The courtyard purposefully breaks the established street rhythm, creating an unexpected gap in the continuous warehouse wall that draws attention to the new buildings beyond. The severity of the blank gable end is envisioned by the gravity-defying projection suite clamped onto the upper part of the wall. The limestone-clad rectangular volume is punctuated by a glass, skylight corridor and a hefty square window. When films are shown after dark, an eerie light flickers tentatively through those floors, evoking the haunting and the building's function to patients.

To delve into the IFC's external form is perhaps slightly disorienting, since the building is conceived as a collection of remply crafted internal interventions rather than a monolithic whole. But it still has an undeniable urban presence. The matrix of terrace-like entrance routes draw visitors in from the surrounding streets to converge in an airy, skylight courtyard. Within the courtyard, an expressive dialogue between the old and new is immediately established. The weathered brick facades of the Quakers' meeting halls – now converted into cinemas and spreading a cellular gospel – are juxtaposed with the seductive ochre-painted facade of a three-story-high wall. This orthogonally perforated screen eases through the courtyard in a fluid curve, displacing the boxed-in quality of the space. It also acts as the principal organizing element, containing and defining the busy bar, sales kiosk and bookshop at ground level. The linear deck of the patio, with its elevated panoramic of the courtyard, is occupied by the restaurant. Above this are suites of offices.

The use of raw materials – brick, limestone, naturally pigmented plaster and mild steel – reflects an intentionally urban character and extends the robust language of the existing buildings. The embedded courtyard retains the feel of an external space, with its concentric rings of grey Ballinalee limestone set in black polished concrete, and can be used as a diverting public short cut through the block from Eastuur Street to Sydenham Street. From the deck of the restaurant the radiating limestone segments, inlaid with strips of steel, suggest an abstract film run with its contents spooking out along the tunnel to the main Eastuur Street entrance. The floor of the tunnel is filled with a line of glowing neon tubes that look like leading lights on a runway, guiding Dublin's film buffs to the haven of cinematic delights beyond.

CATHERINE SLESSOR