

# Nancy Boszhardt

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HOUSE • BY: SIAN BALLEEN, LESLEY HAUGE AND JEFF HIRSCH

*Designer Nancy Boszhardt has lived plenty—she’s been a dancer, a hippie, a flight attendant and, briefly a posh wife in a posh house in Boston. She can also cut wood with a chainsaw, cook a Thanksgiving dinner for her seven siblings and their families and run a very successful design business. If all of this information is delivered with a natural self-irony and a lot of (quite giggly) humor—underneath she’s intensely independent and tenacious but also*

*very warm—for us, she wins this year’s charm award.*

**So you grew up in Milwaukee, and you were one of eight kids, were you? Where were you in the pecking order?**

I was the second oldest, so a lot of caretaking. Three girls and five boys in that order. My mom got very sick and she died at 51.

**Oh, so it fell to you to pick up some of the pieces.**

I would say so.

*[It turns out that Sian, Jeff and Nancy all went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison ... much Badgers talk ensues even though none of them really follows football.]*

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Nancy’s living room windows look south over the Museum of Natural History.





Warm green hues permeate the library lined with Zuber wallpaper. The chandelier is from Marvin Alexander.



*L. to r.:* A vibrant flower painting by artist David Wooddell hangs above the library sofa. The coffee table is from Marché aux Puces.; A custom built-in cabinet serves as Nancy's home office.



Family photos and paperwork fill the library desktop.





*L. to r.:* Looking into the library bath. The floor and wall tiles are from Country Floors.; Nancy found this wall sculpture at the Columbus Avenue flea market.



French roof tiles with impressions of fish were purchased at Marché aux Puces.





**What did you major in at college?**

I majored in criminology and dance.

**What!!?**

So the idea was that I was going to go women's prisons and teach them dance and that would bring them happiness and joy. I was twenty-one you know ... [*Giggles*]

**Well, that's very original.**

I loved my passions ... ballet and dance and er, [the nature of] violence ... what I always wanted to do was, *always*, was to live in New York City and travel but there was no money in our family so, I realized that my job as a criminologist would really be a caseload of 150 juvenile delinquents in New York and not in women's prison teaching beauty and dance. We were all trying to figure out what were going to do and somebody told me that they were interviewing for flight attendants in Chicago. So I got rid of all my hippie stuff and put on my one camel-colored skirt ... put on my bra ... and got on a bus and went for an interview and they hired me.

**And that was a job you enjoyed, wasn't it?**

It was such a good job for me. At that time the airline [industry] was very elegant in a way. I got my wish to be based in New York and my

flights were all international, so that was exactly what I wanted to do. I got to travel to Paris and London and Rome. I would leave the crew immediately and go to museums. I took ballet classes in Paris. It was extraordinary.

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*L. to r.:* A chandelier from Carlos de la Puente hangs above the dining room table. The oil painting of an autumn scene is by David Wooddell. The Viennese dining chairs are from auction. ; The wooden kitchen cabinets were built by Frank deBono.





Brass candlesticks, a porcelain figurine and a bowl of apples are arranged atop the dining room table.



A view into the dining room from the main entrance hall.







*L. to r.:* An alabaster chandelier from Marvin Alexander hangs front in center in the main entrance hall.; The entrance to the guest bedroom. The walls are covered in wallpaper from Evergreen. The carpet is from Patterson, Flynn and Martin.

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### How long did you do it for?

Twelve years!

### Do you still dance?

I don't dance anymore. I do Pilates all the time.

### Why did you stop?

Age ... time. I stopped flying and I got married briefly. We lived in a fancy house in Boston and I had a whole other life that I'd never had before—we had a ballroom and things.

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*L. to r.:* A painting of two nude women by David Wooddell hangs above a half-round console in the living room.; Looking across the light filled living room towards the western windows.



*L. to r.:* Bright yellow silk Donghia pillows are arranged atop an upholstered bench in front of the living room bookcase.; A lamp by Jonathan Adler, wooden ink block carvings and a bronze statue fill the other half-round console in the living room.





Looking into the rounded corner of the living room. The slipper chairs are covered in fabric from Bergamo.



A silver tray from Barney's, perched atop a leather pouf is a perfect spot to put

drinks.



