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**NATE TAN**

Nate Tan of Nate1 Design is a pioneer Asian American artist who started in graffiti art in the 1980s as a teenager. By 1987, he co-founded the West Coast chapter of the Master Piece Creators Crew, influential graffiti artists featured in the definitive "History of American Graffiti" and the documentary "Piece by Piece." Today, his vivid banner of the Peace Pagoda flies over the main streets of San Francisco Japantown.

Escaping a repressive regime, Tan's family immigrated from Myanmar to England, where he was born. His family then moved to San Francisco when he was a young child. Thoroughly a "California kid" by high school, Tan became immersed in hip-hop culture.

Tan studied industrial arts with an emphasis on visual communications and extensive coursework in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University and began a career in graphic design.

In 2004, he started the NewSkool clothing line for infants and toddlers, which has since expanded to include men's and women's clothing and accessories.

"NewSkool has been featured in TV and newspaper stories and items are being sold in Japan, England, and Ireland. I started the line just after the birth of my son, and now both my kids are involved in the family business," he said.



**Nate Tan with his "Blue Peace Plaza"**

In 2010, Tan created a curriculum to teach "The History of Graffiti" at the San Francisco-based First Amendment Gallery. Word about this unusual course spread quickly and, starting with Facebook, technology companies began to recruit Tan to teach offsite workshops on hip-hop culture.

"I was invited to show techies neighborhood murals and tags on buildings and on the ground and explain their significance," he said. "My art is reflective of my surroundings. Inclusion is very important to me. I focus on understanding and accepting other cultures. I want to reflect that through my art."

In Tan's street lamp banner design, the Peace Pagoda, bathed in blue, stands majestically in front of a tower of the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco skyline amid falling cherry blossoms.

*Brenden Oshima, Brandt Fuse, Derrick Higa and Nate Tan are featured artists at the Heart of Japantown Pop-up Shop, which is selling their T-shirts, stickers, cards and artwork on the ground floor of the Kinokuniya Building in San Francisco Japantown through April.*



**Heart of Japantown storefront**

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of them small and community-focused. He rose through the ranks after reporting and shooting pictures to become a respected, demanding and straight-shooting editor," according to Matsuda. "He was the city editor of the Times' large staff in Orange County during a time of ferocious news competition there. As the newspaper noted, 'During his time in Orange County, Hagihara played a key role in coverage of the county's municipal bankruptcy and other major stories.'"

It was Hagihara's third act in journalism that may have been the most impactful. "His most-recognized legacy, though, may be his prescient, relentless finding of rising talents — and in giving them generous, at times gruff, often humorous, and always wise counsel and support."

According to Matsuda, Hagihara's efforts not only helped to "make the newsroom more diverse and inclusive," but also the people he mentored "became news executives, star reporters, foreign and national correspondents, authors and, as well, accomplished filmmakers, federal law enforcement agents and

more." Hagihara used his talents after retirement as a volunteer for the Friends of the Huntington Beach Public Library, serving for three years as its newsletter editor.

According to his surviving stepson, Sean Kawata, Hagihara's death came after a battle with esophageal cancer. He decided to stop further treatment following surgery and chemotherapy. He was predeceased by Janet, his wife of more than 40 years, and stepson Ian Kawata.

The Los Angeles AAJA chapter is planning to honor Hagihara's "legacy of mentorship" and will announce details imminently. ■



**Randy Hagihara (right), shares memories of working with (from left) Steve Chanecka and K. W. Lee at a June 2018 fundraising dinner in Los Angeles for the K. W. Lee Center for Leadership.**

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