



Dressing Up

Brand stylist and designer Erika Brechtel invites us inside for a tour through her gorgeous Los Angeles home.

WORDS NADIA HOWLAND PHOTOGRAPHY SABRA LATTOS

KATE
KELLY
Emma



With her strikingly beautiful Japanese-American looks, it seems wholly unfair that

Erika Brechtel should be down-to-earth, smart and incredibly talented as well.

Glancing through the UCLA art history graduate's resume, it's clear to see she's the real deal, having pursued her childhood love of art and design to academia and beyond.

"I remember as a kid flipping through my mom's home magazines and drawing furniture in the floor plans. I even proposed an elaborate multi-level design for my bedroom to my parents, complete with floor plans and elevations!" Erika laughs.

While studying at UCLA, Erika worked for an interior designer, and from there decided to get an additional degree from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising ("Many years before interior design got to be as popular and sexy as it is now!" she notes wryly.)

After working in the industry for a few years, the dot.com bubble proved too appealing to ignore, so Erika made the switch

to graphic and web design, working for a small boutique firm and a large international corporation – "both ends of the spectrum that provided me a well-rounded experience," she says.

Now, Erika is the owner of Small Shop, a brand styling studio, and also has a popular blog. She lives with her husband and four-year-old daughter in their stunning Southern California townhome.

With her husband a contemporary architect, Erika says she chooses her battles when it comes to melding their personal styles.

"I've found there are several ways I can get my 'glam' in without making it too girly or ornate – like the Tom Dixon pendant in our bedroom, for example. I'll also mix our styles – so while the white Barcelona chair in our living room is very contemporary, I'll throw a fur over it to warm it up.

"A friend once told me to 'dress your home as you would yourself'. I've been following that strategy ever since, and have expanded it into my 'five pieces to a great room' formula: incorporating something textured/patterned, something shiny, something contemporary, something organic/animal, and



something vintage/antique. Whenever I feel like a room isn't quite there yet, I try to find that one piece that's missing from this formula, and it never fails to complete the space. I'm also a big believer in mixing high and low... I incorporate a lot of budget-friendly accessories but splurge on the big ticket, make-a-statement items like my original Beni Ourain rug from Morocco."

Discovering personal style and translating that visually isn't something that comes easily to everyone. Erika says helping clients identify what makes them unique is one of the things she relishes most about her job.

"Identifying your personal and brand style is a process," Erika explains. "You should explore what's out there but eventually you'll find that you'll always go back to the same influences and looks. I tell all my clients to identify a 'muse' for themselves, and we'll often use that muse as a ruler by which to measure every piece we create.

"This idea can apply to your closet, your home, as well as your personal or business brand. Above all, you have to be comfortable with it, own it and try not to please everyone else. Then you'll find your style will really start to develop and you'll have more fun with it."



Erika's top tips

Erika's top five tips for working your personal style into your home.

- 1 Find your muse: "What would (insert muse here) do?"
- 2 Dress your home as you would dress yourself.
- 3 Create a real or virtual inspiration pinboard to refer back to, and continuously self-edit/refine.
- 4 Invest in at least one piece in each room that makes you giddy.
- 5 Own your style and work it!





Decadent dining

"My husband recently made me a Lindsey Adelman DIY chandelier for our 10th wedding anniversary," Erika says. On the dining table, her grandmother's hand-painted, gold-rimmed china rests on Stone Textile's signature print placemats.





Creative space

Erika's favourite room, she says, is her office. "It's my own little creativity hub and I get to recreate the space every so often according to what's influencing me at that particular time. Right now it's a fashion-forward, modern femme vibe. My rotating gallery wall, growing design library and large pinboard over my desk provide constant inspiration." Her self-designed "three muses" pillow pays homage to her style faves Kate Moss, Kelly Wearstler and Emmanuelle Alt.

Bohemian girl

"Cute bohemian" was the inspiration for Erika's daughter Leighton's "big girl room", which boasts a fabulous DIY bed canopy and original artwork by the big girl herself.





Luxe master bedroom

Erika's master bedroom follows her 'five pieces to a great room' formula: incorporating something textured/patterned (the floor-to-ceiling linen drapes), something shiny (the Tom Dixon copper pendant), something contemporary (the artwork), something organic/animal (the cowhide thrown over the tufted headboard), and something vintage/antique (the large ornate mirror over the dresser).



get the look...

Get Erika's glamorous abode's style with black, white and grey pieces mixed with plenty of metallic pops.

CUSHION Jungalow Jet cushion cover 17x17 inch \$118 www.ariannabelle.com **BOWL** St Tropez small bowl \$19.95 www.thebrowntradingco.com.au **PRINT** Black dots print by Jen Ramos US\$17.75 www.madebygirl.com **SOFA** Stockholm three-seat sofa \$999 www.ikea.com.au **URCHIN** Bronze urchin US\$24 www.shopwaitingonmartha.com **RUG** Souk wool rug \$1299 www.westelm.com.au **LAMP** Dome table lamp 60cm in chrome \$79.95 www.freedom.com.au