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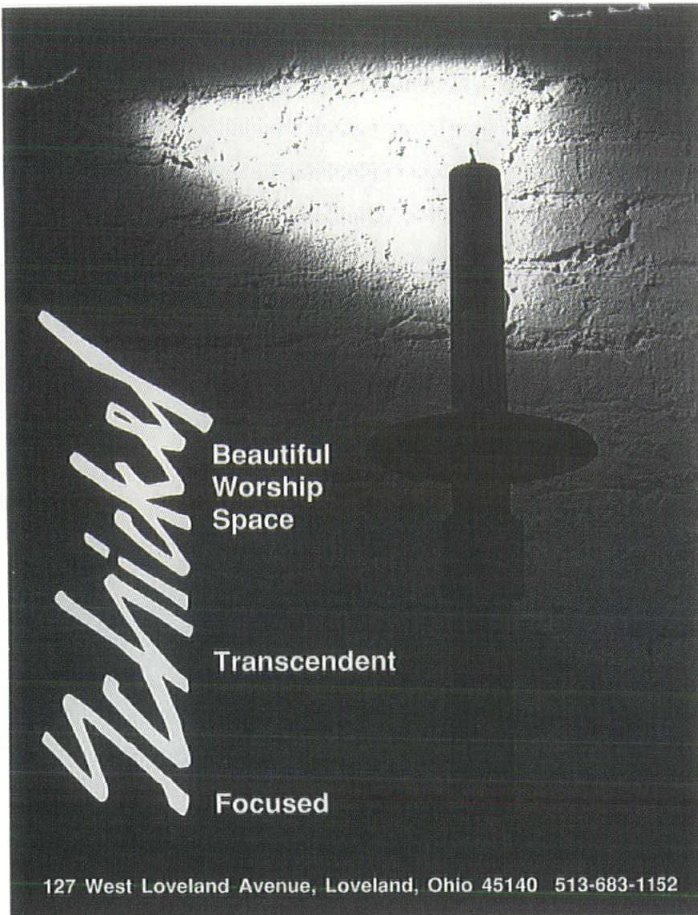
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# FAITH & FORM

JOURNAL OF THE INTERFAITH FORUM ON RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE  
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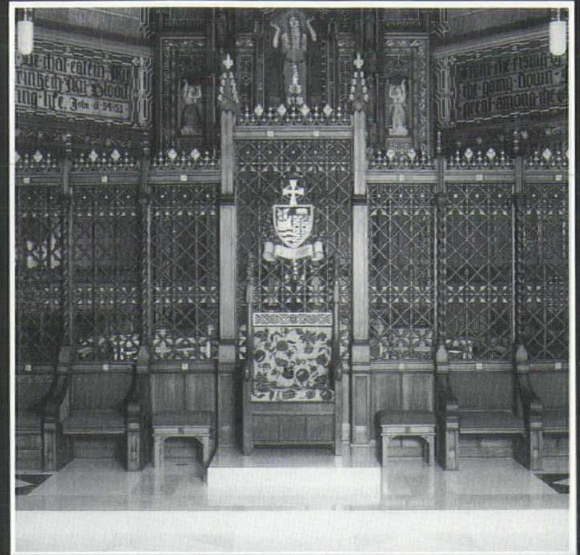
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# Contents

## Features

### Past, Present and Future

By Betty H. Meyer, Editor ..... 6

### The Open Synagogue: Architectonic vs. Readymade

By James Rossant ..... 7

### Windows to Life: A Workshop

By Jeff G. Smith ..... 10

### Revisiting a Church of Radical Design—and Its Visionary Priest

By Laura Burns Carroll ..... 13

### Tadao Ando's Lotus Temple on the Island of Awaju

By Alfredo De Vido ..... 16

### One Artist Can Make a Difference

By Betty H. Meyer ..... 18

### Sadhubella Ashram: A Modern Classic

By Peter Engel ..... 20

### Decisions, Decisions

By Betty H. Meyer ..... 23

## Departments

Notes & Comments ..... 4

Calendar ..... 32

Architects Directory ..... 25

Artist/Artisan Directory ..... 28

Advertisers' Index ..... 31

## ABOUT THE COVER

Jonathan Clowes, a New Hampshire sculptor and woodworker, studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Boston Museum School, and the Portland School of Art in Maine. He has created sanctuary furnishings for Trinity Lutheran Church in Keene, N.H., which earned him a craftsmanship award.

## ERRATA

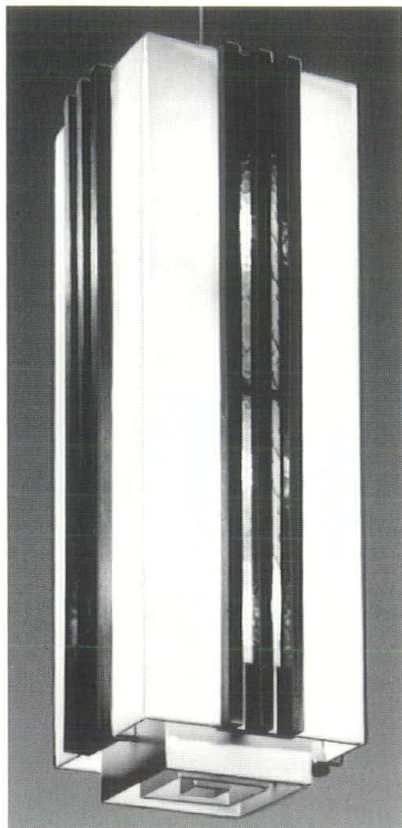
Anyone who looks at the cover of our winter 1993-94 issue will recognize what an important part stained glass played in the design of Beth El Synagogue, Minneapolis. The glass involves an intentional balancing of the high vertical sides to emphasize serenity and justice. The constant renewal of nature and of man is depicted as the design climbs to the glorious event of the giving of the tablets of law, which seem to emerge from the mountain. Jean Jacques Duval was the artist whose name we sincerely regret was omitted in the description, and we offer him our apology.

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**Manuscript Submission:** The editor is pleased to review manuscripts for possible publication. Any subject material relevant to art and architecture is welcome. Text should be double spaced on 8-1/2 x 11 paper. Manuscripts and photos will not be returned unless specifically requested and a return envelope with sufficient postage is included. Good visual material is emphasized.



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## Notes & Comments

### In Memoriam

IFRAA has recently lost two friends who have been much respected and who have contributed much to our common focus on faith as it relates to form.

More than 50 churches bear the imprint of Pietro Belluschi's brilliant talents, including St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco. Born in 1899 in Ancona, Italy, his career spanned almost seven decades and gave him the honor of AIA's Gold Medal for his outstanding contributions.

Charles Moore was an architect and teacher who endeared himself to clients and students alike. Congregations appreciated his design workshops and felt they had participated. It is not insignificant that memorials were held in four cities and that students are raising funds to preserve his Austin House as a study center.

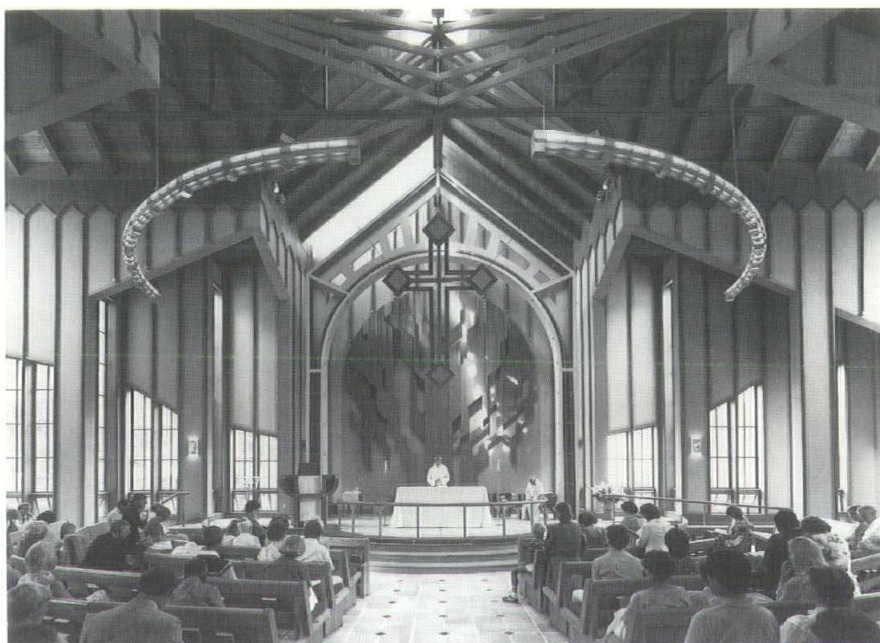


Photo: Timothy Hursley

St. Matthew's Church, Pacific Palisades, Calif. Moore Ruble Yudell, architects.

### The Shelter Rock Unitarian Church

Edward Larrabee Barnes has completed a 72,000 square foot fieldstone Unitarian building in Manhasset, Long Island, N.Y. It includes a meditation room, an art gallery, a children's chapel, and a semi-circular worship space. There is also an educational wing, and an existing building adds 20,000 sq. ft. more space. The congregation marched the two miles from the old church to the new, carrying its familiar chalice to a new place of honor and paused to replant a tree from the old churchyard. This congregation is committed to face the challenges of a changing world and has already established a nonprofit day care center, with plans for a conference on violence and an environmental program for children and adults. In addition, the church receives royalties from gas and oil reserves left in a bequest that allows an \$8.6 million program.

We would like to wish Mr. Barnes, who is retiring, a satisfying and fruitful future. Many IFRAA members will remember the impressive address he gave at our conference in Indianapolis at the art museum.

### Artyecture

Robert Campbell, the architectural critic for the *Boston Globe*, recently wrote a feature article entitled, "Artyecture." He describes a growing number of young architects across the U.S. mixing art and architecture. Unable to find work or to make enough to



live on, they are forced to invent new careers. Often they create imaginary projects and later look for a buyer or sponsor. Campbell describes four Boston architects, extremely talented who draw, sculpt, paint, make lamps, furniture, models, etc. All of them function in cast-off buildings and enjoy living on the margins of society. "They tend," Campbell writes, "to think of the artifacts of the industrial age as a source to be mined for imagery." They are fascinated by the city whether they are responding to it in art or architecture.

## An Island Treasure



Restoration of stained glass window at St. Hubert's Chapel, Kinnelon, N.J.

In 1885 Frances S. Kinney, a U.S. business executive acquired 5,000 acres on a small island in the center of Lake Kinnelon, New Jersey. He decided to build a chapel there dedicated to St. Hubert and in honor of his wife and children. During the winter horse drawn sleds transported rough stones across the frozen lake to the remote island. Ceiling and window frames were made of massive oak and a commission was given to Louis Comfort Tiffany to undertake the chapel's interior decoration. Tiffany assembled a team of artists and historians who spent three years exploring museums and locating art treasures. A mosaic tile floor consisting of 300,000 pieces of marble was laid throughout the chapel. The altar was erected of stained glass mosaics and numidian marble with the altar, retable, tabernacle and furniture designed to resemble those in St. Hubert's day.

Rohlf's Stained Glass Studio was commissioned to remove and restore this most unusual antique Tiffany window (8' x 18'), which is in the shape of a Celtic cross. It has been removed and sent by barge to the studio in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., where it is now in the process of restoration.

## Memorials By Artists

An organization has been set up in England that may stimulate interest in a similar one here. Harriet Fraser was desperate to find a well designed headstone after the death of a family member, and began a discussion with a group of artists. While they recognize that the majority of memorials will probably continue to be headstones with the need for beautifully carved and fine lettering, they like to think that other possibilities do exist. Artists can be commissioned to create designs not only for the cemetery but for a garden or the home. Examples might be: engraved or stained glass, a stone seat, a wood bench, a sundial, a bird bath, a fountain, a piece of sculpture or object in silver. Ms. Fraser has developed a directory of artists and crafts people that is available to individuals and groups, as well as an illustrated booklet with 38 designs for memorials. The National Art Collections Fund has given the group an award "for an outstanding contribution to the visual arts."

