

Inner sanctuaries to get steamed up about

Planning a bespoke bathroom? Take inspiration from these three seriously seductive eau zones. Palatial doesn't come close...

words **Ros Anderson** photography **Richard Waite**

The challenge

Turn a small bathroom into a sleek wet room with an illusion of space

Homeowner/architect:
Richard Found
Design: Found Associates
(020 7734 8400,
foundassociates.com)
Cost: around £15,000



Richard lives in south London with his wife, Jane, and their three-year-old daughter, Olivia

Case study 1: the wet room

Richard Found transformed his small, dark bathroom into a bright, seamless wet room by dextrous use of giant mirrors and white marble

What was the original bathroom like?

The window had been partially blocked and the shower installed in front of it. The room measured 5.3 x 3m, and was all cream with a full-height cupboard where the shower is now.

What were your design priorities?

My plan was to make the room feel as large as possible with mirrors and using one finish – white marble – for the floor and walls. It was important to maximise storage space, hence the doors that conceal a double-height wardrobe. We also raised the ceiling, taking half a metre from the loft.

Is it a problem not having a bath in there now?

No, we prefer to shower in the morning, and there is a bath downstairs.

How did you create the shower area?

I don't like shower trays and I wanted the space to feel like an entire wet room. We tanked the room up to chest height to avoid any risks. If we did spring a leak, it would be a nightmare with all that stone. The shower floor is the same marble as the walls, but we honed it to make it anti-slip. The waste from the shower is totally bespoke – it's a stainless-steel trough that runs the length of the wall. The stone is angled down to the trough so the water rushes into it.

Was fixing the marble to the walls difficult?

It was a lot of work, which increased the overall cost. The slabs are about 1.5 x 2m and not easy to handle.

How about the giant mirrors?

The size of the mirrors forced us to choose acrylic rather than glass because they are half the weight. It's a relatively new product – I went to 3D Joinery (020 8748 3407) – and it seemed the most sensible option when fixing mirrors to cupboard doors that size. All the handles have touch-release magnetic catches.

What did you do about the window?

We removed all the boarding and fitted a white roller blind that lets the daylight flood through but, at the same time, gives us privacy. Then we concealed the ugly workings.

Are you happy with the finished scheme?

Yes, we're very happy. It was a small, dingy room before and felt claustrophobic. The fact that all the walls are reflective has brightened it up considerably, as does having a full-size window. The only downside is that we do end up cleaning it every other day, but I don't mind – I'd rather do that and know it's spotless. The difference is incredible. >>



TANKING AND THE ALTERNATIVES

- 1 Wet rooms and bathrooms with open showers need tanking at the start of the installation so leaks can be avoided. Tanking involves creating an impermeable membrane of specialist fibreglass, vinyl or board over the floor and walls. This is then tiled over.
- 2 Consult an architect or structural engineer to survey the site and ask for a recommended company to carry out this work, as leaks can be costly and hard to pinpoint later.
- 3 A true wet room has no shower screen and the whole room can get wet without worries. However, a popular alternative is having a shower tray that fits flush to the floor teamed with a simple glass screen or a half-wall to minimise splashes.
- 4 A concealed drainage tray with a platform to stand on is another solution. Seek advice if you opt for this: floor levels may need to be altered, and older houses need care with installation due to their wooden floors.