

kitchen & bath DESIGN NEWS

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DEALERS & DESIGNERS EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

By Elizabeth Richards

BATHING RETREATS

Get Personal

The tub/shower area has become an oasis of style, blending custom features and soothing designs to create a relaxing, spa-like atmosphere.

Homeowners are staying put longer, and therefore asking for showers and tubs that reflect their own needs, wants and personal taste. That's according to manufacturers recently surveyed by *KBDN*, who see a growing interest in tubs, showers and tub surrounds with custom features and spa-like amenities. Additionally, while simplicity is still the buzzword in design, consumers are moving away from "cookie cutter" simple and instead gravitating toward clean, elegant looks that speak to who they are on a very personal level.

Today's consumers want "choices and customization along with a great showering experience," says Jerry Capasso, wholesale showering product manager for the North Olmsted, OH-based Moen Inc.

Jarrold Streng, co-founder and co-president of ForzaStone in Phoenix, AZ, agrees that customization is important, noting, "People are staying in their homes longer so they want to make sure their personal taste is

truly reflected in that environment. They're looking for products that will enhance the environment and the space."

Rick Hirschhaut, senior v.p. for Bath Planet in Palatine, IL, adds: "Homeowners now want more colors, patterns and features for *their* use and not for the next owner. We hear 'I want what I want' more than ever before."

SIMPLE STYLE

With the continued trend toward simplicity and elegance, designers are seeking products that offer clean lines and finishes that complement but don't overshadow the overall look of the bath.

According to Fran Aukland, the London-based communications manager for Victoria + Albert Baths, which has U.S. headquarters in North Charleston, SC, "We've noticed a definite trend away from the more complicated designs, [which] links into the trend of the bathroom as a sanctuary, or refuge, away from the noise and pressures of the outside world. Having a beautiful freestanding bath to relax in seems to be the definite



Barclay Products' Bolero is a handcrafted hammered copper tub fashioned from heavy-gauge 16" copper. The double slipper tub measures 72" long and an extra-wide 36". The color is engrained into the tub and finished by hand polishing, producing a patina. It is trimmed with a design above a carved ridge base and ornamental rings on the side.
Circle No. 155 on Product Card



BainUltra's Theatre Stage is an installation option where the tub is elevated atop a dramatic platform. The look is seamless, but the actual tub is set 10" deeper than its outer shell. Theatre Stage is offered with a variety of BainUltra's tubs, including the Amma, Origami, Essencia and Balneo lines.
Circle No. 156 on Product Card



Strom Plumbing by Sign of the Crab combines old-world style with modern technology in its collection of bath fixtures. Among the offerings are reproductions of cast-iron tubs, a stand-alone shower pan and a wide selection of acrylic tubs.
Circle No. 158 on Product Card



Jason International's Zero Threshold TZ3260 Shower Base is sized 60"x32" and crafted to meet Universal Design needs. The base has a high-strength, stainless steel linear drain recessed into the front of the base to provide easy access, and a built-in tile lip provides a watertight installation. The shower also includes a slip-resistant floor and integral seat.
Circle No. 159 on Product Card



The Paiova bathtub from Duravit and Austrian design firm EOOS has been reengineered due to new developments in acrylic technology. Maintaining its distinctive trapezoidal shape, the new Paiova Monolith is carved out of a rectangular, acrylic monobloc, resulting in a seamless tub with continuous lines. An apron leads from the tub's interior all the way down to the floor, removing the need for panelling and rim.
Circle No. 160 on Product Card



Bendheim has collaborated with Robert A.M. Stern Architects and OmniDecor of Italy to create a collection of shower glasses. Merletto (shown) is a dual-sided pattern inspired by nature. It is permanently etched on ultra-clear (low-iron) glass, creating a dimensional, smooth surface that is resistant to dirt and stains.
Circle No. 157 on Product Card

Product Trend Report



The Horizontal Shower is the latest application of Dornbracht's Ambiance Tuning Technique (ATT) technology. Horizontal Shower's six WaterBar sprays, positioned overhead to stimulate neck, shoulders, back, legs and feet, provide invigorating and relaxing shower experiences with three choreographed scenarios to reclined users. Circle No. 190 on Product Card



The Shelburne copper soaking tub from Diamond Spas is a freestanding unit that measures 36"x72"x24". Fashioned from copper sheet metal that is 90% to 95% recycled, the tub is also 100% recyclable. Circle No. 191 on Product Card

Gessi's Spa Shower includes the Tremillimetri 3mm showerheads with cascade waterfall, plus three body sprays. Measuring only about 1/10" thin, the showerheads are available in wall-mount versions with rounded or square profiles. They feature a super polished stainless steel mirror finish, and one version is available with an LED white light. Circle No. 192 on Product Card



