

FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend it

FEBRUARY 7 2015

MATERIAL GAINS
DENIM'S NEW REFINEMENT



CREAM OF THE COPPER

The warm glow and jewel-like qualities of the “red metal” are now being showcased in innovative ways and luring design aficionados away from industrial-looking steel, says Nicole Swengley



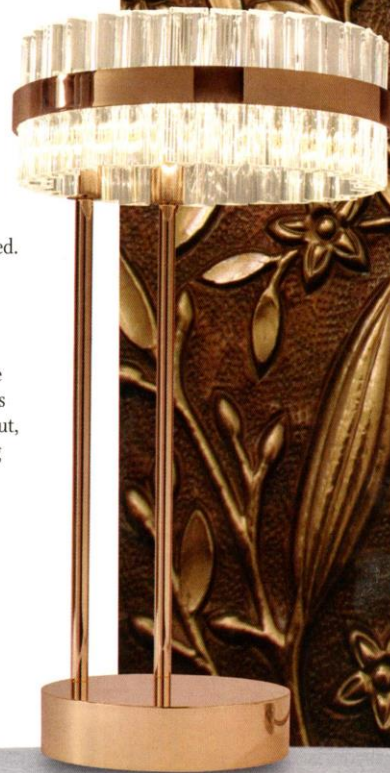
Clockwise from left: Nicolas Le Moigne Copper High Table, £9,600. Jamie Hayón for Gaia&Gino copper Grid vase, from €540. Barocelli copper, crystal and brass Saturno table lamp, £2,390. Baxter copper Loren coffee tables, price on request

When British designer Tom Dixon created the recently opened Mondrian London – his first complete-hotel design project – he installed a spectacular copper-clad structure inspired by a ship’s hull. Piercing an outside canopy, it runs through the lobby

down towards the restaurant, embracing the reception desk en route. “I wanted to make a large, impactful statement and draw people in,” he says. “Copper is a great material – it’s alive, constantly changing, malleable, easy to work and patinates beautifully.”

The “red metal” has, of course, been used decoratively for millennia, but new applications are emerging as contemporary designers explore its full potential. Subtler than brass (a copper and zinc alloy) and more malleable than bronze (an alloy of copper and – usually – tin), copper has a natural radiance and iridescence. When highly polished, it emits a warm glow. When heat-treated or oxidised, it develops a spectrum of hues, from pink, red, orange and yellow to green, blue and purple. And its patina continues to change when it is touched and used.

Beyond these visual nuances, it’s also very practical. Copper is recyclable and a good conductor of heat and electricity, while its antimicrobial properties support its use in handrails, doorknobs and worktops. Interior designer Katharine Pooley boldly used copper to create a glamorous bespoke staircase in a Knightsbridge mews house. “Our client requested copper finishes throughout, from the staircase and fireplace to detailing on lighting





Clockwise from above: Hunting & Narud copper mirrors, from £5,700. Keir Townsend copper- and brass-clad sideboard, from £9,237. David Derksen copper pendant light, from £545. Fired Earth copper and enamel Aphrodite Cyprus basin, £945. Tom Dixon copper and cast-iron Base Copper floor lamp, £845. J&L Lobjmeyr and Studio Formafantasma copper vessel filter, £1,600, and silica vessel, €680



and fittings within the kitchen and bathroom. We heat-treated and lacquered the fireplace and staircase before installation to bring out a variety of colours, from reds and pinks to blues, and combined this with sections of polished copper to show the material's full potential."

Copper has traditionally been a kitchen favourite and remains so due to desirable contemporary kit such as Alessi's La Cintura di Orione collection designed by Richard Sapper (casserole, £215; sauteuse, £234). But why stop at the *batterie de cuisine*? La Cornue – the Rolls-Royce of kitchen-range makers – gives its Château 150 model (£36,960, pictured overleaf) a solid-copper finish and polished-copper trim. Handmade to order, it has a personalised hob configuration and choice of fuel supply.

This winning combination of aesthetics and functionality is also found in the glass and copper mosaic tiles made by Artistic Tile for surface specialist De Ferranti. Designs such as Treble (£1,932 per sq m, pictured overleaf) make attractive splashbacks or feature panels in kitchens or bathrooms.

"Copper's warmth of colour and antimicrobial properties are increasingly attracting homeowners away from industrial-looking steel surfaces," says founder Alvaro de Ferranti. DXU, the Montreal

design studio founded by Joel Dumas

and David Umemoto, uses recycled copper to handcraft two wall tiles, Batavia and Kalimantan (£5,000 per sq m; Kalimantan pictured on previous pages). "Their textures and patterns play with depth and reflection, shadows and light," says exclusive UK supplier Fameed Khalique.

