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'The bathroom is now recognised as one of the most important features of the modern home and

is consequently receiving the consideration it rightly deserves. Bathrooms of mere utility and cheerless aspect no longer satisfy... they must [have] an inviting atmosphere of comfort and colour,' said the Twyford's brochure of 1934, introducing its six new colours, including primrose, jade, lavender, pink, black and old ivory. By the 1950s, peach and coral had arrived, followed, of course, by that 1970s staple – avocado.

I remember my mother coming home triumphantly waving a brochure after my grandmother had allowed her free rein to decorate the cloakroom. 'We're going avocado,' she declared.

My grandmother raised a puzzled eyebrow: 'And what, dear,' she inquired, 'is an avocado?'

By the 1990s, the colour backlash had begun, and the domestic bathroom was returned to a cool spa-like white as the desire for a calm, minimal sanctuary took hold.

And there we have remained for the past 30 years with the 'hotel bathroom' staying at the top of most domestic wish lists. This usually means lots of luxurious marble, crisp white towels, large mirrors and a sense that this room doesn't belong to the people who live in the other rooms, which are generally more relaxed, colourful and comfortable.

Now, trends in interiors move slowly and while the trade shows of the past couple of years have been gently suggesting a return to colour, the stockists and customers have been slow to join in. But a slew of recent press releases have proclaimed the return of avocado, with one survey claiming that one-third of those under 34 would choose green for their bathroom. Vintage stockists The Bold Bathroom Company said that both green and pink were proving popular again. Indeed, I have installed both a pink basin and loo and a blue basin in my house, which featured in these very pages last year.

But it's not just about colour; the bathroom is, as that old catalogue said, finally receiving due consideration when it comes to decorating. We need to approach it as we would any other room in the house and that means not only thinking about colours (there's no excuse for white when Victoria + Albert offers more than 200 colours for its custom-painted baths), but whether you like to bathe or shower, prefer a glass screen or a curtain and even what art you might want to hang on the walls. Imagine that the

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Bathroom at
The Pig in the
South Downs



WALLPAPER, £195 a roll, House of Hackney

bath takes the place of a sofa and add colours, pictures and curtains as you would in the sitting room.

Thankfully, the trend of putting free-standing baths in bedrooms is over (keep that for hotels), but the shower curtain is back. They're much cheaper than glass screens and easier to keep clean, but they can also soften a space that is traditionally full of shiny white surfaces and straight lines. Try Colours of Arley for striped shower curtains, which come in dozens of gorgeous combinations. You can even customise them with frills and ruffles.

If you're nervous about coloured sanitary ware, you could add colour to the walls in the form of paint or wallpaper – there are lots of waterproof versions around now – and bring in pattern with the towels (look to the high street for stripes, checks and William Morris designs).

Even tiles are getting in on the act. Affordable square and subway styles are laid in stripe, check and herringbone formations, and you can also buy porcelain tiles that look like wooden floorboards, over which you can lay a bathmat that would pass for a rug in any other room of the house (try Anthropologie).

Finally, if space permits, why not bring in free-standing furniture to drape your towels on? Hadedra does a range of cane chairs that are perfect for this relaxed and more maximalist look.

It's all about personalising this most personal of rooms. And it all goes to show that bathroom designers were right 90 years ago: bathrooms of mere utility and cheerless aspect (still) no longer satisfy.

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BATH, from £2,923.20, Victoria + Albert. TILES, £7 each, Mad About The House x Mollard & Poole. CEILING PAINTED IN LAVANDA MATT, WALLS PAINTED IN CRÉMA MATT, both £27.50 for 1L, Mad About The House x Graphenstone. TAP, from a selection, Riobel. TOWEL, from a selection, Ikea. WALL LIGHT, from a selection, Leroy Merlin.



BATHMAT, from £38, Anthropologie



WALLPAPER IN ARTEMIS, from £140 a roll, RUG, from £2,250, CEILING PAINTED IN ACHILLEA MATT EMULSION, from £59 for 2.5L, BATH PAINTED IN HYDRANGEA EGGSHELL, from £75 for 2.5L, all House of Hackney



Bathroom design, Buchanan Studio



SHOWER CURTAIN, £295, Colours of Arley