

GAMMA

From
POLITICS
to **PEARLS**

*Getting
Creative
at home*

**THE
RACE**
to end racism



Contents

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2020

COVER

Designer:
SHIRT NUMBER WHITE

THIS PAGE

Collection
FUGEELAH X KHOON HOOI

FASHION

- BOUTIQUE FAIRS
- LEFTOVER NOT LEFT OUT.
FUGEELAH X KHOON HOOI
- SERENITY
- FROM POLITICS TO PEALRLS
- GETTING CREATIVE AT HOME

BEAUTY

- THE SUPERSISTERS BEHIND
MALAYSIA'S MULTI-BRAND
COSMETIC STORE

OPINION

- THE RACE TO END RACISM

LIVING

- TEACH ME ISLAM

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What a rollercoaster ride 2020 has been. And not the good thrilling kind. It's been more like the scary, tummy-turning, I'm-going-to-throw-up kind.

It has been scary and it has been difficult, to be completely honest, and that is why you have not heard from us in a while. It had come to a point where I had to take a few personal days (which turned into months) to take care of my mental state. But hey, I'm back and we're back. Insya'Allah we will get better at this.

Pandemic, racism, protests, global warming - it definitely hasn't been easy and in this issue we face them head on.

In this issue, we had the privilege of sharing with you three personal stories by three beautiful sisters as they face racism in their own country. It may not be easy to hear, it certainly wasn't easy for them to share it. Yet we all have a duty to listen, empathise, stand united and help.

We're nearing the end of 2020 yet it still feels bleak. But if we stand together, stand strong, stand hand-in-hand, we can get through this. Insya'Allah.

Juliana Iskandar

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, GAYA MAGAZINE



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A top-down view of a desk with a laptop, coffee, flowers, and notebooks. The desk is white and features a silver laptop on the left, a black coffee cup with a white lid at the top, a bouquet of pink and white flowers in a brown paper bag at the top right, and several spiral-bound notebooks with various covers (marbled, plain white, and one with 'HOLY' written on it) scattered around. A person's hands are visible typing on the laptop keyboard. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

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BOUTIQUE FAIRS
SINGAPORE INTRODUCES
NEW E-COMMERCE
PLATFORM FOR CURATED
YEAR-ROUND SHOPPING

AURELIA SHIRT IN OBSIDIAN
FROM SHIRT NUMBER WHITE

BOUTIQUE FAIRS



ELYSE DRESS BY STOLEN

Leaping into a new chapter of online shopping, Boutique Fairs Singapore announces eBoutiques, a new e-commerce platform available year-round. eBoutiques brings the same curated experience shoppers have come to know and love from the twice-yearly events at the F1 Pit Building online, creating the ultimate virtual destination for Singapore-based brands.

Each brand featured on the eBoutiques platform has been chosen and carefully vetted by founder Charlotte Cain, as with each brand featured at Boutique Fairs Singapore since the event first launched in 2002. The collection spans across categories, from women's and men's fashion and accessories; home décor; lifestyle products; food and beverages; and children's toys, décor and fashion.



MOKKSIES

The wide variety of categories and price points makes eBoutiques the perfect hub for shopping occasions year-round – beyond the typical holiday gifting season. With everyone inevitably spending more time at home this year, eBoutiques’ home décor, lifestyle and furniture offer solutions and inspiration to upgrade any work from home space.

Highlights include Independent Market, a purveyor of creative Singaporean-themed products; Scene Shang, a furniture and art shop with iconic designs that blend classic Chinese elements with modern-day sensibilities; Sunday Bedding, offering luxury linen and bamboo bedding from sheets to duvet covers and inserts; Rehyphen,

an award-winning pioneering upcycling initiative which reimagines discarded cassette tapes into art and accessories; Talking Textiles, an art and design studio characterised by bold colours, layers of stitch, remnants of fabric, silk screened images and printed patterns which tells the story of Singapore’s rich culture and heritage through its art; and Louise Hill Design, a design venture focused on mixed media and digital art.

Suitable for gifting or personal shopping, the range of men’s and women’s fashion brands include designers such as Jac & Jo, Max Tan, r y e, Reckless Ericka, Graye, Heirloom by Josh Leong, Shirt Number White, Stolen, SUSY + BAE and PINKSALT.



Complete the look with accessories, jewellery and more from designers such as The Rocket Eyewear Company, LINGWU, EDEN+ELIE, Niàn and others.

Offering something for the whole family, eBoutiques' kids-focused brands include MOMIJI KIDS, a husband and wife team offering handcrafted children's furniture built on age-old traditions and sustainable principles; and Mokksies, thoughtfully designed baby and children's shoes which promote healthy foot development.

Everyone could use a bit of pampering these days, so treat yourself and indulge in eBoutiques' beauty brands such as

Nodspark, creative, fuss-free and fun nail wraps; and OASIS, sustainable green beauty products that are gentle on your body and great for the environment.

For those finding comfort in the kitchen, food and drink brands include Batu Lesung Spice Company offering culinary pastes which pay homage to the all familiar flavours of Southeast Asia with its time-tested, traditional recipes; RÓA, known for their vegan, gluten-free chocolate cakes and cupcakes; Brass Lion Distillery, which produces a spirit that truly encapsulates the heart of Singapore; Yocha Kombucha, a collection of fermented drinks born out of a desire to help people get back to feeling great; and Asmara, specialising in 100% natural beverages designed for health & wellness.



More than just an e-commerce platform, eBoutiques provides an opportunity to connect with brands and designers alongside enriching editorial content. The platform allows shoppers to chat live with designers and brand owners, sharing questions and keeping the vibrant community of Boutiques alive online. With direct shipping from locally made brands, the products from eBoutiques can be delivered across Singapore; brands may also opt into international shipping, an excellent opportunity for gifting the Singapore spirit to loved ones abroad.

“Beyond bringing the brands and designers online in a curated space, we also want to continue fostering the community we have built over the years with Boutiques,” says Charlotte Cain, Director of Boutique Fairs.

“We pride ourselves in offering a non-competitive space for Singapore-based brands to collaborate and support each other, and look forward to seeing that continue in this new platform.”



The spirit of giving back remains a priority for eBoutiques, with approximately 80% of featured brands built on a mission of social responsibility. Boutiques strives to create more than just a commercial experience, curating a collection of brands with likeminded values such as The Social Space, a socially conscious multi-concept store which promotes a greater awareness for sustainability, an appreciation for providence, and more accessible conscious living.

The organisation will continue to work closely online and offline to support local charity partners such as Babes (offering teenage pregnancy support), Sanctuary Care (providing foster care for children in need) and Beyond Social Services (a charity dedicated to helping children and youths from less privileged backgrounds break away from the poverty cycle). The eBoutiques site launches in tandem with a brand refresh for Boutique Fairs Singapore, including a new website and logo to represent the evolution of the organisation.

V-NECK PANELLED
LONG DRESS
BY R Y E



Highlighting Boutiques' commitment to champion independent brands and designers based in Singapore, the brand's signature tree has grown into an abstract adaptation of the Tembusu, one of Singapore's prized heritage trees.

With leaves shaped in the map of Singapore and a hand-drawn trunk reflecting the company's design-led strength, the logo was designed as a symbol to the community's fortitude, dynamism and ever-flourishing creative spirit. For more information on Boutique Fairs Singapore, please visit boutiquefairs.com.sg



leftover
not left out

FUGEELAH BY KHOON HOOI



Fugeelah by Khoon Hooi is a meaningful collaboration between two friends. The limited edition collection features a cocktail bag, an adjustable crossbody bag and a twilly that can be used multiple ways. By rethinking what many would consider waste, the collaboration breathes new life into leftover fabrics that may otherwise end up in a landfill, turning them instead, into something that can be kept forever.



Fugeelah by Khoon Hooi, however, seeks to be more than just a statement about textile waste. Made entirely with purpose, and cleverly so, it playfully uses leftovers to make sure that those marginalised in society don't get left out.



After covering costs, the collaboration commits 100% of its profits towards paying for IGCSE examinations for students at Fugee School.

Fugeelah by Khoon Hooi encourages people to make meaningful choices with their purchases -to make them count, to make them matter, to make a change.

Fugeelah by Khoon Hooi Leftover, not left out is exclusively available through Fugeelah's website.

Tap the icons below to follow Fugeelah online and on social.





Serenity

August Berg Launches Serenity Burgundy Series



As leaves turn into a beautiful auburn colour, Danish modern - vintage watch brand August Berg celebrates its first anniversary on, Friday, 28 August 2020, with a stunning, fall collection, ***Burgundy – “It’s Time for Fall”***.

Inspired by the changing of seasons, and the passion to continue living life to the fullest, Burgundy is the latest addition to August Berg’s debut collection, Serenity, which launched exactly a year ago.

The beautiful landscapes and scenery of Denmark is the muse for August Berg’s Serenity Collection. The Burgundy series, features a ruby-coloured dial, similarly influenced by the namesake jewel-like glimmer of a fiery sunset reflected on the clear Danish waters.

