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## 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.

I used a woven wood roman shade ordered from a national retailer with a blackout liner to serve as the functional covering to control light for napping. Layering window treatments gives a more finished look. And the best part is the graphic line drawing drapery panels were found at IKEA - \$20 for the pair!

Since my clients were on a budget, but wanted something high impact for the room, we installed a forest of birch trees and owls that I found online to one wall - a perfectly easy project made of full-sized peel and stick decals. The animated scene brought the room to life and brings a smile to all who enter. Simply peel off when you or your child outgrows the look.

Need more inspiration? How about white? Yes, white! Who says you can't go light from floors to walls to ceiling? The beauty of white is that it allows you to add limitless layers of color to the mix - everything works with a clean white base. For example, add a black striped rug for a mod and graphic expression. Or mix in lime and citrus orange accents for a fresh "Palm Springs" combination that inspires cheery optimism even on the cloudiest days. Try combining navy, chocolate brown and silver stripes for a sophisticated feature wall, and accent with red bedding for a decidedly Upper East Side luxe.

Feeling preppy? Install a painted Kelly green chest with brass hardware, and hang felt tartan drapery panels to bring out an Ivy League vibe - the options are endless.

If you're worried about durability, look for outdoor fabrics to dress the room - there are literally hundreds to choose from - manufactured by most fabric mills and available to the trade. They're made to withstand whatever your kids can muster - stain resistant and anti-microbial - perfect for drapes,

bumpers, pillows and even the changing table cushion.

Design is in the details. With so many nursery outfitters out there it's hard to settle on a look that feels personal. Sometimes, the best spaces are made up of items you already own. Try framing a cherished childhood board game as wall art, or repurpose well worn baby clothes into a new quilt or toss pillow cover - connect your own past with your child's future, and hand down items they'll cherish for years.

I always encourage my clients to think about their design legacy. What will they pass down to the next generation? In this age of mostly disposable and forgettable design, I look to vintage and heritage pieces to connect families. When I was a kid, and decorating my room for the umpteenth time, I loved using items I collected from my parents. My father's fraternity paddle from UC, a souvenir hat from the 1952 Rose Bowl, or a collection of black and white theater photographs from my mother's days as an actress were all fantastic treasures I used to inspire my early decorating adventures. I believe a passion for art and design is inherited - start early.

Need more ideas? Check out a couple of my "go to" web destinations: [www.SerenaAndLily.com](http://www.SerenaAndLily.com); [www.LandOfNod.com](http://www.LandOfNod.com);

[www.RoomAndBoard.com](http://www.RoomAndBoard.com); and [www.DesignWithinReach.com](http://www.DesignWithinReach.com).

I want to hear from you!

Write me and tell me what trends you're following. What looks are inspiring your design decisions? I'd love to know what topics and stories interest you. Don't be shy, drop me an email and say hello!



A neutral background with punches of color in an unexpected palette makes this nursery chic. Photo courtesy Lovejoy



Mostly white elements and a bold wallpaper keep this nursery from looking too sweet. Photo courtesy The Brick House



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