

**Architects**  
McNulty Smyth  
Associates

**Location**  
Dublin

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# Mid-century mews.

Palm Springs comes to Ballsbridge in this refreshing iteration of the much-loved mews house typology.

A client's love of the Californian mid-century spirit was the starting point for this new-build three-bedroom house on a Dublin 4 mews lane. A simple palette and a clear direction allowed McNulty Smyth Associates to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by this backlands site.

### A natural synergy

The best projects happen when all parties are looking in the same direction. It didn't take long for architect and client to bond over a shared love of mid-century design. As an avenue into the architectural journey, Architect Sarah McNulty has found that "the best way to draw out a client's interests is to ask questions like: Is there a particular piece of design you like, or a piece of furniture, a kitchen you really respond to?" The immediate response from the client was "Palm Springs", and in particular a cherished print by photographer Slim Aarons entitled *Poolside Gossip*. The print features the Kaufmann House by architect Richard Neutra in the background, a residential project favoured, coincidentally, by McNulty. Combined, these elements provided the spark for the mews development.

### A tight site

The site was quite constrained and the clients' list of essentials included a master suite as well as two other bedrooms, along with living, dining and utility spaces. The spatial requirements on a plot this tight meant going down into the basement to accommodate three floors, as well as front and back courtyards. A key move that facilitated the creation of the generously proportioned master suite on the first floor was the decision to cantilever out at the front. This overhang houses the third bedroom, while still allowing space for a car to park underneath.

### A marriage of light and air

While sunny days might be few and far between in Ireland, the spirit of Palm Springs was channelled here in other ways. The architects were tasked with creating an interior that was light, airy and spacious. This request dovetailed neatly into an ethos that is central to McNulty Smyth's approach – that architecture should foster a sense of wellbeing among those who occupy it. "We are passionate about the connection between building and wellbeing. Light, proportion, the flow of a space – it is part of the conversation that always grows over the course of the project. Our view is holistic", say the architects.

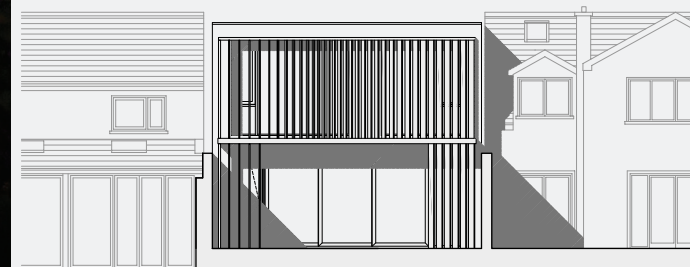


- 01. This new mews house was designed to embrace space and light
- 02. The clients' mid-century furniture complements the modernist architectural style



### + Architect's Top Tip

Think about the best ways to bring light into the house - it's not just about windows, think about roof lights too.







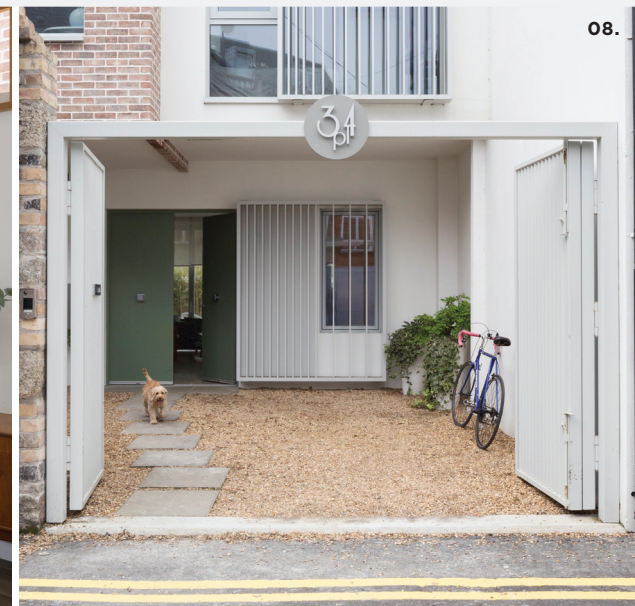
03.



04.



07.



08.



05.



06.

- 03. Textured brick walls create warmth
- 04. The bespoke staircase is flooded with light
- 05. Daylight floods the simple but stylish bathroom
- 06. Bricks add texture and warmth

**In the shade**

To achieve this sense of openness, generous glazing was a natural choice. However, the north-south orientation became a blessing and a challenge. The back of the house was washed with southern sun for much of the day, but this necessitated solar shading. The solution was endorsed by the famous Kaufmann residence in the Slim Aarons' print with its slender metal fins, as the architects recall: "The fins were a project on their own, really. We did several mock ups, first in timber, then in metal, trying to balance the depth with elegance. We worked out with 3D models what angles the fins needed to be at for shading and privacy, and then gradually rotated each one. They're there for solar and privacy shading, but they also evoke the spirit of the Palm Springs house, without being a replica."









**Material matters**

The refined profile of the fins speaks to an aesthetic that permeates the property – one of controlled consistency. The material palette is limited to a few standout choices working in harmony together, explain the architects: "We didn't want a mish mash of things. So a key move in this regard was the brick. This set the tone for the whole

house." Bricks of different types and tones were all considered, but what was finally settled on had rich hues that complemented the tones of mid-century wood. The oak used in the staircase was then stained to work with the tones of the brick. The details too are restrained, almost hidden. Frameless skylights allow light to flood the stairwell and upstairs shower. "It's almost like a set piece. When the sun is shining and the sky is blue, it's like walking up a staircase to heaven." Doors sit in walls without their architraves, giving the interiors a very contemporary feel.