Contact: Harriet Fraser, Snape Priory Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1SA England.

## A Cathedral Completed

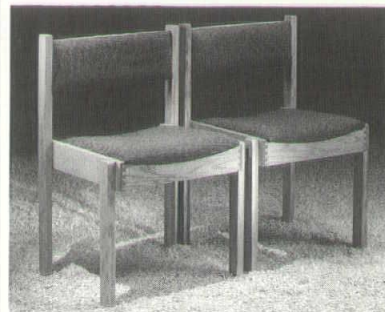
It was in 1972 that an earthquake killed tens of thousands of people in Nicaragua and left the old Colonial-era cathedral of Managua a mere shell. Because of the economic and political crises, plans for rebuilding the cathedral were not begun until four years later. The Archdiocese of Boston, with the generous help of Tom Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza chain, appointed Ricardo Legorreta of Mexico as the architect. The new cathedral is a concrete building with dozens of domes topped by windows that allow natural light to flood the interiors. There has been criticism of style and the highlights of color but Legorreta believes his building is a symbol of unity between East and West and reflects the centuries of Arab influence on Hispanic culture. □

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# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

By Betty H. Meyer, Editor

The challenges that lie beyond the year 2000 were the subjects for discussion at the IFRAA National Conference in Orlando, Florida, October 13-15. After a tour of the old city of St. Augustine, and settling in next door to the fantasy world of Walt Disney, delegates seemed eager to envision a world beyond the present and past, into the future.

## The Church of the Recent Past

Robert Rambusch, liturgical designer, reminded us that the Church opened up to cataclysmic changes only after the secular world had staked out its claim on modernity. Contemporary architecture developed in isolation from the Church, which was slow to accept eclecticism, but did respond to the call for contemporary materials and forms.

Bob used a wealth of dramatic slides to illustrate specific changes as the Church began to acknowledge that changes in culture and belief systems necessitate changes in architecture. He cited the need for interfaith facilities, multi-purpose buildings, ecological concerns, accessibility and hospitality, flexibility of furnishings and historical restoration. His examples tempted us to linger in the past, but we anticipated what would be said about the future.

## Characteristics of the Future

An increasingly discussed question is: Will institutional religion play a part in the future? If so, what will characterize its theologies and its architecture? Both Carol Childress, who does research for a private foundation, Leadership Network, and Thomas Billitteri, News Editor of Religious News Service, described a future as they see it.

Rather than as institutions per se, churches, synagogues, mosques, etc. will be redefined as communities who help people process and adapt to psychological and social needs. There will be a marked shift to the urban landscape with many small groups in large buildings:

day care centers, recreational spaces, counseling centers, food kitchens, etc. Because of a declining clergy pool, lay leadership will be encouraged. With a decreasing birth rate, educational facilities for children will be fewer but those for the elderly increased.

Information burnout will call for more visual rather than verbal communication. The arts will come into their own, even as technology needs must be state of the art. Gardens and atriums will be welcome additions to completed projects.

Sanctuaries will be smaller with an emphasis on individual worship, although there may be several styles of worship, with frequent sharing of space with other faiths. Coalitions around social issues may arise without theological agreement. Education will be intergenerational and interactive.

## Beyond Characteristics

As this practical paradigm was spinning around in our heads, liturgical consultant Richard Vosko began his presentation by reminding us of the expanding universe and what it means to our concepts of a creative God. How do we bridge the gap between the known and the unknown? Suddenly, religion came into focus again and we wanted to think of sacred spaces that would be timeless and faithful to the Eternal.

Dick spoke of sacred space as the place where the unknown and the known meet, where disclosure of the Mystery can happen, and the Transcendent sensed. This is the challenge to the architect. What buildings will stand the test of time? Which will be flexible enough to include future generations? Dick spoke of the gathering and the importance of community; of experiments with form and lighting; of flexibility and openness to other religions; but he called us to a revitalization of spirituality on multiple levels.

## The Importance of Recognition

But as we all know, a conference extends beyond its program. There were many

artists in attendance, and a forum and reception gave them a chance to show and discuss the importance of visual art in close connection with architects. These interchanges we always hope may be the beginning of collaboration.

More than once the importance of the clergy was mentioned and the importance of their contribution as we move into the years ahead.

The climax of IFRAA's conferences always has been the banquet on the last night when architectural and visual arts awards for the previous year are given for excellence in design. Architect James Graham and stained glass artist Brenda Belfield presented the awards to 15 artists and architects. (The winter issue of *Faith & Form* will feature these projects.) Crosby Willet, stained glass artist, announced Richard Vosko as the winner of the Elbert M. Conover Award given to a non-architect for outstanding contribution in this field. We extended congratulations to all of these recipients for their excellence in design but even more for re-imaging religious tradition in a way that illuminates and nourishes our human lives.

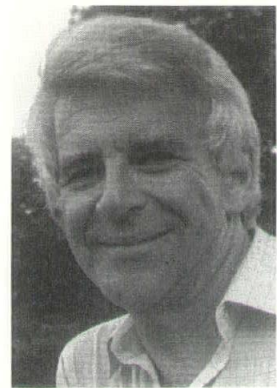
## Parting

As we prepared to leave, we couldn't help but wish we were going on with Professor Donald Bruggink and his group to Spain. At lunch he had shown slides of previous trips to Mexico, Japan, Scandinavia, the Baltic states, etc., and we were reminded how global IFRAA's aspirations are. Our newly elected President, Richard Bergmann, FAIA, and the newly elected Board are committed to leading us into the future as we envisioned it in Orlando, to honor the legacy we inherit through our name: The *Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture*.

A special word of gratitude is due Conference Chairman Richard Takach, ASID, Jean Barber and Rochelle Jones of the AIA for organizing a conference that was remarkable in its unified presentation of theme. □



# THE OPEN SYNAGOGUE: ARCHITECTONIC VS. READYMADE



By James Rossant

There is a belief among Jewish youth around New York that one could skip going to any event except the Knicks' playoffs and High Holy Day services. At the Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor, an active and growing Conservative congregation in a suburb 35 miles north of New York City, typical Sabbath crowds number only 200 regulars. But during New Year's and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the number swells tenfold when 2,000 worshippers crowd to enter the temple.

By 1990 not only had the sanctuary become too small for the regular Sabbath, but when it was opened up to the multipurpose social hall during the High Holy Days there was standing room only, and the long narrow space had many poor seats in the back where it was difficult to follow the services.

It was a situation common to many synagogues and churches designed in the '50s and '60s, when multipurpose space, usually social halls, was designed to be used as overflow space for school functions and religious services. At this particular temple, the spaces for the school, offices and sanctuary were all so little distinguished from one another, that the only visual difference between the three uses were the bronze memorial plaques, a blue plastic window wall in the sanctuary, and the bare pink terrazzo floors in the social hall. The Hebrew school and nursery were also outgrown. New classrooms, kosher kitchens and of-

fices for the school and administration were needed.

The congregation made the decision to build. Naturally, the building committee assumed that as before, the new sanctuary would open directly into the old which would in turn become a part of a longer social hall. The rabbi had a radical proposal that the new sanctuary should have a central bema, creating a sanctuary in the round. This was radical because it departed from the practice which placed the bema (or area for reading from the Torah) next to the ark. The building committee agreed with the rabbi but issued a challenge to the architects: Only \$2 million were available for the entire expansion.

The sanctuary that was dedicated in September is a totally different design

from the one that either the rabbi or congregation expected. It is simple in the way a New England church is simple; it is open to the community in a way synagogues have never been open.

For centuries religious architecture reflected the *sacred* nature of space. Temples were set in groves protected by walls, or placed on hilltops. They were adorned with marble, bronze, onyx and gold and they were protected by massive doors. Closed to the outside bustle of the world, the temples were often murky and dark. Whether overwhelming in size or modest, dim or bright, they were sacred preserves within walls. Indeed, in the ghettos of Europe, the Jewish temple was even more shuttered from the outside town.

In designing Briarcliff Manor a differ-

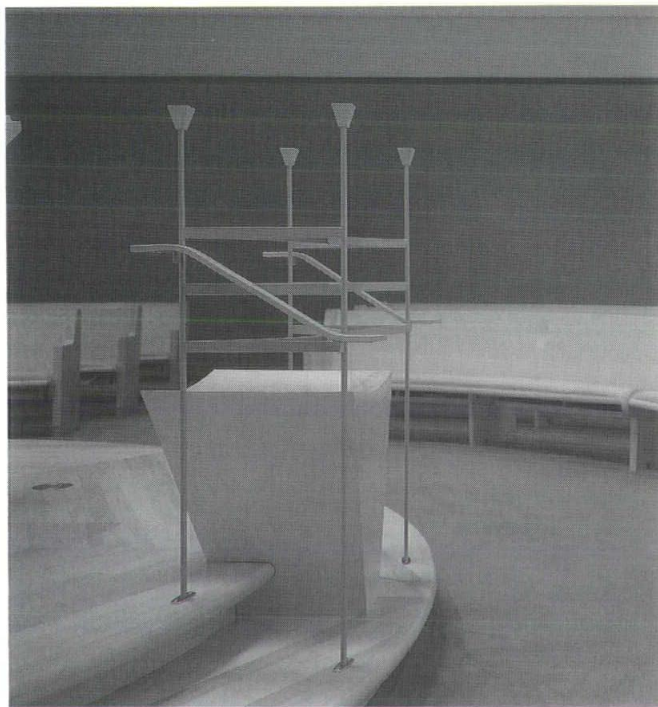
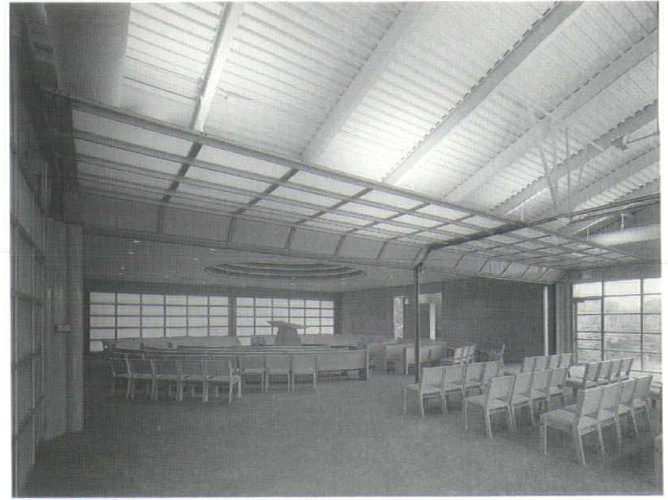
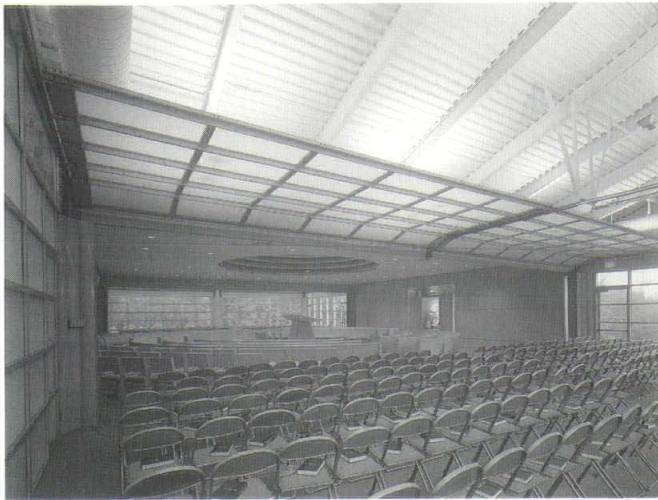


Congregation Sons of Israel, view from west.

