

# children's rooms

PRACTICAL DESIGN SOLUTIONS FOR AGES 0-10



Joanna Cope



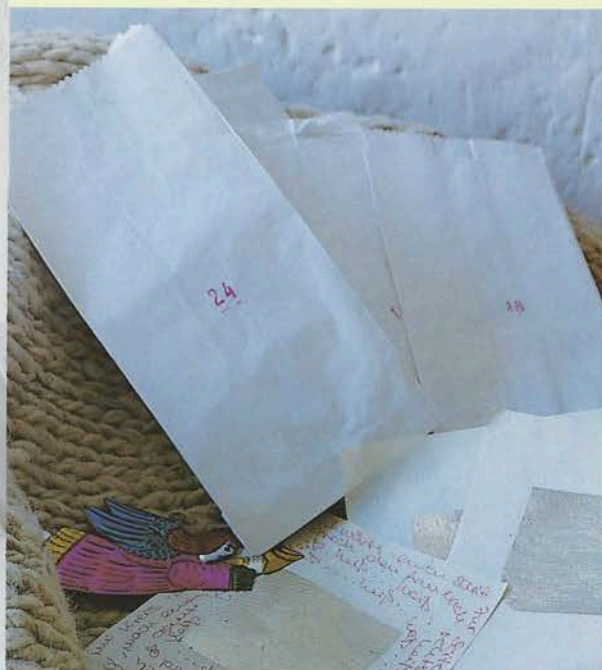
# THE GOOD LIFE



It's a mistake to think that living the organic life means that you have to make design or style compromises. In the north Italian countryside, Katrin and her husband, Omero, have converted an old, abandoned windmill. Inhabited by nesting birds when they first discovered it, the windmill is now an eco-aware home, complete with a children's clothes and furniture design business. Their home displays all the good things about an organic approach to interior design: simplicity, comfortable minimalism and a concern for healthy, eco-living.







**LEFT** The Advent envelopes are made from baker's bread bags and stamped with small numbers, one for each day of Christmas. Each bag contains a small gift, such as a handmade angel, small chocolate or game.

**LEFT** Cool white walls and woodwork and a tiled floor evoke a pure and simple ethos that is softened with wooden furniture for comfort and a woodburning stove for warmth. An arched window frames the view of the river.

**OPPOSITE** One of the early products that Katrin designed was this pull-along horse made from discarded wooden scaffolding. Wherever Laura is playing, she loves to have it nearby.

When Katrin and Omero first saw the romantic but dilapidated windmill four years ago, it had been long abandoned, the sails had already been removed and birds were nesting wherever they could indoors. The couple then embarked on an extensive renovation project, establishing their home in the top two floors of the windmill and later converting the ground floor into a large workshop.

When Katrin gave birth to their daughter, Laura, a year later, she decided to launch a business from home that could grow alongside her baby. Starting out by making one-off children's clothes from recycled linen and selling them to exclusive stores and by mail order, she then turned her thoughts to furniture. She commissioned several carpenters to make cribs, cots and beds to her own designs using recycled wood that included discarded wooden builder's scaffolding





and old wine barrels. Katrin liked the idea of taking very simple materials and re-using them in new contexts. When used as builder's scaffolding, the wood is unprepossessing but Katrin gives it a new lease of life by recycling it into desirable, simple, clean-lined objects, such as a chunky crib on rockers and a simple kitchen table.

Once Katrin had started to recycle linen and other natural fabrics into exquisitely simple designs for baby clothes, she included in her repertoire pull-along toys and a babywalker made of recycled wood. They are undeniably more charming than standard plastic examples of the same things.

Both sides of the business have continued to grow and develop, and Katrin now employs three carpenters and three seamstresses. Her furniture lines and superb children's clothes are sold in stores all over Italy and as far afield as New York and California.

**ABOVE** This delightful baby's crib was one of Katrin's first furniture designs. It is made from wood that has been recycled from old wine barrels.

**RIGHT** A full-sized eco-chic cot made from recycled wooden scaffolding has a satisfyingly robust design. Pure cotton sheets and a linen throw make up the organic bedlinen.



**RIGHT** An organic version of a traditional Japanese futon, this chunky bed base sports wide planks, sunken spaces for bedside lights and two head supports, and there is plenty of room for a king-size mattress.











**ABOVE** Star cookies, made with organic ingredients, are always a favourite when guests come to visit. They bake over the woodburning stove, which doubles as a heating source.

**LEFT** The wooden trestle table, as well as the simple wooden dressers and storage cupboards, were all made to order by Katrin's own designs.





the home. Nowadays it heats just the kitchen, while other woodburning stoves around the home provide heat for the remaining rooms.

Recycling is an important part of the family's life. Encouraged by her own beliefs and a willingness to pass on an eco-awareness to her child, Katrin has created a thriving business that allows her to work from home and bring up Laura in the calm of the countryside. But escaping from work is not quite so easy when your home is also your place of work and there is a constant stream of visitors to the workshop. Nevertheless, living and working in the same building does have obvious advantages. The main one is that Katrin is able to pop in on her daughter at key times during the working day, which she enjoys very much. In addition, when she returns home after business trips abroad, visiting stores and looking for inspiration, there is much less disruption to family life.

**BELOW** Laura was introduced to organic living at a young age. She loves helping her mother, an accomplished cook, in the kitchen, cutting out the cookie shapes.

The windmill's interior has been painted white throughout for a clean, cool atmosphere tempered only by natural wood and neutral linens. In the bedroom, the focal point is a giant futon-style bed base, which Katrin designed. Placed near the window, it allows views out over the local landscape. When Laura was a baby, she shared the bedroom with her parents, sleeping in a cot also designed by her mother.

In the kitchen, simple wooden freestanding furniture houses all the cooking paraphernalia. Katrin has designed tall dressers to hold the everyday china and glasses, while rustic larder cupboards contain all the less visually appealing items. Her chunky table doubles as a worksurface for making homemade bread and cookies, and is conveniently placed close to the woodburning stove. When the family first moved in, this stove was the only source of heat for

