

# Bathing *beauty*

Words **Lynn O'Rourke** Photographs **Phil Wilkinson**

We look at just what it will take to make  
the **bathrooms** of 2008 look their very best

**F**OR DECADES the once-humble bathroom was ignored, but in recent years it has taken to the style spotlight like a rubber duck takes to bath water.

The rise of the spa has inspired the look of many of today's bathrooms, which have left their purely functional tag behind and evolved into a sanctuary made for de-stressing and revitalising.

"There is an emphasis on bathrooms as being a room to enjoy, as opposed to just a functional space," agrees Lee Sowerbutts, interior designer and co-director of Rehab Interiors. "People now use their bathroom as an escape, both from day-to-day life and from the rest of the house."

A recent survey carried out by plumbing and heating supplier William Wilson would seem to confirm this. Top of the list of dream items for the bathroom - aside from having either George Clooney or Kylie to soap your back - was a Jacuzzi, followed by a music system, sauna and high-spec TV.

When it came to taking a bath, relaxation was high on the list, with 39% spending at least 30 minutes in there and 6% spending an hour or more. In

other words, plenty of time to revive mind and body.

As attitudes towards bathing have changed, so too have tastes. Derek Miller, joint owner and director of Scope Bathroom Interiors and Contracts, remembers, "When Scope started in 1999, 'in things' in the bathroom included patterned tile borders, mixage (chrome and gold combination) taps and pergamon sanitary ware. These have been replaced with natural single-colour tiles, chrome taps and white sanitary ware.

"Taps and showers have become more minimalist in style, with square shapes in demand for both basins and taps."

As the idea of luxury has swept into the bathroom, the free-standing bath is enjoying a revival, while free-standing and waterfall taps are new additions that up the style ante. A number of homeowners are also thinking outside the box and relocating bathrooms to a bigger area in the house. "With the average British bathroom being no more than two metres by two metres in size, people are increasingly turning a bedroom into a large bathroom," says designer John Cromb.

"If you are lucky enough to be in this



position, you can treat it as another room and decorate it with a fireplace, furniture and even soft furnishings. For a real wow factor, imagine a twin set of roll-tops, rather than matching washbasins. Rain showers are also a must-have."

With greater emphasis on open-plan living, the layout of bathrooms is also undergoing a process of change. There is a new demand for flowing spaces and the open feel that recreates a spa feel.

"When you walk into a bathroom, you don't automatically want to think 'bath-

room," says Lee Sowerbutts. "Think partition walls that stop short of the ceiling with sinks on one side, while concealing a toilet and shower round the back."

Interior designer Pat Elliot predicts the move towards more eco-friendly living will influence all major design trends this year, which will be reflected in the use of natural materials such as stone, travertine and wood. Expect to see sinks sitting on granite or iroko, while slate, glass and bamboo will also make an appearance.





White may still be the colour of choice for sanitary ware, but this year will see an element of colour creeping in. Derek Miller predicts that vivid colours will make their way into the bathroom as a reaction against minimalism. This high-gloss burst of colour will be seen in tiles and furniture doors or panels, similar to

kitchens.

“In general, kitchen trends tend to set the pace, with bathrooms following on around six months later,” he says.

“Some manufacturers are emphasising brightly coloured pieces,” agrees Lee. “They are combining a bright orange or turquoise sink with the remainder of the sanitary ware in white, to give an accent. It’s not going to be everyone’s cup of tea, but it will appeal to those who want to create a dramatic look that makes a real statement.”

Drama is what many bathrooms of 2008 can expect. However, getting ⇒



Clockwise from top left: streamlined, square shapes such as Alessi’s new range of baths are in demand; designed by Lee Sowerbutts, this Glasgow bathroom has a partition wall separating the twin sinks from the shower and toilet; the Axor Massaud tap is used in Glenskirlie Castle and is available from Scope Bathrooms; this contemporary bath is on the opposite wall facing the sinks in the Glasgow bathroom; Villeroy & Boch’s Squaro range features a sunken free-standing bath and an overhead panel that gives the feeling of showering in a waterfall; new wallpapers are steam and water-resistant; bespoke furniture in green provides a splash of colour. Page 15: surround-sound music systems are becoming popular



## Special Feature

### ADDRESS BOOK

**Lee Sowerbutts, Rehab Interiors**

(07763 389306, [www.rehabinteriors.com](http://www.rehabinteriors.com))

