

ARCHITECT PROFILE - Bart Meo



The Secret Style of Bart Meo

Real estate advertisements do a fine line in breathless hyperbole but a recent ad for a new house designed by Auckland architect Bart Meo may have cut close to the truth about this designer of suave and savvy homes.

"Visual heroics" was the description used for Meo's Remuera creation and it's easy to see - standing at the front gate - that the claim could be more than steroid-driven sales hype: the street view is Armani Meets Architecture, a stylish ensemble of shapes, textures and angles that suggest a confident talent soaring to new heights.

But the Bart Meo label has never been seen on the catwalk at architecture's equivalent of Fashion Week, the NZIA Resene Awards. This veteran of 38 years in the design business maintains such a low profile that it moves beyond modesty to almost secrecy.

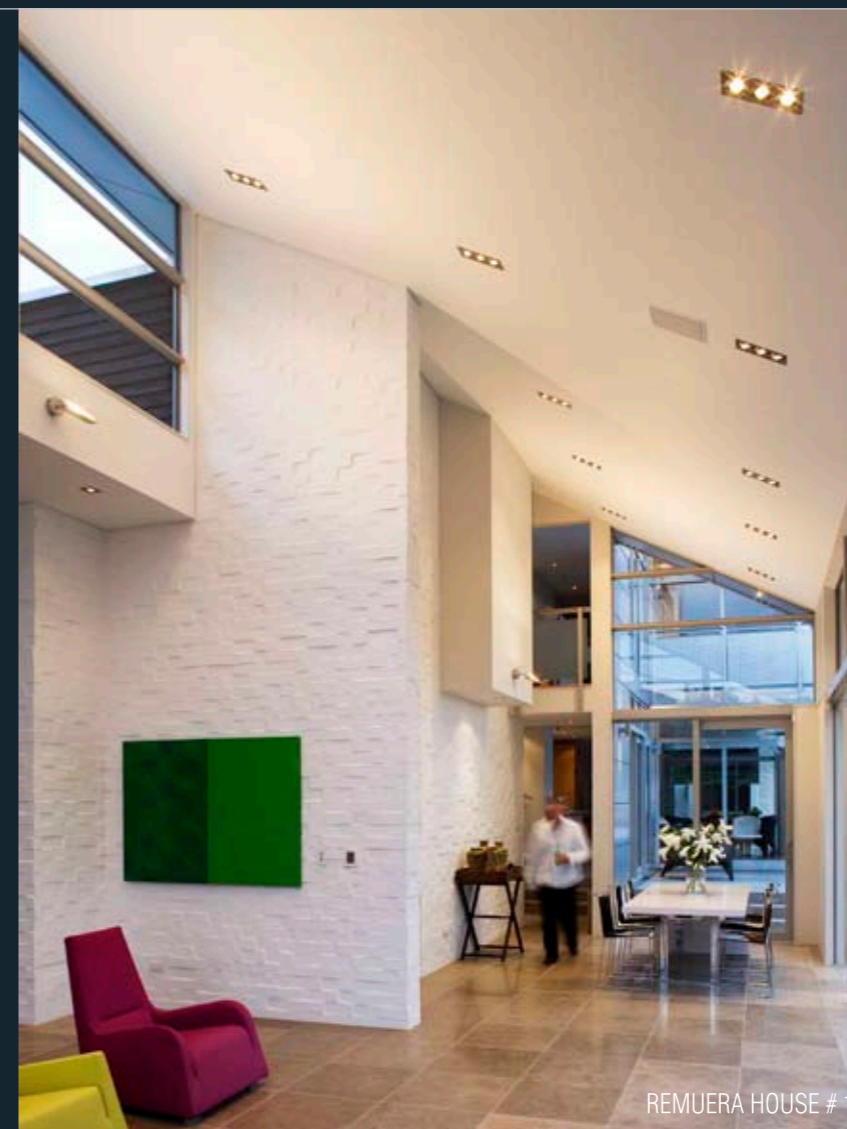
Google Bart Meo and there's almost nothing there. He's never been "published" by any of the trendy magazines. Only those who've cracked the code of his sleek designs sprinkled through Auckland's eastern suburbs can appreciate the verve that this solo practitioner brings to the art of architecture.

"I'd rather be judged by my clients than my peers," says Meo. "I'm not published anywhere - it's all word of mouth. I admit in terms of marketing it's probably not the best approach."

Admittedly, much of his career has been devoted to commercial and industrial design for other people: Gillespie Newman, Fletcher Design & Build, and Project Construction Ltd. It was only in the mid-1990s that Bart broke away and began focusing on residential work.

Not wasting any time, this Wellington-born architect of Italian descent has melded his priorities of "sun, light, space and volume" into highly original dwellings that have moved him into the front rank of Auckland architects practising a distinctive contemporary style.

Clean, tactile strokes of exterior embellishment - often metallic - are offset by internal spaces of simplicity and bold dimension with an emphasis on natural, earthy materials.



REMUERA HOUSE # 1

His decisive design strokes, says, Bart, are a "reflection of my confidence in my own abilities and people's confidence in me."

Aluminium panels custom-moulded to achieve a specific aesthetic effect at soffits and sometimes on walls are a recurring theme. In the Remuera house at left the panels featured an arrased edge on a roof that floated crisply above the double height interior living space at the front of the house. On the following page another Remuera house features flared, beveled panels which add an almost 'Babylonian' drama.

The house at left also featured generous glazing in segmented windows and sliding doors in APL's high performance Metro Series (supplied by Vantage manufacturer, Able Aluminium).

Meo says that he seeks to include double height space somewhere in a dwelling whenever the opportunity arises - "two flat planes don't do anything for the spirit and the soul."



Bart Meo

Another design signature from his last few homes are featured walls in bagged brick - the uneven laying of bricks to create a sensuous, textured effect. These are finished with thick layers of white paint.

"Brick manufacturers hate it," says Meo. "They think it shows their product off in a bad light instead of showing exciting new possibilities." It also went against the grain for the professional brick layer. "I explained to my brick layer that he had to lay them as though an Alsatian was trying to get at him from behind."

Despite his confident views on design, Bart Meo is not a devotee of the school of thought that elevates the architect to the top of the pedestal. Perhaps this hints at the reason for his low profile in the profession, the absence of self promotion.

"I believe in a team approach to architecture. The architect is not absolute. You have to work with builder and client to achieve a grand result."

OPPOSITE PAGE: The APL Metro Series of high performance windows and doors is particularly suitable for large glazed expanses and tall doors. In this house the surface finish was Silver Pearl powder coat.

ABOVE: The downstairs flooring was made from imported European Jurastone.

LEFT: The bank of windows (awnings and fixed lights) were configured to align with joins in the adjoining aluminium wall panels.



ARCHITECT PROFILE - Bart Meo House Gallery



REMUERA HOUSE # 2



WINDOWS & DOORS: APL Metro Series supplied by Able Aluminium in Silver Pearl powder coat.
PRODUCTS USED: Awning windows, fixed lights, sliding doors.



WINDOWS & DOORS: Altherm residential supplied by Altherm Aluminium West Auckland in Silver Pearl powder coat.
PRODUCTS USED: Awning windows, fixed lights, bi-fold doors, hinged doors, overhead glazing.



BUCKLANDS BEACH HOUSE