

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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# ARCHITECTS REVIEW: BATHS

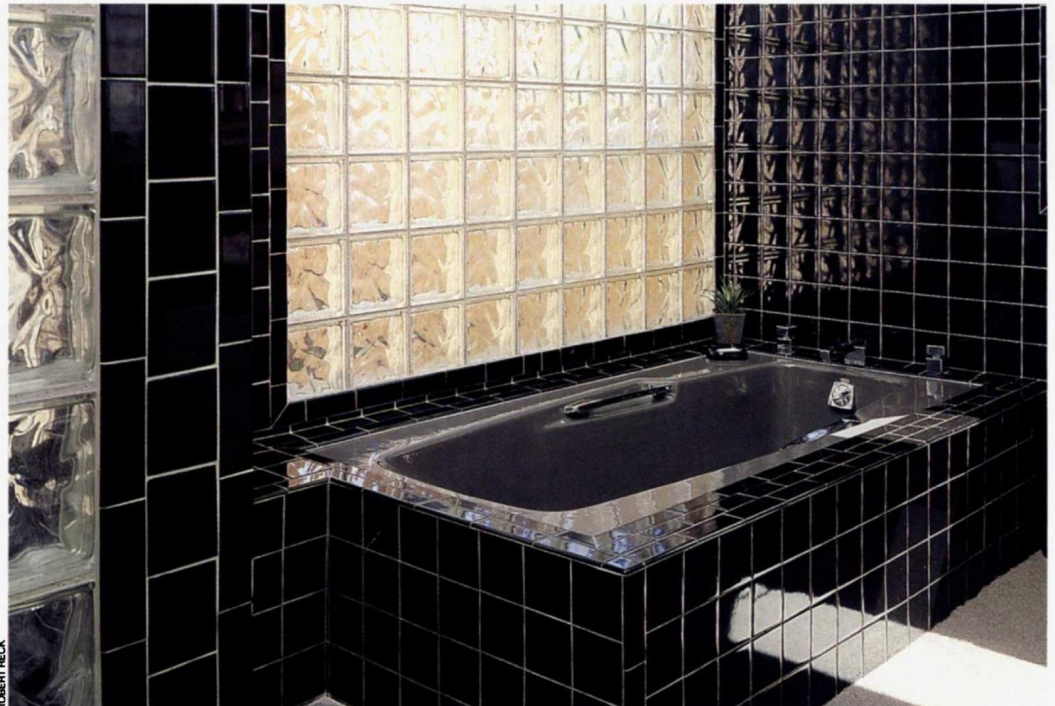
SIX TOP ARCHITECTS  
DISCUSS NEW IDEAS  
FOR OUR MOST  
PERSONAL SPACE



ALEC MARSHALL

**Michael Graves, Princeton:** "Of all parts of the house, Americans are used to small, pragmatic baths. But more and more, we're discovering how wonderful baths can be. Up until now, we haven't had the European traditions of the freestanding tub or the chaise longue. Josef Hoffmann designed a bath in the Palais Stoclet in Brussels where he did all the furniture, the woman's vanity, and so forth. It impressed me because it was a space large enough for the chaise longue, a place to relax before going to bed or out for the day. I like the experience of the bath to be a natural one: I prefer a good old towel and the opulent, natural demeanor of the baths of the 1920s and 30s rather than the spirit-of-the-moment, high-tech style. I don't like odd shapes and colors that you don't want to put your hand on. The mythology and character of water have to do with the ritual of cleansing, and it's nice to express that. At the very least, it can be done in the selection of the tile and the color of paint. The bath has the impact of brightening your day. Yet I have a friend who bathed only at night with a sin-

ABOVE: "My own bath has turn-of-the-century French sinks," says Michael Graves of his Princeton, New Jersey, residence. "There's something very natural about standing at them with a place to put your feet. However, they're not generous enough on the sides, so I'm now designing a table to go in between." French doors open to the spacious room, and skylights over the tub and basin area add natural light. RIGHT: For a house that Antoine Predock designed near Santa Fe, "the bath is a sub-oasis in the desert," he says. A relationship is made to the outdoors through a large window of glass block. "It creates a kind of fly's-eye, multiple aperture of the desert view."



ROBERT RECK

continued on page 60

continued from page 58



BILLY CUNNINGHAM

gle candle. It transformed the room from a space to wake up to in the morning into a place to relax and calm down at night—and you thought it was a totally different room. Now I have the opportunity to do a rather ideal bath. It's for a summer house, and it has separate components: a large shower, a generous-size separate tub. There is a certain luxury to opening up a bath to the outside. That opportunity is rare and depends on the budget, the climate and the



BILLY CUNNINGHAM



JEREMAH SULLIVAN

space. In this case, French doors lead to an outside garden, and there will be a shower there as well. It will be a tranquil place for a private moment."

