



FARMHOUSE WING

Lawrence and Long Architects

Award: Winner, Best Leisure – RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2016

Client: Private

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Image

All spaces in the new Farmhouse Wing open out onto a long veranda

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Project Photography: Richard Hatch

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Location: Co. Meath





Image

- 2/5 The new farmhouse wing evokes the former enclosing out-buildings (showing closed and open doors)
- 3 Oak veneered panelled walls are used internally
- 4 Corner windows have oak liners and built-in seats

RURAL PALLADIA

Michael Kavanagh, MVK Architects

The typology of the Georgian country house, of the middle size, with integrated farm courtyards is common across Ireland. The arrival of Palladianism brought with it the three-part hierarchy of composition: the house itself – as frontispiece and focus of the facade – framed by two lower pavilions intended to make a gesture of welcome. In small Neo-Classical villas, more often than not, the Palladian aspiration of presenting an object in the landscape on the one hand and agricultural practicalities on the other meet; wings are used as barns, or stables, with many extending to enclose farmyards.

A variation on the theme is the 'economic villa', where instead of having farmyards in the wings, the house has a formal courtyard of outbuildings behind it, with the back of the house looking directly into the yard. Maurice Craig describes examples as occupying a pivotal position on the frontier between the farmhouse and mansion.

In the case of this Georgian farmhouse in Co. Meath, early 19th century ordinance survey maps show ranges of out-buildings forming yards behind the house. These enclosing structures have long since been removed and the working farm relocated nearby. The reinterpretation of these lost courtyard spaces by Lawrence and Long Architects is the completion of a layout implicit in the form of the house they serve. The work is an exploration in contemporary architecture rooted in an understanding and appreciation of the historical context and typological lineage from which it derives.

The brief was to accommodate new recreational and storage spaces and reorganise an existing yard to the rear of a Georgian farmhouse in Co. Meath. This was achieved by the rationalisation of ground levels and creation of two distinct courtyards unified by a colonnaded wing.

