



Project Description

Bo Reudler Studio

New Bathroom interior

Location: Near Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Client: Private client

Materials: Plaster, terrazzo, glass, copper, brass, porcelain, LED lighting

Date of completion: November 2010

The project involved the renovation of a bathroom on the top floor of a late 19th century house located near Amsterdam. The antique 100-year old cast iron enamel clawfoot bath and original timber doors are the only remaining elements from the existing bathroom. The brief specified a contemporary design that would complement with the historical character of the house.

Bathrooms are often neglected spaces in a house; the new design intentionally took the opposite approach. The aim was to take away the sterile character associated with most modern bathrooms to create a space that literally came alive. Experiences of nature formed the inspiration: the characteristics of water, the interaction of light and shadows, frost and decay, taking into account the ageing of the space and the materials.

Ceiling, mirror and sink

The experience of water extends beyond the act of bathing. Sitting in the bathtub looking up, the bather becomes entranced by a ceiling of intersecting plasterwork circles, as if the water were dripping upwards from the bath. The water droplet is echoed in the mirror hanging above the sink: entitled the Narcisse mirror, it is called after the mythological boy in love with his own reflection. The mirror is made from glass of varying thicknesses causing a distorted reflection resembling a pool of water.

A Slow White wash-table was especially designed for this bathroom. Part of Bo Reudler's Slow White series, the hand made wash-table is composed of curved branches gathered from the forest, coated in a layer of glossy white paint. The copper sink is intended to show traces of time and usage.

Pipework

The flow of water into a bathroom is normally hidden while being one of the most important functional elements of the space. In this case, the crooked copper pipework

is proudly exposed with all functions derived directly from the pipes. Therefore no tap fittings are necessary – as a playful detail, the copper pipes end in a spout like a teapot allowing good water flow. The valves are standard brass elements used for plumbing. For the shower, the hot and cold water pipes connect together to supply warm water for the shower head which is connected directly to the pipes. Over time, the hot and cold water pipes will age differently due to condensation build-up on the copper surface. Under the sink, the U-trap is formed directly from the copper pipes while a copper pipe dangles down from the hanging water reservoir to the toilet.

Window

Playing with the form of frost and condensation, the bathroom window (overlooking the back garden) features a pattern entitled Summer Frost. To provide privacy, the sandblasted pattern begins dense at the bottom becoming more open at the top. The scene – inspired by the structure of ice crystals – depicts butterflies and dragonflies surrounding a landscape of ice flowers. By day the pattern is reflected on the walls resembling sunlight filtered through foliage, by night the scene is illuminated to become an abstract image.

Walls

Ceramic tiles with a floral relief compose the walls. At first sight, the tiles seem cracked however upon closer inspection, the cracks grow, at the sources of water, to become trees from which flowers bloom. The flowers were created by inlaying particular reliefs with copper. Like the rest of the copperwork, the flowers will age over time taking on a greenish tint. The tiles were water-cut while the mortar is dark grey to highlight the cracks. At the bottom of the walls, certain tiles are missing where the terrazzo skirting meets the tiles like patches of grass. Recessed downlights shine on the trees encourage them to ‘grow.’

Memory

Existing materials from the house are continued into the space: terrazzo and plaster ceilings while the original timber doors are painted glossy black to give them a new life. The bathroom design was executed together with local craftsmen who were keen to keep their traditional skills alive through contemporary design. Traditional fittings bring to mind days gone by: an antique cast iron heater, with a pattern of reliefs matching the tiles, and the ‘new’ toilet with hanging water reservoir and chain flush. Porcelain fittings - the light switch and dimmers, towel hooks and door handles - are a reminder of the attention once devoted to the bathroom. The new design brings life back into a forgotten space.