

## Features

Big Buildings, Big Landscapes, and Big Ideas – EASA Student Conference 2008  
Time To Get Informed About  
Passive Houses  
Architecture and Project Management

## Buildings

*Sleeping Giant, Residence in Killiney, Co Dublin, O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects*  
*The Long House, London, Keith Williams Architect*  
*Hilton Hotel Kilmainham, Dublin, Anthony Reddy & Associates*  
*Georges Court, Dublin, KMD Architecture*  
*AIB Business Centre, Dublin, Kavanagh Tuite*

235

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# ARCHITECTURE

The Journal of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland





**Architects**  
O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects  
Sheila O'Donnell, John Tuomey,  
Triona Stack (Project Architect),  
Susie Carson, Jitka Leonard,  
My Lundblad, Elizabeth Burns

**Client**  
Private

**Quantity Surveyors**  
Brendan Merry & Partners  
Grace Bolger

**Structural Engineers**  
Downes Associates  
Liam Keogh

**Services Engineers**  
Davis & Associates  
Paraic Davis

**Main Contractor**  
Townlink Construction Ltd  
Joe McCarron

**Photography**  
Dennis Gilbert, VIEW

~ **PROJECT SIZE**  
500m<sup>2</sup>  
~ **VALUE**  
€2m  
~ **DURATION**  
16 months  
(on site)  
~ **LOCATION**  
Killiney, Dublin

# SLEEPING GIANT





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## O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects' Account

### Location

The site is high on a hill in Killiney with a view southwards towards Dublin Bay and the Sugarloaf in the distance. It has the character of a secluded hollow, 6metres below the road, with distinctive rocky outcrops of granite.

### Design

The private family house is built into the topography of the site in a series of split levels and within each level directly relates to the ground level outside. The plan form is angled into the shape of the site to provide optimum views of the sea and to bring sunshine into the house at all times of the day. The interlocking rooms step over the rocky site providing a variety of views. An outdoor dining terrace affords views of the southern coastline.

### Form and Materials

The form of the house responds to the character of the site. The most distinctive and challenging aspect of this is the faceted concrete roof, which is inspired by the granite rock formation around it. From the outside, it reads like another outcrop. As the house is approached from above, the view of the roof is particularly important. The concrete sparkles in the sunlight. The chamfered concrete roof is also exposed on the inside to give an angled, tent-like ceiling which reflects light throughout the day. The granite chips give a soft glow to the flowing spaces.

The kitchen and living room walls are fully glazed with heavy timber frames along their southern and eastern edges. The concrete ceiling appears light on

these sides. Its tilted angles emphasise the horizontal line of the distant sea horizon. The roof floats clear of the internal walls of the house, with a series of glazed clerestories allowing daylight and views to penetrate the depth of the house.

### Construction

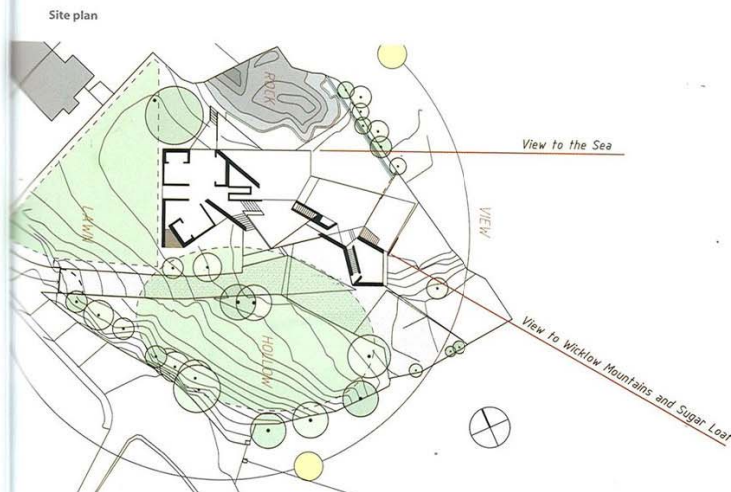
The building is a reinforced concrete construction with solid granite outer walls forming a base, and lime render on the walls above. The concrete roof wraps (and is anchored by) an exposed in situ concrete chimney and rests on lines of slender steel columns. The concrete roof is finished with a hand-applied stiff granite screed, which echoes the crease-lines in the cranked concrete structure below.

