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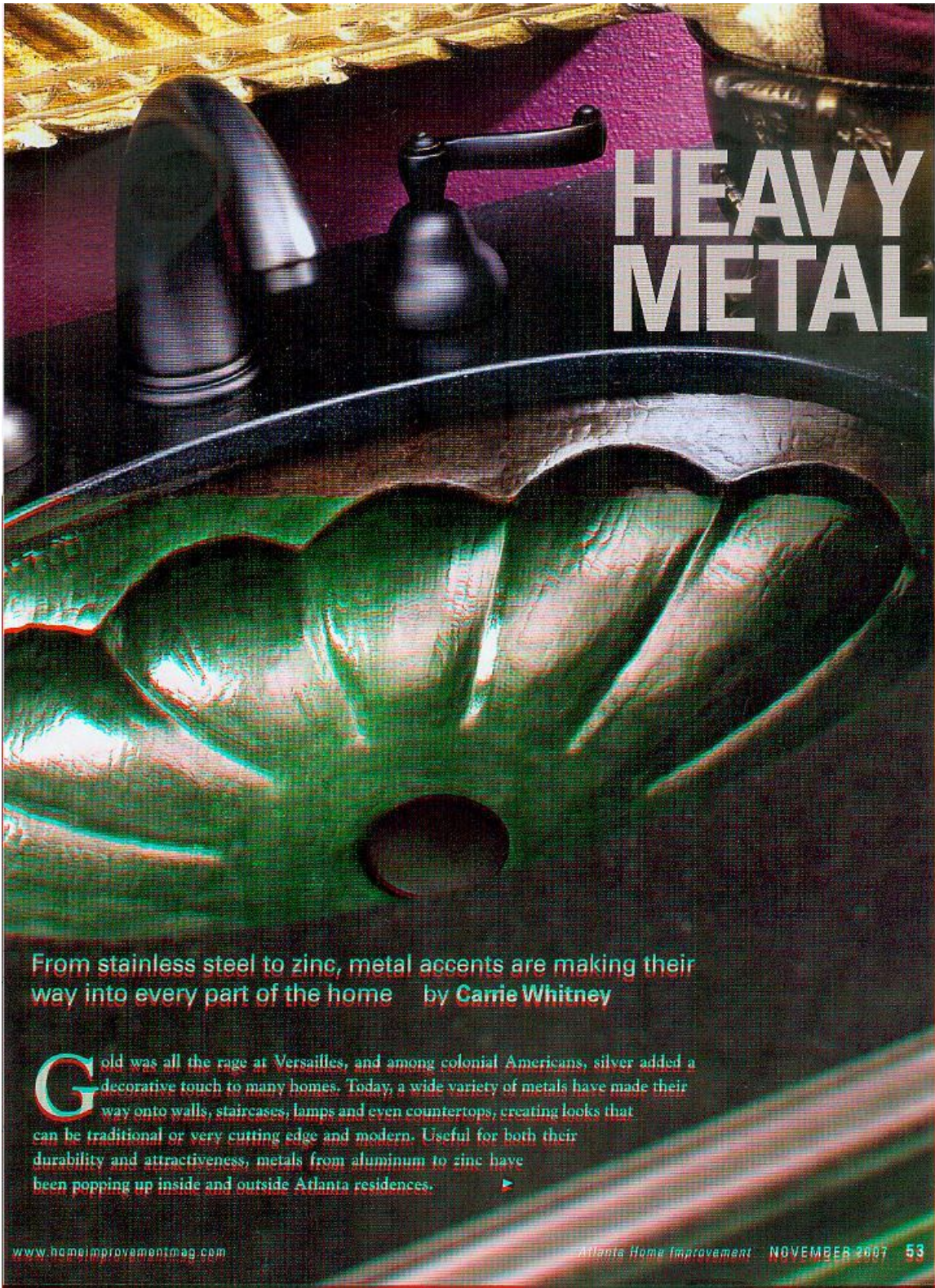


