

## HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: National Register and State Register Coordinator,  
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,  
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

\* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) Yale University Art Gallery Louis Kahn Building

Building Name (Historic) Yale University Art Gallery Louis Kahn Building

Street Address or Location 1111 Chapel Street (aka 1074 Chapel Street)

Town/City New Haven Village \_\_\_\_\_ County New Haven

Owner(s) Yale University, PO Box 208372, New Haven, CT 06520-8372  Public  Private

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: EDUCATION: University museum

Historic Use: EDUCATION: University museum; classroom/studio space

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road?  Yes  No

Interior accessible?  Yes  No If yes, explain During museum open hours

Style of building MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style Date of Construction 1953

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- |  |  |  |                                       |  |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard             | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brick              | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone            | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Sandstone</u> ) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Glass</u> |                                       |  |

#### Structural System

- Wood Frame  
  Post & Beam  
  Balloon  
  Load bearing masonry  
  Structural iron or steel  
 Other Reinforced concrete frame

#### Roof (Type)

- Gable  
  Flat  
  Mansard  
  Monitor  
  Sawtooth  
 Gambrel  
  Shed  
  Hip  
  Round  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### (Material)

- Wood Shingle  
  Roll Asphalt  
  Tin  
  Slate  
  Asphalt Shingle  
 Built up  
  Tile  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Stories: 4, B Approximate Dimensions 157' x 82'

Structural Condition:  Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated

Exterior Condition:  Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated

Location Integrity:  On original site  Moved When? \_\_\_\_\_

Alterations?  Yes  No If yes, explain: 1975 addition (lecture hall), 2006-2012, restoration/renovation

**FOR OFFICE USE:** Town # \_\_\_\_\_ Site # \_\_\_\_\_ UTM \_\_\_\_\_

District:  S  NR If NR, Specify:  Actual  Potential

**PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)****Related outbuildings or landscape features:**

- Barn     Shed     Garage     Carriage House     Shop     Garden  
 Other landscape features or buildings: North and east sculpture courtyards

**Surrounding Environment:**

- Open land     Woodland     Residential     Commercial     Industrial     Rural  
 High building density     Scattered buildings visible from site

## • Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The building is an addition to the earlier Old Yale Art Gallery building of 1926. Together they fill the north side of Chapel Street between York and High Streets. Buildings of the Yale Campus extend north and west, a mix of 19th- and early 20th-century neo-Gothic styles and Modernist buildings including Rudolph Hall to the west and the Yale Center for British Art to the south. The commercial downtown extends to the south and the New Haven Green is two blocks eastward along Chapel Street.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

See continuation sheet.

Architect Louis Isadore Kahn, Office of Douglas Orr    Builder George B. H. Macomber Co.  
Henry A. Pfisterer, Structural engineer

## • Historical or Architectural importance:

Architect for 1975 Lecture hall addition: Herbert S. Newman Associates

Architect for 2006-12 restoration/renovation: Polshek Partnership / Ennead Architects

See continuation sheet.

## • Sources:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills; New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976.

Carley, Rachel D., Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement (Privately printed by the New Haven Preservation Trust, New Haven CT) June, 2008.

Ryan, Susan. 1980. HRI 129. New Haven Architectural Survey. Map/block/lot: 261/0251/00100.

See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 8/07/2016

View Multiple Views    Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 11/05/2016

Organization New Haven Preservation Trust

Address 922 State Street, P.O. Box 8968, New Haven, CT 06532

## • Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude: 41.308437, -72.931075

**Threats to the building or site:**

- None known     Highways     Vandalism     Developers     Renewal     Private  
 Deterioration     Zoning     Other \_\_\_\_\_     Explanation \_\_\_\_\_

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Other notable features of building and site (*Interior and/or Exterior*):

The building consists of two simple masses – a four-story block 82' x 110' in size, close to the Chapel Street sidewalk line on the south and set behind a 28-foot sunken court on the west; and a 42' x 47' recessed block of the same height which acts as a hyphen, connecting with the Old Yale Art Gallery building on the east. The main block has a reinforced concrete structural frame three bays wide by four bays deep. The central bay is narrower and contains a circulation and mechanical core, while the outer bays are uninterrupted loft-type gallery spaces. The recess in the façade formed by the hyphen, provides a sheltered space for the entry steps. A one-story wing with basement, at the north, contains service spaces for the production and storage of exhibitions. To the north of the building there are outdoor terraces stepping up to the level of the roof over the service wing. These are paved with stone and display large-scale sculptures. The building is connected below grade with Weir Hall to the north.

