

2009/09: Lindsey London

Creativity is imbedded in Lindsey London's DNA. With an uncle who was one of the original Disney animators, another uncle a master carver and yet another an architect, there was little chance that her gene pool wouldn't be rife with artistic talent. Smartly, she has chosen not to fool Mother Nature. Embracing her inherent abilities, she pursued and excelled (think Magna Cum Laude) at earning a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design from Florida State University. Despite the less than stellar job market, this ball of energy is doing anything but twiddling her thumbs. As she gains some interior design experience interning, she's working on a customized special event stationary line with her sister and mother, who share her genetic material and her passion. The perfect example of the equal importance of nature and nurture, Lindsey is speeding up her own evolutionary career process with lots of hard work.

What made you want to pursue a career related to the interior design industry?

Since I was a little girl I have had this fascination with drawing. I started with tracing in coloring books, preferably The Little Mermaid's Prince Eric, which turned into sketching cartoons, then turned into portrait drawings of family members, friends, and the occasional celebrity. I always immersed myself in art classes throughout my schooling and was even voted "best artist" from my senior year high school class.

However, once that daunting question rolled around, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" I decided I needed to do something that related to the arts. So it was my sophomore year of high school and I decided on Interior Design. I took a trip to Florida State my junior year and after having a two hour conversation with the Chairman of the design department at the time I decided Florida State was the school for me and Interior Design was exactly where my life was headed.

What other majors did you consider?

Actually... This is really out in left field but my freshman year of college I took an Anthropology course. I loved it! No one was more surprised than me! I always hated history and science (my two worst subjects), and Anthropology is history and science melded together. I always say, "If I hadn't chosen Interior Design I may have become an anthropologist."

I am considering going to graduate school at the University of Central Florida. I'm thinking Hospitality or Business would be most beneficial to my design career. I don't know though; it's scary to think about!

How has your design school experience been compared to what you thought it would be?

To be perfectly honest, design school was a complete shock to me. I never thought I would spend so many sleepless nights working on projects, calling my fellow design friends at ridiculous hours of the night for help or encouragement, and I never thought I had the capacity to learn as much as I did.

I definitely have a greater appreciation for interior design than when I first started out. It didn't matter how many times my professors told us that first year that "design is not decorating," I just didn't get it. Well, what a wake up call once Studio 1 came around. Interior Design is so much more like architecture than decorating. As a designer you typically gut the interior and start from scratch and so many people can't grasp that understanding. Many think that HGTV represents Interior Design when in fact a lot of those shows are great for staging tips.

What was your favorite course of study?

My favorite and most dreadful course of study was Studio. This is where I truly learned the most about designing. One of the most exciting yet grueling parts of studio was coming up with a concept. Understanding a concept is key to creative design. This is where the project becomes alive and takes on colors, shapes, and meaning. It was always difficult to come up with something unique but once I figured it out the thoughts would start to pour.

The most trying aspect of Studio classes was managing time between projects and my social life. We all became a sort of sorority (sorry to those few guys that were in the program) and helped each other through the difficulties. So, though "free time" was not really an option, our group spent time together working on projects and laughing

together during classes.

Have you ever studied abroad?

Oh Italy! This was an experience of a lifetime. My History of Interiors teacher from Florida State took a group of us interior design girls to Florence for six weeks. In school she had taught us all about the Galleria in Milan, the Academia in Florence, the numerous styles and furnishings of Europe, etc over a span of three semesters. As a result, when we got to Italy she told us "Now that you have read and learned about all these wonderful places and monuments, it's time to see and feel them!" So, we kept journals, we sketched and took notes.

We traveled to Rome, Sienna, Pisa, Venice (my profile picture), Pompeii, Naples, Milan, and Ischia. We also went to a ton of Master Craftsmen workshops and learned about the techniques of goldsmiths, silversmiths, shoemakers, paper makers and more. To top it off, at the end of my six weeks of studying in Italy my parents met me and from there we traveled to Switzerland to Paris to London for two weeks.

