

Monumentalism

by Louis Kahn

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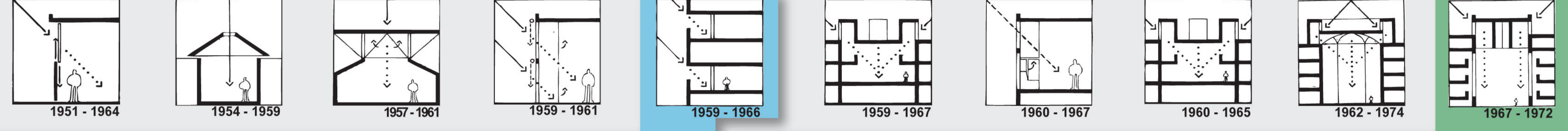
A philosopher among Architects

In this analysis of his design methods is illustrated how he used HIERARCHY and pure MASS as sub-themes to create MONUMENTAL architecture

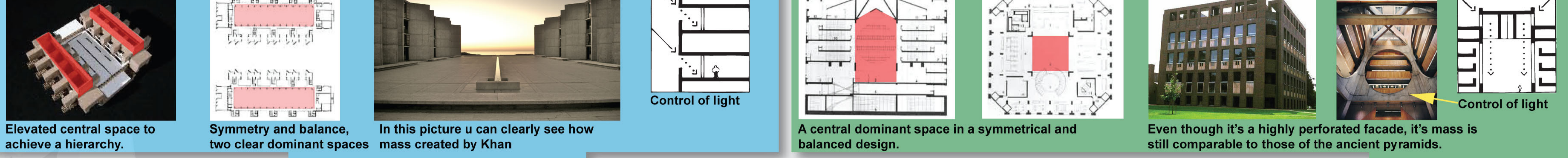
Furthermore his own unique use of TOOLS such as LIGHT, SPATIAL ORGANISATION, the GOLDEN SECTION, CIRCULATION, SYMMETRY, and more aided in the achievement of the MAIN THEME.

OEUVRE: LIGHT CONTROL

KAHN'S LIGHT CONTROL TYPOLOGY THROUGH THE YEARS



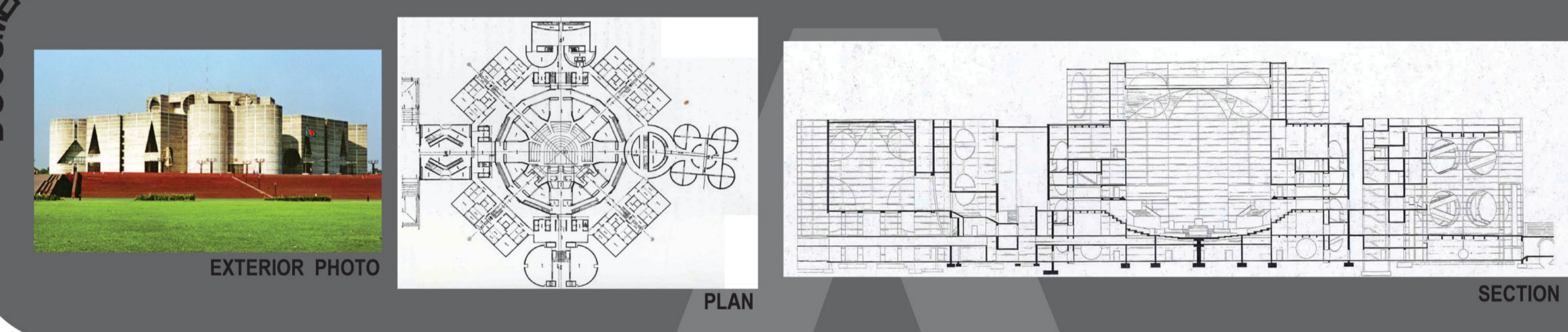
OPERATIONS OF TWO DESIGNS SHOWING MONUMENTALISM



