

The Journal of the Garden & Landscape Designers Association

issue

compass 48

spring 2009



Romance and Sensuality

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Sinuosity

Landfall, a garden designed by Hugh Ryan, creates an impression with a single bold, element, a wall that unwinds itself down a sloping site.

Brian O Hara writes an appreciation.

"The broad sweep of Dublin Bay begins on its south side where the ancient fishing harbour of Coliemore is snugly tucked into the area of rocky coastline that is Dalkey Sound. Just off shore it is the craggy outcrop of Dalkey Island that creates this natural place of shelter, and this island with its very own Martello Tower can be seen from anywhere in the bay area. The shoreline of the Bay runs from here, past Dun Laoghaire Harbour and on to Dublin Port itself, before carrying on to form the northern shoreline that culminates in the Hill of Howth."
(Hugh Ryan).

When I first saw an image of Landfall on the GLDA site, I was struck instantly by the linear confidence of the white walls and hungrily wanted to see more images. I was delighted to see that the garden came from one of my favourite designers, Hugh Ryan. I had the pleasure of working with Hugh when I first returned to Ireland after an extended sabbatical of 20yrs. I found Hugh's approach to

garden design interesting and refreshing because of his ability to feel his way into a project in a way very similar to a sculptor sizing up a large piece of granite or wood, looking for the possibilities and developing his own relationship with an area.

The images of Landfall's walls evoked in me a feeling of elemental and ancient consequence, reminding me of the chalk drawings to be found along the coast of Britain. Hugh describes the linear qualities of the design as being influenced by the sweeping, sensual curves of the Dublin coastline. He also refers to the historic impact and the possibility of ancient meaning of the surrounding landscape in his own notes on the garden.

"The entire front façade of this building is curved so as to take full advantage of both the view and the daily passage of the sun. Our relationship with history and with the cycles of the sun is becoming



increasingly important in my work, and concepts around megalithic monuments, standing stones etc, although not fully explained, holds a particular fascination for me. In this design I have tried to give expression to some of these concepts, and the long flowing walls which emerge from the house are intended to not only link the house with its garden, but moreover with its location in time and place."

In a sense the garden not only links up comfortably with the modern house but also with the surrounding area and one can imagine the ripple of the walls continuing invisibly outward, reaching as far as the peninsula of Howth.

"All of the walls flow in both directions, away from the house to the land, and from the land to the house. The main, and longest wall rises from its point in the land and travels up across the lawn, around the Cedar, kisses its way past the Hamamelis and on by the upper lawn towards the house where it embraces the lower sun patio before finally making its landfall as it slides into the circular deck, then without hesitation it turns around to continue its journey back into the landscape from whence it first emerged."

Hugh has clearly approached the design of this garden with the intention of creating a statement as strong as the architecture of the house but not competing with it. The garden completes the house forming one unit of design.



"I have always been unhappy with the approach that says that the garden, (i.e. the planting), should seek to soften the building/ architecture. Clearly in some cases there may be a case for this simplistic approach, but in this, as in many other instances I much prefer the symbiotic approach where the Architecture and the Landscape Architecture work towards integration."

The striking images speak for themselves and even if the hidden possibility of meaning is ignored, the garden's aesthetic is pleasurable and sensual. I can't wait for Google Earth to update its images of the area. This garden, truly, is a gem.

