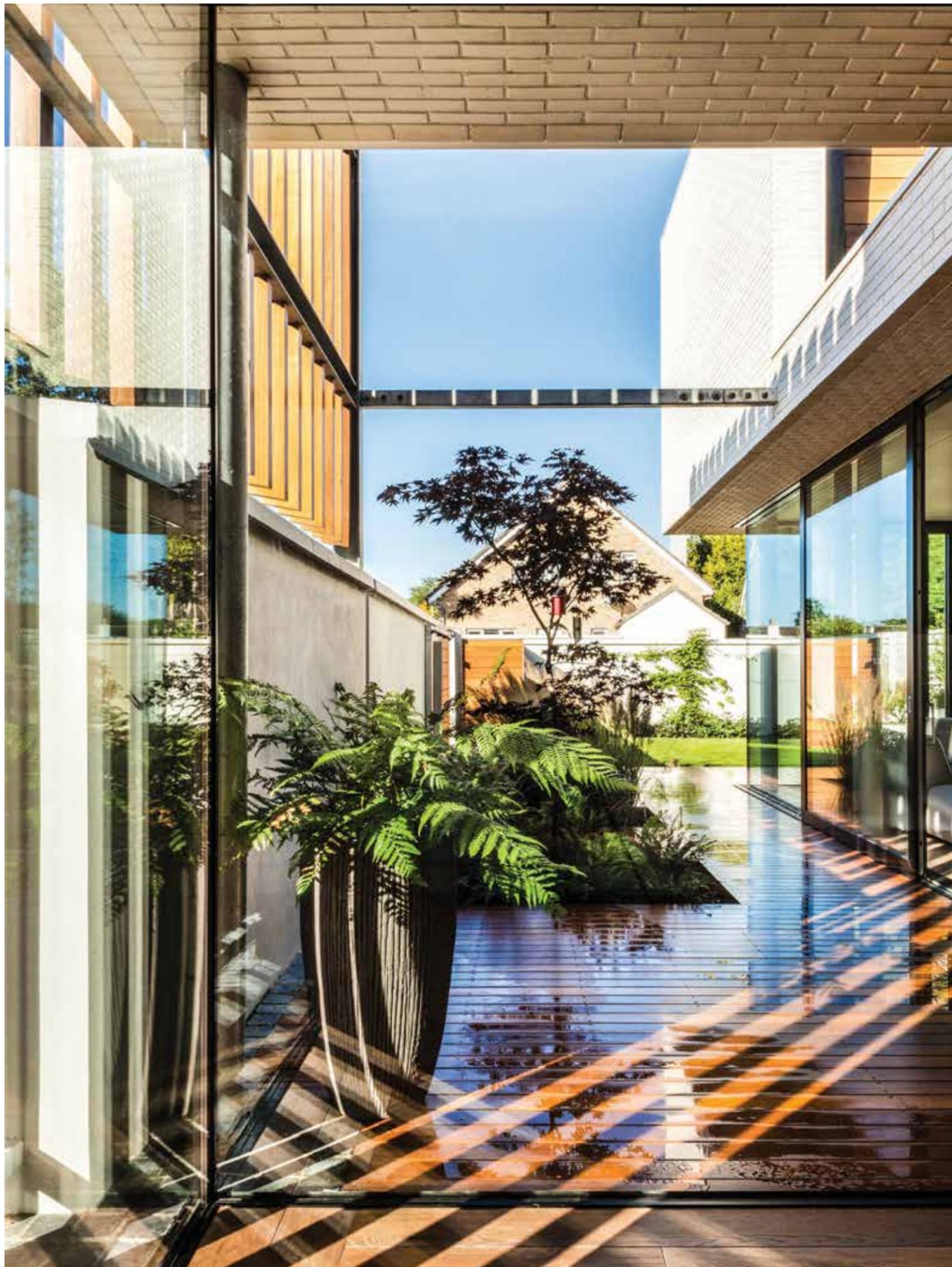


Modern Mews.

This trio of mews houses with their striking white brick facades occupies a small suburban site in the Dublin seaside suburb of Clontarf

Winner
Best House in RIAI Irish
Architecture Awards





01. Each home has been given a private garden and spaces have been designed around garden views

Architects
Dublin Design Studio

Location
Clontarf, Dublin

Text by
Emma Gilleece

Photography
Alice Clancy



02. The open plan kitchen, dining and living room also features a private garden

With house prices rising sharply, self-build can be a real option. It is getting increasingly more difficult to find a vacant site for a new build in Dublin these days. For couple Emma and Niall they did not have to look further than her father's back garden, set within the established residential community of Clontarf. The site was 70m long and just 10m wide. It became a real family affair when it was suggested to Emma's sister and brother to take advantage of this great opportunity and build their own homes next to each other. With Niall being a Registered RIAI Architect they had the potential to solve all their housing needs.

