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3/20

SPRING BATH REPORT • 40

## STYLISH SHOWERS, TERRIFIC TUBS

PORTFOLIO • 36

Nature-Inspired  
Kitchen Designs

KBIS 2020 • 56

Post-Show  
Wrap-Up



# Therapeutic Respite

Deep soaking tubs, jetted tubs, steam and sauna products provide much-desired wellness benefits by helping homeowners to relax, heal and escape the chaos of everyday life.

BY ELIZABETH RICHARDS

Rising stress and hectic lifestyles have made creating a relaxing refuge in the home a high priority in recent years. The bathroom is the perfect place to create this respite from a chaotic world, and heat and hydrotherapy products are a critical component to that peaceful, wellness-focused refuge.

Though showers are often preferred for the simple task of getting clean, these other therapeutic products – including jetted tubs, soakers, steam and sauna – are essential to creating the deep relaxation necessary to rest and rejuvenate.

Bill Strang, president of corporate strategy and eCommerce at TOTO USA, Inc. in Morrow, GA says that while the shower culture continues to be dominant in the bathroom, the opportunity to decompress and disengage is also becoming an important part of the space. “Sometimes that disconnecting/disengagement from the digital world around us isn’t as effective in a shower as in having a nice tub you can get into, relax and really let the stress of the day drain away,” he says.

“Relaxation and refuge continue to be drivers for consumers to seek out bathing – both hydrotherapy and soaking options,” believes Seth Megahan, Bathing and Showering Product Marketing Director at Kohler in Kohler, WI. “Our market insights indicate that nearly half of homeowners use their newly renovated master bathrooms to unwind and around two-thirds of those users identify soaking in the bath as a bathroom



The Vetralla freestanding bathtub from **Victoria + Albert Baths** is made of the company’s Englishcast material. Each tub is hand finished, durable and easy to clean, notes the firm. In addition to six standard paint finishes, the tub is available in 194 RAL colors, in gloss or matte finishes. Shown is Matte White. Circle No. 155 on Product Card



**Kohler’s** Sunstruck freestanding air bath sports airjets that push humidified air through the water, delivering a warm, invigorating, full-body massage experience, the company reports. The oval, ergonomic design supports the body for a deep, relaxing soak. The tub offers an easy, three-step installation. Circle No. 156 on Product Card



Ceres, a scooped 59” acrylic freestanding tub from **Barclay Products**, sports an overflow slot with an integrated drain with white drain and overflow covers. Foam insulation can be added between the tub walls for longer-lasting warmth. Tubs can be painted with a custom color from Sherwin-Williams. Circle No. 157 on Product Card



**Aquatica’s** True Ofuro Tranquility Heated Japanese freestanding bathtub is fashioned from the firm’s Aquatex solid surface material. Now available in black, the soaking tub allows for full body immersion and includes an integrated seat and backrest to ensure comfort and relaxation, notes the firm. Circle No. 158 on Product Card

feature that helps with relaxation. We are seeing the average number of baths per week continuing to increase, with millennials at the helm.”

With the strong trend towards hydrotherapy as a relaxation tool comes demand for products that address accessibility issues, allow for personal style, offer a contemporary look that complements the overall bathroom design and incorporate technology that enhances the experience for the user. So say manufacturers recently surveyed by *Kitchen & Bath Design News*.

## ACCESS FOR ALL

An aging demographic brings the need for accessible products to the forefront, particularly as more homeowners choose to age in place. When designing the space, attention to both current and future needs of those in the household is important.

“Accessibility is huge; perhaps the greatest issue in bath and shower design,” says Don Clarke, president at Clarke Products, Inc. in Colleyville, TX. At KBIS 2020, Clarke introduced a new solid surface accessible shower and bath, the Clarke One, which has an outward opening door and wide entry with low threshold that allows for the whole range of hydrotherapy options.

Megahan says that safety is an absolute must in the bathroom space. “Bathers need to be able to get in and out of the tub [safely], so



Made in America, the Chelsea free-standing tub from **Hastings Tile and Bath** features a transitional slipper-tub-inspired design with wide, open dimensions and a slightly higher back. Available in 60" and 66", the tub is available in four finishes: white, matte white, polished gray and matte gray. Circle No. 159 on Product Card



**BainUltra's** Bain De Ville therapeutic tubs work well for alcoves. The acrylic, hand-finished tubs feature a wide deck, integrated skirt and deep bathing well and are offered in a glossy white or biscuit finish or an UltraVelour Matte in white. The tub is available as a soaker or with a range of therapy options. Circle No. 160 on Product Card



