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You can never learn anything that is not a part of yourself.
Louis Kahn, "Silence and Light", 1969

The Mediterranean is full of wonder and beauty. The parts I saw around Italy I shall never forget.
Louis Kahn letter to Anne Tyng, 1953

Louis I. Kahn fascinated us all with his passion for Mediterranean culture. Precisely at the moment when the centre of the dominant culture moved from Europe to North America, he was able to immerse himself in the Roman brick structures of the great classical buildings, interpreting the timeless forms of antiquity. When the glass curtain of the bureaucratic International Style became trivialized, he turned to the archaic sources of architecture to discover light, matter and desire, in the pyramids of Giza or in the ruins of the Caracalla Baths. Kahn is a unique case in the history of 20th-century architecture: he introduced the question of monumentality, a matter heretical to the Modern Movement, and emphasized the value of permanence, and the decorative character and malleability of constructive elements. He was able to read History creatively, interpreting the permanent value of the monuments for the community and rescuing their public sense of place. Posting questions such as "what do you want, brick? or "does the inside of a column contain a promise?", he produced an impressive body of work and a doctrine with originality, often appearing philosophical, poetic or even mystical. Moving away from dogmas, but never losing the functional and constructive sense of modulation, he broke the systematic use of fluid space and reintroduced a sense of ritual and the value of solemnity, while achieving the most suggestive syntheses between modernity and tradition, as Otávio Paz recognized, between the use of technique and memory.

Louis Isadore Kahn was born on 1901 on the Baltic island of Osel which, at that time, was part of Russia (now Saarema, Estonia). He grew up in the bosom of a Jewish family who emigrated in 1925 to the USA, settling in Philadelphia. When he was 3, an accident disfigured his face and hands. At 4, scarlet fever changed his voice, delaying his starting school, and determining a special destiny in a precarious family context. Kahn chose to be a painter, but his fascination for architectural history led him to enrol in architecture. In 1928, 4 years after graduating, he travelled for a year in Europe, drawing the temples of Antiquity. In 1940 he returned to Italy, beginning what would become a new cycle in his life: the period of growing glory that nurtured him until 1974, the year of his death. In fact, he had lived for 50 years and worked for about 35 when he finally found fame, with the Yale Center for British Art.

This 03 reveals the cross-section of subjects that restoration raises in Kahn works. From houses to factories, from public authorities to private owners, from America to Israel or India, written contributions demonstrate how his buildings have proven their resilience and character.

I wish to thank David Fisher for being such a dedicated and committed guest editor, the authors for having shared their remarkable experiences in the restoration work, and William Whitaker and David Brownlee for the interviews that complete this Journal with their unique insights. Very special thanks must be given to the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, for having graciously shared precious iconography and, in that concert, once again to William Whitaker who daily “watches over” the Louis I. Kahn Collection, with more than 200 projects, 5,363 drawings, 29,843 working drawings, 100 models, 12,140 photographs, correspondence, a personal library and awards.

In fact, the essential revision of Kahn’s work and theories was made two decades ago, when the investigation carried out from this monumental archive resulted in the exhibition that travelled between 1991 and 1994 to 7 museums in America, Europe and Asia, and the significant "In the Realm of Architecture" that constitutes the work of reference to understand the work and the man, that has been completed since then (see exhibitions and book reviews section).

Finally, a special thanks to GC, for their support to this journal, to Yale Center for British Art directors’ Amy Meyers and Cécile Clement, and to docomomo US/Philadelphia and friends who conducted visits on Kahn buildings: Bianca Sorni, Bryn Mawr, Charles Firmin-Diallo, Dan Macey, Larry Korman, Maureen Ward and Paul Savidge.

After more than a half century of use, it is deeply gratifying that society is still able to testify to Kahn’s knowledge and built heritage, renovated by some of the most skilled architectural offices, and can still rediscover the intensity of its poetry, where the transcendence of architecture is perpetuated with power, beauty and plenitude.

