

BACK TO BLACK

Fashion designer Jerry Shai-Sarig's new apartment was inspired by a bottle of perfume

By Yuval Sa'ar / Photos by David Bachar

One prominent aspect of the apartment belonging to fashion designer Jerry Shai-Sarig is the dramatic effect of the color black, which is dominant in the seating area, the lighting fixtures, the wall closet that stretches along the width of the living room, and even the owner's clothing. "Sometimes I have splashes of color, it depends on my mood, but usually it's black," she says with a smile. "When I was a student I was very colorful, I didn't have a single black item in my closet, but that stage is over. It reached its expiration date."

Shai-Sarig, 40, disagrees with the argument that this is not suitable for a residence. "It's me. It looks very dramatic, but when you live here it becomes part of your life. For example, it has a calming effect on me, and it always looks clean, even if it isn't," she laughs. "I always say maybe we'll add a spot of color, but in the end everything remains black and white. There's one spot of color," she recalls, "in the guest bathroom. There's a purple shelf there. And there's color in the children's rooms too."

Other prominent features of the apartment are its dimensions and interior division. The apartment measures 250 square meters (not including a balcony of 33 square meters), and it is divided into three parts. In the center is a living room, including a seating area with heavy leather furniture, and an impressive, well-equipped kitchen, which together take up about half the total area. On the right side is the children's wing, which has two bedrooms, a bathroom, shower and play area; and on the left of the entrance is the parents' wing, which includes a bedroom with a glass wall separating it from the bathroom and stall shower.

Architect Pitsou Kedem was in charge of the interior design. "Although I'm now in the fashion world, I studied architecture, and not only is it a field that greatly interests me, I saw projects of his and I was simply amazed," says Shai-Sarig. "I knew that if and when we moved, he would be the one to design the apartment. He's amazingly talented and super-professional, and above all he's also a wonderful person."

"His style suited us. Already during the first meeting, even before we did the planning, we said that we wanted space and a lot of open areas in the house. The initial design of the building also dictated a clear division of the central area and two wings on the sides. I remember that I came to the meeting with Pitsou with a bottle of Lanvin perfume. I showed him the bottle and said to him 'You see the bottle, that's how I want the house.' It was a purple-black bottle and I let him smell it, and that's how the house looks. Ram, my husband, thought it was very funny, but Pitsou understood. That's how I design, too."

Shai-Sarig studied architecture and product design at the WIZO College of Design in Haifa, and completed her studies in 1998. She then worked in set design, and occasionally designed costumes as well. After a few years she went to Amsterdam to work on an exhibition and stayed there for about two years. When she returned to Israel, circumstances led her to the fashion world.

"That was at the start of the 21st century, and after two years as a salaried





The seating and kitchen areas: pipe-shaped lighting fixtures above the kitchen table create a visual separation.

The long closet wall in the center of the apartment, comprising dozens of rectangular storage units.



Seeing red (above): A touch of color in one of the children's rooms. The open plan kitchen (right) and bathroom (below). The apartment always looks clean, even if it isn't.

worker, during which I learned the entire technical aspect, public relations and fashion illustrations, I realized that it didn't suit me to work for someone else. In 2005 I opened a store on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv. Everything I wear is what I design. You could call it stylish street fashion; these aren't evening clothes, but clothes that I or any woman over 30 can wear around the clock.

"Since then, you could say that fashion is my life. I live and breathe fashion 24 hours a day for good and for ill; it's the essence of my life. Although I started sewing at a very young age, only later did I understand that that's what I wanted, and since then I've come to accept that. I love the relatively immediate satisfaction involved in working for a few months on each collection. The moment the model is ready, producing the item of clothing is quite a rapid process. The immediate satisfaction is lots of fun, and there's also the encounter with clients that makes me happy and provides me with the reinforcement to continue what I'm doing. I love the tension, having my finger on the pulse all the time, knowing what's going on, although it's hard to be creative all the time.

"The situation in Israel and worldwide is tense in any case, but over time I've learned how to get away from that and get back to routine. For example, a month ago I was supposed to be ready with my summer collection, and I got stuck. I don't know why, something didn't flow. I took a week off, I walked around mainly in toy stores, and somehow it worked out. In one day I was able to do what I hadn't done in a month of work. That's how it is in every creative field; sometimes you become overextended, but the idea is not to be pressured, to flow somehow; it works out in the end."

Shai-Sarig moved into her present apartment six months ago with her husband, Ram, who works in computers, and their two sons: Ian, 5, and Lee, 16 months. Bella, "the amazing and wonderful dog," a 10-year-old Great Dane, moved with them. The family used to live on David Hamelekh Boulevard in Tel Aviv. "We lived in a lovely apartment that overlooked the boulevard, but we wanted a slightly larger apartment and we also wanted to change our style. There we had a parquet floor; it was something else entirely.

"When we looked for a new apart-



'I CAME TO THE MEETING WITH PITSOU WITH A BOTTLE OF LANVIN PERFUME. I SAID, "YOU SEE THE BOTTLE, THAT'S HOW I WANT THE HOUSE." IT WAS A PURPLE-BLACK BOTTLE AND I LET HIM SMELL IT, AND THAT'S HOW THE HOUSE LOOKS.'



The master bathroom. The lack of separation reflects the family's life.



was out walking one morning at 6 A.M. There was a small sign for boutique residences. I phoned immediately, they got back to us, we made an appointment, they sent the simulation and I told Ram that we were going to live here, that it was definitely going to be our home. The simulation was of the penthouse, with no relation to the apartments, but it looked amazing." Their apartment, which faces north, is located on Antokolsky Street on the fourth floor of a new eight-story residential building.

As someone who likes to cook, it was important to her that the kitchen be a central part of the house. "I cook a lot, and this way I can see the entire house; you can see everything happening in it. There aren't too many complicated things here, it's very simple, and that's one of the great things about Pitsou's design. The house is very simple, very smart, and living here is very pleasant. If the children are playing and they want quiet, they close the glass doors, and that way it's quiet, but we can see them."

The main element in the design of the central part of the home is a long wall that is one large closet, whose doors are composed of dozens of rectangular units that are alternately embedded and prominent. To the obvious question as to

whether she knows what there is in each section, Shai-Sarig replies: "It took me a little time, but yes, today I already know what there is in each closet."

To the left of the front door is the kitchen, which includes a large island with a table and eight chairs attached to it, and above them eight pipe-shaped lighting fixtures. The play between heights creates a visual separation between the kitchen and the seating area. Beyond the kitchen is the bedroom. The glass doors that separate it from the bathroom block the noise, but not the light or the views between one space and another.

"The fact that it's open and there's no separation reflects our life: an open mind, we have no secrets, we don't conceal anything. In any case, the children enter our room when I'm in the bathtub, so why shouldn't it be comfortable for them," says Shai-Sarig with a smile.

"I've become so accustomed to the house, and it's not at all a magazine-type house," she sums up. "Children come here, my son's friends come, they're crazy about the house because they can play soccer here, they simply run around the living room. On the other hand I'm obsessive about neatness; when they aren't playing, everything is stored inside the black wall. I don't like to see things outside. I really don't."

ment we had very clear boundaries: Jabotinsky Street to the north and Hashofitim Street to the south. Although we're not fans of high-rise apartments, I found this project by chance when I