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*Collections*

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

*Tory*  
Burch

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**GOLDEN GAL**  
The designer in a gold antique sequin shell, oatmeal melange Raveen sweater, brown tree print Bria pumps, all by Tory Burch; jeans by J Brand and ring by Sevan

# *Inside Her World*

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FASHION DESIGNER TORY BURCH, SHE OPENS HER HEART, LIFE AND HOME TO ANTON SAN DIEGO

■ PHOTOGRAPHY NIGEL BARKER

**P**

ICTURE THIS DOMESTICATED SCENE: A PARTY OF ABOUT 12 IS having lunch in a large kitchen with salads, pizzas and sandwiches on offer. The lady of the house opts for pizza that day. She scrapes off the cheese and eats only the crust. Her sons enter the room noisily, trying to get their mother's attention. Some vases have broken and both are blaming the other. All of a sudden, one of them screams, "My mum is so strict!" One of the women present says: "Don't you smell something burning?" The lady of the house goes to inspect where it is coming from and senses it's from the toaster. The boys had placed their toys—which grow in heat—in the toaster and they have burnt to a crisp. "Who makes these things, I wonder?" she says. She yanks the toaster cord from the wall socket, but not without getting an electrical charge first. She gives her boys a look and a reprimand, and then she kisses their foreheads. Lunch is resumed. This is just a day in the life for one of the most successful international fashion designers in the world. Welcome to the domesticated side of Tory Burch.

## *The Early Years*

CONTRARY TO EVERYONE'S THINKING, BURCH didn't grow up as a Park Avenue princess or a WASP; rather, she was raised on a Pennsylvania farm. She studied at an exclusive all-girls' school, then took art history at the University of Pennsylvania. "When I was little, I was a tomboy because I grew up on a farm with three brothers, so I wasn't particularly into fashion," she says. "Then I saw how fashionable my parents were. It was interesting to watch them dress themselves and see how my father designed all of his clothing. My mother was a former model and an actress and incredibly chic as well." The designer recalled how glamorous her mother looked whenever she went out and found she was always so put together. Her father was an investor and loved to travel, collect art and rare antiques.

After graduating from college she moved to New York to work for Zoran, a Yugoslav fashion designer. There she nursed the idea of starting her own fashion brand. From Zoran, she moved onto the fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar*, Ralph Lauren and then Vera Wang. While working at Vera Wang, she met the venture capitalist Chris Burch, who eventually became her husband. Both of them held the common thread of previously being married, and the couple exchanged vows in 1996.

Before becoming a famous fashion designer, Burch was a homemaker and mother of three boys (the eldest of whom are twins) and a stepmother to the three girls from Chris' previous marriage. She was also known as one of the new breed of young socialites who were rich, powerful, beautiful and photographable. These socialites, such as the Miller sisters, Aerin Lauder, Tamara Mellon, Brooke de Ocampo and the late Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy, commanded the same attention and importance as celebrities and models and were

boldfaced names seen and read on Page Six, *Vogue* or *Vanity Fair*. In 2004 *The New York Times* proclaimed her "the pillar of New York's young social set" and *W* magazine called her "New York's reigning blonde."

The young mother resigned from her job to raise her family. As her children grew up and needed less mummy time, she felt her dream of having her own fashion brand beckoned to her. She also felt the need for well-designed, quality and affordable clothes that wasn't met in fashion at that time. Burch raised the money for what was to become an estimated US\$250,000-million fashion empire with the help of her husband, family and close friends. In 2004 she opened her first store in New York's fashionable Nolita district and made close to \$100,000 on the first day. "We opened our store five years ago during Fashion Week and were shocked by the reception we received. When you walk into my store you instantly know who we are—that was my intent. People thought that when I started, it was just going to be a vanity project, maybe a T-shirt line or some accessories," she says. "I just worked hard. People were incredibly surprised by the quality and the price range of

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**GRAND  
ENTRANCE**  
She wears a  
layered ruffle  
dress and Haven  
sandals, all by  
Tory Burch





# *“It’s important to me to be a role model and encourage women to work or be a working mum”*

my products when the store opened.”

