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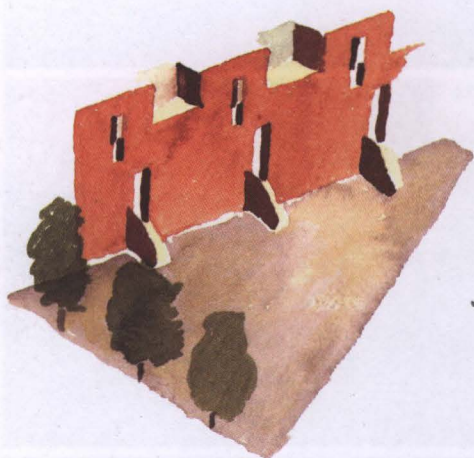
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TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

O'DONNELL + TUOMEY ARCHITECTS

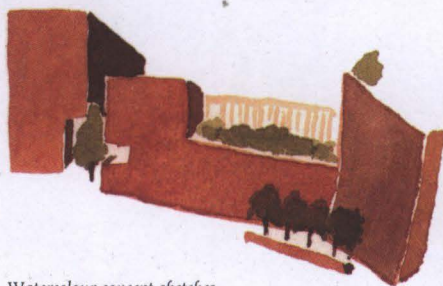


The Timberyard development consists of a new housing scheme of 47 dwellings and a street-level community facility in the historic Liberties area of Dublin. The project was generated by the construction of the Coombe bypass. A backland site was opened up and the urban design requirement was for a new street frontage to heal the wounds caused by the road engineering operation. A new urban corridor of apartments over retail along Cork Street was developed with the demolition of existing social housing pockets, and the need for new social housing emerged to relocate residents.

Dublin City Council was anxious to produce an exemplar residential social housing development in the area. The brief was set out by the City Council in consultation with the local and new residents. The design centres on a new public space on the site of a former timber yard, making a residential enclave with a sense of place. The development proposes to provide scale, identity and a piece of living city, which connects new development in the area to the historic character of the Liberties.

Building form

The scheme works between the six-storey scale proposed in general along the new Cork Street corridor and the smaller scale of the existing houses behind the site. The new buildings are in brick, with hardwood windows and screens to terraces and roof gardens. The windows are offset from each other in the walls to work with the complexity of the residential accommodation within, and to emphasise the continuity of the brick surface. The walls are modulated with recessed porches and terraces and projecting bay windows to give a depth and complexity to the building's edge and an interface between the



*Watercolour concept sketches
opposite – Entrance to courtyard*





private world of the house and the neighbourhood. The building cranks along the street line with landscaped planters, and steps at ground level to allow some privacy to those units accessed from the street.

The main social/play space of the scheme is the triangular courtyard which provides a secure space via the passive surveillance from the adjacent apartments. This space is further animated by the window seats at ground level, recessed balconies and projecting winter gardens above. The scheme opens up two new pedestrian routes through the main courtyard and the Grotto at the east end of the building, which knit into the surrounding urban fabric, re-making connections through the urban fabric which were extinguished by the Coombe bypass scheme.

The housing is built to the latest Building Regulation standards, including the updated conservation of fuel and ener-





gy regulations. The space standards are more generous than the last standards issued, as new tenants are coming from older and bigger housing than has been provided in the last few years.

