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Connemara West Centre

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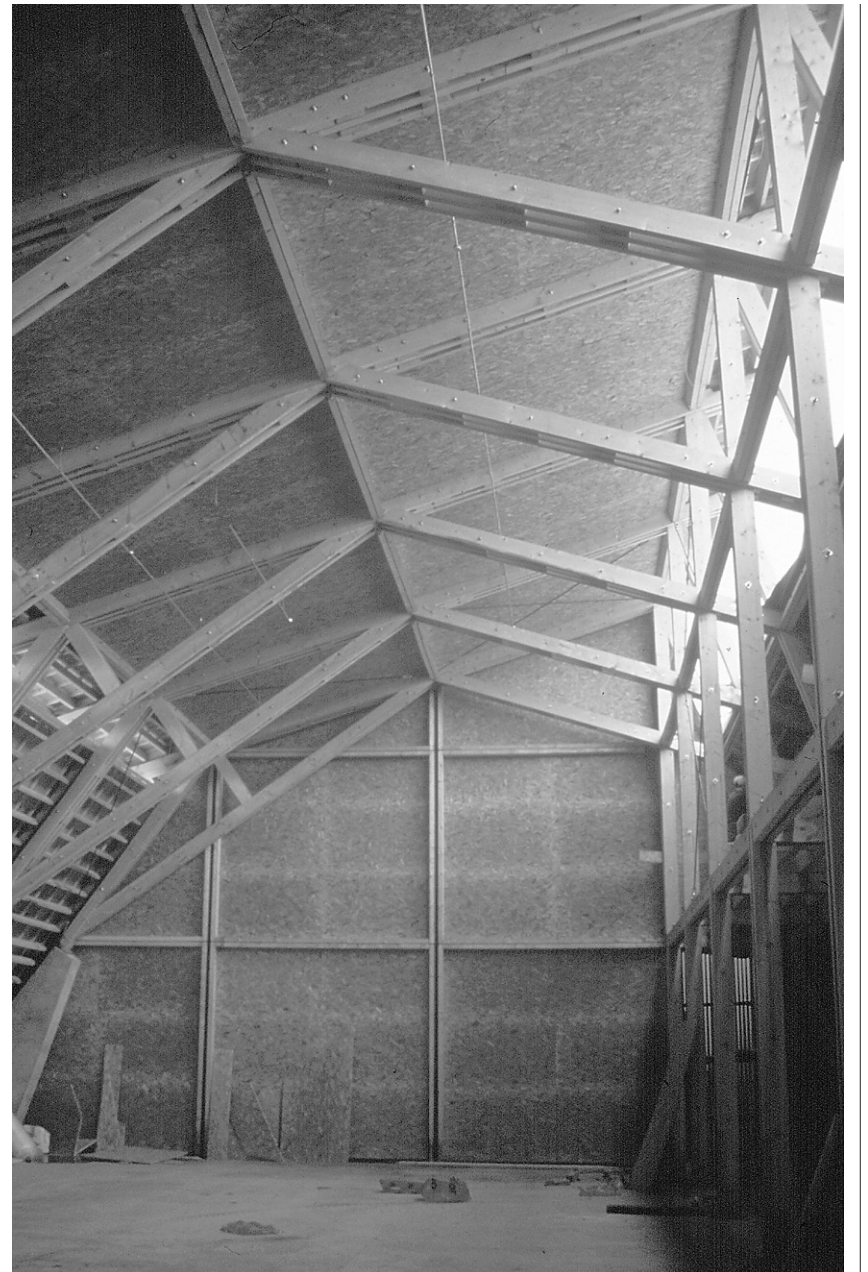
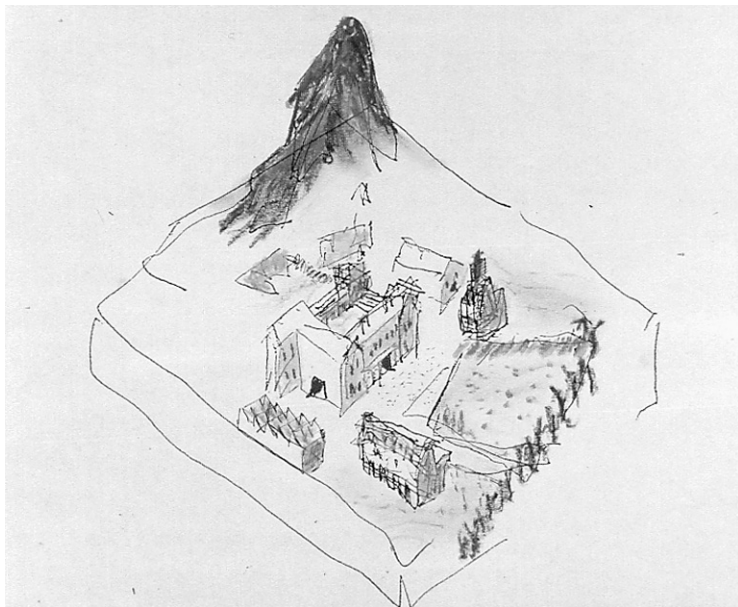
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Connemara West Centre Letterfrack Galway

