

Kbbreview Industry Awards 2007

CATEGORY: Designer Award for Bathrooms - project cost over £15k

FINALIST: Rene Dekker

Background

SHH were commissioned by their client - a newly-single international businessman - to carry out a complete refurbishment of a north London architectural landmark house, originally built in the mid 1990's, which he had just purchased.

The house had an unusual structure, in that the bulk of the external face was built into a hill. The entire foundation was literally cast in concrete. This effectively precluded moving any of the services without either building up the floor or drilling part of the floor away!.

Client's brief

The original master bathroom - one of 7 within the house - was a drab, internal room, with an ineffectual skylight and an ill-considered layout of little individual rooms making up the bathroom, shower and WC. The new bathroom, with any necessary structural changes, had to be a very different animal: a luxurious and masculine statement room, designed with:

- a contemporary style
- a large bath to dominate the room and give it a sense of presence.
- an opened-up feel to make the room feel larger, yet still keeping the wet and dry areas separate.
- plenty of storage for toiletries
- a visually exciting look, but total concurrent functionality
- a lighting control system for every mood.
- every possible creature comfort, from underfloor heating, to towel heaters and great music/AV set-up.

Inspiration

The design inspired by an old image of gym bathrooms at a London gentlemen's club, with tall walls clad in Calacatta Oro, with mahogany detailing.

The Design

Structural works included the removal of a stud wall between the shower and WC to open up the room. A bidet was then added. A grand bath was to be included in the apse opposite the entrance to the room. A new lowered central ceiling partially covered the small and ineffectual skylight and

indirect recessed lighting was used in addition to give a stronger illusion of daylight than the original skylight had provided alone. Hidden storage would also be included in the structural changes.

Challenges and solutions

The inclusion of the bidet posed a problem as no provision had been made in the original bathroom for waste pipes. We removed several inches of concrete to install these. Once included, instead of replacing the stud wall, a smoked glass screen was installed to separate this area from the shower and to avoid encroaching too much on the shower space. This also gave the room a larger feel.

We wanted to include a freestanding basin, but nothing available commercially looked good enough, when viewed from all angles, and so we opted to create a bigger, bespoke marble basin, which we had specially made in India. As this weighed approximately 900kgs, we had to remove the skylight and crane it in from the roof. It took a further 8 men to actually put it in place and install it! To hide the new drainage and pipework, a new stud was packed out behind the basin. This also allowed for recessed, lit storage niches.

The bath itself ended up being the most difficult aspect of the design scheme to solve, as no style of bath at the time suited the new vision. In the meantime, works progressed, in the hope that we would find the dream bath and not have to compromise. The dream bath finally appeared in the form of the polished stainless steel Agape UFO, suiting its theatrical backdrop perfectly. This 2m diameter bath required that the entrance to the room be enlarged, which was problematic due to the concrete lintel holding up the brickwork above. An alternative solution was found instead by changing the programme of works to lower the floor, reinstating and completing it once the bath was in situ.

The bathroom was clad in Arebescato Vagli, cut in random lengths and widths, giving stature to the space. To avoid this surfacing becoming monotonous, the shower and WC area were tiled in stainless steel mosaic.

The traditional heated towel rail made way for the Hotbox, a square box heating the towels from the outside in, installed in the new stud behind the basin as well as the floor standing stainless steel sculpture servicing the shower.

New lighting moods included blue uplight LED's behind the bath, halo lighting in the lowered ceiling, traditional recessed spots in the niches and ceiling as well as integrated lighting in the Rainsky shower head.

Black-polished plaster was used to great effect in the apse and on the ceiling of the shower area. The room is theatrically enhanced by the stainless steel fabric used in the decorative curtains, referencing the stainless steel mosaic and sculptural shower.

Final costs

The final cost of the project, excluding installation, was £80,000.

