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BALANCING ACT • The inner sanctum of a new master bath is a serene modern spa, a delightful divergence from its most traditional other half



WHY WOULD TWO BUSY PROFESSIONALS with three young children disrupt their already hectic life to reconfigure and rebuild the master bathroom in their 1990s suburban Boston house?

“More light!” comes the swift answer from the homeowner/mother/physician. “Our master bath was not very inviting. The shower stall, especially, was very dark. Going to take a shower felt like stepping into a cave.”

Now, following a collaborative design process, she steps into a 350-square-foot luxurious, luminous spa with mahogany

vanities, a Japanese-style stainless steel soaking tub, a whirlpool bath, and 10-by-6-foot shower with its own window. The magic is the work of David Sharff, principal of David Sharff Architect, P.C., of Medfield and Orleans, Massachusetts, interior designer Barbara Goldman of Barbara Goldman Design in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Kenneth Vona Construction of Waltham, Massachusetts, which was responsible for the construction and millwork.

“The transformation was, literally, night and day,” says the homeowner. “Now we have more natural light. It feels much more open.”

However, because the house is more New England traditional than spa spare, the design of the new master bath gives both sensibilities separate but equal attention. A long

THE NEW MASTER bath has an air of luxury, thanks to the iridescent silver, beige, and white 1-inch-by-2-inch glass tiles. When lit, the shallow ceiling dome adds a sense of romance. Curving teak stairs that match the whirlpool tub surround lead up to the custom stainless steel soaking tub.

ARCHITECTURE: DAVID SHARFF ARCHITECT, P.C.
INTERIOR DESIGN: BARBARA GOLDMAN DESIGN

THE RELIEF OF the carved limestone tiles suggests waves, fish, or distant, misty mountain ranges. The 10-by-6-foot shower stall doubles as a luxurious steam room. The recycled glass bench top absorbs light from the window and adds a luminous tone.

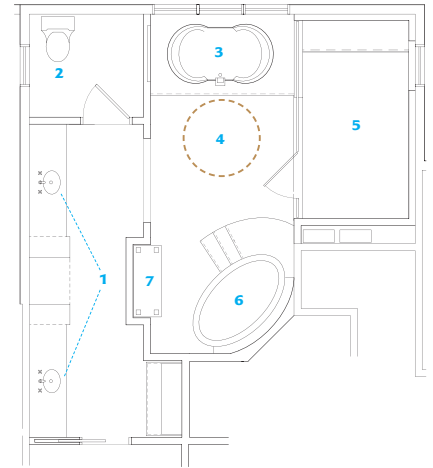


hallway-like space, distinguished by a stately mahogany double vanity and makeup station along one wall, connects the sleek tub-and-shower room to the master bedroom. Black granite, shot through with iridescent bits of mica, forms the countertop, and Balinese prints that the homeowners bought decades ago, but never displayed, have found a stylish home between the two mahogany-framed mirrors. At the

far end of the space is the lavatory, tucked behind a door with a glass transom that allows light into the private WC, which also features its own window.

Turn right at the end of the vanity corridor and, voilà, there is another, marvelously tranquil world. Three windows, the old bathroom's only natural light source, now provide a fitting backdrop to the teak-surrounded whirlpool tub. Radiant heat

- 1 DOUBLE VANITY
- 2 WC
- 3 WHIRLPOOL TUB
- 4 CEILING DOME
- 5 SHOWER
- 6 STAINLESS STEEL TUB
- 7 TEAK BENCH



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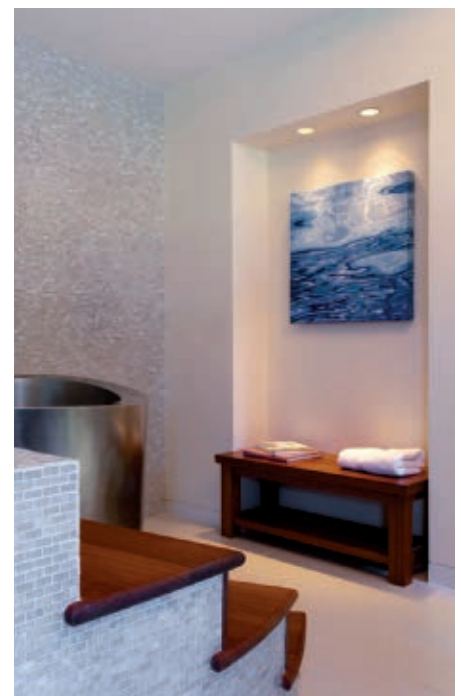
warms the 12-by-24-inch porcelain tile, subtly patterned in beige strié, that covers the floor. A new window brings daylight into the sybaritic shower stall, which features steam, two showerheads, a bench, and carved green-blue limestone tiles whose relief creates patterns in the ever-changing light.

"It's a hard material that creates a sense of softness," says Goldman. "The same is true of the recycled glass that lines the bench and forms the shower sill. It looks soft, almost waxy, though the material is very hard."

Outside the shower, a shallow dome set into the ceiling provides indirect illumination via cove lighting. "The light bounces back from the curved area," says Sharff. "The prefabricated dome is, I think, more interesting than a chandelier."

In addition to the dome, his design called for a variety of natural and man-made light sources, including a skylight and recessed ceiling lights. The pale flooring and glass wall tiles help to diffuse and reflect light. But the undisputed focal point of the inner sanctum is the massive stainless steel soaking tub placed like sculpture before a curved wall. It transforms the room into a temple of serenity.

A SHALLOW NICHE outfitted with a watery blue painting and illuminated by inset lights provides a focal point opposite the stainless steel soaking tub. The teak bench adds a visual link to the tub's steps.



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THE MORE TRADITIONAL side of the bathroom features two mahogany vanities and a dressing table topped with black granite veined with mica. Balinese prints add a personal touch.

“We wanted a Japanese soaking tub after we experienced one in a California hotel,” the homeowner says. “The two tubs perform very different functions: We use the traditional bathtub, which has air jets, for quick baths. The stainless steel tub is for relaxation.”

Subtle 1-by-2-inch iridescent glass tiles in tones of white, beige, and silver cover the curved wall and the face of the three-step teak staircase, which follows the tall soaking tub’s contours and provides easy access. The final Zen touch is the slender wall-mounted tub filler. On the opposite wall, a shallow alcove holds an appropriately watery painting awash in illumination from lights set into the ceiling. “The whole room is a zone for relaxation,” Goldman says. “When you close the door, you get away.”

With a flat-screen television facing the whirlpool tub and a music dock and hidden ceiling-mounted speakers, the formerly uninviting master bathroom has become popular with the whole family.

“My daughter likes to lie in the tub and watch *Hannah Montana*,” says the homeowner. “And the shower even attracts a young man who doesn’t usually like showers. The first time he came home from a lacrosse game and got into a steam shower, he was hooked.” ■



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