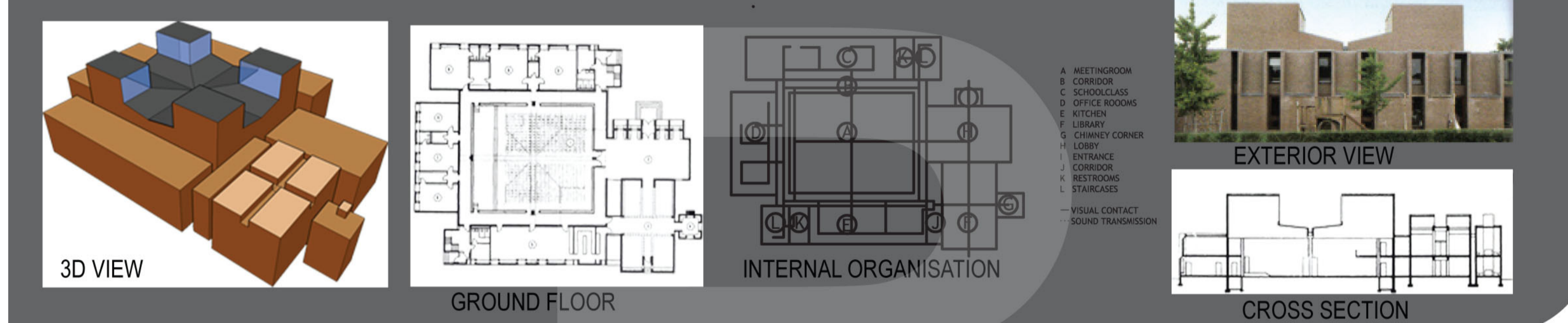
TIMELINE OF COMPLETED PROJECTS



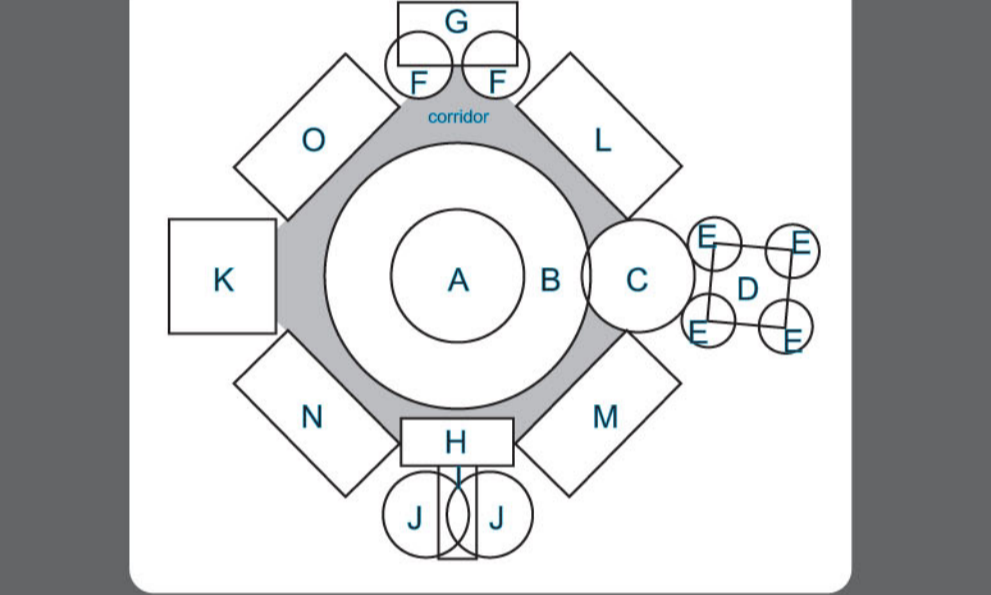
DOCUMENTATION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING



