



H&G BATHROOM SPECIAL

PLAY MISTY FOR ME

Refreshing and reviving, a shower has the power to be the bathroom's best feature. Immerse yourself in its potential and enjoy the benefits, writes Sarah Pickette.

The shower is sometimes the unsung hero in a bathroom, struggling to compete with the siren song of a showstopper bath, despite being in daily use. But, a shower can make a design statement in its own right. Increasingly, as space efficiencies come into play, the bath is being left out altogether, leaving the shower room to shine. This approach makes sense: you may not run a bath all that often but you use your shower every day, so investing in the best fixtures and design you can afford will pay dividends in luxuriant washing and low-maintenance cleaning.

"People are increasingly planning their bathroom design around the shower," says Belinda Geels, bathroom marketing manager at Reece. "In a recent survey we conducted, 25 per cent of respondents named the shower and shower area as the most important inclusion in a bathroom."

DESIGN ESSENTIALS

No matter how impressive you'd like your shower to look, practical considerations must come first, says Vanessa Cook, design manager at Melbourne firm Smarter Bathrooms. "Size is the most important thing to consider; you need to work to the scale of your bathroom."

Cook says that, as a rule of thumb, your shower should occupy no more than about a quarter of the bathroom or ensuite's floor space. But it's also important to avoid a claustrophobic end result: your shower recess should ideally be generous enough for you to be able to stand in it with your arms outstretched.

It's worth thinking carefully about placement of the controls, says Cook. If possible, have the mixer or taps near the opening of the shower so that waterflow and temperature can be adjusted from outside the shower, without having to reach through the water.

Whether you select an enclosed shower that neatly occupies a corner, a full-height glass screen on one side or a tiled walk-in shower, comes down to personal choice. "One thing to keep in mind is that, in a smaller bathroom, the more seamless you can make a shower appear, the less obtrusive it will look," says Cook.

Juliette Arent, interior designer at Sydney firm Arent & Pyke agrees, and adds that using the same material on the walls and floor can have great impact.

"I personally like solid nib walls that create a shower 'nook'. Built-in niches for soaps and shampoo are a good inclusion. They keep things looking neat and eliminate the need for a shower caddy."

SHOWER TRENDS

The range of showerheads and shower fixtures on the market today is broader and better than ever. There are, however, some key trends playing out in showers, according to Geels.

"Twin showers are popular," she says. "They combine the drenching soak of an >



Photograph by Jared Fowler.



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'SHOWERING IN NATURAL LIGHT IS A BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE. A HIGH WINDOW THAT LOOKS OUT ONTO GREENERY OR OPEN SKY HELPS YOU TO CONNECT WITH NATURE WHILE YOU ARE UNWINDING IN PEACE. BATHROOMS ARE SANCTUARIES FOR BUSY PEOPLE.' JULIETTE ARENT, INTERIOR DESIGNER

Overhead shower with the added flexibility of a rail or hand shower." Overhead showers that sit flush with the ceiling, models with integrated LED lights to create beautiful ambience and showers in white finishes are among the hottest new looks, she says. Flat shower rails also make for a striking inclusion in this high-use area of the bathroom: Geels nominates the rail designs in the Nikles Pure range as a good example of this look.

The fully tiled, walk-in shower is growing in popularity, but a glass enclosure is still the top choice. "Normally, the glass represents a single panel or a panel with a small return, so homeowners are moving away from having shower doors and too much chrome," says Geels. "Sleek panels of glass create a streamlined feel as well as the illusion of space."

Arent notes a reaction to the hard lines and 'shinier-than-thou' chrome fittings of recent years. "Shower trends are now moving towards softer fittings such as exposed copper piping, bronze and timber," she says.

SHOWER TECHNOLOGY

Technology has transformed the way our showers perform. It wasn't so long ago that a shower delivered 20 litres of water per minute. The best-performing models today use less than half that amount, an improvement that's been made possible by ingenious engineering. "Water-saving technology has dramatically progressed from the early days, where restriction and pressure was used to limit the amount of water, to the detriment of the showering experience," says Dr Nicholas Matten, sales director of Hansgrohe. "By mixing air with water, we've been able to achieve a rainshower experience in our models. You get the feeling of showering under more water, but you're using less."

