

Bath

DARK SHADOWS

DIM AND SEXY, THE NEW LOOK IN POWDER ROOMS PAINTS EVERYONE IN THE BEST LIGHT.



Several of my favorite restaurants serve mediocre food. But their dimly lit, sultry restrooms never

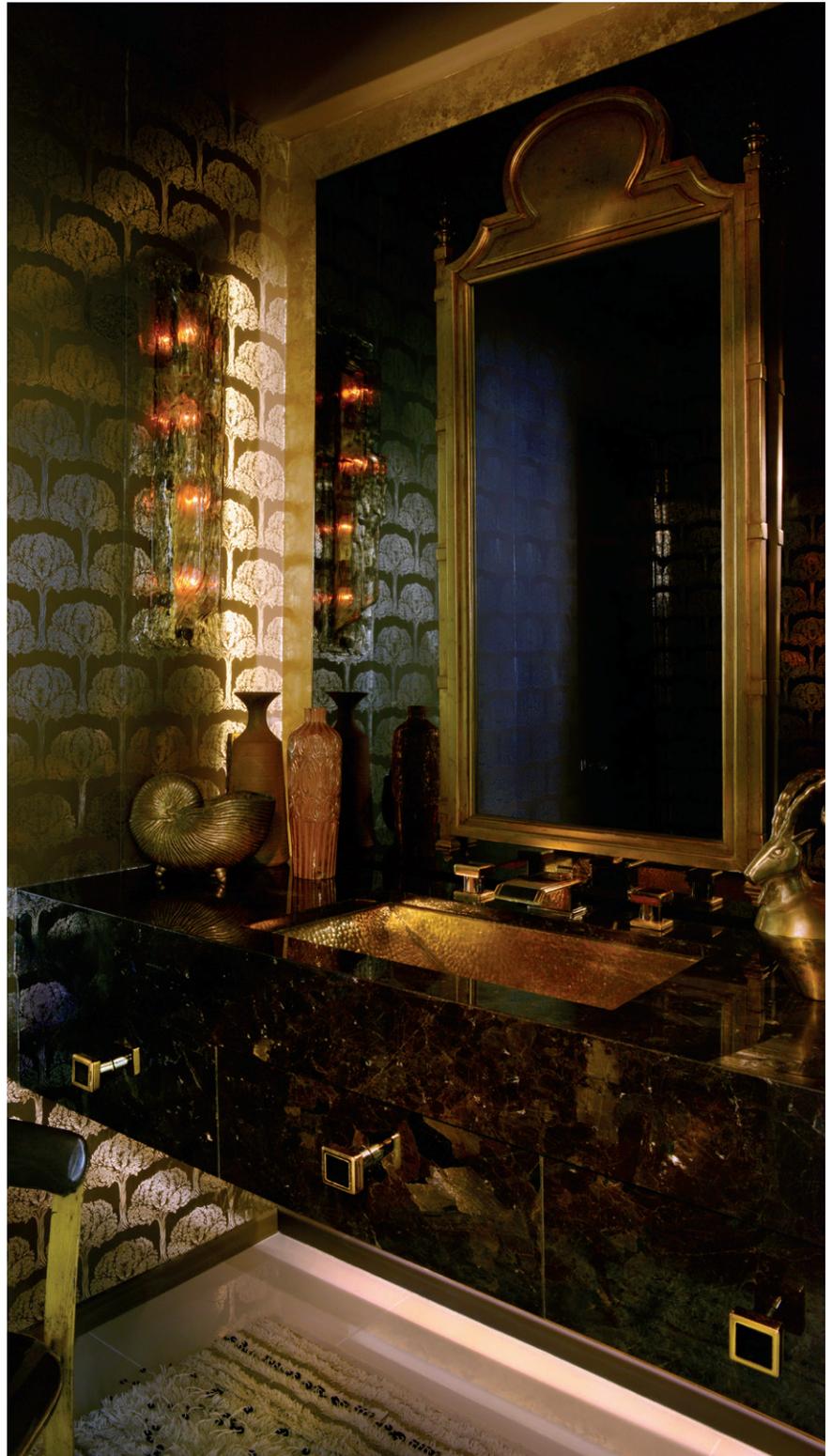
fail to make me look like a movie star.

Such is the case with designer Sean Gaston's own powder room, which he considers a gift to his guests. "When they shut the door, they find a private retreat where they can escape from the party," he says. Gaston admits a glitzy powder room with over-the-top attention to detail will cost more per square foot than other rooms. Yet the price is balanced by the treat factor for guests when they discover the big impact in such a small footprint.

The art of glamorous powder rooms hit its heyday in the 1930s as an elegant lounge where women could primp and powder their noses. Although ornate, these spaces offered little more than a mirror with a dressing table and padded vanity stool. In the war-time 1940s, domestic living shifted to more practical concerns. Now, Gaston says, the elegant powder room is enjoying a comeback. "Lately my clients have been asking for them," he says. "They're definitely on the radar."

Gaston's "small space with oversized design" was sourced from around the globe — a mix of art deco, '70s, and '80s fixtures that blend contrasting old and new metals. "I wanted it sexy and dark," he says. Rolls of new, old-stock wallpaper from the late 1970s dictated the design. In a velvety chocolate brown, its gold trees add a reflective quality that plays off vintage Italian Murano sconces.

