

this week



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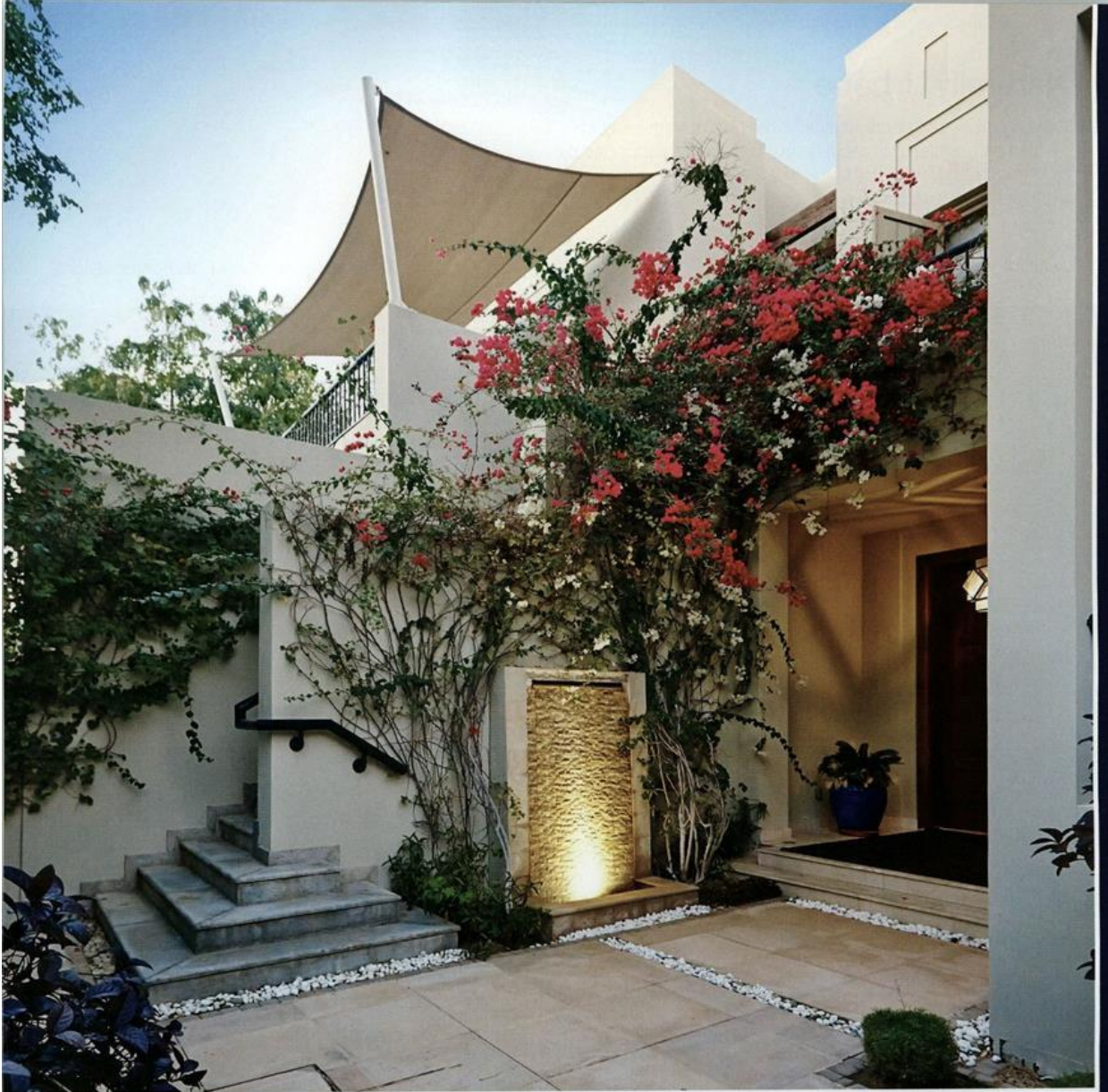
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JEWELLERY DESIGNER

PAYAL MEHTA

INVITES US INTO HER NEW HOME IN DUBAI'S AL BARARI TO TELL US ABOUT HER GLAMOROUS LIFE, GORGEOUS HOME AND GLITTERING CAREER

New Yorker Payal Mehta's move to the exclusive, verdant Al Barari enclave in Dubai was seamless, largely due to this aesthete's ability to transfer her creative skills from the jewellery sphere to her home's interiors. The fact that she has a diploma from the New York School of

Interior Design, where she honed her talent, was an added bonus when picking iconic, visually arresting pieces.

