

# The New Criterion

Dispatch March 08, 2017 10:32 am

## The Critic's Notebook

by The Editors

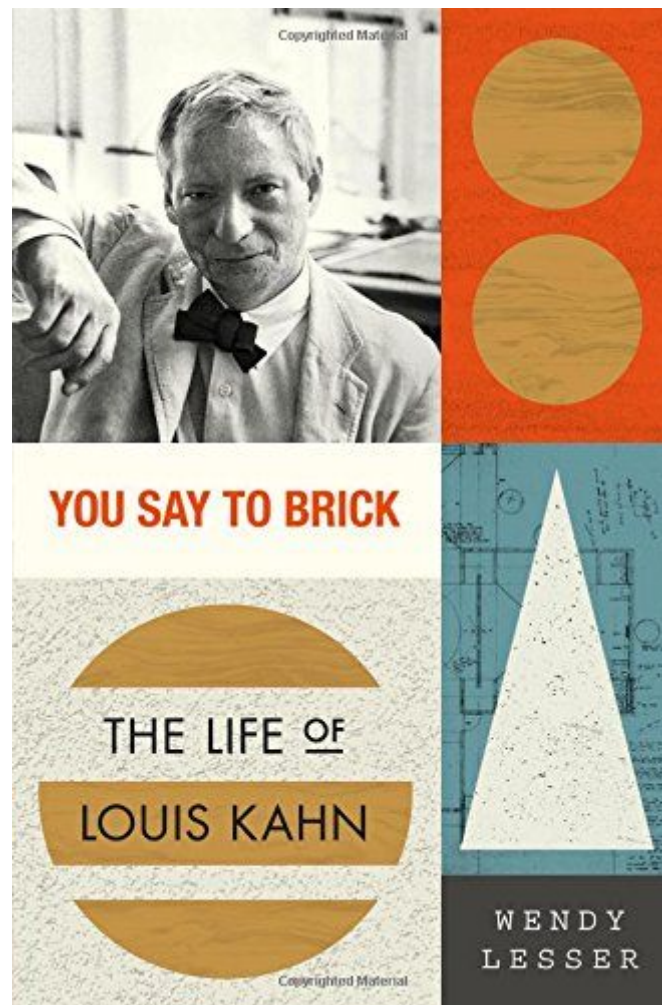
Sign up to receive “Critic’s Notebook” in your inbox every week—it only takes a few seconds and it’s completely free! “Critic’s Notebook” is a weekly preview of the best to read, see, and hear in New York and beyond, compiled by the editors of *The New Criterion*.



*Thomas Wilfred, Nocturne, Op. 148, 1958, Metal, glass, electrical and lighting elements, and a frosted-glass screen in an oak cabinet, Carol and Eugene Epstein Collection.*

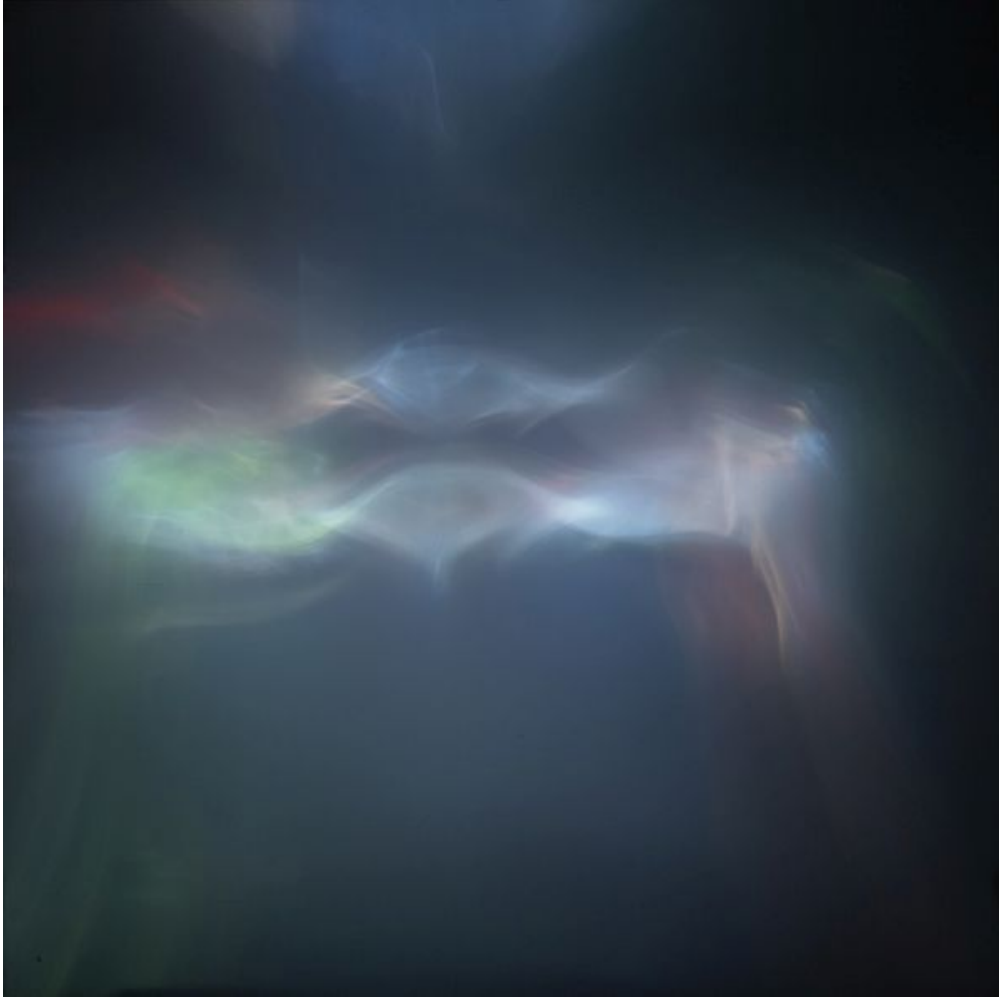
**This week: Stirring sights & phantasmal lights**

