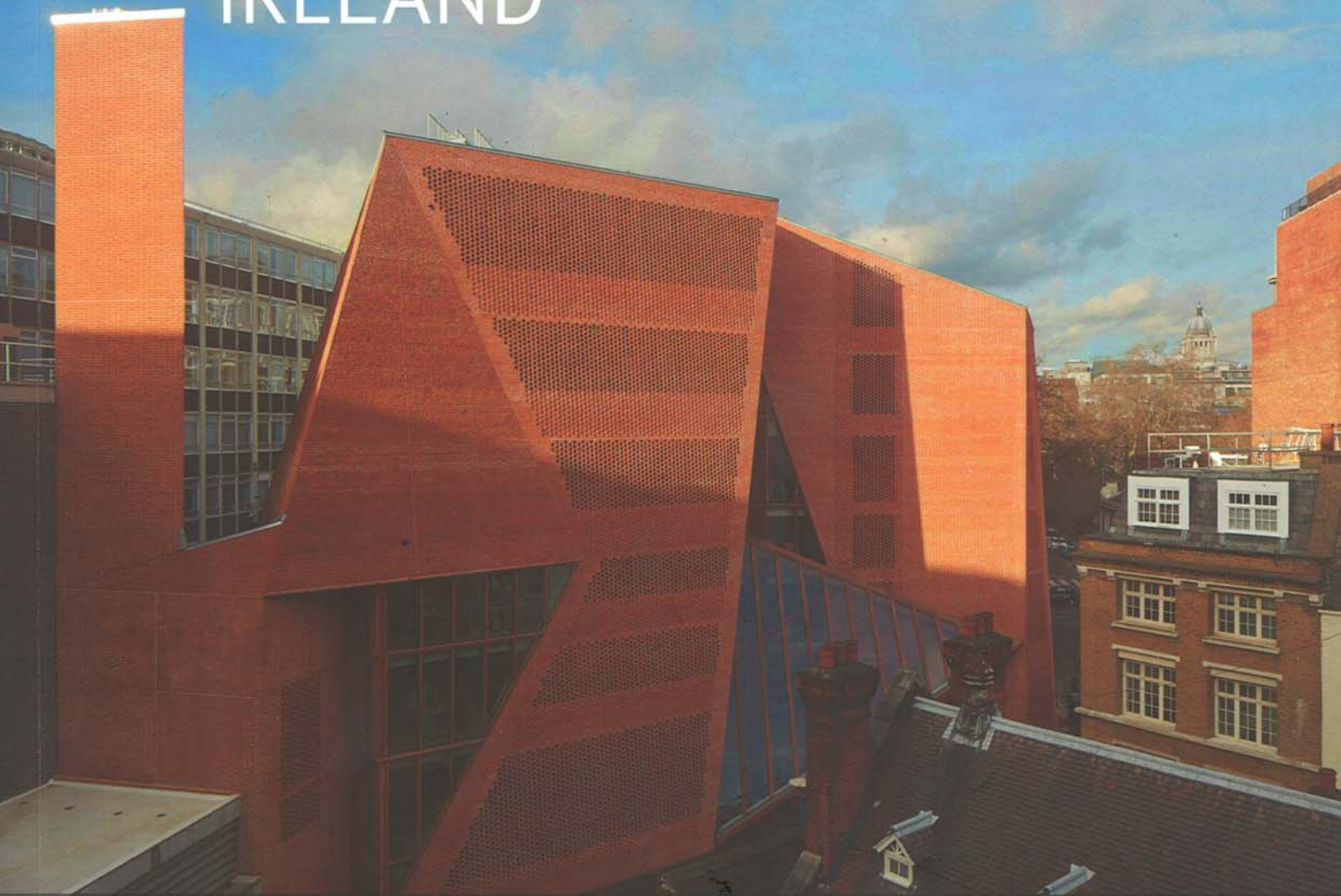


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# ARCHITECTURE IRELAND



*"A Hot Red Masterpiece"* - First View of Saw Swee Hock Student Centre, London School of Economics

