

Manar Laktine's Moni&J has bags of confidence

Here we read an inspirational story of how Manar originally majored in a subject at school she didn't love but she chose because it offered job security.

Later on down the line, while working and raising her beautiful twin girls she put a tiny bit of time beside for a realized love, fashion designing.

Over time, Manar grew to become a Fashion Designer of international distinction. With her luxury handbag brand Moni&J being spoken about in last month's Vogue New York, and having her boutique shop here in Kuwait, it seems the only way is up for Manar Laktine and Moni&J.

☞Please introduce yourself to our readers.

My name is Manar Laktineh and I am the founder and designer of the Moni&j luxury handbag brand. I am a mom for beautiful twin girls and a wife. I have named my brand after my girls, husband and my nickname. I am originally from Syria and I have been living in Kuwait for the past 7 years. I am a kind loving person and I am extremely passionate about what I do.

☞Tell us about your education:

I have a bachelor degree in Library and Information Science, and that part was my family choice. :) I never felt a connection with my education and after my graduation I found myself passionate about fashion and my everyday life revolved around fashion design and style. I have always dreamed since I was a little girl to work in fashion. Now I can proudly say that I have participated in fashion courses and I have successfully learned what it takes to build a brand.

☞How was your journey to become a designer?

After some courses in fashion I knew I was on the right path and destined to work in fashion. I started designing clothes and accessories for a personal use and everyone asked about them. I did that for sometime before starting any fashion line. I was busy raising my twin girls and continued to just make things for myself, when finally the time was right to create Moni&j.

☞How and where do you get your inspirations from?

My all time inspiration is the woman herself. I love to give the woman a piece to give her more confidence and to give her that eye catching 'look' without being over dressed and or too fancy. My main target is to take the outfit to the next level in fashion but to keep it classy as well. I am constantly inspired from anything beautiful that I see on a daily life and I stay very connected to fashion trends, designers and the fashion industry.

☞Why bags? are you planning to design something other than bags in the future?

I have already designed clothes and accessories before I started my handbag line. Handbags have always been a passion of mine. I had the confidence that I could design a very unique bag but it took me a while to find the right sources as the handbag and leather industry is far more complicated than other fashion industries. Now I can say that I didn't choose it, I feel it was something that chose me it's something from inside that I really don't have words to explain.

Yes, for sure I'm thinking to continue designing clothes and accessories. Moni&J will be seen one day as unique and gorgeous pieces for a total look, not just a handbag. I have completed many drawings for new products that I've dreamed to see them come alive.

☞Your concepts are very unique and original is there a pressure to always maintain that consistency with your new designs??

Of course there is a lot of pressure but it goes away when I see people react towards my designs. At that moment I feel that yes I can do this again and again, I am exactly where I am meant to be and it gives me the confidence to do it again.

☞What is your creative process like?

It's a very long process because each bag I design I start it from point zero. It starts from the shape to the flap to the accessories and the hardware. I often get inspired late at night, when I can be surrounded by silence.

After I do my drawings I discuss it at the factory with the craftsmen to see if we can action all of my ideas. Following that we do a carton sample, and following we do another sample that we can use. I always test different materials to see how the final product turns out. It can sometimes be a process of trial and error and once I find the desired style we start the production.



Photographer: @faithalfahad - Location: @designerslounge



Photographer: @fathalfahad - Location: @designerslounge



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What do you love about your work?

I love everything about my work; my favorite part is that I'm a very loving person and I enjoy making everyone happy. With my work, I see that I can make someone happy everyday. I am able to give people happiness with what I create, which is special.

What are some the challenges that you face and how do you overcome them?

Challenges are a daily routine when you are working in the fashion field in particular. I am dealing everyday with suppliers, factories, shipments, and customers. Of course I have a very good team who are working with me on the brand and that help a lot. The most important element that helps me overcome daily challenges; is that I love my work; this gives me the energy to face any challenges that arise.

What's next? What are your future plans?

The future is extremely bright for us, we are working on not only building the brand globally but we are working closely on the product. We are launching an e-commerce website and working closely with celebrity stylists.

To date, which collection has left the deepest impression on you?

I look at all of my collections in the same light. My bags are like my babies. I work so hard to see them grow from an inspiration to a final product. It's impossible for me to put anything in my collection if I am not in a deep love with it. Of course the first collection was something very special to me. The Marshal Bag holds a special place in my heart because it started a new trend within the handbag industry and a lot of other designers are inspired by it.

Tell us of any awards you have earned and other achievements?

I was selected as one of the five finalists for the handbag designer award in the U.S. The event was held in NYC with InStye magazine and Bloomingdales. There were

over 1600 designers from all around the world. Following this I have been recognized globally and magazines such as Vogue UK, contacted me to be featured in their 'Arm Candy' segment.

Have any celebrities worn your designs?

Yes, a number of celebrities have worn Moni&j bags. This includes famous singers and actresses as Ahlam and Hend Sabri to name a few. There have also been very famous bloggers and TV presenters from the Middle East and outside the Middle East. We have also had royalty wearing our bags, as her highness Princess

Amira al Tawil.

Your own fashion statement:

I love to wear new designers and too mix and match luxury pieces. I like to think of my own style as unique. I also like to support new designers whom I believe that they have a talent.

Where is your collection currently available to buy?

My collection is available in Kuwait at Designers Lounge located at Salhia, the Avenues, Zahra and Al Rays malls. The collection is also available in Qatar at Per Lei Couture Boutique

at the Pearl. In the US, you can find the collection in New York City at In Support Of boutique in the Meatpacking District.

We can be found online at www.handbagdesigner101.com and soon on our website at www.Moniandj.com

Your message for us at CityPages magazine:

Moni&j would like to send a huge thank you to the team at CityPages. It was such a pleasure to be surrounded by a talented and creative team in Kuwait. We can't wait to continue to share our unique designs with CityPages, Kuwait and the rest of the world.

