

# Beautiful KITCHENS & Baths™

## Elegant Simplicity

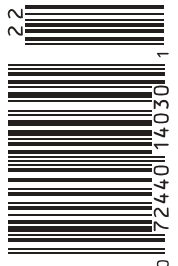
*Why Less Is More*

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# East Meets Midwest

Asian-style elegance and  
no-nonsense design converge in  
a Chicago master bath.

BY MARA BOO | PHOTOS WERNER STRAUBE | FIELD EDITOR MEGAN CHAFFIN



Designer Tina Muller gained floor space in this master bath—and enhanced the room’s spacious feel—by ditching platform steps leading to the tub. She also replaced a wall between the tub and shower with a sheet of glass, which rests atop the tub deck that was extended to create a shower seat.



*(Large decorative graphic element, possibly a stylized letter 'P')*

**Above:** Mirrored wall niches provide dramatic display space flanking the entry to the walk-in closet. Its wood door received a frosted-glass update.  
**Opposite:** Removing the original wall between the shower and the tub required relocating the shower's plumbing to an outside wall, where depth and insulation were added to ensure the water pipes withstand Chicago's winter temperatures.

Though he lives in suburban Chicago, Bill Blaida is reminded of peaceful times he's spent in the Orient when he steps into his master bathroom at the end of a hectic day. "Its Asian influence is very soothing and spa-like," he says. "It's got a wonderfully calming feel."

For that Bill can thank his home's former owners, who spent nine years living in Asia. "They wanted the bathroom to be simple but elegant, and very tranquil," says designer Tina Muller, who was tapped by the couple to translate a Zen sensibility stateside. "It started out very dark—black, gray, and coral. We did a complete turnaround on that to give it a very soothing, soft, warm feel," she says.

Indeed, its faded-earth color palette is key to the bathroom's simple serenity. Sand-tone travertine floors ground the space; narrow bars of pale glass tile climb the shower walls and surround the bathtub. Though quiet, the surfaces are hardly dull. The stone is streaked with silver; the glass shimmers in both natural light and evening's glow. "That iridescence is all we needed to make a statement," Muller says. "It made things elegant without being fussy."

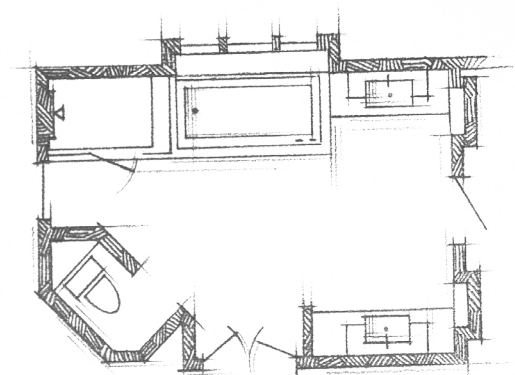
True to a less-is-more philosophy, the bathroom displays a clean, uncluttered look due largely to its floating maple vanities. "Even though they're dark—which gives them a quintessentially Asian look—keeping them off the floor makes the bathroom feel lighter and more open," Muller says. "Having drawers helps, too. They allow you to organize your stuff

more easily than cabinets, so there's really no need to keep anything out on the counters." Especially when those drawers are fitted with electrical outlets so power toothbrushes, hairstyling tools, and razors are kept out of sight yet easily accessible.

The same applies to the water closet, which is discreetly tucked behind a door. "It doesn't even really look like a bathroom because the toilet is in its own little room," Bill says. "That openness, and that spaciousness, is something I really love." Even the glass-wall shower contributes to the room's expansive feel, borrowing light—and, in true Zen style, outdoor views—from minimally dressed windows.

"It's relaxing, peaceful, and calm," Bill says. "It's one of those rooms you're never in a hurry to leave."

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 118





**Expert Advice**  
**Shift into Neutral**

**Seeking Zen? Keep the color palette neutral.**

Neutral colors evoke a soothing sense of calm. Keep them interesting by layering texture, tone, and contrast. Remember the coffee rule: espresso, mocha, and cappuccino are all variations of the same drink. Mix your hues and your room will sing.

Mingle multiple materials such as wood, glass, and stone to create an appealing blend of surfaces ranging from rustic to reflective. Think texture: Nubby rugs and woven baskets, for example, sound graceful notes in a neutral space.

Soaps, towels, artwork, and flowers are easy to change according to whim or season—or for those times when you crave a note of color.