

THE GREAT DEBATE: Showers vs. Tubs

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86

NEW PRODUCTS
ACROSS
SIX CATEGORIES
PAGE 57

MORE WARM
AND SUBTLE,
NEW BRASS
FINISHES PLAY
NICE WITH
OTHER METALS

Brass
/s Back

The Great Debate: Showers vs. T

TEAM SHOWER

► Can a shower offer the same level of luxury as a designer bathtub? Ashton Woods designer Leigh Spicher thinks so.

“We’re not totally abandoning the luxury that comes with what once was the tub with the candles and everything,” she jokes, because showers are larger and more spa-like than ever with rainheads, body sprays, benches, and more. “People are still wanting personal luxury in their bath, but now it’s not necessarily in the form of a tub.”

There’s also a growing number of home buyers with a “less is more” mentality, according to Lauren Jordan of

Gaithersburg, Md.-based Builders Design. “Millennials and Gen Xers are into functionality,” she explains, and if they’re not going to use the tub frequently, they’re going to eliminate it altogether.

Not only is the speed and convenience of showers tough to beat, according to interior designer Amy Miller of Lita Dirks & Co. in Greenwood Village, Colo., but also in certain spaces, showers just make more sense. She adds that the tub is

phasing out just like the formal living room did when homeowners realized they could make better use of the space.

Even if homeowners favor a shower, sometimes a tub is a necessary evil. Having a tub somewhere in the home, typically in a secondary bathroom, is often a priority for homeowners with young children and pets. But a shower can still be the main event, evoking just as much calm and relaxation as a soak in the tub.

“The shower is winning. It would be safe to say that maybe 80% of my clients want the shower, and they’re just putting the tub in because they think they have to.”

— JANET HOBBS, Hobbs’ Ink Custom Home Design



Courtesy Grohe

A HAPPY MEDIUM

For the best of both worlds, consider what designer Marc Thee calls a “wet environment”—a tub within a shower that seems to meet the needs of most home buyers. Designer Lauren Jordan loves the

“progressive” nature of the shower-tub combination because it meets the needs of many end users: It offers the practicality of a shower, easily handles bathtime for young children, and, since

ubs

Bathrooms and kitchens are arguably the most important rooms in a home, and the design choices made in them can make or break a sale. With square footage at a premium in new homes, builders and designers are often faced with a tough choice: Do buyers prefer showers or bathtubs?

by KATHLEEN BROWN

TEAM BATHTUB

▶▶ Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, builder

Tony Crasi has a state-of-the-art whirlpool tub in his master bath. “I’ve used it maybe five times in 12 years,” he confesses. He cautions his customers that they may not end up using their luxury bathtubs either, but that isn’t slowing their requests for whirlpools, garden tubs, and more.

Homeowners are busier than ever and for some clients, stress levels are through the roof, he explains. At the end of the day, he says they want “somewhere to soak, somewhere to relax, somewhere to go hang out and hide.” Whether people actually



have the time to use their tub doesn’t seem to be affecting the trend, according to Crasi.

“A beautiful vessel tub or soaking tub is sexy,” says Marc Thee of Winter Park, Fla.-based Marc-Michaels Interior Design. “It showcases

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— TONY CRASI, Crasi Co.

either a peekaboo or full visual from the bedroom. It reads as this fantasy, wonderful, intimate moment that people enjoy whether they ever get in it or not.”

While some people love to unwind with a

warm bath, other designers agree with Thee that most home buyers who opt for a tub are more interested in its contribution to the overall aesthetic of the room. Bathtubs—particularly freestanding tubs—can serve as a “sculptural centerpiece to the bathroom,” says West Palm Beach, Fla.-based interior designer Gil Walsh, and lately, they “are really being given an opportunity to stand out in the form of art.”

Aside from the works-of-art tubs that are currently trending, in the future Thee says he would love to see a walk-in tub that’s more attractive than those on the market today so that bath-loving baby boomers don’t have to compromise on style.

these environments are typically zero-threshold, it eliminates the traditional shower curb and its accessibility challenges.

While a wet environment is an innovative solution that can meet both Team

Bathtub and Team Shower halfway, there’s even more to come. As American families move away from traditional household structures, bathroom design must also evolve to meet the needs and desires of homeowners, regardless of age.