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Managing Editor/

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Douglas Hoffman, AIA
Faith & Form Magazine
1300 East Ninth St., Suite 105
Cleveland, OH 44114
216-861-5589
FAX: 216-623-3710
<http://www.faithnform.com>
email: dhoffman@faithnform.com

Editor-in-Chief

Michael J. Crosbie, Ph.D., RA
Steven Winter Associates, Inc.
50 Washington St.
Norwalk, CT 06854
203-857-0200
FAX: 203-852-0741
email: mcrosbie@faithnform.com

Editor Emeritus

Betty H. Meyer
25 Maple St.
Auburndale, MA 02466
617-965-3018
FAX: 617-965-7591

Design, Production

James Cotton
Dave Kuhar
The Media Cellar
2720 Glenbury Ln.
Willoughby, OH 44094
440-918-1301
FAX: 440-918-1302
<http://www.mediacellular.com>
email:
faithandform@mediacellular.com

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On the cover: A classic New England church, Washington Congregational Church of 1840, takes its place with an 1883 schoolhouse and the town hall of 1787, all in Washington, New Hampshire, photographed by Steve Rosenthal in 2002.



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EDITOR'S PAGE

By Michael J. Crosbie



All of us—architects, artists, designers, clergy, and people of faith—are engaged in the creation and nurturing of sacred places. But how often do we ask the question: How is sacred space created? Is it even possible for us to create it?

Questions such as these have hung in the air over the site of the destroyed World Trade Center, across the barren field that is the crash site of Flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, even in the busyness of the reconstruction of the damaged Pentagon building. Having been to all three sites, I can report that each one has a sense of the sacred. But how is such a quality created?


A recent broadcast of "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," a public television program, considered this very notion. In New York, the footprints of the twin towers are now considered the essence of their sacredness. People have reacted strongly that these two squares should not be built upon. Monica Iken, whose husband lost his life in the attack on the Trade Center, says that "the most important thing for myself is to be able to stand on Tower Two's footprint, just to be able to stand where my husband once stood and honor his last day here."

Joan Branham, who teaches art history at Providence College, offers that sacred space is not a "static, unchanging concept." It evolves, she says, depending on the different culture, time, and place. One criterion is that it is the site of a divine manifestation in our everyday world. Something outside of our normal realm of experience happened there, or continues to occur (such as the sighting of a saint or what believers deem to be a miraculous event). Boston University's Stephen Prothero defines a sacred place as "a spot where you behave differently," again, stepping out of the flow of everyday life.

Two other aspects of sacred places mentioned in the television program include the site of death, and the site of pilgrimage. Cemeteries in every faith tradition are considered "sacred" but not in the same way as the very place were people lost their lives. St. Peter's Basilica is built on the spot, it is believed, where St. Peter was crucified. Numerous shrines and churches have been constructed there, one upon the other—a cumulative pile of sacred places. The Nazi death camps in Europe are considered sacred in the same way.

Prothero notes that Gettysburg is sacred both as a site of human sacrifice and as the resting place for those who, as Lincoln said in his Address, "gave the last full measure of devotion." And it was Lincoln, in that same speech, who may have provided an answer to our question, when he said, "...we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground." Gettysburg is sacred because of the people who died there, and what they died for.

Pilgrims make a place sacred not only through their presence at the culmination of a journey, but also through the objects they leave behind: notes, photos, flowers, mementos. Each of the sites of the September 11 attacks accumulated layers of these offerings. They lend a patina of sacredness. Ultimately, it is the human interaction with places—through pilgrimage, memory, and touch—that makes the religious art and architecture that we create truly sacred.

In this issue we visit places, on both coasts and in the Midwest, that reveal their sacredness through time: the pristine images of New England churches, the memory of a childhood temple in Los Angeles, an homage to the values of monastic life in Minnesota. We also examine the creation of art in sacred space that captures meaning and lends light, so that our spirits, too, may be enlightened. 

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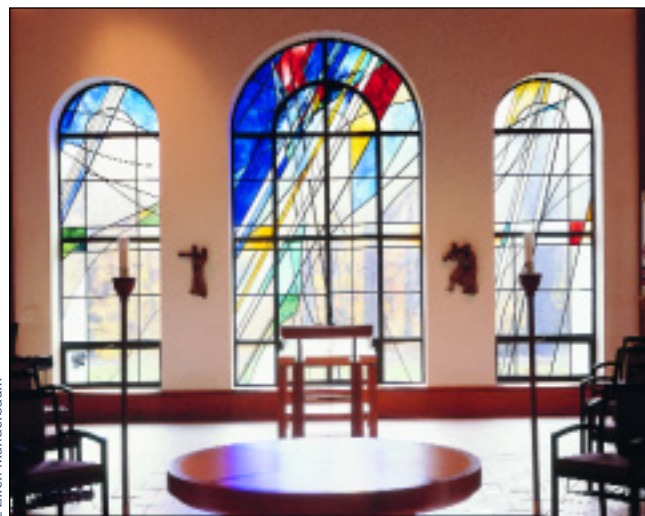
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WORKING WITH A STAINED GLASS ARTIST

By Ellen Mandelbaum



Stained Glass has had varied fates since its brilliant origin a thousand years ago in the Middle Ages. Today, a rich feast of stained glass is available. It has burgeoned: New techniques are being explored while the medieval technique of leaded glass is still used. Design ranges from historic to minimalist. Stained glass now uses materials and aesthetics developed from many sources. Glass that recalls Tiffany and LaFarge's opalescent material is now available. The most treasured mouth-blown antique glass comes from Germany, France, and the U.S. Diachronic glass developed from the space program.



c Ellen Mandelbaum

Transparency of Adath Jeshurun Synagogue's 10 chapel windows.

In the 1980s large studios and their artists offered many styles, which often followed historic precedent. The secrecy that had characterized the field of stained glass began to dissolve as artists such as those in the Glass Painting Society In New York passed on information to aid the field. In 1980 Albinus Elskus wrote the seminal *The Art Of Painting On Glass*. With information like this a newcomer could now work independently.

