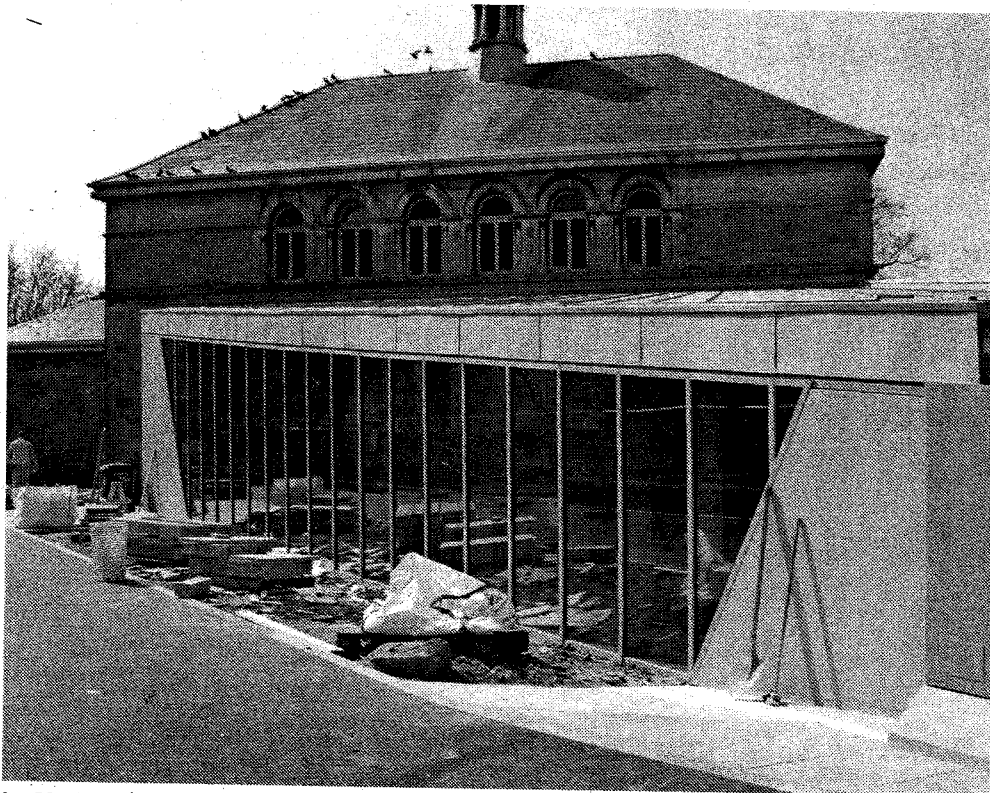


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Gallery - key arts structure for city and country



by Marie Hobbins

WITH the new extension to the Limerick City Gallery of Art nearing completion, it is anticipated that it will reopen in July by the latest.

The gallery upgrade is viewed as a major event for the city.

Limerick City Council's director of services, Pat Dowling, told a recent meeting of the Cultural and Sporting Committee that the Arts Council "sees this development as a key piece of arts structure in the country and not just for Limerick".

The Gallery has been closed since May of last year when work commenced on the new glass-fronted extension which faces onto the People's Park and will feature a restaurant, extended gallery space, storage and other facilities.

The project is being funded by

Limerick City Council and the Department of the Arts.

Mr Dowling confirmed that the Board of Directors of the Arts Council will hold its annual general meeting in Limerick this summer.

For the duration of the extension work, the gallery's €5million collection has been transferred to safe storage and the gallery exhibitions are being held in the Istabraqe Room in City Hall.

Cllr Tom Shortt, a teacher of art, said he is very impressed with the way the gallery has been run during its off-site period.

"It is great what you did with the O'Connor collection which had lain in drawers for years," he told the acting gallery director, Marian Lovett, who said that the gallery reopening is likely to be marked with a new, major exhibition.

"I very much like how the new look extension is shaping up - architecturally, it is looking very well and it is great that the gallery is moving back into its new home in what looks to be a very exciting building.

"It was a very good idea to bring in the same architect who worked on the previous extension there," said the councillor, who added:

"I hope that we can have exhibitions that draw in audiences - we have been doing so but now we should be able to do all the more - programming will be very important in projecting a sophisticated image of the arts in Limerick - we have to aim high on this".

It is understood that the artist, Brian O'Doherty, has been commissioned to execute a major work on the Siege of Limerick for the gallery

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