

Foreign familiar

Creative Direction & Photography: Jeff Hahn

Words: Victoria Chan and Lex Chan

Photography Assistant: Abbie Fisk

Production: Amy Siddons @ Kintzing

Special Thanks: Amelia White and Briony Oates @ Kintzing



Home isn't always fixed. For some, it's the place where they were born, stitched into memory. For others, it's something more fluid—shaped by the places they've lived, the communities they've found, and the creative spaces where they feel most like themselves. But what happens when that home is no longer home? A city of cinematic beauty and chaos, where skyscrapers hum with stories and neon lights shimmer on the harbour, Hong Kong is both modern and traditional, East and West, always in motion. But for many, that sense of home has become uncertain, drifting beyond its shores.

In London, a generation of Hong Kong creatives and innovators are carving out a new definition of home, blending cultures and identities into work that speaks to both their pasts and their futures. Through photographer Jeff Hahn's lens, we step into their worlds, the spaces they create and the identities they navigate. We ask how their work reflects their shifting sense of belonging, the influences that shape them, and what it means to create in a new city.

You moved from Hong Kong to London in 2019, right around the start of the pandemic. How did that affect your experience living in a new country?

When I moved to London, I didn't know anyone, and then lockdown happened. It was tough, but I was also excited—it was my second time living abroad, and I wanted to explore different parts of the world. I'm quite adventurous.

The pandemic forced me to rethink my purpose and identity. I was a fashion designer and stylist in Hong Kong, and I worked as a stylist for Topshop when I first arrived in London. But when I lost my job, I moved to hospitality, eventually becoming a host at a nightclub in Mayfair. In the daytime, I model with News Model Agency. I love being in front of the camera and the creative process—interpreting mood boards, understanding a team's vision, and becoming part of it. I pretty much work 24 hours a day now—it's tough, but I think I'm happy. That period also led me to explore my gender identity. I asked myself: am I a gay man, or am I actually transgender? Eventually, I came out as trans, and I'm really grateful for that journey. If I had stayed in Hong Kong, I don't think I would have had the space to reflect and grow.

What has been your proudest moment as a model, and what does it mean to you to represent the Asian and LGBTQ+ communities in fashion?

Definitely walking for Rick Owens in my first Paris Fashion Week show. As a model, Paris Fashion Week is always a dream. I think being Asian, trans and having blonde hair made me stand out in a space where I didn't always see myself reflected.

The modelling industry is always changing. Sometimes, I feel like I'm just a product, but I don't let that define me. Trends always change so for me, it's about building something unique and staying true to who I am.

When it comes to representing Asian and LGBTQ+ communities, my presence alone sends a message: we not only exist, but we can also be successful and thrive. Even when there's pushback, so many trans people are doing incredible things—especially in the Asian community. I know so many talented trans people excelling in their fields, like Porshe Poon, a brilliant makeup artist.

Have you noticed ways in which the Hong Kong diaspora in London is influencing fashion or culture? If so, what excites you most about that?

I notice more people from Hong Kong's fashion scene moving to London—like Porshe Poon and so many others—who are finding success here. They're bringing Hong Kong's culture with them, blending it into London's creative landscape. Which is really nice to see.

What stories or perspectives do you feel are still underrepresented in the fashion industry, and how do you hope to change that?

I feel like people of color, different body sizes, and gender diversity are still underrepresented in fashion. Sometimes, it feels like diversity is treated as a trend. A few years ago, there was a real push for inclusivity—there were more models of different races, body types, and gender identities on the runway. But in recent years and seasons that seems to be fading again. I hope the industry moves forward towards real inclusivity and not just following trends when it's convenient.

Tell us what you do.

