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PROJECT: Roches Stores, Henry Street
YEAR: 2004
ARCHITECT: Newenham Mulligan Architects
CITATION: *Best Contribution to Urban Design*

Dublin Over €3m

A project that creates a powerful impact on a major retail street. The architects use a series of simple geometric forms and planes to articulate an otherwise blank façade, achieving a dramatic and effective solution.

There has been considerable care in the selection of materials, use of light, and scale. It is also acknowledged that the project was carried out while the existing business remained operable without adversely impacting on the architectural design.

Architect's Comment

The concept was to express the horizontal function of the monolithic nature of the department store in the form of a simple slab wall which is punctured to convey the various internal functions and interact with the street.

The form is defined by a slab of stone creating a new urban edge to the street and redefined Roches Stores commercial presence on Henry Street. The white stone crystals catch the sun, acting as a beacon, and contrast to the vertical proportions of the red brick buildings predominately on the street.

Internally the basic design concept was simple: to create a modern retail shopping experience by improving customer circulation, modernise the retail display and the retailing lighting in the building.

The existing store was built in two element/parts, dividing the space centrally with a spine wall. By removing this it allowed the formation of a full height atrium space in which the elevators were located. This naturally lit atrium provides a central point of orientation organising the customer circulation for the store, giving it a strong retail dynamic. Other existing vertical elements such as stairs and service ducts were also relocated to the perimeter walls to create uninterrupted retail space the client required.

To create the extra retail area an additional floor was constructed over this landlocked site and the existing stockroom areas relocated to an adjacent building. The existing splayed corners are extended and completed with full height glazing to form two dynamic corner atria defining the side entrances to the store.

On the second floor a glass and stone box is cantilevered over the street. The glass floor defines the edge of the building and expresses a new space over the street. This articulates the façade and forms a feature restaurant engaging with the street and creating views along Henry Street towards the Millennium Spire.

Clients' Comment

Roches Stores are a major Irish retailer with department stores across the country. When we decided to carry out major alterations to our department store on Dublin's Henry Street it combined the need to increase and improve the overall retail space, which would be suitable for the constantly changing younger customer profile, and establish the store as the leading department store in the country.

In creating a modern look to the store we pursued retailers in Europe and beyond in fashion, cosmetics and homeware culminating in securing the highly successful fashion retailer Zara. We had to marry their retail styles to our own traditional customer base and maintain the profile of a department store. The building therefore has to reflect its many uses and provide a flexible backdrop to the ever-changing world of fashion.

There were several issues, which had to be addressed with the existing structure:

- the removal of a spine wall which inhibited the practical use of the space
- the upgrading of the internal circulation to assist customer orientation within the store
- intervention with the street/other aspects

The existing exterior façade had to also reflect the internal changes to the store and avail of the important strategic location at the heart of the Henry Street, Mary Street retail area.

To achieve our aim we carried out extensive research with the architects and design team throughout Europe for the modern department stores in terms of their lighting concept, retail display and graphics. The changes to the store have been a huge success and redefines Roches Stores as Dublin's premier department store on Henry Street.

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