

Revitalizing Retreat

MINIMALIST DESIGN DEFINES THE CONTEMPORARY BATH SPACE

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DURAVIT

Blending seamlessly with the home's contemporary aesthetic, consumers are seeing more classic, contemporary bath furnishings than years ago. Although traditional style still plays a large role in the American home, people are cutting back on clutter in the bath space and contemporary, clean lines have become more prominent.

Baths have been converted into a functional space with modern flair. The contemporary bath features a variety of innovative products that integrate technology, functionality and styling. Ornament-free, uninterrupted planes emphasizing geometric furnishing shapes and clean lines form the backdrop for daily cleansing ritual. "Contemporary bath style has a very clean, sleek look and utilizes every space," said Eli Mordechai, CEO and owner of La Strada design firm. "It has an ambiance that is very comfortable, spacious and totally relaxing."

Modern design with open-space planning and furnishing forms distilled to essence are in stark contrast to previously favored formal space configurations. Getting its beauty from simple lines combined with a sensual curve or two, today's bath designs have a universal appeal, emphasizing the architectural over the decorative. European, Asian and American design elements are blended into a minimalist aesthetic that has become an international style.

"Overall, the bathroom trend is personal indulgence, meaning that the master bath is a Zen-like location for people. People are so much more aware of personal space and their needs for their individual personal space. That comes in many shapes, whether it's contemporary fixtures or making room for a wall display of candles. The bathroom is heading more toward a spa-like environment," said Scott Ballin, President and COO of Distinctive Kitchens and Baths.

Luxurious yet functional, bath design epitomizes well-being and renewal, featuring the high-tech element. This includes everything from audio/visual for relaxation and entertainment, such as plasma-screen televisions that can be viewed from a soaking tub and LCD screens built into mirrors and pocketed into shower walls—maximizing space and function.



SPA LIVING

Others want a retreat from the every day bombardment of high-tech living, choosing instead to turn their bath area into a private getaway, a sanctuary and much-needed oasis. The bathroom becomes a retreat from the wired world, a place to unwind after a busy day or re-energize for the next. This is space for spiritual and physical renewal and may even have separate bathing, dressing and grooming areas. The trend towards more spa-like design is reflected in products that blend elegant design and modern technology. Freestanding deep soaking tubs, rain showers and saunas evoke a luxury spa environment.

“What we’re seeing is more open, furniture-type bathrooms, things with cantilevered fixtures, more integrated, very spa-like bathrooms,”

said Paul T. Edwards, Interior Designer, Arquitectonica Interiors. “Simple, pure shapes, very clean, natural looking...In South Florida, modern design also has a more prevalent European style.”

Amenities usually offered in the world’s top spas are now found in the home bath to meet consumer demand for health and beauty regimens with the emphasis on tranquility and an ambiance that appeals to the senses.

“Contemporary is not sparse. Everything has its place, yet it flows. You want to create a place that’s livable, a contemporary design that shows off what you have but at a minimum, no clutter,” said Ann Morris, Certified Master Kitchen and Bath Designer, Allied Kitchen and Bath. “People really want a spa-like treatment because being busy all the time in this cyber age, when we come home we just want to have a room where we can really relax. The bathroom has become a sanctuary.”

Materials typically found in the spa setting now appear in the home bath, including flooring, furnishings and fixtures made of natural materials with a strong emphasis on woods and natural stones including hardwood flooring, granite, marble, travertine and soapstone.

HIGH-END ZEN

Sleek, Asian-inspired contemporary design with a Zen feel extends the spa ambiance with harmony, balance and simple contemporary lines which incorporate natural materials. Asian Shoji and bamboo screens and pocket doors as room dividers, minimal furnishings, bamboo and teak and waterfalls all evoke Eastern principles of balance and harmony while engaging the senses. “The appeal of the Zen or Asian-style bath is a very soothing, calming ambiance,” said Edwards.

In the spa-inspired Zen bath, the Oriental color palette leans away from the classic deep red, lacquered wood and creams toward more neutral shades like black, taupe and sage with accent color. Zen bath design features a sensibility based on Feng Shui’s principles of proportion, balance and element placement and utilizes purity of line and an aesthetic sense of beauty tracing back to the 9th century.

Water, wood and stone are used in their natural states, evoking a connection with nature. “A Zen-like room is organic, very soothing, earthy, very grounded, very relaxing. People actually like the Japanese soaking tub, that’s a trend. As a





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designer, you have to place things to create harmony, healing and balance,” added Morris. “Bathers can be eye level with nature while sitting within the tub, feeling like you are outside in the gardens, bringing the outside in.”

