



Master Bath

An iridescent backdrop.

Glass-mosaic tiles that change color with viewing angle and time of day blanket the back wall of the shower. Creamy, sandstone-colored walls provide a neutral surround for the dazzling tile. Photo taken at A on floor plan.



With a Twist

Sunshine pouring over a glass-mosaic shower wall transforms a dreary little bathroom

BY CHET ZEBROSKI

My wife, Holly, and I live in a typical 1960s-style ranch in a town north of San Francisco. The house has 8-ft. ceilings, dark, narrow hallways, and small bathrooms. The homes in our neighborhood delivered a lot of house for the dollar, but stylish they are not.

Now that our kids have moved on to lives of their own, we're looking at our house with different eyes—eyes that see potential in every outdated space. Deciding where to begin remodeling was easy: The master bath had to come first.

Step into the stretch remo

Even by '60s standards, the master bath was a squeeze for two people. Once you passed through the 24-in.-wide doorway, a frosted-glass shower enclosure and an institutional fluorescent-light ceiling grid conspired to make the room feel smaller than its 18 sq. ft. of floor space ("Before" floor plan, below). Expanding the master bath with an addition was out of the question. We didn't want to lose any of our precious backyard space, the only logical place to expand. And we couldn't justify the extra expense, given the other improvements that we plan to make.

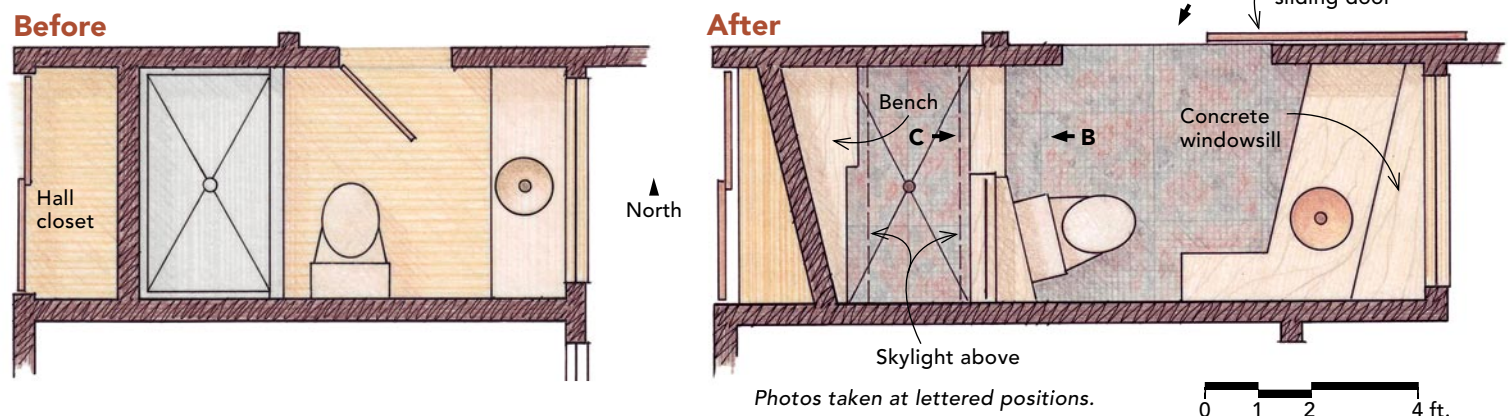
The challenge boiled down to finding a way to expand the feeling of the bathroom without expanding its size much, and devising a floor plan that delivered a little more elbow room at rush hour. We met the challenge by grabbing a bit of the hall closet on the inboard side, letting in sunshine with a skylight over the shower (photo facing page), and stretching the bathroom's footprint to the edge of the roof overhang ("After" floor plan, below).

Include a convenient place to sit in the shower

As we pondered the plan, Holly and I considered the idea of a bench in the shower (photo right). It's a great place to sit and let the water pour over you, or to perch a



Just enough bench. A triangular cast-concrete shelf in the shower makes a convenient spot to sit and soak. Both bathroom and shower floors are slate, offset at the corners to include glass-tile insets. Photo taken at B on floor plan.



