Research paper

Reinterpreting Dominican Heritage

Implementing architectural considerations of three modern Dominican monasteries for the adaptive reuse of Het Steiger as a multifunctional art complex

Abstract

This study explores the potential application of architectural considerations from three Dominican priories—St. Dominic Church, Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, and the Dominican Motherhouse— emphasising their reflection of divine transcendence as a design narrative for the adaptive reuse of St. Dominic Church to multifunctional *Art Complex Het Steiger*. St. Dominic Church's introverted design offers opportunities for reinterpretation, emphasising hierarchy and contemplative qualities. Sainte-Marie de La Tourette's mystical themes suggest diverse lighting interventions and preserving a mystical atmosphere in Het Steiger. The Dominican Motherhouse poses challenges regarding user groups, spatial hierarchies, and integrating circulation and exhibition spaces in Het Steiger's redesign. These priories contribute nuanced design strategies, offering valuable considerations for Het Steiger's transformation into a harmonious coexistence of existing and new architectural layers.

Keywords: modern Dominican heritage, architectural considerations, adaptive reuse, art complex

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1 Introduction

In the summer of 2021, the H. Johannes parish church council in Rotterdam (2021) announced the intention to sell and cease worship at the St. Dominic Church due to a decline in parishioners. The Dominican church complex, currently housing a small number of Dominican friars, was designed by Kraaijvanger and completed in 1960. Situated in Rotterdam's city centre, it is considered one of the iconic representatives of the post-war reconstruction era. With the monastery's viability and sacred purpose at stake, repurposing emerges as a viable option. However, the Dominican church complex still forms the outgrowth of Dominican life within. Therefore, exploring its Dominican architectural considerations holds significant value.

In the redesign assignment of the St. Dominic Church, also known as Het Steiger, the question arises: what to do with these Dominican architectural considerations? Could they still be of value in the redesign, even if this redesign serves a new secular function? This research is part of the overarching graduation theme within the Heritage & Architecture studio: Zero Waste Church. This theme is an additional lens in the graduation project to recognise the value of existing religious heritage and reveal its significance through creative circular design solutions. Although this may evoke associations of sustainable material reuse, this paper primarily focuses on the intangible heritage. This means that the contemporary value and meaning of the design principles of Dominican heritage take centre stage. In short, this research explores the value of religious considerations in a new secular architectural context, namely that of a multifunctional art complex.

Given the multifaceted nature of these architectural considerations, such as the artistic freedom of the architects, specific desires from the client, the *genius loci*, and trends within architecture, these will, if relevant, also be part of the study. As the above aspects can lead to diverse expressions of the considerations, two other Dominican architectural contemporaries are also being researched. These include Sainte-Marie de La Tourette (1960), near Lyon, designed by Le Corbusier, and the Dominican Motherhouse (1969), near Philadelphia, designed by Louis Kahn. In this way, the redesign of Het Steiger in Rotterdam can also draw from other Dominican examples, creating a richer understanding of the Dominican tradition in the modern architectural era, hopefully leading to more valuable and grounded design solutions for Het Steiger as an art complex.

2 Theoretical framework

The architectural considerations concerning Dominican philosophy particularly require additional explanation. In the article, *Dominican Form and Architecture: Tensions* (2016), Dominican friar and former architect Irenaeus Dunlevy explores the reciprocal relationship between the Dominican monastery and the Dominican form of life. The roots of the Dominican way of life trace back to 1215, when Dominic de Guzmán established this monastic order in Toulouse, France. The 'Order of Preachers' emerged as one of the mendicant orders within the Catholic church. At that time, European cities were increasing, and the Catholic Church was losing ground and had a dormant presence in French society. It was with sorrow that St. Dominic looked upon the rampant heresy and the inability and unwillingness of the church to turn the tide (Pepler, 1945). Therefore, his mission was to bring absolute truth to the people and "to show that to be a Catholic was to be truly modern, truly ascetic, truly free" (Pepler, 1945, p. 83). Today, Dominicans worldwide continue to carry out this mission.

Dunlevy's metaphorical comparison between the convent and the friar's habit underscores how architectural elements reflect the essence of Dominican religious practice. Similarly, the monastery ought to enable and stimulate Dominican life within. He states (2016, p. 25): "Just as the habit serves as an external sign of the interior reality of the friar's consecration to God, so too does the priory serve as a sign communicating the reality of a consecrated life". This intertwinement between architecture and monastic life and the contemporary significance of a new secular function forms the crux of this research.

Dunlevy (2016, p. 26) examines three primary architectural considerations intrinsic to Dominican convent design: silence, poverty and preaching. These considerations are accompanied by specific architectural applications, summarised in Figure 1. While this research centres on 'Preaching', it is essential to acknowledge that these three considerations are interwoven and cannot be fully disentangled. The degree of divine expression is questioned within the 'Preaching' category. To what extent does the priory's design manifest the divine transcendence of religious life or its more human aspects? In this research, it is crucial to what extent the identified transcendent architectural considerations can be reinterpreted in favour of Het Steiger as a multifunctional art complex.

Silence	Poverty	Preaching
• priory as a place of silence, also in an urban context • use of architectural elements: *tramezzo* • strategic placement of rooms: cells – communal spaces • separate paths for friars and visitors • recognisable private and public areas • interior routes for friars: choir to cell	Simple and purposeful, involving: • site placement • structure • height • ornamentation • interior materials	Expression of divine transcendence or its more human aspects: • architectural style: temporal architectural trends or tradition of religious architecture

Figure 1. An overview of the architectural considerations and architectural applications stated by Dunlevy. Adapted from *Dominican Form and Architecture: Tensions*, by I. Dunlevy, 2016, *Dominicana Journal*, 59(2), p. 25–37.

