachki’s love for music spans decades, and her recent foray into DJing reflects it all. Apart from performing to music, just waking up and putting on a song is essential for Chachki’s mental well-being, she tells me. “It can really motivate you, and give you that little push you need to get through the day. Driving through LA, that’s all I do. I get in my car, put on music, and just drive.”

Chachki’s online presence, much like her music, showcases her multifaceted personality—the witty commentator, the artistic muse, and the vigorous advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. With it all, she houses a crystal clear vision of herself and the art that she creates. To communicate that vision with

certainty isn’t always easy. “As I have gotten older, I have realised that things aren’t always going to turn out exactly the way you thought they were. You just have to roll with it and see the positives. Okay well, maybe one photoshoot didn’t go exactly how I wanted, but maybe I did get a couple of shots that I liked. You have to be okay with that. You have to hop on to the next thing and learn to grow from the last experience. I am learning every day that the only crucial thing is persistence.”

And persisted she has, with her podcast *No Gorge* with fellow drag queen Gottmik, new music releases, and a bunch of gigs in the fashion space lined up. To add to it all is her very prestigious residency at Crazy Horse Paris, that started on 24 June. “Crazy Horse is an institution—a Parisian cabaret that’s been around

since the 1950s. I am going to be the first male-bodied individual to perform with these historic props, set pieces, and on that stage. These performances—typically by cis-gendered showgirls—were curated for the male gaze. Going in there as a drag queen, and inspiring femmes, women and gay men, non-binary people and trans people, it is really taking something and switching it up.” Through it all one would imagine that she has stuck to a very strict routine, as many successful people are known to do. But Chachki giggles hard when I ask her about it. “Honestly, I don’t know if I have ever had a routine. Every day is a winding road! On my notes app, I just have a big list, and I keep editing the title to change the date. Everything is a check box, and I try to get as much checked off as possible.”

A routine might be the last thing on Chachki’s list, but

*“There is so much fire to put out, and showing up in my most over-the-top, authentic self in public is something that I can do. Just for visibility’s sake. I can only hope that my art will inspire others, bring some positive impact, or change a person’s mind. And that’s the only way I can approach it and sustain it.”*

standing up for LGBTQ+ people is up there at the very beginning. When you are queer, you often feel responsible to respond to all the injustice that happens around you. Chachki is no stranger to that. “Sometimes, looking at the realities of things can overwhelm me, and I think that’s the case for a lot of people who have the privilege. There still exist countries that offer death sentences for being gay. There is so much fire to put out, and showing up in my most over-the-top, authentic self in public is something that I can do. Just for visibility’s sake. I can only hope that my art will inspire others, bring some positive impact, or change a person’s mind. And that’s the only way I can approach it and sustain it. It’s my biggest goal.”

One thing is certain, within the raging storm that the world seems to be wrapped up in, Chachki feels like there is magic in finding the courage to create, and see pride in it. “I am dealing with a lot right now, but I have so much ambition, ideas, projects, and visions about how my life should be, how it should look, and how I can push the needle of what drag and queer art can look like. It’s hard sometimes. I don’t have a husband, I don’t have a boyfriend, I don’t have the energy to date, and I have been

going through managers and agents—working in show business as a burlesque—fetish—tattooed—crossdresser. It’s like we are at the bottom of a totem pole.” On her bad days, Violet remembers her friend Gottmik’s words: *If it was easy to make it, everybody would do it.* “It can all be so exhausting. But there are so many amazing elements to pursuing what you want, there is a give-and-take. There is sort of a balancing act there.” And if there is one thing the dancing queen knows how to do splendidly, it’s to balance.

Through this conversation, we often slip into moments of robust shade-throwing, familiar laments, and make jokes that are best kept private. When the alarm rings for them to get ready for their show, we realise we’ve been chatting for hours. While we wrap up, Violet leaves me with a piece of advice: “Don’t ever be afraid to take up space! When we take up space, it is a political act. And being on the cover of *Bazaar India* is an example of that. I mean whether it’s sitting front row at fashion shows, attending the Met Gala, or having a Crazy Horse Paris residency—these are spaces that have been traditionally and historically reserved for cis-gender heterosexual people. And when we arrive, what is it if not an act of protest? An act of rebellion?” ■





Hair and make-up: Lalngaihzuali Sailo; Editorial Coordination and Production: Pooja Singh Verma  
Exhibition: Mirror/ Maze: Echos of Song, Space, Spectre; Location: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art



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# BAZAAAR

## BEAUTY

### GOLDEN HOUR

IV drips chart the course of holistic wellness rituals; non-surgical procedures are back into the spotlight; reformulated skincare offerings to look out for; and more

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID ROEMER; STYLING: HOLLY GORST; GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: ELÉONORE MARCHAND

B E A U T Y

# IN YOUR SKIN

Let the ocean stir the heart, inspire the imagination, and  
unleash the true essence of self-expression.

*Photographs by DAVID ROEMER*

*Styling by HOLLY GORST*

*Global Editorial Director: ELÉONORE MARCIAND*





Clothing, Ermanno Scervino

# B E A U T Y





B E A U T Y



Accessories, Fendi



# B E A U T Y



Accessories, Bottega Veneta



Clothing, Chanel

B E A U T Y





Clothing, Miu Miu

Model: Zoe Barnard at IMG; Make-up: Vicky Steckel using Chanel Beauty; Hair: Keith Carpenter using Balmain Hair; Fashion assistant: Katie Leimbach; Casting: Richard Blandino; Production: Cowboys Production



# BOTTLING STARDUST

Born under a lucky star, Chanel's new fragrance pays homage to its past and sets us up for a stellar future.

*By JISHNU BANDYOPADHYAY*

**B**efore joining Chanel in 2013, Olivier Polge honed his skills at other fragrance houses. At Chanel, Polge has created new fragrances and reinterpreted classics. Since becoming the head perfumer in 2015, he has balanced his creative vision with the utmost respect for Chanel's heritage, ensuring the brand's fragrances remain timeless. This time, it's no different.

In 1932, Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel, a believer in celestial signs, launched her groundbreaking Bijoux de Diamants high jewellery collection, with the Comète necklace as its centrepiece. This theme is continued with the launch of a new perfume, Comète, that draws from Polge's Grasse roots. Polge tells *Bazaar India* all about how the scent of the season came to be.

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRAND AND GETTYIMAGS.COM

**Harper's Bazaar: What was the starting point for creating the fragrance?**

**Olivier Polge:** For the most part, people seem to imagine that a perfumer comes across a raw material with an exceptional scent inspiring them to build a fragrance based on it, or recreate it. At Chanel, our style is expressed through a creative aesthetic. It is a unique creative process, as Gabrielle Chanel was, above all, a couturier. She wanted to convey elements of her style and personality through fragrance. For that reason, all Chanel fragrances begin with an idea, a state of mind, or an emotion.

Creating this fragrance for the Les Exclusifs de Chanel collection began with a name. What did this name evoke? Could it be expressed through a scent? The goal was to find a link between this new idea, the sensual impression it made, and what could be created from an olfactory point of view. When we chose the name Comète, I was immediately struck by an impression of diaphanous and delicate shimmering stardust. I aspired to give material form to this image, which was almost a magical sensation, through an exquisite and unusual powdery composition.

