

Foam

Amber Tamblyn
*The Poet Princess
of Venice Beach*

225+

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ABOVE: "I'm a very do-it-yourself kind of person," says Kamm, who rehabbed an apartment-ful of flea market furniture with her husband. "My whole philosophy in life is just to wing it." **RIGHT:** Kamm, in her own design, regularly changes up her inspiration board with things to "remind me that people are badass."



Treasure Chest

DESIGNER JESSE KAMM'S APARTMENT/ATELIER IS FILLED WITH LIGHT, LIFE, AND INCREDIBLE CURIOSITIES. *By Marissa Patlingrao Cooley | Photos By Baldemar Fierro*

Fashion designer Jesse Kamm's apartment is a study in unstudied cool. Marked by alabaster walls, hardwood floors, soaring ceilings, and beautiful archways, the sparsely decorated 1200-square-foot two-bedroom she shares with her husband Lucas Brower has an appealingly unfussy, unfinished quality. "As a renter, I don't feel like pouring myself into this place," explains the Illinois native, who splits her time between LA and Panama, where she and Brower, a sustainable real estate developer, are building a second home. But that's not to say that the 32-year-old former model, who runs her eponymous clothing label out of the West Hollywood apartment, hasn't grown attached to the place.

"Lucas and I met in this apartment," recalls Kamm, "so it has a lot of history for us." Inherited three years ago from Kamm's brother-in-law Ned Brower (the drummer for the band Rooney) and his wife Sarah—who had in turn had the place passed down to them years before—the light-bathed two-bedroom "has been in our friend

group for over 10 years," she says.

When Kamm launched her clothing line three years ago, she appropriated what were previously the living and dining rooms as her work studio, where she, Brower, and two part-time interns do everything from screen-printing textiles to handling sales. During the day, Kamm orbits mainly between the dining table, which doubles as a fabric-cutting surface ("I throw a paint bucket under each leg to raise it up, so it doesn't hurt my back."), and a sun-bleached wooden desk—originally an outdoor gardening table salvaged from her sister-in-law's backyard—where her computer and sewing machine reside.

Much of the rest of the couple's furniture collection was acquired in a similar catch-as-catch-can way: freebies, roadside finds, flea market purchases, all overhauled with Kamm and Brower's elbow grease. "I'm a huge fan of '50s modernism, but I can't see myself spending \$1000 on a Noguchi or Eames," says Kamm. "However, that's what my eye gravitates toward, so I find my own way to

pieces with good bones." The dining room table and chairs, for example, were originally painted shabby-chic-white and emblazoned with rooster and toad images when the couple bought the set at a junk shop for \$175. A self-taught furniture rehabber, Kamm says of stripping, staining and reupholstering, "In the end, I feel more connected to a piece when I've done work on it." In fact, she enjoys the process so much that she dreams of one day creating a line of Jesse Kamm Chairs—starting with furniture for her Caribbean beachhouse.

Along with an intrepid group of friends and family, Kamm and her husband are in the process of building an eco-retreat in Panama—a parcel of solar-powered houses fit with rainwater collection systems and composting toilets, with the beach as their front yard. The project is just one example of the couple's commitment to sustainable living. Exhibit B: They converted their two cars to run on vegetable oil scored at a local Mexican restaurant instead of on diesel. Exhibit C: Kamm regularly rides her bicycle to the market, to the

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ABOVE: A technicolor Egyptian tapestry of a busy Middle Eastern village scene serves as the focal point of the bedroom. Says Kamm, "When we first got it, I would just stare at it and pretend I was somewhere else."



ABOVE AND DETAIL SHOTS TO LEFT: Populated by heirlooms, photos, and tchotchkes that remind Kamm of close friends and family, the spare bedroom-turned-den is Kamm's "nighttime sanctuary." **BELOW:** Kamm converted the expansive living and dining room spaces into her studio, where she does everything from screen-printing to sewing to answering emails.



LEFT: Kamm and her husband converted their cars to take veggie oil instead of diesel. "When you spend the time to filter fuel, store it, lift and put it into the car, then collect it, it makes you want to drive less, to not be wasteful."



CRIB KAMM'S STYLE

LEFT TO RIGHT: **ESQUE**, LIMITED EDITION GLASS BLOWN BIRD (PROCEEDS BENEFIT BREAST CANCER), \$500, squedesign.com. **BRIXTON**, STROLL FEDORA, \$45, brixtonltd.com. **KEEP CALM GALLERY**, YOUNG LADY LIMITED-EDITION PRINT, £15.00, keepcalmgallery.com. **POPPYCOTTON**, VINTAGE FABRIC PILLOWS, 20" \$85, 15" \$45, poppycotton.com. **ZGALLERIE**, COCO STICK TABLE LAMP, \$129, zgallerie.com.

