“Pass me the V&A there, please.” It’s a somewhat surreal request on the day of our shoot, as Sheila O’Donnell points to an architectural model. But there’s nothing unusual in it for Sheila and John Tuomey, who are currently working on two adjacent public buildings looking out across London’s Olympic Park – the other being the performing arts venue Sadler’s Wells. “Such an opportunity, and at such a scale, allows us to practise what we preach.” The couple list “civic values, social purpose and the possibility for useful beauty” as values that underpin their work of over 25 years.