

Interview with Karim Rashid – January 2008

1. You have been/are collaborating with some Danish Companies. What is your relation to Denmark and the Danish tradition in art and design?

I believe that Denmark's reputation is based on older tenants established some decades ago. When I think of art I think of the Cobra group, and some abstract expressionism of the 60's and the revival in the eighties with the 'wild ' paintings. Knife in the head (referencing Reinhard Hauff's 1978 film) is my favorite Danish painting. Is there a relationship in the field of art and design in Denmark/ I am not sure. Design seems to have had a more serene, more calm but eloquent role in the Danish landscape. When one thinks of Danish companies today, luxury brands immediately come to mind. Although there are some great newer design brands that really have a global impact on establishing a brand reputation like Bodum, Georg Jensen, Skagen, Menu, Normann, Biomega, and others. Design has caught up to the rest of the world and technology in other countries has surpassed it. Danish companies only seem able to choose between positioning themselves in the high-end market or rigorously competing in a lower mass market. There are so many opportunities and potential growth in this brilliant country where new experientially driven aesthetics may be the great differentiator.

2. You are very much involved in practices that takes the 21st century and the digital reality into them. You have also decided to work with the theme "21" for the upcoming Spring Exhibition, that art, architecture and design should relate to the change of paradigm that the digital world creates. What does this paradigm change mean to you and what do you expect of art, design and architecture today?

I have a theory. It is simple. It is not human nature to turn back. We let go of traditions and rituals and always create new ones. We evolve, progress, and change perpetually. This is the human condition. We are now in the third technological revolution. We are in the digital age. It is an amazing time. We are fortunate to experience and live in the burgeoning of digitalia. The world is exchanging ideas, moneys, languages, information, and every human experience through our new global language – binary notation – 0 and 1. They are our global connector. Arts' position in this new technological revolution has not been defined or secured. Art is starting to play a very marginal role in this new spiritual data-driven global connectivity. Whereas commercial art is at the forefront of total engagement.

"An artist can't compete with a man on the moon in your living room"

Or can he?

- 3. You have said that the theme “21” for the Spring Exhibition does not necessarily mean that all art practices should be virtual, but they should reflect and take a position to the digital as a phenomenon, from the making of the artwork and the distribution to the meeting with the visitors. Can you deepen that?**

In all my work there is a notion of touching and communicating the day and age in which we live and in futurism. As with all my art shows it affords me the freedom and liberty to express ideas of the digital age, of synthetic beings, or beauty and information as one. Design, architecture, film, art and music are all the same to me – it is all about redefining and revisiting the human experience, the total sensorial experience, and about communicating a human connection, a message, a dialect. Evolution and process are about shaping our contemporary landscape. I am interested in getting the public to live now (not in the past), and I am trying to do away with class, elitism, mass, and conventions. I am trying to irradiate high art and low art – trying to fuse all demographics, no aesthetic bifurcations through a common contemporary language.

- 4. From experience we know there will be a lot of artists that will apply with paintings and sculpture etc., and today many artists start creating their art works digitally to take it physically, or from physically to digitally. Have you any thoughts how all the different art practices could agree with the digital world?**

Firstly I don't think that all the art practices will ever agree (and it is always a more interesting condition when there is informed disagreement). But they will inevitably engage the digital age (and hopefully embrace and celebrate it) in their own modus operandi. Art will go through the same transition as did photography and all the applied arts. Only a few years ago I had so many discussions and arguments with many photographers who said they would never become 'digital' and that the pixel-image would never replace or compete with the silver-based 'physical' film. Now they are all digital based. Art is behind but it is just a matter of time. The digital age has afforded us new tools, tools that have boundless power, phenomenal potential, and infinite possibilities and variations. It has democratized us, and has given everyone creative freedom and empowerment. We are now all digital photographers, we all work in our digital darkrooms, we all do desktop publishing, we all design, we write, we paint, we sculpt, we play due to our new digital age. Our technologies are ever-vastly inspiring. So the artist must go beyond the status quo, take us further, deeper, enrich us more, show us something beyond our omni creative human culture. If everyone is creating, the artist must go further. In this exhibition I hope that the art either communicates this digital age, speaks about our information society, touches our infosthetic world, or uses processes of this technological age, or at least comments or celebrates the ubiquity and Art does not have to be obviously digital or Digital World is now. It touches everyone. Artists, atheists, heathens, humans cannot help but experience the new paradigm of the 21st century. Intended or not, our contemporary age must represent itself in the artwork created today.

