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Perfect balance

A spatially challenged bathroom in Fulham is transformed into a luxurious boutique hotel-style wetroom by cleverly combining metallic surfaces with a rich dark palette

Report: Alison Nicholls Photography: Simon Eldon





When Michael Perkins approached designer Lara Francis to redesign the bijou bathroom of his Fulham home she happily embraced the challenge and immediately set about transforming the space. “Michael had a vision that he wanted a separate shower and bath, but it was a very small, very awkwardly shaped room,” explains Lara. “He’d had someone else in to look at it and they’d told him there was no way it could be done so I guess I was determined to find a way round it. Space limitations are something I’ve come across a lot in my professional life.”

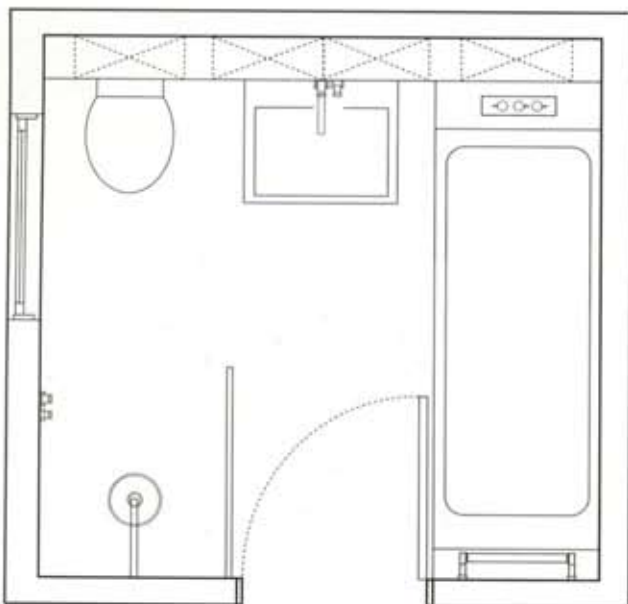
The existing bathroom in this two-bedroom Victorian terrace house was around five years old, having been installed by a developer when the property was renovated. “It was perfectly adequate but it was rather soulless,” remarks Lara. “Originally the bath was on the opposite side to where it is currently with the showerhead above. This, combined with a low, sloping ceiling, meant that standing height was restricted and as Michael is very tall it was proving to be a problem. Therefore he was extremely keen to have a separate shower.”

Lara set to work on drawing up floorplans and trying different configurations, and it wasn’t long before she hit upon a solution. “I realised that if I were to move the door – which was against one of the walls – into the centre and make it narrower I could fit a shower on one side and a bath on the other,” she explains. This was achieved by raising the ceiling height and, with limited floor area available for a standard shower tray and enclosure, Lara created a fabulous wetroom-style walk-in shower with a barely-there glass screen.

Working as a hotel and resort real estate consultant, Michael travels the world and stays in many glamorous hotels, so he wanted to bring a sense of that luxury to his own home. “I could tell from our first meeting and the style of the house that Michael liked bold, statement design so we discussed using a dark scheme to give some strength and mood. I’d come across these metal-effect tiles at a trade show which I took along ▶

Left: Stunning black mother-of-pearl makes up the panel that lines the recessed area – a glittering visual statement that brings a rich contrast to the harder surfaces

Top: The decadent dark colour scheme works beautifully despite the room’s small proportions and provides a relaxing mood



at the concept stage meeting and he loved them – so that was our starting point,” Lara says.

With the room tanked and waterproofed in order to be suitable as a wetroom it then required extensive tiling. With such a small space Lara felt that using the metallic tile on all surfaces would be overkill so opted to clad just two facing walls with it and balance those with a smooth matt tile in a rich anthracite shade on the remaining walls and floor. The Titanium Natural metal-effect tiles sourced from Surface in Battersea possess a textural, industrial quality. Lara then selected brushed stainless-steel brassware from Boffi for its minimal utilitarian styling to complement this look.

In order to introduce another, more decadent element, beautiful black mother-of-pearl panels are used as a backing for the recessed areas. “I thought it would be interesting to combine the industrial look with something a little bit more luxurious, which is why I chose the mother-of-pearl. It’s an amazing handmade product comprised of little shimmering brick-shaped pieces formed into custom-made sheets,” Lara says. Like the metallic tiles, this product has been used sparingly but to stunning effect with a small section in the shower alcove, and the main section in the recessed area across the width of the room creating a jewel-like band and an eye-catching focal point. “We really wanted to make a feature of it as it’s such a unique material,” she adds.

