

ARCHITECTURE

Top Five Ceiling Design Trends in New Zealand Architecture

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Manawa Bay Credit: Featurecraft

Ceilings do not get their fair share of attention in today's literature – as the old adage goes, 'out of sight, out of mind.' Yet the composition of a ceiling has such a potent effect on the overall environment that we would be remiss in not examining this facet of our nation's architecture. Companies like [Featurecraft](#), a manufacturer of bespoke wall and ceiling systems, have made an art out of decorative interior architecture, refining existing approaches and setting new trends. This article shares Featurecraft's insights into the ceiling design trends that distinguish interior spaces in New Zealand.

Biophilic Design

Biophilic design is the incorporation of natural elements into constructed environments. This architectural style acknowledges the inseverable relationship between humans and the natural world, situating us back within

the sphere of the animalistic, slaking our desire for dirt, wood, water, sun, and all the other viscera of our planet.

Commercial architecture has historically failed to recognise this innate human need, resulting in a near-global tradition where the interiors of buildings are completely bereft of any natural elements. However, some practices in New Zealand have defied this trend; one has only to look at Māori whare and marae to see that nature never left these designs, still living in the wooden frames, the bark and fern thatches, the earthen floors.

In our current era, where we seek to build environments that don't just house people but also heal, inspire, and comfort them, we have turned to biophilic design to show us the path forwards.

New Zealand architects are opting to use wooden decorative systems like the ones manufactured by Featurecraft, favouring timber battens, plywood panels and veneered ceiling tiles for ceiling design. These versatile and multifunctional products serve many purposes – such as acoustic performance and fire safety – but most importantly, they are a tangible representation of the world outside, an emblem of nature that re-wilds our constructed spaces.

Open-Flow Composition

Architects have been experimenting with spatial flow since the first caveman decided to move around the rocks in his home. However, in New Zealand, we bring our own ethos to open-flow design. For us, it's not just a trend; it's about that Kiwi pioneering spirit, the propensity to build community in the oddest places, the way we traverse spaces like barriers and gates mean nothing to us.

Architects understand this feeling, hence the popularity of Featurecraft products like contour baffles. These modular units come in different angles and curves, and can be slotted together to create patterns as variable and visually intriguing as the surface of the ocean during a winter storm. The large waveform designs imbue a sense of movement into interior environments, encouraging users of interior spaces to walk around, explore their environments, and build connections with other. With NRC ratings up to 0.95 and Group 1-S fire ratings – the very best for internal surface finishes – these ceiling products are a unique and effective way to enhance the flow of your interiors.

Dimensionality

This is an age of exploration, where the twin questions of 'why' and 'why not' are propelling us towards new architectural horizons. More and more

architects are choosing to forge their own paths, exploring unknown forests and climbing lonely mountains in their search for innovative designs. In this quest for newness, a new trend has risen: dimensionality.

No longer are flat, two-dimensional ceilings the norm. With the development of specialty wood-based products like Featurecraft's timber battens, geometric boxes, and contour baffles, we have seen ceilings all around Aotearoa come to life. For example, geometric boxes are offered in both square and side-tapered forms, and their spacings, perforations, shapes, and sizes can be customised, allowing designers to create anything from the most subtle visual themes to the most jaw-dropping feature ceilings.

These dimensional products offer so much more to play with – and New Zealand designers have been quick to adopt these new offerings, using them to create masterpieces. For example, Featurecraft products were recently used to decorate Te Mātāwai, the flagship Kainga Ora building in central Auckland: the lobby boasts a feature ceiling made of Featurecraft fins. MODE Design Corp, the architects responsible for this beauty, weren't afraid to put aside traditional flat form designs and come up with something exceptional – and other architects are sure to follow in their footsteps.

Sustainability

In a world where corporations greenwash themselves, draping their websites in copy about 'sustainable practices' and 'caring for the natural environment,' the word sustainability, so integral to our current and future quality of life, has been reduced to a buzzword.

How do we combat this issue? How do we sort through all the white noise and identify the companies that actually put their money where their mouth is? It's simple: look for the right accreditations.

For example, if you need decorative timber products, you should look for companies like Featurecraft that hold Chain of Custody Certification, which tells you that their materials are sustainably sourced, and that every step in their supply chain is ethically sound from an environmental perspective. These products will help you achieve Greenstar and Homestar accreditations in your projects.

It's more than a trend. It's a desire to do better, one that's sweeping across our entire architecture industry.

Creating Wonder

When a child sits down with a pencil and a piece of paper and spends an hour scribbling away at a house design, the intention isn't to create

something perfect, or to compete with other architects out there. All that child wants to do is experience the wonder of creation.

We never grow out of this. We shove this desire deep down, overwhelmed by other responsibilities – but that inherent creativity will not die. We still want to be set afire with inventiveness, consumed so wholly by the pursuit of artistic joy that all other trivialities just fall away. This is why custom decorative architecture is among the fastest-rising trends in our industry.

Featurecraft is a custom joinery company that manufactures decorative wall and ceiling systems. As they explained to us, over the past few years, they've seen a staggering rise in the popularity of their custom creation services. Architects have come to them with all kinds of bespoke designs, and Featurecraft has partnered with them to produce many creative masterpieces, from the custom grid ceiling at [Mānawa Bay](#) to the custom rolling perforated panels along the ceilings of the [Risland Apartment Complex](#).

Featurecraft: A Leader in Ceiling Innovation

New Zealand architects have been pushing themselves to the creative limit in devising these stunning interior ceilings, but they cannot do it alone. They need suppliers who understand the deeper mechanisms that shape peoples' experiences of constructed environments. They need suppliers who can reliably deliver beautiful and multifunctional products that are true investments.

Featurecraft has been in this industry a long time, and they have put every drop of their hard-earned experience into developing their ceiling systems. Featurecraft's products range from classic battens, panels, and ceiling tiles to next-level decorative systems like geometric boxes, contour baffles, and décor planks. They have the custom capabilities to make almost any idea possible. They design for both beauty and practicality, incorporating acoustic and fire safety principles into their products. Driven by their love of craftsmanship, Featurecraft hopes to support architects across Aotearoa in creating state-of-the-art interior ceilings.

Find out more about Featurecraft's innovative ceiling systems – and their custom capabilities – by browsing their [website](#) or reaching out to the Featurecraft [team](#).



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