



RONALD ABRAM

FAMILY JEWELS

For JJ Abram, stepping into his parents' shoes at the family's luxury jewellery label, Ronald Abram, is about expanding on their vision



As JJ Abram steps up to plate to take charge of the family business he grew up in, he explains how his son is the apple of his eye and that Hong Kong is the place he wants to raise him.

Your parents [Ronald and Joyce Abram] have been stalwarts of the jewellery scene for decades. Did you always know you wanted to join the family business?

The short answer? Yes. Ronald Abram has been at its current location in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for three decades now – and I literally grew up and spent my childhood here surrounded by these fantastic jewels. While I definitely had other passions, there wasn't anything that had a strong enough attraction for me to pursue professionally. During my teenage and university years, I spent holidays and internships within the jewellery industry, so in a way, I was pretty much destined to end up where I am today.

Give us a little snapshot of what Ronald Abram is all about.

On the surface, it's a high-end jewellery brand specialising in collectible rare jewels, but we like to think of ourselves as more than that. The main focus of our business is relationships. We look to build lasting relationships with both jewellery lovers and jewellery collectors – that's really the core of our business.

As your parents take a step back, what are your responsibilities at the family firm?

Currently, as Brand Director, I manage the day-to-day operations of the business. However, as my mum and dad move to the

next phase of their lives, I'm looking to not just maintain the legacy my parents have built, but to grow it further. So understandably, a lot of my responsibilities revolve around expanding on the foundation they created and looking to the future to see how we can flourish further.

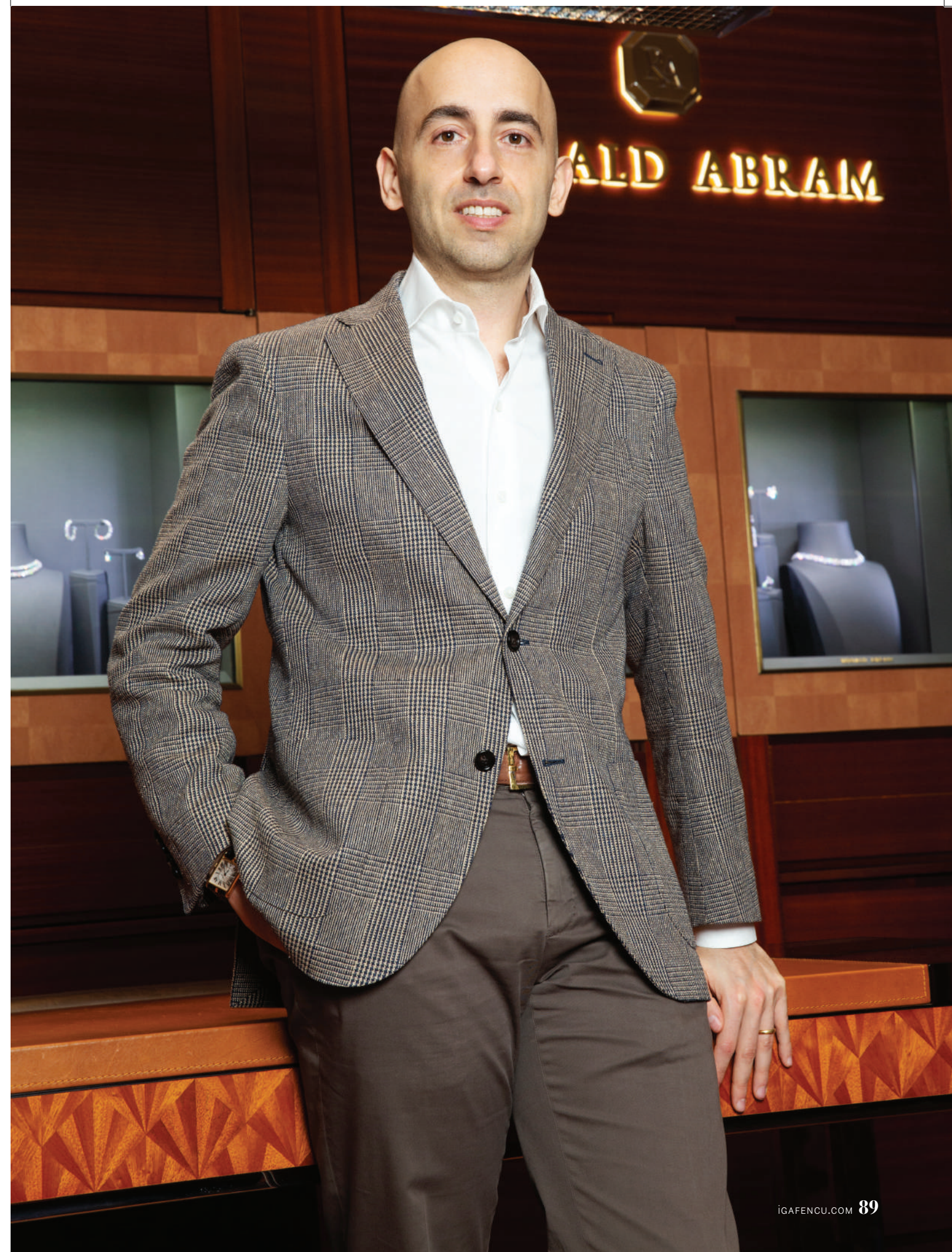
What does that entail exactly?

