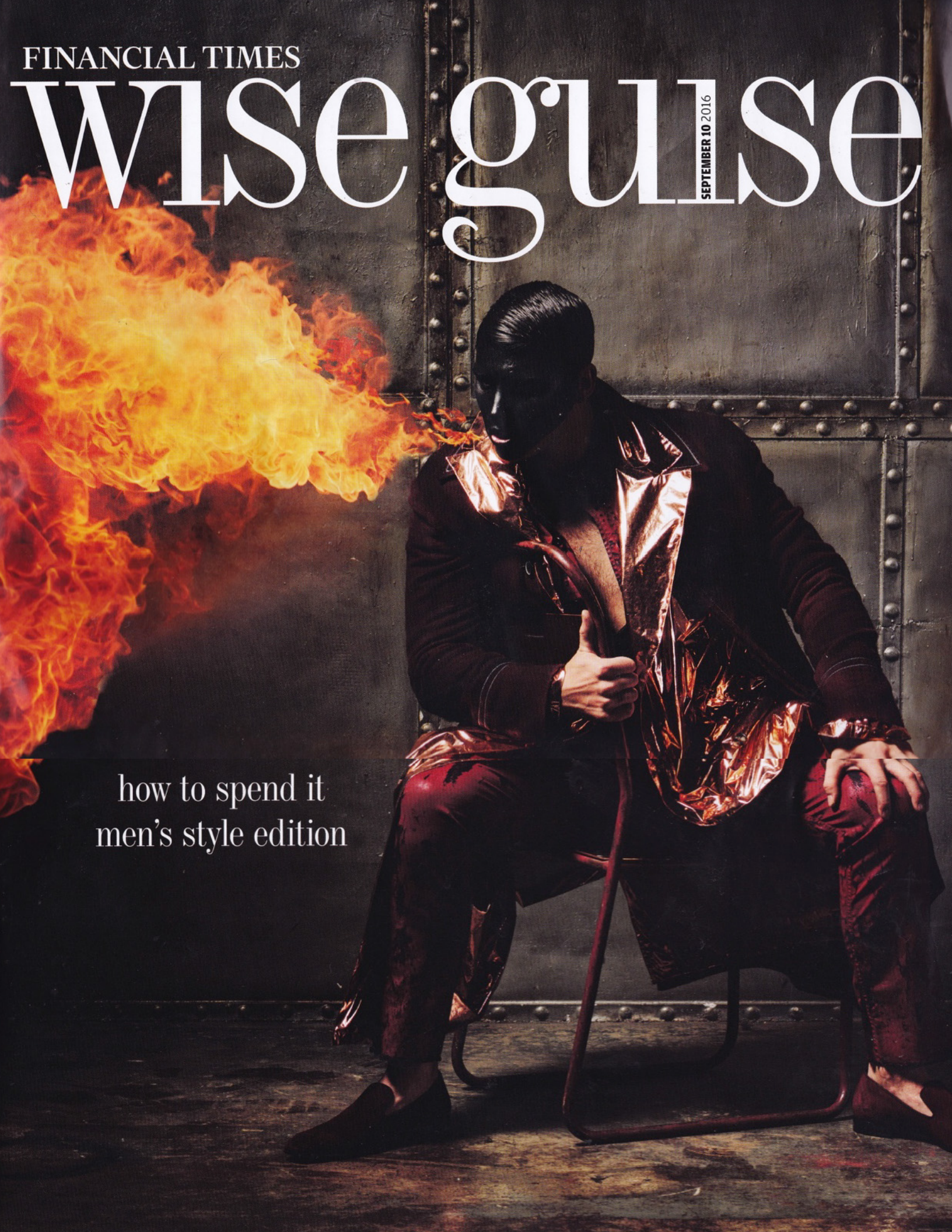


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Patinated shoes step into style

Patinated shoes are gaining ground across the style spectrum, putting swagger in every step. Nick Scott reports

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There was a time when the word “patina” rarely came up in conversation – unless, perhaps, a child asked why the Statue of Liberty is green.

Nowadays, it has become as much a part of the *shoe buff*’s lexicon as “last”, “welt” and “upper”. Real enthusiasts stroke their chins and ponder the depth and nuance of dye applied to shoe leather like art critics poring over the brushwork on a Winslow Homer seascape, while workbenches littered with brushes, sponges and bottles of multihued ink enjoy altar-like status in the factories of luxury brands the world over.

Meanwhile, a bold approach to patination is becoming de rigueur among the style-conscious, thanks in part to the rise of sartorial individualism – and its enforcer, personalisation. “The uniqueness of each pair of shoes, and the handcrafting, is what makes a difference in this world of mass manufacturing,” says Toronto *ennoblesseur de cuir* Emmanuel Farré of Maison Patina (calfskin Altesse boots, \$600). “When clients ask me to copy an existing shoe’s patina, I let them know the outcome isn’t going to be the same – every stroke turns out differently.”

“We owe a lot to Olga Berluti,” says Landry Lacour, an independent artist operating in Brussels, of the woman formerly at the helm of the brand perhaps most readily associated with patinas. “In the early 1980s, she started to introduce patination as a way of reproducing the beneficial effects of age on leather.” While the Parisian house safeguards its patination methodology like the Vatican does its Archivum Secretum, its master shoemaker Anthony Delos does offer some insight. “Our patina is achieved by our expert colourists on our emblematic Venezia leather – a natural leather that goes through mineral and vegetable tanning, which is what gives the colours their characteristic transparency – using pigments and essential oils,” he says.

Franco Gazzani, co-founder of Bontoni – a third generation shoemaker, which handmakes fewer than 2,200 pairs a year in its workshop in Montegranaro – agrees. “When one layer of dye overlaps another, it builds an entirely new hue. This delicate interplay of translucency and depth is critical to accentuating the natural beauty and grain of the leather. It takes between three and four days to finish a patina. Some of our formulas have 13 to 15 blends of essential oils, natural pigments, dyes, creams and waxes.” Bontoni’s Speciale lace-up Derby (€1,395), with antiqued olive wood *patina*, are an elegant choice for those seeking to inject some élan into their smarter casual ensembles.



From far left: Berluti leather Classic monkstraps, £1,440, Bontoni calfskin Speciale Derby, €1,395, Maison Corthay suede and calfskin Brighton loafers, £1,280 | Image: George Ong