


DAUGHTER OF A DYNASTY

Veronica Chou is part of one of China's most famous fashion families. Now she's stepping out on her own.

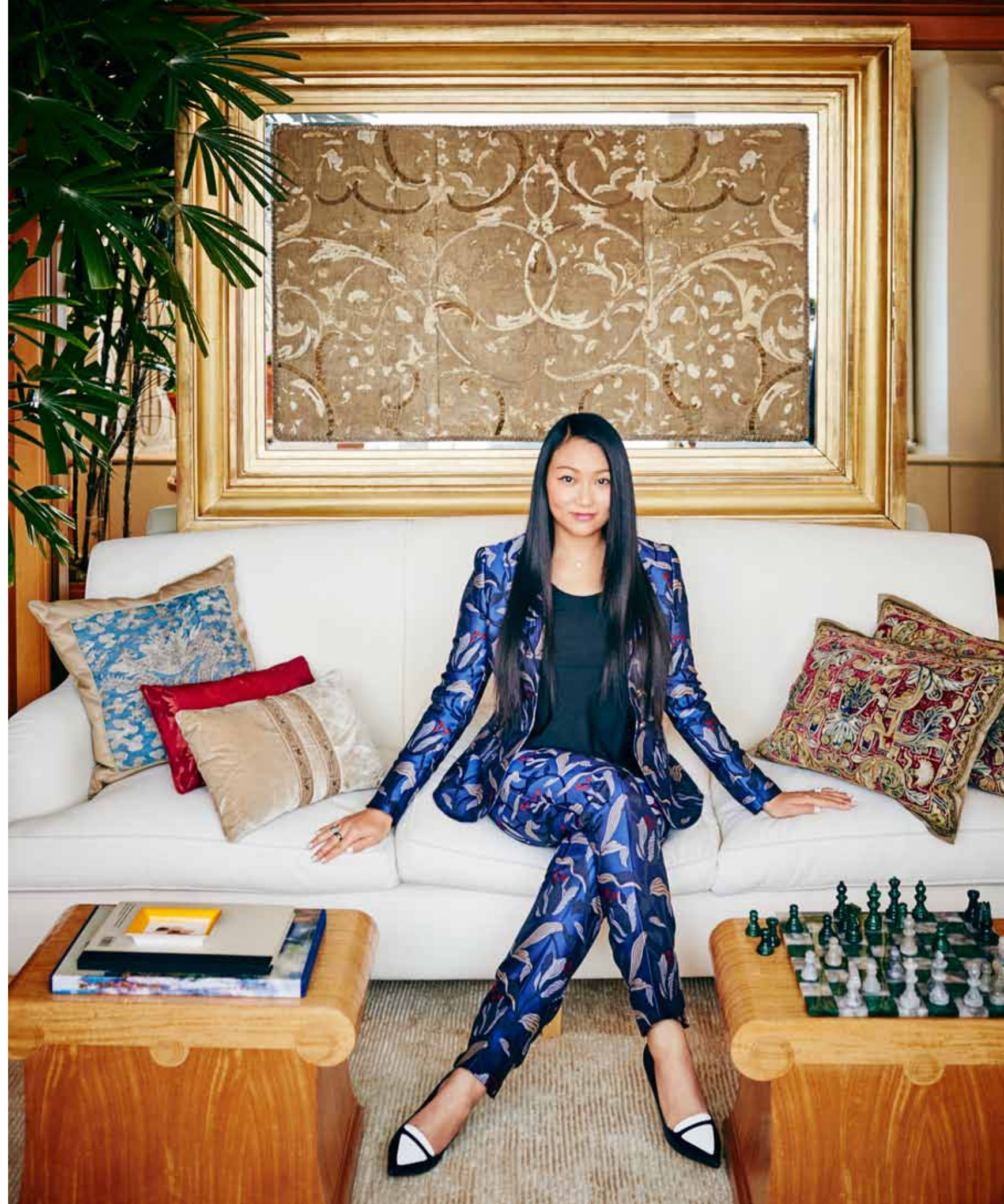
By Priya Rao

Photographs by Douglas Friedman



Lady in waiting. THIS PAGE: Gown, Carolina Herrera. Rings, Delfina Delettrez. OPPOSITE PAGE: Jacket and pants, Escada. Rings, Repossi. Shoes, Tabitha Simmons.  shopBAZAAR.com. Shirt and necklace, Chou's own.

