



THINK PINK

Glamour meets functionality in a sophisticated renovation of this once-tired Victorian property in Dublin.

PHOTOGRAPHY **DOREEN KILFEATHER**

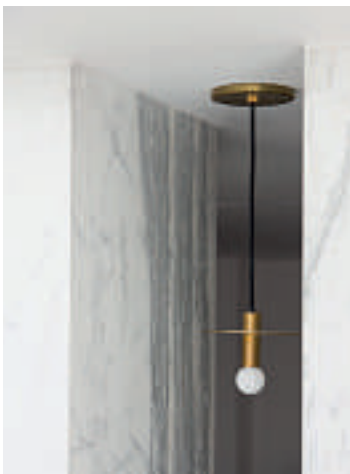
WORDS **ORLA NELIGAN**

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Carrara marble from Stone Merchants was cut to fit around the fireplace. The front door is painted in Farrow & Ball's Nancy's Blushes with flowers from The Garden at Powerscourt Townhouse. A neutral patterned rug from Wedgwood Rugs carries the geometric design inside, while above is a painting by artist Liam Belton. A patterned tile from Woodpecker Floors and Tiles is laid to the front of the house.





CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE A double-sided fireplace from The Stove Depot warms the living space with its plush blue velvet couch from Eames Lighting. A Studio Trench storage unit showcases a vase from Makers & Brothers. Chris Levine's "Lightness of Being". A Flos standing lamp from Eames Lighting. "We love a good dinner party, which is why we opted for a very long dining table," explains Clifden, referring to the Skovby dining table from Sienna Furnishings. A gold fruit cage from Seletti sits in the Evoke Kitchens kitchen. Pendant lights from Eames Lighting hang on either side of the fireplace.





“

I'm still waiting on the barbecue that my husband has been promising me for the last six months,” laughs Orna Holland, elbowing her husband Clifden Foyle who is perched beside her on their soft pink Chesterfield sofa. It’s about the only thing left on the wish list. Other than that, the house is pretty much there.

At first glance, you would be forgiven for thinking this three-bed, redbrick terraced house in a charming square in Dublin was a well-curated gallery space. Paintings from both established and up-and-coming artists adorn the walls, including a John Boyd in the hallway, Graham Crowley behind the kitchen table, Julian Opie over the couch, and a painting by Clifden himself in the master bedroom. For all the discreet lines and tailored perfection, the artwork is one of the stars of the show. Orna, who is in charge of recruitment for a large tech firm and co-owns Roller hairdresser in Dublin, admits collecting art is a “mutual weakness” of theirs. Clifden, who owns The Strand Inn and The Townhouse in Dunmore East, and Riverside Cottage in Waterford, has recently taken a new business leap to launch Artform (artform.ie), an art school in Dunmore East that runs two and four-day courses all year-round with guest artists every week.

Despite it being their city home, the house bears all the hallmarks of their seaside bungalow in Dunmore East. “We renovated our home in Waterford so we knew what worked for us and what we wanted to do differently,” notes Clifden. Enlisting the help of their previous architect Patrick Halley and builders Doran Construction, they worked to create a slice of Dunmore in their Dublin home that would accommodate the needs of the couple and their two daughters, Riley (10) and Farrah (12). Digging out a basement for a guest bedroom and extra storage space, and rebuilding the back of the house were the biggest challenges.

But an old house never fully reveals itself until you want to change it, as the couple discovered when, after gutting the entire property, they were left with just the front wall. However, fortune favours the brave and the result is large airy spaces, sweeping light, juxtapositions of rectilinear and sinuous forms, and a bit of bravado, the latter coming mainly from Orna’s plucky choice of colours. The walk-in-wardrobe’s hot pink is, in her words, “a bit like getting dressed at a rave” but she loves it. She had her eye on the pink velvet bed for some time and the sitting room’s dusty





pink muted tones are pleasantly interrupted by a patterned de Gournay flock wallpaper, which gives the serene space a graphic note. The intention was to wallpaper the entire room until the couple discovered the price. “One small wall of wallpaper is just fine,” laughs Orna. While differing somewhat in style, the couple admit to sharing much of the same interior tastes, apart, that is, from lighting. “It’s the one thing we clash over. He likes black and I like brass.”

The renovation was very much a hands-on project for both, but particularly for Clifden who oiled the limewashed oak floors himself when a contractor failed to show up – the vagaries of renovations. “The build took a year and if I could give one nugget of advice it would be to take your time, don’t buy everything at once. Looking back, it might have been better to ‘sit’ with certain areas for a while,” notes Clifden. Orna’s advice is equally savvy: spend money on windows and insulation; it’ll save you in the long run.

On the subject of revelations, it comes as a surprise to learn that, despite being located in a busy Dublin suburb, the house is extremely quiet. “We’re used to the quiet and calm of Dunmore

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Orna originally wanted to wallpaper the whole sitting room until she discovered the price of the pretty de Gournay flock wallpaper. The couple’s favourite painting in the house is by John Boyd. Orna loved the idea of having one whole pink room and chose Calamine from Farrow & Ball for the walls. The couches, one from Roche Bobois and the other, a Chesterfield, bought at auction for €800 and covered in the same pink colour, perfectly complement the marble and brass Dunnes Stores coffee table. Orna and Clifden share a joke in the sitting room. A porcelain figure from Lladró.







East but I would go as far as to say, this house is quieter,” says Clifden, whose favourite spot is sitting by the window in the kitchen in the morning where the light streams in. And what of other similarities to their waterfront home? “Like Dunmore, there is a great sense of community here,” notes Orna. “My favourite thing to do is sit on the front steps in the summer, watching the kids play in the square, talking to the neighbours. Maybe next year I’ll have a barbecue,” she smiles throwing a glance at her husband. “Then it really will be complete.”



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Orna’s “hot pink” walk-in-wardrobe; the colour is actually one used to paint cars and took about five attempts to get right. The pink Roche Bobois bed was on the wish list for some time and is beautifully offset by two antique cabinets from RJ Keighery in Waterford and a brass lamp from Bloomingville. The pink theme continues upstairs in Riley and Farrah’s rooms with Studio Trench’s pink wardrobes and a colourful headboard from Ormond Furnishings.





HIGHLAND HIDEAWAY

An Irish couple put restraint and simplicity at the core of their restored Victorian holiday home, in the beautiful Scottish countryside.

PHOTOGRAPHY RUTH MARIA MURPHY ASSISTED BY SHAUNA LALLY WORDS ORLA NELIGAN





The orange corner sofa is a B&B Italia Tufty-Too design by Patricia Urquiola, while the tables are from Oasiq. **PREVIOUS SPREAD, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT** John and Susie in the doorway of Dun Aluinn. Views of Tay Valley. The radiators were salvaged from an old school in Blairgowrie and are so heavy that it took six men to move each one. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** John, Susie and John's son Rory sit on Oasiq chairs on the terrace next to a Kadai Fire Bowl. John's 1940s drinks cabinet came all the way from Fins de Siècles in Barcelona. The Heron lamp is from CTO Lighting by Michael Verheyden. The original mosaic tiles and front door make a striking first impression.



There's no shortbread-tin-twee or tartan curtains in Mullingar-based John Burke and Susie Whyte's nine-bedroom period holiday home in Scotland. In fact, there are no curtains at all. "It's really about bringing the landscape inside and ensuring the building doesn't try to compete with it," explains Susie. The landscape in question is the Tay Valley, overlooked by mist-shrouded mountains, a place of quiet beauty, the type of place you'd expect to find a homely Highland lodge with open fires, wood panelling and the odd pheasant wandering around outside. But it wasn't always so homely.

"It looked like a big fancy cream cake," notes Susie of her initial introduction to the property, known as Dun Aluinn. The cornices and gables were painted candy pink, typical of its Queen Anne style, and very little updating had been done to the interior with the exception of a new heating system and windows. The couple wanted to create something that didn't compromise on quality and finish, yet still respected the integrity of the building, a former hotel and boarding house for the local school.

Susie set about dialling back those pink details, revealing both the architecture and the landscape. "It had this lovely eerie, haunted house feel to it and I didn't want to lose that," she says. "My aim was to reveal the architecture, as opposed to renovate it." Taking no credit for the decorative conclusion, John handballs to his wife Susie, who "had the final say from the start, with his full agreement". Given her extensive career as an interior designer and architect it made sense, although, she admits, the design is an expression of both their talents, John being the more flamboyant in terms of style and Susie more restrained.

It was John's persistence and "can-do" attitude that got the Italian Art Deco drinks cabinet from Barcelona to Aberfeldy, for example. The dining room table, on the other hand, was Susie's brainchild. John was happy to buy a premade table, but Susie had the idea to design and make it from scratch. The result is a 5.5-metre work of art made from oak and poured bronze – understated

ABOVE LEFT The original wood window panels were painted a gloss white, so the couple carefully stripped them back to bare wood.

LEFT Simple Boila chairs do not distract from the table. The light above the table was also designed by Susie and manufactured by Kreon in London. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The pitch pine original floor was patched together by the builders, keeping the integrity of the property intact. Susie designed the single casted 5.5-metre bronze and oak table, which was made by Black Isle Bronze in Nairn, Northern Scotland and took an articulated lorry and a crane to put into position.





yet a real focal point in the house, and a symbol of celebration. Susie explains, “Like many of the design choices, the table is confidently simple, using luxurious materials and expert craftsmanship, without a whiff of bling.” The process of instating 21st-century smarts and swagger – without overly gilding the lily – while maintaining the authenticity of a period home takes careful precision, and pushing delicate boundaries.

Even for a seasoned pro like Susie, the 604-square-metre house did provide a few challenges. The bathrooms were the most rewarding aspect of the design process but were equally the most demanding. They had to be minimalist, simple yet functional – a difficult balancing act in an old property. The Japanese bath in one of the bedrooms, for example, required precision planning. “We had to bring new plumbing to the area, dig up joists to sink a special water tray and waterproof around it. Special lats were made to match the floorboards; it involved a lot of mixing of trades.” Although restraint and simplicity underpin the design, there are some bold and daring flourishes. Susie had reservations about the Farrow & Ball Off-Black hallway but it makes a dramatic, and surprisingly warm, entrance. “It’s probably my favourite space, the dark walls and the open fire make it really cosy. I love the panelling and the staircase with the original banister and ironmongery.”