The uncanny comparison to another American socialite designer, Diane Von Furstenberg, is inevitable. Burch’s tunics, either simple or embellished, instantly became a status symbol just like the wrap dress was for Diane Von Furstenberg in the seventies. “I think we’re broader than that,” she says. “We’re also known for our sequined dresses, shoes and totes. I think it’s more about the lifestyle we offer in our clothes. Tunics are one of our best-sellers, not that I mind.”

Tory Burch came at the right time when women were looking for an unfussy, hip, young, stylish type of uniform that wouldn’t break the bank. In an already overcrowded world of fashion, one didn’t need another brand to confuse consumers. What Burch did that wasn’t out there was give women a departure from their monochromatic clothes. She made clothes fun, chic and elegant. She introduced colour and patterns into women’s wardrobes and gave great pieces that went from day to night.

Women also adored the whole New York socialite designer profile. Burch represents old-world wealth; buying her clothes is like believing that you have a Hampton or Connecticut mansion. An avid fan further elaborates, “Wearing a Tory Burch, well, makes you feel rich, whether that’s true or not.” Burch says, “It’s a funny feeling that people buy into who I am but I am very appreciative. It’s wonderful to see your clothes worn by other people.”

Asked if the title Park Avenue designer belittles her accomplishments, she says with a smile, “That was the title given to me before. Now, they call me a socialite designer. Actually I think I have proven myself to be a serious businesswoman. It’s very important to me to be a role model and encourage women to work or become a working mum. We’re starting a foundation about women and microfinance which helps women start small businesses and to become entrepreneurial. It’s a way to empower women to take care of themselves and their family. It was launched three weeks ago. It’s a very exciting project,” Burch says.

In 2005 Oprah Winfrey invited Burch to her show. She was so ecstatic about the Tory Burch tunic she received for Christmas that she want-

ed to meet the designer. The television host, whose every word America follows, heaped praises for the tunic shirts and designs that her online website got more than five million hits that same day. In 2007 Burch won the coveted Accessory Brand Launch of the Year award from the Accessories Council of Excellence.

Everyone says that her rise to the top has been astronomical. Not since Diane Von Furstenberg in the seventies or Donna Karan in the eighties has there been an American women’s designer who has received so much attention, not only for her work but for her private life. She started her fashion empire five years ago, even without a design background. “Yes, I don’t have a design background. I worked in PR and advertising, so until now, I’m still learning and I am willing to learn,” she quickly says. “People tell me that it’s been like an overnight success story for me, but no matter how big we have gotten in this short period of time, I want each collection to be better than the last. That’s how I motivate myself and my team.”

She also feels like she’s just starting in the business. For one, her brand has never done runway. “I would love to one day, but with how expensive runway shows are, I don’t want to do it just yet. I feel like there are so many wonderful opportunities, but I have to be strategic about it, and I want to do it at the right time. We’ve placed a lot of things on hold like our home line, but I am excited that we are launching our watches!” says the multifaceted designer.

