Lost Armatures and Found Forms
Conversation and the Contingent in the making of work by Clancy Moore Architects

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2017
LOST ARMATURES AND FOUND FORMS

CONVERSATION AND THE CONTINGENT IN THE MAKING OF WORK BY CLANCY MOORE ARCHITECTS

PRACTICE CHRONOLOGY
ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This dissertation has been prepared as part of a PhD by reflective practice as part of the RMIT Invitational Design Practice Programme. The research is grounded in research strategies associated with the RMIT model, which is described in detail in what has become known as ‘The Pink Book’.

The dissertation is formed in 4 parts:
- This document which gives a chronology of the work of Clancy Moore as a practice.
- Essays - which gives an overarching narrative to the structure of the phd and links a series of key essays together to tease out the nature of the contribution to knowledge.
- 3 video casestudies of work process, with footnotes which contextualise and frame the work being discussed. These case studies also reflect that I work in a partnership with Colm Moore - one video involves just me describing one project, the second involves both of describing another, while the third involves Colm alone describing a third. All the work of the practice is jointly made by both Colm and I and so there casestudies are common to both our PhDs.

Key elements of the RMIT / Van Schaik model PhD by reflective practice route such as spatial history, touchstones and community of practice underlie all of the above and are threaded throughout the case studies and the texts.
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Andrew Clancy
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All photography of finished buildings by Alice Clancy unless otherwise stated

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This project involves the construction of a multi generational dwelling, capable of being used as a single house, two semi-detached houses or 4 apartments. Situated in a disused quarry with uncertain ground conditions of discarded spoil, the houses act as an inhabited bridge, spanning between natural and man made outcrops of service structures and a shared entrance staircase. The houses language derives from the structure necessary to achieve these spans, an reference to Irish stave architecture (as explored in the ‘Found Forms’ essay).

Constrained by the shadow cast by the quarry wall to the south and a planning line which restricts construction to the north (due to proximity to a potable water reservoir) the project is paradoxically urban or ‘infill’ in this supposed rural condition.

Within the given form, between these two lines, living spaces and bedrooms are arranged to give well proportioned spaces, deep views and contained rooms. This exercise in poché extends to the section which is modelled to present a variety of scales of spaces. More intimate living spaces and bedrooms occur in a lower, north-east facing wing. Taller living spaces address the south-west. The form of the two dwellings closes the quarry to create a shared communal garden room overlooked by a long verandah and the tall living rooms. This room in the landscape was the primary ambition of the project.
Cantilever to lower Quarry
Den to Kitchen
Woodland
View from Above
Plan with Quarry
Section
A vibrant inner city parish needed space for meetings, language classes, children’s play and other support accommodation as well as a clearer link between the interior of the listed church and the space outside.

The project builds itself about the entrance to the church. The form is manipulated such that the intervention recedes from those entering the church, drawing them into the plan before becoming readable as an addition. The resultant poché between this entrance sequence and the fabric of the church is hollowed out to provide the required accommodation. These rooms are insulated and lined in cork to allow for their use separate to the main body of the church.

Constructed in solid walnut the intervention reads with the existing brick interior and yet is clearly identifiable as a contemporary addition. Both this project and Slievebawnogue houses were built by my cousin Mattie, who I mention in the ‘Place and People’ essay.
New Addition as Threshold
Door
This House for a young family is in the foothills of the wicklow mountains near Enniskerry. It is a single storey villa, based on 9 square plan precedents from Schinkel and Aldo Van Eyck. The symmetry of this plan is then adjusted to inflect to the surroundings. We learned a lot from this cast model about the project - not least a means to avoid the purity that might arise from the plan. In the castings the line on the concrete where the edge of the foam core used in making the model was exposed makes a skirting of sorts. Seeing this, and the gap at the top of these walls allowed us to understand the deeper read of the walls conversation between roof and ground. These ideas have been developed in other projects, most recently the Long Island villa. The house was refused planning due to road safety concerns about a nearby junction. The project remains live pending the resolution of this issue.
Site Plan
Cast Model Interior
LAKE HOUSE EXTENSION (2007 - 09)