The concrete is constructed with a special granite aggregate/sand mix and has been sandblasted to expose the reflective mica in the granite. High quality formwork was used and set out to design drawings to achieve a high quality fair-faced finish. Large-scale vertical pours and continuous slabs were achieved to eliminate construction joints. Environmentally friendly GGBS cement lightens the shade of the concrete.

We worked closely with the builders to control and detail the concrete construction. The complex shuttering patterns was worked at through a series of cardboard models, which the contractors kept in the site office during that phase of the work.



3



1 & 3 The plan form has been angled to achieve optimum light and views. The outdoor dining terrace overlooks the southern coastline

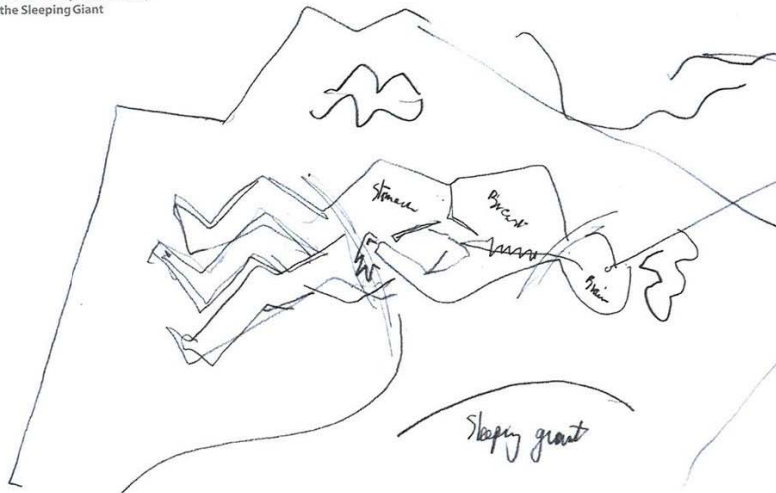
2 The faceted concrete roof follows the site contours, allowing the house to be read from above as another rocky outcrop



Watercolour study by Sheila O'Donnell  
of rock formations on the site



A first sketch by John Tuomey  
of the Sleeping Giant

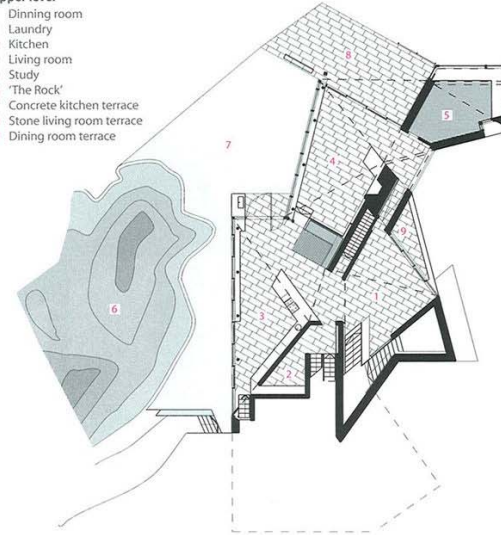


Early water colour studies by Sheila O'Donnell  
exploring the form of the house on the site



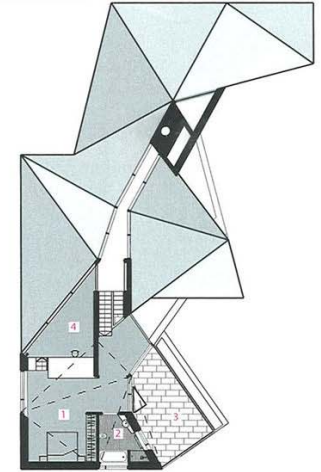
#### Upper level

- 1 Dining room
- 2 Laundry
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Living room
- 5 Study
- 6 'The Rock'
- 7 Concrete kitchen terrace
- 8 Stone living room terrace
- 9 Dining room terrace