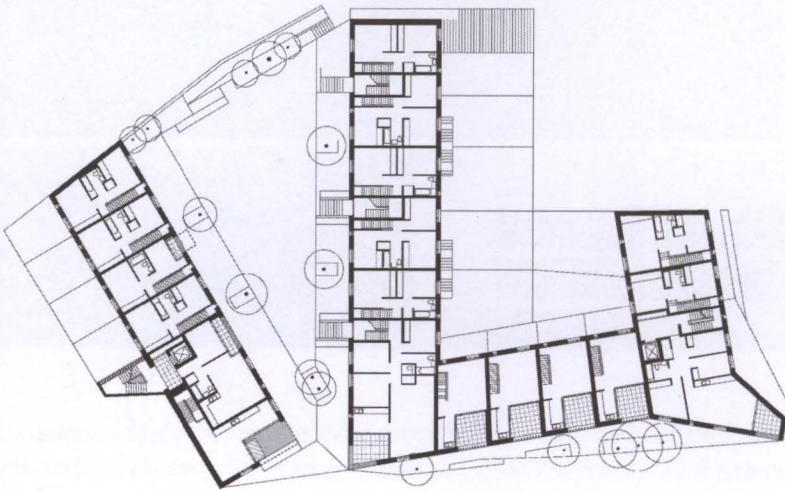
Method of construction and materials

Brick and timber are the main materials used, echoing the existing housing and industrial buildings in the area and the former use of the site as a timber yard. The building is an *in-situ* concrete structure with a brick skin – a typical cavity construction. The concrete structure allowed the openings in the façade to be offset from each other and also enabled a greater flexibility with apartment layouts by stepping the internal party walls vertically. The window openings recess a full brick, giving the openings a greater sense of depth. All openings have solid hanging brick lintels and brick sills to create an illusion of punching through the brick façade. The courtyard is paved in a carpet of brick to match the façade. Iroko timber windows and timber screens are left untreated.

address – Coombe Bypass, Dublin 8
 client – Dublin City Council
 photography – Dennis Gilbert

design to completion – 2001-2009
 area – 3,800m²

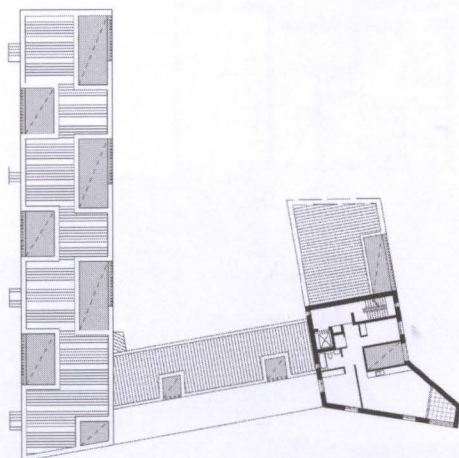
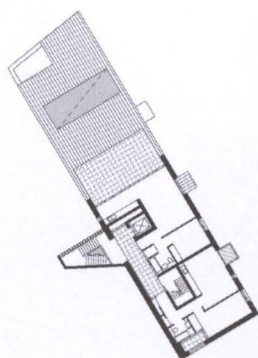
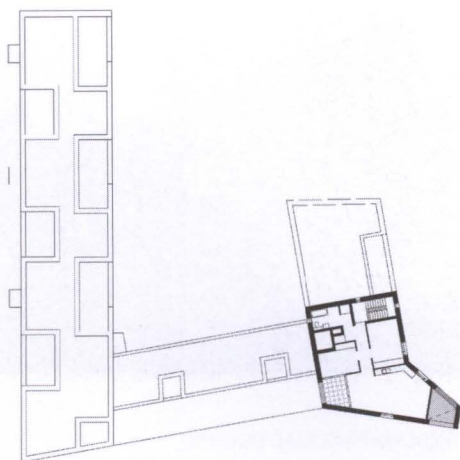
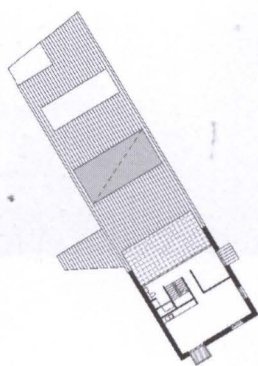
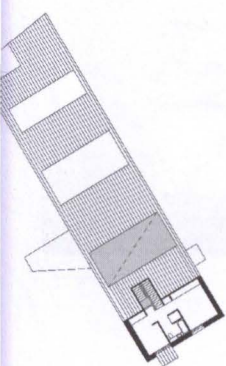




TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

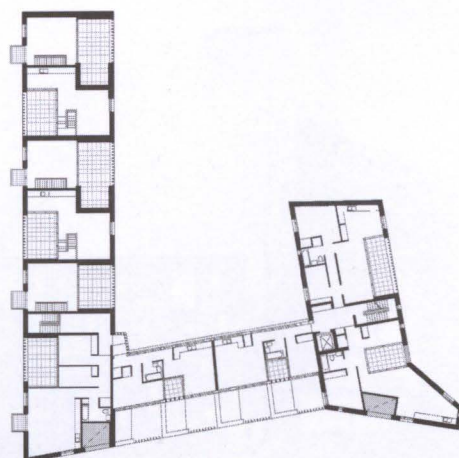
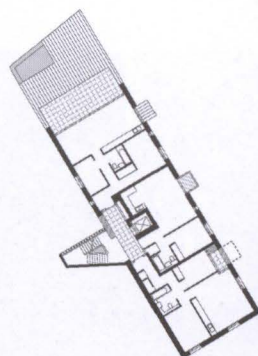
South elevation
Plans – ground, 1st floor

