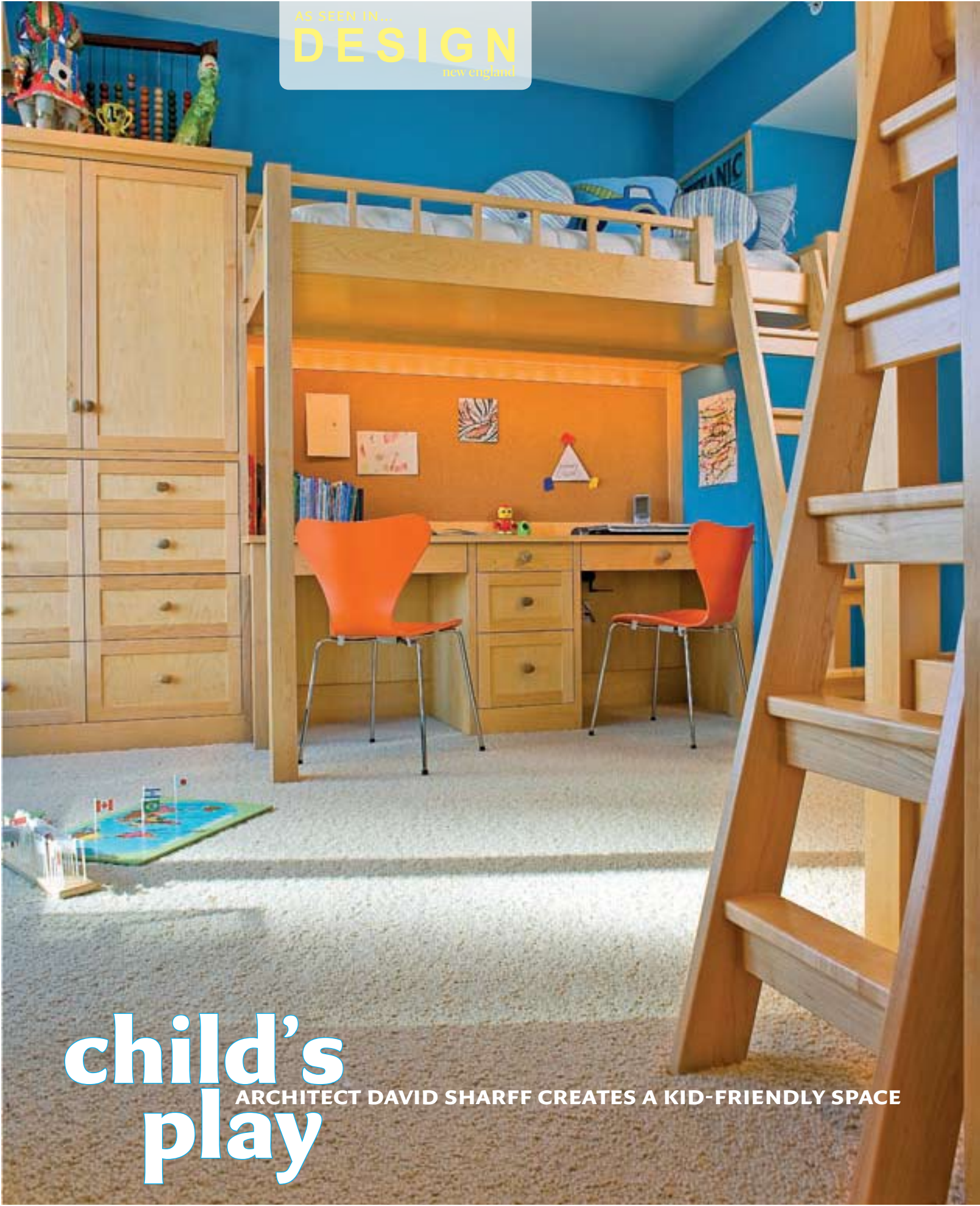


AS SEEN IN...
DESIGN
new england



child's
play

ARCHITECT DAVID SHARFF CREATES A KID-FRIENDLY SPACE

THE FOYER SETS a calming mood with soft purple walls and gentle arches. Architect David Sharff added rough slate floors and built-ins, bringing a sense of homeyness to the high-rise unit. The boys' room (FACING PAGE), is marked by maple cupboards with playful accents, such as the bright orange desk chairs.



WITH A MATURE AESTHETIC IN DOWNTOWN BOSTON

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AVID SHARFF KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN childlike and childish. “Whimsy without being goofy,” explains the architect, whose eponymous firm is in Medfield, Massachusetts. It’s a difficult balance, but one he achieved in the remodel of a sky-high apartment in Boston’s Ritz-Carlton Residences.

On the upside, the 3,000-square-foot unit was a blank slate of bright white walls and standard-issue fixtures. On the downside, there were only three bedrooms, including the master, and the space needed to accommodate the homeowner and his fiancée, his four young children from a previous marriage, and their nanny.

The apartment is a *pied-à-terre* that the owner, a resident of Pennsylvania, uses for weekends with his children, who live with their mother in Massachusetts. His priority for the redesign was to have a fun, safe, and happy space to share with his young daughter and three sons. In

THE NEW KITCHEN is a hub of activity. Sharff chose a reclaimed tiger maple table (BELOW) from Staples Cabinet Makers in Plainville, Massachusetts, that can withstand heavy use. The Poggenpohl cabinetry is a mix of elm veneer and white lacquer, giving the space depth and dimension. Kitchen designer Rosemary Porto added a mini-counter (FACING PAGE) where kids can make their own snacks and grab drinks from the beverage fridge.





addition to creating a warm and inviting environment, Sharff was charged with adding lots of storage, using family-friendly finishes (“We don’t want to be worried about breaking something,” says the fiancée), and incorporating pieces from the owner’s collection of modern art.

