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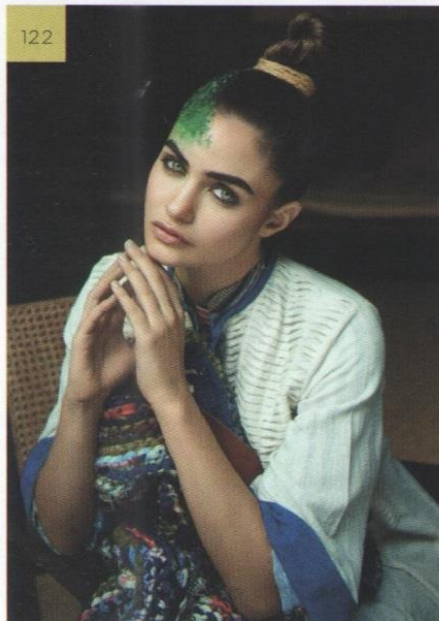
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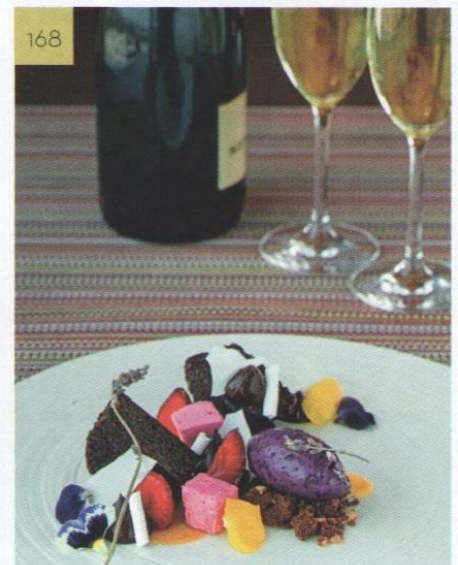
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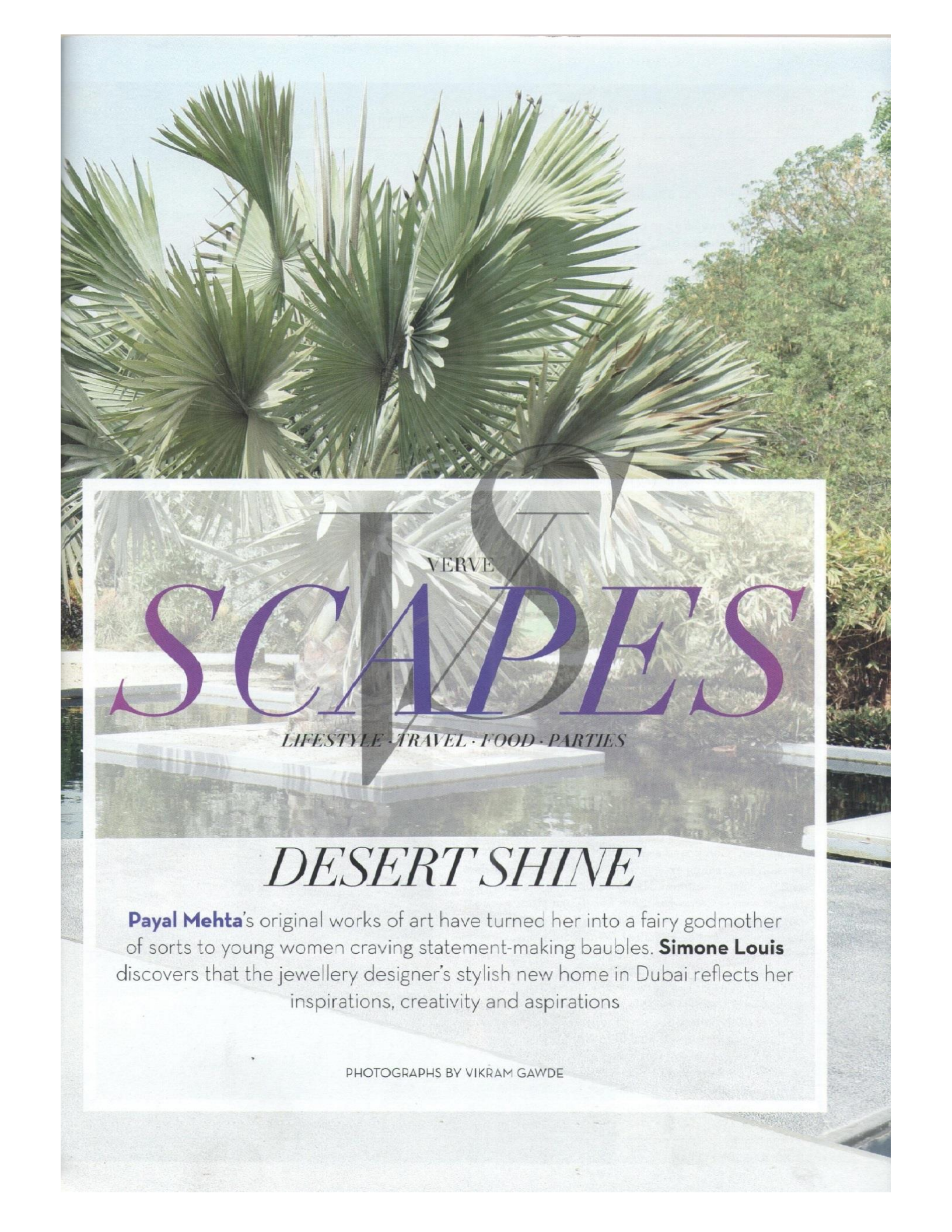
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Payal Mehta: smitten by nature