In the 1970s offbeat glass art came out of a hippy culture on the West Coast. Often these were autonomous panels, not part of architecture. Also influential were German artists such as Ludwig Schaffrath, Johannes Schreiter, and Jochem Poensgen, who developed powerful abstract styles intentionally different from prewar German art for the many churches built or rebuilt after the war.

ELLEN MANDELBAUM is an artist who works in stained glass, with a studio in Long Island City, New York. She can be reached at: ellen@emglassart.com.

Young artists met at conferences such as Portcon and passed the word along that it was possible to function as independent artists: to contract for the job and subcontract the fabrication work to studios, or make it themselves. The studios continue to serve a valuable function but artists now have many options and the field is more open.

I am writing here from my experience as an independent commissioned artist. I cannot speak for everyone who works in stained glass, but the following description gives a basic idea of how stained glass is made and suggests productive ways for architect to work with artists.

Stained Glass Appreciation

For architects and building clients working with stained glass, it helps to build an appreciation for the medium. The process of seeing stained glass clearly is time consuming. The most important thing to do is to see the art. Go to museums and sacred buildings and take time looking. As in all art, look for elements of composition; design: symmetrical and asymmetrical; texture: rough and smooth; size of units; color; character of line; the intention of meaning; all the elements of art.

We see things through the stimulation of the optic nerves in the eye by light, either directly from its source or indirectly by reflection from other objects. Illuminated bodies not only reflect light but sometimes also transmit it. Transparent objects such as stained glass allow light to pass through them. We see paintings in a museum and most objects in everyday life in reflected light. We see stained glass in transmitted light. Many glass artists think of themselves as "working with light." Beyond other art the glass glows and the bright colors make an immediate impact, but it may take time to overcome this immediate effect and to see the finer points of stained glass. To appreciate glass art, spend time looking at its intricate details. It helps to notice in the glass the use of the lead line; different widths of lead line; rhythm of the line in contrast to the cut glass shapes; different degrees of transparency; different textures of the glass itself; evocation of space and scale related to the size of the building.

Selecting and Securing the Artist

It is important to check the artist's previous work, resume, and references. Beyond these factual questions the choice of artist may depend on chemistry and vision, and ultimately on trust that this person can do the work for your holy space. The process often begins with an interview. It may be preceded by a small competition with each artist submitting slides or a folder of work. The architect or committee may ask the artist about his or her

purposes. As the selection narrows the artist submits a proposal. A studio visit is important; so is a visit to an installation of the artist's work if possible. A liturgical consultant can smooth the process by knowing what is standard in the field.

Typically, the architect recommends the artist but the contract is between the artist and the client. The fee and contract are negotiated and there are different practices even among different religious groups. Artists have no Standard AIA Contract. The architect and liturgical consultant can help by treating the artist as a valued member of the team. The artist may be asked to make a preliminary design and should be paid for services once design begins. The contract may indicate standard artist's rights such as copyright.

Of course, fees vary. They can be based on an arts budget, on estimating the amount of time and materials, or on a square foot price. If the cost of a stained glass project is too high, it might be adjusted by altering materials and techniques. Smaller works often cost more per square foot.

Elements of Collaboration

Once the artist is selected and under contract, there are steps that the architect and client can make to aid the artist in this collaborative effort. Among these:

- Bring the artist in early. The artist can help explore possibilities for stained glass and early consultation with the artist or fabricator can avoid mistakes in the choice of frame. Discuss which sizes and shapes of mullions work best. Know the limits to glass size and reinforcement in the early stages of a project.
- Provide the artist with plans and elevations, and frame sections even before the first interview. They are necessary for bidding and will be necessary to begin designing. The artist should know what the building looks like, and what is required of the art glass.
- Include stained glass in the budget from the start, allowing approximately 2 to 4 percent of the construction cost. Unpredictable things happen in the course of building. The art budget is often the first to go but this planning ahead affords it a chance.
- Know your schedule, budget, and scope of the art glass. This is key information that the artist will need to prepare a realistic bid.
- Provide in a timely fashion approved shop drawings and measurements needed before fabrication can begin.
- Stained Glass is not insulated (the space under the lead flange is waterproofed with putty), but stained glass is a fine additional layer when added to the glass of the building.
- Stained glass can be added after the fact to the original frame but it is tricky. New stops are made and a space is allowed in between the window glass and the stained glass. The fit may not be perfect; it may be difficult to match the finish of the stops.
- The easiest frames to use provide room for the stained glass and the window glass in the same integral structure. This type of frame costs a little more but is valued by the artist, architect, and installer, and is recommended.

The contract usually designates three basic phases of work: the Design Phase, with a policy on revision, and design approval; the Fabrication Phase, which begins upon design approval (fabrication can be lengthy, depending on project size, complexity, and the fabricator's schedule); and the Installation Phase.

Design Phase

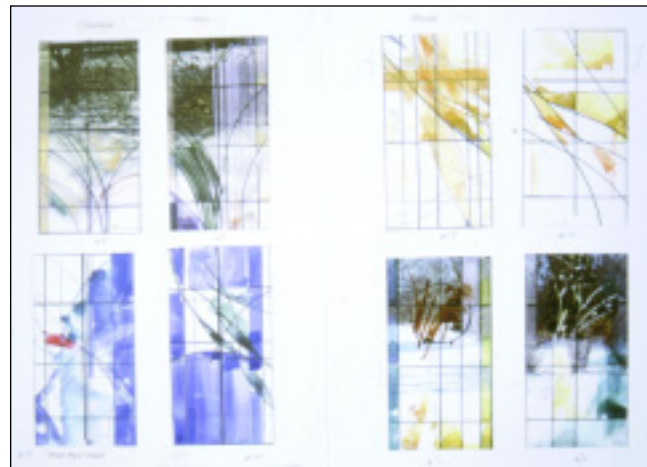
Stained glass design usually takes place on top of a scale drawing of the window with the necessary reinforcing bars indicated in place. Fabricators prefer one-inch-scale drawings because they show the right amount of detail.

