

The Charlotte Observer

Renovations: Save vs. splurge

Spending wisely lets you go hog-wild on materials and fixtures you really crave.

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Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO — People sometimes do it with food, eating a salad at lunch so that they can eat a steak at dinner.

Home renovations are frequently approached this same way: Save here in order to splurge there. You see it especially in bathrooms, where luxury options abound, and homeowners hold out for that to-die-for showerhead or tile they cannot live without — no matter what the cost — while other materials they're happy to find cheap.

Even the most high-end designers will admit that every space presents at least one opportunity to be frugal. "I like repetition in design, and that does afford you a bit of savings, because you're buying quantity," says Chicago interior designer Todd Haley. "Also cost-effective, and beautiful, is to let the natural architectural soul of the space stand out. Less is more in many cases."

Professional guidance can be invaluable in bath remodels. A pro's knowledge of the market can be key in determining which materials and fixtures require money to deliver on quality, and which materials and fixtures are just as reliable

and good-looking as they are affordable. Here we dissect two stylish bathrooms that found success in the 'splurge-and-save' approach — thanks, in some regards, to a pro's input and also the homeowners' own ingenuity.

Shoestrings and serendipity

Were it not for some last-minute basement bargains, Amanda Love and husband Brian Fuller today might not have a bathtub in their master bath.

"We were on such a shoestring budget," Love says. "It would have been a very different scene in here had not these cheapies popped up." Hundreds of dollars were saved when Love bought a floor sample instead of ordering new.

Builder Chris Carey tipped her off to that treasure. Leading the way to other frugal finds were interior designer Rachel Russ, architects Wilkinson and Blender, and feng shui expert Danielle Engstrom.

Of course, more dollars could have been spared by forgoing such luxuries as an antique Parisian light fixture and a European bath console. But those are the features that sent Love's heart swooning. NOTE:

Prices are approximate.

Splurge: Duravit Vero washbasin with Duravit Walnut console and console support towel bars, \$2,200. **Splurge:** Two Dornbracht LuLu faucets, chrome finish, \$2,459.

Splurge: Custom fabricated stone tub deck, \$600. **Splurge:** 1960s antique French pendant light, \$1,700. **Save:** Beveled mirror, free (Amanda, a bookbinder, printed the vendor's business cards in exchange for the mirror).

Save: Kohler Tea-for-Two bathtub, floor sample, \$500 (normally about \$1,600). **Save:** To-be-discontinued green marble subway tile used on floor, tub exterior, and walls, \$3 per square foot. **Save:** Toilet salvaged from former bathroom, free.

Finishing touches

"I can't put into words how much I enjoy this bathroom," says Paul Zurowski. Two big reasons for that unbridled passion: his shamelessly humorous steam shower and whirlpool tub. "You could host a cocktail party in that shower," says interior designer Todd Haley of Todd M. Haley Inc.

