

# ON MIDDLE-EAST

## by ingie chalhoub

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RECENTLY MAKING THEIR PARISIAN DEBUT IS INGIE PARIS, THE BRAND WITH A COUTURE SPIRIT LAUNCHED BY INGIE CHALHOUB. A KEY PLAYER IN THE FASHION AND LUXURY SECTOR, CHALHOUB WAS A CONSULTANT WHO HELPED THE BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL BRANDS PENETRATE THE LUXURY MARKET IN THE MIDDLE EAST. NOW THE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMAN AND CEO OF THE ETOILE GROUP HAS DECIDED TO MAKE HER OWN DREAM COME TRUE: TO CREATE HER VERY OWN (NEARLY) EPONYMOUS BRAND. HOW DID INGIE CHALHOUB BECOME INGIE PARIS? WHY DID SHE CHOOSE THIS CITY FOR HER SHOWROOM-ATELIER? THE FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR GIVES US THE INSIDE SCOOP.

**You decided to open your showroom-atelier in Paris. Tell us about Paris and what the city means for you...**

Opening my showroom-atelier in Paris just made sense because of my dual French and Lebanese culture. It made sense for me to work with artisans from the Paris haute couture world who represent a “Made in France” movement that remains very important in the luxury world.

**What were your inspirations for the summer collection you presented in Paris?**

Several different artistic influences inspired the collection: Jackson Pollock’s expressionism influenced the orange brushstroke motifs, multicolor cubist shapes inspired the crystal embroidery on the belts, for example, while the blue tones recall Joan Miró’s abstract work. For this first collection presented in Paris, I wanted to express a French Riviera spirit with the Mediterranean colors and perfumes evoked on color-block postcards from the 70s. Specifically the yellow of mimosas and the orange of sunsets. As for the embroidery and sequins that are present throughout the collection, I took inspiration from blue and white Sèvres porcelain.

**You often talk about color, but special attention is also paid to textile effects, prints and finishing...**

Yes, I want to bring color and light into the female wardrobe! My goal is to mix vibrant colors! As for the textile effects, I wanted to layer motifs and materials to create an alchemy between floral and graphic universes. The silhouette is often accented by a jewel-belt in English embroidery, which gives an elegant note of freshness. We also worked with cream and black guipure lace, paillettes and plumetis in a porcelain motif. It’s a big collection with 52 models.

**How did you decide to go from being a businesswoman active in fashion and luxury to your new role as the founder and creative director of your own brand?**

It wasn’t easy. I didn’t know if I was ready to create my own brand, even though I’ve wanted to do it since before 2009! I was waiting for my sons to be a bit more independent so I could travel more. I asked Jean-Jacques Picart for advice, since I have known him since I was a child and continued to see him later when I went to my mother’s fashion shows as a young girl. He gave me the confidence I needed to do this thing I really wanted to do. In the end I finally felt that I could cross over to the other side, you might say!

**How did you pick the name Ingie Paris for your brand?**

At first I thought I would call it Etoile, after the name of my luxury fashion group. I thought long and hard about the name. After three weeks of hard work with Jean-Jacques, he told me: “We need to work for you, and

you’re much more than Chalhoub, you’re Ingie. Your brand has to be your personal DNA, it has to express what’s inside you.”

**It seems like you had a lot of doubts... Just looking at your career and experience, it’s easy to think that launching your own brand would be no problem for you, but it doesn’t sound like that was the case...**

No, it wasn’t easy despite the fact that I really wanted to do this for many years. I didn’t know where to start. I went through the midlife crisis where you say that maybe you’ve done good work for years but, in the end, you haven’t accomplished what you want to accomplish. I did it for other people, but something was missing for me. I spent years advising brands and designers. Eventually I started thinking about working for myself.

**What do you like most about design?**

The search, the eureka moment, the detail that makes the difference. I’m always inspired and there’s so much I want to do!

**We can tell you have a taste for design with a couture spirit...**

Yes, it’s true! When you work for big luxury brands, you end up advising clients according to their physiognomy, the texture of their skin, etc. It’s important to express a certain kind of fashion when it comes to clients, and not to dress them just to dress them. So I would rework pieces for my clients... I added something new by slightly altering the pieces or accessorizing. Ingie Paris also came about after different women asked me why I hadn’t created my own brand. My friends, including Arielle Dombasle, asked me to design pieces for them. Now we have an integrated atelier. The word “atelier” means a lot when you start to create custom pieces. My first “couture” design is my future daughter-in-law’s wedding dress. So it’s the first couture order for Ingie Paris along with the spring-summer collection.

**Fashion has changed a lot by adding new collections. How do you see the future of Ingie Paris?**

You have to strike a balance between business and design. You have to do the right amount of each, but at the beginning, you need to design as much as possible and give free reign to your imagination and desires. Afterwards, the pressure will come on its own. What sets me apart, my biggest strength, is being a woman creating for women, all while having my dual culture. The best sign of success is when I see women in my dresses. You’ll have to ask me again in a year or two to see where Ingie Paris will be! We’ll need a few years to really establish the brand. So we’re starting out by working on expressing Ingie Paris and its creative universe. We’re creating its history!