



*new* traditional  
**MONA ROSS BERMAN**

## Classically Modern

It's a classic decorating dilemma: A young family with modern design sensibilities falls in love with an oh-so-traditional house. But loving a house and living in it are two different things. Designer Mona Ross Berman needed to find natural ways to marry the classic atmosphere with practical living when her clients (and long-time friends) asked her to renovate their 100-year-old Philadelphia estate.

Set on lush wooded grounds just outside the city, the house pretty much has it all—stunning millwork, architectural details,

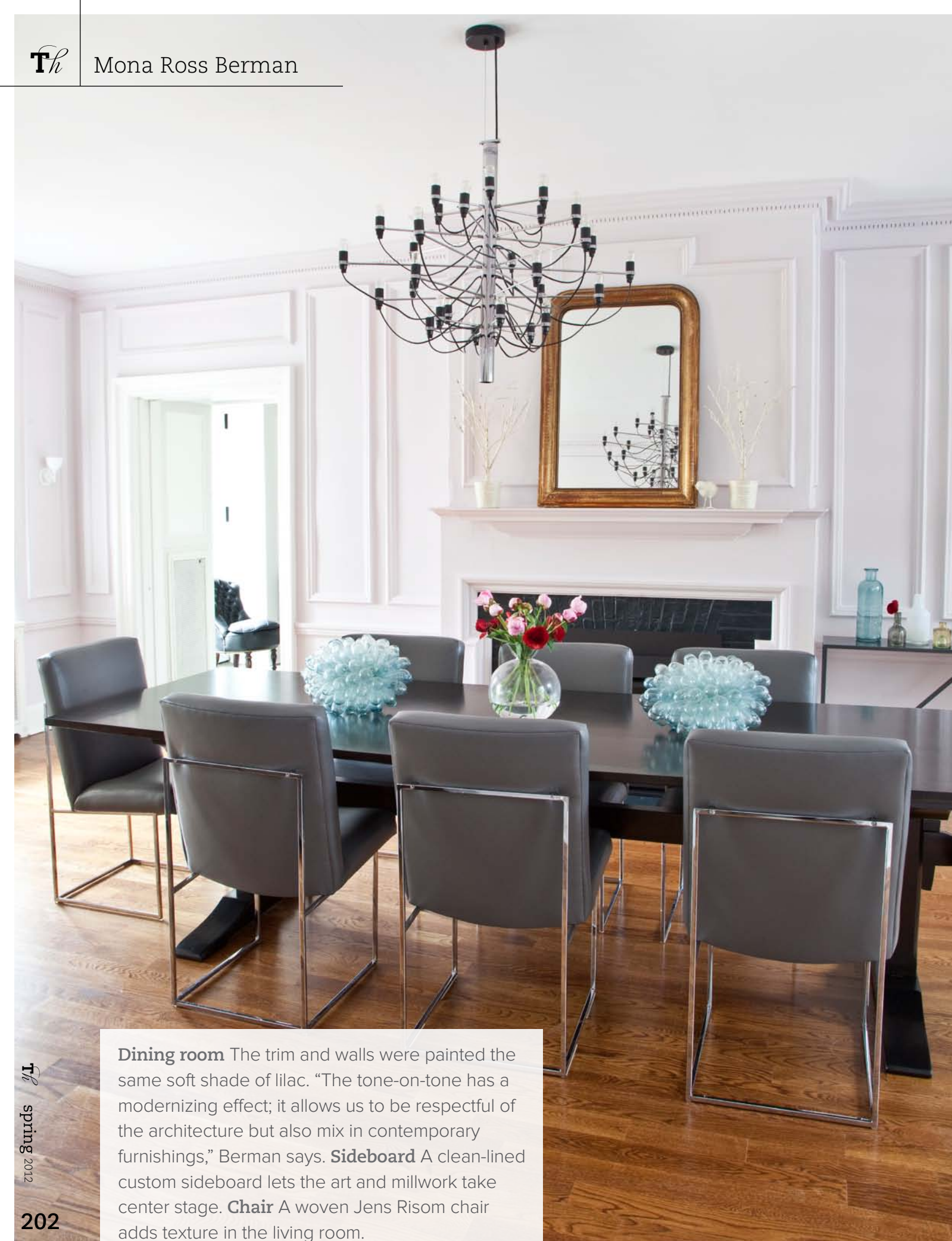
modern furnishings, and a museum-quality photography collection. Berman's job? To infuse antiques and traditional pieces into the mix. "A home with all-new furniture in the same style can feel flat," she says. "I wanted to add layers, patina, and character into the space and bring it more in balance with the home's architecture."

