

The concept of reuse is flourishing. Think about it. Almost every grocery store has reusable bags for purchase. A hotel in a Montana national park took the concept of sustainable reuse to another level—not just preserving the future, but preserving the past as well—with Kohler’s help. The 100+-year-old Many Glacier Park Hotel is undergoing a seven-phase historical renovation.



Veteran Enamel Shop associates, **Dan Schmitz** (left) and **Rick Brack**, hand-enameled a 1914 KOHLER Colona tub to be placed in the Many Glacier Park Hotel.

One component involved re-enameled the guestrooms’ 1914 KOHLER® Colonna bathtubs and lavatories for both historical and sustainable reasons. To do it, the project’s architects turned to Kohler. “We re-enameled cast iron products all of the time during normal production. But removing and reapplying enamel to an almost 100-year-old bathtub is a whole other story,” said Kurt Westley, Supervisor – Enamel Pattern Engineering. The team, consisting of associates from engineering and construction to casting finishing and enameling, customized a process that had to take into consideration the fixtures’ age and composition.

The baths and lavatories needed to be carefully stripped of several paint jobs and the original enamel to the cast-iron core, and then re-enameled. “It took us a while to figure it out,” said 37-year associate Dan Schmitz, Manual Enameler, who applied the modern enamel to the historic baths. “The quality of the cast iron isn’t as good as today’s.

We had to monitor the furnace temperature closely.” This restoration process, when compared to creating new product, has significant environmental benefits. According to Jeff Zeman, Staff Environmental Engineer, the process reduces energy input (54 percent), greenhouse gases (61 percent), solid waste (86 percent) and water usage (80 percent), based on production of a comparable fixture. According to Westley, aside from some newer, modern equipment, the process of enameling cast iron hasn’t changed from that of a century ago, a fact that has some associates seeing ghosts. “I keep thinking about the guy who first made this original tub way back when. I wonder if he was using this same furnace,” said 32-year associate Jim Trossen, Manual Enameler. Paul Graumann, Foreman – Manual Tub Enameling, said, “It was the ingenuity and experience of our team that truly made this project possible.” The 40 baths and 100 lavatories were delivered to the hotel and installed in 2011.