





PEOPLE  
Who's Who

BEACHES

# Making a Statement

BANKER-TURNED-ENTREPRENEUR **YU CHIA MIN** TALKS TO MELISSA GAIL SING ABOUT LIFE AS THE DAUGHTER OF A PROMINENT POLITICIAN AND THE VALUE OF HARD WORK AND HUMILITY.

**I**T TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF confidence and willpower to close the chapter on a successful career in the corporate world and strike out on your own, all the more if your mother is Singapore's longest-reigning female politician. For Yu Chia Min, the daughter of minister of state for community development, youth and sports Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, trading a cushy position in ANZ Singapore to become an entrepreneur is one of the best things she's done.

Taking with her the values of hard work, humility, an open mind and EQ, the 31-year-old left her banking position after almost a decade in the industry early this year and launched her own line of statement swimwear together with her Swiss business partner Letizia Cramer. She says, "It was time for me to do something for myself, something different. I was entering a new phase of my life."

While this may have been a daunting move for many in her shoes, Yu says she faced no objections from her family: "My mum has always been open to what I wanted to do. I'd talk to her and seek advice on various matters, but the final word was always mine, and she was supportive of my decisions."

Growing up, Yu was constantly surrounded by high-flyers. One particularly inspiring figure is family friend Claire Chiang, senior vice president of Banyan Tree Holdings. "We went on a trip together, and she told me all about how they (Chiang and her husband Ho Kwon Ping) started their business on their own and worked their way up. It was very inspiring," she shares.

Early this year, the Miletì swimwear brand was born. With an emphasis on cut, it aims to project feminine chic as seen in its debut collection Klash, which stands out for its eye-popping colours.

Created with the same top-quality Italian fabrics used by big fashion houses and esteemed sports brands, Miletì gives women the option to mix and match pieces. Particularly eye-catching are the one-pieces - like the strapless design with a series of figure-accentuating straps on each side of the bodice - which are just as attractive in the water and for sunset cocktails at a beach bar, with a pair of shorts or high-waisted pants.

While they are fashionistas at heart, Yu and Cramer, who owns an art gallery in Geneva, found the journey to creating Miletì peppered with challenges. "It wasn't easy to find reliable fabric suppliers. And as a new brand, we had to work hard to convince retailers to work with us," Yu says. In trying times like these, she has always found solace in her mother's words: "Stay focused in whatever you do, and accept the outcome, be it good or bad, knowing you've done your best".

Currently looking for inspiration for the second Miletì collection targeted for launch later this year, Yu reveals a bigger goal. "We hope to become

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an international brand sold in major cities, and perhaps even expand the line to include swimwear for kids and men," she says, adding that there are also plans to tie up with resort boutiques.

While there's no sign that Yu may one day become a politician like her mother, who entered Parliament at the age of 34, she clearly wants to make the same social footprints the latter has: "I want to give back to society in whatever way I can. I'm looking for that kind of fulfillment outside of my own world; a fulfillment that comes from doing something for others." ■

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