**HB: What makes Comète stand out?**

**OP:** Comète is a skin fragrance that creates a unique and almost intimate sensation when it is worn. Over time, the skin brings the perfume to life, for a fragrance trail that changes depending on who is wearing it. With this creation, I wanted to explore a new olfactory identity and imagine something enveloping and luminous. Comète is not constructed with obvious powdery notes such as vanilla or tonka bean. The heliotrope accord, in combination with iris, explores unusual olfactory facets with more almond-like and slightly fruity nuances. There is a richness and complexity to it that envelops the skin and reacts very differently on each person.

**HB: What were your primary sources of inspiration?**

**OP:** Everything around me is a source of inspiration and creativity, from the most material item to the most abstract notion. Travel, meeting people, dreams, and words—all generate olfactory ideas and impressions. Emotions, above all, are creative catalysts in the realm of perfumery. I also try to convey an emotion with the composition of a fragrance. It is inseparable from a certain amount of curiosity. You need to be curious to look for new smells every day, and to find them. Comète is both a dream, an almost celestial vision drawn from my imagination, and also a very powerful symbol for Chanel. The comet motif is embodied by a diamond necklace, in particular, and in the very definite taste that Gabrielle Chanel had for astrology, constellations and numerology. That opened the way for numerous inspirational narrative realms.

**HB: What was the development process like?**

**OP:** Once I had found the idea, I had to shape and develop it from the laboratory to the bottle. I wanted to give material form to this mysterious and enveloping impression of a trail

of stardust. When I create a fragrance, intuition plays a large part. I even wear the scents I create for a few days, to see how they evolve and behave on the skin, or what I need to improve. I give free rein to my instinct and visualise the notes that speak the most to me.

**HB: Why did you choose iris as the leading ingredient?**

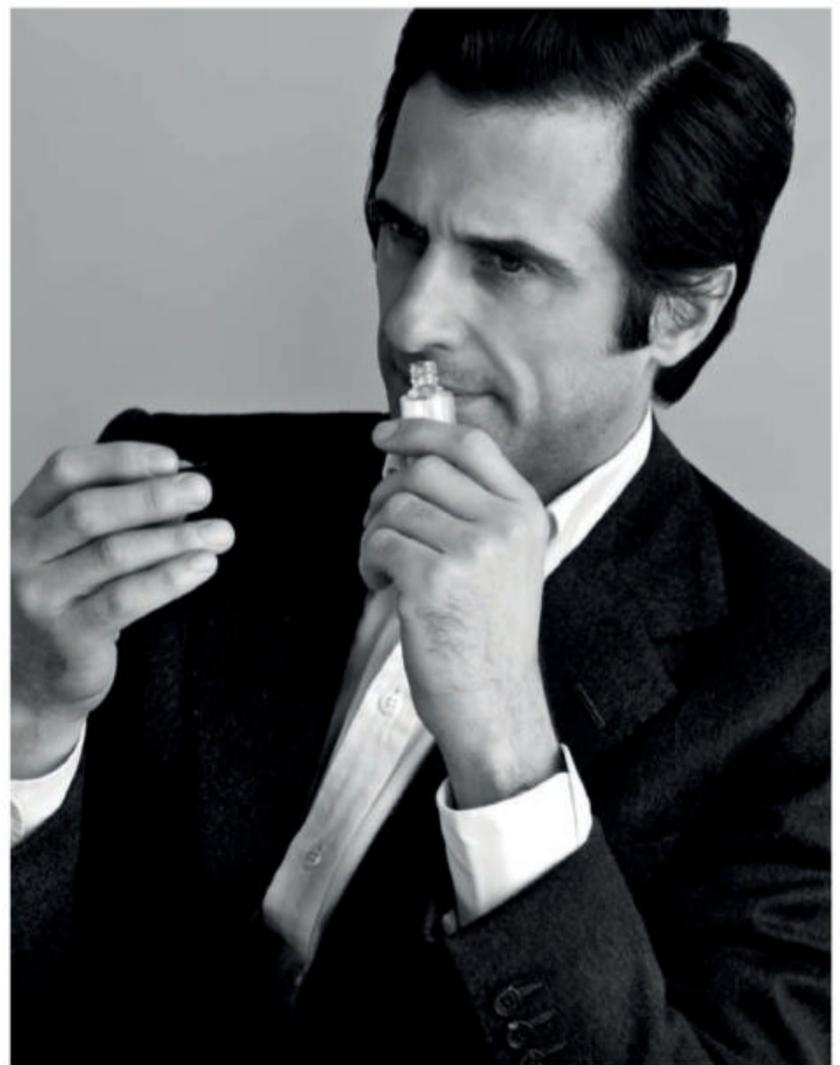
**OP:** I really love iris and I consider this ingredient as my lucky star. It is a complex olfactory note that creates extraordinary effects. Blended in a composition, it reveals floral, powdery, and woody facets. At Chanel, we cultivate our own *Iris pallida* in Grasse, and that is the one we used in the structure of Comète. It is an ingredient that creates depth in this powdery-fruity heliotrope accord. Thanks to iris, the entire Comète accord gains in softness and grows richer.

