

À la maison Kayrouz

Words Nadine Fares Kahil

Rabih Kayrouz brings to life (and to Beirut) four of Lebanon's newest & grooviest talents



Rabih Kayrouz brought the huge support of his label to four lucky talents to help bring their collections to the public eye. And naturally, Skin was the first at the house door to check out their 12-piece collections...

Kayrouz turned his attention towards nurturing Beirut's up-and-coming designers last August by bringing together four recently graduated students: Missak Hajjavedkian, 25, Lara Khoury, 23, Krikor Jabotian, 22, and Rami Kadi, 22.

Overlooking their fashion designs, Kayrouz offered them guidance and practical assistance to keep their young spirits and imagination alive and unique. The international fashion icon then offered the designers a boutique in downtown

for a six-month period. There, they will have the opportunity to display their designs, gain exposure and publicity, and build on their own clientele. This space will be available to new designers Kayrouz is aiming to foster in the future.

The designers all agree that Maison Rabih Kayrouz has offered all of them an outstanding opportunity – a push they are sure they wouldn't have gotten if they were on their own, especially since the prêt à porter sector isn't yet developed in Lebanon.

With different styles and sources of inspiration, the designers showed their 12-piece collections in a fashion show that attracted a wide audience. We met with the designers and delved into what triggers their imagination.



Missak Hajiavedikian

Missak has drawn inspiration from his Armenian roots, specifically from the paintings of the Armenian-born painter Arshile Gorky, which are featured in Missak's designs. His childhood years were filled with bits and pieces of colours, fabrics and the sound of a sewing machine. Missak eventually realised that fashion design was the only language he could use to express his inner feelings.



"My style is inspired by my Armenian origins. I have always been fascinated by fairy tales, grandiose theatrical productions, auteur films and such, and these have become a part of my fashion world, where I construct the "Ideal Beauty" with bits of my personal fetishes." In the future, he sees himself as the messenger of beauty and perfection. His ultimate goal is to have his own brand in the international market.

Who's your fashion idol?

I can't say I have one, but I admire Jean Paul Gaultier and feel that I have his theatrical touch in my work.

What annoys you most?

My work upsets me in the sense that I always seek to create something better. But what bothers me the most is that my creativity is compromised by many things around me, which limits my capabilities. I'd love to be given the green light to completely create what I want.

How would you describe Beirut?

I love Beirut. To me it's a land of beauty and fashion. It's actually a place where new artists and designers are emerging in the Middle East. >



Krikor Jabotian



Krikor strikes a balance between the practical and artistic, ensuring his elegant pieces are sensible enough for the public. His collection carries the theme of blue flowers. "I was inspired by the spinster trend that prevails today in Beirut – a continuously hung over woman, constantly under the influence of reverie, a woman who lies pathetically, but she is still an optimist, positive and light-spirited."

Inspiration to Krikor is all about the mood and state of mind he's in at the moment of creating. Krikor's woman is one who never likes to go unnoticed: A charismatic, tolerant, non-conformist and marginal woman, a woman with a completely open mind.

His ambitions for the future are not planned; Krikor tends to live day by day. "I learned not to plan much from my previous experiences and deceptions. But I do certainly have an ultimate objective since I'm very strict and extremely demanding from myself. One day, I'd like people to be proud of having 'Krikor Jabotian' in their closets."

Who is your fashion idol?

Legends such as Edith Piaf and Barbara Streisand – among many others – who have marked themselves with their stunning attitude/character performing their master pieces, with a simple little black dress on stage. It's all about the attitude!

What annoys you most?

Nothing and everything. I am a perfectionist, thoughtful and meticulous, yet I am well aware that perfection does not really exist. I'm never satisfied!

How would you describe Beirut?

United and diverse...



Rami Kadi

Rami's prêt à porter collection is made up mainly of evening wear inspired by the night itself – specifically the starry skies – something that is reflected in the designs with the use of sober fabrics encrusted with shiny material. Rami doesn't like creating outrageously creative pieces that can sometimes fall under the label of "unwearable". His designs are unique, yet they communicate easily with the clients. "I design for every woman who at the end of the day blows life and character into the garment she is wearing," says Rami.

Rami is planning on working further with other designers to gain the necessary experience that would allow him to start a career of his own. "I hope I'll be able to achieve my goal of creating a fashion brand covering all types of sectors, from prêt à porter to couture, women, men and kids wear, cosmetics and accessories too..."

Who is your fashion idol?

The queen of burlesque, Dita Von Teese, a mistress of the art of seduction, whose fashionism and attitude captivated me long ago. There's something about Dita that glows with elegance and captivates everyone around her. Dita is walking on a path of her own, and that kind of strong woman is something I truly respect and praise.

What upsets you most?

I would probably take anything in stride except injustice, and especially when it's coming from a relatively more powerful side.

What do you love the most about your country?

Our lifestyle. It's incredibly unique.



Lara Khoury

Lara's collection is entirely built around the incorporation of magnets, merged with fabric to create a truly unique collection, where degradations of black and white prevail. "My choice of colour emanates from the distinct positive-negative feature of the magnets." Thanks to the magnets strategically placed within, Lara (who was featured in Skin's Lightbox last month) makes designs that can be worn in various ways by simply connecting them together to create diverse shapes, volumes and forms.

She launched her own brand, *ilk* prêt-à-couture, with the aim to make use of conceptual arts in her designs. "I want people to know that my creations do not solely exist for the art, but also for the inspiration that drove its birth, and most importantly for the message it carries."

Who is your fashion idol?

I really admire Viktor & Rolf. Every collection they've created is connected to art and has an underlying inspiration. To me, the uniqueness of their ideas and their artistic flair is truly inspiring.

What annoys you most?

Although there is a lot of potential in Lebanon, not a lot of attention is directed towards the artistic youth and more importantly the fashion scene. Maybe this is a result of the political turmoil, which constantly diverts our attention from that very important aspect of our lives... Oh, and my neighbour.

How would you describe Beirut?

Lebanon's appeal, to me at least, lies in its eclectic, almost chaotic atmosphere. In this little bubble, space is available for creation and novelty. Lebanon is a melting pot where many cultures come together, converge, confuse and fuse. To me, this is a great asset, and this makes Lebanon very different from more advanced countries where ideas are tailored. ●

