

Kidding around: A special room for your little dreamer

By PAT STEIN
Copley News Service

A child's room is the hub of his or her universe. It's a safe haven in which to play, dream, visit with friends, study, keep treasures and, of course, sleep.

Outfitting a child's room is very different from planning any other room in the house because it is a transitional space that must fill a child's needs from infancy to early childhood and on into the teen-age years. Teddy bears soon give way to computers and the room must be flexible enough to accommodate a child's changing needs.

In her book, "Kids' Rooms" (Chronicle Books, \$22.95), Jennifer Levy offers suggestions for outfitting children's rooms not only with basic furnishings such as bed, desk and storage, but also in ways that nourish each child's creativity and to support childhood as a time of joy and wonder.

Decorating a child's room is more complicated than decorating any other room in the house because children need an environment that both soothes and stimulates in varying degrees and they need to feel they have control over their landscape, Levy writes.

She encourages parents to enlist their children's help in designing and creating their room decor.

"It's a great opportunity to introduce them to color combinations and creative manipulation of space," she said, not to mention the fact that a child who has had a hand in creating his or her "world" is more likely to take care of it.

Lighting, color and furniture are the key elements in every interior, according to Levy, but in a child's room, color, texture and surfaces take on added importance. She suggests painting and decorating the room in colors the child likes, rather than the subtle, stylish hues that may dominate in the rest of the house.

Fun decorating projects that parents and children can do together include stenciling or stamping on walls. Stenciling is an easy way to personalize a

space and incorporate your child's favorite themes, be they spaceships or cats. Stenciling can form a border on the wall near the ceiling and be used to unify mismatched furniture or even decorate the floor.

Children can easily create their own stencils by photocopying a strong, simple design such as a flower or a butterfly or an airplane. Each photocopy should be traced with an indelible marker onto a piece of Mylar (available at art supply stores), then carefully cut out with an X-acto knife (under vigilant parental supervision). Ready-made stencils are also available at craft supply stores.

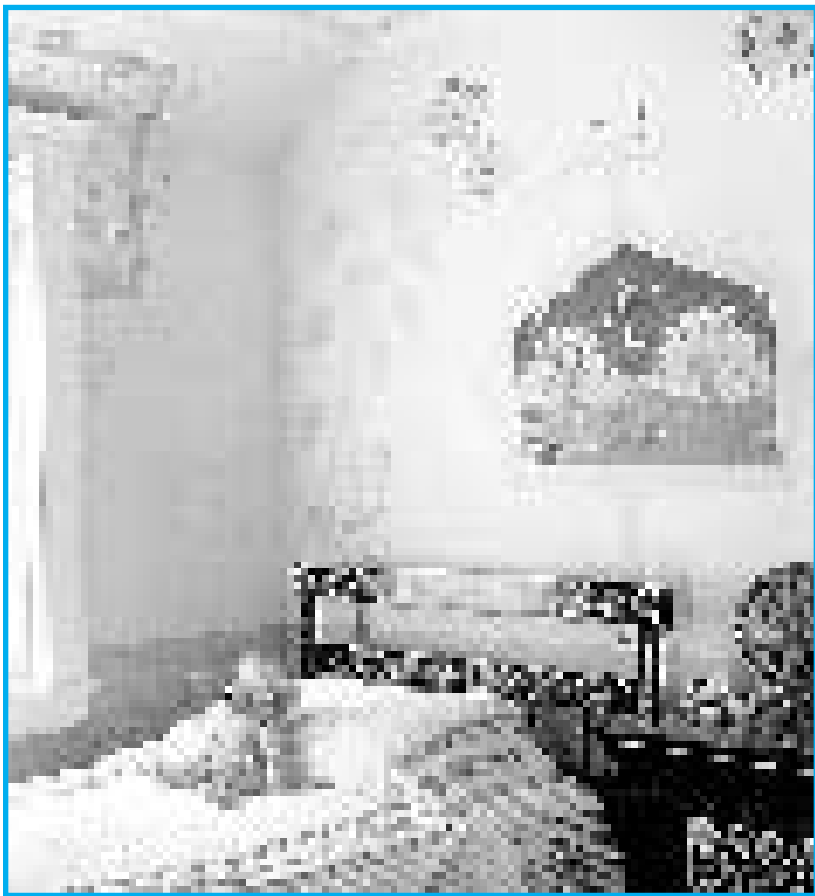
If your child is old enough to paint, affix the stencil template to the wall with stencil spray adhesive or masking tape. Then apply water-based acrylic, latex or stencil paint over the template. Take care not to apply too much paint to avoid having it bleed under the template.

Allow paint to dry before removing stencil from the wall, floor, furniture or other surface. It's a good idea to have several stencils on hand so your child can be painting some while others are drying, Levy advises.

