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New public architecture, salvaged heritage and new housing acknowledged with architecture awards

The best of old and new architecture has been celebrated at the Nelson / Marlborough Architecture Awards, with 12 projects receiving awards at an event at the Nelson Centre of Musical Arts.

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The 2018 Nelson/Marlborough Architecture Awards are part of the peer-reviewed New Zealand Architecture Awards programme run by the New Zealand Institute of Architects and sponsored by Resene.

The awards programme sets the benchmark for the country's buildings and recognises the contribution of architects to their towns and communities.

Ian Jack, an experienced Nelson architect who convened an awards jury that included Wellington architect Sharon Jansen, Nelson architect Stephanie Philips and Nelson designer Dave Knight, said that while houses designed and built to a very high standard won the majority of awards, the jury was also impressed by very good examples of public, commercial and heritage architecture.

Mr Jack described Nelson's Trafalgar Centre, a winner in the Public Architecture category, as a "long and elegant pavilion". Designed for economical construction, the Centre makes a "beguilingly simple transition to the existing indoor sports stadium and park".

"Innovative seismic strengthening work has saved the stadium from demolition, wide terraces and paved surfaces gracefully blend the building with park and river, and outdoor materials unite with indoor in the graceful transition across the threshold."

Under embargo until 9.00pm, 18 May 2018

A suite of offices for Port Nelson received an Interior Architecture Award. The jury said Jerram Tocker Barron Architects have successfully unlocked the potential of an old industrial warehouse.

“Structural strengthening, thermal and acoustic treatment and building services have been seamlessly integrated, with texture added by vertical wood screens, indoor plants and integrated murals that express the history of the port,” the jury said.

The jury said Seafarers’ Chapel was “decrepit to the point of write-off” before it found salvation in an owner prepared to invest in the building’s future. Arthouse Architects reworked the 154-year-old building without “compromise to heritage values,” the jury said.

“The original chapel has been left intact. It is a beautiful space with an elegant trussed ceiling, requiring and given nothing but rigour and simplicity in its restoration.”

Jerram Tocker Barron Architects, working with Lab-works Architecture, received a Commercial Architecture Award for Nelson’s Plant and Food Research Facility, a “fine new laboratory and research building on Nelson’s port edge”.

“The structure has been sculpturally expressed in an elegant timber system, sourced locally from three engineered-wood manufacturers. Inside, glazed walls visually link laboratories with offices for a rich communal working environment,” the jury said.

Seven housing awards, including two for alternations and additions, were announced at the awards evening.

Jerram Tocker Barron Architects’ picked up its third award for Candish House, a carefully composed house sited on Nelson’s Cathedral Hill.

“The house elegantly contributes to the historic context of its mature city-fringe site,” the jury said. “Working collaboratively, the architect and owner-builder have produced a beautiful and sophisticated home that is both immaculately built and carefully organised to meet evolving family needs.”

Irving Smith Architects received a housing award for 12 Year House – a house, in the architect’s words, that took “12 years of getting ready and moving from farm to lifestyle”.

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The jury was impressed by the precast concrete spine that embeds the house into huge boulders on a steep hillside site above Cable Bay.

“The long, skinny form echoes the contours of the land, carefully framing a long, telescopic view over Delaware Bay Estuary and a framed panorama over Cable Bay Beach. A central opening in the cranked form has made a welcoming veranda entry for this compact, original and creative new home.”

A Mana Heights award winner by Continuum Architecture is a “simple, highly efficient yet elegant home that puts strong emphasis on sustainability”, the jury said.

“The owners and architect have made conscious design decisions to achieve quality by limiting size, reducing material waste and embracing tight environmental performance – and less has certainly proven to be more.”

The Kennedy de Leur House, a house designed by Philip Kennedy Associates Architects for the architect’s own family, also has excellent environmental credentials, the jury said.

The new house, which connects to an existing cottage, is constructed with earth-red plastered straw bale walls. The architect’s careful measuring of his red-zoned 1930s Christchurch house allowed windows, doors, wardrobes, kitchen and bathroom to be included in the new build.

The house is a “joyous mirror of the owners’ personalities”, the jury said. “It is also a distillation and album of the architect’s life of thinking about what a house is and should be. Doors open to veranda and garden, and rescued materials from the clients’ previous 1930s home ensure a warm connection to past lives.”

In the design of a Tasman View house, Modo Architects also ensured a connection to past lives.

“Coming ashore after years on a yacht, the owners have been compensated with a new home that floats on the landscape like a carefully crafted vessel, aligned and conditioned to cope with the elements,” the jury said.

“Sliding screens regulate sun and wind, delivering afternoon shade and framing views within the expansive outlook. Within a rich enclosure of warm wood finishes, planning is efficient with everything given its place.”

In the alterations and additions category, Arthouse Architects picked up a second award for a Poynters Crescent house.

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“Virtually rebuilt from the base up, this tree-house has been nestled into a sheltered bush-clad gully with special attention given to securing views of the bay below,” the jury said.

“Fold-back windows celebrate the bush canopy, while the integrity and memory of the original home have been retained by using similar proportions and materials.”

The jury described the Brown House by Redbox Architects as “an excellent demonstration of how small, awkward sites can be enlivened and opened up into very enjoyable living places”.

“The street front is a simple restoration of the original façade, however inside the colonial theme is abandoned for a quiet contemporary apartment style.”

Enduring awards are given to projects that are more than 25 years old that still are relevant today. The awards jury made one Enduring Architecture Award this year, to Nelson’s Bowman Building, designed by Alexander Bowman Architect in 1961 to house his own architecture practice.

“This is a fine example of the priorities and aesthetic of early 1960s,” the jury said. “The materials are simple and unadorned. On the ground floor, a small retail space fills the space below the real reason for the building – the lofty, light-filled studio. This is a real gem of its era that is still in a marvellously original condition.”

Nelson/Marlborough Architecture Award-winning projects are eligible for consideration in the New Zealand Architecture Awards, which will be announced in November.

For more information about any award-winning projects, or to arrange interviews with the awards convenor or a winning architect, please contact:

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List of winners by category:

Commercial

Plant and Food Research Facility – Jerram Tocker Barron Architects and Lab-works
Architecture in association

Heritage

Seafarers' Chapel – Arthouse Architects

Housing

Candish House – Jerram Tocker Barron Architects
Tasman View – Modo Architects
Mana Heights House – Continuum Architecture
Kennedy de Leur House – Philip Kennedy Associates Architects
12 Year House – Irving Smith Architects

Housing – Alterations and Additions

Poynters Crescent – Arthouse Architects
Brown House – redbox architects 2017

Interior

Port Nelson Offices – Jerram Tocker Barron Architects

Public Architecture

Trafalgar Centre – Irving Smith Architects

Enduring Architecture Award

Bowman Building – Alexander Bowman Architect