

## Connecticut Builder Interviews ASID President Beth Krupa Beth Krupa Interiors



**How long have you been involved with ASID, and how has it helped your business?**

I came into Interior Design after living abroad across 4 countries in 12 homes with my husband and two children. My first introduction to our ASID association (America Association of Interior Designers) was in 2008, as a Student Member, while attending the Fairfield University Interior Design program. ASID makes student membership such a deal (\$80 for your entire school career!) with the full benefits that designers receive when paying full price.

What I have learned through ASID has been incredibly valuable as a designer. The CEU courses alone are enough to help any fledgling designer or seasoned professional in understanding our industry. Good examples are LED lighting for wholistic wellness in design, sustainability's huge impact on design and our role in it, changes in the psychology of design and re-thinking space, design for sensory well-being, Biophilic Design, healthy material sourcing and selection, and of course a huge assortment of business management courses.

Other tangible ASID membership benefits include contract examples, insurance recommendations, billing index surveys, job banks, and the biggest personal impact in my life has been amazing peer contacts and invaluable friendships.

ASID's mantra above all else is "Design Impacts Lives" and our role as Interior Designers is to create the vision, or collaborate with Builders, Architects, and our Clients to weave the vision for each unique story to be told, so that life can be lived in the ultimate manner.

**What are your goals as 2021 President, and how has the pandemic affected what you want to accomplish?**

My goals since taking office in October have been to re-instate the quarterly newsletter and our monthly membership meetings (now via Zoom) both socially and for CEU credits. The Board and I have also been focusing on ramping up student involvement with mentorship programs, proposed scholarships, and career fair days.

In my first few weeks in office, I reached out to both the HBRA and AIA presidents to suggest we combine our resources for more successful events. Recently we held a webinar with a panel of very accomplished members of all three associations to discuss 2021 and Future Trends. (See Anticipating 2021 Home Space Trends in this issue.)

The pandemic has definitely changed the way we've been doing business, but by using outside the box thinking, we have reached broader groups of designers and students throughout the state than we would have relying on in-person events to generate new and exciting ideas for our membership.

**What value can an interior designer bring to the builder of a luxury spec home?**

We are trained to see different aspects of the home than the builder may be focusing on. We approach design from a more intimate end-user aspect, being able to touch and feel fabrics and finishes and foresee how clients will be interacting



BKI Wilton renovation with Chris Downey, US Home Services, Smart Home & Surround Sound by James Sweeney, HomeTronics Lifestyles

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with them. We are envisioning the results from the very beginning, and working towards that goal. From a planning perspective, an interior designer is invaluable in terms of saving time and money, while giving the client luxury amenities, always with the best possible result as the mutual goal.

### How do you coordinate with a custom home client, the architect and the builder? How do you see your roles integrating?

It depends on with whom the client has initiated the project. Many times, the designer is brought in first as the process and relationship with the designer starts early. Typically, we begin with their first or “starter home”, so we have worked with them already. When new experts are brought in, we coordinate schedules, help produce timelines, design schematics, drawings /plans, and offer anything else we can to be of service to the project moving forward. We pride ourselves on

being a highly organized firm and keeping everything on schedule.

Sometimes we aren’t the first person brought in, and we’re just as happy to roll with that and work with the project lead. I particularly love being part of a team, as we get a chance to work with other creatives and learn from one another’s expertise.

### Have you worked with any builders and architects in Fairfield County on custom or spec homes, and if so which firms or companies?

We have worked with Anthony DeRosa, DeRosa Builders on the planning of an addition in Old Greenwich. It was a remarkably pleasurable experience. The architect was the very talented Christian Rae, who went on to help us with a condominium project in Stamford shortly thereafter. Most of our work thus far has been with renovation projects, but we

always welcome the opportunity to work with custom and spec homes.

Anthony DeRosa trusted me to bid on two amazing projects that had come across his desk. I appreciated Anthony’s faith in us, so when I was brought in on a renovation project in Old Greenwich that had been overbid, I trusted that he would do his best to help my clients. I knew that this couple’s addition should be in the under \$750,000 range they hoped for, and Anthony not only gave them everything they had dreamed of, but he also found a troubling variance we had to deal with, and brought the super-talented Christian Rae aboard as architect.

My relationship with Christian became vital the following month when during fire marshall inspections for a condo renovation I did in a Stamford high rise, we needed fire exit drawings. Christian Rae was swamped, but he sent someone to us that same week, and saved our client some huge frustration.

