

The New School

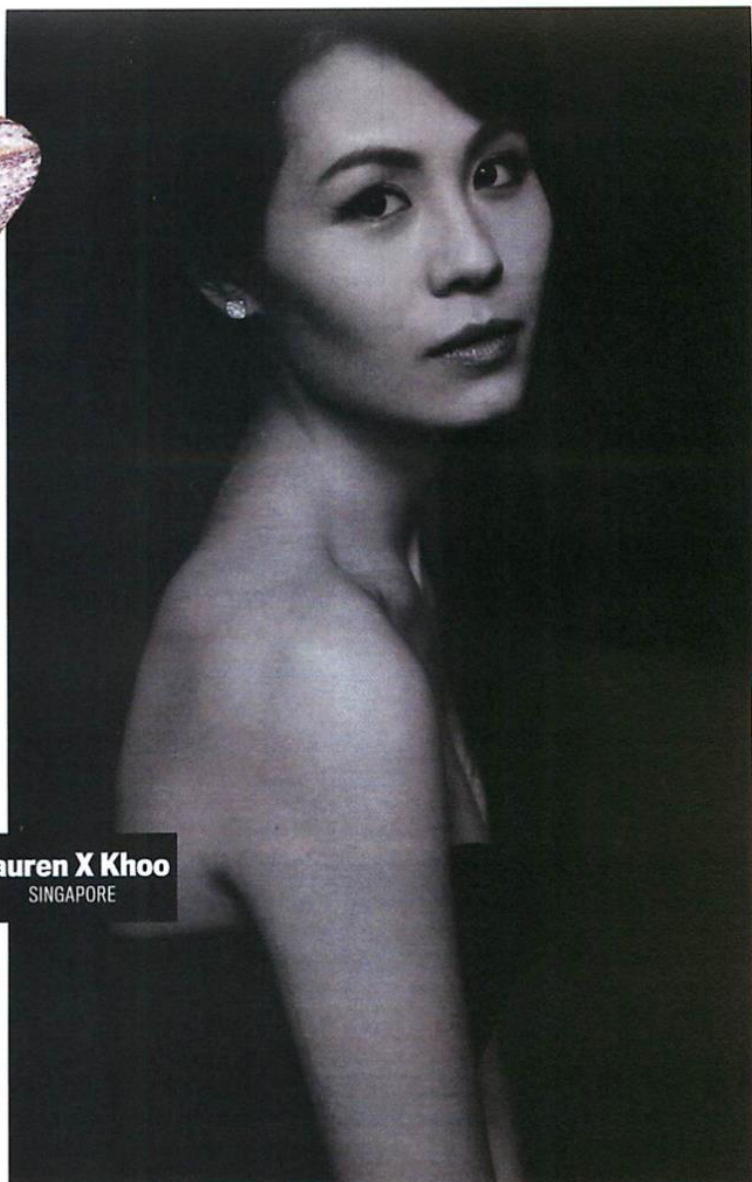


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The stylish Lauren Khoo sits down at Casa Lever in New York in late September to discuss her new jewelry collection. "It's about personal symbolism and romanticism," she says, and then identifies the significance of her own jewelry. The two diamond tennis bracelets on her wrist belonged to her grandmother, the men's rose-gold Rolex Daytona watch was a gift from her parents when she graduated from Brown University, and the matte-gold set of oval bangles on her other wrist are engraved with her grandfather's name and his favorite saying.

"I'm inspired by the Victorian era because so much of that jewelry was connected to sentimentality," says the 32-year-old. But that is as far as the connection to the Victorian era goes. Her contemporary designs are playful, like the mismatched ivy earrings (one is short, the other long) covered with deep-green tsavorite gems and inspired by the ever-present foliage during her four years in New England. Another pair of earrings features a cherry-blossom design with pink-sapphire and diamond petals closed in one silhouette and open in the other. The gummy-bear pendants in blue quartz, black onyx, or pavé diamonds look like her favorite candy. "My craftsmen didn't understand what I wanted from the sketch so I brought them Haribo gummy bears, and they caught on fast," she says with a laugh.

Lauren X Khoo
SINGAPORE



Passion play: Seriously crafted jewelry with a sense of playfulness.

Her passion for jewelry began while observing her mother and her grandmother (part of Singapore's Khoo family dynasty), who had a big jewelry collection. "I noticed that my mother and her friends wore the same handbags and jewelry from Cartier or Van Cleef—it was like a uniform," she says of growing up in Singapore. "I wanted to create bespoke jewelry so women could express their individuality."

To that end, she unveiled her recent collection in Singapore, where women can preview her original designs. Each piece is custom made to a client's specifications,

including size, stones, and other modifications. "Every piece should connect to a woman's story, whether it's a certain stone or a symbol," she says. The engraved gold bracelets are among her most popular designs.

Her latest collection explores putting pearls in a modern context by pairing tiny orbs with diamonds in Cosmos—which appear like large starbursts. "When people think of pearls, they think of Barbara Bush or the Flintstones' [old-fashioned necklaces], but pearls are beautiful and feminine, and I want to reignite the conversation." (laurenkhoo.com)