

BY JULIE WESOLOWSKI

"I'm definitely not a fashionista; I don't keep track of current styles," says twenty-six-year-old furniture designer Patricia Schraven, sitting in her enormous Artspace artist loft that also doubles as a showroom for her meticulously hand-crafted pieces of furniture. Her loft is peppered with vintage, thrift, and found pieces of furniture, reflecting her eclectic style of mixing the old with the new, in addition to throwing in a bit of the unexpected for good measure.

Schraven studied sculpture at the University at Buffalo and furniture design at the Sheridan Institute outside of Toronto. Unlike many of her fellow art school grads who opted to start their careers in design-centric cities like New York or San Francisco, she went against the grain, coming back to Buffalo to focus on her work. Now her busy schedule is split between weekdays managing projects for Datesweiser Furniture, a custom office furniture company, and evenings and weekends at her studio in Buffalo's cobblestone district, designing and creating her own line of furniture.

Influenced heavily by mid-century Scandinavian design, Schraven designs and creates new furniture using old technologies, reappropriating the medium into different meaning. Her pieces span from layered veneered coffee tables with cutout detail to kaleido-



## STYLISH BY DESIGN: PATRICIA SCHRAVEN

WHETHER IT INVOLVES WEARING A COONSKIN CAP AS AN ACCESSORY OR A DRESS MADE ENTIRELY OF RECYCLED SWEATERS, HER PERSONAL STYLE IS EQUAL PARTS CAREFUL COMMENTARY AND PLAYFUL IRREVERENCE.



Photographed in her Artspace  
loft by KC Kratt.




scope-inspired walnut end tables with inlaid parquetry modeled after both Islamic mosque patterns and arts-and-crafts-style American quilts. Of her work she says, "I try to design more personal objects to convey meaning to people. There is often a lack of compassion, a missing imagination, and an absent emotion. I try to design some of that back into existence."

Early next year, Schraven is traveling to Brazil to study with Frederico and Humberto Campana, furniture designers known worldwide for working with ordinary, commonplace materials, bright colors, and mixed media. "They often use waste materials to create beautiful objects, and new materials to create strange ones," she explains of her interest in the Campana brothers' furniture-making philosophy.

Similar to the furniture she creates, when dressing she relies heavily on incorporating interesting materials in unusual contexts. Whether it involves wearing a coonskin cap as an accessory or a dress made entirely of recycled sweaters, her personal style is equal parts careful commentary and playful irreverence. "You want to have an element of sensation or spectacle but not go over the top," she says.

Schraven also credits the ornamentation and opulence of the Victorian, Baroque, and Art Nouveau eras for her flair for the dramatic. But as a child of the eighties, she explains that a lot of her wardrobe is anchored by punk pieces, including a favorite Vivienne Westwood skirt.

Whether she's designing furniture, decorating her apartment, or choosing what to wear, Schraven's vast and varied influences have led to a style decidedly all her own. "I guess you could call my style 'postmodern;' it's just an appropriation of many styles all at once, sometimes random, sometimes planned." 

*Julie Wesolowski is a Buffalo-based writer whose own style is focused around owning too many Marc Jacobs coats.*