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Vol.31 August 2014

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CHAN CHAO

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Bright Future

燦爛人生

Passionate, talented and beautiful to boot, Candice Chan Chao proves that natural elegance never goes out of style. She shares with Precious the plans for her design firm and how motherhood has transformed her.

她熱情、充滿才華，而且美麗，陳浩寧 Candice 那股自然散發的高貴美，讓她常保青春，令人眼前一亮。是次跟《品尊》的訪談，Candice 分享了她對自家設計公司的未來計劃，還有暢談她自當上母親後的蛻變過程。

Text: Emily Leung

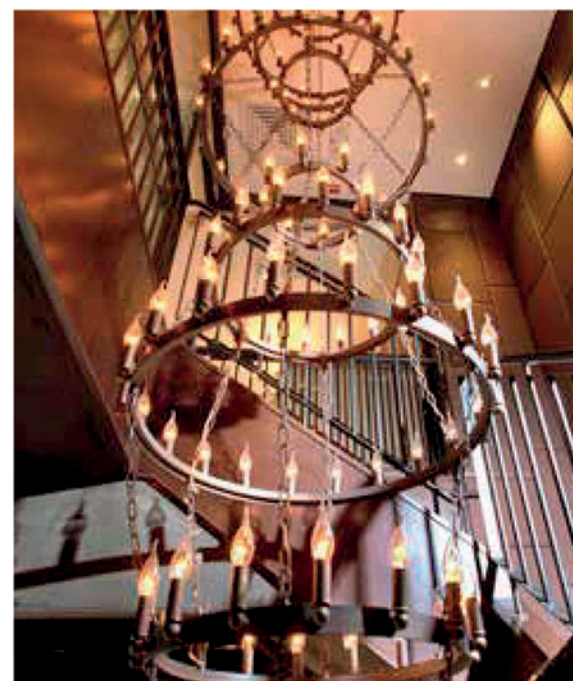


Candice Chan Chao is a young force to be reckoned with. Barely thirty years old, this recent mother is also the founder and creative director of J.Candice Interior Architects, a firm specializing in spatial planning and design, which she launched in 2009. She has since then taken the reigns to expand the company from a one-man band (herself) to a fully fledged team of fifteen staff. "We've done almost 80 projects in the past four years," she shares, "there are always about 10 projects going on at any one time so it's quite stressful."

It would seem that the firm's forte is in developing bars and restaurants, with well known brands/outlets such as Café de Coral, Common Room, Liberty Exchange, The Spaghetti House, Kishoku and Masu under their ever expanding portfolio. While Chan Chao claims to prefer commercial projects due to their faster paced nature, she is equally as keen to tap into residential projects and hotels for a new challenge.

Despite a packed schedule, this talented maven ensures she oversees each of the firm's projects, where a typical day would comprise of communicating with clients, creating concepts, sketching out designs and site supervising. Since becoming a mother however, there has been a shift in her priorities and sentiments, to which she explains, "a year ago, a typical day for me would be 10-12 hours non-stop, working and working. I felt that was the most important thing. Nowadays, it's more about the baby, so I usually spend the morning with him and then head to work in the afternoon and take things from there."

How does she manage to balance it all? Chan Chao credits this to a very supportive system and her family. "My parents help out a lot as well as my



Candice Chan 陳浩寧，一位年輕有活力的設計師，剛剛三十出頭，初為人母的她，在2009年自立門戶，創立了「寧設計事務所」"J.Candice Interior Architects"，還當上創意總監一職，專門提供室內設計及建築專業服務。公司由原本只有她一人作業，到現在已成為15人團隊。「在過去四年間，我們已完成差不多八十個項目，但每次總是有至少十個項目在同一時間進行，壓力可真不少！」說來緊張的她，但仍不失優雅。

在 Candice 的專業領導下，「寧設計事務所」在過去數年為多間著名餐廳食肆提供室內設計服務，包括大家樂、Common Room、Liberty Exchange、意粉屋、樂壽司等。雖然 Candice 聲稱她喜歡商業項目速戰速決的步伐，但她同樣熱衷於住宅及酒店項目所帶來的挑戰。

儘管每天的時間表也排得滿滿，但這位充滿幹勁的才女仍堅持親自監督每一個項目，日常工作包括跟客顧溝通、設計新構思、繪圖及現場監督。然而，自她成為母親的一刻開始，一切也改變了。「一年前，我每天連續工作十至十二小





mother and father-in-law who flew back from South Africa for several months after Logan was born," she shares. "So jumping back to work two months after giving birth was not difficult, as I had good help I could trust," says Chan Chao, "though it was a drastic change which I did not expect. You're suddenly responsible for another person so I had to learn to relax myself. Motherhood has given me a completely new perspective and I really treasure that."