**HB: Who is Comète for?**

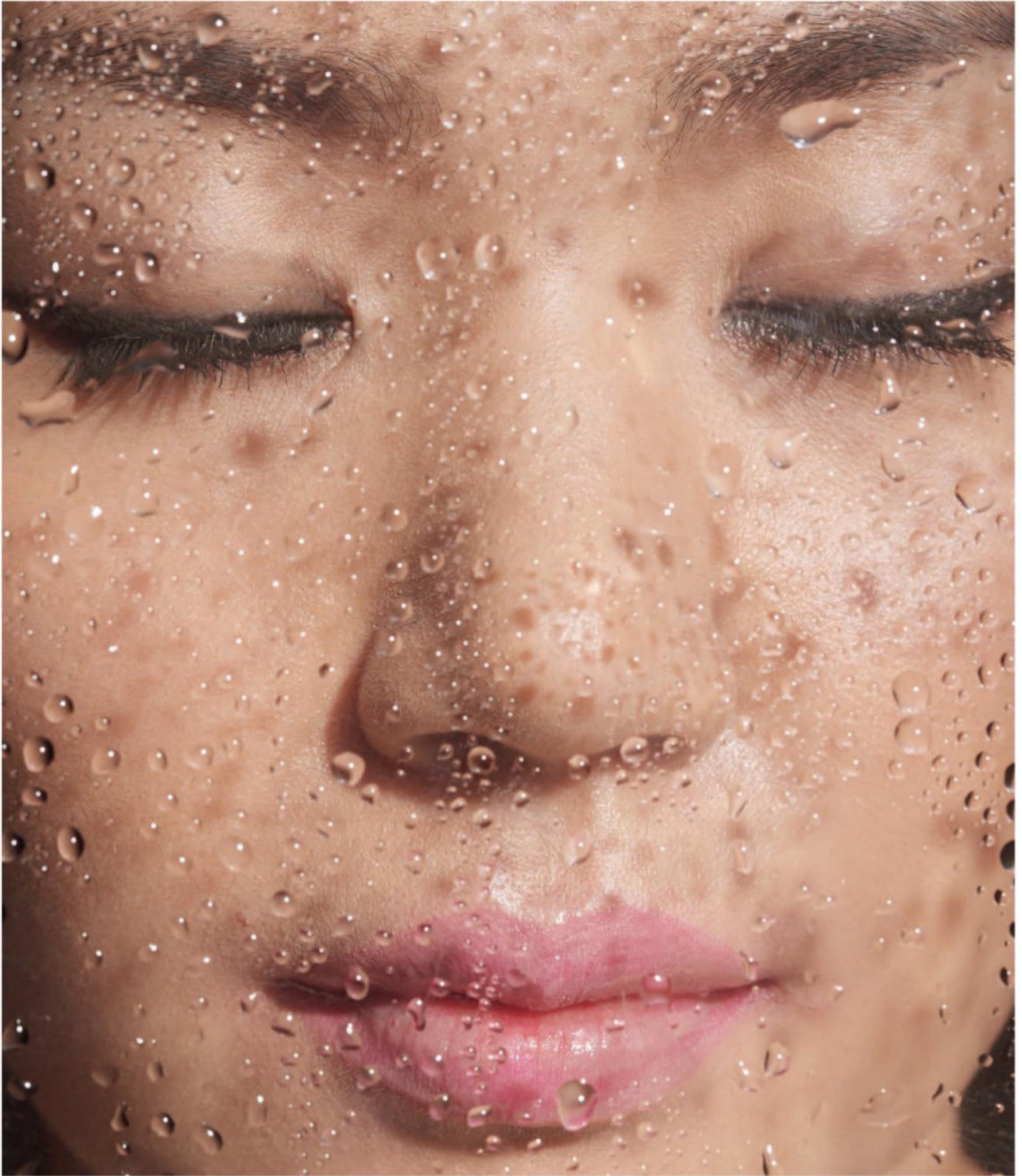
**OP:** Gender is not specified for the Les Exclusifs de Chanel fragrance collection. Each fragrance, including Comète, enables the wearer, whether male or female, to cultivate a form of rarity and express their own unique character. There are no rules in perfumery. Fragrance enables us to express a facet of our character that we want to reveal to the rest of the world. Each of us decides what fragrance represents for us, personally. And then we are one with the perfume that we wear. I love the idea of this magical encounter between a fragrance and a person: it is a sensual relationship, something you wear for yourself.

**HB: If you had to describe Comète in three words...**

**OP:** Exquisite, magical, and luminous. ■



Olivier Polge, head perfumer at Chanel



# DRIP APPEAL

In the world of beauty and wellness rituals, IV therapy is the new buzzword.

*By ANJAN SACHAR*

IMAGE: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM

**I**n the last couple of years, the correlation between external beauty and internal health, totalling to a holistic approach to wellness, quickly moved from being a trend to a lifestyle. After aesthetic smoothies and nutritional gummies, came the casual Instagram stories featuring a needle in the arm and a drip bag—one that promised beauty benefits. “Beauty drips, also known as IV (intravenous) therapy or vitamin drips, bypass the digestive system, allowing for quicker, more efficient and instant absorption of vitamins and minerals directly into the bloodstream,” explains Dr Kiran Sethi, Delhi-based integrative aesthetic specialist, dermatologist and founder of Isya Aesthetics. Considering, our diet today often lacks in supplying the body with essential nutrients and promoting its absorption, IV therapy steps in as a sure shot solution.

Popularised as beauty drips, receiving nutrients intravenously has holistic health benefits that go beyond just glowing skin or refuelling energy. From improving hydration to boosting immunity, and curing hangovers—there’s a drip for every concern.

### **GLUTATHIONE AND BEYOND**

Glutathione drips were the first to be promoted as beauty boosters. “Glutathione reduces oxidative stress and free radicals in the body by removing impurities,” explains Tanya Khubchandani, founder and CEO of Elixir Wellness. “It was originally used for liver conditions. But, its detoxifying properties were noticed too, as it reduced pigmentation and brightened the skin. That’s how wellness drips began to be used for beauty while remaining essential to maintaining overall health and wellness.”

Today, the list of beauty and health drips is vast, with the availability of customised vitamin cocktails based on individual needs. Dr Sethi lists Vitamin C, B (B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B12), biotin, magnesium, calcium, zinc and glutathione as the most common nutrients you can replenish via IV drips. “The ones with antioxidants, like glutathione, can help reduce inflammation and tackle skin conditions, such as, acne and eczema. Vitamin B and amino acids boost energy levels and combat fatigue. Specialised drips can alleviate symptoms of a hangover by rehydrating the body and replenishing lost nutrients,” Dr Sethi explains.

Elixir Wellness, located in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi, has three categories of drips—for wellness, recovery, and beauty. “Our wellness drips are

customised to address migraine prevention, hydration, stomach bugs, cold and flu, immunity, pregnancy symptoms, stress and anxiety, sleep issues, and even a metabolism boost,” says Khubchandani. “Our recovery cocktails include IVs for polycystic ovary syndrome, sports recovery, fatigue, postpartum concerns, and jet lag. Our most popular elixirs—the beauty lot—focus on hair and skin.”

The Wellness Co., which has outlets in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Gurugram, and Hyderabad—offers drips such as, NAD+ and Immuno Boost that help regenerate cells, reduce inflammation, and boost metabolism. Dr Garima Gaur, senior integrative wellness and biohacking expert at The Wellness Co. shares, “Our NAD+ formulation combines beauty boosters, amino acids, and brain phospholipids to help you regain muscle youthfulness while boosting your immunity.”

### **THE NUMBERS: WHAT, WHEN, AND FOR HOW MUCH?**

While some drips only require a single session, others have a prescribed course over a few weeks or months. “For recovery and illness-based IVs, most often, just one is enough,” says Khubchandani. “For beauty elixirs, and those for metabolism boosting and migraines, a short course is prescribed by our doctors which is customised to the client’s lifestyle and goals.” The cost of a single IV can range anywhere between ₹2,000 and ₹22,000, depending on the ingredients, clinic, and the number of sessions you sign up for. “A person seeking to strengthen their immune system during flu season may benefit from more frequent sessions, whereas a person focusing on general wellness and skin health may need less frequent but regular treatments,” adds Dr Gaur.

### **DRIP PROTOCOLS**

Always consult with a certified medical professional to administer an IV drip. Dr Sethi warns of potential side effects like infection at the injection site, allergic reaction to the ingredients, vein inflammation, or bruising. It’s also important to be hydrated before and after the drip. “Ensure you have a light meal to prevent being light-headed before your session and avoid strenuous activities immediately after,” she adds.

Intravenous drips are effective by themselves, but only to a certain degree. “Maintaining a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate hydration, and a proper skincare routine can enhance the results of IV therapy,” clarifies Dr Sethi. Also, clinics like Elixir Wellness and The Wellness Co. often recommend IV therapy as a booster alongside external treatments that focus on skin and body recovery. ■



### NARS POWDER BLUSH

A mainstay in most make-up kits, Nars' best-selling blush has been revamped to last up to 16 hours comfortably. Packaged in a new angular and refillable compact, it comes with Pure Pigment Blend, a combination of four types of pigment for high-impact and true-colour payoff. The easy-to-blend formula glides on evenly and blurs imperfections. Additionally, they have introduced new iterations of their beloved hue, Orgasm, to ensure that it is suitable across skin tones—a win for brown girls.



