

Architecture in the Round

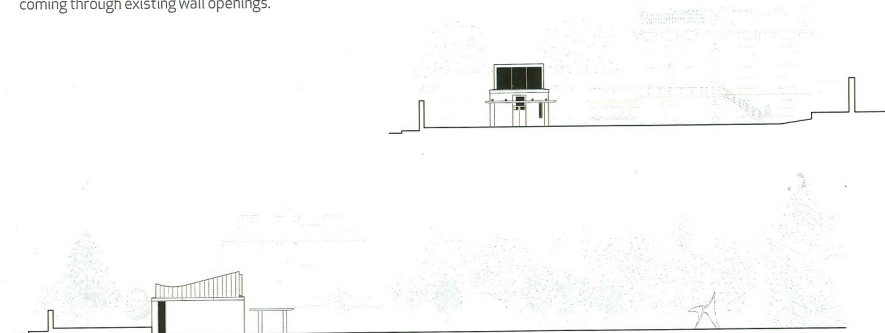
Text by Lawrence + Long Architects

The subject building is a 19th century stone outbuilding within the gardens of a large detached house in South Dublin. The property is included in the local authority's Record of Protected Structures. The main house was constructed in c.1860 and is a substantial two-storey over-garden level residence lying on a site of 0.3ha of mature gardens. The house is of significant architectural merit and lies in a condition very close to that originally built. The subject building is an outbuilding ancillary to the main house. Approximately 40m² in area, the building lies 11m to the southeast of the main house. The building is partially sunk into a level change at the front and presents a taller elevation to the rear garden than to the front. When viewed in the context of the front elevation of the main house, the studio is very modest and it screened by mature planting.

Originally built as a stone rubble-walled stable, substantial works were carried out in the mid-20th century, and it would appear that an original roof structure was removed and replaced with a flat concrete roof. The effect of these works was to remove much of the original fabric except the walls. In the case of this project, perhaps the brief and state of the building combined to allow a little more flexibility in how the structure might be interpreted, and there was latitude for creative adaptation. The situation as a free standing object in the grounds of a residence meant that the building could be considered in the tradition of garden pavilions, as something to be experienced in the round. It was a clear ambition from the outset that the walls, which were in good condition (in spite of their varied appearance) would be retained in their present state so as to assert the outbuilding character of the structure. It was also felt that any new openings in these walls should be kept to an absolute minimum. The existing concrete roof structure was clearly not original and owing to its failures, its removal would be preferable. In addition, this presented an opportunity for a new independent roof structure, which would compensate for the lack of daylight coming through existing wall openings.

The new roof structure entails a new band beam, which clearly is expressed, marking a distinction between old and new. The band beam also acts as a coping, sympathetic to the existing masonry fabric eventually acquiring a similar patina. The new roof was envisaged as a timber framed structure, profiled so as to provide a large northlight on the rear elevation and a flat roof light over the mezzanine level. The roof sits as a clearly distinguishable intervention on the concrete band beam. Some small new openings were provided to give a connection with the garden outside, as well as to provide operable ventilation shutters. These were formed with steel plate liners, which acted as lintel, jamb and cill. This achieved the necessary structural support with the minimum intervention in the granite wall structure. New windows were fitted and these were metal framed to match the existing window on the front elevation. The openings were lined internally with solid oak. The opportunity was also taken to include oak shutters so that the studio space could be 'blacked out' if necessary. This strategy provided a clear reading of the new openings as contemporary interventions within an existing structure.

Part of the design strategy centred on the creation of a 'freestanding' gallery box. This would read as a piece of furniture, and would be clearly distinguishable from the external envelope of the building. The box had a small staircase leading to a mezzanine level containing a study. The gallery box is a timber studwork structure, with painted plaster finish to the outer faces, while the inner faces are all lined in oak panels, which match the new joinery items and the floor finish. The principal ambition for the project was to adapt the building to its present use and to upgrade the structure in so doing, whilst allowing the minimum of intervention that may compromise either the fabric or character of the existing building.



Location: County Dublin

Elevation

Image

The artist's studio sits within the landscaped garden of a large house

Project Photography: Marie Louise Halpenny