The challenge

Slotting in a trio of contemporary homes, each with three bedrooms and a private garden into a long narrow site required careful planning and clever design. Niall had to fit three houses in close proximity to each other while still maintaining their privacy. What made the challenge even greater was satisfying the residents of the surrounding dwellings, which bounded the vacant plot. Their primary concern was also privacy, that they could be overlooked by the occupants of these three new homes. In addition there was a 4m wide laneway to the south, which had to be kept clear for right of access. The building geometry, orientation and size were therefore dictated by the site's unusual constraints, overshadowing and issues of privacy.

Maximise space

The core architectural concept was to maximize the available site area of each house without impacting on the comfort of any of the adjoining dwellings. To achieve this, the footprint of each site including the garden and house was conceived as a single entity. This approach allows for the ground floor to be as open plan as possible and avail of the southwest orientation of the site. Niall came up with a really modern house, finished in white brick and a flat roof to maximize the first floor space.

Living roof

The garden is an integral part the overall ground floor plan, a mirror image and interlocking with the house plan. The planting by Allium Landscaping is a series of grasses of varying lengths planted on different levels stepping up through the site and linking with raised planters outside the site and up to the first floor sedum roof. The first floor level is treated in much the same way as the ground floor with all the windows focused around a planted sedum roof. The south-facing roof garden and full-height glazing to the bedrooms allows light to penetrate deep into the bedrooms without the possibility of any direct or indirect overlooking of any adjoining properties. The Iroko louvres, with their light golden brown colour, at the ground floor are extended up to the first floor levels to form a privacy screen to ensure that no oblique overlooking is possible.

The Brief - Client Must Haves

- + A spacious and light-filled home
- + Individual gardens for each of the homes
- + Flexible space layout and a playroom or future 'den'



Kitchen by Porter & Jones
Dining room furniture by Simon O'Driscoll Furniture
Timber floors by Hardwood Flooring Company
Windows by Schuco

The first floor brick-clad box accentuates the solidity of these inward-looking sculptural volumes, with architectural glazing carefully placed to avoid any overlooking. The uncompromising outward façade shows a determination to ensure the privacy of those inside and those in surrounding houses.

Warm & light

The interiors are neutral with a beautiful herringbone parquet floor at ground floor. A floating staircase greets visitors in the entrance hall and accent lighting via recessed LED lights provide visual interest. A pocket door enters to the open plan kitchen, dining and living space. A playroom opens off this area, which is closed off via folding doors giving flexibility of use. Niall commented: "What is open-plan now can be subdivided when the children reach their teenage years." In the kitchen and dining area, a muted palette is used to bounce light back into the space.

The high-gloss kitchen from Porter & Jones is designed to be sleek without any handles and form a backdrop to the open plan area. The dining space is defined with a handcrafted dining table by Simon O'Driscoll Furniture. The living space is heated by a stuvo model Spartherm stove and is recessed to

allow for built-in seating and storage units below. To the right of the fireplace is seating or a 'stage' for the children's performances. The stove is designed to take fresh air directly from the outside and recirculate the air through hidden vents in the built-in units.

The bathrooms are all located in areas of the plans where no windows could be located so they are lit by rooflights. The tiling and sanitary were all kept very simple and designed to maximise the available light and feeling of space. This is achieved by fixing toilets and sinks to walls and allowing floors to be kept clear with tiles chosen to reflect light.

Winning results

The challenges of this site led to a more interesting design, while meeting the needs of a modern family. Emma explained: "At the start of this process we were very skeptical that any house could be built on this very constrained site much less the extraordinary houses we now live on. The end result exceeded our expectation on every level. 'Not only did the scheme impress the neighbours but the jury of the RIAI Irish Architecture Awards chose it for the Best Housing Award 2016.'"