JAMES S. ROSSANT, FAIA AICP, is a principal with Conklin and Rossant, Architects PC, in New York City, N.Y.

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*Different views of the sanctuary (above and below).*

All photos © Arch Photo Eduard Hueber

ent attitude was taken. The sanctuary is composed of transparent walls which move; it is a sanctuary without walls designed to be open to the community. Unlike those of the past, it is enclosed with transparent walls which rise up into the ceilings of the east and west "porches." When the inner sanctuary is opened to the porches, green lawns and trees are seen through the outer glass walls, and when these walls are opened, the sanctuary is one with its surroundings.

This sanctuary responds to need: Its walls move, allowing it to change with the seasons.

The inner sanctuary used for the Sabbath is a square room focused on the rabbi's centralized bema (altar). A simple

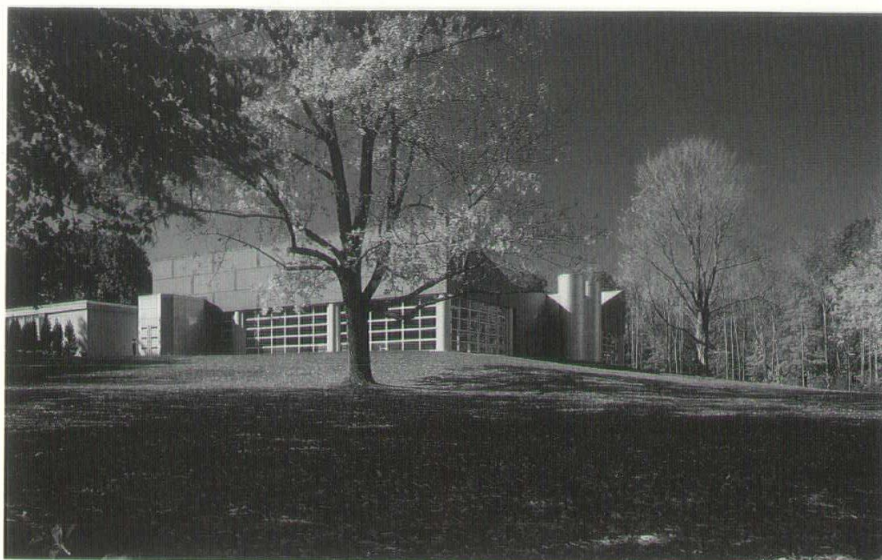
wooden ark is recessed on the one fixed wall, marked with giant stones in low relief. The ark recess is formed by windows and two stainless steel cylinders connected together by a flat, stainless steel plane. A skylight and the windows back-light the stainless steel walls framing the wooden ark. Above the ark floats an eternal light executed in stainless steel and onyx. Borrowing the idea of overflow porches (used around the world to accommodate congregations varying in number with the religious season), two wide porches surround the 50-foot square sanctuary on two sides.

For the weekly Sabbath, the congregation of 250 is seated around the bema in fixed crescent-shaped pews. Light pours

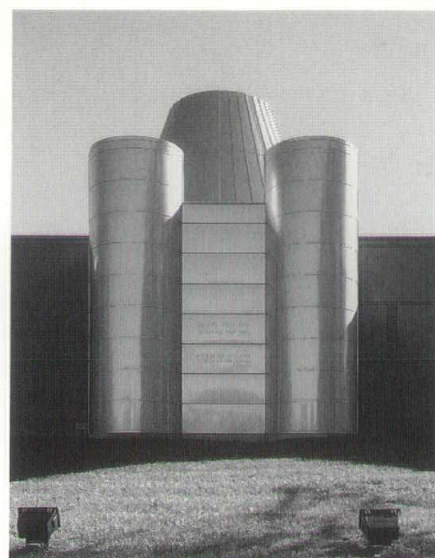
down over the central bema from a high cone-shaped roof topped by a circular skylight with an inscribed Star of David formed by steel tie rods. It is an intimate, uplifting space focused on the reading table on the raised bema under the high cone of space. On special religious days and for weddings and confirmations, the sanctuary is transformed. Motorized walls lift open to the two adjacent porches. In good weather the outer glass walls rise up to the lawns beyond. The fabric-covered doors roll aside to a social hall, which allows the sanctuary to seat up to 2,000. The original snug, square sanctuary is transformed into a vast open shed seating up to 2,000 persons.

In designing this new open sanctuary,





View of exterior.



Torah symbol (Book), roof cone (Text) and large symbolic stones (Wall).

the search for spirituality came not from using church-like materials like stained glass and bronze, but from a design which uses everyday, familiar building products like overhead doors, exposed air supply ducts, industrial quartz lights, commercial carpeting and white corrugated steel ceilings. The painted wall near the ark is sprayed with a coating called Zolatone. Perforated stainless steel shields for door counterweights stretch over each of the eight doors; electric motors, chain assemblies and tracks are left exposed. The ark is made of lacquered maple, and the bema of maple flooring and honed stone. From these materials a spiritual space is made.

While spirituality is fashioned of readymades, religious meaning at Briarcliff Manor is expressed with three symbols: book, wall and tent.

### Wall

The enclosing walls of the sanctuary come to the ground only as they approach the ark. Otherwise, they enclose as a symbolic wall above a moveable transparent enclosure of glass. The walls are made of bricks which are marked into giant stones to emphasize the very idea of wall.

The importance of the stone wall in Jewish history is profound. One thinks of the veneration of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Walls have signified cities, culture, laws, society, ethics. After the wanderings of the Jews, walls rose to proclaim these ideas and temples with walls were raised. The walls of the new sanctu-

ary reflect all this by their architectonic marking.

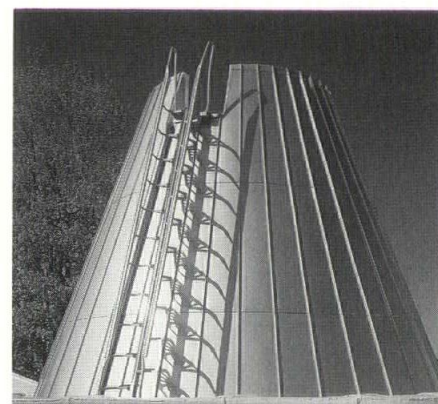
### Book

From the road approaching the temple, one looks up to the end wall of the sanctuary which is punctuated by a Torah scroll formed in stainless steel marking the location of the ark inside. Scrolls are seen against the tent-like form of the stainless steel cone set over the bema. From within light from above and from east and west windows illuminates the Torah symbol, backlighting the ark. The scrolls are twin towers, inside of which are depositories for Bibles and prayer books. This location near the ark stresses the importance of the *book* to members of the Sons of Israel and all congregations.

### Tent

The conical *tent* rises above the bema, open at the top to allow light to pour down over the bema and to illuminate the open Torah on the wooden table. At the top opening tension rods strengthen the cone; they are placed in the form of the Star of David. Concentric metal rings capture the light and make it tangible. The cone and the rings seem to absorb the Word: The prayers are lifted to the light above. The *tent* topped with the star represents the ancient and modern wandering of the Jewish people, and it is fitting that it is placed over the bema at the center of the sanctuary.

Each of these symbolic elements is architectonic: the Torah/book is composed of two towers and connecting wall; the



Sanctuary cone and stepladder.

Star of David is made from steel tie rods; and the stones are made up of black brick lines.

Contrast this use of architectonic symbols with the more usual practice of stamping a building with a Latin cross, a Star of David, or a corporate logo. While easy to read, they have no architectonic role to play.

The enthusiastic response of the congregation came once the new sanctuary opened. The cantor extols the sound as he sings beneath the cone at the bema. Wedding parties applaud the ceremonies in the big sanctuary open to the wooded gardens. Bar Mitzvah crowds view and hear the ceremony as never before. At the first Yom Kippur and New Year's service, a huge congregation was able to see and hear. At the sanctuary's dedication, the entire Briarcliff Manor community gathered to celebrate the wide open synagogue. □

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# WINDOWS TO LIFE: A WORKSHOP

By Jeff G. Smith

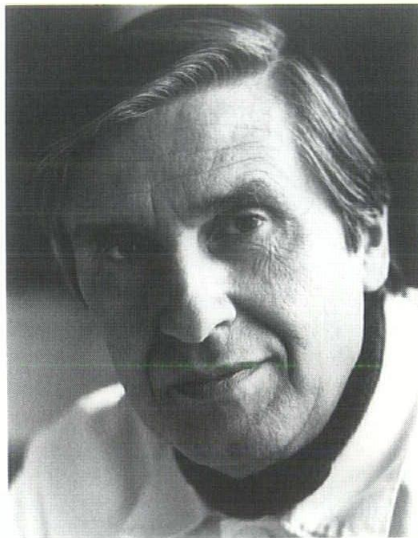


Unlike most design workshops this one had a single specific goal. Rather than simply providing artists with an opportunity to learn, we wanted to produce by collaborative effort the schematics for stained glass windows in the San Francisco AIDS/HIV Life Center. Two years ago Barbara Wichman, an art consultant, took the first steps toward realizing this novel workshop idea. Jonathan Pearlman, director, and staff member Rev. Paul Dirdak were still in the planning stages for the Center and proved to be enthusiastic clients.

After persuading Johannes Schreiter of Germany, a world renowned glass artist, to be the leader, she arranged with Gordon Huether to let us work in his studio, a converted old tannery that is now a well-lighted complex of studio, office, theater and gallery. By invitation, 16 artists from across the U.S., Canada, Germany and Japan gathered to form a design team. Our styles ran the gamut from abstract to representational, from contemporary to traditional, from commercial to liturgical, and from serious to playful.

Thus, it was that for a week in June, two years of planning became a reality. Although we wanted our preconceptions to change and even evaporate, after we introduced ourselves we became conscious of a veil of apprehension whenever the "C" word was mentioned. The "C" word, of course, was *collaboration*. How

JEFF SMITH is the principal of Architectural Stained Glass, Inc. in Dallas, Texas. His commissions range from Alaska to Hawaii and states in between, as well as Germany and Sweden. Among his many awards are two from IFRAA: His "Five Books of Moses" window for The Washington, D.C. Hebrew congregation and those of Hope Chapel, a children's health center in Plano, Texas.



Johannes Schreiter

does the ego of the individual artist subjugate itself to the group?

A cleansing exercise encompassed our first full day. The warmup was a floor papered with pages torn from old magazines—pages containing aesthetically appealing colors and shapes. We were to purge our minds of any association of pictorial content and concentrate on the colors and shapes. Then we took 9 x 12" black paper silhouettes and tossed them towards an appealing area on the floor. Some silhouettes were of a Gothic aperture and others of a more modern opening. When an interesting composition surfaced, we glued the underlapping images to the black frame. This immediate and direct approach led to incredible images. While there was a certain uniformity in the produced images, we noted there were tell-tale signs of individual sensibilities, in spite of ourselves. Though it may be difficult to visualize, the collages had a surprising level of co-

hesion and strength.

The first day we were kept in the dark about details and specifics of the project. Curiously, however, there was a 1" scale drawing taped to the wall that we correctly assumed represented our commission. This drawing depicted two windows. When scaled from the drawing, the rough opening of the upper window measured about 20' tall by 10' wide and was 5' directly above the lower window, which measured approximately 10' x 10'. The interior mullions of these windows divided them into a grid of alternate rows of squares and rectangles with see-through areas measuring 37" x 37" and 37" x 57" tall, respectively.

We noticed that Professor Schreiter had added a bordering device that followed the existing mullions, but sometimes moved from one square or rectangle into another to create larger fields within the windows. The bordering device was simply a 3 1/2"-wide band to be made of white opaque glass. I counted the fields and discovered that there were enough for everyone to have at least one. "Hmmm?!" we mused collectively. "So this is how we are going to tackle the design!"