### CAUDALIE VINOPERFECT SERUM

One Caudalie Vinoperfect Serum sells every 30 seconds—this statistic shows what a raging success the product is. Sixty-two times more effective than Vitamin C and 43 per cent more effective than niacinamide, the serum's packaging has been revamped for a new blue look. While the formulation remains the same, new clinical studies have shown that the serum results in up to 81 per cent reduction in dark spots on phototypes 4, 5, and 6, which encompasses Indian skin tones. New avatar, same results.

# HIT REFRESH

Old favourites, new formulas.

By *NAMRATA KEDAR*

**T**hey say, if it's not broken, don't fix it, but beauty brands aren't paying heed to this. For instance, Glossier revised the revered Balm Dotcom to make it vegan in 2023, only to revert to its OG formula in May this year. But not all reformulations are a miss—some are an instant hit. Constant innovation in the industry means that cult classics and fan favourites are likely to be reinvented for an updated formula with an upgraded experience. We look at some recent reformulations of beloved products that have not disappointed.

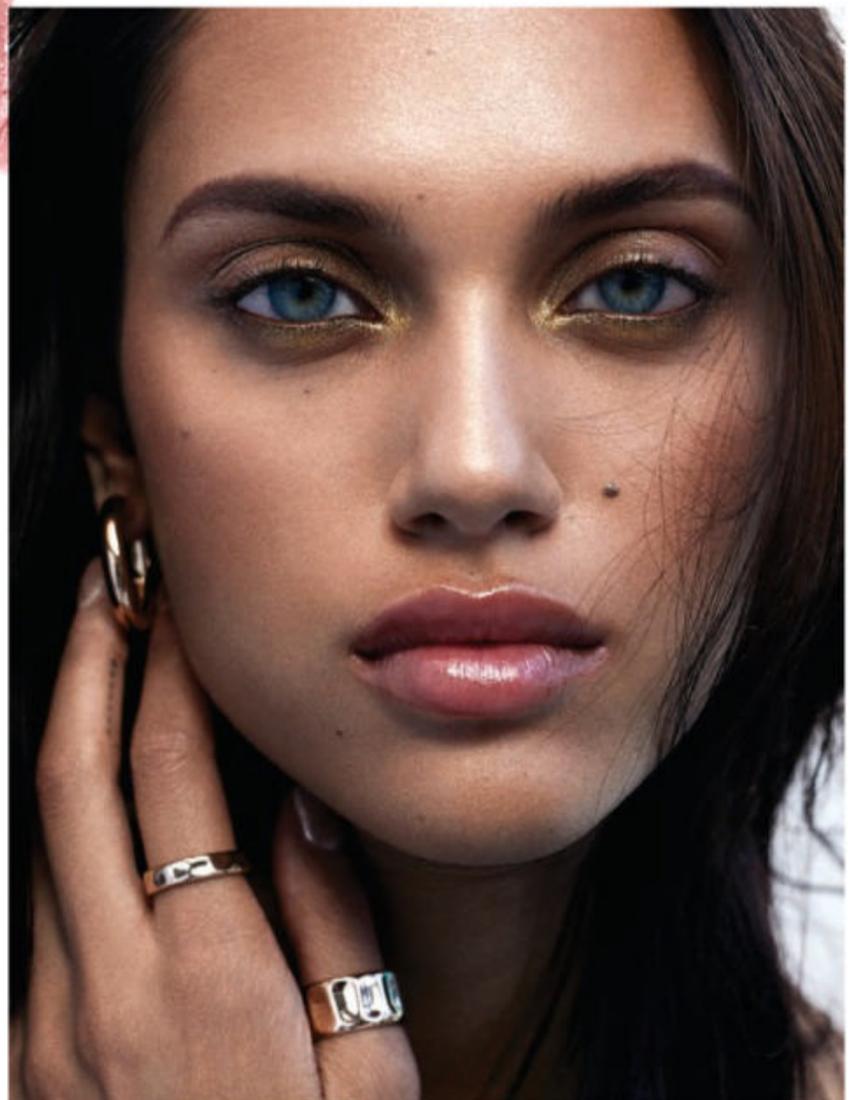


PHOTO CREDIT: LAURENCE LABORIE. IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS

## D'YOU HUSTLE

The one-bottle solution, Hustle by d'you, has undergone slight reengineering, and here's what's new—it offers a cosmetically enhanced experience with a smoother and softer texture for a less tacky after-feel. The ingredient Arbutin is replaced with Hexapeptide-2, a brightening peptide that fights dark spots and hyperpigmentation, and the packaging is refreshed with a sleeker pump design. Everything else remains unchanged, including its results.



## THE ORDINARY HYALURONIC ACID 2% + B5

One of the brand's first-ever products, the Hyaluronic Acid 2% + B5 has been a bestseller since. The original formulation was recently updated to offer an improved and non-tacky texture with the added benefits of ceramides. They help lock in moisture within the skin and are crucial in maintaining and protecting the skin barrier. Together, with the five forms of hyaluronic acid that draw moisture into the skin, it keeps your skin hydrated and plump.



## PAULA'S CHOICE C15 BOOSTER

While Vitamin C has myriad benefits, the ingredient is notorious for irritating the skin. Paula's Choice reformulated its hero product, C15 Booster, to make it gentle and non-irritating to cater to sensitive skin. The serum is formulated with 15% ascorbic acid, ferulic acid, and ergothioneine, which work together to improve uneven skin tone, reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, and visibly boost glow in 15 minutes. The new formula absorbs quickly for immediate results.



## PUT SIMPLY WATER DAM MOISTURISER

Building on the success of its predecessor, Put Simply has reformulated the moisturiser for a heightened sensitivity formula for skin conditions like eczema and rosacea. The formula is enriched with 70 per cent cica water that repairs compromised barriers and heals acne, niacinamide and panthenol to reduce signs of premature ageing, and ceramides that help maintain the skin barrier. The new version is lightweight, fast-absorbing, and great for oily and acne-prone skin.



# THE AGE OF TWEAKMENTS

As the desire to look young grows stronger, non-surgical procedures are upstaging traditional facelifts.

*By NAMRATA KEDAR*

IMAGE: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM

**D**o they begin as young as me?," I asked my dermatologist at the last consultation. I was inquiring about botox to "correct" my laugh lines that have etched deeper in over three decades. Your 30s is when signs of ageing creep up, and it felt like the right time to enter the world of aesthetic treatments. Procedures like injectables and fillers aid in ageing better so one can delay or avoid a surgical overhaul for a later day. People see merit in this as the industry is trending towards tinier, non-invasive treatments that keep your skin taut and lifted without the cut and sew. "The demand for non-surgical facial rejuvenation procedures increased drastically to 75 per cent to 80 per cent in 2022-23," says Dr Karishma Kagodu, plastic and cosmetic surgeon, and founder of Dr Karishma's Aesthetics (Kaesthetics), a cosmetic surgery clinic in Bengaluru. "In a recent survey, 75 per cent of board-certified plastic surgeons practising in Bengaluru stated that they had seen many patients seeking cosmetic procedures, including men and women aged 25 to 65, prefer non-surgical facelifts and skin rejuvenation."