This year, our main focus is on the rebranding of Ronald Abram. We're relaunching the company in addition to revamping our corporate identity. This includes everything from evolving our logo to launching new collections that will appeal to a different audience, in addition to expanding our catalogue for existing clients.

We're also working on several marketing activities to grow our brand awareness outside of Hong Kong, particularly since we're looking to increase the international scope of our business, especially in markets with great potential such as the US and Middle East.

A third priority is to develop the electronic side of our operations, which we hope to accomplish by launching an e-commerce platform sometime this summer.

We've got things bubbling on many fronts, but the most important thing is to time them with the ongoing pandemic, the travel schedules it allows, and the situation in Hong Kong, which at our base is of utmost importance to us. Like many other businesses, we've been working with clients remotely via





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digital means to ride out Covid, but as soon as things open up, we’re ready to step on the gas.

Working alongside your parents, what’s the most memorable experience you’ve had?

Professionally, we’ve had our fair share of special memories and successes, but I think it pales in comparison to the birth of my son. During these difficult times, where people are unable to be with their families for such momentous milestones, both my parents were able to be there for the birth of my son and to see his earliest moments. To me that is priceless.

If you pushed me on a career highlight, though, that would definitely be the first time I ever made a sale. I remember it so clearly. An English gentleman came into the store and snapped up a bracelet from me, and I thought: ‘Hey, this isn’t so difficult!’ In a twist of fate, after not hearing from him for 18 years, that very man emailed me just last month to order a new ring. He even asked if I remembered him, which of course I did. We just completed the order and had it delivered two days ago. The entire experience kind of made me feel that things have come full circle. What’s more, in a family business, when you have a success it’s more meaningful, as you share it with those you love.

Has gemology and the jewellery industry always been your passion?

I understand jewellery very well from a professional standpoint, and I’m well versed in how to conduct myself in this industry. Having said that, is it my passion? To be completely frank, less so. What I love is working with talented people, whether



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they’re in marketing, sales or the creative team – people who bring out the best in others. For me, that’s the best part of my job.

What is the most exclusive piece of jewellery you’ve ever worked on?

That’s a difficult question to answer, because we’ve had the opportunity to work on some truly stunning stones, be it emeralds, sapphires or pink diamonds. Having said that, large, untreated Burmese rubies – those that are 10 carats or larger – are probably the most indulgent pieces I’ve handled. These types of items are not readily available. They don’t come out of a mine anymore, they have to come out of someone’s safe or family collection, so understandably their provenance is of critical importance to the final design. Over the past few years, I’ve come across several such rarities. It’s almost like a badge of honour to be working on gems of that calibre.

You recently welcomed your first child. How has fatherhood changed you?

When I got married, I understood that life is not just about you, it’s about you and your partner. Then when I had my son, that evolved to where everything is about the baby [laughs]. All jokes aside, though, as cliché as it sounds, it gave me the epiphany that I really have to be the best version of myself so I can set a good example for him. Also, it gave me a newfound sense of maturity, because now I’m responsible for someone’s life – that’s something that really transforms the way you look at the world.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Oh, I definitely want to be in Hong Kong. Firstly, I firmly believe in the city, and I believe

in its future. Then, when I think in terms of where I would like to raise a family, this place is it – particularly as I myself grew up here, and I’d like my son to experience the same happy memories that I had.

What’s your favourite way to relax?

I like to kick-start every day with an hour-long walk along Bowen Road while listening to music. It’s important to have that time for myself away from all my worldly responsibilities and the needs of my family. The exercise gives me the peace of mind to meet the day with my best foot forward.

If you were shipwrecked on a deserted island (and all your basic needs were met), what three things must you have with you?

First: music. I listen to music across many genres every day, so I’d need to have some sort of music streaming service. Secondly, I’m assuming I’d be alone, so I’d like a picture of my wife and son. Finally, I guess this would be a tropical island, so I would want some sunglasses to ward off the rays.

What’s the biggest item on your bucket list?

It used to be skydiving, but I ticked that one off the list on one of the first dates with my wife. Now I’d say I want to become a space tourist with my son. I know it’s not very commercially viable right now and the technology is still relatively untried in terms of public travel. But once it becomes a possibility – and my son is old enough to appreciate it – that’s definitely a memorable experience we can share together.

Thank you. 🍷

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