I'm a milliner specialising in vibrant, statement hats through my brand, Awon Golding, and I'm also the Head Millinery Designer for Lock & Co., the world's oldest hat shop. In 2018, I launched Haute Dogs Calendar, a charity project that has raised over £100,000 to support global dog rescues. This combines my love for hats and dogs into a playful but impactful initiative. Haute Dogs features rescue dogs wearing couture hats by top milliners, helping fund rescue, rehabilitation, and rehoming efforts. It's a bit silly, but has real-world impact!

Share a favorite memory and something people should know about Hong Kong.

One of my favorite memories is sailing back into Central after a day on a junk boat with friends—watching the sun set over the skyline is pure magic. Hong Kong is more than skyscrapers and neon lights; around 40% of its land is protected country parks. It's a paradise for hiking, with hidden beaches and lush landscapes. Next time you visit, take a hike!

How has being from Hong Kong influenced your work? Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London?

Hong Kong's international culture shaped me. I'm of mixed Indian-English heritage, raised in a multicultural environment that fostered my curiosity about people and places. This translates into my designs—joyful, colourful, and for everyone. Working with fellow Hongkongers brings a shared cultural understanding. I've collaborated with Jeff Hahn for nearly 20 years, and more recently, with Robert Wun— it's been incredible to see how our shared roots influence our collaboration.

How does millinery differ between Hong Kong and London?

Millinery isn't big in Hong Kong—hats aren't part of the culture. In contrast, London has a strong tradition of hat-wearing, especially for weddings and racing events.

Awon
Golding

Tell us what you do.

I'm a fashion designer

Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded. What fills your cup?

Cinema, museums and most importantly, everyday life.

Share a favourite memory of Hong Kong or something you want people to know about the city.

There's a cinematic beauty in the chaos. The mix of different worlds is what makes Hong Kong such a unique city.

Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London and do you have any advice for those in the diaspora interested in staying connected with their homes?

Yes I have worked with other Hongkongers in London, and there is always a special connection. There's an unspoken understanding of shared experiences and work ethic, which brings depth and uniqueness to collaborations.

In terms of staying connected, my advice is that our homes will always be a part of us, but we are also diamonds with many facets. It's ok to branch out and experience more.

What's next for you?

We have our solo museum exhibition coming up and we will continue to push the boundaries for each collection—the next one is in July during Couture.

Robert
Wun

I'm a multidisciplinary artist using pop culture as my medium. I write and sing music, dance, act, design clothing, make sculpture, and draw. My first solo art exhibition earned me the name Le Fil—the thread that connects all my disciplines. I see myself as both a pop sculpture and the pop sculptor. I've toured with musicians like Mel C, modelled in major campaigns, designed theatre costumes, and, as a queer androgynous artist, found my way into Drag Race. I competed on RuPaul's Drag Race UK and Canada vs. the World—probably what I'm most known for.

If someone finds themselves in Hong Kong for 24 hours, what are some things they have to do?

Start at a Chinese bakery for a char siu bo lo bao, an egg tart, and congee. Then, visit Cheung Chau for pastel-coloured streets or take the cable car to the Big Buddha on Lantau—there's a glass-floor option for extra thrills. Then head back to Central or Sheung Wan, shop and eat before heading up to The Peak for a night view. Use all forms of transport—Star Ferry, trams, boats, taxis. There's something cinematic about a long taxi ride through Hong Kong's tunnels and mountains.

How does your identity as a Hong Konger influence your work?

Growing up in a conservative culture pushed me to break boundaries. As the first son, tradition says I should cut my hair short, but keeping it long was liberating. My background gives me a framework to either align with or rebel against. Working with Jeff (Hahn) has been incredible, and I've studied Chinese music to explore a fusion of my cultures. There is a whole different technique to singing and vocal placement and I'd love to collaborate with more Chinese artists!

Are there aspects of your industry in Hong Kong that you see mirrored—or different—in London?

The queer scene in Hong Kong is still developing, and drag culture is far less established. I hope it evolves uniquely rather than imitating Western drag tropes. There's so much potential to create something culturally fresh and exciting!

What's next for you?

