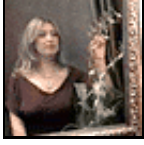


Bathing beauties

Some ideas from the San Francisco Decorator Showcase too good to overlook

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Designers of the 5 1/2 bathrooms at the recent San Francisco Decorator Showcase ventured beyond porcelain and chrome to make a big splash. From the frivolous to the functional, from the fun to the formal, it was all very fresh.

The designs also overran the limits of most budgets and overreached the skills of most do-it-yourselfers -- but there were ideas to be found for all. Here's a close-up look at the work of the designers who won the honor of redoing the bathrooms in the 1914 Georgian mansion at 1 Cherry St.

Sparkling half bath

Ashley Roi Jenkins' opulent, impractical yet glorious powder room on the first floor went over the top to fine effect with a beaded wallpaper from Maya Romanoff in copper and cocoa covering the walls -- "\$140 a yard, 36 yards, and it weighed over 200 pounds," confided Jenkins.

Two light fixtures from Boyd of cascading beads and balls flank the over-the-sink mirror, which has a tiny plasma television built into it, ensuring that guests spend plenty of time washing their hands.

"Rather than feeling suffocated and cramped," Jenkins' design statement observed, "one is hopefully left feeling refined and charmed."

An idea for anyone: A lovely taffeta drape sets off the commode area from the sink, creating the illusion of separate spaces..

Place for people, pups

Caroline Vesey, a first-time showcase designer who recently moved to the Bay Area from London, offset the fuchsia walls in the dog walker's retreat with bright green in the adjacent bathroom.

"This was an awful dungeon with bars on the windows," she said of the suite. "You had to be wacky with it."

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The most memorable element of Vesey's bathroom is not one a do-it-yourselfer would want to tackle: penny round tiles from Ann Sacks, in brown behind the sink and in green, with green grout, in the shower. Labor intensive, but striking.

An idea for anyone: It's safe to throw a wild pitch on color in a small bathroom. If it misses, you can always keep the door closed..

Refreshing refuge

Kimberly Ayres and Lawanna Cathleen Endonino, the design team who merged laundry room and wet bar to spectacular effect in one of the house's tiniest spaces, didn't have much to do in the sprawling master bath, which had been redone in 1998.

Small touches here -- the watery color on the walls, chair rail on the tile, aquatic-themed prints along the windows, coral and seashell accents -- make the oversize room more cozy and intimate, and bring in the eucalyptus trees that are visible from three windows.

Now that the room invites lingering, it also made sense to replace the tub with a much bigger one and plant a cushy bench in the center of the room.

An idea for anyone: Ayres and Endonino covered the one viewless window with a large mirror framed in coral..

A smoke and a soak

Katherine North took on "His Bath" for a second-floor bedroom suite and replaced the white trim and moldings with oak, then plastered the walls and covered them in a dramatic blue and brown color scheme that's echoed in floor and tub tile.

It was "an elegant gentleman" North had in mind when she brought in a dark, masculine cabinet full of shaving supplies and bottles from the 1920s, then installed an elegant chandelier on the high ceiling.

An idea for anyone: Not wanting to spoil the newly plastered walls with holes, North put Plexiglas rungs across two bars of wood, installed antique tap tops on the ends and made a ladder. Placed between shower and commode, it doubles as a towel rack and toilet paper holder..

Suds and bubbles

Christel Heinelt and Thad Warren are the brains behind the beauty of Lushart Decorative Painting and Murals, and they turned a second-floor guest-suite bathroom into a gallery worthy of one of their finest works.

The formerly drab space was given luxurious marble tile and slab treatments from Ann Sacks and Fox Marble for tub and floor, with an intricate mosaic inlay of tiny tiles. Then Heinelt and Warren troweled Venetian plaster onto the walls, burnished it until it was as glossy as polished marble, and painted on a

trompe l'oeil mural of bubbles.

The effect is whimsical yet serene, invigorating yet restful.

An idea for anyone: If you want to do something like this, call a professional..

Room with a view

When Steven Miller took on a third-floor bathroom about the size of that found in a typical San Francisco house, he used the trees outside as his inspiration for rearranging the floor plan and covering the walls in glass, back-painted green.

"This bathroom is so small, the glass gives it a depth, an illusion, that it's bigger than it is," Miller said.

Miller also created one of the more talked-about pieces at the showcase, a white Corian sink-and-cabinet in a wavy shape that evokes the wind blowing in the treetops.

An idea for anyone: Not everyone will want the Kohler Hatbox commode Miller chose -- and it costs about \$3,000 -- but it goes to show that even a toilet can make a design statement.

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