



# HIGH ON HYGIENE

AESTHETICS AND QUALITY PRODUCTS THAT FUNCTION SANS TOUCH ARE POPULAR IN BATHROOMS TODAY

BY ARUNA RATHOD

From designs that were driven merely by pragmatism to creating a sensual experience – with health as the new focal element, it has been a significant transformation of the otherwise obscure bath space. Smart WCs that can be controlled by a remote and packed with features such as night light, seat temperature control, deodoriser and more - an intelligent bathroom is what most customers are after. Abhishek Somany, MD, Somany Ceramics, states, “Consumers... have moved on from utility to premium bathroom spaces. Technology now plays an important role in all spheres of our lives, including bathrooms. Bathroom fixtures integrated with the latest technology have revolutionised the industry.”

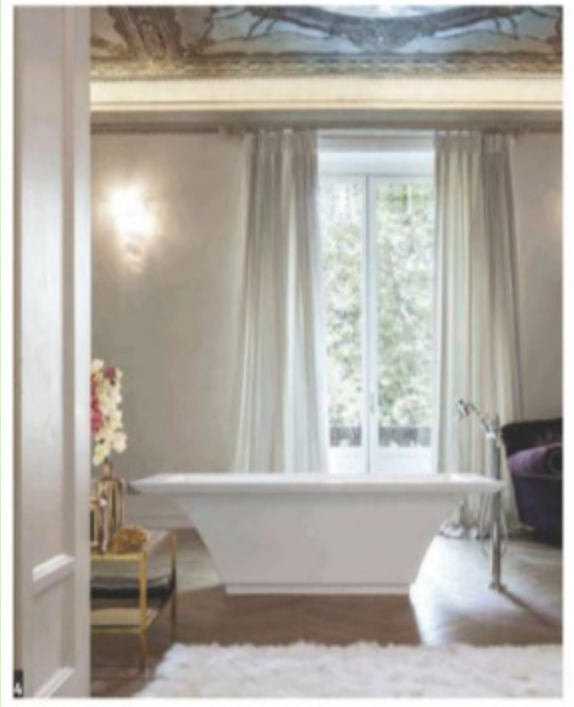
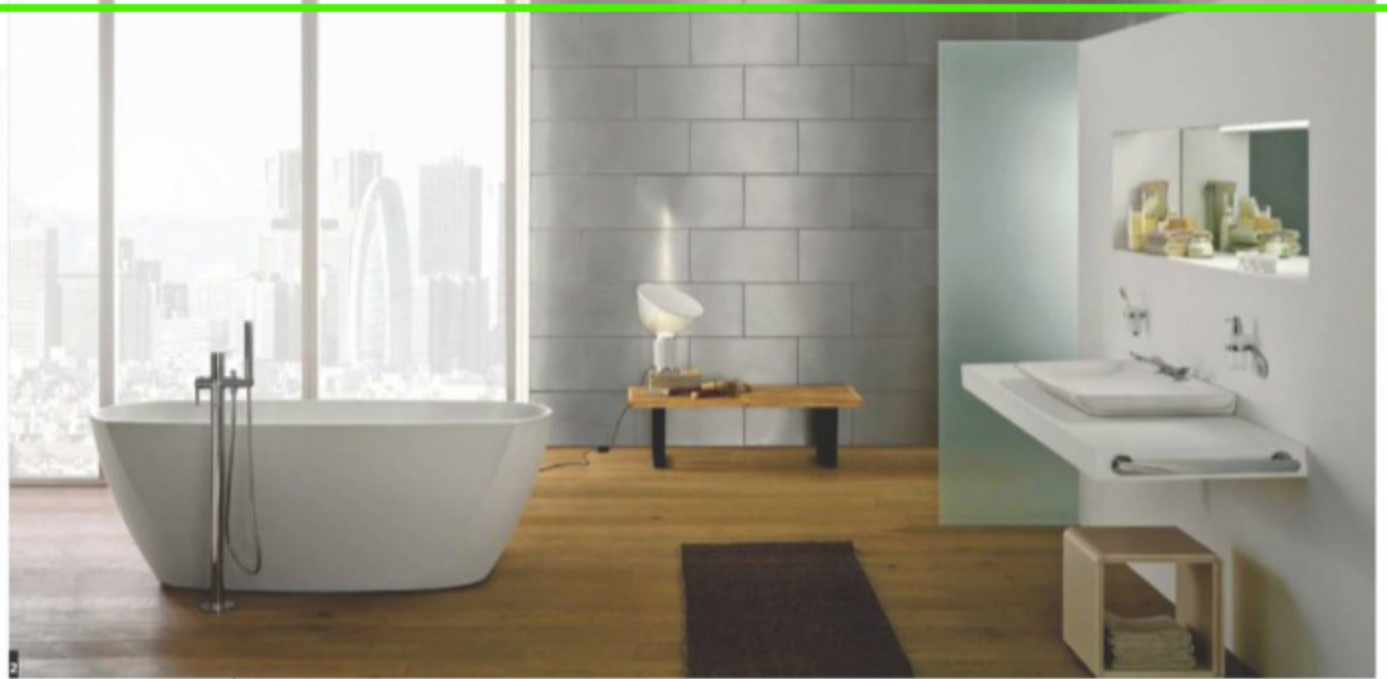
The objective of these innovations, leading to varied bathroom concepts or products, is to offer more planning freedom to interior designers, architects, planners and installers. And the bigger goal is to offer “freedom of movement” to the end customers. Rahul Kher, country manager – Indian Subconti-

