



MAARTEN & CROIX
HOME STAGING

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

THE LAYERS UNDERNEATH

December was slow. Not a single staging project. Just me wrapping up a couple of projects, making mistakes that made me question everything, and feeling the kind of tired that settles deep into your bones...the kind where even coffee feels like a joke.

I had a trip to Sint Maarten planned for months. It was past time to go home. But to be honest? I was scared to step away from work. Even though December had been suspiciously quiet, even though it was the perfect window where it seemed all my realtor friends and clients might have nailed down for their own holiday plans and trips; somehow I'd convinced myself that the second I left, everything would fall apart.

And then, as if to prove my neurotic point, the week before my departure quite a few of you reached out for estimates, advice, and loose ends to wrap up. Which, don't get me wrong, I was grateful for...a glimpse into the coming season, proof that January might not be crickets. But it also made me even more anxious about leaving. Because suddenly slow wasn't slow anymore, and I was about to get on a plane anyway.

So on December 20th, I left as planned. Despite my brain screaming that this was terrible timing, despite my inbox filling up, despite every entrepreneur instinct telling me to cancel and stay available.

I got on that plane to spend a couple weeks with my family.

And I remembered something I'd forgotten... REST MATTERS.

BY THE WAY...

If you've ever wondered about our name, Maarten & Croix, well... half of it comes from here. Saint Martin (Sint Maarten in Dutch, Saint-Martin in French). This tiny island that's split between two countries, two languages, two currencies, two ways of being, and somehow makes it all work beautifully.

It felt like the perfect namesake for a business built on holding multiple truths at once: luxury that's accessible, design that's professional but personal, spaces that are both polished and deeply human. Coming back here always reminds me why we chose this name. Because this island doesn't try to be one thing. It's layered. It's complex. It's unapologetically itself.

Kind of like that living room I staged last spring that broke every rule in the book and somehow became my favorite project. But I digress.



CHIPPED PAINT

There's a wall on the side of my grandmother's house that she paints every few years. She doesn't really strip it down first, just adds another layer on top of whatever came before. So there are probably dozens of colors living under that current coat, decades of her choosing what she loved in that moment and committing to it with a paintbrush.

I was standing there a few days ago, still carrying all that December exhaustion, when I noticed the paint chipping. I did what any normal person would do: I peeled it back. Just a sliver, no bigger than a dime.

And a satisfying dime-sized chunk of paint colors lay between my fingers, but it was on the wall in front of me that my eyes focused on... there it was. Magenta. Bright, unapologetic, unmistakable magenta.

Suddenly I was around 13 years old again. That pink house was one of my favorite summers. In that pink house, I felt like myself in a way I didn't yet have the language for. That pink was freedom and sun-warmth and belonging... all the things you can't really put into words but somehow matter more than anything else.

I kept peeling because apparently I can't leave well enough alone.

Under the magenta was this bright lime, pastel-ish green that I can't quite categorize but can see perfectly in my mind. Tears pricked my eyes, that color was the first time I visited my entire family, my cousin wasn't even walking yet. Now he's almost 21.

This house has been through so many transformations. It went from one massive family home to our home upstairs and our family restaurant and bar downstairs to several smaller homes for different families... different new beginnings. I've grown up with this house. Everyone in it has grown. My grandmother's painted over probably twenty versions of herself on that wall alone.

And all of that... all of those years, all of those versions of us...is held in these layers of paint. Nothing erased. Nothing forgotten. Just built upon.

DECEMBER'S TRUTH

I came to Saint Martin drained... exhausted. And not the cute kind of tired where you post a sunset photo and caption it "much needed break (insert palm tree emoji)." The kind of drained where I was genuinely questioning if I was good at this business thing or just exceptionally skilled at faking it.

Because let me be honest about December: I made some real mistakes on those design projects I mentioned.

There was the client revision I completely missed in my notes; the one they mentioned twice, actually, and I still somehow didn't see it until they very graciously asked about it a third time.



The moment I confidently suggested something only to realize halfway through my own sentence that it wouldn't actually work and had to course correct mid-speech like some kind of design improv act. Oh, and my personal favorite: The furniture piece I was absolutely certain would fit that did not, in fact, fit. Not even close. Yay unexpected new inventory...

