

Clean slate

What we want from a bathroom is changing – the interior designers leading the ablution revolution talk us through three major trends. Are you ready for what they have to recommend?

WORDS EMMA MOORE



The social bathroom

Projects across the globe are reserving space beside bathtubs for armchairs and more, as our once most-private rooms become increasingly sociable. A trailblazer of this trend is Angus Buchanan, the creative director of Studio Buchanan, who included a library in his children's bathroom. 'It's where the family gathers at the end of the day, and on Friday evenings we have a ritual of drinks and snacks whilst the kids are in the bath – we even play music,' he tells us. It's not just the younger members of the family who are being treated to this forward-thinking trend, either; Buchanan's main bathroom feels like a drawing room, with the tub centre-stage. 'Making your bathroom a sanctuary where you can amplify the bathing experience with books and lounging is valuable as we all look for an escape from the stresses of daily life,' he adds.

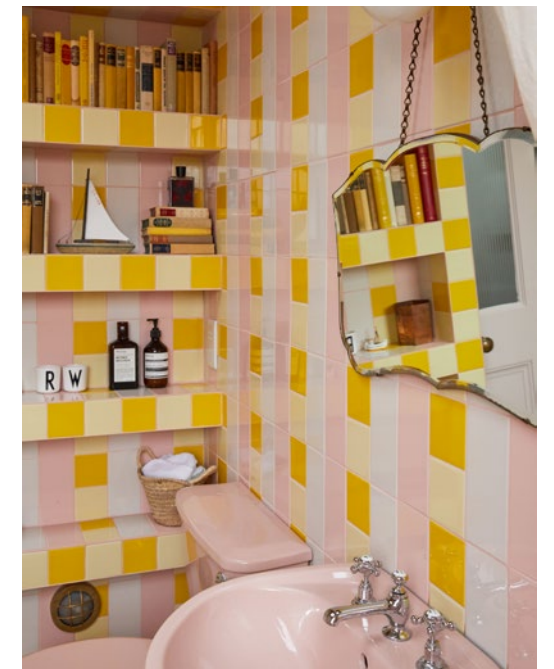
'I've always approached bathrooms as another functioning living space,' agrees London-based architect Louis Hagen Hall, whose recent Balcorne Street project features a bathroom with a bespoke, built-in seating area. 'Bathrooms need to be enjoyable spaces to spend time in,' he explains. Few, however, will take things as far as Holloway Li designer Alex Holloway, who moved his tub into the living room during lockdown when he found 'having long baths was something to do'. Yes, the tight proportions of his London apartment's bathroom only allowed space for a shower, but the designer believes that changing sensibilities are prompting a larger shift towards more liberal attitudes to bathing. 'Generation Rent is used to sharing space and is less prudish,' he says.

So, how do you style a bathroom to take it beyond its primary function and make it feel more like an extension of your living space? Buchanan advocates wooden floors, armchairs and sofas, curtains and rugs. 'Clearly practicality needs to be considered too,' he concedes, 'but that's a challenge we love as designers – finding that balance between beauty, comfort and functionality.' >



Opposite Studio Shamshiri has placed a whole cosy lounge beside the ofuro tub in its south-Californian ranch house **This page, from top** The built-in bathroom seating at Studio Hagen Hall's Balcorne Street project; Alex Holloway's own controversially located bathtub; library shelves and playful tiling in the children's bathroom of Angus Buchanan's home

PICTURES: STEPHEN KENT/JOHNSON/OTTO, MARELLIND HANSEN, EDMUND DABNEY, ALICIA WAITE





This page, clockwise from left
 The outdoor tub in Guy Hollaway's recent architectural project in Kent; YSG Studio's terrace in this Palm Beach home extends the ensuite to allow for a bath with a serious sundowner view; Atelier Delphine Carrère uses colourful tiling to make this outdoor shower feel connected to the rest of the home. **Opposite** With its open ceiling, this bathroom in Mexico by Noa Santos treads a delicate line between indoor and outdoor bathing



The outdoor bathroom

Images of feet lolling against the side of a bathtub, framed by a field of corn, rolling hills or forest foliage, are popping up on social media. That's because, despite the idea often contradicting our notions of propriety and acceptably clement weather conditions, bathtubs have been making their way out of the bathroom and into gardens. Unsurprisingly, it's a trend that began in warmer climate zones, and typically in hospitality venues – there is a touch of decadence about the concept, after all.

