

MORE THAN THE BASICS:



BIGGER, Better Baths

photos and text excerpted from *Her Home* magazine

“The #1 trend in baths is that they’re growing in size,” remarks Linda Reimer, *Her Home* publisher and president of Design Basics, one of the largest home plan design companies in the U.S. “Master baths, in particular, are bigger in new home design. And in existing homes, owners frequently knock out walls to enlarge their master baths.

“But other members of the household are also benefiting from more baths and better layouts. For instance, in the past, our home plans often incorporated a Jack-and-Jill bath between two secondary bedrooms. Each bedroom had its own vanity and shared the rest of the bath. Today, we frequently design secondary baths where only the tub is shared; both bedrooms have their own vanity and toilet.

“We’re also increasing storage to accommodate the growing number of skincare and grooming products today’s families use. And because our clients expect more convenience, our newest plans include linen storage inside the bath, not just in the hall outside the bath.”





LEFT TO RIGHT:
This oil rubbed bronze faucet is from Moen's Eva Suite.

photo courtesy of
www.Moen.com

Somerton Hill Square platform bathtub and cabinetry shown in a Toffee finish from Merillat Classic™.

photo courtesy of
www.Merillat.com

Asymmetric design, light cabinetry and textured glass create a stylish, contemporary bath. (Epic Slab cabinetry from Merillat Masterpiece)

photo courtesy of
www.Merillat.com

BELOW: Livinglass' Barocco collection features decorative materials embedded in an opaque interlayer for a multi-layered effect.

photo courtesy of
www.Livinglass.com

AESTHETICS

Patricia Nunan, CKBR, CKD, CAPS, a certified kitchen and bath designer with Lifestyles Design Inc., in Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania, reports she rarely sees anyone using river pebbles on bath walls or floors. "They looked really cool at last year's show, but I wouldn't want to stand on them or clean them.

"Instead, I do a mosaic using 2 x 2 tiles in every shower floor I do. Because 50% of the work I do incorporates universal design, I often do a no-threshold shower – which means the floor has to be sloped. I can easily form these small tiles to conform to a sloping floor and still have a really nice looking floor. Plus, they're less slippery in the shower. Outside the shower, I usually use 12 x 12 or 18 x 18 tiles and incorporate some metal or glass tiles. They can be pricey, but it doesn't take many to have quite an impact."

"Daltile® and Ahnzu offer extensive collections of metal accents in 1 x 1 and 2 x 2 sizes as well as strips," notes Moen Kitchen and Bath Expert Stephanie Young. Designs include rosettes, flowers, dragonflies, fleur de lis, crests and friezes, along with sleek, contemporary accent pieces. The companies also provide a full range of finishes – from stainless, polished bronze and bullion to aged iron, aged bronze and pewter.

For some time, designers have bemoaned the limited choices in shower doors. Livinglass™ now answers that complaint with beautiful, unique glass designs suitable for bath use. Natural materials and sculptured fabrics are laminated into an interlayer which is sealed with annealed glass on both sides. Because the outside layers are glass, Livinglass is structurally stable, can be installed with regular off-the-shelf glass support hardware and can be cleaned with ordinary household cleaners.

SensiTile™ allows homeowners to incorporate an interactive element in their bath with their Scintilla and Terrazzo fiber-optic tiles. The Scintilla tiles use hundreds of light conducting channels that have been carved out of a clear pigmented polymer. These fiber-optics create a reaction to movement and changes in light, causing the tile to ripple, shimmer and to capture and disperse adjacent colors across its surface. The Terrazzo tiles are composed of a concrete product that has been embedded with fiber-optics that flicker and move as you brush past them.

FIXTURES

"Vessel sinks are still huge," observes Nunan, "and there are thousands to choose from. I just used a gorgeous vessel carved out of stone. The only real drawback is they don't



RIGHT: This modern bath features KraftMaid Cabinetry's Lustra Collection in Sterling Gloss and Bianco Gloss Finishes. photo courtesy of KraftMaid Cabinetry

BELOW: ONDINE's Krystal™ Electronic Light Shower combines an illuminated water column (in blue, green, yellow or white) and Strass® Swarovski® Crystals. photo courtesy of ONDINE



have an alternate drain with an overflow, so you have to watch how far you fill them.”

Granite vanities are still going strong, according to Les Petrie, former president of the National Kitchen and Bath Association and owner of Mother Hubbard's Custom Cabinetry in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. “Lowe's and Home Depot are importing granite vanity tops with the bowls already in them. If you have a standard size, they are surprisingly affordable.”

“Limestone is also very big on vanity countertops,” Young adds.