Professor Schreiter's teaching style was becoming apparent. When discussing the subtleties of art and design, he would rely on a translator to clarify a concept. Sometimes, however, we would learn as much from a series of quickly drawn studies or a single charcoal stroke as from a lengthy explanation. We gathered for formal critiques two or three times a day. The interim periods when we worked separately were interspersed with mini-critiques at individual work tables. Necks craned and ears perked up during these critiques because we learned as much from others' successes



and failures as our own.

That evening we watched slides from the work of members, and this gave us a chance to associate faces with styles of glass approach. I noticed that it also sped up the sense of a group or family that we were beginning to have. But there were still a lot of unanswered questions sloshing around in our heads.

Day Two began with a powerful description of the battle against AIDS in the Bay area presented by Paul Dirdak. His stories of the valiant fight of those with HIV, as well as of the organizations providing assistance, was poignant and moving. Underscoring the urgency and appropriateness of this project, he told us that more San Franciscans have been lost to AIDS than the city lost in World War II, Korea and Vietnam times three. Many of the city's 260 agencies will now be effectively housed at the Life Care Center. He pointed out that most essential services for AIDS "impatients" are administered from dismal, impersonal and run-down facilities where one's basic individuality is constantly eroded—where alienation and anonymity are two of the most bitter pills that must be swallowed. His hope for our design efforts is that the windows will celebrate the lives of these individuals without trying to educate them about pain and frustration. They understand these well enough.

Director Pearlman then presented architectural drawings and a scale model of the Life Center, with a brief summary of the design competition that preceded it. We learned that the windows we were designing are located in a four-story stairwell configured to prevent them from being viewed entirely at one glance. From the exterior they will contrast with the detailing and rhythm of other windows and will make a bold contribution to the building's dialogue with passersby, whether they are on foot, trolleys or automobiles. The windows are to the west and with little solar obstruction.

We were ready to start the design, but already felt the clock and calendar breathing down our necks. I suspect that Professor Schreiter foresaw a clash of concepts and egos as we began to struggle with the art of collaboration and compromise. By dividing the two windows into subfields with the bordering device, he hoped, I am sure, to minimize border skirmishes. As a starting point we took a blank drawing of the windows and their mullions, and then each of us took turns adding design elements and/or reacting

to those already drawn. However, this did not develop to any acceptable level of resolution.

So we began to work—some with abandon, some questioning the nature of collaboration, some working within their usual design approach, some moving beyond the familiar to incorporate ideas Professor Schreiter had spoken about. Unanswered questions were pondered from workstation to workstation. How will Professor Schreiter unify these disparate elements? Once the windows are filled with our designs, will we then rework them so that they echo and acknowledge each other? These and many other questions developed into debates that gripped the entire group including Professor Schreiter. Our frustrations about the process and our uncertainty about trusting our egos to people we had just met contributed to exchanges that grew more passionate as the week progressed.

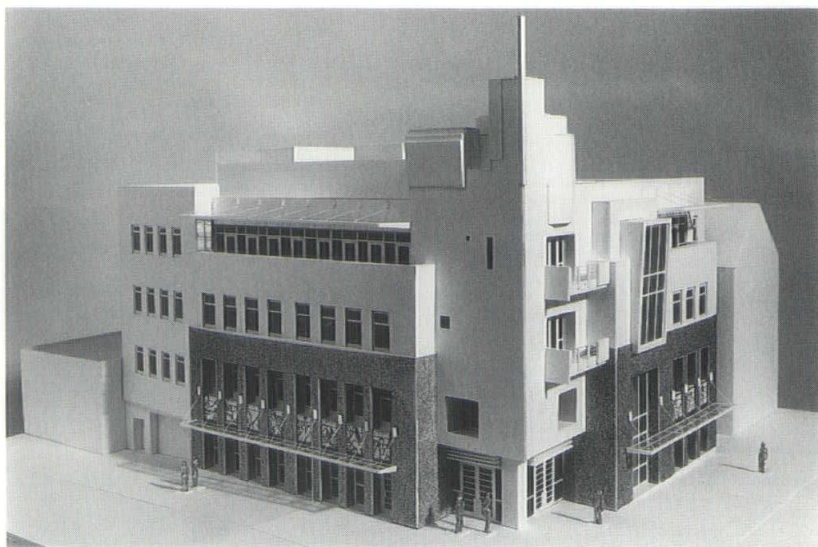
Our deadline was Saturday and the evenings stretched on until after midnight. The Professor told us that we could feel free to work in the larger fields as defined by the border, but to remember that the larger fields were limited in number. More than half the group began to focus on the larger areas. I was galloping full speed ahead wearing my old, comfortable design methodology for blinders, when my first mini-critique indicated that the Professor wasn't as excited about this direction as I was. I reined myself in and decided that if I were going to progress, I should try some of the suggestions he made. Some very interesting color compositions began to

emerge quickly and spontaneously. I liked them and so did Professor Schreiter.

At his Wednesday night lecture, Professor Schreiter gave a quick survey of his own work. The last part of the lecture concentrated on repetition of an idea or motif into the realm of ornament. His primary example of ornament was a fat, squarish "U"-shape that he has reiterated in a wide range of extremely inventive configurations. This Schreiter U provided us with a tool to unify our design. This, in the context of our limited time-frame, resulted in many of us evolving a fast-paced kind of design experimentation which allowed us to "hummingbird" from one design flower to the next very quickly.

On Thursday we all turned in our designs to Professor Schreiter. His herculean task was to combine these into the matrix of the Windows To Life fenestration, and to do so in a diplomatic manner. After a few hours, he and Mrs. Schreiter left for the evening (some of us feared for the airport). Our anticipation and concern about the final design, in combination with our exhausted minds, bodies and spirits, erupted into a heated exchange about the validity and ethics of the whole process.

On Friday morning we reconvened to see the Windows To Life collage that Professor Schreiter had composed from our individual efforts. Since several contrasting media had been used, the collage was not as visually balanced as we had expected. We reminded ourselves that we did not anticipate producing fine art, but to create a schematic that might be-



*Model of AIDS/HIV Life Care Center, San Francisco.*



come art when translated into stained glass. We discussed the possibility of using a glass palette to unify the diverse parts. Professor Schreiter suggested a single color as a common background might be the better approach.

Decorum began to unravel when some dissidents suggested we appoint four or five to make another collage and then compare it to that of Professor Schreiter. There was no consensus on this, and so we decided that we re-do the artwork within our own fields, using the suggestions the Professor had given us. We chose a medium-blue, opal antique as the background glass that each field would share. When we returned we noticed that though the design appeared more unified, the individual designs had lost their strength and presence. Frantically we recreated our original versions with some accommodations.

Our time was up. We had wanted to do so much more, but the nervous and weary consensus of the group was that, misgivings aside, the last design had enough merit to present. We remembered the hope of our "client" that the windows would provide a visual meditation and respite from struggle. We did think that

## FEATURED ARTISTS

Günther Grohs	Michael Pilla
Thomas Holzer	David & Michelle
Lyn Howe	Plachte-Zuieback
Gordon Huether	Jeff Smith
Tetsuya Kishi	Doug Soelberg
Maureen McGuire	Arthur Stern
Leone McNeil	Eric Wallen
Leslie Perlis	Daniel Winterich
Markian Olynik	

our design reflected vitality and optimism, and an elusive multiplicity that would never reveal its last surprise.

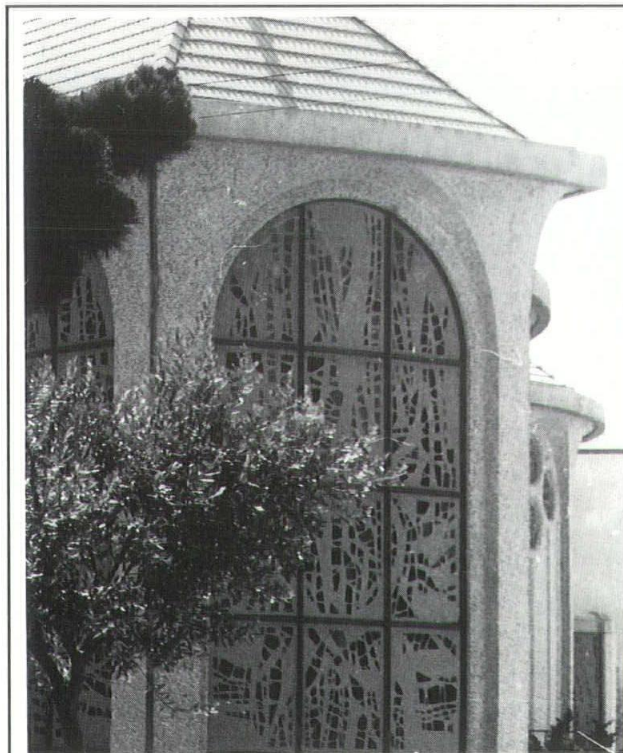
One of the most uncanny aspects of the design is the acknowledgement of the ineffable mystery of death as a gateway (the empty window section at the very top center). The incredible appropriateness and specific location of this potent nothingness was not intentional (I think). This void was fortuitously created when our disillusioned teammate withdrew the design.

Our final act as a group was to ask Daniel Winterich and David Zuieback to present our design at the impending reception and presentation. In attendance

were the Life Center Board of Directors and Staff, the architects and other friends of the Center. They did a professional job, especially considering the disparate points of view the design encompassed. Paul Dirdak then asked that the opposing view, that the design solution was invalid as architectural art, also be voiced. Gunter and Gordon Huether presented these concerns concisely and effectively.

The Board loved the design! The architects not only approved but had high praise for our efforts. Others in attendance seemed equally pleased. But we were too tired to feel elation. I think most of us who had been so closely and intensely involved in this experience were thinking, "But, if only...what if?" But isn't that what we, as artists, always mutter under our breaths at the completion of a project?

The windows will be fabricated from mouth-blown glass produced in Germany by A.C. Fischer Glashütte Bramsche GmbH, and donated by C&R Loo, Inc. Besides providing the most sophisticated glass palette possible, C&R Loo, Director of Operations Oliver Loo and Sales Manager Liz Sheedy assisted in coordinating the design team and publicizing the workshop. □



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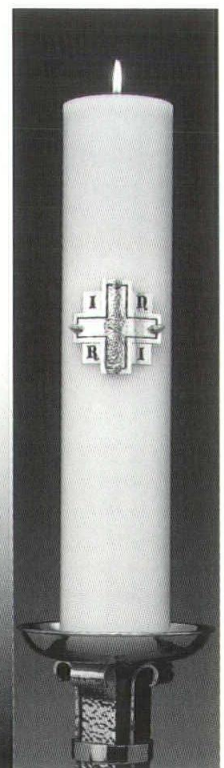
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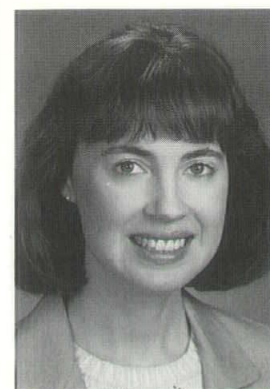


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# REVISITING A CHURCH OF RADICAL DESIGN—AND ITS VISIONARY PRIEST



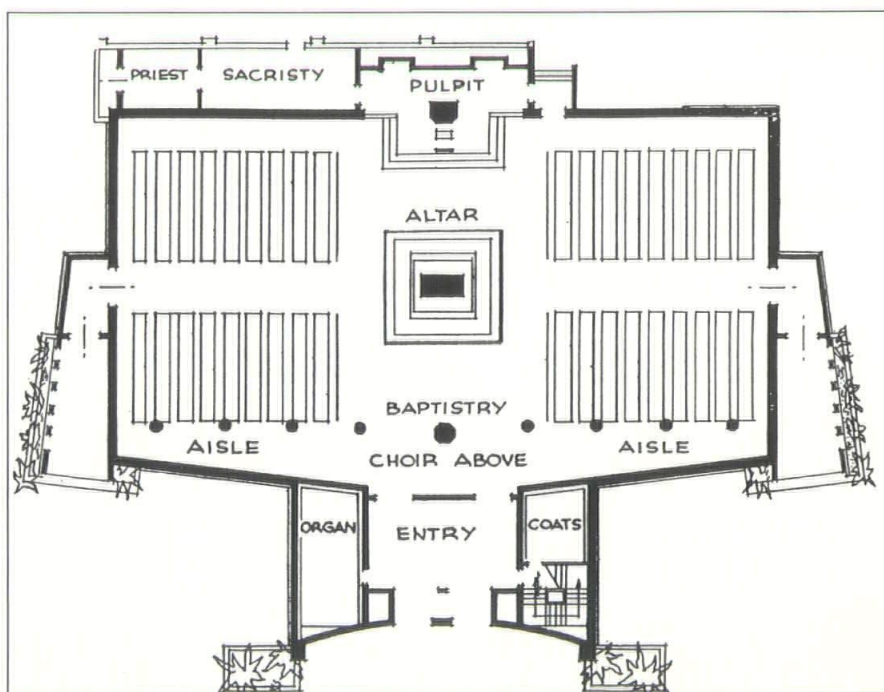
By Laura Burns Carroll

One of the most controversial post-war church buildings in the United States—the Episcopal Church of St. Clement in Alexandria, Virginia—was a bold, progressive statement in religious architecture. Following its dedication in 1948, a time when the overwhelming majority of American churches was still designed in eclectic, revival styles, St. Clement captured national attention as a radical departure from tradition. Box-like in form, with a central altar and contemporary murals, it was wholly unfenestrated, lit only by artificial means. This innovative design was the result of a close collaboration between an architect, the late Joseph H. Saunders, Jr., and a priest, the Reverend Darby Wood Betts.

