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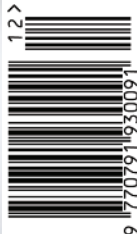
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INTERIORS
AUTUMN 2010



A UNIQUE EXTENSION PROJECT IN NEWCASTLEWEST COMBINED AN OWNER'S MAGNIFICENT COLLECTION OF ART WITH SOME STRIKING STRUCTURAL DECISIONS FROM LAHIFF FOLEY ARCHITECTS

CULTURE CLASH

WORDS JJ Worrall

An Irish bungalow extension doesn't necessarily conjure up images of a project rich in design quirks and styles worthy of an apartment in the upper echelons of London, Paris or New York. Yet, Limerick-based Lahiff Foley Architects recently brought together an extension in Newcastlewest that not only ticks all those boxes but also keeps a strong link to its surrounds through the use of natural material. The company's two leading lights, John Lahiff and Jane Foley – alongside a hugely involved client who prefers not to be named – finished the project in a matter of months, with a clear direction of where the project was headed, alongside some fortune with the Irish weather, meaning things went as smoothly as possible.

As Foley reveals, "Our initial brief was to extend the living space to the south east of the existing family home. We observed that the kitchen was central in day to day living. We felt this core space had a high priority and therefore connecting it to the new accommodation was crucial. Our design solution, presented in the initial sketch stage, was to retain the sitting room as a self contained comfortable space. When desired, through opening the large internal glass double doors the room can be opened into the sunroom creating a sense of borrowed space and allowing natural light to flood in."

The company has been in operation since 2007 and even a cursory glance at their official website (www.lahifffoleyarchitects.com) confirms they deal in exceptionally high standards of quality sustainable design. Moving back to the project at hand though, Foley explains from the company's office that "we used a lot of natural materials, with copper on the outside and stone on the inside, this was important to the client and to us, I suppose it's that type of agreement that got the project moving so quickly." The vertical copper cladding wrapping around the exterior of the extension was supplied and fitted by Tralee's Gleasure Roofing.

She adds that by locating the sunroom of the Newcastlewest home in a central area, they managed to maintain the existing building line of the house. In addition, its location, adjoining both the living room and the newly created dining space, maximises its potential and indeed Foley reveals that, "an important concept of our design was to create a series of spaces flowing into one another allowing an airy open plan".

From the kitchen the space opens seamlessly into the large formal dining space. A large vertical slit window is placed to allow directional views of the copper clad sun room and the garden beyond. The dining space then steps down into the sunroom. A double sided glass fire is shared between both spaces allowing further transparency while a reflective stone floor finish was used throughout to add to the continuity of space. Adds Foley, "Its reflective surface and selected warm white walls enhance the new and existing spaces by maximising natural light. The neutral tones internally accentuate the family's vivid artworks."





[Above]

The cream couch is from Casey's Furniture in Limerick, while the marble table is from Owen O'Neill Furniture in Newcastle West.

[Left]

The kitchen the space opens seamlessly into the large formal dining space.



Elsewhere, in the sunroom, large sliding doors and full length corner glazing allows it to be flooded with light. This corner feature physically and visually links the interiors with the garden and surrounding landscape adding to the sense of space internally. The form of the sunroom is modern and simple and is orientated to the south. The large sections of glass allow the extension and the original dwelling to be heated through solar gain principals.

Says Foley, "We selected vertical seams of copper to clad our contemporary link between the garden and the original dwelling. While our extension contrasts with the original form the natural tones of the copper cladding complement the original brickwork. The ever changing weather conditions are displayed in the reflective qualities of both the copper and glass."

Considering the photos that accompany this piece, alongside Foley's delight in revisiting the project during our chat, it seems almost silly to ask if she feels the extension met all its initial aims. Thankfully, she answers the question without *Select* actually having to say it out loud.

"The client wanted something modern, a simple contemporary interior with a lot of the client's own art collection involved. We married in a lot of the furnishings she had in the dining area and elsewhere in with the colours and designs we had in mind, and by the end we really felt it worked well. There are just so many advantages to a client who knows what the want but is willing to take a risk, and that was definitely the case here."

