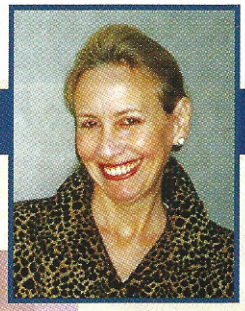

The Powder Room

The powder room is a unique space by invention. While functional in nature, it is a room that demands its own character. It can be whimsical, flirtatious, functional, charismatic, more expensive per square foot than any other space, and downright it's own thing. It can but doesn't have to relate to the rest of the house/apartment. It is an extravagance, an extra, a frivolity.

Powder rooms are traditionally located near or adjacent to the entry foyer. It is here where guests second guess their appearance and adjust whatever adjustments need to be made. It is here where the guest must be made to look and feel the best he/she can before making their grand entrance into the public spaces. It is here where, when one is tired and seeks solace from the conviviality of conversation, one can retire to the serenity of a quiet, usually meditative space.

While usually incorporating the usual plumbing fittings – water closet, lavatory, mirror, etc., the powder room can also house art, curios, objects d'art, and the like. Given enough space, it can also have a gracious anteroom so that one feels even more magnanimous upon entering its unique quarters. In addition, because it characteristically can be set apart from the aesthetics of the rest of the house, it's materials and finishes tend to be special. Here, the designer can combine wood and stone, ceramics and wood, metals and stone, glass and wood, stone and glass. Lavatories can be metaphoric – more symbolic than utilitarian. Water closets can be funky -- wall hung, boxy, all stainless steel, rounded… And, the walls, in particular because there is small moisture collection, can be sheathed in faux paint, fabric, metal, and glass.

In covering its surface with tile, stone, glass, wood, metal, fabric, or paint, one can be experimental. Very often, the visitor will find a faux-painted scenic mural or abstract design, say of squares or circles. Sometimes the painting is mixed with interesting tile work, so that it can be difficult in discerning where the paint begins and the tile leaves off. Often, the tile itself is so unusual; it emulates a painting or design metaphor. Erin Adams 'Zen weave and random mosaic tile from Ann Sacks create such visual images. Its composition transcends its material form in beauty and style.

The Powder Room, because it is usually carved out of extra space, tends to take on an unusual shape. It can be curved, squared, angled, or linear. It can be tiny; it can be grand. It can house one mirror, or many. Ceilings can be dropped to evoke a cozy feeling, or carved to emanate grandness. The faucets and plumbing fittings can be unusual and whimsical, making a humorous gesture.

The Powder Room evokes the character of the house; it expresses its uniqueness through its imaginative expression. In all, it is a room unto itself.

Gail Green
Green & Company Interior Designers
Tel: 212-906-0110
e-mail: gegandco@aol.com