#### Roof plan

- 1 Master bedroom
- 2 En suite
- 3 Terrace
- 4 'Hello to the sea' room



#### Ground floor level

- 1 Entrance hall
- 2 Family room
- 3 Cellar
- 4 Plant room
- 5 Guest bedroom suite

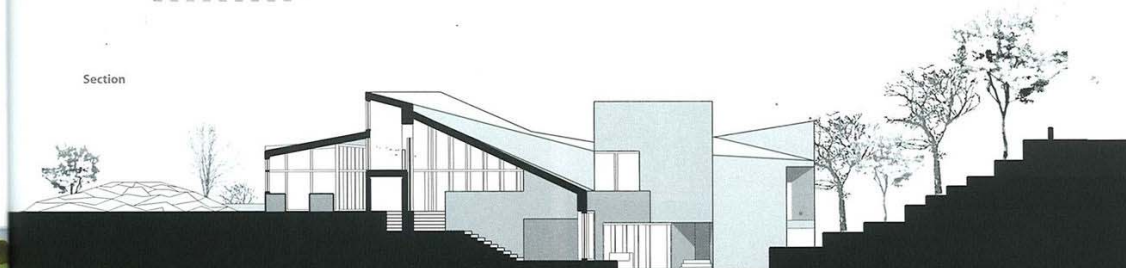


#### Half level children's bedrooms

- 1 Play hall
- 2 Children's bedrooms
- 3 Children's bathroom
- 4 Guest toilet



#### Section





## A Relaxed Recumbent Spatial Generosity

By James Roderick O'Donovan

Having looked at plans, a model and thumbnails of O'Donnell + Tuomey's new house in Killiney I felt a certain apprehension. How could I write about a building that, in terms of its conceptual origins, baffled me – in particular the triangulated roof that in the model seemed to dip and soar according to some laws of its own? Could the watercolours of the initial form and a conceptual sketch of a 'sleeping giant' I had been shown really have been the generators of form?

The next morning, on a bright, blustery winter's day, I walked up the quiet road leading to the house. At the start of the driveway leading down to the building (which lies between an outcrop of rock on one side and gardens that rise in terraces on the other), I realised immediately that I had failed entirely to grasp the plans, the concept, everything.

Few buildings want to be seen initially from above. But you look down at this Killiney house from the top of the entrance driveway and I can think of no other house that is more at ease with being seen from such a height. This is due largely to the concrete roof slab with its clearly defined edge, behind which a concealed gutter rises and falls with the angled planes of the roof. This gutter is read as a broad black line, the screed that covers the rest of the roof is a light smooth surface. The first impression is that of a cluster of elements joined by a chamfered roof slab: somehow continental European in feeling, with a serene clarity.

I immediately found the logically placed entrance. On walking into the hall a sense of spatial anticipation made me hold my breath in astonishment and delight: a flight of stone steps widens and invites as it rises, explaining one of those seemingly capricious cranks in the plan, the second flight turns at an acute angle and leads to a spacious dining room. A balcony at first floor level overlooks this entrance hall; there are glimpses, intimations of other spaces. Simple, beautifully made slatted hardwood balustrade elements front the balcony and protect the side of the dining area that opens to the entrance stairs below. On the half landing a sliding door has been left enticingly half-open. A second sliding door at the top of the entrance stairs has been slid completely open to reveal the kitchen and the first stunning view. And above you the triangular planes of the roof slab tilt and soar, mica chips sparkling in the soft sandblasted concrete surface.

This house does not rudely 'capture' the awe-inspiring views across the Irish Sea and towards the Sugar Loaf

but opens to them, incorporates them. From each point on the main level there are multiple visual connections to other spaces not yet entirely seen. When fully open, the sliding door on the half landing reveals a private children's world with a top-lit play hall, a hatch connecting two of the bedrooms and a stairs leading from one bedroom directly to the kitchen. Behind the second sliding door, at the top of the entrance stairs, is the kitchen (the 'giant's stomach', now the conceptual sketch starts to make sense). This forms the start in a series of cranked spaces each of which opens to the spectacular views and promises more amazement ahead. This sequence culminates in the 'giant's head', the study: a space that would awaken envy in even the most unworldly. More closed than the lavishly glazed living room or kitchen it has an incised window onto the approach side of the house, a full-length window above a long desk and cool clerestory light from above. An air of concentrated calm has been distilled from the view and the clarity of the architecture.