The Duravit Starck X, designed by Michael Graves, is one such Japanese-inspired soaking tub. It features a water channel on all sides with stones to absorb overflow. While reminiscent of the Japanese bathing concept, minimalist contemporary tubs, such as this one, offer a luxurious soak and feature cubist shapes.

Subdued lighting through windows that span walls and light rebounding from wall-mounted mirrors fulfill the Zen design elemental principles of filtered lighting and reflection. Minimal accessories, non-patterned textiles, occasional tapestry artwork, rocks, candles and singular flower vases enhance a clean look. A fluid, clutter-free serene bathing environment is created, relying on architectural elements and minimalist reduction to achieve a visual impact illustrating purity of form.

ULTRA LUXE CREATURE COMFORTS

Showers are getting bigger and becoming multi-functional with multiple heads and sprays, featuring audio/visual systems and programmable showering, steam and lighting options. A curbless and transparent shower design enclosed in clear, frameless glass enhances the bath's open space. Spa-like shower amenities include luminotherapy, aromatherapy, thermotherapy, and hydro-thermo massage.

No longer tucked into a corner alcove, freestanding ultra-deep soaking and air-jet tubs have become sculptural objects positioned in the center of the bath space. Outfitted for couples, tub designs incorporate hydro-massage, chromatherapy and aromatherapy features. BainUltra has enhanced the home spa experience for consumers with innovative customizable bath designs offering chromatherapy through an integrated LED system and air jet injection systems for hydro-thermo massage. Tub designs allow for use of natural products such as bath teas,

algae, marine salts and other therapeutic organic compounds.

Cabinetry features very simple, clean lines in a wide array of wood varieties from standard maple and cherry to more exotic woods such as wenge. In the furniture-style cabinetry that consumers now request, darker wood stains are favored over glazed and painted surfaces with contrasting countertops and cabinets featuring his-and-hers areas, dual sinks and mirror combinations. "Looks are simpler today, designs are not as frilly as they were. They're becoming more streamlined," said Morris.

CONTRASTING MIX AND MATCH

High-end finishes have become less shiny, more honed and satin with textured metallic surfaces such as brushed nickel hardware and faucets and stainless steel fixtures. Matte finishes contrast with luminous surfaces like glass, stone and marble.

Materials including glass, steel and stone are being mixed and matched for an eclectic combination of color and texture, creating a design fusion of organic and industrial design elements. Walls, floors, ceilings and other surfaces are clean, crisp and uninterrupted.

Minimalism's primarily monochromatic color palette is expanding to include new shades in the bath area. While brown neutrals are prominent in the color scheme, spa blues, natural greens, honey tones, aqua, gray and black/white are appearing in furnishings and window and wall treatments. Morris said that today's colors are more muted. Customers, she added, are requesting terracottas, earth tones, browns, grays and greens and that the soothing color of black is also popular.

Mixed with shades of crisp white in cabinetry, flooring, tile and countertops, color is drawing inspiration from the natural environment. Brown has become the new neutral with green becoming more prominent as consumers become more environmentally aware.

GREEN DESIGN

As consumers discover green design, they are increasingly selecting natural material products that offer sustainability and recycling. Many baths now incorporate reclaimed woods and natural stone for floors and countertops, low-VOC paints,



water-conserving sanitaryware, glass and other materials that reflect low-impact environmental awareness.

"Eco-design is compatible with any style," said Bernadette Upton, Interior Designer and owner of Eco-Décor design firm, which specializes in eco-friendly interior design. "Eco-design's importance in the design business is that it does interior design but with an environmental mission...user friendly so spaces are healthy. We optimize air quality as well as the furnishings we use in the process." Her firm incorporates environmentally friendly products that have a low impact on the environment while encouraging the use of renewable resources.

Homes are becoming more energy efficient; solar panels to generate electricity are becoming more mainstream, and new window systems in the form of glass walls move beyond sliding-glass doors, allowing entire walls to open out and bring the outdoors in. While framing city and beachscape views, they also let in natural light. Consumers can enjoy the view from the soaking tub.

"We finally have become more aware of our surroundings, with what's going on, knowing our woods in our cabinets in our homes," said Morris. "It's serious stuff, what's going on with our earth. People are discovering [that being green] is a must. The materials in cabinets, tubs and furnishings are definitely going to have to have a stamp of green. I think within the next ten years, we will see a lot of changes to become more eco-friendly. I think it's going to become part of our designs, our rooms." ☑



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