

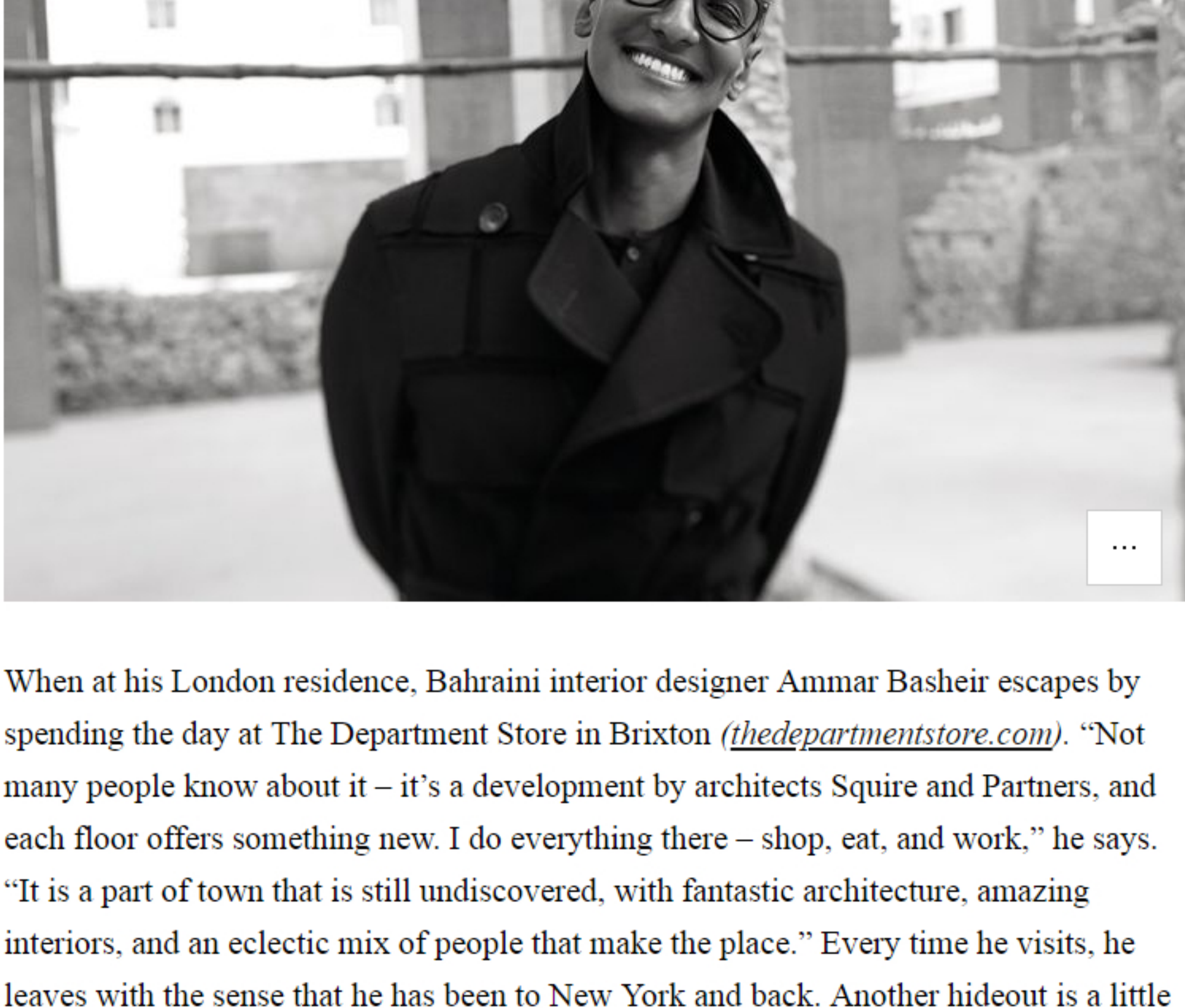
CULTURE 23H AGO

# Regional Tastemakers Share Their Most Favorite Spots to Visit in London

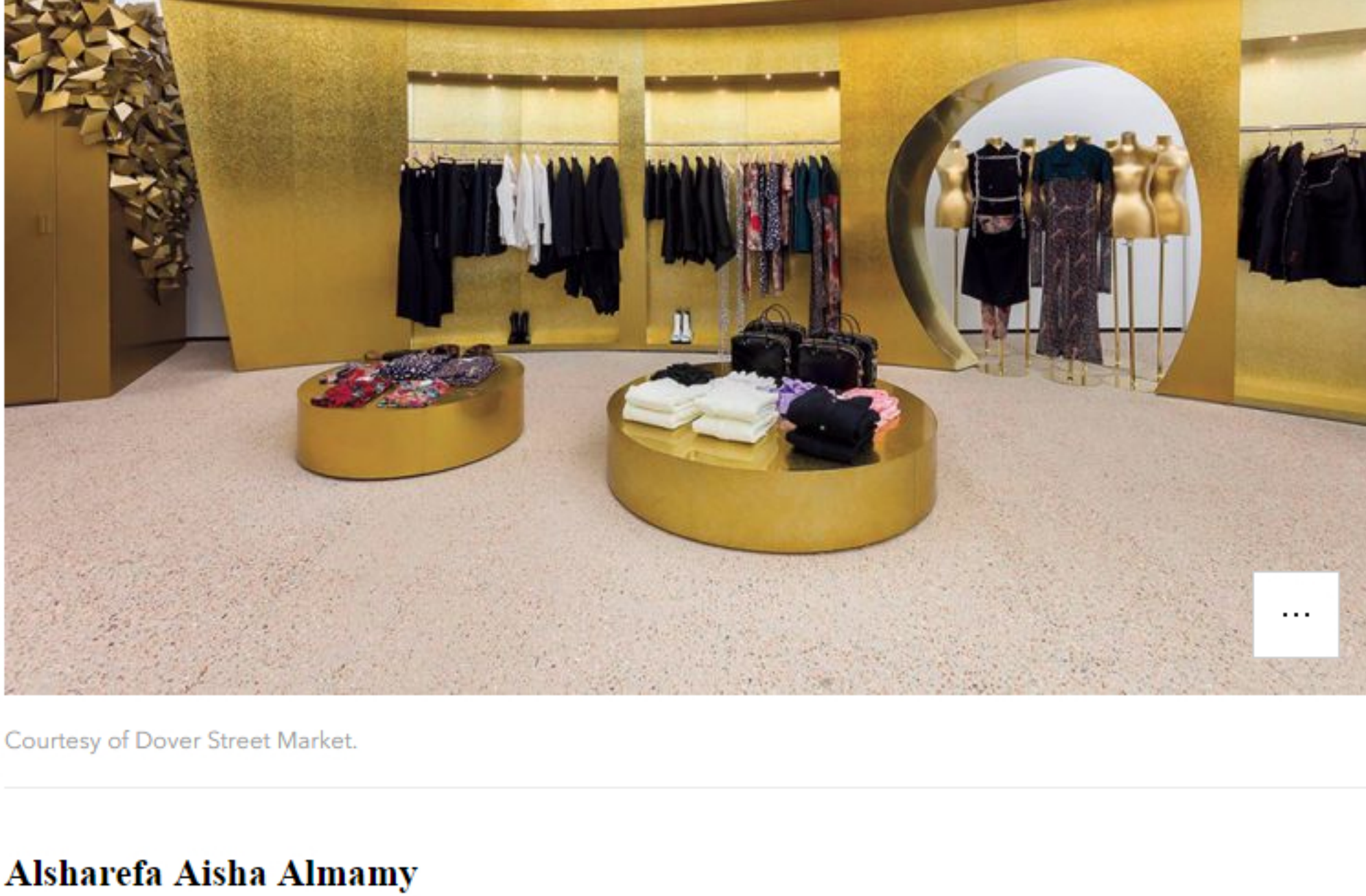
by CATERINA MINTHE

From a members' club to a private gym and hidden hotel, these are Arab London tastemakers' favorite spots to shop, unwind, and recharge

**Ammar Basheir**



When at his London residence, Bahraini interior designer Ammar Basheir escapes by spending the day at The Department Store in Brixton ([thedepartmentstore.com](http://thedepartmentstore.com)). "Not many people know about it – it's a development by architects Squire and Partners, and each floor offers something new. I do everything there – shop, eat, and work," he says. "It is a part of town that is still undiscovered, with fantastic architecture, amazing interiors, and an eclectic mix of people that make the place." Every time he visits, he leaves with the sense that he has been to New York and back. Another hideout is a little backdoor with no sign in Fitzrovia on Newman Street. "I came across The Mandrake Hotel accidentally before it opened. The doorman let me in because of how I was dressed. It's not such a secret anymore though; everybody loves the Mandrake." ([themandrake.com](http://themandrake.com)) Basheir adds that Alexander McQueen is his go-to for a sharply tailored suit, while he heads to Dover Street Market ([doverstreetmarket.com](http://doverstreetmarket.com)) to scope out a new pair of shoes. And since lighting is one of the key factors of great interior design, CTO Lighting fits his bill ([ctolighting.co.uk](http://ctolighting.co.uk)).

