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Lisa Frantz ^[1]



*By Sian Ballen & Lesley Hauge
Photographs by Jeff Hirsch*

Lisa Frantz together with her business partner, **Lydia Marks**, were, what Lisa calls “work friends” and now calls “proper friends” which, interestingly enough, came to pass when they founded their own design business, Marks & Frantz. Prior to that, they had both crossed paths while working extensively in set design for television, music videos and film, notably creating sets for what are apparently called “style-driven” films such as *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Sex and the City* (the closets!). Interior design projects became a natural extension of their set design work when producers, directors and actors started asking them to design interiors for their own houses. While Lydia continues with some set design, Lisa now focuses solely on what we guess can only be called “real life interiors”.

So you’re living the Brooklyn Dream—it’s like that Target ad! [An ad filmed in

Clinton Hill townhouse]

Yes. I feel like I'm the Target ad.

Do you feel like a "Brooklyn person"?

You know you would have had to drag me kicking and screaming to Brooklyn until I was pregnant with my daughter. We were living on Lexington Avenue—it was the classic single floor of a brownstone ... it cost us nothing, like \$1000 and we were like, "We're going to stay here forever! It's the deal of the century!" And then I got pregnant and my little dorm-sized refrigerator wasn't going to do it and hauling my laundry to the Laundromat wasn't going to do it.



Lisa's Clinton Hill townhouse.

I can't remember when it became intensely desirable to have a renovated brownstone in Brooklyn. When I moved to Brooklyn in 1998, our friends felt sorry for us because we weren't in Manhattan.

I started dating my husband when I was about 24 and he had all these friends here from when he studied at Pratt. We wouldn't go to their parties; we wouldn't go to their dinner parties. We were such Manhattan snobs!

Let's talk about how you got started in Manhattan.

When I first got out of college, I worked for *Cosmo* [magazine] as a beauty assistant.

Was Helen Gurley Brown still around?

She was. I felt very lucky that I actually got to meet her and she loved the beauty department. She could care less about the fashion but she *loved* the articles about how to make your boobs look bigger and how to make your lips pouty-er. That was her thing, clearly.



The former parlor floor is now an open living/dining /kitchen space. Both the console and the pastel were purchased from Miles Redd at Housing Works event *Design on a Dime*.



A pair of vintage slipper chairs upholstered in lilac velvet from Lee Jofa flanks a vintage Milo Baughman table. The steel and brass hanging fixture is by Lou Blass from Ad Lib Antiques in Hudson, New York.



In the main seating area a Chippendale-style mirror from The Antique and Artisan Center in Stamford hangs above an original marble fireplace mantel. The Matthews & Parker fire screen was purchased from Décor NYC, a designer consignment store in NYC. The

bamboo silk carpet is from JD Staron.



An iron side table from Mecox Gardens is beside a sofa purchased from Restoration Hardware. The pillows are covered in a Lee Jofa fabric and the curtains in Brochier fabric, are from Angela Brown and fabricated by Marks & Tavano.



Looking across the 1930s smoked glass table towards a flat screen TV. Lisa designed the living room to be both elegant and functional.



A pair of pelicans from The Antique & Artisan Center in Stamford stands near a custom lacquer bookcase from New York Custom Interior Woodcraft.

You studied journalism, right? Did you just pretend to have an interest in beauty products?

I didn't care. I just wanted to be writing for a magazine. I had been at college in Boulder, Colorado for four years living the hippy dippy lifestyle—I mean I never gave up my mascara—and then when I graduated from college, I went right back into city mode. Anyway, the job was fun but I didn't love the whole culture of magazines.

Why not?

Well, I think it's probably different now but everyone had been on staff for about 150 years; they all came in around two and they worked until ten and they had these liquid lunches. They were all women and they expected you to do all the work and stay until midnight. But I loved shooting the pages and because we had no budget, I got to do things like prop styling. I was often doing everything. The freelancers all worked in many mediums and they said I should try television and that I would love it. So I quit my job and went to work on a movie as an assistant.