The proud mother describes 15-month old Logan as an easy, adaptable baby but also very serious. "He looks very intense, and loves reading, so also heralds the nickname 'very serious baby' in school," she reveals. "In terms of appearance, Logan looks like a mini Leonard [her college sweetheart and husband Leonard Chao], but character wise, he resembles me." Though she and her husband both have full-fledged careers [Leonard is the director of property and investment firm Lechare, as well as the founder of organic lifestyle group Kelly and Moss] they are completely hands on when it comes to raising their son and bring him out with them on weekends to gatherings with their friends. Recently, they also brought him on a trip to Paris with no helper nor stroller, to which Chan Chao recalls with a laugh, "He really enjoyed it and we did likewise, (the time with him). You see things differently now when you travel – two years ago, I'd be happily exploring all the beautiful spaces and restaurants, but since becoming a mother, you are just completely in touch with the baby's needs. Whether the place is kids friendly or whether it has high chairs will trump over its décor nowadays," she observes.

It's this unparalleled experience that has also encompassed Chan Chao



時，只是不停的做。我覺得工作就是最重要的東西。可是，今天的我，最重要的是我的小寶貝。現在，早上我會跟他玩耍，下午到公司走走，或到公司取些東西便回來了。」

究竟如何在事業及家庭上取得平衡？Candice歸功於背後支持她的家人。「我的父母幫了我很大的忙，還有專程由南非飛回來的老爺奶奶，他們在兒子 Logan 出世時回港幫忙了數月。因此，當我產後兩個月再回到工作崗位也問題不大，因為我有我信任的好幫手。」Candice 逐說：「這確實是一個出乎我意料之外的大轉變，一夜間，你要為別的人生負責，因此我學會放鬆自己。成為母親後，簡直給予我全新的視野及角度，我真的非常珍惜這一點。」

Candice 自豪地形容她15個月大的兒子 Logan 是個適應力強的孩子，非常容易照顧。可是，他卻是個非常嚴肅的人。「他是一位緊張大師，喜歡閱讀，所以他在學校有個綽號叫『嚴肅BB』！就外表而言，Logan就是迷你版的Leonard(她的丈夫，趙益坤)，可是性格卻跟我相似。」雖然她和丈夫都各



with the sensitivity needed to revamp Café de Coral's outlets. "The goal was to incorporate a design that would make it appeal to a wider range of people, from the working class, students, young children or even the elderly," she shares, so the design had to be workable and adaptable whether it was located in a residential estate building or a shopping mall. "This wasn't an easy task but I learnt so much in the process."

While she has clearly spread her wings and grown from strength to strength since graduating from New York's Syracuse University, this talented aficionado was actually inspired by her father, Michael Chan, to become an interior designer when she was ten years old. As the chairman of Café de Coral Holdings, he would bring her to the restaurants' empty construction sites and ask her to envision what she would do with the space. "From a very young age, I was intrigued by this type of feeling, designing and creating," she shares. "With that in mind, my mother also encouraged me to do something different. I'd spend a summer in Shanghai, learning mandarin or an art class in Paris or New York, all of which helped to hone different skills. So both my parents really contributed to who I am today," Chan Chao reminisces. The most important lesson they taught her was to set up goals and always abide by a set of principles – namely to be humble and hardworking. "Being humble is key, as it means people will always be willing to teach you things. In the design industry, this is crucial as you should always have a mentor to guide you."

有事業，(Leonard 是地產及投資公司中祈集團的董事，亦是位於九龍灣零破天地的有機茶座 Kelly & Moss 的始創人)，但對於照顧兒子他們還是親力親為，連星期天帶兒子跟朋友聚會也是由他倆親自照顧。最近他們更獨自帶兒子到巴黎旅遊，沒有幫傭、也有沒嬰兒手推車，對此 Candice 邊回憶、邊笑說：「我們三人也非常享受彼此相處的時間，也非常珍惜共處的時光。兩年前到外地旅遊，我還是很喜歡到處發掘美麗的空間及餐廳，但自從成為母親後，你會把注意力全放在小朋友的一切所需，看看那處是否適合小朋友到的地方、又或是那裡有沒有配備嬰兒高椅等。」