The collection embodies August Berg’s iconic minimalistic design paired with uncompromising quality.



The Burgundy Series is available in 32mm and 40mm and in either a rose gold or silver hardware. It also sports two variations of watch straps – the classic Milanese Mesh and August Berg’s signature Perlon strap, an intricately woven nylon lined with nubuck leather, in a new elegant crimson colour. Symbolising the crimson rose of the skies, the Burgundy range serves as a timely reminder that through this year

of darkness, anyone can be their own brilliant ray of sunshine that rises through the dark night.

The anniversary collection is available online at www.augustberg.com or www.cocomi.com, and in-stores exclusively at: Raffles City, Takashimaya, Westgate, NEX and Vivo City.

FROM
Politics
TO
Pearls

*Mother launches faith-inspired jewellery
brand on anniversary of son's death*

On the anniversary of her son's death (3rd June 2020), a mother from London has launched a unique faith-inspired jewellery brand in honour of his memory.

Hasina Momtaz, founded Soul Gems London, which offers beautiful, statement jewellery with inspirational faith-based messages and meaningful reminders.

Although the Collection will find resonance with Muslims, the pieces are intended for everybody who appreciates elegant yet affordable jewellery, regardless of faith.

Hasina's son, Sami, was killed instantly in a road traffic collision on 3rd June 2014 at the age of 18 and this year marks the sixth anniversary of his death.

Prior to setting up Soul Gems London, Hasina worked in PR and communications and was in the Mayor of London's press team for nine years dealing with breaking news stories such as the 7/7 bombings and the London riots.



There is one particular piece in the Soul Gems London Collection called the 'Paradise' necklace which was created specially in Sami's memory.

Hasina Momtaz, Founder of Soul Gems London, said: “This is a real departure from my previous career and it’s pretty daunting to launch a business during a global pandemic. However, my son Sami, who is the inspiration behind Soul Gems London, was very entrepreneurial from a young age and always encouraged me to go into business. I had no idea how to combine that with my passion for jewellery and my faith-based values until the idea for Soul Gems London was born in 2019”.

There is one particular piece in the Soul Gems London Collection called the ‘Paradise’ necklace which was created specially in Sami’s memory.

This distinctive necklace is engraved with the Arabic proverb “In paradise there is love without separation”. One side of the pendant is engraved with Arabic lettering and the other side is engraved with the English meaning.



Hasina continues: “I came across this proverb after Sami’s death and it gave me hope that we would be reunited in a better place one day.”

“I’ve had amazing feedback on all the pieces but one customer in particular has bought three Paradise necklaces for friends who have lost loved ones recently. She messaged me to say that it’s brought them peace and hope and that is at the heart of what I want to do which is to bring a little bit of joy to people if I can.

Non-Muslim friends have also bought pieces from the Collection because they loved the beauty and uniqueness of the pieces. They asked me what the meaning is behind certain Arabic words and really liked the messages when I explained to them.”



“Perhaps through something as small as a beautiful piece of jewellery, barriers between communities and faiths can be broken down. That would be a wonderful thing, especially in the current turbulent world we are in.

“Sami was an amazing young man who was loved by many. As well as being entrepreneurial, Sami really wanted to help those less fortunate than himself and, in the month of Ramadan before he died, he fundraised for a charity in the UK.

“I would like to continue what Sami started and hope to set up a Foundation in Sami’s memory which would be supported through profits from the business to help those less fortunate in the UK and abroad”.

Other pieces in the collection have reminders inscribed on them about having gratitude and patience, two of the foundations of faith but also universal messages that resonate regardless of a faith or none.

One piece which has already sold out is a bangle which has the inscription “Sabr – this too shall pass”. Sabr means patience and it’s a timely reminder that at some point the bad times will pass and give way to better, happier days ahead.

Tap the icons below to follow Soul Gems online and on social.



Getting creative at home

*Written & Interviewed by
Emma Khoo*

Corona,
Corona,
Corona!

It is as if the entire world is now singing to the tune of Corona. What had been normal has now been reduced to something that we long for. It is easy to feel lonely, anxious, uncertain during these times, especially when the news incite more fear and the change in lifestyle makes reality hard to swallow. It is easy to feel alone even in your own home.

However, I would like to share with you short, but incredibly uplifting stories of incredible female artists from various parts of the world (UK, Canada, US, Malaysia, Kazakhstan) and how they are turning towards creativity to cope with the lockdown through the power of art in technology. Some find new ways to cope, others make use of the time to pursue new hobbies. For now, let's keep the positivity going because there is much to be grateful for!



@fyi.khoo



Amesha

MODEL & INFLUENCER FROM MALAYSIA

Whilst in the middle of studying her degree in Cybersecurity, Amesha still takes the time to update her loyal Malaysian followers of her new found joy of Tiktok (@AmeshaRoshini) and yet, continue to create content in her own home – serving nothing but killer makeup looks with her own makeshift backdrops and styling that would make any Desi goddess proud.

Since becoming a freelance model in Malaysia, Amesha has already become the face for popular local brands such as Kamelia Cosmetics, GlamX, Qilio cosmetics and some Indian costume wear, and has landed in huge commercials for TGV Malaysia and Coca-Cola India.

Although the lockdown itself has affected the local fashion and modelling industry, Amesha is not stopping there. Instead, she finds more creative ways to work with local brands, engage with her followers whilst spreading her love for makeup, sharing her skincare routine, creating light-hearted but relatable videos on Tiktok.

Makeup has always been a therapeutic effect for this beauty and what more, this lockdown creates just that opportunity to allow Amesha (and most of us) to spend that extra time experimenting with makeup. Here is what she has to say about the art of content creating.

How do you find your makeup inspirations whilst on a lockdown?

I spend a lot of time on Instagram, so most of my inspirations are from there by other artists, but sometimes I randomly get inspired and makeup ideas just flow. It's normally based on what I like example, I love flowers and florals so doing a whole makeup series of flowers will be so fun!

I also love experimenting with different colours on my skin tone, and I'll just go with whatever colour I've been feeling or in trend. During this lockdown, being creative at home hasn't been the hardest as it's the only thing that's been keeping me sane. Because of this lockdown, I've the time to sit and experiment with looks.



Your photos are stunning! Tell us how your self-portraits at home are really done?

I do take a lot of self-portraits myself as organising shoots with photographers weekly is a little hectic for my schedule. First, is the planning: I usually just plan my concept and just go with it! I either try something completely new or improvise something according to the current trends. Pinterest plays such a huge part inspiring me with ideas. Second, is the shoot itself: I don't have a camera at the moment, but use my iPhone 8+ camera to take them.

The trick here is using natural lighting and a ring light mostly. Finally, the editing process. I usually spend about 3-4 hours to create my look including makeup, styling and photographing. I don't really like rushing the process, I prefer to go slow and let the creative ideas just flow.



“

During this lockdown, being creative at home hasn't been the hardest as it's the only thing that's been keeping me sane...

What do you think is the most challenging part of shooting at home?

The most challenging thing for me is the lighting, cause I don't use a professional lighting setup and I've to depend on natural lighting, but no regrets there! Natural lighting gives my skin tone the perfect glow and also picks up the makeup details so well. Also, shooting yourself takes a lot of time and patience. I have to make sure the photos are fine and constantly check the pictures once they are taken to make sure I like it. It takes a lot of running back and forth, but no regrets!



What are your go-to beauty products during this period?

