

of gardens and elegant buildings, which became a sort of German Montmartre during the second half of the 19th century, attracting artists and writers, anarchists and bohemians from all over the world. It was also home to Giorgio de Chirico, Adolf Hitler, Lenin and Albert Einstein's father Hermann, who introduced electricity to the area in 1870. Stefan provides a passionate account of the building's changing fortunes. "It was once LS Sonderbau shelter no. 5 overlooking the Ungererstrasse, one of eight bunkers dotted around the city's nerve points by the Nazi regime to house soldiers and civilians in the event of air raids. According to the Führer it could host up to 700 people in the event of attacks, but because it was located in a residential area it was embellished with a facade containing a number of decorative elements, including the large Renaissance-style buttresses and a line of small blind windows." In the mid-1980s, despite the end of the Cold War, the federal government reinstated the shelter in a list of strategic structures offering protection against possible nuclear attacks, but it was subsequently abandoned completely and listed as a historic building. In 2010, when the local administration decided to auction off a good part of its architectural heritage from the war, Stefan stepped forward and purchased it with the idea of making it his home. "The day I entered those cold, dark dormitories for the first time I experienced a sense of oppression, and yet the great potential these spaces offered was immediately apparent to me," reflects the owner, who also designed and supervised the redevelopment project alongside his colleague Tim Sittmann-Haury. Work took just over three years. This 400-m<sup>2</sup> space houses the studio on the ground floor, an art gallery on the first floor and three apartments to be rented out. The owner has reserved the fifth, sixth and seventh floors for himself, together with the terrace penthouse. This rooftop apartment, arranged as a relaxation room with fireplace, was developed from scratch and is one of the most striking features in the entire project. The tall windows overlook the roofs of the turn-of-the-century buildings all the way to the Englischer Garten, the famous English garden planted in 1789 by the aristocratic Benjamin Thompson, which measures 3.7 square kilometres and is therefore even bigger than Central Park. For the interiors, Stefan worked in partnership with designer Regina Hoefter, splitting them into numerous macro-areas linked to smaller rooms. The large windows cut into the two-metre thick walls add an airy brightness to the overall effect. The dominant style is one of emphasising contrasts. "It would have been a mistake to hide the concrete, which represents the structure's DNA and has a rugged elegance of its own. On the contrary, we wanted to enhance it as much as possible and use it as a strong decorative element, putting into place some daringly unprecedented combinations with beautiful details," he explains. This

is therefore the dominant raw material in the music room, where it is left visible and amplified by elegant and attractive accessories: a nappa leather and fur rug from Ebru, a majestic vintage chandelier in Murano glass, a grand piano, chairs and a chaise longue from Roche Bobois. In studied contrast with the raw effect, the owner then sought flooring combinations able to convey a sense of polish and lightness: marble panels (from Verona Stones), oak parquet flooring, satin-finish resins in shades of grey. Meanwhile, his partner Oscar, an art expert, personally selected the fabrics, combining heavy silks, natural linens, iridescent velvets and furs on the beds and sofas, and theatrical drapes. The walls are lined with linoelum or raffia texture wallpapers, or another variation on the same theme: soft geometric motifs, from cubes to delicate clouds. The furnishings comprise carefully sought-out and unique pieces of modern design, sourced from auctions, travels and markets, alongside customised furniture designed by Stefan himself. He is responsible for the stone dining table, the banquette and the imposing open bronze fireplace, which throws out a blazing heat on cold winter evenings. The beauty of contrast can also be perceived in other areas of the home, each inspired by a 20th-century decade or style: Hollywood Regency in the music room, playing on shades of black and white; Roaring Twenties, contaminated by 1970s hues in the bedroom, in the bathroom with the cast iron tub and in the studio lined with optical wallpaper; and lastly, Swinging Sixties in the living room. The old building has thus been prised away from its weighty history and restored to the future, through the gentle power of poetry. ●



### 132/141 SECRET DUBLIN

*Among the glories of the past and the drive of the future. Discover the private corners of a city soaring towards a whole new dimension*

