



Curation and Craftsmanship: Bittners' Bespoke Interior Design Services Combine Contemporary Furnishings with Heirlooms of Years Past

By: McKenna Graham

Photos provided by: Robert Burge

It is easy to drive past the Bittners showroom on East Main Street without realizing its storied past and exciting future. The unassuming exterior belies a showroom that ignites the imagination and could easily be found in a much larger city such as New York or Paris. Stepping inside is a true delight for the senses, a delectable harmony of lavish contemporary home furnishings alongside one of a kind antique items that feel as though they could have been plucked from an 18th century barn. It's the balance between these two elements, and inclination towards an effortless, organic feel that Kari Ferris, interior designer at Bittners, strives for in her projects. So, when attorneys Kelly and Brian Brownfield moved into a new home in Anchorage in 2022, they turned to Bittners and Ferris to guide the inspired interior design that made their home a unique retreat, and one that would be compatible with their family that includes two young children.

Opened as a custom cabinet shop by a German immigrant Gustave Bittner in 1854, and purchased by Owsley Brown Frazier in 1982, Bittners has quickly grown to be one of the country's leading interior design firms. Led by President and COO Douglas Riddle, their dedication to handmade American craftsmanship is evident in every project they do.

Ferris explains that when it came to the Brownfield project she was grateful to have clients that shared a similar aesthetic to hers and were clear on their goals for the space. "This was a client with very good taste," says Ferris, "with a taste that aligned and that's always a plus. It's great to feel connected from the beginning." Kelly Brownfield, who knew Ferris through her business partner and best friend, had been trying to piece her new home's furnishings and decor together, but due to shipping delays and logistical troubles caused by Covid decided instead to opt for the "full Bittners



experience.” She wanted a space that was clean, curated, organic, eclectic, natural yet sophisticated. Ferris described the Brownfield house that was built in 1993 by saying “It is a house that has really good bones and is tucked in a private secluded nook in the woods.”

The Brownfields had moved from a smaller home in the Highlands and this transition was a perfect opportunity to invest in some truly high-quality furnishings and conceptualize their ideal home interior from scratch. The final product yielded a space that feels light and airy, full of materials that bring the natural world indoors and contrast contemporary pieces alongside antiques. As you enter the foyer you are greeted by 20th c. Japanese Roku pottery and 20th c. Brutalist poured metal sculpture. The living room is truly spectacular with floor to ceiling windows that, unencumbered by curtains or blinds of any kind, invite the eye to view the outdoor scene as a work of art. The original wooden fireplace mantel was replaced with a modern plaster design and limestone frame. The clean, contemporary lines of the refinished fireplace are juxtaposed against a 20th c. traditional African stool that sits by the hearth. Other items such as a hand crafted Bittners bourbon table, collection of terra cotta vases and blackened clay storage pot bring a worldly, eclectic feel. In the center of the room flanked by two large sofas is a grand scale cocktail ottoman with old Moroccan legs. The space feels sumptuous while remaining approachably casual and inviting.

The kitchen, which needed no renovation, is complete with large marble capped island and ample space for a table of eight flanked by the graceful lines of six wishbone chairs and an upholstered captains chair at each end. From the table diners can enjoy the view of the backyard and outdoor fireplace. Off the kitchen is a modest porch with sustainable furnishings from Palecek, rustic 20th c. bench with kuba cloth and woven pillow accents.

Ferris mentions that one of her most important goals when designing homes is for them to be distinctive and tailored to each client, “The worst is walking into a house and being able to recognize things... its inevitable to some degree,” she says, “But I think that the biggest benefit with Bittners, more than anywhere else, you can create a home that is unrecognizable. I think that’s the goal. You can’t just walk into a store and buy that.”

Ferris, comes from a lineage of visually inclined creatives; her maternal grandparents were both architects that studied under Frank Lloyd Wright and she too is influenced by Wright’s preference for simple lines and designs that take inspiration from nature. For those who yearn to create a space they love Ferris advises, “just personalize things. You’re not filling a space just to fill it.” Artwork in the home can be particularly personal. Ferris

describes the care she once took to find the appropriate photograph of a Bison for one client who believed the creature to be his spirit animal.

This meticulous attention to detail makes sense when we remind ourselves how important the spaces we reside in are. Our homes are the most important nexus for life events, the big ones as well as the everyday minutiae that define us. Creating a space that honors this means understanding the profound way space, color and the objects we coexist with can affect us. In an era of fast fashion and instant gratification, Bittners brings a curated thoughtfulness that is well worth the wait.

