Perspective
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Perspective

CIPR Awards 2024 Magazine of the Year Finalist

RSUA DESIGN AWARDS 2024 | REDBRAE FARM | CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL | RESIDENTIAL SCHEME | COMBER GP PRACTICE

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The Royal Society of Ulster Architects

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Liam McCormick Prize for Building of the Year 2024

RSUA Design Awards 2024, Redbrae Farm, Crumlin Road Gaol, Residential Scheme, Comber GP Practice

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See page 36 for Crumlin Road Gaol

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Cover - Ulster University Belfast Campus - Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios with McAdam Design, Scott Tallon Walker and White Ink Architects Photograph: Donal McCann
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BUILDING TRUST

Places Apart

Having selected the nine shortlisted projects (all of them extremely worthy candidates) at the end of January, we set off on our two-day jolly in early March to view the buildings - Ciarán Fox at the helm of the minibus, and the trusty Brian Quinn as co-pilot.

We enjoyed a fabulous couple of days – the company excellent, the hospitality exceptional – and the buildings themselves a sheer joy to visit, exemplified by the architects and clients who proudly showcased their particular projects.

Our first building visit set an incredibly high bar. **Longhurst** is another beautifully designed and crafted substantial residential home in south Belfast by the architectural masters, McGonigle McGrath. The initial approach to the building belies the sheer scale of this house. Every detail has been carefully contemplated and exquisitely crafted and the result is a beautiful family home, full of natural light and with external terraces offering stunning views over the Lagan Valley Regional Park to the south.

There was something joyous about the approach to the playful **Barneys Ruins** in the countryside outside Maghera, the sun shining on this idyllic and tranquil setting with the resident free-roaming livestock a welcome and fitting addition. Patrick Bradley spoke passionately of his desire to preserve his family's 200-year-old year farmstead clachan; a cottage dating from 1830 and a barn from 1900. This modest dwelling is both fun and cleverly executed - the key driver for the construction being sustainability and a desire to reuse, recycle and to be as energy efficient as possible. We left the tranquillity of Barneys Ruins with a little spring in our step - this small project is a real gem.

The next morning, we had a fascinating insight from Stephen Douglas into the restoration of the iconic Grade B1 Listed, Victorian department store, **Bank Buildings**, aka Primark. Devastated by fire in 2018, this landmark, neo-classical, WH Lynn building has undergone a particularly challenging and exemplary restoration, sensitively approached and with the full support and encouragement of an enlightened client in Primark. As a poignant reminder of what Belfast could have lost completely in the devastation, some areas of fire-damaged stonework have been retained for posterity. The skill and dedication of the team involved is evident – a real amalgamation of consultants, locals, stonemasons and special artisans from across Ireland – all with the singular purpose of restoring this iconic building and regaining its prominent standing at the heart of the city.

And so on to another Hall Black Douglas restoration scheme, **St. Comgall's** in west Belfast. On a much smaller scale, but still of great local significance, this building is a real delight. The long-abandoned, Grade B1 Listed, 1930s former school has been transformed into a multi-use community hub by the Falls Community Council, a particularly engaging and enthusiastic client team. This is a fine example of reuse and upgrade, with the resultant building now regaining pride of place in the community it serves.

Almost at the opposing end of the spectrum, the new **Ulster University Belfast Campus** is an incredible feat of contemporary bold design and engineering, packing as it does 15,000 staff and students into 14 floors over 74,000m² on a tight inner-city site. This extensive and complex building is certainly impactful, as well as being highly significant and transformative for the city.

The impact of this building, and the mass of recent new, high-rise student housing in Belfast has generated much debate and it will be interesting to see how this area, and the infrastructure needed to support it, develops. This scheme, 12 years in the making, is surely worthy of wide recognition and praise and its influence over this area of the city will certainly benefit generations to come.

It seemed fitting that the conclusion of our building visits should bring us full circle to the second of the McGonigle McGrath shortlisted homes – the **House on Redbrae Farm** in the undulating landscape of rural County Down. This modest, two-bedroomed replacement dwelling nestles at ease within the beautiful, landscaped setting, with views from every room – windows carefully considered to frame vistas. The simplicity of this dwelling, together with the frugal palette of materials- lightweight steel, rendered masonry walls, exposed raftered roof with corrugated metal, are both uplifting and imbue a sense of tranquillity. The understated modesty of this house is the essence of its charm – a truly exceptional home which embodies both tradition and modernity.

Our visits had concluded well – there was still much debating and deliberating over dinner that evening but we all concurred that over the two days we had (most encouragingly) experienced outstanding examples of great architecture, both inner city and rural, of hugely varying scales, contemporary and restoration projects – an eclectic mix.

It goes without saying that well-designed buildings can vastly improve the lives of individuals and wider communities – and this should never be underestimated. However, there's no harm in a gentle reminder every now and again – and experiencing this harmony completely reinforces this belief. In addition to the joy of visiting the physical buildings, I will cherish lasting memories of the people we met along the way – architects, clients and end users – all full of an evident passion and excitement for their particular 'places' – extremely special... ❍

See feature on RSUA Awards on page 10

Kari Simpson
Associate, TODD Architects
RSUA appointed judge - RSUA Awards

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John Lavery welcomed as new RSUA President

John Lavery was welcomed as the 57th president of the RSUA at the Annual General Meeting on Friday 31 May 2024.

Paul McAlister, John Lavery and Ciarán Fox.

The RSUA AGM was held in Northern Ireland's Building of the Year, the Ulster University Belfast Campus, and the 25 RSUA members who were in attendance got the opportunity to take a tour of the Liam McCormick Prize-winning project. They were guided around the campus by Naomi Sheehan and Paul Warwick from Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, who completed the project alongside McAdam Design, Scott Tallon Walker and White Ink Architects.

Following the tour, current RSUA President Paul McAlister handed over the reins to President-elect John Lavery, who will take over the presidency until 2026.

The AGM also covered the outcome of council elections. RSUA extends thanks to the following chartered members who stood down from RSUA Council in 2024:

- Trevor Leaker
- Cathal Fearon

The following members also stood down:

- Alana Durrent (one year co-opted member)
- Stephen Salley (one year co-opted member)
- Caitlin O'Kane (UU student rep)
- Rachel Murphy (QUB Student rep)

There were eight seats available on RSUA Council in 2024 for chartered members. Eight nominations were received, therefore there was no election. The following six chartered members were re-elected:

- Karen Crilly
- James Grieve
- Martin Hare
- Alan Jones
- Donal MacRandal
- Catherine Mallon

Two chartered members were elected to RSUA Council for the first time:

- Jenny Harper
- Alex Knowles

Other positions on RSUA Council were confirmed as:

- Associate Member Representative: Daithí MacLáimhin
- University Representatives: Rory Caithness will remain as the Ulster University Representative for one year and Alan Jones will continue to be the Queen's University Representative for one year.
- Student Representatives: The QUB & UU Student Representatives will be confirmed in due course.
- RIAI Observer: Anna Meehan will be the new RIAI Observer for one year.
- Further co-options will be discussed at the first Council meeting in June 2024.

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QUB Architecture End of Year Show 2024

One of the main highlights of the year for Architecture students and staff at Queen's is the End of Year Show. Curated by the students, the exhibition showcases the breadth and depth of work across all stages of our Part I & II programmes.

This year, the End of Year Show took place in 15 Chlorine Gardens. For most of the year, 'Number 15' as it is commonly termed, operates as studio and teaching space. It is 'home' to some one hundred-plus students, characterised by perspiration from fevered brows and the carefree untidiness of the industrious working studio environment. However, with the aid of a couple of good joiners, a legion of recycling bins and a steady stream of student help, the studio space was miraculously transformed into a series of connected galleries, each to feature a selection of student work in readiness for the exhibition.

One of the great shames of any exhibition is that it can only ever present a very small selection of available work. In that regard, this year's End of Year Show offered a tantalising taste of diverse projects, varying both in scale and in geographical location. New interventions wound their way in and around the Piranesi-esque streetscapes of Naples and through the discarded palazzos of Venice. Closer to home, the urban was tackled in inner Belfast, a counter point to the reimagining of the coastal lanscapes of Rathlin Island and Ballycastle or the historic gardens of the listed Galgorm Manor.

As it is the students who select and make the exhibition, freedom is given to what is on display. Therefore, there is always a range of different drawing techniques on show. However, whilst students are encouraged to develop their own skill set and one that encompasses their individual personality, all are encouraged to engage with model-making as a form of enquiry that will help unlock the 'mysteries' of the spatial and tectonic. Hence, much of the exhibition is made up with models, testament to our belief that Belfast is a place of making and

Opening Night.

Bringing it Together.

'Intensity' M.Arch Unit.

Continued on page 8

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Continued from page 6

that Architecture at Queen's embodies the local traditions of workshop, innovation and making, inherent and integral in the DNA of our city.

Whilst immersed in and proudly displaying a Belfast attitude, we believe that the integral emphasis on sustainability, quality of environment, place-making and material assembly, within all of the projects, ensures our relevance and purpose in a time of drastic climate and population change across the planet. The exhibition is therefore not just a celebration of work done, but hopefully and optimistically, also of work to come in the future, when our students will go out into the world and very simply ... try to make it better.

For those unable to have attended the opening night, when we were offering a glass or two of wine (that some might have described as 'interesting' in terms of grape and vintage), or missed the exhibition afterwards when the show was open to visitors, we are happy to offer you the opportunity to visit the exhibition virtually via the following link.

https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=8aSb6PWyz2a

We hope that you enjoy the show.

Architecture at Queen's

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RSUA Design Awards 2024

The Royal Society of Ulster Architects awarded the Liam McCormick prize for Northern Ireland's Building of the Year to the new Ulster University Belfast Campus.

The £364 million campus, stacked 14 floors high in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter, was designed by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, with McAdam Design, Scott Tallon Walker and White Ink Architects. The project also received the Living Places Award, which honours developments that excel in placemaking.

The judges noted how "the complex, expansive brief has been accommodated on a challenging, irregular site through the architects" intelligence and skill' and how the project is "socially, economically, and culturally important both to Belfast itself and to the very idea of 'city'."

Northern Ireland's House of the Year accolade was won by House on Redbrae Farm, by McGonigle McGrath Architects, with Alice Nickell named Project Architect of the Year for her work on this rural Co Down project. McGonigle McGrath also scooped a second design award for Longhurst, a private house in south Belfast.

Hall Black Douglas Architects won two awards for conservation projects. The first was the refurbishment of the long-abandoned St Comgall's School in west Belfast into a multi-use community hub. This also earned the Falls Community Council an award for Client of the Year. The practice's second winner was a £100m project they delivered in partnership with JCA Architects, that saw Primark's Bank Buildings resurrected from the ashes following a devastating fire in 2018. This project picked up the Conservation Award.

Architect Patrick Bradley secured both the Sustainability Award and the Small Project Award with his shipping container home, Barneys Ruins, which he built floating above the ruins of his family's 200-year-old farmstead near Maghera.

Ciarán Fox, RSUA Director, said, "Belfast, as with many city centres, is facing multiple challenges with depopulation, working from home, online shopping and limited public investment. It is bold projects like the new Ulster University campus and the rebuilding of Bank Buildings by Primark that help bring life and energy to the city centre. One, an exceptional example of the conservation of our built heritage, and the other an embodiment of the city's future aspirations.

"On the housing front, hats off to McGonigle McGrath who have completed a hat-trick, winning Northern Ireland's House of Year for the third year running. Every year we change our judging panel of experts from across Britain and Ireland but time after time each new panel reaches the same conclusion – that McGonigle McGrath's work is outstanding."

THE JUDGING PANEL

- RSUA-appointed judge (architect from NI): **Kari Simpson**, member of the RSUA Design Quality Panel and Associate at Todd Architects, Belfast.
- RIBA-appointed judge (architect from GB): **Neil Gillespie**, Director at Reiach and Hall Architects, Edinburgh.
- RSUA-appointed lay judge: **Gerry Millar**, member of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment (MAG).
- RIAI-appointed judge (architect from RoI): **Roísín Heneghan**, Director at Heneghan Peng Architects, Dublin.
- Sustainability expert: **Dominic Morris**, member of the RSUA Climate Emergency Committee and Director at McNally Morris Architects, Hillsborough.
- Conservation expert: **Brian Quinn**, RSUA Conservation Committee Chair & Senior Architect in Minor Capital Delivery Service, Infrastructure and Capital Development at the Education Authority NI.

The RSUA Design Award Gala Dinner took place on Thursday 9th May in The MAC Belfast. At the ceremony, guest of honour, Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd, said: "Architects, clients and built environment professionals have a critical role in designing and creating an environment in which diverse and sustainable communities can thrive – a positive environment in which people live, work, study and relax."

All entries for the RSUA Awards were required to have been in use for at least one year so that the judging panel could better evaluate the sustainability and real-life performance of the projects. The six winning projects are now in the running for a RIBA national award, celebrating the best of architecture across the whole of the UK.

The awards were sponsored by JP Corry and Metal Technologies, the Department of Infrastructure, the Department for Communities, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. ❍

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RSUA DESIGN AWARDS 2024 - WINNERS

Ulster University Belfast Campus - Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios with McAdam Design, Scott Tallon Walker and White Ink Architects
- Liam McCormick Prize for Building of the Year
- Living Places Award

House on Redbrae Farm - McGonigle McGrath Architects
- House of the Year
- Project Architect of the Year - Alice Nickell

Barneys Ruins - Patrick Bradley Architect
- Sustainability Award
- Small Project Award

Bank Buildings - Hall Black Douglas Architects and JCA Architects
- Conservation Award

St. Comgall's, Belfast - Hall Black Douglas Architects
- Conservation Award

Longhurst - McGonigle McGrath Architects
- RSUA Design Award

RSUA DESIGN AWARDS 2024 - SHORTLISTED PROJECTS

Gardenmore Green - Hall Black Douglas Architects

House in the Woods / Lough Road House - Studio idir

Moylinney Court - Hall Black Douglas Architects

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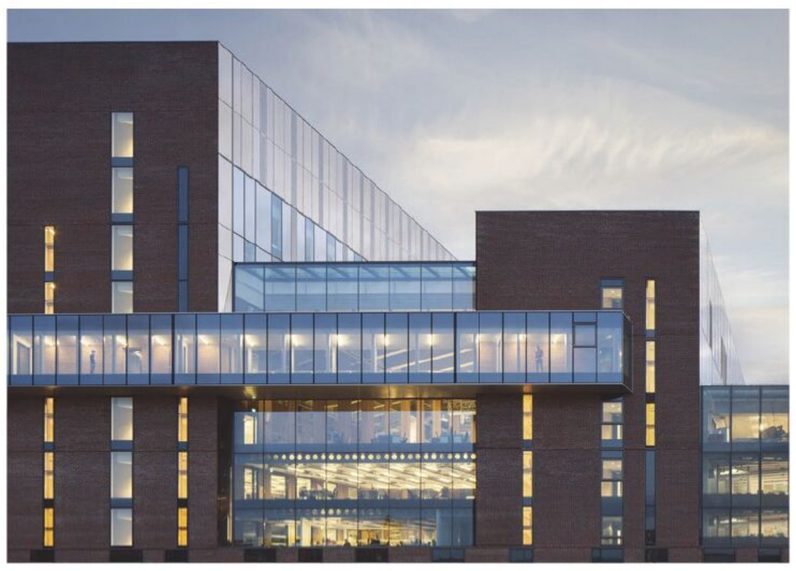
Liam McCormick Prize for Building of the Year
Special Awards: Living Places Award

Ulster University Belfast Campus - Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios with McAdam Design, Scott Tallon Walker and White Ink Architects

The new Ulster University campus is located on the northern edge of Belfast city centre. The project is highly significant on two counts. Firstly, in the university's bold decision to relocate its Jordanstown campus from a 1970s complex on the city's outskirts to a new scheme within Belfast's core, bringing with it people and energy – something the contemporary city centre craves. The other is how the complex, expansive brief has been accommodated on a challenging, irregular site through the architects' intelligence and skill. The mass of the overall building is carefully tailored to respond to its more domestic neighbours, while stepping up to create city scaled moments at key junctions. Inside, the necessary accommodation is grouped around a series of light-flooded atria.



JUDGES' CITATION:

"The campus is statistically significant, with some 15,000 students and staff, 5,000 jobs, 74,000 square metres of development and some 12 years in the making. Beyond the impressive headline facts and figures, however, is a project that is socially, economically, and culturally important both to Belfast itself and to the very idea of 'city'. While out-of-town campuses enjoy generous landscapes, their distance from the city can bring with it issues of disconnection from the importance of life outside of

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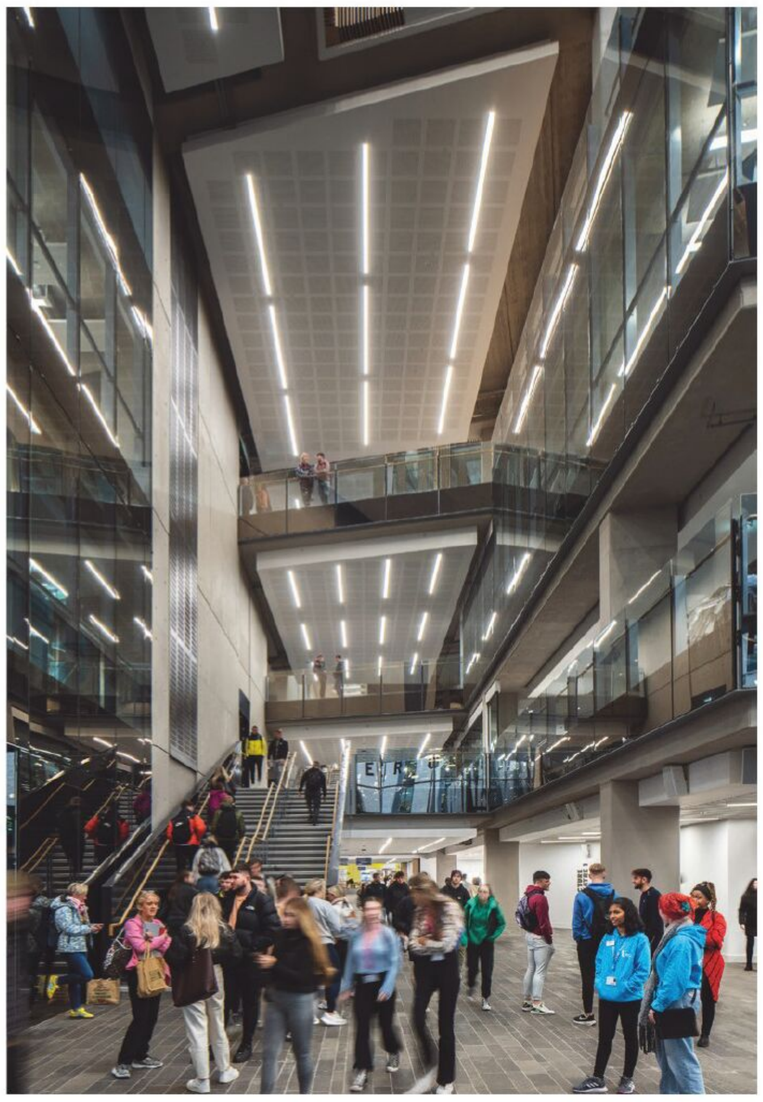

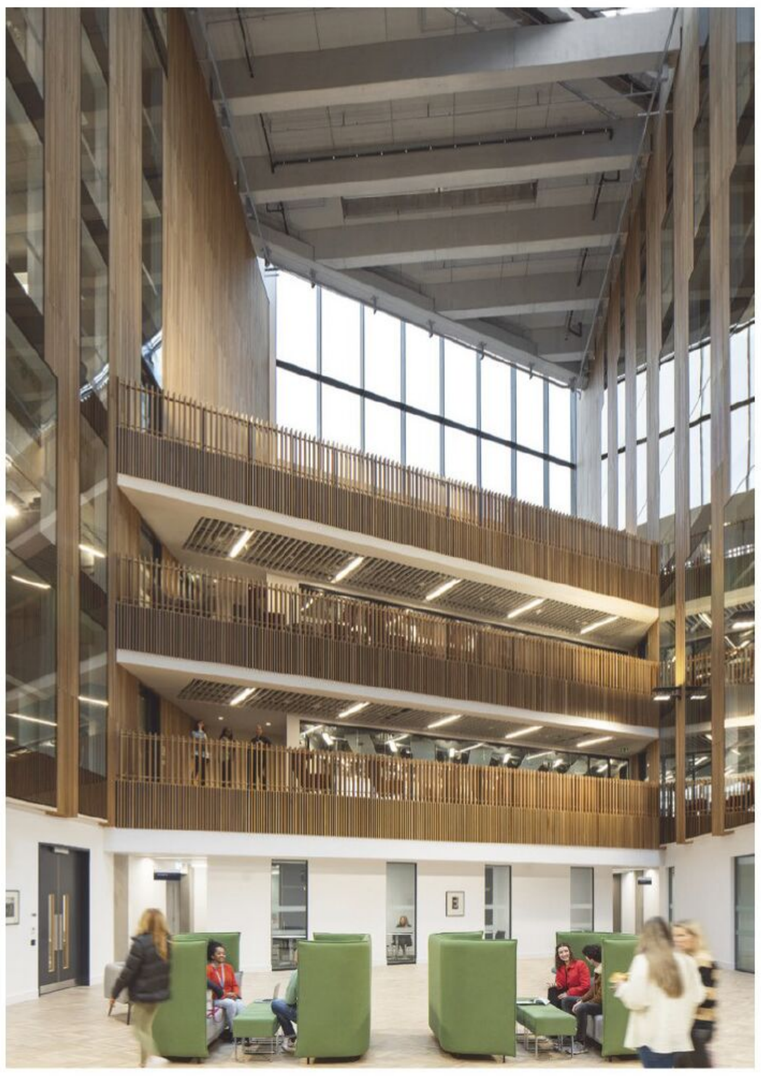

university. They also leave students and staff less able to benefit from the energy, opportunities, and diversity the city offers socially, economically, and culturally. Ulster University's bold move in relocating its campus indicates its recognition of the city as the melting pot of ideas, a place of cultural and commercial exchange. This is significant and bodes well for Belfast, which like many cities has suffered from the exodus of commerce to the online. The move is also hugely consequential from a sustainability perspective in a shift to active travel, public transport, and proximity to accommodation, shopping, and leisure.

The new campus lies on the edge of the historic city, close to the Cathedral and the MAC arts venue. It forms an emphatic northern destination and marker for Belfast. The idea of city as a generator of an architectural plan is evident in the design strategy for the building, which imagines this huge complex as a small city within the city. Where the 1970s architecture of the Jordanstown campus was profligate in terms of land, spreading out horizontally and encouraging the use of cars, the new campus condenses the large brief into vertical extension.

Although the overall building is very large, it has been skilfully tailored in plan, section, and elevation, to break down the mass and respond to the scale of neighbouring buildings and the intricacies of the site boundaries. The organising diagram is concise and direct, arranged around a simple, flexible plan idea that invites a pattern of existing adjacent lanes through the building. Its 12 metre, column-free floor plates alternate with top-lit atria. These not only bring light, air, and amenity into the deep plan, but also create a series of destinations and venues, cafés, study areas, and auditoria, which the University is energetically and imaginatively curating.”

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RSUA Design Award Winner

Special Awards: Sustainability Award
Small Project Award

Barneys Ruins - Patrick Bradley Architect

Situated deep within the rolling hills of mid-Ulster, Barneys Ruins is a modest project in terms of its scale, yet exceptional in its ambition and invention. Its name derives from the 200-year-old ruined clachan (hamlet) that has become its lower levels. A small new house formed from a reclaimed shipping container floats dramatically above. The contrast in response to the site is remarkable – one element is grounded in the landscape, the other detached from it. The architect knows this landscape and its histories, and his passion for it is infectious. Although rooted in the land, the design maintains a thoroughly contemporary position and never succumbs to sentimentality. The detailing and making are carried out with conviction, care, and a lightness of touch that supports and heightens the initial conceptual boldness of the project.

JUDGES' CITATION:

"There is a remarkable meeting of two worlds: the traditional and the contemporary. The new work is unashamedly modern, while the old is left undisturbed, moss covered, to serve as a memory of the generations who farmed and continue to farm these fields."

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RSUA Design Award Winner

Special Award: House of the Year
Project Architect of the Year - Alice Nickell

House on Redbrae Farm - McGonigle McGrath Architects

The House on Redbrae Farm stands in the green, undulating landscape of rural County Down. Although modest in scale, this new family home is hugely ambitious in terms of the refinement of an architectural language and in the quality of its making. It has a direct yet comfortable relationship to the landscape on three levels: the immediate site, the surrounding fields, and beyond to the northern hills. There is a Japanese sense of 'shakkei' – of borrowing the long views back into the intimacy of the interiors. The apparent ease and elegance expressed in plan, section, and detail belie the many years of dedication these architects have made to the discipline of architecture.

JUDGES' CITATION:

"The detailing and workmanship are superb; there is no sense of verbosity or extravagance. Rather, there is a directness and eloquent economy that creates spaces of great stillness – a rare quality. The architects have navigated the design process through intelligence, discipline, and experience. The natural reticence of the north is palpable in their work. This architecture places a premium on a measured and careful exploration of the discipline itself: space, volume, proportion, material. All of these qualities have earned Alice Nickell the RSUA Project Architect of the Year Award."

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RSUA Design Award Winner
Special Award: Conservation Award

St. Comgall's - Hall Black Douglas Architects

Located in a central Belfast neighbourhood that has experienced many troubled times, St Comgall's exemplifies architecture in the service of a community. The project was primarily concerned with the challenging conservation of a derelict 1930s school in order to create a home for a vital and active community group. The architects have diligently re-imagined and then painstakingly remade the building, from reconstructing façades and reusing salvaged brick to upgrading its thermal performance and roofing over the courtyard. The new St Comgall's creates a shared, flexible, light filled complex of spaces to host social, educational, economic, and cultural initiatives at varying scales. Both the conservation works and the new interventions are assured and appropriately modest, enabling the work of the Falls Community Council to take centre stage.

JUDGES' CITATION:

"The jury was impressed by the commitment of the client representing the Falls Community Council: their enthusiasm was infectious. While the building is indeed an incredible new asset, the great strength and significance of this project is in how the client group are using St Comgall's as a unifying, positive force within the neighbourhood.

The finished building is a credit to the enormous collective effort and exemplary skill of the architect and contractors. It not only heralds a new positive chapter, but also acts as a record of the past."

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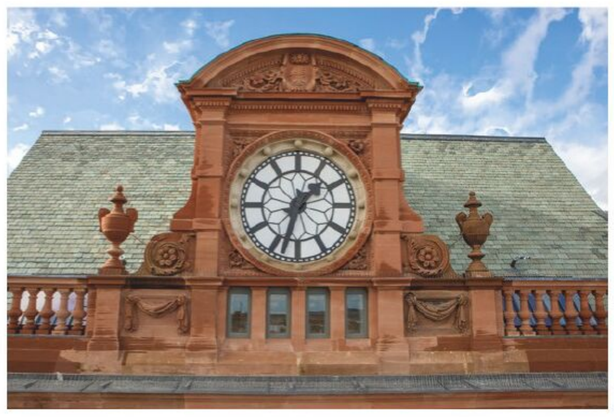
RSUA Design Award Winner

Special Award: Conservation Award

Bank Buildings - Hall Black Douglas Architects and JCA Architects

The magnificent, late Victorian, red sandstone Bank Buildings occupy a key position in Belfast city centre. Although massive in scale, their vulnerability, like all historic buildings, was exposed by a huge fire in 2018 that reduced them to an empty shell. Their restoration through an exemplary conservation project has ensured they can continue to make an important contribution to the city and its people. It also sends out a strong message in favour of retaining endangered historic buildings and in support of the fragile economy of city centres.



