

Hussein Bazaza

Shooting for the Stars



He is turning 27 in a couple of months, and he has already revolutionized the fashion industry in his hometown Beirut, as well as in the Middle East. His fashion masterpieces were showcased for the first time in Italy in 2016, and the brand keeps moving forward. Hussein Bazaza is a young Lebanese fashion designer who studied at ESMOD and made his mark by winning several awards. He interned at the Lebanese renowned Maison Rabih Keyrouz, and worked as a junior designer for Elie Saab in Beirut. Known for his signature style of beadings and creating his own pattern making, Hussein Bazaza is living his success story, and moving forward on the path of accomplishments.

Here the young designer goes down memory and tell us more about the start and the evolution, and development of his brand.

What was it that first motivated you to take part of the fashion industry?

My mom! I didn't want to be a fashion designer. I dreamt of becoming a filmmaker or an interior designer. But my mother always saw me sketching and playing with fabric ever since I was a kid, so she encouraged me to give fashion design a try. I decided to try ESMOD for a month. I did not like it at first but I got used to it, especially seeing that I was getting the highest grades; it motivated me knowing that I was really good at it. I don't have any regret going into fashion design; but I still believe that filmmaking is my passion. If I weren't a fashion designer, I would definitely be a filmmaker!

Since you've radically expanded your own brand, how do you split your time between the creative and business roles?

Nowadays it's really tough to split my time between the creative and the business side. My creative role is usually when I have free time, which I don't have much lately! I spend my days working on the business and production side of the company; I make sure brides and clients are satisfied, private orders are ready, and I supervise the atelier. My creative role comes at night and during weekends, when I have more time for myself. I sketch, I create, and I research, check fabrics and so on.

I started the company by myself. My team started growing with every season and every new collection. Today, we are a group of seven people



(myself, my personal assistant, the production manager, two seamstresses, one pattern maker and one general assistant for the atelier). I am satisfied with my small team; I prefer to be surrounded by a few people working with me in the atelier or in the office. As for any other job such as PR or marketing, I can always outsource. That's how I am comfortable, and it works for everyone.

How did you build your own brand? How would you describe it to people?

It all started with Starch when I joined the foundation in 2012. We were invited to take part of Fashion Forward Dubai,

which is known for its great press and exposure. We were the first fashion designers to participate in Fashion Forward with Starch, and it was the main thing that helped the brand to grow. We showcased three fashion shows, then I personally skipped two seasons, but I never missed out on creating a collection for each season (spring, summer, autumn and winter) since 2013. I think that the main important thing for any designer is to show everyone, from boutiques to buyers and investors that you are able to exist as a designer in every season. I worked hard to make each collection even better than the previous one. At Starch, I sat in the shop and was



in direct contact with the clients; so I knew exactly what they were looking for. Of course at the beginning, I respected Starch's requirement of minimal modern designs for everyday clothing. But then I started noticing that those were not what the clients wanted. I started introducing new items; young couture, mix and match pieces, a combination of evening and modern wear at the same time. That was mainly how I built my brand, by combining what people asked for with my own touch, creating couture pieces with geometric cuts, prints and embroideries. After my one year at Starch, I thankfully made a lot of money selling my designs, which helped me invest in my atelier and showroom. In a nutshell this is how the company started, and after I started getting invited to do solo fashion shows at Fashion Forward Dubai.

What is the most surprising thing that inspires your work?

As I already told you, I've always had a passion for filmmaking. So since I did not study the major, I started creating movies in my head every time I wanted to create a new collection. All my collections fall under girls' names; and this girl is the main character of each movie I create in my head. I transform the whole atelier, I go through each and every detail of my fictional movie; the music, the clothing... I even talk to my characters! The name choice is always the hardest part, it takes a lot

of research because I start with a main inspiration, and then I create my story from it. For example, for this season, I had in mind the '40s and World War II theme. So I created a story to mix them together with a character called Akane (which means angry child in Japanese). Akane is a little girl. Her family was killed in WWII so she decides to learn all the Japanese sorcery and witchcraft, turning herself into a monster in order to avenge her family. And, this why the whole collection has dragons and monsters; it is an honor to the transformation of Akane.

You started your career quite young; do you think the brand will change as you change?

Everyone changes, but the image of the brand will not change. This is what makes the brand successful; people like this image. I can describe it in three words: dramatic, wearable and artistic. All of the three have to exist in each collection.

What is the best thing about being a fashion designer?

I don't like the title "fashion designer". I am an artist; I love to create. Nowadays, everyone is getting mixed together; between designers, bloggers and fashionistas. I am more of a designer who loves his brand and his personal work.



Who is the Hussein Bazaza woman? And Why?

She is a mysterious woman who doesn't like to show everything that she has; she likes to keep her beauty to herself. I think of that woman while creating my collections.

Of all the designs you've created, do you have a favorite?

Yes... I have some favorites. I love the dresses with my signature, which are the ones with the lace collage.

What's the best advice you've ever gotten?

It was from Elie Saab. When I used to work with him, he used to tell me "you always have to respect the woman's silhouette; she has to feel that she is pretty". And his words are always on my mind every time I sketch, especially when I am designing the waist.

What's next for Hussein Bazaza?

Well first of all my spring/summer 2018 collection, which will have Queen Elizabeth I and her childhood as a theme. I am also working on creating a sub-brand for Hussein Bazaza, to be labeled as "Bazaza". It will be more ready-to-wear, more affordable, more every day pieces. It has been my dream for quite some time. I always wanted to have boutiques all over the world with affordable and unique pieces. This is where I see my brand going.

By Dana Mortada