
Other

School of Media

2014

Project 6048 : Curatorial Collaboration

2014 BA (Hons) Photography Students

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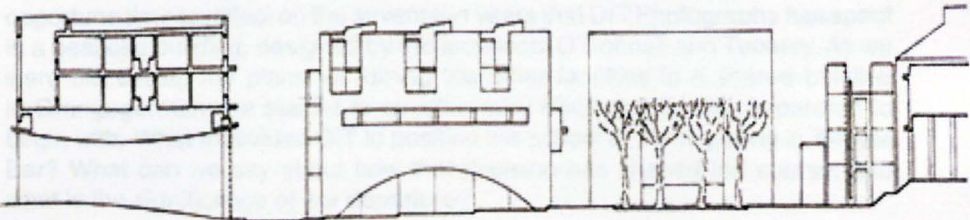
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By John W. ... and ...



All of this has ...

A school of photography ...

PROJECT 6048

Having ...

By June, the college will be empty and ready for the next tenants. It is an opportune time to reflect on the seventeen years that DIT Photography has spent in a bespoke building, designed by the architects O'Donnell and Tuomey. As we were discussing the plans for joining the other faculties in a shared building in Grangegorman, we started to question why Photography was separated to begin with. What motivated DIT to position the school of photography in Temple Bar? What can we say about how that decision has shaped the course, and what is the significance of our departure?

All of this has prompted us to look at the building from a fresh perspective. We're at a point where we can reflect on how the plans and designs for DIT Photography in Temple Bar have materialised, both in terms of its location and its design. We're in a position to take stock before we leave, comparing the initial aspirations for the building with the insight of seventeen years spent here. It isn't often, after all, that a photography school is housed in a building that was designed specifically for its needs. Our discussions are all the more interesting having considered how these needs have changed over time.

A school of photography looks differently today than it did when the building was being designed. A recurring point in our conversations about this are the gradual changes that have occurred to the medium since we moved in to the building. Digital photography has usurped analogue practices as the first point of encounter between students and the medium. This change has reconfigured how we use the building. Gradually the facilities have been reshuffled to accommodate the changes in technology. There are now fewer darkrooms than there were initially, since the colour processing facilities were converted into a locker-room and the printing rooms were converted to digital inkjet printers. The majority of the remaining darkrooms are now a little cut off from the circulation of the rest of the building, since they are on the top floor with the finishing room.

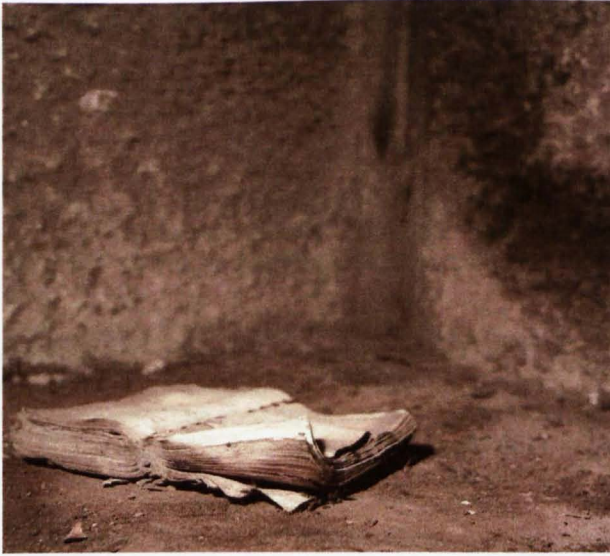
Having discussed this change in the building's use, we started looking at features of the building's design that reflected its use as a school of photography. Architecture parlante is a term used to describe structures in which the function is reflected in the form of the building. When I came across this I thought it was fitting for some of the features of our building in Temple Bar.

The term translates from the French as talking architecture. A quick Google search will reveal some entertaining examples of this. You could say that this is on the agenda, in some shape or form, for any architect given ample reign over a project. But occasionally a subtle gesture becomes instead something more literal. In room 27, for example, the architects have placed a tiny window on the wall that is usually covered by the projector screen. Here they have incorporated the feature of a camera obscura into the building's structure. While we are not concerned with the architectural merits of the building, we are interested in the peculiarities of its design that will be lost on future tenants. It is unlikely after all that the building will continue to be used for photographic purposes.