The architects were the central figures in this story: their experience and creativity were crucial to the project's success, and they orchestrated a strong team. The interior structure has been rebuilt in a way that not only safeguards it from fire in the future but also offers higher standards of insulation, energy use and accessibility.

JUDGES' CITATION:

"Standing at the confluence of Donegall Place, Castle Place and Royal Avenue, the building commands views from both west and south. Designed by W.H. Lynn in 1900, the magnificent, muscular Victorian structure expressed great confidence, material presence and an immense sense of civic pride. The client and occupier, clothing retailer Primark, are to be congratulated for their commitment not only in saving an important piece of architectural heritage but in making a bold commercial commitment to the city centre."

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RSUA Design Award Winner

Longhurst - McGonigle McGrath Architects

Longhurst is a substantial new villa in a residential area on the southern outskirts of Belfast. In contrast to its more traditionally designed neighbours, which stand assertively and distantly at the centre of their large plots, Longhurst is a fine exploration of a modern house that is generated by and responds to the topography and orientation of the site. The architects have skilfully orchestrated a beautiful unfolding sequence of spaces that begin with a modestly scaled, almost Japanese entry courtyard, then carefully step down the slope to finally open out to expansive living spaces, terraces, and lawns to the south. The design hides the villa's scale from external gaze, presenting an almost mute expression to the access lane, while the glazed, garden-facing south elevation reveals its sheer generosity. The quality of detail, materials and construction is exemplary. This is clearly a house for relaxation and entertaining friends on a grand scale.

JUDGES' CITATION:

"From the discreet entrance into the small, landscaped courtyard flows an exquisite architectural promenade. A compressed series of circulation spaces weave down the hill, animated and marked by vertical light shafts and the occasional glimpse through the plan. The house is carefully zoned to afford privacy to guest accommodation and family accommodation."

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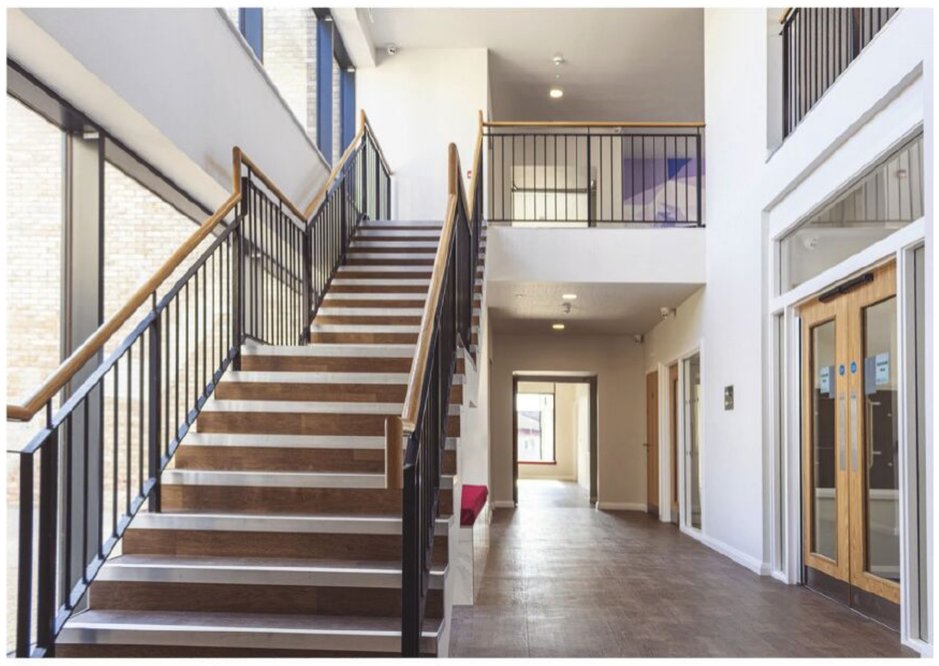
Shortlisted Projects

Gardenmore Green, Dunmurry - Hall Black Douglas Architects

House in the Woods/ Lough Road House, Lisburn - Studio idir



Moylinney Court, Newtownabbey - Hall Black Douglas Architects

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Redbrae Farm

THE TEAM

Client Private

Architect McGonigle McGrath

Quantity Surveyor David Gould Associates

Structural Engineer McAuley and Browne

Main Contractor Marlfield Joinery and Construction

Photography McGonigle McGrath

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"It's the one with the big chimney, you can't miss it," said the postwoman, my Sat Nav having mistakenly taken me to the end of a long and narrow single track lane. The chimney is the first thing you notice as you approach the house. "We wanted to punctuate the landscape," says Kieran McGonigle. The chimney acts as a device around which the plan of the house is ordered. Redbrae Farm is the beautifully simple, award -winning house by McGonigle McGrath, situated amongst the rolling landscape of County Down.

"Anything that we couldn't decide on we said that Kieran could make the decision." It's clear that a good relationship between client and architect was central to the success of the project. After talking to other architects the client chose McGonigle McGrath because, put simply, they "got it", they "invested the time and effort to understand our story" explains the client as we sit at a slate-topped dining table in the open-plan living room/kitchen space flooded with calming flat north light – I am distracted by the beautiful view through the fully-glazed north-facing elevation across a simple lawn garden, through wild planting and down to the undulating North Down fields.

The house sits on the site of the existing farm cottage, a disused stone building, beyond repair that had become home to some local goats. Reusing the cottage was not possible, says Kieran, it was considered but would have required the cottage

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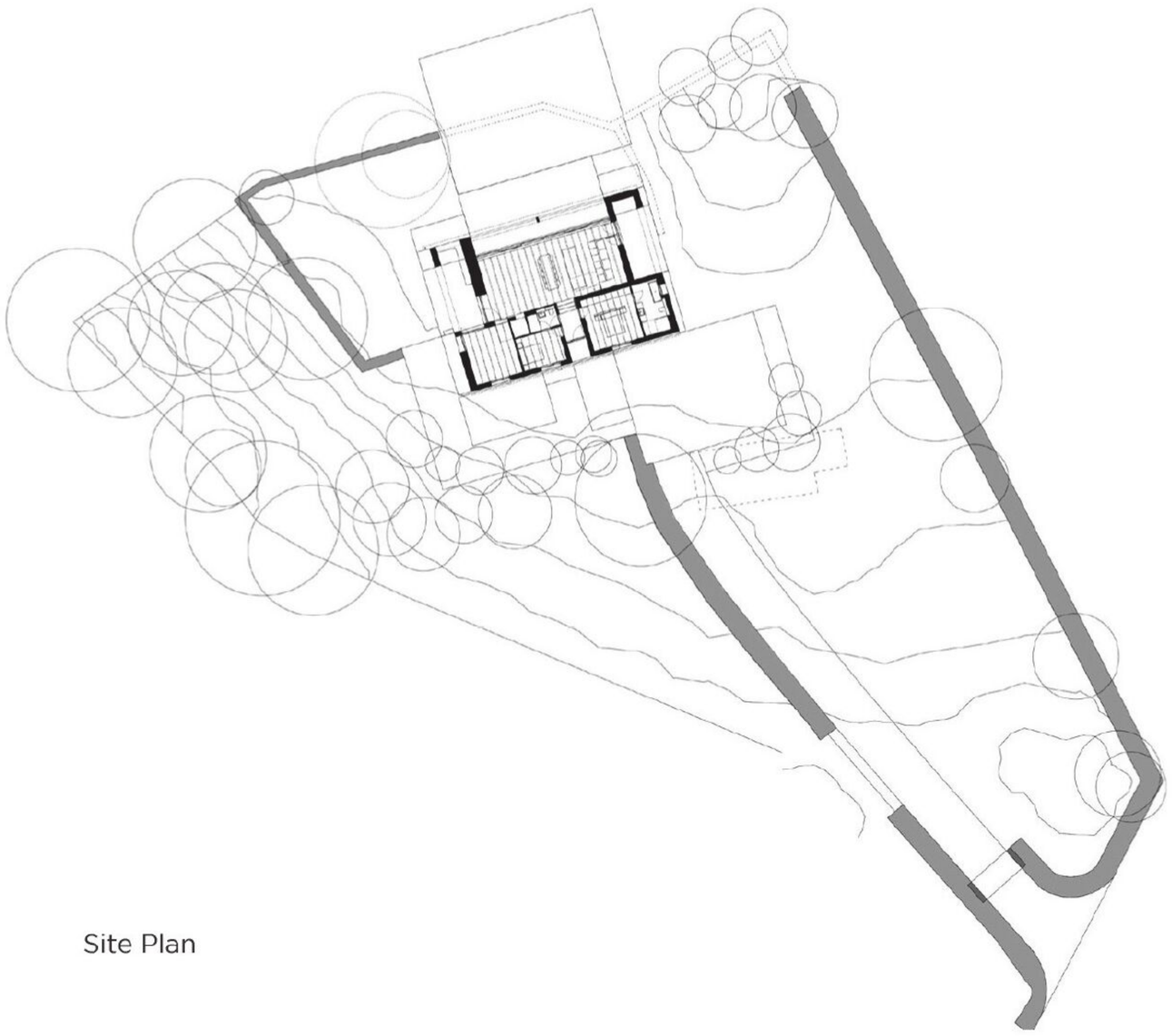

Site Plan

KEY

01 - PARKING COURT
02 - PORCH
03 - MAIN ENTRANCE HALL
04 - LIVING
05 - DINING
06 - KITCHEN
07 - PANTRY
08 - EAST TERRACE
09 - NORTH TERRACE
10 - WEST TERRACE
11 - SNUG
12 - BATHROOM / ENSUITE
13 - MASTER BEDROOM
14 - MASTER ENSUITE
15 - MASTER DRESSING
16 - GUEST BEDROOM

Floor Plans

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to be carefully dismantled and rebuilt. In the end, the option to reuse was economically unviable. Inspired by the strange coupling of the local agricultural vernacular and the clients' travels around Greece, out of which grew an appreciation of how a house can connect with the surrounding landscape, a concept was developed. A simple form following the footprint of the existing cottage, an economic aesthetic mirroring the simple building forms, materials and techniques of nearby farm buildings and an idea about how transparency might pull the outside in and the inside out.

The plan is simple and efficient — moves we have come to expect from a practice like McGonigle McGrath who constantly deliver beautiful high quality one-off residential houses. The main entrance is positioned centrally and cuts deep into the plan. Kieran describes this deep reveal as a "socket" – a deep reveal used elsewhere in window openings and terraces, affording the protection needed on an exposed rural site such as this. Through the socket, crossing the threshold, you step up into a small entrance area, up a few steps, following the contours of the existing site is the living space – the roof pitch drops down from the entrance towards a north-facing glazed screen – an aperture framing the soft horizontal lines of the agricultural fields and meadows beyond. The view is uninterrupted, the garden unbounded by a fence or wall but rather, McGonigle McGrath were able to use the existing topography of the site to create a ha-ha to keep the local cattle out. A ha-ha is a form of landscape often used in 18th century country houses where the house is raised on a mound. It's a clever move – this is a house that does not feel at all out of place with its surroundings.

Internally exposed timber rafters dampen sound as it bounces off a beautifully tiled floor that runs throughout the living space. This coupled with the deluge of north light creates a beautifully calm and relaxing space, the orientation of the house and the location of the bedrooms masking any noise from the nearby road. The bedrooms are positioned along the south side, shuttered windows create privacy and blackout, an economic plan ensures that the bedrooms do not impinge in the size of the living space.

Structurally the house loses some of its agriculturally inspired simplicity: primarily a steel frame, timber roof and block infill, with an exposed cast concrete frame used to create the terraces outside. There is little in the way of sustainable building methods – this is not necessarily a critique of the architects and more a question about how it might be possible for better legislation to exist by which it would be easier for the architect to take their client on a journey of thinking about alternative means of sustainable construction.

What the house loses in simplicity through its structural design it gains aesthetically. The house draws from the surrounding vernacular – a long slender barn-type form, tin pitched roof, grey render, exposed concrete, timber windows and screens. Clearly at home in an agricultural setting, yet the way the form is articulated also gives a nod to the clients' travels in Greece. Deep terraces on the east, north and west elevations respond to the orientation of the site – outdoor spaces from which to capture different moments of the day, shelter not from the intense Mediterranean sun but the more varied climate of rural County Down.

For the client the brief for Redbrae Farm was simple: "create a wow factor". McGonigle McGrath have achieved this through clever and simple moves and thoughtful detailing – carving a simple form that enters into a quiet conversation with the surrounding landscape; taking an ordinary and mundane vernacular material palette and producing a beautiful outcome that speaks as much of the agricultural past and present as it does of future questions of appropriate ways to build in a rural setting. ❍

David Capener

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Architect's Account

The site is on a farmstead located in rural County Down, a drumlin landscape of rolling countryside, irregular field patterns and twisting lanes. The existing cottage, derelict for half a century and beyond recovery, was a single-storey pitched structure, with masonry walls and corrugated roof, situated on a low mound surrounded with mature trees, 60m from the road. Low stone walls defined some sense of enclosure and definition from both the neighbouring farm buildings, and the open landscape.

The clients, the original farmer's grandson and his wife, had inherited the plot and were aware of our practice through friends. Their brief was for a modest 2-bedroomed house, a replacement for the original cottage, with living and entertaining spaces enjoying the long views north and west. We were commissioned in early 2019 and submitted the project for planning late 2019 with approval granted within three months. Construction commenced in July 2021 with completion in November 2022.

Our aim was to search for a language beyond the pitched roofed narrow linear dwellings and tall curved top barns developed through the history of rural habitation in the north of Ireland. Our interest focused on simple animal enclosures (as opposed to constructions for machinery or hay), often low pitched with wide gables, the best examples of which merge form with landscape. We looked to a simple local animal shelter, a low asymmetrically-pitched structure clothed in black corrugated tin, where the building becomes the singular negotiation between land and sky, between topography and horizon. We also reflected on the low wide spanned chicken sheds which characterise the local area and which are present on the farm.

The project comprises a compact plan on one level, with a simple low pitched roof. The plan splits into 2, the front section containing mostly sleeping accommodation in cellular rooms, placed precisely on the footprint of the original cottage, and the rear section containing open-plan living spaces in the 'garden' behind, and engaging with the long views. The house adjusts to the slope of the ground, each section opening out to the contour it finds itself on. The asymmetrical profile is heightened by deep thresholds

to the rear, forming covered outdoor areas for utility and enjoyment, and a tall masonry chimney serving fires inside and out confirms the domestic use.

There are 5 points of access to the inside from the outside, all within sheltered recesses with level thresholds. Necessary level changes are shallow and wide permitting future installation of mechanical aides if necessary.

The material palette is intentionally frugal. The frame is lightweight steel supporting masonry walls and exposed raftered roof. Walls are rendered and windows are from sustainably sourced hardwood. The roof is sheathed in corrugated metal. External terraces are concrete, referencing the yards of local farms.

The outcome seeks to find a form which draws upon the character of local sheds and agricultural buildings, and hopefully makes a positive contribution to the development of the language of rural housing in Northern Ireland. ❍

McGonigle McGrath

Sustainability

Rigorous planning produced a compact single-storey dwelling. The dwelling is sited on the footprint of the previous dilapidated cottage, meaning less of the natural surroundings of the site were contaminated. There are modest scaled openings to the majority of the dwelling, with only large areas of glazing to the main living space, which mostly orientates north west. High levels of insulation in the roof, walls and floor, careful detailing at openings and material junctions, and passive solar design basics were employed to increase the energy efficiency of the dwelling and reduce its environmental impact.

The materials chosen are robust with a long life span. The dwelling is built in masonry, so the walls benefit from having a high thermal mass. The corrugated metal roof is fully recyclable.

The heat source, a gas boiler, is served by an above ground gas tank. This was due to the remote location of the dwelling ie. mains gas was not a viable option. Due to rocky ground conditions the gas tank was placed above ground. There is underfloor heating throughout the dwelling, which is zoned and employs intuitive control systems. A whole house MVHR system was installed with natural passive ventilation achieved by ventilator panels incorporated into screens.

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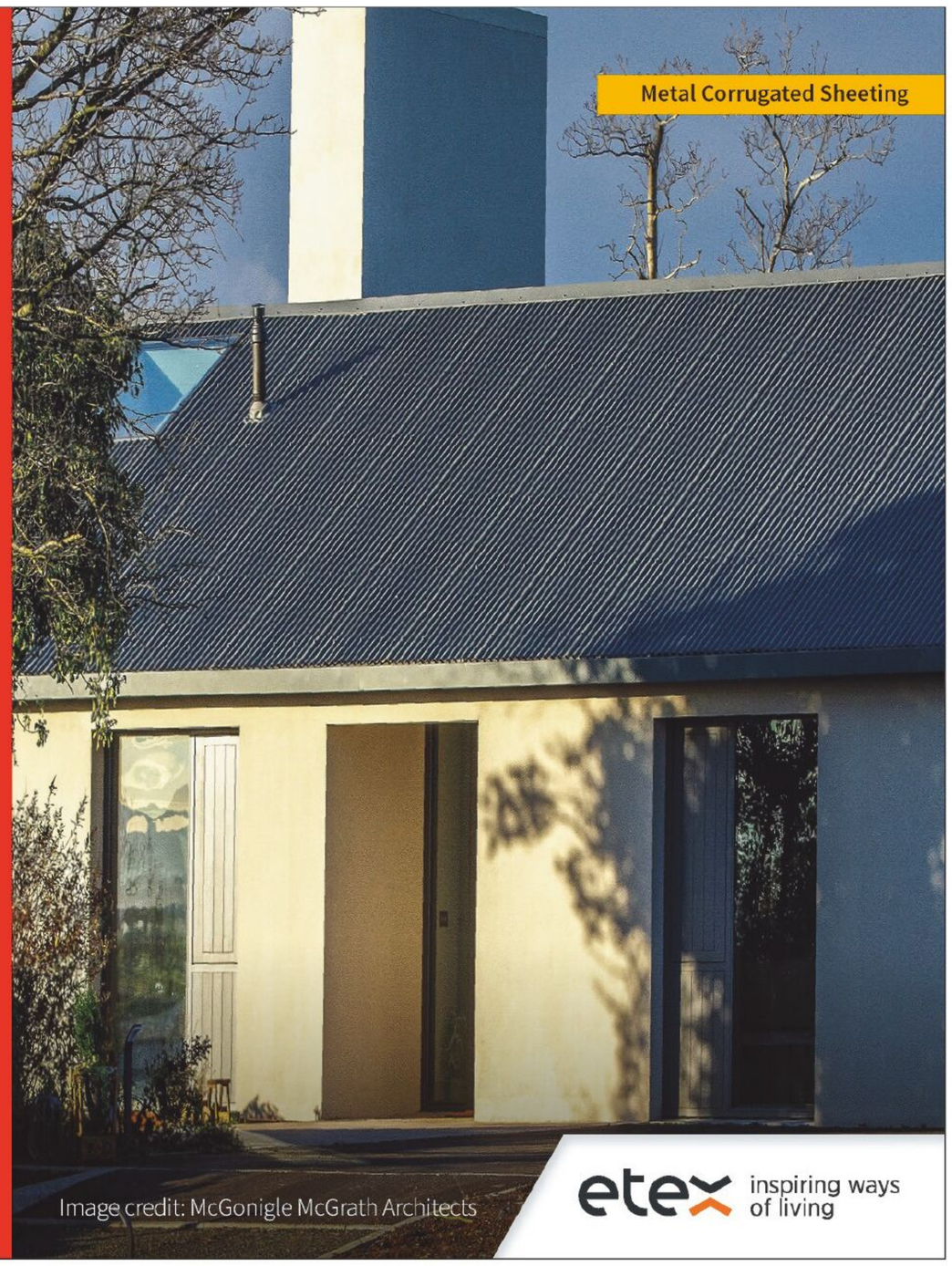

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The Kami and The Metropolis

As part of the Alan Barnes Travel Scholarship, Queen's architecture student Fintan Dalton travelled to Japan.

Kyoto Streets

Fushimi Inari Shrine

Gashapon

Tokyo, the mystical ancient capital of Japan, is a metropolis of sound, people and never-ending movement. The tempo of the commute is set by flickering screens in peripheral vision, high in the air advertising products you can't do without. The street is an accumulation of detail – intersecting seedy backstreets, love hotels and tightly packed ramen joints crammed with insatiable customers – juxtaposed with the traditional shrines, temples and urban artefacts. The ancient culture and the ultra-modern sit easily together, criss-crossed by high-speed trains, Toyota taxis and overhead electrical wires.

Tokyo was the subject of my research. Focusing on the streetscape, the collective architecture of people, I aimed to uncover and learn from the distinctly Japanese qualities that are the product of a continued reference to and respect for its culture and tradition.

The approach to my research, alongside sketching and writing, was to create a short documentary-style video that would capture the raw authenticity of Tokyo's streets and Japanese architecture.

With my pocket-sized Sony camera, the viewfinder defined a zone of focus in a city with an infinite gallery of things to look at. With video I could merge scenes, collect fleeting moments, and show what is difficult and, perhaps, impossible to adequately translate into words. Video allows one to experience; it has the power to completely enthral you in a moment from the past and a place far away. The powerful effect of capturing and framing moments and streets focuses the gaze and awareness on the elements that create these urban landscapes.

Through wandering the streets of Tokyo and observing supposed banality, beauty revealed itself. Streets are incredibly familiar sights in the urban environment. Streets are a shared experience that are involved in all our ideas and images concerning this city. What I find very interesting is the combination of the elements that create streetscapes. Trees that rise behind fences, potted plants simply arranged at a doorstep, the conversation between materials.

It's very clear that streets aren't simply for utilitarian needs, but the meditation of these landscapes situate us temporarily and spatially. In many cases, the resulting urban form or structure is not a pure expression of intention but the imperfect consequence of cause and happenstance. Streets are the intentions and calculations of many different parties at work in a city. However, this is not a flaw. Instead they create a more interesting, spatially richer city, endowing it with unexpectedness, newness, ambiguity and irony.

In Northern Ireland, and the majority of western culture, we privilege the being over the non-being. What is spoken to, what is left unsaid. Shinto traditions infused Japanese culture with respect for the non-being. 'Kami' are spirits that inhabit objects, structures and phenomena. They are also sometimes the force within the living or the dead which leads to a deeper cultural appreciation behind the inanimate and invisible. This force of nature and awareness of all objects and their embodied meaning informs a way of living, one of self-awareness, of reverence and of deeper appreciation. Materials, objects and nature have much more spiritual respect. This respect developed ideas of space and atmosphere through Japan's architectural history.

While in Tokyo I explored the Japanese concept of Oku. Oku, meaning inwardness, originates from the native religion of Japan, Shintoism. Inwardness is the concept that what is the deepest or most hidden is of the most importance. This idea of inwardness,

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Nature Architecture Ritual

Meguro

Japan QR Code

does not mean the physical centre of things which opposes the western view of the centre or most prominent as the highest order of importance.

It was in Kyoto where I grasped this concept in its origin. I visited the Fushimi Inari Shrine where there are as many Red Torii gates as there are steps up the mountain leading to the shrine. These Torii gates weave through the forest appearing as something so natural yet so divinely otherworldly. The centre - the most inward - of Kyoto is at the top of this mountain, on the outskirts of the city. However, it is not the physical shrine that is the sacred piece, but the journey through the early morning fog, the whistling calls of birds, the moss which grows over a stone, and the tranquillity of the city below. It is a feeling unique to each one of us, carried in our being and forever impressed in our minds.

Oku aligns with a phenomenological approach to design. Interacting with our senses, understanding something that speaks to our being rather than satisfying our eyes. Oku is the process of approach, the in-between and the movement to subsequent spaces, a non-directional wandering-like approach endowed with mystery, ambiguity and surprise unfolding as we take our next step. In Tokyo, this inwardness revealed itself in the developing feeling of place, awareness and understanding. It is not the first time we walk through the non-centric street patterns, gaps and intersecting streets, but the many times, that it constantly reveals itself – its problems, personality, desires and optimism. The journey to the inwardness is non-directional, to a probably infinite end.

I aimed to understand how the architecture of Japan developed through its continued appreciation of its culture and tradition. I wanted to gain insight on how a nation's identity can thrive or be conserved in contemporary methods. There was no better place to explore this concept than in Japan, a nation with a prolonged history of a strong identity.

The realisation of the Japan-ness problematic began in the 20th century, most intensely at the beginning of the 1930s. Modernisation in architecture intersected with the insular Japan. Then, Japanese architects began to synthesise the modern and the Japanese while modernist architecture was oppressed. The state favoured imperialistic nationalist architecture that would also establish a presence in their invasions of Asia.

It was after WW2 when the Japan-ness problematic was at the forefront of Japanese architectural discussion.

Kenzo Tange, a polemicist, led the debate. In Hiroshima, out of the ruins of an apocalypse, Tange conjured a nationalist image.

I took the bullet train from Kyoto to Hiroshima to observe for myself this fundamental piece of modernist Japanese architecture. There was a subtle integration of modernist, nationalistic and Shintoist ideas expressed in his building. The architectural language of the International Style was reordered in a Japanese context. The modernist elements were integrated with plans, ratios and references of important historical Japanese works.

While in Hiroshima I also visited the Mitaki-dera Temple. Originally built in 1526 in the Wakayama prefecture, the pagoda was moved to Hiroshima in 1951 to console the souls of victims who died in the atomic bombing.

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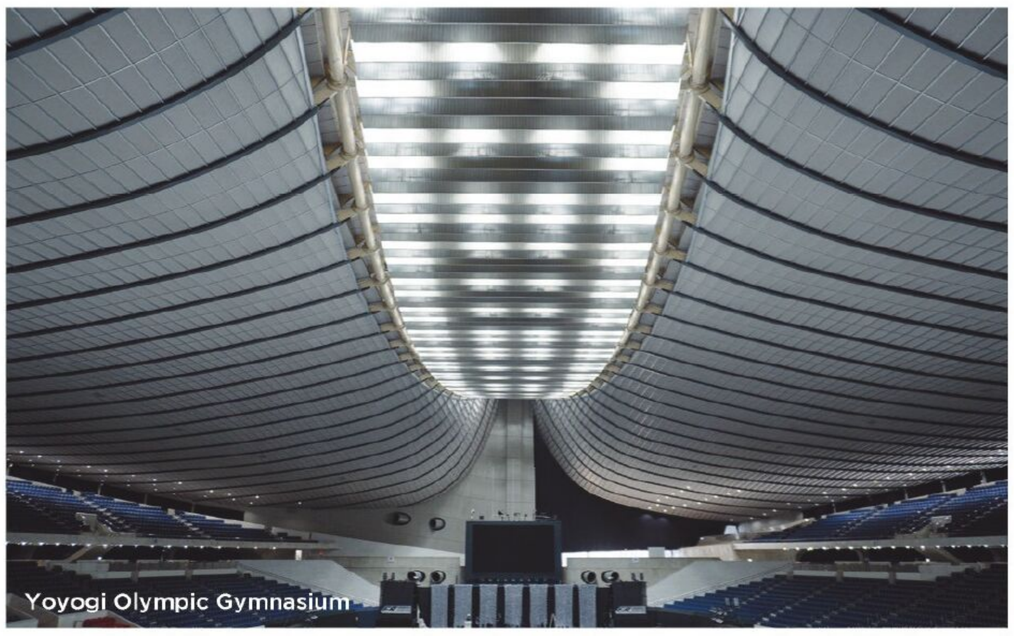
Unfamiliar Inscriptions

Train lines


Yoyogi Olympic Gymnasium

On the slopes of Mt Mitaki was a succession of buildings, although calling them buildings is misguided. They were of the landscape, perched over a stream of water or underneath the red autumn leaves. These were spaces endowed by nature - not wrested from - and in complete harmony with the surrounding landscape. Screens, openings and framed structure – a spatial act of construction, delicately defined edges. Here, architecture is not the protagonist, it does not declare its presence or dominate the environment. It is one with ritual and nature.

