

# NEW · YORK · SOCIAL · DIARY

YOUR LINK TO SOCIETY

Daun Curry



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Photographs by Jeff Hirsch

We were kind of fascinated that designer **Daun Curry**, who appeared so city-sleek and soigné, grew up as one of five kids on an organic farm in Florida. “So your parents were hippies!” we cried. “Big time,” she said and offered us some homemade organic raspberry lemonade. Like so many designers, she had a previous incarnation having initially trained as a holistic health counselor. But after September 11th happened, she was shaken into asking herself what she really wanted to do in life and the answer was design.



**We heard of you through Sam Botero, with whom you were working on projects for China—what was your tour to China all about?**

So, we went there and met with the government and went on a 15-day tour all over China. I sometimes work with a Chinese architect who travels back and forth and he put together a design team. He wanted everybody to have a different angle. They do a lot of hotel and city planning. China is a lot different because the government funds projects—even whole cities. Sam and Emory's angle is "The Collector" so we sat on panels and they showed their work. They discussed being a collector and my angle was how fashion relates to interior design.

**So what did you tell them?**

What did I tell them? [laughs] I mean to me, there is no line really between fashion and interior design. How we dress ourselves and our bodies, is much like [how we want to design] our space. One of the first things I do is go into [clients'] closets.

**What can you learn?**

You can learn a lot about a person by the clothes they wear, like is it tailored a certain way? Is that going to inspire some kind of upholstery detail in their place? I don't mean just fashion, like Vogue and all that, I mean somebody's personal style. And I look at accessories ... do they like whimsical things? Do they like color?







**My problem with what you're saying is that fashion has become such a disposable thing and I don't feel interiors should be that way. I still have the chairs I bought thirty years ago. Are interiors more and more disposable too?**

I would say that you would make a bigger investment in interior elements and fashion is a bit more fleeting. But I still have some pieces of clothing in my closet that I have had for the last fifteen years and they're still relevant, depending on how I wear them. With interiors, I always try to give people a very neutral base and you can change accessories.

**What would you decide what we like judging from what we're wearing?**

Oh you know, I feel like I would have to go into more of your closet. What I also look for are the little things that you may never wear. I had a client who had a vest made out of a metal mesh that she had from the seventies. It was amazing and she loved it. She said, "I just can't get rid of it but ..." So I custom designed a chandelier out of the same material for her entry.

**Why didn't you go into fashion?**

I did consider fashion as a major and then I decided that I wanted to do interiors because it interested me a little bit more. There are so many different layers—I know there are layers in fashion too—but with interiors there's the architecture, the interior design ... just a lot of different things. I wanted to learn more about interior design at the time. I was still interested in fashion. I always felt I could relate the one thing to the other.





**What advice would you give someone starting out in interior design?**

Ohh ... what advice would I give them? [laughs] Okay ... I don't want to say something clichéd here, you know [mocking] "Go for your dreams! ... Work hard!" [laughs] You have to really love it. If you're doing it for a glamour career, you're in the wrong business.

**What's involved in paying your dues? What are the shitty jobs that no one wants to do?**

You just have to do what it takes. To me it has more to do with how much I vibe with the client than the actual project or space. It's relations with people ... not as much the clients as the contractors that give the headaches. I also remember lugging paint cans on the subway in the freezing, freezing cold. I never really wanted to work for another designer because you don't really design. You just end up being an AutoCAD monkey. I don't even know if I could do AutoCAD anymore.

**It seems when you're released from AutoCAD, you've finally made it. Right!**

**You're one of five kids, is that right? And you grew up in Florida. Did you always want to live in New York?**

I didn't. I wanted to live in California. How I ended up here is a little bit of a story. My sister was going to Smith and she was going to do an internship here for the summer. She said that I should come and live with her over the summer. I had just broken up with my boyfriend and got my heart broken for the first time. I had been here one time and I didn't like it. But I thought, "Oh, what's a summer?" So I actually ended up getting really interested in this holistic nutrition program and I studied there for a year and got my degree as a holistic health counselor. Right after that, September 11th happened. It made me think, "What do I want to do with my life? What do I really want to do?" And it was design.







**What do your parents do in Florida?**

Well when I grew up they opened and operated a bottling factory and a greenhouse. They also made terrariums and home accessories, macramé and so on. Then they sold that business and they bought a big plot of land in north Florida and started organic farming in the seventies.

**Oh, they're hippies!** Big time ... they're still hippies.

**Do your hippie origins explain the spelling of your name?**

Yes! My dad is a really early riser and he wanted to name me Dawn and my mom didn't like the name. She gave in but she wanted to make it different.

**How did them being hippies affect you?**

Um ... they're just very open and they accept everybody and everything. I guess they just supported all their kids in anything they ever wanted to do. That's part of the influence but the other part of the influence is that even though I didn't grow up with a very fancy lifestyle, my parents were always interested in architecture and we built our own house. My dad physically built the house with some contractors. It was always about the details. It's really quite beautiful—a lot of intricate woodwork. They're retired now but my dad just sent us a big box of organic vegetables and they have honeybees and they make organic honey.





So we normally ask people what they do when they stop working and relax but if you have three year-old daughter ... Relax?!! [laughs loud and long] ... I don't make it past 9:30 at night.

**It doesn't really sound as though they're hippies—they sound very disciplined and hardworking.**

Right ... there's something of a stigma to the idea of hippies, that they're like, lazy ... or like the Occupy Wall Street people and so on. My parents are very, very educated. My mother is actually an early childhood development specialist. She has helped me tremendously in being a mother.

**What sort of advice has she given you?**

It's little things. Like the way that you talk to your children. At the playground you'll hear parents say, "Please don't hit! Please don't throw rocks!" And my mom says, "No, don't use the word 'please' because then you're making it a request." And she definitely doesn't believe in TV.

