

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.

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.

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Builder Jay Hughes, Hughes Contracting, hughescontractingnc.com

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