



## Ex-reporter redesigns her career

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VIEWERS TUNING in to the sixth season of "HGTV Design Star" next month will see a familiar face among the contestants — Cathy Hobbs.

Hobbs, locals may recall, spent 19 years venturing around the city covering hard news for WPIX/Ch. 11 before leaving to focus on a design career. She's now using that experience on a show that, she says hopefully, could lead to her own design program.

"The challenges were grueling," says Hobbs of "Design Star," which launches July 11 at 9 p.m. "It was a bit of a butt-kicking. It's early calls. It's late nights, it's full speed, with your own talent and ability the only thing you have to rely on."

"Design Star" is built on a dozen contestants in a competition of

design skills. The last designer standing gets his or her own show on HGTV.

Hobbs, 42, says she's always wanted her own national show, so when auditions were held in New York, she was one in a roomful of people trying out. She got a callback and then made it onto the show.

The married mother, a Brooklyn resident, has been working on her plan B for years. She began taking classes at Fashion Institute of Technology mornings before heading in to Ch. 11 for work at night. She eventually launched her own design firm. After Ch. 11, she hosted a local design show.

"My goal is to brand myself nationally," she says. "Cathy Hobbs is a national brand in interior design and hosting."

Production on the show began March 17, and for most of the



Cathy Hobbs, once a familiar face on WPIX/Ch. 11, is now a contender on "HGTV Design Star." Photo by Todd Plitt

time, she was cut off from her family — including an infant — and from television, newspapers or telephone.

"What was a challenge was the use of the power tools," she says. "Some of those tools I'd never seen before. When I do projects, I have people who are paid to build cabinets."

Hobbs looked at the show as a once-in-a-lifetime shot at fulfilling her dream.

"Thousands of people tried out, and in the end, they chose 12

people," she says. "I don't know the stars would have aligned again. I don't know if I would have the freedom to do it again."

Hobbs says she approaches design from a global perspective, getting inspiration from a sunrise in the middle of the Serengeti or the fragrances of spices in a market in Cairo.

Viewers now can see her in a more personal way, she says, on "Design Star."

"Doing news, people saw me like this very professional, credi-

ble, kind of Cathy sitting there telling you what you need to know," she says. "Here, it will be refreshing to see me let my hair down and use those power tools."

But does she miss the daily exposure of the nightly news?

"Not really," Hobbs says. "When I see those stories in the middle of rainstorms, I remember when I had rain up to my ankles and snow whipping my face, and I'm glad to be watching from the comfort of my own home."

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