

# OBJECTS OF DESIRE

*Nadia Gohar masters the modern-day still life with her whimsical sculptures.*

BY **DAVID SARIC**

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NADIA GOHAR**  
 FASHION, FRAGRANCE, AND BEAUTY PRODUCTS  
 COURTESY OF **CHANEL**

## **F**or Toronto-based visual

artist Nadia Gohar, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected her professional and personal life, akin to a myriad of individuals worldwide who are grappling with this novel contagion. Gohar admits that at the start of the strict stay-at-home measures, she felt a bit “defeated and discouraged to continue working on then-current projects and unsure how to otherwise spend my days in isolation.” However, the multidisciplinary artist became preoccupied with a more carefree distraction to utilize her time, tapping into her creative impulses to nullify any feelings of ennui and solitude. The result is a series of photographs that are imbued with an essence of whimsy.

Going through what Gohar would call an “archaeological dig” of her









apartment, the artist collected an assortment of quotidian objects mixed with Chanel accessories to produce three-dimensional mixed-media collages. Using household objects is a reflection of Gohar's intention to infuse "by-products and products of cultural identity" into her artistic oeuvre.

Referring to the work of Swiss duo Peter Fischli and David Weiss and their 1987 short film *The Way Things Go*, Gohar began constructing a series of assemblages that arrange familiar objects in unexpected contexts. Placing objects such as a colander and a bagel



alongside Chanel fineries exudes a playful uncanniness. For Gohar, the vulnerable structures created by Fischli and Weiss—which can topple over at any second—are a metaphor for the state of 2020, as a sense of volatility permeates our mistreatment of both the environment and each other.

Gohar also found inspiration in the ubiquitous presence of domesticity that has saturated various social media channels. As the act of preparing homemade meals became widespread, Gohar responded by cheekily folding Chanel scarves into dinner napkins, "One for each day of the week you had to come up with something to cook—a relatively new concept for most."

An image of a sweater appliquéd with brooches is a nod to Edith Bouvier Beale from *Grey Gardens*, whom Gohar deems "the original social distancer." Directly referencing a scene in which Beale haphazardly reassembles a skirt to double as a cape, the artist recalls watching this clip and pondering "the wild combinations people must have been wearing during this time indoors, or when they finally got to go outside for a walk." Much like the beloved Beale, Gohar's quarantine pastime draws the bizarre out of the banal with an effortless idiosyncrasy.









