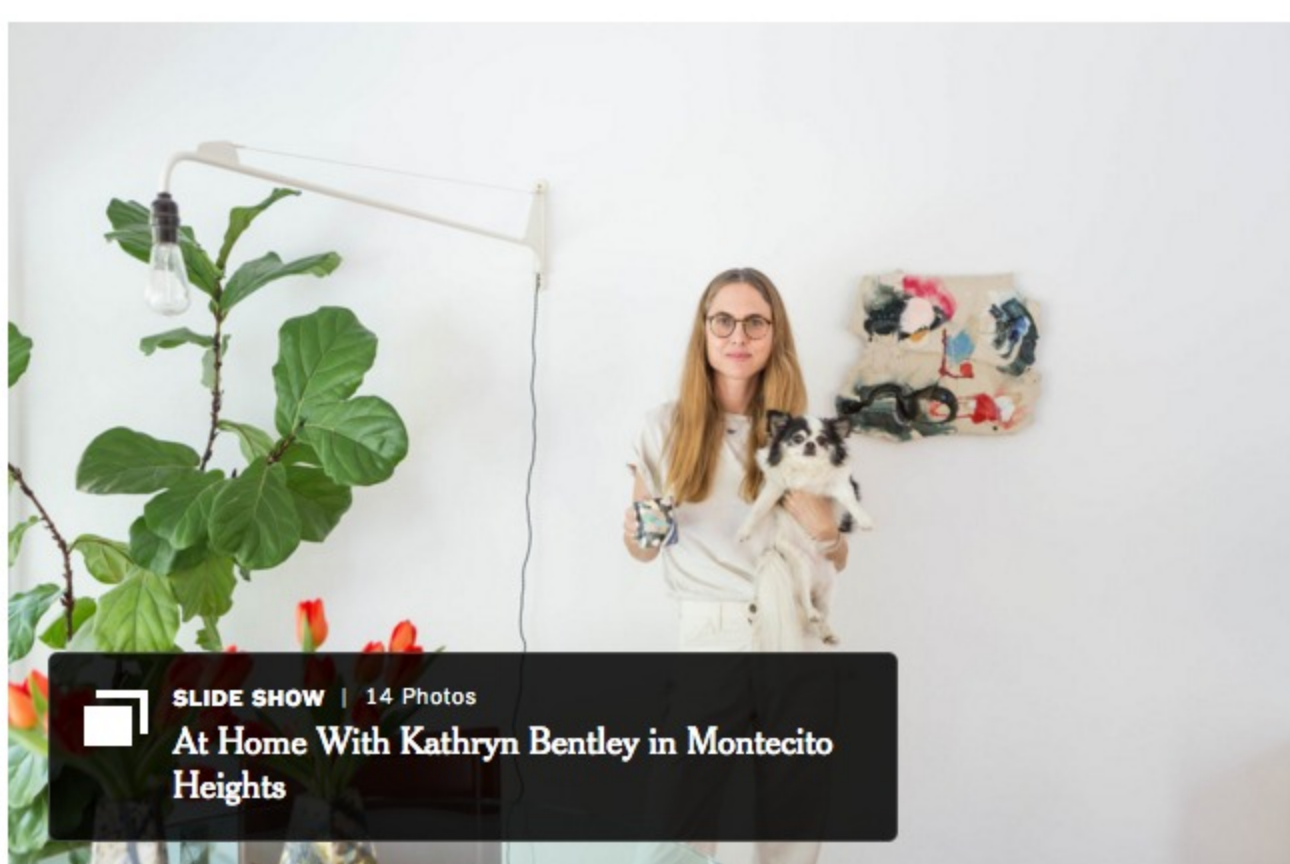


For One Los Angeles Designer, Jewelry Mingles With Fine Art

Home and Work

By MELISSA GOLDSTEIN MARCH 23, 2016



Laure Joliet

For the designer Kathryn Bentley, jewelry is as much about sculpture as it is fashion, thanks to a background in academic fine art and an affinity for raw materials. Her brand and four-year-old store in Silver Lake, Dream Collective, is evidence of her magpie eye, and serves as an indicator of her latest influences: She stocks everything from stoneware peace pipes by the artist Ben Medansky to the cult perfume range by *Coqui Coqui*. “I am rarely looking at other jewelry,” she says. “Art is my inspiration. And how things are made — the actual hands-on part of it. That’s what is interesting for me.”

