



Payal Uttam Contributor

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

ASIA 9/04/2017 @ 3:04上午 | 1,542 views

Meet The Heiress Behind Hong Kong's Largest Private Museum



Lynn Fung

Growing up in Hong Kong as the daughter of the eccentric millionaire and Chinese antique aficionado Peter Fung Yiu-fai wasn't easy. "I was a bit embarrassed by the collection to be honest," admits Lynn Fung whose home was nothing like that of her friends. "He started with a few small stools here and there...then one day, my writing desk was replaced by a Ming dynasty one. Later, my sister's bed got replaced by a seventeenth-century four-poster bed!" Fast-forward to today and Fung has become the managing director of Liang Yi Museum, a sprawling 20,000-square-foot space that houses his myriad acquisitions. Located in the heart of the city, it is the largest private museum in Hong Kong.

On display in the four-storey building are pieces from his collection of 400 classical Chinese antiques and some 550 European vanity cases—jeweled powder boxes made by European luxury brands such as Cartier and Boucheron. Fung's father built his fortune as a banker and as head of an investment company and began buying antiques in the 1970s. His collection now spans from large-scale furniture to smaller scholarly objects, many of which are worth more than \$1 million.

Fung was working as a food critic with a local lifestyle magazine when the idea was hatched to open a museum. "First he thought of opening a clubhouse," she recalls. "He used to have had a storage space on Duddell Street, which he opened to his friends. It wasn't anything fancy at all. He thought of doing it on a larger scale but then he said, 'What if I open it more to the public?'"



Antiques on view at Liang Yi Museum



Liang Yi Museum

While Fung didn't have a background in the arts—she studied postcolonial literature and the culinary arts in the United States—she decided to take the leap into the museum world. "It's nice that I don't have that psychological baggage," she says. "It allowed me to pursue policies or have ideas that I think people from the British Museum would be shocked and horrified by."

Unlike your average white cube museum filled with stern "Do not touch signs," visitors at Liang Yi Museum are free to sit on the chairs or run their fingers across carvings on a cabinet and even pose for selfies. "When at first they come they are a little taken aback. They are cautious and keep themselves at arms-length away," say Fung. "But we train our docents to encourage interaction and by the end of their tours people become comfortable with it."



The interior of Liang Yi Museum

Fung has also done away with extensive text accompanying each piece. Instead, docents narrate stories of the furniture pieces and spark dialogue with small groups of no more than five. The backstories behind the works in the current exhibition *Reunions: A Collector's Journey* are fascinating. For instance two of the 19th century lounge chairs on display once featured in erotic paintings from the Qing period. Meanwhile a wooden tea table with matching stools feature marble inlays known as "stone paintings." They were favored by scholars as the patterns in the marble evoked the mist-shrouded landscapes of ink paintings. The literati saw these items as inspiration as they discussed poetry, calligraphy, and painting over tea.

Alongside showcasing her father's collection, Fung is also making her own mark on the local art scene. She is partnering with institutions overseas to mount exhibitions that venture into new terrain. The upcoming show, for instance, is focused on Persian decorative objects, dating as far back as the 3rd century AD. "I visited Iran and I was absolutely blown away," she says. "I realized how fortunate I was to see that and how nice it would be to bring a tiny part of that back to Hong Kong."



Antiques on display in Liang Yi Museum

Her larger mission is to pique the interest of a younger audience. "I understand that for a lot of people my age or younger, antiques can seem a bit dry or fusty," she says. "But my goal is to try to open up the doors to people of my generation or even millennials, so that they can understand how these incredible pieces are relevant to their own everyday lives."