

COASTAL CUES

BY **ALEX MILSTEIN**

DESIGNERS OFFER TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR DESIGNING IN COASTAL/ISLAND CLIMATES

What challenges do you face designing for coastal homes?

JAMIE MERIDA (*James Merida Interiors*): On a brass tacks level, we need to be concerned with making sure materials will hold up in an environment close to the water. If you are using a wood floor, we recommend using an engineered product so you don't have to worry about moisture warping the floors. Choose Sunbrella or other performance products that protect against fading, mold and mildew. We love using indoor/outdoor rugs (our favorite go-to is Annie Selke) for the same reason.

MARNIE OURSLER (*Marnie Custom Homes*): Because we're also home builders, the flood zone is one of our biggest challenges. We're restricted with FEMA flood guidelines of what we can and cannot do. There is coastal flood zone mapping that FEMA is in charge of, so we have to comply with all of their regulations when building in flood zones.

PAM HARVEY (*Pam Harvey Interiors*): People typically coming back into the house with wet bathing suits and towels. This is a concern for many people because they don't want the furniture getting wet.

JOANN KANDRAC (*Kandrak & Kole Interior Design, Inc.*): Dealing with the Architectural Review Board (ARB). The exterior selections of the home must complement the natural surroundings. You must submit an "Onsite Color



Jamie Merida



Marnie Oursler



Review Form" outlining all colors (i.e., siding, brick, stone, etc.) to the ARB and be approved prior to any work done.

GARY MCBOURNIE (*Gary Mcbournie Inc.*): When you work by the water, there are mold and mildew issues to consider when choosing fabric and carpeting. We tend to do a lot of resort-style projects and there are issues around limited use. Also the activities you do when you're away are different from the things you do at home, so when you're designing these spaces, there's usually more play-time involved.

What advice do you have for designing in this type of climate?

JAMIE: Coastal interiors are places to have fun, relax and get away from the formal and stuffy. But that doesn't mean you have to sacrifice elegance or luxury. These things are always important to our clients, so we like creating a "casual elegance" vibe in our coastal designs.

MARNIE: Really understand what the restrictions are and then get a good civil engineer who can help you with the lot location and where it is in relation to the flood zone. Work with local jurisdiction to make sure you're not designing something that can't be built. And make sure you're familiar with the local and federal codes for the area.

PAM: Pay extra attention to the fabrics you're using. Make



Pam Harvey



Gary McBournie



Joann Kandrac



sure they work for the sun fastness, or use Sunbrella or Crypton or really good performance fabrics. Keep the styles more casual and account for easy maintenance.

JOANN: Don't get caught up with a "coastal" theme. Use durable, stain-resistant and cleanable fabrics, and consider luxury vinyl tile that looks like hardwood versus tile flooring or wood floors. This vinyl is waterproof, has excellent soundproofing properties and does not contain harmful chemicals that affect air quality. It can also handle heavy foot traffic, scratches and spills.

GARY: Do a lot of planning when you're designing at a location where resources may not be year-round. Plan out a whole year so you know you have a drapery provider who can fly down to the location or that your upholstery can get there on time. Also, our approach to designing for coastal settings is to have fun, so I'd advise to try not to be overly serious and don't get too kitschy. If you're in Nantucket, you don't have to have a Nantucket word on every single towel.

What do you like most about designing by the water?

JAMIE: Color palette! We've never designed a blue and white house that we haven't loved. It's a classic, crisp color-way that we never tire of, the perfect choice for a coastal home. We love designing coastal residences because it

allows us to be more playful and fun than we usually are with urban homes.

MARNIE: I like the challenge. I design and build custom homes, and every house is unique. Whether it's on a bay, on the ocean or a canal, they all have different restrictions based on where they are in relation to the water. It's a hard design because in addition to the flood restrictions and the hurricane code, we also have to do what the client wants. Making all those things happen is certainly a challenge.

PAM: People tend to have a little more fun with their homes and they'll take a bit more of a design risk. Overall, the projects just feel a little lighter, easier and less serious.

JOANN: Creating a feeling of relaxation and bringing the outdoors in. For interior spaces, we love to use serene, peaceful colors (off-whites and soft grays), and we like to layer lots of different organic textures and fabrics together. We try to use original art in every project, and in coastal areas love using local art.

GARY: When you grow up near the ocean, you have salt-water in your veins. It's part of who you are. And we happen to work with a lot of clients who also have an interest in the ocean, some who are very involved with research for preserving ocean environments. I also like how the design aesthetic can differ and range from Nantucket nautical to a sophisticated resort location in the Caribbean. ▀