

MOMENT

UPTOWN STATEMENT STYLE FOR SPRING IN THE CITY GIRL

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THE FINE PRINT

“I love print, I love pattern, I love colour, I love joy...”
La DoubleJ’s JJ Martin talks life, laughter and lighting
up your home as MOJEH steps inside the fashion and
interior designer’s Italian abode...

INTERVIEW BY SOPHIA SERIN

An accomplished journalist turned entrepreneur and designer, cultivated Californian JJ Martin is a triple threat of the best kind. Her innate style made the 40-something a social media megastar, with Martin influencing women of all ages in the art of wearing (and clashing) prints with confidence. With the ability to marry her American confidence with European chic, the famed editor waved goodbye to her life in publishing and launched La DoubleJ in 2015. Since then, Martin has been refashioning our wardrobes (and now our homes) with her crowd-pleasing, fearless style philosophies.

“Our mission at La DoubleJ is not to just sell a woman a dress or a tablecloth, but to wrap our arms around her, uplift her soul and help her feel a million bucks in all aspects of her life,” explains Martin. “I’m actually happier if I can get her to start meditating, introduce her to a new pranayama breath technique, hook her up with an energy healer, get her to open her heart space and put her in touch with her intuition — all of which have been topics of the many live and Zoom events that La DoubleJ has hosted for free in the last few years.

“My *Spirit Tickle* newsletter takes our community on my latest spiritual adventures with nuggets of wisdom and soul hacks from my tried and tested teachers and healers. We aim to connect with other women who are also seeking something deeper, and in this way we create and nurture a community,” she adds.

Martin’s holistic approach runs through every aspect of her life. A true artist, the lines are blurred between home and work, with her job a natural extension of the creative. Based in Milan, Martin’s home is a haven, housing her most precious pieces from her travels. To the design novice wondering where to start, Martin offers this sage advice: “It’s really important to create harmony with your colours and prints because you don’t want to feel like you’re living in visual chaos. Start slowly: introduce one thing, live with it, see how you feel. All of this is very intuitive. There aren’t straight rules when it comes to decorating or designing your personal space, it comes from your gut. Every time you look at an object or walk into a room you should feel good inside. That’s your internal test. I always encourage people to start small so they don’t get overwhelmed, especially if they don’t have any print in their house. It’s really easy to start with pillows or blankets on beds to just add special touches to an already minimal or monotone environment. Lamps are also a great way to add an accent.”

A mirror of her life, Martin’s home unites her love for vintage pieces and contemporary muses, with spaces for mediation, work and welcoming loved ones.

“The house is both very old and very new. I have a mix of vintage pieces that I’ve found and a lot of really modern things,” says Martin. “What’s cool about Milan is that it’s not a baroque town like Venice, Rome or Florence. It has a very important history of mid-century design, which is super clean. ☺



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Designer JJ Martin

Technically, my home is 'complete' but to me my homes are never done. I'm always looking to refresh, to peel things back, to remold. My bedroom was once a light celery colour which I've now totally transformed with a deep, earthy clay mood. It's just about allowing the deeper layers of the house to express themselves. There are always more opportunities to play with the space, particularly when it comes to entertaining. I like to convert the little nook in my living room into a dining room, getting creative with mix-matching our homeware collections.”

Always feeling her way through her projects, Martin's designs come from her heart, instinct and via her intrinsic sense of knowing what works on first sight.

“When I see a print or pattern I like I get really excited, my heart starts thumping, I get a buzz of energy and I know we have to do whatever it is I am looking at,” she smiles. “It's an internal oven that turns on. For the Roman Holiday collection we developed a collection of prints in-house inspired by Rome's baroque domed architecture that I love exploring on a busy day in the city to zone out and reflect, as well as a serene dove motif that symbolizes peace and feels just right for now. I love print, I love pattern, I love colour, I love joy.”

LIFESTYLE

Describe an average day in your life.

