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Forbes



Fashion Forward Armenia: Creativity in Motion

As Armenia's economy booms, culture & creativity are becoming powerful drivers of its international identity. Drawing on a rich cultural heritage while embracing contemporary ideas, a new generation is creating globally relevant brands, experiences & institutions that span fashion, art, hospitality & gastronomy, helping position Armenia as one of the region's most dynamic destinations.



THE ALEXANDER
YEREVAN

The Alexander, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Yerevan
Defining the destination



Fashioning a New Armenia

By Jeb Adams

By the end of the first week in Yerevan, we had stopped making plans. The city seemed to operate through momentum instead. One introduction led to another dinner, a new conversation, or an unexpected invitation. A coffee became a four-hour discussion about fashion and identity. Entire evenings disappeared this way. One such invitation took us to the home of a well-known Armenian artist perched above a gorge on the edge of Yerevan. From his balcony, the view itself felt symbolic: untouched nature cutting through the landscape, elegant new homes rising from the rock, in the distance, the brutal remains of a Soviet-era aluminum factory with its enormous smokestack and giant twin water pipes descending almost violently into the gorge below. Nature, industry and modern ambition all occupying the same frame. That juxtaposition felt remarkably similar to the city itself. For years, Armenia has largely been viewed internationally through the lens of history, geopolitics, diaspora and resilience. But spending time in Yerevan today, another narrative becomes impossible to ignore. A generation of artists, designers, chefs, architects, musicians and entrepreneurs is quietly reshaping the country's cultural identity in a way that feels organic rather than manufactured.

One afternoon, we ran into a sommelier friend on the street. He only had a few moments before rushing to a meeting about the opening of a new restaurant, but instead of parting ways, he invited us along. When we arrived, the restaurant was still unfinished and empty except for the bustling kitchen. The owner-chef emerged carrying dishes almost as quickly as ideas. We tasted pizzas and experimental combinations while he asked for opinions

on the menu and atmosphere. It never felt like a formal tasting or branding exercise. It felt collaborative and communal. Friends introducing friends. People building things together in real time. That atmosphere repeats itself constantly across the city. In many larger capitals, creativity can feel highly curated and performative. Yerevan

still feels different. Here, the boundaries between industries remain fluid. Fashion designers move between art spaces and restaurants. Architects collaborate with musicians. Hospitality spaces become cultural gathering points rather than simply businesses. Some of the city's most important conversations happen informally, over long dinners, crowded bars and chance encounters on familiar streets. What emerged from those encounters was not simply a portrait of Armenia's creative scene, but something more intimate: a city still deeply shaped by collaboration and community.

More than once, we squeezed into tiny bars so full that conversations spilled into the street itself. Around us, Armenian, Russian, English and French blended together over the music while familiar faces appeared at



5 Concept Store

Models: Ekaterina Ivanova & Svetlana Ivanova
Jackets: Mamossa / Jeans: True Romance
Skirt: Martirosyan Collection
Bag: Liana Taschyan
Photo: Mariam Kach

nearly every corner. By the second week, we had begun recognizing many of them ourselves. That intimacy may be one of Yerevan's greatest strengths. The city still feels small enough for ideas, friendships and collaborations to move quickly between people, with much of its creative momentum emerging through informal conversations rather than rigid structures.

We saw this especially within fashion. Unlike many emerging creative capitals, Armenia seems less interested in recreating Paris, Milan or New York and more interested in developing a distinct point of view of its own while still speaking to an international audience. Some designers draw from Armenian craftsmanship and symbolism while others lean toward cleaner contemporary aesthetics. What connects them is individuality. Across the city, independent concept stores and creative spaces have become important springboards for emerging Armenian designers, giving younger brands visibility while helping shape a new collaborative fashion ecosystem.

That same spirit extends far beyond fashion itself. Across Yerevan, a younger creative generation is reinterpreting old spaces, old influences and even remnants of the past into something distinctly contemporary and local.

One evening, we found ourselves on the outskirts of Yerevan at an electronic music party inside an old Soviet-era film studio warehouse. From the outside, the building still looked frozen in another time. Inside, however, rooms pulsed with flashing lights, deep house beats and a crowd that felt both intensely local and unexpectedly international.

At one point, a friend quietly pulled us into a side room hidden behind the dance floor. Pieces of the original studio still remained intact: aging walls, abandoned production remnants and fragments of the infrastructure where old Soviet films had once been produced. For a few minutes, everyone spoke more quietly. Then we stepped back into the music, into the lights, into a younger Armenia creating something entirely its own inside the shell of the old world.

That tension between past and future seems to exist everywhere in Yerevan right now. Many of the people shaping Armenia's creative industries have spent



Yerevan's restaurants are a meeting point for creative exchange.

Photo: Turnables Hospitality Group

significant time abroad before returning with a different perspective on what Armenia could become. What is emerging now feels less like a passing trend and more like a long-term investment in the country itself. As investment, tourism and international attention accelerate, the question is no longer whether Armenia will change. It already is. The larger question is what parts of the city's identity will remain intact as that transformation continues.

By the end of our stay, we had somehow amassed a small posse of friends, many of whom seemed to orbit around a tiny restaurant called Camilla, opened by two Lebanese-Armenian childhood friends. It became one of those places we kept returning to, partly for the food, but mostly because it felt like a crossroads for the city itself. On our final evening

there, after countless introductions and shared laughs, I pulled Nareg, Camilla's co-founder, aside for a moment while the youth of Yerevan hurried past us into the cool night.

"How do you do it?" I asked him. "Every single person here seems connected and genuinely happy. It feels less like a business and more like a family." He smiled before glancing back at the dining room. "Yes," he said. "That is our secret ingredient. Community. Every person here is important. No role is more important than another. We all work together to create this piece of art every night." Then he laughed softly. "Haha... that is Armenia." And perhaps that explains the city better than anything else. For now, Armenia still feels shaped by the people living in it. And that connection still feels wonderfully intact. ●



Model: Lidia Zadoorian
Designer: Nensi Avetisian
Platform: Rien-à-Porter
Photo: Mariam Kach

ELEN MANUKYAN

Co-Founder & Team Lead
Fashion Chamber of Armenia



What inspired you to help build Armenia's fashion industry?

Before founding the Fashion Chamber of Armenia, I worked with the Ministry of Economy on business development programs while co-founding 5Concept, one of Yerevan's first spaces dedicated to Armenian designers. I saw strong creative talent but no real ecosystem around it. Designers lacked visibility, infrastructure and support. I believed fashion could strengthen entrepreneurship, cultural identity and Armenia's role in the global creative economy. For me, it was about creating opportunity through creativity.

What is the biggest challenge facing Armenian fashion internationally?

Today, the challenge is no longer talent or visibility. It is sustainable growth. Armenia needs stronger investment, production capacity, marketing, education and international positioning. We cannot compete through scale, but we can compete through originality, craftsmanship and quality. Armenia also

FASHION CHAMBER OF ARMENIA

@hel_man
@fca_armenia
@yerevanfashionweek_

“Culture builds identity, & fashion is one of the most visible languages of culture.”

has strong potential as a production partner for international brands. That combination is where our long-term strength lies.

How important is the Armenian diaspora to the industry's future?

The diaspora can play a major role not only financially, but through mentorship, networks, media exposure and access to global markets. What we need now is more structured, long-term collaboration. Armenia already has a global creative network. The next step is activating it through partnerships, exchanges and projects that connect Armenian creativity worldwide.

Is Yerevan Fashion Week helping redefine the city's identity?

Absolutely. Fashion weeks are about much more than clothing. They showcase a city's creativity, energy and cultural confidence. Yerevan Fashion Week was created as a platform for community-building and international visibility. In just four editions, we are already seeing growing global attention. It is helping position Yerevan as a creative capital with its own cultural voice and aesthetic identity.

How do Armenian designers stay authentic while appealing internationally?

Authenticity is our biggest advantage. International buyers today want identity and originality, not mass production. The strongest Armenian designers reinterpret heritage through a modern perspective rather than using it decoratively. Armenia's connection to craftsmanship and smaller-scale production also gives the industry a distinctive position globally. In the long term, authenticity creates stronger international recognition.

What would success look like over the next five years?

Success would mean seeing Armenian designers represented in major showrooms, boutiques, fashion weeks and international media while maintaining a strong Armenian identity. I would also like Armenia to be recognized as a creative destination known for originality, craftsmanship, innovation and quality production. Ultimately, success is creating an ecosystem strong enough that talented creatives no longer feel they must leave Armenia to build an international career. ●

Fashion introduces Armenia to the world.



Design: Varduhi Torozyan
Clothes: Jocund
Store: Rien-à-Porter

MARETA GEVORKYAN

Armenian entrepreneur
Cultural strategist
Co-founder, Maison Marom



“The goal is to create conditions for creatives to keep building.”

What inspired you to create Maison Marom?