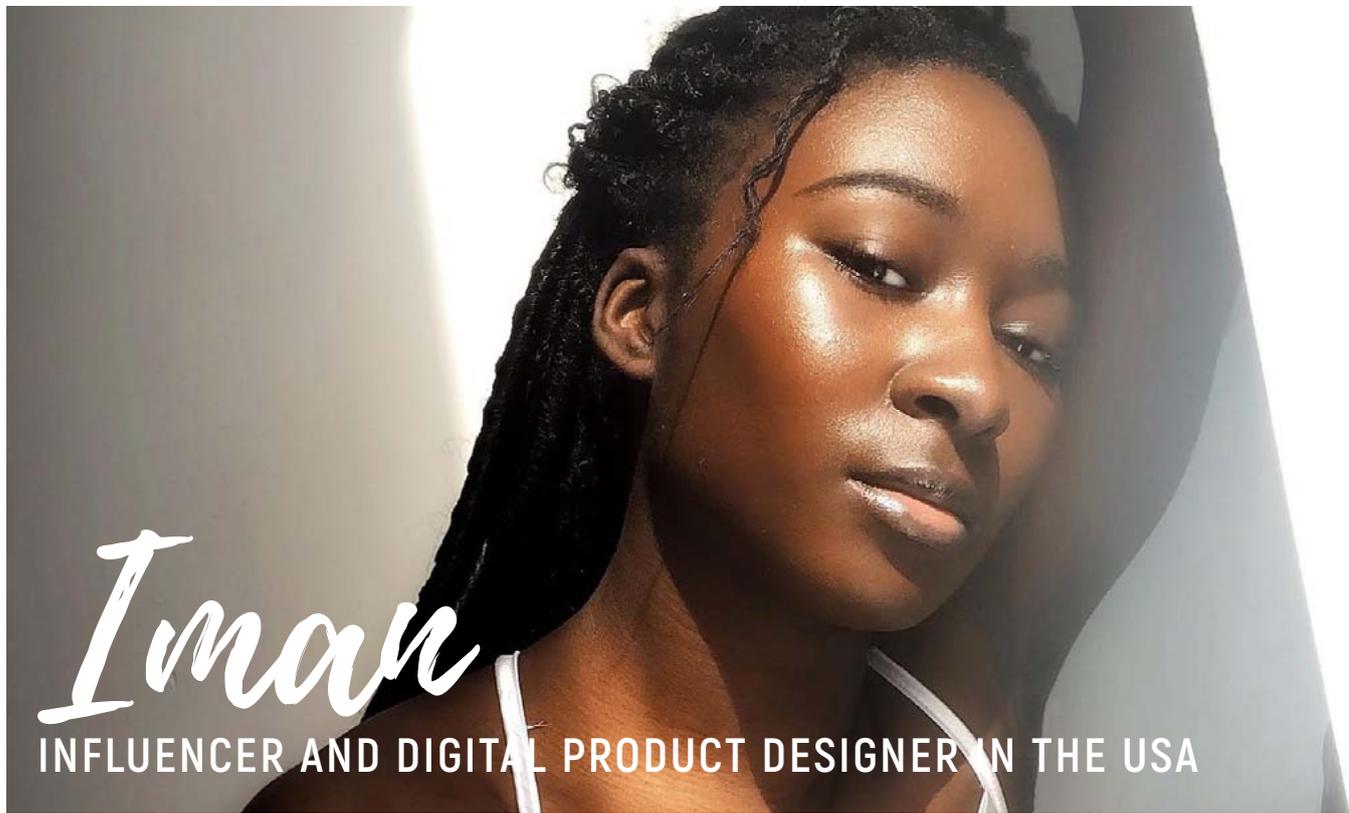
Right now, the weather is scorching hot! So my go-to product would be face masks, whether it's a DIY mask or the ones purchased. I just constantly use them to make sure my skin is clean and plump for my next shoot.

What else have you done or will be doing for the remainder of the lockdown period?

I've never fancied working out, but during this lockdown I realised how I really need to keep my muscles moving since I'm just home. I started working out a lot, trying out new routines, trying my best to eat clean, and to maintain my health. I've also been creating and planning contents for my Instagram so keep an eye out for those!



@amesharoshini



It is always wonderful to see how personal creative interests can become a part of your job as well. Iman worked in PR and Digital Marketing for brands such as Louis Vuitton and Moët Hennessy, before landing a job at Cisco where she honed her software and user experience design expertise in a B2B context. During this time, she also built her own brand (@manigazer) and fashion blog, which amassed interest for her clean, structured, urban and monochromatic styling. It is even more impressive when you realize that they are mainly self-portraits – it is a one-woman show! Her interests in visual arts, design, and technology soon threw her headfirst into a field she hadn't explored yet: creative technology. From coding creative projects for the web to playing with sensors and circuits, she discovered a whole new world.

Iman is also a seasoned traveler and has worked (and modeled!) in Paris, London, Silicon Valley and now, she resides in New York as a postgraduate student at Parsons School of Design. During the past few months, life in New York has vastly changed but her thesis deadline remains a constant. She is currently #stayinghome, working hard on her thesis, and using the extra time to take care of her mind, body and spirit. After this submission, Iman intends to spend her time at home experimenting with surreal world creation, using Photoshop and 3D modelling, and experiment with Internet of Things technologies.

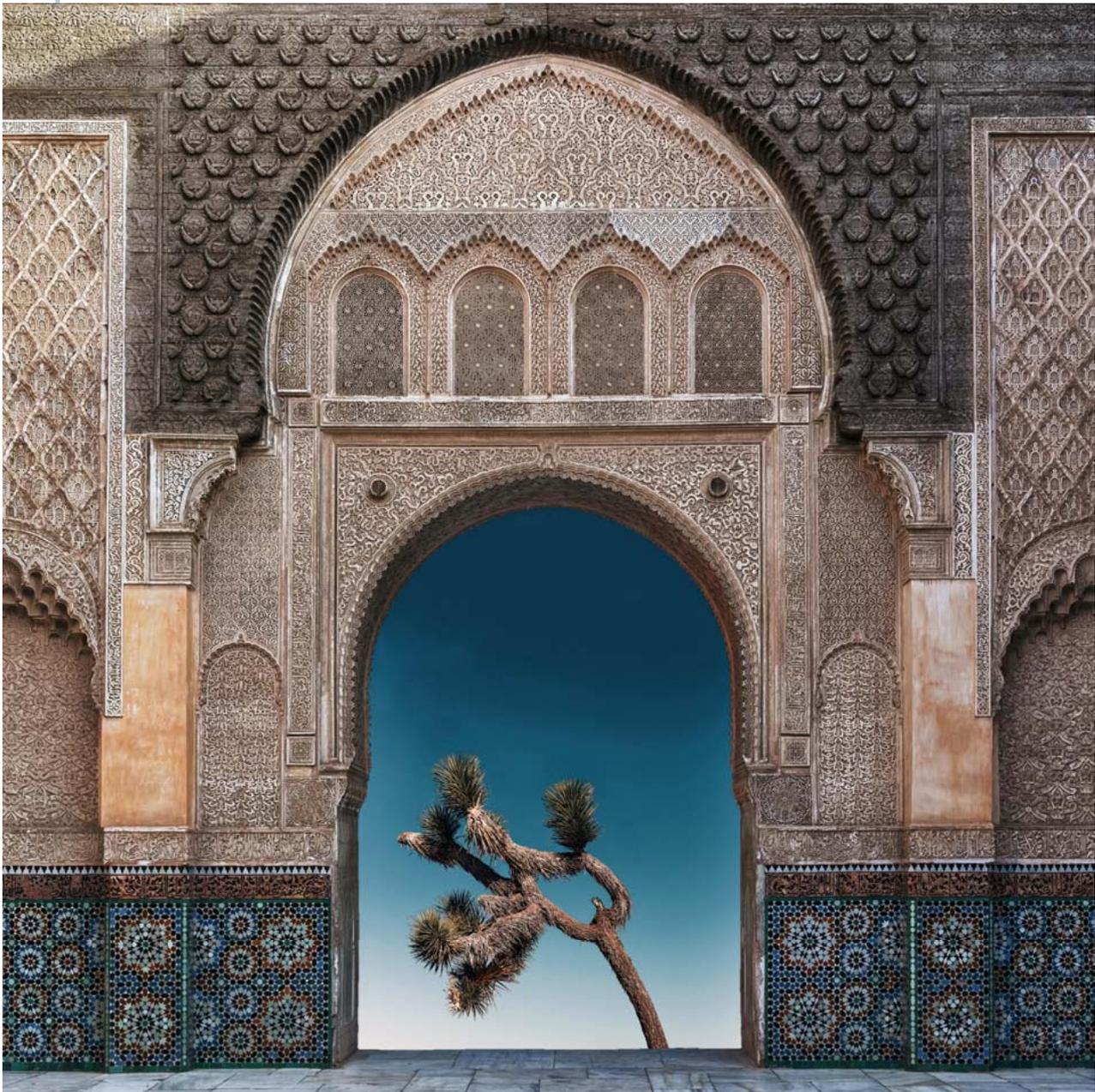
Here is what Iman has to share about writing up her thesis during this time and her current/future projects.

What do you miss about your pre COVID-19 life in New York the most?

The carefree-ness of not having to stress about contagion. Simple things like getting the mail or groceries now coming with serious cognitive load, worry, and thorough disinfecting - I'm not a fan of. Other than that, I'm good with staying in and being solo. I appreciate having the ability to do that. I'm also using it as a self-care experiment, which feels really, really good.

You're nearly done with your Masters thesis! What survival tips would you like to share in regards to writing a thesis at home?

Make it something that brings you joy and that challenges you in a way that excites you. Something you'd want to be doing even if thesis wasn't a thing. Work hard, so you have no regrets, and be kind to yourself. Let yourself relax, explore, fail. It's all good.