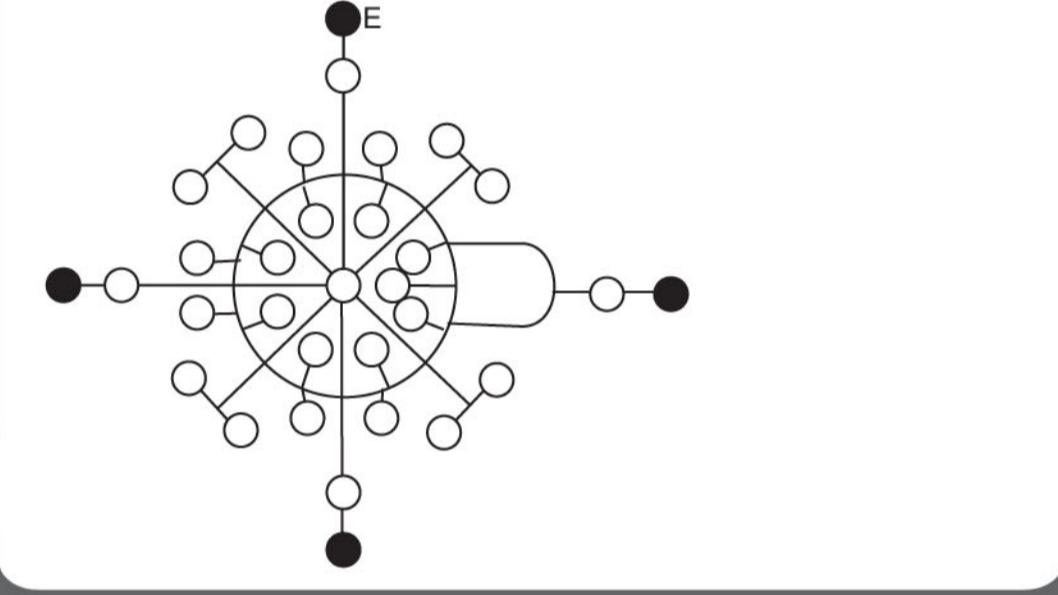
DOCUMENTATION FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH



