

(JEWELLERY)

"DUBAI WAS ALWAYS TOP OF MY LIST"

Stylist meets jewellery designer Monica Vinader at the official opening of her Mall of the Emirates boutique, her first stand-alone store in the Middle East



MONICA SAYS THE NEW DUBAI STORE IS HER MOST BEAUTIFUL YET

Why did you pick Dubai as your first Middle East location?

We've got a really loyal and supportive customer base in the Gulf, so we've been wanting to open a store that would cater to our customers in the region for a while. Dubai has always been top of my list – it's such an incredible international market and a great shopping destination. It's an uber-capital of luxury – just look around this mall; the finish everywhere is fantastic.

The store is gorgeous – talk us through the design

This is probably one of our most beautiful stores in the world – I think we've set a new standard for ourselves here. The interior is very much handpicked by me – I designed the marble floors; the chairs, chandeliers, and stools at the engraving bar are all vintage pieces that I picked up, I bought the Tom Dixon lamps. We wanted to create an environment that was luxurious but also welcoming and

inclusive, because we are a very inclusive brand. In fact, I'd actually like this to be my sitting room...

You've also launched some new collections here...

The new Riva collection is launching in the UAE a month before the rest of the world, as a way of celebrating the store. It means 'shoreline' in Spanish and it's inspired by my drawings of how waves break. So even though it's completely paved with diamonds, it's still a very organic shape. I like to think of it as a diamond collection for every day, with very feminine, easy to wear shapes. We also have new colours in our Siren collection – a beautiful pastel blue agate, some strong tangerine colours and bright greens. It really showcases what we do well: bespoke cut stones in exciting colours and shapes that feel very fresh, with lots of stacking rings that you can mix and match. And we've also launched a limited spring edition of the Fiji friendship bracelet in five macaron, sorbet colours.

Speaking of the Fiji bracelet, it's become synonymous with your brand. Where did the idea come from?

Fiji is such an icon now but the idea came from me wanting to keep that spirit where you pick up all these braided bracelets on holiday, but when you come back home they look tatty and out of place and you can't wear them to the office. I wanted to create the grown-up version of the friendship bracelet so it would sit seamlessly with your other jewellery and you could wear it anywhere, but you could still bring colour and personalisation into it.

Do you think the fact that Monica Vinader jewellery can all be personalised by an in-house engraver has played a key role in the brand's success?

Absolutely, and I also think it says a lot about the fact that women are self-purchasing jewellery now – the days of waiting for someone to buy you a pair of diamond earrings are gone because there are brands like my own that bridge that gap between fine [jewellery] and fashion. I think the popularity of

personalisation shows that women are feeling empowered to buy jewellery for themselves, and so they should. The whole point of our jewellery is you can make it your own instantly. A lot of designers design beautiful things but they're kind of imposing – it's almost like the earrings are wearing you. Whereas our jewellery looks different on different people – it really adjusts to the wearer and the fact [the pieces are] so easy to mix and match allows you to be your own stylist.

What inspires your designs?

I'm inspired by travelling, architecture, art, and nature. I go to lots of museums, and I do life drawing and draw from observation – nature, stones, pebbles, crystal, landscapes. I trained in fine arts and decorative arts, with a focus on sculpture, at City & Guilds, and we did life drawing three or four times a week. I still carry a sketchbook with me everywhere and I have done ever since I was at art school – I have piles and piles of them. My drawings are at the core of every collection.

The Monica Vinader Boutique is open now at Mall of the Emirates