

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 6 Wednesday, May 17, 2017



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Creating a kids' zone is child's play

By Paula King



Stephanie Catron finishes up decorating this kids' bedroom.

Photos Andy Scheck

After building an addition onto her Orinda home, Meredith Friedman had several new living spaces to decorate and the most challenging was a front great room space designated as the hangout area for her two sons and their friends.

One of Friedman's goals for the project was to give the house more of an "adult" ambiance. However, she was unsure of how to balance the kids' entertainment needs and achieving her desired interior style.

"I wanted this area to be the place my kids would want their friends to hang out in, but it's also the first room you walk into in my house, so it couldn't look like a playroom," Friedman said.

Friedman's experience was a common struggle in interior decorating for most parents while trying to create a home that is whimsical and comfortable enough for children yet stylish and striking enough for entertaining.

So, Friedman hired Orinda real estate agent and home designer Stephanie Catron of SBC Style, who believes that you don't have to wait for your children to grow up to have the home of your dreams and you don't have to spend a fortune.

"When you have small kids so much of your time is spent at home either having other families over, hosting play dates or just spending the weekend reconnecting as a family. It's important that you love the space you are in," Catron said. "Invest some time in pulling together the main living spaces with art work and accessories that

make you happy."

According to Catron, the key is occasional updates to create a space that is fresh and inviting to family and guests. She is known among Lamorinda clients for her inexpensive Home Goods, Living Spaces and Target finds of art, pillows and throws that are paired with investment pieces of furniture, professional painting and quality flooring to create a signature look.

"One day you will set an object on a low table and find that the kids are not interested in touching, moving it or putting it in their mouths. That's when you can move your style forward," Catron said.

Catron guided Friedman through a process of searching Pinterest and magazines for images of eye-catching rooms. As a family, the Friedmans tested out new accessories and the overall layout of each room until it was the right fit.

Catron often tells homeowners to utilize store return policies as they place things in various spots throughout the home and find what works for them.

"Don't be afraid to move things around after the kids are in bed. Pour a glass of wine and have fun creating your new space," Catron advised.

In the Friedman kid's zone, Catron placed the TV over a fireplace, suggested an L-shaped sectional and found the perfect placement for a seven-foot pool table. Catron finished the room with lamps, rugs and coffee tables and even Friedman's sons, ages 9 and 11, were impressed.

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