



# The New Brutalism, Brought Home

On the unassuming charm of raw stone

Architectural history has known moments when rawness ceased to offend and began to soothe. When Le Corbusier raised the Dominican monastery at La Tourette, he made no attempt to hide the concrete. He left it exactly as it emerged from the timber formwork - with the grain of the boards imprinted on it, with air bubbles, with the imperfections we would instinctively want filled,



smoothed, civilised. Béton brut: raw concrete became in his hands not a budgetary constraint but a language. He grasped something that, decades later, is returning to domestic interiors with renewed force: a material that pretends to be nothing other than what it is builds a deeper calm in a person than the most flawless façade ever could.

A dozen or so years later, on the other side of the ocean, Louis Kahn faced a similar choice while designing the Salk Institute in La Jolla. The original plan called for a garden at the centre of the courtyard between the two laboratory blocks; greenery, benches, a place to gather. It was the Mexican architect Luis Barragán, brought in to consult, who persuaded Kahn to abandon the garden altogether. To leave the courtyard empty. To lay it with a single, continuous slab of travertine, cut through by a narrow water channel drawing the eye straight out towards the Pacific, and to call it a façade turned towards the sky. That decision to subtract, rather than add, proved to be one of the boldest gestures in twentieth-century architecture. Sometimes the strongest design is the one from which something has been deliberately removed.

Carlo Scarpa went further still. At the Brion family cemetery near Treviso, where he worked for ten years, until his own death, he consciously set the raw against the refined. Rough, unfinished concrete sits there alongside Murano glass and bronze castings, with no softening transition between the two. Scarpa was not seeking harmony in the sense of matching textures. He was seeking tension, a tension in which rawness heightens the value of precision, and precision gives rawness its meaning. It is the same repertoire of articulation we find today in a well-designed piece of furniture: an unfinished edge beside polished brass says more than a uniform surface ever could.



A similar thinking governs the Arh side table. Bent, hand-patinated brass, as a material so malleable that every fold is unrepeatably meets here a top whose natural fissures and flaking have not been concealed but drawn out, picked out by light falling from the side. The Ollar console takes the same idea in the opposite direction: ziricote wood veneer laid in marquetry so precise it resembles a cubist painting more than joinery. The whole collection plays, then, on two strings at once - near-jeweller's precision and deliberately preserved rawness, exactly as Scarpa played them at Treviso.

This tension between the refined and the raw is no aesthetic accident or passing trend, even if today we call it new brutalism. It is a reminder that a home need not be a museum of flawlessly finished surfaces to feel good to live in. Sometimes a single object that has kept a trace of its origin - a vein in the stone, an irregularity in the wood, a crack no one tried to hide, is enough to give the rest of the room a weight and honesty that no smooth surface could ever provide.



Gio, Arh and Ollar now stand in a number of homes. On desks, beside fireplaces, wherever a hand reaches out in the evening for a book or a glass. Anyone wishing to see them up close will find them in our online atelier, together with the rest of our pieces, objects that pretend to be nothing other than what they are.