

BATHROOM WINNER

NZ Plumber talks to Natalie Du Bois of Du Bois Design about her top award-winning bathroom design – and her view on the latest bathroom trends.

Each year, kitchen and bathroom designers around New Zealand enter their projects in the National Kitchen & Bathroom Association (NKBA) Awards. Around 50 designers entered the 2013 competition, which is open to NKBA members.

This year's top bathroom award – Bathroom Design of the Year – went to Auckland-based Natalie Du Bois, of Du Bois Design.

Natalie says she had already designed the kitchen in this client's home, so integrated some of the same features, such as the doors with hidden grip to create a 'decluttered' yet classical look.

The home has four bathrooms in all, and each relates to the other, with vanities in different colours. "In this bathroom, which is an en-suite, the vanity has a hand-painted metallic finish," explains Natalie. "The brushstrokes give it an honest, tactile effect. Some bathrooms can lack personality, with flat, hard surfaces, so I have created a softer, more elegant feel."

The previous bathroom had not made good use of the available space, despite being a large room – making this an exciting project, full of potential. A freestanding bath fills the gap that existed before and provides a sense of luxury and ease.



The 2013 NKBA Bathroom Design of the Year

"People are looking for freestanding baths again to provide time for soaking and relaxing," says Natalie. "This bath gives the space a sculptural feel, becoming like a piece of art."

As the room is an en-suite, with doors to both the bedroom and a dressing room, Natalie has allowed for 'his and hers' basins in the design. The mirror cabinet above the vanity is recessed into the wall by about 80mm, with another 60mm forward of the wall, leaving plenty of space for plugged-in electric toothbrushes and other toiletries. A waste bin sits in the middle drawer of the vanity with storage drawers on either side, helping keep the vanity surface clutter-free.

The shower is highly functional, with a rainhead and slide shower all in one. Male clients often prefer the rainhead while females like the slide shower, so this is a good combination, says Natalie. The judges particularly liked how the shower disappears into the background to maximise the space. Its clear glass also provides an unobstructed view of the patterned back wall, which is the focus of the room.

"I really put the emphasis on the lighting," adds Natalie. "Bathrooms have become a tranquil retreat, so there are tiny LED lights across the back wall that can be used on their own to create mood lighting."

Other bathroom trends Natalie has noticed are large format tiles on floors and walls to minimise grouting, and different colours being introduced into tapware – especially matt black, white and stainless steel. "There is a lot of product in New Zealand, so we are spoilt for choice," she says. "Traditional aspects are particularly popular at the moment, with people wanting to create a lived-in feel. But the style of the home often dictates the bathroom design."

The judges were impressed by the clever space planning in Natalie's award-winning project, noting that the angled positioning of the bath was not an obvious solution. "Good use of colour, pattern and texture make this a very accomplished design," they said.

You can view more of Natalie's designs at www.duboisdesign.co.nz. ■