

Linda Pasca

When did you first become interested in calligraphy?

As a child I loved to create letterforms. In high school, I did truck and boat lettering, murals on walls and the backs of friends' jackets. I was always playing around with letters. There was never a time when I look back that I wasn't doing it. When I went to Cooper Union School of Art in New York City in the late '80s and took a course from a master calligrapher, it was only natural that I'd fall in love with it. But I didn't think I'd make a business out of calligraphy.

How did you make the decision to start your business, Pen & Paper?

It's more like it evolved. I was a single mom and I wanted to do something at home so I'd be more available for my daughter, Kayla, who was 11 then. I was managing the Mark Humphrey Gallery in Southampton, selling art and doing custom framing when I started taking on side jobs doing calligraphy. Before too long, I started to establish a clientele on the South Fork.

What steps did you take to build your business in the beginning?

I tried to set myself attainable goals. First, I promoted myself with local printers. I gave them samples of my work and when people had invitations printed, they'd refer them to me to address the envelopes. From that, word of mouth started to spread.

What's the smartest thing you did?

Stayed within my means. I never said, "I'm starting a business and I'm going to throw all of my money into it," because



Mattituck-based calligrapher Linda Pasca started her company, Pen and Paper Design, in 2002. Her unique design style, which combines elements of nature such as seashells, sand dollars and driftwood, simple graphics, a rich color palette, the textures of handmade papers and, of course, the deft strokes of her pen, has helped Pasca's business to flourish. In 2004, *Bride's Magazine* featured her sand dollars with table numbers in their "new and fresh ideas" section. That same year, she was chosen to hand paint the words to a poem by Baudelaire on the 10-foot-high walls in the entrance hall of the House & Garden Hampton Designer Showcase in East Hampton. Since then, projects have included everything from lavish weddings to a dinner party for Karl Lagerfeld, a large bar mitzvah at The Four Seasons and a private party in the Hamptons with guests of honor Bill and Hillary Clinton.

I'd seen people jump in with both feet and just crash and burn. I kept one foot in the gallery business doing custom framing on a freelance basis. I needed to have something steady coming in.

What does a typical job consist of?

About 75 percent of my work is weddings. The rest is logo and brochure design, promotional events and jobs, like dinner parties. A full design job will include everything from "save the date" notices to invitations, place cards, menus, programs and table accents. Other jobs may simply be addressing envelopes or painting names on stones. I also design custom

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stationery and gifts.


Do you come up with the concept or does the client come to you with an idea in mind?

I come up with many of the specialty items and the design, but I am inspired by the ideas and personality of the bride and groom and the colors and flowers they're using. Often I'll work with an event planner and we try to tie in all the pieces so they fit and they're cohesive. Everything is custom, so no two weddings or events are alike.

What inspires you?

I'm an avid beachcomber so I like to collect natural elements like stones, scallop and clamshells and driftwood to do calligraphy on. I find beautiful handmade papers and incorporate them into my designs. It's a marriage of the two. I renovated my garage and now I can look out on my garden and watch things grow. It's beautiful here, especially in the springtime and summer. It's like I brought the outside in.

Any advice to other women who want to be entrepreneurs?

So much of it is a leap of faith. If you really have something that works, enjoy it, love it. Let it evolve. Let it dictate to you what to do next, instead of thinking I have to do this or I have to do that. Also, set realistic goals. Think about what's within your means and work on that. Sometimes we have fantasies of what it will be like and we can't get there because we're moving too fast. 

Chrystle Fiedler often contributes to national magazines on the topics of health, self-help and lifestyle.