

Los Angeles Times

HOME

After a tough winter, replant paradise.
PAGE 3



Thursday, April 12, 2007

latimes.com/home

DECORATING

Sacrifice on style? No way

(Children, from Page F2)

baby-proofing a booming business. And they have watched friends and relatives surrender their design sensibilities — along with the better part of their homes — to an avalanche of kids' stuff.

"Every house that has kids, there are toys and white plastic furniture everywhere. You can tell the kids rule the house," says designer Jorge Dalinger, the father of a 2-year-old. "You don't have to sacrifice the look of the house for the baby."

Dalinger — who has turned a four-story architectural box into an ornately detailed Spanish showplace — and the Rosenhecks refuse to let their stylish homes become peewee playhouses. They believe that listening to their inner interior decorators, taking the necessary safety precautions and setting proper boundaries for their kids make for prettier, happier nests.

This seems a welcome antidote to the "child-centric" home, as Chicago clinical psychologist David deBoer calls it. "Parents who are trying to reclaim their adult space in the house and set appropriate boundaries help foster realistic expectations versus a sense of entitlement. They are not giving their children a grandiose sense of omnipotence that will be shattered in the real world."

Being raised in a design-conscious home can nurture basic social skills, says Azlene Drake, a licensed marriage family therapist in Encino. "It instills a sense of the value of things. It helps children to be respectful of other people's possessions and their own. When you never say 'don't touch' to kids, that's too permissive. What they learn at home is what they take out into the world."

Professional decorators, naturally, applaud this notion. "All the Alexanders and Ashley's who stay up until 11 o'clock and are allowed to draw on the walls because their parents put up vinyl wallpaper are going to end up in therapy because they don't know what's appropriate," says Andrew Baseman, who decorated the set of the forthcoming film "The Nanny Diaries."

In recent years, the Manhattan-based interior designer has noticed parents opting for grown-up furnishings such as vintage wallpapers, higher-maintenance wool carpets and upholstered storage ottomans that can be used to stash toys. "I am seeing more people with older children who are growing up sophisticated about design. Maybe some parents actually enjoy sugary pastel colors, but you don't have to give kids pink or blue bedrooms."

For the Rosenhecks, simple white-washed walls suffice for their daughters' room, which is filled with tidily organized rainbow-bright toys. Ginger and Ruby sleep in wooden cribs without bumpers because that's how mom grew up. In many ways, the Rosenhecks are doing what they never quite imagined they'd do: They are becoming like their own parents, raising kids the way they were brought up.

Both spent their early years in 1960s modern homes in suburban New Jersey. They were orderly, decidedly adult environments with comfortable dens where the family hung out and fancier rooms that were reserved for company.

Back then, Capobianco recalls, the best of hamburgers and a heavy metal nutcracker in her childhood family room were not considered a choking hazard or



