

GRAZIA

Easy Chic

CENTRE • STAGE •

The Names
You Need To
Know

+ 20

HOMEGROWN LABELS
ON OUR RADAR

★ing

Aqil Khan

*“Go for it, take risks, and be brave”,
introducing the Paris-based
model and actor*

04

ON HIS OWN TERMS



03 HEALING TOUCH

Holistic therapist Vansa Bali draws attention to the need of the hour: Self-discovery.

04 ON HIS OWN TERMS

For cover star Aqil Khan, life is about embracing uncertainties and seizing opportunities.



06

TIMELESS COUTURE

Europe's No 1 Style Magazine

GRAZIA CENTRE STAGE

06 TIMELESS COUTURE

Ohaila Khan shares contemporary designs and painstaking, rich craftsmanship for the new season.

08 GREEN LIGHTS AHEAD

Model Kumari is set to make her cinematic debut as she kick-starts her career.

10 CRAFT CULTURE

ADA Designer Chikan Studio is championing the 'vocal for local' ideology.



12

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

12 LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Young philanthropist, Komal R Deshmukh opens up about her efforts to uplift rural communities.

15 IN HER ELEMENT

Designer Perna Gupta is finding new occasions for fusion wear.

17 MUSIC BEYOND BORDERS

British-Indian artist and singer Raveena Mehta is making waves with her music.



18

REFLECT THE LIGHT

18 REFLECT THE LIGHT

Designer Abhinav Mishra's reveals the festive edit of his eponymous label that infuses rich Indian crafts into feather-light ensembles.

20 THE NEW ORDER

Whether they focus on sleek ready-to-wear or streetwear, 20 homegrown labels truly take creativity and innovation to a new level.



20

THE NEW ORDER



HEALING TOUCH

We're turning our focus to the need of the hour: Self-discovery

Mental health and well-being have gained increasing importance over the last few years, owing to the rise of digital media and its impact on our lives. And while the last six months being cooped up at home haven't been easy, some would even argue that the pandemic came as a blessing in disguise to help people slow down, unwind and rejuvenate. During these pressing times, it's important to cut loose from our mechanical lifestyles and re-focus on healing of the mind and practice self-reflection.

One such individual who has dedicated her life's purpose to this goal is Vansa Bali, holistic therapist, Thetahealing instructor and life coach based in Dubai. We caught up with Vansa Bali to understand the art of self-development to awaken one's highest potential.

GRAZIA: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

VANSA BALI: I'm a Holistic Therapist, a Thetahealing Instructor, a Life Coach and a graduate in Psychology & Behavioural Neuroscience. I have been practicing in Dubai for about 5 years now and I teach simple yet powerful self-development tools and programs that can uplift people to enjoy living purposefully, joyfully and abundantly.

G: What or who inspires

your calling?

VB: I think it starts with my parents because they have always inculcated the values of being open-minded, of opening your horizons to think differently and to think out of the box. And that's resulted in me having the confidence to follow my passion and what I love doing. So, I'm grateful to my parents for that.

G: What is the best part of waking up each morning?

VB: The best part of waking up



each morning is knowing that you can create a new reality by changing the way you think about your life. That pain is not permanent and you can always change the way you look at life. So, that really motivates me to wake up in the morning and look at life really differently.

G: What's your stress buster?

VB: My career is my stress buster because it's my passion. The tools that I use to share with other people that empowers them in their journey are the same tools I use to

empower myself whenever I feel low or stressed. And most importantly, I always remind myself why I do what I do – to help people achieve their highest potential. That takes away all the stress because now, it's about you and not about me.

G: What does success mean to you?

VB: I think, identifying what success means to you, is success. The day I realised what I loved doing, and realised that this is what I wanted to pursue for the rest of my life, I felt successful. And of course, every time I see a smile on someone's face, I see an awakening happen in someone's life where they change their perspective and outlook towards themselves and what they can create with their lives, I feel like I've achieved something worthwhile. So, understanding success is the first step to success.

Vansa Bali is a Holistic Therapist, Thetahealing Instructor, CTI & Exponential Coach, Motivational Speaker, Corporate Wellness Consultant & Humanitarian.
info@vansabali.com

ON HIS OWN TERMS

For cover star Aqil Khan, life is about embracing uncertainties and seizing opportunities

The idea of men earning a living for simply wearing clothes smacked of unappealing traits – narcissism, unintelligence and a lack of seriousness.

But in more recent years there's been a seismic shift in attitudes. As social media influence grows, so has our need to be influenced. And according to 25-year-old Paris-based model Aqil Khan (who also doubles as a commercial director for an import and export food company in Europe), having an authentic approach to connectivity is a key component to becoming influential on social media. The aspiring actor also believes that the craft of acting is like most arts – a beautiful and elusive thing, and the process is different for everyone. "Hard work and perseverance pays off. I'm a big fan of Shah Rukh Khan and, like him, I'd like to achieve great heights. In today's day and age, there's no room for complacency – it's all about the hustle," he says. There are multiple methods of learning how to act, and how to build a character. But in its simplest form, acting is about weaving a story together. For Aqil Khan, acting is about inhabiting a character, and presenting a narrative. "The goal is for that character and the narrative to be truthful, authentic and entertaining for an audience – almost like how it works for a social media influencer. But, it can take years and years to master. There is no set formula, and while some people are naturals, most people need to learn to hone their craft to have a sustainable career," he goes on to elaborate.

And while Aqil has dreams of carving out a stellar career for himself, he remains rooted. "I am dedicated to the family business and believe that hard work will take me places. But I also enjoy



doing normal things and being normal," he says. When asked if he follows any rules to successful living, he's quick to tell us about the three things he's learnt in life, so far.