ment, Keuco, says, “While the world of interiors is influenced by trends which fade away every few years... and technology upgradation takes place every six months, real innovation is when it offers the consumers the freedom of movement within the bath space. It’s zeroing down to freedom of design and planning by offering various possibilities on products.”

Reiterating the role of technology in this space, Emanuela Tavolini, director of Sales Europe, Graff, explains, “Clients want innovations, and we have developed the Aqua-sense shower system based on the use of up-to-date technologies. We aim to meet the most demanding share of clientele. LED lighting chromotherapy technology and the possibility to listen to music and watch videos are a couple of additional innovations.”

A bathroom ornately integrated with clean lines and symmetry, with an echo of simplicity, is truly contemporary. “We have moved a step ahead, and ‘reduction’ rules the contemporary bathroom. The idea is to remove all the unnecessary

1. Keuco Edition Lignatur brings the rare luxury of natural wood to bathroom furniture.



shower elements on the wall, not to confuse the user, simplify showering and bring everything at one place," says Anitha Sharma, general manager - Marketing, Hansgrohe.

Atul Sanghvi, executive director, Cera, too, believes in 'Less is more'. "Our designers have been able to provide more user area within the same space," he points out.

Customers are now focusing on contemporary styles. As a result of this, the outlook automatically favours international styles and designs. Jurgen Wolf, MD of Häfele India, notes, "The overall home interiors market has undergone a massive change in the last decade. Today, customers set aside a sizeable budget for home improvement, and kitchens and bathrooms are biting into a chunk of this budget." Customers are willing to pay a premium as long as their investment in international brands is reaping consequent benefits.

Digital and sensory technology take precedence in the consumer's mind, and there is a tremendous traction witnessed for products that offer 100% control to the users in their bathing experience. Renu Misra, managing director, Grohe India, believes, "Touchless controls, digital and intuitive operations, and water-saving technologies and fittings promote reduced space utilisation. Touchless faucets ensure supply of water only when needed, and also enable pre-setting of optimal water temperature; whereas

digital faucets, which moderate water consumption, ensure satisfying and voluminous flow without making any compromises." These crucial points are an investment towards one's personal well-being, transforming daily routine into a sensational experience.

The concept of luxury has shifted towards creating wholesome experiences for oneself, spending time preciously, making life easier, and enhancing the quality of everyday life. Sandeep Shukla, head - Marketing and Communication, Jaquar Group, says, "With changing trends, patrons are focusing on redefining/redesigning bathrooms as a wellness space and are spending more time there - not merely for hygiene reasons, but to relax and get a sense of well-being."

Chirag Parekh, chairman and MD at Sternhagen, observes that, besides the recent trends in energy saving, there is a higher focus on aesthetics and wellness. "In line with this increase in awareness, brands have come up with highly functional products - for example, in-built hygiene or anti-

2. "Lightness and strength" are principles that inspired Graff's Sento collection.

