

We Want Her Job!

She Designed Her Dream Career

And Krista Ninivaggi, hotshot interiors pro at an edgy architecture firm (she did Google's offices!), wants to help you do it too. *By Alison Goldman*



Ninivaggi, at Shopbop's then in-progress NYC offices. "I try to visit a site as much as possible," she says. "It's my baby. You have to be available and accountable."

Chic paint colors, incredible light fixtures, modern sofas in fun fabrics: You may have spent your weekend repinning this stuff for kicks; Krista Ninivaggi spends her workdays creating rooms with them. Ninivaggi, 33, is the director of the interior design group at SHoP Architects, one of the top New York City firms. She helped dream up Google's California offices, the Barclays Center basketball arena in Brooklyn (she even worked with Jay-Z's team on the luxury suites!), and the "wish we could live there" Shopbop command center in New York City (see it during construction, above). Ninivaggi hadn't always banked on a creative career. All through high school she planned to become a doctor, until a friend turned her on to the Rhode Island School of Design. "It sounded awesome, so I applied, and when I was accepted, I never looked back," she says. "Now I tell young women, 'If you're passionate about something and want to get into that field, just start. Take as many risks as you need to get where you want to be.'" That enthusiasm carries her through tough weeks dealing with challenging clients, tight budgets, and deadlines. "I might work a 12-hour day and be dead tired, but I still get excited by design," she says. At night she talks shop with her architect husband, whom she started dating after they sat at adjoining desks at her old company. "What I do is not just my job," she says. "It's my life!" ■



Be prepared, urges Ninivaggi: "I carry a bag gigantic enough to fit 11"-by-17" drawings, pencils, pens of all sorts of colors, and a tape measure always."



The completed Shopbop offices. "When I see a finished space for the first time, I'm like, 'oh my God. Everything that was in my head is now a reality!'"

OK, Krista, Give Us Advice!

- Do the thing that makes you feel like you.** "I'm so obsessed with design and architecture that I can't imagine not doing this. It's my identity, and I love it."
- Want to be the boss? Dress like one.** "In my industry, I deal with a lot of men who are my dad's age. So when I have a big meeting, I'll break out my superwide-leg Jil Sander 'big pants' to feel more physically imposing."
- Pay attention to all kinds of feedback.** "Anytime you have to implement a higher-up's suggestions, you can blindly do it, or you can try to learn from the change."

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