

HOMES

APT with LSD: Bettina Prentice

by Lauren Santo Domingo | photographed by Claiborne Swanson Frank | April 13, 2012



They say that moving house is next to death and divorce on the trauma scale, but **Bettina Prentice**, founder and owner of Prentice Art Communications, along with her husband, **Jamie**, handled their very recent relocation with the aplomb that one could only expect from a free-spirited couple. “Jamie and I looked around after our first full day in the new apartment, and not a single box had been unpacked,” Bettina says. “But once we got the stereo hooked up, we got into a really great rhythm and everything found its place organically.” Having a generous 1,800 square-foot layout with soaring ceilings and an emerging art collection certainly helps. “I was over the moon that I would not have to display everything in that cramped salon style so common in New York City apartments,” she says. From the art she hangs on her walls, to the projects she takes on at work, she curates her

life with a practiced ease and discerning eye. “Quality is a consistent theme in my life,” she says.

Feminine Mystique

“My husband jokes that I’m the only girl who goes to a Phish show wearing Missoni and Isabel Marant,” says Prentice, photographed with her dog, Harry Hood, a poodle mix, on her living room couch (from ABC Home) wearing Carolina Herrera. “I live in flowing skirts and dresses; movement makes me feel really feminine, and I also love color and prints.”



A Stitch in Time

“All of our furniture and fabrics have a lot of texture to them,” says Prentice of her living room. “We both are obsessed with velvet and Madeline Weinrib’s pillows and rugs. It is so easy to see why she is such an influential leader in design; the quality is amazing and she employs artisans from all over the world.” The gun lamp to the right of the couch is Philippe Starck, and Prentice cites Overbey & Dunn in the West Village as a favorite spot for antique shopping.

Flower Girl

“I have a fascination with orchids and I keep a rotating indoor garden that is comprised mostly of mini-orchid hybrids that I get from J&L Orchids, a world-famous grower in Connecticut,” she says. The most important thing when caring for orchids, she advises, is to remember their natural habitats are swamps. Bettina’s advice: “Invest in a humidity tray!”



Sentimental Value

“This is a sculpture of my grandmother, which was done by my grandfather, who was an artist. It is one of my most prized possessions,” she says. Other art includes an etching by Elizabeth Peyton, and paintings by Lowell Boyers (center) and Natalie Frank (right). “I gave her her first solo show in New York when I was the director of Briggs Robinson Gallery,” says Prentice of Frank. “And I still collect her work today.”

Wedding Belle

“Jamie and I have been together for almost fourteen years. He is simply the most amazing, warm-hearted person. We had an instant connection the night we met as students at Georgetown University and we talked until the sun came up. He taught me how to meditate and slow down, soak up the beauty in the world—and that calm helps us weather the storms when they arise in life,” Bettina says of her husband. “It doesn’t hurt that I think he is the most handsome guy ever, and his English accent still gives me butterflies.”



Fine Dining

“We love to entertain so we are looking to upgrade our dining room table to one that fits at least ten people now that we are in our new apartment,” she says. “And while I do not have natural ability in the kitchen, I think that the modern wife should be able to cook so I’m planning a series of cooking classes/dinner parties this summer with our friend and caterer, Brandon Crowe.”

It’s a Small World

In the dining room, Prentice keeps a lot of personal pieces perfect for keeping the conversation flowing. “The painting was a gift from the artist Kim McCarty, who I represented in my days as a gallerist. We are still great friends and now, coincidentally, she and my sister Alix Smith are represented by the same gallery.” The guitar belongs to her husband, who also plays a mandolin. “Having it handy is a great party trick.”



Birds of a Feather

The papier-mâché birds resting on the fireplace mantel are made from recycled cement bags by artisans in Haiti. “They were a gift from my brother Peter,” she explains.

Personal Style

“My mantra is to live with art that either has a great sense of humor or great sense of style,” Prentice says, photographed here in a dress by Yigal Azrouël. The eye chart by artist Allen Grubestic (“I was young I needed the money”) resonates with Bettina. “I decided to become

financially independent from my parents when I graduated from college and was eating ramen noodles so I could afford to buy art or a pair of great shoes on this teeny-tiny salary,” she says. “It really makes success now all the more rewarding, and my parents are proud I’ve made it on my own.”



Accent Wall

In the bedroom, the couple wanted to hang two dark pieces—Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s *Running Fence* and Arthur Elgort’s *Kate Moss at Café Lipp, 1993*—so they decided the wall could be even bolder and painted it an Athenian blue. A talented designer and friend, Chiara de Rege, suggested the color might play well with brighter works on paper by Isca Greenfield-Sanders and McDermott & McGough as long as they kept the bed linens and curtains white. “It was a great suggestion,” says Prentice. “The crisp white of the paper balances really well.”

Jewel Box

When it comes to baubles and special pieces, Prentice shops at Opening Ceremony in SoHo or Sucre in the West Village. “They carry my favorite designers like Saya Hibino, Lulu Frost, Pamela Love, and Ayaka Nishi,” she says. “It’s all really well-edited and somewhat architectural.”



Smoke Screen

On a table in her bedroom, Prentice keeps a collection of shrunken paperback books—including those written by Hemingway, Tolstoy, and Kafka—that were designed by TANK Books in the U.K. to mimic cigarette packs; a original gift from her sister-in-law, Kate Prentice, who, fittingly, runs a literary agency in London.



On the Nightstand

“Right now I’m reading *Painting Below Zero*, James Rosenquist’s autobiography, and *Man in a Blue Scarf*, which is Martin Gayford’s account of sitting for Lucian Freud. I go through phases and at the moment, I’m into biographies.” Book or Kindle? “Book!” she responds, emphatically. The *Eyes* are by McDermott and McGough, produced by Exhibition A. “They are friends, and they’re on a mission to bring affordable art to a wider audience, which really resonates with me.”

Welcome Home

“I bought the birdcage in the countryside in England and it has served many purposes over the years, but it recently became a sunglasses rack as Jamie’s growing collection has continued to expand,” she explains of her creative entryway. “We stock it with things he needs while heading out the door in the morning like sunglasses, headphones, and the dog’s leash.”

Young Love

The photograph, taken by Jill Krementz, is of Bettina as a young girl.

History Lesson

The framed Andy Warhol rejection letter was a gift from one of Prentice’s best friends, Casey Fremont, whose father was a close member of Warhol’s inner circle and the executor of his estate. The letter is a copy of the original, dated 1956, in which Alfred Barr rejects

Warhol’s offer to gift his drawing *Shoe* to the MoMA. “Jamie and I both get a huge kick out of it,” she says. “It’s a reminder of how tough the art industry can be!” The *Rock News* is a photocopy edition by Thurston Moore that the couple picked up at the White Columns’ booth at NADA art fair in Miami.