



Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism

Sarah Williams Goldhagen

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Louis Kahn is perhaps the most important architect to emerge in the decades following World War II. In this book Sarah Williams Goldhagen dismantles the myths that have cast Kahn variously as a mystical neo-Platonist, a structural rationalist, a visionary champion of Beaux-Arts principles, a rebel against modernism. She demonstrates instead that the essence of Kahn's architecture lies in his deeply held modernist political, social, and artistic ideals. Throughout his life, Goldhagen shows, Kahn sought to rework modernism into a socially transformative architecture appropriate for the postwar world. Goldhagen presents much new archival evidence about Kahn's buildings, his ideas, and his indebtedness to contemporary art and to the many socio-critical and architectural discourses of the postwar years. She offers fresh interpretations of many of his important buildings, including the Yale University Art Gallery and the National Assembly complex in Bangladesh, as well as of such previously understudied or misunderstood works as his essay on monumentality and his AFL Medical Services building in Philadelphia. Goldhagen theorises Kahn's architectural principles to show that he struggled with modernism rather than against it, reconceptualising it into a singular and powerful new vocabulary that retains architectural and social relevance today.

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