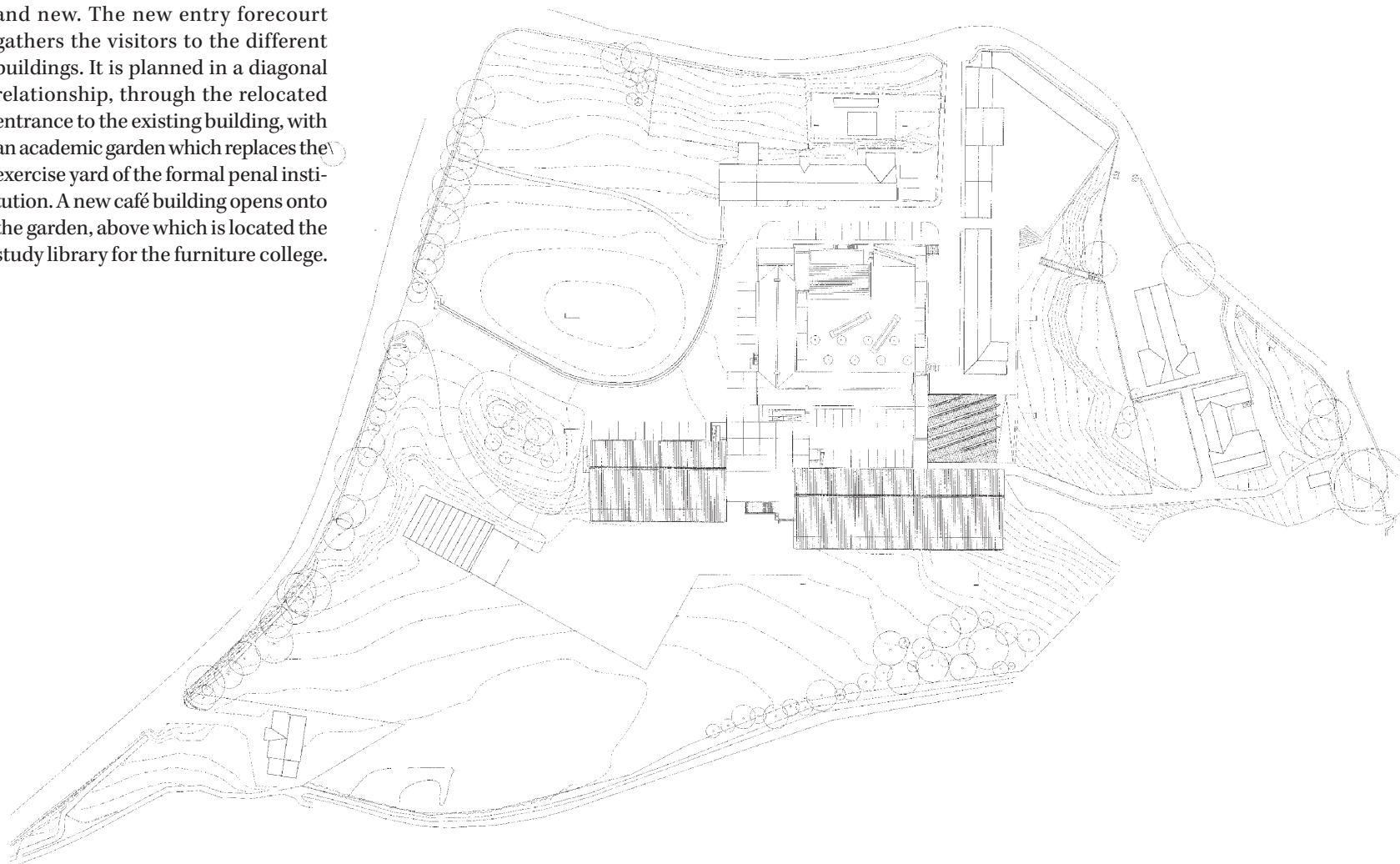
O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

Connemara West is a community-owned development organisation which has grown out of a disadvantaged area situated on the western seaboard of County Galway. The project is for a development strategy for the complex, including new buildings and the refurbishment of the former Industrial School to accommodate a furniture college, workshops, furniture restoration unit, student facilities, and administrative headquarters for a wide range of community-led projects.