I'm working across music, film, fashion, and costume design—rolling like a stone and gathering creative moss! This summer, I'm releasing a single I co-wrote with Cathy Dennis (Can't Get You Out of My Head, Toxic), followed by a UK musical tour. I can't wait!

Le Fil



What do you do.

I'm a lawyer for creators and innovators, specialising in protecting intellectual property rights and facilitating collaborations between creative businesses and individual creators—be it fashion, beauty, music, publishing or food. My friend Claire and I also had the privilege of collaborating with some of London's most beloved East and Southeast Asian restaurants and chefs on a charity cookbook several years ago. I have also just launched a new food venture, baobae. Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded.

What fills your cup?

A mix of creativity, coziness, and chaos keeps me inspired. I'm naturally a multitasker so I have to be quite intentional about staying present in the moment—especially when I'm deep in a reiki session or cuddling with my cat Mochi.

Share a favourite memory of Hong Kong.

As a teenager I did a summer placement at the concierge at the Peninsula Hotel which was super fun—I met a few of my Cantopop and J-pop idols through this gig. Regrettably, I have no sense of direction, so I still feel bad about the poor tourists I may have misdirected.

What's something you want people to know about Hong Kong?

For me, Hong Kong is a place where change and familiarity coalesce. I left over 20 years ago, and when I visit now, I see a city transformed in ways that often leaves me very lost. But in Mei Foo, where my grandparents still live in the same flat since I was born, time feels like it's paused just enough. On my last visit in 2023, I stepped out to run a quick errand and ended up wandering back to the fountain where I used to play as a child. By the time I returned home, my Por Por (the sweetest grandma you could ever imagine), was waiting with my favourite home-cooked braised duck with taro, which tasted the same as it always did.

What's next for you?

I have also just launched a new food venture, baobae.



Lex Chan

What do you do, and what fills your cup?

I'm a DJ and classical pianist, currently finishing up producing my first solo EP. I play across clubs and festivals on weekends and work in Graphic Design and Art Direction at a London agency during the week.

Share a favourite memory of Hong Kong.

My mum grew up in Cheung Chau, a tiny fishing island off Hong Kong. Her childhood home overlooks a jungle with a stream that runs through it known as Python Pond, protected for its wildlife. My 'gung gung' (grandad) used to sit outside burning incense each night, and we'd chat and listen to sounds from the forest. The cicadas were so loud! Each morning just before sunrise the birds would wake you up too. It really is paradise there.

Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded. What fills your cup?

I'm a big fan of Dub Techno—it helps ground me when I feel overstimulated. I grew up in a seaside town in England called Blackpool, famous for its nightlife and illuminations on the Golden Mile. I've always been fascinated by neon lights. I imagine that's partly because of Blackpool and also Hong Kong, where every corner used to

be lit up by neon signs before they started to disappear. I feel like you can learn a lot about a place by exploring its nightlife. Driving, walking and listening to music in new or familiar places has always been a source of inspiration for me.

Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London, and if so, how has that shaped your projects?

I worked with the Yeti Out crew in Hong Kong, playing a guest mix on their FM Belowground radio station. They booked me for a UK event last summer. I also met Chris Cho through them, who recently joined me on my Foundation FM show. Collaborating with Natty Wylah, who shares a similar mixed heritage, and the talented photographer Jeff Hahn has been especially nurturing. My debut solo EP is coming out soon! It's a five track release on one of my favourite labels on vinyl and digital, blending my piano background with electronic sounds and samples of my voice. I'm particularly inspired by 90s rave, trip hop, dub and trance, so I hope these elements come through in my tracks! I recently supported DJ Heartstring at the Roundhouse and have some nice gigs lined up, which I'll be releasing over socials soon.



Lily
Mia



Tell us about Baesianz Football Club and why you co-founded it.

