



# natural beauty

A California couple create a master bath  
refuge that celebrates sunshine and embraces  
ocean views without compromising privacy.

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The modern tub is set in a teak surround to create the look of a Japanese soaking tub.

In the bustling community of Mission Beach, California, it's a challenge to create a master bath retreat with expansive ocean views but no prying eyes. Empty nesters Mitchell and Miyo Reff relied on architect James Gabriel, who designed their three-story home, to find a way.

Gabriel's goal was to celebrate being at the beach while creating an intimate interior. On the home's third floor, he created a contemporary master suite where large windows look out on the water without compromising privacy or opportunities for quiet relaxation inside. For example, a strategically placed window with reflective coating on the glass allows Miyo to take in the view from her large soaking tub without worrying about anyone seeing in.

The Reffs wanted to create a spacious feeling within a limited area by borrowing views, capturing reflections, and filling the space with natural light, Gabriel says. To achieve this, Gabriel designed the master bath as one large open space anchored by a double-sided vanity. The vanity pairs back-to-back sinks and cabinets with an innovative two-sided mirror. The modern tub, which is set in a teak surround to evoke the feeling of a Japanese soaking tub, and the glass-enclosed river-rock shower bookend the space seamlessly and without intrusion.

"Part of the peacefulness of this house is that it's very cleanly designed," Mitchell says. Drawers close automatically at a touch. Nothing clutters the countertops. Even Mitchell's travel-size toiletries have a place of their own. Everything has a place because the Reffs and their design team took time to analyze, plan, and ultimately create a master bath that meets all their daily needs and provides the little indulgences they always wanted. The bath also is an example of green building done right, featuring wise environmental choices.

"What's most appealing is the natural light and transparency of the bathroom itself," project builder Richard Gerace says. "It doesn't feel like you're walking into a typical bathroom. It's open and clear, and that's a projection of the entire house."

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This serene master bath is an example of green building done right. The project used zero-VOC paint and adhesives, sustainable-growth bamboo flooring, water-saving fixtures, and strategic use of daylight and natural ventilation.



**This Photo:** Thanks to a floor-to-ceiling window with reflective coating on the glass so passersby cannot see in, Miyo and Mitchell Reff can enjoy abundant ocean views from their new bath retreat. **Opposite Left:** A rain-style showerhead emphasizes the spa-like feel of the bath. **Opposite Right:** The double-sided mirror is carefully suspended from a ceiling skylight so it serves both sides of the his-and-hers sink arrangement. **Opposite Lower Left:** “The river rock looks beautiful and feels really nice on bare feet,” homeowner Mitchell Reff says. The shower was designed to be part of the overall room by wrapping the floor and walls in the same textured surface of pebbles.



## *Lessons Learned*

Building a back-to-back his-and-hers sink arrangement hinged on finding a way to suspend a two-sided mirror from the ceiling skylight. Architect James Gabriel worked with a metal fabricator to fashion custom suspension rods. The rods hold a bead-blasted stainless-steel mirror, which has lighting integrated onto the mirror itself. Note: On Miyo Reff's side of the mirror, a smaller swivel mirror is mounted to allow her to check the back of her hair.

