



Elizabeth Maxson

"We are constantly invited to be who we are." So goes one of Elizabeth Maxson's favorite quotes

by Thoreau. It accurately describes how she ended up in St. Louis, Missouri, opening her store Elizabeth House, and created her signature lifestyle — Elizabeth House Style — that so many have come to admire. Whether she is writing, photographing, blogging, styling, designing, painting, consulting, or encouraging women to follow their dreams, she does it all with a sense of ... Elizabeth House Style.



These little bags that hold my business cards are what I call a "happy accident." When I first began, I could not afford professional printing and so I printed my own cards and then put them in little bags so the ink would not smudge. Finally, when I could afford to professionally print, I was so happy ... no "ugly" brown bags needed! Little did I know that the customers would go ballistic when I set out my cards without the bags. Who knew? So (ugh) my beautiful cards went back into the bags. The ladies were collecting them since I stamped them with different stamps. So now, the bag is my signature.





After years of working in rented, filthy basements and disgusting, freezing workrooms, here I am finally in my beautiful dream space! And now I am writing "my story" for a wonderful magazine to be read by thousands of talented artists. Unbelievable, isn't it? When I consider all of the talented women being featured in *WHERE WOMEN CREATE*, I have a hard time realizing that I am now on these pages. So while I am asked to explain to you how I got here, please know that I am still trying to figure that one out for myself.

I grew up in a very suburban, middle-class neighborhood in Austin, Texas, raised by loving and very practical parents who worked blue-collar jobs. It all started just because my mother hated the highway and drove out of her way through old, vintage neighborhoods to avoid traffic. It was then that I fell in love with vintage homes; I would practically memorize every detail as we drove past. At a very young age, I spent every summer painting my room a new color. I also began scooting around my bedroom furniture (as well as my brother's) as early as 4 years old.

If there were ever a fire in our home, these boot lasts are what I would run and grab. My brother Bill and I were traveling in Europe together a few years ago and he bought these as a surprise for me as I shopped flea markets for my store. I wanted a pair so badly, but they weren't in my budget. He found a pair and took them to our car behind my back and he even managed to barter in a foreign language!





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TIP

THE MOMENT YOU STOP SAYING "IF" AND START SAYING "WHEN" IS THE MOMENT YOUR DREAMS START BECOMING A REALITY.





Married right out of high school, I lived in Europe for almost six years. There I discovered travel, art, flea markets, junking, great food, and the theater. My semidiploas lifestyle led me to become a stage actress and then a director. I also learned set designing. Little did I know I was honing my skills for a future that was about to be filled with many creative adventures.

Back in the states, I completed my college degree in theater and television production and taught and performed on stage. As a commissioned officer in the military, I was further trained to write and produce training and education videos. Getting good pay to write and produce while traveling seemed like a dream job, but it ended after four years when my job was outsourced.

I moved toward my passion of hunting flea markets and soon opened up my first antique booths. Accustomed to living on a tight budget, I always found ways to make our ordinary living quarters into an inviting home. Over 26 years, I had 17 residences, including an attic apartment, historical homes, a farmhouse, and an apartment above a carpet store in a little German village. Each place felt like home not because we owned found treasures but because we actually used them. Daily living turns a treasure in and of itself.

FAVORITE QUOTE

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future."

—JER. 29:11



Then came two heartache years—two miscarriages, burying my father and then my brother, losing our beloved bulldog, stints of unemployment, having to sell our home, surgeries, and other life disappointments. We were exhausted and broke and felt we needed to leave Texas to begin again. We chose St. Louis even though we did not know a soul there. Only one month after our move I opened my store Elizabeth House; I had to open quickly because I had to sell something in order to just pay the rent.



One week after opening, Mary Engelbreit walked into my store, and a year later, our apartment was on the cover of her magazine, *Home Companion*. I think people related to my style because they found it elegant but also livable. I really use what I live with. My signature style of painted furniture as well as my way of living was something others seemed to want. In those early days, customers trying to describe my store would stand around and debate. They agreed it wasn't Shabby Chic and it wasn't Victorian, but no one had ever really asked me, "What style is this?" I just did what I had always done and never really gave it much thought. One day a customer coined the term Elizabeth House Style, and it has stuck with me ever since.

Owning and running a boutique was exciting, rewarding, and exhausting. Between leaving heartache behind in Texas and having new challenges so quickly before us, my marriage ended. I wasn't prepared, but I put my life into God's hands and continued to run the store for two more years. I was very blessed to be featured in numerous magazines and to find my custom painting and design work in great demand. I wanted to explore so many other creative opportunities and I missed writing very much, but I had no time for either. Long hours spent in deplorable conditions were wearing on me, and my landlord would do nothing about it. My office and workshop, both beneath my store, had no heat, air, or windows and flooded at the hint of a hard rain. Bogs and mice were constant companions. While the store was beautiful, it was a fire hazard and a death trap. Once my lease was up, it was an easy decision not to renew. The store was at its peak, but I was pooped. And I missed the creativity I was forced to push aside while I ran a business.



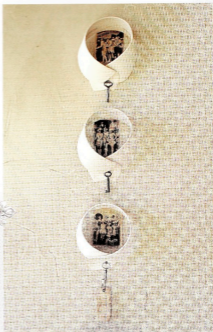


create ... it

FRENCH COLLAR FRAMES

Have you ever wondered what to do with those vintage French collars you find at flea markets? Why not try hanging them on the wall to highlight your treasures? The stiff collar, the belt, the ferns if a collar against the wall and fastener a thick nail with a large nailhead through the button hole. Use flat glue to affix a button, an old key, a watch face — you name it — to the nailhead. Then slide your photos behind the collar. Using various collars in a row makes a wonderful piece of art!

Tip: Using flat glue to attach a metal accessory to the nailhead allows you to easily pop it off and attach something else when you feel like a change.



"We are constantly invited to be who we are." That quote from Therian's book *Winter* is my reminder that no matter what the circumstances, how old I am, where I am living, or what I am doing with my life, I am constantly in a state of discovering who I am and what I am capable of. Yes, doubts sometimes weigh me down, but my creative spirit always soars higher. After closing the store, I continued on as a contributing editor for *Romantic Homes* for several years and began to work with my designs, work on my book, travel to antique shows, and write my blog from my little (rodent free!) office that my new, loving husband gave me to do with as I wish.

My story is now in a beautiful magazine that you are reading right at this moment, and you might be thinking, if she can do all that, then maybe I can too. And that is exactly what I want you to think. Of course, I give credit for all my creative talent to God. He is the One who got me here just so I could tell you my story as a personal message of encouragement not to give up on your dreams. He has great plans for you too, and I felt He wanted me to remind you of that wonderful fact.

WHERE WOMEN CREATE would like to thank Elizabeth Mason for her involvement in our Summer Issue. To learn more about Elizabeth, visit www.elizabethhouse.us or www.elizabethhouse.us/blogspot.com.