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WHO IS SPICYUUU?

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THE FUTURE IS NOW

HOW TECH IS IMPACTING LIFE AS WE KNOW IT



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**“Streaming
helped build
my confidence.
Before that,
I couldn’t talk
to people.”**

- SPICYUUU, GAMER & TWITCH STREAMER

PHOTOGRAPHY REUBEN FOONG DENIM CROPPED VEST AND JEANS IM YEBIN SUNGLASSES GENTLE MONSTER



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HER WORD

Where is the metaverse heading to? **08**

We ask leading tech experts if it's worth the hype

Broken screens, broken spirits **10**

Her World's senior digital writer Shazrina Shamsudin confronts haters and cyberbullies

Navigating the threat of deepfakes **12**

Kelley Wong, an associate at Singapore law firm Morgan Lewis Stamford, shares the steps we can take to safeguard our profiles

Ready Player One: Spicyuuu **16**

The Twitch sensation tells us how video streaming has made her more confident in her own skin

HER STYLE

High society **24**

Cinch up: High-waisted trousers reclaim their place in the fashion sphere

Add to cart **26**

A monthly edit of the most stylish buys to add to your wish list

So you wanna be a stylist **28**

Three fashion stylists reveal what their jobs really entail

Buy now, wear forever **34**

We've rounded up 48 key bags this Spring/Summer 2024 that will work effortlessly with your everyday wardrobe

How do I wear sheer bottoms modestly? **42**

Tip #1: Use an oversized blazer

A starry revival **44**

Own a storied piece of Dior's heritage with the new La D de Dior, which incorporates iconic symbols from the Maison's 78-year history

When should I reach for a mechanical watch instead of a quartz one? **46**

Contributing features editor Karishma Tulsidas answers

0

4

/

2

0

2

4

HER CAREER

Can we keep up with an ever-changing workplace? **48**

We ask specialists how to stay one step ahead

Mum's the word **50**

As general manager of Estee Lauder Companies, Becky Lee is used to navigating demanding environments. Yet, her most significant challenge is balancing work with being a mother

The importance of starting small **56**

How one can make measured and meaningful investment decisions as an angel investor

You don't have to be wealthy to be a philanthropist **60**

Hannah Oh, co-founder of digital impact investment platform Ixo, is on a mission to democratise philanthropy

Budget 2024 decoded: What it means for your wallet, work and well-being **64**

Deborah Tan-Pink, co-host of the podcast Good Girls Talk About Money, highlights how we can put the incentives of this year's Budget to use

Forget FOMO, we're now feeling FOBO **68**

FOBO, or the fear of becoming obsolete, is on the rise as generative AI increasingly dominates the workplace

HER LIFE

Gentle men **72**

How the term "babygirl" is redefining the concept of masculinity today

Loving in slow motion **74**

Are you swiping too fast and too furiously? Perhaps it's time to be more mindful. Writer Cherry Tan explores intentional dating

Changing the game in mental health care **78**

Teletherapy, VR therapy, and mobile apps are revolutionising mental health care, but the question remains: Are there any drawbacks?

What do you know about perimenopause? **82**

Four young undergrads have made it their mission to increase awareness on this condition affecting half of the world's population

I've been having hot flushes recently... should I be alarmed? **84**

Associate professor Rukshini Puvanendran answers

THE COVER



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OUTFIT
STRUCTURED MAXI SKIRT,
FARAH SUDIRO,
AND PULLOVER,
STYLIST'S OWN

0

HER BEAUTY

Black cat energy **86**

The '80s called and the "mob wives" have answered - with dramatic makeup

Editor's picks **88**

Must-haves you will not regret adding to your beauty shelf

Tried and tested **90**

There's a new wave of cutting-edge tools that harness the power of LED light therapy to stimulate collagen production. Should you invest in one?

A charmed life **92**

We show you how customised bag charms are a handy way to touch up your makeup while on the go

4

2

Can I have your number, please? **98**

Uncovering the significance behind the numbers in iconic beauty products, such as the "540" in Maison Francis Kurkdjian's Tiktok-famous Baccarat Rouge 540

0

Next in beauty **102**

Look out for seven trends that are tapping on generative technology to change how beauty products are made, delivered and consumed

2

The nail files **108**

Six women from different walks of life open up about their go-to manicure designs, and what they mean to them

4

REGULARS

Editor's note **06**

Lust page **116**

her world

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PHOTOGRAPHY LAWRENCE TEO ART DIRECTION & STYLING ADELINE ENG

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Soft Power

When the team thought about how we wanted the cover to look like this month, we landed on the idea of a vast desert landscape, not because we think the future is bleak and barren, but because it was inspired by one of the maps found in the world of Valorant, a first-person tactical shooter game that our cover girl Spicyuuu plays.

It's not lost on me that the sandscape is reminiscent of *Dune: Part Two*, the second part of an epic sci-fi movie remake released in theatres recently. As a self-professed gamer girl, the world of Dune was introduced to me, not through Frank Herbert's 1965 novel *Dune*, but actually through the computer game released in 1992.

The younger me was fascinated by leading character Paul Atreides, the fight for melange or spice (a psychedelic drug that unlocks, among other things, an increased lifespan and mental awareness) and the weird worm "monsters" that produced said spice.

As an adult, it's the idea of the Bene Gesserit that fascinates me the most. This secretive sisterhood is trained through years of physical and mental conditioning to obtain mysterious powers (like being able to mind control, or even determine the sex of their baby while pregnant), which they use to influence society, religion and politics.

Was Frank Herbert's intention in creating the Bene Gesserit meant to serve as a warning as to the perils of letting women "rule" (albeit behind-the-scenes)? Or was it a celebration of the "soft power" that women seem to wield? Maybe it's naive of me, but I'd like to think it was the latter.

And is it a coincidence that the outfit Spicyuuu wears looks like one of the long, dramatic gowns favoured by the Bene Gesserit? Yes, kind of!

When conceptualising the shoot, fashion editor Lena Kamarudin looked to our brightest fashion students for inspiration. Our cover personality is wearing a piece by local designer Farah Sudiro, who experimented with unconventional material and silhouettes to produce a gender-neutral collection that is a celebration of individuality, and an ode to the transformative power of art.

Women supporting women? I'm here for it.

- ELIZABETH LEE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

 @BETHRLEE



PHOTOGRAPHY LAWRENCE TEO HAIR PETER LEE MAKEUP CLARENCE LEE

**Feeling like you're
cracking under pressure?
UNWIND WITH US.**



PHOTOGRAPHY LAWRENCE TEO ART DIRECTION & STYLING ADELINE ENG

her world



HER WORD

Where's the metaverse heading to?

Three years after the metaverse boom, we ask leading tech experts if it's still worth the hype.

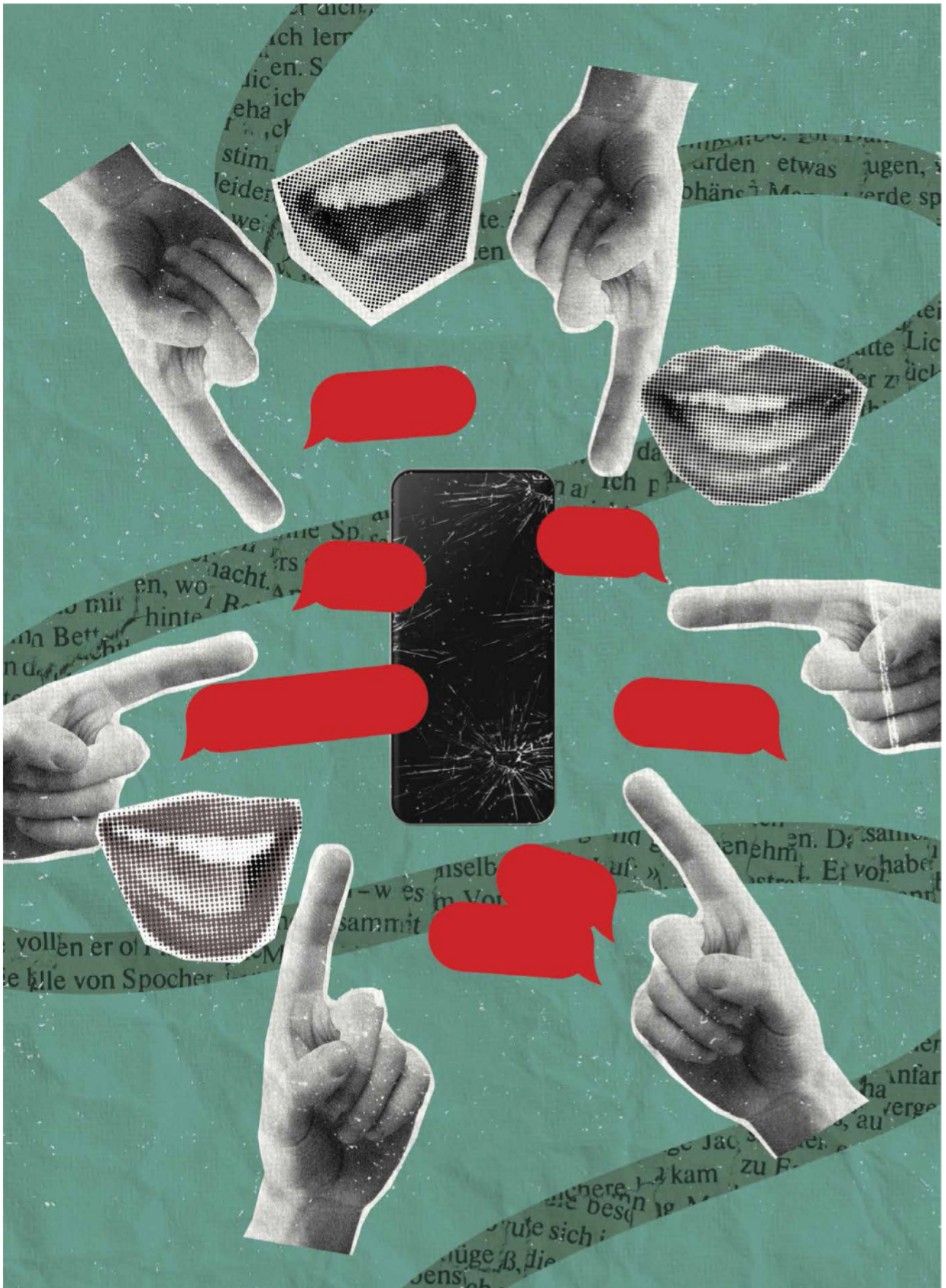
"The [metaverse] hype may have subsided, however the core ideas of immersive experiences are very much alive, and are continuing to evolve every day. Digital ownership is still gaining traction. The intersection of the metaverse with Web3 technologies like NFT and crypto further highlights its potential, specifically around fostering ownership and economic opportunities. Cryptocurrencies are still relevant, and will continue to drive the future of decentralised financial ecosystem." – **Grace Clapham, founder of Untam3d, and co-founder and director of The Change School**

"The digital world moves at lightning speed, and what seems like a fad today could be the blueprint for tomorrow. Take AI for example – it's evolving so fast that it's already hard to keep up. Think about the kids who are the future, currently playing Roblox or Fortnite. They're already hanging out in virtual worlds, trading skins and being incredibly tech-savvy. It's not just games; it's their social space where they hang out with their peers. I believe this is a peek into how we'll all interact someday." – **Shavonne Wong, digital artist**

"Far from fading into irrelevance, the metaverse is still very much work-in-progress. Similar to the Web 2.0 era's embrace of social media by brands, Web3 promises 3-D virtual worlds where you can do more than you ever could on a website or a social media page. Now with video games becoming bigger than movies and music, I believe Roblox and Fortnite's ecosystems showcase the potential of the metaverse to shape our digital future by profoundly changing the way we communicate and interact with each other online." – **Kay Poh Gek Vasey, founder and chief connecting officer of Meshminds**



COORDINATION KARISHMA TULSIDAS PHOTO GETTY IMAGES



Broken screens, broken spirits

Her World's senior digital writer

Shazrina Shamsudin confronts haters and cyberbullies.

“She looks 10 years older than her age.”

“But locals don’t want her right?”

“I’m not liking the current trend of muscle chicks with big behinds and thunder thighs.”

Online forums have long been recognised as breeding grounds for cyberbullying, but I never truly understood its insidious nature until I became a target. I was the subject of cyberbullying when an article featuring my fitness journey became the subject of an online forum. Expecting positive feedback, I was blindsided by the cruelty and negativity.

I had witnessed friends, acquaintances, and even strangers recount their experiences with cyberbullying. I sympathised with their pain, offered support, and advocated for awareness and prevention measures. However, I remained somewhat detached, shielded by the naive belief that it couldn’t happen to me.

The hurtful comments and derogatory messages left me feeling exposed and vulnerable. The anonymity afforded by the Internet emboldened my attackers, enabling them to unleash their cruelty with impunity.

As a teenager, I battled body dysmorphia, constantly worrying about how I looked and struggling with self-esteem. Even in my 20s, hitting the gym didn’t erase these feelings; I still felt like I didn’t measure up. When those hurtful comments surfaced, I tried to shrug them off, but they cut deep, bringing tears and self-doubt. It took a while, but with the support of my friends and family, I began to see that these comments came from others’ insecurities, and not my shortcomings. I realised I couldn’t change how people saw me, but I could control how I responded. It was a journey, but eventually, I found my centre again, understanding that my worth isn’t defined by others’ opinions.

If you are facing similar struggles, know that you are not alone. Before you internalise the negativity, here are lessons from online haters that helped me reclaim my confidence.

ASK YOURSELF IF IT’S WORTH IT

Indulging the urge to respond to online detractors only adds fuel to the flame, and gratifies their desire for attention. It’s crucial to recognise that these hurtful comments stem from their own insecurities. Even if you are on the opposite end and not personally experiencing cyberbullying, it’s essential to be mindful of how you interact with others online. If you don’t have anything nice to say, save it.

DON’T SUFFER IN SILENCE

In our increasingly digital lives, cyberbullying leaves a lasting imprint, with hurtful comments archived and accessible at any time. It’s crucial to emphasise the importance of seeking support from friends or family. Dwelling on these toxic sentiments can significantly affect your emotional and mental well-being, and the situation may be exacerbated if left unaddressed.

Remember, there are also hotlines and other resources, including Samaritans of Singapore (sos.org.sg), available to assist you.

FOCUS ON YOURSELF

Despite years dedicated to improving my body image and mental well-being, I tend to scrutinise every imperfection when online critics persistently find fault, perpetuating a belief that something within me always needs fixing, and that I am inherently flawed.

When someone, whether a stranger or even a friend, hurls hurtful words like “You look fat, old, and unlovable”, it stings. But here’s one thing you should always remember – their words don’t define you. You know yourself better than anyone else. You have worked so hard to come this far, and you shouldn’t let a few nasty comments bring you down.

While these negative thoughts creep in every now and then, it’s important that you don’t let them control you. We’re all evolving, continuously striving to better ourselves, and it’s essential not to let these negative thoughts hinder our pursuit of happiness.

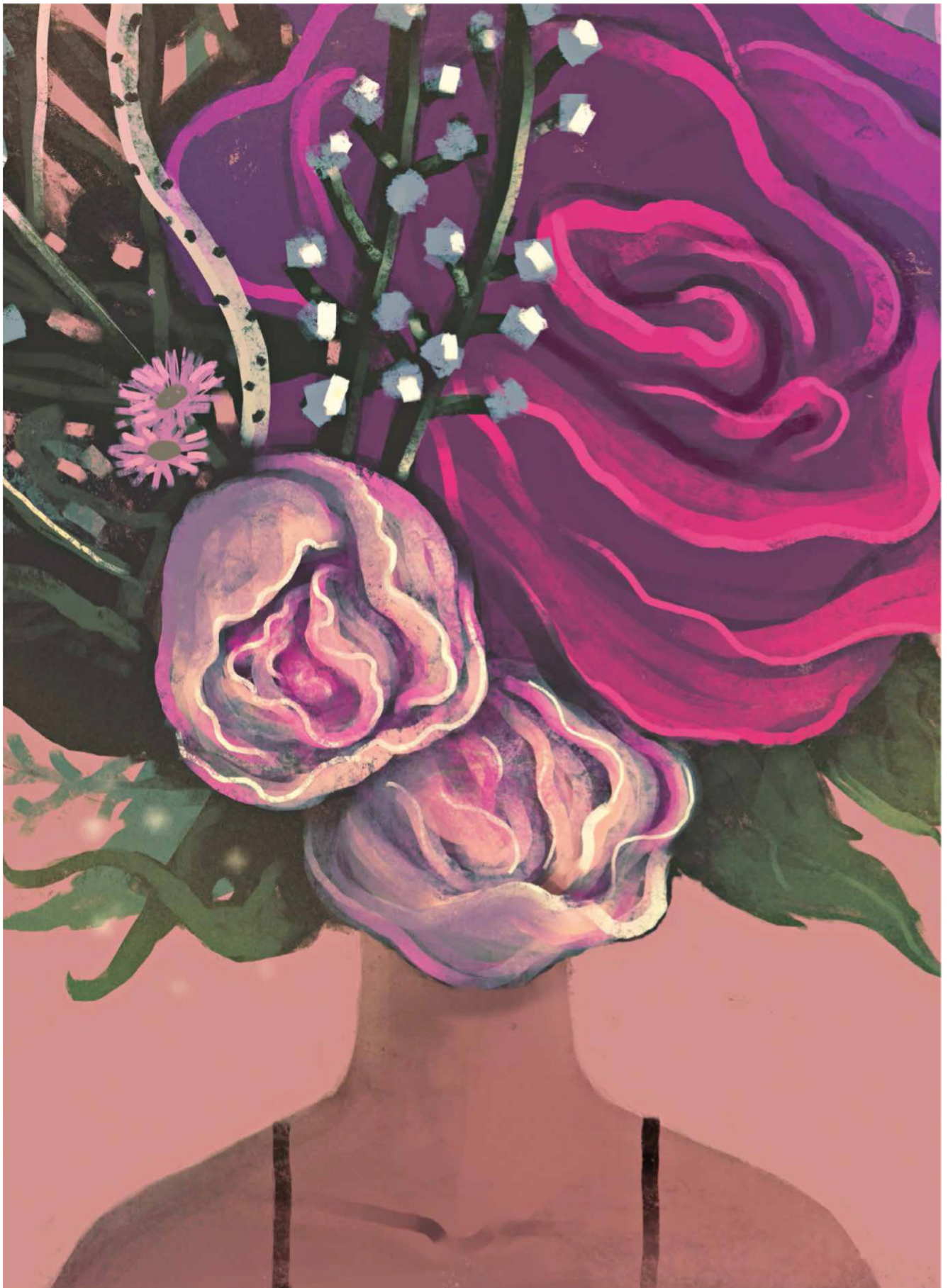


PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

her world

Navigating the threat of deepfakes

In the age of deepfakes and revenge porn, how can women protect themselves from harm? Kelley Wong, an associate at Singapore law firm Morgan Lewis Stamford, shares the steps we can take to safeguard our profiles.

I'm no Taylor Swift, so why would anyone create a deepfake pornographic video or photo of me?

That is what most of us regular women would think when confronted with the topic of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfake technology. It would be, like the title of Taylor's famous hit, something that could only happen in our wildest dreams. Yet there has been a growing number of reported cases where women, especially younger women, find themselves the subject of such explicit content.

In New Jersey, a 15-year-old girl discovered that there were nude images of herself created using an AI application, and distributed to others on social media. According to a lawsuit filed in February this year, the girl accepted an Instagram friend request from a male classmate, who then downloaded a fully clothed photo of the girl that he used to generate those images. The male classmate is believed to have used a programme called Clothesoff to create the nude images.

The truth is that you don't have to be a celebrity to be a victim. Anyone can be a target of pornographic deepfakes, but women are undeniably among the most vulnerable groups.

Revenge porn, for instance, is a form of digital abuse or online harm that is made easier for perpetrators by technological advancements. It is not easy for one to tell that the hyperrealistic sexually explicit images or videos are generated by AI, and the consequences of having such content distributed online may be irreparable.

Apart from posing risks to the victim's personal privacy, reputation, mental/emotional health, and safety, having such content on the Internet also perpetuates harmful stereotypes in society.

DEALING WITH DEEPFAKES

If you find yourself targeted by a deepfake, immediate action is crucial. Firstly, don't panic! Reach out to trusted family or friends for support. Document the fake content, and gather evidence by taking screenshots or recordings to report the incident. Most social media platforms have policies against non-consensual intimate imagery and impersonation, so reporting to the platforms and requesting for a takedown is essential.

You should also lodge a police report. Finally, seek advice from a lawyer or advocacy organisations specialising in online harassment and privacy rights. Shecares@SCWO is a local support centre for targets of online harms. You can reach out to them for counselling services and pro bono legal assistance.

On the legal remedies in Singapore, while laws and policies exist to address cybercrimes, including revenge porn and harassment, the enforcement of these laws in the context of deepfakes remains a challenge.

The Protection from Harassment Act 2014 (POHA) that criminalises cases of stalking and harassment may not always capture instances of deepfakes, given the specific requirements to prove an offence under the Act. One type of offence is based on the perpetrators having the "intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress", and this may be even more difficult to prove when the perpetrators are often anonymous.

Even outside of Singapore, in the New Jersey case, the police were apparently unable to charge anyone for the nude photos. The girl turned to specific US laws to seek relief. These includes laws that allow an individual to recover US\$150,000 (\$202,000) and litigation cost if nude pictures of that person

are disseminated without consent, as well as remedies for those victimised by child pornography, for invasion of privacy and intrusion on seclusion, negligent infliction of emotional distress, and endangering the welfare of children.

While Singapore does not have such specific legislation providing compensation for victims, the POHA contains an avenue for civil recourse. The victim of POHA offences may sue any individual or entity, and damages may be awarded in the victim's favour if the court is satisfied with the alleged contravention of the POHA.

If the victim simply wishes for the offensive deepfakes to stop circulation online, she could seek a stop publication order under the POHA. She would have to satisfy the court that the relevant "statement", which is defined in the Act to include an image (moving or otherwise), was published by the respondent, and is false. The latter may be a challenge and require expert evidence to show that the deepfakes were created by generative AI.

Be that as it may, going through any legal process is an expensive, time-consuming and intimidating process. It is common for victims to not want to spend the time and money going to court, and replaying a traumatising experience. Many victims may not even know the identity of the perpetrator for the purpose of initiating a lawsuit.

The reality is that the rapid evolution of deepfake technology is currently outpacing legislative responses in Singapore. As we await further updates to the law, I would start by taking the following steps to stay safe online:

- **Enable Privacy Settings:** Utilise privacy settings on social media platforms to limit who can view your content, tag you in posts and send you private messages. Regularly review and adjust these settings to maintain control over your online presence.
- **Secure Your Accounts:** Use strong, unique passwords for all your online accounts, and enable two-factor authentication wherever possible. Regularly update your passwords to prevent unauthorised access.
- **Control Your Digital Footprint:** Be mindful of the information you share online and who has access to them. Avoid posting sensitive or compromising content that could be manipulated into deepfakes.
- **Stay Vigilant:** Be wary of unsolicited messages or friend requests from unknown individuals. Always verify the authenticity of online interactions before sharing personal information or engaging with content.

As much as the era of generative AI is an exciting time, there are dangers that loom and lurk ahead. Until the law gets up to speed with the harms posed to women by generative AI, there is no doubt that we need to stand guard.

“The truth is that you don’t have to be a celebrity to be a victim. Anyone can be a target of pornographic deepfakes, but women are undeniably among the most vulnerable groups.”

**Planning to nab
that promotion?**
ACE THE CAREER
GAME WITH US.

PHOTOGRAPHY LAWRENCE TEO ART DIRECTION & STYLING ADELINE BENG

her world



Ready

Player

One

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ART DIRECTION
RAY TICSAY
STYLING
ASSISTANT
SAW YONE YONE
COORDINATION
CHERYL LAI-LIM
HAIR
MARC TENG,
USING GOLDWELL
PROFESSIONAL
MAKEUP
LASALLE LEE,
USING CHANEL
BEAUTY
MANICURE
REBECCA
CHUANG/
FLUTTERY TIPS

OPPOSITE
Crochet maxi
dress with
hoodie, COS.





her world

Twitch sensation Spicyuuu tells us how video game streaming changed her life – by making her more confident in her skin while getting to do what she loves for a living.

Spicyuuu once played Valorant for 30 hours in an attempt to end her losing streak. “I felt so ill the next day. I’ll never do that ever again,” she laughs.

The 20something-year-old describes herself as being “so bad” at the first-person shooter video game, and professes that she could never play at a competitive level. “You have to play on stage – that’s not something I can do. I’m not good at Valorant, but it [still] makes me feel I want to play it more,” she says.

While most of her peers are experiencing first-job woes, Spicyuuu has enviably turned her passion into an occupation. Valorant is the game that supported her rise to fame. She considers herself very fortunate for someone who essentially “just wanted to stay home and play video games”.

