

Electric Zen

The clever renovation of a Scarsdale bathroom adds luminous sophistication to this Zen-inspired space.



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Sometimes, it's subtlety that makes the biggest impact.

Knowing when to use restraint and when to push the envelope is often a mark of great design. For the owners of a French Normandy-style home in Scarsdale, with a circa 1990s-era traditional bathroom, the ask was for an updated, tranquil space with a more contemporary aesthetic. Something that would feel Zen but not be all white. Something that would feel soothing but not be boring.

Enter Alisberg Parker Architects, an architecture and interior design firm based in Greenwich where project architect Sarah Finch worked with firm partner Ed Parker and a team to create a space that would be calming but still exciting.

To achieve the look, the team turned to subtle yet lively tones already embedded within their choice of materials. Then, they played with lines and scale to create a room that inspires and asserts itself.

"The client was willing to make some interesting moves," says Finch.

For the floor, huge, creamy-white Macaubas quartzite slabs (a Brazilian stone) from Marble America in New Rochelle imbue the space with instant drama, with distinct veining that sometimes reads gray, sometimes blue, and other times green. The same quartzite used on the floor was also used for the custom-made countertops on the vanity.



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Glass subway tiles on the wall have a similar character to that of the floor and counters. It's a dynamic material, similar to the quartzite, that evolves with the way the light plays on color. Large French doors, located at the far end of the room, allow light to flood the space. "We took into account the light at all different times of the day," says Finch. The resulting effect is ever-changing: gray tiles that, depending on the light, could look green, blue, or taupe. A subtle touch with a beating heart.

The creams and lively cool tones of the quartzite are both balanced and intensified by the addition of warm, grounding, wood cabinetry.

"To warm up the space, we selected a walnut finish with horizontal graining for the millwork from Handcraft Cabinetry in White Plains," says Finch. Horizontal reveals that are located in the cabinet fronts also function as finger pulls. They allow the wood to be the focal point, and they run in the same direction as the grain. In fact, horizontal lines run throughout, drawing the eye around the room.

On the opposite wall, the shower is a standout. Having the glazing wrap around a corner is unusual. "It's not easy to get the corner detail to look nice and crisp," explains Finch. To achieve that, they turned to Design Glass and Mirrors in Greenwich, with whom they work often. Mitered corners give a waterfall look to the edges. All the elements now wrap the corner, resulting

in a soothing visual. Glass with a low iron content was chosen to help eliminate the blueish tint associated with thicker, more traditional glass, making it look optically clear and super clean.

To further ramp up the shower's visual impact, custom horizontal towel bars from Metalworks Inc. in the Bronx were added to the shower exterior. The hardware was fabricated in polished nickel to match the pulls and towel bar on the wall, as well as the plumbing from Kohler's Purist line. The bars introduce horizontal lines to that side of the room and add a touch of graphic bling.

The tub, with a brushed-chrome finish, is the only thing that remains from the room's previous iteration. Though the tub is more traditional in style, "it somehow really works and is a nod to the past life of the space," explains Finch. A pendant light owned by the client was also incorporated as part of the design, a clever juxtaposition with the wood that seems to float in midair. A makeup area next to the double sink was created by relocating the water closet off to the side and using more of the Macaubas.

The carefully orchestrated confluence of textures, light, and balance in this Scarsdale bath works to create that essence of tranquility the homeowners sought but with a playful kick.

The resulting space is a study in bold, dynamic choices within the context of careful restraint. Calm with a verve. Dare we say, "electric Zen"? ■■



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