



Bathing Beauties

IN A TOWNHOUSE FILLED WITH FRIENDLY CLUTTER AND RIOTOUS COLOR, THE BATHROOMS PROVIDE A SERENE AND CALMING COUNTERPOINT.
By Susan Kleinman

Just like her films and novels, Laura Esquivel's New York City duplex combines rich color and calm reflection, the supernatural and nature itself.

"The public area," explains the author best known for *Like Water for Chocolate*, "revolves around the kitchen and is filled with color and warmth, alluding to earth and fire. At the center of the more intimate area of the place there is a magnificent master bathroom [above] and a greenhouse [through the 'window,' at left], where one can breathe peace."

Cool and almost monochromatic, the bathrooms—all part of the overall design created by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz and project architect Brian Boyle—offer a respite from the hot pinks and deep purples that abound in the rest of the apartment.

In the master bath, the shower is designed to spray right onto the floor, to mimic the feeling of an outdoor shower. Windows make the space appear larger and offer a glimpse of the morning sky. "The water and the air present in this area are in perfect balance," says Esquivel, "making my apartment a true home." >



The main bathroom (previous page) was a real challenge, because the space is triangular," says Noriega-Ortiz. To soften the angles, he installed plenty of mirrors, chose a deep, rounded tub and hung the shower curtain from a curved track in the ceiling. A tile-covered lip on the floor follows the curtain's curve and keeps the outer portion of the bathroom dry. "I wanted to bring the water out all the way to the door," says the designer, "but sometimes you have to be practical."

The tiles, from Bisazza, run all the way up to the ceiling. They're white glass with a slight bluish green tinge that makes them shimmer like running water. In addition to tiny halogens recessed in the ceiling and incandescent wall fixtures designed by Noriega-Ortiz for Neffen, the bathroom is suffused with natural light.

In the third-floor guest bathroom (this page), the sink surround stretches from the left wall to the right but doesn't touch the wall or windows behind it. As a result, the sink (above) appears to be floating. In this bathroom, the tiles are an inexpensive ceramic, installed perfectly. "That's one of my favorite tricks," says the designer. "If you install inexpensive materials as if they're expensive, they'll look it."

The light fixtures are Noriega-Ortiz's own design. Deep glass shelves (right) keep shower clutter under control and add space. "Because of such simplicity," says Esquivel, "I was able to add my own touches." Which is exactly what her designer had in mind. "Laura loves to hunt around and just find things," says Noriega-Ortiz. "I created this home so that she'd have room to fill it with all the quirky pieces she collects." ❖
See Resources, last pages.



In Linda O'Keeffe's 800-square-foot mini-loft in Manhattan, an 18th-century Burmese Buddha, a feathered headdress from Cameroon and a Jain temple hanging border the living area, which is defined by a circular Tibetan rug by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz for Tufenkian. Opposite: A portrait by Regina DeLuise hangs above a Chris Lehrecke bureau; the leather chair and lamps are flea-market finds.

