

APRIL 2012

House Beautiful

New Ideas for
A FRESH START

The
Ultimate
Guide to
American
Style!

**SPECIAL
REPORT**

**MADE
in
L.A.**

Vote
for your favorite
COLOR ➔

\$4.99



0 4>

0 73361 08458 3

BATH OF THE MONTH

Design by **BARRIE BENSON**

Charlotte, North Carolina

A cozy new master bathroom in a 1950s ranch house looks as if it has always been there—give or take a modern luxury or two.

Interview by
LISA CREGAN

Photographs by
SIMON WATSON

Produced by
DAVID M. MURPHY



Victoria + Albert's IOS tub has a luxurious simplicity and compactness that works well on the basket-weave pattern of the Bianco Delicato floor tile from Charles

Luck. The embroidered reverse Roman shade allows light in while also ensuring privacy. The 1950s paintings add to the vintage flavor of the room. >>

BATH OF THE MONTH

LISA CREGAN: *There's a 1950s vibe in here...*

BARRIE BENSON: The house is a modest '50s ranch, so the goal was to design a bathroom that was in keeping with the other rooms. The basket-weave tile floor, the wood wainscoting, and the vanity all evoke the era. We wanted a simple, clean-looking bathroom, but we also wanted it to have character and pizzazz, and to be luxurious but not over-the-top.

That tub is the essence of simplicity.

And luxury! The texture is extra-smooth. It's made of volcanic limestone and resin, a material that feels like porcelain but is not as costly and heavy. I like this tub so much I put it in my own bathroom. Because it's so simple, it works well with a busy pattern like this floor, and it's compact, so it works well in a smallish space. It's not overly modern or overly traditional. It's just a beautiful vessel.

The stool next to the tub is its own kind of luxury—a little one, but so nice.

And the brass has warmth, which is nice against cold surfaces. So does the teak wood stool in the shower, which we put in there because she needed a place for her towels. It feels spa-like, like the pebble floor.

I bet that floor feels great underfoot.

It really does. Feet have the most pressure points in the body, and standing on smooth cobbled stones is very relaxing, even therapeutic. I had a good laugh with my client when she told me that

stepping on those pebbles 'rocks her chakras.' *Don't you worry about oil paintings in a bathroom?* It isn't precious art. It's appealing and it glam's the room up a bit, but it wasn't a big investment. And we were very careful about controlling humidity. The exhaust system clears out moisture pretty quickly.

Is the vanity vintage?

It's inspired by a Robsjohn-Gibbings '50s credenza. I drew it, and my husband, Matt Benson, who's an architect, perfected it—he and I worked on the room together.

It does look more like furniture than a bathroom cabinet.

The delicate mirror and sconces enhance the credenza feeling. They could be in a foyer over a console. Also, the marble has no lip, and there's no backsplash. We continued the wood wainscoting behind it. One of my mentors drilled into me that in order for a room to make sense, the lines should be continuous.

This really isn't a very big space by today's standards, is it?

No. I think people are over enormous bathrooms, though. That was a trend in the early 2000s, but you feel exposed in those large marble spaces. I mean, people were putting in master bathrooms you could hold a yoga class in. It doesn't work as a sanctuary that way. A smaller bathroom is cozy, and it needs to be cozy to be a real retreat. So we're trending back to the '50s! ●



SHE LIKES

"This keeps your face squeaky-clean, wakes up your skin, and makes it glow. And it feels really good like a mini facial massage."



CLARISONIC MIA 2 SONIC SKIN CLEANSING SYSTEM; CLARISONIC.COM.

ABOVE LEFT: The vanity, inspired by a midcentury modern credenza, is topped with Carrara marble and dressed up with brass pulls. The mirror and sconce have a fine-boned elegance that lends an air of femininity. **BELOW LEFT:** Pebble tile flooring and a wood stool create a spa-like atmosphere in the shower. Benjamin Moore's Edgecomb Gray on the ceiling picks up the gray in the marble tiles.

GET THE LOOK...

Victoria + Albert IOS tub: vandabaths.com.

Axor Montreux tub filler: hansgrohe-usa.com.

Brookhaven faucets and shower fixtures: cifialusa.com.

Bianco Delicato Basketweave Mosaic floor tile, Brick Mosaic shower walls, stone pebble tile shower floor, and Carrara marble countertop: charlesluck.com.

Vanity Undermount Lavatory sinks: stthomascreations.com.

Brass pulls: muffshardware.com.

Hulton double-arm sconce by Visual Comfort: circlinglighting.com.

Todd mirror: madegoods.com.

Custom-embroidered shade fabric through Mrs. Howard: phoebehoward.net.

Towels: leontinelinens.com.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES