



## Leslie Ezelle: First Gay Gal on ‘Design Star’ and Ellen’s Next Best Friend?

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A Mom of four, a former Dallas Cowboys When Leslie Ezelle hit TV screens on this season of HGTV’s Design Star, she was an instant fan favorite. It’s not everyday you meet an interior designer who’s a former Dallas Cowboys cheerleader, mother of four and breast cancer survivor who has lived everywhere from Mississippi to the Philippines, and who just happens to also have a wife named Libby.

We interviewed her the week of the show’s premiere, and since then the Texas-based Ezelle didn’t win Design Star but she came out triumphant from the series nonetheless. Named an honorary chairperson for Susan G. Komen’s Race for the Cure organization, Ezelle just spent October (National Breast Cancer Awareness Month) helping raise tens of thousands for the organization, which garnered her the “privilege of being named hometown hero” by Dallas-based KDFW FOX4 TV. Her biggest project last month: Creating a 2,600-pound, 14-ft. tall bullet bra sculpture with the catchphrase, “You Can’t Strap a Good Woman Down.”



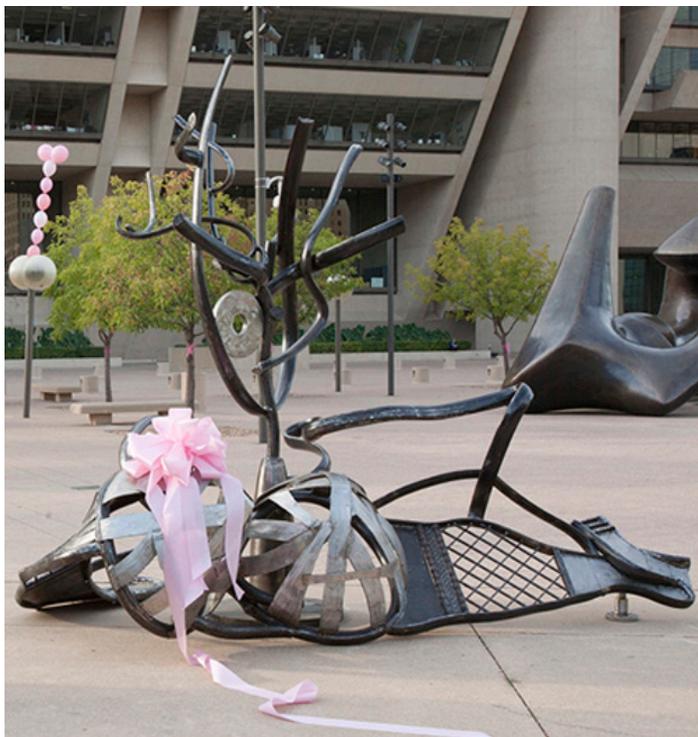
This busy lesbian mom (her wife is partner at a prominent Dallas financial firm) has a devilish wit (she follows up “I had not been on the bottom once” with a ba-da-bing “that’s what he said,” for example) that’s nearly as distracting as her amazing physique. We talked to Ezelle about pillow fights, moody kids, becoming the Modern Family of design shows, and the destiny she and Ellen Degeneres share.

### Tell me about that amazing bra sculpture.

I designed and help sculpt a huge 1950s metal strappy bra, hanging from the tree of life, weighing 2,600 pounds. This Madonna-like bra is named “Ann-E Girl” after my kids’s aunt, who died of breast cancer. It toured Dallas, including a visit to Dallas City Hall, where the mayor did a proclamation about the bra, officially “Turning Dallas Pink” in honor of breast cancer awareness month. “Ann-E Girl” visited various cities and tourist cites leaving a trail of pink in her path to eventually land at the finish line of the Race for the Cure — to be greeted by over 30,000 runners! Now that breast cancer awareness month has come to a close, this sculpture is moving on to other organizations that help deal with the struggles of women trying to overcome adversity.

### Is being a working mom different in a same-sex headed household?

Well, maybe, I guess. You know we both wear the pants in the family, so to speak, however we don’t have penis’s, or peni I should say. But I have to say we both can have pretty big balls at certain times. So I don’t know where that puts us. As far as the kids are concerned, this is just the way it is. Libby, my partner and I are so



totally different that it makes for a good balance in our life. I am the mom that makes costumes, feeds the family, and help the kids with any creative project. Lib is the one that coaches the teams, helps with homework, and makes the money — at least for now. The dogs know that I am the blonde one who sometimes throws them a bit of fat off the steak I am eating, and the brown headed one, Libby, is the one who takes us on walks. So, we all have our roles to play.