While pop culture and celebrities may have popularised botox and fillers, dermatologists are still using an array of procedures to achieve smooth and lifted appearance. "A non-surgical facial rejuvenation targets three main concerns—wrinkles and deep creases, loss of facial volume, skin tone, and texture," explains Dr Kagodu. "The right treatment option depends on the problem status, anatomical profile, and desired rejuvenation goals." She advises techniques such as the Morpheus8, Forma by InMode, and CO<sub>2</sub> lasers to improve the tone, texture, and laxity. Morpheus8 and Forma lend a sculpted appearance, while lasers tighten the skin, especially around the neck and jowls. Some preferred treatments by Dr Madhuri Agarwal, the founder and medical director of Yavana Aesthetics, include "Botulinum toxin (Botox), dermal fillers, threadlifts, HIFU (high-intensity focused ultrasound), and microneedling radiofrequency". HIFU uses ultrasound energy for skin tightening, and microneedling stimulates collagen to improve the texture, firmness, and fine lines. Beside these, microcurrent therapy remains a go-to as well. "It provides a non-invasive facelift effect by enhancing muscle memory and boosting collagen, and elastin production," explains Dr Kiran Sethi, the medical head of Isya Aesthetics. She also

recommends chemical peels to "improve texture, and reduce signs of ageing". In addition, "PRP (platelet-rich plasma) skin rejuvenation or vampire facelift is advised for patients seeking skin rejuvenation with natural methods," says Dr Kagodu.

A nip here and a tuck there are preventative procedures to stave off ageing (as if by sorcery). "People are starting these treatments at a younger age to prevent signs of ageing before they become pronounced," says Dr Sethi. "Early intervention by non-surgical treatments can delay the need for more drastic measures." Without taking a scalpel to your face, you can hop off your dermat's chair and head straight to dinner—no downtime, no prolonged healing. "The fast fact about choosing the non-surgical options for facial rejuvenation are the several benefits, including minimal downtime, the fact that it can be performed in less than an hour, and no aftercare," says Dr Kagodu. While most of these procedures lend temporary results, Dr Agarwal asserts that these can deliver benefits at a deeper level. "They can give proven long-term results," she says. "For instance, fillers can replenish the volume loss and erase the deeper wrinkle, non-surgical thread lift can reposition the sagging skin like a mini facelift, microneedling radiofrequency can generate new collagen, and prevent future ageing signs."

The idea is to get these subtle tweaks over the years to retain the look that you are familiar with. "These procedures deliver natural results which enhance appearance without being obvious," says Dr Agarwal. "The tweaks are more subtle and gradual, which can be less jarring and more acceptable." But this also means regular upkeep and clocking more hours at the clinic, and adding to the cost. "Individual non-surgical treatments may seem less expensive than a facelift, but the cumulative cost over time can add up," warns Dr Sethi. "However, many find the cost manageable as it is spread over months or years." Facelift, on the other hand, has an immediate cost attached to it, reminds Dr Agarwal. "It is a planned surgery that will need all the dos and don'ts of a major surgery, including a prolonged recovery period." But Dr Kagodu warns us that the recommendation for a specific rejuvenation option is more than cost and recovery—it requires certain parameters to be assessed. "Nothing is a preferred choice in cosmetic treatments—it is about the right candidacy." ■



Namrata Soni



Hanna Strömgren Khan



Leeza Mangaldas

# REWRITING NARRATIVES

The Bozzil Group is developing premium brands tailored for the Indian market.

By *SERCHEN CHOKYI*

Bozzil Group's successful ventures include Simply Nam, co-founded by Namrata Soni, and Leezu's co-founded by Leeza Mangaldas, among many others. For Simply Nam, Namrata used her years of expertise as a celebrity make-up artist to craft high-quality beauty products at affordable prices. It is not merely a brand, Simply Nam is a movement that resonates with the unique wants and needs of the diverse Indian population. Through Leezu's, Leeza encourages the exploration of self-discovery via pleasure, motivating individuals to deepen their understanding of their own bodies along the way.

For Bozzil Group, quality isn't just a buzzword. They prioritise responsible practices, promote clean beauty, and collaborate with influencers in product development and content creation, aligning with their target audiences' needs. Their commitment extends to high-quality formulations and packaging, ensuring excellence in every aspect of their products. The group aims to develop premium brands tailored for the Indian market. The Bozzil Group's innovative approach to brand cultivation, alongside their commitment to authenticity and sustainability, sets them apart. Through strategic partnerships and a dedication to quality, they continue to redefine the premium brands landscape—one ingenious collaboration at a time. ■

The year 2020 saw the world change for good. The same year, the world of beauty in India too changed for good. Namrata Soni—one of Bollywood's most sought-after make-up artists for the last two decades—joined hands with Bozzil Group to launch her own beauty brand. Simply Nam is a premium make-up brand designed to enhance and celebrate the natural beauty of the modern Indian woman.

Led by Hanna Strömgren Khan and Jesper Karlsson, Bozzil Group is shaking up India's brand market with a cocktail of innovation and collaboration. The group focuses on revolutionising premium brands, emphasising on authenticity and quality. For Bozzil Group, it is not just about dreaming big; it's about diversifying one's dreams into a multitude of brand realities. Their philosophy—one team, many brands—isn't just a catchy slogan. It's a strategic approach that balances efficiency while preserving each brand's unique identity. They achieve this through an innovative approach, leveraging shared resources across brands, and strategic collaborations with influencers and educators.



A candle by Leezu's

Lipsticks by Simply Nam

IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS

# HYDRATION RITUAL

Get nourished, resilient skin with botanical-powered formulations by Kama Ayurveda.



**A**s we age, our skin's ability to adapt and respond to external and internal aggressors like stress, sedentary habits, and poor diets diminishes. Resilient skin, characterised by its protective nature, elasticity, and strong barrier, is essential to withstand these effects. Kama Ayurveda brings Ayurveda-inspired formulations that are a must-have this summer for hydration, and smooth, resilient skin. Powered with ingredients rich in Vitamin C and E, as well as antioxidants and flavonoids, the hydration range offers proven efficacy for hydrated, nourished, and plumper-looking skin.

## Urjasara Face Oil

The oil is designed to protect the skin from free radical damage, enhance skin resilience, and restore skin strength. This nourishing and strengthening Ayurvedic face oil is ideal for all skin types, especially dry to very dry skin, sensitive skin, and skin facing external aggressors. The face oil is powered by 35 botanical extracts, including the highest concentration of Beauty Berry and Frankincense, known for their skin-enriching properties.

## Eladi Hydrating Face Cream

This rich, nourishing face cream is designed to improve skin texture and repair the skin barrier. Ideal for all skin types, especially dry skin, this cream targets damaged skin barrier, dehydrated skin, and uneven skin texture and tone, providing intense hydration and nourishment. It features 29 botanical extracts, including Cardamom and Costus, known for their skin-enhancing and antibacterial properties.

## Eladi Hydrating Light Cream

Enriched with Vitamin C and E for youthful, smooth, and supple skin, The Eladi Hydrating Light Cream packs a light and non-greasy formulation. It's a complete solution for skin hydration, nourishment, and a dewy complexion. Created with light emulsion technology, this cream has a naturally emollient base that leaves your skin feeling smooth and supple. It has a non-comedogenic formula suitable for all skin types, especially oily and combination skin.