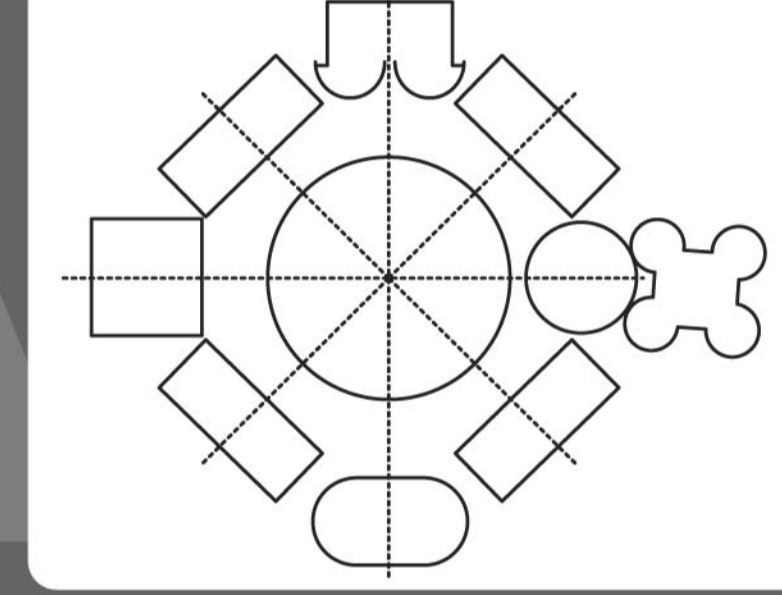
SPATIAL ORGANISATION



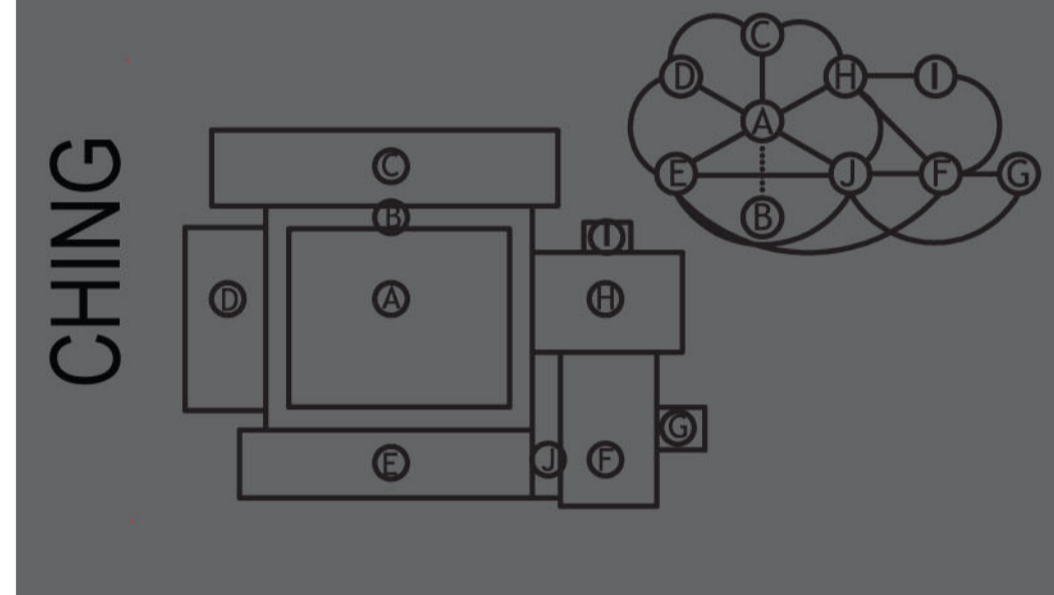
TOPOLOGY



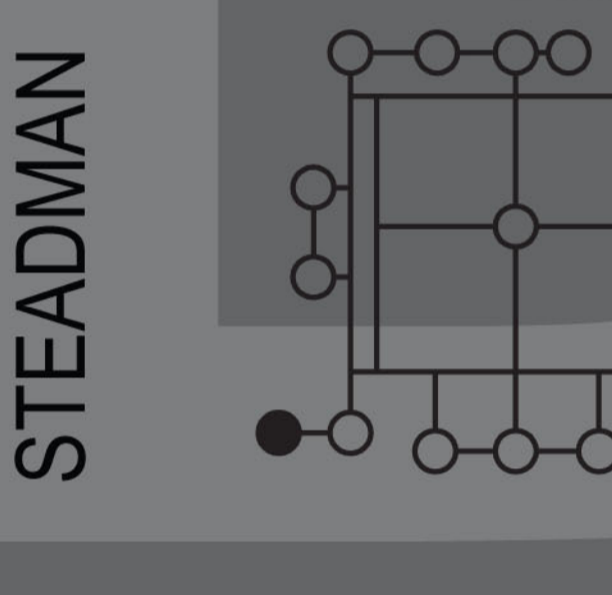
PARTI



SPATIAL ORGANISATION



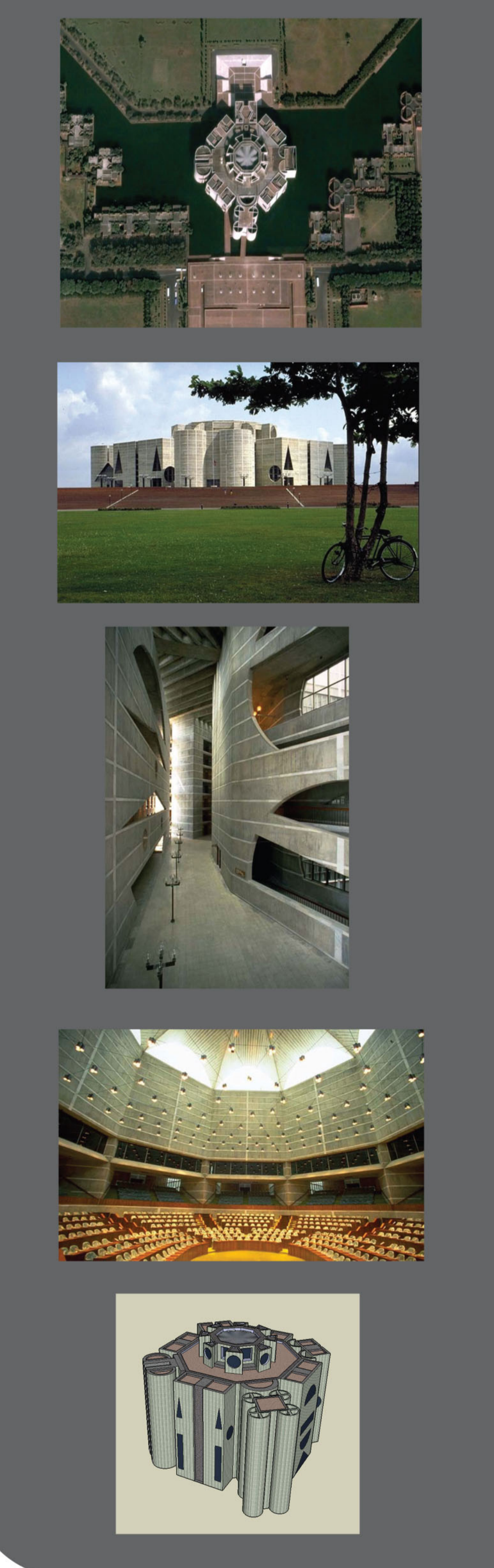
TOPOLOGY



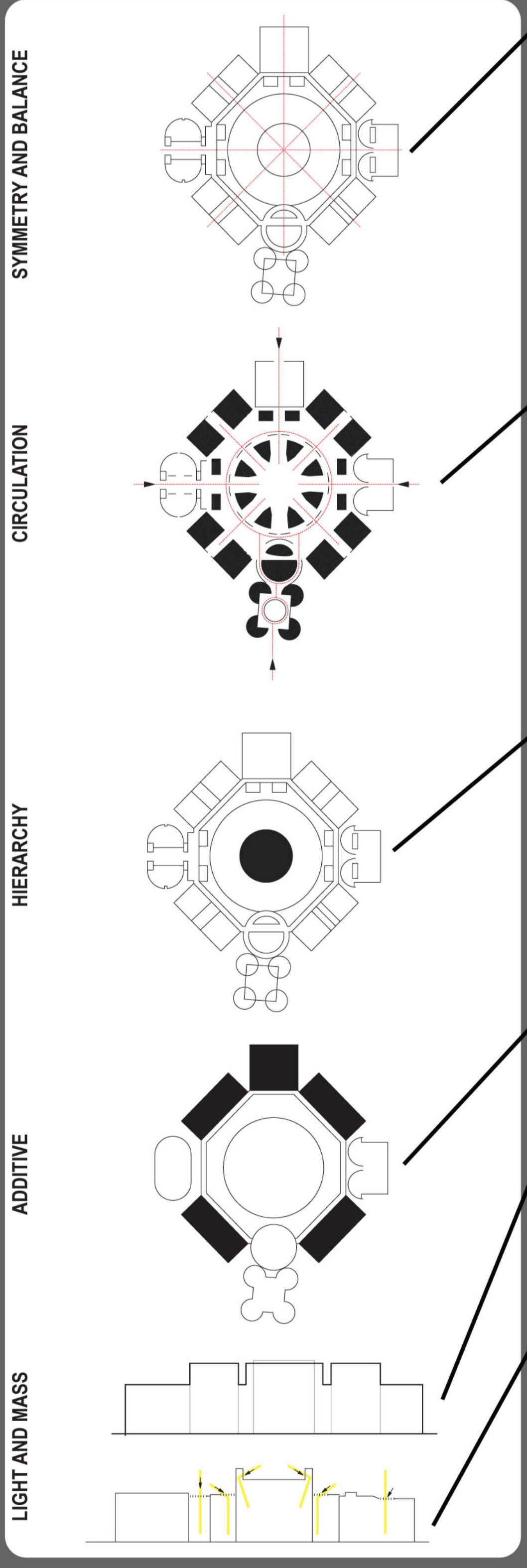
PARTI



FORM



OPERATION



PERFORMANCE

National Assembly Building has a clear symmetry. This building was designed by Khan using the golden section.

He started from the middle, where the most important part of the building is located. From the middle he worked to the outer parts of the building.

These parts of the building are less important and are serving the inner part. Only the mosque is not in the same symmetry. Khan did this because the mosque does not serve the conference hall.

The circulation in this building is like the symmetry and balance a product of the golden section. When you enter the building you walk along the serving parts of the building towards the center. From there you walk around the conference hall. This form of circulation emphasizes the hierarchy in the building.

