

Life by Design

Trading a career for family led Lissa Lowe to her true calling. *By Alisa Blackwood*

Wildly motivated and passionate about her advertising career, Lissa Lowe dreamed big, worked crazy hours and traveled the world. But when her mom—her “mouse”—was diagnosed in 2001 at age 57 with ovarian cancer, Lissa put everything on pause. “I realized that work was not that important anymore and I needed to focus on what was—spending time with my mom,” she says.

Lissa took a leave of absence to stay by her mother’s side until her final breath—a moment she says refocused how she would move through the world for the rest of her life.

Shortly after, Lissa landed her dream job at Apple, where she managed award-winning advertising campaigns for the iPod. Though she adored the work, the long hours and three-hour commute to San Francisco didn’t exactly jibe with her dream to start a family. “So I started asking, how could I nurture both sides of me—the creative part and the maternal side?”

That’s when Lissa began working by night to

indulge her affinity for design, hand drawing sweet, simple images that now adorn the infant and toddler wear line she calls Puss Frocks. “I think a heart-smashing event can either propel people forward or push them backwards,” she says. “I wanted to

become a better person because of who my mom was.” Lowe donates a portion of Puss profits to the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund in her mother’s memory.

The day after she “birthed” Puss, in 2005, Lissa found out she was pregnant. She quit her job at Apple and moved with now-husband Adam to his hometown of Cleveland to be closer to family, especially his ill father. After a pregnancy fraught with challenges, son Charlie arrived in March 2006—two months early—and Lissa put Puss on hold.

Still, as Charlie grew, Lissa’s creative urges beckoned. That’s when she called upon her mother’s inspiration to recreate herself yet again, this time as a decorating maven and interior stylist for her new business, Spruce Décor (sprucedecor.blogspot.com).

“I’m a big believer in repurposing and recycling,” Lissa says. “I believe you can elevate the ordinary and find beauty in everyday things.” Calling herself a “style mixologist,” she combines higher-ticket items, thrift-store finds, handcrafts and meaningful objects that already exist in her clients’ homes.

“For everything I do with Puss and Spruce, I call upon the memory of my mom. It’s what I call my ‘passion with purpose,’” Lissa says, six years after her mother’s death. “So I’m burning the midnight oil again, but I’m happy. I feel like I’m keeping fit mentally and spiritually because I’m doing what I love.”

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Name: Lissa Lowe, 40

Profession: interior stylist/blogger

Passions: Decorating, doodling, traveling near and far, running, playing pirates with 3-year-old son

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