

HOME LIGHTING & ACCESSORIES

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**MAPPING FASHION AT THE
FALL HIGH POINT MARKET**

ARE YOU MISSING OUT?

All of those new high-tech amenities for kitchens and baths prove that discretionary dollars are being spent on high-end goods.

BY LINDA LONGO

Norm Brown, CLC, of Norburn Lighting & Bath Centre in British Columbia and an educator with the American Lighting Association (ALA), has long suggested showroom staffers and lighting designers make it a point to demonstrate that all of the fancy appliances, countertops, and cabinetry clients have purchased won't look so impressive without the proper illumination.

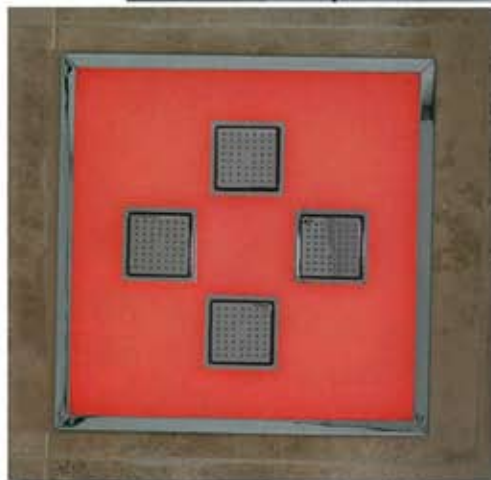
Customers who have already made the trek to a lighting specialty store are presumably more willing to absorb such sage advice. Unfortunately, there is still resistance at the consumer level when it comes to upgrading the task, accent, and ambient fixtures for the most critical rooms in the house: the kitchen and the bath.

This year's edition of the Kitchen/Bath Industry Show (K/BIS) highlighted the latest looks and modern conveniences for these areas – and the innovation and technology (with sizeable price tags) just keep coming.

Lighting veterans should take note of the directions the kitchen and bath companies are going. After all, *their* customers are also *your* customers. Because of the enormous R&D costs, the huge corporations that produce these sophisticated appliances, countertops, cabinets, and plumbing



Music and ambient lighting in the shower made Kohler's DTV II digital control system a stand-out at K/BIS.



The WaterTile® Ambient Rain™ system, from Kohler, puts some flash in the bath.

fixtures seldom miss their target.

In Love With Luxury

As consumers are demanding the ultimate in upscale products and willing to pay a premium, kitchen

and bath-oriented manufacturers are racing to provide them.

A laundry sink that actually cleans knits and delicate clothes that formerly had to be washed by hand? To borrow from the Staples' commercial, "Yeah, [they've] got that."

The Delicair Laundry Basin, from Aquatic, has a deep interior well with bubble action, an electronic control panel, a 30-minute timer, automatic purge and dry

cycle, and contains a variable-speed blower for a range of fabric weights.

MTI Whirlpools also introduced its Gentle Jet® Laundry Sink that features three micro-jets that clean hand-washables without agitation. A three-speed control knob adjusts the whirlpool action from a soft swirl to a vigorous wash. In the middle of the sink is a baffle that allows garments to move freely without being caught in suction.

If manufacturers are inventing task-specific machines like this, you can bet they're confident that people are willing to spend money on products that convey status or save time. Consumers are hungry for over-the-top features that cater to their craving for "custom" this and "luxurious" that.

As the MTI Whirlpools' press release says, "Sometimes it's the little things that count." In this case, the subject is the organic wood shower trays designed to "pamper the feet." The teak trays have slats spaced 1/8-inch apart, ensuring a safe surface while allowing water to run through without leaving behind slippery residue. The company also makes the distinction,

"crafted of the finest grades of Burmese – not Plantation – teak."

MTI has made sure that no one suffers from the disappointment of stepping into a cold bath with its UL- and CSA-approved Radiance™ radiant heat technology that warms the interior surface of tubs.

For homeowners looking to pep up their shower routine with a light/sound show, Kohler debuted its next generation of digital shower control systems with the DTV II, which adds music, ambient lighting, chromotherapy, and steam to the bathing experience.

When Michael Wandschneider, senior product manager/performance showering at Kohler, says, "Showering is not just about water anymore," he's not joking.

"DTV II takes the shower to an unexpected and uncharted level of performance with an all-encompassing sensory and completely integrated experience," he explains. "Best of all, the DTV II controls all of these elements at the touch of a button. The user-friendly digital control panel brings four media together – water, sound, light, and steam – to provide a perfectly tailored and choreographed

showering experience."