The circulation puts the central space above the surrounding spaces.

In this building there is a clear hierarchy. The central space stands above the surrounding spaces. This way of designing is seen back in multiple works of Khan. The Offices are serving the conference hall. Only the mosque is not serving the central space, this also the reason why it's not symmetrical with the rest of the building.

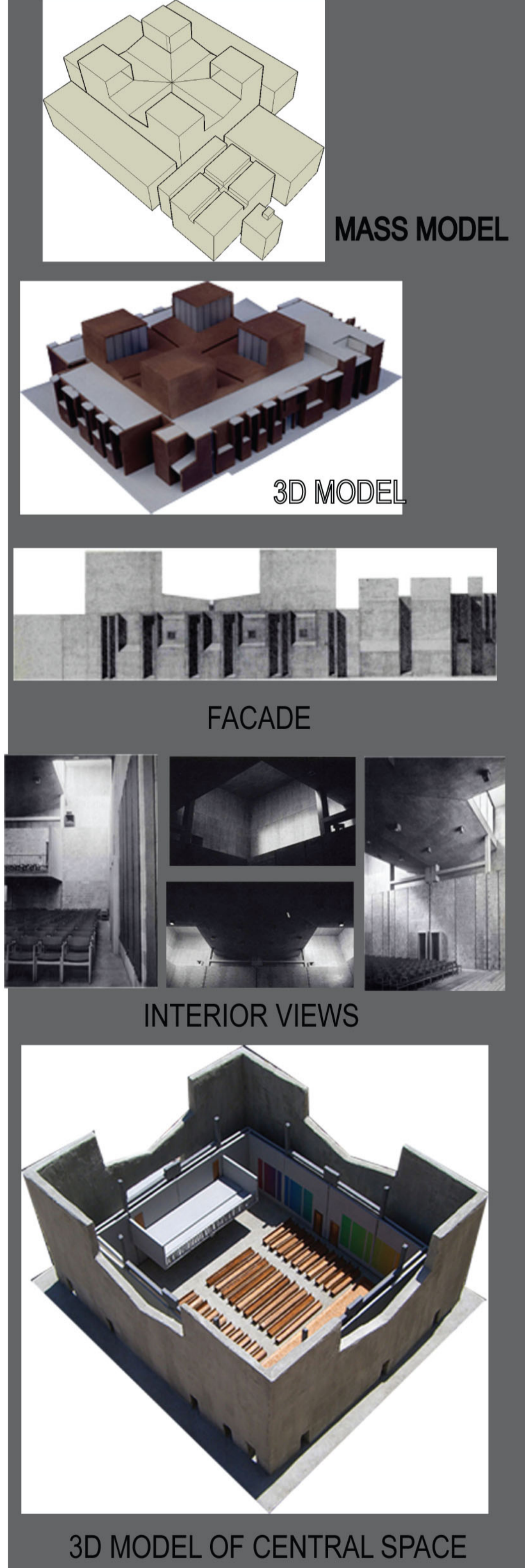
The additive spaces emphasize the importance of the central space, giving the building a hierarchy.

Mass is another tool of Khan for creating monumentality. Khan accents the mass of the building on different ways. First of all its a large building, the big light openings pronounce this fact immensely. The buildings which are surrounding the national assembly hall.

