

The hip Singaporean biker and surfer who helps young entrepreneurs find their brand voice

In this week's instalment of Creative Capital, we meet 32-year-old Dash Kadam who runs Urchin Studios, a fledgling branding and design studio, while also working as a UX designer by day. Prior to Urchins, he lived in Bali and ran his own leathercraft studio

Thirty-two-year-old Singaporean Dash Kadam is your quintessential free spirited, hip creative. His Instagram feed portrays him as a hip urban biker surrounded by gorgeous friends. He studied interior design but, when he left school, worked as a graphic designer instead.

A few years back, he taught himself leather crafting, moved to Bali, and lived off his craft. When he went vegan, he closed his leather studio and is now exploring plant-based leather. His day job is as a UX designer and he spends his free time running his branding and design studio Urchins, through which he hopes to help small brands and young entrepreneurs better communi-

cate their stories.

Yes, since I was a kid, I was drawn to things that were visual. My parents supported me in all my creative pursuits, and when I was young my mom enrolled me into music and art classes. I used to hate going to music class, but I would always look forward to drawing class. I grew up in Mumbai and during summer vacations, there were a lot of art contests for kids. Mom would bring me to as many contests as possible.

It's just how I perceive reality. Expressing myself in various mediums is what naturally brings me happiness. If I am having a bad day or week, I head out with my camera and create some photos. It helps to elevate

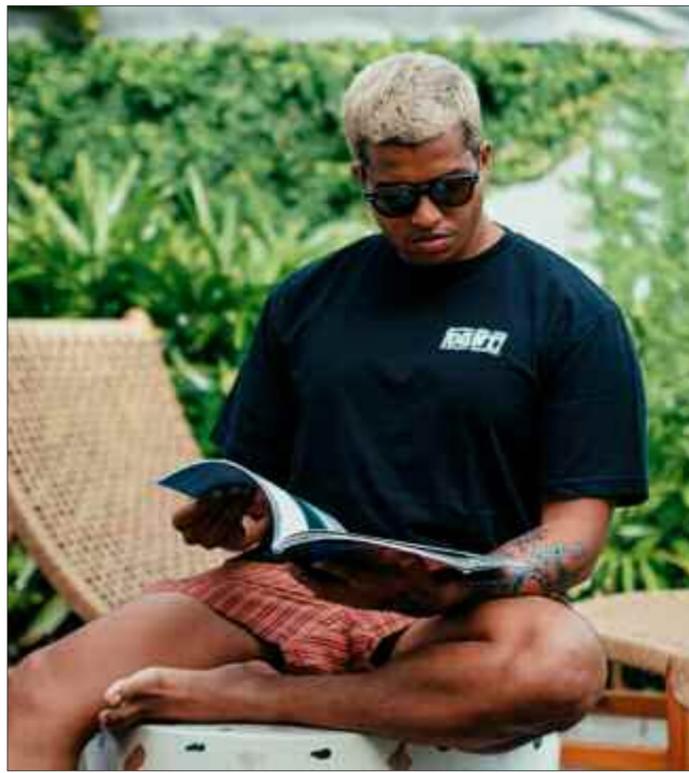
my mood.

The Singaporean designer who's using pineapples to make a difference in the fashion world

I studied interior design by chance but didn't actually have much of an interest in it. I missed out by one (O-level) point to get into a graphic design course, and I really didn't want to study anything other than design. I also couldn't afford a private design diploma. I ended up enrolling into whatever design course I could get into.

But studying Space and Interior design course at NYP was a blessing in disguise. I had the best lecturers and mentors. They encouraged me to explore my creativity. Projects were made open-ended. Problem solving and idea generation were made fun instead of the tasks that we had to do well for grades. Although I don't practice interior design, I have huge appreciation for interior spaces and architecture. And you never know, I might dabble in it in the future.

It started out as a hobby, I learned leather-crafting by watching YouTube videos. A couple of years ago, I moved to Bali to be closer to the ocean and nature, but I needed a way to sustain my stay in Bali, so I decided to do it professionally. I started my leather-crafts brand Oakmoon Crafts where I handcrafted leather goods using locally sourced materials. I also started creating leather-crafted related YouTube content. So, in a way the hobby came full circle and hopefully I inspired someone else to pick up the craft. I had turned my hobby into a job and after a couple of years of working as a full-time leather-craftsman and running a business I found myself feeling creatively



Inside the Met Gala: Celebrities, glamour and 275,000 pink roses



Elegant gowns in gold, classic black and white, tails and even top hats. This year's Met Gala guests followed the sartorial instructions of "gilded glamour" to a tee and came in the best Gilded Age finery they could muster.

Met Galas, he's been to a few. But James Corden, schmoozing at this year's cocktail reception, looked around and pronounced that this might be his favourite yet.

"Classy," he explained. "It just feels really classy."