I wake up and meditate, do my invocations and my prayers, then feed the dog and take her to the park, which gets me into nature first thing. Doing this intention-setting is really instrumental for me. After my dog walk I might do yoga or Pilates, then ideally I like to dedicate the morning to my spiritual writing, but it doesn't always happen. Whether I am in the office or travelling, I start meeting after meeting with my different teams. I don't usually eat lunch at a restaurant, I like to make my own lunch of vegetables and brown rice. At 3:30pm every day I do another meditation for 10 minutes, max, to break up the day. More meetings in the afternoon, and then I like to get some sort of exercise. In the evening I love to entertain at home and host my friends for aperitivo or dinner.

What is your favourite room in the house?

My meditation room. I have a room that is technically a bedroom with no furniture except for an altar and a bookshelf. I had the whole room painted midnight blue and the ceiling painted in a star constellation with gold leaf by a friend of mine who specializes in fresco work to replicate the Byzantine churches in Ravenna. I am crazy about Byzantine art and Italian churches, especially Sicilian baroque. This is like having my own temple space in the home, the place where I have my morning practice, yoga, meditation, and where I lead energy healing groups. It feels like a space that's not asking anything of me and is there to give me something.

What are your most treasured art works?

The wallpaper in the dining room is actually an artwork painted and designed by the artist Kirsten Synge based on some collages that I found in Bali. I gave them to the artist and she created this incredible reinterpretation of it. Then we printed that on to paper and had it custom designed for the space in my dining room. It is the most joyful, exuberant pattern and colour play — she even added my dog in the corner of the design. It is sort of like the room itself has been surrounded in artwork.

Where do you like to shop for your house?

For bar glasses I love Hermès — they do these etched glasses that are great for cocktails. I get pots and pans from All-clad, which weigh a ton and are so hefty they make you feel like you are a legitimate cook. I'm really excited about La DoubleJ's new collection of hand-blown striped glass vases made in Murano which I place around the white surfaces in my apartment for an easy pop of color. Fornasetti are the ultimate for candles.

“Truly focusing on something that I genuinely love and am excited by is the thing that has helped me most with creating La DoubleJ”



Do you collect anything?

I'm crazy about vintage jewellery, which I display on my bathroom wall, and vintage chairs and glass objects. I'm not looking for fancy pedigree pieces, I literally just look for shapes that are very unique.

Where do you eat at home?

Surrounded by the artwork in my dining room with Pepper, my pug. Since I'm from California, a salad with lots of ingredients is my go-to dish. An Italian salad tends to be just lettuce and olive oil if you're lucky. My family thing is to bring out a salad that is super flavourful and packed with loads of ingredients like avocado, orange, toasted pine nuts, red onion, feta and fresh dill.

If you could have a home anywhere where would that be?

The island of Pantelleria is the dream but I am also scoping regions of Sicily. My goal is to find an old convent and turn it into a retreat centre — it needs to have a view, water, we need caves too, so it's a tall order. I would also live in a treehouse in Bali tomorrow.

What items hold the most memories?

I'd say the items in my Meditation Room and on my altar hold the most memories for me. Those are charged up with a lot of meaning and personal significance. Energetically, emotionally, spiritually — whether it's crystals, certain shamanic tools or images of important figures in my life and beyond. I have some really special sacred objects from my two trips through Egypt this year.

What has been your career highlight to date?

It's almost impossible to pin it down to one thing. Knowing that today we are a totally profitable, privately held company with 65 employees is a great source of pride as we're still such a young company. That organizations like Attagamma are recognizing us with design awards, and big global brands like Acqua di Parma, Kartell, La Durée and The Socialite Family are coming to us to collaborate with them. This year we got to completely redesign the lounge space of Lake Como's most luxurious hotel, Passalacqua. I never imagined I would have a company that would have that recognition and profile, it's so exciting. ☺



Martin's clothing collections are perfectly reflective of her eclectic Italian lifestyle. Here the designer is photographed with her pug Pepper



La DoubleJ is proudly designed and produced in Italy, supporting its artisans and making for one very big happy Italian family. Having this Made in Italy stamp is all-important for the designer, as she explains the short but important history behind the brand

