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Designer's Notebook

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By Elizabeth Richards

Sensory-Rich Jetted Tubs

When it comes to jetted tubs, spas, saunas and steam baths, hydrotherapy products are increasingly incorporating light, scent and sound to create a tranquil, multi-sensory experience.

The desire for spa-like surroundings in master bathrooms hasn't disappeared in recent years, and the host of therapeutic alternatives – from water- and air-jetted tubs to steam and sauna – ensures that designers have the opportunity to create the perfect meditative space. Top trends in this market include a growing variety of options to suit any lifestyle and design, a move toward sleek digital controls and a host of features designed to enhance and enrich the therapeutic benefits of spas, steam and saunas. That's according to manufacturers recently surveyed by *Kitchen & Bath Design News*.

While there has been some slowing in the spa market during economically difficult times, manufacturers are getting creative, introducing new products and features to entice consumers back to heat and hydrotherapy.

"During the economic downturn, consumers, remodelers and home builders scaled back to low-cost products with very few features," says Jonathan Fore, director of marketing at Jacuzzi Luxury Bath in Chino Hills, CA. "But, hydrotherapy is definitely making a comeback. Our population's athletes, seniors [and] hard-working parents know that hydrotherapy is not a myth. There is a real, physiological, regenerative benefit to hot water circulating over skin and muscles in the form of high volume and low pressure."

ABUNDANT OPTIONS

While the benefits of hydrotherapy are clear, it isn't a "one product fits all" marketplace. Lifestyles, economics, time and space considerations – as well as consumer perceptions – all play a part in which products are selected.

Michael Kornowa, director of marketing at

MTI Baths in Sugar Hill, GA, says there's a bit of a dichotomy. On one hand, people are pulling out their tubs and putting in showers only, often due to what he calls "time-deprived lives." At the same time, many projects include a large shower installed in the original alcove, and a freestanding tub added as a centerpiece elsewhere in the room.

Many of these choices have to do with both price point and perceived value. "It still fits within a trend that we saw taking shape when the housing bubble went pop," Kornowa says. "Those people who still had the money to do things did not want to be perceived as being frivolous [or] wasteful, so they weren't ordering all the bells and whistles. They ordered only what they wanted and needed."

Phil Reyes, product manager, hydrotherapy, for Anaheim, CA-based Aquatic, agrees. Over the last few years, he says, the trend seems to be moving away from whirlpool bathtubs. He cites a perceived lack of value and the fact that people weren't using whirlpool tubs they had purchased as factors in this trend. "It's really forced us and other manufacturers to take a look at our line and say 'what can we do to our line to give value to those people who are going to soaking tubs?'"

This question inspired Aquatic to develop the DriftBath, a new product released last month that creates a soaking experience that Reyes says eliminates many of the concerns around whirlpool bathtubs and gives users the therapeutic value they are looking for. The system creates a river-like current within the bath, using water-only ports in the backrest and foot areas of the bathing well. "It's not the targeted massage that you'll get from a whirlpool bathtub, [and] it's not the fully enveloping air pumping therapy you get from an air system. It's a soaking experience that promotes relaxation," says Reyes. "In moving



Mansfield Plumbing Products

has added eight air baths to its Builder Series Pro-Fit line, which includes whirlpools and soakers. Each Pro-Fit Air Bath features 46 to 58 air channels for massage, single-speed blower with air heating element, air switch operation and an automatic feature that blows any remaining residue out of the Quick Drain air channel after use. Circle No. 155 on Product Card

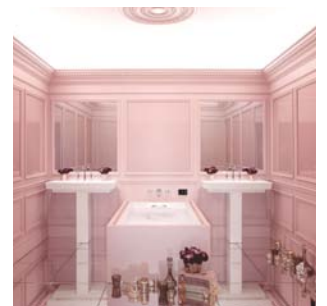
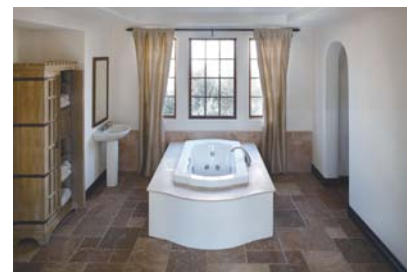


Clean lined with a contemporary design, the Soliste 66"x36" air bath from **Oceania Baths** provides ample room for relaxation, notes the company. Formed with a single sheet of acrylic, the tub is available as a freestanding unit as well as a two- or three-sided skirt (shown). Circle No. 156 on Product Card

