



**Hello, Newman**  
Wayne Knight's love of film noir inspired his iconic character. **M16**

# MANSION

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

**\$20 Million**  
GoPro founder Nick Woodman lists California ranch. **M14**



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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Friday, July 10, 2020 | **M1**

Cost of project: \$7,500



Keia McSwain designed these spaces, above and right, for furnishing company Alden Parkes in High Point, N.C. The painting is 'Dripping Black' by Atlanta-based artist Charly Palmer.

## Black Designers See a Surge

Interior designers of color say the recent attention is great, but hope their talent, not race, makes the sale



KEIA MCSWAIN



LINDA HAYSLETT



Cost of Project: \$135,000

Linda Hayslett, whose renovation of a home included the kitchen above, saw her Instagram followers more than triple since the end of May.

BY NANCY KEATES

In late May, on a road trip from Cleveland to St. Paul, Minn., Suzanne Rivera and Michael Householder spent time talking about updating the new house they were moving into on the campus of Macalester College, where Ms. Rivera was due to begin her term as president on June 1.

Somewhere in Michigan, their conversation turned to race, amid the news of George Floyd's May 25 killing while in the custody of the Minneapolis police and subsequent wave of protests.

By the time the couple reached their new city, they decided they would hire a Black interior designer.

Mr. Householder says they normally would have found a designer by calling friends, but since they were new to St. Paul, and they wanted a designer of color, he searched online for "African-American interior designers in Twin Cities" and "Black interior decorators in Minnesota," but found only a few blog posts and articles. After reaching out to local design schools and business groups, he finally found a designer whose approach he liked through the Black Interior Designers Network.

"The one thing we could control right away was where we spent our money," says Ms. Rivera, who is Macalester's first Latina and first female president. "We see this as a small contribution in the effort toward social justice."

Many Black architects and interior designers have experienced a surge in visibility and demand since the end of May, part of a wider focus on diversity in a range of industries. The attention, Black design professionals say, has led to an uptick in invitations to sit on design panels, speaking gigs, features in magazines—and new clients and referrals.

"This is a grand start to something that could be amazing," says Keia McSwain, owner of Atlanta-based Kimberly & Cameron Interiors and

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Cost of Project: \$30,000 (product and labor only)

This living area, designed by Kiyonda Powell, mixes vintage and modern furnishings and textiles. 'Braiding Hour,' a portrait by Maryland-based artist Tawny Chatmon, is the focal point.

KIYONDA POWELL



## Putting Greens Sprout

With golfers stuck at home, demand is high for the custom mini-courses



Cost of his 5,000-square-foot practice green: \$15 to \$25 a sq. ft.

Dean Vagnozzi in the backyard of his home in Collegeville, Pa.

BY BETH DECARBO

IT WAS LATE, around 11:15 p.m., and Dean Vagnozzi saw his chance. His wife had gone to bed, making this a perfect time to quietly slip out of the house for a rendezvous with the other love of his life. Golf.

From his fully lighted practice green in the backyard of his home in Collegeville, Pa., Mr. Vagnozzi first focused on chipping from all areas of his practice facility, which has three grass heights to simulate a real golf course. Then he practiced putting, working with the assorted undulations and breaks surrounding the nine holes of his 5,000-square-foot practice green. Even his three tee boxes, which measure 35-, 40- and 50-yards from the green, are lighted.

In just a few months, Mr. Vagnozzi, has lowered his handicap by two strokes, to 12. "My short game has definitely gotten better. I'll be surprised if I'm not a 10 [handi-

cap] by the end of summer." (The average handicap is 14.3 for men and 27.5 for women, according to the U.S. Golf Association.)

And for this he can thank the pandemic. "I had a gut feeling that we were going to be locked down in our homes for a while," says Mr. Vagnozzi, who is 51 and works in the financial-services sector. He wasn't the only one.

"The cycle has been insanity. We haven't missed a day of work," says Paul Johnson, owner of Tour Greens Mid-Atlantic, the company that installed Mr. Vagnozzi's practice green. In the early days of the outbreak, Mr. Johnson says he got upwards of 15 inquiries a day, up from eight or nine per week. "It was like a switch flipped."

