

Baccarat

HONG KONG

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全新
中文
版

PANSY HO

GRAND ACHIEVEMENT

何超瓊 · 成就超然

DEREK LAM

INTERNATIONAL MAN

OF LUXURY

林達克 · 國際時尚之子

BONNIE GOKSON

MAGICAL EYE, BEAUTIFUL MIND

BACCARAT
MAGAZINE

04

全新中文版
SMART CASUAL
GREAT ESTATES
LOUNGE





BONNIE GOKSON

VITALS

Occupation Style queen-cum-restaurateur [opening in Prince's Building early next year] and 'the eye' for hotel projects; former regional brand image/creative director

Age "Timeless"

Home Apartment on the Peak

Family Scion of Wing On Department Stores & Consortium family, baby sister of Joyce Ma

Stimulants Exploring the world; art, design and architecture; anthropological science and natural medicine; music and dance; photography

Relaxants Hiking; appreciating nature; learning about ancient Chinese metaphysics and astrology; music; chatting long distance with good friends

On luxury "It's so overused these days," remarks Bonnie Gokson when asked to define the 'l' word. Although she is an admirer of the "luxurious, spanking clean and easily accessible shopping malls" that in her book make Hong Kong a great place to live in, she declares "luxury in the high end of fashion is not 'luxury' any more". Stores stock the same or similar items, and they can be found almost everywhere – at the airport, even online. "Of course, there are the rarer items that are much more refined and handmade with beautiful details; thank God they are still around but scarce. "True luxury for Gokson today is time: "Time to cultivate our own interests and time to nurture ourselves. Spending more quality time with the people who share the same values and who are positive."

On her passions Gokson holds time so dear at the moment because she is so busy. She says that passion has led to her second hospitality venture [she is fondly remembered as the mastermind of the Joyce Cafes in the 1990s], which will open early next year. Gokson's restaurant [name to be announced] will occupy the entire penthouse of Prince's Building, with panoramic views of the harbour and the city. Every aspect – cuisine, ambience, decor, music – is being thoughtfully planned and tastefully executed in her inimitable refined style. "Some people have said to me, 'Are you out of your mind?', 'Do you know how difficult and time consuming it will be?' 'No-one makes money. Why not take it easy and enjoy life?'" she admits of this most challenging and risky of startups. "But for me passion rules again." Apart from creating her second [F & B] "baby", Gokson is passionate about many things – "music, discovering young or less-known talents and nurturing them to greater success; arts and design; and learning, in particular about anthroposophy [a spiritual philosophy based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner] and in general from everyday life experiences and challenges."

On fashion Gokson has been immersed in fashion all her life. Her grandfather, William Gokson (Kwok Shun), founded Shanghai's largest department store in what was remembered by many from that era as "the best of Shanghai days"; her mother started fashion corners in Hong Kong department stores, and her elder sister, Joyce Ma, is an internationally honoured fashion doyenne. Gokson herself worked in the industry for many years, most recently as image chief and communications director of Chanel Asia Pacific. "When I was 12 or 13 years old, I already started to wear hand-me-down Valentino, Yves Saint Laurent, Pucci and Gucci bits and pieces from my sis," she says.

Discussing her personal style, she notes: "I don't think I am of any particular type. I'm able to transform myself to anything that fits the occasion. I love to dress and interpret my look for a day depending on my mood. I appreciate beautiful, quality textiles and silhouettes. I may dig out something I haven't worn for years – a beautiful classic – and match it with the latest 'must-have' of the season, always adding my own twist."

[The fashion maven admits to dressing rather casually of late as she works with her restaurant design team at their office in Sheung Wan and sources items in Wanchai. Stretch pants and comfy tops are also *de rigueur* for her weekly exercise classes with her personal trainer.]

On today's trendsetters She draws a blank when asked about fashion trendsetters, rightly commenting: "Everyone is inspired by everybody else's creation, nothing is that new. Fashion is just a cycle." Nor is she enamoured with the current fashion industry trend for celebrity endorsement. "That is not trend-setting," she opines. When pressed for names, she praises Steve Jobs ("for the fabulous iPhones"), Stelios Haji-Ioannou (founder of Easy Jet) and Ian Shragar ("the maestro mind" behind Studio 54 and the designer hotel phenomenon).

