

How the Coronavirus Pandemic Is Affecting the Interior Design World

written by KELSEY MULVEY UPDATED APR 01, 2020



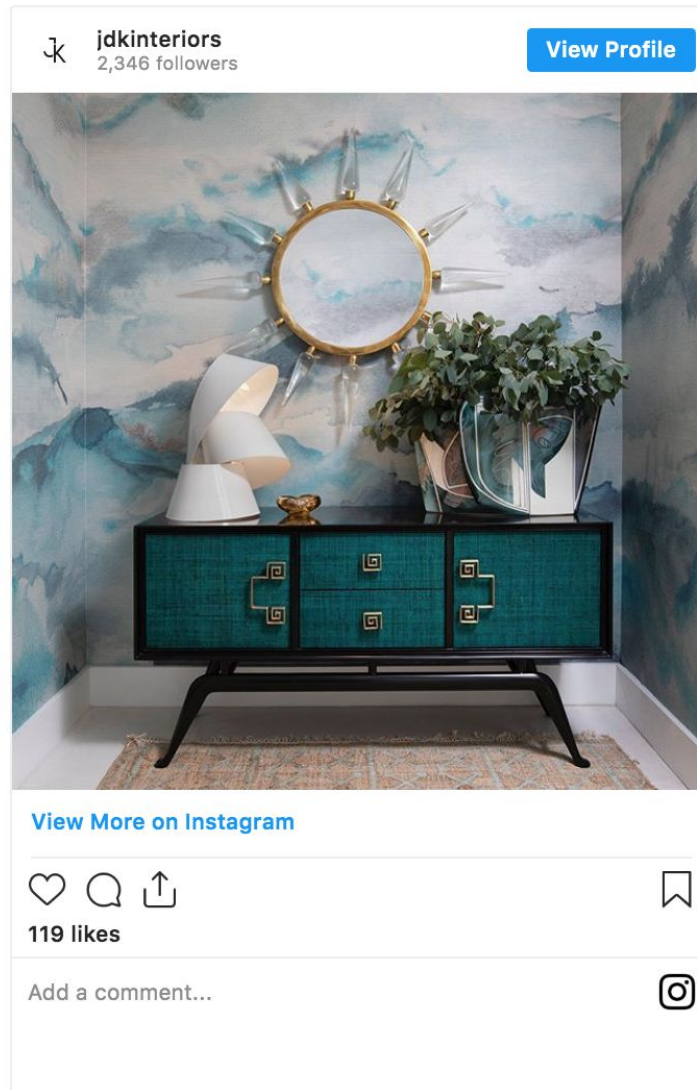
KENDALL WILKINSON DESIGN

Let's not sugarcoat things: The past few weeks have been *rough*. As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads around the globe, the state of the world feels uncertain, confusing, and downright scary. In addition to the anxiety we have about our and our loved ones' health, the pandemic has been changing the way we spend our days. Cities are on lockdown for the foreseeable future. Businesses of all sizes are required to temporarily close their doors, laying off or furloughing employees in the process. And, for many others, working from home has become the new normal.

Although the world is currently practicing social distancing, it's more important than ever to connect with your community. That's exactly why we reached out to our network of interior designers to see how they (and their businesses) are holding up. Make no mistake, their responses run the gamut. While some designers haven't noticed any big changes, others have had to put special projects or launches on hold. Some designers are even using this time to focus on other endeavors. But no matter what their responses are, one thing's for sure: We're all in this together.