The Singapore-based Internet sensation has been streaming since 2021, amassing 379,000 followers and counting on Twitch, with over 1.6 million followers on Instagram liking reels of her self-described “grandpa” antics, and her “stay at home” selfies, which documents her homebody tendencies.

She typically broadcasts several times a week, averaging between four and five hours each session, and more frequently during tournament weeks to support the community with watch parties. Her longer streams can last up to 10 hours.

When Spicyuuu started streaming, she was self-conscious about how she spoke, avoided profanities, and tried to be “nicer, more subtle, and sound happier”. However, she quickly realised that being herself was the best option. Once she did, she saw a spike in growth, especially on Instagram in December 2022.

“After streaming for a while, I realised that my real self came out. When I lose, there’s no reason to put up a front – I just let loose. That made me grow as a person, and a gamer,” she says. “I started [seeing more] growth [in followers] when I started posting more videos focused on who I am and what my personality is like.”

On stream, she’s deadpan, goofy and unafraid to make fun of herself. Her Golden British Shorthair cat Gyoza also makes occasional cameos. She swears like a sailor when she’s mad or on a losing streak, and she’s irresistibly watchable to fellow gamers who chime in with jokes and supportive comments, and give subscription tips.

“I like to be sarcastic, [but] the weird thing is that I don’t understand what people are laughing at. I’ll say, ‘I think your sense of humour is broken,’” she says.

But in many ways, Spicyuuu is like many Gen Zs her age. After a stressful day, she lies in bed with her cat, and watches reality dating TV shows like *Single’s Inferno*. When she needs help with makeup, she turns to Youtube tutorials for tips, often with mixed results. She has a weakness for spicy fast food – it’s what inspired her online moniker, and her first-ever sponsorship from Burger King.

GAME ON

Spicyuuu first got into gaming from “being salty” that her older brother was given a Xbox gaming console, while her 12-year-old self didn’t receive her own game console. She didn’t want to miss out on the fun, so she took turns with her sibling to play Lionhead Studios’ *Fable*, an open-world role-playing game, which allows players to approach objectives freely.

OPPOSITE
Organza top
with fringe.
Prada. Faux fur
leg warmers,
Farah Sudiro.

During her teenage years, Capcom's Ace Attorney series deepened her gaming obsession. It follows the dramatic courtroom adventures of a group of defence attorneys, with the player often being the underdog in the theatrical legal battles.

"It made me want to be a lawyer, but when I started Googling [the occupation], it was so different [from the game]," she laughs.

After ending her short-lived legal ambitions, she studied 3-D art and animation in polytechnic, but found herself disenchanted and wanted a "normal" office job when she graduated, which was about three years ago. Around this time, she became acquainted with Valorant, a game her brother was playing. She started watching esports tournaments for Riot Games' multiplayer first-person shooter, which takes cues from the iconic tactical title Counter-Strike.

Players team up in two groups of five, playing through 25 rounds as attackers planting bombs on designated sites, or as defenders defusing the bombs and guarding their turf. Team players can also eliminate opponents with well-timed headshots, and use the characters' unique supernatural abilities as part of their game strategies.

The more Valorant matches that Spicyuuu watched, the more interested she became in streaming the game. Every match felt like a thrill ride; the tide of battle could easily change, even if there was only one player left trying their best to sneak up on the opposing team.

However, her debut stream on Twitch, uploaded on Feb 9, 2021, was uneventful. She was playing the indie role-playing title Undertale, but she got surprised by a stranger's "hello" message. It was an ordinary greeting, but she didn't know how to respond, and ended the session abruptly. It was her second attempt on the same day that marked the start of her streaming career. There were only five viewers, but the night owl enjoyed that hour-long session so much that she started streaming Valorant almost daily for three to four hours, often staying up till 5am.

During her first month, Spicyuuu used her existing headset and action camera, and gradually acquired a battery-powered ring light and other gadgets later, as her following grew. "I think a lot of people would say that streaming is expensive, that you have to spend a lot of money to get the best mic and webcam, but it's up to you if you want to upgrade or not," she says.

Spicyuuu credits her prudence to her parents. During her childhood years, her father's business went through a rough patch, and her mum worked two jobs to make ends meet. "I grew up living in my father's office, watching a lot of WWE wrestling matches. As a kid, I had fun and didn't understand what was happening; [I now realise] we were in a bad situation then, but my parents would give everything they could for us."

Her mum continues to be a big source of inspiration. "I hope to be as independent as her; I look up to her a lot," she shares.

Her family has some inkling of what she does for a living, and are supportive of her without prying for details. Spicyuuu prefers to keep mum about the specifics of her career to her family, as she doesn't want her loved ones to worry about the more stressful aspects of streaming and her online fame.

"My brother hinted that he has seen me on Facebook, but didn't ask [too much about it]. My mum thought I was a coach. I did mention that 'I play games as a job', but I don't go into the details. As long as I'm not doing something criminal and I'm happy, they will be supportive."

"After streaming for a while, I realised that my real self came out. When I lose, there's no reason to put up a front - I just let loose. That made me grow as a person, and a gamer."



Denim
cropped vest
with denim
wide-legged
jeans, Im
Yebin.

“As a kid, I had fun and didn’t understand what was happening; [I now realise] we were in a bad situation then, but my parents would give everything they could for us.”



her world

“Even if there are people who don’t enjoy what you do, you will find an audience who does like it and appreciates you for you.”

BLOOD, SWEAT AND PIXELS

It’s no secret that women streamers receive a disproportionately high amount of sexual harassment online. New viewers tend to comment on her appearance, and make sexual requests, such as “show more skin”, among other malicious messages. Spicyuuu ignores them and continues to wear her favourite oversized clothing.

She gets the worst of it on Instagram, where she tries to limit her usage to twice a week. “It came out of nowhere and was hard to handle. But really, it’s [from] random trolls on the Internet who are not part of the community,” she says. “I keep a lot of things to myself because I don’t want my problems to burden [my family]. I’ve ranted about it in my ‘Just Chatting’ [the initial conversational segment before the game begins], where 30 to 40 per cent of viewers are women – which is nice! Because there’s not a lot of women streaming [on Twitch],” she says.

She adds: “Even if there are people who don’t enjoy what you do, you will find an audience who does like it and appreciates you for you.”

Her confidence belies her past struggles. “I’ve been working on my self-confidence. I used to be a chubby kid and that mindset stuck with me. If you’re a public persona, you’re bound to get hate. Whether [the comments are] true or not, it’s not their face or body. If they don’t like it, that’s their problem.”

Even for someone who self-deprecatingly describes herself as “having no social skills”, Spicyuuu hopes to meet more viewers and streamers in person at future events and conventions. “Streaming helped build my confidence. Before that, I couldn’t talk to people,” she says.

Last year, she was blown away by the fan support she received in the Philippines when she visited gaming conventions in Manila. “The fan culture there was a crazy experience, and the highlight of my whole streaming career. It makes me appreciate [streaming] so much more, and I am so grateful.”

ELECTRIC DREAMS

Spicyuuu has since diversified into playing other titles, with continued support from her fans. These include horror adventure games such as *Village* and *Little Nightmares II*, and dating simulator *Love Is All Around*.

In a dream come true, Spicyuuu joined Singapore-based esports team Paper Rex as a creator a year ago. She doesn’t play competitively, but supports the team by broadcasting watch parties (streams where fellow fans can watch the tournament matches together) whenever a major competition is happening, such as the recent American season of the *Valorant Champions Tour (VCT)* in February. She also produces videos and photoshoots whenever new merchandise from the team is available.

She adds: “I love Paper Rex; they have a family vibe, and are an absolute joy to work with. When they reached out to me on X, I was playing and streaming a lot of *Valorant*, and I was already supporting them.”

Spicyuuu urges aspiring streamers to give Twitch a try, while cautioning that it won’t be a bed of roses. “If you want to go into streaming, money should never be the thing. You have to have the love to want to stream,” she says. “I think it also happens to every streamer that they always compare their journey to someone else’s journey. Someone else’s success will not determine if you succeed or fail. If [others] succeed, it has nothing to do with you; you should not beat yourself up about the situation.”

To Spicyuuu, streaming has given her everything: a job, a sense of purpose, a social life (online), while bolstering her self-confidence. “Streaming saved my life in a way; at this point, it’s the main thing I like to do,” she says.

“I had no interest in anything [before streaming]. I didn’t know what to do, or what job I should be looking for. I wanted to find a job just to earn money, even though I knew I wasn’t going to enjoy it. Then, I found streaming, and that just changed my whole life. I’m very lucky to be in this position where I can do something that I love,” she reveals.

“As long as I can pay for housing and my part of the bills, plus still have additional income to save, I’ll keep on streaming as long as it’s still fun for me!”

HER STYLE

High Society

Cinch up: High-waisted trousers reclaim their place in the fashion sphere.

To know the key wardrobe pieces for this season, look no further than Loewe, where creative director Jonathan Anderson made a statement with the main trouser silhouette for Spring/Summer 2024, featuring styles that were exaggeratedly high-waisted.

At Alaïa, high-waisted trousers took on a sculptural shape, yet looked relaxed and sophisticated. The safari theme reigned supreme at Saint Laurent: Cargo trousers were given a polished look with a belted and slim silhouette.

This approach is evident with other major fashion houses like Dior and Chanel as well. With Dior, high-waisted trousers were tailored in luxurious fabrics such as silk and linen, while Chanel's Virginie Viard updated the house's classic aesthetic with high-waisted trousers that recalled Gabrielle Chanel's penchant for 1930s sailor pants.

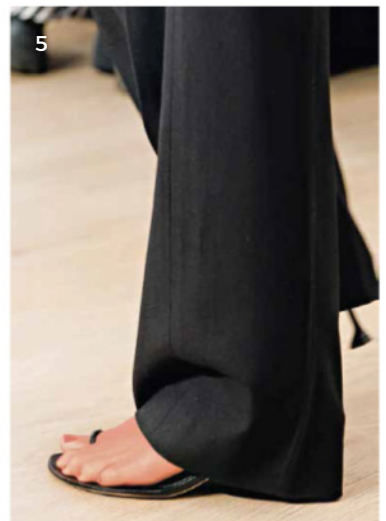
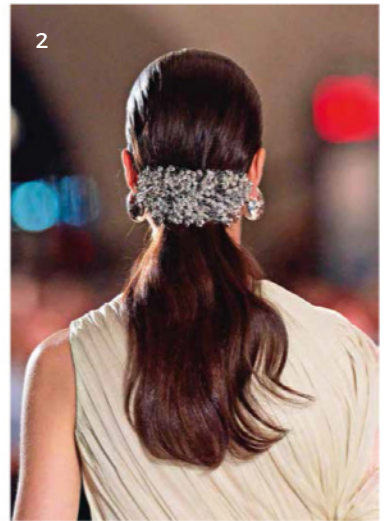
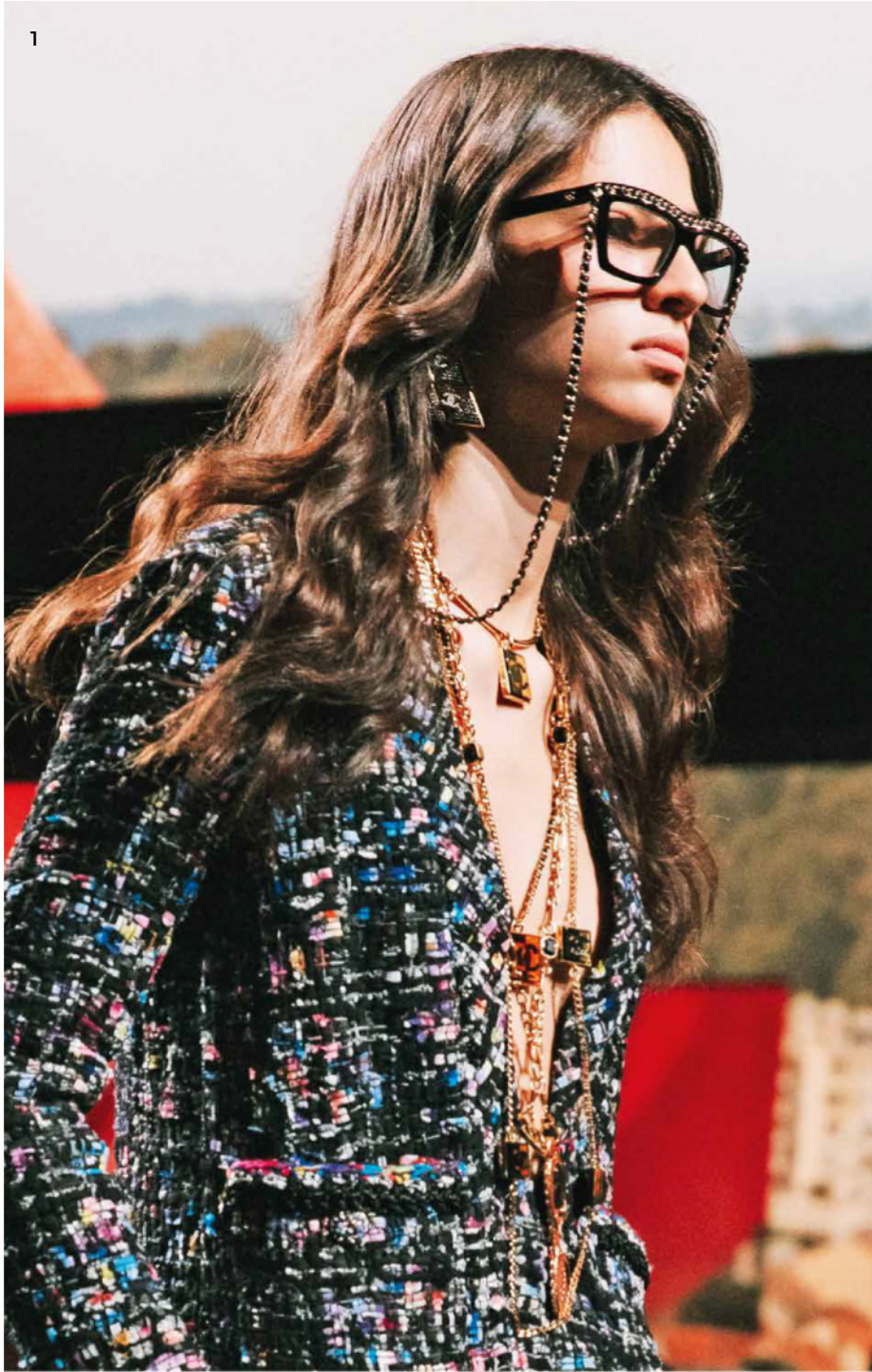
The enduring appeal of high-waisted trousers pervades fashion history, evolving in response to shifting cultural and aesthetic influences, and reflecting changing attitudes towards style, gender and identity. It first gained popularity during the 1920s, an era marked by the rise of female emancipation, as women embraced a more liberated and casual approach to dressing.

They then experienced another feminist revival in the 1980s. This time, it was associated with power dressing – exaggerated tailoring, pleats, boulder shoulders, and block heels were the style du jour. The excess eventually faded off into the minimalist 1990s.

Whether retro-inspired or sleekly modernist, high-waisted trousers remain a wardrobe essential today. They are flattering on almost any shape or size by lengthening the silhouette (high heels are a must!), creating a more balanced proportion and endowing one with a “snatched” waist.



TEXT DANIEL GOH PHOTO LOEWE



Add to cart

The Spring/Summer 2024 accessories edit of the most stylish buys to add to your wish list.

By Lena Kamarudin

1. Acetate sunglasses with chain, \$2,360, Chanel

When two of fashion's biggest luxury powerhouses – Chanel and Miu Miu – opened their shows with a pair of optical frames, I knew this was the time to fully embrace my spectacles and give my contact lens a well-deserved break. Both brands got me thinking about how glasses can be stylish: Miuccia Prada showed her elevated athletic looks with half-rim glasses at Miu Miu, while Chanel took on a trendier Fashion Week-approved route with its iconic chain sling as a design element on a pair of black oversized optical frames.

2. Embellished hair clip, Tory Burch

The girlie girls fond of ribbons and bows have grown up, preferring something more glamorous this Spring season. Tory Burch encapsulates this look best, as models strutted down the runway with a sleek ponytail or slicked-back hair, adorned with show-stopping embellished hair accessories.

3. Calfskin sandals with Kelly buckle, \$2,550, Hermes

The idea of dressing down takes an interesting route this season, with sandals/flip flops leading the conversation. At Hermes, Nadege Vanhee paired all 65 looks on the runway with woven calfskin Greek-style sandals, complementing it with luxurious fabrics like leather summery dresses and lambskin pencil skirts. Virginie Viard made a case for it with models in tweed jumpsuits and skirt suits wearing Chanel logo flip-flops, while cord-styled leather sandals made numerous appearances at Miu Miu.

4. Keyhole brass and shearling cuff, \$3,060, Schiaparelli

It's been in the back seat for a while, but it looks like the statement cuff is slowly trickling back into our wardrobes this Spring. I love how the cuff was paired with a striped shirt at Dries van Noten, and worn over leather gloves at Fendi and Saint Laurent. But don't stop at just one cuff – take a cue from Carolina Herrera and stack 'em up.

5. Sheer red socks, Proenza Schouler

We've scrolled through it numerous times on Instagram and Tiktok, but it seems that red socks are also making their mark on the runways and on celebrities – Kylie Jenner and Dakota Johnson, we see you! On the Spring/Summer 2024 runways, Tibi showed how a pair of cute red socks and ballerina flats added pizzazz to a monochromatic outfit. But it was the unexpected styling at Proenza Schouler – a trouser suit paired with sheer red socks – that totally blew our socks off!

SO YOU WANNA

STYLING
KELLY HSU
HAIR & MAKEUP
(KELLY, LEFT)
GREGO,
USING KEUNE
HAIRCOSMETICS &
BOBBI BROWN
HAIR & MAKEUP
(TARA, RIGHT)
MARC TENG
USING ORIBE &
CHANEL BEAUTY



BE A **STYLIST**

Three fashion stylists reveal what their jobs really entail (it's more than just fashion shoots), sharing industry insights and offering a glimpse into their work with notable clients.

Text Lena Kamarudin Photography Reuben Foong

KELLY HSU

28, FASHION STYLIST

@killyhsu

Born in Taiwan and raised in Singapore, Kelly Hsu started her decade-long career as a freelance fashion stylist while she was studying for her diploma at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). She later pursued her BA in Fashion Media at Lasalle College of the Arts. Her expertise and focus was styling for commercial jobs, which was a different route to embark on, as stylists typically start as styling assistants.

Kelly considers herself fortunate to have crossed paths with influential individuals who have played a significant role in shaping her career trajectory. Eugene Siow, a commercial photographer she met when she was still in NAFA, offered Kelly her very first freelance styling opportunity.

Then, at Lasalle College of the Arts, her lecturer, veteran stylist Furqan Saini, helped open many doors for her as she worked alongside him on creative and commercial projects at his agency Major Minor.

“My first job in 2016 was for a Spotify campaign – I had not assisted a stylist before, nor did I have any related experience before the assignment. I went with my instincts, and thankfully did not make any amateur mistakes,” says Kelly.

Years later, Kelly started assisting fashion stylist Joshua Cheung, whom she now considers her mentor. “Joshua gave me the chance to explore doing fashion editorials for magazines. That was something I had never done before, and it was very different from styling commercial projects. I finally had a chance to explore my creative finesse in a completely new and refreshing way.”

What is a typical day in the life of a stylist?

For commercial styling projects, I’m involved in planning the visual direction by creating mood boards and selecting wardrobe looks. A significant portion of my time will be spent sourcing clothes for the campaign.

For personal styling, I would usually meet up with the client first to get to know their interests better. For special events like balls, I would have detailed conversations with clients to understand their preferences.

Then, I would reach out to brands and their sales assistants to check for any special items, and curate a selection of looks for my clients. We would then review and discuss the curated looks before going through multiple rounds of fittings for gowns, and shopping for shoes and accessories if needed.

Who in the styling scene inspires you?

On the international scene, celebrity stylists Hathairat Nan Nist Permpoon, Mimi Cuttrell, Maeve Reilly and Dani Michelle, art director Yii Ooi, as well as stylist and deputy creative director of Fenty, Jahleel Weaver. Back home, I look up to senior stylists who have turned into friends and acquaintances: Furqan Saini, Joshua Cheung, Neo Lirong, Tok Wei Lun, and Evon Chng.

KELLY’S STYLE TIP

“Curate your wardrobe and play with the pieces, but don’t overspend! And always make sure you feel good in an outfit.”

What do you love most about being a stylist?

The ability to dress people exactly how I envision it. It’s great when I have complete trust from my clients, as they are open to all the ideas and proposals I put forward.

Is it tough to be a stylist in Singapore?

It is not tough as long as I do my best, take opportunities when they come, and stay open-minded.

When a client gets in touch with you, what are the steps involved for a personal styling service?

I touch base on the brief first, checking what this engagement is for, and agreeing on the rate. Then I curate, and start sourcing to get the looks. We go for fittings, and it’s a back-and-forth situation until we both agree on what we like.

The client: TARA TANN

Kelly’s budding relationship with entrepreneur Tara Tann is off to a great start, with Kelly styling Tara for everything from a high society ball to everyday outfits.

How did you meet?

TARA TANN (TT): We met through a recommendation from the team at Bottega Veneta Singapore.

How did your relationship evolve?

TT: Kelly styled me for the Tatler Ball 2023, and after that we started shopping together for my personal trips, and that evolved into her doing personal styling for me.

KELLY HSU (KH): Tara and I have a strong connection because of her warm-hearted nature. It’s worth mentioning that Tara and I share similar love languages, which makes our collaboration even more enjoyable and fulfilling. She consistently shows her appreciation for my work, and treats her team with kindness and respect. There is also a very strong sense of trust between us.

If something doesn’t work, is honesty really the best policy?

TT: We both respect each other, and it’s always a win-win situation. At the end of the day, it’s about hitting briefs in terms of looks and event themes. And having lots of fun together while doing it!

KH: We both value straightforward communication. If Tara isn’t keen on certain looks, she communicates that directly, allowing us to pivot and explore other options. Similarly, I also provide honest feedback when I feel something isn’t flattering on her, or doesn’t align with the desired vibe.

How would you describe Tara’s style now?

KH: She’s more adventurous and open to ideas she’s never tried before, and it’s really exciting to see her evolve in her style journey.

JOSHUA CHEUNG

38, FASHION & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

@joshuacheung

Joshua's foray into the fashion industry began in 2003 when the 17-year-old was a first year in Mass Communications at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. He reached out to Daniel Goh, fashion editor of the now-defunct *Style* magazine, to express his admiration for the latter's work.

"I found out that my peer in school had an internship at *Harper's Bazaar Singapore*, so I thought I'd reach out to Daniel because *Style* was my favourite magazine at that time. I was lucky, because despite having no experience working in a magazine, he got me to assist him on a cover shoot," he shares.

Afterwards, Joshua started his four-year internship with the publication. He felt he was given that opportunity because he had the grit to learn. "I've been fortunate to be surrounded by visionaries and mentors from a young age, including fashion photographers Chuando Tan and Frey Ow, who helped shape my career," says Joshua.

While he had many serendipitous encounters that eventually led him to his career as a stylist, it was hard work that ultimately contributed to his success in the industry. Becoming a part of Untold by Atlas, the awarded retainer creative agency responsible for all of Ion Orchard's key visual assets in 2010, following a successful pitch against four other agencies, marked a significant turning point in his career.

"Over the past 14 years, I've contributed to shaping their campaigns as a fashion stylist. Now, I am thrilled to step into a more substantial role as the creative mastermind behind them.

"Chuando once told me to always remain humble, no matter how successful one has become. This advice has stuck with me and helped me stay grounded till today," he says.

What is a typical day in the life of a stylist?

No glitz, no glamour. Lots of sweat, and hard, laborious work.

Who in the styling scene inspires you?

I admire the work of French fashion editor Carine Roitfeld, British fashion stylist Karl Templer, and Ghanian-British editor and stylist Edward Enninful.

What do you find both challenging and rewarding?

Finding the balance between aesthetics, comfort, and the client's needs and requirements can be challenging. However, I love the experience from the creative process to the end product, whether it's a happy client or a memorable image.

When a client gets in touch with you, what are the steps involved for a personal styling service?

I'd request an in-person casual meet-up to establish chemistry, which is crucial for a successful working relationship. Over the years, I've helped many notable individuals across various industries with their personal style, often forging lasting friendships.

The client: DR GEORGIA LEE

Joshua on working with the doctor, and how their client-stylist relationship has evolved through the years.

How did you meet?

DR GEORGIA LEE (GL): I first met Joshua when I was doing an interview with a writer from *Style* magazine, where he was interning at the time.

JOSHUA CHEUNG (JC): We met 20 years ago, but it was about two years later that Dr Lee was looking for a stylist with a fresh perspective, and reached out to my fashion editor Daniel Goh, who recommended me. I vividly remember her texting me to style her for a jewellery event, and that felt surreal. I was super nervous because I admired her sense of style.

How did your relationship evolve?