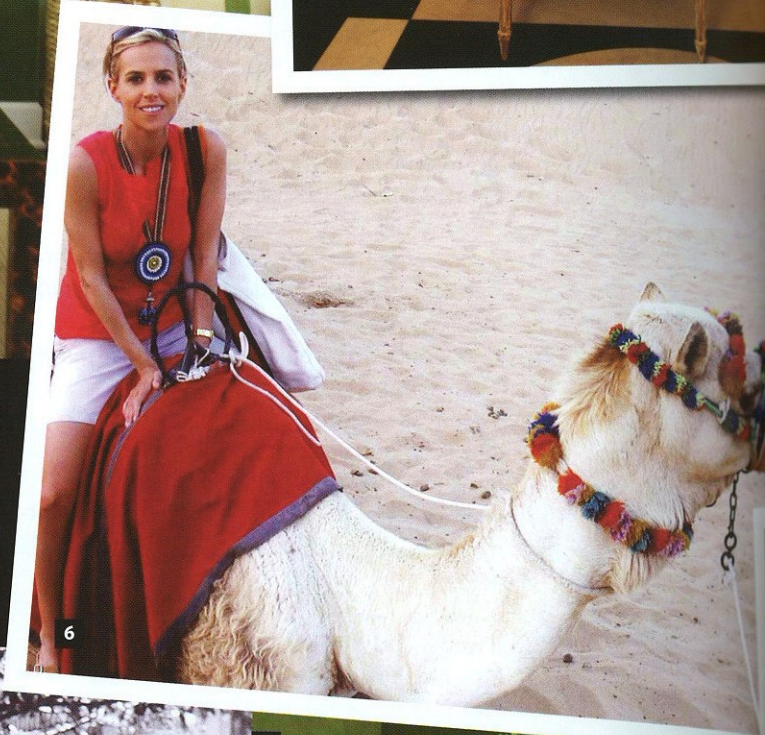
## *On Style and Fashion*

ONE REASON BURCH STARTED HER OWN LINE IS that she felt what the other designers offered was exorbitant, even if she had personal favourite labels before becoming a designer. Her clothes can best be described as American sportswear with a throwback to the sixties and seventies—but modernised—and they transcend age and race. “When I design, I think of what my friends or I would like to wear. What I find so interesting in our company is we dress women of all ages. I can see 20-, 30- and 70-year-olds wearing our clothes,” she says.

When it comes to fashion philosophy the designer doesn’t mince words. “I think I’ve definitely evolved into being comfortable with

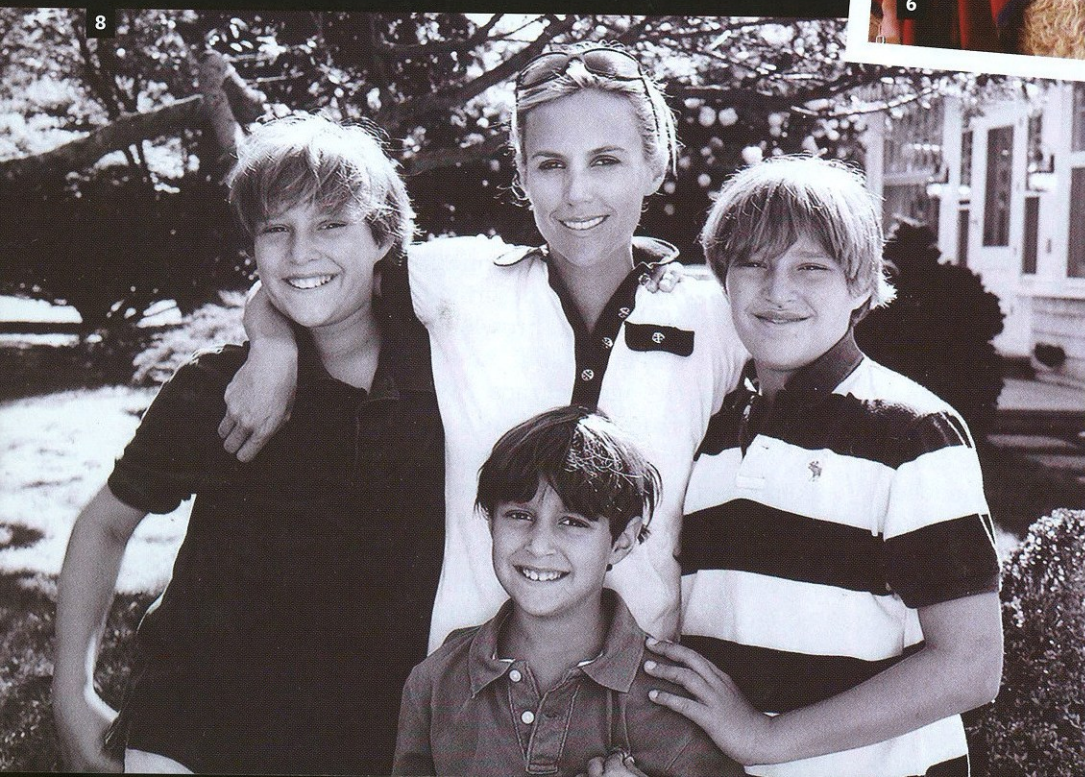
### **MILITARY MANOEUVRES**

Posing in a navy Monceau turtleneck, navy and ivory army stripe Pigadia T-shirt, skinny jeans in Camo print, all by Tory Burch; ring by Sevan