## Pure Rosewater

Kama Ayurveda's Pure Rosewater is known for its hydrating and soothing benefits. This floral water leaves the skin feeling refreshed and revives its natural glow. It is the perfect first step in your skincare routine. A few spritzes on the face help tone, soothe, and revive the skin's glow. Made with roses from Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh), this rosewater is free of artificial fragrance and suitable for all skin types.

## Rose & Jasmine Face Cleanser

This cleanser is infused with a rich blend of Ayurvedic ingredients, and uplifting essential oils to cleanse and remove make-up and impurities, leaving your skin feeling refreshed and hydrated. The Rose Jasmine Face Cleanser is ideal for all skin types, especially normal to combination skin. Its lightweight gel texture is 98 per cent plant-based, helping in purifying, refreshing, and toning the skin. ■



The hydration range by Kama Ayurveda

# B E A U T Y

## SMELL LIKE A DREAM

Love Eau De Parfum, Coach, ₹6,250 (50ml); Mandarino di Sicilia, Acqua Di Parma, ₹17,000 (100ml); Dylan Purple Eau De Parfum, Versace, ₹11,400 (100ml), I Want Choo Forever Eau De Parfum, Jimmy Choo, ₹10,550 (100ml)



# FOR THE LOVE OF BEAUTY



## OUR HAIR COLOUR PICK

Honey for your hair? Our answer is a resounding yes! A radiant sun-kissed glow for your hair is what you need this summer. The honey-dyed colour with its warm blend of golden tones and lighter hues is our pick for this season. With complementing hairstyles like cascading soft waves, mighty curls, or a straight cut, turn heads in one of the most flattering shades of the season.

TEXT BY PRIYANKA KATHURIA; IMAGES: COURTESY THE BRANDS



## CUSTOM LOOK

Shine on with Dior's glow kit. This blush brightens the cheeks with a natural finish. Infused with 'Color Reviver' technology, it reacts to the skin's moisture level for a customised effect. Tips for application: Apply Dior Backstage Rosy Glow blush using the N°16 blush brush, lightly stroking the top of the cheekbones.

Backstage Rosy Glow Blush, Dior, ₹4,400 approx



## YOUR MAGIC WAND

The Kansa Wand by Kama Ayurveda is a massage tool to enhance beauty rituals and promote holistic wellness. Its usage aims to stimulate blood circulation and tone the skin, delivering a natural facelift effect. Great for lymphatic drainage, we recommend adding this to your cart ASAP!

Kansa Wand, Kama Ayurveda, ₹4,990

## ATHLETIC AESTHETIC

Swap the sticky, goopy, and chalky sunscreen with FRÉ's glow duo. Catering to those with an active lifestyle, its products—Vitamin C serum and tinted mineral SPF—incorporate organic argan oil, leaf extract, and stem cells, among others. Ditch multiple products as these care for the skin before, during, and after UV exposure. Added benefits: Its ultra lightweight and fast-absorbing formula.

C ME 10% VITAMIN C SERUM, FRÉ, ₹7,000  
GLOW ME + TINTED MINERAL SPF 30, FRÉ, ₹3,900



## AGE-OLD INSPIRATION

Chloé is all set to embark on a new adventure to Egypt, to reconnect with the roots of founder Gaby Aghion. The perfume revisits kyphi [a compound incense that was used in ancient Egypt] with a modern, refined approach. Expect notes of ginger, cinnamon, broom flower nectar, balsamic, amber, and a hint of vanilla. Presented in the iconic bottle, this perfume is a must-have.

Nomade Nuit d'Égypte, Chloé, ₹12,000 approx (75ml)

# B E A U T Y



## GLAZED LIPS

Glossy lips may not be a new trend, but it's here to stay. Who doesn't love shiny lips that look like the glazed surface of a yummy doughnut? Here are some products to help you achieve the same.

Kissing Jelly Gloss, Too Faced, ₹1,832; The Magic Lip Tint, Simply Nam, ₹799; Get Glazed in Strawberry Jam, Flossy Cosmetics, ₹699; Gloss Bomb Universal Lip Luminizer, Fenty Beauty, ₹2,050; Candy Baby, Victoria's Secret Flavor Gloss, ₹1,199; Big Lip Plumpgasm, Charlotte Tilbury, ₹3,450



## NEW SUMMER BFF

Inde Wild's Glow Drops sunscreen with 12 per cent zinc oxide is your new summer bestie! With SPF 50 and other ingredients, this product provides a broad spectrum coverage. Its lightweight and non-clogging serum texture is made keeping in mind those with acne prone, hyperpigmented and sensitive skin.

AM SUNSCREEN GLOW DROPS, Inde Wild, ₹1,499



## SCENT OF A MAN

TUMI, the luxury luggage brand, has now forayed into the world of fragrance with the launch of a new line of men's perfume. The range comprises of five scents that promise a sensorial journey as you embark on your adventures.

Unwind, TUMI, ₹8,200 (100 ml)

## PRIME AND SHINE!

They smoothen, they blur, they make your foundation slay. Join the e.l.f. primer tribe to have a make-up that remains perfect throughout the day. They come in different variants, and we personally love the one infused with 4 per cent niacinamide. The best part about this primer—it blends completely, leaving a dewy finish.

Power Grip Primer + 4% Niacinamide, e.l.f., ₹1,300 (24ml)



## YOUR OWN FILTER

Huda Beauty's new blush filter is lightweight, buildable, and blendable. Its finely milled micro pearls give a soft-focus but high-impact glow. Available in five shades that work across all skin tones, blush filter has a sweet candy-like scent to complement the names of the shades.

Liquid Blush Filter, Huda Beauty, ₹2,250



## SIMPLE, YET EFFECTIVE

Mira Kapoor and businesswoman Isha Ambani have jointly launched a skincare brand, Akind, that offers curated products to achieve your skincare goals. *Bazaar India* talks to Kapoor to know more about the brand and its philosophy.

**Harper's Bazaar: What sets Akind apart from the other celebrity beauty brands?**

**Mira Kapoor:** At Akind, simplicity guides everything we do. As a brand philosophy, it stands for listening to your skin, drowning the noise and overwhelming advice. It focuses on the skin barrier and enables the consumer to build their own routine.

**HB: Have you faced any skin issues personally that led you to create this brand?**

**MK:** It all began with observing my mother's simple, yet effective, beauty rituals using natural ingredients like raw milk and rose water. Over time, I realised the importance of listening to my skin and understanding its unique needs. This journey of self-discovery, filled with trials and errors, ultimately led me to build Akind. I wanted to create a brand that cuts through the complexity of skincare, offering solutions that are skin type-agnostic, high-performing, and multifunctional. Akind is rooted in the philosophy of minimalism and proven efficacy.

