



## Top Brass

Steel and chrome were once synonymous with modern design. But warm metals—brass, copper and gold—are stealing the spotlight.

» Aside from designer Karl Springer's now-classic leather telephone table and Milo Baughman's swivel club chairs, it seems there's not a whole lot to strive for, stylistically speaking, from circa-1970s decor. Little wonder, then, that the return of disco-era bronze, gold, brass and copper as replacements for cool silver, steel and polished nickel has generally been approached with wary baby steps rather than with an enthusiastic hustle.

While warm metals were the overwhelming choice for fixtures throughout the 1970s and into the '80s—cabinet hardware, furniture and, of course, the ever-popular brass pineapple ice bucket—cool metals reigned in the decades both before and after. Aluminum, stainless steel and chrome are synonymous with the contemporary aesthetic of the past couple of decades. That's shifting.

**Precious Metals** Calgary designer Alykhan Velji mixes warm metals into his designs for a sense of opulence (top left). Tom Dixon's 4X copper pendant, hanging above the Ochre Lunar table (above), may well have kicked off the trend.

Top left: courtesy Alykhan Velji



Designer Robert Bailey incorporated a circa-1980 chrome-and-brass wall sculpture into this Palm Springs home.



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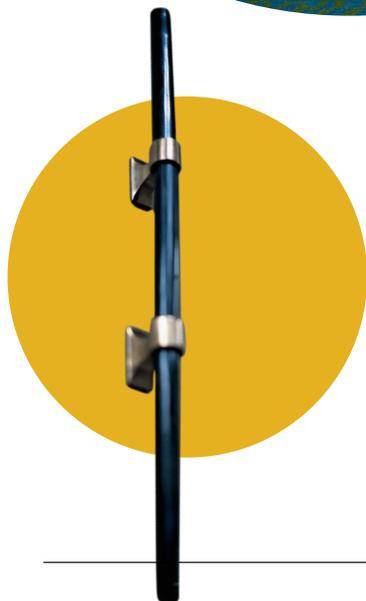
In his talk at the Calgary Home and Garden Show this past February, designer Alykhan Velji chose warm metals as the favourite of his top five design trends for the year. For him, rather than inspiring images of tacky brass-and-glass coffee tables, the warmer tones conjure up a sense of elegance. “They add an air of opulence to a space,” says Velji.

Still, Velji admits, despite the long-time popularity of the aesthetic among designers, warm metals have been a tough sell. “People get so used to a certain look that it’s really hard to convince them otherwise.” He steers clients toward pieces such as Roll and Hill’s Agnes chandelier to illustrate the contemporary elegance of brushed brass finishes. (At \$16,000,

only a few splurge, but one look at the chandelier’s spiky form will cleanse the mind of any images of tacky brass rumpus-room ceiling fans.)

Velji says that while he does love a good vintage find, he’s more excited about the new incarnations of gold-tinged plumbing fixtures, cabinet hardware and lighting, like Ochre’s black horn and bronze handle pulls.

While Robert Bailey, this magazine’s 2013 Interior Designer of the Year, is also inspired by the updated takes on brass and copper finishes—he points to Tom Dixon’s metallic burnished copper and bronze shades as elegant examples—he’s more interested in integrating vintage pieces from, *gasp*, the 1970s as well as the 1980s.

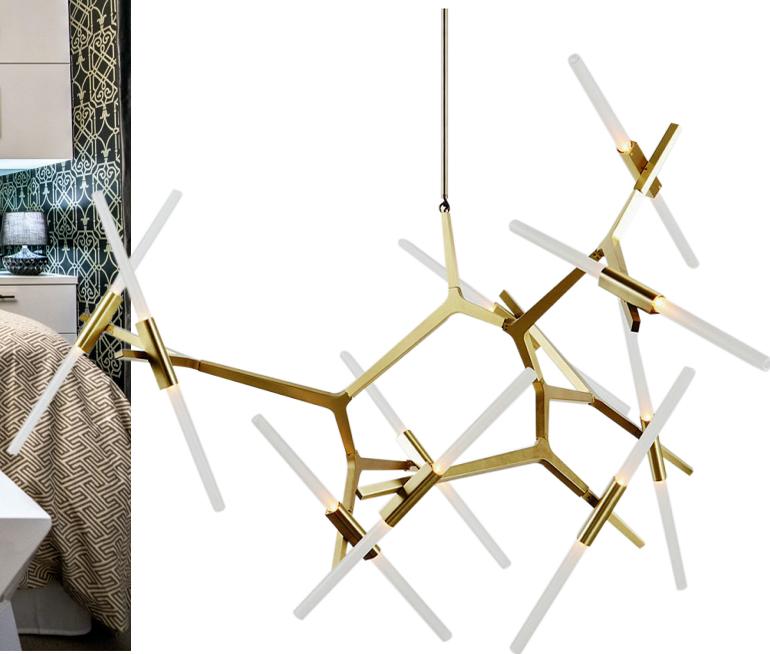


#### Beauty in the Details

Bring a hit of glamour to your space with metallic accessories both retro—think vintage pieces like this brass-edged folding screen (top right)—and modern. These black horn pulls by Ochre (above) are a sleek and contemporary interpretation of metallic cabinet hardware.



*Designer Robert Bailey appreciates the glam effect of gold as an antidote (in small doses) to the popular contemporary grey and taupe palette.*



Like Velji, Bailey has encountered a “strong negativity” toward warm metals, stemming, he believes, from an often unsophisticated overuse of brass a few decades back. “I think using brass in a very glitzy way everywhere at a time when colours were also very warm was a bit of an assault on the senses,” says Bailey, referring to mainstream decor preferences of the 1970s and into the ’80s. “There was bound to be a blunt turnaway from them for a while.”

Bailey, though, has never doubted the transformative power of a well-placed, ’70s-era brass-edged Brutalist folding screen. “I love pieces like that in a contemporary space,” he says.

While the designer would still opt for cooler, “more invisible” metals

such as polished nickel and silver for architectural hardware, he appreciates the glam effect of gold and the like as antidotes (in small doses) to the popular contemporary grey and taupe palette. “The warm metals can be treated almost like fabric; they can be used as accents to add not-so-subtle glitter to a space,” he says.

Given Bailey’s essential design philosophy, it’s no wonder warm metals are dear to his heart: “The best interiors are often strong contradictions—they take your mind and shock you just a little.” While nobody wants a room full of guests who draw that much attention, it wouldn’t be a party without at least one show-stopper. **HL**

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**Light It Up** In this Alykhan Velji-designed bedroom (top left), a bold gold chandelier makes a strong argument for the marriage of modernism and metallics, as does the modular Roll and Hill Agnes Antler chandelier (top right). The key to avoiding disco-style design? Keep the warm metals to a minimum—a few key pieces are all you need.