The centerpiece of this Houston kitchen is the breathtaking island from Chateau Domingue; it was made from a 17th-century sacristy cabinet from Jaca, Spain. The large steel window from Atelier Domingue provides a more contemporary counterpoint to the exterior kitchen wall, which incorporates stones reclaimed from a house in France's Provence region. Pantry doors designed by architectural consultant and designer Sarah West flank the window.

PHOTO: WADE BJESSARD,

KITCHEN + BATH CHARACTER BUILDING

HIGHLY CURATED MATERIALS AND LUXURIOUS CUSTOM DETAILS BRING TIMELESS APPEAL TO THE HARDEST-WORKING ROOMS IN THE HOUSE.

WRITTEN BY **MICHELLE BRUNNER**

The warmth of wood, the cool touch of marble, the gleam of brass or nickel: There's a reason why materials carry so much weight in the kitchen and bath. Capturing both the senses and the imagination, they offer a magical combination of tactile sensation and arresting beauty that goes far beyond function. Consider how an inspired mix of decorative finishes can elevate a room beyond the ordinary, or how a thoughtful installation of architectural elements can pay homage to a home's history or bring context to a space where none existed, such as in new construction. Here, we take a look at the ways designers are using all manner of materials to add a layer of personality and authenticity to your home's busiest hubs.

SALVAGED BEAUTY

SARAH WEST

Houston-based architectural consultant and designer Sarah West combines European treasures with clean minimalism for a fresh take on the country French look.

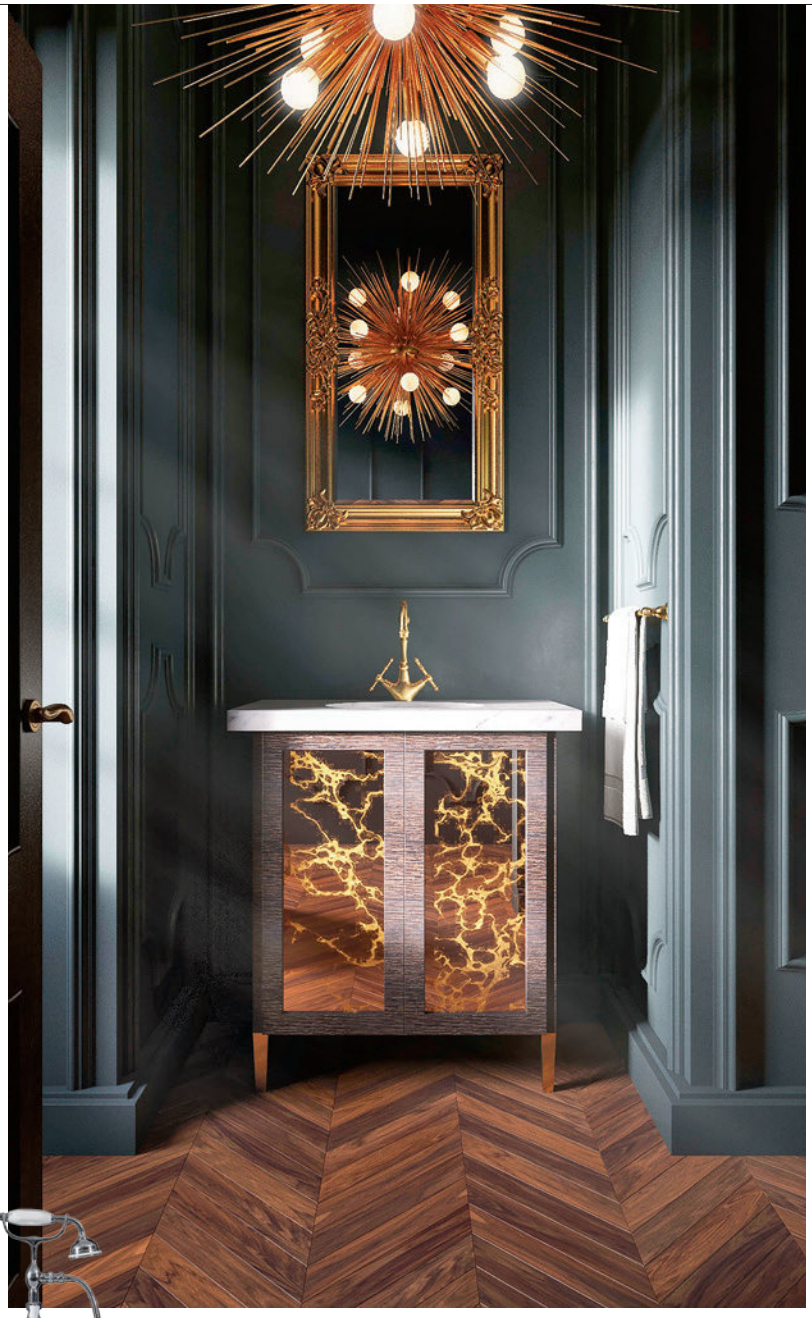
Share your inspiration. My aim was to strike a timeless balance: The architectural antiques and salvaged beams provide a stark contrast with the clean lines of the vent hood and the steel divided-light window. Originally, the window was supposed to have an arch, but making it rectangular felt much more modern.