Authenticity was a constant watchword for Susie. A lot of the original woodwork is still intact. “The floors in the sitting room are made up of three different sections of wood. It’s not perfect but the building has an age and we didn’t want to hide that. It was about keeping it honest.” She admits that proved tricky at times when her team wanted to make everything shiny and new. “There was a bit of convincing,” she laughs. “But, carpenters Hamish Walker and Andrew Brown were masters at finding pieces of wood that matched and seamlessly blending them with the original.”

This modern ode to late Victorian living continues in the kitchen with a design that riffs on a traditional scullery kitchen with simple shelves above and open shelves below, with a nod to the contemporary with the addition of a walnut veneer. “It had to have two functions: be able to host a caterer and also be functional for everyday living. A local kitchen company,

ABOVE LEFT John in his happy place, the kitchen. **LEFT** Bar stools from Oasiq sit at Silestone countertops. **RIGHT** The kitchen was supplied by local company Braco Designs and mixes a scullery layout with modern finishes, such as the American walnut veneer on an oak base structure and a Quooker tap on the island sink. The floor tiles are from Mutina’s Mews range and the cooker is a Mercury 1200.





ABOVE FROM LEFT A white chair from XLV in Belgium sits in the window of a bedroom next to a small Lily pad side table and a white rug from Linie Design. A white stone bath in the master bedroom has dual views over the valley. This oak four-poster bed from Benchmark in England is covered with beautiful throws from Johnstons of Elgin in Northern Scotland.





Braco, did an excellent job merging the two so that it feels like a piece of furniture that simply blends in with the house,” says Susie.

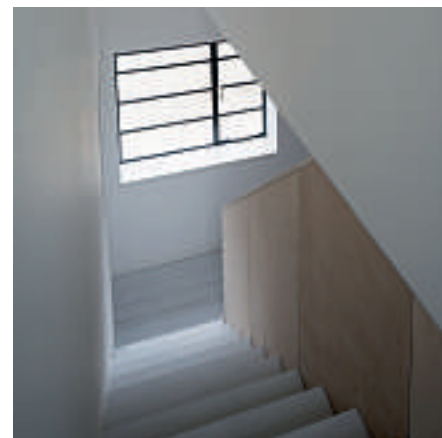
There are spaces in the house where an all-pervading sense of time suspended remains and others where modern living announces itself with aplomb. A purpose-built boot room is just that, with no attempt to make it look old. Anything new in the house is in the context of the building and not imposed on it. “We used an Iroko veneer in the boot room which contrasts with a lot of the house, but it works beautifully.” What underpins it all is Susie’s sympathetic approach to marrying old and new. “There is a sense of achievement now it’s all done. We went over budget and that can be stressful but I know we’ve created the home we wanted: it’s not austere, it’s comfortable, simple and honest.”

Dun Aluinn is also available to rent as a luxury holiday home that sleeps up to 18. dunaluinn.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The B&B Italia bed is a deep wine colour, and is complemented by handmade leather lights by LuLé Studio in Paris, while the turquoise pillows are from Dunnes Stores. The teak sink in the twin bedroom is styled on a Japanese ofuro soaking tub, handmade by William Garvey Furniture. A pale pink sink by Cielo sets a serene tone in the master en suite, offset by a teak wooden vanity unit also made by William Garvey Furniture.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

It's important to assess the design and architectural style of your home and to consider whether windows may also serve as doors, to access views or light up dark areas. Before buying, interior designer Suzie McAdam recommends choosing a style which will have longevity, as the external fabric of the building will be a permanent presence in your home. "The quality of light, the framing of views to the exterior and the tactility of the frame and ironmongery are all important," notes Grace Keeley and Michael Pike of GKMP Architects. Windows determine the light quality of the interior as well as the feeling of connection to the garden, establishing that link between inside and out, explains Grace. Seeing the windows on the elevation drawings or viewing homes or buildings with similar windows can help the decision-making process.



AISLING MCCOY

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

It's worth remembering that windows can contribute to lower home-heating costs or add to them. "The majority of heat loss is through the frame and not the glass," says Denise O'Connor of Optimise Design. Triple glazing, for example, allows for a more energy efficient seal compared with single glazing, but while the cost of triple glazing has come down in recent years, it's still the most expensive option (around 10-15 per cent more than double). The different materials in frames will have a greater or poorer performance depending on what you choose: aluminium, for example, conducts heat more rapidly making it a poorer insulating material. New windows will improve energy efficiency, saving you in the long



DONAL MURPHY

IN THE FRAME

Style, efficiency, light transmission, durability... choosing windows can be overwhelming and, as one of the biggest outlays on a renovation or build, there are a number of key factors to consider.

WORDS ORLA NELIGAN

"Windows are the eyes of architecture. Through the windows enters the light and shadow that creates spaces," writes Italian architect Federico Babina. It's easy to overlook them, but the humble window is a crucial and distinctive part of a building. No longer simple, functional holes, they form part of the continuity of a building. While their geometry is important, their position, material, size, composition and style all affect the overall aesthetic that can mean the difference between the life and death of a space.

ABOVE Floor-length windows of this Optimise Design project draws the eye out to the outdoor space. **RIGHT** Including a stairwell window allows light onto both floors, as in this Broadstone Architects project.

run, while recent improvements such as argon gas in-fill, low e-coatings and spacers will make a significant difference to the comfort and heating bills of your home.

U-VALUE STANDARDS The u-value is the amount of heat retained inside the house. The ideal u-value should be 1.1 or below. U-values measure how effective the material is as an insulator, the lower the u-value the lower the heat loss.

E-COATINGS Low e-coatings (low emissivity) are an energy-efficient glass designed to prevent heat escaping through your windows. Low e-glass has a thin transparent coating, which reflects heat back to its source, reducing heat transfer and keeping the temperature inside your home consistent.

GAS FILL-INS & SPACERS Argon is a non-toxic gas used to fill the space between double and triple-glazed window panes and works as an insulator, minimising the transfer of heat through the window. Spacers, the pieces of metal or foam that separate the panes of glass, help the thermal and moisture seal of the window, increasing its effectiveness.

TIP As timber has one of the lowest u-values, the most thermally efficient window is a hybrid of aluminium on the outside and timber on the inside.

GLASS

SINGLE GLAZING The most basic form of window, single glazing is usually found in period residences, outhouses and listed buildings but is fast becoming obsolete due to its lack of thermal efficiency. If you live in a listed or period home and are required to use single glazing, draught-proofing your windows will help improve things dramatically.

DOUBLE & TRIPLE GLAZING The most common type of glazing (found in 70 per cent of standard homes) is double glazing. It consists of two panes of glass slotted into a frame, with the thin layer between them filled with inert gas. Triple glazing is similar but consists of three panes of glass.

TOUGHENED & LAMINATED GLASS Any window reaching 950mm (around hip

BELOW

The windows of this renovated farmhouse were specially made by Munster Joinery in teak, with modern insulation and double glazing on all but the northern side of the house, which is all triple glazing.

height) or below requires toughened glass by law. It has twice the resistance of normal glass and if broken will shatter into pebbles as opposed to shards, making it less likely to cause injury. Laminated glass is another type of safety glass that holds together when shattered due to a thin interlayer of plastic.

ACOUSTIC GLASS "Double and triple glazing will reduce noise but you can enhance the sound proofing by insulating the cavities," notes Jim Toal, managing director of Fairco Windows & Doors, who admits that the majority of his clients request this due to noise levels of busy main roads. Insulating cavities and upgrading the glass helps prevent vibration and dampens sound.

TIP For best results and to reduce costs, it's preferable to go for triple glazing on all north-facing apertures since there is no solar gain, and double glazing on the south, west and east-facing windows.



SHANTANU STARICK



RUTH MARIA MURPHY

MATERIAL

ALUMINIUM A great alternative to steel windows, aluminium has evolved dramatically since the 1970s. Its light, malleable form makes it easy to work with and it's virtually maintenance free.

"Aluminium offers slender frames and large sizes of glazing panels which are better suited to contemporary designs such as floor-to-ceiling sliding doors, and also perform well thermally," says Denise O'Connor of Optimise Design.

STEEL A popular choice for their industrial look, steel windows are of the moment, but come at a hefty price. The beauty of this material is its thin frame profiles that offer elegant, narrow sight lines and unobstructed views. Unlike wood, steel is extremely durable and requires minimal upkeep, but may not be as thermally effective as other materials.

BRASS Bronze and brass are key materials in extensions, but be sure to get advice regarding the insulation grading of the window, as some may only be available in a single glazed option. Brass, in particular, can be prohibitively expensive. Michael Pike of GKMP Architects recommends an anodised aluminium in a brass or bronze colour as an alternative.

TIMBER "Our climate is actually very humid," notes Jim Toal of Fairco. We have approximately 80-90 per cent humidity even in the winter. Water doesn't



AL HIGGINS

ABOVE LEFT The brass windows and doors from this Suzie McAdam project were made by CDS Architectural Metalwork. **ABOVE RIGHT** The slider window of this Donegal home was sourced through Lynch Windows in Donegal via MacGabhann Architects.

evaporate on windows and timber doesn't like that. "If you are choosing timber frames I recommend Accoya, an extremely durable soft wood from New Zealand that doesn't expand or contract like hardwood," he notes. Timber is also a renewable material and can be moulded to virtually any design and painted in any colour, although it does require maintenance over time.

ALU-CLAD Alu-clad is a hybrid of timber with an external casing of aluminium, making it a popular choice as it allows the comfort and warmth of wood in an interior with little maintenance externally. You can also choose virtually any colour or leave exposed timber on the inside for a Scandinavian look.

uPVC It may be the most cost-effective option but it's far from the inferior choice. A well-constructed uPVC window is a practical choice for the budget-conscious. For example, the cost of replacing windows in a typical three-bed semi with Alu-clad is approximately €28K compared with €18K for uPVC. It also offers excellent energy-efficiency measures through insulated glass and tight construction that reduces air leakages, although falls down on its carbon footprint and is virtually impossible to repair or maintain once it's damaged.



