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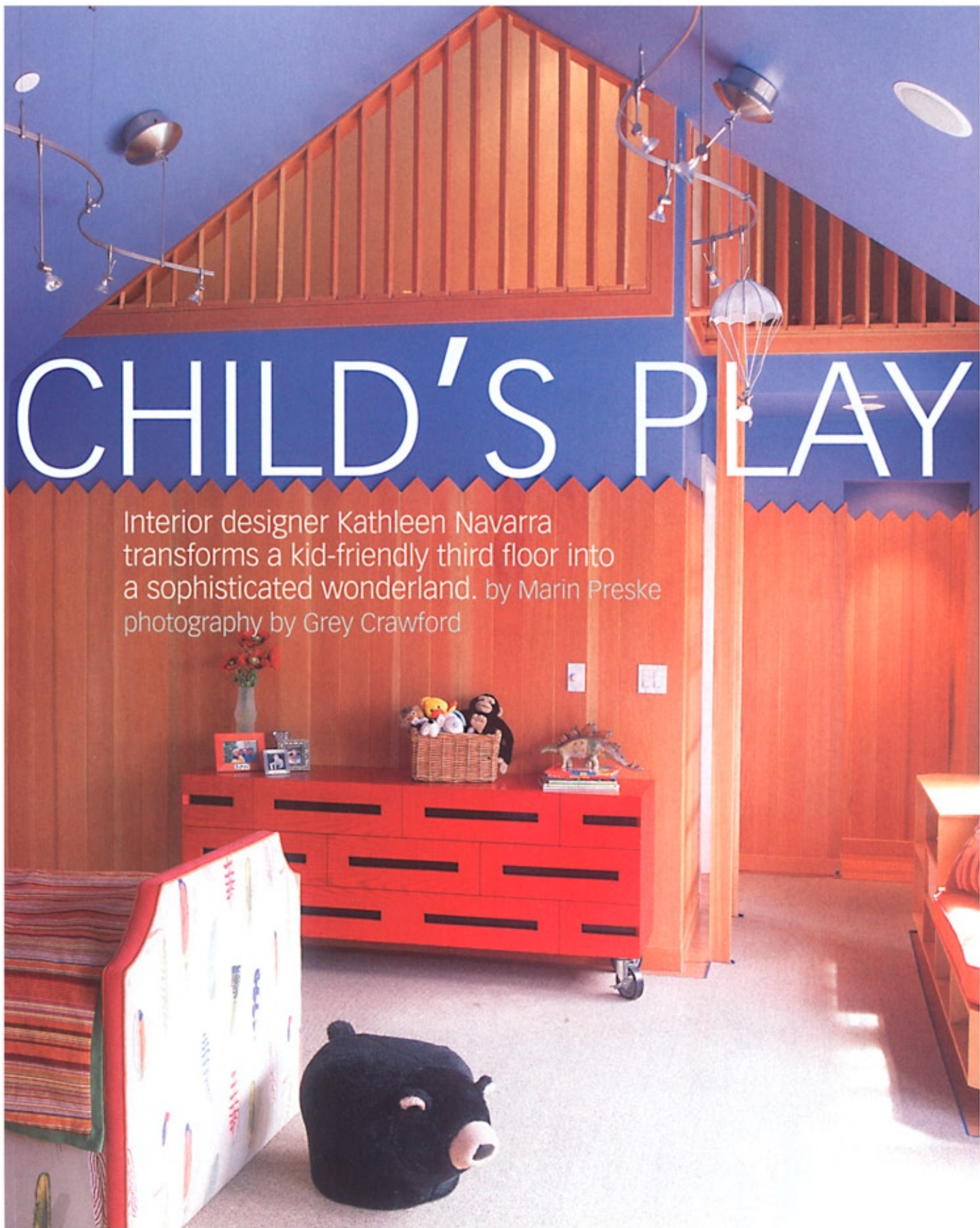
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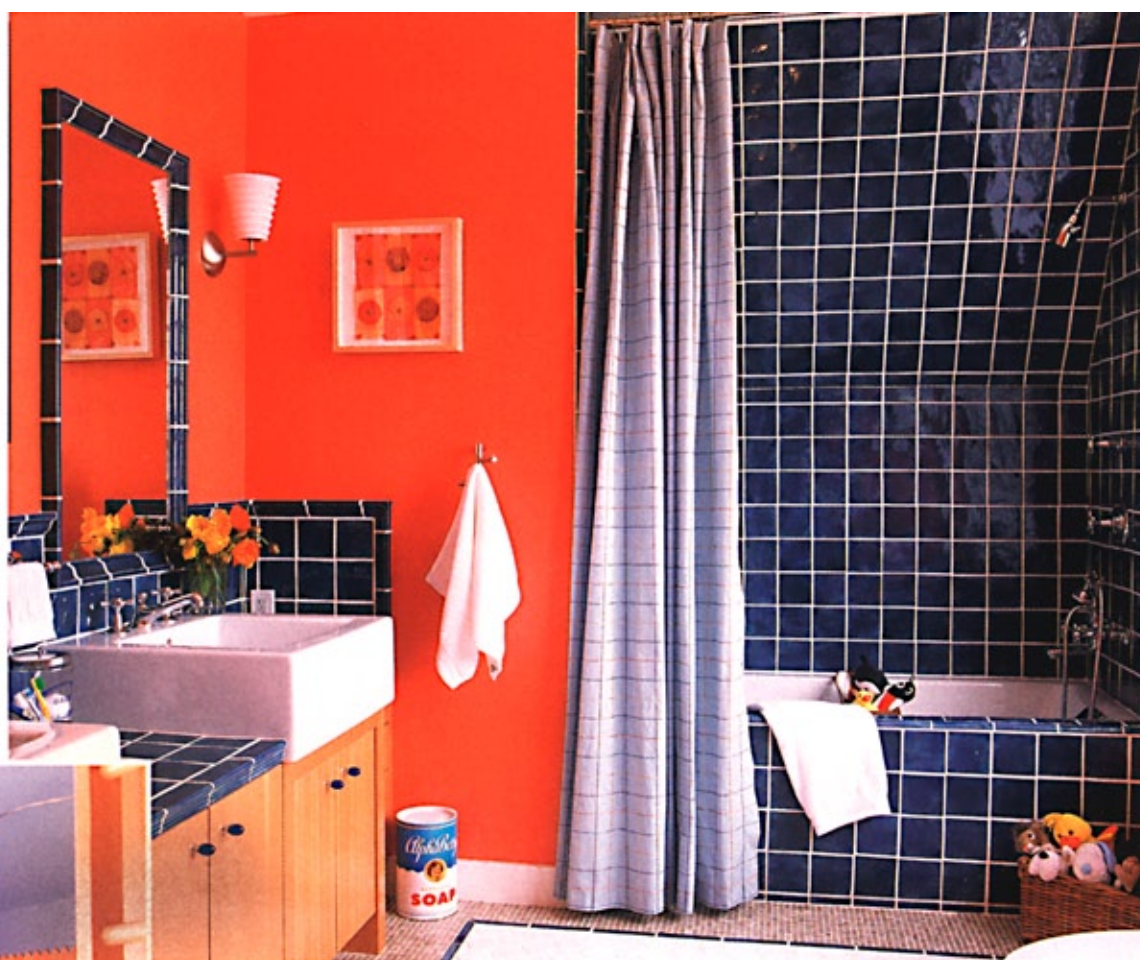
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CHILD'S PLAY

