

The Call of the WILD

Alice + Olivia designer *Stacey Bendet* is gutsy when it comes to using vibrant patterns and hues in her Manhattan town house—a dazzling color wheel come to life

BY MEGAN DEEM

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN

Vintage furnishings and bold art—including a lithograph by Keith Haring, a Dustin Yellin glass and acrylic sculpture (above), and a Julian Schnabel photo—punctuate Bendet's living room.

Clothing, belts, and shoes, worn throughout, Alice + Olivia by Stacey Bendet. Vintage jewelry, worn throughout. Tiffany & Co. sterling silver bracelets, worn throughout. Rings, her own.

Black-and-white awning stripes—a design signature in Bendet's collection and her stores—cover a built-in day-bed in the garden. Vintage head scarves, worn throughout.

“The backyard has a wonderland feeling to it—a slightly trippy, avant-garde vibe. I want every room to be that way.”

It's a brilliantly sunny Monday morning, and Stacey Bendet, clad in denim gauchos and a blue-and-red-print chiffon top, is perched on her velvet green-and-black-striped sitting room couch (made of the same fabric used for a sharp rock-star-worthy pantsuit in a fall ad campaign for her fashion company, Alice + Olivia). Next to her, a life-size stuffed-animal tiger peers from the corner of the room. The design scheme explodes with color, pattern, and flat-out fun—let's just say there's more than one huge stuffed animal here—and these happy-making qualities also characterize her popular fashion line.

“I always intend for my clothes to make a woman feel good about herself,” says the pixieish designer, her long brown hair in braids. “There's a lightness and an energy that comes with vibrant color. When people walk into my stores, I want them to feel exhilarated; when they walk into my home, I want them to feel welcome.”

And they do. Stepping into the four-bedroom abode she shares with husband Eric Eisner, a producer, and daughters Eloise, 4, and Scarlet, 2, guests can't help but smile at the exuberant *Alice in Wonderland* look of the place—beginning with the staircases



that wind between the home's five stories, covered in carpet that switches to a different shade at each landing. “To me, one color is beautiful, but three together make a story,” she says. Which pretty much sums up Bendet's tried-and-true home décor method: a black-and-white base punctuated with a riot of bright tones. “People always ask me, ‘What if you get sick of the bold touches?’ Well, if you keep most of the walls and architectural elements neutral, you can

“There's no reason artwork can't live in a kitchen,” Bendet says. She uses the space to show off her kids' drawings as well as Dasha Shishkin's pink *Faithfulness as Passion for Property*.



From RUNWAY to ROOM

Fearless with color and print, the designer shares her savvy tricks on going bold when it comes to both fashion and décor

COBALT “With clothing, this blue looks beautiful on everyone, no matter what skin, hair, or eye shade you may have. At home, just a touch of it creates the perfect pop in a neutral area.”

BLACK & WHITE “I always start with this combo when I'm designing, whether it's a pair of shoes or a room. Worn on its own, black-and-white makes for a sharp, strong way of dressing. Certain hues don't work with a beige or brown room, but *everything* goes with black-and-white.”

STRIPES “After I made this sexy fabric into a suit, I used it for a couch—it added instant excitement to the space. Try a tonal stripe for a more subtle look.”

Bendet's husband bought this 6-foot fish tank-bar at auction.



The entry hall is lined with Claes Oldenburg framed works. "I'm kind of obsessed with him," she says of the Swedish-born artist. Vintage belt. Alice + Olivia by Stacey Bendet handbag and faux-fur jacket (in basket).

swap out that banana-patterned pillow and lipstick-red sofa," she says. "It keeps the space looking fresh."

It helps that Bendet has unfettered access to the New Jersey warehouse where she stores items waiting to be pressed into service in a showroom, boutique, or home. (Add that to the list of reasons why it's good to be boss.) Her finds are sourced from forays to sprawling Texas flea markets and late-night clicks through the Web site 1stdibs. "I love the hunt, and my mother and my grandmother Sylvia, who must have collected things for a hundred years, are the same," she says. "There was stuff coming out of closets everywhere. My dad always says I got the Sylvia gene; I'm a bit of a hoarder."

Thankfully, her husband shares her passion for collecting. In their bedroom a

ceiling-height glass cabinet displays rows of Barbie dolls in their original packaging. ("She's just beautiful," says Bendet, explaining her obsession. "I love her clothes, and sometimes I'll even be inspired by her outfits.") Rows of Kidrobot mini figures stand at attention in a kitchen bookcase, and contemporary art seems to blanket every available surface. Married nearly five years, the couple shop for art together, but each of them is confident in making purchases solo. The giant Nicola L. fish-tank-cum-bar in the shape of a human profile, for example? His. A humongous multihued Nicolas Pol canvas above the couch? Hers. ("At the time, I was doing this whole leopard collection, and I felt like I popped out of the painting!" Bendet says.) A tar-covered teddy bear by Mattia Biagi sits on the windowsill between

"I tend to like happy art and objects in my home. While I appreciate 'angry' art, I prefer to live with things that are a little more uplifting!"

the second and third floors, a Valentine's Day gift from husband to wife.

In a home plastered with Claes Oldenburgs and Julian Schnabels and a giant resin Dustin Yellin sculpture in the middle of the kitchen table, a question begs to be asked: Is it possible to let the kids run wild? According to Bendet, the answer is a resounding yes. "They need to respect beautiful things, whether it's art or clothing or jewelry, but I also want my girls to feel comfortable in their own home," Bendet says. "I don't ever want them to feel nervous here."

Indeed, making a place for her daughters—both in her living quarters and in her daily schedule—is Bendet's main priority. She rises at 5 A.M. to do an hour of ashtanga yoga before they wake, then whips up their favorite quinoa pancakes or eggs and smoothies. After breakfast the trio might sit and read a story or paint pictures before Bendet takes Eloise to school. "That morning time is so important for me as a working mom, and it's fun for us."

What with running a successful business and creating a rich home life, Bendet seems to have it all nailed down so beautifully—until it's time to activate the elaborate sound system wired throughout the house. "I can't even get the television to go on," she says sheepishly. "When the girls want to play music, I use my iPhone. Sometimes we put on shows, or we dance to 'Call Me Maybe' for hours on end." A Carly Rae Jepsen dance party? Her adorable posse would swear there are few things more fun than that, and the stripes and pop art colors that surround them only help to set the effervescent mood. ■



Platforms and high heels are organized by color and pattern in Bendet's closet.



Daughter Eloise's purple bedroom (her favorite color) boasts a playhouse that was once a display in an Alice + Olivia boutique.