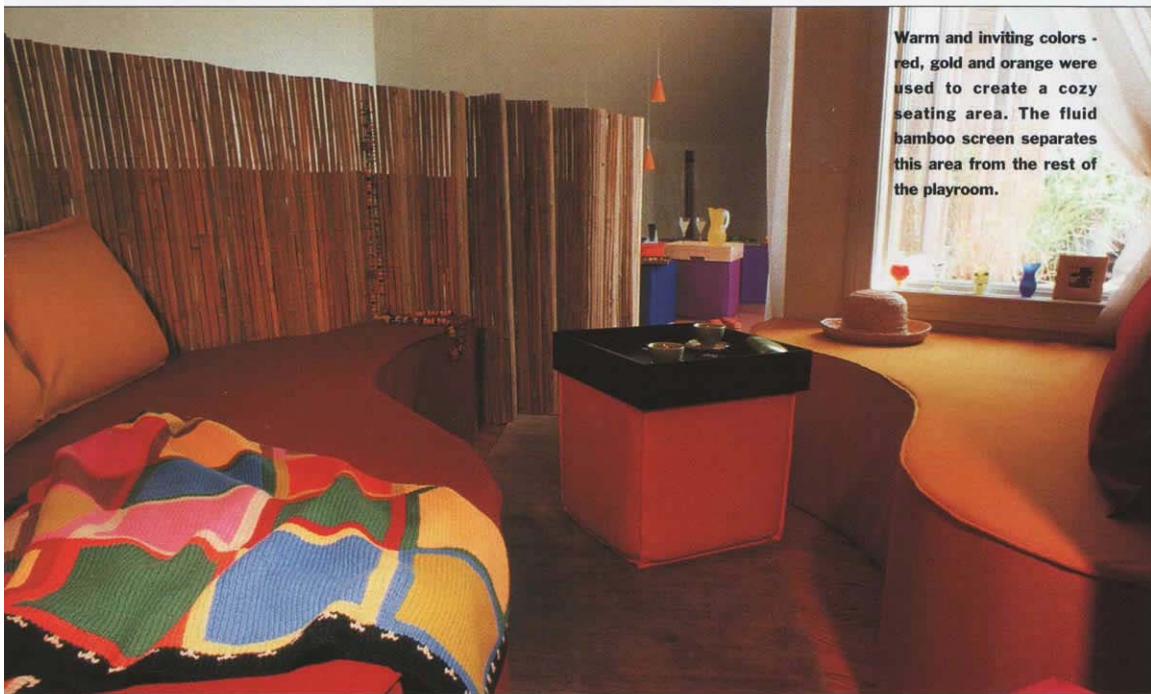


A Playroom *Designed* for fun

Interior Designer Kaja Gam was given the challenge of decorating this finished attic. The room was a blank slate of white walls and oak floors. However, truth be told, the task at hand was to transform this oddly shaped, oblong room with few windows, slanting ceilings and 2 rows of high hats down the center, into a good-looking, inviting space. "The room is out of balance in many ways and has angles that are not very attractive," concedes Gam.

This photo emphasizes Kaja Gam's creative use of a long and awkwardly shaped room. The placement of the lights cleverly ties together three sections of the playroom.





Warm and inviting colors - red, gold and orange were used to create a cozy seating area. The fluid bamboo screen separates this area from the rest of the playroom.

With this knowledge, Kaja had two choices. "I could have disguised the room's flaws or pulled them out," says Gam. "I always feel it's best not to fight what's in a room but to go with what's there."



Principles of Design

When Kaja approaches a project, she uses four principles to analyze the space: scale, proportion, architecture and functionality. "It's important to look at architecture and scale of both the inside and outside of a home," says Gam. "The architecture of a home makes certain demands that must be taken into consideration." According to Gam, before decorating a room, it's important to note such things as the placement and size of the windows, architectural molding, the height of the ceiling and the proportion of the room's elements. "Before the decorating begins, it is important to determine the functions of the room," says Gam. "If the room will serve more than one function, the room needs to be divided appropriately. People neglect to do this and end up with chaos and clutter."

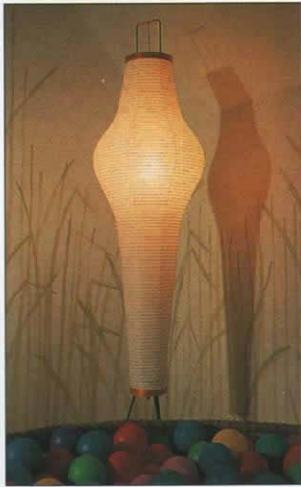
When deciding what to do with this unusual space, Kaja asked herself, "What do most people do with their attics?" Kaja visualized a room where a family could play and have

casual social gatherings. Once Kaja decided to transform the space into a playroom, she thought she'd do something unconventional and fun. "I decided to decorate in a way that most would shy away from in the other rooms of their home." Kaja used a dramatic mix of color, texture and shape to transform the attic into a festive playroom.

