



From his atelier in Rome, Lebanese designer *Gilbert el-Halaby* makes delicate jewellery that roars

From archeology to finance and jewellery design, Gilbert is not your average 28-year-old. His entry into the fashion industry came two years ago, when he left Lebanon (temporarily, of course) to open Halaby, his store in Rome.

How did you first discover your talents?

I explored many dimensions in my life before finding out that I was meant to be in Rome. It's here where I fell in love with some turquoise stones that I'd bought in the Sunday market. It was my first necklace, my first creation, and it marked the beginning of my journey to where I am now.

When did you leave Lebanon and why?

In September 2000, I left Lebanon mainly because I felt that I still had not really discovered myself there. I knew that I had to take the road of adventure and to really learn who I am. I think I opted for the right choice by not allowing others to decide my future and my dreams.

Has being abroad helped you develop your talent?

Of course, but that's just me. There are plenty of creative artists who developed their talent in Lebanon. Personally, though, I needed to get away and see and experience more from the world.

So do you hope to bring your work to Lebanon?

Absolutely, as soon as the situation is better. Having my own venue in Lebanon means that I'm closer to my family and that I get to see them more than once a year.

Tell us about your designs. What do you try to reflect in each piece?

I like to think that the source of my designs is one of love and creativity. The creations convey passion and personality; they combine delicacy with an unconcealed desire for transgression. Ornaments have always been a reflection of power and taste and so every piece has to have its own statement, a reflection of the owner.

What is your perception of design as an art?

Design is a process of making dreams into reality. It's like magic in a sense, breathing life into your ideas. Ultimately I see it as a way of living and expressing emotions.

Who do you admire in the fashion world?

A big question! I find the greatest of all to be Valentino, and I'm sad to read that he's left the fashion scene [As mentioned in our Lightbox page 26 – Ed]. I also love Missoni, Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano.

Why only bags and jewellery? Will you try something else in the future?

I love accessories and I very much intend on getting into designing clothing, though I think that will come at a later time. For now, I operate from a relatively small atelier so it's only jewellery at this time.