01 Jenny Dina Kirschner, owner of JDK Interiors

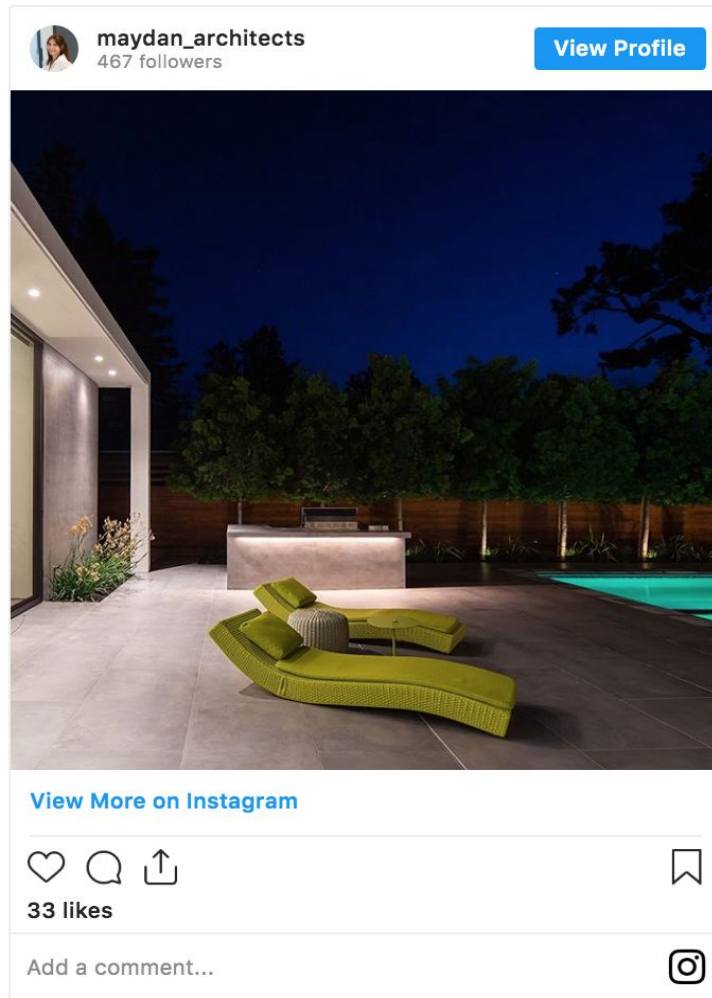
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“Here at JDK Interiors, we started planning for the worst many weeks ago. We tried to meet with as many clients as possible to give presentations and make outstanding decisions on sourced materials so that we could place future orders from home. We also tried to cram in as much sourcing as possible for upcoming projects that required running around the city to showrooms for real 'face time.' Now that we have piles of samples pulled, and especially in light of all non-essential businesses being shut down in the New York area (where the majority of our clients reside), we're able to work from our homes scheming and mailing design care packages to clients in the upcoming weeks and possibly months.”

02 Mary Maydan, Founder and Principal of Maydan Architects

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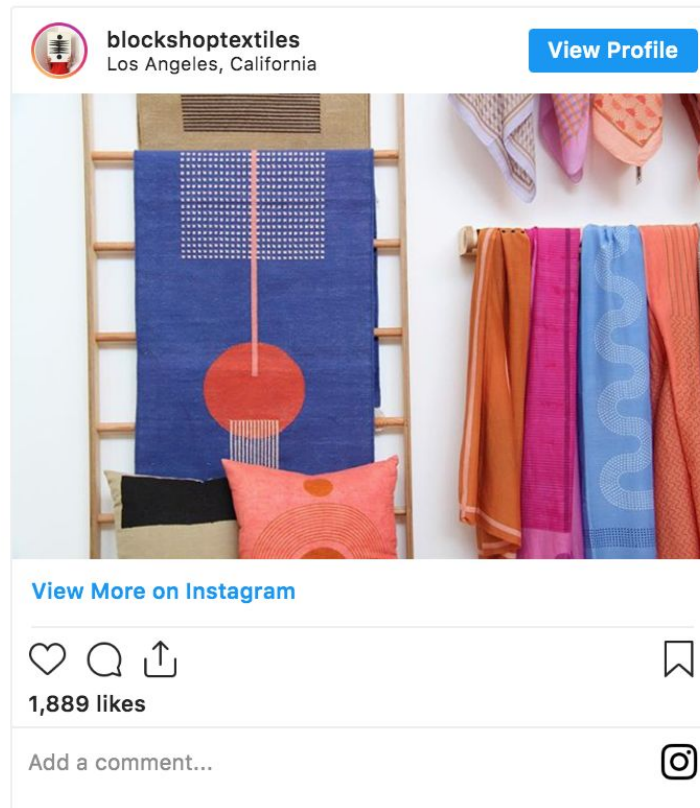


"It is nice to have an opportunity to discuss my design work, because these days, with the kids at home, I feel more like a chef and cleaning lady. California enacted a 'shelter-in-place' policy really early, so my four kids have been home for over a week and need attention. They are also hungry all the time. In that respect, being the owner and leader of Maydan Architects and a mother in this new situation is definitely challenging.

