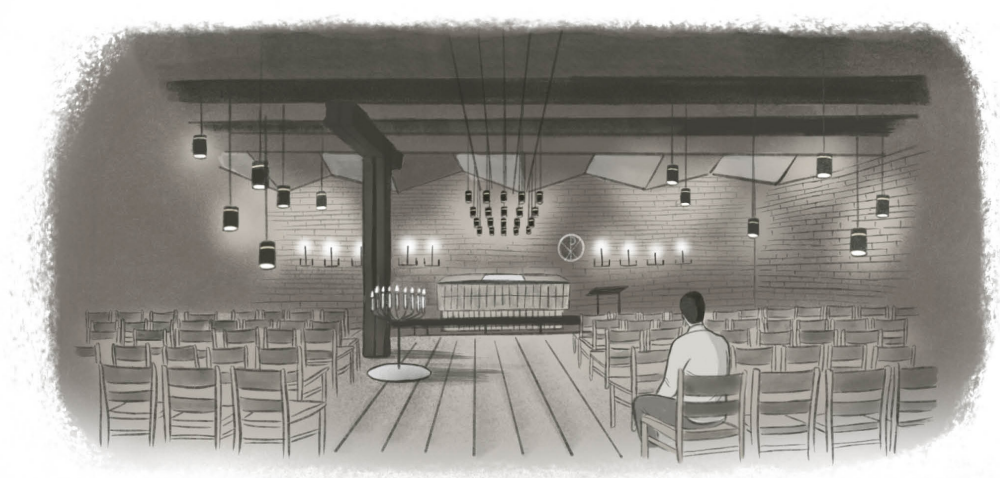




ARCHITECTONICS
THE BUILDING



Sigurd Lewerentz's Church of St Peter, Klippan
By Lyndon Neri

It's impossibly difficult to select a single favourite building. One could admire the sculptural play of light in Le Corbusier's *Sainte Marie de La Tourette*, the profound organisational clarity of Louis Kahn's *Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad* or the poetic spatiality of Kazuo Shinohara's *Tanikawa House*. Similarly, there's the masterful framing of landscape in Jørn Utzon's *Can Lis*, the structural boldness of Paulo Mendes da Rocha's *Casa Masetti* and the graceful social intricacy of Álvaro Siza's *Bouça housing*. Each represents a distinct vision, making a singular choice impossible. Rather than selecting one, I find it more meaningful to discuss a project I deeply admire: the Church of St Peter in Klippan, the final major work of Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz.

Commissioned when Lewerentz was 77, the church is the culmination of an obsessive, holistic vision based on one radical dictum: no brick was to be cut. Over three years, he personally oversaw the placement of each one, allowing construction to continuously inform the design in a reciprocal, almost ritualistic dialogue. This fundamental rule generated a cascade of expressive forms, unconventional joints and a profoundly tactile materiality where mortar was smeared across the brick faces rather than neatly pointed, preserving the palpable trace of the maker's hand.

Formally, the church feels ancient yet contemporary, weaving references from Catholic churches, monasteries and Swedish farmhouses into a unified brick language. Inside, the nave is geometric yet asymmetrical. It is cavernous, intimate and dimly lit, so that its rough surfaces and subtle details reveal themselves slowly. Above, two steel beams meet at an off-centre column, forming a raw Corten steel cross that supports the vaulted brick ceiling. This gesture merges structural logic with religious symbolism in a single, honest expression.

Spatially, the church avoids grandeur in favour of atmospheric depth. An internal street guides visitors on a processional route, emphasising the journey towards the sacred. Inside, the floor rises and dips, drawing the eye towards the altar and engaging the body in quiet contemplation. Every element, from the hidden roof vents to the dark brick walls, reflects Lewerentz's total command of detail and craft.

St Peter's endures as a masterpiece precisely because it resists categorisation. It is at once primitive and refined, spiritual yet pragmatic. By subverting conventional construction and reimagining the sacred, Lewerentz forged an architecture of timeless presence — a testament to the unity of material honesty, tectonic invention and spiritual depth.