

# THE CREAM OF THE

# CREW

With an incredibly high standard of interior design thinking in Ireland today, **Nuala Ryan** recognises some of the great home grown talents and gets their top tips on home renovations



MARIA  
Mac  
VEIGH  
DESIGN

Interior designer Maria MacVeigh typifies the incredible level of excellent design thinking in Irish design today. Having been short-listed, highly commended and winner at last year's Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI) awards for her work on three separate projects, Maria is a force to be reckoned with in national and international interior design.

Maria qualified with a degree in Interior Design from DIT before moving to Barcelona immediately after qualifying to work. Having spent 13 years abroad, she returned to Ireland six years ago to set up her own practice.

Maria undertakes both commercial and domestic work, and approaches each project with a firm understanding of her client's requirements. She takes time to meet with each prospective client, showing them her incredible body of work and explaining how the practice works. These discussions determine whether the practice will be suitable for the client's needs and, if so, the project can begin to move forward with foundations laid for a successful venture.

To date, Maria has worked on such

commercial projects as the redesigning of top chef Ross Lewis's Chapter One restaurant and Chefs Table in Dublin, a project that she particularly enjoyed, and that was shortlisted for an IDI award.

According to Maria, each project has its own narrative.

"Nearly all the work that I do is in the refurbishment of old or existing buildings and all projects offer various opportunities for redevelopment. Finding out what this is can be as much a surprise for me as for my clients, but I really enjoy this process of understanding the existing building in order to bring it to a new stage in its life."

Most of Maria's projects have required an extension of the existing space, which she has also designed. She works closely with engineer David Maher, developing and detailing the finished project to ensure that a thorough service is delivered to the client.

So, what advice would Maria give to anyone thinking of renovating his or her home?

"Appointing the professional most suitable for the job is the beginning and end of a good project. Search through magazines and the IDI's website ([www.idi-design.ie](http://www.idi-design.ie)) for listings of designers. And remember that professionals are very happy to meet you and show you what they do in order to help you make an informed judgment."

**Maria's recent work on a Mews house in Dublin won her a 2009 IDI award. Her work on the restoration and renovation of an Edwardian house in Sandycove was highly commended at this same award ceremony. Visit [www.maria-macveigh.com](http://www.maria-macveigh.com) for further details.**



MARIA FENLON  
INTERIOR  
DESIGN



my client's quality of life is definitely one of the most rewarding parts of the job."

For anyone thinking of renovating their home, Maria recommends you start out by looking at the structure and space of the room and list all the needs for the space. "See if the space is being fully utilised," Maria advises. "It's amazing how many rooms in people's homes can look like separate spaces. You should think about how to link the room to the rest of the house and best use the space and the light."

Maria recommends you next consider what storage space is required, as well as your living needs, and how you plan to accommodate these. Think about the style of the room and how you might carry this style throughout the house. If you can achieve a unified look throughout your home, you can make it feel bigger and more organised.

Using her background in sculpture and model making, Maria provides her clients with a 3D model-making facility. This has proven to be a very useful tool in helping clients and builders to visualise the space they are working with, which in turn saves time and prevents people from making expensive design mistakes.

**Maria was recently commended at the IDI awards for her work on The Mill House in Carlow, a magnificent and traditional thatched structure with working wheel on the banks of the River Slaney. Visit [www.mariafenlon.com](http://www.mariafenlon.com) for further information on her work and projects.**

Former art and design teacher Maria Fenlon started up her interior design business in 2002, specialising in creating functional, comfortable and stylish homes that perfectly suit the owner's lifestyle and needs. By helping clients to focus on their preferred style, Maria designs a living space that will best suit this style.

According to Maria, design is all about newness, innovation and creativity. Research and product sourcing are a very important part of this process and Maria spends a lot of time abroad researching new designs. However, even though new trends are an exciting part of the business, Maria is a firm believer in the timeless quality of classic designs that will always retain their elegance and beauty.

At the end of the day, however, it is the client's home and so it is important to listen to the client's needs and ideas before offering expert advice.

"Even improving storage space in the home can make a huge difference to people's lives. We cater for their needs, help them to identify their preferred style and work to create a unique and seamless finished interior.