The eclectic mix of antiques and modern classics in the foyer sets the tone. "The first thing I said when I saw the foyer was, 'We need a tulip table in the middle of this



**Living room** “The formal living room is used every day,” says designer Mona Ross Berman. “They have guests over, jam on the guitar and baby grand piano, and serve drinks from the bar cart.” The rug is a custom patchwork made of several antiques. The chairs are Jens Risom, another kid-friendly option for modern enthusiasts. “The fabric is nearly indestructible!” Berman jokes.





**Dining room** The trim and walls were painted the same soft shade of lilac. “The tone-on-tone has a modernizing effect; it allows us to be respectful of the architecture but also mix in contemporary furnishings,” Berman says. **Sideboard** A clean-lined custom sideboard lets the art and millwork take center stage. **Chair** A woven Jens Risom chair adds texture in the living room.



room!” recalls Berman. “It immediately shows that this house isn’t what you’d expect. It’s traditional, its classic, but it’s also going to surprise you.”

While antiques make the modern feel more traditional, Berman used color tricks to help the traditional feel more modern. “My clients favor a more muted palette,” she says. “Color and pattern were not elements they were immediately comfortable adding to the home.”

A cherished collection of lavender glass bottles served as inspiration to introduce color as an accent. Playing up the subtle hue, French chairs flanking the living room fireplace are



covered in a bold Muriel Brandolini print. “The fabric modernizes the chairs and really adds personality to the whole room,” notes Berman. “My clients were hesitant at first, but now the chairs are one of their favorite items.”

While aesthetics were essential, practicality was the driving factor for the family. “With two children under 5 and a dog, the functionality of textiles was extremely important,” says Berman. “We laminated the eating banquette so that it’s nearly indestructible. Everything can be used and handled without worry. This is a beautiful home, but it’s lived in. We never wanted it to feel like a museum.”



**Entry hall** A black-painted antique Windsor bench presents a stark contrast to the white entry hall, introducing a clean and classic tone for the home.





**Kitchen** A lively laminated fabric from Duralee covers the banquette. “Everything wipes right off,” Berman says. “It’s practical luxury.” Custom white cabinets sport Deco-inspired doors that feel fitting for the home. Countertops are soapstone. Carrara marble tiles by Waterworks line the backsplash. A built-in cabinet displays vintage wedding china.



## five things

**Nº 1** Always match paint to fabric, not fabric to paint. Wall colors can be mixed to match anything—your favorite sweater, a scrap of wrapping paper—but there is a limited universe of fabrics.

**Nº 2** Space planning and scale are essential to design. Create a floor plan, or outline your furniture arrangement with tape to make sure it fits in the room.

**Nº 3** Budget won’t permit you to tackle your entire home (or even a full room) all at once? Take on the project in 2 or 3 stages, but plan it all at the start—even if you’re not implementing the changes right away. That way you can map out your overall budget, design vision, and plans from the beginning.

**Nº 4** You don’t need to match art to your interiors or interiors to your art. Let your art make its own statement!

**Nº 5** Use vintage pieces to mix things up without breaking the bank. Since they often look like one-of-a-kind, they can instantly give a room real “design cred.”





**Master bedroom** Practicality is of the utmost importance in the simply furnished master bedroom. The duvet on the Design Within Reach bed has the look and feel of crushed velvet but is washable. **Hall** A reproduction protest banner adds a focal point at the end of the upstairs hall.





**Powder room** A bold geometric wallpaper from Osborne & Little makes this small powder room a dynamic space. A vintage mirror with its frame painted in pale lilac continues the home's subtle purple theme. **Lilac bottles** The owner has collected lavender glass bottles since college. Berman used the pieces as inspiration for accent color throughout the home.