

MOUJEH

A woman with short dark hair and bangs stands against a solid orange background. She is wearing a black, sleeveless, form-fitting dress covered in small, multi-colored sequins. The dress has a sheer, polka-dot bodice and a matching sheer skirt with polka dots. She is also wearing fishnet stockings. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the dress and her features.

THE COUTURE HOUR DRESSES TO DREAM IN

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PICTURE THIS

COMPILED BY Sophia Serin

May 21 marks World Day for Cultural Diversity. MOJEH asks the region's top tastemakers, entrepreneurs and creatives to share a photograph that depicts their most memorable moment living in the multicultural Middle East

CAROLIE MIDY DE VILLEE PHID

ARTISAN, DESIGNER,
PHOTOGRAPHER

"This picture was taken from a rooftop in DIFC in 2017. That day, I was surrounded by some of the most talented and renowned photographers from Egypt, India, Germany and the UAE. We were all mesmerised by this astonishing spectacle unfolding its magic in front of us. This is exactly what I love and respect so much about the UAE. Wherever you come from, whatever your religious beliefs, cultural background or ethnicity, we all have made the decision to live, connect and interact with respect and have empathy in a country that welcomes us all.

I don't know many other countries in the world that show such a commitment to encouraging so much diversity and making everybody feel at home. I have been living and working in Dubai since 2016 as an artisan designer and photographer and feel blessed and extremely lucky to grow and learn from all these people in a welcoming land of trade."



MALIA ABDUL RASHEED

FOUNDER, BAMBAH

"This picture was taken at the launch of Bambah's first resort line in 2010. The collection was launched in the form of a mini fashion show on one of Dubai's most beautiful sandy beaches. It was a dream come true. The view was magical, the sun was shining, and the girls were dancing. Love was just in the air! Although it was hard work and we all had to get there so early and work fast to get ready on time, I'm so proud of what we all did together on that day. I am Egyptian and have grown up in Dubai. I love being here and surrounded by so many different cultures and backgrounds, and this picture proves it all. We were a team of 20, all very different but all sharing the same passion for life and love."



WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

LAYLA KARDAN

SINGER/SONGWRITER

"This picture was taken in 2020 on the set of my latest music video 'Underwater'. We shot this in the height of the pandemic under extreme conditions, adhering to restrictions and shooting under water and in the desert. While everything was a challenge in terms of shot preparation, the team and I had the most magical day of beautiful interactions and encounters. We had a limited crew and each one of the seven members was from a different part of the world, but there was so much synergy and harmony between us all. The umbrella shot, which was the concept of director Jhenyfy Muller, was the final scene of the day. We were exhausted but also in such high spirits. It was quite windy at this point, so we were all chasing the umbrellas until we weighed them down with sand. Meanwhile, I was trying not to sink into the sand in my heavy Kristina Fidelskaya gown and heels! We were in hysterics at this point so it was a beautiful way to end a successful shoot. This is my favourite music video to date and one that goes in the memory book of life."

Layla Kardan photographed by Norbert Knaat

JUMANA AL DARWISH

FOUNDER, THE HAPPY BOX, THE HAPPY STUDIO AND HAPPY HEARTS GLOBAL



"This image was taken at my office, The Happy Studio, in 2019. I had just signed off on a partnership that would take my enterprises to the next level. At that very moment I felt empowered, humbled, inspired and deep down proud and grateful for all the hard work and endless nights my team and I put into developing our brands. That moment made me believe that dreams do come true with hard work, persistence and passion. I have always been

fascinated by the symbolic construction of a community and how within it there exists smaller communities with clusters of people interacting with one another based on cultural backgrounds, language, profession, hobbies and interests. The UAE is the embodiment of cultural diversity – the epitome of a melting pot with over 200 nationalities living together as one collective community in harmony and peace, elevating and embracing each other." ☺

DANIA SADIK

FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DESIGNER AT DANYOUSH

"I was born and raised in Dubai. I knew from a very young age that there existed another world of make-believe, and this soon manifested itself in the thrills and joys of establishing my own brand, which I called Danyoush. This picture was taken in March 2019, it was Mother's Day and it was at a party hosted by my sister Lina in her garden. Looking back at this picture and focusing on that crucial year (which, unbeknown to me at the time, would be the last of many such celebrations), I find myself filled with so much gratefulness and compassion.

To be born and raised in Dubai has been a blessing in many ways. The cultural diversity of such a young country can breed so many correct values from such a young age. I am constantly in awe of all the people

I meet in Dubai, of how integrated they are by their acceptance of the cultures that surround them and of how informed they are in their willingness to learn and share of establishing my own brand, which I called Danyoush. This picture was taken in March 2019, it was Mother's Day and it was at a party hosted by my sister Lina in her garden. Looking back at this picture and focusing on that crucial year (which, unbeknown to me at the time, would be the last of many such celebrations), I find myself filled with so much gratefulness and compassion.