Like the architect, the glass artist must respect certain givens. It is important that the architect and client speak with the artist about the program and architectural design concerns so the artist can factor these into the design process. The goal is to seek completeness, integrating the many needs of client, light, architecture, etc. into an overriding creative whole.

The presentation of the design is a dramatic culmination of this phase. In it, the artist can explain her intentions. The client and the architect have the opportunity to respond and affirm their approval and trust that the artist can share her gift. While designing the artist has been looking for a way to present his vision clearly.

Some of the most useful mediums for design presentation include:

- The design drawn on an opaque surface;



c Ellen Mandelbaum

Scale drawing presentation of stained glass windows.

- The design on a transparent surface such as prepared acetate (this is not precise and won't be exactly the same as stained glass);



c Ellen Mandelbaum

Presentation of stained glass on transparent medium.

- A maquette (the design shown in a simple model, usually presented flat);

- A vertical model of the window area showing the stained glass in place (this can be photographed as a slide and projected);
- A computer printout of the design on transparent film;
- A photo of the design montaged into a photo of the site.

Good presentations often include a scale-size image of a person to orient the viewers. There is usually a provision for design revision, if needed. Once the design is approved, final documentation can be completed and fabrication begins.

Fabrication Phase

The leaded method of fabrication is the most common for many reasons. It can expand and contract in architectural applications; it is historic, and practical; it is permanent; repairs are easy; the lead can be opened and a new piece of glass inserted. It is also a natural way to work with the most beautiful kinds of glass.

The brittle glass is held together by lead, which is soft and stretches. Metal bars provide reinforcing. Individual panels can only be so large, but can be combined with other panels. The lead is held together by solder at the joints. The design of leaded glass is limited in that all shapes are surrounded by the dark lead line though lead lines vary in width. Other methods of fabrication are in the process of development, such as lamination: colored glass is laminated or glued to plate glass sheets. This offers the promise of an uninterrupted large area of glass unbound by a lead line.

To prepare a design for fabrication, first a "blank" is drawn on paper, based on the architect's approved shop drawing. This shows the outline of the shape and measurements of the glass windows. Lines where the glass will be cut are drawn based on the artist's scale drawing. This full-size layout is called a cartoon. Paper patterns are then cut from the cartoon.

Glass is then selected for each pattern piece and is cut by a skilled cutter. The artist keeps track of how the whole work will look by placing each cut piece on a table layout of the piece. In a big project it is a challenge as the work proceeds to see the many pieces as a whole.

The stained glass artist does not make the glass, but buys it from a supplier. It is made in the U.S. and in Europe specifically for this trade. All stained glass is roughly an eighth-inch thick.

Most American-made glass is machine rolled. Molten glass is rolled out over metal plates, which cause various textures. The glass can be fairly transparent or opaque. Tiffany glass was machine rolled. It is very varied, mottled, or streaky, and rich with color.

Antique glass is not old, but has bubbles and striations similar to old glass. It is mouth-blown into a cylindrical shape, cut open at both ends and down the middle, and flattened. A sheet of antique glass is approximately 24 by 36 inches. This glass is highly prized. It has nuances of color and texture and varies in thickness. There are many kinds of antique glass, often with medieval-sounding names. "Reamy" is a special antique glass with a texture that looks like moving water. "Seedy" glass has bubbles made by adding a potato to the mix.

"Drawn antique" glass is not as expensive as antique, and its colors are not quite as rich as antique. It is consistent in thickness and has an attractive pattern of striations.

New glass is always being developed. Each type has its characteristic way of cutting. Antique is softer than machine-rolled glass, and cutting it can be unpredictable. It often requires a carbide cutter.



Marian Woods window showing versatility of stained glass texture and painting.

Glass painting is an option and enrichment of the stained glass technique. The artist paints with metal oxides, which are held together temporarily by gum Arabic and water in a tempera-like consistency. Brush strokes and painting methods are, of course, particularly personal. The glass pieces are held in place on an easel in a window or light box with hot wax so the artist can see them against the light while he works. Then the painted pieces are fired in a kiln at 900 to 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit to make the metal oxides permanent.

Yellow, golden silver stain is the only stain in stained glass. It is transparent and probably gives the name to stained glass. Painting is usually black or earth-toned, contains lead, and divided between matt (tone) and trace (line). There is now unleaded paint on the market. Glass paint colors are not as effective as the colors of the glass; the beauty of color comes from the glass itself. Glass painters can scratch through the paint and let out shining lines of light. This is the best medium for drawing. Brushed line is agile and can easily make a face. Imagine having to cut out the lines of an eye and wrap them in lead; how much easier it is to draw the eye with glass painting. Paint moves and mingles among the cut glass pieces and opens up rhythms between separate colors. The brushed line can echo the lead line.

c Ellen Mandelbaum

Next, the glass pieces are arranged on the glazing drawings or "cartoon" and held with lead came of different widths, which are soldered at the joints. The solder is usually a small area that is fairly smooth. The glass is waterproofed, puttied, leaded, and brushed to an attractive finish, ready for installation.


Installation Phase

Ideally, stained glass is installed after all of the messy work is done and all of the heavy machinery is out of the way. A good fabricator who works quickly can install a big job in less than a



c Ellen Mandelbaum

Marian Woods chapel space ready to receive windows.

week. It is helpful if the architect has allowed room in the building for the necessary scaffolding. Sometimes the fabricator shares scaffolding with the contractor. The artist oversees the placement of the work and for the first time sees the work as a whole. Now the architect, clergy, and congregants first begin to enjoy the quality of light and see how special it is, how the glass projects colors of light into the room, how it defines the perimeter of the building, and how this amazing glass art at the edge of the sacred precinct helps to create a sacred space. 



c Ellen Mandelbaum

Installed 'Resurrection' windows are the focal point of the Marian Woods chapel.

Further Reading

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- E. Crosby Willet, "Stained Glass Primer," *Faith & Form*, Vol. XXX, Number 3/1997, p.11.