3 Method

3.1 The considerations and stakeholders

This qualitative research intends to examine to what degree three distinct priories—St. Dominic Church, Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, and the Dominican Motherhouse—embody the concept of divine transcendence and explore the meaning of this divine notion for the multifunctional art complex Het Steiger. To do so, this research aims to identify the architectural themes introduced by the architects and analyse their connection to the expression of divine transcendence and the more human aspects within the architectural design. The architectural considerations in the three projects arise through the collaboration of various stakeholders, as shown in Figure 2. This research resides at the intersection of the architect's artistic interpretation, the aspirations and programmatic preferences of the Dominican clients, the *genius loci*, and architectural trends and constructive possibilities of the constructors at that time. This indicates that architectural considerations are embedded in a complex interplay of various considerations and interests. Extra information about the buildings and stakeholders is included in Appendix 8.2 - 8.4.
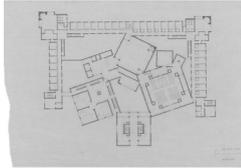
	St. Dominic Church (NL) *1960*	**Sainte-Marie de La Tourette (FR)** *1960*	**Dominican Motherhouse (US)** *1969*
appearance			
architect(s)	*Kraaijvanger Architecten*	*Le Corbusier*	*Louis Kahn*
client	*Roman Catholic Church Board of the St. Dominic Parish*	*OP Marie-Alain Couturier*	*Mother Mary Emmanuel on behalf of the Dominican Sisters*
main contractor	*N.V. Albouw*	*Sud Est Travaux Construction Company*	*n/a*
genius loci	*urban redevelopment site*	*rural landscape, situated on gentle slope*	*rural landscape, wooded land*

Figure 2. Overview of the different stakeholders concerning the three projects. Own work

Research question:
What architectural considerations symbolising the concept of divine transcendence, part of three distinct priories - St. Dominic Church, Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, and the Dominican Motherhouse - can be integrated into the redesign of the St. Dominic Church in Rotterdam, transforming it into a multifunctional art complex?

3.2 Data collection

The data collection includes primary and secondary sources, predominantly monographs; see *Appendix 8.5 Literature citation*, documents and architectural analysis. The latter primarily supplements assertions within monographs and documents, providing further insight into the architects' intentions. While Dunlevy's article mainly motivates this research, supported by the analysis of primary documents such as the Constitutions, the monographs play a crucial role in facilitating qualitative research into the architectural considerations employed by the architects to refer to the concept of divine transcendence. Subsequently, the Design Brief outlined in Appendix 8.6, specifying the requirements for a multifunctional art complex, serves as a guiding document to assess the significance of these themes for the design. In the Results, chapter 4, the discovered considerations will be immediately followed by their importance for the art complex.

To summarise, the data analysis mainly consists of three steps:
1. recognise recurring architectural themes in each design;
2. associate these themes with potential connotations of divine transcendence or more human aspects;
3. determine and describe the value of these themes for the new function of Het Steiger as an art complex.

This study acknowledges that while architectural considerations can be analysed for their potential religious symbolism, interpretations may vary based on individual perspectives. This subjectivity not only influences the researcher's perspective but also applies to both the authors of the literature under examination and the user experiences described in the same literary sources. Determining the value of the found themes considering the programme of requirements is also a subjective process and, therefore, requires careful consideration.

4 Results: Valuable considerations for art complex Het Steiger

4.1 Architectural considerations in the St. Dominic Church (Het Steiger)

4.1.1 The duality of openness and enclosure

The duality of openness and enclosure amidst the bustling city creates an atmosphere of 'peaceful tranquillity'. The complex, see Figure 3, opens to the city through the elevated forecourt but turns inward through the monastery courtyard, cloister, and daytime church (Jager, 2015, pp. 258-259). The interior atmosphere with enclosed walls creates a pleasant ambience for visitors to leave the urban exterior behind and enter the world of art without distraction. The forecourt enhances the stature and formality of Het Steiger as an art complex.

4.1.2 Poverty

'Simplicity is the hallmark of truth' (Jager, 2015, p. 241). The serene-looking interior with modest church walls of fair-faced masonry would "least obstruct […] the religious experience, its contemplative, mystical aspect" (Jager, 2015, pp. 236-237). Illustrative is this father's remark: "Even the empty space up front suggests something. The 'Holy' is indescribable but incredibly present and close" (Jager, 2015, p. 254). The contemplative aspect of the church space, enhanced by the fair-faced masonry, can metaphorically be seen as an architectural canvas of reflection that allows space for a complementary architectural layer in order to adapt the building for exhibition space. Specifically, the brickwork and concrete walls provide a suitable background for the display of artworks.

4.1.3 Spatial allocation and hierarchy

The expression of the church concept also represents the relationship with God. Kraaijvanger strategically allocates importance by isolating or centrally orienting specific spaces or architectural elements. The sacristy and baptismal chapel become dignified spaces by situating them around the cloister. Furthermore, the freestanding sacramental altar, placed at the central axis of the church hall, immediately draws attention upon entering (Jager, 2015, p. 259). The elevation and the crystalline floor contribute to the significant role of the altar. This hierarchy of (religious) significance provides the opportunity to look at the new programme similarly. This raises the question of what will become the most critical and 'sacred' place in the new programme of the art complex.