GL: At first, I noticed his acne-prone skin and wanted to help him. So in addition to our styling relationship, which happened organically later, I had a pre-existing client-patient relationship, which started from helping him treat his skin condition.

JC: Back in 2007, I had pretty bad acne. Dr Lee was so kind and insisted I see her once a month at a minimal cost. This began when I started styling her and so, I am no stranger to her kindness. Since then, she has been a constant presence in my career and life, always expressing gratitude for my work, even though I feel, she takes care of me more. To me, she's more than a client, she's almost like family.

If something doesn't work, is honesty really the best policy?

JC: Definitely! That said, it's important to approach it thoughtfully, and time when to be honest. There's an unspoken understanding between the two of us, which I think is special.

What's the next step in Dr Lee's style evolution?

GL: I am always game to try something new. I trust Joshua's vision completely, and we both look out for current and cool fashion brands. I love that we get to create many memorable moments together, whenever we have the chance.

JC: Dr Lee already possesses a unique sense of style: She has a personal archive of influential designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Issey Miyake, and Etro. When we began working together, my goal was to elevate her style by introducing current designers, creating a look that's different – a standout wherever she goes. Over time, Dr Lee has evolved into a discerning woman, making wiser fashion choices that reflect her personality, personal growth and maturity.



JOSHUA'S STYLE TIP

“Invest in timeless pieces, adorn yourself with chic attire, and let fashion be your armour, empowering you at every step.”

STYLING
JOSHUA CHEUNG
HAIR & MAKEUP
RICK YANG/
ARTISTRY
STUDIOS, USING
ANTI COLLECTIVE
& DIOR

DARYLL ALEXIUS YEO
30, FASHION & COMMERCIAL STYLIST
@daryllalexius



STYLING
DARYLL
ALEXIUS YEO
HAIR
MARC TENG,
USING GOLDWELL
PROFESSIONAL
MAKEUP
GREGO, USING
BOBBI BROWN

DARYLL'S STYLE TIP

“Embrace what makes you unique and incorporate it into your personal style. Invest in a vintage handbag - whether it’s the iconic Louis Vuitton Speedy or the timeless Hermes Kelly, each vintage piece tells a story, weaving in conversations about craftsmanship, heritage, and individuality.”

Growing up, Daryll always loved collecting fashion publications as he was drawn to the beautiful visuals and narrative in the pages. He wasn't sure, however, that what he loved could actually become a career for him.

"I wasn't aware that fashion styling was a real job," he confessed. "Little did I know, this intuitive journey would lead me to explore the world of fashion styling."

He enrolled at Lasalle College of the Arts to do a Bachelor's degree in Fashion Communication (now known as Fashion Media Industries). At that time, he decided to try his luck as an intern for a local fashion publication. "I e-mailed them and later got a call back from fashion editor Sharon Tulasidas, eventually scoring an internship with the magazine."

Today, Daryll has been living his passion for fashion as a stylist for 15 years. He has had many career highs, including meeting his favourite designer Dries van Noten at the Fall/Winter 2024 men's show earlier this year, and being nominated "Stylist of the Year" by the Textile and Fashion Federation Singapore (now called Singapore Fashion Council) in 2017.

However, he's candid about the difficult times as well, which happened during Covid. "It was definitely the lowest point in my career," he shares. "The very nature of my job requires human touch and interaction. As a freelancer, it was tough during that period because jobs either came to a standstill, or were eventually cancelled. I would say the uncertainty really made me contemplate what I was doing at that point my life."

Thankfully, that time has passed, and Daryll is now busier than ever. On top of his styling projects, he recently launched his own merchandise label Daywear, which offers tinted eyewear (for now). He's already in the design process for a new accessories/object drop.

In any line of work, people will always be quick to criticise and have a million opinions about the work you put out, and it can get demoralising at times. Being self-assured and confident is pivotal. Daryll says: "It was important for me to cultivate a strong sense of confidence – to always trust my own instincts at the end of the day."

What is a typical day in the life of a stylist?

It's very dependent on the specific projects I'm working on. A day might start with client meetings or fittings in the morning, followed by sourcing clothing and accessories through shopping trips to boutiques or showrooms from midday to evening. Alternatively, the entire day could be spent on set for shoots, whether it's for magazine fashion editorials, brand lookbooks, or individual clients.

Who in the styling scene inspires you?

London-based stylist Robbie Spencer, Paris-based stylist and *Vogue Hommes* fashion editor Giovanni Dario Laudicina, and fashion editor and stylist Benjamin Bruno. I'm drawn to their innovative and beautiful approaches to styling, and their ability to challenge conventional fashion norms.

What do you love most about being a stylist?

It's not just about dressing bodies; it's about crafting compelling visual narratives.

Do you prefer styling fashion editorials or real clients?

I find fulfilment in both. Fashion editorials allow me to fully explore my creativity, pushing boundaries, and experimenting with and executing bold concepts. Styling for clients offers a deeply personal and rewarding experience. Personally, it's always been very satisfactory to help clients discover their own sense of style and confidence just by witnessing the transformative power of fashion.

What are some challenges working with clients?

It often revolves around understanding and interpreting their personal style preferences, and navigating budget constraints while still achieving the desired style and quality. It's also about balancing client preferences with my creative vision for them.

Is it tough to be a stylist in Singapore?

Absolutely. It is challenging due to the exclusivity and relatively small scale. Fashion is a niche industry in Singapore, and being a small country, we have a limited pool of fashion personalities and clients. However, it's also a realm of potential for those who possess the resilience to persist, and assert their unique point of view.

The client: GABRIELLA CHONG

Daryll and entrepreneur Gabriella Chong met through a mutual friend at an event and instantly clicked, and their friendship has since evolved into a professional styling relationship.

How did you meet?

GABRIELLA CHONG (GC): We met at an event in 2022. Introductions were made, and after 15 minutes of small talk, we realised we vibed.

How did your relationship evolve?

GC: We grabbed lunch a couple of weeks after the event, and three hours just flew by. Like all relationships, we make the effort to connect and meet up whenever our schedules align. Nothing beats some face-to-face time!

DARYLL ALEXIUS YEO (DAY): We discovered our shared passion for fashion, art, design, and music. This burgeoning friendship led to collaborations on various styling and creative projects.

If something doesn't work, is honesty really the best policy?

GC: As our friendship strengthens, and as we accept that we are sincere towards each other, the level of honesty (or in my case, bluntness) increases. People are cautious about saying what they really think, especially in the fashion and social circles. So when you find someone who you can be yourself with, keep them close.

How would you describe your style now?

GC: I think I'm more adventurous now. Daryll has such a unique take on fashion and styling, and it is exciting for me to adopt his perspectives.

DAY: From the get-go, she demonstrated a willingness to explore beyond her comfort zone. I think what sets her apart is her unwavering confidence in my creative vision, fuelling my drive to deliver nothing but the best as her stylist.

BUY NOW



**WEAR
FOREVER**

In the name of mileage and cost-per-wear, we've rounded up 48 key bags this Spring/Summer 2024 that will work effortlessly with your everyday wardrobe.

Text Lena Kamarudin



2



3



4



5



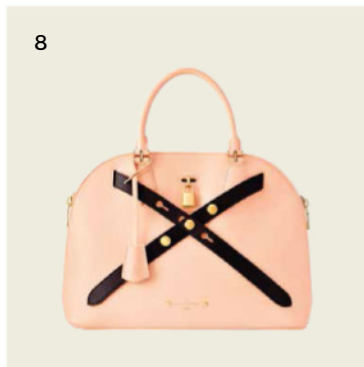
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HOLD ME TIGHT

What are some of the most desirable bags this season? Anything that can be tucked under your arm, whether it's a roomy everyday bag (preferably an overstuffed Miu Miu), a sleek or oversized clutch, or even a slouchy tote. Take your cue from Tod's and Dries Van Noten on how to make an accessory feel like the star of the show, best styled with sharp tailoring, leather jackets and casual denims.



7



8



9



10

1 Ferragamo Spring/Summer 2024

2 Fendi Spring/Summer 2024

3 Large pillow pouch, \$1,090, Saint Laurent at Mytheresa.com

4 Prada Buckle medium leather handbag, \$7,000, Prada

5 East-West calfskin tote, \$2,300, Ferragamo

6 Adventure nappa leather bag \$5,700, Miu Miu

7 Abby Small suede shoulder bag, \$ 2,205, The Row at Mytheresa.com

8 Alma 103 calfskin tote, \$13,300, Louis Vuitton

9 Intrecciato leather clutch, \$5,850, Bottega Veneta

10 Victoria Beckham Spring/Summer 2024

PRACTICAL MAGIC

Pockets and compartments are aplenty on the handbags at Fendi, Ferragamo and Max Mara. What makes these utilitarian-styled bags unique are statement-making details, like the pretty ribbon pockets at Acne or the striking colours on the multi-pocketed Fendi Baguette.



1 Nubuck Cargo bag, \$1,610.02, Blumarine at Fwrd.com

2 Medium Gear bag, \$3,322, Lemaire at Farfetch.com

3 Fendi Spring/Summer 2024

4 Mini Pocket bag, \$2,650, Burberry

5 Acne Spring/Summer 2024

6 Arcon Barenia Faubourg calfskin bag, Hermes

7 Superbusy XS sling bag, \$2,750, Balenciaga

8 Medium zip-pocket tote, \$384, Sacai at Farfetch.com

9 Pocket leather nappa bag, \$5,600, Miu Miu



“For me, the most enduring pieces are those that blend style and pragmatism. The Colby achieves this balance, being both utilitarian and luxurious simultaneously - all the elements I seek in a timeless design.” - MICHAEL KORS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

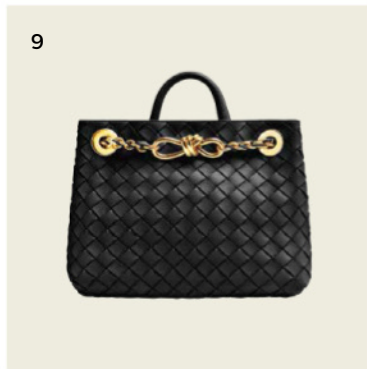
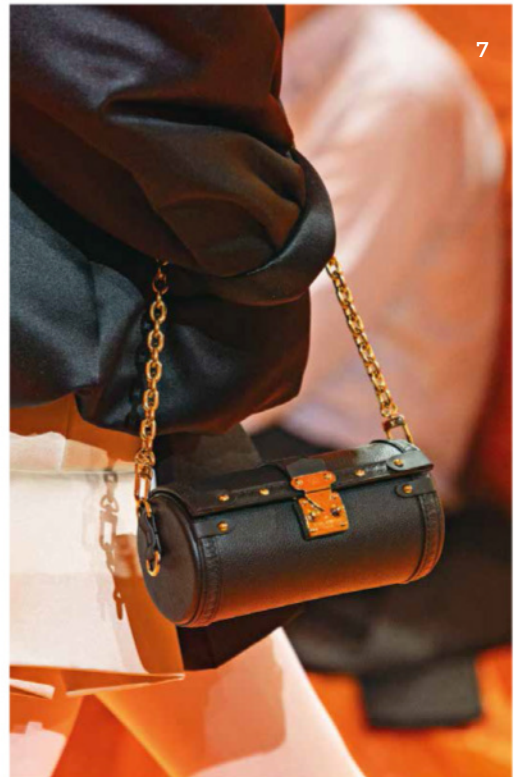
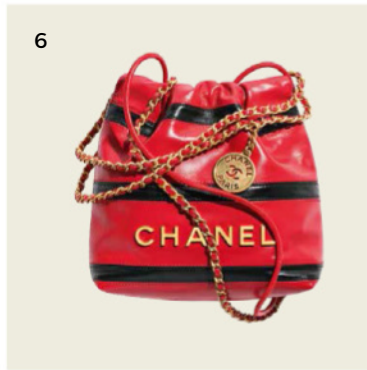
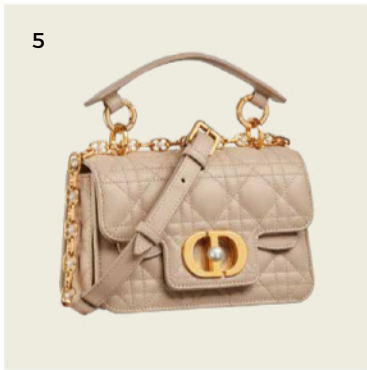


**COLBY LEATHER
SHOULDER BAG,
\$670**

The new Michael Kors Colby handbag is an everyday, chic, and versatile accessory with pragmatic details. We adore the dual front pockets, providing easy access to small yet essential items like car keys or lip balm, as well as the statement buckle closure, adding a touch of utilitarian edge. “For me, the most enduring pieces are those that blend style and pragmatism. The Colby achieves this balance, being both utilitarian and luxurious simultaneously - all the elements I seek in a timeless design,” says creative director Michael Kors.



- 1 Valentino Spring/Summer 2024
- 2 Medium Squeeze nappa lambskin bag, \$4,888, Loewe
- 3 Boucle Sellier Chaîne box calfskin clutch, Hermes
- 4 GO-14 MM Malletage lambskin handbag, \$9,750, Louis Vuitton
- 5 Medium Dior Caro calfskin bag, Dior
- 6 Chanel 22 mini handbag, Chanel
- 7 Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer 2024
- 8 Gucci Notte mini shoulder bag, \$5,050, Gucci
- 9 Small Andiamo bag with chain, \$6,600, Bottega Veneta

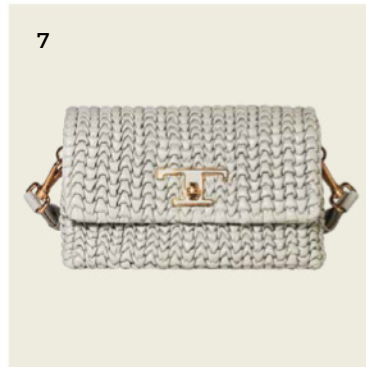
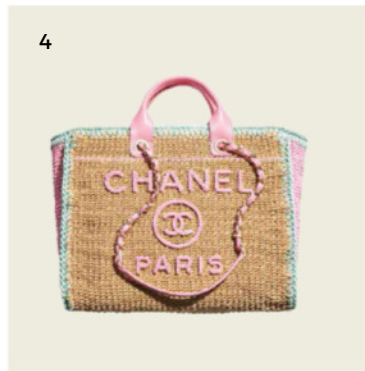


BAG OF TRINKETS

Whether it's a charm, chain, or both, as seen on the Chanel 22 handbag, it appears that designers are considering handbags as an extension of the jewellery category. A prime example is Loewe's Squeeze bag, which returned for another season in new colours, and now features the addition of a gold chain dangling from the handle. Also, metallic hardware in the form of thick chain slings was a prominent feature at Givenchy and Louis Vuitton.

WOVEN WONDERS

Designers continue to push boundaries with woven styles that are far more polished than your regular beach bag. The unexpected renditions at Maison Margiela and Sacai definitely set the bar high in this department – Margiela’s creative director John Galliano wrapped his leather-trimmed woven basket in tulle, while Chitose Abe of Sacai turned the rattan basket inspiration into a bracelet pouch.



1 Sacai Spring/
Summer 2024

2 Le Panier Plage
S basket, \$415,
Longchamp

3 Tee Time Wicker
3D Windmill bag,
\$860, Kate Spade

4 Woven basket
with chain sling,
Chanel

5 Mini Diamond
round calfskin
basket bag,
\$6,055.82, Loewe

6 Panier panama
and Swift calfskin
bag, Hermes

7 T Timeless
leather flap bag,
\$5,990, Tod's

8 Bottega Veneta
Spring/Summer
2024

9 Cordage rope
and Clemence
bullcalf bag,
Hermes

“Spring is a tribute to the way today’s generation is writing their own story through fashion.”

- STUART VEVERS, COACH CREATIVE DIRECTOR



**QUILTED LEATHER
TABBY HANDBAG,
\$1,200**

Touted as one of the New York brand’s signature bags, the Tabby Shoulder Bag 26 is a modern take on the archival 1970s Coach design. Stuart Vever, the brand’s creative director says: “Spring is a tribute to the way today’s generation is writing their own story through fashion.”

This easy-to-wear and affordably priced handbag is a worthy investment – wear it as a cross-body or double up the chain sling for a shorter, dressier look. The bag also comes in a floral print and denim version.



- 1 Fendi Spring/Summer 2024
- 2 Cucci Jackie Small embellished shoulder bag, Gucci
- 3 Shoulder bag with head clasp, Prada
- 4 Alma epi leather backpack, \$3,900, Louis Vuitton
- 5 Viv' Choc Paillettes mini handbag, \$6,850, Roger Vivier
- 6 Small Horn Bag \$3,350, Burberry
- 7 Embellished multi-coloured shoulder bag, Chanel
- 8 Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer 2024
- 9 Baguette Mini calfskin handbag, \$3,290, Fendi

JUST FOR FUN

While quiet luxury may suffice for clothing, when it comes to your bags, adding a dash of drama with novelty designs can elevate your style. It's all about the details, such as Prada's teeny-tiny man's head serving as a bag clasp or Schiapparelli's sculpted torso tote. Another trend this season is the incorporation of bright rainbow colours along with metallics in silver and gold, adding a playful and eye-catching touch to your accessories collection.



How do I wear sheer bottoms modestly?

Lena Kamarudin answers.

An oversized blazer will do the trick

The extra large fit of the blazer or jacket will add a more masculine appeal to the femininity and sexiness of a sheer skirt. Make sure the length is long enough, so it'll discreetly cover your rear end. A belted blazer (because it needs to be buttoned and belted up), as opposed to a classic blazer, is also a more conservative and flattering choice.

Tuck an extra long shirt in

Take advantage of the statement sheer skirt by tucking your button-down shirt inside, so you can see the hem. The overall effect may be slightly subversive, but it still looks incredibly polished.

Consider trousers over skirts

Perhaps because trousers are typically a men's wardrobe staple, a pair of sheer trousers might be easier to style in a modest fashion. You can choose to wear a pair of boy shorts, tights or stockings underneath.

Double your bottoms

Try layering your sheer skirts with a miniskirt for an interesting take on this trend. It also gives your miniskirts more mileage, and creates a totally different look at the same time.

1 Carven Spring/
Summer 2024

2 Showbit

3 Showbit

4 Showbit

Do you have a fashion dilemma? Send your questions to fashion editor Lena Kamarudin (lenak@sph.com.sg) who will solve your style conundrums with practical tips and advice.



The La D de Dior Etoile des Vents timepiece is a masterpiece in elegance

A Starry Revival

Own a storied piece of Dior's heritage with the new La D de Dior, which incorporates iconic symbols from the Maison's 78-year history.

Breathing new life into its iconic Rose de Vents motif, Dior has unveiled its latest iteration: La D de Dior Etoile des Vents. The new La D de Dior timepiece features eight-pointed pink gold stars adorned with diamonds, serving as a symbolic tribute to the late Christian Dior, the house's eponymous founder.

The Etoile des Vents (wind star) is based on the "rhumb," a term denoting a quarter-wind on a compass rose, a symbol found on a compass, map, nautical chart, or monument that indicates the orientation of the cardinal directions and their intermediate points. The French fashion designer first encountered it growing up in Granville, Normandy – it was perhaps a calling written in the coastal winds, as he later chanced upon a similar metal star in 1946, on the very day his luxury fashion house was created. Since that day, he considered the trinket his lucky charm.

THE NEW CLASSIC

Today, Dior's creative director for jewellery and watches Victoire de Castellane has drawn inspiration from the brand's heritage to reimagine the latest version of the La D de Dior, the first timepiece she designed after assuming the role in 1998.

The outcome is an elegant design characterised by a minimalist approach, adorned with only two hands sans indices and date displays. Last year, the collection marked its 20th anniversary with a design refresh, showcasing the iconic Cannage graphic pattern synonymous with the Lady Dior bag.

Launched this month, the 38mm pink gold La D de Dior Etoile des Vents timepiece exudes a sense of timeless elegance, reflecting Dior's commitment to crafting pieces that transcend fleeting trends. The bezel, adorned with 64 round-cut diamonds and anti-reflective sapphire crystal glass, encapsulates a visual symphony.

The pink gold crown, embellished with 10 diamonds, complements the malachite dial adorned with pink gold stars and 48 diamonds. Polished Dauphine hands and a black satin strap with a pink gold pin buckle set with 26 diamonds add to this horological masterpiece. Fuelled by quartz movement, it offers essential hours and minutes functions, with water resistance of up to 30m in depth.

In essence, this Swiss-made horological masterpiece stands as a beacon of perpetual style, embodying Dior's legacy of timeless elegance and impeccable craftsmanship. It transcends mere functionality to become a symbol of enduring allure, captivating watch aficionados and fashion enthusiasts worldwide.

The La D de Dior Etoile des Vents is available at all Dior boutiques. In collaboration with Dior.



PHOTOGRAPHY LAWRENCE TEO ART DIRECTION & STYLING ADELINE ENG

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1 Master Ultra Thin Tourbillon Enamel pink gold watch on alligator strap, price unavailable, Jaeger-LeCoultre

2 Chiffre Rouge steel watch with black DLC coating, price unavailable, Dior

3 Defy Skyline Tourbillon steel watch, \$82,100, Zenith

4 Conquest Heritage Central Power Reserve steel watch on alligator strap, price unavailable, Longines

When should I reach for a mechanical watch instead of a quartz one?

Karishma Tulsidas answers.

THE QUARTZ VS MECHANICAL DEBATE

You might remember the Swatch and Flik Flak watches we grew up with, which needed a battery replacement every few years. These are quartz watches, which essentially rely on a battery for their source of energy.

However, this was not always the case: Until the 1960s, watches were powered by kinetic energy, and were made of different components that worked in harmony to keep them ticking. And because of their kinetic source of energy, they ran out of power after a period of time.

The advent of quartz technology proved to be a game changer, as it meant that watches could be industrially produced, bringing down costs, while improving accuracy.

A mechanical watch should be redundant in the age of smart and quartz watches, but they're still highly sought after.

While quartz and smart watches dominate the market for their affordability and accessibility, mechanical watches are highly prized by collectors, as evinced by the months-long waiting lists at the likes of Rolex, Audemars Piguet and Patek Philippe, and their record-breaking prices.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAND-AND SELF-WOUND

Mechanical watches can either be hand-wound or self-wound – the former means that the user will have to wind the crown when the power runs out. Self-wound (also known as automatic) means that the watch derives its source of energy from the movement of our wrist – so as long as you keep wearing it, you don't have to wind it.

WHY CHOOSE A MECHANICAL WATCH OVER A QUARTZ ONE?

Think of the pleasure of flipping through a magazine or a coffee table book, savouring the rustle of the page, and losing yourself in the nuances of a photograph.

Similarly, a mechanical watch is an ode to nostalgia and human ingenuity. They're anachronistic pleasures in the age of speedy tech. For collectors, the act of winding a watch on a daily basis is almost religious, a mindful act that forces us to appreciate the now.

Moreover, it's also a testament to feats of engineering: Over the years, watchmakers have pushed the boundaries of innovation to improve accuracy and design features that can indicate leap years, and even the astronomical position of the stars.

WHY ARE WATCH COMPLICATIONS SO SOUGHT AFTER?

Mechanical watches can do more than just tell the time. Some can chime the time on command or record the duration of your diving trip, while others can bring the celestial skies to our wrists, indicating lunar cycles and even the position of the tides.

These are called watch complications, and were built by watchmakers to address our needs before the advent of smart technology. Some complications – like the tourbillon – were created to improve the accuracy of time to account for gravity's pull on pocket watches. Others, like astronomical complications or chronographs, were designed to meet the demands of various professions, from aviation specialists to sportsmen.

Complications jack up the price of a watch. For watchmakers, creating a complication is a badge of honour: It reveals the mastery of horology and how far they're willing to go to craft a complication that we arguably don't need for the tiny space that the watch case affords. Now that is true luxury.

Do you have a question about watches? Send it to contributing features editor Karishma Tulsidas (karishma@sph.com.sg), who will solve your conundrums with practical tips and advice.

HER CAREER

Can we keep up with an ever-changing workplace?

We ask specialists how to stay one step ahead.

We are in a period of transition: The workplace has morphed tremendously, and we have to contend with the lingering effects of the pandemic, the surge of AI (read our story on the fear of becoming obsolete on pg 68), remote and hybrid work, and – of course – changing attitudes towards linear career paths. HR specialists and authors Dr David Oxley and Dr Helmut Schuster, who co-wrote *A Career Carol, A Tale of Professional Nightmares and How To Navigate Them*, tell *Her World* how to win in a democratised career world.

Be opportunity-led and embrace ambiguity

“Corporate work creates silo thinking, and is filled with mundane tasks. You can be far more successful by thinking of jobs like a portfolio... and not as a single destination. Don't be dogmatic about what a career means. Jobs will increasingly be a kaleidoscope. You should think of them as colourful tiles that will eventually create a beautiful mosaic.

Those comfortable with uncertainty, and who can see across and between professions, will benefit greatly. Constantly challenge yourself to learn something new about an adjacent expertise.”