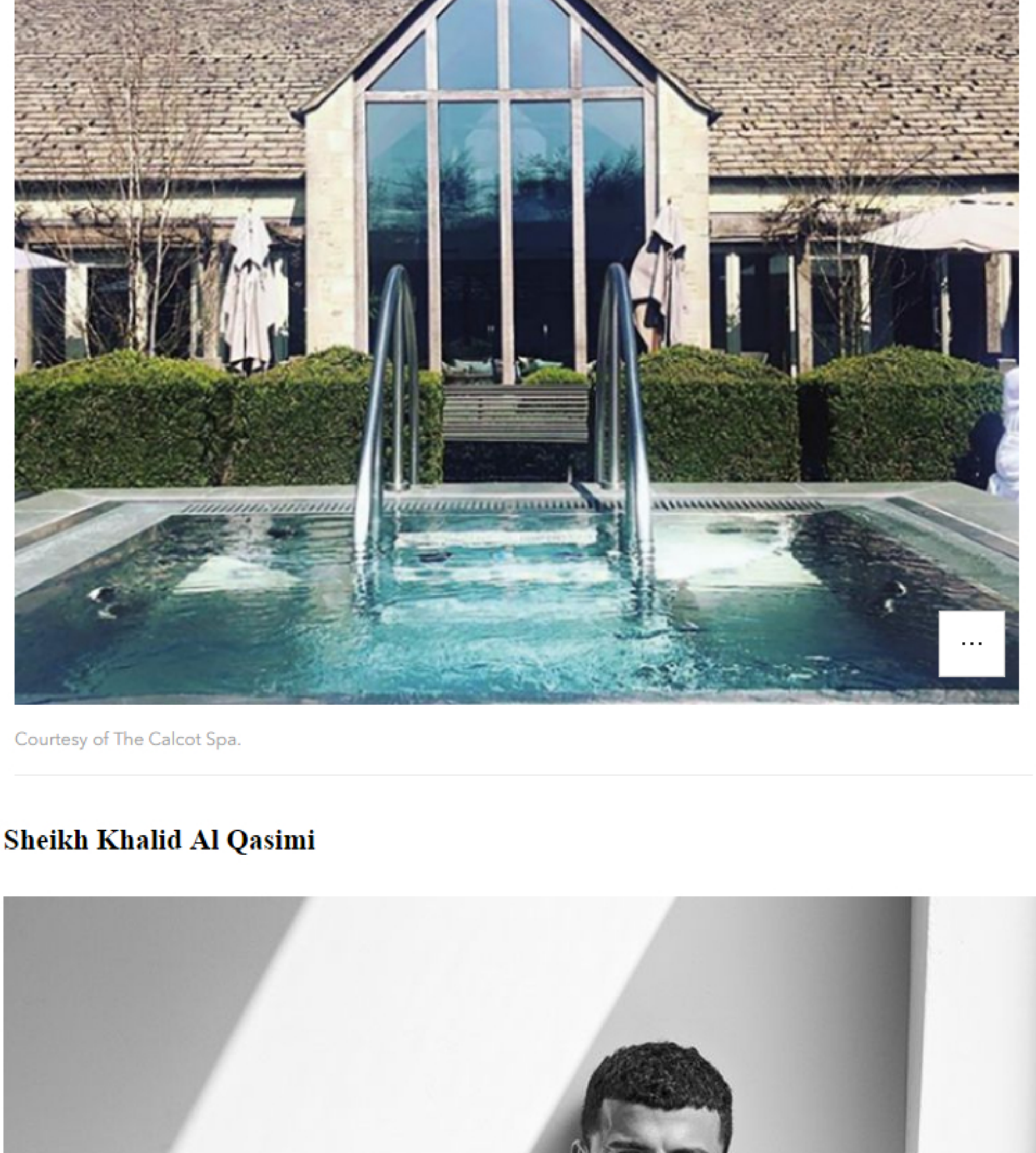


Courtesy of Dover Street Market.

