

western trends

From frontage to landscaping, Perth design gurus take us through the latest WA home trends

Words Katie Lee



THE ARCHITECT Doug Paton, director of D4 Designs. d4designs.com.au

A material palette inspired by nature is gaining more prominence in Western Australia design briefs. “We’re seeing more natural stones and timbers and lots of pre-aged materials like steel, rusted metal and limewash finishes, because the aging process is part of the look,” says Doug. “And creating a low-maintenance lifestyle is still really important.”

Doug adds the modern minimalist look is still popular, with more flat and skillion roofs winning out over the standard pitched roof design. He explains linear roofing allows for higher builds as the roof doesn’t take up as much of the height restrictions, so there is more room for living.

“Smaller blocks also mean people are building up more than out,” Doug says. “Open-plan living is still king and will be for

a long time, but there is a trend towards having a second living space that can be closed off so the parents or kids can retreat to their own area.

“A scullery is also a more common request of late, but because it’s technically known as a space for the maid or in-house chef, it is being redefined into more of a larger pantry workspace to hide all of the messy appliances and preparation and to keep the main kitchen on show for guests.”

According to Doug, younger people tend to want the more “display home look”, where everything is perfectly placed, while older clients are more focussed on practicalities of living and environmental issues.

But across the board, Doug maintains the indoor-outdoor lifestyle Western Australians pride themselves on is still paramount. “Creating outdoor rooms is always a big part

of the design brief. Whether we link it through stackable doors and create an extra outdoor living space, we still spend a lot of our time outside so an equal amount of time is spent on designing that area.”

Doug admits a big change on the design front has been the focus on home automation. “Home automation and wiring used to be more of an afterthought but you can’t do that anymore,” he emphasises. “For example, if you want a wall-hung TV, you need to plan for that in the beginning so you don’t have wires hanging down. With the ability to do all things through wireless networks, especially with the roll out of the National Broadband Network, we’re seeing home automation move up on the list of priorities — so much so that we’re often taking separate electrical briefs in addition to the design plan.”



THE BUILDING COMPANY

Steve Plummer, building and design consultant at Scho Homes. schohomes.com.au

“Elevations are still focussed on a modern cubist look, but instead of having a plain rendered box, people are using different textures and materials to provide definition and depth,” says Steve. “They want something more interesting than the other houses on the street and luxury is being created through different textures and surfaces, rather than through standout highlights. But if the budget doesn’t stretch for different materials, even different colours and textures of render will achieve the same feel.”

Steve says there are two distinctive design formats at the moment. “The first is the upside-down house, where the living areas are found on the upper level to take advantage of aspects and views. The second is where people are investing more to make the areas they spend most of their time in into visual and functional features — such as engineered pools coming right up to the house, or designer kitchens that are attractive and practical at the same time.

“Inside, trends are still pointing to clean, modern lines and manipulation of

natural materials. We’re seeing a lot of glass, timber and stone and higher-end fixtures like wall-mounted tapware, where people are trying to mimic that hotel feel and streamline the design.”

Steve says Scho Homes is also finding more clients requesting a passive-solar-designed home, which is music to a designer’s ears. “In addition to the six-star energy rating, more people are asking for a design that will naturally cool and warm the home, cutting ongoing energy costs.”



THE INTERIOR DECORATOR

Lisa Ewart, principal of Collected Interiors.
collectedinteriors.com.au

Industrial concrete and exposed brickwork are finding their feet in residential interior design, as people pair an organic unfinished look with quirky vintage-inspired homewares and block-coloured furniture for a balance between sophistication and eclectic.

“The use of concrete on floors, benchtops and tabletops is coming to the fore,” says Lisa. “Concrete has a raw, rustic feel, it can be coloured, is hardwearing and naturally water-resistant, making it good for bench and tabletops. It can also be more cost-effective than natural stones.”

According to Lisa, furniture is moving away from the sleek minimalist look and heading toward more rounded, feminine

styles, as this is more pleasing to the eye and easier to live with than hard-edge shapes.