By O'Donnell+Tuomey Architects

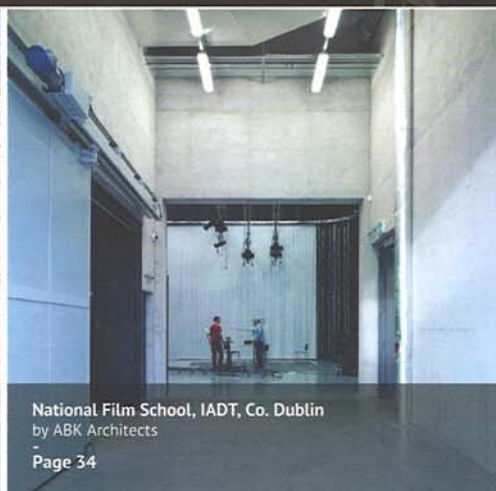
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Building Control (Amendment)  
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Sutherland School of Law, UCD, Co. Dublin  
by Moloney O'Beirne Architects  
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National Film School, IADT, Co. Dublin  
by ABK Architects  
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#### Architects - O'Donnell+Tuomey Architects

John Tuomey + Sheila O'Donnell (Directors), Willie Carey (Associate Director), Geoff Brouder (Project Architect), Laura Harty, Kirstie Smeaton, Gary Watkin, Anne-Louise Duignan, Ciara Reddy, Jitka Leonard, Iseult O'Cleary, Henrik Wolterstorff, Mark Grehan, Monika Hinz

**Client** - London School of Economics and Political Science, Estates Division

**Structural Engineers** - Dewhurst Macfarlane and Partners & Horganlynch Consulting Engineers

**Services Engineers** - BDSP

**Security / Fire / Acoustics / Transport & Logistics / Venue** - Arup

**Project Managers** - Turner & Townsend **Quantity Surveyors** - Northcroft

**Catering** - Tricon Foodservice Consultants **Archaeology** - Gifford

**Planning** - Turley Associates **Party Wall Consultant** - Anstey Horne

**Building Control Consultant** - Carillion **CDM Coordinator** - Gardiner & Theobald

**Main Contractor** - Geoffrey Osborne Limited

**Project size** - 6,101m<sup>2</sup> (gross internal floor area)

**Value** - £24m

**Duration** - 19 months

#### Benchmarking Evaluation System -

BREEAM Outstanding design rating; SBEM; EPC Annual energy demand and CO2 emissions for heating and cooling (excluding any contributions from onsite renewables which should be noted below) 36.84 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> - 7.29 kgCO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>\*

**Photography** - Dennis Gilbert / VIEW

## SAW SWEE HOCK STUDENT CENTRE, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

### Report by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

The brief for the new Saw Swee Hock Student Centre at the London School of Economics was to bring the student facilities together under one roof. The design was the winning entry of an international competition in June 2009. The multi-functional building includes a venue, pub, learning café, media, prayer, offices, gym, careers, dance studio and social spaces. The brief asked for the "best student building in the UK" and had the aspiration for BREEAM Excellent rating. The design achieved BREEAM Outstanding.

### Planning Constraints

The site lies within the Strand Conservation Area. The context was complex and the site was restricted by surrounding building lines. Specifications were closely monitored by Westminster planners, who supported the ambition for a contemporary design integrated with its setting. Throughout the building process, the planners maintained a commitment to the enduring quality of carefully crafted construction.

### Street Life

The site is located at the knuckle-point convergence of narrow streets that characterise the LSE city centre campus. The faceted façade operates with respect to the Rights of Light Envelope and is

tailored to lines of sight, to be viewed from street corner perspectives and to make visual connections between internal and external circulation. The brick skin is cut along fold lines to form large areas of glazing, framing views. Analysis of the context has influenced the first principles of a site specific architectural design.

### Embodiment

The building is designed to embody the dynamic character of a contemporary Student Centre. The complex geometries of the site provided a starting point for a lively arrangement of irregular floor plates, each particular to its function. Space flows freely in plan and section, with stairs turning to create meeting places at every level.

