

# Time to get outside?

September marks the beginning of the painting season as spring brings with it some much needed sun. **Nick Walsh** paints a picture of the exterior renovation market.

**TO MOST CONSUMERS**, exterior maintenance may feel like a bit of a chore, something that is tackled rarely and begrudgingly. The reality is it isn't difficult to keep the outside of a house in good nick. Indeed, something as simple as washing the house down every 12 months will go a long way to preserving the appearance (and value) of the home.

But for some, the thought of exterior maintenance comes only after a degree of wear and tear has been noticed. In this way, it can be thought of as reactive when it should be preventative. Unfortunately, exterior upkeep may all too often come second to interior renovation.

**Tony Smith** of Sika underlines: "You do need to survey your house. Every six months you take your car in for a Warrant of Fitness yet your house is a bigger investment and most people don't even wash it down. I think there is a trend in New Zealand to spend the money on the 'front of the wall' stuff. So people do up their bathrooms and kitchens to make them look good but the roof cavity and external cladding doesn't get touched."

Resene's **Karen Warman** agrees: "Consumers paint the interior of their home much more regularly but they will often only tackle a small job at a time. It used to be that people painted every 7 years but this is tending to stretch out longer as the quality of exterior paint improves. People painting outside their home generally do it because the paint is worn and weathered. Those painting inside often have perfectly sound paint but are wanting a colour change. Exterior painting is therefore more of a necessity while interior painting is more often a choice."

## PAINTING THE PICTURE

In paints, the vast majority sold continues to be waterborne with suppliers saying that only a minority of older customers still prefer the final finish offered by solvent-based topcoats. Outside, specific tasks that solventborne paints are more suited to (like binding up powdery concrete), modern consumers are naturally more inclined to the more environmentally friendly waterborne option.

The old adage "you get what you pay for" continues to hold true in the painting category. DIY novices are frequently price driven but painting pundits say that as they undertake more projects they start to move up the quality scale as they realise that better (and more expensive) paint, generally equates to easier application, fewer coats and more time saved.

**Ashley Wong**, Operations Manager at decorators Wall Treats, puts it into perspective: "Relative to labour, paint accounts for a much smaller proportion of the investment required for a painting project. The more expensive paint products may appear more expensive but they generally provide better coverage and durability."

As a recent winner of the Master Painters of the Year Awards, Wong is in a good position to comment on shifts in the market. Wong says: "We have noticed an increase in house owners investing in exterior repainting, rather than interior repainting. Up to this year, we have been involved in more interior painting projects than exterior ones. The split has been 70% interior versus 30% exterior. However, since late last year, the proportion has changed to approximately 50% each."

**Ian Power** of Power Painters, also a Master Painter award winner in the exterior category this year says that light colours have remained a popular choice over the last twelve months. Power says: "Everyone is keeping to paints with a white reflective value under 18%. It must be light colours – end of story."


## REPAIRING THE CRACKS

Unsurprisingly, the market has suffered from the consumer frugality that has characterised the year. But every cloud has a silver lining and suppliers of construction adhesives I spoke to have seen a lift in the sales of certain product ranges as a result of the earthquakes in and around Christchurch.

Sika's Tony Smith agrees: "In the last six months we've seen a general decline in people spending money on their houses overall. If we were just dealing with for example the residential household permits and general renovations it would be tough but, because of what's happened in Christchurch, we've got a lot of products in

## BRUSHING UP ON BRUSHES

- **Phil Ayling** (Selleys): "Development in synthetic / fibre type brushes has been amazing over the last few years. Over the old technology, they're so much easier to clean. I suppose the biggest advantage is no hair loss. There is nothing worse than having to pick hairs out of your paint work."
- **Paul Yaxley** (Haydn Brush) says that while white hog bristle is suitable for either enamel or acrylic paints, synthetic is suitable for water based paints and will not retain as much water as the natural bristle. With a range of synthetic and natural options available depending on the task at hand, preference is still a major factor in the decision making process. "The personal preference of the tradesperson and to a lesser degree price still tend to play the largest roles in choosing a suitable brush for the chosen application."



The Residential Exterior Award winner in this year's  
Master Painter of the Year for Wall Treats.

