

# BEST DRESSED

Designer Sarah Wittenbraker layers bold patterns and colors with a fashion lover's eye in her Austin home.

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This page, from left: Kashmir Kaleidoscope Wallpaper by York Wallcoverings [wayfair.com](http://wayfair.com); Huancarani by Mia Baxter [mintamaria.com](http://mintamaria.com); Card File Pull \$18 [schoolhouse.com](http://schoolhouse.com); Hale Navy Paint [benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com); Fivestory Fabric [sharris.com](http://sharris.com); Rad, Mad, Glad by Marc Dennis from \$1,105 [twyla.com](http://twyla.com); Annika Table Lamp by Mary McDonald for Robert Abbey from \$429 [lumens.com](http://lumens.com); QS Nelson Console [noirfurniturela.com](http://noirfurniturela.com); Chalet Wallpaper by Kelly We arstler for Lee Jofa [kravel.com](http://kravel.com); Lama Blue Fabric on Linen-Cotton Base by Tulu Textiles [jamesshowroom.com](http://jamesshowroom.com). Opposite: Speech Pattern by Valerie Arber [valeriearber.com](http://valeriearber.com); Gannet Table Lamp by Aerin \$469 [circalighting.com](http://circalighting.com); Vintage Console [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com); Ms. Treat Wallpaper by Grow House Grow [supplyshowroom.com](http://supplyshowroom.com); Cassandra Rug from \$68 [shinebysho.com](http://shinebysho.com). Previous spread: Rex Pendant Lamp \$810 [arteriorshome.com](http://arteriorshome.com).

Austin designer Sarah Wittenbraker comes from a long line of fearless women. “My mom has such an eye for mixing patterns,” she says. “She wasn’t afraid to wallpaper the kitchen or upholster something in a bright color.” As a kid growing up in Dallas, Wittenbraker frequented vintage stores and was always pulling together outfits from mismatched pieces. “I’m as inspired by fashion as I am by interiors,” she explains.

In addition to her namesake design studio, Wittenbraker oversees Worn + Domestic, a site that posts weekly fashion and home style boards, some curated by friends and colleagues like Austin blogger Camille Styles and Los Angeles stylist Jane Black. She applies similar methods to dressing and decorating, beginning with a black-and-white base and slowly layering in brights until the mix feels right: “My go-to everyday uniform is black jeans, a white blazer, an oversize statement necklace, and red lipstick.”

In her own space, a 1960s brick home in the Tarrytown neighborhood near Lake Austin, she starts with her love for wallpaper. The first pattern the designer chose was of mini fluorescent mushrooms on black paper from British brand 17 Patterns. “I couldn’t afford a lot of it, so I put a small dose in the back of the bar,” Wittenbraker explains.

“That set the tone for the whole house.” For months, the living room remained mostly black and white until she added a vintage sofa upholstered in a bold floral fabric. Slowly, more colors and textures came in: a powder blue-upholstered bench from Austin vintage store Wendow; an abstract painting by local artist Diana Greenberg; and vintage safari chairs in chrome, brass, and gray suede.

Leaving the right amount of breathing room can sometimes prove difficult. “Restraint is really hard for me in my own house,” Wittenbraker admits. To balance the busyness, she focuses on the feeling she wants to achieve in each space. In the kitchen, where the family cooks and the kids do their homework, she maintained a simple palette of white soapstone counters, deep blue cabinets, and brass trim work. A series of subtle but distinctive decorative square reliefs carry from the kitchen into the living areas, then outside to the exterior walls and door. In the entryway, the same motif transforms into a graphic Lee Jofa paper covering the walls and ceiling, paired with a botanical print from Austin’s beloved Supply showroom. Curves and nature-inspired patterns soften clean lines, and a mélange of modern and traditional details create recurring themes that don’t feel tethered to any single era.





Abstract prints throughout the house—in art, wall decor, and textiles (above), as well as the backsplash in the butler pantry (left)—are balanced by hints of sunny yellow, bright florals, and the palest blush.

This page, from left: Perennial Verdant Fabric [flatvernacular.com](http://flatvernacular.com); Irwin Cocktail Table \$1,500 [arteriorshome.com](http://arteriorshome.com); Untitled by Diana Greenberg [diana-greenberg.squarespace.com](http://diana-greenberg.squarespace.com); Vintage Rug [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com); O'Neal Bench [highlandhousefurniture.com](http://highlandhousefurniture.com). Opposite: Evoke Gem by Kelly Wearstler Field Tile [annsacks.com](http://annsacks.com).