3. Continuous aluminium frame in lacquer finish marks Keuco X-line mirror.

4. Graff Finezza faucet and tub add a touch of elegance.



5. Hansgrohe's Shower Tablet Select allows for a comfortable switch between spray modes.

6. AquaSymphony by Grohe plays with water/liquid harmonies.

7. Cielo Whirlpool Bath Tub by Cera has a touch screen control panel and ozone disinfection function.

bacterial armours, without sacrificing the beauty of the end product. Innovations lie at the core of the engineering and in the materials, to ensure the highest standards of comfort, hygiene and convenience." Technology-enhanced products, such as infrared lighting in showerheads, can kill bacteria in the water and are very much in demand these days.

#### ENERGY SAVING TECHNOLOGY

While beauty and style is important, it has become imperative to use water-saving products that reduce wastage by up to 50%. Products have to be efficient over a longer period without putting pressure on the resources, thus making them sustainable over a period of time. Kher observes, "There is no point in installing an eco-product which, over a period, takes more water or energy to maintain or even run." Keuco brings in the concept of efficiency across all the segments where sustainability is an issue. "Our products – be it fittings, accessories, bathroom furniture or light mirrors – have a holistic approach towards sustainability from the material standpoint and also from the maintenance standpoint. Our fittings offer lesser flow rate, and we can always customise a flow rate for

a hotel project based on the sustainability and water-saving goals," adds Kher.

Reducing water footprint is becoming necessary for water conservation. At Hansgrohe, the methods deployed and the products designed revolve around this central idea in tandem with energy and environmental conservation. "Our customers always prefer EcoSmart version of Hansgrohe and Axor products. EcoSmart products maintain a minimum flow rate at varying line pressures without hampering the water pleasure. We offer our users bath fittings with Cool-Start technology, (which) automatically realises when the user needs cold water, and never starts heating the water at that time," says Sharma.

Graff provides several faucets with water-saving aerator solutions like Solar and Targa. The Solar collection aerator, for example, can reduce the water flow from 11-7 litres per minute, with a considerable energy saving. Graff is also compliant with LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design) Green building rating system.

Jaquar's eco-friendly design ethos conserves water, and the incredibly superior water-saving advantage can be



shower or a bathroom mixer, and control the different shower modes. Select is smart, as it is easy to use and understand and involves zero use of electricity," says Sharma.

Innovations at Sternhagen mainly lie at the engineering level, using advanced materials and machinery to enhance the properties of the finished product. Parekh informs, "We also keep a strong focus on energy saving and hygiene, with water-saving WCs, easily removable seat covers to enable easy cleaning (which are made of Duroplast, a non-porous material that looks and feels like ceramic and keeps a stable temperature as well as highest levels of hygiene), and UV lights in showerheads to kill bacteria in the water."

#### CONTEMPORARY IS COMFORT

"Delivering comfortable products is a matter of ergonomics, understanding movements within the bath space," says Kher. Contemporary bathrooms combine efficiency with opulence with the right balance of elegant design and technological prowess. From creating energising and invigorating shower experiences to beautiful basins and faucets, these bathrooms have the minutest detail in place to ensure a positive and comfortable experience.

From the bath fittings to the accessories, all need to offer great ergonomics for a comfortable, hassle-free everyday use. "The light mirror has to be at the correct height, with a defogger – so that the user does not find it difficult to switch between cold to warm lights. Bathroom furniture and storages have to be at the right height to perform efficiently as per the user's needs and wants," explains Kher. All accessories, from shower seats, grab bars, support rails to shower curtains, must be designed ergonomically, he advises, otherwise they will have a negative effect on the psyche of the user.

A simple way to make a bathroom comfortable is to integrate a seating area so you can take a break during a shower or rinse off body scrubs in comfort, suggests Misra. Create a relaxation zone that features a day bed or a bench – a place to spend a few minutes relaxing after your home spa experience. As for ergonomics, Misra believes that it is the water-saving technologies and sustainable practices that make a bathroom ergonomic. "Grohe's TurboStat technology delivers water at the desired temperature within a fraction of a second and keeps it constant throughout the usage," she mentions.

