

HOUSING DESIGN AWARDS

Architect Simmonds wins big as entries balloon

AWARDS FROM G1

And with this year's submissions for the design awards skyrocketing to an unprecedented 241 entries in 43 categories, subsequently whittled down to 158 finalists, as well as an influx of new faces, it's clear the housing industry is bullish on offering variety to buyers while diversifying itself.

Speaking of bullish, architect Christopher Simmonds reprised his big wins of the past couple of years by snagging the most prizes on Saturday: eight, spread across custom homes, renovations, kitchens and other categories.

Simmonds' wins included a stunning home in the Gatineau Hills distinguished by contemporary concepts such as open interior spaces and acres of glazing combined with a kitchen sporting a modern rustic look. Reclaimed board on the exterior speaks to a modern use of traditional elements and recalls the reclaimed barn-board of Simmonds' urban Zen Barn home that netted so many prizes last year.

He also won the two new exterior awards — details and living space — which numbered among the six new categories introduced this year. RND Construction won with Simmonds in the exterior categories.

"I'm really happy that good design is appreciated," Simmonds said. "Our projects this year were small. You don't have to have a big house to have a beautiful house."

Other architects on the winners' roster included Barry J. Hobin, whose projects included a partnership with custom builder Roca Homes on a home in Rockcliffe Park. It edged out Linda Chapman and Maple Leaf Homes to take the trophy in one of the four urban infill categories.

Built on a vacant lot, the bungalow is contemporary but connects with its natural surroundings via materials such as limestone and a garden courtyard. It also features extensive glazing and, unexpectedly, glass inserts in the main floor so that natural light floods the entire home.

Roca, which teamed up with Hobin for two awards last year, also won this year's new Custom Builder of the Year award.

"It's great. It's a validation for what we're doing, that we're identifying ourselves as builders of high-end homes," Roca's smiling president Roberto Campagna said at the gala.

Among the big builders, Cardel Homes toted away the lion's share of prizes, with four trophies. Their winning entries included the richly appointed Encore for single detached home in the 2,600- to 3,499-square-foot category (its spiral staircase is a dizzying knockout), two production kitchen awards shared with Deslaurier Custom Cabinets and the newly minted Production Builder of the Year award.

"We're thrilled to be recognized. It's kudos to our team," said Greg Graham, Cardel's Ottawa president.

Other big-builder winners included Richcraft Homes, which garnered two prizes, including one for its single-family Canmore model. That home boasts a thoroughly modern exterior but on the inside jauntily mixes urban chic with touches of rustic thanks to modern white cabinetry in the kitchen, wide plank flooring in the living room, and Craftsman-style wainscoting and other elements elsewhere.

One of the new kids on the block, Greely-based Greenmark Builders, beat out veteran production builders Corvinelli and Richcraft to scoop up top honours for its Ironwood bungalow in the detached, under-2,000-square-foot category.

"It was crazy; I had no idea," said Greenmark president Mark Kranenburg, noting the bungalow is the company's most popular model. "It's an open concept and our best-value plan," he said in an earlier interview. "It's got no din-



The night's big winner was architect Christopher Simmonds, who snagged eight trophies, including one for this Gatineau Hills home. The home reprises the use of reclaimed barn board that was such a hit in Simmonds' Zen Barn winner last year. *DOUBLESPACE PHOTOGRAPHY*



Design First Interiors captured five awards, including one for housing details, for a staircase that appears to float in front of a geometric tile feature wall. *CHRISTIAN LALONDE*

ing room, so you're gaining a lot of square footage."

Kranenburg, who set up Greenmark five years ago, promises to be back. "We'll go big next year."

Allowing competitors to submit entries online — instead of using the old, bulky method of physical photographs and project descriptions — helped account for the number of new faces like Greenmark this year, said GOHBA executive director John Herbert.

And using judges mostly from other cities helped stimulate the diversity in award winners, he said.

"We were seeing one architectural style being selected: glass, hard edges, cold. The warmer solutions weren't winning. It wasn't healthy for the design industry and we needed to get out of that cycle," Herbert said.

The renovations category saw plenty of familiar faces and some warm solutions in the winners' circle. They included Amsted Design-Build joining forces with Chuck Mills Residential Design & Development to transform a cottage-style home into an Arts and Crafts-inspired beauty whose sightline from foyer to backyard helps dissolve the interior-exterior barrier. Amsted also won renovator of the year, an award the company has won multiple times.

As always, kitchens and bathrooms saw a flood of submissions, telling us that kitchens remain the stylish heart of the home and bathrooms a place to unwind in ever-increasing luxury.

Astro Design Centre, always attuned to European trends, won for a minimalist custom kitchen in



Astro Design Centre won for custom kitchen, 159 sq. ft. or less, blending grained veneer, black glass, soapstone and plank floors with charcoal stair



Terra Nova Building Corp. created this home that complements its river setting. The project, which replaced a home the owners lost to fire, won top award for custom home, 4,000 sq. ft. or more.

a modern Westboro townhome. It pushes boundaries by mixing — with dramatic effect — grained European veneer, black glass, soapstone and plank white oak floors with a charcoal stain.

Competitors in the custom kitchen category blended contemporary and rustic, and, in one case, cheerily splashed orange and red accents on the backsplash and pendant lights.

Upstart LineBox Studio and Irpinia Kitchens captured the two custom bathroom awards, with LineBox creating a six-foot polished concrete sink in a tranquil aqua blue.

Design First Interiors, which captured five awards, including one for a custom kitchen with a gorgeous divider wall of cherry veneer display cabinets, took the housing detail prize for a floating staircase.

"Not only were the stair unique and appealing, but they also evoked a feeling of wonder," wrote judge Steven Crowell, president of Crowell Construction, Kentville, N.S., in a pre-gala email. "Not every day do you come across a staircase that looks like it is floating on air."

Other winners included, in one of two condo categories, Claridge Homes with that mid-century-influenced vibe in its Tribeca modern suite.

The People's Choice Award voted on by visitors to last month's Home & Design Show, went to Christopher Simmonds Architect and RND Construction in the new exterior living space category. They won for a fabulous dual-level design with a sheltered outdoor kitchen. *With files from Paula McCooley*



Architect John Donkin and RND Construction won green custom home of the year with this infill project that incorporates a green roof.



Amsted Design-Build and Chuck Mills Residential Design & Development won for renovation, \$500,000 to \$749,999. (The steps are temporary.)