

**Spaces:** Fine Living in the East Bay. Article from May 2007, Contra Costa Times (excerpt)

Jarl Forsman and Audrey Kral co-designed the bathroom tile installation on page 32.

See <http://artfulinteriorsdesign.com> and <http://fullradiance.kralsite.com>

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# Tile Tales

## DIVERSE TILE PRODUCTS ADD DRAMA TO BATHROOMS

BY LINNEA SMITH JESSUP  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN PERKINS

Sure, the sunken tub is part of the story of the perfect bathroom, but it's the creative use of tile that is stealing center stage these days. Decorators and builders are adding more and more details with tile, telling a story, setting a theme and giving bathrooms new energy.

"People are much more willing to experiment with tile," noted Jarl Forsman, Artful Interiors Design, who recently completed several bathrooms in a stunning Skyline Boulevard home in Oakland. She suggests considering a variety of tiles before making that final decision for a particular bathroom. "See how the natural light reacts to the various tiles you are considering," she said. "What are the other textures in the room and how do they work together?"

In many homes, all the bathrooms look similar, with the same counter tops and use of tile, but Forsman and Steve Sekhon, co-designers, like to give each bathroom its own personality, something they did spectacularly in the Oakland home. While each bathroom had green glass counter tops and glass sinks, the pair

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added distinct elements to individualize each room. In the spa shower, for example, the main component was aqua ceramic tile surrounding glass accent tile with a wave pattern and an iridescent finish. In another bathroom, pale brown tiles of soapstone was set to form a small stream traveling down the wall of the shower, then out onto the floor.

The master bath, shown here, is dramatically decorated with a glass brick-shaped tile, set vertically, to enhance the Asian flavor of the architecture and reflect the natural light which pours into the room. Forsman felt that the vertical pattern evoked a feeling of living bamboo, with uneven heights forming a visually interesting but restful backdrop to the soaking tub. The tile was also visible from the glass shower and reflected in the mirror over the sinks, adding both color and detail to the bathroom.

"We like to make bathrooms like jewelry for the home," explained the pair, with great decorative accents. With their approach, "You never feel like it [the tile] was all out of the same catalog. We really scoured the whole Bay Area looking for materials that we liked."

Selecting — and setting — tile are serious tasks. As Forsman and Sekhon noted, builders and owners might consider literally dozens of tile materials before finalizing a tile plan, evaluating color, thickness, finish, size and texture as well as light reflection.

And when it comes to installation, care must also be taken to assure that the designs and patterns emerge as planned and designed. For instance, in a new custom home by Bobby Waal (see related story, page 27), it took seven weeks to set the tile in the master bathroom. The thousands of pieces of marble in the bathroom were cut in many sizes and specified to follow an exacting pattern designed by Waal. There's little room for error in a geometric pattern, particularly. Besides large tiles, Waal chose to create an Italian or Mediterranean design of leaves and fronds to frame a portion of the floor.

"We like to include unexpected details in our homes," he said, and credited Al's Tile and Marble Fino experts with producing an exquisite finished product.

Not only was the floor tiled, but the seat and surround on the sunken tub plus the walls and floor of the steam shower all used elements that repeated the overall room's design. Further challenges: the wall areas around the sunken tub were curved.

Tile works well for such spaces, though, because sizes of individual pieces can be honed to fit into the pattern.

In another bathroom in the home, the builder used a combination of ceramic tiles and marble accents. Again, sizes of the tiles were varied, and the arched entry door to the shower adds to the overall design, making the shower the colorful focal point of the space.

Tile helps tell the story of a beautiful bathroom, bringing international flavor and accents, a variety of colors and designs and a strong and durable surface. And it's even more exciting, note Waal, when heating elements are placed under the floor and tub seat tiles, so there's never a cold morning. ■

### RESOURCES:

Al's Tile and Marble Fino  
Suisun City  
707.864.3486  
[www.marblefino.net](http://www.marblefino.net)

Artful Interiors Design  
Jarl Forsman and Steve Sekhon  
510.866.5275 510.205.2148  
[www.artfulinteriorsdesign.com](http://www.artfulinteriorsdesign.com)

R and S Homes, Inc.  
925.943.7735

