



VOICES

5 Architects and Designers on Their Unlikely Career Paths

With a combination of hard work, determination, and a little bit of luck, these design insiders finally found their calling

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In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust wrote, “We are not provided with wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can take for us...” This sentiment handily applies to the unlikely and sometimes circuitous paths many architects and interior designers take toward achieving success in the design industry. Naturally, a love for visual beauty is a prerequisite, and while many have faced similar obstacles and accomplishments along the way—from getting their foot in the door to striking out on their own to getting published—no two trajectories are alike. We talked to five designers with very different stories about how they got their start. Here, they share everything from the details behind their unexpected beginnings to the career advice they wish they had received themselves.



A Manhattan apartment designed by Paris Forino.

Photo: Scott Frances

Paris Forino, *Paris Forino – Interior Design*

“My love for design was always there. As a very young child I was keenly interested in my room, decorating it beautifully, displaying my dolls on shelves, painting the walls colors I liked. I always loved beautiful things—growing up, I wanted to be a ballet dancer and, before that, an astronomer—and that love built up until I went to Paris after high school. There, I was inspired by so much beauty and so many fabulous spaces. I knew then, absolutely, that I needed to be an interior designer. I received a bachelor’s degree in interior design at the University of Technology, Sydney, and during college I worked four days a week with an architect/interior designer, a really nice guy and good designer, just him and me. That was a great way to learn! I think when you are starting out you can learn a lot more at a small practice. There were times when I wanted to quit; however, I had given up my first love—ballet—when it became clear that I wasn’t as naturally gifted as prima ballerinas need to be. I needed to persevere in design, and I’m so happy that I did. After moving to Manhattan and working at Tihany Design and Cetra Ruddy Architecture, I dreamed about opening my own firm. I had been working in New York for nine years, and I figured if I just try and do it, then it will happen. I guess the stars aligned because instead of a few small projects, we were awarded six beautiful buildings in New York City by a singular developer and enough volume to enable me to hire some amazing designers with great pedigrees right away. I have never looked back for a minute. I even get to bring some of the grace and musicality of ballet to my work as a designer.”