4.1.4 Existing artworks

Kraaijvanger considered religious art essential in St. Dominic's church, aiming to transform it into "an expressive sacred space" (Jager, 2015, p. 260). Thus, artists contributed to concrete cornices, mosaics, stained glass, various sculptures, galvanised steel doors, and the baptismal font. Notably, the glass-in-concrete facade sections from Berend Hendriks, who was one of the first artists to employ this technique (Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland, 1996, p. 113), stand out the most. The existing artworks in the building, often integrated into the structure itself, align well with the new programme as an art complex. The presence of the building's artworks enhances the identity of the new programme without overshadowing the existing art pieces.
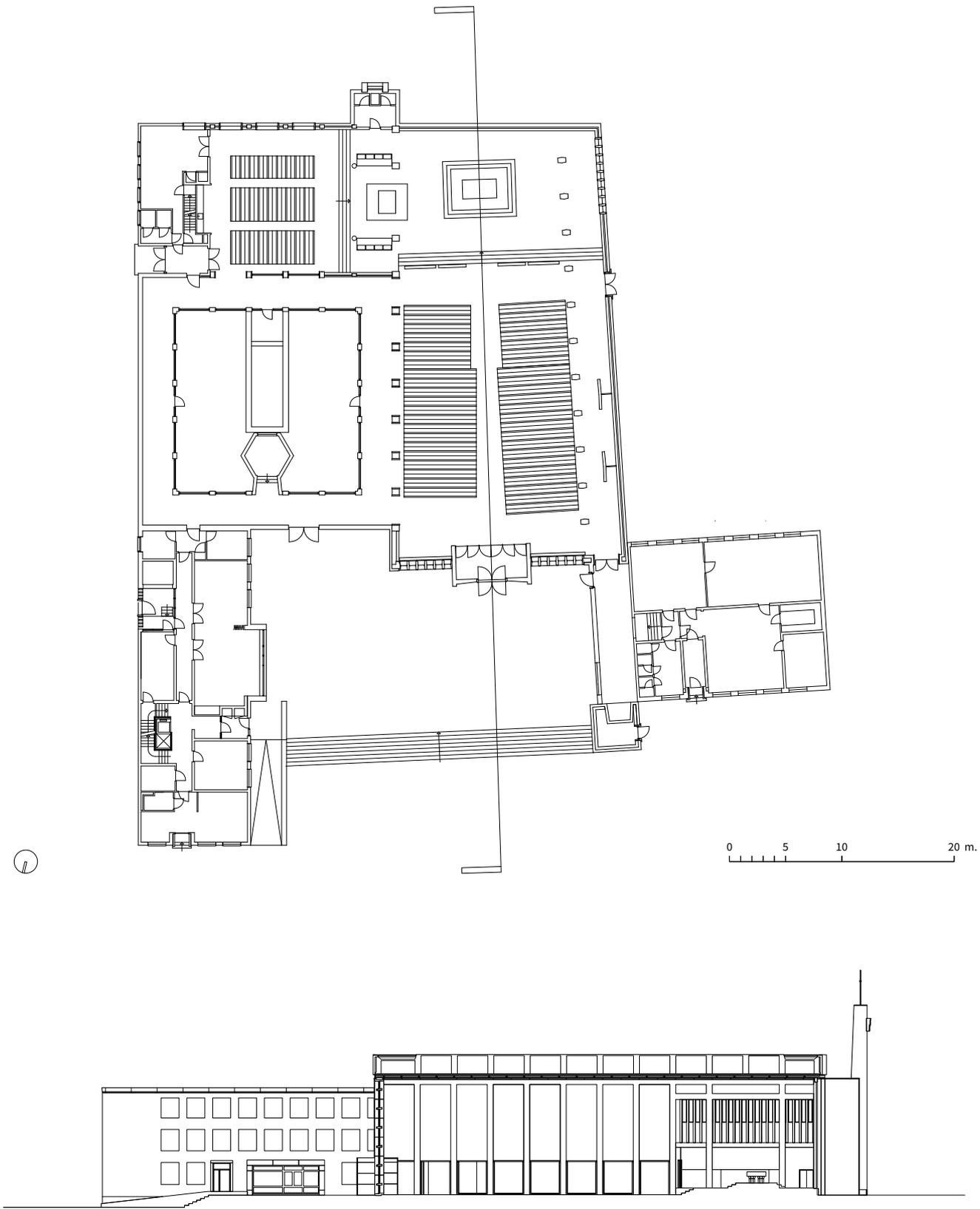
Figure 3. Floor plan and section of the St. Dominic Church in Rotterdam, scale 1:500. Own work.

4.2 Architectural considerations in Sainte-Marie de La Tourette

4.2.1 Social machine

Dictated by the Rule, the monastic life necessitated architectural precision and exactness, conveyed via Le Corbusier's 'geometric' language (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 82). Dominican friar Biot (1912-1995), a former resident of La Tourette, perceives the architecture as a spiritual dialogue (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 114): "Through its plastic dispositions - light, volume, surfaces - the code of monastic conduct - assigning to each moment a place, an attitude, a significance." In La Tourette's architectural language, see Figure 5 (*Sainte Marie de La Tourette*, 2012), a monastic tone is discernible. For the new program, this is a helpful analogy; the architectural language in Het Steiger as a reflection of the new programme, with the potential to evolve into a meaningful architectural expression in itself.

4.2.2 Lighting

Le Corbusier appears acutely attuned to the influence of light. The priory echoes Le Thoronet's luminous atmosphere with its 'long silences and sudden exaltations' (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 65). Ferro effectively captures the diversity of experiences (1987, p. 69), "Whoever walks through the convent has not been struck by the calculated effects of light that is alternately bright and sparing, alternately mysterious".

Figure 4. Particularly in the church space, where only indirect light is employed, the precision and variety of incoming daylight throughout the day are noticeable. The nave is illuminated by horizontal slits painted red, yellow, blue, and green, vertical light slits. The west-facing horizontal light slit (Biot et al., 1985, p. 21) bathes the high altar in the sun at sunset. Two annexes complete the church space, the crypt and sacristy, illuminated from above. The crypt features three conical skylights, one of which illuminates the altar. Own work.

The variety, richness, and precision of all lighting interventions in La Tourette are incomparable to Het Steiger. Nevertheless, Het Steiger exhibits some diversity, with light from the stained glass-in-concrete windows, the horizontal light slit just below the ceiling, and two skylights in the former parish house. Adding new lighting types can significantly contribute qualitatively to the new design. Indirect light can prove its value in exhibition spaces, illuminating artworks, especially for artists engaged in painting.

4.2.3 The Modulor

'The Modulor' intentionally influences the dimensions of the cells (de Soeten & Edelkoort, 1989, p. 30), Xenakis's undulating glass panels (Biot et al., 1985, p. 20), and the church's high altar. L.C. underscores the altar's significance, stating, "In music, there is a key, a tuning fork, a harmony. The altar, the sacred place par excellence, gives that particular note, which should trigger the radiance of the work. Proportions prepare this." (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 88). According to Dominican Biot, the man with arms outstretched, defining the Modulor, "opens up to a beyond, to the spirit, to the transcendent where God can be revealed" (1985, p.114). The Modulor has been carefully applied in La Tourette, aligning measurements with the human scale and creating a harmonious unity at specific points in the building. In Het Steiger, this approach primarily applies to how the new architectural additions spatially relate to the existing complex. This unique harmony may emerge where the dimensions ensure unity rather than contrast.