### Construction, Colour and Atmosphere

London is a city of bricks. The building is clad with bricks, with each brick offset from the next in an open work pattern, creating dappled daylight inside and glowing like a lattice lantern at night. The building has the robust adaptability of a lived-in warehouse, with solid wooden floors underfoot. The structure is a combination of reinforced concrete and steelwork. Steel trusses or ribbed concrete slabs span the big spaces. Circular steel columns prop office floors between the large span volumes and punctuate the open floor plan of the café.

### GROUND FLOOR

- 1 > Entrance
- 2 > Lobby
- 3 > Stairs
- 4 > Pub
- 5 > Post room
- 6 > Control room
- 7 > WC
- 8 > Pub entrance
- 9 > Void to event space

Concrete ceilings contribute thermal mass with acoustic clouds suspended to soften the sound. There are no closed-in corridors. Every hallway has daylight and views in at least one direction. Every office workspace has views to the outside world. The basement venue is daylit from clerestory windows.

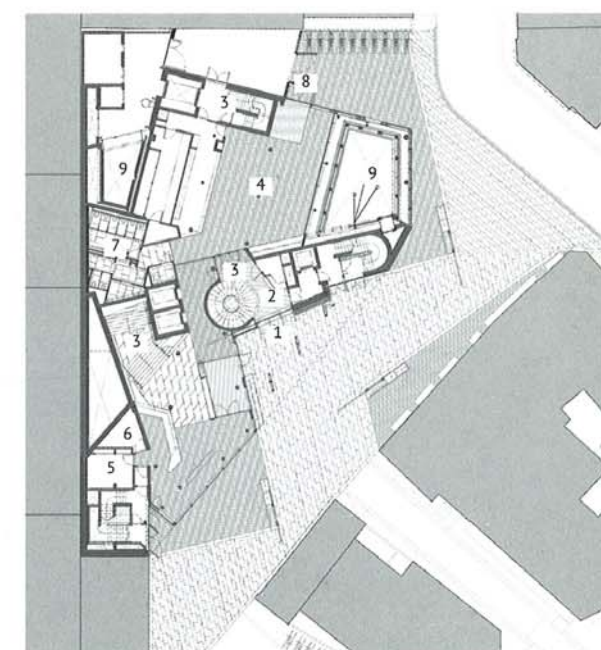
### Inclusive Design

The building is designed with accessibility and inclusive design as key considerations. Approaches are step free. Floor plates are flat without steps. Circulation routes are open and legible with clearly identifiable way-finding.