Merging the contemporary with the comfortable, the forma Collection of tubs from **Jason International** features hydrotherapy choices, as well as chromatherapy, Sound Immersion and Automatic Ozone Systems. The tubs include flow-adjustable, directional jets on whirlpool baths. Circle No. 161 on Product Card



**Fleurco's** Opus Collection Arpeggio freestanding bathtub has a body-hugging design, and is made of easy-to-clean, high-gloss acrylic. The tub features a clean, slotted overflow, and chrome and brushed nickel drain covers. Circle No. 162 on Product Card



The azure-1 freestanding blu-stone bathtub from **Blu Bathworks** features symmetrical sloped ends that ensure an ergonomic bathing experience, the company reports. Its center drain includes a streamlined toe-tap waste and the bathing space accommodates two people. Circle No. 163 on Product Card



Regina, a large freestanding bathtub from **Devon&Devon**, is made of cast iron with an enameled interior. The tub's exterior can be finished in any color from the water-soluble enamel 'Colors Collection,' which is comprised of more than 500 matte colors. Decò feet and eagle style feet are offered. Circle No. 164 on Product Card



The Cilindro Heater from **Finlandia Sauna** features stones at the front, with the remainder enclosed in stainless steel. Available in 6,800 watts, 9,000 watts and 10,500 watts, the heater can use either digital or mechanical controls. Users can ladle water from the top or throw it on the front. Circle No. 165 on Product Card



The New Classic bathroom collection, designed by Marcel Wanders for **Laufen**, is a reinterpretation of classical styles using the company's Saphir-Keramik material. The tub, part of a full suite of products characterized by soft curves mixed with angular elements, is lightweight, with an ultra-thin profile. Circle No. 166 on Product Card

understanding the appropriate style, size and installation is key to a great bathing experience. We offer soaking and hydrotherapy options on a variety of installation types to allow bathers of varying mobility to select the right experience and bathtub."

European styles are finally being more accepted in North America, notes Erica Moir, v.p. of product and engineering at Jacuzzi, in Chino Hills, CA. This includes features like floating vanities, beautiful shower seats and integrated aspects like grabs on baths and storage caddies that double as a grab, she says. "Thoughtfully integrated design for accessibility is often the most subtle and the most accepted by consumers. We need more companies developing products with style and thoughtfulness."

"It's important to consider those who are less mobile when picking the right tub," concurs James Walsh, v.p. of product management at Piscataway, NJ-based American Standard. "American Standard never sacrifices form for function. We've developed bathroom products with on-trend designs, while also ensuring comfort and safety to provide the whole family with the confidence they need to continue living independently," he says, citing his firm's tubs with molded neck and arm support that help those with limited mobility get in and out of the tub with ease.

Incorporating steam into the master shower or lower-level terrace baths is often considered by designers that Duravit works with for accessibility

concerns, says Galen Stump, v.p. of technical sales for Duravit USA in Duluth, GA. "In creating a luxurious bathroom that will age in place, Duravit offers products from comfort- or ADA-height toilets to ADA-height sinks – yet afford the dweller designer bathroom products that capture a timeless look that will be appropriate for all stages of life," he adds.

In saunas, it's important to keep rooms at 84" high and ensure there is both a lower and an upper bench to address accessibility, adds John Gunderson, national sales manager for Amerrec in Woodinville, WA.

#### FREESTANDING FOCAL POINT

Though shower systems are often a must, there is still demand for both soaking tubs and jetted tubs, manufacturers say. Freestanding tubs, which allow for more flexibility in design, have increased in popularity in recent years, and this trend continues. Often, these freestanding tubs are used as a centerpiece to the bathroom space.

Megahan says, "Freestanding bathtubs continue to be the fastest growing segment of bathing. Primary drivers of this trend are avid bathers and homeowners seeking a 'statement piece' to complete the design of their space."

Strang agrees that there is a little more trend toward freestanding tubs, as well as more bold designs for a jetted tub or a deep soaker going into the space.