References
BOOK REVIEWS

Roberto Magagnoli
Louis I. Kahn: Exposed Concrete and Hollow Stones 1949-1959
Author: Roberto Magagnoli
Publisher: Rizzoli
Language: English
Year: 2014

The first volume, "Exposed Concrete and Hollow Stones," focuses on the first 10 years of Kahn's research on concrete. Moving through Kahn's many construction systems, the book reveals the discovery of exposed concrete in the form of "building" at the Yale Art Gallery, the present and poured-in-place techniques, and the development of the "monolith" at the Salk Institute. The second volume, "Towards the Zero Degree of Concrete," covers the following years and leads the reader along Kahn's path to the "true nature of concrete," focusing on his main techniques and poetic discoveries, such as the "smooth finish" at Bryn Mawr, the "expression of growth" at the United Nations, and the concept of the "monolith" at the Yale Center for British Art.

From the Publisher.

Anna Rosenthal
Louis I. Kahn: Towards the Zero Degree of Concrete 1960-1974
Author: Anna Rosenthal
Publisher: Rizzoli
Language: English
Year: 2014

Through sheer determination and courage, Kahn has researched the nature of concrete in the form of precast, cast in place or blocks. Each of his renowned works is made of exposed concrete, such as the Yale Art Gallery, the Richards Laboratories, the Building, the Salk Institute, the United Nations, the Kimbell Museum, the Acton Library and the Yale Center for British Art, in an important chapter in the history of architecture for the exploration of concrete's formal expression, beyond the lessons of Le Corbusier.

Kahn's obsession with concrete fabrication processes, on the formwork and the mix-design, is systematically examined in two volumes. They illustrate Kahn's vision with documents that have never been revealed in other essays, drawing heavily from original sketches, plans, specifications, worksite photographs, and correspondences with clients, contractors, engineers, technicians, and contractors.

While a plethora of books is now available on Kahn, this volume published just five years after his death still offers a unique perspective. The book is a celebration of Kahn's buildings and teachings of the architectural belief "that there are realms that transcend our material lives, and that we can have access to these realms through architecture."

In the first part of the book, we hear from the great man himself on such matters as materials — "You say to brick, 'What do you want, brick?' — wonder — 'the closest intouchness with your intuitive' — and of course, silence and light — "inspiration is the feeling of beginning at the threshold where Silence and Light meet!". In the second part, Lobell discusses Kahn's work in an essay entitled "Architecture as Spirit," while in the third, we see through photographs and plans how Kahn's spirituality was embodied in masterpieces such as the Salk Institute, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Yale Library. The author concludes with a short biography.

Between Silence and Light is an accessible introduction to Kahn's wisdom and oeuvre, and the 2008 edition benefits from a new preface by Lobell as well as a list of additional resources. In a sea of publications arising in the 40 years since Kahn's passing, this "dialogue" between the modern master and his student Lobell remains a definitive work.

Laura Philips
Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture
Author: David D. Brownlee and David G. De Long
Publisher: Universe Publishing
ISBN: 978-0-7893-0699-7
Language: English
Year: 1997 [1991]

This concise edition of Louis Kahn's "Realm of Architecture" is a definitive and richly illustrated volume that presents the essence of one of this century's most influential practitioners, teachers, and thinkers in architecture. Here is the detailed account of the origins of architecture and philosophy of the famous concept of the "spiritual aesthetic" and his vision to transform the world through architecture.

Kahn's career is documented here with meticulous attention to all aspects of his work—from his own fascinating biography to the unique philosophy that underlies his obsession with the "rococo" buildings of the 18th century. The steam engine of Kahn's architectural vision becomes fully apparent: his structures are at once solemn and resonant, elemental and musical. Extraordinary, exquisitely composed color photographs of his masterworks—the Yale Center for British Art, the National Assembly complex at Dhaka,
Bangladesh, the Kimbell Art Museum, the Indian Institute of Management, the Salk Institute – exquisitely demonstrate how Kahn's architecture wholly rearticulates space and light. In all, more than two hundred illustrations, including numerous drawings and floor plans, accompany the painstakingly researched text.

