

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Learning by Seeing – Architecture

Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, June 17th, 2020

Reviewing works of contemporary architecture photographed fifty years ago raises an important question: What is the meaning of these works for the reinvention of the post-pandemic 2020s?

I see a parallel between our time and the 1960s. It was a tumultuous decade: the protests against the Vietnam war became global, the women's liberation movement entered into high gear, the civil rights movement achieved legislative gains, the assassinations of President Kennedy, Bob Kennedy, and Martin Luther King shocked the world. And for the first time, we saw our planet from outer space. We became aware of the Earth's limited resources.

During this time, before discovering [Wright](#) and [Pellegrin](#), our architecture heroes were Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto. They set the direction of architecture in post-WWII Europe, Le Corbusier with a social agenda expressed through planning and design, and Aalto by braking away from dogmas towards a more organic architecture. These architects and other, such as Giovanni Michelucci, Hans Scharoun, Frederick Kiesler and Oscar Niemeyer, conceived spaces at a human scale with their eyes closed, without the help of CAD-3D renderings. They created poetry and experimented with forms made out of basic materials and low budgets.



Traveling throughout Italy



Traveling to Argentina and Brazil



Traveling to Scandinavia

LEARNING ARCHITECTURE BY SEEING

During the late 1960s we were a newlywed couple in our early twenties, studying architecture in Rome. **Bruno Zevi's** course on the history of architecture influenced our yearning to leaning-by-seeing. We traveled to see architecture, ancient and modern, throughout Italy; we went to Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Jerusalem, Istanbul, Romania. Following the revolutionary 1968 Spring, we headed towards Scandinavia, to see the works of Aalto and Le Corbusier.

With \$400 we bought a VW Bug, and also our first semi-professional camera, a 35 mm Exakta RTL 1000. Crossing Switzerland, and Germany, we met with our friend Bernard Lege in Copenhagen. We continued together through Denmark, Sweden, and throughout Finland. During our two-month trip, we covered most of Aalto and Le Corbusier's masterpieces, and much more.



Imatra – Vuksenniksa Church, 1958. Architect: Alvar Aalto



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Paimio Sanatorium, 1933. Architect: Alvar Aalto



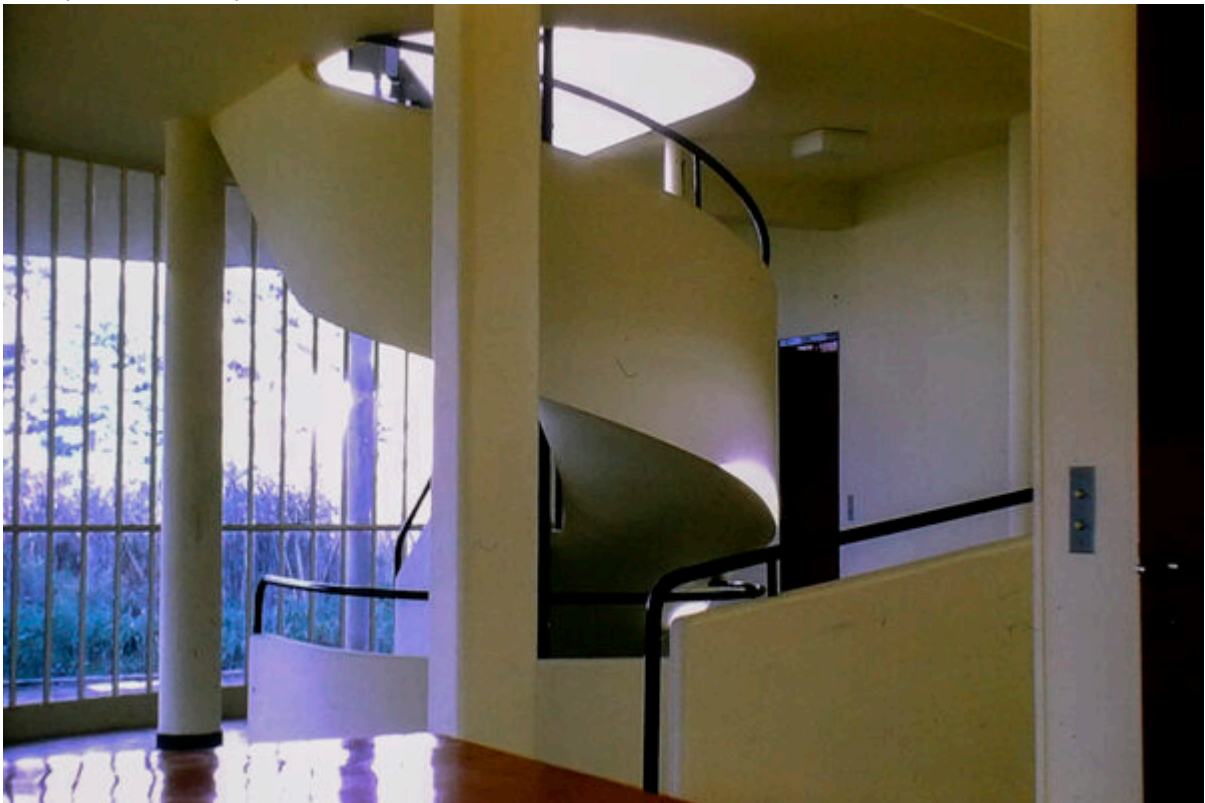
Otaniemi – Undergraduate Center, 1965. Architect: Alvar Aalto



