

# Nursery crimes

It may be the baby's room, but says **Tamsin Blanchard**, you needn't throw good taste out with the bath water



Apparently, it is essential that my new baby has a co-ordinated nursery. At least, that's what it says on the Mothercare website ([www.mothercare.com](http://www.mothercare.com)), to which I have become hopelessly addicted. As this is my last column for six months while I go off on maternity leave, I hope you don't mind if I indulge in a little baby talk. Right now, I am happy to take everything – anything – Mothercare tells me as Very Sound Advice. I think I might have been brainwashed. But even I have to draw the line at the idea of a co-ordinated nursery. Why must it be matching? Why must it be in shades of lime green, sherbet yellow, and appliquéd with Winnie-the-Pooh – complete with matching

self-adhesive wall frieze, fabric lantern, curtains, and cot bumper?

Now don't get me wrong – I'm not advocating Bauhaus cot mobiles (though my other half seems quite set on the idea) or baby bedding in shades of Armani 'greige' (despite the fact that interiors guru Kelly Hoppen has developed a range of cream and taupe cashmere throws for the baby who has everything). But I can't quite come to terms with the idea of all those frills and flounces, all those cutesy animals. Do babies really like all that stuff?

According to Gemma Whiteside, Mothercare's buying director for hardware and toys, all that matters to the babies is the immediate environment of the cot. The Winnie-

the-Pooh syndrome is purely for the benefit of mothers (fathers tend to concentrate on practicalities like car seats). To start with, babies can't focus on anything more than 35cm away for the first few weeks, and can't recognise colour until they are two to three months (when they respond more to brights than insipid pastels). But first-time parents spend an average of £1,800 (including a pram) feathering their little chicks' nests. 'You can't underestimate the influence of *Changing Rooms*,' says Whiteside. The nursery – often the smallest room in the house and the most expensive – has become a mother's indulgence.

So, with a little help from interior-design consultant Anna Ryder Richardson, Whiteside is on a mission to 'up the taste levels' in the nursery. 'We're getting people to think a bit more,' she says. The modern baby can expect plain chambray and clean colours, to be mixed and matched. Mothercare has even produced a book, *Babies' Rooms* (£9.99) by Ryder Richardson, with tips on how to do it yourself, complete with templates of mobiles you can make. Perhaps that Bauhaus idea is not such a bad one after all. You might even see one at a Mothercare near you soon. **OM**

## MY CHAIR... David Breuer-Weil, artist

I think old chairs have a lot of pathos. I found this one in a skip five years ago and felt compelled to rescue it and rehouse it in my studio, a converted garage next to my house. It reminds me of a modern version of Van Gogh's wood-and-straw studio chair. But at the same time, being a 70s office chair, it can also look quite clinical.

The fact that it's on wheels is incredibly helpful when I'm working. I sometimes paint miniatures



but I usually work on vast pieces, where I string the canvasses from wall to wall. As I work on five to six pieces at the same time I like to wheel myself between canvasses on this chair.

I'm also slightly obsessed by the conflict between working in an office and working in a studio, probably because I used to work in an office myself when I was the director of the modern art department at Sotheby's. I like the idea of splattering an office chair in paint and using it in my studio.

I've always subscribed to the view that you should never get too comfortable in a studio – a bit of anxiety and discomfort is good for creativity. Anyway, my studio is suitably tatty and I'm not exactly deferential towards the furniture in there. As well as the chair, I have a large old marble table which doubles as a palette. Lucy Siegle

Project 2, by David Breuer-Weil, is at the Bargehouse, London SE1, until 6 February

## Take three Top tables by Lucy Siegle



# 1

Even if your home didn't start life as an industrial space, you can still catch up with the urban groove with a heavy-duty cubic table. Choose from a Zebrano veneered cube on an aluminium plinth (£712) or the stainless-steel version shown here (£492). HB, Unit 2, Broadwyn Trading Estate, Cradley Heath, West Midlands (01215 599 111)

# 2

Designer Caterina Fadda has a clutch of awards to recommend her funky, practical creations, ranging from glassware to these Perspex squares. The Amaze side table (£89) is formed from one continuous line and can be assembled into a modular unit for extra storage. Unit 108, Oxo Tower Wharf, Bargehouse Street, London SE1 (020 7928 0024)



# 3

David Linley has been fashioning antiques of the future since the late 80s. When he's not working on commissions for Mick Jagger or kitting out yachts, he makes pieces such as this Lizard side table (£2,450), in ebony, red lacquer and acrylic, with integral light to ensure you can't miss the red interior (020 7730 7300; [www.davidlinley.com](http://www.davidlinley.com))