

BackStory

by Holly Bass

Now known for its elegant high-rises and sweeping views of the Potomac, Rosslyn was once seedy, home to bawdy-houses and marauding gangs.

This surprising history was recently brought to life in the Rosslyn Renaissance exhibition at the Artisphere's Works-in-Progress gallery (see story, page 23). The show was a labor of love curated and produced by Carol Muszynski.

Muszynski is the President of Eighth Day Design (EDD), an interior architecture firm based in downtown Rosslyn. She also serves as second vice president of the Rosslyn Renaissance (RR) Board of Directors.

The 22-year-old company, which has been in Rosslyn for 12 years, has practically grown up alongside RR and the Rosslyn BID, so it seemed only fitting for EDD to take on the task of creating a visual history of the city.

Tailor-Made Specialty Designs

While the core of EDD's business remains commercial interior design, the company has come to specialize in these kinds of unusual projects – from corporate art exhibitions to designing playgrounds and high-security residential and office spaces.

"Quite often clients come to us with a project that's a little out of the ordinary, a little challenging. As a small and nimble group we have the ability to deliver something that's not cookie cutter."

Muszynski founded the firm with her husband Olek Muszynski. They later added two more partners, Pedro Nunez and Lisa Layman.

Work and Home Combine

The couple met in 1984 while working for a local architectural firm in Alexandria. She was one year out of college and living in Rosslyn while Olek, who grew up in Gdansk, Poland, was creating his version of the American Dream. "We were all in our twenties, making no money, surviving on happy hours that had food," she recalls with a smile.

Because the company evolved along with their relationship, Muszynski says the lines quickly blurred. "It's actually kind of funny, but it's hard for me to remember typical relationship milestones like our first date. For me, I can tell you when we signed the incorporation papers."

In 1989, the fact that they were spending most of their waking hours



working together and needed to save money for the business, prompted the young couple to move in together. They married four years later.

Yin and Yang

For many, working and living with the same person is a recipe for disaster. But this creative duo manages to find the yin and yang necessary for good business and lasting love.

"He's the design guru and I'm much more organized. I'm the planner. It seemed like a good fit," Muszynski says. "We were very different but we complemented each other, so there was no power struggle."

However, she notes, they like to debate. "We very seldom will agree just to agree. If we have an opinion, we say it. We never compromise our opinion for the other until we've worked through the details to find what's best."

Muszynski, a self-proclaimed "small town girl" from Western Pennsylvania has been going against the grain from early on. "In high school, girls took Home Ec and boys took Shop," she recalls. "I was one of the first girls to take Shop. I wanted to do the mechanical drafting and perspective drawing."

After high school, she earned a degree in Interior Design from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and later continued her education at the Tuck School of Business.

It takes fortitude, a strong vision and a good sense of humor to sustain a business through economic highs and lows. Muszynski manages that feat with aplomb, while raising two teens – a 13-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter.

A Commitment to Design

EDD is known for its commitment to environmental sustainability and diversity. It has been named one of the top 100 diversity-owned, top 100 small businesses, and top 100 woman-owned businesses in Virginia.

Muszynski's life and work illustrate the principle that it's not enough to merely provide quality work. The question is how to be a good corporate citizen, and balance that with a commitment to family and community.

"It's been stressful at times and a juggling act. But part of that juggling has been easier because it's a partnership. It's a tag team at work; it's a tag team at home."

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