I can't paint everything so rosy, though. The building departments are now closed in most of the cities/counties in Silicon Valley and this will hold us back with our submittals. Building stages can become expensive when projects are under construction and a city institutes a 'halt construction' order. Even as early as excavation, if you stop activity, the soil can become unstable, requiring costly measures to fix the problem. The pandemic is a scary situation for our business and we are grateful that so far we are doing well."

03 Hopie Stockman, Co-Founder of Block Shop

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“Now is the time to be nimble, scrappy, and creative. A strong dose of humor and a can-do, pioneering spirit are required of all of us small business owners right now. Our boisterous and ever-resourceful grandmother, Happy, said that all problems have solutions if you’re creative.

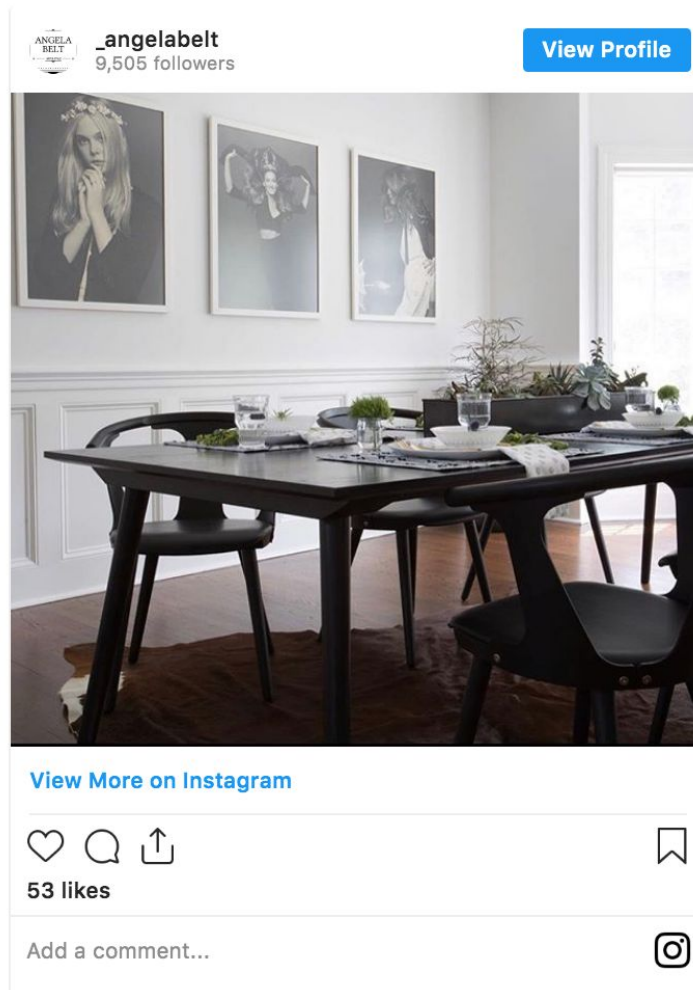
So we’re figuring out online tutorials, pivoting into lower price point product categories while still developing our higher-end launches for later in the year, and taking cost cutting measures, while trying to deepen our engagement with our customers during this otherworldly time.”

“

Now is the time to be nimble, scrappy, and creative. A strong dose of humor and a can-do, pioneering spirit are required of all of us small business owners right now.”

