

A woman with long dark hair is sitting on a white wooden chair. She is wearing a vibrant green, short-sleeved, button-down dress with a black belt. She is also wearing a gold necklace, a gold bracelet, black tights, and black high-heeled shoes. The background is a light-colored wall with a decorative border. The floor has a patterned rug.

*“I want more people
to see jewellery as art.
Jewellery should be
loved and enjoyed, not
kept in a safe”*



Vintage Verve

FOUNDER OF REVIVAL, ASIA'S FIRST TREASURY OF VINTAGE JEWELS AND OBJECTS, **BRENDA KANG** TELLS MELISSA GAIL SING HER HOPES OF INSPIRING PEOPLE TO LOOK AT JEWELLERY IN A NEW WAY

AT BEST, THEY ARE VIEWED AS pre-loved or estate jewels, but many in Asia consider vintage jewellery as old, second-hand goods that have lost their lustre. Brenda Kang wants to change this thought.

"Vintage jewellery is generally anything under 100 years old, and whether from the belle époque, art deco, art nouveau or retro era, each piece holds unique beauty and style. I want more people to see and understand that these pieces are not just amazing for their impeccable craftsmanship and great detailing, but also a beautiful way to learn more about history," says the 42-year-old.

Kang's love for jewellery goes back 20 years, when she was working with Singapore Airlines. She found herself drawn to museums as well as vintage and antique jewellery stores, particularly in Europe and the US. "I'd be captivated by things you normally wouldn't see in Singapore, where retailers carried mainly mass-produced jewellery that were very flat, with little detailing," she says.

The ones that really moved her and sometimes still give her goosebumps are the art nouveau jewellery. "Pieces from René Lalique and Georges Fouquet have a romantic quality and are very detailed. It's rare to find them in good condition and I tend to admire them for longer," Kang says.

After six years of flying, she took a gemmology course with the Gemological Institute of America and in 1997 got a job at Christie's New York. There, under the mentorship of colleagues who had a wealth of knowledge of different types of jewellery and their history, her love for vintage jewellery grew. "Travelling to places such as Paris, Geneva, New York and London, I had the chance to see amazing Cartier pieces from the 1920s, belle époque pieces and art nouveau ones. I began to notice little details I may have never noticed in the past," says Kang, who has worked on high-profile collections and auctions including the estates of Teresa Po Lau, Baron and Baroness di Portanova, and Doris Duke. "The level of craftsmanship and rich heritage the pieces embodied was unlike what you'd find in Southeast Asia. As I learnt how the pieces were made, about the designers and began to recognise the different qualities available, I started

to appreciate vintage jewellery in a new way."

After leaving her senior role at Christie's and returning to Singapore a year ago, she decided to start Revival, a treasury of vintage jewels and objects – the first of its kind in Asia. Her mission is to inspire people with the spirit of romanticism and grand gestures of gift presentation through precious handcrafted jewellery, while adding diversity to jewellery offerings here. A maiden collection was presented during a pop-up showcase at Malmaison by The Hour Glass in September. Pieces ranged from a 1970s Tiffany & Co. locket valued at \$500 to a Cartier Mystery clock circa 1980s valued at half a million dollars. Some of the museum-quality creations, dating as far back as 1910, have even appeared in books and toured prestigious museums.

"We pick pieces that are unique for their rarity, beauty and craftsmanship. At the same time, we try to make the brand accessible to new collectors. Even if they want to just see and learn about the pieces, they'll be able to see a very wide range of vintage jewellery, from Victorian, to art deco to retro pieces and objects. And I'm happy to share my knowledge too," says Kang.

While many of Revival's pieces are sourced from auction houses, and antique and jewellery fairs, some are from consignors and a number are from Kang's personal collection. Her first piece, an art deco brooch with Asian influences, was acquired about 12 years ago at an auction in Paris. "I decided to put up some pieces of my own at Revival. Sometimes, when you've enjoyed a piece enough, it's time to share it with others."

Apart from selling vintage jewellery and art, Revival also helps collectors appraise and sell pieces when they wish to refresh their collection. In the first four weeks of Revival's maiden showcase, more than 20 of the 106 pieces were sold, an encouraging sign for Kang, who sees clients at Revival's office showroom at International Building and is planning more pop-ups.

She doesn't like to use the word "investment" when discussing vintage jewellery, yet she finds it unavoidable in Asia: "Jewellery should be bought for sentimental, romantic reasons rather than how much it is going to make in five years. Our emphasis is more about giving clients beautiful, unique pieces that are well made, pieces they can wear now and later pass down to the next generation," she says. ■