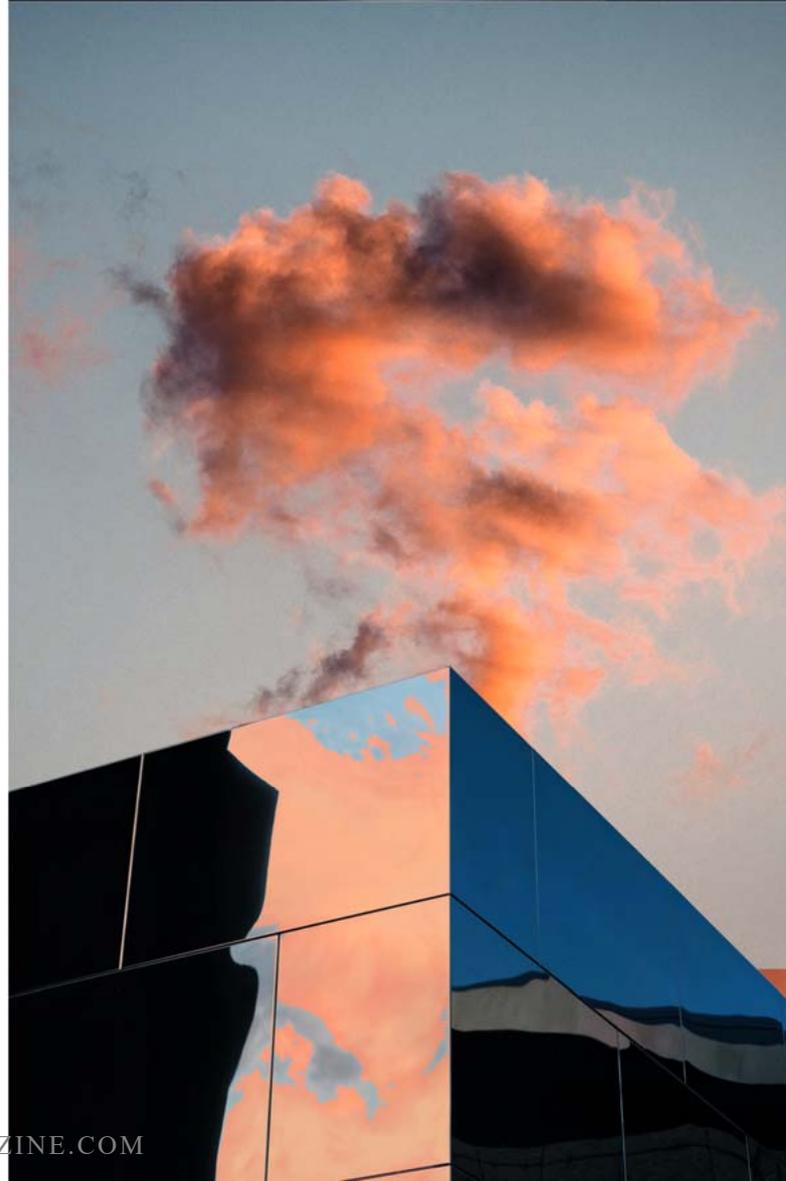
Do you tell us more about your digital art composites!

I got into creating surreal, almost dream-like landscapes last summer. I had seen a few online and loved the feeling they triggered in me, every time. One of calm, stillness, and deep relaxation.

As if time stopped for a second. So I used it as a motivation to challenge myself to learn photo manipulation on Photoshop.

As a User Experience designer by trade, I had been using Sketch exclusively for 3-4 years, and Photoshop had always been this mysterious tool I was intimidated by. So I went for it, and I challenged myself to create something every other day.

Creating these worlds puts me in a state of "flow" - a mix of challenge, excitement, and deep focus. I also love that sharing them means sharing myself on a level that is personal yet feels safe. It's intriguing to hear how the same piece makes different people feel.



You also did fashion blogging and modeling in the UK and the US! Do you spell your secret in how you find the time to juggle your varied interests!

I make the time. I live intentionally, and I like to make sure most of my time is spent doing things that fulfill me, make me grow, and bring me joy. I love creating visually, and collaborating with other creatives - on shoots, for instance, is truly exciting to me.

One thing that helps is that I go to bed very late naturally, around 4-5 am. So it feels like I have two "days" in 24h - daytime when I do all the things that have to do with other people: school, calls, shoots, meetings. And then nighttime, my personal playground.

That's when I am most focused, when I work hard and explore (e.g. making composites, teaching myself 3D modeling, learning about how our brain works).

What are your other plans for the upcoming weeks, after your thesis submission?

Whew, it feels strange to even imagine a time after thesis. I still have a semester of independent study to go, and what I'll be doing during it depends on whether social distancing measures are lifted or not. If they are, I'll be working on the physical version of my thesis: an Afrofuturistic, multi-sensory meditative experience for young adults of the African diaspora.

I'll be putting it in front of people and testing whether it achieves what I built it for: to promote a sense of healing, of well-being, and a pathway to a limitless life vision. Since we are on lockdown, I've had to put it on hold for now and focus on creating a remote version for the home.

If social distancing measures are still on, I'll focus on creating worlds using 3D modeling, which has been a pretty steep learning curve so far. I'm grateful that either way, I'll be learning and advancing something I'm truly excited about. To be continued!



iman.studio



@manigazer



Aisha

ARTIST AND ENTREPRENEUR BASED IN MALAYSIA

In the last of the ‘Get Creative’ series featuring women artists from all over the globe, I would like to introduce Aisha Alkaff, the woman behind ‘Dar Zainah’ and ‘Posh and Pastel’ – a shop for hand-drawn gift items and customised children furniture respectively.

As a watercolour extraordinaire and entrepreneur, she has already held pop-up stores at Malaysia’s most creative bazaars and conducted watercolour workshops. Aisha also has a store at GMBB, KL which you can see her painting away whilst surrounded by her own masterpieces. Aisha is an independent artist whose passions in life revolve around art, creativity and education.

She first received her Bachelor of Arts in Sana'a, and later studied Fine Arts through courses in different institutes in Jeddah. This creative and entrepreneurial spirit clearly runs in the family as she would start an interior design business with her sisters in 2006 called ‘Pure Crafts’ that focuses on designing children's rooms! And she would continue to transform children’s bedrooms into a magical wonderland as she moved to Malaysia in 2017.

Since the lockdown begun, it had put her businesses to a halt but this strong lady is not only coping but even expanding her business online! Here’s what she has to say to artists out there.



This year's Ramadan is one to remember. How did you spend your time during the Ramadan season at home?

Ramadan is considered one of the most important months of the year, a month filled with goodness, blessing and a time for family bonding, in which the family gathers for breaking the fast together. But Ramadan is very different this year because of the new conditions around the world and the interruption of our business, although it did not stop me from accomplishing many paintings and craft work with various concepts and techniques, such as Arab and Islamic paintings, which I get most of my inspirations.

How has this lockdown made any difference to your business? (if at all)

I thought a lot during the lockdown about my work and how I should not allow it to come to a halt. I reached out to my students in Jeddah and started conducting one-to-one online workshops with children who share my passion.

A few of the most important lessons that I teach the children are the techniques Principles of drawing, shading, and using watercolour and acrylic colours. One outcome of the lockdown is it taught me to cultivate the circumstances and find other means to follow through with our work, hence the online classes using video call apps.

Your transfer your watercolour medium onto other products as well, ranging from bookmarks, clothing to furniture! Tell us more about other projects that you have been or will be involved in during this period.

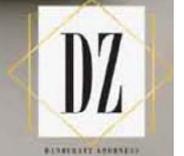
Since I moved to Malaysia, I thought of pursuing the same line of work I did my back in Saudi Arabia with my sisters, as we worked in interior design and customised furniture.

We are currently focused more on creating new products such as gifts with hand drawn artwork on tote-bags, bookmarks, home décor items and introducing Arab and Islamic culture into our products.

They have been received with a lot of admiration from Malaysians as they are arts-loving people and greatly value them through our participation in many local bazaars.

We have been participating with the likes of Makers & Co, Suka Seni, Art For Grabs, and Pop Up Malaysia.





What would be your top three tips for artists to cope with a creative bloc, especially when they are stuck at home?

The three most important tips I can give to artists:

1. To continue to working and creating, learn new methods and techniques.
2. Always communicate with friends, artists and exchange of ideas.
3. Bestow your knowledge with people; teach the earnest of them to draw. The best students are young children, you are able to harness their young minds to think and create creatively.

Finally, do share your advice to freelance artist who are also finding it hard cope with the lockdown.

My last advice for all artists and creative freelancers is to always ADAPT whatever the situation is. Circumstances are always dynamic; we need to find new mediums to convey our work.



@dar_zainah



@poshandpastel

Chinie's

THE SUPERSISTERS BEHIND MALAYSIA'S MULTI-BRAND COSMETIC STORE

Chinie known as “sugar” in Hindi, is currently a multi-brand cosmetic store that selectively imports high-quality and mid-range beauty products (from shades, finishes, formulations, etc.) from around the globe. It is a homegrown brand that pays much consideration and attention to the Malaysian market, as each and every product, personally and carefully selected by two incredible sisters, Kanchan and Vandana Ratnani.

*Written & Interviewed by
Emma Khoo*

Located in Rams Home Decor Department store (Langkawi) and in Nu Sentral (Kuala Lumpur), Chinie's currently houses sought-after brands LA Girl Cosmetics, Isabelle Dupont, Mesaudo Milano, Pielor, Erre Due, and more. To reach out to beauty enthusiasts nationwide, Chinie's also has an online store on Lazada Malaysia.