On the far wall, is a work by artist Larry Pittman.



A table by Christian Liaigre from Holly Hunt is used for both casual dining and more formal occasions. The banquette is from Jan Showers and is covered in a fabric by Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks; both were purchased from the designer consignment store, Décor NYC. The side chairs are vintage, from ABC Carpet & Home.



Lisa outfitted her kitchen with custom oak cabinets by New York Custom Interior Woodcraft, Carrera marble countertops from ABC Stone and a herringbone limestone backsplash from Artistic Tile. The ceiling fixture is from Remains Lighting.





The view from the kitchen.





A view from the kitchen across the dining area into the living room. Once a compartmentalized parlor floor, the opened-up space is now elegant and functional for family living.



A large painting by Lisa's sister, Michelle Frantz hangs on a central wall that also functions as the coat and A/V closet on the opposite side.





Peeking into the main floor guest bath. The wallpaper, *Fern Tree in Noir*, is from Schumacher.



Adorable Oscar, the family's Wheaton-Poodle. The vintage bench has been upholstered in Dedar's *Ziggy*; the pillows are from Ankasa Home.





A view of the living room from the main staircase.

For someone who just doesn't know how a movie set comes into being, can you describe how it's done?

If you're doing the whole production, you usually spend anywhere from a week to two months doing pre-production. So you read the script and you break it down for your department so you have a list of sets and then you have a list of what you need to do for those sets. Then there's location scouting. It's like this frenzy of "How do we get these sets furnished? What's already there? What do we need to take away?" And you're bouncing all this off of the director. And you're renting from prop houses; you're buying from the Salvation Army stores and so on.

How long would it take to do a Nancy Meyers kitchen?

Ha! It would take a week to design it and then it would take a month because she would make you re-design it. And then she'd make you re-design it six more times.



Lisa chose soothing neutral tones for the master bedroom. A custom bed by Martin Albert is made up in a bedspread from Stella and linens from JuliaB. The bench was purchased from Décor NYC and the table lamps are from Arteriors.





Oscar's 'upstairs' bed is positioned beneath one of the master bedroom windows. Drapery fabric is Osborne & Little's *Papilio* and roman shades are from Lee Jofa; all window treatments are by Marks & Tavano.



Lisa's pine dressing table has been with her through many moves. The bedroom wallpaper is by Cole and Sons from Lee Jofa. "This side of the bedroom is waiting for a custom vanity and a wall of built-ins in spring 2016," says Lisa.





The master bath is outfitted in Carrera marble tiles from Artistic Tile and a vanity from Signature at Gracious Home.

So did you get clients out of all these actors and movie people you were working for?

That's how we started our business. We had various people, directors and producers say, "Hey, can you do my house out in the Hamptons?" When Lydia, [Lydia Marks, Lisa's business partner] had these humongous budgets for movies, they would say, "Oh that couch you just bought, I want that in my house." The things weren't always available because studios are so tight with the money but if they said, "Could I have that?" I would say, "No, but you can hire me to find one just like it."

Were the sets you were doing mainly furnished rooms? I mean could you do a graveyard or something?

Sure. I used to work on music videos. It was kind of in the heyday of music videos, when they first got huge, when Sean Combs became Puff Daddy and when Missy Elliot was having her first big break. It was pre-Beyoncé but we had huge budgets and we were shooting all over the world. You could build a nice portfolio out of these crazy shoots, like the director wants a 30-foot tall fan so that Missy Elliot can stand on a stage that's 50 feet x 50 feet and wear an inflatable suit ... and then you have money blowing out of these air cans and it's raining with fake rain.



Looking across the second floor landing towards the family room.



A custom L-shaped sofa by Martin Albert Interiors provides comfy seating for the whole family. The walls are covered in a paper by Cole and Sons and the window shade fabric is Kelly Wearstler's Channel in taupe and ivory. The throw pillows are Mineral in indigo/slate, both from Lee Jofa. The carpet is from Odegard. Lisa's husband, Georges Krivobok, a production designer, inherited the vintage ceiling fixture from a client.





