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\* Commercial: a spring selling spree P12

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PROPERTY EDITOR **TINA-MARIE O'NEILL**



Clockwise from main: Tom and Eileen Mangan's detached house in Rathfarnham in Dublin; the kitchen and the sitting room



## How a suburban residence became a very ideal home

Tom and Eileen Mangan wanted to move from their Rathfarnham home, but when the deal on the new house fell through, they opted to stay put and do it up



Clockwise from top: the living room; the dining room and the office



**Tina-Marie O'Neill**  
Property Editor

**W**hat makes a house a home? Often, there's no straight answer: for some it's their belongings, memories made, fixtures and furnishings. For others it's about space and light, comfort, fluid movement.

For publicans Tom and Eileen Mangan, the owners of this detached residence in Rathfarnham in Dublin, their house just didn't work for them and after three decades of living in it and raising a family there they had decided to up sticks and move to a bungalow in Terenure.

A twist of fate at contract stage stayed their hand. Instead they opted to call in an architect to see if he could help figure out how to make their house feel like home. "Only one home has changed hands in the cul-de-sac in the last 27 years," said Tom, who runs a string of pubs in the capital, including Doheny & Nesbitts on Baggot Street.

"We've been here for 33 years and bought the site when it cost about €15,000 and there was nothing but fields around it.

"We refurbished the house about 15 years ago," he said, "putting in a dormer attic space, which was a bedroom for my son, as well as new windows throughout and a revamped kitchen. We were about to sell the house about two years ago and there was a six-month delay - an issue over a right of way.

In the meantime, the vendor upped the asking price by about €20,000, so we walked away. On route to a wedding down the country, myself and Eileen talked about it and decided to do the house up.

"I'm very impatient," said Tom. "I want things done now. P&G Construction was working on a site down the road from us. I went in and asked for the name of



Jackie Carton of Style My Room



Contemporary wallpaper in the hallway



**We've been here for 33 years and bought the site when it cost about €15,000**

their architecture firm and they put me in touch with Joe Fallon Design. I know Joe's two brothers, but never made the connection."

Luke Kuchta at Joe Fallon Design led the project.

"Luke is very straightforward," said Tom. "And Jackie Carton from Style My Room was the interior designer. The architects came up with the plans and came in within budget.

"Jackie was very easy to work with, particularly as I wouldn't give her an inch. We are now so happy here."

"It was a nice job from the start," said to **page 2**

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Walls were removed to create a dining area that seats ten



Designer David Keily redesigned the pale-hued kitchen



A carpeted double bedroom has a subtle touch of wallpaper

# A splendid sample of high style on the outskirts of Cork

BY ROS DRINKWATER

Style is in the eye of the beholder. A stylish interior is one that delights the eye. It is space used imaginatively to its full potential, thus creating an ambience that's not only impressive, but relaxing and welcoming. When it comes to bricks and mortar, it's the silver bullet that can make a sale.

Presented in immaculate condition, the 302 square metres of 14 Foxwood Drive in Garryduff, Rochestown, Co Cork is high style personified. Entering through the front door, you find yourself in a hall furnished with the harmonious combination of light American oak floors and walls of a seductive grey.

Grey is the sleeping beauty in the colour palette, and it has been used to great effect throughout the house. This is a space that invites you to explore – to the left, through the double doors to the elegant drawing room with its vaulted ceiling, floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the garden and feature fireplace with wood burning stove. To the right, there's a cosy family room with a wide opening to the kitchen, a gas fire fitted in its cast iron fireplace.

No 14 is one of a small development of one-off detached houses built in the early 2000s to the buyer's specifications. The present vendors bought it in 2008 and set about making a number of inspired alterations. They added tall Apex windows in a front gable and in the sun-room off the kitchen.

They also called in high-end designer David Keily to revamp the existing Cherrywood kitchen. Walls were knocked down to create an immense, pale, porcelain-tiled floor space combining the kitchen with a dining area that seats ten, and rather than replacing the Cherrywood units, he had them



14 Foxwood Drive is ideal for a family, tucked away in a quiet cul-de-sac

hand-painted in palest cream, adding white granite countertops and a breakfast bar complete with a wine rack.

A wall of windows opens onto the dual-aspect airy sunroom with its vaulted ceiling. This leads to the patio and large private rear garden.

An exterior side pathway to the garden has a planted-up pergola which provides spring and summer colour.

Completing the ground floor accommodation are three double bedrooms, all carpeted, all with built-in wardrobes, one en suite with a walk-in dressing room, one presently used as a well-equipped home gym, a family bathroom and a utility room.

