

Social Climbing

First came sex; next, it was power, and now, real estate. Candace Bushnell is re-defining Manhattan, one social sphere at a time. The best-selling author of *Sex and the City* and *Lipstick Jungle* (each made infamous by their TV counterparts) just released her latest book, *One Fifth Avenue*, a spot-on tribute to real estate anxiety in Manhattan. And as Bushnell describes, success in the city means nothing without the right address. —Rachel Bowie

New York Resident: *One Fifth Avenue* links almost 20 fictional New Yorkers together with one thing in common — their coveted address. How would you describe the residents of One Fifth?

Candace Bushnell: In some ways, *One Fifth* is a microcosm of New York. There are strivers and arrivistes, people who are trying to hang on to what they have and people who are ready to pass on what they have. I think one of the themes of the book is really about how the new replaces the old and how, in a sense, the new kind of turns into the old. Real estate seems to be wired into our DNA — one of the first things we learn as kids is that as human beings we need food and shelter. Real estate goes deep, especially for New Yorkers.

What inspired this book?

I live in a co-op building downtown and I just love the small town-ness of living there and seeing my neighbors on the sidewalk and chatting about what's going on and what's happening in the building. Everybody always wants to know what's happening with which apartment and, if an apartment goes up for sale, pretty much everybody in the building manages to get a peek at it.

In the book, the character Lola [a twenty-something who has seen every episode of *Sex and the City*] reflects a new generation of New Yorkers influenced by *Sex and the City*. How does it feel to have inspired that?

I love *Sex and the City*. I started writing the column in 1994, which was really during the early days of the Internet. In the last 15 years, technology has changed and advanced so much. The character Lola knows everything about pop culture. She watches reality shows, she knows about labels and celebrities — the reality is that she absolutely



would have to know about *Sex and the City*. If she didn't know about *Sex and the City*, the character just wouldn't be believable. I just love that she's watched every episode of the show, but she's gotten it all just a tiny bit wrong so she's always getting herself into a pickle.

How has New York changed since you first introduced the world to Carrie Bradshaw?

I think it's more corporate, as I think every place is. It's still a really exciting city and it's a lot easier to live here than it used to be. I came to New York 30 years ago and it was tough. There was no Pooper Scooper law and if you parked your car on the street, it would be broken into and the radio would be stolen within minutes. My sister came to visit once with her boyfriend and they parked their car in front of my building, they came up to say hi and we looked out the window and their car was being broken into.

How have you changed since first introducing the world to Carrie Bradshaw?

I think that I've mellowed a lot and I think that's just something that happens with age. You don't worry about things as much, which is great.

With the current crisis on Wall Street, do you think that the New York lifestyle reflected in your books is going to go away?

I don't think so. There will be a whole new crop of financial people that will come up. Traditionally, New York is one of the financial capitals of the world. We had the big dotcom crisis and that would have been a disaster, but the real estate boom came right after that and buoyed everything up. I think it's going to be tough, but eventually something else will come along.

At *One Fifth*, the residents may change, but their ambitions remain the same. What is it about New York that inspires such drive?

There are always young people that want to come to New York to make it. There's a great mythology about success in New York. I think that old saying, "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere," is true. The city is full of smart and talented people and it always makes things interesting. ■