

Ablutions | Tom Ford takes five a day, but most of us have forgotten how fabulous bathing can be. *Charlotte Sinclair* rediscovers the joy of suds

Immersion therapy

Bath time is apparently going the way of landlines and face-to-face communication in becoming rapidly extinct. While a bath might be as central to the idea of home as a hearth, it appears increasing numbers of us are spurning the porcelain tub for the power shower. One recent survey found that more than a third of Britons only bathe four times a year (and two of those occasions are in hotel bathrooms).

Even Cussons, makers of Imperial Leather soap, a cornerstone of the traditional bathing experience since 1768, has witnessed a significant drop in soap sales. A study it commissioned noted there had been a three per cent decline in people using a "bath product" since 1996. Meanwhile, the market for shower gels, creams, lotions, and foams has grown exponentially.

The difference between showers and baths is both temporal and temperamental. Who has time for a bath? Fast, convenient, economic: showers have a utilitarian purposefulness that befits our productivity-obsessed contemporary mode. A quick once-over and out you jump, ready for the day.

Baths, on the other hand, are a positively analogue way of scrubbing up. They are slow and contemplative. All that time spent waiting for the tub to fill, then the meditative lolling, the body scrubs and face masks and, if advertising is to be believed, the accompanying soft music, chocolate and candlelight.

Five best bath buys



Clockwise from top right: Tom Ford Neroli Portofino body oil, £47; Chanel No 5 Le Bain Moussant, £40; Elemis skin nourishing milk bath, £42; Laura Mercier honey bath foam, £33; Ren Moroccan rose bath oil, £30



Marilyn Monroe lathers up while filming the Billy Wilder comedy 'The Seven Year Itch'

Allstar

This reframing of bath time as a self-indulgent luxury — a moment of "me time" — has become a powerful driver of upscale bath products, whether that's Chanel's No 5-fragranced foams and gels, or Estée Lauder's Youth Dew bath oil. Along the way, bathing has become peculiarly gendered, despite evidence that men, too, enjoy a long, hot bath.

The conspicuously well-maintained Tom Ford professes to a five-a-day habit. "And, on a day when I'm particularly stressed, every hour or two," the designer told film-makers in the documentary *Visionaries: Inside the Creative Mind*. "I just lie in the water and kind of

think. Or not think. It's intensified as I get older. I don't think my mother would have ever let me take five a day."

Bath time has evolved from a way of getting clean to a way of getting calm. Noella Gabriel, head of product development at Elemis, identifies bathing's spiritual aspect. "The vibrations created from having the body surrounded completely by water induce a deep level of relaxation," she says. Laura Mercier, whose Honey Bath foam comes accessorised with its own wooden dipper, says: "At the end of the day, I like nothing better than to have a relaxing bath; it's a ritual for me and a necessary indulgence."

(Daphne Guinness's former neighbours might disagree: they've twice sued the heiress for water damage caused by her repeatedly overflowing bathtub; she was apologetic and in 2012, it was ruled she should pay for the repairs.)

There's an aesthetic and philosophical appeal to bathing that's entirely absent from the shower stall. With its relationship to baptism, to cleansing rites and water rituals, there's a whiff of the ancients about a bath. The activity has a rich artistic heritage, inspiring paintings by Degas, Cézanne and Picasso, and a photograph of war reporter Lee Miller, taking a dip in Hitler's private bathtub: bathing as political statement.

On film, showers are places of pain or peril (*Carrie, Psycho*), while baths are where we might find Julia Roberts, decorated in bubbles, screeching along to Prince. What with Vanity Fair immersing what must be a record number of celebrities for glossy spreads — Whoopi Goldberg, Angelina Jolie, Miley Cyrus, Jon Hamm — and Kate Moss having spent, surely, a third of her professional life in the bath, the setting has become such an established cliché of

Christian Dior sketched collections from his tub; Agatha Christie concocted murders from hers

contemporary photography and fashion the style has acquired its own epithet: "bathtub mermaid".

Baths are where the good stuff happens, the thinking, the life plotting, the discovery of displacement theory, as in the case of Archimedes. They work as a palliative; warm water soothes. As Sylvia Plath writes in *The Bell Jar* (1963): "There must be quite a few things that a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them. Whenever I'm sad I'm going to die, or so nervous I can't sleep, or in love with somebody I won't be seeing for a week, I slump down just so far and then I say: 'I'll go take a hot bath.'" For artistic types, a wallow in water seems to have a stimulating effect. Christian Dior sketched couture collections from his tub, while Agatha Christie concocted murders from hers. Virginia Woolf conceived a follow-up to *A Room of One's Own* (1929) after experiencing "a sudden influx of ideas" while afloat.

