

## Bathroom of the Year

Over the vanity wall, the tile switches to a horizontal, iridescent glass tile. These tile finishes contrast with the modern, cast-concrete, ramped vanity-sink and counter.

# A Work of Architecture

By Chelsie Butler

A master bath features smooth, smart materials and a truly innovative design

The shower tile (far left) with a crackled glaze was hand-made by a local potter to match the clean, earthy look the house itself imbues. The shape of the bathroom was dictated by the home's butterfly roof (right), which allowed for a vaulted ceiling.



This master bath is part of a home that was designed from the ground up, and the clients' main request was for it to reflect the home's overall architecture and material palette through a comfortable and efficient design. Part of the home's master suite, which includes the master bedroom and closet, the master bathroom is connected to the other spaces via a vaulted clerestory glass partition running the length of the hallway that bathes the bedroom and bath on both sides

with natural light from the continuous skylight in the vault.

"The shape of the room is dictated by the home's converted butterfly roof configuration, which was optimal for getting solar heat to the photovoltaic panels that power the hot water system," said Fu-Tung Cheng, principal of Cheng Design, in Berkeley, Calif. "The roof allows for a vaulted ceiling in the master bath - giving it big volume - and we were in charge of breaking down its scale and not making the homeowners feel like they were in a hole."



A 7-ft. ramped vanity perpendicular to the shower can accommodate two people at once.

### Challenge

- With a vaulted 12-ft. ceiling between the master bedroom and bath, the team needed to ensure that the bathroom area was an intimate space and that sound was reduced as much as possible between the two rooms.

### Solutions

- A sizable walk-in closet was located between the two rooms to reduce the level of noise. The water closet sits in a small space behind the shower enclosure with a door of its own to help reduce noise. The 4-ft. by 10-ft. shower area is nearly enclosed with a dropped, translucent plenum and oversized glass wall and is located at the far wall opposite the bedroom area.



One way Cheng and his team achieved this was by lowering the shower ceiling with an 8-ft., translucent, polycarbonate plenum and incorporating skylights that allow it to glow with natural light during the day.

"The water closet is enclosed behind a translucent glass door and is also illuminated with natural sunlight via a solar tube skylight," he said.

#### Innovative Thinking

As the home itself imbues innovation, it was not hard to feature this in the master bath, as well.

"Crafting the space with hand-made tiles from a local artist; casting our own concrete countertops; and making a few small, site-specific, simple windows was a way to distinguish our design from the mass market, off-the-shelf items usually specified in similar circumstances," said Cheng.

Other innovative elements include:

- A concrete-ramped sink vanity as a functional sculpture "floating" in the space and balancing out the mass feel of the concrete
- Window glass at the top of the vanity that allows indirect light to bathe the room and create an impression that the butterfly roof "floats" above the structural walls in certain locations around the perimeter of the building
- The small, site-glazed, pivot window to the right of the vanity that allows just enough fresh air circulation when needed and was designed to be light, small and easy to use
- A custom cabinet unit that opens like a Chinese puzzle box located on the opposite wall to the shower that stores a variety of items in multiple, easy-to-reach compartments and drawers

According to Design Awards Judge, Shane Inman, "Even with all of the different textures and elements, the design is not overwhelming." ■



A custom cabinet unit that opens like a Chinese puzzle box stores a variety of items in multiple compartments and drawers.

The master bath features elements seen throughout the rest of the house, including glass fiber-reinforced concrete on the side of the vanity and scaled-down, frameless, plate-glass windows.



#### SOURCES

**Design Team:** Fu-Tung Cheng, Cheng Design (Designer); Ann Kim & John Chan (Architects), R.J. Dailey Construction (Contractor); Endresudio (Structural Engineer); **Photographer:** Matthew Millman **Accessories, Faucets, Hand spray, Showerhead and Thermostatic Valves:** Hansgrohe; **Cabinets:** Custom Plyboo; **Drain:** Quickdrain; **Medicine Cabinet:** Custom Cheng Design; **Sink:** Geocrete pre-cast by Cheng Design; **Tile:** Ann Sacks, Holt Tile by Cheng Design, Sichenia & Ultraglass; **Toilet & Washlet:** Toto

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