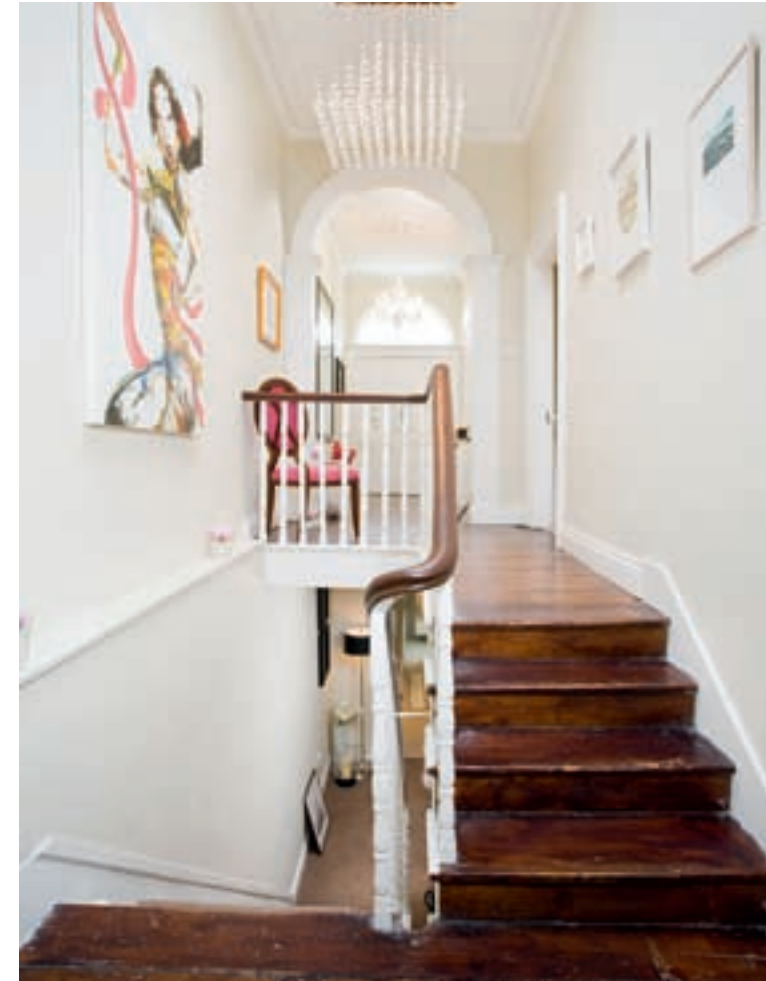


time for change

A fusion of classic and contemporary styles has transformed this Dublin townhouse into an elegant family home.

Situated mid-way through a terrace of eight Victorian houses on the outskirts of Sandymount village on the street from where Paddy Dignam departed on his final journey across the streets of Dublin in Joyce's *Ulysses*, this two storey house has seen a lot of history and changes since its construction. Secret meetings are believed to have been held here before the 1916 Easter Rising, but only the walls know the history of those meetings now. Held as a desirable residential location since Victorian times, people are still attracted to Sandymount because of its location and village atmosphere, surprisingly little-changed since the days of Yeats and Joyce who both lived in the area.





In a condition which could best be described as "pre-War", the house has seen a lot of work since it was purchased in 2000. The entire building had to be gutted from top to bottom to drive out the pernicious dry and wet rot which meant, along with exploding walls, no heating, inadequate wiring and dilapidated bathrooms, that it was a less than desirable abode for a first home. Undertaken at the same time as the restoration work, the house was much enlarged by a modern, two storey extension built onto the rear of the property, adding a large kitchen at first floor level with a master bedroom suite below. Starting afresh with a blank canvas, the owner invited Helen Roden of Merrion Square Interiors to advise them on interior design.

Then in 2002 this part of the city was hit by freak floods when the Dodder broke its banks. The bedrooms downstairs were destroyed so flooring and skirtings had to be replaced, along with all the furniture and curtains.

In 2005 the owners thought that the house needed an uplift and they decided to make some alterations, including a change of style, moving towards a contemporary classic look and they embarked upon an extensive programme of building work and redesign. The arrival this year of their daughter has brought further alterations to the house and its interior design. To help co-ordinate a new look, the help of family friend Sinead Considine who runs interior design and home stage company, Upstage, was enlisted.





