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# POWDER ROOM CONFIDENTIAL

*Turn a tiny room into a display of exquisite design*

BY MARIJKE VROOMEN DURNING



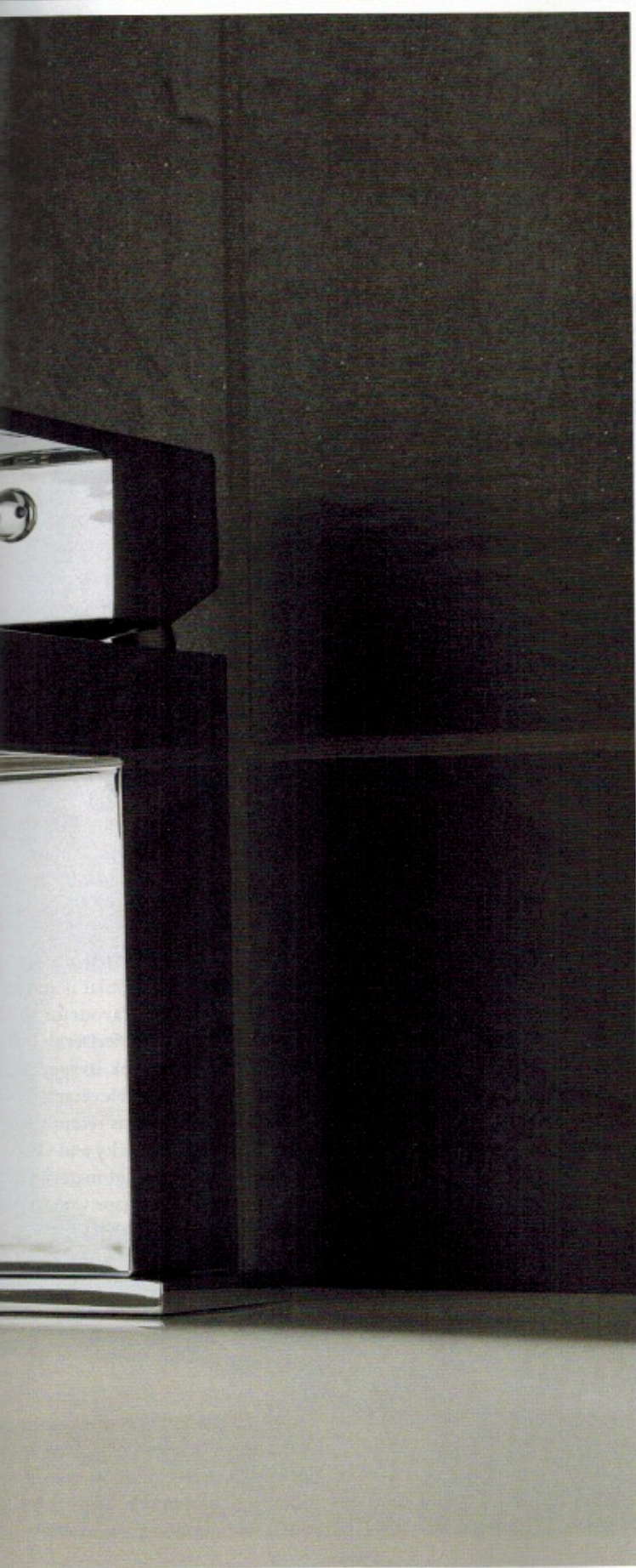


Photo courtesy of Proulx &amp; Fils

*"The trend is not to obviously follow a trend."*

**WHETHER A POWDER ROOM** was part of a house's original design or later claimed from a closet or nook, this small room is often where homeowners make their boldest design decisions. It's also a room that visitors see and use frequently. Your guests' lasting impression of your house could well be the powder room.

Older houses in Montreal tend to have smaller rooms and less space for powder rooms in comparison with newer luxury homes, observed Jacques Farmer, a product manager at Batimat, a distributor of high-end bathroom and kitchen products. His observation was echoed by André L'Heureux, branch director of Mascouche-based bathroom and kitchen product distributor Proulx et Fils Plomberium. When powder rooms are newly constructed or renovated, L'Heureux encourages homeowners to claim enough space to accommodate a shower. As a result, the room becomes multi-functional. If there are no immediate plans for a shower, adding extra space, he said, is simply a smart move for the future.

