

Fuss-free

Machines don't always have to be complex. In the case of Jansen Tan, his have been pared down to look as clean as they possibly can.

Words by Laura Eva Wong

THERE ARE PEOPLE who like to wear black. And then there are those who wear black every day. Jansen Tan, 33, is the latter, and the reason he gives for this is that he doesn't like complications. "Keep it simple." That's his motto. And this rule doesn't just apply to his clothes—it manifests in the food that he eats, the car that he drives and the bicycle designs that he pushes under his brand, Coast Cycles.

An ex-national cyclist who used to compete in bike trials, Tan's interest in product design dovetailed with his love for cycling to lead him to where he is today—managing a family business specialising in high pressure laminates during the day before heading over to Coast & Company, a space along Siglap Drive where cyclists of all persuasions can gather over coffee, get their bikes fixed at the workshop behind the café or peruse the Coast Cycles bikes on display upstairs.

The brand's very first model was the flagship



PHOTOGRAPHED BY RONALD LEONG.

Coastliner, which Tan confesses is his favourite of the six designs standing in his showroom. "If I can do it, I'll do it. Otherwise, my ideas remain just that on my notepad." This rustproof bicycle, which took him two years to complete, was inspired by his need for a bike that he can take to meet friends. "Riding a mountain bike in a city is a bit odd," Tan says, "and you look *off* if you're not in Lycra while riding a racing bike. I wanted an urban commuter that suits my style."

His style, which, of course, is to make things as streamline as possible, has been translated into the maintenance-free Coastliner, which boasts a completely seamless frame design and hidden cables, unlike the typical derailleur system that bikes usually adopt. And because you don't have to worry about derailleurs, you can easily take your bike wherever you want to go—simply detach the front wheel, turn the handlebars, grab it and go—which is exactly what Tan did when he visited Milan last April.

Singapore, according to him, may very well evolve into the likes of deadlocked Milan in time to come, where the best way to get around congested streets would be by bike. With our ever-growing population, limited amount of space and rising car prices in mind, he believes that more cyclists will take to our roads soon—thus, his focus on bikes that are suitable for commuting.

Tan believes in equipping his bikes with bigger tyres so they won't puncture when going over curbs or get caught in drain covers. But, of course, he hasn't forgotten the Singapore weather either, which somehow always manages to sway our rationality to flag down a cab to go someplace we can easily walk to. His Electric Assist bike, available mid-year, was built to get its rider from one place to another without breaking a sweat at a constant speed of 25KM/H. It's been tried and tested, too. Tan lives in Kembangan and it takes him three minutes to get to Coast & Company on one of these bikes—"under the 10AM sun, in jeans and a [black] T-shirt, and not a single drop of perspiration".

"Cycling has always been my thing," Tan says. When he was young, the bicycle was his ticket to freedom out of the neighbourhood. "I owned a Bridgestone mountain bike in secondary one or two, and it took me really far. I'd get lost without any idea how to come home, and we had no Google Maps or iPhones back then, so I followed the MRT tracks home." Even now, he still sees the bicycle as his means of escape. "Friday night, with some friends. Cycle somewhere, we don't know where. Just go. You need to get out once in a while." Especially us, Singaporeans. "We sometimes really need to pull the handbrake and ask, *what am I doing with my life?* It's not all about work. There are actually a lot of things to see in Singapore. Sometimes, you need to get out there." So get on a bike. Go somewhere. Anywhere. 🚲