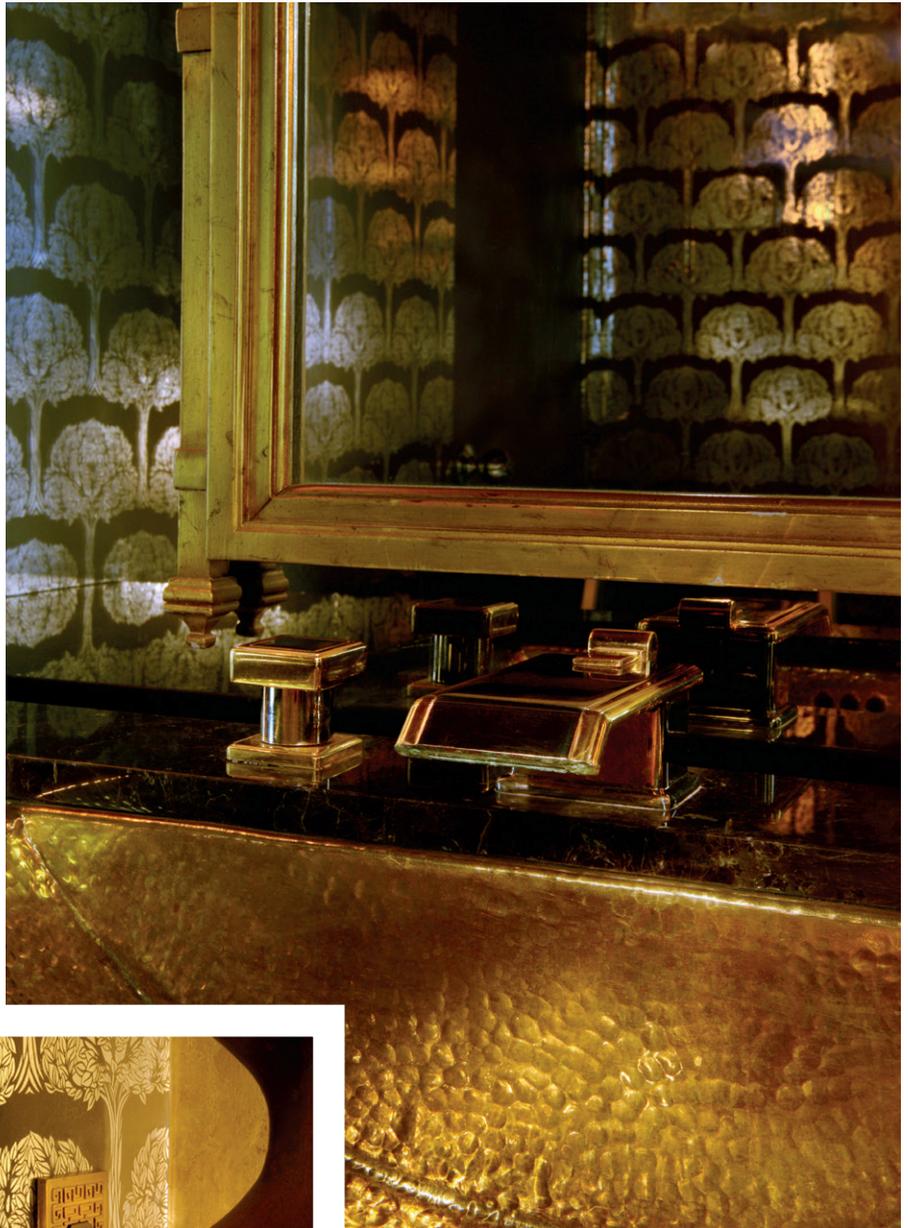
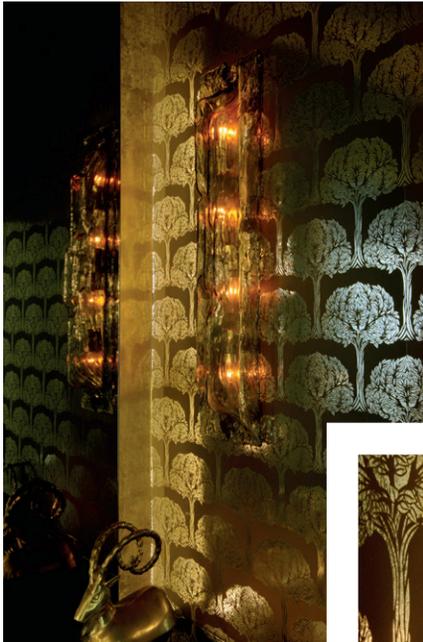
An African granite vanity floats below a Moroccan mirror in designer Sean Gaston's moody powder room. Guests appreciate the flattering light and nod to glamour.



A handcrafted hammered brass sink pairs with a vintage '80s faucet and hardware in brass and chrome. The back wall shimmers in gold leaf topped by a backlit cantilevered smoked glass mirror, finished off with a vintage Moroccan mirror.

"The vanity was a true feat, completely floating between the walls. The mirror goes right behind it, so we had to plumb it from the sides," Gaston says. "We cut the stone to create the three drawers. I love challenges. And, of course, it's great to have a partner who is a general contractor!"

Low lighting akin to a candle's glow makes midday look like 2 a.m. "My guests say they don't want to leave," Gaston laughs. "They love the moodiness of it, and the lighting. They say it makes them look good." With or without the powder.



The powder room's decadent vintage details suit Gaston's 1967 home. It was the first one built and designed by Stan Sackley in the Indian Canyons neighborhood. It will turn 50 next year, and the designer has plans to celebrate by taking part in the Modernism Week Celebrity Designer Tour.