

Mara Silber Shares Her Designer Hints: “I love a combo of a traditional butcher block island with a honed white marble countertop and backsplash”

Best statement pieces.

Mara: “Sculptural chairs. They are fun and surprising. Everyone prioritizes comfort when it comes to seating areas, but adding the extra layer of personality that comes with a sculptural chair, and maybe some art, provides a surprisingly great vignette.”



Favorite materials for kitchen (quartz, granite etc)

Mara: “I love the classics – there is just something about the look of a well-worn, traditional wood butcher block that gets me. Even better, I love a combo of a traditional butcher block island with a honed white marble countertop and backsplash.”

How to pick artwork for a client? Or for yourself?

Mara: “Oh my gosh – it’s so fun.

Art is my favorite thing to buy for myself. I get obsessed with the works I buy and have difficulty parting with them!

There are three pieces above my desk that I look at everyday. Two are by Hugo Guinness and the other is from his wife Elliotte Puckette. They make me smile!

I don’t limit myself to one style. I own a giant Christopher Wool poster that hangs in my entryway. It’s a statement piece.

Art is much more personal than furniture – it travels with you from home to home. It goes where you go. That is why the art selection process is very collaborative when I work with clients.

I always encourage clients to be hands-on. I will organize a day for us to tour galleries and view work from artists that I think they will respond to.

In terms of placing art – I don’t think there is one specific rule. I believe it’s about what feels right. Sometimes I love how something oversized looks over a small nightstand or how a small photo looks over a big console table. As long as the art isn’t hung too high (a pet peeve of mine), I can find a way to make it work!”

“Classic items require maintenance though, which tends to make clients wary, but I really happen to appreciate how these materials age authentically with use.”

Favorite paint colors for living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens?

Mara: “Benjamin Moore’s Affinity colors are always my first stop.

Steam is my go-to shade of white, especially for kitchens. It makes any room feel crisp and fresh.

I’m constantly drawn to versatile neutral colors. I often use “etiquette” and “wish”. They’re soothing and cozy which is why they often work well in living rooms and dining rooms.”



How to pick a color scheme for a design?

Mara: “When designing, clients will typically start with some level of vision. Whether it’s an existing piece of furniture, an inspiration image, or a color they like, this insight gives me a sense for who they are, their style, and what kind of space they want to live in.

Later on, when I’m shopping for textures or colors, I will know which ones “feel” right for them.

That’s why I think one of the most important things a designer can do is see the space and meet the client first. I love getting to know clients.”

Some practical tips:

Lighting is so important, too. Seeing schemes on-site at different times of day eliminates the element of surprise when it turns out that your white fabric turns pink at night under your recessed lighting.

When picking a color scheme, I love a good neutral base when it feels right. But I also enjoy starting with JUST a bold color. You can build a room around a bold color."



How to design your guest bedroom?

Mara: “A guest room is the perfect place to go bold. It’s the same rationale for why hotels can be exciting to stay in – it transports you to a place that is completely different from your regular living environment. That’s fun to do for your guests – create a retreat or fantasy that feels like vacation but is still welcoming and homey. That is what I work toward. You can pack a lot of personality in.

I feel the same way about powder rooms. They’re my favorite to do, which sounds funny, but I read somewhere that powder rooms are one place in your home that every guest is likely to check out. I think about that all the time. I’m inspired to take risks in small spaces knowing that I can make an impression on a guest even if they only visit one time.”



What is one item that is expensive but makes a HUGE difference

Mara: “Ok, I have two answers: right size carpet and window treatments! These are two things that clients always try to eliminate because they’re usually the most expensive part of the project, but I believe they really bring everything together.

Some clients have new wood floors that they don’t want to cover with carpet. In other cases it could be a cost issue. But without the right-sized carpet for the space, I just think the room can feel disproportionate.

I feel the same way about window treatments. Clients have great big windows that they don’t want to cover, but to me it is all about layering. I thrive on the challenge of thinking through every component.”

Some of your favorite products. (Good quality and for the price)

"In a world where unique pieces can cost thousands of dollars - this table provides the perfect statement piece for under \$1,000. It's \$925 and I just think it is so versatile."



"Just like the website says - durable and elegant and perfect for everyday! Emphasis on the durable!"



"I saw this oil and vinegar set while traveling in South Africa and instantly fell in love. This has become my go-to gift for hosts at parties. They're incredibly functional!"



"This is such a cool take on the classic lantern. The listed price starts at \$2,435, but these fixtures can be a bold alternative to that statement chandelier that you are saving up for!"

Billy Cotton Glasses – \$15 – <https://www.marchsf.com/store/billy-cotton-clear-glassware/dp>

Souda – Kreten Side Table – Short – \$925

– <https://soudasouda.com/products/kreten-side-table-short-grey> –

Menu – Pipette Glass with Tray, Set of 2 – \$90

<http://www.menu-design-shop.de/en/Pipette+Glasses+Set+with+Tray.html>

Urban Electric – Doverbell Light Fixture – \$2,435 <http://www.urbanelectricco.com/doverbell.html>