

THE KNOWLEDGE STEEL-FRAMED GLAZING

Sleek and slimline metal designs are synonymous with edgy, industrial-style spaces. Use them for windows, doors, screens and even extensions. Here's how

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STEEL-FRAMED GLAZING first became popular during the early 20th century, when it was much used by Modernist architects (think of the Art Deco Hoover Building in London, the Eldorado apartment block in New York or Walter Gropius's Bauhaus School in Dessau). 'Innovations in glass, combined with the inherent strength of steel, allowed architects to create this avant-garde look,' explains Peter Clement, chairman of steel-window specialist Clement (clementwindows.co.uk). 'Large panes of glass that hadn't existed before could be framed elegantly with slender steel profiles.'

Created by British manufacturers such as Crittall, slimline steel frames also transformed interiors. 'They allowed maximum light flow with minimum sightlines,' says Ben Turner, a consultant at D&R Design (dandrdesign.co.uk). The same effect cannot be achieved in PVC, timber or aluminium due to the heavier structure of these materials.

There's still a demand for replica steel windows in listed buildings and conservation areas, but the way they're being used is evolving. This is largely due to an increase in the conversion of industrial buildings with this type of window for both residential and commercial use (visit London's East End to see this trend in action). 'Steel-framed glazing's popularity has extended to interiors, where it's used to divide spaces,' says Amanda Salt, director and co-owner of Workhouse (workhousecollection.co.uk), which sells steel-framed partitioning systems. 'Screens with opaque glass create privacy in open-plan areas, or you can use transparent glass to make light-filled break-out zones.' Such designs have become a big hit in both contemporary and period homes, with partitions, windows, doors and whole extensions in steel-framed glass.

In terms of application, 'the possibilities are almost limitless,' says Emma Freed, interior designer at Blacksheep (blacksheep.uk.com), who has used steel glazing throughout the Jamie's Italian chain of restaurants. As long as the panes are square or rectangular, 'the glazing can be any size. For



Jamie's Italian, we used runs of glass more than ten metres long, and floor-to-ceiling panels in double-height spaces.'

There are energy-efficient options, too: for example, you can have your windows double glazed to comply with 'Part L' of current building regulations. Additionally, the metal can be powder coated in any colour to match your paint scheme.

If you are considering steel glazing for your interior, you or your architect (the latter if you're planning a larger project such as a rear extension) would need to work with a specialist in steel-framed glazing to plan and install your design. Once fitted, the steel, which is hot-dipped, galvanised and powder coated, is 'virtually maintenance free', according to Turner. 'Steel has a tremendous life expectancy,' adds Clement. 'It doesn't warp, rust or crumble. You'd expect it to last a lifetime.' Such longevity does come at a price, however – you're likely to pay from about £3,000 for a single door. **ED**

INSIDER GUIDE

Steel-framed glass screens can help 'create zones anywhere in the home where you'd like to have a sense of privacy or reduce noise, while allowing light to flow through,' explains Amanda Salt of Workhouse. She recommends using glass with acoustic properties or applying a film to create opacity.

'Glass screens may be more expensive than a stud wall, but they serve as an architectural feature as well as dividing the space,' says Katie Fontana, creative director of Plain English (plainenglishdesign.co.uk). 'They can be used to make ante-rooms, such as walk-in larders, utility areas or en-suite bathrooms.'

Workhouse's steel-framed partitions cost £2,280 for a 1 x 2.5m module; Plain English has steel-framed screens from £7,200