Fight for a cause

“Be it fighting for consequential change – which will inspire others to join you – or fighting for yourself or your family, knowing what you want to fight for means you will have the necessary determination to succeed.”

Spend four years learning 20 different things instead of focusing on just one subject

“The careers of the future will require greater breadth of knowledge – of how to manage AI, people, finances, accounting and, most importantly, get results. You are more likely to remain relevant and in demand by changing your perspective on work every two to three years.

This is why traditional corporate career paths will increasingly be a handicap. Protect your relevance by challenging yourself to constantly reinvent and renew your knowledge.”

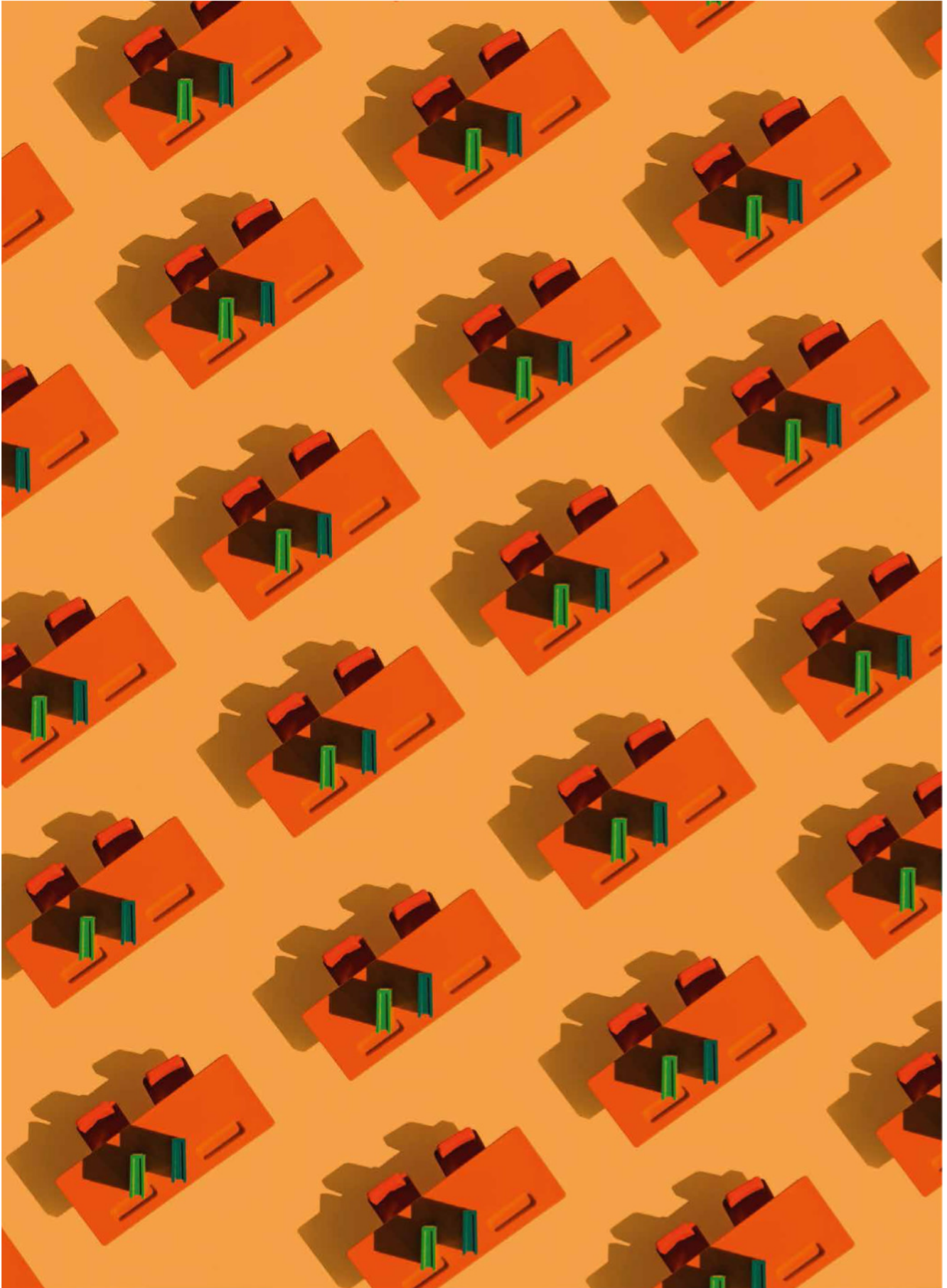


PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

WOMAN NOW

MUM'S

THE

WORD



Becky Lee is used to navigating demanding environments. Yet, her most significant challenge echoes that of many working mothers: maintaining a balance between her professional and personal responsibilities.

Text Cheryl Lai-Lim Photography Athirah Annissa
Art Direction Adeline Eng Hair Sarah Tan

Even before assuming the role of general manager at Estee Lauder Companies (ELC) in Singapore, Becky Lee's passion for the world of beauty had already taken root in her early years. Her interest was fuelled by her mother, a fashion designer with a made-to-measure boutique.

"I witnessed the power and confidence that my mother gave her clients when she created the perfect bespoke outfit for them. I wanted to be able to [offer the same sense of confidence for others]," she recalls.

Rather than fashion, however, she decided to carve out her own career path within the beauty industry. "Thanks to my mother's influence, I've always loved fashion; but as I was growing up, Korean beauty was really starting to kick-off. I was attracted to the fast-moving, innovative nature of the beauty business."

Thus, she kept much of her career path linear – a move that "seemed very natural" to her. "My first job was in beauty," she says, referring to her professional trajectory in the beauty industry, which began with her role as assistant brand manager of Eucerin at the German skincare conglomerate Beiersdorf. "And I have since worked across categories – from derma cosmetics and luxury beauty to mass."

In a world where the term "beauty" is often misunderstood as mere frivolity, its true power lies in its empowering nature, says Becky. It can foster a sense of confidence by offering practical and achievable solutions to beauty issues. "Whether it's finding the perfect red lip or a serum that treats hyperpigmentation, or soothing an irritated complexion, I feel motivated knowing that I can help people," she shares. "Every day, I am inspired by our consumers."

The importance of understanding perspectives is a recurring topic that comes up with Becky. In person, she is warm and approachable, initiating conversations about weekend plans and seeking recommendations for travel. During the shoot for this story, she patiently waits despite having to stand in a sunny spot while the team tests lighting, and demonstrates a genuine interest in understanding their thought process regarding the art direction by actively asking questions to delve deeper into their perspectives.

This curiosity to learn and to understand others is at the core of Becky's values. "I always try to see things from the other person's point of view – whether it's my colleagues or consumers," she explains. "As a naturally curious person, I see every opportunity as a learning opportunity – from meetings with our Gen Z task force, partnership meetings with our retailers and landlords, to bigger global forums. There is always something for me to learn."

This empathy has been her guiding principle throughout her 15 years of experience in marketing and brand management in the beauty

"From a young age, I gained independence, and built a strong sense of purpose, drive, and perseverance – which has stayed with me, and undoubtedly shaped the leader I am today."

and consumer goods industry. Despite the male-driven business landscape in Asia during her early years there, she strategically carved out her own distinctive approach to leadership and business by adopting a "soft approach" with empathy and understanding.

Becky joined ELC in 2018 as marketing director for Clinique in Asia-Pacific. Within two years, she was promoted to the role of vice-president and general manager of Clinique in Asia-Pacific, where she focused on elevating the brand through initiatives like accelerating core products, leading to a decade-high volume in retail sales.

In January 2023, Becky was promoted to general manager of Singapore at ELC. In this role, she is dedicated to growing market share, solidifying ELC's position in the market, and attracting top talent. "Our goal is to be the leading brand powerhouse in Singapore and a talent hub," she says. "We're committed to excellence in execution, service, and the omni-channel experience, driving me to continually learn and evolve."

Does the weight of being the youngest general manager in Asia within the ELC group ever get to her? "I feel incredibly supported in my leadership journey.

Our team of general managers in APAC is a close-knit group, and we all support each other.”

Now in her early 40s, Becky believes that age shouldn’t determine leadership. “I believe it doesn’t matter how old you are – we all have gaps in our experience and knowledge, and as leaders, we need to keep learning and growing in our roles.”

Navigating independence

Perhaps another reason for Becky’s steely resilience has to do with her childhood. Her formative years were marked by a move to the UK, when she and her younger sister were awarded a scholarship to a boarding school. Only eight at that time, she moved halfway across the globe with her six-year-old sister.

As they lived in a boarding school and parental involvement in the day-to-day lives of students were limited, the responsibility fell onto Becky to take care of her sister. “Neither of us spoke a lot of English so it was a daunting experience, and I had to quickly adapt to take care of myself and my sister,” she says, underscoring the profound impact of this experience.

“It’s not always easy, but my genuine love for both my role as a mother and my job truly makes a difference.”

This early experience moulded her character. While other kids her age relied on their parents, she had to learn to manage everything on her own, from managing their schedules to comforting her sister when she felt homesick.

Meeting their parents was a rare occurrence, as their parents had work obligations that they couldn’t easily leave behind, and therefore were unable to join the sisters in the UK. While she missed them dearly, she learnt to cope with their absence by immersing herself in her studies. Through this, she discovered her own strength and resilience, realising that she could thrive despite her parents’ absence.

“This taught me a lot. From a young age, I gained independence, and built a strong sense of purpose, drive and perseverance – which has stayed with me, and undoubtedly shaped the leader I am today,” she shares.

Since then, her global odyssey has further unfolded. She studied in Paris at the Paris-Sorbonne University, and thereafter took a business degree at King’s College London. She has since worked in cities such as Bangkok and Hong Kong, which provided her with exposure to diverse cultures and business practices, enriching her global perspective.

“These experiences have really taught me to appreciate the perspectives and values of others, and the importance of connecting and seeking to understand people from all backgrounds, cultures and disciplines, in order to work collaboratively towards shared goals,” she notes.

A balancing act

Having grown up in a boarding school environment, the qualities of independence, resilience, and adaptability from a young age have informed Becky’s approach to various aspects of life, including motherhood.

“My daughter is six, and such a sweet little girl,” she shares. She adds that her daughter has a rare condition that affects few people globally, but declines to share more details to protect her family’s privacy.

Her experiences caring for her younger sister during their time at boarding school have shaped her perspective on nurturing and support. She recognises the significance of providing a stable and loving environment for her child, while also allowing her the space to grow and develop her own identity.

Despite the unique challenges of parenting a daughter with special needs, Becky finds strength and solace in her unwavering love for her family. She relies on a robust support system consisting of her spouse, extended family, and a network of loved ones, recognising the importance of community in navigating the intricacies of parenthood.

“It’s not always easy, but my genuine love for both my role as a mother and my job truly makes a difference. I consider myself fortunate to have an incredible support network, including a husband who is a true partner in every sense,” she says. “We are committed to fostering the best possible family environment for our daughter, and despite the inevitable challenges, we always choose to embrace the art of gratitude.”

Navigating the delicate equilibrium between career and motherhood is a common challenge for many, and Becky is no exception. Being a mother while running a business is not an easy task. There is always the struggle of giving enough to work, while also being there for your family, and there is always some degree of guilt when you have to make a choice.

As women are often held to exceptionally high standards, especially when they assume roles as both mothers and leaders, Becky understands the pervasive notion that women must embody a certain degree of maternal instinct to be deemed successful mothers, while simultaneously facing the expectation that they prioritise career advancement above all else to be effective leaders.

She emphasises the importance of open communication within the company. By openly sharing her challenges and initiating conversations about the experiences and difficulties faced by working parents, she has fostered a supportive network within the company. Transparency about personal struggles not only fosters understanding, but also strengthens bonds among colleagues, creating a safe and inclusive environment where everyone feels empowered to seek and offer support.

Her leadership extends beyond mere acknowledgment of these challenges; she actively implements solutions to support her team. Embracing a flexible working approach, she ensures that her team members can effectively manage their professional and personal responsibilities. This approach not only enhances productivity, but also promotes long-term well-being and job satisfaction among employees.

As a working mother, embracing the journey is crucial, she emphasises. “It’s important to identify personal visions and goals while exercising patience [with yourself and others around you],” she shares. “And recognise that progress may not happen every day – sometimes, merely getting through the day is an accomplishment in itself that you should be proud of.”

For Becky, the concept of “balance” doesn’t adhere to a universal definition; it varies for each individual. Understanding personal boundaries and requirements is crucial to making it work.

To stay ahead, she employs meticulous planning in her daily routine, including ensuring that she carves out dedicated time for herself – even if it’s just 15 to 30 minutes a day – to sit alone with

her thoughts. Though it might seem simple, this deliberate practice holds significance for her, allowing her to replenish her own energy amid juggling multiple responsibilities.

She underscores the significance of “living life” beyond work commitments, which enables her to return to her responsibilities with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. For her, that encompasses travelling the globe and exploring various destinations, tapping on her previous experiences living abroad.

“We love travelling as a family. My sister lives in Hong Kong, my parents are in Seoul, and my husband’s family are in the UK. We love that we have ‘homes’ in these amazing locations. I also love cooking and experimenting with recipes. My parents-in-law recently gifted me a state-of-the-art food mixer – it’s the best present ever!”

She adds: “I recently made my first soufflé. It wasn’t perfect, but I’ll be trying again.”

“Progress may not happen every day – sometimes, merely getting through the day is an accomplishment in itself that you should be proud of.”



The importance of starting small

Hester Spiegel-van den Steenhoven learnt the hard way not to put all of her money into a single investment – and now, the co-founder of the female investor collective Epic Angels is empowering other angel investors to make measured and meaningful investment decisions.

Text Sasha Gonzales

Hester Spiegel-van den Steenhoven wants women to know that being an angel investor isn't as complicated as it might seem. With the right knowledge and a little confidence, she believes that anyone can claim a financial stake in emerging businesses.

The 46-year-old got her first taste of angel investing in 2019, when she was working at Deutsche Bank in Germany. A friend recommended that she invest in early-stage start-ups; her first investment was in decentralised infrastructure for the real-world economy. She loved the experience so much that she left her corporate job at the bank to become an angel investor.

In August 2020, the Netherlands native moved to Singapore for her husband's job. By chance, she found out that an ex-colleague was living in Singapore too, so the pair made plans to meet.

"Maaïke and I had worked together 15 years earlier in Germany, when we were both part of the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) team at the business management consultancy company PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)," Hester shares.

"She had been an angel investor in San Francisco, where she lived before moving to Singapore. She was surprised that angel investing wasn't as accessible here as it was in San Francisco; the scene in Singapore tended to be elitist and you had to clear a high threshold – typically US\$20,000 (\$26,757) – to get started. We talked about this when we met up, and decided to do something about it."

Hester and Maaïke gathered a few other women and researched the start-ups in South-east Asia that they could invest in, and from there, Epic Angels was born. Now, almost four years later, Epic Angels is the largest female-only investor collective in Asia-Pacific, with nearly 300 investors from countries across the region.

"To join Epic Angels, you need to meet the accredited investor requirements in the country you live in," Hester continues.

"We ask our investors to make two investments a year, so that we remain an active angel investor network. This attracts the best founders.

"I've found that the women in our network are keen to invest their money in solutions that they believe create positive societal change. They want to fund the changes that they wish to see in the world."

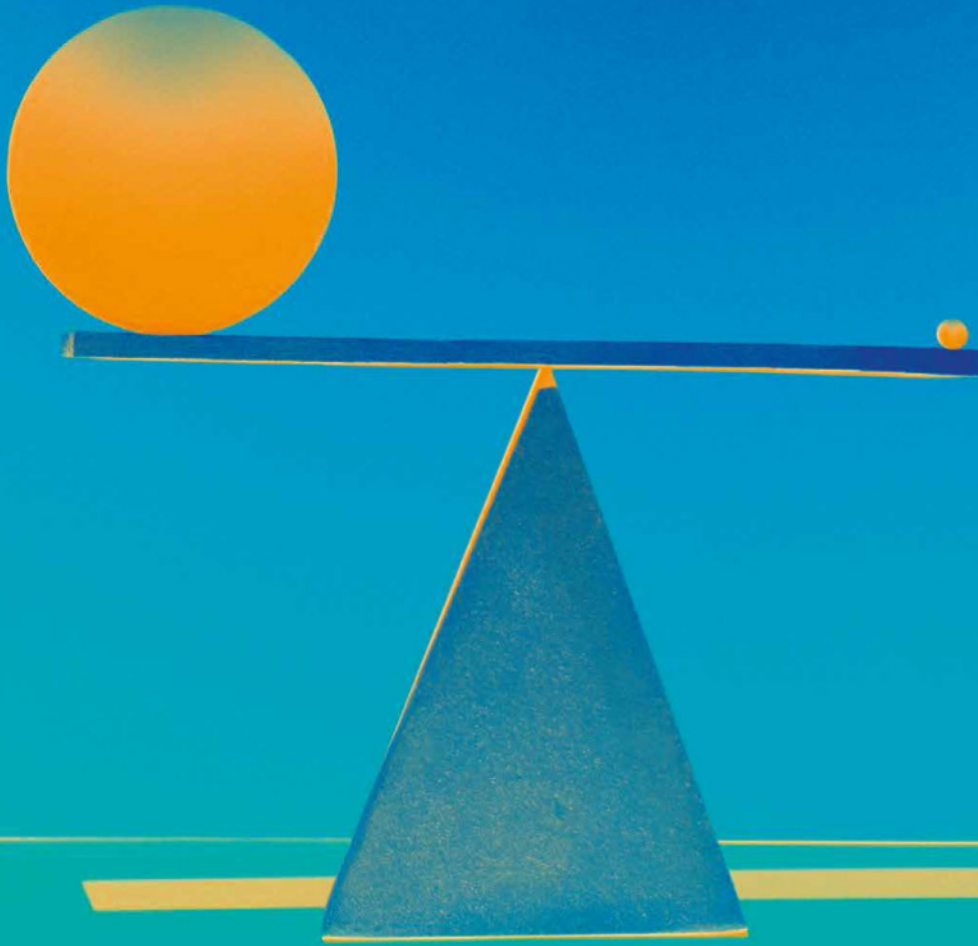
Have you always worked in finance and investment?

Yes. I set up the first campuses of 42 Schools (a software engineering school) in Germany, basically taking them from "zero to one". Prior to that, I ran large integration projects at Deutsche Bank and worked as a consultant at PwC.

What was your view of angel investing before you decided to get into it?

I knew it was risky, and didn't know where to go to learn about it or acquire the necessary hands-on skills. I also didn't think I knew enough about investing, finance, tech or different industries to get involved.

It was only when we started building Epic Angels that I realised angel investing could be about so much more (than just financial returns). You can support founders and make a real difference with your money in areas that are meaningful to you. I personally love working with people who create with a purpose, and who are clever about how they go about it.



**“You’ll get returns if you know what to do,
rather than by simply having a high net worth.”**

“I’ve found that the women in our network are keen to invest their money in solutions that they believe create positive societal change.”

Along the way, I also discovered that angel investing is a constant learning experience – every deal you see reveals a problem in an industry that you may not have been aware of, and gives insights into how technology can solve these problems.

Did you have a mentor or any guidance when you first decided to invest?

Not really. My friend in Germany introduced me to angel investing all those years ago, and I enjoyed listening to his perspectives, but that was more of a co-investing experience rather than a mentor-mentee relationship.

He advised me to look at the total market size. The bigger the market size, the greater the number of potential customers, and the greater the number of potential partners in that market – that is, partners who extend your reach to potential customers, and partners for M&A activity (acquire or be acquired) once the company is mature enough for M&A activity.

Do you have an investment strategy and, if so, has it evolved over the years?

For the longest time, I was mostly focused on investing in Educational Technology (Edtech) solutions because I’m passionate about what tech can do to make learning better, more fun, more personalised, more relevant and, last but not least, accessible to groups that typically don’t have access to quality content or education.

The majority of my investment portfolio is still Edtech, but I’ve consciously made the shift to include other industries as well – I like how angel investing teaches me about industries that I wouldn’t otherwise know about, and opens my eyes to different markets, trends, problems and solutions.

Besides, the Edtech investment market is back to the level it was at in 2016. Solving the challenges in education also typically takes longer, and that’s where angel investors, who have a longer investment horizon and more patience, come in.

Have you made any financial or investment mistakes? What did you learn from those experiences?

I recently lost \$50,000 from an Edtech investment that I made in 2021. The start-up helped teachers become more efficient with technology and digital infrastructure. Unfortunately, the company was not able to create proper engagement on its platform, there was a founder dispute, and investors did not want to come on board before revenues picked up enough to sustain themselves.

The loss taught me to always start investing with a small amount, and to gradually top it up in subsequent rounds if the company is doing well. Coincidentally, this is also the best investment advice I’ve ever received.

What’s your greatest investment win to date?

Arogga, a health tech company in Bangladesh and the very first company Epic Angels invested in, which I continued to support with a follow-up investment. The company’s valuation has grown 7.5 times since our first investment.

Some women may view angel investing as a risky venture. What’s your advice to them?

You need courage to invest, and courage takes time to develop. You can find thousands of reasons to avoid investing in any start-up. For instance, it’s too early, there’s no market for the product, it’s too amateurish, and so on. Investing is really about taking a leap of faith.

What can help you grow this courage is to join a peer-network, constantly educate yourself, and start with small amounts. By investing small amounts of money in, say, 10 start-ups, versus investing the same amount in one start-up, you can learn a lot: hands-on investing skills, what motivates you as an investor, and what makes a successful start-up founder, for example.

Once you’ve acquired enough confidence, you’ll feel better about investing larger amounts, and therefore enjoy a bigger return if everything goes well.

Does one have to be well-connected, financially savvy or wealthy in order to invest?

Being financially savvy is important because it can help you understand profitability potential as well as pinpoint red flags in financial documents, such as large loans on the balance sheet or drivers of cost on profit-and-loss statements.

Many women want to learn about investing, but are put off by the financial jargon or don't believe that they're knowledgeable enough about money. Part of the goal of Epic Angels is to help our investors understand the financial information found in data rooms, so that they can make better investment decisions, regardless of their background.

I don't believe you need to be wealthy to start investing or to be a good investor. We do recommend investing no more than 5 to 10 per cent of your total wealth into early-stage start-ups because of the risks involved. That said, knowledge and understanding of the vetting and investment processes are so much more important than having a lot of money.

You'll get returns if you know what to do, rather than by simply having a high net worth.

The world of venture capitalism may seem confusing to many women. How do you hope to make it more accessible and less intimidating for them?

To start investing with Epic Angels, you need about US\$10,000 (\$13,378) – our ticket sizes range between US\$1,500 (\$2,007) and US\$5,000 (\$6,689), and if you're just starting out as an angel investor, we recommend making three to 10 investments to grow from "curious" to "confident". For experienced investors, which make up about 40 per cent of our network, the small ticket size is a way to get into start-ups early; they can always top up their investment in the next funding round if the company is doing well. Both beginner and experienced investors are part of our peer community.

Initiatives and events we offer within this peer community include monthly pitch nights, meet-ups with start-up founders, Epic Angels partners, and portfolio company founders, as well as in-company sessions for female senior executives, with real-life pitches involved. We also provide a library of resources ranging from podcasts, to online articles and a member-led Whatsapp channel, where Angels can ask any questions about investing, industry trends, and so on.

HESTER'S INVESTING JOURNEY IN NUMBERS

Late 30s
Age when she first started investing

US\$50,000
(\$66,906)
Biggest investment loss

23
Start-ups Epic Angels has invested in since 2020

US\$1,500
(\$2,007)
The minimum amount needed to invest in each start-up funded by Epic Angels)

300
Female investors who have joined Epic Angels

Up to
US\$250,000
(\$334,555)
Amount Epic Angels invests per company

75%
Percentage of Epic Angels' portfolio companies that are women-led

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
WEALTHY
TO BE A PHILANTHROPIST



PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

her world

Hannah Oh, co-founder of digital impact investment platform Ixo, is on a mission to democratise philanthropy, and make it more accessible and inclusive.

As the sun dipped below the vast, golden fields of Lampung, a remote corn belt in Sumatra, Indonesia, little did I know that my early career as a brand manager for an agribusiness would lead me to a profound intersection of purpose, profit and impact. The journey from corporate meeting rooms to the heart of impoverished villages reshaped not only my perspective, but also ignited a passion for social impact that would forever alter the trajectory of my life.

This was in 2007, and I had been working at Bayer as a regional brand manager, where I would often travel to distant villages to study the livelihood of subsistence farmers who own less than one hectare of farmland, and whose families relied on incomes of less than \$200 a month. There, I encountered the resilient faces of farmers, women and children, whose lives were intricately woven into the fabric of agriculture.

One evening, after a gruelling day in the fields, I found myself in a farming community meeting held at the new school that we helped to build. Exhausted yet determined, 10 farmers gathered to discuss the challenges their community faced. It was here that I noticed Yati, a nine-year-old girl who stood out amid the wearied faces of her elders. Curiosity led me to inquire why she was present at this late hour.