**Alsharefa Aisha Almany**

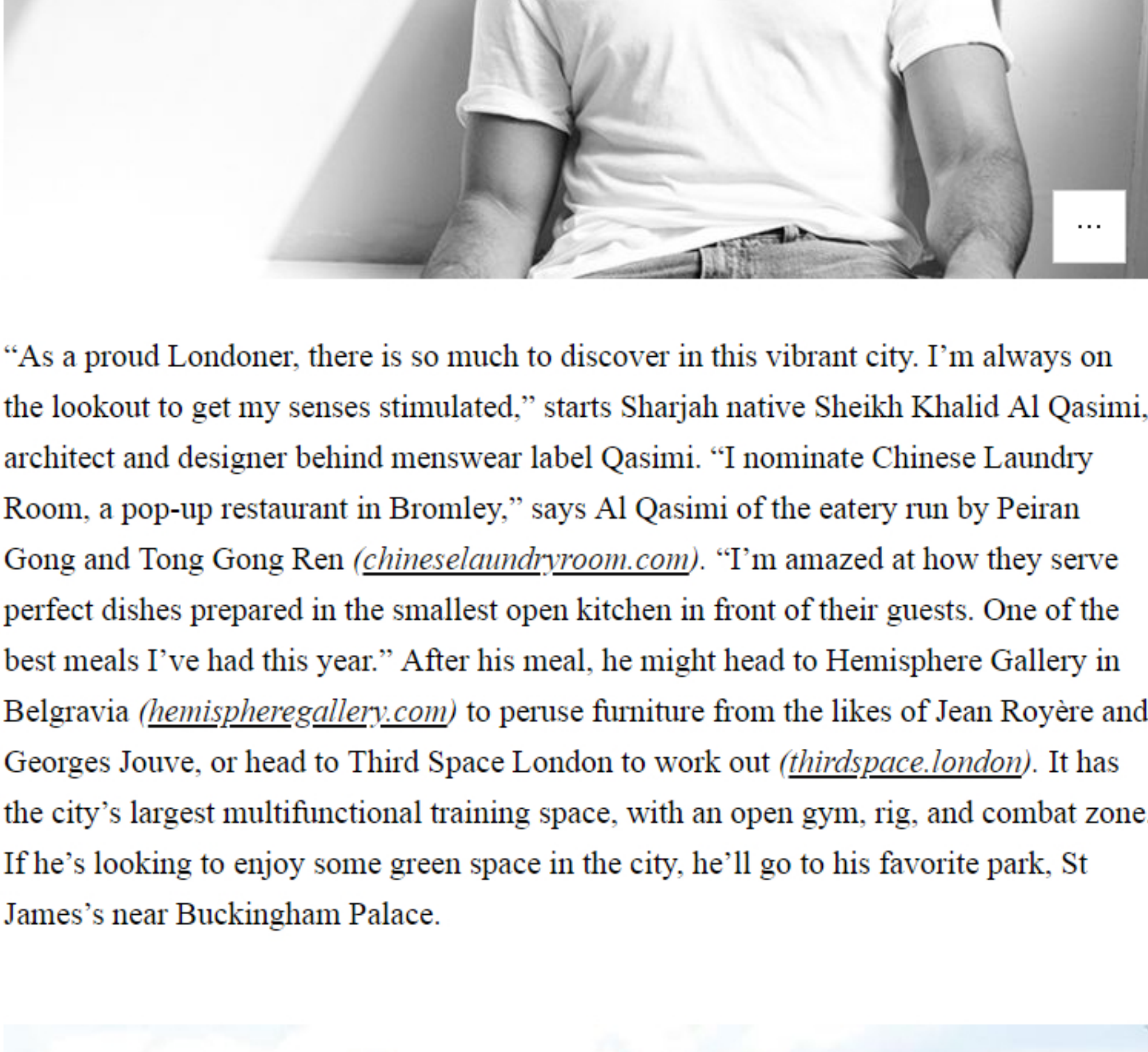


Entrepreneur Alsharefa Aisha Almany starts her busy day with an almond milk latte from Tomtom Coffee House in Belgravia ([tomtomcoffee.co.uk](http://tomtomcoffee.co.uk)), before jogging to White Room Fitness, conveniently right next to her house ([whiteroomfitness.com](http://whiteroomfitness.com)). "It's a private gym that works only by appointment with a personal trainer," she shares. "And it has a cute spa where I go once a week for my facial treatments." Almany also vouches for boutique spa Illuminata ([spailuminata.com](http://spailuminata.com)) and Calcot Spa ([calcot.co](http://calcot.co)) in the Cotswolds to relax. As for secret shopping spots, she gets her rare finds from vintage boutiques Beyond Retro ([beyondretro.com](http://beyondretro.com)) and Rokit ([rokit.co.uk](http://rokit.co.uk)) in East London and heads to LN-CC ([ln-cc.com](http://ln-cc.com)) when she's in the mood for "something unique and limited." Almany heads to Amanda Wakeley in Mayfair for cocktail dresses with edge ([amandawakeley.com](http://amandawakeley.com)), Machine-A for big brands and upcoming designers that no one else is wearing ([machine-a.com](http://machine-a.com)), Nail'd It near Sloane Street for the perfect manicure ([naildit.com](http://naildit.com)), and Greek food at the hip new bistro Meraki ([meraki-restaurant.com](http://meraki-restaurant.com)).