The home is a collaborative project, informed by contributions from Wittenbraker; her architect, Elizabeth Baird; and every member of the family, including husband Rick and kids Lulu (13), Oscar (10), and Beatrice (8). Encouraging the same sense of self-expression her mom instilled in her, Wittenbraker let the children select their own fabric and wallpaper for their rooms. Lulu chose a coral headboard and Flat Vernacular floral curtains; Oscar opted for a “climbing room,” complete with monkey bars; and Beatrice picked pink for the walls and navy peacock curtains from Tilton Finwick.

Family is central to Wittenbraker’s work—her business grew out of the need to reimagine their lives. In 2008 she was working as a freelance writer and doing interior design on the side for fun. The recession hit, and Rick’s department was cut. (Today he works as a partner at outdoor clothing brand Howler Brothers.) With two children—and another on the way—plus limited funds, the couple agreed to try something new. A friend helped secure Wittenbraker her first paid interiors gig—a whole-home design with a tight,

five-week timeline. “It was so much fun,” she says. “I pulled it off with the help of my husband and mom, who came into town to iron all the bed skirts.”

That job quickly led to referrals and a fully booked calendar. “Those early years were super-tough,” Wittenbraker recalls. “I felt like I had to take every job to make ends meet, I wasn’t charging enough, and I was racing around with three children.” With the help of a mentor, she restructured her business, hired staff, and raised her rates. Her studio is currently in the midst of its first large commercial project, Austin’s Domain Northside shopping center, where she is commissioning large-scale outdoor sculptures from local artists.

If bravery is being yourself, in spite of fears and failures, Wittenbraker lives it. In her dining room wallpaper, a little bug appears every so often in the repeat of the climbing-vine pattern, making its way across the leaves. It’s her favorite detail and an apt metaphor for her home. “It’s clean where it needs to be, crazy where it needs to be, and there’s plenty of room to evolve,” she says.

# LAYER BY LAYER

Inspired by fashion, Wittenbraker often uses clothing as a starting point for interiors. Here, she shares her go-to strategies.

## BRIGHTS

"It's very hard for me to buy a little black dress," she admits. "Instead, I'll look for a bright color like chartreuse." Similarly, no room in her home is without a pop of pink, gold, or peacock blue.

Vintage Ceiling Lamp [decaso.com](http://decaso.com); Bond Dining Table \$3,200 [jonathanadler.com](http://jonathanadler.com); Pedestal Bowl \$60 [cb2.com](http://cb2.com); Elowen Chair \$398 [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com); Linen Curtains with Groundworks Trim [trade.pindler.com](http://trade.pindler.com); Honeycomb Trim [decoratorsbest.com](http://decoratorsbest.com).



## BLACK AND WHITE

The interior designer opts for the classic combo as a base for both outfits and rooms. In her hallway, a two-tone pattern from Miles Redd for Schumacher adds graphic punch. "It's also wipe-able, since my kids leave handprints all the way up the stairs."

Deconstructed Stripe Wallpaper by Miles Redd [fschumacher.com](http://fschumacher.com).

## BOTANICALS

In her bathroom, Wittenbraker started with black-and-white tile and dressed it up with Thistle wallpaper by Icelandic artist Kristjana S. Williams. "I couldn't afford a ton, so it was perfect for the powder room."

Thistle Wallpaper [kristjanaswilliams.com](http://kristjanaswilliams.com); Purist Faucet [us.kohler.com](http://us.kohler.com).



## BRASS

"I can't *not* have a big, vintage brass and gold necklace," says Wittenbraker. In her home, brass shows up in the details—the hardware in the kitchen, the handles on the dining chairs, and the barware in the living room.

Mack Leather Barstool covered in Kravet Vinyl Fabric from \$379 [cb2.com](http://cb2.com).