03. The outdoor space with its timber decking functions as an external room in the summer

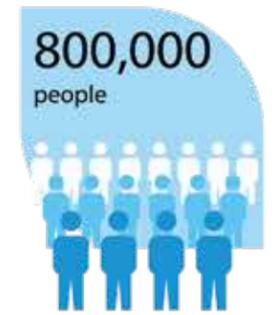


- 04. Bathrooms are illuminated from roof lights
- 05. Bedrooms enjoy view of the planted roof
- 06. White surfaces in the kitchen and living space reflect natural light



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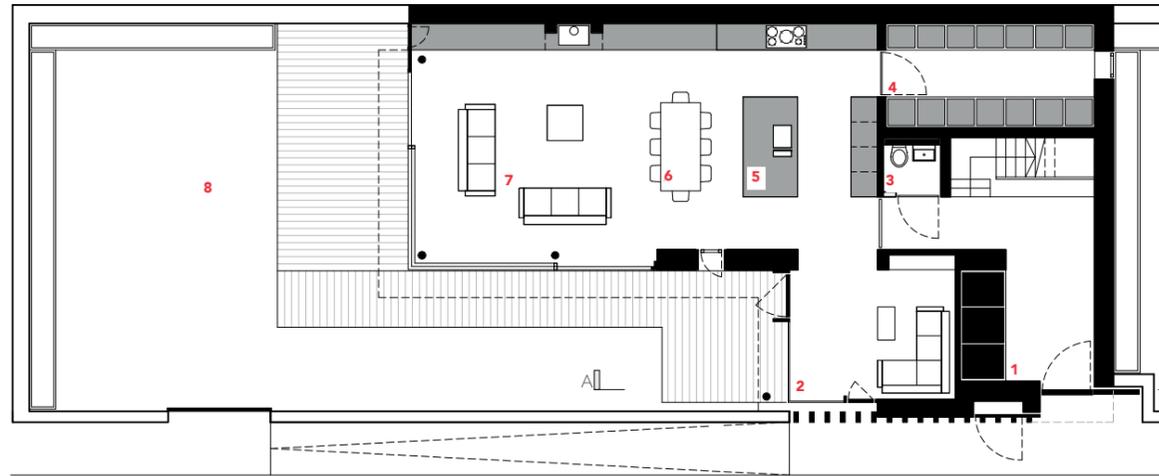
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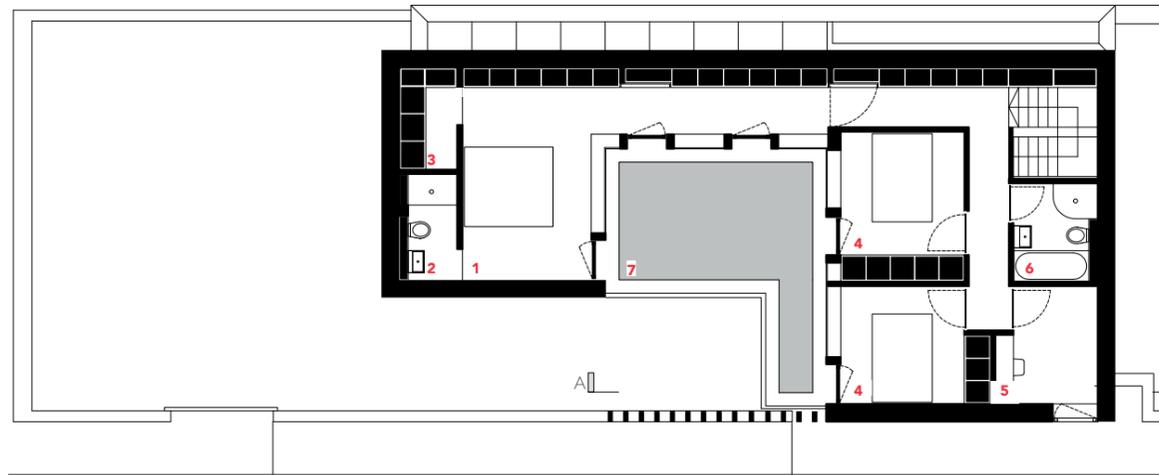
Ground Floor Plan

- 01. Entrance
- 02. Playroom / den
- 03. Bathroom
- 04. Utility
- 05. Kitchen
- 06. Dining
- 07. Living
- 08. Garden



First Floor Plan

- 01. Master Bedroom
- 02. En-Suite
- 03. Closet
- 04. Bedroom
- 05. Study
- 06. Bathroom
- 07. Green Roof



About the Architect

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Dublin Design Studio is a multi-disciplinary design studio. Established by architects David Craig and Niall Henry, who have been collaborating on projects since 1999, Dublin Design Studio was formed out of a desire to focus on design excellence whether it is the realization of contemporary architecture or the intricacies of product design and user experience design.

Project size - each house is 180m²
Structural Engineers - Barrett Mahony Consulting Engineers
Quantity Surveyor - Murtagh Surveyors
Services Engineers - iSEP Ltd
Main Contractor - J&P Woods Construction and Cromwell Construction Ltd.



+ Architect's Top Tip

Even the most challenging of sites can have amazing potential. Set and agree the brief early on and then allow your Architect some creative latitude, you will not be disappointed!



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