

# ARTICHOKE

INTERIOR / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / OBJECTS / PEOPLE

8.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES  
MODELS FOR SUSTAINABLE  
WORKPLACE DESIGN



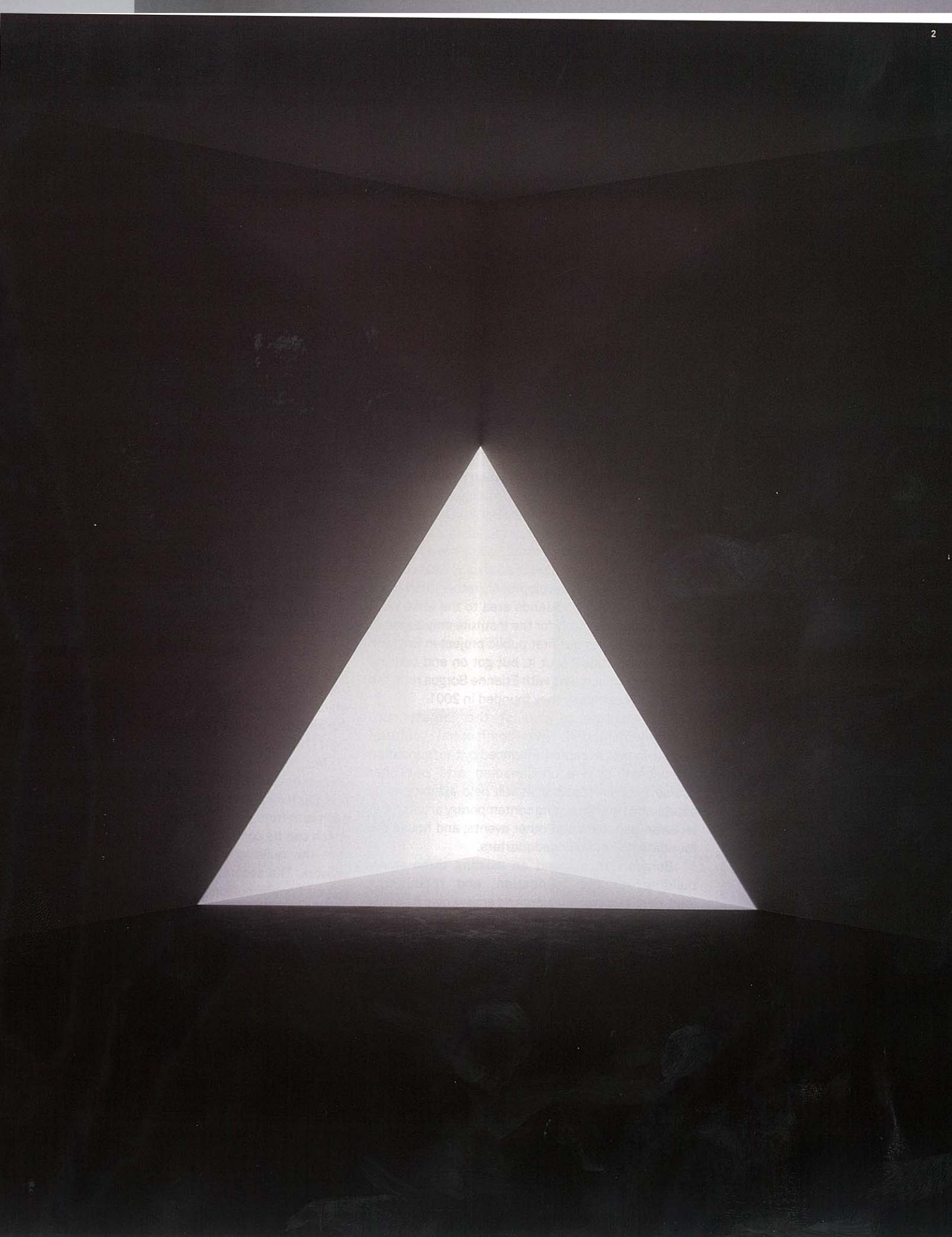
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# LOUISE T BLOWIN INSTITUTE

ILLUMINATED WHITE BOX INSERTIONS BY BORGOS DANCE HAVE CREATED NEW SPACES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE ARTS AND SCIENCES IN LONDON'S NOTTING HILL.

