

# The essentials: bathroom and kitchen

Building or renovating a bathroom or kitchen? Interior stylist **LUISA VOLPATO** reports on some of the latest design trends that will give these rooms the 'wow' factor.

Whether you watch *The Block* or prefer *House Rules*, one thing you'll hear the judges bang on about is the 'wow' factor. Which room has it, which room doesn't?

Traditionally the kitchen and bathroom have been considered the functional rooms of the house where simple practicality is king. However, current interior design trends prove that it's time for these rooms to shine in their own right.

## CREATIVE ISLAND DESIGN

The kitchen is often the heart of a home where families spend a lot of time sitting, working, entertaining and of course, cooking and eating. Often the island bench is where all the action is at. If you think an island bench is just one long, solid rectangle, then think again. Kitchen designers are being more creative than ever and the island can be anything you want it to be.

The stunning award-winning design by Lee Hardcastle of Enigma Interiors in Queensland (opposite) is a good example of what is possible. Sure it's an amazing kitchen in a huge space that most of us will never own, but the same design principles can be used on any island bench. Lee has broken up the one long island by creating three very different design elements and uses, with different heights and materials for interest and contrast.

You've got the marble encased fireplace at one end that is a standout feature in the room with the dark marble contrasting nicely with the rest of the all-white

kitchen. Open shelving at the other end adds interest and removes some of the bulkiness and provides an opportunity to personalise the space with display items. By being raised off the ground, the middle section with stool seating looks like it floats which opens up the space and makes it feel less solid and more like a table.

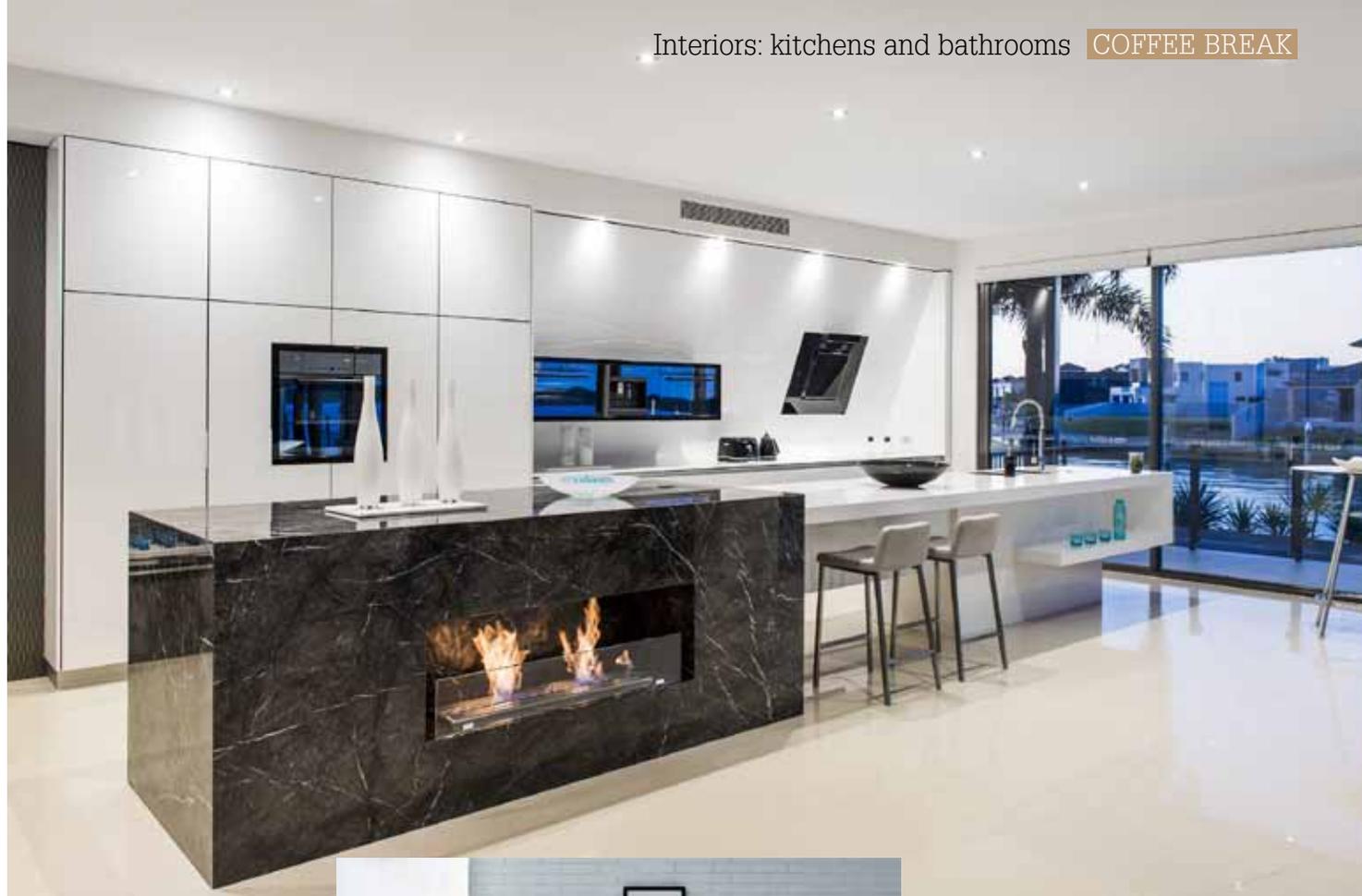
Other ideas to create an island with character include:

