

LET'S TALK ARTS & BUSINESS

With contemporary Bahraini artist and highly-accomplished entrepreneur, **Nabeela Al Khayer**

▶ A free-spirited artist and a successful businesswoman who spearheads two of Bahrain's most prominent companies, Asia Jewellers and Phoenicia Décor –

Nabeela Al Khayer remains driven by a fierce passion to inspire and empower women through her vast experience in entrepreneurship, as well as, her desire to promote local artistry with her vibrant paintings.

This month, BiG Magazine had a unique chance to interview this cognoscente lady, as she talks about her greatest influence as an entrepreneur and her insight on the local artistry scene.

Where did you graduate from?

● From Kuwait University with a degree in accounting. At that time, high school graduates had limited options in the Arab world, and Kuwait was always held in high regard when it came to education.

What were the circumstances that led you to become an entrepreneur?

● I have always been an entrepreneur ever since I was young, although on a smaller scale. Later on, I entered the family business with my husband where I focused on the decoration aspect, which I enjoyed very much.

Back when you first entered the entrepreneurial world, what were some of the challenges and struggles that you faced?

● The main struggle was the constant competition and the availability of new products. As an entrepreneur, you always have to be aware of the direction you are taking and of course, keeping your business up to date. Another essential aspect to be considered is your approach to people and your method of demonstrating your work. As a business, we were always trying to sell the highest quality luxury products with the best prices.



“Fight for what you believe in and work hard to achieve your dreams. Failure is a natural part of the process, but never give up and continue to follow your passion.”

You hold key positions and run your family business from behind the scenes. For someone who made that journey, what has been the greatest lesson you learned when it comes to running multiple business operations?

● My husband always said, and taught our children as well, to always be genuine in your work, be honest with all your clients and gain their trust. For myself, I learned the importance of not only honesty but also of supporting each other and working together hand in hand. On top of that, I learned the significance of working hard and continually challenging myself to continue evolving.

Who has been your greatest influence as an entrepreneur?

● I'm happy that you asked this question because I genuinely want to shed light on someone who influenced me greatly throughout my life - my late husband. He was a great, wise, honest and hardworking. He was able to establish so much from nothing and has been a great motivator throughout my journey. Until today, he is present in all my work although he is no longer here with us. He was a great example to our whole family; we learned a lot from him on a daily basis. He was always there to support us and push us to innovate and become the best versions of ourselves. To this day, our children are following his footsteps, living by his ideals, lifestyle, and morals. He created a roadmap which made all of our successes easier and enjoyable.

What can you say on the rising trend of women entrepreneurs in Bahrain?

● The latest statistics show that a higher percentage of commercial activity belong to women. This proves that the new generation is taking a big step forward in creating the image of a strong independent woman; working very hard and seeking new and creative ways to conduct business in the country. I am very proud of this generation and their success and wish them nothing but the best.

For you, what distinguishes a Bahraini woman, with respect to other women in the region?

● Since the beginning, Bahrain has been a pioneer in the region in providing education to women. Bahraini women have always been involved in various aspects of trade, which includes traditional crafts, and this has evolved into what it is today. The country has always had a strong foundation to provide women with opportunities, while also having strong, educated

women who were willing to take these opportunities head-on. Of course, over time many other countries in the region have taken significant steps to create these opportunities for women, but Bahrain was the first in this regard.

Apart from being an entrepreneur, you are also very much engaged in contemporary artistry. How did this passion of yours start?

● Ever since I was young, as my consciousness developed and I began to understand the minute details of my environment, I found myself leaning towards a love for colors and began to look at things in a different, maybe even curious, manner. This inspired me to constantly wonder and search for more. I was always keen to register all that my eyes could see on paper in the form of a sketch. It is no secret that my passion was always to study art, but I never got the opportunity to do so. The opportunity I got was to study accounting, so that's what I did. Later on, in life, I was able to follow my dreams and took various art courses and workshops in France, Switzerland, Britain and other countries. Thankfully, I have been able to live my dream ever since.

What can you say on Bahrainis arts and creative scene nowadays?

● Bahrain has achieved global success in art. Our art did not begin in the modern era; it goes back thousands of years to the Dilmun civilization where carvings and drawings were found on seals. Bahraini art is a result of this rich culture that has evolved over long periods of time. There are many pioneers of all ages in the modern scene who represent various international schools of art, a scene which I am genuinely proud of.

Describe/outline your typical day.

● My days are always busy and hectic. Between the business, my art, taking care of my family, my role in the Bahrain Business and Professional Women Federation Club, and as a member of a society for children with special needs, my days are very long and tiring, but always fulfilling.

What is it that motivates and drives you?

● I think humans, in general, thrive on achievement and success as they bring us satisfaction and pride. I feel content and proud when I have achievements to my name. This keeps me motivated and drives me forward through the tough days.

If you could go back in time to speak with your 20-year-old self, what would you tell her?

● I would tell her never to be afraid of trying new things. Even if you were to make mistakes, what matters most is the lessons you take away from them and applying them to your present and future.

Where would be your ideal vacation destination?

● The destination is not what matters. I am happy anywhere I go as long as I am surrounded by the people I love.

What is your favorite book?

● Letters to Milena by Franz Kafka.

What do you do when you are not at work?

● I spend my free time painting in my studio with a warm cup of tea.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

● Fight for what you believe in and work hard to achieve your dreams. Failure is a natural part of the process, but never give up and continue to follow your passion.

What do you think of print magazines in today's digital age?

● Despite the rise in popularity of digital media, I still believe in the importance of print magazines and newspapers. I, along with many others, still enjoy the feel and authenticity of print that cannot be achieved in digital form.