

In my Barbie world

Designer Karim Rashid wants to bring more pink into our masculine world. 'It's the new black,' he tells Kathryn Harris

Kathryn Harris

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Designer Karim Rashid's apartment. Photograph: Albert Vecerka

Candy walls and ballet slipper-coloured vinyl floors form the backdrop to designer Karim Rashid's private, pink world. His apartment, in New York's Chelsea, is peppered with his own blobby furniture, its names - including Floob, Blobina and Shroom - rivalling Ikea for their kookiness. It is no surprise that kids are magnetised by this zippy playground, but how many grown-ups would dare turn their home into this sort of cute, space-age confection?

"There's nothing worse to me than domestic environments that are trying to replicate or appropriate the past - I wanted my home to be warm, organic and in the now," says Rashid who, since designing the Garbo bin in 1996 - a wastepaper bin that flew off shelves and landed

in the Brooklyn Museum of Art's permanent collection - has given Philippe Starck a run for his celebrity.

Rashid acquired his loft apartment late last year, when he decided to treat second wife Ivana Puric to new digs. The newlyweds looked at more than 40 buildings before settling for this eighth-floor, 40ft square corner unit. They were won over by the tall ceilings, views stretching all the way to the Hudson river, and southern and westerly light. He invited Ivana to pick out her favourite pieces of furniture - from a list of his own designs, of course. "Anyone in my life has to live with my work," he says, "but I thought it only fair she had some input.

"With so much light," he adds, "I was able to be more reductive than usual." Wanting to make "one big square, open space with a fluid feeling", Rashid ripped out partition walls and put in translucent glass ones with sliding pocket doors. Hardware is nonexistent or hidden, creating seamless spaces. In the kitchen, for example, there's a visual absence of appliances, and all cabinets are on touch and spring systems

The bedroom is Rashid's private sanctuary. "I have an attachment to bed, a habit I probably acquired after spending 240 nights in hotels last year alone." Instead of the soft pink vinyl floors everywhere else, the bedroom has strong, fuchsia-coloured carpet, which warms the room. "It's actually really restful," Rashid says.

"Colour is an inexpensive decorative tool. Too often people are afraid to use it. You don't have to coordinate it - you might just paint one wall," he says. "Muted colours or pastels work easily; primaries are obviously more of a challenge."

Pink, clearly, is Rashid's favourite: "It's positive, it's the new black." Ten years ago, he gave the Salvation Army his entire black wardrobe - suits by Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, Dries Van Noten. He now owns 30 pairs of white jeans, white sweaters, white T-shirts and socks. On the rare occasions he's not head-to-toe in white, he wears pink.

"So many men have issues with anything they consider feminine. I'm trying to break down those gender differences. I want every product I design to soften the world.