



the LOCAL EXPERTS

VILLAGE GREEN
REALTY

#1 In Ulster and Greene County Sales 2011-2017*



An Interview With The Designers Behind Fred High Falls

by: Amy Wallace, Marketing Director

Fred is a little shop in High Falls. Perfectly curated, at once comfortable and aspirational, it's been a favorite of mine for years. I was so glad to hear that owners Charles Farruggio and Michael Van Nort were going to be part of The Kingston Design Connections' Kingston Design Showhouse. It gave me the perfect excuse to interview them and pay a visit to the shop! We sat together on some beautifully upholstered slipper chairs and had a chat.

Amy: I want to start with a couple of questions about the shop, which I just love. Why Fred? I've always wondered.

Michael: Usually people think it's one of our names. People will walk in say, "Are you Fred?" But I'll

let you answer that question. Why Fred...

Charles: When we first were going to open the shop, it was really important to us, we wanted it to be a friendly, down to earth, neighborhood place - welcoming to everyone. And after Michael and I came up with dozens of somewhat pretentious designery names...

Michael: none of which were friendly, down to earth, or approachable....

Charles: my husband, who was hearing all of this, said, "You guys, you're trying too hard; why don't you just call it Fred?"

Michael: So, we thought, "Huh"!

Charles: Yeah, lightbulb! And it worked. It's short. It's great for a logo...

Michael: we liked the way it looked on the sign...

Charles: and it's created lots of intrigue, (whispers) "What's Fred", and , "Who's Fred", and ,"What's going

on?" ...

Michael: and we learned afterwards that Fred actually means peace in Sweden.

Fred Home Decor Shop High Falls

Amy: Oh! That's so nice! Ok, so, the obvious next question is why High Falls?

Michael: Well, we both have homes in Accord. We always loved coming to High Falls for the different shopping that was here: Blue Cashew, Spruce, the Black Barn, Lounge Linger, Mercantile... So, I had sold at flea markets down the road, and together we did a flea market across the street with our friend Ron, and the very first night as we were setting up, people were stopping and asking "do you have a shop?" Next day, same thing, "do you guys have a shop?" We kept saying, no, but by Sunday we were saying, "we don't yet, but we're going to be opening across the street." There was a "For Rent" sign in the window, and we took the space. That was Columbus Day weekend. And then we opened the shop that January.

Amy: How did you two become business partners?

Charles: Well, we were friends before this, and the ironic thing is that both of our husbands were friends from a long time ago, in fact that's how we met, because of our husbands. We were training for the New York City Marathon and we were talking about always having wanted to open a shop...

Michael: ...independently we would both say, "Oh, I'd love to have a shop," "Oh, I'd love to have a shop!", "What would your shop look like?", and, "What would your shop be like?" So, training, running hours at a time, we just started talking and then we were like, "I think we should do this!" We did the flea market first, that was our trial run, a weekend! We liked it. We got along, and worked out well.

Charles: I liked what he was doing, he liked what I was doing - it was easy.

Amy: Do you both live here full-time?

Michael: Actually, neither of us live here full-time. We're both in the city for interior design projects and elsewhere. So wherever the projects will take us, we go. But we both have residences here, and apartments in the city.

Amy: I noticed you just opened an online shop. When did that happen? How's it going?

Michael: Fourth of July. That was our launch.





Charles: Big Bang! (They both laugh) That was a big goal for us this year, was to create an e-commerce website and get it launched.

Michael: There was also an opportunity to put a portfolio section for interior design projects on there. We worked on it together and it's been well received. I've noticed when I'm here, people come in and say, "Oh, I saw this on your website" and then they come into the store for it. We get a lot of reorders on the website, people who are from out of town, who shopped in the store and bought items like candles, they'll replace them via the website. We also have things on the site that are not in the shop, it's allowed us to expand our offerings without expanding our footprint.

Charles: One of things we're trying to do with our site is to increase the vintage offerings, which will also be in the

shop.

Amy: Oh! Where do you hunt for vintage?

Michael: Everywhere! I mean, I've been known to pull off to the side of the road. And if I see something shiny, I'll turn my car around for a yard sale.

Charles: Antique shops, Antique Markets, Flea markets, sometimes when you're traveling for projects, in Tennessee or California, or Ohio you'll come across some great things.

Amy: I know that part of Marilyn's impetus for creating The Design Showhouse was to announce to the area that there are design options available to them right here that they might not be aware of. Have you had a fair number of design projects up here or have you not seen a lot of interest in that?

Michael: Our work up here really started with people coming into the shop who had houses up here, but they were hiring us to do their apartments in the city. Our very first project in the area was a project here in Accord. We've done work in High Falls right down the road from the shop. We have a project in Ellenville right now. We've done a lot of paint color consultations, which are, I think, super accessible and easy for people as an entree into working with a designer. We charge \$200 an hour, the two of us come in with our paint bag and we can usually help people solve what they've been agonizing over for maybe years, where they just get into a holding pattern and they can't decide between two or three colors.