**words**  
COLIN MARTIN  
**photography**  
HÉLENE BINET





**Art galleries and museums** have become the architectural hot ticket, with cities around the world vying to erect ever more alien-looking temples to the new global religion of art, from Bilbao to Brisbane. Planned buildings are prematurely hyped by publicists, when scarcely more than doodles on drawing pads, to boost their stellar architects' public profiles and secure further commissions and fuel cultural consumerism.

It made a welcome change when a new Institute, designed with refined, almost monastic simplicity and great attention to detail by Borgos Dance for the Louise T Blouin Foundation, flung open its doors to the public last October without having been hyped to death beforehand. Located in an area of west London undergoing major redevelopment, rather than more predictably in the Docklands area to the east, work on the feasibility study for the Institute only began in April 2004. "It was our first public project in England and we didn't talk about it, but got on and built it," says Simon Dance, who with Etienne Borgos runs the eponymous company they founded in 2001.

The Institute is one of the largest non-government-funded, non-commercial cultural centres in the UK capital. Financed by the foundation established by French-Canadian arts publisher Louise T Blouin MacBain, it will hold exhibitions by established and emerging contemporary artists; host lectures, seminars and other events; and house the foundation's London headquarters.

Borgos Dance found an existing three-storey building for the foundation, and rebuilt the load-bearing masonry piers and arches over its many windows to create more symmetrical and balanced elevations. The resulting visual poem murmurs rather than shouts for attention, and is the better for it. Built in the 1920s for a firm of luxury car coachbuilders, the original building was subdivided and used by design and advertising companies in the 1980s and 1990s. The architects reconstructed floors and supported internal structures with new internal foundations to reinstate a light-filled, open-plan layout within the existing shell. Columns were removed from the ground floor and lightweight concrete floors were suspended from two concealed 27-metre-long-by-2.5-metre-high roof trusses.

The institute's main, north entrance at ground level leads into a dramatic 10.5-metre, triple-height lobby, which is lit naturally on two sides. With sunshine streaming in, the triangular space created by a diagonal internal wall resembles a campo in a

Tuscan hill town. This impression is reinforced when looking down into the space from the upper storeys, through a glass screen. From the lobby, tall double doors open into the Institute's main exhibition space, which is naturally lit from the east and west facades of the building and is bookended by two large walls for displaying artworks. A sky-lit cafe, reclaimed from a disused courtyard, runs along one side and is visually connected to the exhibition space by full-height door openings and glazed panels. The first and second floors provide offices for the LTB Foundation and flexible spaces for its projects. Two translucent skylights on the roof disperse natural daylight throughout the building's interior.

Paradoxically, given the effort expended to reunify the ground-floor gallery, it has been temporarily subdivided into a series of blacked-out spaces for the Institute's inaugural exhibition of American artist James Turrell's work in the medium of light. "I make spaces that apprehend light for our perception, and in some way gather it, or seem to hold it," says Turrell. Entitled *A Life in Light*, the exhibition includes four of his halogen quartz light projection pieces from 1967 to 1968, in which light projected into corners forms three-dimensional, floating geometric solids.

An aperture piece, *Fastnet* (1992), in which the volume of light is largely hidden behind a wall extending through a rectangular cut, is a rectangle of blue which resembles the abstract paintings of Yves Klein. The rectangle of colour seems to become brighter over time, as viewers' eyes adjust to the low lighting conditions. Turrell is interested in the science of seeing and wants people who view his work to "see themselves seeing – actually and directly perceive the processes of their own perception."