She replied, “I don’t go to school because it is empty most of the time. It’s hard for everyone – not enough money for pencils and books, long journeys, and missing classes for a few days makes it hard [for us] to keep up. I still wish there was a way I could learn, and help mummy and daddy.”

Yati’s comments prompted us to consider new, unconventional ways to build an ecosystem that addresses vital issues that are often ignored in the quest to “help others”, and actually build solutions that take into account the on-the-ground challenges faced by those needing extra support.

How can we leverage technology, community resources, and alternative learning environments to provide children like Yati with the education they deserve? This thought-provoking inquiry calls for a paradigm shift in philanthropy, urging us to seek creative solutions that empower children to learn and thrive, irrespective of the traditional barriers they may face.

Fast forward 15 years from the night I met Yati, now, as a mother of two, and an impact investor, my guiding principle has been how to invest and build projects that are focused on evidence, data and results in the fields of education, clean water, cleaning cooking and agriculture.

I am optimistic about the positive evolution of philanthropy. There is a discernible shift towards more intelligent methods of assessing both the return on impact and investments.

This transformation involves leveraging data and digital platforms to achieve impactful outcomes at scale, all the while utilising data and blockchain to enhance transparency in philanthropic endeavours.

THE ROLE OF DATA IN PHILANTHROPY

One of the main challenges has always been around measuring impact. Data can help solve this conundrum.

One of the companies I helped to co-found is Ixo (www.ixoworld.com), a blockchain- and artificial intelligence-based platform based in Singapore that focuses on impact investing and sustainable development. It enables the creation, verification and management of impact projects, allowing participants to track and measure the social and environmental outcomes of their investments transparently, and based on real time data.

Stakeholders contribute money to specific projects, and can track the impact of their donations in real-time. What makes this approach unique is its connection between funding and actual results, providing contributors with a clear view of the tangible difference their support makes.

This innovative strategy not only enhances transparency and accountability in education financing, but also aligns with a similar successful initiative in Karnataka, India. This was in partnership with UBS Optimus Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Swiss-based investment bank – 200 kids received tablets with a special learning app, funded through a tech-enabled mechanism linking investments to learning progress.

The outcomes exceeded expectations, with tablet recipients learning 28 per cent more than the control group, and increasing school attendance. This success has attracted interest from other regions in India, demonstrating the positive impact of outcome-driven funding for both children and supporters.

Impact measurements should extend beyond tracking the allocation of funds; it should empower us to determine where our contributions have the highest return on impact, and are used most effectively. Given the ambitious targets we have to reach with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and net zero targets, impact capital should be an informed decision where allocation of capital goes to efforts that create lasting, transformative change. After all, only what can be measured can be improved.

DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO IMPACT INVESTMENTS

The traditional belief that philanthropy is exclusively for individuals with significant financial means is evolving. Today, becoming a philanthropist doesn't require the wealth of a Melinda Gates or Oprah Winfrey.

Blockchain technology and NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) play a pivotal role in democratising philanthropy, as they enable the fractionalisation of impact projects, breaking them down into smaller, tradable units.

Traditional approaches to coordinating, financing, and verifying philanthropic projects or impact investments are slow, opaque, and costly. They often require auditors and verifiers to conduct random sample checks. This system relies on lagging indicators of project success, limiting the ability to intervene and make improvements during the project's duration.

An example is one of the projects undertaken by Ixo. Astonishingly, many women and children continue to endure the daily burden of walking several kilometres to fetch a mere bucket of water. With a \$15,000 investment, Ixo aims to revolutionise this scenario by introducing smarter, greener water purification infrastructures, leveraging the Internet of Things (IoT) and UV disinfection.

The \$15,000 water project mentioned above doesn't necessarily require full funding from a single individual; instead, fractional ownership allows any person to contribute a portion of the total amount. With blockchain technology's decentralised ledger, the authenticity and security of ownership records are ensured. In practical terms, this means that individuals can invest or own a specific fraction of the project, such as \$1,000 or any other divisible amount.

Smart contracts then automate the management and distribution of these fractional shares, ensuring transparency and efficiency throughout the funding process.

PHILANTHROPY WITH A HEART AND SCIENCE

The corn fields of Lampung not only yielded bountiful harvests, but also planted the seeds of change within me many years ago, beginning with the realisation that philanthropy is about combining the heart with science.

It's about creating value, ensuring transparency, and making informed decisions based on data. As an active participant in the philanthropic process, we can be at the forefront of this transformation, forging a path to a brighter future for all. Everyone has the opportunity to create a legacy of positive change, contributing to a better world and a sustainable future through the power of data-driven philanthropy.

As women leaders, let us embrace the power we hold to shape not just the future of our efforts, but also the destinies of those whose voices, like Yati's, deserve to be heard and heeded. Together, we can sow the seeds of a brighter and more compassionate world.

Hannah Oh is an impact investor, sustainability expert, and founding team member of Ixo.

“Everyone has the opportunity to create a legacy of positive change, contributing to a better world and a sustainable future through the power of data-driven philanthropy.”

“Impact measurements should extend beyond tracking the allocation of funds; it should empower us to determine where our contributions have the highest return on impact, and are used most effectively.”



BUDGET 2024 DECODED:



PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

What it means for your wallet,
work and well-being

Long-term planning can boost the incentives and perks given to Singaporeans in this year's Budget. Deborah Tan-Pink, co-host of the podcast Good Girls Talk About Money, highlights how we can put them to use.

To be honest, when I received the brief from *Her World's* editors to pen a piece about Budget 2024, I was tempted to turn down the job. Reason: While the Budget hordes headlines in the local media every year, I've never been one to follow the coverage. Then, a girlfriend excitedly messaged me about the \$4,000 Skillsfuture Credit (Mid-Career) Top-Up, and I had to dig a little deeper and ask myself, why the apathy?

There are many Singaporeans who keenly follow the Budget Statement. The initiatives run the gamut. From addressing concerns around cost of living for the everyday person to making Singapore more attractive to overseas businesses and investors, our government stays close to the central theme of building a more resilient nation.

In my younger days, I had assumed a passive attitude whenever it came to the Budget. I tended to see myself as someone who would neither reap the maximum benefits, nor was old enough to feel the bite of any changes made to our retirement system. Instead, I chose to spend my time focusing on what I could do for my finances, and saw any benefits from the government as a bonus.

Today, the runway I have to build a nest egg for retirement has become considerably shorter. There is also the very real worry about my employability as a middle-aged worker. Despite my initial reluctance, it does make sense for me to study the Budget 2024 more closely.

Securing our future in the workplace of tomorrow

In May 2024, Singaporeans aged 40 and above will receive a \$4,000 Skillsfuture Credit (Mid-Career) Top-Up. They can use this top-up for selected courses that are industry-oriented and would provide for better employability outcomes. Another great initiative is that starting from Academic Year 2025, Singaporeans aged 40 and above will be eligible for subsidies if they want to do a full-time diploma course at the Polytechnics, ITE, and Arts Institutions. Depending on the course, one can look to receive up to or at least 90 per cent of the programme costs.

While these top-ups and subsidies aren't going to help you get an MBA, you will not be starved of choices either. Since the inception of Skillsfuture 10 years ago, the kind of courses one can enrol in range from hobby-related, such as baking, to certification programmes offered by Google. Unlike the basic tier of \$500 that can be used for almost any kind of courses, this \$4,000 top-up can only be used for selected training programmes.

What we can do: While we wait for that top-up to arrive, I would recommend eligible Singaporeans to take some time to think through what employability means for them. If it means continuing in your current industry in an increased capacity, you need to stay abreast of all new developments and innovations. If you are looking to start your own business, then picking up new skills in digital marketing, bookkeeping, and basic legal know-how would be important. Like a career plan, we need to have a plan for our upskilling, and identify the skills that are required to enhance our individual competitiveness in the workplace.

Managing today's cost of living

In January 2024, each Singaporean household received \$500 worth of CDC (Community Development Council) vouchers. The vouchers were divided into two categories: \$250 could be used at heartland merchants and hawkers; the other \$250 could be used at participating supermarkets.

With the recent Budget Statement, about 1.4 million Singaporean households will receive a further \$600 in CDC vouchers – \$300 in June 2024 and \$300 in January 2025. In addition, depending on your income level, the type of HDB flat you live in, the number of dependants living with you etc, you may get to enjoy yet more payouts and subsidies.

What we can do: It is true that for many of us, these savings may add up to less than \$1,000. With careful planning, you might just be able to work these savings harder. If the additional \$600 is simply a bonus for you, why not consider investing the same amount? For example, at time of writing, Syfe's Cash+Guaranteed portfolio gives a return rate of up to 3.8% per annum, with no minimum deposit required. It does have a lock-in period of three months. Granted, this isn't going to make anyone a millionaire, but if the CDC vouchers and subsidies are a nice-to-have for you, consider investing the savings.

Preparing for retirement

Arguably, the most talked-about initiative in this year's Budget are the adjustments made to the CPF system. These changes will immediately affect citizens aged 55 and above. Nonetheless, it does not mean the rest of us cannot plan ahead and find the best way forward for ourselves.

First, CPF contribution rates (Employer + Employee) for those aged 55 and above will gradually increase over the next decade or so. Second, for those above 55, from Jan 1, 2025, the rise in contribution rates will be allocated to their CPF Special Account or Retirement Account. Third, the Enhanced Retirement Sum (ERS) will be raised to four times the Basic Retirement Sum (BRS) from

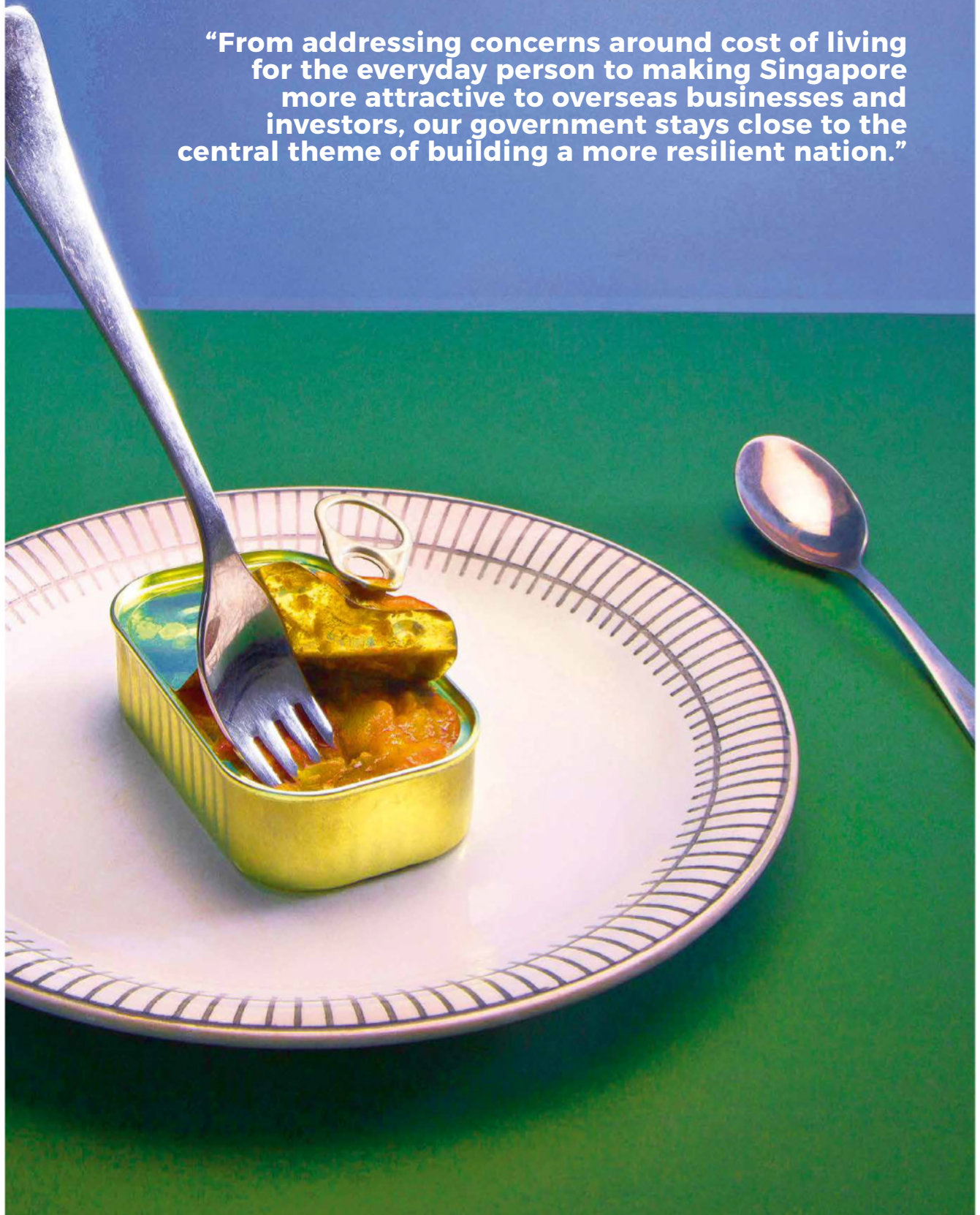
Jan 1, 2025. You may commit your CPF Ordinary Account savings or make cash top-ups to receive higher monthly payouts upon your retirement. Finally, from early 2025, the Special Account will be closed for those aged 55 and above.

What we can do: The BRS is meant to provide you with a monthly payout in retirement to cover your basic living needs. If you wish to receive higher monthly payouts, you have the option to top-up your Retirement Account, which earns you an interest of up to 4.08% per annum. Any amount left in your Special Account will be moved to your Ordinary Account, where you'll enjoy a lower interest rate – but you'll be able to withdraw your money when you want.

How you choose to plan your retirement is up to you. Some may wish to simply meet the BRS amount, withdraw the balance in your CPF account, and invest the money for higher returns. It really depends on the market conditions at the time of your retirement. At 55, we have about 20 years left, and it is up to you whether you want to continue to grow your money, so you leave behind a considerable legacy for your children, or preserve what you have to maintain your lifestyle at a level that you've grown accustomed to.

Deborah Tan-Pink is senior vice-president of Marketing & Communications at Sygnum, a digital assets banking group, and co-host of the podcast Good Girls Talk About Money. She would like to thank Linawati Gunawan for her help in explaining the finer details of the Budget.

“From addressing concerns around cost of living for the everyday person to making Singapore more attractive to overseas businesses and investors, our government stays close to the central theme of building a more resilient nation.”



F O R G E T

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F O B O

FOBO, or the fear of becoming obsolete, is on the rise as generative AI increasingly dominates the workplace – and Gen Zs are feeling the pinch.

Text Cheryl Lai-Lim

If the early 2000s were marked by FOMO (fear of missing out), then the 2020s will be defined by its much more worrying counterpart, FOBO, or the fear of becoming obsolete. FOBO first emerged in 2023, when global education and technology company Cengage coined the term to describe one's anxiety of AI and technological advancements making their skills obsolete. A 2023 Gallup survey, which polled 1,000 workers in the US, revealed that 22 per cent are worried about AI's impact on their job security, highlighting a growing apprehension about technology's influence on employment.

FOBO is not exactly a new phenomenon, but its prevalence has grown tremendously over the period between 2021 and 2023 – interestingly, coinciding with the mainstream adoption of generative AI, with the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT in November 2022. Attesting to its growing prevalence, *The Financial Times* reported in March 2024 that Singapore's Temasek Holdings is in discussions to invest in OpenAI, which is also backed by Microsoft.

Besides chatbots driven by AI, such as ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, there are a plethora of other AI tools making their mark in the workplace across different industries. Virtual assistants like Amazon Alexa for Business, Google Assistant, and Microsoft Cortana are increasingly integrated into workplace environments to streamline tasks such as scheduling meetings, managing calendars, and retrieving information.

Tasks like content analysis, customer feedback analysis, and information extraction can be performed by Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools such as IBM Watson NLP, Google Cloud Natural Language, and Spacy. Then, of course, there are the image generating tools such as Midjourney, DALL-E, and Stable Diffusions. They can create custom images, and deliver new methods for the creation of special effects, thus increasing creativity and efficiency.

UNDERSTANDING FOBO

A 2023 global study by consultancy firm KPMG, which surveyed over 17,000 respondents from 17 countries, found that two in five workers believed AI would replace jobs in their area of work. In Singapore, that

amounted to 44 per cent of the 1,000 respondents. Additionally, half of the respondents – who ranged from 18- to 91-years-old, with the mean age being 44 – felt they lacked understanding of AI's applications.

“We are witnessing the consumerisation of AI in the workplace as demand to use generative AI continues to grow,” says Salesforce Asean's senior vice-president and general manager Sujith Abraham. “Rather than dismiss this and the potential benefits of generative AI, businesses should employ a strategy that's grounded in trust to safeguard against the risks that come with any new technology.”

Career and life coach Kelly Chan acknowledges the concerns over upskilling at work, noting that AI is a recurring topic among her clients. “Many feel that learning AI could advance their careers, but hesitate due to perceived intimidation,” she explains. The reluctance stems from feeling overwhelmed, and viewing AI proficiency as a challenge.

A 2023 survey by global tech giant Salesforce and Yougov found that a significant portion of Singapore workers expressed worries about falling behind in AI usage at work, with 32 per cent even considering changing jobs if training on AI is not provided. And 67 per cent of respondents view companies that invest in and incorporate generative AI policies and practices as more attractive places to work at. Also, 31 per cent would consider leaving their employers if generative AI workflows are not prioritised.

Interestingly, the 2023 Gallup survey also revealed that Gen Zs are particularly susceptible to FOBO. It makes sense – born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, they are the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age. They are deeply immersed in technology from young, making them more aware of and sensitive to technological advancements and their potential impact on the workforce. There's a strong likelihood that generative AI in the workplace will realise its potential by the time Gen Zs fully enter the workforce.

“We grew up in a world where technology evolves at breakneck speed, so this is nothing new. However, seeing the headlines about generative AI taking over the workplace can be quite scary, especially when I think about my future career progression,” says Zoey Lee, a 26-year-old creative currently working in marketing.

“We're facing the prospect of entering the workforce just as these technologies become mainstream. On one hand, we're digital natives, but on the other hand, we fear being rendered obsolete before we even get started.”

GEN AI AND ITS IMPACT

These fears are not unfounded. Take, for instance, the manufacturing sector, where robotics and AI-driven machinery have streamlined production processes, and reduced the need for manual labour. Tasks once performed by human workers, such as assembly line operations and quality control checks, can be executed with greater precision and efficiency by automated systems. While this technological advancement has enhanced productivity and output, it has also led to workforce downsizing and restructuring.

“It has been challenging since I was laid off in the shipping industry due to the integration of AI,” shares Shirley Ng, a 52-year-old former logistics coordinator at a major shipping company. The introduction of AI-driven systems has transformed the way logistics operations are managed, leading to increased efficiency and cost savings for companies.

“But this also meant that tasks I once performed, such as route optimisation and cargo tracking, are now automated. Therefore, there’s no need to keep headcounts, and teams can be downsized.” She is now training to become a part-time nurse for elderly care.

The rise of generative AI has also permeated creative industries, such as graphic design and content creation, posing both opportunities and challenges. With AI-powered tools capable of generating high-quality designs, articles, and music compositions using natural language processing and image recognition, this raises concerns about the future of human creativity, and the risk of losing artistic integrity.

Ariel Yeo, a 24-year-old graphic designer working in an advertising firm, feels that Gen AI in the workplace is a “double-edged sword, as it brings both excitement and concern”. She herself uses Midjourney for ideas and inspiration, especially when she’s stuck in a creative rut, but emphasises that AI-generated work cannot be presented to clients.

“Ethical concerns may inevitably arise. While AI can aid in the creation process, there’s a concern that relying too heavily on AI-generated content may compromise the authenticity and originality of the final product,” she shares. “As designers, we must carefully navigate these ethical considerations, ensuring that our work maintains integrity, and aligns with the values and expectations of our clients and the broader creative community.”

And it’s not just manufacturing and the creative industries – generative AI has the potential to impact virtually every industry by automating tasks and augmenting human decision-making processes.

In 2023, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna announced that the company was implementing a hiring pause, and intends to replace nearly 8,000 jobs with AI. He noted that back-office functions, particularly those in the HR sector, will be the first to see these changes implemented.

Following IBM’s lead, Swedish buy-now-pay-later firm Klarna announced a hiring freeze in December 2023 as tools like OpenAI’s ChatGPT streamlined the company’s operational tasks, reducing the need for additional manpower.

In January, language-learning software company Duolingo made adjustments to its contractor workforce, choosing not to renew contracts for approximately 10 per cent of its contractors.

“We just no longer need as many people to do the type of work some of these contractors were doing. Part of that could be attributed to AI,” a spokesperson told *Bloomberg*, though they emphasised that Duolingo does not have a hiring freeze in place, and is actively recruiting for a wide range of roles.

USING AI TO GIVE YOU AN EDGE AT WORK

This isn’t a reason to panic, though. The World Economic Forum’s 2023 Jobs of Tomorrow white paper notes that there are some roles AI will never be able to replace – such as those in agriculture and education. These sectors are even expected to see growth as they require physical dexterity and mobility, as well as human skills such as empathy, which remain outside the skill set of AI.

The white paper also found that AI will create new fields of work, with emerging fields like “trainers” (the people developing AI), “explainers” (the people making AI easy to use for members of the public by designing the interfaces that enable people to interact with AI), and “sustainers” (those who make sure that AI systems are being used in the best way possible, such as content creators, data curators, and ethics and governance specialists).

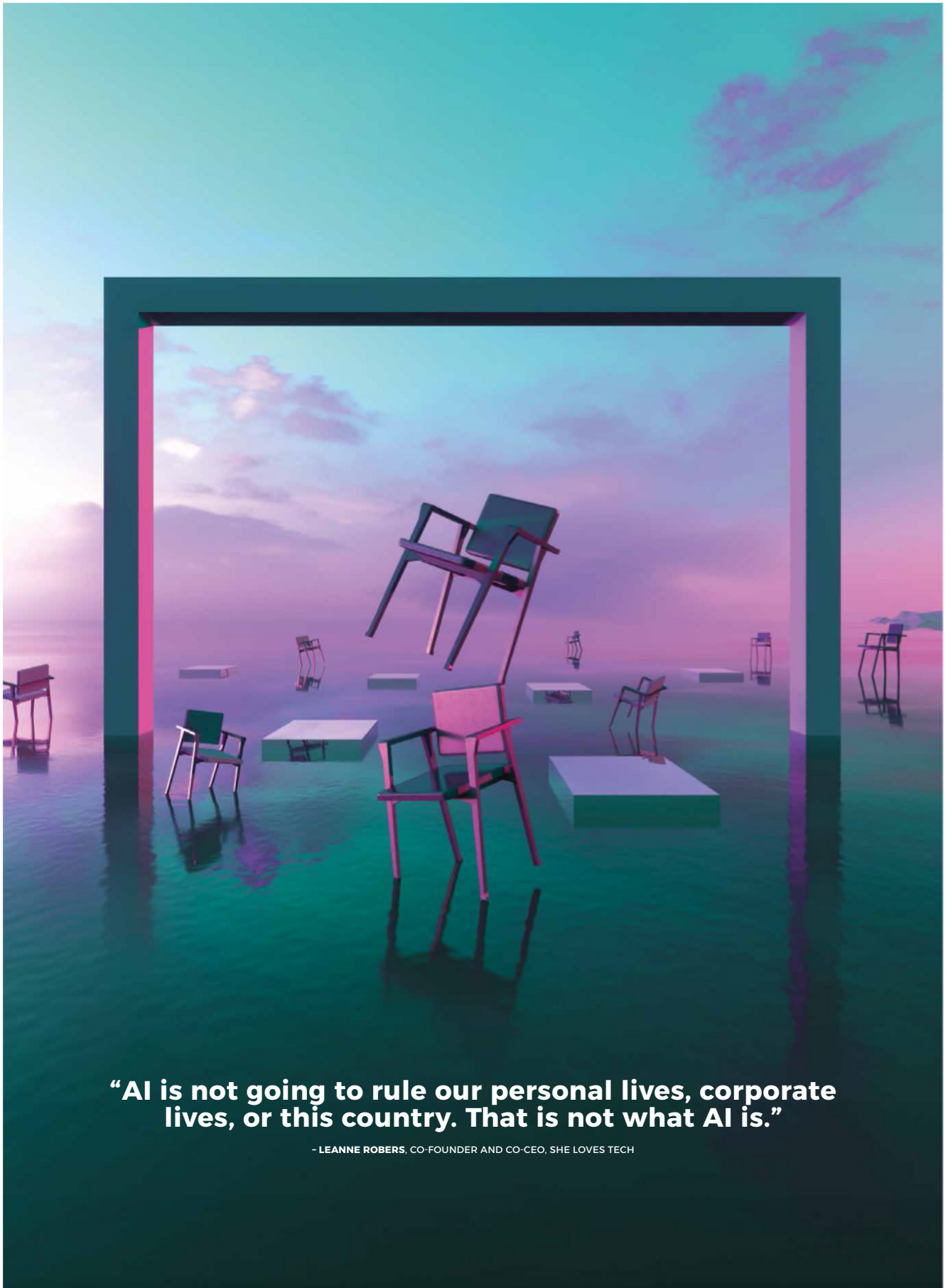
In a panel discussion on AI held last year for the Her World Mentorship Programme 2023, Leanne Robers, co-founder and co-CEO of She Loves Tech, emphasised that there’s no need to fear AI, or worry that it will replace our jobs.