Bathhaus tubs are strong, but light-weight, and stain- and scratch-resistant, according to **Whitehaus Collection**. Hypoallergenic and always warm to the touch, the freestanding footed tub allows for full body immersion. Made of Lucite acrylic, the tub includes a chrome mechanical pop-up waste and internal overflow with a flex pipe drain. Circle No. 167 on Product Card



Designed by Christian Haas, the Bauhaus look of the Antheus bathtub from **Villeroy & Boch** reflects the style classics of the Modern age. The unique facet cut on the freestanding tub and stainless steel frame represents a diamond ring. Made from Quaryl, the tub is available in two sizes. Circle No. 168 on Product Card



The Drop-in Airbath with Aqua Moment Waterfall from **DXV** features a bathing experience inspired by Japanese hot springs. The high-gloss acrylic tub provides lumbar support, and includes a chromatherapy system, headrest, built-in control panel, Everclean Airbath 360° system, inline heated air blower and white LED lighting in the spout. Circle No. 169 on Product Card



The Remedy Japanese Soaking Bath is a stainless steel, double-seat whirlpool and soaking bath from **Diamond Spas**. The tub measures 42"x72"x36" and is constructed with a custom overflow, curved bench seating behind the knee, bowed top ledge and tapered skirting. Circle No. 170 on Product Card



Pierre Belanger and **Wetstyle's** Design Lab present MOOD, an elliptical soaking tub with a side rim storage shelf that blends with the overall design. The tub is crafted from WETMAR BiO, a non-slip, heat-insulating material that is eco-friendly. Matte and glossy finishes are available. Circle No. 171 on Product Card



Inspired by classic American architecture, the Town Square S Collection from **American Standard** includes a freestanding tub with a wide deck ledge that can be used as a headrest or to store bath accessories. The tub is durable, long-lasting and easy to clean, according to the company. Circle No. 172 on Product Card



**TOTO's** original Flotation Tub with ZERO DIMENSION simulates zero gravity by offering bathers a weightless experience. The company's Recline Comfort body posture bathing well is available in its new rectangular Flotation Soaking Tub. The tub features softly round corners, tapered sides, a toe-touch tub drain and non-slip bottom. Circle No. 173 on Product Card



**Premier Copper Products** is redefining the possibilities of copper and brass in the kitchen and bath with its new Terra Firma texture, drawing inspiration from nature and earthy qualities. Available in the company's new Showroom Exclusive line, the Terra Firma finish is shown here on a 68" copper single slipper tub. Circle No. 174 on Product Card

Clarke says therapy tubs continue to trend down, and soaker sales are flat or down, with the exception of freestanding soakers. These are increasing in both solid surface and acrylic, he notes.

“Duravit sees a shift to big, spacious soaking tubs that are simpler in style – no frills, no system – just a simple, comfortable, expansive space to indulge and relax in,” states Stump. “This includes freestanding bathtubs with tub fillers, often being utilized as a jewel of the bathroom in luxury bathroom design.”

Moir believes that, with the trend toward freestanding tubs, the popularity of soaking baths has expanded. “They have given freedom to designers who want to maximize the space in a bathroom and not lose the bath,” she explains, adding that, “Freestanding baths have even moved into the ‘wet space’ to allow for a large shower area.” She further notes that people are also asking for products focused on a silent hydromassage experience that is easy to maintain and available in freestanding installation.

**PERSONAL STYLE**

A range of products is essential to meet the demands of consumers who want to express their individuality and incorporate products that satisfy their unique requirements.

“Depending on the design of the bathroom, the tub can either be a complementing piece to the overall design or the centerpiece,” says

Walsh. “On-trend design options from drop-in and freestanding to alcove tubs allow designers to create the bathroom to match [their clients’] individual style.” There’s a shift toward a contemporary look, he adds.

Strang sees a move away from the conventional clawfoot cast iron tub to something that is more contemporary or transitional in design. “It’s a little bit more dramatic in its look and feel,” he notes, adding that there’s been a small shift in color, with natural colors coming in. The cultured marble look is also gaining traction, he points out. “There’s a trend for trying to give that bathroom space a little bit more of a pop, and not have it be so traditional,” he adds.

“Bathroom spaces continue to evolve and have been redefined by the renovation trend of melding old and new together,” Stump notes. “We are seeing a variety of sizes and shapes hitting the market. And black is a popular color as we enter this new decade.”

“Size, shape and color are really dependent on the bathers and their preferences,” Megahan adds. “Size and shape tend to be a marriage between the overall bathroom layout and real estate given to the bath as well as the bather’s typical or desired routine.”

