COASTAL LIVING

INSTANT BEACH DECOR

30 simple tips & tricks for classic coastal style

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In the kitchen (this page), a spiny aloe plant, sea fans mounted on linen, and a shell fruit bowl from Mecox Gardens pay homage to the ocean. Opposite: California Lompoc stone on the exterior walls blends in with the cliffs.

OCEAN OASIS

Overlooking the crashing Pacific,
this neutral-meets-natural cliff
house in Laguna Beach takes
full advantage of the view

WRITER **SARAH LATTA**   PHOTOGRAPHER **LISA ROMEREIN**

Blue is the main color in this Laguna Beach, California, house—but Santa Monica–based interior designer Tim Clarke hardly used it at all when he was decorating the rooms. Step outside onto the terrace or one of the two sweeping balconies and you'll see why. "The house is built into a steep cliff, and every space has an extensive view of the ocean," Tim says. "It's like a giant, bright blue painting in every room." He employed natural textures (such as limestone and linen) and soft colors (think beige and lavender) throughout the two-level, indoor/outdoor house, leaving the sky and the ocean to do their thing.

Below: The living room's muted palette of creamy whites and faded earth tones provides a soft backdrop for the brilliant blue of the ocean. Opposite: When arranging art, designer Tim Clarke combines different media—black-and-white photographs, paintings, drawings—and styles of mats and frames.
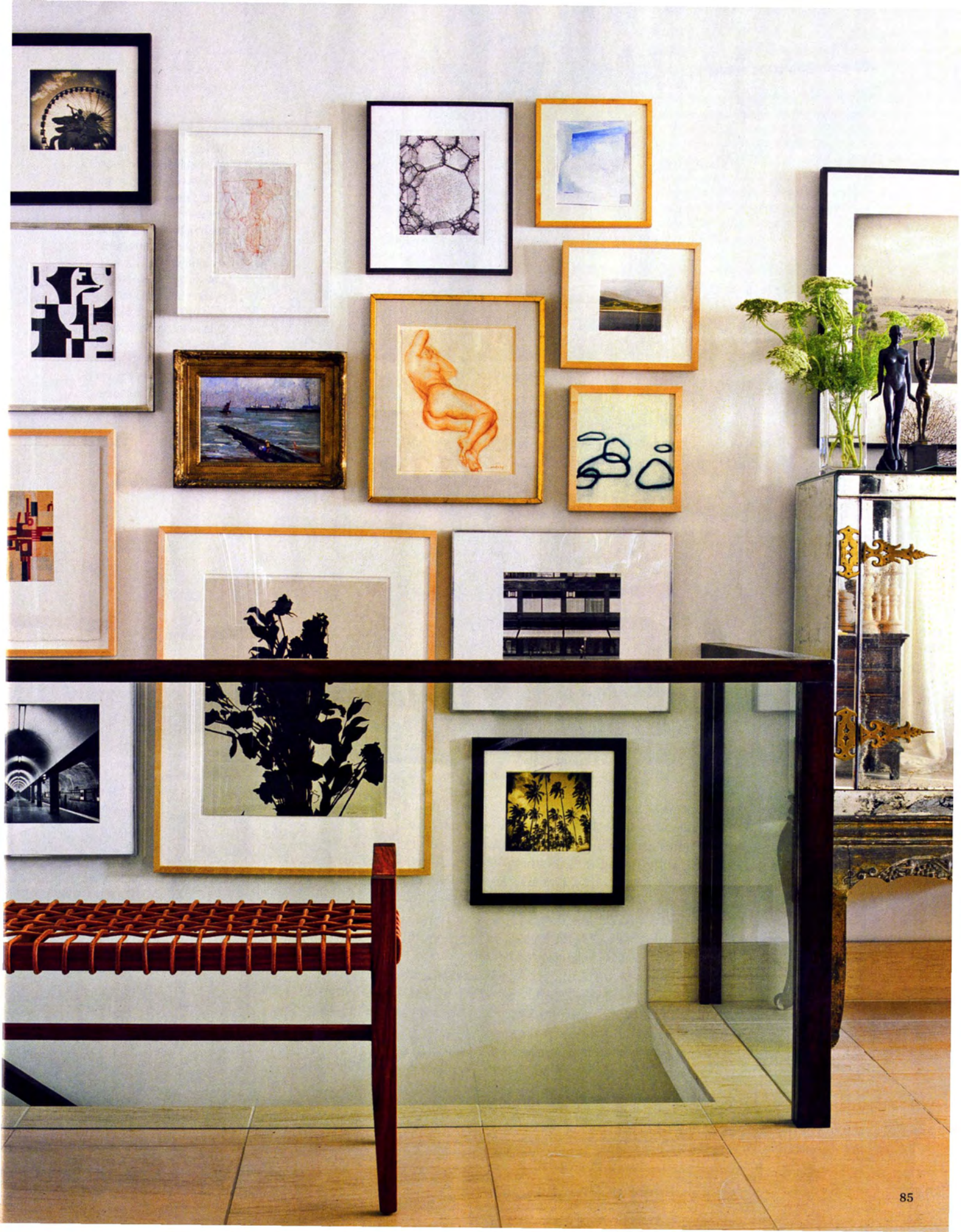
Tim was inspired by country houses in Provence, where elegant and rustic accents mingle comfortably for a look that's neither stuffy nor slouchy. Call this approach Southern France meets SoCal. In nearly every room, he mixed European antiques with furnishings slipcovered in neutral linens. In the living room, for example, Tim matched a traditional Oriental carpet, faded by decades of wear, with a handmade coffee table that has a weathered metal base and a reclaimed wood top. "The house is all about interesting juxtapositions of high and low looks," he says. "It creates this feeling of easy fanciness that's ideal for the beach."

