



HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

AS SHE AWAITS THE ARRIVAL
OF HER THIRD CHILD, COLLECTOR
AND ENTREPRENEUR **SHANYAN KODER**
INVITES JING ZHANG INTO HER
BEAUTIFUL LONDON RESIDENCE

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DRESS **ELIE SAAB**
NECKLACE, SHANYAN'S OWN

T

he prolific art collector, advisor and soon-to-be mother of three Shanyan Koder is sitting snuggled among silk cushions on an antique chaise longue in her living room. Hanging on the wall opposite is *Eden* – a Damien Hirst *Butterfly* piece – one of Koder’s personal favourites.

“Visually it’s an absolutely stunning painting, bursting with colour, iridescence. It’s symmetrical and cathedral-esque – and the only work in his entire *Butterfly* series that includes every single butterfly that’s ever featured in the series,” says the Hong Kong-born and -raised founder/director of Shanyan Koder Fine Arts and HUA arts platform.

An epic Candida Höfer photograph hovers just above the black grand piano, and a pair of Afro-Nude paintings by Chris Ofili adorn the wall above. The scene is set, and what a scene it is.

Dressed in a simple black dress and white robe, waiting for hair and make-up, and looking relaxed in her fairy-tale home, Koder is also gloriously, glowingly six months pregnant. Her third child is well on her way – another girl in addition to daughters Callie, aged six, and Lily, four.

Today, we’re in the safe confines of her spectacular Chelsea house, hands washed and sanitised as London starts to come to grips with the severity of the Covid-19 crisis that’s already swept its way through Asia. These strange and precarious times quickly bring the conversation to balance, well-being and family.

“What a year it’s been so far, 2020, with the Australian bushfires – my husband’s Australian, so it’s been very devastating to our family too – the floods in the UK, the locusts in Africa and now with this virus, and then the markets crashing. I feel it’s a message to mankind to reset and refocus on the most important things in life, which are health and happiness,” says Koder.

Those are also the core values of how she’d like to raise her children – prioritising health, happiness and home. Hectic London life for the Koders is often punctuated by time outs: “We go to the middle of nowhere, the Turks & Caicos, for two weeks just to recharge and reset.”

It’s soon off to a secluded house on a cliff overlooking the English coast – Cornwall to be exact – where the family will be getting away from the hustle, bustle and density of London during this time of crisis. “Hopefully some salty sea air and the windswept landscape will help us escape from all the chaos for a little while. There’s a time to be busy, I like to be industrious and engaged, but there’s also a time to rebalance and reconnect with nature, the ocean and the sea, and I’m quite spiritual about that.”

The art aficionado’s lifestyle is usually a mixture of worldly glamour and cosy, quiet family time. Her father, Hong Kong businessman Canning Fok, was already one of the city’s most prolific art collectors before Koder took a bigger role in shaping the family’s impressive collection, which includes Monet, Miró and Matisse along with Hirsts and Warhols. So it was her own family and upbringing that steered her “love for fine art and the way I collect today ... I remember joining my parents from a very young age to bid at the likes of Sotheby’s and Christie’s’ evening sales.”



DRESS BY **ROCHAS**
EARRINGS BY **ALIGHIERI**

Since childhood, the thrill of acquiring rare pieces at exclusive viewings never left her. Today, the family collection runs the gamut of Modern masters, Impressionists and Post Impressionists – the likes of Degas, Magritte and Van Gogh, as well as contemporary luminaries such as Murakami and Hirst and a smattering of Chinese modern masters. Koder has carved out a stellar reputation as a serious art-world mover and shaker, serving as a council member of the Serpentine Galleries in London, an advisory-board member of the contemporary gallery Unit London and a member of the women-only Artemis Council at the New Museum of New York. The HUA art space (now online platform) she founded over a decade ago introduced the enigmatic Chinese contemporary market to the rest of the world.

As a collector, she has to respond emotionally to the actual artwork. “I like to collect with an open mind and not just stick with an artist that I know, because for me that’s quite closed-minded,” she says. “I’m a classicist at heart – I do love the old-worldly paintings, so I do tend to gravitate towards contemporary works that tend to have the elements of classicism and romanticism. But I like to embrace the new, I like to support emerging artists.”

Our eyes are drawn again to the Hirst, which carries a sense of the classical, and the butterflies a touch of romance. “As with all Damien’s works, there are classical elements of natural history, of science, of art and religious faith; but I love that while this work is a celebration of the beauty of life, it’s equally an appreciation of the beauty also in death.”



OUTFIT SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO



DRESS AND NECKLACE
BOTTEGA VENETA

As much as she's a natural classicist, there's much about her entrepreneurial approach that's progressive and digitally focused. Communications and even sales are easier in the digital and social-media age. "Along that vein, I'm also co-founding an app called Global Showcases (globalshowcases.com), to be launched later this year, which targets an invitation-only group of discerning collectors looking to acquire and cross-collect the world's most exclusive masterpieces."