But to return to the top floor, anyone who has worked in the printing darkrooms for prolonged periods of the year will know how students come and go as different briefs necessitated their use. Apart from this and the odd student who prefers hand printing, there is tranquillity and a full range of the facilities for anyone availing of them. What might strike anyone using these darkrooms is that the stairwell leading up there is often flooded in sunlight. While the rooms below are left wanting, the sun that streams in the large window above the stairs is absorbed by a heavy door and wall. O'Donnell and Tuomey's design intended for the building's extensive need for darkrooms, and so there are not many rooms lit with direct sunlight. It's an oddity then that the remaining light-proofed recesses of the building straddle its most exposed South-facing window. Hanging in-between these two spaces is a large image taken from a project by Paul Seawright.

The image shows an open book that is covered in dust. It is lying on what looks like a concrete surface, the image's frame just showing the corner that the book is sitting in. After looking online at Seawright's work we found the image as part of a set titled 'The Missing', that was commissioned by the Netherlands Foto Institute in 1997. The project engages with 'the landscape of the absent - those who disappear from society, represented in visual fragments gathered from the street, homeless hostels and squats in Rotterdam' (Seawright, 1997). We agreed that it was of value to place images hanging in the building in their context of production and be able to link them into a framework of makers and projects that people are familiar with. There are very little spaces for exhibiting images in the building, both from the student's work and elsewhere. The few pieces that are hung up are left without supplementary information. Some, like Clare Langan's backlit images, become part of the fabric of the building and are forgotten about. One of our objectives is to engage with these four works and re-contextualise them before they are taken down.

After the building has been vacated the pieces will be taken back into the DIT



The Missing, 1997, Paul Seawright



The Missing, in its current state, 2014

collection. Where exactly this collection resides, and what it consists of, is a task that we are currently occupied with. DITs photography collection is scattered throughout the campuses in the city, made up partially of graduate pieces bought from end of year shows. Some pieces, such as the Paul Seawright image, are individual acquisitions.

It's only by word of mouth that we were informed about the origin of Seawright's image. Without any information beside the piece itself, it had no doubt taken on many interpretations from passers by as to what it depicts and why it was placed there.

Looking at the image on Seawright's website, there are considerable differences between it and the reproduction that hangs outside the darkrooms. Our version, the mysterious orphan, has had its already semi-monochromatic surface bleached by the sun for about seventeen years. For what can be considered irreparable damage to a valuable piece of work, the results are not without their own charm. When we consider the processes that are taking place on a controlled scale in the darkrooms behind it, the slow deterioration of the image's surface under the sun's occasional appearance seems like an installation in itself. We found it hard to decide how much of this was just a coincidence and how much might have been anticipated when the piece was hung there. Much of this was dispelled after considering the monetary loss for DIT of letting an esteemed photographer's work be toasted to the point of being barely recognisable. But for others, the (rather expensive) installation outside the darkrooms is a successful version of the window that stays hidden behind the projector screen in room 27. It is a live photographic process that has been integrated into the building, letting the sunlight act on the pigment-based print as a seventeen-year exposure.

The pages of the book in the image bring to mind the tactile element of printing by hand. Contact prints, along with other steps in the analogue process, are often lost as we move away from working with images in a solid and tangible form. The dusty pages of the book conjure this ephemerality of the printed page in contrast with its ever immaculate on-screen counterpart. Our reproduction hangs outside the rooms in which photographers became intimately familiar with darkness as their working environment. Through the use of photosensitive materials and chemical baths students refined a set of skills that were intrinsic for anyone practicing the medium. Seawright's image is an inadvertent reminder of some of the changes to the experience of learning the craft of photography as it progresses in the digital era.

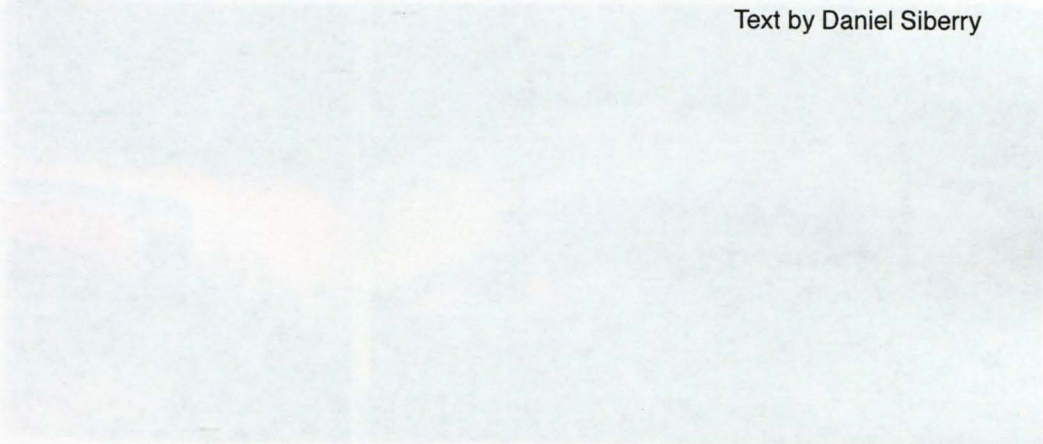
Our forthcoming program engages with these ambient spaces in the building so that we can reflect on the time spent here before we leave. Through this we

