

# Long-distance design

With clients living in Canada, a new home in south-west London, and an architect in north London, this bathroom was designed by email in true 21st century style

Report: Fay Sweet Photography: Rachael Smith Styling: Tamsin Weston Illustration: Peter Davies

**A**fter living and working in Canada, it was time for Meredith Tisdwell and her husband James Hyde to relocate back to London. The couple, academics with twin toddler sons, found a handsome Edwardian house in an ideal location overlooking the river in south-west London, but it was in need of a complete update.

"The place was divided into bedsits, virtually untouched since the 1970s and had a number of ramshackle extensions," says Nicholas Jamieson of Barbara Weiss Architects. The plan was to upgrade the entire property, and because the family needed to stay together in Canada, the design process was conducted by email. "Everything from preparing the design brief and drawings to choosing finishes and fittings was done by email," explains Nicholas. The clients and architect didn't actually meet until the tenders had been prepared to find a builder.

"I'd come across Barbara Weiss Architects long before we bought the house and always admired their work because it is so practical and intelligent," says Meredith, adding that her brother, uncle and grandfather are also architects. "So, although I'm not in the field, I've been surrounded by the language and the ethos," she says. Design by email seemed the only practical option. "My husband and I were both working full time and we didn't want to wait until the end of the academic year before starting on the project." She adds that the Internet exchanges were backed up with hours of phone conversations and a constant transatlantic traffic of sketches and snaps.

Included in the refurbishment programme for the property, this luxurious bathroom was created as an ensuite to the main bedroom. While the room is compact it exudes grandeur with its dark timber and the handsome Mountain Green honed slate used for a section of floor, the bath panel and deck, and to line the shower enclosure. The rich colours are offset by white walls, a gleaming stainless steel towel rail, and sparkling contemporary brassware.

"The central design challenge in this part of the project was to overcome the change of levels







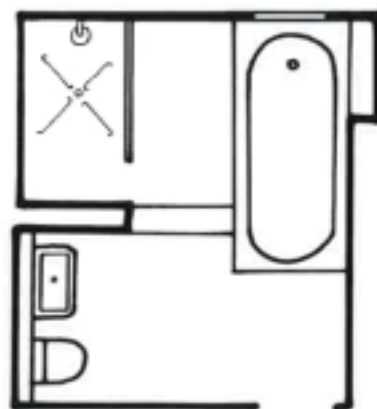
**Opposite page:** Simple modern taps complement the clean style of the bathroom **This page, above:** Green honed slate has been carried up from the floor to clad the bath **Below:** Wall-mounted brassware is easy to clean and keeps the basin uncluttered



between the bedroom, formerly a living room, at the front of the house, and the bathroom, formerly a kitchen, at the back," says Nicholas. The solution was to move the steps half-way into the bathroom, creating two zones; an upper area on the same level as the bedroom containing a wall-hung WC and washbasin, chosen because they are so easy to clean, and then steps down to the lower bath and shower zone. Positioning the steps midway in the room gives the bath the deluxe suggestion of being sunken. The design of the tub is extra long to accommodate James' 6ft 5" height. "It took climbing in and out of tubs in no fewer than 27 showrooms to find the right one," says Meredith.

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Along with the practicality of the design and tactile materials, another highlight for the family is the shower that incorporates a light in the showerhead enabling them to bathe in light as well as water. The idea is borrowed from a hotel where the couple stayed on the occasion of their fifth wedding anniversary. "I loved the way the halogen lights in the shower made the drops of water sparkle," says Meredith. "Four years later, sitting in a site meeting, and the only woman, I wondered if I would have the courage to say I wanted the lighting to work in the same way." She did, and is now delighted with the whole project. "I feel as though I'm staying in a luxury hotel every day. It is beautifully simple and perfect."



## Q&A: ARCHITECT

### What was the biggest challenge in this project?

"Overcoming the problems presented by the change in levels between the master bedroom (formerly a living room) and this ensuite bathroom (formerly a kitchen)."

### And the solution?

"We created new steps in the middle of the bathroom so there is now an upper zone with WC and basin on the same level as the bedroom, and a lower zone with shower and bath – the end of the bath appears sunken where it overlaps with the upper level."

