

# Family

EVE ROBINSON

Our homes are laboratories of creative expression and social engineering, and for families, a home is not only a manifestation of personal tastes and interests, but also the means by which values—through design—are communicated from one generation to the next.

A large part of my practice is designing for families. I come to each project with a developed set of principles for what makes an attractive, comfortable home. The interiors I design are modern and whimsical, yet timeless and fad-averse. Like families themselves, designs should have longevity. I believe homes must have a strong sense of order and place with careful attention paid to scale, balance, and proportion. Objects must have room to breathe. Homes should incorporate elements of the past that add balance and deepen the present. Color should be used to enrich, unify, and warm the space.

With a style all its own, every family reflects its members' genders, ages, personalities, habits, interests, quirks, obsessions, and beliefs. When you think about the design of your home, it is important to consider how your family lives and what rules you follow. Do you take your shoes off when you enter the home? Is food allowed outside the kitchen? Does your cat have claws? Does the dog shed? Are any rooms off-limits to the children? What activities do you all enjoy doing together? How do you like to entertain? The answers will guide your design choices, so the home reflects who you are and how you can function best.

One of the most common complaints I hear from clients is that they have rooms in their homes that never get used, or which they do not feel comfortable in. In an era where many parents want to be involved in every aspect of their children's lives, each room needs to be a dynamic part of the

family. As we all know, the kitchen is once again a central space whose purpose has expanded far beyond cooking and eating. Gone for many are stand-alone dining rooms, replaced by open floor plans combining work, play, lounging, and entertaining.

Just as homes can be laid out to maximize social interaction, an individual room can be designed to positively reinforce parent-child bonds. The placement and relationship of each piece of furniture to another affects how human connections are made. For instance, adding an L-shaped sectional to a family room with an ottoman in front invites everyone to gather to play games, do homework, and converse. Having an inviting, comfortable, well-lit place to read to a child fosters intimacy. Including trundle beds in children's rooms makes it easy to have sleepovers, promoting socialization.

Contrary to what one might think, elegance and practicality are not irreconcilable for families. Throughout a home, materials can be aesthetically pleasing as well as durable. In my own apartment, I designed a Roman-style mosaic floor for the foyer. The polished surface reflects the light and adds a sophisticated glimmer to the entrance, but nothing could be more resilient to withstand scooters, bicycles, and muddy boots, nor so easy to clean. A regal but rugged Anglo-Raj wooden bench is the perfect place for putting on shoes and piling knapsacks, footballs, and catchers' mitts. Chic can serve everyone quite well!

When you live in a place like New York City where space is in short supply, storage, lots of it, is essential so that everything (clothing, books, toys) has a place. Custom cabinetry helps; integrating beds, desks, play areas, and storage means that order can easily be restored at the end of the day. Living in an uncluttered, well-designed



The dining room in an apartment for a young family with four girls is heavily used; it hosts everything from formal gatherings to birthday parties. The pendant light is by Lobmeyr, and the table, custom designed for the room, is made of Macassar ebony. The striped painting is by Callum Innes; the red canvases in the background are by Kate Shepherd.