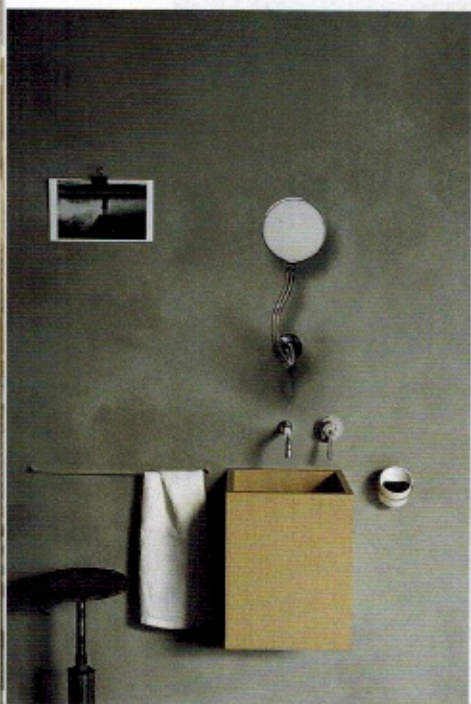
Decisions on powder room décor often depend on whether the work relates to a single room or to part of a larger home build or renovation, said Farmer. If all the bathrooms in a house are being built or redone at the same time, designers tend to harmonize them by using the same materials in each. But if the powder room is a stand-alone project, homeowners might well choose this opportunity to splurge on avant-garde ideas and designs.

Designing creatively for a small space requires the use of optical illusions that trick the eye into imagining space that's not really there. Pedestal sinks provide this illusion because they reveal so much of the floor. However, this once-popular style is no longer the first choice of designers, said L'Heureux, adding, "People are now going with standard vanities with cabinets." ❧





Photo courtesy of PierDeco Design



Photos courtesy of Batimat



Photo courtesy of Proulx &amp; Fils

At 30 to 36 inches wide, these vanities fit in smaller spaces and, unlike pedestal sinks, provide room for storage.

Jean-François Lanoue, web and marketing manager at PierDeco, a high-end bathroom product distributor, noted that his company carries only one pedestal sink.

"We see that people really like wall-mounted products," he explained. "These products are easier to clean underneath and they take up less space."

Traditional floor-mounted vanities leave less space between the toilet and cabinet. With a wall-mounted vanity, the floor remains unbroken. The same holds true for wall-mounted toilets.

"It looks like the floor and ceiling are the full size of the room and the objects feel less invasive," said Lanoue.

Despite a contemporary look that dominates today's powder rooms, Lanoue said a style from the past is making a comeback: lacquered vanities. The most popular colors are black and white.

"Some designers like red too, but we don't know if this will be popular in ten years."

One of Lanoue's favourite vanities is the Axe by AquaMobilia, PierDeco's own brand. Aside from the sleek look, its appeal is the material, which is made of a durable ceramic composite.

Batimat's Farmer has recently noted that clients, looking for novelty and visual appeal, have turned to unusual materials in sinks. One example is the Agape wood sink, made of waterproof birch. Another is a hand-forged metal sink, something Farmer said he would not expect to find in a powder room.

Elongated toilets had a surge in popularity in 2012 because of their comfort, and they remain popular in 2013. But L'Heureux Proulx & Fils is seeing another style that is finding favour: comfort-height toilets. These toilets are two inches higher than traditional ones. Such toilets are more comfortable for taller family members as well as for older people with limited mobility. *—E*



A significant role in the look of a powder room is played by faucets, which should be selected only after the sink is chosen to complement the sink's style and size. For visual and practical reasons, single-hole faucets remain popular, L'Heureux said. Their sleek look is pleasing to the eye, and a small footprint makes cleaning the sink a simpler task.

Homeowners who crave an even sleeker look or who hope to save yet more space should consider the wall-mounted faucet.

"You don't have to create space behind the sink to mount the faucet on the counter," said Farmer, a fan of the minimalist look of Italian faucets.

Keeping a powder room warm can be a challenge, particularly if the room was created out of an unheated closet. Farmer's favourite solution is the Cinier heater or radiator. Cinier heaters are formed out of stone powder and designed by artists from major European fashion houses. The heaters hang on the wall like paintings. With a Cinier heater, the focal point of the powder room is not the toilet or sink but a work of art, which also happens to be the heat source.

"They are naturally beautiful and serve a purpose—and they make a statement," said Farmer.

For homeowners who have enough space to add a shower to their powder room, Pier-Deco's Lanoue suggested the slim Italian shower column from AquaMassage's PD series, particularly the PD-890. When the showerhead function is activated, a bright blue light glows from electricity generated safely by an embedded turbine.

"An amazing shower column," said Lanoue. "We have electricity with lights on the top, so you don't need to plug anything into the wall. It's nice because the plumber doesn't have to place electrical cables, and the customers feel safer."

Still unsure about how to design your powder room? In simple terms, said Farmer, "the trend is not to obviously follow a trend, because you want to distinguish yourself from everyone else."

In other words, try different styles and, most of all, have some fun. ☛

*"Lacquered vanities are making a comeback."*



Photo courtesy of Batimat

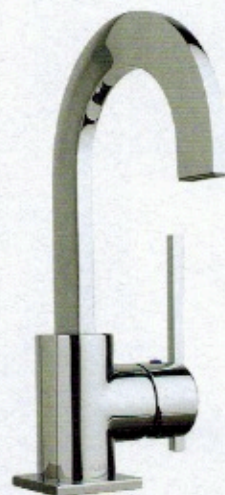


Photo courtesy of Proulx & Fils