

HOME DESIGN Volume 17 Number 1

Home

DESIGN

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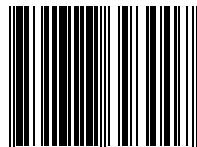
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THE FUTURE *is bright*

The 2000s are producing some very accomplished and refined projects and products from an abundance of talented architects, designers and artists, and it's the consumer who is reaping the rewards

Words Kristin Utz

A new appreciation of design, craftsmanship, materials and techniques from the past, coupled with novel and innovative technology, seems to be producing some beautifully intricate buildings, interiors, furniture and homewares.

Recent design trends definitely lean towards nostalgia for the modernist designs from the 1950s and '60s, particularly from Scandinavia (such as Alvar Aalto, Jorn Utzon, Arne Jacobsen, Poul Henningsen, Hans Wegner). However, there is at the same time a new freedom of expression and experimentation that is being driven by digital technology and fabrication. These industry trends coincide with a time when the public is more educated and discerning about design and has a heightened awareness of the need to conserve energy and water, recycle and minimise waste. All these factors are producing some of the best architecture, interiors and landscapes I have seen in my 20-plus years of practice. This is an exciting time to be designing and working, despite the recent financial crisis, and the future looks interesting, diverse and inspiring.

We live in a country with a mild climate, and building forms and spaces are designed to make the most of natural daylight. This affords a close connection with outside spaces, which is an aspect of home design that has been taken to a new level of sophistication in recent years. People want to live and entertain more casually and this is reflected in our home designs. There are many more outdoor kitchens and living rooms, beautiful garden designs, outdoor furniture, sculpture, innovative lighting, shading and water features. Homes need to offer respite, relaxation and reflection for their inhabitants and we can see this need emerging as an integral part of new homes and additions.

Another area that is exciting is the expression and use of a range of new and traditional materials in more considered,

careful and expressive applications. Humans have always loved the warmth, beauty, colour and texture of natural materials and there seems to be a clear move towards using stone, timber, ceramics, metals and glass in new and innovative ways. These materials are combined to define spaces and enrich them — on walls, floors, stairs and built-in furniture, both indoors and out. The expression of these materials is dependent on the detailing and composition, which is something our Scandinavian design heroes understood so well. For a range of reasons we are seeing the use of what was thought of traditionally as more industrial materials — such as concrete, metal sheeting and plywood — in domestic architecture and design. Improved techniques in production, methods of installation and

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the competitive global market has meant that materials formally only seen in commercial buildings are now available for the mass housing market. Add to this techniques such as laser cutting, digital printing and enhanced computer visualisation and the only limit to their use is the designer's imagination.

Another benefit to the housing market is the need to conserve energy and water, meet BASIX requirements, and a better awareness of the benefits of environmentally aware and environmentally sensitive design. This has led to a lot of industry innovation as well as consumer-driven demand for better and more sustainable building products, methods of heating, cooling and lighting, and systems for collecting and storing water and solar power as



well as automating the home. There are infinite possibilities to help improve the way in which we use our homes and protect the environment, but we need the guidance of experts as the technology is developing so rapidly. For example, in technologies such as LED lighting and home automation, the products available are constantly being improved and the market expanding, therefore the cost is being driven down by competition and increased demand.

At the same time as these new technologies are being developed, there is a return to the use of more traditional materials, such as timber in its many forms (structure, veneers, plywood, flooring, decking and decorative finishes). The difference is that this product is being grown and produced in more environmentally sustainable ways and the need for innovation has led to a much wider range of products and choices. The use of recycled materials has also influenced more recent design trends and aesthetic choices. While recycled timber has been around for a while, we are now seeing more recycled bricks, roofing and sheet metals, as well as recycled waste such as paper, rubber, plastic and fabrics being developed into a range of other products — such as insulation, linings, flooring, furniture and decor.

As we continue to become educated about how to live more responsibly on the planet, how technology can improve the ways in which we live and how we can benefit from new and innovative products and design, I believe the future is looking brighter, cleaner and more beautiful. **HD**