

COLLECTION IS AN OBSESSION

GIUSEPPE RAO: 激情可以收藏

“收藏是一种病。因为太过执着于寻求完美。” 在他位于北京CBD的家中，意大利外交官 Giuseppe Rao 不无骄傲地向我展示他“病入膏肓”的凭据。作为世界上拥有关于意大利知名打字机、电子产品品牌Olivetti私人藏品最多的人，他另外一个身份还是意大利科技博物馆的副馆长。热衷收藏正宗意大利名家设计作品和潘家园市场真假货色，在他看来并不矛盾，如同他同时扮演的学者和政治家双重角色。

There is a big difference between pastime and passion. One is harmless and fun, the other borders the chaotic but makes us more ourselves. “Collecting is a kind of illness. Because it's an excessive quest for perfection.”

Standing in his bright 27th floor apartment in Beijing, Italian diplomat Guisepppe Rao showed me the evidence of his incurable illness not without a sense of pride. A collector's passion is not that difficult to relate to.

We all cherish memories and the like. We have all learned the capitalist trick of finding gratification in shopping around Duomo Square, in sincere hope of taking home a bit of Milan. What's hard to understand with a collectors' passion is that it is often about multiples of stuff, dazzling in its variety that only they could tell and think matter. The vice president of the “Tecnologic@mente” museum, which can be considered the “Olivetti” Museum in Italy, Giuseppe Rao possesses probably the world's largest private collection of Olivetti and is obviously more than passionate about this famous Italian typewriter and electronics brand that turns 100 years old in 2008. Perhaps, most collectors are specialists that have a soft spot in their hearts for memories?

Rao同Olivetti可谓注定结缘。出生于Olivetti的故乡，意大利西北部小镇Ivrea，Rao的父母都是Olivetti公司的雇员，Rao幼年上的就是Olivetti员工托儿所。不难想象，Olivetti对Rao而言不仅仅是一个注重设计的知名品牌，更多地浸润着他成长过程中点点滴滴的温暖回忆。

一迈入Rao宽敞明亮的家，立刻吸引了我的目光的是正对大门的墙上——一张以意大利版图为主题的油画，上面有无数绿、白、红三色的小标识，散步在“长筒靴”的各处——原来它们标注的是Olivetti在意大利各岛的厂址分布。油画下方一张出自Philippe Starck手笔的长桌上郑

重地“供奉”着主人最珍视的收藏品之一——由Marcello Nizzoli在1952年设计的被纽约MoMA永久收藏的Olivetti Lettera 22打字机系列，身姿娟秀，五彩缤纷，甚是讨喜。

“你看，她们的线条多么温润，色彩多么好看，它可是被誉为上世纪最优秀的设计作品之一！” Rao比划着为我揭示个中妙处，语气热忱诚恳，仿佛一位期盼听到旁人称赞自己孩子的慈父，又好似急于显摆自己“宝物”的孩童。客厅、卧室四壁悬挂的都是同一位艺术家的作品，以黑白为主色调，线条清朗，这是Rao多年的好友Lauro Benedet- to应他的要求以Olivetti为主题创作的系列油画。Rao正在写

Rao的心爱之物：
被纽约MoMA永
久收藏的Olivetti
Lettera 22打字机系
列（Marcello Niz-
zoli, 1952年），被誉
为上世纪最优秀的
设计作品之一



