



Marcio Decker

2008 Smartest Hot Water Award Winner

By Robbie Fumo



Photo by Nicholas Rab

The NKBA's newest Design Competition category, Smartest Hot Water, recognizes the unsung hero of today's amenity-laden bathroom—the hot water source that balances comfort and convenience with water and energy conservation. Often overlooked and underappreciated, hot water products are the workhorse of good bathroom design, ensuring the functionality of a myriad of fixtures.

Designer Marcio Decker of Home Concepts in Truckee, California has been awarded the first Smartest Hot Water Award for his master bathroom design in a new Squaw Valley vacation home. Decker's design solution met the clients' request for a spa experience in their master bath that combined a unique, stylized design with a highly efficient hot water supply, offering low operating costs and minimal impact on the environment.

A warm, welcoming bathroom spa is the perfect end to a day spent outdoors skiing or hiking in the mountains. Whether it involves soaking in an oversized whirlpool tub or enjoying a multi-head shower experience, an adequate hot water supply ensures that it will be pleasurable. According to Decker, this goal was accomplished by using a natural gas, high-efficiency storage water heater with a direct vent system. The model selected—Rheem's 75-gallon PowerVent Natural Gas unit—is dedicated solely to meeting the hot water needs of the master bathroom's high volume tub, two shower heads, two handheld heads and two basins.

"We determined the right size tank for the project by calculating the consumption of water in a busy hour and making sure its First Hour Rating (FHR) was larger than the demand by a few gallons," Decker said. He also considered the efficiency ratings of all of the bathroom fixtures when making his selections. "It's very important to have that knowledge so you can successfully combine aesthetics with energy and water efficiency," he added. ▶▶



Rendering by 20-20 Technologies



Decker emphasized the importance of knowing which questions to ask with respect to hot water solutions and how critical the expertise of the entire team is in formulating the final specifications.

BRINGING THE OUTDOORS IN

The stunning mountain views played a key role in how Decker designed the master bathroom. "I wanted the clients to experience the feeling of being outdoors when they were inside their home," Decker stated. By incorporating a color scheme similar to the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape, and through the use of various textures, Decker masterfully accomplished this objective.

This relationship is clearly evident throughout the space. The overall effect is very calm and monochromatic, accented with punches of color. According to Decker, the biggest challenge in designing this room "was to make an area that uses such hard finishes, such as stone and ceramic, feel soothing and soft."

Decker's eclectic combination of stone, tile and natural wood warms the room while visually surprising the eye. From tub to shower to vanity backsplash, the juxtaposition of worn travertine and imperial blend slate, punctuated by mixed salad flat pebbles, offers a comforting palate. The pebble treatment flows in a pattern reminiscent of a mountain stream across the vibrant slate on the tub surround, vanity backsplash and the shower seat. "You can find all of these colors and textures outside," Decker noted.

Decker drew upon his extensive tile background to capture the ebb and flow of nature in his design. "The chiseled edge on the travertine countertops has been smoothed, and the travertine has a honed feel to it that almost massages," Decker explained. "Also, the sinks are granite, just like a boulder that has been sliced in half and shaped into a bowl." The beam inside the shower was part of the architect's design, which Decker creatively wrapped in tile, creating yet another point of interest in the bathroom.

He selected alder for the cabinetry, which is stained and glazed to bring in a driftwood feel. "You can manipulate the wood into darker tones, lighter tones and reddish tones—even ebony. It's a great choice." He also used the alder for a tower between the sinks, which he sees as a design trend in bathrooms. "I am seeing fewer medicine cabinets, and a greater use of a tower storage unit placed between the sinks to create a separation of the space," Decker commented.

Decker integrated the mirrors into the scheme by reprising the pebble treatment to wrap the moldings. "We retained the treated surfaces of the moldings and the pencil liners, while introducing the very organic pebbles," Decker said.

Decker introduced another element of surprise by mounting the custom-made artistic mica lights with ironwork onto the mirrors to add reflection back into the room, complementing the natural light from the expansive windows that remain uncovered to maximize the amazing views. All of the lighting is custom-made. Plumbing fixtures in oil-rubbed bronze and iron cabinetry hardware add warmth and "feel rusted and aged," Decker noted.

Through the use of a proper hot water heater, coupled with high-efficiency plumbing fixtures and a thermostat with a vacation mode setting, Decker has succeeded in creating a spa environment while promoting energy efficiency and water conservation, bringing green into this exquisite spa bathroom in more ways than one. 



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