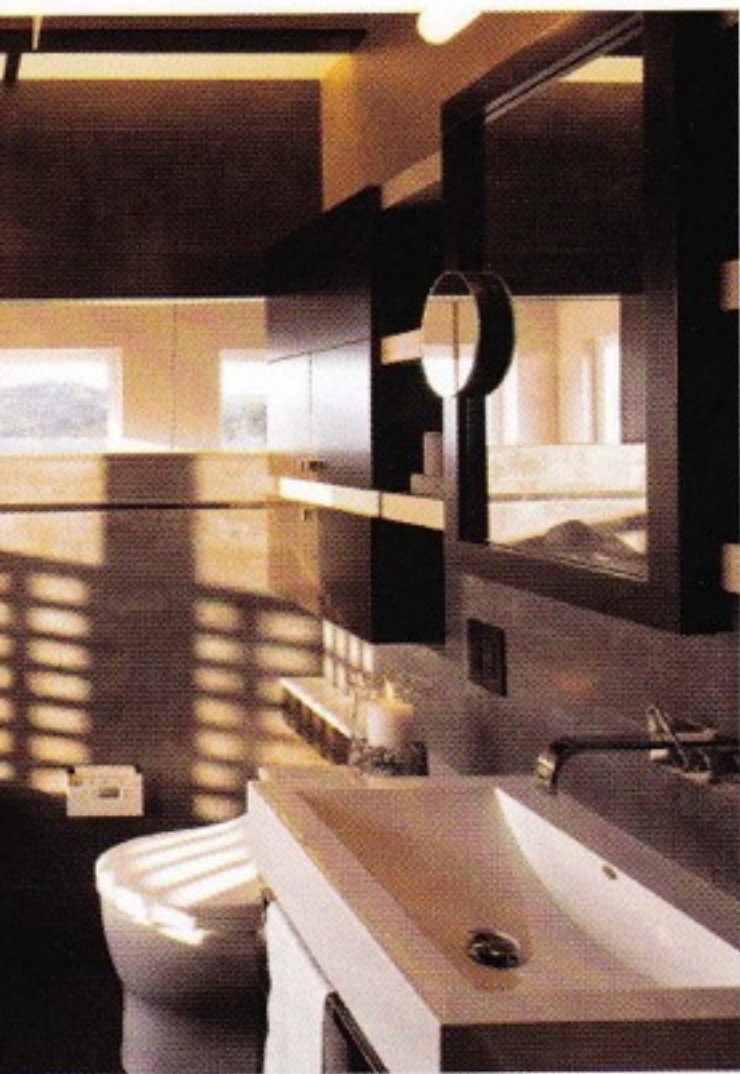




Magic Mirrors

Award-Winning Designer Janet Friedman Used Light and Reflections to Create a Sleek, Modern Environment in a Limited Space



before

Photography provided by Jay Graham.

Famous for its Mediterranean flair, Sausalito, California, is a picturesque historic waterfront community just minutes from San Francisco via the Golden Gate Bridge. This two-story Sausalito summer cottage, built in the late 1920s, is located on a hill overlooking the San Francisco Bay. "Homes in the area are relatively small and often quite close together," explains Janet Friedman, of Friedman & Shields Fine Interior Design. "Complete remodels that change the footprint or exterior structure are rarely permitted. So when we were asked to redesign this home's very dated master bath and laundry, we had to work with the existing windows and doors."

The biggest challenge, Friedman says, was the small space. The bath measures less than nine by twelve feet and needed to incorporate an existing washer and dryer, a hamper, and a linen closet, in addition to a tub, shower, sink, toilet, full-length mirror, and makeup area. "We also had to compensate for the low ceiling and poor lighting," Friedman says. "However, our biggest advantage was the setting of the home, and that aspect had a tremendous impact on our design. The views from the bath are magnificent; the patterns of light and reflections of sky are magical as they change constantly through the day."

Friedman carefully analyzed every inch of available space to create intelligent storage and increase the sense of spaciousness. "We raised the low ceiling to the roofline to showcase the outstanding views of the Sausalito marina," she explains. The windows had originally been constructed to take advantage of the bay views, but the views unfortunately faded between the low ceilings and pale tiled walls.

"We simplified the materials, keeping the design uncomplicated," Friedman explains. "Large metallic, linen-patterned porcelain floor tile and dark, oversized porcelain wall tile with stainless steel feature strips add textural depth to the space. The classic chocolate maple cabinets and the open shelving in a contrasting light maple add an additional dimension as well as architectural interest. The cabinet design incorporates interior as well as exterior lighting for ease of use. We changed the entry to a pocket door to conserve space."

The wedge-shaped tub by Neptune was vital to the design, according to Friedman. "We were able to combine a roomy shower and usable tub without crowding the space. The tub and step up add even more architectural interest to the room," she says. The window in the tub area offers a view of a Zen fountain on a tiny outside balcony, making the bath feel even more open.

Both functional and aesthetic lighting were greatly improved by the light soffit along the end wall, the decorative ceiling fixture, the lighting fixture over the sink, and accent lighting above the laundry cabinet to highlight an exquisitely simple sculpture. The hamper and linen area are covered by semi-opaque acrylic panels that are backlit, offering ambient light.

The artificial lighting is complemented and enhanced by the natural sources of light that change all day long. "We used a variety of shiny surfaces in the bath to reflect both sources of light and the view, thus providing some visual excitement and liveliness," says Friedman. "The clear glass shower door pivots in toward the tub, so as not to interfere with the Toto toilet, as well as out for ease of access to the tub. As it moves, it captures the interior lighting or natural light from outside. The sky changes constantly and all the reflective surfaces in this bath take on the character of the bay."

The washer and dryer are behind a sliding door that provides a practical full-length mirror and also offers reflections of light. "The hardware and shiny stainless trim pieces, the polished shower and sink fixtures, and mirrors over the sink and inside the vanity cabinet—all capture some bit of that wonderful changing sky, day and night," Friedman says. "The shine gives life to the bath and contributes to the spaciousness."

Friedman used less, not more, to transform a dated, small, and cramped space into a sleek, modern creation. "We eliminated clutter and established thoughtful storage; we reemphasized the views by bringing bay and sky into the bath," she says. "Our design reflects the creative interior and spectacular natural lighting, and we provided visual interest with architectural detail and a variety of wood, tile, glass, and metal finish materials." It's no wonder that Friedman soon afterward was asked to remodel a downstairs bath and the kitchen, and is now in the process of renovating the living and dining rooms of this vintage yet modern Sausalito summer cottage. *Written by Carolyn M. Runyon. 2010*