The concrete floor structure supported on rectangular concrete piers is an innovative concrete tetrahedral space frame integral with the floor slab. The lower surface of the frame is exposed to view, and allows for mechanical and electrical ducts and conduit to pass through openings in the members. The design and the un-concealed surface treatment were novel at the time of construction. The main stair is housed within a circular concrete drum, and consists of three-part flights with a triangular geometry, under a dramatic circular clerestory with glass block lights.

The south walls parallel to Chapel Street are clad in grayish tan brick with horizontal sandstone belt courses projecting from the vertical surface. Windows in this plane are minimal, including only a narrow vertical slot of glass at the interior corners of the recessed plane of the façade. The other wall elevations are glass curtain walls, accented by stone-faced structural columns. The curtain wall is designed to lie outside the floor structure, with only a simple metal mullion expressing the location of the structure within, another International-style inspiration.

The roof is flat, with a penthouse over the mechanical core. The north terraces and sculpture garden rise up to meet the older masonry walls of Weir Hall and the Old Yale Art Gallery, forming picturesque contrasts. A below-grade lecture hall was added in 1975 under the highest garden level, with an access corridor along the east side of the sculpture courts, and great attention was paid to preserving mature shade trees which remain.

Historical or Architectural importance (*continued*):

By 1953, President A. Whitney Griswold (1906-1963) had been president of Yale University for two years, and had begun sponsoring Modernist architecture and also the preferred selection of alumni as architects for new campus buildings. Architect Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), an alumnus, began a university master plan. The Yale University Art Gallery addition, designed by Louis Kahn (1901-1974) in 1953 and the 1954 Gibbs Laboratory by Paul Schweikher (1903-1997) were the first Modernist buildings, followed shortly by the Ingalls Rink designed by Saarinen in 1957. In the next decade, the Yale campus became the setting for an important collection of Modernist buildings by important mid-twentieth-century architects, as a result of Griswold's devotion to Modernist design.

Louis Kahn had been hired to teach architecture at Yale in 1947, and influenced the choice of George Howe as department chair in 1950 (Scully et al, 302). While Kahn was in Europe, Howe arranged for his selection as the designer of the art gallery addition, replacing Philip Goodwin who had worked on an earlier scheme. The decision to depart from the Beaux-Arts and revival-style pattern of earlier campus development, had already been made when the Goodwin schematic plan was approved. Kahn worked in collaboration with H. Dillingham Palmer of the Office of Douglas Orr and with structural engineer Henry Pfisterer (1909-1972).

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With the Director of the Division of the Arts (including the School of Fine Arts and Yale Art Gallery), Charles H. Sawyer (1906-2005), and Associate Director Lamont Moore, the program was developed for an open loft-style building. It would accommodate architecture department studios as well as museum galleries. The space would be flexibly arranged with movable panels (known as “pogo” panels) and able to be repurposed in future if or when the architecture department moved to another space.

The design called for a suspended ceiling at first, but as it evolved, Kahn and Pfisterer, with likely inspiration from the work of Kahn’s Philadelphia colleague Anne Griswold Tyng on geometries and space frames, came to a new solution that became the visual signature of the building. Pfisterer described it as a “multiplanar truss system (space-frame) of equilateral triangles with the entire top surface filled in to provide the floor and with alternate inclined triangles in each of the three dimensions also made solid” (Loud, 72). The organization of the plan with stairs and other service spaces clustered in one bay and open loft galleries on both sides, was a precursor of other Kahn buildings where “servant and served” spaces articulated the geometry of building forms.