**HB: Your beauty mantra for 2024?**

**MK:** Less is more!



## DUAL POWER

*Finding time for self-care can often be an uphill task. Beauty brand Shankara has come up with a dual chamber solution. The Timeless Restorative Skin Elixir blends the potent benefits of Kumkumadi Oil, Vitamin C, and more. This 3-in-1 solution aims to moisturise and brighten, and promises to help with anti-ageing.*

*Timeless Restorative Skin Elixir, Shankara, ₹4,500*



## NEWS WORTHY!

*South Korean DJ and singer Peggy Gou joined American supermodel Gigi Hadid as the global ambassador for Maybelline New York. Singer Rihanna has been appointed as the new face of Dior's J'Adore while actor Gwyneth Paltrow's beauty brand, Goop Beauty, launched the all-new Featherlash Lifting Serum Mascara.*



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# BAZAAR

## ESCAPE

### SUMMER LONGINGS

Nestled along the winding banks of the Tagus river, Portugal's capital will enchant you with its timeless allure.

Belém  
Tower,  
near  
Lisbon

IMAGE: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM



## EXPLORING LISBON

What would it be like if Lady Whistledown of the hit Netflix show *Bridgerton* was to visit Portugal's capital known for its history, culture, and gastronomic delights?

*By* SMITA TRIPATHI

### *Dearest Gentle Reader,*

With the summer upon us and the ton all packed and set to vacation in some exotic locale, this author decided to explore the historical city of Lisbon. Nestled along the winding banks of the Tagus—the longest river in the Iberian Peninsula—Portugal's capital will enchant you with its timeless allure. From the vibrant colours of the old neighbourhood of Alfama to the bohemian spirit of Lisbon's central district of Bairro Alto, the city is a mosaic of culture and tradition. But don't be fooled by its charming cobblestone streets meandering through historic neighbourhoods, they are a killer on the legs! Lisbon is built on seven hills and you feel it in every step. So dearest reader, say goodbye to those stilettos and



*Pastéis de nata*  
(Portuguese egg custard tarts)

IMAGES: COURTESY GETTYIMAGES.COM



A cobbled street in a Lisbon neighbourhood

welcome a pair of sturdy boots or the oh-so-fashionable sneakers when exploring Europe's second oldest capital city after Athens—yes, Lisbon is even older than Rome!

Little wonder, every corner has a story—some even scandalous—waiting to be uncovered. Something that this author was delighted to do. Take for instance, São Jorge Castle, a military fortress towering above the city and offering panoramic views of red-tiled rooftops and the sparkling river below. It served as a protector, first of Islam and then of Christianity. But it's not all that it seems to be. The current castle is a replica built only about 80 years ago. "It's a tourist trap, built by dictator [António de Oliveira] Salazar to earn revenue. It's what he thought a Moorish castle should look like when built on a low budget," laughs a local resident whom this author befriended over a glass of port wine.

But for a city like Lisbon, which is a must-stop for all the iPhone toting, sun hat wearing visitors who land here by air and sea—over 7 lakh cruise ship passengers explored the city's geographical and urban uniqueness last year—such "tourist traps" are everywhere. But the thing with tourist traps, dear esteemed reader, is that they need to be ticked off the list of places to see all the same. And so, this author headed to Elevador de Santa Justa—an endearing little elevator built in 1901 that takes some 3.5 million passengers up the hill every year. At the top, you get panoramic views of the Baixa district. Is it worth the queue and the euros? Probably not. Because

**Don't be fooled by its  
charming  
cobblestone streets,  
they are a killer on the  
legs! Lisbon is built on  
seven hills and you  
feel it in every step.**

turned its sights towards Africa and India—a gateway to gold, spices and other untold riches. And thus started the Age of Discovery.

This author next headed to Belém, a short drive away from Lisbon, to explore two Unesco World Heritage sites—Jerónimos Monastery (which holds Vasco da Gama's tomb) and the Belém Tower—to supposedly learn more about Portugal's Golden Period. But in reality, dear reader,

it was only to eat *pastéis de nata* (Portuguese egg custard tarts) at the famous Pastéis de Belém, where these delicious tarts originated in 1837. The story goes like this: There used to be a sugar refinery where the bakery is now situated. Following the Portuguese Liberal Revolution in 1820, when the clergy were expelled, monks and nuns took to baking to survive, which is how the pastries came to fruition. The recipe was invented in the neighbouring Jerónimos Monastery, and by 1837 the bakery was set up. Over the years,

the recipe has remained unchanged and has been passed down to a handful of master confectioners. While *pastéis de nata* are available across Portugal and are a favourite breakfast treat, the ones at Pastéis de Belém are special and worth waiting in queue for.

Having tasted sugar, this author was set to explore Lisbon's culinary delights, and made her way to the Time Out market to enjoy the best of local food and drinks. Set within the old-school Mercado da Ribeira, where locals buy their meat and fish, it's one of the best places in Lisbon to while away the day, eating and drinking at

here's the thing: Lisbon is full of viewing points, called *miradouros*, and they are free. This author's favourite is the rooftop of the Bairro Alto Hotel where you can indulge in sundowners and watch the sun set over the city responsible for introducing India to the western world. For how can you, most favoured reader, be in Lisbon and not think of Vasco da Gama—the Portuguese explorer who discovered the sea route to India in 1498? Not long after the 15th century dawned, Portugal, under the ambitious King John I,

# E S C A P E



Tram 28, one of the city's most iconic trams, that was inaugurated over 90 years ago

more than 50 different places. Most importantly, you get to sample the cuisine of some of Portugal's most famous chefs for half the price of visiting their restaurants.

While Lisbon may be one of the oldest capital cities in the world—the Phoenicians from southern Syria settled there in 1000 BCE—it was completely destroyed and rebuilt after a massive earthquake in 1755. The quake, measuring 9 on the Richter Scale, struck in the morning of Feast of All Saints Day (November 1) when the churches were full and homes were lit with candles. The tremor was followed by a series of devastating tsunamis and five days of raging fires which devoured the buildings. It was one of the deadliest quakes in history, leaving many people dead and 85 per cent of the city in total ruins.

The earthquake inspired a frenzy of philosophical and religious soul searching. French poet Voltaire, horrified by the tragedy and annoyed by religious accusations that Lisbon had been levelled in an act of divine retribution for the lewd lifestyles of its citizens, wrote “*What crime, what sin, had those young hearts conceived/ That lie, bleeding and torn, on mother's breast?/ Did fallen Lisbon deeper drink of vice/ Than London, Paris, or sunlit Madrid?*” The question to be asked, dear noble reader, was why, if it was retribution, were the churches flattened but Alfama with its brothels and courtesans continued to thrive? Alfama was not destroyed in the earthquake and is hence the oldest neighbourhood of Lisbon.

When the city was being rebuilt, Carmo Convent—

which has stood at the centre of Lisbon since 1389—was intentionally left roofless as a reminder of the disaster. It now houses the Carmo Archaeological Museum dedicated to Portuguese history.

If walking around Lisbon tires you out, and trust this author, dear reader, it will, it's time to board Tram 28—one of the city's most iconic trams inaugurated over 90 years ago and travelling through the popular tourist areas of Graca, Alfama, Baixa, and Estrela. Riding in this quaint, antiquated tram is a lovely way of taking in the sites. There are often long queues at its starting station so its best to board it somewhere en route.

If you wish to pick up a souvenir for those back home envious of your travels, dear large-hearted reader, head to Bertrand. Opened in 1732, it is the oldest bookstore in the world according to *Guinness Book of World Records*. Buy them a book on Portugal or may be one by their favourite author.

Retire to the neighbourhood of Bairro Alto in the evening, dear virtuous reader, and immerse yourself in its lively atmosphere. The district comprises over 200 bars with revellers often seen on the streets.

