

The houses that never made it

They were fine designs, but money, planners or events stopped them being constructed. **Mark Keenan** salutes the great unbuilt

Some of the most engaging work by the best architects never sees the light of day. It might surprise the average punter to know that up to two-thirds of designs are never built.

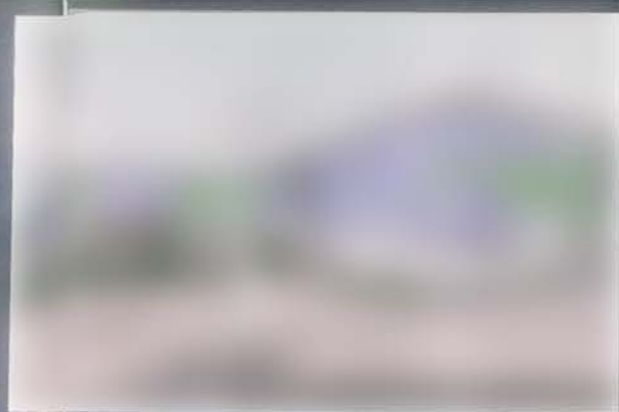
Even the great Frank Lloyd Wright was hit regularly by changed circumstances, bankrupt clients and uncooperative planning authorities. In all, 380 of his projects were never constructed.

One design that did get built — eventually — is in Delgany, Co Wicklow. It is the first Wright house in Europe and was constructed three years ago by Marc Coleman, who obtained permission to go ahead with a mothballed 1959 design by the great master.

Ireland had an explosion in home designs during the boom years but, after the bubble burst, many architects found, like Wright, that their clients were cleared out or simply cleared off. Other homes are not built because planners put the kibosh on them. Some are concept designs that are intended to provoke debate rather than to be constructed.

To show off the homes that have never seen the light of day, Home Ireland asked the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland to canvass its members for images of their best-laid plans that went astray.

This week and next week, we will present a selection of the submissions in order to celebrate the effort that went into them. So here's to the great unbuilt.



Dublin city council approved the design, but it was shot down by An Bord Pleanála. The architect's second effort was a sleek poured concrete design in which the two residences appeared to be a single home.

Why didn't it go ahead? An Bord Pleanála approved this design on the day that Bertie Ahern resigned. It quickly became clear that the property market was turning sour and the developer, wisely put the project on "indefinite hold".

Concrete boots
Who: Sean Fogarty of Open Office Architects of Dublin
Where: A lane in Rathgar, Dublin 6
When: 2005
What it is: Open Office Architects was commissioned by a lawyer who had dabbled in development to design two adjoining mews houses in a back lane in Rathgar. The architect's first design was for two distinctly different residences: one two storey, the other of three floors; one in render, one in brick.