**Antoine Predock, Albuquerque:** "The ritual of bathing goes back to Roman and Japanese traditions, and our Western American culture tends to overlook that quiet essence of the bath. The social aspect was important in ancient Rome, and in Japan the emphasis was on ritualistic cleansing—the sequence of scrubbing, plunging and allowing the film of residue to flow off the top of the water. Those are the traditions that can be called upon. In terms of the spirit of the place, I think it's most important that the contemporary bath be visually calm, a place of respite in the home. For the master bath in a house I designed near Santa Fe, the north light and the view were factors in the design. A large glass-block window allowed for a soft, diffused glow of daylight while providing privacy. Another window in the bath adds the punctuation of a view. I really like having

ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE: "The tub is big enough for two people, for sitting, soaking, watching television, generally relaxing," says Edward Knowles of the luxurious oval tub in the master bath of a Manhattan apartment he designed. Walls and floors are surfaced in chocolate-colored travertine marble. LEFT: San Diego architect Rob Wellington Quigley's own bath is a small space in an urban apartment. "It's so small that I treated the shower as part of the bathroom space to get a sense of openness," he says. The bathroom walls are of slate tile; shower floor of granite; flooring of industrial rubber mat.

continued on page 62

*continued from page 60*

views out of the bath—it enhances the aspect of the ritual and the experience of bathing. I used black tile to create a quiet contrast to the desert light. I'm more interested in the simplest statement and including ambient light, so I tend toward a minimalist approach to materials, but there is a wealth of new ones to choose from. I like some of the European accessories with new finishes and configurations of faucets and handles, but today's emphasis on new bath materials and products tends to make flash the message, not the ritual of the bath."

**Edward F. Knowles, New York:** "The Victorian attitude about closeting away the bath is giving way, and the clinical attitude is also losing its appeal. The bath is not a laboratory, so we needn't restrict similar functions to one space—like showering in the tub. I belong to an athletic club where the sauna/Jacuzzi/steam area is one that you enjoy and welcome going to, and in the same way, I believe that the bath in the home can be an enjoyable space. Other cultures have different ideas about the bath, and it's important to create a delightful space in the way the

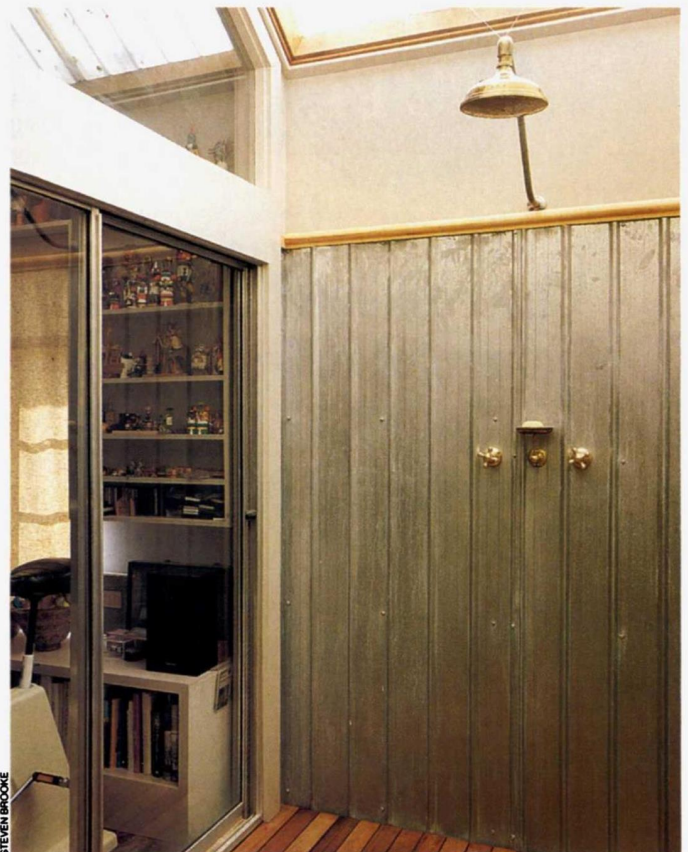
Romans did. We've also learned from the Japanese that the bath is a place to relax. Lighting can be an important aspect, too. Of course, you need good light in some areas, but the total space doesn't have to be clinically lit. It can also be subtle and mysterious. It can be a brightly lit daytime space and a mysterious nighttime space. In a bath I recently completed in Manhattan, the residents shared these ideas. The room is all chocolate-colored travertine with warm ash wood details. It features one main ceremonial space where you step up to a large oval tub. There's a separate shower/steam room—all of the same dark travertine—that's like stepping into a chocolate box. We've also brought music into the space, and it's always full of plants and flowers."

