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Stylish Showers & Tubs

Designer tubs and showers can provide a stunning aesthetic focal point to the bath, whether making a bold color statement, showcasing striking architectural elements or creating a calm sanctuary for reflection and rejuvenation.

BY KIM BERNDTSON

Showers and tubs are often the main events in master bathrooms. At their most basic, they offer a simple place to cleanse at the beginning or end of a day. However, at their most glorious, they can be an aesthetic focal point, making bold statements as sculpted architectural elements or tiled masterpieces. They can also be sanctuaries for relaxation or rejuvenation, or even cultural havens for meditation and reflection.

This month, *KBDN* asked designers to share master bathroom projects that transform the basic tub and shower into something much more celebrated.

HONORING A HERITAGE

There are several time-honored rituals and traditions within Japanese culture when it comes to bathing, many of which were shared with Byron Kellar and Jennifer Renninger, designers at the Neil Kelly Company in Portland, OR, by their clients when they renovated this master bathroom.

“She grew up in Japan and, after meeting an American soldier who was stationed in Tokyo on temporary assignment during the Vietnam War, the couple married and moved to the United States in the early 1970s,” says Kellar. “In the years since, they have lived in a few different homes, and they’ve

◀ ▶ ↻ 🔍 The ofuro soaking tub not only grabs center stage in this bathroom designed by Bryon Kellar and Jennifer Renninger, it also honors their client's Japanese heritage. The designers included a handheld showerhead and faucet, both integrated into an adjacent bench, so their clients can fully cleanse before getting into the tub. A bucket and stool, additional accessories associated with the bathing ritual, are also positioned within reach.

Since the soaking tub is combined with a traditional shower to create a wet room environment, designers at the Neil Kelly Company clad the space with a variety of styles and colors of porcelain tile, including the wood-look tile that finish the window wall.



always wanted to include a Japanese-style bathroom like the one she grew up with and like those they would use when they visited her family.”

Since this is their ‘forever’ home, the couple decided that now was the time. At the heart of the remodeled space is a custom 54"x30" Zen Bathworks ofuro soaking tub accented with a Brizo tub filler. In reverence to age-old tradition, they chose one crafted from wood, specifically Alaskan red cedar, which offers a clear, knot-free grain and uniform color.

With a continued awareness of Japanese customs, the designers were cognizant to include a handheld showerhead and faucet, both integrated into an adjacent bench, so their clients can fully cleanse before getting into the tub. A bucket and stool, additional accessories associated with the bathing ritual, are positioned within reach.

“According to tradition, no soap ever goes into the tub,” he says. “It is just for soaking.”

To build upon the organic tone set by the tub, Kellar and Renninger sheathed the exterior wall with Elegant Wood Brazilian Koa porcelain tile that resembles wood, mitering it around the edges of the recessed window surrounds. Since the soaking tub is combined with a traditional shower to create a wet room environment, the remaining walls are clad with large-format Stone Box Black Ink porcelain tile while the floor is comprised of Century Kosmos Orion porcelain tile.

“Large-format tile, such as 12"x24" to 36"x48", is a trend for many clients,” says Kellar, “as is tile in unique sizes, such as 2"x30" and 4"x36".”

Across from the shower and tub enclosure is a custom Neil Kelly double vanity in African Ribbon mahogany, topped with Perla Venata quartzite. A separate area features a bookcase for displaying special items and functions as the water closet. A third room is the walk-in closet.



Photos: Darius Kuzmickas/KuDa Photography

The trio of spaces offers a haven with dramatically different design vibes from the rest of the home, which features white windows, woodwork, mouldings and trims.

“The bathroom is a stand-alone piece,” Kellar says, noting that they overcame that challenge by designing a custom pocket door entry with white paint on one side and a stained cherry paneled profile that matches the closet door on the other. “When they step through the door, it’s like stepping through a portal into another culture.”



Photo: Brad Scott Photography

Over the course of two years, Talie Jane transformed this home into a mountain modern retreat, complete with an Asian-influenced master bathroom designed for functionality and relaxation. The rectangular-shaped space features a central vanity and make-up station that are flanked by a private toilet room on one end and a luxurious open shower/tub room on the other.

MOUNTAIN MODERN RETREAT

Spanning the course of two years, Talie Jane transformed this early 1990s home into a mountain modern retreat, complete with an Asian-influenced master bathroom designed for functionality and relaxation.

