



New Zealand Institute of Architects Incorporated

Highlights of earthquake rebuild feature in 2015 Canterbury Architecture Awards

Twenty-five awards have been conferred in this year's Canterbury Architecture Awards, which were announced on Thursday 21 May.

Public Architecture was an especially strong category in the Awards. Christchurch Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre, which hosted the Awards event, and Hagley Oval Pavilion won well-deserved awards, as did the much-loved Isaac Theatre Royal, a winner in the Heritage category.

Jury convenor Tim Nees, who is currently Architect in Residence at the University of Canterbury's College of Engineering, said despite the slow process of renewal, there is reason for optimism about the rebuild.

"Architects in Christchurch have been challenged," he said. "For them, as for many people trying to make things happen in Canterbury, opportunity has been partnered with frustration. But to call the amount of construction happening in Christchurch considerable is an understatement."

Nees, who was joined on the Awards jury by Wellington architect Stuart Gardyne, Christchurch architects Justin Leadbetter and Maria Chen, and Christchurch engineer Helen Trappitt, said that one thing that struck the jury was the number of projects that had been initiated prior to the earthquakes.

"Architects have had to re-imagine their work while negotiating significantly changed conditions and navigating a quite different course to completion."

"To develop a design and see it through such altered circumstances and still produce a meaningful building takes skill, patience and perseverance. The Architecture Awards celebrate the architects, their clients and collaborators in Canterbury who have excelled under these conditions."

Warren and Mahoney was a strong presence among this year's award-winning practices. The firm, founded 60 years ago by Sir Miles Warren, continued its strong tradition of design in the region, picking up six awards.

The Awards jury said Warren and Mahoney's painstaking restoration of the Isaac Theatre Royal, a building of priceless heritage value in a city that has lost so much, was "respectful and skilful". The theatre's elaborate façade, marble staircase and the famous 1908 hand-painted canvas ceiling dome all received careful treatment, ensuring the building's "undeniably charming presence in the city will be enjoyed by generations to come".

Two other Warren and Mahoney heritage projects at the University of Canterbury also received

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awards. Matariki, the Brutalist registry building that was once a "bastion against student protest", has been "opened up to welcome students instead of keeping them at bay", said the jury, and the former telephone exchange has been sensitively retrofitted as the Secondary Data Centre without sacrificing the building's streamlined modernist style.

Warren and Mahoney received two awards for Public Architecture. The Lincoln Library and Service Centre was praised for its successful integration with the public realm and for a flexible design that will meet the needs of an ever-changing community.

The Ruataniwha Civic Centre has "transformed the township of Kaiapoi", the jury said, and provided a boost to one of the areas most affected by the earthquakes. "More than just a library, the Ruataniwha Civic Centre presents an impressive range of learning and recreational facilities."

The Christchurch Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre, designed by Patterson Associates, was another winner in the Public Architecture category. A botanic theme runs through the building - a dappled leaf shadow is replicated on precast concrete panels and the carpet pattern comprises blown-up images of plant microbes. Although the structure is thoroughly contemporary, the jury said it "strongly connects with the typology of traditional garden greenhouse buildings".

Wilkie + Bruce Architects also put a contemporary spin on a traditional form at Knox Presbyterian Church. Following the collapse of the building's exterior walls in February 2011, the roof and interior elements were retained, with the architects designing a "strong concrete and copper shell informed by the Gothic original but refusing to be subordinate to it".

Keen observers of architecture and fans of cricket will have noted the debut of the Hagley Oval Pavilion during this year's Cricket World Cup. The pavilion, designed by Athfield Architects and commissioned prior to the earthquakes, "unashamedly draws on precedent", the jury said. The tensile roof structure is instantly identifiable as a sports structure and the "graceful handling of materials and details gives the structure an expressive profile and luminous interior".

Other works by Athfield Architects also featured in this year's Canterbury Architecture Awards. With their simple gable forms, the elegant Cashel Street Townhouses - a winner in the Awards multi-housing category - allude to Christchurch's vernacular architectural tradition. "High-density residential developments are often shoehorned onto a site with regrettable consequences," said the jury. "However, these houses have been skillfully arranged to complement and improve the character of the street."

Another residential project that found favour with the Awards jury was Villa Close, a double courtyard house in Merivale by Thom Craig. "The white-painted, cedar-clad forms have a spare simplicity which suggests a Scandinavian influence, but which also refers to Canterbury's colonial and modernist heritage," the jury said.