A flat screen TV hangs above a vintage Herman Miller marble and wood console from Las Vegas.



The family room also serves as Lisa and her husband's home office. The custom built-ins are by New York Custom Interior Woodcraft.



Books and family photos are displayed atop the home office bookshelves.



You must throw a mean party! And you're responsible for the closets in *Sex and the City*, right?

Yes. That's partially how we launched our business, because Lydia was doing these very style-driven movies like *Sex and the City* and the *The Devil Wears Prada*, and I was doing commercials. I would hire her and if she needed help, I would help her. I don't do film work any more because one of us needed to be constant. Someone hired Lydia to do a rooftop bar and she was pregnant, so she asked me to help and it was a lot of fun. Then we got an apartment building, lobbies and main hallways. So then we said, "What about launching a formal business?"

What do you get out of what you're doing now that you weren't getting from the set design work?

Well I wanted a more solid business model. I wanted to go after my own work and I wanted projects that lasted longer than a week or two weeks.

So on your website you say that you can add "a touch of whimsy". What is "whimsy"? Perhaps it's because I'm British but I'm suspicious of that word.

You know I find that some of my people like that word because we do throw it out there every so often. To me "whimsy" is something like you might do a white kitchen that's just really classic but maybe you'll do brass hardware. Then it feels like you're doing something on trend but it's also very "classic kitchen". I actually live in a much calmer home than any of our projects!



Photos of Lisa's daughters, Loulou and Beatrice, hang on the stairwell walls leading to the girls' third floor bedrooms.



Loulou's room is furnished in her favorite lilac color (Benjamin Moore's *Lily Lavender*). The headboard is covered in a Durable velvet and the geometric-patterned wallpaper is from Osborne & Little. The duvet cover is from Pottery Barn Teen. Roman shades are *Camengo* in Sablet from Angela Brown, and fabricated by Marks & Tavano.



Bubble-gum pink lamps from Robert Abbey stand atop bedside cabinets from Worlds

Away.





A bright pink desk chair from Ikea is tucked under a desk from West Elm.



Loulou's bedroom wall is plastered with photos of family and friends.





A turquoise-and-white storage unit from Ikea is stuffed with favorite toys, books and beauty products.

A home isn't a movie set – I mean there must be a different set of parameters, right? Kids are going to be jumping on the sofas and drawers have to be real, not fake.

Exactly. On film work it doesn't matter – you can just go buy \$10 a yard fabric. Then again you don't get a white sofa if you're shooting a mother with two kids for a Betty Crocker commercial because that woman wouldn't have that sofa in real life. But in real life, you can say well, "Here's these Nanotex fabrics and these high-performance velvets ... and maybe we can get something a little taupe-y so that it doesn't show the dirt." So we've learned how to finesse things.

I love that term, “high-performance velvet”.

We have drawer in our office labeled “High Performance Velvet.”



An oversized "Fatboy" beanbag chair stands front and center in ten-year old Beatrice's room.



The far wall of Beatrice's room is covered in wallpaper from Osborne & Little.



A hanging fixture from Worlds Away gives another pop of pink color to the room. The bunk bed is from Nursery Works and the bedside Tulip table is a vintage Saarinen.



Beatrice's 'room within a room'.



The Smurfs line up in front of a shoebox house constructed by Beatrice.



A souvenir of the Eiffel Tower and more family photos are arranged atop Beatrice's windowsill. The shade fabric is from Duralee.

So you grew up in Texas but you don't seem very Texan. What did you like about growing up in Texas?

Nothing. All I did was go to school and play tennis.

Do you still play tennis?

I've started playing a lot of tennis in Fort Greene Park. I was like a USTA ranked kid.

Are you still very competitive?

I am. In everything. It kills me that my kids aren't. It makes me crazy.



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