



7615 Industrial Rd. Suite 103, Melbourne, FL 32904

Q&A

January, 2019

Name: Mario Arbore, Owner
Website: www.squarepaws.com
Phone: 844-577-7297
Email: sales@squarepaws.com
Facebook: squarepaws
Twitter: @SqPaws
Instagram: square_paws
Pinterest: squarepaws



Q: How long has Square Paws been in business?

A: *I've had my architecture practice since August, 2000, and I began Square Paws in early 2014 as an offshoot of my practice. My first year as Square Paws was designing and fabricating a multitude of working prototypes that I tested on my own cats. It wasn't until 2015 that I started to sell some of my cat-tower work.*

Q: What prompted you to start Square Paws?

A: *Being a cat daddy to three kitties, I had started cobbling together cardboard boxes as play-centers for them. Cats love boxes just as they are. But I wanted to make something more substantial than cardboard boxes and duct tape. So I began to sketch some ideas for cat towers, using nautical themes initially. I wanted to create items that would draw upon my background as an architect, to create iconic conversation pieces, yet still be very cat-friendly. I began with the "lighthouse" and branched out from there.*

www.squarepaws.com

1-844-577-7297

Q&A - Page 1



7615 Industrial Rd. Suite 103, Melbourne, FL 32904

Q: Describe what Square Paws does.

A: *We create one-of-a-kind pet furniture, even though, at the moment, the focus has been solely on felines. The items we create are showpieces, a kind of functional, habitable artwork, rather than the typical beige boxes that get tucked away in corners or hidden when company comes over. We also have ancillary items like housewares and apparel that fit with our cat-centric brand, but our main focus remains the cat towers.*

Q: What exactly is so unique about your cat furniture?

A: *What we do differently than your average cat condo manufacturer is to bring the same sense of play and whimsy that is inherent in felines to the objects they inhabit. Because cats are so curious, it tends to bring out a parenting curiosity in their owners. In the same way parents take joy in a child's first words or their first time riding a bike, we cat-parents become obsessed with "what is that little rascal up to," or "where did she go now."*

In that spirit of "cat watching," I wanted to create play-centers for cats that would bring joy and wonder to the onlooker. I wanted to spark a person's imagination in the same way a fable or fairy tale allows children to dream.

Plus, listening to my clients is very important. For example, in creating the "giraffe" for one of my clients, I knew that two of her four cats really enjoy nesting in bowls on the counter in her kitchen. So, I used a salad bowl as the pinnacle resting point, which became the back of the giraffe's head. And I used the wooden salad spoons as the giraffe's ears, so as not to let any part of the salad bowl set go to waste.

Q: Is using everyday items in your work a theme?

A: *I wouldn't say it's a theme, but it was born out of necessity, really. Starting out with a limited woodshop (my garage) and not having tools like a wood lathe at my disposal, I found myself getting creative with things I could buy at Lowe's or at Bed, Bath & Beyond. For example, on that same giraffe piece, I fashioned two tapered credenza legs as the giraffe's horns. And to create the giraffe's mane, I attached two industrial-sized garage door sweeps to the back of the structure. Using items differently from their intended function is an incredibly creative and fun exercise!*

www.squarepaws.com

1-844-577-7297

Q&A - Page 2



7615 Industrial Rd. Suite 103, Melbourne, FL 32904

Also, whenever possible, I love to re-purpose old things, especially items that people are throwing out. For example, when an old vacuum cleaner of mine broke down, I thought it would be fun to make a cat tower out of it. Since cats tend to be deathly afraid of vacuums, it seemed to be a statement of “triumph” to turn this object of fear into something my cats could sleep atop. Thus was born the “Meowskeeping Tower.”

All that being said, we have now grown into a full-fledged workshop with tools and artisans that can often be found carving solid wood with various power tools.

Q: How do most people react to your cat furniture?

A: *One of my greatest joys for me is hearing people who see my cat towers say, “You know, I don’t really like cats, but I may have to get a cat just so I can have one of your pieces for them to play in.” Watching the kitties scale my work is one of the most engaging things for people to witness. And that palpable joy people have becomes something the cats seem to feed off of and interact with. It’s great!*

Q: How did you come up with the name “Square Paws”?

A: *The name comes from the ubiquitous term “cat condos.” As an architect working on condominiums and private homes in New York City, I was all too familiar with my clients’ bragging rights of square footage. I decided, “If human condos are measured in square feet, then cat condos should be measured in square paws.” I was picturing a New Yorker cartoon in my head: one cat showing off his condo to another cat, boasting about how this one is DOUBLE the square paws that his last one was.*

Q: What’s your personal background and how has that shaped your work?

A: *I grew up in the suburbs of New York City: Bethpage, Long Island, to be exact. It was a great place to grow up, having all of the comforts of the suburbs, but still being a train ride away from the culture and hubbub of the City.*

I was the middle-child of three sons in an Italian-American family. My father and his family immigrated to the US from southern Italy when he was 13, and our family had very close-knit ties to aunts, uncles, and cousins. In many ways, I think my Italian heritage greatly informs

www.squarepaws.com

1-844-577-7297

Q&A - Page 3



7615 Industrial Rd. Suite 103, Melbourne, FL 32904

my artistic approach to this endeavor. Italy is a land overflowing with beauty, and I'm thankful that I have some of that DNA in my blood.

Q: How does being an architect affect your work?

A: *In some ways, what I'm doing now with Square Paws is a real departure from my architecture practice. It straddles the lines between a retail product and artwork, and both of those realms are very different from anything I did as an architect. Architecture is very artistic, but we spend most of our time with more practical concerns than the creative part of the job. All the same, doing the Square Paws work I very often draw upon elements of structure, proportion, color and form...items very much in the lexicon of architecture.*

Two of the most important elements of cat tower design are scale and materials. I've actually studied (and continue to study) my cats to see the heights, widths, and depths of spaces they like, their jumping distance, and what types of materials they respond to. Cats are not all the same, either. It's important to note which cats like to climb, which like to nestle in closed spaces, how they interact with any other animals in the house. I try to take all of this into account in the same way I do with my architectural clients.

Square Paws is currently sold exclusively online via the Square Paws website.



Mario Arbore, *founder*
Artist and Architect
50 years old
Bachelor of Architecture,
Syracuse University, 1991

www.squarepaws.com

1-844-577-7297

Q&A - Page 4