Baesianz Football Club started nearly three years ago, growing out of Baesianz, an Asian art collective and platform co-founded by my friends Sarah and Sami. It all came together casually; one day, at a mutual friend's birthday party, we were catching up, and I mentioned how much I missed playing football. Before the pandemic, I had played for an East London

team, but COVID put everything on pause. I just wanted to play again.

At the same time, we were talking about community—specifically, the Asian creative community in London—and the need for more real-life connections beyond just online interactions. That night, we decided to start a football club. I'd seen firsthand how quickly friendships form through the sport and how much women's football was growing.

Has being in London opened up new avenues for creative exploration?

Absolutely. London has introduced me to so many people who move between creative and sports communities. When I first moved here 12 years ago, football didn't feel like a particularly inclusive space—especially for women. You'd walk into a pub as a female football fan and get quizzed like you had to prove your knowledge. That's changed a lot. Through football, I've met a lot of Hongkongers, both recent arrivals and those who had been here for years. One photographer I worked with moved here three years ago and said his whole neighbourhood feels like it's starting over. That fresh energy is exciting. I think we're going to see a wave of new creative voices from Hong Kong making their mark in the UK.

What makes you feel connected to Hong Kong when you're in London?

Food is a big one. Even something as simple as going to Chinatown Bakery for a bolo bao keeps me connected. Mahjong is another. Back in 2022, I went regularly—it became like football for me, a space I could always return to, where I could meet people from different backgrounds but who share a cultural thread. Baesianz FC also plays a role. We're an Asian football club, but we all come from different places, so there's always a natural exchange of cultures. It's a space where I can talk about my Hong Kong identity in a casual way while also learning from others. My brother, Matt, plays as well, and together we embrace our Hong Kong and Malaysian roots—both aspects of my upbringing have had an interesting influence on my personal life as well as my creative work.

You're also an embroidery artist. How does being a Hongkonger shape your creative expression?

Embroidery is such a traditional craft—it's been around forever, and people associate it with precision, order, and patience. But my embroidery is messy, brash, and disruptive. It's not about following a perfect stitch; it's about expressing myself freely, while still respecting the craft's history.

In many ways, it reflects Hong Kong itself—a chaotic, vibrant city with an underlying sense of order. I see embroidery as rewriting something traditional for myself, much like how I navigate my own identity as a Hongkonger. I take a technique that's been passed down for generations, then push its boundaries in a way that feels personal and modern.

Nicole
Chui

What do you do, and what fills your cup?

I'm an indie-pop artist and model.

Share a favourite memory of Hong Kong.

I grew up in Hong Kong and moved to the UK when I was 14, but I went back all the time. One of my favourite memories was performing a solo at the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland in 2005. I was their first Child Ambassador, and I got to sing with legendary singer Jacky Cheung (張學友) on live television.

Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London, and if so, how has that shaped your projects?

I have! My creative teams always comprise of Hong Kong and other Asian/Queer artists. I've got an exciting collaboration with Hong Kong artist Salty Chick (鹽𩷄雞) coming out this year - it's very Hong Kong coded. There's a relentlessness that Hongkongers have, and I see it in those I work with—that eagerness to share our culture and break ceilings.



How does your identity as a Hongkonger influence your work?

Hong Kong has a unique identity and perspective on life, by being an international hub that blends different types of cultures, while retaining a powerful local flavour. My EP "Deja Vu" tells stories about growing up between Hong Kong and the UK. In my 2024 UK tour, I included a Cantonese song in every set, something I do in all my shows. Hong Kong inspires so much of who I am and how I tell stories, and its humour is something that will never leave me. My music videos for "Deja Vu" and "Paradise" also pay homage to iconic Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, by capturing beauty through darkness.

What's next for you?

Come to The Bitten Peach show (@ bittenpeachuk)! It's a queer Asian cabaret collective that I run alongside an amazing team that honours our Asian roots. I'm also releasing my second EP this year, with a lot of Hong Kong themes, and hopefully I'll see you at my shows!

Jason Kwan



Tell us what you do.