From the entrance hall, an open tread staircase leads to the upper level where a large velux window on the carpeted landing provides light for an efficient office area. This level houses a fourth double bedroom (large enough for a ping-pong table), and



An airy dual-aspect sunroom with vaulted ceiling and large windows overlooks the garden

the stunning en suite master bedroom, an archetypal demonstration of the merit of simplicity, one wall of subtly-patterned wallpaper accentuating the tones of the timber furniture. It has a dressing room large enough for the most dedicated fashionista, and a fully-tiled bathroom with a double shower unit.

Central heating is gas fired, BER is B3 and there is ample

off-street parking in the cobblelock driveway.

The location, some five miles south of Cork city, is ideal for a family, tucked away in a quiet cul-de-sac, yet close to good schools, sporting clubs, and a short drive to Douglas Court Shopping Centre.

No 14 is now on the market priced at €715,000. For further information, call Cohalan Downing at 021-4277717.



A cosy family room has a gas fire in a cast-iron fireplace



A grey palette is used to great effect in the living room

## How a suburban residence became a very ideal home

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Kuchta. "Overall, it took about a year, which is usual for a project of this size for the day we walked into the house to the day the lads left the site. The original house was also lovely, but was very dark. It was badly laid out and had all sorts of badly considered walls in all the wrong places, blocking out light and preventing fluidity," he said.

"The first thing we did was to move the front entrance. We also straightened up the hall, put all the utilities on one side of the hall and located the guest WC in the darkest part of ground floor. We then moved all living areas into the rear extension area. Once we made these changes, it cleared up the space. Then the living area was in the light with a gorgeous orientation in relation to the sun and views of woodland and the golf course at the end of the rear garden."

In total, the house was extended by only 18 square metres, but it was the internal layout that made the difference.

"Size doesn't matter," said

Kuchta. "You can design something huge, but it can feel small and vice versa. Square meterage is not an objective way to explain space and it can sound silly but, square metres can work against you in terms of future maintenance and heating costs."

"The project was borne out of practical considerations. There was no extravagant form. Tom and Eileen needed light and a way to take advantage of the good view. Its ultimate form was derived from its functionality."

"We didn't realise the house was so dark before we refurbished it," said Tom.

"It has an eastern orientation, so we get sunlight in the morning, but it was dark and cold in the evenings," said Eileen. "I needed a space to sit and read and to be warm in. The floors and decor make the house look twice the size it is."

"Once we picked the Chevron floors, everything started to come together," she said. "I like modern and bright space, but I didn't want the house to feel sterile. It was also great being able to hold onto my old



The light-filled living areas are all in the rear extension

furniture like my glass display cabinet and to put up our own artwork," said Eileen.

Both Tom and Eileen mentioned having a great deal of trust in Kuchta and Carton.

"My early career was spent in the printing industry as a graphic reproducer," said Carton, who has a BA in Design in Interior Architecture from Griffith College Dublin, and was a winner of TV3's Showhouse Showdown series.

"Style my Room's ethos is simple: to provide affordable, convenient and stylish designs for home owners requiring a new look, from single rooms to complete projects."

"The print trade is a very disciplined, creative one because you are so restricted by size and dimensions," said Carton. "I'm used to working under restraints. I work well that way and understanding

technical creativity lends itself well to working with other professions like architects. A project like Tom and Eileen's home shows how you need the two disciplines, each having their own strengths and weaknesses, which when they come together creates a visual balance of things."

"Tom and Eileen had a lot of personal characteristics and sentimental items from their travels, which were lost because they were all on top of each other. I pulled out the nice stuff and left them room to breathe. Their home has so much character now. They are very social people, yet the original rooms were so badly designed and dark, it gave them no space to gather and socialise. Luke's job was to make that space, mine was to make it functional, to add colour and to zone it.

wearing, but would also complement the kitchen.

"Part of Joe and Luke's design was to widen the hall. Most people don't have that luxury. To give it justice I wanted to layer in wallpaper and I felt panelling was needed to give the hall depth and texture. The wallpaper is a sea grass type wallpaper in a duck egg finish. Visually, it looks like fabric but its very tactile and contemporary but in a traditional setting."

"The house also has a three-storey landing with a void through it for light. Tom felt the landing needed something, so I sourced the digital wallpaper. Tom and Eileen were a bit quirky in some ways in that they didn't want everything matchy matchy. We spent a day rearranging their artwork. Tom was very much engaged in that. My favourite part was fleshing it out and Tom said: now it feels like home."