My time in Europe helped me value architecture, design, and different cultures on an entire different level. It is another world over there. You walk down a cobblestone side street looking for a gelato stand and find an ancient building or a famous statue that you had just seen in your schoolbooks. There is always something to do... when it rains, Italians close up shop and people relax over a glass of wine or in their homes for a siesta or nap. It's so peaceful there even amongst the crazy sirens and thin walls one finds solitude. The television doesn't stay on for the better half of the day; people find entertainment through the history and in the appreciation for their beautiful country.

What kind of internships have you had?

In the summer of '08, right after I got back from Italy, I started my first internship at Marc-Michaels in Winter Park, Florida. In the spring of that year I knew I wanted to get a summer internship and have always known about this design firm. So, I contacted Marc-Michaels, had an interview, and was asked when I wanted to start. It was a great experience and the people were so easy to get along with. I worked mostly with the commercial department throughout my internship. They had been working on a huge project that was being built in India. I got to help assemble boards for presentations, assist designers in fabric selections, create PowerPoint layouts and more.

I'm currently interning with Élan Design Studio in Altamonte Springs, Florida. When I graduated in December from Florida State I decided I needed to start networking to help me find a job. I met the Design Director from Élan Design Studio at a Home Builders Association [HBA] event. I became more acquainted with her and the Élan team at a wine and cheese social that I was invited to by another HBA member. They offered me an internship position and I have been with them ever since.

With both internships I feel I've learned a lot about design, both residential and commercial. It's a lot different than how school portrayed it. There is a lot of purchasing, selling, paperwork, phone calls, on-site visits, and installs. These are all things that the school system didn't really go over. We were responsible for a concept, fabric selections, designs, presentations, renderings, perspectives, CAD drawings, etc. Yet in a company, there are many people involved and tasks are divided up.

In this rough economy, have you been able to find a job in the industry?

It is tough and unfortunately it's even worse for builders and designers because so many people are foreclosing and not buying homes.

I have not been able to find a job but I am interning with Élan Design Studio. This internship is enabling me to build on my design skills and retain some experience in the field. I also go to the occasional HBA meeting and recently started attending networking events in the Orlando area.

My ideal position would be with Disney or Universal Studios designing their restaurants and hotels. I love extravagant design and feel to work for one of those places you must have a lot of creativity.

Are you planning on taking the NCIDQ Exam?

Yes, I am planning on becoming a licensed designer in the state of Florida. I won't be able to sit for the exam for a couple years at the earliest. Fortunately, I am able to gain my experience hours through my internship. My sister is studying for the NCIDQ exam right now so I will most likely ask for her book and read it 500 times.

Are you a member of any professional organizations?

I am a student member of IIDA and ASID. These are great organizations because they inform you of networking events all over the US and they keep you connected to the design world. I have also been able to post my resume on their websites and gain other job search outlets through these groups.

What do you hope to be doing by 2013?

I hope to have an interior design job first and foremost by 2013. Furthermore, I hope to be a licensed interior designer for the state of Florida.

What do you think that you have specifically gotten out of your design program that you don't think you would have gotten elsewhere?

Florida State University has an outstanding design program. I wouldn't have changed my experiences one bit and feel that if I had gone anywhere else for design I wouldn't have had the contacts and design capabilities that I have today.

On a more personal note…

What's your favorite comfort food?

Most definitely, Ghirardelli's Triple Chocolate Brownies.

What's the last good movie you saw and why did you love it?

Well, the first one that comes to mind is The Proposal. That movie was refreshingly wonderful. It made me laugh, it made me cry, and not one time was I bored or thinking "when are they going to come out with a good chick flick?" Sandra Bullock was great, Ryan Reynolds was soooo good looking, and Betty White was absolutely hilarious!

What magazines do you read for fun?

I read People magazine but stray away from anything Brangelina as I'm on Team Jen! I look through Ikea's stuff, Coastal Living, and any other home décor magazines that look appealing.

What do you hope to accomplish by the end of 2009?

By the end of 2009 I hope to have a full time job. Obviously, I would prefer it be in a Design or Architecture firm. I've spent all of my graduation money and would like to start saving a bit!

Are you a student wants to ask Lindsey a few questions or an employer who wants to take advantage of her passion for the industry? Then contact her via email at l.londondesign@gmail.com.