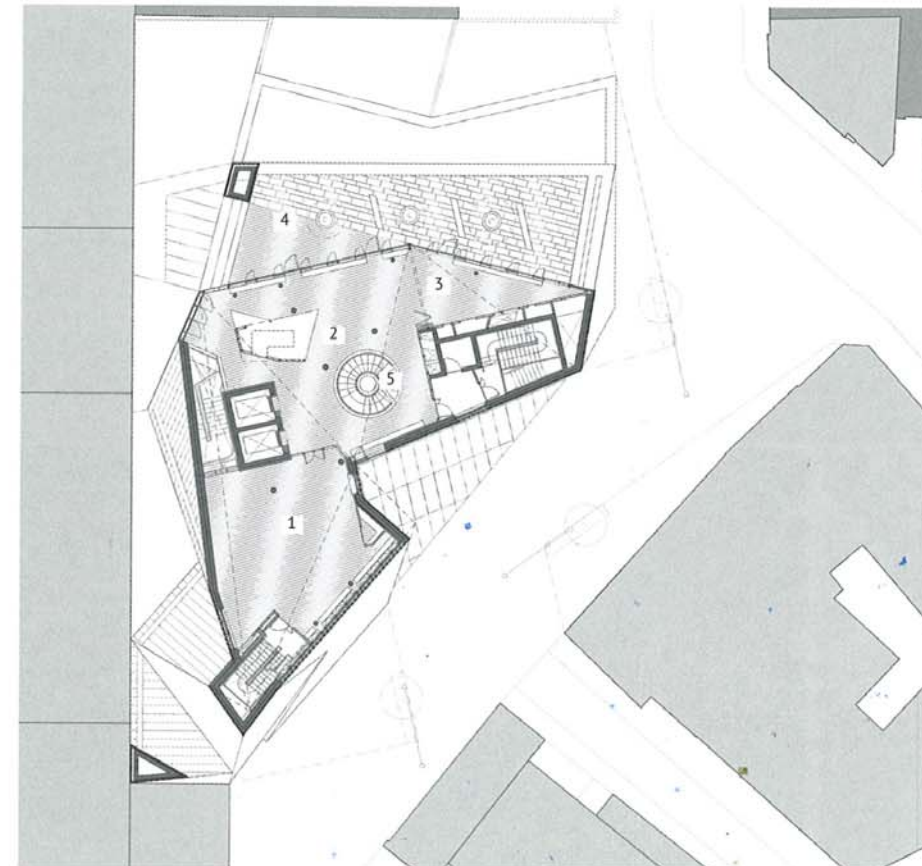
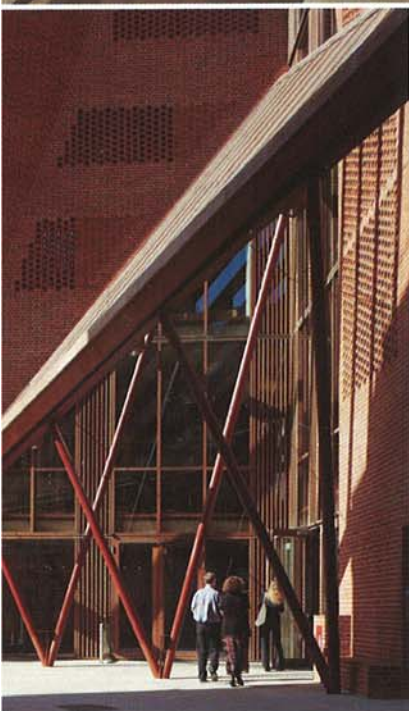
Works are currently underway on the pedestrian street landscape and are due for completion in June 2014.



SITE / GROUND FLOOR PLAN







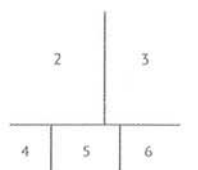
#### SIXTH FLOOR

- 1 > Exercise studio
- 2 > Coffee / Juice bar
- 3 > Student Union
- 4 > Roof garden
- 5 > Stairs



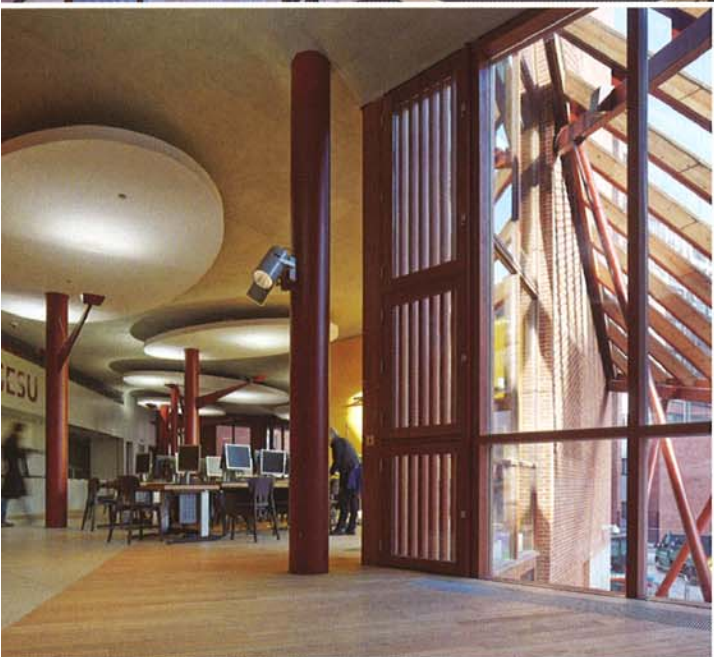
#### FIRST FLOOR

- 1 > Activity centre
- 2 > Meeting space
- 3 > Stairs
- 4 > Cafe
- 5 > Comms room