AL HIGGINS

TIP Good windows should typically last 20-25 years. It may be worth investing in a maintenance contract with your window company that will service windows annually.

RESTORATION

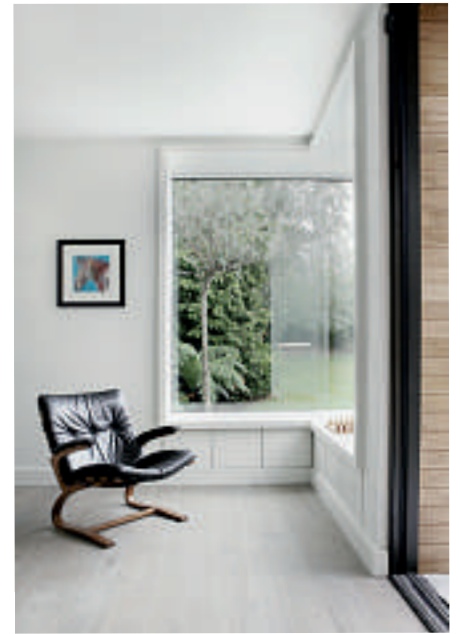
Nothing gives character to an old house like original windows. If you own a period residence you won't have much choice but to keep or restore the originals. Having restored all the sash windows in their Rathmines home, Ed Coveney of Elements of Action is familiar with the mammoth task. "It's labour-intensive and there will be a lot of long-term maintenance, but I did sign up for that. It's not complicated, you just need time and space and to remember that every window is different with varying degrees of rot or damage, so prepare for the unknown." Windows must be removed, stripped of their paintwork and sashes, the timber must be treated, primed, sealed, sprayed or hand-painted, the glass

ABOVE One of the 23 windows restored in Ed Coveney's home.

TOP RIGHT A "pop-up" window in a Savvy Kitchens extension allows light to permeate the centre of the home. **ABOVE RIGHT** A corner window offers a picture-perfect view of the garden in this DMVF project.



RORY CORRIGAN



RUTH MARIA MURPHY

fitted and then windows draught-proofed. "It's definitely a job for the purist and will likely set you back approximately €500-€1,000 per window, depending on what's required, but then new windows would probably have cost more. Restoring is difficult but the overall effect is worth it."

SECURITY

If you're going to spend large sums on windows for your home, they should be difficult if not impossible to break into, says Jim Toal of Fairco. He suggests windows with a PAS011 or PAS024 standard, which certify enhanced resistance to intrusion.



LEFT A glass roof light above the stairwell pours light into this Sterrin O'Shea and Diarmaid Brophy project. **BELOW** A tall, narrow window in this Dermot Bannon project prevents a corner from becoming too dark.

FRITCHE HATCH

ROOF LIGHTS AND CORNER WINDOWS

While vertical windows provide great views, roof lights, lanterns, skylights and corner windows can flood interiors with the best quality natural light. "Roof lights are very effective in our climate as there is far more light in the zenith of the sky than at the extremes," notes Grace Keeley of GKMP Architects. As they face two directions, corner windows capture more light for longer. It's important to consider the size of the corner post when installing corner windows, says Colm Doyle of DMVF Architects. "Generally a glass-to-glass junction is likely to result in fixed panes which means little or no access. A corner post will give you the option of a sliding or flexible door or window."



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TOP BRANDS

VAULTED VISION

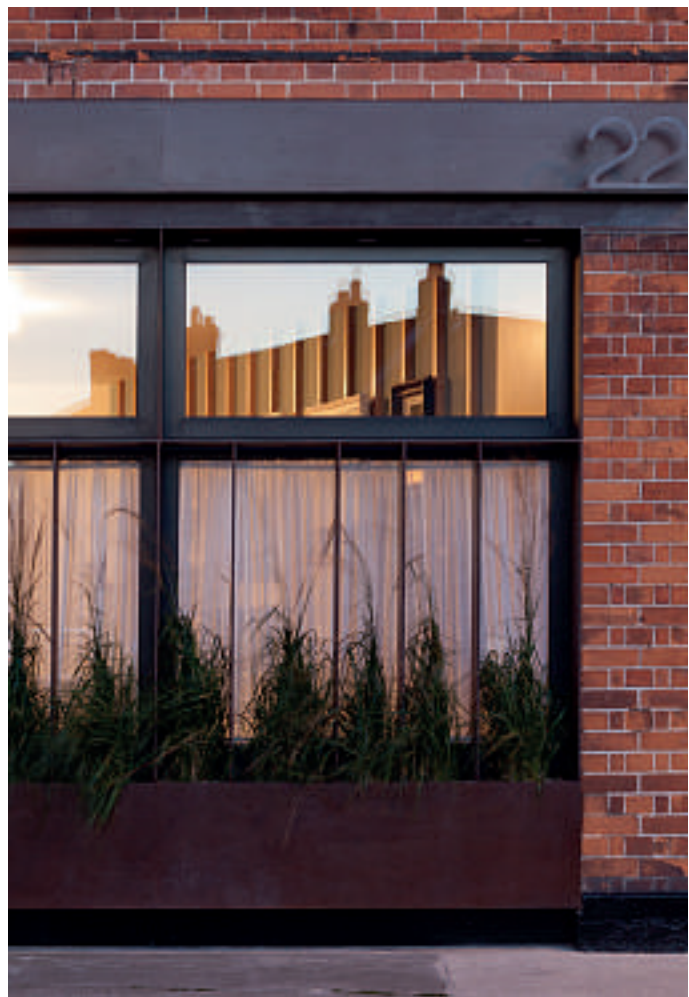
A former shop gets a modern makeover resulting in a pared-back contemporary home with simple charm.

PHOTOGRAPHY
ALICE CLANCY
WORDS
ORLA NELIGAN





The vaulted concrete ceilings, designed by David Maher and made by Gerry and Martin Brennan, were one of the big design choices. The sofa was sourced from BoConcept who designed it to fit flush with the floor, while an Eileen Gray rug is underfoot.



I'm standing outside what used to be a vintage clothes shop in a quiet Dublin village. It looks familiar – I'm pretty sure I bought a pair of shoes here once – but now the window is framed with steel and soft grasses. “Not a day goes by without someone putting their face to the window and having a good look in,” laughs homeowner Katie Redmond, who together with her husband William bought the shop and adjoining red-brick house to convert into a family home in 2015.

Katie and William had lived next door for years; William's mother had run the shop and so they were familiar with the property. “We had our eye on the place,” she admits. “We used to stand in the window of our old house and dream about owning that huge garden one day. When it came up for sale, we didn't have a clue what we would do to it; we just knew we would love to have it.”

With the help of architects Grace Keeley and Michael Pike of GKMP, the couple set about gutting and rebuilding the house. Apart from the two bedrooms at the front and the “shop” (now the front living room), the rest of the space was redesigned. They had one clear wish: an informal and welcoming fluid space with abundant light that would accommodate the whole family.

“We wanted somewhere we could all live together in a communal space but that also offered privacy. We were conscious that the kids are getting older and may want their own bedrooms and space so the house had to serve that purpose, but also be open-plan.” Writing a wish list of rooms and requisite storage that could cater for everyone is no mean feat. The final result is a multi-level living space that unfolds like the Tardis. Shelves are sparse, free of knick-knacks and fussy arrangements. Spaces are functional yet relaxed, with much of the interior clad in oak-panelling and set against clean white brick; it's deliberately clutter-free, stylistically rooted in a mix of Denmark and Japan's rustic-yet-minimalist vernacular. It sits on the threshold between laid-back comfort and modern formality, as told in the big-impact design ideas and organic materials: concrete vaulted ceilings and countertops, wood panelling and floor-to-ceiling windows.

GKMP's premise was to give identity and intimacy to the distinct spaces of the kitchen, dining room and living room while maintaining open-plan living. The house was opened so that wherever the owners sit – whether in the kitchen or living



ABOVE RIGHT Katie and her daughter Ali take a moment at the

poured concrete countertops, made by Lyshna Design. **RIGHT**

The oak cupboards and workspaces were made by Jan Watte.

OPPOSITE PAGE Terrazzo by PJ Ryan Terrazzo is a theme that runs throughout. The vaulted concrete ceiling, which starts over the kitchen, opens up the ceiling height.



room – they can see through to another space and not feel like they’re living in a box. At the front of the house their main objective was to retain the memory of the shop by keeping the large shopfront opening but filter the light and privacy. “Getting the façade right was definitely one of the more challenging aspects,” notes Katie. They toyed with the idea of opaque glass but then settled on the Corten steel frame and the grasses, which soften the somewhat industrial façade. “It’s taken quite some time to get right – we’re on our third round of blinds – but I think we’re nearly there.”

It was Katie’s idea to keep the kitchen in the centre of the house, making the most of the living space and orientation to the rear, and connecting the garden to the living area. “I didn’t want a trophy kitchen,” says Katie. “One of those kitchens that nobody leaves because there’s nowhere else to go. I had this idea of the kitchen being the core of the house and everything evolving from it.” When GKMP came on board, Katie and William invited them to “push the boundaries”, allowing them creative freedom with the space. The result was a series of concrete vaulted ceilings that stretch from the kitchen to the back of the house. “There were moments when I thought it was going to look like the inside of the Port Tunnel: there was a lot of concrete,” laughs Katie, “but we trusted Grace and Michael to do something incredible. The vaulted ceilings are probably our favourite feature in the house, along with the sunken living room.”

GKMP also resolved the issue of what had been a “pokey” hallway, installing a double-height stairwell framed by an oak-panelled wall that stretches the full height and acts as a visual spine to the home. The beautiful brass-rail staircase leads down to the terrazzo marble floor that sweeps through the house. The repetition of the oak panelling and marble, from the kitchen to the stairwell and upstairs rooms, connects the various spaces.