With Kohler's new WaterTile® Ambient Rain™ system, a shower can incorporate ambient light patterns to further enhance the bather's experience. These tiles are 21" x 21" lighted square ceiling panels that accommodate four body sprays.

The executives at Hansa are also counting on chromotherapy in the bath becoming an in-demand feature. The firm debuted the Hansacolorshower, which is comprised of a hand-held body sprayer, an adjustable showerhead, a lotion/soap dispenser, and incorporates high-performance LEDs that cover the chromatic spectrum.

Bright colors – such as red, orange, and yellow – are showing up in plumbing fixtures like never before.

"Today's homeowners are constantly looking for sophisticated ways to personalize their space, and the Mustang Red IN2ITION answers that call," explains Julian Giggs, director/product development at Alsons Corp. "The red IN2ITION is vibrant and adds an unexpected 'splash' in the bath."



Left: With the Hansacolorshower, a push of a button provides color for a stimulating experience that "reduces stress, balances energy, and creates a sense of well-being," according to Hansa.

Right: When the Hansa2day showerhead is positioned horizontally, the water exits as a needle spray from the underside of the tray. When the head is tilted forward, it converts to a surge spray with the water raining down and gently enveloping the body. Made by Hansa, it is available with red, yellow, black, silver, and white trim.

Even utilitarian products such as ventilation hoods have gotten a face-lift in recent years. For example, Zephyr launched a collection of low-profile, high-performance



The height-adjustable island ventilation hood DA 424 V, from Miele, boasts a unique motorized feature that enables the hood to glide up, out of the way, or down, closer to the cooktop when needed.

range hoods with retractable canopies, touch-sensitive controls, and level LED indicators. These styles utilize such materials as stainless steel and magnesium, plus colored

and etched glass. Consumers are able to "lamininate" non-traditional materials, such as wheat, fabric, or other elements into the design for maximum customization.

To complement the shiny metallic finishes that are still popular in kitchen appliances, faucet manufacturer Graff® revealed a Steelnox™ finish that simulates brushed nickel,



Inspired by Italy's architecture, Zephyr's Padova style range hood by Fu-Tung Cheng is designed to be customized with the end-users' materials of choice, such as mosaic tile, ribbed glass, or Italian Marmorino plaster.

but does not show fingerprints. It is available on several bath and kitchen models. The company also introduced two modern designs with bold geometric lines: the



The artisans at Alabama-based Bear Creek Glass' studio specialize in creating organic forms and vivid colorations. Designed to withstand the rigors of daily use, each sink is backed by a lifetime warranty regarding wear and breakage.

Stealth and the Fontaine lavatory faucets. In an ode to minimalism, Graff added a floor-mounted tub filler and matching vessel style to its Solar line.

A smudge-free look was also on the minds of executives at Lasertron, where a line of stainless steel cabinet doors and drawers that resist fingerprints and other stains debuted at K/BIS. The series is available in a standard appliance-grade brushed finish, a charcoal or mirror version, and eight designer textures that include linen,

leather grain, plus all-over diamonds and swirls.

Lasertron also warmed things up with a selection of woodgrain tones for its stainless steel cabinet doors and drawers. More than one dozen colorations – from mahogany to light yellow oak – can be ordered.

Taking recycling and the environment to heart, Bristol and Bath re-engineers common products as bath fixtures for its aptly named Second Chance Collection. The Kobe Basin is comprised of an ordinary car tire. It can be installed indoors or out and is ideal for a game room, car collector's studio, or special garage. The wall-hung design allows for easy wheelchair access, making it a unique option for nightclubs, restaurants, and



Appliance makers are not afraid of color – especially brilliant blue – when it comes to product introductions. For example, BlueStar offers its ranges in 190 colors!



The Stealth lavatory faucet, from Graff, resembles a contemporary piece of art. It is shown here in the fingerprint-free Steelnox finish.

Graff's statuesque floor-mounted tub filler makes a modern statement.



The Shade range hood, created by Fu-Tung Cheng for Zephyr, offers elegant curves, hand-crafted details, and endless interchangeable options for the integrated front panel, including copper, bamboo, wood, and ribbed glass.



The Vintage Wine Barrel style, from Bristol and Bath, is the perfect powder room accoutrement for wine enthusiasts.