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# Magdalena Diab



Black shiny wool/viscose suit with silk/organza pleated trim by Alexander McQueen; Chopard watch with 2.53 carats of diamonds, satin bracelet; Bvlgari Long drop Parentesi earrings in white gold and pavé diamonds (0.5 carats)

Who said you can't have your cake and eat it too? Magdalena Diab is a walking testimony to the fact that one woman can have it all! Owner of fashion store Matt I;ll, interior designer, and mother of two, Diab is constantly on the go, and loving it. She designs boats, chalets, apartments, shops, houses... So if you have a surface that needs jazzing up, this jet-setting fashionista will know exactly what to do with it.

## A jet-setting Fashionista

-During her second year at the Lebanese American University (then BUC), Diab realized that a degree in business administration was not where her true passion lay. After much thought and consideration, she decided to move into interior design. "I always knew I was a bit artistic," she said. "Back during my school days, I was quite good in drawing, painting and sculpting, so I thought, 'why not decorating!' After all, decoration is refined and feminine; you need taste, you need to play with color and it's not so structured - you can be creative." While going to college, Diab began working as a drafter for a Lebanese interior designer, and upon completion of her degree, she took on a greater role working on projects within both Lebanon and the region. "I enjoyed it very much because I found that I do have my own style and I had clients who gave me the freedom to design as I wish; they trusted me and liked my work."

Today, Diab still maintains her passion for design and opts to take on a variety of projects to both challenge herself and hold her interest. "Doing the same thing such as decorating apartments, for example, can get a bit boring," she

said. "While maybe not everybody likes, or is capable of, doing a variety of different designs, for me it's a challenge and I like to see what I can produce when I have different types of projects. My design changes completely in order to adapt to the space depending on whether it's a restaurant or a house, an apartment or a shop, a boat or a chalet. This variety of projects keeps my work both interesting and challenging."

Although Diab is dedicated to each and every project she takes on, one project stands out as perhaps her



Silver-metal & silk maxi evening gown by Alexander McQueen; Bvlgari jewelry - Astrale Line: fireworks choker in white gold and diamonds (9.2 carats); fireworks earrings in white gold and diamonds (0.6 carats); Concentrica bracelet branded in white gold and diamonds (1.3 carats)

most exciting thus far. "It was my first project, which was somehow unique, and I was really happy with the result," she said, speaking of the boat she decorated in Italy. "It was a challenge because there were many different scopes to it... I worked on it together with the company in Italy and the manufacturers of the boat, and it turned out to be a great project!"

For a while Diab shifted her focus from interior design to event planning. "I opened a company that created events; it was kind of a hobby. We brought supermodels, which was the thing at the time, and organized shows for the Lebanese haute couture and jewelry designers. I organized two big events per year, but I later found myself going back to decorating." It was through this event planning that Diab met Italian fashion designer Alviero Martini and her career in fashion kicked off. "When he (Martini) came to Lebanon I really liked his collection. First, I became his client, then friend, and then model after he asked me at the Milano fashion week to take part in his show and I said to myself why not!" she recounts. "This is when I had the idea to open up a shop to represent Alviero Martini in Lebanon, so I discussed it with him and he agreed."

After opening the Alviero Martini boutique, Diab decided to open a second store that offers a number of brands with a diverse price range and product offerings to suit a greater market. Hence the opening of Matt I;II took place. Today, both stores are located in the luxurious Solidere facing the

# Magdalena Diab

St George Marina with Matt I;ll offering 15 brands including Alexander McQueen, Kippys, Versace, and Narciso Rodriguez, among others. "I liked the idea of adding more brands and providing customers with a variety of luxury products that fit different budgets and to do it more like a concept store, which I think is the trend now in Europe. This means you can find everything from clothes to accessories, CDs, books and more under one roof," she explained. The store also offers exclusive items or limited editions, a new concept for Lebanon, for those fond of luxurious things and don't mind paying the right price for refined limited-edition pieces.

Interestingly enough, the world of fashion and that of interior design are strongly influenced by each other. Diab believes that it's a bit parallel; when the trends and colors became pure and minimalistic in decorating, the lines in clothes became simple as well.

Fashion faux pas are a lot easier to fix than mistakes made in interior design and decorating. Should a dress go out of fashion, you can simply buy another; unfortunately, this is not the case with furniture. So how does one incorporate the current trends without becoming a fashion victim? Diab suggests using classic pieces to create a classic look and incorporating an item or two showcasing the latest trend. "Colors are very dependant on fashions and trends," she said. "In the past we had a lot of Spanish and Italian furniture brands that started doing furniture pieces in colors



Black shiny wool/viscose suit with silk/organza pleated trim by Alexander McQueen; silver-metal shoes by Versace; Chopard watch with 2.53 carats of diamonds, satin bracelet





Magdalena Diab

The interior of this beautiful boat was recently designed by Magdalena for the Italian company BENETTI





Black, stretch, ribbed polo-neck jumper; shiny, black leather biker trousers and silver-gold metal shoes, all by Alexander McQueen

that were fashionable for clothes like orange or fuchsia or purple, I mean, this is daring! I was at the time designing an apartment and I did add one arm chair that was a striking purple color, but the rest of the apartment was modern and pure. There was a lot of off-white, a lot of grey, stainless steel appliances and a lot of wood. So all of these things would not really go out of fashion. The armchair however, maybe!" Diab added that in decoration, it is very important to mainly focus on something that is classic – not necessarily old or antique style, but rather something with classic pure lines – and not to exaggerate with very eccentric and original things, because ultimately, they will go out of style.

For a calm, relaxing, decorative touch that will not go out of fashion, Diab suggests earth tones, which have seen an increase in use over the past few years. "Earth colors are very safe. Six years ago I decorated my entire house in earth colors; the walls, the floors, the carpets, the sofas...are all in mocha tones." Diab attributes the increase in popularity of earth tones to the need to go back to basics, the need to simplify our lifestyle as life becomes more demanding. "Most people are now looking for simplicity, calmness and purity, because our lives have become so hectic and stressful and we are always in a rush, always running. So when it comes to relaxing surroundings like our homes, a lot of people prefer colors that are calming and relaxing." Diab believes that a house with strong colors such as burgundy, deep yellow or green can make some people feel tense and agitated, whereas earth colors can be more soothing. Besides, they are safe and they don't really go out of style because they can be used in both classic lines and modern lines.

Although trends and fashions must be taken into consideration when designing a space, there are certain elements







Black fox fur Jacket; black stretch, ribbed polo-neck jumper; shiny, black leather biker trousers all by Alexander McQueen; Bvlgari Concentrica earrings branded in white gold, ceramic and diamonds (1.4 carats)

that are always incorporated. For Diab, the constant factors in design over the last few years have been stainless steel and wood.

Diab's artistic flair and creative streak seem to be a family trait. Her oldest daughter, Tara, is following in her footsteps, and is about to begin a degree in architecture. "Whenever I work on a project, both of my daughters show interest in seeing my work and take part by sharing their opinion with me on a variety of issues," she said. They also seem to enjoy fashion, often visiting their mother's boutiques and traveling with her to attend fashion shows abroad. With such a busy lifestyle, Diab makes it a priority to spend as much time as possible with her daughters. "I like to travel with them, to let them see the world, meet different people and be exposed to different cultures. I want them to see how I work and what I do, hoping that this will help them discover their own paths in life."