“I use comfort-height toilets in nearly every bath I do,” says Nunan. “They're about two inches higher than typical toilets, making them more comfortable for the majority of people and particularly appreciated by those with knee problems or disabilities. My favorite is Kohler's Cimaron™ because it fits most decors and I can get a round front instead of an elongated one – which saves space in small powder rooms.

“Cast iron tubs are very popular, as long as we have the space and can support the weight,” Nunan continues. “Very few people want two-person tubs. It seems the bath is one place people want to relax alone, so they don't want to waste the space. Air jets are still in vogue, but many people are content with a nice soaking tub.

“Years ago, there was a trend to raise or lower a tub. But homeowners found those slippery, wet tile steps were a nightmare. So

today, tubs are usually installed in a deck, typically 18 inches wide, so the bather can sit on the edge and swing their feet over. I put the controls on the outside of the tub...to make it easy to fill the tub before you get into it.

“I also add a horizontal grab bar six to eight inches above the deck and a vertical grab bar at the control panel. Many companies are now producing attractive grab bars. I recently used a Kohler grab bar in brushed nickel that matched the fixtures in the rest of the room.”

“Oil rubbed bronze, brushed nickel and stainless faucets will be around for several years at least,” predicts Young. “Antique pewter faucets are also common and distressed, brushed brass is coming back, as seen in Moen's Showhouse® line.”

For added convenience, Price Pfister's Catalina™ lavatory pullout faucet offers four spray or stream options, in polished chrome or brushed nickel. The 8-Setting Deluxe Personal Shower Kit from Danze® accommodates tall and short bathers with a 24-inch slide-bar that allows users to adjust the personal shower wand to an ideal height.

For extra pizzazz, Ondine's new electronic light showerhead (ELS) uses fiber optics, colored halogen light and Strass® Swarovski® crystals to bath users in a blue, green, yellow or white illuminated water column (each providing the user with a different type of color therapy). Suggested list prices for the Chrome and Polished Gold Krystal™ ELS are \$10,000 and \$15,000 respectively.

GETTING WIRED

Although electronic faucets are now available for home use (at a hefty price tag), they're not popular, even among the disabled, says Nunan. "People have seen them malfunctioning in public restrooms, so they're leery about their reliability. And, if the home's electricity is off, the faucet won't work at all.

"Another recent product that hasn't caught on, at least among my clients, is the television in the mirror," Nunan continues. "Again, it's pricey and not all that practical. The television isn't clear unless you're looking straight into the mirror. My clients want to be able to see the TV when they're in the tub or anywhere in the bath. So they prefer a flat panel on the wall or a television in a cabinet.

"There are a few innovations my clients are wild about, however. I'd say the hottest new thing is having a phone in the bath. I put a phone jack in nearly every bath I do. With baths turning into spas, people want the convenience, and with more folks getting older, they want the security of having a phone in the bath. I install a Lutron® power jack near the toilet or sink area. The phone jack and the electric are both in one, so there's no wire hanging down.

"Another handy gadget is a countdown timer from Lutron. It can be hooked up to any exhaust fan and ensures the fan will stay on for the specified time after you've left the bath.

"I also put an outlet near the toilet. A lot of older or injured people would like to have a bidet, but don't have the space for it. But Toto has a bidet you can put on top of your toilet and plug it in. Having an outlet in place provides the option if it's desired later.

"Last, but not least, is Lutron's GRAFIK® Eye Control that allows homeowners to reduce the number of switch plates in a room. Rather than having five light switches on the wall, you can have one with five buttons. Then you program it so one button turns on your recessed lights, another turns on the light over the vanity, another the radiant heating, one controls the exhaust fan and one turns on dimmers.

"The program is in a main panel somewhere else in the home – probably the laundry room or the basement. I use these controls in kitchens and baths, but they're particularly nice in the bath – where you may not have much wall space and don't want to clutter it up with a bunch of switch plates. Plus, they come in nearly any color you'd want."

* * * *

"A few decades ago, opulence was the primary design theme in master baths," recalls Reimer. "Today, rich colors and textures are still very important, but design has become more thoughtful. Comfort and safety no longer take a back seat to appearance. And that dual approach of practicality combined with pleasing aesthetics has spread to every bath in the home." ■

BELOW: This vanity top is a custom terrazzo. photo courtesy of SeniTile

LOWER LEFT: Linen cabinets often divide vanities. (Merillat Masterpiece's Civano Square shown in Nutmeg Glaze Finish with Maple and Onyx Accents) photo courtesy of www.Merillat.com

LOWER RIGHT: Livinglass is sealed with annealed glass – making it suitable for bath use. photo courtesy of Livinglass