Ground Floor Plan
TIMBERYARD HOUSING



TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

Plans – 3rd, 4th, 5th, part 6th floor

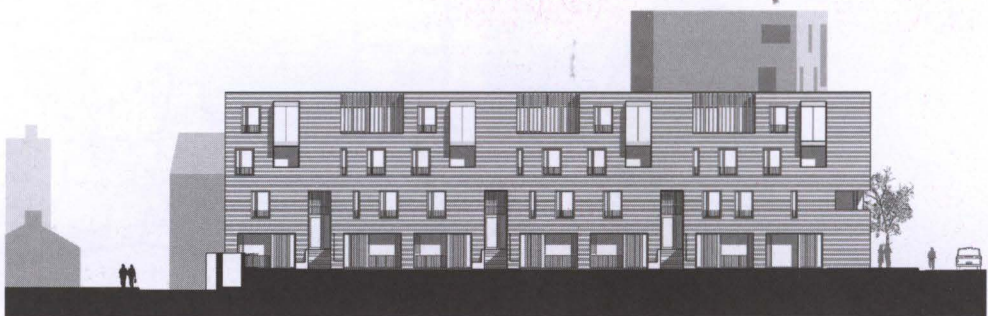
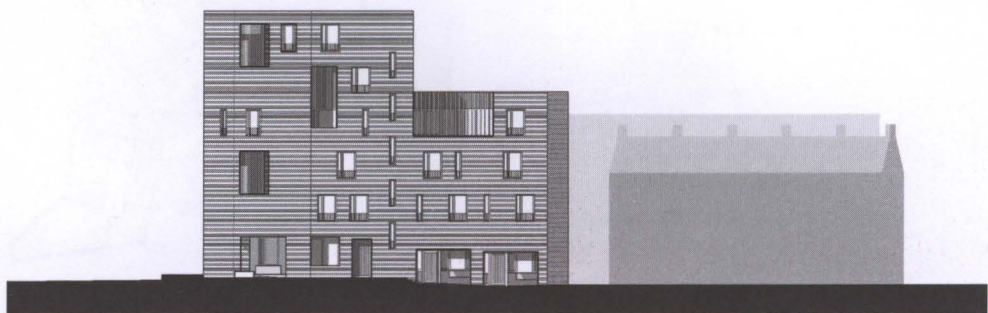


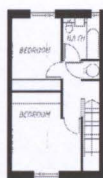
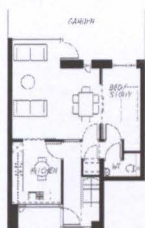


TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

East courtyard elevation
East elevation
West courtyard elevation

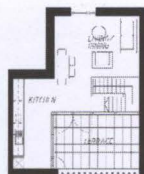
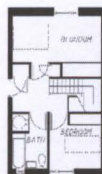
opposite
Section AA
Typical unit plans
Sections BB, CC





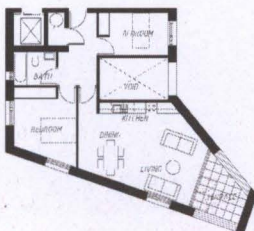
GROUND/FIRST FLOOR
 4 BED 2 STOREY HOUSE 47' x 11'
 REAR GARDEN AT GROUND FLOOR
 53 M²
 OWN FRONT GARDEN ACCESS

SECOND/THIRD FLOOR
 2 BED 1.5 STOREY 11' x 11'
 ACCESS THROUGH AT THIRD FLOOR
 70 M²
 SHARED STAIR ACCESS



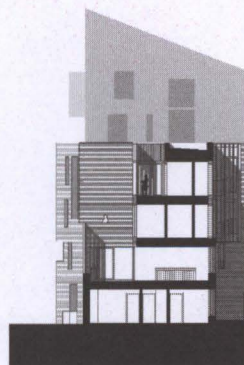
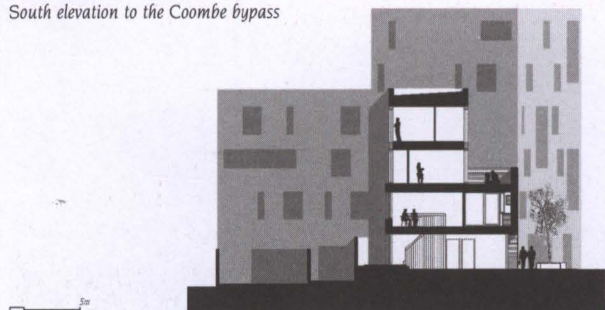
SECOND FLOOR
 1/2 BED 1.5 STOREY 11' x 11'
 2 BED TERRACE
 50 M²
 SHARED STAIR ACCESS

