

Contacts

The story behind the picture

The pin-up chickens

Photographer *Ernest Goh*

Year *2014*

Location *Malaysia*



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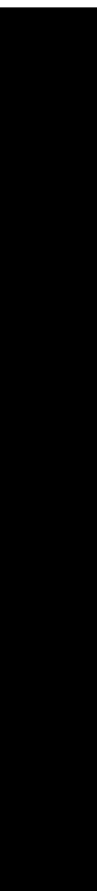
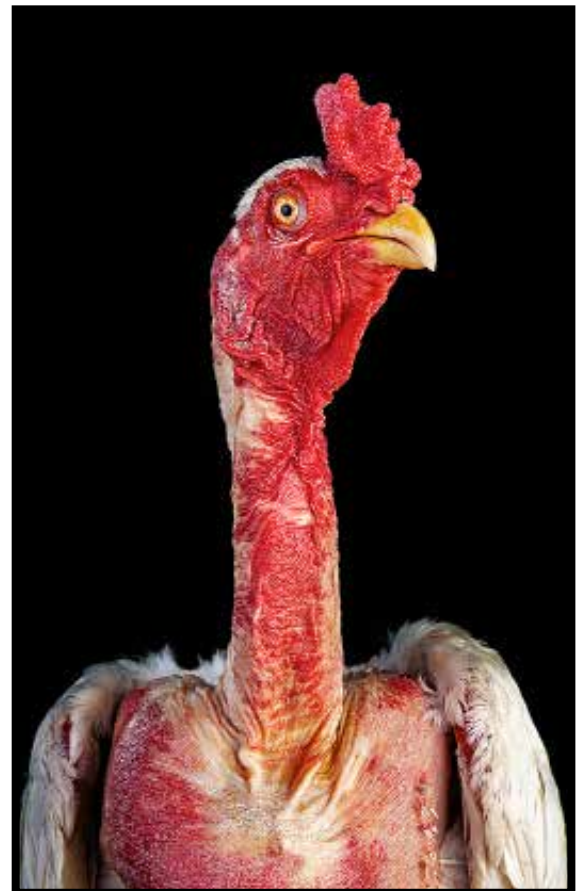
When did we fall in love with chickens? It all depends where you live. In the West, the past few years have seen a boom in affection for the fowl, the UK now claiming more than half a million chicken-keepers and more than 60,000 birds rehomed every year. You can even buy chicken coops at Tesco. It's no longer the pastime reserved for celebrity smallholders such as Jamie Oliver and (apparently) Julia Roberts.

In southeast Asia, it's always been like this. People really love their chickens. The hub of this cultural phenomenon is Malaysia, where photographer Ernest Goh travelled to capture participants in fiercely contested beauty contests.

"Competitions are held almost every week in different villages," he says. "Judges inspect each chicken to determine a champion specimen based on its stance, showmanship and physical assets such as wings, tail and comb."

It helps that the most common breed is the Serama, known for its upright posture, full-breast and upright tail feathers. Locals refer to them as "brave warriors" on account of their pomp and strut, although Goh suggests a less macho comparison: "They seem more like catwalk models than birds." **BEN MACHELL**

Chickens by Ernest Goh (£18.99, Abrams) is out on March 2





From far left: serama cock;
brown frizzle-silkie hen;
serama cock; Japanese
bantam cock



From far left: Thai naked-
neck hen; two serama
cocks; white silkie hen