Charles: So, we're doing these very accessible consultations, whether it's paint colors or window treatments or helping by suggesting one or two pieces of furniture, and we're also doing large scale projects where we're getting involved from the very beginning, and working with an architect and a contractor on floor plans, being a part of an entire renovation.

Michael: We did a project in New Paltz two winters ago, they're snowbirds, so they go to Florida, and they recently hired us to do their new apartment in Florida. So, that's exciting. We're traveling there this fall.

Amy: Great! So, tell me a little bit about what you're doing for The Kingston Design Connection's Design Showhouse.

Charles: Well, we have the dining room. We were on-board early on, so we got to pick. The room would have been the parlor in Victorian times, but we're treating it like a dining room.

Michael: There's a large table, with seating for eight. There's an architectural niche that bumps out. It has very thick, wide moldings, and we're keeping it a little dark and moody. There'll be an eclectic mix of stuff, handcrafted items from the Hudson Valley, but also things that we've collected over time, so it will have a vintage vibe. We've chosen a very dark wall color and we have an amazing chandelier that was donated through Hudson Valley Lighting. One of the other designers had a contact there, and they've actually donated lighting to several rooms. We picked a pretty spectacular chandelier that's going to anchor the space. We have a great rug that's been donated from a vendor that we work with called Patterson Flynn Martin, and art from local artists.

Charles: We're also adding a little modern touch to the very dark, moody color palette. It's not necessarily traditional, the paint color is called Grappa, but it feels traditional, so we're going to throw in a little unexpected modern touch to the wall finish.

Amy: I'm curious to know if you and the other designers had been working together in any way to create a cohesive design? Or is it meant to be every room for himself?

Charles: That's a great question and it's a little tricky. So the quick answer is yes, we've been in touch with each other to see what everyone's doing. But, the rooms should also be individual and express each designer's style and view. But it's important, when rooms are adjacent to each other, that they don't clash.

Michael: We've removed two doors from our room to improve the flow so it is important that the rooms on the other side of those doorways aren't world's away from ours. We've had text exchanges with people about paint colors and changes. I think people have been very collaborative.

Kingston Design Showhouse Sneak Peak

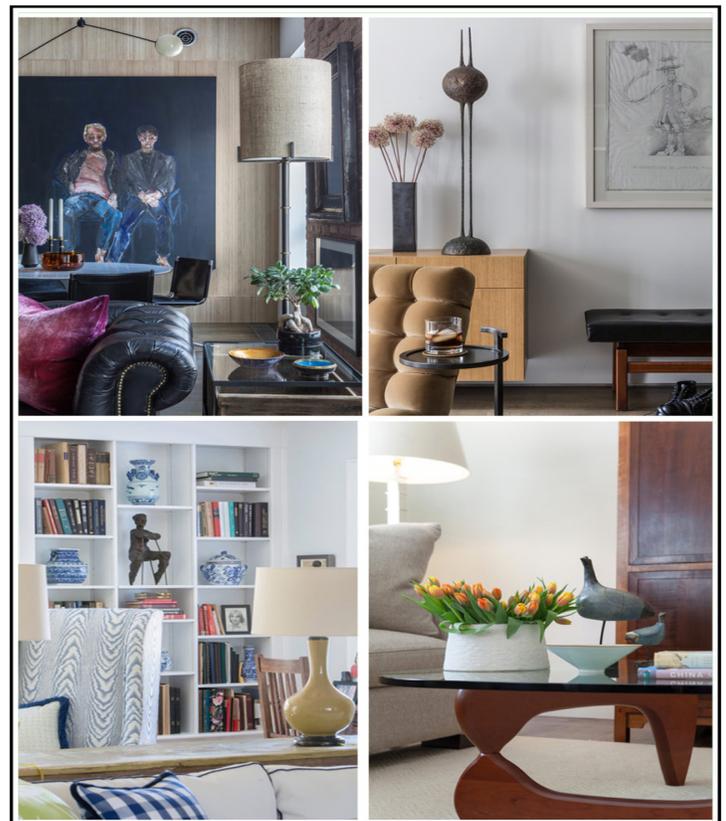
Amy: What excites you most about The Design Showhouse? What do you hope comes from it?

Michael: I think more work,

Charles: more projects.

Michael: Yeah, I mean I'm also excited to take some photos and put them on our instagram page, the social media aspect of it. I think it's fun!

Charles: And it's been great meeting new people. And I think that was part of Maryline's goal - con-



necting people. Not only with people who are going to be coming to see the show house, but designers and resources. It's been fun meeting the other people.

Amy: I made the assumption that everybody involved sort of knew each other, that you would be connected.

Charles: I think being designers, in general, you're sort of in your own world. You're working with your client, and you could easily fall into a vacuum. The Showhouse is a great way to talk to other designer is see other viewpoints, and be inspired by other things.

