

A cut above

CAROLINE PHILLIPS meets Italian hairdressing legend Rossano Ferretti to talk about his latest hairspa in the heart of Mayfair, where classic antique design meets warm, modern minimalism



ROSSANO FERRETTI is that rare breed: a hairdresser-cum-architect with a good splash of the designer in him. In fact, he has designed twenty salons across the globe – from New York to New Delhi – and is a world-renowned crimper. He's known for a way of cutting hair that's not simply described as a 'haircut' but instead is dubbed 'The Method' – a unique and patented technique of cutting tresses that apparently has something to do with snipping the hair based on its 'natural fall in motion.' Even his salons are not just called the S word – to the cognoscenti, they are 'hairspas.' And as for his design work...

We meet in his latest hairspa in Mayfair. Ferretti is Italian and dressed with the look of any stylish man that you might find in Rome's Via Condotti. We sit down with espressos. 'Hair is regarded as less important than music, architecture

and painting,' he says, looking bewildered. In his world vision, people's locks probably rank somewhere up there with the Sistine Chapel and Beethoven's Fifth.

Ferretti has a hair and design pedigree that's not to be sniffed at. He worked as a session hairdresser on shoots with the likes of Richard Avedon, of *Vogue* front cover fame. Ferretti also wielded what one A-list client of his dubs 'his magic scissors' and 'alchemist's hairdryer' at the Milan fashion shows of Giorgio Armani, Gianfranco Ferré and Versace. Indeed Ferretti is a numero uno hairdresser delle celebrita. Who are his other famous clients? 'You mustn't mention the names of any of our VIPs,' says the PR fiercely. 'We offer them absolute discretion.' Never mind. We're really here to talk about his interior design work.

His salons are located mostly in beautiful, historical buildings in exclusive neighborhoods. (For the sake of privacy they're generally not at street level.) The Mayfair one (in St George Street) is in a Georgian townhouse. 'I like the history of our buildings to reflect my philosophy of beauty and lifestyle,' he says. It was once the home of William Morris, the 19th century designer, and Ferretti believes the atmosphere is still infused with Morris's presence. More recently the building housed the showroom of the upmarket bauble company, Fabergé. The wow! black glass chandelier in the hallway was bespoke and to their design.

The salon is 5,500 square foot, over three floors (plus one for his training school for hairdressers.) 'I never do much structurally,' Ferretti explains. 'I like to respect the original construction of the building.' Is he a trained architect? 'No, but I still design every single thing myself,' he reveals with almost religious fervour. 'I cannot ask an architect to interpret my soul.' He seems pretty adept at this soul interpretation business. At any rate, his salons in Verona, Paris and Beverley Hills have garnered design accolades.

His London salon style is simple. 'I like the atmosphere to be calm.' It doesn't have that busy buzz and thudding music of other salons. It boasts just six styling and eight colour stations and three large private rooms. It's so Zen, you could meditate there. Ferretti has used a palette of creams juxtaposed with black. It feels minimalist and tranquil. 'It's not cold and empty,' he explains. 'It's what I call warm minimalism.'

It's a bit like going into someone's private house. The entrance hall has a black and white marble floor and that black chandelier. Throughout, there are black wooden floors – 'they're the original ones, we just painted them' ➤





✦ – plus there are black balustrades and black carpets. Large black and white photographs of his grandparents – a barber and hairdresser – are hung around the salon. Even the hair products are displayed wittily in black Venetian frames. All this nero is set against 'antique white' walls.

Ferretti has placed 'key antique pieces' in this pared-down setting – from his grandmother's 1950s red leather armchair to a gilt Louis XIV-style chair. They provide splashes of colour. Some of the artefacts – such as the 1930s perm machine – are family heirlooms. ('It was,' he reveals, 'the biggest investment my grandparents ever made.')

Other items were hand-picked by him in flea markets. 'I find my vintage furniture in the markets of places like Venice and Tuscany.'

He either selected or designed the contemporary pieces too. The mirrors in their unobtrusive frames were made to his specification. 'I didn't,' he explains, 'want anything Baroque, Venetian or busy.' The 'simple, comfortable' chairs are by Philippe Starck and the salon furniture – known in crimperspeak as 'styling positions' and 'colour tables' – is Scandiano by Maletti, a chic Italian range.

Ferretti is currently working on creating a roof garden – with champagne and manicure bar. We stand there overlooking the city. The roof-top 'spa' will be a first for the capital. It also has a bird's-eye-view into the offices of *Vogue* magazine. Perhaps that's symbolic. After all, on the three floors below us is a place that looks set to become London's most fashionable salon. ■





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