**PRIVATE WORLD**

- 1. Tory has been avidly collecting blue-and-white Chinese porcelain for years.
- 2. A take on the classic New York Fifth Avenue apartment.
- 3. Tory's fascination with vibrant colour and fresh flowers is evident all throughout her apartment.
- 4. A photo of Tory's fashionable parents—Reva and Buddy Robinson.
- 5. Tory vacationing in India.
- 6. Tory enjoying a serene moment in Dubai.
- 7. An antique cabinet in the living room.
- 8. Tory with sons Henry, Sawyer and Nick.







*“If you take a trend too literally, you will become a fashion victim. It’s about understanding your age, body and who you are”*

fashion. Fashion is about your individual sense of style and how it looks on you. If you take a trend too literally, you will become a fashion victim. For me, it’s about understanding your age, body and who you are; being confident and eventually developing your own sense of style. I don’t look at the colour of someone’s skin or where they are from when I design. I am very interested in various cultures and trying to understand them.” Burch loves to travel and embraces every culture there is, as all these cultures are the basis of the inspiration for her clothes.

Burch launched her shoe collection in 2006 and no one knew that it would be a phenomenon. One style maven says, “I don’t care much for some of the clothes but I swear by the flats. They are the most comfortable!” Burch’s mother Reva is her style icon, and thus it is befitting she named her ballet flats with the “T” logo in her honour. The “T” logo was inspired by a sixties London interior designer named David Hicks but with Moroccan styling. “I wanted a logo that is more of a design feature. Personally, I don’t want to wear a lot of logos, I want our logos to be wearable.”

## *Mother Dearest*

ANYONE WHO IS A MOTHER KNOWS THE JOYS and pains of raising children. And yet Burch will say that her fashion empire takes a back seat to her family. She is a hands-on mother who ensures she spends quality time with her children despite her busy and hectic business and social calendar. “I talk with them and spend time with them a lot. Just recently we went to four countries in nine days. What I try to instill in them, more so than anything, is to be thankful and kind to everyone. I think they are gentle and I always teach them how important it is to give back.” Burch doesn’t want her kids to grow too quickly as they have everything they ever wanted at a young age, while she herself started out with a wholesome childhood on the farm. “I just want them to enjoy their youth, their childhood, just like I did.”

Being a lover of all cultures, Burch expects her family to embrace all cultures also, and has no tolerance for concepts such as racism. Though her mother is Jewish, her younger

brother is Catholic and she was raised unconventionally. “My little brother’s actually adopted from Argentina. His mother is a housekeeper who has schizophrenia and was raised by nuns in a convent. We took them both in when Leonard was only five months old. Now, he has two mums and is already 35,” she says.

## *Home Suite Home*

THE FIRST THING THAT HITS YOU ON ENTERING Tory Burch’s home of seven years is its scale, which covers 840 square metres at the tony location, Pierre Hotel, on Fifth Avenue. Before this home, she and her ex-husband lived in the same building but in a much smaller space. Actually three suites combined, the apartment is a collaboration between the New York-based Filipino interior designer Daniel Romualdez (who also designed all of Burch’s US boutiques) and herself. They met through mutual friends and have been collaborative partners ever since. “It’s funny because he just designed this house from a drawing on a table napkin one night, and the layout was great. It’s very complicated. I lived in this apartment five years then we combined it with two little apartments and the hallways,” says Burch. “Daniel is so great at taking people’s taste and making it better. To be someone who can jump into your world and understand it and make it better, it’s a great personality.”