Founded in 2016 by Kanchan after stumbling upon many affordable European cosmetics brands during her trip to Europe, she decided to take the risk by importing some of these brands under her father's company, Rams Home Decor. To her surprise, these products flew off the shelves within the first few months and the rest was history.

From then on, Chinie's was born. Vandana joined in after graduation and was appointed as Head of Marketing soon after.

Inspired by their entrepreneurial parents, both developed remarkable business acumen, whilst possessing many personal qualities that make up the definition of the ideal #girlboss.

With this exclusive feature, Emma Khoo brings you the story of the amazing Malaysian sisters/entrepreneurs behind Chinie's.



What made you guys decide to invest in the beauty/cosmetics business?

Kanchan :

When I went for my first ever cosmetic expo in Europe in 2017, I soon realised I was standing right in the center of an essential industry that runs the world's economy. In the social media age where highly aesthetic visuals are valued, the desire to look and feel good is universal.

At Chinie's, we aim to fulfill that desire at half the price and still maintain quality. To me, it was also being at the right place, at the right time, and being brave enough to grab the opportunity. Chinie's gave me an opportunity to make a business out of my love for idea development and art. Every experience and event kept unfolding on its own. With the experience and financial backing of my parents' company (Rams Deco), I kept my head in the game and enjoyed the process.

Vandana :

I had interned for Chinie's during semester break when the company was only 8 months old. I approached Kanchan to launch Chinie's first line of matte liquid lipsticks on Instagram from the first brand they signed up with.

Before we knew it, our inbox was flooded with inquiries, which led to the start of our online orders.

Within the 2 months of internship, I was given full freedom to make decisions on how to penetrate the e-commerce field, including: content creation, sourcing of marketing opportunities as well as collaborations to further expose Chinie's to the Malaysian market. That marked the beginning of Chinie's launch into Malaysia's largest e-commerce platform, Lazada.

The internship experience gave me a new-found love for cosmetics. After completing my internship program, I returned to university to complete my final year in Bachelors of Marketing and International Business. During this time, I continued my work with Chinie's on a part-time basis for the online platform. In 2019, I was offered an equal position in Chinie's as a co-founder and Head of Marketing.

Could you tell us more about how your previous work experiences are put into good use?

Kanchan:

As the founder of Chinie's, I have learnt one simple rule, no work is too small! At times, I wear every hat, from dealing with logistics to being a salesgirl, to doing social media. Every day is a challenge, but it is a challenge I love to meet every single day.

However, I am proud to say that being an interior designer saved Chinie's starting up cost! My 4 years of study allowed me to bring to life Chinie's brand as we envisioned through two of our beautiful stores (Rams Home Decor & Nu Sentral).

As a designer, it is such a proud moment to use learned skills of understanding patterns, space planning, design, materials and colour combination in representing a brand you create. It is not easy to envision and design and have it executed as planned.

I can't exactly pinpoint on an experience that results in a certain way. I am a product of an amalgamation of experiences. Each of which, put together, has helped guide me and changed the way I think and respond to situations. Without strong work ethics instilled by my grandparents and parents, the ability to be resilient nurtured during my Chinese school education, and abundant creativity learned at design school, I would not have the skills to be where I am today.

Vandana :

As Kanchan had mentioned earlier, we were brought up in an environment where we were taught to not laze around and to always be on the move.

Our family business will not be what it is today if it wasn't for their constant perseverance and diligence to strive to be the best in what they do. Coming from a strong background of such, it has taught me to never give up or even take NO for an answer.

My position as the Vice President of the student council pushed me out of my comfort zone. I adorn different hats at different times. The most important lesson of the process is to organize, delegate and schedule for my professional and personal life to run smoothly.

The FYP process of my marketing studies at Monash University Malaysia helped to broaden my perspectives. The project required us to present our marketing solutions to real world clients. This required manual sourcing, segregating and analyzing of data.

This did not only help me better understand market segregation, it has also further developed my understanding on the effective ways of branding and marketing. There is no right or wrong in marketing methods.

Marketing success comes from one's creativity in manipulating all the data at hand and presenting it to the world. As the saying goes "Any kind of publicity is good publicity".



What is the best part about working together as sisters?

The best part is you really learn to understand the function of the other person. Giving each other tasks doesn't require supervision and checking. We both know it is going to be executed to 100%. Apart from that, you are each other's critic and cheerleader.

We are very aware of the fact that we both are going to be there to catch each other if any of us stumble. It is not always sunshine and roses, it can also be very overwhelming at times as we both expect so much from each other due to our score record and blind trust.

Apart from that, being sisters, there is a small percentage of unconsciously taking each other for granted or

overstepping our lines into each other's scope of work which can lead to an argument. By understanding the function of each other and having a good sit down communication, it is all resolvable. Hahaha...

There are days we both feel unmotivated, lazy and doubtful. We allow each other to take a break, remind each other of the journey, give space to get back up. It is not a sprint but a marathon. We both have the same end goal for Chinie's which makes it easier to always put the company's best interest first.

Working with people of the same wavelength helps the company to grow faster as we keep feeding off each other's ideas, energy and thought process.



How do your skills complement each other?

We are each other's biggest critique and seek for each other's validation before proceeding with anything. Kanchan handles HR and business development whereas Vandana handles Public Relations, online marketing, business & branding. When it comes to suppliers, we both share the load.

Kanchan:

Vandana is much more organized in breaking down a to-do list on a daily basis for her bigger goals which helps me in taking one day at a time. She is also a complete diplomat with a stand. I leave it to her dealing with influencers and their brand!

Vandana is more practical in approach. She allows space for reasoning and doesn't shy away from accepting criticism positively. She brings a more definite structure to the company and advises me on how to implement and practice them. She keeps me grounded while my imagination flies high and wanting results fast. She is definitely more disciplined!

Vandana :

Kanchan, in general, is a bigger risk taker and gambler when it comes to major business decisions. She does not shy away in trusting and importing top brands from various countries. Being a creative person, she also knows the best ways to showcase a brand.

On the other hand, I am more skeptical when it comes to higher risk. For a basic example, importing a top-notch quality brand that may require us to hike up the price, have a higher marketing budget and gamble on the return.

Besides that, Kanchan is better at dealing and negotiating with suppliers. Her sensitivity towards her surroundings has resulted in Chinie's enjoying the fruit of it. This is evidently seen with the healthy and professional environment that she has built for us with our suppliers, employees and investors. She has made everyone feel more inclusive in playing their roles to grow Chinie's and thanks to her, the company runs like a well-oiled machine.

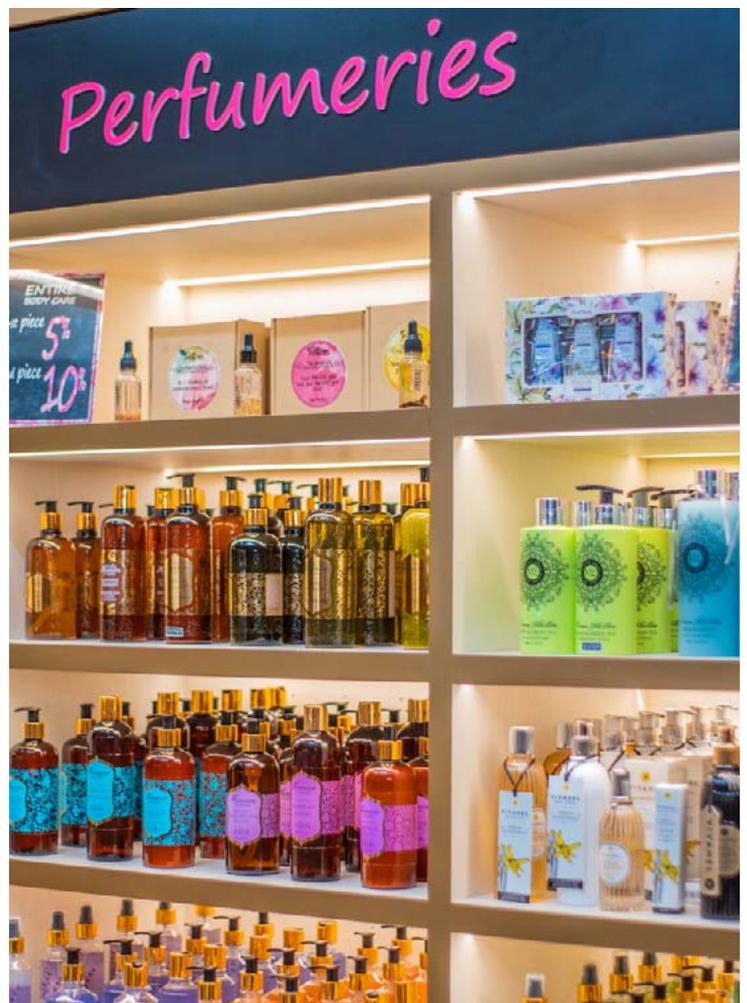
How do you think social media played a huge part in marketing your brand?

The major reason for social media promotion is consumers spend a minimum 4 hours a day browsing through social media to check on updates, be it news, memes, viral contents or lifestyle hacks.