Expectation of colour schemes and lighting in bath fittings is becoming a driving point for most companies to re-engineer their product range, Wolf observes. "Along with ensuring appropriate lighting for the bathrooms, other comfort factors for customers are having a designated shower enclosure along with an efficient shower partition system," he adds. Häfele's new Hydro 80 Glass Sliding System for shower cubicles is a

## NEW ON THE BLOCK

Keuco has updated its most successful bathroom concept Plan, with more than 600 articles in three different finishes, consisting of accessories, bathroom furniture, bathroom fittings, light mirrors, crystal mirrors and care products. The product package is not only based on spatial requirements, but the freedom to choose the movement the way one would like to organise it in the bathroom.

Graff's Aqua-sense shower system provides LED lighting chromotherapy technology and the possibility to listen to music and watch videos. All these functions can be controlled from a wall-mounted touch pad with a simple and intuitive interface. The multi-media contents can be uploaded through the provided USB port.

Somany Ceramics recently launched the luxurious and smart range titled The French Collection. Part of this collection, the Ace series has minimum touch points and comes loaded with smart features like soft close mechanism, user defined energy saving mode, sanitiser to ensure hygiene, deodoriser, fully-controlled remote control and more.

Grohe EcoJoy technology helps in saving up to 68% in water consumption, and is built in most of the showers and bathroom fittings. The Grohe CoolTouch technology ensures that the entire outer surface never exceeds the preferred shower temperature. The Grohe F-digital Deluxe is a completely new shower concept, which delivers a unique sensory experience.

Jaquar HydroLite LED Overhead Shower changes its colour with changes in temperature, while the Artize Showertronic iV6 - an intelligent water mixer system - maintains the water temperature and flow rate during showering. Jaquar is also offering a new self-cleaning shower that solves the problem of unsatisfying water spray and unhealthy germs on the showerhead. Then there is the Jaquar iFlush, a simpler and smarter flushing mechanism that can be installed directly in the pipeline and has multiple aesthetic and design advantages.

Häfele recently introduced Aqua Trendz' bathroom faucets that boast of low operational noise level and a flawless water flow quality even under difficult flow conditions. They are integrated with a Water Sense Technology which helps save 20% more water. This range consists of six series of designer faucets: Style, Stark, Groove, Lure, Still and Magic.

Sternhagen's unveiled five distinct Artistic Bathroom Suites. The Pent Suite unites pentagon and hexagon shapes in an sensorial pattern, while the textured Düne Suite collection captures natural shapes that are a result of water or wind force, and look like they are lifted straight from the ocean floor or a sand-swept desert. The starred Kristall Suite mimics the uniqueness of nature, refracting light from clean-cut crystalline surfaces with no two pieces alike. The Golden Cut Suite celebrates the complexity yet simplicity of geometry and the Seerose Suite embodies the softness and elegance of flower petals.

contemporary sliding mechanism combined with a soft-brake feature. Besides providing a pleasing soft closing, this feature also enhances safety, preventing fingers from being trapped as the door closes. It also protects the glass door itself from impact damage.

The biggest comfort factor in bathrooms is choice. And the highest luxury is when choice is made easy by providing seamless designs through bathroom suites, which instantly make the space look unified and pleasant.

Ergonomics, convenience and user friendliness are at the core of good design. Bathroom design should maintain the balance between beauty and ease of function.

12. The French Collection by Somany Ceramics is inspired by elements of French heritage.



8. Artize Rainjoy combines the latest in material science and hydro-flow design with aqua-pressure therapy.

9. Artize Showertronic iV6 automatically maintains water temperature and flow rate.

10. The Kristall suite collection by Sternhagen is inspired by natural crystals.

11. The Sternhagen bathtub is fluid and compact in design.



experienced in most of their products. In addition, Jaquar's eco-friendly and pollution-free (zero wastage) manufacturing plants promote a conscious and responsible usage of water.

Maintaining efficient Green standards is a priority for most manufacturers lately. Parekh states, "We comply with some of the strictest international and European standards to reduce energy consumption when producing our products, and focus on creating visually striking bathrooms which will resist the test of time with an emphasis on durability and hygiene."