'Why can't your home be as good as a boutique hotel?' protests architect Guy Hollaway, who recently installed a bath and shower in a discreet corner of the terrace at West Meadow House in Kent. According to the founder of Hollaway Studio, as showers increasingly become the norm, the tub is being seen more as a luxury, changing from a place to wash, to a place to zone out. 'It works so well here because we've positioned it close to the car port which has solar panels and an air-source heat pump, making getting hot water to the bath incredibly efficient and cheap,' explains the ever-practical Hollaway, who also points out that it can be used as an ice bath for fitness fanatics as well as a spot for al fresco champagne quaffing.

'Bathrooms have become pamper zones beyond a life necessity, with five-star retreats serving as inspiration,' agrees Sydney-based interior designer Yasmine Ghoniem, of YSG Studio. 'Savouring soaking moments is a newly found habit we're clinging to,' she adds, tracing the change to the lockdowns of the pandemic. For a project in Sydney's northern beaches, Ghoniem extended the home's ensuite onto the connecting terrace, adding a double-sized daybed to encourage winding down after a bath. 'The once-neglected private balcony area has become a magnet come sunset,' she says. Seeing the appeal, brands are already offering outdoor bathing options, with superstar designers Patricia Urquiola and Marcio Kogan both having created al fresco tubs for Agape. ►

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The ensuite 2.0

The ensuite is evolving. No longer a small adjunct to the bedroom, increasingly it's the centre of attention. The trend takes its cue from high-end hotels, where a bath sharing space with the bed often imparts a sense of luxury. This is more than simply placing a tub at the foot of the bed, though. Showers and washbasins are joining the slumber party – as freestanding architectural flourishes or partly concealed in inventive, often decorative ways. It's a move away from conventional ideas of privacy that may seem opulent, but practicality and economy are also driving factors.

'As houses and apartments become more compact, especially in urban areas, open-plan designs can help to create a sense of space and fluidity,' says California-based interior designer Yana Prydalna, who has long been busy knocking down (or refusing to build) dividing walls between bedrooms and bathrooms in her designs across the US and Europe. 'Removing walls and barriers can allow for better natural-light distribution,' she explains. 'It reflects a shift in how we view bathrooms – from purely functional spaces to places of relaxation and rejuvenation.'

Forward-thinking Foster + Partners spotted the trend early, creating 'MA', its collection for bathroom brand Falper that sees bathroom amenities reimaged as pieces of furniture that would look at home in other rooms. 'The typical boundaries of zoning these spaces are breaking down,' confirms the studio's head of industrial design Mike Holland. Few have embraced this new flexibility more creatively than Neapolitan designer Giuliano Andrea Dell'Uva, who produced an ensuite for the 21st century with Marazzi at ELLE Decoration's exhibition at the Palazzo Bovara during this year's Milan Design Week. The memorable space perfectly demonstrated how to merge bedroom and bathroom, adding a semi-transparent wall that encased a freestanding shower, as well as an open-plan dressing room with a well-placed bath. **ED**



Opposite Defined by zoned flooring alone, this open-plan ensuite by interior designer Greg Natale is an integral part of the bedroom **This page, from top** Two vanity units carved from blue onyx – one on each side of this room's bay window, opposite the bed – make a statement in architect Jake Moulson's D2 Townhouse in Dublin; glazed dividing doors create a subtle sense of separation in interior designer Louisa Grey's main bedroom; Giuliano Andrea Dell'Uva's memorably modern take on the ensuite from Milan Design Week



PICTURES: ANSON SMART, MICHAEL SINCLAIR, GIORGIO POSSENTI, MITSUKO MOULSON