

it's all **black** and white

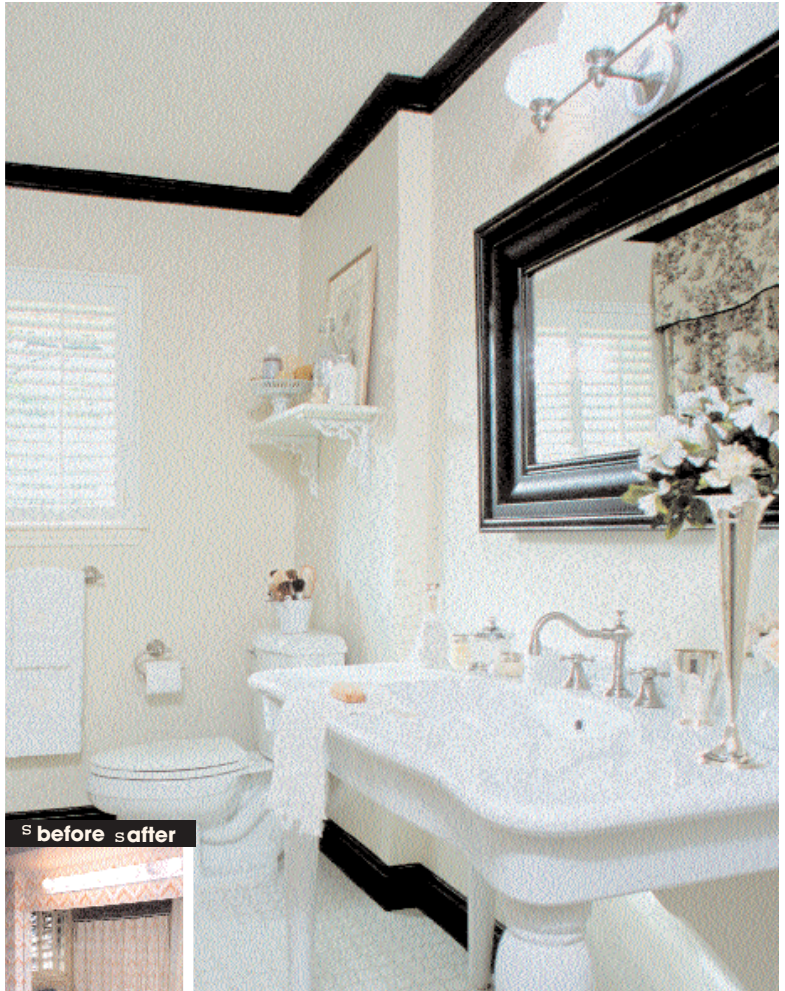


s after

s before

After: A distressed black buffet and matching mirror from Pottery Barn fit perfectly in the niche where the old dressing table was. With the old wallpaper gone, the crisp black and white color scheme with brushed pewter accessories gives the room a more sophisticated feel.

Before (right): The dressing table in the entry to the bathroom was never used. The light fixtures and wallpaper were dated.



s before s after

After: The large Porcher sink was a splurge, but it makes the room seem acres bigger. A couple of the family's good silver vases accessorize the sink. The white ironstone pitcher on the sink, the pail on the toilet tank top and the white cake pedestal on the decorative shelf are from www.shelterstyle.com.

Before (Left): The cultured marble countertop and sink had cracked, and the lighting and cabinetry needed serious updating.



simple steps freshen up an old 1960s bathroom

by joetta mouldeu
photography by janet lenzen

This is the time of year we make—and strive to keep—those shiny New Year's Resolutions. The holidays are over. It's chilly outside, and it's the perfect time

to take stock of all those projects that we keep pushing to the back burner.

Houstonians Charlotte and Kip Smith kept their resolution to remodel their outdated bathroom, and are quite pleased they did. They contacted me early in January last year, having seen a bath redo I wrote about in *Houston House & Home*. They were hopeful that their outdated, 1960s bath could be freshened without breaking the bank.

