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STORIES FROM THOSE WHO LIVE THERE

How it's made

With years of honed skills and hours of work, a lot goes into some of the items we use in our homes each day. We find out more from those behind the brands

Francesca Wezel, founder, Francesca's Paints



**Tell us your top...
Food to cook?**

I just employed a chef - the best thing I've ever done. Coming home and having food made for me is a joy. My favourite is Indian. I could live on Dhul and pasta.

Household item you can't live without?

My books and the stones I collected during my travels. Way to spend a weekend? Veg, seeing friends, walking, and reading.

Before work...

I wake up around 6am and have a warm shower that always ends with a freezing blast, to stimulate my brain and body. I get ready very quickly as I don't eat breakfast. Then, I walk to work with my dog Rufus, an 18-year-old Tibetan Terrier, via Clapham Common which is a lovely start to the day. I find walking great for body and mind. If I'm carrying paint, though, I do have to drive instead.

Once at work, what's the first thing you do?

I have a shot of lemon and ginger and a cup of tea. I check my emails and messages on the answering machine and then schedule the day ahead.

What are you responsible for in your job?

I am the founder and creative director of Francesca's Paints. I am responsible for everything from creating and formulating the colours

to liaising with clients as well as admin and accounting.

My typical day...

In the morning my team and I mix the paint orders and send them out to our customers. In the afternoon, we prepare invoices and deal with orders that don't require mixing, such as sealing sample pots, handpainted and colour charts. We are old-style artisans at heart so take time over every detail to get it all just right.

How did you get your job?

I founded Francesca's Paints in November 1996, after spending seven years in Sydney, Australia, working for a paint manufacturer there. My ex boss, Peter Lewis, is my mentor and taught me a lot of what I know. Once I returned to London via Nepal and India (spent on the back of a motorbike for three months), I saw there was a gap in the market for sustainable and ecological

paint in the UK. I went to various job interviews but found the rules restrictive and limiting, so I took the risk and opened my own business.

Is there a particular skill you're glad you possess?

I can talk badass, which is completely useless, and I can make colours, which I think is a great asset.

What is your proudest moment at work?

I have had many over the last 25 years. I have great clients, from actors and writers to stars of pop and royal, and have mixed paint for some of the most amazing locations in the world. Unfortunately, names cannot be disclosed, but I love to think that there is appreciation for what I do.

What surprises or impresses people the most when you tell them what you do?

When I say I make sustainable paint

and mix bespoke colours, people are really curious and want to know more. I tend to get a great reaction when speaking about my work.

What's the weirdest thing that's happened at work?

I once had to match the skin of a client who had just come back from holiday - he wanted his drawing room the same colour as his skin.

What do you enjoy most? Making colours gives me joy and colour matching is one of my favourite things.

What's the last thing you do before going home?

Make a list of what I need to do the next day - and water the plants.

How do you like to relax?

I read a lot, walk a lot, and I do yoga. When life is 'normal', I love having dinner with friends. ☺

Photo: Inna Haseb