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Beyond Limits

When brave clients meet bold designers, the results take design to the next level.
Róisín Lafferty of KLD went out to play in Cork.

photography Ruth Maria Murphy words Gemma Tipton

ABOVE LEFT “We wanted to create portals into each zone,” says Róisín Lafferty, who marked changes with different coloured tiles. **ABOVE RIGHT** A seat is built into the kitchen. The circular Meridium wall lamp is by Debonademeo. **OPPOSITE PAGE** “There isn’t a single white ceiling in the house,” remarks the owner. A polished concrete floor is softened by wall-length curtains. An extra colour pop comes from the set of 1960s Kai Kristiansen chairs, via 1stDibs, reupholstered in vibrant blue.



“It was

one of those projects that grew legs,” says KLD’s Róisín Lafferty with smiling understatement. If interior architects dream of the ideal client, the award-winning designer must have been thrilled to meet the owners of the Cork home she and her team have transformed into a jewel box of smooth marble, undulating tiles and lush colour.

“It’s like commissioning a piece of art,” the owner says, in full dream-client mode, speaking of the process that, admittedly, had its tough moments. Moving from a period terrace in Dublin’s Ranelagh, the family had found a more modern build, perched on one of those sites above Cork that give views across the city and countryside beyond. Inveterate travellers, having lived abroad for long periods, they weren’t shy about using colour, and were keen to create a backdrop for some of the things they had picked up en route.

“We’d lived in Indonesia, and the Middle East,” the owner explains, and we knew when we moved we wanted something more modern. Initially, the team thought it would be a relatively small renovation, Róisín says, casting her mind back to early mood boards. “But we realised there wasn’t proper insulation and foundations, so we were stripping right out, and that meant new everything.”

They did, however, preserve a timber stairwell in the hallway, which became the starting point of the scheme. “It’s quite vibrant, and quite 1970s. It was the charm of the house,” recalls Róisín. “The clients said they had never really played with colour before, and so we said, ‘Let’s go for it.’” The results are a wild blend of seven different shades of marble, plus polished concrete, polished stone and the softening elements of velvet, leather and curtains that stretch beyond windows to cover entire walls.

The detailing and craftsmanship is extraordinary. As the burl walls of the dressing room and bathroom, in which there are no visible doors, meet the smooth purple stone of a purpose-built vanity unit in the bedroom, everything is seamless and smooth. “We wanted it to be quite intense, but feel calm,” says Róisín.

Designer’s dreams are one thing, but what is it like to make such a dramatic backdrop your family home? “Great,” says the owner. “My wife said to Róisín and the KLD team, ‘We want a house with colour’, and we certainly got that. “She was actually thinking there might be some colourful soft furnishings and bits added, but I don’t think there’s even one white ceiling in the house!”

The kitchen, he says, is an incredible family space. “It has different views to the outside, so you get this real sense of nature.” Taking pink quartzite, and setting it off with red-stained rosewood, the house has a kitchen that must make even the most humble slice of breakfast toast seem like an El Bulli feast. Then there’s the green marble of the lounge wall – “I wanted it to look like it was growing,” says Róisín. “It’s mesmerising,” adds the owner, “although he does say that on a more practical note, all those smooth surfaces take quite a bit of cleaning. “It does come with maintenance,” he says wryly.

Moving in in June of this year, it must have been hard, through various lockdowns, to keep such a brilliant space to yourself. “Now that we’ve had the opportunities for family and friends to come around, I don’t think there’s many who wouldn’t just take the keys and want to move in,” he says. Fully committing to the idea, the family jumped with both feet, jettisoning their old furniture so that KLD could source pieces, often within a mid-century modern, or 1970s vibe, to complement the backdrop they were creating. “Some of it’s quite Studio 54,” agrees Róisín. “It’s like Alice in Wonderland,” the owner adds. “Once she’s down the rabbit hole, there’s no coming back...”

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Interior designer Róisín Lafferty of KLD. The green marble wall includes a built-in bio ethanol fire unit that doesn’t require a glass screen. The marble meets the floor, spreading out to look like it’s “growing”. The rich blue Marengo sofa is from Minima. BELOW RIGHT The arch door was an original feature. “We emphasised transitions with contrasting colours,” says Róisín. The Studio 54 vibe is picked out in furniture, such as the vintage Mr C set.