正是這種無與倫比的體驗，觸發了 Candice 要改革大家樂的靈感。「我的目標是想藉設計擴大受眾層面，由上班一族、以至學生小朋友，甚至老人家。」因此在設計上要配合地點及地區性，包括屋苑住宅區、又或是商場。「縱然這次任務絕非易事，但我從中獲益良多。」



Fresh upon graduation with a bachelor in fine arts from Syracuse University, Chan Chao was hired by a mid-sized architectural firm that was heavily involved in the historical preservation field. She and her advisor were in charge of the interior design of a multitude of interesting projects, ranging from renovating a Broadway Theatre, revamping a fire station into a radio station and an abandoned warehouse space into a recreational centre. "My superior was very hands off and trusted me with many of the decisions in the design and choice of materials," Chan Chao recalls. "I was deeply inspired by these works and would love the opportunity to take on similar types of work – preserving and redesigning historical landmarks."

從紐約畢業後的 Candice，經過不斷的努力及學習，終於能展翅高飛，原來這位才女是受她爸爸 (大家樂主席陳裕光) 的啟發而成為一位室內設計師。那時只有10歲的 Candice，爸爸帶她到餐廳的建築工地，要她想像她會如何使用這空間。她說：「自小，我便被設計和創作這類感覺迷住。」她分享道：「這感覺一直在腦海中盤旋，媽媽於是鼓勵我做些不同的事。那時我趁著暑假，到上海學習國語、到巴黎或紐約修讀藝術，這些都有助於磨練我不同的技能。因此，感謝父母讓我有機會成為今天的我。」Candice 回憶著說，父母給她最重要的教導便是『設定目標』，並要保持謙虛及勤奮。「謙虛是成功的關鍵，因為它意味著人們都願意對你不吝賜教。在設計界，至關重要的便是要有一位導師來指導你。」

畢業於美國大學 Syracuse University 的 Candice，深造室內設計，以優異成績取得 Bachelor of Fine Arts 學士學位。在紐約任職期間，她和上司更參與了許多歷史建築保育項目，包括百老匯歌劇院復修工程，由一間消防局改建為一間電台，還把一個被廢棄的倉庫改建為康樂中心。Candice 憶述說：「我的上司對我非常信任，把手上的項目全交給我負責，由設計到物料使用也全由我管理。我深深被那些工作所啟發，亦想有更多機會參與各項保育及重建歷史建築物。」

對比起紐約和香港的設計風格，Candice 沉吟道：「香港是一個較為商業化的社會，香港人喜歡旅遊，喜歡自不同的城市挑選當地的新潮流並加入其設計中。因此，我們要想出更多新創意才能給他們驚喜。」

談及風格，縱然Candice是以Andre Putman的簡潔線條作為她的創作靈感，但她卻加入了自己的個人元素，



Contrasting the design style of New York and Hong Kong, Chan Chao muses, “Here, things are more commercial. Hong Kong people travel a lot and pick up what they like from trends in different cities so you have to think of new ways to always excite them.”

While she cites Andre Putman as an inspiration for her designs with clean classic lines, if Chan Chao's portfolio is testament, she is clearly doing a great job in making a fast name for herself locally and abroad. Current exciting projects at her firm include several restaurants in Shanghai, a five-level high incubator office in Korea and a four-storey high restaurant complex at The Mira's new boutique hotel establishment together with the Privé Group.

Despite this exciting lineup and Chan Chao's lofty ambitions, she insists that J.Candice Interior Architects will remain a boutique design firm. “I've seen a lot of firms over expand to the extent they lose the personal touch – the director will not have time to oversee all the projects they undertake,” she says. “I really like to be able to talk with my clients and be in touch with the process and all the details – that is my vision and I really hope to be able to keep that promise.”



把設計發揮至極致。短短數年她已創立自家公司，並於本地及國外均打出名堂，觀乎她的作品選輯足以引證她的成績斐然。最近更有多個讓人引頸以待的新項目，包括為上海數家餐廳作室內設計、為韓國一家五級高密度辦公室設計，還有跟Privé Group合作，在The Mira的最新精品酒店內，設計四層高的餐廳樓群。

儘管機會處處和擁有遠大理想，但Candice仍堅持「寧設計事務所」只維持是一間精品設計事務所。「見過許多大企業過度擴充業務，失去了跟人接觸的機會，總監根本沒可能應付所有項目。我喜歡跟客戶溝通及接觸，了解整個設計過程及細節。這是我的理想，並希望一直堅守下去。」