When Dr. Betts was called in 1943, his congregation consisted primarily of military families and had no permanent building. A small neo-Colonial structure was commissioned as a temporary worship space, and thus began three years of research and planning toward creating what would be, in his words, "an expression of the contemporary idiom in architecture and worship."

Following his studies at Virginia Theological Seminary, Dr. Betts had visited the recently completed St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Dunn and Nagel, 1939) in St. Louis, which had made a serious impression on him.

LAURA BURNS CARROLL received degrees in art history from Stanford University and the University of Washington. The subject of her doctoral dissertation was the early Pacific Northwest churches designed by Pietro Belluschi.



Floor plan, Episcopal Church of St. Clement.

"Everything about it, except the floor-plan, was expressive of the contemporary: the wall, the shape of the building, the art," he recalls. "It said, 'we want to worship today.'"

This interest also intrigued architect Joseph Saunders, who had opened his office a few years earlier, after receiving his degree from Harvard University. The fact that Saunders had no previous experience in church design appealed to Dr. Betts, who stated from the outset, "Joe, you must not think in terms of the churches we have seen. We will work to-

gether on the design, you from the architectural angle and I from the liturgical, with the central altar as the main focus."

The idea of a central altar, derived from sepulchral buildings of early Christian times, was considered radical for an American parish church in 1948. This plan, which encouraged congregational participation in worship, evolved from the European-based liturgical movement. Dr. Betts too considered "the central activity of Christian worship" to be "around the Altar of God," and felt correspondingly that "the basic principle of



contemporary architecture should be to build around this activity."

Thus, the congregation sat on the two outer sides of a basically rectangular plan, with the middle section divided into three areas for the pulpit, altar and baptismal font. This arrangement, wrote Dr. Betts, symbolizes the congregation as "a family called into being by its Father which is God, and therefore, as a family, we sit facing one another rather than looking at the backs of each other's heads as does an audience.

To focus attention on the liturgical action, St. Clement had no windows, nor was there any decoration on the plain brick walls. The ceiling, painted black, contained tiny projection lamps to give only sufficient light for reading, and spotlights directed attention toward the chancel, altar and baptistry. "Our desire," said Dr. Betts, "was to create a sense of spaciousness and grandeur in a 400-seat church with a 20-foot ceiling. It could have been oppressive, but we achieved a sense of mystery. We look up into the darkness that reminds us of the vastness of the over-brooding presence of God as does the night sky, and all variations of light and darkness, heat and cold, wind, rain, snow and sound are shut out as much as is humanly possible."

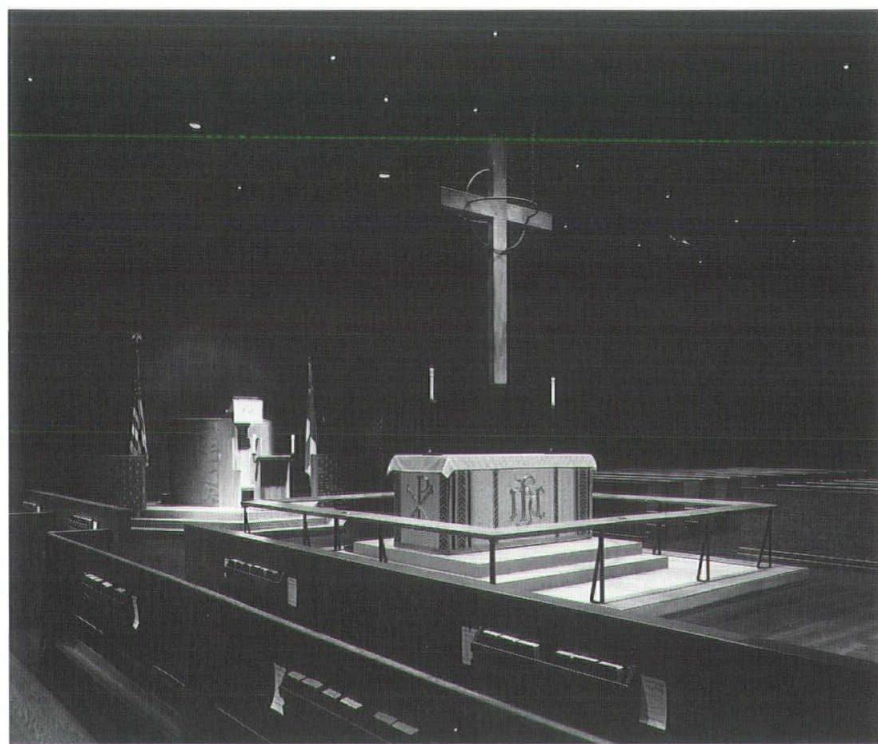
Since the exterior was a flat-roofed brick structure and did not have any traditional church features, both architect and priest shared a concern that it might not be immediately recognizable as a church. Therefore, a large white and gold mosaic cross was constructed at the entrance, and it was anticipated that further artwork would strengthen the message of the church. Though on a tight budget, Saunders contacted a colleague at Cranbrook Academy of Art, who referred him to a young painting student, Robert E. Davidson.

Dr. Betts selected the subject matter for the artwork, but Davidson was allowed to proceed with his own interpretation. The artist, who had spent the previous year (1947) studying in Mexico City, painted vivid murals reminiscent of Rivera and Orozco on the reinforced concrete walls adjacent to the cross. These murals, depicting Moses and Elijah, were executed in a new method using ethyl silicate, which unfortunately did not survive exposure to the damp climate. Another mural, portraying the Last Judgment, was done in true fresco over the entrance. Considering the loss of the Old Testament murals to be "a tragedy," Dr. Betts



Photos by Charles Bappte

*Saint Clement before the Robert Davidson murals were destroyed. Left, The Law (Moses); right, The Prophets (Elijah); center, Christ in Judgment.*



*The pulpit before the angled steps were rebuilt in one straight line and the wooden pulpit replaced by the wrought iron one.*

points out that "they were great propaganda, and religious art must have that connotation."

The design of St. Clement encountered much resistance. Dr. Betts is certain that congregational approval was gained only because so many military families did

not intend to reside permanently in the area. Some parishioners left in protest. There was a problem in convincing the diocesan bishop and even the faculty at nearby Virginia Theological Seminary was initially skeptical, calling the church "St. Clement in the Dark." However, Dr.



Betts pursued his reasoning and wrote his Master of Sacred Theology on the building in 1950.

St. Clement appeared in numerous architectural, religious and popular publications, and suddenly Dr. Betts became a spokesperson for the cause of contemporary architecture. In 1950, he appeared with a scale model of the church on a nationally televised program, "We, the People," and he believes that this exposure "opened a lot of eyes, just as contemporary architecture was beginning to make a dent." Other work was widely published including the Saarinen's First Tabernacle Church in Columbus, Indiana (1942), and Christ Church Lutheran, Minneapolis (1949); Pietro Belluschi's First Presbyterian, Cottage Grove, Oregon (1951); and Mies van der Rohe's chapel at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago (1952).

When Dr. Betts became assistant chaplain at Columbia University in 1950, he also assumed a post as adjunct professor of architecture for Protestant churches. During this time, he edited and co-authored a book for Seabury Press, *Ar-*

***"Our desire was to create a sense of spaciousness and grandeur in a 400-seat church with a 20-foot ceiling. It could have been oppressive, but we achieved a sense of mystery."***

*chitecture and the Church*, in which he stated, "the leadership of the Church has rediscovered the necessity of having its architecture as well as its sermons, music, liturgy, and parochial organizations address the contemporary questions of our time." Later in the decade, he opposed the completion in Gothic style of the Ca-

thedral of St. John the Divine, New York City, and participated in judging the competition which selected Paul Rudolph to finish the crossing in a contemporary manner. "The Church must be of the world as well as in it, and it has to speak the language of the world," he commented.

Today, at 81, Dr. Betts still advocates the same principles he has held for the last 50 years: "Speak the language of the day and provide the setting for the worship of the day." Dr. Betts was given an opportunity to build a church in the 1980s, a non-denominational chapel for the Spring Lake Village community in Santa Rosa where he now resides. The Chapel of the Resurrection, designed by architect Varoujan Hailozian, is built around a central altar, and has virtually no windows except a skylight, recalling St. Clement in its architectural focus.

During this past year, St. Clement itself has been renovated to project "an updated, lighter appearance for the 1990s," according to Building Committee Chair Bill Fisher. It remains a testimony to the vision of the first priest. □

## ASTOR THEATER CONVERTED TO IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHAPEL



Constructed originally as a legitimate theater, the Astor eventually became a movie theater. Thirty years ago it was purchased as an annex by the church of St. Joseph of the Palisades, West New York, N.J. Internal changes were made to permit religious services, but the dome "projection hallow" in the ceiling has been a constant source of audio distortion.

The annex of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, North Bergen, N.J. contains no windows because the installation cost was prohibitive. The original movie theater organ is used during services.

Recently, major renovations like a new concrete floor and wooden pews were completed, but the audio problems continued. Joe Jorgenson of Soundshine Inc. surveyed the site and

suggested a single Soundsphere loudspeaker with new microphones and electronics.

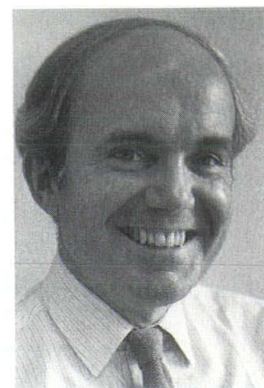
"The success of the Soundsphere #2212-1 in the main church gave us the thought that perhaps we could reproduce the same success at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Annex. This has been achieved and the system has never been better," stated Monsignor Peter A. Cheplic. He has told the installer, Joe Jorgenson of Soundshine Inc. that the installation at the Annex is "most successful."

