

Luciana Fragali: “Don’t do unto others what you don’t want done unto you”

*By Candice Georgiadis
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As a part of my series on the “5 Things You Can Do To Help Your Living Space Spark More Joy”, I had the pleasure of interviewing Luciana Fragali.

Luciana Fragali, who has owned Miami-based Design Solutions for 15 years, has completed over 400 high-end residential and commercial projects to date. She studied architecture in her native Brazil and later received a degree in interior design at the Fort Lauderdale Art Institute. Her clients primarily include high-net-worth individuals who rely on her to develop creative, functional home and office settings. Fragali may be reached at lfragali@ds-miami.com. More information is available at www.ds-miami.com.

Can you tell us a story about what brought you to this specific career path?

I strongly believe that I was born to be an architect/ interior designer. While other kids my age were playing with dolls or in the playground, my favorite pastime was going to the mall where there was a unique store which sold children's furniture. This was my favorite place to spend my time. As I entered my teenage years, the antique fair near my home became my “go-to” spot — I loved hunting for unique pieces, never knowing what I would discover. So for me, there was simply never another path. I was born for this field!

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you started this career?

I have had the privilege of working with people from around the world. 15 years ago when I first began my career, I worked with various clients and budgets. In interior design, you always want to do and design something you love and can be proud of. At the beginning, this isn't necessarily the case, as sometimes you are dealing with different tastes and styles that aren't necessarily your own and you need to meet certain expectations with extremely low budgets that make it almost impossible to truly design. I've come to find that aside from being an architect/ interior designer, I'm also a psychologist, a friend, an advisor, and more. Over the years, I have worked with highly successful and influential people — many of them geniuses in their respective fields; however, on the other end, there are times where I must deal with difficult clients- large egos where finding a common ground is always the goal.

Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

One of my funniest mistakes was when I was doing the Penthouse of Ocean Club here in Key Biscayne, Florida. We remodeled the entire unit and bought all the furniture; however, I made the mistake of not measuring the elevator or sending someone to do this, as we usually always do. As a result, many of the larger pieces purchased — from the large one piece sofa, to large consoles, millwork panels, etc., simply wouldn't fit. The sofa had to completely be taken apart and reconstructed/ rebuilt inside the unit — it of course didn't look the same, but thankfully it still looked magnificent and the client didn't even notice. I learned from this experience that no matter what we purchase, small or large, we must always think of how to get these pieces to its destination, even if we have to get a crane and bring it up through the window — which we have had to do many times.

What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now? How do you think that might help people?

The most interesting project we are working on right now is for a high profile CEO who has recently purchased a unit at the new luxurious residence of Eighty Seven Park. With the onset of Covid-19, we had to completely halt construction, setting us back a bit when we were already working with a tight deadline. This project will include state of the art features, including a unique air filtration system often found in hospitals. The lighting system will be unlike anything you've ever seen, perfectly balanced, and executed with the utmost precision and care.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

My favorite quote that I have lived by my entire life is "Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you." That's mandatory for me, and how I live my life personally and professionally. This has helped me tremendously as many people realize I try to always respect them as much as I can. I respect their feelings and their points of view. At the end of the day, I always try to put myself in their shoes as much as I can.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

One person that I am extremely grateful for is my older brother who had the vision of sending me to the United States to learn English and take classes at the University of Delaware. It was at that time when I decided to remain in the US and follow the path that I'm on today. Career-wise, I still would have probably been an architect/ interior designer in Brazil, but not where I am in Miami doing the amazing projects that I am doing with my incredible team.

The second person I'm grateful to is someone who truly believed in my work and gave me an opportunity to grow here in Miami — Paulo Bacchi from Artefacto. When I first met him, I had just started my company here in Miami and I didn't know anyone; but, he quickly identified with me, saw my potential and gave me the opportunity to be part of his design house which is something he used to do yearly in his Coral Gables showroom to showcase the work of different interior designers. Needless to say, I felt lucky and extremely honored as he didn't know me well, but saw potential in me and believed in me. From there, my client list grew, and it made a huge difference in my life.

Here is the main question of our discussion. What are your “5 Things You Can Do To Help Your Living Space Spark More Joy” and why. Please share a story or example for each.

1. Wallpaper on accent walls — you won't have to spend a fortune and still can make a statement.
2. Home accessories — having a nice coffee table is important, but how you stage it is even more important as these pieces should really tell a story about you!
3. Greenery — plants, flowers, unique vases bring life into a room. I always advise on natural greens rather than faux.
4. Indirect lighting — this is super important, as there are now so many options of what you can use to achieve this, including unique lamps.
5. Wooden wall panels — this can really spark up any room as they add charm and a luxurious feel.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger.

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We are very blessed that some of the biggest names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might see this, especially if we tag them :-)

1. Bill Gates — I would absolutely love to sit down and enjoy a meal with this person who has achieved so much and who I can learn even more from. I don't even know if I would be able to do this without passing out from excitement — I would require much meditation! I love bright minds — I find him to be a perfect combination of genius and generous.

2. Meryl Streep — as a person, as a professional and as a human being, I just adore her. I admire everything she has accomplished in her field.

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