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# Tenafly

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# INTERIOR *Motives*

Abby Gruman realized she had a passion for home design—and turned her interest into a full-time career.

BY CHRISTIANA MAIMONE

**What makes a house** feel truly like a home?

An interior designer can help you answer this question. Meet Abby Gruman, a Tenafly resident and residential interior designer serving the tristate area. Her journey into interior design is an impressive one. We chatted with her about how she made a big career switch and started her own successful business.

In her college years, Gruman was always drawn to architecture and learning about historical styles of design. She majored in education and history, becoming a teacher after graduation. When she bought and renovated an apartment in Manhattan, she fell in love with the process of designing rooms and discovered a new passion.

“During that time period, I said, ‘Wow, this is really what I want to do in my career,’” Gruman says. “I always was interested in interior design as a hobby but I never knew I could make it a career.”



Abby Gruman of Abby Leigh Designs often punctuates a contemporary, minimalist style with texture and pops of color.





### A Step at a Time

Gruman enrolled at the New York School of Interior Design and began her new professional path interning for design firms. She was a teacher by day and a design student at night. After working as an assistant upon completing her program, she decided it was time to start her own business.

“I had a great mentor,” she says. “I worked for another small business owner before I opened my own [studio]. She gave me the courage to say, ‘I could do this. I could do it on my own.’ So I started with making an Instagram account and a website. And then, slowly but surely, my business just started growing.”

Gruman opened her studio, Abby Leigh Designs, nearly a decade ago, shortly after her son was born.

The Instagram account and website helped build a solid base of clients. She now operates out of her home office with a hired associate and occasional interns.

She describes her style as contemporary and sophisticated while also being simple and minimalistic. “I like to use a lot of texture and pops of color,” she says.

When you book Abby Leigh Designs, Gruman will give you a variety of design schemes and floor plans for your space. She gives you several options to choose from that showcase what your room (or rooms) will look like according to her recommendations and expertise.

“I think my clients choose me based on my style,” she says. “And then I try to garner my style to what they want. If we’re doing a beach house, we’ll go more coastal. If it’s a New York City apartment, we might go a little bit more midcentury modern.”





### Making Clients Happy

Many of Gruman's clients are located in New Jersey, New York City, Long Island, the Hamptons and Westchester. She's even traveled to clients as far as California and Puerto Rico.

A big part of her job is being able to work with different personalities and styles to make sure her clients are getting exactly what they want. Her latest big project is designing a large family summer home on Long Island.

The most gratifying part of her work is seeing how happy clients are with the finished product. "Knowing that my clients are happy is always my No. 1 priority," she says. "That's how you know the project was worth it. It's very rewarding."

Gruman has been happily able to use her design skills to serve her own community. This past winter, she designed the upstairs lounge at the Bergen County Pickleball Club,

the first pickleball club to ever open in Tenafly. "It was definitely really rewarding, giving back to my community," she says. "And it's a space where my kids go and play."

Gruman moved in 2019 from Manhattan to Tenafly, where she lives with her husband and two children. "I think Tenafly is just such a great community, not only for my business but for my children," she says. "We've made so many lifelong friends. I feel like it's really special because it's such a small community—everyone knows each other. Everyone is willing to help a friend."

Looking to renovate your own space or need inspiration for your next move? To contact Gruman and view her impressive portfolio, visit [www.abbyleighdesigns.com](http://www.abbyleighdesigns.com) or find her on Instagram using [@abbyleigh\\_designs](https://www.instagram.com/abbyleigh_designs).

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