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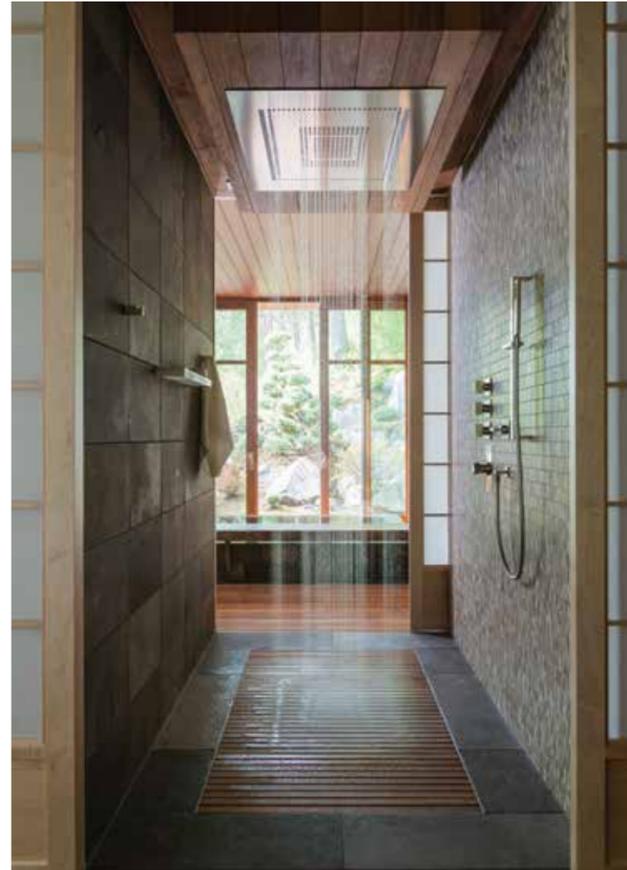
HOME