**William Wilson, plumbing and heating suppliers**

([www.williamwilson.co.uk](http://www.williamwilson.co.uk))

**John Cromb Interior Design** (0773 895 7069,

[www.johncromb.co.uk](http://www.johncromb.co.uk))

**Pat Elliott, The Borders Design House**

(07765 057409, [www.thebordersdesignhouse.co.uk](http://www.thebordersdesignhouse.co.uk))

**Doreen Smith Interiors** (0141-884 2319,

[www.doreensmithinteriors.com](http://www.doreensmithinteriors.com))

**Victor Paris** (0845 607 6944, [www.victorparis.com](http://www.victorparis.com))

**Scope Bathrooms** (0141-882 8282,

[www.scope-bathrooms.co.uk](http://www.scope-bathrooms.co.uk))



← the look doesn't have to carry an equally dramatic price tag – imaginative use of colour and materials will all create a unique space.

Wallpaper is one such way to make a statement. Forget the peeling corners of old – companies such as Tektura and Muraspec now manufacture papers that are steam and water-resistant. And with wallpaper working just as well in small spaces, it is ideal for those with compact bathrooms who still want to make an impact.

Large-format wall and floor tiles will open an area up, while floor and wall tiles provide the opportunity to add texture and interest.

Although natural pumice and sandstone spa-like colours are set to stay, more people are experimenting with dark tiling and dark wallpaper, and finding both work well. Pattern and texture will be used to offset simple sanitary ware, while you can dress things up with great taps, beautiful tiles and eye-catching walls. Mix and match without spending a fortune and employ a few tricks of the trade.

“This year I will be using more reflective surfaces to create light and space, using the same tile on floor and wall,

and mixing with different textures of stone, slate, marble and ceramics,” says Doreen Smith of Doreen Smith Interiors. I will also be using large sheets of mirror to double the feeling of space, and injecting colour such as coral, teal, and zingy yellows with accessories.”

Technology is likely to play a big part this year as LED colour showers, under-floor heating, surround-sound music systems, waterproof TVs and changing optic mood lighting make waves.

“There is no need to rely on just one overhead light,” says Gavin Derighetti, showroom designer at bathroom specialist Victor Paris. “Inset LED lighting in showers or around baths will create a completely new ambience.”

Steam is also making a name for itself, but in a good way. “A steam function can be built in when a new shower is installed,” explains Gavin. Built into a shower area with tiled mosaic seats, it resembles a home spa.

With a combination of function and luxury setting the tone for the coming year, bathrooms will become increasingly individual spaces.

And regardless of whether George or Kylie is around, the bathroom of 2008 is set to create its own sense of drama. \*

### webwatch

**Amaroni** ([www.amaroni.com](http://www.amaroni.com))

**Bathrooms in Reality**

([www.bathroomsinreality.com](http://www.bathroomsinreality.com))

**Bathstore** ([www.bathstore.com](http://www.bathstore.com))

**Bette** ([www.bette.de](http://www.bette.de))

**Bisque** ([www.bisque.co.uk](http://www.bisque.co.uk))

**Cosmo Ceramics** ([www.cosmoceramics.co.uk](http://www.cosmoceramics.co.uk))

**CTD** ([www.ctdtiles.co.uk](http://www.ctdtiles.co.uk))

**CP Hart** ([www.cphart.co.uk](http://www.cphart.co.uk))

**Hansgrohe** ([www.hansgrohe.co.uk](http://www.hansgrohe.co.uk))

**Ideal Standard** ([www.ideal-standard.co.uk](http://www.ideal-standard.co.uk))

**Kohler** ([www.kohleruk.com](http://www.kohleruk.com))

**Laufen** ([www.laufen.co.uk](http://www.laufen.co.uk))

**Muraspec** ([www.muraspec.com](http://www.muraspec.com))

**Pentland Stone & Bathroom Company**  
(0131-221 9005, [www.pentland-stone.co.uk](http://www.pentland-stone.co.uk))

**Porcelanosa** ([www.porcelanosa.co.uk](http://www.porcelanosa.co.uk))

**Tektura** ([www.tektura.com](http://www.tektura.com))

**Villeroy & Boch** ([www.villeroy-boch.co.uk](http://www.villeroy-boch.co.uk))

### TREND SPOTTING

Streamlined, square shapes

Bold splashes of colour

Luxurious baths

Natural materials

Water-resistant wallpaper

Individual looks