

TAPWARE

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Images: Parex, In Residence and Foreno



HydroTap from Parex

Access to running water has always influenced the hierarchy of society. If you have running water, as most of us do, you are therefore likely to have all the conveniences of modern sanitary care. We can no doubt all imagine, and may even have experienced at some time, what it is like to live without running water. A camping trip is a gentle reminder ... by walking to the nearby ablution block, we think we are "roughing it". Life must have been uncomfortable in bygone times when bathing was a rare occasion. Imagine dining with Elizabeth I in her era - your senses would have been in overload! Not only would the experience have been visually impressive with the pomp and pageantry, but I'm sure the smell must have been just as memorable. To disguise one's odour, one doused oneself with perfume, put a group of people in a room together during this period and the smell of cooking odours, body odours and perfume must have been pungent.

The industrial age influenced society hugely. Mass produced sanitary equipment became standard in most households, which affected the middle class as they could no longer separate themselves from the working class. And so the status of the bathroom moved up several notches. No longer was this an area of the house that was looked upon purely for sanitary requirements. It was starting to develop its own identity as a room of style and status.

Bathroom fixtures and fittings over the last century have been influenced by trend and fashion as much as anywhere else in the home and tapware has advanced in leaps and bounds to keep pace with the ever-evolving bathroom. My grandparents would have grown up with tapware that looked not too dissimilar to tap fittings more commonly seen in our gardens today - things have come a long way.

A past trend saw tapware powder-coated to co-ordinate with the bathroom furniture, but this finish had a limited lifetime as the surface deteriorated over time. As time has gone on, the finishes available have become wider. Chrome-on-brass tapware is always a popular choice and without a doubt looks fabulous when sparkling clean. Gold-plated tapware is not everyone's preference, but it does ooze opulence and is an obvious choice in bathrooms where elegance and timelessness are a prerequisite. Gold and chrome look great mixed together and manufacturers now produce fittings with interchangeable parts where the different parts of the tap can be chosen from the two elements and combined into the one fitting. This allows for greater design possibilities, especially on boats where other visual elements such as latches and hinges may only come standard in stainless or chrome. Thus, by using combination tapware and door hardware, the co-ordination of the hardware is made simple. In order to prolong gold-plated taps in the marine environment, the fittings can be clear powder-coated to extend the life of the finish.

Stainless steel tapware is a little less common but well worth the extra effort involved in sourcing it. Take, for example, the Inox collection available from Shipwright Agencies. Perfect for boats, these sleek modern fittings have been designed in Denmark and micro-cast in Italy. The range is priced competitively and meets EC standards. Stainless steel bathroom accessories are equally hard to find but The Waterware Group in Auckland supply a very smart range to complement their large tapware range.

Whether you are looking for stainless steel, chrome or gold-plated tapware, there is vast selection on the market so that one





can truly coordinate the bathroom. Function and form go hand-in-hand here. My advice when choosing tapware is that the tap should feel comfortable to touch and hold, and the mechanism should work effortlessly. We all know how embarrassing it is to encounter a stiff tap lever ... the lever jerks up, water comes out at an unexpected force bouncing off the side of the vanity bowl and all over the front of you creating a rather obvious watermark - there is never a time when this looks good.

Water pressure plays a large part in your choice of tapware. Here in New Zealand, pressure falls into three main categories ... unequal pressure, equal low pressure and mains pressure. It's easy to tell which system you have. If the hot tap runs faster than the cold tap and you have a pipe protruding from the roof, you have an unequal low pressure system. Where both hot and cold taps give out equal low volume water, your system works on equal low pressure. Mains pressure on the other hand is the water system most new homes have and it is ideal because it delivers equal and high water pressure combined. The widely known benefit of this system is that other amenities can be used at the same time, such as showering and flushing the toilet without effecting the water supply or pressure.

From the aesthetic point of view, form definitely follows function. Tapware now resembles state-of-the-art engineering. Sleek minimalist fittings now look like pieces of art. But to choose tapware on looks alone could be a costly mistake. For instance, European tapware works on high water pressure and these fittings only work marginally well with low water pressure, especially in older homes where the water pressure can be lower than 30 PSI. This is the same on boats; the water pressure has to be very good for European tapware to work. For low pressure systems, Methven and Greens Tapware have excellent tapware that is not only good looking but also fit for the purpose intended.

Foreno Tapware (NZ), a company which has been manufacturing and testing tapware in New Zealand since 1969, have an Equaliser shower mixer which works on all pressures. Their range of tapware covers anything from antique styles, through to retro and up to the minute minimalist designs. Take a peek at their Forma, Riviera and Antique ranges.

For classic styling, Perrin & Rowe tapware appeals to the discerning. Perrin & Rowe is a small English company who specialise in the design and construction of high quality tapware and accessories. Their beautiful range graces some of the world's most luxurious hotels, resorts and private residences, such as Huka Lodge in Taupo, New Zealand and Lilianfels, a luxury country hotel in the Blue Mountains of Australia. Perrin & Rowe is available through In-Residence in New Zealand or The English Tapware

Company in Australia.

Standing waiting for the kettle to boil can take forever if you are in dire need of a cuppa. The Zenith Hydro Tap from Parex Industries Ltd has put an end to this. This stylish tap is the ultimate in convenience. It provides chilled or boiling water in an instant and what's different is that the tap doesn't have to be installed on or near a sink. With its unique font, it can be mounted on virtually any benchtop where plumbing is available, giving flexibility of installation. What's even better is that the boiling, chilling and filtration unit is installed out of sight under the benchtop, keeping this unit as unobtrusive as possible.

The next time you turn on a tap, think of the technology and engineering involved in making water, one of life's necessities, so readily available... bet you won't! ■