

Couple's search for personal bathing retreat finds an inspired collaborator

■ Master designer/remodeler Sonny Nazemian shapes space plan, finish-work and mood for a stand-out spa bath

BY JOHN BYRD

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"We were looking for someone with creativity and design expertise," Amanda Curtis recalls, thinking back on events leading up to a recent master bathroom renovation. "My husband and I enjoy working out home improvement ideas, so we were searching for an inspired collaborator who would work with us closely."

And as they soon learned, their personal criteria still closely echoes that of Sonny Nazemian, who had helped the couple remodel their kitchen five years earlier.

"Helping homeowners find their vision is the most important part of what we do," says Nazemian, president and CEO of Michael Nash Kitchen and Homes. "Obviously, we bring our expertise to bear... but it's the dream the homeowner is chasing that really inspires us."

This time around, the Curtis' "wish-list" included a dramatically reconfigured master bathroom; an aroma bubble tub installed under the suite's only window; a walk-in shower with a footprint five times larger than the previous "phone booth" model; several custom-designed Asian-style vanities; a wall-mounted working water feature; and sound equipment discretely wired into the cathedral ceiling.

The bigger point, however, was ambiance. What would Brian and Amanda find aesthetically-pleasing and, especially... relaxing?

It's at this juncture that interior design ceases to be mere decorating and becomes something more: a quest for self-discovery and self-expression.

"Our first step was formulating a space plan that would give Brian and Amanda the elbow room they wanted," Nazemian says. "We weren't going to add any square footage, but we can design-in the impression of a substantially enlarged interior."

Such impressions were called for in this case. From the start, the old master bath was an impromptu affair, formed when the previous owner borrowed space from an attic garage adjacent to the master bedroom and routed-in the requisite plumbing. Not surprisingly, the room had its peculiarities: an oddly-angled Jacuzzi on an elevated platform that took up too much floor space,



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

Understated colors and textures create the restful ambiance Brian and Amanda Curtis were seeking in a private and personalized spa bath retreat. To make the space plan work, Sonny Nazemian (of Michael Nash Kitchen and Homes) removed a Jacuzzi and scaled back the suite's entrance to make room for a 42"-by-72" aroma bubble tub and an Asian-style vanity with towel cubbies.

and an outsized two-step landing linking the master bedroom to the bathroom.

On the other side of the equation, the existing shower was a tiny 1.5'-by-1.5' cubicle - the commode offered just enough room for fundamentals; there was a make-up table that didn't have much utility, and moreover, there were few places for storing towels and other bathing items readily at hand.

"Inches count in master bathroom design," Nazemian observes. "Our goal here was to scale back anything that was in the way, while adding usable extra space wherever we could find it."

Hence, the landing was deleted and replaced with a more compact single-step variant.

Removing the Jacuzzi and its ziggurat platform, likewise, freed up some 90 square feet of floor

space. More importantly, the modifications created room for a custom-designed, Asian-style vanity with towel cubbies now situated between the new hot tub and the re-designed landing.

"The change has made the bathing area much more functional and comfortable," Amanda says. "And the room feels a lot larger."

See HOMES PAGE B-2



Removing a wall between the old shower and vanity created the footprint needed for a 5'-by-6' glass-surround shower. The black marble tub surround is extended into the shower to form a bench. The shower is equipped with four body sprays and an overhead rainforest nozzle. The three-level wall niche was custom-designed for personal items.



The newly-designed master bath beckons warmly from beyond double doors leading in from the bedroom.

HOMES

Continued from Page B-1

On the suite's opposite corner, Nazemian removed a wall between the old shower and vanity, creating the footprint needed for a 5'-by-6' glass-surround shower equipped with four body sprays and an overhead rainforest nozzle.

As a further demonstration of the plan's tight tolerances, the black marble surface surrounding the hot tub extends into the shower as a convenient bench. On this note, a three-level wall niche inside the shower was custom-designed to accommodate specific personal items. [NOTE: Brian provided a bottle of his favorite shampoo to assure accurate specifications.]

A "His" and "Hers" vanity adjacent to the shower also shows the designer's knack for turning thin air into usable space. More capacious than it appears, the tall built-in cabinet between the two vessel sinks actually extends 18" into unused attic space behind the wall. Meanwhile, its custom-sized drawers keep everything organized and orderly.

A few feet of unused attic space also provides just enough room for the wall-flush vanity inside the commode, which now houses the equipment used to power the spa's sound system.

On the interior design front, elaborating the suite's intricate wall elevations, flooring and other details largely became a labor of love for all parties.

"Exposing the homeowner to the universe of finish-work ideas we provide in our showroom is an important part of our process," Nazemian says, referring to the extensive display space available in the company's Lee Highway offices. "Often, this is where the project really comes together."

On this point, Amanda says she utilized the showroom often as the project got underway.



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

An aroma bubble tub installed under the suite's only window offers a strikingly complete summons to deeper relaxation. There's also a wall-mounted water feature, and a sound system discretely wired into the cathedral ceiling.

"The staff [was] very knowledgeable," she says. "A lot of the innovations we're especially proud of were conceived in our conversations with designers on the showroom floor."

Certainly the effect of conscientious choices is visible everywhere in the final product, like the subtle contrasts of textures and lines, and lights and darks. The trompe l'oeil of the

black granite mysteriously passes through the shower's glass surround. The large two panel wall-mounted water feature offers a non-stop sound/visual montage. "It's so just personalized,"

Amanda says. "That's why it feels so wonderfully comfortable."

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More capacious than it appears, the tall built-in cabinet between the two vessel sinks actually extends 18" into unused attic space behind the wall. The reflective accent glass backsplash makes the space feel larger.

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