In the case of Hansgrohe's Raindance Air showers, one part water is combined with three parts air to create a full-volume rainshower experience. Other

manufacturers, such as Swiss firm Nikles, use a turbine wheel within the showerhead to increase water pressure and give a massaging experience. In other models, Nikles employs an air-injection process in a series of mixing chambers, resulting in a gentle spray. Methven takes a different approach with its Satinjet system, which is based on two single jets of water colliding to break the surface tension and create thousands of droplets. The user thinks they're experiencing a full-flow shower, but, in fact, they're using only nine litres of water or less per minute.

"Making every drop of water count is at the core of everything we do," says Methven Australia CEO Mark Bejatovic. "Technology has a huge influence on how luxurious a water-efficient shower can feel."

And the advances don't stop at the showerhead. Shower-control systems are another area where development has

occurred rapidly. Hansgrohe's RainBrain (available on special order in Australia for about \$5000) is an electronic touchscreen control system that allows you to set the shower operation, jet type and water temperature before you step into it. It will even play your favourite music while you shower.

In a similar vein, Kohler's DTV shower interface operates a thermostatic valve that enables you to individually control up to six showerheads (both wall- and ceiling-mounted, plus hand-held) through a wall-mounted digital control pad. This can be installed either inside or outside the showering area.

Showers with built-in LED lighting are yet another emerging trend (Nikles models are available in Australia through Reece). So are chromatherapy showerheads, which colour the waterflow. These have been developed on the premise that exposure to certain colours can have a healing effect.

SEEING BEYOND CERAMICS

Tiles aren't the only option for shower enclosures.

Here are a few more...

Smartstone quartz slabs make for a sleek and grout-free shower space. From \$450/lineal metre (including installation); 1300 888 607 or www.smartstone.com.au.

Laminex Aquapanel is a non-porous, economical wall-panelling material that comes in a range of textured finishes. From \$83/m² (supply only); 132 136 or www.laminex.com.au.

OzzieSplash's glossy acrylic ShowerSplash surface is a hygienic and extremely durable option. From \$198/m² (supply only); (02) 4322 7900 or www.ozziesplash.com.au.

Shower with compliments



1 Grohe BauCosmopolitan showerhead and arm, 3-star WELS rating, \$129, Domayne Bathrooms. 2 Brodware City Stik shower, 3-star WELS rating, \$394, Candana Bathroomware. 3 Rush square showerhead and arm, 3-star WELS rating, \$176, Phoenix Tapware. 4 Hansgrohe PuraVida 120 1 Jet handshower, 3-star WELS rating, \$225, Bathe. 5 Ora Ito shower, 0-star WELS rating, \$1352, Paco Jaanson. 6 Nikles Techno 300 LED overhead showerhead, 3-star WELS rating, \$349, Reece. 7 Rochelle Capstan shower set, 3-star WELS rating, \$369 (includes taps, not shown), Recollections. 8 Fontana Rectangle gooseneck showerhead and arm, 3-star WELS rating, \$325, Abey Australia. 9 Neu England ceiling shower rose, 3-star WELS rating, \$320, Brodware. For Where to Buy, see page 236.

THE PLUMBER'S VIEWPOINT

Ernie Kretschmer is a licensed plumber and technical services manager of the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland. Here, Kretschmer shares his professional views on what you need to know about plumbing and caring for your shower:

- ❖ Ensure that the waterproofing process is done well. Get it wrong and it can be expensive to remedy.
- ❖ A three-star WELS-rated showerhead is the best choice; it'll give you a flow of less than nine litres of water per minute.
- ❖ Make sure your builder is aware of the need for a certain amount of fall across your shower's floor or base. You'd be amazed how many fail to get this vital point right.
- ❖ If you're renovating, be aware that some continuous hot-water services are not equipped to deal with the lower rate of water flow required by new three-star shower fittings.
- ❖ When you're looking at shower mixers, choose a model that has a soft-close mechanism. Older houses, in particular, can have issues with water hammer, which occurs when a valve is suddenly closed at the end of a pipeline system, causing pressure to build up in the pipe. Mixers that need to be slowly and firmly pushed to close are a safer way to switch your shower off.
- ❖ Taps do need maintenance, but beyond a simple change of washer, you should leave this to a plumber.

