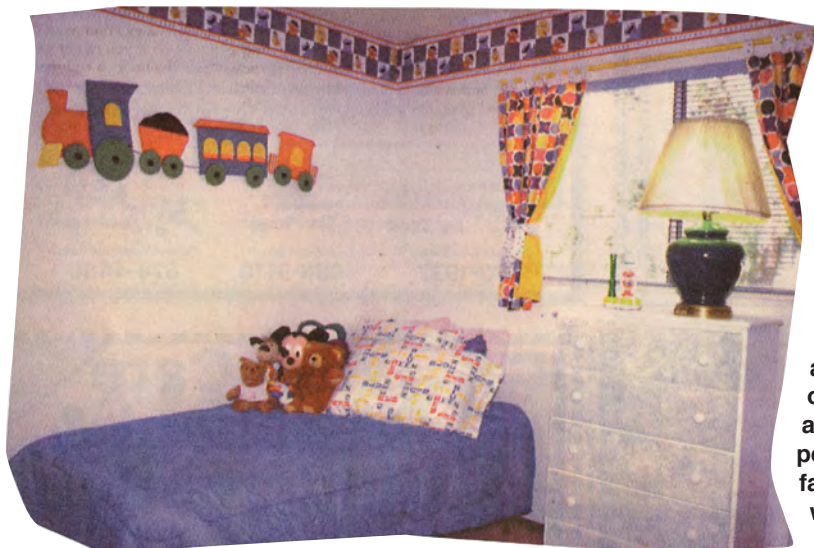




## CHEAP DIGS

BY VIVEN SANTANA HUGHES

Can you transform your child's room for around \$200? Yes, it's possible—with a little creativity, plenty of elbow grease and inspiration from our designers



*'You can get really creative—when you have to'*  
—Pamela Thompson

For designers Pamela Thompson and Gervel Sampson, the goal was to brighten up 2-year-old Bryan's somewhat small room that gets limited light from its single window. Primary colors were selected, with a twist—a lighter slate blue was paired with the traditional bright red and yellow, so the overall effect wouldn't be as dark. The walnut-stained chest of drawers was refinished in white (lots of sanding and two coats of a good base were required), while the drawer fronts were sponged in slate over white and given new porcelain knobs. Tab curtains (made by Thompson's mom) add color and interest to the window. Want a custom drapery rod on the cheap? Stick some fabric on a plain metal curtain rod (they used spray Formula 77 adhesive) and there you have it. While the new wallpaper border screams Sesame Street (Bryan's an avid Elmo fan), the curtains' print fabric can go with a new border when he outgrows this one—maybe one with trains, a passion Bryan shares with his dad, *L.A. Parent's* general manager for production, Kendall In. For storing books and toys in a decorative manner, Thompson designed three simple 18- by 36-inch wooden cubes; In was recruited as carpenter. Finishing touches of a Stroud's slate blue comforter (the toddler outgrew his crib while the work was in progress!), alphabet pillow cases that double as shams, and a blue-and-white rag rug tie it all together.



*'Work with what you already have in the house so you don't have to buy more'*  
—Gervel Sampson





**'Sheets are cheaper than fabric'**

—Rickey Pryor



**T**wo hundred dollars buys nothing," insisted Sharon Staley when I first approached her with this challenge. Nevertheless, she and her partner, Rickey Pryor, still managed to stay within the budget—with a couple dollars to spare, in fact—and achieve their goals of adding color and storage solutions to 4-year-old Lauren's room.

While custom-cut white OSH shades keep out the afternoon sun, swags (a 1 1/2-foot wide rectangle of fabric twisted onto a swag bracket) dress up the windows. Can't sew? No excuses: "You can use a twin sheet and cut it in half—you don't even have to finish the end," says Pryor who did all the sewing here. He recommends using plain sheets if you're not going to line them or the pattern won't be attractive from the back. A red sheet and red and white striped fabric were stitched together to form a reversible duvet over Lauren's own comforter. Leftover fabric covers decorative throw pillows. Best of all, everything is machine washable.

Another key to the successful transformation was to "edit the dresser and sheives," says Staley, who likes to keep things simple. A plastic shelf unit (not shown) makes the upper closet space more usable. Four under-bed storage boxes house toys, art supplies and dressup gear, and a green throw rug provides a comfortable place to play on the hardwood floor. As I left, Lauren's mom, Associate Editor Christina Elston, was getting a few fips on redoing her living room. . . .

**'Keep it fun and simple—and look for sales'**

—Sharon Staley



**F**ull of ideas, I decided to give it a try myself. Kyle's room had been a blah beige since we moved into this house two years ago. One visit to Dunn-Edwards Paints solved that. First we used an eggshell latex Swiss Coffee (a bright white) to cover walls and ceiling, and gloss for woodwork. The walls then got the sponged look with two coats of diluted yellow gloss latex—a brighter shade under a lighter one gives depth to the walls—applied with a natural sea sponge. (Read the book *Paint Magic* [Random House] for tips on this surprisingly easy technique.) I found paint to be the least expensive way to change the look of a room.

For accessories, IKEA came through in a big way: A 7-foot-long stuffed serpent winds around a tree branch as a valance; a yellow-and-black, zebra-striped duvet is turned into a wall hanging. The heavy, plywood closet doors were cut up and turned into storage "cubbies" and replaced with jungle-print shower curtains (my theory: easy access equals cleaner room has so far held true).

The old and dingy wall-to-wall carpeting was removed to expose the wood floors now topped with a couple of \$8 IKEA throw rugs. Bulletin boards and artwork (leftover jungle prints from his older brother's room, a painted leopard from art class) are hung at 6-year-old Kyle's eye level.

"My room's the awesomest," he says. The ultimate compliment.

Transform your kid's room for about \$200 bucks? You've seen it can be done, now go to it!