The real point of all this is relationships. The fact that joining the HBRA led me to all of these happenstances is based on people and our joined forces. The ASID has taught me very similar lessons, and in a full circle coincidence, I now find myself President, as Anthony was President of HBRA for the last two years. What the HBRA has done for us as an industry to keep construction alive and essential during the pandemic cannot be underestimated. We all owe such gratitude, and with each inquiry my firm has been receiving due to the 34% increase in CT home sales over last year, I know I have the HBRA to thank. ■



BKI Greenwich (Riverside) renovation with Chris Downey, US Home Services, woodwork panels by Renaissance Millwork, New Milford





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19 E. Elm Street Greenwich, CT 06830 • (203) 890-9292 • [bethkrupainteriors.com](http://bethkrupainteriors.com)



Photography: Jim Fuhrmann

## Anticipating 2021 Home Space Trends



*Gina Calabro*



*Kerry Brun*



*Beth Krupa*

In February, Gina Calabro, Executive Director of AIA Connecticut, Kerry Brun, Executive officer of HBRA Fairfield County, and Beth Krupa, President of ASID CT presented a webinar to explore what will impact and change design, architecture, and construction in 2021.

Panelists included two talented architects, two leading Fairfield County builders and two successful interior designers:

- ▶ Jack Franzen, FAIA; J.P. Franzen Associates Architects, P.C.
- ▶ Emilia Ferri, AIA; Emilia Ferri Architecture + Design, LLC
- ▶ Anthony DeRosa; DeRosa Builders, LLC
- ▶ Peter Sciarretta; Hemingway Fine Homes
- ▶ Tori McBrien; McBrien Interiors
- ▶ Sarah Weiland; Tusk Home + Design



"We have all learned to be more flexible, and we need our homes to be flexible too," said moderator, Amy Vischio.

"Home is no longer a place we return to at the end of the day. It's a place we rarely ever leave."

— Amy Vischio

Moderated by Amy Vischio; Creative Director at Large, athome magazine. Our building professionals are in great demand, and probably have more work than you know what to do with. You are tasked with delivering world class luxury homes in an environment with a disrupted supply chain, and rising material costs and container fees. In fact, today I would say it's easier to bring a baby to full term than it is to get a pool pump!" Amy posed the question, "So what does all this mean for home design?"

Then Amy Vischio opened the discussion, with a question about the open concept floor plan's relevance since COVID.

**"The open concept floor plan was never meant to run our businesses, educate our children and cook our meals all at the same time. Has the demand for this way of living changed?"**



**Jack Franzen** - "We are still knocking out walls, but acoustically and visually separating spaces. And I have many requests now for new buildings detached from the house...spaces over the garage or additions separate from the main house."

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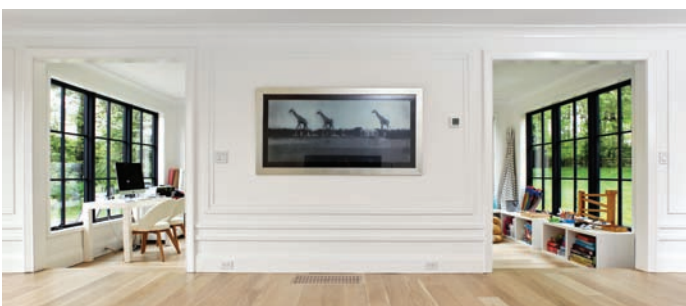


## Anticipating 2021 Home Space Trends

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**Anthony DeRosa** – I'm glad architects and builders are on the same page. The open concept floor plan is alive and well, but we need those separate little spaces , , , a place to close the doors, where kids can do homework, and parents can be on Zoom calls. Clients still want the open floor plan where the family can gather together.



DeRosa learning room



DeRosa playroom

### Are you finding more space within homes or doing new builds?

**Anthony DeRosa** – I think it's 50:50 right now. Last summer and fall, it was all remodels. Then, about 8 months ago, the calls for new homes started coming in.

### What are the most requested rooms or features today?

**Jack Franzen** – As a result of Covid and problems with nursing homes, more homeowners are opting for finished spaces within their homes for their parents, and people are avoiding club pools, so in ground pools are more popular than ever.



