



Light streams in from a glass-block window and reflects off the Crème Marfil marble on the bath vanities, flooring and tub deck, apron and surround, all installed by ICM Marble & Granite.

BY DEBI BRYANT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIRO DVORSCAK

SIMPLE ELEGANCE

UPGRADE FROM ARTIFICIAL TO CREMA MARFIL MARBLE FROM ICM MARBLE & GRANITE CHANGES COUPLE'S BATH INTO A LUXURIOUS SANCTUARY

Elegant and durable marble, cool to the touch and soothing to the eye, has been used in spas and sanctuaries for millennia. Marble was being used widely during the 1st century B.C., and by the time of Augustus' reign as emperor of the Roman Empire, it was the favored building material for fine construction.

Marble clearly has stood the test of time. It seems only natural that today's homeowners desire the luxurious look and feel of marble in their baths, the inner sanctum of the home. This preference includes homeowners like Burt and Toshiko Hering, who recently remodeled their home of 10 years.

"When this house was first built, it was built to budget," says Burt. "So, we were ready for some changes — just for ourselves, our own pleasure and particularly in the bath."

One of those upgrades included using marble. "We wanted something that would look nice and wear well," he explains. "Before, we had artificial marble, and it never had a great finished look."

So, in collaboration with their designer, their remodeler and ICM Marble & Granite, they went with the real deal —

Crème Marfil marble for the bath vanities, flooring, the shower and the tub deck, apron and surround.

Crème Marfil, named for the quarry it comes from, is a classic marble from Spain. "It is beautiful with a creamy, almost almond color," says Dollie Martinez, co-owner with husband Ivan Martinez of ICM Marble & Granite.

"The Crème Marfil was so beautiful, it became the focal point of the bathroom," says Yvonne Forney, owner-designer of Y.V.Y. Design, who was hired by the Herings to transform their bathroom. "It works particularly well with this bathroom's overall sense of simple elegance. There's not a lot in there; it is minimalist."

Inspired by the minimalist theme and also by a Japanese screen that hangs over the bed in the master suite, the Herings went with a neutral palette. Most of the light in the room is natural; it comes through the block windows over the air-jet tub.

"We wanted a soothing feeling," Forney says, "one that was not overdone, so in the bath, we added touches of sage green — with the towels, for instance. Also, green shows through the finish of a piece of shelving we had specially made." A wrought-iron antique bench rounds out the furniture pieces.

WORKING WITH MARBLE

Remodeling a bathroom comes with special challenges — and no less



A wrought-iron bench adds an elegant finishing touch to the Herings' beautiful master bath enhanced with marble from ICM Marble & Granite.



so than when working with marble, says Greg Lough, owner of The Remodeling Co. and the contractor hired by the Herings.

"I encourage my clients to go to the supply yard and look at the entire sheet of marble, rather than the small samples," he says. "You need to see all the markings and inclusions. Mrs. Hering has a very sharp eye and wanted all the pieces to fit her scheme. So once we got the boxes of tiles in, she sat down and went through each one, culling out the ones she didn't like. This way, she got the look she had originally talked about."

But the benefits of marble are worth the extra effort. "It's that look," says Lough. "You know it is real marble when you see it. With upper-end homes, you want it to have an upper-end look, that rich look that has been prized through the ages."

People are using marble more and more in bathrooms, Forney says. And like the Herings, people are choosing luxurious finishes and elements just for their own enjoyment.

"The trend is to create a spa feeling in a bathroom," she says. "Homeowners want to go in after a busy day and relax."

MARBLE IS MORE AFFORDABLE

Lough often sees the use of marble in his high-end bath remodeling jobs. But, he adds, "Marble and granite are easier to get now, which makes their price more doable for more people."

Plus, he sees that the Internet has really opened the eyes of homeowners as to what is available. "As homeowners go for a higher-end look, they're willing to spend more and more money," he says. "For instance, in the mid-'80s, the average bathroom-remodeling job cost about \$15,000. Now it's probably closer to \$85,000 to \$100,000."

Keeping the high-end look of marble is no mystery: "Although it does require a little extra effort, it is well worth the effort for the luxury it provides," says Dollie. "With proper care it will stay beautiful through the years. The true appeal of marble is its beauty and timelessness. It comes from nature and is considered luxurious, even though it's much more affordable today than it was 10 years ago."

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Above: A glass door to the shower keeps the bath a clean-lined retreat — and showcases the Crème Marfil marble in the shower.

Right: Imagine lighting the candles and drawing a warm bath in your air-jet tub surrounded with Crème Marfil marble.



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