

# Calm Elegance

Situated in the beautiful countryside of the Ring of Gullion, County Armagh, this elegant family home takes full advantage of the surrounding landscape.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL ROBINSON.





The challenge for architect Sarah McNulty of McNulty Smyth Associates was to design a house on a relatively small site that sympathetically let the landscape become part of the home, whilst making the most of the views and creating a building that didn't feel like an imposition on the surrounding area. The result is an elegant storey and a half house that nestles comfortably into the landscape.

'The site was selected for its views and location, however at the outset it was hard to tell exactly what the views were as the only dwelling was a small derelict house and the entire plot of land was completely reclaimed by nature – you couldn't walk across the site because of dense overgrowth,' comments Sarah. 'Thankfully, when the clearing began, the fantastic views that we hoped for were revealed, and were particularly apparent when up on ladders at the design stage! The brief was to focus on emphasizing the beautiful countryside in which the house is located, whilst being respectful of its position in the landscape.'





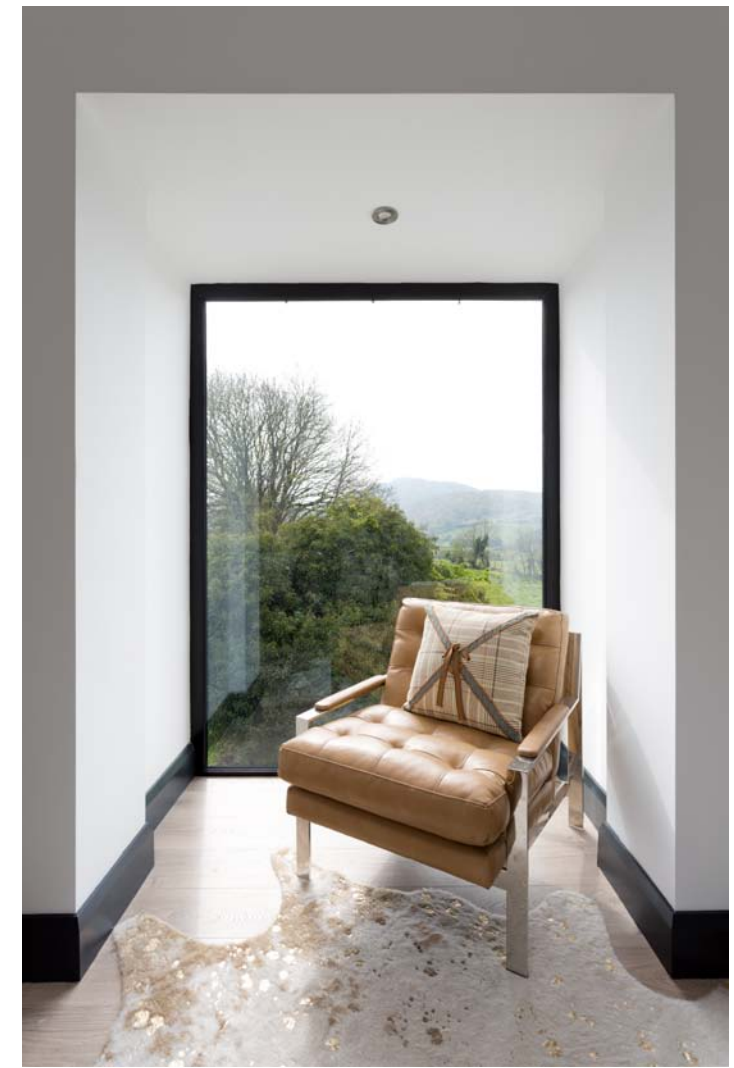
‘At the initial stages we talked to our client about Irish vernacular farm cottages, which traditionally have a simple gable form, with outhouses at ninety degrees, forming a courtyard and shelter. This typology influenced the design while ensuring the social living area was located where it could take maximum advantage of the view,’ adds Sarah. ‘At a fifth of an acre, the site was tight with a difficult triangular geometry, so we were happy our design met the challenge of fitting a four bedroom house whilst providing a good garden and parking for two to three cars. The result is a storey and a half contemporary yet classic ‘farmhouse’ which sits sensitively on the site.’

‘The build went very smoothly, with Paul McVeigh appointed as the main contractor, which reflects the good relationship between the clients, builder, architect, engineer (also McNulty Smyth Associates) and the quantity surveyor. The entire project was completed within twelve months.’



‘When designing the house it was important to create a social area for the main living, dining and kitchen space. We envisioned this to be a large open-plan room that whilst having zones, would flow and work for extended family gatherings. This was achieved by installing huge double slider doors in the living space. Many suppliers can only offer one slider in the six metre wide glazing designed. The company the client selected in the end could slide two doors back to achieve a four metre opening, so the space benefits from a fantastic inside outside connection in all weathers.’

When approaching the house and entering the home you are greeted by dramatic double height glazing. The bespoke staircase was designed to be open, let light flow in the double height hallway, yet have an industrial vibe – another must have. ‘We and the client had clear ideas about the industrial feel being consistent throughout the house. In this project, like in many others, we were also appointed for the interior design and selection of materials. The selected palette of materials and colours inside and out was kept deliberately pared-back, giving a sense of calm simplicity.’



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‘The grey whites and dark blue greys link to similar external tones of the zinc and slate, and nod to the fact that the house is modern, yet also aware of the history of other buildings in the area,’ says Sarah. ‘From the shortlist we provided for every room, including sanitary ware and the statement tiles in the master en-suite, the clients chose their favourite.’

‘On select projects we undertake design drawings for the kitchen, and work with a joiner or a small kitchen supplier who doesn’t have the big showroom. This way the client gets what we have agreed between us, and it can be economical too. In this case the kitchen design has resulted in a beautiful industrial vibe,’ says Sarah. ‘The open-plan

living and kitchen space with a double height ceiling that follows the shape of traditional farm buildings, with its expansive views through the six metre glass doors, is a hit with our clients and their extended family,’ adds Sarah. ‘Our client had a fantastic eye, and she selected all the furnishing, which complemented the industrial character of the house. Comfort is key when choosing pieces to complete an interior design approach, and our client was a natural. We used mood boards at the design stage for key rooms, as these communicated the desired end result. We also continually shared images with our client on a private pinterest board – a great tool architects and designers can use to understand exactly what their client likes and wants.’





With this careful design and attention to detail, Sarah has created a home that ultimately is a relaxing space for this family. 'It's instantly calming, and something I always aspire to in my designs is calm elegance. I really believe that the spaces you spend time in make an impact on how you feel. These types of spaces have the ability to slow you down – you can just sit in a chair, quietly contemplate life and look out to that fantastic view.' 🏡