

Kbbreview Industry Awards 2007

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

FINALIST: Marco Ali

What was the full brief from the client?

Mr and Mrs Al-Fakhri, a Middle Eastern couple, reside in a three-bedroom 1970s semi-detached house with their two children who are still at school.

The house a very small upstairs bathroom (1.78m x 2.2m), servicing all three bedrooms, and a small cloakroom downstairs. The dilemma Mr and Mrs Al-Fakhri therefore faced was between their desire for a sophisticated bathroom which would appeal to both parents and guests, and a space practical enough to be used daily by all the family.

The bathroom had remained untouched since the family had moved into the property and desperately required attention. The shower had been leaking for some time and had caused damage to the kitchen ceiling and walls beneath, necessitating renovation of the bathroom as a priority.

The existing bath was situated on the left as you entered and had hot and cold pillar taps, an electric shower that no longer worked and a blue painted tongue and groove bath panel. The basin sat on a vanity unit with blue painted louver doors, and was positioned directly under the window. Finally, there was a close coupled wc to the right of the basin which had a leaking cistern and soil pipe.

The client brief included the following wish list:

- An overall feeling of more space
- Sophisticated Middle Eastern hotel chic, employing dark wood and marble
- A smaller steel bath with overhead shower
- A minimalistic bath screen
- A large countertop basin
- Storage to keep the small space free from clutter
- A towel radiator
- A douchette for the wc
- An installed budget of £10k - £12k

Describe the final design and, in detail, the design process

Immediately on inspecting the room I realised there was potential to make the space appear larger. The door is located fairly centrally allowing me to position the basin on the right, so generating a roomier feel and providing uninterrupted wall space for the addition of a mirror above.

As I developed my ideas further the deign evolved to accommodate a bespoke wenge floating shelf with a deep drawer for storage. The shelf was built into a stud wall on the left and additionally supported by the drawer on the right, thus taking the basin off the floor and increasing floor area.

The choice of basin was Mrs Al Fakhri's, the Massaud basin by Hansgrohe (a personal favourite), which she felt was complemented beautifully by the dark wood and Dornbracht's angular Lulu

deck mounted basin mixer.

To further enhance the floor space I decided to wall mount the wc which, of course, meant concealing a frame behind it. Both Mr and Mrs Al Fakhri were initially concerned that a further stud wall would make the room appear smaller however, after some discussion decided to trust my judgement and are please that its placement along the shower wall has allowed them to have both the size of bath they prefer and a recess below their shower.

The two stud wall allowed me to conceal all plumbing which was of paramount importance when using marble tiles applied floor to ceiling. When using marble tiles particularly, which are difficult to cut, it is best to leave them whole wherever possible. I had selected marble tiles specifically not only to increase the look of the space (marble reflects) but also to fulfil the client's desired hotel chic ambience.

I decided to use the same tiles on the floor, walls and bath panel to unite the surfaces and give the illusion of more space. I then decided to use mosaics of the same material to add interest and give the correct spacing between whole tiles so avoiding the use of cuts.

The rectangular mirror above the basin was suspended horizontally into a recess created by the thin stud wall and had two red LED lights installed above it reflecting their light and colour back into the room through the mirror to create a more relaxing, serene atmosphere when adults are bathing.

To keep things uncluttered the bath fitting include a wall mounted bath spout, a concealed thermo-static bath/shower mixer and hand shower on a slider rail which adapts the shower to the varying family members' heights. The additional benefit of placing the wc as I have is the the shower screen, a single panel of clear glass, can be swung out over the wc when bathing or cleaning the bath.

Finally, a chrome dual fuel towel radiator is installed within easy reach of the basin and the door hinged on the left allowing a clear view of the stunning basin from the upstairs hall.

The total cost of the project, including installation, was £11,760