Maison Marom came out of an observation that took years to settle. Armenia had real craft and talent in its people, but very few stable spaces able to hold that work at the standard it deserved. The gap I kept noticing was infrastructure. Designers and makers had skill, but no reliable way to meet international audiences without losing the texture that made them theirs in the first place. Maison Marom was an attempt to build that bridge with enough patience for the work itself to do the talking.

How do Rien-à-Porter, Melonpan & Maróm Label in Paris work together?

Rien-à-Porter began as a Yerevan-based space curating Armenian designers alongside international brands. Recently, we expanded this vision through the launch of Rien-à-Porter Global, a multi-brand fashion platform that reaches beyond Armenia, bringing our curated selection to new markets and audiences across different countries. Melonpan explores Armenian culinary heritage, while Maróm Label in

Paris blends Armenian heritage with contemporary design and French production. What connects them is a shared instinct. Armenian craft travels well, carrying its detail and care from Yerevan to Paris and connecting with new audiences abroad.

How is Armenia's creative culture evolving today?

Armenia is moving through a change that I think will look bigger in retrospect. Talent that once left in search of audiences is now finding that audiences are beginning to arrive here instead. My role, as I understand it, is to keep building the conditions for that. The spaces, partnerships and visibility that make it normal for an Armenian designer to show in Paris one season and Yerevan the next. What already exists here deserves somewhere stable to stand and the conditions to continue building.

How does cultural heritage influence your other projects?

Vernatoun is perhaps the clearest example. It was created as a space where the conversation between past and present can continue to develop in a setting that respects both. For us, heritage is not decorative. It is the working material itself: the buildings, traditions and inherited ways of gathering that carry the weight of history. The intention is

to make heritage a living part of everyday life again and place it in the hands of the people who will carry it forward.

How do you bring Armenian creatives to global audiences while preserving identity?

The mistake I try to avoid is treating identity as a costume to put on for an international audience. We focus on partnerships with people and institutions that already understand context, craftsmanship and cultural literacy, and then allow the collaboration to develop naturally over time. MOMENT OF WHITE, our bridal and couture atelier, is one example of how that approach travels. Identity preserves itself when the work is good and the partnerships are strong.

What is your long-term vision for Maison Marom?

I think it is a long-horizon project. Maison Marom currently operates as the brand holder for initiatives including Rien-à-Porter, Maróm Label, and Melonpan, while the next phase is being built carefully. What I am building for is continuity. Twenty years from now, if Armenian designers and craftspeople have a recognizable place in those conversations, and the people working within our traditions can do so with dignity and at the standard they deserve, that would be an outcome I would be very proud of. ●

Design: Moment of White
Brand: Lunaria Limited
Store: Rien-à-Porter

Creativity weaves fashion into art.

MAISON MAROM

rien-a-porter.com

ARTAK TOVMASYAN

Founder, Seven Visions Resort
& Places, The Dvin



“Monaco glamour,
Vegas energy,
Macau prestige,
yet uniquely
Armenian.”

What did the world teach you about luxury?

Seven Visions was never created to copy global luxury. The goal was to enter the global ultra-exclusive hospitality conversation with our own Armenian language. Of course, we were inspired by destinations like Las Vegas, Dubai, Monaco and the world's leading hospitality groups, but we never wanted to import a foreign concept into Armenia. We wanted to prove that Armenia itself could create a hospitality experience capable of challenging the best in the world while remaining deeply rooted in its own identity.

What do you want guests to understand about Armenia?

For us, Armenian culture is not decoration. It is the structure of the entire experience. Seven Visions was imagined almost as an architectural book written in stone instead of words, where every floor, restaurant, performance and detail tells part of Armenia's story. Guests are not simply staying in a hotel. They are entering a journey through memory,

history, spirituality and modern Armenian identity. Even the name “Dvin” carries the history of Armenia's ancient capitals.

How did you preserve the old Dvin while reimagining it?

The old Dvin was never treated as something to erase. It was treated as a memory to transform. Almost half a century ago, the original Dvin hotel was a beloved place in Yerevan, and today we wanted to preserve that emotional memory while expanding it into something entirely new. This is the essence of our philosophy: we do not cut roots; we nurture them. The spirit of gathering, diplomacy, celebration and Armenian hospitality still exists, but it has been reborn through contemporary architecture, entertainment, technology and immersive experiences.

Which symbol at Seven Visions is the most personal to you?

The entire resort is built around symbolism, but the most personal element for me is Hayrik. “Hayrik” means “father” in Armenian, and the restaurant is a tribute to fathers, family warmth, memory and recipes carried through generations. It is also deeply connected to my own father and the emotional idea that food can preserve love and heritage. Hayrik is

more than a restaurant. It is the emotional heart of the resort.

How important are aesthetics & emotional staging?

Hospitality is not only comfort. It is emotion, rhythm, light, storytelling, surprise and atmosphere. We treat hospitality almost like cinema or theatre. One&Only Theatre is one example, where performances unfold above the atrium through choreography and immersive staging. The same philosophy exists throughout the resort, from gastronomy to music to architecture. Beauty is not passive for us. Beauty performs. Hospitality is not only what guests see, but what they feel.

What lasting message do you hope guests leave with?

I want people to understand that Armenia is ancient, but never old; spiritual, but never static; elegant, but never silent. Seven Visions exists to show that Armenian identity can be expressed at the highest international level through architecture, gastronomy, wellness, performance, music and human warmth. The deepest message is that life itself should be experienced as art. We are not simply offering rooms or restaurants. We are offering a journey through memory, beauty and possibility. ●

SEVEN VISIONS RESORT &
PLACES, THE DVIN

7visionshotels.com

Experience
becomes living art.



BARON SCANCELLI

AKA Da Vinci Disciple of
Positive Collision



Was there a moment when your understanding of success changed?

I was born at midnight, and my mother always told me she had a choice of what date to put on the birth certificate. After she passed away, I changed it myself because I saw it as the beginning of a third life and a new chapter. I believe life revolves around change because change is the true constant. Every day is an experiment. When you stop learning, you die. Success in the traditional sense is highly overrated. Life is really a series of comebacks, and failure is often the thing that teaches you most, figures lie, liars figure.

Do you see yourself as an artist, collector, patron, or something else?

Less is more. Trying to define what you do is senseless because life constantly changes your role. Some days you are a philosopher, some days a laborer, some days a parent, and some days a patient. We are all servants to one another in some way. You need to give in order to receive. Labels matter far less than energy, curiosity and the willingness to keep evolving.

DA VINCI DISCIPLE

@baronscancelli
@artfactory.am

“The strongest communities are built where perspectives collide.”

Why does building cultural community matter so much to you?

Community and solitude are both necessary. Loving people and connecting with them is phenomenal, but balance matters because anything can become unhealthy without limits. I think being alone is equally important because that is where strength and creativity are developed. Time with community gives inspiration, while solitude becomes sanctuary. Whether someone creates visual art, music, writing or algorithms, the creative process ultimately depends on having space to think holistically.

What drew you back to Armenia after spending much time abroad?

I first came to Armenia in 1991. I am a first-generation American, and my grandparents were genocide survivors who constantly shared stories about Armenia and survival. Those stories became part of our DNA. When I stepped onto Armenian soil for the first time, I felt something almost impossible to explain, like a charge running through my body. Later, when I watched the political change in 2018, I felt it was a sign to reconnect with my roots and contribute something meaningful here in Armenia.

How do creativity & culture help connect people?

I was recently researching the origins of Silicon Valley and Xerox PARC, where engineers, artists, writers and historians were intentionally brought together. That combination of technology, commerce and culture created something transformative. Creativity works the same way everywhere. Culture allows people from completely different worlds to communicate, collaborate, and imagine together. The strongest communities are usually built where disciplines and perspectives collide manifesting positive development.

What kind of long-term impact do you hope to leave behind?

For me, legacy is really about my children and the art itself. Art becomes a time capsule showing how people lived, thought, and imagined during a specific moment in history. I love combining old and new ideas in unexpected ways and hopefully inspiring someone else to create something bold. Life is a puzzle. Every generation tries to solve it differently. If my work leaves behind curiosity and inspiration for someone else to build on, that is success for me. ●



Baron Scancelli: "Shutter"
Mixed Media Invoupage 2023

Culture connects
unlikely minds.

ARMEN POGOSSIAN

Co-Owner, Pogossian Luxury
Brand House



“We wanted to create a universe people can emotionally connect with.”

Was building your brand around identity & experience intentional?

From the beginning, I wanted to create more than a collection of products. I wanted to build a brand that people could genuinely connect with and see as part of their lifestyle and identity. For me, luxury has never been only about the product itself. It is about the feeling it creates and the values it represents. Products can be copied, but emotion cannot. Luxury today is about belonging, atmosphere and aspiration. That philosophy shapes everything we do, from hospitality to products like Jardins d'Arménie Royal Brandy and Godfather Vodka, where presentation, ritual and experience matter as much as the product itself. Emotional connection is what creates longevity and transforms brands into part of people's identity.

What separates true luxury from something that simply feels expensive?