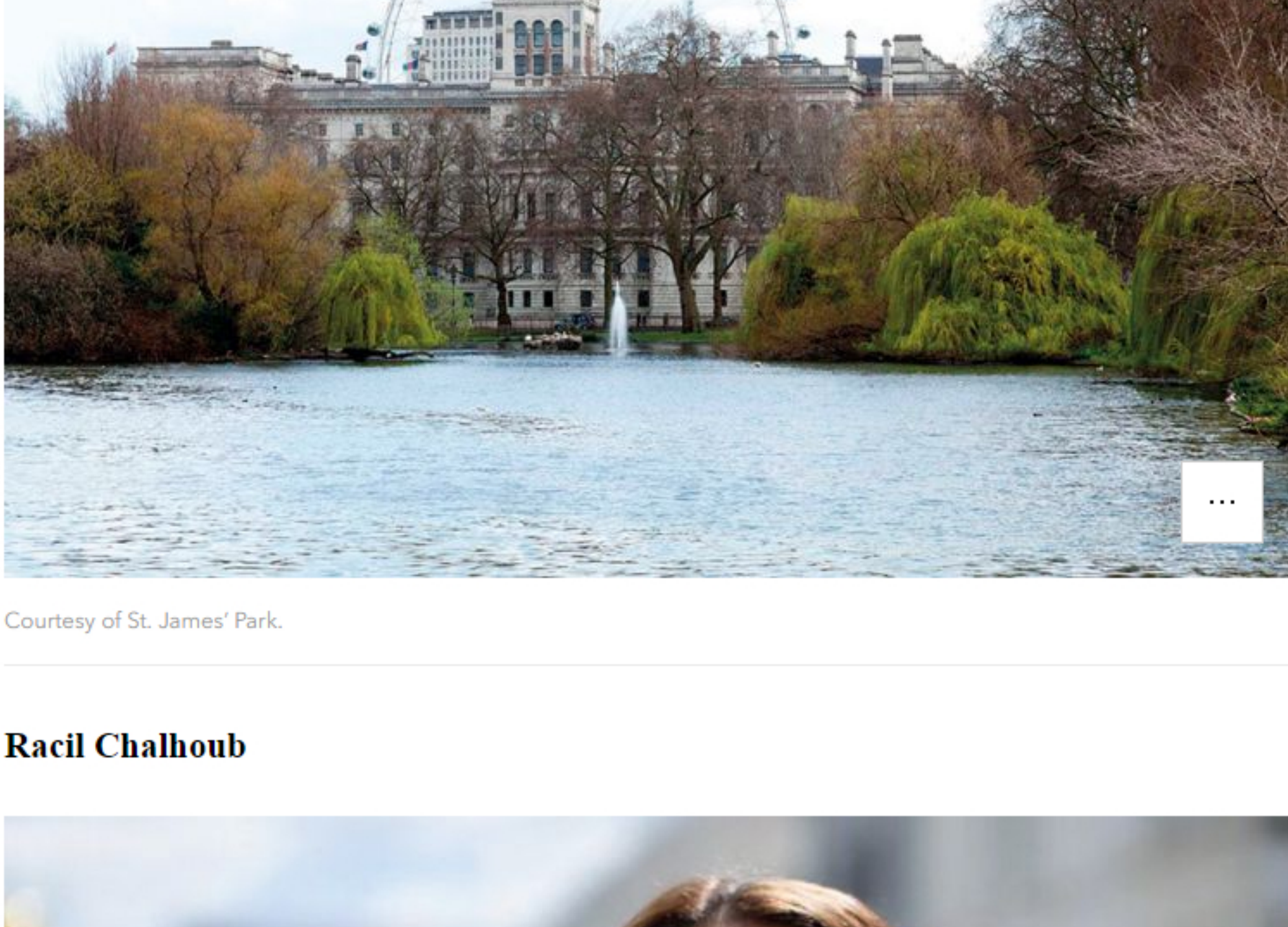


Courtesy of The Calcot Spa.

