RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

NOVEMBER 2013

PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGY

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THE GREEN ISSUE

AND MORE!

Copper Tops

What's old is new and hip again.

Rita Catinella Orrell, LEED Green Associate

London's annual design festival encompasses hundreds of events, exhibitions and installations around the British capital. During the most recent edition in September, there was one material that appeared over and over again — as an accent on accessories and jewelry, as shades for lighting fixtures or as details on furnishings. It wasn't some high-tech new polymer either, but one of the oldest metals known to civilization — copper.

It's not just a European phenomenon. "We have seen the same strong trend toward increased use of copper and copper alloys in home decor, furnishings, artwork and jewelry," said Robert Weed, VP, OEM Markets, with the New York City-based Copper Development Association (copper.org). "Designers have told me that people appreciate the warmth of the color and the impression of durability and longevity imparted by copper."
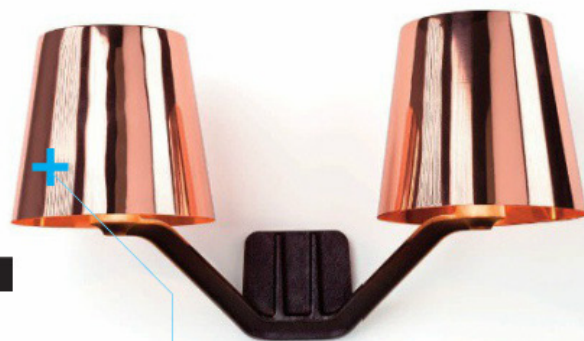
Ian Hunter, director of the London-based consultancy Materials Council, said copper's antimicrobial properties are one reason for the renewed interest. One copper-based alloy, CuVerro, has been applied to building products, such as hardware and switch plates, for its ability to continuously kill harmful bacteria 24 hours a day.

Hunter also cites the larger range of "off-the-shelf" architectural products now available, and sees a trend toward more warmer, organic and natural finishes. "Copper and its alloys all age wonderfully, building up a beautiful natural patina, which is a register of the environment it has existed in."

Brooklyn, N.Y.-based designer Paul Loebach prefers copper because it is non-corrosive, pliable and easily cut with simple household tools. "Its warm sheen elicits a uniquely 'primal' beauty, and one can somehow imagine the fascination it must have held as seen by early humankind by the light of fire over 10 thousand years ago," said Loebach.
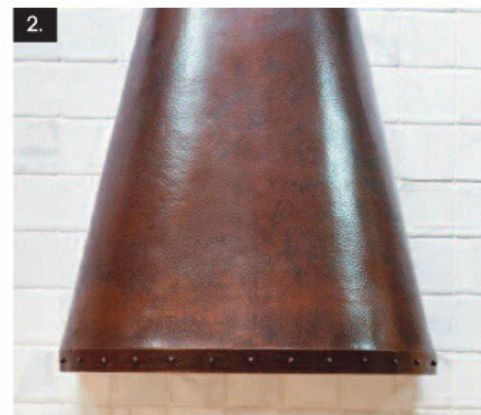
Surprisingly, Weed does not cite cost as one of the reasons for copper's increased popularity for interior design products. "The cost of copper is only one of many factors that influence the manufacturing cost of a product," said Weed. "Rather, I believe it is a result of increased appreciation for the appearance of the metal, and of course, the artistry and creativity of designers who are using the copper." ■

1.

1. Tom Dixon's Base Copper lights feature a matte-textured cast iron body and highly polished, spun-copper shades. The lights are available in table, floor and wall versions.

2. Native Trail's Coronado Range Hood is made of hand-hammered copper in a centuries-old artisan tradition. The standard hood measures 36 ins. wide by 41 ins. high, but it can be customized.
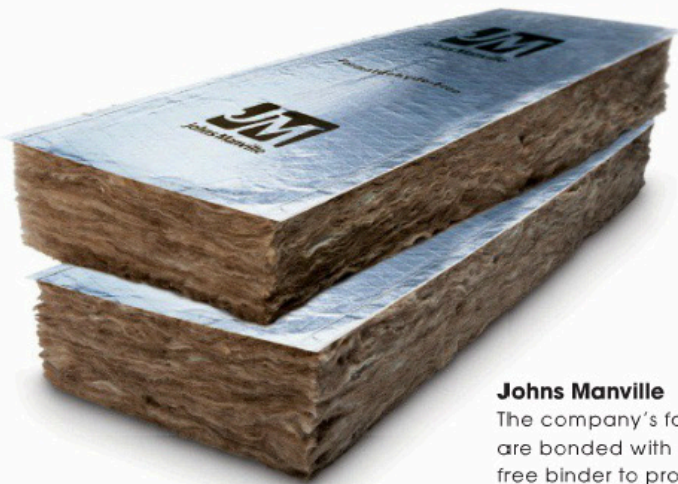
3. Diamond Spas custom fabricates soaking tubs, shower pans and other bath fixtures in stainless steel or copper.

Rita Catinella Orrell is the former products editor at Architectural Record and editor of SNAP, a building products magazine. She currently edits Architects Toybox (architects-toybox.com), a resource for architects and designers.

2.

Featured Brands
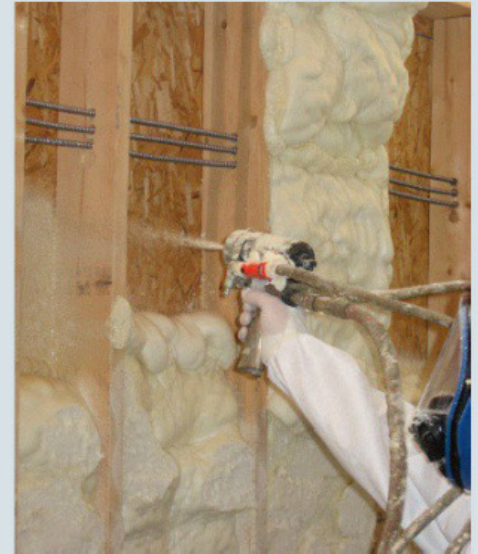tomdixon.net
nativetrails.net
diamondspas.com

3.

Johns Manville

The company's faced batts and rolls are bonded with a formaldehyde-free binder to promote better indoor air quality and come in a variety of R-values from 11 to 38. jm.com

Icynene

The company's LD-C-50 is a one-step high-performance open-cell product that insulates and air seals homes at the same time. Offering an R-value of 3.7 per inch, the water-blown product expands almost 100 times from its liquid state to seal all nooks and crannies. icynene.com

Knauf Insulation

EcoFill Wx is an unbounded glass wool blowing insulation with post-consumer recycled content. Designed for weatherizing and retrofitting existing houses, the product is used to dense-pack sidewalls using the drill-and-fill technique common in retrofitting homes or in-home weatherization activities. R-values range from 15 to 23. knaufinsulation.us

Du Verre

Made from 100% recycled aluminum, the Botero line of hardware offers soft curves but is clean and modern. The line includes a small knob, a large knob, a 4-in. pull, a 9-in. pull and a 17-in. pull. It comes in such finishes as oil-rubbed bronze, polished nickel and satin nickel. duverre.com