"We have noticed an increase in house owners investing in exterior repainting, rather than interior repainting. Up to this year, we have been involved in more interior painting projects than exterior ones"



our range that are particularly suited for building remediation and specifically crack repair.”

The most overtly affected of the suppliers I spoke to was Christchurch based Haydn Brush Company, whose manufacturing facility was significantly damaged by the earthquake. Haydn Brush’s **Paul Yaxley** says: “We’ve had to combat working out of portacoms and working with the factory doors open in case of subsequent aftershocks. But heading towards spring we’re experiencing the usual seasonal lift and with the EQC work starting to pick up particularly in Christchurch we are starting to see a move upwards.”

**Phil Ayling** from Selleys says the earthquakes have resulted in an increase in sales in masonry repair products, gap fillers and roofing

compound repair products. However, the rebuilding process has stalled and many Cantabrians, exasperated by the prospect of aftershocks have been understandably hesitant to repair.

Ayling looks to the future: “When it settles down and they start rebuilding it’s going to be huge down there, people are building up stock and I think it will take off with a real hiss and a roar.”

### THE LOW-DOWN ON LEAKY HOMES

The well-publicised leaky homes syndrome has seen weather proofing techniques come under considerable scrutiny. Indeed, before even beginning research on this article I was forewarned that once broached, the issue should be considered dangerous territory.



## MASTER PAINTERS – GETTING A PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This year’s New Zealand Master Painter of the Year Awards were presented at a black tie dinner at the Master Painter Association’s annual conference in Hamilton in May. We spoke to Ian Power, Managing Director of Power Painters, winner of New Exterior under \$25k category (above), and Ashley Wong, Operations Manager at Wall Treats, who took away the Residential Dwelling Rework Exterior Character Award.

**Ian Power** says that his history as a Master Painters Award winner over the last three years comes down to close collaboration with his builder and attention to detail: “I’ve worked with the same builder for years and I’ve won the previous two years with him. The work that I’m presented with from the builder is top notch. The house was all done in wooden joinery with three coats of Sikken’s, all the weatherboards were Resene water-based stain. The house has Danish oil ceilings. It was really all about attention to



detail. I’ve done all the wallboard fixing and the stopping as well. It gives me total control over the quality and how it’s all put together I find that’s a big advantage. Most of my job I’ve done with the stopping and painting combination.”

Of Wall Treats’ winning project (left), **Ashley Wong** says: “The property is a magnificent house in one of the most exclusive suburbs in Auckland. This exterior repaint project was one component of a major refurbishment to the exterior of the property. The house was built in the early 1900s, using timber weatherboards and joinery and cedar shingles. It had been painted prior to the current owners purchasing it. However, the paint finish was not in a good condition. We undertook extensive preparation work on the main house. The garage and loggia are new additions so required less preparation work.

Nonetheless, the structure of the loggia required precision painting.”  
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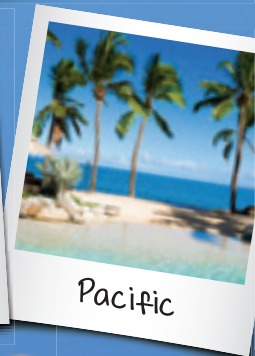
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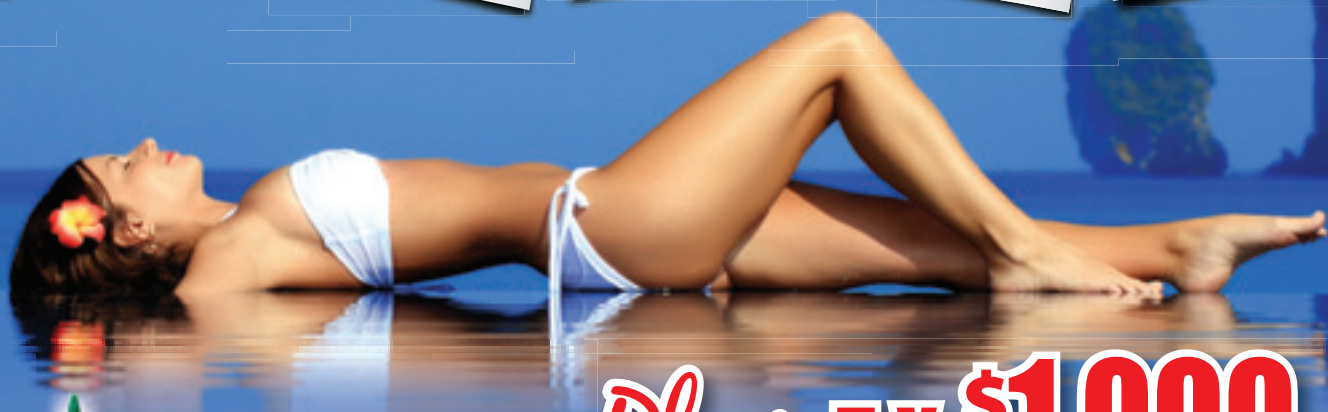
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## TRADE TIPS – EXPERT ADVICE