There are more important things to bathing than simply keeping clean.

Where do you stand on bathing? Take our online survey at ft.com/baths

The barefaced cheek of the natural look

Kathleen Baird-Murray

Beauty insider



It's 7am and I'm sitting in a café in St John's Wood, London, having breakfast with my friend Elise, whose fleeting visits from Australia are few and far between.

"There aren't that many people I would get up this early for," she says. "It must be a sign of true friendship." And it is. But what's more telling is that neither of us stopped to put on make-up, even at this hour, and even at this particular stage of our lives (ie old). Now that's what I call true friendship.

Our foundation-free faces are also, as they say, bang on trend. To paraphrase the greatest film about fashion, *Zoolander*, Elise and I are so hot right now. Like Julia Roberts in the Givenchy campaigns; Keira Knightley doing minimal make-up on the red carpet (pictured); or, er... Kim Kardashian's make-up free selfies on Instagram; Elise and I are riding the crest of one of the biggest make-up trends this season, the no-make-up make-up trend.

Yes, I know, yawn, we've been here before, usually every spring, and any moment there will be a list of products to achieve said natural look — feel free to skip to the last couple of paragraphs if that's what you're after. The irony is that, while going barefaced is an Instagram trend — be it for raising awareness for charity or boasting that you're (*Zoolander* voice) really, really good-looking — it is a backlash to that same selfie-fever that started it. Backstage at the spring-summer shows, the directive of many designers was that they wanted "natural" to mean just that — a move away from the exaggerated perfection of Instagram contouring and excessive bronzing.

Instead, the references were to make the model look "like she's just come from the gym" or "just woken up in a light-filled apartment". These things rarely stand up to analysis, but hazarding a guess, the trend is about looking expensively put together, the assumption being great-looking skin means great genes and a lifestyle spent

flitting between spa and gym. It could also be about honesty, about stripping back, or how we're happiest when the make-up is off because that's when we're sleeping, spending time with our nearest and dearest, or on holiday.

It's not an easy look though, unless you're Keira Knightley (classic bone structure). If you're not? To avoid looking like every other half-dead person on the tube with bags under their eyes, ignore all advice to go barefaced and learn to cheat. A little make-up never hurt anyone.

Start by getting a tan, or at least, a tinted moisturiser. At Alexander Wang, make-up artist Diane Kendal was grateful that most of the girls were just back from summer holidays — it's a lot more forgiving under the harsh lighting of the catwalk. "Natural tans work well for this look," she says. Meanwhile make-up artist Francelle Daly recently introduced me to Nars Pure Radiant Tinted Moisturiser, £29 — it's sheer, conceals naturally and lacks the

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density of a foundation. Alternatively, use your regular foundation, but only in the areas you need it. Apply it with fingers but finish with a brush (I like Chanel's Les Beiges Kabuki brush, £35, it works with all sorts of textures) so that an otherwise patchwork complexion blends flawlessly into skin.

Don't be afraid of powder — I have been avoiding it for years, but the new textures are

soft and, over a touch of concealer or light foundation, provide a filter-like finish. I like Diorskin Nude Air Tan Powder, £35, which comes in a compact and adds a touch of sun to your face. At Badgley Mischka, Tom Pecheux kept foundation super-sheer but dusted on MAC's Prep+Prime Transparent Finishing Powder, £20.50. "If you put on too much foundation and then add powder, it looks like pancake — which is not good." At JW Anderson, Aaron de May went for a "super-polished look — like a Bruce Weber picture, fragile and aristocratic" using a mattifying cream (MAC Matte, £16) instead of a powder, and nothing else but lip balm.

Switch your black mascara to brown; it's surprisingly effective and adds a touch of freshness. At Victoria Beckham, where the make-up was luminous and healthy-looking, Pat McGrath used a brown mascara. Try Revlon Grow Luscious Mascara in Blackened Brown, from £9.99 or Burberry Beauty Bold Lash Mascara in 02 Chestnut Brown, from £23. Curl your lashes first. At DKNY, Yadim added mascara only to the tips, saying: "It's about adding definition, nothing more," while Dick Page at Zero + Maria Cornejo left it off altogether.

Far from avoiding colour, go ahead, apply your eyeliner, eyeshadow or lipstick — this look is about keeping the skin bare but doesn't mean being devoid of definition. Keep blush on the cheekbones, or — as Francelle Daly did at 3.1 Phillip Lim, apply the palest of blushers as a wash. And when all else fails, remember: those natural-looking selfies on Instagram? Probably taken using an app such as YouCam Perfect or similar, with an instant retouching effect. You didn't think anyone really looks that good without make-up, did you?



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