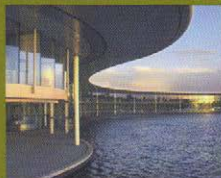


ARCHITECTURE05 THEGUIDETO THERIBA AWARDS

MERRELL



LEWIS GLUCKSMAN GALLERY .CORK .IRELAND .O'DONNELL + TUOMEY

The Lewis Glucksman Gallery is one of those buildings that can neither be captured in photographs nor properly summarized in words. Adolf Loos once said he was proud that his (and by implication other great) buildings could not be understood in photographs, and the same is true here. You need to visit it.

The building sits in a key position close to the entrance of University College Cork. On two sides it has a civic role in addressing the university and the city beyond; on the other two it has a completely different, almost picturesque, role in settling into an important mature landscape. That the building handles this difficult tension with apparent ease is the first mark of the incredible skill that the architects have brought to it.

In a way the architecture is full of contradictions: it uses everyday materials such as galvanized steel and MDF, yet it manages to appear luxurious (but not decadent); it has a truly astonishing cantilever, but it feels as if it should be there (rather than being a gestural shout); the walls of the gallery, which by tradition should be orthogonal, have bends in them, and they work; the building occupies the tight footprint of two previous tennis courts, but inside has a Tardis quality through the continuity of route and space; it employs none of the classical tropes for beauty, but looks astonishingly good; the galleries have a feeling of concentrated internality and yet one is always connected to the outside; the detailing is under complete control, but never fetishized. This is a rich and intellectually stimulating building.

To understand the experience one follows a *promenade architecturale*. This starts with one of the main routes of the university that cuts straight beneath the underbelly of the galleries. Le Corbusier used a similar trick, driving a major pedestrian route through the Carpenter Center at Harvard, but there the effect is to turn visitors into voyeurs; at Cork it democratically opens up the building to anyone. From the entrance one either descends (guided by a cold steel handrail) into the stone-clad, earthbound lower floors, apparently cut from the raw landscape, or rises (guided by warm timber) to the galleries

