

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

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KERRIE KELLY ON
LIVABLE DESIGN



Practice What You Preach

A designer brings accessibility to her bathroom

AFTER YEARS OF RECOMMENDING options like grab bars and shower seating to her clients, Certified Living in Place Professional Barbara S. Roth wanted to show just how seamlessly these useful features could blend into a bathroom. The designer, who is principal of NYC-based PS Rossy Design, had seen the difficulty her parents had experienced when they were at the point that they needed accessible features in their home but were no longer well enough to undergo a renovation. Touting these options as a type of planning ahead, Roth transformed the bathroom of her Roosevelt Island condo from builder grade to a contemporary space with features for today and tomorrow.

"I decided to renovate my own bath and add as many things to make life easier, now and going forward, as was practicable," she explained. "Now, when I come across a client who is hesitant to add things like grab bars, I share my own story."

While incorporating practicality, Roth kept an eye on aesthetics so that the Living-in-Place solutions enhance rather than detract from the overall design. With about 40 square feet of space plus a 3- by 3-ft. entry, her renovation made better use of the area, so the bathroom is more functional. The original design included a spacious tub with shower and a small vanity. A shallow, wall-mounted medicine cabinet offered good storage on one side but tended to allow items to fall into the toilet when doors were open on the other side. Lighting situated in a recess over the medicine cabinet created too many shadows.

ABOVE A self-cleaning toilet minimizes maintenance, making life easier at any age.

ADDING ACCESSIBILITY

Roth replaced the tub with a walk-in shower, which is not curbless but has just a 4-in. lip on the outside. For safety, she chose matte floor tiles, and explained that you don't have to be too old to slip in the shower.

Inside the shower, there is a niche for products, and the dark flip-up seat and grab bar look stylish instead of industrial. The grab bar doubles as a place to hang towels or other items.

The showerhead can be raised and lowered, making it adaptable to anyone's height. Roth placed the shower controls on the pony wall between the vanity and shower so that they are reachable from the shower seat as well as from outside the shower.

"No one needs that cold blast [of water] first thing in the morning," she said.

The low-flow, self-cleaning toilet with Washlet makes maintenance easy. It lights up when someone approaches, so it is visible at night and eliminates the need for a jarring bright light.

By CARRIE WHITNEY



LEFT Rather than appearing industrial, the useful grab bar and shower seat blend with the bathroom's contemporary design.

Adding more light to the small bathroom was critical, and glossy wall tile makes the most of what the fixtures provide, but flooring is matte for slip resistance.

IMPROVED LIGHT & STORAGE

The custom vanity is 24 inches wide and 21 inches deep with two drawers for storage. Above, a smaller recessed medicine cabinet with a slide-up mirror allowed Roth to hang pendant lights in front of it because its doors do not swing out. She added more storage in the entryway, getting use out of a previously unproductive space.

One of her major complaints with the old bathroom design was that it lacked lighting, so the designer added multiple types. In addition to the pendants, she installed a light in the shower ceiling. Because the shower doors are glass, light from the vanity area also enters this area. Glossy wall tile reflects light, creating even more illumination in the room.

LOOKING GOOD

"I didn't want it to be institutional," said Roth, explaining that "aging in place" sometimes terrifies clients, and the word "safe" makes them think about being in a home. "I was really going for all the things I think are helpful no matter how old you are."

Located in a new building, the condo bathroom complements the architecture with its contemporary design. Because the room is relatively small, Roth was able to choose high-end fixtures without going over budget. The vanity countertop is quartz, and the bathroom includes three types of tile – hexagons in matte or gloss, stone for the shower walls and a chevron pattern on the floor in front of the vanity. Roth looked to the future with the design too by choosing stone with multiple hues she could highlight in case she wants to change the paint color someday – currently, it's Gravel Gray.

"I have no issues now, but you plan for the worst and hope for the best," she said. "It's not just about aging, it's about being prepared for whatever happens."



SOURCES

DESIGNER: Barbara S. Roth, AKBD, CAPS, CLIPP, PS Rossy Design
PHOTOGRAPHER: Kate Glicksberg

COUNTERTOP & SADDLES: Caesarstone; **GRAB BAR & SHOWER SEAT:** HEWI;
HARDWARE: Häfele;
LIGHTING: Tech Lighting;
MEDICINE CABINET: Roborn; **PAINT:** Benjamin Moore; **RECESSED WALL STORAGE & VANITY:** Custom by PS Rossy Design & Cabinetry;
SHOWER FIXTURES & SINK FAUCET: Hansgrohe; **SINK, TOILET & WASHLET:** TOTO;
STONE & TILE: Walker Zanger

LEFT The showerhead is adjustable to accommodate any height, and the extra-long hose helps during cleaning.