

INSIDE OUT OUTSIDE IN



EXPERT VIEW:

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The external spaces surrounding our homes are often neglected due to the unpredictability of our Irish weather. Then out comes the sun and we all rush out to enjoy it and top up our uneven Irish tans.

A visit on Easter Monday to Woodstown beach was a perfect example of Irish summer behaviour, as bikinis and barbeques met woolly hats and wellies, the temperatures reaching the heady heights of the late teens. How can we design to take better advantage of the Irish weather and enjoy, rather than fight, its uncertainty and changeability? As a small island located in the middle of the Atlantic, we are open to everything the ocean's weather fronts can throw at us and as such, we need to design to work with this changeability.

Our forefathers understood this and the vernacular Irish farm cottage was built to take advantage of the orientation and protect from the elements, the internal and external spaces of our homes should do the same. Orientation, as we discussed last month, is key and the same rules apply, we need to position our patios and sitting areas to face the sun at the time of day most applicable to us.

Generally, this is the late afternoon into the early evening for most of us, or early morning for those of us lucky enough to be able to enjoy a morning cup of coffee outside in the sun. The "sun trap" we all talk about is generally a combination of orientation and another key factor – protection from the elements. Our prevailing wind in Ireland is south-westerly, which is also the direction from which we receive our best sun, so as vital as the orientation, is the provision of protection from the harshness that this prevailing wind can bring. This can be by means of planting strategically positioned trees, shrubs or hedges or can be something more solid by means of garden walls, fencing or pergolas. What we are attempting to do is to form a semi-enclosed space, which lets us enjoy the sun but offers protection from the elements. The garden folly and park pavilion are examples of this provision of partial protection in the external environment.

A really successful way of achieving the best of both worlds in your home is forming a very strong link between the interior spaces and the external space, large glazed sliding doors, folding doors and patio doors can help provide

this link. The ground level of your patio being at the same level as the house will help to further reinforce this connection. The connection between the two spaces should be as seamless as possible so that moving from internal to external happens almost without you noticing. The spaces connecting to the garden should be your most used spaces; family area, kitchen, dining space. The advantage of this is that on those days when the sun does come out we can throw open the doors and the inside spaces become part of the garden and conversely your patio becomes part of your house. The other advantage is that on the remainder of the Irish summer days, and indeed all seasons, you can enjoy the amenity of your garden and the sunshine, liquid or otherwise, from behind the protection of your glass elements.

Watch out for the RIAI Simon Open Door 2015 which runs for its eleventh year on the weekend of the 9th and 10th May 2015. Check out the website www.simonopendoor.ie, to book a consultation with a local registered RIAI architect for €55, all of which goes to help out a truly worthy cause in the Simon Community.