

THE BROTHERS KEENAN JEFF AND BRENDAN TELL ALL

SNOWBOARD CANADA

JESSE FOX
TAKES THE PATH OF THE CROCODILE

YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

IS ANYTHING BETTER THAN CATBOARDING?

TRAVEL ACROSS POLAND,
ONE RAIL AT A TIME

MEET THE NEW 418

Jesse Fox. Colin Adair photo

FALL 2006 \$5.99 CDN \$4.99 USA
www.snowboardcanada.com



DISPLAY UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2006
CDN PUBLICATION AGREEMENT #40036843

ARTIST FILE

[EPHRAIM CHUI]

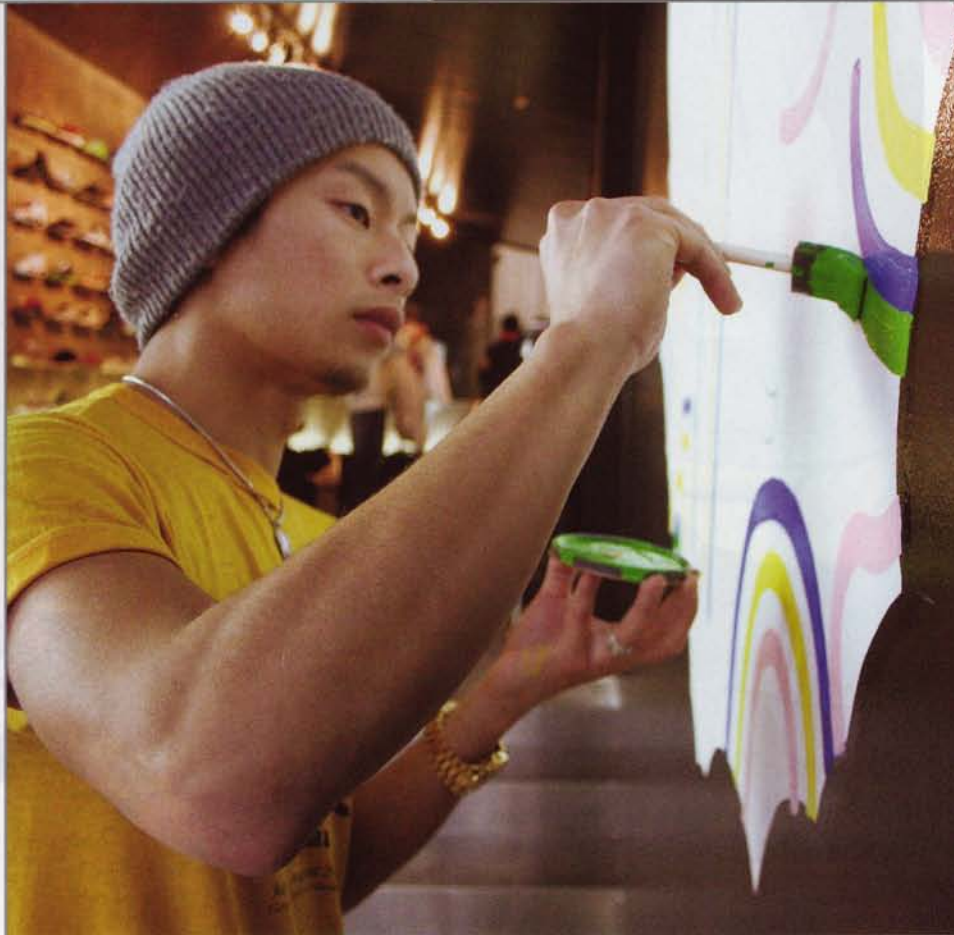
BY NATALIE LANGMANN



Ephraim Chui has designed over 50 snowboard graphics since 2000, mostly for Capita and some for his own company, The Zwen Experience. He's also designed T-shirts and participated in art shows with Lifetime Clothing and developed watches for Alive Athletics. Toss in art for Grenade, IS Design, and other snowboard companies, and it's safe to say Chui is sitting in a fine position as a professional designer and artist. You might not expect that he was once turned down by a top art university, that he finds himself dull, and that he cares more about global warming and the future of snow than talking about the world of snowboarding. Asked what other forms of art he finds himself involved in, he says, "I like to dance to really bad Japanese pop music." Chui is a sarcastic and witty artist, yet a shy one, indeed.