She believes they make a good team because they met each other in the middle, Romualdez being modern and Burch being traditional. “I love colour and I think I helped him with that a little bit,” she says, and he agrees. “When I started working on her apartment almost 10 years ago everything was beige—her bold colour sense made the place look distinctive,” says Romualdez. The apartment was designed as a fresh take on the classic New York Fifth Avenue apartment with architecture based on many of the apartments done in the 1930s in the English Georgian style. “While the decoration is largely traditional we tried to use those elements in a younger way. The apartment is a family home so even though it has a slightly formal look it is still very child-friendly,” he adds.

For the apartment’s décor and furnishings Burch and Romualdez bought antiques and accessories from their trips all over the world. The

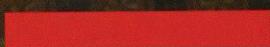
### **SILK AND LACE**

Lounging in an eggplant Meredith top, black washed leather thin cropped pants, black Teagan sandals, all by Tory Burch; ring by Sevan



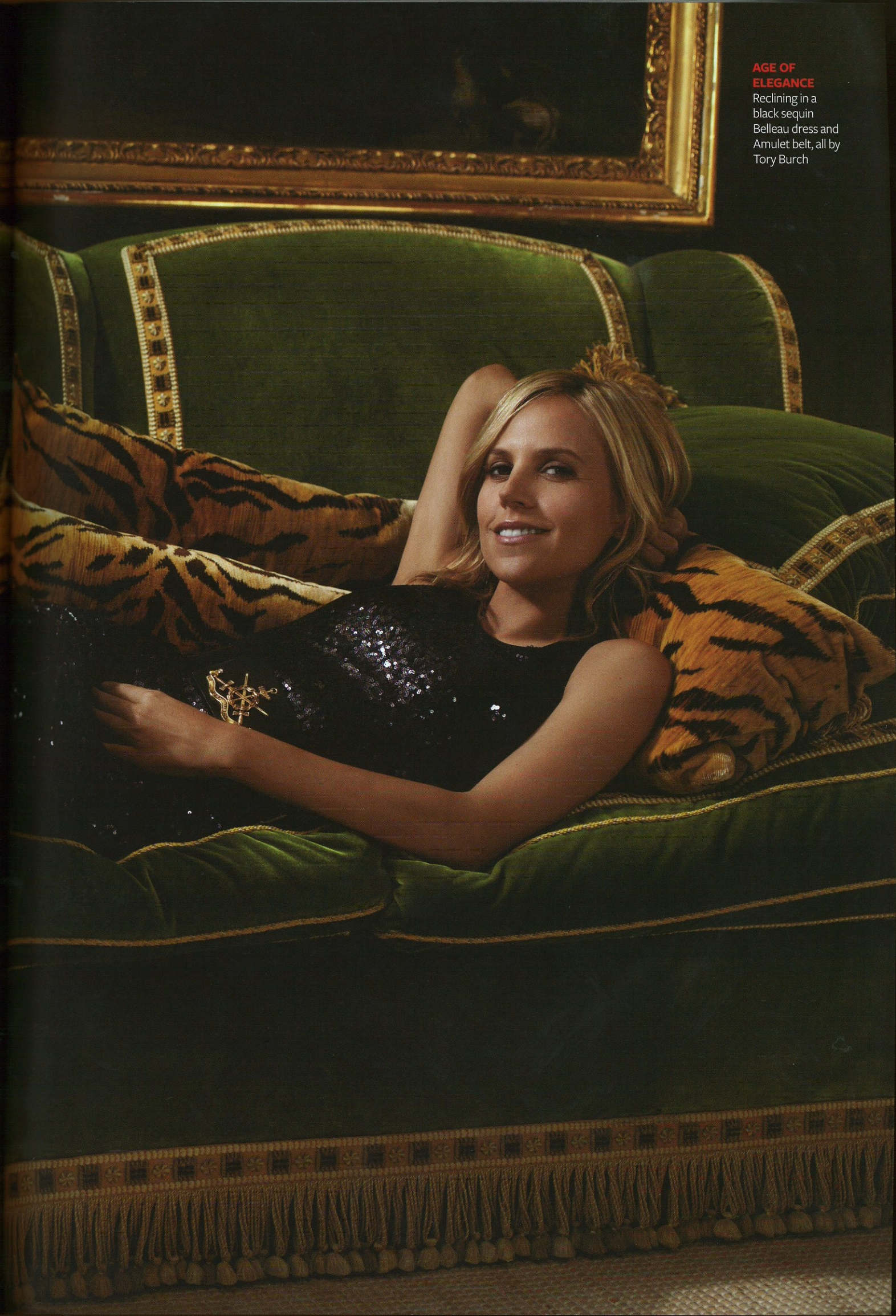


*Not since Diane Von Furstenberg in the seventies or Donna Karan in the eighties has there been an American women's designer who has received so much attention*



**AGE OF  
ELEGANCE**

Reclining in a  
black sequin  
Belleau dress and  
Amulet belt, all by  
Tory Burch

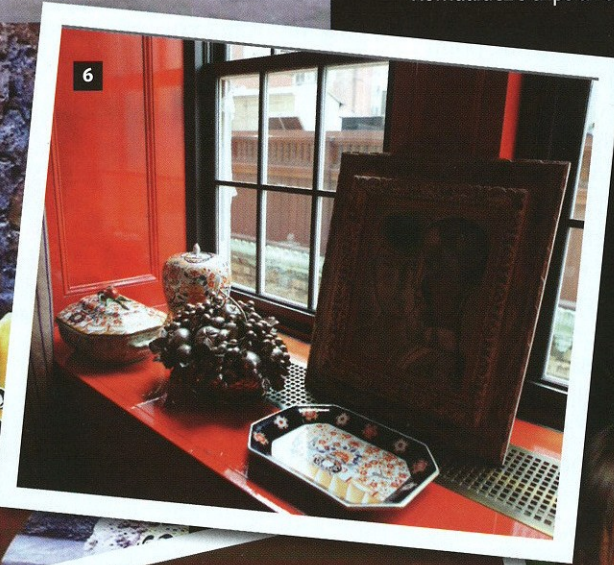






**FAMILY MATTERS**

1. Tory enjoying a moment with her sons in Porto Ercole, Italy. 2. Some of her first edition books at her library. 3. Tory strikes a fun pose while sightseeing in Turkey. 4. Fresh red flowers match the walls of the dining room. 5. Tory with children from Thailand 6. A collection of Imari porcelains are displayed. 7. Tory Burch meets Oprah Winfrey in 2005. 8. Tory in Porto Ercole, Italy. 9. The apartment's living room is filled with antiques and accessories from Burch's and Romualdez's trips all over the world.