TREASURE CHEST

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movies, to dinner—not merely an anomaly, but practically death-defying in LA's traffic-clogged streets. One recent afternoon, while pedaling her way to a party wearing high heels and a dress, a random man, struck by the absurd scene, stuck his head out of his car and shouted: "Hey, lady, are you Danish?"

Exhibit D is Kamm's work itself: Her breezy tunics, dresses, jackets, and silk tanks—which have shown up on such Hollywood fashion plates as Liz Goldwyn, Marley Shelton and Alison Lohman (who starred in *LA Bloom*, a short film produced by Kamm to showcase her spring '07 collection)—are also, in a way, part of the designer's battle against waste. Explains Kamm, "This idea of mass-produced, throwaway fashion is a thing I really want to combat. I'd like my clothes to be the opposite of that." With that in mind, each piece is screen-printed by Kamm and sewn by hand. Made in limited editions, and numbered like art, Kamm's fall collection, dubbed "Into the Bush" is laced with tortoise shell prints, bird track motifs, and interpretations of tree rings.

The same obsession with nature—a reaction to living in LA's concrete jungle, according to Kamm—trickles into the apartment's décor. Of the decorative tchotchkes artfully scattered on bookshelves, windowsills, and the coffee table, a majority come from the wild: feathers, conches, sea urchins, dried flowers, bones.

A note about this bric a brac: As haphazard as these items may seem (also on display: a harmonica, a leather-bound atlas, a raccoon mandible), there's actually no such thing as just a prop in Casa Kamm. In fact, every piece each has its own elaborate five-minute tale—from the road trip to Big Sur that yielded the fully intact vertebral column of a deer, to the couch bought off a drunk guy at the Rose Bowl. Every time Kamm glances at an item in her home, it reminds her of a beloved place, friend or adventure. "These things hold deep meaning for me, and that's why they've made the cut to be here," she says—a statement that could just as easily apply to one of her breezy tunics or sublime, earth-mama dresses.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

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in her car and hugged her (now super supportive) mom goodbye. She was heading to California, and she wasn't coming back.



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Abigail wears an Insight dress, Roxy scarf, Grey Ant shades and Converse kicks.

THEODORA ALLEN

Though she quickly blended into the Cali songwriters' circuit, there were trying times still to come. Bouncing through a series of rundown apartments, she took a job as a waitress at Sunset Boulevard spot Cheebo. "A lot of yuppies came in there," she recalls, "and they were really miserable." The vibe took a toll on her spirit and after a year, college back in Pennsylvania began to look awfully appealing. "I was depressed and lost," she says. "But then I had a talk with a friend I respected. He convinced me to continue. I thought, well, if he believes in me this much, I have to try."

Sure enough, things began to look up, and they haven't stopped since. Through a subsequent gig opening for fellow singer-songwriter Joshua Radin, Ahn hooked up with drummer Joey Waronker, who produced an EP for her, and, later, *A Good Day*. It was her old friend Lee who encouraged Blue Note to get behind her debut. "Every person I've met has pushed me along in some way," says Ahn, her charming humility popping up once again. It's a chain of good fortune that she hopes will continue, but she's wildly happy with her current situation. Though Ahn's career is really just beginning, to her, it already feels like a dream come true.

FREE STALLION, FREE SPIRIT

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they took advantage and thought, "This might be interesting."

Lately, Amber has been taking more risks: she just shot *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, a film noir with Michael Douglas in which she plays an assistant district attorney; she's considering obtaining a motorcycle license, and she hopes to have her pilot's license by the end of the year. The proximity and ease of the Santa Monica airport has made that dream a reality. "I'm a very active girl," she says. "I love adventure." Still, flying is

"kind of scary," even if it's "kind of simple"—she has 500 hours to go. "I'm only halfway through," she adds. "We'll see."

But she can't be ahead of the curve on everything. Though her music tastes tend towards a kind of break beat called Dub Stump, she recently texted her boyfriend to ask him if he'd heard a song called "Umbrella." "It's wicked!" she wrote. "And I swear," she goes on, "I swear I just discovered 'To the Left'—i.e. 'Irreplaceable'—by a woman named Beyoncé. Look her up and check her out." And here is when the dry humor of Amber Tamblyn really begins to manifest itself.

"I love being behind," she jests. Being behind, one could argue, is a form of being cool. "I just rediscover it when it's already over and everyone else is like, 'Boring!'"



Amber wears a Juicy Couture silk dress, Joie cardigan and We Who See boots.

JASON ODELL