I'm a dancer, movement director, and choreographer.

Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded. What fills your cup?

Movement—especially for joy and curiosity—keeps me grounded. I find endless inspiration in many things, but I've always been particularly drawn to how relationships and emotions manifest in the body.

Share a favorite memory of Hong Kong and/or something people should know about it.

When I was about eight, my dad took me to the AIA Carnival, which used to happen only once a year for a short time. That day, he won me a

massive wolf stuffed toy, and I remember feeling so happy lugging it home.

As for something people should know—Hong Kong's hikes are incredible! And if you visit, take the tramway from start to finish at least once.

How does your identity as a Hongkonger influence your work?

Being from Hong Kong shapes every part of my life—from the food I love to the way I navigate relationships. It's hard to pinpoint exactly how it influences my work, but I think it comes through in subtle, nuanced ways, sometimes without me even realising it.

Sabrina Wong

What do you do, and what fills your cup?

I'm a makeup artist.

If someone finds themselves in Hong Kong for 24 hours, what's one thing they have to do?

Eat! Try dim sum, wonton noodles and as much local food as you can.

How does your identity as a Hongkonger influence your work?

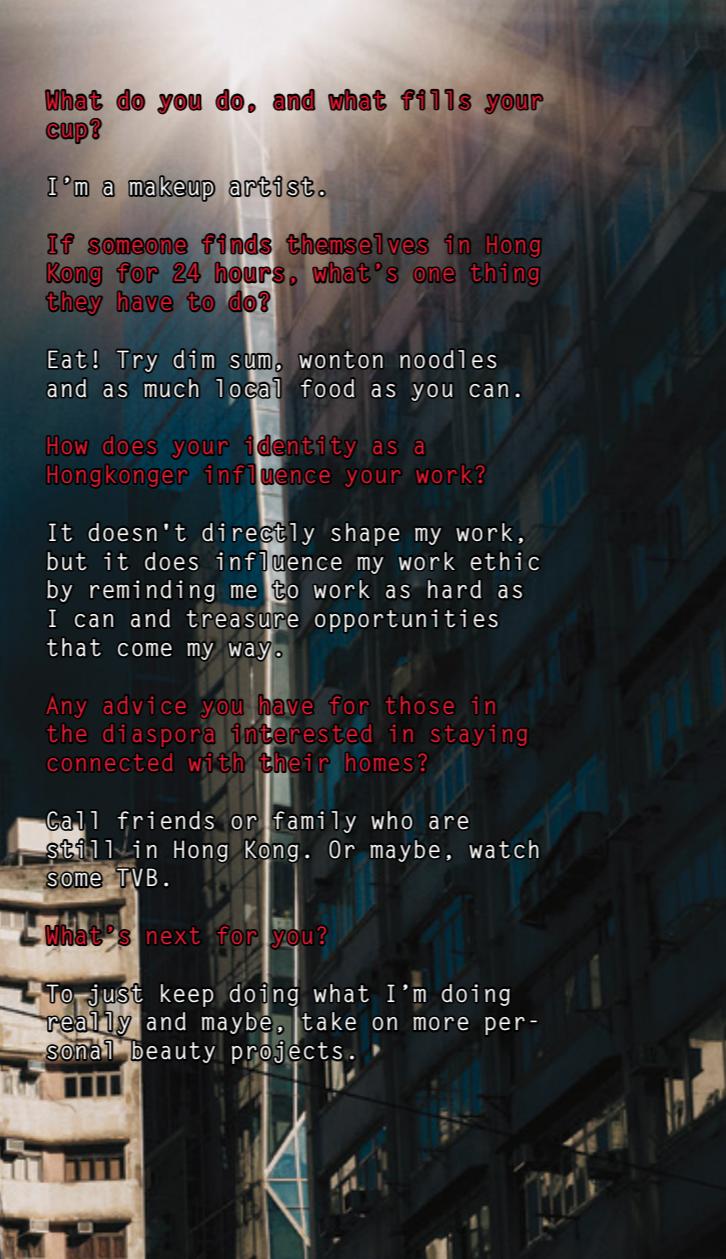
It doesn't directly shape my work, but it does influence my work ethic by reminding me to work as hard as I can and treasure opportunities that come my way.

