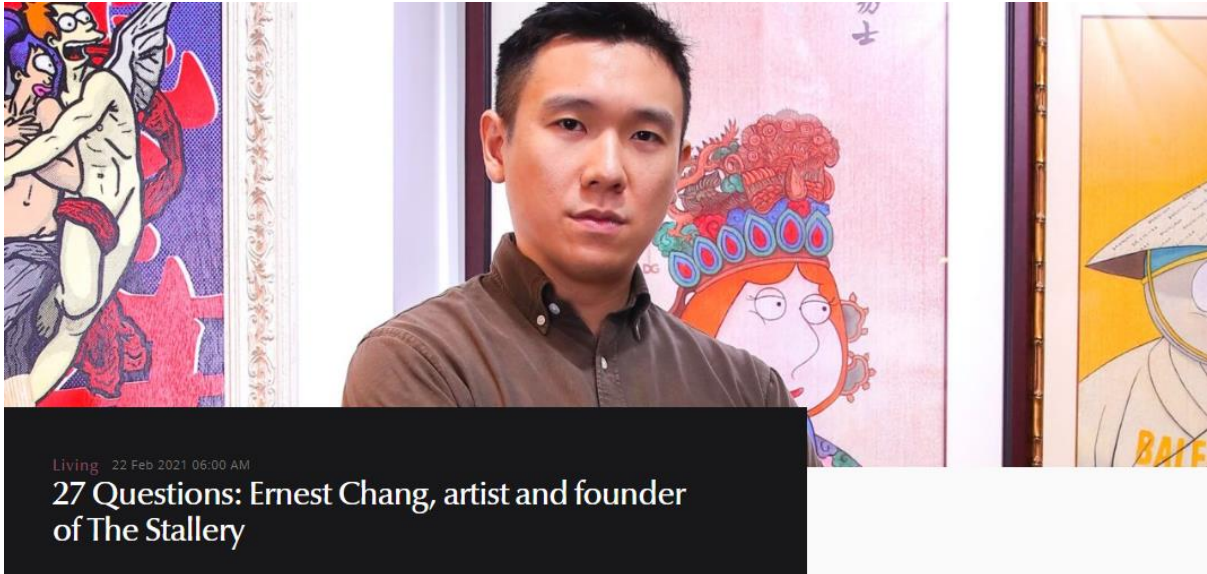




LIFESTYLE ASIA



JOEY WONG Editor

Hong Kong is a place brimming with talented and intriguing people. Each week in [27 Questions](#), we get up close and personal with the city's notable personalities, learning about their whims, aversions, pivotal life moments, and hopes and dreams — all in roughly the same duration it takes to sit through a two-minute speed date.

Achilles' heels of the most ironic sort — think Beethoven, who couldn't hear; chef-extraordinaire Grant Achatz, who (temporarily!) couldn't taste — tell tales of cruel little twists of fate that, somehow, feel poetic. Prophetic, even. It tells a life of passion, lived in spite of obstacles; in spite of real, tangible reasons to walk away. Ernest Chang — a working visual [artist](#) with deuteranopia; or, red-green colour-blindness — is dealt one such hand of cards.

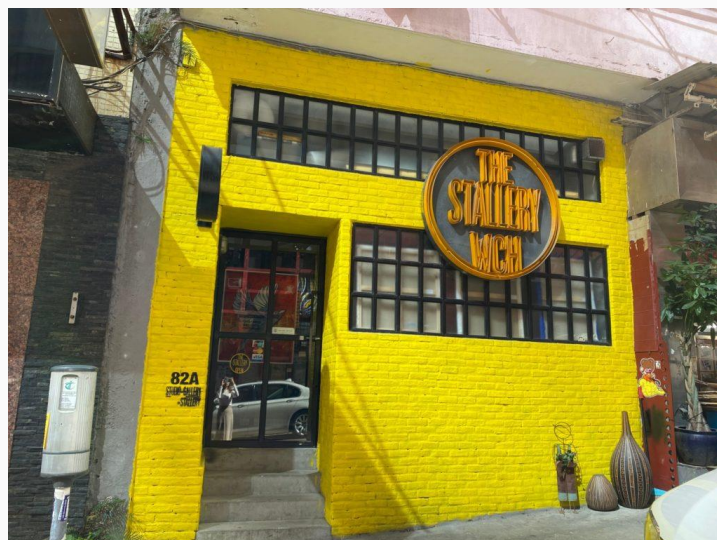
Just like his nationality (i.e., Chinese-American); birthplace (i.e., Tampa, Florida); brief stints in Ringling College of Art and Design and Savannah College of Art and Design; and demographic cohort (i.e., Millennial), Chang's deuteranopia offers yet another lens from which he sees the world. Literally. Blanketed layers of dots that may appear brown and red to the rest of us will bleed into a pool of orange for Chang. This, in turn, informs the way Chang approaches his work. His techniques; his colours; his very way of thinking, processing and making. Even his now-renowned Pop Art-style aesthetic — with its thick, graphic lines — is a conscious choice; one made as a workaround to this singular way-of-seeing.