This project comprises of the re-ordering and extension of a 19th century country house in Kerry. Sitting on the edge of a lake the house stands on a man made hill at the centre of an elaborately planted romantic landscape incorporating both native species and many rare plants. The original house is what can be termed an Irish house of the middle size - a common typology in 19th century Ireland, the classical house of the middle size is characterised by a highly ordered plan containing a variety of rooms within a square or rectangular form. Upon commencement of the design we reinstated this order returning the dwelling to its original form, somewhat abstract within the broader landscape. The challenge then became to accommodate the clients requirements by extending such a singular, complete and direct structure.

A strategy of elaborating the threshold between the reception rooms of the house and the garden was adopted by wrapping the house in a notional forest of columns creating deep verandas to the south and west of the main living spaces. This grid of structural columns derived its proportions directly from the house. Clearings were made in this concrete forest where rooms were required with a meandering weathering line creating a series of indoor and outdoor garden rooms for eating and entertaining. The columns became analogous with the mature oak and pine trees in the garden beyond while the floor and ceiling were considered as landscapes in their own right, with the black floor forming hearth stone, kitchen island and basement cellar and the concrete roof inflected to hold roof lights, a chimney, and a landscape on the roof above.
Verandah
Kitchen
Dining (In existing house)
RUSSELL AVENUE EXTENSION (2007 - 08)

A project for some friends involving the making of a return extension and some brick rugs to the rear of a terraced house.
Brick rugs (photo by Author)
This project for some studios sits in the middle of a park in a northern suburb of Dublin. As budget was tight we proposed to set the plan as a square, and for the plan to hold a wide range of scales of spaces to allow the building host a range of media from dance to drawing. The grain of the plan is derived from the offset between a serration of roof lights (facing due north) and the plan orientation of the building (held by the existing walled enclosure it sits against). We enjoy the way the geometry somehow completes the plan, and in a way this project was a culmination of an ongoing fascination with classical plan typologies. The walls intersect with this roof make studios with widely differing characters. The castings here were made to communicate these spaces to our client, but also helped us to think of the building as potentially being rough (we had initially thought of it being crisp concrete like the Caragh Lodge Extension project) - the chips and bubbles in the concrete model added a texture to the form, a grain which allowed the building sit more natively in the parkland setting. This project was a collaboration with Henchion Reuter Architects. The project was abandoned by the client as funds dried up in the recession.
External View
Cast Study Model
This project to extend a semi detached house in Inchicore takes its cue from a concrete water tower that sat at the end of our clients garden. We enjoyed this structures ungainly presence and considered the extension as a frame holding a mass above. The figure of this structural frame was then drawn back through the existing house as a timber cornice, blurring the line between original and added.
Rear
LAKE HOUSE POOL (2008 - 09)

This project was a follow on to the extension project described earlier. We took the columnar language of the extension and used it to make an inhabited retaining wall that would at its upper level frame the arrival courtyard of the house. On its lower level the pool engages with the garden.

The project was abandoned by the client as funds dried up in the recession.
Model view
Site Plan
This was an open design competition for a regional arts centre in Skibbereen. We thought of the building as an open house for the town, one anchored about a generous central staircase that would make the entire building legible and accessible to those who visit it.

A ground floor plan of larger order spaces (auditorium, lobby, galleries) makes a 4 square order. Upper levels of smaller spaces make a 9 square plan. Each are slipped relative to one another so that the stairs operates on every half level - a raum plan of sorts. We can see traces of the Inchicore extension in this strategy, and the stairs is informative of the approach being developed in the Shatwell Farm project.

We were placed second in the competition.
Study Model
O’MALLEY RESIDENCE (2008 - 09)

This project was a follow on to the extension project described earlier. We took the columnar language of the extension and used it to make an inhabited retaining wall that would at its upper level frame the arrival courtyard of the house. On its lower level the pool engages with the garden.

