

The RIAI's annual Public Choice Award is open now online and voting will run until next Friday. This is a great opportunity to see what's happening in architecture in Ireland, says **Rose Martin**, and to have an input into the built environment

# It's your choice

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As a country obsessed by buildings — from extensions to new builds to renovations to sheds — the RIAI Awards are a great way to see the best in Irish architecture for wannabe builders. They're a great instrument too for getting the members' work across to the public.

The Royal Institute of Ireland's Public Choice award, to give it its proper title, is online now and open for voting. Just log in, pick your favourite, and vote — it's that easy.

Along the way you'll get to see a list of beautiful structures, from the educational to the commercial to the domestic with lots of photos and a brief synopsis of each project. It's available on [riai.ie/publicchoice.ie](http://riai.ie/publicchoice.ie).

Emerging trends in structure, form, and material is plain to see and the site is a good primer for anyone interested in building or improving their home — inside or out.

It also makes a very persuasive argument for using architecture in any new project — big or small. What's on show is sleek, lovely, and, in some cases, downright monumental and we can take a certain pride in the international quality of the work that's going on here now.

The RIAI too is much more proactive to terms of taking the work of architects to the public and is actively engaged in a dynamic way with media other than bricks and mortar. There was a TV show with Sandra O'Connell and architect

Angela Brady, (a former president of RIBA, Royal Institute of British Architects), called *Designing Ireland*, and the Institute has published a magazine, *house + design* directed at the general reader.

It begs the question too, why there isn't a television special in the works for the Irish Architecture Awards — it was a great success for RIBA over the last two years, in a series presented by Kevin McCloud and the same might work really well here.

Architecture carries the responsibility for the environment in which we live, be it urban or rural; schoolroom or office, church or shopping centre and it could be said that up to now, engagement has not been its strong suit. Generations of

commercial and domestic buildings have suffered from a lack of quality design input, partly down to ignorance on the part of commissioners and also, perhaps, because of a disengagement on the part of designers.

Cost has been a factor, even when money was swilling around, architect fees were begrudged. Why? Short-term thinking, or just a lack of awareness of what good design can do?

One building frenzy and recession later, we've all worked out the importance of an holistic approach to our little world. Sorting the wheat from the chaff and the monetary value versus the societal value of our built environment has, thankfully, led to a demand for a more sustainable and integrated approach to how

we live, work, and play.

Along the way, it could be said that the concept of architecture for the few and not the many has fallen away, and the requirements of newly unfettered planners, allied to the expectations of an educated and discriminating public (who have had to work very hard for their money), has seen a greater range and demand from a profession which has also gone through its own metamorphosis.

Irish architects and RIBA International Award winners Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects ([graftonarchitects.ie](http://graftonarchitects.ie)) have been selected to design, curate, and programme the 2018 Venice Architecture

Biennale. They have decided on *Freespace* as the title for the exhibition.

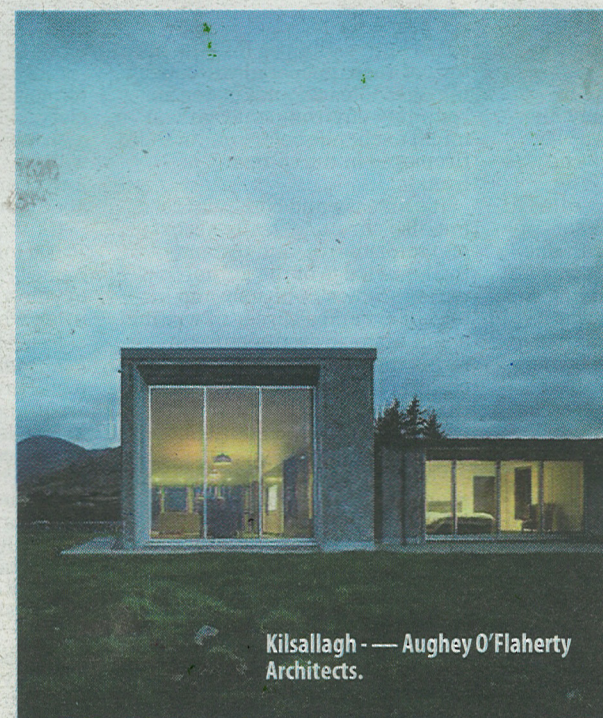
The position of curator is one of the most prestigious accolades in global architecture and Yvonne and Shelley are the first Irish architects to receive this honour in the Biennale's 40-year history.

The Architecture Biennale will run from May 26 to November 25, 2018.

The annual *House + Design* magazine from the RIAI, edited by Sandra O'Connell, is on sale now. At just under a fiver, it's a great read if you're thinking of building, extending, renovating or re-modelling. Lots of projects, good photos and good writing make it a quality showcase for Irish architects.

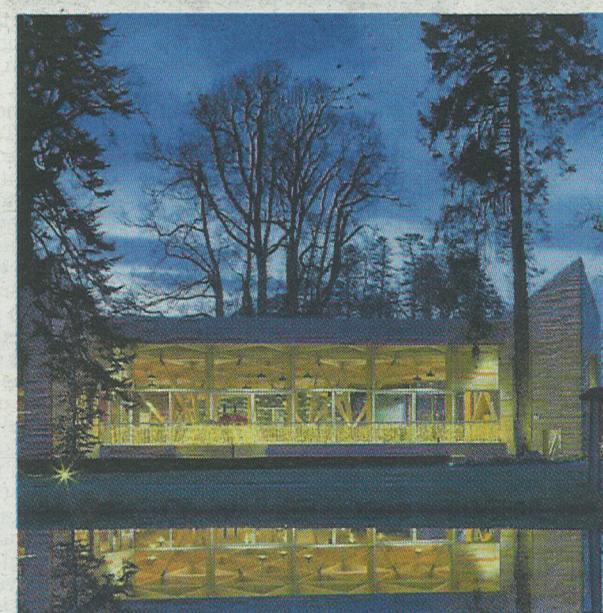


The facade of the Central Bank of Ireland's new headquarters by Henry J Lyons Architects with Hufton and Crow.



A passive house by Wain Morehead Architects at Douglas, Cork, one of the projects selected for the shortlist of the Public Choice Awards on [riai.ie](http://riai.ie).

Kilsallagh — Aughey O'Flaherty Architects.



Elizabeth's Tree House — McCauley Daye O'Connell Architects.



The north elevation of the Beaufort Maritime and Energy Research Building, Ringaskiddy, Cork by McCullough Mulvin Architects  
Pic: Chirstian Richter

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