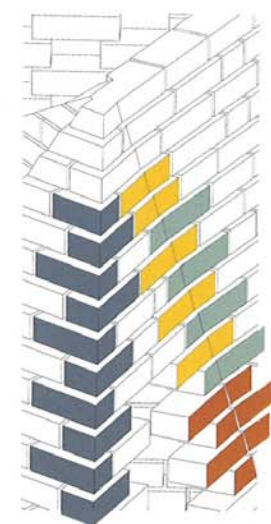


2. The geometries of the angular stairs creates a series of meeting places  
 3. View of the fourth floor gymnasium  
 4/5 Entrance and facade have been tailored to lines of sight and to make visual connections with the urban context  
 6. Spiral stair detail





ELEVATION 30 | 31 <

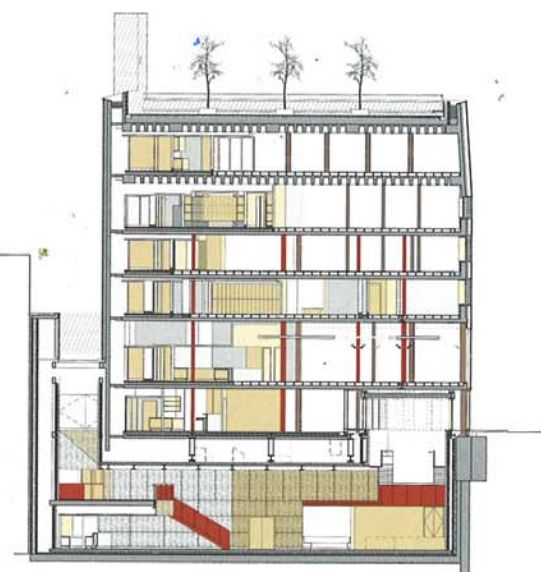


BRICK DETAIL

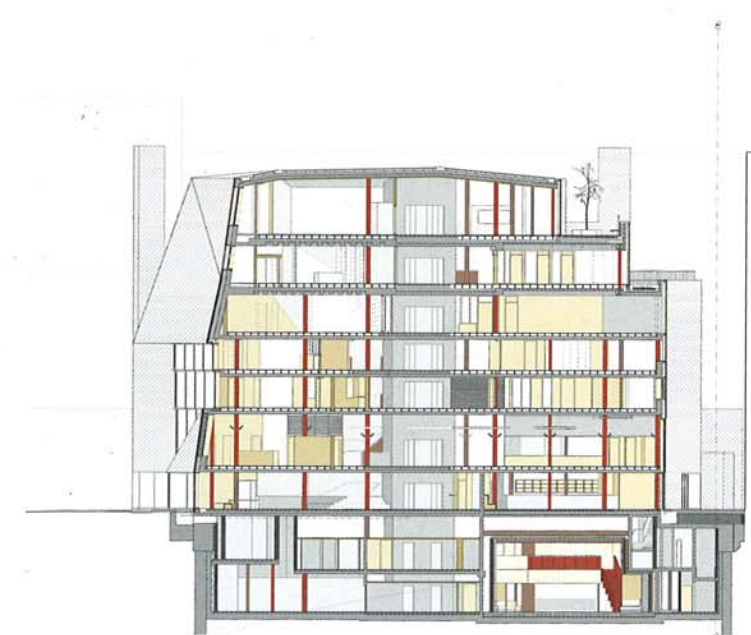
7	8
9	10
11	12

7. Daylight and views abound in the learning cafe  
 8. The basement music venue  
 9. There are no closed corridors - every space has daylight and multiple views  
 10. The dance studio opens onto the urban context  
 11. Complex site geometries have resulted in irregular floor plates  
 12. Views and openings are controlled