“AI is not going to rule our personal lives, corporate lives, or this country. That is not what AI is,” shares the tech entrepreneur. “AI is a tool built by humans, so the extent of how good AI is depends on the people who built it.” At its core, she explained, AI is a tool designed to augment human intelligence and improve efficiency.

When it comes to FOBO, it’s all about switching mindsets. Think of AI as a tool in the workplace, and see how it can help you to develop more complex and marketable skills.

When I ask ChatGPT whether humans should fear AI taking their jobs, its response pretty much sums it up: “As an AI language model, I don’t have desires, consciousness, or intentions of my own. Ultimately, while there are legitimate concerns about job displacement due to AI, it’s important to approach the issue with a balanced perspective.

“Rather than fearing AI outright, it may be more productive to focus on how we can harness its potential to create a better future for workers and society as a whole.”



“AI is not going to rule our personal lives, corporate lives, or this country. That is not what AI is.”

- LEANNE ROBERS, CO-FOUNDER AND CO-CEO, SHE LOVES TECH

Gentle Men

How the term “babygirl” is redefining the concept of masculinity today.

Hollywood actor Jacob Elordi is a “babygirl”. I’m sure that even if you’re unfamiliar with the term, you’re probably nodding your head (perhaps reluctantly) in agreement. But what if we said: Timothee Chalamet is a “babygirl”, and so is actor Andrew Garfield. Confused yet?

No, “babygirl” is not a lyric from your favourite Boyz II Men song, but rather, a term of endearment used on some of your favourite male celebrities. The term hit mainstream culture when *Mean Girls’* Renee Rapp and comedian Bowen Yang called *Saltburn’s* Elordi “so babygirl” in a January 2024 *SNL* skit.

But what exactly does it mean, and why is it being used to describe such a seemingly broad array of men today? Multiple sources describe “babygirl” differently, ranging from a man who is sexually attractive with a good personality, to males over the age of 25 who display a mix of cuteness, submission, and a non-intimidating bad boy demeanour.

While the term may initially seem demeaning, it also serves to celebrate men’s softer, more vulnerable aspects, and is often used in a positive light to highlight favourable qualities in a man.

These changing meanings reflect the fluidity of the term, suggesting a broader trend of challenging traditional toxic masculinity, and embracing vulnerability and emotion. It’s also seen as a way for Gen Zs to buck toxic masculinity, and celebrate men who aren’t afraid to embrace their feminine side.

Initially associated with an infantilising undertone in fandom culture, it has evolved to serve a more ironic purpose, particularly targeting men in their 30s and above who defy traditional expectations of masculinity.

This repurposed usage notably complements brooding, anti-heroic figures in their 40s – such as the character Kendall Roy from the HBO drama *Succession*, and actors Bill Hader and Pedro Pascal – adding depth and complexity to their characterisation.

Even now, the “babygirl” trend continues to thrive and evolve unabated. While most men remain hesitant to embrace the term, there is a growing acceptance among some who are comfortable with its usage. Despite initial reservations, the label serves as a catalyst for fostering discussions around emotional intelligence, challenging conventional norms of masculinity.



Timothee Chalamet

Jacob Elordi

Andrew Garfield

Harry Styles

TEXT SHAZRINA SHAMSUDIN PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

L O V I N G I N

S L O W

M O T I O N

PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

her world

Are you swiping too fast and too furiously? Perhaps it's time to be more mindful. Writer Cherry Tan explores the concept of intentional dating.

I first started dating actively in the wake of the pandemic. After months of being cooped up, it was time to do the exact opposite with the dating equivalent of revenge travelling. I spent most of my free time on dating apps, curiously swiping right on anyone I found remotely interesting.

Following a match, the steps were simple. First, determine that we have common topics; second, make sure they're not creepy; finally, arrange a date. Rise and repeat for the next person till someone sticks around. A couple years later, and this cycle runs itself on autopilot.

Valerie Tang, a 29-year-old engineer, does the same. "When I'm bored, I start swiping mindlessly, then I end up juggling too many [dates] at one go. The most I've been on was five dates, five days in a row, with five different people."

However, this results in "half-assing" her dates, and, due to fatigue, hitting pause on dating altogether until boredom kicks in, and she swipes mindlessly again once more. Sounds familiar?

Dating out of boredom to fill your time can be fun, but it can also lead to burnout if you're constantly experiencing unrewarding and short-lived interactions, on top of being overwhelmed by the sheer number of choices on the apps.

IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO DATE?

Not too long ago, I stumbled upon the concept of intentional dating, or the idea that we should be mindful in taking our time to find someone whose needs and desires match ours. What does that entail?

"To have intention, you need clarity. That could be a few things: Why are you dating? What do you want the experience to be like? Are you even ready to date in the first place? Having some basic criteria, what I call the deal breakers, will be quite important," shares Andrea Tan, founder of Athena Rising, a sex and relationship coaching and consulting practice.

Dating with intention isn't just an introspective process. For Ambra Liew, a relationship and break-up coach, intentional dating also means communicating what you want. She shares: "A lot of [my clients] say, 'I keep ending up with emotionally unavailable men.' I'd counter with, 'Okay, have you expressed to them what it is that you desire?'"

This process of determining whether your goals align isn't as simple as completing a checklist – it's a continuous process. "Intentional dating means seeing and talking regularly enough with someone to determine long-term compatibility. Someone's most consistent self is them at their truest, and I value the trust that builds with consistency," says Gen Lee, a 25-year-old content strategist. In a way, Gen's process is about "finding people whose lives I can add value to, and vice versa".

Naturally, people can and do change over time. "People don't stay the same throughout, even in long-term relationships, and their views may change. You're constantly learning new things about each other, and you have to choose to work on your relationship or to be in love and connected with that person," says Andrea.

While we hold space for our partners to change and grow, perhaps what's most important is keeping conversations open, and making that active decision to work on any differences that may arise, especially if these differences are non-negotiables for either party.

CAN YOU BE TOO INTENTIONAL?

There are occasions when well-intentioned intentions – pun fully intended – can backfire. One such occasion is when we develop a rigid and uncompromising attitude towards finding someone that has to fit each and every single piece of criterion we have.

Some specific criteria I've heard through reading online forums or in casual chats with my friends include a minimum height requirement, income level, and having a good smell (whatever that means). Then there's also time-based criteria that you can easily find when you Google "dating timeline". Sticking too rigidly to these criteria can lead to a sort of tunnel vision that shuts out potentially meaningful and long-lasting connections.

"We get very hung up with a lot of the mechanics," says Andrea, "and we try to control things that are actually entirely beyond our control." This manifests in milestone goals that aim to determine how to move forward (or not) with a potential love interest.

“To have intention, you need clarity. That could be a few things: Why are you dating? What do you want the experience to be like? Are you even ready to date in the first place?”

- ANDREA TAN, FOUNDER OF ATHENA RISING

Denise (not her real name), who works in the marine industry, recently told me that if things weren't feeling “right” by the third date – or around the month-long mark – it's a sign to move on to the next match. When pressed, she found it hard to define what “right” specifically meant. “I guess it's when I get a positive feeling about someone, and know intuitively that this connection is worth pursuing”

What constitutes “right” for Denise may not adhere to a set criteria – indeed, there is plenty of room for our messy and sometimes idiosyncratic feelings to shape our thoughts. I kid you not, I've had a friend tell me she would only date men who could pay for her meals and were well endowed. And those were non-negotiables to her!

Yet, the fact that Denise stuck so rigidly to her “three date, one month” rule sounded, to me, like an overly prescriptive way of going about a process that's usually unpredictable. For us, the best connections – be it between (potential) lovers, friends and family – are those that have the time and space to grow organically and spontaneously. While we're busy #girlbossing close to the sun, relationships can't be rushed.

At its heart, dating is an unpredictable game. Once, when I was aimlessly dating and uncertain of my goals, I went on two dates with someone I shared many similar interests, political beliefs, and values with, only for both of us to decide that we'd be better off as good friends. We remain great friends, meeting up as and when we feel like it, and bonding over our love of books and social causes.

Conversely, during a period of time when I was certain I wanted to find The One, I dated a guy I really liked for six whole months, only for me to get unceremoniously dumped after a regular movie date. There were no telltale signs of trouble. In fact, we grew more intimate than ever in the bedroom over the past weeks, on top of enjoying our staycations, cafe dates, and intellectually stimulating conversations.

There are things beyond our control when we date. Namely, we can't control how someone else feels towards us and reacts to what we do. Given all this, how can we help ourselves date better?

EMBRACE THE FLAVOUR AND EXCITEMENT IN DATING

This is where Ambra's advice to her clients to consider the “flavour of the date”, or what they want their dating experience to feel like, can come in handy to make the dating experience more meaningful, and less stressful than trying to meet some time-based dating KPI.

“A lot of people are scared to have the element of fun [in dating], because they're afraid to ‘waste time’. What if we allow ourselves to have fun, be curious, and still bear certain things in mind at the back of our heads?” asks Ambra.

Andrea concurs, advising us to “get less intentional about stuff [like height and income], and more intentional about how you want the relationship to be, and how you want to feel in the dating process”.

With these insights in mind, perhaps it's time for us to slow things down. Years after the post-pandemic “revenge dating”, I've grown tired of going on endless dates for the sake of it. Now, I've elected to go slower, and be mindful about what I want in a potential partner.

These are mostly related to one's personal values more than anything, such as being inclusive and sharing similar political views. With these intentions in mind, I spend less time agonising over something weird or nasty or hurtful someone said, because there's no chance I'd be willing to date someone like that.

Important non-negotiables aside, everything else is fair game, and I do my best to lean into the dating process, embracing all its highs and lows. Not every date will turn into a relationship, but that doesn't matter, as it's still time well spent getting to know another person.

Perhaps being intentional has “narrowed down” my dating pool, but I've learnt to place more value on the quality, rather than quantity, of my dates. I've also learnt to shift my focus away from the material outcome of dating – marriage or some form of long-term cohabitation – and focus more ensuring that both my date and I feel affirmed and valued in each other's company.

Sitting down with ourselves to discover our intentions and how to best honour them isn't an easy process. It's a lot of trial and error to account for the various changes we go through in life, but it has ultimately led to a more joyful dating life that all of us deserve. This process may be slower, but it holds many beautiful opportunities ahead.



**“A lot of people are scared to have the element of fun
[in dating], because they’re afraid to ‘waste time’.”**

- AMBRA LIEW, RELATIONSHIP AND BREAK-UP COACH

A woman in a grey dress stands in the center of a maze. The maze is composed of blue walls and orange floors. The lighting is dramatic, with the walls casting long shadows and the floor glowing with a warm orange light. The woman is seen from behind, looking into the maze.

CHANGING

THE GAME

IN MENTAL

HEALTH CARE

Teletherapy, VR therapy, and mobile apps are revolutionising mental health care. But while these tools aid in diagnosis and treatment, the question remains: Are there any drawbacks to integrating tech in the space?

Text Cheryl Lai-Lim

I'm standing on the 100th floor of a building in the central business district. Up here, I can hear the wind whistling, with the muted sounds of traffic below. My high vantage point means that I can see the rooftops of neighbouring skyscrapers. If I tip my legs over the edge, the fall will most likely be fatal. If I had a fear of heights, this location would trigger my anxiety.

But despite the sensations, I'm actually safe. Physically, I'm not on a precarious ledge. I'm sitting in an office chair at Olive Branch Psychology & Therapy Clinic in Singapore, immersed in a therapy session wearing a virtual reality (VR) headset. The session is facilitated by centre director and psychologist Sam Roberts.

While using VR for entertainment isn't out of the ordinary, its application is increasingly extending beyond leisure – it's now becoming a popular modality for mental health care.

When utilised effectively, these computer-simulated worlds offer a profound form of treatment for many mental health conditions. A number of studies have shown that VR therapy is linked to reduced symptom severity in both post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, and it has demonstrated significant promise in providing pain relief as an alternative to traditional medications.

For instance, a study published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, one of the journals of the Society of Behavioral Medicine, showcased how burn victims experienced substantial reductions in physical pain – ranging from 35 to 50 per cent – by engaging in immersive virtual environments, such as interacting with snowmen and throwing snowballs in a snowy world.

HOW VR THERAPY WORKS

"VR therapy is a form of exposure therapy," explains Sam, who has been employing VR therapy as an adjunct treatment for phobias for three years. Each session typically lasts 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the individual's level of fear.

How does the VR equipment come into place during a therapy session? Sam emphasises that it isn't immediately introduced in the first session, particularly if the client isn't ready. Instead, each session begins like a traditional therapy session, where the soft-spoken counsellor engages in dialogue with the client. "First, we need to understand the psychodynamics – meaning, what's happening and where their fear came from," he explains.

VR is then brought into the therapy process if deemed necessary, serving as an additional tool to help confront specific scenarios. Sam tailors the VR environment to address the client's specific needs and the severity of their phobia. For example, he might create a virtual presentation room or stage to help those with stage fright overcome their fear of public speaking.

"We can also transport socially anxious individuals to a virtual restaurant or bar, where they can interact with simulated characters," he adds.

Like many others, I have a moderate fear of cockroaches, though I wouldn't say my fear is rooted in trauma. The psychologist decides to simulate an environment with cockroaches. He gradually increases the exposure level, starting with placing me in a room where a glass case of cockroaches sits at the end of a table. With him controlling the VR program via a laptop, the virtual cockroaches begin to stir and climb out of the case, heading towards me. Though it gives me the heebie-jeebies, the knowledge that it's all virtual (and constantly rubbing my hands to make sure no real cockroaches are crawling all over them) provides reassurance.

Just how effective can VR therapy be when you are aware that you're physically not within the environment?

"Through repeated exposure and guided therapeutic interventions, the skills learnt in the virtual environment can generalise to real-life situations, where individuals report feeling more confident and better equipped to face their fear outside of the therapy setting," explains Sam.

While a single 30-minute session did not eradicate my fear entirely, it does provide reassurance that cockroaches pose no harmful intentions towards me. (Though I'm 100 per cent sure I'll still scream if I see a cockroach flying towards me.)

OTHER FORMS OF TECH IN THERAPY

In addition to VR, wearable devices also offer a unique opportunity to gain insights into individuals' mental states. According to global market research company Facts and Factors, the global wearable device market size is expected to cross US\$380 billion (\$512 billion) by 2028. The number of health and fitness app users has crossed 91 million in 2023.

Wearable devices offer continuous monitoring of physiological data, such as heart rate, sleep patterns, and activity levels, providing valuable insights into an individual's mental and physical well-being. For example, smartwatches can track changes in heart rate variability, which may indicate stress levels or mood fluctuations, while Oura Rings monitor sleep quality and recovery metrics.

Then, there's also a growing prevalence of AI chatbots and teletherapy services, offering easy accessibility for individuals who need instant support. US-based platforms such as Betterhelp, Talkspace, and Amwell provide remote therapy sessions with licensed mental health professionals through video conferencing, chat, or phone calls.

In Singapore, local mental health practices are also embracing telehealth services. Annabelle Chow, founder and principal clinical psychologist at Annabelle Psychology, says: "Telehealth is integrated with in-clinic therapy, offering a hybrid approach tailored to each client's needs."

For instance, clients might initially attend sessions in person to establish rapport with their therapist, then transition to telehealth for ongoing support. This approach ensures regularity and consistency, while also giving individuals access to clinicians with specific niches or specialisations that may not be readily available locally.

She sees potential for AI to assist in triaging clients, prioritising those in urgent need of help, and preparing standard lists of resources based on the AI's assessment of clinical presentations.

There is also a plethora of mental health apps available for smartphones, offering features such as mood tracking, guided meditation, cognitive-behavioural therapy, stress reduction techniques, and self-help resources. AI-powered chatbots provide instant support and guidance, serving as conversational interfaces for accessing coping strategies, information, and emotional support.

Hannah Ong, a 27-year-old accountant diagnosed with depression two years ago, uses Wysa, a mental health support app. "I discovered the app by searching 'mental health' in the app store," she says. Out of all the other mental health apps, she decided to download Wysa in particular as she was attracted to its easy-to-use interface, and positive reviews from other users.

As her condition has improved since her diagnosis, she has gradually reduced her therapy sessions with her counsellor. Wysa assists her on days when she's feeling down, allowing her to vent and engage in reflective exercises. "Talking to the AI chatbot helps me reflect, and be more aware of my emotions and feelings," she shares, adding that due to the fact that "it's a non-living being, I feel that there is less judgement".

TECH'S IMPORTANT ROLE IN MENTAL HEALTHCARE

The integration of tech into mental health treatment represents a significant shift in how therapy is accessed and delivered. In 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced so many of us to work from home and transition to virtual platforms like Zoom, mental health professionals – psychiatrists, psychotherapists and social workers – followed suit.

But what initially emerged as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic has now become a permanent fixture. Recent data from the American Psychological Association reveals a widespread adoption of remote therapy services, with 96 per cent of clinical psychologists offering some form of remote treatment. This shift has dramatically improved access to treatment for conditions such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

"While AI and other technologies serve as valuable tools to increase access and promote desirable outcomes, it's essential to recognise that psychologists remain the cornerstone of effective therapy."

- ANNABELLE CHOW, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AT ANNABELLE PSYCHOLOGY

The World Health Organization's World Mental Health Report, published in 2022, underscores the rapid integration of digital technologies into the mental health care landscape. Online consultations alleviate the need for travel, reducing time and cost. They also offer greater flexibility, easily fitting into people's work or home schedules.

These innovations are backed by significant financial support, with global investment in mental health technology surpassing US\$5 billion (\$6.7 billion) in 2021 alone, marking a remarkable 139 per cent increase from the previous year.

A report published in January 2024 by the global market research and consulting firm, The Business Research Company, predicts this trend's continuation, projecting the market to reach US\$12.05 billion (\$16.1 billion) in 2024, and US\$31.03 billion (\$41.6 billion) by 2028. Leading this market growth is the Asia-Pacific region, followed closely by Western Europe, North America, and other regions.

Sam anticipates a bright future for VR therapy, foreseeing its widespread adoption. "I envision increased accessibility and affordability of VR equipment, fostering inclusivity in therapy. Exciting prospects emerge with innovative modalities like integrating VR with mindfulness or art therapy for comprehensive treatment approaches," he says.

While these advancements undeniably enhance accessibility, the question remains: can technology alone suffice as a comprehensive solution for mental health treatment?

POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

Well, it depends. The effectiveness of VR therapy in addressing various mental health issues is a topic of growing interest and research. A 2023 study conducted by psychologists in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, highlighted the success of VR therapy, particularly when used in conjunction with cognitive-behavioural therapy, reporting success rates ranging from 66 to 90 per cent for individuals with PTSD.

However, despite these promising results, questions regarding the long-term effectiveness of VR therapy persist. For example, in using VR for exposure therapy, can the fear or anxiety return after therapy?

"Certainly, relapse remains a possibility post-VR therapy, similar to other therapeutic methods," says Sam. "Fear or anxiety may resurface due to various factors, including incomplete or premature treatment termination, difficulty in generalising coping skills, new life stressors triggering past anxieties, and inconsistent maintenance of learnt strategies."

Therefore, while virtual reality therapy offers innovative solutions, the "human touch" remains indispensable in mental health treatment. "Regular follow-up sessions with a therapist are essential to reinforce coping techniques and address emerging concerns effectively," says Sam.

Wearable technology on the other hand, also has its own limitations. The data collected by these devices may not always be accurate or reliable, due to user error – for example, if I don't wear my Apple Watch to bed, it's unable to capture sleep data from me, which can affect the insights drawn from it. Plus, wearing a device continuously can be uncomfortable or inconvenient for some, which might then lead to inconsistent usage. And capturing the data is one thing, but interpreting the data? Complex insights might require specialised knowledge from healthcare professionals.

Similarly, when it comes to telehealth, one notable concern is the vulnerability of clients when seeking therapy online. Due diligence is crucial to finding a qualified therapist who can provide appropriate support and guidance tailored to individual needs.

When it comes to AI chatbots, Annabelle highlights the potential limitations of the technology right now, cautioning that clients may not always articulate their issues accurately, and the AI's responses may not always address the underlying concerns adequately.

Despite advancements, the personalised support and connection offered in face-to-face interactions are still valued by many individuals seeking mental health support.

For Hannah, while the Wysa mental health app offers professional telehealth services with just one click, she still prefers in-person sessions with her therapist when necessary. She finds face-to-face interactions to be more comforting and effective in addressing her mental health needs.

THE NEED FOR A HUMAN TOUCH

Ultimately, while technology continues to revolutionise the field of mental health care, it's essential to remember that the human connection between therapist and client remains irreplaceable. Despite promising advancements in technology-assisted therapy, it is the expertise, empathy, and personalised care provided by psychologists that truly drive meaningful therapeutic outcomes, says Annabelle.

"While AI and other technologies serve as valuable tools to increase access and promote desirable outcomes, it's essential to recognise that psychologists remain the cornerstone of effective therapy," she concludes.

WHAT DO YOU
KNOW ABOUT



PERIMENOPAUSE?

TEXT SEE WENWEI, EDEN LOKE, PRIYANKA TAMILARASAN & NICIA LEONG PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

It can start as young as our 30s, so why aren't we talking about it? Nanyang Technological University undergrads See Wenwei, Eden Loke, Priyanka Tamilarasan and Nicia Leong have made it their mission to increase awareness on this condition affecting half of the world's population.

Watching her mother struggle with perimenopausal symptoms in her early 40s – due to the removal of her womb – inspired our classmate Priyanka to kick-start the conversation about the idea of a perimenopause awareness campaign. Priyanka shared that she had felt extremely helpless watching her mother in pain from her countless hospital visits, as she had no idea what was happening to her body.

As young women in our 20s, we were ourselves shocked to only find out about the existence of perimenopause when we heard Priyanka's story.

With 1.1 billion women set to be postmenopausal by 2025, the quietness around menopause and its precursor, perimenopause, remains surprisingly loud.

This silence leaves countless women unprepared for a natural, yet pivotal, life transition, surrounded by a culture of silence and stigma. Perimenopause, a phase fraught with its unique set of challenges, symbolises not a decline, but a natural progression in a woman's life, akin to a second puberty.

Perimenopause heralds a period of significant change, hitting women aged 45 to 55, though it can start as early as the mid-30s. It brings hormonal shifts, irregular periods, and symptoms mirroring menopause.

Dr June Tan Sheren from Osler Health International underscores the diversity of the perimenopausal experience, noting that symptoms and severity vary from one woman to the next, with some facing the whole host of symptoms, from the physical to the emotional, and others facing none at all.

Research by the awareness campaign Beyond The Pause revealed that 45 per cent of the 177 Singapore women surveyed, aged 21 to 60, were unaware about perimenopause.

This lack of awareness, coupled with the stigmatisation of menopause, contributes to a culture where women often endure their symptoms in silence. Participants in focus groups expressed a desire for more information and support, confessing their reluctance to discuss their symptoms for fear of being dismissed, and having their genuine distress reduced to mere "PMS" or trivialised as "just menopause".

Beyond The Pause is more than just an awareness campaign – it's a movement towards empowerment and understanding. By collaborating with doctors and local women's organisations to produce educational materials on the topic, we aim to equip perimenopausal women and their families with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate this phase.

The campaign has already made significant strides, with a presence at events such as the Singapore Women's Festival in March. The personal interactions at our booth allowed for deep, meaningful conversations, providing attendees with insights and reassurance about perimenopause. Many elderly women told us how heartened they were to see that we were raising awareness about perimenopause. They recalled it as a confusing and isolating time where they didn't understand their bodies, and no one understood what they were going through.

This only serves to bolster our purpose, which is to destigmatise conversations around women's health and mental well-being – and we believe that change begins with us.

For more information, visit @beyondthepause_sg on Instagram.