4.2.4 Materiality

Also, the raw concrete appearance amplified by the traces of the formwork contributes to that mysterious experience. What stands out is the "play of opposition between the geometric unity of the masses and the profusion of heterogeneous elements" (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 40). In La Tourette, it is mentioned that materiality could have a so-to-say mystic connotation. In Het Steiger, as seen in 4.1.2, a similar connection is made between materiality and mysticism. This mystical quality is highly appropriate for buildings with a religious function. With the repurposing of Het Steiger into an art complex, preserving this mystical atmosphere allows the original layer of the complex as a religious building to remain intact. Striving for this layering can make the building feel richer for art visitors.
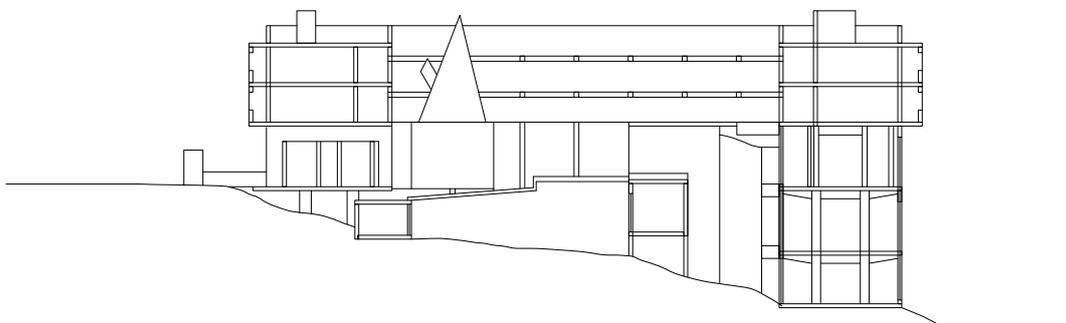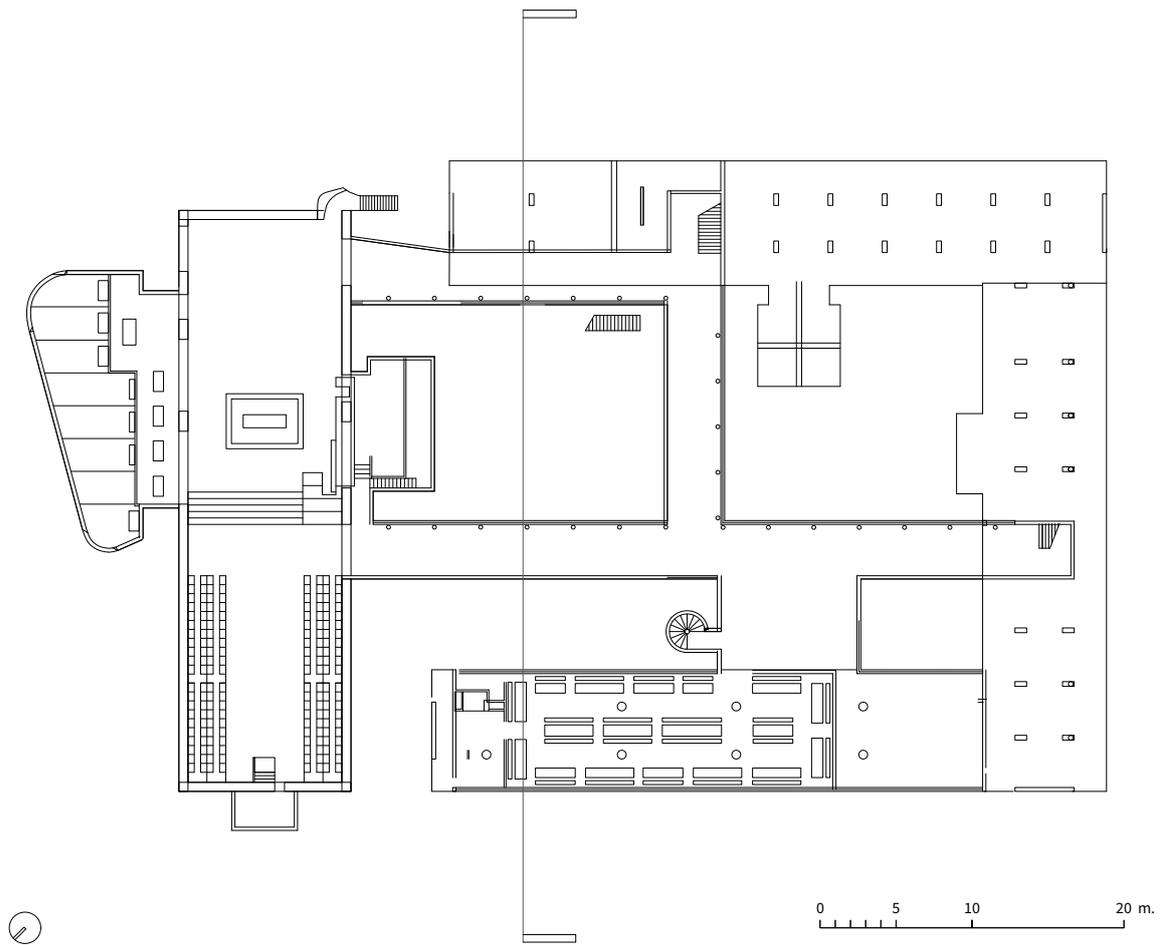
Figure 5. Floor plan and section of the Sainte-Marie de La Tourette in Éveux (FR), scale 1:500. (2012). Adapted from: http://www.archsociety.com/e107_plugins/download/download.php?view.85

4.3 Architectural considerations in the Dominican Motherhouse

The three themes in Kahn's design process that revolve around human aspects and transcendent values must be understood through his 'Form and Design' idea. Kahn was always seeking the unchanging essence of the institution in question, in this case, a motherhouse. He aimed "to reshape that programme in light of a transcendent image of man, liberating it from the narrow paths laid out by functionalism or modern behavioural science" (Merrill, 2010b, p. 20).

4.3.1 Intertwining worlds

Kahn initiated his process by introducing a two-parti scheme, differentiating between the sisters' cells and the communal/public spaces (Merrill, 2010b, p. 31, 51). He proposed novel aspects to the Form in two ways: by intertwining the realms of the sisters and the visitors, and more specifically, by introducing the gatehouse, transitioning between inside and outside (Merrill, 2010b, pp. 22-28). Kahn is aware of the social implications of his design. From the outset of his design process, his goal is to bring together two user groups: the world of the sisters and the visitors. In Het Steiger, this overlap between the artist's and visitor's worlds also requires careful consideration. Depending on the function, this overlap can be intentionally employed or not.

4.3.2 Equally significant spaces

The austere concrete block walls reflect the Dominican Rule of voluntary poverty (Merrill, 2010b, p. 99). However, the architectural consideration of poverty is even more prominent in Kahn's design proposal from March 2, 1967, forming the foundation for the eventual design. This plan, see Figure 6 (Pérez García, 2018), gives nearly equal importance to the communal spaces—contemplation, worship, learning, assembly, and cooking. Furthermore, private and communal realms remain undifferentiated due to Kahn's limited use of corridors, galleries, halls, and courts (Merrill, 2010b, pp. 69-71). While Kraaijvanger introduces a clear hierarchy of spatial significance in Het Steiger, as mentioned in 4.1.3, Kahn's approach is to create more equal spaces in terms of importance. The church room is no less important than the dining area. Kahn's approach prompts reflection on how to address the existing hierarchy in Het Steiger.

