

## Blending The East And The West

An Interview with Reem Acra, Fashion Designer

**EDITORS' NOTE** Reem Acra is a renowned international designer known for her breathtaking collections in ready-to-wear and bridal. She combines tradition with a modern aesthetic and leads the way by continuously redefining the boundaries of fashion. She launched her eponymous line Reem Acra New York ([reemacra.com](http://reemacra.com)) in 1997 and after successfully establishing herself in the bridal market, expanded into ready to wear in 2003. Of Lebanese heritage, Acra graduated from the American University of Beirut with a business degree. She went on to study at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York and the École supérieure des arts et techniques de la mode (ESMOD) in Paris. Celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Taylor Swift, Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, and Kate Hudson have worn her intricate designs to red carpet events such as the Oscars, Grammys and Golden Globes. Some of her notable accolades include being named the 7th Most Powerful Arab Woman in the World by Forbes magazine, which includes the likes of Amal Clooney, Nemat Shafik, and Zaha Hadid. She has also been the recipient



Reem Acra

of the Building Bridges Award from the Bridges of Understanding Foundation, a nonprofit organization which seeks to improve relations between the Middle East and the United States. In 2012, she received an honorary award by the United Nations for her support of the work of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Acra is a member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, the Bridal Council of America, the International Advisory Council of the American University of Beirut, and the Fashion Group International. She also



**What was your vision for launching the Reem Acra brand and how do you define its mission?**

I do not think that I had a specific vision when I launched my brand. It was very much organic. I know I had a unique eye and aesthetic and that I could have my own voice. The mission has always been to help women express their own style by creating collections that are feminine and beautiful.

**How do you define the essence of the brand?**

The brand stands for femininity and for its roots defined by the aesthetic that blends the East and the West, the past and the future.

**Will you provide an overview of the collection?**

Each collection is defined by a theme that is expressed via color schemes and motifs or styles that are created with a specific inspiration.

**How do you describe the Reem Acra client?**

The Reem Acra client is:

- sophisticated
- knows what she likes
- has a sense of power
- is feminine and classical with a nod to modernism



serves on the Honorary Board of the American Foundation for Saint George Hospital and the board of the Dubai Design and Fashion Council. In 2019, Acra was announced as Goodwill Ambassador for Tamanna, an organization that supports children in the Middle East suffering from critical illnesses by granting life changing wishes. For four consecutive years, Acra has hosted the hugely successful Middle Eastern reality TV show, Fashion Star, where she mentor's 12 aspiring up-and-coming designers.



*A selection of Reem Acra designs*

**Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own brand?**

I always wanted to explore my vision and my own imagination. I had a sense of belief when I was young that I was blessed by the power given to me to create beautiful things – all I want is to share it with the world.

**Where did your passion for the fashion business develop?**

When I was a teenager in 1977, I wrote in my prayer book a note to God. It said the

following, “Thank you God for giving me more than beauty. Thank you for giving me the power to create beauty.”

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in fashion?**

My advice for young people interested in fashion is to identify your talent and follow your passion. Remember that success does not come easy – you really have to look to your passion. You need to be able to give up on a lot of other things so you can focus and work hard towards your ultimate goal. ●