Ernest Chang, artist and founder of The Stallery, against select works from 'Bling Dynasty'.
(Image courtesy of the artist and The Stallery)

Beyond his profession as a working artist, Chang is also the founder of The Stallery: a portmanteau of 'studio' and 'gallery'. You know the one; that sunshine-yellow brick-front gallery atelier seated at the tail-end of Stone Nullah Lane, doorsteps away from Wanchai's historic Blue House. Chang's camera lens — his choice of medium from a past life as a photographer — have also touched upon this historic landmark, preserving and commemorating the Blue House as it stood — decrepit tatters and all — prior to its reconstruction in 2016. This series of photographs, titled the 'Blue House Clutter Project' in collaboration with St James Settlement, became award-winning in 2017.

It is precisely this sense of community; this sense of Chang as not apart *from* but a part *of* said community, that connects the artist, The Stallery and his work within this little nook of Wanchai.



The exterior façade of The Stallery (Image courtesy of The Stallery)

'Bling Dynasty', Chang's latest exhibition, weaves together the very facets that make up his personhood. On show are a host of Western, predominantly American, cartoon characters, rendered anew in pastiches that imitate iconic Chinese portraiture. Rick and Morty's Rick

seated in the style of 'KangXi Emperor' (1699) in 'Age of Abundance' (2020). South Park's Eric Cartman, modelled after 'Khublai Khan' (1294) in 'Don't Say Anything Mean' (2020). This presence of traditional Chinese craftsmanship and artisanship can be appreciated, too, through the exhibitions' plethora of mediums, from delicate paper-cut designs to sheaths of beautifully embroidered pieces — crafted in collaboration with master embroiderers.

Vestiges of a bygone childhood, now tainted with overtures of consumerism and branded garb and hypebeast modalities — see: Kermit looking particularly pleased in VETEMENTS and Fear of God in 'A Favor For A Favor' (2020) — turn an outwardly joyful, tongue-in-cheek series into one that deserves moments of reflection. 'Bling Dynasty', then, reads like a cautionary tale. The cartoon-watching age cohort of today is most probably swiping through TikTok instead; watching propelled-into-stardom teens cohabit in mega-mansions clad in the latest hyped-up Gucci x *whatever* collection. And that's the benchmark of aspiration.

Stepping into The Stallery's now-gold foiled interiors — blinged up for 'Bling Dynasty', of course; we shot the breeze with the artist through our signature rapid-fire interview, meandering through everything from his past drug addiction to his childhood growing up with Disney World a stone's throw away.



As Long As It Doesn't Affect Me (2020), courtesy of The Stallery

Name: Ernest Chang

Age: 20's

Neighbourhood: Wanchai

Occupation: Artist and founder of The Stallery

1. What is your life motto?

My life motto is: 'Just for today.' I just live for today and think about tomorrow, tomorrow. Hopefully. This is an actual motto from Alcoholics Anonymous; it's something you have to say everyday.

2. What is the best meal you've ever eaten in Hong Kong?

Teppanyaki at Nadaman.

3. What's your drink of choice?

Does it have to be alcoholic? A [gin and soda](#).

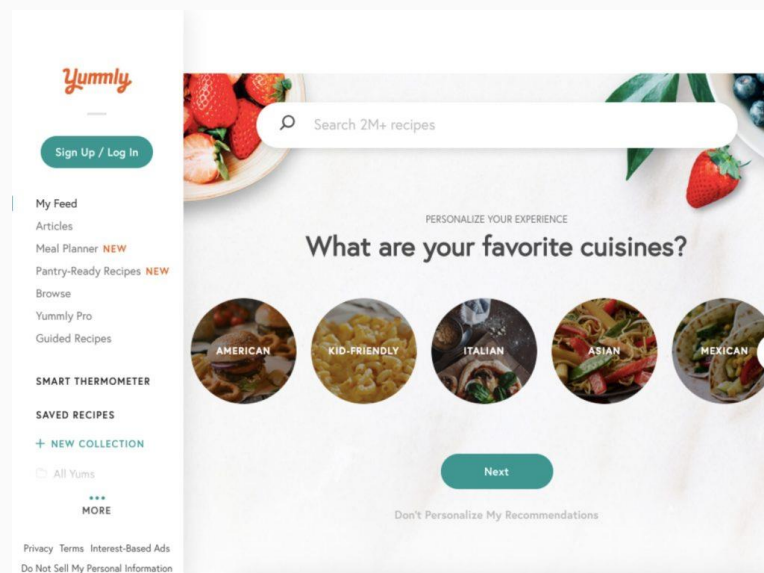
4. What is the best thing in or about your apartment?

I have a million plants. I have a really wide window and I fill it with plants.

5. Are you a morning person or a night owl?

Night owl.