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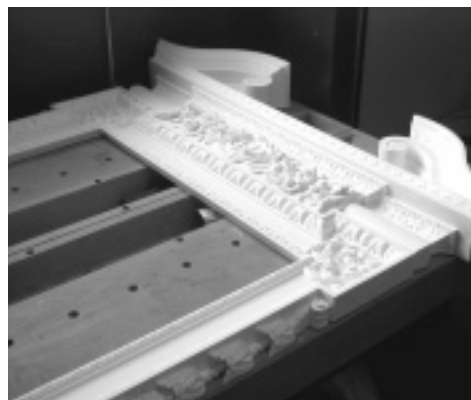
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MY CHILDHOOD TEMPLE

By George M. Goodwin



I have an unusual interest—perhaps better described as a passion. Wherever I go, despite my wife and children's objections, I stop to inspect and photograph Jewish houses of worship.

I know when and where this interest began: during the 1950s in Los Angeles. As a child of affluence during the Sputnik era, I grew up in a city without much history, where everything seemed perpetually new. My parents built our ranch house in 1950, and I attended a brand-new elementary school, not far from UCLA, where construction never ceases. In 1960 my father oversaw the construction of his firm's law offices; a decade later, he built larger quarters.



Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles during the 1930s.

GEORGE M. GOODWIN has written on art and architecture for *American Jewish Archives*, *American Jewish History*, and *Modern Judaism*. As president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, he is helping plan Heritage Harbor Museum, which will open on the Providence waterfront in 2005.

As "freeways" encircled us, many civic monuments arose: LAX (the international airport), the Sports Arena, Dodger Stadium, the Zoo, the Music Center, and the County Museum of Art. Nobody had yet heard of Richard Meier, Frank Gehry, or condominiums.

As a youngster I was aware of a few older buildings. These included my junior high (now "middle" school), built in 1938 by the eminent modernist Richard Neutra. Though less than 25 years old, the campus was already considered an early example of progressive academic planning. In the seventh grade I wrote a paper about Will Rogers State Park in Pacific Palisades. His former residence—decorated with hunting trophies, Indian blankets, and cowboy paraphernalia—was a true ranch house.

Growing up in Tinsel Town, where maps to the stars' homes were hawked daily on Sunset Boulevard, I could glimpse the studios' macabre back lots and enormous sound stages. Aware of the Chinese and Egyptian, I thought that most movie theatres, even in nearby Westwood, were by definition picture palaces. For me, "drive-ins" were restaurants, not parking lots with silver screens.

Beyond home, school, and cinemas, the building I knew best and most fondly remember was Wilshire Boulevard Temple, a landmark of Reform Judaism. Never referred to as Congregation B'nai B'rith, "synagogue," "shul," or "temple," it was always "The Temple." To the best of my knowledge, Los Angeles had only one other—the colossal new Mormon Temple with its gigantic sculpture of Moroni.

Long after its members moved from downtown's periphery and streetcars were demolished, Wilshire Boulevard Temple was approached by bus or auto. For many families this was a lengthy ride; for ours, almost an hour in each direction. But before the construction of the Santa Monica Freeway, this meant a journey down stately Wilshire Boulevard, the city's grandest thoroughfare. Wasn't it built to deliver sleepy Jewish children to their lessons with a sense of security, pride, and accomplishment?

Erected in 1929 as the congregation's third home, Wilshire Boulevard Temple, I later learned, was somewhat typical of America's metropolitan synagogues. Indeed, as a large, imposing, and ornate building, evoking numerous chapters of Jewish history, it resembled sister structures in Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, San Antonio, and San Francisco. Like many of these synagogues, Wilshire Boulevard was illuminated by filigreed chandeliers and stained-glass windows, encrusted with spires and minarets, and crowned by a huge dome. An American flag fluttered over the central portal.

But the Temple's opulent interior—a synthesis of the Pantheon, Hagia Sophia, St. Peter's (and the Brown Derby restaurant)—was peerless. Circling above the pews was an epic cycle of murals, donated by the Warner brothers and painted by Hugo Ballin, their studio artist. From Genesis to the Inquisition, the paintings traced the journey of Jewish civilization leading not to the resettlement of the Holy Land but to the voyage of Columbus. Such architectural spectacle was reinforced by a mighty organ and a choir loft filled with virtuosi. To a Bar Mitzvah boy or any other, what could be more impressive?

In many respects this edifice was the Jewish cathedral of Los Angeles, if not all of Southern California. The Temple's senior rabbi, Edgar F. Magnin, who presided from 1915 until his death in 1984, was considered a patriarch. Indeed, Cardinal McIntyre, who resided a block away, did not enjoy a pulpit of such grandeur, even after a new St. Basil's was erected in a bold, modern style.

Having attended religious school at the Temple from kindergarten through Confirmation, I felt quite at home there. As Rabbi Magnin's great-nephew, I felt even more comfortable. Whatever his conception of Judaism lacked in the way of piety or erudition, it was counterbalanced by a sense of vitality and exuberance. Though housed in an antiquarian vessel, his Judaism was a celebration of peace, freedom, prosperity, joy, and beauty—not in a distant or an imaginary realm but in the here and now. How could providence not exist? We were its living proof and testament.

The chapel at Hess Kramer, the Temple's camp in Malibu, seemed so strange yet wonderful. Located within a grove of

sycamores, it consisted little more than a few concentric rows of rough-hewn benches placed around an ark, a lectern, and two menorahs. Constructed in the mid-1950s, it was a chapel without architecture or whose architecture was the entire universe.

Wilshire Boulevard Temple had a third sanctuary, though used only a few days each year. This was the nearby Immanuel Presbyterian Church, which received the overflow of congregants on the High Holy Days. Because the Temple boasted three distinguished rabbis, one would be dispatched to this neo-Gothic, satellite shrine. My father was one of several laymen (later a few laywomen) who helped read prayers before a temporary ark.