“It’s easy living,” Katie says, in response to what surprised her most about the house. “We’re only here since June but it feels like we’ve been here a lot longer. In summer it felt like we were on our holidays, all the doors were open, the sun was beaming in. In winter, it’s cosy and warm. I said to William the other day that I don’t even want to go on holiday, I’d miss here too much.” gkmp.ie

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Dinosaurs enjoying the terrazzo floor. Exposed timber joists give rhythm to the ceiling while also creating greater volume in the master bedroom. William Junior’s bedroom is one of the original rooms in the house. Geometric tiles from Vives. The hallway still has the original fireplace and bread oven. “I haven’t made any bread yet,” laughs Katie. “But we have lit the fire. It’s a really beautiful antique.” Above it is William’s prized possession: a Nixie clock bought in New York.







In warmer weather the family eat in the covered barbecue area at this concrete table, made by the building contractors Frank and Declan Darcy (Darcy Brothers). **BELOW** Large Schüco windows from Senator Windows are framed by soft planting by Peter Boland of Vision Landscapes who did the grasses to the front too.





MODERN RETRO

Lighting designer Niamh Barry and her mid-century maven husband Killian McNulty have turned a seaside semi-D into the perfect mix of contemporary and playful vintage.

WORDS ORLA NELIGAN PHOTOGRAPHY RUTH MARIA MURPHY STYLING CIARA O'HALLORAN

ABOVE LEFT A pair of silver mid-century Willy Rizzo Love Lamps sit on a curved rosewood table, which was made as an accompaniment to the curved sofa. On the wall behind is a 1970s geometric print by Victor Vasarely. **ABOVE RIGHT** Killian's obsession with bronze sculptures is found in various pockets of the house. Here, on the brushed steel Willy Rizzo table, are ones he bought in Spain along with Willy Rizzo serving dishes. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The focal point of the sitting room is the mid-century Milo Baughman gunmetal grey curved couch. The cushions, made by Niamh, add pops of colour and Killian's collection of bronze sculptures and square paper weights are displayed on the brushed steel TRG coffee table. Behind hangs Erin O'Connor's award-winning photograph *Adam*, and beyond is the showstopping ram's head table, which is the first thing you see when you open the front door.



“ It looked like the inside of a sauna,” laughs Killian McNulty, recalling the first time he and his wife Niamh Barry stepped inside the wall-to-wall pine interior of their 1940s semi-detached house in Clontarf. It was definitely not love at first sight. In fact, Killian “hated” it, but the couple saw its potential: it was near the sea, had off-street parking and an 85ft south-facing garden with the potential to extend.

At the time, the couple were living in the city centre with their three year-old daughter Katie, and Niamh was pregnant with their second child, Ella. “I really loved our house in the city, but it wasn’t the safest area and we wanted to settle somewhere long-term, near a good school and amenities. We knew we’d have to do a lot of work to it, but we were prepared for that, as it had all the makings of a great house,” says Killian.

Having moved from a regency period residence, their Clontarf home felt small, with little character or original features compared to their previous home, so the main objective was to create more living space and an area for entertaining. An additional bedroom was also on the wish list, but a limited budget meant choosing between an upstairs or downstairs build. The result was a one-storey downstairs extension with an additional guestroom at the end of the garden.

Niamh drew on her own creativity and experience in planning the design, with the focus on the large living and dining area (her favourite room in the house), which ended up very differently to how it started. Her initial plans included floor-to-ceiling windows with aluminium frames and polished concrete floors. “I realised it was starting to resemble a gallery instead of a home. It seemed cold, so I softened the details.”

The polished concrete floor became warm oak and the windows no longer went to the ceiling and were framed by cedar wood. A modern stove was added to bring some warmth and atmosphere. Happy to let his designer wife do the planning, Killian stepped in at the end to agree on the functionality of the space. “For me, it was about how you move about a house, how you open and close things. Is it practical? Once we agreed on that, there were no changes. It was important for me to get the kitchen right. It’s my



KILLIAN'S VINTAGE SHOPPING TIPS

- Don't be afraid to buy from antique shops when you're abroad. Your purchase will be a lovely reminder of your trip and help you to create a more layered look in the house. Small items such as sculptures, art glass, paperweights, lamps, desk items or prints are all easy to carry home.
- Antique dealers can get a bad rep as being grumpy or unfriendly, but in my experience it's best to go in to a shop and engage with the owner. When you find a few things you like, then go back and ask the owner what they can tell you about the piece. In some cases, an object comes to life when you hear its back-story.
- Lots of people think you can't mix antique and contemporary, but they work really well together and can give your home an added layer. For example, an antique table can often work well with a modern chair.
- Don't forget that buying antique and mid-century furniture is also environmentally friendly, as you're giving new life to something already made.
- You will always regret the things you didn't buy. If you love it, then buy it; don't miss out because with mid-century pieces, when it's gone, it's genuinely gone.
- My current buying craze is small bronze sculptures. I love them. They are generally good value and represent a solid investment for the future.

ABOVE RIGHT Killian's favourite room in the house is the kitchen, which he refers to as a “great communal space” centred around the oak island. The contemporary tray and tea set are both Wedgwood and a gift from each other last Christmas. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The glossy Arena kitchen is contrasted by the striking dark wall, painted in Little Greene's Jack Black 119. A set of wooden chopping boards from Two Wooden Horses sits against the wall and the pottery plate was bought on a trip to Schull in Cork.







favourite space in the house because it functions so beautifully and it's a really lovely communal space to be in."

No alterations mid-build is a big achievement, but the couple were very conscious that changes meant additional expense and stress. Apart from the builders laying the hall floor on top of their cat (they did eventually find her, alive you'll be glad to know), their only regret is not adding a larder directly off the kitchen. "It was Killian's idea, and it was a really good one, but it would have meant encroaching on our front sitting room space, and that wouldn't have worked either. You have to sacrifice somewhere," says Niamh.

A glance around their home, and it's obvious their careers have informed their interior styles. As the owner of Mid-Century Online, The Vintage Hub and Historic Interiors prop hire, Killian's eye is drawn to eclectic, unique and vintage finds, while Niamh's prodigious talent for designing one-off, dynamic light sculptures allows her to experiment with flow, form and balance.

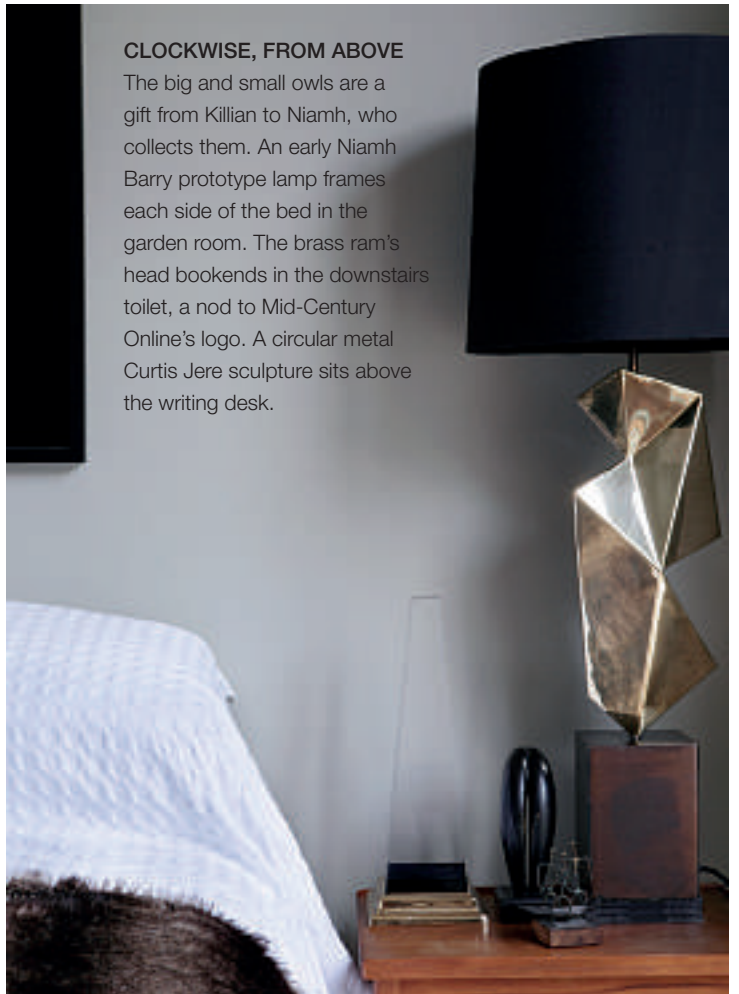
The result is a warm, layered-yet-open and light-filled space, perfectly balanced with curios, playful artwork, mid-century aesthetic and quirky vintage pieces. "I've no interest in owning modern or new things," says Killian, who spends his days "treasure hunting" for work. "I prefer to find things that have had a life and tell a story." Niamh is quick to remind him that we are drinking tea from a new tea set served on a new tray, Christmas presents they bought each other last year.

In his defence, they don't look new. He can appreciate contemporary accessories, but when it comes to furniture, he'd rather fill his home with mid-century or vintage. The striking dining table, which is the first thing you see when you open the front door, thanks to its brass ram's head legs, is a favourite, as is the vintage stereo. The mere mention of the latter, and he's off on a passionate pique.

The 1960s stereo is the one piece he'd take with him to the grave. If it would fit, I offer, since it's about the size of a coffee table with large ball speakers at each end, but it's a rare and beautiful addition to the living space. A Clairtone Project G model, it is one of only two made for Europe, and Killian owns both of them. "Always room for one more," laughs Niamh. "That's Killian's motto." mid-centuryonline.com



OPPOSITE PAGE The industrial exposed concrete fireplace works beautifully with the soft oak floors and cedar windows and doors. The stove adds a modern touch, while the copper and brass Curtis Jere sculpture above the fireplace completes the wow factor. **ABOVE** The couple love entertaining, and the ram's head dining table gives a sense of occasion. The table, with brass legs, is a copy of Léon François Chervet's original and around the table are 1960s Rosewood chairs by Niels Otto Møller. On the table are Niamh's prized orchids, which she's managed to keep alive and considers that "quite an achievement". **LEFT** Killian's favourite item he has collected is his 1960s Clairtone Project G radio with ball speakers. After months of searching, he finally found one for sale in Scotland and bought it "sight unseen". When the delivery truck turned up, Killian discovered the owner had sold him the earlier model, and he ended up buying both of them.



