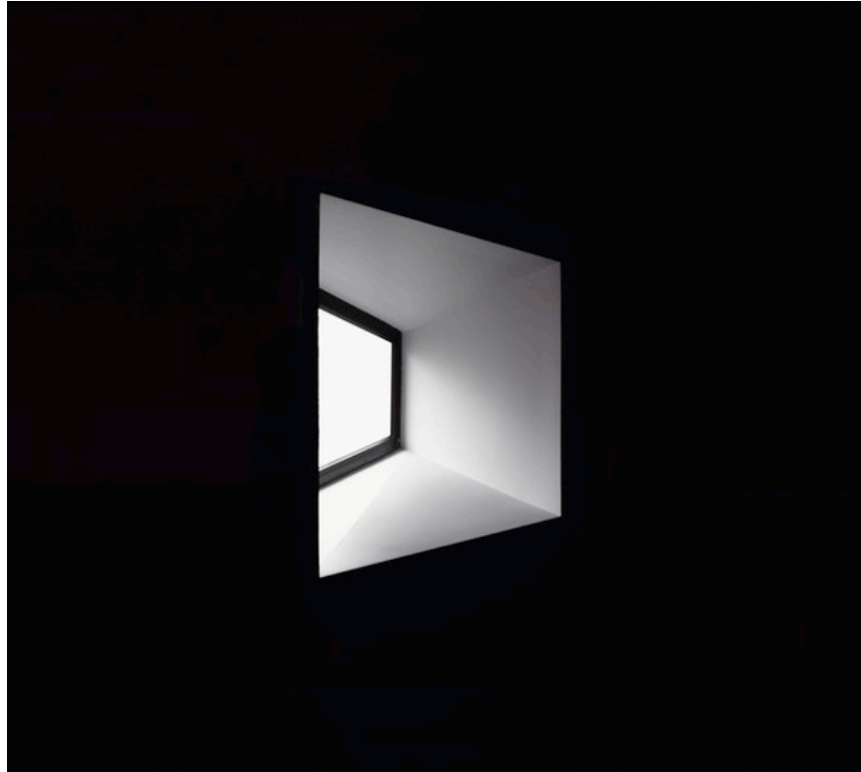


THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Luisa Lambri, 'Luisa Lambri', *ARTFORUM*, 31st January 2017



Luisa Lambri, *Untitled (The Met Breuer, #06)*, 2016, black and white photograph

For nearly twenty years, the artist Luisa Lambri has lingered in the twentieth century's most hallowed interiors, using the doors, corners, and mood-altering apertures of modernist buildings by Aalto, Bo Bardi, Corbusier, and others as prompts for photographs that convey phenomenological experience rather than reliable documentation. On the occasion of "Breuer Revisited: New Photographs by Luisa Lambri and Bas Princen," the artist reflects on her encounter with the work of Marcel Breuer and her tentative, arms-length relationship to architecture. The show runs February 1 through May 21, 2017, at the Met Breuer in New York.

FOR THIS EXHIBITION, I was asked by Beatrice Galilee, one of the Met's architecture and design curators, to photograph three Breuer-designed buildings: the Met Breuer, the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, and Saint John's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota. I have been familiar with Breuer's work for a while; in 2007 I took photographs of his Hooper House II in Baltimore. I had also photographed the windows of the former Whitney on previous occasions, and so I welcomed the opportunity to work there again, especially now that it has a new identity. This exhibition gives me the chance to install my photographs in that very building, which I am very drawn to. Generally, I relate to the unique dialogue between drama and simplicity in Breuer's buildings, the thick void they create, and their silence—a cold, enveloping darkness with a spiritual dimension.

While I photograph buildings—mostly interiors of houses—I do not identify with traditional architectural photography. I actually try to distance myself from most image making that documents architecture, even though some of my work might seem related to that. In my work, architecture only exists in abstract and subjective terms. I use it to create my photographs, rather than using my photographs to document it. I often think of my work as closer to performance than photography. For me, photographing interiors is an existential practice rather than the creation of an accurate representation of a building. The spaces I choose to photograph speak for me and of me, and each and every one of them is a reflection of myself. My photographs are in many ways self-portraits devoid of my own

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representation but filled with my own experiences. My work exists where personal and collective histories and images overlap.

I choose the buildings I photograph carefully, but never because they were made by a certain architect. I select spaces I relate to and identify with, and which I understand intuitively and emotionally. To me, my works are all part of the same personal archive, which is the result of pursuing the unrealizable quest to find an ideal home. They are variations of the same space and of the same image. I also feel a certain responsibility in speaking up for the buildings, especially for some of the most overlooked areas and details. Buildings have a lot to say, especially when they carry a lot of history. Male architects have designed most of the buildings I have worked with, and while I would not say that my work is explicitly feminist, I do investigate a female experience in a world created by men. I hope that exploration expands out to address larger and more universal questions about our place in the world, the relationship we have to the world that we have constructed around us, and the ideologies that have shaped these constructions.

When I take photographs, I usually focus on small and specific areas that speak to the architect's work while also being relevant to me. I might photograph the same skylight or window for days and would do that endlessly if that were possible. I might spend time in the exact same spot or move and align myself with the space slightly differently. I usually adapt myself to it and don't move or change anything around me, with the exception of perhaps opening a window to let some light in. I only use natural light and often work in poor light conditions, without necessarily waiting for the perfect moment to occur. Each moment is part of a process and they are all equal, as are the hundreds of photographs that are the result of a shoot.

I use film when I take photographs, and over- or underexposing it erases some of the physical elements of the architecture in favour of more metaphysical ones. But for the most part, my work is created at the lab where the images are scanned, and through an often long digital process they distance themselves further and further from the actual buildings. This transformation is as dramatic as it is imperceptible. What remains of the architecture is just an idea, and what emerges is something that transcends it.

— *As told to David Huber*

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