



Take the Plunge

*Want to transform your bathroom into a style-soaked sanctuary?
Two words: freestanding tub.*

BY BRAD MEE

PHOTO BY SCOT ZIMMERMAN

PHOTOS: LOWER RIGHT, COURTESY OF STONE FOREST; RIGHT, LMK INTERIOR DESIGN



You've got a walk-in shower, underlit vanities and heated towel racks. Nice job. Now for the next big splurge: a freestanding tub. Unlike its pedestrian built-in brethren, this off-the-wall piece soaks any space in spectacular style.

When interior designer Kristen Brooksby considered a tub for her master bath in St. George, she selected a shapely double-ended freestanding model that sits like sculpture in her master bathroom's sunlit alcove. It draws the eye like art. "Freestanding tubs are the new focal point in today's bathroom," says Brooksby who explains that more and more, they are replacing ordinary drop-in models in newly built and renovated bathrooms alike.

"Five years ago, drop-in tubs represented the majority of those we sold," says Jessica Roberts, plumbing specialist at Mountain Land De-

Opposite: A mosaic tile "rug" not only performs as a stage for this shapely tub, but its grout provides traction creating a non-slip surface that surrounds the feature. Design by Anne-Marie Barton.

Top: A bold fireplace feature wall creates a dramatic backdrop for the Chelsea tub by Hastings. The team at LMK Interior Design created strong horizontal lines that accentuate the tubs shape and paired dark wood shelves, veined stone and stainless mosaic stripes and large wall tiles to form the striking design of this Holladay home's bathroom.

Right: Stone Forest's chiseled granite tub features a polished rim and interior. Heavy tubs like this require a sound foundation and strong flooring to support their weight.





PHOTOS: LEFT, BY SCOT ZIMMERMAN; RIGHT, BY CHRISTIE SOELBERG; FAR RIGHT, BY DANNY LEE

The rounded forms of this freestanding Victoria + Albert Barcelona tub and matching double sinks contrast with the square angles of the waterfall style vanity in a Park City home. Gleaming, clean-lined faucetry complements the tub's contours. Design by Gardner Group.

sign in SLC. “Today, half or more of the tubs our clients choose are freestanding models.” Like Roberts, designers and contractors throughout Utah have seen stand-alone tubs become one of the hottest trends in bathroom design and recognize many reasons for their surging popularity.

“They are more sophisticated and elegant than drop-ins and require less space visually and physically,” Brooks says. Centered in an open space, the freestanding tub allows light to flow around it making the room feel larger. “We’ve moved away from heavy decorating and these tubs are the perfect way to foster an open, bright and clean-lined design,” she says. And because stand-alone tubs aren’t built into a corner or against a wall, they are easier to access and clean, adding to their appeal. What’s more, the majority are soakers, meaning they simply and serenely hold water. They don’t noisily bubble or require the maintenance of jetted tubs.

Given the increased demand for freestanding tubs, it follows that manufacturers are making them in a larger

assortment of styles, sizes and materials. From traditional ball-and-claw footed tubs to ultra modern egg-shaped models and everything in between, there is an off-the-wall tub to suit most any décor and room size. And unlike basic built-ins, stylized freestanders can drive the design tone for the entire space. For most of these showy soakers, material is key to their design.

“Acrylic represents the broadest segment,” Roberts says. “It runs the gamut price-wise and offers both traditional and contemporary styles.” Because acrylic is the most dominant and flexible of the materials, it allows manufacturers to create a variety of sizes and styles. A two-piece acrylic model may cost around \$2,500 while a seamless, double-walled version goes for \$8,000 to \$10,000, Roberts says. In comparison, a traditional cast iron tub ranges from \$2,600 to \$6,000, solid stone tubs run \$13,000 to \$31,000 and a copper soaker—at the peak of its popularity in Park City about six years ago—costs upward of \$15,000 and more.

PHOTO BY CLARK KELSEY



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—Kristen Brooksby



Below: Interior designer Kristen Brooksby hung a modern pendant above Victoria + Albert's Toulouse tub in her master bathroom. The elegant, double ended tub is cast from a volcanic limestone composite.

Right: The sleek Amalfi slipper tub by Victoria + Albert appears to float on a luminous floor of chevron patterned stone. Design by Kristen Brooksby.





PHOTOS: ABOVE, BY WILLIAM WALDRON; BELOW BY SCOT ZIMMERMAN (2)



Above: A Waterworks .25 tub sits like art in a master bathroom designed by Kristin Rocke. A B&B Italia chaise and custom walnut cabinetry give the modern space a subtle '60s vibe. Calacatta marble floors and Kravet draperies finish the sophisticated décor.

Far Left: In Park City, glass tiles clad the walls of an alcove housing a rectangular freestanding tub paired with polished nickel faucetry. The space's dimensions allow enough room to move freely around the eye-catching tub.

Left: Believed to be original to its 1880's Holladay home, this cast iron tub rests on penny tile that helps shape the room's period décor. Designer Robert McArthur cleverly updated the décor with modern fixtures, bold wallpaper and vintage photos.

Of all the material options, Roberts sees the brightest future for composite—a stone and resin combination. “It’s heavy duty and because the edges need only be about 1-inch wide rather than the typical 4-inches for acrylic, you get more volume and depth inside the same sized tub,” she explains. What’s more, composite is chip-resistant, easy to clean, malleable and available in a variety of finishes and colors. Composite tubs typically cost \$4,000 to \$8,000, says Roberts.

Regardless of the material chosen, a freestanding tub is going to be more costly than a comparable built-in model—typically 2-3 times more expensive. And because the faucetry of most freestanding tubs is exposed rather than hidden inside a wall, it requires some serious coin to buy the showy stuff. “It’s worth it,” Brooksby says. “It’s the jewelry of the tub.” Roberts agrees. “A freestanding tub is like an art piece and faucetry is

the finishing touch,” she says. Then there are the other elements often used to increase a freestander’s fantasy-factor—a chandelier hanging above, a tile rug shimmering below or a cushy bench set beside. Together they evoke a sense of unbridled luxury, a guilty pleasure.

“Freestanding tubs have always been romanticized, but they are now a reality for more and more people,” Brooksby says. Should one worry that these dreamy tubs are a soon-to-fade fad? “Absolutely not,” she insists. “While today they are on trend, they are not at all trendy. Freestanding tubs are classic and will always have a place in a beautiful bathroom.” For those seduced by serene soaks and stylish sanctuaries, that’s very good news. **USD**

usd UtahStyleandDesign.com for more photos of fabulous freestanding tubs

MAKE A SPLASH

Freestanding tubs offer styles, shapes and sizes that can bathe any bath in luxury.



Top row from left: Waterworks .25 acrylic and fiberglass tub, \$12,654, waterworks.com*; Kohler Stargaze acrylic tub with fluted shroud, \$3,167, us.kohler.com**; MTI Elise 4, solid surface tub, \$6,655, mtibaths.com**

Middle row: Cheviot Regal cast iron footed tub, \$3,120, cheviotproducts.com*; Waterworks Margaux vintage tub with hand-burnished exterior, \$16,640, waterworks.com*; Neptune Amaze acrylic tub, \$2,200, produitsneptune.com*

Bottom row: Kohler Vintage Bath cast iron tub with base, \$8,512, us.kohler.com**; Stone Forest Sienna Tazza stone tub, starting at \$25,700, stoneforest.com*

*Available through Mountain Land Design, SLC

**Available through Ferguson Bath, Kitchen and Lighting Gallery, SLC