6. Which phone app do you think more people should know about?



Yummly, a search engine for personalised recipe recommendations (Image courtesy of Yummly)

Hmm. Grindr? No, I'm kidding. Yummly! It's a recipe app for when I stay at home and cook. I just type in all my ingredients and they give you the recipe.

7. If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Katsu curry rice.

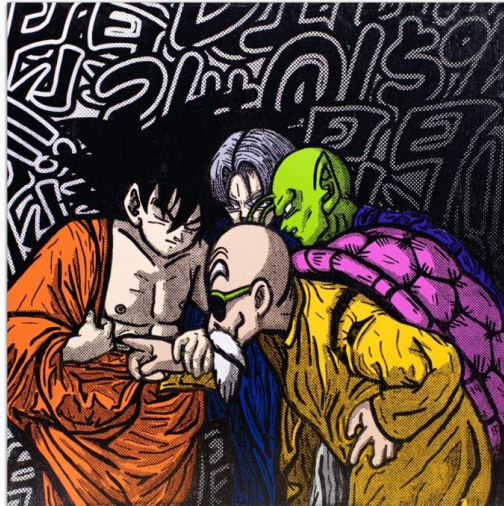
8. What is your biggest regret in life?

Um, my biggest regret in life. Wow. That's tough. No regrets.

9. What is the top destination on your bucket list?

Galápagos Islands! It's the place where Darwin discovered evolution, you know? They also have these iguanas that swim. They've evolved from iguanas that climb on trees to iguanas that swim and lick salt off rocks for survival. Isn't that insane?

10. What is your greatest fear?



The Incredulity Of Master Roshi (2019), courtesy of The Stallery

Not being loved. That my art sucks. I don't know!

11. What is one movie everyone should see?

Bridesmaids (2011)! Best movie. They're going to have a new one, too! It's not Bridesmaids 2; it's a new film from the people who wrote it. It's a funny movie with Jamie Dornan in it and it's coming out during Chinese New Year. It's called Barb and something goes to Las Vegas — or something. *[Editor's note: It's called 'Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar'; trailer linked below]*

12. Which moment in your life would you most like to relive?

I guess I wouldn't mind the opening of my gallery. It was very exciting. We invited all our friends and all our family. The gallery was empty back then so we could fit a whole lot of people.

13. If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would it be?

I would like to say New York. My grandpa lived in New York for, forever, so we used to go there.

14. If you could invite any five people in the world to your dream dinner party, who would they be?

Andy Warhol, definitely. Maybe Jack Kerouac? Frida Kahlo. Takashi Murakami and [Yayoi Kusama](#).

15. What is one song you know all the lyrics to?

'The Man' by Taylor Swift. Haha. I do know all the words to it.

16. What's your favourite childhood memory?

Disney World. I was born in Florida and when I was a kid, we had these annual passes and we'd go, literally, every month. There was this water park called Blizzard Beach Water Park and they had this really, really tall slide. You'd get the biggest wedgie of your life when you slid down, but it was so fun.

17. What is your favourite scent in the whole world?

Fresh-cut grass.

18. Who is the best teacher you've ever had, what is one important lesson that they taught you?

It was my French teacher and she taught me this idiom: "Empty vessels make the most noise." I've always remembered that.

19. What is your unique party trick?

I have no party tricks. I have zero game. But I have tattoos!

20. Do you have any favourite tattoos or special birthmarks? What is it?



Melencolia I (1514) by Albrecht Dürer

My favourite tattoo is my Albrecht Dürer. He was a 1600's German Renaissance artist and he made this first piece of art that ultimately contained the feeling of melancholia. I had that tattooed when I was 16 when I was going through a lot of depression and it helped me put a focus on that — and move on.

21. Would you rather never be alone for a single moment, or be alone for the rest of your life? Why?

Never alone. Because I really enjoy the company of other people and they inspire me. So, without them, I wouldn't be able to make anything.

22. What would you do if you won the lottery?

I would do nothing. If I won the lottery, I would gift half to charity and gift the other half to my mum. I love her.

23. When did you feel that you 'made it'?

Wow. I don't think that. I never feel like I've made it. I think I still always have room to improve on my art. That's what makes good art, I think.

24. If you could do it all over again, what is one thing you would do differently?

I guess I would've not been so experimental with addictive drugs. I would try to stay focused on things I wanted to do instead of constantly getting side-tracked by drug addiction.

25. Start your life again at age 15 with all the knowledge you have now, or fast forward 10 years?

Definitely start my life again at 15. For sure.

26. What's the scariest thing you've ever done, and why?



The interiors of The Stallery

Starting my own business. It's because I never knew exactly how hard it is to start a business and have it succeed and continue succeeding, year after year.

27. A genie gives you three wishes — what are they?

One, solve climate change. Two, solve world hunger. Three, stop people from killing each other all the time.

'Bling Dynasty' runs from 20 February to 4 April at The Stallery.

[The Stallery WCH](#), G/F, 82A Stone Nullah Lane, Wanchai, Hong Kong, +852 2771 3800

(All images courtesy of Ernest Chang and The Stallery)