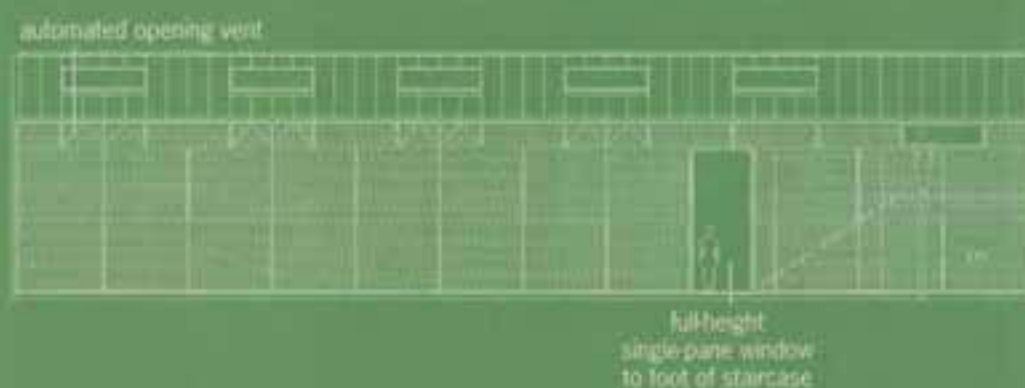


north west elevation

