

Lighting up a half-bath

By day, a skylight shines on the walls, and at night, incandescent fixtures mimic the sun

BY JEFFERSON KOLLE

Every room needs a focus, and for the half-bath in Sara Beth Peacock's house outside Santa Fe, N.M., it was an elegantly rustic sink carved from stone. Sara Beth told architect Robin Gray that she wanted the bathroom to "be a bit of a surprise when you walk in, without straying too far from the overall simplicity of the house." Other homeowner-to-architect directives included the desire not to be immediately confronted with the toilet when entering and the need for some natural light in the room.

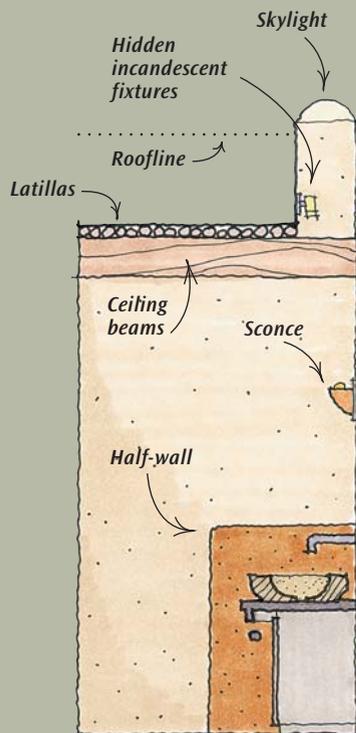
Gray partially hid the toilet behind a half-wall fit with book shelves on the back side. A full-height partition between sink and toilet would have made the approximately 5-foot by 8-foot room seem even smaller and the WC area almost claustrophobic.

Because the bathroom has no exterior walls for windows, the only source for natural light had to come from above. But direct New Mexico sunlight can be too bright and easily overheat a small room. Gray's solution uses wooden beams and latillas—small round branches typically used as ceiling planking in Pueblo architecture—as a way to filter the sunlight. The skylight is positioned so that most of the light washes the smooth plaster walls, which are painted a color Sara Beth calls Grey Poupon. Light from incandescent fixtures above the ceiling and next to the skylight mimics sunlight on cloudy days.

But if the lighting is subtle, it's the sink that stands out when you enter the room. Carved from a granite boulder, the rustic basin sits on a slab of Brazilian slate, which is harder and less prone to spalling than domestic varieties. "The sink was a great starting point for the the room," says Gray. It makes the perfect finishing touch as well. **h**

Jefferson Kolle is managing editor.

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LIGHT FROM ABOVE

Above the ceiling beams and sticklike latillas, the skylight in the flat roof captures sun to flood the bathroom's walls. Hidden incandescent fixtures in the skylight well create a similar effect in the evening and at night. Wall sconces above the sink provide back-up lighting. A half-wall next to the stone sink hides the toilet and provides storage.



CLEAN LINES, NO VANITY *Suspending the Brazilian slate counter between two walls eliminates the need for a supporting vanity. A simple painted box hides the plumbing. The granite-tile backsplash and stainless-steel towel bar complete the minimalist look.*

BRIGHTENING A WINDOWLESS ROOM *Indirect light from a skylight washes the wall in a half-bath. A rustic sink carved from a granite boulder was the room's inspiration.*

HALF-WALL PARTITION *A half-height wall at the end of the counter hides the toilet and provides additional storage without making the room seem smaller.*