◀ Another interesting idea that's been showcased at recent European bathroom trade fairs is the horizontal shower, in which you lie on a shelf while water falls from a series of jets above. Fairly unlikely to take off here any time soon!

ECO EXCELLENCE

The message about water efficiency has been heard loud and clear by most of us, so shower manufacturers have risen to the challenge of providing showerheads that can offer a satisfying experience without using too much water or driving up utility bills.

All showers sold in Australia have a Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) rating. The most efficient showerheads have a three-star rating, and use less than nine litres or less of water per minute.

A three-minute scrub under a super-efficient showerhead can use as little water as it takes to fill a kitchen sink, says Druce Davey, bathroom designer for Brisbane-based Greener Kitchens+Bathrooms.

"That said, performance can be an issue as efficiency increases," he adds. This means it's a sensible idea to see whether you like the way a particular shower feels before you invest in it.

"Some showerheads do have better water dispersion than others," says Davey. "The better showrooms have showerheads hooked up for you to switch on and test if you like the way they will feel."

If eco-friendliness is a priority, Davey suggests you buy an Australian-made showerhead. "It's one way to keep control of your bathroom's carbon footprint and you'll be pleased you bought Australian if you need to replace a part." ▶

On the rails



LEFT TO RIGHT Kohler Rain Duet Shower Column twin rail shower, 3-star WELS rating, \$605, Tradelink. Methven Satinjet Escape MKII rail shower in White, 3-star WELS rating, \$349, Reece. Mia twin rail shower, 3-star WELS rating, \$495, Phoenix Tapware. Raymor Atlanta five-function rail shower, 3-star WELS rating, \$99, Tradelink. Porcher Cygnet Square twin rail shower, 3-star WELS rating, \$599, Reece. For Where to Buy, see page 236.

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Looks we love



A feature wall showcasing encaustic tiles from Tiles By Kate brings pattern and playfulness to a guest bathroom in this Adelaide home.



Matching Sussex Pol showerheads, plus a Scala handshower, all from Reece, make the showering experience twice as nice.



Colour-backed glass in Dulux Soft Fern and a square Phoenix Kubus overhead shower from Reece energise this Queensland ensuite.



Bisazza mosaic tiles create a cheery rainbow centrepiece in a child's bathroom by Royston Wilson Design in a Melbourne home.

Photography this page by Brad Griffin (top left), Chris Warnes/bauersyndication.com.au (top right), Reece (bottom left), Andrew Ashton (bottom right).



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1 Calacata 32x90cm marble-look ceramic tile in Silver, \$99/m², Earp Bros.
2 Elle 12.7cm glazed terracotta tiles, \$388/m², Elite Bathware & Tiles.
3 Ultimate Plus 60x15cm porcelain mosaic tiles in Steel Grey, \$41/each, Taste Living.
4 Crystal 33.3x100cm ceramic tile in Acid, \$99/m², Earp Bros.
5 Timber-look 20x120cm porcelain tile in Grey Negative, \$299/m², Tiles By Kate.
6 Starry Night 20x20cm concrete tile in Blue, \$295/m², Tiles By Kate.
7 Tresor 30x35cm mixed-materials mosaic sheet, \$46, Amber Tiles.
8 Baroque 2 Negative 10x10cm ceramic tile in Porcelain/Gloss White, \$31, Elite Bathware & Tiles.
9 Bon Ton Pink on White 20x20cm porcelain tile, \$155/m², Di Lorenzo Tiles.
10 Mirror Grey, 30x30cm glass and metal mosaic sheet, \$36, Amber Tiles.
11 Flores Dusk 7x15cm porcelain tile, \$12, Elite Bathware & Tiles.
12 Porcelain 30x30cm tile in Dune, \$69/m², Taste Living.
For Where to Buy, see page 236.

