



The daughter of renowned concert pianists, Melanie Gowen, is like a musician as well, but instead creates harmonies and rhythms of her own in her interior design business.

After graduating from Cornell University with an interior design degree, Gowen actually landed in a financial role in the Washington, D.C. area. Honing skills that would later come in handy, like project management and managing customer expectations, she helped her clients problem-solve and implement better risk-management systems. However, she found she wasn't happy and longed to get back to her creative roots. A serendipitous trip to Nantucket, that she was reluctant to take, was the spark she needed to launch her own interior design business, and she's been making music ever since.

Gowen was named best Interior Designer for Nantucket and her work has been featured in *Maine Home + Design*, *Veranda*, *Flower* magazine, and the *Wall Street Journal*. She has also been featured by Monogram Appliance for her innovative use of state of the art appliances. A licensed real estate agent in Massachusetts, she brings the unique skill set of being able to help clients find, as well as design their dream home.

~ Leslie Hatton

Melanie Gowen

CCH: *You've been commended for your creativity in using high end appliances, what are some ways that you have accomplished that?*

MG: I work with a talented cabinet maker on the island and one of my strategies when working in a space or a historic home is to cover appliances with a custom cabinet panel; you'll have no idea what's behind it and it blends so well into the house. I think we are rethinking kitchens as living spaces, especially in historical homes, where there may be restrictions such as meandering ceilings limiting upper cabinets. Monogram makes wonderful modular, column refrigeration units in various sizes so we can divide the refrigerator and the freezer. I don't encourage clients to choose complicated specialty technical appliances that are going to be hard to service given that we're on an island. I love specifying LaCananche ranges which are really fun because they come in all kinds of colors.

CCH: *What is a favorite piece in your own home?*

MG: For me, it's my kitchen faucet! It's a polished nickel Waterstone faucet. I always say that the plumbing and lighting fixtures and decorative hardware of a home are the jewelry. When you use it and look at it every day, I think it should be well made, beautiful, and something that you love. There are a lot of things that you can upgrade in your home that aren't expensive and can make a tremendous difference.

CCH: *What is something that you tell clients to splurge on?*

MG: I think most people don't really love the look of recessed lighting—I don't. When layering in architectural

lighting, I advise my clients to invest in little two-inch flangeless downlights; the Element is a warm color temperature LED light by Visual Comfort. Clients want a quiet ceiling effect so they disappear and you don't even know they are there—they get muddled right into the ceiling by the plaster and really disappear. It's a warm, glowing light that you can use on dimmers. Again, it's all about the atmosphere you create as you are living with it every single day.

CCH: *What makes you stand apart from other interior designers and/or real estate agents?*

MG: I think of myself almost as a strategic consultant; I start by listening and understanding how the client wants to live. I learn what their needs and preferences are and how that translates into a floor plan. I want to make a difference in changing the way that people live by designing spaces that really support that. Design can be an empowering and transformative tool.

CCH: *How does Nantucket influence your design?*

MG: The natural beauty all around is so inspirational, whether it's marsh grasses or the sand, or the ocean. But there's also the history—so many of these homes have had generations before in them; Nantucket isn't like any other place in the world. So any time there's a chance to incorporate the unique history and bring it into the light is really neat. You never know what you're going to find behind a wall or a ceiling! 🏠