New buildings are sited in relation to the existing to make a series of social



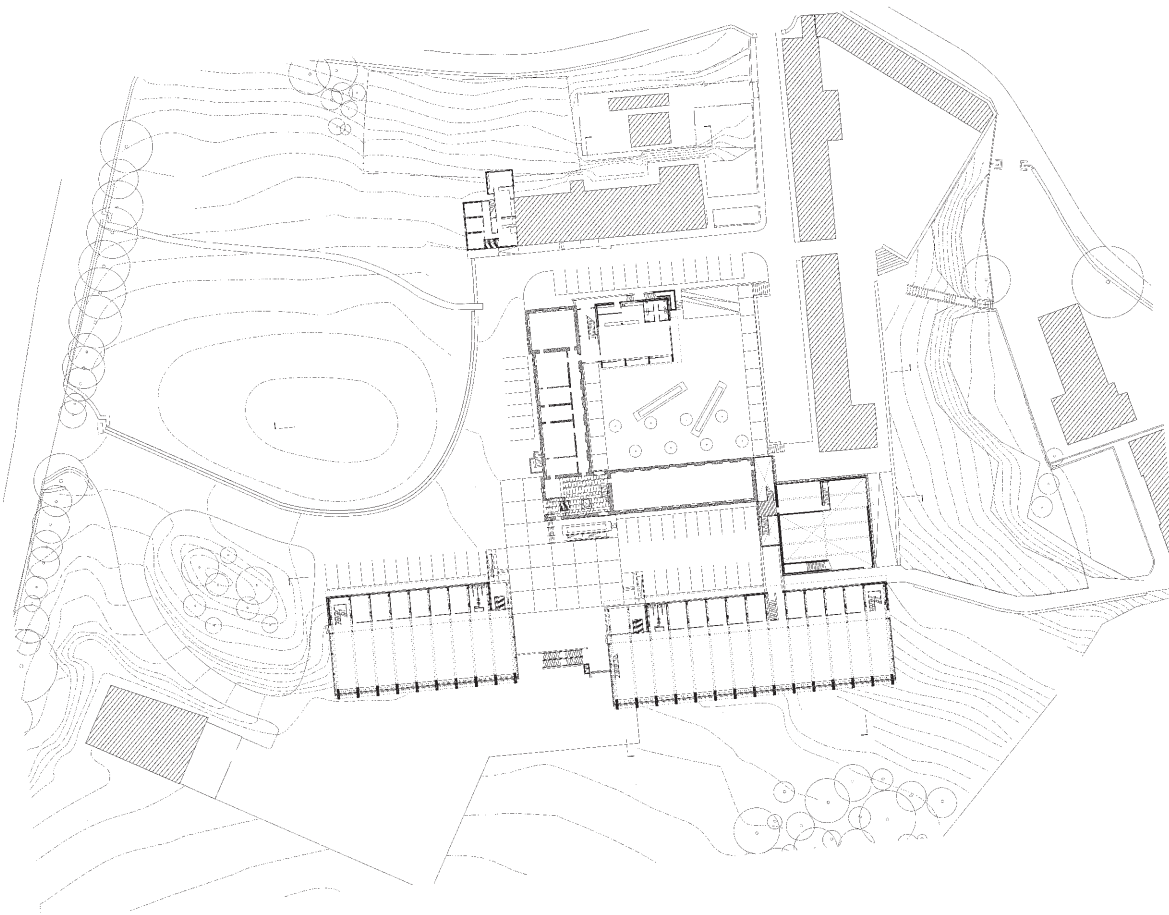
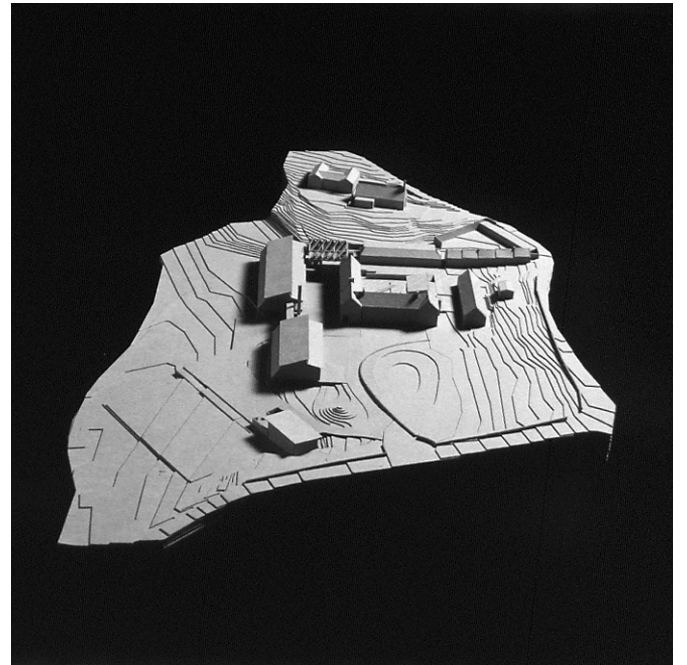
and communal external spaces and to increase the sense of connection with the village. The axis of entry has been shifted from its former centralised symmetry to achieve a compositional balance of equilibrium between old and new. The new entry forecourt gathers the visitors to the different buildings. It is planned in a diagonal relationship, through the relocated entrance to the existing building, with an academic garden which replaces the exercise yard of the formal penal institution. A new café building opens onto the garden, above which is located the study library for the furniture college.