VERVE

SCAPES

LIFESTYLE · TRAVEL · FOOD · PARTIES

DESERT SHINE

Payal Mehta's original works of art have turned her into a fairy godmother of sorts to young women craving statement-making baubles. **Simone Louis** discovers that the jewellery designer's stylish new home in Dubai reflects her inspirations, creativity and aspirations

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIKRAM GAWDE

“Jewellery can be very intimidating; I want to change that,” she asserts. Payal Mehta is not your run-of-the-mill couture accessory creator, not in the least. No airs, no pretensions, just an unbridled passion and honesty come through as I chat with the charismatic founder of Payal New York – a brand now synonymous with style, functionality and ingenuity. As the name suggests, her journey began in the Big Apple, but she is enveloped in the comfort of her new Middle Eastern big-city abode when she points out the irony of her first name to me. “My background was actually maths and physics as a student, but I did an interior architecture course in New York which somehow got me interested in jewellery design. It’s neat that I found my way here, because the name Payal refers to a traditional Indian ornamental anklet...so maybe working in this line was always part of my destiny!” The daughter of a jewellery designer, she married a diamond merchant but continued to study history and art while raising two daughters in the American metropolis, before founding her brand in 2009 and turning it into an empire. “I see my daughters and other young girls growing up and I feel that the whole experience of couture jewellery is missing – I’d like to create that for them,” she explains.

Mehta was the first independent and first woman designer to partner with Le Bal des Débutantes, an annual invitation-only event in Paris that has previously had designs by Oscar de la Renta, Elie Saab and Dior adorning the attending debutantes who are hand-picked from social circles around the world. “With each of my collections, I’m creating my own stories but, at the same time, when I meet young girls, I learn from them. They influence me in a very creative way. When designing for the debutantes at the ball, I made each of them a profile and got to know their likes and dislikes, their personalities and the gowns they’d be wearing. The jewellery tells a story of who they are as people and the pieces are created as ones to remember.” Composed and elegant, the artiste details her passion for creating experiences for the women of today and the next generation. She maintains that the energy from the universe is what feeds her design ethos and that her main inspirations are always nature and global living, with a focus on being practical. “When designing, I imagine the Payal New York woman to be like you and I. A lot of thought goes into creating pieces that she can wear to, say, a cocktail party or an interview or while travelling. I want each piece I create to be able to be worn more than once. None of my jewellery is mass-produced; it is all handmade and one-of-a-kind. It will be different each time it’s worn... special, like the woman wearing it.”

