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# JONATHAN ADLER

IT'S BEEN 15 YEARS SINCE HE OPENED HIS FIRST STORE IN NEW YORK CITY. TODAY, THE POTTER- TURNED-HOME DÉCOR GIANT IS AS FOCUSED AS EVER ON MAKING BEAUTIFUL THINGS — FURNITURE, ACCESSORIES, BEDDING, PET PRODUCTS, A JUNIOR LINE, BAGS AND MORE. AS FOR SLOWING DOWN? NOT A CHANCE.

*Liberace  
says:  
Turn the  
page for  
more!*





Adler's office is next to his pottery studio and in-house kiln where he creates, and oversees, new pieces.



**J**onathan Adler's corporate office in downtown Manhattan is as cool as you'd imagine. It's bright and cheerful, peppered with items from his various collections. His employees are allowed to bring their dogs to work (the pups are all well-behaved but for a mean chihuahua named Stanley that belongs to potter Eddie Vera). Adler's personal office, where this interview and shoot took place, is, well...imagine the space all his stores might go to pray. The man himself is accessible, down to earth, candid and — despite his cheeky-chic persona — very serious about making items people will love as much as he does. After all, his guiding principle is: "If your heirs won't fight over it, we won't make it."

***You formed your company in 1993, and sold your first collection to Barneys New York the following year. How would you describe the last 20 years?***

"The first 10 were just a nonstop struggle, and I probably should've gone out of business a million times, but luckily I was unemployable, so I had no choice [but to break out on my own]. That's the truth. I was a full-time production potter to begin with, so that was a struggle. I burned down studios and caused fires, had every production problem you can imagine and worked really hard. It was crazy. The second part has been largely a struggle, too, but often incredibly fun. And it's funny: The less tied I am to being a potter and working on production, the more creative I get to be. I'm kind of the luckiest person alive professionally."

***Through your home decorating books, app and blog, it seems like staying connected with your customer is important.***

"I feel like I do a really Jay-Z job at it. I'm rarely on 'the Twitter' and Facebook. I think we're in a world now where you're expected to be in touch 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that's sort of the enemy of creativity. I do the absolute minimum I have to do so I can be completely focused on making stuff all day."



*You're often described as "a home décor guru, potter and personality." How would you describe the "personality" part?*

"People think I'm super upbeat, and the truth of the matter is, I'm not. I'm actually kind of tortured in the sense that I'm totally preoccupied with making great stuff and I am intensely self-critical. The truth is, I'm 100-percent focused on making great stuff all day, and that comes with a lot of angst and struggle. So I think it's hilarious that, and I don't presume to say I even have a public presence, that it's one where I'm perceived as so carefree."

*You're now making scarves and ties and hats — is a full fashion line far off?*

"Everything is intuitive. I pretty much say 'yes' to every opportunity that rolls around, because my career has been a ridiculous, preposterous, happy accident rather than something that involves a lot of trial and error. So saying 'yes' is easy. Fashion seems logical to me. It's just another application of print and pattern and color and shape."

*Your mom made the chandelier in your New Jersey childhood home out of Styro-foam cups! Does your craftiness come from her?*

"My mom [Cynthia] was always kind of crafty. My dad [Harry] was sort of a rigorous modernist, very Knoll furniture, very New Canaan-y. My mom has a more exuberant sense of color. My house was full of married textiles. My interest in rigorous chic and the 'classique' comes from my dad, and my sense of color and eccentricity comes from my mom."

*How do you balance the nostalgia in your work and keep it modern and fresh?*

"I do have nostalgia and I do like to put my life experience into my contemporary culture and see what adapts. My work should feel familiar and fresh at the same time. I think my house on Shelter Island is a good example. There's this artist, Andy Harman, and he took the 1970s macramé owl and made it huge. It's epic. And I think it's a perfect example of what design can and should be, referential and recontextualized." 🐼

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JONATHAN

Even the captain of happy chic puts in a hard day's work before curling up with a good book and his husband, Barneys New York creative ambassador at large, Simon Doonan.

### 6:45 a.m.: Start the day

"My husband and I have this rule that whoever wakes up second has to walk the dog [their Norwich terrier, Liberace] so I always try to wake up before him. I always eat breakfast. I am pretty consistent with what I have for brekkie: granola, yogurt, fruit."

### 7:45 a.m.: Out the door

"I go straight to the gym, where I exercise like a crazy person. Every day. It's a habit. I'm completely repetitive, but I do mix up my exercise so I'm not completely predictable."

### 9:15-9:30 a.m.: Arrive at the office

"This is when the fun begins. My day is completely, immoderately fun, almost ridiculously so, in that I just sit around and look at design stuff and make pottery and laugh hysterically all day because my fellow operative coworkers are hilarious. I work with the funniest, most creative people. So, I'll make a pot. Then, have meetings."

### Lunch!

"I always go to lunch with my work husband David Frankel, our president. I try to eat carefully during the day because I know at night it's just nonstop. We go to my favorite restaurant, Giorgione, and sit at the same table every day. It's a really good table. I order the chicken paillard and they have these polenta cookies that are delicious. I go in so regularly I'm at the point where they know my order and I like it because, truth be told, I spend all day at work thinking and making decisions — like nonstop. I'm not an actual parent, but I have about 55 needy children at work. And you have to treat people with love and affection."

### 6:30-7 p.m.: Back home

"I head home and if I don't have anything to do at night that's my dream. I do have to go out and do stuff a lot. But if I don't, I just have the most chill evening with my husband. I live for a nice roast chicken and apple pie. We play Ping-Pong, watch lots of TV and read."

### 11 or 11:30 p.m.: Bedtime

"Oh, and I always walk the dog at night."

Zebra Rug, \$88



“I'M KIND OF THE LUCKIEST PERSON ALIVE PROFESSIONALLY.”

— JONATHAN ADLER

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Needlepoint Hand Sanitizer Cozy, \$42

Brass Fly Box, \$178

SHOP THE SPRING 2013 COLLECTION!

Page 85: Terrier, \$138, and other items available at Jonathan Adler in Westport and Greenwich, CT, or [jonathanadler.com](http://jonathanadler.com)