

BEAUTY COMES TO BATHROOM SINKS



ROY INMAN | SPECIAL TO THE STAR

A range of materials and designs makes them more than just functional.

Really, the bathroom has few functions, all of them personal. In the case of the bathroom sink, it's used for washing your face and hands and brushing your teeth.



introduced during this time, with their enamel white interior and glazed brown exterior. Twenty years later, the need for copper and other metals rose because of World War II, and stainless steel sinks became popular

alternatives. The bathroom has gone through many transitions, some caused by cultural changes. Through history, some societies valued cleanliness, while others feared that water carried illness, and therefore they would rather be dirty than diseased.

Technological advances inspired other changes. Indoor plumbing didn't come into common use until the end of the 19th century. During the prehistoric era, water basins were made of rocks eroded into concave shapes by rain. Since then we have hauled water from streams to troughs and pumped from outdoor wells and the sink.

We take for granted the single-handle faucets so commonplace today, but they have been around fewer than 50 years. We now live with multiple sinks per household, with hot water available with a flick of the handle or a wave in front of a sensor.

In modern times, sinks have come in various materials, depending on what was available regionally. Heavy soapstone from Vermont, and slate from the northeastern United States were costly to transport.

During the 1920s, sinks of lightweight, corrosion-resistant metals such as nickel and copper became popular, because they cost less to transport. Earthenware sinks were also

alternatives. Over the past 15 years, bathroom sinks have risen from 24 or 30 inches to 36 inches high. Even being short, I wonder why they were installed so low. At a historic apartment building we remodeled, we saved all the original farm sinks mounted at 27 inches, had some re-porcelained, and then installed them at their new height of 36 inches. Now you can wash dishes without bending over.

Now that bathrooms have become more functional, design has taken precedence. Bathrooms are built for beauty and relaxation. Powder rooms impress and welcome guests.

Sinks often take center stage, and the materials they're made of have expanded to include cast glass, wood, sculpted stone, solid surface, and composites of granite and epoxy.

Minarc, a California-based design firm, is using melted old tires formed into a slim sheet of rubber and then stretched over a wood or metal frame to create the "Rubbish" sink. Vaskeo makes sinks in organic shapes, sculpted of solid surface materials. Locally, UroGlass casts textural glass sinks.

Reach Lisa Schmitz, owner of Lisa Schmitz Interior Design in Kansas City, at lisaschmitz@kc.rr.com.

In this powder bath, a bamboo sink from Stone Forest sits atop a custom cast concrete counter by Dave Root of Atlas Archimedes in Lawrence. The cabinet from Royal Fixture Company matches the walls, painted in Benjamin Moore Newberg Green and Mount Etna. The Vessel light fixtures from Ylighting have glass shades that can be filled with marbles or glass balls, even flowers or gold fish, as the fluorescent lamps keep the water from getting hot, creating a seasonal surprise for guests.