# *“I have to imagine what Tory’s house would look like in Forbes Park” says Romualdez*

painting above the sofa in the living room came from Burch’s previous apartment, the sofa was custom-made and inspired by another in Hubert de Givenchy’s house in Paris and the rug was woven in a village outside Saint-Tropez. She had been collecting the Imari and blue-and-white Chinese porcelain for years. “We just added to her stash from local antique stores. We found the Jansen slipper chairs in Buenos Aires, the other antiques on a trip to Paris. The marble mantle was made in China, where her now ex-husband has factories that make high-end home ware. We even have many tables of shagreen and parchment made by Garrison Rousseau in Cebu,” says Romualdez.

He wanted to create today’s version of the iconic rambling Manhattan apartment overlooking Central Park, and he did this with several inspirations; such as Oscar de la Renta’s long book-lined salon on Park Avenue for the library, Pauline de Rothschild’s bedroom wallpaper for the entry hall and a fabric made by Billy Baldwin based on a Matisse painting as the starting point for the family room. “Luckily Tory and I have wonderful shorthand when we work together and we tend to like the same things. While I might use a fabric or a photo of a favourite room as a starting point—it is my goal that in the end the whole thing will look very Tory.”

For the Tory Burch boutiques the pair took into account which city or country they were located in. In Malibu they focused on rustic wood. In the Meatpacking District in New York the look is more industrial. “When you walk into a store, you know it is Tory Burch but not necessarily the same one. We keep the orange doors when we can, which is our signature look. Antiques in our stores were collected on my travels,” Burch says.