This volume – published in association with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and with the exclusive participation of the Louis I. Kahn Collection – contains six principal essays that critically address different dimensions and periods of Kahn's architecture. The essays and photography are accompanied by succinct notes and captions, as well as a complete list of buildings and projects and an index, making this book the preeminent scholarly and illustrative source for Kahn's architecture.

From the Publisher:

You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn

Author: Wendy Lesser
Publisher: Farrar,Straus and Giroux
ISBN: 978-0-374-27997-4
Language: English
Year: 2017

Wendy Lesser's acclaimed biography of Kahn, published last year, has achieved a near-impossible feat: bringing serious writing on an architect and his work to a mass audience. Although there is much in You Say to Brick to appeal to those in the field, Lesser writes about the man and his masterpieces with universal appeal, avoiding a chronological account and allowing the recurrent themes of his personal and professional lives naturally to emerge.

The author conducted extensive original research, including interviewing Kahn's descendants, colleagues, and students, to produce an account of his life that still has the capacity to surprise. This is interwoven with shorter essays on the buildings considered to be Kahn's "big five": the Salk Institute, Kimbell Art Museum, Phillips Dee Library, the National Assembly of Bangladesh and Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. Lesser made visits to each and presents not their specifications but their stories. It is made clear, through her engaging prose that highlights visual and human details, that they could only have come from the incomparable mind of Kahn.

"Though You Say to Brick is portable, affordable, and emphasizes Kahn's humanity — he famously anthropomorphized the material by asking how it would like to be used — the book also adds to a growing body of scholarly work on the beauty, but also the "contradictions and paradoxes" of the architect's feeted structures. More of its ilk would be welcome."

Laura Philips

Louis Kahn The Power of Architecture

Editors: Mateo Kries, Johan Eisenbrand, Sten Sandanski von Rumohr
Publisher: Vitra Design Museum
ISBN: 978-3-03778-221-7
Language: English
Year: 2013

This catalogue was published on the occasion of Louis Kahn – The Power of Architecture, an exhibition of the Vitra Design Museum, Wellem Rhein, in cooperation with the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam.

The American architect Louis Kahn (1901–1974) is regarded as one of the great master builders of the twentieth century. With complex spatial compositions, an elemental formal vocabulary and a choreographic mastery of light, Kahn created buildings of archaic beauty.

As the first comprehensive publication on this architect in 25 years, the book Louis Kahn – The Power of Architecture presents all of his important projects. It contains essays by prominent Kahn experts and an extensive illustrated biography with many new facts and insights about Kahn's life and work. In a number of interviews, leading architects such as Frank Gehry, Remo Paone, Peter Zumthor and Sou Fujimoto underline Kahn's significance in today's architectural discourse. An extensive catalogue of works features original drawings and architectural models from the Kahn archive. The compendium is further augmented by a portfolio of Kahn's travel drawings as well as photographs by Thomas Fischbeck, which offer completely new views of the Salk Institute and the Indian Institute of Management.

From the Publisher:

To know more about the exhibition, read the news section of this issue.

Louis Kahn Drawing to Find Out: The Dominican Motherhouse and the Patient Search for Architecture

Author: Michael Morris
Publisher: Lisa Müller Publishers
ISBN: 978-3-03778-221-7
Language: English
Year: 2013

Drawing to Find Out is a treasure trove of more than 320 documents and drawings produced by Kahn in the late 1950s, as he worked on his designs for the Dominican Motherhouse in Philadelphia. Although the convent was never built, his sketches — laid out chronologically, and summarized diagrammatically at the end of the book — offer a profound insight into Kahn's preoccupations and methods. While they are arranged here to provide a narrative, with commentary from author Michael Morris alongside each, in many cases the illustrations are also objects of beauty in their own right.