UPDATE ON TILES

The tiles you select play a key role in determining the look and feel of your shower. Large-format tiles continue to be the most popular choice for shower enclosures, says Tina Di Lorenzo, marketing manager of Di Lorenzo Tiles in Sydney. "We're seeing tiles of up to 60x120cm being used on the walls. Laid horizontally, these slabs look amazing."

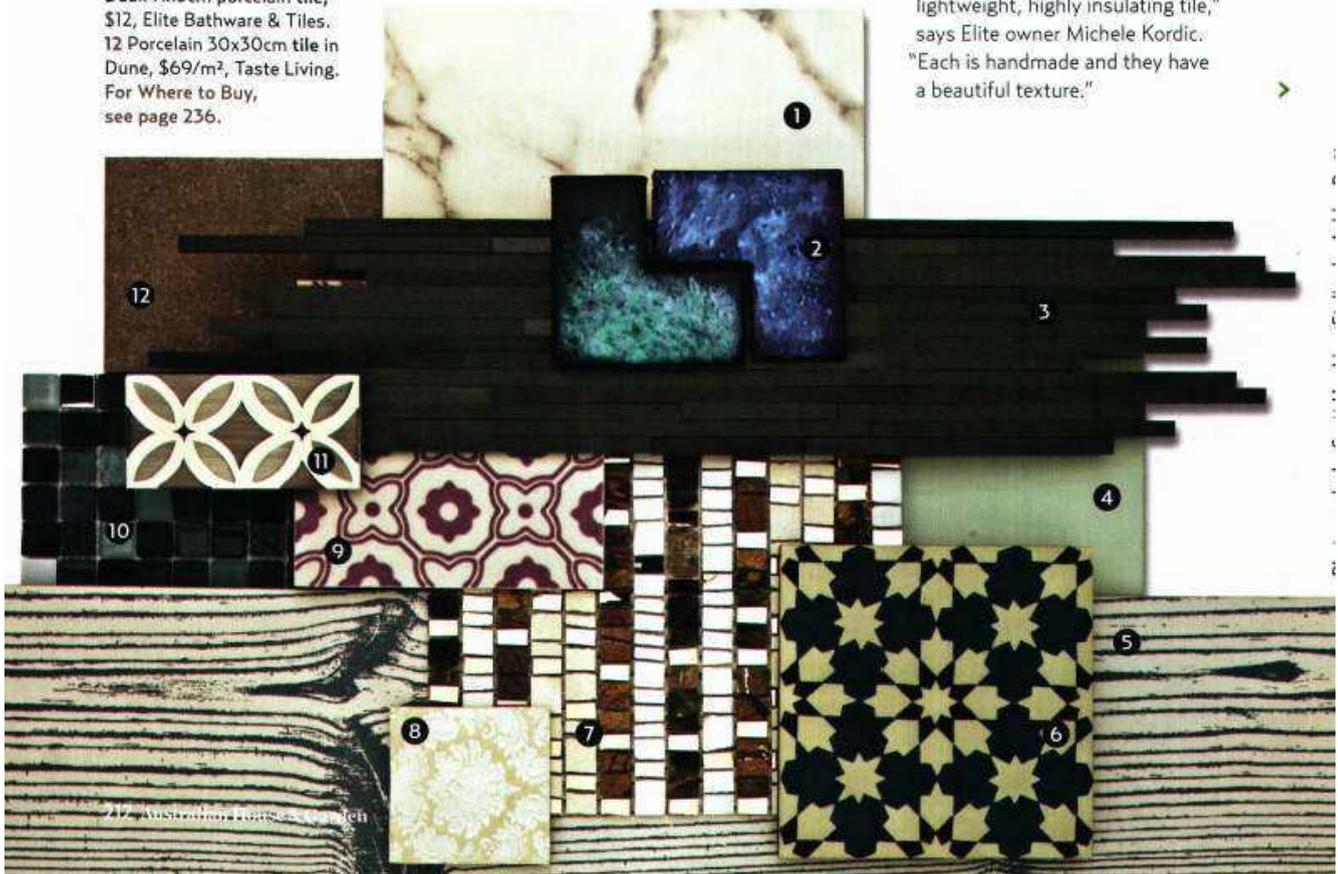
One of the best things about using big tiles, says Di Lorenzo, is the need for less grout, and that means quicker cleaning. To make the most of generously proportioned tiles, allocate as much space as you can to your shower area. At the other end of the size spectrum, mosaics are perennially popular for shower areas. Di Lorenzo says she's seen some spectacular bathrooms in which mosaics are restricted to a single, vertical feature area.

