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Best of the west – local Architecture Awards announced

The Tui Brewery Tower in Mangatainoka, a new Dutch–Māori museum in Foxton and a veterinary school complex in Palmerston North are among the 13 winners in the 2018 Western Architecture Awards.

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The Western Architecture Awards, which were announced at an event at Heritage house, Whanganui, are part of the peer-reviewed New Zealand Architecture Awards programme run by the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) and sponsored by Resene.

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

Whanganui architect Sophie Ross was the convenor of this year's awards jury which also included fellow Wanganui architect Duncan Sinclair, Palmerston North architect Heather Hocken and Auckland architect Pat de Pont. The jury visited 23 shortlisted projects in the Taranaki, Whanganui and Manawatu districts.

Ross said the jury was impressed not just by the diversity of architecture it encountered, but also by the its quality and inventiveness.

"We were continually impressed by the ways architects in our region are innovating and applying new technologies to help keep project costs to a minimum, problem solve, and give their work an identity that suits local history and culture," Ross said.

"A special mention must go to the New Plymouth practice BOON, which won five awards this year, and as such can be considered a leading light in the practice of architecture in the region."

BOON (formerly Boon Goldsmith Bhasker Brebner Team Architects) received its first award in the commercial architecture category for North Taranaki Sport and Recreation Centre in Waitara. The jury said the architects maximised a tight budget and worked with community members, local contractors and suppliers to produce a valuable community asset.

"By successfully incorporating a range of different uses and employing innovative and sustainable materials in the design, the architects have provided a facility that celebrates, engages with and is meaningful to the local community."

Property Brokers Building, a flagship head office for a Palmerston North real estate agency, also received a commercial award. The jury praised the inclusion of a café and gardens to encourage public interaction, and the manner in which Designgroup Stapleton Elliott has accommodated workplace change.

"Bold and sophisticated building masses run the length of this building, enabling a logical flow based on centralised circulation and shared rooms – and, importantly, the potential for future flexibility."

Te Henui Chapel – the third commercial award winner – is a former workshop that has been “skilfully reinterpreted as an elegant space suitable for reflection and celebration”, the jury said. The building, designed by Jackson Architects, “provides a welcome sense of shelter and protection to visitors at a time when emotions are heightened”.

Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom, a museum in Foxton designed by Bossley Architects to celebrate the region’s Maori and Dutch heritage, received the sole Public Architecture Award this year.

“The museum is the result of a decade of politicking, but the impact of this wholly appropriate and apparently simple stroke of genius on the town of Foxton has been immense,” the jury said. “This project showcases the best of what architecture can contribute to our communities.”

Wildbase Hospital and Administration Building – a cornerstone for Massey University’s Veterinary School – is the sole education award winner. Designed by Studio of Pacific Architecture and Lab-works Architecture, the building “provides a much-needed public face for the school and is a unifying element on campus,” the jury said.

The Tui Brewery Tower – a significant regional icon, if ever there was one – received an award in the heritage category. The Category 1 listed building has been upgraded to 100 per cent of the National Building Standard. The jury described the project as a “skilful piece of work” and acknowledged the collaboration between client, engineers and Heritage New Zealand.

“The restoration methodology has minimised the impact on the building fabric and maintained layers of history for future celebration.”

Four housing projects, three in New Plymouth and one in Fielding, received Housing Awards.

Two of the New Plymouth houses were designed by BOON, including the inner-city Leuthart House, which was praised for the sophistication of its siting.

“The variety of outdoor living spaces, and the manner in which the external envelope has been manipulated to accentuate views, constitute an outstanding celebration of the location,” the jury said.

A simple and rational planning approach provided the platform for the L+D House, allowing “this well-mannered addition to the neighbourhood to maximise the envelope of its narrow (sub)urban site,” the jury said.

“Each of the main spaces has a unique connection to the outdoors that extends beyond the walls of the house to the limits of the site boundary.”

“Mondrian-esque” was the jury description for effect of the cladding used on Elliott House, designed by Designgroup Stapleton Elliot.

“Inside, the floor drops away and the volume opens into living areas with views to the Manawatu plains and Ruahine Ranges on the horizon.”

Although the Hamblyn House had a “strong presence on its corner site”, the jury noted that Gibbons Architects had cleverly ensured it was not overpowering.

“This house is also elegant and restrained, thanks to a material palette that is layered both vertically and horizontally.”

Two projects received awards for small project architecture.

Mexi-az, a Mexican-inspired street food eatery designed by 242am Architects in Palmerston North, is a “neat little statement”, the jury said.

“It is a contemporary solution derived from the traditional aspects of Mexico with a compact yet functional layout that has been woven together with vivid colour and earthy tones.”

Taranaki Base Hospital’s Intensive Psychiatric Care (IPC) Unit, in New Plymouth, was a “small but challenging project” for BOON, the jury said.

“However, the architects have achieved a practical and positive result for the staff and users. Cleverly planned for connectivity, and with a generous amount of shared space, the design has created a space that feels safe and secure, while also comfortable and calm. This is a real asset for the community.”

All Western 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, including additional images, or to arrange interviews with the awards convenor or a winning architect, please contact:

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List of winners by category:

Download images:

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Commercial Architecture

North Taranaki Sport and Recreation Centre – BOON
Property Brokers Building – Designgroup Stapleton Elliott
Te Henui Chapel – Jackson Architects

Education

Wildbase Hospital and Administration Building – Studio of Pacific Architecture and Lab-works
Architecture in association

Enduring Architecture

New Plymouth Telephone Exchange – Boon Goldsmith Architects

Heritage

Tui Brewery Tower Strengthening – Tennent+Brown Architects

Housing

Leuthart House – BOON
L + D House – BOON
Elliott House – Designgroup Stapleton Elliott
Hamblyn House – Gibbons Architects

Public Architecture

Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom – Bossley Architects

Small Project Architecture

Mexi-az – 242am Architects

TDBD IPC unit – BOON