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Retreat

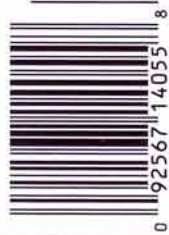
18 Luxury Baths
Layered with:

- Stylish Storage
- Floral Patterns
- Custom Touches
- Spa Comforts

2005

Display until October 25

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Floor Show

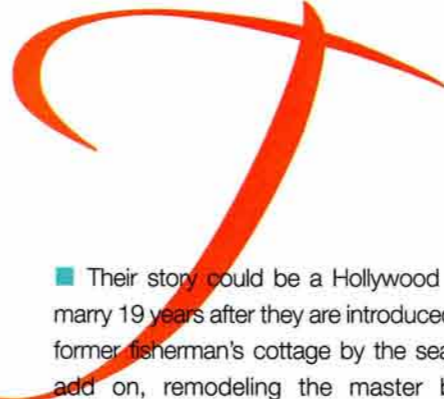
Silvery blue softens a bath where details take center stage.



This photo An arched niche lends the dressing table intimacy. A 1940s Italian ballroom chair is re-covered in ruby imitation sueds. Opposite The blue marble countertop merges into a backsplash finished with an oggee edge.



This photo A marble tub backsplash is shaped for decorative effect. Fixtures add a gentle arc, echoed in the easy swag of Roman shades. Opposite Drapery panels soften the tall expanses of cabinetry flanking the sink vanity. Lines of silver-gray paint accent molding.



■ Their story could be a Hollywood script. Two world travelers marry 19 years after they are introduced, then move to the groom's former fisherman's cottage by the sea. To ready the home, they add on, remodeling the master bath to fulfill the bride's passion for all things French.

The protagonists in this modern tale are Stacy Smith, who manages performers in music and film, and Mark Gonsenhaus, an importer of Oriental rugs, who created Stacy's ideal bath at their Virginia Beach, Virginia, home. Representing half of a his-and-hers bath suite, Stacy's space captures the elegance of old-world design. "I wanted a bath to remind me of the Ritz Hotel in Paris," she says.

The plans called for retaining the existing bath's footprint but improving the use of space. For assistance the couple turned to designer Irwin Weiner. Taking a cue from Mark's occupation, they started from the floor up. Stacy wanted mosaic flooring, but a search of various showrooms yielded little beyond small-repeat patterns and traditional border designs. Instead she desired a more free-flowing motif to introduce drama and a sense of play. Weiner ultimately designed the floor, drawing a leaf pattern based on a 1940s vase from Paris.

To fabricate the floor, Stacy and Weiner chose a pure white Thassos marble background and a blue-green cipollino marble for the design. Color striations in the cipollino were thoughtfully harvested to enhance the pattern, Weiner says. "We allocated the darker shade for shadow and the lighter shade for highlights."


The floor literally sets the stage for Parisian-style glamour, which Weiner finely balanced with soft touches. He eased the visual mass of floor-to-ceiling storage with the addition of seafoam-color curtains gathered behind glass-front doors, for example, and added a hint of silver to the cabinetry's white glaze for a mellow, antiqued



look. Then he enveloped the bath with the atmospheric effects of Venetian plaster walls for layers of subtle color, interest, and depth.

Other carefully selected details enhance the bath's goal of achieving the established, traditional look Stacy admired at the Ritz. These include the molding on cabinets, the carved backsplash of the tub and sink, the tub's casework surround, and the shapely feet of the cabinets and dressing table, intended to lend each piece its own identity.

"We didn't just buy one style of foot and apply it to everything," Weiner says. "On the one hand, pieces are stylistically coherent. On the other hand, they're slightly different." The same could be said for the two alabaster light fixtures, which Weiner discovered at a New York antiques shop. From the 1920s, they are similar, yet not a perfect match.

In the end, while the size of the original bath was retained, its architectural flow was greatly improved and its character enhanced to reflect Stacy's taste and personality. Calming colors and well-planned function provide a happy ending to the story, she says. "This is my little Ritz." 

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WRITER: Debra Landwehr Engle PHOTOGRAPHER: Gordon Beall
STYLIST: Susan Stiles Dowell