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hen I first meet Veronica Chou at her billionaire father, Silas Chou's, palatial apartment on New York's Madison Avenue, she immediately takes me to her guest bedroom closet. Though wearing a nondescript camel V-neck sweater and skinny jeans, the 30-year-old has accessorized with navy-and-oxblood pointy-toed Céline flats, a larger-than-life Rolex watch, and a bevy of diamonds, including a massive emerald-cut engagement ring from her husband, Russian-born businessman Evgeny Klyucharev. "This is Mary Katrantzou for Adidas," she says, as she pulls a Technicolor bomber jacket from an overstuffed rack. "I might wear a long dress and this."

It's the Saturday of New York Fashion Week in mid-February, and Chou, who divides her time between Beijing and London, is deciding what to wear to the Alexander Wang show later that evening. "Alex and I met when he came to China for events," she says. "I'm going to all the Asian designers—Philip [Lim], Thakoon [Panichgul], and Prabal [Gurung]—as well. Then I'm going to Michael Kors and Tommy Hilfiger."

Given Chou's family background—Silas was an investor in Michael Kors and Tommy Hilfiger and helped take both businesses public; his father started South Ocean Knitters, one of the largest textile and apparel manufacturers in the world—it's easy to assume that she is in New York for fun, but as president of Iconix China, a Hong Kong-based company that brings American brands to the Chinese market, she is hard at work. "I have full-day meetings from nine to nine," she says. Since she first began working at Iconix in 2008, Chou has launched 12 brands, such as Badgley Mischka, Material Girl, and Candie's. She is also a cofounder of the Beijing-based private equity fund China Consumer Capital and director of Karl Lagerfeld Greater China (she is currently collaborating with the designer on a luxury hotel in Macau to open in 2017).

Chou came by her love of fashion early, when she took a summer job at a Tommy Hilfiger store in her native Hong Kong at age 14. "Luckily I looked a little bit older," she says, laughing. After interning at *Elle* magazine and at a local newspaper ("I was following breaking news and listening to the police radio"), Chou returned to retail while studying communications and business at the University of Southern California. "I helped Michael Kors open a store in L.A., so I was basically just cleaning and unpacking boxes," she recalls. When asked if she got special

treatment because of her father, she replies, "I tried not to say who my dad is."

Nowadays, the pair work closely together, especially as Chou plans for life after Iconix: She's pregnant with her first child and expects to spend more time in New York and London. "I might invest in more brands; I might buy a brand," she says. "I'm looking for something in the West. There's so much opportunity for me. My father is always guiding me; I listen to him a lot because he's really done so well for himself."

She has also learned a lot from the competition, studying Ralph Lauren, J. Crew's Mickey Drexler, LVMH's Bernard Arnault, and others. Regarding Arnault, she says, "I know he still goes to see all his stores before they are opened. He's hands-on still, and that's impressive."

Chou brings a lot to the table herself. As a lover of Balmain leather pants, Tabitha Simmons heels, Reformation plaids, and Huishan Zhang florals, she is the perfect mix of East meets West, which she feels is important to knowing her customer. Of up-and-comer Zhang, Chou offers: "He uses Chinese elements. One coat is a traditional Chinese-style landscape painting of mountains, but he transforms it to polka dots so it looks really modern."

She notes that the Chinese market's luxury-logo mania has died down recently, and mixing high and low labels is the trend du jour. "People don't look for logos," she says. "They really want to show their personality." Her own aesthetic is "split," she says. "Some days I can go, like, really grungy black downtown and Alexander Wang; some days I'll be more proper and more uptown like wide-

legged pants and Michael Kors. I'm just growing up," she adds. "You can't always dress 'model off-duty.'" As for the bigger picture—U.S.-China relations—Chou says, "Americans think that whatever Americans wear would work in China. That's really not the case." For example, jeans: "Americans live in denim. Denim in China does not sell as well; it's a more difficult business."

Chou will be spending spring in New York as she prepares for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's upcoming exhibition "China: Through the Looking Glass" and the opening-night gala (Silas is honorary chair). She doesn't know yet what she'll wear, though she hopes the circumstances won't be quite as dramatic as last year. "I was supposed to wear Karl Lagerfeld," she explains. "They put it in a wooden crate and shipped it over from Paris, but the crate was bigger than the SUV, so the driver couldn't pick it up from Customs. There was no way I could've gotten my dress in time." Like Cinderella without a dress (but with a bigger budget), Chou skipped the designer favors. "I went shopping immediately at Bergdorf Goodman," she says. "I picked up a Zac Posen off the rack." ■

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Puppy play.
Dress, Burberry Prorsum.
Ring, Aurélie Bidermann.
shopBAZAAR.com. Bracelet, Bulgari. Shoes, Manolo Blahnik. Necklace, Chou's own. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Hair: Fernando Torrent for Philip B; makeup: Kristin Hilton; prop styling: Angharad Bailey.

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