One amazing tool, social media has helped small businesses is its ability to target our posts towards new audiences that pose demographic, personality traits or interest towards our line of work. This effectiveness helps in minimizing wastage of resources.

Creating campaigns on targeted products does draw in a lot of attention. Consumers are constantly on the lookout for what is new, what could make them look or feel different, which lipstick shades they are missing out on.

Lastly, engaging with consumers online helps in brand loyalty. In today's world, everyone is always on the move, everybody wants convenience and information to be at the fingertips. Hence, being quick with replies on consumer's enquiries builds a good service reputation. This is one of the factors that assists in setting you apart from your competitors. It is all about reinforcing your care for them.



Sisters Vandana (right)
& Kanchan (left)

Photo credit:
Emma Khoo
@fyi.photography

Could you tell us what your future plans are for Chinie's and how would you like to diversify your brand in the future?

From a business development viewpoint, we would like to expand into more outlets for sure. Followed by signing two big famous brands we have been really keen on. Apart from that, building a successful network of dropshippers selling Chinie's products all around Malaysia.

Whereas from a marketing point of view, one of our goals is to be able to be featured on magazines under top trustable local companies in the near future. Besides that, we are looking forward to venture into billboard marketing for Chinie's.

We are constantly working towards making our brand fall under the evoked side of consumers' minds. It is a long way to go, but definitely not an impossible one.

The biggest marketing goal for us would be collaborating with local celebrities to produce ranges of cosmetics that are personalised for their fan base and sold under Chinie's. This way, we are helping to stir up the economy and give back to the local community that has given us so much support to be thankful for.

Tap the icons below to follow Chinie's online and on social.



*In a racist society,
it is not enough to be non-racist.
We must be anti-racist.*

- Angela Davies -

“Anti-racism protesters are thugs, says Trump” - the headline in the local newspaper reads loud and clear as we are all glued to what’s happening in the US in wake of the shootings and killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, and many others.

“They’re not protesters. Those aren’t protesters. Those are anarchists, they’re agitators, they’re rioters, they’re looters.”, he says.

With a pandemic affecting all our lives and racism at its heels, it is not hard to feel that 2020 has dealt us with the worst cards.

The call to fight racism has been plastered all over social media, and rightfully so because enough is enough.

Truth be told, racism is a long-standing disease in our society regardless of where you live. And it is our rightful duty to change that...to fight that...to end that.

But where do we start? We start by educating ourselves. Listen to the voices of the marginalised. Listen to their pain. Listen to the systemic racism they've had to face. Listen to the stories of how they were called names. Stories may hurt. But stories can heal.

Here we have compiled three such stories. We thank our sisters Saniyyah, Fatimah and Sara for sharing their stories with us. If you have a story to share, please contact us.

Together we can make a difference.

Have you experienced racism in your country and how?

I would like to share my experiences in racism within the fashion & modeling industries as well as from Muslims.

My first experience was at a nationwide modeling competition where I competed alongside models of different, ages, shapes, races and sizes. We were being judged by all of the top modeling agencies in the game, hoping to get signed or scouted by them. After the segment of the competition where we did our runway walk, we had the opportunity to have one on ones with the agents of our choice, as a casual feedback session.

When I did my runway walk portion, I had to wear fitted jeans and a black top. I intentionally wore my hijab tied to the back as a turban, less noticeable as a Muslim Woman. I advanced to the next round where I was going to speak to the runway agents. I mean wow, a personal critique and conversation with modeling and talent agents from IMG, MMG, BMG, CESD and many more. I intentionally wanted to see the difference in response at this phase. I wore my full hijab to the front with an open front abaya. I excitedly walked up to the agents of interest with a smile giving my 30 second pitch.



“We have to collectively use our platforms to create that change”

Saniyyah Bilal
Modest fashion model

Most of them looked at me with complete disinterest, much different faces when I was doing my runway walk with my scarf to the back, not as obviously identified as a Muslim woman. I walked up to the agent, whom I was very excited to speak too.

We talked for a little I told him about my industry experiences. His concluding response to me was “because of how you look you will have a lot of difficulty being successful in the modeling industry, especially wearing a scarf.”

So wasn't just because of the color of my skin, it was also my hijab. Quickly offended and taken aback, I attempted to explain his lack of ignorance to the modeling industry and that being a Muslim, dressing modestly would not at all be an adherence for me. It made me realize that we still have so much more work to do.

“

...I was almost in tears by the blatant discrimination and discrediting of my craft simply because of the color of my skin...



Photographer Credit: Haythem Lafhaj
Instagram: @WorldTravelingGQ

My second experience was at a modest runway fashion show with all foreign Muslim designers during New York Fashion Week. Where surprisingly I was the only Muslim model, a black one at that. Going into this fashion show, I was so naive thinking I would finally be accepted. I wouldn't have to explain my hijab to designers or help them modestify my runway looks. Right?

I finally had the opportunity to walk for modest fashion designers during a mainstream fashion show who identified with me, as a Muslim woman. **WRONG.**

I bumped into some of the designers in the elevator. I guessed I had the model look, arriving early and with bags of shoes. So they asked "are you a model?" I was so ecstatic, I gave them the greeting "As Salaamu Alaikum, yes I am a model!" Their responses were a combination of gasps & ohhhh really wow, basically shocked to see a black Muslim model in hijab. Slightly taken aback, that did not dim my light and enthusiasm. Moving forward into the fitting and fashion show process.

All models were assigned to certain designers, fitted and confirmed hours before the show. As we prepped for the show getting into our first look or confirming shoes, accessories etc I started to see models in my outfits.



We have to create our own opportunities for black people, especially Muslims...

This one designer in particular had a modest sporty athleisure line, totally my style! She had put a European model into my look. In the mayhem of backstage no one really had time to talk but, I quickly asked the designer. I said “this is my outfit and shoes were confirmed for me, you have another model in my outfit.”

She looked at me and said “no, no not you”, then walked away.

Now, it could have been my size, it could have been my shoe selection or any other combination of variables. But you know, when you just know something isn't right you have that intuition. I also noticed it with other black models too, the designers specifically seeking out the European models instead of us.

In my mind I could not understand why designers with modest wear for by not exclusive to Muslim women, would not want to show a Muslim model in their clothing.

Thankfully, I still had the other designers to walk for, but I was almost in tears by the blatant discrimination and discrediting of my craft simply because of the color of my skin. That was from a foreign Muslim woman to a black Muslim woman.

What does change look like to you?

We do not need their acceptance. We have to create our own opportunities for black people, especially Muslims.

The models, designers, photographers, magazine executives, wardrobe stylists, creative directors, venue hall owners, manicurists, barbers, tailors, casting agents, make-artists, hijab stylists, hair stylists etc., we have to support and hire those qualified people who look like us.

Whether it's in the fashion and modeling industries or in the medical field, politics or in education etc., we must be represented so we can take control of the narrative being told about us and use that power to shift who gets a seat at our own table. We have to collectively use our platforms to create that change.

“ *We must be represented so we can take control of the narrative being told about us and use that power to shift who gets a seat at our own table.* ”

SANIYYAH BILAL
MODEST FASHION MODEL
www.saniyyahbilal.com
Instagram: @hijabimodel



Have you experienced racism in your country and how?

I am a Muslim person of color living in the United States. I have experienced microaggressions that have been motivated by racism and anti-Muslim bias as a child, as an adult in the workplace, and as a parent pushing for change in my children's school.

However, in the broader context of what is going on in the United States, my experience pales in comparison to the racism our Black Muslim brothers and sisters have endured by society as a whole and sadly, within the Muslim community.

Black Muslim friends have told me their greetings of Salaam are ignored and people move away from them when standing for prayer. This breaks my heart.

“By hearing one another’s stories we create deeper connections and empathy for each other”

Fatima Mukhtar



What does change look like to you?

Changes we need to make: I believe societal change can only happen if we change ourselves.

First, we need to make friends of other ethnicities, races, and religions. By hearing one another's stories we create deeper connections and empathy for each other.

Next, we must speak out against injustice against ANYONE - our faith commands it. Lastly, we must be more thoughtful consumers, and for me it is what brands of clothing I choose to buy. I am committed to spending a percentage of my budget on Black owned fashion brands, and buying from brands that are committed to social justice and diversity in their companies.



FATIMA MUKHTAR

www.modestlyspeaking.com

Instagram: [@modestlyspeaking](https://www.instagram.com/modestlyspeaking)

Facebook: [@modestlyspeaking](https://www.facebook.com/modestlyspeaking)



Have you experienced racism in your country and how?

I think nearly everyone who is non-white has experienced some form of racism. I've had racially derogatory words hailed at me whilst walking down the streets of Britain.

In one instance, I was walking to my university accommodation from the library and I had a group of white males calling 'black monkey' and a 'terrorist' because of my appearance. I think being at the centre of marginalised identities is always difficult because whenever I was targeted for my blackness, there would always be a comment about me being a Muslim.

