

I have met so many incredible Chinese women in Europe and in the United States in the past 15 years. Some were from mainland China, and some were expatriates. All were courageous, hard working and honest. It was a pleasure to work, and spend time, with them.

Coming to Beijing

来到北京

A few months ago, I received an e-mail from Singapore, from my friend Josephine Chong Schlittler. She asked me to be a speaker during a Round Table, with five Asian women entrepreneurs, as part of the Women's World Expo. The event was held in Beijing from November 29 to December 1, 2005. It was a marvelous opportunity for me to meet hundreds of Chinese women in a few days! I was very honored, and I accepted right away.

On the day I arrived in Beijing, I decided to take the subway to go to a shopping center. Everyone was kind and helpful when I asked how to get there. I found the market without a problem.

A shopping center is a very good place to watch women at work. You can see what is offered, and get a feeling about people and their lives. As I passed by a tea shop, I was offered a cup of tea. The young lady offered to let me taste many different kinds of tea. She was so kind and professional that I finally decided to buy a very nice box of jasmine tea. I admired the ability with which she wrapped the tea in the box, and her nice smile touched my heart. I was really in China.

I began organizing the exhibition the day after I met many Chinese women, and I could see they were more quiet and patient than people in Europe. They also worked much longer hours. I saw many products, most of which were made by women. It would be a good idea to create a



Giselle Rufer, the author and President of Delance Swiss Watches
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Sisterhood: A Message from a European Entrepreneur

姐妹情愫: GISELLE RUFER (Switzerland)
茹弗 (瑞士)

一位欧洲企业家的心路

After attending the 2005 Women's World Expo in Beijing, Giselle Rufer, President of Delance Swiss Watches, was happy to share her impressions of Chinese women, and her personal course regarding sisterhood, with *Women of China's* readers.

出席了在北京举办的2005女性世界博览会，德朗斯瑞士名表总裁茹弗很高兴与本刊读者分享她对中国女性的印象以及她个人的姐妹情愫。

laboratory with women from both China and Europe to determine how to match and combine the knowledge, the skills, and the traditions of each to create contemporary products to sell throughout the world.

From a European point of view, I can say to the fantastic Chinese women: You are full of energy and very creative, you have a good sense of family and friendship, and you are keen to do well in business. Just continue placing great importance on the education of your daughters, as well as your sons. Respect, develop and appreciate your Chinese traditions. Establish good friendships and relations with other women all over the world, and support other women any way you can.

Little 'Donna Quixote'

小“堂吉诃德”

Femininity is magic. Believe in yourself. Build your self-esteem. Be all that you can be. It is wonderful to be a woman.

My admiration for women is the result of knowing my mother; she was my role model, and she was a beautiful, intelligent and courageous woman. She was also a singer and a true entrepreneur. Today, she is 75 years old and she will always be beautiful, energetic and full of life. Her beauty is reflected in the love she constantly gives, free of charge, to those around her.

I was a very spirited and curious child, always wanting to know everything and to go everywhere. When I was 6 years old, however, I learned that life is not always so simple. It was my first brush with injustice. My brother was a Boy Scout, and I used to go with him to the meetings. It was exciting to be an "honorary" Boy Scout, and to be able to join in the activities. Then, one day, the new Scout

leader told me that I could no longer participate because I was a girl. What a shock! I was good at the activities and had just received a special new knife to help with the "survival" endeavors. But, none of that mattered to the new leader. I was out of the group, and his decision was final. Even today, at 54, when I see an injustice of any sort, my blood boils, just like it did when I was that little girl who was turned away by the Scout leader. Perhaps that is why I am a non-conformist, with a rebellious nature. That incident helped shape my ardent commitment to the notion that women should be treated the same way that men are.



Giselle Rufer (center) at the 2005 Women's World Expo in Beijing
茹弗(中)在北京2005女性世界博览会上

What I felt in those days was frustration at not being allowed to do what I wanted simply because I was a girl. I felt completely helpless. Even my parents could do nothing to change the situation. As a result, I looked for "sisters" who shared my passion for life. I began following the lives of women, first in my family and then in our small town, always listening to their experiences with interest—and often admiration. I voraciously devoured books about strong

women. I had an over-riding need to express my energy and my creativity. Even in school, I needed to defend the status of justice and women. One of my teachers used to call me "Don Quixote," because I was always defending one cause or another. True to my ideals, I corrected her by saying that I was indeed "Donna Quixote."