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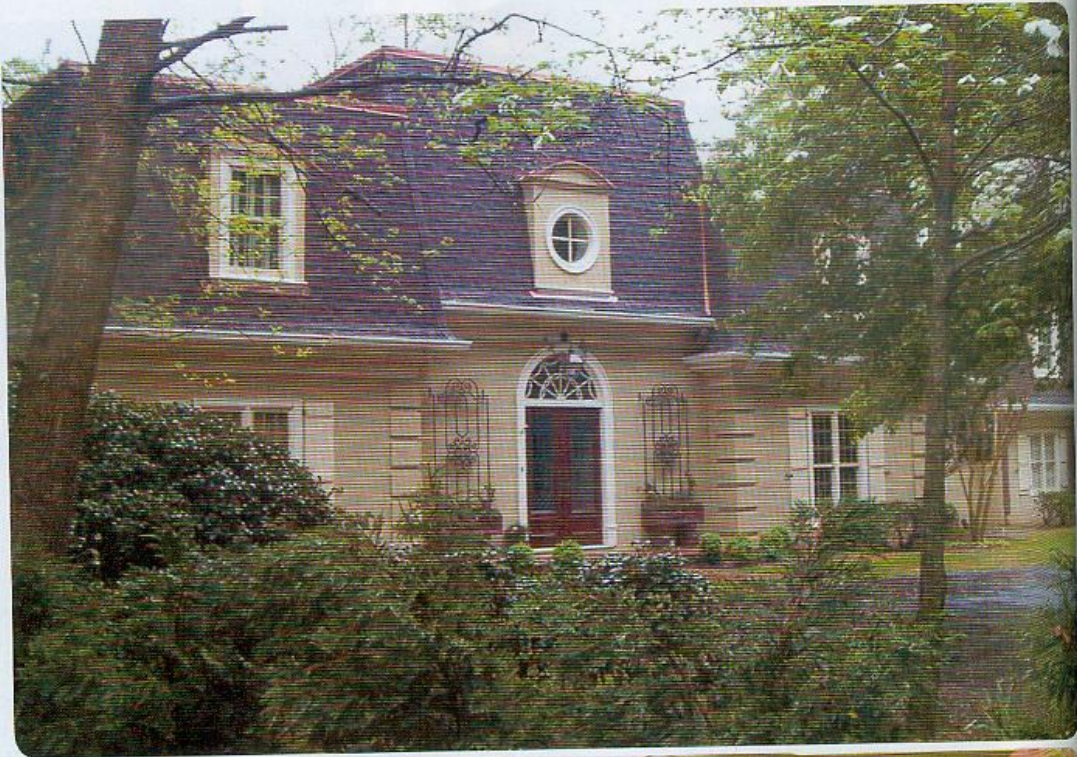
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HEAVY METAL

From stainless steel to zinc, metal accents are making their way into every part of the home by **Carrie Whitney**

Gold was all the rage at Versailles, and among colonial Americans, silver added a decorative touch to many homes. Today, a wide variety of metals have made their way onto walls, staircases, lamps and even countertops, creating looks that can be traditional or very cutting edge and modern. Useful for both their durability and attractiveness, metals from aluminum to zinc have been popping up inside and outside Atlanta residences. ▶



Photos courtesy of Brian Patterson Designs

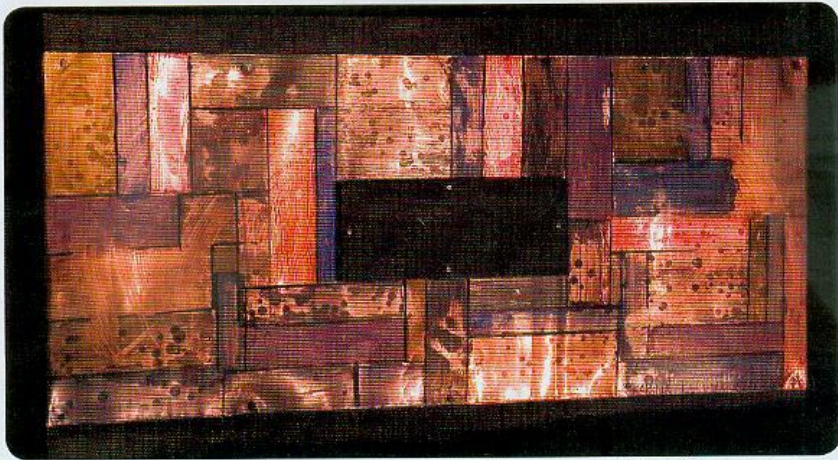


Photo courtesy of Atlanta Copperworks Studio

Zinc, a metal rising in popularity, can be found in tables, too, like the Zinc Table from Crate & Barrel, which Patterson used as a breakfast table in a client's home. With its soft blue-gray coloration, zinc is an unusual and striking material.