The project was abandoned by the client in the recession.
CHELMSFORD ROAD (2008 - 09)

This project to make a free standing house in Ranelagh was informed by the constricted site - with the entire plan being governed by the stairs acting as a central spine. The project was abandoned by the client in the recession.
MURRAY HOUSE (2008 - 09)

This project involved a design in the garden of a suburban semi-detached house for the couple who lived there to downsize to. Based on a 4 square plan the house was designed as a two bedroom house that could be easily expanded to being a four bedroom house by infilling voids. The project was abandoned by the client in the recession.
GIFFITH AVENUE EXTENSION (2009 - 10)

This project involved proposing an extension to the rear of a terraced house, which we proposed as being a generous space in contrast with the tighter spaces of the existing house. The project was abandoned by the client in the recession.

Some of the ideas from this project were realised in the Albany Road extension.
Sketch
WARSAW MUSEUM (2009)

In this competition for a museum in Warwaw we proposed a mat building. Major spaces such as terraces, courtyards, and assembly spaces were each held by a different type of vaulted spaces.
NOW WHAT? (2010)

In the summer of 2010 Alice Clancy, James O’Hare and the UCD School of architecture organised a summer school in response to the growing fallout from the recession, which had decimated the construction sector in particular.

Working with Ryan Kennihan, we sought to examine simple forms of construction that might allow new ways of thinking about space. We examined timbrel vaulting and made a small garden room.
IRISH GLOBAL HEALTH INNOVATION CENTRE (2010)

An invited ideas competition, later abandoned by the client.
AOIBHNEAS WOMENS REFUGE (2012)

This was an open design competition for an extension to a women refuge in the north of Dublin. In the project we explored attics and roof spaces along with garden rooms in the making of a characterful places for women and children to spend time in safety.

The tracing of frames and broken figures through the ground floor entrances and structure to the tensile form under the roof become a way to generate a consistent language for a project that linked existing structures and new.

We were placed second but the project was abandoned due to an inability to raise funding.
Living room in adjusted existing building
Garden between new and existing
Massing
Threshold
BIRD AVENUE CHURCH (2010 - 12)

A series of studies for altars and a side chapel for a Catholic Church in a suburb of Dublin. The existing church, too large for its dwindling congregation needed a means to make a more intimate series of spaces for those engaging with it, The project was abandoned due to an inability to access funding.
Altar
TEMPORARY CINEMA (2009)

A speculative proposal for an open framework (derived from Aldo van Eyck) to act as an armature for various projections.
FOX EXTENSION (2010 - 11)

A proposal to extend a suburban terraced house to its rear.
A fit out for a space in the National Museum of Archeology, to be used as an education space and children resource space. We proposed a series of pieces of furniture, each thought of as a small building. These pieces acted as storage, and as small spaces for individual occupation.
This proposal for a new house in a 16th century walled garden drew on a series of precedents from the history of Irish garden architecture. The house stands at a junction between the two walled gardens and the wider field, and stitches itself to a series of existing openings. The structure acts independently of the wall, propping a pyramidal roof above.
Other walled gardens
LALOR RESIDENCE (2010 - 11)

A proposal for a house in Kildare.
BALLYCORUS (2011 - 12)

A sunroom made of two nested structures - an internal timber one which makes a panelled room and holds the glass, and an outer concrete one which sits on triangular columns.
STRAND LAMPS (2011)

A range of lamps in copper and brass. Designed to be a figurative presence in the rooms where they sit their form is based on a study of characters in Orpen’s painting ‘The Holy Well’
This proposal for a house in Donegal. This project has taken a wide variety of forms due to a contentious planning context. A consistent theme has been to think of the house as an inhabited pier with a roof above which exists independently. In its various forms it has become an engine for thinking in the office influencing a wide range of project, and this is treated in more depth as one of the video case studies as part of this dissertation (link). This project is currently going to tender.
NEW QUAY EXTENSION (2012 - )

An extension to a house in the west of Ireland (owned by the same clients who commissioned the Slievebawnogue Houses and Bohernabreena). The proposal takes the form of a linear addition along the flank. The primary exploration was the form of the truss, which would change the roof from pitched to mono pitch - allowing the addition to read with its context at one end and allow light in elsewhere. This project is currently under construction.
IRISH DIASPORA CENTRE (2013)

