Re-inhabiting a protected 19th-century end-of-terrace house and garden, this project creates a family home oriented to the garden. New glazed brick and timber elements graft the house and mews to the garden, making this the focus of habitation. The garden extends onto new green roofs. The roof of the original house drains via the new study roof and garden wall to a cistern, which contains fish, and waters the southwest-facing vegetable plot, stretching to the mature apple tree and mews beyond.

Reuse / grafting

The project strips away extraneous extensions and makes a new connection from entrance to garden level by reconfiguring the lowest flight of stairs to arrive at a small study, raised two steps above kitchen level. Additional accommodation at the other end of the garden is built from the walls of an existing garage, providing play space and guest accommodation while resulting in minimal intervention in the main house. Upstairs in the old house, a bathroom is inserted into the plan, lit and ventilated by a new roof light and pivoting clerestory window.

New fabric / existing fabric

The new study extending as a plinth from the stairs into the garden is sited in a sheltered, sunny corner, capturing solar heat for the kitchen and stair hall. The new walls, stitched into the existing, are of robust, sky-blue, glazed brick and concrete, made of granite sand, designed to capture light and to weather in the elements. The remnants of the old garage walls are also wrapped in glazed brick, and above this the loft is made of breathable, hemp-insulated, timber-framed walls clad in sweet chestnut and supporting a planted roof and hanging gardens. South-facing roof lights are inserted over stairs and shower. The sweet chestnut is sawn and finger-jointed from small-section coppiced wood sourced from Welsh woodlands. The ground floor is finished in large Valentia slate slabs, and kitchen units are finished in granite concrete with slate worktops. The house is heated by a borehole geothermal heat-pump, with a range, wood-burning stove and convecting fireplace. Water is heated primarily by a solar panel in the roof valley.

address – Ranelagh, Dublin 6
client – private
photography – DDA
design to completion – 2006-2009
area – 301m²
AAI Awards entry panels

New garden building seen from mews lane

opposite
Cistern, apple tree, garden room
HOUSE - GARDEN - GRAFT

Section AA
Garden building - side and front elevations

Section BB
Plans - ground, 1st, 2nd floors
HOUSE - GARDEN - GRAFT

Detail views of garden room

Top light

Insertion of bathrooms and rooflight

New stair and study with rainwater pool

opposite

New openings to garden

Side light to kitchen
McLAUGHLIN – I really like this project. It's one case where, maybe, less is more. It hasn't gone for the big architectural move, and, by doing that, it's kind of made a virtue out of it. They haven't built a big extension, like most of these houses; instead, they've just built a room at the end of the garden, and that's where the playroom is, which is quite practical. I really like the integration with the house. I like the fact that you see books and toys and things. It feels lived-in, even if there aren't actually people in the photos. It's just quite real.

JENCKS – All of that is true...

FARRELL – I love the blue tile, the ordinary, sparkling colour. I like the atmosphere of the drawings and the pictures, the clarity with which they show new and old... A lot of entrants didn't do that, and sometimes it's very hard to see what is an addition. I like the separation so that you actually extend the plot to the very end, and you have a reason to go down there. You have the expenditure of the full dimension. The control of materials and range of materials is really strong. I'm surprised that the path down to the end is not wider and more substantial because you have to tiptoe across these little pieces on the grass. It's like a game of hop, skip and jump. I would imagine you would actually go to that building quite a lot, and walking on grass in wet weather in Ireland is not very practical. In the overall context, it's nothing, but the relationship in ground might have been stronger.

McLAUGHLIN – The big move of putting the new build at the end means you don't have the problem of that middle room that we were talking about elsewhere. It means that the graft isn't taking over the host; the host body is restored to health. I think there's a kind of intelligence about that which isn't about big architectural things. It's a very quiet kind of intelligence. I would give this an award.

DEPLAZES – It's good. It's ordinary, with a subtle note of poetics.

KEAVENEY – It's simple, restrained, nicely integrated, sympathetic, not clunky or gauche. It's a successful realisation.

McLAUGHLIN – I think that making slightly less stuff is a very interesting kind of strategy, and something that, as architects, we need to start thinking about in terms of sustainability. How do you actually make fewer things? Many of these extension projects suck something out of the original houses, but this one doesn't.

MARCUS DONAGHY was born in Dublin in 1968, and graduated from UCD in 1993. Worked with Paul Keogh Architects in 1997. WILL DIMOND was born in 1961. Holds a BA in modern languages from Bristol University (1980-84), and graduated from UCD in 1992. Worked with O'Donnell + Tuomey from 1992 to 2001. Both partners have been part-time lecturers at UCD since 1999. DONAGHY & DIMOND ARCHITECTS was formed by in 2001. Practice ranges from furniture design through to houses and gardens to public space and buildings in urban and rural conditions.

DESIGN TEAM – Marcus Donaghy, Will Dimond, Máire Kiely (project architect) collaborators: Anne Henry, Margaret Krawecka, Conal Ryans, David Maher (structural engineer)

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