



Clockwise: Kholoud Kurdi; sketching expressions; Birds of Paradise ring made of gold, oud, and gemstones



TOUCH WOOD

Step into the world of **Kholoud Kurdi**, the soul behind Dubai-based bridal favourite, *Toujours*, and their unique scented wood jewellery collection.

By **PREETA AGARWAL**

Dubai might be infamous for its ostentatious gold offerings, extravagant displays, and the largest possible diamonds but hidden in the unending lanes of jewellery souks are enticing tales that make it one of the most coveted shopping destinations of the world. Taking a walk through The Souk at The Dubai Mall, you will come across a quaint boutique with its display windows flocked with a menagerie of birds and animals, studded with magnificent colours, diamonds, and unique materials and techniques. Home to the Dubai designer—Kholoud Kurdi—this unique display is a prologue to the magnificent jewellery saga at *Toujours*.

Kurdi's creative and often experimental flair for designing jewellery translates into a unique array of bijoux fixations for brides and women across the globe. Then there are those famed gilded doors where the designer personally attends to your trousseau needs. Drawing from its name *Toujours*, the Arabic word for eternity, the brand creates timeless pieces that would be the envy of many. A trained gemologist from the Gemological Institute of America, Kurdi honed her skills further while working at the Dubai Diamond Exchange for four years where she envisaged creating jewellery that would be a hallmark of her style.

Strongly inspired by the rich Middle-Eastern culture, right from Arabic calligraphy to Islamic motifs, her jewellery is a reflection of the rich heritage as well as the modern influences of the city. "Dubai is famous for its jewellery. The design and product ranges are very wide, choices are more than you can take, and the prices are highly competitive. From Indian, to Middle Eastern, and Western tastes, all is available in Dubai," says Kurdi, the owner and chief designer of *Toujours Jewellery*.

The latest innovation from the brand, The Glamorous Scent collection,

pairs the scented oud or agarwood with gemstones to create stunning renditions of birds, butterflies, and flowers. Dark and aromatic—the densely textured and expensive wood is a major cultural symbol in the world, commonly used for perfumes, which also works as an exceptional material for carving jewellery. The aromatic wood clubbed with Kurdi's talent brings forth tactile pieces that are both priceless and irresistible.

These gorgeous floral earrings, bird brooches, and pendants with carved wooden petals and wings are a must for every bride, who is looking to add that one exclusive piece in their jewellery trousseau. "The oud wood pieces from The Glamorous Scent collection are unique and exclusive in terms of design and the materials used. It is certainly not suitable to wear with the wedding dress, but it surely is beautiful for a pre or a post wedding reception," says Kurdi. "Oud wood is often gifted to brides, so what better than setting this wood in a beautiful piece of jewellery, making it a gift to cherish for generations. It illustrates exclusivity, beauty, joy, happiness, and unique style to match the exclusive occasion of a wedding," says Kurdi.

Noted for her attention to detail, Kurdi loves adding a third dimension to the jewellery that she creates through a fusion of thoughts, colours, and materials. "I love using carved stones, where I get to shape and re-shape gems into forms such as birds, flowers, human figures, and so on. The gemstone then becomes a more interesting element in the visual story and makes the piece as unique and different as it gets," she explains. Kurdi enjoys telling stories through her jewellery and thus also uses beautiful Arab motifs and calligraphy in her jewellery.

When asked about how her work is different from her counterparts, Kurdi proudly explains, "The jewellery industry in general is looked at

as pure business by most companies. Only a few are interested in elevating the taste, beauty, and artistic approach to jewellery. Customers are more often than not on the same lines, not everyone looks for uniqueness and allure in a piece. However, there are still some patrons who believe in creativity and unique interpretations that a designer can bring to the table in this copy-paste market of today. My clients are the ones with a taste for the offbeat, they are art lovers and thrive on innovation." The acclaimed designer has been awarded many titles over the years such as the Luxury Jewellery Brand at the Luxury Lifestyle Awards 2015 Middle East, Best Arab Jewellery Designer at Middle East Jewellery & Watches Awards 2013, and Jewellery Woman of the Year at the Arab Woman Awards and many more, for her glittering contribution to the jewellery design sector by industry experts and collectors.

Having worked with many Arab brides in her career so far, Kurdi wishes to design for Indian brides as well. "I have still not had the pleasure of working with an Indian bride on any exclusive design. We have catered to an Indian bride before but it was just the classic jewellery set, nothing special. I would love to work with a stylish bride on a unique concept note. It should be fun, because Indian culture is rich and layered when it comes to bridal jewellery. The designs, colours, and pieces are mind-blowing."

For brides who want their jewellery to be more elaborate and formal, Kurdi's boutique offers timeless diamond pieces set with emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. Whether looking for a delicate round necklace with pearls or one with large emerald drops, *Toujours* boutique is a must-visit for a spectrum of creative choices. To top it all, superior quality diamonds and rare handpicked gemstones lend that covetable factor to the product portfolio. Having spread her magic in the Middle East, Kurdi plans to spread her wings to London soon. Talking about jewellery styling for young brides, Kurdi suggests, "Brides usually pay attention to their dress, makeup, hairdo, and the overall look when it comes to the wedding ceremony as it is the most important day of their lives. However, jewellery pieces should be given the same amount of attention in terms of beauty, uniqueness, and exclusivity. Brides should think of their wedding day jewellery as heirlooms, which will stay in their family for generations. Always opt for jewellery that matters, in terms of design, quality, and value." As no two women are same, no two jewellery pieces are the same. A jewel is more than the style it evokes, it also expresses a personality. Choose the ones that speak to you in a language of your own. Kudos to Kurdi as she brings this individualistic flair to her creations, making them a story to be told and loved. ■



Jewellery from The Glamorous Scent collection

IMAGE COURTESY: TOUJOURS JEWELLERY.