Growing up in Los Angeles as a Reform Jew, I never experienced a fear common among traditional Jews, who avoid walking by or entering a church. (To alleviate a comparable fear or superstition, Temple students were escorted to an Orthodox service.) Having studied California history in grade school, I went on bus trips to some of the Franciscan missions. Of course the state was inundated with Spanish place names, and our city was literally Our Lady Queen of the Angels. I was aware of a hospital called Queen of Angels, which didn't sound any stranger than its Jewish counterpart, Cedars of Lebanon, where my twin brother and I were born.


During my youth Southern California's most unusual architectural creation and the one soon known throughout the world was Disneyland, which, compliments of Rabbi Magnin, I was privileged to visit on opening day.

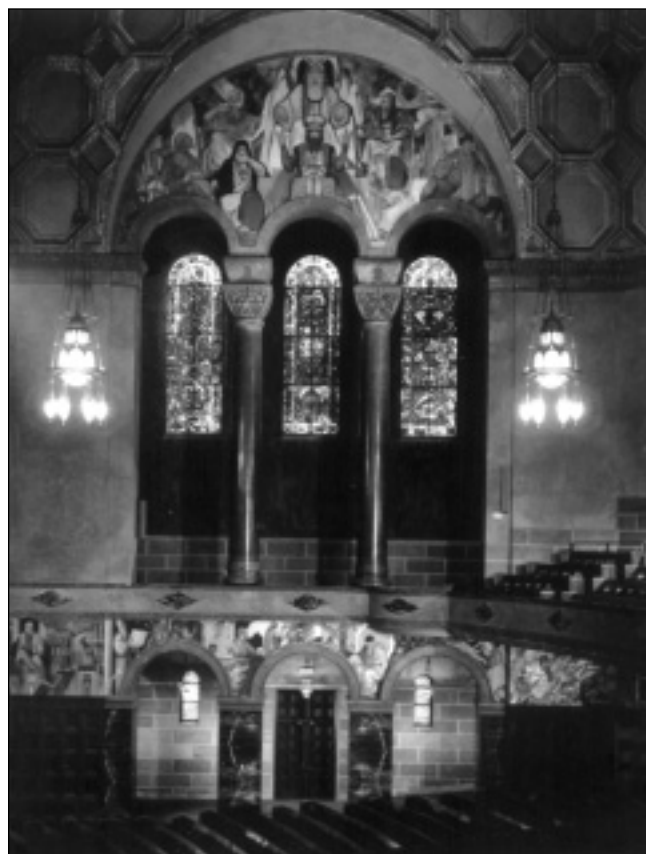
I remember riding on the monorail, but the Magic Kingdom's least interesting feature was Tomorrow Land. I had lived there most of my life. Never having seen a Victorian town or village, I was enchanted by Main Street and its train depot.

Over the years I visited Disneyland many times, as well as other amusement parks eventually known as "theme parks," but they seldom held my attention. After learning to drive, however, I took notice of many buildings and places. In addition to department stores, hotels, and office towers, there were fascinating cemeteries, which included, perhaps, the La Brea Tar Pits. Restaurants, such as Don the Beachcomber and Trader Vic's, seemed ever more fanciful. Even after discovering Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House and the Greene Brothers' Gamble House, my favorite structure became the Watts Towers, a folk art extravaganza.

Over the decades, as I have learned to admire the architectural riches of many traditions, I have grown in my understanding and practice of Judaism. I have studied and lived in several cities and have belonged to impressive congregations. Yet, my attraction to Wilshire Boulevard Temple—the building and the institution—has never subsided.

I have never reached a point where the Temple's splendor has appeared artificial or ostentatious. Yes, it stirs in me many happy memories and resurrects elders' lofty expectations. But I see the Temple as more than an artifact or an anachronism. As an embodiment of perennial hope and optimism, it is something far more creative and accomplished.

Blessed with new generations of professional and lay leadership, the congregation has recently built a stunning new campus in a western suburb. My nephew attends its day school. Yet, the old Temple endures, as Judaism endures, through its nobility, humanity, and dynamism. 



View of Temple interior looking east.

CLASSIC NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES

Photographs by Steve Rosenthal

For nearly the past 40 years, award-winning architectural photographer Steve Rosenthal has canvassed New England, capturing the essence of that region's classic religious buildings. These pages present just a few of Rosenthal's images, which are part of an exhibit on the subject now at the Jackson Homestead Museum in Newton, Massachusetts.

Rosenthal's photos remind us that when we imagine a classic New England landscape, the picture in our mind's eye almost always includes a church as its focus. Notes the photographer, "the visual excitement of the gleaming white clapboards, the commanding steeple, and the well-proportioned rhythm of the windows, shutters, and doors, is an icon familiar to all of us."

The photographs also document what we risk losing. Rosenthal observes that over the years he has been photographing



Door with decorative hinges on the York Street Baptist Church of 1891 in York Village, Maine, photographed in 1971.



In the background, First Congregational Church of 1839, with the Windham County Court House of 1825 in the foreground, in Newfane, Vermont, photographed in 2002.

these churches, "they have probably seen more of a physical decline than in the previous century, or more." The tooth of time is not the only threat to these old buildings. Declining church membership takes its toll, as does (ironically) growth in membership, as congregations must adapt their buildings to accommodate new users, new programs, and changing modes of worship. They sometimes do this sensitively, sometimes not.

"Classic New England Churches" is on view at the museum through January 2003. It is then available to travel. Those interested in hosting the exhibit should contact Steve Rosenthal directly at P.O. Box 354, Manchester, Massachusetts, 01944.

— **Michael J. Crosbie**



Detail of the West Parish Congregational Church of 1847, in Bethel, Maine, photographed in 2001.



The exuberant steeple of the Oxford Congregational Church of 1843 in Oxford, Maine, photographed in 2001.



First Parish Church and Meetinghouse (Unitarian) constructed between 1747 and 1755 in Cohasset, Massachusetts, photographed in the 1970s.



St. Mary's Episcopal Church of 1813, in Newton Lower Falls, Massachusetts, photographed in 1982.

THE BENEDICTINE'S BAUHAUS

Finding the connections between a Modernist and monks.

