

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

IF YOU'VE EVER COOKED A MEAL, SAT IN A CHAIR OR TOSSED A PIECE OF PAPER IN THE TRASH, YOU MAY HAVE USED A PRODUCT DESIGNED BY KARIM RASHID. BRIGHT CANDY COLOURS AND ROUNDED ORGANIC SHAPES ARE HIS CALLING CARD; AN ENERGETIC REDESIGN OF HIS UNIVERSE IS HIS CALLING.

BY SHAWNA COHEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS JAUSSAUD

Karim Rashid may be one of the world's most prolific multi-taskers. "Today I am designing a perfume bottle, some stainless steel objects, glass objects, a building in St. Petersburg, furniture for Italians, lighting," reads a recent tweet by the Cairo-born, Toronto-raised industrial designer and interior architect. Best known for his ultra-bright organic designs, Rashid has created more than 3,000 products in his 30-year career—including the award-winning Garbo trash can he designed for Umbra—many of which can be found in the permanent collections of major museums around the world, from New York's Museum of Modern Art to the Design Museum in London.

It's no surprise, then, that Rashid's new townhouse is outfitted almost entirely with his own creations—everything from armchairs to artwork, cushions to candy bowls. Located in the heart of Hell's Kitchen in New York, the structure itself—designed by Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects—stands out, thanks to a folding glass wall that's at once striking and serene. Rashid—who lives with his wife, Ivana, a senior scientist at L'Oréal, and their 6-month-old daughter, Kiva—says he was attracted to the

Karim Rashid and his wife, Ivana, in the garden of their Manhattan townhouse. The white mesh furniture is Rashid's design for Talenti. *Fuchsia rug, Gallant, Inc.*



The focal point in the living room is a painting by Peter Halley. Rashid designed all of the furniture: the pink Sensual Chair for Gamma & Bross; Kivas modular blue sofa for Valdichienti; Splash and Kut coffee tables for Tonelli; Ottawa sideboard for BoConcept. On the cabinet are his white sculpture for Kundalini, pink Bokka lamp for Bitossi, and limited-edition Golden Bubbles vases for Memphis Gallery, Milan.



Left: The dining room table and chairs, along with the coloured vases, are part of Rashid's award-winning Ottawa Collection for Danish brand BoConcept. The lenticular painting is by Rashid. He created the Ego vase—used here as a fruit bowl—for Portuguese label Atlantis. The LED Nafir pendant lamp was designed for Italian lighting company Axo.

Below: The kitchen counter showcases a lineup of Rashid's designs, including his Kone vacuum, Siliconezone paper towel holder and 7 Hills bowl (foreground).

Opposite: After living in Chelsea for two decades, Rashid moved into this Hell's Kitchen townhouse in spring 2013. Designed by Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects, it features a striking glass façade.



building's high ceilings and abundant natural light. Inside, the 53-year-old designer has created an all-white space accented with bold punches of colour. "The majority of our world is grey and that's really depressing," he says. "Colour can shift our emotional well-being. It increases that feeling that you're alive." Surprisingly, Rashid hasn't always felt this way. In fact, he can recall being in his 20s and watching his father, an abstract painter, create canvasses bursting with colour. "I remember thinking it's almost garish, the amount of colour he was using," he explains. "But as I moved into my late-20s, 30s, 40s, it was completely inside of me. I never really sat down and thought, I'm going to embrace colour. It just happened. It's part of my genetic makeup."

One look at Rashid's New York townhouse and it's difficult to imagine a time when he wasn't obsessed with colour. The living room, for instance, combines varying shades of blue with bursts of neon green and bubble-gum pink; even an orange sofa looks perfectly in place. "For many years, because I've been travelling so much and am used to hotels, I'd hang out in the bedroom. I'd come home, put my luggage down and immediately sit on the bed and open my laptop," says Rashid, who spends around half the year on the road. "It's only in this new place that I've designed a living room to feel so relaxed, so comfortable. It's where I spend most of my time."