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE

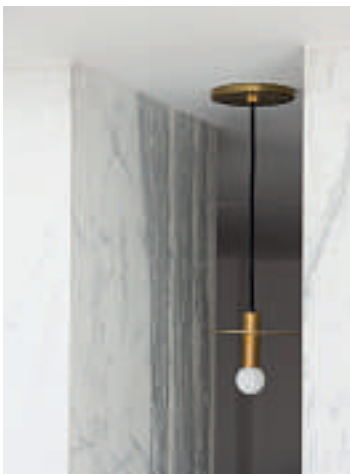
The big and small owls are a gift from Killian to Niamh, who collects them. An early Niamh Barry prototype lamp frames each side of the bed in the garden room. The brass ram's head bookends in the downstairs toilet, a nod to Mid-Century Online's logo. A circular metal Curtis Jere sculpture sits above the writing desk.



For everyday dining, the family uses the 1950s mid-century round table. Behind, on the bookshelf sits Lucy Meagher's 3-piece doll sculptures with classical references. Killian admits they're "slightly creepy" but he enjoys them.



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE A double-sided fireplace from The Stove Depot warms the living space with its plush blue velvet couch from Eames Lighting. A Studio Trench storage unit showcases a vase from Makers & Brothers. Chris Levine's "Lightness of Being". A Flos standing lamp from Eames Lighting. "We love a good dinner party, which is why we opted for a very long dining table," explains Clifden, referring to the Skovby dining table from Sienna Furnishings. A gold fruit cage from Seletti sits in the Evoke Kitchens kitchen. Pendant lights from Eames Lighting hang on either side of the fireplace.





MODERN MELANGE

A designer breathes life into a rambling 250-year-old Georgian property in Tullamore and adapts it for contemporary family living, writes Orla Neligan.

PHOTOGRAPHY **RUTH MARIA MURPHY** STYLING **MARLENE WESSELS**



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT The “hidden” kitchen, with its quartz worktop, is designed to be closed-off with Georgian panelling. Willow helping with lunch. A mirrored backsplash adds depth and light. Tanya had the original date of the house made in tiles by Mosaic Assemblers. An old trunk doubles as a coffee table in Tanya’s studio, where Tanya is pictured.



“We instantly fell in love with the house and the shapes of the rooms”





“It’s like choosing between children,” laughs Tanya Ross, art director and owner of Element Inc, when probed about her favourite item in her newly restored Georgian home. “We Marie Kondo’d the hell out of everything a few years back, so we only have what we really love and need, but if you had to twist my arm, it would be my grandmother’s heirloom suite of furniture, cracks and all.”

Having moved from an 75-square-metre home in South Dublin with her husband George and daughter Willow two years ago, Tanya’s first impressions of the 420-square-metre period house on the main street in Tullamore town was how she was going to fill it; they could literally “live in one room”.

Dating from 1786, the house was built after the Great Fire of Tullamore and, while lovingly maintained by previous owners, they also sought to modernise it, leaving little of the original features intact. The following years saw a series of “age-relevant” design choices that seemed to stagnate in the 1970s.

“It was pretty dated,” says Tanya. “There was lots of carpet, and both the plumbing and electrics needed to be redone. I have a real weakness for ceiling roses, architraves and cornicing, so I was disappointed that none of them had survived. Molloy Plaster Mouldings added them beautifully.” Restoring the original features was one of the biggest challenges the couple faced. Much of the six-month renovation was spent researching and sourcing from local suppliers for affordable prices. However, there was some self-doubt over covering the original flooring in the kitchen, which was quite badly damaged, and eventually, a new distressed, dark-smoked oak floor went in. “I dreamt about floors every night for months,” laughs Tanya. “George’s selective hearing was strong at that point.”

Although budgets were tight, she did splash out on the wallpaper for Willow’s room – a beautiful woodland scene by London-based designer Sian Zeng. “I love Willow’s room: the wallpaper, the tall Georgian windows and those pink curtains are just so sweet.”

This sensitive restoration resulted in a successful adaptation of the Georgian home to suit a modern way of living, lending itself to a spacious family home. It’s also a nod to her skill as a designer. “My main aim was to have a space that is bright and feels healthy, one that will age well, with a function for every room,” Tanya says of her vision for the space.

A mix n’ match aesthetic informs her design choices. “I love combining antiques with minimal twists. I like contrasts and I like rooms to be unexpected.” The impact of this approach is evident in almost every room where French interiors meet

Tanya loved the idea of Crittall windows but, due to the prohibitive expense, she had wooden frames made by Michael Kelly Joinery in Kilbeggan. The cast-iron radiators, from Radiator Plus, were one of the biggest spends. The window seat was made by Rytis Furniture.



bright colours and modern-yet-minimal touches: the hidden contemporary kitchen by Dermot Bracken is faced with Georgian panels; her great-grandfather's cast-iron, lion's feet bath sits on a faux-timber-tile floor next to a contemporary deluge shower; an antique mirror hangs above a bright mustard bathroom vanity; original Georgian windows are left without drapes to keep the rooms bright and free from clutter.

Although confident with her vision for the house, she did enlist the help of her parents Frank and Imelda Murray – who both happen to be architects – for their keen eye for detail and structure. It was her parents who suggested moving the basement kitchen to the first floor and refurbishing the old coal shed into a living room, with views of the large rear garden, which is the biggest surprise about the house.

“We instantly fell in love with the house and the shapes of the rooms. Although I project managed the house renovation myself, my mum and dad were great sounding boards throughout.” When you peruse the details of her period home, it all seems very impressive how she has married her varied design aesthetics, but it's all in a day's work for Tanya. As a designer, her credentials run the gamut from graphic design that has riffed on magazines, packaging and books (including *Make The Home You Love* for O'Brien Press out in March), to her love of furniture and interior design, while this summer she and her dad Frank are running design and architectural workshops from the house. “Usually the design projects I work on are essentially for someone else, it's what the client wants. This is solely for us; I think that's what I love most about it.”
no6highstreet.com





Tanya doesn't believe in a "good room", so this room is used daily. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The gramophone was a French market find, while the sideboard was one of the few pieces left in the house by the previous owners. Willow enjoying the view. The beautiful ornate fireplace came from a period house in Scotland, and was bought in John Walsh Fireplaces in Mitchelstown.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A doll's house, made by Tanya's dad Frank when she was six-years-old, is now Willow's. "It's been painted about 25 times but we all love it." Willow practising ballet. The master bedroom is a work in progress, with a bed from Laura Ashley and a French antique side locker. Black hexagonal mosaic tiles combine with brass taps and a showerhead from Tapwell.





FROM THE ASHES

After a fire destroyed her family's home, artist Eva O'Donovan set about rebuilding it into a bolder, braver and more colourful version of its former self.

PHOTOGRAPHY **RUTH MARIA MURPHY** WORDS **ORLA NELIGAN**

ABOVE A pair of leather Roche Bobois chairs frame a bay window in the first floor drawing room, along with a side table from Mid-Century Online. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The drawing room's double-ended design is a nod to French-classic apartment style. The blue sectional couch was purchased from Mid-Century Online and covered in a distressed Mulberry velvet paisley fabric to add to the antique feel of the room. The Gio Ponti lounge chairs, one of interior designer Suzie Mc Adam's favourite additions to the house, are from Michael Mortell. The walls are painted Bone China Blue by Little Greene Paints and framed with Eva's artwork. A Jan Kath rug covers the lightly smoked herringbone oak floor. Eva's love of antiques and mid-century come together in this room: the chandelier and vitrine, both bought at antique auctions, marry with the brass coffee table from Mid-Century Online.



“

t’s only after you’ve lost everything that you are free to try anything,” admits artist Eva O’Donovan, referring

to the fire that wreaked untold damage on her beautiful period Victorian home two years ago. Thankfully, she, her husband John and their three teenage children all escaped unscathed, but they were, in her words, spectacularly underinsured for contents. Everything, bar some family portraits and a few pieces of furniture, was destroyed; they literally had the clothes on their backs. “The fire has made me less emotionally attached to material things and much braver about my interior choices. I realise it’s only paint and décor, after all.”

This freshly risen phoenix is now a veritable sweet shop of elegant furnishings. Brave colour schemes and busy patterns add bucket-loads of drama – the jungle-inspired wallpaper in the dining room, pink walls in the hall, and backlit marble in the high-gloss black kitchen all combine to make a serious impression. The perfect backdrop for Eva’s striking canvases, which riff on the theatrical with costumed figures emerging from bold heritage fabrics.

As you walk through the door of this period home, its trump cards are immediately apparent: double-fronted, south-facing, immense Victorian windows look out over the leafy street beyond, and high ceilings abound. It’s a house that can take contrasts and one that offers Eva the perfect gallery to display her art and passion for colour, pattern and portraiture.

Even in its smoke-damaged state, the potential was there, notes interior designer Suzie Mc Adam, who worked closely with the couple. “The proportions of the rooms were fantastic; you could immediately see the potential.” Suzie’s initial focus was the couple’s love of vintage furniture and Eva’s whimsical art, which she used as a foundation from which to build the design.

“I would never impose a style, but instead try to bring the client’s passions and interests to the fore.





“The fire has made me less emotionally attached to material things and much braver about my interior choices. I now realise it’s only paint and décor, after all.”

ABOVE LEFT Artist Eva O’Donovan in her kitchen. **LEFT** A colourful Sputnik pendant light from the Cross Gallery hangs over the Gubi dining table, and 1950s vintage chairs from Mid-Century Online. **ABOVE** Coving and moulding were added to the former kitchen, along with a pendant light by Michael Anastassiades, a beautiful marble table from Michael Mortell and one of Eva’s signature pieces, “Metropolitan Girl”, inspired by a picture of a girl from The Met Ball. **RIGHT** The black lacquered bistro-style kitchen was inspired by visits to Paris. Once Eva was clear about what she wanted, Suzie set about designing it with backlit Calacatta marble and help from kitchen maker Conall Nolan of Wexford. Brass bistro lighting was added along with 1960s brass bar stools from Mid-Century Online, upholstered in Zoffany fabric.