A copper bath, meanwhile, is luxurious and practical. It warms up quickly and, as Aphrodite/Venus – often depicted bathing – represented copper in mythology, there's a poetic quality too. Fired Earth's double-ended Babylon bath (£5,700) is made from solid copper with a white-enamel or polished-nickel interior. There are also two copper basins. Deeply curved Aphrodite Cyprus (£945, pictured above right) has a white-enamel interior, while Aphrodite Kythera (£1,350) has a stepped base and lipped rim with a polished-nickel interior. Bathroom specialist Drummonds also now offers its bestselling cast-iron Tay (£8,940, pictured overleaf) and Usk (£8,340) baths with hand-applied copper cladding. This bespoke finish can be polished to a rich glow or given an antique verdigris patina.

Homeowners have not always been so enthusiastic about copper. "It used to be considered too industrial for a home environment, but now there's a greater understanding of the material," says British furniture-maker Paul Kelley. "To me it's warm and inviting and needs to be touched and used. The way it ages really appeals to me. And it's often recycled, which makes it pretty eco-friendly. Copper also works as well with wood and concrete as with textiles and wallpaper, and it's a very forgiving material that lends itself to all kinds of applications. Each design has its own character and finish – from a highly polished Tom Dixon light to the

raw look of my patinated cubes." Here Kelley is referring to his modular Bob cubes (from £195 per cube, pictured on previous pages) in copper-clad MDF, which launched at London's 100% Design show last September. A soon-to-be-patented magnetic system attaches any face to another simply by stacking or pushing the cubes together to create chunky tables, stools, benches, seats or room dividers with various configurations. Kelley also makes glamorous bespoke designs. One client requested copper storage boxes and a walk-in wardrobe whose Douglas-fir interior is concealed by sliding copper doors (from around £42,000). Others have commissioned a chic copper tallboy (from £21,000), a copper and walnut desk (from £20,000) and a drinks trolley (from £12,000) made out of copper sheet, cast acrylic and walnut.

Copper's elemental, jewel-like qualities are highlighted in new designs such as Italian furniture specialist Baxter's sleek Loren coffee tables (price on request, examples pictured on previous pages). And London-based Keir Townsend has collaborated with Italian artisans on sideboards (from £9,237, example pictured top), cabinets (from £7,578) and coffee tables (from £3,026) clad in copper or given a striated effect using variegated strips of natural and burnished copper, polished steel and brass. Equally elegant is Nicolas Le Moigne's limited-edition Copper High Table (£9,600, pictured on previous pages), which launched at Design Miami/Basel last June. Made from spun copper and black-lacquered steel, this eloquent design whispers a playful subtext about the use of plinths or podiums in museum and gallery displays.

More dynamic is the vertical and horizontal geometry of Christopher Jenner's brushed-copper and pearwood Devisor shelving (example pictured on previous pages, £2,500), which is shipped flatpacked and supplied with a

bespoke key for Meccano-like assembly. "Our relationship with copper is as ancient as civilisation itself and the elemental interplay between wood and metal creates an emotive layering of narrative and material," says Jenner. Similarly, the large-scale, freestanding, limited-edition copper mirrors (from £5,700, pictured on previous page) by Norwegian-born, London-based Amy Hunting and Oscar Narud owe their distinctive charm to the intrinsic beauty of copper, steel and granite.

For most designers, though, the material's appeal lies in its malleability and radiance. Danish designer David Derksen folds thin copper sheets to create his faceted copper pendant lights (from €545, pictured on previous page), while fellow Dane Tom Rossau creates sculptural flattened pendants (£590, pictured top right) from strips of copper-plated aluminium. There's also legendary Danish designer Verner Panton's iconic Onion pendant that has been newly produced in copper by Verpan (£2,996, pictured on opening pages).

Copper's reflective qualities are particularly championed by Tom Dixon. His bestselling Copper Shade (small pendant, £245; large pendant, £375; floor lamp, £395) is made by exploding a thin layer of pure metal onto a polycarbonate globe's internal surface using an electrical charge. The technique is reiterated in Dixon's theatrically inspired Fat Spot floor

Clockwise from near right: The Artistic Tile Company for De Ferranti glass and copper Treble mosaic tiles, £1,932 per sq m. Tom Rossau copper pendant light, £590. Drummonds copper-clad cast-iron Tay bath, £8,940. David Adjaye for Gaia&Gino copper and Swarovski-element Star vessels, £8,400 for three. La Cornue copper Château 150 range, £36,960



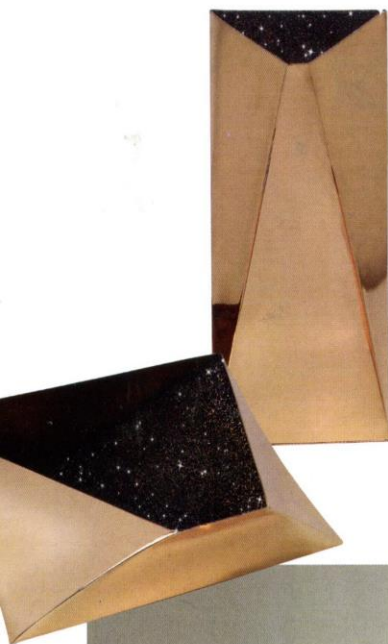
"copper" stems from "cyprium", meaning "metal of Cyprus"). More architectural are David Adjaye's limited-edition Star vessels, also handmade for Gaia&Gino (£8,400 for three, pictured far left). Meanwhile, lighting specialist Baroncelli encircles crystal trihedrons with a copper band in its new LED-powered Saturno collection (pendant, from £2,740; table lamp, £2,390, pictured on opening pages; wall light, £1,670).