- **A built-in timber dining table—built at a right angle to the island bench, this is a good way to save space in an eat-in kitchen without having two rectangular structures running parallel. Then match the timber of the table to some timber veneer feature cabinets to create a nice contrast against a backdrop of plain white or neutral coloured cabinets.**
- **Open bar—incorporating a wine fridge and bar storage area at the front of an island provides easy access when entertaining.**
- **Shelving—build floating or fixed shelves at one end to display cook books, accessories or crockery items or even some vegetable baskets if you like a more organic, rustic look.**

## SPA TIME = ME TIME

These days if there's one thing we all need more of it's time. Specifically 'me' time. The role of the bathroom as just a functional space in the home has really evolved and people are seeing its potential as a private sanctuary for relaxation, not just the place to go for a hot shower and the loo.

Bathroom designers are embracing the day spa concept with a freestanding bath often taking centre stage. For example, the Falper Scoop bathtub from



Award-winning design by Lee Hardcastle. [enigmainteriors.com.au](http://enigmainteriors.com.au)



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Rogerseller is a combination of the classic bathtub with a freestanding contemporary twist in black and white.

Other design elements that will help transform your bathroom into your very own day spa include:

- **Getting the lighting right—make sure you have a dimmer on your light switch so you can create a dark and relaxing space at night when you want to soak in the bath compared to the bright lights you need when you're in front of the mirror applying makeup or shaving in the morning.**



- **Candles**—surround yourself in them. Besides setting the mood, calming scents like lavender, chamomile and rosemary will help put your mind in a relaxed mood.
- **Hang artwork**—why save your artwork for walls in the rest of your house only? Not only will it look great but if you choose calming images or nature photography—think green rolling hills, the beach and ocean, or an exotic destination—it will add to the overall feeling of escape.

### TIMBER ON TREND

If you love the look of timber but don't think you should use it in wet areas like the kitchen, and especially the bathroom, then think again.

Companies like Mafi are among the trend-setters in timber. Their timbers are fine to use as flooring in bathrooms due to the timber structure and all-natural finish that allows the timber to process moisture in wet-areas so the timber doesn't warp or cup. It also regulates humidity, filters smells and is antibacterial. Besides looking great, timber also provides a non-slip surface and is warmer than tiles underfoot. All you need is a waterproof membrane over the sub floor, and then you simply float the timber on top.

Other ways to feature the texture, warmth and natural beauty of timber in the bathroom include:

- **Timber ceiling panels**—once considered very 1970s or reminiscent of the 'Scandinavian sauna' look, timber ceiling or wall panels are making a



LEFT: Timber flooring suitable for bathrooms. [mafi.com.au](http://mafi.com.au)

ABOVE LEFT: Patchwork tile feature wall. [perinitiles.com.au](http://perinitiles.com.au)

ABOVE RIGHT: Everything old is new again in tiles. [perinitiles.com.au](http://perinitiles.com.au)



- resurgence in many areas of the home. The main thing to consider in the bathroom is how the timber is treated plus good ventilation, so as with timber flooring, get advice from the experts first.
- **Timber tiles**—if you're not sure about using the real thing then there are some great tile designs that mimic the look and colour of natural timber. They'll make you look twice.
- **Wallpaper feature wall or mural**—with the huge range of timber look-alike wallpaper and wall murals available online (including removable ones) this is the cheat's way to creating a rustic or industrial backdrop in an otherwise neutral or all-white bathroom.

### BOLD AND COLOURFUL TILES

All too often when it comes to building or renovating kitchens and bathrooms people revert to the 'safe' all-white colour scheme. Luckily, there is a definite trend towards being more creative with tiles and plenty of products to choose from, including these great designs from Perini Tiles.

Some of the top trends in tiles include:

- **Geometric tiles**: they come in all shapes, sizes and colours and are hot right now. New technology has made it possible to create new ways of adding texture and 3D profiles.
- **Patchwork tiles**: patterned and patchwork tiles add interest, colour and a homely, traditional element to contemporary homes. The ability to transpose digital images onto tiles has led to creativity in tile design with inspiration coming from many sources such as Moroccan and Turkish designs, florals and textiles.
- **Old is new again**: inspired by century-old traditions in ceramics, some brand new tiles have all the look, feel and character of styles of yesteryear, more commonly seen in places like Morocco, Spain, France and Italy. **PS**

White tiles, white cupboards, white bench or vanity tops... it's all a little bland.