

frameless enclosures

BATHROOMS

1. MERLYN

The Series 8 Walk-in with Swivel Panel has been designed for a recess situation or a smaller wetroom area, with sizes from 1200mm up to 1700mm. Made from 8mm toughened glass, it measures 2015mm high and features a 30mm side panel.

Readerlink 108

2. ROMAN

Adding to its Sculptures range of enclosures, the Bespoke Frameless Hinged Door is made from 10mm toughened safety glass. It can be used on its own for an alcove or with an inline panel for a larger space and comes with the Truelife Lifetime Guarantee.

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Freeze frame

The minimal frameless enclosure may be a staple of bathroom fashion but, as it moves downmarket, can we expect manufacturers to differentiate by detail? Philippa Turrell asks the question

Interior fashions may come and go – Rattan one season, Pop Art the next – but one trend has remained a staple, and that's the clean, coveted lines of the wet room. Arguably, it has been the greatest influence on bathroom design – and in particular the showering space – spawning the frameless enclosure. From the premium market, down through the mid, and even into the mass market, consumers can embrace this frameless look. Andrew Bullingham, commercial director of Kirby Sebastian, agrees saying: “Frameless enclosures do transcend all levels of the sector now and have continued to develop, in line with the demand for the minimal wet room look and feel.”

And the demand for frameless enclosures has no signs of waning as, marketing manager for Aqualux, Sandra Hyde says: “Consumer feedback suggests that the appeal of minimalistic styling is for the long-term, which gives it selection on enduring value.”

Selling all levels

Perhaps unusually for trends which have filtered down the market, sales of the frameless enclosure in the mid-to-high end of the market remain very strong. MD of Dröm, Kicki Carlsson-Boyd comments: “It is still the middle to high end of the market that mainly purchase frameless shower enclosures”, pointing out “around 90% of Dröm UK shower enclosures sales are frameless glass.”



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**3. AQUALUX**

As the name suggests, the Aqua 8 frameless enclosure range is made from toughened, 8mm glass. Part of the range is this hinge Quadrant design
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4. ROBERT LEE DISTRIBUTION

The Matki Walk-in 1200 Curved recess has Celtic Silver supports and clear safety glass. It comes complete with a Matki Elixir concealed thermostatic shower mixer, hand shower and overhead support 150mm Easy Clean overhead deluge shower head and 90mm Matki Fastflow shower waste
Readerlink 111

5. KIRBY SEBASTIAN

The Monaco Frameless Sliding Door is made from 8mm toughened 'easy clean' glass and has 20mm adjustment for out-of-true walls. It is available for left and right-hand entrance and in a variety of sizes, all of which boast a 10-year warranty
Readerlink 112

And Jayne Barnes, managing director of Aqata, reports similar sales success stating: "Two frameless ranges account for approximately 70% of our sales."

However, it is perhaps the definition of frameless that differs across the price points, which reveals why frameless sells at both the premium and the mass market end. At the premium (and still rather niche end of the market) is the glass panel, while for the more mass market frameless refers to a 'look'. Managing director of Roman Showers, David Osborne explains: "Designers and manufacturers of shower enclosures are developing products which give a frameless finish, but that can be installed within the typical UK bathroom. Semi-frameless is very much where the mainstream shower enclosure sales lie, and this is certainly increasing as the look moves through all market sectors."

Different by design

But in a market where less is more, how will manufacturers encourage consumers to see the difference between mass, mid and upper end enclosures? Will they look to add 'detailing' to differentiate their designs, adding more 'value' for consumers? Industry experts believe the market for frameless enclosure looks will continue to thrive, perhaps moving towards thicker glass and higher enclosures for points of difference.