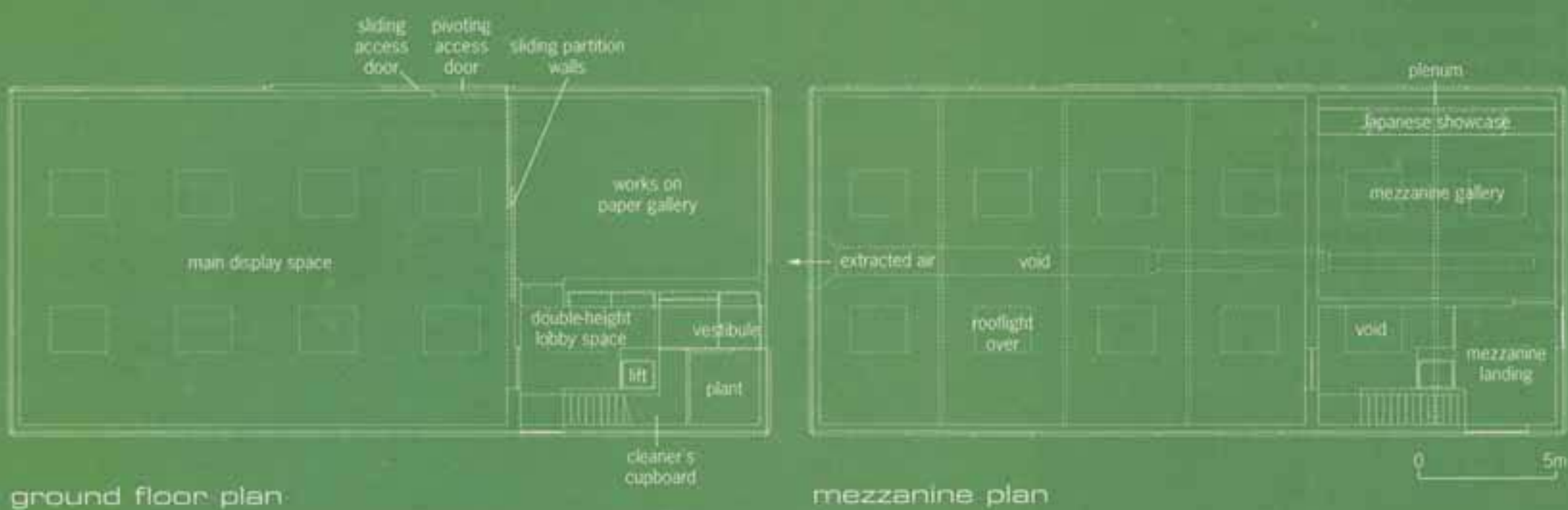
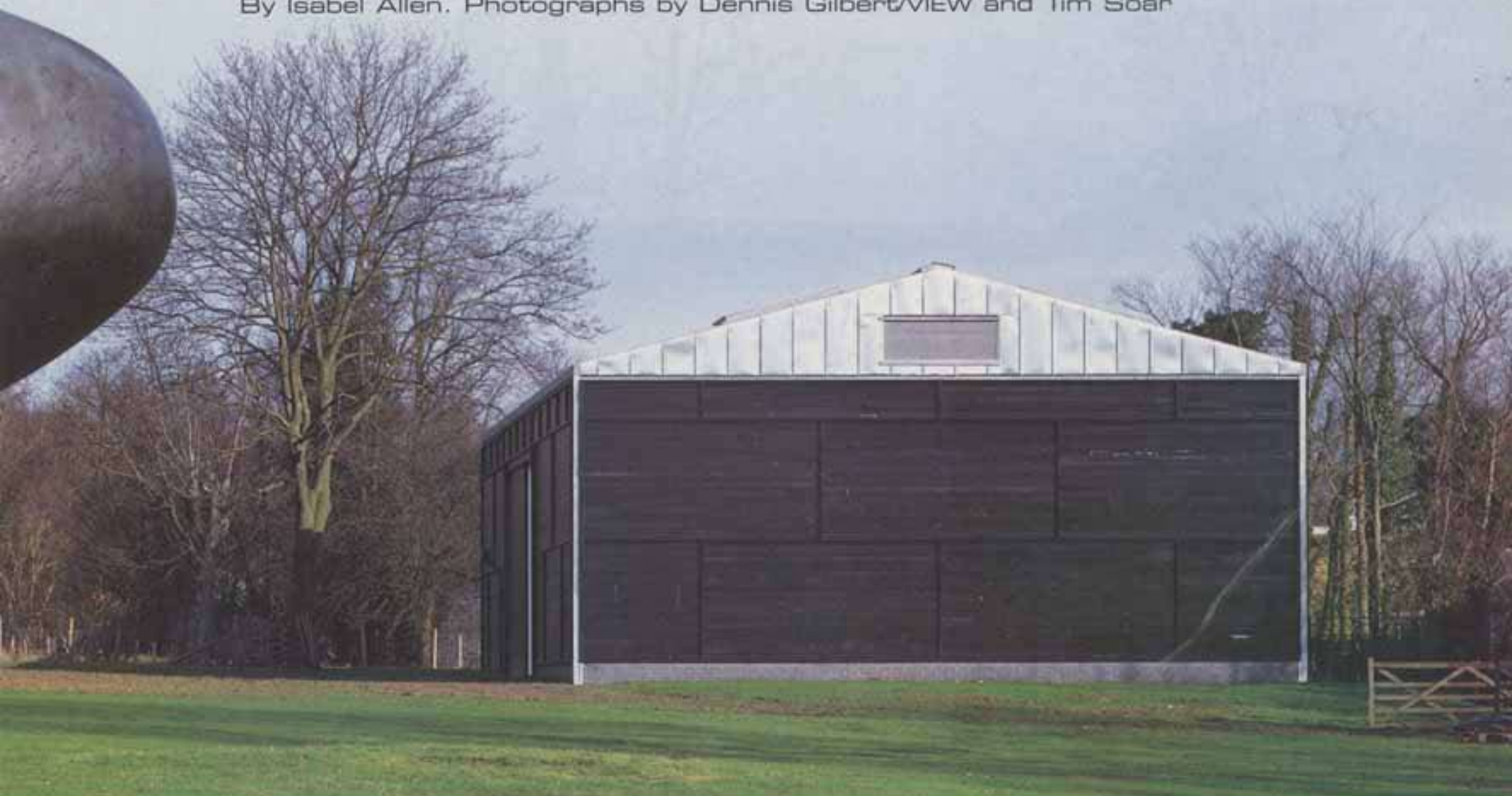


