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TEXT: TIONG LI CHENG

JANICE WONG, THE AVANT GARDE DESSERT MAVERICK, IS EXPLORING DIFFERENT MEDIUMS OF EXPRESSING HER FOOD ART WITH INSPIRATION FROM SURREALIST ARTISTS, ARCHITECTS, AND SCULPTORS.

ART DIRECTION: SHARON GAN

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PHOTOS: LIM MINGLONG

STYLING: SHARON GAN,
BENJAMIN SOH & SOH KAH KHEE

d AS
ART.

DISHES: JANICE WONG

LOLLIPOP
PAINTING

created with
chocolate paint.



“I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO CHANGE PEOPLE’S PERCEPTION OF FOOD,” SAYS JANICE WONG.

Jars of edible chocolate paint and chocolate crayons.



have your art. and eat it too.

It's truly fitting that Janice Wong's eponymous dessert-focused restaurant is located in the National Museum of Singapore. Chocolate in every colour of the rainbow drips down canvases instead of plates and designer marshmallow art "paintings" are on display. Wong is not just a pastry chef, she is the Willy Wonka of Singapore and her creations have been likened to fantastical sweet treats in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* many times over.

Wong's early days were devoted to running her first concept, 2am:Dessertbar—an innovative concept doling out plated desserts—which opened in Holland Village in 2007. At her first book launch, she created a dramatic edible art experience with marshmallow ceilings, panels of gummies that guests could pull off the wall to eat, fruit purée paintings, and a large coral sculpture made of isomalt sugar. "At that time, Singapore was not ready for this. People were still used to the idea of food on the table, not food on the wall. But I have always wanted to change people's perception of food," says Wong. More than a few edible art installations later, the accolades followed. She was named Asia's Best Pastry Chef for two years running by the prestigious San Pellegrino Asia's 50 Best Restaurants 2013 and 2014. Today, her dessert empire extends to shops in Tokyo and Macau.

At the root of the Janice Wong brand DNA is the tagline: "Pure imagination", and her collection of creative sweet treats are testament to that. "Usually when you open a box of chocolates, everything is brown because [most pastry chefs are] focused on flavour and taste", but Wong's bonbons are a visual feast for the eyes, with colourful, geometric or lego-shaped chocolates because she "wanted to focus on art, colour, and textures".

With her frequent travelling and museum visits around the world, Wong draws much of her inspiration from culture. She's recently been to an exhibition in London, featuring Surrealist painter Salvadore Dalí, and loved a painting so much that she purchased it. "Art inspires me a lot and you inspire art back," she muses. From her eclairs that come topped with chocolate discs swirling with abstract pictorial lines, you see influences from Surrealist artist Joan Miró; while colourful splatters on Wong's signature chocolate bars channel a strong sense of Jackson Pollock. "I would love to be like Anish Kapoor but with food," declares Wong. Sure enough, there is a hint of the famous British sculptor's signature biomorphic style in some of Wong's cakes.

With desserts down pat, she has started exploring the savoury side of cuisine. At her eponymous restaurant, Wong serves up colourful dumplings defined by appearance of the wrapper— Elastic, Transparent, Matt, Crystal, and Crispy—instead of the filling. A sheet of mushroom paper printed with poetry from Henry David Thoreau's memoir *Walden* disintegrates into a bowl of deep-fried black noodles as hot collagen broth is poured over. It's like a transient art performance, an interactive dining experience, perhaps paving the way for her latest Playful Cuisine concept featuring laser cut stock, 3D printed chocolate and flying puffs. "It's not just about pastry, I'm also looking to other disciplines like technology and architecture. Everything kind of intertwines," says Wong.

Janice Wong

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Orchid flowers made from sugar and painted with chocolate for a special event in Seoul, Korea.

AS
ART.

**CORAL
SCULPTURE**

made of
isomalt sugar

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SALT

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GEMSTONE

—like sugar pieces

ECLAIRS

in a plethora of flavours



SALT

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