

**ART GALLERY, MAYFAIR  
LONDON**

**ARCHITECTS: MICHAEL BRAWNE  
AND ASSOCIATES**

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1. the fully-glazed display window encourages the curious into the gallery.

## Art gallery, Mayfair, London

Architects: Michael Brawne & Associates

The practical requirements of a commercial art gallery can be summarised as follows: a good window to identify the gallery and attract the passer-by; plenty of wall space for pictures; good lighting; adequate security arrangements; a room in which clients can view pictures with the storage area adjacent and the usual office space, tea-making facilities and w.c.s.

Although its front is fully glazed, the new gallery for Gimpel Films in Davies Street does not wholly expose itself to the street, but follows the traditional shop-window approach of backing the object displayed with a screen which stops short of both ceiling and side walls. Immediately behind this is a relatively small space which provides a more intimate atmosphere and can be closed when shortage of staff makes this necessary for security reasons. The entrance area, which is consequently quite deep (and sensibly furnished to its full extent with coconut matting to protect the beautiful carpet of the gallery proper), opens out in a series of 45-degree splays, the third splay deftly incorporating the L-shaped area at the back and at the same time providing space for two offices. This angling, then, is no gimmick. It also gives anyone sitting by the window in the central office 75 per cent

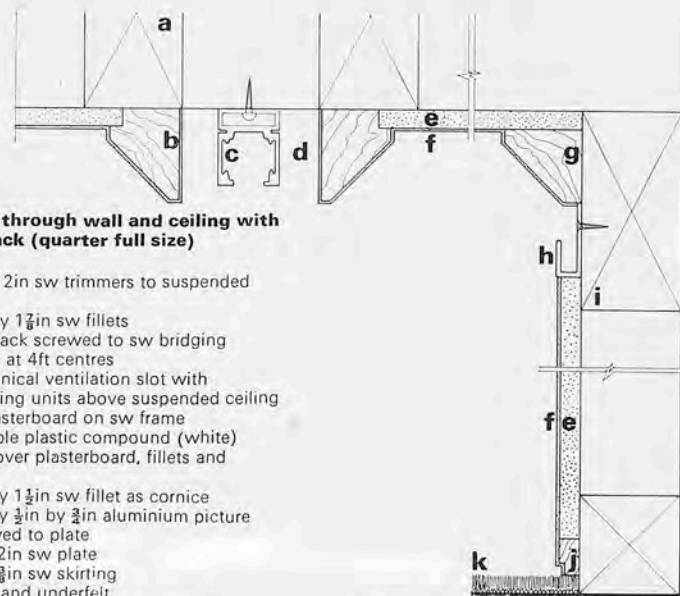
visibility of the ground floor. By moving out to the desk and telephone on the other side of the window, this can become almost 100 per cent.

To even out the irregularities of existing structure a false ceiling has been inserted and walls have been battened out and lined with plasterboard. The detail at the top incorporates a flush picture rail which is continuous and even extends across the folding doors which divide the back area on the ground floor from the rest of the gallery to provide additional display surface.

The false ceiling precludes the use of the existing roof glazing in the back half of the ground floor for daylighting and the effect of the rear window is too muffled by louvres to make much impact. Regrettably most galleries today depend largely on artificial lighting. This is both easier to design for and to control, though here dimmers had to be omitted on grounds of cost except for the mixed sculpture show which will be a permanent feature of the basement room. Due to the smooth, wrap-up treatment of the gallery as a whole, the artificial lighting makes for a certain amount of visual disturbance, not because of the spot lights whose robust, industrial character makes a welcome contrast to the overall smoothness, but because of the linear insistence of the track. This is particularly evident in the smaller spaces like the back area, where the track with its attendant ventilation slots and triangular fillets follows the line of the walls only to end abruptly on the open side with the folding doors.

If the spatial organisation commands respect, there are in addition a number of felicitous touches. One end of the screen behind the street window is hinged, so that large pieces of sculpture can be wheeled round with greater ease; the doors to the offices in the back area are concealed and the wall surface continues uninterrupted with the exception of the spy holes; the relationship between the basement viewing room and the store has been carefully worked out, with a wide hinged door which screens the untidy store from the client's view and a sliding door which widens the opening even further. The gallery opened with an exhibition of sculpture by Isamu Noguchi, which is seen in these photographs.

The assistant architect was Gary Taylor; mechanical and electrical services consultants, James R. Briggs & Associates. SHERBAN CANTACUZINO



section through wall and ceiling with light track (quarter full size)

### key

- a. 4in by 2in sw trimmers to suspended ceiling
- b. 1 1/2 in by 1 1/4 in sw fillets
- c. light track screwed to sw bridging members at 4ft centres
- d. mechanical ventilation slot with air-handling units above suspended ceiling
- e. 3/8 in plasterboard on sw frame
- f. washable plastic compound (white) sprayed over plasterboard, fillets and skirting
- g. 1 1/2 in by 1 1/2 in sw fillet as cornice
- h. 1 1/2 in by 1/2 in by 3/4 in aluminium picture rail screwed to plate
- i. 4in by 2in sw plate
- j. 3/4 in by 3/4 in sw skirting
- k. carpet and underfelt

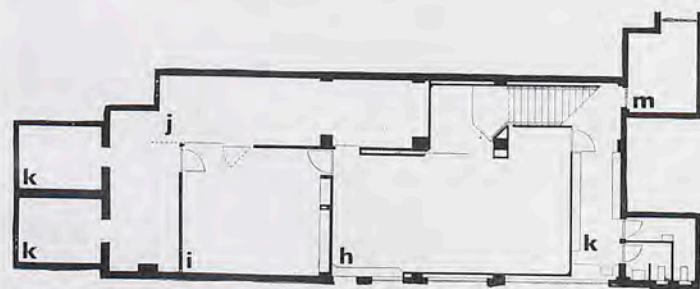


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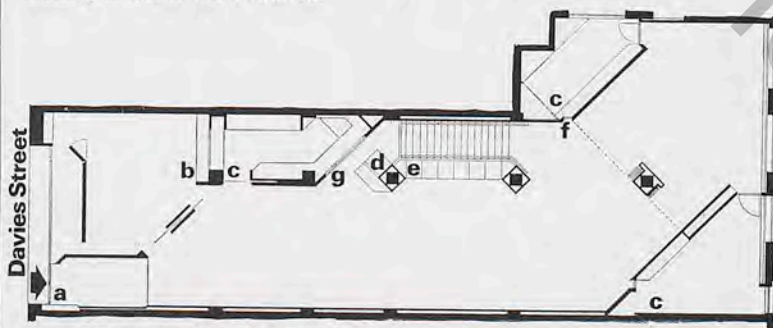
2. the small ground-floor gallery. Facing page: 3, the bland, white-painted main gallery, looking towards the entrance.

4. looking in the opposite direction. The sculpture on display is by Isamu Noguchi.

- |                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| <b>key</b>      | g. window                    |
| a. entrance     | h. sculpture gallery         |
| b. display case | i. viewing                   |
| c. office       | j. picture store             |
| d. desk         | k. store                     |
| e. seating      | m. packing and card printing |
| f. spy hole     |                              |



basement plan



ground floor plan (scale 1/24in = 1ft)



3



4