

Kate Marker in her
newly renovated
home kitchen.

AT HOME WITH

Kate Marker

*Interior Designer Kate Marker shares her thoughts on life at home,
leading a fast-growing business, and the exciting new
Kate Marker Home retail store in Barrington.*

Written By LISA STAMOS | Photography By LINDA M. BARRETT



Ken and Kate Marker in their newly renovated Barrington home. Ken Marker is a surgical sales representative.

IT'S AN EXCITING TIME for interior designer Kate Marker. She and Ken Marker, her husband, recently bought a new home that they have renovated with additional property projects in the works. She has opened her first retail store in downtown Barrington—Kate Marker Home—with a second store opening in the charming Michigan beach town of New Buffalo in the near future. Soon, she will step onto the national media and entertainment stage with a featured episode on Chip and Joanna Gaines' Magnolia Network, to air on the Discovery+ Channel in the coming months. Add to that virtual consulting on E Décor and The Expert, two platforms where she can share her design talent to anyone in the world. This all extending from her decision to become an interior designer over 20 years ago.

What is so appealing about Marker, though, is that the hometown girl who grew up in Effingham, Illinois, has brought her family values and Central Illinois roots to Barrington. "Effingham is a small town that has grounded me as I've moved away, and become a business owner, wife, and mother," Marker says. She was always creative and knew early on that she wanted to do something in the art world, but wouldn't know exactly what kind of work until college.

Kate Marker's Mom, Cathy Kaufmann, was a grade-school teacher whose attention to detail, kindness, and respect for others was an important influence. "Growing up, it was always my Mom and how she carried

herself, and her compassion and kindness to others," Marker says. Her Dad, Lee Kaufmann, is entrepreneurial, owning a business that is now run by Marker's brothers. "My Dad taught me drive, grit, and hard work." Today, Marker imparts those values at work, with her clients, in local volunteering, and at home with her children.

The local community is also important to Marker, who serves on the board for Barrington Youth & Family Services. During their recent relocation to a new office property, Marker offered guidance for the design transition to their new, permanent home on Applebee Street. Her overall goal is to learn about the community needs and help where she can.

A CAREER IN INTERIOR DESIGN

Before college, Marker thought her vocation would be in the arts. "I was always creating and was initially focused on becoming an artist, a painter, specifically" she said. "It was in college when I observed a sorority sister working on an Interior Design project when I realized I would love the various elements of that as a career! I was also into mathematics and felt there was a connection, so once I found that I could choose interior design as a career, I transferred schools to specialize in the major and was 100% in love." She credits her college training with learning Computer Aided Design (CAD) for 3-D building and product models. She graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor's degree in Interior Design.



More is more when two islands deliver the best of form and function. Builder: Grand Traditions.

PHOTO: STOFFER PHOTOGRAPHY

But before she transferred from her two years at Illinois State University, she had another important discovery about what, or in this case who, she loved. There she met Ken Marker, who she kept in touch with after making the move to Harrington College of Design. The two eventually tied the knot in 2004 and moved out of the city to Lake Zurich. About nine months later, they discovered the charming Village of Barrington and bought a home that was to be quite the renovation.

A UNIQUE DESIGN AESTHETIC

The Kate Marker design aesthetic is described as “an approachable, classic aesthetic aimed at bringing a fresh, modern feel to residential spaces.” For many—about 404,000+ followers on social media—they know her work when they see it. For Marker, it is a set of style standards that has evolved along with the changing interior design world in general. She calls her style “light, bright, and well-balanced to appeal to men and women, young and old.” Her brand goal is that she wants her clients to experience an inviting and welcoming feeling, that they can picture themselves in her interior design spaces and feel inspired and at ease.

“Spaces are less formal, and there is more emphasis on the use of natural materials,” Marker says. “My color palette has always embraced neutrals with a few ‘neutrals’ of navy blues and deep greens, and consistently mixed old and new to avoid looks that are stagnant or dated. I love working now on projects across the country and tapping into the influences of that region or climate to keep pushing the creative process.”

Her best work is with her team, collaborating and strategizing on how to fix problems on a project or working together to create a dream space for a

client. She says that her best thinking space is at home, when it is quiet, and she has some time to reflect.