Solid, bright block colours in furniture and homewares is a big trend in western interiors, she adds.

“Colour evokes emotions, makes people happy, and creates moods for rooms,” says Lisa. “We’re all so over brown and beige in every single way!”

She says interior fads to be wary of are mirrored furniture and fluorescent colours as the direction for interiors is toward mid-century styling with inspiration from the pared-back Danish style with light timbers, which works well with the raw material drift.

Lisa predicts, “travertine will soon become the slate of the ’80s.”



THE KITCHEN AND BATHROOM DESIGNER

Fiona Bartucciotto, principal designer of Kitchen & Interior Design Consultancy.
kitchdesign.com.au

The latest kitchen and bathroom trends are coming straight from Europe, with more subtle and elegant designs featuring clean lines combined with neutral colours. “Textured finishes, particularly wood grains and natural timbers, as well as the use of recycled and vintage materials, are becoming increasingly popular due to the element of individuality they add,” explains Fiona.

She adds kitchens are becoming multi-faceted with built-in dining tables, bookshelves, open storage units and media centres, with trends moving towards the merging of kitchen, living and dining areas into one holistic space. “Recent years have seen a rise in popularity of concealed appliances, hidden pantries, and second kitchens utilising the latest kitchen technologies, all conveniently concealed behind closed doors.”

Well-planned lighting, especially the use of LED lighting both inside and under cabinetry, is becoming increasingly requested. “Not only are they energy efficient, they provide practical task lighting to work surfaces and can be used

aesthetically to highlight design features,” explains Fiona.

“Combined with the trend toward simple designs, neutral colours and mixing textures, built-in lighting is now an integral part of well-thought-out kitchen and bathroom designs.

“There has been significant development in kitchen technologies in the past decade in terms of automatic remote-controlled doors and drawers and pull-out pantries, which means that all your modern conveniences are concealed behind closed doors.

“The easy use of these conveniences means sustainable design for growing families and the aging population,” explains Fiona. “In the next 12 months I expect to see Australians embracing a more eclectic selection of materials and finishes in their kitchens, sleek clean lines from Europe, and classic Hamptons-style nostalgia from the USA.

“I also expect to see even further development in the field of appliances, with more black and white finishes to ovens and cooktops to match in with cabinetry colours and more sculptural bathroom fittings.”



THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Craig Martindale, landscape architect with Newforms Landscape Architecture. newforms.com.au

Design that is tailored to or responds directly to its site is number-one on landscaping checklists.

“As each site is different, development of a design is essential to create external living spaces that can be used year-round and create a living space that you want to spend time in,” says Craig. “Highly resolved designs that are site specific eliminate dead spaces so, in turn, you can focus your money on creating exciting features that are unique to your home.”

Increasingly, people are considering a product’s origin and lifecycle and turning to local recycled timbers to dress their outdoor areas. “Timbers such as recycled jarrah and blackbutt are being used in timber decking as they are highly stable products and warping

is minimal because the seasonal process has already occurred,” continues Craig. “Recycled timber sleepers have made an appearance in a few of our projects recently as they are a cost-effective material that can be used in a variety of ways — in a rustic fashion as garden retainers, or milled down to create an industrial-feel feature bench seat.”

Native plantings fit in with the low-maintenance trend as they minimise water use and are suitable to WA’s soils. “Because these plants are suited to our soil types, less soil preparation means a cost saving in creating an attractive new garden,” Craig explains.

“The stereotypical native gardens that are ugly and woody are a thing of the past; we have a huge assortment of native plantings in

various colour, shape, texture and size.”

Craig warns against using cheap knock-off materials not designed for the WA climate. “They may be cost-effective and will look great for a few months, but when they start to deteriorate under the elements they will require maintenance or replacement more often than if a local product suited to the climate was used,” he states. “We have also seen a move towards ‘Green Star’ design requirements and I believe the focus will only become stronger and pushed for by more people as we move forward.

“Many projects ranging from civic, commercial and residential are conscious of the term ‘Green Star’ and it is exciting to see these design strategies being implemented in more projects.” **HD**