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News

RALA Architects announced as winners of European 10 Dublin Site Competition

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View from gallery to sculpture garden



View of gallery rooflights



View of sculpture garden

RALA Architects are delighted to have been announced winner of the European Dublin Site competition. The proposal is comprised of a rich brief including, Art Gallery, Artist Studios, Community Workshops, Residential Masterplan and Sculpture Garden. All placed in and around an existing redundant heating plant and chimney.

The Boiler House studios occupy a unique location at the centre of Ballymun with the opportunity to connect the five communities of Ballymun in a common cause, the creation, teaching, crafting and exhibition of Art.

The site is located between the re-invented high street and Coultury Park, the site also neighbours the Axis Arts centre and future Metro Station. The proposal provides a place where the people of Shangan, Coultury, Poppintree, Raicuiris and Sillogue can meet, exchange experience, learn together and reflect upon their world.

To achieve this, the proposal retains the existing boilerhouse structure and chimney as a means for the people to relate the past to the radically regenerated current and future of Ballymun. The landmark nature of the existing chimney is too powerful a geographic and cultural marker to be demolished.

The proposal seeks to take advantage of this verticality, rising up with the chimney, to provide a roof garden with views across the 5 communities of Ballymun and into Dublin city centre. This incredible experience of relating yourself to Ballymun and beyond is informed by a journey through the boiler house gallery, sculpture gallery, community workshop and past the artist studios.

The masterplan for the site engages the existing boiler house studio with the street frontage through the creation of a tree lined and planted public space. This new public art space acts as a green link between the reinvented high street and the major green space of Coultury Park. By increasing the visual permeability of Ballymun in this way ensures the enduring viability and flexibility of the high street and the communities served by it.

Coexisting with the boiler house studios programme is an independently managed residential development. The existing boiler house, with industrial proportions and strong visual reference to the past and change makes it an ideal place to exhibit the Irish and International art. The gallery space can open up to connect with the external Sculpture Garden. Similar to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, this visual connection between gallery art and exterior sculpture serves to enrich the experience as a whole.

Enclosing the southern part of the site is the new build element of the proposals, primarily the artist studios community workshop. The artist studios are double height spaces, fully glazed on the north face with randomly organised vertical strips of glazing and translucent insulation. This achieves a variety of views without sacrifice to the quality of diffuse light and thermal performance of the building.

The two key types of studio are in distinctly different locations. The non-residential studios face onto the Sculpture Garden, within easy physical and visual access of the public. The residential studios, by nature of being residential, require a greater degree of privacy. These studios are stacked vertically, rising above the gallery, gaining panoramic views of the context within which the artists are working.

Each studio has an intermediate lobby which separated the working studio area from the living accommodation, making the workplace capable of accommodating showings or professional meetings. At the junction between these two types of studios is the Community Workshop and lobby to the roof garden. The workshop is used by the community and artists alike, providing a great opportunity cross fertilisation of ideas, skills and life experience.

Views of the sculpture garden, easy access to the gallery and artist studios make the workshop an invaluable resource for all. This space is also the ground floor lobby of the roof garden, meaning gallery visitors, artist and the community enjoy a chance to mingle and journey upwards into the sky line with the chimney.

The roof garden gives everyone panoramic views of Ballymun and beyond to the city of Dublin and the Irish Sea. A gestural portal, which is of a similar geometry to the artist studios, gives visitors a chance to see the world from a different perspective.

RALA Architects were formed 2 years ago by Director Ross Lambie, "We base ourselves on rigorous and collaborative design which investigates the context of all projects from both physical and social points of view. RALA has built some successful projects in its first 2 years, and we look continue making socially responsible contributions to improving the built environment".

"We are delighted to have been declared winner at Ballymun. This site was a challenge and the brief demanding, but we feel we provided a solution which will make a real contribution to Ballymun's reinvention. We are looking forward to taking the project further with Ballymun Regeneration Limited."

-Ross Alexander Lambie B Arch(hons) Dip Arch RIBA

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