“Color really is dependent on the overall aesthetic of the bathroom,” he continues. “While white has typically been the leading seller among bathtubs, we see a strong desire in some homeowners and their designers



The **Stone Forest** Roman Bathtub is carved to order and available in Papiro marble (shown), Carrara marble and Crema marfil marble. Each Stone Forest bathtub is created from a single block of stone that displays natural veining patterns and other color variations. Since carving is done by hand, each tub is a little different in size, shape and color. Circle No. 175 on Product Card



Combining luxury with practicality, the oval, ergonomic design of the Spectacle Freestanding Bath from **Sterling** conforms to and supports the body as it stretches out for a deep, relaxing soak. The tub features gracefully shaped lines, sloped lumbar support and a generous bathing depth. Circle No. 176 on Product Card



The Mendocino NativeStone Freestanding Tub from **Native Trails** features thick walls that provide insulation for a hot, deep soak. Created using a sustainable blend of natural jute fiber and cement, the tub offers a silky texture and is lighter in weight than other stone tubs. The tub is available in Ash, Slate, Pearl (shown) and Earth finishes. Circle No. 177 on Product Card



The Lotus Sink & Bath Collection, designed by Nathie Katzoff of **NK Woodworking & Design**, includes sculptural works of art that are completely stabilized, waterproof and smooth to the touch. The tub is available in three sizes and various hardwood options. Shown in Sapele Mahogany and Walnut. Circle No. 178 on Product Card



The Biscayne tub is constructed out of Hydroluxe SS, **Hydro Systems'** proprietary solid surface blend. It features lumbar support on both backrests and linear overflow with drain. Available as a soaker or with thermal air, the tub comes in 16 standard colors, and can be customized with any color or metallic finish, in polished or matte, or two-toned. Circle No. 179 on Product Card



Andaz – a round, solid surface tub from **Clarke Architectural** – features a spacious interior. An in-wall slot overflow is positioned high on the wall for a true soaking experience. The tub can be ordered in a standard matte white finish or a satin white finish, as well as gray shades of Whisper and Ghost in both matte and satin finishes. Circle No. 180 on Product Card



The Finezza Freestanding Tub from **Graff** is inspired by Art Deco design, with a distinctive modern trapezoid shape. Constructed from the company's proprietary Sleek-Stone – a composite of dolomitic stone and resin – it is warm and smooth to the touch yet extremely durable, the firm notes. The tub is available in gloss or matte. Circle No. 181 on Product Card



From the Sieger design XViu series for **Duravit**, this freestanding bathtub showcases a prominent metal frame with a V-shaped profile available in Champagne Matte or Black Matte. The gloss white acrylic tub, available in two sizes, contrasts with the frame and enhances the overall geometric design. Circle No. 182 on Product Card

to use the bath as a focal point in the space, and often this opens up the conversation for bold color statements.” Meghan also sees customers seeking to blend their tub into the overall design, which makes the ability to color match other bathroom fixtures important.

### CUSTOM FEATURES

The demand for individualized options extends beyond aesthetics to the features and technologies selected for the products installed.

“Speaking to the customized experience, homeowners often are interested in multiple hydrotherapy experiences,” Meghan says. “Kohler offers combination hydrotherapy options to allow bathers the freedom of choice – providing personalized bathing experiences that can vary with each use, or from bather to bather.”

Walsh says American Standard offers three different types of jetted tubs: Air Bath, Whirlpool and Combo Massage. “The Whirlpool mixes air and water through high-powered jets for a hydro-massage effect, while the Air Bath model uses warm air bubbles for a gentler experience. The combination massage tub offers both features,” he explains. “Aside from the bells and whistles, we’ve also noticed that people are seeking deeper soaking tubs, which we’ve made sure to incorporate with options like the Studio S Freestanding Tub, which has a 17" soaking depth.”

In saunas, Gunderson sees increased demand for the firm’s sauna/infrared custom cut rooms. “Pretty much all of our Sauna Infrared packages are customized to the dimensions of the room that you frame,” he notes. These can be located in bathrooms, for easy access to showering, or in other areas of the home, such as space bedrooms, rec rooms or basements.

The size of these saunas varies depending on the type of technology selected. “While a traditional sauna can be just about any size, the combined heat sauna/infrared rooms need to stay under 425 cubic feet,” Gunderson states.

### TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Hydrotherapy products are about relaxation and escape from the pervasive technology in daily life, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t important technological advances. In this case, technology isn’t about screens and entertainment, but functionality and comfort.

