

THE MIDAS TOUCH

Everything KEVIN POON touches is entrepreneurial gold; from streetwear brand Clot to restaurant La Rambla by Catalunya, he tells MARTA COLOMBO how his burgeoning empire continues to grow



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HEN YOU TALK to Kevin Poon, the multitasking creator makes it clear that the concept of “lifestyle entrepreneurship” can be taken to a whole new level. Over the years, he has injected his cool and his vision into many projects that encompass fashion, music, design and even food – establishing a sort of urban empire.

“The vision really is to do stuff that we are proud of, and to continue to make creative and cool s**t,” says Poon when I ask him how Clot, the brand he co-founded in 2003 with childhood friend Edison Chan, inspired him to expand his activities beyond fashion.

Clot is a streetwear and lifestyle brand that has established itself as a top player from the very beginning. After starting with a curated selection of cult brands, the duo launched a line of original products in 2004. “We were very much into hip-hop, basketball and fashion and, at the time, our favourite brands weren’t available in Hong Kong,” he explains.

Juice, another successful business venture that originated from the Clot concept and Poon’s entrepreneurial abilities, started as a small shop in Causeway Bay and went on to become an international retailer, with branches across Asia and pop-up stores in Los Angeles. From that entrepreneurial success, the “movement,” as Poon often describes it, organically developed into an event organiser. That culminated in Hong Kong’s first hip-hop festival, 2013’s Blokk Party, curated by Pharrell Williams.

“I think a lot of the Clot clientele grew up with us over the years and now we seem to have a bigger audience of people,” says Poon. “The new youth is also excited about the movement and embraces it.” From every carefully selected piece to Clot’s impressive collaborations with international brands and prominent personalities, it’s clear that the brand’s strength lies in its multifaceted power to appeal to different lifestyles. For one of its

latest collaborations, Clot created a pair of Converse bearing quotes from the Analects of Confucius – a great example of what it means, for Clot and for Poon, to strike a balance between innovation and cultural preservation.

In a culture where brands represent more than mere products, symbolising a persona and exerting an influence on the consumer’s ways of life, Poon and his team have found a winning formula that has positioned them at the centre of urban culture. Clot’s universe, for example, also comprises a Mixcloud page with original DJ mixes that translate the brand’s vision into sounds. “Growing up in Chicago, Vancouver, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Hong Kong, I was a constant nomad,” explains Poon. “The connection between East and West is very much in my DNA and continues to influence the way we think and live, and is a part of the creative process.”

In February, Poon’s transnational and multicultural “movement” triumphed on one

of the most prestigious stages in the fashion world: the runway of New York Fashion Week. “It was a very nerve-wracking, fun and valuable experience,” he says. “We came up with the concept over coffee, with the idea of creating a runway based on our Clot logo and including Chinese New Year flowers in the middle of the stage. We also recruited our friends to walk the show, like [celebrity tattoo artist] Dr Woo.”

In the age of #foodstagram, branching out into the culinary industry was an almost obvious move for Poon, who thinks that it goes “hand in hand with everything.” So how do streetwear and urban culture translate into the food world? He started off in 2013 with the coffee shop Elephant Grounds, which now has a network of five cafes around Hong Kong – the idea was to offer coffee lovers a temple of quality with attention to detail in a contemporary, stylish environment.

“I wish landlords were more open-minded, because there are a lot of things that can happen,” says Poon. “I’m actually working on new food projects.” One of these, La Rambla by Catalunya, is tangible proof that he wants to be at the forefront in pushing the boundaries of new culinary concepts in the city. “Malibu meets Barcelona and Soho House – this is how I like to describe it. There’s a lot of interest in Spanish cuisine – and La Rambla in Barcelona had such a magical energy that I just wanted to bring a piece of it back to Hong Kong.” In the new space, located in IFC Mall and overlooking Victoria Harbour, Poon also wanted to bring a piece of Catalan art from Spanish artist Javier Calleja – once again, creating a space that inspires customers beyond its primary function.

What’s next on the menu for Poon and his burgeoning empire? We can only guess – but whatever he turns his hand to, it’s almost guaranteed success. #

Clockwise from top: Kevin Poon; looks from Clottee by Clot summer 2018; Clot autumn/winter 2017

PHOTOS: KEVIN POON (PREVIOUS PAGE); SIMKY CHEUNG (CENTRE AND TOP RIGHT); ELAINE LI (BOTTOM RIGHT)