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# TADAO ANDO'S LOTUS TEMPLE ON THE ISLAND OF AWAJU

By Alfredo De Vido



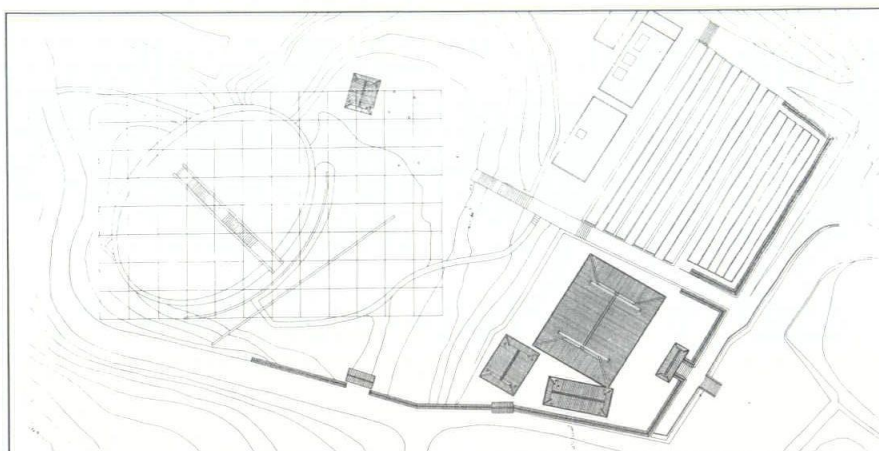
The lotus has long been an important Buddhist symbol. Its beauty signifies the purified soul rising above the world's problems which are evoked by the water in which the lotus grows.

Tadao Ando's new Buddhist temple places the temple sanctuary below an elliptical lotus pool. Since the act of ascent, rather than descent, is normally associated with spirituality, this arrangement is unusual. By doing it this way, however, Ando heightens the climax of arrival at the sanctum when the visitor finally reaches it via the descent within a sea of lotuses.

The sequence of space leading to the temple and the design of the space is masterful. It is another successful example of this architect's ability to use a reduced palette of materials and geometries to achieve a strong visual impact. The approach to the pool suggests a pilgrimage. From the existing temple complex below the hill, a path of white sand winds up and terminates at a rectangular opening with a wall 130 feet long and 8 feet high. As in all of Ando's concrete work, this wall features flawless surfaces which are achieved through the careful fitting of hardwood plywood formwork.

After entering the opening in this wall, one confronts another wall curving away to the left and right. A gravel path directs

ALFREDO DE VIDO, FAIA, is a New York architect whose work has garnered many design awards over the years, including a national AIA Honor Award and two New York City Club Bard Awards. De Vido spent three years in Japan and has a special interest in Japanese architecture. He served on IFRAA's 1991 Architectural Awards jury and his Community Church in Astoria, Illinois, was featured in the fall 1987 Faith & Form.



Site plan, Water Temple.

## WATER TEMPLE

Tadao Ando Architect & Associates

Function: Buddhist Temple

Location: Awaju-shima Island, Hyogo, Japan

Design: Tadao Ando

Term of planning: November 1989-December 1990

Term of construction work: December 1990-September 1991

Structure: Rigid frame reinforced concrete; steel frame and reinforced concrete

Site area: 34,000 s.f.

Building area: 9,976 s.f.

Total floor area: 4,837 s.f.

one to the right, from which there is a glimpse of the sea. Traveling 133 feet along this curved wall, which is 10 feet high, a turn takes one further uphill, finally arriving at a level from where there is a view of surrounding farmland. Now,

one is on axis with the stair directly ahead leading down into the pool.

After descending below the pool level, one is further led along a tall hall defined by the circular sanctuary formed by Japanese cypress boards, painted vermillion. Within and behind the shrine, there is the unexpected discovery of natural light admitted through windows in the exposed support wall.

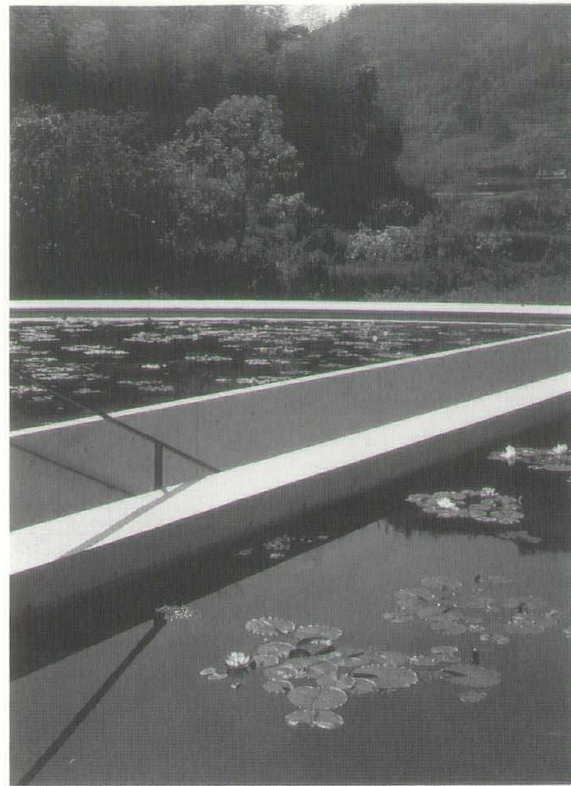
A traditional Buddhist shrine provides a free-standing, contrasting image, powerfully backlit by the exterior glazing. The ornateness of the shrine is in sharp contrast to the surrounding simplicity.

In the Lotus Temple complex, Ando has composed simply shaped spaces, well lit and sequenced. His spaces refer to nature in its varied forms and substances, and with its changing light. At the end of the day, light enters the underground hall of the temple, intensifies the traditional red coloration, casts dramatic shadows from the underground pillars and heightens the spiritual atmosphere of the building.





Water Temple. Tado Ando Architect & Associates.



Photos by Hiroshi Ueda

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# ONE ARTIST CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Betty H. Meyer



All of us roam the world in our imaginations and take great art as a part of it for granted, but eventually it is inevitable that we return to our local environments that are often devoid of significant art.

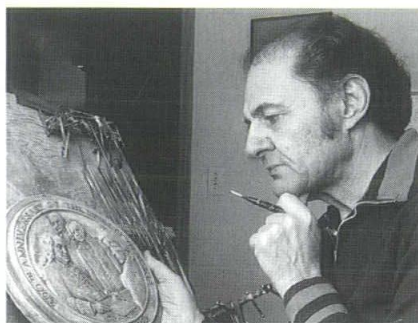
Recently I made an appointment to meet a sculptor, Mico Kaufman, who was commissioned to create a memorial to the parents of Elsie Howell, a member of the United Methodist Church and a lifelong resident of Tewksbury, Massachusetts. I arrived at the studio mid-morning and was invited to see some of the artist's work there before being taken on a tour to see his public pieces in the town.

Mico Kaufman was born in Romania where he later suffered three years in a concentration camp, and then was helped to study in Florence and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. He came to the U.S. in 1951 at the age of 27 and became a citizen in 1956.

One of the first pieces I saw in his studio was one of three cast bronze figures—Protestant, Catholic and Jew, entitled "Ecumenism." The figures were barely suggested as if the forms they were assuming are yet in the future but are nevertheless related to one another.

Along one wall was an impressive line of cast medals designed for the Judaic Heritage Society. In fact, the artist has achieved outstanding recognition for his official inaugural medals for every President since Gerald Ford. In 1992 the American Numismatic Society gave him an award that included these words: "For his great ability to humanize the official and to universalize the personal." It was Mico Kaufman's medal that memorialized the martyrdom of the 11 Olympian athletes representing the state of Israel.

But it was on the tour that I began to feel the impact this artist has made not



Mico Kaufman, sculptor.

only on the national scene, but in the small town where he has lived since he came to the United States.

On the grounds of Tewksbury's City Hall is a large cast sculpture of two female figures with the word WATER engraved on the base. It takes only an instant to realize that you are looking at Helen Keller at the moment she spells out the word WATER in Annie Sullivan's hand. Almost every school child and adult has seen the play or read the biography of Helen Keller and remember what a triumph this was for pupil and teacher. The figures are so sensitively conceived, the emotions on their faces so telling, that the observer feels that he has participated in the actual historical moment. It was to an almshouse in Tewksbury that Helen Keller was brought before she entered the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston.

Not too many yards away is an inverted triangular monument that holds the names of Tewksbury's World War II veterans. It has replaced an earlier billboard whose plastic ribbons often fell away from the names. Mico insisted on replacing this because, he said, "Were it not for them I couldn't be here."

Several blocks away we stopped to

look at a whimsical sculpture next to the town's fire house. It is called "Muster" and is, in fact, a fountain. The hose of the firemen spirals upward into the air in serpentine fashion. Near the top a little fire-fighter hangs on despite the water gushing up and four of his buddies rushing around in various poses around the base. It is a piece that makes one happy to look at it.

The next figure we saw stands on a 30-ton rock on a site that has been landscaped into a small park and that is cared for by admiring neighbors. The figure is that of an indigenous Wamesit indian standing tall and strong with his fishing spear in hand. At the dedication of this piece 60 Wamesit indians came with their drums and dances and return every year to celebrate their faith.

Finally, on the lawn in front of the Methodist Church I saw the sculpture I had read about and wanted to see. This sculpture announces the Gospel this church invites one in to hear, better than any signboard. The artist has sculpted four children sitting spread-eagled with the soles of their feet touching and their arms spread as if to embrace each other. One sees an Indian child, a Black, a White and an Asian, and the expressions on their faces are those of happy, carefree children enjoying each other. Elsie Howell, who gave the piece in memory of her parents, talked with us about how pleased she is with the response of the community. People stop their cars to come and look. Children sit next to the figures as if to join the circle; one child went from one figure to the other, kissing them all. The church secretary has told her that strangers call to ask the name of the artist.

On the drive home I asked myself the question: How did this happen? Why is it





"Ecumenism."



The Rev. Jerry O. Cook at the dedication of Mico Kaufman's sculpture at the United Methodist Church in Tewksbury, Mass.

Photo: Myrna Evans



"Water" (Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller).

that this little town is the home of five important pieces of public art? Are the people who sit on its town boards or who sit in its church pews any different than people in small towns everywhere? I don't think so. I am more likely to believe it is the spirit of the artist and his determination to express his belief in justice and equality in all of his work. You recognize that he is a talented artist, but any conversation with him reveals that his sensitivity to the human condition is primary. He is an artist who has made a difference not only in Europe where he has exhibited widely, or in large cities of the U.S. where he is in many collections but in his local community where he lives and moves and has his being. □



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# SADHUBELLA ASHRAM: A MODERN CLASSIC

By Peter Engel



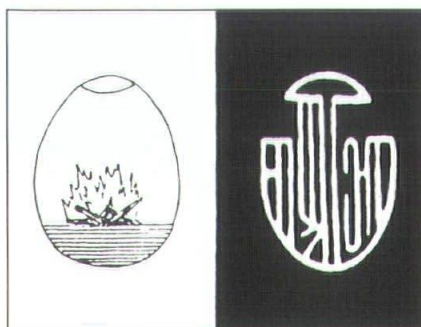
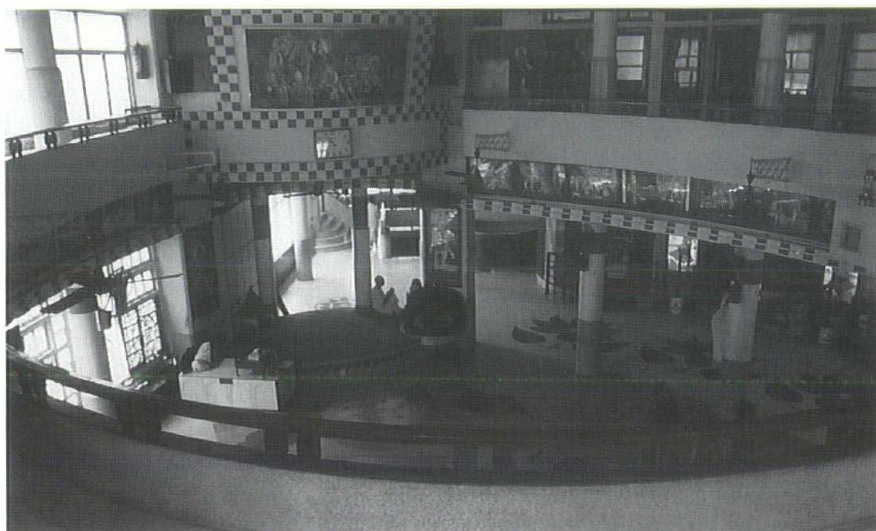
In the chaos of most cities it is hard to find a peaceful sanctuary. In an Indian city it is next to impossible. But a brilliantly designed building in the heart of Bombay does just that, providing a place of seclusion and calm even as it butts up against the clatter and mayhem of the Indian street.