**Fabric first**

Sustainability is at the heart of this house, because it is at the heart of the architects' design process. "In trying to get as close to an A1 rating as possible, we always encourage clients to go 'fabric first', because it's the best money you'll spend. We work with a BER consultant, and try to get clients to go beyond the Building Regulations, because it's in their interest in the long term", say McNulty Smyth. The front and back walls of the existing property were reused, a heat pump was installed and the windows are triple glazed, making this house highly-energy efficient and a joy to live in.

-  Windows  
**DK Windows and Doors**
-  Aluminium fins  
**Urban Metal Design**
-  Bricks  
**Ibstock**
-  Joinery  
**Wicklow Joinery**
-  Engineered timber floors  
**Mourne Flooring**
-  Panasonic heat pump and underfloor heating  
**Base Engineering**
-  Metal gates and railings  
**Mc Garrigle Engineering**
-  Paving and Gravel  
**Roadstone paving**



09.

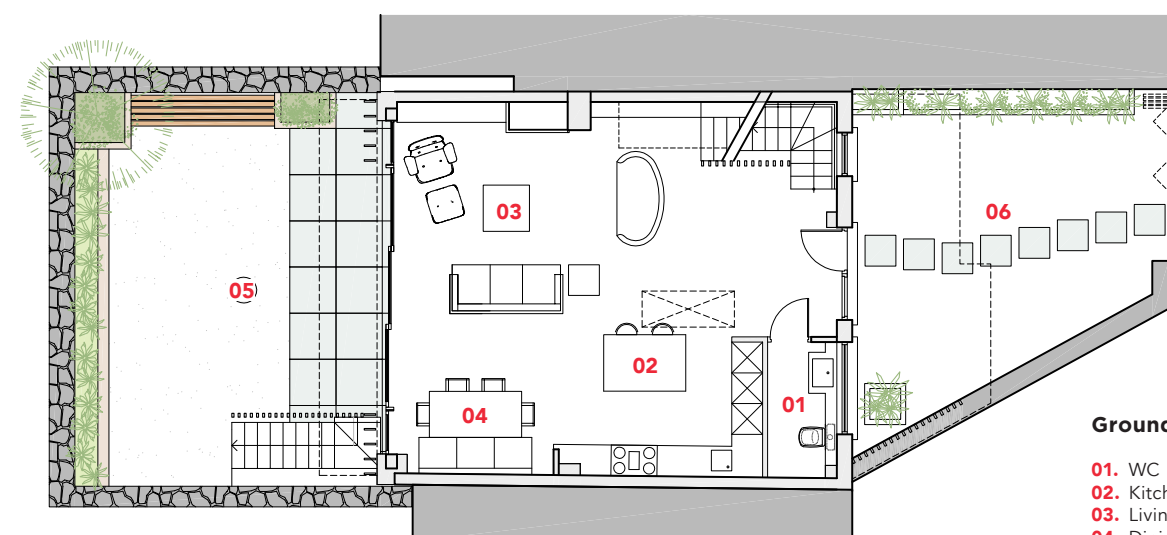
- 07. Although on a constricted site, the house maximises its connection with the garden
- 08. The entrance courtyard can be closed off for privacy
- 09. The Palm Springs theme is evoked in the colours and artworks



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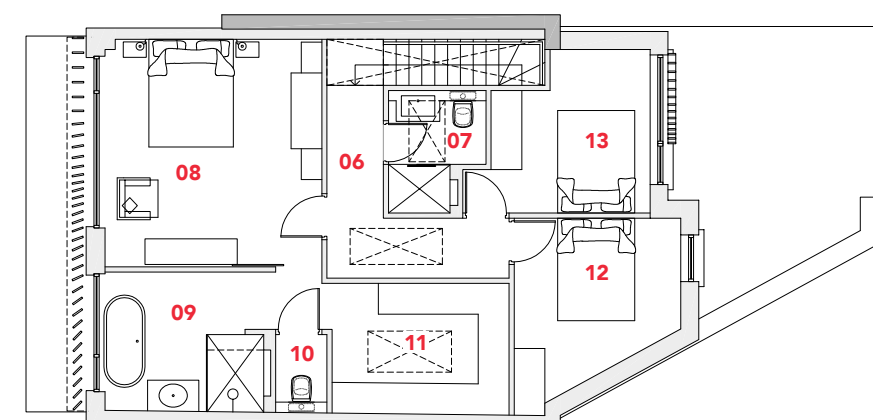


10/11. Aarons' print inspired the slender metal fins of this home



Ground Floor Plan

- 01. WC
- 02. Kitchen
- 03. Living
- 04. Dining
- 05. Courtyard garden
- 06. Entrance Court



First Floor Plan

- 06. Hall
- 07. Shower room
- 08. Master bedroom
- 09. Master ensuite
- 10. WC
- 11. Dressing
- 12. Bedroom 2
- 13. Bedroom 3



Front Elevation



### About this Home

**McNulty Smyth Associates**  
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McNulty Smyth Associates creates timeless, elegant architecture and design that reflects our clients' vision. We prioritize well-being in our homes, meeting our clients' aspirations for their dream house. Our core value is responding creatively to each project and client, innovating for the best possible outcome.

We specialize in crafting homes that blend seamlessly with their surroundings, using natural materials in their purest form. Our buildings are designed to age gracefully, creating a lasting legacy. At McNulty Smyth Associates, we take pride in fulfilling our clients' needs and creating homes that stand the test of time.

- Site area - 400m<sup>2</sup>
- Engineer - McNulty Smyth Associates
- Floor area - 175 sqm
- Duration on site - 18 months
- BER Rating - A3

Main Contractor - McGrath Contractors