



Good design in the frame

The Photographers' Gallery unveiled its new home for international and British photography in the heart of London's Soho, marking the conclusion of its ambitious £9.2 million capital campaign.

Designed by award-winning Irish architects O'Donnell + Tuomey, the transformed building features a two storey extension that doubles the size of the previous exhibition space. The generously proportioned galleries provide a platform for an enhanced programme of exhibitions, showcasing established and emerging photographic talent from the UK and around the world.

A new environmentally-controlled floor will create opportunities to show more work from archives and museum collections and higher ceilings in the top floor galleries provide dynamic spaces for large-scale and moving image works.



A sculpted terrazzo entrance with an open plan design connects the ground-level Café and lower-ground Bookshop to the street, creating a welcoming meeting place and a lively hub for visitors. Extending over a further five floors, the original Victorian red-brick warehouse is linked to a modern steel-framed extension through an external sleeve of black render, terrazzo and sustainably sourced Angelim Pedra wood. The architects have created numerous links between exterior and interior, punctuating the building with large feature windows which function as apertures onto the urban realm around Oxford St.

The project's Architectural Statement provides a good insight into the design challenge. The Gallery is located at a crossroads, between Soho and Oxford Street. The corner site is visible in a glimpse view through the continuous shop frontage of Oxford Street. Ramillies Street is approached down a short flight of steps, leading to a quieter world behind the scenes of London life, a laneway with warehouses and backstage delivery doors. The brick-warehouse steel-frame building is extended to minimise the increase in load on the existing structure and foundations. This extended volume houses large gallery spaces. A close control gallery is located within the fabric of the existing building.





The lightweight extension is clad in a dark rendered surface that steps forward from the face of the existing brickwork. The street front café is finished with black polished terrazzo. Untreated hardwood timber framed elements are detailed to slide into the wall thickness flush with the rendered surface. The composition and detail of the hardwood screens and new openings give a crafted character to the façade.

A deep cut in the ground floor façade was made to reveal the café. The ground floor slab was cut out to lead down to the basement bookshop. An east-facing picture window and the north-light periscope window to the city skyline were added in response to the specific character of the site.