can produce a dialogue between the occupants of the building and the everyday environment that we work in.

Bibliography

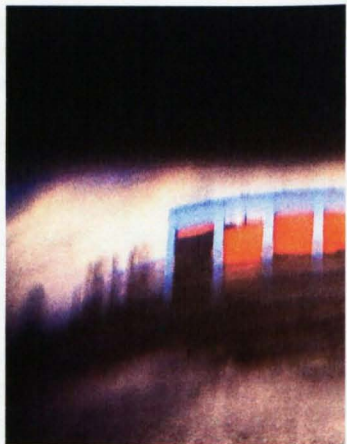
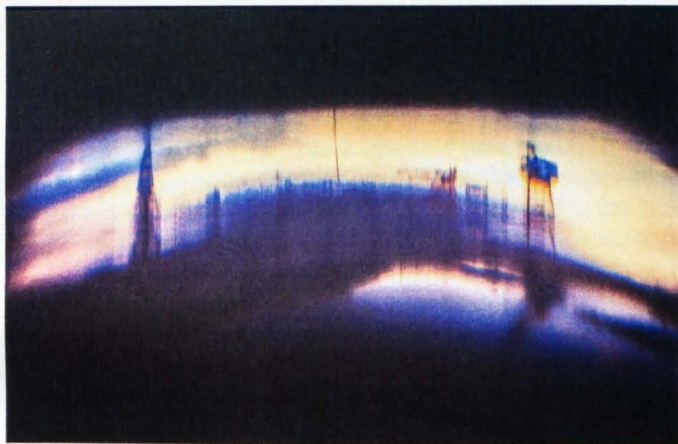
Seawright, P (1997) The Missing [Online]. [10 March 2014]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.paulseawright.com/themissing/>

Text by Daniel Siberry



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Clare Langan, *Untitled*, 1997

Temple Bar Staff 1999 - 2014

Tony Murray Anthony Haughey
Ann Curran Tim Kovar
Anne Marie Walker Geoff
White Michael Durand Ciaran
O'Keeffe Dave Monahan
Mark Curran Shakira Ennis
Tim Parry Paul Kate Boulez
Lisa Godson Justin Carville
Evan Murphy Martin McCabe
Val Connor Niamh McCole
Rashmi Sawnhi Monica Flynn
Cliona Barnes Sarah Lincoln
Aoife Leahy Mick Muldoon
Michael Crotty Robby Banks
Gerry McDonnell Gerry Moran

Niamh Barnes Silvia Massano
Ann Donohoe Grainne
O'Rourke Roisin O'Hagan
Sinead Murphy Mandy O'Neill
Thomas Woods Emer Noreen
O'Callaghan Pia Holmes
Tony Brazil Michael Tobin
Tim Stott Alan Wong Alan
Pike David Davison Stephen
Coonan Mella Travers Maeve
Robinson Paul Nulty Brian
Hand Brigid Fitzgerald Ross
Kavanagh Anaele "Adis"
Iroh Brenda McGuire Tara
O'Reilly Tom Grace Ellen
Thornton Marie Byrne