Inspired by her clients' recent trip to Peru, the rectangular-shaped space features a layout based on a bathroom in a luxury hotel in which they stayed where a central vanity and make-up station are flanked by a private toilet room on one end and a luxurious open shower/tub room on the other.

"The bathroom has three distinct sections, each divided by custom, sliding hanging glass doors," says the principal designer/ASID, Talie Jane Interiors in Lake Tahoe, NV. "An open shower and tub room, like in this bathroom, is becoming very popular. It can create the appearance of a larger bathroom while allowing for more space. You no longer need to plan for a separate tub and shower, so you can enjoy wide open space – with lots of elbow room— when washing."

In this wet room, Talie Jane focused on creating a spa-like aesthetic via two waterfall showerheads complemented with

an overhead rain showerhead and a Kohler soaking tub, positioned to take advantage of the view.

"Homeowners are also requesting that their open showers be fully equipped...think his/her rain or waterfall showerheads; misting systems; hand-held shower attachments; built-in Bluetooth speaker systems; voice-activated systems; electrified, polymer privacy glass and more," she continues. "The trend isn't just for inside the shower either, since people also want smart toilets and TV installations, such as in this bathroom, which features a custom TV integrated into the mirror."

Another highlight of the space is texture, illustrated by juxtaposing large-format, smooth Brazilian Black slate floor tile with the rounded Island Stone Medan Charcoal pebble shower floor tile and rough Lava Stone Chisel shower/tub wall tile. Talie Jane also added texture via leathered Black Pearl granite, sourced from a quarry in Andhra Pradesh, India. She used the natural stone as a surround for the soaking tub and for the vanity tops, the latter of which features a hand-chipped edge to create a rough and organic texture.

"Incorporating texture really brings in a lot of depth, despite the dark tones," she says.



Photo: Andrew Bennett Photography

➦ To create continuity between the tub area and shower, Lisa Diaz repeated the mosaic tile from the tub's accent wall in this shower niche. The generously sized shower also has adequate room for a pair of showerheads.

➦ The original architectural plans for this master bathroom called for an ordinary sheet of drywall to separate the tub and shower, but designer Lisa Diaz decided to create something different in the space to allow the clients to enjoy soaking in their new tub.

BEYOND THE ORDINARY

While the initial architectural plans for this master bathroom called for a plain, ordinary sheet of drywall as a separation between the tub and shower, Lisa Diaz saw it as an opportunity to create something special for her clients as they enjoy a peaceful soak in their tub.

“Knowing that the tub would be in front of the wall, I wanted to do something different...to dress up the wall and make it the focal feature of the room,” says the owner of Nuela Designs in Austin, TX, who worked with Jonathan Traylor of Meridian Custom Homes on the project.

To coordinate with an overall design theme of light, bright and serene, she chose to cover the entire wall with natural stone mosaic from Marazzi. The crisp, bright marble creates a monochromatic, yet striking, backdrop for the American Standard soaking tub, which she accented with a Brizo tub filler in a Chrome finish to coordinate with the metallic details in the tile.

The tile's linear hexagon shape adds interest while creating a distinction from the large-format, rectangular floor tile, which is also marble.

“I wanted something geometric and graphic so it would make a statement,” she says, noting that using different tile on the floor and accent wall makes the latter special and unique.

Diaz also added a niche at tub height that extends nearly the full length of the wall.

“It's functional for holding soaps, loofahs, etc.,” she says. “It provides easy access so you don't need a tray to float across the tub, but it's also visually impactful because it spans the entire wall.”

To create continuity between the tub area and shower, the latter of which is located on the back side of the accent wall, Diaz repeated the mosaic tile in the shower niche, giving it



an elongated shape that echoes the tub niche. The designer also carried the large-format marble tile into the shower, using it as a wall covering. The generously sized shower also has adequate room for a pair of showerheads, something that is becoming a more frequent request from many of her clients who also often want a hand shower, she notes.

MINDFUL COMPLIANCE

Ashley Campbell was in the midst of renovating this master bathroom when her client suffered a heart attack, resulting in compromised mobility.

“We were reconfiguring the entire upstairs level to include an ensuite master bathroom as well as a master closet,” says the ASID member/principal, Ashley Campbell Interior Design in Denver, CO, who worked in collaboration with Littleton Construction. “After his heart attack, the renovation quickly became about making the bathroom ADA compliant. He also

wanted to maintain as many of the initial design decisions as possible because he knew his wife had fallen in love with a lot of the selections we had made.”

To that end, they kept the initial plan for a wet room.

