

Designer Poesy Liang overcomes an illness to start her own jewellery business.

By BEVERLEY HON

WE EACH have our tales of gaining strength through adversity and it's usually something that makes enough of an impact to alter our lives. For jewellery and interior designer Poesy Liang, her life-altering moment came when she had everything going for her. She was a much sought-after television commercial talent and a VJ, among many other things, when a tumour growing in her spinal cord caused her to become paralysed ... twice.

"I was forced to spend time on my own and I struggled to come back socially," she says. "But it helped me develop all these other sides."

The "other sides" which Liang, 33, refers to are the many artistic talents which she has honed in her life. Uncertainties over her health prompted her to use her creative skills – architectural and jewellery designing – to enjoy whatever time she has and earn a little money while at it.

"I went into jewellery design with the intention of backing up my career. Should my health take a turn for the worse again, I need to be able to work from a wheelchair," she says.

Liang recalls the first time the paralysis hit – she was just 17. She had just completed secondary school at the Bukit Bintang Girls School and was in the first year of her diploma (in architecture) when she found herself losing control of her lower limbs, and her legs weakened. She soon needed help to walk and was paralysed for a year and a half.

Fortunately, the tumours were removed and she defied the odds by

Crafted with care



Jewellery designer Poesy Liang wearing two of her designs.

walking again.

At 19, she set about getting her life back, first by completing her diploma in architecture engineering in 1995 and then her Masters in Business Administration in 2000. In between, she squeezed in hosting NTV7's RIM Chart Show and doing TV commercials again.

In 2001, she worked as an interior

designer's assistant and had projects in the Hilton hotels of Jakarta, Thailand and Malaysia, as well as at Regent Hotel Kuala Lumpur and Shangri-La Surabaya.

And then, at the age of 28, the tumour reappeared along with the paralysis. "I started on a law degree in 2002 and didn't get to finish it because I fell sick again. But instead of concentrating on my physiotherapy when I was recovering, I took up an attachment student job at a legal firm," she recalls. "It was supposed to be a two-month stint but I worked for one month and ditched law after that."

That was when she decided to try her hand at interior design. Her first



The Anderson cufflinks feature semi-precious stones like garnet, topaz and peridot with a very limited edition pair in tanzanite.



The Ace cufflinks range has precious stones like rubies, diamonds, sapphires and tanzanite set in 18k white, rose or yellow gold body.

project, in 2004, was a kitchen belonging to one of the partners of the legal firm she once worked at.

"I had health complications and needed walking aids. I was clumsy and there were times I would stub a toe and end up back in a wheelchair. I then had to hire a driver to drive and push me around," says Liang, who has needed regular check-ups and scans since her last operation in 2006.

Honed in the arts

Liang enjoys running a business and has been able to utilise both her artistic skills and corporate training to make things work for her.

"I'm at artist at heart. I wanted to use my artistic training, something my father had painstakingly invested in since I was seven. I had 'princess training' when I was growing up ... I learnt Chinese calligraphy, Chinese landscape painting, Chinese water painting and seal carving. I still use calligraphy as it's all about space and space planning, and the carving skills are used when I carve wax models (for jewellery)."

In fact, she takes an architectural approach to jewellery design. Some of the designs in her POEZ Jewellers brand are such examples: the Royal January ring looks like a king's crown from the side while the side profile of The Taj ring shows the architectural view of the Taj Mahal, albeit in abstract form.

"My creations are three-dimensional. You can admire them for the stone, from the top and side ... the whole structure of it," Liang proudly states.

"All my creations have a story behind them and have been inspired by certain people who have touched me. I've been lucky though to have met mentors and people who inspired me. For example, Mama's Heart was inspired by my mother ... the apple of my eye, in the form of a heart."