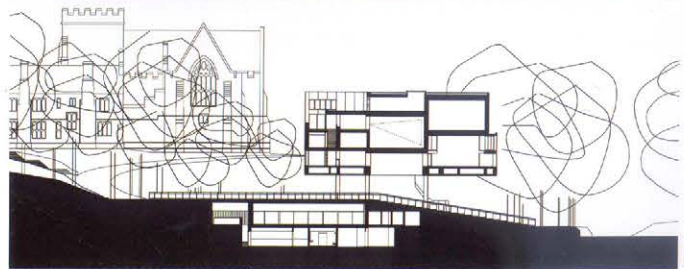
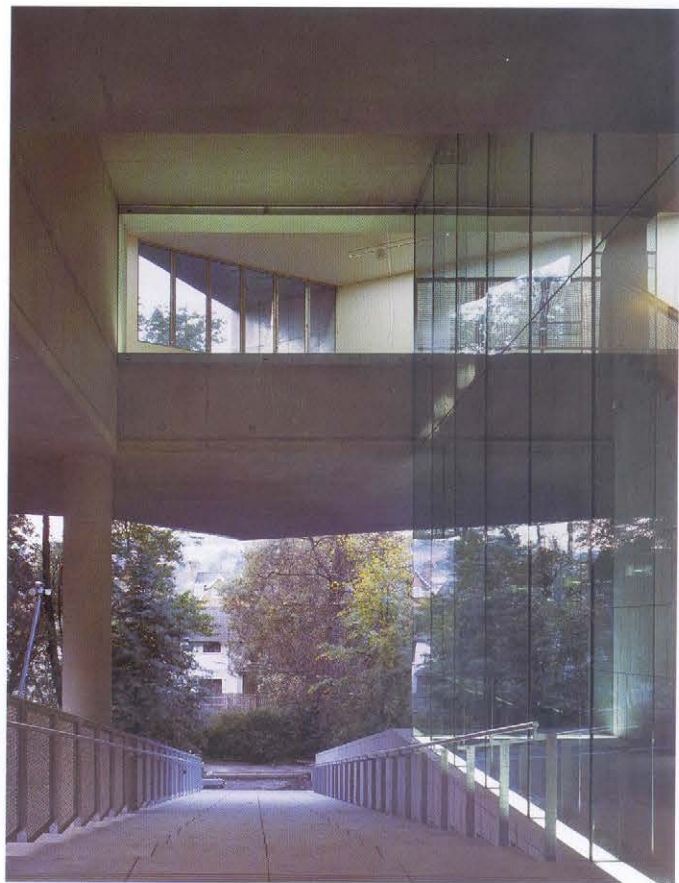
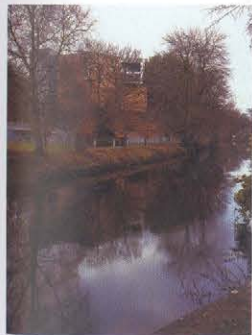
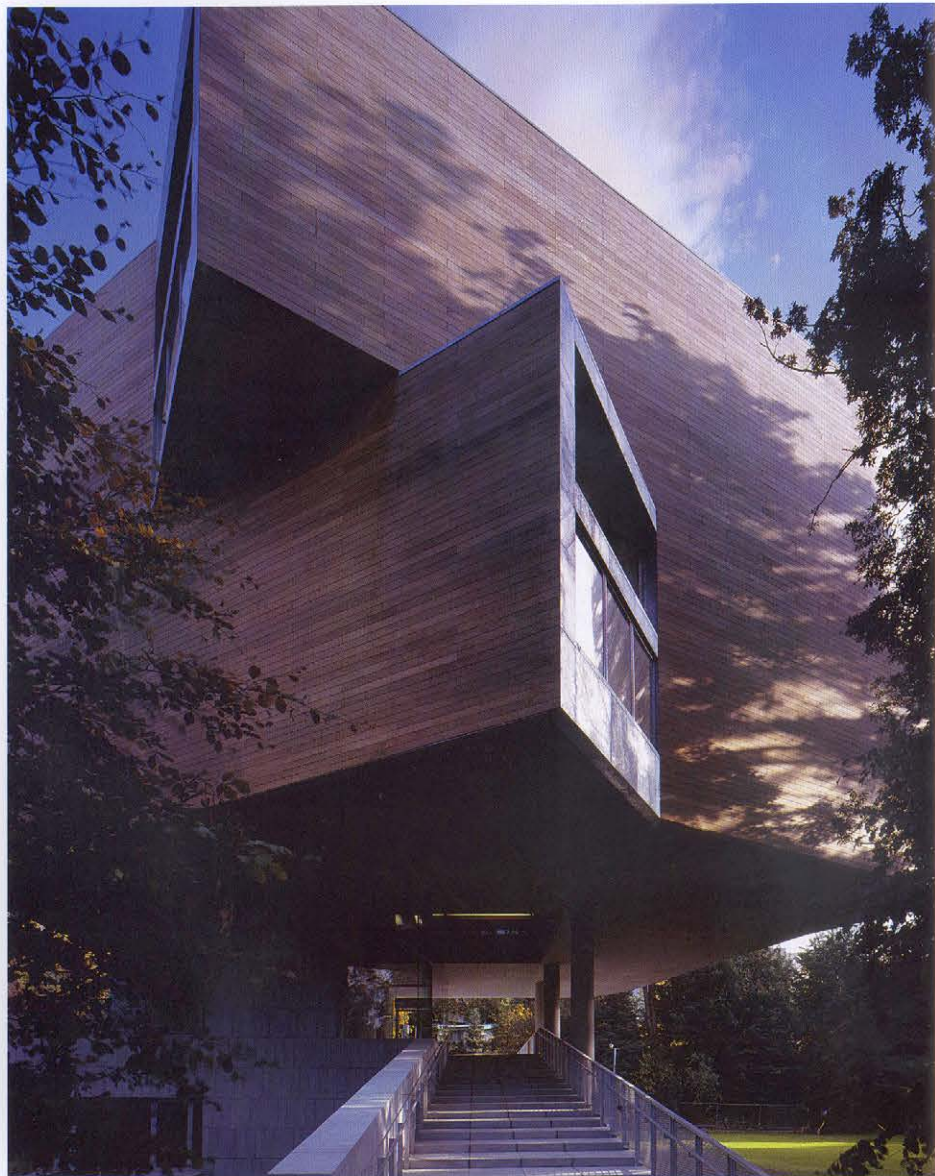
CLIENT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER HORGAN LYNCH
CONSULTING ENGINEERS
M&E ENGINEER ARUP CONSULTING
ENGINEERS
QS AKC CHARTERED SURVEYORS
CONTRACTOR P. J. HEGARTY & SONS
GROSS INTERNAL AREA 2295 SQUARE
METRES
CONTRACT VALUE £7 MILLION
PHOTOGRAPHER DENNIS GILBERT – VIEW

above. Here one is nudged but not cajoled on a route upwards until at the top, just when one thinks one has reached a cul-de-sac and will have to retrace one's steps, a small staircase releases the tension and spins one back down. Along the route are incidents and placements that are beautifully judged, adding variety without being intrusive.

What is really remarkable about this building is that the more one looks, the better it gets. That is a sign of complete assurance and maturity. Miles Davis once said that what most artists do is to make simple things complex, but what great artists (and of course that included him) do is to make complex things appear simple. This is one of those rare buildings that fits that definition of great art. To cite two giants of the twentieth century in this report is not incidental. This building belongs to the canon of modern buildings.

Perhaps it was the romance of the visit, perhaps it was the Beamish, but afterwards Joan Bakewell thought she detected an architectural change: 'I think I can spot a certain return of sensuality generally to the feel of the places we have been to. They are softer, not quite as rigid, perhaps an emerging romantic strand in the way architecture is going.' Piers Gough thought it 'A Stirling building without the faults', though he did think Stirling's faults made his buildings more interesting. For Joan, the building gave her 'pleasure at every turn'; and Isabel liked the informal relationship of the building and the art and the way 'things can be small and heroic at the same time'. Piers was also moved to make a more general point about architects and clients: 'There's a generosity among clients towards architects. Architects are no longer the feared, frightening people who go and spend your money badly. There is a sense in which architects are allowed their freedom and this is what I mean by poetry.' The Lewis Glucksman Gallery has poetry in stanzas.





PLAN AND SECTION