south east elevation

# Less is Moore

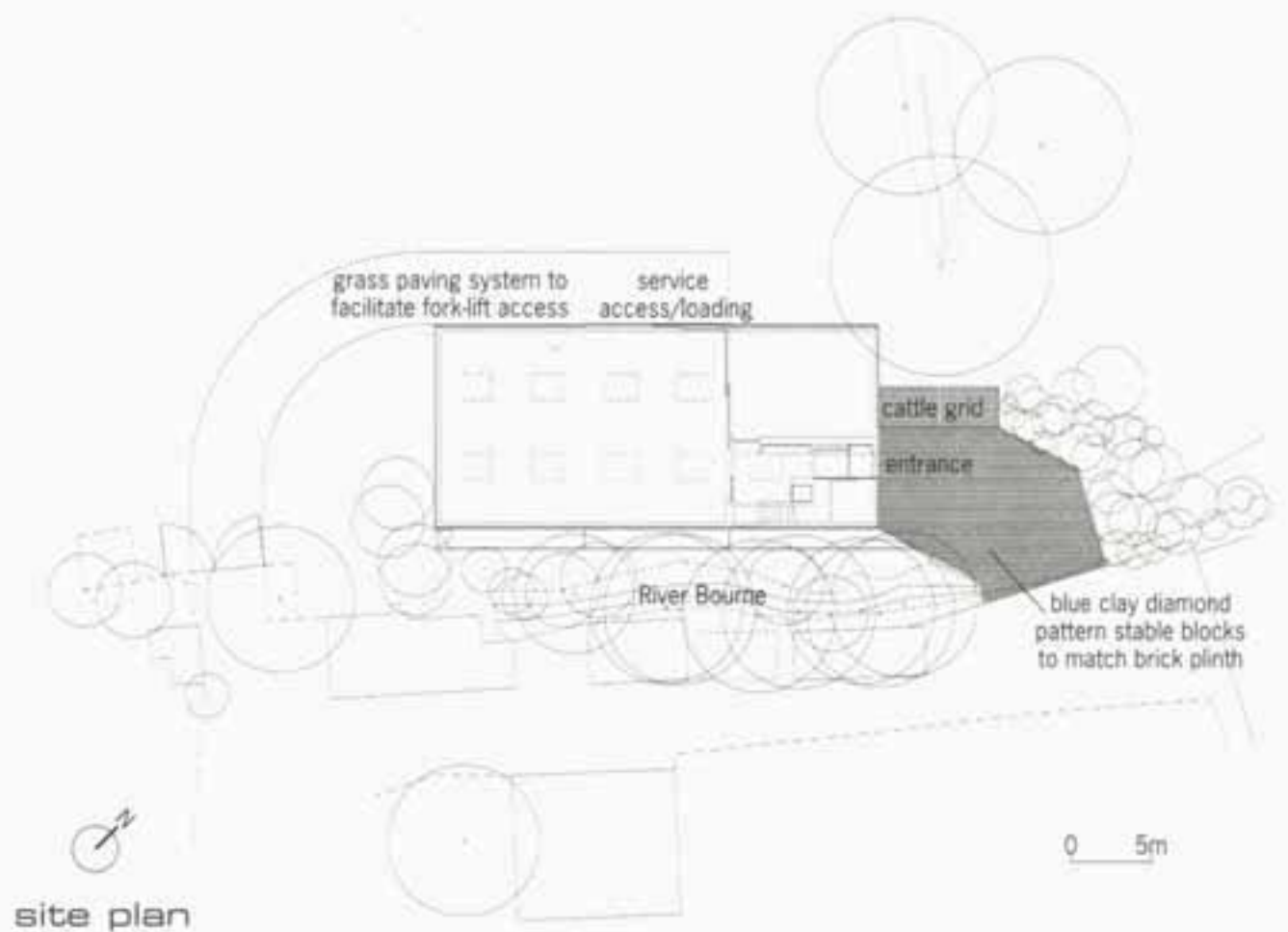
**Hawkins/Brown's conversion of the Sheep Farm Barn into a sculpture gallery at the Henry Moore Foundation preserves the simplicity of the 'building in a field' concept and lets the art speak for itself**