BATH EXPANDS AT BOTH ENDS

A triangular space carved out of the hall closet made room for a bench in the shower. On the opposite side of the bathroom, where the lavatory reaches to the edge of the existing roofline, a mirror image of the triangle is reflected in the new windowsill. The lavatory counter follows this angle, creating a much larger doorway and a more generous sense of space.

DAYLIGHT AND MULTIPLE CEILING HEIGHTS



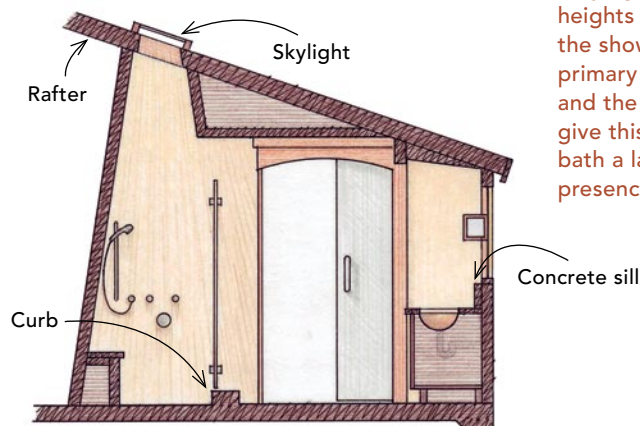
The east-side extension. The lavatory bump-out, with its triangular windowsill and concrete counter, reaches into the space below the existing eaves. A 4-ft.-wide opening to the hall on the left is closed with a door that rolls on a barn-door track. On the right, abstract flowers of glass tile and brass rods spring from the base of the shower partition. Photo taken at C on floor plan.

SOURCES

GLASS MOSAICS
www.glasstile.com

LAVATORY SINK
www.oregoncopperbowl.com

ACRYLIC FORTIFIER
www.quikrete.com



Varying ceiling heights over the shower, the primary space, and the lavatory give this small bath a larger presence.

leg for a soapy scrub. When we realized that we could annex a triangular piece of an adjacent hall closet, we turned it into a bench in the corner of our new shower. The wall above it torques into a rectangular skylight well as it climbs to the roof, creating a twisting backdrop of glass tile.

The shape of the bench is repeated at the opposite end of the room, where a triangular concrete windowsill sits atop the lavatory counter's back-splash. The cabinet below reflects this shape, creating a floor that is wider on the hallway side and making it easier to get into and out of the room.

Capture adjacent space with a big door and a garden view

All designers have their tricks. An old standby is to make a small room seem larger by making it a part of another room. We played that card by taking advantage of the new, wide opening to the bathroom. Instead of a swinging door, we installed a 4-ft. 6-in.-wide barn-style door on a track. When the door is fully open, the hallway seems a part of the bath.

We have a private backyard to the east, so we included the largest possible window over the sink. Then we lowered the ceiling a bit to give this part of the room its own sense of place (photo above). The window faces the sunrise and a small sculpture garden that greets us every morning.

A neutral palette lets the tile take center stage

A little iridescent tile goes a long way and needs subdued surroundings. We flanked the tile with white-plaster walls and ceilings tinted with a bit of ochre to give the plaster some warmth. Our plaster contractor, Alfonso Bazurto, persuaded us to fortify the plaster with an acrylic additive called Quikrete to resist mold, mildew, and cracking. So far, it has worked.

We chose 2-ft.-sq. slates as floor tiles to minimize the number of grid lines. (More lines make a floor seem smaller.) Like the shower tiles, the slates are steel blue and rusty red. They are offset at their corners just enough to inset a glass tile.

Holly and I have a strong admiration for concrete, with its sturdy presence and ability to take on any shape imaginable. We hired David Condon of Kilnworks to cast the shower bench, the curb, the windowsill, and the lavatory counter (photo right). The concrete counter's delicately eroded edges, created with thin layers of hardboard glued to the inside of the countertop mold, give the counter an almost geological bearing. □



Concrete ripples in the counter. Resembling the impressions left by retreating waves on a sandy beach, slight level changes in the concrete step back from a hammered-copper sink bowl.

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