

# Seeing Clearly

Alexandra von Furstenberg is all about transparency. Angella Nazarian checks in with the fearless designer—and champion of Lucite.

PORTRAIT BY **SAM FOSTER**

**ANGELLA NAZARIAN, FOUNDER OF THE** nonprofit organization Visionary Women, continues her ongoing series of interviews for *LALA* with Lucite impresario Alexandra von Furstenberg about life after DVF.

**Angella Nazarian:** You made a major career transition from director of Diane von Furstenberg to founding your own business and home décor line in 2007. Tell me about the moment that you decided that you wanted to become an entrepreneur.

**Alexandra von Furstenberg:** When I left Diane von Furstenberg's company, I was also married to her son and had two children under the age of four. It was a very difficult time for me. I was leaving my life, my career—and somewhat my identity of living in New York. After we divorced and I gathered myself together, I knew I wanted to go back to work, but I knew that fashion wasn't the right place. There was something about home furnishings that really got me.

**AN:** What have you learned about yourself through launching your own business?

**AVF:** It was terrifying! But there was a passion and a drive in me that just took over. I was so clear while researching, developing, designing and creating this line. That feeling superseded any insecurity I had.

**AN:** You have a neon sign that says "Fearless" in your store. Is that your mantra?

**AVF:** It was very much a mantra. I became fearless in order to launch Alexandra Von Furstenberg and put my name out there. I chose Lucite because it was a material that had kind of gone dormant. The popularity was great in the '70s and early '80s, but then it just vanished. It is such a beautiful material that has so much potential. I didn't realize that it was going to take off the way it did. My father always told me, 'If you can find your niche, ride that. Own it. And it will be better than you can ever imagine.' I didn't set out to be the person who resurrected Lucite again, but when I found that I did, it was a double whammy for me.

**AN:** What is your business model?

**AVF:** I sell directly online, which accounts for 50 percent of my business, in addition to my brick and mortar store in West Hollywood. I also sell to luxury home stores around the country and overseas. I have been asked a few times if I would open another brick-and-mortar and my answer today is no. I believe it's not necessarily about having multiple stores—that was a model that worked maybe 10 years ago. Now it's all about online shopping. I have my one flagship here in L.A., and that's the platform where I get to showcase everything together.

**AN:** How does Los Angeles inspire you?

**AVF:** The colors and light in California inspire me—it makes you happy. I also look to art, such as Gary Lang's paintings. I created a bowl that had multiple colors going through it—the inspiration came from his use of color.

**AN:** You are now married to an Angeleno, architectural designer Dax Miller. How does it feel to be married to another creative person?

**AVF:** It's fantastic to share common interests and similar tastes with someone you love. We are both super visual people. We do so many inspiring things together—traveling, exploring and discovering the world through art, design, architecture and, of course, nature. It's a beautiful thing.

**AN:** Do you work together?

**AVF:** We do. We started developing real estate where he does all of the architectural design. We just finished a residential home in Malibu that is on the market now. That's one of our first projects together. We plan on doing many more in the future.

**AN:** What else can we expect from you?

**AVF:** I would like to find a way of doing a diffusion line that would be a little less expensive, like for Target or HSN. However it would be a challenge because the quality of the material I use is very high end and working in acrylic is very labor-intensive. My line is all made in Los Angeles. I'm very proud of that—'Made in the U.S.A.' It does upset me when I see companies knocking me off. How does that expression go? 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery?' Not really. It's annoying!



Alexandra von Furstenberg in her West Hollywood flagship store.