



DESK



IN THEORY
Clockwise from far left: Bhojwani in Helmut Lang; in a Theory blazer, Prada top and J Brand jeggings; with Waris Ahluwalia and Mortimer Singer at their book launch, in Lanvin

DANCE FLOOR



STYLE

FROM DESK TO DANCE FLOOR

Two stylish New York-based fashion executives tell SAHAR KHAN about working hard, and playing harder

The urban minimalist

From TINA BHOJWANI's office, a black-and-white portrait of Katharine Hepburn gazes out upon New York's Meatpacking District. This is the North American headquarters and flagship store of Theory LLC, the Japanese company that owns the eponymous line of stealthily sleek, richly subtle clothes.

Bhojwani is the senior vice-president of international business development at the company that also owns Helmut Lang. Under Ms Hepburn's erect posture, Bhojwani's slight form recedes into her seat. Today, she's the epitome of understated chic in Marni sandals, J Brand jeans and a white Theory tee, topped with a paper-thin beige pashmina from India. Black and silver bracelets crowd her left wrist. They are mostly from India, where she buys her jewellery. The only hint that this youthful 37-year-old is a top executive in a multi-million-dollar business is her unflinching gaze, which is disarmed by her girl-next-door smile.

A former Donna Karan executive, Bhojwani is overseeing a collaboration with Olivier Theyskens, the former Nina Ricci designer, for spring 2011. The collection was shown to much acclaim during New York's Fashion Week in September.

Her social life acts as an umbrella against the deluge of stress that comes with such a high-powered position. In the upcoming weeks, she's planning a birthday party for a friend and a weekend trip to the Hamptons. This past summer she was in Turkbuku to attend a book signing by the founder of Ship Ahoy, a legendary Turkish bar on the Aegean Sea.

If Bhojwani is travelling for work, she will often add on a long weekend for personal trips. After a recent meeting in London, she took off to Marrakech for four days. And India is on the itinerary twice a year, every year. Bhojwani was behind the launch of Theory at New Delhi's Kitsch (which is the first store in the country to carry the line).

Growing up, she and her family spent

summers at the family home in Mumbai's Colaba, close to the Taj Mahal Hotel, which she frequented often. "I have so many wonderful memories from the Taj," says Bhojwani, who knew much of the hotel's staff.

It was because of these memories that a brightly coloured book, glowing like a jewel in the monochromatic space, sits atop her desk. *To India with Love: From New York to Mumbai* is a collection of essays and photographs about India that Bhojwani, along with friends Waris Ahluwalia and Mortimer Singer, published in response to the November 2008 attacks on Mumbai. All proceeds have been donated to the Taj Public Service Welfare Trust, which helps the victims of the attacks, and their families.

"We wanted to raise awareness about India, and at the same time raise money," says Bhojwani. "This scrapbook format is chaotic yet personal; it's a bit haphazard, but then, that's life in Bombay." It is also life in New York, especially during the hectic fashion weeks.

Bhojwani is a minimalist dresser in and out of the office. From Lanvin, one of her favourite brands, she recently picked up a black jersey dress with a gathered waist; and a leopard-print version, which, laughs Bhojwani, is, "me stepping out a little bit."

It might be just the statement she needs to make an entrance at a show or a party, or, being the true executive, lend her the sartorial oomph to lock down a business deal. >

TINA'S

new york

EAT

- Bond Street.** Tel: 001-212-7772500
- Sant Ambroeus.** Tel: 001-212-5702211
- Tamarind.** Tel: 001-212-6747400
- Indochine.** Tel: 001-212-5055111

PARTY

- Rose Bar at Gramercy Park Hotel.** Tel: 001-212-9203300
- Boom Boom Room at Standard Hotel.** Tel: 001-212-6454646

SHOP

- Barneys.** Tel: 001-212-8268900
- Kirna Zabete.** Tel: 001-212-9419656
- Jeffreys.** Tel: 001-212-2061272

FASHION SURVIVAL TIP

"When in doubt, always opt for an LBD and great accessories—appropriate and chic for almost all occasions."