By Danilo Ascani - Photos Matteo Carassale

Like the ancient volumes stored in the sumptuous library of Trinity College – over four centuries old and home to three hundred thousand texts – this is Dublin revealed, one page

at a time. A city sure to pique your curiosity, and wow you with wonders at every turn. Because as well as the castle, St. Patrick's Cathedral and the pubs on Temple Bar, what we see is a city of discreet charm, never boastful. This is clear as you walk along Portobello's Canal Road, or along the River Liffey, which meanders slowly to the Docklands, a rapidly up-and-coming cultural hub. Here you'll find the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre – the work of Daniel Libeskind – and the Design Tower, where young talent is nurtured inside an old sugar refinery, converted into a gin distillery. Nearby you'll also find Google's European headquarters and Airbnb, a building full of light, designed by Heneghan Peng: a local architectural firm, and the talent behind the recent extension of the National Gallery of Ireland. A prestigious museum opened in 1864, it houses masterpieces by Vermeer, Rembrandt and Caravaggio, paintings by Daniel Maclise, William Orpen, Sir John Lavery and many Irish portraitists of the late nineteenth century. Heading back towards the centre, a stone's throw from Merrion Square, lies something truly magical. Just peek through the windows of Sweny's and you'll see that this tiny pharmacy established in 1847 has preserved all its original charm. "The setting is still intact, just as described by James Joyce in *Ulysses*. Today these spaces make up a small museum run by volunteers like us, after the shop was closed in 2009 and reopened within just a few weeks, following a genuine popular uprising," Joe Kenny and Josephine Russell, two of approximately thirty romantic citizens who take care of the daily readings of the works of the great poet and playwright, told us. These are the Dubliners, in the words of Joyce himself, the same people who every day cross the ancient Ha'penny Bridge or the more futuristic construction named after Samuel Beckett, designed by Santiago Calatrava and inspired by a great Celtic harp, a symbolic link between past and future. The history of the Merrion Hotel is equally as intriguing, a five star establishment created by converting four Georgian townhouses, built around 1760 by Lord Monck. Its rooms are home to the largest private collection of Irish art and 24 Upper Merrion Street – the largest of the four buildings – is Mornington House, the birthplace of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington. Past St Stephen's Green you'll find the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church, home to the relics of St. Valentine. The narrow streets of the Liberties – a former enclave, which had long been a jurisdiction in itself – offer a breath of fresh air. There the antique boutiques on Francis Street rub shoulders with the ateliers of young hopefuls and contemporary art galleries. It is no coincidence that this part of the city is home to the National College of Art and Design. Since 1969, in the Republic of Ireland, artists, writers and compos-

ers have been exempt from paying taxes. This has, of course, led to an influx of creative talent, especially in the capital. "In winter, the heavenly light, ploughed by rapidly moving clouds, is wonderful, and Dublin boasts some extremely poetic landscape, providing new inspiration for my watercolours every time I paint", explains Elizabeth O'Kane, a painter and sculptor who moved to the city from her village on the outskirts of Belfast. Greenery aplenty – past the Guinness Storehouse, a stately eighteenth-century building, and the nearby Kilmainham Gaol, a former prison – can be found in Phoenix Park. In a forest inhabited by foxes, deer and squirrels stands the majestic Farmleigh House. A Georgian mansion built in the middle of the eighteenth century, today it welcomes dignitaries and heads of state visiting Dublin. Surrounded by thirty hectares of green grounds, a pond and a striking iron and glass greenhouse, Farmleigh House is home to the collection of Benjamin Guinness: the third Earl of Iveagh, who gathered valuable manuscripts and books from the thirteenth century onwards. No less important are the rarities preserved in the halls of the Chester Beatty Library, a small museum complete with a zen garden on the roof, where visitors can see miniatures, prints and drawings from the Islamic tradition, the Middle East and North Africa. These are the highlights of this city that gave birth to famous names such as Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and William Butler Yeats. ●



### 142/147 SLEEPING BEAUTY

*A thin covering of frost adds a touch of charm to the gardens at Broughton Grange. Some of the most surprising in the United Kingdom*

Photos Andrew Lawson - Text Gaetano Zoccali

These designer gardens come to their own in winter, the season that truly highlights the essence of a landscape more than any other. Its layout appears clear-cut, while a covering of frost gives an air of magic to the plants. Here at Broughton Grange, in Oxfordshire, chiselled bushes seem to be the ic-