The TV host waved his arm around the room, taking in the hundreds of guests who'd followed the sartorial instructions — "gilded glamour" — and came in the best Gilded Age finery they could muster. Elegant gowns, shimmering with gold. Classic black and

white. Tails and even some top hats. Headpieces and bustles and perhaps the accessory of the night: the tiara, sported by none other than Vogue's Anna Wintour, who runs the gala, wearing a family heirloom. Even allowing for creativity, this was not the night for artfully ripped jeans.

Tessa Thompson attends The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala celebrating the opening of the "In America: An Anthology of Fashion" exhibition on Monday, May 2, 2022, in New York. (Photo by

Evan Agostini/Invision/AP)

Of course, take one letter off "classy" and you have "class," with all the tricky implications of channelling an era that saw the creation of excessive wealth and income inequality in the United States. Some guests wrestled with that thought as they pondered the meaning of the evening. Others pointed out, accurately, that the gala funds the Met's Costume Institute, allowing for exhibits such "In America: An Anthology of Fashion," which opens this week and seeks to uncover unsung he-

roes and untold stories in American fashion history, especially women, and women of colour. Janelle Monae attends The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala celebrating the opening of the "In America: An Anthology of Fashion" exhibition on Monday, May 2, 2022, in New York. (Photo by Evan Agostini/Invision/AP) Others said the night was an important way of showing that New York was back in full force, even with the pandemic still upon us. "We're celebrating craftsmanship and we're celebrating America." —CNA

Kim Kardashian wears Marilyn Monroe gown to Met Gala

Kim Kardashian went for classic and iconic at the Met Gala, once again breaking the internet by donning one of Marilyn Monroe's most famous looks.

By tracking her whereabouts from paparazzi photos and scanning recent interviews, social media users guessed that Kardashian was going to wear the dress when she and Davidson were recently spotted in Orlando, Florida — the home of Ripley's Believe It or Not. In 2016, the dress worn by Marilyn Monroe as she sang "Happy Birthday" to President John F. Kennedy in 1962 was sold at auction to Ripley's Believe It or Not for nearly US\$5 million (\$6.9 million)

In this combination photo, Kim Kardashian attends The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala celebrating the opening of the "In America: An Anthology of Fashion" exhibition on Monday, May 2, 2022, in New York.

The figure-hugging nude dress worn by Kardashian at Monday's Met Gala contains more than 2,500 handstitched crystals.

Kardashian was the final celebrity to walk the Met Gala red carpet, joined by her boyfriend, Pete Davidson. She swapped her signature long black hair for a tight platinum blonde bun, emulating Monroe.

The reality TV star and entrepreneur told Vogue that she had to lose 16 pounds to fit into the dress. All of Kardashian's sisters attend the Met Gala, as did momager Kris Jenner.

Kim Kardashian and Davidson made their first red carpet outing together last week at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. —AP

The star of The Kardashians said she lost 16 pounds in three weeks so she could wear the iconic dress that Monroe wore as she sang "Happy Birthday" to President John F. Kennedy in 1962



He designs genderless athleisure for men and women that's perfect if you dance or do yoga

In this week's Creative Capital, we talk to Leonard Cheong, who left a long career in public relations to pursue dreams of designing modern, genderless athleisure that would appeal to anyone



In one of our previous interviews, we met a young entrepreneur who has put sustainability at the centre of her athleisure brand. For her, that meant pursuing environmentally sustainable materials and ethical suppliers, and finding ways to give back through her brand. Sustainability, though, can also translate as creating garments that fully embrace the diversity of today's customers.

One local athleisure brand that is trying to do this is Finix, founded by 38-year-old Singaporean Leonard Cheong.

Finix specialises in genderless, modern athleisure, informed by Cheong's past experiences as a dancer and current passion for yoga (he's a certified instructor). Having felt that athleisure catered to specific body types and customers, Cheong, who spent his career prior to Finix in public relations, launched his brand in January 2020, just months before the pandemic changed our lives.

Finix has just launched a new collection, titled "Freedom".

The idea of switching careers had been in my mind for quite some time. I think I was already thinking about that right before I applied for a job opportunity in Japan back in 2009. However, the catalyst that finally made me make the career switch came in 2017 when I was going through a very challenging period of my life. It was a very existential moment. I was feeling a lot of negativity that stemmed from my aversion to proactively changing my circumstances.

The idea of starting my own fashion line, though, only came to me very recently, in the past two or three years. Truth be told, I was doing okay at my day job but I think what was gnawing at me deep inside was this nagging feeling that I was not realising my full potential. This kickstarted my journey of introspection and self-reflection in which I started noting down all my strengths and what brought me the most joy.

In the end, fashion, art, design and creativity came up highest on the list. I eventually went with fashion because it sat right at the heart of everything I wanted to do and achieve for myself: Creativity, commerce and building a community.

I started my brand Finix at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020. So, my product development timeline would not be the most indicative of standard industry timelines. —Reuters

