AVIATION PHOTOGRAPHER LAIRD KAY FOCUSES ON FASHION LINE

News / Personalities



Aviation photographer Laird Kay is set to release a line of clothing and homeware inspired by his images of airports and planes.

Laird Kay is a self-described “plane nerd.” When the light is just right and the wind’s coming in from the right direction, unless Kay is actually on a flight somewhere, you will find him out there with all his photography gear behind the Wendy’s and the Petro Canada on Airport Road in Mississauga, with all the other aviation geeks.

Says Kay of his lifelong fascination, which began with his first flight as a little boy (a long one, on SAS from Johannesburg to London where he was invited into the cockpit and given a pin with golden wings), “planes are just these great, sexy, engineering beasts.”

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Thanks to Kay's keen eye for design and his gift for photography, however, this fascination has become a calling, landing his soaring, lyrical photographs of planes in gallery shows (recently, at Pearson's Terminal 1), magazines and travel sites (memorably that of *Vogue Italia*), and netted him some 18,400 followers on Instagram.

After coming across Kay's Instagram feed, none other than Lufthansa got in touch: Would Kay like to meet them in Seattle at the Boeing factory for the delivery of their newest retro livery jet — the 747-81 — and join them on its maiden voyage to Frankfurt?

That week, Kay estimates he took more than 5,000 photos. "The Boeing factory itself was extraordinary," says Kay.

"It's the biggest building in the world. Everyone who works there rides around on bicycles. It's so huge it has its very own weather system. If they closed the windows, it would literally rain inside."

En route to Frankfurt, Kay was amazed to be the only photographer on-board. "All the economy seats were yet to be installed so there were these amazing angles that aren't normally possible.

Seeing the line of the sunset through the rows of porthole windows was just incredible. And then the pilot dipped the plane and waved goodbye to Seattle and everybody cheered."

Choosing art over sleep, Kay spent much of the overnight flight taking photographs, the results of which, combined with images culled from his years of shooting planes at Pearson, are now inspiring a unique line of clothing and housewares that Kay has dubbed Very Plane Clothes and Very Plane Home — both of which will feature limited editions of Kay's aviation photography in ever-evolving new and clever forms.

Says Kay, "I'm sure that plane nerds will love it, but I want it to be glamorous and fun."

And fun it is. On close inspection, a lacy, filigreed wallpaper reveals itself as a pattern of tiny white planes flying into formation on a sky-blue background which Kay calls "Air-gyle."

A zip-front aviation-styled bomber jacket features the sunset view from an airline's porthole as a sort of bull's eye at chest level, right where it hits even the most jaded traveller every time. Plans for porthole-print pillows and leather goods for travel are in the works.

Says Kay, "planes transport people and so, in a way, does fashion. Put on a new jacket, and you can arrive at a different persona."

And of course the same applies to fashions for home — particularly when you've had the opportunity to hop aboard one of those great, sexy, engineered beasts, taken in the view and made it back again.

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