Metal also can offer functional uses that are structural as well. In her loft home, designer Leslie Tyrone of Left Arc built a steel mezzanine with hollow steel bars running horizontally across the columns. Atop the bars, she placed glass shelves, creating a large, built-in bookshelf. While most of the structure retained the dull gray of steel, the joints were polished to a shine, and she painted the columns white.

Choosing a color

While Tyrone decided to add white to her metal bookshelf, as a modern aesthetic, painted metal will look best in contemporary homes. It's probably not a look for a traditional setting. Similarly, a kitchen with stainless steel everywhere, including the countertops, can yield a "clinical aesthetic" if overdone, according to Tyrone. Metals must be properly chosen to complement the environment. You need to consider the scale and pattern of the piece, she says. The larger the metal object, the more impact it will have. For something less striking, you might focus on hardware like handles and fixtures

that can add a bit of chrome or brushed aluminum without making the atmosphere too cold. The color of the metal you choose is also important to take into account. "A lot depends on the tonality of the metal," Tyrone says. If you do not want a modern look, try a less "clinical" metal. "You can get copper, which is warm," Tyrone says.

Generally, metals inside and outside of the home are used in their natural, basic colors. Wrought iron will usually be black, copper will be warm and sunny, and chrome will be shiny and silver. For something a little out of the ordinary, bronze coating on wrought iron is gaining in popularity, according to Stinnett, and a few years ago, white was also a fashionable option. Once, he had clients who chose ivy green for their outdoor wrought iron.

From traditional to ultra-modern, metals can find a place in any home. Whether it's adding a simple light fixture and updating handles in the bathroom or something more elaborate like a faux balcony or pressed tin ceiling, artisans, manufacturers and designers are creating plenty of exciting pieces that can add coolness or warmth to kitchens, living rooms or even front lawns. 

Editorial Resources begin on page 136.

Metal Maintenance

If your iron has been powder coated, you can wipe off the rust as soon as you see it. Left alone, the surface rust will discolor the metal after a few years, and you will need liquid paint to touch it up. Plasti-Coat Corp. offers a highly durable powder coat option.



Photo courtesy of Native Trails Company

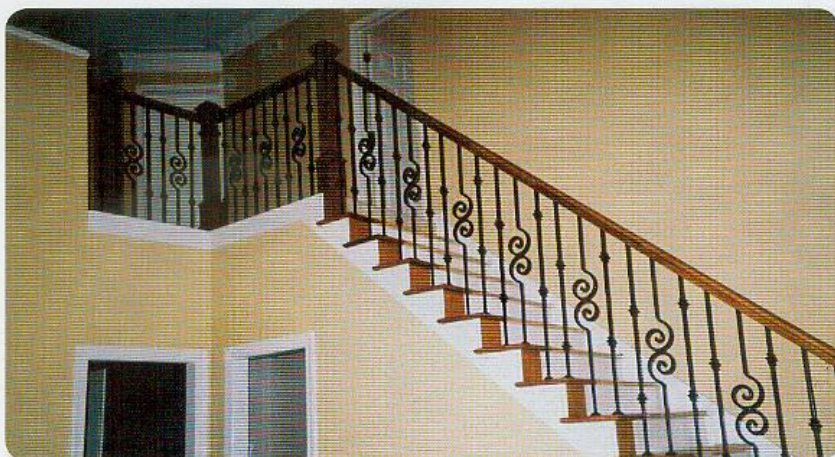


Photo courtesy of Majestic Metals

While some of the mid-20th-century metal accents—like wrought iron railings leading to the front door—might seem old-fashioned, the artisans and companies that are producing metal pieces today are leaning more toward a sense of sculpture than simply functionality. With an artistic and often shiny nature, metal might be just what you need to perk up a tired interior.

Steps with style

Currently, one of the biggest home-improvement trends in Atlanta is replacing wood balusters or pickets along stair rails with wrought iron versions, and it's a trend that can add serious value to your house. In fact, wrought iron balusters have become so appreciated that sometimes when a house on the market isn't selling, the real estate agent will recommend replacing the balusters.

