



PROJECT Willard Street Residence, San Francisco FIRM Cary Bernstein Architect PHOTOGRAPHY David Duncan Livingston

Bathroom 101

THE WATER CLOSET NOW DELIVERS
AESTHETIC APPEAL AND FUNCTIONALITY.
BY ADRIANA NUNEZ

A COMPACT SPACE LIKE THE BATHROOM can become cluttered, even if it only has a few features. Ensuring that yours works on the most practical level often takes priority over any design ambitions. But with careful planning and a bit of creativity, bathrooms don't have to be an architectural wasteland. To help you realize its hidden potential we sat down with Cary Bernstein, principal of Cary Bernstein Architect in San Francisco, to discuss exactly what goes into the architectural bathroom.

To counter the cramped feeling in the bathroom, Bernstein suggests using a mix of organization and restraint. In architecture, what isn't there plays as an important role as what is. Removing the weight of a single piece of furniture and subtle variations in textures and finishes can add a sense of airiness to the room. In Bernstein's design for the Choy Residence (above right), for example, the cabinetry hovers 9 inches above the floor, while the tiles feature distinct reflective properties to capitalize on an ever-changing interplay with light.

Another way to add sophisticated design touches is the use of customized cabinetry and hardware. "There is a misperception that customization has to cost more," Bernstein says. "But that isn't always true, particularly when compared to high-end, off-the-shelf products." Custom pieces offer you added flexibility and control and allow you to build to the exact constraints and quirks of any space while maintaining a clear artistic direction. To preserve the clean simplicity of the Lin-Besio bathroom (left and right), Bernstein brought the outside in by installing a custom sliding mirror that moves over the window, creating changing views of the yard. She also designed a removable mahogany mat for the shower that echoes the walnut color used throughout the client's home.



According to Bernstein, creating bathrooms that are consistent with the overall design vocabulary of the home is at the essence of a successful space. Favorite shapes and colors regain new forms of expression in the bathroom, giving it the coherence many others lack. Every element from the towel rack to the shower stall has a visual impact, and careful attention to the material palette can ensure that your interactions are as enjoyable as they are biological. ■

Cary Bernstein practiced in New York City for six years prior to opening her office in San Francisco in 1995. Projects completed to date include residential, commercial, and health-care commissions in California, New York, and Moscow, Russia. She teaches at the California College of the Arts and is Program Chair for the SFMOMA A+D Forum.