

# METAL AS ANYTHING

Uber designer *Tom Dixon* has created a polished interior which references the 70s for the new *Eclectic* restaurant in *Paris*, his first venture in the French capital.

Photographs PATRICIA PARINEJAD Words DOMINIC BRADBURY



This page, from top left Tom Dixon 'Lustre' lights echo the geometric theme. Hexagonal brass wall panels and waxed concrete floors. The chandelier features 124 Tom Dixon 'Cell' tall pendant lights. Opposite page 'Cell' tall pendant lights.

The 1970s were an exciting but divisive period of design. It was, perhaps, a love-it or hate-it decade – an era of concrete brutalism, disco balls and sci-fi futurism. It may not have been the most sophisticated or accomplished phase in the grand history of design, but it was certainly fun, colourful and playful and still holds a certain resonance for those of us who grew up in that period. That includes British designer Tom Dixon, who has rediscovered a certain affection for the era, which has influenced a number of his new projects, including the interiors of the *Eclectic* restaurant in Paris, situated within the Beaugrenelle Centre on the banks of the Seine, just blocks from the Eiffel Tower.

“People are starting to rethink all of that period,” says Dixon. “There’s a renaissance in late-70s style, although it was a style that I reacted against when I started off as a designer. It’s only now that I’m really starting to appreciate it.”

Dixon’s recent interior design for the Paramount members’ club on top of London’s Centre Point – a landmark tower in London by architect Richard Seifert, completed just as the 60s breathed its last – was infused with something of a 70s spirit. And the same can be said of *Eclectic*, which sits within a shopping centre that opened in 1978 and has just been reinvented and updated by architects Agence Search. Beaugrenelle has become a destination in itself once again.

“The 70s architecture of the Beaugrenelle was definitely the departure point for the interiors,” says Dixon, who worked on the project with Design Research Studio, the architectural interiors practice that he founded in 2002. “The extreme geometry and the structure as decoration provided the departure point for us. We think that brutalism is making a comeback.”







This page, from top left: Bespoke timber pieces. Tom Dixon 'Cell' tall pendant lights. Brass-topped tables and circular booths with timber backing reference the 70s. The 'Cell' chandelier resembles an artwork. Opposite page leather banquettes and upholstered chairs are warm and tactile.



Éclectique is the brainchild of Parisian restaurateurs Fabienne and Philippe Amzalak, who reinvented Le Bon restaurant with Philippe Starck and collaborated with Starck again on Ma Cocotte, which opened in 2012. Éclectique, as the name suggests, fuses a range of different culinary and design influences in a truly international brasserie. For Dixon and Design Research Studio, the project marks their first major commission in France.

"We loved Tom's work," say the restaurateurs, "so we went to London to meet him. After that everything went pretty fast. Éclectique is a mix of styles from the 70s, but with an English twist, if that makes sense. Tom has played with the contrasts between concrete, brass and the warmth of the fabrics and coloured leather."

Brutalist concrete pillars, floors and ceilings form a backdrop for sculptural, custom-designed furniture: high tables like sprouting mushrooms as well as comfortable sofas and sinuous timber-backed banquettes. A metallic wall made of repeated hexagons forms a spine towards the rear of the space, adding an element of retro futurism. As one might expect from Dixon, the lighting design has particular importance, especially the dramatic central chandelier, which consists of 124 separate metal lampshades.

"We wanted the lighting to feel as if it was part of the architecture rather than an afterthought," says Dixon. "We wanted a strong statement in the middle of the restaurant to try to draw people off the street outside into the depths of the building. We used a lot of pierced brass fittings, which cast an attractive glow in a bid to make everybody look more beautiful."

The use of so many different textures – timber, leather, brass and the softer notes of upholstery and rugs – warms the space and provides a foil for the exposed concrete. Crucially, the design of Éclectique has a contemporary sophistication and thoughtfulness – along with some playful touches – that helps set it apart from the 70s reference points and prevents it becoming a pastiche.

The same might be said of Dixon's latest and largest project in London: the conversion and redesign of Warren Platner's Sea Containers House on the banks of the Thames, soon to become the first Mondrian Hotel in the UK. Coincidentally, Platner's building also dates from the 70s. It's sure to create a big impression when it opens in July.

For more go to [tomdixon.net](http://tomdixon.net).



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