

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with House of Hunt's Holly Hunt

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Holly Hunt is founder of House of Hunt

By LISA POWERS

Introducing "Off the Cuff," a new Q&A series from Luxury Daily exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world's best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. The 11th edition features Holly Hunt, founder of interior design studio [House of Hunt](#).

In this Q&A, Ms. Hunt discusses her department-store beginnings in retail, the power of good leadership and the inspiration found in designing a new home for avid art collectors.

Here is the dialogue:

What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?

My first job ever was the summer after high school in the city at a property tax office. It taught me to be very careful of what you do, as everything needs to be correct.

Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?

I always had a creative soul and wanted to be a designer, as I loved fashion and clothing. I started off majoring in English literature at Texas Tech. After graduation, I was fortunate to get a job at a federated executive training program at Foley's Department Store in Houston. Everyone that wanted to be in retail wanted to get into one of those programs, so I felt very fortunate.

I credit my years of working at Foley's for my start in the industry. We learned everything from the basement up: display, reordering, buying, merchandising, client relations. We were taught the Stanley Marcus way: "The customer is always right." It was our job to make our customers look good. I still believe in that philosophy.

It clicked for me there that creativity and business could go hand in hand. Of course, you have to have an impeccable eye, but your business sense needs to be just as good. You can have the talent to create the most beautiful designs the world has ever seen, but if you're not focusing on customer service and quality throughout every step of the design process, you're not going to last.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Listening to others the good, the bad and the ugly. Then failure is never an option because you understand the entirety of the issue. Know your strengths, and little can be done without the smartest, strongest team.

Not anyone can lead - management is controlled, but leadership is liberating. The best leadership that one can have in the company is to help managers grow to be leaders. When that happens, everyone wins.

How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think your industry will look like in a decade?

I purchased my first showroom in 1983, which would become HOLLY HUNT. It was in large part because I knew I could run showrooms better than what was out there. I wanted my showroom to have a clear point of view, something more inspirational. Because showrooms had stuff piled everywhere which seldom went together, I knew I could do it better. Doing it better meant great presentation, a focus on customer service, and offering quality furniture and product.

In 1983, designer/luxury showrooms were only representing custom-made products for designers' specifications. Therefore, the client needed a designer to help in the process of selecting and customizing their product.

Since then, the luxury design landscape still revolves around quality service and product, but it's also become much more collaborative since consumers have access to design information at their fingertips because of the internet. I think this will continue to evolve, as luxury consumers are now investing in design that can be used in various ways for generations to come.

What recent projects have ignited your passion for working in luxury?

We recently completed a beautiful home in Miami, where we architecturally combined two side-by-side duplex apartments into one grand space. The couple have been art collectors, and she a well-known figure in the art world for years. It was a dream for our team to work on this project to make a home for their incredible collection of art against their wide and tall vista-views of the Biscayne Bay.

We see more in the way of cross-pollination where fashion, art, even hospitality are in direct conversation with one another and ultimately influence direction and style.

Who, in any industry or sphere, would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?

Peter Marino an architect who's always ahead of the rest of us. And I'd prefer (to be invited to) the Four Seasons.

How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?

I'm very impromptu I feel comfortable with the interview process and never a written speech.

On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?

I enjoy a good book while snuggling with my two cats, Brian and Bradley possibly involving a nice glass of wine.

What does luxury mean to you?

It's the best of the best at the time that you're doing it. Both the devil and the beauty are found in the details.

Whether a product or service/experience, what is your favorite luxury indulgence?

Sleep.