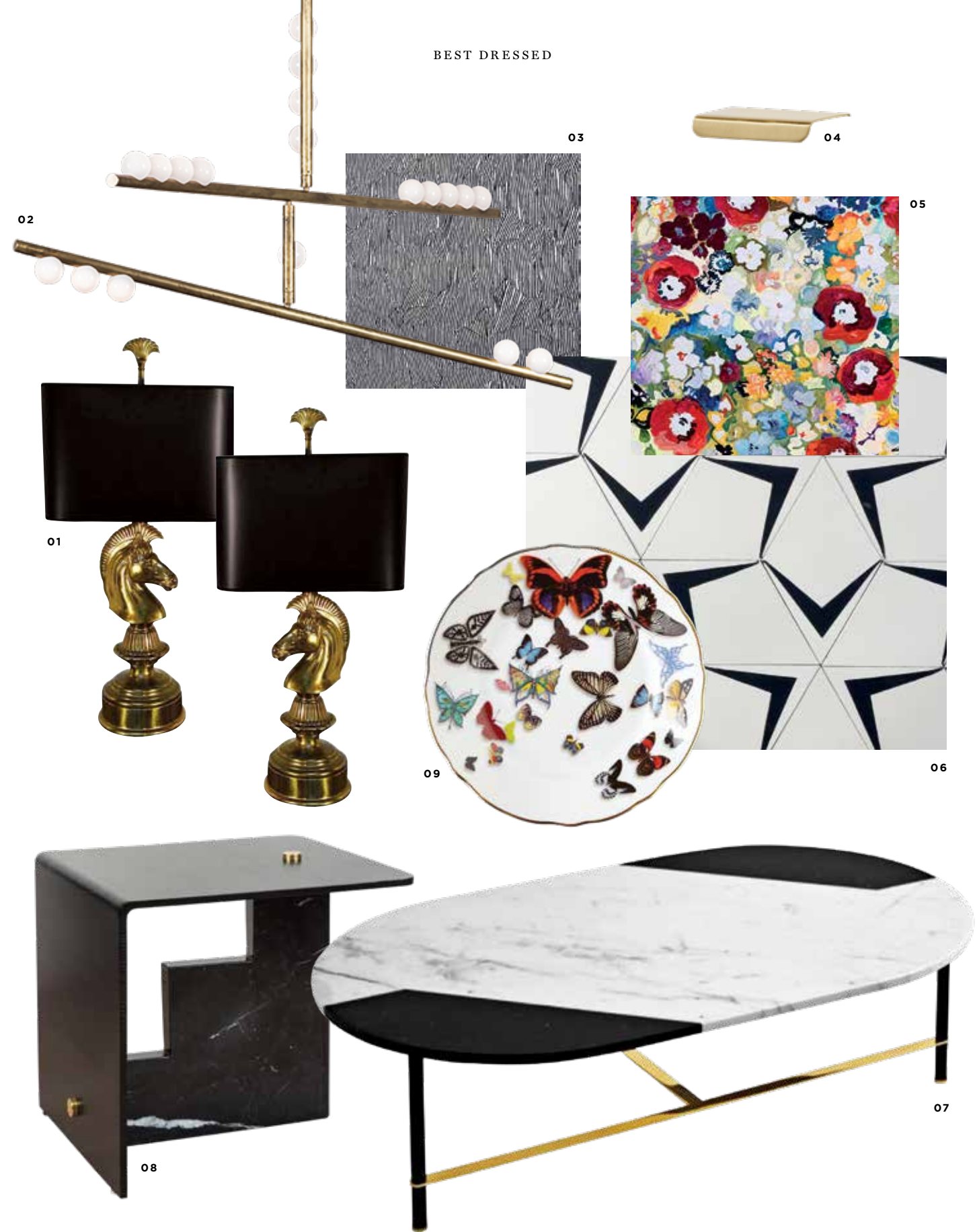
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A wallpaper whiz, Wittenbraker excels at playing up out-of-the-way nooks and smaller spaces with fun, impactful patterns—like the chic bar station.

Forager Wallpaper [17patterns.com](http://17patterns.com); Bella Goblets [casadeperrin.com](http://casadeperrin.com); Modern George Bust [jonathanadler.com](http://jonathanadler.com).

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01 Horse Head Lamps \$1,000 for pair [chairish.com](http://chairish.com) 02 Drop System Chandelier [lindseyadelman.com](http://lindseyadelman.com) 03 Avant Wallpaper [kellywearstler.com](http://kellywearstler.com)  
04 Drawer Edge Pulls from \$39 [rejuvenation.com](http://rejuvenation.com) 05 Poppy Wallpaper [voutsas.com](http://voutsas.com) 06 Soar B Tiles [pophamdesign.com](http://pophamdesign.com) 07 Black-and-White Inlaid Marble Coffee Table [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com) 08 Huxley Side Table \$2,050 [lawsonfenning.com](http://lawsonfenning.com) 09 Butterfly Parade Dinnerware by Christian Lacroix from \$65 [casadeperrin.com](http://casadeperrin.com)