Lisbon was last year declared the best urban destination in Europe at the World Travel Awards. But let that not sway you, dear knowledgeable reader. Visit the elegant city and discover its timeless charm on your own. ■

*Yours Truly,  
Lady Whistledown*

# FROM FASHION TO EDUCATION

Ajay Teli, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer of The University of Warwick, shares his views on the evolving landscape of strategic communications.

**Harper's Bazaar: From fashion to education, define your evolution as a marketing and communications professional. How do you leverage it?**

**Ajay Teli:** My journey from Bicester Village to The University of Warwick has been one of continuous learning, adaptation, and growth. At Bicester Village, I honed my skills in creating brand communications and building strong customer relationships. Transitioning to The University of Warwick has allowed me to apply these skills in a different context. Fashion and education might seem like disparate fields, but they share a common thread—the need for powerful storytelling and brand differentiation. At The University of Warwick, I leverage my skills to develop strategic communications initiatives that resonate with our stakeholders, highlight our unique offerings, and foster a sense of community and pride.

**HB: What are your views on the evolving landscape of higher education and strategic communications?**

**AT:** This sector is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological advancements, changing student expectations, and global competition. Strategic brand communications in this context is more critical than ever. It involves promoting the institution's strengths and engaging with diverse audiences. As we navigate this evolving landscape, it is essential to prioritise inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability in our messaging.

**HB: Any advice for aspiring strategic communications professionals?**

**AT:** Be curious, adaptable, and authentic. Additionally, never underestimate the power of storytelling that connect emotionally and intellectually with your audience. Finally, always seek to understand and

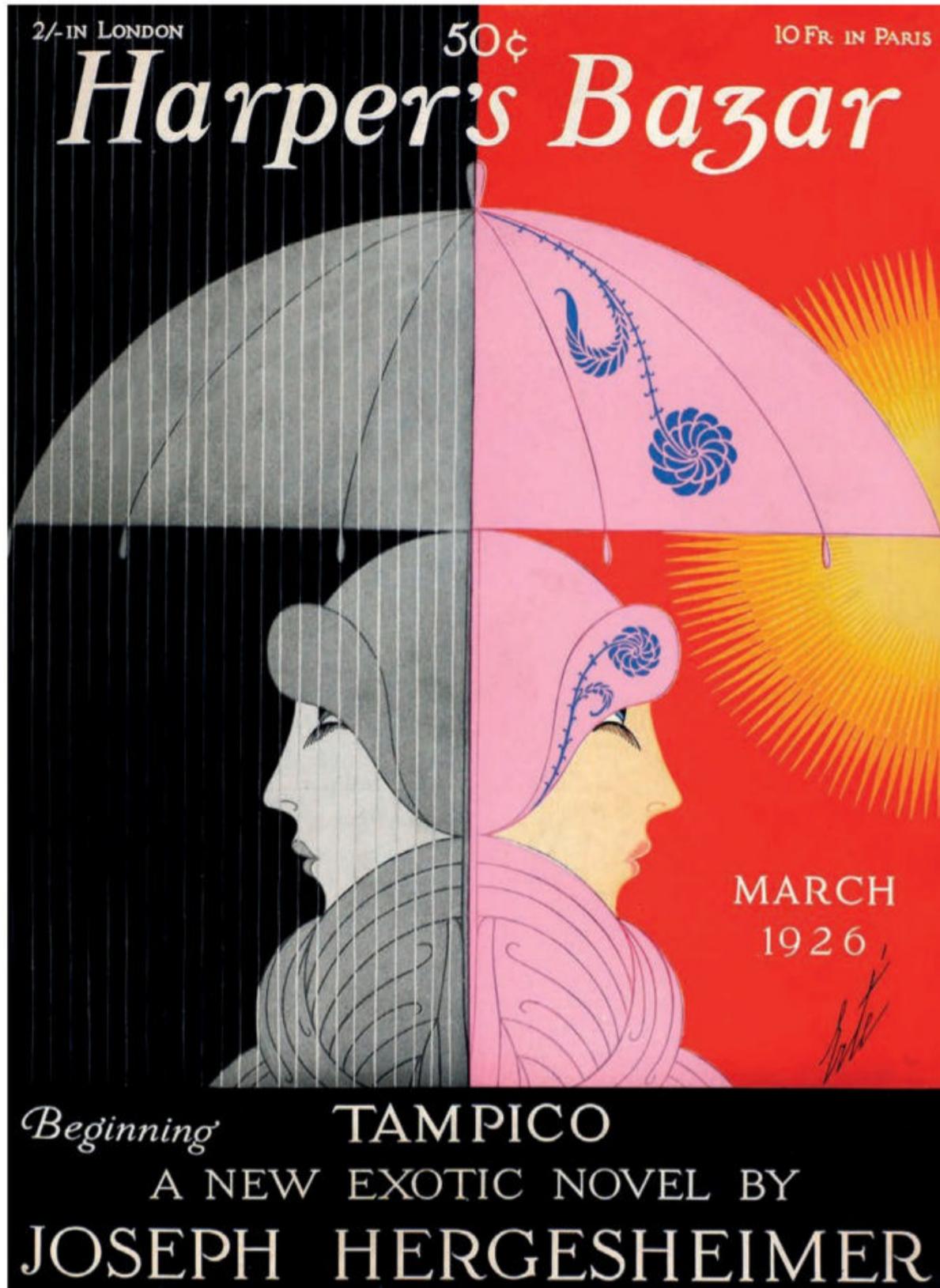


Ajay Teli

embrace new technologies that can amplify your message and expand your reach.

**HB: What is your vision for The University of Warwick?**

**AT:** Collectively as a team, I want to continue building the university's reputation as a brand that resonates deeply with prospective students, their parents, partners, and diverse audiences. We want to build an environment where ambition and innovation are at the forefront. I envision Warwick as a university that inspires pride and connection among all stakeholders, solidifying its position as a premier choice for students and collaborators worldwide.



Y I N & Y A N G

The delicate art of balance.

*Artistic and fashionable as all Harper's Bazaar magazine covers are, the March 1926 cover of Harper's Bazar US stands out not only for its impeccable illustration but also for its deeper meaning. The cover features a fashionable woman with an umbrella, depicted in two contrasting halves: one dark and subdued, the other vibrant and colourful. This stark symbolism mirrors the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang—a Taoist principle that embraces balance and the coexistence of opposing elements in the universe. It champions a delicate equilibrium between light and dark, rather than extremes. So, my dear reader, if you ever find yourself in an inopportune moment, eclipsed in darkness or facing an existential crisis, remember the importance of maintaining balance. The highs of life gain their value through the lows.*

*Balance is key!*

WORDS BY **RIA SINGH**

# Z 8



## READY. ACTION.



**8K**

8K/60p<sup>\*1</sup>



12-Bit Internal RAW  
N-RAW | ProRes RAW HQ



Hi-Res Zoom  
(Up to 2x)



20FPS RAW  
Up to 120FPS (Jpeg)



Enhanced  
AI Algorithm<sup>\*2</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup> 12-Bit N-RAW video    <sup>\*2</sup> Enhanced AI Algorithm for AF, Skin softening and Portrait impression balance

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