

Quirky Cool

Rachel Antonoff is making waves in the fashion world by not adhering to convention and making sure to always have fun. A slew of fabulous It Girls have already taken notice. We suggest you do too.

BY EMMA GRADY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ETHAN SCOTT

In a world filled with deeply, deeply upsetting things that happen every day all the time," says Rachel Antonoff, the New York City-based designer behind the cool-chick clothing label bearing her name, "[fashion] just makes things nicer, a little prettier, a little easier. But then, it's mixed in with this fluffy, ditzzy vibe that I wish it wasn't."

The recently blue-coiffed Antonoff makes no qualms about the fashion industry's superficial reputation, or about her desire to change it. Her line attracts customers who don't "[take themselves] or fashion too seriously"—much like the designer herself, who's the impossibly rad girl next door you'd want to philosophize and giggle with for hours on end. "Sometimes I wonder if I'm known for having a potty mouth," laughs Antonoff. Her sense of humor shines through in her ready-to-wear clothing, from the pretty hearts that adorn a playful, floor-length gown to the print of a nude woman holding a carnation (taken from a painting in her grandmother's bathroom) spotted on baseball caps and high-waisted pants in her Spring 2014 collection.

The New Milford, New Jersey, native first (and quickly) became an indie fashion darling with Mooka Kinney, a clothing line she founded with her college roommate, Alison Lewis. She rode that wave of success until it felt natural to stop, which ironically coincided with her most memorable sartorial moment to date: Sarah Jessica Parker wore a dress of theirs in *Sex and the City: The Movie*.

After contemplating a career in nonfiction writing, Antonoff decided to launch her own label for Spring 2009. It was instantly picked up by Barneys New York, which she says felt "really validating"—for her business-partner father too. "I just kind of threw myself into [starting Rachel Antonoff] because I was scared and anxious about the fact nothing was 'next,'" she says. "And I'm glad I did."

Today the designer, whose go-to fabric is cotton ("I love fancy silhouettes in cotton"),



Rachel Antonoff in her New York City studio.

Nattie jacket in Dressler print, \$198; Ravenswood tee, \$55; Andrew pants in Dressler print, \$275; RACHEL ANTONOFF, rachelantonoff.com.

employs an assistant and is based in Midtown Manhattan; the line is available both online and in brick-and-mortar boutiques including Anthropologie and New York City's American Two Shot. Although it's often dubbed "vintage-esque," she says that in fact "it's become more contemporary." On the horizon: "I want to expand to home; I love prints."

When she's not designing, Antonoff can be found in the Upper West Side apartment she shares with her brother, Jack—guitarist for the band Fun.—or jogging nearby in Central Park. Together the close-knit siblings (she calls him her best friend) founded The Ally Coalition, an organization that supports and works for LGBTQ equality. Antonoff rolls with an intimate crew comprising in part actresses Lena Dunham (who dates Jack) and Mae Whitman. Whatever the day brings, the deadline-driven designer de-stresses by watching TV: She falls asleep to *Grey's Anatomy* and loves HBO's *Girls*, which was

created by Dunham. ("Obviously," says Antonoff, who once had a cameo on the show.)

However simple, Antonoff's life is far from one-note. "I want to do so many things," she says—something she chalks up to being a Gemini. "I want to write a script that's an updated version of *The Naked Gun* for my brother to star in." However, acting is not on her own to-do list (that is, unless her "doctor friends" on *Grey's Anatomy* come calling), but she does enjoy hosting and had a blast at the 2013 VMAs as MTV's red-carpet cohost alongside singer Grimes.

Perhaps one of the most refreshing things about Antonoff is she doesn't pretend to have it all figured out. She believes "natural talent or lack thereof can be replaced with really hard work," and hopes her brand lasts long enough for her children to be part of it—"no pressure," she says jokingly to her future spawn. With Antonoff's combination of diligence, hard work and stellar talent, anything seems possible. *EF*