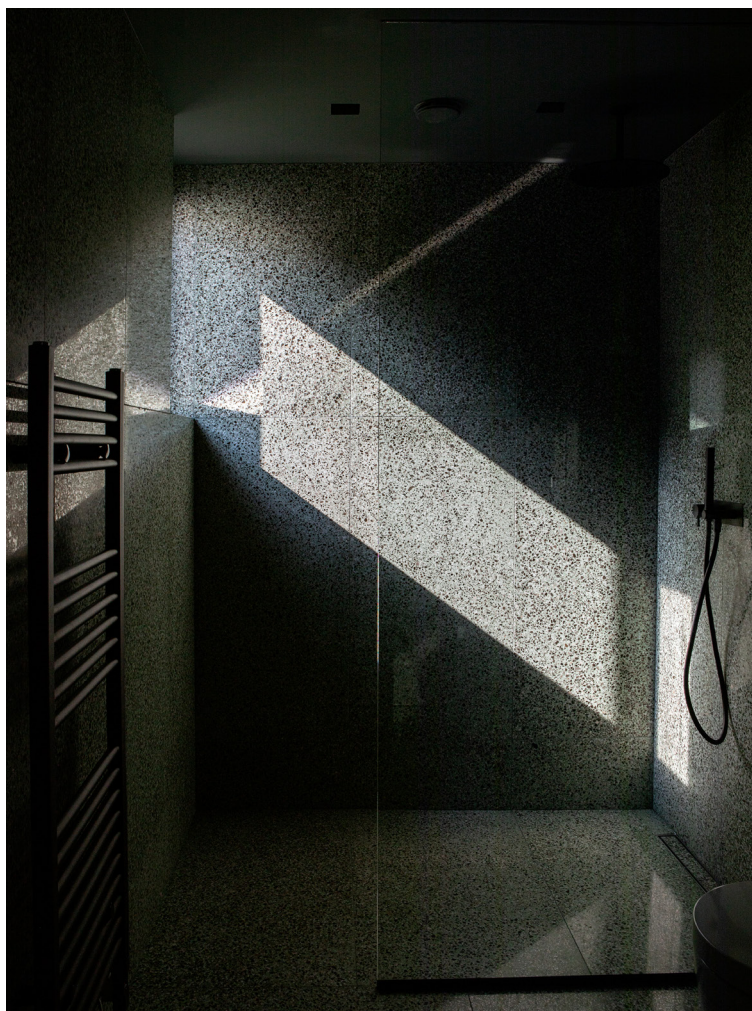


Stained rosewood meets pink quartzite in the kitchen. The over-counter light is by Flos, while the kitchen stools are by Mater in black oak with black leather. All from Minima.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
The owners' son loves Lego, and so a toy shelf has been fashioned to look like one of the famous bricks. The guest suite is in hues of blue, designed, says Róisín, to make you think you might be in the Yves Saint Laurent house in Marrakech. A built-in burl cube conceals the walk-in wardrobe and leads through to the bathroom. The purple vanity unit is made from marble and custom designed for the space. Built-in bunk beds make for a playful child's bedroom. The Roly Poly chair by Driade is upholstered in red brick. The green carpet is woven with silk. "We wanted everything to be quite intense, but feel calm," says the designer.





While lots of us love lots of things about our homes, we also tend to see their limitations, and it is rare to speak to someone who is so abundantly in love with their living space. It's an enthusiasm that quickly transmits, and talking to the owner, you could easily start to imagine some similarly radical transformations in your own space, even though I wonder about how relaxing it might all be at the end of the day.

"There are so many different aspects to it," says the owner. "But the thing is, it's absolutely fantastic to come home to, to spend time here. Yes, you've got all this colour, and all these amazing spaces, but it all just works. It's a relaxing haven. That's what it's really all about, isn't it? The space you come home to and relax." On an acre site, KLD is now working on the gardens. Expect wild things.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The en suite may be small, but it is incredibly detailed as different marbles meet in a space described by the designer as "an unexpected gem". The Gamma D light fitting is from Artemest. The family bathroom has a dramatic walk-in shower, again with marble touches.