

PINK RUSSIAN

By Lauren Mang, Assistant Editor



LASZLO RECOS PHOTOGRAPHY, BERKELEY, MICH.

Above Kira Plastinina's SoHo store is bedecked in shine and spangle with pops of pink in "pouffe" ottomans, slick mannequins and rose-colored lighting.



From Russia with hearts:
Kira Plastinina brings a bit of
extravagance and a lot of pink
to SoHo in her first U.S. store.

Paris Hilton, watch your back. Kira Plastinina, a 16-year-old, pink-obsessed socialite from Moscow, has leveraged her wealth, name and status into 80 eponymous retail stores across Russia and now the U.S. – all bubbling with her own line of trendy clothes and accessories.

The daughter of food-product mogul Sergei Plastinin, Kira (and her well-rounded retail and fashion team) found success in the Russian market and has now taken on the U.S. with a 5900-square-foot store in New York's SoHo between Houston and Prince streets.

"They saw it as, 'If you can make it here, then you can make it anywhere,'" says Ken Nisch, chairman of JGA, the Southfield, Mich.-based firm that helped carve a perfectly manicured niche for the specialty retailer in the American market. "Kira is a youth icon and she's a real person behind the brand. It's the peer-to-peer element that appeals to the consumer. She's every girl, but she's the girl the shopper wants to be."

In a time when the retailer's target 15- to 25-year-old age group is obsessed with celebrities, the red carpet and cheap-chic clothing from companies like H&M, Zara and Forever 21, Plastinina's celeb-tante designer persona fits right in. But the brand hopes



to differentiate itself from other fast-fashion offerings. "Kira is a young girl designing for her peers," says Bob Higgins, the retailer's president. "This is truly a different approach to offering product for this demographic."

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

To play up that differentiation, the stores' design capitalizes on Plastinina's energized, feminine personality. Bits of the wealthy wunderkind's Russian lifestyle are on display, with nods toward luxury and opulence in chrome columns, gilded mirrors and baroque-inspired wallcoverings. But the concrete floors and pop-art carpet patterns hint at a more rebellious, punk-glam side. "It's not formal luxury," Nisch says, "but rather lavish details with just enough urban edge to allow a young girl to feel like she's on the red carpet."

Designers at JGA paid close attention to elements that hadn't been a competitive priority for the retailer in its Russian stores, such as the fitting rooms, cashwrap and visual merchandising. So in the SoHo store, dressing rooms are larger; the cashwrap stands out via stenciled, illuminated panels; and merchandise is presented on glossy mannequins or double-scaled white furniture.

Above The cashwrap makes a statement through stenciled, illuminated panels and a back wall adorned with Kira's heart-infused signature.

Left Opulent details like Corinthian-style columns and oversized furniture hint at the Russian socialite's lifestyle. JGA spent extra time on the fitting rooms to make them larger, more comfortable and reflective of the Kira brand.





Above Overlooking the store is Kira's Bedroom, an 800-square-foot loft intended for full-price merchandise and special events. A zebra rug adds an urban, punk-glam edge to lavish details.

"Our stores offer a boutique-style experience," says Higgins. "They have an intimate feel and are merchandised to showcase the unique ways to wear the clothes."

There's always fresh product coming in each week. To highlight new items and keep the customer browsing, designers organized the store around five collections, creating a series of in-store boutiques. Each includes a backlit feature wall and a foreground visual or merchandising component.

"It's like you're shopping five stores in one," Nisch says. "Because they're so segmented, the shopper can see the difference between the merchandise and is more likely to look around." When they do, they'll see pink. The rosy hue is speckled throughout the store in pink "pouffe" ottomans, mannequins, fitting-room carpet and soft blush-pink lighting. Shoppers in the SoHo store can even pop into the hot-pink photo booth or purchase a pink pinwheel lollipop from the Dylan's Candy Bar shop inside.

Plastinina continues to open U.S. stores on the East and West Coasts. ▀

Project Suppliers

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KP Fashion Co., Los Angeles

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JGA, Southfield, Mich.

LIGHTING
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