

# Splash Palace



## A refurbished claw-foot tub, custom tile and creative use of inexpensive materials jazz up a child's bathroom

BY SHERYL MURRAY-HANSEN

What do you get when you mix a general contractor, an artist, a baby and a derelict old house begging for a new bathroom? Let me tell you a story.

### "The tub stays"

This edict, issued by my husband the general contractor, laid the ground rules for reworking the tiny original bath in our 1907 home into a bathroom better suited to our little girl. In the midst of gutting and living in our whole-house remodel, he found the idea of inching the beastly, old iron tub down our narrow Victorian stairway apparently unthinkable. Fortunately, this was just fine with me. The claw-foot tub was one of the few charming details present in our new old house.

One thing we did give the old heave-ho was the minuscule bath's original layout. It was cramped and dark, and decorated with maroon plastic tiles and Pepto-pink walls (photo to right). It was a true pleasure to swing the big mallet against those walls.

### Relocating the fixtures made a big difference

Moving the tub, sink and toilet adds expense to a bathroom remodel and can be a budget breaker for many projects. But we decided that the advantages outweighed the expenses in this case. Swinging the tub perpendicular to its original spot and repositioning the sink and toilet on the wall where the tub had been dramatically opened up the space (photo facing page).

Our one splurge, the vintage-looking handheld shower, is perfect for hosing down our grubby little one (Sign of the Crab, model #P0146C; 916-638-2722; $550). We figure it will be at least eight years before our baby girl and any upcoming siblings need an upright shower of their own. At that point we may add a shower-curtain ring and a clip to convert the handheld shower.

Beadboard paneling, shelving on brackets and a built-in beveled mirror add loads of friendly cottage charm without adding substantially to the budget. The beadboard is inexpensive painted paneling that looks like the more pricey individual boards. The shelves are made of finger-jointed fir, with curvy brackets cut with a jigsaw.

### Thinking inside the grid

Did I mention that I make tile? My studio, MonkeyHouse Design, specializes in site-specific work. Custom tiles can be costly, so I've become adept at working one-of-a-kind tile murals into the grid imposed by the thickness, length and width of less-expensive, commercially available tile.

In this bathroom, I made a spinning-mermaid mosaic for the floor and some bas-relief aquatic friends for the tile walls flanking the window.

Our baby girl loves splashing around in the big, old tub, chattering to her tile fish and mermaid friends the whole time. There's plenty of room for us to sit nearby on a stepstool and enjoy her playtime. And the tiled surfaces make for a quick and easy cleanup.

A final word about the tub and my husband: He said it had to stay. He didn't say I couldn't paint it. □

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Sheryl Murray-Hansen and her husband, Bert Hansen, operate Renovation Innovations, a remodeling company in Portland, Oregon. Photos by Charles Miller, except where noted.



***Ready for a change.*** *The pink walls and maroon plastic tiles in this bathroom were a powerful incentive to go back to the drawing board.*

***The tub points south now.*** *Relocating the tub to the wall below the window opened up the center of the room, where a custom-made mosaic featuring a spinning mermaid is framed by store-bought tile.*

Bottom photo: Bert Hansen