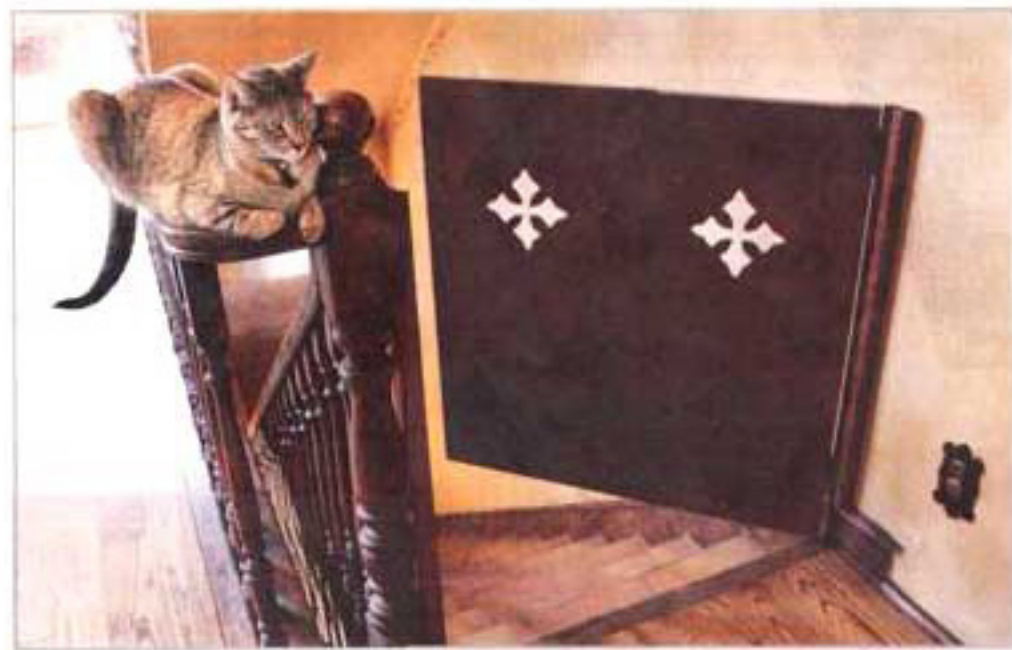
Ken Strickland/Los Angeles Times



Ken Strickland/Los Angeles Times



Ken Strickland/Los Angeles Times



Ken Strickland/Los Angeles Times

a broken finger waiting to happen. "Today's parents tend to overprotect their kids," she says, scoffing at the notion of the latest infant fad, a warmer for baby wipes. "If (the kids) can't deal with a cold wipe, how are they going to deal with not getting a job?"

Rosenheck laughs when he tells about an in-home consultation with a San Fernando Valley store that specializes in selling and installing baby safety products. "They gave us a laundry list that ran to \$1,500," he recalls. "They wanted to put every electrical cord in a sheath and put bumpers on every piece of furniture."

Instead, Rosenheck used standard cabinet latches and electrical outlet covers, put an earthquake strap around the TV, and added four doorway gates. "Our philosophy of parenting drives what we've done," says Capobianco, a work-

from-home mom. "The most important thing is to pay attention to your kids."

Ginger and Ruby, now 1½, are allowed everywhere except the kitchen and their parents' room. "We want them to see the world as a safe and open place. They crawl and climb up on furniture and if they fall, we wait to see how they react instead of freaking out and making them fearful," Capobianco says. "Most of the time, they just get up and keep going."

They believe that toddlers understand more than they can communicate. After tugging on a cord attached to one of Rosenheck's favorite table lamps a few times, Ginger and Ruby discovered it would topple onto the side table by the living room couch. Dad caught them in the act and saved the lamp from being smashed. But when he went to put the lamp back, he not only

noticed some hairline cracks in the ceramic base, but also an imprint identifying the lamp as a Maritz, a highly collectible midcentury design.

"I just thought it looked cool," says Rosenheck, who picked it up at a vintage furniture store. "I had no idea it was worth anything," he adds with a laugh, "and now it isn't."

The couple wouldn't have it any other way. "I don't think we could've transformed the house so that we would be living in their world," he says. "We welcomed them into ours."

In this artsy, groovy place, Ginger and Ruby are kids in an eye-candy store. On the walls of their living-dining room, there is an Egyptian-themed stained glass window, odd bits of folk art, estate sale paintings, and Rosenheck's photos of Joshua Tree landscapes and portraits of his kids as newborns.

ESSENTIALS: Old world touches hold sway in Sofia's room, above at far left, and on the baby gate created by Dalinger, left. Shelves in Cindy Capobianco and Rob Rosenheck's great room, above, are adult- and child-friendly.

The vaulted Tudor-style family room with a banquette and daybed covered in Indian and Moroccan fabrics and pillows has a TV that is never on when the kids are awake. Instead the room serves as a stage for family jam sessions, with dad on guitar and the kids on toy piano and percussion. "We don't buy anything that needs batteries," he says. "We really want them to bring their imagination to things." There is an orange bucket in the room to keep stuffed animals and dolls in one place. "Kids learn quickly," Rosenheck says, "and they can live in an adult house."

SOFIA DALINGER does not sleep in a cutesy powder pink nursery. The only indications that her parents' former sitting room is now 2-year-old Sofia's domain is an elaborate wrought-iron fireplace screen draped with stuffed animals and a hand-built Spanish crib designed by her father, Jorge. Otherwise, the room is awash in earthy ochre, olive, terra cotta and amber — the colors Dalinger herself grew up with in a stucco and red-tiled hacienda in Beville. Old World scones hang over Sofia's crib between golden chenille curtains. The walls are antique glazed with a stenciled damask motif; the furniture is dark and hefty.

It is a baby's room with a grown-up