

Bath Couture

New collections offer high-style options for unique hotel baths

BY STEFANI C. O'CONNOR

The most recent round of bath products to emerge in the hospitality arena run the gamut from showers to vanities to toilets, faucets and mirrors—all created to give designers more stylish options to choose from.

One of the most sizzling debuts comes from Neo-Metro. The manufacturer of luxury plumbing products has jazzed up its industrial-gauge, recycled stainless-steel Ebb Concept product with LED lighting, allowing the sink basin to double as illumination in hotel, nightclub and restaurant settings. LED patterns may be customized and offer a dimming option.

Kristin Kahle, principal of Neo-Metro, said the Ebb Concept is a good fit for hotels because it is highly customizable and versatile. "We can customize to any size expectation, color-match to any hue of resin and powder coat the steel to match any Pantone color...What's more, it doubles as a source of lighting, which is especially important in hotels. In an unfamiliar setting, hotel guests appreciate a nightlight, and hoteliers appreciate any element that streamlines with the look and feel of the hotel's design. And LEDs are a perfect fit for hotels, because they last longer and require very little maintenance to deliver energy-efficient lighting," she said.

Meanwhile, Symmons Industries has bolstered its product line to include the Dia Collection. Offered in polished chrome, it includes rounded and square single-post lavatory faucets, a wide-spread lavatory faucet and tub/shower systems featuring the company's pressure-balancing, anti-scald valve.

According to Beth Mercurio, vp, marketing for Symmons Industries, the Dia Collection provides excitement in the industry "because it takes one-stop shopping and design to the next level. Property owners, designers and architects can look at one product line and find everything they need to complete a bathroom from the shower system to the sink and accessories...this product is a good fit for hotels because installing one product line simplifies maintenance and renovations."

Sustainability and water conservation also are impacting hotels' choices and TJ Mullally, national sales manager for JACLO, noted low-flow fixtures continues to be a hot trend. "Low-flow showerheads are being installed more and more in hotels for a number of reasons. They are good-looking contemporary products, they provide an excellent shower experience for the guest without sacrificing any performance, and they reduce the hotel's costs and water-usage significantly." He noted many smaller hotels don't always have the resources to perform complete renovations or upgrades to their bathrooms, which makes retrofitting showerheads a good alternative.

At THG USA, the Bagatelle and Profil Collections of faucets are causing a stir. According to Scott Triethart, national sales manager, "collaborating with highly respected designers has been a big draw with affluent consumers and other designers." THG's Profil collection was developed by the world-renowned designer Jamie Drake, the face of Benjamin Moore paint. The new Bagatelle Collection was designed by Parisian designer Olivier Gagnere and has already been specified for several international five-star hotels and resorts.

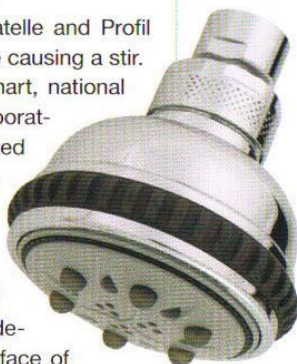
Also very hot in bath design is "industrial cool" style. Watermark Designs is catering to the trend with its new Urbane25 and Brooklyn Collections of bathroom fixtures. Avi Abel, Watermarks' general manager, explained this new trend has come from the conversion of warehouse and factory spaces into luxury condominiums and hotels.

"Everyone is always looking for the next best thing and the industrial feel is that right now," he said. "Unique furnishings create a sense of exclusivity among guests and keeps them returning. High design and fashion command higher prices. Hoteliers want the guests to talk about the hotel and, more specifically, the

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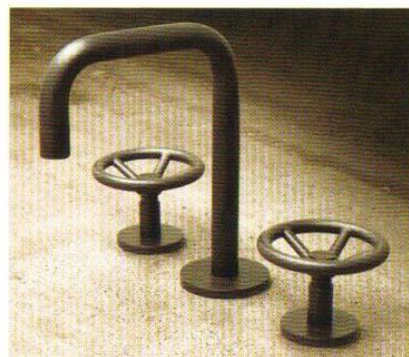
Laufen takes a minimalist approach with the new Mimo Collection.



