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Style

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Career Women

The Power Issue

The style of Mary Ma: sportswoman, model, entrepreneur

An audience with Cheung Yan, China's richest woman

Dressing from boardroom to ballroom

Not for Resale



Michelle Ong Cheung

Michelle Ong Cheung is a jewellery designer and co-founder of the Carnet line. Her creations were used in the blockbuster film, *The Da Vinci Code*.



It all came rather naturally. I began to express my ideas through design when I found the perfect creative medium – jewellery. I started designing pieces for myself. Friends who saw my creations asked me to design jewellery for them. As the request grew, my personal artistic expression evolved into a business. My business partner Avi Nagar and I have been working together since 1985, and we launched the house of Carnet in 1998.

Jewellery design is something you either love or you don't. Personally, I have always been drawn to design, and I bought a very small diamond when I was still in school. To me, it was so organic, brilliant and filled with design possibilities. Later, when I began working with a gemologist, I learned to appreciate all stones and the endless artistic opportunities they offer.

My style is very unique. My designs fuse aspects of my environment, cultural background and aesthetic sense. I view jewellery design as an art form. I combine great jewels with contemporary glamour. I'm influenced by the east and the west.

I actually don't look for inspirations. Ideas find me. I like strong colour contrasts that give life to a piece, and fluidity and

movement. I often design pairs that have slight variations in colour or shape so that you can wear them separately or together. I use a lot of natural forms but I also think traditional Chinese motifs translate beautifully into jewellery and antique lacy effects can be exquisite.

Once you try to explain or identify inspiration too closely, it takes away from the mystery of creativity. I think it's something that comes from inside you, from having a mind that's open to beauty and a desire to express what you see.

Every day offers its own challenge. I am proud of each step we take, probably because each one is a challenge in itself. In terms of executing a design, each piece is a true artistic endeavour. I monitor each step in the process to ensure the end result is what I envisaged. In terms of technical difficulty, my Black Lace collection or my titanium pieces are incredibly labour-intensive, and many hours of skilled design and workmanship go into creating something so light and delicate.

I am firmly grounded in the "now" and in the integrity of my designs. I hope to work hard, express my artistic vision and live happily surrounded by family and friends. To me, that is true success.

It would be difficult to choose just one memorable event in my career. To name a few, I was very happy about Carnet's participation in an exhibition at the Natural History Museum in London this year, and at an exhibition currently showing at the Burrell Museum in Glasgow. I was also delighted to see my *Da Vinci Code* designs featured on the big screen. I could also say that so many of my jewels are memorable achievements in my career. Some of my pieces take two years to create. I am always happy to see the completed jewel reflecting my artistic vision through the beauty of the gems and precious materials.

Unwind? What does that mean? But seriously, I have a family, a career and I am active in my community. I have a very busy life and I would not have it any other way. I am fortunate to fill every day doing things that I love to do.

There is never one gratifying decision you make in life. However, I can speak of a gratifying decision in relation to my career. I am happy that I pursued my love of jewellery design and my unique design vision that led to the creation of Carnet with my business partner Avi Nagar. That sense of integrity has allowed me to think outside the box and create my jewels as a true reflection of my ideas, without hesitation. ☺