Artos has added a new pressure balance mixer to its Italian Designer Collection. The pressure balance mixers are available with or without diverters in chrome and brushed nickel as well as three different trim styles that coordinate with Artos faucets. ASSE 1016 certified, the mixers offer integrated volume control. Circle No. 193 on Product Card

Delta Faucet Co. has released the Traditional Shower System as part of its Universal Design bathing and showering systems. The 60"x34" or 48"x34" unit fits into a standard bath/shower alcove and includes a brushed stainless-steel center grab bar, four shelves, two foot rests and an available flip-up seat. Circle No. 188 on Product Card



Roda by Basco Shower Enclosures is a line of luxury shower enclosures that includes eight collections. Ranging in style from traditional to modern, each collection offers a number of different styles, configurations and accessory options. Shown is the Dresden shower enclosure. Circle No. 189 on Product Card



and we see a higher demand for these."

Technology comes into play in other ways, as well. Hirschhaut notes, "In our business, we see the growth of integrating technology with design. Since a bath remodel is an endeavor most homeowners do only once or twice in their lives, we've developed tools to help create a visual image of what their bath would look like when complete. This visualization software has been a great help in better ascertaining their needs, as well."

Ultimately, though, the success of the technology relates directly to how simple – or complicated – it is. As Capasso concludes, "In the end, it's all about ease of use and ease of installation."

HOT AND STEAMY

As designers take homeowners towards a spa-like home bath, a steam generator added to the shower can be a logical step. Streng says his firm has seen a large increase in requests for steam showers, which he believes is all part of showers becoming a focal point more than the tub.

Martha Orellana, v.p. for Mr. Steam based in Queens, NY adds, "I feel that the steam world in general has positioned itself where jetted tubs were in the '80s." Indeed, there seems to be some momentum building for steam, due to water conservation and wellness trends.

Orellana notes that Mr. Steam has created a more affordable line of steam generators, and therefore expanded the marketplace, explaining that some consumers are now realizing that they can afford what they'd always seen as a luxury product.

ECO-FRIENDLY

Both stricter regulations and a growing awareness of environmental issues have had an impact on trends in bathing fixtures, as well. "Water conservation regulations have definitely impacted traditional applications of conventional products used


in the shower," says Allen.

Aukland agrees. "One notable trend that is gaining momentum is that of saving water," she says. "Around the world there are increasing numbers of guidelines, rules and regulations to limit consumption, and the freestanding bath cannot be immune to environmental pressures."

Capasso believes, "The majority of consumers haven't latched onto the latest water conservation practices because there hasn't been a change to the national standard since EPA92, which calls for a maximum flow rate of 2.5 gpm at 80 PSI. However, there are state and regional codes mandating water savings at lower flow rates. The challenge we as manufacturers are faced with is the lack of consistency between the states and regions."

Wheeler adds that there is always new legislation emerging and, as a whole, the industry is adapting to consumers' needs, as well as offering more WaterSense certified and eco-efficient products.

Of course, some consumers still fear that water conserving products can diminish the water experience in the shower. As such, Wheeler notes, "We have also seen that people are being more conscious about how much time they are spending in the shower [rather than going with a water conserving product]. In the end, sometimes it's not the fittings that are installed that make the difference, but how they are used and for how long."

Steam lends itself as a natural choice when consumers are thinking of water conservation, says Orellana, as a steam unit averages less than a gallon of water for a 20 minute session, rather than 40-60 gallons to fill a tub. She adds that people are becoming aware not just of water, but eco-friendly products, such as their steam generator, which is made from recyclable stainless steel. "It's the size of a briefcase, and can be used over and over," Orellana says. "It's never going to be sitting in a landfill." 



Aquatic has released the Starla acrylic, drop-in, hydrotherapy tub that fits in standard 60" bathing alcoves. At 57" long, 38" wide and 24" deep, the oval tub is available as a soaker or a whirlpool with eight adjustable jets that target the hips, legs, back and feet. It also features sculpted armrests, an oversized backrest and a raised headrest. Circle No. 194 on Product Card



The StyleTherm thermostatic shower system from California Faucets provides thermostatic technology at pressure balance pricing. Besides the ability to dial in exact temperatures, StyleTherm requires no diverter valve to toggle between shower applications – each is operated via its own volume control. The system includes anti-scald temperature protection. It is available in a range of styles and finishes. Circle No. 195 on Product Card



The Sydney tub from Hydro Systems has the same footprint as a standard tub, though it provides a deeper tub for soaking. It features an extra-thick reinforced fiberglass body, finished in a 1/8"-thick layer of acrylic. Offered with a non-skid bottom, options include Microban antibacterial protection, molded arm rests, jets, heat and chromatherapy. Circle No. 196 on Product Card