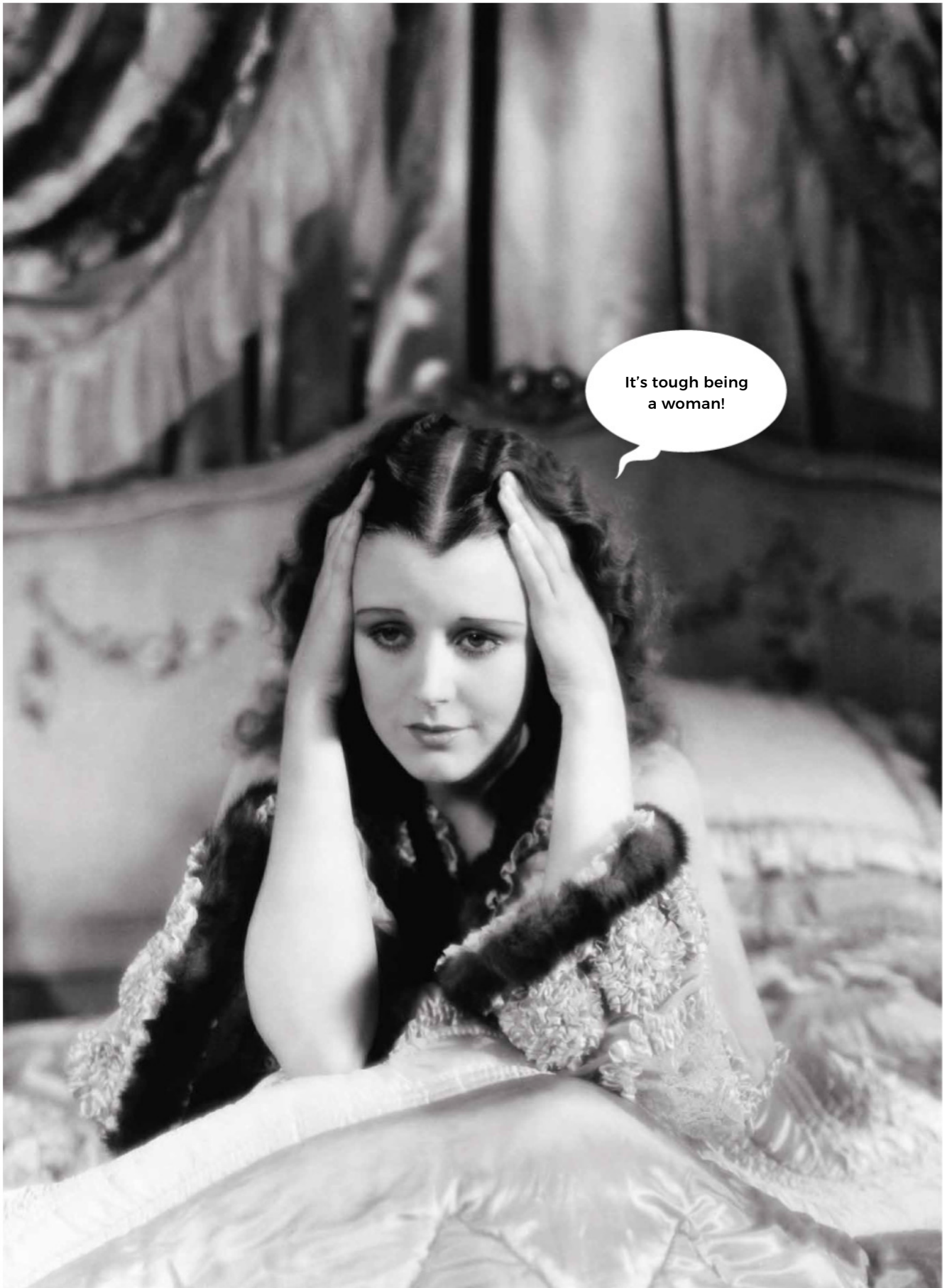


PHOTO EVERETT COLLECTION

I've been having hot flushes recently... should I be alarmed?

Associate professor Rukshini Puvanendran answers.

I have been experiencing symptoms of menopause, including hot flushes, body aches and mood changes like low mood or irritability. A friend suggested that I might have menopause - but I still have my period. What am I suffering from?

Menopause occurs after a woman has her final menstrual period (defined as 12 months of no periods in a woman who is not pregnant or has other causes for loss of periods), and typically occurs in the late 40s or early 50s. Perimenopause is the transition period before a woman's last period. The average age of menopause in Singapore women is 49, so most women should expect perimenopause symptoms a few years prior.

Getting evaluated is ideal, to determine if it is indeed perimenopause, and exclude other causes of hot flushes, eg thyroid or other hormonal imbalances. Some women experience premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) or early menopause too.

Perimenopause symptoms, including hot flushes, night sweats, body aches, mood changes, and changes in the intensity and frequency of menstrual periods, are caused by hormonal fluctuations (oestrogen production in the womb), and occur up to 10 years before menopause. Symptoms can be confusing, as women are still having their periods and may lack awareness of hormonal changes. Perimenopause impacts a woman's health, and can affect personal relationships and work performance.

What might seeking treatment look like?

We encourage women to not "bear with it". Take charge! Perimenopausal women with bothersome symptoms should talk to their primary care doctor. If symptoms affect quality of life, or if they undergo unusually early menopause (before 45 years old), they may be referred to a tertiary centre like KK Menopause Centre.

Generally, we look at menstrual history, reproductive history and family history, as well as any other medical illnesses to identify risks. We evaluate patients' physical symptoms and emotional health, ruling out situations that may mimic menopause symptoms, including thyroid imbalances or consuming certain medications. A full physical examination, as well as investigations like mammograms, scans and blood tests, may be ordered.

Lifestyle interventions – nutrition, exercise, stress management, sleep optimisation, and avoiding substance use (cigarettes or alcohol etc) – form the foundation of treatment. Treatment may also include menopause hormone therapy (MHT) or non-hormonal medications to control symptoms.

I've never heard of MHT - what is this treatment, and is it available in Singapore?

The underlying cause of menopause symptoms is a decrease or lack of female hormones – replacing these hormones improves the symptoms. MHT is the most effective treatment for typical symptoms like hot flushes and night sweats. Widely used since the 1980s, MHT is available in Singapore in the form of oral tablets, gels and patches.

However, a local qualitative study co-authored with KK Women's and Children's Hospital showed that only 5 per cent of menopausal and perimenopausal women sought MHT, despite its efficacy.

A 17-year follow-up of the study showed that five-year use of MHT in women in their 50s had several benefits: reducing heart disease, fractures and all-cause mortality, including cancer mortality. While starting MHT if you are over 60 is not recommended, MHT has been shown to be safe and effective for most women under the age of 60 who are not at risk of breast cancer or blood clots.

Associate Professor Rukshini Puvanendran is the co-director of KK Menopause Centre, and head and senior consultant for Family Medicine Service at KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Her clinical interests are in Midlife Women's Health, including Menopause and Osteoporosis.

Do you have a question about health, wellness or just life in general? Write to maghw@sph.com.sg, and we'll have your query answered by an expert.

HER BEAUTY

Black Cat Energy

The '80s called and the “mob wives” have answered – with dramatic makeup.

Say goodbye to subdued and “clean”, and hello to bold and loud. Mob wife makeup is making its mark in 2024 – and in a very dramatic way. If you’ve seen new looks from the likes of Hailey Bieber and Dua Lipa, you’ll know what we’re talking about.

Makeup artist Larry Yeo describes this trend as an escape from the overworked and over-worn “clean girl” aesthetic, with a shift towards the ultra-excessive, “pretend-TV” look. “It’s all about the presumed 1970s/80s ‘Italian-American look;” he says.

A throwback to the glamorous women from movies such as *Scarface* (1983) or *Casino* (1995), the look is flashy with bright lips, heavily lined eyes, and just oozing sophistication and confidence. Forget barely there makeup and take things up a few notches by going heavy on every part of your face. It’s also not important to apply everything perfectly. In fact, a “morning after” effect is one of the fun – even sexy – features.

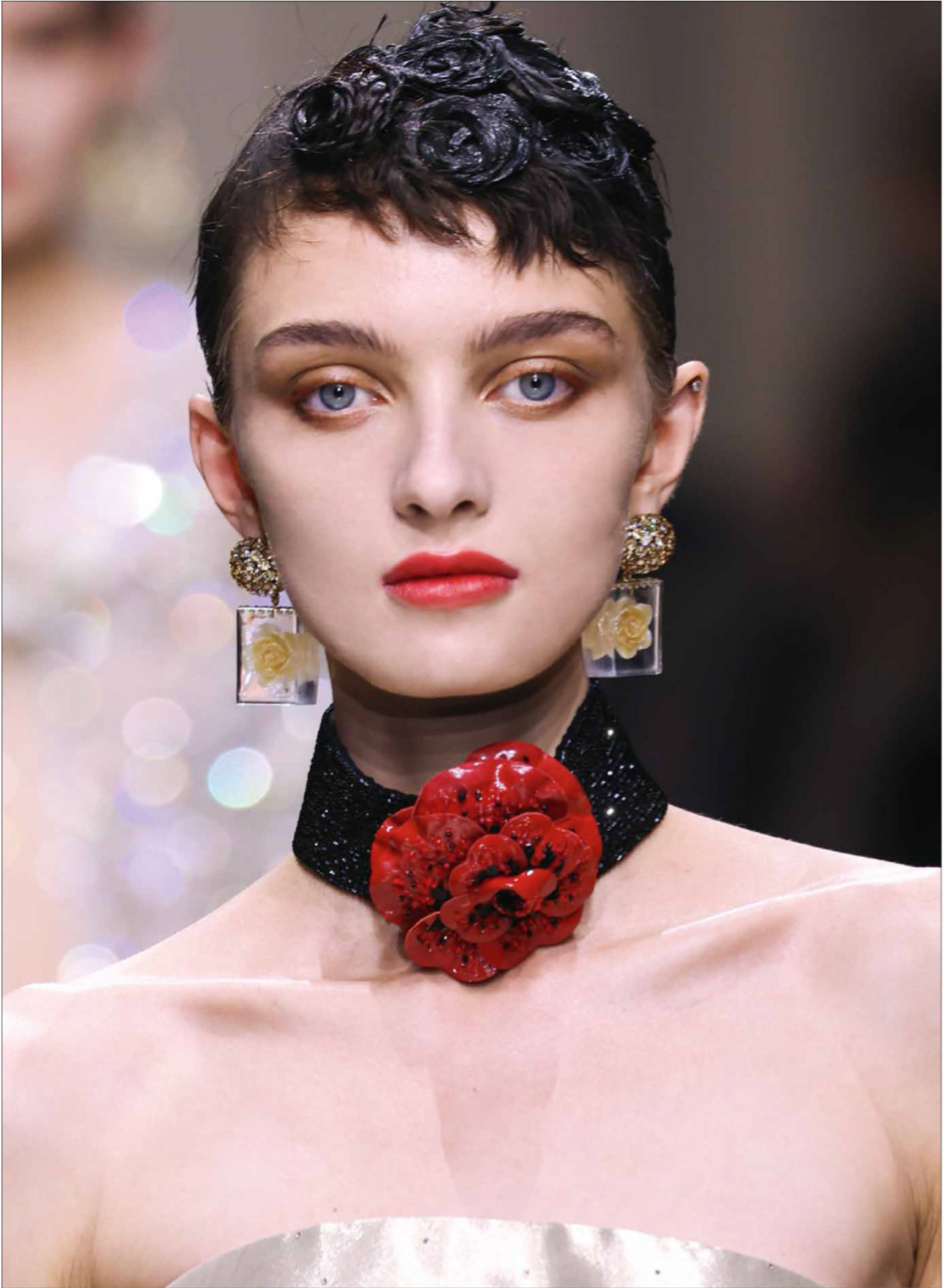
Larry recommends this look for a night out or an important evening dinner. His tips for achieving it: a strong-contoured eye showing a bit more old-school luxury, mid-contoured cheeks with a neutral blush suited to your skin tone, and a darkened mauve or stunning red lip boosted with liner.

“We have to be careful about how it works on the face, though,” he advises. “You can tone it down by taking one focus feature one notch down.”

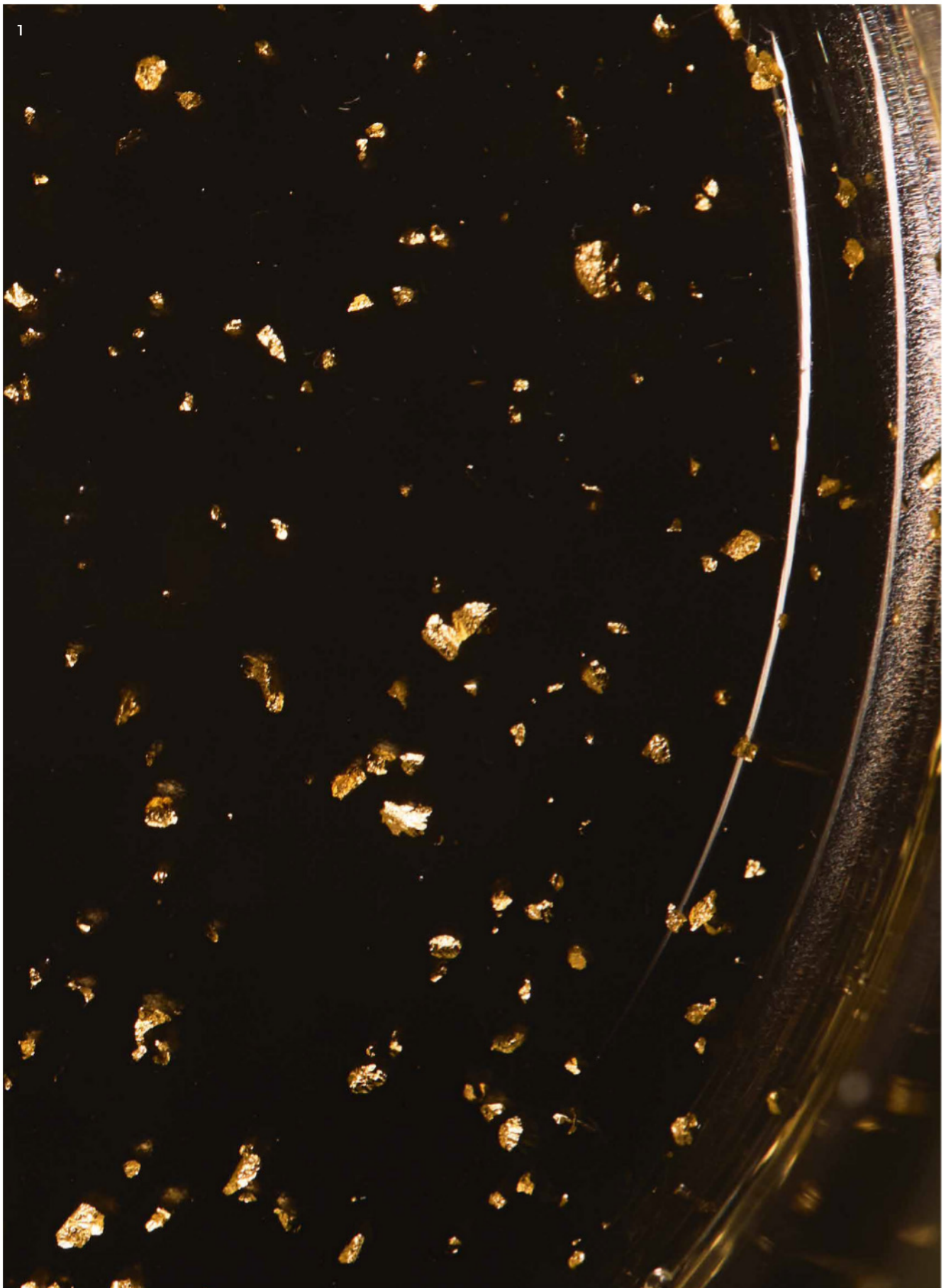
To make it last, he recommends using any eyeshadow base, such as Hourglass Eye Primer, to ensure that everything stays in place.

“Bobbi Brown eyeshadow sticks are amazing for working on the depth and shadows before you apply powder eyeshadow,” he adds. “And M.A.C Colour Excess Gel Pencils (in navy, eggplant or black) are stunning, and last through wind, rain and tears.”

Larry also suggests evening out the skin with Sisley Phyto-Teint Perfection for a soft matte, but luminous finish. Touch up where needed, using Fenty Beauty Pro Filt’r Instant Retouch Concealer to hide signs of your late nights. Finally, finish off with Gucci Rouge A Levres Liquide Mat Lip Colour so your lipstick stays on without smudging.



TEXT BALVINDER SANDHU PHOTO SHOWBIT



1

PHOTOGRAPHY ATHIRAH ANNISSA ART DIRECTION ADELINE ENG

her world

April favourites

Here are some of the must-haves you will not regret adding to your beauty shelf.

By Letty Seah



2



3



4



5



6

1. Bio-essence Bio-Gold 24K Black Gold Water, \$47.30

This gold-infused serum is truly worth its weight in gold. Besides elevating your shelfie, it deeply hydrates and tackles signs of ageing with skin-loving ingredients such as peptides and caviar. The result? Moisturised skin with a healthy glow.

2. Dior Beauty Miss Dior Mini Miss Eau De Parfum, \$104

At just 3.2g, this sleek lipstick-shaped solid perfume houses one of maison's most timeless scents, Miss Dior. A fruity floral concoction of zesty blood orange, mandarin, delicate lily of the valley, and woody patchouli, this fragrance is perfect for the tropics.

3. Caudalie Resveratrol-Lift Firming Night Cream, \$90

Powered by resveratrol, a gentle retinol alternative that encourages cellular turnover sans irritation, this formula works overtime to plump, firm and hydrate skin. It's also infused with hyaluronic acid, a vegan collagen alternative, and peptides to keep skin moisturised.

4. Sisley Phyto-Teint Perfection, \$130

While this buildable formula boasts impressive coverage, it still manages to impart a natural, second-skin finish. It's also formulated with the brand's Ideal Skin Complex (a mix of hydrating cucumber and glyco-complex, soothing green lentil extracts, and strengthening buckwheat seed and peach blossom) that combats environmental aggressors.

5. Guerlain Kiss Kiss Bee Glow Oil, \$64

Thanks to moisture-boosting ingredients such as Corsican honey, propolis and royal jelly, this lip oil offers immediate comfort to even the driest of lips. Wear it on its own for a glass-like, high shine finish or pair it with your favourite lipstick to enhance volume and luminosity. Choose from six wearable hues.

6. Cle de Peau Beauté Eye Contour Cream Supreme, \$360

Antioxidant-rich Indonesian lempuyang (fragrant ginger) extract and citrus unshiu peel extracts work together to reduce the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines and dullness. For best results, work the formula into your skin with the accompanying platinum massager to cool and energise the delicate under-eye area.

LED lip therapy

Text & Coordination Letty Seah

Beyond eye masks and skincare wands, there's a new wave of cutting-edge tools that harness the power of LED light therapy to stimulate collagen production, so as to plump and enhance smoothness of the lips in under five minutes.

Enter Dr Dennis Gross Drx Spectralite Lipware Pro, a small but mighty handheld mouthpiece that is fitted with over 56 red light bulbs to add volume to your pout, and reduce signs of ageing sans fillers.

While LED facial devices are not new, most of the products out in the market are not designed to treat the lips and skin around the mouth.

"The lip area is notoriously different to treat," says Dr Dennis Gross, eponymous founder of the brand. "The skin on the lips is especially thin and sensitive, making it extra vulnerable to collagen breakdown, free radical damage, and premature ageing."

He adds: "The device uses four unique red LED wavelengths to help stimulate collagen production, increase skin density and firmness on and around the lips, visibly plump, smooth lines and wrinkles, promote healthy circulation, and enhance lip colour and definition."

According to Dr Gross, Drx Spectralite Lipware Pro employs a full spectrum of light, combining amber, red, deep red and infrared wavelengths. The amber wavelength targets the epidermis, and repairs visible signs of sun ageing at the surface level of skin. Red and deep red wavelengths go in deeper to stimulate collagen production, and minimise the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Finally, infrared wavelengths work on the deeper tissue, promoting circulation and wound healing.

"When used specifically on the lips, it is meant to increase blood circulation and, in so doing, increase lip volume, fill in fine lines and wrinkles, and enhance plumpness," says Dr Lee Hwee Chyen, consultant dermatologist at Epi Dermatology & Laser Specialist Clinic. "It has been marketed as an alternative to injectable lip fillers."

La Clinic's medical director, Dr Rachel Ho, notes that although there isn't sufficient data to validate the efficacy of such light-emitting technology for the lips, such devices "can be used to treat conditions such as eczema, depending on the wavelength of the LED light".

Can it replace in-clinic solutions?

However, both experts were quick to point out that light-therapy lip treatments like Drx Spectralite Lipware Pro will not plump your pout or dramatically change the way your lips look in the way that a dermal filler or lip lift might.

"LED light is unable to replicate the effects of lip fillers or Botox lip flip (it does not replace volume nor help to relax muscles). The results of LED light therapy for rejuvenation are usually subtle and gradual, and will not be able to give the same results as in-clinic treatments," explains Dr Ho.

Dr Lee adds that as convenient as the device is, it's important to manage your expectations. "LED home-based devices require consistent use over an extended period of time, resulting in visible but subtle results at least four to eight weeks later."

Even though these at-home gadgets can't take the place of more invasive, in-clinic solutions, they serve as preventative tools for those who prefer a more subtle effect. Dr Gross notes that these are also convenient and suitable for busy individuals, as well as those who are concerned about downtime and potential side effects of injections like pain, bruising or "over-filling", as LED light therapy is suitable for all skin types.

That said, Dr Lee warns individuals with a predisposition to photo-aggravated conditions such as eczema, rosacea and other autoimmune conditions like lupus, or who are on photosensitising medication like tetracyclines or retinoids, against trying out new at-home LED devices until their condition has stabilised.

Is it worth the hype?

There is still the question of whether the device is truly effective. After using it, I did not notice a visible difference in the fullness of my lips, but I definitely observed an improvement in their texture.

After two uses, I noticed a dramatic improvement in my lip lines. With consistent use over two weeks, I also observed that my lipstick, even matte formulas that tend to be more drying, applied more smoothly. I also appreciated its automatic switch-off feature after three minutes, which is the duration of a cycle.

Even though the pacifier-like device is equipped with a lip tray to prevent your pout from puckering, I found myself clenching my jaw to hold the device. This made it hard for me to multitask even though it is designed to be used hands-free. I definitely recommend using this tool when you're lying down, so you can relax your pout and jaw when using it.



PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

Dr. Dennis
Gross
Derminfusions
Plump +
Repair Lip
Treatment
(\$72), and Drx
Spectralite
Lipware
Pro (\$238),
available at
Sephora



A

CHARMED

This season, playful accessories are adorning the purses of stylish tastemakers. Here, we show you how these customised bag charms are a handy way to touch up your makeup while on the go.

LIFE

Bag, Dior

SUPER LADY Dior Forever Cushion (\$127 for refill and case) is laced with wild pansy extract and 25 per cent water to effortlessly smooth over imperfections, without feeling cakey. Prevent your foundation from settling into fine lines by priming your face with Dior Capture Totale Hyalushot Wrinkle Corrector (\$146). It is a hyper-targeted treatment that harnesses the moisturising powers of hyaluronic acid and logonza. Finally, bring on the drama with Dior Addict Hydrating Glossy Natural Lipstick (\$63).



Bag, Alexander McQueen

TEXT & COORDINATION LETTY SEAH PHOTOGRAPHY ATHIRAH ANNISSA ART DIRECTION ADELINE ENG

STAR APPEAL You can use the lighter shade of the Anastasia Beverly Hills Brow Powder Duo (\$45) for that no makeup, makeup look and the darker hue for night. It's equally effective when used as a contour for the hairline and nose bridge. Pro tip: a statement-making lip like Pat McGrath Labs Mattetrance Lipstick (\$62) is great for enlivening your complexion. Keep a bottle of travel-sized perfume, such as Analisa Neige Bleue (\$10 for 2ml), on hand to smell and feel your best. Drawing inspiration from the crisp winter air and brisk sea breeze, this scent boasts notes of mandarin, geranium, lavandin and cedarwood.



Bag, Bottega Veneta

GOOD CATCH Elevate your daily makeup look with the four quad Burberry Beauty Eye Quad Eyeshadow Palette (\$110) that comes packed with a mix of neutral matte, shimmery and satin shades. Since the shadows are designed to be used wet or dry, you can dampen your applicator and use the darker shades as eyeliner. Swipe on a coat or two of Fenty Beauty Hella Thicc Volumizing Mascara (Deluxe Sample Size, price unavailable) to look bright-eyed and put together. Finally, add a hint of colour to your cheek and pout with Charlotte Tilbury Hollywood Beauty Icon Lipstick (\$55).



Bag, Chanel

SOFT GIRL Embellish your handbag with Chanel No. 1 De Chanel Lip and Cheek Balm (\$78). Not only does it offer instant relief and comfort for dry, chapped lips, it is also versatile enough to be used as a blush and base for lipstick. Team it with the brand's Le Vernis (\$46 each) in #111 Ballerina, a pinkish nude, and #135 Immortelle, a periwinkle blue, to lift your spirits and complete your look.



Bags, Loewe

TWO OF A KIND (Bag on left) This two-hue Amuse Lip & Cheek Healthy Balm (\$23) imparts a glossy stain on the cheeks and pulls double-duty as a lip balm in a pinch. Dab on the Amuse Jel-fit Tint (\$27) to deliver extra moisture to your pout. (Bag on right) Fenty Skin Plush Puddin' Lip Mask in Kalahari Melon (\$36) dispenses a small amount of product with each twist for mess-free application, while the formula itself is fortified with conditioning oils to repair chapped lips. Follow up with the ultra-sleek Fenty Skin Lux Ultra-Hydrating Lip Balm (\$25) to coat your pout with a waxy, moisturising layer that lasts all day.