“A lot of Four Seasons Hotels throughout the country are combining the tub with the shower into one room, and my clients are big fans of the concept,” she says, noting that the inclusion of a curbless entry allows easy access for his wheelchair.

Original finish decisions that remained unchanged included the Ann Sacks Statuary Classic marble that clads the shower/tub area.

“She loves natural stone and marble and we had already selected the gorgeous ceiling and shower wall tiles,” she says.

Another original product selection was the Native Trails concrete tub, which she positioned perfectly to fit beneath the angled ceiling. Accenting it with a Kallista tub filler adds to its beauty.

“It isn’t necessarily ADA compliant, but it’s spectacular,” she says, adding that freestanding tubs, in general, are a popular request from many of her clients.

The relatively dark coloration of the tub also reinforces the concept of contrast within the space, Campbell continues, adding that she references the project as ‘elevated duality.’

“There is contrast between light and dark finishes,” she states. “There is also contrast between refined and formal finishes like the polished marble juxtaposed against the industrial, casual elements such as the tub.”

Selections that ultimately changed included the shower floor tiles, which Campbell switched to Waterworks Matte Black penny mosaic for extra grip. The designer also added



📌 In the midst of renovating this master bathroom, Ashley Campbell needed to reassess her clients’ needs when a heart attack left the husband with limited mobility. While some decisions, such as a curbless entry to the wet room and the marble wall/ceiling tiles, remained, others, such as the floor tile and the addition of a grab bar, were changed to make it easier and safer for him to enjoy the space.

While the concrete tub isn’t necessarily ADA compliant, it adds beauty to the space.



Photos: Megan Larsen



Photos: LD & A

↑ With a purposeful eye toward a contemporary coastal vibe, designers at LD & A included warm neutral tones accented with calming blue hues and an overall ‘clean’ look for this master bathroom. For the shower wall, that meant white tile laid in a chevron pattern highlighted by dark gray grout that calls attention to the pattern.

➡ Many of LD & A’s clients enjoy having a freestanding tub, including these homeowners who chose one with extra features such as jets and a heated back rest.

a handheld shower and a grab bar, the latter of which was purposefully chosen for function as well as aesthetics.

“This project is all about form meeting function,” she says. “We were very mindful about making decisions that wouldn’t make it obvious that it was an ADA-compliant bathroom.”

CONTEMPORARY COASTAL

The goal for this bathroom renovation may have been to improve the overall space plan, but designers at LD & A were also keenly aware of their clients’ desire for finishes that reflected a contemporary coastal theme.

“The previous floor plan wasted a lot of space with a huge corner tub and tiny shower,” says Lindsey Tsang, a designer with the Calgary, Alberta, Canada, firm. “The home was also stuck in the 1990s, so modernizing the finishes, as well as the layout, was a driver for the renovation.”

Addressing the layout first, designers focused on reconfiguring the space.

“One client loves to take baths, and both like the efficiency of a shower,” she says. “Fortunately, we had enough space to include both.”

With regard to the tub, these clients wanted one that was comfortable, with extra features such as jets and a heated back rest.

“She wanted a place where she could fully relax,” Tsang says in reference to the Bain Ultra model. “In general, we find that freestanding tubs are becoming more popular as people enjoy having a spot to relax, as well as enjoy the aesthetic look they bring.”

Spacious showers with multiple showerheads are popular with many of the firm’s clients, and while these clients wanted one that was large enough to include storage, it didn’t need to be massive. To accommodate this, designers included a niche as well as a bench that continues beyond the shower to serve as a landing place for towels, etc., or as a place to display decorative items.



“Our clients wanted to maintain the windows to let in natural light,” she says. “Tucking the tub into the corner would have been awkward, so we extended the bench into that space. We were still able to position the tub underneath a window which, since the bathroom is on the second floor, provides a nice tree-top view.”

With a purposeful eye toward a contemporary coastal vibe, the designer included warm neutral tones accented with calming blue hues and an overall ‘clean’ look.

For the shower wall, that meant Arrow tile, in glossy Silk Gesso, laid in a chevron pattern highlighted by dark Smoke Grey grout.

“The contrasting grout allows the tile pattern to be really obvious,” Tsang explains.

Tile used throughout the rest of the space includes various shapes and sizes of Kingwood, a glazed porcelain tile that resembles wood.

“We liked the color and the movement of its soft wood grain pattern,” she says. “And, since it was available in multiple shapes and sizes – such as mosaics, large-format rectangles and hexagons – we were able to achieve the look we wanted without changing the color.” ■