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# BEAUTIFUL BATHS

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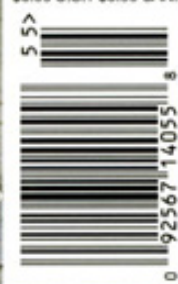
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# Subtle Polish

Rich wood and sleek surfaces create a handsome 1930s-style suite fit for modern life.



■ Although the stately Georgian manor had a steadfast grip on a wooded precinct of New Canaan, Connecticut, architect Louise Brooks could see that its interiors didn't muster the space, light, and comfort demanded by its owners' modern lifestyle—especially with regard to the master bath. Confident that a 21st-century aesthetic could emerge while honoring the 1938 home, Brooks began a renovation, her design blending the sophistication of mahogany heirloom furniture with everyday ease.

"The owners wanted a clean, airy, spalike feel," Brooks says. However, a voluminous new room would have seemed awkward compared with the home's distinguished architecture, consistent artisanship, and modest room proportions. Clarity came in the form of a his-and-her bath suite—two rooms that keep their scale in check while indulging the owners' desire for pampering. A modest-size addition to the house created space for a new bath for the wife, while the original bath became the husband's domain. Both baths access a shared shower, while hers hosts a tub for lingering.





Near the gracefully curved tub in the new bath, a mirrored door to a walk-in closet mimics the look of the Palladian-style window and bounces light around the room.

In the addition, a vaulted ceiling imparts a sense of spaciousness, and Palladian windows welcome natural light. The wife eschewed a door for a short hallway from the master bedroom to her light-filled bath, which captures garden views. The walk-in shower doubles as a passage between the baths, and the rich look of cabinetry—cued by a marble-top French Empire dresser—imparts visual continuity between the rooms.

Euro Antiques, a furniture and cabinetry design company in Brooklyn, imitated the heirloom dresser's clean lines and classic proportions to create the vanities in both spaces, as well as the tub surround. The trim woodwork boasts an extravagant plume of grain—a signature of crotch mahogany veneer, cut from just beneath the fork of the tree—and a traditional French-polish finish patiently achieved by hand-rubbing multiple layers of shellac over several days.

"Shellac is a natural product," says Jerry Solinski, a principal at Euro Antiques. "It pulls out the depth and beauty of every wood. Chemical lacquers, though very practical in a bathroom, cannot give the same depth." The French polish has held up well, withstanding even the kids' fondness for a soak in the whirlpool bath.

As an elegant companion to the mahogany, the owners chose crema marfil marble honed to a matte finish for the floor and shower. "They wanted a limestone look, and the crema marfil marble, when it's honed, has that look while being more impervious to stains," Brooks says. The couple also employed honed black granite on the countertops and as cabochons that echo embellishments in the home's foyer.

Nickel accents that appear in the sinks, faucets, and tassel drawer pulls are attractive but subtle. Brooks insisted on their modest shine. "Philosophically, I don't like to call attention to toilets and sinks," she says. "They are the functional part of the bathroom, and we'd rather spend our resources on beautiful finishes and clean design." Indeed, like the homeowners' treasured dresser, the fittings simultaneously exude luxury and restraint—ensuring that the bathroom suite appears grander than the sum of its parts. **B**

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**Above right** The restrained elegance of an antique dresser in the new bath inspired the furniture styling of the vanities. White trim and generous windows counter the traditional dark woods with a fresh, airy aesthetic.  
**Right** The passageway between the original, 1930s bath and the new bath addition provides access to the shower stall.

