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With this project we had the opportunity to work closely with our clients to refurbish the entire house and garden, making a marked change in its design and atmosphere. This late Georgian terraced house has rooms of majestic proportions. In light of this we felt there was no need to make any significant change to the main body of the house, and we worked primarily in what were originally the servant spaces – the basement and the return.

The concept behind our approach was to see our architecture as installation. Where we worked within the original house, we abstracted our work in order to disengage our designs from existing conditions. We used a reduced palette of rich materials to unify the interventions that we made throughout the house – for instance, black walnut and marble, which are the common floor finishes in the project.

The kitchen addition is simply cut and extruded out of the existing return to accommodate a new dining area. Its location takes advantage of the south-east views down the neighbouring gardens, and the large sliding glazed screen allows for its use as an indoor/outdoor space. Access is provided to the garden via reconfigured existing granite steps. A garden store and boiler room are located below.

On the first floor of the return a new shower room is introduced. This space is roof-lit, and a heavily veined white marble floor was installed. A pool of natural light defines the wet area in the room, which is further articulated by the walnut boarding and the glazing of the shower enclosure. A dressing room is accommodated in an existing first-floor bedroom at the rear of the house, and is designed as a series of floating wardrobes, each finished in different veneers – birch, zebrano and mirror. They are moveable and have integrated up-lighters that illuminate the room.

Dove-grey marble floors cover the basement. Their reflective quality is exploited by various sources of artificial light. The utility room and guest bathroom are hidden behind folding walnut screen doors which line the basement hall.

The geometries of the house determine the layout of the rear and front garden. The client required that these were maintenance-free, and the architecture and planting mirror
this desire. A black reflecting pool in the rear garden provides a counterpoint to the openness of the new kitchen. It runs alongside a Dublin limestone boundary wall and links the upper garden with the granite terrace below. In the front garden it is the construction of a sunken terrace and garden store that provides the interest, screened behind a veil of black bamboo.

area – 260m²
design to completion – 2003-2004
photography – Paul Tierney, Cillian Hayes
WELLINGTON ROAD

Longitudinal section-elevation and section through original house and return

Plans (from bottom) – basement, ground, and 1st-floor plans
ASSESSORS' COMMENTS

RILEY – This is probably the most well-done little addition of them all. It certainly integrates well with the pre-existing house. If you look at the lower level, and this walnut-panelled corridor, this new thing just reaches in all the way back to the existing house. It looks a bit complicated at first: there is a sliding glass wall and then a second glass rail along the length of the dining room. So there was a little loss of nerve there, but that's okay – you don’t want your guests falling off the edge.

MURPHY – I like the way it works with the original old return, the way the new goes back into the existing older extension. I like the way that full-height window articulates itself through the new and the existing.

RILEY – It's really an extension on an extension.

MURPHY – They actually paid great attention to that.

RILEY – It's like the one kind of unravelling story...

MATEUS – It's very interesting the way this whole area behind the original house became the space.

BYRNE – It's actually quite a modest thing to do at the back of a typical Victorian terraced house, that you would continue the return in a very sculptural way. It's very quiet, but contains very nice, well-made objects.

MATEUS – It has a certain relationship to its context, even if it's a very modest scale.

KAAN – This is a very nice one, a very nice project.

RILEY – And the axonometric diagram shows the extension is not just an extension of the architecture, but of the furniture elements and the cabinetry as well, which infiltrate the old house from the new.

MATEUS – That's right. It corresponds to that ambition that we have a translation of an idea, a very clear idea.

BYRNE – It's a very good, clear presentation, I think. It stands out because some of the other extensions weren't so clear.

KAAN – This is almost good on every level – presentation, plan, concept.

MATEUS – So, this is an award.


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Structural Engineer – John Casey

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