

Life & Style

Humble perfectionist, that's designer Eric Choong

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PERSONALITY CLOSE-UP Perfectionists often give the impression to others that they are difficult to deal with due to some high expectations and desire to achieve the best amongst the best.

However, Eric Choong (*left*), Malaysia's top fashion designer, is one living example that such stereotype has no validity with his outright down-to-earth personality.

As creative director of Wedding Treasures Sdn Bhd, he has every reason to be proud of the great achievements he built into his portfolio. Eric has been invited to international events including Swarovski Spring/Summer Asian Fashion Tour 2004 and Sydney Bridal Fashion Week 2009.

He has received numerous nominations, notably as Malaysia's top batik designer by Batik Inspirations in 2005, and three times consecutively as KL Six designer by Malaysian International Fashion Alliance.

Listed as one of The Who's Who of Malaysia in 2005, Eric was subsequently in 2006 awarded the Best Costume Designer at the 19th Malaysian Film Festival for

the film 3rd Generation.

Filled with humbleness and sincerity, Eric shared some of his stories with *Malaysian Mirror*.

Q: Having to become one of Malaysia's top leading fashion designers, how do you keep your inspirations alive?

A: Passion is the force that has kept me going through the past 25 years in the industry. Undeniably, I have been through rough times where the economy was bad and there were many other obstacles. But I have successfully established my brand which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

I do travel to places such as Nepal, Pakistan and Chiangmai, which give me a lot of inspirations.

Q: What were some of the obstacles and how did you get through the turbulent times?

A: When I first started, minor matters such as criticisms and financial difficulties easily took over me. Back then, fashion to me was purely art but I soon realise it is also serious business.

The thought of giving up did come across but my mother who encouraged me, gave me two choices: strive to succeed or leave behind every inch of effort we've put into together.

I also struggled with my business plan to rebrand 'Eric Choong' as I was frustrated with my state of mind which was "dry" – running out of ideas. I visited India with a friend and started to develop dharma knowledge learning how to take things easily.

Not long after, my prayers were answered. I found my business partner, Loo Ee Ling, to help lessen the business burden while I concentrate on the creative part.

Q: You have achieved tremendous success in your lifetime career. What does success mean to you now?

A: I used to think narrowly and often trapped myself to a dead end in pursuance of fame and reputation. The journey into which I fought fame for self-satisfaction had delivered less joy.

Five years ago, I met Guru Tsem Tulku Rinpoche who taught me when everything changes, nothing changes. Who you are, you maintain who you are. His spiritual guidance has helped me to release my inner-self ego and to accept better the way of life.

Since then, my definition of success has changed considerably whereby the purpose to pursue fame has become one to inspire others to do charity.

Q: How do you think you can achieve this?



Eric's book "In Full Bloom"

A: With some encouragement from guru, I realise that I can utilise my credibility to help others contribute to the society. The reason I wrote my book "In Full Bloom" it was to share my dharma and fashion knowledge.

Q: In what ways do you think you've changed?

A: Sincerity in human interaction has become central where I don't just close a deal with the customer, I want to understand her more.

I don't think negatively and question others as how I used to be. Instead, I change myself to accommodate them. As they say, keep your enemies close.

The chemistry and environment to which I interact with others have become more peaceful.

My life has become more meaningful visiting Kechara House three to four days per week to conduct dharma work.

Q: Any countries that you would like to visit but hasn't?

A: I like to travel with my backpack carrying in it a little black book and camera. Places such as those in Europe are for working leisure but nothing luxurious for a personal breakaway.

Unlike career, personal life needs its own sphere where you have to take things easily and not deliberately setting a direction to which you must go.

Q: Any plans to be a fashion mentor?

A: I wish to have classes to teach aspiring fashion designers how to overcome challenges based on my years of experience in the fashion industry, combining it with dharma knowledge.

Q: Any advice to them?

A: If you want to be a fashion designer, think twice. Passion alone is not enough, determination is essential in this tough industry. - *MM*

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