



FROM THE BATHTUB IN THE MASTER BEDROOM YOU HAVE A VIEW OF THE OUTDOORS.



A TRANSPARENT DOOR CAN BE CLOSED TO CREATE A PARTITION BETWEEN THE SHOWER AREA AND THE REST OF THE MASTER BEDROOM.



DURAVIT SUPPLIED SANITARYWARE FOR AN ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSE IN PARIS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT PABLO KATZ.



CLEAN LINES

According to CEO FRANZ KOOK of DURAVIT, the products used in a Pablo Katz-designed, eco-friendly house near Paris are meant 'to set an example'.

WORDS FEMKE DE WILD
PHOTOS ARNAUD RINUCCINI

In a suburb sometimes referred to as 'the countryside of Paris', Helène and Laurent (who asked that their full names not be used) recently built their eco-friendly dream house, Magic Cube CK06, which was designed by French-Argentine architect Pablo Katz. The project was supported by Duravit, which supplied sanitaryware for the house. CEO Franz Kook talks about the importance to manufacturers, in their attempts to reach the end user, of both small-scale local and large-scale international projects.

Why did Duravit support this project?

It's important to demonstrate your products in real-life situations and not only in showrooms. In the past, when architects needed sanitary appliances, they indicated

only dimensions and quantities on their plans. They paid little attention to quality or design. Nowadays, we do our best to advise people and to point out all the possibilities. The owners of this house didn't want an ordinary bathroom. They had something really special in mind. And they were open to the idea of making the results public, at least to selected magazines. Magazines are often more willing to feature the design of a house than of a hotel, but hotel projects are yet another way to reach a new audience.

Hotel projects?

People who stay in modern hotels are noticing the gradual disappearance of a wall between the bedroom and the bathroom. You can separate the two areas

if you want to, but they still form an entity. Some of the travellers who see this in their hotel rooms will be inspired to renovate their bathrooms at home. Duravit supplied Burj Dubai with 1,000 Starck vanity units, 7,000 toilets and bidets, and over 1,700 bath and whirl tubs. An enormous number of guests will see and use these products. The house in France has an ecological design. Was that important to you?

The word 'sustainability' is influenced by inflation, so it's vital to demonstrate practical solutions. Water is reused in this house, and solar panels supply energy for heating water. The house has three baths, however, including one on the roof. It's an exaggeration to label the house as a totally sustainable building, but it does show that

DURAVIT

WEBSITES duravit.de; duravit.nl; duravit.com
LOCATION Hornberg (DE)
ESTABLISHED 1817: earthenware products; sanitaryware: 1842
AREA OF DISTRIBUTION More than 90 countries worldwide
ANNUAL TURNOVER (2008) €335 million
MARKET SECTOR Sanitaryware, bathroom furniture, wellness products and accessories, kitchen sinks
BEST-KNOWN PRODUCTS Starck K by Philippe Starck, Sauna Inipi, BlueMoon, Sundeck
BEST-SELLING PRODUCT Starck 1 collection by Philippe Starck
COLLABORATING DESIGNERS Sieger Design, Philippe Starck, Michael Graves, Massimo Iosa Ghini, Phoenix Design, James Irvine, Lord Norman Foster, Frank Huster and Herbert Schultes, EOOS



FRANZ KOOK.

'More design value for less money – that's the key to better living'

Franz Kook

it's possible to have a quality bathroom that doesn't consume an unnecessarily large amount of water and energy.

How can the design of sanitaryware contribute to sustainability?

We make sure our products use as little water as possible. Making toilets with a variety of flushing options helps, too, but the main thing is a manufacturing process that consumes a minimum of energy. Another contribution is a design with a timeless quality. We developed Starck 1 some 15 years ago, but it's still one of our major lines.

What do you consider most important: the project market or the consumer market?

When you have more than one child, you can't pick a favourite. We need both of

these markets. Projects have suffered as a result of the economic crisis, but at the same time we're seeing very strong growth in the middle classes of countries like India and China. It's these middle-class populations that need new, quality bathrooms. Renovation, on the other hand, is a prevailing activity in developed countries. Every ten years or so, hotels require renovation, and bathrooms in private residences should be replaced after about 20 years of use. What we're seeing, however, is a delay in renovation activities owing to the recession. People have quality products that are still functioning well despite their age. We have to wake up the market, create a demand for our products, and communicate the latest possibilities.

Don't you see a contradiction between designing sustainable products and creating a demand for new ones?

Yes, I do, but I'm talking about replacing a 20-year-old bathroom with a new one. Two decades is a long time. Installing a new bathroom at that point is a good investment. Quality of life is the most important issue here, and functionality is not enough to improve that quality. More design value for less money – that's the key to better living.