

ELLE DECORATION

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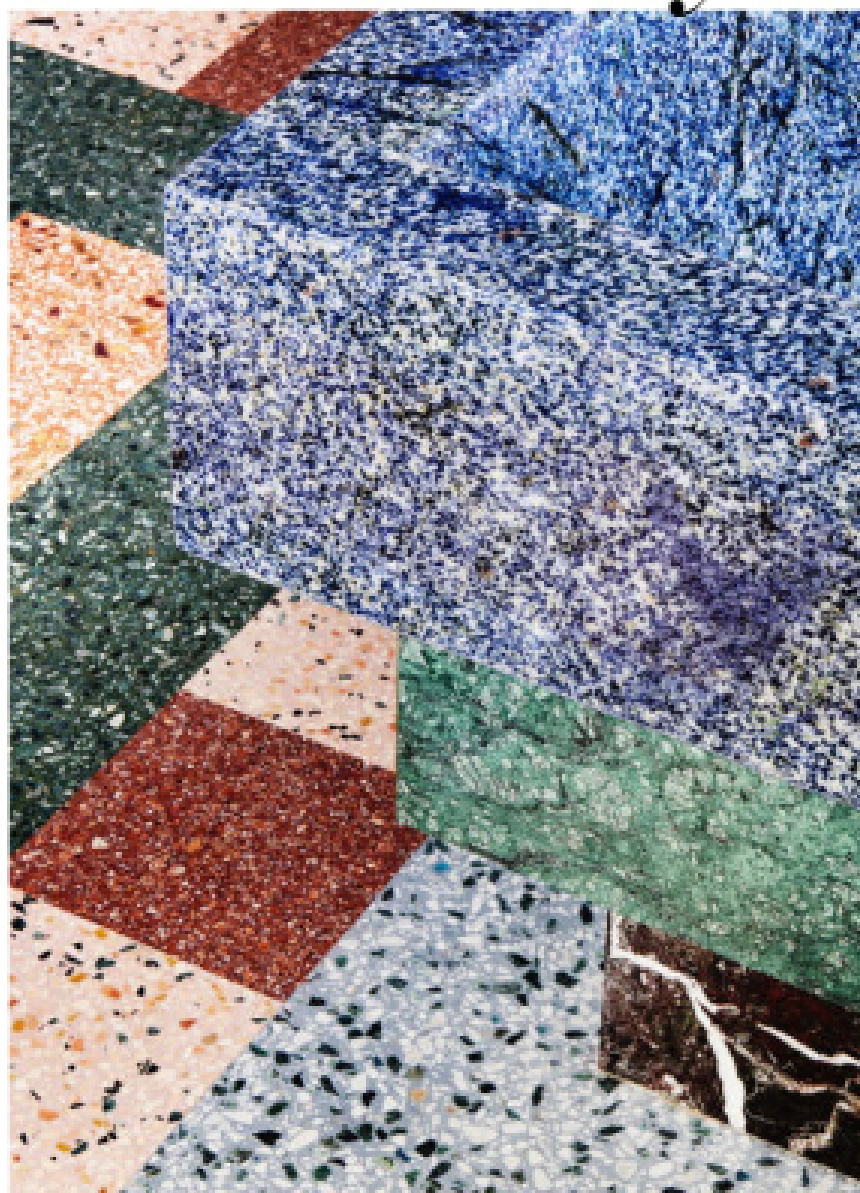
The secret to BLISS



*Victoire de Taillac and Ramdane Touhami,
co-founders of luxury beauty and lifestyle
brand Officine Universelle Buly,
on designing a bathroom with the power
to create total domestic harmony*

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case study



If you're looking for some wow-factor bathroom inspiration you really couldn't do better than the Parisian home of Victoire de Taillac and Ramdane Touhami, the creative duo at the heart of the traditional yet oh-so-modern luxury lifestyle brand Officine Universelle Buly. 'The bathroom is one of my favourite rooms in the house; I think it's spectacular,' agrees Victoire.