Temple Bar Staff

Niamh Barker, Sarah Massano

Ashley Doherty, Yan Gering

O'Rourke, Foisian, O'Hagan

Shine, Murphy, Mundy, O'Neil

Thomas, Wood, Walsh, Keenan

O'Callaghan, Evans, O'Leary

Tommy, Brian, Michael, John

John, Alan, Wong, Alan

Brian, David, O'Connell, O'Brien

Edgar, Mellan, Ryan, Mearns

Brian, John, Nulty, Brian

Hugh, Brian, Fitzgerald, Ross

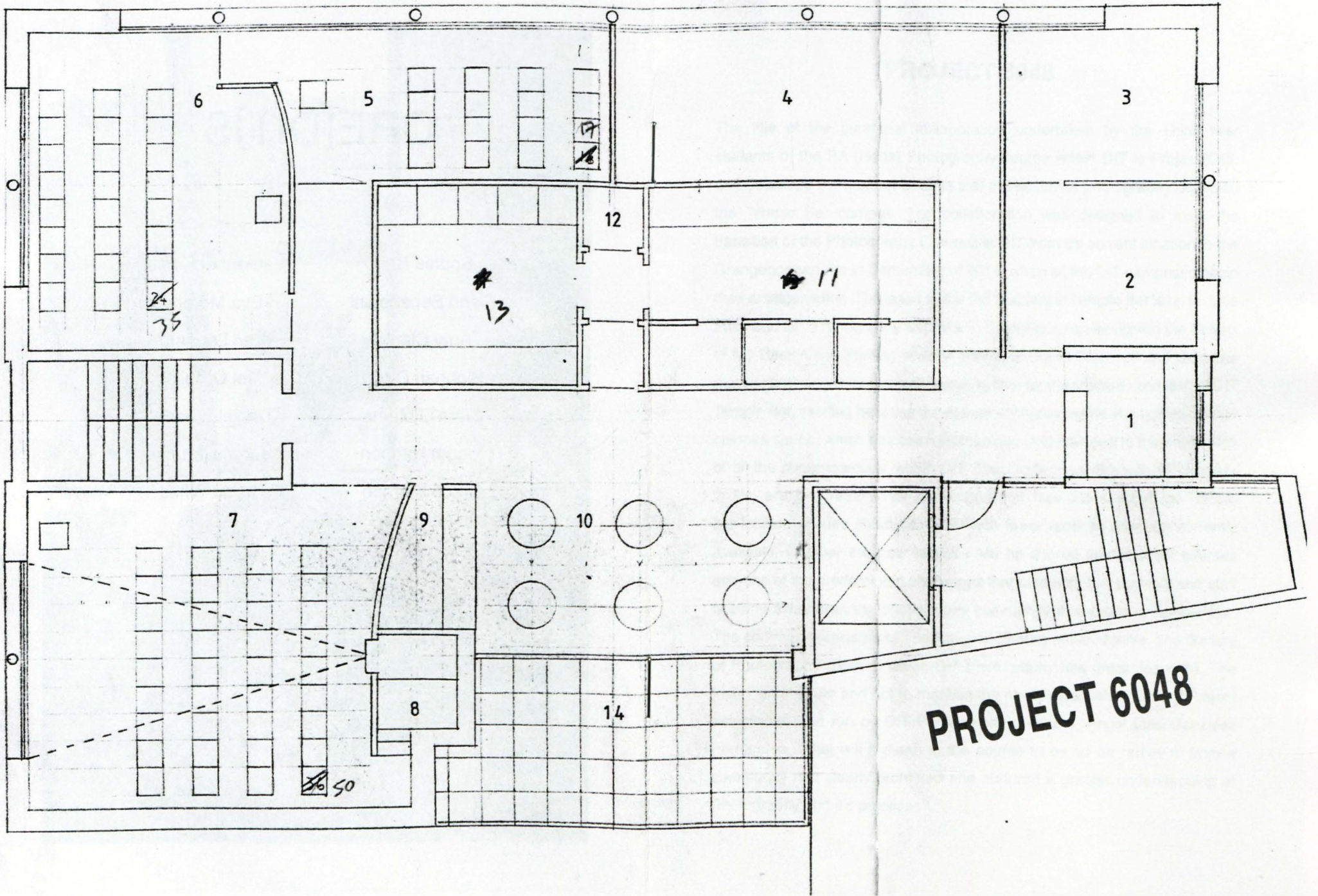
Kieran, Alan, Ansel, Alan

John, John, McGuire, Alan

O'Reilly, Alan, O'Connell

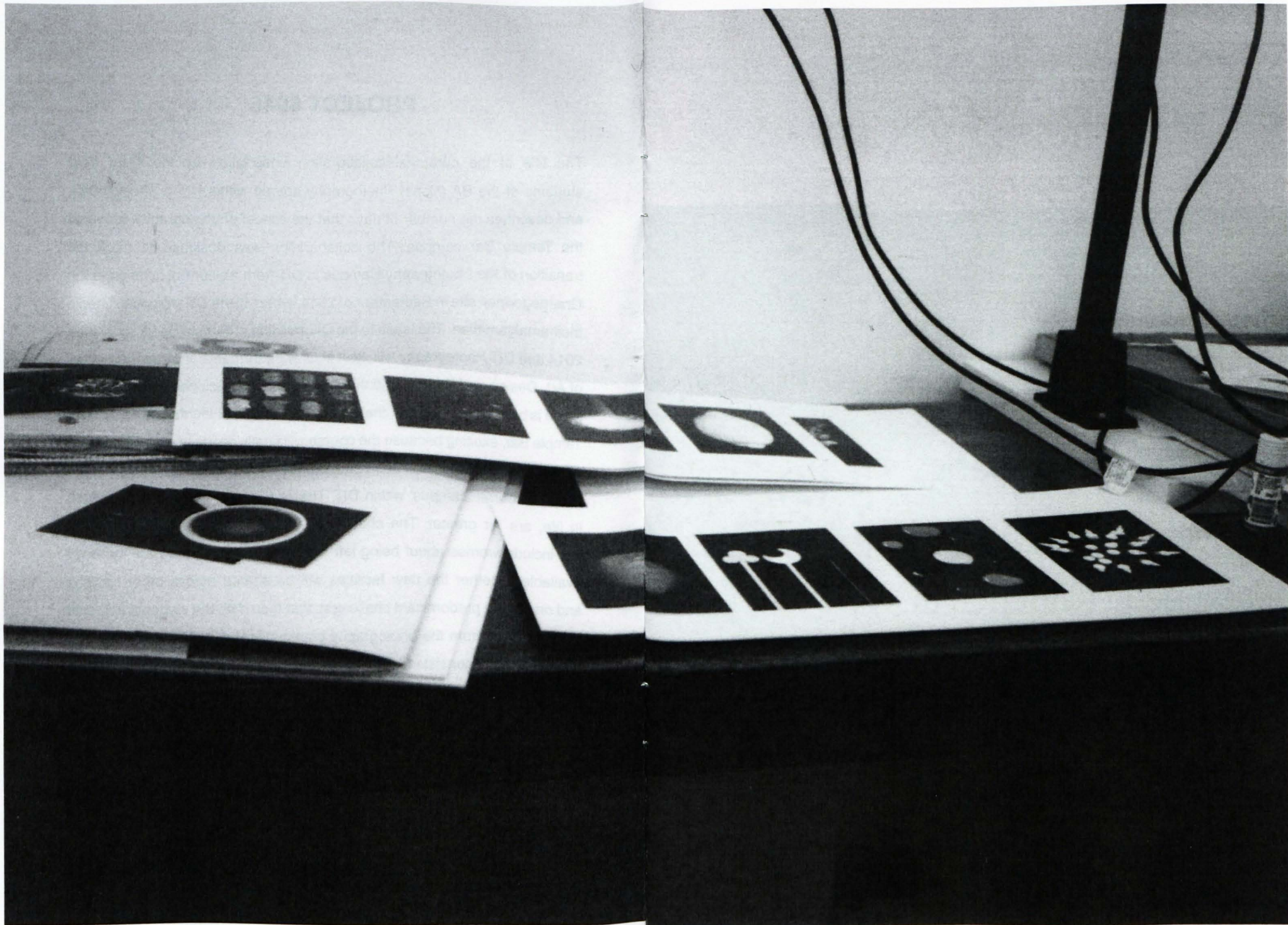
John, John, O'Meara

www.project6048.com

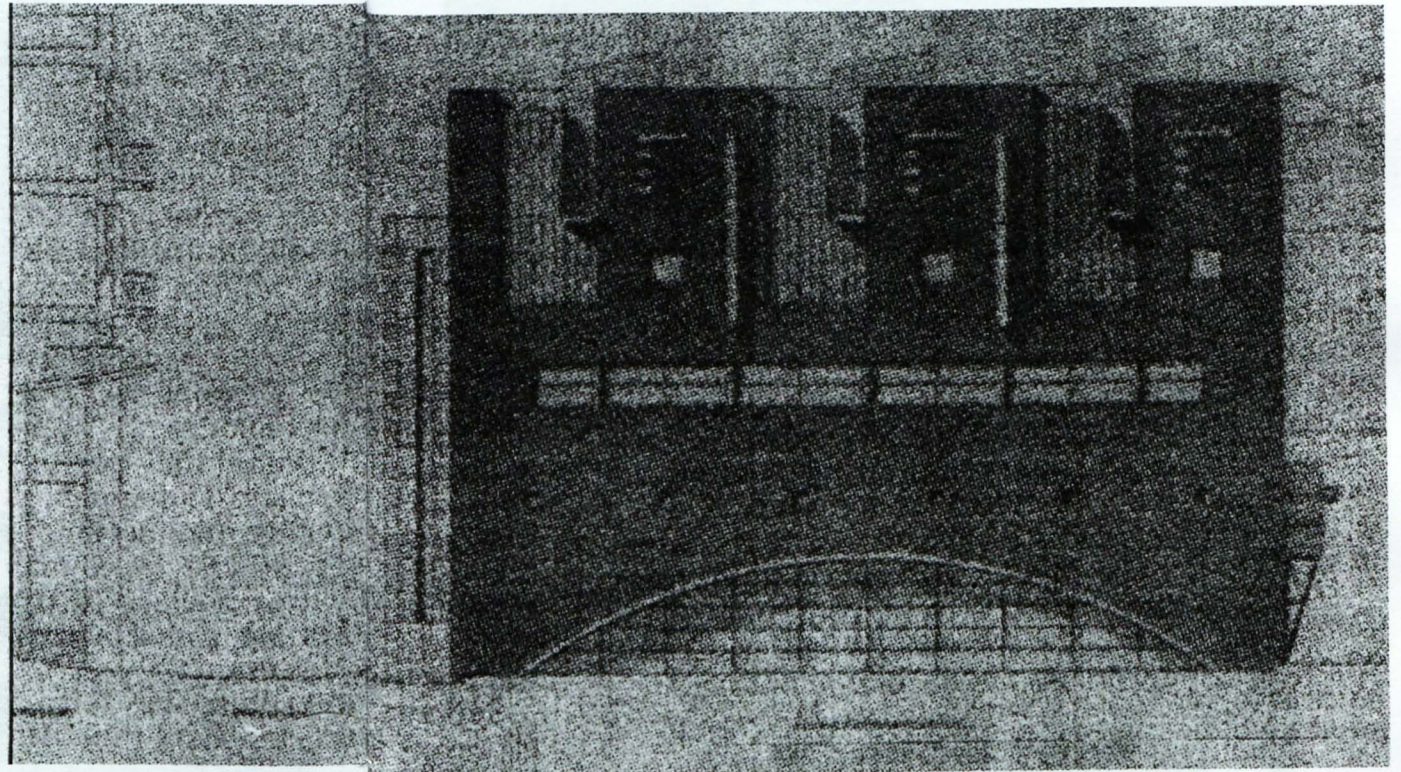


PROJECT 6048

The title of the curatorial collaboration undertaken by the Third Year students of the BA (Hons) Photography course within DIT is Project6048, and describes the number of days that the school of photography occupied the Temple Bar campus. The collaboration was designed to mark the transition of the Photography Campus in DIT from it's current location to the Grangegorman site in September of 2014, when all the DIT campuses begin their amalgamation. The lease to the DIT building in Temple Bar is up in June 2014 and DIT Photography will exist in Grangegorman alongside the School of Art, Design and Printing and the School of Social Sciences and Law. The move is both an exciting and challenging time for the students and staff of DIT Temple Bar, exciting because the course will finally reside in a typical college campus set up, which has been problematic until now due to the separation of all the currentcampus' within DIT. The challenges, like with all changes in life, are far greater. The challenges that face the students of Temple bar include worries about being left with fewer facilities than are currently available, whether the new facilities will be shared across other courses and one of the predominant challenges that face both the students and staff is being away from the photography community that exists in Temple Bar. The community consists of The National Photographic Archive, The Gallery of Photography (both of which DIT Photography has great ties with), The Irish Film Institute and not to mention the newly established Library Project established and run by DIT Photography graduate, Ángel Luis González Fernández. What will it mean to the course to be so far removed from a community that clearly promoted and nurtured a greater understanding of Photography and it's practices?



Ireland's rich
photographic heritage,
and the keen interest in
photography among
today's students, will
soon be in evidence in
one new building.

