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JOHN MALKOVICH



“Candace, as you know, is very funny,” says Susan Forristal, decorator for

writer Candace Bushnell. “When we first sat down to talk about how she wanted her home to look, she said, ‘Suze! What can I tell ya? I want something fancy.’ She really sets a standard. You can tell by how she dresses and the way she looks. She’s a fancy girl.”

Wearing a chic, gauzy black shirt by Tuleh, white Alexander McQueen jeans, and gleaming gold flats by Roger Vivier, and with her blond hair book-jacket perfect, Bushnell—author of blockbuster bestsellers *Sex and the City*, *Four Blondes*, *Trading Up*, and *Lipstick Jungle*—projects a potent blend of power, glamour, openness, and warmth. Her apartment reflects all these qualities. The regal Venetian chaise and the Louis XV sofa in the airy living room with double-height ceilings are upholstered in soothing velvet. The den has a pair of cowhide-upholstered ebonized campaign chairs for viewing the 40-inch Sony flat screen. And the kitchen isn’t just for show—it’s where both Bushnell and her husband, New York City Ballet dancer Charles Askegard, cook chicken, pasta, and Thanksgiving dinners.

“One wants home to be comfortable and pretty,” says Bushnell, sipping Earl Grey tea from a homey Celestial Seasonings mug. “Apartments in New York get cluttered quickly, so I wanted there to be a spacious feeling. I’m perfectly happy here. I’m not a person who likes to move. Once I’m settled, I’m there.” The drive to nest, Bushnell adds, comes from a similarly primordial place. “Martha Stewart has made a fortune on that primal instinct,” she says. “It’s a longing for a place where you can feel relaxed and safe.”

Home is on her mind a lot these days: In addition to producing the NBC series based on *Lipstick Jungle* and hosting the Sirius Satellite Radio show *Sex, Success, and Sensibility*, Bushnell is celebrating the launch of her fifth novel, *One*

OPPOSITE PAGE: In the living room, Candace Bushnell stands in front of a Louis XV sofa she bought from Jay McInerney and an abstract painting by Gary Komarin. “I love the colors,” she says. “Gary’s my neighbor in Connecticut. I met him three months ago, and one day he popped over with his catalogs.”



A Venetian chaise creates a ballroom feeling: “It’s perfect for a woman wearing an evening gown to take a breather on,” says Susan Forristal, Bushnell’s (as well as Bret Easton Ellis’s and Griffin Dunne’s) decorator. Next to the chaise is a brass-roped, tiered table for picture books like *Richard Avedon Portraits*, and a Venetian glass lamp atop a mirrored table from Laurin Copen. Above the lamp hangs a painted nude by Sol Leiter. In the foyer upstairs sits an upholstered bench that Bushnell had in a previous apartment.

Fifth Avenue—a fast-paced, witty social satire on modern living played out by the residents of a tony Downtown co-op, many of whom (the glamorous and the not-so-glamorous) have set their sights on a spectacular penthouse triplex when its Brooke Astor-ish resident suddenly dies.

The description of this apartment, with features like a 10-foot-wide terrace and a grand ballroom with a black-and-white checkered floor and a domed ceiling, is something of a wish list for Bushnell's perfect New York abode. "I kept thinking, What would I like? It's a fantasy apartment, and I really fictionalized that building. The real

One Fifth Avenue is actually 29 floors, and I made mine 16."

Bushnell first took notice of the address as a new arrival to the city in 1979, when she lived in a studio apartment on 11th Street and Broadway. "One Fifth always stood out to me. It was superchic, with a restaurant also called One Fifth," she says. "You could have dinner there at 11 P.M., and then go to Studio 54"—both of which were on her social calendar. "I was a 19-year-old kid. I didn't hang out with Halston or Liza, but I certainly saw them."

But One Fifth wasn't the only building Bushnell had her eye on. Nearby was another complex of apartments that the Connecticut-raised writer lusted after, a series of buildings with trimmed hedges and gardens in front. "It's a little bit French... pretty and romantic," she says. Twenty-five years later, in a plot twist

worthy of *Howards End*, this is where Bushnell and her husband bought their 1,200-square-foot one-bedroom apartment.

