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All As Seen In Art & Design **Urban Nomads** Spaces & Places



DIALOGUES / URBAN NOMADS / SARAH A. ABDALLAH

Urban Nomad: Sarah A. Abdallah

f p

As a dynamic woman of a bi-racial and bi-cultural background, she is the founder of a bespoke luxury design firm based out of Manhattan. Sarah's ability to connect with people with ease both in social and business environments makes her unique. As a globe trotter since birth, she spent her summers in Cairo and traveled the world as a young adult, giving her a global perspective that is unique to her own journey. Her true authentic diversity of thought is what drives her understanding of building her business. Her personal experience and culture extend into her intentions to build and grow a team of broad interests and backgrounds. She surrounds herself with a diverse group of colleagues and is constantly working to break boundaries between cultures and generations through providing life hacks - making her a true trail blazer of her time.

01

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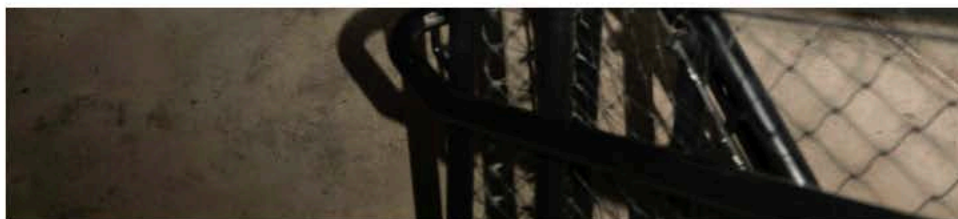
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01

Q / WHERE IS HOME FOR YOU? WHICH CITY BEST REPRESENTS YOU?

A / I feel most at home while I am traveling and feel most comfortable being a part of a global community. I was born in Manhattan, and love being a New Yorker and I spent my summers growing up with family in Cairo, Egypt. So if I needed to clearly define a particular 'city', I would say my heart is in Cairo, my drive and passion are in NYC, and my soul is embedded in the globe. Each country/culture offers new insights on how to be and approach life. I believe the late Dr. Edward Said said it best "I've never known which was my first language, and have felt fully at home in neither, although I dream in both". This is especially grounding and inspiring to me as an individual and for the work I do whilst being the leader of my company - Functional Creative Design.

02

Q / HOW DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL AS THEY ENTER THE SPACES YOU DESIGN?

A / Some words that come to mind would be - comfortable, at ease, confident, luxury, sophistication with a twist of relaxed, not uptight. I really believe in creating environments where the space speaks for everyone so that it truly makes people feel comfortable,

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confident and relaxed in sophistication.