The **Cal Spas** Escape Select Spa comes equipped with the exclusive Pure Heat system, a technology that prevents the heater from coming into contact with the water. Other benefits to the spa include the Pure Cure sanitizing system and Shell-Loc foam insulation. Circle No. 157 on Product Card



Jacuzzi's Salerno tub features a transitional design, with wide arching curves, chamfer edges and sculpted details. The tub is available with whirlpool, Pure Air or Salon Spa, which combines the two therapies. Chromatherapy and Illumatherapy are also available. Circle No. 158 on Product Card



Kohler has introduced VibrAcoustic technology on all nine models of its Underscore bath line. VibrAcoustic is a technology-based sound therapy defined as hearing and feeling sound vibrations through the body. The bather can stream music and podcasts through the bath from a mobile device, or select one of four experiences that integrate music, vibration and light. Circle No. 159 on Product Card

Mr. Steam has introduced iSteam, a home steam shower control system that features a 4.3" color liquid crystal display. The system displays only the function the user wants, instead of multiple buttons. Features include temperature, duration, aroma, chroma and music displays, all hidden until needed. Swipe controls allow the user to swipe and select. Only about 1/8"-thick, it features a diamond cut edge that creates a mirror-like finish. It is available in Black or White. Circle No. 174 on Product Card



Orellena says, "People are very familiar with devices for phones, in their car and in their living rooms. Now digital controls have entered the shower." The most advanced devices, she says, work like a smart phone, including swipe technology and large, beautiful displays as stylish as the spaces they are in. She adds that manufacturers are eliminating confusing controls and buttons, making the user interface appealing and enticing through simple-to-use products with a sleek appearance.

VISUAL APPEAL

What good are products that function perfectly if they just don't fit into the overall style of a room? Therapeutic products that perform well are, of course, essential, but designers know that the aesthetic appeal is just as important to the big picture.

Unless a tub is deliberately used as a focal point, manufacturers say that white, bone, biscuit and almond remain perennial color favorites. "I think that colors come in when you're looking at a freestanding tub and it turns into an art piece in the bathroom," says Stacy Zar, director of marketing and new product development at Aquatic. "Otherwise it's white and biscuit – and 95 percent is white."

Fore agrees. "White, white, white," he says. "Neutral earth tones and black had a bump in popularity, but in the bathroom, people equate white and shiny with clean."

For steam and shower doors, Garman says that clear glass continues to be the most popular selection, along with chrome, brushed nickel and oil-rubbed bronze finishes for framework. For the overall look, she says, "Consumers continue to be attracted to the more frameless look for their master baths."

At the same time, when considering steam she adds, "The goal with a steam door is to hold as much steam as possible inside the shower. This is more easily achieved with framed doors containing additional aluminum to seal off openings where steam can escape as filling the opening completely is preferred."


Tub shape and line preferences vary greatly, and manufacturers have responded to this by offering a wide range of choices. "Jacuzzi has overhauled our complete tub line and created or rounded out three distinct collections," says Fore, including adding three luxury tubs – the Acero, the Salerno and the Mio – with modern, clean lines.

Kornowa says, "[Shape] is a matter of personal taste, and while we do sell the less organic ones, there is still that gravitational pull toward the more organic, the more traditional, even though it might be a tub you could put in either setting." For instance, he says, the Elise has the fluidity to fit in with traditional décor, but can also work in a contemporary setting. Other tubs can change character depending on whether there is a pedestal, no pedestal or an inverted pedestal, he adds.

CLEANLINESS CONCERNS

Over the years, concerns have arisen over the cleanliness and maintenance of jetted tubs. Many of these issues have been addressed, and the type of jet system doesn't necessarily mean the tub is more or less clean or easy to maintain, say manufacturers.

Kornowa says that air baths still have an edge over water jets due to the bad rap whirlpools had of being dirty. "The fact of the matter is, you can build an air bath or a whirlpool that will breed bacteria. The question is, how do you engineer it, what are the cleaning systems that you build into your product that enable the user to keep it hygienic?" he says.

Reyes agrees that people were gravitating away from hydrotherapy systems due to these cleanliness issues, which forced manufacturers to find ways to address these issues. "The responsible manufacturers are going to do a re-plumbing system and creatively find ways to get all of the water to evacuate," he says. He adds that the issues have declined as manufacturers have become aware of them and invested resources in addressing them. While not all manufacturers have been as responsible as they can, he says, "the good manufacturers have stepped up their game." 