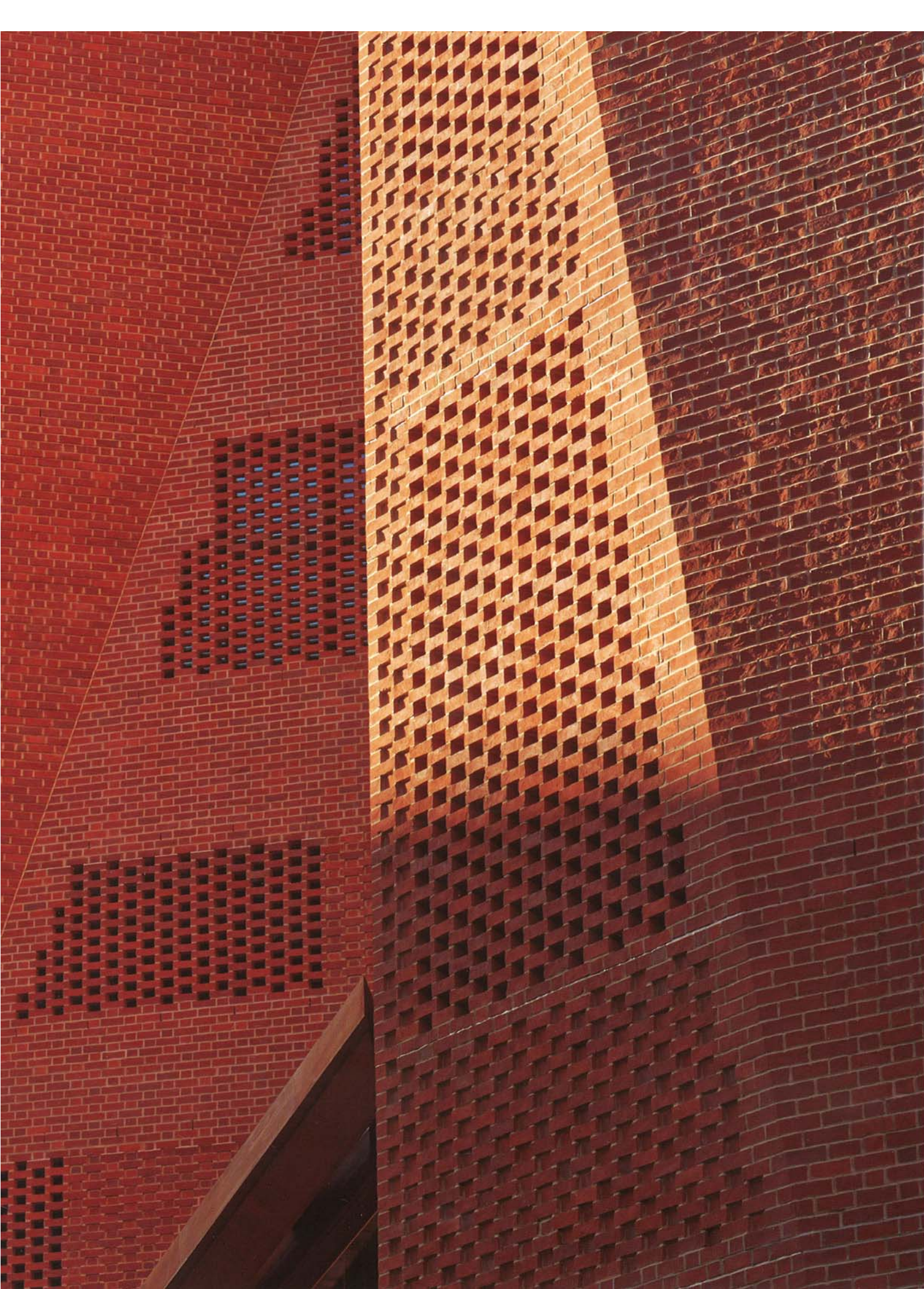
SECTION



SECTION







13

13. London is a city of bricks and the Student Centre responds with an open pattern sculptural brick facade

Tim Ronalds Architects design arts, education and public buildings. They are best known for The Landmark, Ilfracombe, Hackney Empire and Sevenoaks School Performing Arts Centre. timronalds.co.uk