True luxury creates meaning. Expensive products may attract attention briefly, but memorable brands are built on craftsmanship, heritage and authenticity. The strongest luxury houses combine quality, consistency

and storytelling into something people genuinely value and remember. Luxury should feel intentional, never forced. Whether it is a product, a hotel experience or a spirit, every detail should contribute to a coherent identity and a distinctive experience.

How do you make Armenian heritage feel globally relevant?

Armenia has incredible cultural depth, but we never wanted to present it in a nostalgic way. We reinterpret heritage through a contemporary lens. That balance between timeless identity and modern aesthetics allows us to connect with international audiences while staying rooted in who we are. I think people today are searching for brands with genuine character and real stories. Even with products like our Royal Brandy, we focus on presenting Armenian craftsmanship in a way that feels contemporary, elegant and internationally relevant.

What insights did you gain from the Forbes China 30 Under 30 event?

Being recognized at the Forbes China 30 Under 30 event was meaningful because it provided a firsthand view of how luxury is evolving across international markets. What stood out most was the growing importance of authenticity, craftsmanship and experience. Consumers are increasingly looking beyond traditional symbols of prestige and

seeking brands with a clear identity and purpose. It also highlighted how global luxury conversations are becoming more open to emerging brands and new perspectives. It reinforced my belief that the future of luxury belongs to brands that combine quality, innovation and a distinctive point of view.

Why are audiences drawn toward lifestyle worlds?

Because people no longer want isolated products. They want immersion. Fashion connects with hospitality, music, design and even spirits. Audiences want to enter a world that reflects their values and aspirations. The brands succeeding today are the ones creating atmosphere and community around what they do. That is far more powerful than selling a single object because it creates a lasting emotional relationship with the audience.

What do you want Pogossian Luxury Brand House to represent globally?

I want it to represent modern Armenian creativity on an international level. Beyond luxury, I want the brand to symbolize ambition and originality. Armenia has extraordinary talent and perspective, and I believe brands from this region can contribute something distinctive to global luxury conversations. Ultimately, I want people to associate Pogossian Luxury Brand House with vision and lasting cultural impact. ●

POGOSSIAN LUXURY
BRAND HOUSE

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Jardins d'Arménie

ROYAL BRANDY

REINVENTED



A 35 YEAR OLD
AWAITED SYMPHONY



Generations of spirit and mastery in every note

www.jardinsdarmenie.com

NINA HOVNANIAN

Co-Founder, Yerevan Biennial
Art Foundation (YBAF)



“Creativity
imagination &
innovation are
shaping Armenia’s
future.”

What motivated your move from New York to Yerevan?

I first arrived in Armenia in 1992 after years fundraising for a major New York arts foundation. The country was struggling through war and the aftermath of independence, yet there was an extraordinary cultural dialogue everywhere. Artists, writers, composers and historians felt like the nation’s mentors. Growing up in a family deeply connected to Armenian culture, that first visit felt like a mission. I realized Armenia’s creative community needed support more urgently than the institutions I had been serving at home in New York.

What have been the foundation’s defining milestones so far?

YBAF was founded in 2019, and almost immediately we faced Covid and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Instead of postponing our plans, we launched the first fully digital biennial online, attracting more than 50,000 visitors. During the war, our Latitude Art Space sheltered displaced families. Since then, we have continued

building exhibitions, artist residencies, the YBAF Fashion Awards and spaces like A1 Art Space and Art Factory.

How did your earlier work in tourism & design shape your approach today?

When I moved to Armenia full time in 2001 to help develop the Armenian Tourism Development Agency, I learned that team building was essential. Armenians are extraordinary innovators and thinkers, but collaboration needed strengthening. At ATDA, and later through Treasures of Armenia and my design house, we focused on building shared purpose. That philosophy still shapes YBAF today.

Why are spaces like Latitude, A1 & Art Factory so important?

We realized there is real power in numbers. In the Soviet era, arts and sciences were deeply respected, but in Armenia’s early independence, culture moved behind necessary commercial development. Our mission is to restore culture as a central force in national identity and the future. Spaces like Latitude, A1 and Art Factory are creative ecosystems where artists and thinkers exchange ideas and grow together.

What are the biggest challenges still facing Armenian creatives?

One of the biggest challenges is international visibility. Armenian creatives are often presented abroad under different national identities, weakening recognition of Armenia’s cultural contribution. That is one reason the Yerevan Biennale is so important. We want to bring the international art world directly to Armenia, allowing local artists to interact with global institutions, curators and collectors while presenting Armenian creativity through a unified platform rooted in Yerevan.

What is your long-term vision for Yerevan’s creative future?

My dream is for Armenia to once again become a country where arts and sciences sit at the center of national life. Armenia’s greatest export should be Armenian *joie de vivre* expressed through culture and innovation. I would like to spark a Da Vinci style renaissance, fusing artistic creativity with scientific innovation here. If, ten years from now, Armenia is recognized globally as a creative and cultural force, then I will feel we accomplished something meaningful. ●

Imagination
transforms
societies.



Artist: Sveta Gas

YEREVAN BIENNIAL ART
FOUNDATION

@latitudeartspace / @a1artspace

FABIO LENZI
Co-Founder, Yerevan Biennial
Art Foundation (YBAF)

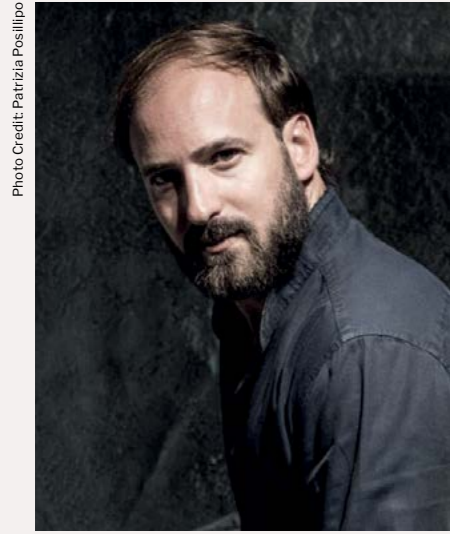


Photo Credit: Patricia Posillipo

“The Caucasus’ next cultural chapter begins in Yerevan - the future art capital of the region.”

What is the mission of the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation?

YBAF’s mission is to establish Yerevan as a sustained regional platform for contemporary art through The Yerevan Biennial. Yerevan city exists at a rare intersection where deep historical continuity and contemporary acceleration visibly coexist. Very few cities still carry that kind of cultural density. The Biennial will foster bridge-building dialogue between local and international artistic practices and strengthen Armenia’s place within the global cultural landscape.

How has your background shaped your vision for Yerevan?

Coming from Italy shaped the way I see culture, not as something secondary, but as part of a country’s identity and international image. Being an outsider also allowed me to recognize cultural potential here that deserves global visibility. From the beginning, I wanted the Biennial to operate at international standards while remaining deeply connected to Armenia itself. This is

not about importing an international art model into Armenia. It is about creating a platform where a new cultural language can emerge from Yerevan itself.

What makes the Yerevan Biennial different?

Most biennials show art. We want to produce it. The residency program sits at the center of what we are building, with artists creating commissioned works connected to Yerevan, Armenian identity, and the tension between ancient civilization and modern becoming. Artists today are searching for places outside exhausted cultural centers, where history still feels alive and identity is still being negotiated. Yerevan offers that immediately.

What did the digital edition teach you?

The digital edition proved the international interest is real, even during Covid and war. Artists and institutions stayed engaged, which confirmed the appetite already existed. At the same time, it reinforced something important: you cannot feel a city like Yerevan through a screen. The digital edition kept the flame alive. Now the goal is to light the fire.

What can people expect from the Yerevan Biennial?

Yerevan gets under your skin. It is walkable, layered, ancient and completely alive at the same time. I want visitors to feel they have

arrived somewhere that matters. For artists, this means ambitious curatorial work and engagement with a culture carrying thousands of years of history. For local audiences, it means access to an international contemporary art experience that has never existed here before. And for the diaspora, I want it to feel like a homecoming with purpose.

