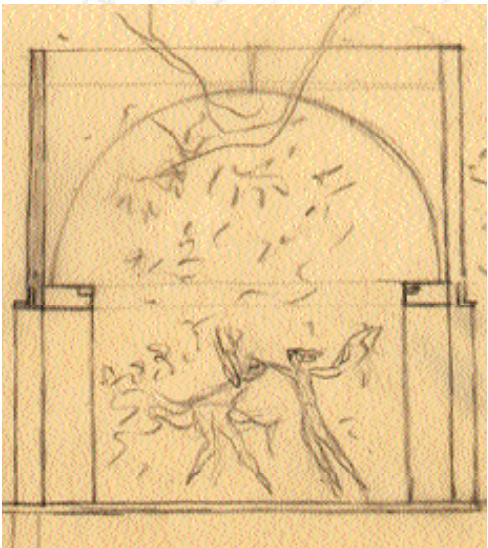


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DRAMATIS PERSONAE
A CAST OF CHARACTERS FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL
DRAWINGS OF LOUIS KAHN

Louis I. Kahn: The Making of a Room
Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania
February 7 through March 29, 2009

This “Cast of Characters” was assembled by another cast of characters, the students in the 2008-2009 Halpern-Rogath curatorial seminar on modern design—Peter Clericuzio, Claudia Lauture, John Matthews, Jordan Pascucci, Gabrielle Ruddick, Sara Smith-Katz, Laura Ventura, and Robert Wainstein. In a very short period of time in the normal scheme of exhibition organization, the students undertook individual research projects in the Louis I. Kahn Collection in the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, and together conceived and created the exhibition that this brochure accompanies, *Louis I. Kahn: The Making of a Room*.

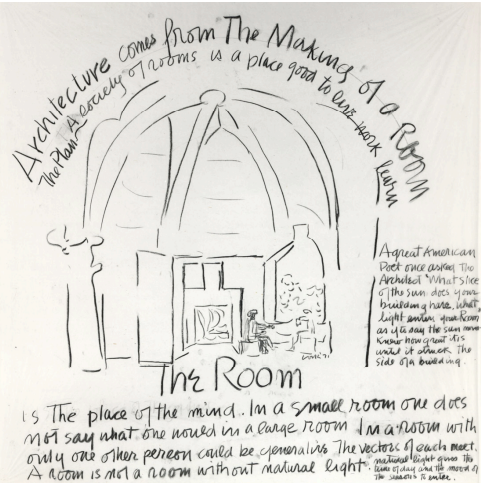
Their introduction to archival research, and to the drawings of Louis Kahn, was supported by William Whitaker, Curator of the Archives, who also contributed greatly to the exhibition organization. The exhibition celebrates the wealth of treasures yet to be discovered in the Louis I. Kahn Collection in the Architectural Archives, the principal lender to this exhibition. This presentation was greatly enriched by loans from Sue Ann Kahn, the First Unitarian Church in Rochester, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

At the Arthur Ross Gallery, Lynn Marsden-Atlass, Director; Sara Stewart, Exhibition Coordinator; and John Taylor and Gregory Tobias, Gallery preparators, gave practical advice on all aspects of preparation, presentation, and installation. The students also worked closely with Orly Zeewy, who created the show’s elegant identity and graphics, and designed this brochure.

The curatorial seminar, rostered by the College of Liberal and Professional Studies, is one of a series created by the Department of the History of Art with the generous support of Leslee Halpern-Rogath and David Rogath. Without their extraordinary vision, the students would not have had the opportunity to learn about curatorial practices and to gain the hands-on experience of being curators themselves.

George H. Marcus
Adjunct Assistant Professor of the History of Art
University of Pennsylvania

Opposite: *Architecture Comes from the Making of a Room*, 1971
Drawing for *City/2* exhibition
Charcoal on tracing paper
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Gift of the Artist



Louis Kahn’s architectural drawings are surprisingly well populated. It is difficult to miss the characters who inhabit his rooms, telling stories of the interactions he imagined would take place there. While architectural drawings frequently contain figures for the purpose of conveying scale, Kahn’s figures are different. Far from being peripheral to the significance of a room, they are often central to it, engaging in vibrant and poignant ways in a variety of everyday activities, in conversation, celebration, and contemplation. Kahn not only tells a story, he invites us into that story, so that we might dwell empathetically, allowing the room to take on the animate quality of real life. With these vignettes, Kahn suggests that a room is nothing without the people who use it.

Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974), one of the preeminent American architects of the twentieth century, is renowned for his monumental buildings. They are based not on the flowing, undefined architectural spaces that were in vogue at the middle of the twentieth century but on his notion that the room, particularized in form and defined in purpose, is the unit with

which an architect must begin to design. It is this philosophy that he visualized in the drawing *Architecture Comes from the Making of a Room*. Here, two figures composed with quick gestural lines are in conversation. The hybrid space they inhabit—a partitioned “stage set” under a Gothic vault lit by one of Kahn’s keyhole windows—transforms them from mere figures into actors. These characters, one at a window seat bathed in light, the other in shadow before the warmth of a hearth, are engaged in a relaxed discourse that is meant to convey Kahn’s idea of the comfortable relationships that appropriately designed spaces can engender.

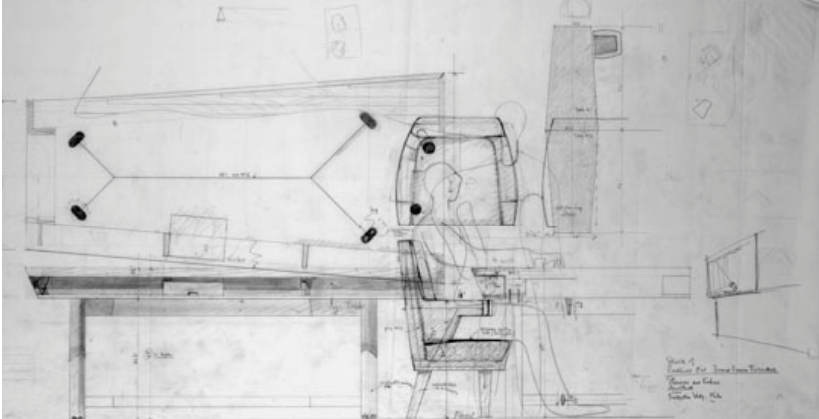
Section through Dining Room, Living Room, and Covered Terrace
Pencil and colored pencil on tracing paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
030.1.A.530.6



The figures seen within this section drawing of the Robert Fleisher house give it a human presence, recognizing Kahn’s desire to build only after finding the room’s true essence. Even without figures, however, Kahn’s drawings could imply human interaction. The table in the dining room on the left is set, and although no one is around, it reminds us that more than being just a room for eating, a dining room can be a place for strengthening relationships. In the large, two-bay central living room, a faint, ghostlike figure appears surrounded by pictures, perhaps evoking the idea of the room as a carrier of memories, while a much sturdier figure appears to be working at right. Outside, two animated figures dance in a whimsical scene on the terrace. One makes a grand, open-armed gesture, while the feet of the other are barely touching the ground. These depictions seem to indicate that for Kahn, the spirit of a room was as important as its functionality.

ROBERT H. FLEISHER HOUSE, ELKINS PARK, PENNSYLVANIA, 1958, UNBUILT

In delineating this drawing of the boardroom table and chair that he designed for the Radbill Oil Company in Philadelphia, Kahn displayed a rigorous approach to designing for functionality. But he also included a lively figure, drawn in outline, sitting upright in the chair (his head extending over a view of the chair seen in plan, as if from above). Kahn may have placed him there to show the relative dimension of the table top, or to give a sense of use—a productive fellow needs sufficient surface area and legroom to work comfortably. Or he may simply be a universal image, adding personality to a drawing that was otherwise made for practical purposes.



Plan, Section, Elevation, and Details of Boardroom Table and Chair
Pencil and colored pencil on tracing paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
030.1.A.235.4

RADBILL OIL COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA (RENOVATION OF OFFICES), STONOROV AND KAHN, 1944-47

In this perspective of a gallery for the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, a couple stand somewhat apart, gazing at an abstract painting, while diffused sunlight vibrates in wavy lines of color on the vault overhead. “George, step back and look at the colors in the painting,” we can almost hear the woman exclaiming. “They’re dancing in this light! Remember, they were so muted when we came last winter.” Here, in one of three almost identical compositions meant to show how the works of art and his building would be seen under different lighting and seasonal conditions, Kahn seems to have made his characters spokespeople for his dedication to the vagaries of natural light. “I can’t define a space really as a space unless I have natural light,” he explained in an interview published in *Perspecta* in 1961. “And that [is] because the moods which are created by the time of day and seasons of the year are constantly helping you in evoking that which a space can be if it has natural light and can’t be if it doesn’t.”