4.3.3 Architecture of Connection

Kahn values circulation space as much as programmed spaces (Merrill, 2010b, p. 127). By forcing the communal spaces to meet unmediated, these become integral to the convent's circulation. Kahn aligns with the sisters' desire for modern interpretation through this proposition, harmonising "monastic ritual and modern informal religious life" (Merrill, 2010b, p. 71). For Het Steiger, it could be interesting to apply this principle. The open space plan is highly suitable as an exhibition space, where the cloister transitions into the church hall, and separate exhibition spaces can be created within the church space.
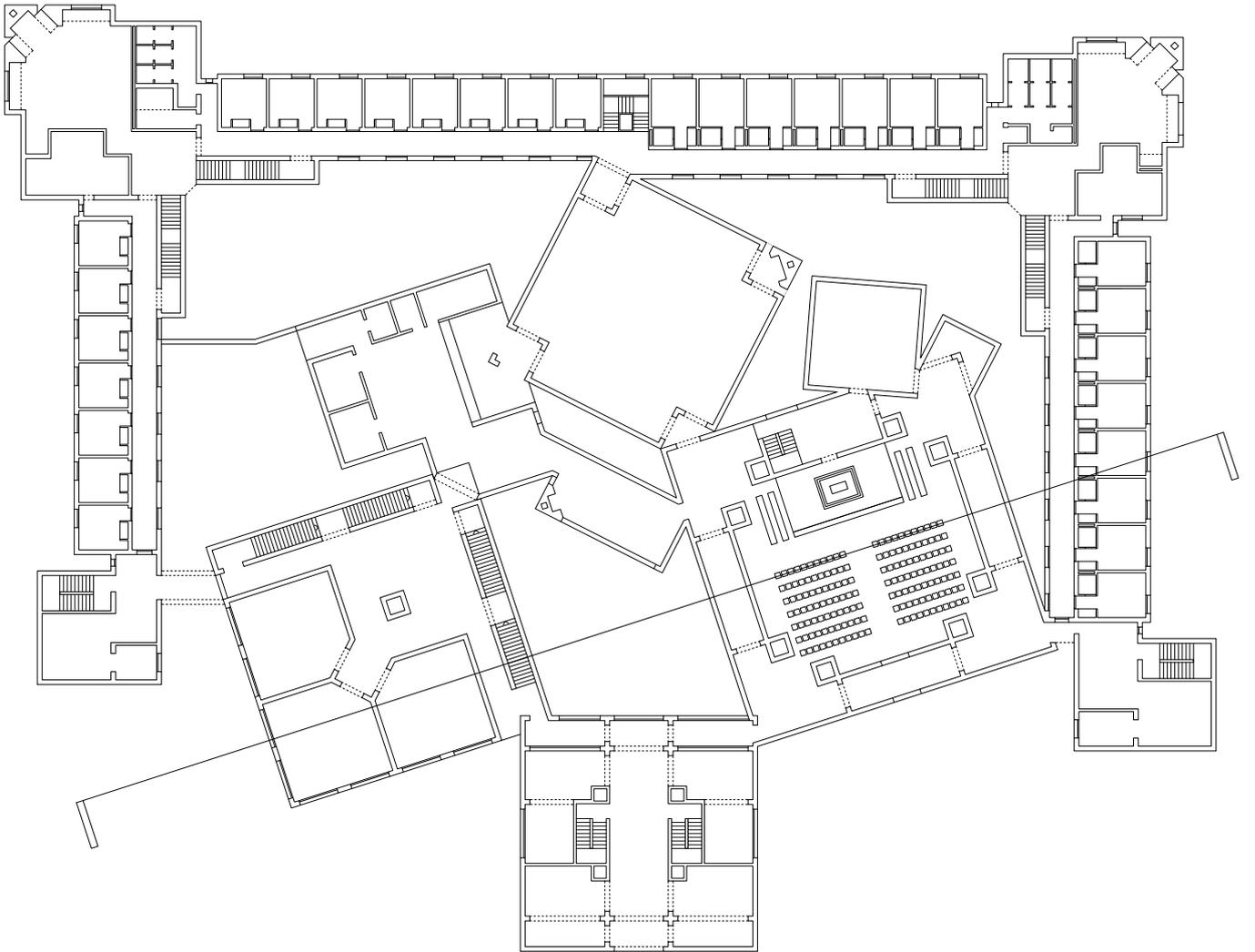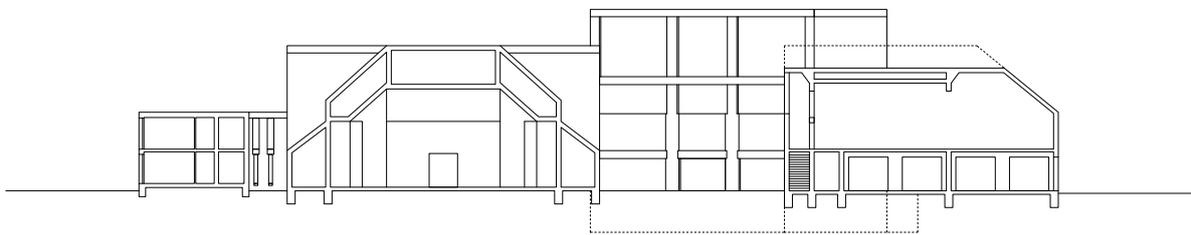
Figure 6. Floor plan and section of the Dominican Motherhouse in Media (US), scale 1:500. From *Teoría del proyecto, Louis I. Kahn; Dominican Motherhouse; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US 1965-1968* by D. Pérez García, 2018. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

5 Conclusion

This study has examined in what way the three priories—St. Dominic Church, Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, and the Dominican Motherhouse—reflect the notion of divine transcendence, considering the distinctive contributions of the architects and how these can be valuable for the adaptive reuse of Het Steiger as an art complex.

Firstly, the St. Dominic Church offers a tranquil environment due to the introverted character of the building. This makes the complex highly suitable as an art complex, allowing visitors to focus undisturbed on exhibitions. Modest material choices, notably brickwork, strengthen the contemplative quality of the building. Thus, the building serves as an 'architectural canvas', providing ample opportunity to add a new architectural layer. Thoughtful placements and orientations of religious elements establish a hierarchy of importance. For the art complex, there is an opportunity to reinterpret this theme in a new way. In the spirit of Kraaijvanger, a new significant space within the programme would fit well. Lastly, the comprehensive integration of religious art was meant to create an 'expressive sacred space'. These existing artworks strengthen the identity of the new programme.

