

FRAME



KOSSMANN.DEJONG : AEKAE : RICK POYNOR : CARMODY GROARKE : YVES BÉHAR : MATT WOODS : LOT-EK : DAYTRIP
EERO AARNIO : WHATSWHAT COLLECTIVE : ANTONIO GARDONI : SOU FUJIMOTO : RENE GONZALEZ : FREELAND BUCK



RE-USE

THE 85-PIECE AXOR/BOUROULLEC BATHROOM COLLECTION INCLUDES BASINS, TUBS, SHOWERS AND TAPS THAT CAN BE COMBINED IN VARIOUS WAYS.



OF THE FIRST WATER

CEO PHILIPPE GROHE asked the BOUROULLECS to create a new bathroom collection for AXOR, 'because these designers consciously influence space'.

WORDS CHRIS SCOTT
PHOTOS PAUL TAHON, COURTESY OF RONAN AND ERWAN BOUROULLEC

Hansgrohe, global leader in bathroom and shower fittings, is moving even further into the world of innovative style with its design brand, Axor. Klaus Grohe – son of founder and namesake Hans Grohe, who established the company in Schiltach, Germany, in 1901 – began working with designers 40 years ago. Today his son Philippe, who heads Axor, continues to do so. Philippe Grohe's most recent collaboration was with French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, creators of the Axor/Bouroullec bathroom collection, a line of products that offers a raft of new possibilities. The quality of these items, says Philippe Grohe, comes along 'once every 20 years if you're lucky'.

Can you tell us about the designers involved in the Axor collection?

Philippe Grohe: Axor has no in-house designers,

because we want to avoid the closeness that leads to repetition or monotony – and to rule out conflicts with outside designers. But we do have an excellent and experienced group of employees that others might see as a design team. With their background and open-minded approach, they form an intrinsic part of the design process, working with external designers to find solutions, providing them with the expertise of a global company – and that includes the power of innovation, a solid distribution network and a culture of understanding. Choosing the designers we work with is my responsibility. It's the most important decision I take.

What are your criteria?

It's crucial to have a positive rapport with the designers I select. After all, we will be working together for years. I look for designers

who've got something to say, designers with a philosophy. It's about more than a portfolio of projects from which to choose. These people are often more than just product designers. Sometimes we work with architects or interior designers. At the end of the 1990s, I formulated a strategy. I wanted to work with people who understand and work with space and who focus on solutions. These are things the Bouroullecs do so well. They consciously influence space.

How strict is the briefing your designers get?

It would be crazy to give a formal briefing. I talk with them, listen to as many of their insights as possible, and tap into what I hear. We engage in a wide-open discussion that includes an intense exchange of ideas – not just about products but about how to live in this bathroom they're designing. >>>



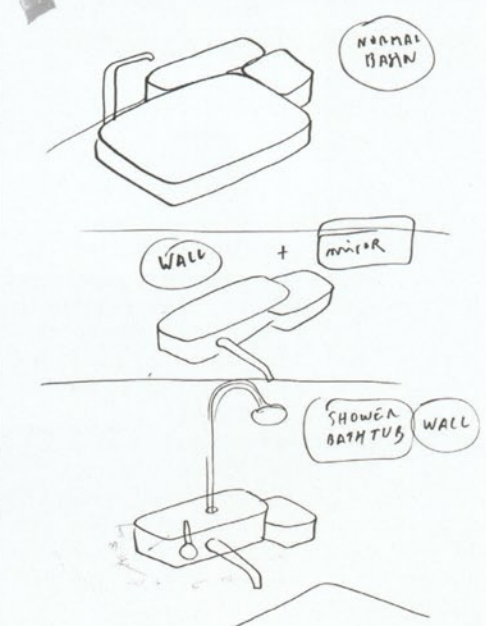
**AXOR/BOUROLLEC
BATHROOM COLLECTION**

The Axor/Bouroullec bathroom collection was a learning process for all involved. The project took six years, and the result is a pure, simple and timeless line of products. Brothers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec were delighted to work on a complete collection, as opposed to individual pieces; to consider the ergonomics of the space; and to search for a subtle 'white language' of harmony, sensuality, softness and elegance – all in relation to the human body. No superfluous details, but smooth, simple shapes. No sharp corners, but surfaces inviting to the touch. In the words of the Bouroullecs: 'Early in the morning, after a late night, you do not particularly want to be faced with a conceptual project. You just want something that works well.' The collection – comprising 85 elements and highlighted by a washbasin – invites the user to create a personalized bathroom based on an endless number of possibilities. No longer do mixers or controls have to be placed in certain positions. After Axor/Bouroullec products leave the store, they begin to lead their own exciting lives.

SMOOTH, SIMPLE SHAPES CHARACTERIZE THE SHOWER UNITS, AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE COLLECTION.