**Rob Wellington Quigley, San Diego:** "It's hard to generalize about bathroom design. In my own experience, I have one client now who wants a luxurious bath, yet in many of the grander homes I've designed, the clients have felt the bath is where they want to spend the least money and where they feel they want to spend the least time. It's a chal-

BELOW LEFT: "This bath is a cross between an ancient tub room, or Roman *caldarium*, and a cosmic chapel with a ceiling painted with stars and astrological symbols," says New Yorker Alexander Gorlin of the master bath in his design of Richard Ekstract's Hamptons house. BELOW: Charles Moore's 6' x 6' skylit shower in his Austin residence. "I love big showers—otherwise I feel like I'm trapped in a coffin," he says. The back wall is galvanized steel; the sliding door opens to the bedroom. "I like the army barracks simplicity."



ALEC MARSHALL



STEVEN BROOKE

*continued on page 64*

continued from page 62

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lence to have these two design extremes. I'm most intrigued about bringing a sense of light and air into the bathroom, which is generally a smaller, tighter space. The luxurious elements of a bath are nice, but in the morning most people have little time to draw a bath and enjoy it. That's why the shower is such an important part of the design challenge. To me it's the most important part of the bathroom. It's the way you're introduced to the day, and the experience can be enhanced through light and space. My own bath is an incredibly small space in an urban San Diego apartment. I included a window in the shower, trying to make the shower itself part of the inhabitable space. The window opens to a small garden with an orange tree. Soon we'll be able to reach out and pick an orange for breakfast. Also, I've cut back on the small paraphernalia that clutters the traditional space. For instance, the toiletry storage in my bath is all in one cabinet with only one door to open. That makes it easy to find things."

### Alexander Gorlin, New York:

"What inspired me is what Philip Johnson taught about the goal of architecture. It goes something like this: 'If you can make architecture out of an outhouse, then you can really make architecture.' What I think is most important in bath design is a sense of fantasy and fun. In the modern movement, with its emphasis on function, bathroom design has become formulated to a single room—usually five feet by eight feet—combining all functions. Recently there has been a move toward dividing the areas of function and, especially, elaborating and separating the tub area. That area can be a sensual cocoon of pleasure. The idea goes back to the ancient Roman baths. For the Ekstract residence in the Hamptons, I elaborated on this Roman concept, putting the tub in a separate pavilion. Within the pavilion, you walk up two steps to the tub. The house is

Tuscan-style with classical themes throughout, and in this master bath there's a bust of Dionysus in a niche. Actually, the bath pavilion is in a classical, towerlike belvedere. It's the climax of the whole house, the last pavilion in a series of pavilions that offers the best views from the house."

### Charles W. Moore, Austin:

"My doctoral thesis was on water. I like the sound of water, the delight in water and the wonderful ritual of bathing. Also, one set of questions in my book *The Place of Houses* was about the bath. Should bathing be private? in the dark? in the open? a social occasion? Bathing is generally private in our society, but in California there's the tradition of the hot tub. People differ greatly about the bathing experience. Personally, I'm claustrophobic and I love big spaces, big baths, big showers. I'd settle for a minimum four-by-four-foot shower, but six feet by six feet is even better, and my own shower is this dimension. This bathroom was a remodel, so I kept the standard toilet; I don't think the fancy ones work that well. The only luxury I allowed myself was a stainless-steel sink with faucets and handles that are a bit fancier—they're black. The shower has duckboards on the floor, corrugated steel walls and a wonderful large shower head retrieved from a nineteenth-century Atlanta house. I added the shower room onto the bath, and it has a skylight and a sliding glass door that also helps to light the bedroom. The only drawback is the sound when acorns fall and squirrels skitter across the skylight. I used to try to talk clients into elaborate baths. But now I feel more comfortable with stainless steel or galvanized metal. I'm not against marble, it's just that I have so much fun making something out of the cheap materials. Anyone can make something nice out of marble. Maybe having grown up in the Depression, I now take pleasure in the astringency—a perverse delight in very simple materials." △