

The Friendships Found In Muslim Sisterhood



After an evening taking over Whitechapel Gallery and exhibiting at the likes of the V&A, photography, publishing, events and art collective Muslim Sisterhood is just getting started. Co-founders Lamisa Khan, Zeinab Saleh, and fellow sister Hafsa, share in this short film, in collaboration with Whistles, what it means to use joy as a form of radical rebellion and to not compromise your beliefs in order for acceptance, while also finding your sisterhood.

BY VOGUE

15 June 2022

There is an unspoken intimacy in being understood without having to explain the foundations of yourself. In the past two decades, it has become more normalised for Muslim women to live under the microscope. Our choices, our lifestyles and our freedoms tend to be observed under a harsh lens and further policed. That makes Muslim Sisterhood – the photography, film, events and art collective for Muslim women by Muslim women – a space to breathe. It's a chance to pause and centre one's faith on what it means to be a Muslim woman today.

Over the span of five years, Muslim Sisterhood has exhibited at the likes of the V&A and taken over Whitechapel Gallery. The collective have worked with numerous brands such as Converse, Daily Paper and now with Whistles, in a film featuring two of the co-founders, Lamisa Khan and Zeinab Saleh, alongside fellow sister Hafsa Adan. Previously nominated for the Dazed 100 prize and featured in *Vogue Arabia* and *It's Nice That*, Muslim Sisterhood have made noticeable waves, yet have always grounded themselves in the purpose of throwing the ladder back down for the new generation of Muslim women.

“I want to make sure we're making it easier for Muslim women to enter the creative industry, or whatever space they go into, without having to compromise who they are as a Muslim,” says Lamisa.



Although Muslim Sisterhood is a full-time job in itself, it isn't Zeinab, Lamisa and Sara Gulamali's day-to-day careers. While working in casting, advertising and the arts, the core team of three (Zeinab and Lamisa are based in London; Sara in Vancouver) often work through the night and take meetings on their days off.

"Sometimes it can be quite overwhelming having to wear so many hats," says Zeinab, but they all agree that a deep satisfaction comes from this labour of love. "The way our community supports us makes it worth it."

It is perhaps because of this broader mindset of faith and balance, which is shared mutually between Zeinab, Lamisa and Sara, that Muslim Sisterhood works. "Having known each other for five years now, we're more like sisters than colleagues. We know each other's

interests, strengths and weaknesses and we apply that to our work. When one of us is going through something, we carry each other's loads, because self-care isn't possible without collective care," says Sara.



In an era when it feels as though there is so much tragedy occurring to Muslim communities, it is vital to celebrate and centre the joys. "Choosing joy is a form of rebellion," says Lamisa. "In all our work, we want to celebrate Muslim women and give them respite from an external gaze. If we are commissioned to put on an event, we centre joy – whether that's belly dancing or zine making. We are always conscious of trauma narratives; we want people to feel uplifted and inspired after interacting with our work."

This legacy of remembering the rich and beautiful histories that Muslims come from is something Muslim Sisterhood especially

wishes for other Muslim women. “To be proud of who you are, without having to shed parts of yourself in order to be accepted or fit in. There is so much strength in being able to hold onto your Islam despite all the tests this *dunya* [world] throws at you,” says Lamisa. As after all, what Zeinab, Lamisa and Sara, as well as numerous other Muslim creatives, have been able to find through the work of Muslim Sisterhood is their sisters.

For more information on Muslim Sisterhood, visit Muslimsisterhood.com. Shop the pre-fall collection online at Whistles.com

*Featuring **Zeinab Saleh, Lamisa Khan and Hafsa Adan**. Director **Olivia Lifungula**. Executive Producer at Pavilion Works **Nailah Clair Blissett**. Art Director **Philip Jackson**. Lead Production Manager **Camilla Bellamacina**. Creative Producer **Alexandra Dawson**. Junior Creative Producer **Kirsty Brady**. Producer at Pavilion Works **Alice Gilfillan**. Production Assistant at Pavilion Works **Cree Brown**. Director of Photography **Kia Fern Little**. 1st AC **Laura Black**. Gaffer **Lorène Desportes**. Sound Recordist **Marina Fusella**. Editor at Pavilion Works **Romany Rowell**. Colourist **Nielsan Bohl**. Sound Mix **Dale Curtis**. Styling **Hanna Kelifa**. Styling Assistant **Nadiya Hassan**. Hair Stylist **Danielle Igor**. Make Up Artist **Laila Zakaria**. Make Up Artist **Viviane Melo**. Manicurists **Chiara Balisai**. Prop Stylist **Julia Dias Cuietta**. Project Manager **Lucy Flay**. Interview & Words **Tabmina Begum**.*