

Las Vegas Luxury

A condo bathroom with a Vegas vibe that's grounded in nature

TEXT BARB SLIGL PHOTOGRAPHY MARCOS ARMSTRONG

When you think Vegas, nature may not necessarily come to mind. But if you were to combine the glam and energy of that city with the love of the outdoors – say, a camping trip to Red Rock in the surrounding desert – you'd find the inspiration for a condo in Yaletown, Vancouver.

A Vegas camping trip is an atypical vision for a master ensuite bathroom, but it gave the client and designer just the right mix of the posh with a little bit of the wild for this unique space. At their first meeting, Andrew Barker, principal of AJ Barker Design, asked his potential client what he was looking for. The answer: "I want an over-the-top, Vegas-inspired bathroom. I want people to walk in and I want them to laugh."

The bench was a must-have; it's a nice place to sit after getting out of the shower and provides extra storage. And as a furniture or "non-bathroom" element it makes the bathroom more of a retreat.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The baroque-style mirror adds a posh touch. And it's heated – it never fogs up! Flanking the vanity mirror are sparkling and highly functional crystal sconces. The solid brass swan faucet is very personal and may not appeal to all tastes, but it's what makes this bathroom special.

In describing “over-the-top” the client added “. . . like a crazy gold swan faucet or something.” After making sure he wasn't joking, Barker began searching, found a suitably comic and glitzy swan – solid brass – and got the job.

From there everything else fell into place easily.

“[The swan] was the whole kicking-off point . . . That was the overall inspiration,” says Barker. It may not have been his personal style – “I'm a bit more of a minimalist; my house is a white box, and I love it,” – but the concept of a gold swan faucet was so over-the-top that he knew it would be fun. It's



BETTER BATHROOM DESIGN

LIGHT Go for layered lighting. “Lighting is a big thing,” says designer Andrew Barker, especially

in the bathroom. Recessed lights provide general task lighting and ambient lighting. A gimbal light pivots and provides directional light. In this ensuite a gimbal lights the shower. A sole downlight over the sink will cast shadows (think bags under the eyes or three chins!), so add flattering lighting for shaving or make-up application; go for something decorative and functional like this bathroom's crystal sconces. Don't forget mood lighting; the light under the floating vanity (10 inches off the floor) casts a lovely glow, as does the rope light in the coffered ceiling. And always put bathroom lights on dimmer.

STORE More storage means less clutter. Go for built-in storage and incorporate drawers (and cubbies and storage pockets within the drawers) in a vanity. This bathroom vanity ingeniously includes little things you don't see, like an electrical outlet in the drawer so that a razor can be charged without it sitting on counter.

FOCUS Bring in a focal point that reflects your personality, whether that's art (in this bathroom, a photo of rail yards by Marcos Armstrong Photography reflects the homeowner's love for trains), a fixture, a mirror frame . . . the sky's the limit. It could be something that you have somewhere else in the house that you give new purpose and life in the bathroom. Don't use the shower? Put an oversize urn in the corner. “Why not?” says Barker.

URBAN edge

what made this a great project to work on. The client's approach was not to create "super-serious high design," but a space that was cool, yet very playful.

The bling began with the swan. But more gold is reflected in the coffered ceiling. The condo ceiling is low, so a coffer of iridescent material opens it up (without messing with ducts and pipes) and gives the appearance of more space. Gold leaf and rope lighting in the coffer give the warm glow. At one point there was even discussion about putting an LED lighting system into the coffer to connect with the client's DJ booth and turntables in the living room; the lights would change in time with music and bathroom-bound party guests wouldn't miss any beats. Very Vegas indeed.

The Vegas theme continues in the rich, luxe materials and elements such as the sleek, dark walnut millwork (storage tower, bench, cabinetry), curvaceous white marble countertop, hefty baroque mirror, and sparkling crystal sconces. The key was pulling off these more conventional pieces while still making the bathroom modern. The sconces, for example, are traditional, lavish elements reconfigured in a contemporary form. And apart from that gold swan, the other fixtures are chrome, contributing to a clean, contemporary feel. No crown mouldings, no superfluous design.

That Vegas vibe is also tempered by natural elements and the original camping inspiration: cool limestone, a tile floor laid to look like wood planks, a grey/green iridescent mosaic-like wall (with a watery shimmer, and appropriately part of the shower stall). Earthy tones come into play and balance out the gold glow. The subdued palette also translates to sophisticated and urban, and reflects the condo's Yaletown location. "We wanted a bit of an edge, a youthful element to it," says Barker, as well as making it a masculine space.

This meld – the bling with the boho – all came through based on Barker's extensive profile of the client prior to any design. He considers himself a design facilitator. "I don't come in and look at a space and say, 'OK, this is what we're going to do.' I suspend judgment and ideas until I really sit down with people." For this bathroom Barker spent time with the client just talking about his lifestyle, daily routines,

CONSERVE ENERGY WITH
DUETTE®
ARCHITELLA™
HONEYCOMB SHADES

Save up to
\$300
in Manufacturer's Rebates

AND ENTER TO
**WIN GAS
FOR A YEAR****
(Max. value \$5,000 CDN)

Ask us for details.

**Contest runs from January 1st 2009 to April 30th, 2009. No purchase necessary. Correct answer required to skill testing question. See complete Prize, eligibility and Contest details in the Official Rules at any participating Canadian Hunter Douglas dealer or www.hunterdouglas.ca

Energy efficiency meets design innovation.

Duette® Architella™ shades transform the way your home looks and feels. The patented cell-within-a-cell design significantly reduces heat loss through the window and can cut heat loss by up to 50%* or more – and that means lower heating costs.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE, OF COURSE.

