

Grey eminence: Zumthor in Cologne

Ivan Harbour on Denton Corker

Marshall's Civil Justice Centre

**Edward Jones on two galleries
in Cornwall designed by MUMA**

Tight fit – Toh Shimazaki in west London

Elder & Cannon's house for ten priests

Plumbing and drainage • Refurbishment

BUILDING ■

A house for ten priests completes Elder & Cannon's Glasgow triptych.

St Aloysius' College is one of Scotland's most highly regarded catholic private schools. Like its neighbour, Glasgow School of Art, St Aloysius has over time bought a number of properties in the Garnethill area of the city and now has what might broadly be described as a campus, whose circulation areas and break-out spaces are the city streets. Elder & Cannon has built three buildings on the campus over a decade: the junior school was completed in 1999, and a large maths block for the senior school called the Clavius building in 2003, which went onto to win the RIAS Doolan Award. The third is a new residence for ten Jesuit priests, who play a role in both the school and the local community, and incorporates a counselling centre on the ground floor.

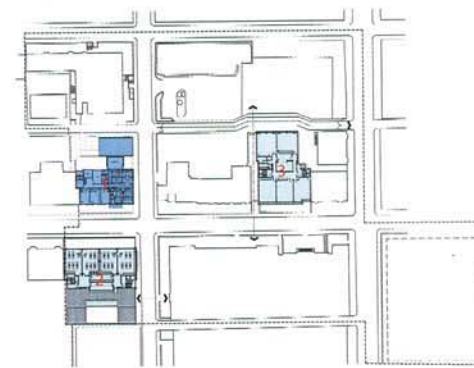
From the terrace on the top floor of the new residence you can look across one block to Mackintosh's school of art building, so this is an area with a tradition of radical new developments (which include the lumbering but sculptural concrete blocks built by the school in the 1960s). St Aloysius sits where the city grid climbs up to embrace the ridge from which the area takes its name. The streets frame spectacular rollercoaster views over the south of the city, down to Sauchiehall Street and the city centre, towards Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's St Vincent Street Church and then the Clyde, the south side and Castlemilk and East Kilbride. To the north, vistas are contained by the majestic face of the Campsie hills.

This very particular context has given rise to a set of three very distinctive buildings, which can be clearly identified by their architectural language and palette of materials. Large concrete and glazed panels stand out against the Victorian red and blonde sandstone buildings. The Clavius building and the new residence sit on a junction and face directly onto each other as well as turning their respective corners to form two new gables either side of the hill top. Meanwhile the junior school further down the hill is clearly in dialogue with the later blocks.

Although the palette of materials differentiates the new school blocks, each building in the triptych takes its lead from the surrounding tenements. They follow the massing and the building lines and, in line with tradition, the key rooms tend to face onto the street from an austere, disciplined front

Public and private spaces are skillfully reconciled within a new tenement, discovers Penny Lewis. Photos: Keith Hunter.

Top The residence – Elder & Cannon's third building for St Aloysius. Construction took 65 weeks and cost £2.4 million. The priests' living quarters occupy the top three floors while a spirituality centre is on the ground floor.
Right The junior school, 1999 (ph: David Churchill).
Location plan 1 Residence, 2 Clavius building, 3 junior school.
Far right The Clavius building, 2003.



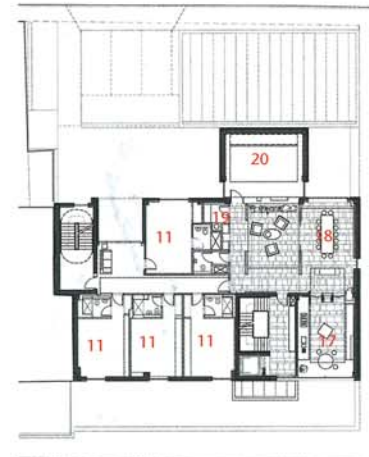


elevation. The rear elevation tends to be more relaxed and to embrace a variety of forms and materials. Elder & Cannon pioneered this kind of reinterpretation of the tenement form in its social housing projects of the 1990s. That work also explored the capacity to innovate both plan and section within the conventions of the tenement block. If there is a coherence about the external language of all three buildings, there is also a consistency in the way the architects have approached the planning and internal organisation of volumes.

The latest building contains two functions on the ground floor. Accessed from a protected court off the gable elevation is the entrance to a spirituality centre, which provides conference spaces and small counselling rooms and offices for the priests and local catholic counselling organisations. The centre follows the fall of the site and extends back as a single-storey building to complete the block. In a few simple moves – in particular the use of symmetry and the manipulation of natural and artificial light – the architects have signalled the spiritual function of the building. Now it is occupied, however, the building's users suggest more therapeutic than transcendental functions.

