



MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Wash and go? No: bathrooms should be beautifully dressed places that encourage lounging

Photography **Christopher Horwood**
Words **Miriam Mathuen-Jones**

"Both bathrooms were already fairly complete when we came to the project," says interior designer Rachael Gowdridge of the Georgian home in London she was asked to revitalise. "Each had some really beautiful elements, but they both felt cold and formal. The client described the main bathroom as feeling too much like something you'd find in a hotel, which was exactly what we wanted to get away from."

That chimed with the brief she'd been given for the rest of the house: to make it feel like a home again. "Warm, comfortable and quite layered, while reconnecting it with some of its Georgian character. It had wonderful bones, but it felt fragmented."

Take the incredible marble bath in the guest bathroom, for example. This was already in situ when Rachael began. "It's completely extraordinary – apparently it had previously been used as a planter in the garden," she laughs. "It could have made the room feel incredibly grand and serious, so a lot of our design was about taking the edge off that." Exposing the old timber floorboards, celebrating them rather than covering them up, made a big difference. "They immediately gave the room warmth and age, particularly against the pale marble and white sanitaryware. We didn't want to erase that patina."

Other existing features were left alone, such as the original fireplace. It is now highlighted with accessories and wall art. "We tried not to 'correct' the age of the house. It's over 200 years old so of course there are wonky walls, old floorboards and slightly ►



BRIEF To warm up the cold, formal bathrooms and bring them into line with the rest of this Georgian house

LOCATION Clerkenwell, London

DESIGN Rachael Gowdridge Studio

Top left A Little Petra armchair from &Tradition sits in the corner. "We used shearling chairs elsewhere, so bringing one into the bathroom connected it to the rest of the house." **Bottom left** The wall lights' frilled shades are by Alice Palmer and the rattan pendant (reflected in the mirror) is from MG&Co. **Above** The marble bath was once used as a planter in the garden. It now looks at home, surrounded by art, greenery, a soft rug and a wooden stool





Above The bamboo shelving by Studio Hám steers clear of typical bathroom storage. **Right** Wall lights by Paolo Moschino complement the existing marble vanity and shower enclosure

awkward proportions. But those things give it character. I'm much more interested in working with that than in making an old house feel perfectly smooth and new."

A washable rug serves as a bathmat, a rustic milking stool acts as a side table, a shearling chair encourages lounging, and there's a rush-wrapped shelving unit to display curios. "A lot of the design was about introducing things you might expect to find elsewhere in the house," says Rachael. "I didn't want lots of little 'bathroom accessories'; I wanted a few things with enough character to make the room feel inhabited."

The main bathroom was a challenge too. It had a lot of marble in it – gorgeous and full of strong veining, but the sheer scale made the room feel intimidating. "We didn't want to rip out perfectly good materials, so the question became how to change the character of the room. Keeping the floorboards, introducing linen at the windows, adding softer lighting, timber furniture, artwork and plants all helped enormously."

Rachael layered in a number of different light sources and focused on sculptural fittings that look just as lovely when turned off. The linen ceiling light is from Watt & Veke and the geometric wall lights are Coco by Paolo Moschino. Relaxed linen Roman blinds were chosen for the windows. "They filter the daylight rather than blocking it completely and, importantly, bring some movement and softness into a room that otherwise had a lot of hard surfaces."

Both bathrooms now feel so much more inviting. "I think the simplest thing is to stop treating the bathroom as a completely separate category of room," Rachael says. "If space allows, there's no reason you can't have a proper rug, an armchair, artwork or a beautiful piece of furniture in there. It stops everything feeling too showroom-like." ■

style *file*



1 Bilton bath caddy, £98, Rowen & Wren
2 Dijon wall light with pleated shade, £65, Dar Lighting 3 Small urn-shaped vase, £65, Colefax & Fowler 4 Rico swivel club chair, £1,570, Ferm Living