* Savings based on inside-mounted shades. Savings vary with such factors as specific Architella fabric, window R-value, and climate.



HunterDouglas

Extraordinary window fashions,
exclusively yours.

WINDOWWORKS

Where will your inspiration take you?

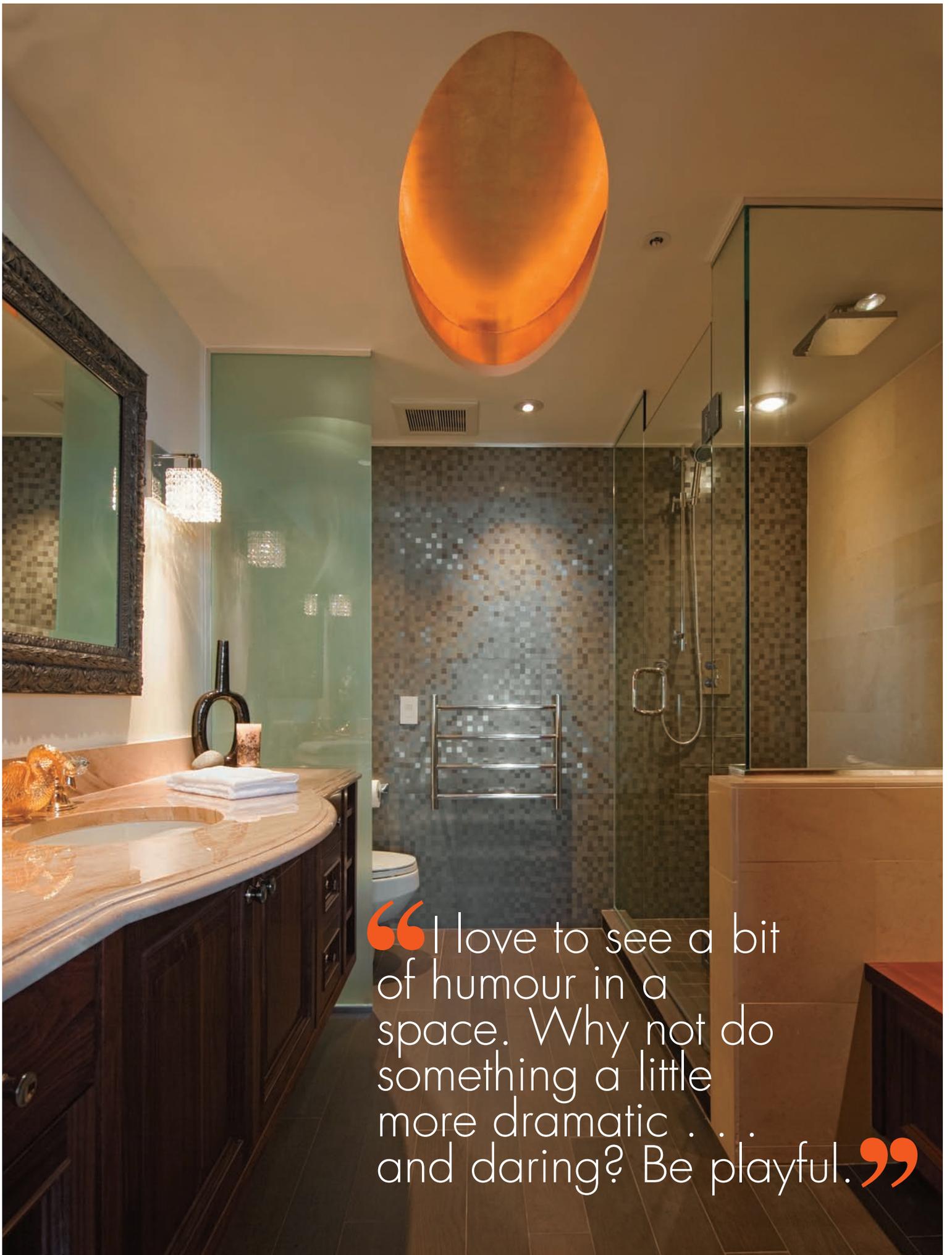
10-13331 VULCAN WAY
Richmond, BC

Monday-Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

604-231-1433

www.windowworks.ca





“I love to see a bit of humour in a space. Why not do something a little more dramatic . . . and daring? Be playful.”



LEFT and ABOVE: “The two-person shower is a must-have,” says designer Andrew Barker. This one has two shower heads, too: rain and wall-mounted. Large-format limestone tiles and iridescent mosaic-like tiles create the shower walls. Other savvy details include a built-in shower storage niche, heated towel rack, and privacy screen shielding the toilet.

how he entertains, what inspires and motivates him, how he relaxes. “I really like to understand who people are and how they work so that I can create a space that’s very functional and reflects their needs, but then also is going to reflect their personality.”

And the bathroom may be the ideal room to really inject some of that personality. Defy the generic bathroom. “I love to see a bit of humour in a space,” says Barker. “Why not do something a little more dramatic and a little more daring than you might do somewhere else in the home? Be playful.”

The result of all this personal assessment (“almost like design therapy,” says Barker) is a 30-page book of inspirational images (materials, lighting, fixtures, elevation drawings, floorplans, accessories, art, written descriptions). This bathroom’s synopsis: Take the glam and the bling, infuse it with fun, and make it hip and contemporary. Or simply put: Camping in Vegas. ■

See SOURCES on page 98

ADERA

NATURAL STONE SUPPLY

Architectural • Landscape



New Stone Tile Showroom

Ph 604-436-0204
Toll Free 1-877-526-6900
Mon. to Fri. 7:30 am - 4:30 pm

7420 Lowland Drive
Burnaby, BC
www.aderastone.com

BC Home FEBRUARY 2009

29