Let's talk about that island. I wanted to integrate a freestanding furniture-like island in the center of the kitchen, reminiscent of something you'd have seen in France several centuries ago. It was a way to introduce history and have a beautiful piece anchoring the space. The goal was to have that immediate "wow" factor when you enter.

Why work with salvaged materials? People tend to like pieces that tell a story, but especially with new construction, it's hard to add a sense of history to a space. Bringing in antiques lends patina and character. You can have a drawer handle and see where it's worn from centuries of use. That kind of context is always appealing.

SURFACE APPEAL

Less about form than function, vanities aren't usually the first place one looks to make a splash style-wise in the bath. That may change with Chameleon Concepts' Parsons vanity, though, which features a customizable façade with a wide range of finishes you can use to coordinate with the surroundings. The door front cleverly frames inserts of various materials such as tile, mirror, marble or leather, allowing designers and homeowners to put their personal mark on an otherwise underutilized area. **chameleonconcepts.com**



best in GLOW

There are few places in the house where abundant lighting is more essential than the vanity mirror. With a three-bulb LED option, the Julien sconce from Hudson Valley Lighting ensures that you've got just enough coverage to tackle all your grooming needs, all while making a glamorous statement in opulent aged brass. Groovy satellite shades combine midcentury good looks with a dash of space-age cool, so your bath will be as chic as it is well-lit. **hudsonvalleylighting.com**

IN THE BLACK

For the past decade, we've seen freestanding tubs soar in popularity, but one thing has been a constant: Whether they were vintage-inspired or contemporary and sculptural, soakers were overwhelmingly white. Now, the matte-black trend, so in vogue for kitchen appliances and personal tech, has made it to the bath in the form of the Warndon tub from Victoria + Albert. Crafted from a solid casting of volcanic limestone and resin, it's harder and more durable than acrylic, and it comes in seven finishes. **ferguson.com**

SURFACE APPEAL PHOTO: COURTESY CHAMELEON CONCEPTS. BEST IN GLOW PHOTO: COURTESY HUDSON VALLEY LIGHTING. IN THE BLACK PHOTO: COURTESY FERGUSON KITCHEN AND BATH.

A daring, predominantly black palette and brushed-gold accents, such as a Kohler Purist wall-mount faucet and a West Elm pendant, give this bath one-of-a-kind style. The vanity is by Designed & Made Custom Woodworking, and the cement floor tile is by Lili.

dark matter

These days, high-impact finishes in the bath go beyond mere tile and stone. Architectural flourishes, brass hardware and striking surface treatments combine to create unique spaces filled with character and an element of surprise. Take this Minneapolis powder room, where black and white is anything but basic thanks to a conversation piece of a vanity featuring a whimsically curvy leg. “The vanity is spectacular, but it doesn’t dominate the room because we kept the space dark and cave-like for maximum drama,” says builder Chris Van Klei of Detail Homes. On the following page, design talents from across the country share some of their favorite ways to use architectural elements, such as paneling and steel-frame doors, to impressive effect in the bath. **detailhomes.com**

PHOTO: COREY GAFFER.

"THE SHOWPIECE OF THIS MASTER BATH IS THE CUSTOM-MADE METAL-AND-GLASS SHOWER DOOR, WHICH LENDS A CHIC CITY VIBE TO THE OTHERWISE WHITE AND GRAY SPACE. IT'S DEFINITELY NOT YOUR TYPICAL SHOWER DOOR."

–BETH KEIM,
lucyandcompany.com

"I LOVE CREATING DRAMA WITH MATERIALS IN POWDER ROOMS, SO I DID A FLOOR-TO-CEILING TILED WALL TREATMENT IN THIS SPACE. I WANTED IT TO FEEL LIKE AN ITALIAN MODERNE HOUSE."

–KRISTIN ROCKE, krockedesign.com

"I was inspired by the house, which is a classic Tudor, so I added architectural character through custom paneling and an antiques-inspired vanity."

–KISHANI PERERA,
kishaniperera.com

Clockwise from top right: To create a focal point and keep this master bath feeling open, Beth Keim employed a custom shower door by Tuan Hoang Le of Fe26 Design & Fabrication. In this bathroom by Kishani Perera, custom paneling painted in Benjamin Moore's Kendall Charcoal sets a refined mood. Marble tile from Daltile, laid in a herringbone pattern, lines the walls of this Kristin Rocke-conceived bath; a pair of Avron sconces from Bourgeois Boheme Atelier complement the hand-carved Carrara marble sink.

KEIM PHOTO: MEKENZIE LOU. PERERA PHOTO: NOAH WEBB. ROCKE PHOTO: WILLIAM WALDRON.