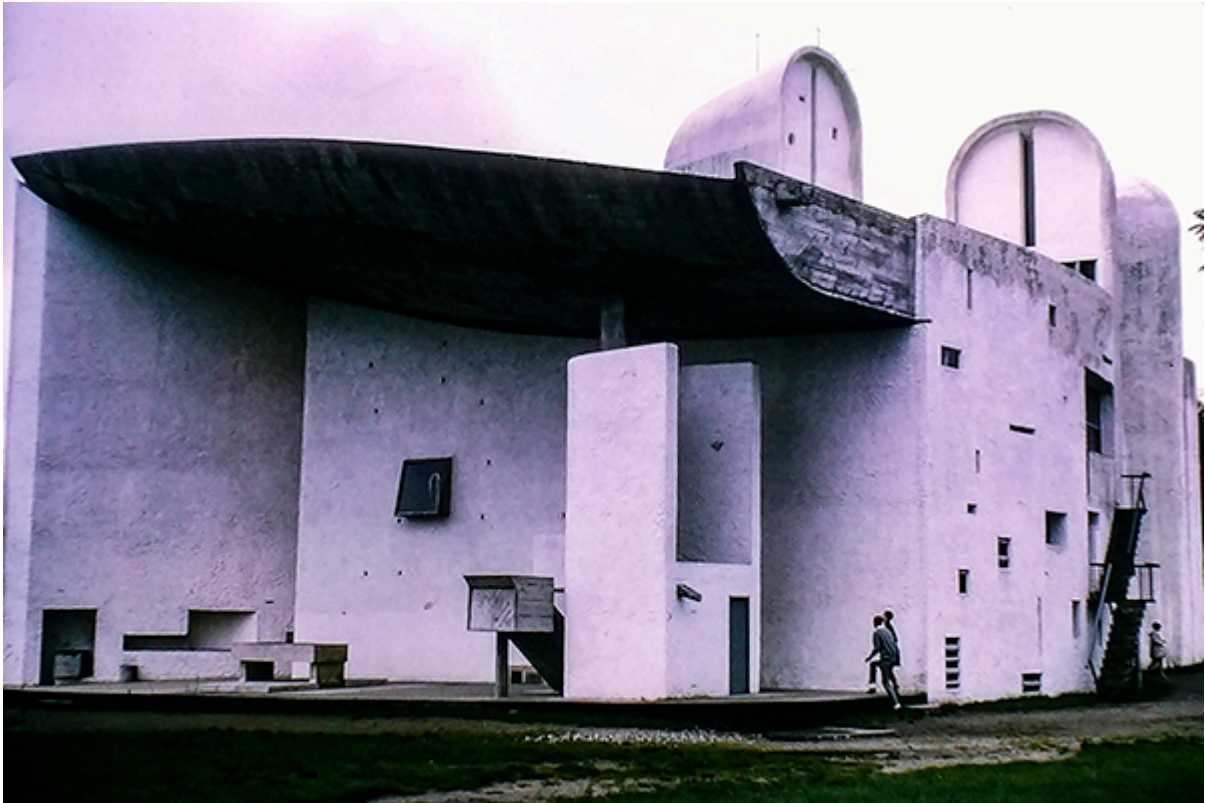
Otaniemi – Undergraduate Center, 1965. Architect: Alvar Aalto



