

A festoon necklace in
gold and diamonds
by A&W
Mouzannar.

Founded in the 18th century in
Lebanon, **THE HOUSE OF AW
MOUZANNAR** is currently
helmed by cousins and
sixth-generation designers,
Dori and Alia Mouzannar.
But this Beirut-based brand
is more than just a family of
jewellers, states
SMITHA SADANANDAN.

THE HOUSE OF AW MOUZANNAR

IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY

The Mouzannars form a sort of medieval brotherhood with their family name, meaning “belted,” owing its origin to a rather adventurous story that can be traced back to the 18th century. “At that time, our ancestors braved the hazardous roads of the Ottoman Empire to transport their precious creations by hiding it in the folds of their belts,” explains Alia Mouzannar.

From the early 20th century, the Mouzannars had been instrumental in transforming Beirut’s jewellers souk into a hub for all of the Middle East. Though the Lebanese Civil War destroyed the souk, siblings Aziz and Walid Mouzannar continued to grow their family business – crafting timeless pieces and drawing upon Middle Eastern tradition and antiquity, especially Phoenician, with a contemporary twist.

The new generation soon followed in the footsteps of their fathers. Following a degree in Economics from London, Dori Mouzannar specialised in gemmology and joined his father, Aziz, in 1991. Alia, daughter of Walid Mouzannar, went on to study architecture, and in 2003, she decided to delve into the world of gemstones and jewellery. Today, they each create collections for the heritage brand.



Asymmetrical diamond and gold earrings by A&W Mouzannar.

Bracelet crafted with antiquated gold set with diamonds by A&W Mouzannar.





Gold and diamond
pendant chain by
A&W Mouzannar.

Rose gold ring set
with diamonds by
A&W Mouzannar.

DORI'S DESIGN melds the traditional with the modern, infusing each piece with **CHARACTER**, timelessness, and a sense of daring.

"We wanted to preserve our ancestral know-how, while opening the doors of the new millennium. We also carry immense passion for design combined with the handcrafted artisan techniques," say Alia and Dori. They add a modern touch to the classic and give a twist to their designs by adopting new technology, creating haute couture handcrafted jewels that reflect poetic and bold inspirations. Although their designs are stylistically different, they complete each other. "We both express our own visions of the family's signature aesthetics, using the same excellent craftsmanship and artistic visions that the world has come to know for over two centuries," they add.

Dori's design melds the traditional with the modern, infusing each piece with character, timelessness, and a sense of daring. For him, pieces of jewellery are wearable sculptures that are made possible with technique and vision coming together. The bold use of colour and stones along with a signature ruby that accents each piece form the crux of Dori's aesthetic.

Alia's creations are a delicate mix between proportions and colours. Innovative design and assembling are part of her passion, as evidenced in the "modules," a constant concept in her work. "The essence of my jewellery artistry comes from the way I approach my collection. My jewellery is an alibi to tell stories, an extension of personality, mood and values. There's a spirit behind each jewel," says Alia, who is noted for her modular pieces.

Their collaboration with celebrated Iraqi-British architect, late Dame Zaha Hadid, was monumental. Over 10 years ago, Zaha fell in love with the brand's creations, while browsing through their shops. The Pritzker Prize-winning architect became a fan and friend of the Mouzannar family. When Alia asked Zaha if she might be interested in working together on a piece, it took her just under 20 minutes to accept the offer. "We created together a beautiful line called the Silene collection, and it was a wonderful experience," recalls Alia.

Describing the creative endeavour, the late architect had said: “Our collaboration with the House takes full advantage of Alia’s expertise and Dori’s knowledge to explore the beauty of natural forms and the unique properties of its materials. Alia’s work celebrates materiality and composition in the rich history and traditions of Lebanon jewellers. Each immaculately detailed piece conveys formal complexity and precision with the highest standards of craftsmanship.”

The collaboration put the brand on the international radar. It was handpicked to craft the 2016 Victoria’s Secret Bright Night Fantasy Bra, designed by New York-based designer Eddie Borgo. Dori chose five of his most skilled artisans as his core team; seven-hundred hours later, the 18-karat handcrafted gold bra composed of 772 elements, including 9,000 diamonds and emeralds weighing over 450 carats, made its glittering debut when Victoria’s Secret Angel Jasmine Tookes took to the runway during last year’s show at the Grand Palais in Paris.

