



**HAUTE H2O:**  
*The latest in luxury  
 and blinged-out  
 bathtubs. R1*



**DANCE:**  
*There are four East  
 End productions based  
 on 'The Nutcracker.' B1*

# The Southampton Press

EASTERN EDITION

www.27east.com

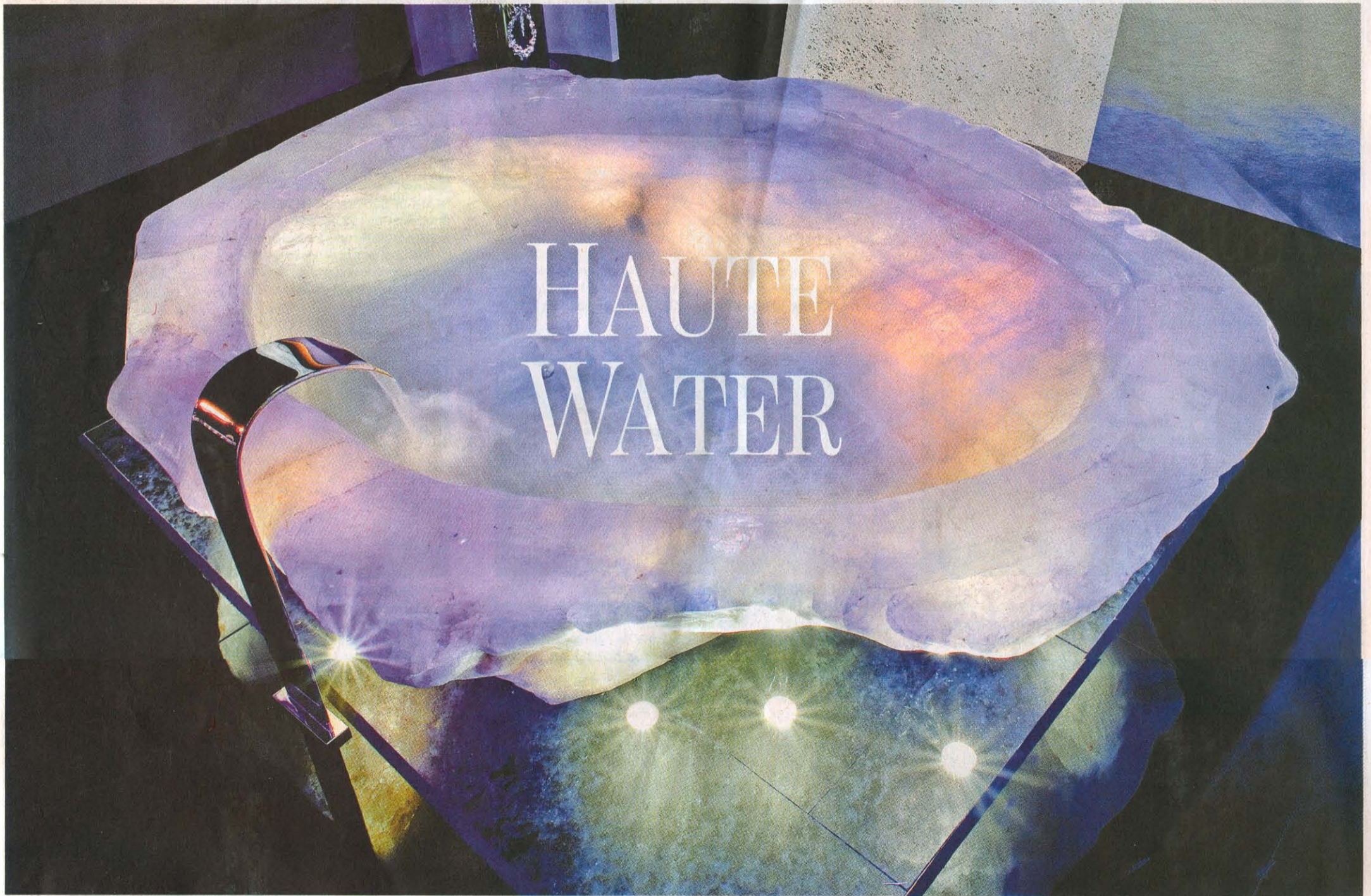
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2012

ONE DOLLAR

## Residence

THE HAMPTONS REAL ESTATE, HOME AND DESIGN WEEKLY

DECEMBER 5 & 6, 2012 **R**



The Baldi hot rock crystal bathtub costs \$1.5 million.

COURTESY BALDI

BY HEATHER BUCHANAN

While Hurricane Sandy reminded East Enders that water may be friend or foe, depending on how close they live to a beach, when put to good use in a steaming hot bath, it can feel heavenly.