Secondly, La Tourette's architectural themes frequently carry mystical undertones, including the humanistic perception of the priory as a 'social machine', where the monastic tone of the building is clearly visible. This principle, in which the physical and immaterial expressions of the building harmonise, could also be a guiding principle for Het Steiger. Additionally, diverse lighting techniques—often employing indirect illumination—contribute to a mysterious ambience. In Het Steiger, new lighting interventions could increase the architectural quality of the building, both in exhibition and atelier spaces. The calculated application of the Modulor, evident in the cells, undulating glass panels, and the church's high altar, amplifies the significance and harmony of these spaces and elements. In Het Steiger, it is primarily the spatial design solutions that need to harmonise with the existing complex. Moreover, using raw concrete and heterogeneous forms adds to the enigmatic atmosphere. The starting point is to maintain the mystical atmosphere in Het Steiger and perceive the building as a collection of existing and new architectural layers.

Lastly, the considerations within the Motherhouse are fundamentally human-focused. Kahn searches for a spatial organisation that interweaves the domains of the sisters and visitors. Also, Het Steiger faces a similar issue regarding user groups. Furthermore, he emphasises equally significant communal spaces, regardless of a space's purpose, achieved through limited use of serving spaces. This principle is almost opposed to Kraaijvanger's approach, which does implement a strong hierarchy. A clear stance must be taken regarding the existing spatial hierarchy in the redesign task. Finally, Kahn implements the 'architecture of connection' by making the programmed spaces integral to the circulation spaces. For Het Steiger, it is interesting to use a similar approach where circulation and exhibition space flow into one another.

In essence, all these three priories exemplify the architects' design strategies for invoking divine transcendence through architecture, although to varying degrees and sometimes in nuanced ways, contributing to the Dominican heritage of spiritual spaces that engage with the sacred in distinct yet interconnected ways. These design themes also provide extensive reasons for responding to the adaptive reuse assignment of Het Steiger as an art complex.

6 Discussion

To begin with, the use and availability of literary sources. As listed in Appendix 8.5, the monographs used to identify the key considerations of divine transcendence vary in scope and focus. The availability of literary documentation was limited, especially for the St. Dominic Church and Dominican Motherhouse. However, the available documentation was sufficiently extensive, allowing for the collection of various relevant architectural themes and the assessment of their relevance for the new programme.

The design of this study as a thematic exploration of three convents naturally limits the ability to delve deeply into the identified themes. Consequently, a single quotation or conclusion can exert significant influence, and efforts have been made to select these carefully. However, it cannot be ruled out that additional architectural themes resonate with the embodiment of divine transcendence, which are not included in the Results section.

The three projects express the concept of divine transcendence in varying ways and to different degrees. In the Kraaijvanger project, simplicity stands out: the blind brick walls, colourful light filtering through the glass-in-concrete facades, and the clear visual connection with the inner courtyard from the church hall. Architectural elements have been deliberately chosen to create a unifying and contemplative environment. On the other hand, Le Corbusier employs a broader spectrum of natural light, striking contrasts in his figurative design language, thereby crafting a richer and more mystical experience, which possesses a greater degree of complexity. In Kahn's work, divine transcendence is not explicitly articulated. The austere concrete brick blocks evoke a similar sense of simplicity as Kraaijvanger's project. However, in Kahn's case, the transcendent aspect primarily represents a quest for the institution's essence, resembling Plato's theory of Forms.

The significance of the identified architectural themes for the new program requires a careful translation and, therefore, calls for imagination as a designer. Inevitably, personal considerations are made during this process. Another designer may perceive a different relevance for the themes in the context of an art building.

Of course, this research provides an opportunity for follow-up studies. Some suggestions are provided below:

- The research motivation is partly based on the premise of the architectural consideration of 'Preaching,' as derived from the article Dominican Form and Architecture: Tensions. The historical foundation of this consideration could be further explored.
- The experience of the transcendent divine by users of these 'sacred spaces' could also be subject to more detailed investigation. To what extent do the identified themes resonate with their experiences?
- Delving into specific case studies of religious buildings repurposed with a museum function could provide valuable insights. What qualities of religious heritage contribute to buildings where art exhibitions take place?

7 Literature

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8 Appendix

8.1 Additional to the theoretical framework

Dunlevy consistently cites the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers, also known as the Dominican Rule, to substantiate his proposed considerations of silence, poverty and preaching. The Constitutions contain the fundamental principles of the Dominican monastic order, providing structure to the life of the Dominicans. Although he does not cite the Constitutions for the' Preaching' facet, references exist. Article 100-I (Dominican Publishers, 2012, p. 70) designates the monastery itself as "holy preaching". Article 126 (2012, p. 77) asserts: "Our churches ought to be centres of preaching, liturgical life, Christian community and apostolic outreach". Notably, in this last article, number 126, the term 'preaching' bears dual connotations: a functional contribution to the practice and an allusion to the architecture that proclaims the divine; this study predominantly concentrates on the latter interpretation.

8.2 Background information St. Dominic Church, Rotterdam (NL)

Figure 7. The St. Dominic Church in 1960. From "4121 Collectie Ary Groeneveld, 1956-1978", by A. Groeneveld, 1960 (https://hdl.handle.net/21.12133/5EBCE3749E51432C8B0A5EE2277426CE).

8.2.1 Introduction

After World War II, the Dutch welfare state and consumer society emerged, and religion gradually began to lose out to the belief in progression based on technological developments (Monteiro, 2008, pp. 365-366). Nonetheless, the number of Dominicans increased until 1965. (2008, p. 836). Two decades after the bombing of Rotterdam on May 14, 1940, the new Saint Dominic's Church (1960) emerged, as shown in figure 7 (Groeneveld, 1960), designed by Kraaijvanger, following the obliteration of its predecessor. The once-prominent location along the pre-war shopping street gave way to a more secluded location near the Hang. While this new location could be perceived as a sign of the church's waning societal prominence, it, in fact, proudly asserted itself as "a place of tranquillity in the heart of the city" (Jager, 2015, p. 253). The architectural composition comprises a church with a forecourt flanked by a detached campanile, the monastery-rectory, a cloister, and a parish house. While the complex initially used to house thirty Rotterdam Dominicans, its primary purpose was to provide accommodation for Catholic Rotterdam.

