

# BLOCKBUSTER

## BATHS

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**B**reath-taking baths needn't be big. To illustrate the point, we challenged two talented young architects to create the ultimate 11 x 13-foot bath. Their response: two totally different versions, each brimming with ideas to help you make your own dream bath take shape.

### Oval Embrace

An ivory-white update of the curvy, chrome baths of the '20s and '30s

### Power Grid

An energizing interplay of beams, tile, wood trim, and glass

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS, OCTOBER 1991

## OVAL EMBRACE

**T**he curvy, chrome, pristinely white bathrooms of the '20s, '30s, and '40s are born again in Connecticut architect Duo Dickinson's ivory-white update. Like a bar of soap fresh from the wrapper, his sleekly sculptural spaces invite you to unwind. Their shapely planes make a perfect foil for the undulating arcs in American Standard's Platner Collection, turning a simple act like washing your hands into a soul-satisfying ritual.

BATHS



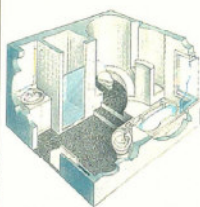
■ A mix of 1x1 and 2x2 tiles lends subtle texture to the vertical surfaces, playing up the silky sweeps in the pedestal lavatory and tub. Shampoos and rinses perch within arm's reach while you settle down to soak.

■ Polished slabs of cast marble staircase past the shower stall to the whirlpool tub. Solid-surface ledges near the tub reach out to embrace the pedestal lavatory and toilet alcove. A slim strip of glass brightens the toilet alcove.



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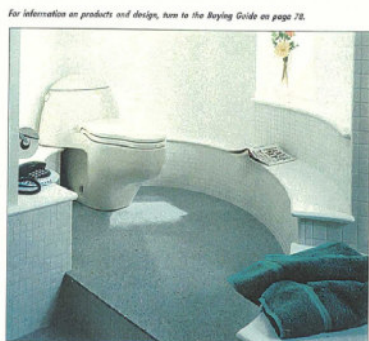
■ The plan fits a simple 11 x 13-foot rectangle. Sweeping curves and changes of level deliver sculptural drama.

*"Size is the biggest problem in remodeling a bath; it's like trying to fit 10 pounds of sugar into a 5-pound sack."*

—DUO BICKINSON

■ One of the lavatories tops a 36-inch-tall vanity next to the shower stall. Recessed oval lights in the soffits supplement warm-white fluorescents over the vanity; an angled window adds a slice of light in the shower.

■ Admit it: You spend some of your quietest, most private moments in this part of the bathroom, so why not make it a visual treat? Here, quietly curving walls and a frosted-glass window offer cocoonlike privacy.



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■ A rich layering of forms better than bath's simple footprint: ledges cascade like overlapping, two sizes of tile merge on the floor; rounded edges wrap the corners. The top ledge extends as a columnlike backdrop for art; behind its concave face the TV swivels toward the toilet or the tub.

## POWER GRID

**H**aving trouble getting squared away in the morning? Minneapolis architect Sarah Susanka's antidote for a.m. fuzziness is an elegant grid of frosted glass, ceramic tile, and honey-hued birch. Working with Kohler Company's Pillow Talk fixtures and fittings, she concocted a scheme that has backbone: a spine-like central "hall" that serves alcoves of activity. Boxed beams overhead lend punch to the orderly parcelling of spaces.

**B**ullnosed edging on the granite-like solid-surface countertops echoes curved fronts on the sinks. Daylight spills into the tub alcove through an art-glass window and a low-slung pane of Shoji-style frosted glass.



**I**nteresting lines of grain, wood trim, and birch laminate tie the bath together. Lighting sparkles inside floating grids or reflects off the ceiling. Deep curves soothe off the lavatory bowls, faucets, and whirlpool tub.





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■ An artful interplay of squares and rectangles divides this bath into separate activity areas along a central axis.

*"The bathroom is unique because it's that private place where people can lavish attention on themselves."*

—SARAH SUSANKA

■ Splash all you like! The tub and shower share a ruled platform along the rear wall, isolating drips and puddles from the rest of the room. Minimal trim and transparent panes in the shower enclosure let light and lines slide right on through.



