

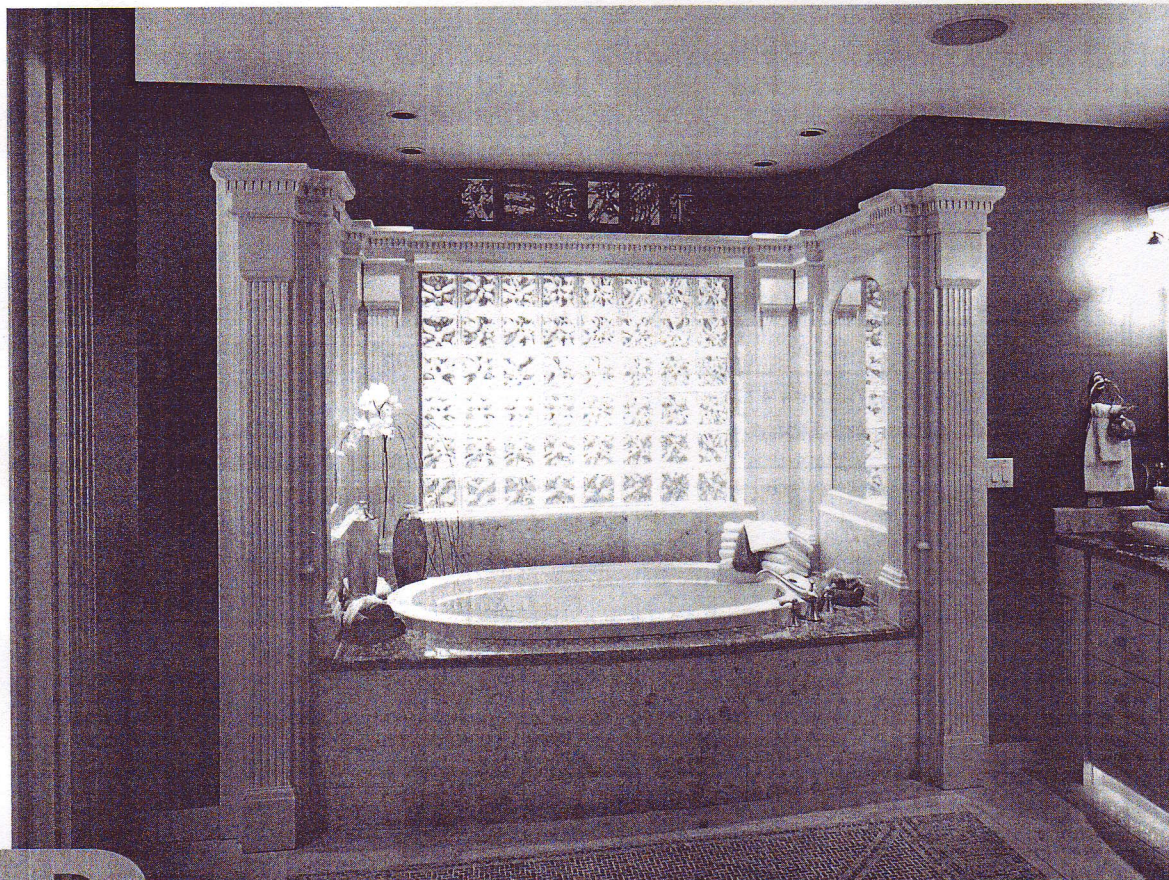


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Glass (Block) Houses

Jazz up your decor with this clearly striking design option.

BY JULIE JACOBS



Reflecting on the best way to brighten up a basement? Keen on mirroring a popular design trend in your own home? Look no further than glass block.

Initially used some 80 years ago in the construction of factories, glass block realized a resurgence in the 1980s in commercial building, quickly moving to the residential sector. Homeowners sought the sturdy material primarily for basement windows to improve security and to draw light to traditionally dark

subspaces. Soon after, architects, builders and homeowners found new ways to incorporate glass block into elegant structural and aesthetic designs.

"I think it started with basement windows, because they were then standard single panes that broke easily," says John Glenn, marketing

director for Glass Block of America in Bordentown, New Jersey, the largest glass block supplier and installer on the East Coast. "Then it was used to create partitions, and over the years it has become a material of choice for many different applications."

These include showers and windows in bathrooms, which have come to be focal points for high-end residential design. For showers, glass block is usually employed in interior walls that abut marble or tile. Other uses for the block include desks, tables,

kitchen counters, kitchen islands, divider walls and bars. The material is amenable to both interior and exterior architecture. And although not opaque, glass block blurs and dims images, thereby enhancing privacy.

Besides looking good, glass block offers other benefits, including durability and weather resistance. While replacement windows are nailed in and caulked, allowing for voids that enable outside air to come through, glass block is solidly sealed off with mortar. There's also no icing over or