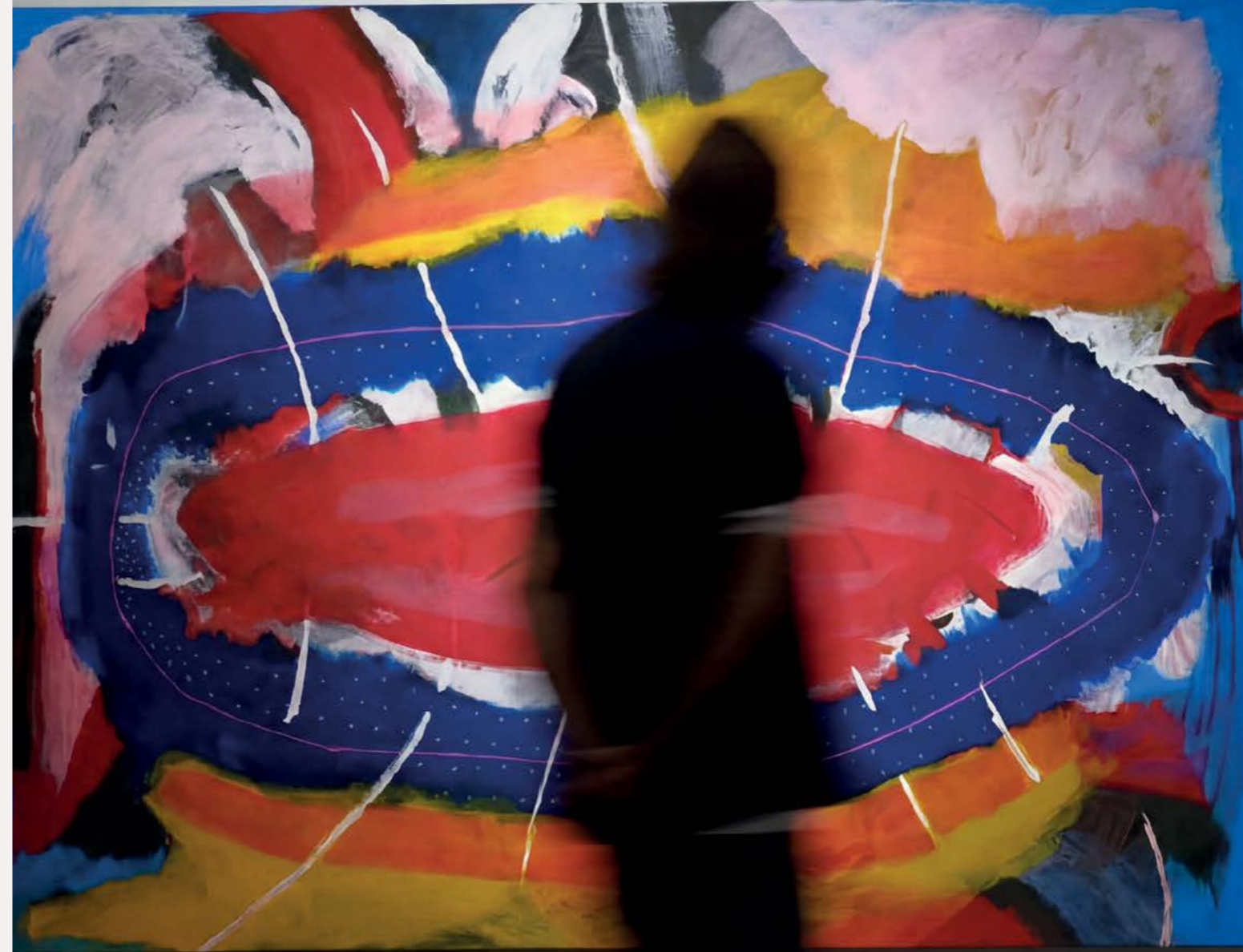
How do you see the biennial influencing Armenia long term?

A biennial has the potential to reshape Armenia’s long-term trajectory. Over the past decade, the country has become a recognized center for technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The Biennial adds another engine of growth: culture. Strong countries need both. Technology creates value; culture creates identity, influence, and relevance. Beyond its cultural significance, a respected international biennial is an economic asset, attracting visitors, investment, international attention, and spending while creating opportunities across tourism, hospitality, services, and the creative industries. It strengthens the cultural ecosystem, helps build a more competitive regional art market, and positions Yerevan as a regional center for contemporary art. Together, we may be witnessing the beginning of something that helps define the region’s future art capital. ●

YEREVAN BIENNIAL ART FOUNDATION

info@yerevanbiennial.org
@ybafarmenia

Khachik Yeghikyan: “Awakening
in a Dream” - Part 5, 2023



Art gives cities
global voices.

LASARO RYUMIN

GM, The Alexander, Yerevan



“Yerevan combines nightlife gastronomy culture & history in a way very few cities can.”

How would you define Armenian luxury today?

Armenia is still developing its luxury infrastructure, which is part of its appeal. What makes the country special is its authenticity and emotional warmth. At The Alexander, Yerevan, we combine international luxury standards with strong local character. Guests experience Armenian hospitality through gastronomy, traditions, personalized service and genuine connection. Luxury here is not only about design or comfort, but about feeling welcomed and discovering something authentic.

How do you bring Armenian culture into the guest experience?

We want guests to feel they are truly in Armenia. Alongside international luxury standards, we focus on local experiences. During breakfast and throughout the day, guests can enjoy Epicurean Moments inspired by Armenian culinary traditions, such as Jingyalov Hats (herbal flatbread) and Brduch (wrap with Armenian greens and vegetables), prepared fresh on site. These experiences create lasting memories and deepen guests' connection to the destination.

THE ALEXANDER, YEREVAN

info@thealexanderyerevan.com

Why is Yerevan attracting more lifestyle travelers?

Yerevan has a unique atmosphere. It is safe, walkable and full of energy. The city has excellent restaurants, bars, cafés and cultural venues, all concentrated within a compact center. People enjoy dressing up, socializing and spending time outside. There is a lifestyle culture emerging in Yerevan that many travelers do not expect. At the same time, the city still feels authentic and undiscovered, which makes the experience even more attractive.

How important is sustainability in luxury hospitality?

For us, sustainability is not simply a trend or marketing concept; it is part of our daily operations. We separate waste, monitor food waste carefully, recycle materials and work with local initiatives to improve environmental practices in the city. We believe luxury hospitality has a responsibility to lead by example and create long-term positive change within the community.

What gives Armenia its competitive advantage as a destination?

Armenia still feels undiscovered, creat-

ing an exciting experience for travelers. Visitors can experience ancient history, dramatic landscapes, nightlife and genuine hospitality in one destination. There is also a strong sense of warmth that people remember after they leave. One moment you are in a modern restaurant, and the next exploring a museum or historical site connected to thousands of years of history. That contrast makes the country memorable.

What is your long-term vision for The Alexander?

We want The Alexander, Yerevan to remain one of the leading symbols of luxury hospitality in Armenia while continuing to raise international standards in the region. One of our next major goals is achieving Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star certification, an important milestone both for the hotel and for Yerevan's growing luxury market. We have already spent years building a reputation for service and quality. Our goal is to continue evolving while remaining deeply connected to the city and Armenia's growing international identity. ●



Agency: Wot Models, Lidia Zadoorian
Dress: Ariga Torosian, 5 Concept
Photo: Mariam Kach

Inside The Alexander, Yerevan Precision & Ease

Our first fashion shoot began inside the lobby of The Alexander, Yerevan. Garment bags were thrown over chairs. Makeup kits spilled across tables. Models arrived half-awake while the photographer checked batteries and schedules with escalating panic. Everyone carried a wild-eyed expression of a production just getting underway. Somehow, amid the disorder, one of the hotel's young concierges, Areg, kept everything moving with effortless calm. Taxis appeared exactly when needed. Locations were confirmed. Problems dissolved before they fully materialized. The name Areg means "sun" in Armenian. During that chaotic morning, he was definitely our shining light.

That atmosphere continued throughout the week. For much of our time, The Alexander, Yerevan became less of a hotel and more of a staging ground. Interviews were planned there. Wardrobes were unpacked there. Drivers, photographers and models all seemed to pass through its lobby at some point during the week. Yet despite the constant movement, the property never lost its composure. Throughout our stay, the front desk maintained a cheerful energy that subtly shaped the mood of the property. Returning after long shooting days or late dinners, there was always the sense that somebody genuinely seemed pleased to see us walk through the doors.

I have always believed that a hotel reveals its true character through its breakfast experience. It is there that the atmosphere becomes apparent in ways architecture alone cannot convey. At The Alexander, Yerevan's



rooftop restaurant, mornings carried a quiet sophistication. Sunlight flooded the room while the city emerged below, with Mount Ararat visible in the distance. The selection was extensive, but what lingered most was the atmosphere created by the staff. There was refinement, but never stiffness. People stayed longer than intended. Conversations softened. Luxury rarely feels truly relaxing. Here, somehow, it did.

By evening, the rhythm shifted again. Located just steps from Republic Square along Abovyan Street, The Alexander, Yerevan sits beside many of Yerevan's busiest restaurants, cafés and cocktail bars. Recently, the city added a striking new detail to the neighborhood: a freshly painted pedestrian

crossing designed to resemble a traditional Armenian carpet stretching across the street outside the hotel. Each night, guests cross it toward wine bars and crowded terraces as the city hums around them. In many capitals, luxury hotels function almost as sealed environments separated from local life. The Alexander, Yerevan feels intertwined with the neighborhood instead.

