

# Metrolife

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## Go global, buy local

If you want to be in the know on all things Middle East chic, there's only one place to go



Everyone talks about how small the world is, but small or not, the world is certainly accessible, thanks to the wonders of the world wide web.

And one corner of it, a place inhabited by hip Middle Easterners on the lookout for all that is trendy, cutting edge and fashionable, has just become even more reachable.

Dia Diwan (www.diadiwan.com), an online portal that showcases all things luxury, leisure, arts and culture from the region relaunched its web site yesterday with a couple of new additions that are, for lack of a better phrase, simply fabulous, dahling! Rasha Khouri, a Lebanese-Palestinian-British banker created Dia Diwan after noticing a gaping hole that needed to be filled for relevant outlets that wanted to target the region.

According to Rasha, the site allows readers access to all the goings on in the cities of the Middle East (with a band of in-the-loop reporters from each submitting material on the latest happenings from store openings to spa get-aways).

"We hope the site provides readers with a sense of belonging and an environment they can relate to. Whether it's a new boutique hotel in Damascus or a yet-to-be-discovered designer in Dubai, we're on top of it. Rest assured, if it's hip and it's about the Middle East, we will bring it to you," Rasha says. The revamped look of the site comes courtesy of Dia Diwan's creative director Rouba Mourtada with some inspired additions by Lebanese designer extraordinaire Rana Salam - the ambassador of Middle Eastern cool - with graphics that are the perfect reflection of the modern, chaotic, colourful and lively Middle East. But the cherry perched atop the

site is the newly introduced Global Souk, Dia's online marketplace showcasing carefully scouted regional designers with the mission to support, promote and encourage Middle Eastern talent. Tala Tayara, Director of Global Souk, who knows the ins and outs of every boutique this side of the world, says the main aim of Global Souk is to provide the platform for boutique designers in the region to promote themselves and sell their designs.

"We wanted to create a luxury, upmarket web site focusing on all the good coming out of the Middle East, tailored specifically for women so that they have a place to see, learn and shop for items they wouldn't normally have access to in their home cities," Tala says. And shop they can. The Dia gang have teamed up with an impressive list of designers sourced from across the world with a keen eye on fashion and a finger firmly on the pulse of current trends.

"Although the Middle East is considered as one entity, each country has its own cultures, identity, food and style of dress. We wanted to bring all those elements together and offer our visitors the bag from Beirut to the prêt-a-porter from Saudi and the jewellery from Jordan," Tala adds.

One designer who has signed up to be on board Global Souk is Essa, who works out of his studio in Sharjah, whipping up creations that have Dubai's ladies running for their purses.

Essa's creations, ranging from ghutra (Arabian head scarf pattern) in a rainbow of colours and every conceivable shape of dress, to the ethereal, floaty evening gowns, have amassed a cult status in the city, and are sold exclusively at S\*uce. Until now. With his presence on Global Souk, Essa lovers are set to multiply exponentially. "It may be cliché, but it is really a very small world and no matter how traditional or vintage-y you are, you have to go with the times. Which is why I finally decided to have my designs available through Global Souk," Essa tells 7DAYS. "Rasha and Tala are just the kind of modern woman I design for and I see the future with these girls and Dia Diwan.

"So, it came at the right time and the right place and I think Global Souk allows me the kind of online presence I am interested in," Essa adds. For all the fashion lovers out there, that means the world not only got smaller, it just got a hell of a lot more stylish too.



**STYLE ICONS:**  
The Global Souk

### IN THE MARKET FOR...

#### ESSA

The Sharjah based designer who has redefined Arabian chic. We love his 'I Love Dubai' dresses emblazoned with sequinned camels, palm trees and falcons.



#### RANA SALAM

The woman behind Dia's look, Salam's designs are infectious, surprising, nostalgic and utterly irresistible. Sip your coffee from one of her Dia Diwan exclusive mugs.



#### DOMAKAYA

The brainchild of three Lebanese sisters with a penchant for Fair Trade hand-knitted and crocheted cashmere and luxury wools. Don't think twice about their adorable Heart Hand Warmers.



#### SARAH'S BAG

Celebrating Middle Eastern heritage mixed with a dose of good taste and a social consciousness (the label started off as a programme to help rehabilitate women in prison in Lebanon), these bags go beyond the 'It Bag' phenomenon. Pick up their Classic Graffiti clutch.



#### ASUDARI

Combining Saudi Bedouin culture with a bit of London edginess thrown in, Asudari (the label had its regional debut during Dubai Fashion Week) is paving the way to a new way of dressing. The Venus dress is to die for.



#### EVRA

Exploring the art of female seduction in fashion, Evra is a treasure trove of beautiful pieces. Tap into the tribal trend with the Amhara neckpiece.



#### JOANNA

Joanna Nakhle, the force behind the delicate jewellery pieces inspired by traditional Arab and Western culture with a twist. Ward off the negative energy with her Nacre Evil Eye pendant.



#### KAFTAN BUDDHA

Boho-babes meets sun-drenched beaches with this designers easy-breezy kaftan creations perfect for the summer days. Slip on the hot pink, beaded Mykonos number to get the look.

