



- 1 20 PU 08 Grey
- 2 20 CUI Matrix silver & antracithe, synthetic horse hair, copper and silver
- 3 20 PU 08 Petrole gold, synthetic horse hair and polyurethane
- 4 20 CUI LAJ Antracithe, synthetic horse hair, copper & silver

The shimmering textiles of Luc Druez have something of the fairy tale about them. They catch the light, change colour; like the magic cloak woven by the fairy queen they look precious, ethereal – alive almost. But while the fairies and elves had the finest gossamer threads at their disposal the Paris-based designer favours far more humble materials: industrially produced electrician's copper wire, nylon fishing wire, polyurethane, synthetic raffia, PVC.

Using traditional weaving techniques Druez fashions these unorthodox materials into subtle metallic jacquards, translucent lacy weaves as well as lengths of metallic textiles, some of them mottled with unexpected textures and colourations.

Copper is one of Druez's great passions. It is thanks to its oxidising properties that he achieves the corroded look and the subtle variations in colouration that make his pieces so distinctive. His latest collection for his LcD line includes weaves made of oxidised copper and silver-plated copper threads. "From time to time I try other metals but I always come back to copper," he says. "Copper is the most beautiful metal, it gives the widest palette of colours – other metals don't have that. I love the way it oxidises. You can get hundreds of colours – from verdigris to a very dark turquoise. It's like copper church roofs. The same process will cause each one to change differently."

The Belgian-born designer's fascination with the effect of the elements on copper dates back to his childhood growing up in the French-speaking area between Charleroi and Namur, an important metal-producing centre since the industrial revolution. "Outside the factories near my home there were piles of waste metal, metal stocks, rejects left to rust outside which turned the most amazing colours. It made a big impression on me."

And this is precisely the fate that Druez's copper textiles undergo. After being woven they are brought to his house in the countryside not far from Charleroi where they are subjected to a final, poetic and rather eccentric stage in their manufacture during which they are left outside in the garden to oxidise naturally. He is something of an expert on how to achieve a particular effect: "It's down to the pH of the air. It takes very different times to achieve different colours and this varies between the seasons too," he explains. "But generally you need three

THE ALCHEMY OF FABRICS

Paris-based textile designer Luc Druez is an expert at weaving and oxidising metals to make the most breathtaking of fabrics. **Deborah Burnstone** reports



weeks to achieve oxidation. There are plenty of surprises – I usually reproduce these happy accidents later on.”

The garden is crammed with enormous tables holding lengths of cloth at various stages of oxidation. With Druez working in Paris he has an assistant based at the house to help tend the copper cloth. Once the textile has oxidised sufficiently it is washed, brushed and then varnished. This prevents further oxidation, although if it is used in a spa or bathroom it may oxidise a little more.

Many of the metallic weaves contain nylon fishing wire, which is not only durable but also transparent: “Fishing line interests me because it is invisible,” explains Druez. “Combined with another material it helps enhance it. This is what helps create the translucence.” The other materials are chosen for their proven performance in other fields. For example, synthetic raffia is UV-resistant as well as shower-proof, PVC is non-flammable while polyurethane has a leather-like look to it.

It is not hard to understand why architects and interior designers like these materials. They have a restrained drama and they change constantly with the light. Added to which, no two pieces are the same. “They have something of the chameleon about them,” Druez says. “The way they change. For example during the day they look cool. At night with candles or electric light the effect is very warm, very decorative.” They work particularly well as blinds, screens or wall hangings – in any vertical setting in fact. Peter Marino has used them for blinds and wall coverings. Andrée Putnam is a fan and they have also found their way into Louis Vuitton and Gucci boutiques as well as the Nantes Opera.

Druez is a passionate advocate for the health-promoting properties of copper. He is currently working with a group of scientists to develop a copper-based textile that can screen out measurable quantities of unwanted mobile phone rays, which can be used in hospitals, children’s rooms and hotels.

He may be an experimental designer but Luc Druez reveres traditional manufacturing techniques. He has built up strong relationships with mills in France, Belgium and Italy: “I’m really passionate about collaborating with skilled workers who know all about the process,” he says. “I’m passionate about the techniques. I’ve still got so many things I want to try.” www.lcd-textile-edition.com

5 *Natté gold & bronze,*
nylon, copper & silver
6 *20 RA CUI D 23 Silver,*
nylon, raffia & varnished
copper