Poissy – Villa Savoye, 1931. Architect: Le Corbusier



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Ronchamp -Chapelle Notre-Dame du Haut, 1955. Architect: Le Corbusier



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Éveux -Sainte Marie de La Tourette, 1956. Architect: Le Corbusier



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Firminy – Maison de la Culture, 1965. Architect: Le Corbusier



Firminy – Maison de la Culture, 1965. Architect: Le Corbusier



Roma – Mixed-use in via Romagna, 1965 – Passarelli Studio



Buenos Aires – Bank of London and South America, 1966. Architect: Clorindo Testa and SEPRA



Buenos Aires – Bank of London and South America, 1966. Architect: Clorindo Testa and SEPRA



Jerusalem – Shrine of the Book, 1965. Architect: Frederick Kiesler



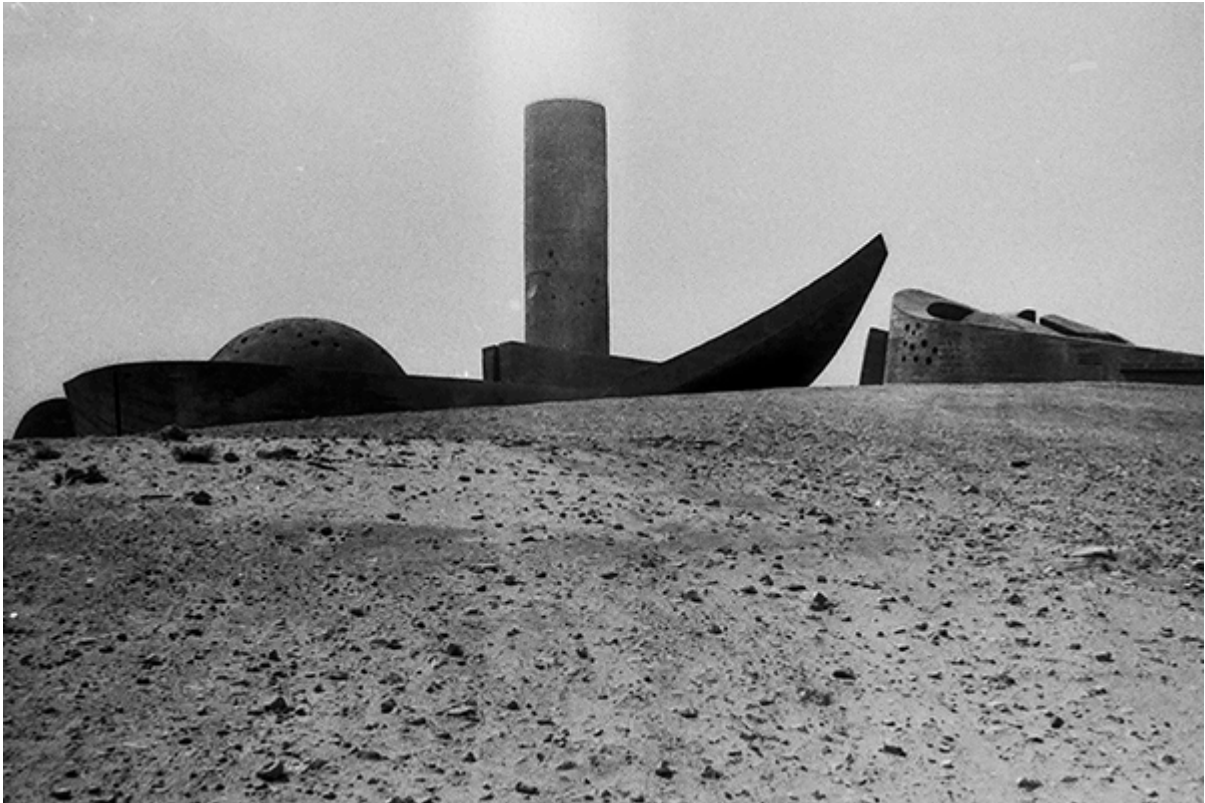
Jerusalem – Shrine of the Book, 1965. Architect: Frederick Kiesler