Lighting was another major consideration. "Eileen had some amazing Waterford Crystal, so we kept those and added modern smoked glass pendant lighting in the kitchen and a modern but simple chandelier in the three-metre drop in the void, which can be seen from the landing too," said Carton.

"There's always a turning point in every project, when the client relaxes and starts to trust and enjoy the space. Once we got to that point, it really became a special project."



**Karl Deeter**

Every time conservationists moan about the loss of a little bit of skyline,

we should celebrate new buildings housing more people

## Where have all the towers gone?

I regularly argue in favour of tall buildings. Many highly qualified professionals are very quick to tell me that you can have equal density at lower heights, but it is always predicated on the same false logic. That logic goes like this: if you have to have one home per a given square metre of land, then you can have the same density of housing at lower heights.

However, this misses the crucially simple logic that if you forego these things, you can have far more housing density with higher buildings and less public space.

Designers and planners will gasp in horror at the prospect of this, but we have a misguided sense of what 'public space' is really about. We look for more of it than is often necessary. Why does everybody have to have a mini-park on their doorstep?

They don't, of course; large lawns are a throwback to the French, who had them as a folly and show of extravagance. In an age before lawnmowers, lawns were a luxury only the royals could afford. Somehow this got baked into middle-class mentalities with suburban-spread results.

Skylines are another common objection. As a daily user of our capital city, I don't spend a lot of time (despite my obsession with buildings) looking at skylines. When you are at street level, there is no appreciable view of the next road or of anything in the distance in Dublin city centre, unless seeing the top of the Spire fills you with joy.

When we have national conversations about homelessness, and then listen to the voices that helped bring about housing shortages, it's like putting the devil himself in the pulpit to say mass; you'll get a sermon, all right, but hardly the one that you signed up for.

For every moan a conservationist has about the loss of a bit of skyline, we should instead rejoice in new buildings housing more people.

People will look back and say: "That building was typical of the 2020s", but if we don't build them, they can't become part of a shared history. Nor can an un-built building house anybody.

Here's a common way to start the conversation: "I'm in favour of housing, but..." and then throw in some old trope like "We don't want shoeboxes like during the boom". Guess what? Those shoeboxes housed lots of people, and whether you agree with them or not has nothing to do with what other people might want.

Politicians who behave as though they know what's best for everybody, and can explain why you should want what they tell you to want, aren't so good at delivering alternative housing when the housing they actively prevent doesn't go ahead.

That is part of the reason that I have become an aesthete to any critique of the Children's Hospital. Another location might be the better place for it. It might get us better value for money and more parking. Might.

The one guarantee we'd have, though, is that it would be a decade into the future before it started, because that's roughly how long one failed attempt to build a children's hospital takes. We had the same debate about how good or bad the Mater site was for the Children's Hospital in 2006, the same political voices shouting, but what did we get? No hospital.

How many children were cared for in the hospital that wasn't built? None. How many were cured in it? None. How much did stopping the Mater children's hospital cost the people who wanted to stop it? Almost nothing, but it cost society generally and the taxpayer specifically to the tune of €40 million in sunk costs.

Do you ever get driven mad by progressives who regularly justify any expense "if it saves just one life" but then go on to use costs as a reason for why we can't build a hospital that will save thousands of lives?

I don't actually care if the place costs €2 billion to build; just get it done and open for patients. In the scope of a healthcare system that has overruns of more than half a billion euro in a single year, is a spend of €1.5 billion in exchange for a state-of-the-art facility that bad?

If we really care about value for money, where is the public outrage about the many administrators in our hospitals who we can't replace with computers due to labour unions? What about scanning departments that only open during business hours?

They'll support pay rises for nurses that we can ill afford, but don't want a brickie getting a penny more in the construction contract. A hospital construction cost is more of a one-off than baking in annual wages for everybody forever. If the future is self-driving cars, tall city buildings housing tens of thousands more people, and connected public transport, then a city site makes perfect sense. It doesn't make sense to those who want none of those things.

The nub of the issue is this: we have a housing minister who has given us all of the potential for building up, but we are immersed in a society that won't have it.

The collective will stop construction while pointing an accusatory finger at the government which has used every tool it has to facilitate development happening.

The accusers won't build a house, but they'll talk about what a disgrace it is over a bottle of Cabernet while nodding knowingly at one another because, since house prices started to rise, their gaff accrued more in value last year than they earned.

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