Selecting neat wall-mounted pieces to free up valuable floor space, Lara chose a bath and basin in a composite material that can be moulded into very sharp lines for a clean, contemporary look. Elsewhere, a bank of custom-made illuminated mirror cabinets creates the illusion of added space, and also provides crucial storage to hide clutter. “I find that there isn’t a great range of mirror cabinets on the market so I tend to design bespoke cabinets wherever possible,” Lara elaborates. Strip lights concealed behind sandblasted panels sit between the cupboard doors, giving key task lighting, while beneath an LED strip light accentuates the glittering aspect of the mother-of-pearl.

Despite the apparent disparity between Michael’s requirements and the bijou nature of the room, Lara has certainly risen to the challenge and maximised every inch of space to its full potential. By installing quality products and striking finishes she has achieved fantastic results, remodelling an awkward and problematic bathroom into a bespoke-designed, contemporary wetroom with a stylish and individual character.

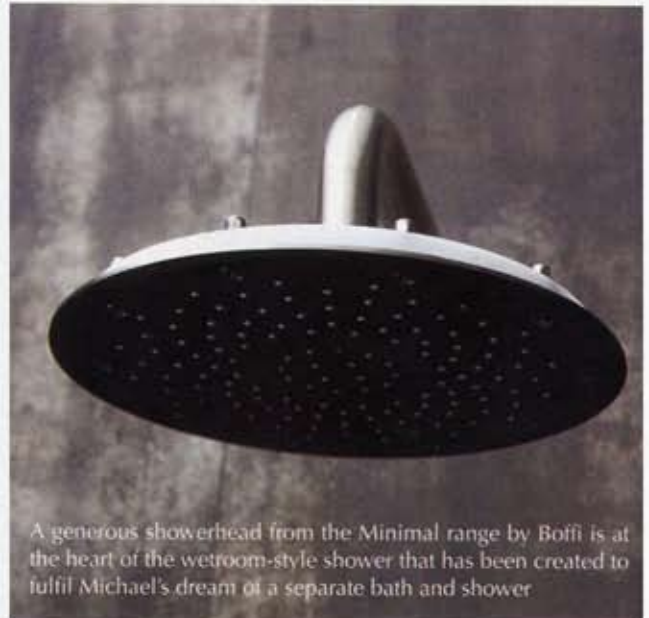
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Michael wanted a very minimal contemporary look so Lara used wall-hung and built-in pieces to ensure clean lines in keeping with a boutique hotel style





Smooth black granite was used as a base for the deck-mounted bath set at the foot of the tub



A generous showerhead from the Minimal range by Boffi is at the heart of the wetroom-style shower that has been created to fulfil Michael's dream of a separate bath and shower



A pull-out hand shower adds versatility to the bathing options



Above: Lara opted for a mineral cast wall-hung basin from Keuco with a silky finish. The wide yet shallow design looks sleek with its sharp, simplistic styling

Right: The large-scale tiles used on the shower and the basin walls have a distressed metallic effect that sets the dark industrial tone. The alcove, lined with mother-of-pearl, lifts the scheme with its luxurious touch

SourceBook

DESIGN

Designer Lara Francis Design
(020 8674 2822 or
www.larafrancisdesign.com)

BATHROOM

Bath Oberon, Villeroy & Boch
(www.villeroy-boch.com), from West One Bathrooms
(020 7499 1845 or www.westonebathrooms.co.uk)

Taps, bath set, showerheads and controls

Minimal, Boffi (www.boffi-chelsea.com),

from West One Bathrooms, as before

Basin Keuco (01442 865220 or www.keuco.co.uk),

from West One Bathrooms, as before

WC Flaminia (www.ceramicaflaminia.it),

from West One Bathrooms, as before

Shower panel Simpsons (www.simpsons-enclosures.co.uk),

from West One Bathrooms, as before

Heated towel rail The Sussex Range

(www.sussexrangec.co.uk), from West

One Bathrooms, as before

Tiles Newstone Metropolis in Anthracite Natural

and Metal in Titanium Natural, Surface

(020 7819 2300 or www.surface-tiles.com)

Wall panels South Seas collection Black Mother-of-Pearl

brick, Decored (01453 840111 or www.decored.com)

Paint Charleston Gray No. 243, Farrow & Ball

(01202 876141 or www.farrow-ball.com)

Mirror cabinets Lara Francis Design, as before

COST

A similar bathroom would cost around £40,000