1. "It's important to listen first and then react."
2. "If you're looking to branch out into a field of your choice, it's important to do your research first. Sometimes, it's important to just 'be' as opposed to 'trying' or 'performing'."
3. "Go for it, take risks, and be brave. A good tip for life is to just go for it, that bold choice, that thing that scares you, whatever. I always believe: Go big or go home."





BRAVE NEW WORLD

For Aqil Khan, it's always been about following in the footsteps of his father, who he believes is the sole reason behind his tenacity. "My parents always have our best interests at heart. I've been told on several occasions: 'Don't quit. Patience and diligence are the main keys to success.' People expect everything to come from a magical 'big break', but those things don't happen instantaneously. Despite the hard work sometimes, there's always going to be heartbreak, and a lot of near misses. As an aspiring actor, if I don't book a role, I've trained myself to deal with the silence. Why? Because most often that not, we don't get to hear a categorical 'no'. You must fight your way through thousands of silences until it all works out in your favour.

Despite picking up lessons along the way, Aqil believes that there's no end to learning. "You are never done growing as a person, as an entrepreneur, or as an artist. In my experience, you must surround yourself with people who challenge you. If you think you're the best, you're in the wrong place. And if you think you don't have anything left to learn, you're wrong. There's nothing better than thinking: 'I can't do that yet, but I'm going to do it.'"

And as a non-negotiable Aqil Khan believes that acting any role in life starts with overcoming



the biggest challenge of all: Loving yourself. "It's important to love the work. I want to be a successful businessman and an actor – but it's not going to be easy. There's going to be a lot of days when I will feel inadequate, less-than, and completely ignored by everyone around me. It's during these times that it becomes important to remind yourself that your value is not found in how your last winning venture or audition, it's in how you treat your loved ones, strangers, and yourself."

ROAD AHEAD

Like any Gen-Z individual with a dream, Aqil Khan believes that the nature of success will continue to evolve for him over the next few years. "It's important to stay optimistic and committed to a goal. Putting in the hard work matters. It's important to get out of your head as we all tend to overthink everything. Another life lesson that's helped me out is: Don't be afraid to look stupid. I've had to learn, on several occasions, to embrace my inner fool all over again. I'd be so comfortable being my weird and funny self around people I was comfortable with, but I'd turn that off in company I wasn't familiar with and it'd dull me down. I had to learn to embrace myself all over again."

For someone just starting out, Aqil Khan comes equipped with a desire to embrace any opportunity that might come his way. He tells us: "Learn the lines. Do the work. Stay in focus. Invest the time. Do everything that is required."





OHAILA KHAN'S TIMELESS COUTURE

Contemporary designs and painstaking, rich craftsmanship defines designer Ohaila Khan's creations for the new season.

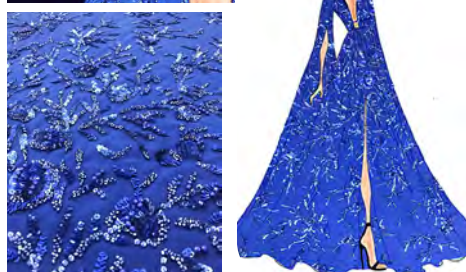
From tips on buying occasion-wear virtually to building a sustainable wardrobe, in a free-wheeling conversation with Grazia designer Ohaila Khan reflects on the positive impact which the new normal has enforced. Edited excerpts from the interview below:

GRAZIA: Where did you draw inspiration for your latest collection?

OHAILA KHAN (OK): This collection was born with an aim to bridge the gap between the East and the West. I noticed a monotony in the occasion-wear market, where most brands were harping on designs that were inspired by Indian heritage. I felt the consumers need a change from it and hence I decided to take a fresh and modern approach. While staying



Bespoke couture ensemble crafted for Bollywood actress Ileana D'Cruz's red carpet appearance.



true to the brand's signature style, we developed a contemporary embroidery technique and designed modern silhouettes. For instance, one can see the folds of a wild mushroom translated into dramatic ruffles and pleats and the abstract patterns in the surface embellishments in this couture collection.

G: Could you describe what silhouettes, colour palette and embroidery techniques employed in your latest collection?

OK: Our Paris Fashion Week collection, which is our most recent work, features pastel hues and jewel tones. The clothes are an amalgamation of European and Middle Eastern aesthetics. We usually tend to employ multiple hand-beading techniques in each garment. For instance, we've used a combination of embellishment techniques like appliqué coupled with thread work, fabric manipulation and encrusted sparkling crystals with hand-cut sequins in our garments this season.

Further, I consider this as our all-inclusive collection that has a global appeal to it. The extensive line comprises of lehengas and ballgowns, voluminous overskirts, cascading capes, along with prêt and contemporary separates.

G: In the new normal the nature of weddings have changed. As an occasion-wear designer, can you name some of these changes? How have these changes impacted your design approach?

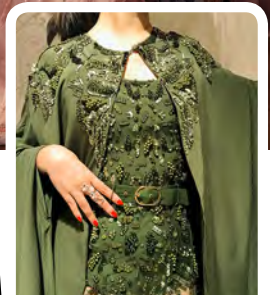
OK: The future of weddings is definitely intimate, be it at a private residence or an outdoor destination with a tightly curated guest list. In my observation, there are two kinds of consumers. The first category includes individuals who repeat outfits but invest in mindful and timeless pieces and the second group includes shoppers who buy different clothes for every single occasion, irrespective of their quality. Having said that, as our social gatherings have reduced in the new normal, buyers are increasingly gravitating towards well-crafted products as opposed to the quantity. Client budgets that earlier needed to be split for more variety are now being invested in garments that can be created with attention to detail and good craftsmanship. I hope this pushes all the consumers to rethink their spending habits and adopt a 'less is more' approach.

As a label we believe in limited production and tend to focus on the timeless value of the ensemble. In a market dictated by seasonal trends, I believe that staying true to your own style as a designer has become important, rather than releasing collection after collection to tap into every viral trend.

