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— Designer Rug Blog —

**WHY I LOVE TO START WITH  
A DESIGNER RUG –  
GIDEON MENDELSON**

## Designer Rug Blog - Interior Design Inspiration

### Why I Love to Start with a Designer Rug – Gideon Mendelson

POSTED BY [JUSTIN HEITMANN](#) ON JUN 27, 2016 11:58:26 AM



### Interior Designer Spotlight with Gideon Mendelson

The [Mendelson Group](#), New York, NY.

Since launching Mendelson Group in 2003, Gideon Mendelson has been featured in Architectural Digest, Elle Decor, House Beautiful, Traditional Home, Luxe Interiors, Modern, and Coastal Living. Mendelson Group offers a broad range of services including interior architecture, construction management, interior design and custom furniture design. A Columbia University architecture graduate, Gideon also has a degree from The New York School of Interior Design. Gideon's early background in the classics and his later education in modernism provides him the ability to work in a wide range of styles. His 2014 Kips Bay Decorator Show House room, *The Lady's Lair*, won critical acclaim in the press. Gideon's down-to-earth manner is a refreshing break from the image of the decorator as a snooty arbiter of taste.

Join me as Gideon expresses surprise at Margaret Russell's sudden departure from Architectural Digest; why he loves starting a room with a [designer rug](#); what it was like to work with Steven Gambrel when both were starting their career; how he responded to a

challenging space in his first Kips Bay experience in 2014; why he avoids Viscose rugs; and much more...



*Gideon used an [Asmara needlepoint rug](#) to anchor this Park Avenue living room.*

## Why Do You Love Starting with a [Designer Rug](#)?

"We design and specify many [custom rugs](#). They are a wonderful jumping off point for a scheme and take many months to make. They need to be ordered early on in any project. The choice of a rug depends on budget, client preferences, and how the room will be used. I try to work with natural materials whenever I can. If a rug has [Viscose](#) in it, I politely decline. Viscose is difficult to clean and looks decidedly synthetic."



*Mendelson Group was incorporated in 2003 by its principal, Gideon Mendelson.*

## Where Do You Source Furniture and Accessories?

"Gosh—all over. Like [Bruce Bierman](#), I source things from all over the world. Mostly, I try to shop in New York because then I have an opportunity to see things in person. But over the years, with 1stdibs and the internet, I've developed relationships with dealers across the globe. Whenever I'm traveling either personally or professionally I try and visit gallery owners to introduce myself and get a sense of their styles and finishes. We just bought a chandelier in Germany and we buy in London and Paris all the time. I wish I spoke a few more languages, but I gesticulate well!"



*Gideon Mendelson's living room at his [home in the Hamptons](#).*

## Do You Have a Favorite Design Magazine?

"It's a tough question to answer. They are so hard to compare. Every magazine has a different spin and angle. The truth is, I read as much as I can. It's a trove of information about new products and industry trends. It's also a treat to see the projects of my colleagues, many of whom are friends. All the Hearst publications (Veranda, Elle Decor, House Beautiful) come to my office. I always enjoy them. On my desk right now is the current issue of [Luxe](#), and it's fantastic! It's a great addition to the magazines I grew up reading—Architectural Digest, House Beautiful and the now defunct House & Garden. I don't know if you heard the news, but it was announced that Margaret Russell is being replaced at Architectural Digest. That was surprising. I will certainly continue to follow Margaret's career and wish her well."



*Pale gray and champagne damask rug complements greens and yellows in a Greenwich Village living room.*

## What's it Like to be an Interior Designer in New York?

"New York is a cultural hub and inspiration is all around you. It's also a center of style, so interesting and beautiful things end up here. I get to work with some of the great galleries and dealers, which is a pleasure. New York has a variety of neighborhoods, each with its own distinct character, as well. Our projects on the Upper East Side and Brooklyn are quite different, as are our projects in The Hamptons, Westchester, and Florida. We've done beach houses, manors, lofts, town houses—it's really fun. I guess it's the diversity of New York that makes it so exciting."



*A faded gold and blue designer rug enlivens the dining room in this East 79th Street house.*

## What Was it Like to Work with [Steven Gambrel](#)?

"That was a long time ago! I met Steven through a friend and worked there for a year. When I look back we were kids having a lot of fun. He was just making a name for himself. He had a tiny office on Lafayette Street and I was happy to be getting into the industry. At that time the internet was exploding, [1stdibs](#) was launching, and the mid-century market gaining in popularity. We were focused on those trends. Steven's success is well deserved."