What inspires Marker’s passion for design? “I love creating and having something tangible to show for my efforts,” she says. “Each project, space, or room is a blank slate and an opportunity to create something more beautiful and lasting that can also evoke an emotional response from someone. I love helping a client feel and be their best in the space we created.”

A DAY IN THE LIFE

What’s a day in the life of a Kate Marker look like? How does she juggle it all?

“I start the day in the office as soon as my girls are at school, reading emails and connecting with team members,” Marker says. “We have a brief team meeting each day to understand the day’s framework and goals, and then I often have a scheduled site visit, a virtual Zoom client meeting, perhaps a consultation for The Expert, and/or touch base with our Kate Marker Home leads regarding inventory or product purchasing.”

The day progresses with several impromptu or planned strategic discussions to address and brainstorm ways to innovate her business processes and problem-solve on any number of issues that may arise affecting clients. She meets one-on-one with her designers to review and revise client-specific designs and with business managers to discuss new projects. “I head out at 5 p.m. for time with my family and often revisit emails and social media once the girls are tucked in,” Marker says.

For some, this schedule might be daunting. But not for Kate Marker. She has an innate sense of clarity about who she is, what she can accomplish, and how she wants to design her world.



Kate Marker in her interior design studio in Barrington. The custom-made tiles are available at Kate Marker Home and through residential interior design services. Carrying family names, the tiles are (from left) Lillian (in rose), Mae (in coal), Myla (lake gray on gray brushed), and Millie (gray on lavan).

WORKING WITH *Kate Marker Interiors*

IN KATE MARKER'S upcoming episode of "Point of View: A Designer Profile" on the Magnolia Network (Discovery+ Channel), three Barrington area builders who collaborate with KMI will be featured. We reached out to them to get their point of view.

Matt Warman

Warman Construction

Kate and I have worked on numerous remodeling projects together. Whether we bring each other to a particular project, or a client brings us together, I am always impressed at how she is able to read and work with the client, assess their needs, and create something so special, yet livable, for each particular one. Kate has a unique way of making each client feel special and their project unique. She has a very inviting style, creating spaces everyone wants to be in. Her design is edited, yet classic and timeless.

Kate is always very approachable to everyone involved in the projects and we have a blast anytime we have meetings on site or in her studio.



Big Chill's just-launched 30" Classic Fridge is a curated palette of custom colors designed in collaboration with Kate Marker. The Spring Edit's color collection evokes a clean slate, indicative of the spring season. From left to right: Oyster, Light Grey, Telegray, and Pigeon Blue. Photos Courtesy of Big Chill. Learn more at bigchill.com.

PLATFORMS AND COLLABORATIONS

Kate Marker is off and running with a variety of collaborations and virtual services, as well as her new retail store with its wide variety of home goods. Here is her current line-up.

Kate Marker Home: Now you can stop by Kate Marker's new retail store and bring some of her curated collections home! Learn more in the pages ahead.

"Point of View: A Designer Profile": The Magnolia Network TV program airing on the Discovery+ Channel showcases the influences and inspirations of 12 designers from around the country. Kate Marker's episode will feature a complete first-floor Glen Acres renovation with Warman Construction; a master bathroom remodel of a historic home in the Village with Grand Traditions; and a new construction home in Barrington Hills with Hammerkraft Homes.

E Décor: Kate Marker is overseeing the rollout of E Décor, a virtual service to bridge the gap between her full-service design offerings and small, one-off styling consultations. Perfect for those comfortable on Zoom calls and with email, the service will offer customized designs for specific living or bedroom spaces, where clients can implement their own solutions.

The Expert: This is an exciting online global consulting platform that offers one-on-one virtual consultation for 25 or 55 minutes to answer your design questions and provide suggestions or feedback with an industry leader. Kate Marker and team member Liisa Gent have joined a curated list of interior design and architecture-focused Expert team members. Find them at TheExpert.com.

Big Chill Spring Edit: Big Chill is a design-centric, professional-grade kitchen appliance manufacturer that has launched its third edit, this one for spring. Kate Marker was selected to help with the color palette selection (see photo).



