



In her mother's shoes: Minty steals a pair from one of her mother's more than 1,000 pairs. Dresses, **Vera Wang**. Shoes, **Jimmy Choo**.

Mellon started looking at places "on a whim, just to see what was available" in 2008 with then-boyfriend Christian Slater. Though that relationship fizzled, Mellon was still thinking New York was a good move. She says everything in her life was pushing her to New York: Her friends were in New York and L.A., and Minty's father, with whom Mellon has what she describes as "a great relationship," lives on the Upper East Side. She first looked downtown, but then her broker brought her to a place that seemed oddly familiar. "This place is exactly the same as my apartment was in London," she says. "My old apartment building in London was a school that was converted into an apartment, and this was too. It was the original Lycée Français in New York."

Before she gave herself a chance to fully contemplate the hassle of a transatlantic move, she bought the place. "I can remember thinking, Well, it looks like I'm going. But if I had thought about what it was going to take to get here and to set up our lives here, I don't know if I would have done it," she jokes. The apartment sat empty for almost a year, and she started to put it together last summer. If she had to describe what she was going for, she'd call it "my own signature look, something that is both modern and old and glamorous, a bit of '70s but a bit minimal."

Traces of the tough Tamara show up in the several tasked accents throughout the home, in both oversize sculptures and the legs of her wide glass desk. The apartment features sexually provocative images from artists like contemporary Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki and 1960s Swinging London photographer Jim Lee; in the formal sitting room, six large-scale photographs from Guido Mocafico of vibrantly colored coiled snakes are displayed above the couch. In the entry, there is an original Terence Koh installation that reads LOVE FOR ETERNITY in neon lights. It's a piece Mellon commissioned at a dinner party one night in New York, telling the artist he had a week to create and install it.

"Last year was the best and worst year of my life, a breakthrough year for me"

Keeping it neutral in the master bedroom



In the upstairs sitting room, there is a Warhol silkscreen of the ultimate lady's lady, Grace Kelly, which Mellon bought the same way she buys all her art: on impulse. "I never plan to buy a piece of art," she says. "I buy it in the moment. When you get divorced, you have to go through this awful thing of listing everything you own. When you actually sit down and write the list, you realize that the only good investments are art and property." In the kitchen, there's a Jean-Michel Basquiat painting, which she has put onto a track and can be rolled away to reveal a flat-screen television.

But the sharp edges of high art and glam minimalism are softened by her daughter's presence. Throughout the house, Minty's sketches are both framed and taped straight onto the walls, including a no-smoking sign she made her mother when she was trying to give up nicotine. "My one last vice," Mellon sighs. Minty's playroom was the previous occupant's dining room, but Mellon outfitted it with a tea set, a pink tent, and a wall of pictures of Minty playing dress-up. Recently, Mellon says, "I asked Minty if she would like to dress up as a princess, and she said, 'No. That was so two years ago.'" Spoken like a true budding fashion fanatic, a spot-on real-life illustration of proverbial acorns and trees. Minty may be only a few years away from stealing into her mother's closet, where Mellon houses a selection of her more than 1,000 pairs of Jimmy Choos in all manner of heights, shapes, styles, and colors. More likely she'll be encouraged to snap up what she likes. That is if all goes as planned. "They're all a size 37.5," Mellon says, fear on her face. "And I'm sure Minty is going to be taller than me. I'm sure she'll have bigger feet than me, so what am I going to do with all these?" ■

There's an almost cinematic charm to the upper part of the Upper East Side, a glittering chunk of city blocks so immaculate, they must be the work of a set designer. The scene on this particular spring afternoon is straight out of a movie: a little girl in her private-school uniform skipping down a street lined with cherry blossoms until an ice cream truck's chimes can be heard in the distance. "Mummy, Mummy!" she shouts—because the only thing cuter than a skipping little girl in a private-school uniform is one with an English accent—as she breaks into a sprint when she sees her fresh-faced, well-tanned mother hopping out of an SUV in her spandex gym clothes. "Can I please? Can I? Please!"

Mummy is Tamara Mellon, the founder and chief creative officer of the supersuccessful accessories company Jimmy Choo, and that little charmer is Aunamia, or Minny, her eight-year-old daughter with ex-husband Matthew Mellon. It's a typical day for Mellon, who has raced home from a full day of meetings and a workout with famous physique specialist Tracy Anderson in order to be there when her daughter gets out of school. Being a modern mummy and entrepreneur is a constant juggling act. And sometimes the balls just drop. Earlier this year, she was stranded in London by the volcanic ash, forcing her to miss Minny's first New York birthday party. "It was terrible but a good lesson in humility. We're still at God's mercy. You couldn't buy yourself out," she says, handing over a \$20 bill to the ice cream man for a treat for Minny. "I still feel guilty for missing that one."

