

'I was fairly unpopular in school – I was really nerdy. But there was this whole kind of idea of Pygmalion ... the idea that fashion can be something transformative was very important to me' – the designer Joseph Altuzarra to The Style Report



# A different kind of style

**Priti Salian** speaks to Langston Hues about bringing his Modest Street Fashion project to Dubai

Hijabistas in the UAE, take note: the Detroit-based photographer Langston Hues will be flying into Dubai this week as part of a world tour for a fashion shoot featuring style-conscious women with a focus on “modest” attire. The 25-year-old Hues plans to collate the images into a book, titled *Modest Street Fashion*, which is set for release by the end of the year.

The young artist has already conducted street shoots in several other cities including Chicago, London, Brussels and Amsterdam.

“My book is not just about Muslim fashion, but about modest fashion trends,” says Hues. “It will include faith-driven fashion designers, bloggers and a large number of their followers who dress modestly but are stylish at the same time.”

## Promoting modest fashion

Hues’s first tryst with “modest fashion” was in 2008 when, on his blog titled Seeking Nearness, he wrote about creative professionals and their work on lifestyle and spirituality.

“That was when I realised that faith, fashion and spirituality could work together beautifully,” Hues says. He took the blog offline after a while, but not before it had attracted several hijabi bloggers and writers who wanted him to photograph them.

By 2013, Hues decided to put all

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Langston Hues photographer



the extra, unused images into a book. In September last year, he decided to tour the world for a wider variety of subjects, and began with a trip to New York, where he met with hijabistas and set up his first shoot.

Hues says Dubai, with its sophisticated blend of traditional and contemporary, was the first choice in his quest to connect with cities in the Middle East; next on the list is Kuwait.

## Calling out to fashionistas

Women around the world who want to be part of his book can contact Hues through his Facebook and Instagram pages, and he alerts them when he is in their city. Hues says

that he shortlists women who cleverly blend ideas from the streets with their own sense of style.

Besides a collection of images, *Modest Street Fashion* will also feature the participants' views and opinions on related fashion trends and their evolution. What it will not have is a stern stance, Hues says, adding: “I’m not here to change mindsets about how people should dress; I’m here solely to document a trend.”

## Collating style trends

Traversing the globe, Hues has experienced great diversity in modest styles, and credits their popularity to the social network.



**Basma Kahie, far left, in London and Ruba Zai, left, in Rotterdam are two of the women who have been photographed around the world by Langston Hues, below.** Courtesy Langston Hues



and the West. “Abayas are popular in the Middle East but uncommon in the West, where women usually stick to long shirts over jeans, skin-nies or palazzos,” says Hues.

## Inspirational work

The project hasn’t been without challenges, though. Funding, for instance, says Hues, has been “difficult, but there’s a lot of love and support”. But the response that he’s received from the non-Muslim community has been surprising, Hues says.

“I’ve had people from other faiths respond to me and say: ‘Wow, I really like it; the styles make me want to dress in this manner.’ Which made me realise that no matter which religion you follow, if you find modest dressing inspirational, it will work for you.”

“People dress on the basis of their environment and the values they uphold,” he says. “The breed of modest fashion bloggers is fairly new but ever evolving.”

“Women who chose to cover themselves were an anomaly a few years back and, in some cases, criticised. Today, they are reaching out to like-minded people and have a massive following throughout the world.”

Hues has also noticed a difference in such fashion in the Middle East

● **Langston Hues will be in Dubai on his fashion shoot between Wednesday and Friday. To sign up, contact him on thelangstonhues@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/ModestStreetFashion or www.instagram.com/langstonhues**

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