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## Rooms Where Elegance Meets High Performance

You're crazy about your home—its style, comfort and personality. Yet you sense there's a purpose waiting, a space teeming, for nurturing creativity or just having fun. A themed room may be the answer.

**M**usic, crafts, movies, sewing—whatever your passion, a themed room can provide a place for everything, with everything in its place. But you don't have to sacrifice elegance for functionality.

"The technical aspects and aesthetics go hand in hand," says Michael Smith, partner at Triad Design Associates in Griffith, Indiana. "Using rich materials and deeper, richer tones can make a themed room look exceptional, but still with a clean look, so it's clear what you're there for."

Barbara Ince, vice president and director of design at Susan Fredman Design Group in Chicago, says clear communication is key. "One client wanted a craft room; we learned the son would be building model rockets, so the space needed a high enough ceiling. Had we not known what he was doing," a vital design aspect could have been missed.

Smith suggests having clients cut out pictures of what they like—and don't like. That helps clarify the client's vision for the space. Says Richard Samuels, owner of Interiors by Design in South Bend, "We ask, 'If you could have anything you want, how would it look?'"

David Weston, partner at Think Design Studio in Grand Rapids, Michigan, created an elegant music room with highly polished hardwood flooring and Oriental rugs. "I take inspiration from the 18th century, with very luxurious drapes, upholstery and antiques."

Samuels recalls a stately old home with a little catchall room converted to a music room. "There were too many doors and one window. To create an elegant look, we concealed the doors with picture frame panels and replaced the window with French doors that open on a small terrace. We created this wonderful getaway, to play music or listen to it."

Weston notes that acoustics matters. "I suggest drapes and rugs, so the sound isn't too bright or tinny, or over-amplified."

To ramp up a home movie experience, think concealed



equipment and superior sound. Smith hid speakers in walls and provided high-tech remote controls for sound, screen and lighting. Samuels created three levels of seating with reclining leather theater chairs. Faux-painted walls, picture-framed panels with a damask pattern, and a step-down to the room lend "a very elegant feeling," Samuels says.

Not that there isn't room for a bit of whimsy: glass cabinets hold traditional candies, a popcorn machine is at the ready, and big movie posters brighten the mood.

However, sometimes "it's better to understate the purpose of a concept room," says Ince, who chose neutral hues for a craft room, letting the crafts provide the color in a renovated attic. Cork flooring provides durability, safety and absorption of sound. Conventional task seating is ergonomically correct so that the children don't outgrow the chairs. Two worktables are on casters so they can adjoin each other or be moved near a window for natural light. "Lighting is critical for a craft room," Ince notes. "We worked with a lighting consultant, calculating foot-candles at the work surface level."

Style and function can share the space: name placards identify drawers' contents and there's a wet sink for paint brushes, while display space and a window seat add visual interest and comfort.

When one room must meet the needs of multiple themes, create distinct areas. Samuels did that in transforming a basement: "With that home we created several different areas all within a typical home to make it multifunctional," Samuels says.

Full-view windows were added for more light, along separate egress. Two computer work stations face away from two other activities: a console with game and puzzle area, and a game table with captain's chairs. A sofa and table offer a comfy spot for reading, while at the opposite wall are an entertainment center and love seat; two ottomans provide moveable seating. An area for sewing was created in the laundry room, with a bench and tools for fly-fishing at the other end of the room.

With imagination and planning, themed rooms can be a "wonderful getaway," Samuels says. —JULIE DEAN KESSLER