



The Bath Magazine





In more recent times, our relationship with the bathroom has been influenced by two modern phenomena: widespread indoor plumbing and central heating. It wasn't until the 1930s that new houses were built with indoor toilets and bathrooms as standard, says Zoe Hendon, head of museum collections at Middlesex University's Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture. "At that time, bathrooms were seen as a luxury." But for many decades after, these rooms remained cold and uninviting. Their *raison d'être* was to keep the household relatively clean, and people spent as little time in there as possible.

The bathroom has shifted from being a place of communal function to being symbolic of a private luxury and space for recuperation – Rachel Wilson

But for those of us who have grown up with hot water literally on tap, personal hygiene is only one rea-

son to visit the bathroom. "The bathroom has shifted from being a place of communal function to being symbolic of a private luxury and space for recuperation," says Rachel Wilson, of forecasting consultancy the Future Laboratory.

It's not only the availability of heating and immediate hot water that has changed our relationship with the modern bathroom, lifestyle changes have also played their part. In recent decades, city living has increased and the beauty and wellness industries have boomed. Grooming has become a competitive sport, and treatments that originated in the beauty parlour or the hair salon are now conducted at home, thanks to the ever-growing range of gadgets, from epilators to beard trimmers.