04 Angela Belt, Founder of 28 Black Tastemakers

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“For me, I’m realizing I need to re-evaluate what I can offer clients with online services, such as e-designs and adding more tools and engagement around my Skillshare class, [How To Style A Room](#). This is also a great time to build on existing projects like my podcast, [The Mood Board Series](#), where I discuss the intersection of race, culture, and interior design. This week, I am reaching out to tastemakers that in most cases would be too busy to sit down for a call, but now are more flexible due to the pandemic.”

05 Marie Flanigan, Interior Designer

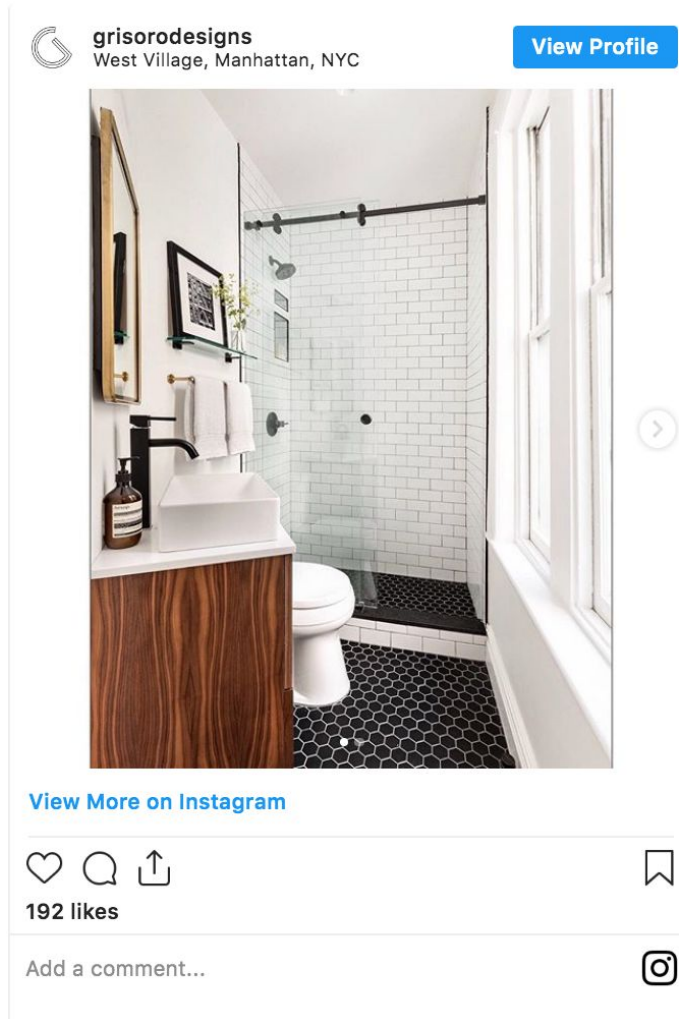
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“We are fortunate that much of what we do can be accomplished remotely while still maintaining our highest level of service. Many of our projects have one to two-year timelines, so we are continuing to place orders to keep our local vendors and friends afloat during these uncertain times. I also predict we are going to see some elongated lead times and fluctuations in pricing as the coming weeks unfold, so we are doing our best to keep our clients informed as we see changes.”

