

By Willy Wilson | Oct 12, 2010

Fashion designer Eric Choong's colourful space

As a fashion designer, Eric Choong has a very distinctive style—shimmered, feathered, ruffled and beaded. Considered by many as one of the most sought after designers in this country, Choong says that he functions like a sponge, absorbing elements from his surroundings and translates them into well-made garments.

He is also known for his unapologetic sense of colours. Admittedly, minimalism is not a term associated with him. Thanks to his daring choice of colours, the Ipoh native who graduated from Hong Kong Institute of Fashion Design in 1986, has received numerous awards and accolades.

In the early days of his career, Malaysian Tourism Board nominated him as one of Malaysia's Top 10 Designers for three consecutive years (1990-1992). In 1997, Choong was regularly invited to represent the country in the ASEAN Designers' Fashion Show, Asia Pacific Young Designers' Show, Asia Pacific Bridal Summit and Show of Asian Cultural Garments. More recently, Choong was appointed as South East Asia's sole representative at the Sydney Bridal Fashion Week with his bridal and evening wear collection.

Unsurprisingly, bold green and fuchsia dominate his atelier in Bangsar. Adding to the dramatic setting are exquisite Oriental pieces such as Ming chairs, vintage partition, antique cupboard, Tibetan fabric and old rugs from high-end antique retailer, *House of Suzzie Wong*.

A devout Tibetan Buddhist, the 46-year-old designer admits that his fondness for Oriental furniture is influenced by his faith. StarProperty.my finds out how his professional and spiritual journeys have affected his preference in interior design.



Wanted!: Eric Choong is considered by many as one of the most sought after designers in this country



Oriental influence: Choong admits that his fondness for Oriental furniture is influenced by his faith

How did you get into the fashion industry?

I have always been interested in fashion. As a young boy, I remember that I would draw and sketch. My mother noticed my talent, but my father thought fashion designing was not a profession. With my mum's support, I went to study at Hong Kong Institute of Fashion Design. After graduation, I spent six years in Hong Kong working for local designers to hone my designing and tailoring skills. I returned to Malaysia in 1990 and started my own atelier in Kuala Lumpur. The rest, as they say, is history.

What has been your inspiration in fashion design?

My inspiration comes from the different environment that I am surrounded by. In the past, I have been inspired by culture, which translated into Songket and Batik collection. Several years ago, during my first encounter with Tibetan Buddhism, my collection hinted at colours and graphics found in Tibetan arts. Recently I have been drawn into nature and forest.

Have the same inspirations translated to the way you decorated your atelier and your house?

Yes, they have. I try to emulate forest-like environment in the atelier by painting the walls green and putting a water feature in one corner. My fondness of Oriental culture is represented by a number of furniture and rugs that are mostly supplied by House of Suzzie Wong. I also have an altar dedicated to my Tibetan Buddhist faith, where there is Thangka (Tibetan silk painting with embroidery depicting Buddhist deity) and other Buddhist art pieces.

From walls to curtain, there are a lot of bold colours in this atelier. What do you try to achieve with such contrast?

Basically I wanted a place that invokes creativity. But most importantly, I wanted a working environment that functions like a sanctuary, where I could feel distant from the hustle and bustle of city life. Therefore, despite the sharp contrast, there is a peaceful atmosphere here.

Is your house as colourful as your atelier?

Yes, it is! In fact, the design and decor aesthetic is very similar to my atelier. I live in a 1,200sq ft condominium, where there are three bedrooms and a balcony. There is nothing fancy about my house, but I can say it is quaint and comfortable.

Share with us what your dream house looks like.

Having lived in big cities for the past 25 years, I yearn for a wooden house located in a remote area. I would love to be surrounded by lush greenery. The closest I can get to that is having a terrace garden in my condominium.



Dramatic: Choong's atelier setting features exquisite Oriental pieces such as Ming chairs, vintage partition, antique cupboard, Tibetan fabric and old rugs