

# SEPARATE SPACES

Builders and remodelers say the concept of his and hers bathrooms in master suites is just the thing for some couples, providing private time and separate storage.

It's not an exact ratio, but a correlation between the size of a master bathroom and the number of years of marriage emerges if you ask enough builders, architects and decorators:

The longer the marriage, the bigger the bathroom.

For some couples, though, it's not just size that matters. Privacy, neatness, schedules . . . a number of factors feed into the desire to have a little less togetherness and a little more alone time when it comes to the bathroom.

The solution: His and hers bathrooms.

"It tends to be older people who know what they want," says renovator and builder Michael Matrka of Michael Matrka Inc. "In the design stage, we mention it to younger people and some are interested and some are not. But, 15 years down the road, with work schedules and kids, it changes."

Architect John Behal of Behal Sampson Dietz agrees. "It tends to be people who understand how they function, people who understand what

**BY SUSAN WITTSTOCK DALZELL**



*The doors to the separate walk-in closets, which include built-in drawers and shelves, are positioned near the couple's separate vanities. Additional storage and counter space was built into the dressing area here, a space the owners find comfortable and relaxing.*

works for them," he says. "The majority of people have been married awhile. Their lifestyle issues have been resolved."

One couple who found the idea appealing live in a stately German Village home. When they renovated the house in 2001, they incorporated a his-and-hers bathroom into the design. "It was time. We had been in here for 20-some years. We decided we needed to upgrade it," says the woman of the house.

When they began the project, the master bedroom had a small bathroom and was adjacent to a guest bedroom with a small bathroom of its own. "We

went to John Behal and he came and looked at all the space and said this is what I think we can do. It's really his design," the owner says.

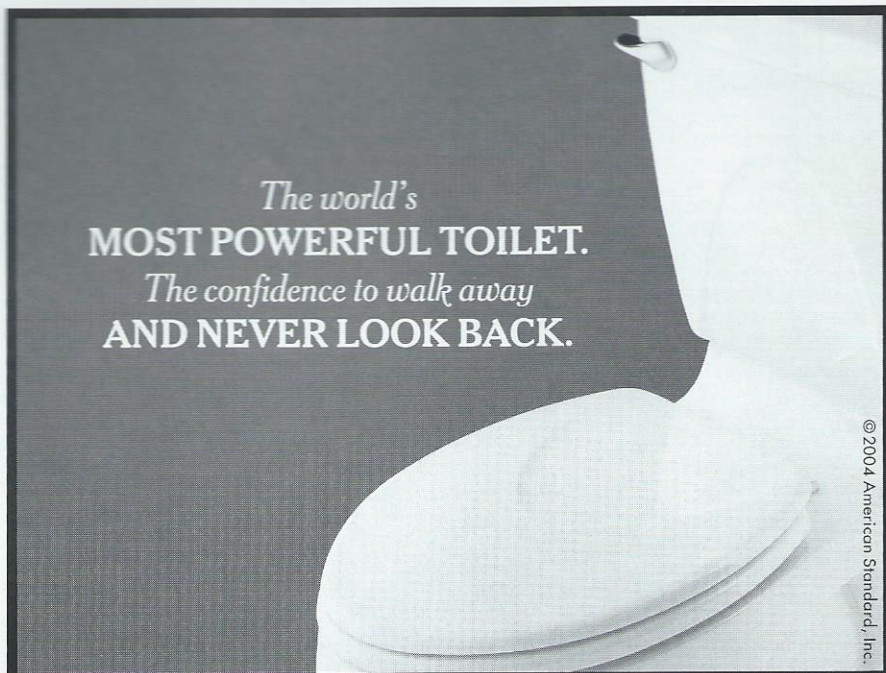
The guest bedroom and the two small bathrooms were gutted and converted into one contemporary-style bath and dressing suite that incorporates separate toilet rooms, a walk-in shower, two vanities with sinks, a large dressing area and two walk-in closets.

A door from the master bedroom and a door from the home's main upstairs hallway open into the bathroom's interior tiled hallway. The two private toilet rooms (one for him, one for her) are accessed from this hallway, as is the



large tile shower, with a floor-to-ceiling glass door.

The interior hall leads into a carpeted dressing area. Three tall windows fill the area with light, reflected by large mirrors above each of the honed limestone vanity countertops. The counters appear to float several inches above the gray cabinetry below, with narrow stainless-steel columns providing the only visible support. The effect is repeated with a countertop that stretches beneath the bay window, suspended over eight sets of drawers. The wife's walk-in closet, with many built-in drawers and shelves, is located near her vanity; the husband's is



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The shared dressing area in this Bexley residence features a large Kohler whirlpool tub with a heater and a built-in vanity and dressing table. This area and the two adjoining private bathrooms are part of a master suite the owner had built shortly after purchasing the home.

entered from the opposite wall, near his vanity.

