



Your best accessory: A BICYCLE

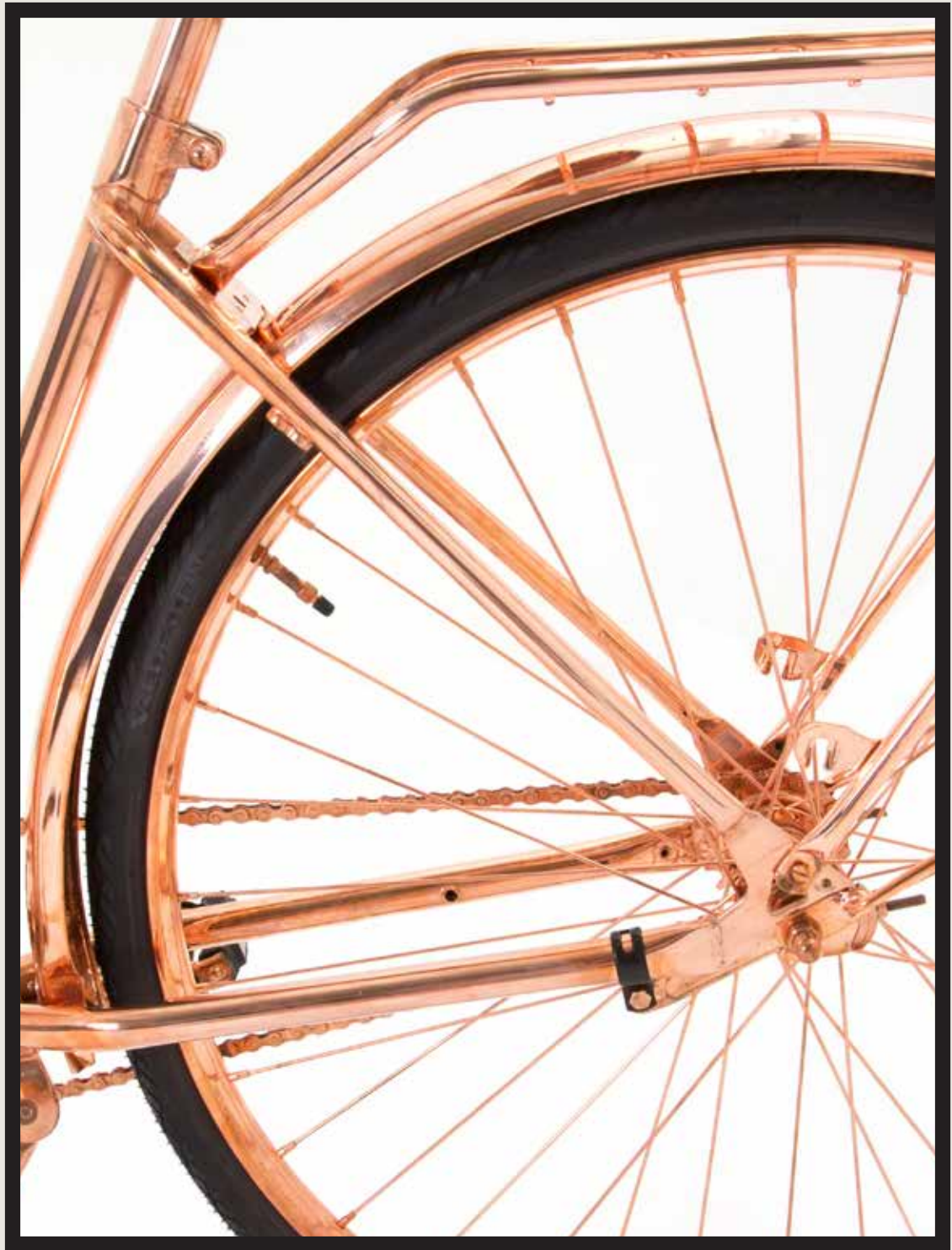
Whether it's for a scenic spin through the park or as way to get to work, cycling is chic.

BY JILL BECKER



WHEN BIKES DEBUTED FROM FASHION HOUSES, WE KNEW. BIKING IS BIGGER THAN EVER. Not only do you see them on the streets and parked in front of cafes, but open any fashion or men's magazine and bicycles are featured in photos and pepper the pages. One of the surest signs that biking is chic might just be a piece on the front page of the fashion section of the *New York Times* declaring that "roadways are the new runways" and offering up bikes as the must-have accessory.

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) Hermès Bicycle \$4,650, hermes.com; Brooklyn Cruiser 2012 Willow Three Speed Bicycle \$579, brooklyncruiser.com; Sole Bicycles "the DELANO" \$379, solebicycles.com; Van Heesch Copper Bicycle \$6,000, anthropologie.com



What's the appeal? Darrin Nordahl, a transportation expert and consulting designer of "bicycle environments," believes it harkens back to our youth. "Biking, by its very nature, is fun," he says.