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SOLITUDE & SERENITY

Tips for creating a luxury master bath

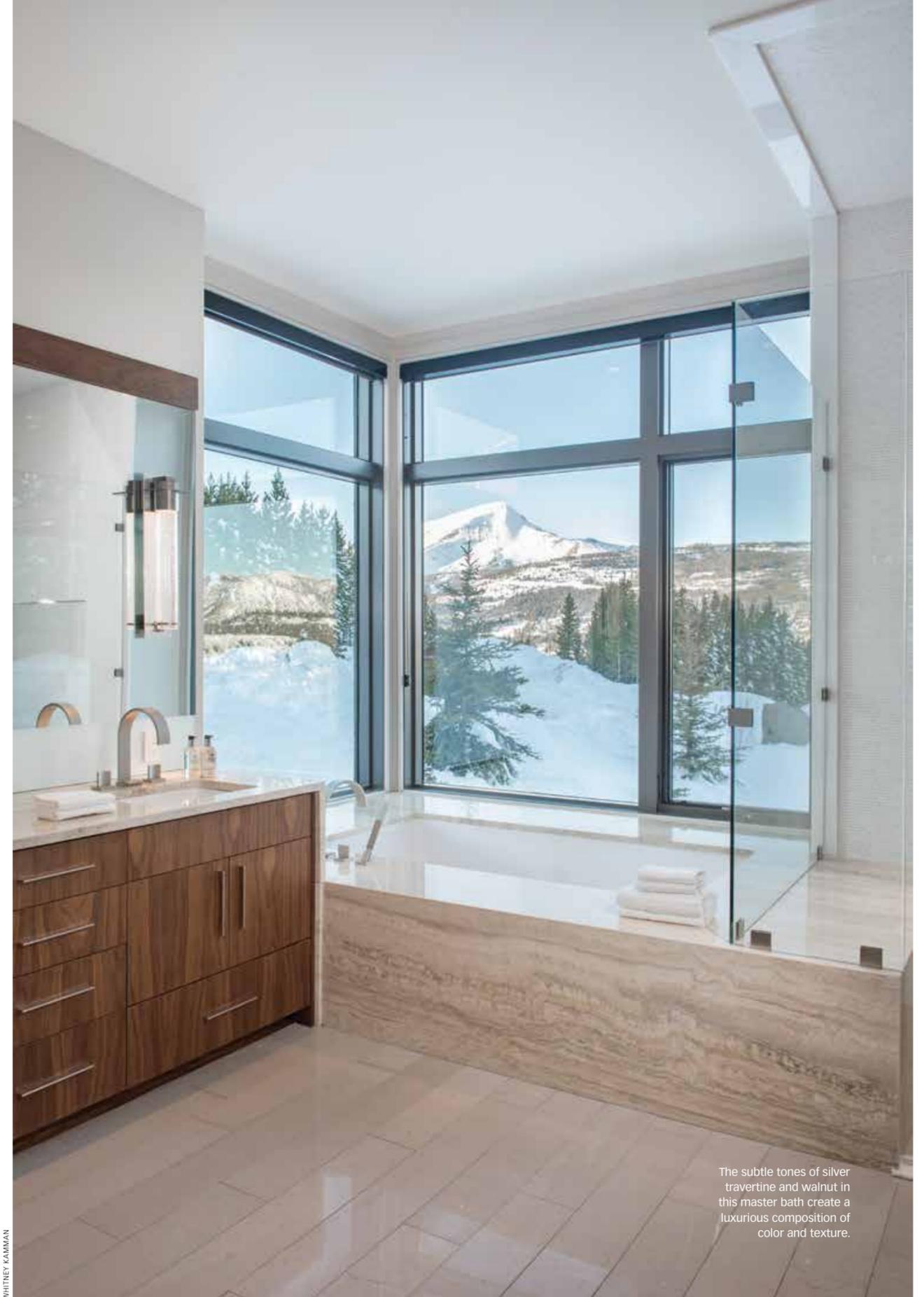
Written by Jessianne Castle

WHETHER IT'S IN AN ALPINE RETREAT OR A HOME IN THE CITY, an integral part of any house is the master bathroom. It's a private space that we use to prepare for the day to come, physically and mentally, and it's also where we calm and collect ourselves when that day comes to a close.

"I think there's a real ritual in the bathing experience, whether it's getting ready for your day or the calming experience at the end of the day," says Susie Hoffmann, founder and principal designer of the Bozeman, Montana-based Envi Interior Design Studio. Hoffmann approaches each home project with a simple philosophy — seeking to purify, balance, and energize a space — and says it's important that a master bath appeals to each of these needs.

As a space that serves an important function in the home, design elements for a luxury bathroom should complement the experience of preparation, no matter the architectural style. "It's all about the feel and aesthetics," says Sophia Cok, owner and founder of Sanctuary Interior Design in Bozeman.

ABOVE: This walk-through Dornbracht Rain Shower, designed by Envi Interior Design Studio, features a custom teak slotted drain. Sliding doors on either side allow for privacy or an open view to the soaking tub and Japanese garden beyond.



WHITNEY KAMMAN

The subtle tones of silver travertine and walnut in this master bath create a luxurious composition of color and texture.



AUDREY HALL

integrated body sprays, benches, and steam elements. Some of the modern fixtures even use electronic valves connected to a smart-phone, offering convenient touches, such as the ability to start a steam shower from the comfort of one's bed.

By making use of steam elements and heat, the master bathroom can also provide an unmatched personal spa-like experience. Whether a dedicated steam room is set aside or is part of the shower, heated bench seats and shower pans add to the relaxed setting.

CREATING CUSTOM APPEAL

A key aspect of a luxury master bath is the overall atmosphere. "It's the experience, and it really feels more luxurious when you're appealing to all the senses," Hoffmann says. To create this appeal, Hoffmann makes special use of natural stone, lighting, and aromatherapy. "My philosophy is to use the most natural materials possible," she says, adding that she does this in lieu of acrylic and plastic. She particularly enjoys developing an ambiance with unique textures, such as adding a walnut inset or teak to a stone shower floor. "I love mixing natural stones with wooden elements," she adds.

