



The shower (facing page) can't be seen from the stairwell; a pale blue pod (at right) conceals the toilet; at the room's center, the bed's dark headboard provides contrast.

## The Right ANGLES

*In Cambridge, an attic master suite with a daringly open bathroom shows off gabled rooflines.*

By Jaci Conry

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Very dark” is how Gigliola Staffilani remembers her antique home’s old attic master bedroom and bathroom — “not at all what I’m used to,” says the native of Italy. The pine-paneled walls and ceiling gave the third-floor space the feel of a rustic cabin, but “we wanted a more modern space that was lighter and brighter.”

So Staffilani and her husband, Tom Mrowka, contacted Joseph

Kennard, an architect based in South Boston’s Fort Point Channel area, whose big idea for the top of their Cambridge Victorian was to remove the walls separating the bedroom and bathroom. “When you are creating a master suite in an attic space, it is difficult to create an open floor plan due to the functional constraints — bedroom, bathroom, closets, et cetera,” says Kennard. “Therefore, it is rare to get a full sense of the roofline.” He felt an open, continuous floor plan, even

though it’s not typical for a bedroom and bathroom, would maximize opportunities to appreciate the rooflines, which have four gabled ends, and to take advantage of abundant natural light.

“We assured him that we were the type of people who didn’t mind having the bathroom exposed,” Staffilani says.

The lack of partitions between the bedroom and bathroom made sightlines crucial: The shower is positioned so it’s hidden from view

when approaching from the stairway. A floating sink was selected for its minimal impact and furniture-like quality, says Kennard. “It was also important to hide the plumbing — drain and trap — below.”

Kennard designed a 7-foot-high pod to encase the toilet. Because the room is all about experiencing the roofline, the top of the pod is open; the back is also open to a gable dormer for light filtration. The edges of both the pod and the shower area are curved. “The toilet room’s curve rolls inward to suggest a ceiling or roof while still remaining open to the cathedral above, creating a space within a space,” he says. “The curve reverses on the shower to make the interior tile feel endless.”

To enhance the geometry of the roof and brighten the room, the tongue-and-groove planking on the walls and ceiling was lightened dramatically with paint. “Even though there were a lot of windows and skylights before, the dark surfaces created too much contrast,” says Kennard. “Painting the woodwork a creamy off-white bounces light all over the place. It has such a nice aura now.”

The dark stairway leading to the space got some lightening up, too. Transparent glass replaced a solid railing and bookcase. “How you initially engage with the new space is key,” says Kennard, adding that the glass also allows sunlight to filter down to the second floor.

While Mrowka occasionally regrets not installing a soaking tub, Staffilani finds the shower heavenly. The wall is clad with blue glass tiles. A skylight bathes the enclosure in light and even breezes when it’s open on warm days. While Kennard suggested leaving the shower open to the bathroom suite, the homeowners nixed the idea. “I was worried it would be too cold during the winter” without a glass door, says Staffilani, who, on frosty mornings, finds comfort in the heated floor tiles underneath. ■

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