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Show Stopper

A luxury bath celebrates the union of exceptional design and glitzy materials

By Holly O'Dell

In a home perched atop Encino Hills near Los Angeles, a dated master bath lacked the design and personality befitting its location and owners. "The client wanted to ultimately get a glamorous bathroom similar to those experienced in high-end luxury hotels," explained designer Elina Katsioulas-Beall of DeWitt Designer Kitchens.

The design goals for this his-and-hers master bath were twofold: to create a "sparkling place" for her daily beauty care, as well as a soak, shower and steam for two. Pampering was the keyword, according to the designer. To make room for this new glitzy prep space – comprising a larger sink vanity and separate low-height makeup vanity – Katsioulas-Beall removed



the existing 1980s-style bathtub and its enormous deck and front step and replaced it with an oval tub for two surrounded in glass mosaic tile and softly angled into a corner space.

Knowing that the client loved glitter and sparkle – but in a subdued and balanced way – the designer derived inspiration from crystals. “That

magic, that clarity of crystals and that ability to break into iridescent colors was what I sought in most of the materials,” she added.

For the vanity countertops, Katsioula-Beall discovered what she describes as a “magical and rare” material known as a crystal cloud marble, featuring a crystalloid composition. When hammered, it breaks

into pieces that look like diamonds, although she added that it is also difficult to work with, as the fabricator's fingers were bleeding.

Floating base cabinetry in a dressy espresso tone anchors the vanities while accenting the room's spaciousness and height volume. Tall, slim and shallow product pantries sit atop the counters, as several drawers and interiors integrate hidden outlets for beauty care appliances. The "his" vanity also integrates a niche for a TV. Meanwhile, strips of LEDs under the floating cabinets lighten the volume of the room while providing shine to the honed travertine flooring, which suggests a flowing water pattern.

To create even more depth to the vanities, Katsioulas-Beall designed a series of niches to host mirrors, as well as sconces crafted with large Swarovski crystals and framed by white iridescent glass tile that reflect back the light. On that same wall, which was a sheer wall supporting the roof, hangs the floating base cabinets topped with the 7-in.-thick marble counters. A 3-in.-thick secondary wall was built flush with the existing one to house the niches, while embedded angle brackets support the weight of the floating cabinets and counters.

The steam shower continues the theme of shimmering luxury with its enclosure of random recycled glass mosaic tile set with pieces of small pebbles and black crystal rock. The client chose the pattern, because

according to Katsioulas-Beall, she wanted to shower and steam in a jewel-box interior.

Universal design elements of the shower include a lowered floor, bench, balance bar, side flat sprayers located at universal height and an entrance through which a 24-in.-wide wheelchair could fit.

To tie together the bath's rich, glittering design, the designer strategically placed low-voltage halogens – initially designed to light diamonds in jewelry stores – in various beam spreads to accent each cabinet, faucet or counter area. This approach "provides the most appropriate illumination to achieve that jeweled look in the bathroom," she added.

Lessons Learned

The project offered Katsioulas-Beall an education on complying with local codes without compromising the overall design idea.

"The client wanted a chandelier over the bathtub, which is considered a fire hazard, especially in an earthquake territory like the Los Angeles area," she explained. "The idea would not pass inspection."

As a workaround, Katsioulas-Beall's team selected a chandelier that looked more like a ceiling-mounted sconce (made of the same Swarovski as the vanity sconces) and engineered a secure mounting rig installed in the attic above.





The vanity countertops are made of crystal cloud marble, and the floating base cabinetry features an espresso tone.

The steam shower features a random recycled glass mosaic tile set with pieces of small pebbles and black crystal rock.



The shower includes such universal design elements as a lowered floor bench, balance bar, side flat sprayers and a wide entrance.



"Then we connected the fixture to its own GFCI switch," she added, "a total success that passed inspection and fulfilled the client's wish of looking up at her crystals while soaking in the tub.

The other lesson the designer learned, as she does from all of her projects, is that "exceptional design comes only from the most harmonious combination of four elements: space flow, proportions, materials and lighting, and the homeowner clearly agreed."

"When this bathroom was completed and lit, the first evening that the client bathed, she emailed me a snapshot with the title 'Diva-licious!'" recalled Katsioulas-Beall. "Frankly, the fact that she came up with that title for her master bath was my biggest reward." ■

SOURCES

Designer: Elina Katsioulas-Beall, DeWitt Designer Kitchens, Inc., Pasadena, Calif.; **Photographer:** Suki Medencevic

Bathtub: Americh; **Basins:** O'Brien Porcelain; **Cabinetry:** Benchmark; **Faucets:** Graff; **Flooring:** Silver Mountain; **Lighting:** Halo & Mi Casa Lighting; **Showerhead:** Kallista