John and Eva have great style and are very clued-in in terms of design, so they were dream clients,” notes Suzie. Eva, whose own work is inspired by historical France and Marie Antoinette, “loves mixing mid-century with classic antiques and modern furnishings”.

The upstairs drawing room offers an insight into her aesthetic at its most intrepid. It’s Eva’s very own Versailles, wrapped in French apartment style. The double room is bookended with fireplaces framed by a gilt mirror and a huge canvas. Blue walls, ornate décor, antique furniture and chandeliers continue the strong French theme. This gutsy part of the house is married with flourishes, like the 1950s Sputnik light from the Cross Gallery in the Parisian bistro-inspired kitchen, and the 1960s cube mirrors from a nightclub in Brussels in the living room. The house steers well clear of anything that could be conceived as remotely sterile – such as white walls – and this gives the house its playful, bold personality.

“When we moved in five years ago, it was very neutral. Being honest, it was boring,” laughs Eva, who admits to taking much bigger risks after the fire with the help of Suzie, and architect Suzanne MacDonald of MacDonald Vagge. Suzanne played



LEFT In stark contrast to the upstairs drawing room, the living room is painted in the moodier hue of Pantone Grey, with dark oak floors. The pair of 1960s cube mirrors, bought by Eva years ago, are originally from a nightclub in Brussels, and were purchased from Décor on Camden Street. The family of elephants belonged to Eva’s mother. **ABOVE LEFT** A Roche Bobois couch is covered in House of Hackney’s Palmeral print fabric, while the red and brass enamel light is from Michael Mortell. On the wall beside hangs a painting by Zhu Chuang, a fellow art student with Eva. **LEFT** The beautiful hand-painted wallpaper in the dining room, available from suziemcadam.com, was custom-made and Eva’s “bravest decision” when it came to decorating. Gubi dining chairs and an oval dining table from Niall Mullen Antiques make a bright and elegant addition.



a key role in keeping the integrity of the Victorian home, and if it hadn't been for Suzie, they'd all still be sitting on crates. "While I had a very clear vision of what I wanted, it's a big house, so the task of fitting it out was overwhelming. Suzie provided a wealth of information, knew where I could source everything, and shares my love of French antiques."

Their search for textiles, furniture, lighting and accessories repeatedly brought them back to their favourites: Mid-Century Online, Niall Mullen Antiques and Michael Mortell – pieces from which are dotted around the house. Every interior decision was one made by both Eva and her husband John. "It sounds corny, but that is one of my favourite things about the rebuild. It was really enjoyable to be able to spend that time together doing something we liked. Thankfully, we share the same taste."

John's favourite space is the upstairs drawing room, while Eva loves the kitchen, standing at the marble counter with views out to the garden and the courtyard – and those beautiful brass windows that overlook the back garden. "A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into those," recalls Eva. It's no wonder they are her favourite investment in the house. Months were spent trying to source Crittall windows until Eva saw a similar brass façade at The Chelsea Drugstore on George's Street and found out they were made by Cds Architectural Metalwork. The brass touch is carried throughout the kitchen, with bistro-style brass lighting from Mid-Century Online and brass fixtures – that French theme again, albeit a contrasting era, inspired by visits to Paris, where her daughter Lucy was living for a year.

ABOVE LEFT Tiles digitally printed with a portrait from the V&A Museum cover the back wall of the shower in the master bathroom.

LEFT Eva and John chose hand-painted Italian wallpaper for their bedroom. The kidney-shaped table in the corner from Mid-Century Online is one of Eva's favourite purchases. **RIGHT** Conall Nolan Custom Furniture built the vanity units in the master bathroom to tie in with the kitchen. Antique touches are added to every room, and this room is no exception, with vintage lights from Niall Mullen Antiques.





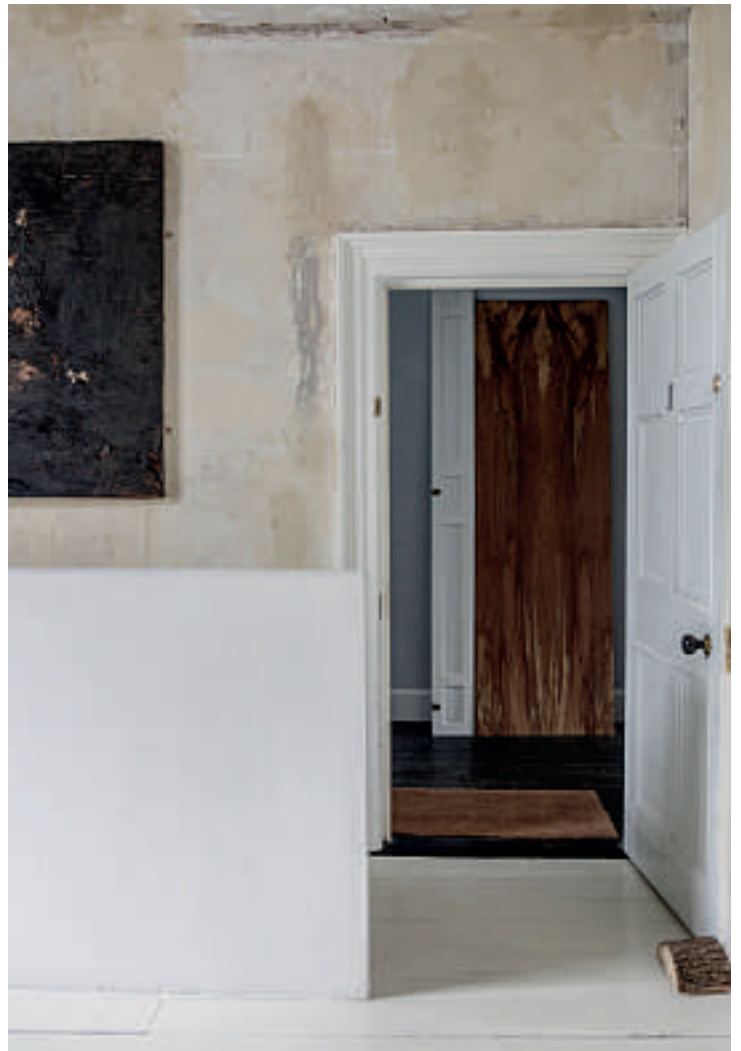
A house this size can often run the risk of feeling too big and unwelcoming. This was a concern for Eva and John, who wanted a home that was warm and inviting, where the living was casual and comforting without sacrificing on taste. “As an artist, you tend to have a good sense of visualisation. I knew what I liked and what I felt would work, but I wanted the spaces to be manageable and for us all to feel like the house was a reflection of us,” she explains. “I love that we have an open door policy. It’s a big house, but it never feels empty – that’s the sign of a happy home for me.”

An exhibition of Eva’s art, entitled *Les Femmes Diaphane*, will be showing from November 23-30 in Sol Gallery, 8 Dawson Street, Dublin 2. evaodovan.com

ABOVE LEFT Eva at work in her studio just off Thomas Street. “It was meant to be a temporary studio due to the fire, but I’m still here and it’s been such a wonderful place to escape to.” **ABOVE** Pinks used to balance the noir tones in Eva’s work. **LEFT** The stunning original window from her studio’s history as a Victorian textile factory.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Ed restored the marble fireplace. The antique clock was handed down from Esther's great-aunt. A floating wall acts as a breaker to the basement stairs. Esther and Ed in the ground floor kitchen. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The couch is from Michael Mortell Antiques and in front is Ed's light-up Daft Punk coffee table.





RESTORED ELEGANCE

This once crumbling Georgian property in Dublin, transformed into two truly unique apartments, perfectly manages to honour the old while folding in the new.

WORDS ORLA NELIGAN
PHOTOGRAPHY AL HIGGINS



I'm sitting in the ground floor kitchen of Esther Gerrard and Ed Coveney's restored Dublin 6 home, enjoying the view from the beautiful window and trying to imagine what it looked like as an 18-bedroom B&B. "It was a warren of corridors and en suites with pigeons flying around and water running down the walls," recalls Ed, who, together with his wife Esther, own Elements of Action, a practice that fuses landscape architecture, furniture design and project management.

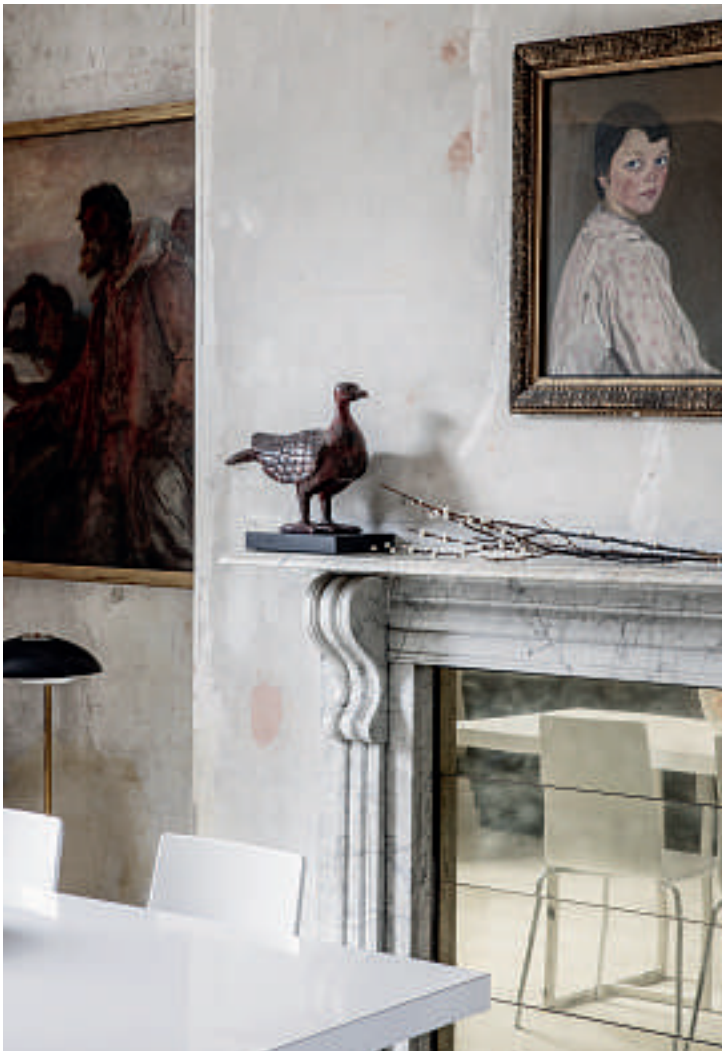
Although the property is a three-storey house, the family live in what they describe as the "duplex" (the ground floor and basement), with additional living space in a garden studio and workshop, both to the rear of the property. "It may be apartment living, but we made good design choices, so it doesn't feel poky," says Ed. Placing the kitchen on the ground floor at the front instead of its original space in the basement at the back, introduced more light and engagement with the street. They also have a second apartment upstairs that they use to host guests and as a venue for launch dinners and opening nights. "Georgian houses are typically very big for one family," says Esther. "Splitting the space meant we could live in one part and utilise the others for our work or as a separate space to rent out. It's modular, flexible and deliberately generous. Another developer might have been inclined to add more bedrooms, but we weren't."