- **Karen Warman** (Resene): “Don’t leave it too long. People often put off maintaining or painting outside to save money. However it is far easier to clean down and repaint a paint finish that is faded, worn but still generally sound compared to one that has been left too long and has started to crack and peel. Time wise, if the surface is badly weathered it can take more time and effort to prepare the surface than it does to paint it. It’s best to tackle maintenance and painting on a regular cycle. Some customers who struggle to get an entire home exterior painted work their way around the house and do 1-2 sides every year, which can be a good option for those with limited time or money. If you buy sufficient paint for the job and store it properly it will last well for years.”
- **Ashley Wong** (Wall Treats): “Consider the light reflectance value (LRV) when choosing new colours for the exterior of your house. Each paint colour has a LRV and this is usually listed on the colour chart. The rule of thumb that most paint companies use is to avoid paint colours with a LRV less than 40%. The lower the LRV, the darker the colour is. For example, black has a LRV of 0%. Dark colours absorb more heat, which usually puts the paint film under more stress. Houses painted in dark colours may require more regular maintenance and repaints than houses coated in lighter colours.”
- **Tony Smith** (Sika): “One of the things in America is winterising your home and they talk about caulking (their equivalent of a gap filler). It’s almost a seasonal thing, once a year you’ve got to get round your house and actually check: Is the sealant round the window? Is it still intact? If you’ve got painted plaster and you get a crack in it that means the water can get through to the plaster so you’ve got to paint over that crack or repair or fix it otherwise the building will deteriorate.”
- **Trent Mason** (Masons Plastabrick): “Make sure you use a reputable company that has licensed contractors. Make sure there is some sort of appraisal attached to the product you’re using.”

Intrigued, I thought it best to consult one of the leading lights on the issue for some background. **Greg O’Sullivan** is from building and quantity surveyors Prendos, the group that famously “uncovered” the leaky homes issue in New Zealand. O’Sullivan explains: “Back in 1994 I was working as a BRANZ accredited advisor and a building surveyor. I visited some houses, did investigation and found that the plaster had been directly applied to building paper over timber with no rigid backing and no gap. I became alarmed because this was outside of standard so I wrote an article that was picked up by the *New Zealand Herald*. From there we found a number of issues” and the rest is history...

**Trent Mason** of Masons Plastabrick says: “Exterior plaster has definitely diminished a little bit due to the nature of the leaky homes saga. But new products have been introduced with cavities so it’s still holding its own. There are a couple of shining lights, particularly an exterior plaster cladding system that’s selling well.”

As a side effect of the leaky home syndrome, weatherboards have proven a popular cladding option with one pundit estimating that 90% of recladding over the last year has been done with weatherboards.

The incorrect use of fixing products was also pinpointed as a contributing factor to the leaky homes epidemic. Tony Smith of Sika elaborates: “Sealants got a pretty bad wrap because in a lot of ways sealants get misused. We went through a stage in building where people thought the sealant was all they needed. A sealant normally has to be used in conjunction with some other part of the system. In real waterproofing situations you shouldn’t be relying just on a sealant.”

Experts also point towards unclear details within the *Building Code* around external moisture and timber durability at the time as playing a part in the problem. These have fortunately long since been amended. Taking a closer look at some of the houses worst affected by the issue quickly reveals a common set of design features. Specifically, features like recessed windows, flat roofs with no eaves, solid balustrades and complex roofing.