The building exterior reflects the International Style in its use of simplified masonry planes for the south wall, contrasting with glass curtain walls on the west and north elevations and at the east-facing entry wall. This refined detailing contrasts with the bold sense of weighty geometry experienced at the interior.

The Yale Art Gallery came to epitomize Kahn’s blend of Modernist functional thinking, Beaux-Arts planning, and his unique language of form evoking ancient forms in an abstract Modernist vocabulary. In addition to its place as the first of Louis Kahn’s mature building projects, the Yale Art Gallery began the new period of Yale University’s Modernist campus development, which would change the planning philosophy and the appearance of individual buildings over the next two decades.

The building underwent various changes over time, with some of the openness being lost to partitions. Major restoration and rehabilitation campaigns occurred from 2006 to 2012, including the Old Yale Art Gallery and Street Hall to the east.

#### Architects:

**Louis Isadore Kahn** (1901–1974) is widely recognized as one of the most important and influential architects of the twentieth century. Kahn emigrated from Estonia to the United States with his family at age four, becoming a citizen in 1914. A gifted artist, he chose to study architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Kahn earned his Bachelor of Architecture in 1924; he learned in the Beaux-Arts tradition, under the mentorship of Paul Philippe Cret (1876-1945). He worked for Cret before opening his own studio in 1935. His earliest projects included collaborations with Modernists George Howe (1886-1955) and Oscar Stonorov (1905-1970). Kahn began his teaching career at Yale University in 1947; he served as a professor and design critic at the Yale School of Architecture until 1957. During that time, he was also a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome and traveled through Italy, Greece, and Egypt, recording abandoned ruins and historic architecture in sketches and drawings. The experience of ancient monumental forms significantly influenced his architecture. Following his tenure at Yale, Kahn returned to Philadelphia to teach at the University of Pennsylvania. There he was appointed Paul Philippe Cret Professor of Architecture, a position which he held until his death in 1974.

From the mid-1950s onward, Kahn’s architecture was notable for its simple geometric forms and complex play between natural light and materials. Kahn received numerous honors and awards, as well as important national and international commissions. He was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects

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(AIA) in 1953. He was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, the highest award bestowed by the association in 1971. He also received the Royal Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1972.

**Douglas Orr** (1892-1966), a prominent New Haven-based architect, practiced in various architectural styles throughout his career, adapting to new design trends. He served as President of the American Institute of Architects (1947-1949), and left a strong architectural imprint on commercial, social, and religious New Haven by virtue of the local dominance of his office. Trained in Beaux-Arts architectural principles at Yale University, Orr became known for his Colonial Revival designs in the 1920s and for his Art Deco work in the 1930s. By the 1950s much of his work was Modernist, with his staff architects taking lead design roles. H. Dillingham Palmer was prominent among the staff. Orr's firm worked with a number of out-of-state architects including Louis Kahn and Philip Johnson, functioning as the Architect of Record for prominent structures sponsored by Yale University and local and state public agencies during the Redevelopment Era of the 1960s.

Sources (*continued*):

AIA Historical Directory of American Architects,

<http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/What's%20here.aspx> .

Maps and aerial views:

Bing Maps accessed at: <https://www.bing.com/mapspreview>

Google Maps accessed at: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Condit, Carl W. 1968. *American Building: Materials and Techniques*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crawley, Amanda & Lindsey Schweinberg. 2007. "Yale University Art Gallery." Docomomo United States web site. Accessed 11/05/2016 at [http://docomomo-us.org/register/fiche/yale\\_university\\_art\\_gallery](http://docomomo-us.org/register/fiche/yale_university_art_gallery)

Fitch, James Marston. 1973. *American Building: the Historical Forces That Shaped It, Second Edition*. New York: Shoken Books.