Further, the pandemic has reinforced this belief system of sticking to my design values and now I'm even considering withdrawing from the pressure of seasonal fashion calendars to work on collections that can be worn and enjoyed for years to come.



Actress Radhika Apte dons a French-inspired Lehenga, reminiscent of infamously stylish, Marie Antoinette.



Ohaila Khan gives precedence to the re-wearability of an outfit think detachable layers such as overskirts and capes.



Designer Ohaila Khan fronts her eponymous label's campaign, 'My Muse Is Me' for women like herself.

loop throughout the process. The experience is similar to what a client would receive if they booked an appointment at our physical retail stores, except everything is facilitated digitally.

G: Three tips you would give to pandemic brides who are planning their wedding right now?

OK: My advice to brides who are planning their special day amidst the pandemic would be: even if you're having an intimate wedding right now you are allowed to celebrate your special day and don't need to dress down for it. We often wrongly equate how grand our outfit must be based on the number of guests attending the wedding. In my opinion, grandeur doesn't always mean shine, sparkle and gold, it lies in the intricate details. As one might not be required to stand on a stage and shine from far now, (most of your guests will see you and your outfit up-close) opt for things that look beautiful when you zoom into the details and pick an outfit that you will cherish even after years not just because of the sentimental value but also for its timeless elegance and quality craftsmanship.

G: You have actively spoken about investing in classic clothing items and taking an eco-conscious approach. Can you lend some tips on building a sustainable wardrobe?

OK: Sustainable fashion is definitely the way forward; however, it doesn't have to restrict one to wearing only biodegradable cotton and recycled garments. I believe investing in classic couture garments that can be reused and even passed on as another effective and more realistically achievable approach. We have started pricing a lot of our sets as separates to allow clients the freedom to buy a lehenga and skip the blouse so there is less wastage and clients also can have the freedom to match and restyle. Going forward we have to be more innovative to reuse a *choli* as a sari blouse or a cape over a sari or palazzo pants and not just the set they came with.

G: The pandemic has led to reduced footfall at brick-and-mortar stores. Since you retail through your own e-commerce website as well, can you name some challenges one faces while buying luxury and occasion-wear clothing virtually?

OK: Our website offers all the information required about a garment in terms of custom size specifications, measurement forms, colour, fabric, embroidery details and sometimes even more than what a customer would ask when they physically walk into a store. Yes, they can't try on an outfit but if they aren't a sample size, they won't be able to do that even at the store.

Long before the pandemic and Zoom calls became the norm, we had started using digital platforms. Since our clientele is global, we are used to designing couture virtually. We already have an efficient system in place when it comes to coordinating with our clients online via emails, phone calls and WhatsApp messenger. We share sketches, images of embroidery details and colour swatches with our patrons and keep them in the



Eye-catching embroidery details are infused in every creation from the label.

GREEN LIGHTS AHEAD

Girl on the rise – Kumari is set to make her cinematic debut as she kickstarts her stellar career

Texan-born actress and Model Kumari is a face out watch out for. The multi-faceted artist grew up in a diplomatic family, which bestowed her with the rare opportunity to speak on behalf of the international charity, Helping Hands, Inc. (a philanthropic endeavour her mother founded), to foreign dignitaries and United Nations Ambassadors in New York at the ripe age of fourteen. This former competitive figure skater, who represented her state in the Dallas All Districts competition, began acting at age 13 when she entered The International Performing Arts Academy, where she honed her natural skills in acting. At age 17, she dabbled in modelling and was seen on the runways for Melissa Chaney during Dallas Fashion Week, as well as strutting San Francisco's runways for such designers as Stella & Dot, Sikara & Co, and Pashmina. Kumari has also been spotted on various Hollywood red carpets, including the Primetime Emmy Awards, and looks forward to exploring her passion for acting – which began at age 7 while performing in various school plays, setting the tone for a prolific career ahead.

Now, she is geared up to make her big screen debut in the upcoming movie, *Generation Text* which will release later this year. The actor takes on the role of the protagonist in the film which is based on a true story about the consequences of texting and driving. Also Kumari is signed onto another film, a teen flick thriller set to start filming this year as well." We spoke to her about her remarkable trajectory and the journey that lies ahead.



GRAZIA: Tell us about yourself and your background.

KUMARI: Well I come from a Sri Lankan and Portuguese background. I used to be a competitive figure skater and competed in many competitions. I now am in the field of my other passion, acting & modeling. I recently signed onto two films which are set to start filming this year.

GR: What was the defining moment when you knew you wanted to be an actor?

K: When I noticed that acting was like my second nature and something I had a true passion for. I knew it was my calling and would make me happy.

GR: Who have been your icons growing up?

K: Kareena Kapoor Khan, Kajol, Angelina Jolie, Michaela Coel and Evan Rachel Wood.

GR: Tell us about your experience in the modelling world. What does fashion represent to you?

K: Fashion is a representation of self expression to me. A way to express your style and a platform to try something new and start something of your own.

GR: How did the opportunity to star in *Generation Text* come about? What was the experience shooting for it like?

K: I was fortunate enough to meet the writer and director of the film at an event. We both got speaking and he thought I would be a perfect fit for the lead role.

GR: How would you describe your personal style?

K: Glamorous and chic.

GR: Tell us more about your upcoming projects?

K: I've recently been cast in a teen thriller which will start filming this year. Definitely excited for that as it's another new learning experience. I'm excited that my career is off and running. I can't wait to see what's next.

GR: Have you noticed any key changes in the dynamic of the industry especially in relation to diversity and representation?