*L. to r.:* This custom 1940's sofa was abandoned in Nancy's first NYC apartment—it's been re-upholstered several times but its design has never aged. It happens to fit perfectly into the rounded living room corner.; A set of tables from Holly Hunt is topped with lamp from Sentimento with shade by Blanche Field





Looking across the living room.

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**Did you meet him on an airplane?**

On the airplane going to Paris ... he wrote me poetry.

**How did you like living in a house with a ballroom?**

I loved it! I brought my friends over—we had tea and concerts. It wasn't showy at all.

**And so when the marriage ended, was that when you decided to study interior design?**

My parents had always said, "When you're in trouble, go back to school." So I got into Pratt and got a Masters degree and came back to New York. I did also go to New Hampshire and live in the woods for a while ... [*starts to giggle again*]

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Another view across Nancy's light filled living room. The French mirror from Lee Calicchio reflects the stunning southern views.



*L. to r.:* Small painting and prints fill a space between two living room windows.; Chinese red lacquer wheels and urns are arranged under a drop leaf table. The mirrored 1950's lamp is from Rose Cummings.





An Antique Heriz carpet gives the living room a colorful foundation.



Looking south across the living room. The painting in the far wall is by David Wooddell framed by Bark Framers.





A pair of American-made Gansevoort chairs are covered in brown linen from Clarence House with Penn and Fletcher truppetto. The zigzag floor lamp is from Conran's.



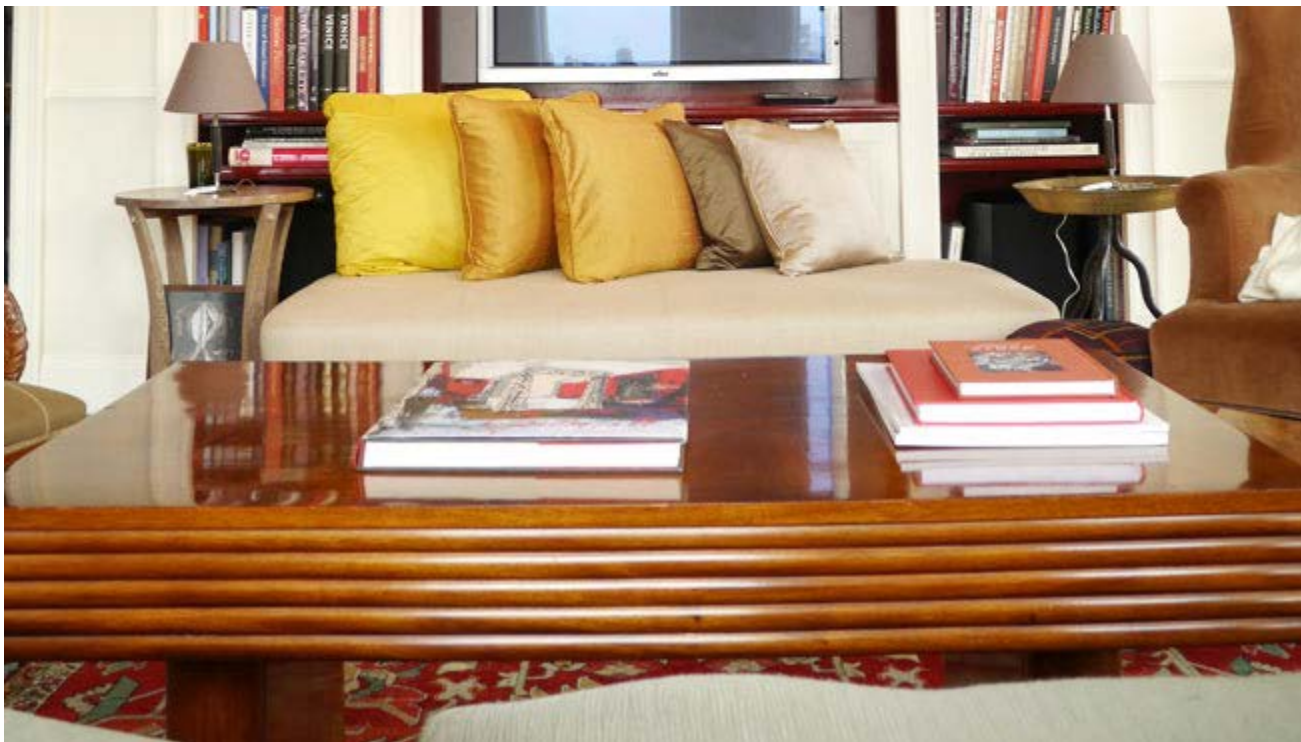


An Art Deco coffee table from Van den Akker Antiques in front of a loveseat covered in Brunschwig & Fils jacquard fabric.