The bathtub has a long and rich history dating back to 3300 B.C. Whether it was

filled with the milk, honey, and sandalwood oil credited for Cleopatra's beauty or for prohibition gin, its mystical powers are legendary. The bathtub also has its own unique place in American Presidential history. One was built on the USS Iowa for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who wasn't able to stand to shower. Portly President William Howard Taft got his 330 pounds stuck in the tub on inauguration day

in 1909, requiring four men and a gallon of butter to free him.

And for those who can afford it, the simple bathroom staple has evolved from being just a place in which to soak in hot water to a top-of-the-line vessel for haute water. Like any other luxury item, the sky is the limit in terms of spending to own the ultimate high-end bathtub.

The record for the high-

est-priced bathtub stands with Le Grand Queen, made of the rare gemstone Caijou. The tub, which is manufactured by The Caijou Group and was first purchased in 2011 during the Dubai International Jewellery Week for AED \$6.4 million in United Arab Emirates Dirham currency, (at press time, 1 UAE dirham equaled 0.2723 U.S. dollars) boasts curative powers.

There's also the \$1.5-mil-



lion-dollar Baldi hot rock crystal bathtub, made from a single 10-ton piece of rock crystal mined from the Amazonian rain forest. British socialite Tamara Ecclestone bought one for her \$72 million house in London.

Getting acclimated to a life of luxury can start practically from birth with the pink Swarovski crystal-studded baby bathtub from designer

See **LAP OF LUXURY**, Page R6



Left to right: The BainUltra Ayoura air-jet bath, Kohler Chromatherapy tub and Victoria + Albert IOS bathtub.

PHOTOS COURTESY BAINULTRA, KOHLER AND VICTORIA + ALBERT

## LAP OF LUXURY: *Blinged-Out Tubs Are In Serious Demand*

FROM PAGE R1

Lori Burke Gardner, which retails at \$3,800. It takes Ms. Gardner, the creator of The Diamond Bathtub, an average of 16 weeks to complete each baby tub, she said.

"It's all hand-done one crystal at a time with no gaps," the Newport Beach, California-based designer said during a recent telephone interview. "It has to be absolutely perfect. People also love to use it as a decoration or centerpiece and put ice and drinks in it."

Like any other Hamptons home must-have luxury item, bathtubs are not only aesthetically pleasing, they've now gone high-tech. Modern tubs can alleviate everything from stress, to aching muscles, to cellulite and can come with accessories such as a console framed in 18-carat gold, waterproof HDTV and crystal-encased champagne holders.

Frank Setteducati, a sales agent at Blackman in Southampton, said that the role of the bathroom has changed over the years from a utilitarian room in which to get clean to a place to be pampered. "The bath has really become more of a room, a destination," he said. "It's geared for the in-home spa experience."

At Blackman, luxury tubs start around \$2,500—with most falling in the \$4,000 range—but

five-digit tubs are not unusual. When asked what the high-end Hamptons consumer is looking for, Mr. Setteducati said with a laugh, "Whatever someone else doesn't have."

Trending right now are the European brand Duravit, which is known for its freestanding designs, and the BainUltra line of air-jet tubs, which offer full-body massages, Mr. Setteducati reported. Duravit ceramic bathtub prices start at \$1,500 for the most basic models. The BainUltra Ayoura features three distinct levels of air jets and a three-level footrest and retails for approximately \$6,000.

Kohler now has a line of tubs utilizing chromatherapy, featuring color light sequences. Each color is believed to have a unique effect on the bather, with warm colors stimulating and cool colors calming. Models range from \$3,500 to \$14,000.

There are also tubs that offer a variety of hydrotherapy options. Most popular hydrotherapy models include those boasting mixed lymphatic drainage to loosen the tissue and activate blood circulation, flushing out toxins and working against cellulite.

For technological innovation, Kohler's VibrAcoustic® Bath allows soakers to plug in smartphones, tablets or MP3 players. Special speakers hidden behind the shell of the bath emit sound

waves that travel throughout the water to both envelope and gently resound within the body. Models retail for approximately \$3,200 to \$5,500.

Gina Hickey of Green Art Kitchen & Bath in Southampton finds her clients are very drawn

to modern, freestanding soaking tubs with clean lines. One of the freestanding tubs very much in vogue is the Victoria + Albert IOS Bathtub, which was chosen Best Compact Soaker and one of the Best New Home Products of 2012 by This Old House Maga-

zine and retails for \$4,400.

The British brand is getting a claw-foot hold in the U.S. market, with its hand-finished products made of Englishcast®, a blend of volcanic limestone and high performance resins, which are also known for their insular

ability to hold heat, reducing hot water usage.

Incorporating exquisite form and function, the newest luxury baths offer the ultimate in haute water relaxation. The pool from which to choose them from is forever deepening.



Lori Burke Gardner's pink Swarovski-studded baby bath.

COURTESY LORI BURKE GARDNER