06 Gabriela Gargano, owner of Grisoro Designs

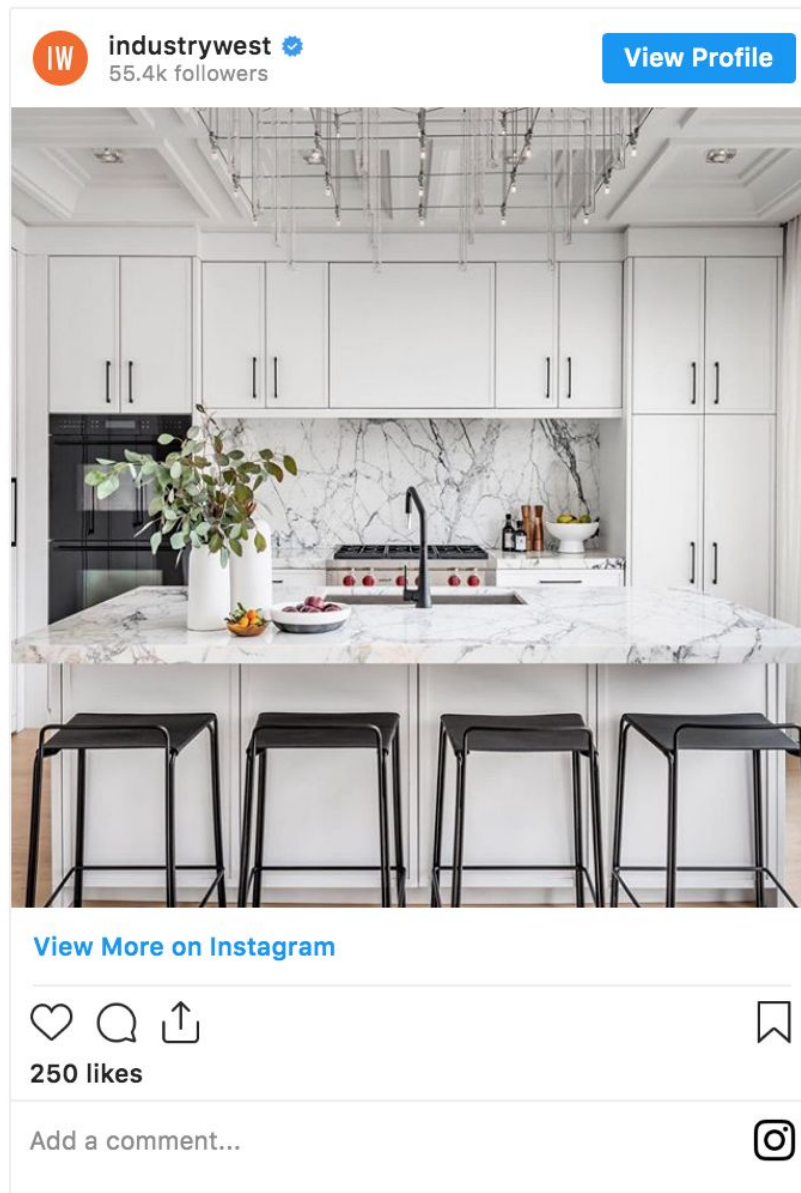
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“While the full impact is still unclear, as of now, we thankfully have our clients still looking to move full speed ahead. The biggest potential impact thus far are delays from our European vendors who have, or may, experience production issues as a result of quarantines, and most recently vendors in the tri-state area as well. The same may be true of transportation and delivery teams both internationally and domestically. We are in constant communication with our vendors, construction teams, and clients to work as closely as we can to avoid delays while keeping everyone safe and healthy. It’s also a great opportunity to source vintage since there’s no production lead time!”

