



OUTSIDE THE BOX

Admitted in interior design magazines and the star of television make-over shows, the glass box extension has evolved as the new Irish building style of the last decade or so. With older houses tending to have a poor connection with the garden and light, it is a simple and popular

architectural device to open up space. However, while the Celtic Tiger roamed our back gardens, rear extensions often grew so big that they eclipsed the existing house. Young architects are now rethinking the 'box', with exciting new spaces evolving - from daring curves to clever detailing. SANDRA ANDREA O'CONNELL profiles three innovative approaches.



TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Not a straight line in sight; the clients for this elegant extension to a period house opted for a curvaceous design. Inside, the extension is based on two adjoining circles - a bigger one for dining and a smaller one for sitting. **ABOVE:** A new reading room opens up to the south-facing garden, while the overhanging roof has created a small, sheltered patio.



FITTING THE CURVE by Lawrence and Long Architects

"We don't want a box. Can you design something with curves?" - was the brief for architects **JOE LAWRENCE** and **PIERRE LONG** from their clients, who wanted to extend a period house in Rathmines with a new dining and sitting room. Although the

architects' initial design had proposed an orthogonal design that would open up the rear of the house to westerly light, Lawrence and Long Architects quickly came up with a new innovative solution. Bespoke floor-to-ceiling glass panels, held in place by elegant steel sections, create a fluid and sensuous shape for the couple's new dining room overlooking the pretty back garden. At night, when viewed from the patio, cleverly integrated lighting illuminates this daringly curvaceous design.

An admirer of the simple and restrained style of Scandinavian architects, in particular the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, Joe Lawrence found inspiration for this bespoke extension in Aalto's legendary "Savoy Vase", designed in 1936 for the Savoy Hotel in Helsinki and made by Iittala. The curvaceous shells of the Sydney Opera House by Danish architect Jørn Utzon were also an influence. Lawrence worked for some time in Sydney and was a frequent visitor to the Sydney Opera House. Both designs are based on strict geometries and Lawrence emphasises that "you can't have curves without geometry". In the case of the Rathmines extension, the form is derived from two adjoining circles - a

smaller one for a sitting area and a larger one for dining, as the couple likes to entertain.

While the curved glass extension is undoubtedly the focal point of this project, the architects also cleverly reworked a warren of poorly lit interior spaces into a fluid sequence of bright and spacious rooms. The house is entered somewhat unusually via a side entrance. "The front door leads to a long internal hall corridor, and from there you entered the kitchen, and from the kitchen another room before you finally connected with the garden," explains Lawrence. In the revised design, the hall leads to a new central living space, which opens onto the curved glass extension, while also connecting with a new addition - a cosy reading room with a deep window seat. The reading room also opens up to the south-facing garden, while the overhanging roof has created a small, sheltered patio.

As the house is a protected structure, the practice liaised closely with Dublin City Council's Conservation Office. "In reworking the house, we paid attention to period details," says Joe Lawrence. They retained the existing fireplace in the new living room and an old sash window was re-used in the entrance hall and brings light into the formerly dark space. Finishes in this highly bespoke design also respect the historic character of the house; including a beautiful new parquet floor in classic herringbone pattern. "A straight line in the parquet floor marks where the old house stopped," says Lawrence - an important memory in a project that has, according to the clients, "completely transformed their lives". www.lawrenceandlong.com.