That same sense of connection seems embedded throughout the property. Beyond the marble, rooftop views and polished interiors lies a hotel that understands hospitality less as performance and more as emotional intelligence. In a city evolving as quickly as Yerevan, that balance feels particularly well suited to the moment. ●

THE ALEXANDER, YEREVAN
info@thealexanderyerevan.com



Agency: Wot Models, Lidia Zadoorian
& Ekaterina Ivanova
Clothes: Ariga Torosian, 5 Concept
Photo: Mariam Kach

Livingston: Where Emotions Shape Memories

One evening, we dined and held a fashion shoot inside Livingston. At first, the atmosphere behind the camera felt familiar. Lights were adjusted. Models appeared. Elegant plates moved quietly through the room, each presentation as carefully composed as the performances that would later follow. But I sensed something slightly different when I glanced over at the photographer's assistant. Normally, she spent most shoots half-buried in her phone. Here, she seemed unusually captivated by the sheer grandeur of the space from the moment we arrived. Even before the performances began, she kept looking up from the screen to take in the room around her. Then the music started. What followed no longer felt like dinner service in the traditional sense. Musicians moved through jazz standards, Armenian classics and sweeping cinematic

arrangements while dancers appeared between tables in carefully choreographed intervals. Conversations slowed. Phones disappeared. Even the assistant lowered hers completely, staring wide-eyed toward the stage as the room seemed to dissolve into something slightly outside ordinary time. For nearly two hours, Livingston carried its guests through an emotional exchange where music, performance and dining blurred together into a single atmosphere. Perhaps part of that feeling comes from the setting itself. Located on the ninth floor of the Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concert Complex, Livingston sits high above the city with panoramic views stretching across Yerevan below. At one point during the evening, I stepped outside onto one of the terraces to briefly escape the revelry inside. From there, the city unfolded beneath the lights. For two weeks, we had been rushing between interviews, restaurants, galleries, hotels and fashion shoots, experiencing

Yerevan in fragments. Standing above it that night, I could suddenly see the entire city connected below me, glowing quietly against the dark outline of the surrounding hills. Then, just as the evening seemed incapable of becoming more theatrical, a man stood from his table and proposed to his fiancée in the middle of the restaurant. For a brief second, she looked genuinely stunned. Then the entire room erupted. Applause spread across the dining hall while musicians folded the moment seamlessly into the performance itself. In another restaurant, the interruption might have felt awkward or staged. At Livingston, it somehow felt perfectly aligned with the emotional rhythm of the evening. That ability to blur entertainment, dining and atmosphere into something immersive may be Livingston's greatest strength. Many restaurants attempt spectacle. Few create genuine emotional momentum. Livingston understands that luxury is not only visual. It is about how you feel. The lighting, the music, the pacing of the performances and even the gradual unfolding of the evening itself are designed less around display and more around emotional immersion. What impressed me was that despite everything happening around the room, the food consistently commanded attention. Several dishes arrived with a level of creativity and execution that momentarily eclipsed the performances themselves. The experience also reflects a broader hospitality philosophy. Livingston is one of 18 restaurant concepts developed by Yeremyan Group, which has spent two decades creating distinctive dining destinations across Armenia. In a city increasingly defining itself through experience, creativity and cultural confidence, Livingston feels perfectly positioned within Yerevan's evolving identity. ●



At Livingston, live music & choreographed performances transform dinner into theater.

Yeremyan 20



YEREMYAN GROUP

20 Years. Three Industries. One Vision.

Building Armenia's Future Through Hospitality, Agriculture, and Education.



LUSINE YEREMYAN

Deputy General Director, PR & Marketing Director, Yeremyan Group



“Food, fashion & aesthetics all speak the same language: authenticity.”

What first drew you to restaurants beyond food?

Growing up in Armenia, the table was where traditions and human connection came together. That became central to the philosophy behind Yeremyan Group. We do not simply open restaurants to serve meals. We create places people remember. A restaurant can become part of someone's story, where they celebrate, reconnect or experience Armenia in a new way. Hospitality is one of the most genuine ways to share culture.

How do you shape a new restaurant concept?

Every concept begins with one question: what emotion is missing in the city right now? Sometimes people seek elegance through haute cuisine. Other times, they want energy, craftsmanship or comfort. With 18 restaurants representing 13 concepts, our goal is to create experiences people connect with. From the interior and music to the menu and service style, every detail must support one story. We want our concepts to reflect an expressive and deeply

Armenian Yerevan, while maintaining a modern perspective.

How has Yeremyan Group helped shape contemporary Yerevan?

Restaurant culture shapes cities almost as much as fashion or architecture. Restaurants influence how tourists remember a destination and how locals experience everyday life. For more than 20 years, Yeremyan Group has worked to preserve Armenian culinary traditions while creating modern hospitality experiences. Through our farm-to-table philosophy, we want guests to experience Armenian hospitality built on high-quality products and impeccable service.

What excites you about food, fashion & Armenian identity?

Food, fashion and aesthetics all speak the same language: authenticity. When Armenian identity becomes part of that equation, a recipe, fabric texture or atmosphere can carry history and emotion across generations. What excites me most is finding ways to reinterpret those elements in a modern, global way while preserving authenticity. Even our Guinness World Records were

about presenting Armenian culture with confidence and creativity.

What does Armenian luxury mean to you today?

For me, Armenian luxury is about warmth and abundance. It is the feeling of genuine care, when every detail creates a sense of belonging. Luxury today is defined less by formality and more by authenticity and emotional connection. At Yeremyan Group, that means locally sourced and in-house ingredients, signature dishes and experiences where Armenian culture is reflected through music, dance and genuine hospitality.

How would you like Yeremyan Group to shape Armenia's cultural future?

I believe restaurants can become cultural platforms in the same way as galleries, theaters or fashion spaces. Throughout our history, we have created concepts that bring together cuisine, art, music, design and community. Projects like Gastro Couture, Portraits of Lavash and the Hayk and Bel performance reflect that vision. We want to create experiences that connect people more deeply to Armenia and its culture. ●

Connection is the finest ingredient.



YEREMYAN GROUP

www.yeremyanprojects.com/en/

Photo: Mariam Kach

Grand Hotel Yerevan, the Art of Hospitality

Some hotels impress through architecture. Others through service. The Grand Hotel Yerevan manages both, but it was a small gesture that stayed with us the most. When we needed to change hotels during our stay, the doorman came to our location, picked up the luggage and carried it three blocks through the city to the hotel. No questions. No fuss. Just a simple act of kindness. It was the sort of thing that cannot be taught in hospitality manuals and yet says everything about a place. That attitude seemed woven throughout the property. Established in 1928 as Ar-

menia's first hotel, Grand Hotel Yerevan has welcomed generations of travelers, artists, politicians and cultural figures while remaining one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. Yet despite its history, the atmosphere never feels formal or distant. Throughout our visit, staff greeted guests with genuine warmth, often anticipating needs before they were voiced. The hotel's location helps explain why it remains so closely connected to the life of the city. Situated on Abovyan Street in the very heart of Yerevan, it sits just steps from the Opera House, the fountains of Charles Aznavour Square and many of the capital's most beloved cafés, restaurants and

boutiques. During the late afternoons, we often found ourselves sitting on a nearby bench, watching families, students and couples gather around the fountain as sunlight reflected off the surrounding stone facades. The atmosphere felt unmistakably Yerevan: relaxed, social and optimistic. Mornings at Grand Hotel Yerevan felt inseparable from the city itself. Breakfast was served in a bright, sun-filled space where natural light poured through the glass ceiling. Guests drifted between tables as the city gradually came to life outside. The atmosphere was unhurried and distinctly social. Rather than feeling tucked away from Yerevan, the experience felt connected to the rhythm of the city beyond the hotel doors. That connection to Yerevan extends throughout the property. As a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Grand Hotel Yerevan offers refined accommodations, elegant interiors and a level of comfort expected from an international luxury hotel. Yet what distinguishes it most is something less tangible. Beyond the historic façade, polished service and central location lies a hotel that understands hospitality as a human connection. Nearly a century after opening its doors, it still feels deeply connected to the city that grew around it. ●



The Charles Aznavour statue, just steps from Grand Hotel Yerevan.

GURGEN MURADYAN

General Manager
Grand Hotel Yerevan



“Guests do not simply stay here, they experience part of Armenia’s history.”

What makes Grand Hotel Yerevan unique?

The hotel carries nearly 100 years of history and stands as an architectural monument. Many boutique and lifestyle hotels have entered the market, but history cannot be recreated. Since joining Small Luxury Hotels of the World, our mission has been to offer personalized luxury hospitality while preserving Armenian heritage and warmth. We want every guest to feel the spirit of the place the moment they arrive and experience a deeper connection to Yerevan’s cultural history.

How do history, art & design shape the guest experience?

Even the walls here carry history. The frescoes, murals and architectural details connect guests to another era of Yerevan. Famous Armenian poets, composers and cultural figures once lived in this building. Today, we have even renamed several suites to honor that legacy. Hospitality, art, fashion and lifestyle are all connected, and we try to preserve that atmosphere throughout the hotel experience.

GRAND HOTEL YEREVAN
www.grandhotelyerevan.com

How would you describe the feeling of staying in Yerevan today?

Yerevan offers a very emotional experience. Guests can explore ancient history through places like Matenadaran, museums and historical monuments, while also enjoying vibrant cafés, wine bars and nightlife. The city feels warm, walkable and full of energy. Armenia may be a small country, but it offers incredible depth of culture and heritage within a compact space. That balance between ancient history and contemporary lifestyle makes Yerevan increasingly attractive.

