

Buongiorno

*first times,
tabcos,
& fuck-yous*



TANJA HEISS

A journey through matter and form

Abrera, Augusto 2014

Qué calor! It's incredibly hot on the shop floor in the suburbs of Barcelona. Every day, I spend around two hours assembling elevator buttons. Those buttons you push to get on the metro in Paris, to enjoy the view from the top of the Palm in Dubai or to get inspired by Gaudi's creativity in Barcelona's Sagrada Familia. Those buttons!

Manufacturing has inspired me ever since; thinking something into reality, building something concrete. Things one can touch, use, and sometimes even love. My current job allows me to combine my fascination for international business, Japanese production methods and manual activities such as welding, embossing and engraving stainless steel plates. When the day ends and we pack the orders, I always start dreaming about shipping my own creations, without an idea in mind of what these could be.

As the weekend approaches, I decide to try to build my own little something with the conviction that I will find out where it leads. Spending one day at home in front of my computer, soaking up the sun, just next to Rebecca Horn's beautiful *The wounded star sculpture* in the crowded Barceloneta beach, turns into my very first photography blog on Tumblr¹, baptized "CHO" shortly after. Google helped to pick the three-lettered translation of my last name "Heiss" in Haitian Creole when the idea for a great name was missing.

I moved to France where everybody pronounces it "chaud". *Chaud* means "hot" in French, my last name "Heiss" is pronounced like "heiß" which in German also means "hot" - we've come full circle. Why am I even revealing this fact? I had been tranquil for four years and a half after being called by



everyone "Miss hot", "hottie", all my life. Fun fact: this argument helped to convince Jimmy Choo Germany to remove their opposition against my brand CHO in 2019 (after eight months of discussion).

Travel with me to 2018. Once all the possible elevator buttons were assembled, a bachelor's and master's degree in international business and operations management (production, logistics, purchasing) successfully completed, innumerable catalytic converters bought and precious metals recycled for Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi, I get closer to live fully my creativity as the first international account manager at the Paris-based photography startup Mee-ro. I finally take the final leap into the void: I quit my job.

First, I just wanted to see how I would intuitively spend my day not worrying about work. From day one I was drawn towards photography, architecture, art, fashion, drawing painting and creating jewelry. I'm seven again and happy AF.

Since I was a child, I've always been fascinated by people. We are seven billion and everybody is different in appearance, belief, thinking, opinions, origin, experiences, age and at the same time we all have something in common.

I find that the beauty lies not in our differences nor in our similarities but in both together. We are different, we are similar. We are unique. The similarities bring us together and the differences make us grow.

CHO is born. My very first project, company, brand, jewelry label.

CHO aims to accentuate this uniqueness through timeless asymmetrical jewelry.

¹ <https://tanjacho.tumblr.com/>

Sketching, prototyping, finding suppliers, running from one post office to another to find out that they are closed because of the *grève*² - this is the moment where you should add a *force majeure clause* everywhere - sending emails 24/7, organizing photoshoots on some rocky island in the Philippines right after snorkeling, capturing the jewelry's lights and shadows in Israel's HaBonim beach with my dad as a hand model, chasing similarities with Le Corbusier's buildings (the large circle ring and the pilotis definitely have something in common), turning my friends into hand and ear models, painting and drawing creations, is indeed working, all of this is working, this is my job, or at least I'm still convincing myself it is.

What I imagined as living my dream comes with a lot of struggle, concessions and hard work. The creative journey includes a ton of legal and finance stuff, highs and lows, self-doubt, freedom which feels like a cage, being vegan for two months, becoming a non-smoking person after two trials, a bit of loneliness here and there (even though alone time always had been a priority), learning, you need allowance for precious metals, becoming a logo designer, CEO, web designer, accountant, writing agbs³, dealing with SSL certificates, being a product designer, photographer, and more, all of which doesn't really fit in twenty-four hours.

Uber eats feat. Ben & Jerry's has a new favorite late-night client!

Positivity and motivational quotes (omg I love them) keep me going and convince me that being bankrupt is part of the struggle. (Ben & Jerry only costs 12€ on Uber Eats *this can be an ad! pay me!) Drinking red wine every single night until 2 am while working means nothing less than being an artist anyways, doesn't it?

And eventually, everything makes sense.

My greatest goal in life is making people (family, friends, and strangers) feel happy and beautiful about themselves and others, embracing their asymmetries, through my creations, the CHO pieces.

From the oldest client, 94 years old from Germany to red-wine-with-olives-sales-appointments with C. before she moves to LA, a millefeuille-gouter-fitting with S. who wanted the pieces even before the prototypes were created, collaborations and exhibitions in favorite cities around the world, early morning coffees and late-night talks with inspiring people, until sharing all these parts of my creative roller coaster ride here in Buongiorno.

It seems like I found my place - the struggle is worth it. Down for a glass of red around a cup of Ben & Jerry's, anyone?

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Instagram: @chokonzep
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All pictures courtesy of CHO.

² "strike" in French.

³ German for terms and conditions.



A photograph of an art studio setup on a wooden table. In the foreground, there's a palette with several tubes of paint. One tube is labeled 'LEFRANC BOURGEOIS gouache tempera violet purple violette viola rosa'. Another tube is labeled 'WATER COLOR'. A brush with a wooden handle and dark bristles lies across the palette. In the background, there's a white cloth or paper with some text, including 'WATER COLOR' and 'LEFRANC BOURGEOIS'. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, creating a cozy atmosphere. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

who knows / who cares