

[LOOK WHO'S TALKING]

# APRÈS SKI

NICOLE PORELL TRADES BLACK DIAMONDS FOR OIL PAINTINGS AND DESIGNER FABRIC.

By Jennifer Sergent | Photography by Greg Powers | Photographed at J. Lambeth & Company

The slope from ski racing to interior design might not be straight, but Nicole Porell ([nicoleporell.com](http://nicoleporell.com)) has relished its twists and turns. First, the design details: Porell started her own business in 2013, after several years of apprenticing for local A-list designers such as Mary Douglas Drysdale and Camille Saum. She'll go one step further in April, launching an online design shop, [helenstrest.com](http://helenstrest.com), named after her newborn daughter.

"I'm heavily influenced by the way my clients live," Porell says of her urban aesthetic. "I like to balance a rough and refined look. I like to have naturally hewn pieces next to something modern."

It wasn't so long ago that naturally hewn might have referred to the evergreens she flew by as a competitive skier—first at the Stratton Mountain School and then the University of Colorado at Boulder.

She took a break from skiing to study fashion in New York and interior design in Los Angeles. "Fashion and interior design go hand in hand," says Porell, who got a taste of both while working retail and dressing the windows at ABS by Allen Schwartz in Santa Monica.

But burgeoning career paths are rarely direct, and Porell's was no exception. She left California to go back home, where she quickly returned to the slopes, traveling the country to promote SSKI, a startup maker of ski wax. "I would ski all day and then do demonstrations at night," she says of the heady lifestyle, which included filming commercials in Vail. "Skiing actually ended up paying off."

Fast-forward to DC, where she lives with her husband, Mark, and is lining up young, city-dwelling parents like herself as new clients. She's on the hunt for handmade accessories, streamlined furniture and local artists to feature on her new site. Every stop along the way, she notes, has contributed to where she is now, whether it's helping someone choose a new frock, improve ski performance or find that perfect modern piece for a living room. "I love clients. I love retail. I love working with people and helping them find what they need."

## PORELL'S HOTS

Glazed linen, American made, Virginia wine, one of a kind, monogramming, embroidery

## PORELL'S NOTS

Out-of-scale furnishings, clutter, all my heels collecting dust, baked potato chips, parking tickets