

DL: I was interested when I was in India by the tenuous nature of the cross-axial order in most Islamic buildings. A building like the Taj Mahal, even, for instance, is controlled and orderly when seen on axis; yet because of the multiple domes, the four minarets, and the two buildings to either side, if you move off axis, it becomes wildly picturesque – all those pieces start juxtaposing in new ways. Then going around in places like Fatehpur Sikri, it was clear that the same thing happened internally in a courtyard building, especially because many from Islam are organized as a square with pavilions on their centers which make the cross axis. If you stand at the cross axis, it's serene and all in place; and when you move off it, you get a complicated, rich set of three-dimensional juxtapositions. The reference to Islamic architecture is in the courtyard being made not principally by walls (the boundary), but by pavilions (the four faces). The idea here was to use those front pavilions to make the cross axis, and to establish major points as a building size and frame of reference. Meanwhile all hell is breaking loose in places to go, places to sit, places to look down from, places to look up to, things to pass under, etc – it's a tension between the clear and the complicated.

LL: What other references or influences besides the New England row house model and Islamic architecture framework did you have here?

DL: One is influenced by virtually everything. We spent a lot of time looking at the brick blocks of the traditional Providence buildings. The idea of making a porch with benches to either side – obviously interpreted quite differently here – is a common New England theme. We were interested by adjustments made as Providence's brick houses meet the ground – and the intersecting stairs that slide out sideways. I thought that a gate that everybody was going through ought to be a triumphal

gate, and they normally had niches with people's sculpture in them: so we ought to have niches with pay phones, thinking that the only legitimate way to get figurative sculpture in aediculae at the present time would be to have pay phones that would invite people to stand in the niches. But we didn't actually do that here.

It is perhaps rather obvious that nearby architecture and great monuments which made a deep impression while traveling and were probably seen with an expectant eye, should be within the mental baggage of the designer.

The same exhibition included Louis Kahn's Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut. Kahn had died in 1974 while the Center was still under construction. It was finished by Pellechia & Meyers. They were interviewed with Jules Prown who had persuaded Yale University to appoint Kahn and who was director of the Center from 1968 to 1976.

'In some cases, we were able to use recent precedents that we knew Lou would pull out of the drawer. Lou used to say, "What did we do on the so and so job?" He had reached the point in his career where he had developed his own vocabulary and his own details: "Let's see what

Right  
**Louis I. Kahn**, Yale  
 Center for British Art, New  
 Haven, Connecticut, model  
 of first project March 1971

