

AMINA KHALIL

YOUNG, CREATIVE, PROUD TO BE EGYPTIAN.

Text: Hilary Munro

"The time is right, anything starting now is bound to succeed, you can follow your dream"



Amina Khalil is talking about her fashion brand **AminaK**, which was set up in Cairo only two years ago, and is already sold in boutiques in Cairo, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. By early next year, her products will be available in Mazagy, a privately owned boutique in Geneva, Switzerland.

By any standards this is a meteoric rise, but her story and formula for success is not unusual these days in Cairo. Home-grown brands such as Shib Shibi, El Horreya, Dina Ayeshe, Nana's Closet, Nihal Basha and Nuniz Handbags have also risen in the last two years. Behind all these fashion houses are young, creative, female fashion designers. All proud to be Egyptian, and using the by-line "Made in Egypt". Their lines differ of course, they have different visions, different styles and products.

They all combine uncompromising international standards of quality control with marketing, image and branding skills. Their products are beautifully produced with expert finishing, but they are sourced and produced in Egypt. They are being bought in Egypt and the Middle East by

the chic set who until very recently would have thought it necessary to travel to London, Paris or Milan in order to acquire stylish clothes or accessories.

Cairo is a perfect hothouse for this new and upcoming generation of designers. The market is surprisingly small. Despite a large population, only a small percentage of Egyptians are interested in couture fashion. However, technology permits these designers to reach a customer base that spans the whole region and to do so, via the Web, at little expense. Trusted on-line buying is provided at the click of a mouse by Egyptian entrepreneurs via the website www.style-treasure.com. This website, set up only two years ago, is the Egyptian portal into this dynamic new marketplace.

Designers no longer need to reach their customers through fashion shows, impressive shops, and expensive full-page advertisement in national newspapers. Facebook and on-line buying is the preferred medium for these customers. "I can't over emphasise the importance of Facebook as a means of selling on-line and advertising," states Amina.