

# Out with the Old



WITH CLIENTS DETERMINED TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO A HOUSE THEY'D LIVED IN FOR A DECADE, STERRIN O'SHEA ARCHITECTS OPTED FOR A BRIGHT, SCANDINAVIAN-INFLUENCED DESIGN THAT HAS REINVIGORATED THIS SUBURBAN BOOTERSTOWN HOME

WORDS JJ Worrall  
PHOTOS SOSA



Eoin Ryan Landscapes created a very simple Zen-like garden which leads into the light-filled dining area





**[Above]**  
Tilestyle supplied the magnificent Kahrs Oak Nouveau Snow floors that enhance the Scandinavian feel to the kitchen/dining/living area

**[Below]**  
'Unfold' pendant lights from Muuto bring a splash of colour and sense of fun to the kitchen

**[Opposite]**  
Windows were provided throughout the home by Ballymount-based Carlson & Company

The day you buy a home you may well have a deep-set idea of just how many years you're going to live there. But life, as always, has a way of changing many a grand plan. Take a couple who ten years ago bought a two-storey home in a quiet cul-de-sac in Booterstown, Co Dublin. They had thought that by now they'd move on, but with a six-year old son in school at the end of the road, and with strong personal links built up around the area, any plans to move were put on ice. Add all that to the town, park and sea being within a stone's throw and the home had too many plusses to let go.

While they had decided to stay at the same address, the owners still had an ambition to live in a 'new' home. It was at this point that they called on the services of Sterrin O'Shea Architects, or SOSA for short, to help them radically change the look of their family abode. Built in the 1990s as the middle house of three in that aforementioned cul-de-sac, those at SOSA arrived to find that there was "an unusual cross section" with this home. As O'Shea herself reveals, "The house is single-storey to the front and two-storey to the rear, with only velux roof lights indicating a second floor."

She continues, "The layout of the existing house clearly did not work for the clients. Some modifications over the ten-year period included adding an internal porch to deal with the main door opening directly on to the kitchen and dining area from the road. Previous owners had added a small timber-frame conservatory to the rear too, which was used as a home office. However, this structure blocked light back in to the original living room and created a dark overshadowed side garden."

There were some valuable plus points on show in this three-bedroom home though. While the first floor was quite small the layout upstairs "worked well", says O'Shea, "as everything was accessed off a square landing". She was also pleased to see that the





bedrooms were in the semi-dormer roof space leaving the master bedroom in the two-storey part of the house to the rear. A lack of storage throughout the home did present problems though.

An east-west orientation means the home gets morning sun to the front and evening sun to the rear, and the final brief unsurprisingly reflected a desire to utilise this light as much as possible. A bright, open plan was required, one which provided a living/dining/kitchen space with a separate home office and play room. SOSA created an open-plan layout at ground level which could be sub-divided in to three defined spaces: an entrance area, a study and a living/dining/kitchen area.

Adds O'Shea, "One enters into a low porch area which is open to the hallway; but which is defined with a change in ceiling height and a change in floor surface. There is a stud wall which is splayed from the narrow doorway to the hallway and beyond. The 'splaying' of this wall allowed for a better layout for the study which would have otherwise been too narrow given the position of the main entrance door."

To address storage issues, there is a floor to ceiling wall unit in the hallway which accommodates "cloaks, gas boiler, ESB fuse board and the laundry unit". The study, which doubles as a home office, is to the front of the house and is separated from the entrance area by the stud wall. "This room can be closed off from the hall and living areas by two sliding panels which either meet to close off two spaces from each other or continue across to close both off from the living room," reveals O'Shea. "The occupants rarely do this as they enjoy the eastern light from the front of the house."

O'Shea reveals that the clients wanted a bright contemporary approach reminiscent of Scandinavian homes, which meant "bleached woods and hues of blue". She tells how canary yellow lights – which are made of rubber and are by Muuto – were added for the much-needed splash of colour and the study's sliding panels picked up this tone.

The kitchen and dining areas are accommodated to the rear with direct access to the back garden. Speaking about this portion of the project, O'Shea tells *Select Interiors* that the exquisite island accommodates appliances on the kitchen side and narrow storage on the dining side. It is clad in sprayed and lacquered MDF with a routed detail to omit a need for handles. 'Blanco Zeus' silestone was selected for the island top and "this was carried over and down to form a breakfast bar". The recess to the cooking area meanwhile was finished in the same white silestone on all sides.

The living section of this area was then located in the heart of the building and this room can be closed off from both the entrance hall and the study. "We positioned a large flush glass roof light over the kitchen island to give additional daylight to the preparation area but it also had the benefit of allowing natural day light back into the living area," says O'Shea.

There is a 'walk in' toy storage area hidden behind floor to ceiling doors which are "bi-folding to allow the toy storage unit to become part of the room". Fitted furniture is detailed to disappear and enhance the sense of space in this otherwise small footprint. Elsewhere, Eoin Ryan Landscapes created a very simple Zen-like garden to reflect the calm tranquil interior.

Obviously, many of these elements did require structural changes and planning permission was needed despite the small size of the proposed extension. The application related to the demolition of the conservatory to allow for a single-storey flat-roofed extension to the rear. Working alongside the main contractor – Charlie Gallagher of Elmleaf Construction – the roof to the new extension had to be designed to have a stepped profile to address concerns of overshadowing by the adjoining neighbors. Notes O'Shea, "We decided to express this step both externally and internally, by creating a low ceiling over the dining area which allowed for a more intimate setting."