Above ground, the residence contains 12 bedrooms, two of them for guests, a large

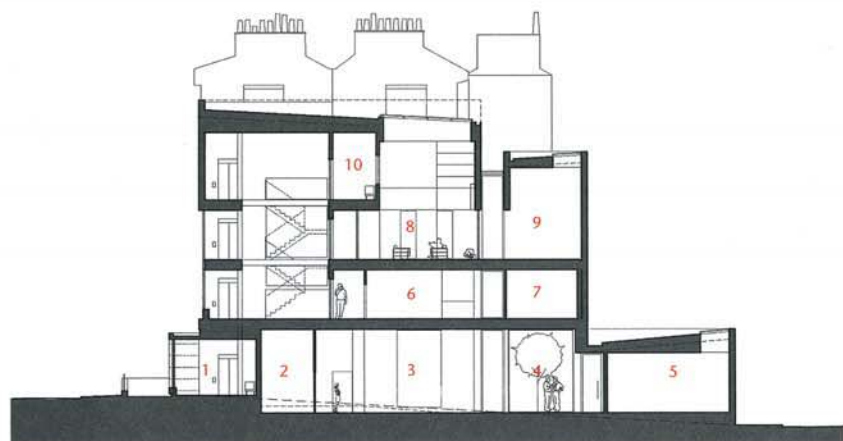
Top/left Front, gable and rear elevations. The spruce-clad element marks the main entrance to the spirituality centre and contains a small chapel within the living quarters.



Top Main entrance to spirituality centre.
Above Private roof terrace.
Above right Oblique view to north-east.
Plans Ground, first, second and third floors: 1 office, 2 residence reception hall, 3 group room, 4 interview rooms, 5 admin, 6 prayer, 7 team room, 8 entrance hall, 9 coffee, 10 conference, 11 bedroom, 12 parlour, 13 guest bedroom, 14 seating area, 15 laundry, 16 plant room, 17 kitchen and breakfast room, 18 dining room, 19 sacristy, 20 residence chapel, 21 timber deck, 22 superior's bedroom, 23 living zone, 24 tv room. The bedrooms are concealed from the main spaces and, as the priests' only private spaces, are generously sized. Internally, Elder & Cannon has attempted to create an interesting sequence of spaces which manage the priests' dual needs for privacy and welcome.

laundry on the first floor and the key public communal functions on the second floor – an open reception area which opens off the stair links a large dining and kitchen and a small chapel. The private living room sits on the top floor beside a large external terrace. The exterior is a touch gentler and more domestic, and a little less gritty than its partner opposite, but the south-facing roof terrace, which looks like it has been carved out of the block, provides a deliberate challenge to the solid stone boxes of the tenements that surround it.

The brief – to provide the priests with private bedrooms but also to include public and communal spaces, and to comply with fire regulations while avoiding an



institutional atmosphere, is the kind of challenge on which Elder & Cannon thrives. The solution follows a pattern adopted in the first two buildings creating a central core or void running through the building, coupled with the creation of informal breakout spaces between rooms. In the junior school this approach created a really animated section with views that cross levels. At the residence the ambition is rather more modest:

Above Clockwise from top: chapel in the residence; lobby to interview rooms, access to chapel within the spirituality centre; chapel/prayer room in spirituality centre.
Section 1 entry lobby, 2 group room, 3 spirituality centre, 4 entrance foyer, 5 conference/coffee, 6 laundry, 7 plant, 8 reception area, 9 residence chapel, 10 library.



a double-height reception space greets visitors when they arrive at the residence entrance on the second-floor level. This in turn opens out onto the dual-aspect kitchen and dining area and provides open access to a modest chapel, toplit from the north by a narrow band of natural light. On the floor above, a small library space overlooks the reception area. As yet these informal spaces are barely furnished and are yet to be used by the residents, but over time they should provide the priests with some flexibility.

