

LIFE . EXTRAORDINARY

HONG KONG TALENT

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THE DAUGHTER OF
A BOND GIRL AND
GRANDDAUGHTER OF
A CASINO MAGNATE
ON TRAGEDY
AND TRIUMPH

HK\$45



A portrait of Bonnae Gokson, a woman with dark hair styled up, wearing a white blouse, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

*Her extensive travels have allowed **Bonnae Gokson** to amass a treasure trove of exquisite things. The beautifully curated pieces make the style icon's home a study in perfection, write **Madeleine Ross and Chit L Lijauco***

Photography **CHESTER ONG**



LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL From left: Bonnae Gokson; antiques and bowls in agate and jadeite sit before a work by artist Candida Höfer



LAYERS OF LUSTRE Clockwise from far left: A slate dining table supported by the mechanism of a 17th-century French clock, with a piece by Candida Höfer on the wall; Gokson's cosy "chillax" corner; a framed collection of antique pillow ends made of sterling silver against a stainless steel wall; rare Peking glass and jade bowls; a Han dynasty horse sculpture

BONNAE GOKSON'S NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH STYLE. THIS IMPECCABLY TURNED OUT HONGKONGER IS BEST KNOWN FOR HER VENTURE IN EXQUISITE FOOD, DESIGN AND MERRIMENT, SEVVA, WHICH CROWNS PRINCE'S BUILDING IN CENTRAL. BUT THE ENTREPRENEUR'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH ENTERTAINING AND FINERY STRETCHES BACK TO HER CHILDHOOD.

Since she was a young girl she has loved playing house, hosting brunches, afternoon teas and dinners in creative and unique settings. She has spent her life collecting extraordinary and rare objects: homewares, pieces of art and antique furniture that tell stories of craftsmanship and family. As such, her home is a temple to beautiful things, both modern and bygone.

Gokson's Hong Kong residence nestles on Victoria Peak. The apartment is very different from the house in which she grew up, a stunning home in Stanley bedecked with tiered gardens, fountains and a private staircase down to the beach. Gokson has put her stamp on every inch. Once a lover of monochromatic chic, her "cosy" apartment used to be stark white, stone and shades of grey, but her tastes have changed.



PEAK PERFORMANCE

Gokson's vibrant living room showcases breathtaking views along with her objets d'art



"I have re-edited my home, decorating the interiors with colours that exude more energy"



PRIZED POSSESSIONS

From top: a collection of agate bowls and ornaments; Jiangxi crockery that bears the stamp of Gokson's grandfather

"I have re-edited my home, decorating the interiors with colours that exude more energy," Gokson says, referring to decor of orange, green, blue and purple hues. She also wanted to create a living space that properly celebrated her plethora of vibrant and disparate objects. "I think it's nice to layer a home with different beautiful things. I prefer a home that is lived-in, with both the modern and the old, rather than a showroom for the latest furniture pieces. Decorating and editing was challenging, as I've collected so much over the years. I move certain items around depending on my mood, and I have fun with it."

Gokson has a sharp eye for art. A Candida Höfer pair—*Biblioteca dei Girolamini* (200cm x 246cm) and *Villa di Poggio a Caiano Prato* (200cm x 286cm)—is arresting. Höfer's large-format photographs of empty interiors

Homewares in Hong Kong. Gokson helped source the items, a task that took her to myriad wonderful nooks and crannies all over the world. "I love to visit fine antiquity stores or auction houses on my travels," she says.

Among her prized homewares are bowls fashioned from semi-precious stone such as agate, onyx and jade. "Each piece is a natural miracle that never ceases to amaze me," she says. Her collection of wafer-thin Peking glass cups is exquisite and includes beautiful examples in hues of pink and yellow. "If you study antiquity you'll know that these shades are very rare. It's like choosing a diamond—the pink ones are very, very rare." Then there's a dramatic dragon-shaped wine decanter made of glass, coral and gold. "It was made for royalty in the 1800s. I love decadent items like these." A Han dynasty horse punctuates a corner of her dining room, and the table is a creative combination of a 17th-century French clock mechanism supporting a slab of slate as the table top.

But it's family heirlooms that Gokson treasures most. Her grandfather founded the Wing On department store in Shanghai and collected and commissioned many beautiful pieces for their family home. "A very sentimental piece is my huge sterling silver punch bowl," says Gokson. "It was created from a few of the sterling silver wedding gifts received by my parents, who had them melted down and refashioned by the silver department of our family's department store." She also treasures sets of luminous green crockery commissioned by her grandfather from craftsmen in Jiangxi—China's version of Limoges, the French city famous for its refined work in porcelain. Every bowl and plate bears the stamp of her grandfather.

"What I have today is the result of a whole lifetime of exposure to beautiful things, great experiences, sights and sounds," says Gokson. "Decor, mood, sound and lighting are all important to me. Everything should harmonise together, giving the space a good energy. Many people collect art and rare objects for their investment value, or just to have a name that impresses. I buy because I love the pieces." ❀

"I prefer a home that is lived-in, with both the modern and the old, rather than a showroom for the latest furniture"

and social spaces have been admired for their technical perfection and unique perception of space. Gokson was introduced to the work of Höfer by her sister, Joyce Ma, the woman behind the eponymous boutiques of luxury fashion in Hong Kong and elsewhere in Asia.

Enjoying equal pride of place in Gokson's apartment is *Garden of Earthly Delights*, a three-piece ensemble by Vik Muniz. "It is superbly handsome and I fell in love with it at first sight," she says, noting that the Brazilian-American artist is considered the "rock star" of contemporary art. She has also framed a collection of antique sterling silver pillow ends, which she sourced in Borneo.

Gokson is the consummate host. She has elevated entertaining to an art form, using as her medium a range of priceless and precious homewares. She credits her family and particularly her sister for exposing her to the best items when she and Joyce started Joyce