Born in Wah Fu Estate, Hong Kong, in 1980, Chui moved to Canada when he was seven, first to Toronto, then to Vancouver, where he grew up in the city's Marpole area. Snowboarding entered his life in Grade 8, when he'd take the bus to Grouse Mountain every day. While Chui has no idea why he still sucks at snowboarding—maybe because he focuses more on art than shredding—he jokes that there's a different feeling with both and that painting doesn't give him concussions.

"Like most people who work in art or design, I started drawing when I was a little kid," Chui says. "The first serious drawing I did was a T. rex in Grade 2. I spent so long on that thing. When I was in high school I wanted to be a painter; my goal was to get into Emily Carr and be a fine artist. That didn't work out. I was rejected. But looking back, that might've been the best thing that could've happened."



Thinking that perhaps art wasn't for him, Chui stopped painting for a few years and took an apprenticeship at a Japanese restaurant, working under a strict chef who would kick and hit him and sit him down for hour-long lectures.

"It was awesome," Chui laughs. "He taught me so much about work ethic, respecting what you do, and how to make crazy food. It was straight out of *Karate Kid*."

As fate would have it, the angry chef broke his leg snowboarding and moved back to Japan. Chui says his replacement was a "total prick," which enticed him to quit and return to school for two years at Langara College to study sociology and philosophy—great stuff, yet it held no future for him.

"Being from a good ol' Asian family," Chui says, "I had to get a degree somewhere, or my family would disown me."

After meeting the Human Five artists and hearing them talk about school, Chui applied to Capilano College's IDEA program. Three years later and \$30,000 poorer, he graduated and went forward with design in mind. Initially, Chui went through the starving-artist stage, during which he couldn't even afford a bus pass until work fell into place with Capita. Over the next six years, he established a career based on trust and understanding while designing three or four of his own series of board graphics each season. He works with mostly pen, ink and Illustrator and uses One Shot for painting.

"Working for Capita is fantastic," he says. "Few companies would give me as much freedom as I have with them. I don't think people realize how restrictive design is. It's not fine art. You can't just go do whatever you want. If you do that in design, you're completely missing the point. The most interesting thing to me about designing for any project are the restrictions."

"There's very little skill involved in being selfish and doing something that you're happy with," Chui continues. "That's easy, and it's not very fun. The fun comes from the challenge of having rules and doing something unexpected within those restrictions."

Capita's Blue Montgomery says Chui is incredibly gifted.

"Smart, talented, and just a solid human."

He's *easy style*, but he's also not scared of debate," Montgomery says. "We have lyrical battles over Instant Messenger daily. We just chat it up, all day, every day. We're kinda like a married couple, except we're both dudes and we live in two different countries."

To find a good home for his other ever-developing ideas, Chui knocked on the door of Lifetime Clothing, where he now creates T-shirt designs and cut-and-sew pieces and participates in group shows.

Lifetime's Reid Stewart has ample respect for Chui.

"Ephraim's artwork really speaks for itself. He is an amazing individual with a big heart," Reid says.

Trying to understand Chui the artist would be like trying to understand his company, The Zwen Experiment. Two friends of his in Japan, Hiro Saito (Alive Athletics) and Yasuhiro Kawamura (Un-fudge), conceived Zwen as a snowboard company without sponsored athletes or team members. They're experimenting with a company and not using the traditional business model, purely for the fun of making product.

"It's ridiculous," Chui admits. "We barely make minimums and don't depend on it for an income. We can do this because we're workaholics and we all have serious, full-time jobs on top of Zwen."

Having limited the project to five years, if the fun runs out, they'll get out. Since designing for two companies can present problems, Chui keeps his work strictly for Capita when it comes to board design.

To find inspiration, IS Designs' Kenta Gota, a fellow Vancouver artist, says Chui looks to less-than-traditional sources.

"Once in a while we link up online and talk about work [art and design], but that usually lasts about a minute and the topic of our conversation quickly changes to food," Gota says. "Besides Japanese porn, Japanese food must be his biggest inspiration."

Chui agrees: "I do have a bit of an obsession with food. Mostly Japanese food, but I would say all good food. I spend most of my money on food. When I'm not working, I'm cooking. I'm lucky to have an overly efficient metabolism. I don't think it makes its way into my art, but it definitely puts me into a positive mindset, and that's a good thing."



CHECK OUT

EPHRAIM CHUI'S ART AT

EPHKA.COM, CAPITASNOWBOARDING.COM,
LIFETIMECLOTHING.COM, ZWEN-EXPERIMENT.JP,
AND ALIVEATHLETICS.COM.