

Colm Doyle and Peter O'Reilly in the kitchen of their house on Camden Street in Dublin



Who lives in a house like this?

Top architect Colm Doyle's Camden Street pad is a feast for the senses, combining cool charm with an enviable eye for detail, writes **Ruth O'Connor**

The first thing that strikes you when you step through the door of architect Colm Doyle's home is a sense of cool and calm. The location of his residence on bustling Camden Street in Dublin is what makes it such an exciting place to live – the vibrant mix of restaurants, specialist food delis, local huckster shops and charity outlets. Located high above street level, with kitchen views at the back to Synge Street Church, the calm contrast to the street outside is the home's initial impactful charm.

Camden Street has that buzz that you typically get in certain enclaves of bigger cities – a mélange of the high and low, the tacky and the tasteful – on this street you can buy everything from a mousetrap to a bunch of bananas, plastic pegs for laundry to a fancy three-course meal in Delahunt, and that's exactly what Doyle and his partner Peter O'Reilly love about it. "I just love it for that reason. It reminds me of London," says Doyle. "We wanted to live in town – or at least within walking distance."

The residence, purchased in 2013, consists of two adjoining Victorian buildings (built circa 1815) which were on the market for a long time before Doyle decided to buy them. The dilapidated buildings had been purchased by Irish

Nationwide in the 1960s and had been used as offices with all the associated reckless modification.

"They built a two-storey extension, the basement was partially flooded, partition walls had been installed, the upper floors had no power and the floors had been badly damaged to install utilities," he says.

The original shutter boxes and shutters had been removed on one side of the building to the front, and the building had been clad in concrete. Unbelievably, in an attempt to modernise the original red brick facade at the time, the original granite window sills had been removed and additional windows had been placed in front of the existing ones.

The building sat unloved and unwanted until Doyle, director of DMVF Architects in Rathmines, saw the potential in it. "This poor building had war wounds," he says. He advises people to talk to the experts, get good advice and take time over a project if undertaking a similar renovation.

"Once you get into a project, particularly with protected structures, there is always an issue you haven't dealt with before, even if you are in the industry, and it's about building your knowledge and educating yourself around that and finding good people. You need a good QS [quantity surveyor], a good engineer and a good architect with conservation experience. It can be the less glamorous side of things – getting stuck into the

THE KITCHEN BY NEWCASTLE DESIGN

"Newcastle Design were fabulous to work with and do lots of works with us at DMVF," says Colm Doyle. "I worked with Ronan Carey there. I wanted the island to act as a kitchen table as well as for storage and to be on legs like a piece of furniture in the room. For that reason we don't have the hob and sink in the island. The kitchen leads onto the terrace which is planted and has a seating area for socialising."





foundations of the building – but it is worth employing someone who offers a full service such as DMVF. Ultimately, it's about not doing damage whatever age of building you are working with."

The residence consists of two adjoining buildings measuring 800 square metres in total – 500 of those are dedicated to a restaurant at ground level, with the remainder functioning as an apartment upstairs. The apartment is an elegant and airy space which benefits from the proportions of the original Victorian property – the high ceilings and large windows.

"We looked at this building for two years. We had been looking for a mews or something that could become an apartment, but this came up," says Doyle.

"It had been for sale for years and no one wanted it, I suppose, because it was something in between. Because of the modifications, it wasn't a Georgian building and it wasn't a modern building. But from our perspective, it was still a Georgian building above ground floor level with some of the interior finishes left intact – making it perfect for creating a home."

To the front of the building, in the interconnecting reception rooms, on one side there are one-over-one sash windows (probably installed in the early 20th century) with new shutters; on the other side there are the original six-over-six sashes and shutters, however, the windows have been reconditioned with rubber seals to keep out the noise from the street and make them more energy efficient. Lighting in the house was supplied and fitted by Shadowlight in Kilmainham, and the kitchen is by Newcastle Design.

Doyle says that where there are period features (such as the doors, architraves and



RAISING THE FLOORS

the mirror image 200-year-old spiral staircases on the second floor – a delightful result of the home being formed of two adjoining buildings) he left them as so, while making the new additions to the building, such as the kitchen and the shelving in the TV room, deliberately and obviously modern in feel.

Tiles by Project Tile Design have been cleverly cut and arranged in a herringbone pattern in the entrance hallway. The new wooden flooring in the TV room at the back of the property is by the Hardwood Floor Company in Sandyford, while the Crittall steel-framed doors which lead to the outdoor terrace area are by Fabco in Britain.

The balance between old and new is continued in the interior styling of the property where a Victorian games table, Georgian Irish peat buckets and a rather extraordinary 12-foot-long Irish hunting table (a gift from Doyle's parents and purchased from Adam's Auctioneers the day after the couple's "derelict dinner party" at which they introduced the two families to each other and showed them the house) sit quite happily among contemporary pieces such as couches from SCP and DFS x FCUK.

The interior styling of the home is carefully considered, but not without wit and humour,

The floor had to be raised on one side of the home as the two houses were not previously interconnected. "We had to cut down the doors on one side of the house in order to raise the floor level to match the other side," says Colm Doyle. "It's not an ideal thing to do, but we wanted to retain the original doors."



Colm Doyle and Peter O'Reilly on the terrace of their home

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and there is a sense of irreverence here which suggests that the owners do not take themselves too seriously. The two early 20th-century fireplaces at either end of the reception rooms were found in a skip on Morehampton Road in Dublin. There is a table in the shape of a bird's leg picked up on a visit to Chile, two Fornasetti plates hang on the wall and there is a flamingo-shaped lamp atop a side table. A fabulously kitsch ceramic Shanghai Tang jar, purchased in Hong Kong, sits on the floor in the TV room, as well as a leather rhino from Liberty of London – much loved by the couple's nieces and nephews when they come to visit.

This happy marriage of old and new in the space is further seen in

the eclectic art collection on display. Older pieces of art sit alongside paintings and prints by Ireland's contemporary artists and designers. A sketch by Irish artist Sarah Purser (1848–1943) and a painting by Daniel O'Neill (1920–1974) are as at home here as Sligo Must be Punished by Philip Lindey, Contemporary Ruin by Brian Maguire (a painting depicting the shell of the Central Bank building which became the symbol of the latest recession) and an abstract painting of actress Lauren Bacall by Irish-based Polish artist Katarzyna Gajewska.

"I bought Contemporary Ruin for Pete's 40th birthday," says Doyle. "This building was an



IBRC building and the Central Bank building was an IBRC building. This was a ruin and that was a ruin, so I thought there was a link between the two. Our building was the Irish Nationwide building in the 1960s, and the other building was the proposed Anglo building and they both were 'derelicted' by what happened, so I thought it was a fun tie-in for this house."

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