"That joy is first learned at childhood, when we discover bicycling is perhaps the closest thing to flying. The visceral thrill of speed, felt through the velocity of wind on our face, is an experience we never forget. Even as parents, we insist our children learn to ride, because we remember how joyful and liberating bicycling can be."

As evidence, sales of bicycles topped \$6 billion in the U.S. alone in 2011 — a number that has remained remarkably steady since 2003 despite some trying economic times. "Almost every American owns a bicycle," says Nordahl, who acknowledges that not only is recreational cycling going gangbusters, but there's also a steady increase in biking as transportation.

Bikes themselves are evolving, too, both out of necessity as cycling becomes more and more commonplace, and as a means of expressing ourselves, much the same way we do with our cars.

Pedal Pusher



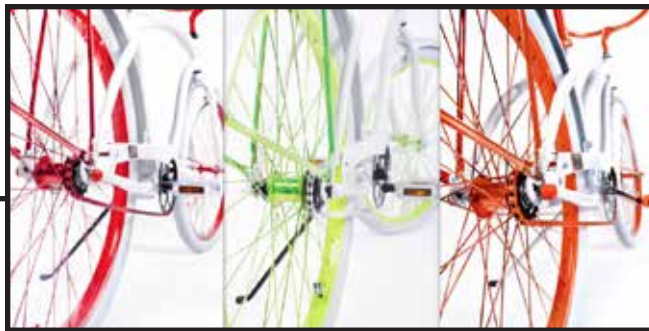
TRICKING OUT YOUR WHEELS

"Customizing a bike is the only way to guarantee a ride is perfectly suited to your physique and your style," says Nordahl. "There is a dizzying array of handlebars, saddles, forks, wheelsets, and accessories available."

But customization isn't as easy as going and buying that bike-mounted wine rack or the pedals built for high heels — both real things, by the way.

"Before you customize your bike, you need to ask yourself what you're after," says Nordahl. "Do you want a faster bike or a more comfortable ride? Do you ride your bike solely for recreation or for commuting? The answers to questions like these greatly influence the type of bicycle you should buy, and also how to customize it."

However you outfit your ride, you'll join the growing legions of cyclists enjoying life on two wheels. After all, as John F. Kennedy once proclaimed, "Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride."



STROLL PAST THE GIFT SHOP AT THE OMNI DALLAS HOTEL

a bustling 1,001-room property adjacent to the Dallas Convention Center, and you'll find something strange and unexpected on display. Bicycles.

Collections, the hotel's gift shop, carries a selection of one-of-a-kind, brightly colored bicycles from local bike maker **Villy Custom** (villycustoms.com). Totally customizable and sold only on the company's website and a few select area boutiques, the bikes have to be seen to be appreciated.

"They're like rolling pieces of artwork," says Villy founder and president Fleetwood Hicks.

Hicks pitched the idea of Collections carrying his unique two-wheeled creations to Collections Manager Wade Moore about two weeks after the hotel opened in 2011, and they've been there ever since.

"The bikes have had a huge impact on bringing people into the shop and we've sold a large number to hotel guests," says Hicks. "It's been a very successful partnership."

So successful, in fact, that Hicks recently launched a new apparel line that's also available at Collections. The high-end, fashion-fit T-shirts are emblazoned with different designs that are as decorative and fun as the bikes themselves. Not surprisingly, they're flying off the shelves.

GIVE IT A SPIN

Among biking's advantages is the fact that it's a great way to explore a new city. You can stop whenever you please and cover more ground than if you were walking. Here are five fun, guided bike tours in five fantastic destinations.



1. SAN FRANCISCO In addition to Segway tours, the Electric Tour Company provides guided tours of the City by the Bay via electric bikes, which allow you to choose between pedaling, motor power, or both. On the four-hour trek, you'll take in the Golden Gate Bridge, the Palace of Fine Arts, and other area landmarks. electrictourcompany.com



2. PARIS What better way to explore the City of Light than at night? On Fat Tire Bike Tours' popular Night Bike Tour, your starlit spin features sights like the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, and the Louvre, and even a boat cruise along the Seine. fattirebiketours.com/paris



3. BOSTON Boston is a city with a rich history, and Tour de Boston Guided Bike Tours offers an up close and personal look at some of the city's most historic sites. On your ride you'll travel along the bike paths of the Charles River, through Boston's North End, and past the Rose Kennedy Greenway Park. www.trustedtours.com



4. NEW ORLEANS When most people think of New Orleans, they think of food. So local outfitter Confederacy of Cruisers has created a Culinary Bike Tour that serves as sort of a progressive dinner on wheels, where you not only sample the sights, but local delicacies like gumbo and jambalaya. confederacyofcruisers.com



5. CHARLOTTE Charlotte is on the rise as a craft beer hot spot, and Charlotte NC Tour's Bikes and Brews Tour gives you a taste of some of the best local brews. You'll get an inside look at North Davidson, one of Charlotte's most unique, up-and-coming neighborhoods, with stops at some of the city's best breweries where you are encouraged to sample the wares. www.charlottenctours.com/biketours