



child's play

WHEN DESIGNING FOR CHILDREN, LET'S MAKE ROOM FOR THEIR OWN CREATIVITY TO BE OUR GUIDE.

WORDS, PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK

I CONSIDER CREATIVITY something we are all born with, something that is intrinsically woven into our sense of self. Seeing children play is, to me, observing creativity in all its splendour.

Over the years I've had the chance to decorate many clients' nurseries and playrooms, and now that I have my own child, I'm more inspired than ever. And I've learnt that as adults, we tend to curb the decoration desires of our kids by focusing heavily on multi-functional furnishings set within a neat and confined colour palette.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for functionality in a child's room. However, I do believe the most interesting and inspirational spaces are those that invite the child's own creative energy to fill the room, encouraging them all the while to follow their design and styling instincts.

While adorning my baby girl's room before she was born, I was conscious not to get too carried away with decorating, as it was important for me to get to know her personality first. In the lead-up, I spent much time sitting quietly on the day bed, letting go of preconceptions, and stitched up some simple bird shapes to hang from a mobile above her bed.

Today, at 18 months, my daughter Laly loves spending most of her waking hours in the garden. She is often busy pouring water into little buckets, and collecting rocks and seed pods. Another strong characteristic is her love of fabric — she finds pieces of cloth and spends much time folding and shaping them into blankets for her stuffed toys, as well as wearing them as scarves and headdresses.

A flat woven basket filled with fabric scraps makes a wonderful toy — for older children the fabric can be turned into decorative pinwheels by accordion-folding

rectangular pieces, then tying them in the middle and fanning out the ends to meet, stitching them into place (full instructions on my blog). These can then be added to plain cushions or stitched onto pockets, bags or pinafores.

Fabric scraps can also be made into flags and bunting, or tied with a ribbon to become a cape. Plain cloth can be cut and stitched into a favourite animal shape, stuffed with more fabric or cotton padding, with hand-drawn features like a charming whale made for me by artist and designer Hagar Vardimon van Heummen. Fading blossoms or fern stems that your kids have collected can be taped to the wall in rows, creating their own ephemeral wall art.

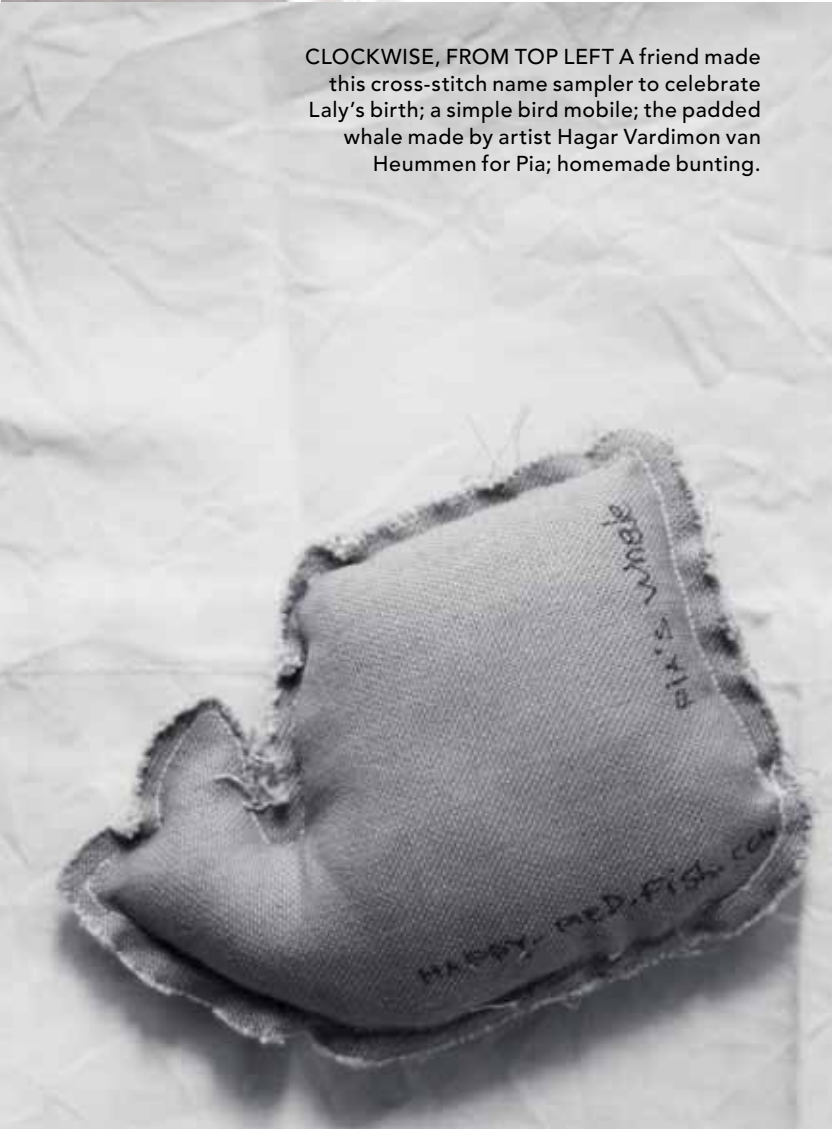
Instead of questioning our children's choices, we can encourage and nurture their style. Giving a child free decorating rein within their room makes most of us cringe, but children are the essence of creativity and if we can breathe through that initial uncertainty and loosen our desire to create limitations, our children become our muses and together you can make a beautiful, imaginative space. *

Pia Jane Bijkerk's new book, Little Treasures: Made By Hand (Par Coeur Press, \$24.95), is available at www.piajanebijkerk.bigcartel.com

PIA'S LINK LOVE

- 1 www.happy-red-fish.com/wordpress
- 2 www.bkids.typepad.com
- 3 www.lmnop.com.au

Pia is Country Style's resident blogger at blogs.homelife.com.au/countrystyle



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT A friend made this cross-stitch name sampler to celebrate Laly's birth; a simple bird mobile; the padded whale made by artist Hagar Vardimon van Heummen for Pia; homemade bunting.