However, I think the most damaging type of racism was the institutional racism I experienced throughout my years in school. It was constantly, working really hard to prove my teachers wrong.



“The systematic racism pushes minorities back from early on and not everyone can push past it”

Sara

Up until 18, I was always underestimated by my teachers. I had one of my teachers telling my parents that I achieve one of my grades by complete luck and would not get high grades in my other exams in that subject.

Constantly, being put down even when I prove them I'm capable. Because I was extremely driven and had a great support system at home, I was able to excel.

However, I know this isn't the case for everyone. There are many children who have their self esteem killed by teachers who inherently believe black children aren't capable of getting high grades. The systematic racism pushes minorities back from early on and not everyone can push past it.

“

I think being at the centre of marginalised identities is always difficult because whenever I was targeted for my blackness, there would always be a comment about me being a Muslim.

What does change look like to you?

To me real change is dismantling the white supremacist systems we see surrounding us in society. The schooling system, the prison industrial complex and law enforcement all need radical change.

We need racially diverse senior executives in all companies and industries so we can see representation.

All of these changes will help to bring about a difference in the world.

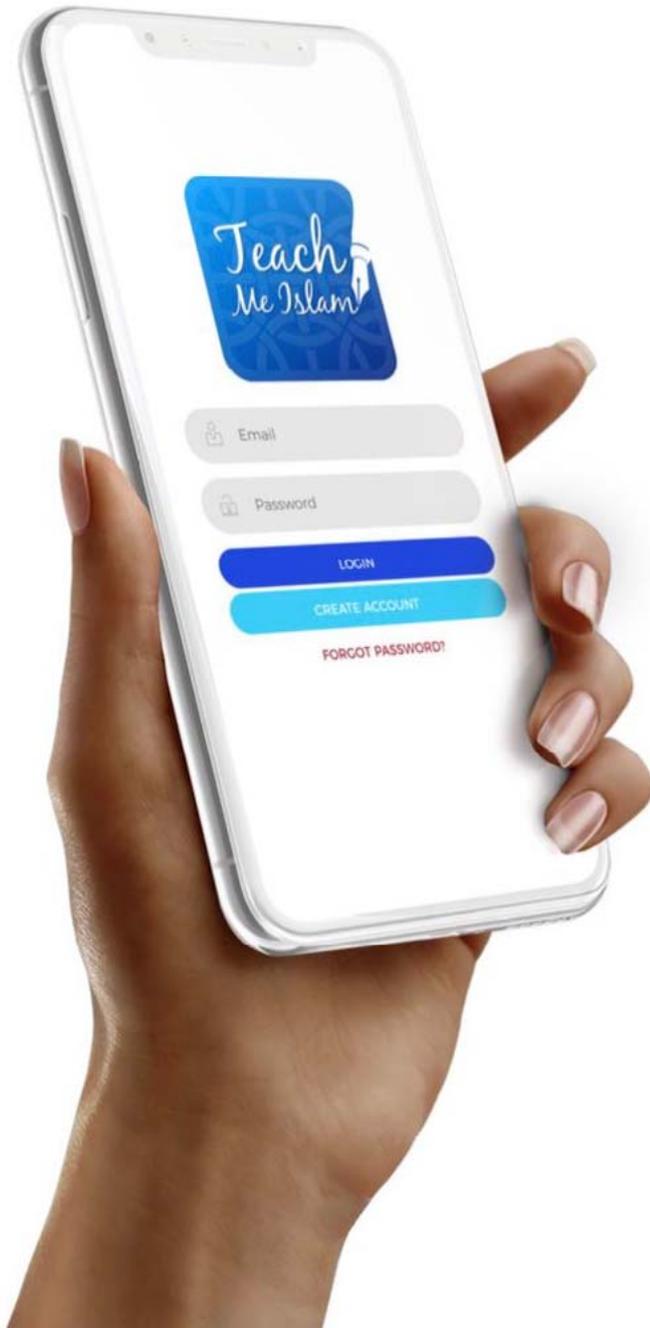
“

We need racially diverse senior executives in all companies and industries so we can see representation.

SARA

Instagram: @saraboed





TEACH ME *Islam*

**WORLD'S FIRST ISLAMIC
EDUCATION APP ANNOUNCES ON-
LINE GROUP PROGRAMMES TO
INSPIRE STUDENTS DURING
LOCKDOWN!**

June 17th saw the launch of the Teach Me Islam group tuition platform (TMI). As the coronavirus outbreak continues to keep people in lockdown, e-learning is fast becoming the new norm for most children and adults. Schools have implemented zoom, teams and online classes for their students and religious education is no different.

TMI is all about modern delivery of Islamic education. The app allows parents to browse tutor profiles and select a local Islamic Tutor for their child / children as well as checking their profile and qualifications and all tutors are DBS checked. It has also recently added women empowerment programmes teaming up with internationally respected journalist and author Lauren Booth.



Although TMI has been set up as a one-to-one tutoring service, there has been a growing appetite for group Islamic Education online.

With that in mind TMI have launched a new programme aimed at children whose parents are looking for quality Islamic education in small groups of up to 7 students only, therefore still keeping its trademark personal delivery, and at an affordable price.

The new model will benefit children who at present may not be able to attend Islamic classes due to mosques being shut but it will also introduce parents and children to a new way of learning as TMI tutors are British educated, social savvy and highly experienced with a masters equivalent degree in Islamic Theology and Jurisprudence.



The new on-line courses will allow parents, for a limited time period, to book their children for a month's advance classes. The new programmes will enable up to 7 students to join a class that will be 2 hours long.

Nabeela Raza CEO of TMI says of the new programme, "Whilst being in lockdown we have had so many parents approach us about catering for group sessions. We felt it was the right time

to introduce the group programme – we will be delivering the very best in Islamic Education with the added benefit of small online classes. Online will definitely be the way forward for Islamic education as parents are seeing the potential of e-learning”.

Tap the icons below to follow Teach Me Islam online and on social.