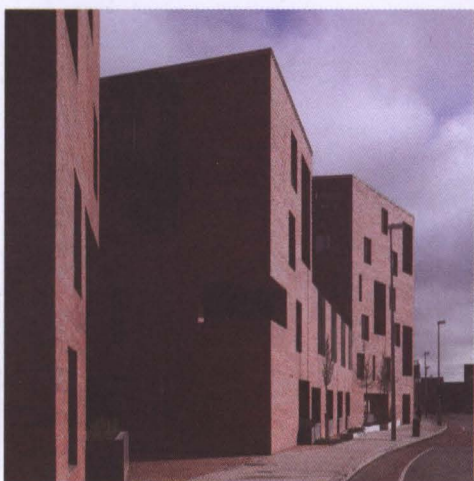
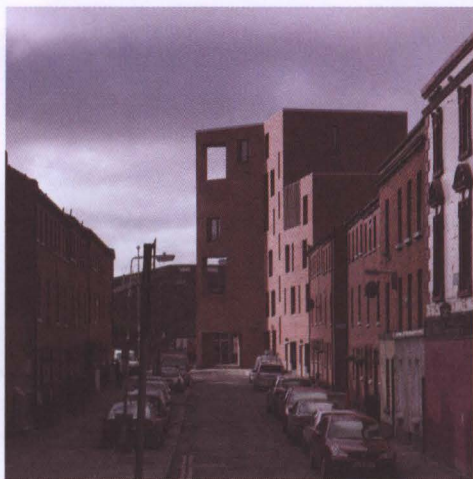
4 BED 1.5 STOREY 11' x 11'
 TERRACE
 63 M²
 SHARED STAIR/ LIFT ACCESS



TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

overleaf
 Context
 Threshold
 Collective
 South elevation to the Coombe bypass







ASSESSORS' COMMENTS

JENCKS – I like that little red sketch. I wish there had been more of it to tell us what actually was the concept behind the building. The photographs are very seductive just as stitching photographs... It is described in the text as a ruptured environment pulled together by social housing to give a courtyard to the city, repairing the urban space – 47 dwellings pushed and pulled with brick in a way that recalls key social housing projects in other countries that were done something like that. So, it's definitely in the tradition of late Modern social housing, done with a certain style and urban thinking.

DEPLAZES – For me, it's one of the best projects in terms of urban reparation or integration. It's really strong in every sense.

McLAUGHLIN – I think it's hugely accomplished. It's actually difficult to understand from the photographs, but I've passed it a few times. The context in which this is inserted is so harsh, where they've done this road-widening. And whilst this looks kind of monumental in the photographs, when you see it in the context of the buildings around it, it's actually quite modest. It has this kind of Lutyens-esque scale to it. There are these huge box-like buildings which have gone up – bam, bam, bam – along the road-widening scheme, and somehow this is mitigating between the scale of those and the scale of the existing street, which is this scale here, and there are still stretches of it which are at that scale. This is an incredibly harsh environment – two lanes of traffic each way. It would be like the Cromwell Road in London. And what it has done is created a space. And then there's this much more tiny scale here, which is part of the historic city, and somehow it makes its way back into that. What's really interesting is the section here, how you have a single-storey cottage, and then it scales up to six storeys high, up to the scale of the tax-incentive stuff up this street. It's an incredibly difficult site and it makes a huge amount out of it.

JENCKS – It suddenly reminds me of social housing in Holland in the 1920s, where it became a monumental statement of the working class. It was a bastion of terrific strength.