How important are gastronomy & wine to Armenia’s identity?

They have become extremely important. Armenia is increasingly positioning itself as a gastronomy and wine destination. Wine culture has developed strongly over the past 15 years and festivals now attract visitors from around the world. Armenian cuisine also creates a strong emotional connection because it is prepared with warmth and spirit. We often say our food is “made with love,” and guests genuinely feel that authenticity when they visit Ar-

menia. Gastronomy has become one of the country’s strongest cultural ambassadors.

What are your priorities for the hotel in the coming years?

One of our main goals is sustainability. We are working toward Green Key certification while maintaining the luxury standards our guests expect. The challenge is becoming more environmentally responsible without losing the personalized experience and elegance that define the hotel. We are also placing strong emphasis on staff training and creating a more guest-oriented culture.

What would you say to travelers wanting a lifestyle getaway?

Come to Armenia to experience history, culture and hospitality in a deeply personal way. Armenia may seem like a small point on the map, but within it you will discover ancient history, strong traditions, remarkable gastronomy and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. That combination creates an experience guests do not easily forget. ●

Culture lives within these walls.



ANNA K. GARGARIAN

Head of Strategy, Design & Development, Fine Arts Academy Dilijan Campus



“We want to reconnect craftsmanship, environmental research & community.”

Why do you see culture as an economic force?

I see culture as both a social and economic force. Art connects people across differences, shaping identity, understanding, and belonging. But the artworld is also a major industry. Research across Europe showed that creative sectors generate significant income, employment, entrepreneurship, and GDP. That inspired me to explore Armenia's creative economy, helping build programs and research that demonstrate culture's value not only as heritage, but as a driver of economic growth and opportunity.

Why was it important to build the Dilijan Campus outside Yerevan?

Dilijan Campus reimagines an institution that has been part of the city since the late 1990s, building on its legacy in textile and carpet making with a broader vision of craft, material, nature, and ecological knowledge. Dilijan's rich artisanal heritage and unique relationship to the landscape inspired the project, which reconnects craftsmanship,

environmental research, and community while engaging with contemporary conversations around sustainability and design.

Why do traditional crafts still matter in conversations about sustainability?

Textiles and craft are increasingly important because they connect identity, material knowledge and sustainable design. Today, artists and designers are revisiting traditional techniques through new perspectives tied to ecology and circular economies. Armenia already has centuries of expertise in textiles, natural dyes, carpets and wool production. By combining that heritage with material science and biodesign, we can create more sustainable approaches to design and production.

What does Armenia still lack as a global creative ecosystem?

One of the biggest challenges is legal and structural infrastructure for creative industries. Armenia's systems were not designed around freelance, collaborative and intellectual-property-based work. Many creatives struggle with outdated regulations, tax structures and weak protections around royalties and contracts. We also need stronger distribution networks and cultural exporters who can connect Armenian talent to global markets. Armenia is a

small market, so creative industries must think internationally from the beginning.

Could ideas & innovation define Armenia's future?

I believe that is already happening. Armenia's strength lies in knowledge, education and intellectual production rather than mass industrial scale. We already see this in the country's growing technology sector and companies like Picsart, Krisp and Renderforest. Creative industries function similarly because they are built around ideas and intellectual property. Armenia has the talent and cultural depth to compete globally if creatives are given proper support and access to international markets.

What long-term impact do you hope Dilijan Campus will have?

I hope Dilijan Campus helps revitalize cultural identity in Dilijan through research, innovation, and creative practice rooted in local heritage. More broadly, I hope it contributes to making rural life vibrant and relevant again. What inspires me about Armenia is its deeply relational culture, where purpose and human connection matter. I hope the campus becomes a catalyst for connection, creativity, and a renewed sense of place. ●

FINE ARTS ACADEMY
DILIJAN CAMPUS

@agargarian

Grit & Gloss



Designer: Tatev Khachatryan
Painter: Narek Barseghyan
Model: Arpi Tadevosyan
Set Design & Videography:
Daniel Ghazaryan
Styling: Anais Paws, Sugar
Collective
Curators: Hasmik Badoyan,
Anna K. Gargarian for HAYP
Pop Up Gallery 2018

IRINA KAVANYAN
Creative Director, 5 Concept Store



“Armenian fashion always existed. What was missing was belief.”

What first drew you to fashion?

Fashion was never a calculated career choice for me. Even as a child, I created my own worlds through drawing, styling characters and making miniature magazines. The real turning point came later, after returning to Yerevan from Milan and joining Prestige magazine as a fashion editor at a time when glossy publishing was still new in Armenia. Eventually becoming editor-in-chief taught me how fashion and media can shape identity, culture and public perception. That experience later became the foundation for 5 Concept.

What gap was 5 Concept created to fill?

When we launched 5 Concept in 2016, Armenian designers were talented but lacked a unified platform and visibility. Together with Elen Manukyan and five founding designers, we wanted to create more than a store. We wanted a space that presented Armenian creativity with confidence and identity. I still remember people waiting outside in the cold on opening night just to see something completely new for Yerevan. That moment confirmed the need was real.

5 CONCEPT STORE

@5conceptstore_
@irinka_v

Your store feels more like a cultural space than a retail one. Was that intentional?

Absolutely. From the beginning, 5 Concept was designed as a creative environment rather than a traditional store. It became a meeting point for designers, photographers, artists, stylists, architects and people simply drawn to aesthetics and culture. Over the years, it evolved into a living creative space where collaborations, conversations and new ideas happen naturally. I think that energy is what continues to make it feel alive and relevant after ten years.

What does Armenian fashion still need to truly break through internationally?

The biggest change was creating belief that Armenian fashion could exist as its own identity. Since 2017, we've seen enormous progress through the work of the Fashion Chamber of Armenia, Yerevan Fashion Week, international collaborations, and growing international media attention from platforms like Vogue Italia and L'Officiel. Armenian designers are now showing internationally, but sustainable growth still requires stronger infrastructure, education, investment and long-term support for emerging talent.

What makes modern Armenian fashion distinctive today?

What makes Armenian fashion interesting is its balance between heritage and modernity. Designers are no longer using cultural references in a purely decorative way. Instead, they reinterpret Armenian identity through silhouette, materials, craftsmanship and contemporary design language. At 5 Concept, we work with more than 70 designers, each with a completely different voice, and that diversity is one of the industry's greatest strengths.

What is your long-term vision for 5 Concept & Armenia's creative industry?

This year, 5 Concept celebrates its 10th anniversary, and one of the most rewarding things is seeing how fashion in Yerevan has evolved into a form of self-expression rather than status. People of every generation come to 5 Concept looking for individuality, creativity and confidence. I believe the space helped redefine how Yerevan dresses and how Armenian designers are perceived. For me, the future is not something distant. It is already happening through the people, energy and creativity that continue to grow around us. ●



Fashion gives identity form.

Models: Nare Zaqaryan @
Ani Khachatryan
Blazer: Soncess
Pants: Petoor
Sweaters: Loom Weaving
Bag: Mine
Store: 5 Concept Store
Photo: Mariam Kach

ARSHAK SARKISSIAN

Armenian Artist



What first drew you toward your surreal visual language?

My work is fundamentally figurative, often showing people in strange and unconventional relationships. My characters are not political. They are dreamers, romantics and individuals resisting convention. I have always been interested in personalities that exist outside social norms, and surrealism became the natural language for expressing that emotional and psychological freedom. I am drawn to people who reject conformity and create their own internal worlds filled with imagination and contradiction.

How did the 1988 earthquake shape you as an artist?

I was only six years old during the earthquake. I remember running home from school and seeing a jar of honey melting slowly across the floor. That image stayed with me and became one of the first surreal moments I ever experienced visually. At that age, instinct was stronger than understanding, but I believe those memories deeply shaped my emotional world and my desire to draw and paint. Experiences like that remain somewhere inside you forever, even if you cannot fully explain them.

ARMENIAN ARTIST

www.arshaksarkissian.com
[@arshaksarkissian](https://www.instagram.com/arshaksarkissian)

“Armenia is becoming increasingly visible on the international cultural map.”

Why are you drawn to fragmented or hybrid human figures?

I am fascinated by human personality and transformation. I look for people who constantly evolve, experiment and create themselves through experience. In my work, these transformations often become hybrid forms that combine human, animal or natural elements. Animals bring instinct and emotional intensity into the paintings, while eccentricity reveals individuality and inner complexity. I think personality is something layered and constantly changing, never fixed.

What advice would you give young Armenian artists today?

Take art seriously. The creative process requires complete dedication and honesty. Artists must stay curious about life, people, colors and emotions while constantly studying and questioning themselves. It is important to understand what you truly want to say. Creativity depends on remaining open, inspired and able to observe the world with fresh eyes every day. An artist should never stop experimenting or becoming impressed by the world around them.

What keeps you creatively connected to Armenia?

Armenia gives me the freedom and atmosphere I need to create. My connection to the language, the people, and the culture keeps me here. I feel like the best version of myself in Armenia. It is a place filled with history, mystery and layers of meaning that continue to inspire me daily. There is always something new to discover here, which makes it impossible for life to feel boring creatively. Armenia constantly gives me emotions, stories and visual inspiration.