Payal, who laughs that "there is no such thing as outrageous", is used to breaking boundaries and never shies away from a challenge. At last year's invite-only le

Bal des Débutantes in Paris, the crème de la crème of the world's debutantes sported haute couture, and teamed it with Payal's one-of-a-kind pieces; she was the first female designer to be chosen for this accolade and admits to it being a milestone in her already shining CV. ►

'Living in Dubai inspires me. It's given me even more confidence to create what I believe in'



Payal welcomes us into her beautiful home in Al Barari. The jewellery designer admits that luscious surroundings are one of the biggest attractions of the luxury development

'I feel your home is an extension of who you are. I love modernity; clean cut, simple lines with a touch of intricate art'



The villa, which features an impressive foyer (above) and staircase (right) has been lovingly and cleverly transformed by Payal

Hungry for new experiences, the jewellery doyenne, who specialises in bespoke pieces and admits to having a penchant for gems, decided to pack up shop and shift with her family – which includes her diamond dealer husband and younger daughter (the eldest is studying in New York) and her puppy Truffles – to Dubai a year ago.

The effervescent fashionista has no regrets: “We are looking forward to seeing what this metropolis has in store for us,”

she enthuses. “Living in Dubai inspires me. It’s given me even more confidence to create what I believe in.”

The gracious hostess’s home reflects her personal taste: “I feel your home is an extension of who you are. I love modernity; clean cut, simple lines with a touch of intricate art and beautiful sculptures.”

And though the sunshine-filled space is sprawling and open plan, she has managed to balance its grandeur, keeping it inviting, cosy and perfect for familial bonding.

The enigmatic force behind Payal New York, invites **HELLO!** into her lush villa, which is so immaculate that we are surprised to hear her admit it is still a work in progress, to talk about what drives her, what inspires her and the personal journey that led her to jewellery design.

Al Barari is such a special location; did you know instantly that you wanted to call this home?

I had a park close to my home in New York,



so I was surrounded by greenery and was facing the river. I feel it's very important to be surrounded by these elements and this space offered both my prerequisites. The first time I saw this property I just fell in love with the outside space, it was beautiful. I knew there and then that this was the place for us.

Have you been working on this piecemeal and is it now complete?
We've been living in Dubai for ▶





'I am very passionate about interior design. I take great pleasure in knowing that I made a house into our home'

10 months and managed to create a beautiful home, but it's still a work in progress. Whenever I get the occasional moment I love working on the space and I still have things that need to be shipped in from New York.

Do you have a particular room that you love best?

My family room which opens into the garden. I love it because of the peace it offers due to the relaxing surroundings and the environment. Overall I love the tranquility that my whole home gives me. I also have a soft spot for the dining room; the long painting that takes pride of place in it was an anniversary gift from my husband. It's a painting by Raqib Shaw called First Blossom, I think it is breathtaking!

Are you happy with the way everything has turned out, given you worked on this giant decorating project solo?

Yes, I am very passionate about interior design and I always like doing things in a specific way. I take great pleasure in knowing that I made a house into our home, and have left my mark all around.

You're a certified chef, studied model drawing at FIT and then opted to study towards a diploma in interior design; is it safe to say you weren't ►



This living area is a perfect example of Payal's interior aesthetic – modern with clean lines and a striking piece of art





'I tried out many different things before I knew jewellery design was what I wanted to do. It was all trial and error...'

Payal's jewellery designs and pieces laid out across the table, she says she has a soft spot for her dining room (left). It features a painting by Raqib Shaw (which can be seen behind Payal); it was an anniversary gift from her husband

always destined to design jewellery?

I tried out many different things before I knew this was what I wanted to do. It was all trial and error, but it was when I was flicking through a magazine that I realised what a huge market there was for good jewellery.

That's how Payal New York was launched back in 2009. I think I would have been an interiors specialist if I hadn't gone into this field.

What sets your pieces apart from other jewellers out there?

Beside the fact that only the finest quality of diamonds and stones are used in my pieces, I think what sets me apart from other jewellers is the process that I like to go through in order to make my bespoke items. It is almost like a journey; I get to know my client individually, their likes and dislikes, what the piece is meant for and what they'll be wearing it with. Each of my pieces should be meaningful and unique to the client.

If we were to buy one piece from your collection that typifies your style, which

should it be?

All of my pieces and collections symbolise something special to me but the Bird collection probably means the most. I identify with the spirit of the bird and what it represents; the idea of it flying high and free into the open, at peace. That's how I envisage the women who wear my label, strong, soaring and independent.

