

Bathroom of the Week: Moody Makeover With a Japanese Soaking Tub

A design-build firm found on Houzz goes dark with a black-and-wood transformation of a basement bathroom near Seattle



Suzanne Ennis September 19, 2023

Houzz Editorial Staff. I write about all aspects of home design and remodeling, but I ha... More

♡ Save
💬 Comment 9
👍 Like 30
🔗 Share

When remodeling a windowless basement bathroom, many homeowners and designers attempt to make up for the lack of natural sunlight with a light and bright color scheme. But when a Washington state couple found design-build contractor Model Remodel on Houzz and hired the firm to make over their new home’s finished basement, they leaned into the darkness.

“Their main goal was to create something very chill, very moody,” says Cat Schmidt, the project’s designer. “A place different than the rest of the house in general.” Keep scrolling to see how she used a black-and-wood palette and natural materials and motifs — plus a wet room-style shower and compact soaking tub — to create the calming getaway the homeowners desired.



Photos by Cindy Apple Photography

Bathroom at a Glance

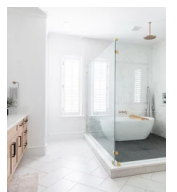
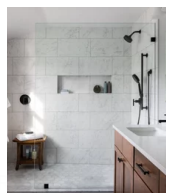


Bathroom Accessories



Wall & Floor Tile

People who



Bathroom of the Week: Storage for En

Who lives here: A couple who works in tech

Location: Bellevue, Washington

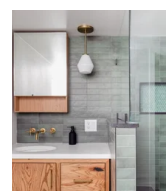
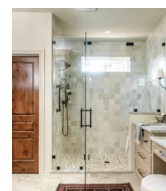
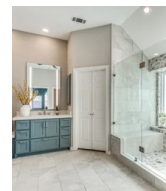
Size: 79 square feet (7.3 square meters)

Designer: Cat Schmidt of Model Remodel

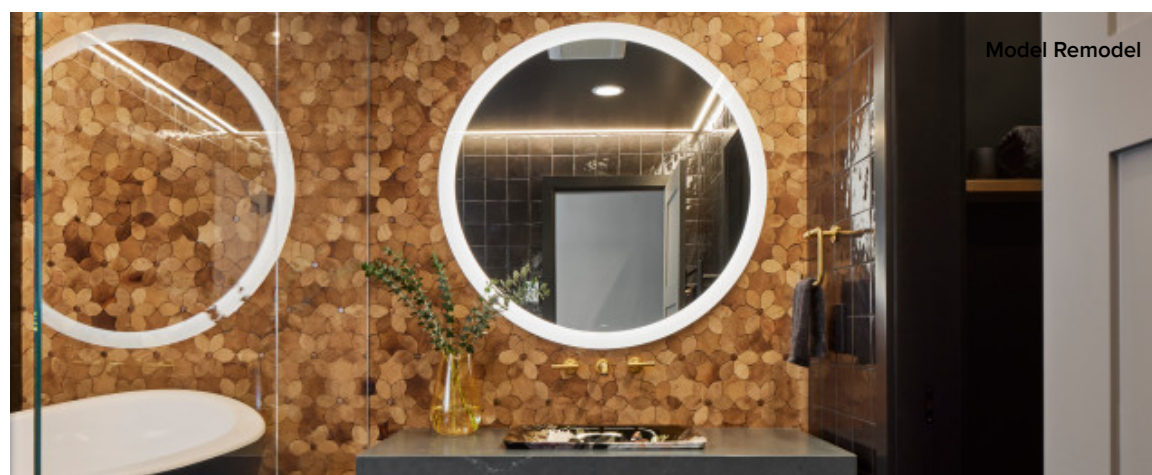
When the couple purchased the home, the basement was already finished, but neither the style nor the layout worked for their goals, Schmidt says. So they updated it with an office for each homeowner, an expanded entertaining space where they can play board and video games and watch movies with friends, and this utterly transformed bathroom. The new bath absorbed an adjacent linen closet, allowing Schmidt to add 9 square feet to the original 70-square-foot footprint.

Scroll to the bottom to see the original and new floor plans.

Find a local design-build firm on Houzz



Before: When the couple purchased the home, the bathroom had a shower-tub combo and mostly white finishes. It also had an unsightly plumbing line coming up through the concrete next to the toilet.