**Nonfiction:**



***You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn*, by Wendy Lesser (Farrar, Straus and Giroux):** Unlike many of his contemporaries, Louis Kahn adopted the International Style that prevailed in his day without absorbing the suspicion of charm and reverence that often came with it. His major buildings, such as the Yale Center for British Art, project an ease that stands out among the structures of the '60s, despite the fact that Kahn's clean lines and concrete mark his works as creatures of that era. In *You Say to Brick*, a new biography of Kahn, the critic Wendy Lesser traces these humanist features of Kahn's Modernist works to the unmistakable personality of the man himself—a natural teacher who believed that beauty should speak and stir the heart. —MU

**Art:**



*Thomas Wilfred, Vertical Sequence, Op. 136, 1940, Metal, glass, electrical and lighting elements, and a frosted-glass screen in an oak cabinet, Carol and Eugene Epstein Collection.*

**“Lumia: Thomas Wilfred and the Art of Light” at the Yale University Art Gallery (through July 23):**

A seeming correlation between music and color was a hallmark of early Modernism. Wassily Kandinsky was deeply influenced by the mystical “Thought-Forms” of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, which imagined the music of Mendelssohn and Gounod rising in colorful waves above a church. A musician by training, Thomas Wilfred, who came to New York from Denmark at the turn of the last century, developed an organ called a Clavilux that realized such theosophist ideas by “playing” color through the projection of light. A display of his work, including the projection of light nocturnes and suites, is now the subject of a groundbreaking exhibition at the Yale Art Gallery called “Lumia: Thomas Wilfred and the Art of Light,” on view in New Haven through July 23 and traveling to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington next fall. —JP

**Music:**



**The Philadelphia Orchestra performs Tchaikovsky and Bartók at Carnegie Hall (March 7):** The Philadelphia Orchestra brings quite a stark pairing to Carnegie Hall this Tuesday night: on one half, selections from Tchaikovsky's masterful ballet *Swan Lake*, some of the most sumptuously gorgeous music ever written for the stage. On the other, Bartók's one-act opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, a pitch-dark psychological drama for two characters whose score is a black, shimmering, viscerally disturbing work of genius. For Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Music Director-elect of the Metropolitan Opera, this will be the edgiest operatic work he has conducted in New York to date, having previously led *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, and *Rusalka* at the Met. The bass John Relyea takes on the role of the mysterious and sinister Duke Bluebeard opposite the Judith of Michelle DeYoung, a talented young mezzo-soprano who has sung several roles to great success with Opera Philadelphia. —ECS

**Architecture:**



**“Architecture, War, and the Erasure of Identity” at the New School (March 9):** Grand acts of political vandalism have drawn newfound attention over the past decade, as Islamic terror groups have traversed the Middle East destroying every graven image in their path—along with the people and cultures that produced them. This Thursday, the architecture institute of the New School will present a screening of *The Destruction of Memory*, a recent film that documents today’s wave of violent desecration. The director Tim Slade will host a discussion of the film at the event, inviting the audience to contemplate the literal destruction they’ve witnessed on screen, and the erasure of culture to which the film’s title alludes. —MU

**From the archive:** “The cultural contradictions of J. M. Keynes,” by James Piereson: On the insights & limitations of the influential economist.

**From the current issue:** “Populism, VII: Representation & the people,” by Roger Scruton: On the relationship of government to the governed.

**Broadcast:** Roger Kimball, James Panero, and Dominic Green on the recently renovated Yale Center for British Art.



---

Each week the editors of *The New Criterion* offer recommendations on what to read, see, and hear in the world of culture in the weekly Critic’s Notebook. To get it first, subscribe to the free Critic’s Notebook email by [clicking here](#).