8.2.2 The client's stance

The client of the complex, the parish church council, emphasised (Jager, 2015, pp. 241-242) primarily that the new complex should be a centre of silence within the city. Moreover, as art and architectural historian Ida Jager noted (2015, p. 241-242), this perception was also shared by visitors. She writes: "Amidst the openness of this composite church interior, in the heart of the bustling city, there is a serene tranquillity". It can be argued that in this manner, the council aimed to create an atmosphere conducive to inner reflection, thus serving as a daily meeting place with God. This suggests that the client mainly focused on establishing essential conditions for the transcendent character of the church.

8.2.3 The architect's stance

In the early 1930s, the Catholic architects Evert (1899-1978) and Herman (1903-1981) Kraaijvanger considered the 'Modern Movement' as a threat to the ecclesiastical architectural tradition (Jager, 2015, p. 236). The Kraaijvangers particularly critiqued the values associated with modern morality. The 'utilitarian spirit of the modern world,' they believed, would lead merely to 'mass production that profanes' (Jager, 2015, p. 238). He questioned whether the rush allowed room for cherishing beauty and simplicity during the building process (Galema et al., 2000, p. 45, 47). The architects saw more potential in continuing the 'craftsmanship purity of the old church architectural art', where churches should primarily embody 'higher-order values' (Jager, 2015, p. 239). According to Kraaijvanger, this transcendental character took on various forms. The continuation of local building traditions and brick architecture was inherently connected to the divine order ordained by God (Galema et al., 2000, p. 42). Churches were to symbolise eternity (Galema et al., 2000, p. 10), anchoring liturgy and Catholic consciousness and serving as monumental embodiments of beauty. Furthermore, the church functioned as a meeting place between God and humanity, strengthening the faith life and always serving as the primary inspiration for art (Jager, 2015, pp. 236-241).

8.3 Background information Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, Éveux (FR)

Figure 8. Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, south facade. From "Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette (Le Corbusier) - Éveux", by E. Westerveld, 2016 (https://www.flickr.com/photos/westher/29401114891/in/photostream/). Licensed under CC BY 2.0

8.3.1 Introduction

In 1952, French Dominican friar Marie-Alain Couturier (1897-1954) approached Le Corbusier (1887-1965) to design a monastery dedicated to educating Dominican student-brothers (Biot et al., 1985, p. 9). Completed in 1960, the priory is situated within a 70-hectare rural expanse, over 25 km northwest of Lyon. Le Corbusier, entranced by the undulating farmland, thoughtfully situated the priory on a gentle slope, as shown in Figure 8 (Westerveld, 2016). The primary architectural form is rectangular, with the church completing the U-shaped residential block. At the heart of this design lies a cross-shaped cloister. Initially envisioned for housing around 100 friars, residents encompassed soon-to-be-ordained student-brothers, brother-priests serving as professors, and lay brothers entrusted with daily duties (Biot et al., 1985, p. 106, 108).

8.3.2 The client's stance

By appointing Le Corbusier as the architect, Marie-Alain Couturier aimed to reconnect the church with modern culture, preferring collaboration with "geniuses without faith than believers without talent" (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 12). Couturier's emphasis leans slightly more towards the priory's human aspects: he shared with Le Corbusier the *Rule of Saint Augustine*, referred to *Abbaye Le Thoronet* as an archetypical example, and highlighted aspects as poverty, silence, conducive spaces for intellectual work, and efficient space utilisation (Biot et al., 1985, pp. 9-10). Essentially, Le Corbusier was tasked with "grasping the signs and human conditions of faith" (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 114), reflecting Couturier's considerable confidence in Le Corbusier's ability to fully embody religious life in architectural space.

8.3.3 The architect's stance

Le Corbusier's humanistic architectural vision becomes evident in the words of Father Belaud, who describes his enduring fascination with humanity and its connection to the world, characterising his architecture as "the response to a certain vision of the human being and his needs" (Biot et al., 1985, p. 14). This perspective aligns with the application of the Modulor: a human-scale proportion system guiding the arrangement of architectural dimensions within the convent that harmonises with human requisites. His functionalist approach is also reflected in the monastery's design. The highly regulated monastic life was particularly well-suited for a strongly programmatic layout: spiritual, individual, and collective life (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 67). During his visit in 1960 to contemplate his work among the Dominican monks, he almost used mystical language, referring to "unspeakable space" and ineffable proportions. To the Dominicans, Le Corbusier's humanism resonated with their religious experience: "It is open to spiritual values, to the sense of mystery. The mystery of beings? The mystery of God? Everyone has their contemplation. Ours goes beyond his and dares to name what he calls the ineffable" (Ferro et al., 1987, p. 115).

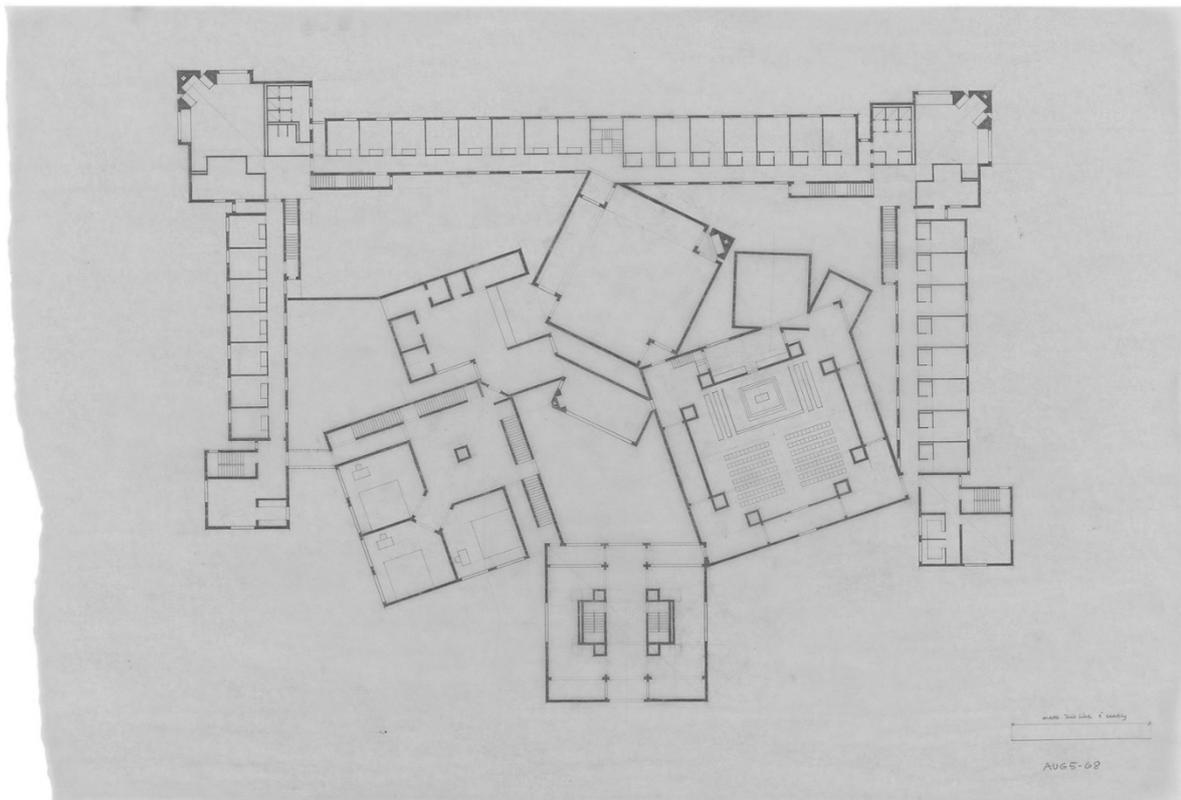## 8.4 Background information The Dominican Motherhouse, Media (US)