These weren't catastrophic failures. The kind where clients fire you and you end up on some interior design do not hire list. But they were humbling. The kind of mistakes that make you lie awake at 2 AM wondering if you're actually good at this, or if you've just been lucky so far and everyone's about to figure it out.

HERE'S WHAT I'M LEARNING THOUGH: NOBODY TALKS ABOUT THIS PART.

We see the finished rooms on Instagram. We see the glowing testimonials. We see everyone's highlight reel of flawless execution and six-figure months (hah, a girl can dream, right?!) What we don't see is the designer who ordered the wrong sized sofa and had to eat the cost. The one who showed up to install day and realized they forgot half the dining table base in their garage. (All hypothetical examples, of course. Definitely not speaking from experience.)

But being here long enough to actually rest...long enough to dream again, literally and creatively. I'm remembering something important:

Growth isn't pretty. It's not the finished, perfectly staged room with the fluffed pillows and the strategic afternoon lighting. It's the middle part where you're trying something new and getting it wrong and adjusting and trying again.

Finding the beauty in the mistakes and the broken things; that's the work. It's life, it's art, it's truth.

This island of mine has reminded me that nothing easy is worth having. For six months out of the year, families (mine included) plan, prepare, worry about the hand that Mother Nature may or may not deal them. Every year. Hurricanes.

Yet each time they face the cruel punishment of cleaning up and rebuilding, homes aren't rebuilt and then painted black or left bare in defeat. They're painted with the most bright and beautiful murals, new colors, new beginnings, new declarations of "we're still here and we're not going quietly." The island doesn't shrink from color after a storm... it doubles down on it.



HERE IN SAINT MARTIN

Color is everywhere. Every house, every building, every wall has been marked by someone who picked shades for their own reasons. And I can only imagine the majority of those reasons boil down to this: they simply loved it.

Not because it was on trend. Not because a designer told them it would increase their property value by 3%. Not because Pinterest said it was the color of the year. But because something in them responded to that particular shade of yellow or blue or coral, and they wanted to live inside that feeling.

What a revolutionary concept, right? Choosing things because they make you feel something instead of because they'll look good to everyone else. (She says, fully aware of the irony that this is coming from someone whose job is literally to make houses look good to everyone else.)

But here's the thing: the staging we do, the design work, the whole business... it works best when there's truth underneath it. When the choices come from somewhere real, even if that somewhere is "I don't know why but this chair makes me absurdly happy."

THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE

Find something in your home that has layers. Maybe it's an old piece of furniture with paint you could peel back. Maybe it's a wall in your childhood bedroom. Maybe it's just a photo album or a drawer full of old colors you used to love.

Look at those layers. Not to judge them, not to cringe at past choices. But to remember: **you've always been becoming.**

Every version of you that chose those colors, that style, that way of living...they were real. They mattered. They got you here.

And then ask yourself: **what do I want the next layer to be?**

Not what should it be. Not what would look best to everyone else. Not what some algorithm thinks will get the most engagement.

What do you want? What color, what feeling, what version of home makes your heart skip the way that magenta did for thirteen year-old me? What makes you feel like yourself?

SEASON TWO

WE'RE HEADING INTO OUR SECOND YEAR NOW

Okay, technically we hit that milestone back in September, but it feels right to mark this moment as we move into 2025. Like the first layer was just the primer coat, and now we're getting to the real color.

And I'm ready. Not in the "I have it all figured out" way, because let's be honest, I clearly do not have basic furniture measurements figured out. But in the way where you peel back that paint chip and remember why you started in the first place.

I'm excited to push further into what this company is becoming. To create more spaces that feel truly unique in the staging industry; not just pretty, but alive and unexpected and bold. To challenge myself to trust my instincts even more, to choose the magenta even when everyone else is choosing greige. To make mistakes and learn from them instead of pretending they never happened.

This year, we're growing. We're adding people to the team... actual humans who will bring their own layers, their own colors, their own magic to this work. I can't wait to introduce you to them.

And honestly? I'm excited to see what we choose next. What the next layer looks like when we're not exhausted, when we're rested and dreaming and brave enough to go with the colors that feel right instead of safe.

Thank you for being here while we figure this out, layer by layer. For reading these monthly rambles where I compare my business struggles to my grandmother's house paint and somehow make it make sense. For trusting us with your spaces, your stories, your new beginnings.

Here's to choosing the colors that make us feel like ourselves. Even when they're magenta. Especially when they're magenta.