"We basically disliked everything about the room," Charlotte says, smiling. "The yellow tile on the floor and the pinky-beige tile in the shower were very dated—even when we moved into the house in 1984.

The cabinetry was ugly, the drawers didn't slide easily, the dressing table opposite the doorway was never used, and the cultured marble sink had cracked. About the only thing we wanted to preserve was the large storage closet between the tub and the dressing table," Charlotte explains.

"Because there were other projects to do in the house, I didn't want to spend our entire budget in this small bathroom," she says. "I called because I liked your ideas and the fact that you had so many creative ways to save money. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted an interesting look. I had moved to Houston from

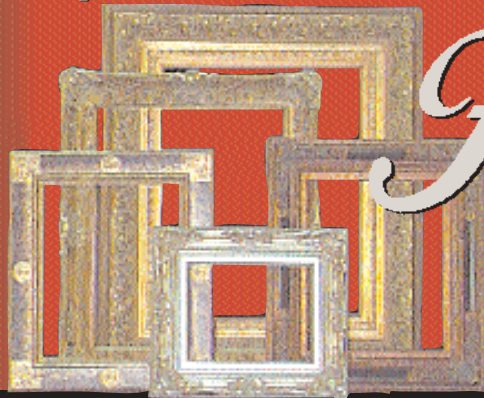
New Orleans, and I missed the charm of old houses. "You really took off with that, and gave me a lot of ideas. I felt that you connected with my vision," recalls, Charlotte.

In that first meeting, I mentioned that the tile in the shower did not have to be torn out, but that it could be painted white, along with the tub, by a porcelain refinisher like Perfect Surface. It's a viable way to change the color of obnoxious, dated tile, and the finish lasts—I know, because my husband and I refinished our 1950s porcelain bathtub 22 years ago—and it still looks great!

I also discussed the possibility of

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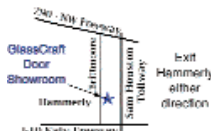
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after

before

After: Four magnificent botanical prints, circa 1776, from *The Antiquarium Antique Print and Map Gallery* are the focal point of the room.

Before: The bathroom's orange-patterned wallpaper was the center of attention.

laying a new tile floor on top of her existing yellow floor (without tearing out the existing tile) and replacing the existing cabinet doors and the small swinging hamper door by the tub with two new door fronts and hardware to refresh them.

Charlotte showed me pictures of a bath she liked, which featured beaded board walls and a pair of pedestal sinks. We talked about tearing out the furdowns (the Sheetrock "boxes") over the sink and dressing table areas, adding crown molding, wider baseboards and trimming out the window with molding and plantation shutters—for the sake of adding some historical charm and architectural interest to this outdated bath.

"Once we had a specific plan to follow," Charlotte explains. "I met with my contractor, Abiel Garza-Fernandez of Rainbow Contracting Group. He had his own suggestions. He thought that I didn't have room for the twin sinks I wanted, and that dual plumbing would add considerable cost. He liked the beaded board a lot, but the labor cost to install it would be more than stripping off the wallpaper and refinishing the Sheetrock walls. Shortly afterwards I spotted the Porcher wide porcelain sink at Expo. At the same time, you e-mailed me a photo of a similar sink. I fell in love with it, and knew that the large size would be perfect on the long wall where the 6-foot vanity was," says Charlotte.

Kip discovered that the Porcher sink is even less expensive if ordered online at www.plumbingexpress.com.

Charlotte put pencil to paper. Yes,

the sink was expensive. "But when I figured the materials and labor cost of rebuilding the sink cabinetry, replacing the countertop, buying a sink and faucet set, and painting and buying hardware for a new cabinet, it wasn't any more expensive. And I really loved the openness underneath the sink," she explains.

"All this time, you and I were e-mailing ideas and photos back and forth. I was using you as a sounding board, which helped tremendously. You gave me confidence!" Charlotte says.

After falling in love with a black and white toile fabric, the color scheme for the room was set.