■ Pine molding coated with high-gloss black enamel frames the custom-built one-glass window. Grout lines in the tile restate the window's airy leadings.

■ A tile wainscot topped with maple trim and bullnose molding lines the toilet alcove. The mirrored pocket door provides total privacy when needed. Built-ins around the corner keep toilet tissue and cleaning supplies handy.

For information on products and design, turn to the Buying Guide on page 78.

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**T**he two baths on the preceding pages show how even a modest-size bathroom can be architecturally innovative and exciting. Should you hire a design pro to build that kind of excitement into your own dream bath? To help you decide, architects **Sarah Susanka** and **Duo Dickinson** discuss the examples they created.

What design challenges do you usually face when remodeling a bath?

**SS:** In remodeling, one often deals with rather constricted spaces. For example, a very common scenario is that somebody wants to take their master bedroom closet and make it into a master bath. In older homes those spaces frequently have sloped roofs, so you have to be very creative about how you utilize the square footage.

**DD:** The biggest problem in remodeling a bath is that it's like trying to fit 10 pounds of sugar into a 5-pound sack. Always there are too many features and physical movements that have to be accommodated within existing space. And if you decide to expand the space, you automatically have to expand the budget.

What inspired the design for your *Better Homes and Gardens*® bath?

**SS:** The stylistic inspiration was Prairie School architecture. I really like working with wood a lot. I think it lends a natural warmth and it's a material that's easy to install. Also, the idea of alcoves of activity: you have a central walkway through the space, with alcoves or pockets that open off that space.

**DD:** What triggered the design of my bath was the whirlpool tub. For any bath, there are two radically different sources of inspiration. The first is to pick out the fixture or material that you really love and have the rest of the bath sing in harmony with that. The other is to let everything be blissfully ignorant of everything else.

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Does it make sense to lavish architectural richness on a small bath?

**SS:** Absolutely. Bathrooms are one of the reasons people buy houses. An eye-catching bathroom may be what sells the house.

**DD:** The big rationale is that you spend a lot of time in the bath. Where else do you spend quiet time alone doing simple, fundamental tasks that compel you to look at your surroundings with a still, thoughtful mindset? What are the least costly ways to gain drama and impact in a modest-size bath?

**SS:** One way is special tile designs, and another is the way you use windows. Also, I try to make internal views very interesting. That tends to make spaces feel bigger and more delightful to be in.

**DD:** The least costly way is to use mirrors. Also, anything that doesn't subdivide the bath spaces, that allows them to share light and air. Maybe the shower or sink wall doesn't go clear to the ceiling. Level changes work well, too—if you can make the floor move around a little, it creates a much richer visual experience.

Are there any general rules regarding how much you should spend on a bath remodel?

**SS:** A minimum figure is about \$5,000, and the sky's the limit. There really is no set ratio between the cost of the bath and the cost of your house, because everyone has a different notion of how important a nice bathroom is in their lives.

**DD:** If you find that the square-foot price exceeds \$200, pull back and make sure you're happy with all the features you've included. Above \$200, what you're paying for are options, not essentials: shapes that are hard to

build, surfaces that are really expensive to put in. Baths are *exquisitely* idiosyncratic. You should have exactly what you want. It's just like buying underwear; why would you want to buy underwear that doesn't feel good on you?

If the budget is tight, which bath luxuries are really worth splurging for?

**SS:** I've discovered over the years that bathrooms are incredibly personal spaces. We all have very different attitudes about bathrooms, and likewise about what they should contain. Those who are perfectly happy with a 5×7 bath can't imagine why anybody would want to build a 12×16 bath. So this is a very difficult question to answer. But one thing I wouldn't scrimp on is windows. I'm a strong believer in natural light and ventilation in the bathroom. Also, I'd do some special things with tile. I love to play with tile, and if you're even a little bit daring with color you can really add an enormous amount to the bathroom.

**DD:** The one thing you should splurge for is to accommodate exactly your routine and nothing else. For example, if you're a total neatnik and can't handle grout lines, splurge for polished stone. Don't splurge to impress your neighbors; you'll just spend money on things they'll see only once.

To order plans for the bathrooms on the preceding pages, write directly to the architects. For addresses, see the Directory of Designers on page 80.