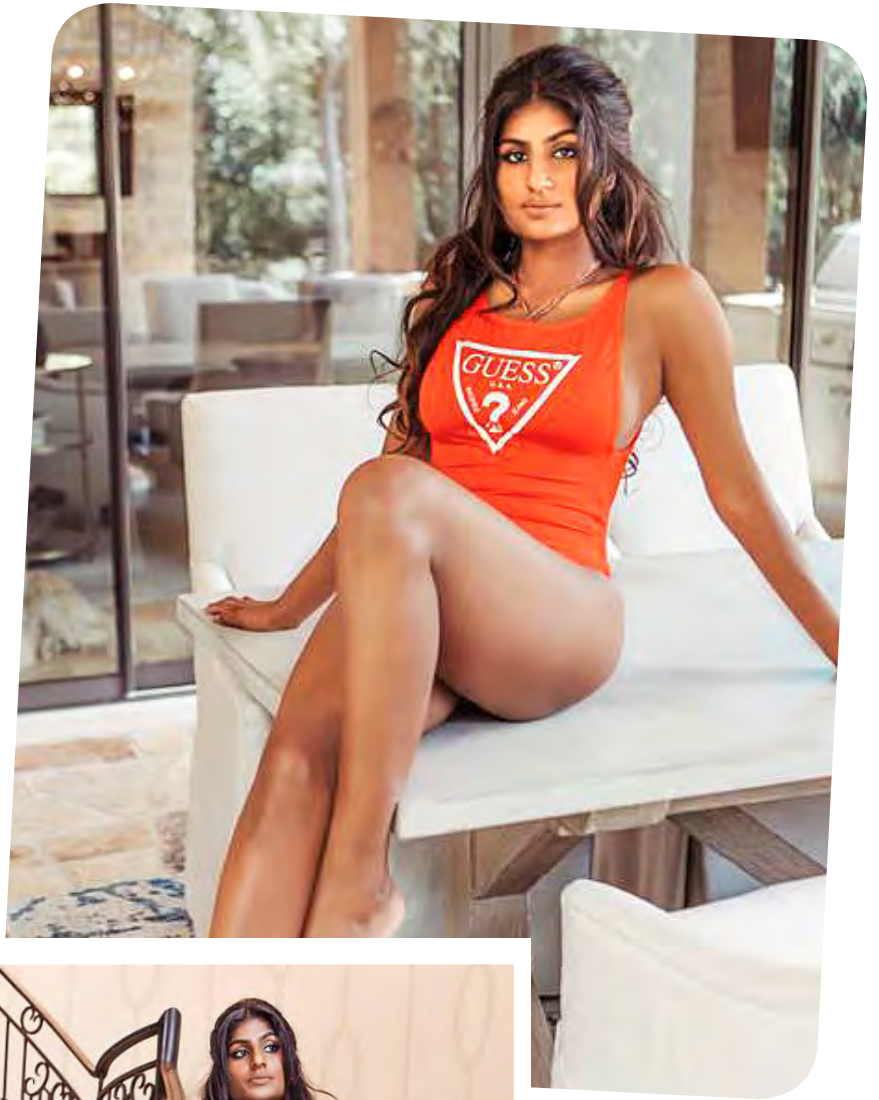
K: Yes, it definitely has changed and is providing the audience opportunity to see and experience many different talents from varied backgrounds. The industry is definitely heading in the right direction.

GR: According to you, what does it take to be successful in this industry?

K: It takes determination, courage and a focused mindset.

GR: What do you like doing in your down time?

K: I love to take long drives, travelling, trying new cuisines and reading historical memoirs or romances.





Reiving the traditional craft of *chikankari*, which originates from Lucknow, through exquisite handcrafted pieces, and empowering women artisans who practice it, has been ADA's endeavour since its inception over a decade ago. *Chikankari*, believed to be four centuries old, has over the years evolved to be presented with a fusion of various other forms of Indian crafts including *zardozi*, *aari*, *kaamdani* and *muqash* to create unique ensembles in a couture range. At ADA, this delicate and labour-intensive craftsmanship, typically practiced on fabrics such as muslin, georgette and chiffon has been introduced on finer fabrics including pashmina, organza and silk.

With their flagship store located at Lucknow's main Hazratganj market, ADA has grown to be a well-known global *chikankari* brand. Its sprawling outlet is a statement of opulence and an expression of ethnic pride. In 2007, the brand opened its doors to the world with their e-commerce website, extending their reach to a global audience, with a wide range of collections. We caught up with ADA Designer Chikan Studio's chief operating officer, Vartika Punjabi, to find out more about her journey.

GRAZIA: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

VARTIKA PUNJABI: I was born into a business family, where I assumed the position of a fourth-generation entrepreneur. My great grandfather started a retail store with *chikankari* apparel in Lucknow. I completed my schooling in Lucknow, after which I moved to Mumbai for my graduation where I also pursued a diploma in communications, simultaneously. Once that was done and dusted, I knew communications and marketing were my strong suit, I moved back to Lucknow and joined work with my parents at our firm, ADA. Since then, I have been working in the digital business. Very recently, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the 'vocal for local' campaign, I was newly inspired knowing that I was moving in the right direction and that I was helping out so many people. So far, ADA has delivered to 80+ countries globally, and across India. My goal is to expand our business further.



Vartika Punjabi, Chief Operating Officer,
ADA Designer Chikan Studio

G: What or who inspired you to pursue your calling?

VP: I would say that the people who have inspired me in my life would be my parents. They are the co-founders of ADA and have been my mentors, giving me the strength I needed to overcome the challenges I have faced in life.

G: What drives you to be the best at what you do?

VP: To be honest, the fashion industry is what keeps me on my toes and makes sure that I perform to the best of my capabilities.

G: What is the best part of waking up each morning?

VP: I would say I have a penchant for being a perfectionist, which is why I wake up everyday and make to-do lists and get to work to implement those.