The options offered by the different routes and the physical and visual connections give this house its great spatial complexity and richness. The entrance stairs and the children's stairs to the kitchen have already been mentioned, there is also a more private stairs leading to the parents' bedroom (with its own bathroom and terrace). From here an upper area connects to an amazing spine of clerestory windows running through the centre of the house, offering even more unexpected views through and beyond the building.

On the glazed side of the house facing the view, you walk down a short flight of steps from the kitchen to the living room, you can continue to the study or turn around and walk back up a ramp to the dining space. Beyond the ramp a stairs leads up from the lower level where there is a self-contained guest room and a family room. The tilted planes of the roof slab intensify the fluidity suggested by this wealth of routes and visual connections.

This house seems to have developed naturally out of the conditions of the site, not like a plant but like the rock outcrop that borders it on one side. The heightened sensitivity to topography evident in the watercolour sketches has been given built form; the house's relaxed, recumbent spatial generosity does indeed suggest a sleeping giant. Visiting this great house reveals the logic (persuasive, not inexorable) of the floor plans, the volumes and the roof.

4 & 6: The roof floats clear of the internal walls of the house, with a series of clerestories allowing daylight and views to penetrate

5: In the original concept sketch, the kitchen was considered the 'stomach' of the sleeping giant and social heart of the home



# 10 QUESTIONS

## for... Triona Stack, O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

### Architecture Ireland

Where did you study and what did you do next?

#### Triona Stack

I studied in the School of Architecture UCD and then went on to complete a Masters. After that I worked in Dolan and Donnelly, O'Muire Smyth and Niall McLaughlin before joining O'Donnell + Tuomey three years ago

AI

What is your favourite building?

TS

Villa Mairea by Aalto, Newgrange, Ronchamps Chapel by Le Corbusier, Kimbell Art Museum by Kahn, ...

AI

Which architect's work do you admire most?

TS

I'd love to name someone I discovered, but the greats are great and it's hard to go wrong with Le Corbusier, Kahn and Aalto.

AI

What keeps you motivated in your day-to-day work?

TS

Dark chocolate and colleagues to laugh with.

AI

Which piece of office equipment could you not do without?

TS

One of my red Marimekko satchels and my little black sketch book which lives in it.

AI

What is your favourite city?

TS

To live in – Dublin; to visit – the next one.

AI

What books do you read?

TS

Reading helps me go to sleep so a single page can sometimes take a few nights to get through. The stack of books by my bed represents an ambition rather than achievement. My favourite book to date is *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry. The next book I want to read is *Pure Heart Enlightened Mind* by Maura Shoshin O'Halloran.

AI

What music have you recently bought?

TS

Sufjan Stevens, Ronan Ó Snodaigh, Ray La Montagne, Arvo Part.

AI

How do you relax?

TS

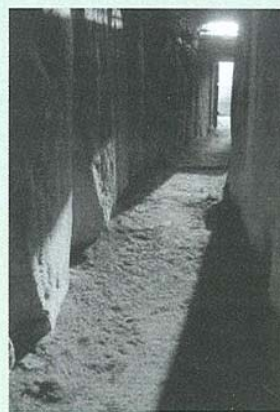
Making furniture, playing soccer and golf with much too much enthusiasm.

AI

Finally, what would you have become if you had not become an architect?

TS

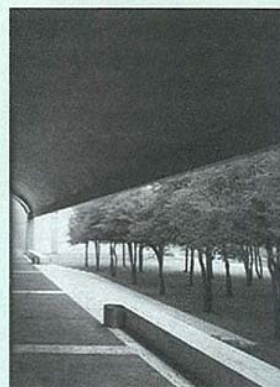
When I was very young I wanted to be an ambulance, but that didn't really work out for me. Architecture was my next choice, and that was not so much a career choice as an inherited genetic trait.



Newgrange



Ronchamps Chapel by Le Corbusier



Kimbell Art Museum by Kahn