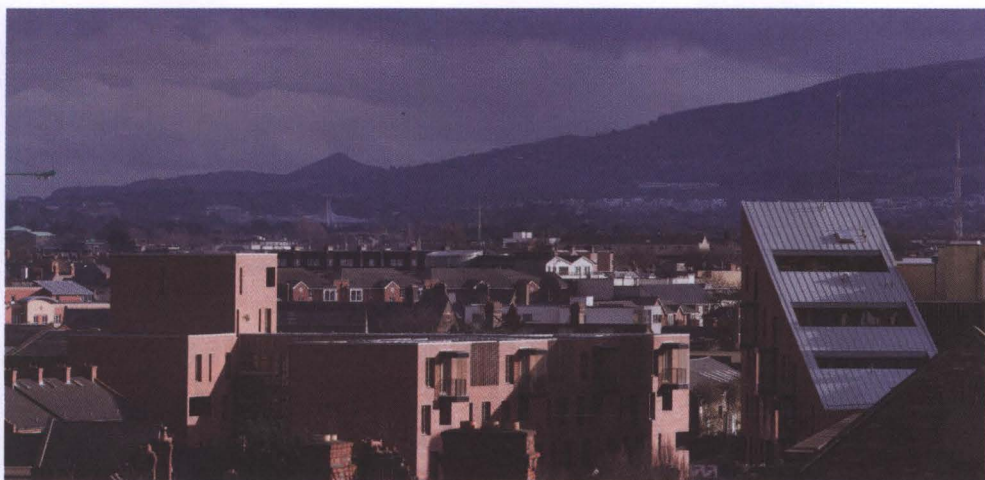
McLAUGHLIN – But in the context, this is actually not that monumental.

JENCKS – It's a pity. I wish it were.

FARRELL – It captures an atmosphere of Dublin which is very important architecturally, especially in this part of Dublin with its tradition of large-scale industrial buildings. But it also makes it in terms of the domestic. It has a strong sculptural quality built into this form. The fact that it is social housing is very important, social housing playing a significant urban role. It's important that local authorities are commissioning work of this quality.

KEAVENEY – It's superior to most blocks of apartments for middle-class buyers. It's really beautiful, very, very fine.

JENCKS – What is this material here [in the recessed part]? It's not brick, it's a hardwood screen. That's really incredibly nice. One of the things that excites me about this scheme is I feel it's incredibly urban. I feel the eyes of the city are there, but they aren't obtrusive somehow.



FARRELL – When we look at other, smaller projects which are crafting details in a certain kind of way, this project also works at that other scale of the city in terms of thresholds, and the making of entrances and apertures. It's thought about right down to the detail of the tactile as well as the form, so, yes, it's very successful.

JENCKS – What are these great voids, these heroic voids?

FARRELL – They're terraces. These are double-height.

JENCKS – Really? Wonderful.

FARRELL – They sometimes cross. They're solid above, so they're two-storey recesses.

JENCKS – And facing south too. Wonderful.

McLAUGHLIN – There's a lovely scale to that kind of courtyard with these little winter gardens and windows and staircases. You can imagine it's very active and full of life.

LATER

McLAUGHLIN – I am not going to participate in this discussion because one of the three schemes is by a relative of mine.

JENCKS – I personally think Timbryard, Gaeláras and Alzheimer's are the three best. I think Alzheimer's is great, but partly because it is so beautifully rendered. It wins the presentation award. Nowhere else is the intentionality as strong and committed as in these three projects.

KEAVENEY – As a structure, in the way it's built, and the fabric, I think Gaeláras is very impressive. But the concept and the range and the breadth that Alzheimer's takes in – the building, the function, the space, the surrounds, the environment – makes it a more complex, a more sympathetic realisation of a project.

DEPLAZES – Yes. There is a nice idea and a nice concept in the Alzheimer's garden, but somehow it is a story enclosed for itself, in a double sense... while Timbryard and Gaeláras are really giving the city something that is more than just the projects. They are absolutely important urban interventions that have strong, sustainable effects. They all have strong ideas, but besides being good projects with good ideas,



TIMBERYARD SOCIAL HOUSING

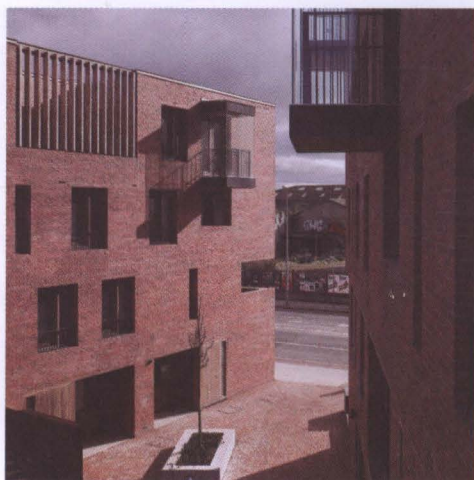
Surface Thickness

Courtyard

Our Lady of the Liberties

opposite – Courtyard to City

page 63
Double-height terrace
Dual-aspect living





they not only densify the city, they are upgrading it.

