



Pietro Russo's Metropolis light fitting.

THE GLORY OF METALS

PAULA AGIUS AND KATJA CASSAR OF THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE ATELIER MAISON WRITE ABOUT THE CURRENT VOGUE FOR METALLIC ELEMENTS IN INTERIOR DECORATION.



The simplest way to incorporate metals into your decor is through ornaments like dishes.



These candleholders, inspired by the ones made in India from hand-punctured patterned tins, come in copper, black and silver metal, and cost €69 for a set of six from BoConcept in San Gwann



The bedroom in a 1950s apartment interior in Florence, by Massimo Adario.

Fitted cupboards in an interior designed by Pietro Russo, using metal elements as part of the doors.



When preparing a material palette or mood board for a client, just using materials like fabrics and woods may not be enough. Adding metals can create a space that is rich and more architectural, because metals can be used structurally, decoratively and functionally.

Metals are really on trend at the moment, and the top ones are copper, brass and bronze. Copper vases, dishes and elements are on the hot list, and 1970s-style tables incorporating black marble with brass are sought after in the vintage version or remade to the original designs.

Copper was widely used in architecture in the past, as a roofing material.

When it comes into contact with water through damp and rain, it oxidises and turns from its standard fiery orange to a beautiful topaz green, which is what you see on old buildings in many central and eastern European cities. But copper has more recently been used on the interior too, to clad structural elements like beams, columns and trusses, to front mantelpieces and even to build cupboards. Brass has long been far more familiar because of its frequent use in ornamentation, tools and decorative elements on furniture. It also used to be standard for lock fittings and handles, capping cupboard legs, or forming foot-rests. This is because of its



Brass inlays and finishes are even used for ceramics, like this blue and white Chinese pot, €42 from the boutique at Palazzo Parisio in Naxxar



This well-shaped piece is the Edel vase, made in granite green distressed brass - €49 from BoConcept in San Gwann



Kitchen by Pietro Russo, using brass plates in the cupboards.



Silver candle holder with rope handle at Camilleri Paris Mode in Rabat, €36



This is Gordon Guillaumier's Cage coffee table for Tacchini Italia, available in Malta through Satariano Home. It centres on the use of metal strips which have been stamped with a slight bending radius to soften the geometry of the whole.

hardwearing qualities and the way it becomes better and more burnished with age.

These metals have now been given a slightly different use, in the form of inserts into furniture pieces and even trims in flooring. Despite not being precious metals in the category of gold and silver, copper, brass and bronze remain costly and not easy to source. Yet used in the right quantities they can still be affordable, while increasing the value of the piece and the overall aesthetics. They lend richness and robustness. Metals can be either cold and forbidding, like chrome, or warm and welcoming, like copper and burnished old brass.

We think that these beautiful metals can even be used in smaller architectural elements, like as door and window surrounds –a portal or even a sill. Metal profiles can be used as a border in flooring, which when used in the proper way, can make any ordinary tiled floor look rich and elegant. A metal

trim within a glass door can add so much elegance. Metals have reflective properties, and can be used instead of mirrors to make a space appear larger, in situations when you don't want or need a perfect mirror reflection.

The designer Pietro Russo adds metals to furniture pieces, like side boards and kitchen counters. The interplay of natural wood and metal makes something special of furniture that is used every day. And why not make an everyday object look like something extraordinary? Russo has also designed a number of light fittings using metals, like the Metropolis pendant light, which can be made as big or as small as the space requires. It is made up of brass hexagon modules, which are pieced together.

Handles on some furniture pieces can be custom made out of brass. Instead of using the conventional handle, you can do something different, for example, using a brass bar, or a folded metal plate inserted into a door in a manner that looks like an



The bathroom in a 1950s apartment in Florence, designed by Massimo Adario.

architectural element but works like a handle. In a wooden door, a brass kick plate will transform it completely, elevating it to another level. And the same can be done with the plinth below kitchen cupboards.

Blackened steel and corten steel are very beautiful and can be used for larger elements, like doors and tables. Corten steel is essentially steel that has rusted and created a skin of rust. It is wonderfully textural, and has been used as cladding in many projects. The Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron used corten steel panels to encase the upper floors of the Caixa Forum in Madrid.

Using different metals, you can create a composition of varying shades and patterns. They complement each other and yet create one holistic whole. Don't use them separately in the same room – handles in different metals, for instance – but us-

ing two metals like copper and chrome in the same composition will work beautifully. For comparison's sake, earrings made of gold and silver worked together look good, but wearing gold earrings with a silver necklace does not.

Metals are usually associated with heavy and bold aesthetics. But when sheets are perforated, the metal can almost feel like fabric. The layering of these sheets can help in creating smaller spaces or semi outdoor spaces. When layering meshes of different coloured metals, you get a result which has an interesting play of light, reflection and colour. It is a larger version of the Indian candle holders which are made of patterned and perforated metal tins, so that the light flickers through in plays of shadows.

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