By Thomas Fisher



St. John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, has one of the largest collections of buildings by the architect Marcel Breuer, not only the main abbey church and monastic wing, but the library and science building, dormitories, and apartments, even an entry sculpture. Critics have largely ignored Breuer's work over the last couple of decades. But Breuer's reputation, at its nadir among architects, has never been stronger at St. John's, which held a major celebration of the centenary of Breuer's birth this past June in Collegeville. When there, one feels a strong affinity between Breuer's work and the ideas of the Benedictines. What exactly accounts for this seemingly



Marcel Breuer

strong connection between an ancient order and a Modern architect?

I spent part of a sunny, summer day touring the Breuer buildings with two Benedictine monks, Columba Stewart and Alan Reed. They talked about the Rule of St. Benedict, which calls for them to live communally, with few personal possessions and with a significant amount of daily life devoted to prayer and to manual as well as intellectual work. And they described how St. John's, one of the largest Benedictine monasteries in the world, is considerably self-sufficient, once growing all of its own food and still building much of its own furniture.

Breuer and his mentor, Walter Gropius, had this in mind for the Bauhaus in Germany during the 1920s and '30s. Gropius envisioned the Bauhaus as a place in which an architect could, "once again gather spiritually like-minded workers round him in close personal intimacy – as the masters who built the Gothic cathedrals had done in the Middle Ages." The Bauhaus also had communal living quarters for its members, common rituals that strengthened social solidarity, and rules of behavior that



Photo Caption

Exterior view of St. John's Alcuin Library, with abbey church in background.

THOMAS FISHER is Dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, and Editor of *Architectural Research Quarterly*, published by Cambridge University Press.

created a sense of independence from the outside world.

Listening to Stewart and Reed, I could see why Breuer's architecture appeals to this Benedictine community. The ideals of the Bauhaus, which Breuer sustained long after most architects

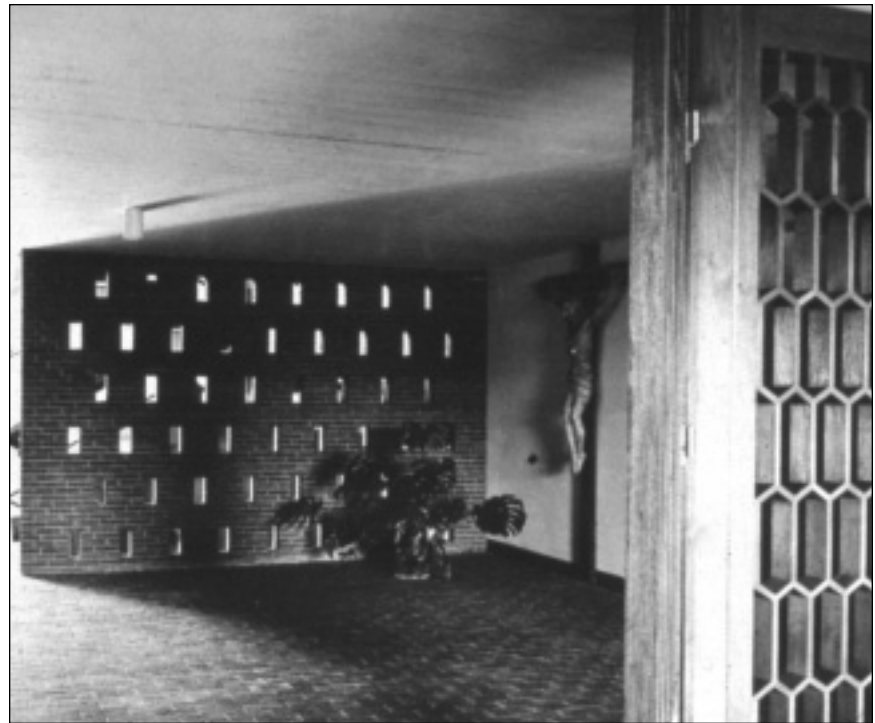
had given up on them, embodied a secular version of Benedictine beliefs: the importance of community, the value of craft, the simplification of life. This may seem distant from most of our lives, but monasteries such as St. John's and secular equivalents like the Bauhaus can help us rethink our definition of the good life, especially needed at a time when most of us are over-consuming natural resources and bringing on an environmental crisis of monumental proportions. I also began to see why Breuer has been largely ignored or misunderstood in recent decades. The values embedded in his architecture, like those of the Benedictines, seem out-of-sync with the conspicuous consumption of our time. Rather than equate the good life with the quantity and expense of our material wealth, the monastic tradition envisions that life in more sustainable terms. The Benedictine asceticism accepts the material world, but sees it serving other, more important non-material goals.

The Bauhaus took a similar position. Much of the product design that occurred there, including the furniture from Breuer's workshop, had as its goal the elimination of the excessive or unnecessary, and the design of simple, standardized objects. At the same time, the students and faculty at the Bauhaus continually tried to transcend the material world, seeing what they did as an almost spiritual pursuit. The work itself reflected those transcendent values.

Similarly, throughout their history monasteries existed as self-contained communities, growing or making most of what they needed, and so they serve well as a model for how we all might live on our self-contained planet. While St. John's is no longer as self-sufficient as it once was, it still embodies the values that make a sustainable existence possible. It is a model in which three realms—the social, the intellectual, and the spiritual—interact so that wealth accrues not through the amassing of material goods, which bring social inequity as well as environmental damage, but through the pursuit of non-material riches: connecting to other people through conversation, increasing our knowledge through study, and deepening spirituality through prayer.

How do we realize those non-material values in something as material as a building? Doesn't architecture, which is costly and material intensive, obstruct our achieving a more equitable, non-

materialistic existence? Three of Breuer's best buildings at St. John's speak to these very questions. While massive in scale and made of heavy materials such as stone and concrete, the monastic wing, the library, and the abbey church each express the non-material values of the Benedictines and the Bauhaus. Indeed, these icons of Modern architecture add new meaning to "less is more," the oft-quoted comment of Mies van der Rohe, himself once a director of the Bauhaus. Expressing more than just an aesthetic preference for eliminating ornament or other unnecessary elements from buildings, "less is more" applies, as well, to the values of a sustainable community, where doing with less in terms of finite material resources allows us to cultivate a more rich social, intellectual, and spiritual life.



