

# *BostonVoyager*

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## **Meet Lisa Reindorf in Boston**



Today we'd like to introduce you to Lisa Reindorf.

**Lisa, let's start with your story. We'd love to hear how you got started and how the journey has been so far.**

When my sisters and I were young, our father – an artist immigrant from Poland – moved the family to a small town in Mexico. The culture, the colors, the architecture, all entranced me and engendered a lifelong interest in art, color, and design – as well as an appreciation of other cultures. I loved walking through the marketplace with its piles of colorful produce and exploring the parks and fields.

Our house was always open to visitors. Painters, musicians, opera singers, bullfighters – they all seem to flow through the house. When my father finished up a painting, he would walk to the town square and invite whoever was around to

dinner and the subsequent parties with music, discussions, drinking, and dancing could last all night. Let's just say a lot of plates got broken as bullfighters swept tablecloths off the table to demonstrate a move or once someone rode a horse through the living room! My mom said, "living with an artist you will never have tranquility but you will never have a boring moment." I loved the unexpected adventures of the artistic life.

When I moved back to the USA, it was a bit of a culture shock. In Mexico, life was leisurely and focused on spending time with people, in the US, everyone seemed to be charging ahead with careers.

My sibling and I were the first ones in our family to attend college. We all worked our way through college and I am still grateful to the national merit and other scholarships that allowed me to get a college degree. I attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying design of the environment. I had wanted to be an architect since I was ten years old and was entranced by the Anthropological Museum in Mexico City that had an enormous central column that seemed to support a floating cantilevered roof. So, I studied to become an architect and received my masters in Architecture from Columbia University in NYC.

I had been told that being an architect would be a challenging and demanding profession. That was true but I loved imagining a building and drawing and designing and then working with a team to create it. I worked in NYC for several years on international architecture projects. After leaving NYC, I moved to Boston and started an architecture firm with my husband. The firm specialized in science buildings. It was fascinating designing laboratories and learning about the work each PI undertook in their research. It still thrills me to walk by a construction site and see contractors looking at drawings our firm produced.

Concomitantly, I kept an art career going, painting and going on art residencies. With my family, we traveled to many countries, even when our kids were young, and they were also fascinated by the arts, cultures, and museums. I would take time off from work to go on painting expeditions. I was always fascinated by certain viewpoints – particularly looking down at landscapes. While I did have many exhibits, here in Boston, as well as in NYC Mexico and Europe, I felt I hadn't quite reached my stride or found a topic that was extremely meaningful to me.

It wasn't until I was on an art residency at the Studios at Mass MOCA (the largest contemporary art museum in the country), that I had an epiphany. I could bring together my advocacy of the environment, architectural background, and painting. I finished up my architecture career and since that time, I began focusing my artwork on climate change.

Currently, I focus on the conflict between architectural infrastructure and rising seas – a result of building into fragile ecosystems and disrupting natural patterns in the environment. I continue to do a lot of research on the subject and am starting a collaboration with a marine scientist on climate change patterns as they relate to the intersection of land and oceans.

### **Has it been a smooth road?**

It was a challenge in my architecture career, being a woman in a male-dominated field. Surprisingly, since almost all the people I worked with – the construction managers, developers, scientists, contractors, engineers, etc were men, I encountered minimal sexism. They seemed to respect my experience and expertise – I can't really account for it. Maybe because I expected it.

Now that I am a full-time artist, it is easier having the time to devote to art and finding my voice. It really was a balancing act spending a lot of time with my kids, and working and having an art career. It was difficult to focus my work on a particular area that was meaningful. With the work on climate change, I feel that I am working on a message that is important and developing a community of artists that are also working on environmental issues.

My son works in science and my daughter attended RISD and is an artist in NYC, so I feel that my husband and I raised two wonderful kids. They have found work that is also meaningful to them.

### **We'd love to hear more about your business.**

I have had two main business careers. One is as an architect in Goldman Reindorf Architects, Inc. We are known for science buildings and laboratory expertise, and for designing buildings and spaces that really work for the people that use them. I am proud of having a business where the employees are respected and lead balanced lives.

As an artist, I focus on climate change. I'm known for vibrant aerial views of coastal ecosystems. I bring my knowledge of science and environment into the work. At first, I exhibited at galleries but I wanted my work to have a more educational role. So now, I mainly exhibit at Universities or with environmental organizations and I speak at environmental conferences on how artists confront climate change. At this moment, Brown University is presenting my exhibit "Sea of Troubles- rising seas and sinking cities" as part of their Arts and Environment Initiative. In October, I have an exhibit and lecture at the University of Pennsylvania. This has been meaningful work for me.

**Is our city a good place to do what you do?** Excellent question. I don't particularly think Boston is a great place either for emerging architects and artists.

For architects, there are so many architecture schools turning out excellent young architects. Competition for work is fierce. I would suggest to young architects to move to a state or city that has more need of architects such as the Midwest. As an artist, I find a community of artist really supportive and wonderful. There are interesting galleries and museums as well. However, the art market is limited and the city doesn't do much to support the arts and artists. In particular, housing and studio space are unattainable for young artists. Again, I recommend that emerging artists move to a more affordable community – or a more eccentric one! There are some many interesting and unusual towns and cities in our country

**Contact Info:**

**Website:** [www.lareindorf.com](http://www.lareindorf.com)

**Email:** reindorfstudio@yahoo.com

**Instagram:** reindorfstudio

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