



Eljer's wooden bathroom lav, called Jakarta, is fashioned from naturally water-resistant teak—toughened with a patented polyurethane finish.

by Patrick J. Galvin

Will any 1987 bathrooms in New England have a lavatory that "kneels" lower for a child, then lifts to standard height for an adult?

Will any new bathrooms have a family of fixtures, cabinets, and lights that are color-coordinated in Heron Blue or Wild Rose?

Maybe—because these features are new and available to builders and remodelers looking to enliven a space that is often no more than 5 or 6 feet by 7 or 8 feet.

The kneeling lav is by Villeroy & Boch, an international company that specializes in tile, fixtures, and other vitreous ware.

The color coordination is by two well-known U.S. companies, Kohler and Broan, that are following the lead of American Olean Tile, which cooperated with both Eljer and American

Standard to match colors and pieces to make products work together better.

Pricey Plumbing

Many of the new products don't exactly fit into builder buying habits. Some builders venture occasionally into expensive fixtures, but the price range now goes to the stratosphere. The Sensorium by American Standard, for example, runs upward of \$12,000 plus installation.

The Sensorium gives home owners a bathtub they can program to draw the bath—at whatever time and temperature are desired—before leaving for work in the morning. And it includes music, phone, intercom, and can even lock or unlock the front door.

There are other, similar products, notably the Environment or Habitat by Kohler, which started the trend, and the BathWomb by Waterjet.

High-tech wombs aside, there are a lot of lesser luxuries still available for

ordinary humanity.

Cabinets Abound

One of the best developments for 1987 has been a proliferation of bathroom storage cabinetry.

This has always been needed. Until now, bath designers have resorted to adapting kitchen cabinets to bathrooms, or have special-ordered them from custom-cabinet firms. But kitchen wall cabinets are 12 inches deep, and, generally, bathrooms call for shallower depths of six to nine inches for the storage of towels, washcloths, whatever.

This year, many stock kitchen-cabinet makers added full ranges of stock bathroom cabinets to their lines. These are now in general distribution in a wide variety of woods, laminates, and styles.

In addition, makers of medicine cabinets have become more innovative. For 1987 we see more examples of three-mirror units with drawers and doors and with good lighting that, in many cases, can eliminate the need for additional bathroom lighting. Some of these are surface-mounted, which can limit their depth, but others are deeper and designed to recess.

Faucets Galore

There are hundreds (literally) of new bathroom faucets on the market.

A few years ago, only foreign makes were characterized by colors, different materials, and unusual shapes. But many U.S. manufacturers now offer foreign styling at lower prices.

The new faucets are made from various plastics, ceramics, and metals. Many now have cartridge or ceramic-disk construction, which eliminates washers and, manufacturers claim, ensures a lifetime of leak-free performance.

But the most interesting faucet features in the bathroom are the same as those in the kitchen: solar-powered temperature readouts (on American Standard's Ceramix Electronix), automatic turn-on and shutoff (Cue-Tel), and spouts that lift or lower several inches by finger pressure (Moen's Riser).

Otherwise, take your choice of the strange shapes and colors. If you like, you can even buy a faucet shaped like an orchid—and in orchid color—from Ginger's USA.

New Lighting

Low-voltage lighting is something that builders can do a lot with in both bathroom and kitchen.

A lot of low-voltage lighting is available for commercial use, but not much for residences. A Nebraska firm, Task Lighting, has put together packages and systems that make it easy to use. It



"Lift" is a lav that kneels for children, lifts up for adults. It is new from Villeroy & Boch.



For the bather who has everything: the Sensorium comes with electronic controls for timed baths, music, intercom, lock protection, and phone. But will it clean behind your ears?



American Standard's Ceramix Electronix bath-and-kitchen faucets give instantaneous temperature readouts powered by light.



Cue-Tel bath-and-kitchen faucets turn on in presence of hand or object, turn off when it is taken away.

requires a transformer, which can easily be hidden in or behind a cabinet.

The energy savings are not really significant. What is important is the design capability of a lot of small lights that can be placed around vanity kick spaces, around mirrors, up above—behind translucent fascia—or around tub surrounds where there seldom is enough light to read a shampoo-bottle label.

Fixturemania

American Standard offers the luxury Warren Platner collection of lavs, tubs, toilets, and bidets. Eljer and Kohler have jumped on this bandwagon with many upgrades.

Eljer, for example, offers lavatories, toilet seats, tank covers, and bar sinks in either teak or mahogany. The lavs are coated with a polyurethane finish to add to their natural water resistance.

Then there are the foreign lines, such as Porcher and Sanijura of France. These are expensive, distinctive in appearance, and of high quality, but so are the new American lines. The main gain is a much wider variety of colors. Otherwise, the only notable difference is a more direct flush action in foreign toilets.

All toilets are moving toward less tank capacity. Many water-supply valves now feature flow restrictors. Water conservation seems to have become more important than saving energy, in many quarters.

To sum it all up, the move is toward better merchandise, often with interesting new features. Some of these luxury upgrades would appear to be well worth the builder's consideration, even in plain vanilla homes. ■

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