

AVENUE

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HER (VERY COOL!)
NEW BOHEMIAN
HOME COLLECTION

Understated Elegance

BY CARMEN ALCARAZ GOMES

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WHITE & BRIGHT VISION

Soak in Style

TUBS ARE THE ULTIMATE
RELAXATION

THE

Home Design

ISSUE



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Native Trails Santorini in polished copper



bathing

in a tub is a sexy ritual that not only offers some of the finest product design, but also brings to mind hit films with stars who are still known for their sensual soaking scenes. Memorable was Marilyn Monroe bathing in a bubbly white tub while starring in *The Seven-Year Itch*, Natalie Wood reclining in a warm-water soak during the filming of *Splendor in the Grass*, Elizabeth Taylor lounging in a lotus flower bath in *Cleopatra*, and Al Pacino shouting commands to Michelle Pfeiffer from his gold-leaf tub in *Scarface*.

The ritual of bathing as a stress-reducing passion has been recognized for centuries. These days, many people are extolling the virtues of bathing as a sensory indulgence, an escape from the smartphone and high-tech world of being on and available 24/7. According to predictions from the National Kitchen & Bath Association, bathtubs should reach sales of \$10.8 billion by the end of the year, a hefty jump from 2018. The surge can be attributed to a new generation of people, especially millennials, who are unplugging and indulging. They have the option of choosing from a wide variety of fashionable shapes, styles, sizes and materials when it comes to tubs, each designed for comfort, beauty and function.

"Bathing has evolved into a ritual of self-care and living well," says Barbara Sallick, co-founder and senior vice president of Waterworks, a bathing products company that offers artisanal tubs like freestanding copper, acrylic and cast-iron models. "It's a luxury that invites you to feel more pampered and mindful as well as offering a rejuvenating personal ritual that helps you unplug from the overload of today's life. It has become the only truly private sanctuary."

It is fascinating to study the design of the bathtub and learn that it has experienced many variations over the years. According to the book *Taking The Waters* by Alev Lytle Croutier, as early as 1800 B.C. the Minoans were using terra-cotta tubs that are similar to modern examples.

Although the Greeks and Romans experienced communal bathing, the wealthy had their own private tubs, some of which stood upright and were filled with water that poured from gargoyle heads above, or by handmaids that poured water over them.

Egyptians also loved their time spent bathing in tubs decked out in their own splendid bathrooms. Croutier wrote that they "built shallow tubs with shower-like attachments and embellished their bath water with body ointments and perfumes, turning bathing into a potentially calming, rejuvenating, sensuous and liberating experience." They often followed the experience with an aromatherapy massage.



Native Trails Santorini in antique



DXV Modulus Newport



DXV Oak Hill



Native Trails Santorini in brushed nickel

Ferguson Waller cast-iron tub with signature hardware



Native Trails Aurora in antique



In the U.S., owning a bathtub was a mark of class beginning in 1851 with the first tub installed in the White House. This followed with a dozen or more tubs made of Carrara marble imported from Italy and placed around the Capitol. Soon the bliss of bathing spread with the 1880 cast-iron bathtub, the 1910 porcelain enamel bathtub, the 1920 flat tub (which replaced those with feet), the white cast-iron single-shell tub, and the 1927 colored tub in lavender, blue or green.

Today, experts believe what's old is new again whether talking about home design or fashion. "Homeowners gravitate toward clawfoot tubs reminiscent of earlier century models because they like the look and function," says Johnny Rice of the Ferguson Bath, Kitchen and Lighting Gallery, which offers a dazzling array of bathing tubs in unique sizes, shapes and colors, including black. "They are also thinking out of the box and buying tubs with an integral seat for smaller spaces."

Freestanding tubs are in high demand as more people are following the millennials lead to relax in a spa-inspired tub in their own home bathrooms. What is better than walking a few feet to soaking splendor? "It's no surprise that freestanding tub designs are so popular," says Katty Pien, chief marketing officer for DXV Baths. "They add an element of luxury to the bathroom in a truly unique way, providing a stunning focal point that serves as an anchor in the space. There is nothing more soothing than sinking into a hot bath at the end of a long workday. It is the perfect way to relax and help ease muscle tension, making you feel as if you are at the spa while bathing in the comfort of your own home."

For example, the DXV Modulus freestanding soaking tub offers minimalist yet functional design. This sleek tub showcases striking, angular lines and features high-gloss acrylic construction for lasting beauty and shine, and an 81-gallon capacity for pure pleasure. (This standalone tub is designed for use with a floor or wall-mounted tub filler.) Emulating authentic cast iron design, the DXV Oak Hill freestanding model offers the option of a decorative skirted bottom or rustic feet to suit any bathroom décor. The classic high-back slipper tub shape exudes an aura of luxury from another era. The footed tub model highlights the contrast of the contemporary bathtub styling with the provincial block feet supporting it.

Finally, the newest tub from DXV is a drop-in model, not a freestanding tub, but it does have some cool hydrotherapy features. Inspired by the soothing tranquility of Japanese hot springs, the Aqua Moment Airbath delights with a relaxing waterfall that envelops the bather's shoulders in the comfort of warm, flowing



Native Trails Avalon in ash



Waterworks Clothilde Copper

Native Trails Aspen outdoor tub



Jade Signature bath



water. A mood-enhancing chromatherapy system adds a cycle of eight rich, soothing colors of light to the bathing pool. Designed to complement the massage effect of the waterfall, the tub's Airbath system offers 360-degree air jets with a choice of classic, high-pressure and deep massage settings. An inline heated air-blower keeps the water warm for the duration of the bathing experience.

Indeed, manufacturers are responding to today's health conscious consumers who continue to seek new ways to enjoy wellness amenities which include these "spa-like" experiences in their own homes. The more beautiful the look of the tub, the more inviting the entire soaking experience can be at the end of the day. "The visual impact is a big factor because a beautiful, freestanding bathtub as the centerpiece for a luxurious and restful retreat makes a design statement like no other," observes Naomi Neilson, founder and CEO of Native Trails tubs, which shine in antique or polished copper, brushed nickel, and also in a blend of cement and natural jute fiber.

For example, Native Trails' Santorini is hand-hammered and forged out of recycled copper. Highly skilled artisans use coppersmithing techniques passed down through the generations to craft the luxurious tubs, each resembling a work of art. The Aspen model is a double-walled, insulated tub made from recycled, hand-hammered copper. Native Trails' artisan-crafted Avalon model is made of sustainable materials that are 40 percent lighter than standard concrete. "This tub has the feel of smooth yet earthy concrete that makes the soak seem otherworldly," says Neilson. "It exudes an undeniable wow factor."

Even condominium architects and designers are creating new bathing tubs that respond to the popularity of soaking. At Jade Signature Sky Villa on Sunny Isles Beach, the tub is accented with Calacatta marble mosaic tile with silver leaf designed by Pierre-Yves Rochon (PYR). The French designer believes if a homeowner has the space for a soaking tub, it is essential to go for it because the tubs signify a lifestyle that slows down to allow you to enjoy quiet moments. "Bathing reflects a conscious decision to incorporate time for basic relaxation and self care despite the fast-paced and tech-focused era we live in," says Rochon.

We all know the more stress and volume of information that we encounter in our daily lives, the more important it is to step back, put away our phones and focus on wellness in a peaceful environment—which includes long, leisurely soaks in dynamic style. **M**

Ferguson Siglo with signature hardware