Loud, Patricia Cummings. 1989. *The Art Museums of Louis I. Kahn*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Metz, Don and Yuji Noga. 1966. *New Architecture in New Haven*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

New Haven Modern web site. New Haven Preservation Trust. Accessed at: <http://newhavenmodern.org/>

Pfisterer, Henry A., obituary. 5/28/1972. New York Times.

Scully, Vincent et al. 2004. *Yale in New Haven: Architecture & Urbanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wiedersheim, William A. 1979. "Douglas Orr's New Haven." *Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* 26/3 (Summer 1979): 2-22.

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper. 1981. *American Architecture: 1607-1976*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Wright, Gwendolyn. 2008. *USA: modern architectures in history*. London: Reaktion Books.

Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG) web site, accessed 11/09/2016 at:

<http://artgallery.yale.edu/about/architecture> .

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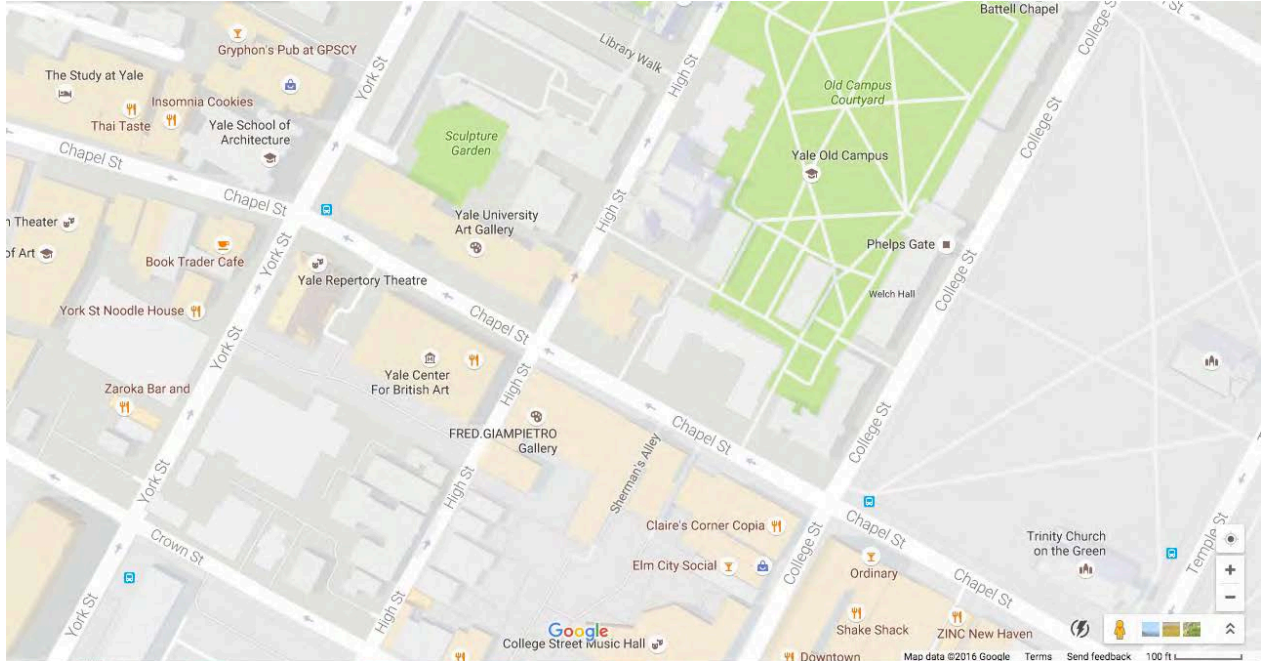


Figure 1. Location map of the Yale University Art Gallery. Image from Google Maps accessed 11/13/2016.

