

SEPT 2025



IT'S OUR FIRST BIRTHDAY AND WE'RE
CELEBRATING THE ONLY WAY WE KNOW HOW...
WITH UNFILTERED TRUTH, A FEW TEARS, AND A
WHOLE LOT OF HEART. SETTLE IN.

THIS IS A FAMILY BUSINESS (AND I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS)

For the longest time, I pushed back when anyone called Maarten & Croix a family business. In my mind, that meant everyone was on payroll, everyone had official titles, and it wouldn't just be me on the line with the IRS every year. Since my family aren't collecting paychecks and it is indeed just me who stands to be in trouble with the IRS, I figured I was just running my business with a little family help.

But as I reflect on this incredible first year, I realize I've had it backwards this entire time.

I don't have a business despite my family ... I have a business because of my family.

Let me be the first to say Maarten & Croix probably wouldn't be here without my sister. Ty kept me sane when things were crazy, she stayed up with me through some brutally long nights, she was my sounding board, strategic partner, right hand, and most often the only person to really understand what I was going through when I couldn't vocalize it. Thank you sister.

My mother has taken weeks off from her own job (which is a pretty big deal) to jump in without me even having to ask. My boyfriend showing up for the late-night builds, so many of the moves, and every moment when the finances felt impossible.

And my SXM family, while they may not fully understand the nuances of home staging (since it doesn't really exist there), one thing has always been crystal clear: "Kelsey is doing something good, and that deserves recognition and support." My aunts teaching me how to manifest and constantly reminding me that "busy is good." My dad's excited offer to fly out and help repair any furniture that needs it. Even my cousin stayed with me and put in several hours helping me move and build furniture this past spring.

The lessons I've learned from watching them, the support that appears without me even asking, the way they've believed in this vision when I could barely see it myself... that's not just family helping out. That's the very foundation this business was built on.

So maybe it's time I start honoring that truth.

Mom, I have a question for you: You've been asking to be featured on the website for months now, and I kept saying "maybe later" or "yeah, we'll see." But after everything you've poured into this business - all the brainstorming sessions, the reality checks, the endless encouragement - I think everyone should know about the woman who helped shape not just this business, but the person running it.

What do you say? Ready to make this official?

PEOPLE DON'T BUY WHAT YOU DO. THEY BUY WHY YOU DO IT.

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle taught me something profound: people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

So let's talk about the why.

For the longest time, I struggled to articulate why I do this work. I knew it in my heart, but putting it into words felt impossible. Then my business coach helped me see what was always there. I do this because my family comes from humble beginnings, and somehow, even in the most humbling of times, I still had a space that was able to be decorated and crafted in a way that made me feel like it was carved out just for me.

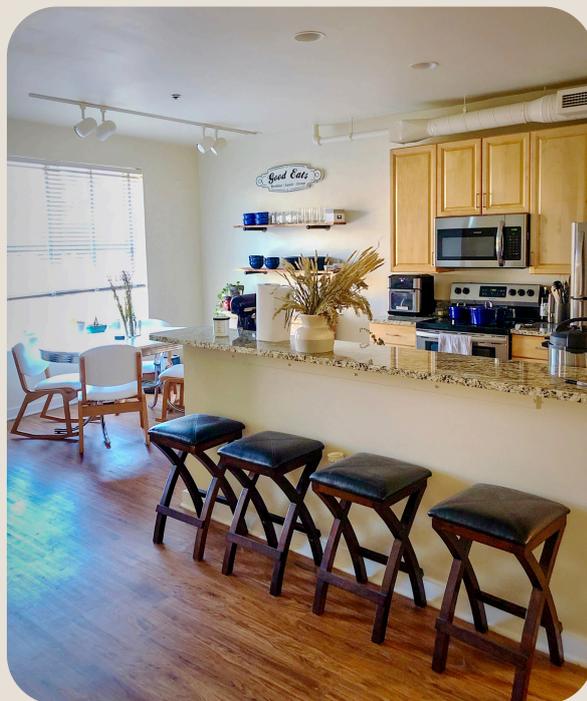
It didn't mean I got art all over my walls from Society6 or cool new bedding from Target. It meant I wasn't given restrictions on how I could make my space represent me. I loved puzzles, so at one point, every puzzle I finished I glued together and stuck all over my walls and that became my art. My mom taught me very early how to fix furniture, strip paint, repaint, or stain. From her I also learned to install lighting and fans. My dad taught me to tile.