At TOTO, Strang says, the company is working to enhance the experience of bathing through technology and innovation, allowing people to step away from the constant flurry of information they receive. TOTO’s luxury floatation tub with ZERO DIMENSION technology has gained traction, he notes. “It’s really bringing into the space a different look and feel, and a technology that wasn’t there before,” he explains,





A double-slipper tub with deep bathing well, the Mallory from **MTI Baths** is part of the company's Boutique Collection. The tub's interior is curved to cradle the body, the firm notes, and it can accommodate one or two bathers. Created from MTI's SculptureStone, the tub retains heat and is resistant to stains, mold and mildew, the company adds. Circle No. 183 on Product Card



**Drummonds** has launched a compact version of its Tyne solid copper bath, which is based on an 18th century bateau bath. The Baby Tyne is available in three versions: Polished Copper, Copper with a Nickel interior and a custom-painted exterior with a Nickel interior. Circle No. 185 on Product Card



Honoring the **THG Paris** tradition of design savoir-faire, Honore features a softly rolled edge and oval shape for an elegant look. Available in a variety of custom finishes, this freestanding bathtub is made of the company's MineralStone, and delivers generous dimensions and bathing basket. Circle No. 187 on Product Card



**Herbeau's** Marie Louis 61" cast iron slipper tub is handcrafted in France, and features a white porcelain enamel surface that offers excellent heat retention, the company notes. The tub, available in 15 metal finishes, is shown with the Pompadour deck mounted tub filler/hand shower and freestanding adduction pipes in Polished Brass. Circle No. 189 on Product Card



**ThermaSol** offers custom sauna rooms, modular sauna rooms, residential sauna heaters and commercial sauna heaters. The custom cut sauna room features ThermaSol's Finnish Sauna Heater and Heater Guard, imported Olivine rocks from Finland, a wooden bucket and ladle, pre-assembled benches and a pre-hung, all-glass door. Circle No. 184 on Product Card



The **Jacuzzi** Arga bathtub embraces the body in continuously moving water from its Swirlpool jets. Precisely blended, scented Epsom salts can be added to the tub's mixing chamber with waterfall delivery to deliver multiple benefits. Illuminated glass touch controls and Illumatherapy lighting are also featured. Circle No. 186 on Product Card



Combining classic French curves with clean, contemporary American style, **Americh's** Orleans bathtub measures 62"x35"x22" and features a 16" interior depth with an integral linear drain that allows enough depth to be used as a soaking tub. Crafted from Mineral Cast Solid Surface, Orleans is available in Glossy or Matte White. Circle No. 188 on Product Card



The V-Masseuse system provides the experience of a deep tissue massage in the comfort of the tub. The system, available in tubs from **Valley Acrylic**, has massage rollers that pulsate, vibrate and sequence to target specific areas that are experiencing tension or pain. Depending on body and muscle density, the V-Masseuse can be customized to fit specific needs. Circle No. 190 on Product Card

noting that the firm has also introduced a more budget-friendly line of floatation tubs. "It doesn't have as many of the features on it, but still has that same look and feel, and that aesthetic, as well as the deep soaking experience," he states.

Easy maintenance is important, and technological advances that contribute to simpler upkeep are in demand. "Cleanliness and convenience continue to be important considerations in our consumers' ever-busy lifestyles," says Megahan. "We see consumers gravitating toward technologies that provide them with a desired experience with minimal maintenance, such as Kohler's Heated BubbleMassage, which provides thousands of heated bubbles to cushion and massage the bather. This technology does not require the same maintenance as whirlpool tubs traditionally do, due to the use of heated air, and not water, to provide the massage experience in addition to an automatic air line purge feature to remove any residual water."

Advances in technology also offer a better experience than in the past, manufacturers agree. "Jetted tubs have evolved into more of a specialty product. In the past, many manufacturers put jetted baths into their offering just because they thought they should. Unfortunately, that often meant poor consumer experiences. With technologies now available, the experience has been elevated," says Moir.

"People are looking for more wellness-focused experiences in their homes," she adds. "That trend drove the development of our new pump that is compatible with Epsom Salts and allows the user to benefit from the magnesium rich water as well as hydromassage jets."

Efficiency and energy consciousness also drive new innovations. "American Standard's revolutionary EcoSilent technology, found in our selection of whirlpool tubs, makes relaxing and unwinding a more peaceful experience throughout [with] quieter jets that also use less energy," says Walsh. "With a cultural trend toward efficiency and sustainability, this technology saves 45 percent more energy and provides a 50 percent quieter spa experience."

Infrared technology is the biggest advance in saunas. "The ultimate sauna experience must be 'infrared' now," says Moir. "The benefits of infrared technology on relaxation, circulation and detoxification are being touted by many wellness professionals and medical journals. For many people, the high temperatures of a traditional sauna are just too much to handle. An infrared sauna can offer the benefits of a sauna without the extreme heat."

Gunderson adds that the sauna/infrared systems offer options. They can be set at the traditional sauna heat of 180 degrees, or a lower temperature of 130 degrees can be selected for a more direct infrared heat. ■