Romualdez notes that all the stores have a decidedly residential feel, which is great. “I want people to think that they have stepped into Tory’s world when they visit one of her stores. The best part of designing the stores (and I have worked on 30 or more of them) is that each one becomes a new design challenge. First it was easy to imagine what Tory’s house in Palm Beach would be like or Tory’s getaway in Malibu. Now that I am going to design Tory’s store in Greenbelt, I just have to

## **FACING FORWARD**

Tory wears an eggplant Meredith top, black washed leather thin cropped pants, black Teagan sandals, all by Tory Burch; ring by Sevan

## Q&A with Tory Burch

### **WHAT IS YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE AND UNIFORM?**

My style is classic with an eclectic edge.

### **FAVOURITE SCENT / CANDLES (HOME FRAGRANCE)/ FLOWERS?**

I love Vetiver by Guerlain, candles from Vie Luxe and my favourite flowers are orange poppies and hot pink peonies.

### **WHO DOES THE FLOWERS IN YOUR HOME?**

For a party or special event, I have Helena Lehane do them. She does a beautiful job and always finds the most gorgeous flowers. I love fresh flowers in every room in my house. I tend to like bright colours and prefer arrangements with all one type of flower. I also like to go to the flower market early in the morning sometimes and pick out whatever is in season to do casual arrangements for my apartment.

### **FAVOURITE NYC HAUNTS?**

Sushi of Gari and Milos are two of my favourite restaurants. I live near Central Park, so I take my boys there often. They also love to go to the Museum of Natural History and the Hayden Planetarium.

### **FAVOURITE ACCESSORY/ JEWELLERY?**

The sunflower pendant my father made for his mother that was passed down to me.

### **DO YOU HAVE A BEAUTY ROUTINE OR FITNESS REGIMEN?**

My beauty regimen is very easy. I don’t wear a lot of make-up and often leave the house with wet hair. Keeping the skin moisturised is the key. I love Bobbi Brown tinted moisturiser with SPF 25. It gives you sun protection and a natural glow at the same time. I usually run on the treadmill or go for a walk with friends in Central Park. In summer I get together with a group of friends a few times a week and play tennis.

### **HOW OFTEN DO YOU ENTERTAIN AT HOME?**

I like to entertain and do everything from ordering takeaway at home with a small group of friends to catered sit-down dinners. Glorious Foods is a great caterer and I love working with them for larger events. One of my specialities is chicken curry. It is a great dish to serve at a buffet dinner.

### **WHAT’S YOUR FAVOURITE FROM THE F/W 2009 COLLECTION?**

Our Jaden boots. They are chic and sophisticated and look great on women of all ages.

### **FROM ALL YOUR TRAVELS, WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CITY, SOMEWHERE YOU GET INSPIRATION AND WOULD GO BACK TO TIME AND TIME AGAIN?**

Marrakesh [in Morocco] is an incredibly inspiring place to visit. All the amazing colours at Yves Saint Laurent’s Majorelle Gardens influenced our collection last spring. I always find amazing things when I travel. I love going to flea markets and bazaars to find local textiles, pottery and jewellery. It is also inspiring to experience different cultures and meet people from around the world. Anything from the print on the bottom of a basket to a box of colourful beads can lead to a new idea.

### **WHO IS THE PERSON YOU ADMIRE MOST OR GET INSPIRATION FROM?**

My parents. It would have been impossible not to have developed an interest in fashion and style growing up with my mother and father. They have always had an amazing and innate sense of style.

### **WHAT ARE THE CHARITIES YOU ARE INVOLVED IN?**

I am thrilled to announce that we launched the Tory Burch Foundation in June. Our goal is to provide economic opportunities for women and their families in the US and eventually abroad. Balancing work and family is always difficult, and I feel blessed that I am able to support my family and also have a career that I am passionate about. I started my Foundation to give back and help other women realise their dreams. I am also very involved with the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre. Many people in my life, including my father, have been touched by cancer. It is incredibly important to me to support the search for a cure and to improve the lives of those living with cancer.