By the time Zurowski and Bill Hiscott (owners of Saw-

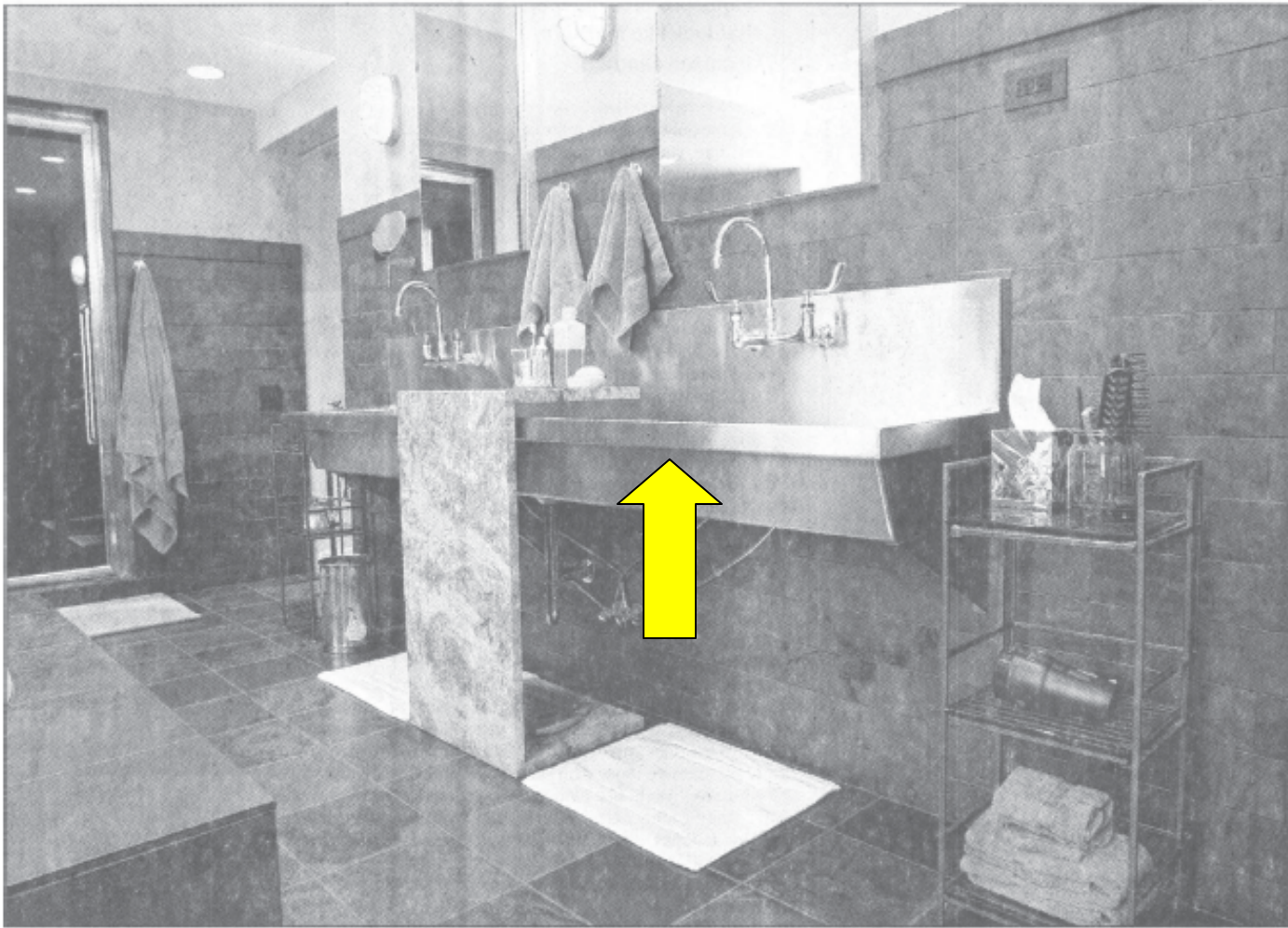
bridge Studios stores) moved into their West Town Chicago loft in 2006, Haley had completed most of the home's major renovations. Having been given a carte-blanche budget from the previous owner, many of Haley's product and material selections were high-end.

But there are thrifty ideas to be excavated in the form of Zurowski and Hiscott's clever "finishing touches" and a masculine-looking commercial sink. "I wanted to do something special with the sink," Haley says. "Had we done a sink like this custom, it would have been \$8,000. But I knew an \$8,000 sink wouldn't fly."

Splurge: Kohler Vintage whirlpool tub, \$5,700. **Splurge:** Kohler Vintage tub faucet, \$1,030.

Splurge: Black Hones slate tile on floor and wall, \$15 per square foot. **Save:** Granite slab C-shaped counter top, custom-made from remnant, \$350. **Save:** Iron shelving from Container Store (\$35 each) with custom-cut glass shelf inserts (\$15 each). Glass cut through private vendor.

Save: Elkay industrial trough sink, \$2,000 (vs. \$8,000 custom sink).



Paul Zurowski's bathroom features an industrial scullery sink and faucets, a granite bench that was turned on its end to provide counter space, and iron and glass shelving from The Container Store.