

ISH 2019: colour opens the door to lifestyle bathrooms

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Permanent bathroom transformation into a lifestyle room is the most powerful trend at this year's ISH. Organised by Messe Frankfurt and the German Sanitary Industry Association (Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitärwirtschaft, VDS), the 'Pop up my Bathroom' trend forum presents 'Colour Selection', showcasing current colour trends in interior design and showing how these create new possibilities for the sanitary sector. Jens J. Wischmann, General Manager of the German Sanitation Industry Association (VDS), explains why colour is such an important topic for the next evolutionary step in bathroom design and defines the possibilities arising from the new openness for colour and lifestyle.

For the ISH 2019 the VDS is making colour the key theme of its 'Pop up my Bathroom' trend forum. Why?

Colour is a key theme across the whole field of interior design – with a broad spectrum of different colour options from plain colours to a predominance of pattern. Only in the bathroom is there a reluctance to look at colour. We think it is now time to get behind those in our industry who show the courage to embrace colour as a topic in itself – and not just for accessories! Ultimately, the bathroom has become a room that calls for a sense of homeliness and personalisation.

Surely colour has always been part of the 'Pop up my Bathroom' shows?

Colour has been supplementary, but not a topic on its own. Over the last few years we have looked at the bathroom primarily in terms of its functionality and societal role. In 2015 the ISH's 'Pop up my Bathroom' trend forum took the slogan 'free bathroom' to focus on the concept of a cross-generational bathroom, while at the ISH in 2017 the main, so-called mega-trend was 'bathroom personalisation'. This year we describe the transformation of the bathroom into a lifestyle space – according to aesthetic criteria.

With design focussing increasingly on making the bathroom a homely space, why is colour so important in this respect?

White is still by far the dominant colour in existing bathrooms. Over the last few years colour choice has tended to stay with tradition. If in doubt building owners choose a neutral colour scheme to avoid the risk that a

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colour is quick to go out of fashion. On top of this, the bathroom is for certain the room that is the least frequently redecorated and refurbished. 1970s bathrooms often had an overabundance of intense colours with almost every bathroom interior matched to just one single colour such as Bahama beige. Today, the buzzword is variety, so-called mix and match, reflecting a change in interior design and an increase in expectations vis-à-vis the modern bathroom.



The Pop up my Bathroom trend forum presents current colour trends for the sanitary industry. Source: Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH

How do you stop and / or solve this fixation with white?

We are not looking to stop anything at all. Yes, white is a fashion colour, just like black. The trick is to find a balance between embracing current trends and choosing colour schemes that have long-lasting appeal. Over the last few years we have seen change across the world with suppliers promoting a range of sanitary products on a mix and match basis. Building owners can create their ideal bathroom from a plethora of individual modules. Variety is also found in the different designs, surfaces and materials available with bathroom designers, architects, interior designers and even trades people being able to create a fully harmonised design concept for their customers. To meet this objective it goes without saying that colour has a part to play in the bathroom.

Does this make bathroom planning more complicated?

Designing and fitting a bathroom, like a kitchen, is without doubt the most complicated project in the home. You need to coordinate different trades and plumbing fixtures require fixed installation. Nevertheless, users express a strong wish for a bathroom to have an appeal of its own, which increasingly requires bathroom designers to embrace the lifestyle aspect in relation to colours, materials, architectural and, of course, also lighting design.

What is the role of lighting in bathroom design?

Light plays a big part in our daily life – primarily in relation to well-being. Different phases of bathroom use require different lighting solutions:

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quick use in the morning, perhaps a more leisurely time spent in the evening, while at night you only need to find the toilet. Indeed, it is amazing the effect lighting has on a bathroom and its design! As a result, there is much to consider when designing intelligent lighting in the context of a lifestyle bathroom, including the use of emotional or functional lighting, having bright lighting for ergonomically critical places or the incorporation of natural light.

Does this not make the new bathroom more expensive?

Lifestyle bathrooms certainly require additional work in terms of services provided and trades involved. Whilst sanitary product manufacturers do simplify the selection process using application examples and online configuration tools, the wide range of product variations almost presupposes a design input. Bespoke DIY store paint mixing is not going to guarantee the kind of harmonious, unified design concept as might be developed by an interior designer. Playing safe means seeking the creative input of a bathroom consultant – and this is going to take time. It will prevent mistakes in the design process, and, what is more, with the bathroom designer creating the perfect bathroom based on the needs of the client and the spatial constraints, it also ensures that the bathroom is user friendly. To assist in this process the sanitary industry purposely provides help with its choice of colours and its offer of different colour schemes.

With the enormously wide range of products and new technologies on offer, the building owner is spoilt for choice. Is the bathroom designer a kind of personal trainer for the bespoke bathroom?

Yes, whilst not everyone needs a personal trainer from the start, you certainly cannot be sure of getting a lifestyle bathroom just by clicking on great products in an online shop.

So, the demands placed on trades, retail and designers are also changing?

No doubt we are about to see enormous changes, whether due to increasingly more complex, visible and concealed products and systems, digitalisation or the creative aspect of bathroom construction. Tradespeople offering both lifestyle bathroom design and installation are heroes in my eyes. They are required to continually retrain to keep abreast of current knowledge. The ISH – along with 'Pop up my Bathroom' – offers the possibility in compressed form of learning more about current trends and the future of individual bathroom design and to put this knowledge to good use.

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Colour trends are setting the pace in bathroom design and one of the ways in which these are presented at the ISH, the world's leading trade fair for HVAC + Water, is as part of the 'Pop up my Bathroom' trend show". Source: VDS; Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH

The sector is suffering from a lack of skilled people. So, who is going to design the many lifestyle bathrooms forecast for the future?

The potential is enormous and the number of bathrooms that need to be renovated is large. Developing bathrooms into lifestyle rooms will have an impact on all professions involved. The bathroom academy has been set-up as an instrument to support further training in this area. New job descriptions will develop over the longer term and perhaps new, attractive study courses. Most importantly, entrance to the profession must be made easier. Creative careers are in demand and particularly so for the field of bathroom design.

What kind of colour trends can we expect to see in the bathroom of the future?

We have identified twelve current colour trends that we bring together and describe in our 'Pop up my Bathroom' trend show. Our most important finding: When colour plays an important role in a lifestyle bathroom as an element of the overall design, a basic colour or colour combination must have precedence. A colour collage is created – and all other materials and surfaces must buy into this basic theme in a harmonious, unified look.

Is there a bathroom 'colour of the year'?

We have absolutely no intention of making such a pronouncement. At 'Pop up my Bathroom' we show the most important and current possibilities for bathroom design and see ourselves as providing ideas. The message we want to promote is: bathroom colour is no longer a taboo, but rather a door-opener to a lifestyle bathroom.

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www.sanitaerwirtschaft.de

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Background information on Messe Frankfurt

Messe Frankfurt is the world's largest trade fair, congress and event organiser with its own exhibition grounds. With over 2,500* employees at 30 locations, the company generates annual sales of around €715* million. Thanks to its far-reaching ties with the relevant sectors and to its international sales network, the Group looks after the business interests of its customers effectively. A comprehensive range of services – both onsite and online – ensures that customers worldwide enjoy consistently high quality and flexibility when planning, organising and running their events. The wide range of services includes renting exhibition grounds, trade fair construction and marketing, personnel and food services.

With its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, the company is owned by the City of Frankfurt (60 percent) and the State of Hesse (40 percent).

Further information is available at: www.messefrankfurt.com

* provisional figures 2018

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