The houses that never made it

They were fine designs, but money, planners or events stopped them being constructed. Mark **Keenan** salutes the great unbuilt

ome of the most engaging work by the best architects never sees the light of day. It might surprise the average punter to know that up to wo-thirds of designs are never built.

Even the great Frank Lloyd Wright was hit regularly by changed circumstances, bankrupt clients and uncooperative planning authorities. In all, 380 of his projects were never constructed.

One design that did get built — eventually — is in Delgany, Co Wicklow. It is the first Wright house in Europe and was constructed three years ago by Marc Coleman, who obtained permission to go ahead with a mothballed 1959 design by the great master.

Ireland had an explosion in home designs during the boom years but, after the bubble burst, many architects found, like Wright, that their clients were cleared out or simply cleared off. Other homes are not built because planners put the kibosh on them. Some are concept designs that are intended to provoke debate rather to be constructed.

To show off the homes that have never seen the light of day, Home Ireland asked the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland to canvass its members for images of their best-laid plans that went astray.

This week and next week, we will present a selection of the submissions in order to celebrate the effort that went into them. So here's to the great unbuilt

Slated in Sligo Who: Sterrin O'Shea

Where: A rural site in Co Sligo overlooking Benbulben

When: 2008 What it is: Designed by Sterrin O'Shea who cut her teeth with Grafton Architects and FKL, this design was drawn up for a young couple who wanted to turn a 1930s protected cottage into something special. The dark cramped cottage had to be retained (a planning condition and a budgetary constraint) and a two-storey

The cottage overlooks the Atlantic coast to the west and Benblben to the north. O'Shea attempted a contemporary take on rural themes, deliberately eschewing hard box forms for traditional pitched forms and cladding in traditional slate.

extension would not be permitted.

The interior, however, was designed as an open-plan space with picture windows framing the stunning views. Timber boxes inside would house service areas such as the kitchen and

Rather than adding a "lean-to" extension to the side or rear, the architect proposed a new form separated from the









original via a glazed link, but slipped in to allow for a screened car parking forecourt and deck area. This new structure would mirror the profile (pitch/height/ width) of the original cottage and be clad entirely in slate matching that of the existing pitched roof. A secret staircase cut into the timber box would give access to the loft, which would overlook the double-height living/dining space.

Why didn't it go ahead? Permission was granted in 2007 but the plan was stopped by the banks. The clients returned to their bank to find that it would no longer finance the scheme. The cli-

Undecided

Who: Leahy & Associates Where: A rural site with views in Innishannon, Co Cork

When: 2007 **What it is:** A 4,000-sq-ft home reflecting one in render, one in brick.

local forms and materials. It was designed in glass and cut stone, with a rounded roof reflecting the rural barn form commonly found in the landscape. Why didn't it go ahead? The clients kept changing their mind on what they wanted and eventually lost interest. As a result, the design didn't even make it

Who: Sean Fogarty of Open Office Architects of Dublin

Where: A lane in Rathgar, Dublin 6

When: 2005 What it is: Open Office Architects was commissioned by a lawyer who had dabbled in development to design two adjoining mews houses in a back lane in Rathgar. The architect's first design was for two distinctly different residences: one two storey, the other of three floors;

sign, but it was shot down by An Bord Pleanala. The architect's second effort was a sleek poured concrete design in which the two residences appeared to be

Why didn't it go ahead? An Bord Pleanala approved this design on the day that Bertie Ahern resigned. It quickly became clear that the property market was turning sour and the developer wisely put the project on "indefinite

Boxed in the head

Who: David Dwyer of Box Urban Where: Kilmacud, Dublin

When: 2003

What it is: A contemporary home for an infill site in an estate of 1960s suburban semis. Dwyer's partnership with Gary Mongey — Box Architecture — wowed Ireland in the early Noughties with some of the coolest back lane creations around. As the name suggests, the pair did pure contemporary form in straight lines. Since the partnership split, Dwyer nas taken his own direction with Box

In 2003, Dwyer was approached by clients with a site that could be created next to their house by knocking down a granny flat. Dwyer harked back to 1950s irban architecture to find inspiration for the city home of the future. The design was based on the needs of the smaller modern family, which averaged 2.1 children rather than the 3.5 children that was typical when the semis were

One large box, containing the main living space, sat on top of another. The lower half would have been red brick and the top half render to match the sur rounding houses.

Why didn't it go ahead? While the local authority approved, An Bord Pleanala wanted something more traditional. The architect drafted three more plans and all three were shot down. In the end, the client won permission for a "more traditional" form. It's possible the design was just a little ahead of its time for the Board and might get a

Foxrock clocked

Who: Colin Galavan & Associates Where: Torquay Road in Dublin's posh Foxrock suburb

When: 2008

What it is: A 4,520-sq-ft, six-bedroom house over two storeys, with an exterior finish of stone and plaster, and a natura slate roof. The result of a compromise between the clients, who wanted a replica period home, and the planners, who wanted a contemporary version, the design was remarkably energy efficient. It incorporated high levels of insulation, a ground source heat pump, underfloor heating, heat recovery ventilation system and solar panels. The external walls were to be constructed using insulated concrete formwork.

Why didn't it go ahead? Construction did start but was halted in July 2008, a victim of the economic downturn. The house remains unfinished.

Who: Niall D Brennan Associates Where: A site in Killiney, Co Dublin

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