By Isabel Allen. Photographs by Dennis Gilbert/VIEW and Tim Soar





Top left and above: the barn is flanked by a row of undistinguished but listed buildings including a brick shed which is visible from the foot of the stair, and the 'Meccano House' which is still used to house sculptures. Top right and far right: the weatherboarding panels were inspired by packing crates used to store Moore's work





'We wanted to design a building which was as bland as possible,' says Roger Hawkins of Hawkins/Brown. This may sound like an extreme stance in the context of the ongoing debate about whether galleries should be background or exhibit, but then this is an extreme case. The Sheep Field Barn at the Henry Moore Foundation's estate at Perry Green, Hertfordshire, is a simple and economical building designed to house, among other things, works which are considered 'medium-sized' by Moore aficionados but are positively monumental to anybody else. There would be something faintly ludicrous in the notion of this modest building attempting to compete with pieces of sculpture which manage to look imposing outside corporate headquarters or town halls.

Yet a 'statement-building' would be inap-

propriate for the sleepy hamlet setting. Such, at least, was the view taken by residents when confronted with a proposal put forward in 1992 by Jeremy Dixon. Edward Jones. The plans included a print gallery, a sculpture gallery, a study centre, a library, archive space, and storage as well as a reception area, rest room and shop to be housed in an octagonal glass extension to the existing Dane Tree House. Described by Hawkins as 'a big Staatsgalerie scheme in the middle of the countryside', the Dixon. Jones scheme was supported by the foundation, but was simply too ambitious, both in style and scale, for the community, which was particularly concerned at the prospect of invasion by hordes of visitors.

Realising that a more modest approach was in order, the foundation contacted Hawkins/Brown, who addressed the foun-

dation's most pressing problems by extending and remodelling Dane Tree House (AJ 15.6.95) to provide workspace and storage for maquettes and works on paper. The scheme proved popular with visitors and staff, making Hawkins/Brown the obvious choice when in 1996 the foundation's new director, Charles Joint, identified the need for a flexible gallery space where Moore's drawings and sculptures could be displayed. The new building was to be a modest refurbishment of an existing sheep barn – an off-the-peg 1970s portal-frame shed, considered of some significance on the grounds that Henry Moore bought and sited the building himself.

In addition to its nostalgic appeal, the barn offered practical advantages – it was ideally positioned next to Moore's studios, easily accessible to visitors, not overlooked

by any neighbours, and under-used. But it was also inadequate for the purpose. Although the foundation liked the idea of aesthetic simplicity, it needed a building which could meet the stringent security and environmental conditions which would allow it to display not only its own collection but work on loan from other institutions, and a shed simply wasn't up to the task. The trustees agreed that a new building – to be called the Sheep Field Barn – should be rebuilt on the same site, using the steel frame and the proportions of the original barn.

Having decided on a basic strategy, the project had to win the support of the community. A policy of employing locals to show round visitors encouraged a greater appreciation locally of the foundation's worth as an educational and cultural resource. A second tactic was to stress that the new gallery is not seen as a magnet for additional visitors, but simply as a means of making previously unseen works available to the 10,000 visitors who currently visit each year. The scheme met with considerable support, and work started on site in autumn 1997.

Hawkins describes the building as 'a modern reinterpretation of the barn', but it is infinitely more sophisticated than this description implies. Since there was no possibility of re-siting the building, Hawkins/Brown and landscape designer Dan Pearson set about a subtle process of re-ordering the surroundings so that the building sits rather more happily on the site. Little could be done about the motley assortment of sheds which runs along one side of the barn, as each one is listed on account of its association with the great man. (Moore particularly enjoyed working in the so-called 'Meccano House' – a makeshift construction of corrugated plastic which, as he rightly said, was ideal for keeping water out and letting light in.) Hawkins/Brown did, however, succeed in arguing that one particularly humble brick store was about to fall down, and could legitimately be removed – thus conveniently opening up the view from a full-height window in the new gallery.

