



# Contemporary Classic

THIS REMODELLED 1950s HOUSE IN MALAHIDE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED BY A LOCAL ARCHITECT INTO A STRIKING, ECOLOGICALLY-FRIENDLY HOME THAT REFLECTS THE OWNER'S TASTE AND CHARACTER AND PERFECTLY SUITS HER LIFESTYLE

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Moving back home from London for Valerie was an exciting time, but the key consideration was where she was going to live when she returned to Dublin. One of her main conditions was that the house should be near the Dart so, as she got older, she could get in and out of town without using a car. She was looking for a property that she could renovate, so when this house came on the market, near to the Dart station and in a lovely area, she immediately went to view it.

Built in 1954, the house was pretty much in its original state and in need of a lot of work, with the original bathroom and kitchen still in situ. "It even had the original doorknocker, which made my family laugh as it was the same doorknocker we

had when we were growing up," says Valerie. Being very sure of the design she wanted, namely a large bright open-plan space, Valerie contacted a couple of architects and asked them to meet her at the house to give her their opinion before she put in her first offer. The first architect told her that she could never make the back of the house as bright as she wanted to, but the second architect Gareth Maguire of Studio Mua in Malahide ([Mua.ie](http://Mua.ie)) assured her she could. "Gareth showed me a house he had done on the same road, which I loved; it was exactly what I wanted, extending and opening up the back of the house to make a lovely bright airy space, filled with light. I could see that what I had envisaged was possible."



THE WHITE RECONSTITUTED STONE WORKTOPS AND SIMPLE SPOTLESS LINES AND SYMMETRY OF THE KITCHEN ALLOW IT TO BLEND SEAMLESSLY WITH THE LIVING SPACE





Gareth and Valerie made a great team. He understood exactly what she wanted, and from the start they had a good working brief. "Being an east-facing house, it was a tricky and awkward site on which to produce a bright space," explains Gareth. "Working with natural light is key. To add light to the entrance I created a triple-height vaulted hallway. We moved the entire end gable of the house to achieve that size of hallway and effect, to ensure the house was correctly balanced and scaled. Now it's such a bright space, it's incredible to think it's east facing."

Finding a builder for the job was relatively easy, and Rob Morgan of Morgan Building Services came on board. "Gareth project managed the whole house build as I was up in Sligo a lot and he did an amazing job," says Valerie. As you enter the house the staircase is a main feature piece. "I wanted it so when you walked in the front door, the eye would follow straight through into the living area and out the big window at the back." Gareth designed the staircase and three different



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companies built it; one did the wood, one did the glass and another did the steel, so it was a complex project. "A company called Spiraco did an amazing job on the metal work for the stairs," says Valerie. She picked the wood, a light mahogany, which works perfectly with the mix of woods in her existing furnishings.

She wanted the kitchen to blend into the background as part of an open-plan kitchen and living room space. The white reconstituted stone worktops and simple spotless lines and symmetry of the design allow it to blend seamlessly with the living space. At night when she is having dinner in the dining space, she can turn the lights out in the kitchen and it virtually disappears. She

loves Aga stoves and one holds pride of place in this kitchen. It is a traditional Aga, but works well in the space and she loves it.

"Because I was moving from London, I had a lot of beautiful furniture already; I didn't want to go out and buy new pieces," explains Valerie. "The dining table, desk and cabinets all came from a designer called Tom Schneider. I love his furniture. The two blue striped chairs have moved around the world with me and the carpets came from the Middle East, from places where I lived. I bought a couple of pieces to finish it off, including the cream recliners, and the high chairs by the breakfast bar. I had bought similar chairs for a house in Sardinia. I went to



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Arnotts and showed them photographs of them. They sourced and imported these chairs for me; they are not the exact model but similar."

She had seen the fireplace in a book and showed it to Gareth. He then designed it for her as well as the floating shelf. The flooring downstairs is a beautifully even Spanish marble, which was sourced from a quarry by the stone company Vigore based at Belle Cheminée in Dublin. Gareth designed the upstairs floor plate so that although it is a three-bedroomed house, it could

easily be reconfigured to work as a five-bedroomed house. Valerie is a firm believer that the more bathrooms you have the better, so upstairs was reconfigured so that each bedroom would have an ensuite, plus a dressing room for the main bedroom. Rather than remove the fireplaces in the bedrooms, they simply boxed them in and then cleverly added built-in shelving to the alcoves.

The long wide garden had lots of potential. Valerie wanted a wide entertaining space and



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Gareth came up with the idea of the retaining wall near the house with built-in seats and lighting underneath. It is beautiful and works really well, while another patio area at the end of the garden gets the late evening sun on sunny days. "It was actually quite a good thing that it was untouched and not refurbished in any way," says Gareth. "It made the build a little easier as you were not working around someone else's refurbishments and trying to incorporate that into the new design, or else trying to get rid of it completely. It made it much easier for me to write the brief with Valerie."

They decided not to create the look of a swanky modern house, but an elegant, contemporary house with classic architecture. From the outside it's a modest house, but when you walk inside the proportions give the sense of a much larger space. It sits within its surroundings really well. The interior design is also classic contemporary interior design. Importantly, the high-quality wood and marble that were used will not date over time.





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The architecture and interiors provide a stunning example of what can be achieved with good architecture and design. "I really enjoyed working with Valerie and worked with her style of furniture and art for the interior design of the house," says Gareth. "I created the

interior so that it would work with her collection. Especially for the stairs I tried to capture her style and fashion and personality within the design." With this house, he has created a timeless design that reflects Valerie's style and character and caters perfectly for her lifestyle.