

JUNE 2025



WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

THE MONTH WHERE EVERYTHING THAT COULD GO WRONG DID—AND SOMEHOW,
IN THE CHAOS, WE FOUND SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL.

(TURNS OUT THE BEST STORIES AREN'T THE PERFECT ONES.)

THE REALITY CHECK: WHEN EVERYTHING GOES SIDWAYS

Let's be honest—June was hard. Like, really hard. The kind of month that tests everything you think you know about your business, your process, and yourself.

First, we lost our moving team. Just gone. Mid-project, mid-timeline, mid-everything. We had to pivot and relearn all over again. Then came the deadlines that seemed reasonable when we agreed to them but felt impossible when we were living them. Add my perfectionist brain, which can fixate on adjusting a throw pillow for an hour—an hour!—for something no one else would ever notice.

Some days I caught myself wondering if I was making this harder than it needed to be. If maybe "good enough" was actually good enough. But then I'd walk into a space we'd just finished, and I'd remember why we do this work the way we do it.

The details matter. Even when—especially when—no one else sees them.



THE EVOLUTION: FROM FAKE TO REAL

Something shifted this month in how I approach staging. I got tired of the perfect, sterile, showroom aesthetic that feels beautiful but hollow.

You know what I mean—those glass kitchen canisters filled with colorful pasta that no one has ever cooked, books that have never been read, "coffee table books" about places no one has ever been, perfectly positioned sets of 3s.

So I started bringing something real into each space. Something with a story:

The **dried peppers** I use to stage kitchen countertops? They're for the stew I've watched my dad make at least fifty times but still can't perfect myself. Every time I see them in a jar, I'm thirteen years old again, standing on his side, watching him work magic with ingredients I'd never heard of.

The **cinnamon sticks** aren't just props—they're from the porridge I used to beg my Oma to make for me when I was young. Though I asked multiple times a day; she never rolled her eyes and always indulged in my request. To this day, I still see her smile as she stirred in those perfect curls of spice.

The **dried hibiscus leaves** carry perhaps the deepest meaning of all. They're not only from the tea our grandmother used to steep for us when we weren't feeling good—that deep red comfort that somehow made everything better. They're also a nod to our mother. Hibiscus is her favorite flower, and seeing those delicate leaves is a small reminder for us to succeed in her honor, because of everything she sacrificed to get us here.

Each jar, each ingredient, each carefully chosen element carries a memory. A connection. A reminder of where I come from and to never forget it, always give thanks for it.

This past week at the Raleigh farmers market, I met a lovely woman selling braids of garlic. The moment I saw them, I knew they belonged in our next staging. Not because they looked good—though they did—but because they carried the story of her hands, her farm, her craft.

"When you put real stories into a space, people feel it. They can't name it, but they know something is different. Something is true."

THE STAGING SPOTLIGHT: FAVORITE ROOMS

Usually, we spotlight one complete project each month. But June was different—it was so difficult to choose just one house when each space taught us something unique. So instead, we're highlighting our favorite rooms from a few different projects.

Each room told its own story & created its own magic.



Sometimes the most beautiful work comes not from one perfect project, but from the collection of perfect moments scattered across many. These rooms remind us that every space deserves its own story, its own care, its own moment to shine.



THE PERFECTIONIST'S PARADOX

Here's what I'm learning about perfectionism: it's not really about making things perfect. It's about making things right. And "right" is different for every space, every story, every person who'll walk through that door.

Yes, I spent an hour adjusting that pillow. No, the buyers probably didn't consciously notice. But maybe—just maybe—that pillow was the thing that made the couch look like the perfect place to read Sunday morning stories to their kids. Maybe that hour was worth it.

The hard months teach you things the easy ones never could. They teach you what you're willing to fight for, what standards you won't compromise, and what really matters when everything else falls apart.

THIS MONTH'S PRACTICE: STORY BEHIND THE STYLE

Look around your home and find three things that are just for show—the decorative bowl that's never held fruit, the candles that have never been lit, the books that are there because they look good on the shelf.

Replace one of them with something real. Something with a story. Something that makes you smile not because it looks perfect, but because it reminds you of a person, a place, a moment that mattered.

Watch how it changes the energy of the room. Watch how it changes how you feel in that space. Real always wins over perfect.

LOOKING FORWARD: CARRYING THE STORIES

July probably won't be easier—this work is never easy when you do it right. But it will be more intentional. More real. More rooted in the stories that make us who we are.

We're not just staging spaces anymore. We're staging stories. We're creating homes that feel lived-in before anyone lives in them, loved before anyone falls in love with them.

And maybe that's the secret to this whole thing. Maybe the difference between a house and a home isn't about the furniture or the finishes or the perfectly placed accessories. Maybe it's about the stories we choose to tell and the memories we're brave enough to share.

Thank you for being part of this story. For staying with us through the messy months and the perfect ones, the easy wins and the hard-earned lessons. The best work always comes from the hardest places.



MaartenCroix.com | [@MaartenCroix](https://www.instagram.com/MaartenCroix) |
Info@MaartenCroix.com