Andrew Bullingham of Kirby Sebastian adds: "In





6. AQATA

The Spectra SP440 is part of the company's best-selling range and together with its Minimalist frameless enclosures, accounts for 70% of sales

Readerlink 113

7. LAKES BATHROOMS

Part of the Coastline Collection is this Riviera Walk-in frameless enclosure. Made from 8mm glass, it features AllClear coating as standard

Readerlink 114

8. HSK

The Exklusiv Corner Entry is a frameless enclosure that folds back to the wall to create a wetroom, for improved ease of access. It is made from 6mm toughened glass, with HSK Shield glass protection, and comes with a lifetime guarantee

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9. SIMPSONS

Meeting the demand for showering in awkward spaces, Design is a semi-frameless enclosure with a wall profile for adjustment. The glass is coated with Simpsons Clear and the enclosure comes with a lifetime guarantee
Readerlink 116

10. DRÖM UK

Giving the illusion of space and light, this bespoke fully-glazed steam room features clear glass. It also boasts brass trims and hinges, plus a matching brass handle
Readerlink 117

11. KERMI

The Pasa XP enclosure is a semicircle with fixed panels for the premium segment of the market and boasts a frameless look. It is available in clear glass or sand-blasted décor finish and both come with Kermi Clean coating
Readerlink 118

12. CORAM

Using 8mm glass shower panels, supported by a chrome pillar, is this 'walk-in style' enclosure. The front panel and end panel boast Glassguard protection and feature a wall channel with 20mm adjustment, all in one box
Readerlink 119

the next couple of years, the height of the doors and enclosures is going to change from the current standard of 1900mm to 2000mm. This is reflected in the on-going trend for shower trays and bases reducing in depth. A few years ago, the average base was 90mm but we are now at 40mm and this is likely to reduce further to 20mm." He continues: "I also believe in the mid-to-upper end of the market, 10mm glass will become the new 8mm, giving products that extra bit of stability and luxury." (See Expert View on how to encourage consumers to move more upmarket).

While the ability to create bespoke spaces will further the growth of the frameless enclosure in the premium sector. As Sandra Hyde of Aqualux comments: "Experience shows that the modern consumer concept is to place showering facilities where they are needed, rather than where custom dictates." And Jayne Barnes of Aqata agrees, continuing: "In the future, more attic spaces will be utilised in new builds and conversions and our Bespoke service can maximise the potential of these challenging spaces."

Return to detailing

However, industry experts haven't entirely ruled out updates to the frameless design with perhaps a return to pattern or colour. Kicki Carlsson-Boyd of Dröm comments: "There could be a gradual move to more embellishment onto the glass itself – frosting, etching etc. Privacy glass will be used more, again with or without embellishment, and also shower enclosures incorporating textiles between two thin pieces of glass will definitely be cutting-edge trends." However, Andrew Bullingham of Kirby Sebastian, adds: "We saw an influx of stained and engraved glass to the market a couple of years ago, along with water delivery systems built into the enclosures, but these simply did not take off." But he cautiously adds in conclusion: "If they can be adapted to be more affordable and appealing, I can see some of these ideas re-appearing in the market."



EXPERT VIEW:

MAKING UPMARKET CHOICES

Managing director of Coram Showers, Peter Dimeloe explains why retailers and designers should encourage their customers to opt for quality investments



More and more consumers are seeking to emulate a spa lifestyle with the introduction of wet rooms in the home, opting for walk-in and frameless enclosures to achieve that look and feel. As a result, manufacturers and retailers alike are answering the call from all levels of the market. However, the market has fast come to realise that you 'get what you pay for' and that considering a lower entry range is typically the unreliable option. Consumers are undoubtedly becoming savvier these days and are demanding more for their money. We have noticed that homeowners don't mind spending a bit more on an 'investment' item, but the quality has to be second to none.

In order to remain buoyant within such a saturated market, variety and flexibility of design will be a great influence to your success. Exclusive design elements will set you aside from the competition, such as unique height options, quality and type of glass, ease of access and ease of installation. And extra product incentives such as lifetime guarantees will hold sway with the buyer, providing confidence in not only the function of the product, but its longevity too.



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