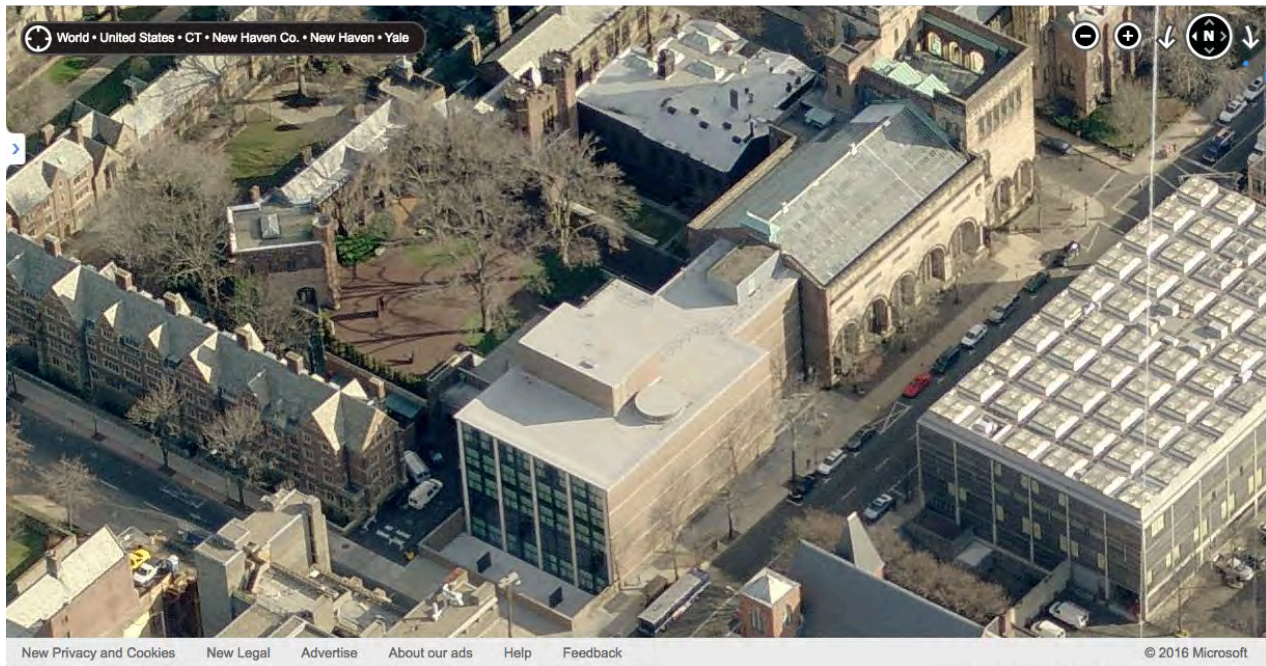


Figure 2. West aerial view of Yale University Art Gallery. Image from Bing Maps accessed 11/13/2016.  
Note: photograph taken prior to 2012 renovations to Old Yale Art Gallery building to the east.

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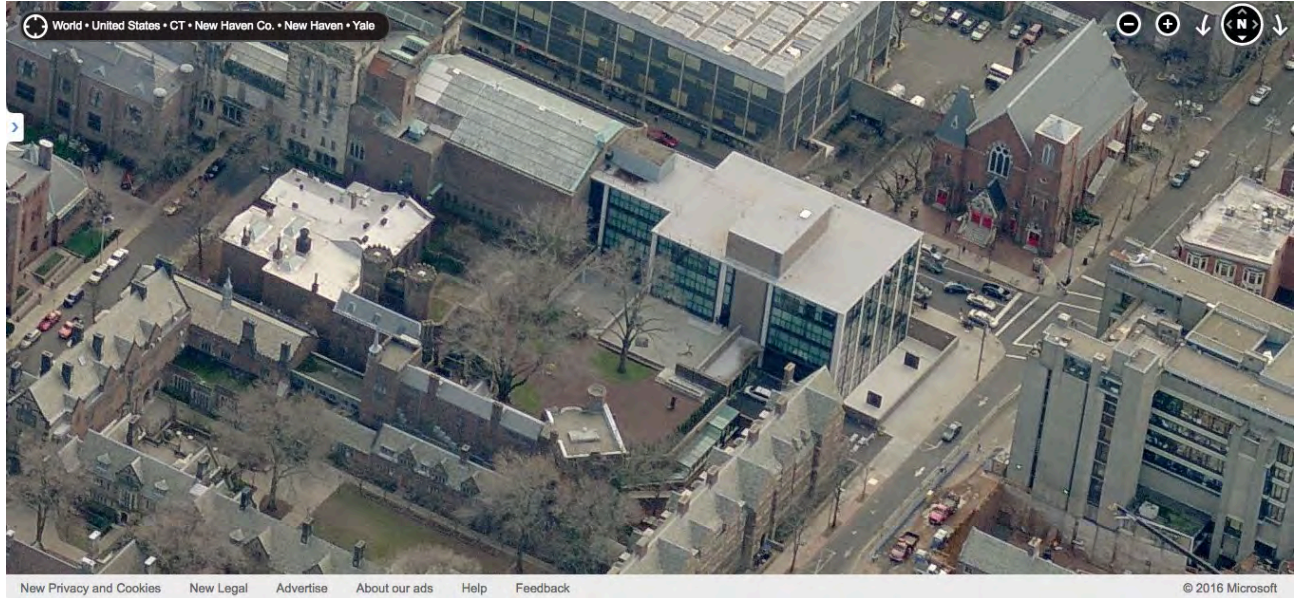