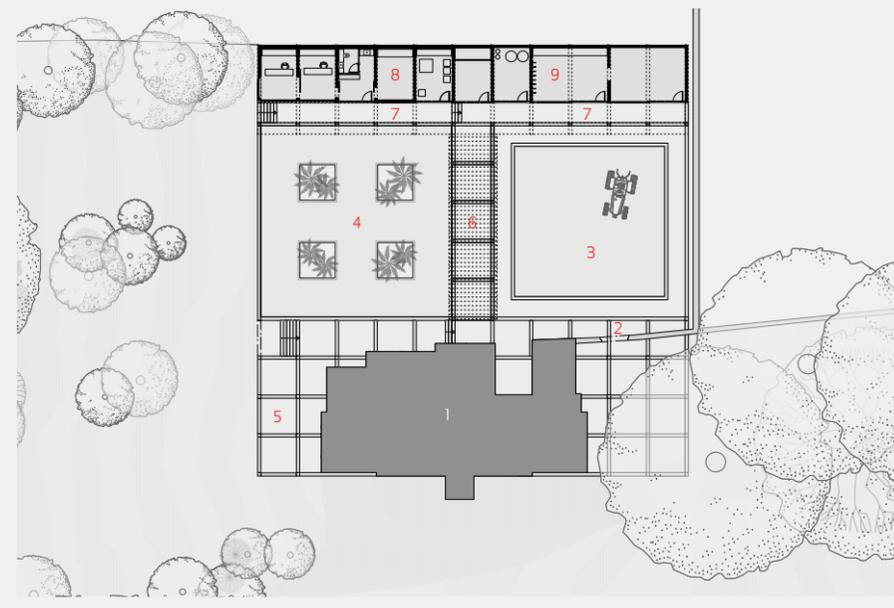
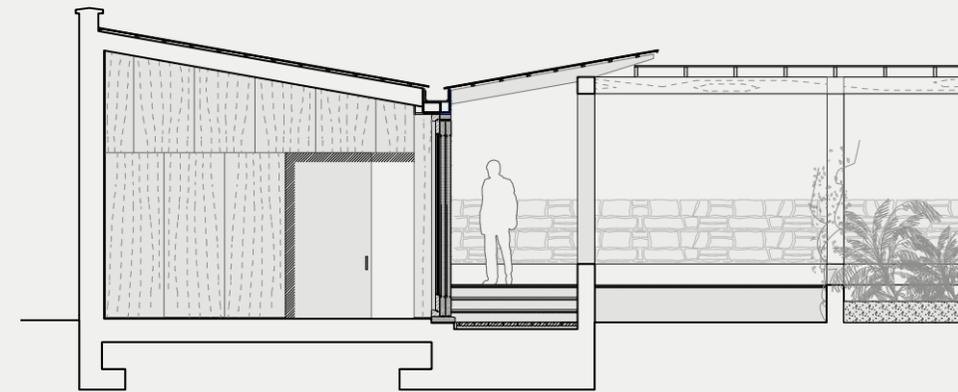
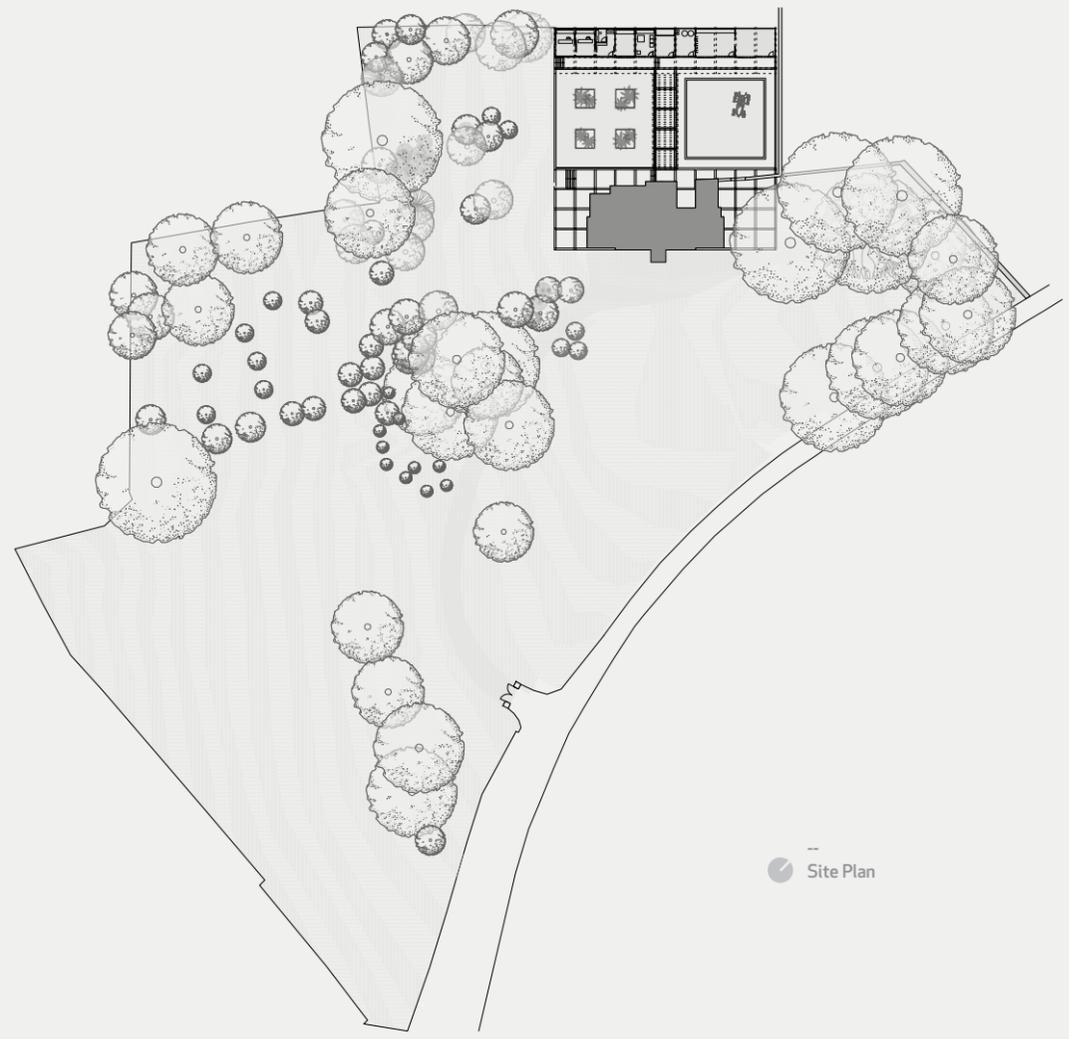
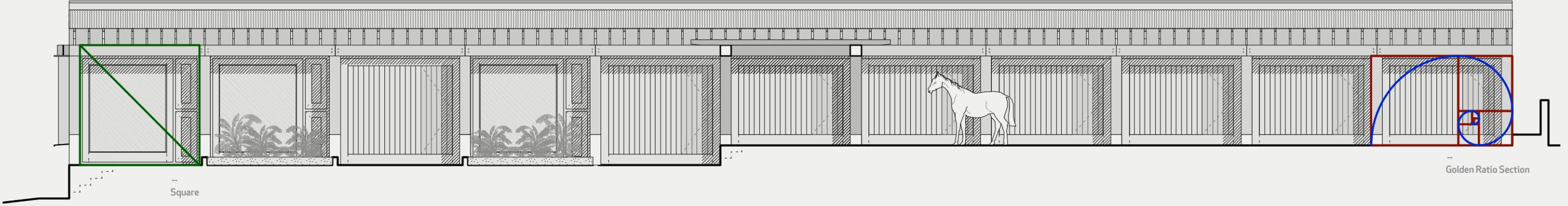
The courtyards each respond to different elements of the brief, one being agricultural while the other is domestic and recreational in nature. A new single storey, colonnaded wing encloses both courtyards in a single gesture facing the farmhouse. An open colonnade, perpendicular to the wing, is used to visually separate the two courtyards and locates the change in level between them, while providing a sheltered route from the house.