Detail of monastic wing interior, with screen-like walls.

Consider the monastic wing, Breuer's first building at St. John's. Completed in 1955, the wing is a four-story rectangle, parallel to the shore of Lake Sagatagan, containing service and recreational rooms on the lowest level; reception rooms, guest rooms, social spaces, and the sacristy on the main level; and sleeping rooms for the monks on the top two floors. Compared to most apartment buildings, this monastic wing has a far greater proportion of shared space than it does private space. As Columba Stewart writes in his book, *Prayer and Community, the Benedictine Tradition* (Orbis, 1998): "The

genius of Benedict was to situate the individual search for God in a communal context." While the original building had many of the monks sleeping in common dormitories, those spaces have since been divided up into small, individual rooms. But the social spaces for conversation, recreation, and relaxation have remained remarkably unchanged in nearly 50 years, suggesting the value and importance this community places on those activities.

Breuer's monastic wing also makes a point about the relation of the social realm to that of nature. The architect opened up the rooms, especially the public rooms, to the outside with large areas of glass and, in many places, screened balconies or porches. As a result, the sun, the sky, and the surrounding trees and lawns all make their pres-

ence constantly felt inside the building. An organic community, one in which social interaction ebbs and flows as people grow and change, does not mean that its material enclosure also must appear organic, ebbing and flowing itself. As Breuer once wrote, "A building is a man-made work, a crystallic, constructed thing. It should not imitate nature – it should be in contrast to nature." Breuer's work at St. John's suggests that a more sustainable role for architecture is as a minimal backdrop to the wealth of social interactions that occur there, facilitating human community without imitating it.

The intellectual wealth at St. John's emerges most clearly in the library. Located across the entrance court from the abbey church and monastic wing, the rectangular library has a deceptive simplicity from the outside. A nearly blank lower wall of vertical-slit windows, above which runs a wall of glass, is shaded on the south side by a flue-tile screen. The one break in the pattern marks the entrance, with asymmetrical glass openings deeply inset to provide protection from the sun and rain.

The surprise occurs once inside. The library is, in fact, a split level, with a two-story lower level, illuminated by high windows along the rear of the building, and an upper two-story room featuring two massive, tree-like columns whose concrete "branches" hold up a broad, flat roof. Offices, study carrels, and other service spaces ring both of these spaces, with glass clerestories providing views out to the sky.

The library's form brings to mind two aspects of the intellectual life. One involves the outward modesty that comes with an enlightened mind, a humility highly valued in Benedictine life. The library has the same demeanor – retiring almost to an extreme on the exterior, and inwardly complex and light-filled – which not only minimizes its visual impact on the abbey church across the court, but exemplifies through its own form the character of those who have studied within its walls.

The library also symbolizes the tension that often exists in religious communities between knowledge and belief. "Early monastic writers protest the dangers of study for its own sake," writes Stewart in *Prayer and Community*, and yet "intellectual work suited monastic stability." The same tension existed in the Bauhaus. Some faculty emphasized the reason and knowledge of science and culture, while others advocated that their students seek a kind of spiritual transcendence.

The St. John's library embodies that tension in several ways, perhaps the most obvious being the two enormous tree-like columns supporting the roof. [FISHER 4] Breuer's allusion to the tree-of-knowledge, which bore the forbidden fruit that gave rise to human wisdom and human sin, seems fitting in a library here. To sustain a community, people need to balance information and faith, negotiating between the need to know and the will to believe. Breuer encountered a secular version of that at the Bauhaus, where knowledge of



'Tree of Knowledge' columns in library interior study area.

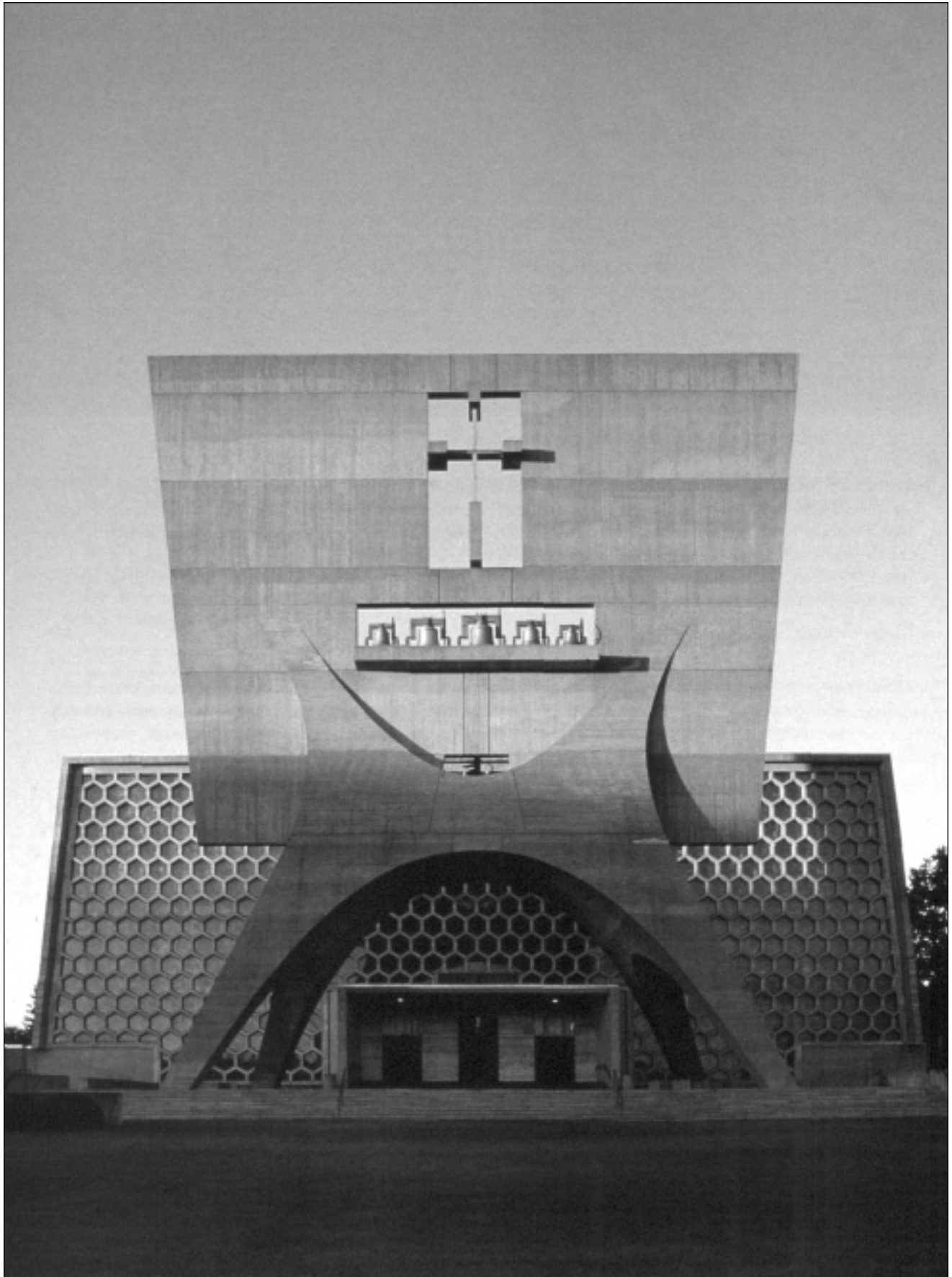
craft traditions sought reconciliation with strongly held beliefs in the cause of modern art and design. At the library at St. John's, Breuer gives us a religious version, whose larger-than-life symbolism reminds us of the necessary tension between mind and spirit.