I returned to Tokyo to explore more works by Kenzo Tange, Kunio Maekawa, Le Corbusier and other architects who built in this post-war period. It was Kenzo Tange's Yoyogi Olympic Complex that struck me as a masterpiece of this era. In the destruction of tradition Tange rehabilitated the traditional. The colossal suspended roof is reminiscent of the great halls of Japan's wonderful heritage. The complex was a landmark creation of substantial uniqueness that no longer relied on exoticism or identifiable brutalist themes. This dynamic Dionysian space of competition was the resolution to the problem of Japan-ness.

But in the busy districts of Tokyo, architecture has begun to dissolve and become the foundations of a media-space, the structure for signs to be displayed, a framework for experiential marketing and advertising real estate. This in itself has defined a contemporary identity of Japan, a collection of images rather than a singular declaration of what it is.

Since the rapid growth of technology, the world has become a series of archipelagos, with multiple dispersed and disconnected centres. Inevitably, the insular Japan has become one of these mutually heterogeneous configurations. That is to say that the very border that once gave substance to Japan-ness has become porous and penetrable by outer influences.

The persistent self-reflection in Japanese architecture has revealed sensibilities and qualities moving beyond a singular declaration of Japan's identity. It has freed itself from the obligation of paying homage to traditional forms and from the gravitational pull of American and European thought. Contemporary Japanese architecture embodies a wide variety of design intentions, sensibilities, confidence and purposes that could appear as different as the buildings themselves.

The most celebrated contemporary architecture of Japan makes a critical commentary on the present-day urban and cultural conditions. And often they manifest a special fragmentary quality. In this architecture, as in the cultural and urban landscape in which these works have been conceived, scattered elements, incongruous motifs and materials, fractional and membranous surfaces are liberated, neither in opposition or reconciliation. Japan may have finally found its true Oku.

I want to sincerely thank the RSUA and the Alan Barnes travel scholarship for granting me this opportunity to explore Japan, enrich my knowledge and understanding. This trip has had a significant impact on my architectural thinking and will continue to shape my future as an architect and designer.

I hope my report and documentary will spur curiosity, discussion, and provide insight into Japanese architecture and philosophies for architects and students. Thank You. ❍

Fintan Dalton

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Crumlin Road Gaol - McConnell's Whisky Distillery

By the late 19th century, Ireland was a major player in the whisky industry, producing 14 million gallons of whisky per year – equating to 70% of the world's annual supply. As a recently established city, Belfast alone boasted an output around 6.7 million gallons in the early 1900s.

Within this thriving economic context Hugh McConnell established his business as a grocer and spirit dealer. After his death, his sons John and James McConnell opened the Cromac Distillery in 1899 on the south side of the River Lagan to meet the growing demand. Producing what would become known as McConnell's Irish Whisky, the brothers helped to establish Irish whisky as the most popular drink in the world. In spite of this success, J & J McConnell suffered two significant fires – the first at their Ravenhill Road mill in 1907 and subsequently at their Dunbar Street warehouse in 1909. Despite these setbacks, it wasn't until Prohibition outlawed the sale of liquor in America in the 1930s that the business was forced to close. Over 90 years later, the oldest whisky brand in Northern Ireland has been reborn through the endeavours of the Belfast Distillery Company.

Like Architects were commissioned to develop a working distillery and visitor centre for the Belfast Distillery Company within Crumlin Road Gaol, a Grade A listed building designed by Sir Charles Lanyon. Constructed in 1845, the building comprises four linear prison wings arranged in a radial fashion off a central entrance block. The building was finally closed to prisoners in 1996 with only the Gatehouse, Governor's Corridor and 'C Wing' being repurposed as a visitor and conference centre.

The distillery and visitor centre is located within 'A Wing' of the Gaol – this presented a number of unique challenges. Notwithstanding its listed status and historic relevance, the building's elongated proportions were not immediately suited to the installation of large-scale tanks and equipment. Furthermore, the cellular nature of the building did not readily permit alteration, where 2-foot-thick stone walls were found to be reinforced with steel mesh.

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THE TEAM

Client Belfast Distillery Company

Architect /Project Management
Like Architects
Project Lead: Simon Scales
Project Director: Ciaran Deazley

Quantity Surveyor Naylor Devlin

Structural & Civil Design ID

Heritage consultant Graeme Moore

Mechanical & Electrical ISD

Health & Safety
Safe Construction Design

Main Contractor
Felix O'Hare

Photography Felix O'Hare and Rory Moore

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Measuring 13m by 81m internally, the 3-storey wing originally accommodated 58 cells per floor, all of which flanked a central top-lit atrium space. Slate walkways and linear staircases connect each floor and provide direct access to each cell.

At the outset, the design approach sought to interweave the parallel programmes of visitor experience and the distilling process throughout each floor. Despite its Grade A status, permission was uniquely granted by Historic Environment Division to alter the internal layout in order to accommodate both building programmes.

At ground-floor level a number of cells were removed and a series of sculptural 'V'-shaped columns installed to create a more open-plan layout, accommodating reception, shop and a gathering space for the commencement of tours. Half of the ground floor has been given over to public use and the other half to the process of distilling. Where cell walls were removed, the design of the floor tiling references the original footprint of each prison cell.

The tour officially commences at first-floor level, where visitors learn about the history of the McConnell's brand and are led on the journey through the distilling process. The second floor includes a whisky-tasting and cocktail experience as well as an open-plan bar area and function rooms. A newly installed glass lift situated at the circle end of the plan links each floor of the building.

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Whisky distilleries are commonly spread out across large warehouses, albeit the process is often a linear one. A key challenge was the delivery of a fully functioning facility within the restricted confines of the building footprint. The requirement to find adequate space to accommodate the sizeable tanks and stills necessitated the localised removal of three floors of vaulted cells – where some of the tanks and equipment extend almost the full height of the building. Prior to commencing demolition, a steel structure had to be constructed to support and restrain the vaulted floors which were integrally linked to the adjoining cell walls. Sections of the existing glazed roof also had to be removed to facilitate the craning in and positioning of the grain handlers, the interspirit receiver and the three copper Forsythe stills which were manufactured and shipped across from Scotland. The narrow atrium void (at 2m wide) within which to manoeuvre these large items required strategic planning by the design team and contractor at the outset. Four of the six washback tanks were built in-situ to avoid the need to remove and reinstate the vaulted floors. A structurally glazed floor has been installed over the stills, allowing visitors to appreciate the distilling process from above.

Repairs within the atrium space were sympathetically carried out using traditional materials. The original slate walkways and one of the two main linear staircases within the atrium

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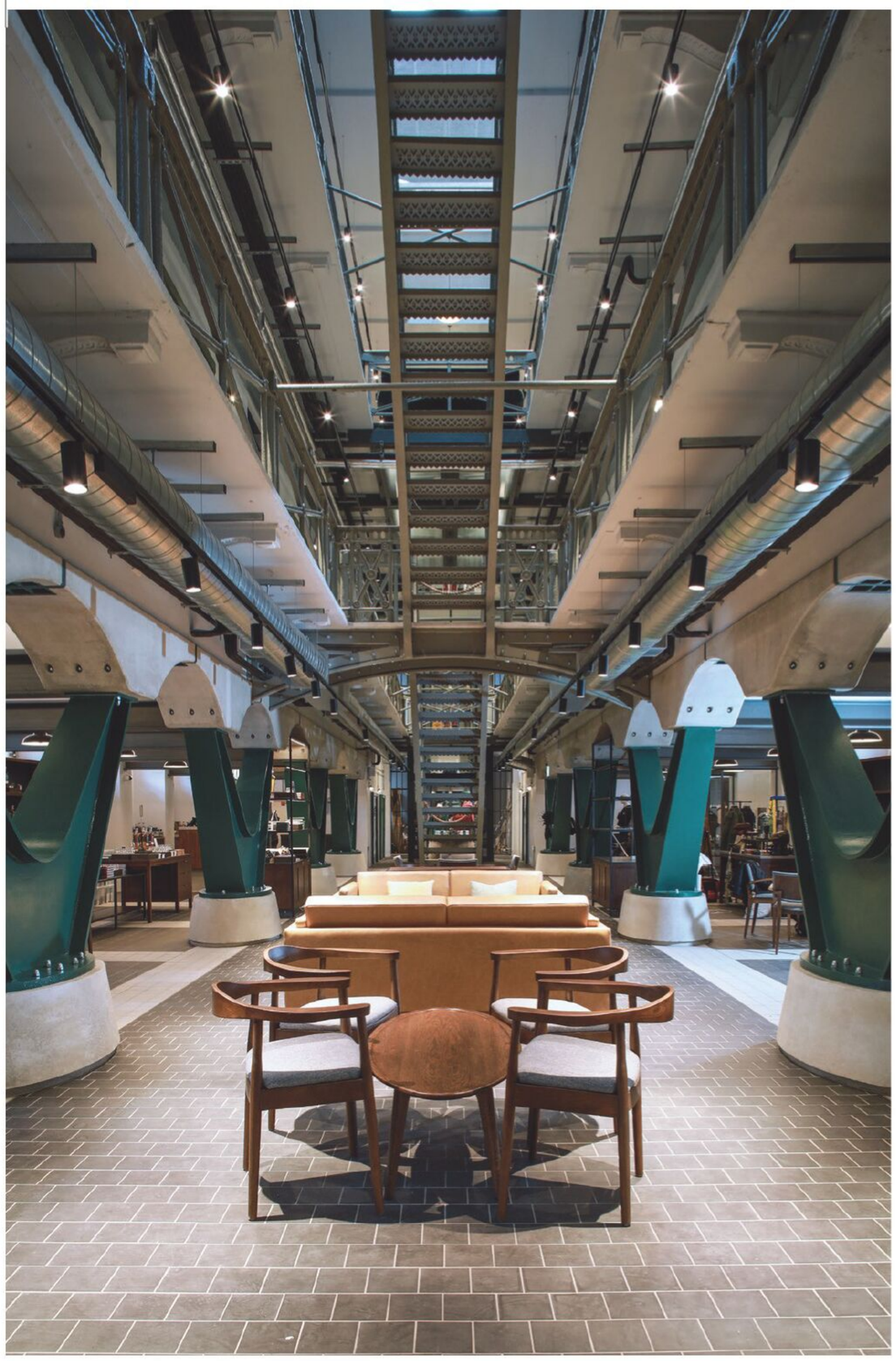

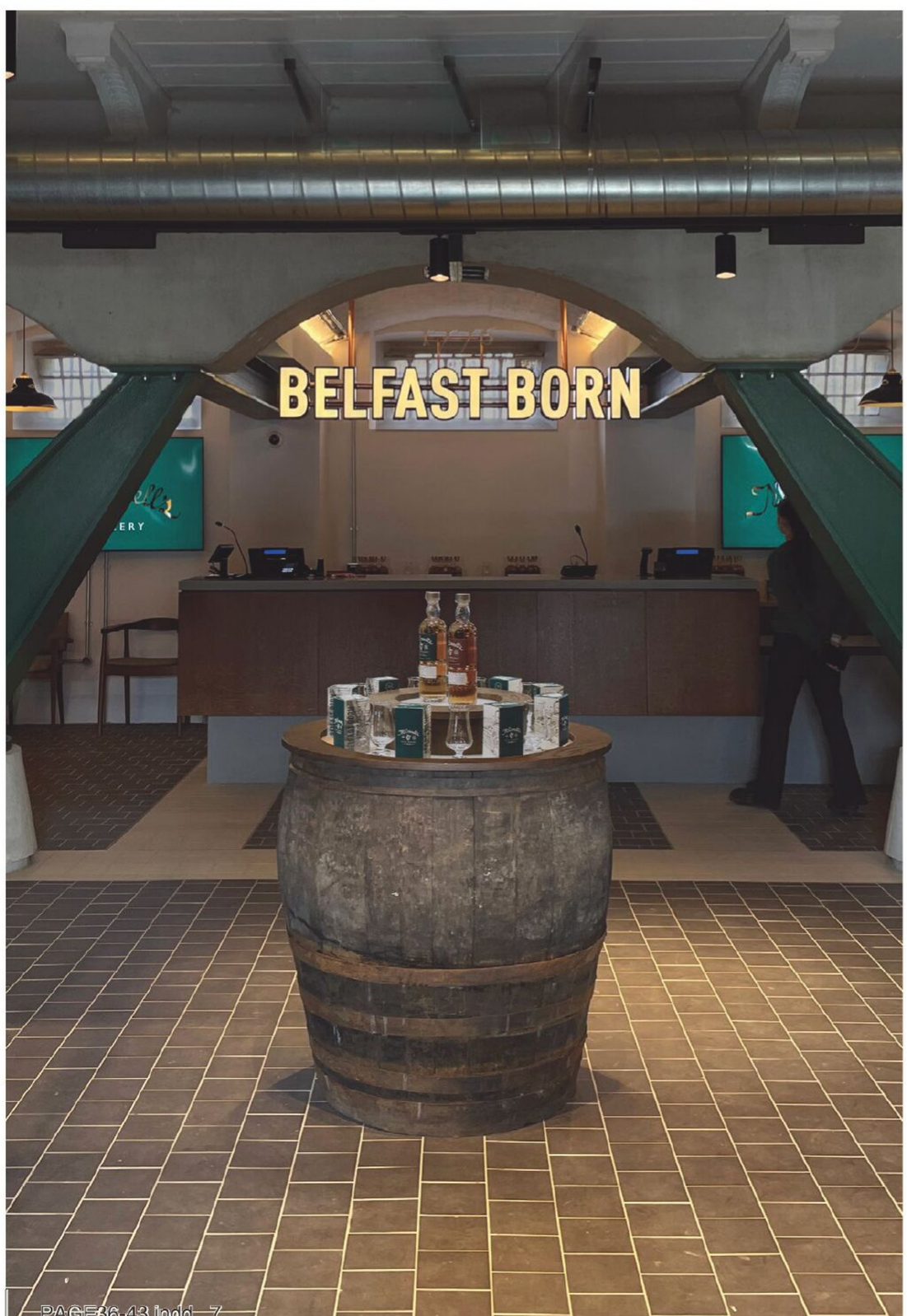
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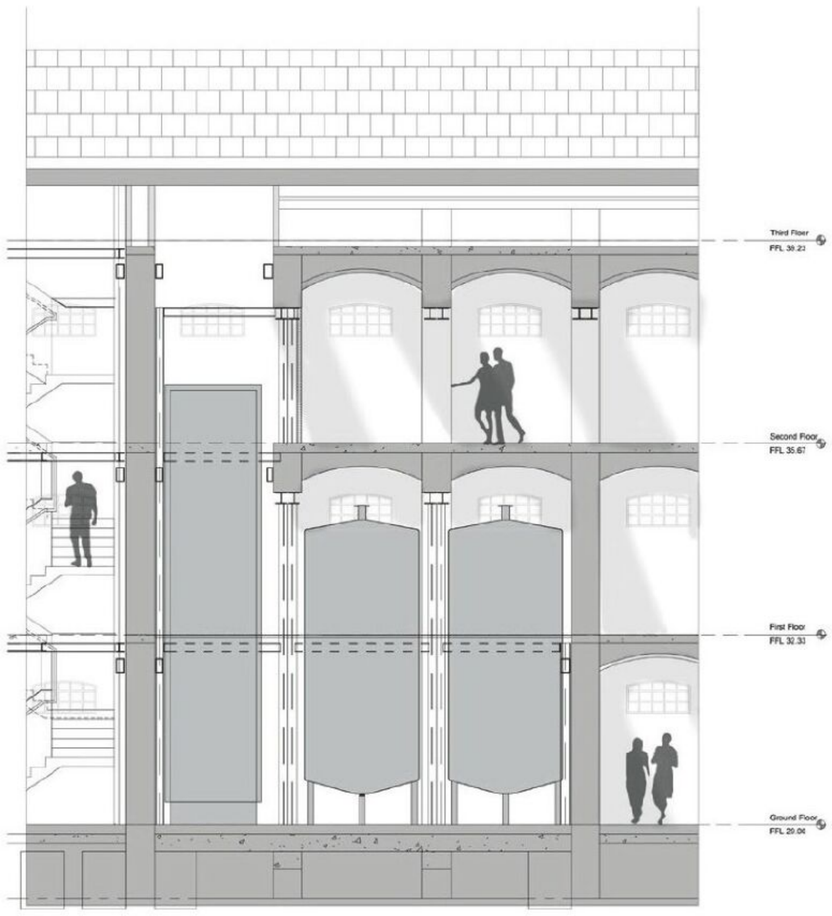
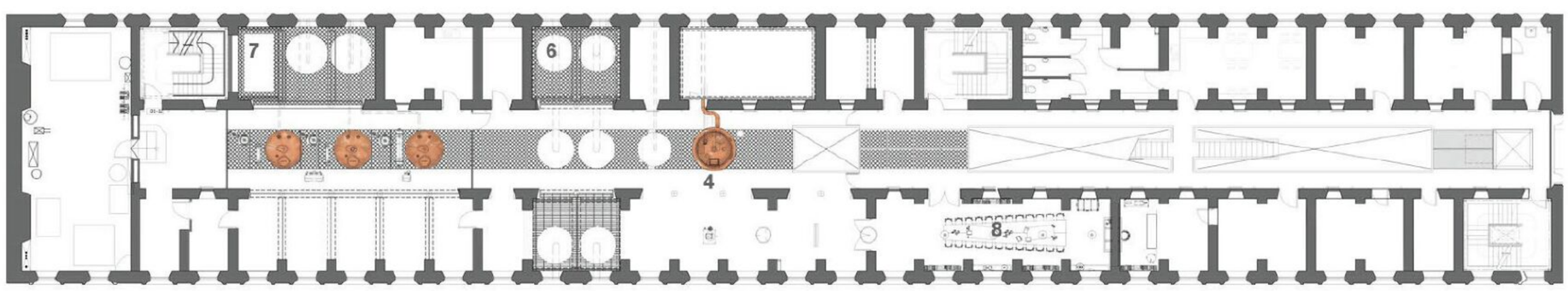
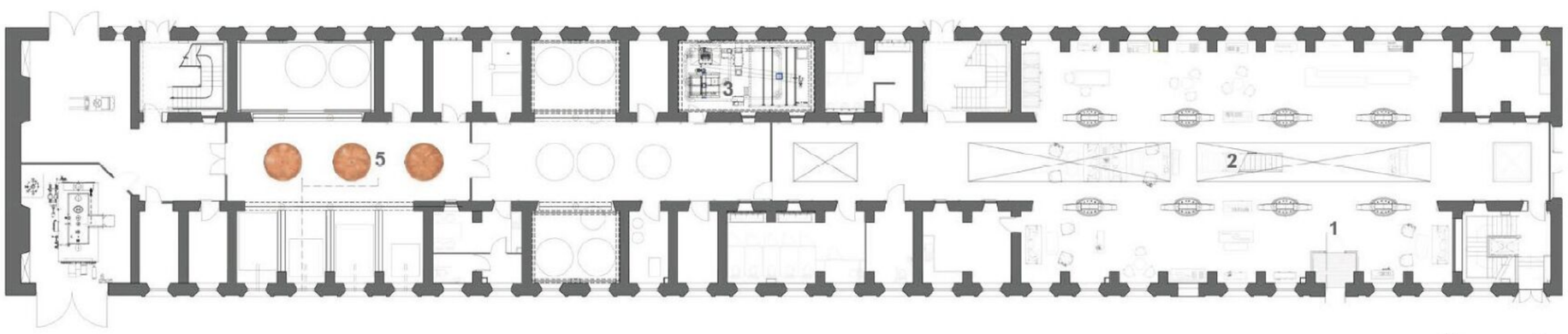


Long Section Through Interspirit Receiver

Cross Section Through Washbacks



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

0m 5m

1. Entrance
2. Reception/Retail
3. Grain Handling
4. Lauter Tun
5. Stills
6. Washbacks
7. Interspirit Receiver
8, Board Room
9, Tasting Rooms

Long Section Through Atrium

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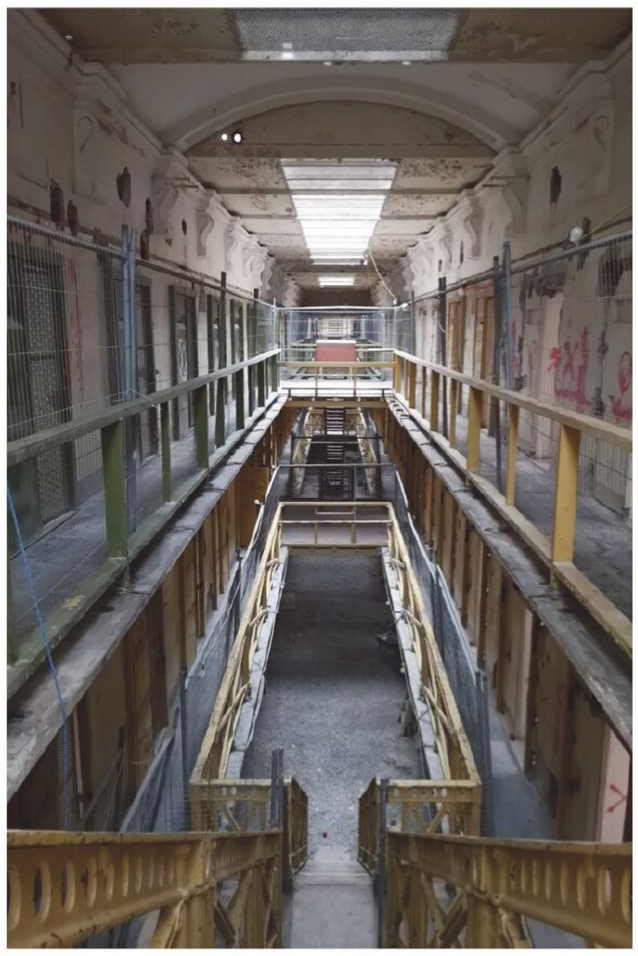
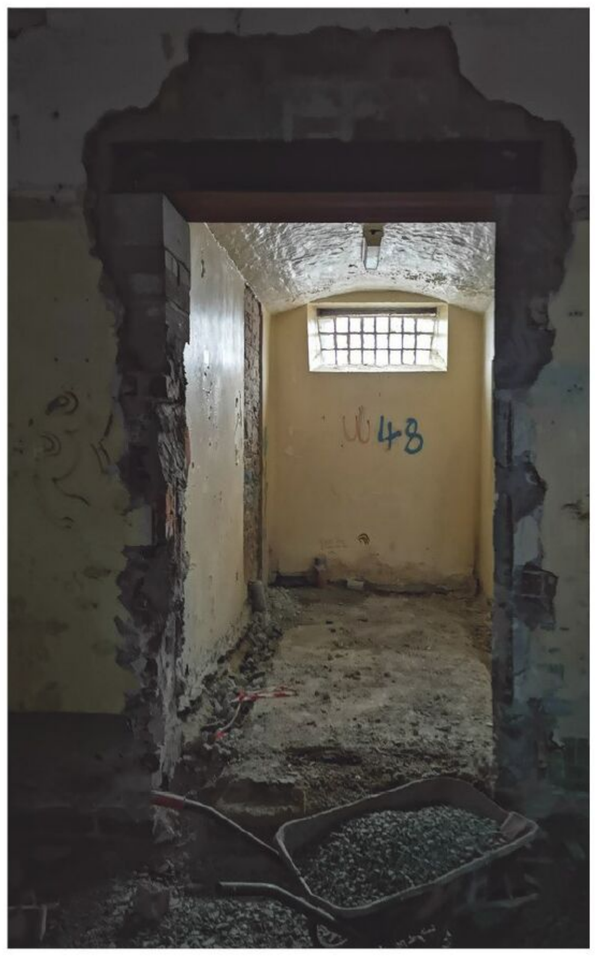
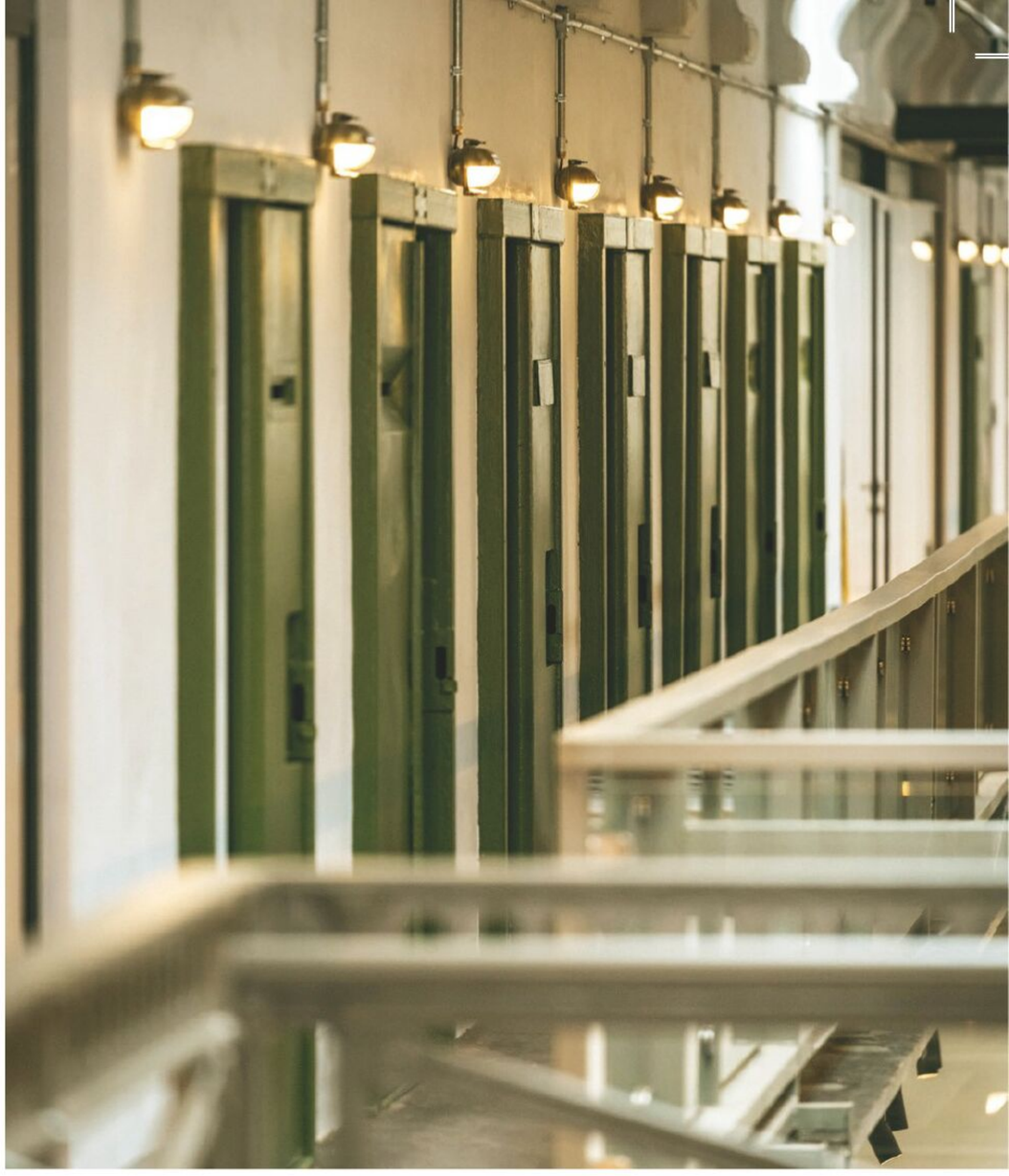
Before photographs.







have been retained and restored, guiding visitors around the atrium and emphasising the route that prisoners would once have taken.

