

RENOVATION STYLE[®]

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10 ways to indulge—
within your budget

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4 kitchen makeovers
Update of a '70s ranch
2006 bath trends

aged to perfection

by debra landwehr engle photography by gordon beall

Designing a bath and dressing room to suit a period house is a matter of incorporating smart ideas and beautiful details.



THIS PHOTO: Cream-and coffee-color Italian marble tiles create a classic Roman pattern of octagons and squares. OPPOSITE: The tub, found in a French château, was mounted on a concrete base to afford a better view out the window. Made of cast iron, it retains heat for long soaks.





LUXURY IS NOT ONLY ABOUT GOOD LOOKS AND PRICEY MATERIALS. It's also about sensible solutions that make life easier and more orderly. For proof, look to the master dressing room and bath in the Virginia home of interior designer Barry Dixon and Michael Schmidt.

Built in 1907, the fieldstone country house has "a kismet about it," Barry says. A grand home with 11 bedrooms, it sits on 200 acres with a trout stream and a panoramic view of the mountains. It was already in excellent condition when Barry and Michael bought it, having been rehabbed recently by a builder.

That rehab, though, resulted in a master bath with too many modern lights and fixtures for this historical home. "We

didn't want a brand-new bath in an old house to look brand new," Barry says. So, he and Michael re-created the space, combining it with a 14×16½-foot guest bedroom to shape a 22-foot-long dressing room. The key to its success comes down to a central idea: Everything in a house must be chosen for both beauty and function.

After demolition, Barry started with a clean slate. The designer took cues from the home's original distinctive architectural details, including grand windows with Romanesque arches and diamond mullion patterns. For the room's core, he worked with kitchen and bath designer Lois Kennedy to design a rectangular grouping of floor-to-ceiling closets that

OPPOSITE: Mirrored cabinet doors reflect light, visually expanding the long, narrow room. A custom wall finish in a café au lait color gives an aged effect. BELOW LEFT: Being able to see a fire flickering in the fireplace when bathing is one of designer Barry Dixon's favorite features of the bath. The fireplace is original to the house; the space was previously a bedroom. BELOW RIGHT: An open-back chair Barry designed pulls up to the built-in vanity.



littleluxuries

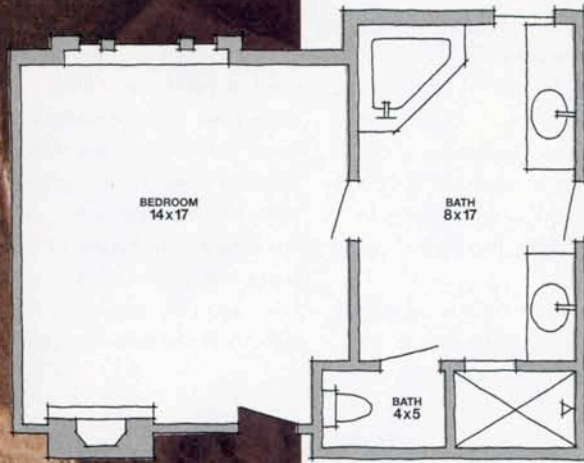
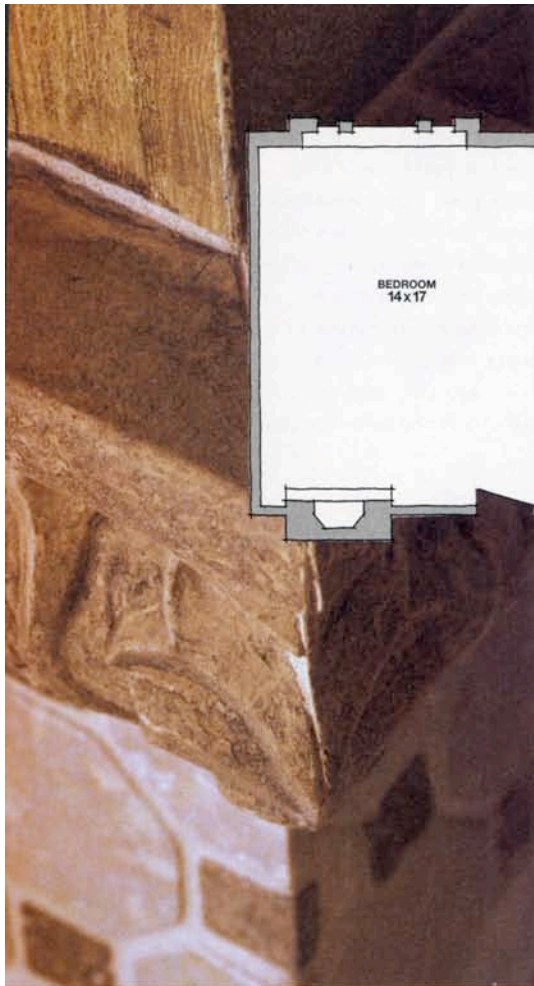
No matter how much space you have, small changes can greatly improve function in your master bedroom and bath. Designer Barry Dixon offers these suggestions.

