

# KBB REVIEW INDUSTRY AWARDS 2009



## CATEGORY

YOUNG DESIGNER AWARD FOR BATHROOMS - AGE 25 AND UNDER

**NAME:** LINDSAY MERCHANT, SARAH IRELAND BATHROOMS

## THE CLIENT

Sarah Ireland wanted me to create the customer cloakroom at our showroom in Worcester. It was an area that she had intended to develop for some time and was very important as most clients will visit and use it. The showroom has a light contemporary feel which Sarah wanted to be continued.

## CLIENT BRIEF

Sarah wanted me to predict the next big trend and demonstrate to potential clients what can be achieved, but with budget in mind. It simply needed to have the 'wow' factor and to achieve this, I was free to use my imagination in any way I chose.

## CLIENT BUDGET

Products - £11,694 (inc vat)

Installation - £7,175 (inc vat)

**Total - £18,869 (inc vat)**

As this was a showroom installation, Sarah felt it was vital to keep the budget realistic while not losing the impact of the design. Overall it was to cost no more than 20k.

To achieve this I intended to keep the design simple and uncluttered. Due to the nature of its use as a cloakroom, storage was not necessary so I could spend more on a contemporary design-inspired basin as the focus along with some really interesting tiling.

## THE FINAL DESIGN

As the cloakroom would need to be used by all clients of all ages and abilities, I felt it was important to consider accessibility without compromising on design. This would also be a

good demonstration of how a 'mixed ability' space can still contain all the elements of a contemporary design statement.

In terms of layout, I was limited by the compact size of the room and its' very low ceiling. I wanted to create a shower room that would be fully working in the showroom to use as a realistic example for client's to see. The space was well suited to a wet area with just a piece of glass to shield the WC and basin from splashes. There was really only one way to position all the products for it to be fully accessible, with the glass, WC and basin all attached to the one back wall.

As I wanted the room to be suitable for mixed ability use, I decided on a wall hung basin so a wheelchair could be pushed underneath. A wall hung WC with automatic electronic flush plate provides a hygienic alternative to a push button and is user friendly for people of all ages and abilities. Both products also complemented the minimalist look.

The recent trend seems to have been neutral browns and creams. I wanted to steer away from this and do something different that people would still want to try in their own home. Taking inspiration from fashion, furniture designs and magazine adverts, I felt that white was making a come back. White doesn't have to be clinical or unimaginative. I wanted to show how glamorous and inviting it can be and I feel this was achieved through a combination of textures, shapes and materials.

I fell in love with the Dornbracht 'Tara' brassware in matt white. It was released when I first started the project and this was where I wanted to spend a lot of the budget as I felt it would compliment my design perfectly. I wanted everything to be white, to be very minimalist yet comfy and relaxing.

The overall feel of the space reminded me of a 'cave' or 'secret den'. I wanted to enhance this further by giving the client the sense of being enclosed within the bathroom space. Taking inspiration from a programme I had seen on Japanese hotel 'sleep pods' I felt this could be well adapted to the cloakroom environment.

I curved the corners of the room to soften any harsh edges and make the low ceiling a part of the room design. I therefore needed to use a mosaic tile for a smooth finish around the bends. I chose an iridescent, pearly white mosaic that catches different colours in the light. As these were quite an expensive option, with budget in mind, I decided to use them for the middle section of the room wrapped around floor and ceiling and contrast with a white porcelain base tile for the remainder.

To follow the flow of the curves further, I chose to create a moulded curved seat along the entire back wall of the shower area. Combined with a fixed head, handheld shower and body jets, the user can enjoy a total shower experience while standing and while seated. This is useful not only to wash feet and relax but also for those less able to have the chance to wash

independently. All controls are within easy reach, as is the towel radiator which also allows towels to be stacked as well as hung.

I wanted to use modern materials within the space to show the latest products available to clients. I chose an enamelled steel basin for its crisp edges and sleek, circle design. The bespoke glass screen is pure white and thick enough to stand alone, almost reaching the ceiling, to provide privacy and a contemporary feature.

The only colour was to be provided by a set of colour changing LED lights at floor level in front of the glass panel. They highlight the tones in the mosaics and colour-therapy is said to influence your mood. I placed small speakers and a music system to work within the space for a complete sensory experience.

Thinking practically, I also provided lighting in the form of ceiling down-lights with mirrored surrounds to reflect the pearly glass tiles. A circular mirror with diffused light around provides an equal light for the user to put on make-up, clean teeth etc. Under-floor heating was an important luxury to not only dry any splashes from the shower but also give an ambient heat to the space.

## **SUMMARY**

Overall I feel that the design is a good prediction of a new trend that seems to be increasingly more popular. It shows how a mixed ability public space can be transformed into a haven of contemporary ideas and a space in which to relax and unwind.