Figure 3. North aerial view of Yale University Art Gallery. Image from Bing Maps accessed 11/13/2016.

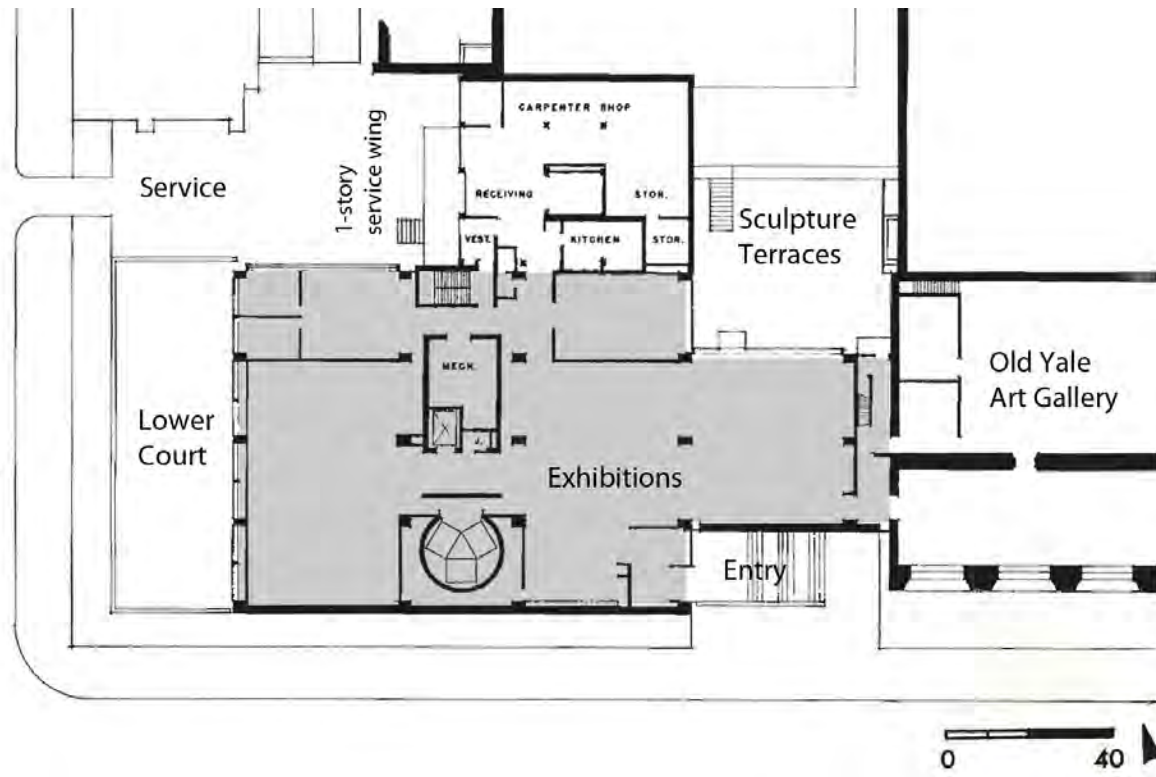


Figure 4. Plan diagram showing the First Floor (Metz 1966). The shaded area represents the floor area on levels B through 4; annotations added.