The other side of the gallery faces an open field dominated by vast sculptures, one of which lies on a 13.5m-long hill which Moore had made specifically for the purpose. Moore's studio looked out over this slightly surreal landscape, and the sheep which he was so fond of sketching grazed happily among the sculptures, often rubbing up against them and leaving a distinctive patina. Sheep will continue to be part of the landscape – the field is leased to a farmer for a peppercorn rent on the understanding that it will always be grazed by sheep – and a sheep-grid has been installed so that they can come right up to the gallery without being in danger from the road. Hawkins/Brown toyed with the idea of incorporating bronze into the facade so that



the building, like Moore's sculptures, would eventually bear the traces of the attentions of several generations of sheep. In the event, the £550,000 budget meant that Hawkins/Brown had to opt for less costly materials, although in retrospect Hawkins feels that the use of bronze would, in any case, have been too mannered.

The materials which were eventually chosen are appropriate both for the area and for an agricultural building. The zinc roof was selected partly for aesthetic reasons, but also because it comes with a 30-year design warranty – as Hawkins points out, 'you do want to keep the water out when you have a load of Henry Moores inside'. Apart from a base of Staffordshire blue bricks, the elevations appear from a distance to be constructed from the black-stained weather-boarding which has been used for many local barns, including one which sits elsewhere on the Perry Green estate, but on closer inspection prove to be altogether more magical. Each elevation is a composition of beautifully-made timber panels inspired by the vast timber packing crates which are used to transport Moore's work, and which were previously stacked high in the barn.

Hawkins/Brown considered various ways of ordering the internal space, settling on a strategy which is both practical and a nostalgic reference to the building's past. One-third of the building is divided into two floors, containing two small galleries for drawings or maquettes, while the remaining two-thirds is a full-height space used to display larger works: one-third of the original barn was used for fodder for sheep, while the remaining two-thirds was given over to storage. The curator David Mitchinson wanted a gallery where drawings and sculpture could be shown together, but where separate galleries could work equally well apart. Hawkins/Brown responded by devising a system of large sliding doors between spaces, and presenting the foundation with a sheet of diagrams showing 32 different ways of configuring the space.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no visual link between levels – from the main sculpture gallery there is nothing to indicate that the upper galleries exist. The design could have been made more exciting if the large Japanese showcase which is built into the outside wall of the upper gallery had instead been built into the internal wall overlooking the main space, giving views through smaller exhibits in the case to the large exhibits beyond, but the building is not concerned with such fanciful tricks. It is essential that exhibitions can be entirely separate to meet the different environmental and lighting conditions demanded by, say, sculptures which were designed to be

**Top: detail of the south-east elevation. Middle: mezzanine gallery. Bottom: the staircase is an exercise in simplicity. Opposite: main gallery**





Above: the main gallery. Opposite: part of a nearby hedge has been removed so that the barn is more clearly read as 'a building in a field'

viewed in the open air, and pages from sketchbooks which were never meant to be displayed at all. Any internal window would have had to be fitted with shutters, pushing it beyond the scope of the budget. In any case, Joint maintains that there was a feeling among the trustees that Moore's sculptures were not meant to be viewed from above.

The simplicity of the interior means that it still feels like a barn. The exposed portal frame gives the illusion of simplicity, despite having been de-rusted off site, and strengthened with gussets and tie-rods to give it the capacity to support lighting and the industrial-looking air-handling unit. The floor, too, is more complex than it seems – thick enough to accommodate the underfloor heating, and strong enough to take the high point loading of the larger exhibits.