1908年创建于意大利西北部的小镇Ivrea的打字机品牌Olivetti经过Adriano Olivetti卓有成效的管理，成为了世界最富盛名的电子产品制造商之一。Olivetti在1959年研发制造了意大利第一台电子计算机Elea 9003。Olivetti对于设计的注重是出了名的，哪怕对于平面广告亦是精益求精，Marcello Nizzoli, Mario Bellini和Ettore Sottsass都曾坐镇Olivetti主持设计。Olivetti还同Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Gae Aulenti等世界知名建筑师合作，修建其厂房和公司大楼。图为Roberto Olivetti (Adriano Olivetti之子) 和在Elea 9003的研发中功勋卓越的华人学者Mario Tchou在一起。Tchou是Rao正在写作的关于Olivetti的书重点着墨的人物之一。Olivetti was established in 1908 in the Northwestern Italian town Ivrea. Marcello Nizzoli, Mario Bellini and Ettore Sottsass all served for a time as its head designers. Olivetti also collaborated with Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Gae Aulenti and other world famous architects to construct their factories and office buildings. In 1959, Olivetti developed and manufactured Italy's first computer, the Elea 9003. Giuseppe Rao dedicated 7 years to researching and writing a book about Mario Tchou, the Chinese-Italian scholar who made outstanding contributions to the research and development of the model.



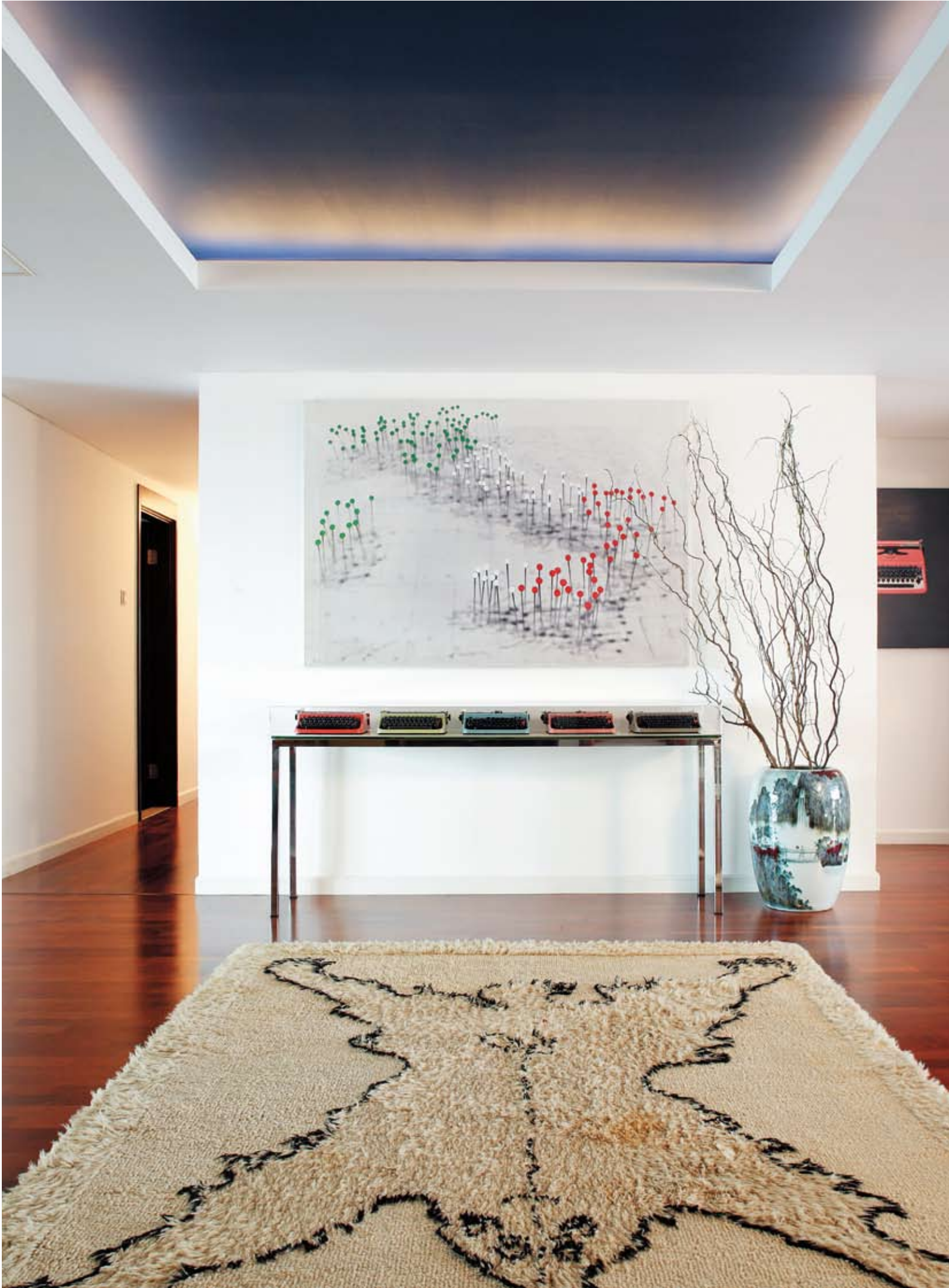
上: 意大利驻华技术与工业改革参赞Giuseppe Rao
右: Lauro Benedetto的大幅油画让每一位访客都感受到扑面而来的浓郁的意大利情怀, Olivetti Lettera 22打字机系列收藏则和主人工作间门口的油画相映成趣

