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I was very excited to do this interview, as I usually am when I get to chat with people I admire. David Bromstad's unending enthusiasm and bright disposition are just like the rooms he designs, edgy, colorful and just a little outside of the box. He took the *Design Star* phenomenon by storm in the first season of its life, winning the coveted title and going on to become one of HGTV's leading personalities. And he hasn't stopped since…

His association with HGTV continues on his show *Color Splash*. He has also returned to his roots on *Design Star* now as host, mentoring the contestants on the current season, a post that he "just loves." Outside of HGTV's franchise, he is developing an entire "world according to David Bromstad" with a fine art collection, a bath group, design services that take him and his team all over the world and a soon-to-be "top to bottom" furniture and accessories line coming in summer 2014.

Moss definitely doesn't grow under this young man's feet. Unless of course it were a decorative concept chosen by him, which was hand-colored and artfully placed within one of his fabulous designs.

So tell me a little bit about how you got from Minnesota to Florida and *Design Star*?

There is a long, long answer to that question, let me see if I can abbreviate it a bit! I went to art school at the Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida because I wanted to become a Disney animator, like all good Midwestern gay artists! (Laughs).

That's how I ended up in Florida, I attended school there for about four years and I graduated, then moved to Orlando. I actually did work at Disney for a while, not as an animator but as one of their artists—it was pretty cool. It sounds much more glamorous than it really was but I learned a lot. After a while, I realized that I didn't want to be an animator because it was super boring for me. It was like "oh my gosh, we are really going to hand-draw all of these people and cells over and over again?"

Disney was fun and I ended up as a personal artist for the parks—a part of the resort's visual team. But that was only part of what I was doing at the time. On the side I was painting murals, furniture, making props, whatever I could get my hands on. That's what led me into making the fantasy bedrooms for a company that did model homes across the southeast. It was basically like building sets for me; I built a portfolio of work that way and that's what got me on to *Design Star*—in a nutshell. A small nutshell that is!

What was your favorite part of being on the show as a competitor?

It really was about the camaraderie with the other designers, architects and other artists. It was so awesome, kind of a summer camp/boot camp for interior designers—that was the best part of it all and I learned so much. I love to compete and I love what I did there, but it was so much about the people and how we really helped each other out. There wasn't really one person who wasn't liked, so it was actually just like summer camp for me!

That season to me was the most interesting, it had a natural, less scripted feel because it was such a new concept at the time.

It's true; we really had no idea what we were doing, or what the heck we had gotten ourselves into. When I and everybody else for that matter initially applied, it wasn't a reality show concept, it was just supposed to be a competition. Each of us was supposed to get a half an hour spot on television to redo a room. But at the end of the interview process, they told us that we were going to have to move to New York for five weeks to do the show!

That was back when reality shows were less well-known, they didn't "make you" like they do nowadays. Shows like *Top Chef* and *Project Runway* had only been out that first year so it was still sort of unknown territory. It was definitely one of those moments when you just had to go for it and realize that you have nothing to lose!

A great ideology to live by I think… So what's it like for you now, being on the other side of the experience?

It's really kind of surreal and amazing. It's a "full-circle moment," now that I'm hosting and mentoring, just as was done for me. I have to say I love it thought, helping the four designers, that is. I remember wishing that I had access to a mentor at that time, because I was absolutely terrified in the moment. Not so much about my designs, I knew I was very strong in the creative area, but I was terrified of the camera challenges. I wasn't very good at them at first and I am happy that I can help the students/design-

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ers now, because it is probably the hardest part of the show.

Everyone on *Design Star* can create, they are the best of the best, there's no question about that. But can you talk about it? Can you make your presentation interesting in short little bullet points that are fun, entertaining and exciting? That's the real challenge, learning to shape yourself for television.

It is so intimidating, a completely different animal than interacting on the show, which in comparison is so easy because you are just being yourself. It's different when you have to actually pass on information in a very short period of time because you're under such pressure in a very competitive model, it's absolutely frightening.