Understanding the needs of customers, Häfele has a range of bathroom fittings with advanced water-saving technologies without any compromise on the actual functionality of



the product. "Our products have integrated flow limiters and aerators along with control cartridges, that enable us to save water consumption by 25% to 30% of normal use," says Wolf.

#### SMART FITTINGS – NEED OF THE HOUR

Globally, consumers are moving towards the trend of Smart living in order to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Effectively, the Smart bathroom market in India is expected to grow rapidly, as it offers increased functionality with optimal integrated solutions. Somany states, "Somany Ceramics recently launched the luxurious and Smart range, The French Collection. The star of this collection is the Ace series, which is designed to ensure minimum touch points and enhance overall comfort."

Manufacturers also want to ensure that the technology employed is familiar and doesn't require any special knowledge, which is why smartphone and tablet integration is considered important. "Shower touchpads, for example, allow control of several multimedia and water functions with a simple touch. The final user can benefit from a technology which is very user-friendly and satisfying in terms of aesthetics. Watch videos, listen to music and enjoy the different shades of colour lighting - all controlled through a touch screen," says Tavolini.

The intelligent Indian customer understands the importance of 'value' over price, says Wolf. "Value entails many things – it includes a good quality product, unique functionality and, most importantly, prompt and timely service. For this value package, a customer is willing to invest more in a product to be able to enjoy longer benefits; and in such cases, price takes a back seat," he explains. There is also a growing demand for good designs that carry the right functionality. There is an obvious expectation that the installed products should be user-friendly and not complicated in usage.

Hansgrohe's long-lasting technological innovation is integrated into the products. "We came up with the innovative Select technology, a purely mechanical technology that helps users operate bathroom fittings at the press of a button. Pushing the smart Select button is all it takes to turn on and off a



## INDUSTRY SPEAK

EXPERTS FROM THE BATHROOM SEGMENT SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON THE LATEST TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS



**Is there a trend towards solid colours for tiles and other large surfaces in contemporary bathrooms?**

**Rahul Kher:** Yes, the trend has been towards more clear and solid colours, and black and solid greys in bigger formats are making a huge comeback; and this will stay within the bath space for the next 3-4 years. We are also witnessing a shift towards more combinations of solid colours and black, Anthracite, Titanium and truffle; white is coming back in a big way, as interior designers are trying to bring back drama into the bathrooms.

**Abhishek Somany:** Patterned and geometric tiles have become hugely popular. This year, these tiles will find a huge market while simple, timeless tiles will be laid in unusual patterns in order to create an enduring appeal. Solid colours have always had a special appeal and never seem to go out of fashion or demand. In fact, with the latest technology available to make tiles that mimic natural materials, the solid colours are coming up very strongly.

**Emanuela Tavolini:** In the bathroom fixtures sector, colour has been trendy for a few years. Graff offers some of its contemporary collections in two distinctive black and white finishes. The two finishes are obtained through a powder coating process, that makes products resistant to scratches, chipping, abrasions, corrosion, fading and other wear issues.

**Anirudh Sharma:** Tile colours hold a psychological value. While white is timeless and relaxing to the mind, the bathrooms of the present need a colour punch that also gives a

### PANEL OF EXPERTS

**Rahul Kher**, country manager - Indian Subcontinent, Keuco  
**Abhishek Somany**, MD, Somany Ceramics Limited

**Emanuela Tavolini**, director of Sales Europe, Graff

**Anirudh Sharma**, general manager - Marketing, Hansgrohe India

**Sandeep Shukla**, head - Marketing & Communication, Jaquar Group

**Renu Misra**, MD, Grohe India

**Atul Sanghvi**, executive director, Cera

**Chirag Parekh**, chairman and MD, Sternhagen

**Jurgen Wolf**, MD, Häfele India

clean and fresh look. Also preferred are the solid colours that reflect light so that the bathroom doesn't have a dull appearance. Many customers are adapting to using materials like glass, which give a spacious and clear look. However, using vibrant colours is not a choice of the masses.

