



Trend Report This month's trend report is on *spas*.

What's here: The **spiritual** spa, the **wellness center**, the spa in the **mall**, the spa as the newest **lifestyle experience**...

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We are a nation in search of healing. The American psyche post-WTC (and post-economic boom) is fragile, and changing. Many of us are asking ourselves what we really believe in, how we really want to live, and what really matters. Recent market studies indicate we are now focusing on enjoying small rituals, aspiring to simplification, moving spirituality forward, and recognizing the sanctity of life more than ever.

As in ancient times, spas exist to provide "services that fulfill three basic needs at three levels of being; relaxation, revitalization, and rejuvenation for body, mind, and spirit." This makes spas and all of their permutations one of the most relevant, and quickly evolving, environments in the world today. Even before recent tragic events, the spa industry was exploding. According to the International Spa Association ([ISPA](#)) 90 million spa visits took place in the United States in 1999, generating \$5 billion in revenue...

The Brand For those in the know, the words *spa* and *Bliss* are synonymous. [Bliss Spa](#), the state-of-the-art spa in the new LVMH tower on Manhattan's East 57th Street, is more than a spa, it is a brand and a lifestyle - or in Bliss's words: a world.

According to [Interior Design Magazine](#) (April '99) "The Bliss legend is well known... Founder and executive director Marcia Kilgore had some skin problems, began experimenting with solutions and, in early 1991, opened a small office where she gave professional beauty treatments. Two years later came a three-room mini-spa and, as the press release explains, 'her cult-like following ... grew faster than you can say *glycolic peel*.' In 1996, Bliss was born.

"...Blissworld now comprises a catalogue with circulation of over one million, an expanded Soho location, and a plush new spa in the recently opened LVMH tower by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Christian de Portzamparc. Plans are currently in the works for spas in London and San Francisco, as well as a new midtown Manhattan "nail bar."

"The New York design firm UT designed the company's corporate headquarters and warehouse in Brooklyn. 'We have a bit of a wacko twist on spas...' says Kilgore. A signature 'feather wall' expresses something of the Bliss aesthetic; it is made of two sheets of glass with individually glued, white turkey feathers. In the uptown spa, the translucent feather wall links the locker room to the reception desk. Set against this wall, cuddly, Mongolian lamb benches underscore the quirky sensuality and witty luxe that is sheer Bliss."



Spa design strategies: Feng shui is one way to create the type of *spatial meaning* critical to the success of healing and wellness environments, but there are other ways. How about...

Emotional modernism The best spa experiences are emotional; they use sensory effects (acoustic therapy, aroma therapy, "hands-on" therapy, light and color therapy) to tap into emotions and create spiritual, loving, healing experiences. According to a recent article in [The New York Times](#) (free registration required), a "restrained cadre of Europeans is quietly creating furniture that starts at minimalism but doesn't stop there. Their loose confederacy has so far gone nameless, but they might be described as the 'emotional modernists.'