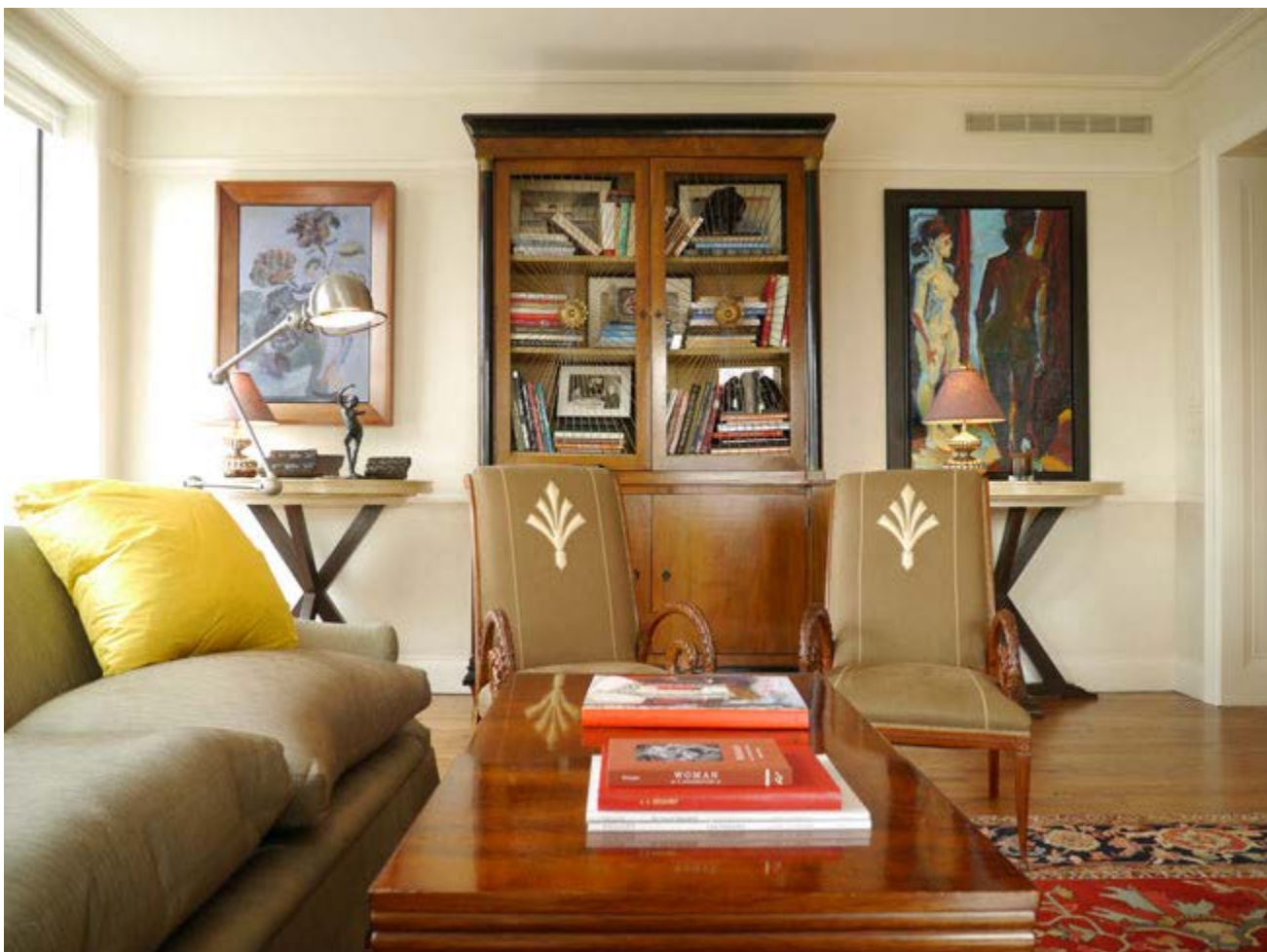


The large, exaggerated wing chair is covered in brown velvet from Manual Canovas.