**Sandeep Shukla:** Consumers are looking at clean and elegant products with straight lines and curves. People are moving towards simple, cleaner and contemporary designs – hence products with cleaner lines and a more minimalist modern vibe are preferred.

**Atul Sanghvi:** With technology in tiles – especially digital printing, which has matured over a period of time in India – the options of colours, designs and patterns have no limits

1. New bath products like Graff's Aquisense system, celebrate the digital age.

2. Rahul Kher.

3. Abhishek Somany.

4. Emanuela Tavolini



5. Anitha Sharma

6. Sandeep Shukla

7. Renu Misra

8. Atul Sanghvi

9. Chirag Parekh

10. Jurgen Wolf

11. Wellness is the new mantra as seen in Grohe's AquaSymphony range.

12&13. Form and function define Keuco products.



and the customer preference too is changing.

**Chirag Parekh:** What we've seen in recent years is not so much a trend towards specific colours, but a definite trend towards innovative textures – from 3D tiles such as our Kristall design in Sani-Quartz (a German engineered material created from Quartz) to bold colours, soft finishes such as velvet, or innovative uses of concrete, steel and marble.

**Jurgen Wolf:** The trend of using solid colours has been on a decline for some time now, and the colours currently popular among designers are plain and simple colours – preferably in large slabs.

#### How do you create a home spa-like ambience within a contemporary bathroom?

**Kher:** Focus on well-being and wellness to design a spa-like concept. Keuco products always serve a dual purpose of being useful as well as bringing happiness to everyday life – simply by being beautiful, interesting or just so completely functional that it feels as if they are organic rather than designed by man. And it is this organic approach to design that we can deliver with the complete Edition 400 furnishing concept.

**Somany:** The visual and sensory appeal of a bathroom are the key elements used to create a spa-like setting. Most spas focus on creating spaces with minimalistic design and increased functionality. This is also the hallmark of con-

temporary bathrooms. Install dimmer light controls, as they help to set the mood right for different times; most spas have wooden flooring, as it provides natural warmth to the space. Since wooden flooring is high maintenance and not environment friendly, you can use faux wood tiles that closely replicate its look and feel. Place living plants in your bathroom in order to give it a fresh, green feel. Installing a bathtub helps unwind after a long, tiring day at work – provided there is space and the budget for the same.

**Tavolini:** Thanks to technology and a very open-minded design approach, it is now possible to create a spa-like ambience in any bathroom, even in private houses. Graff Wellness Program exhibits a full range of high-end shower products targeted to consumers who aspire to a shower experience that resembles the one enjoyed in a spa. Ametis Ring, for example, is a multi-function showerhead featuring rain and waterfall effects as well as a full-spectrum LED RGB colour therapy lighting system with six colours. The showerhead main body, completely empty inside, is internally designed so that the rainfall flows in a perfect angle, merging exactly below the centre of the ring.

**Sanghvi:** Cera offers whirlpools and steam shower cubicles to create a personal spa in private bathrooms.

**Shukla:** Extra-large shower offering a stress-busting, rejuvenating downpour, while the powerful flow of heavy drops serves to recharge the tired nerves. Customers look for such products that provide an experiential feel to their home spa.

**Misra:** Grohe faucets and fittings enhance the feeling of pampering and relaxation, whereas the strategic placement of body jets that aid in manipulation of deeper layers of muscle and connective tissue through pressurised water help create a home spa. These products will not only enhance healing and facilitate better blood circulation, but also promote relaxation and a sense of relief through the in-built lighting schemes. The under-floor heating and a heated towel rail will ensure comfort when one steps out of the shower or the bath in any temperature. Choose a double vanity unit or an extra-wide basin, so that there's no fighting over the bathroom mirror in the morning. A free-standing bathtub in the centre of the room brings focus to the rituals of bathing. For convenience, introduce a small side table to store cleaning essentials. Dedicate as much space as you can to your shower.

**Wolf:** Häfele's range of Bathroom Lighting helps enhance the beauty of the bathrooms and concocts the perfect atmosphere for leisure and recreation. Its elegant bathroom lamps are sealed tight and are suitable for humid environments. All the lamps come with an IP (ingress protection) classification of IP 44 – which indicates the degree of resistance to water, moisture as well as dirt. ■