Jerusalem – Shrine of the Book, 1965. Architect: Frederick Kiesler



Jerusalem – Kennedy Memorial, 1966. Architect: David Resnick



Monument to the Negev Brigade – Artist: Dani Karavan



San Giovanni Battista, 1963. Architect: Giovanni Michelucci



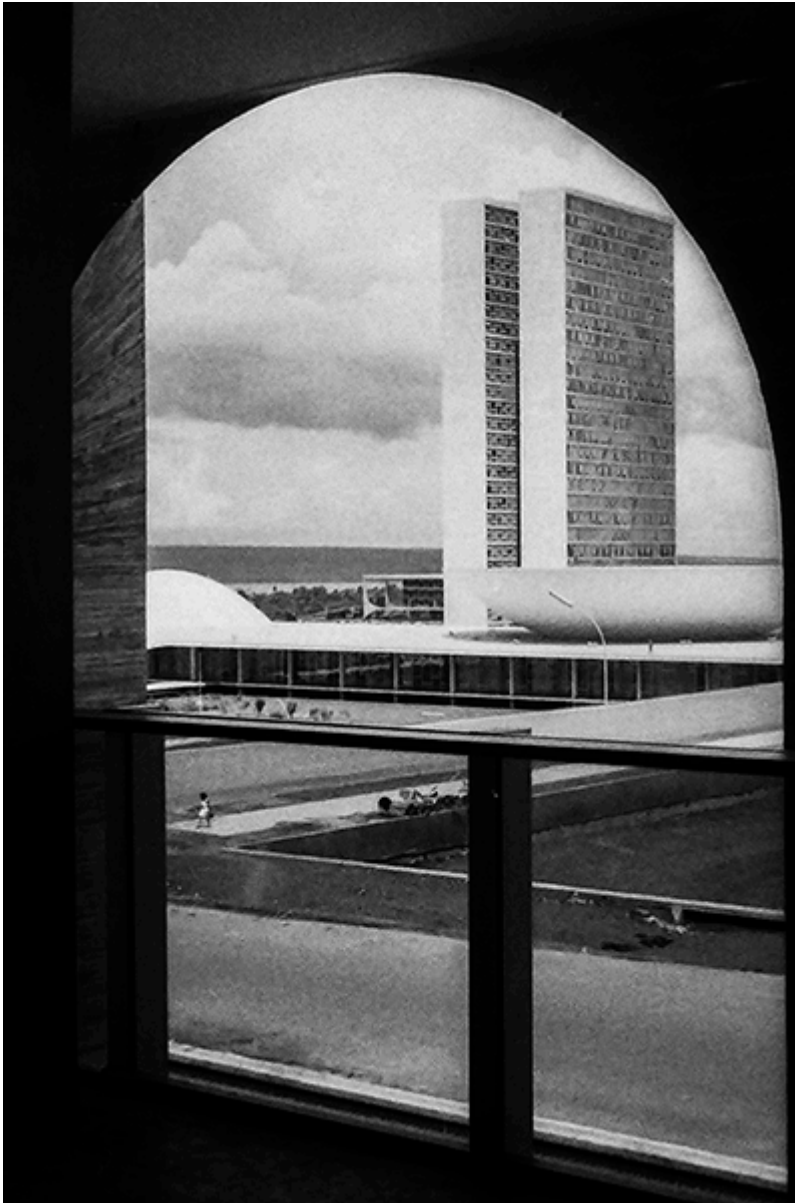
San Giovanni Battista, 1963. Architect: Giovanni Michelucci



