

SaphirKeramik



# A REVOLUTION IN CERAMIC DESIGN.

**SaphirKeramik** allows a new language in ceramic design, where precise, thin-walled shapes and tight edge radii are possible: A high-tech material at the core of new design.

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Exploring the potential of a new type of ceramic through a series of cutting-edge collaborations with designers



Globally renowned for their collaborations with architects as well as creatively pushing the limits of production process and materials, Laufen's latest venture takes the concept of bathroom fittings into an entirely new and compelling physical and experiential dimension. The starting point is SaphirKeramik, an innovative and recently launched new type of ceramic that has the

potential to revolutionise bathroom design, combining as it does durability, lightness and thinness. Specially developed by Laufen, following extensive research and testing, it presents the Swiss company's design partners, such as Konstantin Grcic and Toan Nguyen, with hitherto untried formal possibilities, which are prolifically explored in a series of highly expressive

and elegant product designs.

The key to SaphirKeramik is its strength and extreme thinness. 'The material is like a fruit with a thin rather than a thick skin', says Nguyen. 'When you unpeel it, there's a lot of fruit to eat inside.' Compared with thicker traditional ceramics it enables precise and very fine corner curvatures of up to 1-2mm to be achieved; previously the maximum was 7-8mm. This gives rise to a radical new aesthetic, which has been eagerly seized on and interpreted in different ways by Grcic and Nguyen. 'We agreed that we wanted to challenge things', says Grcic, 'nothing was impossible to try.'

Following an exhaustive process of research and development, Grcic has designed a series of exquisite, jewel-like washbasins characterised by their utter simplicity and spare clean lines, which exploit the fundamental characteristics of SaphirKeramik. They also embrace a subtle game of subtraction, paring back and taking away in an almost Japanese spirit of austerity and rigour. Every product



**1. Laufen craftsman hand finishing the new range of bathroom fittings designed by Konstantin Grcic and made from SaphirKeramik, the revolutionary new ceramic material which allows elements to be ultra thin**  
**2. A piece by Toan Nguyen in production. Laufen is renowned for its creative collaboration with architects and designers**  
**3. Washbasin designed by Konstantin Grcic shows the potential of SaphirKeramik. Further information: [www.laufen.com](http://www.laufen.com)**

‘We are constantly researching how we can develop new forms and materials, but ultimately a sense of quality depends on the human touch’

‘must have meaning’, says Greic, ‘but also and above all be pleasing, enter into a relationship with the user and make them feel at home’.

SaphirKeramik also has impeccable ecological credentials, using fewer raw materials, so it is lighter and easier to transport. ‘Innovation is in the Swiss DNA’, says Marc Viardot, Laufen’s Director of Marketing and Products, ‘we are constantly researching how we can develop new forms and materials, but ultimately a sense of quality depends on the human touch’.

Can materials have their own design language? In the case of SaphirKeramik it seems so. ‘It’s like a traditional ceramic’, says Toan Nguyen, ‘in that it’s hygienic and shares the same production processes – moulding, glazing

and firing. But while it’s recognisably made of ceramic, it’s also modern and very high-performance. Its thin walls provide the opportunity to create very graphic, minimalist shapes. Its radii can be tight, yet they don’t feel sharp but smooth.’ Nguyen’s designs allude to and honour a familiar series by Italian designer Achille Castiglioni, but also propose reconceptualising the archetype of the washbasin in a way that redefines boundaries and determines new functions. The outcome is a wall-mounted washbasin that incorporates a shelf to one side, which takes the place of the wider area normally found around a typical basin.

‘Laufen is an interesting partner for architects’, says Marc Viardot, ‘as the bathroom

is a distinct element in architecture. It stands between the hard elements of architecture and the softer ambience of interior design, concerned with creating a sense of wellbeing’. And like all great creative partnerships, the emphasis is on the art of the possible; of pushing, testing and refining technical innovation, then having the courage and generosity of spirit to hand it over to others and see how it is elaborated on as a jumping off point for design imagination. ‘I believe that in future SaphirKeramik will define how ceramic sanitaryware is designed’, says Toan Nguyen. ‘It’s just the beginning of a process, like the trailer for the complete movie we’ll see later.’