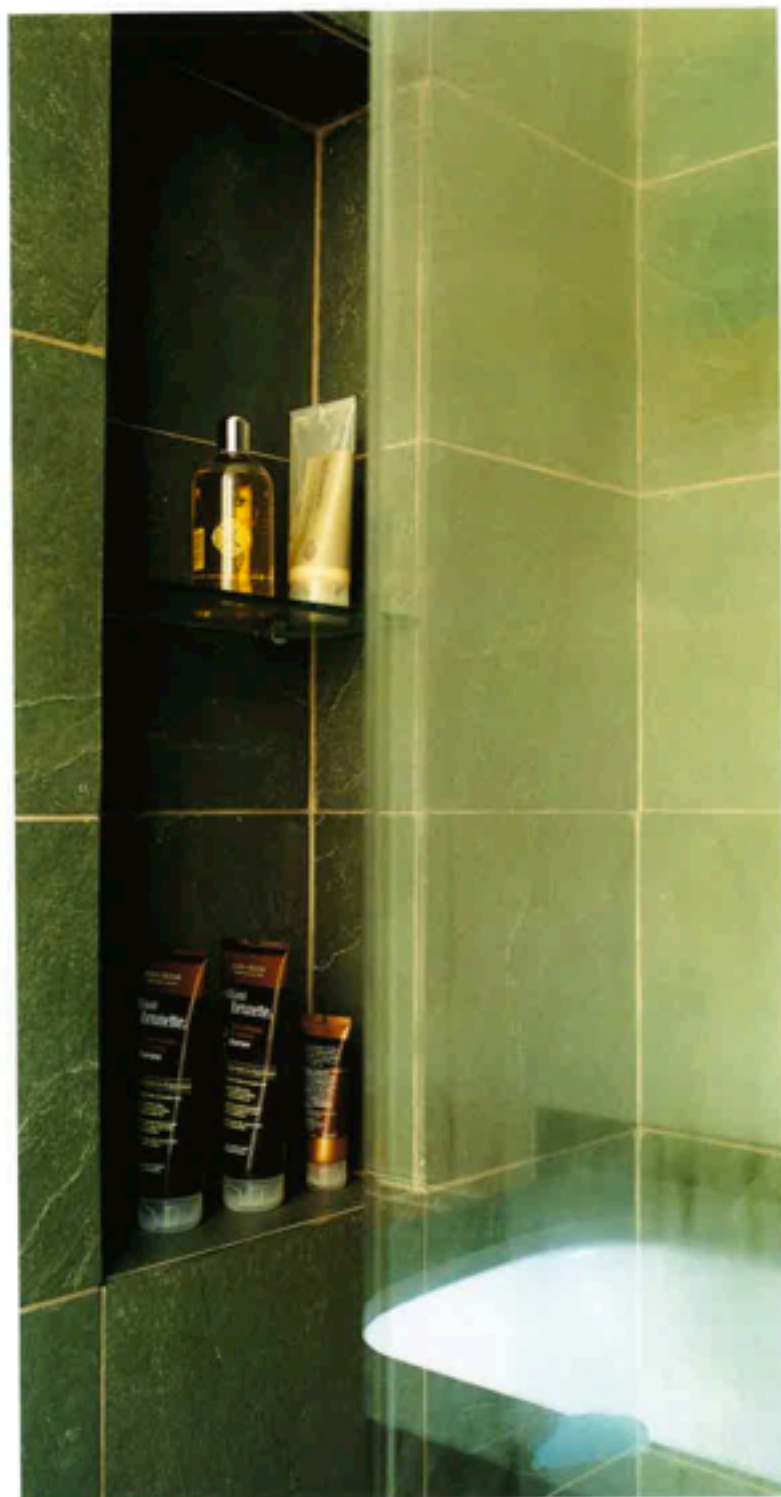
### What is your favourite element of the design?

"The Mountain Green honed slate from Stonell, which we have used on the floor and to line the shower enclosure, for the bath panelling and top deck, and splashbacks."

**Right:** The rectangular basin echoes the straight lines of the steps and bath surround. **Below:** A mirrored cabinet stores all the bathroom's clutter out of sight. **Bottom right:** The narrow shelf running along the wall behind the basin and WC is a handy place to store essential toiletries.







**Above left:** The shower enclosure is lined with the green honed slate used in the bathroom's lower level. **Above right:** Niche shelving in the shower enclosure provides storage without encroaching on the space.

## COST

A similar bathroom would cost from £17,625 plus fees

## CONTACTS

### DESIGN

Barbara Weiss Architects  
(020 7609 1867 or  
[www.barbaraweissarchitects.com](http://www.barbaraweissarchitects.com))

### CONSTRUCTION

**Main Contractor** Rajvel  
Construction (020 8451 1611)

### BATHROOM

**Tiles** Mountain Green  
honed slate by Stonell  
(08000 832283 or  
[www.stonelldirect.com](http://www.stonelldirect.com))  
**Underfloor heating**  
The Floor Warming Company

(01895 825288 or  
[www.floorwarmingcompany.co.uk](http://www.floorwarmingcompany.co.uk))

**Bath, showerhead, washbasin**  
CP Hart

(020 7902 1000 or  
[www.cphart.co.uk](http://www.cphart.co.uk))

**Brassware** Hudson Reed  
(0870 873 7271 or  
[www.hudsonreed.com](http://www.hudsonreed.com))

**Shower cubicle** bespoke with  
fixed glass screen by Preedy

Glass (020 7700 0377 or  
[www.preedyglass.com](http://www.preedyglass.com))

**Shower controls** Grohe  
(020 8594 7292 or  
[www.grohe.co.uk](http://www.grohe.co.uk))

**Towel rail** Myson  
(0845 769 7509 or  
[www.myson.co.uk](http://www.myson.co.uk))

**Lighting** WF Electrical  
(020 8517 7000 or  
[www.wf-online.com](http://www.wf-online.com))