Low-flow showerheads by JACLO reduce water costs without compromising on performance.



THG's Profil Collection was created by designer Jamie Drake.



The Brooklyn Collection by Watermark Designs offers an industrial feel.

Hotel baths freshen up

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room. Who wouldn't want to have a faucet that no one has ever seen before and then have that guest talk about it to acquaintances?"

Minimalism is the inspiration for the Mimo Collection by Laufen. "Consumers are literally and figuratively scaling back on the size and shape of everyday items—from the food they eat to the cars they drive. They're demanding something more unique; something more personal and practical," said Mike Teresso, North American general manager. "We recognized that a growing number of American consumers are looking for smaller, stylish and more appropriately scaled products." Mimo "epitomizes originality" he added, noting there's been interest from boutique properties "and hospitality projects in urban areas that don't want to sacrifice design because of space."

Gerber Plumbing Fixtures, LLC has added to its sophisticated Wicker Park bathroom suite with high-efficiency toilets as well as self-rimming and wall-hung vitreous china lavatories. "Customers have consistently responded to the Wicker Park suite's sleek modern design and green-minded water saving features," said Kevin McJoynt, vp, marketing. The self-rimming sink includes a concealed front overflow and the wall-hung lavatory is ADA compliant. A certified EPA WaterSense Partner, Gerber has crafted the Wicker Park suite high-efficiency toilets to use only 1.28 gpf versus the industry standard 1.6 model, saving a minimum of 20% annual water usage, according to the company.

California Faucets recently introduced the StyleTherm thermostatic shower system, which has the ability to dial in exact temperatures and requires no diverter valve to toggle between shower applications, such as showerhead to hand-held shower. Each shower application is operated via its own volume control, so applications may be used independently or together. The system also includes anti-scald temperature protection with a safety temperature override button. A higher water-flow rate accommodates a variety of shower options, including rain showerheads, body sprays, handheld showers and tub spouts.

According to Noah Taft, senior vp/marketing and sales, the company already is seeing interest on the part of urban, four- and five-star hotels, said Taft, as well as three-star hotels "that can now stand apart from their competition by providing a superior thermostatic shower experience."

Moving away from the world of fixtures, MirrorMate also is displaying some hot new looks for hoteliers looking for an update in bathroom décor. President Lisa Hunting noted a framed mirror "is a standard in the design world today. MirrorMate provides an innovative, cost-effective way to add a retrofit frame to any mirror currently on the wall and achieve an up-to-date, finished look in the bathroom in a matter of minutes. The pre-taped frame attaches directly to the mirror while [it's] still on the wall, so there is no room downtime. It's an affordable way to salvage an older mirror by covering desilvering, and provides a current, designer look."



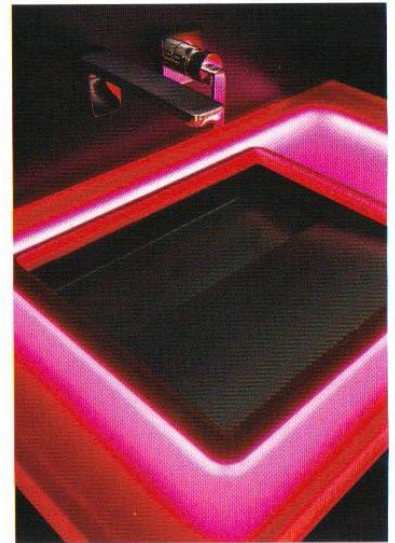
Gerber offers a sophisticated take on bath fixtures with its Wicker Park Suite.



Hotels can give new life to an old mirror with The Cherokee Siim line by MirrorMate.



Neo Metro's Ebb Concept utilizes LED technology.



California Faucets' StyleTherm system allows for a truly customizable shower experience.



Symmons blends style and simplicity with its Dia Collection.