Related Proj

Arlington Gen

New Bern Ger

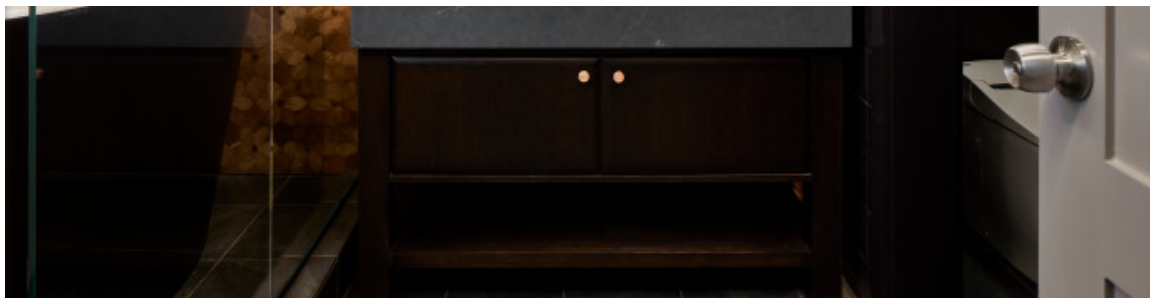
Pooler Genera

Salem Genera

Arlington Gen

Cibolo Genera

Pooler Genera



After: Schmidt's design included a separate water closet with a bidet toilet where the tub once was. (You can get a peek at it on the far right of this photo.)

A 50-inch-wide single-sink vanity replaced the double-sink vanity and is farther to the right. To its left is a wet room-style bath-and-shower area behind a glass panel, which you'll see in detail later.

Bidet toilet: AT200 LS SpaLet in Canvas White, DXV

Shop a curated selection of products for your bathroom



The layout changes have made a huge difference in terms of efficiency. But the impact of shifting from light to dark finishes, like the java stain on this rift white oak vanity, is equally, if not more, dramatic — and makes sense for the bathroom's primary function as a relaxing retreat.

"Light and bright is great when you're getting ready in the morning and you're trying to start your day and motivate yourself," Schmidt says. "But when you're trying to unwind and just relax, it's nice to have a more subtle, calming-on-a-visual-level environment."

Jewelry-like details, including cabochon knobs made of brass and rose-pink quartz on the vanity doors, add to the sense of luxury.

4 Secrets to a Shiny-Clean Bathtub



While visiting a local showroom with Schmidt, the homeowners



fell for this Kohler Dutchmaster wading pool-style sink, which is set into a charcoal-gray quartz countertop.

Countertop: Eternal collection in Charcoal Soapstone with suede finish, Silestone; faucet: Purist collection widespread in Vibrant Brushed Moderne Brass, Kohler