After graduating from New York’s School of Visual Arts in 2001, she worked for the New York-based jewelry designer Philip Crangi before relocating to Los Angeles in 2008. She landed in a Craftsman fourplex in Silver Lake; her neighbors were Roman Alonso, of the then-emerging design studio Commune, who gave her freelance work, and the bag designer Clare Vivier, with whom she went on to share a studio. Eventually, Bentley took over the space and transformed it into the Dream Collective shop, which she opened in 2012.



Dream Collective, Bentley’s Silver Lake store. Courtesy of Dream Collective

The following year she moved to Montecito Heights, a quiet, hilly neighborhood a few miles east of Silver Lake. It was her version of going electric — both professionally and domestically. “What I had been making at the time just happened to be ‘the thing,’ and suddenly my jewelry was everywhere,” she says, referring to the mystical symbols she used in her jewelry when she first launched her diffusion brand. (She also has a fine jewelry line.) “I was like, please, no more

snakes and evil eyes — can we move on?” So she did. “I went less antiquated and Old World — and my house reflects that too. Before, I had a lot of Navajo rugs and could not miss a flea market. Now, the design is clean; it speaks for itself.”

She found an airy, two-level midcentury home on a cul-de-sac, and discovered that she already knew its owner, Josh Kritzer, the founder of the vintage lighting gallery Rewire. He had enlisted the Neutra and Schindler expert Eric Lamers to restore the space, and lived there with his then-girlfriend, Amanda Bacon, the founder of the pressed-juice shop Moon Juice. “I was not the highest offer, but Amanda insisted that Josh sell me the house, because she’s all spiritual,” Bentley says. “She did me a solid.” Built in 1965, the 1,100-square-foot blueprint is set on a 5,000-square-foot lot that includes a terraced backyard with walnut, loquat and lemon trees dating back to the ’60s — as well as agave, lavender, white sage and tangerine and grapefruit trees cultivated by Kritzer.

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For the interiors, Bentley traveled to Morocco to buy a selection of midcentury and ’80s and ’90s-era rugs. From there she slowly amassed interesting pieces: a Matteo Grassi dining set from the estate sale of a Dow Chemical heir, a pair of Mario Bellini chairs she found on eBay, a brash, craggy ceramic vessel purchased directly from the L.A. artist Roger Herman and, more recently, a custom maple and linoleum credenza commissioned from the independent furniture maker Doug McCollough.

Every item testifies to her gift for collecting unusual, handmade works — as well as her support for the people behind them. “I don’t really think of it as decorating — each thing holds this special experience, this story of getting the piece,” she says. “Everybody that I have art from is a friend first. I don’t think I would connect with the work if I didn’t know the person.” That group also includes the artist Sarah Ball, who built Bentley’s bleached-white-oak bed, and whose photographs, which depict everyday objects in unconventional compositions, dot the space throughout. Still, the look is spare. “I left this place a tiny bit empty to allow room for someone else to move in, but I have not met the right person yet,” Bentley says. “I’m taking it as an opportunity to focus on my art.”

She does this in her upstairs studio, where an array of architectural ceramics — some her own, others by friends Bari Ziperstein, Cody Hoyt, Laida Aguirre and Sean Brian McDonald — is on display. A white oak Enzo Mari desk is currently covered with collages Bentley has made from the graphic envelope liners of junk mail; there are paintings in progress too, but those, she admits shyly, are hidden away.



Memphis-inspired pieces from Bentley’s diffusion line. Courtesy of Dream Collective

Bentley keeps her jewelry design separate, working in the studio in the back of her boutique, and her latest accessories reveal an obsession with the Memphis Milano group, including a black and white striped bronze and enamel cuff dubbed the Noguchi bracelet. “I want to take a little bit more risk — to explore and go a little bit bigger,” she says of her guiding stylistic impulse. An ongoing flirtation with the postmodern movement also manifests itself in the décor, from an Ettore Sottsass table lamp to the boldly color-blocked bedding, a scheme that stars a linen duvet Bentley hand-printed with cobalt ink in a spongeware pattern. (The textile arose from a collaboration last year with furniture designer Shin Okuda of Waka Waka.)

“I don’t buy things anymore, or at least, there’s no impulse buying,” she says. “I have the things I want. And it’s a nice place to be, at least for now.” The sentiment seems to encompass her career stage as well as her relatively incognito coordinates, which allow for breathing room and retreat. “There is no cool coffee shop over here, and it’s such a relief,” she agrees. “I make coffee here. I just stay.”

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