KEAVENEY – In broad terms, Timberyard, urbanistically, is very, very impressive, and has a striking presence on the street. But are there elements within it which are not quite of the same level of invention and execution? While it is a wonderful contribution to the street, with nice variation and nice cutting profiles and nice changes in height, is some of the internal detailing, perhaps, a bit more mundane?

JENCKS – I think it's a bit unfair to compare these three projects actually, because the cost of each is so different, and the context of each is so different. It's just really hard to compare apples and pears and pineapples.

FARRELL – What Andrea said is very important about where a piece of architecture stands relative not just to itself, but to others. I think they are beautiful projects, all three of them. They are all of a very, very high standard. I'm intrigued by the wall in the Alzheimer's project, because it's about layering and it's quiet and it's restrained. But I feel that the Timberyard project, in terms of cityscape and carving, somehow has more generosity in terms of what it gives to a city. I haven't experienced the Gaeláras project, which looks really playful, but it seems more private and internalised. It might be wonderful; I just don't support it as fully as I do Timberyard. This is a beautiful piece of architecture. And the fact that it is social housing, I think, is significant.

JENCKS – Listening to what Yvonne said about Timberyard being more open and generous than Gaeláras, I think that's true, but it suddenly made me think that they're both, rather, as urban schemes, both a little bit forbidding in terms of their mixed usage.

Maybe that's because they're both so new; they haven't been filled out. But you don't see that kind of mixture that makes an urban scheme so vital – at least, in these photographs you don't see it; maybe it's there. Again, it comes back to representation in architectural photographs, because those two are represented with stunning photos. What won me over to this photo of Gaeláras was what you described as the Hertzberger feeling, although you were talking about the façade. You can see it as working there in a way that is extremely urban. It's one of the few photographs which has people in it. Alas, they don't use these things urbanistically, so that while they feel extremely urban in their plans, the photographs curiously treat them as object buildings, whereas they are not object buildings. Anyway, that doesn't make any judgement about them as buildings.

FARRELL – Can I just ask Andrea to elaborate again on the public nature of architecture and then the more private?

DEPLAZES – To me, the Alzheimer's project is a really nice project, and this is a garden enclosed in walls. The concept is utterly focussed on that nice idea. It's a paradise garden, where you don't have to care what is outside. It would probably be tougher if it was not in the landscape but in the middle of a city to provoke another perception. To me, it looks really harmonious, without any breaks. It is fitting, and the idea of Alzheimer's patients living there with its orientation is wonderful. Everything fits and it's really nice. But somehow, for me, it's too nice to be true. I'm not sure if the poetry of these wonderful drawings is really fitted to what then happens when the whole thing is realised. One can hope that this is a hypothesis; one hopes that it really does become this kind of paradise. While in Timberyard, we have all the breaks of the city, all the things that do not fit, and it is really a project that connects contradictory positions in a way that it produces something of more value than just being good social housing, or just being a nice object. It is a defining, catalytic project, a very complex one, that helps develop a new perception of that quarter. I can't say that for sure, because I have never been there, but it looks like it has the strength to be of potential there.

FARRELL – But also, in experiencing it, it really does capture a sense of Dublin. It's not just healing a break, it's not just a metaphor, it actually picks up on scale and grain and materiality and the toughness of certain parts of the city. So, in terms of an architecture both in use and in form, in character and in materials, it is very thorough and very convincing. It's a proud contemporary interpretation of a city.

O'DONNELL + TUOMEY ARCHITECTS was established by Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey in 1988. Winners of more than 50 national and international awards for their work over the past 20 years, they have been 6 times winners of the AAI Downes Medal, 3 times finalists for the Mies Van der Rohe Award (1997, 1999, 2003), twice short-listed for the Stirling Prize (1999, 2005) and for Lubetkin Prize, and won the RIAI Gold Medal in 2005. Selected to represent Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2004 and in *The Lives of Spaces* at the 2008 Biennale. Recent cultural projects include the Glucksman Gallery, UCC (2004); Lyric Theatre, Belfast (2011), extension to the Photographers' Gallery, Soho, London (2010), Coleraine Museum & Library (2012); London School of Economics SU (2012).

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