**Peter Sciaretta** – The two most popular add on rooms people want are first, the Amazon Room for secure delivery of all packages and Instacart, and second, the Distance Learning Room. We recently completed an Amazon Room outfitted with secure exterior door for delivery and exit, which can be unlocked with your smart phone, ceiling mounted security camera, iPad on the wall, shelving for storage, and even refrigeration .



Beckman Homes delivery room

NOTE: Amazon will deliver packages right to your garage. The service is called Key for Garage, and only requires a \$30 myQ Smart Garage Hub, available on Amazon, which will let Amazon talk to your garage door opener, so that it can be opened by a delivery person. You'll also need an Amazon Prime subscription.

Peter Sciaretta went on to say that the most notable request is for The Distance Learning Room, which can be sound proofed and equipped with a virtual learning screen, classroom desks and lighting, and ever increasing demand for an reliable wifi system, preferably hardwired and with more access points..

### The new bar is the backyard

Indoor outdoor relationship is more important than ever, as people spend more time at home and crave natural light. There is a priority on the usability of outdoor living space such as covered porch, screened in porch with roll up screens, outdoor fireplace, TV, dining area, good play space and a huge pool market has developed as a result of COVID and the fear of club pools.

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## Anticipating 2021 Home Space Trends

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Hemingway Construction outdoor environment



**Sarah Wieland** – media rooms with stadium seating and popcorn machines to bring the movies home, and home gyms are being brought to the next level – also seeing golf simulators – anything that brings entertainment home.



**Emelia Ferri** – expanding on the home gym, we're seeing Pelaton Rooms, as well as home saunas and spas, and dog bathing stations incorporated into the garage or mud room.



### What about supply chain issues?

**Emelia Ferri** – There are up to 4-5 month delays in appliances.. and kitchen renovations are huge right now!

**Sarah Weiland** – There's been a huge shift – a narrower view of what the customer can get. We used to source from Italy and India, but now we are focusing on U.S. made furniture and furnishings, and the less states you have to go thru the better chance you will get it, so for example we're sourcing from New Jersey.

### Tori you truly are a one woman firm. You even do your own CAD... How are you handling these issues?



**Tori McBrien** – We have to be super flexible. . . for example, when there's a shipping delay, it's about educating your clients. There are two main criteria I look for. Timing is huge, so we are looking for pieces in stock, and East coast vs. West coast. The other criteria is people are willing to wait for something really special and unique, and I try to find those special items for them.

**Peter Sciarretta** – We are managing client expectations, and building in delays.

**Jack Franzen** – As architects, we are having trouble getting surveys. Surveyors are so busy, they are just not available. On the other hand, millwork is at the end of a job, so millwork subs need work.

### Have you changed your contracts to reflect the realities of COVID?

**Sarah Weiland** – We have a COVID Contingency written into every contract and every invoice with projected lead times on materials, cost of goods, import taxes and tariffs! We're telling clients that it's a whole new ballgame... A guy in the factory gets COVID and the factory gets shut down... Clients are normally very understanding. It can be from 6-8 weeks to 16-20 weeks!

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## Anticipating 2021 Home Space Trends

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**Peter Sciarretta** – We definitely have a COVID clause that we call a “cost of commodity” clause.

### What about the town approval process..how has that been impacted by COVID?

**Emelia Ferri** – It varies from municipality to municipality in both Connecticut and Westchester County. Some are drop offs; some are by appointment and some are electronic... Response is quicker with electronic.

**Anthony DeRosa** – I love what happened with the permit process! We used to send someone to town hall every day with a check list and follow up 3-4 hours each day. ..Now, we get it to them digitally, and for the standard building permit, it's streamlined and much quicker response by e-mail. Most towns were antiquated... We've had great luck especially with Darien, Greenwich and New Canaan.

**Peter Sciarretta** – there's a dropbox in the lobby, and the questions I get are a lot more direct, streamlined and a shorter list than when I went in person.

### How are you handling crisis management?

This is where professional associations like AIA CT and local Fairfield County HBRA have been so valuable to their members.

HBRA of CT and members like Anthony DeRosa and Bob Wiedenmann were instrumental in getting Governor Lamont to categorize construction as “essential” during the state two month shutdown in April and May. That allowed builders and remodelers and all of the associated trades and suppliers to keep working.

**Jack Franzen** – When the first round of PPP loans became available, Gina Calabro at AIA CT helped us and other members navigate the process and got us to the right bank. ■



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