

LUXURY LIVING

At home on East Elm Street

By Gretchen A. Peck

Beth Krupa is an award-winning designer whose work has been featured in a number of high-design magazines. She's traveled the world with her family, living in Hong Kong, London, India, and New York City. Today, she calls Greenwich home—for her family and for her small, woman-owned design business, Beth Krupa Interiors (BKI). Greenwich Time spoke with Krupa about the past pandemic-challenged year, and what still fuels her passion for interior design.

It was in 2008 when Krupa returned to the States, settled in Fairfield County, and went back to school to study interior design at Fairfield University. The process of relocation and re-establishing their homes was what led Krupa—who'd had an impressive career as a big-brand fashion buyer—to professional reinvention. "Every time I redid a home for our family, I found that the faster we were all comfortable—my husband, the kids, and I—the better. I found there was great power in getting everyone settled quickly," she recalled.

Krupa founded her namesake business in 2011, first in Old Greenwich. By February 2020, the business and design team had grown enough to warrant a new space—one that could accommodate a new retail studio. They moved into 19 E. Elm Street just before the pandemic descended. Krupa assembled a balanced team, to which each member contributes a unique perspective, special talents, and expert skills. "I like hiring people who have something special to bring to the team, so we have a wonderful design-operations lead, and she provides follow-through. She's the person who organizes all the procurement, tracking, all the nitty-gritty details for each project. We also have a senior designer who has loads of CAD experience, and she's particularly adept at working with architects and construction documents. Now, we have a design assistant. Everyone's got their strength. All the talent combined makes us a stronger team," she suggested.

Krupa's team also relies on a network of reputable craftspeople, artisans, contractors, painters, and electricians. When Greenwich Time spoke with Krupa in late May, she was preparing to travel to High Point Market, the largest trade show in the world for home furnishings. It would be her first professional trip in over a year. "[Typically], we see between 4,000 and 6,000 vendors every year," she said.

Design component industries, like foam manufacturing, were hit particularly hard during COVID-19. Foam, for example, is essential to furnishings and appliances, so the interruption was significant, and yet, Krupa marvels that they were able to keep working, without pause, throughout the challenging year. "It was scary. We had to be hyper-vigilant and slow down, because I had tradespeople to keep safe," she recalled. "Normally, we'd have electricians, plumbers, and others in a space, working side by side, but because of COVID, we could only have one team at a time come in. We were all in it together, and we got through it. Now, spring has sprung, and it just feels good."

Supply chains are slowly returning to normal, she noted, but getting materials wasn't the only aspect of the business impacted by the global pandemic. Clients' requests and the types of projects changed, too. Reflective of new priorities for homeowners, Krupa noted that clients are bucking previous trends for smaller



Beth Krupa photo

Beth Krupa is the owner and lead designer at Beth Krupa Interiors at 19 E. Elm St., Greenwich.

properties, closer to town. Today, they often need space—indoors and outside—amenities, offices, and places to comfortably gather as a family or with the friends and family members they've missed over the past year.

Naturally, Krupa has her own style preferences that she refers to as "eclectic," but notes that when she works with clients, their tastes and living needs are paramount. "We have some helpful tools that we use to help clients visualize the space," she explained. "It helps both of us get to the goals and what we'd like to achieve." When designing a space, she takes a forward-thinking approach, anticipating how an individual or family may evolve as time passes. "We just built a mudroom for a family with toddlers. I'm already picturing how they'll be a foot or two taller in a few years, and you know it happens overnight," she quipped. "We try to design for five years out. That's our job, to think about things like that."

Krupa finds interior design to be equal parts creative, planning, logistics, and execution. "From the outside, people may look at what we do and think, 'Isn't that fun?' And it is, often, but it's also a balancing act, with every decision organically based on another and another," she explained. "This is such a left brain, right brain industry," Krupa added. "We have to be creative and deal with problems and issues as they come up. There are so many details for every project, thousands of details that we manage, so the client only sees exceptional customer service."

Recently, they completed a design project for a homeowner who breeds and rescues racehorses. Part of the design called for a piece of grand-scale art. "Her home is really unique to her. She told us she wakes up and feels like she's in Shangri-La. That's the goal. We want everyone to feel like that. We all deserve Shangri-La," Krupa said.

Krupa is currently serving as the president of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) Connecticut's chapter. Under her direction, the organization pledged time and resources to Circle of Care, a local non-profit organization that supports families with children undergoing cancer treatments. The ASID chapter will design bedrooms or other kid-friendly rooms for these special children; volunteers will help execute on Krupa's team's designs.

Krupa said she relishes time spent in the team's new studio space at 19 E. Elm Street, Greenwich. "It's all windows, and it feels a little like a fishbowl, but in a good way," she said. "You'd asked me about whether Greenwich has a certain style. I think that's why I settled my business here, because there's not a certain style, and that creatively excites me as a designer. Greenwich is so cosmopolitan, so eclectic, and a little 'sky's the limit.' You see people from all walks of life, from different cultures and countries. It's a fabulous place to have a studio."



Jim Fuhrmann photos

Beth Krupa Interiors designed this kitchen for a Greenwich home, leveraging natural materials like wood and marble to create a beautiful but highly functional space.



For a Greenwich client, the Beth Krupa Interiors' team reimagined the formal dining room with new flooring, furnishings, wall coverings and an art-piece chandelier. Photo styling by John Stefanick.



The Beth Krupa Interiors' team recently designed this mudroom to accommodate the family's needs today and well into the future. Photo styling by John Stefanick.