Site plan

We have separated heavy delivery traffic from pedestrians and cars, and yet tried to keep a sense of openness and connection between the buildings and spaces on the site. Climate has been a strongly motivating factor, with entrances sheltered from the wind, and planting and earth banking used to create areas of shelter. It was important that the campus should have a clearly contemporary, forward looking identity; that the new use and new architecture would combine to transform the obsolete 19th century institutional building into an open educational resource for the 21st century.

The project has been developed in a phased construction program to allow the furniture college to remain in its existing building while the new machine hall, furniture restoration unit, bench room, café/library and link blocks are on site. When the new buildings are handed over the existing building will be refurbished and landscaping works will be completed.



The structural systems of the different buildings have been designed in response to their contrasting functional requirements and their place in the sequence of the construction program.

The café/library is an in-situ concrete frame building with the upperlevel timber frame added as a wraparound two storey bookshelf. The library roof is tilted to capture the view of the Diamond Hill mountain which forms a dramatic backdrop to the campus. The café opens out between fin columns of concrete in an effort to unite inside and outside space in the academic garden.

The machine hall and furniture restoration unit are built between the landfill foundation of the existing building and the boggy ground to the south. The concrete substructure straddles these special site conditions with ground beams ending in hammer head column, supported on individual piled foundations.



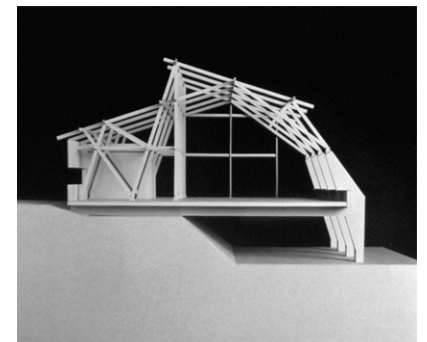
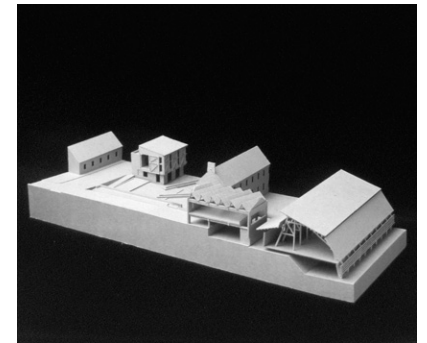
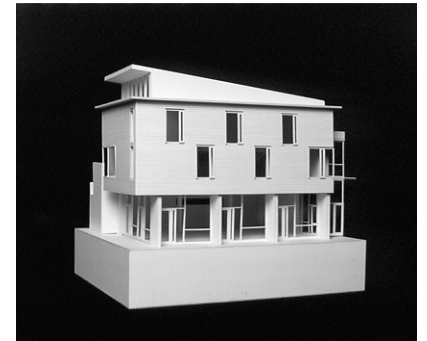
Elevation looking east