The glamour girl

BONNIE TAKHAR is seated against a large window in her office, the monotone hues of the room playing against the colourful backdrop of Soho's Spring Street. She's clean-faced, except for slight smudges of eyeliner under her lids. Loose strands from a messy chignon brush against her dusky neck. At 41, she has a dewy freshness poetically evocative of the fields of Punjab at dawn.

Takhar is the CEO of Halston, the vaunted American house founded by Roy Halston, the godfather of jersey and jet-set fashion, which was resurrected in 2007 by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. A former executive at Earl Jean and Jimmy Choo, she's preparing for New York Fashion Week when we meet. "There are many steps that go into turning an outfit from fabric to on a woman's back," says Takhar.

Hard work is a large component of Takhar's days. So is play. "That's a very important part of my life," she says. "I call it my fifty pence coin; both sides of it need to be fed." Last summer she attended Alice Temperley and Lars von Bennisgen's annual themed soirée in Somerset. At the end of August she was in Ibiza for another friend's shindig. And this past fashion week in New York found her hosting and attending numerous parties.

Whether she dons a four-tiered chiffon gown or a sequined jacket—both Halston pieces she wore to events this year—or a traditional design from Tarun Tahiliani, a favoured Indian designer, Takhar has an innate elegance and appreciation for beauty.

"I think a woman's sense of style is very much a reflection of the phase she's going through in life," says Takhar. "I've reached a point where I'm very



DESK



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CEO STYLE

Clockwise from far left: In Halston at the office; with Sarah Jessica Parker; effortlessly chic in Halston Heritage; with Donna D'Cruz and Padma Lakshmi



"I make a real effort to invest in people I want to see, people I want in my life"

comfortable with the choices I make about what I wear and how I wear it. Halston is effortlessly chic, and that's sort of the phase I'm going through in my life at the moment."

It is a busy phase. Takhar and her boyfriend, Angus Whelchel (whom she affectionately refers to as her husband), recently bought a \$3-million apartment on Fifth Avenue. The couple also owns a flat in London, where Whelchel lives and works for half of the year.

"My dining table arrives at the end of the month, so I was saying, 'Okay, we have to start the dinner parties now.'" Takhar regularly hosts dinners for friends like renowned gourmand Padma Lakshmi ("She makes fantastic kich-di") and serves only desi fare.

"If you're invited to my house for dinner, it's going to be Indian food on the table, because I can't really cook anything else," she says. She makes Punjabi dishes like saag, mutter paneer and makki di roti. After all, she is a daugh-

ter of the Land of the Five Rivers, whose hospitality, sense of humour, expansive warmth and pride in loyalty seem to have been embedded into her spirit. Though she was raised in London's South Kensington, her strong Sikh roots remain, perhaps because of summer trips to India.

These days, many of her nights are spent entertaining, or being entertained by, New York's fashion glitterati—parties which she attends in a revolving cast of Halston looks. Despite her gilded lifestyle, what is most important to Takhar is friends and family, especially her one-year-old son, Tristan Gaurav Whelchel. Of parenting and motherhood, she says, "It's fantastic, it's the best thing I ever did."

Her maternal nature extends to her extended social circle. "I'll always throw a dinner party when I go to London, and I'll do one here," says Takhar. "I make a real effort to invest in the people I want to see, the people I want to have in my life, because it actually means something." The first party Takhar plans to throw in her new apartment is for her son's first birthday, so that she can surround him with the love she has been encircled by. The only difficult part will be deciding what to wear. ■

BONNIE'S new york

EAT

Tamarind. Tel: 001-212-6747400

The Lion. Tel: 001-212-3538400

PARTY

Bungalow 8. Tel: 001-212-6293333

SHOP

The 5th floor at Bergdorf Goodman.

Tel: 001-212-7537300

FASHION SURVIVAL TIP

"Get yourself some Studio 54-glitter."