This project involves the construction of a new single-storey, 50m² addition to an existing three-storey house situated in Clontarf between Hollybrook Park and the Howth Road. The existing house, itself the modified return of a larger residence, lacked sufficient living accommodation for a growing family. The strategy involved breaking out the gable wall to form a new extended entrance, living, kitchen and dining area, set over three interconnected levels. The addition remains relatively opaque to the busy road, while beyond are two L-shaped glazed screens opening to communal garden and private courtyard. The small courtyard is trapped by the plan, holding a piece of outdoor space, forming a connection to the timber-clad roof terrace above while providing a much needed element of recreational space in a house that has no associated private garden.

An extended ground plane that incorporates both the external entrance and enclosed courtyard is formed from a cast concrete plinth that is depressed 75cm below the entry level to form the dining room, and raised 90cm to the level of the existing living room. The kitchen occupies the interstitial space, supervising the entrance, enjoying a view of the communal garden beyond. The living-room floor extends out to form the kitchen counter top, just as the concrete floor slab extends out along the glazed wall of the external entrance to form a long table top facing into the dining room. Above this cast ground plane the enclosing walls are formed from traditional cavity-block construction, rendered internally and externally to invite the reading of a single, integrated volume.

A series of upstand rooflights are made in the roof to make headroom for the physical connection between the existing house and the addition, to draw light from both east and west into the rooms below and onto the work surfaces over the course of the day, compensating for the addition's otherwise northern orientation. The ceiling is pulled away from the external walls to give the impression of a floating roof plane overhead and a more singular reading to the external volume, as the glazed panels extend in front of the enclosing parapet walls.

area – refurbishment 27.5m² / additions 55.5m² / design to completion – 2004-2006
photography – Paul Tierney
ASSESSORS' COMMENTS

ROLFE – It’s beautifully sculptural, but there’s nothing there to tell me much about the context, other than that photograph which isn’t very enlightening. It survives on the images of the interiors, which are beautiful.

HENCHION – I think it’s skilled and elegant.

GERRARD – It seems to me to be formally well resolved. The materials are relatively conventional, in some ways. It’s not setting me alight, but I appreciate its intentions.

HENCHION – If someone went in and lived in it, it might just be better for it...

GERRARD – The floor seems to extend onto the work bench, is that right?

ROLFE – It looks like a ramp that models walk up and down.

RAMBERT – I think it’s a very good addition, because it works. It’s real architecture: it works with space, with light, it gives views, it gives very interesting spaces... The site was very tight, so the exercise, we know, is very limited.

HENCHION – After you look at a lot of the busier projects, you come back late in the afternoon and enjoy its quietness again.

RAMBERT – And it seems to give you more space than there is really, and that’s a very good quality.

ROLFE – Well, it’s been very well photographed.

RAMBERT – Sure, but those qualities are there in the project. It’s not the kind of project that is only a picture.

ROLFE – Well, it’s specific because they have chosen to photograph it before it’s inhabited.

RAMBERT – It deals well with space.

HENCHION – It would be an issue if we were looking at photographs and not the object, but it’s a skill for an architect to make the right photographs possible. I would recognise that.

GERRARD – It may not be just the photography. It may just be a very minimalist type of usage of the space. Like the kitchen, for example. I’ve seen a lot of kitchens that look just like that!

RAMBERT – Yes, it’s minimalist, but not formalist in that way.

DERMOT BOYD and PETER CODY studied and graduated together from Dublin Institute of Technology in 1990. Peter Cody received a Masters degree from Columbia University in 1996. Both served as president of the AAI. Dermot Boyd teaches at DIT and Peter Cody at University College Dublin. BOYD CODY ARCHITECTS was established in 2000. The practice won the Monaghan Civic Offices competition in 2002, and has received numerous awards, including the AAI Downes Medal in 2005. They have been shortlisted for the British Young Architects Award. Their projects have been widely published, and they featured in the Venice Architectural Biennale, 2006, and the Lisbon Architectural Triennale, 2007.

DESIGN TEAM – Sinead Bourke, Dermot Boyd, Peter Cody, Ryan Kennihan, Oran O’Siochain

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