

# A Splashing SUCCESS

FIVE interior design tricks  
that can DOUBLE THE  
SIZE OF YOUR BATH  
*(or at least make it look that way)*

BY ALYSSA FORD

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HEN IT COMES TO REAL LUXURY, there are few things in this world that beat a big, gorgeous, private bathroom for soaking, unwinding, primping, pampering, and just being alone.

The dream bath is entirely achievable, even if your current loo is less spa and more storage locker. These five Twin Cities families are living proof. They each worked with an interior designer to transform their baths from uninspired blah to sanctuary bliss, and they did it without adding a single inch to the square footage.

You, too, can revitalize your bath without taking a bath (financially speaking.) HERE'S HOW »

PHOTO BY GILBERTSON PHOTOGRAPHY



Interior designer Roger Zierman made this once claustrophobic bath appear airy—and much larger—by mounting the sink, toilet, and storage cabinet on the wall.



# 1

## LOSE THE LINEN CLOSET ▼

If your bathroom has a towel or linen closet, thank your lucky stars, says interior designer Barbara Schmidt, owner of *bstyle* in Minneapolis. That little closet can be a bathroom breakthrough.

It certainly was for Schmidt and her significant other, Michael, who own a vintage, 1915 cottage-style house in the Tangletown neighborhood of Minneapolis. When Schmidt was ready to give her 8-foot-by-6-foot bath a re-do, she made a beeline for that closet, tearing it down to the studs. When she uncovered the original, 1915 plumbing for a shower, she took it as divine inspiration and designed a much-welcomed, marble-lined shower in the newly unearthed nook with a rain-style showerhead. “Before, there was no way to take a shower at the house,” says Schmidt. “Now we have gorgeous shower.”

Dave and Karen Senger of Minnetonka made a similar, closeted discovery. When interior designer Amber Ranzau, design assistant at *Hauthaus* in Minneapolis, saw an underused, inefficient towel closet in her clients’ master bath, she thought, “Eureka.”

Once the closet was torn away, Ranzau, *Hauthaus* owner Holly Bayer, and the Sengers discovered 4 feet of empty space sitting behind the back wall of the closet. By claiming that significant chunk of territory, the designers were able to place a double-sink vanity in the closet spot and add in a generous custom cabinet with deep towel drawers and glass-fronted display cabinets for Karen’s perfume collection. “Getting rid of that linen closet opened up a whole new world,” says Ranzau.



BELOW PHOTO BY KAREN MELVIN PHOTOGRAPHY; AT RIGHT PHOTO BY LISA M. BOND PHOTOGRAPHY

# 2

## MOUNT IT ON THE WALL ▲►

With so much heavy equipment, a bathroom can easily feel cramped and claustrophobic, especially when floor space is at a premium. But interior designers have a remedy for that, too: They can put the

biggest appliances on the wall, thanks to new innovations in wall-hung vanities and toilets.

Interior designer Roger Zierman of *Partners 4, Design* in Minneapolis went one step further in the Golden Valley bath of Paul Bock, a local physician. He put everything—the sink, the toilet, the storage cabinet—on the wall, so the whole of the room seems to be unfettered by gravity. The cabinet, in particular, involved an extra dose of design magic. The deep, wall-mounted piece is fronted by mirror that extends almost to the floor and is surrounded by a band of LED lighting that adds to the impression of floating in midair. “It’s rare to do a bath that you can realistically call ‘airy’ but that’s exactly what this is,” says Zierman.

Even on a more modest scale, the wall-mounted trick works wonders. For the bathroom of Tom and Janine Olmscheid in Shoreview, interior designer Rosemary Merrill, principal at *Casa Verde* in Minneapolis, mounted the bamboo-strand vanity to the wall so it is only suspended by about 6 inches. “Just by taking the weight off the floor, the visual expanse of the room is greatly heightened,” says Merrill.

◀ Interior designer Barbara Schmidt captured enough square footage from a linen closet to add a marble-lined shower when she renovated the diminutive bath in her 1915 Minneapolis house.