Figure 9. Floor plan of the Dominican Motherhouse. From *Teoría del proyecto, Louis I. Kahn; Dominican Motherhouse; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US 1965-1968* by D. Pérez García, 2018. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

8.4.1 Introduction

Architect Louis Kahn (1901-1974) worked on the Dominican Motherhouse from 1965 to 1969, a project that eventually remained unrealised. Initially, the Dominican Sisters sought more space due to a growing number of postulants (Merrill, 2010a, p. 22), but that narrative evolved during the design process. Due to increasing costs, fewer postulants than anticipated, and a changing perspective on monastic life, the project was halted in 1969 (Merrill, 2010b, pp. 101, 112). The convent was planned for wooded rural land (Merrill, 2010a, p. 24) nearly 50 kilometres south of Philadelphia. The eventual design, aiming to house 75 sisters (Merrill, 2010b, p. 78), features a U-shaped block that contains all dormitory cells, enclosing a cluster of five blocks for communal spaces.

8.4.2 The client's stance

The reforms stemming from the Second Vatican Council seem to nourish the desire for a modern interpretation of their institution. The choice for Kahn underscores that, allowing him to introduce a fresh programmatic order (Merrill, 2010b, p. 20). The pursuit of modern expression is evident yet consistently rooted in the Dominican Rule. For instance, they aim to minimise excessive circulation spaces (Merrill, 2010b, pp. 55, 59, 69). However, the transcendent dimension is scarcely addressed in

Louis Kahn on the Thoughtful Making of Spaces: the Dominican Motherhouse and a modern culture of space (2010). The discourse primarily revolves around the design's spatial organisation, which does eventually not adequately align with the Dominican sisters' expectation, saying: "It would dictate decisions on our form of life rather than permit us to vary our life to fulfil our vocation amid the needs of today" (Merrill, 2010b, p. 112).

8.4.3 The architect's stance

While religion never played a significant role in Kahn's personal life (Wiseman, 2020), his architectural texts like *Monumentality* (1944), *Silence and Light* (1969), and *The Room, The Street, The Human Agreement* (1971) suggest a near-religious belief in architecture's potential. He perceives it as the architect's responsibility to create buildings that serve the institutions of humanity. Regarding institutions, Kahn meant the institution of learning, work, health, or recreation (Kahn & Ngo, 1998, p. 19). The institution of religion can also be included among these. Kahn observed a fundamental human urge for self-expression within these institutions: "It is my belief that we live to express" (Kahn & Vassella, 2013, p. 27). With his firm conviction that everyone should have access to these institutions, their abundant presence in the design of the Dominican motherhouse, reflecting "the ideals of secluded contemplation, learning, and ritual community" (Merrill, 2010b, p. 22), made it a profoundly appropriate project for Kahn.

8.5 Literature citation

The list below shows the literature used to deduce the architectural themes concerning the divine notion.

St. Dominic Church
- *E. H. Kraaijvanger (1899 - 1978), H. M. Kraaijvanger (1903 - 1981) : tussen traditionalisme en modernisme - op zoek naar schoonheid voor een moderne wereld.* Galema, W., Hutjes, G., & Roding, J. (2000).
- *Evert en Herman Kraaijvanger : architectonische noblesse.* Jager, I. (2015).

Sainte-Marie de La Tourette
- *La tourette et le corbusier : l'architecture du couvent et l'attitude de l'architect.* de Soeten, H., & Edelkoort, T. (1989)
- *Le Corbusier et l'architecture sacrée : Sainte-Marie-de-la-Tourette-Eveux.* Biot, F., Perrot, F., & Salmon, J. (1985).
- *Le Corbusier : le couvent de La Tourette.* Ferro, S., Kebbal, C., & Potié, P. (1987).

Dominican Motherhouse

- *Louis Kahn : drawing to find out : the Dominican Motherhouse and the patient search for architecture.* Merrill, M. (2010).
- *Louis Kahn : on the thoughtful making of spaces : the Dominican Motherhouse and a modern culture of space.* Merrill, M. (2010).
- *Louis Kahn : essential texts.* Kahn, L. I., & Twombly, R. C. (2003).

8.6 Design Brief Art Complex

Short description

The art complex houses artists-in-residence - where they can live and work - and a dynamic public area for visitors. This public area involves a grand café, exhibition spaces, and the possibility for lectures. Art Complex Het Steiger aims to offer talented art students from the Willem de Kooning Academy the opportunity to participate in an annual artists-and-residents programme.

Design brief Art Complex Het Steiger

Artists-in-residence
Residence
- 9 apartments ranging from 31 m² – 60 m² + 1 guest room 15 m²
- Communal dining room 35 m²
- Shared kitchen 20 m²
- Meeting room 20 m²
- Shared workspace 7 m²
- Shared laundry room 7 m²

Working spaces:
- 9 Atelier spaces, 3 locations
    - Nieuwstraat: 4 atelier spaces: 35 m² (2x), 38 m², 22m²
    - Roof addition Hang: 3 atelier spaces: 35 m² (2x), 52 m²
    - New building Hang: atelier spaces 55 m² (2x)
    - Small kitchen and toilets
- Office space 32 m²
- Meeting room 18 m²

Visitors:
- Grand café with bar 320 m²
- Terrace Nieuwstraat
- Inner garden terrace
- Exhibition space 800 m²
- Service area with toilets and wardrobe

Staff
- Service desk
- Office space
- Kitchen including:
    - Storage rooms
    - Dishwashing area
- Technical rooms