Mr. Johnson says he has installed greens as large as 12,500 square feet, and one that's a replica of Augusta National's 12th hole in the heart of Amen Corner, so called because so many players

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**\$30,000**  
Average cost of an at home practice green



MANSION



NICOLE WHITE

Black Designers

Continued from page M1  
president of the Black Interior Designers Network. Since May, she has gained three new clients who hired her for residential projects, including Ms. Rivera and Mr. Householder. “When I heard how important it was to them to work with a designer of color, I was pleased they were taking that step,” she says.

Ms. McSwain says a space she created in High Point, N.C., is reflective of her culture and lifestyle. It includes rich and colorful rooms with paintings by Black artists, pillows and lighting sourced from the indigenous African design-focused Ngala Trading Co., and juju hats from Cameroon. She says all the new attention is bittersweet. “We’ve been trying for 10 years to encourage the design industry and clients to partner with Black designers,” she says. “We are now noticing an influx in attention from white counterparts who are finally lending an ear to what we have to say. There was a serious lack of representation. I often share with people it’s hard not to look back.”

For Nicole White, owner of Nicole White Design Interiors near Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the first sign of change was on social media when she got 10,000 new Instagram followers in one week in early June. “That kind of flood is what will bring new clients,” says Ms. White. She says she has gained new business from around the country in the last month.

However, she says, she suspects most of the people are now calling her not only because they are specifically looking for a Black designer, but because they didn’t know her firm existed and just found out by seeing shares of her posts. “I believe clients are just happy to see there’s diversity among interior designers across the country and that’s likely

‘I am happy to be included and grow a wider audience, but I admit it feels bittersweet in the current climate.’

—Kiyonda Powell



pushed some off the fence to decide to hire us. Most would never know Black designers exist from the design publications. The lack of diversity there has been an offensive pill to swallow over the years,” she says. Ms. White’s style is evident in a space she designed for herself that she calls a “mom cave.” Filled with colorful art, dark walls, lots of books and comfortable furnishings, it is intimate and warm.

“It keeps growing,” says Linda Hayslett of Los Angeles-based LH.Designs, whose Instagram followers surged by 3,000 in one day, more than tripling since the end of May. One new client who called, a Black couple with three children build-



FROM LEFT: TYE STUDIOS; GIORIELL LERON (2)

Nicole White, whose firm specializes in large-scale home renovations, created a ‘mom cave’ in her Miami home, above. She likes to use white marble and compelling lighting in her work.



KEISHA GILCHRIST

The kitchen below was designed by Keisha Gilchrist, a former advertising executive, who started a design and real-estate firm outside Washington, D.C. She is also a real-estate broker and general contractor.



Cost of Project: \$26,000

FROM TOP: PIX PHOTOGRAPHERS; AMANDA HEPTINSTALL

ing a new house in Santa Monica, told her they wanted to support a Black designer and have now asked their contractor to try to hire Black subcontractors and workers for their project. Ms. Hayslett describes her style as both warm and modern. She says most of the people calling her now about projects are Black people who didn’t know Black designers existed. “They didn’t realize we are there,” she says.

Designers welcome the interest, but still feel resentment at the historic lack of representation of Black designers and architects. They also want to make sure people are seeking them out for the quality of their work.

“I don’t want someone to hire me just because I’m Black,” says Eneia White of New York-based Eneia White Interiors, who gained 3,000 new Instagram followers in a week. “I don’t specifically market myself as a Black-owned business. The new business I have comes from people liking the quality of my work.”

Kiyonda Powell, of Washington, D.C.-based Kiyonda Powell Design Studio, agrees. “The events of the last few weeks have indirectly amplified many Black designers,” she says. “I am happy to be included and grow a wider audience, but I admit it feels bittersweet in the current climate of social injustice.”

Johanna Howard’s Montclair, N.J.-based home company Johanna Howard Home has seen online orders for its décor products go from one or two a week to five to 10 a day, including one 48-hour period in which they got 100 orders. She attributes this to the doubling of her Instagram followers since early June. She has also doubled her new clients in her trade business. “What catches their eye is a desire for a Black-owned business,” she says.

When Keisha Gilchrist started her design and real-estate firm

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