一本关于Olivetti设计历史和为意大利第一台电脑的设计、生产做出杰出贡献的华裔意大利电脑天才Mario Tchou的传记，前后已经花了七年时间。“Olivetti品牌最打动我的是那种对于智慧和品质尽善尽美的执着。” Rao告诉我。同样的执着或许也正浸润着他自己的人生哲学？

六个月前来到中国的Rao第一眼看到这套南北两面落地窗，通透明亮的公寓，就毫不犹豫地将它租了下来。“人生短暂，是过客就更要时时处处为家。一看到这间公寓，我就知道我的设计收藏可以从罗马启程和我团圆了。”对设计情有独钟的Rao的家中自然少不了Carlo Scarpa、Karim Rashid等名家的经典之作，但让他最津津乐道的却是点缀其间的风格古朴的中式家具和各种心思独具的小玩意。花纹繁复雅致的木橱柜，七十年代浓墨重彩的装饰画，还有他收藏的各色古旧的瓷制茶壶茶杯，都是他从潘家园搜集而来，如数家珍。为什么对中国情有独钟？ Rao微微一笑，给出的答案很有几分浪漫的意大利味道，“这是我的命运。我相信冥冥之中一切都自有安排。”十四岁时偶尔读到毛

泽东的著作，信奉左翼理念的Rao便对这个遥远神秘的东方国度充满了向往。尽管后来有多次机会到访亚洲，他却一直有意绕开中国而行。“中国对我而言有着太特殊的意义，我希望把同它的交汇留到某个特殊的时刻。”直到去年十二月Rao作为意大利技术与工业改革参赞被派驻北京，才与多年来梦里的中国初次邂逅，并一见钟情。终于踏上这片自己魂牵梦萦的土地，Rao最希望的是能为这个被他称为“精神故土”的国度做点什么。在他的努力推进下，不久之前意大利在竞标中拔得头筹，被唐山曹妃甸国际生态城定为国际战略合作伙伴，这让他深感欣慰。

“那你自己生命中最大的激情是什么呢？”我问，期待着一个同样激情洋溢的意大利式答案——设计？艺术？音乐？ Rao的回答却有几分出乎我的意料，提醒了我面前这个西装革履的男子的外交官身份：“政治。”他看着我略显困惑的神情微微一笑，最终还是添上了一句令我恍然的解释，“它和设计一样，都是为了让这个世界更接近我们心中那个美丽的理想。”





1. 家里铺满白色鹅卵石的阳台是Rao平日最爱的读书、小憩、观景的角落 2. 红木边桌上的茶壶和上方悬挂的名为《老游击队员的儿子》的装饰画是Rao从潘家园淘来的心爱之物，亦是他心中浓得化不开的中国情结的自然流露 3. 出自Karim Rashid手笔的白色橱柜（Horn公司制造）气度优雅，手工骨瓷Adelaide系列（Driade公司制造）是来自北京设计师的经典之作。Baroque镜子是Sturm Und Plastic公司的产品

The connection between Rao and Olivetti could be called destiny. Rao grew up in Olivetti's hometown, the Northwestern Italian town of Ivrea with both his parents employed at Olivetti. Rao spent his early childhood in the Olivetti staff nursery. It's not hard to imagine that, for Rao, Olivetti is not just a famous brand that emphasizes design; it is also a part of his warm memories that influenced his entire life.

