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Editorial: Architectural Competitions

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At a school sports day, whether as participant or as spectator, one of the most challenging and enjoyable events is the three-legged race. Competitors, inextricably linked, career down the field: one arm embracing their partner's shoulder, one leg bound tightly to their partner's at the ankle. The other arm flails the air; the other leg, loose and free, paves the way, marking the course of the ground to be covered. The speed of this motion, this progress, brings an indescribable feeling of freedom and rootedness, of searching and connection all at once.

The Competition is the architect's three-legged race. The architectural imagination is fired up, awakening ideas with the sense of possibility—the unfettered leg is fully in action, exploring a way. But our development, our history, comes too—our other leg is bound to our progressive understandings—it is our fuel, our power engine.

This issue of *Building Material* looks at competition entries and their authors. The entries gathered did not win their respective competitions, and for the most part have, until now, remained unpublished. The idea for this issue, and early work on it began with the previous editor of *Building Material*, Peter Carroll. It works its way through different time periods, types of competition, locations and architects both within Ireland and further afield. The very tangible sense that reads in all these pieces is the intensely felt relationship between the architects and their ideas. The entry may not have won the competition, but the ideas linger, smoulder and develop, like

recurring dreams, perhaps eventually making their way into built work. What also reads strongly through these writings, whether working as an individual or as part of a larger team, is the close and personal nature of entering competitions—the self-reflective activities and thoughts they encourage. The competition promotes the growth and development of the person as architect.

Beyond this personal scale, on the scale of community, *Building Material* provides a platform for charting the growth and development of our architectural culture in Ireland. The activities of the AAI—the lecture series, the site visits, the awards and the publications all stimulate and promote debate and interaction among architects and the wider community. *Building Material* endeavours to reinforce, sustain and expand these conversations. As appears on the back cover of each issue of *Building Material*, the AAI aims to provide a 'medium of friendly communication between members and others interested in the progress of architecture'. In such a vein, I welcome and strongly encourage response, reaction to and comment on the work of *Building Material*—its content and aspirations. Such a forum for debate has huge potential for an architectural community the size of Ireland, and is very important for the progress and further development of our country's architectural culture. I ask you all, the members of the AAI and the readers of *Building Material*, to contribute to this developing discourse—to fuel the dialogue, to power the understandings of our communal leg.

