

# DESIGN

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NEW ENGLAND

## HOUSE *MEETS* GARDEN

A CELEBRATION OF SPRING



**REFLECTIVE SURFACES SUCH as the glass shower enclosure, the mirrored, stainless steel soaking tub, polished nickel bath fittings, mercury-glass vases, and a sparkling glass-ball-and-silver-leaf chandelier by Currey & Company help turn this once cave-like room into a bright and welcoming aerie.**



## Into the Light

Eliminating awkward excess brings a master bath out of the dark

WRITTEN BY LARRY LINDNER • PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL J. LEE

**T**he demo started during the initial consultation. Interior designer Jill Najnigier of JN Interior Spaces in Boston was measuring the master bathroom shower stall to replace its walls with a glass surround when her client pulled out a sledgehammer and began hacking away at a bump-out that anchored the long vanity. She had never been able to figure out its purpose, other than that it contributed to the feeling that the room was closing in on her.

It turned out the bump-out had no purpose other than to provide symmetry with a clunky linen closet on the vanity's opposite end. Thus, what began as a simple directive to make the shower — which the homeowner says “made you feel like you were walking into a cave” — more welcoming turned into the wholesale renovation of the bathroom.

Truth be told, the entire space felt cramped and cave-like, which is what prompted the client to start chopping away at it. That way, she reasoned, she

## BATH



A CUSTOM VANITY from Venegas and Company painted a warm gray-green replaces a wall of dark cherry cabinetry, opening up the space without sacrificing storage. Mirrors of undulated silver and wall sconces in polished nickel with seeded glass from Visual Comfort enhance the reflective effect.

the stall to give the wife what she had originally asked for: “a shower that I don’t want to leave.” She gained space by replacing a door to the toilet area with a pocket door. She enclosed the shower with glass and raised the height of its ceiling, which visually opened the area and helped reduce the noise, or static, of various soffits, adding to the sense of calm.

The bulky tub and its deck were replaced with a generous French Bateau cast-iron soaking tub by Penhaglion. With an exterior fashioned of mirrored, polished stainless steel, it became a focal point in the room.

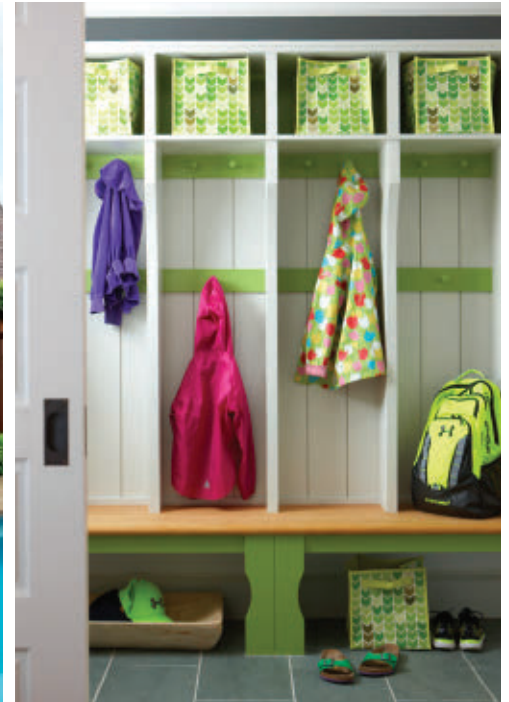
Najnigier also used visual tricks to enhance the open aesthetic. For instance, out went the shower door and threshold between the stall and the rest of the room, both of which disrupted the sightlines. In their place, she installed a long, narrow, rectangular drain. Usually, such linear drains are not at the entrance to the shower but against

could tell her husband they had no choice but to gut the whole space. Call it her *I Love Lucy* moment.

The room “truly felt like a corridor,” says Najnigier. “It was all squared off and closed in,” with a massive Jacuzzi tub surrounded by decking that made it difficult to climb in and out of. On the opposite wall, the vanity, a dark

cherry number flanked by those overbearing bump-outs, ate up space, and multiple soffits and jagged ceiling heights furthered the closed-in feeling.

Najnigier, who had designed every other inch of the Westborough, Massachusetts, house before tackling this master bathroom, began the transformation by enlarging



## BATH

**FOR THE SHOWER,** interior designer Jill Najnigier selected a 12-inch polished nickel Rohl rain shower fixture. The tiles by Porcelanosa have the feel of natural pebbles, adding texture to the room. They extend to the wall by the tub, creating a seamless flow of material that makes the space read larger.

the back wall, says contractor Gerry Mariano of GM Carpentry & Painting Inc. in Everett, Massachusetts. In this case, however, pitching the floor toward the back wall would mean cutting into joists, among other difficulties. "We would have had to raise the whole bathroom floor," says Mariano. With his solution, even water from the spray feature on the 12-inch shower head doesn't make it out of the doorless stall.

Removing the shower threshold allowed the floor tile, porcelain designed to look like weathered, bleached wood planks, to run uninterrupted from the room into the stall. Najnigier also had the tile on the wall of the bay window by the tub continue into the shower. With these materials on the floor and wall moving casually, naturally into the glass enclosure, the shower seems part of the room. "The tiles don't cut the room off from itself," Najnigier says.



The vanity and its dark wall cabinets, reaching to the ceiling in spots, were replaced with a custom-built installation designed by Najnigier in conjunction with Michele Kelly of Venegas and Company in Boston. Painted a warm gray-green, the combination of cupboards and drawers keeps the 13-foot-wide

wall from feeling too linear and provides so much storage that the client doesn't miss her cramped linen closet. The vanity's warm-gray quartz countertop has faint veining, so that it looks like marble but has none of marble's maintenance issues.

Now the client can sit in the soaking tub and look at the vista in a way she never could from the Jacuzzi. It's a view worth soaking up. The large window in the bathroom looks out over neighboring hills to the west and, before dusk, the glow of the sun easing toward the horizon in a show of hot and heady color. (Insert glass of champagne and a bubble bath here.)

Najnigier used reflective surfaces throughout to help lighten the room: polished nickel bath fittings, a sparkling glass-ball-and-silver-leaf chandelier, shimmering liquid-silver mirrors, and mercury-glass vases whose patina lends them a vintage look.

How does the client feel about the makeover? She calls the new bath "a place of serenity for me, like entering a spa that I never do want to leave." Her husband doesn't mind it either. ■

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