Clean contemporary lines with a touch of colour is her favoured aesthetic, as it is clear from her home. She tells me she loves playing with shapes and texture, exclaiming,





Payal Mehta: trendsetting.creator

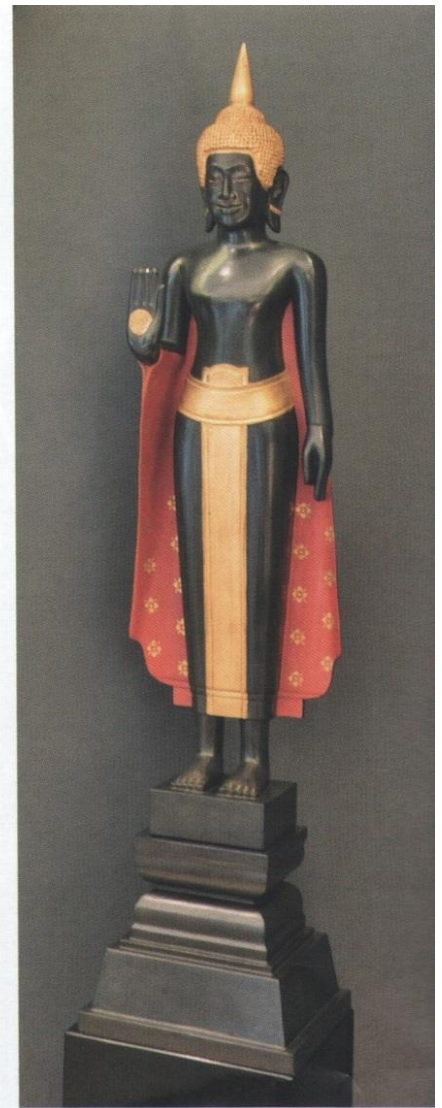


Payal Mehta: perfectly practical

“My home is exactly like my jewellery, I think!” Styling her space is another passion, and she picks up decorative pieces whenever she travels, though without ever having a shopping agenda. “I know in three seconds whether I love something or not.”

She owns a lot of art, some of it reflecting her own design sensibilities, but it is her large varied collection of Buddha figurines that mean the most to her. “I’m really not a very materialistic person, but I can’t imagine my space without them,” Mehta explains. The most recent addition to the collection came from her daughter’s travels in Burma, says the doting mum, who also loves sculptures. There’s exhilaration in her voice as she tells me about a piece that was acquired during a vacation with the family in South Africa. “My husband and I just fell in love with this artwork and asked the hotel whether we could buy it, even though we had no clue who the artist was. We later found out that he happens to be a very established designer from Paris!” She may be a self-confessed outdoor person who is zealous about fitness, but her favourite places in the house are the kitchen and family room, where





“My home is exactly like my jewellery, I think!”

she loves spending time looking at jewellery on Instagram whenever she’s not working.

Though she is largely drawn to colour palettes comprising white, grey, black, pale pink and sometimes blue, Mehta makes it a point to elucidate that her style is still not minimalistic. “If you look at my designs, the clean lines give an overall feel of minimalism, but there are layers and intricacy involved. Anything beautiful, to me, is not simple.” The jewellery designer’s creative process leans on instinct, but once she has a concept, the thorough research begins. This is when, she says, certain elements or ideas jump out at her, motivating her to sketch. Meeting the right craftspeople who can bring her vision to life is the next step. “It’s a long journey from concept to execution, and I take my time,” she chuckles, telling me it takes her about nine months to arrive at a finished piece. The creative soul is constantly inspired by people, interviewing – in her charming way – anyone new that she meets, and absorbing their stories. Her creations also revolve

mostly around nature and it’s fascinating that she, in a way, forecasted the recent design trend that is inspired by galaxies, seeing as she came out with a constellation collection two years ago. “Now I’m seeing stuff from Valentino to Louboutin, and in every fashion magazine, that is largely constellation- and star-inspired fashion. I’m really proud of that!” she smiles. “A similar thing happened with my first collection that was centred around birds.”

Rightly enough, I see that Payal Mehta’s jewels speak a different language and there’s no mistaking them for any other designer’s. Like her personal aesthetic, her jewellery is practical while being absolutely young at heart. Whether in New York or Dubai, it is the same passion that reverberates as she speaks, sketches and creates. Although the UAE is a new market for her, she is confident about the future of her brand, which includes plans to participate in numerous events and collaborate with a host of museums. As she eloquently put it, “I want to be more than a jeweller in the world of jewellery.” [V](#)