This small dwelling is located in the corner of a field at the edge of the village of Graiguenamanagh, on a south-facing hill overlooking Mount Brandon. Two boundary walls – one retaining, the other freestanding – make a forecourt off the public road and anchor the building to the site. Five single-storey volumes, increasing in width from 1m to 5m and in height from 2.1m to 2.7m, step with the landscape as they descend down the hillside. The volumes are drawn apart to form a series of interstitial courtyards / outdoor rooms. The house remains closed to the road; a recessed entrance formed out of the first volume marks the threshold, allowing you to slip between parallel walls into the house, where an enfilade of rooms leads to the meadow below.

address – Bohermore, Graiguenamanagh, Co Kilkenny
client – private

design to completion – 2005-2008
area – 105m²
photography – Paul Tierney
HOUSE IN GRAIGUENAMANAGH

Plan
Longitudinal section
HASSETT – I think this is fantastic!
KOIVISTO – This is great. Look at that plan. I wish I did that plan.
PAPA – I actually drew a sketch of it to take it home with me.
KOIVISTO – I made a little sketch of it too!
HASSETT – I should really actually, in fact. It’s just really good. Damn them!
PAPA – I mean, what would happen if you put curtains in... It would be interesting what it would do if you actually had to put something in it.
ROBINSON – It looks full of fresh air and sunshine, and I’m sure it invites the field and the trees in; the cows too, perhaps.
HASSETT – It’s really smart. There are no internal doors, but it doesn’t have to have doors.
PAPA – I enjoy the complexity of it, what that simple move does, just by sliding the spaces apart. And then that shot of the person walking down the hall just shows you what richness it gives actually. I mean, I think the plan doesn’t put it across. You have to inhabit the space.
HASSETT – You have to understand architecture as well.
PAPA – And then the courtyards and what it could become... For me, it’s fantastic.
WANG – But it has a flat roof, Eero!
KOIVISTO – But it’s still a good building, a very good building. I was looking at that plan earlier and was thinking that this is a really good idea. I think also that that little concept diagram is really nice, because imagine doing a bigger communal building that way... It’s really beautiful. You have the circulation clear, you have these spaces which open out to the sides when you pass them, and then they, in turn, open out to the sides too. It’s very intelligent.
WANG – The only thing that I find somewhat repetitive is the fact that essentially you get the same view from here, as you get from here, as you get from here – from each courtyard or from each room.
HASSETT – No, you don’t, Wilfried, because the build-up of the density is different.
WANG – I think it would have been a bit more subtle to have had some more wall elements to make varying degrees of enclosure. But I think it should be an Award.
PAPA – You could level some criticisms at this project actually: that, because of a certain mood, they didn’t put in a door here or a window there. There might be this fantastic view behind the bed or looking perpendicular to the main axis that we don’t know about. But somehow we believe in this because of the strength of it.
HASSETT – Oh yes. It’s very strong.

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

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