

BATHROOMS

ANY STYLE CAN BE
DESCRIBED AS LUXURIOUS,
IT'S NOT WHAT IS
IN THE SPACE, BUT HOW
IT MAKES YOU FEEL

Designed by Kalu Interiors' Aleem Kassam, this ensuite's dramatic look relies on the interaction between colour and texture. Black matte tiles are juxtaposed against the lighter marble-look porcelain tiles.

PHOTO: PROVOKE STUDIOS

From tiles to tubs to towels



The clean lines of the Amanpuri bathtub from Blu Bathworks sets the tone for this bathroom. PHOTO: BLU BATHWORKS

Every detail matters when it comes to creating a soothing, spa-like ambience

By **KATHLEEN FREIMOND**

Nowhere is form and function more important than in the bathroom. A luxurious ambience relies on design that soothes the senses with a mix of materials, textures, layers of light and clutter-free spaces.

Luxury begins with ensuring everything has a place, says Shelley Scales, principal at Shelley Scales Design Associates. As bathrooms, particularly ensuite, become personal zones to refresh and relax, every aspect needs to look beautiful and be nice to touch, she says, adding, "Every detail needs to be considered, from shelving and storage for towels to lighting and practical things like a place for garbage."



PHOTO: JULIE LIU

Kalu Interiors' Kassam designed his own bathroom with contemporary features including black matte wall-mounted shower body jets, an over-sized rain shower head and a hand-held wand.

Blu Bathworks founder and designer Michael Gottschalk agrees. He points to the vanities in his range where he uses a drawer-within-a-drawer design to maximize storage. The ubiquitous two-door cabinet often results in a jumble of hard-to-reach items, but the Blu Bathworks vanities allow the storage to be functional and effectively organized, he says.

While the Blu Bathworks range leans to a modern style, Gottschalk notes when it comes down to it, material choices and design are a personal preference.

Kalu Interiors principal Aleem Kassam says at one time classic design was considered luxurious; now, any style can be described as luxurious because it's not necessarily what is in the space, but how it feels.

While marble has traditionally been a favourite choice for high-end bathrooms, Kassam says superior-quality porcelain tiles have replaced marble in many applications because they replicate the look without the maintenance natural stone requires.

While colour choices are important, texture shares top-billing, he adds. To ensure a visual balance he suggests contrasting polished surfaces like walls, floors and countertops with matte finishes.

In his own bathroom (pictured left and on page 28), Kassam used black matte porcelain tiles in a strip that runs the length of the room and up the wall. It breaks up the polished surfaces and juxtapose a contemporary wow factor against the more traditional look of marble. He then repeated the colour—and the texture—by opting for a black vanity and a honed countertop and backsplash.

Contemporary black matte faucets and fixtures are popular and provide an alternative to textures like chrome, but often require replacing the sparkle usually provided by that polished metal finish. One way to add some shimmer to the space, Kassam says, is with glass shelves, glistening metal accents on lighting and styling with a tray of items like apothecary bottles.

Geele Soroka, principal and senior interior designer of Sublime Interior Design, agrees that every bathroom needs a little bling. In a recent project (on this page), she selected sinks with a mirrored finish and added mirrors to the doors of the vanity to enliven the space and indulge the client's love of Art Deco style.



PHOTO: IVAN HUNTER

Geele Soroka of Sublime Interior Design combined Art Deco design, marble mosaic tile and modern features such as the steam shower, mirrored sinks and freestanding tub to create this elegant place to relax.



PHOTO: VINCE KLASSEN



PHOTO: BLU BATHWORKS

The Blu Bathworks Blue Stone freestanding tub in a concrete matte finish is the centrepiece of this ensuite bathroom.

Choosing foundation products—such as sinks, tubs and shower base—with a common design quality makes for a cohesive design. Gottschalk says the Blu Bathworks line, manufactured in Burnaby, allows a designer to choose products “with the same DNA and esthetic” to comfortably align in the space.

Scales says repeating shapes is a subtle way to make the space feel cohesive and continuous. She used that process in the award-winning design of a luxury ensuite in Victoria’s Oak Bay neighbourhood (top of this page), where the octagonal base of the gooseneck faucet she selected from the Henry Collection inspired

the custom-designed base of the vanities and was repeated in the backplate of the sconces.

Working with the client’s preference for a luxury English cottage esthetic and a black-and-white palette, Scales maximized both colours by creating striking tile rugs on the floor of the 220-square-foot bathroom using a basket weave mosaic tile edged with a black pencil tile from Ann Sacks. The balance of the floor comprises white porcelain tiles laid on the diagonal.