**Sheikh Khalid Al Qasimi**

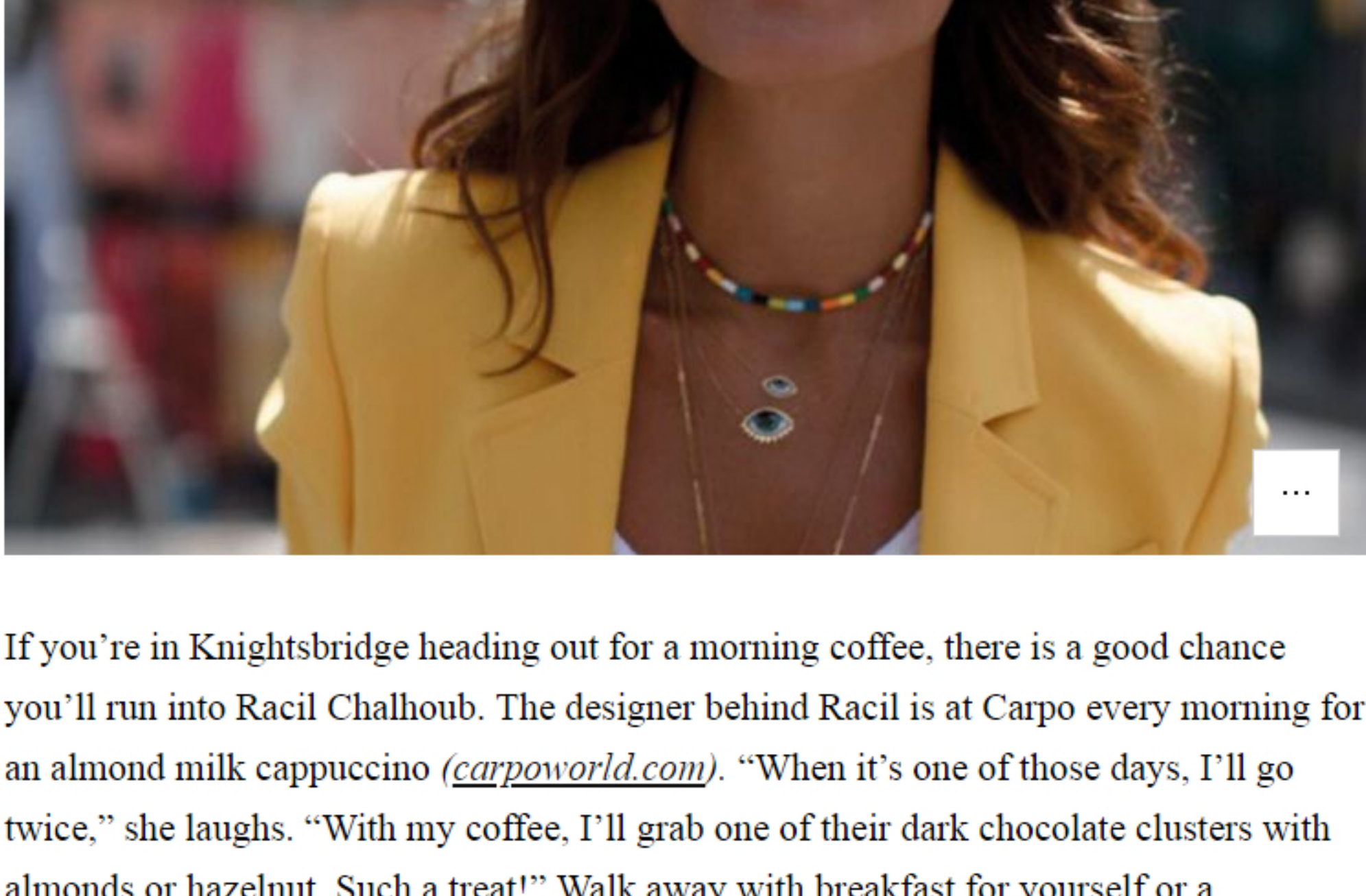


"As a proud Londoner, there is so much to discover in this vibrant city. I'm always on the lookout to get my senses stimulated," starts Sharjah native Sheikh Khalid Al Qasimi, architect and designer behind menswear label Qasimi. "I nominate Chinese Laundry Room, a pop-up restaurant in Bromley," says Al Qasimi of the eatery run by Peiran Gong and Tong Gong Ren ([chineselaundryroom.com](http://chineselaundryroom.com)). "I'm amazed at how they serve perfect dishes prepared in the smallest open kitchen in front of their guests. One of the best meals I've had this year." After his meal, he might head to Hemisphere Gallery in Belgravia ([hemispheregallery.com](http://hemispheregallery.com)) to peruse furniture from the likes of Jean Royère and Georges Jouve, or head to Third Space London to work out ([thirdspace.london](http://thirdspace.london)). It has the city's largest multifunctional training space, with an open gym, rig, and combat zone. If he's looking to enjoy some green space in the city, he'll go to his favorite park, St James's near Buckingham Palace.

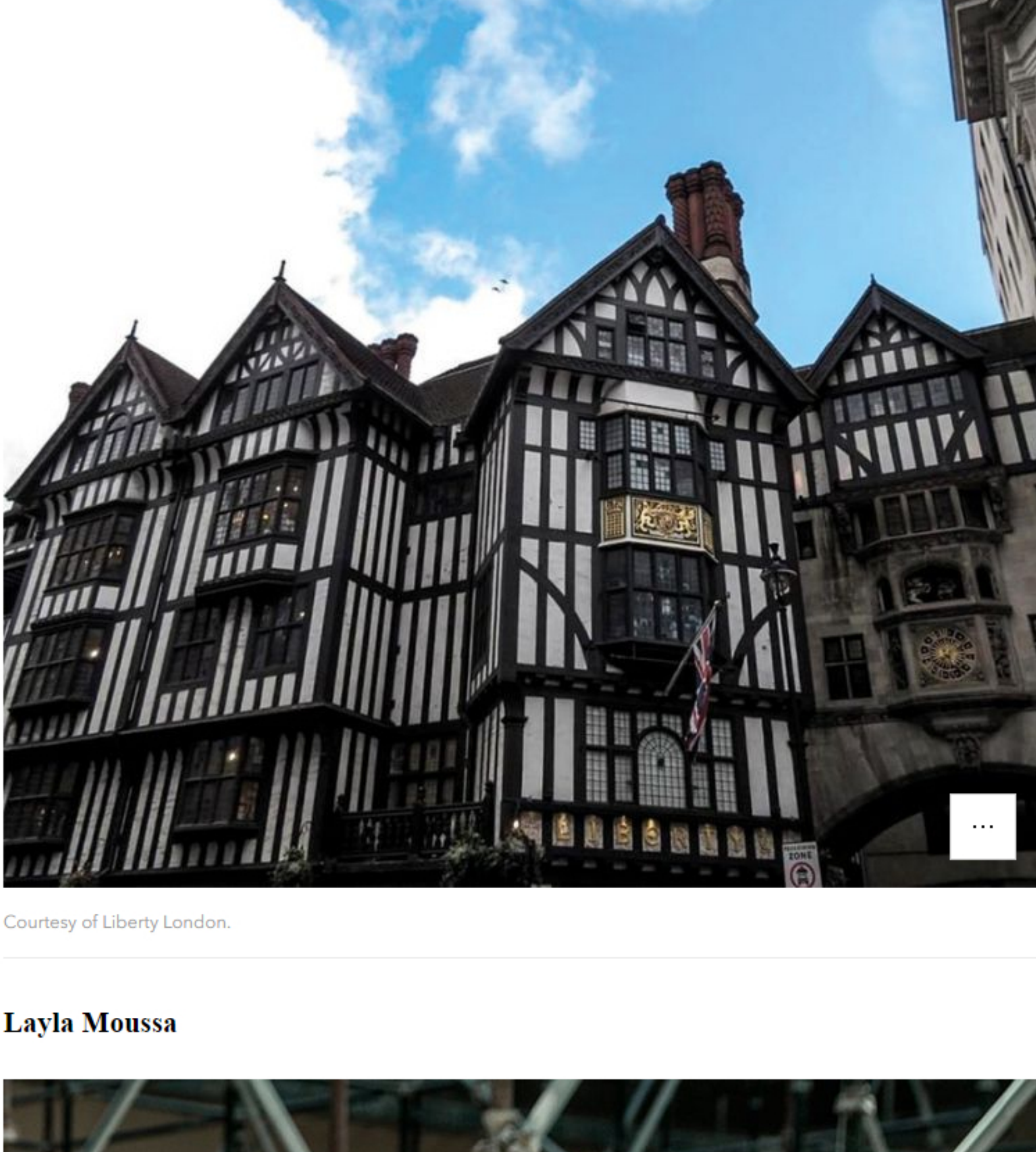


Courtesy of St. James' Park.

