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THE SLEEPING GIANT, KILLINEY

O' DONNELL + TUOMEY ARCHITECTS

The house is built around a rocky outcrop in Killiney, with the concrete and rock making a primal and poetic connection between nature and construction. The plan of the house sprawls across the contours of the site like a sleeping giant. The house is arranged in a series of stepping half-levels, each cut into the existing slope of the site and all overlaid with a faceted concrete roof. Entry is at the lowest level and the climb begins from there, moving up out of the hollow towards the sea view.

The children's bedrooms are clustered around a playroom at the first half-landing, with secret doors between wardrobes, and secret stairs leading to the kitchen. A thick wall runs through the middle of the plan, containing fireplace, secondary stairs and passageways, and bringing in clerestory light from above. Dining is on the west side of this hollow wall, and kitchen/living is on the other side. The master bedroom is under the highest end of the concrete roof, with views out across the roof to the south and back down into the house through the telescope of the hollow wall. The living room looks out to sea, with the constant datum of the distant horizon contrasting with the canted underside of the concrete canopy roof. On the east/southeast side, the house is open to the sea view, relating to the landscape form of the distant mountains. On the west, garden side, the house closes down to protect its privacy from the road along the suburban boundary.

address – Glenalua Road, Killiney, Co Dublin  
client – private  
photography – Dennis Gilbert / ODT (b/w illus)  
design to completion – 2005-2007  
area – 500m²
THE SLEEPING GIANT

View eastwards to sea, with mountains to south
View of sea from sunken garden hollow
Nearby Forty Foot with granite outcrops and concrete platforms
Granite outcrop inspired the solid granite walls, granite dust lime render, and granite sand concrete roof
Sleeping Giant models

opposite – AAI Awards entry panels

previous page – The sweeping cloak of the faceted concrete roof, visible from the road above
Plans — main and lower floors
Abstract site plan / Roof plan
Section through rock and kitchen, spine-wall, dining room and terraced garden

opposite

The faceted concrete roof-ceiling in the kitchen, living room, and dining room.
Kitchen door pivots to greet the sea in the morning.
ASSESSORS' COMMENTS

PAPA – I really like this project.
KOIVISTO – This is not something I would normally like, but I really think it's kind of cool. I like a lot the image of the stairway which leads straight into the sea.
WANG – And we have a wonderful watercolour.
ROBINSON – I like this as well. It jumps out from the ruck of houses that we have seen.
PAPA – It reminds me of Siza's early work, like his little restaurant on the rocks, which is not trying to shout; it tumbles down. The other house we like – you know the 'black seaweed one' [Tuath na Mara] – comes up like a prow, but this one hugs the cliff as it tumbles down, and then it uses light and the juxtaposition of the roofs to really bring light deep into the plan. And it's just concrete and wood.
KOIVISTO – It's funny. If I had seen just the plans, and the model, I don't think I would have liked it at all. You know the three stones houses for the sisters [3 Houses, Cong]? This has a kind of similar thing which feels like it would last for a long time and you could look forward to inheriting the house.
PAPA – I mean, look at the gutter detail...
HASSETT – Yes, the gutter detail is very convincing.
WANG – I think now that you mention Siza I really think that this is much heavier in terms of detailing. Because Siza has overhanging roofs and very fine edge details, the whole thing becomes quite refined. All these profiles are very thick-set.
PAPA – I don't mind that. And I think, actually, because of the muted palette – the concrete, the simplicity and the sort of flatness of the concrete – it actually allows the wood to do all the work. I like it a lot.
HASSETT – I agree with Wilfried. There's too much over-articulation afterwards. And there's actually very little idea on what the space would be like. I am relying on that [kitchen door photo] to convince myself that it would be nice. But I also agree with Dominic that there is very clear aspiration towards architecture. The overall form of the roof is particularly nice.
PAPA – I think the cliché would be to have frameless windows and big sliding doors and bi-fold outs. I like the fact that instead there is this kind of layering of wood and glass.
ROBINSON – The complicated roof form, with its various shallow slopes, rhymes very intelligently with the sprawling rock outcrops on the site. I like it.

previous pages – Entry forecourt / Kitchen terrace with granite outcrop / Master bedroom balcony with telescopic view of sea
View from road of sweeping cloak of faceted concrete roof / Kitchen built up tight against granite outcrop.


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