

BEST OF PLAZA MIDWOOD

DANIELLE MCKIM OF TUFT

by Vanessa Infanzon

Danielle McKim has always been crafty. As a kid, she once decoupaged her dresser with magazine clippings. Her parents gave her the freedom to experiment with leftover paint and old furniture around the house.

That interest in design, color and creating never left McKim. She owns TUFT on Central Avenue. McKim specializes in selling custom-made furniture and locally made household decor and provides interior design services.

McKim moved to Charlotte after graduating from Clemson University in 2008 with a sociology degree. When she wasn't working a corporate job, she practiced her interior design skills armed with a power drill, nail gun and an air compressor.

"When I had my weekends back, I really could dive into my passion of refinishing furniture and design and tweaking spaces," McKim, 36, said. "I allowed myself to have Saturdays and Sundays every week to play. I kept honing my skills."

McKim took a risk; she quit her full-time job and opened up TUFT five years ago. She sold vintage furniture pieces that she'd reupholstered and painted. This year McKim rebranded TUFT to include her new locally manufactured custom pieces. "I'd like to pull toward crisp modern because I have new ideas I want to explore," she said. "I feel like it's time to expand."

The shop now carries consoles, side tables, dressers, nesting tables and coffee tables—all designed by McKim. "I'm not at the mercy of finding vintage pieces," she said. "I'm having custom pieces made. I'm playing with the details. They'll be painted in bright colors." She's still offering reupholstering services for clients who bring in their vintage items.

McKim also supports the artists in the area by selling locally made products such as candles, artwork and blankets in her shop.

TUFT's interior design services include design consultation and full-room installations. "I'll listen to the client's needs," McKim said. "I'll listen to what they'd like to get out of a space and then I'll figure out the process to make sure those two things happen."

Lisa Howell and her husband James moved to Tippah Avenue in June 2018. They used McKim's interior design services for the master bedroom, study, downstairs living spaces and a sun porch. "She can see possibilities and creative uses that I would not have imagined," Howell said. "Her shop is unique and her design services are a natural fit for the Plaza Midwood community."



Danielle McKim outside TUFT. Photo by Lauren Rosenau.

Patrick Villafane, owner of The Hop Shop, partnered with McKim for the interior design of his business' space on Lamar Avenue. "She has great passion, energy, and vision," he said. "Our most popular seating area at The Hop Shop is the hanging swings. A great idea!"

The experience was positive for McKim and Villafane. "It creates a better community," Villafane said. "Danielle and I have become friends through our collaborative efforts and will continue to work together on future projects."

The DIY design experience is available too. McKim teaches small group workshops in her studio on Wendover Avenue. Learn how to make household items such as blanket ladders, geometric shelves, ottomans, ladder shelves and French mattress floor cushions. These weekend classes are four to six hours long. Costs range from \$55 to \$150 and include instruction and supplies. McKim also offers Brunch & Crafts—eat and drink while crafting.

McKim's recent involvement in the Plaza Midwood Merchants Association has been good for her. "As much as we'd like to support each other, it's hard to get out of our own daily grind," she said. "All of our businesses are maturing to the point that we can talk to each other and figure out what we can do as a team to make sure all businesses are flourishing on this side of town."



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