### **WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SPOT ON EARTH?**

Wherever my children are—our kitchen is my favourite room in the house. Everyone gathers there at the end of the day to do homework, get dinner ready and catch up on the day.







# *Burch finds great inspiration in Asian women because she feels they have a unique yet elegant way of putting things together*

imagine what Tory's house would look like in Forbes Park," says the interior designer.

## *Private Life, Public Divorce*

ALTHOUGH HER LIFE AND CAREER MIGHT SEEM perfect, everyone knows there is no such thing. In 2006 Chris and Tory separated. *Vanity Fair* magazine wrote an article about her fashion empire as well as the messy divorce. "It certainly was one of the most difficult times in my life," she reveals. The magazine recounted a lot of tension brewing between the couple. Chris served as her business adviser and partner and the couple found it difficult to work together, much less make a home together.

In spite of this being both the couple's second marriage, Burch refused to comment on what went wrong with her first, although she gives some insight on her divorce from Chris. "I went through a very public—but not very nice—divorce and it was very difficult. To get a call from *Vanity Fair* telling me that they are writing a story...it's not a good call. Though I think in the end it all worked out well," she says.

She took the writer into her life so she felt she might as well show him everything. She welcomed him to the house where she grew up in and introduced him to her parents. "I wasn't hiding anything. It was me trying to put a stop to all the gossip and all the wrong things people have been saying. I told him, 'I will give an honest answer to all the questions that you have for me.' We became great friends because I think he saw through a lot of the noise and the silliness of gossip, meanness and people going through a tough time or jumping on the bandwagon. I was lucky. For the most part, I came out better."

What kept Burch through the emotional storm was relying on her family and close friends. "I know who they were and during that time I kept to myself most of the time," she says. "It's also important to think and be positive and be nice to people. In the end, you'd think, 'I'm a positive and nice person, so who cares what people say?' I have moved on and I'm beyond it. Now we are good friends and have six children together."

## *Future Perfect*

AS THE SHOOT WRAPS UP AND NIGEL BARKER and crew are packing their things, Burch

excuses herself to "put on something comfortable." She comes back barefoot, wearing a light sweater and camouflage pants. Up close, Burch seems unapproachable because she has a million things on her mind. That may be true since juggling business with single motherhood is no easy feat.

Those in the fashion industry must be scratching their heads in wonder at the successful Tory Burch Empire. Some would say five years isn't enough time to gauge a brand's success or create a fashion empire. Yet it has 18 freestanding stores in the US and the likes of Bergdorf Goodman's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Harvey Nichols, Selfridge's and Bloomingdale's carry it. She is at more than 450 selected speciality stores worldwide. She has partnered with Stores Specialists, Inc and is slated for opening in late October. Manila will be abuzz to shop at her first boutique to open at the Greenbelt 5 mall.

In October Tory Burch will open in Japan. She already is represented by Lane Crawford in Hong Kong. "I think we have a huge opportunity in Asia. It's important to build your own store. We're being copied, so it damages our business," the designer says.

Burch finds great inspiration in Asian women because she feels they have a unique yet elegant way of putting things together. She even visited the Philippines when she was just a college student. "I found the people and country so beautiful. I would be so honoured to have Asian women wearing my clothes. I'm excited to grow that business in that part of the world," she says, citing Thailand, China, Malaysia and the Philippines as some of her favourites.

Pressed whether or not she thinks she is successful, she pauses to say, "I have to keep everything in perspective. One of the biggest challenges I face personally is the balance of being a mother and running a business." Her guard finally comes down when she is asked what her wishes are for her sons. "The only time I feel the most successful is when I look at my three boys and know that they are growing up happy and healthy. I am so grateful for the success we have had with the brand, but nothing compares with the joy I get from my sons," Burch says with a big smile. ■

### **SITTING PRETTY**

Seated in a brown bark Alva blouse, army green Rochelle cargo pants, all by Tory Burch; and her own vintage necklace