

FINANCIAL TIMES

how to SPOON

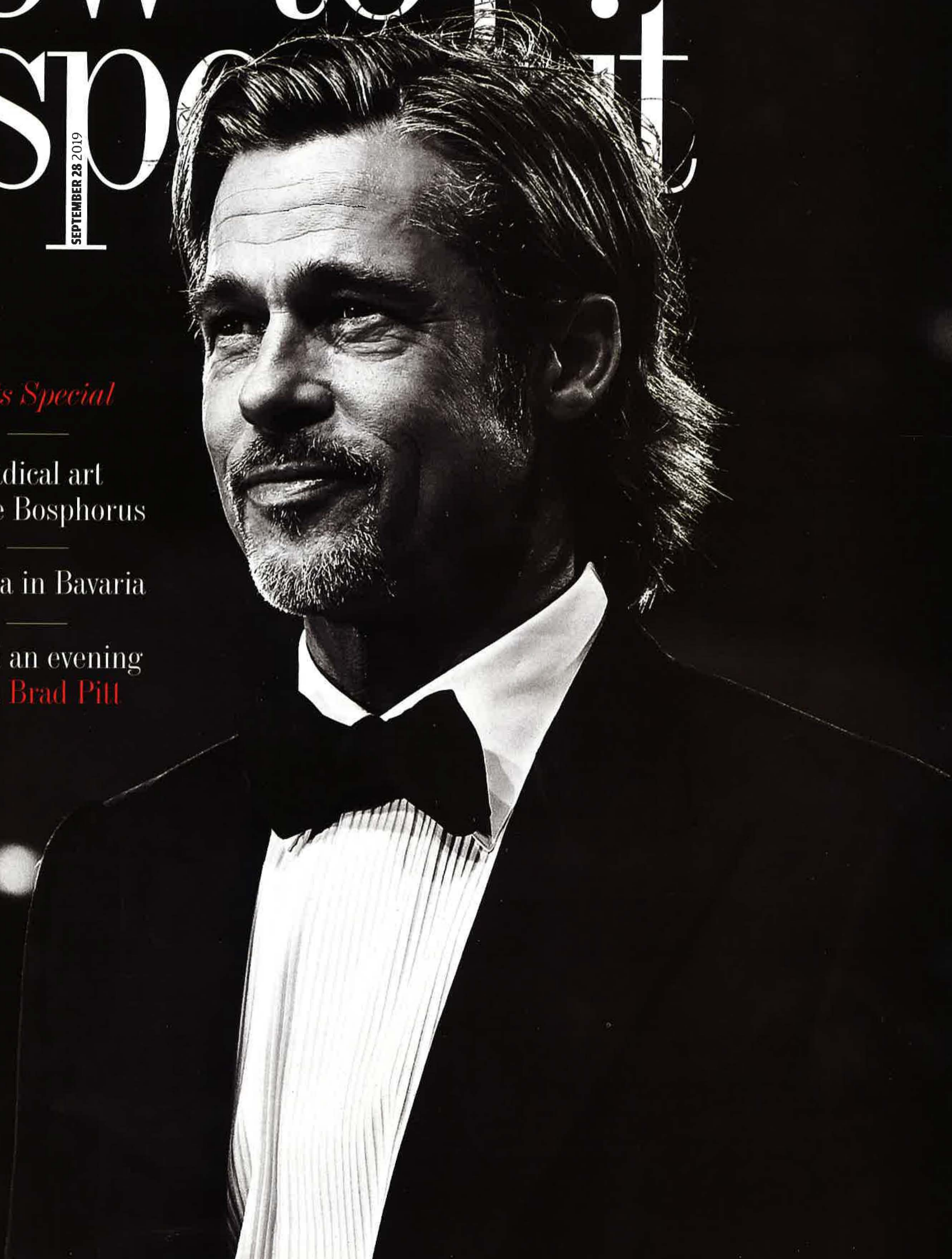
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Arts Special

Radical art
on the Bosphorus

An aria in Bavaria

...and an evening
with *Brad Pitt*



artistry in residence

From bold freestyle brushstrokes to figurative flourishes, an exuberant painterly aesthetic is transforming furniture, walls and objects into canvases for expression, says **Helen Chislett**

At Design Miami last year, New York gallerist Cristina Grajales highlighted the work of South Korean furniture designer Sang Hoon Kim and his anarchic 2018 Foam Sofa (\$35,000, pictured on final page) with a surface that seems to drip and ooze with paint. “The base is initially sculpted in foam and the hand-mixed colour dyes are then added,” says Grajales. “Sang Hoon pours layers of colour and methodically disperses the solution at different drying intervals to create varying-sized marks. Through these methods, he expresses his perception of light and movement by creating spaces that are regular and irregular, bright and dark, negative and positive.”