Thinking along the line of saving carpentry labor, Charlotte called me after seeing a distressed black buffet cabinet and matching mirror in Pottery Barn's catalog. Would it work? I thought it was a brilliant idea. It fit perfectly, and economically solved the problem of what to do when the dressing table was ripped out. Charlotte liked the matching distressed mirror so much that she bought a second one and hung it over the Porcher sink. It was really fun for both of us to have these creative exchanges.

"The attention to detail evolved," Charlotte explains. "I decided to paint the new crown molding and baseboard trim black to match the new buffet cabinet and to coordinate with the black and white toile shower curtain. You encouraged me to be consistent with all finishes, so I shopped a lot—and looked at a lot of hardware.

"Pottery Barn's brushed pewter light fixtures had the charm and

trade secrets

- When refreshing a tired bath, it isn't necessary to gut it to the studs. The tile and tub can be painted, the furdowns can be removed and new tile flooring can be laid right on top of the old.
- Be consistent. If you choose a light fixture with a brushed pewter finish, repeat that finish on doorknobs, pulls, plumbing fixtures and towel bars. Nothing looks more amateurish than switching back and forth between warm and cool metal finishes.
- Do consider a European styled sink with four chunky legs instead of a solid wood under sink cabinet. It definitely will make the room wider because your eye will measure the width of the room underneath the sink, too. A small bathroom will feel more "open."
- Instead of paying a carpenter to build in custom cabinetry, think outside the box. With careful measuring, a piece of furniture can easily fit into a wall niche—and you don't have to paint it!
- Add charm and style with artwork and display shelves. Everyone loves to look at pretty, fragrant bath accessories.



Pretty bath accessories dress up a display shelf.

historical feeling I wanted. They led to brushed pewter knobs for the linen cabinet door fronts and the faucet set, towel bars and other hardware. I love the well-planned look the room now has," Charlotte says.

"I'm usually good at the big details—it's the little details, like the accessories, that I have trouble with," she says with a laugh.

When the remodeling was complete, I assisted with accessorizing. To continue her black and white theme, I found a set of unusual, uncolored 1776 botanicals at The Antiquarium Antique Print & Map Gallery, framed in the perfect pewter molding. Four were hung on the wall, and two leaned—one against the buffet mirror, the other on the new Pottery Barn shelf over the toilet. Charlotte had a pair of silver mint julep cups, which hold flowers on the buffet, and I found a beautifully engraved family silver trumpet vase, which worked beautifully on the sink.

A grouping of white ironstone—pitcher, cake pedestal, and pail from www.shelterstyle.com—were put to use to house bath accessories and continue the black and white color scheme. The open pedestal holds bars of soap, shampoo, a sea sponge and loofah. The broad ledge on the sink allows room for additional toiletries, Q-Tips and cotton squares. A custom Chinese seagrass rug from Creative Flooring adds nice texture and a relief from the black and white scheme.

What did the couple learn from the experience? Kip was relieved to finally get the project under way. "He

had been after me to make decisions, which I do slowly, and he was very glad that I was working with someone whose ideas and taste I trusted," Charlotte explains. "I learned to be open to new ideas and to get inspired by what I love, which for me was the sink and the toile fabric. I also learned the value of a holding on to a really good general contractor.

"When I came home from work, my house was always clean, which kept the intrusion of remodeling to a minimum," she says. "They did all the work with the exception of the tub and tile refinishing. It's rare that you can still say you like your contractor at the end of a project!"

Charlotte and Kip are happy that they proceeded with the bathroom, because this time they'll actually have time to enjoy it. "With other houses each of us has owned in the past, we've remodeled right before selling, and couldn't enjoy the benefits," Kip says. "We feel that this bath has added to the resale value of the house more than it actually cost."

When asked what advice they have for *HH&H* readers, the couple didn't hesitate. "Find a professional you trust and who is patient with you every time you change your mind!"

Joetta Moulden offers home makeovers using your own home furnishings. She has opened a new shop, which sells some of her favorite home accessories, a few pictured in this project, on her Web site. Visit the shop at www.shelterstyle.com, e-mail her at joetta@shelterstyle.com, or call 713.461.2063. n



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