30 Small Bathrooms Full of Big Ideas



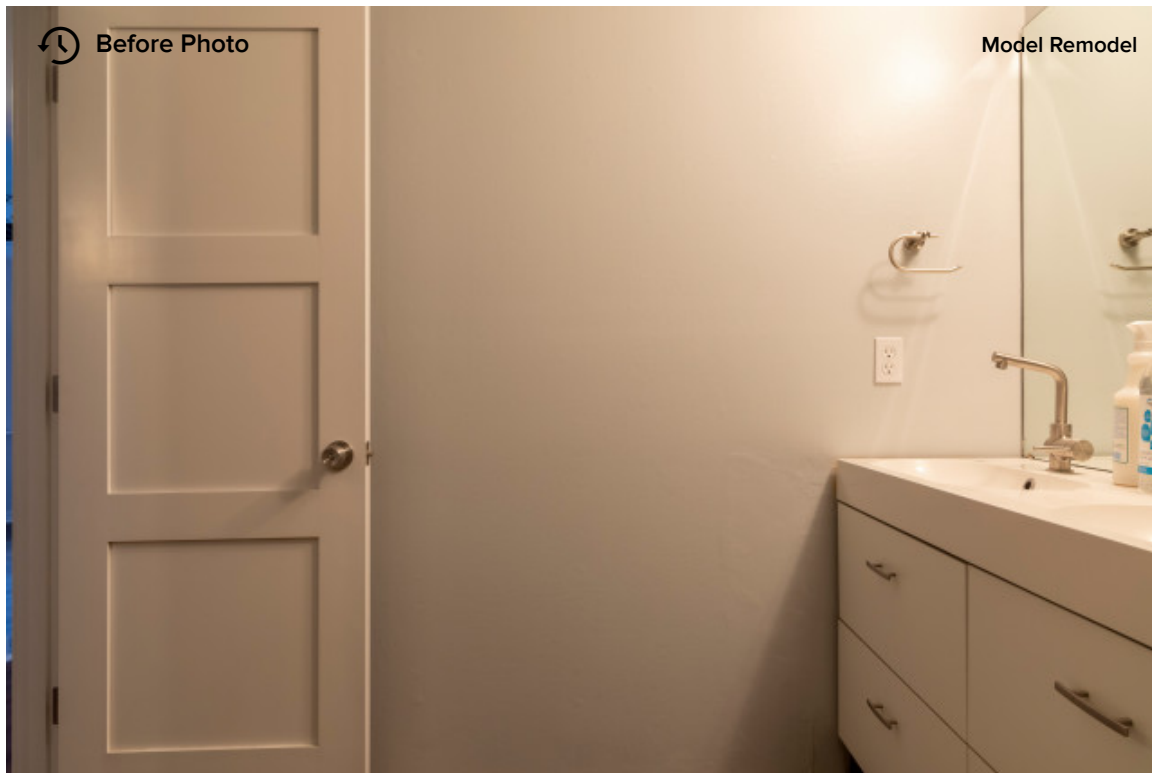
The same day, they found a wooden mosaic wall tile in a floral pattern, which spoke to the flower-patterned sink and reinforced the “surrounded by nature” theme that inspired many of their choices. Look closely and you’ll see little metal details at the flowers’ centers.

The ungrouted but sealed tile covers the entire back wall into the shower area, although the installers did keep it slightly off the floor so the wood wouldn’t soak up puddled

water.

“That [tile], of course, was the showstopper of the room. Everything else was just designed to be more simple, clean and monotone in general,” Schmidt says.

Tile: Insert Myosotis, Forest Elements; mirror, Vitality lighted 40-inch circle, Robern



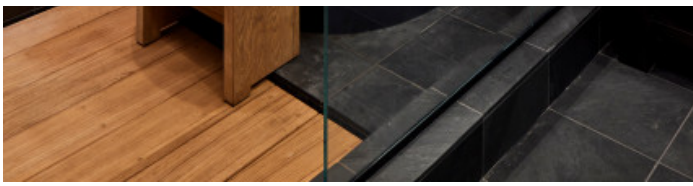
Before: Previously, the double vanity met a blank wall to the left of the room’s entry. On the other side was a slim linen closet, which you can see in the “before” floor plan toward the bottom of the story.



After: Claiming that closet and moving the door enabled Schmidt to install a 36¼-by-51½-inch Japanese soaking tub, called an *ofuro*, on a slightly elevated tile platform with a bench step next to it. Schmidt installed extra blocking so grab bars could be added easily at a later date.

Next to the tub is a showering area that’s also tiled below its teak slat floor, which can be lifted for cleaning.

The shower and bath are together behind glass panels — a wet room design that works well when space is too tight for a



tub and a separate shower stall, Schmidt says. The natural slate floor is heated underneath, and the bathroom isn't particularly large, so draftiness (often a concern when it comes to wet

rooms) isn't a problem here, she says.

Around the perimeter of the ceiling, LED lighting on a dimmer softly illuminates the room.

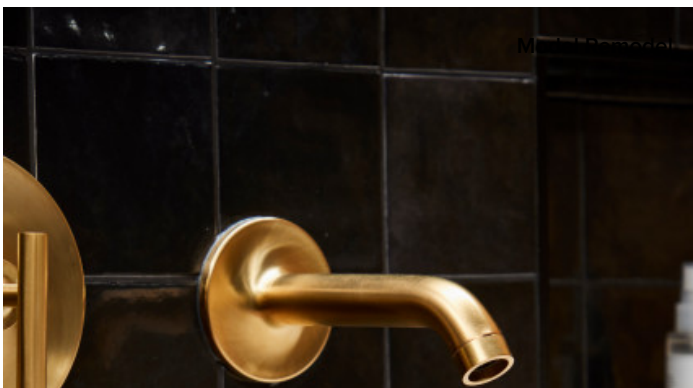
Tub: True Ofuro soaker in matte black, Aquatica; accessories, tub filler, hand shower and tub-shower trim: Purist collection in Vibrant Brushed Moderne Brass, Kohler; floor tile: 12-by-12-inch slate in Brazil Black, Daltile



The compact tub is a favorite of the homeowners'.