Upon stepping into Rao's spacious and bright house, my eyes are immediately drawn to an oil painting hanging on the wall facing the entrance. The depiction of the Italian territory has countless small green, white and red marks across different parts of the "boot." The marks originally indicated Olivetti factory sites on various Italian islands. "What's most moving to me about Olivetti is their persistent aspiration to the apex of wisdom, quality, ethical values, and leadership," Rao explains his years-long devotion to the brand. Did the same persistence iron into his life's philosophy? I wonder. Rao is in the midst of writing a book about a remarkable scholar of Chinese origin, Mario Tchou, who according to Rao, was the key person and mastermind behind the creation of Italy's first computer, the Elea 9003. He has spent seven long years exploring the stories.

The lower part of the oil painting has Philippe Starck's earnest handwritten consecration of one of the most prized items in Rao's collection: a set of Olivetti Lettera 22

typewriters, designed in 1952 by Marcello Nizzoli. The design icon typewriters, now permanently stored at New York's Museum of Modern Art, are characterized by graceful posture and blazing color. "Look how gentle the lines are, how delightful the colors—it's considered one of the most brilliant design products of the last century! A perfection!" As Rao gesticulates, pointing out the subtleties of the picture, he sounds like a proud father eager to hear others comment on his genius child, who accomplishes the renew of one's own existence in an unfailing way. Works by the same artist hang on each wall of the living room, and his office: Rao commissioned 18 oil paintings on the history of Olivetti from his old friend Lauro Benedetto.

Rao arrived in China six months ago. As soon as he saw this apartment, with daylight flooding in through French windows along the northern and southern walls, he immediately felt at home. "Life is transient. You can't afford wasting time even when you live in transit mode as a foreign diplomat. As soon as I saw this apartment, I knew I found my design collection in Rome a new home." A passionate design enthusiast, Rao naturally has indispensable works from Carlo Scarpa, Karim Rashid and other distinguished designers, but he delights most in his new collection: Chinese-style furniture and all kinds of original trinkets he has gathered from the Beijing Panjiayuan dirt market. There is the elegant, intricately patterned wooden sideboard, the thickly colorful, nineteen-seventies decorative painting,

and the assortment of antique porcelain teacups and teapots in his collection... "Why are you so passionate about China?" Rao smiles and answers with a hint of Italian romanticism: "It's destiny. I believe that everything happens according to an imperceptible plan." A socially oriented thinker who read some of Mao Zedong's works at the age of fourteen, Rao is full of enthusiasm for this distant country that he finds closest affinity with. Although having often traveled to Asia before, Rao says he has always deliberately avoided China. "To me China bears a special significance. It is too special to spoil the moment. So I wanted to save the opportunity and waited patiently for a certain special moment." Not until last December, when he was assigned to Beijing as Italy's Technological and Industrial Innovation Attaché, did Rao experience his first contact with the country he had dreamed of for years; and it was love at first sight. Finally setting foot in the land he calls his "spiritual homeland," Rao desired most of all to make his own contribution to the country. Not long ago, Italy was chosen as the international strategic partner for Tangshan Caofeidian International Eco-City project, filling Rao with a sense of gratification.

"So what is your life's greatest passion?" I ask, ready for some Italian-style response — Design? Art? Music? Rao's response was somewhat surprising yet expected when I thought of his job in Beijing: "Politics. Politics and design are the same in a way: the purpose of both is to make the reality close to the beautiful ideals in our hearts."