

A CLEAN BREAK

Formulaic, functional facilities are giving way to colour and character in London's luxury bathrooms, says
Arabella St John Parker



OASIS OF CALM

Top: Brunel cast iron roll top bath, £3,549.60
astonmatthews.co.uk

Below: Astonian Rimini cast iron roll top bath white with Regal cast iron feet, £1,857.60
astonmatthews.co.uk

Previous page: Marnie basin, £849, and Oscar tap in Brushed Gold, £435, both by the London Basin Company
londonbasincompany.com

As possibly the last sanctuary within our increasingly open-plan homes, making your bathroom as stylish and luxurious as it is efficient and functional is essential.

“Bathrooms are coming out of the closet; they’re expressive and want to be noticed,” say the designers at Living Space and Partners. Colin Roby-Welford, creative director at interior retailer Fired Earth, agrees: “Today’s bathrooms are brimming with personality and are much more in keeping with the tone of the rest of the house.”

“Instead of being purely functional, almost formulaic spaces, they are all about detail and character; beautiful finishes and eye-catching designs are key. People like to surround themselves with bits and pieces that make them happy, which tell their stories, and increasingly, this applies just as much to bathrooms as to any other room in the home.”

In prime London properties, bathrooms typically match the number of bedrooms. Multiple bathrooms, including his and hers with attached dressing rooms, according to Savills estate agents, have been creeping up the list of buyer must-haves for some time.

On the question of how to maintain



a coherent look for your washroom and wet room, all the en-suite bathrooms and even in the utility room that doubles as the dog’s rinse room, Victoria Wormsley, of French Brooks Interiors (french-brooks.com) suggests “designing each room as a variation on an overall theme, choosing pieces from a common set of elements to suit each user – perhaps the same brassware, for instance, or using modern or traditional taps throughout and adding points of difference with mirrors and wall lights.”



MATERIALS

Organic materials that evoke a strong sense of connection with nature are top of the list of materials when it comes to setting a palette for the luxury bathroom. “Pearl grey-toned micro-cement-lined walls and floors, misshapen concrete basins, and rustic wood bathroom furniture that gives the space a sense of warmth and texture, are very popular at the moment,” says Donna Blake, showroom manager and senior designer at North Arch Bathrooms (northarchbathrooms.co.uk).

Classic honed marble oozes luxury and white marbles, in all their permutations, are still kings of the bathroom, says Oliver Webb, director at Cullifords. For a point of difference, however, some designers are off-setting the elegant surface with industrially inspired matt black metal fixtures (try Barber & Osgerby’s new One collection for AXOR) or gun metal (see the Incanto collection at Ripples) to create a dramatic twist on a classic look. “Taps and showers in natural, unlacquered brass will patina beautifully over time,” adds Blake.

For those of you who like your drama in full technicolour, exotic stones such



as Azul Imperial quartzite or Brazilian granite Marinace Rosso (try Cullifords, geraldculliford.co.uk) are the way to go for a distinctive, one-off look. Pair the slabs with brushed gold, brass or dark copper fittings, invisible edge glass such as Crosswater’s new Gallery 10 shower panels (crosswater.co.uk) and a sculptural bath to reflect the natural patterns in the stone’s surface.

Bathroom tiles are also dramatic this year, with a generous palette of geometric patterns, hexagonal shapes and herringbone, chevron and striped arrangements to play with. Use Alhambra-inspired geometrics (try Bert & May’s new collection for Fired Earth) to draw the eye to the walk-in shower or take your cue from the likes of architect-designer Basil Ionides and inject Art Deco glamour with narrow-width bricks in shades of aqua, blue, pink and green, and

CREATING CHARACTER

Top: Azul Imperial blue panel, from £850 per sq m, geraldculliford.co.uk **Left:** Bert & May Pradena pink tile, £6.50 each, £165 per sq m; Empire Grande exposed showers finished in Vintage Bronze, £5,062 each, all by firedearth.com

NEUTRAL TONES

Right: Wall&Decò Wet System 20, Vivido, westonebathrooms.com **Below:** Infinity countertop with integrated washbasin; top available in a variety of lengths and colours, from £538.80, Ripples, ripplesbathrooms.com

plenty of gold or chrome trim – take a look at Burlington's Claremont basin mixer or Lefroy Brook's new Janey Mac collection (burlingtonbathrooms.com, uk.lefroybrooks.com).

COLOUR

Colour is back, not only on the walls and the floors but on sanitaryware and furniture too - the rich, earthy tones of designs such as Lago's Tadeo bath (livingspaceuk.com) and Antonio Lupi's Mastello (westonebathrooms.com), for example, are perfect complements for that other home spa essential, real wood (or wood-effect porcelain tiles).

Alternatively, you could make a statement with milky pastels. Susie Atkinson's Whitewater slipper bath design for Drummonds (drummonds-uk.com) can be painted to order and is elegant and prettily tapered, perfect for those fragrant and luxurious long soaks in the main bathroom, while the London Basin Company's Marnie (londonbasincompany.com) is a beautiful way to expand on the theme elsewhere as well introducing a little flora and fauna into the scheme.

AMBIANCE AND SMART TECH

Embrace technology by choosing systems that assist rather than interrupt your bathing ritual. Consider towel warmers and mirrors with heat pads that keep it clear of condensation (try West One Bathrooms' Ambience Illuminated Mirror), and fittings that help reduce energy and water usage, and improve the carbon footprint of our homes. Roca's new Smart Shower allows up to three people to save their preferred temperature, flow rate and shower duration, all controlled via an app which monitors your water as well as your energy consumption. Dornbracht's CL.1 tap has a unique spray that gently rinses your hands using a water flow rate of just 3.9 litres per minute (most taps typically use six litres a





TOUCHES OF COLOUR

Clockwise from left: Isla PVC Blackout Sorbet Electric Roller Blind, from £11.16, [swiftdirectblinds.com](https://www.swiftdirectblinds.com); the new handmade Marnie basin, £849, [londonbasincompany.com](https://www.londonbasincompany.com); the Belgravia bathroom of Alison Henry, [alisonhenry.com](https://www.alisonhenry.com)



minute, according to Waterwise). Control panels such as Gira's pushbutton sensor 4, meanwhile, allow you to manage lighting and window blinds, and moderate the room's temperature and humidity as well as adjust underfloor heating.

Biophilic design is also an increasingly essential part of the modern bathroom. Use plants which can withstand moisture and humidity (try boston or bird's nest ferns, or peace lilies or spider plants), and natural materials to inject a tangible sense of the outdoors indoors.

Make the most of natural light, fresh air and views of the outside world. The newly glazed roof of interior architect Alison Henry's Belgravia bathroom was one of the most valuable changes she made to her home shortly before the lockdowns began in 2020: "Being able to see the sky as it changes above me, whatever the time of day, is extraordinarily moving and utterly restorative."

Windowless bathrooms and evening bathing require carefully planned task lighting and decorative lights that please the eye and set the mood. Ripples' Lamp Shower is an eye-catching solution that combines both – make it the feature of your shower room – but for the master bathroom, statement chandeliers are no longer just for the hall or dining room. **L**