The Spa Collection from **Diamond Spas** incorporates recycled stainless steel or copper metals into a sleek spa tub design. A range of options are available, including jet systems, LED lighting, built-in bench or chaise lounge seating. The custom Stainless Steel spa, shown in a landscape design by Shannon Murphy, features two-level bench seating, multi-massage jet package and a sheet waterfall feature. Photo by Brent Bingham. Circle No. 175 on Product Card



Inspired by hot mineral springs, **BainUltra's** new Geysair is now available on most of its models. The new technology uses heated air that is then humidified and holds its thermal energy to create a feeling of prolonged warmth. Geysair offers more uniform heat and a deeper, more intense massage effect, notes the company. Circle No. 176 on Product Card



Produits Neptune's Tonic massage system combines water and warm air. Eight oxygen jets, built into the bathtub's contour, provide a blend of water and warm air to produce thousands of micro bubbles that surround the body from head to toe. Shown is the company's Believe tub with Tonic massage system. Circle No. 177 on Product Card



MicroSilk Generation II technology from **Jason International** is an updated version of the company's MicroSilk Hydrotherapy, and presents a more minimalist design with fewer ports, less maintenance and a quieter system. MicroSilk's oxygen-rich microbubbles provide gentle, deep cleansing of the pores, leaving skin feeling smooth with less visible wrinkles, according to the firm. Circle No. 178 on Product Card



The Oakmont tub from **Laurel Mountain Whirlpools** is constructed of .125"-thick cast acrylic sheet, backed by layers of polyester resin and fiberglass roving. The bath contains six multi-directional, adjustable jets, dual air controls and a safety suction fitting. It is available in whirlpool, air or a combination of whirlpool and air, in 30 colors. Circle No. 179 on Product Card



The mySteamist app from **Steamist** offers users control of their Total Sense Home Spa System using an iPhone, iPad or Android mobile device. By enabling the free technology, which is linked to the latest 2.0 version of Steamist's TSC-450 digital control with a built-in WiFi interface module, homeowners can activate pre-programmed user profiles within their home network range using their mobile phone. Circle No. 180 on Product Card





AMERICANA COLLECTION

History in the making: bath furniture handcrafted from reclaimed barnwood by American artisans. Built to last for generations.



29. Premier Copper Products (Booth 3161) is introducing a standard size range hood for the kitchen. Made from hand-hammered copper, the hood has outer dimensions of 38"Wx24"Dx36", narrowing to 22"Wx12"D at the top of the hood. The antique patina is burned into the copper so the color remains constant over time.

Circle No. 238 on Product Card

30. The Soft-Close Tip-Out Hinge from **Rev-A-Shelf (Booth 2621)** is designed for use with all of the company's Tip-Out trays. The soft-close piston eliminates slamming and the 50-degree opening allows for complete accessibility to items stored within. These hinges have precise movement and the spring allows the hinge to close firmly and stay closed, while stiffening ribs provide added stability and eliminate side play.

Circle No. 239 on Product Card

31. ProKitchen's (Booth 3361) Professional Design Software for Windows and Mac supports 300+ kitchen cabinet manufacturer catalogs. The National Kitchen & Bath Association CKD exam-approved software includes Countertop Designer, Closet Designer and electronic ordering to EDI-supported manufacturers. Designers can export fully rotational 3D designs to their client's iPad/iPhone/Android.

Circle No. 240 on Product Card

32. The Hot Hoop Towel Radiator from **Runtal North America (Booth 3927)** is part of the Bisque Collection, a series of distinctive products developed by European designers and artisans. The Hot Hoop encircles empty space in a series of sinuous coils and allows for the stacking of towels within to keep them warm and dry.

Circle No. 241 on Product Card

33. To celebrate Pantone's Color of the Year, **Atlas Homewares (Booth 4321)** is introducing Emerald knobs to its Dream Glass collection of decorative hardware. The limited edition knobs – available in round or square shapes – feature Emerald Green polka dots on Clear or Brown glass.

Circle No. 242 on Product Card

34. Wellborn Cabinet's (Booth 3135) newest door style, Messina, is a full-overlay, wide stile and rail, cope and tenon door with a solid wood reverse raised center panel. Messina is available in Cherry and Maple, and comes standard with a three-piece drawer front or optional slab drawer front.

