



**EWIN
LYONS**

An attic mezzanine area provided the perfect solution for a family seeking more space at home



Heavens above

ARCHITECT STERRIN O'SHEA opened her practice in 2005, specialising in extensions and new-builds. Design is just one aspect of the service she offers. "My role is to liaise with the client, be team leader for the design team, work with the builders, engineers, sub-contractors – in short, making sure everything gets done properly."

For the owners of a semi-detached Edwardian house in Dublin 6, her brief was to create more space for the couple and their three teenage daughters. This meant extending to the rear and creating a new attic mezzanine area. As well as simply having a greater floor area, they also wanted to create a building that would be elegantly modern, and at the same time workable for family life. Eight months later, the house has increased in size from 200sq m to 255sq m and the results present a beautiful canvas for the owners' lives.

The groundwork

"The project involved refurbishing the entire house. Heat loss and dampness were a concern, so floors were tanked and insulated, wet and dry rot was treated, and external walls were dry-lined," O'Shea says. The house had charming original features such as cornicing, architraves and panelling, which were restored. Internal doors were stripped and re-hung. A new plumbing system was installed and the main bathroom was enlarged and several en-suites added.

The courtyard

"The challenge was to balance the relationship between old and new, and to create a garden room which would not only link the extension to the main house, but also connect directly with the garden. It was critical that this would not compete with the main house, but would work with it in a sympathetic way without blocking natural daylight." For this reason, she designed an elevated courtyard that sits between the old

house and the new extension. With its sliding glass doors to the outside, this extension is essentially a garden room, and is used as a family living and dining room. The courtyard acts like an external room, and allows light into the original dining room at the rear of the house. The new kitchen, a space that links the old house to the garden room, has doors opening to this courtyard. The garden room, running the width of the site, is sunken. That means its impact is reduced when viewed from the hall and dining room in the original house.

The attic

The clients were also keen to convert the attic. "I had concerns about developing the attic as the head height was restricted, due to the low pitch of the main roof. So rather than make a separate room, we created a mezzanine room overlooking the main stairwell." Hatches for storage in the eaves are hidden along the birch veneered panelled walls and lighting is concealed beneath this, illuminating the marmoleum grey floor.

"Access to the attic room was a challenge because I didn't want to take away from the generous height of the existing landing by creating a regular staircase. The builder on this project was Brian Leach Construction (01-6244520) and together we introduced roof lights to the main roof and the roof over the return. These bring lots of daylight to either side of the main stairwell and hall."

Instead of extending the original staircase up to the attic in a pastiche fashion, O'Shea designed a new stainless steel and white oak stairs that appears to fold down. "It's quite bridge-like as we had to allow for two metres of head space below."

The details

On entering the house, the eye is drawn through a somewhat dark hall by the immense light and the view of the lush garden beyond. A storage



GRAND DESIGN The garden room (above, top), the courtyard (far right, top), the stainless steel and white oak staircase (far right, bottom) and the garden which was excavated to the same level as the new extension. Above, Sterrin O'Shea

wall acts as a link between old and new. It begins under the main stairwell (a toilet and cloakroom have been incorporated) and extends into the kitchen, concealing the gas boiler, water cylinder, laundry facilities and larder presses. It continues into the rear extension, providing more storage, and ending in the form of a study desk. Most of the kitchen appliances are housed in the 1,100mm-wide island that is clad in white marble. There is a recess in the island to allow for casual dining on stools facing the courtyard.

"The clients wanted a garden room that would be connected to the kitchen, but at the same time sealed off from it, so we put in a double sliding wall between the two spaces to achieve this. The main slider is made of frameless glass and the other is white oak, which acts as a backdrop to the dining table, made from the same wood."

The materials

The palette of materials was kept to a minimum. The same hardwoods and natural stones were used in both the new additions and the old house. All the floors and joinery are made from American white oak with an oil finish. Hardwearing limestone flags were selected for the hallway, kitchen, bathrooms and courtyard. Sprayed and lacquered MDF with routed flush edges instead of handles were used for doors to wardrobes and storage walls.

The garden

"The job also involved re-working the rear garden. This was originally half a level above the ground floor of the rear return and was oppressive when viewed from the main house. To deal with this, we excavated the garden to the same level as the new extension." Landscape designer Bernard Hickey worked on planting and the layout of the garden.

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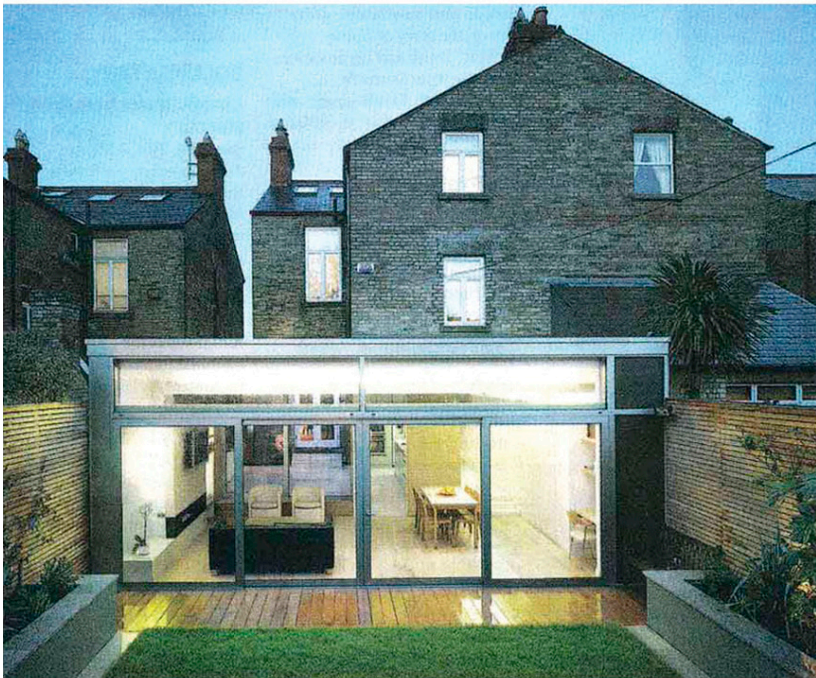
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