It was clear when they bought the fixer-upper that it would require serious work. "We moved home from the UK in 2013 and it took us a year to get the planning and design right, then another year for the build. We already had Rúairí, who is now five, and I was pregnant with our twins, Axel and Rex, who are almost two. I regularly used that to remind the builders of our timeline," recalls Esther. "We moved in a week before I gave birth."

Some risk-taking is required when restoring a derelict period residence, but sensitivity is needed too. The couple had a vision, inspired by a trip to the Neues Museum in Berlin, which was redesigned by David Chipperfield. From this, they had a view to emphasise the original structure in space and materials, while also allowing the "new" place

ABOVE LEFT The downstairs kitchen is stained birch ply. **LEFT** Japanese palm brushes hang in the kitchen. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**

A painting of French fishermen by Maria Dorothy Webb, circa 1920. Esther's favourite piece is this antique linen closet, which is a family heirloom. Rúairí doing his best Superman impression. A fireplace in the kitchen was converted into storage space using brass and wood, while the painting above the mantelpiece is by an unknown Parisian artist from the 1920s.







Concrete floors and white walls add lightness to the basement.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT An aerial shot of Dublin fields in winter sits above one of Ed's console tables. Throughout the apartment are wild flowers from the garden. One of Ed's circular brass mirrors and marble/brass tables sit alongside a vintage chair. Below the window seat is an African Ashanti chair from 1900 given to Ed by his dad.



“THE WHOLE PREMISE OF THE RENOVATION WAS TO USE THE HOUSE AS A SHOWCASE FOR OUR DESIGN WORK AND BESPOKE FURNITURE,” SAYS ESTHER. AS SUCH, THE UPSTAIRS APARTMENT REGULARLY HOSTS GUESTS AND IS USED AS A VENUE FOR LAUNCH DINNERS AND OPENING NIGHTS.



One end of the upstairs apartment is framed with a fireplace; above it hangs one of Ed's signature handmade brass mirrors and, in front, is his marble and brass coffee table. The floorboards in the upstairs apartment are the only ones they managed to salvage and are oiled black to complement the bright brass finish of the kitchen. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The first-floor apartment's show-stopping brass kitchen frames the other end of the room.



to form. Together they conceived a metamorphosis of the property that would keep the Georgian spirit alive, without the 200-year-old problems.

Under-floor heating and soundproofing were added while salvaging as much of the Georgian features as possible, the biggest loss being the flooring, which was rotten throughout. “I was upset about the floors, but the configuration was the most difficult part of the design,” notes Esther. “Essentially, we wanted three separate living spaces that complemented each other but were all different and separate, so that meant reworking the staircase while adhering to proper fire regulations and allowing generous spaces.” Ed painstakingly restored all 23 Georgian windows, made both kitchens and treated the walls. “It was a sensitive strip out, but really enjoyable, as we were revealing a series of surprises as we went.” The timeworn plaster walls may look untreated, but it was quite the opposite; months were spent peeling layers of wallpaper, lime treating and painting the plaster.

The upstairs apartment shares a similar aesthetic: a bright, airy space with dusty walls and a replica kitchen layout to the ground floor but with a bold brass façade. The basement has a more contemporary feel, with modern doors, painted white walls and a floor-to-ceiling pink marbled bathroom. Each space on each floor is dotted with curious antiques and collectibles, wild grasses and plants from the garden, and Ed’s signature marble and brass-edged tables. There is no paean to any particular aesthetic, but instead the result is a carefully composed use of materials and eclecticism that gives the home a singular air, as though it has been put together over many years of assiduous collecting – it all works seamlessly throughout.

“The value of craft is really important to us,” says Ed. “The house is not flamboyant; it’s beautiful, but pared back – I guess that’s our style – and we wanted to achieve that in how we finished the house. We knew it would be expensive and time-consuming, but it’s better to use really good materials and do it properly.” Large slabs of marble, heavy gauge brass, carefully salvaged materials and

ABOVE LEFT A steel and leather chair – part of Ed’s furniture collection. **LEFT** Esther arranges dried alliums and mischantus grasses from the garden. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Cleverly tucked away, the first-floor apartment’s bathroom is a mix of marble and local Elm, which is completed with flint taps. A renovated lamp from an Austrian market. One of 23 windows restored to Georgian glory. A Christopher Bucklow painting, on loan from a friend, sits above an early Elements of Action piece.





clean, generous spaces mirror this simplicity.

There is nothing to distract you from the beauty of the place. It's evident they share a very similar aesthetic. "I think we're about the vernacular," explains Esther. "It's modern living but with a design element and ecological sense. The house is simplistic but not minimal." Less is very much more, colour palettes are low-key so rooms flow into one another, and against those clean lines are quiet tones, where different eras, styles and materials are able to play off each other.

This is mirrored in their latest collection of homewares. Since the start of Ed's furniture business, there has not been one skip used. Instead, all the waste material is reused to make accessories such as their candlestick holders and shelves. The premise is timeless and functional. "I'm really enjoying the work we've put into the house," explains Ed. "I used to cycle down this road as a boy and dream about living in one of these grand houses. Sometimes I can't believe the dream has come true." elementsofaction.net

ABOVE LEFT Rings of brass that will be combined with mirror. **ABOVE** A shipping container at the end of the garden doubles as Ed's workshop. **LEFT** Ed at work cutting marble.



BREAKING the MOULD

Determination, risk-taking and creative vision have turned a rundown Victorian terrace house into a bright, spacious home that's full of surprises.

WORDS **ORLA NELIGAN** PHOTOGRAPHY **SHANTANU STARICK** STYLING **CIARA O'HALLORAN**



A view of the kitchen from the landing. The dining table is Dutchbone and above it hangs a Katatsumuri light designed by Issey Miyake. **OPPOSITE** A Crossing shelving unit from The Conran Shop.



Patrick McKenna of Wabi Sabi designed the kitchen, which is a mix of brass, MDF and Valchromat. Its partition wall allows for hidden storage on the other side. Many of the antiques in the house date back to the same year as the house. This antique 1860 oriental drinks cabinet, to the right, from Mullen's Laurel Park, is just one example.



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verything in Mona and Rob Fox’s home has a story. Even their journey to find this Portobello beauty has its own dramatic lore.

Much like their home, it’s a classic tale with a twist: a young couple move into his parents’ house for six months while looking for a house to buy. They sale agree on a modern mewns but, just as they’re signing, the sale falls through. They find a Victorian property on the north side and, at the last minute, the owners decide not to sell. A beautiful two-storey-over-basement catches their eye, they agree a price and again, the owners pull out. Three years and five houses later, they finally get the keys to their dream home.

“We were pretty unlucky,” laughs Mona. “Our solicitor said that nine out

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of ten times the sale goes through. We just happened to be that one that didn’t, five times.” For three years, they lived with family, out of a suitcase, surrounded by boxes. But fortune favours the brave and the couple are definitely that: defying the advice of friends, family and builders, they turned the classic

Victorian layout on its head, creating an eclectic spacious home with many surprising features.

The first floor is divided into the kitchen and sitting room, while the original ground-floor reception rooms are now the master bedroom, and adjoining dressing room. A mid-floor landing bookcase reveals a secret bathroom – one of the biggest unexpected elements in the house.

There were a few pre-requisites: they didn’t need a house with lots of bedrooms; they wanted a bathroom each and rooms that enjoyed the light at different aspects of the day. The couple met a lot of resistance, especially when they decided to redesign the four-bed into a one-bed. “Apparently, it’s going to be difficult to sell,” laughs Mona. “Lucky we’ve no intention of moving.”



LEFT A rug from Carpet Vista sits under the table. “It’s an amazing place,” says Mona. “You input your dimensions and colours and you get a selection of thousands of rugs to fit the space you need.” **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The kitchen is designed to contrast. The backsplash is a single porcelain tile from Italian Tile and Stone in Terenure. Mona enjoying breakfast at the table.





The cinema-sitting room is painted in Farrow & Ball Salon Drab, as chosen by Rob. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The walls in the hallway and landing were left bare deliberately; as Mona and Rob painted the house themselves, it was a few less walls to paint. All the windows in the house were made by Ashton Joinery, while the radiators are from UKAA. The pendant light, made from recycled cardboard, is from Graypants. Rob's collection of records, and his "hobby" decks.





Thankfully, their architect Garbhan Doran from Broadstone Architects shared their vision to honour the time period of the house, while breathing new life into it, weaving some wonderful contradictions.

While urbane and sophisticated, it's also home to Mona's love of the past, dotted with antiques and curios. The upstairs kitchen built by Patrick McKenna of Wabi Sabi is one of the more contemporary rooms, bright and airy with brass and stone-effect cabinets.