G: In the age of Instagram, how do you build recall value?

VP: Throughout our Instagram feed, we try to maintain continuity of communication for all our customers and I feel like that is the most important element of creating recall value.

CRAFT CULTURE

In light of going vocal for local, here's everything you need to know about a supporter of the cause – ADA Designer Chikan Studio



Rhea and Vinod Punjabi, Co-founders,
ADA Designer Chikan Studio

G: What has been your most cherished achievement in the digital business?

VP: I'm absolutely thrilled to mention that ADA Designer Chikan Studio has been recognised by Facebook India twice as 'one of Asia's leading businesses leveraging Facebook for Business'. This has been extremely rewarding in terms of the efforts our team puts in creating brand value.

G: What, according to you, are the three qualities you need to make it big in life?

VP: According to me, it would be consistency, perseverance and integrity.

G: What does fashion mean to you?

VP: Technically, today, anything that's trending is considered to be fashion; but according to me, fashion is the simple ability to put together a look with various elements that speak about your personality.

G: Who or what was your inspiration while creating designs for your brand?

VP: One thing that never fails to inspire me is the grand, flowy dresses that were worn by princesses and queens from the bygone eras. And when I think of that, one name that permanently comes to my mind is that of Empress Noor Jahaan who brought *chikankari* artisans to Delhi during the Mughal Era.

G: How do you stay updated with Indian fashion trends?

VP: I'm a digitally-dependent person. Whenever I am doing nothing, I'm always scrolling through my phone, and I think that's

the best way to stay updated with everything in the world of fashion.

G: How would you relate past and present fashion trends?

VP: When we talk about past and present fashion trends, one thing I've realised is that fashion is not new. All the motifs that you see back then or even now are all almost the same – motifs inspired by nature, architectural monuments, artifacts, jewellery. The way it has been presented, in terms of fusion or in terms of placement, or combinations

of silhouettes and colour palettes continues to evolve to present designs in fresher ways.

G: How would you deal with an arrogant client?

VP: I think the best way to deal with an arrogant client would be with a smile because that almost always works.

G: How do you handle stress?

VP: My go-to way to deal with stress is to just take a nap.

G: Where do you see yourself in the next ten years?

VP: What a lot of people don't realise is that most of *chikankari* is practiced by women artisans and with respect to reviving this craft, our endeavour at ADA is to push these women artisans toward a better living standard and financial independence. In the next ten years, I would see myself furthering this venture by ADA and supporting more and more women artisans to support themselves individually. And perhaps, even branching out globally.



ADA DESIGNER CHIKAN STUDIO
HAZRATGANJ, LUCKNOW
🌐 : www.adachikan.com
☎ : +91 87951 60153
✉ : support@adachikan.com



LIKE MOTHER, **LIKE DAUGHTER**

*Young philanthropist,
Komal Roban Deshmukh
has geared up to uplift
the rural communities.*

Komal R Deshmukh at
Hello Urja Awards, Pune.



Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor giving away an award to Komal R Deshmukh for her philanthropic work in the area of women's empowerment.

To be born into a legendary family comes with its own set of great expectations. The Kakades are one such legendary family on Pune's glory scape. The youngest of the Kakade clan, a shining star in her own right, Komal Rohan Deshmukh nee Kakade recently joined the family business. And within no time, her out-the-box projects proved that she was born to lead, just like her mother, Usha Kakade. "My identity solely and firmly rests on the saying 'like mother, like daughter,'" says Komal, who looks upto and idolizes her mother. The proud daughter smiles and adds, "Who needs a superhero when I have my mother, who is no less than Pune's most loved superwoman."

Being exposed to such high-class and novel work under taken by her mother, an

equally passionate Komal has taken the leap to endorse several socio-economic activities in conjunction with the rural youth. Currently, she is engrossed in her pet-project with Shriram Pratishthan Mandal, where she has sponsored free education to over 180 underprivileged children, Komal feels that the world can easily be a better and happy place to live in. "Being happily married is one of the biggest boons a woman can ever have. My husband's (Rohan) support has motivated me to work hard," says Komal. Continuing her social work even after marriage, her work through Lokmangal Foundation has moved heaven and earth to uplift the needy. Komal Deshmukh is currently the director for Lokmangal Foundation. Komal

is passionately working towards bringing change in people's life.

Lokmangal Foundation is a registered charitable trust, spearheaded by Komal, operating across a broad landscape of social causes. The foundation is working to bring back the glory of rural India. They cater to all classes and sections of the rural society to upgrade their standard of living by all means. From providing deserving children with quality education to getting them married, from bringing water to farms to feeding the dependent elders of the society, The trust is determined to help them all. They work on the model that is changing the face of rural society. Some of their work is arranging mass weddings every year for underprivileged families. Till date for the past 12 years, Lokmangal Foundation has arranged the weddings of 2500 couples. One-of-its-kind in India, the foundation is known for its consistency and dedication to rural India.

Serving free tiffins twice a day, every day to 400 elderly people who cannot afford a meal as they don't have anyone to look after them or they cannot work for their living is another one of their projects. Also, adopting 200 students every year for higher education who cannot afford the ongoing education cost and get eliminated from the education system. Suffice to say, she's not only living up to her family name and adding to their glory but also amassing immense goodwill for all the great work.



Komal R Deshmukh with Bollywood actor Kartik Aaryan at Femina Mrs Stylista Awards.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



VIRTUAL
Beauty
CARNIVAL

By
FEMINA × **GRAZIA**

Listen up, Beauty Junkies,
the best of beauty is here!