O’Sullivan explains: “What it came down to is that we moved our design type to a more North American style; we adopted more monolithic looks. The problem is simple. The form gave architects a lot of room to move with the design but they didn’t actually bring forward with it the detailing that could make these sorts of products work. It was higher demand work without the backup of design to go with it.”

“It is far easier to clean down and repaint a paint finish that is faded, worn but still generally sound compared to one that has been left too long”

So what’s the latest on leaky homes? The situation has long since been prevented from being drawn out with measures being put into place; in 2002, the Building Industry Authority appointed a Weathertightness Overview Group to enquire into the state of leaking houses in New Zealand. This outlined systemic failures in the building industry that led to inadequate building practices causing leaking, and called for changes across the construction industry.

In a nutshell, its report highlighted the need for improved education and training schemes as well as a wider availability of information on construction practices and materials. The *Building Act 2004* also enforced the treatment of timber.

A low number of new claims relating to houses built in the past five years is a positive indication that the building failure rate has been significantly reduced. The department of Building & Housing has also stepped in by offering a Financial Assistance Package (FAP) option for owners of leaky homes to get their homes fixed. Under the FAP, qualifying homeowners share the agreed actual repair cost of repairing their home with the government and local council which will each pay 25% of the repair cost.

So, it clearly pays to keep tabs on a home’s exterior, from design, through to finished product and into occupation and beyond. Get on the front foot and don’t ignore the potential in exterior maintenance! **NZB**



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## COLOURFUL SCHOOL WINS TOP RESENE TOTAL COLOUR AWARD

The striking colours of Albany Senior High School on Auckland's North Shore by architects Jasmax (above) has been awarded top honours in the Resene Total Colour Awards. The school chose between a neutral palette and a bright and bold option and bright and bold won hands down.

Over 100 entries were received and Awards were given in the following categories:

- Resene Total Colour Master – Nightingale Award and Resene Total Colour Education Award: Jasmax for Albany Senior High School.
- Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior Award: John Mills Architects of Wellington for "60s Residence"
- A Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior Maestro Award (excellence of colour use): Gordon Dalkie Architects of Christchurch for Janssen House.
- Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior Maestro Award: Pacific Environments Architects NZ of Auckland for Bourke House.
- Resene Total Colour Residential Interior Award: Daniel Marshall, Daniel Marshall Architects for Corinth Residence in Auckland.
- Resene Total Colour Display + Product Award: Waikato Museum Hatching the Past exhibition.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Award: OC Design of Christchurch for striking their office exterior.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Maestro Award: Archaus Architects for Tattoo in Wellington.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Maestro Award: Interact Architects for St Anne's Church in Wellington.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior – Office Award: Gascoigne Associates for its office fitout.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior – Office Maestro Award: Vorstermans Architects for Koru House in Wellington.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior – Public + Retail Award: Gascoigne Associates for Glassons Flagship store in Newmarket.
- Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior – Public + Retail Space Maestro Award: Palmer & Palmer Architects for Theatre Royal in Nelson.
- Resene Total Colour Sustainable System Award: Stephenson & Turner for its Wellington Design Studio.
- Resene Total Colour Education Award: Jasmax for Albany Senior High School.
- Resene Total Colour Education Award: Lab-works Architectural for the Alan MacDiarmid Building, Victoria University.
- Resene Total Colour Rising Star Student Awards: Kate Andrew (Auckland University).
- Resene Total Colour Rising Star Maestro Awards: Simone Duckett and Sharon Dorman (UCOL Palmerston North).
- Resene Total Colour Lifetime Achievement Award: Roger Walker of Wellington.

Of the exterior achievers (photos below), John Mills Architects of Wellington took out the Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior winner for "60s Residence". For this project, the clients were open to strong, saturated colours that revitalised this gem of 1960s suburban culture. The colours reinforce the house's 60s architecture and is reminiscent of tints that people would use to paint old baches.

A Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior Maestro Award recognising excellence of colour use was awarded to Gordon Dalkie Architects of Christchurch for the Janssen House. Colours were carefully chosen to reflect the local environment at the same time as being bold enough to stand alone.

Another Resene Total Colour Residential Exterior Maestro Award went to Pacific Environments Architects NZ of Auckland for the Bourke House. Neutral colour inside "provides an inviting backdrop" to the exterior, with native timbers salvaged from the seashore.

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