



Bathroom ritz

Glam up your personal space by injecting ambience, writes **Alice Wasley**

The organic forms of Laufen's Palomba collection add a feeling of harmony that reflects a serene natural environment



Balancing function and style is the key to creating a sanctuary out of one of the most utilitarian rooms in the house. There are plenty of things to consider if you are contemplating a bathroom overhaul, for example there are more and more fixtures and fittings to choose from, in a variety of different materials, but keep in mind the most expensive is not always the best choice.

Personalised space

Candana Designs managing director Marc Reed says he has noticed these days the

look of the bathroom is more in keeping with the rest of the house.

“The biggest trend at the moment is the bathroom has become a furnished room as opposed to a utility room, so by making it a lot more personalised, doing things like wallpapers, coloured tiles, people are willing to take a step outside the norm and put some really colourful pieces into the bathroom, whether it’s tiles or furnishings, creating an ambience in the bathroom,” Marc says.

There is a move away from the sterile aesthetic that dominated bathroom design in the 1980s and ’90s.

“Now there’s a feel for organic shapes and structures, natural tiles and stone basins and so on, more so than there has been in the past, so that’s a continually growing trend in the industry. Even bringing plant life into the bathroom again,” he says.

Marc says that different finishes for taps are proving popular.

“The biggest thing is the different finishes in the products, so taps are no longer polished chrome and we’re looking at things like nickels, blacks, whites and stainless steel finishes. It’s the same



style of tap and we’re just introducing a different finish, to give it a sexier, more attractive feel,” he says.

Think about how you will move around in the bathroom when you are choosing your fittings, as well as how they look.

“The number one thing I tell clients is to choose something you feel comfortable using, so keep the bathroom a practical space and make sure that your benchtops are at a nice height, which is convenient and easy to use,” he says.

“The old under-counter basin is very much the number one priority now, where you can have a benchtop at a comfortable 900mm height, rather than having to have a basin sitting on top of a benchtop, because then your benchtops become very low and not very user-friendly.”



Removable furniture

but I think the critical thing is to actually put it together nicely.

“We get people who come through and they just go for the dearest stuff, because they think ‘that’s an expensive tap so I want that’. But it doesn’t necessarily go with everything else they have picked.”

“If there’s a \$300 compared with a \$1000 toilet then people tend to go with the cheaper one these days, so I think people are more budget conscious,” he says.

If you are working within a strict budget, Paco Jaanson managing director Ari Zorlu says that avoiding built-in cabinetry and vanity cupboards and introducing removable furniture into the bathroom will allow for more flexibility in the future.

“If you have a simple but nice wash basin hung on the wall then today you can have some veneer furniture next to it and that could be a tallboy or a trolley on wheels with drawers, so that could be scattered around the bathroom. In five years time, if it deteriorates or the trend changes, you just change the furniture,” he says.

Select fittings that fit in with the overall concept for the bathroom.

“Come with a design concept before selecting the product,” he says.

“What we find a lot of people do is they pick bits and pieces as they go along, so they might pick a tap and then a toilet

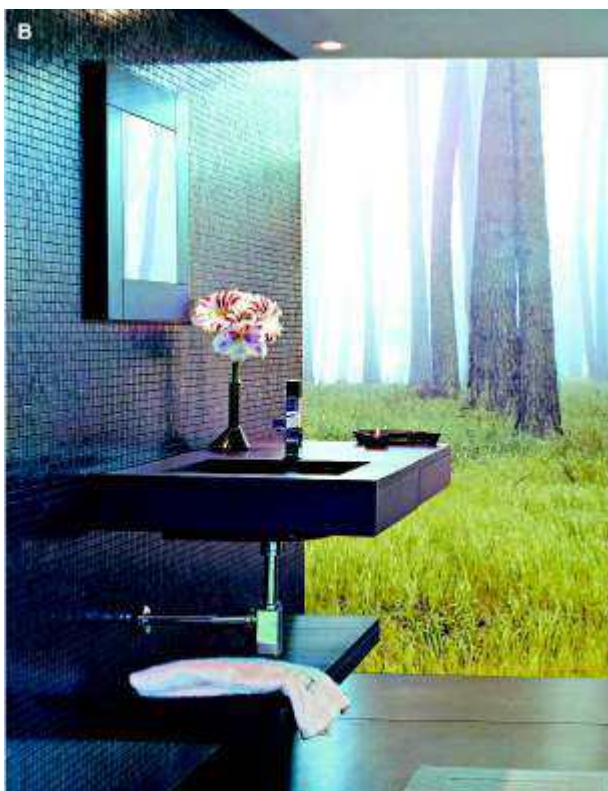
Ari recommends choosing a cheaper product from a reputable brand so you are more likely to have some kind of recourse if something goes wrong.

“Whether someone buys a \$300 toilet from us or a \$1000 toilet we still offer the same back-up, because we don’t want our name to be muddied if something fails and the same goes for every product – we have an obligation to back it up.”

Bathroom designer Robert Dyson says most people have space constraints so he uses design devices – incorporating concealed toilet cisterns, wall-hung sinks and toilets, open-plan showers and stand-alone baths – to make the bathroom appear bigger by revealing as much floor space as possible.

“Free-standing baths are now very popular,” Robert says.

“I don’t find too many negatives about them. People worry about cleaning behind them and things like that but it’s relatively easy to do. It does wonderful things for the bathroom, as it makes the room appear bigger. You’re using the same amount of space as a normal bath but it becomes more of a floating item over a bigger floor area. That’s how you perceive it.”





Keeping costs down

If you are looking for an area to cut costs, wall tiles are a good option, Robert says.

“There are a lot of relatively inexpensive wall tiles around at the moment which still look good,” he says.

“Everyone is using them, as they look really sharp if they’re tiled well and they’re really cheap.

“However there are certain things I wouldn’t skimp on, such as shower screens. But if you use a glass panel rather than a shower enclosure then the shower screen only costs you half as much and looks five times better.”

Bathrooms renovations can be expensive exercises but if you do the legwork you can have a beautiful bathroom at an affordable price.

“It’s a matter of searching around and finding a good name, a good product and a good price,” Robert says. “A little bit of research will save you a lot of money.”



A Hansgrohe tapware by Italian architect Antonio Citterio **B** Paco Jaanson's Antonio Miro Bano collection **C** Hansgrohe's Axor Urquiola bathtubs and tapware are characterised by gentle lines.