More recent works, *Pancho* (2000) and *The Light Underneath* (2006), part of the Tall Glass series in which Turrell uses LED technology, are exhibited on the second floor with a series of 20 aquatints, *First Light* (1989–90).

Borgos Dance also worked with Turrell on two permanent lighting installations for the Institute. The first illuminates the building's 80 external windows: each is lit from within and acts as an intelligent unit, which can be controlled individually or as a whole to turn the building's facade into an ever-changing artwork. The second installation lights the opaque polycarbonate rooftop screen that hides the building's plant and surrounds the paired light wells. At night, this creates a beacon of light which serves as a new nocturnal landmark.

<sup>1</sup> / THE BRIEF CALLED FOR A DYNAMIC BACKDROP FOR THE VIEWING OF WORK BY ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS.

<sup>2</sup> / *A LIFE IN LIGHT*, 13 OCTOBER 2006 – FEBRUARY 2007, JAMES TURRELL, *ARGUS WHITE*, 1967 (PROJECTION) © FLORIAN HOLZHERR. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ALBION, LONDON.

<sup>3</sup> / LIGHTING INSTALLATIONS BY JAMES TURRELL ILLUMINATE THE BUILDING AT NIGHT.

<sup>4</sup> / A NEW STRUCTURE WAS INSERTED INTO THE EXISTING BUILDING. BORGOS DANCE'S NEW SPACES HAVE A REFINED, ALMOST MONASTIC SIMPLICITY.



× **design statement**

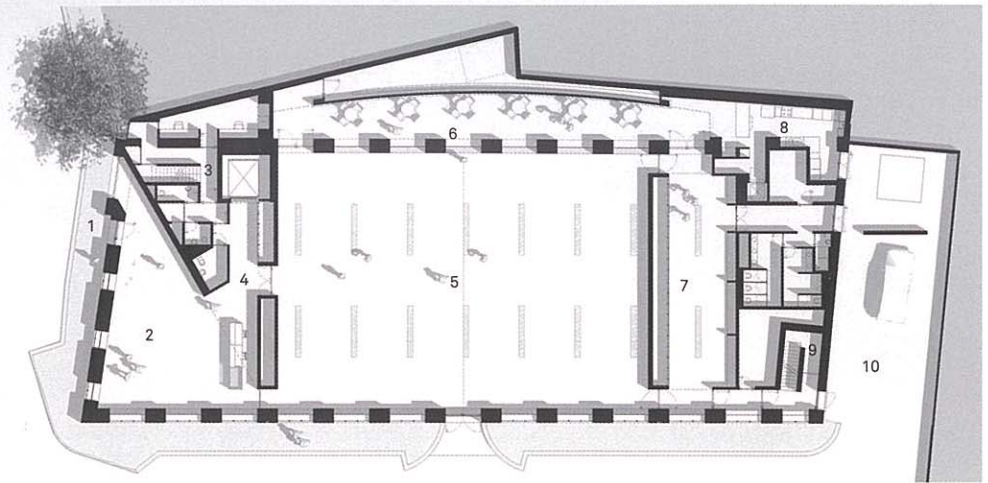
Housed in former coachworks in Notting Hill dating back to the 1920s, the Louise T Blouin Institute is an exhibition, lecture and events space for both the arts and sciences, in addition to being the London headquarters of the Louise T Blouin Foundation. The building has been extensively transformed. Arches have been rebuilt to create more pure, balanced elevations. Internally the aspiration has been to create new, dynamic rooms, each with its own individual feel, albeit guided by the same aesthetic and all naturally lit.

In order to provide a column-free ground floor exhibition space, the lower floors are suspended from two 27-metre-long trusses. A triple-height entrance lobby has been formed by the removal of the floors. Within a derelict courtyard, a new cafe has been created. An existing roof skylight on the second floor has been replaced with two new translucent skylights.