**Racil Chalhoub**

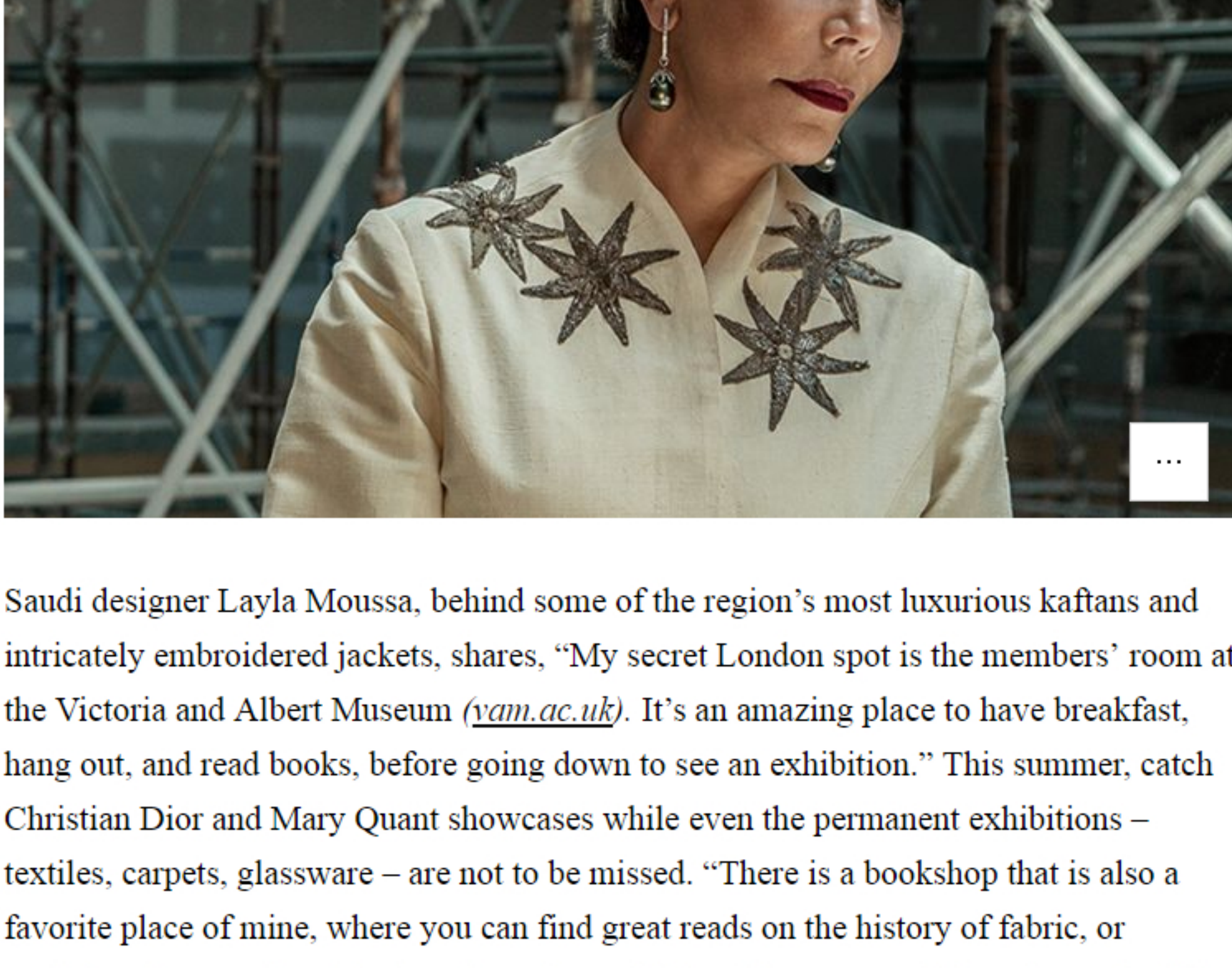


If you're in Knightsbridge heading out for a morning coffee, there is a good chance you'll run into Racil Chalhoub. The designer behind Racil is at Carpo every morning for an almond milk cappuccino ([carpovorld.com](http://carpovorld.com)). "When it's one of those days, I'll go twice," she laughs. "With my coffee, I'll grab one of their dark chocolate clusters with almonds or hazelnut. Such a treat!" Walk away with breakfast for yourself or a personalized hamper filled with fresh treats for a friend. Every week, Chalhoub gets her fresh flower arrangements at the New Covent Garden Flower Market – "go early" – or the flower shop at Bibendum ([petalsatbibendum.co.uk](http://petalsatbibendum.co.uk)). For events, she works with Scarlet & Violet for floral arrangements ([scarletandviolet.com](http://scarletandviolet.com)) while she shops tableware from The Conran Shop ([conranshop.co.uk](http://conranshop.co.uk)) and other quirky home accessories from Liberty London. When looking to foster her wellness, she'll head to the Apogee Clinic in Notting Hill ([apogeeclinic.co.uk](http://apogeeclinic.co.uk)). "It is the first medical-grade cryotherapy in London. The coldest three minutes of our life, but you'll love it."

