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ALL KIDDING ASIDE

Tips for a tricked out kid's room

BY DAVID CROSSON



ABOVE: Clei systems (which also come sized-up for adult spaces) twist, turn and transform for maximum versatility. Images courtesy of Resource Furniture, Calgary.

Once upon a time, "Go to your room" was a dreaded phrase for kids. Not only did it conjure thoughts of bleak hours staring at a wall, it also bore the threat of being sentenced to cleaning said room while sequestered there. Despite being chock-full of books and art supplies, my room was without a television — as many were back in the day — and the separation anxiety was unbearable.

My how things have changed. Fast forward to 2014, where all manner of electronica resides in every room of the house and kids' spaces have become defined more by what they have than what they haven't in terms of interesting distractions. These days the choices are endless — and I'm not talking which Disney/Pixar/LEGO characters grace the sheets.

Today's toddlers, tweens and teens are viewed in some ways as an extension of their parents' aesthetic, although thankfully there is still some room for self-expression.

(Omit the factor of choice at your peril, mum and dad.) Truly, what was once a mere bedroom has morphed into something closer akin to a mini bachelor suite, the only thing missing being a damage deposit.

I enjoy working on kids' spaces as there is so much more latitude when it comes to the use of colour, bold gestures and an overall sense of joie generally not found in a neutral-on-neutral living rooms for grown-ups. Lovely and elegant as such spaces can be, they hardly have the capacity to 'jazz' a young mind.

Anyone who has dealt with the whims of an "insert-age-here-year-old" knows that keeping options open is a key factor when it comes to kitting out kidspace. Clei, represented in Calgary by Resource Furniture, has mastered the art of adaptability with their series of ingenious convertible pieces with more tricks up their sleeve than Inspector Gadget. In their world nothing is what it seems — or, more accurately, everything is more than it seems.

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Desks flip around and convert to beds; portions of wardrobe faces do double-duty as tables; shelves miraculously become feet for sofas — and all of it slick, stylish and space-conscious. Better still, the pared-down design of the

system allows for it to remain style-neutral within the space and to grow and adapt as kids' needs and tastes change. Although Clei does offer a dizzying array of delightful, candy-like colours in their palette, their wares remain stunning even when realized in classic white.

When neutrals are a non-negotiable factor in your child's room then the easiest way to add colour is with paint. Or chalk. Or paint and chalk. As recently as 2012, Benjamin Moore developed chalkboard paint that can be tinted to any one of their more than 2,500 fabulous hues. This is a great way to add a dash of drama as well as provide a mum-and-dad-approved forum for self-expression.

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Consider "curating" the colour combos for maximum impact — say, lavender with pink chalk or an apple green with that chic cocoa-coloured chalk that everyone avoided when I was a youngster. >>



Apple green is the new black! Benjamin Moore's tintable chalkboard paint is available in more than 2,500 great colours. Image courtesy of Benjamin Moore.



ABOVE: Urbane blight. Norwegian artist Tom Haga's ConcreteWall vinyl is a witty take on bringing the outdoors in. Image courtesy of Resource Furnitures, Calgary.

If your kids are older, why not bring the outdoors in through unexpected means: photorealistic wall covering depicting rough-hewn urban surfaces like concrete and brick (some even include graffiti). The brainchild of Norwegian designer Tom Haga, this vinyl product is hip, hardwearing and arrestingly authentic. ConcreteWall, also available through Resource, will satisfy the tastes of even the most discerning junior Gothamist — not to mention significantly increasing his or her parents' cool factor.

Is your little one more about urban sophistication than urban grit? Then why not equip their space with scaled-down pieces found in the homes of full-grown tastemakers. Thanks to companies such as Vitra and Knoll, your wee ones can drop their derrieres onto the works of such mid-century masters as Verner Panton, Harry Bertola or Charles and Ray Eames. The Eameses adorable pint-sized pachyderm, initially conceived in 1945, is about as charming — and chic — as kids' gear can get. And who wouldn't want to take a "time-out" when the seat of honour is one of Eero Saarinen's Womb chairs. Both Vitra and Knoll are available at

BELOW: Eero Saarinen's Womb chair is as comfortable as it sounds for kids of any age. Image courtesy of Knoll.



Eames Elephant chairs are as charming today as when they were created in 1945. Image courtesy of Vitra.

No matter the age of your children, designing spaces that help reflect their emerging personalities is a wonderful opportunity for bonding.



Cove series furniture from G. Romano

Kit Interior Objects.

If you have room and are looking for something even more substantial, the Cove series from furniture manufacturer G. Romano could be just the ticket. Blocky and almost cartoonlike in its simplicity, this line offers several chair, sofa and loveseat combinations in a variety of fabrics. And while you may not be able to stop your kids from slouching, you can at least help them to do so in style. G. Romano is available in Calgary through Country Furniture/The Other Room.

No matter the age of your children, designing spaces that help reflect their emerging personalities is a wonderful opportunity for bonding. Get it right and you have a friend for life — or at least until they change their minds. Good luck! **CL**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: David Crosson is the owner of Barbarian Interior Decoration Ltd., which woks with both residential and commercial clients in Calgary and beyond. He is also the author of the blog *Hausfrau: Better Living Through Better Living* and is frequently called upon to provide commentary in matters of life and style in the local media. For more information visit www.barbariandesign.ca