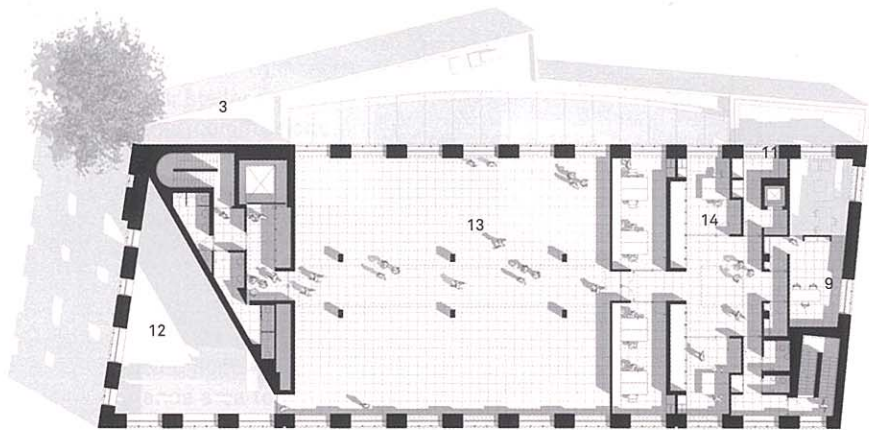
The building incorporates automatic blind controls, a displacement floor air supply system, temperature and humidity controls and perimeter fan coil units that provide heating and cooling, served by a rooftop plant concealed behind a polycarbonate screen.

Two installations by American artist James Turrell illuminate the building at night. The roof screen and 78 windows are lit by LEDs, creating an iconic form on the West London skyline.

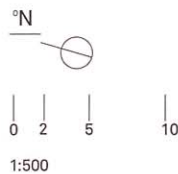
Borgos Dance



GROUND FLOOR



LEVEL TWO



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Entrance lobby
- 3 North stair core
- 4 Exhibition space entrance
- 5 Exhibition space
- 6 Courtyard cafe
- 7 Meeting room
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 South stair core
- 10 Car park
- 11 Butler station
- 12 Entrance lobby void
- 13 Open-plan space
- 14 Offices

× **project**  
Louise T Blouin Institute  
3 Olaf Street  
London UK W11 4BE  
T +44 (0)20 7965 9600  
W www.ltbfoundation.org

× **design practice**  
Borgos Dance  
9 Ivebury Court  
London W10 6RA  
T +44 (0)20 8962 8502  
F +44 (0)20 8962 8504  
W www.borgosdance.com

× **project director**  
Simon Dance

× **project architect**  
Giles Reid

× **project team**  
Simon Dance, Etienne Borgos,  
Giles Reid, Vidal Fernandez-Diez,  
Javier Ampuero Ernst, Holger  
Leibmann, Rita Baltina, Dua Cox,  
Tea Puric

× **time frame**  
Design and documentation:  
10 months  
Construction: 18 months

× **builder**  
Delcon Construction

× **project manager**  
Mitchell Price

× **lighting**  
Campbell Design

× **building engineering**  
Arup

× **quantity surveyor**  
Davis Langdon

× **planning consultant**  
Atis Real and CGMS

× **catering consultant**  
King Design

× **products**

**walls**

Plasterboard and skim

**ceilings**

Plasterboard. Pacy & Weatley

acoustic rendered finish

**doors**

Bespoke solid core timber

doors with polyurethane

lacquer factory finish

**floors**

Cast in situ concrete slab.

Axia Moonrock composite stone

on raised access floor system

**lighting**

Litelab Museum Collection track

lighting. Incandescent wall wash

and spotlighting. iGuzzini LED art

installation lighting

**reception desk**

MDF. Corian. Glass

**bathroom**

Armitage Shanks

Sandringham and Duravit

Architec wall-mounted

sanitaryware. Grohe and

Vola taps. Armitage Shanks

Contour urinal

**roofing**

Alumasc Derbigum roofing

felt. Rodeca translucent

polycarbonate roof screen

5 / TWO TRANSLUCENT SKYLIGHTS DISPERSE NATURAL DAYLIGHT THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING'S INTERIOR.