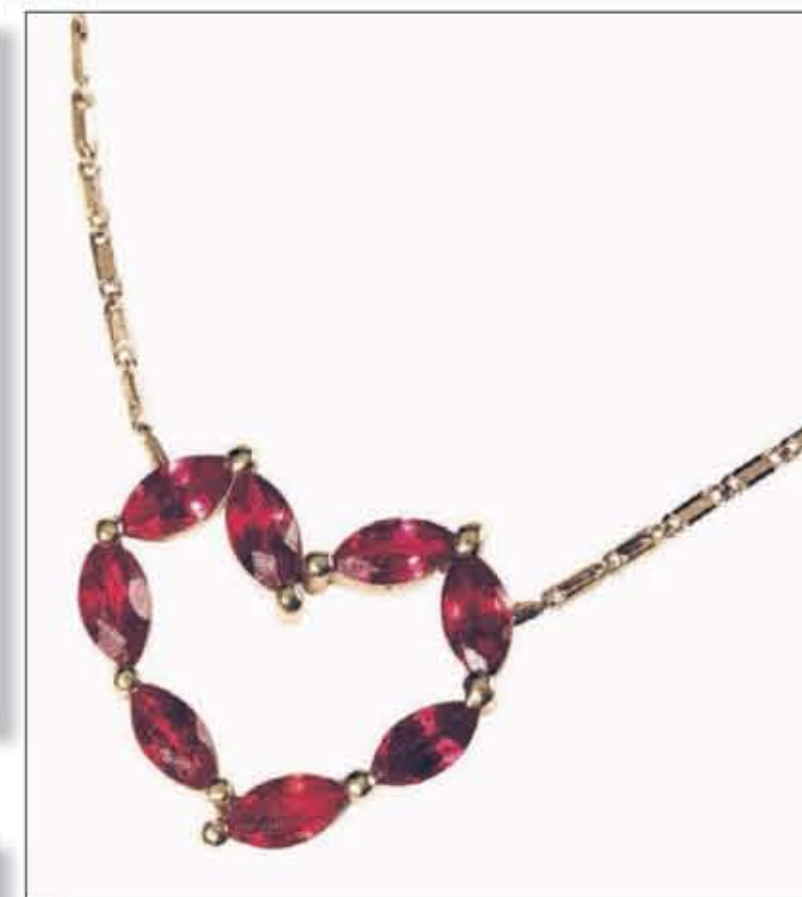
The name "Poesy" means "poem" in French and it recently dawned on Liang that her jewellery, like all her previous artwork, should be accompanied with a poem. So each Mama's Heart comes with a poem and a note about the inspiration behind the design.



The Sweetheart range offers heart-shaped splendour in yellow and rose gold. The Sweetheart ring (left) combines a ruby heart and diamond pears, the Electric Love ring (middle) pairs a blue sapphire heart with round-cut diamonds, and the Heart of Gold (right) has a yellow sapphire heart with yellow diamonds.



A Pretty Bow earring with kunzite and diamonds on rose gold.



The Ruby Garland features marquise-cut rubies arranged in a heart shape and attached to a chain.



A diamond-studded dragonfly that curls around the finger forms the Dragonfly ring, which comes with matching earrings. There are limited edition versions in tanzanite on white or rose gold.

Left: The Fat Catch fish pendant comes in several combinations of stones – such as a blue sapphire eye with spessertite body, tanzanite eye with kunzite body and rubellite eye with aquamarine body – set in rose, white or yellow gold.

Many-faceted lass

POEZ Jewellers offers jewellery that are works of art and have broad appeal. Those who love coloured stones will definitely like how Liang has creatively combined precious and semi-precious stones.

Like many artists, Liang has developed an attachment – at least not until she finds someone who will truly appreciate them and intends to collect them, like an art collector would.

"It's not about the price," assures Liang, who regularly travels abroad to hold private viewings of her collection.

A young woman with many facets to her personality, just like the gems she works with, Liang is not content with just jewellery or interior design. She also does her bit for charity and is the founder of Helping Angels, a network of volunteers dedicated to providing support and assistance to various community causes in Malaysia and neighbouring countries.

"There are a lot of people with high-flying jobs who want to join in so we're using the resources to help other people," she said. "I really admire how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation teamed up with Warren Buffet and they've got a great thing going where they put in their best material and human resources to help make a significant difference. I'm not Mother Theresa though. I'm more business-oriented in order to deliver in practical ways," she admits.

"As long as I keep my creative side alive, my ability to brainstorm for the corporate side will be kept alive," says Liang. "Creativity is a form of spirituality which should be kept alive in order to run all our other aspects."

For more information, visit poezjewellers.com or e-mail contact@poezjewellers.com.



The Mama's Heart pendant was inspired by Poesy Liang's mother and comprises a tourmaline heart with tsavorite pear on rose gold.

Below: The Pinker Debutante ring (top) has pink tourmalines on rose gold while the Grape Delight right (bottom) features a rare-coloured amethyst flanked by pink tourmalines on rose gold.



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