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Winner
takes all

A prize at tonight's architecture awards means added value for the entries.

Stephen Crafti reports.

At this year's Royal Australian Institute of Architects Awards, which are announced tonight, a record 18 entries are jostling for recognition in the multiple residential housing category.

Apartment developments previously recognised have included Engelen Moore's Altair and Harry Seidler's Horizon, which won the ultimate prize, The Wilkinson Award, in 1999.

The president of the institute's NSW chapter, Caroline Pidcock, who will announce the winners at the NIDA theatre in Kensington, says buyers are becoming more switched on about the relevance of apartment design.

"Award-winning projects come onto people's radars," she says. "Buyers are becoming more attuned to orientation, ventilation and privacy issues."

"As densities in the inner city increase, these issues are becoming more important."

Resale values are also on people's minds when buying an apartment or townhouse, and according to Stella de Vulder, national manager public relations for the RAI, an award adds value.

"Award-winning projects generally sell faster and for considerably more."

Architect Frank Stanisic of Stanisic Associates, who has entered the Mondrian apartments in this year's awards, received the institute's inaugural Premier's award for excellence in residential design in 2001 for the Domain Apartments in Marrickville.

Stanisic says winning the award helped elevate the value of the Domain Apartments and the value of his next project. As a result of the award, the architects were asked to submit a development application for an adjacent site, the value of which had more than tripled following the success of Domain Apartments. "Having an award-winning building next door raises people's expectations," he says.

A new two-bedroom apartment in Domain had cost \$290,000, however, a similar apartment in the new development would cost more than \$500,000.

Here are four nominees for this year's awards:

STANISIC ASSOCIATES

Stanisic Associates's Mondrian apartments at 2-5 Powell Street, Waterloo, have proved a hit with buyers. Agent Knight Frank Residential reports capital gains of up to 24 per cent in the 22 months since apartments were purchased off-the-plan.

A two-bedroom apartment that originally cost \$390,000 recently sold for \$485,000, while another that had been bought for \$398,000 sold for \$490,000.

Stanisic describes the four slim-line buildings as "eco-minimalism".

"The emphasis isn't just on minimalist design. It's also about minimising energy consumption, maximising daylight and green space," says Stanisic, who used 60 per cent of the site for open space that includes garden courts and communal courtyards.

The apartments, many of which are two storeys, have north-facing living areas on the lower level and bedrooms above. And instead of dark corridors leading to each apartment, the architects designed galleries - light-filled communal glass walkways.



In the frame . . . Engelen Moore's 138 Barcom Street in Darlinghurst (above), Nova, at Victoria Park by Turner & Associates (bottom left), Redfern townhouses by Johannsen + Associates (bottom centre) and Mondrian in Waterloo by Stanisic Associates.

ENGELEN MOORE

The Engelen Moore-designed apartments at 138 Barcom Avenue, Darlinghurst, include many of the firm's hallmarks such as large sliding doors, generous balconies and a wall of joinery that extends onto the balconies for storage.

The apartments, built on a small sloping battle-axe site surrounded by everything from five-metre wide terraces (directly opposite), to a six-storey warehouse (north-east) and a series of terraces with high-pitched roofs (south west), occupy three, four and six-storey buildings.

The apartments sold last year with prices ranging from \$350,000 for one-bedroom apartments to \$875,000 for two-storey two-bedroom apartments.

JOHANNSEN + ASSOCIATES

Architects Johannsen + Associates' entry consists of five townhouses at 80 Renwick Street, Redfern. There are three two-bedroom homes (98 square metres) and two single-bedroom residences (44 square metres).

To maximise space, the living areas are above the footpath and the architects created courtyard spaces with overhanging balconies.

"You are not aware of the proximity of the street once you're past the front gate," says Jon Johannsen.

The two-bedroom apartments have a garage on the ground floor. There are a bedroom, laundry and bathroom on the first floor, together with a small balcony that juts into the courtyard. On the second

floor is a kitchen, dining and living area. The third level is given over to the main bedroom and an ensuite.

Studios were sold off the plan last year for between \$295,000 and \$305,000. New two-bedroom homes sold for \$535,000 and one, with an interior fitout by Nick Graham, was recently sold for \$600,000.

TURNER & ASSOCIATES

Architect Nick Turner's Nova development at Victoria Park in South Sydney is a "ground scraper".

On a narrow site, overlooking Joynton Park, Turner & Associates designed a series of four- and five-storey buildings built from long precast walls, punctuated by timber-clad cantilevered apartments above.

The apartments range from 90 square metres for two bedrooms, to 140 square metres for three bedrooms. As each building is relatively shallow, there is an abundance of natural light in each unit.

Those units facing the park have loggias with sun-screening devices.

Unlike towers that have one main entrance, there are seven entry points. "It means there are seven lobbies rather than one. These spaces are more intimate and allow people to get to know their neighbours," says Turner. And while there are balconies, like most apartments, there are also shared courtyard gardens.

Nova sold out this year. One-bedroom units cost from \$395,000; two bedrooms from \$550,000 and three bedrooms from \$895,000.