"It's small enough to fit most rooms as a freestanding tub, but it's a Japanese soaker, so you can relax and sit back and not have to put a washcloth on your chest to keep warm," Schmidt says.

Door and trim paint: black, Benjamin Moore; wall and ceiling paint: Black Beauty, Benjamin Moore; tile: Cloe 5-by-5-inch ceramic subway in black, Bedrosians

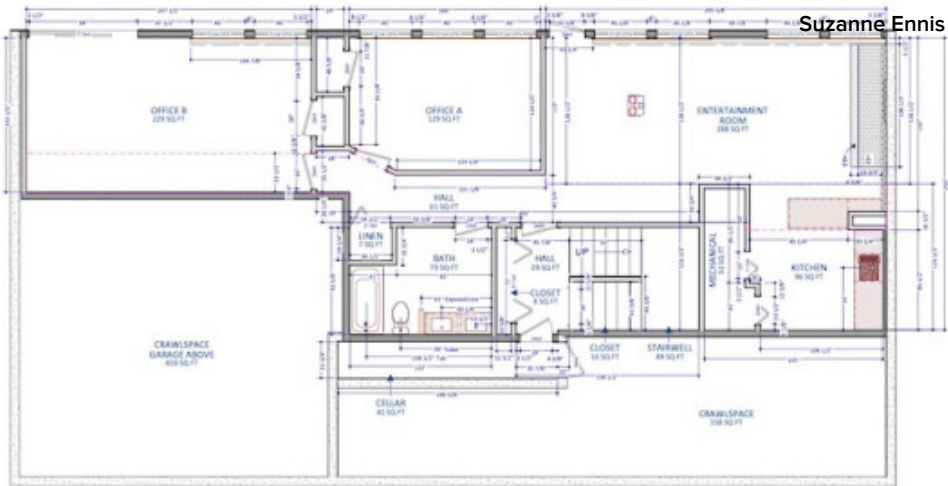


Along with steam showers, *ofuro* tubs have been popular with Schmidt's clients lately. In fact, she says, more and more people are embracing a moodier, dreamier feeling in their bathrooms.

"Why do we only get to enjoy

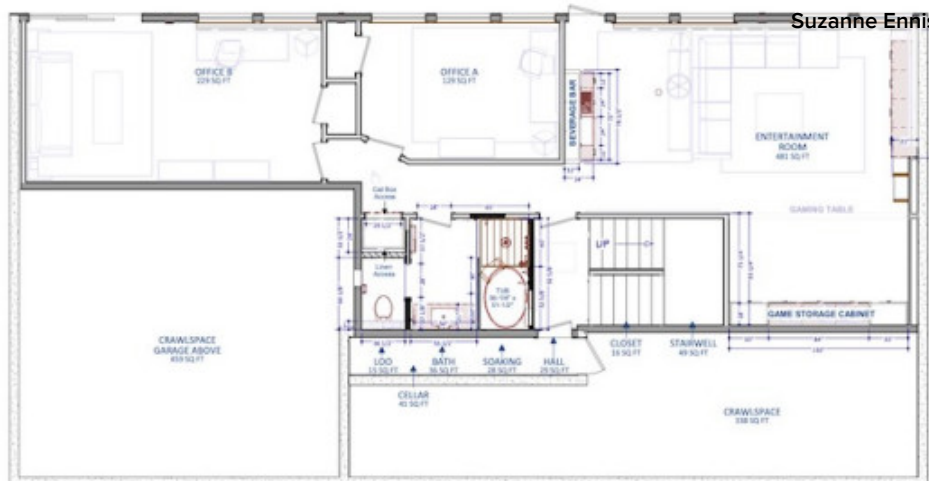


bathrooms in really nice hotels? Why don't we just invest in ourselves at home?" she says is her clients' typical reasoning. "I think that's part of the focus for this bathroom too."



Suzanne Ennis

The "before" floor plan



Suzanne Ennis