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Relaxing views and clean lines distinguish this modern Victoria bathroom

BY JENNIFER BLYTH PHOTOS JO-ANN RICHARDS

IS it possible to marry a traditional West Coast home in a rural, waterfront setting with a sleek, contemporary interior captured in a glass-and-chrome bathroom? One look at this luxurious Victoria ensuite designed by homeowners Chris and Joan Walker, and the answer is a resounding yes! However, whileit boasts the sensibility and style of a five-star spa, this is also a space where practical matters are front-and-centre.

A joint creation by the Walkers, "we wanted it to feel more contemporary than the rest of the house, and we wanted to keep it really clean and simple to capture the view," says Chris, a Victoria home builder whose company, Christopher Developments, designs and builds homes throughout the Capital Region. This beautiful bathroom overlooks a secluded corner of a tidal inlet
minutes from downtown Victoria – but with the water, trees and abundant wildlife, the atmosphere is worlds away. "I like the clean lines of it all and the way the sunshines in in the morning – it's very spa-like," says Joan.

Beautifully blending form and function, the bathroom is designed in an L-shape, with a door-less corner opening to the master
bedroom. On the short wall is the glass shower and enclosed toilet closet fronted by an opaque-glass door to afford additional privacy in this "bathroom built for two," while the long wall is home to a bank of large windows on one side, facing the lengthy vanity. Essentially, the floor

The countertop and vanity were custom built to enhance the bathroom's airy ambience.

plan allows for four separate "stations," with ample room between each to allow easy traffic flow during busy mornings.

And at the end of the vanity, a luxurious soaker tub is the perfect place to relax at the end of a busy day, listening to the sounds of the build-in stereo system and enjoying the private view – trees, water and distant city lights. "You can watch the lights going over the bridge, but it's definitely not a privacy concern," says Chris. A combination of soft, tone-ontone neutrals – anchored by Benjamin Moore's 'Bennington Gray' on the walls – echoes some of the colours soaked in through the expansive windows (unique, energy-efficient Euroline models with the advantage of having a white interior frame, but black exterior). This detail was essential for this Scottish-inspired West Coast home, whose exterior is in many ways as traditional as this ensuite is contemporary.

While the low-E windows offer some protection against excessive heat during the summer, the Walkers have also added twoinch maple-look blinds for added flexibility and to play off the natural tones both outside and in.

The roomy floor plan allowed the homeowners to use large, 18-inch-square Travertine floor tile, which are toasty on the toes thanks to the programmable in-floor heating system which they can set to warm up before their alarm clock – or young daughter – rouses them for the day. The tiles also flow upand over the tub surround, providing a seamless look.

Above the shower and the adjacent private toilet, clean, white subway tiles line the angled ceiling that follows the peaked roofline while disguising the exhaust fan. If there's a "star" in this bath, it's likely not the tub or the admittedly amazing shower, but rather the vanity and counter. Sitting atop the long, matte-finished suspended vanity is a threequarter-inch tempered-glass countertop, its stunning sea-green colouring reflecting the streaming light from the south-facing windows. Esthetically, the vanity's warm, butternut-stained maple draws in the warm browns of the trees outside, while the matte finish adds a soft, buttery, begs-to-be-touched appearance.

Indeed, the ensuite is a fine example of how to blend both polished and brushed finishes. Paired with the reflective glass counter and ultra-contemporary polished - chrome Grohe fixtures sparkling atop the vanity are wide-framed, brushed-metal mirrors hanging above each sink. "Chris came up with the glass idea and how to do it, and then we kept with that theme – light and airy," says Joan.

Over-height nine-foot ceilings add to the spacious feeling of the bathroom, aided by the clean, uncluttered accessorizing, made possible by the large vanity, with room for the

The 'Bennington Gray' wall colour is a perfect neutral tone for this space that features Travertine floor tile. White subway tiles line the ceiling that follows the peaked roofline.

his-and-hers undermount sinks, (themselves a work of art, the bowl resembling the shallow-to-deep-end appearance of an empty swimming pool). In a successful experimenthe's now incorporating into new designs for clients, Chris took the same glass-countertop concept and stood it on end, creating a roomy, glass-walled shower with frameless glass door. Not only does it create a seamless sightline from one end of the ensuite to the other, but smooth, groutless glass is wonderfully easy to clean, Chris says of his favourite element in the ensuite (along with the view, of course!).

"It's always different designing for yourself," he observes. "It allowed me to experiment a little bit more."

As he relaxes in the comfy tub, soaking in the view, is there anything Chris would do differently?

A possible future addition may include long glass tiles rising up behind the vanity,creating an interesting feature wall, he suggests, but adds with a smile that Joan may take a little more convincing

RESOURCES Bathroom design and build: Christopher Developments,Victoria; Paint: Benjamin Moore 'Bennington Gray' from Pacific Paint,Victoria; Travertine floor tile and white subway tile: Gazzola Tile, Victoria; Glass countertop and vanity: custom built by Christopher Developments; Light fixtures: Illuminations, Victoria; Windows: Euroline Windows, Delta; Sink faucets: Kohler Purist; Shower fixtures: Kohler Mastershower; Soaker tub: Neptune. Tub and plumbing fixtures from Westburne Plumbing. See SOURCES on page 100