First of a Series of Three Perspectives of a Gallery Showing Variations in Lighting and Seasonal Conditions
Pencil, Negro pencil, and pastel on tracing paper
The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, by Anonymous Gift
AAUP217.1.1

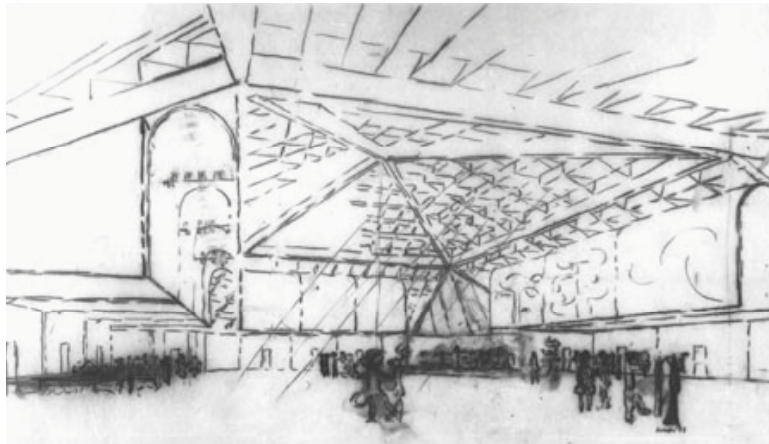
KIMBELL ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, 1966-72

Certainly among Kahn’s most colorful and playful drawings is the costume party he imagined in the upper foyer of the Performing Arts Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana, a space that is brought fully to life by its inhabitants. Kahn revealed his own artistic inclinations by making a drawing that looks more like a work of art than a traditional architectural depiction. The bright blue, orange, and yellow pastels create a lively backdrop for his dancing figures, illuminated from above by the grand chandeliers he envisioned. Their clothing is strikingly varied: A lion and a tiger share a dance in the foreground; other figures are dressed in theatrical hats, gowns, and party frocks; while others wear semiformal attire, offering a glimpse into the styles of the sixties. Kahn’s characters, their action, and his use of color make this tableau effective in conveying a sense of the center’s space and its possibilities. Yet the lack of precise detail leaves the illustration open enough to excite the imagination.



Perspective of Upper Foyer
Pencil and pastel on paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
030.I.A.605.145

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA, 1958-73



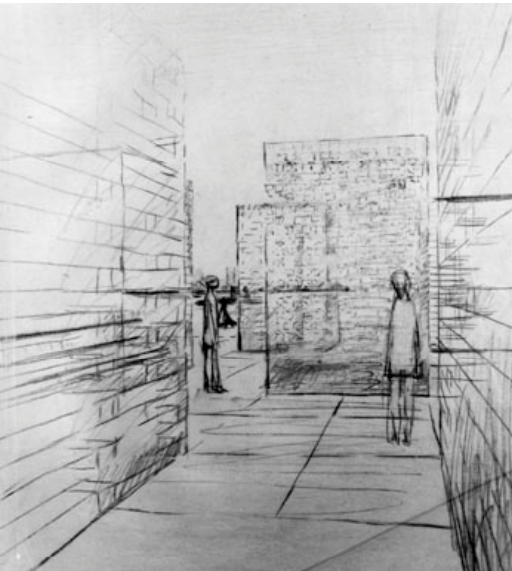
Perspective of Atrium
Charcoal on tracing paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection, University
of Pennsylvania and the
Pennsylvania Historical and
Museum Commission
030.I.A.790.158

The dramatic open space in this perspective of an atrium in Baltimore's Inner Harbor development represents what Kahn must have meant by "a richness of place, full of availabilities." It shows the interior of a large ballroom with many doorways leading into it, flooded with light. The figures are drawn in charcoal with a loose and sketchy quality that conveys an air of movement and liveliness even though the space is sparsely populated. A conductor directs a musical performance on a raised platform in the triangular niche at rear, but the focus of the drawing is on how the audience responds to it. Most of Kahn's characters are shown dancing freely, while a few others listen quietly, seated at the tables at left. The vaulted ceiling heightens the festive mood both by

its power to draw the imagined visitor into the space and by the light that filters through it and illuminates the dance floor. Ultimately, Kahn's aim was to demonstrate just one of the many possibilities for how this welcoming and inspiring space might be used.

