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an afternoon with

REGINE BECHTLER

German-born and creatively-bred, Regine Bechtler is the ultimate creator. Infusing art, history, fashion, and design – each creation fascinating, unique, and packing its own marvelous story – Bechtler begets inspiration across artistic manifestos.

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FOUR sat down with fashion designer and artist Regine Bechtler in her enchanting, self-designed home and studio, spellbound with the intriguing creations within each. Her personality as welcoming, eclectic, and captivating as her surroundings, as she talked about her passion for individuality in décor and fashion, her unique line of jackets, and all things art, we could not help but be beside ourselves with inspiration.

What did you want to be when you grew up? My dream was to be a doctor. I guess this fixation came in handy for learning proportions and human anatomy for sculpting and painting later.

Favorite childhood memory: I saw my first mummy at seven years old, and was totally fascinated.

How would you describe your personal style? Very eclectic, slightly glam punk, artistic, different. I never want to come off as traditional or boring.

You travel a lot! Which place was most inspiring? Europe by far. I have the feeling that I'm exploding with ideas and have so much energy to take back with me.

Your artistic nature also led you to designing your home. How would you describe the space you've created? When I first moved into this house, the living room in particular just screamed "Versailles, Marie Antoinette, Rococo" for me. In general, however, I would describe my style as very eclectic, maybe a little eccentric, artistic, and a little bohemian.

Your home is designed literally from top to bottom – inspired by art, history, and a bit of everything! Talk to us about your selections in your living room. I have always liked warm colors, mixing a lot of different colors, and gold makes for a nice accent for warm colors. The coffer ceiling, the main focus in the living room, looked like 12 empty frames to me, so I got the idea to put up a classic painting, "The Garden of Earthly Delights", from one of our favorite Dutch painters, Hieronymus Bosch. I took this color scheme and designed the upholstery for the sofas. Since I love opposites, I put cowhides in as rugs to compliment the elegant sofas. My inspiration is obviously from museums, churches and castles I visited in Europe.



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Your studio is set against a beautifully rich green forest. How does nature inspire your work? I get to see all sorts of beautiful wildlife. I once saw a magnificent stag in front of my studio, so that inspired me to sculpt antlers on one of the skulls I made for my skull series. It's now even been reproduced out of bronze. I also often utilize leaves and bark for interesting textures and imprints. In the evening I can watch the local flock of wild turkeys go strutting by, which inspired me to make a human/bird hybrid, life-size sculpture.



Artists you admire? I like the great sculptors like Renoir, Henry Moore, Lynn Chadwick, Louise Bourgeois, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci. I also have several favorite painters like Dali, Max Ernst, Rene Magritte, Marcel Duchamp, Jean Arp, Yves Tanguy, and Francis Bacon.

An artist is always working on something! What are a couple of your current art projects? Finishing my collection of 13 different skulls, a wall sculpture, and a bunch of tabletop-sized sculptures.

What's next for you artistically? Since I've been working with the human shape, my next challenge is to make a life-size human sculpture. My dream is to sculpt a life-size "Iron Man".

There are a lot of sculptures around your home and studio. Which ones are most significant to you? My favorite right now is the chess game in our garden. It was a lot of fun to make and a very good friend helped me with the bases.

Most treasured thing you've ever made? A Chanel-inspired suit for my daughters when they were three years old.

Complete this sentence: I first fell in love with art when... I was a small child. My grandfather was an artist, my twin brother and I spent every summer with him in his studio. I fell in love with ceramics when I was six and made my first piece during summer camp. I still have this little dish.

What types of methods do you use in creating your sculptures? It is very seldom for me to use molds. I hand-build almost everything. My sculptures are one-of-a-kind, made using the coil technique, or by simply building them up and carefully shaping them one lump at a time.





ELLESHOPPING
ON THE GO

Singer
Ultrafeed
Zigzag
Model No. 152-1

ALGOON

Fans

Continental Cuisine



How do art and fashion intertwine in your life?
 Fashion and art are constantly intertwining my life. I once made a piece of art that was made of hundreds of ceramic flowers arranged in a composition that looked like a dress. I mounted it on a collage of images of “Le Monde” since it’s the city of love and fashion. I am lucky enough to get to travel very often, so I get a lot of ideas for art and fashion from wherever we go.

What is the significance of the name “Peace Jackets”? The name “Peace Jackets” developed

from putting individual pieces like patches, buttons and applications on the jackets. I work mainly with used uniforms from around the world and transform them, through my designs, into happier, aesthetically pleasing garments that draw one’s mind away from the darkness of war and toward the light and beauty of peace.

Talk to us about your decision and the creative process to make each jacket different. Why is that so important to you? First of all, I like to create wearable artwork with the jackets. Therefore,



each one is one of a kind and shouldn't ever be replicated. They are each unique, like a fingerprint. Also, the various patches and embellishments may have come from a finite source. There aren't any more patches exactly like that particular one, for example. Lastly, I am playing with the irony factor that the jacket was originally a uniform - a piece of clothing designed to make the wearer look exactly like the next person. Now, this jacket makes you stand out, instead of making you blend into the crowd.

Your jackets are like a collage of art representing little pieces of history and story. Tell us about some of the things you put on the jackets, and the significance they have. When I make a jacket, I like to customize it for that individual. If they are musicians, I put something related to the music world on it. In jackets I've made for the runway, I've put strong statement patches on them like "We kill for peace". Putting this on a very feminine jacket creates a very ironic image. Or I sew the original army patches on upside down with red silk roses and leather barbwire attached. This juxtaposes the idealism behind military advertising and the painful and brutal reality of an army job.

What's next for you as a fashion designer? My dream would be to be in New York Fashion week, but for now I'm just building up my client base.

What do you love most about Charlotte? It's an up and coming city where everything is still possible and we are all directly involved in developing it into the artistic metropolis it could become.

How can people see or get some of your art, sculptures or peace jackets? Right now one of my ceramic sculptures is at the New Gallery of Modern Art. They should call or email me to set up an appointment. I'm also in the process of creating a new website. **4**

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