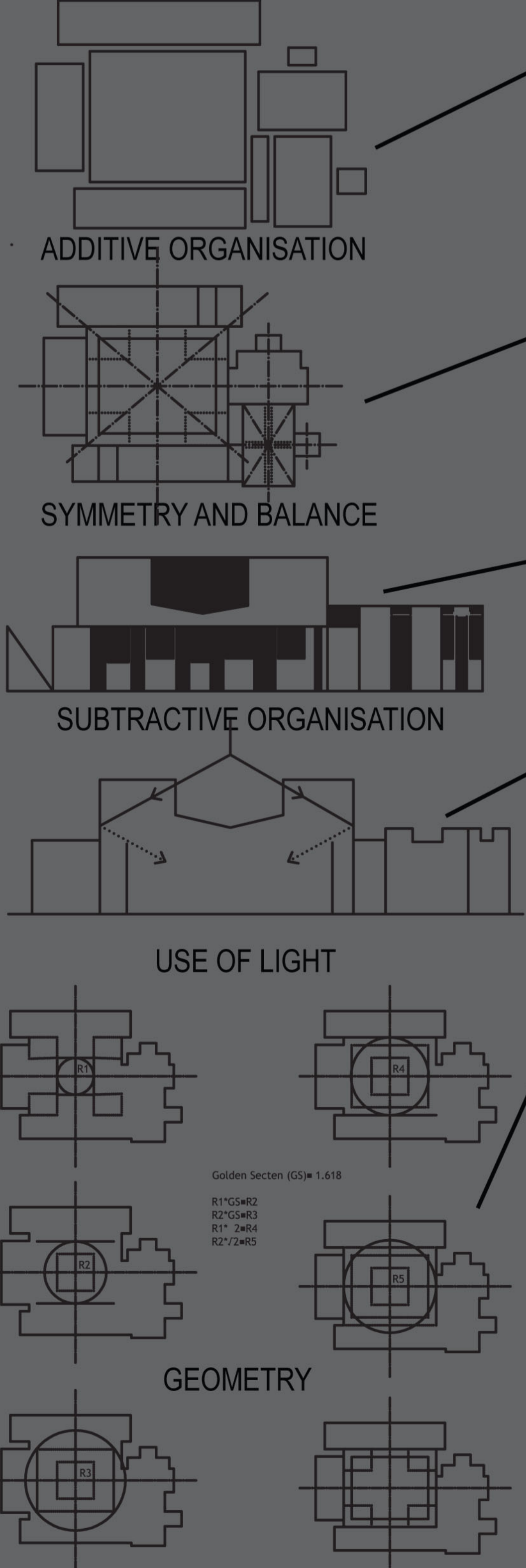
Light can accentuate particular spaces and can make clear which space is more important or give it a certain affect. The big corridors in the national assembly building imitate the outside, through the amount of lightfall.

The center of the building is elevated and lets light through, this way indirect light can enter the conference hall an effect, which leads to hierarchy. Just like the corridor and conference hall there are more spaces in the building, where Khan makes use of light.

FORM



OPERATION



PERFORMANCE

Louis Kahn used an additive organization surrounding the meeting room of the church to accentuate this central space of the church. This makes the central space the top of the hierarchy in terms of organization.

Louis Kahn gave the central space of the church a width symmetry and balance attaching the surrounding 'serving' rooms. The library has a symmetry of its own, because it has its own function and isn't always serving the main meeting room. Still there can be found a hierarchy in this symmetry and balance, which accentuates the meeting room as most important.

By subtracting mass in his building blocks he not only sets a hierarchy (subtracting most at the central space), but also gives the volume a massive appearance. He accentuates this by using the same material for the several building blocks and cuts out peaces.

One of Kahn's main performances to achieve a monumental and spiritual building is his indirect use of light. In time he developed several ways to use (indirect) light. He thought that indirect light could give a certain kind of mythical and even supernatural experience. Which is not only very appropriate for a church, but also for every other building reaching for spirituality.

After Kahn's journey to Europe, he got to experience the effect of the Golden section. He already knew it from the time he was studying and had Beaux-Arts teacher, but know he could experience the effect of these proportions. Probably he saw the ancient Greeks and even Egyptians using rational proportions. This way of forming a room has a very old monumental characteristic and Kahn used it in this project to from his central space and the corridors surrounding it. Again accentuating the central space as the highest hierarchy.

INTRODUCTION TO LOUIS KAHN AND THE THEME.

The few buildings that Louis Kahn did realise were so remarkable that they established him as one of the most important figures in 20th century architecture, whose influence is compared to that of Le Corbusier and Mies Van Der Rohe, yet whose work offered new intellectual possibilities to the younger generation of architects searching for alternatives to their hegemonic International Style. Convinced that contemporary architects could – and should – produce buildings which were as monumental and as spiritually inspiring as the ancient ruins of Greece and Egypt. Kahn devoted his career to the uncompromising pursuit of formal perfection and emotional expression.