INNER HARBOR PROJECT, BALTIMORE, 1969-73, UNBUILT

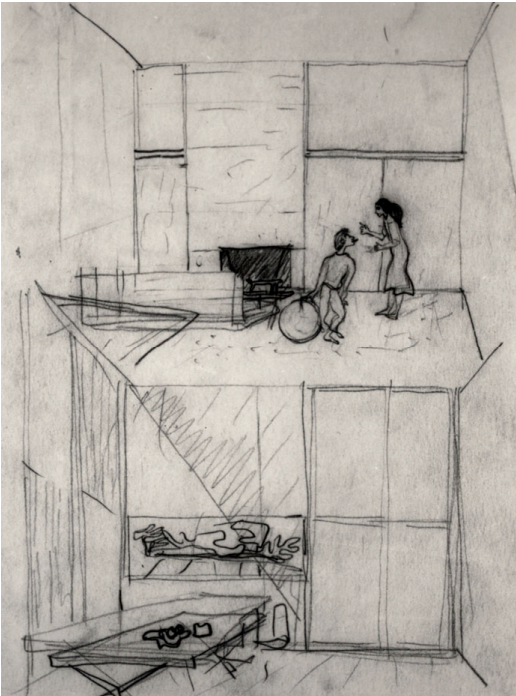
Kahn's perspective drawing of the Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs for Battery Park in New York City invites the viewer into the sacred realm of reverence and reflection. The two solemn figures have come to a stop as their course through this maze of translucent glass blocks has been obstructed. They are portrayed in a moment of contemplation as their thoughts are absorbed by the architectural space before them. The translucency of the figures suggests that the issues addressed in the monument transcend the individual, as all of society must confront this past, and it likens them to spirits, evoking memories of the Holocaust martyrs honored by the memorial. While many of Kahn's drawings show people interacting with each other, the only conversations that occur in this drawing are those that are within the visitors' minds.



Perspective
Pencil and Negro pencil on tracing paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of
Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical
Museum Commission
030.I.A.690.37

MEMORIAL TO THE SIX MILLION JEWISH MARTYRS, BATTERY PARK, NEW YORK, 1966-72, UNBUILT

Perspectives of Living Room
Pencil and colored pencil on paper
Louis I. Kahn Collection,
University of Pennsylvania
and the Pennsylvania
Historical and Museum
Commission
030.I.A.390.5



Kahn had an uncanny ability to bring intimacy to his drawings, which is clearly revealed in this sheet with two perspectives of the living room of the Fruchter house, seen from different viewpoints. It captures a tense moment between mother and son and has an immediacy suggestive of an incident that Kahn may have witnessed. The mother is scolding her son, who sticks out his tongue as he clings to his bouncing ball. Significantly, in this black and white drawing, the boy's tongue is colored red, emphasizing the child's response to his mother's reprimand. Kahn, who often spent considerable time with the families for whom he designed houses, seems to have felt comfortable enough with the Fruchters to include such a personal recollection in this early drawing for the project.

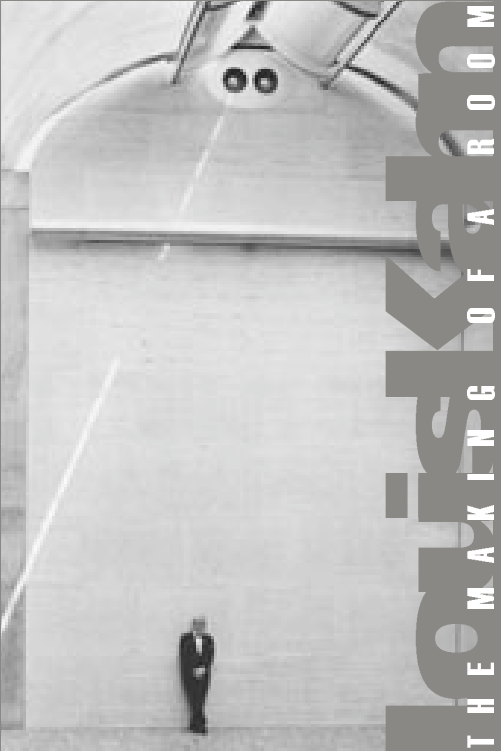
MR. AND MRS. H. LEONARD FRUCHTER HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, 1951-54, UNBUILT

This exhibition has been organized at the Arthur Ross Gallery in cooperation with the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania by students in the Halpern-Rogath Curatorial Seminar. It is supported by the Department of the History of Art thanks to the generous support of Leslee Halpern-Rogath and David Rogath. Additional funding has been provided by the Friends of the Arthur Ross Gallery. The seminar, taught by Professor George H. Marcus, is part of the Masters of Liberal Arts Program of the College of Liberal and Professional Studies.

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Text: Peter Clericuzio, Claudia Lauture, John Matthews, Jordan Pascucci, Gabrielle Ruddick, Sara Smith-Katz, Laura Ventura, and Robert Wainstein

Design: Orly Zeewy, Brand Identity Consultant



Left: Louis Kahn in the Auditorium of the Kimbell Art Museum. Photograph by Robert Wharton. Courtesy Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

Cover: Perspective of Upper Foyer of Performing Arts Center, Fort Wayne, Indiana (detail)

Back cover, left: Perspective of a Gallery in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (detail)

Back cover, right: Section through Robert H. Fleisher House, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania (detail)