"Seeing how my designs impact on



Project by Maria MacVeigh, photography by Barbara Corsico



## ODKM ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

**O**DKM Architects and Designers is a newly formed practice located in the heart of Terenure. Promoting an open door policy, ODKM are with you from the beginning to end of every project, offering an initial free appraisal and inspection of your home, as well as sharing ideas as to the potential direction that the property renovations and design could take.

Partners Declan O' Donnell, Barry Kane and Ciarán Cole are undoubtedly a talented bunch. In fact, Declan was headhunted from college to work with one of the leading architectural firms in the world, Norman Foster and Partners in London. Having spent some time abroad, Declan returned home and together with Barry and Ciarán set up ODKM. Since then, and with the help of Declan's incredible design training and experience, the practice has been laying a solid foundation in the architectural design market.

According to Barry, the current market is a lot different than it was a few years ago. Today, it is almost inconceivable to spend 200-250 thousand euro on extensions and renovation work, as many had done during the boom time. But, as Barry points out, now is the right time to be developing your home as labour is cheaper than ever and building costs are down.

"People's lives have changed over the past 10 years and the vast majority of jobs that we work on are home renovations. Most people want to create an open plan kitchen, dining and family area, as this is where they spend the most time. And by investing in these well-used areas of your home you will see the most benefits and get the best value for money."

For many people, renovation work can be a huge undertaking, both financially and emotionally. Barry offers his expert advice on how to make the most of this investment.

"We would advise people to have an overall plan or idea of what they would like to achieve at the end of their renovation work. We recommend that people who are getting work done now should ensure that this work will not have to be undone later or affect the overall plan.

"If you are serious about getting work done then get an architect to review your home," Barry advises, "This way they can take into account what you are looking for and what is the best way to reach your end goal."

**For more information on ODKM Architects and Designers, why not call into their office in Terenure or visit [www.odkmarchitects.com](http://www.odkmarchitects.com).**



## HOME GROWN TALENTS

**A**nn-Marie McCarthy is a determined young designer. Not willing to let the economic downturn affect her career, she set up her own interior design practice and hasn't looked back since.

Having left Griffith College with a BA Honours degree in Interior Architecture, Ann-Marie was working with a practice in Cork before being let go due to the recession. Not content to sit on the sidelines, Ann-Marie decided to set up her own company and has been lucky enough to be busy ever since, making sure that her clients are looked after 110 per cent.

Having felt the impact of the recession first hand, Ann-Marie noticed a lot of difference between then and now.

"Back in the boom times, people didn't really invest in anything; when they wanted something they just bought it. Now, people are thinking long term instead of short term. Not only do they want to get good value for money, they want something that will stand the test of time."

According to Ann-Marie, there are many ways to freshen up a room without it becoming an expensive process.

"Most people have lovely homes with lovely furnishings but sometimes they just have things in the wrong places. You can change the look of a room by simply moving a few things around, and this won't cost you any money!"

"Also, I find a lot of people are not happy with the tiles they have in their bathrooms or kitchen. What a lot of people don't realise, however, is that, as long as the tile is suitable, they can tile over tiles. This saves the mess of having to pull down tiles and is a great way of giving a room a fresh, new look."



## ANN-MARIE McCARTHY Mac INTERIORS

Ann-Marie also offers her clients a shopping service. Having put in all the groundwork beforehand, she brings her clients around to all the shops to pick out all the key ingredients needed to put their room together.

If you are starting out by renovating a single room in your house, Ann-Marie advises you to consider the overall style of your home and to make sure that this new design is in keeping with this overall style. She always reminds her clients that it is their design and is ultimately their choice - her job is to make this design real and to make sure that the client loves it.

**If you would like more information on Ann-Marie's work, visit [www.macinteriors.ie](http://www.macinteriors.ie)**



## THE IDI DESIGN AWARDS

Established in 1997, the Institute of Designers in Ireland Awards is an occasion to celebrate the excellent standard of design achieved by designers on the island of Ireland and to promote this creative talent to a commercial audience. It is the only 'all-Ireland' design competition, covering all design sectors and judged by a distinguished panel of international jurors. Judging is conducted in a round table discussion format and entrants vie for the coveted 'IDI Eye'. For more information of the IDI and the work that they do, visit [www.idi-design.ie](http://www.idi-design.ie).