At the homeowner’s request, Sharff designed the living room around a collection of paintings by Porfirio DiDonna. The eight canvases inspired the apartment’s earthy palette of warm wood, slate, and subdued shades of coral, baby blue, and sage green. But, says Sharff, “the focal point of the rooms is the view.” So he used custom built-ins fabricated by R.F. McManus Company of Charlestown, Massachusetts, that defer to the skyline and give the residents the storage they craved. “We are absolutely gaga for all the built-ins,” says the fiancée.

THE LIVING ROOM is “all about the views,” according to Sharff, who oriented seating (FACING PAGE) to maximize the wraparound windows of the corner unit. Customized built-ins (ABOVE) are painted soft taupe; drawers conceal toys and games, while flat panels open to reveal more shelves. Sharff ripped out the unit’s original parquet flooring and replaced it with planks that appeal to the homeowners’ modern sensibilities.

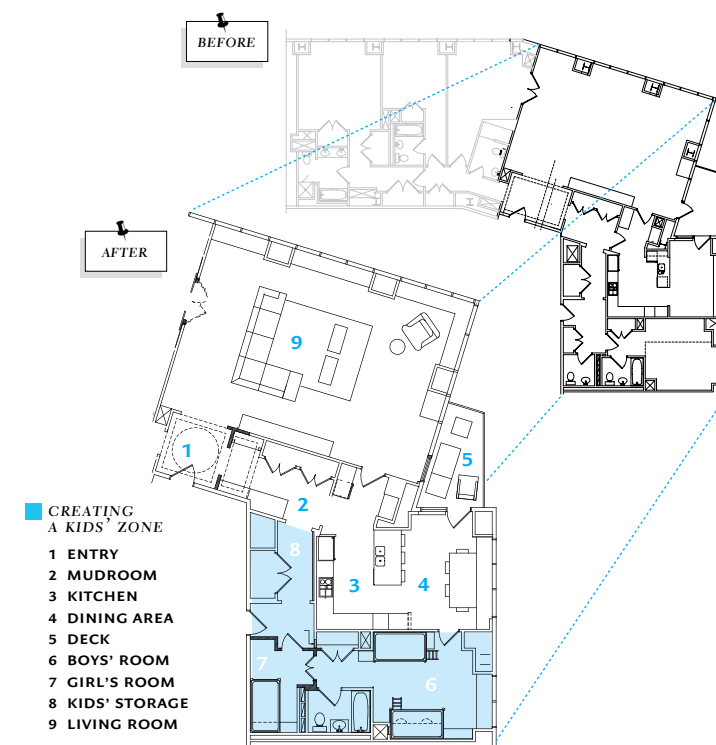
While the “adult” wing (the master suite, guest quarters, meditation room, and media center) remained intact with just some reconfigured layouts and new finishes, the entry, kitchen, and kids’ rooms underwent a major overhaul.

In this busy residence, creating a landing space for sports equipment, jackets, and shoes was a must. “A mudroom isn’t typical for an urban environment,” says Sharff, who redesigned the once boxy foyer into a cozy, but organized, catchall for gear and toys. Hard-wearing, variegated slate tile floors are now framed by cherry cabinetry that conceals locker-style cubbies for each child.

The guest room and two baths off the kitchen were reworked into a large room with bright blue walls and maple bunk beds for the three boys and a small private room for their sister. Her room features a custom carpet from K. Powers & Company in Needham, Massachusetts, which features a grown-up koi fish motif. Powers designed the carpet so that it could be reworked into an area rug when the daughter gets older.

“The kids’ rooms were really fun because of the playful quality of the built-ins with the ladders and bunks,” says Finley Perry of FH Perry Builder in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, who worked on the unit with project manager Greg Mackintosh. “I think the kids liked it a lot, too.”

The two guest baths were combined to create one large bathroom that



is accessible from each bedroom. Soft colors and a playful tile pattern keep the bath from feeling overly juvenile. And since the daughter is still at a napping age, Sharff added a door from the kitchen to the boys’ room so that they can access their toys and the bath without disrupting her.

Rosemary Porto of Poggenpohl in Boston updated the kitchen with a mix of off-white lacquer and elm-veneer cabinetry, a glass tile backsplash, and gray-blue Caesarstone countertops. With little chefs in mind, Porto added a 30-inch-high mini-counter that is inset into a larger 36-inch-high cabinet. Here, the children can prepare their own snacks. “We put a little footstool in the toe-kick that snaps right open and pulls out so they can help themselves to what’s on the shelves above,” says Porto.

In the large window-filled living room, cabinets conceal toys and games. When the white modular sofas are pushed against the walls, the room doubles as a game zone. Says the children’s nanny, “They have two playgrounds: Boston Common when it’s sunny, the apartment when it’s rainy.” Indeed, on a recent afternoon, there was a volleyball net strung from wall to wall.

“It’s a unique living space,” says Sharff. “Relaxing and cheery — with personality.” ■

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