

NEW YORK POST

MINOR ADJUSTMENTS

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Many New Yorkers are now thinking less about buying a new property and more about updating what they have. This is especially true for growing families, where carving out space for tykes can be a challenge in any city apartment. And of course, given that they're city kids, the design has got to be chic as well as practical and durable.

It's a dilemma that's being solved by designers like Christina Topaloglou, co-founder of the Chesterfield NYC furniture company and Chesterfield NYC Design. Topaloglou, with her partner Sofia Feldman, is bringing modern flair to kids' rooms.

One recent Topaloglou project was in an 1,800-square-foot Trump Place apartment, where she designed a bedroom shared by two girls, ages 10 and 13. On a pared-down budget - \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the living room, children's bedroom and office - she created a wall-to-wall floating white lacquer desk with two workstations, as well as a file cabinet and drawers for each girl.

"It gives the kids more freedom, yet nothing is beneath the desk, so kids can't damage anything when they kick their feet," says Topaloglou, who typically charges a \$2,500 starting fee and a percentage of the total project cost.

She added a classic white leather Cardwell chair (Chesterfield's starting retail price is \$1,100) and white lacquer headboards of her own design. She dressed the beds in funky orange velvet (matching the curtains) from ABC Carpet & Home, brown faux mink pillows from Yves Delorme and dark brown wool throws from Frette. The girls' own artwork adorns the walls, along with two large black-and-white photos of them.

Artwork - by children, for children and of children - is a popular way parents are personalizing kids' rooms.

Photographer Michael Molinoff charges \$1,100 for an on-location portrait sitting and also creates custom prints on canvas, wallpaper and removable adhesive fabric. Prices begin at \$220 for a 16-by-20-inch portrait. Another option is Molinoff's series of three to six 8-by-8-inch photos (\$120 to \$400) of a subject's facial expressions: close-up photos showing a child's many moods.

"The best part," he says, "is that the kids love making faces during the shoot."

Kristine Baelin of Figment Portraits offers unique images with hand-painted circle and dot techniques based on photographs of children - you can send photos to her or she can take the portraits herself. Baelin charges about \$500 to \$2,000 per portrait.

If you prefer painting to photos, artist Carter Kustera makes custom silhouette portraits of children, with witty sayings that sum up their personalities. (You can also see his work at Jonathan Adler and Barneys

stores.) His prices start at \$450 for unframed portraits, which are drawn in pencil and finished in heavy opaque paint.

Parents are also giving kids more of one of their most precious urban commodities: space.

Viktoria von Siemens, a married, working mom with two young children and a busy social life, gave her two daughters separate bedrooms connected by a sliding door - along with their own living/play space - in their 2,700-square-foot TriBeCa home. Interior designer Kimberly Hall of Kimberly Hall Kids used bold color and fabric choices to thematically connect the children's rooms.

"I wanted their rooms to be funky and fun, colorful and happy," von Siemens says. "My idea was to give them not what adults want but what kids would think is really fun and quirky, with as much fantasy as possible while still being practical."

Sophia, 13, and Philippa, 9, love to hang out in their living area/playroom, with its own TV and two space-age, upholstered Eero Aarnio chair reproductions (that resemble a globe cut in half) in green and blue. There's also a large upholstered wheel sculpture called the "OM Zone," designed by Hall. The artwork is all by the children.

Philippa's bed is a vintage French "dolphin" bed that von Siemens found at an antique store on Brooklyn's Atlantic Avenue and then lacquered white. It's upholstered in birch print fabric, which is also on the walls.

Sophia's bedroom has an understated "surfer" theme, with aquatic colors and mod patterns that create a retro vibe. Her bed, a modified sleigh-style, is also an antique found in Brooklyn and lacquered glossy white.

A key element in the room is the transparent Bubble chair, designed by Eero Aarnio in the late 1960s. For a tween, it's a cool place to hang (literally) - and it doesn't take up valuable floor space.

Hall used acrylic desk chairs from Ruby Beets in Sag Harbor for the girls' desks. Both rooms have classic French lamps from Jielde, which come in powder-coated colors.

Children, Hall notes, "are really attracted to classic mid-century furnishings. Having iconic pieces like the Bubble chair is a status symbol."

Tracey Frost Rensky, mom to Chloe, 1, and Natasha, 3, and a co-founder of Citibabes - an early learning center for children - notes that another new trend is eco-friendly nurseries and children's rooms.

"Everything in your nursery, from the paint on, can be green," says Frost Rensky, who recommends green kids' lines such as ducduc.

As Citibabes builds its second space in Scarsdale, Frost Rensky says she is becoming more aware about using green building materials to create safer, less toxic surroundings while raising children's awareness about the environment. She likes Green Depot, a sort of eco-friendly Home Depot that can "flip your projects green," she says.

Frost Rensky also advises parents to create multi-purpose children's spaces - areas that can open up to include the rest of the home or be closed off while parents are entertaining.

"Our playroom is directly off our kitchen and living area," she says. "It can't be too ridiculously childlike, but it still has to function for our kids. There's a round-edged table and soft floors, but it's not crazy and fits

in with the rest of the apartment."

KID'S STUFF

Daniel Frisch, the architect of the von Siemens home, creates sophisticated, urban-chic homes that work for both grown-ups and kids. Here are his tips for designing children's rooms.

- * Storage cubbies: These can be from the floor up for easy access, or from the ceiling down for display purposes.
- * Nooks and alcoves: Children like to congregate in small spaces.
- * Window seats: Try to have the cushion 15 to 18 inches above the floor. The seats can also be used for storage.
- * Playrooms: Create spaces for playing between children's bedrooms.
- * Large pocket doors: These sliding doors disappear into a wall when open.
- * Color: This gives rooms personality.

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