"There were three apartments available, and this is the one we could afford. I think we made up our minds before we walked in the door that we were going to take it," says Bushnell. And they did—even though it was "pretty much a wreck," she says. "It had been used as an office. I don't think anyone had lived here for 15 years."

Full-scale renovation ensued, including the installation of new wiring and plumbing. The building, Bushnell says, was built in the twenties, and one holdover from its jazz-era origins is a stipulation in the building code that no musical instruments be played after 11 P.M. (a rule that doesn't affect their lives—neither she nor her husband is a musician). The charm is apparent in the apartment's focal point, a sunken living room with a working fireplace, 11-foot-high ceilings, and French windows with southern exposures.

Such a splendid room captured Bushnell's imagination: She envisioned it as a ballroom. "But I realized it just isn't big enough, so we put in window cushions," she says. On the advice of good friend Jay McInerney, she installed a small built-in refrigerator behind one of the bookshelf cabinets for easy access to chilled drinks while entertaining. "We've had parties for 50 people," Bushnell says. "One year Charles invented a drink that was so good—it had vodka, fresh clementine juice, a little lime juice, and triple sec or Cointreau."

While the living room is grand and light-filled, the den is luxe and cozy, with a graphic rug by Madeline Weinrib from ABC Carpet & Home that both grounds and energizes the cowhide and velvet-covered furnishings. "I love having two areas where people can hang out—a casual space and a formal space," says Bushnell. One of the closets in the den holds Bushnell's evening gowns, a space just a fraction of the size of the one



International editions of Bushnell's best sellers in more than 30 languages line the living room bookshelves, mixed with classics by Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, and Truman Capote, plus a leather-bound copy of *Trading Up*, a present from her publisher. She also has 18 copies of the first edition of the original hardcover of *Sex and the City*. "They only published 10,000 of those," she says. Given special prominence on the third shelf are copies of her new book, *One Fifth Avenue*. Bushnell picked up the painted Buddha on the bottom shelf at a Chelsea flea market for \$20.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Light blue walls, metallics, and mirrors create an ambience of light, lofty elegance. A Baccarat crystal chandelier hangs in the center of the living room, where Moroccan ottomans flank a working fireplace. Above the mantel, original to the design of the home, hangs an antique beveled mirror flanked by vintage gold-leaf sconces, with a copy of a Ming Dynasty cat that Bushnell paid \$20 for at a flea market. A French bronze coffee table sits on an Oushak rug.



"I wanted to do a very soft, elegant, airy feeling," says Bushnell, "because the windows are so spectacular. Apartments in New York get cluttered so quickly, so I wanted there to be a feeling of space."



So, how much of *Sex and the City* is real and how much is fantasy? "There's part of it that has absolutely been my reality," Bushnell says.

Both Bushnell and her husband like to cook in this "working kitchen," outfitted with soapstone counters, wood and glass cabinets, a window covering made from circular metal discs bought at Surprise! Surprise!, and a vintage porcelain enamel light fixture. "We cook Thanksgiving dinner, roasts, and occasional desserts here. Charles eats healthy—chicken, whole-wheat pasta, eggs."



that Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) romped through in a montage of eighties fashions in the *Sex and the City* movie. Bushnell does, of course, have Manolos, but, she says, "compared to some people who are crazy about shoes, I'd say I have a standard amount."

So, how much of *Sex and the City* is real and how much is fantasy? "There's part of it that has absolutely been my reality," Bushnell says. "It certainly was my reality 15 years ago. One of the

best things about the fashion sequence in the movie is just the joy of it, the pure fun. That's one thing that's great about both the TV series and the movie—they celebrate life."

And so, while Bushnell will continue to tap the cultural zeitgeist with unerring instincts, there's a part of her that will always be Carrie Bradshaw—as evidenced in the way she signs a dedication in a visitor's copy of *One Fifth Avenue*: "Drink cosmos!" [G]



To add a jolt of style to a small powder room off the kitchen, decorator Susan Forristal took a poster advertising a Bushnell event and had it made into Warhol-style wallpaper.

The family pooch holds court on the velvet-upholstered sofa in the den, decorated for chic comfort with a wood-and-iron chandelier, cowhide-upholstered ebonized campaign chairs, a rug by Madeline Weinrib from ABC Carpet & Home, a watercolor by James Nars, and an oil painting by Dan Rizzie.