Ramdane proffers the utmost brevity as his inspiration for the space: 'cubism'. And, on a fundamental level, Victoire does say that, because the room is very small, 'you have a feeling that you are inside a stone box'. But the bathroom feels so much more epic than that. It's like the Taj Mahal of wash spaces, a tangible version of an Elton-and-Bernie ballad. For this not-so-humble bathroom feels more akin to a testament to love, the purity of togetherness and to understanding a person so well that you know just what they need – and give it to them in a way that ensures you can harmoniously co-exist.

It's also an exercise in trust, as Ramdane was the creative force behind the interiors-renovation project when the couple and their three children moved into their new house (a former brothel) in the 9th arrondissement, and he had full control from concepts through to realisation. 'He knows very well what's important to me and how the kids and I live, so he has this in mind. When people enter the house and pay a compliment I say, "But you're just inside my husband's head."' So, when it came to the bathroom territory, Ramdane ensured

that he created something special for his partner of over 20 years. 'I love to take baths,' enthuses Victoire. 'So it's a very big tub!'

As this was the first time the couple would have their own space and not be sharing a family bathroom with their children, it was also crucial that Ramdane had what he wanted: a great shower (he is not a taker of baths). In their previous, more traditional, Parisian apartment, the best he'd had was an over-the-tub option – a far cry from the walk-in he has now. 'He wanted it to be perfect,' explains Victoire. 'And I think, when you travel a lot and spend a lot of time in hotel bathrooms, your relationship to your own is very important.'

Because the room is small it presented a design challenge. 'Ramdane was frustrated and complaining that the kids on the first floor of our two-storey house have a way bigger room. He was saying, "Oh là là, I can't do this or this," because he didn't have the space he wanted. But he's been way more creative because of those limitations, and had the idea that the whole room would be finished only in stone.' That includes, of course, that stupendous bath, which was very technically challenging to get right – especially with Ramdane's insistence that no plumbing be on show. The effort was worth it, as Victoire describes it as 'a kind of magical experience: when you step in to the bath you have this feeling of smoothness but the stone is a bit cold too'.

The marble Ramdane used was imported from several places, but mainly from Italy. On the walls and for the basin and bathtub he used Rosso Levanto, rosa tea, verde Guatemala, blue Bahia and blanc de carrare. The floor is a cement-based terrazzo in a custom-made pattern. The room has been quietly accented by small details such as a 1960s Italian daisy lamp on the ceiling and an Eileen Gray mirror, which was bought from a friend. The glass in the large window at the foot of the bath is pale pink – it both continues the colour theme and is a practical detail as, although the aspect looks out to the tops of trees in the courtyard, there's a building opposite and this affords some privacy from prying eyes.

Day-to-day bathroom use is largely private too, as Victoire and Ramdane live on different timetables, so that Ramdane's morning showers and Victoire's evening baths remain largely undisturbed. And, although it

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looks spectacularly decadent, this is really a very simple and functional space. 'It's a water room, only for washing and taking care of yourself,' says Victoire.

That's the main reason why it is exceptionally clutter-free. Two mirrors beside the basins hide shelves where the couple keep essentials (toothbrush, combs, some Buly bath salts and suchlike), but when they moved home and gained more space they made an effort to keep things streamlined. 'My sister, the jewellery designer Marie-Hélène de Taillac, laughed when she first saw it, and said it's a minimalist house for maximalist people. I don't think it's minimalist, but she was essentially saying there's less stuff. You can see the design without it being overstuffed with things. In the past, we had more sentimental objects in the bathroom, but this space is about the room itself and it doesn't need anything.'

Having this level of bathroom privacy with no excess objects and no fighting over access has been a bit of a game-changer. 'Now, with just the two of us sharing, it's easy. It's a complete luxury,' muses Victoire. 'I feel very spoiled.' buly1803.com **15**

Bathroom essentials

The latest Officine Universelle Buly buys for some stylish self-care



From left 'The Amiable' comb, approx £48, 'Fragrant Berkane Orange Blossom' bath salts, approx £28, 'Eau Triple Indian Cucumber and Syrian Mint', approx £140, and 'Polychromatic Travel Toothbrush', approx £35, all Officine Universelle Buly (buly1803.com)

