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A new star has risen in the east of Dublin, says Shane O'Toole

Donnell + Tuomey, Ireland's most celebrated architectural firm, is also its most controversial. John Tuomey, recently appointed professor of architectural design at University College Dublin, has shared the practice for the past 20 years with Sheila O'Donnell. The buildings they design will, they hope, feel strangely familiar yet be entirely new. Their relation to their vicinity, to their context, to the structures they are conventionally familiar with, is the subject of their work. "We're not in a new context," says Tuomey. "We're in a new context in our own way." The key to success, Tuomey adds, is to "find the right balance between the known and the unknown." The architects are currently completing the Sean O'Casey community centre in Dublin's East Wall. It's a building that's both traditional and innovative, combining new materials with familiar forms to create a unique design. "We're trying to find a way to make the unknown known," Tuomey says. "We're trying to make the unknown familiar." The building is a part of a larger masterplan for the regeneration of the area, and it's designed to be a vibrant hub for the community. "The building is designed to be a place of encounter," Tuomey says. "It's a place where people can come together and share ideas." The architects have also designed a number of other projects in the city, including the Fitzwilliam Library and the National Gallery of Ireland. "We're trying to make buildings that are unique but also familiar," Tuomey says. "We're trying to make buildings that are both traditional and innovative." The architects are also planning a new development in the Docklands area of Dublin, which will be a major landmark for the city. "We're trying to make buildings that are both traditional and innovative," Tuomey says. "We're trying to make buildings that are both traditional and innovative."