1901 Born on the island of Oesel (now Saaremaa) off the coast of Estonia.

1906 Emigration to Philadelphia.

1928 Embarks on a two year tour of Europe visiting the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, Estonia, Latvia, Switzerland, Hungary, Austria, Italy and France.

1930 Marriage with Esther Israeli, difficulty finding work during the economic depression.

In 1947 He started teaching at Yale having rejected an earlier offer from Harvard, as he was loath to leave Philadelphia. The Yale commission also offered an opportunity for Kahn to experiment with the ideas he had developed since a trip to Greece, Rome and Egypt when he had become convinced that modern architecture lacked the monumental and spiritual qualities of

ancient buildings. "Our stuff looks so tiny compared to it," he wrote to his office colleagues in Philadelphia. Kahn was convinced that, as a modern architect, his responsibility was to create buildings with those qualities using contemporary materials and construction techniques.

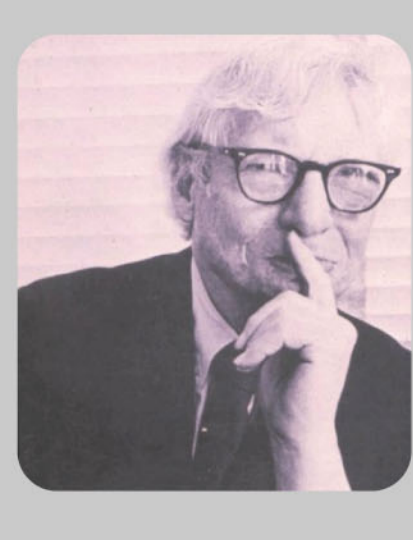
1950 Wins a fellowship to the American Academy in Rome and travels to Greece and Italy where he is inspired by the ancient ruins.

Working with simple materials, notably brick and concrete. Kahn applied his principles to create buildings instilled with the spiritual qualities for which he strove through a **masterful sense of space and light.**

Kahn's private life was equally turbulent, marred by financial difficulties but also by secrecy. He remained married to Esther, with whom he had a daughter, Sue Ann, but had two more children, born to women with whom he conducted long and passionate love affairs. Kahn had a second daughter, Alexandra born in 1954, with Anne Tyng, a young architect who worked for him in Philadelphia, and a son, Nathaniel, born in 1962, with another collaborator, the landscape architect Harriet Pattison. Years after Kahn's death, Nathaniel made a documentary film, My Architect, about his father.

It was in Dhaka that Kahn realised his dream of building a city of the future. In a Muslim city prey to painful poverty and natural disaster. Louis Kahn achieved his goal of **creating a monumental modern architecture, which is at once spiritually uplifting and humane.**

Louis Kahn tried to design buildings to create an impression as the ancient Greek and Roman buildings did. This monumental theme is present in all his great designs. The use of hierarchy and mass are in his eyes, the most important to achieve **monumental architecture!**



COMPARISON. CONCLUSION. COMPARISON. CONCLUSION.

To achieve monumentality Khan used different design techniques in his works. The use of "mass" and "hierarchy" were two very important keys to create a monumental building. The National Assembly Hall in Bangladesh and First Unitarian Church in Rochester were two of his important designs.

The project of the First Unitarian Church in Rochester started in 1959 and was finished in 1967. In this project he made use of a lot of aspects to create monumentality. To these aspects belonged: the use of indirect light, the use of a central space, the use of additive and subtractive organizations, the golden section and more.

During the project of the First Unitarian Church Khan started in 1962 with the National Assembly Hall in Dhaka and was finished in 1963, unfortunately he died in 1974 and did not see the completion of the National Assembly Hall. Like the First Unitarian Church in Rochester he also used different kinds of performances to create monumentality and a spiritual charisma which he wanted to give to the building.

The difference in designing between these two projects is not that big, he consistently uses the same performances to achieve his goal. Though the National Assembly Hall is of much larger scale and of course his designing techniques improved in time the main subthemes hierarchy and mass remain. The huge scale of National Assembly building and his perfected performances make the National Assembly building one of his masterpieces among his Creations.

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