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AZYÄ SWIM



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP

LEFT

TERRE SWIM SET

AUD 289

RIGHT

**CLASSIC ALL BLACK
MIDI SWIM SET**

AUD 289

BOTTOM

**FLORAISON MIDI
SWIM SET**

AUD 289

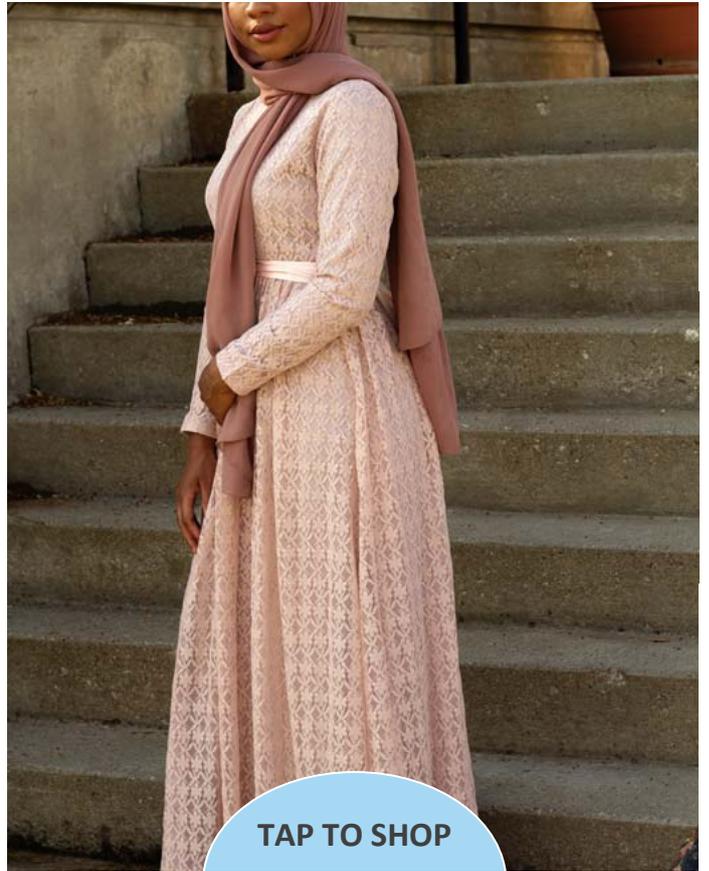


TAP TO SHOP

BELLA HIJABS



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP

LEFT

**LACE SLEEVE
OPEN ABAYA**
USD 50

RIGHT

**LONG SLEEVE LACE MAXI
DRESS WITH SATIN BELT**
USD 50

BOTTOM

**HIGH-WAISTED LACE
MAXI SKIRT**
USD 40

JAMELA BOUTIQUE

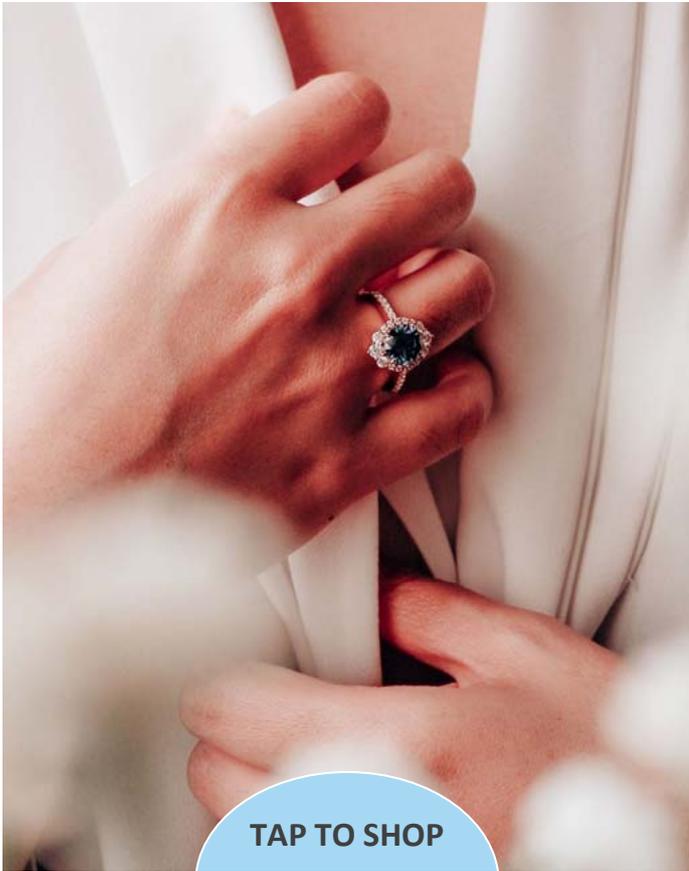


**JAMELA BOATER
HAT IN BLACK**
AUD 85

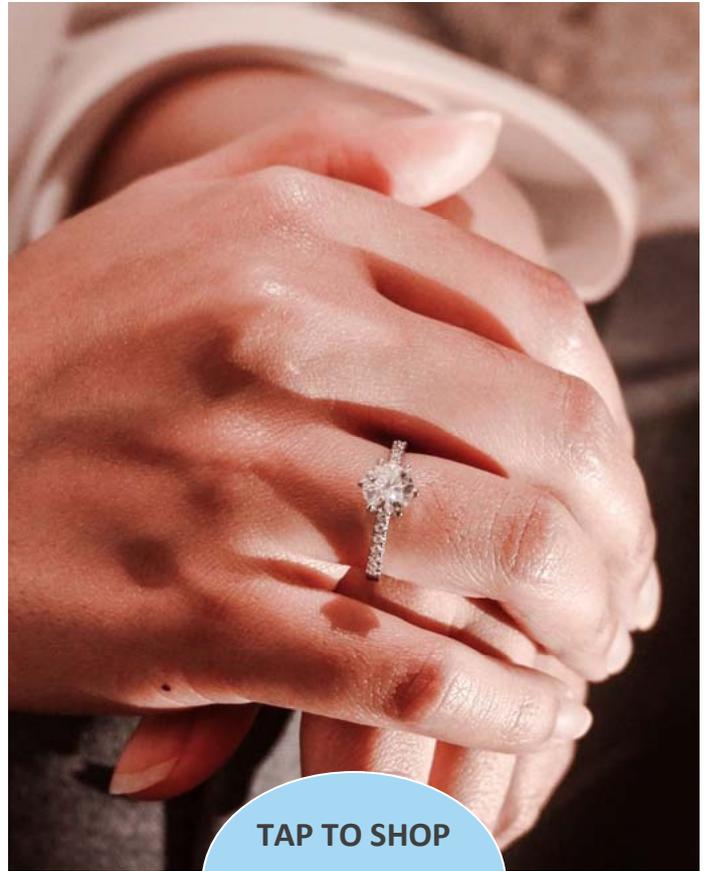


**JAMELA BOATER
HAT IN STRAW**
AUD 85

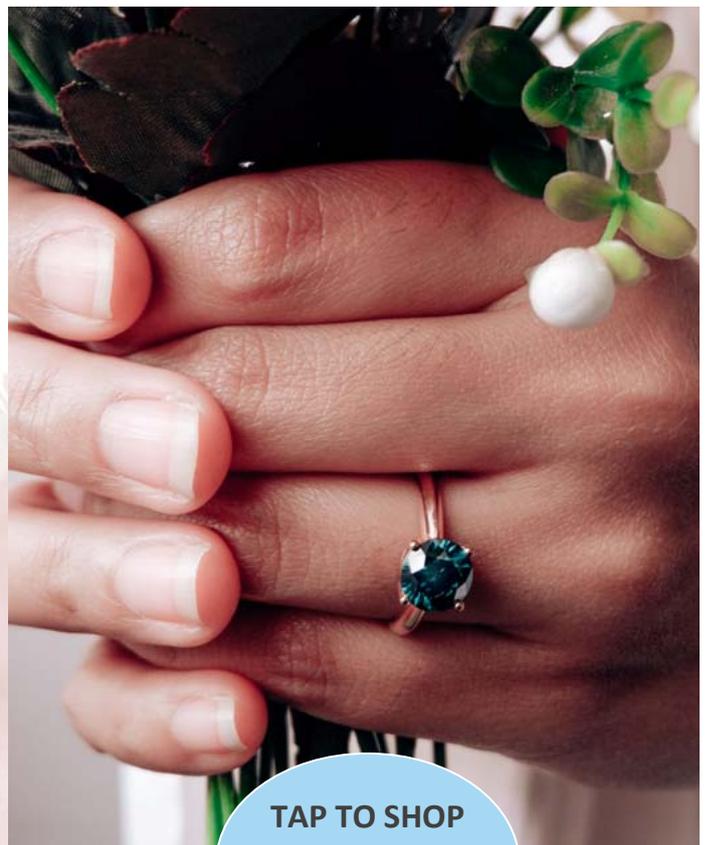
LECAINE GEMS



LEFT
**2 CARAT VINTAGE HALO
GREY MOISSANITE RING**
SGD 1388



RIGHT
**1 CARAT CROWN SETTING
WITH CRUSHED MOISSANITE
DIAMONDS 18K WHITE GOLD**
SGD 768



RIGHT
**4 CARAT MINT GREEN
MOISSANITE RING ON 18K**
SGD 899

MASSYMOO



LEFT
**HELIZA PEPLUM
DRESS IN APRICOT
AUD 70**

RIGHT
**GILDA DRESS IN
NAVY WITH BELT
AUD 60**

BOTTOM
**FADYA PEPLUM DRESS
IN PASTEL GREEN
AUD 60**

NOMINAL



LEFT
DUSK WATCH
USD 140



RIGHT
WOMEN'S CUFF
AYATUL KURSI
USD 54.99

BOTTOM
AYATUL KURSI
NECKLACE
USD 49.99



SAFIYYAH STUDIO



LEFT
**SOTOKI FLORAL
DESIGN SCARF**
£92.50

RIGHT
**KOLDIRA SUAY FLORAL
DESIGN SCARF**
£92.50

BOTTOM
**JUSKIO FLORAL
DESIGN SCARF**
£92.50



SA-ORSA



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP

LEFT
**BURNT ORANGE
JUMPSUIT**
£50

RIGHT
**WRAP STYLE
JACKET**
£50

BOTTOM
**FULLY BEADED
DRESS**
£85



TAP TO SHOP

SUELLE BOUTIQUE



LEFT

**BURNT ORANGE
JUMPSUIT**

£50.00

RIGHT

**JERSEY MIDI TOP
NAUTICAL NAVY**

AUD 69.95

BOTTOM

**DAKOTA STRIPE
WRAP DRESS/TOP**

AUD 169

SOUL GOOD PROJECT



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP

LEFT
**HIMALAYAN WILDERNESS
DEODORANT BALM**
SGD 26.90

RIGHT
**MANDARIN SPRING
DEODORANT BALM**
SGD 26.90

BOTTOM
**DREAM HAVEN
SLEEP MIST**
SGD 24.90



TAP TO SHOP

TREPEZZI



LEFT
**BONDI SURF BODYSUIT +
BALI SKIRTED SWIM TIGHTS**

RIGHT
**TROPEA SWIM MIDI
WRAP DRESS + PETRA FULL
LENGTH SWIM TIGHTS**

BOTTOM
**MATIRA ZIP DOWN
SWIM TOP + MARBELLA
PETRA FULL LENGTH
SWIM TIGHTS**

PURE



TAP TO SHOP



TAP TO SHOP

LEFT
FAITH (IMAN) IN WHITE
SGD 35

RIGHT
HOPE (AMAL) IN WHITE
SGD 35

BOTTOM
LOVE (AL HUBB) IN WHITE
SGD 35



TAP TO SHOP

LANUUK



LEFT
DIANA DUSTY OLIVE SWIMSUIT
£79.99

RIGHT
SERENA BURGUNDY SWIMSUIT
£89.99

BOTTOM
MAYA BLACK/MARSALA SWIMSUIT
£74.99