

PERSONALITIES*

JCK LUXURY

* MEET A MULTIFACETED ARTIST, A CONNOISSEUR OF THE FINER THINGS, AND A FORMER BANKING GURU WHO ADD DIVERSITY TO THE INDUSTRY

PUBLISHED BY
Reed Business
Information. RBI.
SPRING 2009

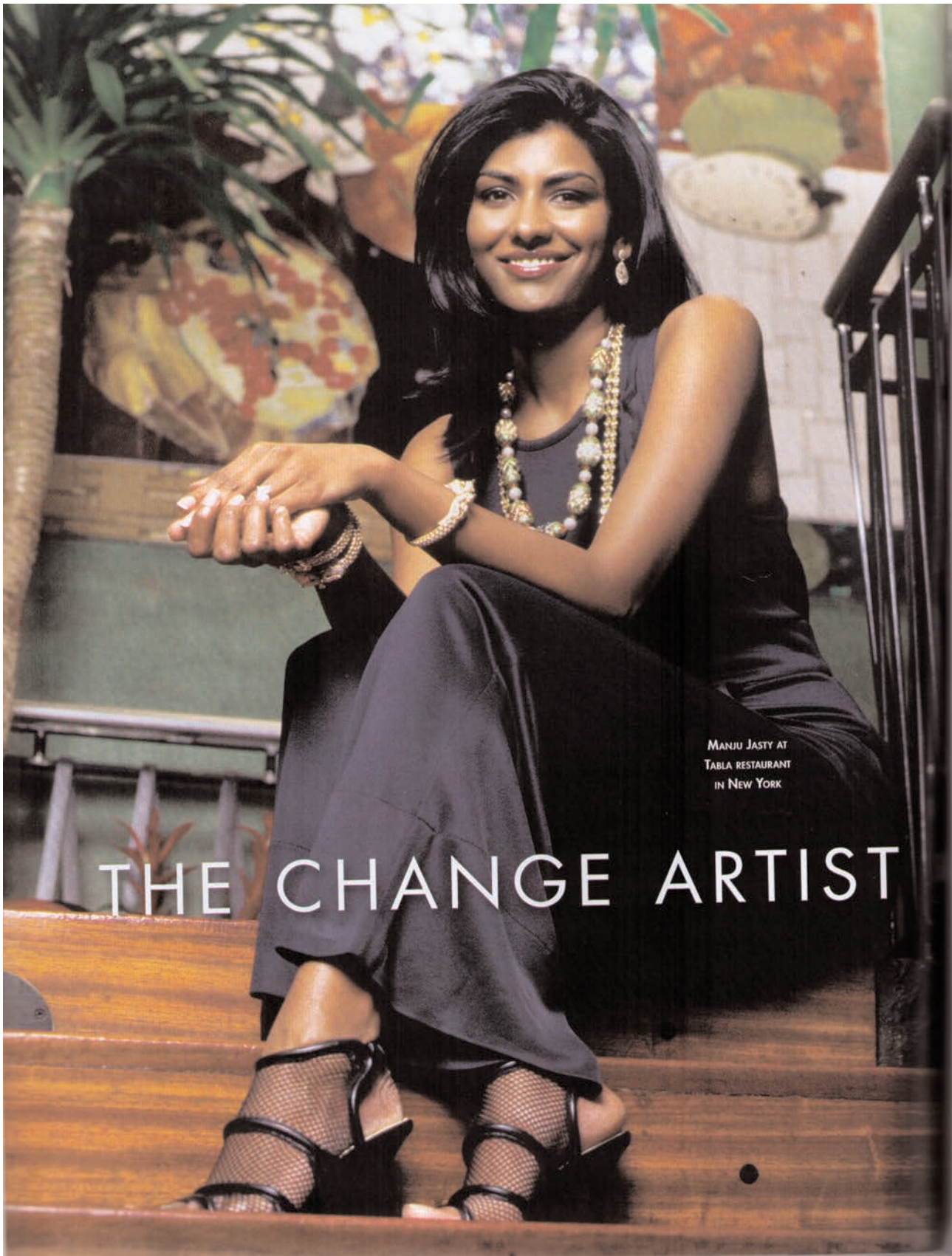
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DESIGNER **MANJU**
JASTY, PHOTOGRAPHED
AT TABLA RESTAURANT IN
NEW YORK.





MANJU JASTY AT
TABLA RESTAURANT
IN NEW YORK

THE CHANGE ARTIST

PERSONALITIES

PHOTO: ERIK EKROTH

MORE THAN A FEW PEOPLE HAVE LANDED IN THE JEWELRY INDUSTRY BY CHANCE, BUT RARELY HAS KISMET PLAYED A STRONGER ROLE THAN IN THE CAREER OF DESIGNER **MANJU JASTY**.

Indian-born beauty Manju Jasty spent a decade rising through the investment banking world, working such grueling hours and focusing so intensely on her career that she rarely stopped to think about her future. When she finally did, she knew she needed a change.

"I realized there were a lot of other things I wanted to do and I wouldn't be able to do until I retired," Jasty says.

Enter the hand of fate.

On the day she resigned, she attended a jewelry trunk show, where, by chance, she met a Barney's executive and enjoyed a brief chat. Without thinking much about the conversation, she went on to travel and spend some time in India, where she worked on a childhood hobby: jewelry making.

Six months later, back in New York, she went to a cocktail party at Barney's and ran into the same executive. When asked what she was doing now, Jasty, who was wearing some of the jewels she'd created in India, joked: "Today I'm a jewelry designer, but ask me again tomorrow."

That led to a meeting at Barney's where Jasty showed the jewels she was considering doing on a small scale for private clients. The luxury department store, however, wanted the collection, launching Jasty into a line of

EACH YEAR, AS HER INVESTMENT COLLEAGUES SPENT BONUSES ON THINGS LIKE VACATIONS, SHE WOULD MAKE A SPECIAL JEWELRY PURCHASE FOR HERSELF.



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PHOTO: CHAYO MATA

work she had never considered seriously.

"It's completely random," she says. "It's so funny how doors just opened up."

While the transition from investment banking to jewelry designing may seem outlandish, jewelry "was always there," she says, explaining how the importance of jewelry in the Indian culture meant she had constant exposure to jewels as a child. But as the daughter of two doctors, a career in the field was "never an option." Her mother did, however, indulge an 8-year-old Jasty, allowing her to refashion some ornate jewelry into pieces she would wear.

Jewelry remained on Jasty's radar. Each year, as her investment colleagues spent bonuses on things like vacations, she would make a special jewelry purchase for herself.

Today, Jasty's designs blend a contemporary edge with classic Indian styling. She creates 12 pieces a year—handcrafted in India and limited in production to three each.

Right now, Jasty's business remains small. She continues to sell at Barney's and to private clients, and she has a long-term goal of expanding to a handful of boutiques in key U.S. and international cities. Meanwhile, during this economic downturn, her finance experience serves her well by giving her the tools to maintain a sound business. But that background also prepares her, she says, on a much broader level: "The whole world of finance is a great foundation for anything." ▲

By **CARRIE SOUCY**