



A Touch of Glass

Taking on the complete refurbishment of any house is a big job, and if the house is large the project becomes even more substantial. When Marie and Fergal spotted this large Victorian house, they had been looking for quite a while and had viewed quite a few similar houses, but this had something special.



They went to view it a number of times, although it was in pretty bad condition – it had been divided into bedsits, was terribly shabby and the floors were completely rotten. But Marie says, ‘once we saw it we knew it was the one, even though it was in dreadful condition.’ The house was actually converted into bedsits in the seventies and low tiled ceilings had been put in place and many of the original features of the house were either hidden or damaged. However there were holes in the ceiling tiles, and this allowed a small view of the original cornices and features hiding behind them. Marie and Fergal had seen quite a lot of these types of houses in their search so they knew the potential and what could be done with a little bit of imagination.

The key thing in the search for their family home was that it could accommodate them and their four girls. As Marie says, ‘with four children, we had to find a space that was big enough, bedroom and bathroom wise. We wanted the house to grow with us and while a lot of the period houses we viewed had lovely high ceilings, big entrance halls and reception rooms, they always fell down on the bedrooms and bathrooms. We had to be able to extend and accommodate the whole family’. Once they purchased the house, the next task was to find an







architect and begin the process of renovation. Noel O' Dwyer from NODE architects came recommended from a friend. They met with Noel who listened to what they wanted to achieve and understood what their vision was. The brief he was given was relatively straightforward, to restore the house to its former glory while making it into a family home, by extending it and adding a contemporary living space. They wanted a nice big bright extension with plenty of glass to give them a bright kitchen and living area. They presented these ideas to Noel and then he put a shape and design to them. As they have four children, he had to design it to accommodate five bedrooms plus a guest room.

A large two storey living area was built at the back and this accommodates a large, bright living area. To the side, a three-storey extension was added that accommodates two bedrooms and the kitchen. Built slightly lower than the rest of the building, it is sympathetic to the style of the rest of the house. The original house was completely gutted and the floors were replaced. Restoring the original features, all the cornices and roses were taken down and the broken ones remodelled. Noel wanted to retain the character of the original building, while extending it and to include the contemporary build without it being jarring to the eye. He succeeded in this and the house as a whole now rests together in a harmonious fashion. He organised the planning process, which was a relatively quick process with no objections and it all went very smoothly. Although the house wasn't listed, the building process was still extremely sensitive to the fact that the house was old and carried out conscientiously and carefully. The renovation process took just over a year.

A balcony built at the back of the original house overlooks the large







bright living area, and a spiral staircase connects the downstairs with the upstairs – this provides a flow between the old and new areas. They chose a spiral staircase rather than a regular staircase as it fits into that area without intruding into the living space. Fergal loved the glass and the clear straight lines of these spiral stairs. It is used much more than the main staircase, and means greater access to the reception rooms upstairs.

With a house this large, it was quite overwhelming to know where to start with the interior fittings. ‘We lived with bare basics initially,’ says Marie. ‘The carpeting was the first decision and then we worked on the wall colours. Midway through the build, I enlisted Helen Turkington, an interior designer to help with the paint colour choices. We had thought initially we could do it ourselves, but we found we couldn’t agree on the paint colours. We found that paint on the walls didn’t look like they did on the charts! Helen used a methodical process that she knows as an interior designer. And at 6,000 square feet there was a lot of decision making to do’. Farrow & Ball or Zoffany is used throughout, these colour palettes are sympathetic to the style and dimensions of the house.

Downstairs, in the den area a strong splash of red adds character and interest to the mainly white and glass decor of the area. This was Fergal’s idea – he wanted a strong colour somewhere, to make a feature wall. It adds extra depth and interest and warms up the area that could otherwise be somewhat cold. Striking light fittings also add points of interest there; all of these came from Willie Duggan Lighting in Kilkenny. Marie’s vision of the kitchen was that she wanted a classic, rather than an ultra modern look. The cream wood and marble worktops combine to give a classic and smart look. The flooring throughout is travertine marble – chosen for its durability and practicality. Upstairs off the balcony is Fergal’s office – this is where the old house joins the new – large sliding doors, allow traffic of little people through, but they can be closed off if needs be. In the master bedroom a super king size bed from Hästens in





London, was bought for the house. With large rooms in the house, the items of furniture needed to look in proportion. Above the bed hangs a painting from artist Paul Christopher Flynn. From Kilkenny - he is local to where Marie grew up. The bathrooms are a lovely combination of old and new – tiles and classical wood panelling are combined with funky sink shapes in the main bathrooms. The reception rooms upstairs do actually get quite a lot of use; as can be the case with these types of houses, they can often be forgotten about and not used very much. But with the grand piano in there, it means that the girls do use the rooms - they all play the piano. It was bought a few months after they moved in and it fits perfectly into that large room. Striking paintings, again from Paul Christopher Flynn add colour and interest to the reception rooms.

This is a house where the brief to combine the old and new and to provide a good family space has been achieved. Both old and new areas are equally lived in and look very well – upon walking into the house you immediately get this feeling and good design combined with great interior fittings make this the perfect family home. 🏠

