

CREATIVE CLADDING

Cladding is not just about enhancing a building's surface but also the first step in giving a building its own architectural expression.

By Bindu Gopal Rao

PHOTO COURTESY: A-CLASS MARBLES



Cladding shapes the perception and character of a space. Each stone carries its own narrative through colour, texture, and origin, influencing how interiors and exteriors are experienced.



Ramesh Bhandari, Director, A-Class Marbles



Kartikeya Batra, Founder, Metalia



PHOTO COURTESY: METALIA

The parametric facade for Jaquar World in Jaipur establishes a distinct identity for the structure through carefully crafted rhythm and depth.

Cladding is a layer that shields and enhances a building; hence, by choosing the right material, texture, and finish, it can completely transform how a surface interacts with its surroundings, turning protection into distinctive character.

THE CONCEPT

Cladding is the application of a material over a surface to provide protection, texture, and visual character. It enhances the performance of walls, columns, façades, and interior features while defining the space around them. Cladding is the face of architecture; it's what people see first and remember longest. It carries the building's character and sets the tone for what lies within. Ramesh Bhandari, Director, A-Class Marbles, says, "We treat cladding as an essential design element that shapes the atmosphere of interiors and exteriors, reflecting craftsmanship, material integrity, and a refined sense of luxury." Cladding forms the protective outer skin of a building, shielding it from the sun, rain, dust, and the effects of time. From ancient stone masonry to contemporary ventilated façades, cladding has evolved into an intelligent envelope that regulates temperature, resists weathering, and shapes architectural identity. A well-designed cladding system doesn't merely decorate the surface – it breathes, performs, and endures.

MATERIAL MATTERS

A wide range of materials can be used for interior and exterior cladding, but metal can be especially adaptable and expressive. Aluminium stands out for its strength, precision, and versatility, making it especially suitable for diverse applications. When choosing materials, it's essential to consider how



PHOTO COURTESY: STONELAM SURFACES

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their inherent qualities and contributions influence both the project's design language and its overall spatial impact. "Through our experience with different materials, we've come to understand that each carries its own character. Some offer flexibility and lightness; others help add depth and permanence. I believe the key lies in understanding how the material evolves over time and in aligning it with the space's environment and purpose. Material selection is not simply choosing a metal based on its advantages and disadvantages; it's a dialogue between design ambition and performance," says Kartikeya Batra, Founder, Metalia.

USE CASE

Choosing the right material depends on the location, intended use, and overall design objectives. For interior spaces, stones that convey elegance, depth, and tactile quality are preferred. Sandeep Bagade, Managing Partner & CEO, Stonelam Surfaces, says, "Wet cladding involves adhering the facing material directly to the wall using cement-based mortar or adhesive – hence the name 'wet'. This technique is common with natural stone, ceramic tiles, and small-format façade panels. It is ideal for interiors, feature walls, lobbies, and compact exterior areas with limited exposure to harsh weather. Dry cladding systems rely on mechanical anchors or framing structures to attach panels, creating a ventilated air gap between the cladding and the base wall. This cavity improves thermal comfort, prevents moisture buildup, and enhances energy efficiency. It is best suited for exteriors, large façades, and high-rise projects demanding long-term durability and advanced weather protection." For exterior applications,



Sandeep Bagade, Managing Partner & CEO, Stonelam Surfaces



Ranjeet Sharma, President and CEO, 3A Composites India Private Limited

durability is as important as appearance. Granite resists weathering and temperature changes while retaining its structure and finish. Selected and properly treated marbles can also perform outdoors, especially when honed or textured to minimise wear. "Sandstone offers natural warmth and texture, limestone delivers consistent sophistication, and engineered stones or porcelain slabs are increasingly chosen for their robustness and low maintenance requirements," adds Ramesh.

DÉCOR DETAIL

Cladding adapts beautifully across scales and surfaces, whether on expansive façades or in interior detailing. With the range of finishes



PHOTO COURTESY: METALIA

At the Malabar lobby in Jaipur, parametric geometry is used in the interiors to create a continuous visual flow, transforming the walls into expressive architectural elements.



Abisanka Sinha, Product Marketing Manager, Kerakoll Group



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Cladding design today is driven by innovation in materials and performance.

and systems available today, designers can experiment freely, combining textures and forms to create contrast and continuity. “For us, it’s about crafting a visual language that ties the entire building together. Customisation continues to drive innovation and define the future of cladding. Designers, architects, and clients alike are increasingly drawn to modular systems, layered textures, and mixed materials that offer flexibility and the narratives they seek. Sustainability, too, has become central; there’s a growing focus on durability, recyclability, and mindful fabrication, aligning performance with purpose,” says Kartikeya. Stone cladding introduces texture, depth, and natural movement to interior spaces. Feature walls, corridors, bedrooms, and bathrooms gain character through the inherent veining and patterns of marble or the rugged surface of quartz.

MAINTENANCE MUSINGS

One of the strengths of metal cladding lies in its ease of maintenance. It requires minimal upkeep, often just a simple wipe-down or exposure to rain. “Regular inspection and gentle cleaning are key to maintaining cladding longevity. Periodic washing with mild soap and water removes dirt and pollutants, while joints, sealants, and sub-frames should be checked for wear or corrosion. For rainscreen systems, keeping ventilation cavities and drainage paths clear is essential to avoid moisture buildup. Adhering to the manufacturer’s maintenance guidelines, scheduling annual inspections, and replacing damaged panels promptly ensures that cladding systems remain safe, attractive, and long-lasting,” says Ranjeet Sharma, President and CEO, 3A Composites India Private Limited.

VERSATILITY VIBE

Meanwhile, lobbies and reception areas benefit from stones that convey permanence and



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Beyond décor, cladding improves durability and hygiene. In high-traffic areas like malls, hospitals, or airports, these surfaces resist wear, moisture, and dust, ensuring easy maintenance.

sophistication. Bathrooms gain a serene, spa-like quality from textured or polished stone, while bedrooms and living rooms achieve warmth and depth with carefully chosen feature walls. Abisanka Sinha, Product Marketing Manager, Kerakoll Group, says, “Across India, architecture and interior design are witnessing a clear shift from ornamentation to performance. Large-format porcelain slabs, natural stones, and engineered composites dominate modern design because they combine elegance with durability. These materials resist moisture, thermal expansion, and mechanical stress, making them ideal for India’s demanding climate. As slabs become thinner and larger, the hidden layers behind the surface gain importance. The adhesive that bonds the cladding often determines whether a system performs for decades or deteriorates early. In most cases, failures such as hollow sounds, detachment, or

seepage stem not from the visible material but from the adhesive layer beneath.”

IN CONCLUSION

Sustainable practices guide sourcing, cutting, and finishing, reducing waste without compromising quality. Recent design trends in high-rise architecture are shifting from a purely vertical expression of density towards a more biophilic and human-centric design approach. Architects and designers are actively exploring ways to bring nature into the vertical realm through sky gardens, shaded balconies, and living façades that moderate climate whilst enhancing well-being. Reliability in wall cladding today depends on integration. Successful systems are built through coordinated specifications, where substrate preparation, waterproofing, adhesives, and grouting operate as one ecosystem. **AS&**