Laying Aside Dreams

搁置理想

I was 7 years old when my father died. He was only 32. My mother was 28. It was an accident, and he was not able to say "goodbye." Even at that age, I knew he was proud of me. To live up to his expectations, I was determined to be a very reliable daughter, and sister. By the time I had finished mandatory education, at the age of 15, I left school to work in my mother's small shop. As the oldest of five children, I also wanted my sisters to have opportunities to follow their dreams. My dreams were temporarily put on hold, and I admit that I felt somewhat discouraged. I had thought that I might become a doctor or an artist, or even a lawyer or a sculptor. There were so many possibilities...

We lived in a delightful, small town in Switzerland; a town that dated back to the Middle Ages. I loved it there. My mother's boutique was filled with jewelry, china and crystal. I undertook my job with a great deal of responsibility. This is where I learned to run a business, and to realize it was a seven-day, 24-hour affair. The hours were long and the work was hard, but we found time for a certain joie de vivre. Whenever there was a seemingly insurmountable problem, my mother would always say, "Don't worry, we will find a solution." And, we always did. My self-confidence increased. I learned how to deal with clients and suppliers. I



was in charge.

At 22, I fell in love and married. First came a son, then a daughter. With my husband's blessing, I decided to go back to school. I taught myself English and German and, then, juggling textbooks and diapers, I studied at home to get my second degree, so that I could attend the university. At first, I wanted to be a doctor, but with two small children, very little money and no help at home, that dream evaporated. My second passion was art, so I studied sculpting, painting, art and art

history. I quickly learned that the arts were dominated by men. Where were the women? I did find a few, such as Camille Claudel and...

Still, things began to change for women. More and more talented, creative and courageous women were making names for themselves in all walks of life, all over the world. I knew that someday I would find a way to join this movement.

For My Children

为了孩子

When my daughter was 7 years old, she announced that she wanted to be a ballet dancer. Beautiful, talented, mature and confident, she was, even at that tender age, ready to do what it took to succeed. Her passion enchanted me. When I suggested that this was a difficult career, she answered, "If you can dream it, you can do it." I knew that the life of a dancer was one of sacrifice and very hard work, but I wanted to help my gifted young child reach her goal.

Private dance lessons, and all that goes with pursuing such a dream, were very expensive, and I realized that it would not be long before the expenses would be more than we could afford. So, at the age of 32, I went back to school to get a degree that would allow me to find a job that would provide more income. At the end of four more years, I was the first woman in Switzerland to have earned an engineering degree in computer science.

After my daughter joined the Ballet Conservatory at the Paris Opera, she said she appreciated the way I had sacrificed my career for her, and she added she sincerely hoped that one day, I would be able to do what I wanted. I was very touched ... as I was when my son presented me with a Mother Day's day card that read, "Mom, I love you, because you have made me, and you have made me very well!" It was clear that he was a young man with a healthy dose of self-esteem.

Destiny Calling

命运在呼唤

With the children on their way to

becoming established in their careers, I had time to pursue my career. I began working for the Swatch Group, and I was responsible for introducing the children's Flik-Flak watch. Being in this industry and meeting many people, I realized that my destiny was calling.

I wanted to create a watch for women, a watch that would express our shared values; a watch that would represent life, harmony and spirituality. I wanted to create a symbol for the excellent femininity in all fields. I started my own business, and the result was the culmination of all my aspirations. It was the DELANCE watch, a timely piece of art that represented the hopes and dreams of women. It was a jewel filled with energy, love, and spirituality, to remind women everywhere that it is wonderful to be alive—and to be a woman!

The road from inspiration to design to reality was not easy. I had to overcome many obstacles, meet many challenges and endure many hardships. During all this, I realized there was no limit to creativity, no limit to what can be accomplished if you set your heart and mind to it.

The name DELANCE was taken from the name of my father. Speaking of fathers, I would like to say to men that being a father is very important. It is crucial that you show love and respect to your children, and to instill in them the necessary self-confidence. Their very future depends on it.

Whatever the century, whatever the country, whatever the culture, whatever the color of their skin, the main concerns of women are "life" and "harmony," which come from peace and spirituality. Ancient Greek women used to go on strike to stop wars. What an effective and simple idea! Today, women all over the world demonstrate for peace. As Charlotte Wolff stated, "Women have always been the guardians of wisdom and humanity, which makes them natural, but usually, secret rulers. The time has come for them to rule openly, but together with, and not against, men."

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