

LOOSE & FREE!

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Having space empowers us to think creatively when considering bathroom design. Why build in every item when all or some can be the spotlight of your new ablutionary delight - a beautiful stone or ceramic bowl, a luscious free-standing bath or striking circular shower - each and every one of these can be utilised in traditional, contemporary or eclectic schemes.

In a smaller space consider having the rustic charm of a circular stone bowl supported on either a tiled shelf or by its own brackets, both providing ample space below the piece to visually enlarge your space - it's also easy to clean with no nooks and crannies to harbour dust of ages! Taps can be wall or shelf mounted to add another difference.

If this isn't to your taste, how about a Belfast-inspired ceramic basin such as Fired Earth's Galaxy 60 or 100. Both provide ample space to cleanse and beautify, and provide useful wide ledges for storage of cosmetics and bathing products.

In comparison to a more traditional basin with pedestal, stand-alone bowls can either provide you with the all-important space underfoot, or can be mounted on a bespoke or even pre-made storage unit. Tiled, natural wood or painted will all work beautifully as well as providing the oft forgotten space to squirrel away bathroom debris.

Free-standing baths do not suit everyone - for instance a need to have a shower over the bath can necessitate a shower curtain rather than glass door to protect surroundings from splashing; some have an eternal hatred to these clingy modes of protection so this arrangement would not suit. However, a free-standing tub - roll top or footless - doesn't need acres of space to do it justice. These items can be successfully slotted into an alcove adding curvaceous beauty to a smaller room.

Remember to consider the weight of your tub - including water and bathing belle - no en suite sitting rooms please! Modern acrylic baths have many advantages over their sturdy cast iron cousins. They are



FIRE D EARTH'S LE BAIN DE BATEAU

considerably lighter (Fired Earth's acrylic Flow roll top bath weighs in at a svelte 57kgs, in comparison to the visually identical cast iron Versailles, muscling in at a substantial 120kgs), and any light scratches can be polished out with ultra-fine wire wool. Cast iron tubs do retain the heat for longer, so if you are a lounge rather than a sprinter, this option may suit better. Both types are also available in the classic 17th century-inspired French 'Boat' tubs: Le Bain de Bateau is the cast iron king of tubs with its lighter acrylic cousin, the St Moritz, providing similar styling, but much less body weight. Both are replicas of the rarer, wider and more comfortable Boat Baths - many modern reproductions are narrow and a bit of a squeeze.

If your ageing cast iron charmer is looking a little sad with its chipped and worn interior, consider having it re-enamelled. Modern techniques can provide you with a sparkling new companion without always having to remove this fellow from its settled position in your home.

Fired Earth do not provide this service as yet but many manufacturers can recommend companies which can. However, nothing can beat a kiln-fired vitreous enamelled bath, although this isn't always practical or affordable when so many other factors are to be considered in a bathroom refit. Also, make sure the design of the bath is worth this process.

Choosing one or more free-standing items can add charm and grace to your bathroom and will age beautifully as fashions change, being, as they are, beyond everyday fads. So be bold and think of the alternatives!

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