Her roles over the years on the boards of laudable global art institutions have lent her platforms gravitas and trust. And selling ultra-exclusive art pieces to a select, closed and elite group of collectors via her app platform is already starting to send ripples through the traditional-leaning fine-art markets. This digital development sits as the third business to HUA and her art-advisory platform Shanyan Koder Fine Art (shanyankoder.com), which came about organically more than a decade ago when she was a younger collector and professional in the art world, having done time at Sotheby's and Goldman Sachs in both London and Hong Kong.

"Now, many of my business projects have flourished as a result of millennial collectors empowered to make quick decisions on the back of social-media communication, and the ease of communicating visually via digital platforms," she says. With Art Basel and other fairs being cancelled this year, that digital dimension is becoming ever more prevalent, as more galleries and artists rely on this mode of working.

Art might be her business, but as a consummate creative, Koder's expressions extend from fashion – I discovered quite the enviable shoe closet hidden near a bathroom – to furniture and interior design.

She prefers to dress in classic cuts and likes simplicity over fussy, complicated contemporary fashions. Even her style connects to some of her most beloved artists since childhood. A penchant for pieces that highlight the grace of a woman's neckline and her figure is "I suppose, a little like a Degas work on paper!" she says with a laugh, draping a graceful arm over the sofa.

"I like nothing more than to put on a simple black dress – and often have the same dress in white, in nude, and red. I love the fragility of thin shoulder straps, the femininity of a Bardot neckline, and the sensuality of a strapless bodice. Paired with nude stiletto Louboutin heels and diamonds, of course."

The charming Chelsea house, where we shoot this issue's cover, is a good example of Koder's aesthetic carrying from one mode to another. Bought in 2009, from a music-business impresario ("he was a manager for Dire Straits and Bryan Ferry"), the three-storey property was a wonderful space but total bachelor pad.

"I LIKE TO COLLECT WITH
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“I SEE MY CHELSEA HOME AS A QUIET OASIS, A PEACEFUL SANCTUARY IN A BUSTLING LONDON METROPOLIS”

“I’d seen more than 50 places in this postcode alone. It’s funny how properties find you, and things just worked out with this one,” she says. “We’ve transformed the house over the years. My husband and I love going to art fairs and cross-collecting is a big thing for us – not only art, but we love design pieces like these vintage Tiffany lamps or these two 19th-century French antique country chairs that fit with the house so well ... You’ll see elements of my taste in the sensual, feminine lamps, handmade by my dear friend Sera Loftus.”

There’s art, books, family photos and curios – beautiful vintage and antique pieces abound. A gorgeous mirrored-glass statement coffee table by famed French modernist Serge Roche sits in one area, and in another, where we shoot one of her portraits, there’s a coffee table by the French artist Pierre Giraudon, its surface embedded beautifully with broken-up watch pieces and looking almost intergalactic from above.

Re-upholstered grand sofas, armchairs, chaise longues and beautiful regal curtains come in lush fabrics, silks and jacquards. Minimalist this home is not. Old-world charm oozes from each detail, but plants and contemporary pieces give the space a warmth, vibrancy and energy.

“Everything I’ve collected and acquired for our home has a touch of romance, classicism, and femininity,” says Koder. “I see my Chelsea home as a quiet oasis, a peaceful sanctuary in a bustling London metropolis. It’s also a family home, cosy and warm.”

It’s a perfect place to come back to after an artist preview, charity event, meeting or a lunch with her girlfriends. Sometimes, she says with a smile, it’s also quite good for “doing a cover shoot for an internationally acclaimed magazine!”

This space is, of course, the primary home base for her regular routine – days start around 6am, when she gets the kids ready for school, packs meals and arranges lessons, as she doesn’t have a full-time nanny. When they’re at school, she gets several hours to pack in her meetings, emails and work. Most evenings she spends with her husband, Matthew Koder, and the kids, and cooks for the family. “My family are creatures of habit, so we like to stick to an overall daily routine, which helps ground all of us.”

She also admits to being a romantic, in life as well as in style: “I’m a bit with my head in the stars – it’s probably good that I have a husband who brings me down to earth every now and then. He’s my rock...”

“Art is just part of my everyday life, my kids are growing up in a family and an environment surrounded by art, music and nature, so hopefully these elements are already shaping a part of their soul and spirit.”

The family, which already includes two very old cats, Watson and Sherlock, as well as a fluffy dog called Scooby, is about to welcome another addition. Koder is thrilled about having a third daughter in the coming months: “We’re all very excited,” she says, laughing. “And my husband is well and truly outnumbered now!” 🐾

JACKET AND TOP **DRIES VAN NOTEN**
NECKLACE AND JEWELLERY, SHANYAN'S
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