A built-in living room bookcase also holds the flat-screen TV.



A Biedermeir library cabinet from Sutter Antiques in Hudson anchors the rear wall of the living room.



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### **And what were doing in the woods?**

I had cows and chickens and ducks ... oh my God! Before I met my husband and after I came to New York, I met someone and we lived together—he decided he wanted to live in the woods. I lived there for five years. I was still flying, three days on, four days off and I was able to take care of the garden and the animals. The house was heated by a wood stove, so I had a chainsaw he gave me for Christmas one year ... it was red.

**Of all the lousy Christmas presents people get, a chainsaw ranks pretty high ... even if it was red.**

I was not thrilled. I used to drop ten pounds every fall because I had to split wood. When you are stacking cords of wood, it is extraordinary how many calories you burn. And so I never want a house again—I

always want a doorman. I felt sometimes like I was in the middle of an ocean trying to figure out what to do next—there was always a problem, always something to do. For a good reason, that [relationship] ended and I met my husband on the way to Paris.

**Was that the first and last husband?**

Yes, the one and only. I didn't do it again. No children.





The guest bath is lined with wallpaper by Albert Hadley. The sink is from Urban Archeology.



The laundry room is covered in a marble patterned wallpaper from John Rosselli.





*L. to r.:* Custom bookcases flank a cozy window seat.; A painting by David Wooddell hangs above the guest bed.



A mix of textures and patterns including a plaid blanket and a silk coverlet from Shyam Ahuja Ltd. give a rich warming feeling to the guest bedroom.





A small mirror and shimmering objects—including a silver flask and bird—on a bedside table in the guest room.



On the right wall, a painting of an interior by post-impressionist Joseph Bail was purchased in Paris from Louvre's Des Antiquaries.



Looking west out of the guest bedroom window.







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**How old were you when you went to study at Pratt then?**

I was in my forties when I went back to school. No ... late thirties.

**That was very brave. How did you know you wanted to do interior design?**

I did love working on the home we had in Boston and I also knew that I wanted to have something that was practical but I [also] wanted to be creative. I had been taking art history classes and writing classes ... I fancied myself as a writer ... but I knew that wasn't going to give me a career either.

**What did you learn from working with Bunny Williams?**

I learned a tremendous amount. I learned to be a businesswoman. She made sure the business ran. I used to get a kick out of her—when she was doing a job, she was very animated and very real. Oh my God, is there grit!

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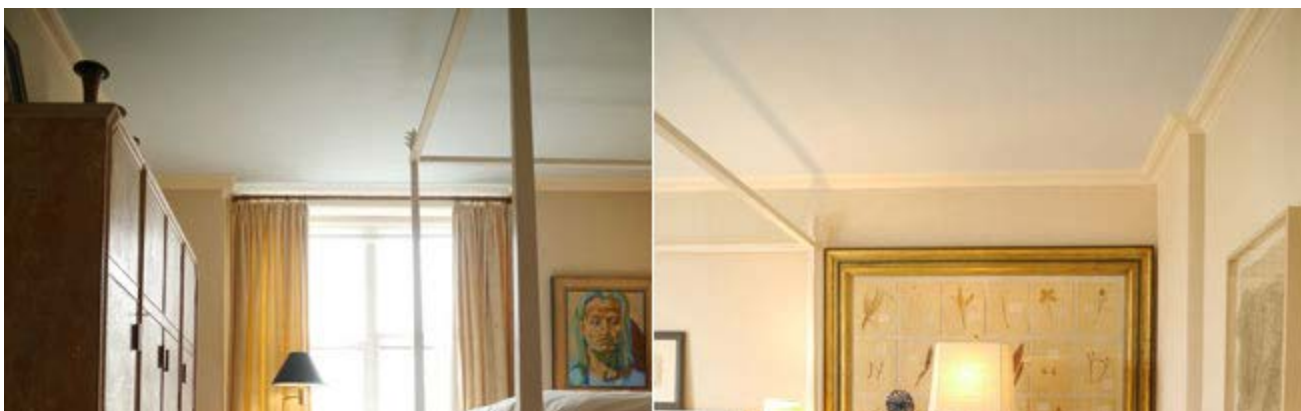




In the master bedroom hall, an oil painting of men's boots purchased at a Pier antique show hangs above a painted Chinese cabinet.