What makes Armenian artists distinct internationally today?

I believe Armenia is becoming increasingly visible on the international cultural map. For such a small country, there is an extraordinary amount of creative energy and artistic talent. Armenian artists have strong voices and unique perspectives shaped by history, identity and transformation. To stand out internationally, artists must have something real to say and the courage to express it honestly. I believe contemporary Armenian art has a very bright future globally. ●



Art transforms
the ordinary.



“Culture survives only if we continue sharing it.”

What inspired your move into immersive visual performance?

When I first heard my grandfather playing the saz, I was deeply moved by how one person could carry an entire culture and express such profound emotion. I wanted my artwork to communicate with audiences in a similar way. Over time, I began combining drawing, animation, music and live performance into a single visual language. I developed a technique of drawing directly onto paper while cameras captured the process in motion, allowing the work to evolve live in front of audiences.

How have Syria, Armenia & New York shaped your artistic identity?

Aleppo had a profound impact on my visual imagination through its architecture, carvings and atmosphere. Later, studying in Yerevan added another layer entirely. The Opera House, museums, monumental sculptures, and Armenian masters in painting and illustration deeply influenced me. Over time, these Armenian influences merged with the Middle Eastern visual language I carried from Syria. Living in New York added another

perspective, allowing these worlds to coexist and evolve together.

Do you see art as preservation or something more personal?

Moving between countries made me think deeply about memory, belonging and cultural survival. Drawing became a way to revisit places from childhood and reconnect with what shaped me. Many of my works contain references to places or monuments destroyed by war or erased over time. Beneath the surface there is often a political layer, but the work ultimately speaks more broadly about humanity, memory and the responsibility of protecting cultural identity before it disappears.

What makes live collaborations creatively unique?

Performing live with musicians like Yo-Yo Ma and Kinan Azmeh creates an environment where sound, image and emotion influence one another in real time. Because the drawing happens live, there is no editing or correction. Every line becomes part of the performance itself. I can feel the rhythm of the music shaping the movement of my drawings, while the visuals also influence the atmosphere around the musicians. The audience becomes part of

that experience as well, creating a shared emotional space.

What ideas are shaping your Art Dubai installations?

At Art Dubai, I presented three large-scale installations exploring memory, coexistence and cultural dialogue. One work, Memories of the Stones, reflects on 10th-century Andalusia, when Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted and collaborated creatively within one society. Through the voice of the stones, the work asks whether humanity today has truly become more tolerant and open-minded. The installations invite audiences to move through the spaces and create their own interpretations and narratives.

What does Armenia represent to you today?

Even after living in the United States for many years, Armenia remains deeply present in my work. I feel a responsibility to preserve and reflect Armenian history, symbolism and cultural memory through art. At the same time, Armenia represents inspiration, roots and continuity. I believe culture survives only if we continue sharing it through art. Identity must remain part of the living language of contemporary culture rather than something preserved only in the past. ●



Memory becomes living culture.

ARMINE HARUTYUNYAN

Visual Artist & Model



“Creativity begins with having your own voice & not being afraid to use it.”

How did your childhood shape your understanding of beauty & self-expression?

My first sense of beauty came through art. I grew up in a family of artists, and creativity was simply part of everyday life. My great-grandfather, grandparents and parents were all artists. As a child, I watched people paint, sculpt, discuss ideas and see the world through their own perspective. Looking back, that was my first understanding of self-expression: having your own voice and feeling free to use it. My grandmother taught me that beauty is not about perfection but about sensitivity and character. My grandfather showed me that beauty is not only visual, but also intellectual and emotional.

How has your identity influenced the way you see beauty?

Identity is shaped by many things, and not all of them are visible. My artistic background influenced how I see beauty, but my Armenian identity has also played an important role. The values I grew up with, including resilience, family, culture and creativity, continue to shape who I am. Modeling taught me that the body can be a powerful storytelling tool. A photograph can communicate emotion and character without words. For me, beauty is ultimately about presence, individuality and depth.

How do art & fashion influence one another in your work?

For me, they are closely connected. Both begin with observation and curiosity. Art encourages me to ask questions, while fashion allows me to communicate ideas in a more immediate way. Both create space for interpretation. A painting and a photograph can tell a story, but neither offers a single answer. The viewer becomes part of the experience.

What can fashion express that other forms of communication cannot?

Fashion has a unique ability to communicate without words. Politics explains, tourism introduces, and traditional culture preserves.

Fashion creates an immediate emotional connection. It allows culture to live in the present, reflecting how a generation sees itself today and imagines the future.

What makes Armenian creativity unique today?

What interests me most is the dialogue between generations, experiences and influences. Armenia is a place where history feels present, yet there is a strong desire to experiment and imagine something new. Many projects emerging today feel deeply personal and reflect the complexity of contemporary life. What inspires me most is the sense of movement and discovery.

What would you like the world to understand about Armenia?

I would like people to approach Armenia with curiosity and openness. The more time you spend here, the more you realize it cannot be understood through a single image or story. Armenia is shaped by achievements and losses, resilience and reinvention, memory and hope. Every generation inherits something, transforms it, and contributes something new. For me, Armenia is a living story that continues to be written through the experiences and dreams of its people. ●

ARMENIAN VISUAL ARTIST
& MODEL

@deararmine

Model: Armine Harutyunyan
Designer: Total Look
Photo: Vazgen Harutyunyan @vazgi
Style: @argishtantonyan
Makeup: @sunnysusmua



Expression
without words.

AREVIK SIMONYAN
Founder & Creative Director
Kivera Naynomis



“Armenian heritage should feel contemporary, not nostalgic.”



How did your journey lead to the creation of Kivera Naynomis?

My journey began in childhood, when I was only five years old and already knew I wanted to become a fashion designer. At thirteen, I entered college and discovered the world of fashion and creativity more deeply. I was fortunate to study with inspiring teachers who changed the way I saw everything around me. Fashion stopped feeling like simply a profession and became a way of thinking and living. That was the moment I truly felt I had begun to live.

How would you define Kivera Naynomis?

I believe a woman is both delicate and feminine, but also incredibly strong. In my designs, I always try to express this balance between softness and strength. Fashion should never feel too predictable or overly classic. Even when we create evening dresses, we try to give them a modern spirit that reflects confidence, individuality and the character of today's woman. That contrast has become the signature identity of Kivera.

KIVERA NAYNOMIS

www.kivera.am
[@kiveranaynomisofficial](https://www.instagram.com/kiveranaynomisofficial)

What has the international market taught you?

Participating in international competitions and fashion events gave me a much broader understanding of the global industry. In Armenia, fashion is still developing, while internationally the system is far more advanced and established. Those experiences taught me that fashion is not only about beauty and creativity, but also a serious business world. Seeing how international brands operate and how fashion-weeks function helped me better understand where Armenian fashion can continue to grow.

How do you balance heritage & modernity in your designs?

Armenia has an incredibly deep and ancient culture, and bringing that heritage into fashion feels very natural to me. At the same time, I never want it to feel overly folkloric or nostalgic. I prefer to reinterpret it through a more modern perspective. I grew up and studied in Moscow before returning to Armenia at twenty, so I came back seeing the country differently. Armenia's architecture, churches, symbolism and energy constantly inspire me, and each place can become the beginning of an entire collection.

How do art, identity & design connect in your work?

For me, fashion, music, painting and art are all connected because they are forms of creative expression. What matters most is the ability to see ordinary things differently and transform emotion into something meaningful. I pay great attention to details because I want every look to tell its own story. It is never only about creating beautiful clothes. I want women wearing Kivera to feel emotion, confidence and identity through the design itself.

What is your long-term vision for Kivera Naynomis?

When I founded Kivera in 2005, the fashion industry in Armenia was still at a very early stage. I believe our brand became part of the movement that helped shape modern Armenian fashion. Today, I see our role becoming even more meaningful, especially for younger creatives entering the industry. I want to help the next generation grow faster and with more opportunities than we had. At the same time, I believe Kivera still has much more to share internationally and can continue proving that Armenian fashion represents quality, creativity and strong identity. ●

Heritage
inspires modern
expression.



Model: Logina Salah
Designer: Arevik Simonyan

VANANE BORIAN

Co-Founder, DASEIN

What inspired you to create DASEIN?

DASEIN was born from a desire to document contemporary Armenian culture honestly and in real time. Too often, Armenia is either romanticized through nostalgia or reduced to trends. Together with multidisciplinary artist Anna Vahrami and film director Ina Abrahamyan, we wanted to create a platform focused on observation and cultural memory. The name DASEIN, inspired by Heidegger, means “being there,” which reflects our approach to documenting culture with care and depth.

Was DASEIN a reaction against digital culture?

Absolutely. Digital culture often encourages speed, distraction and constant consumption. With DASEIN, we wanted to create space for attention and reflection. We believe photography, fashion and ideas deserve depth rather than instant visibility. Choosing slowness is not an aesthetic decision, but an ethical one. In a culture obsessed with algorithms and virality, depth becomes a form of resistance.

