

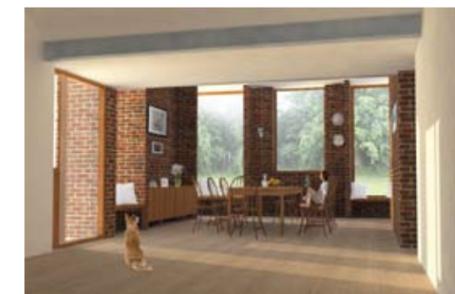
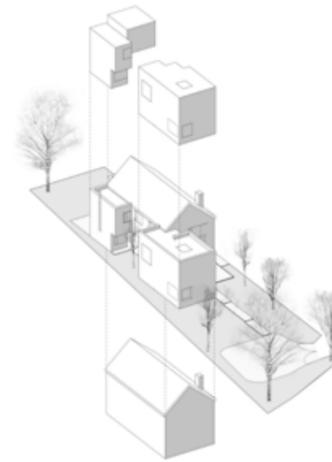


IRISH APPROCHIT THE FUTURE

THE RIAI ANNUAL REVIEW



Vol.5
2014|2015



ROBERT BOURKE ARCHITECTS

2014 Irish Architecture Awards
Best Emerging Practice - Winner

Practicing through Engagement & Discovery

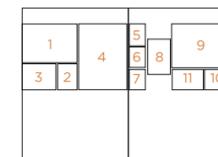
Since setting up in 2009, Robert Bourke Architects (RBA) have been developing a particular set of skills that has become integral to their design approach.

Robert Bourke and Anna Pierce use various techniques to enable clients and other stakeholders to fully focus upon and engage with a particular design challenge. The result of this approach is that vital layers of information, often untapped in the conventional design process, are revealed. Through this process of gathering, filtering and translating information, a brief emerges and RBA set about fully exploring its potential through craft, detail and materiality. The ultimate aim is to create an architecture that is imaginative, responsive and often unexpected at the outset.

Two key projects, which have become touchstones in the practice's learning and development involved enabling young people to critically appraise their built environment. Both were initiated by the Irish Architecture Foundation with Arts Council Funding.

In A Space for Learning, RBA worked with school students in north Dublin to help them to re-imagine their school environment. Through a series of intensive workshops the students revealed a key failure in current school design: the lack of quality social spaces. The team presented their response to this issue in an exhibition piece comprised of a narrated film, scale models and a bespoke bench. The exhibition travelled to major arts and cultural centres around Ireland throughout 2011-12.

In Place Shapers, RBA helped students in west Dublin to discover and address urban design issues in their neighbourhood. During their explorations, the team identified the lack of permeability in their housing estates due to the proliferation of walls and fences surrounding the clusters of cul de sacs. Their creative response was to invent a "shortcut structure" consisting of a platform with a pair of ladders and slides, designed to straddle boundaries at strategic points in the area. They won over residents and local government officials and secured



- Image
- 1 Place Shapers - "Shortcut Structure"
 - 2 Place Shapers - TV interview with one of the team
Photos: Jonny Savage
 - 3 A Space for Learning - Exhibition piece
Photo: Alice Clancy
 - 4-7 House +3 - Light-filled corridor and brick detailing
Photos: Alice Clancy
 - 8 House +3 - Axonometric showing the 3 brick additions
 - 9 Learning Pavilion - Competition image
 - 10 Learning Pavilion - 1:20 structural model
 - 11 Honey Park - One of RBA's current residential projects

permission to present their idea to the community and gain valuable feedback. Place Shapers was awarded First Prize in the Participatory Planning category of the National Planning Awards. RBA is currently working with Fingal County Council to devise more permanent ways to address the issue of urban permeability.

House +3 involved the adaptation and extension of a standard suburban house within the limits of the planning regulations and a strict budget. Three brick additions create new spaces and re-shape existing rooms. The south-facing side, originally a blank wall, was opened up to create a light-filled hallway linking the ground floor living spaces. Communication and engagement were paramount at all stages, from pre-planning to construction. Craft, detail and materiality were fully explored in the brick bonding and oak joinery.

The Learning Pavilion was the result of an open competition in 2013. RBA's winning proposal is an all-timber pavilion with open sides placed in a 'natural' landscape of hills, dips and pathways. An amphitheatre, set within two grassy mounds, provides an alternative learning space for performance and play. The overall concept is a contrast to the order and sameness of conventional school buildings. Construction and materiality become key components in the creation of a stimulating and flexible learning environment.

By placing engagement and discovery at the heart of their approach, RBA continue to develop and refine their technique in an expanding body of residential, educational and public commissions.

www.rba.ie