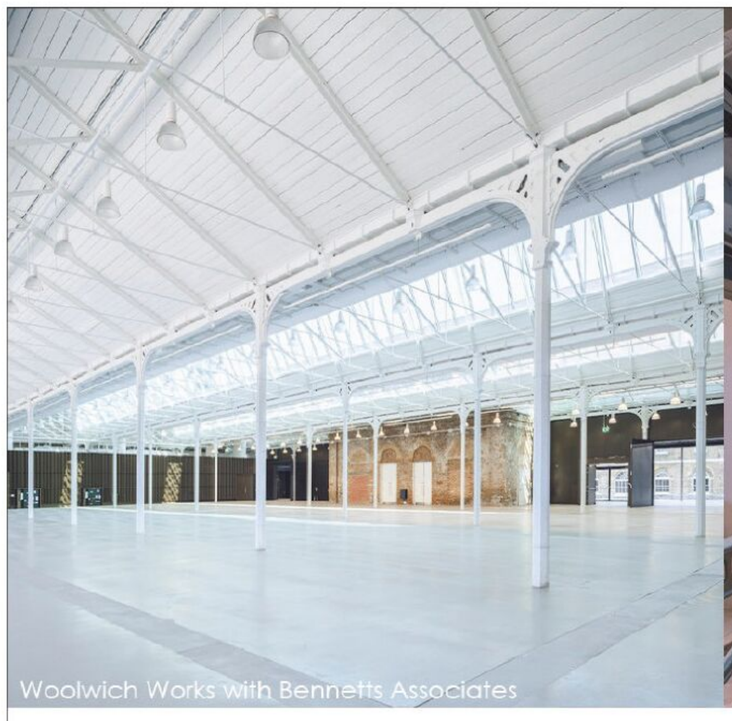
The process of restoration and rejuvenation has been approached in a manner that avoids sanitisation of the past, whilst retaining the essence of what was once a Victorian Gaol. New interventions were treated in strict contrast to original finishes and fittings. All were surface mounted to maintain the integrity of the existing walls, which suits an aesthetic where everything is exposed and on show – similar to the distilling process.

Rooftop vents which had been previously removed were recreated to screen external flues and the integration of building services had to be carefully concealed to preserve the spirit and character of the spaces. Air supply and extract is achieved through existing cell window openings where cell bars were retained externally and louvres discretely installed behind.

With over half of Crumlin Road Gaol now in active use, it is envisaged that B and D Wings will eventually be brought forward for development.

Works commenced on site in August 2022, with a construction programme of 18 months. Representing a £23m investment (including the distillery installation), the project is testament to Belfast Distillery Company's ambition to bring about the rebirth of McConnell's Whisky production in Belfast, whilst reusing one of the city's most unique historic buildings. ❍

Arthur Parke
Like Architects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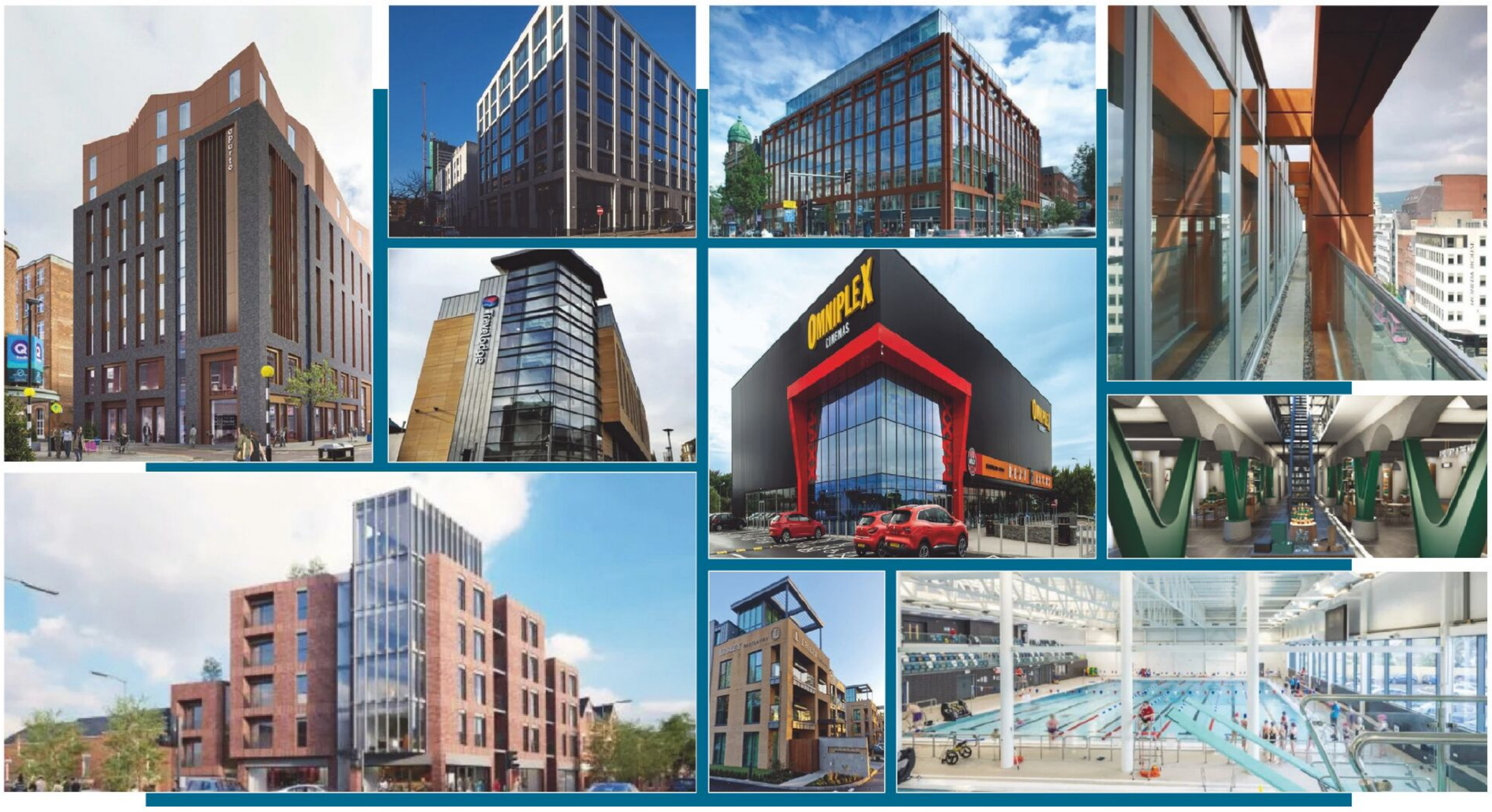

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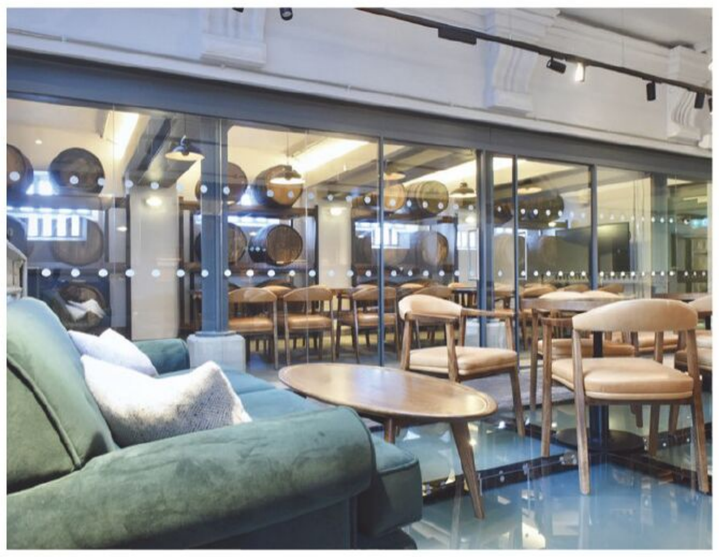

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Fire Glass Direct successfully delivered a full glazing installation package, showcasing its vast array of products, to McConnell's Distillery.

The installation comprised fire-rated and non-fire-rated glazed partitions, scenic lift glazing, fire-rated and walk-on floor glass, and a glass balustrade. The glazing specialist was involved from very early on in the project, working closely alongside the designer and main contractor Felix O'Hare to achieve the end result.

Roy Robinson, Contracts Manager, said, "Attaining the client's safety and fire requirements called for incorporating floor glass with fire-rated glazing. The weight of this glazing resulted in a few challenges arising during the project but, with back and-forth communication and teamwork between ourselves and Felix O'Hare, the project ran smoothly and was completed successfully.

"All at Fire Glass Direct were delighted to be involved in the transformation of such an old building here in Northern Ireland and wish the new state-of-the-art distillery much success."

Founded in 2004, Fire Glass Direct is a family-run business providing bespoke glazing solutions to the commercial and domestic sectors throughout the UK and Ireland. Its products include glass partitions, shopfronts, painted glass, balustrade, mirrors, glass displays and more.

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Thompsons Garage Nightclub

The proposed development involves extending Thompsons Garage and redeveloping Nos. 51-53 Upper Arthur Street. This project aims to create a ground-floor restaurant, café and street-serving booth, along with a first-floor extension for the existing nightclub. Additional features include a new access, a balcony over Upper Arthur Street, public art on the façade, specialised lighting, and three digital window display screens.

The development will enhance the retail, food, nightlife and entertainment options in the area. By providing a high-quality, more dynamic street frontage, it will boost the vitality and appeal of Belfast city centre, creating a welcoming environment for customers and pedestrians, and increasing the sense of safety and security. The design focuses on transforming Nos. 51-53 Upper Arthur Street, revitalizing the area, and turning a previously inactive street frontage into a vibrant scene. The development features an active ground floor and a new active first-floor frontage. It also provides ample internal space to support the growth of Thompsons Garage. Materials will blend modern and traditional finishes, including off-white fibre cement cladding panels, stone tile cladding, Pigmento grey VM zinc standing seam balcony cladding, tinted curved glass balustrade, anthracite grey aluminum window and door frames, specialized lighting fixtures, and a neon butterfly public art installation. The first-floor balcony will enhance passive surveillance and create a more attractive building frontage with a high-end finish appropriate for the location. ❍

Paul McCreanor Jnr
McCreanor Company Architects MCCA

East Elevation (Night - Lighting Proposal)

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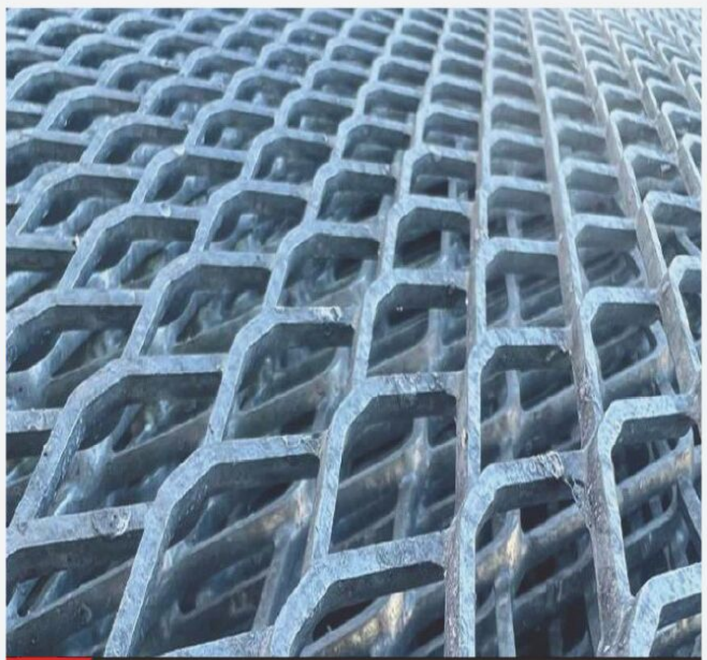

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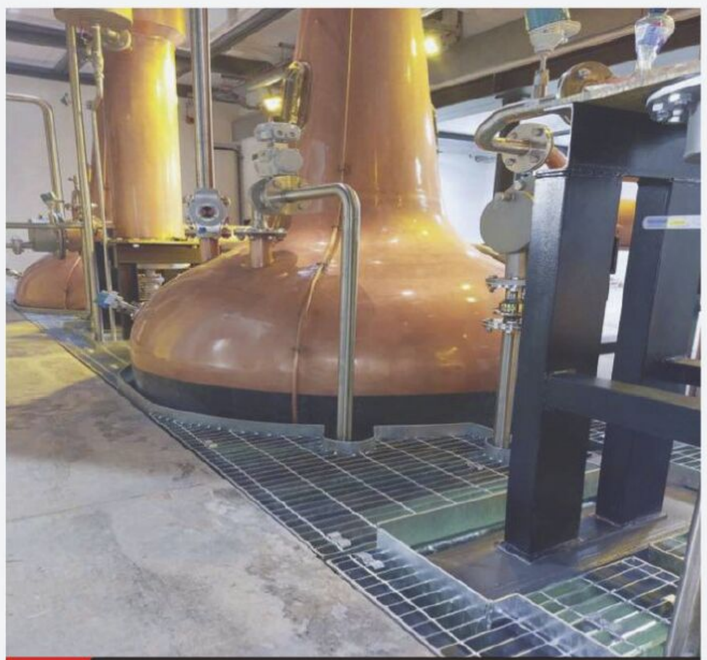

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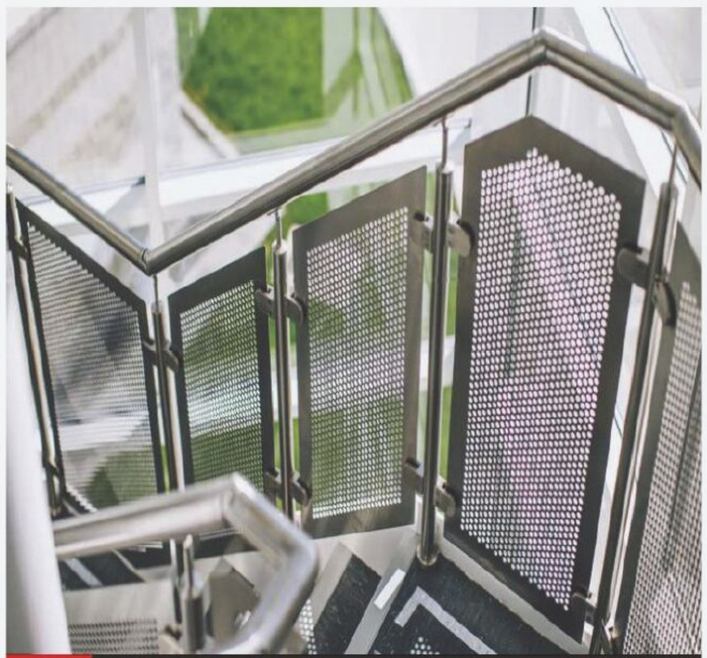

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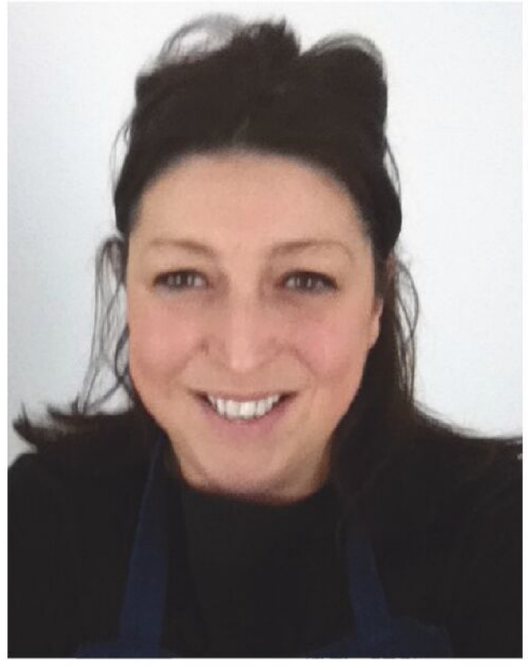
Designer Maker Profile: Atlantic DESIGN Studio

Atlantic DESIGN Studio .... is the creation of architect, artist and silversmith Lou Gillett, based on the north Antrim Coast. Lou is best known for her contemporary silver jewellery. Her unique statement designs have been seen on fashion show catwalks and featured in Northern Women, OX, BRIDES, GQ and VOGUE UK magazines.



Atlantic DESIGN Studio

Whilst working in a London architecture practice in the late 90's, Lou took up the art of silversmithing at night school and was hooked from thereon. It has been a long-time creative journey with her love of making starting in early childhood and has continued throughout her life for nearly four decades.

Lou's background as an architect has directly influenced her jewellery designs being inspired by forms, textures, planes, and relationships between objects.

"My passion for designing and creating wearable modern statement pieces has been a journey of exploration, and I often use similar design principles to that in architecture. The jewellery design process is very fluid, translating from paper to piece within days and fine tuning within weeks. I love making something a little bit different as well as creating the end product with my own hands. In this sense, the whole process from start to finish gives a real sense of fulfilment.

Working solely with silver for so many years has allowed me to fully test its material boundaries. A lot of my work is produced using ancient traditional processes, such as lost wax casting. Although this takes years to perfect, it offers a certain freedom of expression through the versatility of cast silver.

My signature designs are often large and reflective, yet are deceivingly lightweight and comfortable to wear, day or night. Silver is such a wonderful precious material that can last for generations. It can be polished back to its original reflective quality, scraps from the process can be recycled and re-used, so nothing goes to waste."

Lou is listed in the UK Crafts Council maker directory, is a member of the Guild of Jewellery Designers, a-n artists, and a selected member of DESIGN NATION. Her maker's hallmark is registered with the Birmingham Assay office.

To see further designs for jewellery, art, and greeting cards please visit www.atlanticdesignstudio.com and the RSUA website www.rsua.org.uk/shop.

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An Analogue Travelogue

Looking through the lens of a vintage camera under the sunny skies of Spain, by Andrew Denton

A few years ago, as I was tidying up my parents' attic, I stumbled upon a weathered leather box that, unknown to me, would change my life. As I unfastened the buckle and lifted the lid, I was met with a collection of vintage 35mm film cameras and an assortment of photography gear. I was familiar with modern cameras, however, these cameras were different – dials in the "wrong" place, irregularly shaped buttons and triggers – yet amidst my confusion, one thing was clear, they radiated a timeless beauty.

My grandfather owned these cameras. I dedicated several days to restoring his old camera gear and even more time acquainting myself with the intricacies of a 60-year-old light meter. Before I realised it, I had fallen head over heels for the hands-on experience of using these cameras; every dial click, switch flick, and trigger pull became a delight. I delved into books on light and film, exploring the frontiers of analogue photography and the history of the craft. I engaged in conversations about niche cameras, eagerly sharing my newfound knowledge with anyone willing to listen. I was hooked.

When I received the invitation to visit the Cosentino Headquarters in Spain, I found myself pondering two questions. The first, relatively straightforward one, was whether to accept the invitation (to which the answer was a resounding yes). The second, more challenging question, revolved around which type of film to bring along for the trip. The decision on film would hinge on several factors: light conditions, subject matter, and weather forecast.

For years, I had been safeguarding my last roll of Kodak Portra 400 in the fridge. I store film in my fridge because, like food, film has an expiration date. The fridge extends the film's lifespan, and it's oddly satisfying to see the shelf where eggs would sit, now occupied by vibrant film boxes. Known for its versatility, Portra 400 is often hailed as an excellent all round film stock. However, as I stood there contemplating, the allure of selecting something different from my collection beckoned. In one hand I held a low 50 ISO film, while in the other I grasped a high speed 3200 ISO film. Despite the temptation to opt for novelty, I ultimately opted for the tried and tested Portra 400, preferring to stay on the side of caution. Each roll of film can capture up to 36 images so I had to be confident in my choice.

Arriving in Malaga, my excitement bubbled over as I swiftly loaded a roll of film into the back of my camera, eager to capture the charm of the bustling streets teeming with hidden corners of life. The winding pathways revealed serene, shaded courtyards providing a welcome respite from the scorching sun. We had the chance to join a tour of the Alcazaba of Malaga, a historic fortress dating back to the 10th century, commanding views of the town. It was a fascinating experience, melding the charm of vintage cameras and film with the enduring beauty of ancient stonework. Working with film allows one to embrace the quirks of daily life; the grain and occasional light leaks, all of which can either enhance or challenge the final image.

Beyond its role as a defensive bastion, the fortress was a vibrant community hub where residents shared their lives – eating, celebrating and growing old together. Perched atop the fortress were a series of pools used for grand receptions. Mirrors strategically placed along the walls created a mesmerizing effect as they reflected in the clear water, reminiscent of a disco ball, particularly when welcoming esteemed guests. Yet – amidst the festivities – archers remained vigilant, ready to defend against any potential threats.

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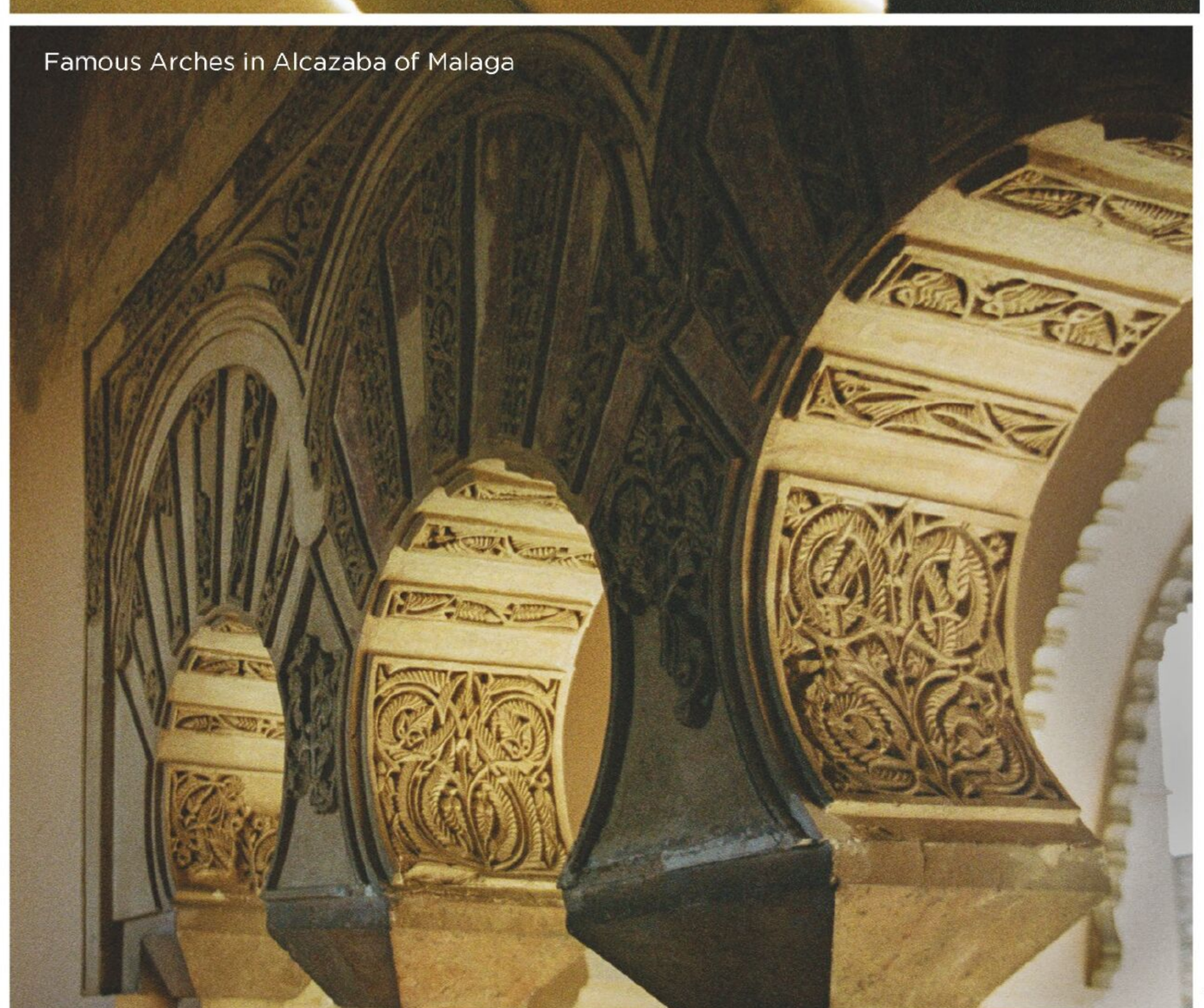
Camera and Box

Pool in Alcazaba of Malaga

Teaching stair within
Cosentino Headquarters


Famous Arches in Alcazaba of Malaga

On the second day of our trip, we arrived at the Cosentino HQ site and were greeted by the vast expanse the site covered. Encompassing an impressive 3 million square metres, the site would have more than 4000 employees boasting the capability of producing thousands of clad panels weekly. While the factory hummed with machines dedicated to cutting and polishing stone slabs, what truly stood out was witnessing the skilled artisans at work. They meticulously checked the quality of the stone and added final finishing touches by hand, showcasing their dedication to craftmanship.

On the final day of our trip, we explored the charming streets and seaside of Alicante. Venturing away from the bustling seafront, I found myself wandering through quiet narrow streets, where the faint sound of singing echoed against the stone paved pathways. Following my ear, I walked up a flight of steps leading to the oldest active church in Alicante (dating back to the 14th – 16th century). Before its gothic arched entrance, a circle of women stood, singing in perfect harmony. The audience comprised only of myself, a few locals enjoying their afternoon coffees, and some curious sparrows. Though tempted to capture the scene with my camera, I chose instead to set it aside, closing my eyes to simply immerse myself in the music. Some moments, I realised, are meant just for personal reflection. It was an opportunity for me to reminisce about our journey: from the vast expanse of the industrial park, to the winding streets, and even back to the discovery of that weathered old box in the attic.

I believe many people are seeking more tangible connections, moving away from screens. Just as vinyl records have made a comeback, people are drawn to the physical experience. Playing a record becomes an event, an opportunity to sit and truly enjoy the music you love. The slow paced nature of shooting film gives me the same sensation as spinning a record.

Amongst all the things I cherish about these vintage cameras – the slow pace, the tactile sensation of operating them, the unique grain of the images – I believe what I love most is the connection I feel to my grandfather when I'm out capturing photos. I can almost envision him now, sporting a proud grin, knowing that the technology of his era still finds purpose in my hands and will continue to do so for years to come. ❍

Andrew Denton

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Steps leading up to church/choir

Streets of Malaga

Cosentino Headquarters display of awards/ historical artefacts of the company

Streets of Malaga

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'A Windy Day' signed 'J Lavery' (lower right), signed again and inscribed
'A WINDY DAY/JOHN LAVERY' (on the reverse)
oil on canvas 30 x 25 in. (76 x 63.5 cm.) Painted *circa* 1908.