This is Mellon's new New York life, and this is her new New York pad. Choosing the idyllic neighborhood in which she lives was a deliberate move, both geographically and emotionally. Put delicately, Mellon's past few years have not been a walk in Central Park; put bluntly, after her father's death, a very public divorce, and most recently a trip to court to sue her own mother (Mellon admits that she is estranged from her family), she was ready for a change of pace.

"Last year was the best and worst year of my life, a breakthrough year for me," Mellon explains. "I've moved here and managed to clear up a lot of the wreckage. I feel like I've arrived in New York with a clean slate, and I have a whole new set of challenges ahead of me. And I find that invigorating."

Now inside, Mellon props herself up on a plush white sofa in the penthouse apartment, which is currently drenched in a Manhattan sunset coming in through three walls of windows. It's shocking how unguarded and jovial she is in person. She has a hearty, contagious laugh that comes straight from the gut, accompanied by a wide, twinkly-eyed smile. "I think the public perception of me and the reality are two completely different things," she says, reaching into a candy

jar arranged on the mirrored coffee table, where she's rested her bare feet. (She must enjoy playing the tough temptress, though. Earlier this year, Terry Richardson photographed her for a magazine reclining on this very couch, smoking a cigarette and wearing nothing but a pair of Jimmy Choo's and a strategically placed kitten. "I wonder what they'll say at the next board meeting," she demurred at the time.)

"I've actually been told, when someone sits and spends time with me, that I'm not the person they thought I would be," she says. She adds that there is still a stigma to a woman who is successful in business. "If a woman gets tough in negotiations, she's difficult, whereas a man would be considered a brilliant businessman. Of course, there have been moments in my career when I've had to be tough and I've had to step up to the plate—but usually that's because a man has underestimated me." She smiles and lets out that belly laugh. "But other than that, I wouldn't say I'm a tough person."

Mellon is quick to point out that her stiletto empire wasn't built on a professional whim or sexual prowess, as has been alleged. "I've paid my dues in this business," she says. She started working when she was 18 at the London fashion emporium Browns. "At the time, I thought, 'Why am I doing this? I hate this!' But the lesson I learned was so valuable: I learned retail." After being a shopgirl, she worked at a PR firm, then in the London office of *Wired* magazine, and was finally brought to British Vogue to work in the accessories department. That's when she met Jimmy Choo, an East End cobbler, and the rest is a fashion fairy tale. "But still, when someone asks about a career in fashion, I say start at the bottom," she says. "If you want to start a business, you have to know it from the ground up."

The dichotomy between the stern, sexy professional and the gregarious, fun-loving girlfriend is apparent in the decoration of Mellon's new apartment, which she bought in July 2008 and moved into about a year later. L.A.-based interior designer Martyn Lawrence-Bullard spearheaded the apartment's transformation from a white-walled series of boxes into the working woman's bachelorette pad that Mellon envisioned. "What I like about Martyn is that he can take your look, digest it, and then magnify it by a hundred," she explains. ▶



A shot of Mellon's apartment, living room.



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The dining table is set.



Interior designer Martyn Lawrence-Bullard executed Mellon's design vision in the formal sitting room.

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Wild at heart. Minty and her
mom stand out in animal prints
in the formal sitting room.
Gown, \$3,255, **Blumarine**,
neimanmarcus.com. Earrings,
\$1,025, **Gabrielle Sanchez**.
Bracelets, **Pomellato**.
Shoes, \$695, **Jimmy Choo**.
Dress (on Minty), **Crewcuts**.



Mellon and her daughter, Minty, laugh it up in the entry, which is decorated with a Terence Koh neon-light installation. Dress, \$765, **Diane von Furstenberg**, 646-486-4800. Bracelet (top), \$320, **Eddie Borgo**. Bracelet (bottom), \$6,630, **Ann Dexter-Jones Design**. Shoes, \$1,095, **Jimmy Choo**. Dress (on Minty), **Kicokids**. Sunglasses, Minty's and Tamara's own.

A FASHIONABLE LIFE

TAMARA MELLON

The sexy, stylish founder of Jimmy Choo shoes opens the doors to her new New York lair and life

Text by DEREK BLASBERG

Photographs by DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN

Six framed glossy snake photographs by Guido Maestri hang overhead as the sultry Tamara Mellon takes a break from her hectic life. Dress, \$2,690, and belt, \$490. Oscar de la Renta. Brown Moccas, \$68-98-473. Ring, \$175. Earrings, \$150. Jimmy Choo. 800-4-CHOO-USA. Fashion editor: Amanda Ross





Charmed: Mellon and her daughter smile at their fairy-tale life. Gown, \$5,590, and belt, **Carolina Herrera**, 212-249-6552. Bracelets, \$4,855-\$6,430, **Ann Dexter-Jones Design**. Shoes, \$1,250, **Jimmy Choo**. Costume, Minty's own. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Hair: **Ashley Javier** for **Kérastase Paris**; makeup: **Talia Shobbrook** for **Nars Cosmetics**; manicure: **Tatyana Molot** for **Essie**; prop styling: **Chelsea Maruskin**.