Circle No. 243 on Product Card

35. The Multiple Motion Sliding Door System (MFS) from **Sugatsune America (Booth 2247)** allows doors to pop out first, then slide sideways over adjacent doors, allowing full access to the opened cabinet space. The system is equipped with a damper for soft-closing action and fits flush with other doors when closed. The hardware takes up approximately 4" of depth for shallow cabinets. It is available for wood and glass doors.

Circle No. 244 on Product Card

36. TOTO USA's (Booth 3616) two new Maris dual-flush, high-efficiency toilets feature clean-lined design inspired by mid-century Modernism. The two-piece Maris Floor Mount Model, shown, features a recessed-curve tank style and elongated front bowl. A push/pull trip lever activates its gravity-fed, dual-flush system – push for a light flush (0.9 gpf) and pull for a full flush (1.28 gpf). This Universal Design model is ADA compliant.

Circle No. 245 on Product Card

37. In keeping with the trend toward distinctive finishes, **Vent-A-Hood (Booth 1335)** offers range hoods in a selection of styles and materials. The hood shown here showcases a designer look with a hammered Copper finish.

Circle No. 246 on Product Card

38. The new **Brizo (Booth 2823)** Hydrati 2|1 shower features a showerhead design with an integrated handshower held in place using MagneDock Technology. Both the showerhead and the handshower incorporate H₂Okinetic Technology, which sculpts the water into a distinctive wave pattern, designed to create the feeling of more water without using more water. The detachable handshower can run separately from, or simultaneously with, the showerhead. Four models are available in a range of styles.

Circle No. 247 on Product Card

39. From **Jay Rambo Co. (Booth 4001)** comes a display created from Walnut and finished in a Natural with VanDyke Glaze. The construction style is frameless, inset, with doors that are five quarter. Blum soft-close hinges and Blumotion full-extension, soft-close drawer guides are available standard on Jay Rambo cabinets.

Circle No. 248 on Product Card

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Circle No. 49 on Product Card



45 46



45. Ashley Norton's (Booth 2105) Manzoni cabinet hardware collection features two distinct lines – Urban and Classical. The Manzoni Urban line, shown, reflects a more modern vibe with its contemporary lines. It is available in finishes of Polished Chrome, Satin Nickel, Flat Bronze or Satin Stainless. Shown is the bowed MC2796 and the wave-like MC2852.

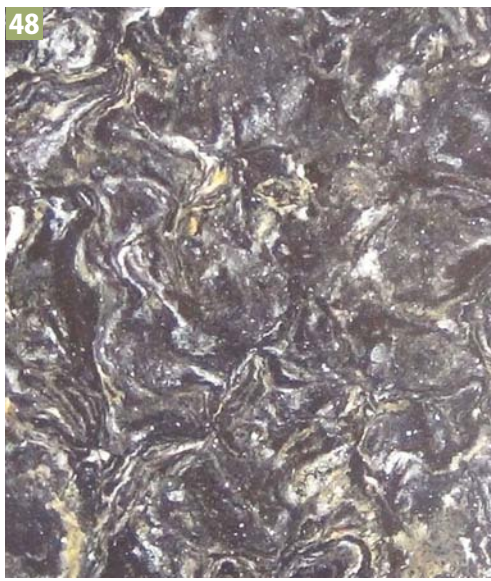
Circle No. 254 on Product Card

46. Clean lines and glossy, tough finishes are featured on the Contemporary Channel Series Cabinets from **Elmwood Fine Custom Cabinetry (Booth 2961)**. Finished in white Hydra Gloss, the cabinets are scratch-proof, according to the firm.

Circle No. 255 on Product Card



47 48



47. MotionSense from **Moen Inc. (Booths 3119, 3524)** utilizes advanced sensors to detect movement in two sensing zones, setting water flow in motion. Kitchen faucets with MotionSense can be controlled in three ways: the Wave Sensor at the top of the faucet starts and stops water flow with a hand movement above the faucet; the Ready Sensor near the base of the faucet identifies when an object is placed beneath the spout, and the handle on the side of the faucet allows for manual operation. MotionSense is available on the Arbor pull-down, Haysfield pull-down and Delaney pull-down kitchen faucets.

Circle No. 256 on Product Card

48. Vicostone Quartz Surfaces (Booth 1654) continues to expand its Natural Look Quartz Collection, which recreates the appearance of natural granites and marbles. The new colors are made with Italy's Breton technology, which uses special molds and color techniques. The Romance Series includes Cosmic Black (shown).

Circle No. 257 on Product Card

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