Plain white walls conceal a wall construction of 200mm concrete blocks, which provide a high thermal mass. Vents on either side of the building open at night to admit cool air which is expelled through the central air-handling unit. The fact that visitor numbers are controlled (the planning permission dictates that there will only rarely be more than 25 people in the building at any given time) helps to keep the ambient temperature relatively constant at around 19°C. Devised with Michael Popper,

the environmental system is passive (with the exception of the switching gear to activate the vents) – 'partly to keep the running costs down', says Hawkins, 'and because anything else just didn't seem appropriate for a building in the middle of a field'.

The fact that the building maintains the aesthetic simplicity of a 'building in a field' is a testament to the architect's almost obsessive attention to detail. When there are so few architectural moves, each one has to be perfect. A recurrent theme in the story of the project is that the association with genius imbues the commonplace – the shed, the barn, the packing crate – with disproportionate significance. Hawkins/Brown in a way has done the opposite in that it has created an exceptional building, and yet presented it as something which is absolutely plain.

The completion of the Sheep Field Barn comes at an important time for the foundation. Last year was the centenary of Moore's birth. On 1 April this year the Henry Moore Foundation and the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust joined together under a combined board of trustees. When Chris Smith officially opens the gallery on 22 April, it will be the first event in the life of the united organisation, and it seems in keeping with the spirit of Perry Green that the art world will be focused on a simple, but quietly beautiful, barn.

#### CREDITS

##### CONTRACT TYPE

IFC 84

##### START DATE

December 1997

##### COMPLETION DATE

November 1998

##### TOTAL COST

£550,000

##### TOTAL FLOOR AREA

410m<sup>2</sup> net

##### CLIENT

The Henry Moore Foundation

##### ARCHITECT AND PLANNING SUPERVISOR

Hawkins/Brown: Roger Hawkins, Russell Brown, David Bickle, Seth Rutt, Nicola Chambers, Wayne Glaze, James Gosling, Andrew Groarke

##### PLANNING

##### CONSULTANT

Adrienne Hill

##### QUANTITY SURVEYOR

Stern & Woodford

##### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Price & Myers

##### MECHANICAL &

##### ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

Michael Popper Associates

##### LANDSCAPE

##### CONSULTANT

Dan Pearson

##### CONTRACTOR

John Mowlem

##### SUBCONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS

door ironmongery Allgood, engineering bricks & stable blocks Baggeridge Brick, lighting Erco; Concord/Bega, light switches Wandsworth Electrical, windows Jandor-Hansen, rooflights Twide Paragon, concrete floor Permaban Products, insulation Rockwool, zinc roofing Rheinzinc UK, blinds Hunter Douglas, oak flooring Junckers, concrete floor planks Richard Lees, opening vents Velfac, underfloor heating Wirsbo, rigid insulation Dow Construction Products, louvres Waterloo, glass door gear, sliding & pivoting Dorma, mansafe roof HCL Safety, door seals L'Orient, paint ICI Dulux, coir matting Jaymart, building membranes Tyvek/Klober, plasterboard British Gypsum, wood stain Sadolin

## cost analysis

**CONTRACT TYPE** IFC84

**START DATE** 8 December 1997

**COMPLETION** November 1998

**GROSS INTERNAL FLOOR AREA** 410m<sup>2</sup>

**TOTAL COST** £550,000

### DEMOLITIONS AND ALTERATIONS

**REMOVING BARN** £45.85/m<sup>2</sup>

Dismantle asbestos-sheeted steel-framed barn, transport portal frames to fabricator's works, break up ground slab

### SUBSTRUCTURE

**FOUNDATIONS/SLABS** £65.12/m<sup>2</sup>

In-situ concrete trench-fill foundations, brick/block foundation walls, in-situ reinforced-concrete ground slab

### SUPERSTRUCTURE

**FRAME** £97.56/m<sup>2</sup>

Work to existing portal frames, additional steel members and cladding rails, paint finish

**UPPER FLOORS** £8.29/m<sup>2</sup>

Precast-concrete plank mezzanine floor

**ROOF** £117.19/m<sup>2</sup>

Rafters and counterbattens, insulation with breather and vapour-control membranes, boarding covered by zinc with standing seams, zinc gutters and downpipes. ManSafe system along ridge. Non-venting aluminium rooflights with 24mm sealed double-glazed units

