



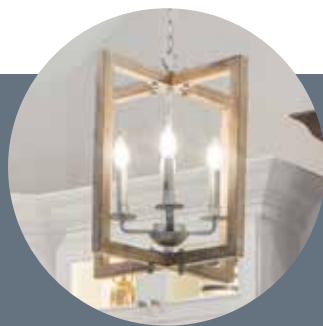
INTERVIEW WITH

AMIE FRELING BROWN

**Designer. Muralist.
Faux Finisher. Blogger.
Brand Ambassador.**



Images courtesy of Morrell Builders



“For all my jobs, I’m picking up Progress Lighting,” says designer Amie Freling-Brown, a design consultant for Morrell Builders who decorates their model homes.

“They want something that’s eye catching and pretty ‘wow’ factor.”

For the model home at Greenpoint Trail, which is located on a golf course in Pittsford, New York, Amie chose fixtures based on the story she created for the home—something she does with every model. “Here, it was Hampton Chic: Clean, bright, comfortable, classic. Hamptons style, but completely usable.”

Amie Freling-Brown claims all these titles, having built a career that has flowed from her creative passions. “I come from a family of artists and very creative people,” says Brown, whose Rochester, New York, studio, Meme Hill, is an homage to her grandparents: Her maternal Italian grandfather, affectionately called Meme, was a woodworker who asked Amie to paint

his carved tulips, and her paternal grandmother, Grandma Hill, was an art teacher who always urged her to be creative.

We sat down with Amie to talk about how her multifaceted career has flourished in the 25 years since she started painting vintage furniture from weekend flea markets.



WELCOME HOME

The Penn Collection Three-Light Chandelier illuminates the foyer and stair hall. Amie says she admired its polished style and schoolhouse charm.

How did you first get started?

After I graduated from college, I went to DC, landing a job as an art director for *Environment* magazine, but soon after, I craved more creative and artistic liberty. I would shop the Georgetown Flea Market on the weekends for potential up-cyclables. Once I started painting furniture, the commissions came rolling in. I would hurry up and rush home from my desk job every day so I could paint furniture and my handmade creations. I eventually moved back to Rochester to open a brick-and-mortar studio. I began exhibiting on the craft-show circuit. I scoured garage and households sales for perfect one-of-a-kind pieces.

One time at the Westport Craft Show, there was a very unassuming woman in a baseball cap who spent a lot of time in my booth. She carefully examined everything while asking questions. She asked me if I sold wholesale and handed me her card. It turns out, she was a buyer from Nordstrom! I painted everything for them—glassware, vases, furniture, picture frames, flower pots. I sold thousands and thousands of flower pots over the years.



What was that first project that propelled you into interior design?

In 2007, Scott Morrell [of Morrell Builders] came to me through a mutual friend. His company had a house on the local Homearama parade of homes that year, and he said, ‘Can you help me pick out some colors for this house?’ Before I knew it, I had designed this whole six-bedroom house. And then he asked me to furnish it! And pretty much everything evolved from there. [Amie is currently the chief consultant for Inde, a design center owned by Morrell Builders, and she decorates all its model homes.]



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You started your business prior to the advent of social media. How did you discover what it could do for you?

I've always tried to make my path. I tried out for HGTV Design Star for three years in a row. Once, I made it all the way to an on-camera interview, but I never made it onto the show. I was ready to give up on everything! But once I let that go, I thought, 'I'm just going to wait and see what door opens for me,' and in comes social media. I was very early to Facebook, and got on Instagram in 2012. I started posting what I was doing every day, and I would tag the brands I was using, like Progress Lighting, Sherwin Williams, Delta Faucets, Home Goods, and Raymour & Flanigan. I also started my blog around that time, and it all kind of snowballed from there. Now I'm a brand ambassador for these brands and others, sharing trends, how-to's, my design insights, and what's new to the market.





ORGANICALLY ELEGANT

Amie chose pendants from the Turnbury Collection for the kitchen island and dining area. "I wanted to blend with this tall ceiling and the beams, and bring the outdoors in by introducing wood elements. The Turnbury Collection seemed to encapsulate all of that. They're open and they're bright and they're architectural-looking, and the scale is perfect."



How do you decide which brands to partner with?

I only work with brands that I use and believe in, that are quality and have good aesthetics. It's super easy to promote and share the things you love.

Who have been your most important mentors as your business has evolved and grown?

My mentors are my parents. They taught both my sister and me to work really hard. When we were kids, we'd be clearing gutters, gardening, painting, and building all kinds of stuff. We did it all growing up, and I feel like that's helped me as an adult. Now we both run our own businesses. My sister, Jennifer, is an extremely successful floral designer.

What does a typical day look like for you?

I get up and I make my bed. I have coffee, sit on my comfy couch, answer emails and engage in social media for about an hour. Then, I'm meeting with clients, working on projects, and shopping. Every day usually involves shopping! If a client says, 'I'm looking for a purple velvet pillow with piping,' I know where to find it. I have a black belt in shopping.

What is your social media regimen?

Typically, I post around 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. I have really good engagement at 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. People on the east coast have finished dinner and put their children to bed, and people on the west coast are just coming home from work. As for platforms, I use Twitter for products or sharing projects, but I'm partial to Instagram and Facebook. And I love Pinterest! I source a lot of products and pin them to my project boards. Pinterest is where people can find my resources, ideas and current trends.

I never post the same picture all across the board; Facebook is more local—and Instagram is world-wide. I'll share behind-the-scenes pictures on my Instagram stories, and on my feed, people can see what I'm looking at and what trends I'm following and what I'm sourcing.

I pin the finished images of my projects on Pinterest. It's a never-ending source of information.



“I never advertise, I just do a good job.”

What would you say is the single best way to attract new customers?

You never know where your next job is, so whether it's small or big, I give 150 percent! If you want to pay me to look for pillows, I'm happy to do that, and if you want me to design a multi-million-dollar house, I'm all in. I never advertise, I just do a good job. You never know where you're next customer is going to be, like with kids' rooms. I cannot tell you how many kids' rooms I get because all these kids Snapchat with each other and tell their parents.

What keeps you going when things get tough at work?

Coming home to my family, my house and my dog. Sometimes it's as simple as just being grateful for what I have. +



MASTER DEGREE

The appropriately named Status Collection Five-Light Chandelier and Sconces unify the comfortably chic bedroom and bathroom in the owners' retreat. "I wanted the bedroom to seem like a spa, so I went very light and airy. I loved the shimmer and the classic elements to [the fixtures]," she says, adding: "I also do love a really good drum shade."