Having visited, studied, lived in and traveled to different countries, I got married, had kids, started a business and came back to my roots and birth home of Dubai. The ease of doing this and ability to adjust is because I grew up within the foundations of a country that defined itself through its open-minded approach to diversity. The cycle of life always takes you back to where you want to be, and today I am definitely in my element. This country has taught me what it means to aim high."



SONIYA KIRAN PUNJABI

FOUNDER OF ILLUMINATIONS WELL-BEING
CENTER, HYPNOTHERAPIST, HOLISTIC
WELLNESS COACH & CORPORATE TRAINER

"I truly have a newfound appreciation for the UAE and all that it has to offer, especially after seeing how amazingly well they have handled the pandemic. But I didn't always feel this way. When people used to ask me if I live in Dubai, I used to say no. I lived in Illuminations, the wellness company that I founded in 2006.

This was because the UAE for me was only work, work, and more work. I rarely gave this city a chance to be anything more. While I am eternally grateful for what this city has gifted me in terms of a flourishing career and life purpose.

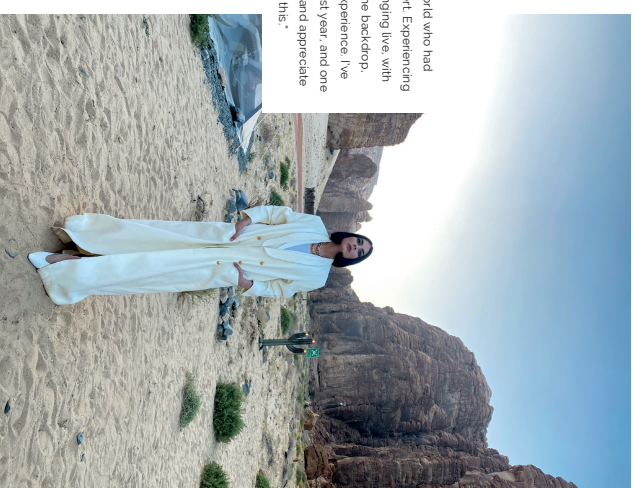
back then I viewed Dubai as more of a convenient base to have rather than calling it my home. Since the pandemic, all that has changed. Being grounded in Dubai for months at a time, I've had the opportunity to create my own little nest, make an effort to build meaningful relationships and connections, and embrace the city as my own. Thank you to the UAE, and all the great leaders of this country for always giving us the best of the best, for making the impossible possible, for inspiring us and showing us what it means to be a true alchemist."

TAMARA AL GABBANI

LUXURY INFLUENCER

"Ajlula is a magical place, one of the world's newfound wonders, in my opinion, full of history, archaeological magnificence, epic landscapes and a sea of stars at night. It was certainly a fitting setting for the open-air concert of Andrea Bocelli and his family in April 2021, which was my first outing since February 2020. There were

visitors from all over the world who had come just to see the concert. Experiencing Bocelli and his family all singing live, with the grandeur of Hegra as the backdrop, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I've learned many things this last year, and one of them was to be present and appreciate the magic of moments like this."



KAMILA OMARZAY

FOUNDER, THE SNACK SOCIETY



"I chose this picture even though it wasn't taken so long ago because looking at it makes me feel so grateful. I always wanted to do something in the food industry, but I didn't know how or where to start. Eventually, I started a food page in 2016, with not much hope of whether it would be successful or not. Fast forward five years later, here I am in 2020, sitting in the Bee Kitchen, being photographed for a collaboration with Hilton

Hotels! I never thought The Snack Society, which started as a small business, would end up where it is today. Looking back, I have nothing but so much gratitude for how the universe lined things up for me. Dubai offers an amazing platform for start-ups, so living in the UAE definitely helped. The UAE is one of the very few places in the world that offers that cultural acceptance, which is why it is home to so many different nationalities."

KATIE JENSEN

JOURNALIST, KEYNOTE SPEAKER & COMMUNICATIONS COACH

"This photo was taken in 2019, just before my Emirati co-host, Dr. Khalid Al Suwaidi and I went on stage to host Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. The audience of 4,000 included UAE royalty, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, leading business figures and many more who had travelled from all over the world to be there.

It was an honour to meet His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, to help present a series of sustainability awards designed to recognise entrepreneurs driving innovative environmental solutions.

I love that the UAE is home to more nationalities than the United Nations. As I

raise two young children, I think it's incredible to give them the opportunity to meet

different people from all over the globe and to understand the different languages they speak, the food they eat, the clothes they wear and gain an appreciation of the world they live in. The key to eradicating racism, wars and conflicts lies in educating our children.

I am lucky enough to have grown up in Australia with access to a good education, clean water, healthy food, a roof over my head – the basic essentials that so many people don't have just because they were born in a different country. I hope that growing up in the UAE, my children can see just how they lucky they are, and learn how to help those who have had a different path forced upon them."

