



ABOVE LEFT Architect Ekaterina Voronova, fondly known as Katya. ABOVE RIGHT Creativity obviously runs in the family – the plaster heads were sculpted and painted by Katya’s two children, George and Sasha. BELOW Katya loves to collect teapots. The curved mantelpiece is one of her signature designs. “I like to use shapes,” she says. “Not for the sake of them, but to fit the house.” OPPOSITE PAGE Katya is a big fan of antiques – particularly the industrial style of the 1930s and 40s. The 1960s brown leather sofa is by Erik Jørgensen and came from [www.orangeandbrown.co.uk](http://www.orangeandbrown.co.uk). Katya’s mum made up the cushions using Marimekko’s Cherry Blossom fabric. The mohair throw is from Avoca. The rug is from Uzbekistan (circa 1950s) and the wallhanging is a 19th century child’s camel saddle rug. The side table is a Bauhaus design, which Katya found in Arkonaplatz, Berlin’s flea market. The floor lamp is from Habitat.



# FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

SOFT CURVES, PRETTY INTERIORS AND CLEVER USE OF SPACE MAKE UP THE SIGNATURE STYLE OF RUSSIAN ARCHITECT EKATERINA VORONOVA, WHO HAS CREATED AN INSPIRATIONAL HOME IN DUN LAOGHAIRE.

PHOTOGRAPHY VERITY WELSTEAD WORDS AMANDA COCHRANE



**W**hen architect Ekaterina Voronova and her husband, Tony Kelly, first spotted a semi-detached house with an enormous crack down the front of the façade, they thought it was perfect. The house had subsidence, which meant it had been greatly reduced in price, and so fell well within their budget. “The crack was the size of my finger,” says Ekaterina, better known as Katya, with a hoot of laughter.

Katya and Tony, a project manager in the construction industry, didn’t waste time mulling over the purchase, as the house was a true bargain. “We weren’t worried as we knew the crack could be easily fixed,” Katya explains. “We had to fix it quickly as we couldn’t get the full mortgage until the problem was sorted, but €10,000 and the crack was repaired.”

What was far more important to Tony and Katya, a native of Moscow, was the fact that there was room to extend to the side and the rear of the property. With two children, George, 17, and Sasha, 10, they needed the extra space, but what sealed the deal for Katya was the coastal location. When Katya and Tony first moved to Dublin, they lived in the city centre, which Katya loved, but gradually she was lured to the suburbs, bewitched by her love of the sea. “I always wanted to live beside the sea and felt Dun Laoghaire was ideal because it has a real holiday feel.”

Today, Katya feels completely at home in Dun Laoghaire and swims daily in the Forty Foot. “I think I started to feel really at home in Dun Laoghaire once I started swimming,” she says with a happy smile. “I try to swim every day and if I miss a day, I don’t feel well. It’s a great thing, I have even met clients there!”

ABOVE LEFT Katya designed the kitchen using hanging cabinets and worktops made from oak and treated with Osmo oil, which is available from Fired Earth and Stillorgan Décor Centre. The tiles are from Fired Earth. The stools came from Ikea. The Apoteker pendant lights are by architect and industrial designer Sidse Werner, from Holmegaard. The oak floor boards were treated with Osmo oil, which Katya has used throughout the house. “It gives a lovely bleached finish,” she says. “I like it because it’s ecologically-friendly and easy to apply.” The Britannia cooker is Katya’s favourite gadget and the sink is by Blanco. LEFT George and Sasha sit at the large picture window – one of Katya’s signature designs. Katya gave her old kitchen table a new lease of life by stripping it down, treating the top with Osmo oil and painting the legs in Raw Earth paint by Fired Earth. The painting of a eucalyptus tree on Tivoli Road was a birthday present from the Russian artist Alexey Krasnovsky. The SE 68 chairs are by Egon Eiermann. Originally designed in the 1950s as conference chairs, they came from Wilde+Spieth. The window seat, a recent addition, was made to Katya’s design by Sapele Construction.



The Indivi sofa is by BoConcept and the vintage silk and linen cushion was made by a friend of Katya’s; similar ones are available from [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com). Katya bought the Georgian rug in Tbilisi and the glass table was an eBay find. The radiators are from Christy Bird and the double doors were made to Katya’s specifications by Fitzpatrick & Henry.



Katya, who graduated from the Moscow State Architectural University in 1993, met her Irish husband in Moscow when she worked for an Irish building firm. She worked as an architect in Moscow until 1998, specialising in commercial interiors for bars, restaurants and apartment buildings. In Ireland, Katya's first job was with Tony's brother working on social housing projects for Gardiner Architects. "It was hard, because I didn't find the work that exciting," she says. "I suppose it was outside of my personal interests as I like to do more creative work."