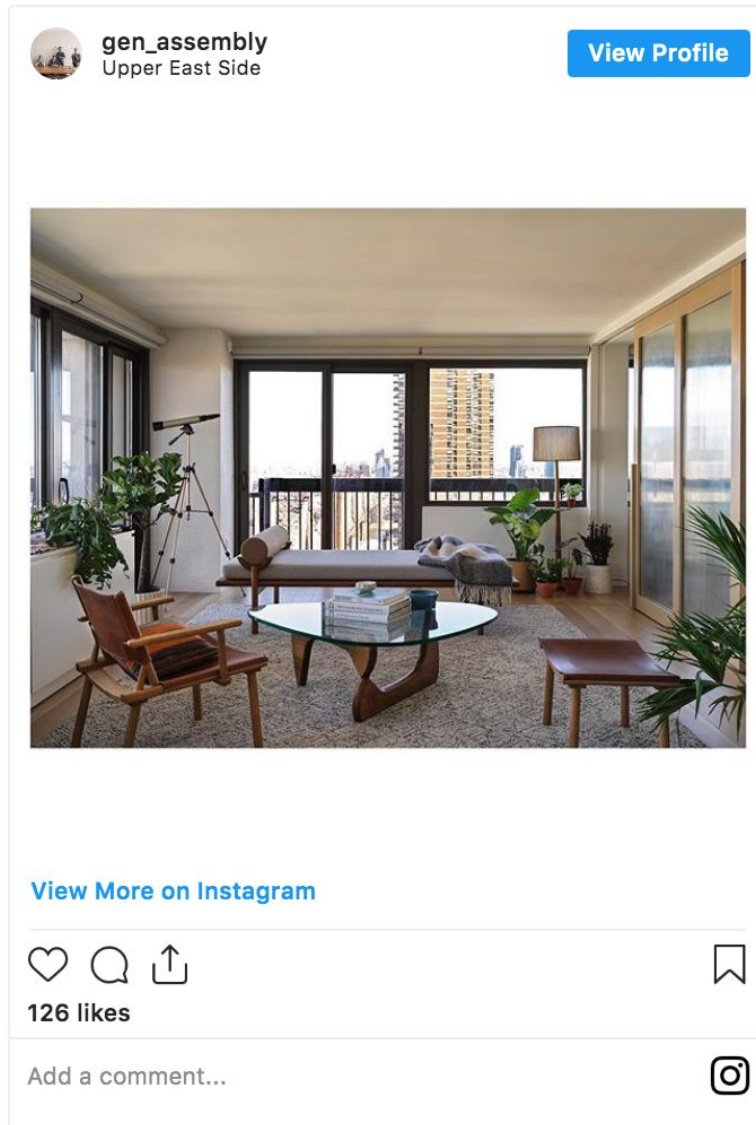
07 Jordan England, Founder of Industry West

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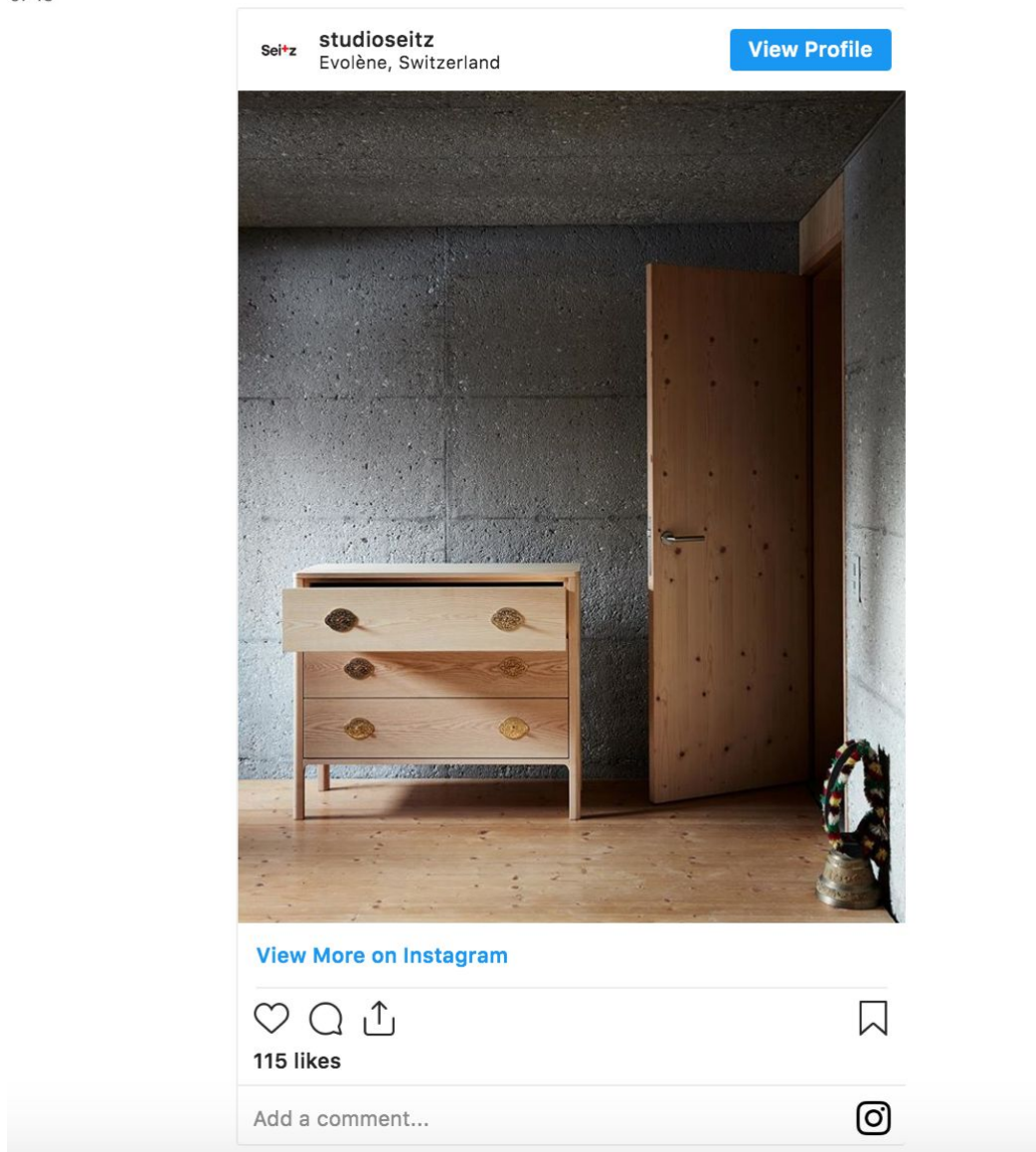
"We are continuing to see strong interest and sales among residential customers. While sales from trade clients have taken a dip, we are receiving the same level of traffic in terms of inquiries about upcoming projects, though it seems several clients are looking to wait out the current climate before completing their orders. We are working hard to meet our clients where they are right now, whether that's waiving storage fees and allowing them to buy now but delay delivery or allowing our customers to schedule meetings with us at hours (late or early) that better serve their needs."