Lavery on Location

An exhibition of Irish artist Sir John Lavery's paintings at the Ulster Museum

Lavery on Location, an exhibition of Irish artist Sir John Lavery's paintings at the Ulster Museum was an exhibition marked by the presence of an absence — arguably Lavery's most famous painting, *The Artist's Studio*. Painted across three years (1910 - 1913) this remarkable 3.5 metre oil on canvas is one of the most important works of Irish art in the 20th Century. In Lavery's studio, sitting facing the viewer, is Lady Hazel Lavery, seated next to her, their daughter Alice, arm awkwardly positioned around her left shoulder. Standing to the right, leaning on a desk is Hazel's stepdaughter Eileen, head turned to the left staring at or past Hazel; on the floor in the foreground lies a dog. Behind Hazel, to her left stands Aida the Lavery's Moorish servant girl, not present in the first iteration of the work but added towards the end of its three-year creation. One final figure is visible in the background, reflected in a full-length mirror standing against the wall of the studio is John Lavery, palette in his right hand, a brush in his left; to his right we see Hazel's back. The viewer is drawn into a contest of perspectives.

The *Artist's Studio* connects Lavery to what is perhaps one of the most famous paintings in art history — Las Meninas by the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez. In *Las Meninas* a similar scene plays out — Velázquez paints himself painting the scene while in the background a small mirror reflects the subjects of the painting: King Philip IV and Queen Mariana. Both *The Artist's Studio* and *Las Meninas* speak to a significant cultural shift in ideas about representation. Reflecting on the significance of Las Meninas, the French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote in his book *The Order of Things* that "It may be that, in this picture, as in all the representations of which it is, as it were, the

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manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing – despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits... in the midst of this dispersion which it is simultaneously grouping together and spreading out before us, indicated compellingly from every side, is an essential void: the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation — of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance." In the uncertainty of who the subject is, in the subject only being revealed in a reflection, painted amidst a significant cultural shift as enlightenment ideas of the human as a stable subject were beginning to erode, Foucault sees in Las Meninas a representation of a fracture in the divine order of things that had legislated thought in centuries prior. Man [sic] "would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea". This too is what Lavery wants us to see, that the order of things was changing.

One painting in the exhibition that does this with remarkable and arresting force is another scene from the artist's studio, *Daylight Raid from my Studio Window*. Painted just four years after *The Artist's Studio,* the painting records the afternoon of 7 July 1917, when German biplanes appeared in the skies above London and were engaged by British aircraft. The half-light of daybreak pours into the studio through a large sash window, a clear blue sky punctuated by twenty-one light grey specks, some free-falling, tumbling downwards. Kneeling on a sofa staring up at the sky is the fragile figure of Hazel, an almost childlike frame disappearing amongst the oversized scale of the room and the enormity of the events that were unfolding in front of her.

In *The Artist's Studio* Lavery had played with perspective to capture the enormity of a cultural shift in thought; in *Daylight Raid* he played with scale to capture the enormity of war. In nearly all of the landscapes on show in the exhibition Lavery also plays with perspective — the artist is always painting from an elevated position, looking down on the subject, an observer from the outside, the artist as documentarian, not from within the scene but removed from the scene. As in *The Artist's Studio,* in these landscapes Lavery seems to be exploring the shifting relationship between the subject and the object; the gaze of the artist as distant, objectifying or perhaps framing his subjects in a particular way for a particular purpose — like the presence of women in works such as *The Greyhound* (1910) where Hazel resting an arm on a mantlepiece, engaging in conversation with the British diplomat Sir Reginald Lister. In the painting Hazel, although holding a poker and attending to the fire, appears to take the position of power as she engages in conversation. In *Father and Daughter* (1898), Alice appears as a strong and forceful young girl with Lavery seated behind, adopting a relaxed, almost resigned pose.

Lavery on Location revealed an artist who, as the *Inclusive Global Histories* wall text from the exhibition reminds us, "lived in an age of imperialism, at a time when attitudes, behaviours and social conventions were significantly different from today". His beautiful paintings provide a window into this moment in time; I do not doubt that Lavery was a product of his age, his paintings of Moorish women, one of whom he brought back to England as a servant, reveals an artist who was part of the imperial project of Orientalism — the representation of places and people across the British Empire that were used to produce certain (often mythical) ideas about those people and places. But Lavery's paintings reveal a tension: he was an artist of his time, caught in the then fading echo of the death gurgle of imperialism, but also capturing something of the changes that were taking place, of a future time. Behind these beautiful, often idyllic and romantic paintings is a subversive undercurrent, an artist calling into question ideas about representation, the subject and the object and gender roles. Lavery is often cast as a society painter but this brilliantly curated exhibition revealed much more.

This exhibition took place from February 23rd until June 9th 2024 ❍

David Capener

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Lacuna Developments

Main Contractor
EHA Group

Photography
Gareth Andrews/
Stephen Henry

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Park Avenue is a new social-led housing development that presented us the opportunity to design a scheme that successfully rejuvenates the former hotel site into the surrounding urban context. We worked in close liaison with Lacuna Developments and the main contractor, EHA Group, to deliver the scheme to Choice Housing and Maple & May. The project provided much needed housing for the area. A total of 90 new homes in a mix of 3-person 2-bed apartments and 5-person 3-bed houses were incorporated into the site.

Given the high-profile location of the site, early engagement with Belfast City Planning and HED, as part of a Pre-Application Development (PAD) process was very beneficial and resulted in a strong conceptual layout that formed the basis of the final layout. The site's topography has dictated that development within the site is split into two zones, with the change in level dealt with via a stepped, landscaped modular block retaining wall running north to south across the site. At the lower end of the site along Sefton Drive, the new housing units were designed to complement the existing 2-storey terrace dwellings opposite. The dwellings were set back into the site to create a new public footpath and recessed parking layby, enhancing the street frontage. Duplex feature apartment blocks at each end of the street bookend the housing to create a more defined corner element.

The main part of the site on which the former hotel was located now comprises of two new 4-storey apartment blocks

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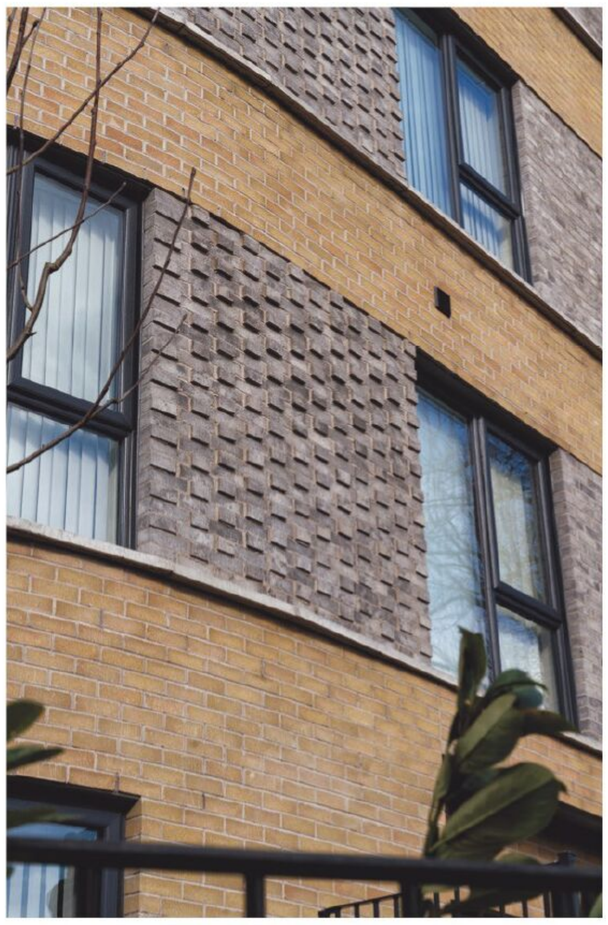
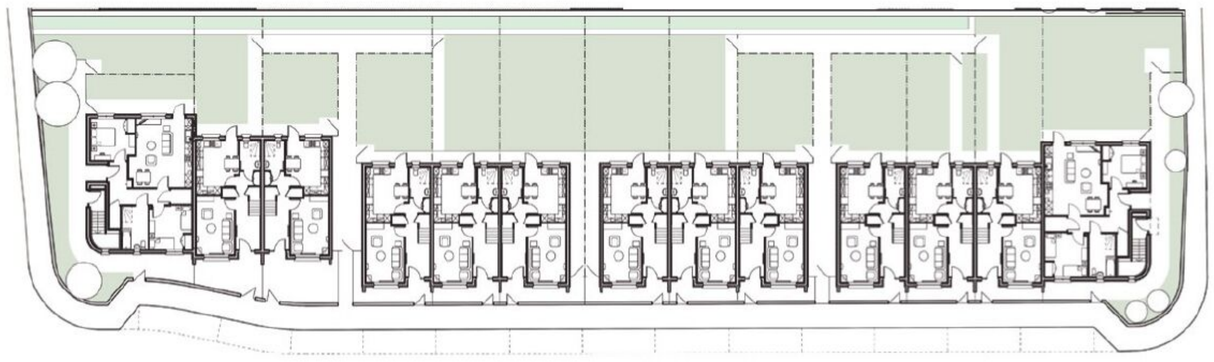


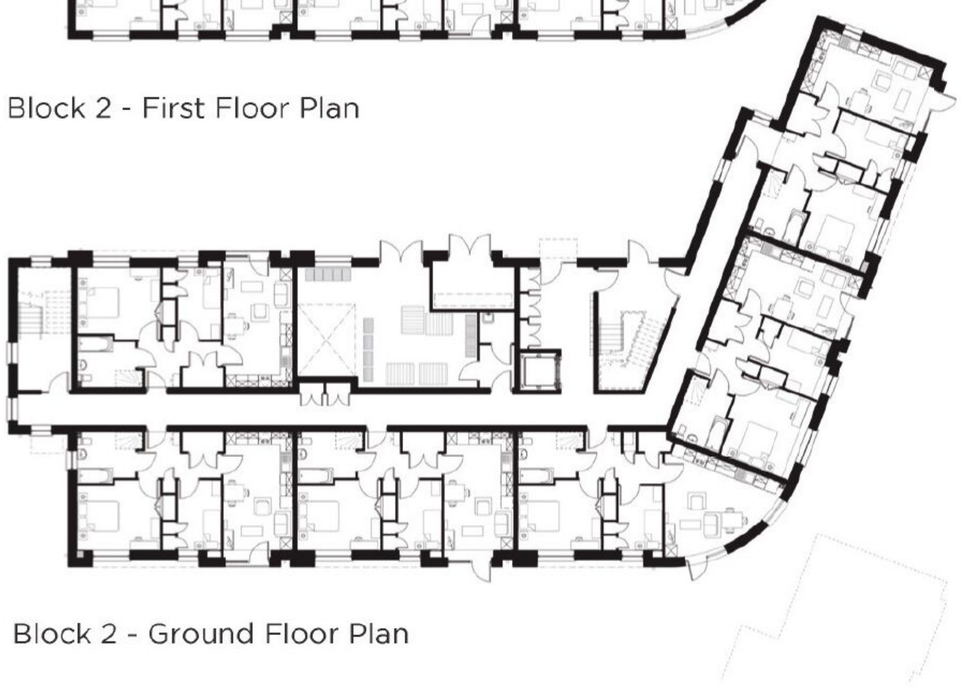
STRAND

Site Plan

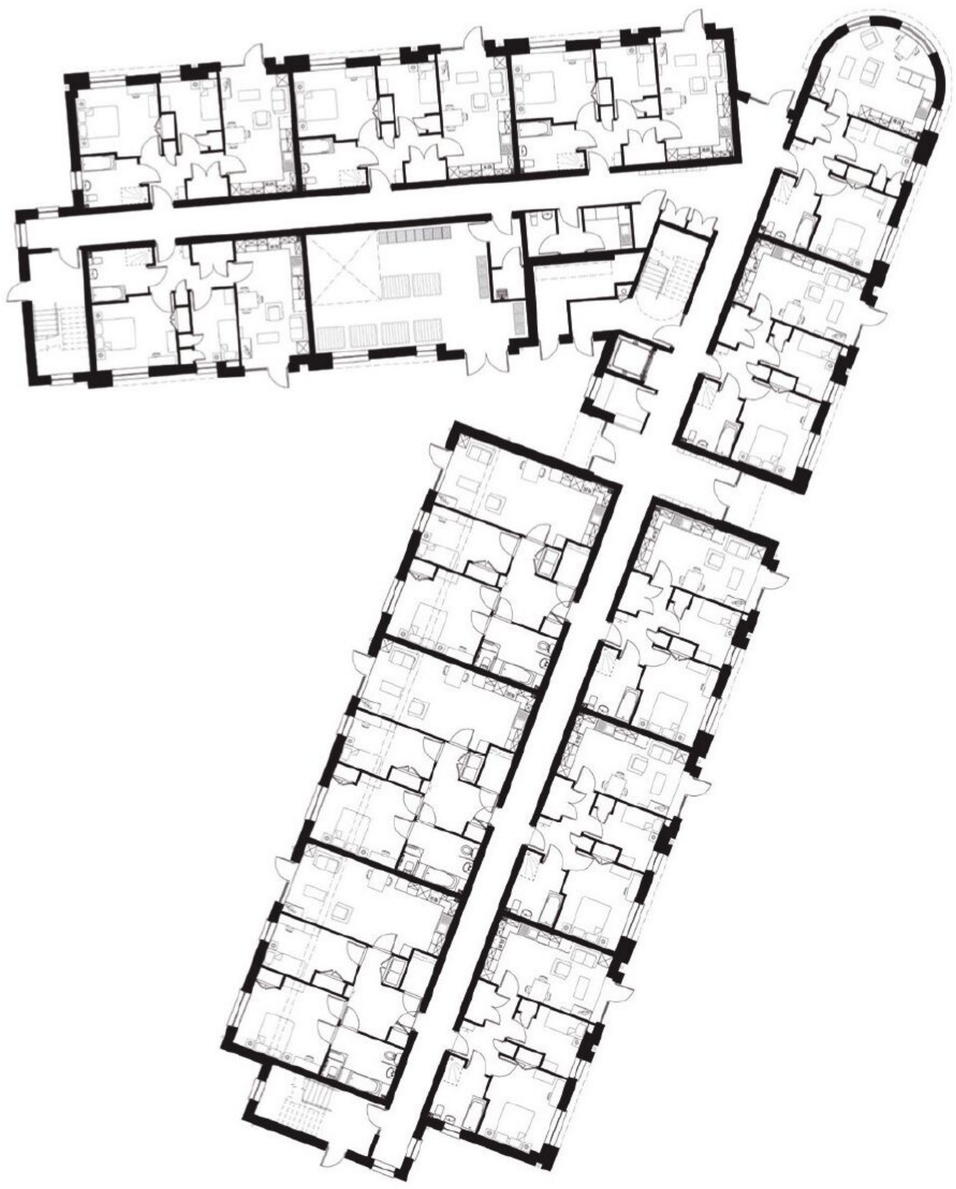


Sefton Drive - Street Plan - Level 00

Block 2 - First Floor Plan



Block 2 - Ground Floor Plan



Block 1 - Ground Floor Plan

Holywood Road Elevation - Block 2

Holywood Road Elevation - Block 1

Pimms Avenue Elevation - Block 2

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that respond well to the surrounding context in terms of material finishes, massing and level changes. The separation of the apartment accommodation into two distinct, articulated buildings, rather than one large plan form like the existing hotel, was a deliberate design decision. It allowed us to create a better, more flexible response to the surrounding streetscape, creating added visual interest. The plan form and positioning of the apartment buildings was designed to take account of numerous protected trees within the site. The roots and canopy crowns of the feature trees being retained was an integral part of the detailed landscape proposal. A large, retained tree to the rear of the Pims Avenue apartment block forms a key feature within the internal landscaped/parking area.

In agreement with Belfast City Council Planning and HED, curved forms were introduced to the primary street corners along the Holywood Road, picking up on the facade of the Strand Arts Centre whilst also respecting the Grade 2 Listed Strandtown Hall (former corner shop and office building) at the junction of Holywood Road and Belmont Road opposite the site.

The materials palette takes cues from the surrounding context. The buff brick used for the corner apartment building is sympathetic to the Strand Cinema whilst the red brick used for the apartment building along Park Avenue reflects the varied colour of red brick of the surrounding housing stock. The top floor level of the apartments is finished in fibre cement cladding which breaks up the massing of brick, providing variation in the elevational treatment. A lighter tanned colour for the fibre cement panelling was used to complement the buff brick apartment building, whilst dark grey cladding echoing the dark slate and tiled roof forms of the surrounding area was selected for the red brick apartment building fronting Park Avenue and Holywood Road. We aimed to restrict the overall colour palette of materials used in the project, ensuring samples agreed with planning onsite (in terms of discharging conditions) were from the same tonal palette.

Our primary focus was to provide a sustainable mixed tenure residential development, designed with a view to encourage reduced reliance on the private car. In addition to this, a detailed landscaping proposal was successfully integrated into the site, respectively retaining the numerous protected trees (TPOs) along Holywood Road and within the site. The project delivered the first social housing led, mixed tenure residential development in this part of Belfast, creating a sustainable addition to east Belfast. ❍

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Residential Scheme at the Former Park Avenue Hotel Site, Belfast

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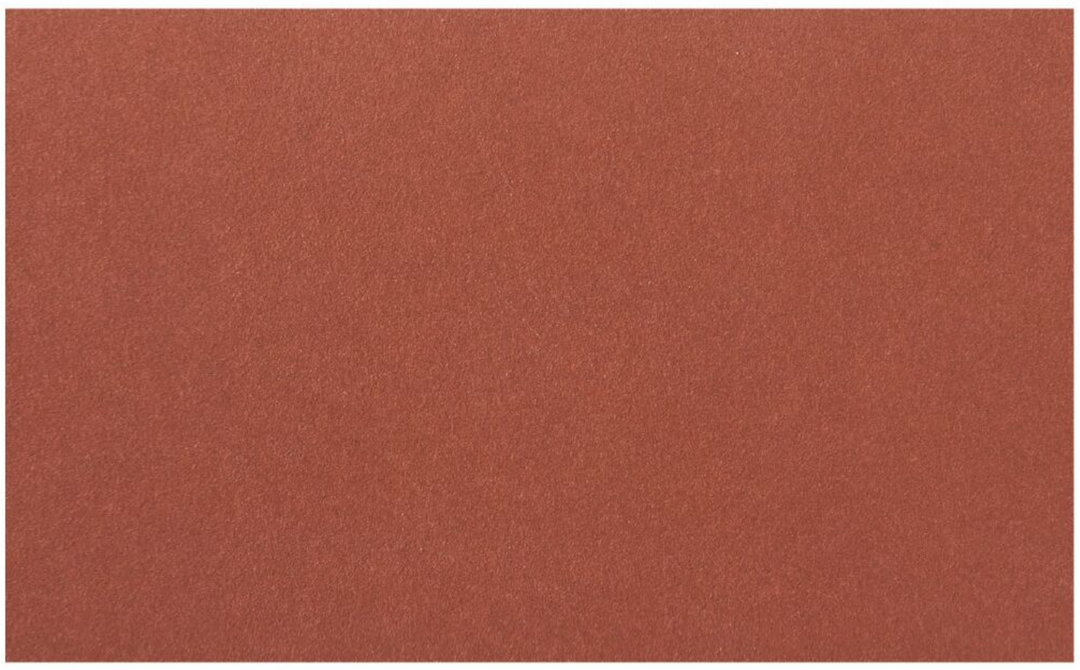

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Photo Credit: Steve Lerum, Laguna Beach, CA, USA.

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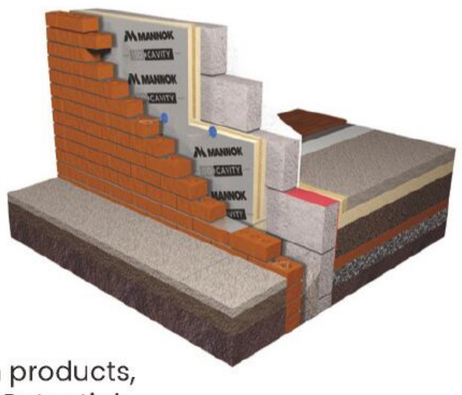

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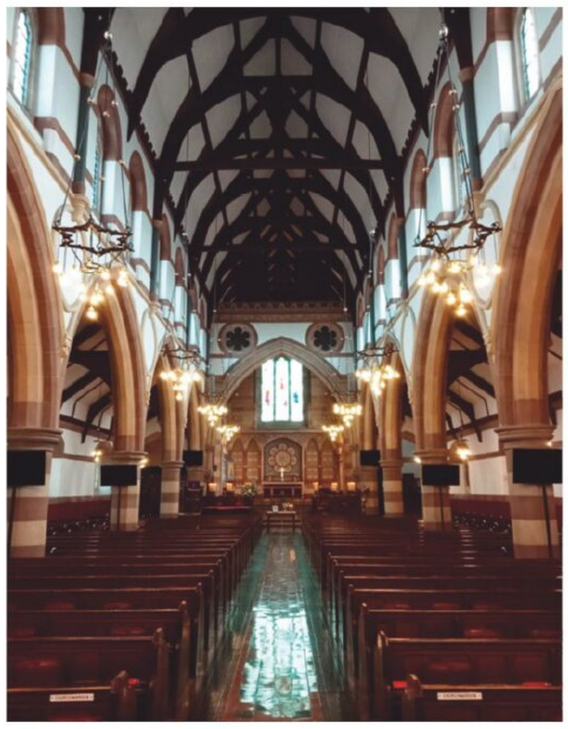
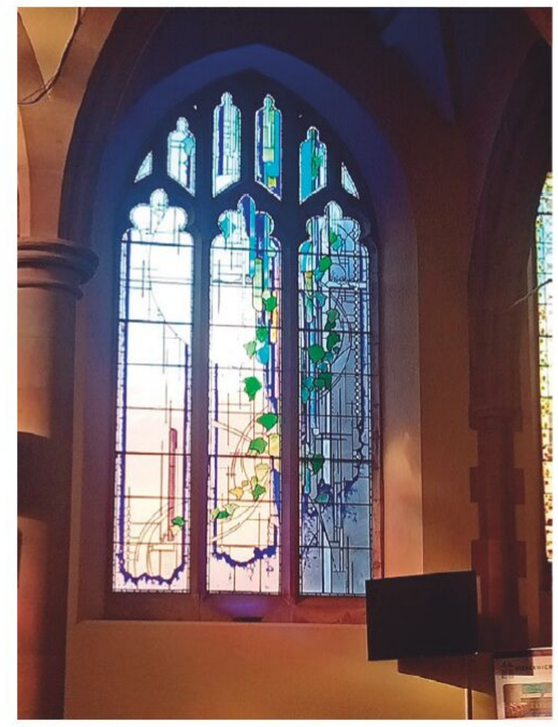
Architectural and Musical Interplay

Ulster Consort performances harmonise with extraordinary spaces



St Mark's, Dundela

Fisherwick exterior



Fisherwick window

Sometimes an experience can move into the realms of the transcendent, the outworking of a coming together of beautiful elements, richly layered with meaning, wrought from combinations of artistic skill, craftsmanship and aesthetic vision. Every so often, speaking personally, this impossible-to-fully-explain and overwhelming delight is the result of the fusing of architecture and music. Over the past year-and-a-half, I've been thrilled to discover an extraordinary group of musicians called the Ulster Consort, who, under the direction of Matthew Owens, have performed a wide-ranging and exciting choral repertoire (accompanied by various wonderful instrumentalists) producing spine-tingling performances, and they have chosen to do so in settings which seem to repeatedly bring the architecture of those buildings alive in vivid ways.

Their 2023 season began with a powerful rendition of Arvo Pärt's 'holy minimalist' music in St Molua's Church at Stormont – an early 1960s building designed by Denis O'D Hanna, sometimes referred to as a miniature Coventry Cathedral, with a bold fresco depiction of Christ the King by Desmond Kinney dominating the East wall. Pärt's haunting music (including the well-known 'Spiegel im Spiegel') combined with the church's imagery and rich symbolism incorporated into the furnishings intensified the brilliance of each other. A sparse work for three singers, organ and percussion, with antiphonal singers placed either side of the nave and another at the west end, created a remarkable spatial interplay between architecture and music, with organ and voices reverberating around this unique space. St Molua's is a building ripe to be discovered by those who don't know it and the Consort will perform there again this October – fittingly, with a programme of contemporary compositions.

In early March, there was Renaissance Lenten music for reflection such as Allegri's 'Miserere' and Byrd's Mass for Four Voices in the sumptuous Tudor-Revival St Malachy's Catholic Church in the centre of Belfast. Again, the music and architecture melded profoundly, with voices soaring into the lofty ceiling with its fan vaulting with plaster pendant drops. We were transported back centuries into more mystical times. The Consort returned to the church in December to perform Handel's exquisite 'Messiah' accompanied by players using period instruments. Once again, the setting moved the sacred work into a sacred context which is an improvement on the concert hall for singing the redemptive scriptural story.

Not that concert halls don't also work in combination with music

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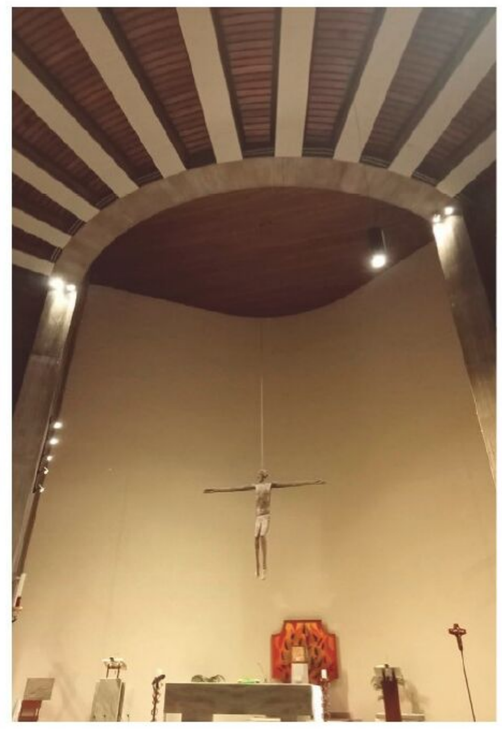
St Molua's



St Bernadette's

Holywood Parish Church - Photo: Jonny Ireland

in rewarding ways – a Northern Ireland concert premiere of the Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon's 'To our fathers in distress' and world premiere of new work by him, with the Ulster Orchestra, required the superb grandeur and acoustics of WJ Barre's Ulster Hall, while the Consort has also used the marbled Great Hall space of Stormont Parliament Buildings to good effect for Christmas concerts, singing jolly carols on its staircase, and will be returning there to sing Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas' in June, surely allowing the sepulchral qualities of the architecture to resonate with that tragic piece.

