

ATTENTION TO AESTHETICS WILL ADD VALUE

Metal cladding systems are a popular function-led solution for a wide range of building envelope applications; however, advances in colour and form have led to a reappraisal of their visual appeal which has resulted in their increasing specification outside of the industrial sector. Members of the Metal Cladding and Roofing Manufacturers Association (MCRMA) have been at the forefront of providing metal solutions for many of the UK's prestigious buildings including Cardiff's Millennium Stadium; the Sage at Gateshead; the Pavilion Stand at Edgbaston Cricket Club; the SSE Hydro and the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, both in Glasgow.



*Rugby College, Warwickshire
Image courtesy of Omnis*

The creative use of metal can be seen across a variety of sectors including hospitals, schools and universities, airports, sports stadia, entertainment arenas and, more recently, in residential developments which are now incorporating coloured rainscreen or louvres in their housing designs. And in nearly every case it is the versatility of metal and its ability to accommodate almost any creative requirement or design element which is the pre-eminent requirement for the designer.

The aesthetic benefits of modern metal cladding systems offer the designer and client with the opportunity to explore a mixed colour palette and inventive forms, which in some cases can result in complexity at junctions and interfaces. However, these attributes cannot be considered in isolation from the building function; namely to provide shelter, insulation, durability, structural stability and structural strength. During the design stage the designer has to assimilate all of these parameters to provide a fully functional and useable building; without these considerations the benefits of aesthetic and design opportunities offered by metal are unlikely to arise.



*Crossrail Training Academy, Ilford east London
Image courtesy of CA Building Group*

One of the simplest ways to guarantee a striking building design is through the creative introduction of colour, and what better way to do that than through the use of the many specialist finishes available for profiled, flat and rainscreen cladding. Whether it is a juxtaposition of different panel colours in a rainscreen-clad building or subtle colour changes in a 'half round' or louvre continuous elevation, colour can make or break a design. The palette of colours with which an architect can work is virtually limitless.

All MCRMA manufacturers offer an extensive colour range in various finishes and, in many cases, distinctive or special colours can be delivered to specification to align buildings with recognised corporate identity. This is particularly important for companies who use their business premises as a promotional statement and as an extension of their brand image.

Rainscreen systems also offer specifiers and building owners the opportunity to explore the use of colour and scale to provide a visually exciting or contrasting façade.

Rainscreen façades have become increasingly popular both for their design and for their practicality. Since 2004 metallic rainscreen systems have shown a sustained growth and have substantially outperformed the wall cladding market.

With the latest advances in rainscreen technology, metallic-based systems are more affordable and provide an opportunity for the façade to change with time and indeed fashion. The technology used within modern rainscreen systems not only provides a weather skin which can be attached to an existing wall or new sub-structure but also allows the incorporation of insulation systems which comply with the latest and ever changing energy efficiency standards and building regulations.

In any development there will always be an element of detail to be considered, but in a metal envelope system so much can be considered with the benefit of knowing that the extraordinary can be achieved.

For example, a metal roofing system with slim verge overhangs, slim parapets and eaves offers a simple way of achieving this often essential design feature.

Opportunities for creative detailing abound for example, specifying bullnose edges, rounded corners and rising feature elevations in shining silver or corporate colours or under brise soleil overhangs and perforated profiles to allow subtle light through.



*Energy Technologies Building, Nottingham University
Image courtesy of Ash & Lacy Building Systems Limited*

Designers, specifiers and clients are now looking at new ways to incorporate aesthetic shape, detail and colour into the buildings which they are designing and funding. This level of rapid progression brings with it many detailed and challenging questions for manufacturers and system suppliers.

In particular, questions about complex interfaces, availability of bespoke shapes and details, specific RAL colours and associated durability together with help and advice about compatibility of components and calculating thermal and structural performance. The detail opportunities are, like the design opportunities, immense.

The focus should always be on system solution or a design solution involving component manufacturers who understand and recognise the importance of an engineered design solution. MCRMA members have the experience and knowledge to support the design requirements.

There are also opportunities for refurbishment and rather than demolish a building when it has come to the end of its primary lifespan, a complete retrofit can be the answer... and for complete retrofits, metal can offer wonderful design opportunities, providing tired and often no longer functional buildings with new and exciting leases of life. Also, in today's economic climate there seems to be a whole raft of sectors willing to consider the retrofit or refurbishment solution over new construction.

For more information about the exciting possibilities offered by metal visit the MCRMA web site at www.mcrma.co.uk

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