

ASK A DESIGNER

Mona Ross Berman

You have questions, and we have the experts on speed dial. Here, designer **Mona Ross Berman** of Mona Ross Berman Interiors in Philadelphia spills tips, tricks, and design secrets.

What colors are you gravitating toward for beach house design?

MRB: I'd like to do a serene gray/dark navy palette with pops of bright yellow. It's very modern nautical and nontraditional. I never want to do anything expected!

Is there a surprising design element you like to incorporate?

MRB: I often use woven vinyl area rugs. They have the look of sisal but are completely wipeable and pretty comfortable underfoot. And if you want something more plush, just layer a cotton flatweave, cowhide, or sheepskin throw rug on top.

Favorite secret designer trick?

MRB: Symmetry! When all else fails, add pairs of things to a space and you will see it begin to make sense.

Tell us some great swaps coastal homeowners can make for winter.

MRB: Add some afghans or wool throw blankets. Change out linen throw pillows for velvets and heavy silk in deeper colors.

In a living room, where should homeowners splurge?

MRB: On a well-proportioned sofa. If you invest in something well made, you can have it for a lifetime and just reupholster it.

Where can they skimp?

MRB: Lamps. They can be bought at so many great price points from many retail outlets.

It's 5 o'clock Friday afternoon, and you're oceanside. Your cocktail?

MRB: A fresh lime margarita, on the rocks, with salt.

—Stephanie Gibson

"Everyone feels more relaxed at beach houses—they free up the creative process to be fun and irreverent"

MY FAVORITE COASTAL PAINT COLORS

● Donald Kaufman DKC-37

"This color is like the ocean personified. Depending on the light, it morphs from blue to green to gray"

● Benjamin Moore Fresno (020)

"Gives a seaside home a pop of color. I've used it on doors, furniture, and walls"

● Benjamin Moore New Providence Navy (1651)

"Navy is so versatile and screams 'beach!' This one coordinates perfectly with gray, yellow, and orange"

Have a question for a designer? Write to us at letters@coastalliving.com