"The La DoubleJ world has always been a love letter to Italy, from shouting about the legendary ladies of Milan to shining a light on our all-Italian roster of suppliers and artisans that we continue to support in an era when so many have decamped to Asia," says Martin. "We are 100 per cent made in Italy, and it's the backbone of my company. It's a guarantee of quality, craftsmanship, passion and good values, as workers are treated well. In our new homeware collection, all of our porcelain is crafted with painstaking precision by Ancap in Verona. Our table linens are crafted by the Como-based textile house Mascioni and all our glassware is hand-blown by the Murano glass masters Salviati in Verona."

When not working, Martin is living her best Milanese life, and can be seen starting her days with her pet pug Pepper.

"Usually I take my dog for a walk in Giardini Pubblici, Pepper loves all the Roman ruins in the centre of the park, or I go to yoga," shares Martin. "Truly, my free time is spent in a non-social way. I used to be a very social animal and would be out five nights a week. Now I barely go out one night a week.

"I love to read and work on my writing, and sometimes I'll do it at Pasticceria Cucchi, my home away from home. It used to be my office when I was a journalist and since then we have done lots of takeovers with La DoubleJ. They are like family, I love that place," she smiles.

When it comes to shopping, Martin prefers vintage stores and markets every time: "You'll always find me rummaging through the Naviglio market on the last weekend of the month or vintage shops like Madame Pauline and Cavalli e Nastri. We have an ever-expanding *Milan Guide* on Ladoublej.com that has all my favourite must-go-to restaurants, shops, cultural hotspots and secret places around the city."

With La DoubleJ now having a firm cult following, a pack of A-list collabs and boutiques popping up from Milan to Dubai, Martin has come a long way since shooting and selling vintage clothes online (another of her past dabblings). When asked the secret of her success, Martin believes that loving what you do makes all the difference.

"Truly focusing on something that I genuinely love and am excited by is the thing that has helped me most with creating La DoubleJ," she says. "Back when I first started photographing and selling vintage, those clothes deeply excited me. I'd jump up and down when I found them. And I think that's what transmits to people. There has to be some soul and heartbeat and that all comes from truly loving it."



PERSONAL STYLE

Describe your style?

Piled-on joy! It's really a reflection of my inner world of creativity, which is quite unconventional in the sense that I love wackiness and playfulness and then I love sober seriousness. Let's just say, I put things together that most people wouldn't put together. That's what I do at my company, La DoubleJ — the ingredients are unusual.

What is your definition of 'style'?

The true mark of style is finding your own imprint and not being sanctioned by anyone else. Sometimes I'm wacky, sometimes I'm woowoo, sometimes I'm extremely sophisticated — it's all very feeling-based.

What are your can't-live-without La DoubleJ clothing essentials?

If you're in Milan, you can't wear trainers and sweatpants — this is not a dressed down city, even the women on bicycles wear their Prada skirts and kitten heels. The Milanese *scuire* [wealthy women] have amazing outerwear so our new printed Milano Trench Coat is an absolute essential for everything from my dog walking schlep to Bar Basso cocktails. The Swing Dress was our first ever design for La DoubleJ and I still love it because it is such a versatile wardrobe piece. Weddings, cocktails, work — I've worn it everywhere.


And jewellery?

Vintage jewellery has always been my thing — a big necklace or piles of chunky bracelets — but nowadays I don't leave the house without our Soul Pendant necklace. It has a big square Rose Quartz stone at its centre, which is a fiercely feminine stone associated with the heart and throat chakra and drenched in healing properties. I like to keep it close to my heart.

Which brands do you love?

1970s-era Yves Saint Laurent and Oscar De La Renta because they both had this incredible blend of romanticism, femininity and glamour, as well as optimism and joy with their colours and prints. That's a hard combination!

What is the last thing you bought?

A pair of Chloé boots with built in socks. 



Milano Trench coat; Soul pendant necklace; Swing dress