

Top architecture trends show Kiwi architects have the edge

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IRVING SMITH ARCHITECTS

'Bach with Two Roofs', a Golden Bay holiday home by Nelson-based Irving Smith Architects won the Best Villa award at the World Architecture Festival in November.

Read any overseas architecture website about design trends for 2018 and you'll see there is almost always a reference to the rise in popularity of open-plan spaces. Welcome to New Zealand circa 1970.

But then Kiwi architects have always had the edge – they are prepared to experiment and adapt, and we, their clients, traditionally have been happy to let them. And it's all been for the benefit of both parties.

One of our own even won Best Villa at the World Architecture Festival (WAF) in November. Nelson-based Irving Smith Architects took out the big prize for a holiday home in the forest, called Bach with Two Roofs.



STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

'Madras Street' by Mitchell Coll of Coll Architecture features two 74 square-metre townhouses. The project won the ADNZ Supreme Award for 2017.

The judges loved the the environmental considerations that went into the design and build, and the way the house was able to evolve to cope with changing conditions following a devastating cyclone.



MEDIAWORKS

The black house designed by architect-owner George Hilgeholt of Nelson and wife Yvonne featured on Grand Designs NZ in 2017

It is these sustainable initiatives that have determined much of this country's new architecture this past year. They also point to the design of the future.

Materials reflect these influences – natural timbers and plywood continue to feature extensively, along with concrete with a raw or board-formed finish. Brickwork also made a strong appearance in 2017. The NZIA Housing Award winner was architect Guy Tarrant's own house in Point Chevalier, where bricks define both the exterior and interior.



*Architect Guy Tarrant's own award-winning brick house in Point Chevalier, Auckland features a 'floating roof'.
Photo by Patrick Reynolds*

But it's not just sustainable materials and the environment; there is also a move toward healthier social outcomes and better "connectedness".

Open-plan living in New Zealand will always suit our relaxed, informal lifestyle, but in the past couple of years, architects have taken a more layered approach. A change of levels, sometimes known as "broken-plan living", and the use of freestanding walls retain open, connected living spaces, while still providing a degree of separation for family members looking to do their own thing.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Internal courtyards help to achieve this, and also bring light into the centre of a house. The Best House award at WAF went to a house in Vietnam that is built around one vast landscaped atrium that provides both vertical and horizontal lines of sight, and ensures all rooms benefit from the greenery.

This past year we have seen plenty of innovation with slot windows and skylights in unexpected places, which ensure homes, and stairwells especially, are flooded with natural light.

"Floating roofs" that hover above high clerestory windows are another way light is maximised. These soaring roofs, which are almost obligatory, also make interiors much more airy and spacious.

SCREENS COME INTO THEIR OWN

Where privacy is a concern, screens are an old standby. But the modern versions are highly decorative and operable. They may be timber or laser-cut metals, and they frequently appear on apartment facades as well as houses.

In terms of colour, black remains a tour de force, both outside and in. New paint technology helps ensure exteriors don't transfer heat inside the house.

And of course, the emergence of large "outdoor rooms" is greatly in evidence, with extended roofs and wide, seamless openings making it increasingly difficult to determine what is inside and what is out.

Other key trends over the past year reflect a Mid-century influence, notably built-in furniture that is sleek and pared back, so clutter is minimised. Integrated electronics are a given. Wires and cords are rarely seen in the modern house.

SUSTAINABILITY AND COMPACT HOUSING

But what we can expect in 2018? More sustainable initiatives, including charging stations for electric cars, will be evident. We will also see more innovative compact houses, similar to the project that won the 2017 ADNZ | Resene Architectural Design Supreme Award.

"Madras Street", by Mitchell Coll of Coll Architecture proved that award-winning architecture isn't always about size or expense. It's about good design that ticks a lot of other boxes, including functionality, sustainability and aesthetics.

The two townhouses are just 74 square metres each and were designed to be "an exemplar for urban living".

MULTI-GENERATIONAL LIVING

And yes, there will always be a demand for large houses. But we can expect to see more of these designed to cater to multi-generational living with multiple master suites, and living spaces.

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