The style carries through to the house's dining room, where a delicate antique chandelier with a turned-wood center and rusted metal arms hangs above casual, chunky wicker armchairs and a trestle table with a zinc top. The chairs' natural weave dresses down the ornate yet earthy light fixture, while the table adds one-of-a-kind panache. "I like using items that aren't mass-produced," Tim says. "When they're handmade, they're touched by real people, and they add warmth and soul." In one corner, he hung an antique gilt mirror to reflect the ocean beyond the oversize windows so that everyone in the house has a view of the breathtaking surroundings.

"The point of beach living is to celebrate the outdoors, not recede from it"
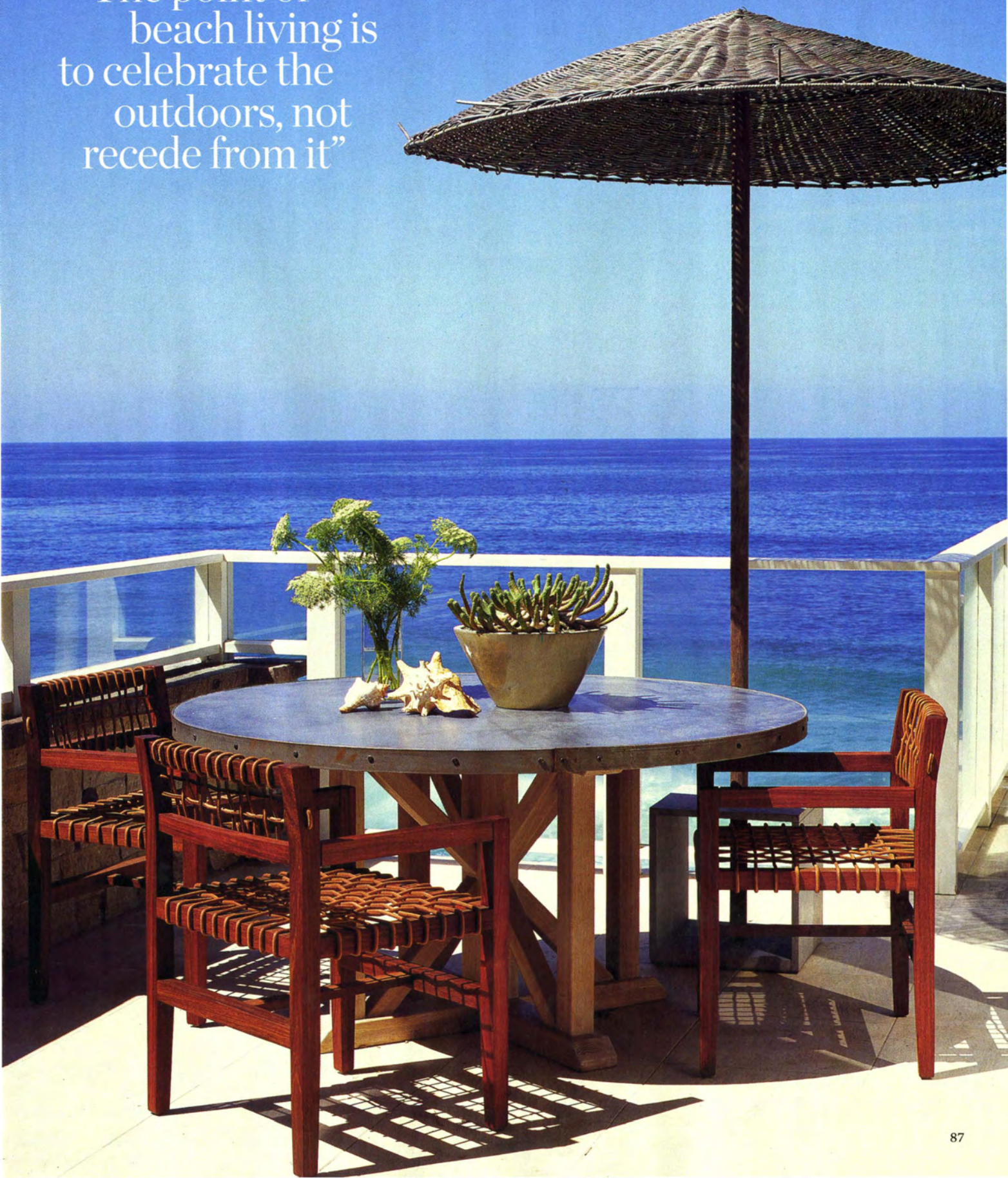
This inviting guest bedroom features an antique headboard with mirror detail and a washed-cotton quilt by Matteo Home. In the other guest room (opposite), a simple rounded headboard and rattan dressers complement ornate details, such as the antique mirrors and crystal chandeliers.