*A brown and cream [geometric designer rug](#) energizes the dining room in this Upper East Side house.*

## How Did You Get Your First Project?

"My mother called me. She had clients from years ago who were building a house and wanted her help. The problem was she had retired but asked if I were interested in taking it on. It all happened very quickly, and we decided to start Mendelson Group together."

## Do You Still Work with Your Mother?

"Sadly, no. We really just worked together in the beginning. She came from a traditional background, while I was more of a Modernist and we complimented each other well. I was young and lucky to have her showing me the ropes. The office has grown over the years. I'm fortunate to work with a team that is extremely capable, one that I respect and adore. The collaborative effort is my favorite part of the job."



"Lady's Lair" by Gideon Mendelson in the 2014 Kips Bay Show House.

### Tell Me About Your First *Kips Bay Decorator Show House*?

"I did Kips Bay in 2014. It was a wonderfully challenging experience. Kips Bay is the most prestigious show house in the country. I used to visit as a kid with my mother. It was a dream of mine to participate. Show houses in general are challenging because you are not given a lot of time. This was particularly challenging. The industry was just starting to take notice of me and my work, but as a first timer, I knew I wasn't going to be offered one of the grander rooms. The room I was offered was oddly L-shaped; required a tremendous amount of construction; and boasted a leaky ceiling. We made the most of it and at the end of the day it was worth the effort. I got to show what my company is capable of doing and we had a very positive response."



*A silk and wool rug layered on top of a carpet defines the sitting area in the L-shaped space in Kips Bay.*

## How Do New Clients Find You?

"In my case it's 99% referrals. Periodically, and it's happening more and more, I get a call from someone who saw us online, in the press, or at a show house."



*A multi-colored [geometric designer rug](#) softens the dining room in this Riverside Boulevard house.*

## When Do You Use Bold Colors?

"Whenever I'm given the opportunity, and I feel like it's right for the space. When I first meet a client we have a discovery period where I'm learning about them—what their preferences and needs are. In Manhattan I tend to do bolder stuff and in the country a little softer. It's not always the case—everyone is different. I try to listen to my clients and let them guide me on their palette and boldness preferences. I might show them some images or a few fabrics to see how they respond to strong colors or pattern next to pattern. If someone is comfortable with color, I jump all over that because it's fun for me."



*A cream and blue wool and silk custom rug grounds a living room on East 79th Street published in House Beautiful.*

"We did a project on East 79th Street, where we used a lot of saturated color in the dining room, bedroom, and family room. They are not bright colors but they are rich colors. In this project, we used a lot of deep blues and greens. The architecture of the space is pretty grand and we were trying to emphasize that. We specified analogous colors for much of the trim work in the apartment. The effect was bold, but still a sophisticated study of color."



*A blue designer rug complements green and blue accents in the East 79th Street bedroom.*

## What Makes a Bedroom Feel Relaxing?

"I start by asking clients what a relaxing bedroom means to them. Relaxing for someone could be beige and for someone else it could be red. Relaxing might be a real minimalist look or a real layered look that feels cozy and warm. It's about communicating with the client and finding out how they want to feel in a particular space."



*Kitchen and breakfast area, Purchase, NY.*

## Why Has the Kitchen Become the Most Important Room in a House?

"Because I can't stop eating! Years ago in Manhattan, people started to demolish their butler's pantries and small service areas to create these big open kitchens with eat-in areas. That was a shift in how we lived and it has now translated into *the great room*. It's a less formal environment. We are now welcoming our friends and guests into our kitchens and that's where everyone is hanging out. That never happened when pre-war apartments were designed. There were distinct public, private, and service areas. Now the kitchen is public, part of the entertainment space. I, myself, enjoy cooking and when I entertain in the Hamptons, we're all in the kitchen."



*Great Room, Purchase, NY.*

"We did a home in Purchase, New York where the kitchen includes a breakfast area and a family room, which is really one big space. This is a space where you can cook, eat, watch TV, or hang out by the fire. It's not a fancy space—it's all very durable and easy to clean. The clients wanted a traditional white kitchen but we gave it a little zip with the painted ceiling and the clients' collection of Majolica."

### **How Important Are Relationships in the Design Business?**

"Our industry has traditionally been about relationships but it's changing. Social Media allows an exposure never before possible. This has created more interest in interior design than ever before. I feel like we're in a period of transition. Marketing our services is adjusting and evolving, but relationships will always be important."