You know it's funny for me though; I have to admit that I get a little jealous each new season. All I really want to do is get out there and compete! I am so highly competitive, when they get their challenges I always feel like, "Oh man that looks like so much fun, I want to get in there and do it!" I would totally kill all of you! (Laughs)

I'm a little addicted to watching the challenges, what a gas it would be to take on one of those projects—I can't imagine anything more exciting! I loved the recent school bus challenge on *Design Star*, it made me want to go out and buy one so I could do the interior!

I agree, it was my favorite, favorite episode of all time and their designs were so good—they did such a great job. They totally killed it!

Do you have more shows coming up other than *Design Star*?

We just finished filming six new episodes of *Color Splash* in Miami and it's definitely new, it follows the renovation/transformation model more because that's the trend on HGTV. They're not super-huge renovations due to the show's time constraints, but we tried to make it interesting! You'll see me with a sledgehammer getting dirty! It's a different *Color Splash* but it was great fun and should air in September so watch for it!

Talk to me about your design philosophy.

My philosophy is that number one, it has to be functional. On top of that functionality though it has to be fun—you should walk into the space and smile. Whether it's a piece of art, an installation or the arrangement of the room, whatever that is, it should make you feel like "I love it here." I love whimsical and functional, fun and also timelessness.

If you had to name the most common mistakes a designer makes, what would it be?

I think that often they don't push their clients far enough. They tend to do exactly what the clients want and that has its place, but it's not necessarily why a client hires a designer. They want something they can't produce themselves… they want innovation. Many designers get stuck in very staid, safe routines, which is disappointing. People come to us because they want something that no one else has.

PhotoCourtesyMystic Paint

"It was so awesome, kind of a summer camp/boot camp for interior designers—that was the best part of it all and I learned so much. I love to compete and I love what I did there, but it was so much about the people and how we really helped each other out."

Even if you are very traditional, there are ways to push that envelope and still be comfortable, safe, but sexy. Traditional design is a favorite and every time I do something in that vein I end up loving it. But I always push it a little bit beyond the comfort zone and that's what being a designer is all about. Seeing something that might not be there, a way to handle a space or element in a new way.

One of my favorite things about your show is that you are absolutely not afraid of color. So many are terrified of using it.

I have no problem with color… no problem at all. (Laughs) I think that's from my years working at Disney and doing the kids' fantasy rooms. I developed a sense of color really quickly, almost before I knew color was scary. I really didn't understand the fears around it because I started out as an artist, I just did it because it was fun and eye-catching. Who knew it would turn into what it turned into!

Tell me about Design Studio, your company; it's based in Florida, correct?

We're based in Miami but we do work all over the world. We're doing commercial as well as residential; we're very selective about matching our clients to my aesthetic to be sure it's a good pairing. I'm dying to do more commercial, I really want to get into a hotel or a resort and perhaps a shopping mall, stuff like that.

We have been working on the River Walk Project, it's one of my first commercial projects. It's a mixed use residential/commercial complex along the Riverwalk on the outskirts of Miami. It's really interesting and man have I had to learn a lot, but I love a challenge!

I'm also working on an exiting "top-to-bottom" furniture line as well, we're working hard to get it into catalogues and stores in summer of 2014. You'll be able to design your entire room or house from top to bottom with David Bromstad!

Tell me about your fine art collection, do you create all of the designs yourself?

I have always created original artwork for all of my clients, so it was a natural offshoot. I have a large selection available; it's a way for you to have a little David Bromstad in your home! Great high-quality prints at really affordable prices, we also do hand-signed limited editions as well. You can get them online at **pennylanepublishing.com**.

I have a bed and bath line out right now too that I'm very proud of. You can find it on **amazon.com, grandinroad.com** and soon to be **kohls.com**.

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this, David. I really enjoyed it. I am so very excited for you, it seems you're taking it to a whole new level.

I'm gonna try to. Watch out Martha I'm coming to get you! I totally love her but I am ready to take over!

To find out more about David and his fabulous world of Bromstad, go to bromstad.com.
For scheduled viewing times and more details on *Color Splash* or his hosting gig on *Design Star* go to hgtv.com.

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