'I want to work with people who understand space and concentrate on solutions'
Philippe Grohe

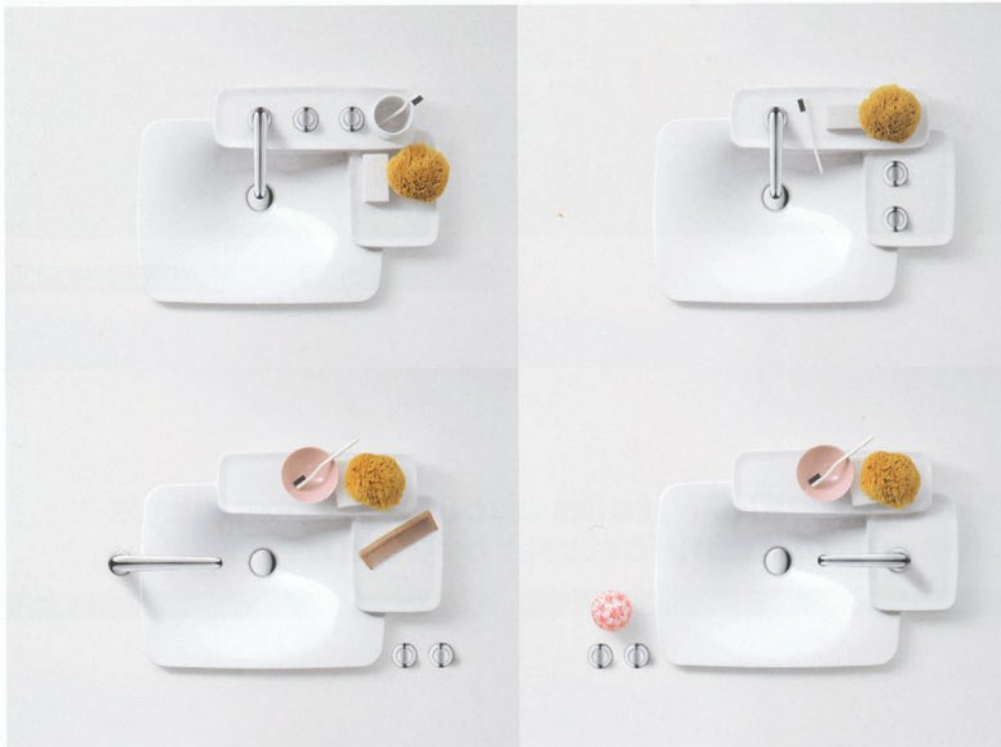


LINE SKETCHES CONVEY THE SIMPLE SHAPES THAT EPITOMIZE THE BOUROLLECS' PROJECT.



THE FORMULATION OF A COLLECTION RATHER THAN A SERIES OF INDIVIDUAL PIECES ADHERES TO AXOR'S HOLISTIC APPROACH TO DESIGN.

USERS CAN CREATE A PERSONALIZED SINK BY CHOOSING WHERE TO PLACE THE TAP AND WATER CONTROLS.



Can you describe the Axor approach?

We're an ecologically minded company that has green blood flowing in its veins. We take a holistic, visionary approach to design. I would like Axor to live the philosophy of architecture and of exploring solutions rather than simply proposing additional products. Here at Axor, design is the driving technology – a technology that needs to be reinvented time and again. We're constantly considering the direction that bathrooms will be taking in the future. Beyond its functional significance, the bathroom is increasingly a place of peace and relaxation, a retreat from life's fast pace.

What are the most important changes?

There is a huge difference between now and ten years ago. Architecture is moving into bathrooms, spaces are changing, and bathrooms

are gaining importance as living areas. Such changes are picking up speed as we speak, but this is still a very conservative part of the home. About 80 per cent of today's bathrooms resemble those of yesterday. There are better things to do with space – like opening it up – and every one of our collections provides users with new and improved features. It's also important to have a structural, holistic approach. If one company makes mixers and another makes basins, nothing can change.

Have you just described your biggest challenge?

Our biggest challenge has to be water. People want and need a greater sense of wellbeing, which means that they use more water. It's not possible to continue like this; we have to find a solution. People often ask me how I can come up



PHILIPPE GROHE, CEO OF AXOR.

AXOR

WEBSITES hansgrohe.com, axor-design.com
LOCATION Hansgrohe AG, Auestrasse 5-9, 77761 Schiltach, Germany
ESTABLISHED Hansgrohe in 1901, Axor in 1994
AREA OF DISTRIBUTION Worldwide
MARKET SECTOR Sanitaryware
BESTSELLING PRODUCTS Axor Starck, Axor Citterio
COLLABORATING DESIGNERS Philippe Starck, Antonio Citterio, Jean-Marie Massaud, Patricia Urquiola, Phoenix Design, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec

'The biggest challenge is water; people are using more and more of it'

Philippe Grohe

with yet another good idea. I have hundreds of ideas. They're lying all over the floor, so to speak. All you have to do is pick them up. Ideas are not a problem. The only problems are time and capacity. ■■■■