5, 6, 7
November 2020

CELEBRITY CHATS

MASTERCLASSES

EXPERT TUTORIALS

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

CONTEST AND GIVEAWAYS

DEALS & DISCOUNTS

For enquiries, reach out to Annesha.Sanyal@wmm.co.in

clothing norms and mix and match, and if getting it customised even mix and match the cut and style of an outfit to have a heavy western as well as Indian influence,” says PG. To take her point a bit further, it isn't uncommon to see ethnic prints like *kalamkari*, *bagru*, *ikat*, etc., being used beautifully to create western outfits like couture and ready to wear. In fact, women today are seen to opt for traditional prints and have the fabric stitched to suit their western outfit needs.

The designer's interest in fashion piqued at a very young age. During her formative years, she participated in a host of competitions and winning these creative and fashion competitions boosted her spirit of venturing into the fashion industry. After completing her education, she knew she wanted to start her label, almost immediately. As she was a new entrant in the world of fashion, she began by presenting her collections at a show in Westin, Pune along with other notable designers, including Vikram Phadnis and Nivedita Saboo. That gave PG the confidence to open her first store. What started as a dream has now mushroomed into a full-blown success story. Six years later, she has stores in Pune, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Indore, Raipur and Goa, creating couture for both, men and women.

HITTING HER STRIDE

While her immaculate attention to detail is well known, PG attributes the growing popularity of her brand of fusion wear and occasion wear to the need to looking good without compromising on the comfort factor. She shares, “For the woman of today, apart from looking good, comfort is also another key factor. The fusion wear segment is showing fast-forward growth. With only a handful of branded players in this space, stakeholders see a huge potential ahead. Fusion wear is seen as fashionable, bold yet not too western, which matches the sensibilities of India women,” says the designer.

To that end, Gupta believes that the new-age luxury consumer is able to appreciate couture on a daily basis – from a Sunday brunch to a late-night event and from formal official meetings to a joyous solo vacation in Europe.



IN HER ELEMENT

Designer Prerna Gupta is finding new occasions for fusionwear

The emergence of fusion wear on the Indian fashion scene has revolutionised the way we approach style. People, today, want contemporary styles and vintage charm to blend and thus the Indo-western wear is fast catching up. Fusion wear – a mix of Indian and western wear is a celebration of the best of both worlds. And, Prerna Gupta (fondly referred to as 'PG'), director and creative director at Prerna Gupta

Couture, is doing her bit to amalgamate Indian and western wear. Armed with a bachelors and master's degree in fashion design from Nottingham Trent University, in the UK, PG has an in-depth understanding of global fashion and trends and is proud of being a trendsetter in the world of fashion. “Fusion wear leaves ample room for getting as creative as one can get with their choice of clothing. It allows the person to break away from the shackles of set



DOWNLOAD YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINES FOR FREE!

Stay Indoors. Stay Safe.



worldwidemedia.in



MUSIC BEYOND **BORDERS**

British-Indian artist and singer Raveena Mehta is making waves with her music on a global scale

GR: You started formal training in music when you were seven. Practicing music requires a lot of time, what your childhood was like?

RM: I spent my childhood in the town of Antwerp, in Belgium. I was born in a beautiful suburban neighbourhood and went on to spend the first 11 years of my life there. From a very young age, my world consisted of three integral components that continue to drive my perspective: Family, friends and music. I began a formal education in Hindustani classic singing at around age seven and would always be inclined to take the last 20

minutes of class to sing classics like *I Will Always Love You* by Whitney Houston or *The Power of Love* by Celine Dion; songs that I grew up listening to. The initial effort that led to the creation of my personal brand came about in 2018, when I started a public Instagram profile and began posting covers. This was while I was studying fine art at Goldsmiths University in London. Once I graduated, I knew I would relocate back to Mumbai to pursue music full-time.

GR: You launched your first music album when you were 12, how did that happen?

RM: Once I moved to Mumbai in 2008, I continued taking singing lessons for about two hours a day, four times a week; in that time my mother and vocal coach came together and asked me if I would be interested to experience singing at a professional level; which would encompass composing songs, working alongside musicians from around the world, and singing at professional recording studios. This experience continues to be one of the most pivotal and fundamental components of who I am today,



which ultimately led to the release of my album, *From Deep Within*, in 2010 – when I was 12 years old.

GR: What, or who, inspired you to pursue your calling?

RM: My mother has always been a pillar of strength when it comes to pursuing my passion. I have the most supportive parents; they've helped hone my creativity and taught me the importance of autonomous living and thinking. In 2010, when people questioned her reasoning for the album release, my mum wasn't afraid to go against convention in the hope that I



get to experience the opportunity of a lifetime. From a young age, my inner circle has consisted of individuals who weren't afraid to challenge the norms and prioritise what they wish to accomplish. I've benefitted tremendously from this phenomenal energy.

GR: Which music directors are on your wish-list?

RM: It would be a dream to work with the likes of AR Rahmanji; Pritamji and Mithoonji, amongst many other brilliant music directors – one synonymous quality that all three music directors have is they have revolutionised the way Indian music is heard and understood, globally.

GR: Tell us something about your upcoming release?

RM: My upcoming release is a very exciting project with Rishabh Kant and Asad Shabbir – the song was shot in Dubai earlier this year, prior to the lockdown.

GR: According to you what are the three qualities you need to make it big in life?

RM: Humility, drive and passion.

GR: Tell us about your personal style?

RM: My personal style is edgy and chic. My wardrobe consists of darker colour tones, high-waisted distressed jeans, boots and oversized blazers.



REFLECT THE LIGHT

Designer Abhinav Mishra's festive edit is an amalgamation of rich Indian traditional crafts and feather-light ensembles

From tips to plan an intimate wedding in the new normal to choosing the right outfit for your special day; as the world slowly resumes normalcy, Delhi-based designer and decor expert, Abhinav Mishra chats with *Grazia* about his latest collection, which features pastel hues, exquisite mirror-work and *gota* embroidery. Edited excerpts from the interview below:

GRAZIA: Where did you draw inspiration for your latest collection?

