

Gallery Quay

Bernard Seymour **Landscape Architects**

This client wished to create a restful retreat with potential for both solitude and lively entertaining and the roof-garden is one of three such separately owned spaces, all aligned in a row, previously inter-visible from each other. These penthouse roof-gardens consisted of a remorselessly hard palette. Galvanized mesh panels between wooden uprights and handrails and concrete slabs on pedestals had not weathered well, the wood was decaying rather than bleaching and the impression of a mottled greyness was despite the fabulous views beyond, about as uninviting as grey mashed potato.

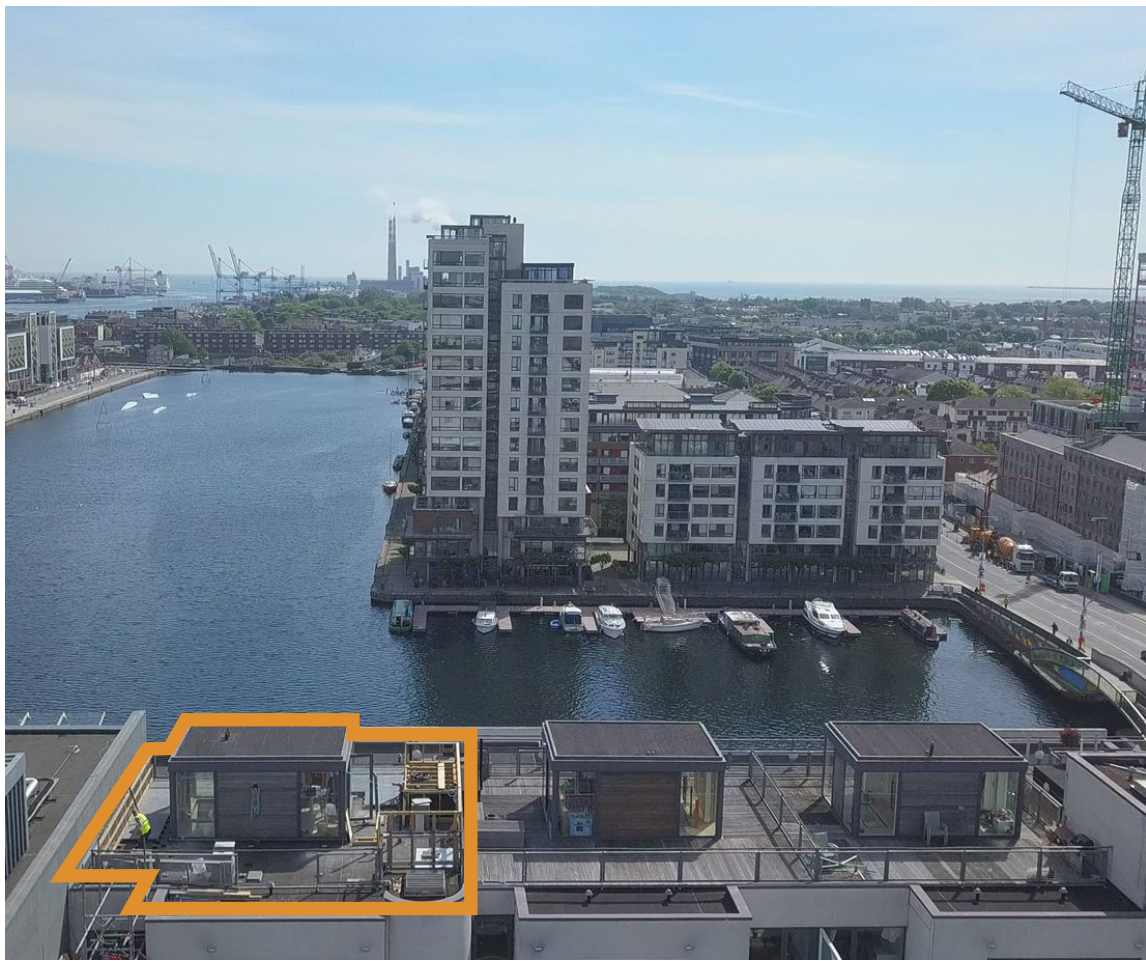
We initially made an inventory of both these old elements, alongside any new components emerging from the interior works, capturing all the vents, new lightwells, drainage elements, flues etc and examined the build ups and structural make-up of the slab in order to establish weight parameters and to manage the usual precautions for a retrofit roof garden that takes care of existing waterproofing and insulation.

From the outset we sought to establish a significant planting with some trees of heft and presence, to frame and enclose views and offer a leafy canopy to sit or walk under. In such a small space we wanted both material consistency with moments of pause and transition along the journey. In our ground plane study, new rooflights and existing drainage outlets were aligned within tight strictures and then these loosened again to rebalance the greenery, such as where Leptinella creeps along a widened joint defining the northern pathway. Elsewhere adding a thin film of water, in a position that reflects the sky when viewed from within, creating pause and separation, if only by two steps, defining an afternoon dining area from a lounging area. On the harbour side,

a sheltered place to take morning coffee with the rising sun from the east offers another moment of ephemeral pleasure.

We sought a unifying device that we could modify for all those things we needed to either incorporate or hide, which led us to a series of cor-ten elements made as planters, screens and frames. In places they become seating nooks, on other occasions they screen air conditioning units and provide integrated storage and housing of the water feature pumps while crucially, resized once more for deep planters for specimen Cornus kousa, Acer palmatum and Eriobotrya japonica, all hoisted into position by crane with the inevitable road closing licences in place.

The planting works well to frame the best views from within the available panorama, simultaneously disguising others and both the climbers on frames and pergolas and the bigger specimens add an instant maturity. This small garden has a barbeque area, sheltered sitting areas on outdoor sofas, and new glazing to the edges for protection with sedum replacing gravel in a manner that extends the impression of spaciousness beyond the owners demise. A retractable canvas awning offers more reliability for planning events and lighting and soft furnishings complete these requirements.



Before: one of three gardens with no plants



"Screen and reveal", "intimacy and solitude", are not oxymorons



The rain isn't going to spoil the party



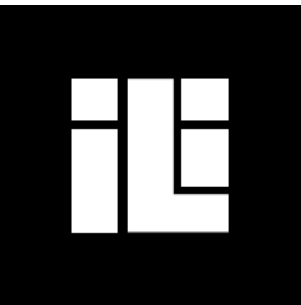
Step from one area to another marked by thresholds



The sequence of circulation reveals different atmospheres at each orientation



The large trees in planters are crucial for the sense of balance and proportion



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