**STAIRCASES** £8.90/m<sup>2</sup>

Oak dog-leg staircase, glass balustrade to landing

**EXTERNAL WALLS** £89.02/m<sup>2</sup>

Solignum-finished Douglas fir shiplap boarding and framing, zinc coverings, support framings for insulation with breather membrane

**WINDOWS AND EXTERNAL DOORS** £79.27/m<sup>2</sup>

Powder-coated steel windows with sealed double-glazed units, aluminium motorised opening vents, sliding external doors

**INTERNAL WALLS AND PARTITIONS** £11.46/m<sup>2</sup>

Blockwork and plasterboard covered metal stud partitions

**INTERNAL DOORS** £23.90/m<sup>2</sup>

Flush doors, paint finish. Steel-framed ZMDF-covered sliding doors

### INTERNAL FINISHES

**WALL FINISHES** £31.71/m<sup>2</sup>

Gypliner system with two layers plasterboard and plaster finish coat to main gallery and ZMDF board to mezzanine and works on paper

**FLOOR FINISHES** £40.24/m<sup>2</sup>

Power-float-finished fine concrete screed with surface hardener. Oak strip flooring to mezzanine

**CEILING FINISHES** £21.95/m<sup>2</sup>

Gypliner system with two layers plasterboard and plaster finish

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

**FIXTURES AND FITTINGS** £52.93/m<sup>2</sup>

Oil-fired boiler, underfloor low-temperature hot-water heating coil, mechanical ventilation

### SERVICES

**MECHANICAL SERVICES** £160.61/m<sup>2</sup>

Oil-fired boiler, underfloor low-temperature hot-water heating coil, mechanical ventilation

**ELECTRICAL SERVICES** £119.51/m<sup>2</sup>

Lighting and power, fire detection and alarm systems

**LIFT AND CONVEYOR INSTALLATIONS** £21.95/m<sup>2</sup>

Disabled access to mezzanine

**BUILDER'S WORK IN CONNECTION** £4.27/m<sup>2</sup>

### PRELIMINARIES AND CONTINGENCIES

**PRELIMINARIES** £218.29/m<sup>2</sup>

**CONTINGENCIES** £51.72/m<sup>2</sup>

### EXTERNAL WORKS

**EXTERNAL WORKS** £29,500

External pavings, fencing, sheep grid and drainage

### cost summary

	Cost per m <sup>2</sup> (£)	Per cent of total
<b>DEMOLITIONS &amp; ALTERATIONS</b>	<b>45.85</b>	<b>3.61</b>
<b>SUBSTRUCTURE</b>	<b>65.12</b>	<b>5.13</b>
<b>SUPERSTRUCTURE</b>		
Frame	97.56	7.69
Upper floors	8.29	0.65
Roof and rooflights	117.19	9.23
Staircases	8.90	0.70
External walls	89.02	7.01
Windows and external doors	79.27	6.25
Internal walls and partitions	11.45	0.90
Internal doors	23.90	1.88
<b>GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>435.59</b>	<b>34.31</b>
<b>INTERNAL FINISHES</b>		
Wall finishes	31.71	2.50
Floor finishes	40.24	3.17
Ceiling finishes	21.95	1.73
<b>GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>93.90</b>	<b>7.40</b>
<b>FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS</b>	<b>52.93</b>	<b>4.17</b>
<b>SERVICES</b>		
Mechanical services	160.61	12.65
Electrical services	119.51	9.42
Lift and conveyor installations	21.95	1.73
Builder's work in connection	4.27	0.34
<b>GROUP ELEMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>306.34</b>	<b>24.14</b>
<b>PRELIMINARIES</b>	<b>218.29</b>	<b>17.20</b>
<b>CONTINGENCIES</b>	<b>51.22</b>	<b>4.04</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1269.24</b>	<b>100.00</b>