"Iron balusters open up the line of sight," says Phillip McMillian with Majestic Metals. "This is one upgrade that's definitely worth the money." The iron balusters can be traditional in design, such as "S" scrolls interspersed with straight bars, or something more contemporary like a "P" scroll, so they are an option for almost any home. McMillian says that most homeowners opt for black coloring, but the iron also can be brown or have an antique copper look.

Having a professional replace your wood balusters might cost \$2,000 for an average job, and anyone who has tried this as a do-it-yourself project will know that it can be frustrating. To help, Majestic Metals has recently released a DIY kit that plans the job on the computer so that all of the parts will fit perfectly. The company also has a patent pending on shoe connectors that attach the iron to the wood. "We're taking all the guesswork out of the do-it-yourself installation of wrought iron baluster replacement," McMillian says.

Take it outside

Wrought iron has taken over more than staircases, of course. It also serves many purposes on the exterior of the house. "We do a lot of faux balconies, gates and spiral staircases," says Scott Stinnett with Riverside Metal Products. Gates are going high-tech, too. Driveway gates promote privacy, but also can be power-operated and have call boxes. These are not just found in front of mansions anymore. Another popular outdoor option is a metal trellis, which can be freestanding (possibly with a gate) or placed up the side of the house about an inch away from the wall. Whatever its location, a trellis can be a great outdoor accent with vines or flowers growing around its bars. ◻

Metal Maintenance

Wrought iron outside the home will need to withstand the elements. It should be powder coated for protection. During this process, metal is electromagnetized, then the powder is sprayed on and baked. The powder coating acts as a UV protectant and is very hard to chip, like car paint. However, moisture can still cause surface rust, according to Stinnett.



Photo courtesy of Metal Works



Photo courtesy of Harbour Towne Construction

Porches and balconies also benefit from attractive metal railings. When French doors inside don't lead to an actually balcony outside, an iron railing can be used to create the look and feel of a balcony. These faux balconies impart a "Parisian" experience.

Creative in the kitchen

Following the growth in popularity of stainless steel appliances, metal is popping up in all corners of the kitchen. For instance, designer Maribeth Gaines with SawHorse Inc. had a sculptor fabricate a wavy stainless steel backsplash for one client, and also added glass cabinet doors with metal surrounds. Behind the range, the solid panel of stainless steel was functional, easy to clean and protected the wall. The steel was paired with CaesarStone countertops that look like concrete, but some homeowners might like to go all the way with stainless steel countertops.

If you don't want to have a custom metal backsplash made, you also can find metal tiles in everything from stainless steel to pressed tin and copper. These look great in the kitchen, and can also add interest to the ceiling of any room. Pressed tin on the ceiling can be rustic and reminiscent of early '90s restaurants, bars and stores. Ceramic tiles with metal coverings also are available, and they can be used to create a backsplash, laid and grouted just like regular tiles.

Accents that shine

If adding structural metalwork to your home is more of a commitment than you are looking for, most types of furniture can be found in metal versions or with metal accents. Iron lamps are a traditional option, as are benches and cocktail tables. "A lot of decorative ornamental ironwork is used on walls with candles," says designer Brian Patterson of Brian Patterson Designs. Ornamental ironwork can range from contemporary or modern to traditional and ornate. Mixing different metals can provide an interesting twist. For example, Patterson has seen ornamental iron table bases with battered copper tops.

Modern metal furniture will frequently border more on sculptural effect than utility. Consider the Hugo floor lamp designed by Jean-Francois Crochet and offered on retromodern.com. With its feathery legs, it looks like a broom and acts like an illuminated steel sculpture. Likewise, the design of the Teorema Floor Lamp by Ferruccio Laviani has been influenced by Piet Mondrian and Gerrit Rietveld and is made of chrome-plated metal and a polycarbonate screen.

Of course, tables offer plenty of metal options and finishes like iron, steel and chrome. Frequently, metal base tables will be topped with a glass panel, creating anything from an ornate to an airy effect. ☐

Metal Maintenance

Some metals, like stainless steel, are easy to scuff and scratch, so you need to be careful when interacting with them. Some type of clearcoat should be put on steel to protect it from moisture.