Sadhubella Ashram is not a typical example of vernacular architecture. It exemplifies an ancient Indian building-type—the ashram—but it is not composed of mud, bamboo or thatch like the buildings that most Indians make for themselves. It was built in 1957 out of concrete, steel and glass, but it is as quintessentially Hindu as any classical temple, and as emblematic of Modernism as any building by Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright. Because it is so precisely attuned to its climate, its culture and urban context, it could not have been built anywhere else in the world.

## An Ancient Building Type

An ashram is a centuries-old building type: a place where the followers of a particular Hindu sect gather to practice their religion. Like other ashrams, Sadhubella provides a secluded place to meditate, pray, seek the advice of a religious leader, or discuss matters of importance to the group. Visitors come from all corners of the country (now, the world; Sadhubella has branches in Texas and New York). They are housed and fed, usually for free, and stay for days, weeks or months. Both ordinary followers and *sadhus*, itinerant

PETER ENGEL, a writer and architectural designer in Oakland, California, specializes in low-cost housing and socially responsible architecture. He currently is completing a book on Indian vernacular architecture and designing an ashram in Sri Lanka.



The sacred symbol of Sadhubella Ashram is an egg containing fire and water.

holy men, are welcome. Other Sadhubella ashrams are located throughout India, enabling *sadhus* to engage in sacred pilgrimages for years or decades. In addition to serving members of its own group, the ashram provides education and medical services to the community.

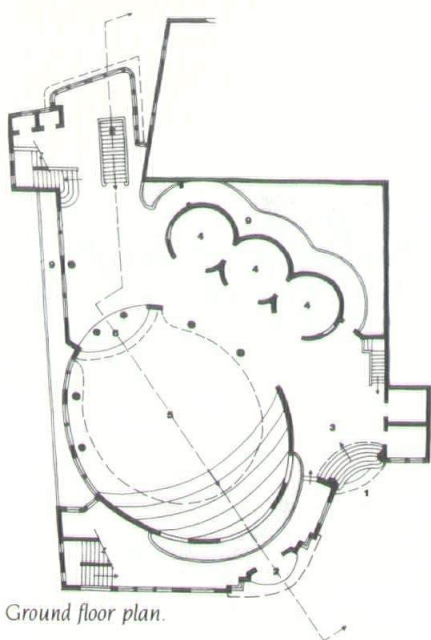
An unusual feature of this sect is its sacred symbol of an egg containing fire and water. The fire is emblematic of the

perpetual flame, or "Dhooni," lit by the founder of the sect, Swami Bankhandiji, on the site almost 200 years ago. He had cured the son of a Parsi philanthropist of a previously incurable disease and in gratitude, the father donated land for the founding of an ashram to be called Sadhubella, "the time for prayer." In 1818, Swami Bankhandiji commemorated the opening by lighting a flame with his yogic powers.

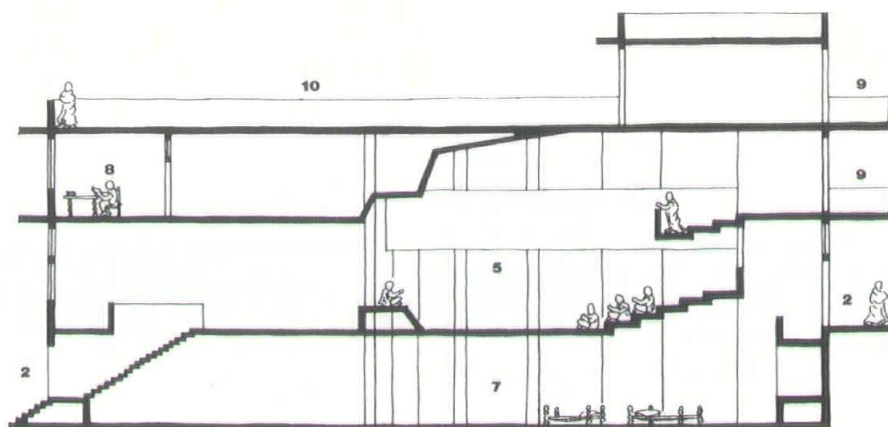
## A Symbol Made Visible

Today, the flame burns still. And through the genius of the building's designer, Bombay architect K.T. Tinani, the original sacred symbol has gained further meaning with the creation of the huge, enveloping, womb-like space that is the centerpiece of the ashram. Functioning as a prayer hall, a meeting room, or a place for private meditation, the room accommodates both huge crowds and solitary visitors. In contrast to the dark, smoke-filled interior of a traditional Hindu temple





Ground floor plan.



Section facing northwest.

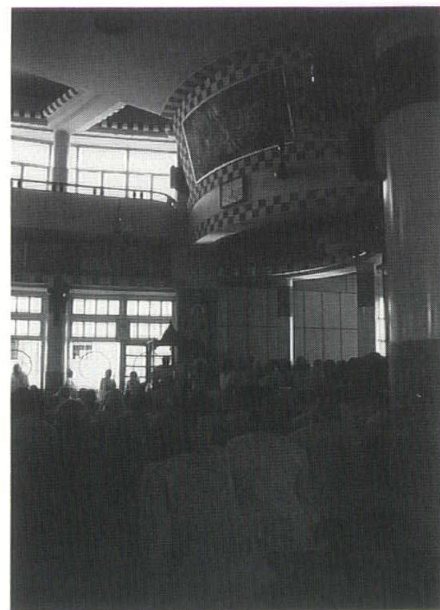
Key (for floor plan): (1) public entry, (2) private entry, (3) entry foyer with bust of founder, (4) shrine, (5) main prayer hall, (6) dais, (7) communal sleeping quarters, (8) office, (9) balcony, (10) roof deck.



The entrance, formed by a short flight of steps and an overhead plane, beckons the faithful into the dark interior.



On the second floor, three round offices are stacked atop the circular shrines, while other rectangular offices are located further down the corridor. Clerestory windows permit natural light to penetrate into the curved hallway and enhance the feeling of openness throughout the building.



The prayer hall with a meeting in progress, seen from ground level.

constructed of heavy masonry, Sadhubella's light, column-borne concrete frame surrounds its visitors with openness and bathes them in natural light. The extraordinary ambiguity of this space—a simple diagram of an egg, yet different on all sides—gives the building richness and meaning.

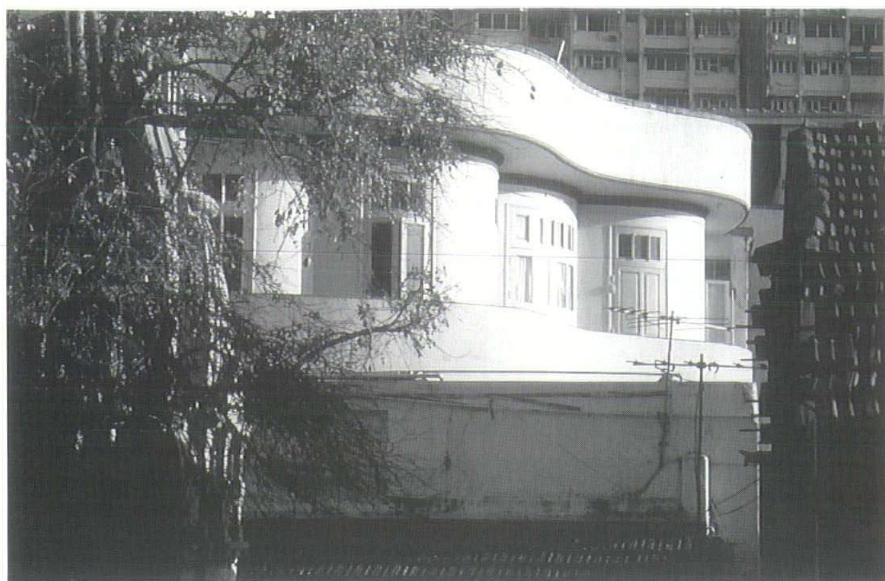
Seen in photographs, Sadhubella Ashram may strike readers first for its profusion of decoration and detail: the odd

checkerboard patterning, the cheap ceramic tile, the tacked-on paintings of scenes from Hindu epics, the carelessly strewn cords of electric fans. In truth, however, it is the space and light that matter most, the rich natural light that passes through clear casement windows, frosted clerestories, and openings in the floor to reach rooms below. No part of the building fails to receive natural light, including the basement, which functions

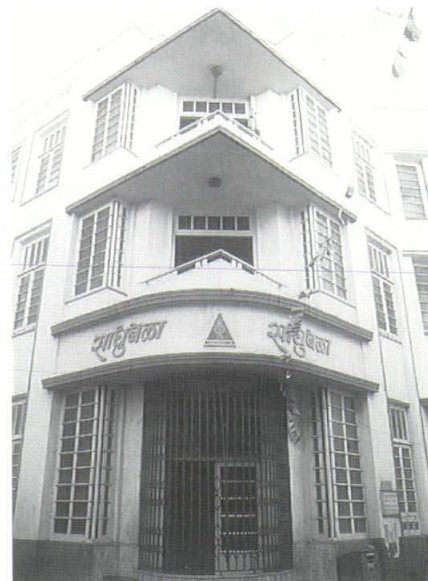
as a dormitory for visiting *sadhus*. In the end, the clutter melts into the noisy backdrop of Indian life, and the sense of spiritual exaltation remains.

Many Western architects have visited India and been enthralled by its architecture, from the great stone temples and stepwells to the houses of mud and thatch, only to return home and reflect, sadly, that we don't build like that anymore. Sadhubella Ashram proves them





*This highly articulated corner on the northeastern facade lies on the prayer hall's main axis, at the opposite end of the dais.*



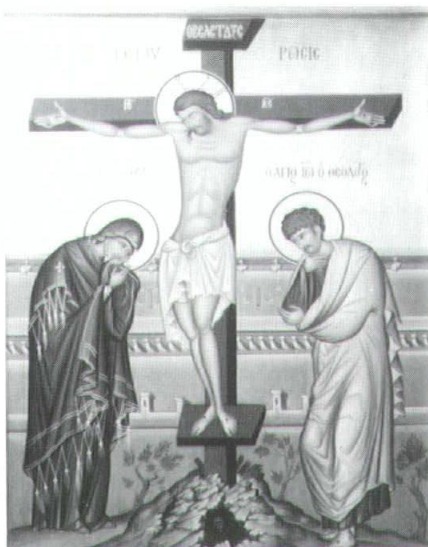
*The curved exterior wall provides a continuous running balcony for the three offices and gives solidity and mass to the northwestern side.*

wrong. Vernacular architecture has never been static or immutable. Local styles, customs and techniques, like language, continually change.

