

# Architects without egos building up a reputation

By Cheryl Rickard

As the new co-presenter on the RTE series *About the House*, Una McQuillan is becoming a familiar face in Irish homes. But the Belfast-born architect already has ten years of running her own practice under her belt, as well as experience of large international projects.

After qualifying as an architect at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, McQuillan travelled to San Francisco, working on the redevelopment of houses destroyed in the Oakland Hills fire. Then it was on to Barcelona, where she was in-

Una  
McQuillan

**Company:**

McQuillan  
Architects

**Position:**

founder and  
managing director

**Location:**

Ballsbridge,  
Dublin 4

involved in the Olympic Village project.

In 1995, she returned to Ire-

land and joined the Building Design Partnership, which was working on the renovation of Connolly Station in Dublin and the offices of Fingal County Council. She then took a position with Anthony Cotter Architects in Blackrock, designing the Air Rights office building over Connolly Station, and working on her own projects at night.

"I amassed a good portfolio of schemes," she said. "I generally worked until midnight and at weekends, and very quickly I was able to set up my own practice when Connolly Station was completed." McQuillan Architects (MQA) was set up in 1998 and has five employees.

McQuillan said that MQA was different from many com-

peting firms because it offered architecture and interior design services, which were usually separate. She feels buildings should be designed as a whole and that interiors should relate directly to exteriors.

She describes her own style of architecture as "classical, to withstand the test of time".

McQuillan particularly enjoyed her work on the offices for La Crème Recruitment on Lower Pembroke Street in Dublin, and is also proud of the Budda Bag store near Jervis Street and the offices of Fian-na Fáil. "We are not architects with egos," she said. "The needs of the client, the brief and the budget must come first."

McQuillan is also working on MQA's own offices, which are housed in a Georgian building in Ballsbridge.

She is refurbishing the hall level into a series of rooms for hire for events. They will be called the Kavanagh Rooms,



Una McQuillan, founder, McQuillan Architects

as the poet Patrick Kavanagh once lived there.

About the House, which she co-presents with Duncan Stewart, is also occupying her time.

Being a television presenter was not a big leap for McQuillan, however. "I had been interviewed on the show in 2003 by the presenter at that time, so I was familiar with what it was

about and had done a lot of other TV and radio over the years," she said.

McQuillan is upbeat about the future for MQA. "We will continue to provide the services of architecture and interior design, either separately or together. We are also expanding into providing the services of energy rating assessments and health and safety audits."