All of those lessons flowed into me with one truth: home doesn't have to be luxury all the time, but having a space that feels like yours, and only yours because you made it comfortable with what you had, is the true luxury. You made it out of puzzles you built and glued together. You made it out of furniture you found on a curb that you saw deserved a second chance. That in itself is luxury. It's not about buying a piece of furniture from RH. It's not about purchasing the highest-end light fixture because you can. It's about having a space that feels yours, that you feel comfortable in, that reflects who you are, even when you have to find pieces that need a second chance at life.

That's why I do this. I want people to understand that there are gaps, and those gaps need to be filled. My mission is to provide luxury on all ends of the spectrum, because my definition of luxury is very different than your definition of luxury. It's very different than Kim Kardashian's definition of luxury.

And I think that luxury, no matter what the definition is, what the scale is, where it fits, deserves to be honored. Because at the end of the day, we all crave comfort. And more than that, we all need a space to feel safe in, a space that is ours and represents us.

As I step into year two, that's what drives me forward: making sure everyone gets to feel that sense of "this space is mine", regardless of budget, regardless of circumstances, regardless of what anyone else thinks luxury should look like.



MY FIRST SPACES. PROOF THAT LUXURY IS A MINDSET, NOT JUST A BUDGET

STAGING SPOTLIGHT: A CREATIVE RESET

There's a home I staged late this month that I need to tell you about. Not because it most expensive listing, but because it reminded me why I started this business in the first place.

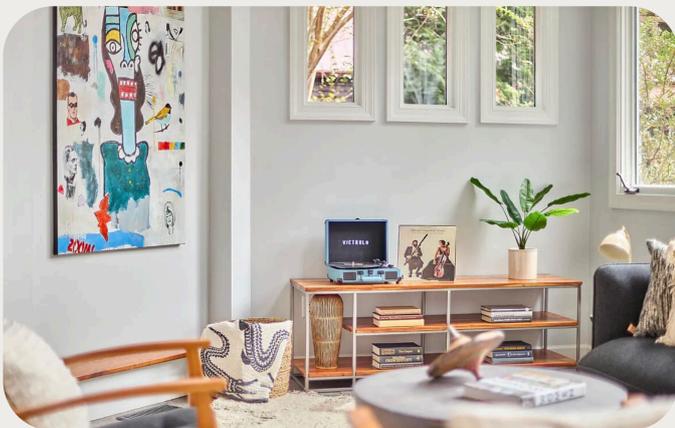
The truth is, I've been running on fumes. Staging three to four times a week, juggling five design projects, managing admin, logistics, creative direction... my mind has been split into a thousand pieces, each demanding attention. And somewhere in that chaos, I lost something precious: the part of me that creates just for the joy of it.

When I'm this exhausted, I usually default to the safe choice. I'll stick with a tried-and-true layout and experiment only with the "safer" elements: a pop of color here, an interesting art piece there, maybe some unexpected smaller decor. It keeps things fresh without requiring the mental energy I simply don't have left.

But with this house? Something shifted.



PHOTOGRAPHY: BRAD BUNYEA



I walked in and decided not to plan. Instead, I just picked pieces that I really wanted to use and see shine. Pieces that made my heart skip a beat. Pieces that whispered, "What if?"

I gave myself permission to play. Permission to experiment with the big stuff... the layout, the statement pieces, the bold choices. Permission, even, to fail.

It felt like watering a part of my soul that had been begging for attention; the creative, playful part that thrives on trying something new. That's my favorite part of what I do: creating dream houses within each stage. But when you're using your creativity to stage multiple times a week and design for several clients simultaneously, it gets hard to save a little bit for yourself.

