

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE WOMAN

WHO WANTS THE WORLD

ASIAN WOMAN

www.asianwomanmag.com

AUTUMN 2011 | ISSUE 48 £2.95

15

ETHICAL
PASSION
KILLERS

SEDUCTION MANUAL

POSSESS THE ONE
YOU WANT

*Confessions of a
bigamist*

ARI BODY

he perfect
workout for
e perfect
houette

lack
magic
host
hunting
ampires

PREEYA KALIDAS

bares her soul

Where fashion &
danger collide:
PAKISTAN

ONE
NIGHT
*with a
male
escort*

DARKNESS FALLS

THIS AUTUMN BE SEDUCED BY THE DARK SIDE



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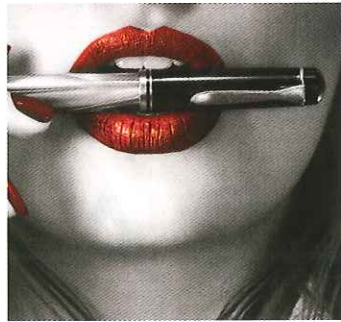
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Beauty, money and a successful business – surely these are the makings of a 'diva'. But with half her waking hours dedicated to her luxury interior design company, Casa Forma, and the other half to a charity she herself founded, Faiza Seth is far from spoilt.

Born in India, Faiza grew up in America and spent five years in Hong Kong. In 2005, she settled in the UK in a trendy Mayfair home, perfect for a stylish Stanford graduate running her own interior design business. It is this home that I went to visit on a sunny autumn day.

Mi Casa Es Su Casa

It is a common belief that rich, beautiful women can't empathise with the less fortunate. We meet designer Faiza Seth, the very antithesis of this idea

By Rachael Elliott



As I stepped out of the lift straight into the apartment, I was greeted by Faiza's two adorable and hyperactive dogs. I followed her maid through to the living room, awestruck by the beautiful surroundings. The room, infused with inspiration from her five-year-stint in Hong Kong, is one of Faiza's favourites: "Just before I moved to London I was in Hong Kong, so it has this Far Eastern setting. It's so glamorous and comfy. We like that we managed to combine the two – they always say fashion and comfort don't go together." The 'we' she refers to is her business partner who she formed Casa Forma with after they renovated her room together back at Stanford.

Despite saying she's not very creative herself, Faiza took a keen interest in the design of her flat after dabbling in property development. In the early days of Casa Forma they began buying properties to renovate them, which inspired an interest in architecture and design. Faiza, who takes care of PR and networking on behalf of the company, travels to India several times a year, an activity that accounts for 8-10% of their profits each year. It is a market she wants to expand in, turning Casa Forma into a truly global business.

Faiza leads me to the beautiful dining room where she had laid out a generous spread of Lebanese food. She sits down and visibly relaxes – a momentary pause in her extremely busy day. Life as a businesswoman is never-ending and not as exciting as one may expect, she tells me: "I spend my day on Casa Forma but in the evening my attention turns to my charity. If I'm not working or travelling then I like reading and walking my dogs – nothing too exciting."

I ask how she managed to go from running an interior architectural design business to starting



her own charity, Soham for Kids. "I started it three years ago with my family. We used to spend weekends doing charity work in India, which is actually really fun. We would visit schools and distribute things. For us it was a bonding thing but we wanted to make a long-term impact."

And so she partnered with the Hope Foundation, which helps create schools in local communities, the members of which depend on the school for their children's education as well as for employment.

Soham for Kids is currently solely funded by Faiza herself but fundraising events are to take place soon. The first consists of a day in the countryside, filled with a range of activities including golf, a dance competition, entertainment from a Bollywood group and a four-course lunch.

From this particular event an estimated £150,000 is expected to be raised through both ticket sales and the auctions, one of which is the Bollywood package including flights, a hotel in Bombay, a shoot during the day and the opportunity in the evening to have dinner with a Bollywood star like Aishwariya Rai. "It's an interesting package, an experience that would be very cool. The aim was to come up with something different, an experience as opposed to something superficial to raise a majority of the money," says Faiza.

So where will the money go? Currently in the school there are 24 classes but over the next year Faiza hopes that they can bring in another pre-school class and fifth grade "The whole point of school is taking these people's lives and getting them out of poverty. They will take skills and help build an income. My goal is to get them to a certain level where they can earn money and get out of poverty; then they will be able to provide for themselves and their families."

The school has already had an extraordinary impact on the community. "They don't even have food. I mean the students have a maximum of one meal a day. When I went there, mothers were crying. Imagine seeing your child like that – it's hard. In the morning the children are given Bonvita, a chocolate powder, and then they get milk and a banana. It's a great thing because it encourages the kids to come to school. The fact that at this school they are given two meals a day, breakfast and lunch, helps the parents and for that reason it's a good influence."

Sitting in Faiza's walk-in bedroom-sized closet with its own en-suite bathroom as she has her makeup professionally applied for the upcoming photoshoot, it's hard to imagine why such a fortunate woman would spare a thought for those less well-off but Faiza genuinely cares

Yes, I am awed by her spacious apartment and cavernous closet but I'm far more impressed by her empathy, her compassion and her *heart*, which is far, far bigger. (AW)

www.sohamforkids.org