Sheppard & Rout, another practice with a long history of quality work in the Canterbury region, received an award for the Loudon Homestead Alteration and Extension on Banks Peninsula. The work was "expertly planned" said the jury, which was also impressed by the "arrival sequence and the meticulously refurbished and extended picturesque cottage".

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Athfield Architects' third award was for the Whareora Science and Wellbeing Facility at CPIT, which was commended for its confident and effective planning, use of colour, and variety of collaborative learning spaces. "This building demonstrates how cost-effective, rational and functional architecture can still be welcoming and exciting," the jury said.

Architecture for younger people also figured in the Awards. The jury praised the design of Kidsfirst Diamond Harbour, by Opus Architecture: "Through the intelligent use of space light and texture, the architects have crafted special spaces for children and adults alike."

Also in the Awards' Education category, Sheppard & Rout received an award for Te Kete Ika, a dining hall redevelopment at Lincoln University. The building is a "robust singular form that references the industrial-scaled agricultural buildings common to the area".

Proving that quality is not determined by scale, several small projects received awards. Lyttelton Studio Retreat by Bull O'Sullivan Architects, is a "very personal statement by a talented architect," the jury said. Hand-built by the architect on a precipitous site offering panoramic harbour views, the studio is constructed from a number of salvaged materials, including a car deck recycled from a bridge.

Another award-winning Lyttelton project is the Warrander Studio, designed by First Light Studio and Makers of Architecture and assembled in just three days. "A labour of love by two architecture students from Victoria University of Wellington, their tutor and their client, the compact digitally designed home punches well above its weight," the jury said.

Two public toilets received Canterbury Architecture Awards. The Brooklands Lagoon Public Toilet by Opus Architecture "demonstrates how modest materials and construction methods can be elevated to become poetic", the jury said.

In Twizel, the new public toilet facility designed by DLA Architects has a form inspired by pump houses and industrial structures associated with the South Canterbury hydro dams. It is "a confident addition to the Twizel Market Place," the jury said.

The provision of high-quality commercial development is critical to the economic viability of Christchurch. The Christchurch Eye Surgery Clinic by Wilson & Hill is the "exemplary result of a post-earthquake collaboration between ten medical professionals who previously practiced from separate consulting rooms," reported the Awards jury.

Sheppard & Rout's proficiency in commercial architecture was acknowledged with two awards in this category. Stranges and Glendenning Hill Building Replacement, one of the first post-quake commercial buildings, demonstrates a commitment to "creating a vibrant and rich inner city development in a manner that goes beyond ordinary expectations".

Sheppard & Rout's award-winning Young Hunter House is one of the first buildings in New Zealand to employ PRESS pre-stressed laminated timber technology, which offers enhanced performance during earthquakes and lessens repair requirements. The jury said the building "possesses a four-

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square quality, a direct robustness that plants its toe on the pavement with assurance."

177 Victoria Street, by Modern Architecture Partners (MAP) is, the jury said, a "delightful and modest" building. Encountering "small surprises" such as glazed tiles and stainless steel mesh in a modest commercial development is "proof of the skill and wit of the architects", the jury said.

Three35, by Jasmx, is a commercial architecture project showing the benefits of prioritising the public realm over the automobile. The two buildings, the jury said, are "smart, professional and considered" and contribute an "urbane identity to the emerging business character of Lincoln Road".

In Merivale, the arrival of three small shops designed by Thom Craig Architects was a "surprise and source of intrigue for many in the neighbourhood". The folded and faceted buildings, cloaked in copper, are "obviously contemporary and somehow slightly strange, like much new fashion when it first arrives".

The Awards jury also made an award for Enduring Architecture. It went to Warren and Mahoney's Munroe House (1968), which has been painstakingly restored over the past five years. The house has a "beautifully proportioned" exterior and ground floor spaces that "meander and flow", the jury said. "A lightness of touch is clearly evident in project architect Nicholas Kennedy's drawings and in the design elements on which he contributed."

"Nicholas Kennedy died tragically early, in his early thirties. This building demonstrates his incredible architectural talent."

All Canterbury Architecture Award-winning projects are eligible for consideration at the New Zealand Architecture Awards, the highest tier of the architectural awards programme. The New Zealand Architecture Awards will be announced in the first week of 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](#).