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Photo 5. Southwest view of Yale University Art Gallery Louis Kahn Building, camera facing northeast. Chapel Street is at the right, York Street in the foreground. The wall at street level encloses an open sculpture court at the Basement level.



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Photo 6. South view of Chapel Street façade with Louis Kahn Building in the foreground and Old Yale Art Gallery at rear; camera facing east.

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Photo 7. South view of Louis Kahn Building entry; camera facing north.

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Photo 8. Southwest view of the west sunken courtyard and west façade of the Louis Kahn Building; camera facing northeast.

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Photo 9. North view of Louis Kahn Building from the sculpture garden; camera facing southwest.



Photo 10. North view of Louis Kahn Building from the sculpture garden; camera facing south. The second level walkway at left is part of the 1975 lecture room addition.

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Photo 11. Interior view of Louis Kahn Building first floor level looking north to the sculpture garden; camera facing north.



Photo 12. Interior view of Louis Kahn Building at Basement level west wall showing floor/ceiling construction, concrete frame, interior wall finish of concrete masonry bricks, and curtain wall glazing; camera facing south. Note how the structure is held back behind the glass curtain wall.

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Photo 13. Interior view of Louis Kahn Building stairwell seen from the fourth floor; camera facing down.

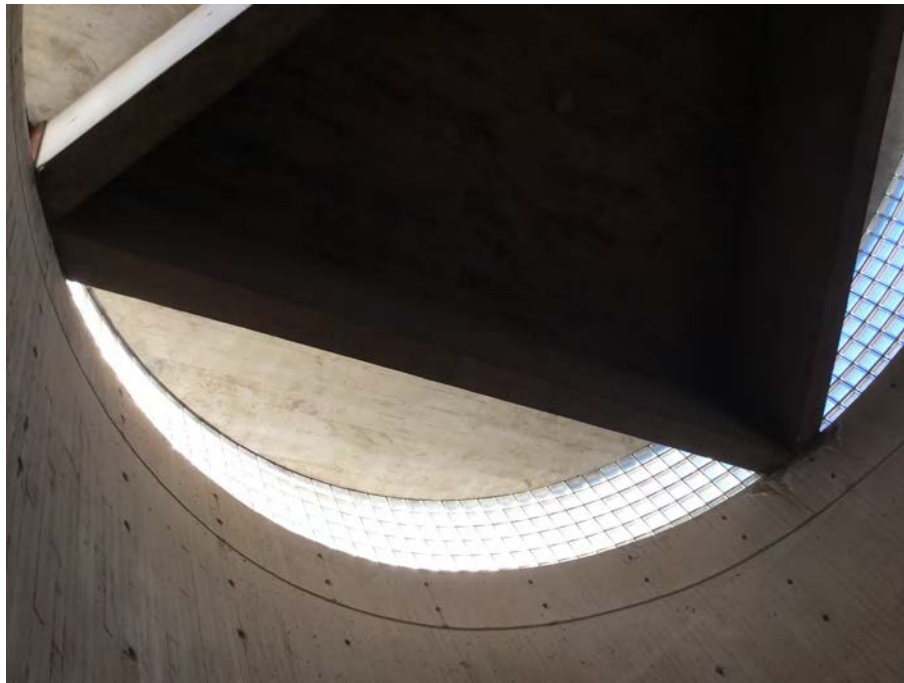


Photo 14. Interior view of Louis Kahn Building stairwell looking up from the fourth floor.