

Star attraction

A beautiful combination of iridescent tiles and sparkling lights emulates the drama of a starlit sky, all within the confines of a guest ensuite

Report and styling: Nicola Taza • Photography: Warren Smith

Sarah Pilcher and her husband, James, moved into their Victorian town house when she was 36 weeks pregnant with their first child. Their family home-to-be was in need of some modernisation but as expectant parents they were reluctant to commit their own time and energy to revamping the property's tired bathrooms.

"It was a priority for us to modernise the bathrooms and it seemed like a manageable project whilst we were expecting a baby," explains Sarah, "but it wasn't something we wanted to tackle on our own." So they enlisted the expertise of another husband and wife team, Lara and Rod Francis of Flow.

"We first met Rod when he replaced our boiler," recalls Sarah. "In the process we discovered that he and his wife, Lara,

have a bathroom design company so we viewed their online portfolio. We were so impressed with what we saw that we didn't even consider anybody else from that point onwards. They offered such a good, all-inclusive service. We knew we could leave every aspect of the project in their hands."

Within a year, Lara and Rod had revitalised all but one of the property's four lacklustre bathrooms. The guest ensuite concluded the transformation process but it necessitated some of the most dramatic alterations. "It was a claustrophobic, grim little room before. Awful, dated linoleum tiles covered the floor and cheap white tiling with dirty grouting was all over the walls. The layout was wrong too. It just wasn't anything like what we wanted at all," says Sarah. ▶

Left: The large mirror extends across the width of the room to reflect light from the window onto the adjacent surfaces and enhance the sense of space. The simplicity of the fixtures and fittings accentuates the beauty of the mosaic tiles. **Below:** The Karnak towel rail from Aeon keeps warm towels close to hand from the shower



Q&A: HOMEOWNER

Was it a conscious decision not to have any storage facilities?

"Yes. There is a huge airing cupboard next door so all our towels and other bathing necessities are just outside the door. Also, this room was only ever intended to provide showering facilities for our guests, who bring their own toiletries with them anyway, so there was never any need for additional storage."

Did you find the design process as stress free as you had hoped?

"Yes. We certainly found that having even one child can make things very difficult. We didn't have the freedom or the inclination to trudge around bathroom showrooms at the weekend so Lara did all the groundwork for us. She was brilliant – they both were."

How long did it take?

"There was a slight delay while we were waiting for the taps to be delivered from Italy but other than that, it was a very smooth process. All in all it took about six weeks so it was really quite quick."

"It's just like a twinkling, starlit sky at night"

And they certainly had very clear intentions for the space. "I always knew that I wanted a walk-in shower, with mosaic tiles on the walls and floor, so we specified that in our initial design meeting. At the same time, Lara showed us an image of the 'starry night sky' shower and as soon as I saw it, I knew I wanted that too," smiles Sarah. "I instantly thought of how lovely it would be to shower underneath it at night."

Sarah and James were enamoured with the concept of an all-encompassing starlit sky and so Lara translated their aspirations into three-dimensional reality. Within a matter of weeks, the guest ensuite was reconfigured as an expansive shower room. The redundant bath was removed and the plumbing was reorganised to correspond with the new layout, which was dictated by the shape of the room and the location of the window.

Although the room benefits from a generously proportioned window, it can be quite dark, so both Sarah and Lara were

careful not to accentuate this with the choice of tiling. "We were really tempted by darker shades of turquoise and teal but decided that these colours were a little too sombre for the room. It wasn't until we saw the beautiful, pearlised glass mosaics from the Iridium collection in Hyacinth from Sics at Surface that we knew we'd found exactly what we were looking for. They're just perfect."

To accentuate the mosaic's lustre, Lara incorporated a subtle combination of dimmable LED lighting, both within the recesses of the niche shelving and further down at foot level, which instils the space with a calming, ethereal ambience. "Although the lighting is undeniably simple, it is incredibly effective," explains Sarah. "It adds another dimension to the design entirely. When just these lights are on, it becomes very calming and serene, almost magical really. It's just like a twinkling, starlit sky at night. It really is so beautiful – I couldn't have asked for anything more." **K33**

Above: A constellation of twinkling fibreoptic lights and a large showerhead have been integrated into the ceiling, to create a shimmering spray into the room below **Right:** The showering area is distinguished by the continuation of the mosaic tiling, which flows from the walls onto the floor to create a raised shower tray





COST

Bathrooms from Flow start at £12,000

CONTACTS

DESIGN

Lara Francis of Flow
(020 8674 2822 or
www.flowlondon.co.uk)

BATHROOM

Basin and WC Duravit
(www.duravit.co.uk) at CP Hart
(0845 600 1950 or
www.cphart.co.uk)

Brassware and shower
Zucchetti
(www.zucchettionline.it) at
Alternative Plans
(020 7243 9747 or
www.alternative-plans.co.uk)

Towel rail Kamak, Aeon
(01525 379505 or
www.aeon.uk.com)

Mosaic wall tiles Sics
(www.sics.it) at Surface
(020 8481 9588 or
www.surfacetiles.com)

Slate floor tiles Surface,
as before

Lighting Unlimited Light
(01890 883522 or
www.unlimitedlight.com)

Accessories Vases, Habitat
(0844 499 1111 or
www.habitat.net); Towels,
Christy (0845 758 5252 or
www.christy-towels.com);

Toiletries, Think Happy
(01955 603110 or
www.thinkhappy.com); Soap
dish, Flow (020 8674 2822 or
www.flowshop.co.uk)

Left: Zucchetti's Aguablu brassware is sleek, streamlined and elegant

