

# Press

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## ISH

The World's Leading Trade Fair for The Bathroom Experience,  
Building Services, Energy, Air Conditioning Technology and  
Renewable Energies

Frankfurt am Main, 12 to 16 March 2013

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### **ISH 2013: Bathroom Trend "Bathroom Bubble" – Room to Retreat**

**"Bathroom Bubble" is the answer to a growing need for calm and equilibrium**

**Increasing cosiness is leading to alternative, highly individual usage possibilities for the bathroom**

The modern bathroom is the embodiment of retreat into a world of one's own, far removed from everyday life. In future, as the core area of a private home that is increasingly becoming the focal point of life, the bathroom will gain even more significance. At the ISH, the World's Leading Trade Fair for The Bathroom Experience, Building Services, Energy, Air Conditioning Technology and Renewable Energies in Frankfurt am Main from 12 to 16 March 2013, this development will be taken up in the form of the "Bathroom Bubble" trend – as an isolated bubble within a permeable living cocoon. The bathroom trend for 2013/14 will be presented in the "Pop up my Bathroom" trend forum established by Messe Frankfurt and the German Sanitary Industry Association (Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitärwirtschaft / VDS).

As a virtually timeless, intimate place, the bathroom provides a welcome change to a culture of permanent representation in which we are accustomed to constantly defining our image via our appearance, our work, our style and our consumption. Today, public perception of that image is also increasingly focusing on our choice of a home and how we design it. Besides shaping the opinion our friends have of us, our home also affects how we are seen by the wider circle of acquaintances and colleagues that we are increasingly admitting to our private world. This long-term development is being driven by several factors: the relocation of a

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large part of our social life to our homes, the increasingly blurred borders between our private and working lives and the spread of the home office. In future, furnishing the bathroom as a final place of retreat and designing it as a cosy space will thus become even more important to our personal wellbeing.

**"Bathroom Bubble" creates boundaries in an environment where the boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred**

And yet it is not a question of opposites, of the contrast between areas of retreat and presentation. It has more to do with the idea of a space within a space, a capsule beneath the outer shell, as protected as the smallest figure in a set of nesting dolls. Accordingly, the design of the bathroom can certainly be based on the same representation requirements as the rest of the home. It isn't just that, even here, the user applies the highest standards of comfort and aesthetics in order to enjoy the time he spends here himself – he also wants his beautiful bathroom to be a demonstration of sophisticated bathing culture. For here too, it's not just the family who are granted access, but an inner circle of friends and acquaintances as well; they too should feel at home here. Everything that applies to our home in general also applies to the bathroom: we want it to represent both ourselves and our self-image.

**The bathroom shows everything in a different light**

As in every highly developed culture where increasing individualisation is being accompanied by dwindling privacy, we are increasingly drawing a distinction between our public persona and our private self. In the "Bathroom Bubble", we can be alone and celebrate being alone. But it isn't just the seclusion of the bathroom that allows us to drop the mask. Coming into contact with water, one of the four classical elements, has a ritual function as well: it "washes away" our make-up, shell and armour and allows us to emerge from



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the shower or bathtub naked and feeling reborn. The bathroom thus becomes a place of encounter with the self, a cause for self-reflection and – when used to prepare for the outside world – a place of self-definition. For the "Bathroom Bubble" isn't just where we take things off, it's where we put things on as well – where we don a new mask, style our appearance and brace our inner selves.

The needs that are satisfied by this particular bathroom function are determined by the opposite of our everyday experiences. Whilst everyday life is governed by a hectic pace and the pressure to respond to external influences, satisfy expectations and adapt to external conditions, the inner sanctum of the "Bathroom Bubble" is governed by a sense of calm and its own laws. All the noises from outside are absorbed or eclipsed by noises that we cause ourselves, by our own thoughts and – in contrast to the constant stream of music from e.g. the radio – by music that is played for a specific reason. Here, everything is geared to the needs of the individual. Those who need order to feel comfortable keep things orderly, those who are forced to keep order in their everyday lives although they don't like it create disorder. This is where it's okay to forget the time, lose yourself in a book or your dreams and let your mind wander.

The "Bathroom Bubble" is also a place of creativity. It is no coincidence that many creative people say their best ideas come to them under the shower. And it's not just muscle tension that melts away in the bathtub, problems do too. The various dimensions shift, trivialities fade into the background and we get a clearer sense of what's important.

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**It's not the style that constitutes a "Bathroom Bubble" but the interplay of all the various design elements**

It's not so much a certain styling that is crucial for this positive effect as the creation of a separate – in future perhaps even soundproofed – protected environment and of emotionality. A bathroom cannot become a "Bathroom Bubble" unless it conveys a sense of security. And yet the factors that bring about this effect are of a thoroughly material nature: the specific atmosphere in which a person can feel at ease is defined by the product aesthetics, the product functions and the creative interplay between colours, materials and forms. Whilst a purist design might cater to the need to empty one's mind and distance oneself from the world, it is ultimately individual tastes that are the decisive factor. The design of a "Bathroom Bubble" is thus not dependent on any specific style. A "Bathroom Bubble" can be modern or antiquesly opulent, organically natural or coolly angular, overloaded with ornamentation or floral elements or painstakingly purist.

**"Bathroom Bubble" calls for a selective approach to the technical possibilities**

The possibilities for a cosily furnished bathroom that the industry and designers have created in recent years are just as much responsible for the spread of the "Bathroom Bubble" as the inroads technology has made into what was once a lovelessly tiled room. Even today, digital features such as hands-free fittings, individualisable shower programmes and integrated lighting for the ceramic fixtures, mirror, tub, fittings and cabinets – or even the jet of water – are already endowing the bathroom with an incredibly high degree of cosiness, comfort and convenience. In the not too distant future, the bathroom will also be equipped with multimedia functions and the usual communication media. But even though they might enhance the quality of the space, these features are ambivalent in the context of

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the "Bathroom Bubble", for they divest it of its retreat function to some extent. And yet what some may find disruptive only increases the bathroom's value as a "different world" for others. Those who are in to purism will manage without the additional features or switch them off, whilst those who like entertainment will be more than happy to enhance their island of calm with an appropriate programme.

### **The bathroom as a protected area**

The dreams we indulge in or the thoughts of escape we harbour in the "Bathroom Bubble" are no less individual. Probably the only thing these places have in common is the desire for a mix of freedom from everyday obligations and security – sometimes embodied by nature, sometimes in the anonymity of big city life. In a word, the bathroom is being declared a protected area. Regardless of whether we choose to pitch our tent in a natural idyll or an urban setting.

Photos to accompany this text are available at:

[www.ish.messefrankfurt.com/trend\\_report](http://www.ish.messefrankfurt.com/trend_report)

### **Background information on Messe Frankfurt**

Messe Frankfurt is Germany's leading trade fair organiser, with 467.5 million euros in sales and 1,725 active employees worldwide. The Messe Frankfurt Group has a global network of 28 subsidiaries and approx. 50 international Sales Partners, giving it a presence for its customers in more than 150 countries. Events "made by Messe Frankfurt" take place at more than 30 locations around the globe. In 2011, Messe Frankfurt organised 100 trade fairs, of which more than half took place outside Germany. Messe Frankfurt's exhibition grounds, featuring 578,000 square metres, are currently home to ten exhibition halls and an adjacent Congress Center. The company is publicly owned, with the City of Frankfurt holding 60 percent and the State of Hesse 40 percent. For more information, please visit our website at: [www.messefrankfurt.com](http://www.messefrankfurt.com)