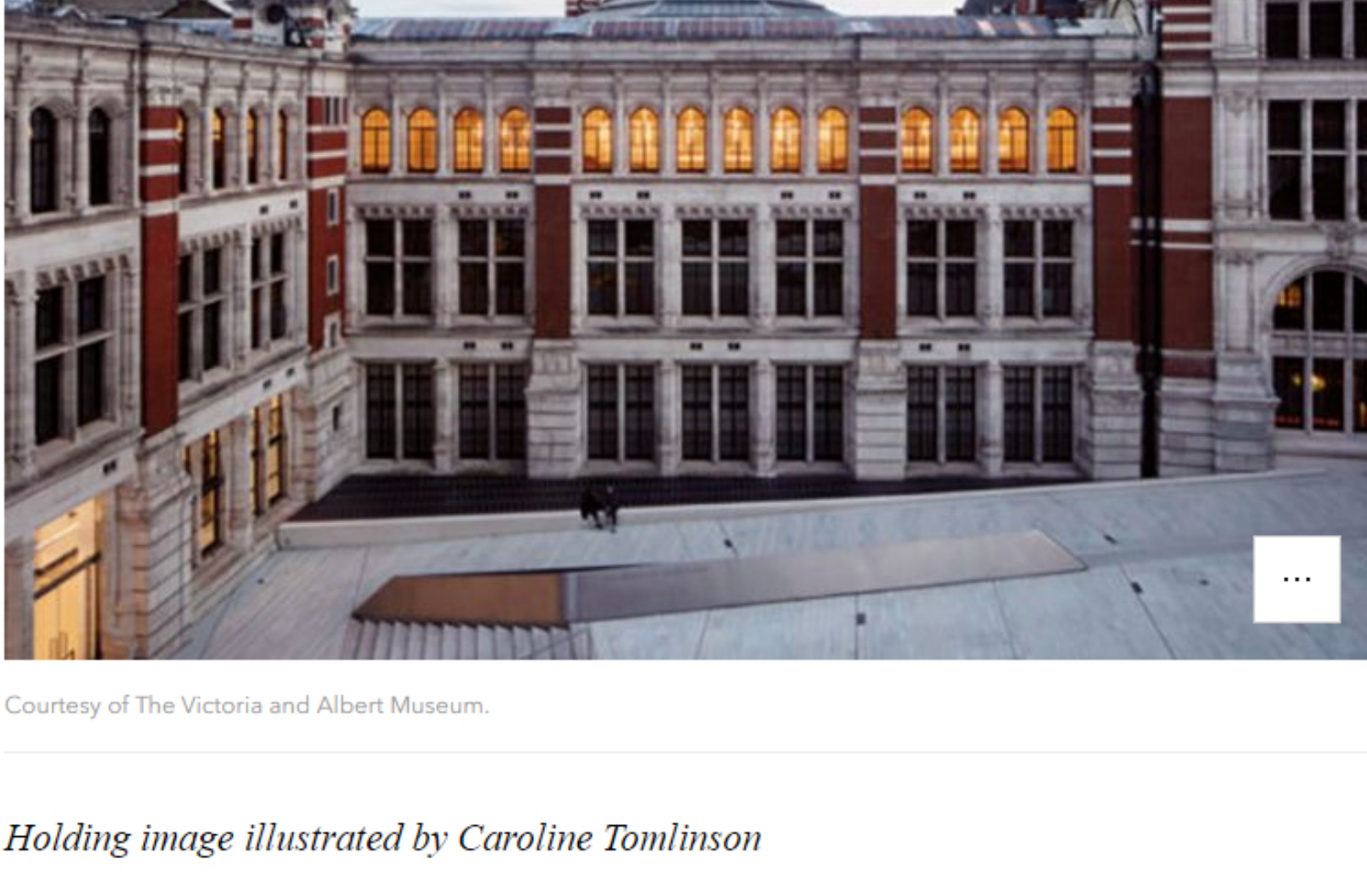


Courtesy of Liberty London.

**Layla Moussa**



Saudi designer Layla Moussa, behind some of the region's most luxurious kaftans and intricately embroidered jackets, shares, "My secret London place is the members' room at the Victoria and Albert Museum ([vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)). It's an amazing place to have breakfast, hang out, and read books, before going down to see an exhibition." This summer, catch Christian Dior and Mary Quant showcases while even the permanent exhibitions – textiles, carpets, glassware – are not to be missed. "There is a bookshop that is also a favorite place of mine, where you can find great reads on the history of fabric, or anything else your heart desires. From there, I'll head to my second favorite spot – Soho. Seedy but interesting."



Courtesy of The Victoria and Albert Museum.

Holding image illustrated by Caroline Tomlinson

