

The kitchen is wrapped in purple-toned Viola marble. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** A glass screen separates the kitchen from the living and dining spaces while keeping a visual link. Wanting a tidy kitchen, much of the workspace is hidden behind slatted walnut doors. The dining bench that buttresses the living room also has storage for children's toys and is clad in the same engineered oak from Floor Design as the floor.

SMOKE & MIRRORS

Tricks of the eye give a sense of space to this compact house in East Wall.

PHOTOGRAPHY RUTH MARIA MURPHY WORDS EMMA DWYER







Smoke and mirrors is a turn of phrase used to describe a magical illusion that dates as far back as 1770. An eerie moving image appears in a cloud of smoke, created by a hidden projector that reflects onto smoke by a mirror. Magicians have been using this gap between what we can see and what we understand for centuries. Interior designers use a similar illusion – making spaces appear larger, deeper or narrower than they are. Things like colour, lighting, horizontal or vertical lines, mirrors and material selection can trick our brains into experiencing spaces differently. In Dublin 3, this semi-detached house takes advantage of every inch of its narrow site to create a home that feels spacious and warm.

Paula and Paul McIntyre lived in their two-up-two-down end of terrace house in East Wall for 10 years before they decided to reconfigure it. With two growing boys, Milo and Noah, the space started to feel small. In Paula's words

OPPOSITE A steel frame acts as portal into the main open-plan kitchen/dining/living room, contrasting with the textured plaster walls and graphite wood treatment.

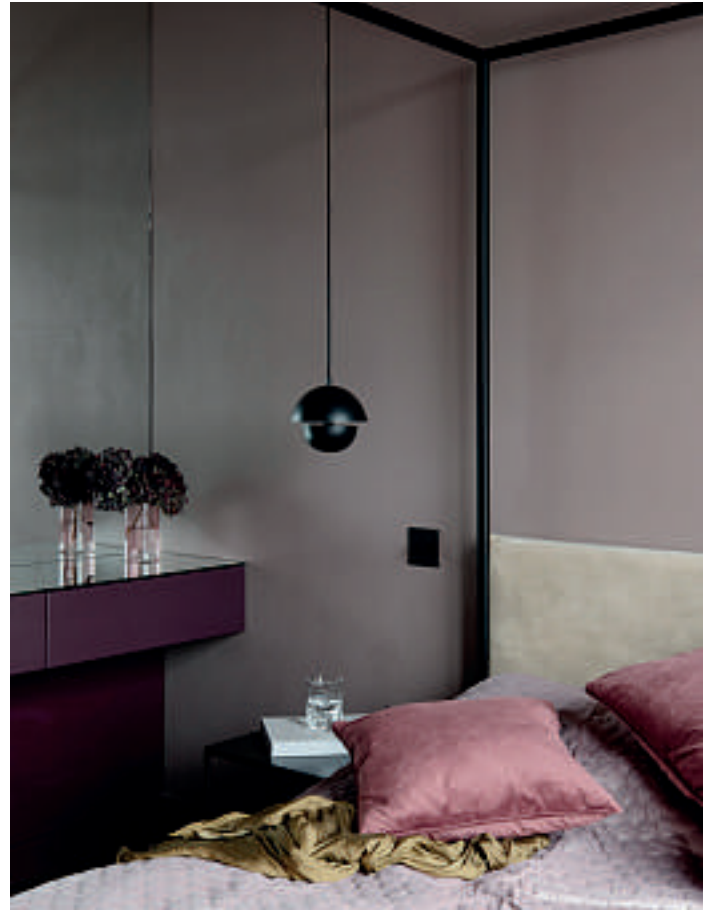
ABOVE LEFT The living area is compact and playful, designed for the whole family to spend time in. A circular coffee table balances the clean lines of the joinery.

ABOVE RIGHT The front sitting room has been wrapped in a walnut wood wainscot to give it a more adult feel.

it felt like a “living-on-top-of-each-other space. We knew the potential of it if we could just push the walls out” – and that's just what they did. They completely gutted their home to build out to the edges of the site and maximise the space they knew was there to make a home that functioned better for their family.