Bags, Tod's

SUMMER LOVING Supergoop's Unseen Sunscreen Stick (price unavailable) is the ultimate handbag hero. Not only does it offer SPF40 coverage, it also smooths skin and preps it for makeup. Meanwhile, IT Cosmetics Bye Bye Under Eye Bags Daytime Treatment (\$55) harnesses a patented honeycomb technology to create a flexible adhesive layer that depuffs and lifts the undereye area without lifting your makeup. Another convenient addition to your oversized bag charm? Fenty Beauty We're Even Hydrating Concealer (\$45) is an all-rounder concealer that masks dark circles, cancels out redness, and hides spots without caking on the skin.

Can I have your number, please?

We uncover the significance behind the numbers in iconic beauty products, from the “50” in Biologique Recherche’s renowned Lotion P50 to the “540” in Maison Francis Kurkdjian’s Tiktok-famous Baccarat Rouge 540.

Text Syed Zulfadhli

1. Elizabeth Arden Eight Hour Cream Skin Protectant, \$42 for 50ml

What’s in a number? In 1930, Canadian-American beauty mogul Elizabeth Arden concocted a multi-purpose ointment that was later named “Eight Hour Cream Skin Protectant” upon release. It earned the catchy “Eight Hour” moniker when one of Arden’s client’s supposedly applied the balm on her son’s scraped knee, and noticed the complete healing of the injury just eight hours later.

Claim to fame: Aside from the famous story of its origins, the vitamin E and salicylic acid enriched petroleum-based formula has gained popularity among royals, celebrities and A-list makeup artists (the late Queen Elizabeth, Victoria Beckham and Kate Moss are said to be fans). The nourishing formula has a range of uses, from a glossy sheer highlighter to a deeply hydrating lotion.

2. Maison Francis Kurkdjian Baccarat Rouge 540 Eau De Parfum, \$912 for 200ml

What’s in a number? Love it or hate it, the Baccarat Rouge 540 won’t go unnoticed. The 540 refers to the Baccarat crystal’s alchemy, where it turns a brilliant shade of red at precisely 540 deg C when its molten mass and 24K gold particles are fused. All these elements allude to French luxury, which Kurkdjian successfully captures within the sweet “ambery” juice.

Claim to fame: Thanks to its distinct floral-amber notes, the Baccarat Rouge 540 EDP went viral among Tiktok’s community of fragrance heads and influencers in 2020.

3. Chanel No. 5 Eau De Parfum, \$205 for 50ml and \$292 for 100ml

What’s in a number? When French-Russian chemist and perfumer Ernest Beaux offered 10 fragrance samples for Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel to test, she decided on the fifth one as the first perfume to be launched by the maison. The notoriously superstitious couturier dubbed it “No. 5”, as she believed five to be her lucky number. It’s also said that it was her way of honouring her astrological sign, Leo – the fifth sign in the zodiac.

Claim to fame: The original No. 5 is a hypnotic blend of aldehydes, powdery notes and sensual florals that was an instant hit when Chanel first introduced it to her select clientele of society’s elites. Fast forward to 2024, and four interpretations of the No.5 have since been released, with Jacques Polge’s 1986 launch, No. 5 Eau De Parfum, being the most well-received one today, thanks to its modern take with woodier and more effervescent notes.





4



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4. Drunk Elephant Beste No. 9 Jelly Cleanser, \$49 for 150ml

What's in a number? Stay-at-home mum-turned-skincare mogul Tiffany Masterson is known for being involved in every step of formulating the concoctions in all of Drunk Elephant's inventory – so much so that it took nine tries before the Beste No. 9 Jelly Cleanser finally earned her seal of approval, hence the “9” in the product's name.

Claim to fame: The brand has garnered over 285 beauty awards since 2015, speaking volumes about the efficacy of the famously toxin-free vegan formulas. The ultra-hydrating Beste No. 9 Jelly Cleanser is a favourite among beauty editors, as it thoroughly removes every trace of grime and makeup without stripping the skin of precious moisture.

5. Biologique Recherche Lotion P50, price unavailable

What's in a number? According to Biologique Recherche's founder and creator of the brand's famous Lotion P50 Yvan Allouche, the “P” and “50” in the name refers to the word “peeling” and the sum of two rounds of our naturally occurring 25-day epidermal cycles respectively.

Claim to fame: Concocted in the '70s by Allouche, a biologist, and his physiotherapist wife, Josette – the Lotion P50 is often touted as the first acid toner in the market that aims to exfoliate, purify, cleanse, sanitise and regenerate the epidermis. With a blend of exfoliating hydroxy acids, purifying plant extracts and balancing botanicals, the regenerative formula delivers a brighter and more even complexion effectively.

6. Dior Beauty Rouge Dior 999 Velvet, \$66

What's in a number? French couturier Christian Dior created shades #9 and #99 – a nod to one of his lucky numbers, nine – for his fashion show back in 1953. The shades were later combined and modernised as Dior 999, which features a warm red heightened with a touch of blue.

Claim to fame: On top of being a universally flattering shade, the high-performance lip colour is treated with floral science, with peony extract and other botanicals infused in the formula to comfort and hydrate the lips for hours on end. The lasting staying power seals the deal, earning the lipstick a spot as a favourite among beauty enthusiasts worldwide.

7. Loewe #001 Man Eau De Toilette, \$168 for 50ml and \$229 for 100ml, and #001 Woman Eau De Toilette, \$164 for 50ml and \$223 for 100ml

What's in a number? In 2016, the Loewe #001 Man and Loewe #001 Woman EDPs marked the first pair of fragrances launched by the brand under designer Jonathan Anderson's creative direction. Created by perfumer Emilio Valeros, these perfumes have “001” as their names to signify new beginnings, specifically the first crack of morning light after an intimate encounter.

Claim to fame: A quiet yet statement-making favourite among minimalists. The skin-like scents dry down to leave powdery and musky notes in their wake.

8. Olaplex No. 3 Hair Perfector, \$52 for 100ml

What's in a number? When it comes to Olaplex's best-selling No. 3 Hair Perfector, the numerals only serve to give order to a system. After treating your hair with Olaplex's No. 1 Bond Multiplier and No. 2 Bond Perfector exclusively at the salon, the haircare brand's safe-for-home No. 3 Hair Perfector enters the picture, working as a weekly at-home treatment to be used before shampoo.

Claim to fame: Formulated with Olaplex's proprietary Bond Building Technology (also known as bis-aminopropyl diglycol dimaleate), the potent formula works at a deep molecular level to repair broken disulfide bonds, restoring strength and health back to severely damaged hair.

9. Shu Uemura Shade RD163, \$56

What's in a number? Kakuyasu Uchiide, Shu Uemura's international artistic director, was on a quest to discover the perfect shade of red for Asian women. After running a survey on over 3,000 of them, he discovered that the variety of skin tones among Asian complexions was greater than he initially thought. With this in mind, he put the red colour map and the Asian skin tone spectrum together before finding that point RD163 is where the perfect shade of red lies – it strikes the perfect balance of yellow and blue tones, making it universally flattering.

Claim to fame: Besides being the go-to shade of red for Asians, the versatile hue also comes in a myriad of finishes. From matte to metallic, there's always an RD163 suited for any occasion.



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Look out for seven trends that are tapping on generative technology to change how beauty products are made, delivered and consumed.

Text Balvinder Sandhu

From the introduction of multipurpose products and “complicated” treatments you can now do at home, to how goods are marketed these days, the beauty industry is one that constantly thrives on innovation.

It is also growing massively. In Singapore, the beauty and personal care market is projected to generate a revenue of US\$1,244 million (\$1,639 million) this year. Within this industry, there has been a surge in demand for organic and sustainable products.

As with any major industry, it is ripe for disruption too. It's not surprising to see that technology is playing a big part in the way we consume beauty products. The experts we spoke to are excited about these changes – and you should be too.

Here's a rundown of seven beauty trends we'll see in the coming years.

AI AND CUSTOMISED SOLUTIONS

AI is not a new phenomenon in the beauty industry, but its advancements are making shopping for beauty products even more personalised. For instance, shoppers can access AI skin analysis tools in Sephora, as well as diagnostic apps developed by skincare brands, such as La Roche Posay's Effaclar Spot Scan.

Dr Harvey Ho, founder of Skinscape Clinic, highlights the significant advancements in technology, noting that certain devices now offer 3-D post-treatment previews prior to undergoing procedures, enabling patients to visualise the expected outcomes. He emphasises the widespread adoption of such technology in spas and clinics, asserting that it has significantly enhanced the quality of patient care.

“AI skin analysis can provide a more personalised skincare experience, and boost confidence in

decision making for both the provider and the patient when choosing what treatments to do, especially if they are costly treatments,” he elaborates.

AI-powered tools are also making their mark in haircare. Shawn Chia, salon director of Chez Vous: Private Space, has seen tools that analyse the scalp along with prescribed recommendations in South Korea.

Some hairdressers are using skin tone analysis tools to diagnose and recommend hair colour shades that best suit their customers.

“Such tools will begin to pick up and become more sophisticated as consumers have this perception that AI technology is seemingly more accurate and objective, as opposed to human judgement and expertise. Also, these tools make the entire experience more professional,” he says.

MICRO MAKEUP TRENDS ON TIKTOK

Dr Rachel Ho, medical director at La Clinic, recognises that 2023 saw many micro makeup trends – from food-inspired blueberry nails, to the “mob wife” or quiet luxury aesthetic.

“I don't expect micro trends to fatigue in 2024, as content creators bank on them going viral for their content to be highly visible, and for brands to ride on these trends,” she says.

Hair and makeup artist Airin Lee doesn't think Tiktok-friendly micro makeup aesthetics like the “mob wife” style will be as strongly viral in Singapore as compared to other parts of the world, simply because the look feels too “heavy” for our current climate to be relatable.

While Dr Harvey hasn't come across Tiktok trends relating to makeup, he does have patients frequently visiting with screenshots of recent Tiktok trends, and requesting for the same looks.

“It could be something like a pixie nose tip lift or a fox eye lift,” he explains. “A notable recent Tiktok trend was the ‘Barbie Botox’ neck. After the recent *Barbie* movie, I saw many patients who requested Botox injections into the neck muscles to give the appearance of a longer neck – even if this was not something they routinely did.”

“Along with changing perceptions of beauty, and growing awareness of skincare benefits, Gen Alpha is a new demographic that cosmetics companies are directing their attention to.”

— DR RACHEL HO, MEDICAL DIRECTOR AT LA CLINIC

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GEN-ALPHA CONSUMER

La Clinic's Dr Rachel expects the growth of Gen Alpha consumers to shape consumer trends and the cosmetics industry in many ways, including marketing and product design.

“This generation has unprecedented access to online content and social media. Along with changing perceptions of beauty and growing awareness of skincare benefits, Gen Alpha is a new demographic that cosmetics companies are directing their attention to,” she explains.

She cites brands such as Sol de Janeiro and Bubbles, which have colourful, visually attractive packaging to attract this young audience. And in December 2023, American skincare brand Drunk Elephant, another favourite among Gen Alpha, issued a statement on its Instagram page saying, “Many of our products are designed for all skin, including kids and tweens.”

“I predict that more brands will be courting the Gen Alpha crowd and allaying the concerns of their parents with ‘clean’ skincare and makeup products, as they are perceived to be safer on skin. Gen Alpha influencers are being tapped to market these products on social media too,” says Dr Rachel.

However, Dr Harvey disagrees, as he thinks Gen Alpha consumers are too young to have a meaningful impact on current aesthetic trends. “But I do see more Millennial and Gen Y parents being concerned about their Gen Alpha children's appearance – they are willing to bring them for treatments such as mole removal or laser treatments for acne,” he says.

THE “SKINIFICATION” OF HAIRCARE

Shawn of Chez Vous reveals that this is already happening, with ingredients popularised by the skincare industry – such as hyaluronic acid, ectoin, ceramides and peptides – currently dominating the haircare industry.

“By marketing them as skincare either directly or indirectly, it is easier for consumers to infer the benefits of such ingredients, and how the product is expected to perform,” he says. “Many ingredients used in skincare are effective as well when it comes to haircare,” he adds.

Dr Harvey Ho is a fan of this trend, as it acknowledges the interconnectedness of scalp and hair health, because “all hair pathology arises from the scalp, and good scalp health really is the key to healthy hair”.

“In my practice, I have adapted facial skin treatments for the scalp. For example, I combine microneedling (traditionally used to increase collagen in skin) with scalp application of exosomes (signalling molecules that cells use to talk to each other), and this has shown great results in improving hair growth,” he says.

While he agrees that some “classically skincare ingredients” in haircare products may be beneficial, he advises to approach them with caution as they are relatively new. “It would be best to seek advice from a haircare professional or doctor before using them,” he adds.

HIGH-PERFORMING ALTERNATIVES TO SYNTHETIC INGREDIENTS

Our experts have mixed views about this trend, and the main gripe is that there has been a lot of fearmongering in recent years. Shawn reveals that “fear marketing” from clean beauty industries has successfully demonised many great synthetic ingredients like sulphates, parabens and silicones.

On the other hand, he says consumers are getting smarter and realising that many of these clean beauty claims – such as natural ingredients being better than synthetic ingredients, or how certain synthetic ingredients are harmful to human health – have to be taken with a grain of salt.

“How this trend will go is still too early to say, but in the short term, yes, ‘high-performing’ alternatives will be marketed and explored more. Let's just hope that consumers will become more aware about many of these claims moving forward,” he adds.

Shinji Yamasaki, founder of skincare brand Re:erth, says the brand believes in harnessing the best of both worlds – natural and synthetic – to create effective and safe skincare formulations.

“While there are indeed fantastic natural ingredients, it’s essential to recognise that there are also exceptional synthetic ingredients that offer unique benefits for skin,” he says. “Fearmongering about synthetic ingredients is neither productive nor necessary; instead, we advocate for a scientific and balanced approach to skincare formulation.

“From a technical perspective, replacing high-performing, synthetic raw materials with natural alternatives can present significant challenges. Natural ingredients often come with inherent instability and aesthetic limitations, which can affect the overall efficacy and sensory experience of the product,” he adds.

Shinji also notes that not all natural or organic ingredients are necessarily beneficial for skin. Surprisingly, some natural ingredients can cause irritation or other adverse reactions, highlighting the importance of careful ingredient selection and formulation.

Sisley’s regional managing director of Asia-Pacific Nicolas Chesnier mentions how the brand made a deliberate choice to use active ingredients from natural origins.

“We are a pioneer in that field, having specialised our labs in this new science 50 years ago,” he explains. “We do not use just a few actives in a formula, but often more than 30. This complexity of the formula results in the high level of results we manage to achieve, as the different actives work in synergy to deliver even better results for each targeted action.”

“I expect this trend to continue, as ‘natural ingredients’ like heartleaf and mugwort continue to be popular,” says Dr Rachel. “Also, I am seeing cosmetic brands perform [more] research and development, and modify their formulations to improve the performance of their ‘natural ingredients’, such as Sulwhasoo’s newer product releases with ginseng and ginseng berries.”

SUN PROTECTION WILL GET MORE SOPHISTICATED

There’s no longer a one-size-fits-all product when it comes to sun care. Airin gives the example of not just having the usual cream-based products, but also gel-like ones that feel more like a moisturiser than sun cream.

“What we can look forward to are products in stick form, but more seamless and lightweight than before. In fact, we are now spoilt for choice with mists as well,” she adds.

Shinji has observed a notable shift towards more sophisticated sun protection products, with an emphasis on natural ingredients such as algae and herb derivatives. He says antioxidant-infused sunscreens have become increasingly prevalent in the market too.

These formulations help neutralise free radicals generated by UV radiation, providing added protection against sun damage and premature ageing. By combining sun protection with potent antioxidants, these products offer a comprehensive approach to skincare and sun care.

“We’ve also noticed the emergence of ‘funscreen’ options, such as sunblock patches, which have gained popularity on social media,” he reveals. “This trend reflects a growing interest in innovative formats of sunscreen that cater to different lifestyles and preferences. By offering a variety of sun protection options, including these novel formats, the industry is working towards making sun protection more accessible and enjoyable for consumers.”

Dr Harvey mentions edible sunscreen, which is popular with his patients: “Edible sunscreen refers to an oral tablet with a compound called PLE (Polypodium Leucotomos Extract). PLE is a powerful antioxidant that, when ingested, reduces the harmful effects of UV damage on the skin. It provides a noticeable benefit on top of the usual application of topical sunscreens.”

“We’ve also noticed the emergence of ‘funscreen’ options, such as sunblock patches, which have gained popularity on social media.”

– SHINJI YAMASAKI, FOUNDER OF SKINCARE BRAND RE:ERTH

And Dr Rachel thinks we can expect new UV filters that are more stable and offer a wider spectrum of UV protection (such as L’Oreal UVMune 400), plus a greater diversity of sunscreen textures and finishes for different skin types.

“Some of the major Korean sunscreen manufacturers are working on improving the performance of their sunscreen, for example, in terms of water resistance and delivery systems,” she adds. “I also expect sunscreen to be incorporated into more products. Brands like Augustinus Bader are launching lipcare products with SPF this year.”

SCIENCE OF EPIGENETICS

Dr Rachel thinks this cutting edge science is intriguing, but still lacks robust, large clinical trials to assess its effectiveness when used in skincare. Also, one of the barriers to epigenetic skincare products is the skin barrier, which affects skincare absorption, as these epigenetic skincare products need to penetrate beyond the skin barrier to influence the DNA and cell communication.

“I believe that more brands will be investing in epigenetic research, as it presents a innovative modality to delay ageing and influence wound healing,” she adds.

Professor Augustinus Bader, founder of the namesake brand, explains that although we cannot change our genes, “there is a possibility to influence which genes are expressed”. He says epigenetic science tells us that how we age depends not only on our genes, but also what we do with them. Lifestyle factors, such as what you eat, where you live, when you sleep, how you exercise, and even ageing – can eventually cause chemical modifications around the genes that will switch specific genes on or off over time. Therefore, we all have the means to course-correct.

“Our formulas help to do this, and can be used at any age to support the body’s natural renewal process. It’s something that empowers your body and your skin to be healthier,” he reveals. “Our skincare technology moves in the field of epigenetics, working with skin’s own intrinsic renewal processes. Derived from my research of the body’s healing processes, this combination of active ingredients is what makes

up our proprietary TFC8, or Trigger Factor Complex technology. The complex is essentially a ‘toolbox’, providing skin cells with everything they need to fix the things that go wrong, from improving elasticity to supporting natural hair growth.”

Lim Ker Han, managing director of Est.lab, explains how the brand’s study of epigenetics has led to the discovery of a class of molecules in the body that helps regulate a part of our skin ageing genes. These molecules work in a way similar to switches, with the ability to turn up or down an activity influenced by our diet, lifestyle and environment. The brand has developed epigenetics-based solutions, such as Vitalift A+ Skin Reboot Serum and Skin Reboot Cream, where regenerative plant stem cell technologies are employed to stimulate, regenerate and reboot skin to its youthful state.

“The key ingredients in these products were derived from our research of skin ageing via epigenetic phenomena to effectively reduce the signs of ageing, while re-establishing our genes’ function, and controlling and reducing skin stressors due to our urban lifestyle. As you can imagine, epigenetic research will continue to be a key component of our R&D focus,” he says.

“I believe that more brands will be investing in epigenetic research as it presents a innovative modality to delay ageing and influence wound healing.”

– DR RACHEL HO, MEDICAL DIRECTOR AT LA CLINIC



T H E
N A I L
F I L E S

Text & Coordination Letty Seah Photography Lawrence Teo
Art Direction Adeline Eng

Just like a carefully selected accessory, your nails can reflect everything from your sense of style to your personality. Six women from different walks of life open up about their go-to manicure designs, and what they mean to them.



NAILS @BEAUTESHAA



SYA SYA, BROW EXPERT, 26 "I've always loved the colour pink, but it was something that I hid growing up as I was afraid of getting judged (for being too girly). As I got older, in my teenage years, I would incorporate the hue in small ways, like with my earrings, phone case and on my nails. When I was 19, I landed a job with a cosmetics company that only allowed me to have red nails. I left a few years later, and started experimenting with my nails more. When I joined my current company Benefit Cosmetics as a brow tech, I could finally get the pink nails that I always wanted (pink also happens to be Benefit's brand colour). I started getting more compliments from my clients and co-workers on my manicure designs, which made me become more experimental. One of my inspirations is Barbie and her wardrobe. I love her positive disposition and the message that she stands for: You can be anything, and there are no limits to what you can do."



NAILS @QUIRKYNAILS

HILLARY HENG, CASE WORKER, 23 "Being in a people-centric role, I have to meet clients (families and individuals) and partners (officers from other statutory boards or organisations). As part of my job, I try to bring that empathetic touch, and think from the standpoint of my clients. My playful nails have served as conversation starters with my clients. The designs that I choose are inspired by what I see. Most recently, I went for a hotpot-themed set. Manicured nails aren't just the finishing touch to your outfit - my bimonthly nail appointments also allow me to decompress and stay focused on the present."





NAILS @BEAUTESHAA



ISHVAREYE, RESEARCHER, 27 "Getting a fresh set of nails signals a new era for me. It's just like getting a new haircut. When I look back and think of core memories, I'll be reminded of the nails that I was wearing at that point in time. One of the most memorable was the set of nails I got to commemorate my trip to Greece. It was my first proper vacation that I paid for with my own money. And when the *Barbie* movie came out, it was such a cultural moment. Everyone was partaking in this 'girlhood' culture, so my girlfriends and I went out to get pink nails."



NAILS @BEAUTESHAA

MARIA CHAN, PERSONAL TRAINER, 43 "My love for red nails started when I was a child. I fondly remember stealing my mum's red nail polish when I was young. She had beautiful long fingernails that were always painted in that hue. Even the piano that she plays beautiful pieces on still has crimson marks (from her nail polish) today. I teach and train, so the colour red is significant to me. It symbolises the blood flow from your head down to your toes, and also represents the heart. The heart embodies love."





NAILS @BEAUTESHAA



CALESTER KANG, UNDERGRADUATE, 24 "I used to study fashion design, so this artistic side of me is reflected in my outfits and how I do my nails. It's a way to express my creative side. I like to choose nail colours that pair well with my clothes. This is why I gravitate towards neutral and darker tones. I really like American social media personality Emma Chamberlain's manicure designs because her nail colours are usually cooler and more edgy."

her world



NAILS @BEAUTESHAA

TATIYANA EMYLIA, COPYWRITER, 24 "What I love the most about getting my nails done is expressing how I'm feeling at the time, or whatever era I feel I'm in. I also get inspired by things I see, such as music videos. I remember this specific set of nails I had that was inspired by tattoos from an Instagram page I came across. I usually keep my nails long because it makes me feel more confident, especially when I'm trying to prove a point."





LUST PAGE

Heavy Metal

The go-to name for music and design aficionados, Danish consumer electronics brand Bang & Olufsen is known for its quality sound systems and sleek design. While its sound systems can cost upwards of \$60,000, the latest Beosound A5 Spaced Aluminium (\$2,099) could be an entry-level option for budding audiophiles. Crafted and finished by hand, it is made from a single sheet of aluminium. The anodised effect gives the illusion of over 3,500 floating discs in front of the speakers.

According to vice-president of Product Marketing, Michael Henriksson, this optical illusion has a unique purpose. The circular shape typically serves as the aperture for sound to pass through a speaker grille – but with the Beosound A5 Spaced Aluminium, the concept has been flipped on its head. Here, the circular shape becomes the focal point, creating a floating aesthetic experience in the process. Meanwhile, the sound is seamlessly transmitted alongside the discs. bang-olufsen.com

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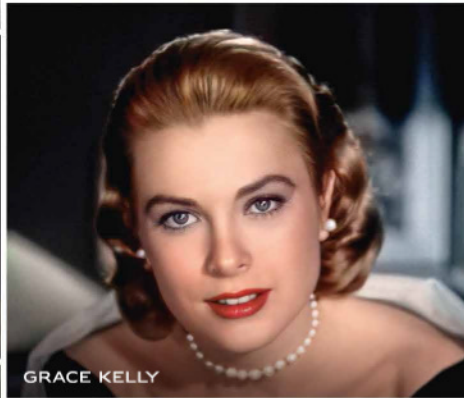
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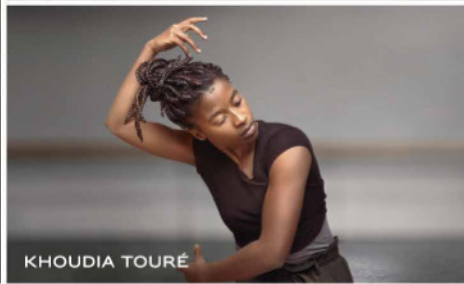
GRACE KELLY



SYLVIA EARLE



LEXI THOMPSON



KHOUDIA TOURÉ



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