**How does your background — especially moving from Biloxi, Mississippi to Philippines to Louisiana to Texas — affect your design sensibility?**

It doesn't. No wait, maybe that's not true, maybe it gives me a more "global perspective." If you have watched Design Star that may strike a chord with you. There was a gal on the show that said her design style was "global" and used the term "global perspective" every chance she got. It was hilarious! We had a drinking game over here one night where we had to drink every time she said "global." Needless to say, we were all two sheets to the wind by the end of the night. [Laughs]**Do you think there's such a thing as a lesbian design aesthetic?**

Huh? Come again? Well, I can tell you this much, I don't design in a granola, Birkenstock, no makeup, wallet-in-my-back-pocket, stereotype kind of way — not that there is anything wrong with granola, or Birkenstocks, or not wearing make-up or carrying around a wallet in your back pocket. I mean, I have eaten granola and would like to say on the record that I am a fan of it and I have worn Birkenstocks — once — and definitely I have been seen without makeup, so really the only thing I haven't done is my wallet in my back pocket, but recently I have been considering it as an option over my new Jimmy Choo purse. So, to answer your question, since I do not have a good grip on the latest design aesthetic for lesbians, I think I would say, um, no.

**You had the all-American childhood; high school cheerleader, football sweetheart, and voted class favorite. Did it surprise you to discover you were gay? Are you gay or bisexual? How do you identify?**

I know, isn't it crazy? My old boyfriends, to this day, can't believe it. I have been asked the question by a couple of them if they were the one responsible for turning me gay. My canned response is, "I'm sorry, no, you do not get to take credit for that." I'm just lucky that way. So, I'm going with, it's because of the black mollies [urban dictionary: black mollies] my mom's doctor prescribed to her when she was pregnant with me. It's always the mom's fault!

No, seriously, I identify myself as gay, because after numerous boyfriends and relationships with various boys, since 1990 I have not been with another man. And no, I have not been celibate. So I think that makes me gay. It is a mind blower for most folks, which I love. You can't judge a book by its cover.

**Would you do another reality show?**

Absodamnlutely! I will when I have my own show. I am still in hot pursuit of my own show — my dream show may not be an HGTV kind of show. I mean, I can be a bit racy, which is hard to keep from my kids at times. I want to have more of a real life Modern Family kind of design show, which is a glimpse into my amusing life, with design tits — I mean tips — for example, all that it will encompass to redesign every room in my house plus the four new kids' rooms. Ever dealt with a hormonal 13-year-old girl or a determined 11-year-old boy who has difficulty understanding the concept of coordinating colors? Try having to develop a sophisticated and elegant look that will have to withstand a tornado of activity moving through it day in day out. That means on any particular day I can have mud tramped through the house — or worse, remember three dogs create a lot of poop — as the kids run in from school to change for the afternoon activity. Then the Gatorade is kicked over as the boys race out the door to catch a ride to practice and the snack I fixed for Ella has left a trail through the living room as she wanders around eating it as all three dogs follow her. I think you get the idea. More of what I like to call an organic kind of design show. Any takers?

**Do your kids think you're as cool as everyone else does?**

Well first let's start with the cool part: Does anyone out there think that I'm cool? Because I have always pictured myself in the goofball category. But cool? I can be cool, I like that. And no, they definitely don't think I'm cool. For



a minute there when they thought I was like Beyonce and had won the contest maybe yes, but that passed. So now I am shooting to get on the Ellen Degeneres show for my 14-foot tall, gigantic metal bra sculpture that toured Dallas and across the nation turning each of its destination spots pink for the month of October. See, the dream is to have the bra sculpture land at Ellen's studio and turn her building pink. Then maybe the kids will think I'm cool again. Any chance you have some ties to my gal, Ellen? It's the perfect match for me to be on her show: we have so much in common. We both like women, we both were Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders although she was a few years before me I think — well, clearly she's a dancer; we both lived in Louisiana growing up; she HGTV'd someone and I was on HGTV; she is big into Susan G. Komen; her mom had breast cancer and I had breast cancer; and she sculpts in her spare time like me!

**What's next for you?**

I'm running for president. Either that or my own reality design show. <http://www.shewired.com/sites/shewired.com/files/imce/annegirlfam.jpg>