Tyler Owens Architects designed the plans for the structure of the house, adding width and reorganising the layout. They relocated the stairs from the front of the house to the centre and made a feature of it by giving it a cylindrical shape. New windows and roof lights bring in more natural light than there had previously been. In fact, there was little left of the house. “The only thing that reminds me of the original house now is in the bathroom; behind the press is my son's old dinosaur wallpaper,” says Paula.

The couple had worked with Róisín Lafferty of Kingston Lafferty Design before on a commercial project. When the time came to renovate their own



home, they naturally turned to Róisín once again. “Initially I don’t think they thought they needed both an interior designer and an architect,” explains Róisín. “It was more ‘could you just help us with the finishing touches’ and then it grew legs and we did the full project with them.”

The house now has a raw and streamlined aesthetic with a focused palette of polished white plaster, stained oak in graphite and white, muddy pink and navy tones, with splashes of marble and velvet soft furnishings. It’s a compact space that requires multifunction in every corner and a precise attention to detail, Róisín says.

“Every millimetre counted with the design, which meant it was almost like designing a shop fit out.” In fact, the open-plan kitchen/dining/living space at ground floor level was built like a commercial space, taping out the floor plan and custom-building the kitchen, dining table seating and living area storage to ensure it all fitted together seamlessly.

From the front door, your eye is drawn right through to the back garden with its

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Polished plaster gives a gorgeous chalky off-white finish. The master bedroom is finished in pale pinks with touches of softness in the linen curtains that wrap around the room. The stairway was designed to let in as much light as possible. Milo’s room is finished in block tones of blue from Fleetwood Prestige paints. One wall of Noah’s bedroom is covered in Forest wallpaper from Photowall.

Mutina Puzzle tiles and black slatted screen, which hide a shed and bin storage area. “Rather than hide the fact that it is one long narrow space, we wanted to accentuate that,” says Róisín. At the front is an “adult” living room that has one wall of smoked mirror and is wrapped in a walnut wainscot and finished with a polished, off-white plaster on the ceiling and walls. “We incorporated a lot of smoked mirror to give a feeling of space where it doesn’t really exist,” she says.

The main room is located to the rear of the house, where the kitchen is tucked behind a slatted, dark-stained walnut wall. Behind one door is a secret pantry where the oven is hidden and behind another are the kettle, toaster, microwave and work surface. A dividing glazed screen visually breaks up the kitchen and dining area to give a sense of space. In the living space, the floor treatment is continued up the units to give the appearance of a sunken, defined space. Upstairs are three bedrooms and a family



SMALL SPACE CONSIDERATIONS

- **SPATIAL PLANNING** Every square metre counts so it's important to decide what is essential. Rooms often have to serve multiple purposes. Store only what you really need so you're not taking up space for things you never use.
- **STREAMLINE** Design a visually simplified space; cut out unnecessary details such as skirting boards, architraves and trims between floor finishes. Opt for more subtle shadow gaps and flush finishes. Your eye will read a simpler space that feels bigger.
- **SCALE UP THE MIRROR** Instead of decorative mirrors choose mirrored panels. Smoked grey or bronze mirrors add a sophisticated and more understated feel and can run from wall-to-wall or floor-to-ceiling.
- **MAXIMISE YOUR OUTDOOR ROOM** Make the most of your garden by designing the layout as a continuation of the interior. Use similar materials and lines so that it reads as an external extension. Include lighting so that you can appreciate it all-year round.
- **SECRET HANDLES** Maximise storage by designing concealed storage in every nook and cranny with push-to-open mechanisms instead of visible handles. Finish in the same colours as the walls for the most invisible result.





bathroom that wraps around the curved staircase. The master bedroom has a walk-in wardrobe and a nook for gym equipment hidden behind curtains that envelop the whole room.

The project took just over six months from demolition to moving back in – no doubt helped by Paul who coordinated much of the build. “He is brilliant, I would hire him to do project management,” says Róisín. Walking around the house it’s evident that nothing was compromised. This was really important to Róisín, Paul and Paula who shared the same high standard and attention to detail.

With bespoke joinery, shadow gap skirting, recessed LED strip lighting, and the use of a small palette of finishes throughout, the result feels seamless. There is no visual clutter, no fussy architraves or imperfections. A two-up-two-down turned into a sizeable and sumptuous family home, now that’s actual magic.

ABOVE The bathroom is tucked in behind the stairwell with a circular wall – vertical tiles make it feel larger, while orange travertine gives it a luxurious feel.

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