



HBK ARCHITECTS LATEST HOUSE IN THE WEST OF IRELAND IS A FUSION OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY. THIS INTRIGUING ARRANGEMENT OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SPACES COMES FROM A DETERMINATION TO CELEBRATE THE PRIMACY OF NATURAL LIGHT

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## a house within a house

This dwelling is essentially a 'house within a house,' and perhaps a nod in the direction of the matryoshka/Russian nesting doll, considering that the smaller house fits, more or less, within the larger. In its fusion of tradition and modernity, it is also reminiscent of 'Bunny Lane' (2001) by New Jersey architect Adam Kalkin, where the outer building provides an industrial shed-like shell, and the inner structure is a traditional two-storey New Jersey home. Similarly this house, situated in the west of Ireland overlooking the sea, retains a '70s two-storey home as the building's core in this dynamic revision. The five-bedroom house, completed last August, was conceived as a family home with adjoining three-bedroom annex to accommodate visiting relatives. It was designed by Stephen Salley, principal of HBK Architects in Lisburn. HBK architects is a continuation of Houston Bell & Kennedy which originated in a practice founded by Thomas J Houston in 1900. The current ownership



[Opposite page]  
Large pivot entrance door by Dask Joinery

Kitchen and dining area with simple palette of Walnut and Jura Limestone tiling as supplied by Feelystone



dates back to 1994 when Eddie Mulholland invited Stephen Salley to become partner. Salley studied at Hull School of Architecture and he enjoys the personal nature of dealing with domestic clients. Indeed the clients of this house have an ongoing working relationship with HBK and have had five buildings (commercial and domestic) designed by the practice over a 15-year period.

another sister space - a roof terrace over the sunroom - which is accessed via the master bedroom above. Continuity of clean lines is enabled through the exclusion of a handrail on this terrace, all done by incorporating 15mm structural glass as balustrade. Both terraces are finished in Kilkenny limestone. Internal finishes meanwhile, are limited to walnut in all joinery and jura limestone flooring.

The architect explains; "We felt that all we needed to do was to pull and tease the faces of the existing house in different directions to meet the functional needs of the family, enhance the views, create outdoor space and bright interiors." The existing house of 2,500 square-feet occupied an L-shaped footprint and the extension has been designed alongside in an embrace. The house maximizes on orientation with ground floor rooms amalgamated to facilitate open plan living and is 'extended' with a south facing single storey sunroom.

The principal element of the structure's façade is a three-storey extension that has been added to the east. The three floors house the formal lounge, master bedroom suite and feature bathroom respectively. The bathroom, described by the architect as 'oasis like', has a unique character. Accessed via a walnut staircase from the master bedroom, it is dynamically shaped with a curved ceiling and a trinity of windows overlooking the sea. The freestanding bath, neutral palette and infusion of natural light provide a remarkable sense of calm in this elevated refuge. Materials utilised in this extension include solid rubble Donegal quartz with iroko windows framed by cut Kilkenny limestone.

This fully glazed living/kitchen area exploits the drama of the sea prospect beyond. The blurring of boundaries has been important to the architect; "Walls have been built within in Donegal quartz to bring the exterior in, whilst the glazed walls of the sunroom allow the interior to roll out into the garden." Transition from interior to exterior is mitigated through the incorporation of a terrace accessed via a large sliding glass door. This terrace is complemented by

The entirety is capped with a curved zinc roof to distinguish it from the existing house that is roofed with natural slates. The house is set on just under two acres and is surrounded by mature gardens. The interior of the house is

[Above]  
The blurring of boundaries within the kitchen was vital to the architect

[Right]  
Ceiling details by main contractor, John Finneran

[Opposite page]  
Glazed walls and sliding door by Dask Joinery





[Above]  
Walnut flooring by Pat Tiernan

[Left] Joinery by John Finneran, supplied by Palace Joinery [Centre] Bespoke furniture by Philip Mills [Right] Freestanding bath supplied by the Bathhouse Monkstown



“ THE COMBINED DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECT AND CLIENT HAS DETERMINED A BALANCED MIX OF OPEN PLAN SPACE AND DESIGNATED QUARTERS ”

distinguished by the primacy of natural light. There is a sizeable allocation of living space, overall 6,800 square feet distributed throughout the main house and adjoining annex. The garage occupies a footprint of 1,400 square feet. Guest accommodation consists of a two-storey annex that is linked to the main house via a flat roofed glazed tunnel. The annex is at once an independent structure yet it can be accessed from the main house. Four zinc clad boxes accentuate the dormer windows on the exterior too. The final extensions to the existing house have a smaller footprint; a small music room and double height entrance hall to the rear, accessed via a wide iroko pivot door. Also added to the side is a curving stairwell, externally clad with iroko. Internally the stair well is top lit by a skylight and natural light also enters through vertical strip windows. These clever extensions add drama to the semi-enclosed courtyard. Energy efficiency has been considered thoroughly and the house includes under-floor heating, a

high level of insulation, detailing that provides airtightness, a heat recovery system and solar water heating. While somewhat of an anomaly in relation to the surrounding houses, the secluded site means that the house is not apparent from a distance and hence makes no dramatic claim on its presence. It remains a somewhat discreet architectural innovation in relative privacy. Indeed, the clients felt that, "If we had a blank canvas, we would have built a contemporary box but the incorporation of the existing house into the design gives the resulting structure an interesting dynamic."

Considering the house has a substantial overall square footage of 8,200, it is remarkably homely and convivial. The combined design philosophy of architect and client has determined a balanced mix of open plan space and designated quarters. The resulting fusion is both engaging and vibrant.

[Below]  
Kilkenny stone paving and wall cladding by Feelystone; zinc cladding by GG Roofing; Iroko cladding and windows by Dask Joinery

