

# GERMANY

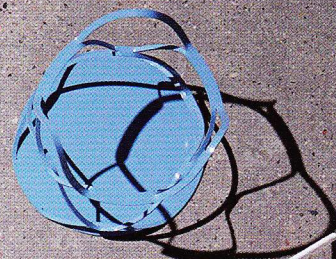
2011  
WALLPAPER\*  
SURVEY

## DEUTSCHES DESIGN

How Germany is designing, engineering  
and building for all our futures

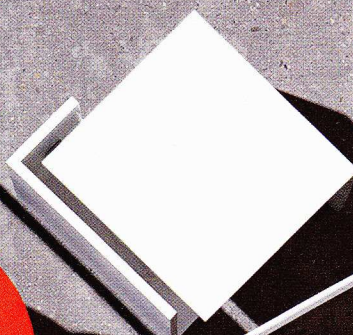
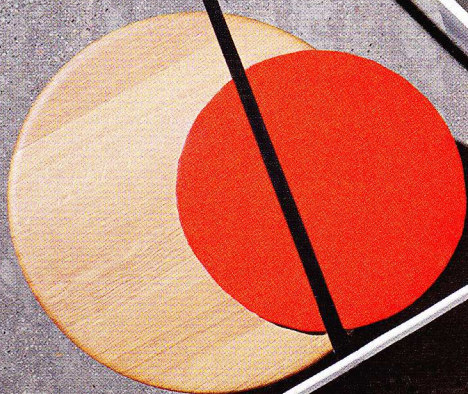
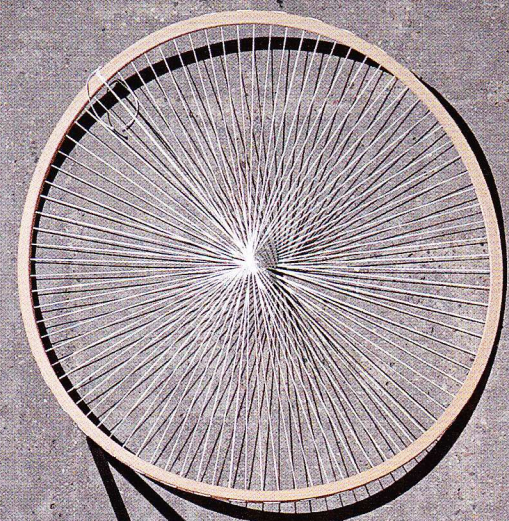
### IT'S ELECTRIC

The car you'll be driving  
for tomorrow's power trip



### HOT KÜCHEN

German engineering  
with knobs on – six sexy  
new kitchens



### CITY LIMITS

A designer's guide to Berlin, plus the  
talents putting Munich on the map





# CLAY TIME

Vying for a place at the contemporary table, Germany's historic porcelain makers are serving up innovative new designs alongside their classics

PHOTOGRAPHY: FRANK HÜLSBÖMER INTERIORS: ALEXANDER STÜTZ WRITER: ANNEKE BOKERN





**FINE FIGURES**

Far left, 'Eye White Knight German Stripes' (2010), price on request, by André Fischer; various birds (1765), by Johann Baptist Pedrozzi, and 'Bluebird' (1921), by Wilhelm Carl Robra, from €88 to €738, all for KPM

Near left, 'Chrysanthème' (2009), €1,498; 'Neptune Chariot' (1770), €2,598, both by Dominikus Auliczek; 'Cula' bowls (2011), prices on request, by Olaf Nicolai, all for Nymphenburg

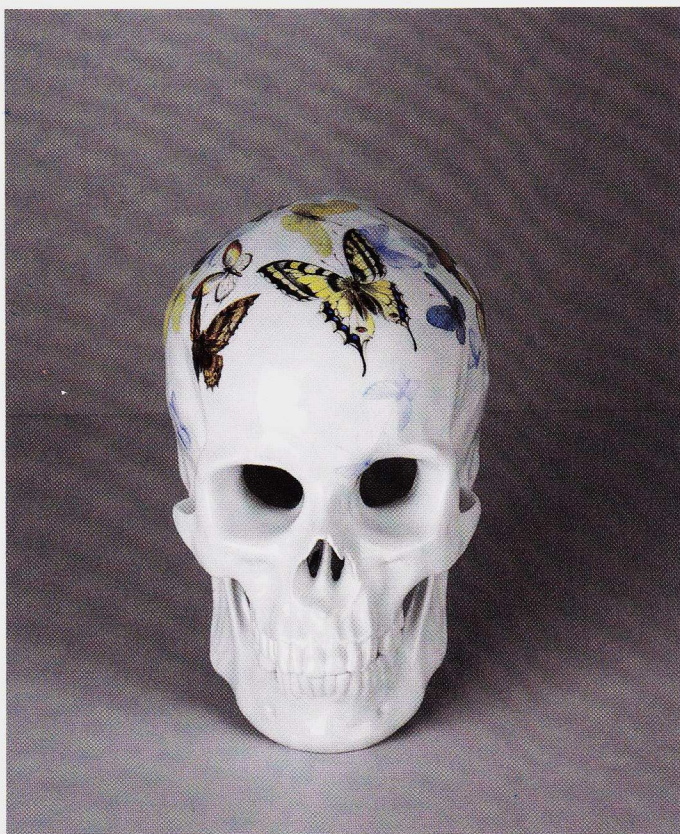
**HOT POTS**

Far left, 'TAC Black' sugar bowl (1969), €125, by Walter Gropius; 'Format Guilloché' milk jug (2011), €50; teapot, €135, both by Christophe de la Fontaine; 'TAC Black' milk jug, €112; teapot, €429, both by Walter Gropius; 'Format Guilloché' bowl, €43, by Christophe de la Fontaine, all for Rosenthal