Katya's love of domestic interiors and interior design led her to work with award-winning architect Ross Cahill O'Brien. After a few abortive meetings – "I turned up to meet him (twice!) but he had forgotten I was coming!" – they eventually got together for a chat and clicked. They worked together happily on residential projects until 2008, when the credit crunch meant there wasn't enough work to keep them both busy.

Today, Katya works from her home in her beautifully-designed garden studio with a zen-like work space on the mezzanine level, a sauna, which the family use every weekend during the cold winter months, a library and a chill-out space complete with a small kitchen area where they watch movies. It's hard to believe this vibrant area was once just the end of a drab garden. "It's a great spot for teenagers to hang out," she says simply.

Meanwhile, their home, which was originally 98 square metres, has been transformed and is now almost double that size. "Originally, the house was tiny," Katya remembers. "there was no shower, the kitchen had been built in the 1930s and barely touched since then and, generally, the house was in a very poor state."

Retaining the original structure – Katya likes to combine the careful restoration of original features with contemporary additions – the house now includes a generous extension to the rear of the building with a large and airy kitchen/dining area and two extra bedrooms on the upper level. In the original part of the house, meanwhile, she has preserved much

ABOVE LEFT The 1960s rosewood chair was an eBay find. The oak flooring was treated with Osmo oil, available from Fired Earth and the Stillorgan Décor Centre. LEFT The painted MDF bench was made by Sapele Construction to Katya's design. OPPOSITE PAGE The lamp shade above the bed is by Duff Tisdall and the crochet bed cover and cushions were made by Katya's au pair. "It took her one rainy winter," Katya says. The painting above the bed is "Russian Toys" by Alexey Krasnovsky, who has an exhibition in Dublin's Jorgensen Fine Art from September 6-24. The bedside lamp is a Bauhaus design and came from an antique shop in Berlin.





of the true character, keeping the floorboards, a fireplace on the upper level and a cast-iron bath. She has even kept the old, and rather small, doorframes that are a quirky – and enjoyable – touch next to the large contemporary double doors made to Katya's specifications by Fitzpatrick & Henry.

Designing her own house was tricky, Katya admits. "It was difficult because we wanted to make it bigger but didn't want to create a long corridor. I did around 125 sketches of different scenarios but it wasn't straightforward and it is difficult when you are doing it for yourself. In the end, we compromised on space, but it works. The light is good."

To the casual eye, the house seems spot-on, but for Katya the design process is ongoing. There is always an improvement to be made. She recently added the kitchen bench and is hoping to add a bay window to the front of the house. "I always wanted to change the front elevation and add a bay window. I think it will improve the room, add a focus point, but also add a lot of floor space."

"And I still have big plans for the back garden. I want to create a Japanese-style garden with soft shapes. I also want to get rid of the grass, but my husband loves it so I'm working on that!"

When Katya looks back at the project, she is happy she took her time deciding what to do with the extension. It is vital not to rush into such a major step. When talking to clients, she is equally keen to mull over all options. "Traditionally, everyone does an extension and tries to make it as big as possible," she says seriously. "But when I first meet a client, I spend a long time examining the site but also talking about their lives, trying to find out their needs, their lifestyle, how they would use the house. Do they like to cook? Will they use the kitchen much? What do their children like to do?"

However, coming up with the plans for the house is only part of the process for Katya, who is adamant that interior design is equally important, especially the use of colour. "In Ireland, architects don't choose colours, but you can ruin the whole effect with the wrong colour. I'm very serious about colours and what works well in particular spaces."

Today, now the building and renovating is complete, the home is a delightful mix of creative architecture and interior design. This is a house I would truly love to live in myself. "Style for me is the perfect balance between our personal knick-knacks and the functionality of the place we live in," she says, and smiles once again.

ABOVE LEFT The spacious extension includes the master bedroom and a light-filled kitchen/dining area. LEFT Katya has strategically placed seating areas in the front and rear of the garden, which catch the sunlight at different times of the day.



The cosy studio, complete with sauna and a mezzanine level for Katya's office, is the perfect retreat. The Contura wood-burning stove is from Unipipe. The coffee table is by O'Driscoll Design. The Norm 69 light is by Normann Copenhagen. The painting above the sofa is by Alexey Krasnovsky. The Karlstad sofa is from Ikea and the cushions were made by Katya's mother in a fabric by 10 Swedish Designers.