



AFTER

Miami Bright

Designers **Nikki Baron** and **Wendy St. Laurent** convert a small, dark master bath into a luminous refuge, creating the illusion of space and ushering in sparkling sunlight

AS EXPERTS IN HIGH-END REMODELING, DESIGNERS Nikki Baron and Wendy St. Laurent of Baron & St. Laurent Interior Design in Miami frequently gut grand houses and condominiums to reconfigure spaces and deliver their polished design schemes. An oceanfront condominium on exclusive Fisher Island provided one such opportunity.

At barely 180 square feet, the master bath proved the greatest challenge. Dark walls and floor tiles produced a cramped, closetlike feel. A massive built-in bathtub swallowed nearly half the room, and tiny, high windows let in little natural light. Forced to work within the bath's existing footprint, plumbing stacks, and drains, Baron and St. Laurent stripped it down to the studs and started over. While they maintained the original layout, the remodeled bath represents a considerable upgrade in terms of function and glamour.

The designers' plan was to add light colors and natural light to contrast with the rich, dark woods that dominate the furnishings and accessories throughout the rest of the house. "The goal was to open the bath up, lighten it up, and delineate the 'his' and 'hers' areas without chopping it up into separate spaces," explains St. Laurent.

The third-floor condo is high enough to afford views of the ocean, but low enough so that wavy fronds of coconut palms come into view, casting shimmers of sunlight into each room. "We wanted to play with that light



BEFORE

ABOVE AND TOP: Keeping the original layout of the bath, the designers added matching mirrors to delineate his-and-hers lavatories. A smaller sink for her allows more counter space. Waterworks fixtures and flooring that resembles an area rug give the bath a glamorous feel.



LEFT: The claw-footed Waterworks tub seems to float above the floor. The designers coated the feet in polished nickel for extra pizzazz. Wainscoting and decorative tiles add architectural interest. **ABOVE:** A frameless glass shower door makes the shower appear as though it is part of the room. The dark wood of the étagère in the water closet contrasts with the sparkling white paint and tiles, reflecting design themes found elsewhere in the house.

and make it one of the design elements," says St. Laurent.

Reflective elements, such as the rare Thassos marble on the countertops and floor, help create a luminous effect. "This marble is pure white without veining and has a tiny bit of crystallization so it catches the light," explains St. Laurent. Likewise, two Venetian-style mirrors, set into arched recesses, reflect light from the windows on the opposite wall. Polished-nickel fixtures add further sheen.

"The client is a lovely woman who, in her own words, 'loves a good ruffle,' so the challenge was to reflect her femininity while maintaining masculine elements suitable for a his-and-her bath," says Baron. To that end, the designers added wainscoting to the entire bath. "In a small space it is

important to use the same materials and features throughout to unify the design scheme," explains St. Laurent. The paneling and trim were painted bright white to lighten up the bath, as was the custom cabinetry, which was lacquered to give the surfaces a glossy finish.

The designers extended the line of cabinetry down the entire wall to give the illusion of a longer room, while the varying heights of the his-and-her vanities add interest. Glass-front cabinets display the owner's collection of antique crystal perfume bottles, and electrified medicine cabinets, concealed within the side panels of the arched vanity niches, open with hidden touch-latches.

In order to punch up this pristine white space, Baron and St. Laurent

employed a single color note of pale green on the walls and floor tiles to evoke the aqua tone of the ocean just outside the windows.

Ceramic cap tiles with decorative swags circumnavigate the room, topping the wainscoting, serving as a backsplash for the sinks, and wrapping around the shower. A wall, added to separate the tub area from the shower niche, represents the only partition in this cohesive space. The claw-footed tub, which replaced an imposing whirlpool bath, lightens the feel of the room, and a new frameless glass door lends the steam shower a dose of transparency. The designers also added a paneled arch above the shower door to match those above the vanities. Inside the shower, white polished-marble tile matches the



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should lead to a door like this.*

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remodeling

countertops. "We wanted the shower to feel like it was part of the room," says St. Laurent. A bidet was replaced with an Art Deco dark-wood étagère that displays even more reflective surfaces—a collection of antique silver—along with extra linens.

St. Laurent explains that the make-over would not have been possible without ripping out all the old tiles and fixtures, taking the room down to its studs. "Sometimes you just have to start over with a new approach," she says. "And with properties as beautiful as this, with views to match, it's certainly worth the effort."

For details, see Sourcebook, page 186.

bright bath ideas

- Limiting the variety of colors, textures, and materials makes small spaces appear larger. Repeating design details, such as matching the floor and wall tiles, can produce a similar effect.
- Evaluate the needs of the client and designate space accordingly. A large whirlpool bath, for example, can demand an inordinate amount of space if the clients prefer to use the shower.
- If your space is small, splurging on a few luxurious materials is a cost-effective way of creating a dramatic effect. But exercise restraint, caution the designers, because a little luxury goes a long way—don't pile it on or the space will look too fussy and over-the-top.
- Try one punch of color, such as the aqua accent used in this Miami bath, to brighten up a neutral or all-white space. A limited palette with one striking color choice creates maximum impact. Or contrast dark woods and finishes with light ones for drama.
- When designing a bathroom for two, use the same materials for both areas, but differentiate in subtle ways: vary the heights of the vanities or use different sink basins for each.