

25

BEST *new* RESTAURANTS

# New Jersey

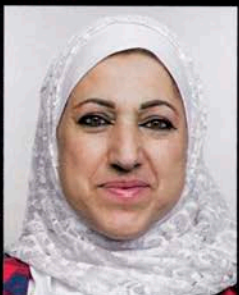
MONTHLY



## THE NEW FACES

OF NEW JERSEY

Tears, fears, joy and triumph in pursuit of the American Dream.



**ROOM WITH A VIEW**  
Designer Anthony Passanante conceived his new master bathroom to take advantage of the lake views, leaving the windows unadorned. Accessories are nautical, including the sconces and porthole mirror.



# MASTER DESIGN

## FOR A MASTER BATH

Here's what happens when a certified bath designer takes on his own project.

By LAUREN PAYNE | Photographs by LAURA MOSS

**IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT** the new master bathroom in Anthony and Carmelina Passanante's Bergen County home should have lots of bells and whistles. After all, Anthony, a certified master kitchen and bath designer, has spent his career dressing up other people's bathrooms.

Anthony and Carmelina moved to their Washington Township home four years ago with son Marcello, now 10, and daughter Valentina, 8. The family welcomed Isabella in 2016. The home, a modified split-level, was nothing spectacular, but its location was: it sits directly on Schlegel Lake, a private, 28-acre lake. "We saw the water in the backyard and immediately fell in love with that," says Anthony.

Built in the 1950s, the house was sorely in need of some work. "We chipped away at it little by little," says Anthony. The couple refinished floors, repainted the interior and rebuilt the deck. They

combined two smaller bathrooms into one, which became the kids' bath. Next came a kitchen renovation. But the master-bathroom project remained on hold. "Anthony wouldn't let me do anything to the bathroom," says Carmelina. "Not even rip down the wallpaper."

Finally, the couple turned their attention to the

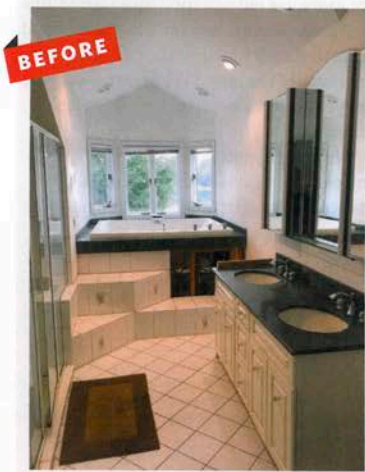


**ALL THAT SHINES** Passanante chose stainless fixtures and hardware to add a touch of sparkle to the room. The custom mirror reflects the entire space, making the room appear larger than it is.

master bath. The narrow space had an undersized double vanity. The separate toilet closet was covered in dated wallpaper, and the off-white paint was peeling. The bay of windows overlooking the lake was covered in "ugly, huge valances," says Anthony. The biggest eyesore: an enormous tub installed on an elevated platform set underneath the windows. "It took up so much room and looked like a giant hot tub," says Anthony. "Our water heater couldn't even keep up with it. By the time it was filled, the water was running cold."

Picking new materials was Anthony's biggest challenge. "I struggle, since this is what I do for a living," he says. "I suffer from overexposure." He started with the flooring. While working with a client, Anthony spotted a porcelain tile that looked like weathered wood and knew he had to have it. To add interest, he had it installed in a herringbone pattern.

The custom double vanity is finished in white for "a timeless look," he says. The cabinetry, built in Anthony's workshop, is customized for their





**FINISHING TOUCHES** The shower is honed Carrara marble with an accent wall and floor of natural pebbles. Carmelina and Anthony take a break by the lake. Custom drawers are outfitted for specific toiletries including Carmelina's make-up collection.

stuff. A tall standing cabinet serves as a linen closet. Drawers and pull-out shelves are outfitted to hold toiletries and Carmelina's makeup and accessories. "I love that makeup drawer," says Carmelina. "I can see everything I have at once." Carrara marble in a honed finish tops the vanity. An enormous custom

mirror edged with silver leaf fills the wall. Sconces are installed directly onto the mirror for a touch of glam. "The mirror really dresses up the space," says Anthony. "The reflection of the light fixtures adds a bit of bling."

The walls are painted a warm gray. "We didn't want cool tones," says

Anthony. The toilet closet remains, but Anthony upgraded to a toilet/bidet that not only cleans itself, but has a seat that instantly warms. "It's a luxury, but it's really nice," he says.

The stand-alone shower is in the same place as before, but was extended by 7 inches. The shower floor is made of natural stone pebbles; the walls are marble. A custom glass surround makes the space appear larger and lets in natural light. It also allows views of the lake while showering.

The crowning touch is a deep soaking tub, situated under the unadorned windows. "We toyed with putting a makeup vanity in that nook," says Anthony, but the freestanding tub won out. "I'll get a lot more use out of a tub," says Carmelina.

Accessories, including the sconces and a porthole mirror, are nautical, inspired by views of the lake. "We love the water, so we wanted a nautical feel," says Anthony.

Now the couple savors their kid-free space. "The cliché of the master-suite retreat lives on in this house," jokes Anthony. "We shut the door. No kids allowed." ❧

**RESOURCES:** Design: Anthony Passanante, CMKBD, Allied Member, ASID, Anthony Albert Studios, Waldwick, 201-857-2868; anthonyalbertstudios.com. Plumbing fixtures and cabinet hardware: Hardware Designs, Fairfield, 973-808-0266; hardware-designs.com. Tile: Mediterranean Tile, Fairfield, 973-808-1267; medtile.com. Custom mirror and shower door: Artique Glass Studio, Glen Rock, 201-444-3500; artiqueglassstudio.com.

## Splurge or Skimp?

Certified master kitchen and bath designer Anthony Passanante offers a few tricks of the trade on planning your bathroom budget.

### SPLURGE

- It's worth it to invest in high-quality custom cabinetry that's going to survive in a bathroom. "There is a lot of water and moisture in a bathroom," says Passanante. "Good quality cabinetry is treated to withstand all that humidity." Plus, it adds to the overall look.
- Quality plumbing fixtures are worth the extra cost. "They should have brass interior fittings," he says. "No plastic interior parts."
- "I recommend splurging on a toilet," says Passanante says. "Ours has a seat that heats up instantly when it senses you're in the room." Some

models even raise and lower the lid automatically. • A large mirror makes a huge impact. Plus, its reflection instantly makes a space look bigger.

### SKIMP

- The kids' bathroom is a good place to cut corners. "Put the money into the powder room and the master bath," suggests Passanante. For example, use ceramic tile in a shower or tub surround in a kids' bath rather than marble.
- Skip radiant floor heat. Passanante agrees it's a nice feature but in his own bathroom, he instead

situated the registers for the forced hot air on the baseboards of the vanity cabinet. "It blows the heat out and warms the room from the ground." • Ask yourself if you'll really use a tub. Many homeowners can use the kids' tub for the occasional bath. "Tubs can be expensive, especially if you add the air, the lights and the aromatherapy," says Passanante. • Polished chrome hardware and fixtures tend to be the least expensive option, while also being the most durable. "It adds some bling," says Passanante, "without the dollars."