



When Zac and I grew up in Soho, it was a village of bohemian painters and sculptors.

*Half of our loft was a sacred art studio.
That artistic microcosm was the world we knew.
So, it follows that art was the religion that we were raised with.*

*Playfulness, creativity and imagination were highly prized
and regarded as the ultimate value and ultimate joy.*

- Alexandra Posen

ZAC POSEN: Mom's amazing library, and Dad's massive video collection. My sister and I watched so many great movies over and over! *The Wizard of Oz*, *Singing in the Rain*... hugely influential.

SUSAN POSEN: You guys could do karaoke to those films...word for word (laughing).

ZAC POSEN: Yeah pretty much and I think that the play between creativity and performance was influential in my work. And many of dad's early paintings involved fabric and so it was those kinds of materials that were around to work with. My dad's early work – he was grouped with the photo-realist painters – were paintings of cloth on top of boxes painted in trompe l'oeil fashion. So there were lots of cloth scraps and my sister's love of magic, surrealism and glamour were really big influences. I played with her dolls and made them clothes. Her masks and dolls and theater fed me.

SUSAN POSEN: The two of you would make theater together.

ZAC POSEN: Yeah, we played. I think play has that raw, creative freedom to it.

ALEXANDRA POSEN: I have a prized memory of making my first mask with my father when I was about six. Halloween was a big deal in our family -- sort of a Christmas for the Posens. I remember that I wanted to be the witch from Snow White. My father and I set up a workspace in his painting studio and began building the core form of the witch's face. Two halves of a tennis ball became her bulbous scouring eyes. A pickle-shaped piccolo (whistle) became her protruding nose. Glue gun galore. After we had the bones of her face, we applied paper mache in a fast and easy-going kind of way which gave her surface a tactile and imperfect quality. We painted it and topped it off with a nasty mole with some telephone wire hairs popping out, as well as some crisp stringy twine falling on the sides of her face. She was fabulous, one of my favorite objects to this day. That free approach to materials and their expressivity was profoundly influential for me. A fluidity and lack of boundaries in terms of what materials can do with each other and what they can create.

ZAC POSEN: And I think form. Seizing form and extracting it through the use of materials is in all of our work.

STEPHEN POSEN: I think the abstract aspect of the both of you is somehow related to how both of you were very good at math in creative and different ways. Zac cornered the market in tessellation theory and Alexandra's talent in advanced mathematics was astounding to me. I think that there is an abstraction, a sense of using form, that is not only literal or representative of an object or a named thing. You both have the strength to do that whether it be draping or whether it's pouring wax. Each of you has a confidence in doing those things.

ALEXANDRA POSEN: I think in addition to physical form, we have an appreciation of poetic form. As Zac was speaking, I was flooded with a memory of our listening to T.S. Eliot's reading of "The Naming of Cats," which is a fantastic reading and an example that a word can be abstract and at the same time have meaning and resonance.

STEPHEN POSEN: I would say that each of you in different ways has informed me of poetry. You know I think that Alexandra feels poetry in a very deep and profound way and I think that Zac's imagination grows with each of his collections in ways that I always find awesome and inspiring.

ZAC POSEN: And I think that our mom comes from a very creative background and also has an appreciation of craft in a different way. Not only from doing craft, but also in appreciating cultural crafts as seen during our many travels. Having the experience of seeing the reference in the same day from craft to fine art. It's really interesting and sort of breaks down barriers.

SUSAN POSEN: Well I'm laughing because if anyone saw my Instagram account right now they would see pictures of tiny design elements that delight me. On a recent trip to Turkey, I posted all of these images as we traveled from east to west and Alexandra said it looked like an ant had crawled across the country taking photographs through a pin hole. I love design and detail and I love fabrics and textiles. I think that comes from my grandmother. I think there's a whole line of extremely influential people, from a grandfather who was a jeweler to another grandfather who was a tailor in New York. You feel embedded in it. Zac's work with fabric feels sort of preordained. It makes sense. Alexandra is working with various materials, including tulle and chiffon, in her current artwork and I'm thinking, my goodness, it's all part of one piece!

ZAC POSEN: I think creativity is hereditary. I believe it's there. I think every person has a form of creativity in them and it's about nurturing and harvesting...to be given your sort of own creative ambitions. To be able to express yourself.

STEPHEN POSEN: Mom and I think of creativity as intelligence.

SUSAN POSEN: It is emotional intelligence in a way but I was also going to say that there is also another element. You can have lots of creative freedom but unless you use it, it doesn't really matter. Stephen particularly believes that. When Alexandra or Zac would come up with some idea, he would say "I believe in the Do It University." You would say to them, "Don't talk about it. Go do it."

ALEXANDRA POSEN: Just the other day, as I was taking my two children home from school on the bus, we started a conversation with my son who is passionate about comics and graphic novels. I was explaining the concept of storyboards for film as they relate to comics. My six-year-old daughter (who has big ears!) picked up a Sharpie the

moment we got home. She proceeded to knock out a fairly thorough storyboard for a movie she wanted to make. As soon as she finished, she was desperate to film it, and despite the fact that it was dinnertime, bedtime etc., I just said "OK, let's do it!" And we filmed all 16 scenes that she had outlined. She directed. It was fantastic. So, the tradition continues...

NICO ILIEV: Yeah, just doing it.

STEPHEN POSEN: In the tradition that Susan was speaking of with her family, I just want to add that we happened to meet in Florence where she was studying art history and I was on a Fulbright after Yale. It was both romantic and filled with art!

ALEXANDRA POSEN: And you were a dancer. So there is a lot of creativity

SUSAN POSEN: I took a different turn professionally, but it's there.

STEPHEN POSEN: Law can be creative too.

SUSAN POSEN: I made it creative...but obviously all of these things take passion and support of those around them to see that passion and see it through.

ALEXANDRA POSEN: I want to add something. We're talking a lot about the liberty of creativity. But it's also worth saying that this is a critical family as well – tough and analytic.

ZAC POSEN: Self-critical.

ALEXANDRA POSEN: Yes, self-critical at times... and of one another! Intellectual evaluation and deconstruction made up much of our dinner table conversations. This goes pretty much hand-in-hand with the freedom of play.

STEPHEN POSEN: And that continues to this day (laughs). A little more on my tippy toes now (laughs).

ZAC POSEN: Yeah, I feel that kind of creative empowerment. We started the fashion company together here in my home and it has been a big part of our company to try to understand the creative process and teach that creative freedom to lots of people who come through our studio. I don't consider fashion an art form: it is a mix of commerce, media and extreme creativity. But the purpose of it originates from something utilitarian, whether or not you take it there. I think that for me, that's sort of an interesting combination of different left and right side of the brain attributes. Also growing up in Soho, fashion was entering into the artist community here and that was definitely a big part of the neighborhood. You sensed the end of the garment factories and that was sort of a big eye-opener. There were only a few stores selling fashion in Soho. Having those things around us, it was pretty abstract when we blindly jumped into the fashion business.

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