

The Home Designer

Fit For A Little King (or, Queen)

By Brandon Neff



A simple peel and stick wall decal adds whimsy and scale to any nursery.

Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

With all eyes turning toward the British Monarchy following the birth of Prince George, I got to thinking about nursery design. What makes an inspiring kid's room? I think that some element of surprise makes for a great start. In my work, I've seen many a baby room look far too saccharine and precious to suit my tastes – I call it the "Jordan almond" syndrome – everything looks as if it were dipped in pastel shades of mint, blush and lemon. Have we not evolved beyond pastels?

Today, everything from mid-century modern furniture to luxury bedding is being made pint-sized – why should the adults have all the fun? And, since the nursery is really more about the parents than the kids, shouldn't you create a perfectly stylish space for you to enjoy while you're filling out those pre-, pre-, preschool applications? To be sure, your newborn isn't going to be able to discern between an Eames chair and a Moooi pendant light, but you will. Half the fun in designing a baby's room is letting your imagination run wild and creating a unique and playful space that you want to hang out in. You're going to be spending a lot of quality time there feeding, changing, reading and burping – why not make it a spot that inspires you, too?

Now, I've never been a fan of baby blue or ballet pink as the main event of any room (let alone a child's room) – there are just too many far more interesting hues out there to choose from. In the 21st century, gender lines shouldn't dictate color barriers, so it's high time to think outside the toy box. When approaching the design of a nursery just apply the same practice you would to any other room in the house – begin with the inspiration, and draw from the world around you.

For example, I recently completed a nursery for a couple of first time parents who wanted something different for their daughter Kayla. While a shade of pink was used sparingly – we actually settled on a more sophisticated rose – I introduced them to a pale grey for contrast inspired by the Paris salon of Christian Dior. To add dimension, deep moss green, coral and aqua were mixed in for personality and gravitas. The overall effect elevates the room to a more artful chic rather than the ubiquitous Barney schtick.

Additionally, with very little architectural interest in the small, spec 12 by 12 foot room, I added a simple chair rail – a decorative moulding running around the room at 36 inches – painted to the floor in one color, and an accent shade painted above. This simple trick adds tremendous interest. Hint: paint the chair rail and the wall below in the same finish (satin or gloss), to ensure easier cleaning where sticky fingers are likely to reach. Additionally, full length drapes hung just below the crown were added for extra drama and to properly dress the one window.

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