Michael: And to share of the resources I think. When I started chatting with Maryline in the very beginning, she came into the shop, we sat down and had the conversation with her and then Charles and I went there and met her at the house. We had recommended that she reach out to Kate Cummings. And then Kate has this amazing custom wallpaper that's going to go in the entry hall, which I'm very excited to see - a local artist/illustrator. Have you heard about this paper?

Amy: No, I haven't, but I love wallpaper. Hence my smile.



Michael: We love wallpaper too. This is super special. Jason O'malley, who's from Kerhonkson, he's an illustrator, created this wallpaper for her. It's amazing. And they didn't have anyone to do the installation. We use wallpaper a lot and there's a guy in Kingston named Michael Germaine and we connected them. So the collaboration started back all the way back in June.

Amy: Tell me what each of your favorite part of the house is architecturally, or something that you've found particularly challenging.

Michael: The challenging part is the house has been a rental. It's been broken up into three apartments. So, if it was one big house, I think it would be amazing, you know, the dining room would be spectacular, so would the hall, but there have been hallways created to break it up into apartments. But I feel like all the designers are using that to their advantage and creating special areas. I think my favorite part

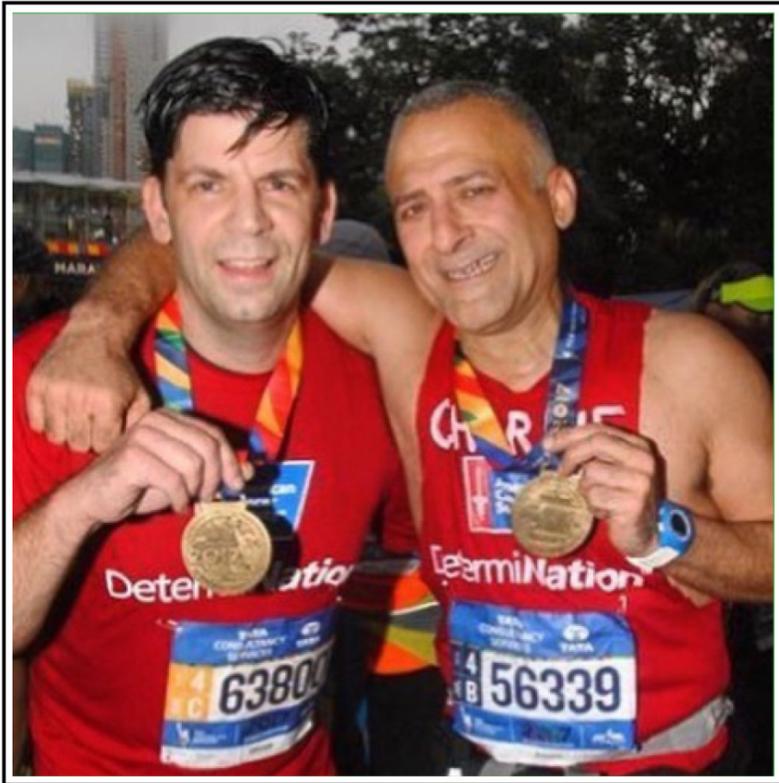
about the house would be the moldings. They're just really big. We have this giant arch in our dining room and, what I call a bump-out with the windows is really nice. The molding has layers and layers of paint. I don't mind actually.

Charles: It definitely has an old world charm to it.

Michael: And we've used a satin finish on the trim which sort of enhances the bumps and the age, just like what we've done in shop, it's very high gloss.

Charles: I'm with Michael, my favorite part of the room is the arch, and the window bump-out. It would be a cute apartment. It's a big project because they've refinished the exterior that they're doing the yard and the porches.

Michael: There's been a lot of work. I'm impressed at how far they've come. I mean, stained glass going in the front door, which is beautiful. The exterior was completely painted, the porch was rebuilt, so I think there's a lot of nice detail happening. It's exciting.



Charles: Yeah. It's been great for me personally, actually. I feel like with Kingston, I either went to the Stockade or the Rondout, and having this destination has sort of opened up the central part of Kingston for me. I've been up here in this area for about 12 years now, and I really hadn't spent any time there.

Amy: All right, last question, what's your favorite thing to do here on the weekend?

Michael: Shop. I do love to shop, there's no doubt about that. But you know, relaxing. I like to drive around too - to get to the next shop.

Charles: I do a lot of running. So, I'm either running, or I'm working on my house or spending time with friends.

Visit Charles and Michael At FRED
1209 State Route 213, High Falls, NY 12440

397 Main Street
Catskill, NY 12414
518-625-3360

6423 Montgomery St, Suite 3
Rhinebeck, NY, 12572
845-876-4535

268 Fair Street
Kingston, NY 12401
845-331-5357

5383 Main Street
Windham, NY 12496
518-734-4200

157 Main Street
New Paltz, NY 12561
845-255-0615

11-13 Mill Hill Road
Woodstock, NY 12498
845-679-2255

*According to Hudson Valley Catskill Region MLS. Each Office is Independently Owned and Operated.