The courtyards and enclosing structures are arranged on a geometrical grid emanating from the front of the farmhouse. The considered use of geometry extends to the proportional system employed in the new façades and pays respect to Italian Renaissance antecedents in the Veneto.

The simple low building provides accommodation appropriate to the function of each adjacent courtyard; machinery and equipment stores, tool shed and plant room to the agricultural, and a sequence of rooms enfilade to the residential. The primary structure is of solid European Oak posts and beams. A concealed steel beam running the length of the building allows a functionally sophisticated façade to appear uncomplicated. The detailing of the components is immaculate; large oak sliders with wicket doors move across the south facing elevation, solid oak shutters provide ventilation, while large picture glazed units, set behind the sliding doors, animate the colonnaded wing. The oak reappears internally lining the habitable rooms, its warm tone complementing the polished concrete floor. The bathroom ceiling becomes pyramidal in form reaching to a rooflight above, blurring the light source and definition of space. External paved areas are carefully defined in a deliberately limited palette of materials. The total effect is one of serenity.

In this work, Lawrence and Long's preference for measured restraint is evident both in the precision of the detail and in the excellence of the craftsmanship which brought it into being. The result is a contemporary interpretation of the working farm courtyard, which is respectful of the found space, grounded in an appreciation of historical context, spatially uncluttered and exacting in detail and execution.

Michael Kavanagh is an architect based in Dublin. He is co-founder and Director of MVK Architects and a part-time tutor at UCD School of Architecture, Planning & Environmental Policy.



- Plan
- 1 Main House
 - 2 Archway in existing stone wall
 - 3 Upper Courtyard
 - 4 Kitchen Garden with raised beds
 - 5 New West Terrace
 - 6 Covered Pergola
 - 7 Veranda
 - 8 Study & Music Rooms
 - 9 Workshops