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The house is located in a conservation area, on a small but prominent infill corner site at the junction of Mountpleasant Avenue and Richmond Place in Rathmines. A modest dwelling was built to replace the existing cottage located on the site. The accommodation consists of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, utility, and living/dining area, laid out on three separate levels. At two storeys high, the house is substantially in character with the nearby terrace of houses. It forms a low book-end building to Richmond Place, while making a strong contextual response to both the unusual site configuration and the prevailing architecture.

The geometry of the existing site is the principal generator of the building form. Approximately triangular in shape and with a pronounced curve along Richmond Place, the house adopts the site boundary line along its north and south elevations, and aligns with the adjacent terrace to the east and west. In order to maintain the low-lying nature of the block fronting to Richmond Place, the living room is sunk 75cm into the ground, following the natural fall across the site. The ambition was to build the entire site, maximising the footprint of the building, and visually extending the living area into the external courtyards.

The house exploits and explores its section to create a series of interconnected but separate spaces, providing each area with a degree of autonomy. The main bedroom opens out into the roof-lit stairwell by means of a workdesk and folding screen, forming a potentially seamless flow of space connecting with the living room and kitchen below. The kitchen itself is located at entry level. It overlooks the living space across the worktop, with the storage units fronting to the living room, housing the TV, etc, while the concrete desk, formed by extending the ground surface into the building, faces west into the courtyard and neighbouring street beyond.

Externally, the house is faced entirely in brick with aluminium windows, while internally a simple palette of materials is deployed – white oak, concrete and rubber – giving a legible and uniform reading to the interior.

area – 110m² / design to completion – 2004-2005 / photography – Paul Tierney
HOUSE, RICHMOND PLACE

Elevation to Mountpleasant Avenue (with wall removed)
Ground and 1st-floor plans
Elevation to Richmond Place

opposite
Day and night views from junction of Mountpleasant Avenue and Richmond Place
View from Richmond Place and cross-section through house
ASSESSORS' COMMENTS

STEVENS – Here we have the privacy issue again – bedrooms with big plane windows. Windows have to do more than that. You can’t have an upstairs bedroom with a huge public window.

BENSON – Unless you’re an exhibitionist. As a house though, it’s very nice. I like the entrance and that curve.

PIÑOS – I like how resolved the curved corner is, how it makes the whole wall sweet. The architect articulates the corner very well. But I think the people who live here must be exhibitionists. You see all the family getting out of the bed. This big window is in front of the bed, and all the street sees the bed.

STEVENS – This person is a good architect. It’s nicely made and it’s nicely conceived in the way that it all goes together. The fact that this living space is sunken helps it. But there’s still a lack of resolution. You look at the open-sided fireplace with the steps alongside, and I’m not sure about it. And it’s nice that the kitchen overlooking the space is slightly buried, but does it work?

PIÑOS – I think it works. And when you are cooking you can see, you have a view. The only thing I don’t understand in this project is the emphasis on the bed in the window. Because the bed could be away from the window, but the architect presents this photograph like it is a quality. It’s strange.

STEVENS – You could always get some of that yellow glass stuff they used on the Kevin’s Road house.

BENSON – Or some of that lattice from London.

HRAUSKY – I just thought this was a tradition in Ireland, like in Holland where everybody has these windows and shows themselves off.

BENSON – No, it’s quite the reverse. We used to have a famous book here called The Valley of the Squinting Windows, because the curtains were opened only slightly to look out, not to let anybody look in. But the main photograph is quite painterly.

HRAUSKY – Otherwise, I like how these external masses are handled, and the details. I even don’t mind this fireplace in the corner, and the sunken living space. If you have ever been to such places, it’s very nice because when you sit down, you have the grass at eye-level.

STEVENS – For me that window shows a primary lack of judgement. I think that bedroom side is completely dumb. The house on Sorrento Road, with the big living spaces upstairs, is a better example of this language.

PIÑOS – The relationship with the surroundings is perfect. With the massing and the curved wall, when you see it in context, it fits with the rest.