

Would you let a moose handle your interior design? You would with this Brielle moose

4-minute read

Susan Bloom Special to the Asbury Park Press

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BRIELLE - Even as a child, the gift of designing spaces, managing projects, and arranging furniture came naturally to Katherine Cowley. So it came as no surprise when she launched Brielle-based [Moose Interior Designs](#) in 2020 with the goal of bringing her fresh, comfortable, and casual aesthetic to homeowners throughout the Shore area.

Growing up in Oceanport, “I was very into floor plans and was always rearranging the furniture and décor in my room,” recalled Cowley, 33, a Manasquan resident. “I soon began doing the same thing in our house and my parents were very supportive; they were constantly renovating and I was intrigued by the fact that you could keep improving your home.”

In addition to offering her parents suggestions on their kitchen cabinets or backsplashes, she said, “I was very mechanical and my father and I even built an outdoor barbeque area and new deck at our house.”

Art in your home: [Point Pleasant Beach art gallery sells a sticky secret ingredient — beeswax](#)

After graduating from the University of New Haven in Connecticut in 2012 with a degree in interior design, “I worked for a New York City-based firm that designed gyms, but I didn’t find it as fulfilling and it was a long commute,” she said. Wanting to be closer to home to help care for her ailing father, “I worked for Hovnanian Homes in Red Bank for the next five years and then at an architectural firm until that position dried up when the pandemic hit,” she said.

Feeling ready to strike out on her own anyway, “I started Moose Interior Designs in April 2020 as a side job to see what it would be like,” she said of the venture that she launched on Instagram and named after her beloved father. “People were always asking me to help with floor plans or rearrange their furniture, so when COVID hit and my job ended, I took it as a sign to move on and do my own thing — and I never looked back.”

Coming into the process with experience in virtual modeling and Zoom calls — “I show all of my clients their home in 3D before any nail is hammered,” she said — Cowley wasn’t concerned about starting a new business during the pandemic.

Rather, “I capitalized on the free [marketing exposure offered by Instagram to post my designs and engage people on my page](#) and got my first big break in mid-2020 working on a 7,000-square-foot new construction home in Holmdel with a client that found me on Instagram,” she said.

“I was hands-on from day one working with them on everything from the architectural plans through to the construction and soft furnishings,” Cowley said. “The two builders involved enjoyed working with me and saw my skill set, and the project helped me get recognized through positive word of mouth.”

As her firm expanded throughout 2021 and 2022, “I felt the need to take the next step and establish a dedicated space where I could bring clients,” she said of her decision to lease her current 900-square-foot brick-and-mortar space in Brielle — a former dog-grooming salon that she completely gutted and opened in October 2022.

In addition to being just a short drive from her home, “it has beautiful glass windows, is very modern and airy, and is completely tailored to my needs,” she said.

'Tomorrow isn't a guarantee': [Loss drove Manasquan interior designer to find her passion](#)



Katherine Cowley, owner of Moose Interior Designs, pulls fabric and rug samples for a project in her studio space in Brielle, NJ Friday, September 8, 2023. *Tanya Breen*

'Comfortable but still designed'

“I gravitate towards a modern coastal vibe that’s warm, inviting and homey while still being elegant,” Cowley said of her style. “My spaces have a ‘comfortable but still designed’ modern flair that showcases the cabinets, countertop selections and other finishes.”

“In my studio, I have physical samples of everything from exterior stone, siding and roofing to interior flooring, lighting, plumbing, rugs, drapery, furniture and accents, so I’m start-to-finish when selecting everything, which helps us ensure that we’re working within each project's budget,” Cowley said. “We also provide all elevations for contractors when it comes to outlets, light switches, trim measurements, etc. so that nothing gets missed or mistaken. Builders like working with me because I address those concerns for them.”

Among trends in residential interior design, “white, sterile kitchens and modern black-and-white farmhouse styles are fading away in favor of warmer looks with textiles and vintage rugs that make spaces look homier,” Cowley said. “Plaster is becoming a big hit based on the extra texture it can add to walls, and homes are straying away from the once-popular open concept and increasingly using strategically placed walls to give spaces greater definition.”

“While trends are fun, I work to achieve designs that are timeless but not boring so that they don’t look like every other kitchen or living room you see in magazines,” she said.

Among challenges, Cowley noted that while clients do some of their own design research online, they can be misled by internet images that are photoshopped or else aren't applicable to their settings.

Looking good at home: [How Colts Neck interior designer started by creating the best-looking dorm rooms](#)

“I have a lot of technical know-how and often have to bring my clients’ expectations back to their actual space based on all of the things that have to be taken into consideration, such as the number of recessed lights their home needs, clearances required for walkways and other specs,” said Cowley.

“I’m constantly working, even at home when I’m searching the web for the right product or vendor,” she said. “This job requires a lot of hours, but I have an amazing husband. We’re a great team and we always make sure to read to and say nightly prayers with our 3-year-old son William before he goes to bed.”

While her customers were largely based in northern New Jersey and even southern New York when she first started, “my clients are more in the Spring Lake, Brielle and Sea Girt area now that I have my space in Brielle and I’m really feeling like part of the community,” she said. “I currently focus on residential new construction and renovation projects, but I especially like new construction work because I’m very detail-oriented and it gives me the ability to oversee everything from start to finish.”



Katherine Cowley, owner of Moose Interior Designs, works on a project for a client in her studio space in Brielle, NJ Friday, September 8, 2023. *Tanya Breen*

'Push the limits'

Currently supported by one design assistant (and looking to add another full-time design assistant/junior designer) and recently recognized in DesignNJ Magazine for one of her projects, Cowley is excited to take part in the “Taste of Spring Lake Kitchen Tour” this Oct. 21. “I’ll be decorating the dining room of one of the homes on the tour, which will be a great way for people to see the personality of my work,” she said.

Looking ahead, “I want to remain a small firm that’s like a family, all while expanding on our brand, gaining more recognition and continuing to push the limits on projects knowing that we have our clients’ full trust,” said Cowley, who’s open to adding commercial design work for restaurants and hotels into her portfolio.

Style where you find it: [Lakewood interior designer started by finding beauty at flea markets](#)

She also wants clients to know that she walks in many of their shoes. “There are a lot of young families in this area,” she said, “and as a married couple with a young son ourselves, I want the homes I design to be kid-friendly but still elegant.”

As for her favorite part of the job, “I love that I get to be creative and that every day is different,” Cowley said. “It’s rewarding to see what you can come up with from start to finish, and I enjoy the opportunity to be constantly learning and expanding my skill set in this field.”

“Homeowners get to see their home throughout the process, but the ‘big reveal’ happens when the furniture and artwork are all installed and everything comes together,” Cowley said. “There’s nothing like seeing your customers in awe and hearing them tell you that ‘It’s better than I ever imagined!’”



Exterior of Moose Interior Designs in Brielle, NJ Friday, September 8, 2023. *Tanya Breen*