Passiontide music in the form of Stainer's 'Crucifixion' oratorio was also performed last March, deploying the open, lofty space of Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, a landmark of High Victorian Protestant-adapted-Gothic-Revival architecture by Samuel Close. The Victorian setting with the Victorian music and the tremulous organ sounds once again brought out hidden qualities of comfort and longing in both the music and the architecture. Yet, more recently as part of the Consort's second full season for 2024, Fisherwick Church was chosen again as the venue to perform contemporary English composer John Rutter's music – lighter and more Spring-like in mood, listening to it was enhanced by the ability to simultaneously enjoy surveying Fisherwick's more recent stained glass windows, juxtaposed with the Victoriana of the building, some busy with colour, others more serene and abstract. Musical performances, like buildings, are always several in impact.

William Butterfield's heroically-scaled, magnificent St Mark's Church, Dundela was chosen to showcase sacred music by Mendelssohn and Schubert and Romantic songs by Brahms; the radiance of the music soared into the tall eaves of the church with its nave roof like a great ancient ship (it was also the atmospheric setting for Christmas carols by candlelight, a concert to be repeated there this December).

Another fine, bold High Victorian Gothic church was utilised for a Remembrance-tide performance of Durufle's gorgeous 'Requiem' and Taverner's 'Song for Athene' – John Lanyon's eclectic St Thomas's Church on Eglantine Avenue of 1870 with a cool, light interior (refashioned by Consarc Conservation in 2008); the choir's exquisite harmonies bounced off the apsidal sanctuary walls with its dazzling mosaic roundels and the Bath stone pulpit with its jewel-like crystal inlaid stones. This is a space which deserves a fine choir to sing in it. Equally so, John Lanyon's St Philip & St James's Parish Church in

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St Malachy's - Photo: Jonny Clyde

St Malachy's ceiling

St Malachy's

Holywood which was the venue for a stunning performance of Bach's St John Passion in March this year to celebrate the 300th anniversary of its first performance. The profundity of the work, extraordinarily performed, was heightened by sitting within the red-bricked warmth of this Gothic Revival church, which speaks of all the elements of the faith which Bach held so deeply and which the building itself seeks to capture in its form and purpose - longing, mystery, hope, comfort, redemption, colour, the work of Christ.

Awe-inspiring music for Christmas and Epiphany in January at St Bernadette's Catholic Church at Rosetta, was another highpoint – significantly so in that the epiphany was both directly liturgically seasonal and resonant in the sense of a special revelation of the type I'm trying to describe around music and design combining with each other spiritually in a specific locality and moment – in that here the choir sang Taverner's 'The Lamb'; contrasting versions of the motet 'O Magnum Mysterium' from Victoria's 16th-century one to Morten Lauridsen's lovely late 20th-century setting; a new composition by Owens and the poignant 'Bethlehem Down' by Peter Warlock. St Bernadette's, designed by P&B Gregory, opened in 1966 and refurbished by Kennedy Fitzgerald in 2016, is on a fan-shaped plan with an expansive, bare interior with a sanctuary dominated by a floating bronze sculpture of Christ by Elisabeth Frink, elongated arms outstretched to become a crucifix, under which the choir stood to sing about the infant who would become the sacrifice. The sculpture movingly encapsulates the Passion and Resurrection at once; the precise yet floating choral performances brought out the mystery of the words being sung and the building felt like an embrace.

This touring of this new Consort around such a variety of thoughtfully curated settings is a wonderful thing. Other venues have included Portaferry Portico; St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast; The Church of the Good Shepherd, Ormeau; Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Newcastle and St Columb's Cathedral, Derry. Awe-inspiring is an overused term, but not in this instance. Goethe said, 'music is liquid architecture and architecture is frozen music'.

Music and architecture can combine to move and affect one in deeper ways which will 'vibrate in the memory' (as Shelly wrote). I encourage you to seek out the Consort's upcoming concerts in remarkable spaces. (ulsterconsort.org). ❍

Dr Paul Harron

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Comber GP Practice

Located between a small pharmacy and a public library, this GP Surgery is at the heart of the community in Comber, Co.Down.

The brief was to reconfigure and refurbish the existing 1990s red brick building, adding additional multi-disciplinary treatment rooms to increase patient capacity and a new office/recreational room for staff. The clients also wished to create a covered entrance area and improve the visual appearance of the building from the main approach.

The original building presented a defensive elevation to the street. Face-mounted steel roller shutters, flood lights and high security fencing contributed to an urban environment which

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THE TEAM

Client Comber Family Practice

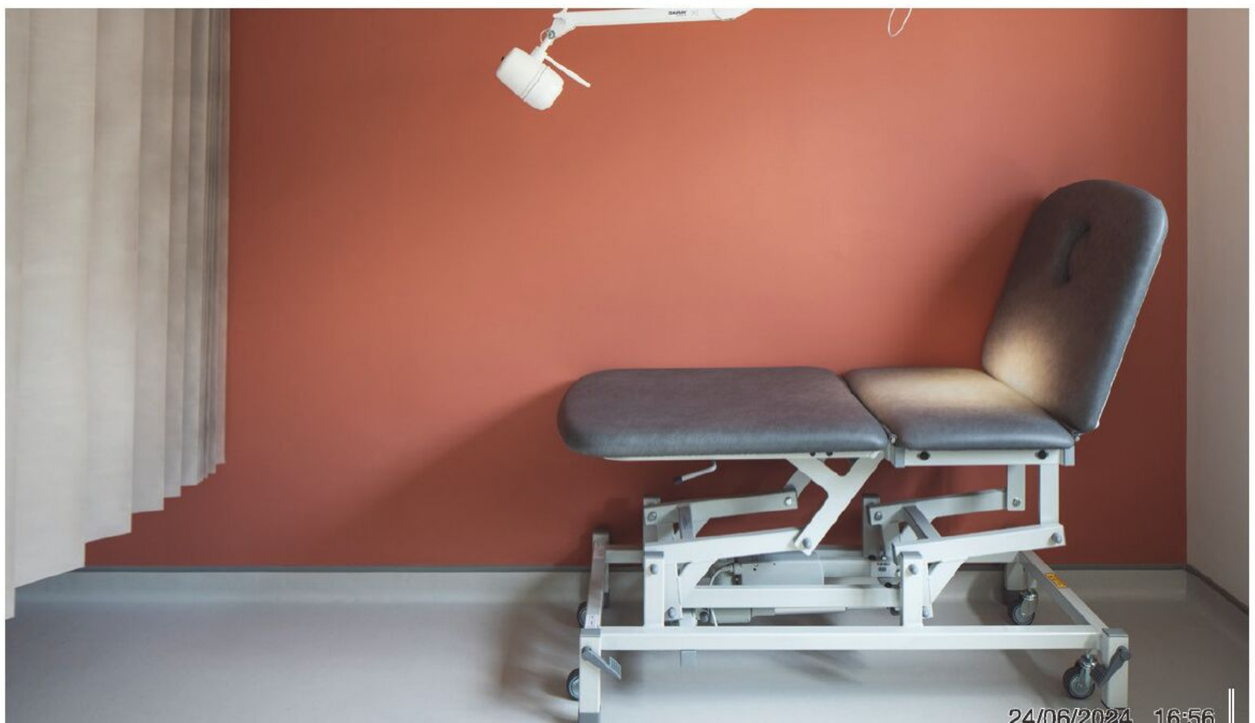
Architect
Niall McAleenan Architects

Structural Engineer
Albert Fry Associates

Quantity Surveyor
Look QS Ltd

Main Contractor
Keelryan Construction Ltd

Photography
Donal McCann



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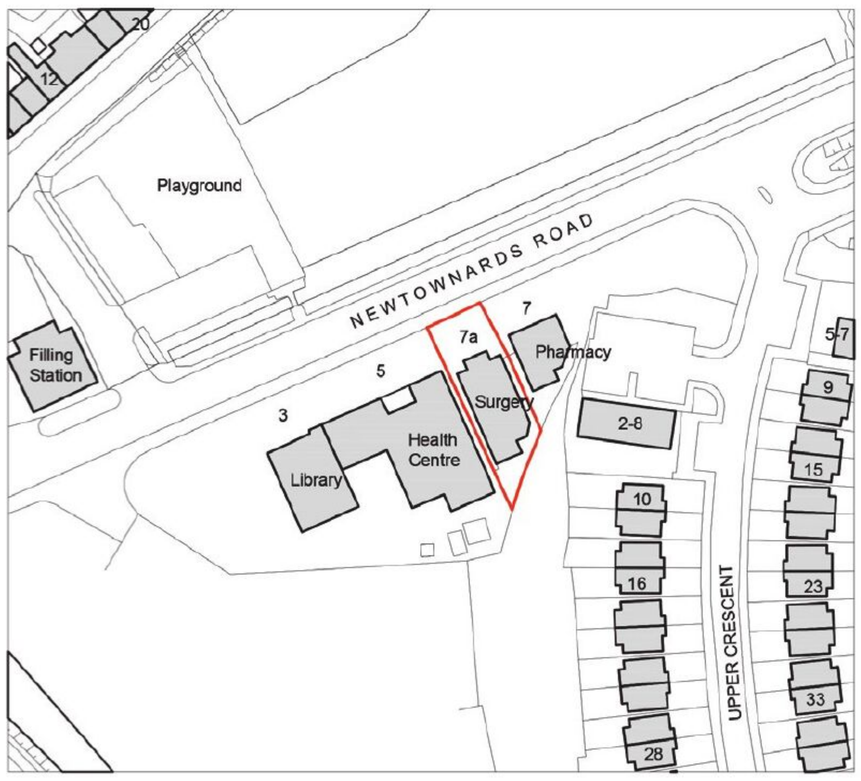


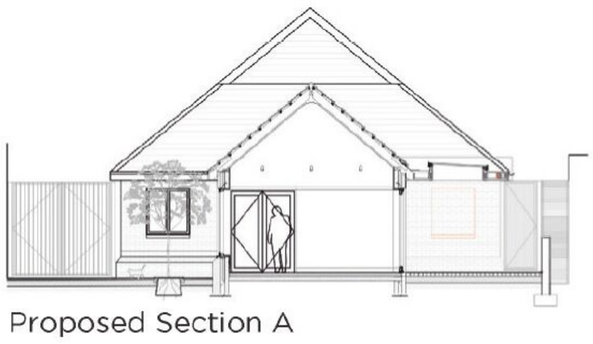
Location Plan

Existing North Elevation

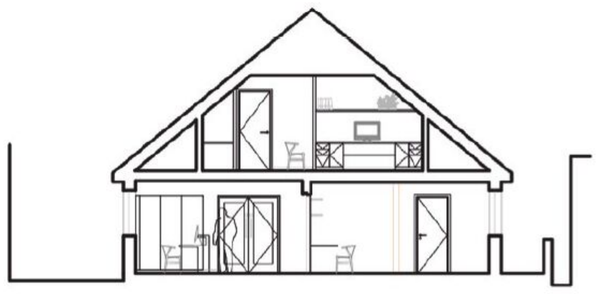
Existing Front Elevation

Proposed North Elevation

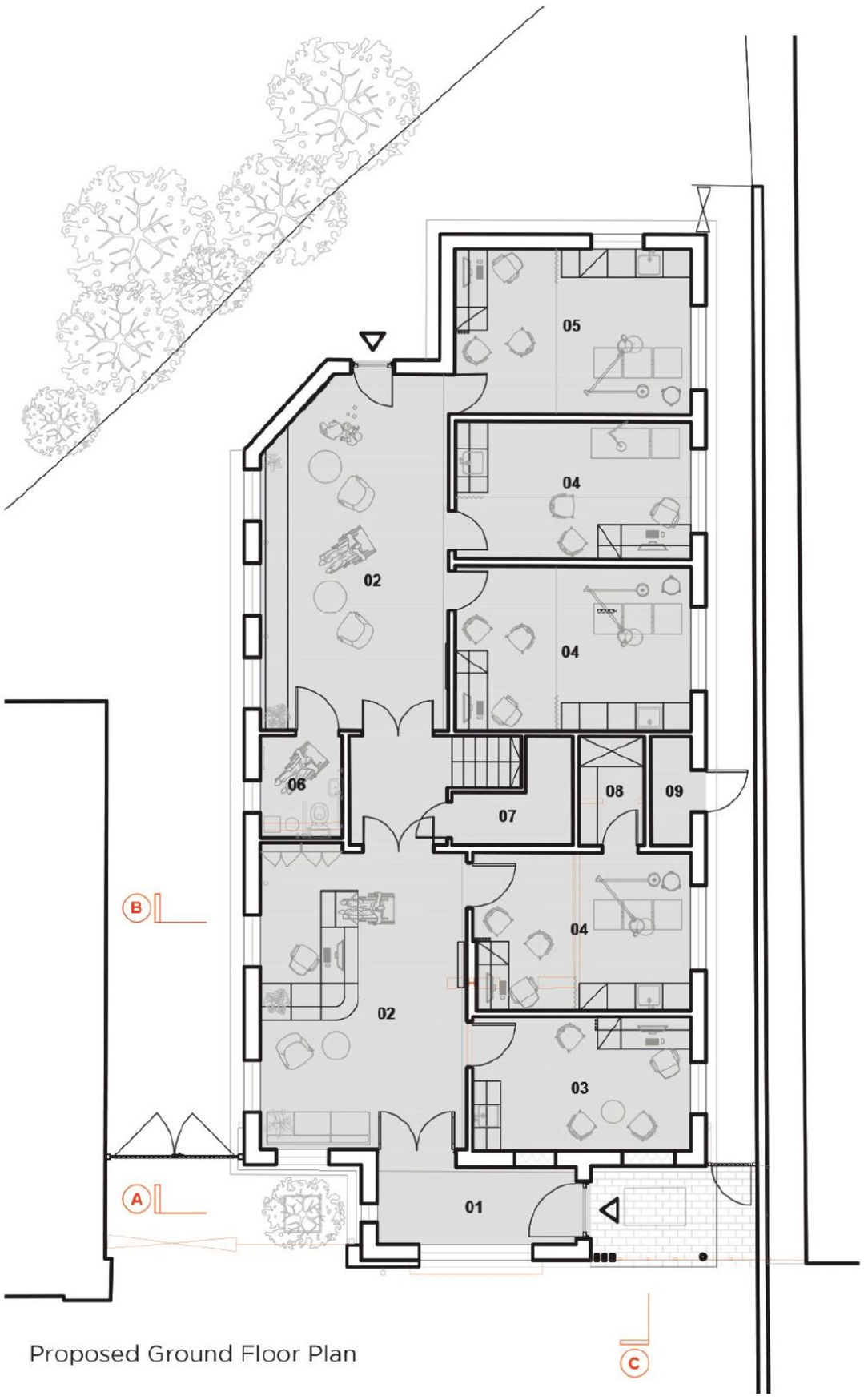
New Front Elevation



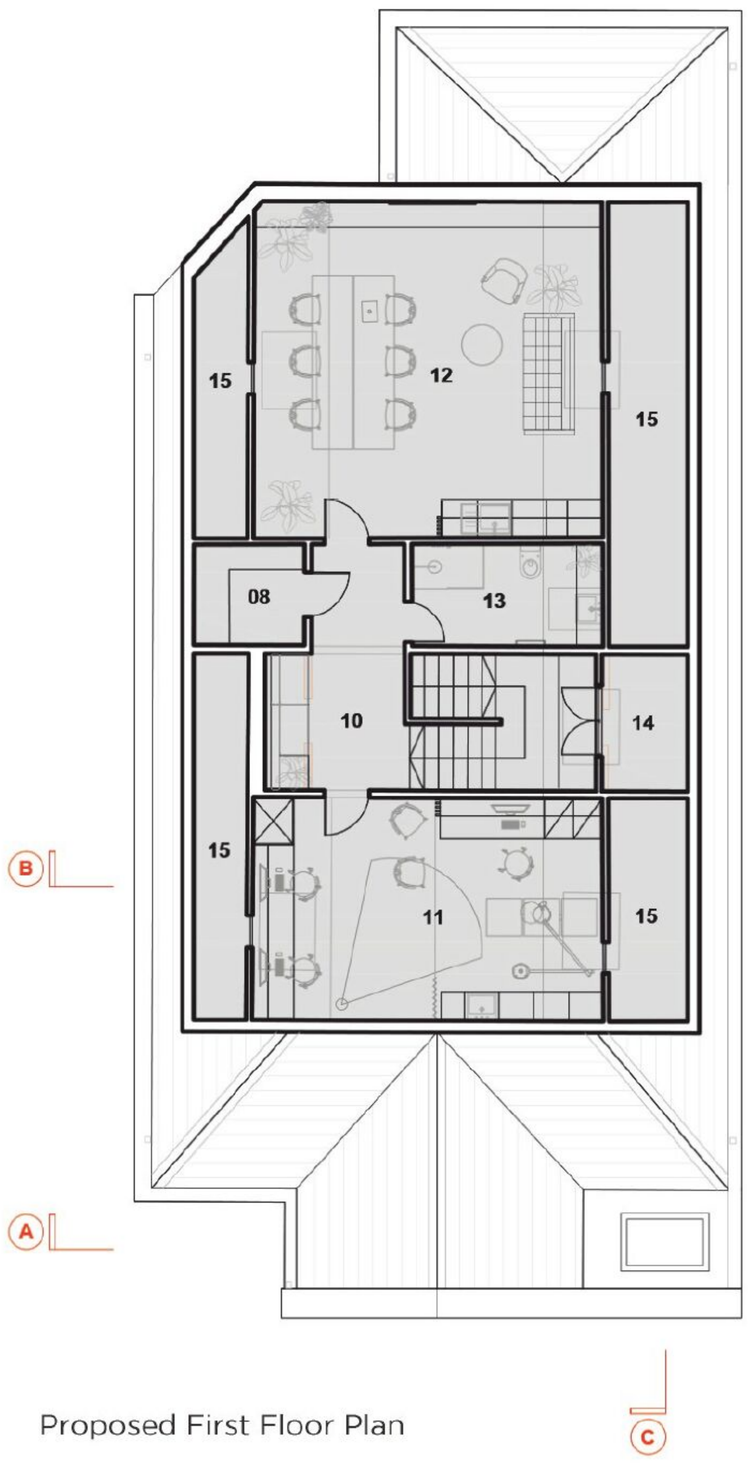
Proposed Section A



Proposed Section B



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan

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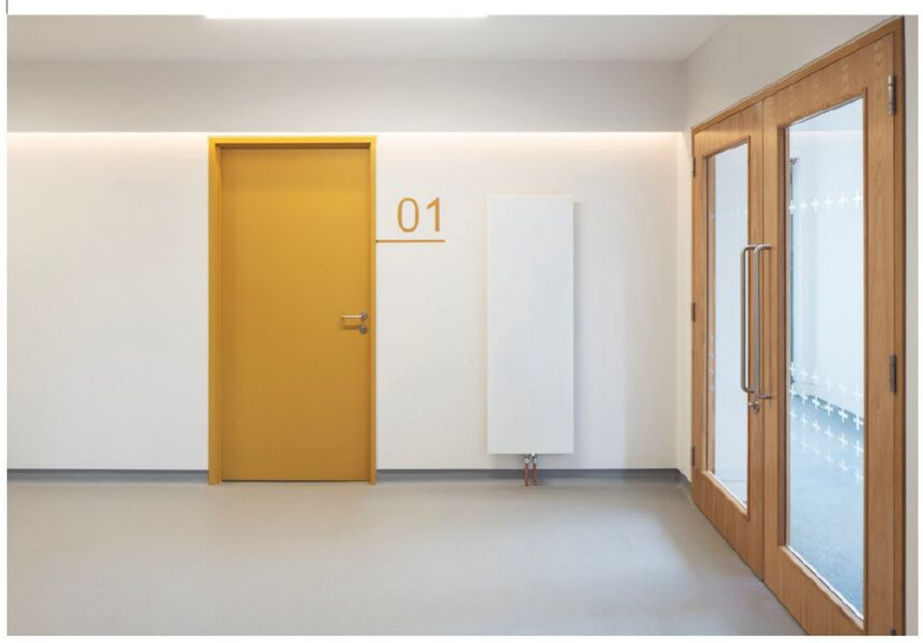

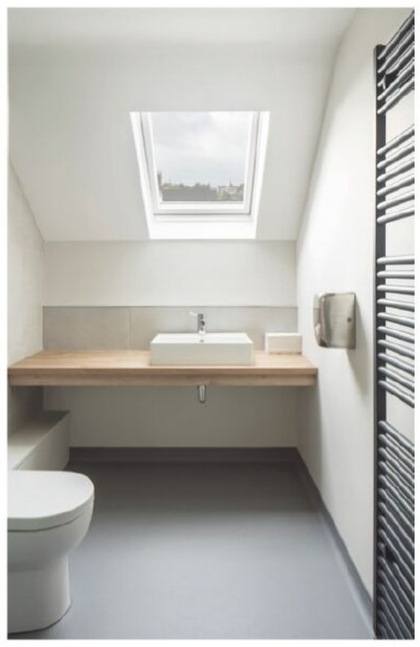

was a little hostile, creating a barrier between the building and community it served. The refurbishment works presented an opportunity to reconfigure the main entrance and improve this connection with the public realm. The front door, which previously addressed a busy car park, was relocated to the side of the projecting entrance lobby, improving visitor safety and accessibility. A new flat roof canopy was erected, incorporating a fixed rooflight and fins of white-oiled iroko timber which signify the new entrance location. The existing fencing was removed and a new planted bed was introduced, softening the new white rendered front elevation. Large-format clear glazing replaced the original steel shuttered entrance, presenting a more open and inviting elevation to the street whilst flooding the entrance lobby with natural light.

Internally, two new multidisciplinary treatment rooms were created on the ground floor by removing the existing reception room and servery hatch. A new wheelchair accessible reception desk was designed as a stand-alone piece of furniture set within the main waiting space, better connecting the staff with their patients.

Glazed double doors were introduced, linking the two waiting rooms across a central stair lobby on the ground floor. These oak-framed doors align with a new glazed exit door to the rear and the new window to the front, allowing natural light deep into the plan and establishing stretching vistas along the main axial circulation routes. Long built-in benches were constructed along the walls of the waiting rooms to increase patient seating. These were topped with leather cushions and underlit with LED light strips.

On the first floor, a large office replaced an existing meeting room, doubling as an additional treatment room and space for remote video consultations. A new staff base was established, complete with a kitchen and dining area, sitting space and shower room. A seating area was also introduced along the first floor hallway by niching into the existing eaves storage space – a floating bench here aligns with a south-facing rooflight, framing views across the town towards the church tower.

All too often, the functional, clinical design of healthcare spaces can feel somewhat sterile and uninviting, doing little to allay patient anxiety or provide a nourishing environment for staff. From the outset, we worked closely with the surgery staff and the HSCB team to establish a material palette which would not only conform with the strict hygiene requirements of the healthcare sector, but which would also introduce more warmth and tactility to these clinical spaces. The use of colour was key in transforming these traditionally white physiotherapy and treatment rooms into vibrant, inviting and visually stimulating spaces for patients. Playful graphics and oversized fonts continued the use of colour and helped create an inclusive set of wayfinding graphics across the public and private spaces on both floors

The project was completed in 2022 and has been warmly received by staff and patients. A second phase of public realm improvement works is planned for 2024/25. ❍

Niall McAleenan Architects

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Tynan Station

Front of Tynan Railway Station

Below / Passenger bridge just visible

The village of Tynan stands elevated over the rolling plains of west Armagh. There was a pre-Norman settlement here and the church is dedicated to St. Vindic who is said to have established a monastery at the village. It is famous for its village cross which has been moved twice and is made up of two different crosses. The village was strategically important due to its location near to three large landed demesnes: Tynan, Caledon and Glaslough. In the mid 1800s the railway came and would help the area develop and provide it with better communications to Armagh and beyond. Tynan Station is just north of the village and is a rare survivor of a rural station with Gothic flair and an intact array of surviving structures.

In March 1857 a tender went out for builders to send their costs for the building of the Tynan and Glaslough Stations with plans and specifications viewable at the engineer's office in Belfast.[1] The station was newly built by July 1858 where the Ulster Railway Company noted they were prepared to carry goods to "Tynan, Glasslough and Monaghan".[2] The architect behind the station was Alfred George Smith Clayton, who also designed the Glaslough Station which also survives and is in a similar style. At the time, Tynan station was described as being "absolutely ugly" while that of Glaslough was a "happier conception".[3] The exterior is almost like a miniature cathedral with tooled and chamfered sandstone quoins and window surrounds while the bulk of the building is rock faced sandstone. The passenger hall is in the centre of the structure and has an unusual four light mullioned window with star-like upper panels; the stonework is extraordinary. To the right hand side is a tower, although it is now missing its spire.

To the rear of the building is the platform which can just about be appreciated in its overgrown state. There is a cast iron footbridge by Ross and Walpole, Dublin leading to the other platform where there are the remains of a shelter and beneath the bridge itself would have been a phone box. The signal cabin also exists with bargeboards and finials. Further structures exist

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Signal box adjacent to the Main Station

Trefoil to gable of station with star like highights

such as the goods shed (shed is an understatement), a huge expanse again lavishly decorated with mullioned windows and trefoils. There is some ingenious reuse of the railway track to lintels in the shed while there is also a weigh house in the yard in a similar style.

The station also boasts three worker cottages built by the Great Northern Railway Company in 1902. Tynan also operated as the eastern terminus for the Clogher Valley Railway running eventually to Maguiresbridge. With the partition of Ireland the station took on greater importance, a custom post was erected and in 1933 a barrier was set up to examine cattle entering Northern Ireland from the Irish Free State. However, the glory days had passed and trade and passenger numbers struggled. There was a temporary increase in demand during World War Two with the arrival of American GIs and Belgian forces stationed at nearby Tynan Abbey. The station eventually closed in 1957 when the line was withdrawn. Speaking after its closure, Sir Norman Stronge noted that the station closed due to non-support of the public. He added that on one occasion in September 1957, "he, the driver and the guard were the only people on the train to Portadown".

The building has had no real purpose ever since, being utilised for storage but now that is no longer a feasible option due to the roof condition. It featured in the UAHS' First Building at Risk Catalogue, published in 1993, noting its deteriorating condition.

The current condition of the building is very poor with gaps to the roof structure, vegetation growth and water ingress. The substantial timber trusses are beginning to rot to their ends which, if they failed, would make a complicated job even more difficult.

Vegetation growth in the form of Japanese knotweed is rampant to the rear of the site while willow and ivy grow throughout the structure. The owner has not been idle, vegetation growth was cut back and removed but this needs annual management while the owner should be praised for keeping the entire grouping intact.

Dialogue between the owner, UAH, a local MLA and a number of railway enthusiast groups is now underway to discuss a way forward for the building. One of the common themes is to capatalise on the potential tourism draw to the area. The route of the old Ulster Canal sits just half a mile away from the station and there are plans to connect Middletown to Monaghan via a greenway, utilising the old canal route. There is great excitement about the restoration of the canal and the wider benefits it could bring.

Tourists frequently want to stay in historic buildings to get a sense of place and feel connected to places they are staying. The station could host as premium tourist accomodation due to its uniqueness. Other parts of the site could be operated as a museum for local railway artefacts but also for local history too. It is hoped that discussions can open up the possibilities for the site, raise awareness about our wider built heritage and find sustainable solutions to long standing buildings at risk. ❍

Sebastian Graham

Heritage Projects Officer, Ulster Architectural Heritage

References

1 The Ulsterman - Monday 30 March 1857
2 The Ulsterman - Wednesday 21 July 1858
3 The Civil engineer & architect's journal, Volume 22

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Exactly what is included in a Grant Integrated Heating Package?

Grant Aerona³ air to water air source heat pump.