It is an exuberantly expressionist aesthetic that is finding favour in interiors, with many design studios looking to capture a painterly finish – a term used to describe works of art in which brushstrokes are not only evident but also appear loose and barely controlled. At Milan’s Salone del Mobile in April, New York-based Calico Wallpaper collaborated with British designer Faye Toogood on Muse, an artfully composed new wallpaper collection (from \$344 per sq m; Ada, \$344 per sq m, pictured right) celebrating the diversity of womankind. The design is based on handpainted artwork by Toogood featuring iconic women such as Marie Curie and Coco Chanel. It was conceived a year ago as a temporary mural in the office of *Vogue Italia* editor-in-chief Emanuele Farneti. Using precise digital technology, Calico is able to transform Toogood’s original sketches into custom-fit murals. The results are spellbinding, not least because they feel so uncontrived. “The design is figurative, but no face is painted in detail,” says Toogood. “I wanted to capture the essence of the important women in our lives, but many of the faces are anonymous, because I wanted them to remain symbolic.”

De Gournay recently designed a site-specific wallhanging (from £900 per panel, pictured overleaf) with a very painterly aesthetic for a client in New York, commissioned by the Los Angeles-based designer Jessica Ayromloo. Installed behind a striking red suede headboard, it is an abstract motif on white-dyed silk of broad brushstrokes in tones of bold black and misty greys. Harald Donoghue of de Gournay says the brief from Ayromloo referenced artworks of the mid-20th century: “The design has an organic feel with energetic brushstrokes that evoke the water-filled brushes of gouache painting.”

Right: Calico x Faye Toogood Ada wallpaper, \$344 per sq m, from its Muse collection inspired by Toogood’s handpainted artwork of iconic women







he explains. "This handpainted quality is intrinsic to what we do, ensuring no two designs are ever entirely the same, but the technical work to achieve this composition was as precise as the result appears effortless."

Donghia faced similar challenges when it created the embroidered textile Manhattan Muse (£254 per m, pictured overleaf). "We wanted to capture the sense that an artist had dipped a broad brush into several different colours of thick oil paint before dragging it down the textile in great gestural movements," recalls David Toback, director of textile design. "However, translating the look of midcentury abstract expressionism into embroidery threads was an enormous technical headache, which took dozens of efforts to perfect. It is a tour de force of the embroiderers' art." Donghia's Downtown print (£256 per m) also has a dynamic, handpainted quality. "Each motif was replicated from an actual brushstroke of paint, making the print seem very alive with movement and infused with energy," says Toback.

Earlier this year, the historic French house Zuber commissioned artist Valérie Morien (also artistic director of the company) to create a series of scenic wallpapers, where the brushmarks of the artist are carefully retained. Commercial director Guillaume Tregouet says the vibrant style of designs such as Sumatra (from £440 per 2.5m drop) and Bornéo (from £455 per 3m drop) offer a more contemporary feel than its traditional printed wallpapers. "They are more akin to large paintings that can also be highly customised," he says.

Ceramicists, too, are adopting a freestyle approach, including Los Angeles-based artist Roger Herman, who had a solo show at Carpenters Workshop Gallery in London this summer, which showcased his large, handcrafted ceramic vessels alongside three of his own paintings. Before he began working in clay, Herman was described as the West Coast equivalent of the '80s neo-expressionist movement. Many of his vessels (from £12,000) take inspiration from the human body, including figurative works in the style of Japanese erotic prints, while others veer more towards abstraction. He treats each pot (Untitled 38, £18,000, pictured overleaf) as a blank canvas on which he layers brush strokes – typically dashes, lines and wild splodges of colour – to build up fabulous layers of texture. "The interesting part of making ceramics for me is that you can't control the process – it is about letting go of control," he says.

British sculptor Fiamma Colonna Montagu is also passionate about the creative possibilities of mixing texture and colour to dramatic effect within her ceramic works (from £720; Major



– Homage to Kossoff 1, £2,520, pictured below left), as revealed at her recent solo exhibition at Willer. "I grew up with paintings by Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff, as my grandmother was a great friend of theirs," she says. "Both used paint as an almost three-dimensional medium, which has long been an inspiration to me. I like to think these pieces feel as though they have been created through a series of brushstrokes." Also represented by Willer is Dutch textile artist Claudy Jongstra, whose large-scale artworks and architectural installations are intertwined with the cycle of her native landscape. To this end, she maintains a flock of rare, indigenous Drenthe Heath sheep and grows botanical dyestuffs, taking the raw material of home-farmed wool and turning it into highly acclaimed murals (example pictured overleaf, price on request) for private and hospitality settings. Looking at the power of Jongstra's work, it is not surprising to learn that Rothko, Turner and Frida Kahlo are among her art icons. She says her method of painting with natural fibres is a way of expressing textile art (from £2,800) in a dynamic and contemporary way: "It imparts a feeling of comfort, informality and sensuality."