ABHINAV MISHRA (AM): Our latest collection, titled 'The Royals', is dedicated to the most memorable day in every woman's lifetime – her wedding. The clothing line is special to me because this time of the year allow us to experiment with pastel hues, which is my signature style and has been a recurring theme in my designs since the inception of the label. There is an underlying story behind each design as every outfit holds a special place in my heart and represents memories and

lived experiences from my life. The campaign celebrates special days in a bride's life – from getting married to spotlighting her bond with her best friends, which, to me, are the foundations of the collection. This new line is a surreal interpretation of those moments, grounded in love and friendship. Even though it is spread across four sub-themes, each represents a different mood, and the entire premise is built on love.

G: What craft techniques have you used in the collection?

AM: India's rich weaving and craft heritage, along with its diverse



cultures and communities, has always helped me stitch a narrative for every collection. For this one, I took a modern Indian approach and focused on the traditional technique of mirror-work. Over the years, the revival of this painstaking craft has become synonymous with my brand's identity. Further, the reinterpretation of this indigenous embroidery technique in a contemporary fashion has made my label stand out even on global platforms.

G: What silhouettes and colour palette have you used this season? What was your inspiration behind it?

AM: In the last couple of months, owing to the pandemic, there has been a shift in how we celebrate special occasions. When it comes to weddings, the big fat Indian wedding has been replaced with an intimate celebration. Hence, the wardrobes of brides in the new normal also mirror this change. Brides, now, are far more conscious about the environment than before. Since weddings are now personal affairs, clients do not opt for heavily embroidered *lehengas*, but instead, are happy with lighter,

pastel colours, prints and minimal embroidery that highlight the patterns. Hence, our signature style of working with lighter fabrics such as georgette and chiffon, and then fusing them with delicate mirror-work or *gota* embroidery, or heavier fabrics with minimal embellishments are ideal in such a time.

G: The pandemic has led to reduced footfall at brick-and-mortar stores. Since you retail through your own e-commerce channels, can you name some challenges while buying luxury and occasion wear clothing virtually?

AM: E-commerce is playing a big role for designer-wear clothing, wherein we are actively pushing our collections on our website, and social media platforms such as Instagram. Even though our stores have reopened now we are following strict safety measures and social distancing guidelines, hence we allow entry



AM: My personal favourite *lehenga* is the from our sub-collection known as 'Mausam Mastana' from our main line, 'Royals'. The colour palette of this *lehenga* comes in the combination of daffodils and an eye-catching shade of mango-yellow. It is embellished with intricate mirror-work while the silhouette is very simple and flowy. It perfectly embodies what our label represents – a celebration of the rich crafts of India. It is designed for the Indian woman of today who is in tune with the international fashion sensibilities while being authentic to her own ethnic aesthetic.

G: Three tips you would give to pandemic brides who are planning their wedding right now?

AM: After gauging the current times, there has been a noticeable shift in the functioning of the couture industry. Reusability and sustainability are a few parameters that can be the guiding forces of the decision-making process for brides these days. I would suggest, refurbish or reuse your existing outfits, experiment with colours and silhouettes. For intimate celebrations, move away from traditional vibrant hues and opt for soft pastels. Consider silhouettes such as *sharanas*, indo-western styles and *anarkalis*. Lastly, I believe it's important for the bride should be comfortable and happy in what she's wearing on her special day.



is available for assistance on almost every digital medium be it social media, video conferencing or audio calls. Since we are a young brand, we've always been very active on social media and digital platforms so virtual shopping has always been our focus. Although in the last couple of months, we have been actively promoting our collection via virtual channels, and it turns our consumers are happy to have the personalised experience of viewing the clothes from the comfort of their homes.

by appointment only. This has also given us a chance to personalise the shopping experience for the consumer, and that is something we have implemented across the board. Patrons at the store are not being permitted to try clothes, however, we facilitate virtual trials and all our staff

G: Which bridal couture and festive wear trends will rule this season?

AM: Fluid, fuss-free and lighter

silhouettes are making a comeback. Brides are moving away from the traditional reds and maroons and opting for prints and soft pastel hues. Also, in recent times, an ensemble's versatility has determined its demand as customers are increasingly adopting an eco-conscious lifestyle and the same is reflected in their wardrobe. So, buyers are on the lookout for pieces that can be styled differently as separates, or classic and timeless styles that are relevant irrespective of the trends or season.

G: What's your favourite piece from the latest collection and why?

G: What should we expect next from the Abhinav Mishra label?

AM: We have added an all-new collection of menswear ensembles recently. In this digital era, where technology is helping us craft a more personalised experience for clients, we hope to offer more unique services. We are also in the midst of preparing for an exciting couture showcase, in a similar manner to our couture show, 'Mehzabeen', last year. However, this year we are planning a digital show through the brand's Instagram feed @AbhinavMishra_.



NEW ORDER

Whether they focus on sleek ready-to-wear or streetwear, these 20 homegrown labels truly take creativity and innovation to a new level

The new normal has made us re-evaluate our lifestyle choices. First up, our consumption habits. Some of us have already started questioning our day-to-day needs, cutting down on excess, and further adopting a mindfully and sustainable approach. When it comes to our wardrobe, the conversation around the impending environmental degradation caused by trend-based, fast fashion brands has accelerated even more than before. In the same vein, a number of Gen-Z and millennial fashion enthusiasts have gone a step ahead by adopting eco-conscious living by supporting emerging homegrown labels. These up-and-comers are not just entrepreneurs, they've also upheld their responsibility to sustain and amplify the growth of the local indigenous crafts and weaves community.

