

VOGUE

ARABIA

حياة



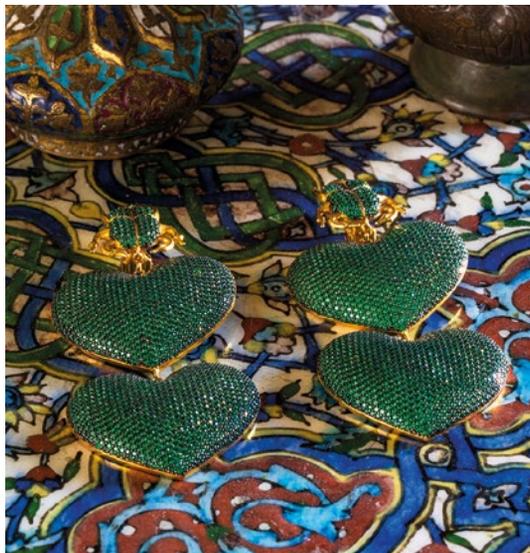
Scene stealer

Turkish jewelry designer Begüm Kiroglu opens the doors to her personal wonderland at the crossroads of distinct cultures

Photography MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE Words KARINE MONIÉ



PREVIOUS PAGE BEGÜM KIROGLU WEARS AN ANTIQUE JAPANESE KIMONO FOUND AT MARCHÉ AUX PUCES MARKET IN PARIS **ABOVE** ANTIQUE OTTOMAN PRINTS AND CALLIGRAPHY ON THE WALL COMPLEMENT THE IKAT PILLOWS AND METAL HEADPIECES FROM ISTANBUL'S GRAND BAZAAR **BELOW** SCARAB MON AMOUR EARRINGS



Nothing happens by chance – Begüm Kiroglu's path proves it. Born into a family of Ottoman art collectors in Istanbul, Kiroglu spent her childhood surrounded by rare and beautiful objects. After studying business in her hometown and luxury brand management in Milan, she pursued dreams to go further east and moved to China. In Shanghai – which she likens to Istanbul for its vibrancy and openness to new ideas – she completed a master's degree in Chinese culture and art, delving into a fascinating and inspiring world. It was after completing her thesis on the Chinese luxury market and behaviors that Kiroglu identified an opportunity to create gifts for men, specifically handcrafted items to accessorize and refine their style. Her first pair of custom cufflinks debuted at her brother's wedding, marking a starting point for her brand, Begum Khan, launched in 2012. "I've always believed that cufflinks had something mysterious about them," she says. "They are half-hidden under the jacket, half-shown... This kind of veiled elegance is very alluring and sophisticated."

Upon her return to Istanbul, Kiroglu launched her collection of women's jewelry in 2017. "I create for brave women, to make them feel special," she says, adding, "You don't need to be a princess to wear a royal piece." All the items – earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and even bags – are crafted in her Istanbul atelier and produced by hand,

by Turkish craftsmen. Her passion for Asian art history prevails throughout. "I'm fascinated by the Chinese and Ottoman empires. I try to imagine how people lived at that time, how they created art, and what type of ceremonies they organized. You can see all of that through my designs."

In her home, Kiroglu finds the perfect refuge to balance her busy life. Her uncle, art historian and interior designer Serdar Gülgün, bought the house some 10 years ago and restored it to its original state. Built in the 1860s, the home is located in Çengelköy – an area of Istanbul renowned for its historical, elegant wooden houses where the old atmosphere meets the new dynamism and growing creativity of the city. Once the hunting pavilion for an exiled Hungarian soldier who joined the Ottoman Empire and was granted the title of pasha, the home is spread across 1 200 sqm, and comprises four stories. Made of stone and built with its own independent entrance, the ground floor – called the garden flat – has become Kiroglu's private nest. Her uncle resides on the palatial first and second floors. Offering panoramic views of the Bosphorus, the top floor – historically known as the belvedere – is used as a guest apartment.

"Our garden is truly a fantasy," says Kiroglu of the surrounding lush grounds. "Even though we are not in a tropical location, it is full of palm and banana trees along with oak trees. I love sitting in my living room and contemplating it through the French windows." Inside, several architectural and interior design elements pay tribute to classical Ottoman houses. The layout does not include any corridors, for instance. Instead, a central hall in the shape of a cross is reminiscent of Byzantine

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ENGLISH BIRD
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ON THE CEILING

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ABOVE LEFT A CORAL TURTLE PIECE BY SERDAR GÜLGÜN, WITH KIROGLU'S LOBSTER EARRINGS AND EVIL EYE BAG **ABOVE** BEGÜM KIROGLU WEARS SKIRT, ROSIE ASSOULIN **BELOW** A FOO LION DOG FOUND IN A BEIJING ANTIQUE STORE WEARING A CROWN KIROGLU MADE FOR HERSELF FOR AN AQUAZZURA PARTY IN VIENNA, AND A PHARAOH MEDALLION NECKLACE **LEFT** THE JEWELRY DESIGNER'S CUORE SACRO EARRINGS AND A CARETTA CUFF REST ON A SIDE TABLE **FAR LEFT** IN THE BEDROOM, AN ANTIQUE LEOPARD SKIN HANGS ABOVE THE BED, WITH A BLACK CHINESE MINI TRUNK AND ANTIQUE BLEU BLANC PLATES ON THE WALL



AN USHAK CARPET ON THE COFFEE TABLE, WITH CHINESE MING GUO-PERIOD MONKEYS AND PARROTS. THE ROCK CRYSTAL SKULL WAS PICKED UP IN NEPAL. **BELOW** THE DESIGNER SITS ON A VINTAGE CHAIR FROM HER GRANDMOTHER IN FRONT OF A MOSAIC WARDROBE FROM SYRIA



building plans with an oval dome at the center, which represents the Ottoman royal tent. Hand-painted frescoes, Oushak carpets, antiques, imperial portraits, Ottoman calligraphy, and inlaid mother-of-pearl Syrian armoires adorn every room. “It’s really a wonderland,” Kiroglu says. “Every day, I feel like I am in a movie scene.” All white, the traditional Ottoman hammam with Marmara marble is often used as a sanctuary. “It offers a feeling of purification, both for the body and soul,” reflects the jewelry designer.

On her own floor, where stone prevails – in contrast to the rest of the house that’s embellished with wood – Kiroglu opted for a rich and diverse palette of bright and contemporary hues, including blue, yellow, red, and her favorite color, green. “It represents my melting pot,” Kiroglu says. “I’ve always loved the way the Chinese use a vibrant green in their

antique architecture; it is so classic yet so contemporary.” For the Ottomans, green was considered the color of Islamic culture.

“I collected a lot of precious pieces when I was living in China,” explains Kiroglu. “My flat is filled with Chinese furniture and porcelain. It also features Japanese pieces and, of course, Ottoman textiles.” Among Kiroglu’s favorite objets d’art are two peacocks from Turkey, placed on each side of the staircase. “I love them because they reflect the way I dress,” she says, referring to her wardrobe beholding a myriad of colors, silk, gold, and Ottoman garments, Japanese kimonos, Chinese dresses, and contemporary clothes from designers such as Rosie Assoulin, Amur, Yuliya Magdych, and Leal Daccarett. Her upcoming project, due to be launched next summer, will be a collaborative collection with a shoe brand. “Fashion makes me happy,” she smiles. □