Leading heating technology manufacturer Grant, is renowned for its innovative approach towards the research and development of its award-winning heating technologies. With a focus on efficiency and reliability, Grant continues to pave the way by providing architects across the country with high quality integrated heating solutions that are ideal for new build homes.

To get a better understanding of Grant's Integrated Heating Packages offering, Barry Gorman, National Renewables Sales Manager at Grant explains exactly what architects and architectural designers need to know about this increasingly popular and valued offering.

Barry Gorman.

What is a Grant Integrated Heating Package?
"A Grant Integrated Heating Package is a fully integrated heating solution that includes a main heat source, hot water storage and heat emitters, smart heating controls can also be added. Grant's technical specialists will design, size and specify all technologies needed for each individual property to ensure optimum efficiency.

Are they suitable for all new build properties?
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How do I avail of a heating package for a property I'm designing?
The first stage in the home heating design service begins when we receive house plans. Using these plans, our technical specialists carry out room by room heat loss calculations in line with building compliance requirements. This information provides the heat load requirement for each room and helps to calculate the heat pump output, the hot water demands and underfloor heating and/or radiators for the new property.

To avail of a bespoke Grant integrated heating solution for a property, all you need to do is send us planning drawings, preferred choice of heat emitters, radiators, underfloor heating or both, with contact information to **heatpump@grantni.com**

What is included in a Grant Integrated Heating Package?
The Grant Aerona³ air to water air source heat pump is the recommended main heat source when designing and installing a heating system for a new build property. Available in outputs of 6kW, 10kW, 13kW and 17kW the Grant Aerona³ R32 air to water air source heat pump range is a popular choice due to its cleaner, environmentally friendly performance and its ability to work in tandem with our other Grant heating technologies.

Pre-plumbed and integrated hot water cylinders like the Grant Integrated Unit are specified for hot water storage and a range of heat emitters including the Grant Uflex underfloor heating system and the Grant Afinia aluminium radiators can be selected for each property.

What are the benefits of this heating solution?
At Grant, we pride ourselves on working side by side with those designing and building new properties to ensure the most efficient Grant heating technologies are specified for the individual requirements. This results in a fully integrated heating system that delivers cost-effective, low-carbon and comfortable results for the occupants.

Our core focus is to provide innovative, reliable and cost-effective heating solutions to help combat the problem of rising energy costs and carbon emissions, in the hope of securing a greener future for generations to come."

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Visit grantni.com for more information on Grant's range of innovative heating packages.

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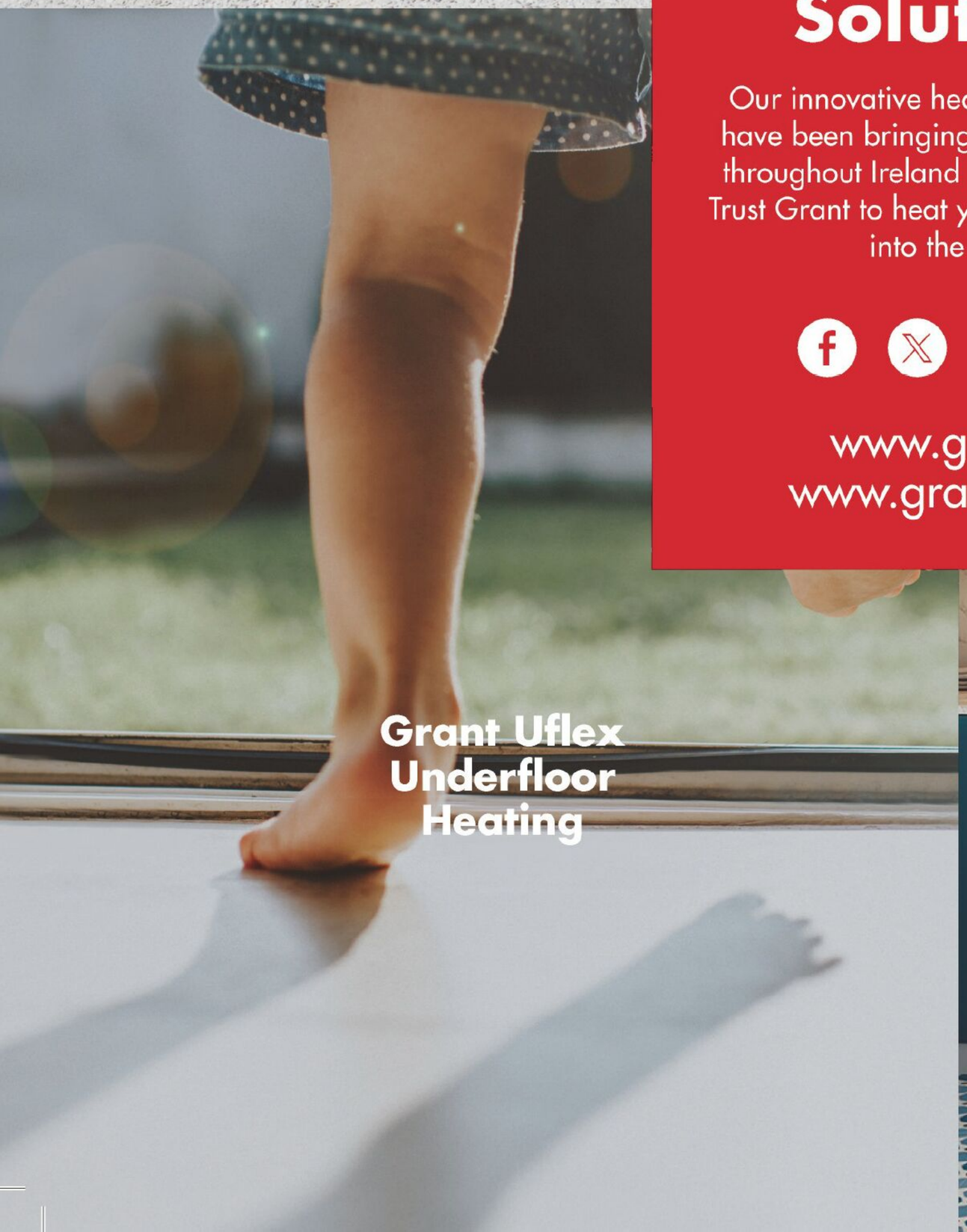

Grant Uflex
Underfloor
Heating

Grant
Hot Water
Cylinders

Pennyburn Bridge and the Greenway

On 29th April 2024, the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council officially opened the new Pennyburn Bridge. This is part of a major development of public amenity on the west side of the River Foyle including a major landscape rehabilitation scheme, a 63m-long single-span bridge and greenway linking the Fort George area to Bay Road Park. It is the latest section of the North West Greenway Network to be completed that comprises a number of cross-border greenway routes being developed by Donegal County Council and Derry and Strabane District Council. The basic objective and principle of the Greenway Network is set out as follows:

"To develop a cross border network of greenways that link people with places locally, regionally and nationally – bringing social, economic and environmental well-being to all"

This latest section is worth a review on the basis of it demonstrating how a simple new landscape and connection can result in significant wider community benefits and improve the city's character and amenity.

In 2023, one was able to walk or cycle all the way from the city centre and the Peace Bridge, approximately 2km distantance, along the generally well-appointed Quayside Trail that has been created, restored or improved over the last 20 years as part of various public realm projects. It has resulted in an attractive, well-used landscape that has been integral to the city regeneration and events such as the notable Halloween Festival. But at Fort

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THE TEAM

Client Department for Communities and the EU INTERREG VA programme, administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Landscape Architects
Derry City and Strabane District Council- Parks Department

Project Managers, Civil & Structural Designers and Principal Designer
McAdam Design

Bridge Designers
Chris Black/Design ID

Steel Fabrication Hassons

Landscape Contractor
Cameron Landscapes

Main Contractor
FP McCann

Photography
Stan Ridgeway and F P McCann (drone)

George (a currently vacant site but formerly a shipbuilding yard and military base), this connectivity corridor wobbled inland and dissipated into the more ordinary cityscape. So after quite a short distance, the Derry-Muff Cross-Border Route had its first hurdle created by a tidal inlet and private industrial, commercial or vacant lands that rendered it a broken link. Just over 600m downstream from Fort George is Bay Road Park, a Derry City flagship park extending over 12 hectares, but this was, to all intents, physically and aesthetically severed off from access to the Quayside Trail.

In terms of city planning, a bridge was a logical solution and a new curved bow string bridge traverses this long-standing gap across the inlet (over what was historically named as Mill Stream). Access to the bridge was easy from the south (towards the city) where the area around Fort George including its listed wharf (constructed as part of the US Navy repair base in World War two) has been subject to an environmental improvement scheme, making it a pleasant and attractive part of the city that took advantage of the riverside setting. North of the inlet was different. The Bay Road Industrial Estate presented an altogether different landscape, made up of former oil terminals, coal yards, large scale building and a very utilitarian character closed off to public access and where landscape considerations were low on the agenda for the last century.

Through working with landowners and the community, the access was opened up to connect though to Bay Road and Bay Road Park and this forms a key new publicly accessible corridor and component in the city's green network. Further, the linear shoreline area aside Bay Road has been subject to a major landscape overhaul with new hedgerows (that will screen the industrial lands to the west as they mature) and tree planting that will augment the retained belt of trees, ensuring the area has a greener characteristic into the future. The broad path allows sufficient room for runners, walkers and cyclists to pass each other, with spurs leading towards the Foyle shoreline. Beyond Bay Road Park, the route can now link along the riverside to Broomhall and then cross-border to the recently delivered Muff-Quigley's Point greenway, via the Culmore Greenway.

New furniture, including picnic tables and benches, have been placed at strategic locations along the greenway route taking advantage of the views over the river and upstream towards the city. SMART lighting has been installed throughout and the project designed by Urbis Schrede. Essentially, this type

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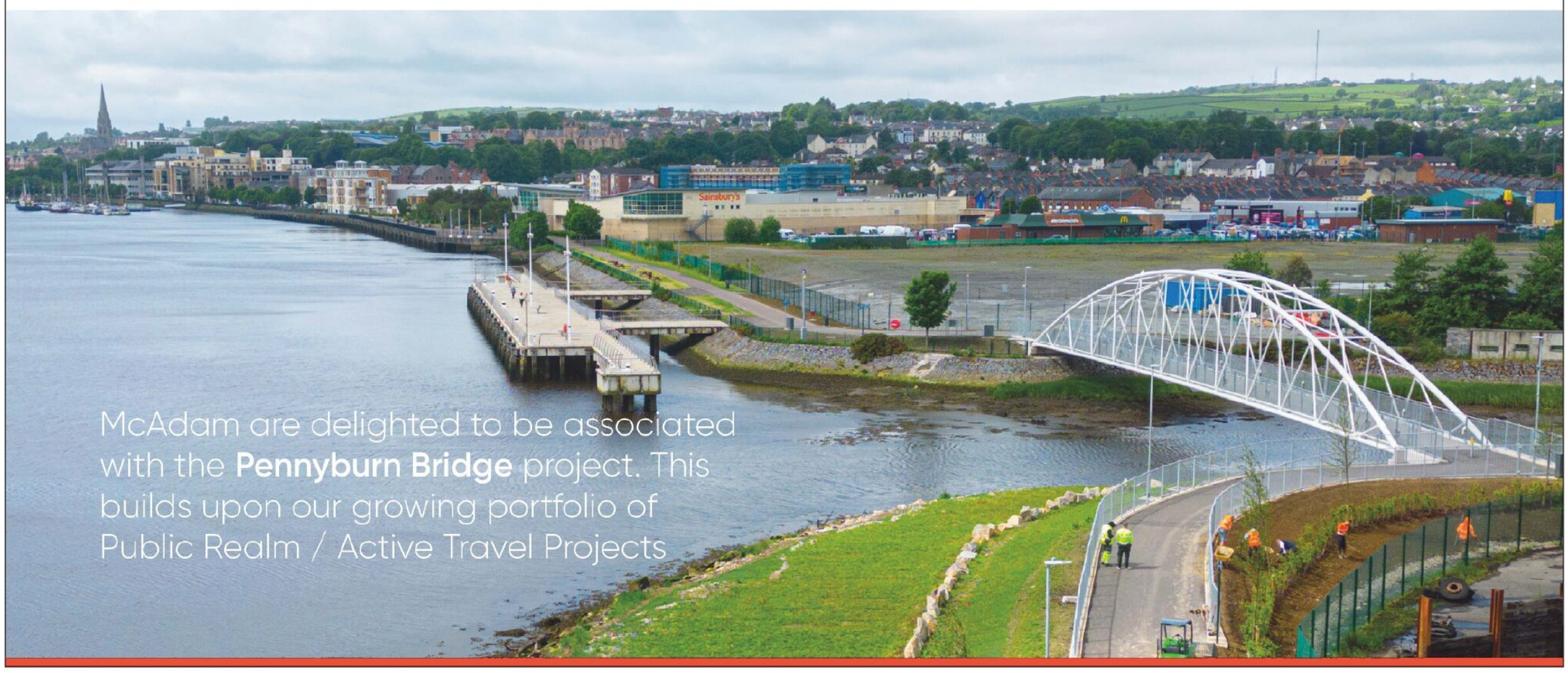
of lighting is a more environmentally friendly lighting system whereby the lights dim to 1 lux when no one is using the greenway. This offsets running costs, carbon emissions and has associated benefits for wildlife as it allows for species such as bats to use this wildlife corridor in a manner that would not be possible if conventional lighting was used.

The total project cost approximately £2m with the bridge being the integral cog in getting a continuous 12.5km greenway route from the city to Co Donegal. Issac Newton once said, "We build too many walls and not enough bridges." This is a perfect example of a city moving forward with this project providing incalculable landscape character, social and visual amenity benefits. ❍

Andrew Bunbury

McAdam
ENHANCING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ARCHITECTURE
ENGINEERING
PROJECT MANAGEMENT



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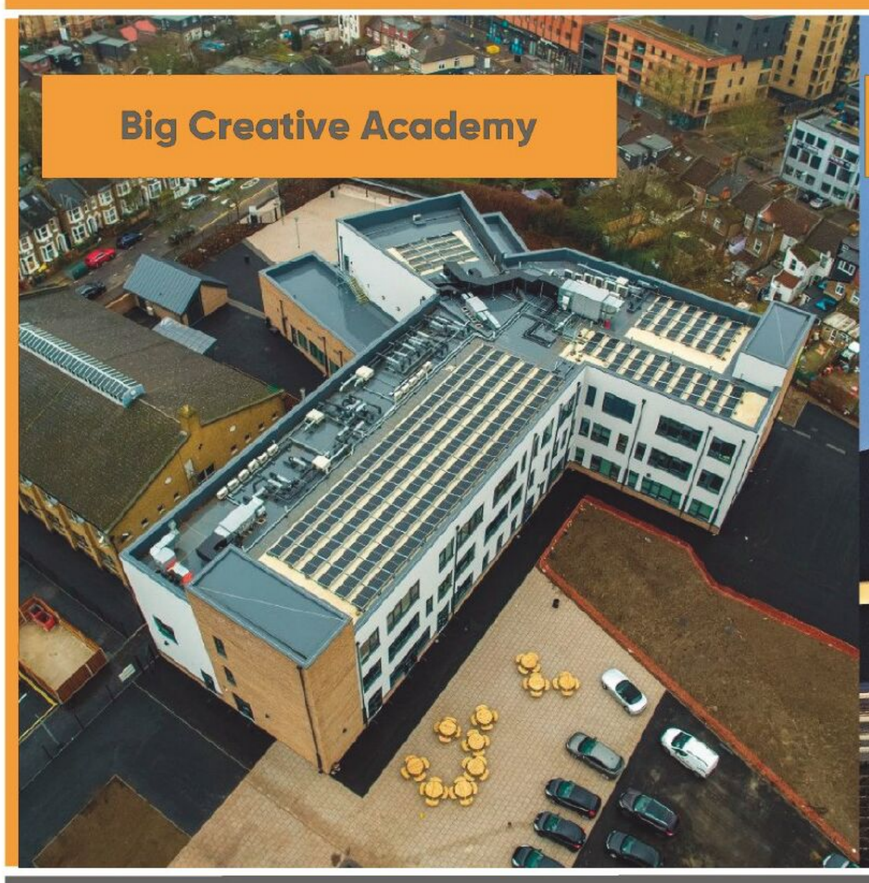
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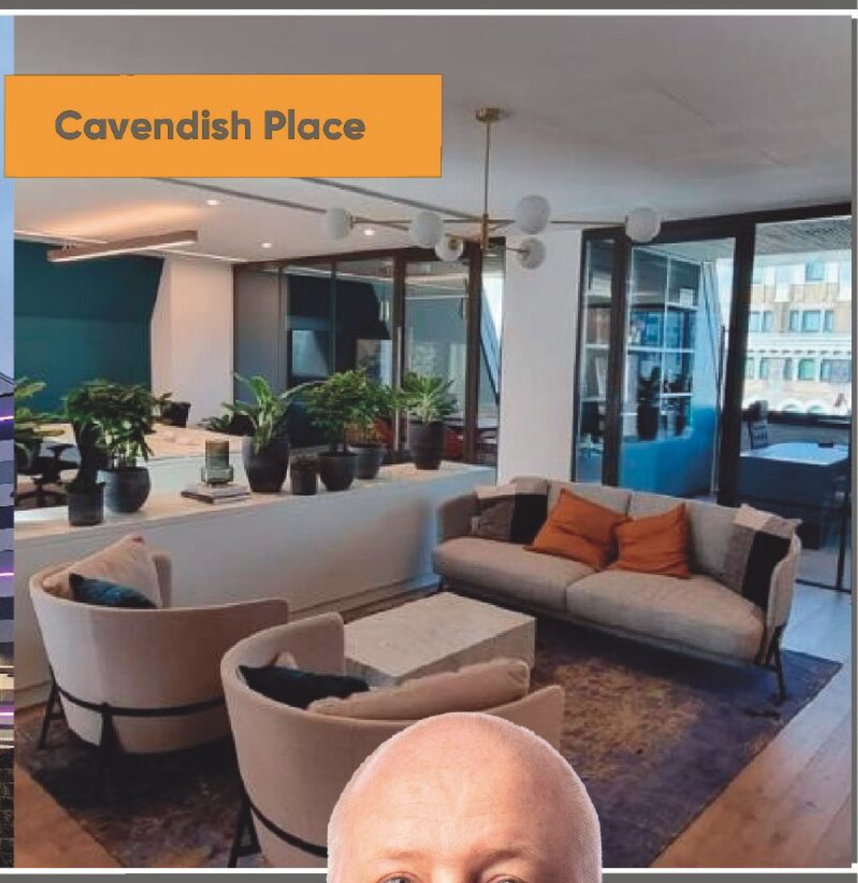
Cavendish Place

Gavin McCausland
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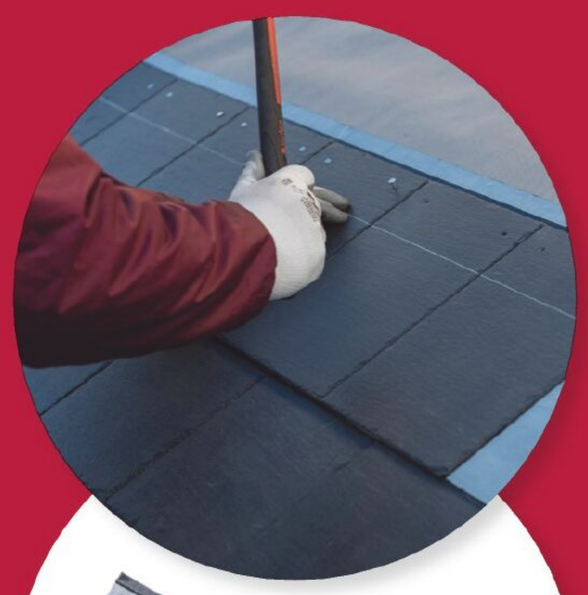

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KILWAUGHTER MINERALS ENHANCES SUSTAINABILITY OFFERING WITH NEW K REND ECO RANGE

Kilwaughter Minerals has enhanced its portfolio of industry-leading products with the launch of its K Rend Eco Range which offer a suite of reduced cement render and mortar products.

Designed with innovative cement replacement technology, the range represents a significant investment from Kilwaughter and boasts re-engineered formulas for three existing products – K Post, GP Mix and Mineral TC – significantly reducing embodied carbon in the manufacturing process by up to 56%.

Developed by K Rend's research and development team, the launch of the K Rend Eco Range underscores Kilwaughter Minerals' dedication to improving environmental standards in the construction industry, promoting sustainable practices and meeting the demands of eco-conscious customers.

Caroline Rowley, Business Development Director at Kilwaughter Minerals, said:

"The launch of K Rend's Eco Range reinforces Kilwaughter Minerals' position as an industry leader in the UK and Ireland construction market. Sustainability is one of our core values and was very much a key focus during the concept, design and manufacture of this suite of products.

"This new range of sustainable products, delivers reduced embodied carbon, providing choice to our customers while contributing to a cleaner environment, and maintaining the high level of performance customers expect from K Rend.

As a responsible manufacturer, Kilwaughter Minerals is committed to innovating to get the best outcomes and to lead by doing so."

Each product within the range is designed with enhanced sustainability features tailored to its specific function. K Post, a premium rapid-setting concrete, comes ready-mixed and is packaged in eco-friendly 20kg showerproof bags.

GP Mix is a versatile grey ready-mixed product which can be used as a render, mortar or plaster now offering improved workability and faster drying times, while Mineral TC is a low-maintenance, through-coloured thin coat render available in a variety of colours to suit individual taste and project style.

For more information on the UK and Ireland's market leading render manufacturer and its services, visit www.k-rend.co.uk

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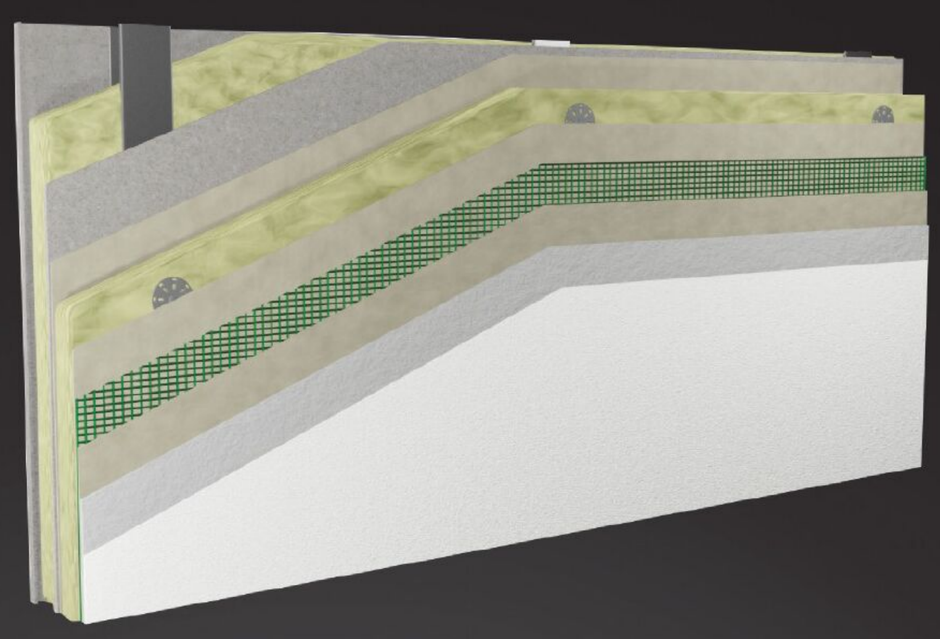

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REDSTONE CALSITHERM: REDEFINING INSULATION SOLUTIONS FOR TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS

Preserving and upgrading traditional buildings is crucial to meet national climate targets. With over 300,000 such buildings on the island of Ireland, many with minimal insulation, there's significant potential to cut heat loss, energy use, and boost comfort and well-being. Redstone Calsitherm, a lime-based and highly breathable insulation system, offers significant thermal benefits, along with contributing to a healthier, more comfortable living climate.

The internal insulation of solid stone or brick walls presents many challenges, not only from a thermal viewpoint but also from a moisture control aspect. When solid masonry walls are thermally refurbished, several points must be appreciated to avoid degradation and damage. This necessitates a need to balance energy efficiency with breathability and damp protection while maintaining the characteristics of the building, particularly in heritage or older buildings.

Redstone Calsitherm Climate Boards are a highly absorbent and dehumidifying insulation capable of absorbing up to 4.7 times their own weight of water. The boards are capillary active and hygroscopic, helping to regulate peaks in humidity and moisture levels within traditional walls. The boards, made from a mixture of lime and sand (calcium silicate), serve as a natural and highly effective mould inhibitor due to their high pH. Additionally, the boards are non-combustible with an A1 fire classification.

Calsitherm Climate Boards have been used on prestigious projects including the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the award-winning Bank Building in Belfast, as well as many vernacular traditional homes and buildings throughout Ireland and the UK. Ecological Building Systems, who exclusively import and distribute the Redstone range of thermal solutions, provided technical and site support from design to completion on the refurbishment of the Bank Building.

Rather than allowing condensation and moisture to accumulate between the wall and the insulation, Calsitherm Climate Boards absorb moisture rapidly, and due to their effective capillary-active properties, allow the moisture to harmlessly disperse into the living space at a later stage. The boards are installed using a proprietary capillary active adhesive and can be plastered directly with a Calsitherm lime-based finishing plaster for an aesthetic and breathable finish. This can be painted at a later stage with a natural breathable paint, such as Auro natural paint.

It is vital to ensure older buildings, such as the Bank Building, can breathe and to use insulating materials which are compatible with the existing structure. There is little point in achieving exceptionally low U values if one increases the risk of condensation or moisture accumulation within a wall.

By Niall Crosson, Group Technical Director, BTech, MEngSc, MIEI, CEPHC

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redstone

Breathing new life into old buildings

Redstone Calsitherm, supplied by Ecological Building Systems, are high-performing calcium silicate insulation boards that provide unparalleled protection for older buildings, including heritage and protected structures.

A1 fire class rated and non-flammable

Absorbs moisture and regulates humidity

High performing internal wall insulation

Lime-based with high mould resistance

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CONSIDERING CAVITY WALL INSULATION

In 2023, the Department of Finance ran a public consultation looking at further upgrades to Part F of the Building Regulations designed to lower the operational carbon emissions of new buildings. Its domestic proposals included the introduction of a fabric energy efficiency standard (FEES) to ensure new homes are well insulated, limiting their energy demand. This proposed change may have a significant impact on insulation specifications, particularly for cavity walls.

Kingspan Kooltherm range phenolic insulation boards deliver low thermal conductivities, providing the thinnest commonly used insulation solution for any specific U-value.

FEES

The FEES metric is already used in England. It considers U-values, thermal bridging values, thermal mass, internal and solar gains and the airtightness of the property.

To calculate the FEES target for a project a set fabric specification is applied to a notional building of the same dimensions as the proposed dwelling in SAP. Selected fabric elements of the proposed notional dwelling specification for Part F are shown below. Specifiers are free to vary from this specification providing the proposed building achieves the target FEES value and all elements at least meet the area-weighted limiting values shown in the final column.

In some cases, Kooltherm K8 Plus Cavity Board can be fitted with a clear cavity width of just 20 mm.

Whilst the U-value set for external walls is in line with the current limiting U-value of 0.18 W/m²K, the requirement for roofs is significantly lower. In practice, this can be challenging to achieve with standard loft lagging due to the thickness of insulation needed. As a result, it can often be simpler to relax the roof U-value and compensate by upgrading the U-value of the external walls.