In the best tradition of house renovation projects, the new look took the best part of a year to achieve as it grew in scope and changed in brief. Windows and exterior doors were all replaced by Nordic Solutions and work was carried out to repair the old roof and ceilings. The bathrooms were totally refurbished, turning the two small guest bathrooms into one to provide a larger bathroom with a bath and shower and also revamping the en-suite off the master bedroom incorporating a wet-room type shower & large double tap sink.

While the building work was in progress, Sinead used the ideas and pictures the couple had given her, to work on co-ordinating the interiors and sourcing furniture, fabrics and carpets to blend with the furniture and fittings they had decided to retain, such as an antique dining table and chairs and antique chaise longue, which has been re-upholstered in a vibrant velvet fabric to blend in with the new surroundings. The result is a look that both complements the Victorian origins of the house and incorporates the contemporary tastes of a young couple.

Typical of this fusion of styles is the eclectic mix in the hallway. Two chandeliers dazzle, hanging one in front of the other, as the front door opens. Both from Hicken Lighting, the first is an Art Deco copy, while hanging beyond it is a contemporary confection, consisting of a pyramid of crystal tear drops which cast prismatic light all around. Original, dark, polished elm floor-boards contrast with off-white walls and white cornicing and intense shots of cerise pink catch the eye in the shape of the upholstery on an antique chair and the water lily painted on the inside of a large white bowl propped against the faint outline of Philippe Starcke's Illusionist's Table.



Pink is an accent colour in the hall, taken from the painting of a dancer energetically swirling ribbons about her; which hangs above the stairwell, leading down to the bedroom floor below. Art is a plentiful presence all over the house, mostly by Irish artists such as Brian Bourke, Paddy Lennon, Neil Shawcross, Jack Hanlon and the emerging talented artist, Michael Morris.

The architecture of the house, typical of the late 1800s, means that it has one floor above street level and one below. Those rooms on the first floor are the living areas of the house as they enjoy the most light and the bedrooms are all located on the lower level. The kitchen is situated in the extension at the rear of the house and is a bright, airy room, incorporating a smart Siematic kitchen, an informal dining space and a relaxed seating area, complete with his 'n' hers leather chaise longues, before opening out onto an elevated timber deck with a staircase down to the courtyard garden below.





Off the hall, the dining room and sitting room have been combined to form one large room with views out to the street at one end and the garden at the other. In here, the mahogany dining furniture creates a period feel in one half of the room while a luxurious modular sofa in cream leather and wenge stained coffee table, exert a contemporary influence on the other. Sinead linked the two areas through the use of colour, taking the claret from the seat pads of the dining chairs through to the sitting room with matching velvet scatter cushions for the sofa and tasselled tie-backs for the pale gold silk taffeta curtains. Covering the chimney breasts in both halves of the room in the same mottled gold wallpaper provides a similarly unifying effect, with toning pale biscuit walls and carpet running throughout.



Downstairs, the master bedroom has been decorated by Sinead in a classic colour combination of cream, brown and putty shades. Walls and floor have been kept neutral and against this backdrop, boldly patterned floral fabrics appear with a flourish on the headboard, window blind and on cushions for the bed. Damask shaded lamps stand on wenge stained lockers beside the bed, which match the tv cabinet and tall oval chests. Double doors open out onto the landscaped circular stone terrace in the garden which was given a complete makeover by landscape designer Brian Considine and his company, Landscape Developments.

In the adjoining bedroom a digitally reproduced rose dominates one wall, leaving no doubt that this can only belong to the youngest member of the house. With such a strong concentration of colour in one place, the remaining walls in the baby's bedroom have been simply painted in cream, which tones with the faun carpet running throughout the lower level. The room has been furnished with wooden baby furniture from Little People in Sandyford & Limari in Donnybrook, including a clever extending cot which is suitable for children up to around 5 years old.





The final room in the house to benefit from Sinead's styling talents was the guest bedroom at the front of the property. It's hard to believe that this was originally the kitchen, with a pantry off to one side and a door out to the front garden. A smart black and white colour palette makes the most of the light coming in through the large sash window to create an atmosphere of comfortable spaciousness which completes the transformation.

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