Near left, 'Imagery' and 'Consonante' tiles, €36 each; teapot with gilded handle (1739), €45,000, by Johann J Kaendler, all for Meissen







#### LIFE AND DEATH

This picture, 'Flacon With Snowball Blossoms' (flacon shape from 1847, with flowers from a Johann Kaendler 1739 design added in 1993), €2,712; tiles, as before, all by Meissen

Left, 'Skull' (2011), edition of 25, €4,500, by Nymphenburg  
For stockists, see Resources, page 080



**B**rightly coloured rococo figurines of ladies with parasols, or flowery dishes with gold rims – for decades, that's what came to people's minds when German porcelain was mentioned. It was the kind of china one would inherit from grandma and immediately banish to a box in the attic. In recent years, however, the sector has reinvented itself. Traditional manufacturers are now co-operating with designers such as Hella Jongerius and Konstantin Grcic, or venturing into new fields such as architecture. The results are anything but attic material.

Changing social mores have had a negative impact on the traditional high-end porcelain sector since the 1970s. 'People are less interested in table culture than they used to be,' says Sabine Schrenk, head of communications at Rosenthal. Dining and entertaining habits have changed, dinner services with 12 settings are no longer considered standard, and buyers with a taste for historic figurines are on the decline. Many brands have had to take drastic measures. Last year, for example, the *grande dame* of European porcelain, Meissen, celebrated its 300th anniversary – and also laid off a quarter of its employees.

Bavarian producer Rosenthal was bought out by another traditional firm, Waterford Wedgwood, in 1997, and endured a testing period when its Anglo-Irish parent company got into financial difficulties. Now owned by Italian cutlery firm Sambonet, Rosenthal is continuing with the progressive approach that proved so fruitful for it in the past. It all started in 1961, when Rosenthal created its Studio-Line sub-brand, a showcase for designs from modernist greats such as Walter Gropius and Raymond Loewy. More recent projects have featured designers Jasper Morrison and Patricia

Urquiola. 'Our latest addition is the 'Format' series by Christophe de la Fontaine. It has a certain 1950s appeal, but with a contemporary twist,' says Schrenk. Rosenthal believes that consumers are weary of cheap tableware and are slowly returning to quality, so it's sticking to its 50-year-old strategy.

But while Rosenthal has always produced functional tableware, manufacturers such as Fürstenberg and Nymphenburg, founded centuries ago by German princes, specialised in costly decorative pieces unfit for today's dishwashers. In order to keep up, they have started to cross-breed their historic expertise within the contemporary context. Meissen,

#### WHITE GOLD

At the beginning of the 18th century, German alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger foolishly boasted that he could make gold out of base materials. He couldn't, but he did discover the recipe for something called *porzellan*, which helped Prince August of Saxony become the first European producer of porcelain (in Meissen, in 1710). Of course, the Chinese had been making porcelain for centuries, but until Böttger came along, European pottery had been distinctly chunky. Böttger's secret recipe soon leaked out, and before long other European princes were setting up their own workshops. Thanks to its solid but fine translucent texture, porcelain became far more than functional new tableware material. Rococo art wouldn't have been the same without it, and even today, artists are still turning base materials into gold – think Jeff Koons' *Michael Jackson with Bubbles*, which fetched \$5.6m at Sotheby's in 2001 – thanks to Böttger's recipe.

for instance, has decided to fall back on its historic connection with architecture, by abstracting a famous old tile relief in a new line of handmade porcelain tiles that can be joined without visible seams. KPM, in contrast, is pinning its hopes on customisation. Its minimalist 'Urania' service, for example, can be decorated according to the client's wishes with monograms or motifs. 'Being a firm that relies on skilled handcraft means customisation has always been our strength,' says Christiane von Trotha, KPM's head of marketing. 'And I believe that this kind of quality is back in fashion.'

The most striking strategic fusion of tradition and tomorrow has to be that of Munich-based Nymphenburg, founded in 1747. Rococo figurines are still very much part of its collection, but so too are decidedly contemporary works by Barnaby Barford, Ted Muehling and other avant-garde designers, artists and fashion designers. Their recent collection of 'Flying City' tableware was designed by Belgian artist Carsten Höller and scooped a place in Wallpaper's 2011 Design Awards (see W\*143). Last year's limited-edition figurine of a rearing black horse by artist Karen Kilimnik – each piece requiring months of work, and phenomenally expensive – sold out completely.

In a way, not a lot has changed here: German porcelain manufacturers are still making high-quality, high-cost objects in collaboration with the best artists and designers of the day, just like they have always done. But their real success today lies in the fact that they are all, finally, keeping an eye on the ball in terms of contemporary tastes and evolving with the times. Let's hope this strategy pays off, and helps see them through the next century or two. ★