Over decades or centuries, new ideas and forms are introduced by visitors or invaders, and enterprising artisans inno-

vate and expand upon local traditions. In India, a dozen civilizations and empires have arisen, dispersed and vanished over 3,000 years of recorded history. Motifs imposed by the Mauryans and the Gup-tas, the Mofhuls and the British have long ago been absorbed into the designs

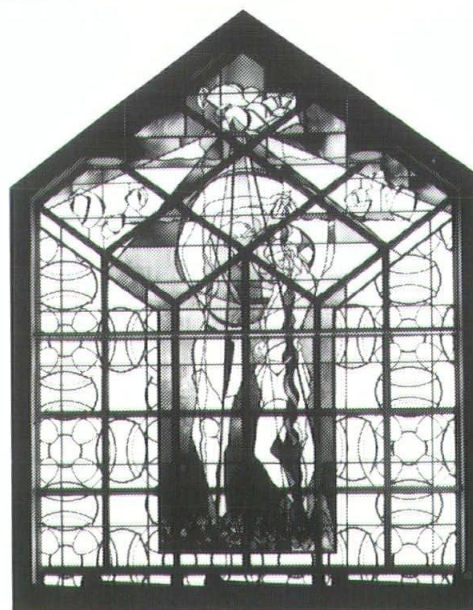
of ordinary people. Acknowledging our own time in history, Sadhubella Ashram uses the language of Art Deco and Modernism to express ancient Hindu principles. And before we know it, a new vernacular will be rising among us that we cannot even imagine. □



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# DECISIONS, DECISIONS

By Betty H. Meyer

I think we all feel a certain sense of satisfaction when we see an eyesore building turned into one that gives not only visual pleasure, but a sense of pride in the profession. This is the story of the Iranian Jewish Society's synagogue in Great Neck, Long Island. The local newspaper headline read *Miracle on Steamboat Road* and the *New York Times* named it one of the best examples of adaptive re-use of a structure.

But the decision had to be made. The site in a residential neighborhood once housed four indoor tennis courts, but the lot had been abandoned and the blue metal building was surrounded by debris and weeds. Residents were impatient with this, but they wanted assurance that any new structure would be appropriate for their neighborhood.

Walter E. Blum, the architect, understood that opposition to a new use of an old building is likely to be less intense than new construction. He told them, "Only the use is being changed and...this is what we're going to do to make appearances better." But he saw a zoning problem too that made delays probable.

The site is partially within the business as well as the residential zone, and this convinced him more than ever that rather than demolish the old building it would be wise to rework the existing secure

steel structure. He was successful in helping the congregation to make this decision; the vote was taken and preliminary designs were submitted. Even so, it was six long years before the fruits of the decision would overcome all hurdles and make dedication possible.

"This congregation needed to be integrated into the community," Blum comments, "but they also needed to retain their identity. I felt they had made the right decision and I had to make mine. We designed a synagogue that was not a transplant of an Iranian temple, but a spiritual structure that grew out of the community and at the same time retained Iranian-Jewish themes and symbols. A determination to accomplish this influenced many of our subsequent smaller decisions."

The sanctuary is turned to a 45-degree angle to face the traditional East. The exterior color is a buff sand, evolved from roots in Iran. The open design is like ancient synagogues that had few doors, and provides for hearing the worship liturgy from anywhere in the building.

The angled walls and partitions completely disguise the rectangular plan of the former tennis courts. By designing a vestibule with a low ceiling, the height of the sanctuary is even more dramatic. The interior metal supporting beams are covered with dry wall so they too become a

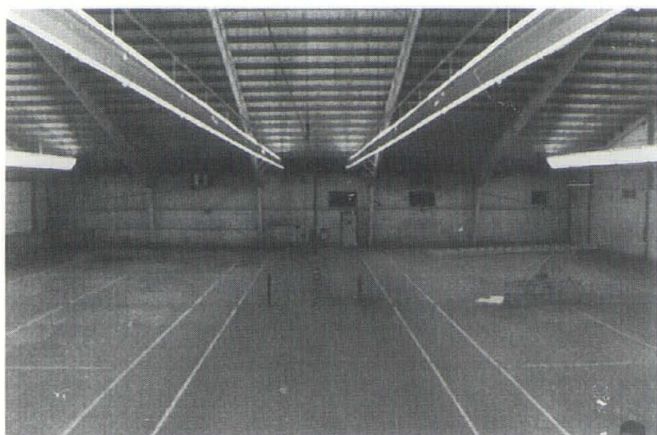


Photo: Rebecca Cooney

Walter Blum in front of Iranian Jewish Synagogue, Great Neck, Long Island, N.Y.

sculptural accent. In addition to adhering two inches of expanded polystyrene insulation board to the exterior, various foam shapes were fabricated to depict a menorah and to establish a decorative rhythm in the building.

Halfway through the design process, Evan Blum (Walter's son), who is a dealer in architectural artifacts, learned that a temple in New Jersey was to be converted into condominiums and that it had unusually fine stained glass windows. This added exciting possibilities and they



Original building-indoor tennis court facility.



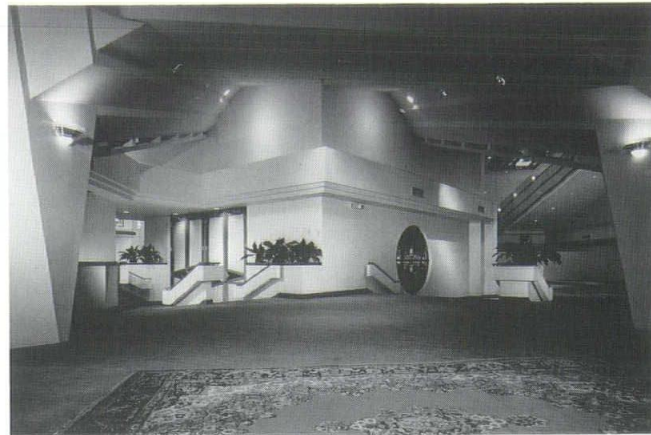
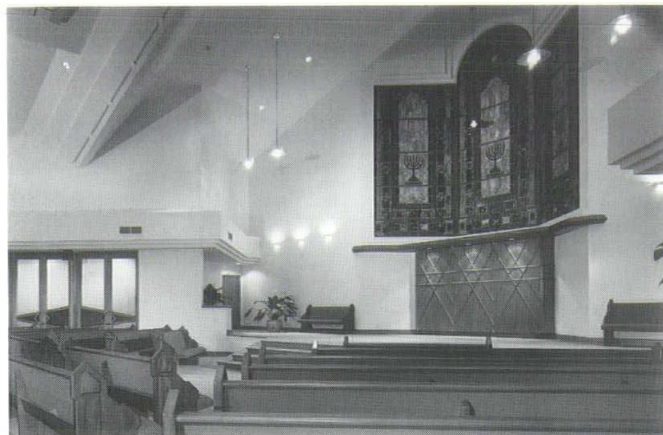


were purchased; photographed before they were dismantled; and given into the hands of restorers, who also re-worked certain patterns to adjust to Blum's drawings.

The first high holy day in the new temple was celebrated on Rosh Hashanah,

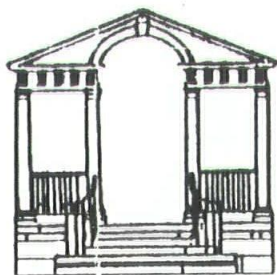
1992. The 14,000 square foot building includes a sanctuary, a smaller chapel, a classroom, a 3,500 sq. ft. social hall and several offices. Less than a year later the congregation asked the architect to prepare plans for a zoning application for expansion.

The community has expressed in many ways its appreciation of this congregation's decision to re-adapt the old tennis structure. The congregation in turn has expressed appreciation to Walter Blum whose 14 architectural awards attest to his intelligent decisions. □



*Iranian Jewish Society Synagogue.*

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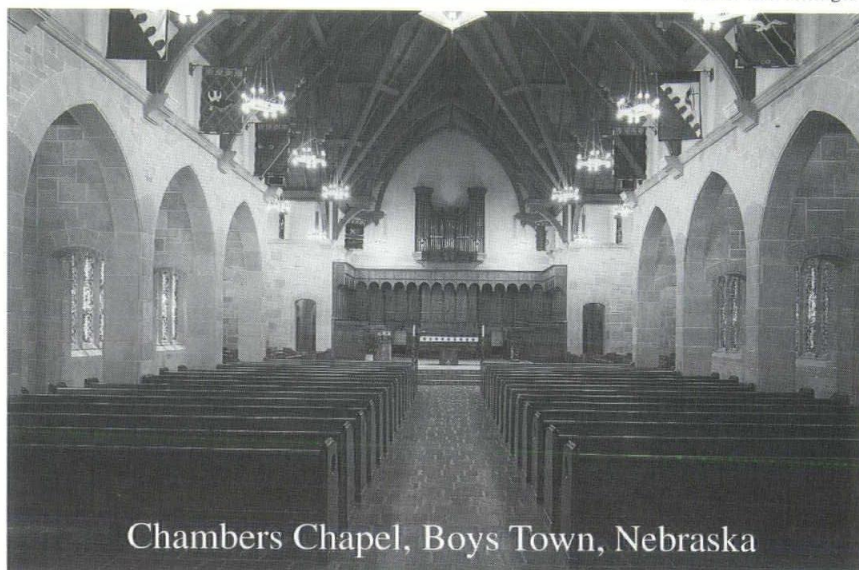
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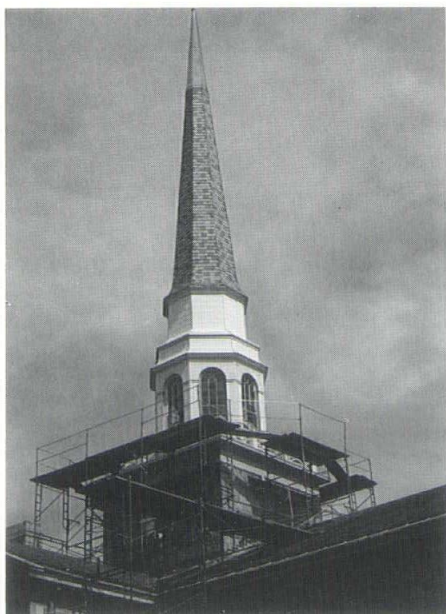
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Fax: 214-644-2133

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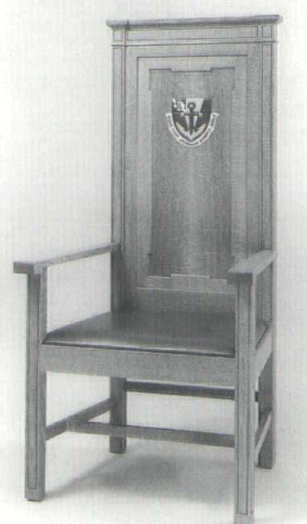
#### INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Agrell & Thorpe Ltd.	2
Century Guild	31
C.M. Almy & Son, Inc.	12
Daprato Rigali, Inc.	17
Jean Jacques Duval	12
Frankoski Construction Co.	24
The Ikon Studio	22
Ianet Janjigeon ("Resurrection")	19
R.A. Manning Company	4
Maureen McGuire Stained Glass	Postcard
New Holland Church Furniture	5
Overholtzer Church Furniture	26
Rogers Roofing Co., Inc.	27
Rohlf's Stained Glass	22
Sauder	2
Schickel	2
SoundSphere	15

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# Calendar of Events

1995

February 26-28

## Restoration 95

Boston, MA, Hynes Convention Center

Theme: "Affordable Preservation—Practical Strategies for the '90s." Largest trade event in the world.

March 19-22

## Form/Reform Conference

San Diego, CA

The National Conference on Environment and Art for Catholic Worship

Contact: Conference Services, Loretta Reif, PO Box 5226, Rockford, IL 61125,

(815) 399-2140

April 5-9

## Society of Architectural Historians Annual Meeting

Seattle, WA

Contact: SAH, 1232 Pine St., Philadelphia, PA 19107

May 4

## Significant Spiritual Spaces Tour

Atlanta, GA

In conjunction with National AIA Conference

July 29

## Religion and the Spiritual Arts Tour

In conjunction with the Visual Arts and Religious Communities Conference,

July 31-August 4

Contact: Jean Barber, American Institute of Architects, (202) 626-7305

October 14

## Theology, Liturgy and Music Tour and Conference

Dallas, TX

Sponsored by IFRAA. Details to be announced.



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