

strathmere fun house

A FASHION RETAILER AND A HIP DESIGNER CREATE A COLORFUL RETREAT
IN '60S SURFER STYLE. BY KATHLEEN NICHOLSON WEBBER

When Maureen Doron asked interior designer Mona Ross Berman to be a little irreverent with her beach house, Berman knew exactly what to do. After all, the pair had worked together on the design of Doron's Philadelphia home; her hip Bryn Mawr clothing boutique, Skirt, in 2000; and its Stone Harbor sequel in 2010. The seaside store was the perfect reason for Doron to spend more time in Strathmere, a quiet slip of a town just south of Ocean City, New Jersey. It was here she vacationed as a child and met her husband, Nate, and where she and her parents had bought a double lot with a cottage on it.

From the start, Doron and Berman were simpatico about making this house fun and totally different. Channeling *The Endless Summer* and other surf classics, Berman contacted Asher Architects (115 West Ave., Ste 202, Jenkintown, 215-576-1413; asherarchitects.com), who designed a simple, three-story, saltbox-style home with one big deck to enjoy the ocean views. It was inside where the classic house was given a hip shakeup.

"We streamlined the interior design a bit to make it more modern, more fun," says the Philadelphia-based Berman. Known for her use of bold colors

and patterns, and an affinity for Mid-Century furnishings, Berman worked with Doron on a plan to create a classic surfer-chic ambience perfect for a family of five that includes three boys under the age of six. Doron already had some ideas in mind for incorporating her love of fashion; a colorful, chevron-patterned Parsons-style dining table, with a Missoni feel, was the jumping-off point. "The table was the genesis of the whole house," says Berman. "I saw a version of it in Miami years ago and thought Maureen was just the girl who would like it." She had it reproduced by Tom McGinnis of Phoenix Design Works in Phoenixville, who did all the custom pieces in the Philadelphia house and in her stores. The colors in the stripes run throughout the living spaces—yellow, turquoise, and orange.

The backdrops of the living and dining spaces are white with pops of color, all anchored with ebonized floors. There are yellow leather John
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Mona Ross Berman,
who designed the
Strathmere getaway



The house's one large deck takes in an unrivaled view of the Atlantic Ocean.

Pops of color punctuate the otherwise traditional living room.



The powder room, papered in a graphic print from Studio Printworks

YSL framed prints and a steamer trunk Berman found at auction give the master bedroom lightness.



Maureen Doron has spent her entire life going to Strathmere.

“A powder room is a license to be silly.”

—MAUREEN DORON



SECRETS OF STRATHMERE

Realtor **Bruce Riordan** reveals why would-be buyers will love this seaside getaway.

“New construction is more desirable because buyers want a turn-key house with all the amenities,” says Bruce Riordan of Riordan Real Estate in Strathmere, whose family has sold real estate in the town for close to 80 years. Riordan says that Strathmere is a well-kept secret in the real-estate world, typically discovered by would-be buyers through friends or during visits to the Deauville Inn, a local restaurant and bar. “We have only 300 houses in town and just one of everything. The biggest reason people want to buy here is that it is quiet and small. In fact, we get many buyers who come from other shore towns like Ocean City.” Because Strathmere is so narrow, the bay and ocean are near to most homes, and it attracts sportier buyers, those who enjoy surfing, boating, or fishing. The town’s element of privacy has kept prices consistent with those of Ocean City and Sea Isle. “We are not a big rental town. In fact, only 20 percent of the houses here are rented. This is a town where you get to know your neighbors.” 1 Vincent Road, Strathmere, NJ, 609-263-3235; riordanre.com

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Derian poufs, curvy vintage occasional chairs upholstered in an op-art-print fabric by Trina Turk, and a plethora of vibrant pillows. Berman added architectural intrigue to the fireplace surround and all of the doors around the house. “With trim and millwork, you can create a sense of age in a house that is new,” explains Berman.

In the kitchen, a yellow fabric cornice over the sink has a chinoiserie feel; it perfectly complements the seaglass-tile backsplash and the all-white cabinetry. Classic Carrera marble counters are a wonderful counterpoint to the mod Mid-Century stools that line the breakfast bar. Berman did not hold back in the powder room, which she wallpapered in a punchy graphic turquoise print from Studio Printworks, a New York-based company that creates hand-printed wallcoverings. “A powder room is a license to be silly. It should be an experience,” says the designer.

The master bedroom was a place that is still lighthearted, and with nods to fashion. The orange and pink room features YSL framed prints from the 1980s and ’90s, and a bright-orange lacquered steamer trunk Berman found at auction. Says Berman: “It’s finds like these that can make a room.” Even Nate was on board with the doses of color. “He got really into it,” says Doron. “He went online to bid on vintage surfboards and found old

surfing posters. In the boys’ room, there are two sets of bunks and a crib. They found real porthole covers, and Nate found brass marine brackets to use as drawer pulls.”

Builder Michael Donahue of Avalon (2123 Dune Dr., Ste. 9, 609-368-2227; mdonahuebuilders.com) created the built-ins and playful barn doors to conceal the washer and dryer. “Here was an opportunity to take something that may be an afterthought and make it fun,” says Berman, who chose a tangerine hue for the doors. “If you are doing something, why not make it interesting?”

Donahue blanched when Doron told him they would paint the brand-new hardwood floors in the master bedroom a pink and white zigzag print, another homage to Missoni. But “once he saw them finished, he liked them,” says Doron.

For the laid-back mom, the house is far away from the demands of retail life, and appropriately about fun and family. “We have a mini compound here, with grandparents next door and cousins nearby,” says Doron. “We have bumper stickers and T-shirts that say, WHERE THE HELL IS STRATHMERE—and that is what we love about living here.” **PS**