



## World Renowned Artist Wins Con Edison's Millennium Manhole Cover Design Competition

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NEW YORK, September 15, 1999 -- You've probably already touched, sat on or looked at one of Karim Rashid's designs and you didn't even know it. Remember the Oh! Chair designed for Umbra? That was Karim's.

The Garbo waste basket is his, too. Now as the winning designer of Consolidated Edison's Commemorative Millennium Manhole Cover, this international designer of furniture, lighting, houseware products, cosmetics, interiors and fashion is ready to have his work stepped on and run over by some of the best feet and tires in the greatest city in the world. And he loves it!

"As an industrial designer to actually have this manhole cover become a part of everyday life is one of the greatest thrills for me," said Egyptian-born Rashid at the official unveiling ceremony in Times Square today with Con Edison and city officials.

A five-member jury of distinguished art professionals commissioned by Con Edison, selected Rashid from among eight other talented artists to design a three-dimensional grid drawing just under 32 inches—the actual width of a manhole cover. Rashid's winning design, "Global Energy," was transformed into a 314-pound cast iron cover that will be manufactured on a limited basis for use by Con Edison.

"To be connected globally you need data and energy. This morphing grid is representative of the two elements," said Rashid.

"I've been experimenting with breaking the matrix- trying to create a three-dimensional form from a two-dimensional surface. The design on the manhole appears as if the objects are growing out of the ground, which for me is symbolic of the Earth moving out of the holes," he explained.

Rashid himself is a contrasting work of art. Born in Cairo, Egypt, raised in England and Canada, he studied and worked in Italy and the U.S. Rashid's works are on permanent display at major museums in New York, San Francisco, Montreal, London, Chicago and Tokyo. In 1998, he was awarded his second "Young Designer of the Year Award" by the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and in May, 1999 he received the George Nelson award which cited him as "one of the ten most innovative furniture designers working today."

As principal designer for his firm Karim, Inc. in Manhattan, his client base extends from Japan and Canada to Italy, France, and Germany, and includes retail and industrial heavy hitters such as SONY Electronics, Tommy Hilfiger, Estee Lauder, Black and Decker and Union Carbide, Nambe, Umbra and Issey Miyake.

When he's not designing, you'll find this 38-year-old in the classroom teaching design. His stints have included the Ontario College of Art, The University of Toronto, The Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and a full-time professorship at the Rhode Island School of Design. Rashid is currently a full-time associate professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and is a freelance writer for design publications in Japan, Canada and New York.

"I come from a creative family and we are all consumed by art in one way or another," said Rashid. "My father was a set designer for television and film; my brother is an architect, and my sister is both an artist and a musician. We're living in a world where we can all afford to be creative and expressive," he added.

Karim is unwavering in his aim for unity and universality in his designs. To achieve his desired goals, he looks toward new technologies that offers him a certain amount of "democracy."

He designs for mass production and exhibits art galleries simultaneously. "I am interested in the entire physical landscape," he said. Interestingly enough, Rashid's inspiration and techniques for the manhole cover actually involves a holistic design approach and includes some very common items.

"We are in the digital age of Internet access and advanced communications- which is really a metaphor for being globally connected," Rashid stressed. "Through a special software program, I was able to create a pattern that morphed, bulged and mutated - a pattern that would have been extremely labor intensive and time consuming if done by hand," he explained. "Today the technology has become so seamless that I created more than 30 separate proposals for this project. I couldn't have done that using traditional design methods.

"My goal is to create products by machines, where we can eliminate laborious, repetitive motions," he continued. "By using new technology and production techniques, we will never have to put another person on an assembly line."

At today's ceremony Rashid and his spherical "digital" design took center stage. After a few weeks on display at the Times Square Visitors Center, Rashid's manhole cover will be officially placed in Times Square to usher in the year 2000. In the city that never sleeps, his work will quietly add panache to the living canvas that is decidedly and distinctively New York.

"It's similar to the feeling that I had when I designed Canadian mailboxes. It was like leaving your stamp on an entire culture," he said with a chuckle, "that affected virtually everyone there. It's a very moving experience."

So when you're strolling around in Times Square, look there. Over there, down there on the ground where the pennies are. That's three hundred pounds of pure "Global Energy" staring you in the face. And a dream come true for an extremely talented artist.