

Homes

POWDER ROOMS THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

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Special to Postmedia Network

When it comes to powder room design, small can be beautiful. Don't miss the opportunity to be bold — and have fun — with this often-overlooked space.

"One great thing about a powder room is that you can express your personality to the fullest with colours and finishes that your guests will see," says designer Carley Mulligan of Ottawa's ARTium Design Build & Just Basements.

Secondary spaces such as powder rooms and mud rooms have the advantage of standing apart from the other areas of the house, says Eugenia Triandos, principal designer for Montreal-based Hibou Design & Co. They're also rooms where you don't spend a lot of time, so there's less chance you'll get tired of a quirky or unconventional look.

Given these factors, daring design choices pose less of a risk in a powder room than they might in a large living room or kitchen. "We enjoy using these small rooms to introduce unexpected elements that can surprise and delight in a home," says Triandos, who often works on residential projects in Ottawa.

So where can you start?

WALLS AND CEILINGS

Conventional wisdom may lead you to paint a powder room in a single light shade, as that will make the room seem bigger. However, designers say you won't be fooling anyone, so there's no need to stick with builder beige if you'd rather not.

"Adding a combination of colour



Eugenia Triandos, principal designer for Montreal-based Hibou Design & Co., says powder rooms can delight your guests if you add a few unexpected touches. Photo: Hibou Design & Co

and pattern is a great way to add some boldness," says Mulligan. Graphic wallpapers, on a single accent wall or the whole room, can make the space pop. For one client, she sourced dramatic black-and-gold wallpaper printed with images of cheetahs, then painted the woodwork and even the door black.

"Combining both brighter and darker tones that complement each other is best when working with small spaces," says Mulligan, explaining that this often leads to a more harmonized look. However, she adds, "there is always opportunity to go completely dark or bright, depending on the overall design goal."

Triandos agrees. "We often opt for

darker hues to emphasize the cozy scale even further. We've often painted small powder rooms in deep, rich colors, including the ceiling."

Mulligan is also a fan of using a fun accent colour on the ceiling. Other ways to keep a ceiling interesting is to add wood textures or large light fixtures that draw the eye upward.

In fact, lighting is one area of powder room design that offers lots of opportunities for fun and surprise, say designers. Unlike a principal bathroom, which requires bright lighting for tasks such as shaving or putting on makeup, a powder room gives you more latitude to choose lighting fixtures such as wall sconces, pendant lamps and even a glam chandelier. Just be sure to consider how the brightness and placement of lighting fixtures will affect the look of your textures and materials.

TILE AND TEXTURES

Texture is another way to inject a bit of personality into a powder room, say designers. Wood trim, stone accents, handcrafted accessories and unique artwork are just some of the ways to bring texture into what can otherwise be an almost clinically smooth room.

If you do opt for tile, you don't have to lay it out in horizontal, monochromatic rows. Wall tiles can be laid out in chevrons, for instance, while floors can be tiled in a two-toned checkerboard pattern.

You can even look beyond your local retailers for distinctive tiles. Many countries — including Mexico, Portugal, Morocco and Turkey — are known for their colourful traditional



Because powder rooms are small, they allow homeowners to splurge on cabinetry, flooring, wallpaper and fixtures without breaking the bank.

ARTIUM DESIGN BUILD & JUST BASEMENTS



A unique marble sink, wall-mounted faucet, capsule-shaped wall lights and moody grey walls make this powder room distinctive.

HIBOU DESIGN & CO.



Tiles laid in a chevron pattern can create a stylish feature wall in a powder room.

ARTIUM DESIGN BUILD & JUST BASEMENTS.

tiles. A good designer can help you source a look that has caught your fancy.

FIXTURES

Unlike a larger bathroom, a powder room usually has just three fixtures: a toilet, a sink and a faucet. Because requirements are so minimal, why not try something unusual?

"We have been working more and more with concrete plumbing fixtures, like sinks," says Triandos. "They are often available in many colours and add a sense of organic texture to the space." She adds that clients are also opting for sculptural faucets in unique materials and finishes, such as copper or matte white.

Mulligan notes that wall-mounted faucets, toilets and vanities can be both eye-catching and great ways to save space in a contemporary powder room. Keeping fixtures off the floor also makes the room easier to clean and maintain.

WHAT NOT TO DO

"One common mistake is overcrowding the space with too many items, which can make it feel cluttered and cramped," says Triandos. "It's essential to prioritize functionality and ensure that each element serves a purpose."

And don't forget to think big. "The biggest mistake you can make in designing a small space is overlooking its potential," says Mulligan.