

DESIGNER DELIGHT

Chance collaboration

UNIQLO partners Nanyang Polytechnic graduate for new T-shirt designs

ZHANG WEIFANG
weifang@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE – It's not every day that a Japanese powerhouse retailer collaborates with a local student to launch a set of designs that finds its way into stores; but that was what UNIQLO did with 22-year-old Vicki Ng.

The recent graduate from Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) previously came up with designs that exemplified 50 uniquely Singapore colloquial phrases such as “sabo king” (an expert at sabotaging other people's efforts), “bin chao chao” (a Hokkien phrase for “unhappy face”), “ya ya papaya” (a show-off) and “chop chop kali pok” (to do things quickly). It was part of her final year project, titled 50 Types Of Singaporeans, when she was studying Visual Communication at the polytechnic.

Her designs caught the eye of the South West Community Development Council, who linked up NYP's School of Design with UNIQLO Singapore. The latter loved the designs so much that they decided to work with Ng to launch them via UNIQLO's UTme! application under the UNIQLO Street Tales initiative.

“Our earlier foray into the SG50

celebrations saw us working with locals from all walks of life to create a myriad of Singaporean inspired designs that are near and dear to many of us. This collaboration with Vicki continues on in that spirit of supporting local talent and we are delighted to partner with Nanyang Polytechnic for this project,” said Sei Tomohiko, chief operating officer of UNIQLO Singapore. “Vicki's designs also offer a touch of humour for good measure.”

Ng was over the moon when she learnt about this dream collaboration. “I am truly humbled to be given such an incredible opportunity. It was one of the best things that has happened to me. It strengthened my faith in not only my craft and designs, but also Singapore's local design scene as a whole,” she told TODAY in an e-mail interview. “These designs, which are very relevant to Singaporeans, have been launched in time for the country's Jubilee celebrations, hence making it even more meaningful when I see my designs being worn by fellow Singaporeans.”

She declined to reveal how much remuneration was involved, stating that she “will not discuss the commercial arrangement between UNIQLO and myself”; but Ng, who will be polishing



Nanyang Polytechnic graduate Vicki Ng and her designs on UNIQLO's T-shirts.

her design skills at the Singapore Institute of Technology with a degree in Communication Design, said that the inspiration behind 50 Types Of Singaporeans came from her observation of the quirky myriad of ways these phrases were being applied in Singapore.

As a part of her design research, she spoke to almost “100 youths on this topic (and) discovered that there were actually many elements that represent Singapore”. “Due to globalisation and modernisation, I am concerned that Singaporeans may be losing their Singaporean identity and the community spirit to come together as one. This project aims to reignite the spirit of community and connect Singaporeans across the island and

hopefully the world,” she added.

“Singapore may be a melting pot of cultures and people. However, there are still many elements that are uniquely Singaporean such as Singlish. Singlish is part of the Singaporean identity and one that Singaporeans can identify with. With these 50 characters, Singaporeans will be able to reconnect with their fellow countrymen in a fun manner.”

You can check out these 50 designs at UNIQLO's UTme! application from now to Oct 31.

> Shoppers can print their favourite catchphrases onto UNIQLO T-shirts and buy them for S\$29.90 (adults) and S\$24.90 (children) exclusively at UNIQLO Bugis+.