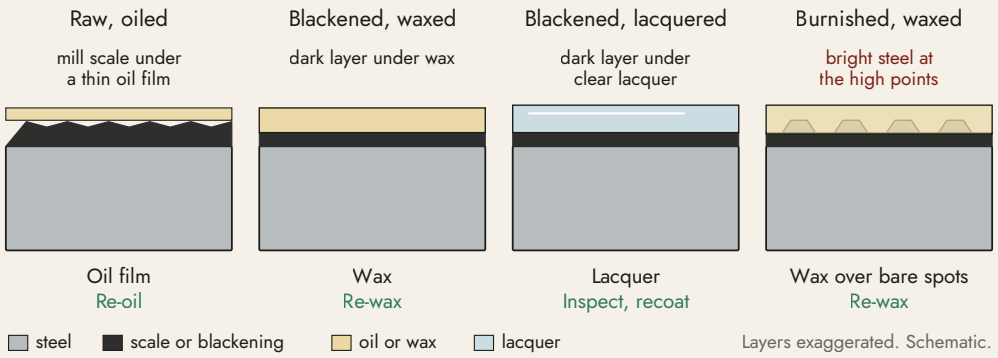
Blackened, burnished and *raw steel* finishes

Blackened, burnished and raw steel rust if the seal fails, so the seal is the specification. Name it, give the sheen as a number, test a sealed sample, and hand over a care card. No life in years is given.

AT A GLANCE

Step	What it is	What the sources say	Upkeep	Basis
A Raw, oiled	Hot-rolled steel, mill scale kept or cleaned off, under a thin oil or wax film.	A hot-rolled mill finish is tight scale and rust powder. Bare iron and steel keep oxidising.	Re-oil when rust shows.	NAAMM; CCI 9/6
B Blackened, waxed	Mild steel chemically darkened, then waxed.	A conversion, not an applied layer, and variable by design. Suits dry interiors, vertical or low-abrasion faces.	Renew the wax. No interval found.	One supplier page; CCI
C Blackened, lacquered	Blackened steel under a clear lacquer.	Lacquer alters the look and is hard to apply thin and even and hard to remove (CCI, on brass).	Inspect, recoat or strip. No interval found.	CCI 9/3; supplier
D Burnished	Blackened, rubbed back to show brighter metal at high points, then sealed.	Bare steel shows where it is rubbed through (our reading), so the seal matters most.	As B or C, and watch the bare spots.	Euro Inox glossary
E Black powder coat or paint	An opaque coating, not a treated steel surface.	Most architectural steel finishes are applied coatings (NAAMM).	See the powder coating sheet.	NAAMM

A qualitative ladder, not test data. The CCI notes were written for museum objects. No source read gives a life in years, or an interval, for any seal on steel. The cleaning chart in our cleaning sheet does not cover blackened steel.



Four ways to finish steel, drawn as layers. Layers are exaggerated and the ladder is qualitative. Original schematic by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

FINISH DESCRIPTION

[Item ref.]: mild steel, [hot-rolled / cold-rolled] to [BS EN __], [__] mm, chemically blackened to match control sample [ref. __], [mill scale kept / removed]. [Burnished: rubbed back with [grade] at [edges and raised areas] to sample [ref. __].] Finish approved on sample, not by name.

SEAL SYSTEM

Sealed with [wax / clear matt lacquer system: type and product named by the partner, data sheet attached], applied by [ ], to a gloss of [__] GU at 60 degrees (BS EN ISO 2813, edition to be confirmed), tolerance [ ].

SAMPLE, RANGE AND TEST

Control sample [ref.] and light and dark limit samples approved by [name] on [date], viewed in [raking and face-on light]. Production is to sit within that range, including welds, formed edges and scale variation as on the sample. Before production the partner is to test the sealed sample for [a wet glass left __ hours, a spilt drink wiped after __ minutes, hand contact] and report the result with photographs against the pass mark [ ].

USE AND CARE

Suitable for [dry interior, vertical or low-abrasion faces]. Not for [wet areas, outdoors, bar tops] unless the sealed sample has passed the test above. Handover includes a care card naming the seal, how to clean it, the inspection and renewal interval [from the maker's data sheet] and who is responsible.

TERMS USED

Blackening

Chemically darkening steel to a dark brown, grey or black, then sealing it. One supplier calls it a surface conversion, not an applied layer. The result is variable by design.

Mill scale

The dark oxide skin left on steel after hot rolling. NAAMM describes a hot-rolled mill finish as tight mill scale and rust powder. It is kept or removed according to the look wanted.

Burnishing

In metal finishing, smoothing a surface by rubbing under pressure rather than by removing material (Euro Inox). Designers also use it for a rubbed-back finish, so say what is done.

Hot-rolled and cold-rolled steel

Hot-rolled steel is rolled hot and keeps its mill scale; cold-rolled steel is rolled further at room temperature, smoother and flatter. They take a blackened finish differently.

Gloss unit (GU)

A measured value of sheen, usually at a stated angle such as 60 degrees (BS EN ISO 2813). Matt, satin and gloss are not fixed bands.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- NAAMM/NOMMA AMP 500-06, Metal Finishes Manual for Architectural and Metal Products (2006), Chapter 4: US trade guidance, pp. 4-2 to 4-4.
- Canadian Conservation Institute, CCI Notes 9/6, Care and Cleaning of Iron: for museum iron objects.
- Canadian Conservation Institute, CCI Notes 9/3, The Cleaning, Polishing and Protective Waxing of Brass and Copper: lacquer and wax; brass and copper.
- Euro Inox, Electropolishing Stainless Steels (Vol. 11, 2010), glossary: burnishing.
- A steel supplier's web page on blackened steel (29 April 2026): the only specifier-facing description found; no performance data.
- BS EN ISO 2813 (gloss at 60 degrees): named from its listing; text not read; confirm the edition.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/blackened-burnished-and-raw-steel-finishes. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.