

MIX UP YOUR MATERIALS
A burlap side chest and a rush bed provide an interesting textural touch to the blue-and-green patterns in this bedroom.



I FELL IN LOVE WITH BLUE long before I became a decorator. Growing up on the beach in Florida, I spent my days a stone's throw from the ocean, with wide-open skies above. When I was 5, my mother gave in to my pleas and let me paint the walls of my room a pale aqua. I couldn't have been happier. Decades later, as I started a design career specializing in waterfront homes, I found I wasn't alone. But my clients didn't just like blue. They were obsessed with it, especially for the interiors of their coastal properties. Very quickly, I came to understand why. Blue connects us to nature more than any other color. But it also connects us to worlds of possibility. Blue knows no bounds. Its variations and versatility are what make it so attractive to so many. Did you know that, statistically speaking, blue is the world's favorite color? The hue can range from almost-white ice to nearly black midnight, sliding along a spectrum from turquoise to sapphire, powder to peacock. Unlike other colors, blue never runs out of ways to express itself, and in all these variations, it remains true.

"Blue is the only color that maintains its own character in all its tones," the French Fauvist painter Raoul Dufy wisely noted. "It will always stay blue." It's also forgiving: You can't make a mistake with blue.

Psychologists say blue calms us and puts us in an open-minded mood. There's even research suggesting it lowers blood pressure and heart rate. So it turns out blue doesn't just look good; it makes us feel good, too. I take advantage of this constantly, often using blue through an entire waterfront house. I bring on blue, especially in lighter shades, to craft a quiet, reserved atmosphere of serenity. Stronger blues encourage reflection and stimulate clear thinking. Regardless of shade, blue feels reliable and responsible, sincere and loyal. There's a reason the expression is "true blue."

Classic and timeless, blue transcends trend, and its popularity never fades. Over the years, I've never decorated a waterfront house whose owner didn't ask for blue. I've seen how happy it makes clients in their homes, and it has been my great joy to share in that happiness.



MRS. HOWARD'S BLUE CRUSH

In her third book—*Coastal Blues: Mrs. Howard's Guide to Decorating with the Colors of Sea and Sky*—the Jacksonville-based designer shares a breathtaking roundup of rooms inspired by the coast's most beloved hue. The 270-page tome features more than two dozen of Howard's treasured blue color schemes, along with plentiful pearls of decorating wisdom.

Indigo Bay

“DIFFERENT SHADES OF INDIGO-DYED DENIM ALWAYS GO WELL TOGETHER, AND THEY LOOK GREAT WITH A VARIETY OF OTHER BLUES AND NEUTRALS, TOO”

Indigo Bay Palette 2



Bridgewater
Tan



Old
Blue Jeans



Sea
View



Decorator's
White



GIVE IT THE STAR TREATMENT

Think beyond wallpaper: A decorative painter created this blue star print by hand, directly onto the wall.

BRING IN THE OCEAN

Antique wicker and a vintage-inspired slipper chair get a modern makeover with brightly hued indigo fabrics. A mix of nautical paintings and dioramas displayed in a grid with lots of white space completes the old-meets-new look.



"THE KIDS BEGGED US NOT TO SELL [THIS HOUSE]; I THINK IT WAS JUST MEANT TO BE IN OUR LIVES" —LAURA KAPLAN



The diamond-pattern flooring and border in the bath is painted teak, and the faux coral mirror is by MadeGoods. Right: In the master bedroom, Clarke added a custom paint design to a West Elm bed and flanked it with a pair of sky blue reading lamps by Rejuvenation. The groovy beaded screen leads into a small closet.



living space and welcome in the breeze—it was the only change they made to the cottage's original footprint. They did flip the floor plan, shifting the two bedrooms from beachside to the back of the house (squeezing in an additional bath) and giving the main living areas the prime ocean views.

Clarke kept the decor streamlined and minimal. The kitchen's concrete countertops, open shelving, and natural, light oak and fir wood harmonize with the living room's airy, organic sensibility. "On vacation, you want to live in one big, communal space," the designer says. "Plus, open rooms better connect the interior to the world outside." A sectional sofa—a Clarke design—can be configured as another sleeping option, and all the fabrics are indoor/outdoor, so no worries if the foldout divider between the living area and screened porch stays open (as it typically does).

In the bedrooms, beaded curtains are cool, retro stand-ins for closet doors, but they also save space and invite airflow

into potentially musty spaces. A window-seat nook in one bedroom creates additional sleeping space, as do the two daybeds (with nifty pull-down mosquito screens) in the new ocean-side pavilion—a versatile, open-air entertaining and living space that Clarke added at the water's edge. "People aren't too picky about where they sleep in Hawai'i," he notes. And especially not when they can practically roll out of their bunks into one of the best surf breaks around.

Perhaps the best surprise in the surf shack's reincarnation was the big reveal: Mike knew nothing of Laura and Clarke's design plan until he arrived at the little cottage. "I wanted it to be like a present for him," Laura says. Of course, he loved it. And with their kids now young adults and equally smitten with the house, she sees the couple's return to Maui as something of a second honeymoon. "Mike and I got engaged on this island," she says. "Our love affair and this place go hand in hand. I like how it's all come full circle."