Where do you get your inspiration from?

I am inspired through my everyday experiences, or when I am touched by something, when something moves me. ►





'I am inspired through my everyday experiences, or when I am touched by something'

I think my different cultural experiences after living in various continents, along with my love of fashion and fine art has most definitely sparked ideas for my pieces.

What's the single biggest mistake people make when investing in jewellery?


Firstly, it saddens me that so many people will spend money to buy such exquisite pieces and keep them hidden and locked away. Secondly, I wish people would take the time and make more of an effort, like they do for other things, when it comes to selecting and buying jewellery because it is something that stays with you forever. It's a true reflection of you that can be passed on from generation to generation.

Which woman typifies your aesthetic and would make the perfect Payal New York brand ambassador?

The Duchess of Cambridge. Kate has sheer class and elegance.

Do you see Middle Eastern women opting for different pieces or styles than those that were popular in the US?

I think there is now a universal aesthetic. Women chose the pieces ▶



'I identify with the spirit of the bird and what it represents. That's how I envisage the women who wear my label, strong, soaring and independent'

that speak to them... it's an individual rather than a cultural or geographic choice.

Do you think your collection will change now that you are based in the Middle East?

I can't help but be inspired by the city around me, its history and ambition, especially as it grows day by day. It may well have an influence on future collections and even the bespoke pieces for my Middle Eastern clients, but my originality and passion will always remain the same.

Can you name some of the designers you admire and which shops do you tend to go to when buying clothes for yourself?

I have to admit that because I am so busy working all the time, I love to shop online. Net-a-porter.com is my saviour!

Which other creative influencers do you admire?

Steve Jobs. He has allowed us to live a life where we are able to carry on with our day-to-day activities, stay on top of work and juggle home chores whilst on the move. Because of him I am able to multi-task like never before.

You're obviously a workaholic but what do you do in your down-time?

Honestly speaking whenever I get the chance to relax nothing beats a day at home on the sofa, in front of the TV. I am addicted to *Shark Tank*, *Modern Family* and *Suits*. ▶



Payal leans against an exquisite armchair, while an antique telescope and half mannequin bedecked in beautiful jewels make their own style statements



Where do you love to travel to?

Paris is probably my favourite city to visit and it definitely influences my work. It's a city that has so much to offer. It's so rich in art and culture, which I find are two of the most vital inspirations when designing.

Do you tend to return to The Big Apple a lot or to explore new places when you head overseas for a break?

New York is always on my list; I miss walking on the streets, strolling to a museum in the middle of the day and being able to see Broadway shows on a whim.

I think every culture vulture should make a point of seeing The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art and a theatrical performance in Central Park.

Another New York must-do is to stroll along the High Line from the Meatpacking District all the way to West 34th Street. It's the best way of seeing West Manhattan; the views from this historic freight train line that has been transformed into a public park, are fabulous. The best area for restaurants and boutiques is Tribeca.

But I am really looking forward to

visiting Prague. I would love to spend time exploring the gothic architecture.

You've made Dubai home – have you managed to establish any special haunts here?

Store-wise, Boutique 1 is a firm favourite. The brands I adore are Vince and Hermes. I collect blazers; I literally have a wardrobe full of them! The food in Dubai is fantastic, it's hard to pick just one regular haunt as I am in awe wherever I go – I couldn't choose just one! Although I have to admit the other week I had a great dining experience when I went for lunch at seafood hotspot Pierchic in Madinat Jumeirah Resort. The whole restaurant was surrounded by azure water; the ambience was just incredible.

What's next in the pipeline for you?

The plan is to grow Payal New York within the UAE, whilst keeping my already established presence in Paris, New York and India.

INTERVIEW AND STYLING: NATASHA FARUQUE
PHOTOS: AJITH NARENDRA





'The first time I saw this property I just fell in love with the outside space, it was beautiful. I knew this was the place for us'

When it comes to relaxing, Payal says nothing beats chilling out on the sofa with a box set of one of her favourite TV shows

HELLO!

MIDDLE EAST

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'This was the first time either of the children had played in the snow'



ROYAL REPORT

THE FABULOUS FOUR

INTIMATE FAMILY PHOTOS AS THE CAMBRIDGES WHISK GEORGE AND CHARLOTTE TO A WINTER WONDERLAND IN THE SNOWY FRENCH ALPS

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BHD 1.5
OMR 1.5
QAR 1.5
SAR 1.5
KWD 1.2