

PROFILE

Shane Inman

Local boy makes good: a phrase that conjures images of a young man from a small town, working against all odds, to make it in the big city. Clichéd? Perhaps – but an apt description of local interior designer and rising HGTV star Shane Inman.

The Traverse City Business News sat down with Inman following the news of his most recent coup – he has been named Interiors Director of the famed Randolph Street Market in Chicago – to talk about his trajectory from closeted Lake City kid to a local designer on the regional and national design radar.

By Karen Johnson

TRAVERSE CITY – The only one of eight siblings to go to college, Inman's career started with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interior Design from Michigan State University. After graduation, he moved to the nation's hotbeds of art and design: first San Francisco, and then to Miami, where he served as director of design and senior interior designer for Home Depot's high-end subsidiary, Expo Design Center. While he credits the mastery of his craft to his five years with the firm, by the end of that time, he says he was, "creatively done."

"I'd reached a point in Miami where I wasn't happy," he says. "If you don't like where you are, get out! It's like a three-year old

who isn't growing – there's a problem." So in 2003, Inman did something you don't expect a big city transplant to do: He contacted the Peace Corps and became a goodwill ambassador to Africa, where he taught automated computer-aided design (AutoCAD) and

English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The time there also allowed him to work on another project – his memoirs.

Inman says he had come out to his family years before, but it wasn't until writing his own, albeit young, life story that he was able to face and forgive the issues raised by the revelation of his sexuality. He says the writing helped him take ownership of his life, and offered a catharsis that brought relief and clarity. It also brought him back to Michigan and jumpstarted the catalyst of his next adventure: The Inman Company.



Inman is certified as an interior designer by the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ), and holds the highest-ranking professional memberships with American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and International Interior Design Association (IIDA).

Inman founded the design company in 2006 and, by his own admission, started small: first a focal wall for Hagerty, then a remodeling project for TV 7&4, a fresh interior for attorney Gerald Chefalo's new office location on Railroad Avenue in TC.

But he didn't limit himself to design alone; he built a brand by extending

INMAN CONT'D NEXT

real estate | construction CONT'D

INMAN CONT'D FROM PG. 40

himself to various media, hosting “Resale Reality Check” on 106.7 FM, writing about design for the Traverse Area Association of Realtors, the *Michigan Home Resource Guide*, and the *Traverse City Record-Eagle*.

In 2009, Inman opened a second office in Chicago. Each project brings new contacts, which Inman tends to with an almost fanatical commitment. “I probably have every area business owner’s card in my file, and they definitely have mine. And everyone I work with gets a thank-you card. Someday I’ll be telling *Time Magazine* that logo-branded, handwritten thank-you notes were the secret to my success.”

Contacts, he says, also bring reciprocity. “Once I have my foot in the door, it’s my responsibility to get someone else’s in there too,” Inman explains. Inman’s appreciation for reciprocity in business doesn’t preclude him from lending his talents to pro bono work. “Nobly place your name next to projects you support without thought of

personal gain,” he says. “In the end, the rewards that come back to you from your dedication and ability to deliver what you promise will be better than capital.”

2010 brought Inman’s most recent success. After viewing his website, HGTV.com – the world’s largest home and garden television website – invited Inman to be part of their Designers’

Portfolio.

“I am amazed and absolutely privileged to be working with HGTV,” Inman says. “I am grateful to all my clients and industry partners, who are the reason this has happened.”

Liz Gray, Senior Editor at

HGTV.com says the feeling is mutual. “[Designers’ Portfolio] is one of the most popular parts of the site, and Shane’s images are a real asset to us.”

Inman was recently named interiors director of The Randolph Street Market in Chicago. The once-a-month urban market set in the historic West Loop neighborhood is widely considered a Mecca of cool and endorsed by no less than celebrity designer, Nate Berkus.

If there’s a secret to his success,

Inman credits his tireless work ethic: relentless networking, hands-on media promotion, elevation of customer service to the highest levels and a dedication to his craft through higher learning.

As for his memoir? It’s not gathering dust on any shelf. Inman tells the *TCBN* it’s completed and boasts a working title – *In The Life Of A Man*. He’s currently working on its release. BN

Follow Inman Online

Inman authors the blog
“The Interior Design Savant”
via Chicagonow.com