THE BUILDING MAINTAINS ITS SINGULAR EXPRESSION THROUGH THE TONE AND NATURE OF ITS MATERIALITY

Rubbed: 'The Sleeping Giant' by its architects, this overwhelming house is situated high on a hill in Killiney, County Dublin. Unlike the 1950s house it replaced, it takes advantage of striking views towards Dublin Bay and the Sugarloaf. In contrast to the more conventional semi-detached homes that line the approach road, O'Donnell + Tuomey's project is far more of its place, taking on the character and figure of a rocky outcrop and conceived as part of the landscape. The bedroom house hunkers down more harmoniously into its topography, in section occupying a series of split levels, each directly related to the ground outside, and in plan buckling and skewing to take full advantage of views and daylight, while negotiating its place between rocks and established trees.

Despite the complexity in plan, the building maintains its singular expression through the tone and nature of its materiality, with a base of randomly coursed granite, upper storey of lime render and in-situ concrete folded roof. According to the architects, this was the most challenging part of the house, and appears as a concrete tent, exposed to the internal spaces and inspired by the formations of granite in the surrounding landscape. A special granite aggregate/cement mix was specified to unite the materiality of the building with its context, the surface sandblasted to expose the reflective mica in the granite that makes the concrete sparkle in the sunlight. Enclosing the internal spaces and endowing them with a cave-like ambience, the concrete is anchored by an exposed in-situ concrete chimney and rests on lines of slender steel columns. Exteriorly, the overhanging roof is finished with a hand-applied stippled cement screen, which echoes the crease-lines in the cranked concrete structure below. Aogdaeill all this manner, a dark-stained wedge is inset throughout the house for all joinery elements, including the large sections of timber that frame the fully glazed kitchen and living room walls that occupy the house's southern and eastern edges. It is slung at elevations that reflect the concrete ceiling's propped light, with its tilted angles emphasizing the horizontal line of the sea horizon. Elsewhere, the roof floats clear of the internal walls with a series of glazed clerestories allowing daylight and views to penetrate the house.