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Making waves

by Ruby Rogers

Studio takes a look at five key trends in bathroom design for 2017

ONCE UPON A TIME, bathroom design was at the bottom of the style pile. It was form-follows-function all the way, and aesthetics were an afterthought to quality, durability and longevity. These are all worthy qualities of course, but they don't make for the most beautiful of bathrooms.

That was then. Now, while functionality remains important - essential even - aesthetics have gained equality. Bathroom designers are developing super-practical spaces that are also super-desirable.

"Bathrooms have become a much more significant part of the house, being incorporated into the holistic design of the property," says Roselind Wilson of Roselind Wilson Design. "As a result, its hierarchy is on par with that of other significant rooms like the kitchen. Clients want their bathrooms to feel connected to the rest of the house, so the finishes and look must marry."

This shift in thinking has triggered a flurry of new looks for the bathroom, all of which contribute to its new role as a living space.



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A soft aesthetic

Stark clinical looks were officially over when Bette debuted a freestanding bath dressed in water-resistant fabric at Milan Design Week earlier this year. Sure, it was a concept design - but concepts inspire trends, and a 'living bathroom' in which we can truly relax is at the heart of the 21st century home.

Interior designer Niloufar Bakhtiari-

Bakhtiari reveals that she often uses coloured fabrics to soften the look of a bathroom: "I upholster the doors and match these with the blinds. Adding pops of colour and texture can transform the entire space."

It's not just water-friendly fabrics that have found their way into the bathroom. A move away from tiled or stone walls has led

to designers bringing in softer finishes such as wallpaper and even leather.

Perhaps the ultimate in decorative detail is upholstered seating, for here it is possible to truly stake a claim for comfort. Whether an occasional chair or oversized pouf, these pieces are as practical as they are good looking - perfect for perching, preening and posing. ▶

1 - Bette's fabric-covered concept bath was well-received when it made its debut at Milan. Bette is now working on a development of this design for a launch in spring 2017. bette.de

2 - Twenty-four new additions to Wall & Deco's Wet System were launched at Cersaie in Bologna. Shown here in a shower enclosure is its Inner Forest design. wallanddeco.com

3 - Soft textures can mean more than just seating. Here Niloufar Bakhtiari-Bakhtiari has used coloured fabric to upholster the doors, which also match with the blinds. nbbdesign.com

4 - Studioart's Waternatural and Watersuede collections use specially treated leathers that are entirely water resistant. The texture and shading of the leather add a subtle softness to the space. studioart.it



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