

DESIGNERS CORNER

Designing Around a Freestanding Tub

How to create drama and style in your bathroom

BY JENNIFER TZESES | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 22, 2018 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)

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Birgit Klein's soothing bathroom incorporates a freestanding tub.
BIRGIT KLEIN INTERIORS

Whether claw-footed, pedestal, or cast iron, a freestanding tub brings instant elegance to any bathroom.

"It not only allows for more flexibility of tub placement, but it also becomes a statement piece," says Jenny Kirschner, principal of JDK Interiors in New York.

Freestanding tubs make a bathroom feel larger, says Donna Mondì, founder and principal at Donna Mondì Interior Design in Chicago. "They expand the visual floor space, open up cramped corners, and give a much lighter feeling overall," Ms. Mondì says. "They also make a design statement in their form, from modern with a smooth, sculptured shape to claw foot for more traditional interiors."

Additionally, they create a focal point. "In contrast to a built-in tub, a freestanding tub allows the eye to travel around the tub, thus giving the illusion of greater floor space," says Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York. "They can also have a sculptural feel, which can bring energy and glamour to an otherwise utilitarian space."

To choose the best tub—and design well around it—follow these tips.

Consider the Tub's Style

"I love using more simplistic, clean, modern tubs in more traditional bathrooms rather than a typical claw foot, as it brings a new, fresh feeling to the room. A freestanding tub works best when it can be the focal point of the room—say, opposite the door or against a textured wall.

"I like tubs that have a subtle curve to them to soften up a bathroom. Nothing too modern, nothing too traditional.

"I generally place them in front of a book-match marble wall or a window with a great view. It's also beautiful when the tub is the first thing you see when you walk into the bathroom."

— **U.S. and London-based designer Birgit Klein of Birgit Klein Interiors**

Think About the Entire Space

"Freestanding tubs can work in many different types of bathrooms. The key is to make sure they work with the proportions of the space.

"It's important to have ample space around at least three sides of a freestanding tub. This way, it feels like a sculpture or piece of furniture and less like a utilitarian object. When freestanding tubs are confined on multiple sides, they tend to make a space feel smaller.

"The most important feature is comfort. The shape and size of a tub can affect the experience. While people often think that larger tubs will be more comfortable for bathing, the truth is that it may be the opposite.

"Other elements within the bathroom should complement and frame the tub. Keep the supporting elements simple."



Designer Philip Thomas says freestanding tubs give the illusion of greater floor space.

Michael Mundy

— Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York

Add Interest

"Adding a clean, sculptural bathtub to a traditional interior makes things really interesting. The opposite is also true in adding a claw-foot tub to a modern interior. There are so many interesting shapes out there, and this is the easiest place to add some personality.

"If you have a choice, always choose the window wall. Windows aren't ideal for the vanity or shower, so it's the perfect place for a tub. If the window isn't an option, I would create a feature wall behind the tub to draw attention to this part of the bathroom. I've incorporated antique mirrors, dramatic art installations, accent tile designs, or even wall coverings (just make sure they're waterproof).

"I always add a soft or furry rug at the front of the freestanding tub, along with an interesting accent table just big enough for a candle and glass of wine. I also love a minimal teak slat shelf that bridges the bathtub to hold soaps and scrubs."

— Donna Mondì, founder and principal of Donna Mondì Interior Design in Chicago

Let the Space Determine the Style

"I tend to specify freestanding tubs in larger bathrooms because that allows me to delineate the space in a more dynamic way, adding interest and drama that a typical built-in may not offer.

"I like to make sure there is at least enough room around the tub for it to feel as though it's floating in the space. Depending on the style of the tub, that can be as little as six inches, just so long as you can clean around the sides and the back.

You'll want to be sure the finishes of the tub, sinks, and toilet(s) are all coordinated. If you plan to stay in the white-color family, I would recommend using the same white finish throughout the space.

"A freestanding towel rack can also be a useful accent."



Color coordination is key, says New York-based designer Jenny Kirschner.
Ryan Dausch

— Jenny Kirschner, principal of JDK Interiors in New York *This story first appeared in Mansion Global magazine, published on November 19th, 2018.*