

Design For Kids Part Three

If you've met me at any of the Planning workshops I conducted for the Sacramento Aquarium Committee at Belle Coolidge Library, you already know I'm a big proponent of involving kids in planning. At these lively workshops, the kids (including, but not limited to, my own daughters, Kimberly and Tessa) had wonderful and innovative ideas to contribute! The freedom they felt to brainstorm and express their enthusiasm was contagious, and greatly contributed to the fun and excitement of our sessions.

We've discussed why it's important to involve kids in the process of planning for a remodel/addition, and how to go about it. Now we're continuing with some notes about features that kids have contributed to some of our clients' homes. We've already covered two of my favorites:

Bat Caves. Small places that kids can claim them as their own.

Alcoves. You don't have to be a child to enjoy the pleasures of a small window seat or reading alcove. Better plan an extra one for the grown ups!

Kid Size Elements. You've probably noticed how children just can't resist that "little door" next to the full sized regular door at the Sesame Street General Store in Arden Mall. It's the same idea as the "*Stoop, you stupid grown up, or you'll knock you noggin*" door into Fairytale Town. You can use this same concept in your own home. Something ordinary scaled down can become very special in the imagination of children and it can be heart warming to see how important a detail can be.

In my own home, for example, I took the original front door (which had to be replaced), turned it sideways, and cut it down. That created a perfect "kid size" front door to

a "secret alcove" I created over our front stair. The panels on the door, some "small" hardware I found, and the trim all contribute to the feeling that it is *their* special door.

Observation Lofts. Kids love to be in a spot where they can see what is going on. Sometimes that leads to them being right under your feet at the wrong time. Although it's hard to believe at times, no, they don't really want to trip you up! If you create a loft, perch, or balcony where they can keep tabs on the action, they will be out from underfoot and still feel like they are where the action is.

We have such a loft over our entry. It is discrete, so as not to take away from the character and charm of the entry that grownups see, but open enough to let our kids take command. Sometimes a whole balcony becomes an observation loft, as in Ron Heller's home on Third Avenue where a wrap around second story balcony overlooks his entire family room. The railing design is just open enough to let kids see through, while they feel safely concealed behind it.

Perches and Sleeping Lofts. Bunk beds are a dream of many children. It's that same notion of a special, personal space. We have had several clients ask us to take this idea one step further and create sleeping lofts that overlook a rumpus room or child's bedroom. As an alternative, we've also created Little Perches. These can be simple raised platforms that capture some of the same feel in less space and at lower cost.

Peek Holes. Kids love to make discoveries. One of my favorites when my kids were younger was to drop a nickel in the sand at the beach and then suggest a few minutes later that they dig for treasure in that spot. Their squeals of delight were always astounding. (Oh oh, I hope I didn't give away that secret for any of you kids reading this, including my own!) We incorporated that sort of

excitement in our last house on 14th Street by creating a little glass block window on the stair landing that looked into the kitchen. I made it out of a couple of glass block that were trimmed and framed just like a full sized divided light window. It made a unique vantage point that never ceased to delight my children, as well as a great design accent from both the kitchen and stair. I hope the current residents of that house enjoy it as much. If there are no kids living there, the "grownups" probably don't have any idea what that little window is for!

Join with me next issue as I cover a few more kids' notions!

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