"This was an old, old house, so the bathrooms were very small and there was no closet space," the woman says. "This is just much more comfortable. I really do spend a lot of time up here. I have my phone and my television. It's a family room, a family bathroom, if there is such a thing."

Her husband appreciates the larger bathroom, particularly as he is getting ready for work in the morning, but the wife believes the individual amenities mean a little more to her than to him. "I think women appreciate it more than men," she says. "It's terrific. You don't have to wait for anyone."

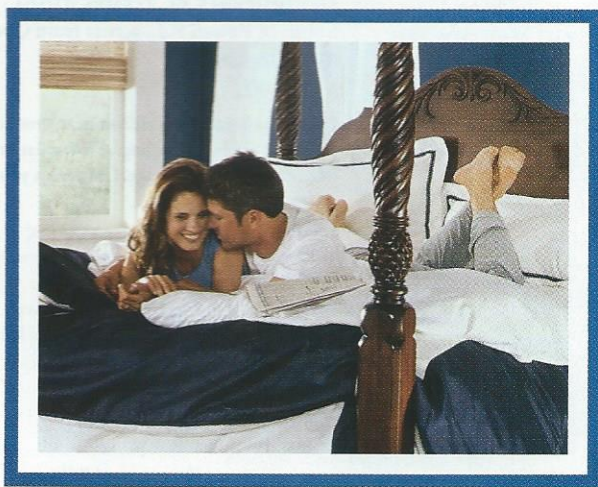
It was a male homeowner, however, who hired Matrka to design a his-and-hers bathroom for his Bexley home.

"I've been doing these a long time," the owner says, noting that his first marriage benefited from having his and hers bathrooms. "I'd earned it in my life. It was a mandate. I never thought of it as unique. I thought it's the way people should live."

When he and his current wife purchased their home, he hired Matrka's firm to build a master suite

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with his and hers bathrooms. The renovation was completed in 2001.

The owners enter the suite by passing through a small office and seating area. From there, they can either walk straight into the master bedroom or turn to enter the bath area, which includes two bathrooms—each with a glass-enclosed shower, toilet and sink—as well as a large, open dressing room.

The husband's private bathroom, closest to the area's entrance, is opposite his closet. His bathroom is masculine in décor, with dark green Verde marble for the countertop as well as the floor and shower tiles. Custom stained mahogany wood was used for trim, cabinetry and a built-in medicine cabinet.

The wife's private bathroom, one door down and located off the dressing area, is decorated in a brighter palette that

matches the dressing area's décor. The tiles on the floor and in the shower are made of light Durango limestone, while the countertop is mocha suede limestone. The cabinetry is painted white and the walls are a cheery sky blue. Her bathroom also has a bidet.

The dressing area includes a large Kohler Tea for Two whirlpool tub tucked into one wall, framed by white shuttered windows, and, on an adjoining wall, a vanity with a sink, storage and dressing table to sit and apply makeup or do hair. The wife's walk-in closet, complete with small window seat, also is accessed from the dressing room, just a step away from her private bathroom.

The his-and-hers concept takes a different shape for each home, Matrka says, depending on the owners. "Usually the wife's needs are different than the man's.

*The décor of the wife's private bathroom matches the dressing room, with sky blue walls and the same Durango limestone tile.*



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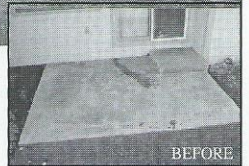
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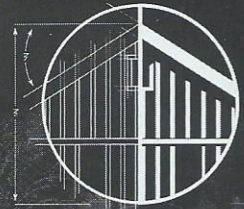
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The mahogany wood and dark green marble give the husband's private bathroom a masculine feel. All cabinetry and trim were custom-designed for the project.



For some, having your own vanity space makes sense so you're not rubbing elbows. For others, sharing a shower and a tub is no big deal. It's more of a functionality, not a privacy, thing," he says.

He is currently working on a project with two toilet rooms where the couple has requested a phone be installed in each room. "They're very personalized," Matrka says. "It no longer has to be 'The man takes the bathroom down the hall.'"

The concept isn't for everyone. Big, glamorous bathrooms are popular, Behal says, and splitting the space can be viewed as a disadvantage by many clients. "His and hers means each section would be smaller. They prefer big over separating the space," he says.

Although he's fielding more requests for separate bathrooms today than 10 years ago, it's not yet a popular design option. "Maybe 25 percent of people are thinking that way," Behal says. "In my sense, it's always going to be a minority trend, definitely a niche market. I have people saying to me, 'I like to run into my spouse in the bathroom.'" ■

*Susan Wittstock Dalzell is a freelance writer.*

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*The his-and-hers bathroom in this German Village home gives the couple plenty of elbow room when they get ready in the morning. Sharing a shower wasn't a concern, but after more than 20 years of marriage, the owners were ready to enjoy a bathroom with some separate facilities.*