The design is relatively robust but it has suffered in the final stages of completion. Little things, like the decision to change the floor covering on the stair and to build a television room in the corner of the lounge compromise certain aspects of the original design intention and, so far, the splendid

Above Clockwise from bottom left: entrance lobby to residence; main house stair; chapel within residence; main reception room within residence, with dining room off. The residence occupies the upper floors, and incorporates twelve bedrooms and a range of living spaces. This is at the same time a home, a retreat and a place of work for the priests and so the environments created have both a domestic and formal character. Upon arrival a small parlour for meeting parishioners can be accessed from the entry hall, creating a secure threshold separate from the main house stair, which leads up to the large reception room at the heart of the house, around which are arranged the chapel and the house kitchen/dining room, where the priests congregate nightly for mass and supper. The upper lounge is a more private space, and shares the top floor with the timber-decked roof terrace.

south-facing terrace has been left fallow by the residents. A visit to the building evokes memories of trips to some of Scotland's best modernist catholic churches. In many radical churches the architect's heavy walls, deep reveals and plans for daylight creating poetry as it passes across richly-textured, simple forms are foiled and made 'homely' by a congregation and priesthood with a fondness for white doilies and plastic flowers. One can't avoid being troubled by the question – is the priesthood aesthetically challenged or have the architects failed to appreciate the strange interplay between both vision and conservatism that characterises their client?

Penny Lewis is the editor of Prospect magazine, and has written on architecture and broader cultural and social issues for many other publications. She is co-author of In Defence of the Dome and author of two monographs on Gordon Murray and Alan Dunlop.



Elder & Cannon writes: St Aloysius Church and St Aloysius College are part of the Jesuit Order and have been established in the city centre Garnethill area of Glasgow for almost 150 years. This part of the city is a tableau of Glasgow in miniature: the rigid city grid, the long lines of sandstone tenements, the impressive Victorian architecture of St Aloysius, Edwardian townhouses, and the brutalist sixties companions to Mackintosh's sublime School of Art are all within a city block. This is unsurprisingly a conservation area, but without a dominant typology the test has been whether a building is of sufficient quality to rub shoulders with its neighbours.

Due to structural problems with an existing property in the early 1990s, which later became the site for St Aloysius Junior School, the Jesuit priests resident at St Aloysius were forced to move outwith the parish to

another house in the city's west end. For the priests this created an unsatisfactory disconnection from their parishioners and community.

It had always been the intention that the residence would return to Garnethill and, with the recent purchase of a derelict gap site directly opposite the college's Clavius building, this became possible. Early feasibility studies presented the client with the opportunity to develop another facility in conjunction with the residence which could bring together its existing community services in a dedicated venue. From this early premise the spirituality centre evolved to include a small conference facility, a prayer room, interview rooms, group rooms and offices for the full-time staff.

The materiality of the new building takes its cue from its predecessors, re-using the large-scale precast concrete panelling of the schools to give a completeness and cohesion

to the campus. Although the residence steps back on the upper floor to reveal the sun terrace, the massing of the tenement is matched by framing the elevation in a crisp concrete surround, supported on a matching colonnade, which partially screens the terrace from the street. Within the concrete surround, a refined light buff brick identifies the bedroom zones, and contrasts with large glazed panels over less private areas. The detailing throughout has focussed on creating clean, precise lines to give clarity to each element, and bring legibility to the building's composition.

By bringing light into the building in different ways, we have been able to give variation to the house and by opening corridors out into reading spaces and using fire engineering solutions at stairs and voids, have attempted to overcome the institutional character that can occur in multiple occupancy buildings.

Detail 1 RC frame and 250mm floor slab, **2** precast panelling with cast-in fixing channels, **3** Halfen fixing angles bolted to concrete edgebeams and precast panels, **4** loadbearing waterproofing to beam edge below fixings and turned up inner leaf, **5** stainless steel cladding glued to wbp ply on framing on breather paper, **6** 60-minute rated cavity barrier, **7** standing seam aluminium roof, **8** one metre mineral wool insulation to limit cold bridging, **9** Halfen head restraint fixing.

Project team

Architect: Elder & Cannon; design team: Dick Cannon, John Docherty, Stephen Hoey, Marc Kilkenny, Tobias Laipple; structural engineer: Arup Scotland; services engineer: Hawthorne Boyle; qs: Ross and Morton; contractor: Chard Construction; client: Society of Jesus British Province.

Selected suppliers and subcontractors

Facing brick: Baggeridge Helsinki; precast concrete: Plean Precast; doors: McTavish Ramsay; joinery: Avonhill; aluminium roof: Kalzip; lift: Kone; window system: Technal; glazing: Solaglas; fencing/metalwork: J&T Blacksmiths; glass canopy: Gray and Dick; service installation: Weir and McQuiston; plasterboard: British Gypsum; tanking: Radmat; precast support fixings: Halfen; lights: Blackmoon.