Any advice you have for those in the diaspora interested in staying connected with their homes?

Call friends or family who are still in Hong Kong. Or maybe, watch some TVB.

What's next for you?

To just keep doing what I'm doing really and maybe, take on more personal beauty projects.



Porsche
Poon

Tell us what you do.

I'm a writer, community organiser, and Chinese food cheerleader. I recently published my debut non-fiction book, *An A-Z of Chinese Food (Recipes Not Included)*, and I am also a luncheon club chef at the East and Southeast Asian Community Centre (ESEACC) in Dalston.

Share a favourite memory of Hong Kong.

Any time spent with my dad. I moved to the UK at 11, while he remained in Hong Kong for the rest of his life. I remember an overcast day when he took me birdwatching in the wetlands, followed by dim sum in Tai Mo Shan. We ate in an old-school teahouse where they brewed tea with fresh spring water. A pot of shui jin oolong that day ignited my lifelong love of Chinese tea.

How does your identity as a Hongkonger influence your work? Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London?

I grew up in Hong Kong until I was 11, but even then, I often felt like an outsider. That sense of displacement drives my exploration of Chineseness, particularly within the diaspora. At ESEACC, many staff and volunteers are Hongkongers who have lived in the UK for anywhere from two to 50 years. It's a unique environment—we switch between English and Cantonese, sharing memories of Hong Kong or discussing our next visit.

What's something you want people to know about Hong Kong? Any advice for those in the diaspora interested in staying connected with their homes?

I'd like them to understand the complex, nuanced and problematic way in which its economy relies on the import of domestic labour, at the same time as how that labour-force has shaped Hong Kong's cultural identity. Resist the romanticisation of nostalgia. Question the urge to preserve a notion of home that is no longer there.



Jenny
Lau

**Tell us what you do.**

We're the founders of SLJ London (Sweet Lime Juice), a luxury fashion jewellery brand based in East London. Our focus is on creating modern, ungendered jewellery that merges traditional craftsmanship with unconventional materials and 3D technology. Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded.

What fills your cup?

Inspiration comes from everyday surroundings—textures on the street, the way light hits a surface, and how materials interact. We're also influenced by contemporary art, sculpture, and personal experiences. Cycling to the studio and deep conversations over coffee help keep us grounded.

If someone finds themselves in Hong Kong for 24 hours, what's one thing they have to do? Is there anything you'd like people to know about Hong Kong? You can't leave without

experiencing a cha chaan teng or yum cha. Food is at the heart of Hong Kong culture. Cha chaan tengs are a fascinating fusion of Eastern and Western influences, while yum cha showcases the artistry of dim sum. But beyond the food, it's the experience—the waiters may be blunt and fast-paced, but there's an unspoken warmth that's unique to Hong Kong. Hong Kong may be small, but its global influence is huge. The Octopus Card, launched in 1997, was one of the first large-scale contactless payment systems, shaping transport cards worldwide. Despite its size, the city is home to incredible talent with far-reaching impact.

How does your identity as a Hongkonger influence your work? Have you worked with other Hongkongers in London? Growing up in Hong Kong gave us a deep appreciation for contrast—tradition vs. modernity, structure vs. spontaneity. That

duality is woven into SLJ's designs, where precise metalwork meets bold, experimental forms. We worked with Jeff Hahn on our AW22 campaign, drawing inspiration from 80s-90s city pop aesthetics and a signature shade of blue. With our shared cultural background, he immediately understood the vision, making it one of our most seamless and rewarding collaborations.

What's next for you?