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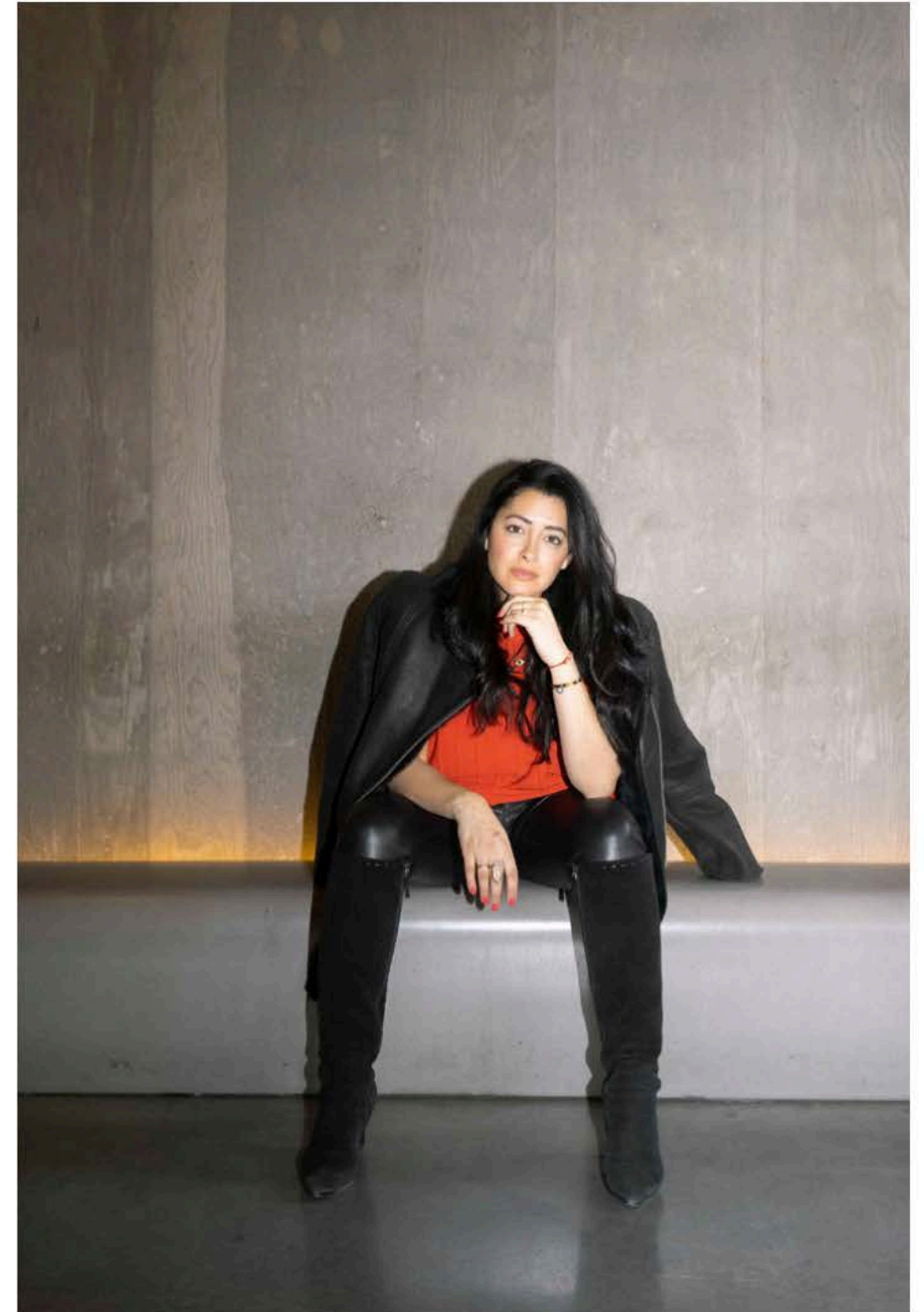
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03

Q / WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WORK?

A / What I have found inspiring is not just the work that I am helping lead as the founder of a bespoke luxury firm, but the embodiment of who I am, and what that represents to a younger generation that comes after me. When I was in school, I didn't have someone to look up to that I could resonate with – someone who was in the field of architecture and design, and who also represented who I was as a woman – a bi-racial, bi-cultural, first-generation child from immigrant parents growing up in America in a Muslim family. In middle school I read tons of poetry by Rumi, Khalil Gibran, and Robert Frost to name a few. I also read about Buddhism to gain a broader understanding of the world. As I started traveling and living abroad in Beirut, Lebanon, I came across some amazing interior spaces and buildings. I learned about Bernard Khoury, a world-renowned Lebanese architect, whose work fused Political Activism in Architecture. His work really resonated with me back in 2003, when I was finishing my degree at Parsons, The New School for Design. During this time, I continued to search for other inspiring leaders whose work was at the intersection of Art + Activism in Design and came across the work of Ai Weiwei. As I went through my own journey, through my first Masters, I realized the importance of implementing theory into practice. I have an MA in Higher Ed with a focus on Social Justice/Leadership, and an understanding of what these skill sets mean to individuals and how it shapes their paradigms of communication through a creative lens. Taking things full circle, I

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05

Q / BEST THING ABOUT NEW YORK CITY?

A / Being a native in New York, there is so much to love about this city. Here are my top picks:

- 1. THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY** - I have connected with so many incredible humans through the years because they pass through New York. They live here for a while, they come for school or for work, and each one has taught me something about life and myself.
- 2. GROWTH** - As NYC has changed over the past 2 decades, like a living object, I have learned from its change as well. I have seen the city transform itself, downtown areas are now the most sought out areas to live in. What this teaches me as a person and as a female entrepreneur, is that you can never stop 'leveling up', and when it is time to reinvent yourself authentically. When we decide to look at the same object through a different lens, the whole perspective changes. This is a life long lesson that I have learned living in NYC and that has helped me look at challenging situations in a new light.
- 3. SINK OR SWIM** - NYC is one of the hardest cities to live in the world. The lyrics by Frank Sinatra captures it well "In old New York, If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere". Perhaps the saying is not as true in the present day, as it used to be, only because the internet and the rise of social media have provided us a "real-time"