Interior designer Kathleen Navarra transforms a kid-friendly third floor into a sophisticated wonderland. by Marin Preske
photography by Grey Crawford



BOYS' CLUB

After the construction of a brand-new bathroom and closet, the room's angled ceilings resulted in "dead space" above each unit. Because the areas weren't large enough to stand up in, Navarra created two lofts, each with a ladder and slatted walls, to peek down onto the bedroom below. In the long walk-in closet, separate wardrobe areas for each boy are designated overhead with chunky metal letters spelling out their names. Below each moniker, wire bins and shelves efficiently store clothing.

Hedge-fund managers, boutique hoteliers and illustrious socialites may be the usual suspects that come to mind when you think of high-design clientele. But what about a prepubescent quartet whose vocabulary doesn't yet include terms such as "patina" and "vener?" When Kathleen Navarra, principal of the SF-based Navarra Design Consultants, first saw the third floor of the Pacific Heights mansion she was to transform into a playful stomping ground for the owners' four children, she knew it would require a major dose of creativity. "The space just didn't feel cohesive," says

Navarra of the third floor's three large rooms. "It needed to be inspiring."

Granted, the interior designer's very involvement signaled that these would be no ordinary kiddie quarters. A five-year participant in the exclusive San Francisco Decorator Showcase (for which she designed a kitchen earlier this year), Navarra has a signature design style that she describes as "tradition with a twist." The spaces she's created, which range from a high-rise apartment to a villa in Sonoma, exude serenity but are packed with unexpected details, combinations and juxtapositions. "I'll put

a contemporary fabric on a traditional chair, or vice versa," she says. Both this year's and last year's Showcase homeowners are now her clients.