But Scales recently took custom one step further when she couldn’t find the perfect sink. Constrained by limited space, she

The Loft tub, designed by Michael S. Smith for Kallista, takes pride of place in this Oak Bay bathroom designed by Shelley Scales Design Associates. Tile rugs in a basket-weave mosaic pattern enhance the room’s black-and-white palette.



PHOTO: SHELLEY SCALES

This trough sink for two with waterfall wall-mount faucets was designed by Shelley Scales to ensure the perfect marriage between form and function.



PHOTO: BLU BATHWORKS

Combining the Electronica wall-mount digital control with the faucet of choice creates a unique sink feature.

custom-designed a trough sink for two with waterfall wall-mount faucets. “This enabled the couple to each have drawers in the vanity with ample countertop space while sharing the sink in the centre,” she says.

With more attention on the bathroom as a sanctuary and a place to de-stress after a busy day, Kassam says good lighting is essential. “You can create a space with beautiful finishes, but if it’s not illuminated correctly with different levels of lighting, then you’re losing some of that luxury,” he says.

A combination of light sources like recessed lights, chandeliers, sconces, under-cabinet and adequate illumination for grooming is the basis of a good lighting plan.

But Kassam cautions that choosing the right light is all important. “It shouldn’t be too cool—a 4,000-Kelvin can produce a cold and clinical light—or too warm, which has a yellow tone,” he says. (He suggests a crisp 3,000 Kelvin). “A well-lit space improves one’s mood and gets you ready to tackle the day.”

While steam showers are becoming a must-have in many luxury bathrooms, the free-standing tub maintains its appeal. In addition to fulfilling the obvious functional need, it adds a touch of glamour and a sculptural element.

Soroka says the curved lines of an oval tub add a sense of femininity and softness to a space that otherwise has many hard edges and straight lines. “That seems appropriate since tubs are generally favoured by women while men often concentrate on showers,” she adds.

Medicine cabinets are also being upgraded or supplemented, says Soroka. “Expensive creams and lotions—as well as medicines—need to be stored in a cool space,” she adds. Adding refrigerated bathroom cabinets like those from Biszet, which offer three different zones, each with its own temperature setting, could be the new must-have feature in luxury bathrooms.

LUXE LAVATORIES

By **CLAUDIA KWAN**

When it comes to raising the bar in your bathroom, most people have seen the rainfall showerhead, the built-in body jets or even built-in Bluetooth shower speakers for the ultimate surround-sound experience. However, there’s also much to be said about décor that makes your quotidian routines go more smoothly, prioritizing function as well as form. Here’s how.



TUB IN THE ROUND

It is an almost-automatic reflex to pop a rectangular tub into your bathroom, but the Taizu—a collaboration between Hong Kong-based designer Steve Leung and Victoria + Albert Baths—lets you consider a perfect circle, providing more room for a solo experience or more comfort for a couple of kids bathing together. Starting at \$8,405. vandabaths.com

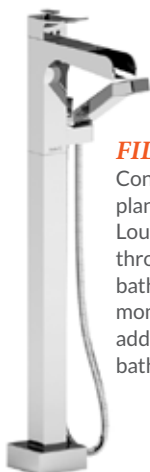
NEVER TOO HOT, NEVER TOO COLD

One person likes icy-cold showers; another wants to be blasted by nearly boiling hot water. No problem. The solution is a shower system incorporating a thermostatic valve, which separates temperature control from the control that designates the volume of water flowing out. Mark the temperature each person prefers on the wall, then set it and forget it. This kit from Hansgrohe includes a height-adjustable showerhead on a shower bar as well as an overhead showerhead to let you individualize your shower to your exact preference. \$1,283. robinsonco.ca



NO HANDS, NO PROBLEM

Forget about twisting taps with sticky or dirty hands. This wall-mounted Grohe faucet handle lets you pop the water on with the back of a wrist. The water then spills down the elegantly curved faucet, decreasing the splash factor around the sink. \$813.75. grohe.ca



FILL 'ER UP

Consider adding a tub filler into your design plan. Pick one with a generous flow rate—the Loure model from Kohler sends 26.5 litres through in a minute—and decompressing bath time could be yours within mere moments. The style you pick serves as an additional design statement, dressing up your bathroom a bit like jewelry. \$2,541. kohler.ca



TOASTY TOWELS

These heated towel bars gently turn your towel into a source of warmth. They’re also especially useful for drying out a towel more quickly for those who shower more than once a day. This set of five allows you to choose the spacing between the bars to accommodate different sizes of towels, and to put the bars out of the reach of little fingers. Starting at \$4,000. watermark-designs.com