“Creating unique and custom-made jewellery is something we are used to doing for our clientele. However, creating a wearable bra made exclusively out of gold and precious stones without using any fabric at all was the real challenge. Our inherited passion to tread into new territory made us welcome this challenge,” says Dori.

Having made a strong presence at stores like Dover Street Market in London and New York, Ikram in Chicago, Comptoir 102 in Dubai, Qirdala in Kuwait and, at home, in Beirut, Dori and Alia are channelling their skills, creativity and passion into their new work: they are quietly crafting a fitting tribute to their beloved collaborator – Dame Zaha Hadid.



Enamelled 18-karat gold ring set with diamonds by A&W Mouzannar.



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Sketch earrings of 18-karat pink gold set with diamonds by Alia.



18-karat yellow gold Cherry flowers ring by Alia.



Gold Cache ring.



18-karat gold modular earrings from the Arabesque collection by Alia.



18-karat yellow gold earrings from the Modular collection feature white and black diamonds and rubies designed by Alia.



18-karat gold Galet rings set with an array of diamonds by Alia.



18-karat Arabesque cuff mounted in yellow gold and set with diamonds by Alia.



The 18-karat pink and oxidised gold ring is accented with diamonds by Dori.

The Spine cuff in 18-karat yellow gold set with white diamonds on oxidised gold by Dori.



For Dori, pieces of jewellery are wearable sculptures that are made possible with technique and vision coming together.



Meteor rings in gold set with black diamonds and rubies by Dori.



The Meteor earrings in 18-karat yellow gold set with emeralds and white diamonds by Dori.



Gold meteor bangles by Dori.



“Our collaboration with AWZ takes full advantage of Alia’s expertise and Dori’s knowledge to explore the beauty of natural forms and the unique properties of its materials. Each immaculately detailed piece [from the Silene collection] conveys formal complexity and precision with the highest standards of craftsmanship.”

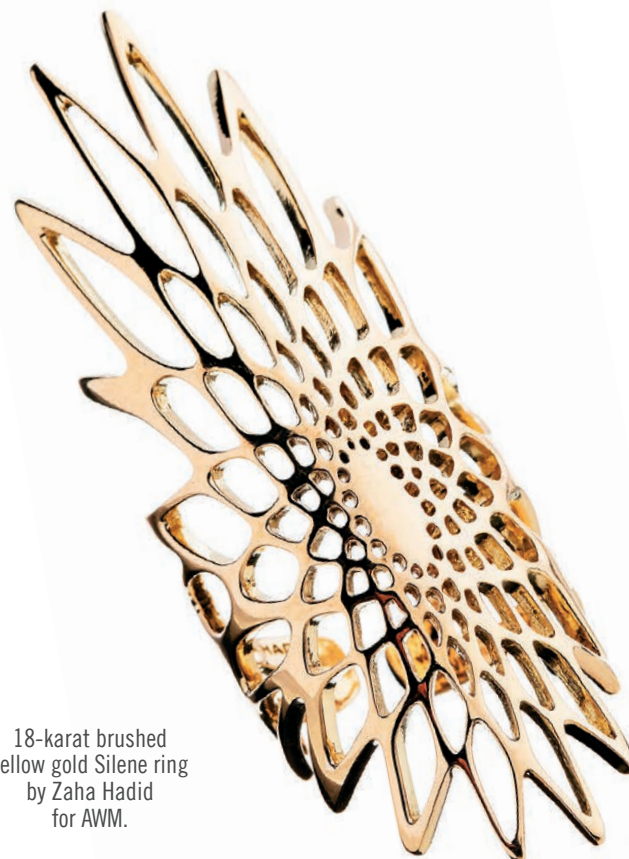
— ZAHA HADID



Pink and yellow gold Silene cuffs designed by Zaha Hadid for AWM.



18-karat Silene brushed yellow gc ring set with white diamonds designed by Zaha Hadid for AWM.



18-karat brushed yellow gold Silene ring by Zaha Hadid for AWM.

