

Big Ideas for Little People

Safe and whimsical design ideas
for the young or young at heart

BY KRISTEN MUCCI

As people spend more time in their homes, designing a room now acts as an integral form of personal expression. Whether it is an adult's passion for art or a child's obsession with fairies or footballs, a home can express each of these. When Esther Sadowski, ASID, owner of Charm & Whimsey in New York City, designs bedrooms or bathrooms for children, she meets with them first to discuss their likes, dislikes, hobbies and favorite colors. "As long as it is safe and functional, I don't see why we can't accommodate what the child wants," she says. "There is no need for them to walk into a bleak-looking bathroom everyday."

If the bathroom is attached to the child's room, Sadowski, who's not only a designer, but also a talented artist and craftsperson, will pick up patterns used on the bedspread and carry them through by creating a handmade shower curtain or sink skirt. To add extra spunk to the design, she uses bright-colored, fun-shaped accent tiles on the wall or the



Designs by Karen Silton Handpainted Ceramics, Custom Tile & Fine Art, Santa Monica, CA, trigger the imagination and ignite the spirit.



Each Silton piece features unique characters and magical themes perfect for a child. Circle No. 167



American Standard offers the Baby Devoro two-piece toilet with a rim height of 10 1/4", perfect for toddlers. Circle No.168

floor. Going a step further, Sadowski even personalizes the accessories to fit the child. For instance, she has created a soap holder out of a toy found at a flea market and then added a plastic dish for functionality.

When designing a bath that is not only used by the child but other members of the family or guests, options for whimsical, playful designs may be limited. However, there are little things that can be done to meet important needs of the child. For instance, Sadowski will bring a mirror down to the height of a child or even put a full-length one on the back of the door. She will add a basket on the counter for personalized items like hair clips or bows. This enables a child to build confidence, she says, by allowing them to do things for themselves, like

Creating A Kid-Friendly Kitchen

"I have found that parents like to have their children with them in the kitchen while they are preparing a meal," says Colette Whitney, CKD, CBD, president, Whitney Interiors, Ltd., New York. "These days, families have so little time to spend with one another, that they are now grasping every moment as part of that time, whether it be cooking in or cleaning up the kitchen."

Today, the kitchen is the hub of the home; therefore it is important for it to be safe and inviting to the entire family.



Airmatic System from Grass slows momentum of a closing drawer. Circle No. 169

Safety

A kitchen can be a dangerous place for a child so it important to take a few safety precautions to avoid accidents. "One of the things I have advised people to do is to put in soft flooring rather than tile," says Whitney. "If a child falls on a tile floor, it's a whole lot harsher then falling on a wood floor." Luckily, Whitney adds, "This goes hand-in-hand with the trend of using wood floors in the kitchen." Other child-friendly surfaces are cork or resilient flooring such as vinyl. Safety also includes lower cabinet locks, outlet covers and soft-closing drawers (to avoid wandering fingers). In order to avoid accidents with the stove, knobs should not be easy to turn on.

Style

As for the style of a family kitchen, an open-plan is preferable, according to Whitney, and the homey, comfortable look is the trend. "A popular feature in today's family kitchen is the breakfast bar," says Whitney. "It centers around family togetherness." Whitney has been asked to incorporate a specific desk area for the child within the kitchen. "People are very conscious of the children being included in the kitchen," she says. This gives the child their own space where they can do homework or draw pictures while their parents can cook or clean while keeping an eye on them.



Accidental turn-on is impossible with a removable magnetic knob from Bosch. Circle No. 170



Esther Sadowski, owner of Charm & Whimsey, New York, designs a bedroom and bath for a 6-year-old girl using delicate colors and whimsical designs. Patterns and fabrics carry through from one room to the next creating a scene out of a storybook.



The Triflow bath faucet from Franke provides filtered water, perfect for a glass of water before bedtime. Circle No. 173

getting ready in the morning.

GROWING UP

"I design my bathrooms to be multifunctional," says Sadowski. She explains that as long as the plumbing is ageless, a child can grow with the room. Redoing wallpaper or paint can make a huge difference at a minimal cost. Shower curtains, hardware or a

toothbrush holder can easily be replaced with more mature styles as the child's interests change.

SAFETY

"A foot stool, which can be a fun design element, should be safe and secure for getting up to the sink or toilet," says Sadowski. In addition, tiles should have slip-resistant surfaces, she says. Colette Whitney, president, Whitney Interiors Ltd., New York City, recommends staying away from marble or any polished stone, suggesting ceramic tile with tread or smaller 1" x 1" tiles, since the more grout involved, the less slippery the surface. Whitney also opts for grab bars in children's bathtubs. "They are not only great for the elderly, but for children also," she says. Other safety features that should be included in a child's bath include a thermostatic valve with a pre-set temperature feature, a bath mat for added slip resistance and safety latches for medicine cabinets. **KBB**



Flexible rubber pendant-style handles from Hafele avoid sharp edges in the bath. Circle No. 174



Hansa's 1/2" thermostatic valve controls the temperature to prevent scalding. Circle No. 171



Mickey's Shadow line from the Disney Collection by Kohler features platinum raindrops and a 24-karat gold border pattern inside a vintage lavatory. Circle No. 172