

A NARSISSIST'S DREAM

A peek inside NARS cosmetics' inner sanctum reveals the brand's New York City headquarters is home to cutting-edge innovation—and “bold lips” galore.

BY EMMA GRADY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREA TESE



FROM TOP: NARS' minimalist welcome area features the Fall 2013 campaign image of Toni Garrn; books by François Nars (*X-Ray*, *Makeup Your Mind* and *Makeup Your Mind: Express Yourself*); the Fall 2013 cosmetics collection, along with the just-launched NARS Hearts Los Angeles makeup set.

collaborative environment. “Everyone is accessible. If you need to speak to Louis [Desazars], our CEO, he’s right there,” says Chopin Rabin, 34, director of global communications, pointing to his large corner office. “If you want to bring an idea or anything to the table, it’s actually possible.”

Large, vibrant campaign images—each photographed by Nars himself—hang on the walls, featuring top models including Alek Wek, Stella Tennant and Toni Garrn, who dons Fall 2013’s striking deep-blue Kamchatka eye shadow and rich crimson Mysterious Red Velvet Matte lip pencil. Desks throughout the space are neat with common essentials: magazines, business cards, sleek black NARS mirrors and a few personal items. “I have little knickknacks here and there,” says Park of her Buddha figurine, Ganesha statue (a gift from beauty blogger Karla Sugar) and bike helmet (she commutes from Astoria, Queens). Rabin’s desk is littered with editorial shoots Nars recently shot for *W*, *Vogue Korea* and *Vogue Japan*—some of which are set at his stunning home on Motu Tané, a private island he owns in French Polynesia. “It’s the most unbelievable place I have ever been in my life—ever,” says Rabin, who oversees the company’s 23 markets around the world. “It messes with your head because you’re in paradise but you’re still working.”

“I can spot a ‘NARSissist’ (the nickname for a devoted NARS fan) before meeting them,” says Denise Kreft, 32, senior manager of US public relations for the beauty juggernaut. “There’s the bold lip, the way they carry themselves and the way they put together their clothing.” Like the skincare and makeup label’s founder, François Nars—who launched the company with 12 highly pigmented lipsticks in 1994—the girls who work for him are confident, outspoken and passionate. Adds Heather Park, 34, director of digital media: “It’s fun to work at a company where you can be talking about a marketing strategy one moment and the next be asking, ‘Are you wearing 413 Bleecker [a lip shade named for the NYC boutique] on your lips?’”

The Shiseido-owned company’s corporate headquarters is located in the thick of Midtown Manhattan in a sweeping 36-floor building designed by famed architect César Pelli; the 70-plus NARS employees work on the sixth floor, while the parent company is on the 15th. Similar to the label’s iconic minimalist packaging, the office is sleek, modern and tasteful. A spin around the premises reveals a clutter-free and organized space with an abundance of natural light, white furniture and rows of desks separated by low-profile dividers that support a

Wherever the team is, the vibe is upbeat and fast-paced. “Work hard, play hard” is the collective MO. “We are super type A, but we love to laugh and listen to music,” says Rabin, whose taste veers toward ’90s playlists. Park is currently into The 1975, Snakadaktal and former *FOAM* cover girls Haim.

Polished and always fashion-forward describe the office attire. Black on black with a pop of bold NARS makeup is a perennially popular ensemble. “I do a serious smoky eye,” says Rabin, who joined the team two years ago, while Park says she has three beauty staples: blush, eyeliner and lipstick. Kreft—who never wore makeup before coming on board earlier this year—now can’t leave home without NARS’ new Brow Gel and her go-to lip colors Funny Face and Yu (she wore the latter on her wedding day). As for the brand’s notoriously provocative product names (Deep Throat blush, Pillow Talk lip gloss), “None of us get embarrassed pitching [the media],” says Kreft. “*Parents* magazine might not feature our Orgasm blush that much, but I think our names are fun.”

New York Fashion Week—or “month,” as Kreft calls it—is chaos. Then again, the bustle is expected when you’re highly coveted and working with major designers including Alexander Wang, Marc Jacobs, Rodarte and 3.1 Phillip Lim, as NARS will be in September. Despite the intensely busy schedule, the girls still make time to have fun: Park created the Fashion Week Makeup Challenge, a competition in which

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—Chopin Rabin

they re-create different looks from the runway each day.

“Everything about the brand comes through [Nars],” says Park. “His view on beauty is so specific; he’s creative in the truest sense.” But while the label’s namesake is committed to quality and looking beyond the conventional, most of all, he’s about fun. “At the end of the day, François is a makeup artist,” says Rabin. “To him, there are no rules. It’s just makeup. Try it—if you don’t like it, take it off. Don’t take it so seriously that it keeps you from pushing boundaries.” Words of wisdom that extend to more than just beauty. *EF*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Denise Kreft at her desk; vintage campaign images and makeup samples decorate a conference room; the glass outside an executive’s office features swipes of the brand’s iconic lip pencils; magazines with editorial spreads shot by Nars sit on Chopin Rabin’s desk; (L to R) Heather Park, Rabin and Kreft.



Hair: CANDICE CRAWFORD Makeup: JUSTIN HESLOP USING NARS