When it comes to entertaining, Rashid and his wife throw dinner parties about once a month. Inevitably, their guests will end up in the garden, which Rashid describes as an extension of the living room. "I'll go out there with coffee in the morning before work, or on weekend afternoons," he says of the space that's accentuated with a round fuchsia carpet and a custom wall painting. "I've started to do a bit of planting out there. I can barbecue—all the Canadian things I was brought up with!"

When children stop by, Rashid says they climb all over his furniture—a fact that delights him. "Children have always been attracted to my work," he boasts. "At first I thought, Oh, is my work childish? Then I realized they live in the moment while the majority of us live in the past." He jokes about his place being naturally baby-proofed because of the soft rounded edges found in all his designs, from coffee tables to bed frames. "With all my work, objects don't become obstacles," he says, "but rather they increase the level of comfort."

It's a philosophy that's apparent, not only in his own living space but also in the countless objects he's created for public consumption. Rashid is adamant that good design goes hand in hand with innovation, and he's been instrumental in making design accessible to the masses. "A design isn't finished until someone loves using it every day," he recently tweeted to his 21,000-plus followers.

For one of his recent projects—a kitchenware series for Siliconezone—Rashid manages to make a dustpan and dust brush look sexy. "Silicone itself is an amazing material. My goal was to make inexpensive but elegant kitchen products that you don't mind





'The majority of our world is grey and that's really depressing. Colour can shift our emotional well-being. It increases that feeling that you're alive.'



Far left: Karim Rashid leans on the Blu armchair, designed for Casamania. The painting is by New York artist Ryan McGinness. "I love his notion of layering graffiti-esque imagery," Rashid says. "His paintings have a good energy."

Above: The art on the office walls includes a painting, far left, by James Marshall (a.k.a. Dalek), and sketches of Ivana by Rashid. Under the desk is Rashid's award-winning Garbo trash bin, designed for Umbra.

Left: In Kiva's nursery, the Leander crib sits in the centre. "I can access her from any side. Plus, it's sad to put a crib up against the wall," says Rashid, adding that babies have full peripheral vision. The pink sketch is by Rashid.



In the kitchen, the staircase wall is distinguished by a swath of candy pink. A custom storage cabinet holds four Sottsass vases and a blue Fornasetti vase. Ivana white metal chair, Talenti.



leaving out on the counter," he says. "I always had that idea, going back to the '80s and '90s when I designed Garbo. We have all of these banal objects that we hide in our closet. If they're beautiful, why not show them as small sculpture?" Case in point: In Rashid's New York townhouse, these types of everyday objects are lined up on his kitchen counter. Included in the mix is a cordless hand-held vacuum, called Kone, that he designed for Dirt Devil; a Siliconezone paper towel holder; even a 3M Post-it dispenser.

His desire to bring well-designed products to a style-savvy public has only magnified with age. For example, recalling 2010, the year he turned 50, Rashid says, "That was a tough year. I got cancer that year. I'm fine now, but it was frightening. It made me become hyper-aware of my mortality. When it's in your face, you realize you have a choice to be more contributive to the world, make people have better lives. That was a turning point for me: I'm not here for my ego, I'm here for others." He says he's healthy now and happy as he moves into the next chapter, which, in addition to product design, includes hotels, restaurants, a dental office and a slew of condos in New York, Miami, Montreal and Toronto (where his mother still lives).

Rashid has built a career out of functional design, of reinventing basic objects so that they're beautiful and efficient. His sole disappointment stems from what he calls "the conservatism of the world." As Rashid explains, "Many clients run away because they think I'm too forward or radical or wild, which I don't believe at all." When it comes to colour, for instance, he still sees many people shying away. "I'm not sure what the issue is with standing out," he reasons. "It's an expression of one's individuality." ●

Above: "It's so nice to finally have my own closet!" says Rashid, who fills it with his signature pink and white suits. "I'm a Virgo—I organize by colour."

Right: Rashid's custom tile work adds a splash of colour to the bathroom.



The master bedroom features a custom-made carpet by Oriental Weavers and a painting by German artist Peter Zimmermann. Rashid's Ottawa lamp (right, on bedside table) is paired with an Ettore Sottsass design (on the left). *Rullo bedside tables, Tonelli. Dragonfly Chaise, Bonaldo.*