Let the Fun Begin

Kaja decided that the room would serve two functions: a playroom and a casual sitting area. Kaja suggests that a playroom can be an aesthetic room, and so the fun began!

"It's important that the contents of a room contrast with the large surfaces - the wall, ceiling, floor," says Gam. "Oak has a lot of texture and makes a big statement." For starters, to set off the bland walls, Kaja used items that were rich in texture. She accomplished this with the use of a bamboo screen, which



Rice lamps are attractive and unusual and can now be purchased at a variety of price points.

served as a divider between the play and sitting area. Other items that added depth and interest to the room were a rice lamp, the design painted on the wall and the gravel used on the bocce court. For families who are not big bocce ball fans, installing bowling lanes is an option.

The colors used in the playroom were cheerful and welcoming. The furniture made a big color statement. Kaja designed the fun, casual furniture because most standard sized furniture would not fit the room. The cube and curved furniture were

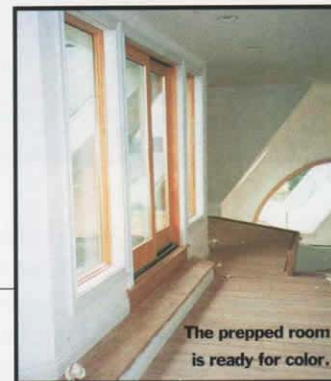
unconventional, playful, and at the same time accommodated this awkward space. In addition, the cubes were versatile and can serve as a seat, table (when topped with glass or a tray), or ottoman. Kaja made the furniture by simply covering

dense foam with felt in vivid colors. (Instructions are included at the end of the article.) "Felt is economical. However one can use wool, suede or leather to cover the foam," says Gam. "I used warmer tones - red, gold and orange in the sitting area to make it cozy, and brighter tones - blue, purple and orange in the large play area of the room to keep it fun." To add even more color to the room, Kaja scattered accessories, pillows and throws.

To contrast and soften the unattractive and harsh angles of the room, Kaja used lots of curves. This was accomplished with the winding, fluid placement of the bamboo divider, the curved furniture, and placement of the lighting system.

Lighting was very important since the room had little natural light. The lighting system was chosen for its simple, clean design, which ultimately served three significant functions. It disguised the ceiling and its fixtures, it mimicked the curves of the furniture and tied the sections of the room together.

Mission accomplished, as you can see, Kaja magically brought this sleepy space to life. The end result was a whimsical, colorful, and contemporary playroom that welcomed all that enter. This was truly a playroom designed for fun.



The prepped room is ready for color.

Decorative Paint Job

Material:

Tracing paper
Bainbridge or cardboard
Drafting pencils
Carbon (sara) paper
Paint
Various artist brushes
Stencils
Stencil brushes
Recyclable food containers or flat lids
Small foam rollers and refills
Chalk
Painter's easy release tape
Level
Tape measure

CHOOSE YOUR COLORS CAREFULLY. To make sure your colors will match your room, bring fabric samples to the store. If the wall you're going to work on is painted, bring a sample of the paint color. Be careful not to use too many colors. You are better off using green for foliage and red, orange or yellow for blossoms.

Trace flowers from a garden magazine onto tracing paper - one by one with lots of space in between and large borders. If this is your first time, make simple choices. A copy machine can enlarge or reduce the size of an image. Try using the same flowers in different sizes.

Make a second tracing, grouping the flowers the way you want - take a leaf off, turn a leaf, add a leaf, etc. Continue until you have the look that you want.

Now it's time for color samples. Use white bainbridge board or stiff cardboard to test colors. If the wall is painted a color, you must first paint 2 - 3 boards the same color. Let the boards dry.

Trace an outline of your motif on the board in pencil. Practice applying the colors. The color of the board/wall will influence the color of the paint. Safe color variations are obtained by applying transparent or opaque coats to create lighter or darker shades.

When you have successfully painted 2 - 3 repetitions of your design on the sample board, it's time to work on the wall.

Measure the entire length of the wall.

Measure your pattern repeat. Divide the length with the pattern repeat. This gives you the number of repeats that you will paint. If the number leaves you a few inches short, you must spread that extra length out on the entire border. If you are short a few inches you must squeeze the design.

Decide where your border is to be painted. If high on the wall, measure down from the ceiling. If low, measure up from the baseboard or chair rail. Use painter's easy release tape and a level to get your base line. If your design sprays from the center, use chalk to draw a straight level line. You can paint over it and remove afterwards. Use chalk to mark your repeats on the wall.

To keep your hands free, attach stencils with easy release tape. Follow the instructions that come with your stencils. For the free-hand look, apply some painted flower or fruit over stencils, some underneath. This will create variation and depth.



The room is rich in texture. Shown here are the bocce court and bocce balls placed neatly and conveniently in a wicker basket.



The curved furniture offsets the harsh angles of the wall and ceiling. The felt cubes can be used as a seat or as a table, when topped with a tray.