Locally, Gokson undeniably is a trendsetter. Joyce Cafe pioneered the trend for organic food and during her time at Chanel she organised the first of the big shows and evening brand parties that are now commonplace. "I had the opportunity to conceptualise these first-ever events in Hong Kong and Asia and brought about some of the best quality soirees for the brand in the industry," she says.

[Gokson's friend, the fashion designer Vivienne Tam, says: "Bonnie saw things globally long before it was chic. She's always 10 steps ahead."]

On Hong Kong "I love New York, London, Paris and Shanghai, but nothing beats the comfort of service and efficiency that we find here," says the frequent jetsetter, explaining why she chooses Hong Kong as her home base. Having said that, she laments that the level of service here is not what it used to be, and bemoans the lack of world-class cultural and entertainment facilities. "It would be great if we had a beautiful museum like Moma [the Museum of Modern Art], Tate Modern or the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art], or great theatres. The entertainment scene choices here are so limited – there is nowhere for a quality big act involving good lighting and a grand stage. If we had an equivalent of Moma, people could take classes and attend lectures by great speakers, which is so enriching to life."



Gokson has a second home in Sydney, which she describes as "a little nest". [Her friends call it "an absolute dream pad for a single gal".] "When I wake up, beautiful clear blue skies are above and I overlook a small bay with sailboats. Further ahead, I have a sweeping view of the city and the harbour bridge." Unfortunately, her restaurant project and a new role as design, arts and style director of the upcoming W and Ritz-Carlton hotels in west Kowloon and Shanghai have grounded her in Hong Kong for the time being.

On happiness The bright sunny weather she wakes up to in Sydney is one of a long list of things in life that bring her joy. Laughing and giggling with good friends, close family, total freedom and good health are part of the bigger picture, while there are small achievements and incidents such as working on the music for her restaurant, or a "bunch of rare peonies that just bloomed to a size larger than my palm with such an exotic tone of pink that just looking at it and admiring its beauty makes me so happy". She concludes: "I cannot be at a better stage of my life right now and there's so much more to look forward to."

On regret "I don't have too many regrets. Probably the biggest one is that I dropped Chinese for French when I was young, so now my Chinese is not so good."

On staying young Gokson keeps a youthful glow through her many interests and activities and by

maintaining a balanced diet. "The secret is to have good circulation and meridian flow through exercise and massages or acupuncture, to detox whenever you can, think positive and just let your hair down and have fun with the simplest things that you enjoy."

Physically, her trainer instructs her in the method and philosophy of renowned LA fitness guru Paul Chek. In addition, she embarks on a biannual intensive rejuvenation, recharge and regeneration programme. It's a luxury spa-like course of treatments derived from Rudolf Steiner's teachings, but there's no gain without pain. "Unfortunately, I become a 'pin cushion', with twice daily courses of injections by a doctor to strengthen and energise the cells of my organs, skin and brain," she reveals. "It's just like tuning up an old car." She has been undergoing this treatment for years and pronounces the results as "pretty amazing". Anyone who encounters Gokson and her naturally radiant aura would concur.

On the younger generation Gokson is concerned about the next generation, which she feels has been "brainwashed by materialism and the cheap values spread by the mass media". She elaborates: "Let's face it, education is tough on today's youth if one is not fortunate enough to belong to a well-to-do family who can support school fees plus extra classes like music and arts. Upbringing is so important. How many of them have great family communication and support? Look around and don't be surprised – listen to their language, their standard of English,

their manners . . . are you impressed?"

On human nature Gokson is a keen observer of the human condition. "I believe we are all born innocent and pure. Unfortunately some people are not as lucky as others to have a decent upbringing, causing insecurities and low self-esteem. A person's character is moulded at a young age – underneath the robust and evil persona of a convicted felon there is still that love and tender side that was never given the chance to develop because of circumstances." She concludes: "I have a lot of faith in love, compassion, encouragement and empowerment. I am thankful that I have a loving family and a spiritual master who nurtured me."

[Gokson and her sister are longtime devotees of the Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, who teaches Siddha yoga and meditation. She has also been inspired by her German doctor, a naturopath who practises anthroposophy.]

On beauty Renowned for her 'eye', Gokson finds it tough to identify the single most beautiful sight she has ever witnessed: "Wow, I have seen so much beauty throughout my life . . ." She pauses. "If I have to answer, I'd say the most beautiful sunset – a vast sky filled with opalescent colours and changing hues. It might not have changed my life, but it certainly made me appreciate what God has created for us and that every moment is so precious."