Another booming trend is replica-stone tiles. "They are so like the real stone, it is

difficult to differentiate which is which," says Di Lorenzo. "Homeowners can use products that look like the real stone, yet they don't need the maintenance real stone would require in a shower. These tiles won't stain or discolour, and do not need the sealing."

Textured tiles, so good for adding depth and drama to bathrooms, are increasingly popular, says Sarah Parry-Jones, a branch manager at Earp Bros. "People expect their bathrooms to look stunning, and shower areas are where much of the focus is," she says. Luxurious, spa-inspired spaces can be created by using textured tiles with repeat patterns. "They look glamorous but are easy to live with and maintain," says Parry-Jones.

For an eco-friendly option, consider the Climatica range, imported by Elite Bathware & Tiles, which are made up of 50-per-cent biomass (waste material from nut production) and 50-per-cent clay. "When they're fired, the biomass burns off and what's left behind is a lightweight, highly insulating tile," says Elite owner Michele Kordic. "Each is handmade and they have a beautiful texture."



H&G BATHROOM NEWS

FULL LEAF

Organic-inspired fixtures have enduring appeal. Kohler's Leaf basin, with its delicate, furled aesthetic, is a beautiful way to soften the hard lines of a modern bathroom. Priced at \$549 from Tradelink; 1800 228 476 or www.tradelink.com.au.



Vanity fair

We love the retro lines of the Joy 1500 wall-hung vanity, \$3554, from Domayne Bathrooms; (02) 8339 7103 or www.domayne.com.au.

HIDE AND SLEEK

From Paris comes the ArtCeram Cow range of basins and toilets. This Italian-designed range has bovine-inspired lines and playful prints, but also comes in simple black or white if you're not struck by the pattern. Prices start at \$490 for a basin and \$1590 for a toilet. Parisi; (02) 9559 3666 or www.parisi.com.au.



ABSORBING NEWS

Woven from a high-tech microfibre yarn, Microdry towels dry faster than cotton and are super-soft to the touch. Priced from \$40/each, they're available from Domayne and Myer.



DRAUGHT PLANS

New Eco Ventflo ventilators, from \$49, feature clever self-sealing flaps that shut when the unit's not in use, to prevent draughts and cut energy usage. From Sampford IXL; 1300 727 421 or www.ixlappliances.com.au.

The Euro zone

Italian design house Gessi releases its first complete bathroom collection this month. The iSpa range includes the beautiful tapware Gessi is known for, plus mirror, basin, bath and toilet models, as well as essential accessories. Each sleek piece complements the others perfectly. Distributed exclusively by Abey Australia; 1800 809 143 or www.abey.com.au.



TILE FORECAST: 'EXPECT LIGHTER SHADES USED PROMINENTLY THROUGHOUT ALL FACETS OF BATHROOM DESIGN. HOWEVER, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE TILES THAT SURPRISE WITH OVERSIZED FLORAL PRINTS, OR FEATURE STRIPS IN BRIGHT HUES OR RICH BROWN.' CHRISTIE WOOD,
BEAUMONT TILES STRATEGIC DESIGNER AND BUYER

Soak it up

Zucchetti's Kos Morphing bath, from \$12,000, references both classic clawfeet and contemporary tubs. The Italian beauty is available from Candana Bathroomware; (02) 9389 8631 or www.candana.com.au.

SEAT OF POWER

Introduce a little colour and pizzazz to the bathroom with this Roca Khroma soft-close toilet seat in Passion Red, \$211. Available from Reece; 1800 032 566 or www.reece.com.au.

3 OF A KIND: MIXER TAPS

Methven Aroha basin mixer set, 4-star WELS rating, \$399, Reece.



Focus basin mixer set, 5-star WELS rating, \$560, Hansgrohe.



Kludi Balance basin mixer, 5-star WELS rating, \$449, Tradelink. **H&G**