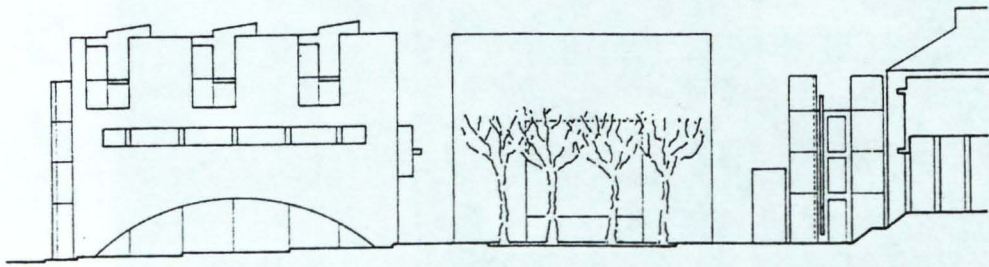


The Irish Times, 1992

7.5.93.67



Meeting House Square Outdoor
Cinema, Tim Kovar, 1993

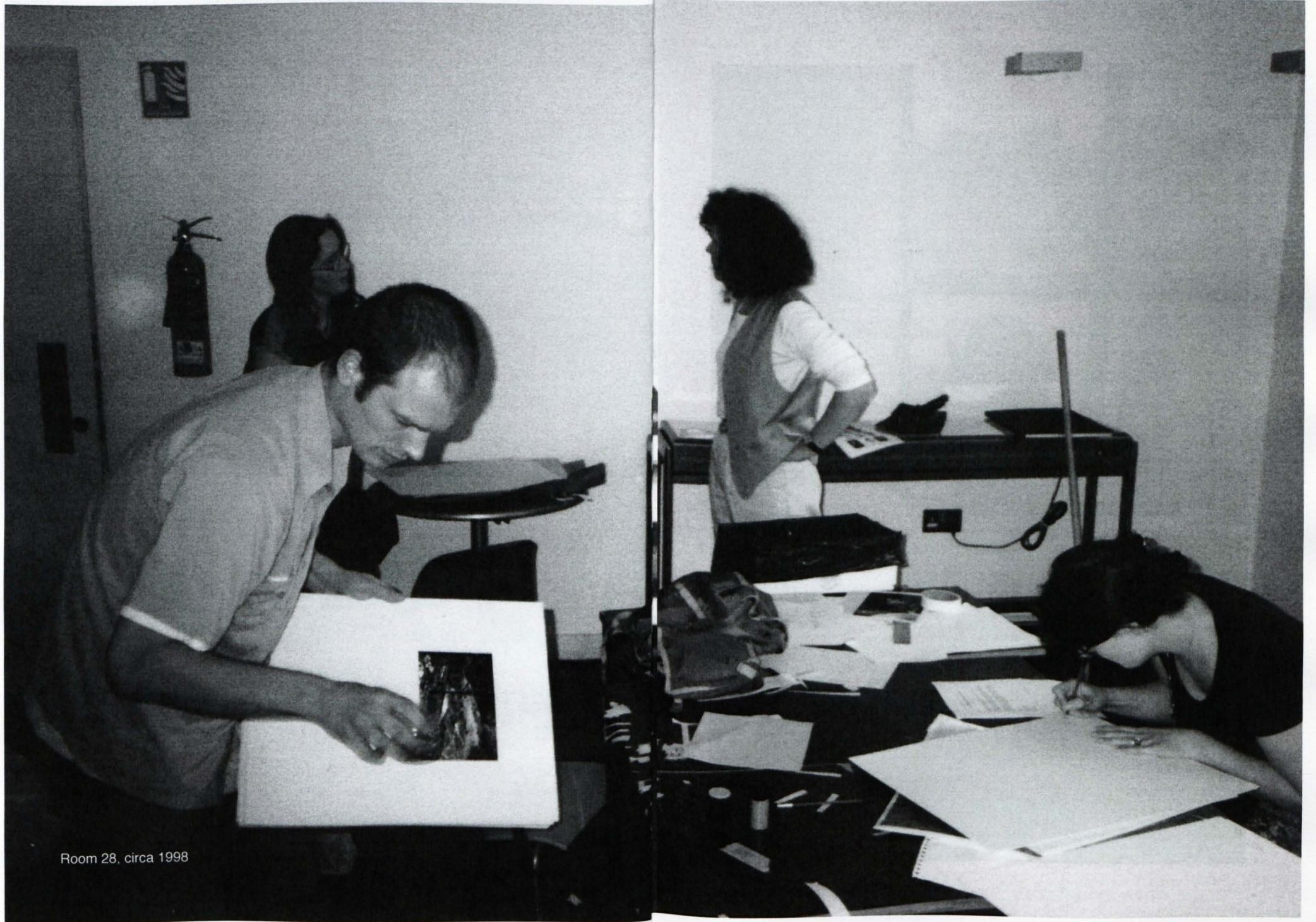


Tim Kovar, circa 1995 (right)