The book recounts a four-year journey, beginning with the architect's first meetings with the sisters and ending with their rejection of Kahn's final scheme and its development on financial and other grounds. In its narrative we see the individual elements of Kahn's con- vent, delicately drawn and collaged, combine in final forms after iterations as Kahn scales back plans to meet the sisters' needs. The result is a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a man at the peak of his creative powers, or as Merrill calls it, "an intimate biography of an architectural idea."

Laura Philips
Louis Kahn (1901–1974), one of the most important architects of the postwar period, is widely admired for his great monumental works, including the Kimbell Art Museum, the Salk Institute, and the National Assembly Complex in Bangladesh. However, the importance of his houses has been largely overlooked. This beautiful book is the first to look at Kahn’s nine major private houses. Beginning with his earliest encounters with Modernism in the late 1920s and continuing through his iconic work of the 1960s and 1970s, the authors trace the evolution of the architect’s thinking, which began and matured through his design of houses and their interiors, a process inspired by his interactions with clients and his admiration for vernacular building traditions.

Richly illustrated with new and period photographs and original drawings, as well as previously unpublished materials from personal interviews, archives, and Kahn’s own writings, The Houses of Louis Kahn shows how his ideas about domestic spaces challenged conventional wisdom, much like his major public commissions, and developed into one of the most remarkable expressions of the American house.

From the Publisher:

Building Bacardi: Architecture, Art & Identity

Author: Allan T. Shulman
Publisher: Rizzoli
ISBN: 978-0-8478-4748-8
Language: English
Year: 2016

Founded in 1862, the family-owned spirits company, Bacardi Limited, is best known for its trademark rum and the renowned red and black bat logo: “Any way you drink it... Bacardi rum is the sensible one.” Parallel to the development of the spirits and the company’s corporate identity, it was also a force in the development of avant-garde art and architecture.

Exceptionally illustrated, Building Bacardi: Architecture, Art & Identity is the first book exploring the 20th century architectural legacy of the company. Collecting a full range of vintage, diverse and glamorous images, it tells the story of the iconic brand’s interest in high design and how it was used to assert its corporate identity through buildings designed by the most varied and renowned architects, from Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson to Caribbean and Mexican architects.

The story of Bacardi can’t possibly be dissociated from the story of modern architecture, Cuban and Latin American history.

From the Publisher:

Book Reviews
An accessible primer to the most important architectural touchstones of our time by today's leading architects and teachers of architecture.

For this volume, over forty internationally renowned architects and educators—from Peter Eisenman and the late Zaha Hadid to Rafael Monro and César Pelli—were asked to list the top 100 twentieth-century architectural projects they would teach to students. The contributors were encouraged to select built projects where formal, spatial, technological, and organizational concepts respond to dynamic historical, cultural, social, and political circumstances. The capacity of these buildings to resist, adapt, and invent new typologies solidifies their timeless relevance to future challenges.

The result is presented here in this unique volume: a master list of the top 100 "must-know" built works of architecture designed and completed between 1900 and 2000. Ranging from houses and apartment buildings to museums and buildings for education and government, the book offers a wealth of extraordinary works of design and construction and is an essential edition for anyone with an interest in architecture and design.

From the Publisher:

This publication has the institutional support of docomomo International and the participation of the Chair, Ana Tocón, on the selection of 100 20th-century buildings.
docomomo International is a non-profit organization dedicated to the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. It aims at: • Bringing the significance of the architecture of the Modern Movement to the attention of the public, the public authorities, the professionals and the educational community. • Identifying and promoting the surveying of the Modern Movement's works. • Fostering and disseminating the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation. • Opposing destruction and disfigurement of significant works. • Gathering funds for documentation and conservation; • Exploring and developing knowledge of the Modern Movement.

docomomo International wishes to extend its field of actions to new territories, establish new partnerships with institutions, organizations and NGOs active in the area of modern architecture, develop and publish the international register, and enlarge the scope of its activities in the realm of research, documentation and education.