An invited competition for a museum and exhibition to the Irish diaspora in Dun Laoghaire, a suburb south of Dublin
COLBINSTOWN (2014 - )

This house is laid out as a grid of thick brick walls, with a roofs cape of timber barrel vaults above.
Sketch
GALLOWS ROAD GALLERY (2015 - 16)

This proposal to convert a Georgian house from office use to a series of galleries was governed by a need to do so with minimal disruption to the fabric of the building, and with a tight budget. We proposed that the galleries be clear insertions of minimally held rooms, which would sit against the found spaces and reading as a clear addition.
SCHOOL, TALLAGHT (2012)

This competition for a new school to the south of Dublin was set up to be an exploration of systems of construction - due to the very low proposed construction budget.

We found a lot of value in thinking about the pre-cast concrete frame, and in how to derive character from how it would be wrapped and inflected.

Much of this work has been continued in work on projects like Shatwell farm.
CEMETERY, STOCKHOLM (2010)

This entry for an open design competition was made in collaboration with our friend Ryan Kennihan, and built on the work we had done together in the Now What? workshop.

The brief called for a space suitable to be used by all religions and none, and we adopted the dome as a space which is common to the major religions and public buildings.
Main axis
BIG RED (2016)

In 2016, along with a number of other practices, we were invited to design a small pavilion for the London Festival of Architecture. In collaboration with these other practices we decided to pool our resources, and to make a single work between us. As the city is a collective work, so might be our pavilion. Very early on we agreed that we would build our design conversation around the ideas of incidental public space, that our structure would seek to be a background to life.

We started by thinking about the facade as a public space. The facade is the place where the relationship between the individual and the collective is made most explicit. We wondered at what point a deep facade became a thin building. We thought of the facade as a theatrical backdrop to Cubit Square, with props to the north to hold it up. We elaborated these props to make a room, sheltered under a roof. It made us think of market halls and public rooms and we thickened the rhythm of the facade, drew it back to give order to this space.

In the space between the hall and the facade there was room to make a gallery that overlooked the square. We lined it with park-benches and a deep cill. We liked the way this might be a place to hide away while at the same time could allow people gather in small groups. We thought of how doorways, niches and thresholds of buildings are good places to linger in and made a deep arcade between our hall and the square. We painted it red as like the phone box it is a public room in the city, caught somewhere between furniture and infrastructure.
BELFAST HOUSE (2013 - )

A proposal for a simple house on a steeply cloping site overlooking Belfast. The house is a pitched roof form, with the ridge perpendicular to the slope.
BOANN DISTILLERY (2015 - )

This project for a distillery and brewery is a conversion of a disused car showroom. Our approach was to act as consultants rather than full architects, guiding the location of the plant and equipment of the facility so that this would become the main architectural expression of the project.

A three tall, rendered masonry forms are added to hold the ends of the showroom sheds. These hold services, and ancillary accommodation. The largest of these is an elaborated stair hall holding an orientation space for the public and a bar above.
Service Building
Entrance
VENTRY HOUSE (2014 - )

A proposal for a holiday house. The roof is thought of as a tent, with a cluster of structures underneath.
The project comprises of renovations to, and the extension of, a house in South Dublin. In approaching the design we were anxious to not undo the existing character of the house; One of discreet rooms, ante rooms and niches that created an informal, convivial landscape for dwelling. This interior landscape was one composed of objects, furniture and space skillfully arranged by the domestic eye over time. In the renovation of the house we sought to preserve this conversation. As such each intervention is considered as a discrete autonomous object that would enter into dialogue with the existing elements of the house and its future furnishings. This could be described as an architecture of furniture and furniture as architecture.

The primary addition to the house is the extension to the return of the house. Made in Steel it is intended both was a pavilion in an oversized piece of garden furniture. Formally it can be understood as two tables texted into each other. The primary floor provides a banquet seat and plant shelf that catch the morning and evening light. Whilst the floor below provides a small office.

