

# Foreign Flair

An architect turns a boring bath into a retreat with a Far East influence

BY SOPHIE PIESSE

In our early design meetings, most clients bring images of spaces that they love to help inspire me; a binder full of lights, windows, fixtures, and hardware is the norm. Cate and Dave, who were looking for a whole-house redesign but wanted to begin with their master bathroom, were no different. Instead of a binder, though, they came with only a single photo of a Japanese hinoki soaking tub. It was this tub, they felt, that should drive the entire master-bathroom redesign.

They wanted to embrace the total experience that the tub would create: deep relaxation after a long workday and commute. They wanted a functional bathroom that was well planned, but they also wanted it to be a unique space, something that would reflect who they are.

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Sophie Piesse is an architect in Carrboro, N.C. Photos by the author.

## ASIAN AESTHETICS

We reinforced the Japanese-inspired design theme in the creation of the vanity. A floating cabinet is modern, and bamboo is an appropriate material. Lanternlike wall sconces and shoji-style sliding doors—which are actually aluminum frames with frosted glass—are intended to reflect and complement the style established by the tub.





## DESIGNED BY TRADITION

In Japanese culture, bathing is thought to have profound health benefits. Traditionally, bathers shower before entering the tub, so we designed a specific area designated for this choreographed sequence. The large walk-in shower sits adjacent to the tub, and the area is raised from the rest of the bathroom by two steps to set it apart. We also put a large window next to the tub to connect to the outside, but in true Japanese fashion, the view is controlled. A cedar fence forms a courtyard that ensures privacy from neighbors and that provides a calming garden view while one is relaxing in the tub.



**Drain detail.** The hinoki tub doesn't have an overflow drain. To handle any water coming over the tub's rim, we set the tub, which has feet, in a sloped waterproof pan in the built-up floor. We filled the space between the tile and the tub with river stones. Any spills run through the stones to the drain below.

## DETAILS

**Soaking tub** Hinoki Kyoto 48 Ofuro, zenbathworks.com

**Sinks** Lacava Spring sink, lacava.com

**Faucets and shower fixtures** Grohe Allure, grohe.com

**Tile** Neostile, energieker.it  
12-in. by 24-in. Graphite for main floor and walls  
Mosaic Graphite for shower floor and ceiling  
Muretto Graphite mosaic for vanity backsplash

**Vanity top** Concrete by Counterpart, counterpartllc.com

**Vanity cabinet** Custom-made by Cabinet Creations, cabinetcreations.info

**Wall sconces** Hubbardton Forge, hubbardtonforge.com

**Location** Carrboro, N.C.

**Architect** Sophie Piesse, LEED AP, sophiepiesse.com

**Builder** Jay Hughes, Hughes Contracting, hughescontractingnc.com

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