08 Sarah Zames, founder of General Assembly
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“As far as impact goes, I think that people are going to reprioritize what they need after all of this. My office focuses primarily on custom residential design, but maybe after the dust settles on all of this, there might not be such a clear distinction between residential and commercial design anymore. People are being forced to work from home and in a few weeks (or months?!), we are all going to learn whether we hate it or love it. Right now, the only thing I feel certain about is that our business will be different this time next year, I'm just not sure how that will manifest yet.”

09 Kevin Seitz and Rob van Wyen, Co-Founders of Studio Seitz
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“We were really looking forward to launching our new product at the 2020 AD Design show, but with the threat of COVID-19, we understood that was no longer an option. We have worked really hard to create editorial images and content to highlight our makers’ stories. Instead of pushing anything further back with so many unknowns, we have decided to launch online instead in the coming weeks. We’re all stuck inside looking for inspiration, so we hope that our new products, images, and story can create a bit of reprieve during these tough times. While we were excited to see and meet everyone at the AD Design Show, we think that everyone's health and well-being is the most important.”

10 Kendall Wilkinson, Interior Designer

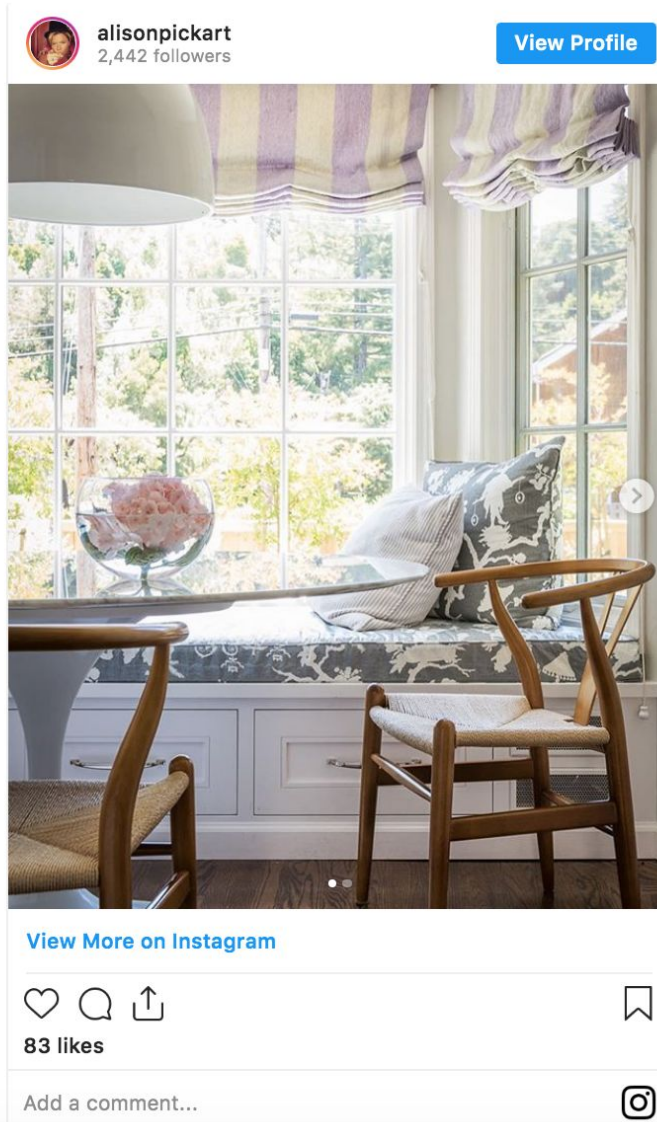
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“Though our designers can’t physically shop, they can shop online, and can continue to share information and keep orders going. Designers are turning to virtual means of communication like setting up video meetings with their clients through platforms like Zoom. At the beginning and end of every day, the staff also comes together to connect, to check in on the day's progress and set new goals for the next. It’s business as usual, only now from behind a screen.”

11 Alison Pickart, Interior Designer

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“We have a disruption in our process chain, the manufacturers who are dependent on working with each other to craft our custom products are unable to. Fortunately, showrooms and salespeople can work remotely, but the question becomes ‘Do you sell, if the order ultimately cannot be completed?’ This is the current challenge, made all the more frustrating, because there are clients and money in the space to spend but with the shutdown here in California our makers in the state can’t produce.”

12 Ginny Macdonald, Interior Designer

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“I’m trying not to look at this time as a negative for my business and as of now things are still running at a similar pace. We’re just navigating things differently. I’m using the extra time to push projects forward but also get on top of business systems, marketing, and general processes. Being able to regroup and focus on how we do things is key to improving how the business runs and will only benefit us once we regain normalcy.”

13 Lee Mayer, CEO of Havenly

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“Given it’s such a sensitive and uncertain time, we decided to ask our customers directly what they wanted to hear. What would be useful or beneficial to them?. Life is unfolding at home, and our customers are asking our tips to make it more comfortable and functional. Design is not just about aesthetics but about the feeling it evokes. We are trying to share what we are good at with people who find it valuable. We know it doesn’t fix everything, but I hope it helps people feel better as they stay home right now.”

14 Cortney Bishop, Interior Designer

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cortneybishopdesign
Sullivans Island

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“The cancellation of upcoming design shows, particularly High Point Market and Round Top, definitely took us by surprise. We rely on these shows to learn about new product releases and source vintage and antique products. Our vendors are our friends and we also love seeing them! The shows provide a collective opportunity to achieve these goals at a single forum during a dedicated timeframe. We are now shifting to still achieve these objectives—we're reaching out to show our support by shopping online or purchasing through Instagram. After all, the client presentations are still due and installations are still looming!”

15 Sylvia Hill, Designer and Owner of MAYDE Australia

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“What we’re seeing here in Australia, particularly after suffering through devastating bushfires, followed by flooding, is the general population really giving back and supporting small-medium businesses. We’re throwing out all the names we know to followers and fellow businesses to encourage everyone to support local. Whilst sales have slowed and we are definitely all sitting on the edges of our seats to see what happens next, we’re still mindful that we’ve all worked so hard to get to where we are and that virus or not, we have a myriad of creative and useful ways to keep helping each other out.”