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Let's Get Practical: Master bathroom design trends

By Edy Keeler For The New Mexican
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Marble-patterned porcelain tile laid in a herringbone pattern adds drama without the maintenance needs of the natural stone

The latest master bath trends, colors and finishes appear first in new-home construction and master bath renovations. Trade shows and showrooms bring the hottest new products to designers and builders, and we bring them to our clients. Here's what's trending in master bathrooms for 2020, in the big world, and closer to home. Please know that we're not always trendy here.

Technology for the master bath

Tech-controlled features and smart-home integration can turn the master bathroom into a convenient at-home spa. Custom shower settings, toilets with bidet functions, integrated music, and soft lighting can elevate the experience. Add a mini-refrigerator or cold drinks for during a long soak. Smart mirrors have anti-fog technologies, integrated TV screens, and USB ports.

But I haven't had requests here in Santa Fe for most of these items, beyond the ability to set shower temperature controls, as fun as the other things seem. We've also had no serious requests for smart home remote-controlling. Here at home, I am actually finding my clients are looking to simplify, seeking an escape from too much technology.

Warm colors and rustic wood bathrooms

Overall, white and gray remain popular for master baths; but colors like greens and blues are trending, sparked by our desire to connect with nature. Drama is in, as deep green, blue, and black add contrast against white or gray. Expect to see slightly rustic wood finishes in medium and light tones, with hand-scraped and wire-brushed textures. You'll see this trend in wood-look tile, as well as real wood walls and vanities.

The baths we've done in the past year have reflected this, like the white and gray-mauve palette we used here. The other trend, for us, has been the earth colors. Rich browns, golds and terra cottas are perennials in our town. My personal favorites? Any of the aqueous colors: aqua blue-greens are incredibly beautiful in reflective mosaic tiles, glass or ceramic. And blues, rich and dark like the Pantone color of the year, Classic Blue, in accent roles.

Open-plan master bath and shower

Open-plan master bathrooms are the latest trend in 2020. While spa tubs are out — we haven't put in a jetted tub in years — soaking tubs are making a statement here. Divided by a glass wall, a large “wet room” for both shower and tub makes a bathroom feel very spacious. If there is room! In the past two years, every single bathroom remodel we've designed has been launched with, “Where can we push into another space to add square footage to the master bath?”

There often isn't space, so we re-worked the baths pictured by removing a typical '80s or '90s built-in and tiled-in tubs and making a large simple shower or freestanding tub space.

Alternatively, if there is room, the open-plan bath is ideal for a tiled feature wall, or dramatic floor design. Something increasingly cool is black-framed glass, keeping the water in, and working with both modern and rustic bathroom designs.

Geometric tile and matte finishes

Patterned tile is still going strong. We still love our global-inspired patterns, but now we're embracing modern geometric designs. Warmer shades of gray, brown, and gold combined with matte brass or gold to create modern, but warm, understated chic.

Matte finishes are a big trend, as tastes move away from the glossy lacquers of recent years. Plus, matte finishes on stone and tile are easy-care and more slip-resistant.

Hexagon and chevron tile patterns are hotter than ever — but we're moving away from gray, and towards warm brown and gold.

Stone-look porcelain tile and slabs

Large-format tile is getting even bigger, with new porcelain tiles up to 24×48 inches. New manufacturing techniques create realistic faux marble, onyx, and travertine. Full-size slabs of porcelain tile are the newest stone substitute. At enormous sizes like 5 x 10 feet, these wall-sized faux stone tiles can be used to create incredible patterns in master bathrooms.

These bathrooms are the perfect place for a dramatic book-matched stone pattern. Large-format porcelain tiles make it easy. Centering them on the wall of a walk-in shower makes a work of art. You can install a beautiful backdrop for vanity mirrors, or we can create an amazing floor design.

What to do with your master bath constraints

Constraints of size available for a remodel can be creatively addressed. And small spaces can be treated in a way to maximize the impact. Small can be quite beautiful, and is a trend in remodeling as well as new home building. We call it downsizing, desired or reactive. The constraint of budgets can be addressed as well. There are multiple sources of material and clever ways to use them. Designers can accommodate budgets. Courage and reality can make magic.

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