

Designed and made in Singapore DESIGN / 19 New exclusive art club targets the well-heeled ARTS / 18 Crossing new culinary borders at Nouri DINING OUT / 17



Above: Athleisure wear brand Kydra has opened its flagship store at Takashimaya shopping centre. Left: Fitness enthusiasts Debra Tay (seated) and Tudi Guillamot recently entered the fitness industry with Cycling Bears. Far left: Luxury fitness equipment from Cycling Bears. Below: Fitness and wellness centre Core Collective has just opened its 4th location at Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa. Its other locations are at Anson Road, Dempsey and 112 Katong. PHOTOS: CORE COLLECTIVE, CYCLING BEARS, KYDRA

Boom time for fitness business

The pandemic has not only seen more people exercising but a rise in health business too.
BY TAY SUAN CHIANG

HANDS up if you were bitten not just by the Covid bug but the exercise craze that set in during the pandemic.

You would have found yourself heading to park connectors or nature reserves for fresh air, or maybe helped clear out the shelves at places like Decathlon, picking up dumbbells and resistance bands.

According to Sport Singapore, more than 238,000 people made use of its 26 ActiveSG gyms in May 2022, a 6 per cent rise compared to the same month in 2019.

The number of people in Singapore who have become more active has gone up, and in the process, new fitness businesses have also popped up while existing ones are seeing big expansions.

Home gyms go luxe

Fitness enthusiasts Debra Tay and Tudi Guillamot recently entered the fitness industry with Cycling Bears, retailing luxury fitness equipment.

Having spent more time indoors during the pandemic, they too bought their own fitness equipment so that they could work out at home. But such equipment tends to be bulky and unsightly, so the couple found themselves scrambling to stow it away when friends came over.

"This inspired us to think about how we could offer gym equipment that was functional yet beautifully designed to blend in seamlessly with its surrounding aesthetics," says Tay.

With Cycling Bears, the couple hope to meet a gap in the market for bespoke luxury fitness equipment, the kind that homeowners want to invite their friends over to admire.

One such example is the Ciclotte Bike, that looks nothing like a conventional stationary or spin bike. Shaped like a unicycle, the award-winning exercise bike, which retails from \$519,000, comes in a steel or carbon fibre and glass frame. Performance-wise, the bike is said to replicate the sensation of cycling on a road, and definitely not a piece that doubles as a clothes hanger.

Cycling Bears recently sold 1 to a client, who wanted it to match his crystal piano.

It also sells Pent luxury dumbbells, made using stainless steel and natural woods. Clients can create bespoke dumbbells by choosing from different woods and have their initials engraved on the storage stand. And for the yoga enthusi-

ast, there are leather yoga mats, straps and blocks.

The pair have also decked out their showroom at East Coast Road much like a home, to show how the pieces can blend seamlessly with any decor.

Tay, a trained interior designer and a certified home gym designer, also works with clients and their architects or interior designers to design a workout space.

Cycling Bears isn't the only company wanting to improve the look and feel of home gyms. Technogym, a well-known brand at fitness centres, is gearing up to engage the consumer market.

Michelle Lim, marketing executive at SE Active, the distributor for Technogym in Singapore, says: "There is a steady interest in the B2C side of the business. Even with the economy opening back up, people are still eager to know what's next in the home wellness sphere. From temporary home solutions during the circuit breaker, people are now upgrading their home wellness spaces."

Earlier this year, Technogym opened an experience centre at Mohamed Sultan Road, where clients can try out the equipment.

Among the popular items with homeowners are pieces from the Personal Line which is designed by famed Italian architect and industrial designer Antonio Citterio. The treadmills, bikes and elliptical machines are made of polished aluminium,

boast sleek lines and look elegant, but still come with technology features such as online training and tracking programmes and entertainment options.

Lim says Technogym clients range from seasoned fitness buffs who want to improve their performance to new homeowners who are creating dedicated spaces for their workouts.

"Our clients opt to invest in a home gym for a number of reasons, but especially to include the whole family in an active lifestyle and also for convenience. With working from home or hybrid-desks becoming a norm, more people are reimagining their home spaces to make room for wellness," says Lim. "Some of our clients also invest in gym equipment to complement their out-of-home fitness escapades. For example, they see a personal trainer outside for strength training, but do their cardio in the comfort of their own home."

New partnerships and locations

For some other businesses, the rise in people working out during the pandemic has led them to opening in new locations and forming new partnerships.

Fitness and wellness centre Core Collective has just opened its 4th location at Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa. Its other locations are at Anson Road, Dempsey and 112 Katong.

Founder Michelle Yong chose to open

at Sentosa because clients have been asking for it. "Our outlets nearer residential areas are also doing better than the CBD one, and with more people moving to Sentosa, we can cater to that crowd as well as to corporate folks at Harbourfront."

Core Collective's latest opening isn't just about being in a new location. It also marks a new partnership with a hotel.

Dawn Teo, senior vice-president at Amara Hotels & Resorts, is already a Core Collective client, and the 2 women began discussions about a partnership.

The resort's spa and gym underwent renovations earlier this year to become the new Core Collective space. Apart from massages and facial treatments, clients also have access to other services that Core Collective offers, such as osteopathy, life coaching and personal training.

Teo says: "Amara wants to go deeper into wellness, and this is the opportunity to house fitness and wellness facilities at the resort to provide in-house guests and the public an idyllic setting to focus on staying healthy."

Yong says that the space provides endless opportunities. For example, hotel guests can enjoy a staycation and also do a personal training trial at the same time.

Companies offering wellness retreats overseas can now offer similar ones in Singapore.

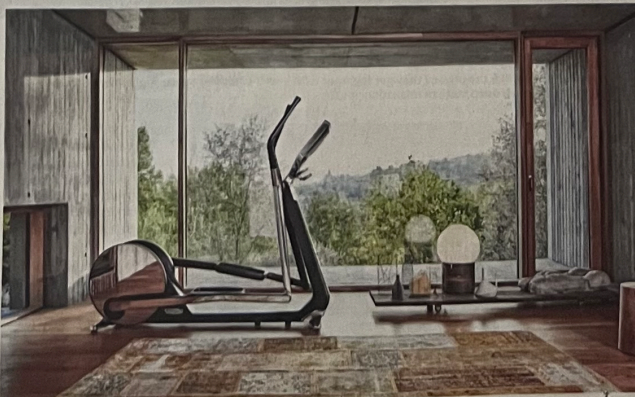
"And for corporate folks who are attending conferences at the retreat, they can also consider doing pre-event yoga sessions," says Yong. There's even the possibility of offering a pet spa, since the resort is a pet-friendly one.

Yong adds: "We can also bring Core Collective to other overseas hotels."

Another company that has seen growth in the past few years is home-grown startup, The Gym Pod. Offering small gyms housed in container pods, The Gym Pod started with 1 pod in 2018. By July 2020, it opened its 8th pod, and to date, it has 52 pods in Singapore, and has even expanded to Chicago, with the opening of 3 pods there.

Explaining the popularity of its pods, Peter Lam, its brand and partnerships director says: "We had a strong and dedicated community that was focused on fitness but also put a premium on their own private space. Covid-19 certainly showed people the importance of fitness and personal space, so we welcomed many new faces to our Gym Pod community."

He adds: "We had such a spike in awareness and customer demand that there were not enough slots available. We had to grow and launch many more loca-



Homeowners like Technogym's Personal Line equipment for its sleek look. PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

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