In contrast, the adjoining cinema-sitting room is dark and moody with a large antique fireplace and a mix of retro and modern lighting and furniture. Rob's love of contemporary classic architecture, Mona's penchant for antiques, plus their refined taste and love of travel all aided the design process. Salvaging what they could, they set about redesigning with careful curation of both aesthetics in what could be considered two homes in one: contemporary for Rob and period with a nod to the modern for Mona. "It's a mishmash of styles and everything we love, hopefully it works." Ninety per cent of the original floorboards were saved, as were the shutters, but unfortunately the cornicing and all but one ceiling rose were too damaged to keep.

Having sale agreed on five houses prior, Mona had honed her sourcing skills over the years, well before landing their dream home. The only snag being everything bought was for another house. But her savvy eye, determination and sensitivity to the old has created spaces that feel as though items have been designed specifically for them.

Antique bedside lockers bought to fit the bedroom of the modern mews are simply turned sideways to fit; black wall-mounted

ABOVE LEFT The garden room at the back of the house is a "work in progress"; it's currently where things live that don't fit anywhere else in the house. **LEFT** Mona's love of teal can be seen in her choice of carpet from TC Matthews. Above hangs a print by Vincent Sheridan. **OPPOSITE** One of the biggest surprises about the house is the hidden bathroom on the first-floor return.





lights purchased for house number two make a striking addition to the kitchen wall, and even the couple's original couches work with the new space beautifully.

But to bring a project like this to completion, there must be sacrifices. An open fire in the hidden bathroom was pulled at the last minute when it was discovered there could be a carbon monoxide risk. "I was pretty gutted about that. I'd bought the fire set and everything," says Mona.

Renovating a period home comes with a seemingly endless set of obstacles, and they admit they were "walking through mud" with builders for over a year. The exposed plastered walls were advised against, the decision to move the downstairs fireplace to the sitting room upstairs was all told a "bad idea", while the original vintage taps in the antique bath "might just explode". "I do stand back when running a bath," laughs Mona. "We went against the grain on a lot of elements and we're so glad we did." For months, the couple urged the builders to knock the dividing wall in the downstairs bedroom in the hopes it would reveal the original partition doors. "When they finally did it, seven months into the build, we discovered beautiful original swinging doors. I actually did a little dance that day."

It's been less than a year since the couple moved in and two years since the build began; there are still snags, a few corners that need filling, and they haven't got around to the garden yet. The next phase is converting the garden shed. "It could very well be a mini gin distillery at this stage," laughs Mona. But, ultimately, they have achieved their goal: to bring something old and beautiful back to life, breaking a few rules along the way.



ABOVE LEFT Lucciola pendant lights from Twentytwentyone frame each side of the bed.

LEFT "This is the final result of Rob's fireplace salvage attempt," laughs Mona. "It's slate but has been painted so many times, it was virtually impossible to get it back to the original. We've decided we like the distressed look!" **OPPOSITE** The Victorian oriental wall hanging, bought at an auction, is three pieces of wallpaper hung separately with frames from Ferm Living.





The original sitting room of the house is now Mona's dressing room, which adjoins the couple's bedroom. In the centre is an vintage haberdashery cabinet bought for "a steal" on eBay, and on the wall is a neon sign what says draíocht meaning magic in Irish, which Mona had made by Club Neon. "I'm a teacher and I love Irish so I wanted something fun and Irish hanging here."



TOP, FROM LEFT A bamboo pendant light from Ay Illuminate. Cleo busy in her reading nook. Hugo's racing car is from Munchkins in Gorey. The pegboard in the playroom is from Danish cabinetmakers The OakMen. Emma and Hugo enjoying a cuddle. Framed scissors by Cori Kindred on Etsy with bulbs from Mullan Lighting. Colourful pottery are sentimental items as they were made by Emma's grandfather, who once owned the house. Cleo enjoying the view. RIGHT A wooden shoe rack, made from old crates on wheels.



Shore Thing

A boring bungalow by the sea is transformed into an airy and spacious home with a nod to the nautical.

WORDS ORLA NELIGAN PHOTOGRAPHY DOREEN KILFEATHER



“Despite everyone telling me not to, I did keep the original 1950s glass doors into the sitting room. That was both a design and a personal decision. I actually love the look of the doors but also, I have memories of sitting behind them in my pyjamas listening to glasses clinking and people chattering – I wanted to keep that memory alive.”



alking into Emma Lynch’s home overlooking Brittas Bay is like stepping inside the Tardis. Perched on the top of a grassy hill, the modest bungalow is unassuming until you discover its unfolding spacious interior. “That’s the impression I was aiming for,” laughs Emma. “I didn’t want to change the façade and wanted the interior to be a series of surprises.”

Her decision to keep the original front was sentimental, since the house once belonged to her grandparents. Emma had spent every childhood summer there until it was sold. In 2014, while she was living in London with her husband Peter, daughter Cleo (6) and son Hugo (3), the house came back on the market. “I never thought we’d get it back, but now it feels like it was meant to be.” However, with family homes come trappings of time, and sentimentality can often be a hurdle in design-terms, when owners are unable to part with or remove items.

Was this a challenge for Emma? “The beauty of it was that I knew the house inside out, nothing had really been changed, so it was very nostalgic, but also very dated. The kitchen, where the dining room table is now, was in the wrong place and didn’t have a sea view. The rooms were split up too much, making it feel claustrophobic. I wanted to open it up, alter it to suit our young family, and bring it alive again.” With 2,000 square feet, Emma knew she didn’t need to extend, but just rework the existing space. The house was gutted down to its four walls, rewired and re-plumbed.

“Despite everyone telling me not to, I did keep the original 1950s glass doors into the sitting room. That was both a design and a personal decision. I actually love the look of the doors, but also, I have memories of sitting behind them in my pyjamas listening to glasses clinking and people chattering – I wanted to keep that memory alive.” Equipped with a simple BER rating plan and a few measurements, Emma set about designing the house herself.

Walls were removed to make way for an open-concept design with views of the ocean from nearly every room. Her elegant, yet pared-back style is introduced in a carefully curated mix of Scandi-meets-country French interior: industrial lights, plush furnishings and rustic furniture sit side-by-side. Her knack for weaving together texture and colour is evident throughout: bright encaustic tiles in the kitchen, while the hall and bathrooms blend easily with natural touches like woven baskets and wall hangings. The result is contemporary yet beach-inspired all at once.

Despite its effortless appeal, it was anything but. “I’m like a dog with a bone,” laughs Emma. “I spent a lot of time sourcing the things I wanted. I didn’t want to fill the house with things I was just ‘happy enough’ with. I wanted things around me that I loved, and I was prepared to take the time and spend the money to have them.” It was her love of sourcing that inspired her to launch Lamb Design – an online collection of homewares and accessories sourced from far and wide. “I want it to be an online destination for those who like my aesthetic,” says Emma. “You might love one of my lamps and mix it with a contemporary piece of furniture you already own.”



The sunken sitting room is a favourite family hangout. The use of neutral colours and wood creates a simple palette, which Emma then layered with quirky art and colourful accessories, such as cushions and faux deer antlers. The original Noguchi coffee table adds a contemporary twist. **LEFT** Emma sourced the reclaimed wooden mantel from The Store Yard in Portlaoise, as well as the vintage oars in the corner of the room.



The kitchen's encaustic floor tiles are from Best Tile. The luxe Carrara marble counter, from M Roe & Sons in Deansgrange, is a favourite item in the house. **RIGHT** The kitchen, painted in Pinto and Smokey Joe by Helen Turkington paints, was handmade by P&M kitchens.

DESIGN TIP

"Start with something special," advises Emma. "When you are setting out on a room, pick one item that you really like – it could be anything from a tile pattern, a piece of furniture, a cushion or a piece of art. The item doesn't need to be a big feature piece, just a piece that you love, to set the mood. Then let that inspire you to work the rest of the room around it."



The kids' playroom is painted white, but the Ferm Living rug and beanbag from Nobodinoz add splashes of colour. **LEFT** Cement lights from Andy Thornton in the UK add an urban industrial edge to the otherwise French country style.





“A bungalow is simple living. There’s no shouting up the stairs, there’s a great flow to it. The kids love it. They have the huge garden, and the beach is just two minutes away.”

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP A bold blue blind from Mary Wafer in Gorey hangs in Hugo’s room above a toddler bed and Jute rug, both Little Lamb. Hugo points out his favourite picture. “It’s actually a tea towel from A La Campagne shop in Gorey,” laughs Emma. Cleo’s favourite teddies get pride of place in wall boxes from Harvey Norman. The teepee is from Domestic Objects in Hong Kong. The deer head is by Tamar Mogendorff. One of Cleo’s favourite things in her room is her grandmother’s mirror. Both the “Sandy Toes and Salty Kisses” sign and baby anchor are from notonthehighstreet.com.





Speaking of lights, Emma quickly admits to having a profound weakness for them. Partly because she believes there is a serious lack of good lighting available in Ireland, but also because lighting can set the whole tone of a house. The same applies to flooring. She refused to put in laminate for better budget reasons. “Then I’d have to live with it,” she smiles.

The biggest frustration, however, seems to have been the project management. “It worked well in one sense because I had time to plan everything and the builder wasn’t waiting around for deliveries – everything was ordered and here on time. But project managing it myself meant I had to be here every day, and juggling that with being a full-time mum of two small children was tricky.”

Her husband Peter made the decision on the stove and the cooker, but was happy to leave the rest to Emma. Having lived in four different houses, she admits this is the most comfortable home so far. “A bungalow is simple living. There’s no shouting up the stairs, there’s a great flow to it. The kids love it. They have the huge garden, and the beach is two minutes away. I feel very lucky to get the house back, and hopefully I’ve done it justice.” lambdesign.ie

TOP LEFT A navy wall makes a striking focal point in the back hallway, decorated with a wool clock from Anthropologie and two-tone baskets by Lamb Design. **TOP RIGHT** Emma’s love of woven wall hangings can be found throughout; this miniature one is by Weaverella. **LEFT** Industrial mirrors from Chehoma and lights from Lamb Design frame twin sinks. **OPPOSITE PAGE** One of Emma’s biggest spends was on lighting, which she believes can make or break a house; these are from LongMade Co on Etsy. On the bed is a Ferm Living cushion and a throw from Habitat.