Foam Cube Furniture

Designed by Kaja Gam

Cube furniture is all the rage, and practical as ottomans, seats or side tables. With a price tag of over \$1,000, they are out of reach for most of us. You can make your own cubes for as little as \$100. Following are instructions to make a 16"x16"x16" cube.

Find a foam dealer in your area. You will need good quality high-density foam. If it is not in stock, they can usually order it. The cost for the foam should be approximately \$65.00 - \$75.00.

Make a paper template of one side of the cube (16"x16") for cutting fabric. Measure the cube on all sides to make sure they are all the same. If not, you should make individual templates for the different sizes, marking the sides of the cube and the templates with matching numbers.

Most fabrics are 54" - 56" wide. Solid fabrics are the most affordable. There are no pattern repeats and there's less waste. The least expensive fabric is felt. For durability, brushed wool has the look and feel of felt, but is more expensive. Leather or suede are stunning options, but expensive choices.

For one cube you will need one yard of fabric. For piping you will need another yard of fabric.

Map out your pieces before cutting the fabric. Mark the reverse side of the fabric with chalk or marker. Add two inches for seams all the way around. With felt, leather and brushed wool you can make outside seams, which is a new look. If you want outside seams add one inch.

Sew all of the pieces together leaving one seam open. You can add a zipper so the fabric can be removed for cleaning.

To get a snug fit, cover the block of foam with a plastic bag. Tape all holes with plastic packing tape except for one small opening. You want an airtight bag. Insert your vacuum cleaner hose into the small hole and press it into the foam. Turn the vacuum on to compress the foam. When the foam is small enough for you to easily slip on the cover, remove the vacuum hose and tape the hole in the plastic.

Place the cover over the shrunken cube inside the plastic. Sew the last seam. Leave a space large enough to pull the plastic

through.

To expand the foam, cut open your vacuum seal and the foam will take in air to regain its original size. If you make the hole small enough, you will have time to place the seams perfectly over the edges while the foam expands.

Screen Fifties modern décor is back with force, and so are screens. Natural fencing comes in a variety of heights and textures. Split bamboo resembles 50's screens the most. However, there are other materials with great texture and color. Try your local garden center or obtain a catalog and order from The Bamboo & Rattan Works, Inc. at 800-4-BAMBOO.

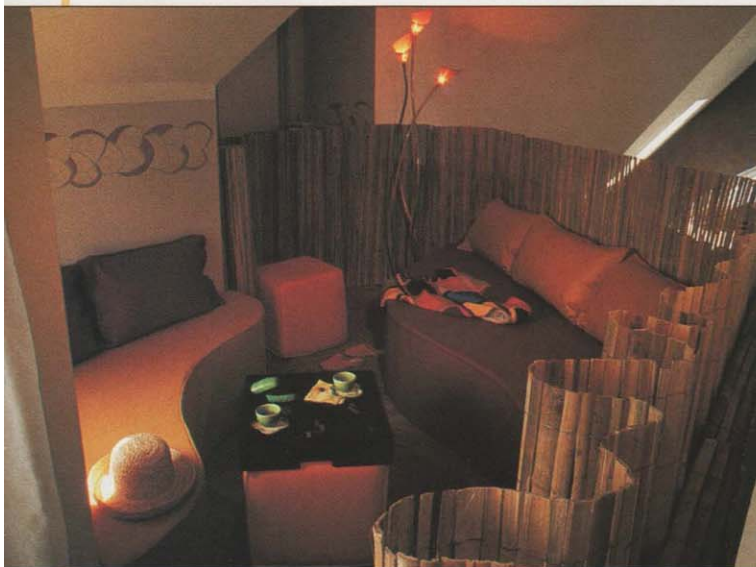
They come in 15-foot lengths, are 6 feet high, and are woven with a pliable wire. The pliable wire allows you to shape the material in freestanding meandering rows. To shorten the length, snip with a pair of wire cutters. Bamboo and Rattan Works will cut the height for a fee. You can also do it yourself.

To cut the height of split bamboo, tightly coil the bamboo. Place a strip of 2.5" masking tape - blue or white - around where you want to cut. Measure the length, and make a clear straight line around the entire coil on the tape. Cut with a circular saw. Use only a new or very sharp small tooth blade or the bamboo will shred. A minor amount of shredding is unavoidable.

If you are concerned about the bamboo scratching your floor, dip the ends in cleat mat or stain polyurethane. This can be done while the bamboo is coiled.

Remove the tape. Dip 2 - 3 inches of the end of the coil into a can of fast drying mat or stain polyurethane. Let drip off and dry suspended coils for about 5 - 10 minutes. Turn the bamboo over, carefully uncoiling it, and allow to dry. If the liquid drips, you have turned the bamboo over too soon. If spots are missing you can fill them in with a brush.

Let the polyurethane dry according to instructions on the can before you turn the fencing back over and do your final styling.



Start with good quality, high-density foam. Cover it with vibrant colored fabrics and watch your room come alive. It's cheap, easy and fun!