Hoffmann says that the feel of the room also can be developed



AUDREY HALL

Marble, used for the walls and vanity, makes a dramatic contemporary statement in this bathroom.

THE MAIN ELEMENTS

With considerable advancements in the design and functionality of bathroom fixtures in recent years, Hoffmann says she's seeing more space allocated to the bathroom and bathing experience, with a separate room or divided area for the water closet, a spacious vanity for two, and both a soaking tub and a walk-in shower.

A mainstay in any master bathroom is the shower. To promote relaxation, experienced designers often choose to use multiple showerheads, ranging from those with various water pressures to hand-held options. The rain showerhead, with a gentle spray that elicits the calming sense of bathing in a warm rainstorm, is a popular choice. Fixtures engineered with multiple spray settings allow users to adjust the water pressure from a strong acupressure spray to a water-saving trickle.

Cok says that the focus of the bathroom has changed over the last decade, with more emphasis being placed on designing the shower experience as opposed to the soaking experience. Cok sees the shower as a simple, freestanding sculptural piece, and she often makes use of

FROM TOP: A graphic-patterned tile combined with a black travertine floor, Taj Mahal countertops, and a Terzani chandelier create a glamorous spa-like bath in this mountain home. • This shower features a heated bench and pan, body sprays, a steam unit, and speakers. The ceramic tile and Calacatta marble keep the space light and bright.



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with the use of fire, and that the flickering flames in a fireplace can balance the water element. Another of her favorite techniques is to develop focal points in the room with decorative sconces or well-placed chandeliers.

Like Hoffmann, Cok enjoys using natural materials in the master bath, and she tends to stick to light or bright colors. "I like a natural or neutral color palette to create a place where your eye can rest," she says, adding that she prefers to use slab stone, like marble or limestone, as well as white or cream ceramic tiles.

FUNCTIONALITY

Strategic light placement helps to set the room's overall tone, but beyond creating a mood, lighting ultimately serves a purpose. "Lighting is really central in the bath," Hoffmann says. "It should be functional but not harsh."

Cok taps into the functional elements by using illuminated mirrors to add a sophisticated touch and to serve both practical and decorative purposes with a high-end aesthetic. Cok and



WHITNEY KAMMAN

According to Sophia Cok of Sanctuary Interior Design, drapery adds an additional lux option to a master bath. This master bath includes floor-to-ceiling fabric on the windows that contrasts well with the hard surfaces of the countertop and floor. The inset tile border on the floor adds a subtle level of detail.

Hoffmann both make frequent use of light dimmers that can shift with the mood of the user. And adjustable lighting is a major factor for both preparation and relaxation.

Human-centric lighting, also known as circadian lighting, is an expansion of the idea of dimmable lights. But beyond changing light intensity throughout the day, it also changes the color temperature of a room. The reasoning behind it is that varying light levels and colors are said to help us tune into our own personal clock and 24-hour circadian rhythm. "There are some real health benefits from that type of lighting," Hoffmann adds.

While innovation has improved the master bath experience, Hoffmann believes that some technological advances don't belong in this space. She prefers to maintain the serenity of the bathroom ritual by leaving out technology, such as TVs or high-tech mirrors that display weather, news, and daily schedules. "I'm a proponent of eliminating that element in a master bath, just to keep morning preparedness and evening



AMELIA ANNE PHOTOGRAPHY

Lighting is a powerful feature in a master bath. Sanctuary Interior Design designed this vanity, made with reclaimed barn wood.

bathing sacred," she says.

Certainly, with thoughtful colors, lights, and modern fixtures, a master bathroom can balance aesthetics and functionality, promoting a space of serenity, calm, and luxury. 🏡

Jessianne Castle is a freelance writer and editor who calls Montana's Shields Valley her home. Born and raised in Montana, she enjoys telling the stories of the West.

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