There's a painterly moment happening in rugs too, in Jan Kath's Artwork collection (from £2,200 per sq m) for Front Rugs, where designs appear to be random but are highly controlled. "From a technical point of view, it is incredibly difficult to achieve such a look, as there isn't a coherent pattern for the weavers to focus on as you find with repeat or figurative designs," says Karisa Lundberg, head of



Clockwise from top left: Amy Kent art-silk/wool Painterly rug (340cm x 340cm), £6,763. Achille Salvagni parchment-lined wood, cast-bronze and gold-plated bronze Silk Parchment cabinet (92cm x 147cm x 55cm), from £90,000 (edition of six). De Gournay site-specific abstract wallhanging on white-dyed silk, from £900 per panel. Fiamma Colonna Montagu ceramic Major – Homage to Kossoff 1, £2,520



Clockwise from right: **Claudy Jongstra** mural for a private New York residence, in Drenthe Heath-sheep wool and silk, price on request. **Sang Hoon Kim** memory-foam Foam Sofa, (63.5cm x 160cm x 68.5cm), \$35,000, and memory foam Meteorite, \$12,000. **Donghia** linen/cotton embroidered Manhattan Muse fabric in turquoise, £254 per m. **Roger Herman's** ceramic Untitled 38, £18,000



special projects. “Everything is precisely specified by the designer in the template and has to be reproduced knot after knot.” Kath took inspiration from contemporary abstract artists, using a mix of Chinese silk, Tibetan highland wool and Nepalese stinging-nettle fibres to create the necessary depth of materials. The results are extraordinary, with clients often reacting to these designs as works of art. “They make an emotional connection, which always comes as a wonderful surprise to us. Many also commission designs that harmonise with their own art collections,” says Lundberg.

Amy Kent created the Art on Rugs series two years ago. This comprises 10 pieces, each based on her sister Lucy Kent’s abstract paintings, followed by similar collaborations with artists Marcus Hodge, Jane Bristowe and Eddie Wrey. She has also produced her own Painterly rug (example pictured on previous page, £6,763), which – as with all of Kent’s designs – can be customised. For her, part of its appeal is its adaptability. “Although these designs are based on original works of art, the tones chosen can change the look from informal and relaxed to super-smart, or from showstopper piece to subtle backdrop,”



she says. “All of them are reminiscent of the thickness and richness of oil-paint brushstrokes.”

Rome-based architect/designer Achille Salvagni has found inspiration in painterly effects, most notably for his Silk Parchment cabinet (from €90,000, edition of six, pictured on previous page) in blue-parchment-lined wood. But it’s equally influenced by abstract expressionists such as de Kooning, Pollock and Rothko, who in turn informed Italian artists such as Afro Basaldella. But as Achille Salvagni gallery director James Malcolm Green

explains, it pays further homage to Italian furniture designer Aldo Tura, who in the same period experimented with dyed parchments and vellums within his own furniture pieces.

“The process of dyeing parchment brings out the inherent nuances and irregularities of the material, making each piece unique,” he says. “Here, parchment is used as a canvas to wrap the cabinet in this deep, vivid blue. The effect is comparable with an abstract painting, which has moved from the wall into the room. It is very powerful.”

And then there is architect/designer André Fu, creator of some of the world’s most inspiring hotels and restaurants and founder of André Fu Living, who launched his new

lifestyle collection Modern Reflections earlier this year. He describes it as “celebrating the rigour, beauty, expressions and emotions that arise from the painter’s brush”. His Artisan Artistry range includes handpainted porcelain tableware (£235 for a large serving plate) and handpainted cashmere-blend throws (£2,050). Fu says he too wanted to channel the work of Rothko, as well as that of Korean artist Ha Chong-Hyun. “For me, ‘painterly’ has a sense of expressive movement,” he says. “It is delicate to achieve as it can so easily appear rigid and contrived. Done correctly, however, it is both powerful and poetic.” ♦

ART FOR HEARTH’S SAKE

Achille Salvagni Atelier, achillesalvagni.com. **Amy Kent**, amykent.co.uk. **André Fu**, andrefuiving.com and see Lane Crawford. **Calico Wallpaper**, calicowallpaper.com. **Carpenters Workshop Gallery**, carpentersworkshopgallery.com. **Claudy Jongstra**, claudyjongstra.com and see Willer. **Cristina Grajales Gallery**, cristinagrajalesinc.com. **De Gournay**, degournay.com. **Donghia**, donghia.com. **Faye Toogood**, fayetoogood.com and see Calico Wallpaper. **Fiamma Colonna Montagu**, fiammacolonna montagu.com and see Willer. **Front Rugs**, frontrugs.com. **Jan Kath**, jan-kath.de and see Front Rugs. **Lane Crawford**, lanecrawford.com. **Roger Herman**, rogerherman.net and see Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **Sang Hoon Kim**, kimsanghoonart.com and see Cristina Grajales Gallery. **Valérie Morien**, see Zuber. **Willer**, willer.co.uk. **Zuber**, zuber.fr.