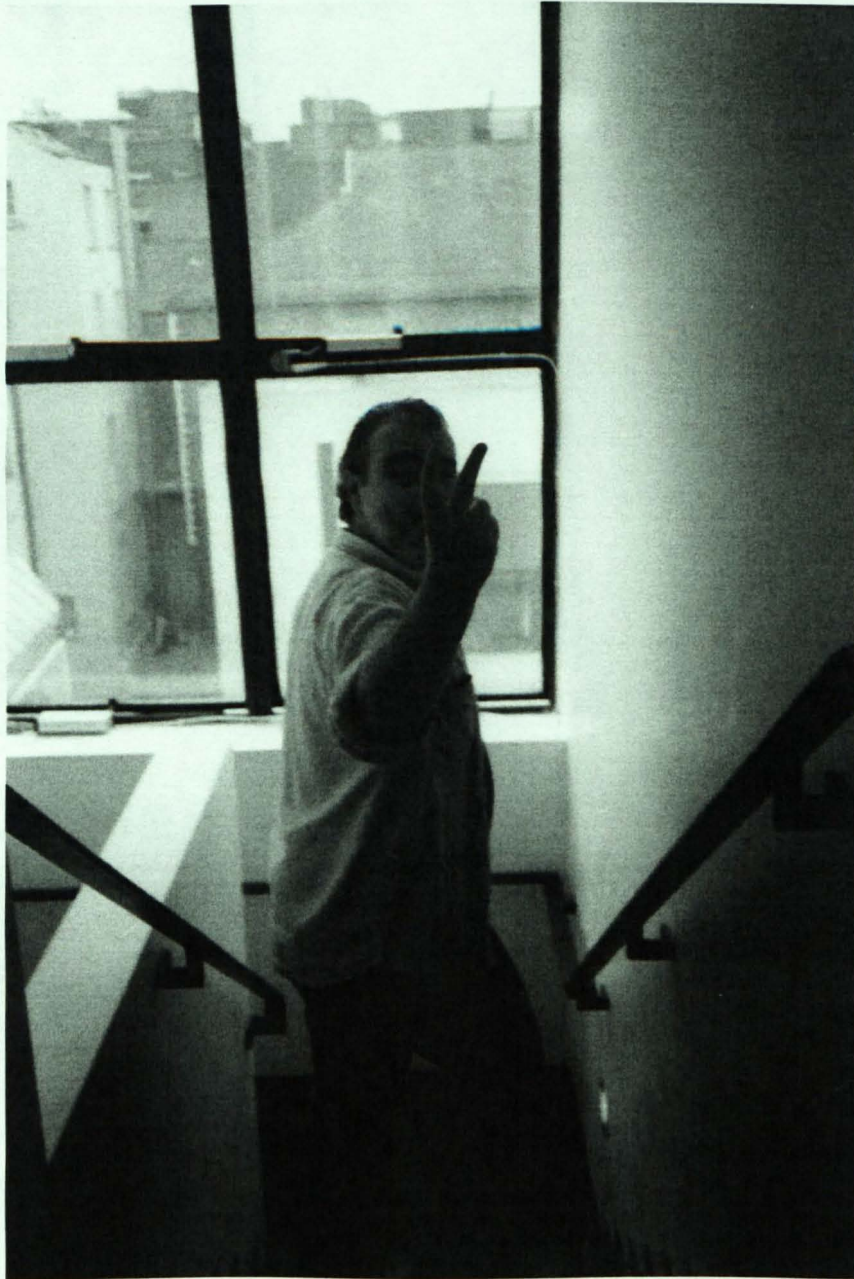




Meeting House Square
Tim Kovar, 1995



Room 28, circa 1998



CRE[DIT]S

Sophie Barr

Lauren McKenna

Elena Benedettini

Eva Murphy

Amy Clarke

Karl Leonard

Siobhan Dillon

Mel O'Reilly

Ciara Gibbons

Daniel Siberry

Niamh Hannon

Francesco Taurisano

Grace Kiernan

Roisin White

www.project6048.com

Top Floor Stairwell, circa 1998 (left)