

Rust to the Finish

In a moment worthy of reality television, Chemetal races to ready a weathered backdrop for New York Fashion Week.

To get their clothes down the runway, fashion designers must sometimes resort to tailoring shortcuts, such as tape and glue, when there isn't time for real alterations. But during February's New York Fashion Week, the audience at the Hervé Léger for Max Azria show probably didn't realize that there was a similar rush to deliver the dramatically distressed backdrop that set the tone for Léger's "urban tribe."

When BCBC Max Azria had reached out to Chemetal just days before the show, the Massachusetts-based metal-laminate specialists didn't actually make the kind of Richard Serra-inspired pattern the fashion house wanted. "I told them we had this one thing we were playing with," says Chemetal's creative director, Geoff Schaefer, who snapped a picture of the prototype with his cell phone that Thursday. The following Tuesday, 18 sheets of the stuff arrived in New York.

At that time, the pattern, now called 380 Weathered Steel, was achieved using oxidized copper foil on a high-pressure laminate backing, and the company was still working to stabilize the surface. "Providing something in three or four days normally isn't a big deal," Schaefer says. "But it's tougher when it's an R & D item and we haven't done a real production run."

Since then, Schaefer realized that in order to get a lasting material with the look of rusted steel, he needed to use, well, rusted steel. "We used chemicals on some, and we just left some outdoors," he says. "The most durable and best-looking results we got were basically just rusted."

—Kristi Cameron

PROPERTIES

The panels are available in four-by-eight-foot sheets and can be installed using adhesives or hardware. Because steel, a hard metal, is difficult to fabricate, Chemetal can cut pieces to size and make bends.

APPLICATIONS

Interior, vertical, and light-duty horizontal

COMPOSITION

0.024-inch-thick steel sheet with a urethane-coated back and a rusted-steel face, also finished with urethane



DISTRIBUTOR

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