

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Hanuxe reassesses preconceived notions of Middle Eastern style

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*Hanuxe's Arià and Siena styles in blue leather. Image courtesy of Hanuxe*

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By JEN KING

Saudi Arabian leather goods brand Hanuxe is fusing Italian craftsmanship with the Middle Eastern region's appreciation for luxury in its debut handbag collection.

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Hanuxe was founded by 26-year-old Hana Aljabr, who is one of a small number of up-and-coming female creatives and entrepreneurs from Saudi Arabia. Ms. Aljabr is also the only young talent from Saudi Arabia to currently be producing leather handbags that set new standards in contemporary, understated excellence.

Sold exclusively via ecommerce, Hanuxe's debut collection features three styles in ethically and sustainably sourced exotic leathers such as alligator and ostrich and rex fur. Handcrafted by Italian artisans, the first eight-piece capsule by the brand comes in a choice of colors reminiscent of "magical Arabian landscapes and inky night skies."

"Hanuxe is rooted in using the very best materials and artisans, and for me Italy is unquestionably the natural home for the finest leather goods," Hanan Aljabr, founder and creative director at [Hanuxe](#), Alkhobar, Saudi Arabia.

Ranging in price from 1,000 to 10,000 euros, Hanuxe handbags are designed to combine beauty and function, with a guiding vision that "less is truly more."



*Hanan Aljabr merged her first name and luxury for Hanuxe. Image courtesy of Hanan Aljabr*

In this Q&A, Ms. Aljabr talks about the inspiration of Hanuxe's debut collection, why Italian craftsmanship is a selling point, the evolution of fashion in the Middle East and advice for the region's emerging designers.

Here is the dialogue:

What inspired you to launch your debut collection of leather goods?

I have always had a passion for handbags.

During a vacation to Venice, Italy when I was aged 11, I remember stepping into a Fendi boutique and seeing a wall covered with its latest Baguette bags: a magical moment that sparked my lifelong love affair with Italy and its bags.

As I was too young to own one myself, I convinced my mother to purchase a gorgeous bag then and there with plans to claim it later as mine!

As my collection of handbags grew, the thrill of purchasing a new bag ceased, as I could never seem to find the perfect bag one that was practical, yet beautifully luxurious. So I decided to design my own, and Hanuxe was born.

Why is Made in Italy and Italian craftsmanship an important selling point for Hanuxe?

Hanuxe is rooted in using the very best materials and artisans, and for me Italy is unquestionably the natural home for the finest leather goods.

Hanuxe is "Made in Italy" but the creative inspiration is a fusion of Italian flair and craftsmanship alongside my Arabian appreciation for and understanding of luxury.

With each bag, we aim to celebrate both cultures and influences in very modern, relevant ways.

Why was starting with ecommerce an important aspect for your brand's launch?

After graduating with a degree in Information Systems, I decided to combine my two strengths by designing luxury handbags and creating an online platform for Hanuxe.

As a start-up brand, ecommerce allows Hanuxe to reach a far wider international audience than bricks-and-mortar stores alone.

How do you plan to market your first collection?

With our initial capsule collection of three bag designs we are in "soft launch" phase.

We're keen to gather feedback and insights as we engage influencers and commentators before moving onto more overt forms of marketing. We're doing this via a series of intimate trunk shows and PR.



*Hanuxe's Aria in Terra Cotta and Pacific Blue ostrich leather as seen on Instagram. Image credit: Hanuxe*

Do you plan to expand to other categories?

Hanuxe is slow' luxury fashion in its truest sense and I'm keen to retain control of every element I will spend half my time in Florence, Italy moving forward to expedite this.

The Hanuxe handbag collection will evolve via new colors, with a new style to be introduced each year.

If there is an appetite for Hanuxe to move into other categories of luxury goods, then we will of course consider and I am already the possibility of introducing a men's line of accessories.

How do you see fashion evolving in the Middle Eastern market?

The Middle Eastern luxury market is extremely saturated with large international brands and household names. Consumers have a great awareness for what is new and different as well as a keen eye for luxury, so discovering new designers and concepts is all the rage right now.

Many are turning their attention to emerging, local talent and brands and this will certainly grow apace it's exciting!

I'm very proud of the fact that I'm the youngest female entrepreneur and designer in luxury leather goods in Saudi Arabia right now.



*Hanuxe's Aria and Siena styles in terra cotta-colored leathers. Image courtesy of Hanuxe*

Hanuxe was prompted by my own search for the perfect, understated bag that I would want to treasure forever and I have a good understanding of what Middle Eastern women are looking for in accessories.

However, the timeless designs and understated elegance of each Hanuxe bag has a global appeal and I'm keen to share and export worldwide.

What advice could you give to other emerging designers in the Middle East?

Beyond the advice I would give any talent of seeking professional advice and being patient and persistent, I would say to emerging designers from the Middle East to be brave and stay true to their own personal aesthetic - and not follow the crowd.

There are many preconceptions of Middle Eastern style and there is a huge opportunity to challenge this and carve a unique design path certainly with Hanuxe I am deliberately understated rather than brash, which I think many outside of the Gulf region find surprising.

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