MIX MASTER

Interior designer Tim Clarke is a pro at creating artful arrangements. Here are a few of his tips.

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Always use three motifs for a smart, balanced look: textured (woven fibers or ceramic sculptures), chalky matte (a photo frame or book cover), and transparent (a vase or glass lamp).

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Add soul with at least one handmade item that has special meaning, such as a painting by a friend.

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Choose a variety of frames when hanging artwork. Combine deep, ornate styles with sleek, contemporary ones. Vary the mat size, too!

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Put high next to low (literally and figuratively). Tall antique lamps and ornate chandeliers balance short stacks of books, squat vases, and beach treasures.
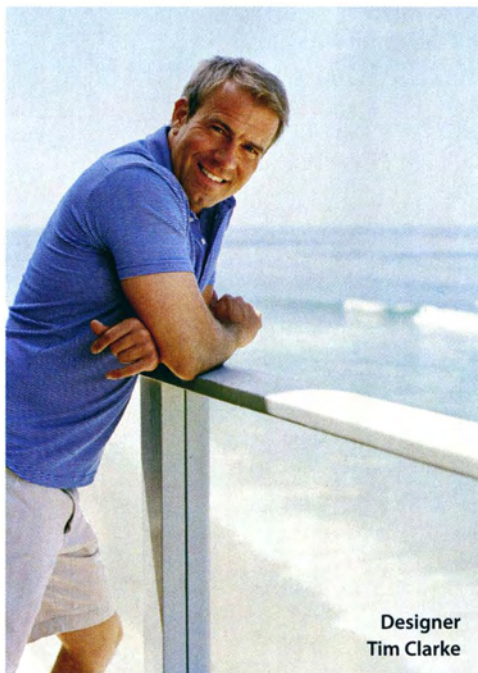
Designer Tim Clarke

The kitchen is kitted out with rich mahogany countertops rather than sleeker, more sterile stone or marble. Super-matte paint on cabinets and open shelving helps infuse the space with a relaxed finish. In the living area and bedrooms, bamboo chairs and rattan consoles and dressers add a beachy flair to the owners' collection of antique mirrors and fixtures. Most of the house's fabrics are a celebration of textiles in their purest form, including washed-cotton quilts and raw linen pillows in the bedrooms. Even Tim's arrangements of accessories typically incorporate something organic or handcrafted, such as shells picked up from the beach or a glazed ceramic lamp.

He continued the careful balance of formal and casual outdoors on the house's large terrace and two balconies. "Outdoor rooms should be designed like indoor ones—and that means not buying all your furniture from just one vendor," he says. A set of weatherproof woven seats with plush, custom cushions, a zinc-top coffee table, and an all-weather polypropylene faux-Oriental carpet echo the interior's eclectic aesthetic. Inside and out, this coastal house is a study in contrasts: organic and elegant, old and new, sophisticated and laid-back. "The point of beach living is to celebrate the outdoors, not recede from it," says Tim. "The inside of a beach house should be a happy place where natural beauty and indoor comforts collide." ❦ Sources: page 110

Want more of Tim Clarke's expert tips and decorating tricks? Visit **coastalliving.com/tim**

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