



The bathroom of tomorrow, today

BATHROOMS & AMENITIES

Considering both the past and future of bathroom design, a slate of new releases explore notions of shape, heritage and the user experience.

At the forefront of the bathroom sector, ISH provides a platform from which designers showcase the trends, ideas and styles set to guide the year ahead. Across 2,400 stands within Messe Frankfurt's expansive halls, the latest technological, aesthetic and cultural shifts in bathroom design can be observed. An increased focus on global sustainability, for example, saw the 2017 show introduce a wealth of new efficiency and waste reduction solutions, whilst the changing demands of the hospitality market contributed to the production of new materials and functions, as well as the proliferation of both cutting-edge and resurgent design styles.

Featuring leading global suppliers alongside emerging names and rising talent, the fair offers an essential insight into the minds of designers across all levels of the industry, and an indicator of what to expect from bathrooms in new projects worldwide.

This year, a slate of new fixture, amenity, water system and accessory releases highlighted the revitalisation and reintroduction of historical design elements to the market. Combining graphic lines and a simple spout with natural curves, THG's Dean collection recalls a striking industrial spirit, whilst Graff's Finezza faucet channels retro-chic through its elegant profile and an uninterrupted cast that runs from tap to base. Likewise, the Meccanica and Cesello members of Gessi's 316 collection reference the industrial aesthetic with their vivid texture options, and Lefroy Brooks' Ten Ten tap reinterprets machine-age forms through a contemporary lens. The colours on show reinforced this historical influence, with an abundance of bronze, brass, copper and gold prominent throughout. A step away from traditionally popular pure white and porcelain shades, these finishes allow for moodier environments and expressively dark interior schemes.

However, for all the heritage influences that shone through, the evolution of brand-unique materials and manufacturing solutions emerged as an alternative, more forward-thinking trend.

Laufen's SaphirKeramik, first launched in 2013, has now developed into a material employed by designers including Patricia Urquiola for the distinctive Sonar washbasin, whilst Villeroy & Boch's Patrick Frey-designed Finion collection utilises the brand's own TitanCeram, a versatile fusion of feldspar, quartz, clay and

titanium dioxide. Elsewhere, Kaldewei's Steel Enamel took centre stage at a stand dedicated to 'iconic solutions' with the launch of the Minea washbasin, a minimalist and seamless fixture made possible by the single-layer material.

With these surfaces allowing for experiments in shape and profile, several new silhouettes emerged. The thin washbasin rim – a defining feature of both Duravit's Cecillie Manz-designed Luv range and Vitra's Outline collection – proved a popular design choice, whilst Victoria & Albert's Eldon bath, the product of a collaboration with Conran + Partners, combined the London-based firm's knowledge of contemporary interior demands with the shift towards slimmer, more compact pieces.

New materials also mean new textures, with Bette's Ornament bath and BetteLux Oval Freestanding bath boasting experiments in surface character. The latter's fabric exterior turned inquisitive heads and highlighted the steps away from convention that bathroom designers are taking, as manufacturing processes quickly evolve.

This departure from classic bathroom forms and shapes could be seen as a direct consequence of this material revolution, with designers creating new conventions through the development of more adaptable ceramics. However it is not just the materials that have evolved, but also the industry's scientific, technological dimension.

Toto's Flotation tub – a research-driven release that draws influence from flotation therapy – exhibited the leaps and bounds that the science behind bathroom design has taken, whilst Grohe's Aquasymphony rebranded the shower space as a wellness zone, complete with adjustable coloured lighting, spray settings and integrated Grohe Spa mobile application. Likewise, Dornbracht's Michael Neumayr-designed Aquamoon, part of the wider Lifespa concept, incorporates water-control technology to create a range of different mood-specific flow modes, matching these with suitable levels and shades of ambient lighting.

Seeking to stimulate guest senses through texture, aesthetic and shape, as well as expanding on the psychological side of the bathroom experience, this new slate of products juxtaposes popular, traditional ideas with forward-thinking sensibilities, wrapping the technology of the future in aesthetics of the past.