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MINIMALISM TO THE MAX

A Chicago couple
recharges in a peaceful
two-room master bath.

writer MARA BOO *photographer* WERNER STRAUBE *field editor* MEGAN CHAFFIN

THIS PHOTO: The bath's two-room layout doubles opportunities to accentuate its clean, modern style. OPPOSITE: The egg-shaped bathtub is sited directly in front of a large window to let bathers enjoy the view.





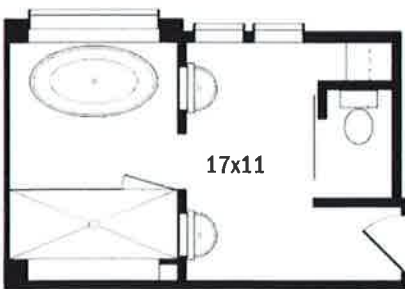
Takeaways

- 1** A two-room design allocates one space for routine, the other for relaxation.
- 2** Streamlined design means minimal detail. But plenty of planning is required to achieve such spare simplicity.
- 3** A movable wall creates flexibility for the toilet compartment and the linen closet.
- 4** Dark tile surfaces contrast with white, rounded, sculptural elements to create visual excitement.



LESS IS MORE.

OPPOSITE: Architect Fred Wilson describes the gray panels backing the sinks as architectural elements embellished by wall-mount fixtures, faucets, and mirrors. “The sink is the sculptural piece that softens it up,” he says. **ABOVE LEFT:** The sliding wall near the toilet provides privacy and convenience. **ABOVE MIDDLE:** The shower’s handheld head is augmented by a rain-style fixture and a steam option. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The floor-mount tub filler “is so slim it’s like it’s not even there,” Wilson says. “We wanted the minimal amount of fuss necessary to create the function.”



Just ask Andrea Poulos, who, along with her husband, Craig, begins and ends each day in this uniquely streamlined, two-room master bath. “It’s beautiful in spite of its simplicity,” she says. “In fact, it’s beautiful because of its simplicity. Everything in it has a purpose. There’s not a single fussy thing about it.”

Indeed. From its just-big-enough size to its well-edited materials, the bath is a powerful example of the impact of restraint. “We wanted a dramatic space that was all about clean design with an edge,” architect Fred Wilson says. “We didn’t have a lot of room to play with, and it needed to feel bigger than it is. It was a challenge to get it all to work.”

To create the breathtakingly minimalist space Andrea and Craig envisioned, Wilson divided it into two distinct rooms, each bathed in light, clearly separated by function. “That’s not too often done when you’re trying to lay something out efficiently, but we felt it was important in order to get the drama we wanted,” he says. “The sink and toilet portion of the bathroom is functional, where you perform your daily routine. But then you go through the opening into the bathing area, and you’ve entered a peaceful escape from the world. There’s nothing to distract you.”

Both rooms share a consistently spare sensibility. “That consistency is one of the real successes of the bathroom,” Wilson says. “You’ve got all these hard elements—the dark stone walls and floors, the linear grout lines—and then you’ve got these soft, curving, sculptural sinks and tub. It’s very subtle, the way the soft elements play off the hard edges, but it’s the key.”

Equally subtle—and innovative—is the sliding, frosted glass door shared by the toilet compartment and the open linen closet. “We didn’t want to have a lot of doors swinging,” Wilson says. “The idea is that this really isn’t a door at all—it’s a movable wall. You can leave the toilet compartment partially open, or you can close it off completely. It offers great flexibility.” Andrea concurs. “We like its versatility,” she says. “And we got it all with such a simple style.” **KBI**

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