



bRainbow

Just a little left of centre



Entering the world of bRainbow is a little like falling down the rabbit hole. There's something magical about its vintage whimsy. There are cubic owls, Matryoshka dolls, soy sauce fish, old school TUs and cameras, all in perfect miniature. These quirky accessories crafted in wood, acrylic, leather and felt, are joyously irreverent.

Orrr Dhiravarangkura and Akiko Ikeda are the husband and wife team behind the rainbow smile, working out of their home studio in Sydney. An award-winning senior art director, Orrr designs the products, while Akiko, a former financial journalist, wrestles the marketing and business side into submission.

bRainbow is something of a happy accident. After fourteen years in digital advertising, Orrr missed making things by hand. Last year, he bought a laser-cut machine from America. "Initially

it was only meant to be a hobby. I wanted to create something just for myself pretty much." Then Orrr posted a series of Star Wars-inspired accessories on etsy.com and they went viral. The Finders Keepers markets brought more success. And bRainbow, the brand, was born.

Orrr's Star Wars-inspired series is indicative of bRainbow's unique style, juxtaposing Darth Vader mask with retro gaming controllers in an exercise of perpetual adaptation. The range is diverse: boom boxes, birdhouses, record players that move, hand-strung ukuleles, Super 8 video cameras with see-through viewfinders. They are wearable works of art, studies in detail and depth for the unisex market.

Eco-friendly and sleek, the products fit together like Lego, for the most part without glue. Refining the designs involves a process of trial and error. But for Orrr, realising an idea is incredibly satisfying. The nature of production allows for the creation of one-offs, as well as custom-made pieces. You can even personalise the text on the typewriter brooch.

Orrr's approach is hybrid, fusing traditional craft and digital qualities. Born in Thailand, he graduated from a Fine Arts degree, moving to Australia to study graphic design at the Enmore Design



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Centre. He went on to complete a Masters in Multimedia at the University of Sydney, and AWARD School, the advertising industry's prestigious training platform. Culturally, he says, the transition was smooth, in part due to his chosen profession.

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His influences are eclectic, drawing on contemporary typography and design, Japanese manga, travelling, among others. He has a passion for all things retro that takes him to garage sales and markets on a weekly basis. "I love vintage. It's one of the things that inspire me to create the work. I love old toys, old robots, 1970s games.

When I travel to Paris, I go to the second hand, vintage markets first before I see the Eiffel Tower."

Their studio is packed with treasures from around the globe. An old school monkey playing the drums is a standout favourite. "It creates a vibe. So when you enter into the space, it already feels different, you know, a little bit special." He laughs. "But it's a very thin line between vintage and junk."

Orrr's latest acquisition is an original 1960s Heidelberg letterpress that he christened Gaijin, meaning outsider, foreigner in Japanese. "I called him Gaijin, my letterpress machine, because he is originally from Germany, and then he grew up in California and now he is in my garage!" Orrr is coaxing him into action with the help of his guru, a seventy-year-old letterpress enthusiast. Orrr hopes to etch his own plates in the laser cutter and move into letterpress products.



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In its short life, bRainbow has attracted a lot of attention. From the Finders Keepers and Bowerbird markets to retail (Monsterthreads) and online, they have branched into wholesale orders from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and New Zealand. It's hard to guess what will happen next. The move into usable products like iPhone cases is sure to continue and there is always the promise of Gaijin.

With their home slowly morphing into an eccentric factory (the car has been evicted from the garage to make room for Gaijin), disorder has become the norm. Their daughter, eighteen-month-old Emma maintains the chaos with the help of their brindle Staffy, Momotaro (meaning peach boy in Japanese). But Akiko and Orrr are happy. Which is a good thing. With all their success and another baby on the way, there's no sign of respite soon. But it sounds like there will be plenty to smile about.

Written by Kay Harrison
Photography courtesy of bRainbow
brainbow.com.au

