

MILIA M
M IS FOR
MASTERING
THE DETAILS

For years she has been making HEARTS FLUTTER in the Arab world. From her beautiful lingerie she went on to open her own studio and produce her first designer collection in 1999. With such vaulting skills and an open, free nature that exudes allure, it was only a matter of time before appreciation for MILIA MAROUN spilled over the borders. In 2008, she was the first Arabian designer to show at the Milano Fashion Week. She has done Beirut, the Paris of the Middle East and her native city, proud. But for Milia, this is not enough. She certainly is GOING PLACES.

INTERVIEW Adrienne HAREBOTTLE



FROM LEFT: LOWER PRINT GREEN DRESS, HANGING EAGLE RED DRESS, SLEEPING BIRD BLUE DRESS FROM S/S 2013

It was time to leave Beirut for Paris – Milia Maroun was going off to study fashion design. Such a move was quite normal. Being a designer seemed right for someone passionate about visual forms and where else would the Lebanese go to study? Moving from “the Paris of the Middle East” to the real city was a logical step.

“I always knew I would be working in the arts. Wanting to be a designer was discovered at the moment when I was ready to go to university. I explored the idea of ‘being a designer’ and I thought why not? Deciding on Paris came naturally. It was nothing unusual for a Lebanese who wants to enrol into fashion,” she says. During her time at university, Milia entered into a design competition and stole the show with her lingerie. Winning was an obvious highpoint, but it was her work and the processes involved that gave her an addictive taste for lingerie design.

“This contest and obviously my taste for this unique world led me to design lingerie. It’s all about the detail, which is quite my thing I should say. Then again, focusing on details is also what I could say about my brand. My work is detail orientated on all levels: from the colours to the shapes and techniques used.”

From Paris Milia returned to her home city, Beirut. She opened her own studio and in 1999, the milia m label released its first collection.

“It was unofficially released in the summer of 1999. It was a small collection of knitted long dresses that you could wear on any occasion. It also entailed suits in linen fabric all in under tuned colour shades.”

Almost a decade and a half later, milia m has retained its core qualities while passing through various stages of evolution.

“My designs went into phases and discoveries of shapes, époques and new technologies, nevertheless without ever losing the common DNA. My four yearly collections are now smaller and more focused.”

It was in 2008 that Milia made history. She was invited to show at the Milan Fashion Week, marking the first time ever for someone from the Arabian world to participate in the event. Still happy about this achievement, Milia says her winter 2008 collection was a big success.

Her having gone to Milan and making a grand impression helped bolster the exposure of Arabian designers, whose couture is not only well respected regionally but abroad, too. Ready-to-wear, however, needs greater representation, says Milia.

“Very few Arabian designers in the ready-to-wear are showing internationally, but my going to Milan Fashion Week certainly encouraged many to aim for it.”

Being a free spirit and thriving in environments that nurture natural growth, Milia is not influenced by archetypal styles. However, Paris and her Arabian roots have played a part in the milia m brand and its evolution.

“Paris influenced my work in defining its quality standards, in broadening my vision and culture. There aren’t really Parisian references in my designs other than the highest level of quality. Throughout my work I’ve retained the touch of femininity that is imbedded