Why is fashion such a powerful expression of identity?

Fashion communicates identity before words do. Today, clothing functions not only as aesthetics, but also as social language, political

“Choosing depth over speed becomes a quiet form of resistance.”

expression and cultural memory. In Armenia, many designers reinterpret heritage and craftsmanship through a contemporary lens. Fashion has become one of the most immediate ways younger generations express belonging, individuality and confidence.

Have independent voices lacked platforms in Armenia?

Armenia has always had a rich creative scene, but many independent voices were rarely documented seriously. Attention often focused on established narratives,

while younger creatives, women and underrepresented communities remained less visible. DASEIN was created to help fill that gap by treating these voices as important now, not only in retrospect. Documentation should happen in real time.

How do younger Armenians balance local & global identity?

Armenian identity has always existed between cultures, languages and geographies. Younger generations now embrace that complexity with confidence. They move naturally between Armenia and the diaspora and see identity as expansive rather than divided. Armenian culture today feels less focused on preservation alone and more engaged in global dialogue and exchange.

What is your long-term vision for DASEIN?

We want DASEIN to become an archive of a generation shaped by movement, creativity and cultural dialogue. Beyond the magazine, we hope to expand into exhibitions, books and collaborations while maintaining a strong editorial identity. Our goal is to position Armenian culture as an active presence in the global creative conversation while building a lasting platform for future generations. ●

DASEIN

daseinzine.com



Photo: Danir Lihanov

Vanane Borian, Anna Vahrami, Ina Abrahamyan



Presence over noise.

Models: Lyucifa, Egor
Styling: Ashi Muradian
Makeup: Vana
Photo: Lusine Grigoryan

AREN DEYIRMENJIAN

Co-Founder, Turntables Hospitality Group & Camilla Yerevan



“The moment we stayed true to ourselves, everything changed.”

When did Camilla begin to feel culturally important?

From the beginning, we felt Yerevan was missing hospitality concepts that created genuine emotional connection rather than simply offering good food and service. It took time for Camilla to fully become what we imagined. We kept evolving the concept through additions like the wine bar and Saturday jazz evenings, which eventually became inseparable from the restaurant's identity. Today, I feel we created something that brings a fresh energy to Yerevan's dining scene while still feeling deeply personal and authentic.

What originally fascinated you about restaurants & nightlife?

I always loved how restaurants bring together food, design, music, architecture, atmosphere and human connection into one seamless experience. Growing up in Beirut exposed me early to a rich hospitality culture, but visiting New York in 2017 completely changed my perspective. That was when I fell in love with immersive, experience-oriented restaurants and began seeing hospitality as something much

more creative and emotional than I had previously understood.

How involved are you in shaping Camilla's atmosphere & identity?

Before entering hospitality, I came from backgrounds connected to design, architecture and music. When we entered the restaurant world, I realized those experiences could become part of shaping the atmosphere and identity of our concepts. My role naturally evolved into focusing on the creative and conceptual side of the business, from interiors and pacing to music and emotional atmosphere, while working closely with my partner Nareg on the broader vision.

What has Camilla taught you about leadership & resilience?

At first, we thought Camilla needed to feel more exclusive and refined because of its location, but very quickly we realized something important was missing. People enjoyed the restaurant, yet it lacked the emotional warmth and authenticity we wanted it to have. The biggest lesson was understanding how important it is to stay true to yourself creatively. Once we stopped trying to become what we thought people expected and focused instead on our real

identity, the concept became much stronger and more honest.

How have you & Nareg built Turntables Hospitality Group together?

Nareg and I have known each other since school, which created a strong foundation of trust and transparency. Over time, we realized our personalities complemented each other perfectly. He is incredibly driven and constantly pushes forward, while I tend to approach things more carefully and strategically. At the same time, I always tried to keep us grounded and focused on quality and intention. I think those differences became one of the biggest reasons we were able to grow so quickly.

Where do you see Camilla fitting into Yerevan's future identity?

I hope Camilla encourages more concepts in Armenia that combine authenticity with strong local cultural identity. As Yerevan becomes more international, it is important that the city's hospitality scene remains connected to Armenian culture. Visitors do not come here simply looking for another polished restaurant. They want to feel something unique to Armenia itself, and I think that identity should remain visible in the way we create experiences moving forward. ●

TURNTABLES HOSPITALITY GROUP & CAMILLA YEREVAN

@camillayerevan

Hospitality is emotional design.



NAREG SFEIR

Co-Founder & CEO, Turntables
Hospitality Group



“We never begin with the restaurant. We begin with the feeling.”

What shaped your vision for hospitality early on?

Hospitality became the foundation that shaped my entire professional mindset. Working across restaurant operations taught me discipline, operational excellence and the importance of understanding human behavior under pressure. At the same time, studying Data Analytics allowed me to combine creativity with systems, structure and long-term strategy. What influenced me most, however, was interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds. It made me realize hospitality is not simply about what is served, but about creating spaces where people feel understood and emotionally connected.

What gaps did you notice in Yerevan's hospitality industry?

When I first arrived in Yerevan in 2020, the hospitality industry was still in a relatively early stage. There were strong venues, but many experiences still felt transactional rather than relational. I felt there was room for a more emotionally intelligent

approach to guest connection. The strongest hospitality experiences come from making people feel comfortable in subtle and meaningful ways.

When did Turntables become more than simply a restaurant group?

At first, our focus was straightforward: building strong concepts and making each brand successful individually. Over time, we noticed guests beginning to expect a certain standard of experience across the city. That was the moment we realized Turntables was helping shape a broader hospitality language in Yerevan, where design, music, service and culture merged into something much more lifestyle-driven.

How do you create the atmosphere for each concept?

For us, everything starts with emotion. We never begin by asking what kind of restaurant we want to open. Instead, we ask what we want people to feel when they leave. That answer shapes the lighting, music, pacing of service and guest interaction. Some spaces are built around energy and movement, while others focus on intimacy and conversation. What connects every Turntables concept is intention and the way the experience makes people feel.

How do you build such strong culture & loyalty within your teams?

We have always believed that if the team does not feel like a community, guests will never feel it either. Turntables began with the friendship between Aren and myself and expanded into a team built on trust and shared vision. Beyond systems and structure, it is also about presence. We stay close to our teams, understand their challenges, and create opportunities for growth. Many people who joined us in entry-level roles have grown into leadership positions, creating strong ownership across the group.

Where do you see Yerevan's hospitality scene heading next?

Yerevan is entering a major period of hospitality and lifestyle development. As tourism grows, the city will continue evolving toward more experience-driven concepts and stronger hospitality standards. For Turntables, the vision is not simply to open more venues, but to continue building concepts with strong architectural identity, operational discipline and cultural relevance. We want to contribute to a hospitality scene that feels internationally competitive while still remaining deeply connected to Armenia's own character. ●

**TURNTABLES HOSPITALITY
GROUP**

@turntablesyerevan

Atmosphere
shapes human
connection.



Agency: Wot Models - Svetlana Ivanova & Ekaterina Ivanova
Clothes: ZGEST / Theweave Armenia
Photo: Mariam Kach

NAREG AROYAN

Beverage Director & Mixologist
Pabló Yerevan



“At Pabló drinks are approached like living pieces of art.”



How do you create cocktails that feel both artistic & memorable?

As hospitality evolves globally, people are no longer drawn only by the product itself, but by the world surrounding it. From the beginning, Pabló was designed as a space where culture, art, storytelling and mixology coexist within one immersive experience. The cocktail philosophy behind the bar is deeply influenced by Pablo Picasso and his

ability to transform simplicity into something emotionally powerful and visually unforgettable. Every cocktail is approached almost like an artistic composition through flavor, texture, color, glassware and presentation. One of the clearest examples is the Yellow Picador, inspired by Picasso's Le

Jeune Picador, which became one of the most talked-about cocktails in Yerevan's nightlife scene. At Pabló, drinks are designed not only for technical precision, but to create emotion, conversation and lasting memory.

What role does atmosphere play at Pabló?

Today, people rarely return to a bar for the cocktail alone. They return for the feeling the space creates. A strong bar experience is built through music, atmosphere, conversation, movement behind the bar, and emotional connection with the environment itself. At Pabló, the bar was designed as the center of the experience, where art, hospitality, music, storytelling and mixology all exist together naturally. Over time, people became connected not only to the cocktails, but also to the personality and rhythm of the space itself. That emotional connection is ultimately what builds community and gives Pabló its distinctive identity within Yerevan's evolving nightlife scene. ●

PABLÓ YEREVAN

@pabloyerevan



Model: Ani Khachatryan
Designer: Nare Zaqaryan



Mixology
meets creative
storytelling.

Photo credit: Mariam Kach

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Melinda Snider
Managing Director

**Carla De Malezieux
du Hamel**
Production Manager

Jeb Adams
Editor & Production
Manager

**Íñigo López
González**
Production Assistant

Paulo Couto
Creative Director