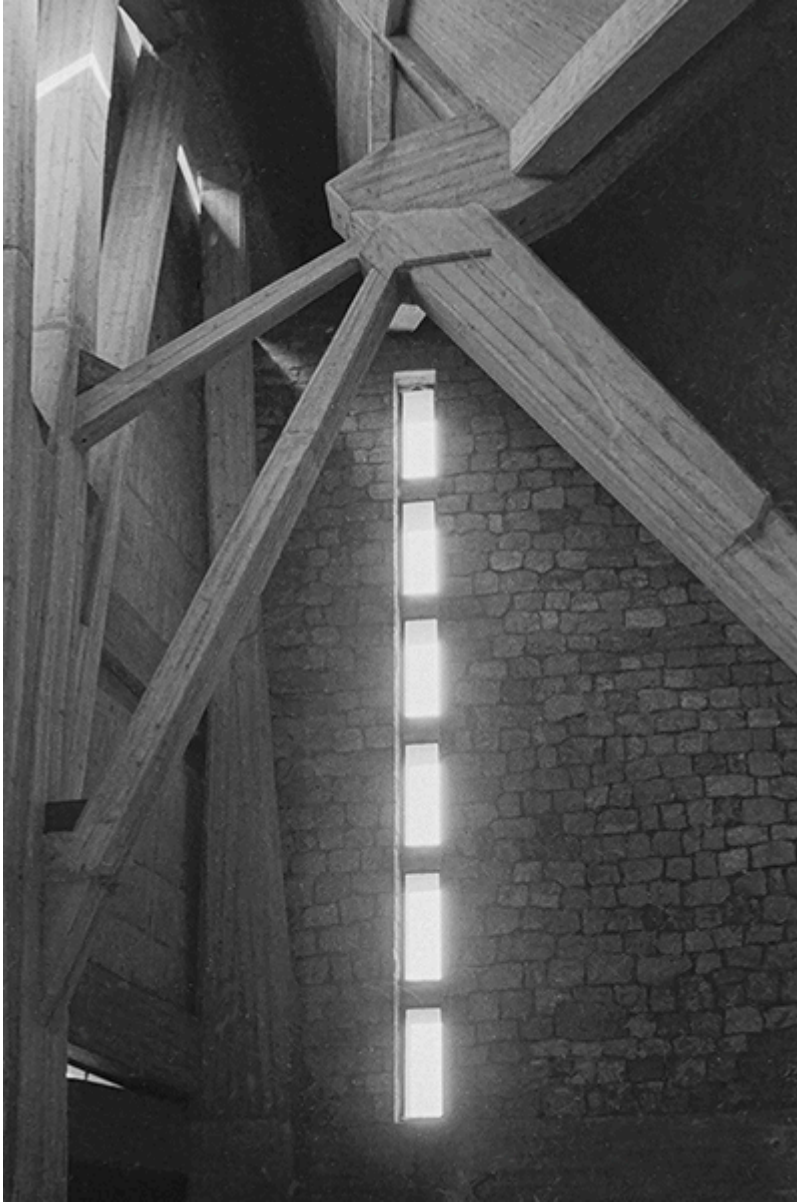
Brasilia – President Kubitschek Monument, 1960. Architect: Oscar Niemeyer



Brasilia – Itamaraty Palace, Foreign Relations Ministry, 1960. Architect: Oscar Niemeyer



Brasilia – Square of Three Powers, 1960. Architect: Oscar Niemeyer



San Giovanni Battista, 1963. Architect: Giovanni Michelucci



Buenos Aires – Rioja Housing Complex. Architect:Flora Manteola, Javier Sanchez Gomez, Josefina Santos, Justo Solsona, Carlos Sallaberry, and Rafael Vinoly, 1969-73.

Today we have more tools and information than we are capable of digesting. What we really need is humane strategic thinking capable of confronting the challenges that lay ahead of us. Some of the following examples may hint at possibilities. I hope that the images presented here may be inspiring. For more extensive coverage, please go to <http://archidocu.com/early-architectural-photography/>

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