

# ARCHITECTURE: THE MERITS OF COPPER

**Contemporary architecture relies increasingly on copper. Whether for roofs or facades, architects greatly appreciate copper, not only for its aesthetic qualities but also for its physical and environmental properties. Art & Build at the European School, the Atelier d'Art Urbain for the La Glacière project, Altiplan for the renovation of Electrabel, etc., major architectural firms now view copper as the source of a new creative impetus.**

## **Copper emblazons the town**

Flaming orange-red, warm brown or almond green, the palette of colours that copper offers architects is a source of creativity. This range of colours is linked to the natural development of copper as it acquires a protective brown then almond green film in just a few years: it is this patina that protects the copper and makes it so resistant to corrosion. And thanks to innovation in the copper industry, architects now have access to pre-patinated products giving them a range of colours as soon as building construction starts. For the new Robert Schuman room at the European School in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Art & Build used a beautiful pre-patinated almond green copper.

## **Copper, the environmental benefit**

The other essential advantage of copper is that it is part of an environmental approach which integrates the entire life cycle of a building, from conception to implementation to recycling. "With the La Glacière project, we want to take the environmental approach as far as possible", says Sefik Birkiye, founder of the Atelier d'Art Urbain. "It's therefore no coincidence that we have freely used copper in this project." Extremely durable, 100% recyclable and with no loss of performance or any restrictions as to its use, copper can be used, recycled and reused indefinitely. Furthermore, the recycling industry is very effective and well organised. In 2004, 41% of the copper used in Europe, i.e. 2 million tonnes, came from recycling.

## **Fluid forms**

Malleable, ductile and highly resistant to corrosion, copper is also valued for its physical properties. For the renovation of the Electrabel buildings in Ixelles, the architect Philippe de Roos of Altiplan designed a conference room in the heart of the block resembling a parallelepiped box covered with pre-patinated copper sheets. The use of copper scales gives the structure an organic feel. As profiles or mesh, in sheets or slabs, copper is used by many interior architects and designers in a variety of ways to create true works of art.

## **Now a European competition**

For several years, Copper Development Association in the UK has been organising a competition for UK based architects who use copper in their projects. The winners from previous years are amongst the most talented architects in the UK. Given the growing success of this event, it was decided to extend this competition to a European level. The projects had to be submitted before 30 June, and the results will be given during an official ceremony in London in September 2005.

### ***About the European Copper Institute:***

*The European Copper Institute is a joint venture between the main global copper producers and the European copper industry. Its mission is to promote the merits of copper in Europe for contemporary society.*

[www.eurocopper.org](http://www.eurocopper.org)

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