



Lewis Glucksman Gallery

O'Donnell + Tuomey

Cork, Eire, 2004

While not easy to categorize, the Lewis Glucksman Gallery, situated close to the entrance of University College Cork, is an extremely significant building of its time. Some even herald it as the alternative winner of the 2005 Stirling Prize – it somewhat predictably lost out to the host city's Scottish Parliament Building [see pp. 202–3]. Regardless of such conjecture, however, it remains one of the most accomplished works to date by the Dublin-based practice O'Donnell + Tuomey, and deserves close scrutiny in order to unpick hidden delights held in both plan and section.

Through its location, set somewhere between city and park, the building performs two simultaneous roles: to the north and west it performs a civic role, addressing the relative formality of university and townscape, and acting to some extent as a gatehouse to the campus; to the east and south, it is seen more clearly in picturesque isolation, elevated high above a neatly kept lawn and set against a backdrop of trees. Locked into the site's northwest corner, therefore, the building sits on a solid and formally assertive stone podium that contains two levels of accommodation. Built partially into a slope, the stone monolith contains toilets and stores at the

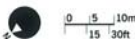
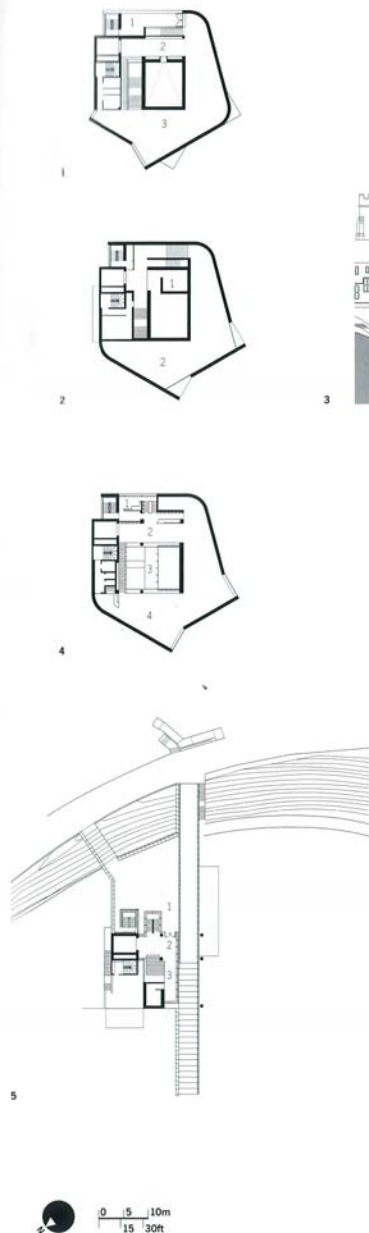
lowest plinth level, and a loading bay, function room and café on the upper level. Above this, the principal gallery spaces are elevated in a curvaceous timber box, and linking the two, with vertically modulated glazing that cuts up into the timber, a glazed lobby steps back to create a public route. This route, articulated at high level by an axial window that provides a preview of a gallery, encourages all who pass by to enter, led by the light via the principal stair.

With a twist in plan that effectively turns the principal axis of the galleries east by 45 degrees, the largest double-height galleries are cantilevered out in two triangulated L-shape spaces. These run east and south around the orthogonal gallery core. The core, which extends the geometry of the podium, contains three floors, with two smaller black box galleries (suitable for projections and light-sensitive work), stairs, lift and a roof terrace to the north.

While apparently whimsical when seen in plan, the soft curves and angular window boxes of the galleries help to locate the spaces within their context, providing opposing views – first to the east on the second floor, and then to the west on the fourth. Through its curves, views and subtle

shifts in geometry, the plan implicitly encourages movement through its spaces, giving a level of sophistication and intricacy that belies this building's relatively small scale.

This is a fine example of how to conceive a building that is planned completely in the round. With no discernible front or back, it is both a compelling object in its own right and a highly contextual and well-anchored addition, placed within a delightful setting.



1 Third Floor Plan

- 1 Terrace
- 2 Reading Desk
- 3 Gallery 2

2 Second Floor Plan

- 1 Close Control Gallery
- 2 Void over Gallery 1

3 Section A-A

4 First Floor Plan

- 1 Office
- 2 Book Shop
- 3 Void over Showcase
- 4 Gallery 1

5 Upper Ground Floor Plan

- 1 Forecourt
- 2 Entrance Hall
- 3 Showcase

6 Lower Ground Floor Plan

- 1 Café
- 2 The River Room
- 3 Service Yard