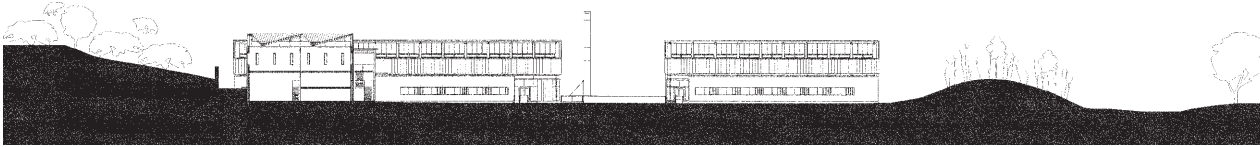


Elevation looking west

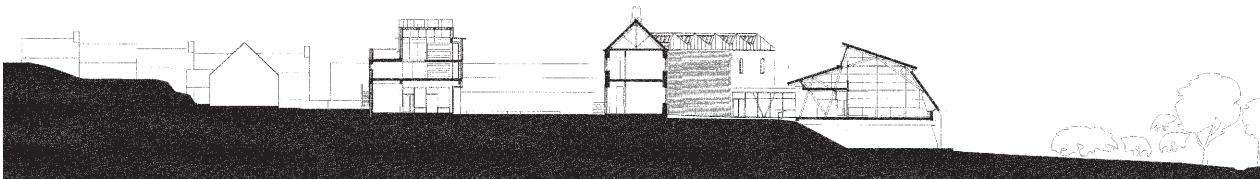


Elevation looking south



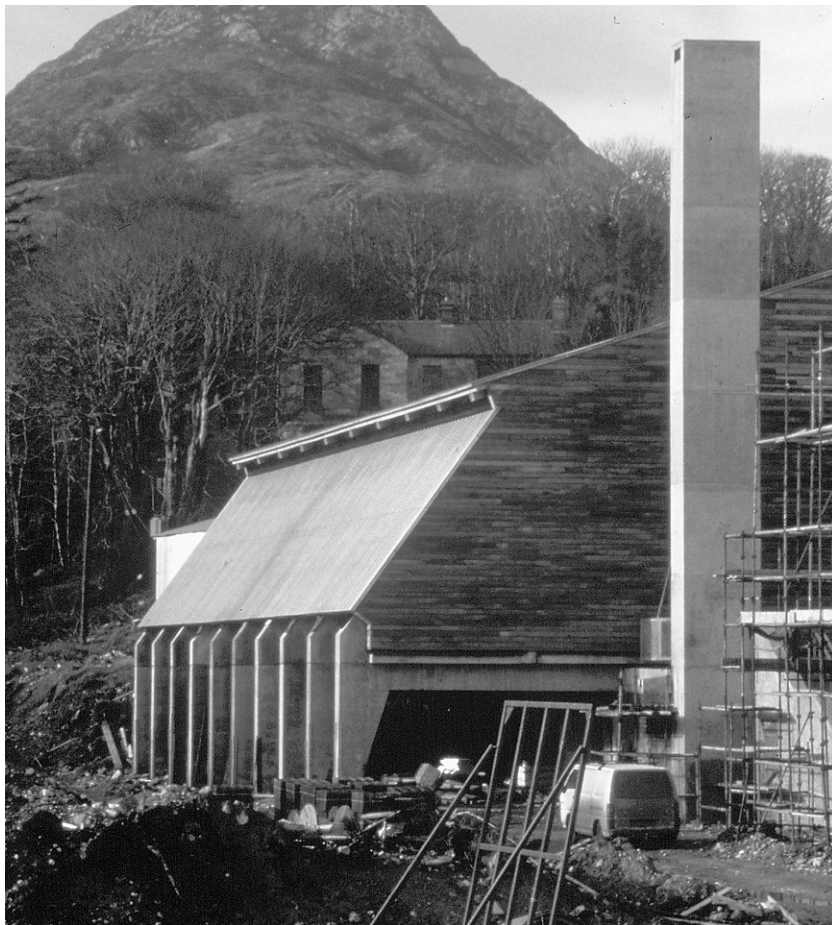


Section C



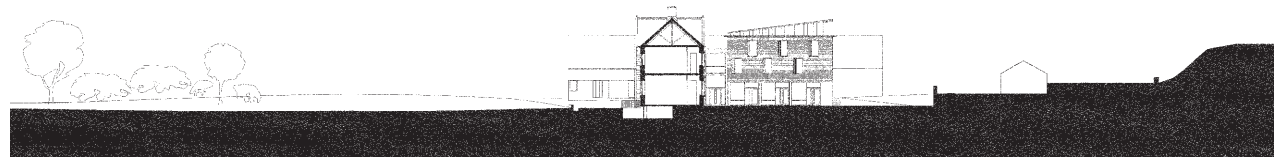
Section A





This supports a suspended ground slab raised above the wet ground with the intervening undercroft used for storage and technical rooms. A structural timber frame is erected above the concrete base. The bolted framework leans away from the prevailing winds and its asymmetrical section provides north light and cross ventilation to the workshop space within.

The bench room and link blocks are the last building elements added in the construction sequence to minimise disruption to the college in the demolition works and connections to the existing buildings. Steel frame construction allows for quick erection and an 18 meter clear span rooflit studio space occupies the entire upper floor of the bench room block.



Section D



Section B