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FOR ALL TO SEE

BY JIM KEMP

Sink stands, display niches, glass block walls, stainless steel—even old-style medical supply cabinets—are hallmarks of today's trend-setting baths that put everything out in the open.

Best on the Block

If there's one thing Los Angeles designer Barbara Masket is known for, it's her love of materials. Take, for example, the powder room in her Venice, California, house: It has an entire wall of glass blocks.

Though unmistakably stylish, the wall serves two practical purposes. It harvests an abundance of natural light despite the presence of another building only 4 feet away. At the same time, it protects Barbara and her husband, Sam, from the view of passersby on a pathway next to their house. "As people in the bath move, you can see their shadow, but you can't see silhouettes or forms clearly," she says.

To prevent light being blocked inside the bath, Barbara designed an open vanity out of hollow stainless-steel tubing. A 1-inch-thick clear plate-glass countertop holds in place hospital-inspired chrome faucets and a 15-inch-diameter, brushed stainless-steel bar sink.

"You really don't need anything bigger than a bar sink in a bathroom," Barbara says, explaining her lavatory choice. "I don't like powder room sinks. They are too formal, too ornate. There are a lot of bar sinks in other shapes and sizes that look good in a bath."

For an eclectic jolt of color in the coolly sleek room, Barbara added storage in the unexpected form of a 50-year-old turquoise medical cabinet. Originally yellow, the piece was inherited by the couple in the late 1970s when Sam, an ophthalmologist, bought a medical practice. Standing 5½ feet high and 2 feet deep, the piece has seen plenty of use by the family. In fact, for a number of years it served as a display case for the children's football-helmet collection.

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Photographer: Tommy Miyasaki. Field editor: Laura Hull.

The crossbars of the vanity double as towel bars, *opposite*. Echoing the shapes and materials of the vanity, the mirror is a 3-foot square inside a stainless-steel frame suspended from the ceiling.

Glass Block Wall

A favorite of modern architects in the 1930s, glass block enjoys a renaissance among many of today's forward-thinking designers. Letting light in, however, can compromise privacy. Glass block comes in a range of translucencies, from obscure to moderately wavy to clear, and even in colors. Barbara Masket recommends an extremely distorted version of the material to obscure the view to the indoors. The block in her bath, for example, has a sandblasted core, as well as horizontal lines on the interior side and vertical ones on the exterior side. The different patterns maximize visual distortion.

Another privacy-keeping strategy is to limit the use of glass block. Instead of an entire wall, Barbara suggests installing only one or two horizontal rows of the material near the ceiling or one down the center of an otherwise solid wall.