Stamping, like stenciling is a great way to add color and interest to walls. Stamps work well on primed wood furniture and toy boxes, as well as walls. Stamps in motifs ranging from cowboy hats to pigs can be found in craft stores. They can be applied to any primed wall with a matte finish. To use a stamp, roll a thin layer of latex paint onto a smooth non-porous surface such as Plexiglass. Press the stamp into the paint, then remove excess paint by lightly stamping on a piece of paper before applying the stamp to the wall or furniture.

Aspects of lighting, another key element in interior design, can also involve children. Although adults must be in charge of creating the basic elements such as windows and built-in lighting systems to illuminate the room as needed around the clock, children can participate in making lamps that delight and enchant.

Levy likes the "lacy lamp" as a simple and inexpensive but



rewarding lighting project for parents to undertake with their children. Start with a table lamp with a plain white paper lampshade. The project calls for disposable paper doilies with a strong cut-out design, spray adhesive (available at hardware, paint and craft stores), transparent tape and spray paint.

Hold the doilies against the lampshade to find the arrangement you like best.

"You can overlap them for a scalloped effect or even cut the doilies to create new patterns and shapes," said Levy.

Once you've decided on a design, spray adhesive and attach tiny bits of transparent tape to the backs of the doilies and fix them to the lampshade, making sure they are firmly tacked down at the edges and corners.

Be sure to position the tape so it doesn't cover any of the holes in the doilies.

Immediately after affixing doilies to shade, spray paint onto the shade, being careful to spray

the holes in the doilies evenly and completely, but don't use so much paint that it drips.

Remove the doilies right after painting, before the adhesive has time to dry. The result is a personalized lampshade with a magical, personalized pattern through which light shines.

Since a child's room must accommodate an array of ever-changing interests and needs, storage needs to be flexible. But, Levy says, it should also be fun.

Toys and arts and crafts supplies can be stored in wicker baskets, hanging vegetable baskets plastic buckets and almost any other kind of container where items can be stored generically—teddy bears in one basket, crayons and markers in another, Legos and building blocks in another and so on. Built-in cubbies, similar to the ones found in classrooms, are ideal for storing the containers in an organized fashion.

Copley News Service photo

Children love to help design the room in which they'll live. If your child is old enough to paint, a stenciling project to define a border or create a sunflower motif as seen in this room, is a great way for you both to be involved in redecorating a room.

"It's a great opportunity to introduce them to color combinations and creative manipulation of space."

**Jennifer Levy,
author of "Kids' Rooms"**



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Home gives comfort in home improvement

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Products, Northern Floor & Tile, Floor Covering Brokers and Tile Craft.

Although popular flooring colors are inspired by nature, they are not accidental trends. Crossville's products, for instance, are in colors selected by Barbara Schirmeister, ASID, who also sits on the Interior Forecast Committee of the Color Association of the United States.

Heather Peters, Crossville's spokesperson, explained that experts understand how floor color works across a range of sizes, a factor home owners often neglect while looking at small-sized samples.

For those who want top of the line and to spend to help America's economy, the Obsidian line is state of the art in both technology and aesthetics. It is unbreakable, tempered glass which outperforms marble, granite, ceramics and laminates. It has striking design options because of the aesthetic qualities of glass. Up-scale, it is \$30 a square foot.

Inter-nationally renowned English designer, Robert Kime, finds his inspiration in the Middle Eastern textiles, especially Uzbekistan's hand-woven, printed fabrics. The future will tell whether the Middle East remains an influence in home furnishings.

Whether Americans choose to spend a lot or a little on home improvements, their interest in home seems to have been awakened since Sept. 11. Exactly how the new war will effect home furnishings remains to be seen.

Sally D. Ketchum is a local freelance writer.

Painted furniture can be pure fun

Interesting furniture pieces, whether from grandma's attic, a flea market or new ones from an unfinished furniture source, are pure fun because of their versatility. These days, you can pair them with nearly any other pieces of furniture and accessories in any room of the house, and they fit right in.

For some pieces, it's simply a matter of choosing the right color, and painting. For other pieces, it's all about embellishment, adding details, such as painted "rickrack" on a small chest and repeating it on a headboard. For some pieces, adding stenciling, hand painting, decouping and glued-on trims gives the right finishing touch.

Other paint techniques such as crackling might be a choice for shelves on an open cupboard to be used for displaying dishes or collectibles in a dining room.

For an outdoor project, you might add several shades of green to give new life to an Adirondack chair's slats and its footrest.

Painted pieces are an easy way

to add pizzaz and to showcase your personality in the overall look of your home, inside and out.

These helpful tips can get you started:

Projects can be as quick and easy or as intricate and creative as you want them to be. Depending on the furniture piece, you might consider one-color projects or decorative techniques, such as sponging, ragging or painting color blocks.

When you use vintage pieces, make sure they are in good repair. If the piece previously has been

painted, you can sand and repaint in most cases without stripping off old paint.

In general, furniture requires sanding, wiping with tack cloths or clean damp cloths to remove dust, and priming to seal the finish.

For some pieces, though, it's good-looking to incorporate the charm of the natural wood or previously stained wood for variations of an aged or antiques effect.

For best results, paint in thin coats and never rush drying times.

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