

CASE STUDY

in the bank

Deposits of hard work and a high rate of interest. It took a photographer time to create her ideal studio from a former bank branch, and its dramatic bathroom is the crowning glory

WORDS JOANNE HAWKINS PHOTOGRAPHY ARMELLE HABIB STYLING JULIA GREEN

IN THE OPEN

Armelle went without a shower screen, to boost the space's flexibility, and a City Plus showerhead from Brodware extends down from the ceiling. "Its organic weathered brass finish really works with the terrazzo from Signorino," says Armelle.

Who works here: Armelle Habib, an interiors, food and lifestyle photographer. **The project:** After a major renovation to turn the ground floor of a 100-year-old inner Melbourne bank into a photographic studio, the original laundry has been transformed into a multi-functional bathroom with a striking colour palette.

TOUCH AND GO

Textural materials are key, with a concrete trough from Schots Home Emporium paired with City Plus tapware from Brodware, a metal Verde mirror by Woud and a Studio WM porcelain lamp in Anthracite. "The lamp has a weighted pulley system, which is quite different," says Armelle.

DESIGN IT

Photographer Armelle Habib was ready and willing to do something "a little different" with the design of the bathroom in her studio. Formerly a branch of Victoria's State Savings Bank, the studio had just undergone a three-year reno to become Armelle's perfect workspace, and she knew exactly what she was looking for as the finishing touch. "The studio is white, as most photographic studios are, and contains a beautiful white kitchen with marble benchtops," she says. "I wanted the bathroom to feel like a completely different space and full of colour."



“I’m so pleased with how it came together. And I’m most pleased with the tapware and the terrazzo, which is really beautiful to touch and feel”

ARMELLE HABIB, OWNER

GREEN LIGHT

Ceto, a work by artist Aylsa McHugh, adds a playful hint of hue. A Menu 'Copenhagen' table from Simple Form is topped with a Lumiere Art & Co vase and surrounded by plants from The Plant Society.

DREAM IT

Armelle wanted to create a stunning space. "My thinking was, if I had to do it, why not make it great?" she says. But as it was situated in a working studio, it had to be functional, too. "I wanted a flexible and open space, kept minimal as it is multi-use. As well as being a bathroom, it might store photography equipment or props, furniture or homewares for a shoot, or somewhere to iron bedlinen or do hair and make-up."

Robust materials such as the concrete trough from Schots Home Emporium were also important. "I went for a trough because I needed to be able to put a bucket in there for mops and for paint and so on," says Armelle. "It was actually the first - and cheapest - thing I bought for the bathroom and the rest of the design was based around that."

However, Armelle didn't let practicality completely rule the roost in her quest for an edgy and unusual space. She commissioned a large piece of art by her favourite artist Aylsa McHugh to add a colourful, unexpected feature. "She's perfect," says Armelle of its female subject. "She's a redhead with green coral hair and an alluring feminine vibe."

DESIGN IT

Although Armelle has worked with many great designers, for her own bathroom, she went straight to Jessica Bettenay from Resident Avenue. "Her aesthetic is closest in line with my taste and style," says Armelle. "I love Jess' eclectic use of materials and how she layers texture, which is what I wanted here. We've got the terrazzo, the leather handles, concrete floor and the black steel mirror."

It was Jessica who suggested the stunning terrazzo slabs from Signorino. "I'd decided to do green because it's my favourite colour, and I had already bought some green square tiles - but when Jess

showed me the terrazzo, it was love at first sight," says Armelle, adding that those original tiles were later sold on eBay.

The pair then workshoped the paint colours. "I wanted a paint that added texture - I didn't want a flat surface," she says of the Bauwerk lime paint. Part of the inspiration for the colour palette was British film director Peter Greenaway's 1989 movie *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*, which uses varying colours in different scenes.

DO IT

Armelle's partner, builder Bruno Mein, took on the construction, as he had with the rest of the building. Having a client who knew exactly what she wanted meant things progressed smoothly - although there were some tense moments when the terrazzo was installed. "Each of the three slabs weighs around 300kg, which required several men on site. Let's just say that I had to grit my teeth and leave the premises until they were safely installed," says Armelle.

Her renowned attention to detail carried over into her design choices. "I never went, 'Yes, that'll do,'" says Armelle. "Instead, I put four different green paint testers on the wall and looked at them in different lights. I also looked at the terrazzo, the tapware and the mirror before I bought them, as it was important to touch and feel them, and make sure I was making the right decision."

As in the studio's kitchen, she eventually settled on Brodware tapware, this time in an organic weathered brass finish. "I love how this finish ages and will develop a patina over time," says Armelle. View Armelle's portfolio at armellehabib.com. See more of Jessica's projects at residentavenue.com.au. The concrete floor was poured by Oliveri Design + Construction, oliveridesignconstruction.com.au



THE DETAILS

The showstopping feature of this bathroom is undoubtedly the '853' terrazzo slabs from Signorino that Armelle has used. The colourful aggregate of quartz and onyx chips is further enhanced by other sophisticated style choices. Walls painted in a forest green - Bauwerk Colour lime paint in Cucumber - create a calm and elegant atmosphere. Touches of utilitarian industrial style come in the form of the Menu 'Copenhagen' tray table from Simple Form, a Woud 'Verde' mirror, plus Leather O1 strap handles from MadeMeasure.