Ultimately the project is intended as an exploration of an enabling architecture that simply facilities the intensification and joy of domestic inhabitation.
Axonometric
Sunroom
Master Bedroom
Kitchen
Rooflight (via Eileen Grey)
Sunroom
Basement Stairs
SHATWELL FARM (2014 - )

A project to convert a pre-cast concrete barn into a residence and a gallery. This project is explored in a video case study, and in the essays ‘Portal extension’ and ‘Lost Armatures.'
Living
Den
Elevation
TEMPLE BAR GALLERY & STUDIOS (2015 - )

The remodelling of an existing gallery and artists studios. The ground floor is opened up to provide a more generous suite of rooms to engage with art and artists.

The remedial structural work to facilitate this becomes the primary architectural act.
A WORLD TO WIN EXHIBITION (2015)

A temporary exhibition space to host a visiting show from the V&A.

A series of walls are made to an existing narrow gallery space, and the exhibition hung enfilade. The props necessary to hold the walls in place are used to mark thresholds and set up a conversation with the existing roof above.
ALBANY ROAD EXTENSION (2015 - )

A domestic extension that seeks to add a single generous space to the rear of an existing Victorian house. The project is made in fragments, each held off one another.

Brick walls are modelled to make niches and aedicules, and a structural figure of a column which props the return above anchors this centrally.

Two vaults are hung, allowing light between their forms and the envelope.
WITHOUT STILLING (2016)

This work was made in collaboration with the artist Maud Cotter, as part of an invited competition to design a memorial to the 1916 rising. The desires that were made manifest in the events of 1916 and subsequently were themselves consequences of the impulses and sacrifices that came before. The rising was not a culmination, and neither is our current position. All human situations are temporary, and exist in a fragile equilibrium. The nation is not static, but restless, absorbing and reacting. The present is an emergent condition.

A commemorative urban structure, Without Stilling is an inclusive sculptural form that provides a psychological function of remembering, and a place of performance and exchange of ideas through time. Without Stilling is scaled to the body. It is made of 2’559 individual pieces, one for each person who stood forth on the day of the rising.

Incomplete in form, it leaves space for others to be included. Each piece is made of highly perforated corten steel. The porous surface of the plate is folded, (insert space)with one side longer than the other. This formal gesture is repeated to form a circumference of 100 metres.
CARVEL CHAIR (2014)

This design evolved from a conversation with Mattie O’Malley about timber boat building techniques.

It is made of a shell of steamed and shaped timber, held by copper rivets and roves - so that the whole form can flex and move through its life.
HOUSE BOHERNABREENA (2016 - )

This is a house extension for a small cottage in the Dublin mountains is for another member of the family that commissioned the quarry houses (Slievebawnogue).

It continues some of the explorations started in the Donegal project
OFFICE BOW STREET (2016 - )

A proposal to convert a 18th century distillery structure into a small office. An addition to the rear allows access to all levels including a currently inaccessible vaulted basement.

The form of this addition is an echo of other forms in the context, and it is expressed internally as a separate gridded structure, held off existing walls.
Massing Model
AVENUE ROAD (2016 -)

A proposal to convert an existing warehouse into a residence. Existing structure is kept and augmented by a modelled ground floor plate and a series of screens.
ARKLOW WASTEWATER (2016 - )

This commission for a wastewater treatment plant for a town of 36’000 people is primarily a civil engineering exercise. Working with the operational logics of the plant we are developing an approach which seeks to make this new arrival a coherent part of the fractured urban form.

To the sea a new flood defence wall is adjusted and makes a new public promenade. The working tanks of the plant are held underneath a series of monumental roofs, which act as a mediator between the working spaces and the broader landscape.
LONG ISLAND RESIDENCE (2016 - )

The design of this villa is a development of the Enniskerry house, as well as ideas developed and abandoned in the Ventry project.

The level is based around an inflected 9 square plan. A tent like roof is set out on a different geometry, building a slight tension wall and soffit.

Below a basement level is set out about a series of slow curving walls, each running against a vaulted ceiling.
Exterior