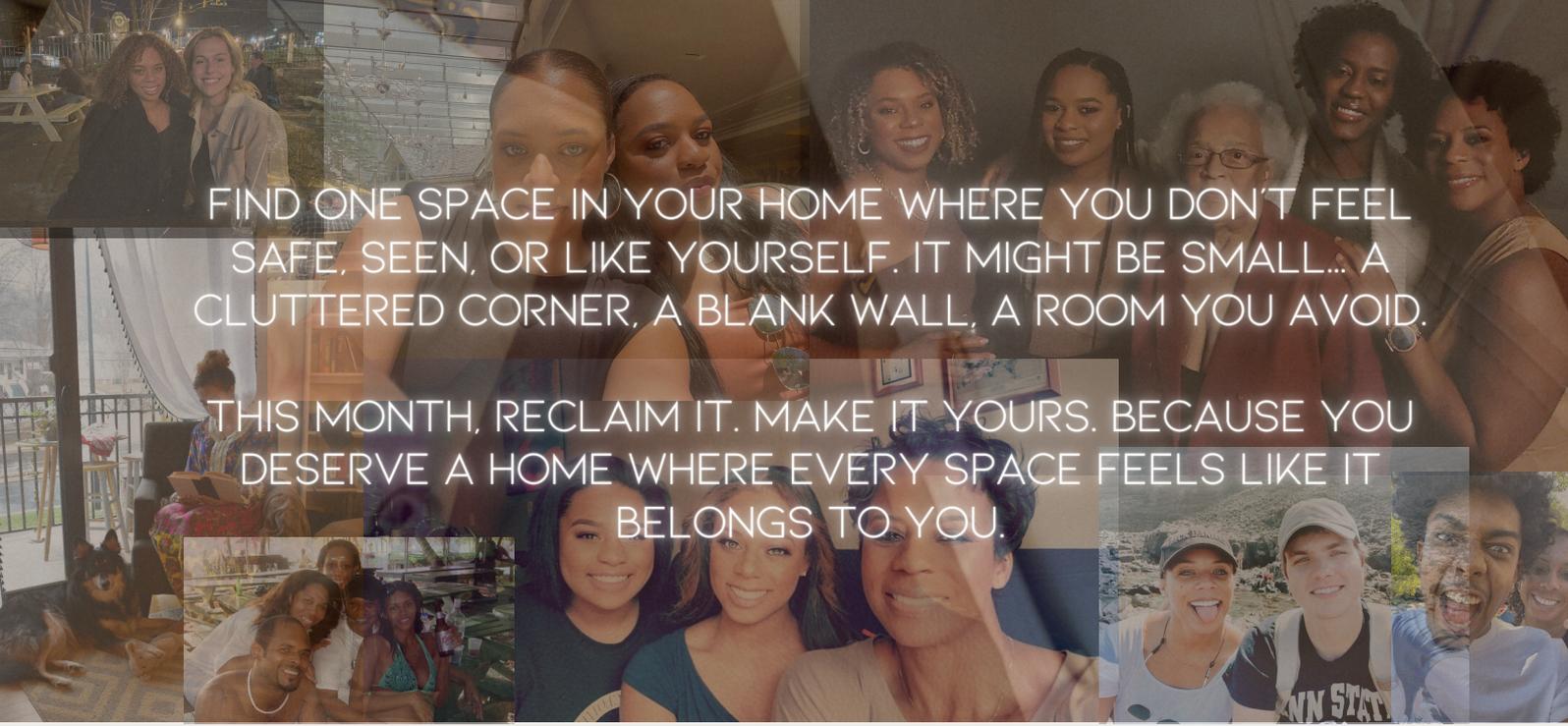
This house was different. This house was my reset button.

And when it all came together? When I walked through and saw the outcome? That thirst was quenched. That dried-up part of me bloomed again. I was reminded that sometimes my best work happens when I stop trying to control every detail and simply trust my instincts.

[CHECK IT OUT HERE](#)



THIS MONTH'S DESIGN CHALLENGE



FIND ONE SPACE IN YOUR HOME WHERE YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE, SEEN, OR LIKE YOURSELF. IT MIGHT BE SMALL... A CLUTTERED CORNER, A BLANK WALL, A ROOM YOU AVOID.

THIS MONTH, RECLAIM IT. MAKE IT YOURS. BECAUSE YOU DESERVE A HOME WHERE EVERY SPACE FEELS LIKE IT BELONGS TO YOU.

THE BIGGEST THANK YOU

Here's to one year of building something from the ground up. Here's to the exhaustion and the exhilaration, the safe choices and the brave ones, the houses that challenged me and the ones that saved me.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for letting me share not just the beautiful staged homes, but the messy, honest, human story behind them. Thank you for believing in this vision alongside me, for your support, your trust, and for inviting me into your homes and your lives.

This first year wouldn't have been possible without you. And I can't wait to see what we create together in year two.

With gratitude and a full (but happy) heart,

Kelsey

