

William Whitaker

Curator, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania

Biography

William Whitaker is the curator of The Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design. Trained as an architect at Penn and the University of New Mexico, Whitaker has worked for over 20 years documenting and interpreting the collections of the Architectural Archives, most notably the work of architect Louis I. Kahn, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, and the partnership of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. He has organized and co-curated over 30 exhibitions and co-authored: *The Houses of Louis I. Kahn* (Yale University Press, 2013) with George Marcus, the first comprehensive study of the architect's house designs.

Philadelphia's Concrete Modernism: The Example of Louis Kahn

This paper examines Louis Kahn's sensibilities about concrete, particularly its surface character, using the specific example of his Salk Institute for Biological Studies. To do so, it draws upon Kahn's writings and sketches, archival material, oral histories, and the personal recollections of several members of the original design team. The analysis focuses mainly on the broad context in which Kahn worked and developed his thinking about materials, their built expression, and their effect on human experience. Particular emphasis is paid to the work of his Philadelphia colleagues and teachers. Equally important, by unraveling the threads that Kahn brought together at the Salk, this paper reveals the manner in which Kahn merged his interests in structural innovation, material expression, and use to realize the possibility of transformative experience in buildings and landscapes.



Louis Kahn's Salk Institute for Biological Studies. Photo credit: William Whitaker