SUI

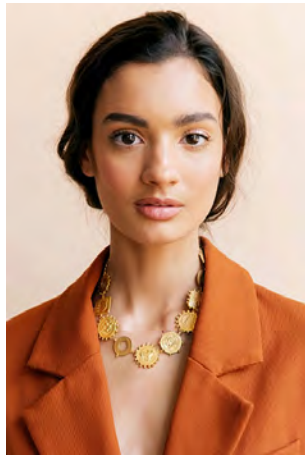
If you're looking for: Fuss-free clothing that'll feel airy during peak summer, but will still have you looking put together.

Get in touch: www.wearsui.com

MEHROTRA

If you're looking for: Accessories that seamlessly blend traditional Indian and minimal Scandinavian aesthetics, because you've had time at hand to refine your aesthetic during the lockdown.

Get in touch: www.mehrotrasthlm.com

**THE OLIO STORIES**

If you're looking for: Minimal jewellery that is distinctly Indian yet something your mother may want to borrow, this label will deliver.

Get in touch: www.theoliostories.com

**AKANÉ**

If you're looking for: Minimalist pieces crafted using natural dyes and organic fabrics.

Get in touch: www.akane-studio.com



BAKA

If you're looking for: Consciously-designed, contemporary, and ethically-handcrafted jewellery.
Get in touch: www.shopbaka.com

PAYAL JAIN

If you're looking for: Broderie anglaise on the cutest pieces to adapt to WFH life.

Get in touch: IG @payaljaindesign



ROUKA BY SREEJITH JEEVAN

If you're looking for: A modern interpretation of traditional kasavu handloom weave from Kerala.

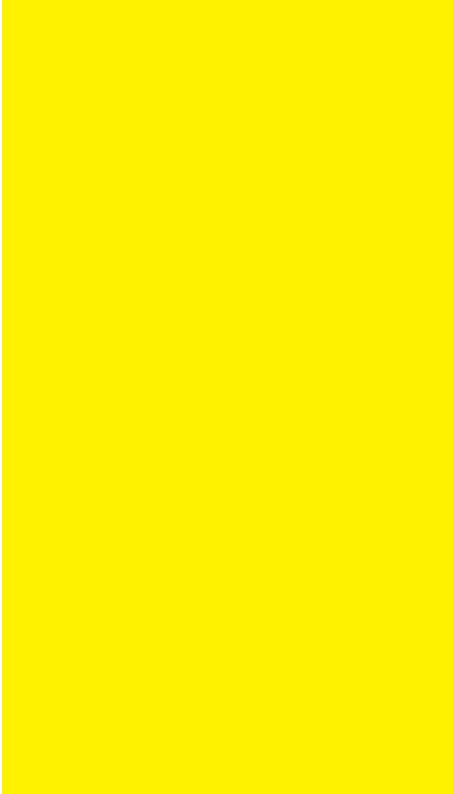
Get in touch: www.shoprouka.com

LABEL EARTHEN

If you're looking for: Styling-friendly, timeless, versatile separates for the festive season.

Get in touch: IG @labelearthen





SOLE STORIES

If you're looking to: Invest in thoughtfully designed, artisanal vegan accessories that aim to be inclusive and sustainable.

Get in touch: IG @solestories_
handcraftedshoes

LOVE LETTER

If you're looking for: Colourful, stacked and beaded jewellery crafted from locally-sourced recycled plastic, sterling silver and freshwater pearls.

Get in touch: IG @studioloveletter



RAFF

If you're looking for: Ethically made accessories and leather bags from locally sourced materials that will perk up your outfit when you're feeling basic.

Get in touch: www.shopraff.com



AKHL

If you're looking for: Well-engineered cocktail dresses as trusty investment pieces for your wardrobe.

Get in touch: www.akhlstudio.com



THE SLOW STUDIO

If you're looking for: Minimalistic pieces for your waist-up Zoom meetings, or are looking to experiment with chunky accessories for post-pandemic outings.

Get in touch: IG @theslowstudioofficial



KA-SHA

If you're looking for: Versatile, playful separates crafted using indigenous techniques.

Get in touch: www.ka-shaindia.com

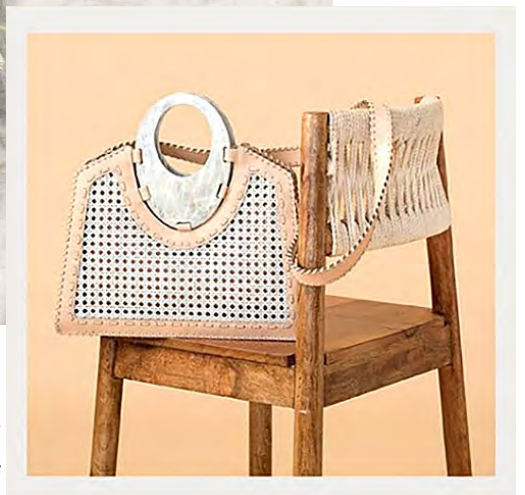
THE EPISODE

If you're looking for: Handcrafted footwear embellished with sequins, embroidery, beadwork, and encrusted coloured stones.
Get in touch: IG @theepisoddee



WICKER WEAVES

If you're looking for: Bags that will make you feel like your life's a picnic.
Get in touch: IG @wickerweaves



THE INITIATIVE

If you're looking for: Functional, well-designed, handcrafted products that provide sustainable livelihoods to craftspeople.

Get in touch: www.theinitiative.in



ODE TO ODD

If you're looking for: Refined and romantic clothing.

Get in touch: IG @ode.to.odd



INJIRI

If you're looking for: Comfy clothing that will make the transition back to work easier. Here's a bonus: The brand fuses southern Indian weaving styles on the floatiest muslin and silk.
Get in touch: www.injiri.co.in



THE SUMMER HOUSE

If you're looking for: Feel-good clothing that'll pick you up on your dullest days, even after quarantine ends.
Get in touch: www.thesummerhouse.in

