

NYC & G

New York Cottages and Gardens

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CHELSEA
CLINTON HILL
THE BRONX
TRIBECA
UPPER
EAST SIDE



SIMPLY CHIC

FAMILY AFFAIR



Positive Outlook
In the living room, a SoHo cocktail table from Desiron is surrounded by Serena & Lily poufs and a cotton-slipcovered sofa and armchair from Restoration Hardware. The black-and-white zebra print is from Natural Curiosities. A Tom Dixon brushed-brass pendant hangs above a Saarinen table and Eames dining chairs from Design Within Reach. See *Resources*.

The work of mother-daughter design team Sissy+Marley brings out the kid in everyone

BY CINDI COOK | PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCO RICCA



Even sluggish economic times can't keep creative types down. Take Sissy+Marley, a Brooklyn-based interior design firm that specializes in children's room decor. The creation of Chelsea Reale and Rachel Geisler, who are sisters, and their mother, Diana Rice, the company was launched in 2011, when both Reale and Geisler were pregnant and the economy was still shaking in its boots. What better time, figured these brave creative types, to take a leap of faith? "Design just seemed like the way to go," says Geisler. "Besides, we get to work with our mom. She's not only our parent and business partner, she's our best friend. We wouldn't have it any other way."

The plan was also spurred in part by Reale's decision not to go back to an office job, and to find an occupation that would offer her more flexibility. "We did some research and didn't see anyone designing kids' rooms in a stylish way," recounts Reale. Sissy+Marley—the moniker comes from Geisler's childhood nickname for Reale and Ryan Marley, Geisler's daughter—was a success from the start. Two years later, when they had trouble finding the right wallpaper for their projects, Reale, Geisler, and Rice started to make their own, partnering with wall-covering designer Jill Malek, a friend who is also a Brooklyn-based mom. "We keep coming up with new patterns," reports Reale, adding that she and her mother form the right-brain side of the firm, while her business-minded sister is more left-brain oriented. "We are the dreamers, and Rachel reels us in!"

All three are multitaskers in their own right. Reale comes from a background in fashion (she oversaw store displays for DKNY); Geisler previously worked as a pediatric physical therapist; and Rice has been a private chef. (The sisters say their "super-stylish, hip mother"



Image Is Everything
A Clyde mirror from Oly is mounted on a living room wall (ABOVE); the runner is from Calypso St. Barth. The kitchen (OPPOSITE) includes Jonathan Adler's brass Rio pendant lights and Tractor stools by BassamFellows. See *Resources*.



Great Form

A silver-leaf artwork hangs in the entry (ABOVE); the brass sconce is from Onefortythree. In the master bedroom (RIGHT AND OPPOSITE), a chromed-steel Neo chair from Jayson Home sits at a whitewashed ash desk from Blu Dot, and *Hyden Horses-Blonde*, a photograph from Natural Curiosities, hangs above a linen-wrapped headboard from Restoration Hardware. The Crosshair Hide bench is from Wisteria. See *Resources*.



was always cooking something in the kitchen when they were young.) Rice was born in Brooklyn and raised her daughters, who both make their home in Carroll Gardens, in Park Slope, so the trio is more than familiar with the needs of customers in New York's more family-oriented neighborhoods.

"A lot of people are attracted to our children's work, which often leads to our redesigning other rooms too," Geisler says. "Many families don't necessarily want fancy spaces, but they still want something beautiful." Sara and Douglas Mercer, whose 2,000-square-foot Tribeca apartment is featured on these pages, are a case in point. They contacted Sissy+Marley to design their nursery while Sara was pregnant with their daughter Hermione, who is now three (the couple are awaiting the birth of Hermione's new baby sister this month). "I wanted to do something with baby elephants and found Sissy+Marley's baby-elephant wallpaper

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online,” Sara recalls. “I fell in love with it.” Reale, Geisler, and Rice gave the nursery—formerly Sara’s office—a monochromatic palette of white, oatmeal, flax, and linen infused with metallics and pale pinks. “They made great use of the space,” Sara adds. “And the little touches, like the swans hanging above Hermione’s crib, make the room even more special.”

The nursery was executed so successfully that the Mercers signed up for a revamp of the entire apartment. The goal: a calm, chic family retreat that would be both functional and fabulous. “Sara is a health and wellness expert and wanted the home to reflect her holistic approach to life,” Rice says, and Douglas works for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), so a chaos-free environment was in order. “It’s easy for us to open a client’s mind when we’re designing kids’ rooms,” Geisler says, “but all our rooms have many layers to them. We want every space to look pretty and be super livable.” ✨



Child's Play
Sissy+Marley's Lucky Star paper in Silver covers the walls in daughter Hermione's playroom (THIS PAGE). Metallic bins from Serena & Lily sit in a West Elm shelving unit; the dhurrie is from Calypso St. Barth. Hermione's nursery (OPPOSITE) features a Restoration Hardware armchair, Baby Elephant Walk wallpaper from Sissy+Marley, a Madeline Weinrib dhurrie, and a DucDuc Campaign crib. See Resources.