Cavity Walls

When considering which cavity wall insulation product is most suitable to deliver more ambitious wall U-values, arguably the most fundamental consideration is the thermal conductivity of the product. The lower this value is, the more effective the insulation will be at preventing heat loss.

Phenolic cavity wall insulation boards achieve thermal conductivities as low as 0.019 W/mK. This can allow U-values to be achieved with slimmer insulation thicknesses than lower performing alternatives. This in turn can limit the depth of the cavity walls, making it possible to maximise internal floor space within a given footprint.

These boards should be specified with a clear cavity width (typically 40 mm min). Depending on project specific factors, some phenolic boards can be fitted with a reduced clear cavity of 20 mm. The appropriate clear cavity should be confirmed with the relevant warranty provider or insurer.

Specification	Proposed Notional Dwelling (area-weighted)	Proposed limiting values (area-weighted)
External walls (W/m²K)	0.18	0.18
Floor (W/m²K)	0.13	0.18
Roof (W/m²K)	0.11	0.16
Thermal bridging Y-value	0.05	
Air permeability (m³/(h.m²)@50 Pa)	5.0	6.0

Future proofing

Under the Energy Strategy, it is expected that by 2026/27 all new homes will need to be "net zero ready" and built to a high fabric standard. By specifying insulation products which achieve low thermal conductivities now, architects can prepare for these changes without compromising on construction depth or internal building space.

For further information and technical support, please contact:
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email: technical@kingspaninsulation.ie
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Thickness of insulation: 130 mm (assuming a 20 mm cavity, 100 mm blockwork inner and outer leaf (1.13 W/mK) and 6.6% thermal bridging for the effect of mortar joints.

Premium performance insulation for cavity walls.

In these challenging times, the drive to achieve a net zero carbon built environment is an ever-increasing focus in the construction industry. Kingspan Kooltherm® K8 Plus Cavity Board partial fill cavity wall insulation can achieve the same U-value as other products but with a much thinner profile.

With its engineered jointing to resist water ingress, Kingspan Kooltherm® K8 Plus can be used with just a 20 mm clear cavity, achieving U-values as low as 0.14 W/m²K in a standard 150 mm cavity.

Visit our website to find out more about Kooltherm® K8 Plus and to use the U-value calculator to work out the thickness of insulation needed for your project.

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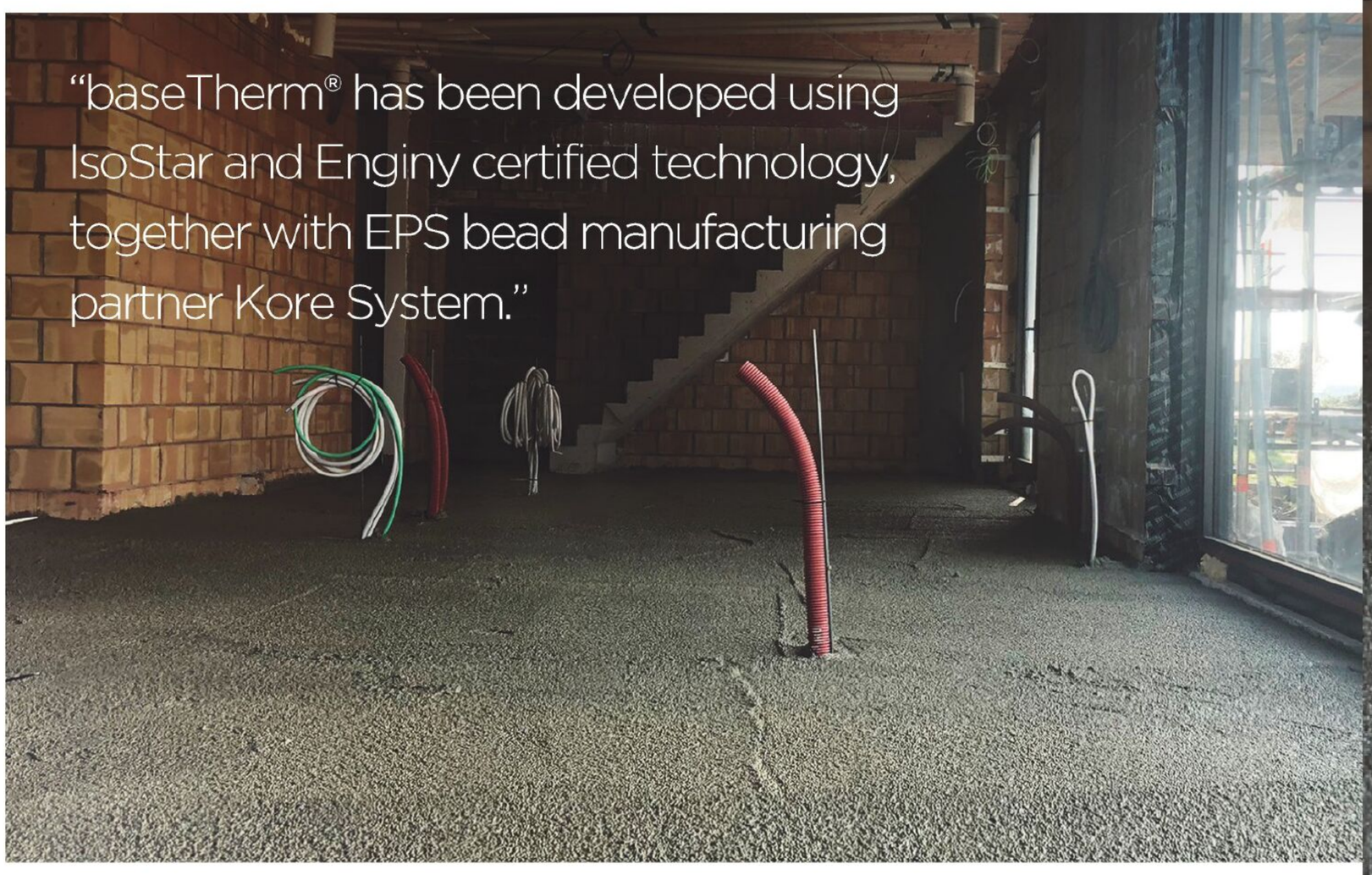

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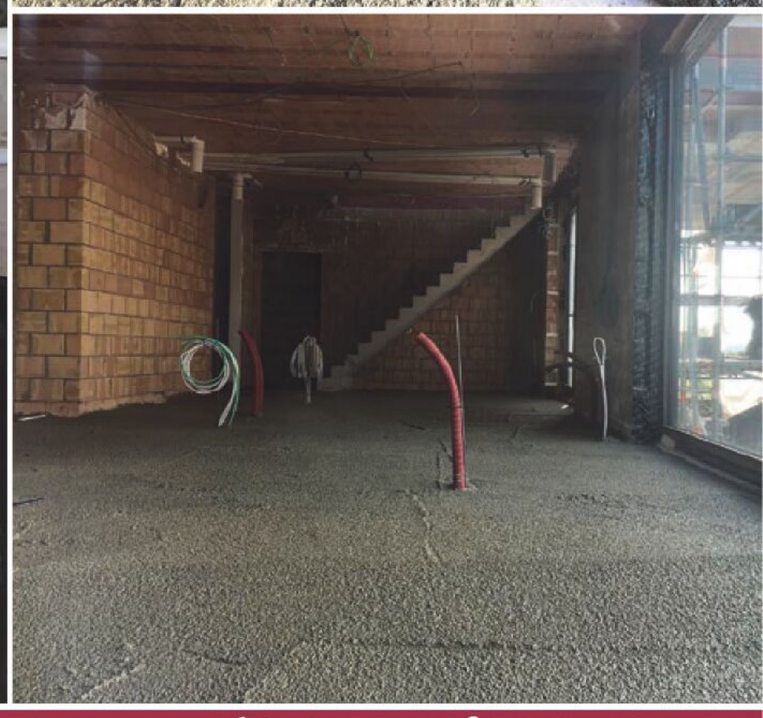

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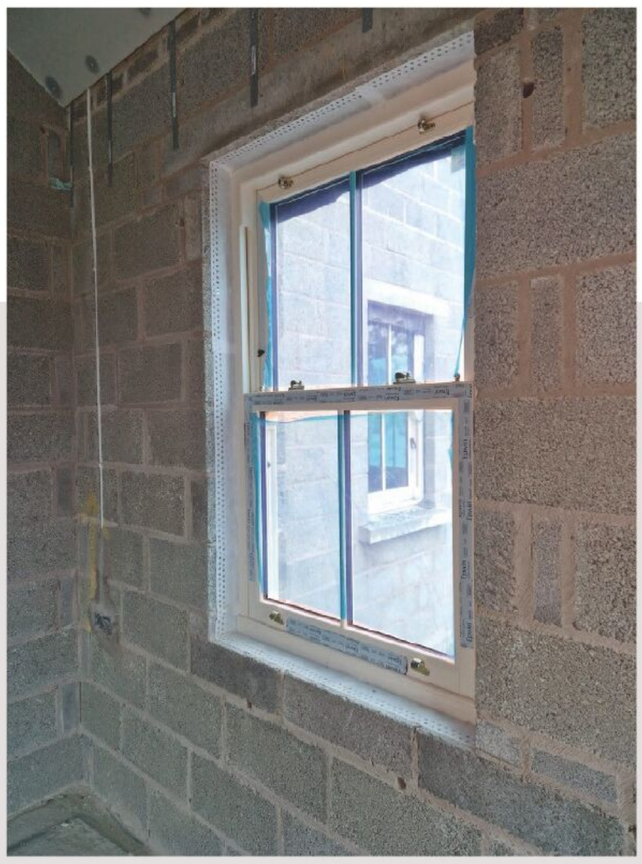

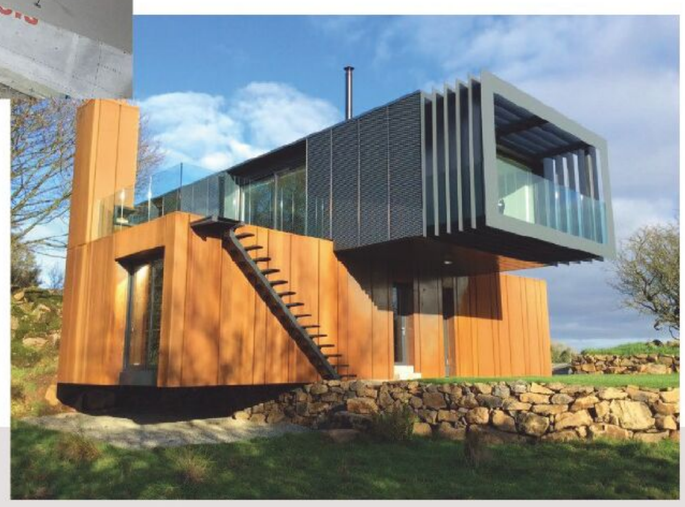

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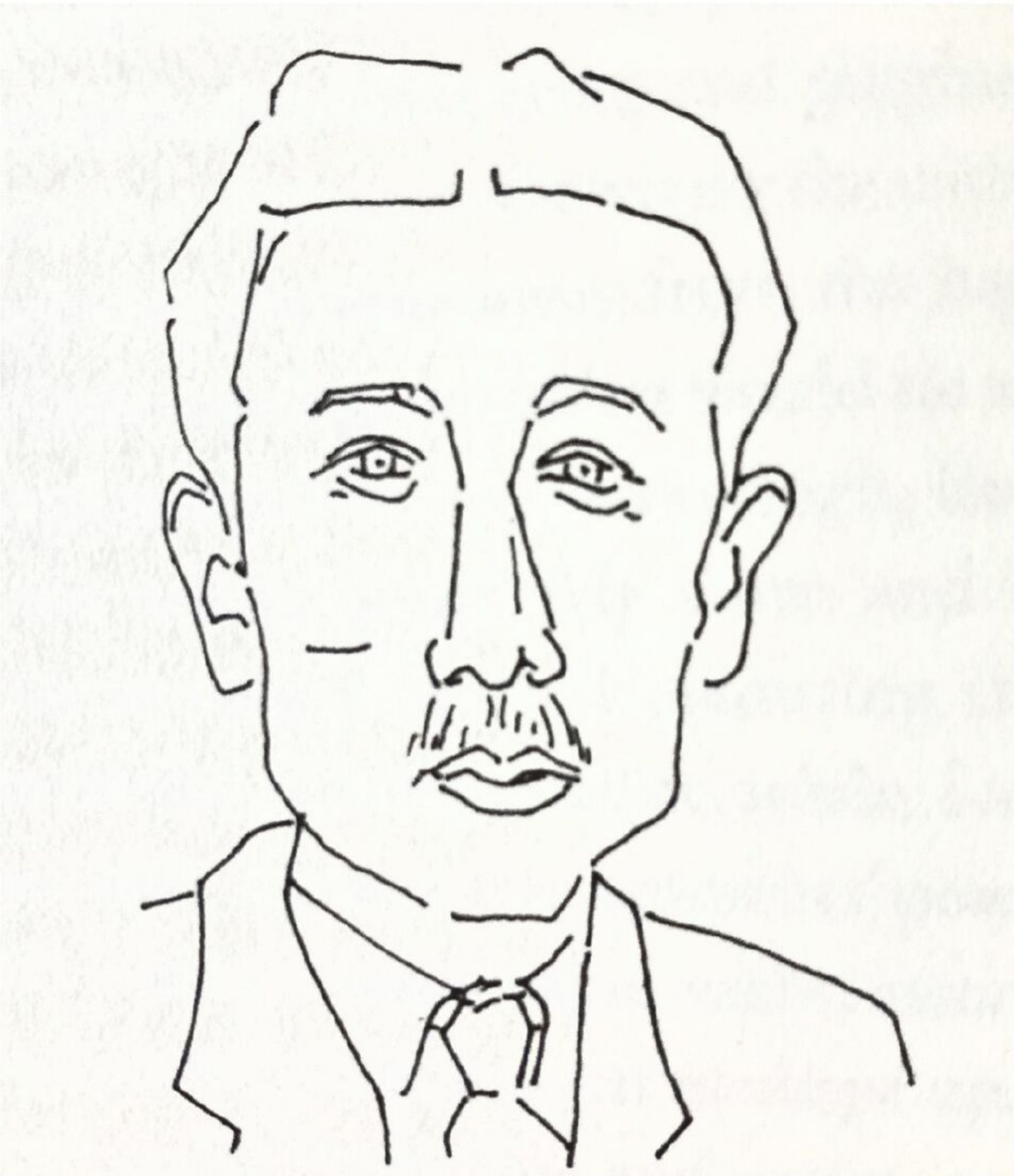
The First Quarter

John Tuomey



I have recently returned to Ireland after a decade away. I'm back in south Belfast, a stone's throw from my old student digs. It's easy to be transported back in time; Belfast sits as comfortably in its red brick skin today as it did when I left. Still my favourite building, The Lyric Theatre stands proudly upright against the banks of the Lagan to the south, and quietly disguised into residential Stranmillis from the north. Upon opening, it was widely praised for its contextual and sensitive appearance. Ten years later, it has settled even further into its surroundings; the brick weathered, the timber darkening. I have recently read 'The First Quarter' (The Lilliput Press, 2023); an autobiography by John Tuomey, one half of O'Donnell Tuomey, the practice responsible for this camouflaged beauty.

As the title suggests, the book takes us on a journey through Tuomey's first 25 years. Reading more like a novel, the book does not simply list facts and figures but rather presents a series of vividly descriptive memories. Occasionally Tuomey will break the chronological sequence, creating the impression that he is frantically writing as new fragments of the past land in his consciousness. The book is split into ten chapters, some with ambiguous and intriguing titles, but all beginning with a quote from a source of inspiration: a playwright, author, musician, or fellow architect. Fine line sketches, assumedly Tuomey's own, intermittently break and perfectly accompany the text. Tuomey's writing encourages you to create imagery in your head, the sketches only to aid you, allowing the written word to take centre stage.

The book begins by taking us through a reasonably disrupted childhood as his family yo-yoed their way up and down the country every two years due to his father's job as a site manager. The housing, ranging not only in location but also typology: main street townhouses, flats and rural farmhouses. All surely being an unconscious influence during his formative years.

His teenage years in the Cooley peninsula shaped his personality of contrasts. He describes himself as an 'extrovert

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introvert' and 'optimistic by nature'. Classic and necessary architect traits. Like his mother, he enjoyed 'café life in the city' but equally enjoyed days spent walking the fields and mountains with his father. He talks at length about the mythology of County Louth, stories of warrior heroes and goddesses shaping the landscape on which he played.

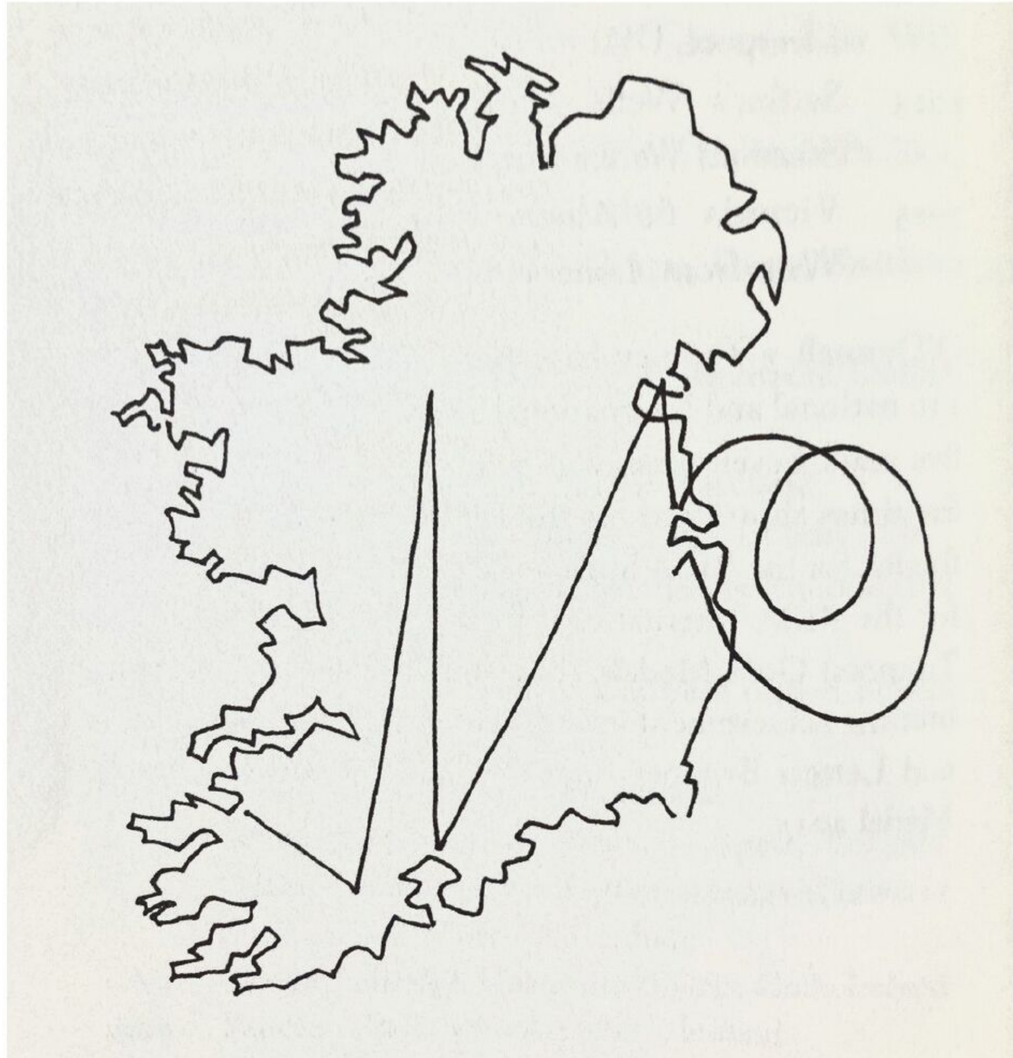
The countryside, folklore, imagination and naïve acceptance gave way to the city, philosophy, questioning and activism once he reached Dublin and UCD. His reflections are viewed through the same rose-tinted spectacles that many students experience when they first leave home. Dublin is presented as an urban utopia; a city with an eclectic mix of cultures, bubbling with creativity and full of opportunity. In addition, this was a time when students had a growing influence. In his first experience of activism, he and others occupied the College of Art, questioning the institution's approach to teaching. Later, alongside fellow architecture students, a similar occupation saw them save five Georgian houses from authorised demolition. Those buildings still stand today. This ability to enforce change no doubt stoked a desire to further adapt the urban landscape through architecture.

Pushing the boundaries of his independence, he spent summers working odd jobs in London where he moved upon graduating. London life centred around working within James Stirling's basement studio. His time here was not simply a brief stint working slavishly for a starchitect. He formed a good rapport with Stirling, who later, upon Tuomey's invitation, travelled to Dublin on the eve of collecting a Pritzker prize to talk at the Architectural Association of Ireland.

Tuomey provides a frustrated commentary on Dublin today. In comparison to the 'working townhouses' of his childhood in Dundalk with their 'interdependent exchange with the life of the town', he finds that Dublin 'has lost the sound of life'. He conveys depair at the 'potentiality' of the derelict sites that peppered the city in the 1980s, now 'developed, with one banal, bad and boring building after another'.

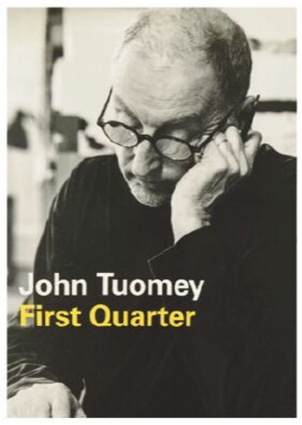
The final chapter could have been named 'Looking Back'; Tuomey opts for 'Looking Out' as he reflects and simultaneously keeps one eye firmly on the future. The book, with its detailed prose and simple sketches, perfectly captures Tuomey. In his concluding line, he writes he's 'happy to be an architect with eyes to see and hands to draw'.

I highly recommend this book. There are many lessons to be



learned for all creatives, not only architects. The narrative frequently prompts us to stop reading and go searching for his inspiration; the sketches of James Stirling, the myths and legends of Irish folklore, a Heaney poem here, a Dylan song there. The book places importance on process over any perceived destination. Tuomey almost brushes over his later years; one chapter reserved to swiftly cover his return to Ireland and the formation of his studio, O'Donnell Tuomey, with wife Sheila. Luckily, the title of the book is suggestive, mathematically at least, of a sequel and I will impatiently wait for more Tuomey tales. ❍

Richard Kennedy



The First Quarter
by John Tuomey

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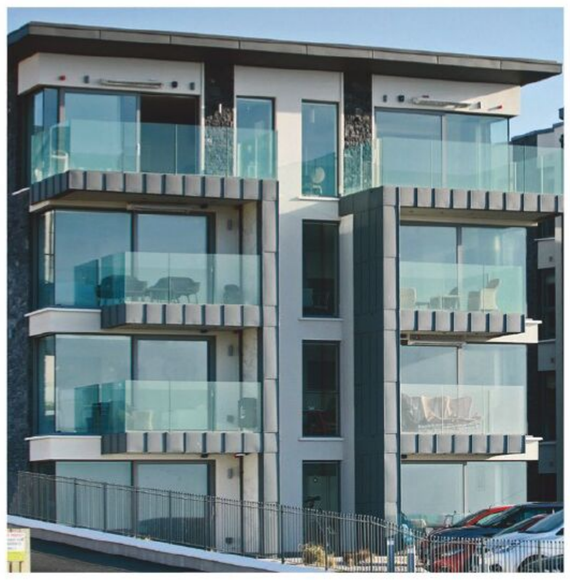

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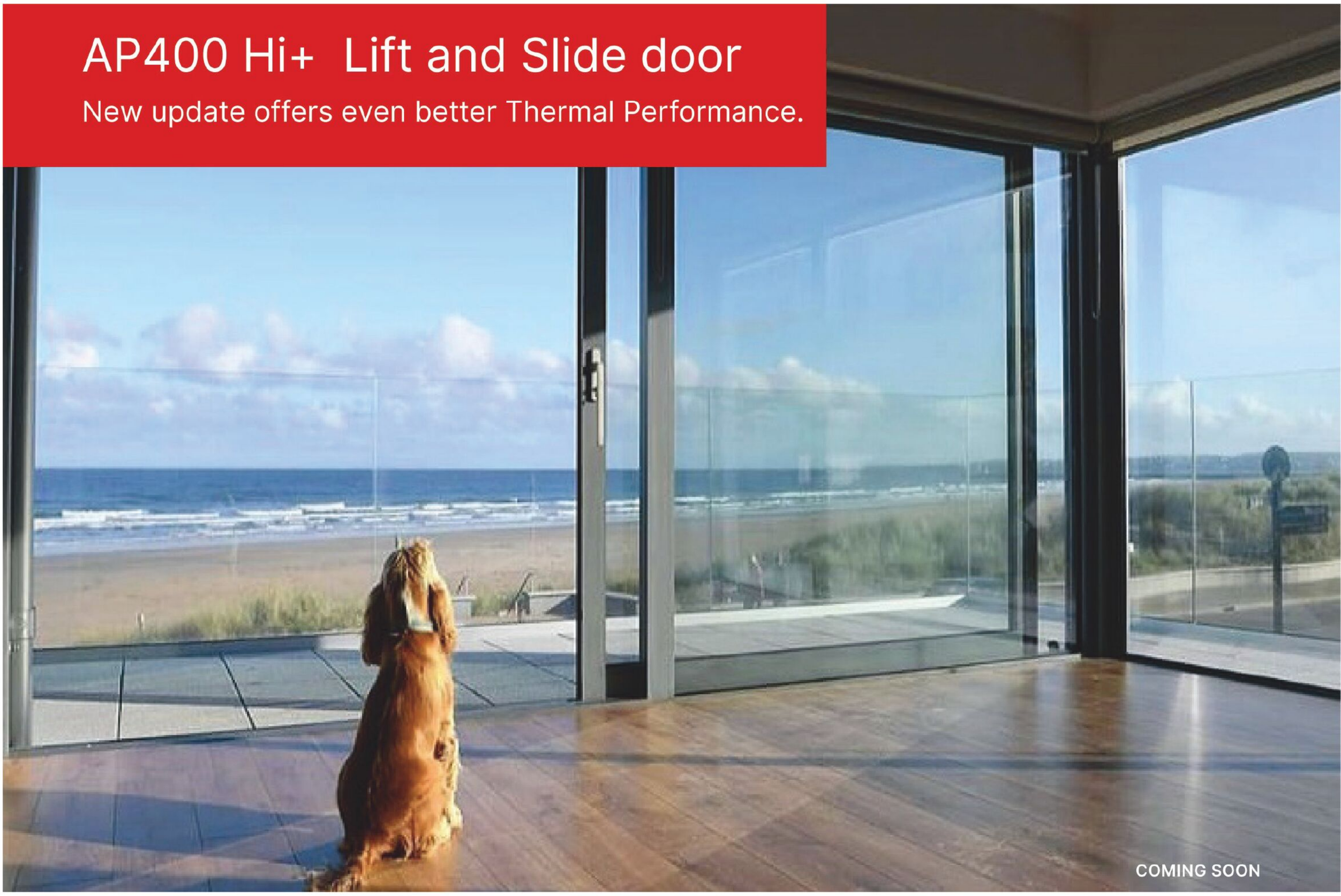

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