The owners of this early 20th-century semi-detached house approached us to design their kitchen and garden. The brief was to create a new kitchen/dining room in the existing return, to provide a room with open aspect to the west-facing garden and accessible outdoor space, orientating the accommodation away from the return next door. The brief also required consideration of utility, boiler-house, etc, within the works.

The response to the brief was to clear the garden of a jumble of outhouses and take out the bottom floor of the return. The upper floor is supported on cantilever beams propped by a new concrete pier, held back from the edge of the walls above, allowing a free plan below. This free plan allowed for reforming the space without over-extending the plan.

The new wall of the return is cast as a south-facing concrete bench rising to become a solid screen wall to the dining alcove. The external bench extends into the kitchen to become the polished concrete counter top. This work surface is lit through a slatted timber screen to provide privacy at eye level, with a more open slider below. The dining space is lit from above by light reflecting off the new exposed concrete party wall.

Plan and section extend outwards to the garden and the sky from the constricted entry, through the kitchen space, widening out at the dining table and up through the roof light at the west-facing gable. This foreshortens the view to the garden and allows oblique glimpses through the extension from the west-facing rear window of the existing reception rooms. The garden is regraded with a low concrete retaining wall, extending to form a plinth for an outhouse. The concrete outhouse roof cantilevers from the new garden/party wall, which extends back into the kitchen to form the chimney breast of the new hearth.

The project allows south light to enter the plan and privacy from the neighbouring house to the south. The new element takes the form of a drawer, cast beneath the suspended return. The outside of this insert is cast in situ in exposed aggregate concrete with a granite sand. The floor, hearth and kitchen units are cast as one, in concrete with a polished finish. The seating surfaces are lined in oak plywood.

area – 28m² / design to completion – Feb 2004-June 2005 / ph. – Luke White, Marie-Louise Halpenny
KITCHEN-GARDEN-PARTY-WALL

Cross-sections

Longitudinal section-elevation

Ground-floor plan
South-facing window seat

Rooflight detail

South elevation
KITCHEN-GARDEN-PARTY-WALL

Views of dining alcove and kitchen area

opposite
View towards garden (with timber-clad outhouse)
Pivot door to garden
West elevation
ASSESSORS’ COMMENTS

STEVENS – I like this project, especially for its use of materials.
PIÑOS – I like it for how the materials are expressed. And indeed how well the project is expressed in drawings, models and photographs. It seems like a building of Kahn’s just forming in the drawing. I think for an extension, it is not necessarily the best, but it is fine.
BENSON – I think it’s too angular for where it is.
STEVENS – I like the way that there’s a clarity about where the old house is, and how this new piece slides underneath the old house so that the new piece doesn’t disturb the rest of the house. It’s very clear what’s old and what’s new. There’s a tightness about it: the architect is just using concrete and timber, which is tighter than a lot of the other nicely made projects that have a bit of this, and a bit of that, and a bit of the other. This has a very straightforward palette of materials, it’s very nicely made, and it’s clear how it tucks in under the building. So at every level, for me, it’s clearer. It may not be quite as elegant as some of the others, but it’s clearer.
HRAUSKY – On the long elevation, which is the south side, you have this built-in bench, you know, where you can sit and enjoy the sun. I think the only weakness here is this timber-screened window. I don’t see the need for it – is there that much sun?
PIÑOS – It is all very beautifully made, inside and out. And I also like this long section through the house to the garden.
BENSON – There is a pressing need to provide people with a range of good contemporary exemplars for domestic extensions, and for that reason I’d like to have it in the exhibition.
HRAUSKY – It is another one of these highly commendable, modest projects, like the little green library. It is the same theme in a way.

DONAGHY & DIMOND ARCHITECTS was formed by Marcus Donaghy and Will Dimond in 2001.

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