



Media Release - Friday 16th April

Auckland, Arrowtown, & Christchurch Take Top Design Honours

Auckland, Arrowtown, and Christchurch produced this year's top winners in New Zealand's prestigious Landscape Architecture Awards ceremony, held last night (*Friday 16th April*) in Wellington.

Staged at Te Papa Tongarewa, the Awards event, titled the 'NZILA Resene Pride of Place Landscape Architecture Awards 2010' provided a record 127 entrants with tougher competition than ever before.

Award-winners, who are chosen by the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects' judges just once every two years, received Golds, Silvers and Bronzes, while a select few received a Gold or Silver plus additional titles of excellence.

Winner of the event's most coveted title, the Supreme Award, was Aucklander John Potter of Boffa Miskell Ltd, for his design of St Patrick's Square by St Patrick's Cathedral of Wyndham Street, Auckland.

One of the ten-strong judging panel, Jan Woodhouse of Woodhouse Associates, said John Potter had demonstrated "real understanding of creating spaces on a sloping site" and of manipulating circulation patterns to provide for people's needs without any sense of either crowding or impersonality. She said his detailing, materials and plantings are "sublime, sophisticated and subtle," with its water creating "surprise and delight."

Another Aucklander to receive Gold as well as a special Colour Award was Ted Smyth of Ted Smyth Landscape Architecture, for his design of a residential coastal garden on Waiheke Island. The same awards - Gold and Colour, were conferred on Christchurch-based Mike Thomas of Jasmax, for his campus design of Otara's Te Whanau a Tupuranga, a unique whanau-based Te Reo immersion school for teens and pre-teens.

Aucklander Patrick Corfe of Patrick Corfe Landscape Architects received Gold and Sustainability Awards for his rural/residential development design of Parkhill Farm, Haumoana, in the Hawkes Bay.

Within the contest's planning section, Aucklander Mark Lewis of Boffa Miskell Ltd received Gold plus Sustainability Awards for his stormwater management guidelines prepared for the Auckland Regional Council.

In the top honours list, Arrowtown landscape architect Philip Blakely of Blakely Wallace & Associates took out two awards of Gold; one including a special Colour, and the other including a Sustainability Award.

The former is for his design of Queenstown Airport's landscape development project at Frankton, while the latter award recognises the Routeburn Track's Visitor Development project, in Mount Aspiring National Park.

One other contestant, Yvonne Pfluger from Christchurch's Boffa Miskell practice, received a special Sustainability Award along with a Silver placing. Her entry, titled 'Riverscape and Flow Assessment Guidelines' is a plan for effective use and preservation of Canterbury waterways.

Five projects by Auckland-based practitioners received straight Gold Awards. Three of these were for major central urban designs, namely Paeroa's 'Civic Heart Revitalisation' by Catherine Hamilton of Soul Environments, Manurewa's Northcrest Plaza by Tim Keat of Thresher Associates, and Christchurch City Mall, which was a collaboration between Garth Falconer of Auckland's Reset Urban Design practice, the Isthmus Group, and the Christchurch City Council.

The design of Whitford's Te Puru Bridge, by Sean Burke of Auckland's Isthmus Group, also attracted Gold, as did a design of Auckland's St John's College Library Entrance, by Sarah Collins of Boffa Miskell.

Three Wellington landscape projects received Gold Awards.

Ralph Johns of the Capital's Isthmus Group did so for his sustainable subdivision design of 'Ferndale,' on the Kapiti Coast. Christchurch's Mike Thomas of Jasmax was equally rewarded for his design of Te Papa Tongarewa's forecourt seating. And Megan Wraight of Wraight and Associates received Gold for her proposed 'Wellington Gateway' design collaboration with a film-maker and interactive artist, in a quest to create special design 'moments' along the city's inward-bound commuter routes.

Keen to nurture upcoming design talent, the NZILA awards include a Student section for undergraduates. Three Gold Awards were conferred on landscape architecture students of 2009 for submitted design projects; one on Nick Griffin of Wellington, one on Emma Content, previously of Christchurch and now in Britain, with the other going to James McLean of Whangarei.

One judge of student entries, Mandy McMullin, was impressed with the level of sophistication she encountered.

"It's heartening to see the emergence of new young voices speaking out for the local and regional landscapes they clearly feel passionate about."

Jan Woodhouse said the award winners were those whose designs showed "a real connection and response to the underlying characteristics of the site."

To do that, a landscape architect needed to totally understand the cultural and social requirements of people using each space, she said.

The best entries showed attention to detail by reflecting elements in their surrounding landscapes. She said the special Sustainability Awards were given to those landscape architects who had used green technology in a clever way, or whose landscapes were robust enough to withstand use for many years to come.

Australian judge Niall Simpson said he had been impressed with how sensitive New Zealand's landscape architects were to their sites, and to their use of water in particular.

"When travelling around I saw real restraint of design, which requires great maturity on the part of the designer. New Zealand landscape architects can truly hold their own against their international counterparts," he added.

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