- Line deep drawers with cedar to keep your sweaters safe from moths in the off-season and eliminate the need to carry them to another location for storage.
- Be creative when choosing a hamper. "You're going to have to look at it, so make

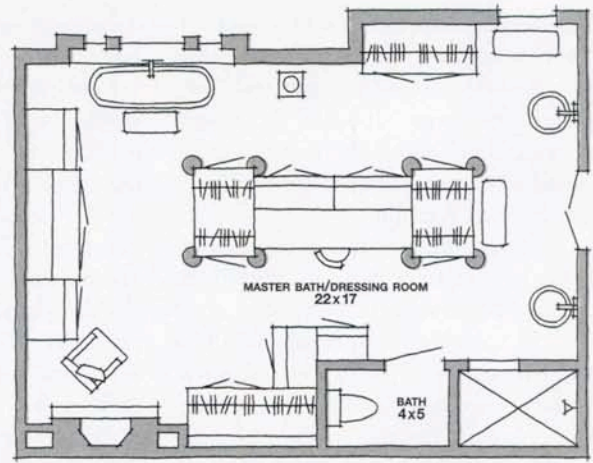
it something wonderful," Barry says. He suggests combining beauty with function by using an early-20th-century picnic basket, a 19th-century metal-mesh trash can with a canvas bag made to fit, or a ventilated window seat built into a dormer.

- Choose oversize doorknobs and drawer pulls that you can hang clothes on. This comes in handy, Barry says, when you're bringing in cleaning or trying to coordinate an outfit.

- Line a drawer with an antitarnish cloth to protect watches and jewelry. Put locks on drawers for security.
- Add privacy and natural light to a water closet by outfitting it with a French door; sandblast the clear glass to make it cloudy but translucent.
- Invest in a thermal regulator for the shower. Once you set the temperature, the shower water will be the same temperature every time you turn it on.



BEFORE



AFTER



look like built-in armoires. This left space around the perimeter for sinks, a shower, a water closet, and freestanding bathtub.

They added mirrors at each end of the core and on the closets to bounce natural light around the room. “When you have one mirror across from another, you have an infinity of space and light,” Barry says.

Beyond its beautiful detail, the space is a textbook of smart ideas, guided by the step-by-step ergonomics of getting dressed in the morning. Behind all the mirrored doors, storage in the central core is arranged by category of apparel. A clockwise walk around it first yields undergarments, then suits and shirts, and finally ties, belts, shoes, and other finishing details. At the end of the day, simply reverse the direction and return everything to its proper place.

The room also boasts a large medicine closet for towels and toiletries, which, Barry says, reduces the need for counter

space and keeps clutter out of sight.

Creating the function-smart space took about four months and, despite thorough planning, presented a few challenges. The custom-made cabinetry, for instance, was bigger than the windows in the new dressing room, so it had to be lifted by a crane and brought in through the master bedroom windows. New French doors allowed the cabinets admittance into the master bath and also give a grand entrance to the renovated space, Barry says.

That beautiful final product, not the obstacles, is what’s important, he adds. “Don’t be dissuaded when something doesn’t seem easy,” Barry advises. “You forget the pain, and you remember the above-average results.” ■

Interior designer: Barry Dixon
Bath designer: Lois Kennedy

For more information, turn to Sources on page 118.

OPPOSITE: This sink, one of two in the room, was cast to look like a garden well and plumbed with standard fixtures. Shaker craftsmen made the floor-to-ceiling columns, which give the bathroom a sense of history. The base of each column is rounded to prevent stubbed toes. TOP LEFT: Marble floor tiles continue up the wall and are crowned with stone trim, creating wainscoting with an aged look appropriate to the house. BOTTOM LEFT: Ornate capitals and crown moldings draw the eye upward and enhance the verticality of the narrow room.

