

FINANCIAL TIMES

# How to spend it

APRIL 6 2019

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gold, palladium and “moon” gold leaf, resemble the surface of the moon. But the piece then opens, revealing these “craters” to be a part of larger spheres representing the planets of the solar system. At the centre of the arrangement lies a black hole. “I’ve always been intrigued by Ben Nicholson’s artwork, especially the way he layers ideas into one abstract composition by combining a still-life foreground with a landscape background,” says Senior. “It’s this layering of composition that I’m exploring with the Moon cabinet, only in a three-dimensional form.”

His design is a tour de force. The door construction uses carbon fibre to create its curve, with the ash then bent and laminated to it, a complex process that required numerous mock-ups before the technique was perfected. The piece fulfils its purpose as a functional key cabinet beautifully – even if the polished, stainless-steel key-hangers, which are hidden behind the craters, evoke mini-satellites spinning off into space.

The idea of the high-concept wall cabinet is also being explored by furniture-designer Jake Phipps. His Urchin cabinet (£62,640, pictured bottom) is a response to his memories of collecting seashells as a child, and what he calls “the bilateral symmetry of the urchin shell”. The doors are adorned with 70 curved and faceted polished-brass panels that surround a central convex mirror. Pushing the key-latch pops open this centerpiece, which pulls back a full 90 degrees to become a polished-marble worksurface. And the cabinet’s glamorous wood interior has a series of glass shelves with a mirrored compartment at the epicentre. “I focused on the idea of encapsulation,” says Phipps. “As a boy, we’d take family holidays along the Dalmatian coast, where I’d dive for urchin shells. I’d sit and study them, my eye always drawn to the void at their centre. I replicated this in the cabinet by fragmenting the reflections of the space around the piece, so the viewer’s eye gravitates to the central mirror. It’s the heart of the cabinet – not just visually but also physically, as a means of opening the cabinet doors.” Phipps’ focus echoes the symbolism used by the 15th-century artist Jan van Eyck in his famous *The Arnolfini Portrait*. “The painting also features a mirror, which expands the space beyond the immediate scene,” he explains.

As this piece shows, the fine line between art and design is becoming ever more blurred and, like artists, furniture designers are finding new ways to explore with a palette of mixed materials. Vincenzo de Cotiis, a Milan-based architect/artist, excels in this respect. His limited edition wall cabinets (prices on request, example pictured overleaf) combine such materials as stone, polished brass, silvered brass, smoked glass, recycled wood and resin to create a patina that appears as though weathered over time. “My work recalls nature in the abstract. It’s an aesthetic infused with ‘perfect imperfection,’” he says.

“Vincenzo starts from an idea, then embarks on an artistic journey before function comes into play,” says Loïc



Le Gaillard, co-founder of Carpenters Workshop Gallery, which staged a solo show of de Cotiis’s handmade designs in London last September. The exhibition, entitled *En Plein Air*, recalled the moment in art history when 19th-century French artists abandoned their studios to paint outdoors. The work, says Le Gaillard, references this through the pigments and composition. “Vincenzo expresses himself through texture and patina. There’s an incredible chemistry with the materials – you want to touch the surfaces. It makes the work so addictive, like the weathering of sculpture over time.”

Bespoke furniture maker Kent Townsend also references momentous moments in art through his expertise with wood. Based in Salida, Colorado, Townsend employs traditional cabinetmaking techniques and hand skills to create complex forms. In the past, he has drawn on the beauty of nature and Asian art, but his current muse is art deco, which is given a “modern twist” to create strikingly sophisticated designs such as his fluted rosewood wall cabinet with sterling-silver pulls (\$29,000 for the five-drawer version; \$19,000 for the two-drawer version).



Clockwise from above:  
Zelouf & Bell koto, bolivar, oak, ebony, birch and wenge Scullied bar cabinet, €19,700. Jorge Pardo’s steel and tzalam Meretricious Untitled 6, price on request, from David Gill Gallery. Jake Phipps’ brass, oak and marble Urchin cabinet, £62,640

