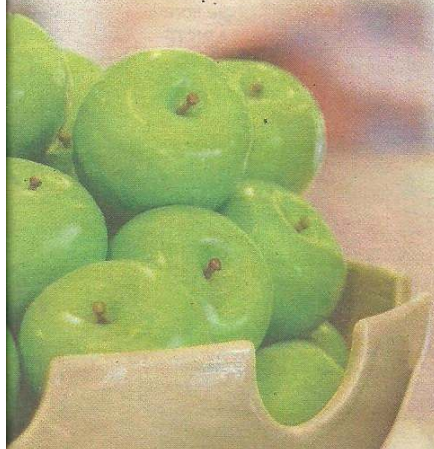


# HOW • *vain* CAN YOU GET?

Urban talks to women  
who go to the extreme  
when it comes to  
looking good



## SKINCARE SNOB

**KAREN NG, 39, PERSONAL STYLIST**

Ms Karen Ng, a fixture in Singapore's social scene, always shows up in the latest looks from luxury brands such as Chanel and Givenchy.

The same expensive tastes apply to her skincare regimen.

The 39-year-old swears by potions from luxe brands such as La Mer, La Prairie and SK-II, spending \$1,500 to top up her supply every month.

"Beauty is something I will not compromise on. I will do the best for my face as this is an investment," says Ms Ng, whose job involves dressing celebrities and socialites for events.

"I want to be assured that the skincare I use is of good quality, so I pay for the brands."

She once spent about \$10,000 on a facial machine that claimed to use ion technology to purge the skin of impurities. She used that for about a year before realising that "I am blessed with good skin and all I need is to upkeep my skin with a proper regimen".

This entails a 20-minute routine twice a day, where she cleanses with Clinique facial soap before slathering on La Prairie's Skin Caviar Luxe Cream. Her eye area is kept hydrated with La Mer's The Eye Concentrate.

She also has about 10 other face and eye serums as well as spot lighteners from brands such as By Terry and Lancome.

The devil in her "minimalist" regimen is in the details.

A \$1,200, 100ml jar of La Prairie cream lasts her only about six weeks because she is "not stingy" with the amount she slaps on. Usually, a jar of this size would last at least four months.

A certified facial therapist, she also uses the facial massage techniques she picked up from the course on herself "to promote absorption and circulation". She massages her face for at least 10 minutes, morning and night.

She also exfoliates her skin with a La Prairie scrub once a week, and uses face and eye sheet masks from La Mer and SK-II three to four times a week.

Explaining her diligent grooming, Ms Ng, who is single, says: "Just like how I tell my clients that the right appearance will open many doors, my looks help me overcome my insecurities.

"For example, when I feel down, I look at the confident front that I am projecting and I can tell myself, 'Heck, I'm not going to be crushed by what other people say'."

Besides skincare, she also visits Passion Hair Salon about five to eight times a month to get her hair and make-up done for events, spending about \$550 per session.

"Looks are a whole package. Whether I wear a gown or a sleek pantsuit, my hair and make-up have to match my clothing."

The battle with Father Time will only get tougher as she grows older and she has no qualms about going under the knife if need be.

"I am a believer in aesthetics procedures. I am fine for now because being meticulous with skincare helps delay the signs of ageing," says Ms Ng, who goes for intense pulsed light treatment once a year to tighten the skin around her eyes.

"If I see my skin start to sag, I will definitely go to the best doctor to get some help."

**Beauty spending:** About \$1,500 a month on skincare products, which include moisturisers and sheet masks. Her annual intense pulsed light treatment costs about \$1,500.

### Must-have items

#### 1 La Mer The Eye Concentrate, \$295

It moisturises and nourishes the area around my eyes, which gets dry easily as the skin is very thin. It is also a good base for eye make-up.

#### 2 La Prairie Skin Caviar Luxe Cream, \$1,220

This cream makes my skin supple and it contains light diffusers to make my face look brighter.

#### 3 Clinique Facial Soap, \$26

This cleanser gets rid of all the dirt and impurities in my skin for a squeaky-clean feeling.



## MAKE-UP MANIAC

**MS LIVIA GOH, 27,  
PART-TIME STUDENT  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE  
EXECUTIVE**

At the ripe old age of 27, Ms Livia Goh knows her days of pulling off the "kawaii" doe-eyed Japanese look are numbered.

Which is why, with youth still on her side, the part-time student has no qualms about spending up to two hours to turn herself into a clone of the famous Harajuku girls in Tokyo.

Lush false lashes, coloured contact lenses and light brown hair are just some of the trademarks of these teens.

"Not everybody can pull off the cute look but I'm small-sized, so I have an advantage," says the 1.56m-tall Ms Goh.

"I want to be able to look at my photographs in 20 years and say that I once looked really cute."

About three times a week, she wakes up at 7am and spends about two hours just to paint on her kawaii face.

So adept is she that when she holidayed in Taiwan last month, the people she met thought she was Japanese.

But she has been known to be one to two hours late for appointments because of her make-up obsession.

Her defence: "If I look bad, I'd rather not go out."

She once got up at 3am just so that she could doll up in time for a morning flight to Taiwan. On another trip, she left her make-up kit at home and dashed to a drugstore to stock up on beauty essentials the minute she arrived at her destination.

Her eyes get the VIP treatment in her routine: She spends up to 45 painstaking minutes perfecting them before moving on to the rest of her face.

"They are the first things people look at," she explains.

She applies a sticker to each eyelid to create more defined double eyelids, draws a wingtip on each eye using eyeliner to make them look wider, then finishes off with false eyelashes.

She is not short-sighted, but pops in coloured contact lenses – she has three pairs in brown, grey and green – for the full doe-eyed effect.

But she rejects the "beauty fanatic" label.

"I may be vain but I'm not obsessed

### Must-have items

**1 ZA Perfection Concealer, \$13.90**

This is a multi-purpose concealer that covers spots, blemishes and dark eye rings.

**2 Bobbi Brown Long-wear Gel Eyeliner, \$40**

With this smudge-proof gel liner, I can line my eyes extremely close to my lashes to make my lashes look fuller.

**3 Maybelline Volum' Express Hyper Curl Mascara, \$18.90**

Eyeliner does only half the job of "opening" my eyes. I need mascara to complete the look.

because I don't constantly touch up my make-up once I am out."

She takes pains to look her best, especially when meeting someone for the first time, as feedback to her going bare-faced has not been encouraging.

Previous boyfriends have commented that she looks tired, while her colleagues joked that she "looks like a ghost".

But there is a pragmatic side to her vanity – she says she wears make-up only when necessary.

For example, she goes without make-up when attending night classes – she is doing a part-time bachelor's degree in communication at SIM University.

"I'm there to study. There are also no cute guys for me to impress, so I don't have to bother," she quips.

**Beauty spending:** About \$50 a month on make-up from drugstore brands like ZA, Silkygirl, Kate and Integrate. She also spends about \$100 a month to trim and colour her hair at the salon. She spends about \$150 every three months on Laneige skincare products.

Every six months, when she goes to Taiwan for a vacation, she will pay about \$100 for a full set of nail art, which lasts two months.