We're planning pop-ups in Tokyo and New York, with hopes of expanding into a full world tour. SLJ is growing globally, and we're excited for what's ahead.

Jovy & Simpson
Sweet Lime Juice

Everyone has their own way of staying inspired and grounded. What fills your cup?

I'm a film colourist. I stay inspired by absorbing anything visually stimulating, be it films, photography, art, painting, and nature. Working in London's creative industry is invigorating because you're surrounded by super creative and interesting people, but it can also pull you into a whirlwind of insecurity, competitiveness and restlessness. I stay grounded by spending time with loved ones, meditating, exercising and having hobbies that don't involve the internet.

Recently, I also found out that the Chinese Community Centre in London does mahjong sessions, and it's probably time for me to learn how to play! With so many new markets and restaurants opened by Hongkongers, there are plenty of ways to stay connected to home.

What's something you want people to know about Hong Kong?

years, there's been a wave of Hong Kong creatives doing really cool things, despite budget constraints and lack of government support. There's subtle differences in the visual styles people favour in Hong Kong and London, which I find interesting, but what they have in common is both industries are fast-paced, with people that work very hard. Having grown up watching a lot of Hong Kong and Asian films, that visual style is burned into my brain and I always try to inject a bit of that sensitivity into my work, whether I'm conscious of it or not.



For a small city with a lot of people, it's easy to go hiking, camping or to the beach. You can find yourself doing an eight-hour hike and heading straight back to the city for hotpot, drinks and dessert in the evening. I didn't realize what a luxury that was until I moved to London.

One of my favourite spots is Garden Hill in Sham Shui Po. You can see the quintessential Hong Kong cityscape from there, up high. Not the prettiest skylines, but it evokes a nostalgia I cherish every time I visit.

Are there aspects of your industry in Hong Kong that you see mirrored—or different—in London? London's film and post-production industry is much bigger—it's a hub for European filmmakers, the way Hong Kong once was for Asia. That status is fading, but in recent

Sharon Chung

Could you tell us about New Territories Training, and why you started it?

Lee: NT is a calisthenics community for East and Southeast Asian men. After the pandemic, I felt the need to create something meaningful outside my work as an artist and designer. It combines my passion for uplifting my people with physical training, and Chris embodies both passions. We made some tees, set a date, and got started.

Chris: Fitness is important to us, and we wanted to create a community where people could build confidence and get fit mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Lee: The name has a double meaning—it's a nod to our heritage, coming from Hong Kong's New Territories, and also about starting a positive journey, whether in fitness or mental health.

What does a typical training session look like, and how is it different from other fitness groups?

Chris: We start with a warm-up, then focus on calisthenics skills—like handstands, pull-ups, muscle-ups, or front levers—followed by a group workout session with no egos, just support.

Lee: Our slogan is “Love, Gains & Energy,” and it sums up our community. We’re militant but in a wholesome way. NT is the only ESEA men’s group in London as far as I know.

Why is it important to have spaces for East and Southeast Asian men in fitness and sports?

Lee: NT’s power comes from the unity among ESEA men. We often fit into others’ spaces, but NT is made for us, catering to our unique needs. It’s a place to write our own narratives and build community.

What inspires you outside of calisthenics?

Chris: It’s about helping others, staying active, and being around people with good energy. Alone time is also important for staying grounded.

Lee: My family and my creative work inspire me. As a father and husband, I’m living one dream, and

my art and NT world are my other passion.

How do you ensure inclusivity in the fitness space?

Chris: New members sometimes find the sessions intimidating, but they’re always surprised by the supportive community. Everyone helps each other, regardless of personality. It’s a space where we coexist in harmony.

Lee: It’s about stepping out of your comfort zone. It’s not for everyone, but here, you get respect for trying, not just for being the best.

Where does the group go to unwind?

Both: We love to eat! After sessions, we hit up restaurants, fast food spots, or host BBQs in the summer. We also support each other at events.

Lee & Chris
New Territories Training