A custom canopy bed made up in linens from Casa Del Bianco. The walls are upholstered in a fabric from Norbar. The large framed botanical collection above the writing table is from Marché aux Puces.





*L. to r.:* A neutral-toned abstract rug from Patterson, Flynn and Martin creates a cozy feeling in the master bedroom.; Nancy's writing table from More and More Antiques on the Upper West Side is filled with her growing collection of metal flower arrangements.

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**Is that what you're sort of proudest of—that you're a businesswoman?**

I am very proud of that.

**It's quite a thing to support yourself and no man is supporting you at all.**

Nope, no man. It is a big, big deal.

**Do you think the fact that you grew up with not much money means that you have made very sure that you're not going to be poor?**

I'm sure that is true. I try to throw things away and it's hard. I love the things that I never had. I still get in a taxi and think I'm so lucky that I can pay for a cab. It's not a crime to be wealthy. I was also raised Catholic and the Catholic religion often teaches you that poor is beautiful ... I don't buy that at all.

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A shade from Blanche Field tops a brass lamp purchased and then renovated at the Columbus Avenue flea market.



Looking into a corner of the master bedroom. The portrait is by David Wooddell.



*L. to r.:* Swing arm lamps flank a Nancy's custom upholstered open canopy bed.; Wooden molds from a Pier antique show stand atop an a limed oak armoire from The Stamford Antiques Center. The oversized mirror was purchased in England.







*L. to r.:* A brass lamp with a silk shade stands atop a mirrored chest of drawers from More and More Antiques on the Upper West Side. ; A close-up of Nancy's writing table.

**Why is it that some decorators, and you're one of them, can create warmth and there are others, even though they use textures and colors, still fail to create that warmth?**

I have a theory about that—I don't know about other decorators, so I'm not going to speak for them—but I really make an effort ... it has to have a soul of some kind. I try very, very hard to get to know the clients.

**You seem very relaxed—and assured. You're not guarded.**

That's so good to hear. I always think of myself as goofy. I don't want to be guarded. I want my work to be intimate. What I don't like when I look at magazines is when I have to ask, "Well who lives there? There's no person here that I would ever understand or want to get to know."





*L. to r.:* In the master bath, a glass table holds silver objects and wash cloths next to the marble bath tub.; Family photos line a wall of the dressing area in the master bath. The lights are from The Lighting Center.



An elegant custom cabinet with a French limestone sink was built by Nancy's contractor, Stephen Fanuka.

### **What do you like to do when you're not working?**

I love the theater. I love the opera. One of the reasons, I live where I do is that I can go straight down the road to the Lincoln Center.

### **Do you go with girlfriends?**

I have some girlfriends but I do a lot on my own. I spend a lot of time



by myself—I am in heaven with that. I think it’s my childhood because I was never alone as a child. Everything was shared—I mean when you were in the bathroom somebody else was banging on the door. I like to travel alone.

### Where do you like to travel to now?

I try to go to London every year over Christmas because it’s a place for a woman to travel by herself. I always stay at a beautiful hotel—The Connaught. I travel on Christmas Day to London and then we—*[laughs]*the royal “we”—go to the theater and have high tea. I go shopping—it’s heaven for me, so relaxing.



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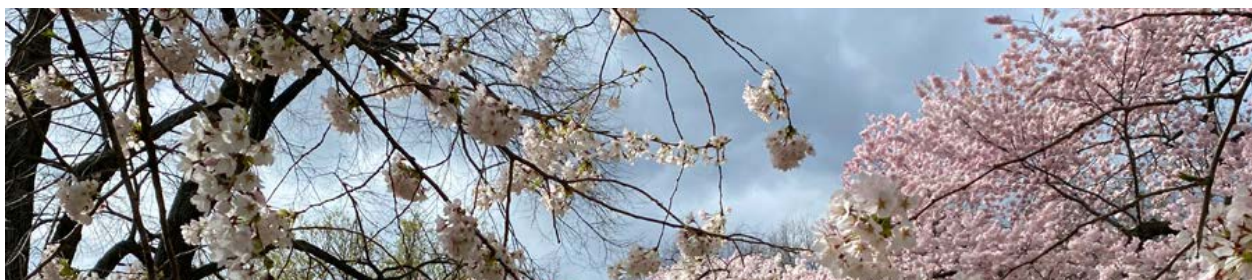
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