

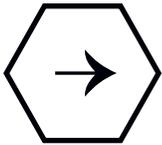
DISCOVER



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Pillow Talk

When Keita Turner visited her late grandmother's home in Georgia a few years ago, she found the sewing room, brimming with fabrics and half-finished projects, just as her grandmother had left it. Among the textiles that Turner saved that day was a vintage handkerchief whose riot of geometric patterns would later inspire the look of her Karachi pillow, a lively paisley print model in the designer's pillow line, Livvy & Neva. The collection, which launched last year, is named after Turner's great-grandmothers Olivia and Geneva. Turner's called on the skills she acquired during her career in fashion to mix daring color schemes and patterns. "The colors and the movement are almost surreal," she says. "I went all out and placed kerchiefs with an abundance of pattern on an equally busy fabric." The style, she admits, isn't for everyone. But its vibrant qualities recall the look of something she might find in her grandmother's home. —SAMANTHA STEVENSON



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LIVVY & NEVA



Keita Turner

For as long as she can remember, Keita Turner was enamored with her mother's copies of *Vogue* and *Architectural Digest*. Her teachers noted how the chatty young Turner created her own magazines of notebook paper and distributed them to classmates. By the time she was a student at Parkway North High School, Turner was driving to Parkway Central High School—in the mornings before her regular school day began—to attend an honors art class. Her art teacher, Lauren Davis, encouraged Turner to apply to the Rhode Island School of Design. Since her days at RISD, Turner has gone on to make a name for herself as a residential and commercial interior designer and, now, as the creative director of her own collection of accessories for the home. —S.S.

WHAT'S AN AVERAGE DAY LIKE FOR A NEW YORK CITY INTERIOR DESIGNER? I live in Harlem. I love Harlem. It's such a historic neighborhood. Part of its history is the Harlem Renaissance. There's a lot of nostalgia and romance in that aspect. But because of the pandemic, if I'm going out it's usually to the Decoration & Design Building or the New York Design Center. I can probably count on one hand the number of times I've gone out. I've traveled a little for projects, but other than that, a lot of it is working remotely. A lot of Zoom calls, meetings with clients. Mondays and Tuesdays tend to be my client calls, new client discovery days. Thursdays are for paperwork and invoice purchase orders. And, of course, designing in between.

WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR CLIENTS? I've created interior environments for several entrepreneurs. Other clients have come from the regional and national political arena, published authors, national magazine editors, psychotherapists, fashion designers, and the corporate C-suite.

WHAT'S BEEN ONE OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE PROJECTS DURING THE PANDEMIC? My project in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I love the client because she is a fashion designer; she's very bold and abstract; she has this amazing collection of African-American artifacts that she's either collected or she inherited from family members. I also always wanted to do a project in Florida, which I now



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRAD BUNYEA, PATRICK CLINE PHOTOGRAPHY, KELLY MARSHALL, COURTESY OF LIVVY & NEVA



WHAT WAS IT LIKE LAUNCHING YOUR PILLOW COLLECTION?

It took time mentally, because a lot of times the fear sets in—fear of failure, fear of the reception. We got a great reception with Livvy & Neva in 2020, and I know some of it was due to the unrest and movement for equality and justice. I follow a lot of media and bloggers who started posting and sharing Black makers. I guess I got caught up in that. It's a good thing, because sometimes you just have to take the opportunities that come, but on the other hand you wish that color and race didn't have anything to do with it. You just want to be recognized and acknowledged for your work and efforts like anyone else.

WHAT CAREER GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR 2021?

To do larger projects. At some point, you need a project minimum or you're just not going to grow or be viable. You have to make a decision. When I looked around and saw designers I admired doing full homes, I wondered, *Why? Probably because they set boundaries.* That comes with believing in yourself. You need to be more discerning. *What is it that I want to invest in, and what do I want to work on?* Everything is not for me, and I am not for everyone.

YOU WERE A JUDGE FOR DESIGN STL'S ANNUAL ARCHITECT AND DESIGNER AWARDS. WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU?

I realized that some opportunities come to designers and architects [in NYC] because we're the center of the media capital. New York is so saturated. I saw amazing, amazing projects [in the ADA submissions], and I feel like I don't see St. Louis and Kansas City designers being published enough in these national publications. The coasts get a lot of love, but the middle of the United States—there's amazing work coming from those places.

have. [Right now] I'm trying to will things into existence: then, after you will it, you have to advertise or have a marketing plan in place to attract clients in other states. I'm trying to break out of just working on the East Coast or in the New York tri-state area. It would be good for me, because architecture is different all over the country.

WHAT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR CAREER? One thing I didn't do early on—whether I was being too cheap or just didn't know better—was hire the right photographers. Designer friends would say to me, "You really have to invest in photography. You can't always wait for a magazine to do it." It's a huge investment. And hiring a professional stylist: I am definitely seeing the difference.

