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DIVAN AND CONQUER: In one of her recently completed interiors, Alison Blumenfeld wears a silk tank from her new collection.

LEISURE SASS

STYLISTA ALISON BLUMENFELD IS SWANKING UP INTERIORS AND A NEW CLOTHING LINE WITH HER LAID-BACK TAKE ON LUXURY

BY ALEXANDRIA ABRAMIAN-MOTT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JI SHIN

Almost all decorators agree: It's the clients—not the lost cargo containers, not that impossible-to-source sofa, not even those monster flat-screens—that constitute the most difficult aspect of home design. But when Alison Blumenfeld decided to defect from interior design to the world of fashion, friends thought she was jumping from the frying pan into the Devil-Wearing-Prada pressure cooker.

Not the case, says Blumenfeld, who launches her eponymous line of seriously sumptuous knitwear this month at Barneys. "My company is small, so I'm removed from the cattiness," says Blumenfeld of her silk jersey collection, a minimalist line of 15 silhouettes of just-so tanks, T-shirts and dresses.

"The idea of wearing a T-shirt with a \$1,500 De La Renta skirt is my favorite thing in the world," says the 36-year-old designer. "But finding that T-shirt proves really difficult." Her quest turned into a high-flying odyssey that took Blumenfeld—who worked as the art director for Esprit in the '90s—all over the globe searching for the perfect material. The result takes the well-trod T-shirt concept to rarified turf: Her Italian silk jersey tanks cost around \$400, the halter dresses break the three-digit mark, and fashion editors are already sending out the APB on where to get the Blumenfeld goods.

Which isn't to say the designer is abandoning home décor entirely. Instead, Blumenfeld—who is pregnant with her first child

with Jim Deutch, executive VP of business development at Nederlander Company—is just focusing on a few choice clients, while expanding her vision of earthy chic infused with blue-blooded decadence. “Really heavily gilded mirrors, Louis chairs, ornate frames. I love all that fanciness, but the truth is I walk about in rock T-shirts and leggings.”

Blumenfeld applies that same offhand opulence to the home by combining big-ticket antiques with relaxed details. “I avoid overdone window treatments,” she says. “I don’t like it when things get too formal.” Mostly, she shuns using pieces from just one period. “If you don’t mix and layer eras, things can start to look institutional,” says Blumenfeld, whose own apartment blends groovy Karl Springer pieces from the late ’70s with ’40s-era dining chairs and her grandmother’s 19th-century chandelier. The through line? Color. “It’s all black and white.”

Until two years ago, Blumenfeld worked with her half-sister, Marjorie Skouras (the daughter of Bay Area socialite/designer Patty Skouras), as part of an interior and product design team who did up the digs of some of L.A.’s most private families. These were near-palatial projects that had the designer following one of her



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greatest passions: “creating beautifully balanced spaces.” Then Blumenfeld decided to pull back from the 80-hour work week of large-scale design and instead focus on smaller projects, mostly the homes of friends, like that of Kaye Popofsky Kramer (shown opposite and top right). “For her wedding gift, I offered to do all the wall color selection for her,” Blumenfeld says. “Then she decided she wanted me to decorate it, too.”

As for her approach to Popofsky Kramer’s 4,000-square-foot Mediterranean, which Blumenfeld is now populating with antiques, vintage pieces and upholstered furniture of her own design, it’s the same as it ever was: “It’s about keeping it down-to-earth, even if it nods to something that is fancier and more decadent.”

ALISON BLUMENFELD’S MUST-HAVES

(1) Madeline Weinrib’s ikat fabrics, “for everything” (2) Josef Hoffmann’s Patrician Glass Collection at Table Art on Melrose (3) Turkish brass coffee grinders from www.arabiannights.ca (4) Layered spaces that have pieces from all eras, as in client Kaye Popofsky Kramer’s living room. “When you do rooms that come from just one period, things start looking institutional,” says Blumenfeld, who used a combination of antique, vintage and contemporary pieces. “There’s nothing that makes me happier than a well-balanced room.”