



New Zealand Institute of Architects Incorporated

Heritage, hip hospo and houses – the 2015 Wellington Architecture Awards

From refurbished heritage buildings to a new office for Trade Me and a yoga studio at Days Bay, the 2015 Wellington Architecture Awards present a snapshot of the Capital's contemporary building design.

Eighteen awards were conferred at the Awards event, which was held at the National Library on Wednesday 10 June.

The convenor of the awards jury, Wellington architect Arindam Sen, was impressed by the diversity of work in the Awards and the evident breadth of architectural talent in the city.

"The projects the jury visited demonstrated that architects are innovating and producing good results for adventurous and trusting clients," Sen said.

"The work showed that architects perform many roles in a building project. Some jobs call for a creative genius, others for a prudent manager, and some demand technical wizardry. And sometimes you need all these skills to produce a good result."

Sen said that heritage buildings are valued features of Wellington's cityscape, and the jury was pleased to acknowledge projects that address the challenges of adapting familiar buildings into modern working environments and improving the structures' seismic performance.

Behind the historic façade the former Whitcoulls building at 312 Lambton Quay Athfield Architects undertook a complex seismic upgrade that is an example of technical strengthening that "adds to, rather than overwhelms, the commercial operation," the awards jury said.

When it was constructed in 1940, 15 Stout Street was the biggest commercial building in the city. Later, it was the face of the television show *Gliding On*. Today the heritage exterior belies a significant interior reconfiguration by Warren and Mahoney Architects that incorporates a large atrium into which the balconies of various floors project.

"This is a fine example of a subtle exterior change to a historic building, in combination with a radical interior reworking that retains a maximum of the existing building fabric," the jury said.

From gliding on to sliding down - in the new Wellington office for Trade Me, designed by Herriot + Melhuish Architecture, a slide between levels three and one "blurs the differences between work and play," the jury said. The multi-level office fitout is characterised by "free and open space with no obvious hierarchies."

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Athfield Architects's second award was for the refurbishment of Massey University Wellington Library. Reading rooms and individual and group study areas were inserted into the existing 1950s building. The boldly coloured, open and flexible structure provides a "youthful as well as an elegant space that is enjoyable to inhabit", the awards jury said.

Two other schools received Education Awards. The reworking of Fergusson Intermediate School in Upper Hutt by McKenzie Higham Architects was commended by the jury for the "innovative use of shared learning spaces that break down the barriers between classroom and recreation space and allow the different classes to meet and learn in a warm and social environment."

The Special Needs Unit at Naenae College, designed by Stephenson & Turner, is clearly organised around a colourful internal street. "The unique challenges that a building such as this demands have been addressed with clarity and empathy," the jury said.

Wellington City Council is currently making significant improvements to its large portfolio of social housing stock. At the Marshall Court Apartments in Miramar Designgroup Stapleton Elliot has demonstrated how decades-old apartments can be rebuilt to meet current needs. "The use of circulation balcony spaces as private outdoor spaces is a feature indicative of the thought that has gone into the building," the jury said.

Working at the luxury end of multi-unit housing, Athfield Architects won an award for Clyde Quay Wharf, the significant structure that now occupies Wellington's former international passenger terminal. The new structure, the jury said, is "resolved in an elegant and thoughtful manner". Putting shops on level one of the building offers a "chance to retain this important Wellington location as a public amenity."

At the smaller-scale end of the multi-unit housing category, Kerr Ritchie won an award for the design of two adjacent townhouses. The Cooper Stevenson Houses in Brooklyn are an "excellent example of an architect exploring the use of common materials and construction technology while achieving high standards of design," the jury said.

For over a century, on very challenging sites, Wellington architects have been designing houses that provide their clients with light and great views. This year is no different. On Oriental Parade, Architecture Workshop has designed a house with a "street presence that demands attention". Behind the house's "beguiling simplicity" is a "technically complex solution to an equally technically demanding site."

At the Chatsworth Pavilions in Upper Hutt the site restrictions were self-imposed, with Craig & Coltart Architects challenging "standard living conventions in their response to the client's desire for a home built around the existing native trees". Two pavilions, one for sleeping and one for living, together with an intervening open deck, provide a "constant awareness of the outside environment."

On the Kapiti Coast, 'Harakeke', designed by Geoff Fletcher Architects, "manages to maintain the bach-like qualities that we associate with the beach, which very few baches seem to do these days" said the jury. With sea views from every room and well-deployed decks, the house is "easy and elegant," the jury said.

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At Peka Peka, the White House, by Kebbell Daish and Architecture Lab in association, is a modestly proportioned house in a very open landscape. The project, the jury said, is the product of "a close collaboration between architects and client to achieve an outcome that challenges the typical economic biases attached to architecture."

Paul Rolfe Architects received two awards. Built on an existing platform on a steep site surrounded by beech trees, the Days Bay Yoga Studio is a "simple, but carefully detailed" little building that makes the most of sea views.

The firm's other award was for an extension to an Eastbourne house. The York Bay addition provides ample natural light in mature bush surrounds, and the family focus of the design is evident in "a clever use of a change in level between existing and new structure that creates a sense of cosiness and provides a stage for impromptu performances."

Loretta Café & Restaurant in Cuba Street, designed by Parsonson Architects, is one of two cafés to win an award. The jury appreciated the way the "clear and concise plan is combined with a limited material of raw materials that emphasises the historic building elements".

The PREFAB Eatery in Te Aro designed by Studio of Pacific Architecture, was designed for a building with less heritage appeal. "Raw, robust and familiar materials were inserted into the generous space of a former liquor store which is opened up both inside and out," said the jury. The verdict? "Pretty fabulous."

Enduring Architecture Awards recognise buildings at least 25 years of that have stood the test of time. This year, an Enduring Award went to The Stroud House (1970) in Wilton, designed by the celebrated Wellington architect Roger Walker. The house, with its complex spaces, porthole windows and colourful flourishes, offers "a wonderful insight into a more gentle and optimistic time", the jury said. Although small by today's standards, the house "still manages to produce a sense of joy and play."

The Wellington Architecture Awards are part of the annual nationwide Architecture Awards programme run by the New Zealand Institute of Architects and supported by Resene.

In addition to convenor Arindem Sen, the awards jury comprised Professor Mike Austin of the Unitec Department of Architecture, architect William Giesen and architecture graduate Victoria Willocks.

All winners of 2015 Wellington Architecture Awards will be considered for 2015 New Zealand Architecture Awards, which will be announced this November.

Rights-cleared, hi-res images of all award-winning projects and a pdf of the 2015 awards booklet, with citations and a convener statement, can be [downloaded here](#).