PHOTO AT LEFT BY TIM NEHOTTE; TOP PHOTO BY GILBERTSON PHOTOGRAPHY



▲ Designer Zierman added a triangular 5-foot-by-3-foot shower and a 7.5-foot-by-8.5-foot frameless-glass shower door on a European track system. Dynamic blue vertical glass on the shower walls, black porcelain floor tiles, and black river rock on the floor of the shower “that feels fantastic on your feet” says owner Paul Bock round out the finishes.

▲ The Hatfield’s college-aged daughter, born in Paraguay, wanted something Spanish inspired for her bath re-do. Interior designer Susan Brown complied—and employed her favorite space-enhancing solution, a frameless-glass shower door.

◀ Interior designer Rosemary Merrill pulled out all her tricks to visually expand the Olmscheid bath: a frameless-glass shower door, a bamboo-strand vanity suspended 6 inches above the floor, and the continuous glass-tile flooring.

# 3

## MAKE IT TRANSPARENT ▲

Perhaps the best invention since indoor plumbing, watertight, frameless-glass shower doors work beautifully to expand any bath visually. For Bock’s bath in Golden Valley, Zierman commissioned a massive, 7.5-foot-by-8.5-foot frameless-glass shower door on a European track system to replace

what was a teeny frosted-plastic version. By enrobing the triangular shower in glass, the room looks and feels 10 times bigger.

“The first thing people say when they walk in here is, ‘Wow, this bathroom is huge!’” says Zierman.

At Char and Al Hatfield’s home in North Oaks, the original frosted-plastic shower door extended the entire width of the space, effectively cutting the bath into two smaller chunks. For interior designer Susan Brown, owner of *Susan E. Brown Interior Design* in St. Paul, the solution was obvious: a frameless-glass shower door to make the room whole again.

“Frameless-glass shower doors really are the magic weapons of bath design,” says Brown.





Interior designer Lori Berg's re-do of her own bath shows off its furniture-style, custom-designed vanity, painted a satiny black, and its leopard-print wallpaper from Boussac.

# 4

## RIGHTSIZE YOUR VANITY

Too often, builders make the mistake of installing oversized vanities in bathrooms that can't accommodate them, says Amber Ranzau.

That was the case in the Sengers' bath: The original, double-sink vanity was so long and deep that it seemed to be custom-crafted for the Taj Mahal. Ranzau exchanged the monster vanity for a curved, Mama Bear-sized vanity, thus maximizing usability and enhancing breathability.

The situation was even trickier in Schmidt's 1915 bath, a room so narrow that even Baby Bear-sized vanities didn't work. Her solution was to custom design a small vanity fitted with an exceptionally narrow sink from Porcher. "Getting furniture that fits the room is absolutely essential," says Schmidt.

► Amber Ranzau added space to the Senger bath by capturing space from a linen closet in and by rightsizing the double-sink vanity.



TOP PHOTO BY RICK DECAMP; BOTTOM PHOTO BY LISA M. BOND PHOTOGRAPHY. OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTO BY JILL GREER



◀ The Hatfield bath continues the Spanish-inspired tile from the floor to shower surround. Bright walls, (Benjamin Moore Firefly 299) make the room sing.

# 5

## TAKE YOUR FLOORING TO THE WALLS

Interior designers know that perception of space is just that: perception. By lining the floors and walls with the same material, the eye perceives the space as a single, continuous volume.

Merrill used this tactic in the Olmscheid bath, covering the floors in 1-inch, recycled glass tiles and then continuing the same pattern up over a step and throughout the entire shower.

Interior designer Lori Berg of Gabberts Design Studio used big pieces of porcelain tile, inspired by golden-veined Calacatta Crema marble, on the floor of her own Minneapolis bathroom and then draped the walls around her tub with the same dreamy material. Even though Berg chose a richly patterned leopard print paper from Boussac for most of the room, the jewel-box bath still feels large.

"It's all in how the eye takes in a space," says Berg. "This is what good design is all about." **MH**

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