

Haque, Abid. "Manhattan Muse | Inside Noor Fares's New York City Home," *Harper's Bazaar*, 22 January 2017.

BAZAAR  
Harper's  
ARABIA

## Manhattan Muse | Inside Noor Fares's New York City Home

By Abid Haque

Lebanese jewellery designer Noor Fares, who has become the darling of New York, takes Abid Haque on a tour of her Manhattan home.

"Let me see them," Noor Fares tells her PR manager, who's hidden a pair of Gucci heels that we've brought along for the shoot. She's sure that Noor will dislike them. It's 10 o'clock in the morning and Noor is not the slightest bit fazed by the team of strangers I've brought into her Manhattan home for our shoot. She's dressed casually in a gray T-shirt and tights discussing the goals of the event while simultaneously making decisions on the looks shortlisted for her. Unlike her team who has mentioned that they're running on fumes, as a by-product of a particularly hectic set of press days and meetings, Fares seems refreshed. I notice her yoga mats neatly rolled up in the corner of her picturesque living room by a trio of small, cartoon-like metal sculptures.

Flooded with natural light, courtesy of a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that look out onto 5th Avenue, Fares' living room appears impeccably furnished, but she laughs at this. "I still don't have a coffee table, so I do my yoga practice here. I quite like it like that; I'm not in a rush to get a coffee table." And who can blame her; the view is spectacular. The way the sunlight fills the room, it draws my eyes to the two large paintings she has on the wall. An untitled piece by Allison Miller and a Francesco Clemente original of a vase with a large blue ribbon around it. They're very different from each other, but they work well together in the space, and they're not alone. In the corner of the living room, by her dining table, Noor appears to have what looks like a piece straight from a museum; inside of a glass case and sitting on a stand are ceramic pieces which have been curated by tattoo artist, Scott Campbell. This eclectic mix of decorative pieces continues by the entrance of her home with a mirrored piece by Chicago artist, Rashid Johnson, entitled *The Reasons* and a recently acquired piece from the Venice Biennale.

Noor does yoga every morning before starting her busy work days, but it isn't the only way she incorporates her commitment to a healthy lifestyle at home; it's re-emphasised when we discuss her design principles. She says,

“I REALLY ENJOY BEING HOME. WE GET SO CAUGHT UP WITH BUSY LIVES THAT PEOPLE FORGET TO ENJOY THEIR SPACE”

And it's hard not to feel good here, Fares worked closely with her mother and New York-based interior architect Rafael de Cárdenas to re-do the space. In her home studio, two Francesco Clemente



*An Eric Fertman sculpture sits below Noor's Allison Miller painting in her living room. Far left is a mirrored work entitled The Reasons by Rashid Johnson*

paintings adorn the walls; the furniture is contemporary with a set of designer chairs that feature women in ski masks and objects of all sorts fill entirely the available shelf space. Fashion books, dolls, large wooden colouring pencils, framed postcards, and more all occupy the same shelving space, but nothing seems out of place. “I’m a hoarder,” she says jokingly. With so many breathtaking pieces, I’m curious if Noor has a personal favourite, and she does – it sits on her dining table: a Flavie Audi crystal piece. It’s one of many crystal pieces on

the table, but it embodies Noor's spirit. It's in the shape of a gem and features flecks of colour which are a natural by-product of the chemical reactions from making the piece. It matches Noor's personality and her love of "accessorising with colour."

Noor, 30, was born and raised in Paris to Lebanese parents, but moved to the US to attend Tufts University in Massachusetts where she studied History of Art. She then went on to receive a Master's in Jewellery Design at the famed Central Saint Martin's School of Art and Design in London. After graduating, Noor started her eponymous label in 2009 which, like her, is based out of the UK. When we discuss her roots, Noor's father served as the Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon – she proudly discusses the many ways she incorporates her Lebanese heritage into her life at home, from the food she cooks to her close relationship with her family. "I know how to make most Lebanese dishes...my culture is more a part of [me] since living abroad." The value she places on her relationships is apparent when she mentions that her parents own the unit down the hall, which is a big plus for her. Noor's family are original owners in the luxurious building which, until recently, was also home to the Gucci sisters.

Speaking of family, Noor lights up when we talk about her husband. Recently married in Normandy, France to Lebanese businessman Alexandre Al Khawam, which was the wedding event of the season, Fares gushes about life with her husband. "There is something very cozy about it. We're married, and it's a new stage in our life, but at the same time it's like living with my best friend, so it's really fun." As for who is to credit when it comes to the design at home, Noor admits that some of her home's appeal is due to her publicity shy husband who she says has great taste and unique style. But do their tastes match? "He's very creative, and he has really good taste so we overlap, and it makes it easy to make decisions together...we even created a camp at Burning Man together." The newlyweds are obviously very close; Al Khawam, who works in private equity and paints, advises Noor on business matters. As for where the line between personal and work life are distinguished, she admits that it's quite heavily blurred but in a positive way. "It's very intertwined. My husband helps me a lot with my business which is even more of my personal life mixed, but it's good."

Eventually, the Gucci heels make a re-appearance and they, like my team, don't faze her. "These could be fun," she exclaims. Noor gets dressed, accessorises herself, and maintains a cheerful demeanor throughout the shoot. When she leaves, she takes the time to thank each member of the team for coming and working with her. It's in this

way with her upbeat attitude, strong commitment to her roots and quiet confidence that Noor has become a regular on the fashion social scene, count several high-profile editors and designers as close friends and become regarded as a tastemaker. As for advice on how to approach interiors, Noor is clear, "Intuition is important. You don't have to know everything about design...you can learn. It's not just about making an informed decision; you have to be instinctive and intuitive, and that's really how you get your personality to shine through your home." And hers clearly does.

*This article first appeared in the winter 2016 issue of Harper's Bazaar Interiors*