



STERRIN O'SHEA

STERRIN O'SHEA ARCHITECTS

After studying architecture at DIT, Sterrin O'Shea worked with Engelen Moore in Sydney for two years. Back in Dublin, she worked for Murray O'Lauro and FKL Architects. She then spent two-and-a-half

years at Grafton Architects before setting up on her own, as Sterrin O'Shea Architects. She is now working on houses in the city.

"I like the competitive nature of architecture now. The work has become braver, more daring and more progressive. I love the fact that Ireland is finally on the map and being recognised abroad; you can tell that by the number of foreign architects who are choosing to work here.

"There are also good planners around now and attitudes have changed. They have relaxed a bit more towards the idea of high density and tall buildings, and it is time that Dublin densified.

"Architects are more attractive to developers now. They see how architects can add something to a building that will bring more value.

"Irish people seem to be more design aware and have a better appreciation of good architecture. It has been easier for other countries. When I was on an Erasmus year in Paris I was amazed at how the French are so interested in and proud of their buildings; that has a lot to do with things like the free lectures in the Louvre, by fairly famous architects, that any Joe Soap can wander off the street and listen to.

"I've always chosen to work in design-led offices because, while you can learn the technical side of architecture in any office, such as planning law and building regulations, design practices teach you the value of spending time at the design stage. Many architects joke that they often return to their first idea, but it is the process of working to make building better that is so important.

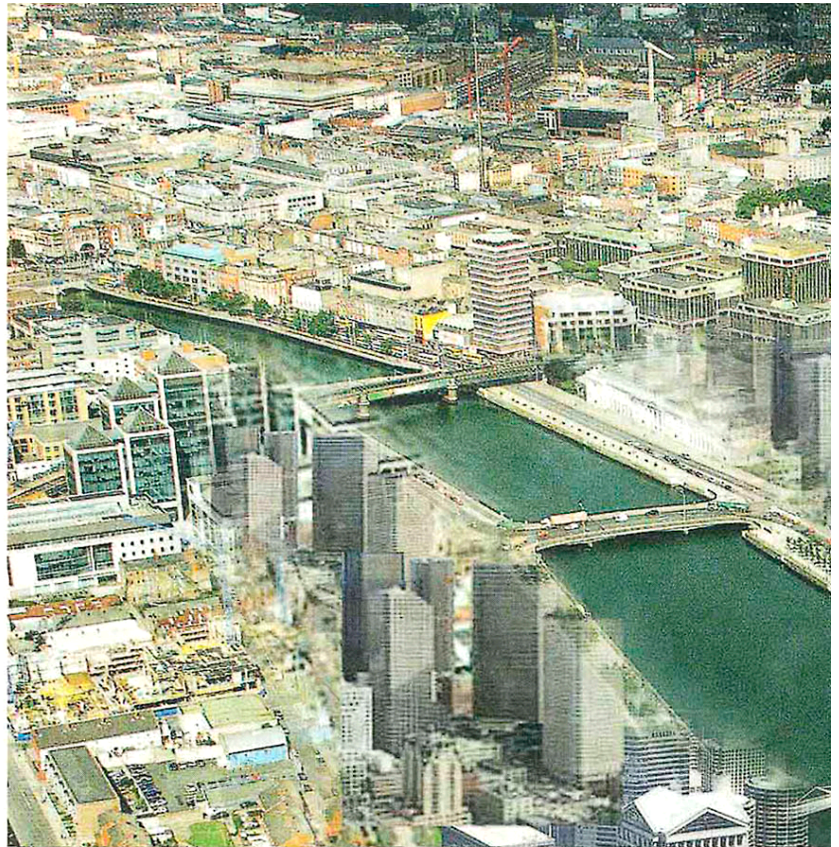
"I can't imagine working on a project I don't respect. I've always sought out those offices that inspire me. You're always learning in those offices, almost by osmosis.

the arts. Architecturally, there is a lot of catching up to do. I don't like saying that, but Dublin has spread horizontally and not vertically. All architects value density as a positive thing. We just have to be very careful, for instance, how tall buildings connect to the ground, because it is possible to build bad, tall buildings. Besides needing a greater density, the other major issue is our transport system, which lets us down. London has had an underground for 150 years. In a way, the infrastructure has to be there before all the building and all the urban ideas can work.

"When people come to visit me here, I show them Georgian Dublin for its scale, materials, design, grace and the way it has stood the test of time. I take most architects to the Docklands and Ballymun to see how they have addressed the massive task of creating a sense of place and how to rehouse people in a positive way.

"Trinity and UCD are good places to bring architects too, because they have really good buildings of different scales and different eras. My favourite building is the Bank of Ireland on Baggot Street by Scott Tallon Walker. I like the spaces between the buildings and the way it all relates to the street.

"In an ideal world, it would be great if our generation of architects could give Dublin a modern identity. That would be a massive task, to design flexible, adaptable living and working spaces and create buildings that have a sense of permanence. I have faith that we can get there, although it will happen very slowly, but the great thing is that it is so inspiring that architecture is no longer just about ideas - architects are now in a position to execute them."



The only way is up: a Pittsburgh-style skyline superimposed on the Dublin docklands area (looking upriver). Many architects agree that the city needs to intensify its urban space use in order to rein in urban sprawl



PETER CARROLL

A2 ARCHITECTS

Peter Carroll graduated from UCD in 1995 and worked with O'Donnell and Tuomey. He also edited *Building Material*, a quarterly published by the Architecture Association of Ireland (AAI). He then spent three years working for Rafael Moneo in Spain before setting up A2 Architects with Caomhán Murphy in 2005. He teaches architecture part-time in Limerick University.

"It's an exciting time and there are great challenges for us. The scale of change has been phenomenal. We have never seen a city change so quickly and it has highlighted the value we place on things.

"Architects are becoming engaged in the debate about the lack of infrastructure, coordinated planning and political will. This is something we addressed in an exhibition we did with Boyd Cody Architects in Lisbon, which was designed to bring important debates into public awareness. And the general public have become a lot more knowledgeable about design in all fields.

"We need to make a difference as architects, not just by designing compact bijou extensions and houses, but by looking at the bigger picture. The lack of infrastructure and planning affects how we live in the city. The

quality of life is not there because of the lack of quality of space and the need to drive.

"It is good to see the recent new Dublin apartment guidelines for large homes with more storage. People are only just waking up to this. We shouldn't build the city through crisis management all the time, with developers promoting buildings beyond the expectations and needs of the local community. Often building is dictated by the economy and developers, with Dublin City Council having to respond every time a new plan is shown to them. When it comes to planning, we need to have a shared and clear idea of where the city will go. I feel positive about Dublin - there is a very exciting culture of architecture here and it is great to see it promoted in other cities, such as Limerick.

"We make sure that there is sustainability in everything we do. We are not interested in wearing a green hat but instead want it to be an integral part of the practice. When we design buildings we are not afraid to be conventional. Some buildings now have a sense of newness and foreignness to them, but they can lose touch with vernacular ideas about space and environment. We are losing a lot of qualities in Ireland because of that need to be new.

"While I don't have a favourite building in Dublin, there are certain special moments, such as passing through the gateway in Trinity, with its end-grain

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1 Phoenix Terrace
Blackrock
County Dublin

www.sosa.ie

Published in:

The Irish Times
Dublin's Rising 26 September 2007
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