## “A HOT RED MASTERPIECE” BY TIM RONALDS

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The London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE) was founded in 1895 by Beatrice & Sidney Webb ‘for the betterment of society’. A specialist social science university, it has always been a radical institution and has had huge influence in shaping social policy and political theory. Sixteen Nobel Prize winners have been LSE staff or alumni, including the Irish writer George Bernard Shaw - one of LSE’s founders and also a founder and devoted member of the Fabian Society - who received his Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925.

### “IT IS A SPATIAL, VISUAL AND AURAL TREAT FROM START TO FINISH.”

The LSE occupies an area of central London, north of the Aldwych, east of Kingsway. It began with a building in Houghton Street and has grown by acquisition, conversion and redevelopment of the neighbouring buildings and sites. The narrow streets have become its campus; their diagonal geometry animating the area. The LSE has a library by Foster + Partners and a new Academic Building by Grimshaw, while Rogers Stirk Harbour recently won the competition to design its new Centre for Social Sciences. The site for the new LSE Student Centre was a difficult triangle, surrounded by six-storey buildings and marvellous contrasts; best of all the brick shafts of the back of the Cancer Research UK soaring above Dickens’ Old Curiosity Shop. In this space O’Donnell + Tuomey have created an epic three dimensional form; its essence inspired by the constraints. The triangle on the ground is elevated into a form which transcends the orthogonal and the vertical.

To carry through its concept of solid brick form, the building uses areas of perforated brickwork to introduce light without breaking the surface, but where the inclined brick planes meet, triangular areas of glass connect the interior to the surrounding streets.

I will describe it as experienced. You see the building from various viewpoints up narrow streets – a hot red thing, its perforated brickwork mysterious and Islamic. The skewed plane of a timber and glass canopy collects you at the entrance. To your left, an isolated blade of brick, which appears to have absolutely no third dimension, rises skyward. You enter through glazed doors, are held momentarily in a static timber lobby, then released into a fluid reception area where, without a pause or security obstacle, you are drawn up a sensual open stair, rising and turning, beside a coloured enamelled steel shaft.

You climb through six floors, each successively slightly smaller, moving without encountering another door. On the first floor is the study café area, a sea of tables and computers under metal trees with white planar clouds. On the second, a media centre with views into sound studios and a faith centre with prayer rooms and a cylindrical brick chapel of exquisite peace and solace. On the third floor, the Student Union and its bustling offices and activity. The fourth is the gymnasium of machines and pumping people, all around. The fifth is Careers – LSE people are focussed on work and future. For the sixth you move sideways to a spiral concrete stair and emerge under sloping white roof planes with views into an exercise studio and a lounge kiosk bar opening onto a terrace overlooking the City. It is a spatial, visual and aural treat from start to finish. Back down to the ground

floor bar and to another spiral concrete stair down two floors into the basement venue – a 1000 capacity double-height music venue.

The larger glazed areas give views down the surrounding streets which makes the interior of the building feel a connected part of LSE’s part of the city. Even the basement venue has a triple-height glazed and sound-proofed shaft above its stage to give you a glimpse of the life below.

The building is a robust material thing. Built of beautiful brick, heavy hardwood mullions, terrazzo stairs, robust and dancing steel, rough oak-boarded floors, it is crafted in design and execution in every part. This quality and the spatial complexity help it accommodate activity in a rare way. The stuff of life that challenges many architectural interiors – the recycling bins, computer clutter, notices and posters – are here absorbed as a natural part of the place. Spatial sensuality, visual variety and material quality unite all in a very haptic way.

I have watched O’Donnell + Tuomey’s projects from the beginning, watched the work becoming more original, watched their explorations of three dimensional freedom. I visited The Lyric Theatre not long ago and admired aspects of the vocabulary being essayed. But here at the LSE the work has complete conviction – exciting, sensual, sculptural. This is a masterpiece.