The structural obstacles of the Pacific Heights project were apparent from the start: minimal natural light and severely angled ceilings, remnants of a onetime apartment. "The spaces were tent-like," says Navarra, who sought a prevailing theme to carry throughout the project. "So we came up with an outdoor concept."

She began in the bedroom of the eldest child (and only girl), which she envisioned



DOLL'S HOUSE

"Originally it felt very dark," Navarra says. To counteract this, she edged the walls with crisp white wainscoting and had local custom-painter Willem Racké lightly texture the walls. Custom-built shelving above the wainscoting on either side of the bed—a clean exhibit space that's also easy to organize—was a clever stratagem for displaying an extensive doll collection. A skylight was installed, and the bathroom entrance was moved over to allow natural light from a window to stream through: "Now the effect is bright and happy."



as a garden sanctuary awash in a palette of soft lavender and sage green. With its considerable doll collection and custom faux-finished lilac walls, it's the ideal setting for a springtime tea party. "We used flowery fabrics, a green rug to evoke grass and cloud-like walls that are very ethereal," Navarra says. Modern clustered light fixtures are "evocative of big flower bouquets," and mismatched wooden antique pieces, picked up at various shops around the Bay Area, are scattered throughout the room. The cushy quilted headboard and colorful bed draping summon a *Princess-and-the-Pea* nostalgia.

Adjacent to the bedroom, a dressing area leads to a petite bathroom. "We wanted to keep things in mind for when she gets older," Navarra says to explain the lack of saccharine devices. Toffee-colored tile, understated floral wallpaper and delicate linen fabrics provide a natural opulence. To delineate the dressing chamber from the bath, Navarra brought in a Shabby Chic-esque iron garden bench and bordered penny tiling against the hardwood flooring. A built-in dresser occupies a corner outside the walk-in closet, which is stocked with the wants and wares of an eight-year-old girl.

Across the floor, where *The Secret Garden* leaves off, train lofts and tree forts emerge in the boys' dominion. To frame the voluminous room, Navarra rimmed the walls with a clear-coated wooden picket fence. "It was one way to make the space more intimate," she says. To further invoke the great outdoors, she suspended metal replicas of parachutes and planes from curvaceous track lighting—which, against rich periwinkle walls, has the feel of a lively night sky. Underneath the fabricated heavens, two trundle beds (the youngest toddler still sleeps downstairs) upholstered in a bright

ROMPER ROOM

Since the area was once a top-floor apartment, Navarra worked with architects Butler-Armsden to open up the space. The stairwell leading up to the floor was completely renovated to open onto the playroom; walls were blown out to maximize natural light and floors were gutted to put down new wide-slat hardwood flooring. In the playroom, a large built-in storage unit that consumes most of the far wall is indented in various areas. "Since it is so long and narrow, we created an undulating effect to give motion and break it up," Navarra says. For efficiency purposes, the owners needed accessible laundry facilities (the closest was three floors down in the basement). Just off the playroom, Navarra installed a utility nook in festive shades of green and indigo with frosted glass cabinets that have "soap," "storage" and other content-revealing words sandblasted into the panes.



feather motif rest aside a massive crimson-dyed oak dresser. It's cowboys-and-Indians with a sophisticated touch.

To accommodate the needs of three youngsters, Navarra erected a deep walk-in closet on one side of the room and a new bathroom on the other. Juicy coral walls, mosaic tiling and crafty touches, such as retractable steps that boost the smaller boys up to the sink, make it a vivid yet functional space. For those under six, however, the real treasure lies in the pair of overhead lofts that extend above the closet and bathroom. The sleeping loft, complete with mattress, is

prime overnight-guest territory; the train loft lives up to its name, with a toy model running the circumference of the space.

Connecting the two bedrooms is an airy, soothing playroom flooded with natural light—the result of three built-in skylights and a neutral color scheme. "We wanted to make it the focal point of the space," says Navarra. "It's like a big sandbox." Wooden structural beams offset a sloping wall, and thin metal suspended lighting creates an aerial feel. For storage purposes, a massive built-in unit holds a TV, mini-fridge, board games and toys. "The owners are constantly

entertaining and hosting play dates," Navarra says. As in the bedrooms, the decor abstains from exaggerated childhood whimsy: An oversized chalkboard and furry animal stools are juxtaposed with works from the family's spectacular modern art collection.

The overall effect is a merger of refined design elements and relaxed children's quarters. "They wanted the kind of place where you wouldn't be afraid if you put a rug down and some paint spilled on it," Navarra says, examining a blob of glittery goo smeared on a linen curtain. "It just becomes part of the design." x