Experimentation persists. Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin of Amsterdam-based Studio Formafantasma collaborated with renowned Viennese crystal company J&L Lobmeyr on the Still collection of tools and vessels designed to use activated charcoal to purify and improve tapwater's taste. "It continues the investigation we started in 2012 with our previous project, Charcoal, for Vitra Design Museum," says Trimarchi. The copper utensils include a vessel filter (£1,600, pictured on previous page), jug filter (£980) and cup (£280), along with mouth-blown engraved silica vessels (£680, pictured on previous page) and crystal tumblers (£115). Initial responses have been encouraging. "We

had a very positive reaction at Maison et Objet in Paris last autumn," says Lobmeyr managing partner Leonid Rath. Designers are in their element, it seems, playing with this protean material. ♦

lamp (£305), while Base Copper (table lamp, £385; floor lamp, £845, pictured on previous page; double-arm wall light, £555) counterbalances a gleaming copper shade with a black cast-iron base.

"Despite being a metal, copper's anything but cold and I love its sophistication and the reflections it creates," says Spanish designer Jaime Hayón. His Grid vases (from €540, example pictured on opening pages) for Istanbul-based design company Gaia&Gino – inspired by suits of armour and fencing masks – are made by Turkish artisans whose copper skills are centuries old. In Roman times the metal was mined on nearby Cyprus (the term



STATUS GLOW

Alessi, 22 Brook St, London W1 (020-7518 9090; www.alessi.com). **Artistic Tile**, www.artistictile.com and see De Ferranti. **Baroncelli**, Studio C3, The Imperial Laundry, 71 Warriner Gdns, London SW1 (020-7720 6556; www.baroncelli.com). **Baxter**, 2 Hay Hill, London W1 (020-7629 0045; www.baxterlondon.net). **Boutique 1**, The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence, Dubai (+971-4425 7888; www.boutique1.com). **Christopher Jenner**, Newman Hire Building, 16 The Vale, London W3 (020-8746 1249; www.christopher-jenner.com). **David Adjaye**, see Gaia&Gino. **David Derksen**, see Holloways of Ludlow. **De Ferranti**, 583 King's Rd, London SW6 (020-7384 4424; www.deferranti.com). **Drummonds**, 642 King's Rd, London SW6 (020-7376 4499; www.drummonds-uk.com). **DXU**, see Famed Khalique. **Famed Khalique**, Unit 101, 190 St John St, London EC1 (020-7490 5524; www.famedkhalique.com). **Fired Earth**, 74-75 Marylebone High St, London W1 (0845-366 0400; www.firedearth.com). **Gaia&Gino**, +4202-2231 5739; www.gaiagino.com. **Gallery Libby Sellers**, 41-42 Berners St, London W1 (020-3384 8785; www.libbysellers.com). **Gallery S Bensimon**, 111 Rue de Turenne, Paris 75003 (+331-4274 5077; www.gallerybensimon.com). **Holloways of Ludlow**, 121 Shepherd's Bush Rd, London W6 (020-7602 5757; www.hollowaysofludlow.com). **Hunting & Narud**, www.huntingandnarud.com and see Gallery Libby Sellers. **Jaime Hayón**, see Boutique 1 and Gaia&Gino. **J&L Lobmeyr**, www.lobmeyr.at and see Studio Formafantasma. **Katharine Pooley**, 160 Walton St, London SW3 (020-7584 3223; www.katharinepooley.com). **Keir Townsend**, 142 Old Brompton Rd, London SW7 (020-7746 2442; www.keirtownsend.com). **La Cornue**, 0870-789 5107; www.lacornue.com and stockists. **Nicolas Le Moigne**, see Gallery Libby Sellers. **Paul Kelley**, 07930-135 238; www.pk-designs.co.uk and see Paul Smith and other stockist. **Paul Smith**, 9 Albemarle St, London W1 (020-7493 4565; www.paulsmith.co.uk). **Studio Formafantasma**, +316-1629 5171; www.formafantasma.com and see Gallery S Bensimon. **Tom Dixon**, Wharf Building, Portobello Dock, 344 Ladbroke Grove, London W1 (020-7183 9737; www.tomdixon.net). **Tom Rossau**, www.tomrossau.dk and see Holloways of Ludlow. **Verpan**, 29 Egeskovvej, Horsens, Denmark 8700T (+4576-581 882; www.verpan.com).