PHOTO: STOFFER PHOTOGRAPHY

With attention to material and textures, this light and airy space is relaxing for adults and resilient for children. Builder: Tartan Builders

Mark Cornwell

Grand Traditions Homes

We have worked with Kate and her design team on many projects and are currently working on two now.

We typically bring up the option with our clients to get Kate and her team involved, and then they set up a meeting to visit with them directly. If a client decides to work with them then we collaborate on the design/finishes with KMI and Grand Traditions. KMI also separately will work on the interior furnishings and window treatments for the home.

Kate and I typically meet with the clients together in design meetings and all work as a team on selecting the designs/finishes inside the home. KMI also puts together beautiful design boards for each room of the home, and we sit down and look at the entire interior spaces as a whole and how the individual rooms may complement each other.

Collaborating on the designs with Kate and her design team really shines in the completed project as the attention to detail is evident and the furnishings make the house into a home.

Kate and I both have a strong appreciation for timeless design, and this aligned style naturally works as we start the finish selections with our clients.

Patrick Lytle

Hammerkraft Homes

I'm very proud of Kate. I've witnessed her growth as a designer and businesswoman. Her talent is evident in her popularity and response on social media and online, gaining clients all over the country and followers all over the world.

She never stops thinking of her next business growth. I've never seen someone with as much energy as Kate, she never stops thinking of what's next. Once she has an idea or plan in place, she's determined to make it happen; there's really no stopping her.

Kate has a real gift to connect with her client and gain their trust to make all those very personal touches that make a house feel like a home.

We have great chemistry together; there's a certain rhythm and language we share when we are in a meeting. It's like our own virtual reality where we take these two-dimensional plans and discuss the future space in detail, many times just verbalizing it for the client.

She understands the construction side of the business too, which helps her to collaborate and communicate with the builder. I don't think of her as an "interior" designer because her influence and knowledge extends much beyond that.

Most importantly, Kate has become a great friend. Her heart is huge, and I think that carries through in her designs.



WELCOME TO *Kate Marker Home*



A living room vignette at Kate Marker Home in downtown Barrington.

ABOUT KATE MARKER HOME

KATE MARKER HOME WAS CREATED to offer clients and the public the opportunity to experience the team's favorite products and furnishings, especially prompted by the large number of inquiries about their products via Instagram posts.

The store carries a wide variety of home goods including furnishings. Sofas, chairs, ottomans, cocktail and side tables, new and vintage rugs, and runners of all sizes and colors are featured in room vignettes and sections of the store. Shoppers will also find small and large pieces of art, mirrors, faux greenery, planters, candles, vases, and containers. Also available are kitchen serving items including tableware, seasonal décor, and some cute offerings for little kids.

When you enter Kate Marker Home, you will see styled vignettes of furnishings and accessories complete with lighting and rugs. They have products at all different price points, from the popular candles and faux greenery to antique rugs and statement art pieces that will transform a room.


HELPFUL ASSISTANCE

"We love to share our design ideas and guidance if someone seeks it, but do not pressure people," Marker says. "We let people browse at their leisure."

Staff are happy to assist with fabrics, dimensions, and any product information that will help guests make a decision, knowing that design is a personal process."

There is something for everyone at the store and offerings can lean modern, traditional, or in-between. Sometimes, Marker says, the best looks are a juxtaposition of sleek and timeworn. It's all in the pairing and styling.

A few years from now, Marker hopes to grow her Kate Marker Home brand into a retail name. "I'm so happy living in this community, and I love my life here, what I have created with my personal life and professional life. My husband Ken and my girls are what ground me, and I live and breath all things design. I plan to just keep learning and growing. I'm so grateful for the blessings the Lord had planned for me, and I hope to continue to inspire others through my work."

Kate Marker Home is open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The store is located at 211 Park Avenue in downtown Barrington. Reach the Design Studio at: hello@katemarkerinteriors.com. The store's email is: hello@katemarkerhome.com. Call 224-848-4322 for more information. Follow in Instagram @katemarkerinteriors. 



A garden shed display at Kate Marker Home. Gardeners will appreciate the assortment of garden shears and other hand-sized tools, planters, and garden-in-a-bag products.