The spiritual life at St. John's reigns at the abbey church, one of Breuer's masterpieces. A massive concrete structure that stands at the end of the approach drive up from the valley below, the church has, as its dominant feature, an enormous freestanding concrete bell tower in the shape of a flat banner. The banner has "legs" that extend over and to either side of the projecting entrance to the church and "arms" that hold up the banner for all to see for miles around. [FISHER 5] The campanile's abstraction of the human body expresses the individual "standing before God and humankind," as Stewart puts it, for one's beliefs. While such a statement has long characterized Benedictine life, it also defines Breuer, who continued to uphold his beliefs after his work had fallen out of fashion.

If the campanile represents the individual pursuit of one's beliefs, the abbey church itself expresses its communal pursuit. With walls and roof wrapped in folded pleats of concrete, like a monk's robe, the church encloses a vast area of seating for the congregation as well as a ring of seating behind the altar for the monks. Light enters through a large stained-glass rear wall, through a skylight over the altar, and through horizontal bands of glass at ground level providing

views into adjacent gardens. As a result, the massive shell of concrete appears to float on air, appearing heavy and light, open and closed at the same time. This expresses the paradox of communal life – belonging to a group in order to transcend it, being both enclosed in a community and desiring to break free of that enclosure. That same paradox affected the Bauhaus, where the ideal of communal living and working confronted the pressure on both students and faculty to stand apart and express their individuality.

St. John's has recently embarked on a new project, commissioning the noted Japanese architect Tadao Ando to design a guest house for the abbey, consisting of two rectangular wings oriented in a V-shape in plan with communal space in between. This brilliant little building pays homage to Breuer, using the same material – concrete – and deferring to the nearby abbey church by remaining low to the ground and visually unobtrusive. At the same time, Ando has also managed to embody, with a minimum of moves, the very spirit of St. John's. Outwardly modest and inwardly complex, with ample social space and minimal private space, and with an abundance of places to contemplate nature as well as God, the guesthouse continues the Breuer tradition of dealing brilliantly with paradox, using strong, evocative, minimalist forms. As did Breuer, through his architecture Ando affirms the values that sustain this community, and that may eventually sustain us all. [6]



Main façade of abbey church, with anthropomorphic campanile.

Notes & Comments

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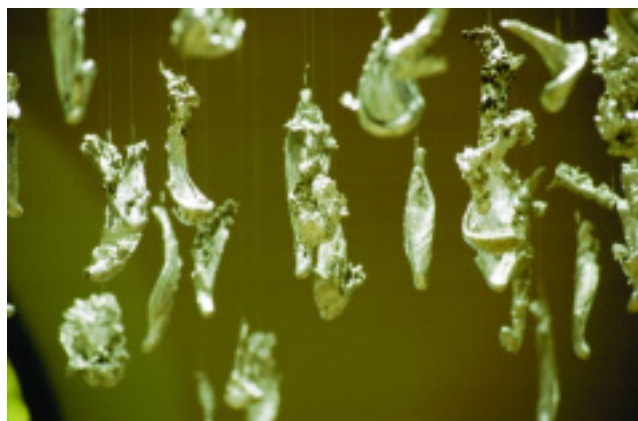
The editors of *Faith & Form* want to bring its readers the latest news of those involved in the fields of religion, art, and architecture. Send press releases and materials to the attention of Michael J. Crosbie, Editor, *Faith & Form*, c/o Steven Winter Associates, 50 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06854; fax: 203-852-0741; email: FaithNForm@aol.com.

Observing September 11

With the passing of the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the U.S., congregations around the country observed the spiritual dimension of the tragedy. Some dedicated works that spoke to event. In Philadelphia, the Episcopal Cathedral dedicated a sculpture work by Elizabeth Hoak Doering entitled "Initiation," which takes as its theme the beginning and end of life. In the Cathedral's garden on Mary Magdalene's Day (June 22), Doering poured molten pewter into holy water 65 times, to symbolize the number of children who were born on September 11, 2001 in Philadelphia, and the triumph of life over death. The holy water came from a church in the Republic of Cyprus where Mary is said to have provided a well for early Christians hiding the catacombs. To note the 45 lives lost on Flight 93, which crashed in Western Pennsylvania, Doering poured molten pewter into the Atlantic Ocean as a symbol of purification. The 110 pieces, each a differ-

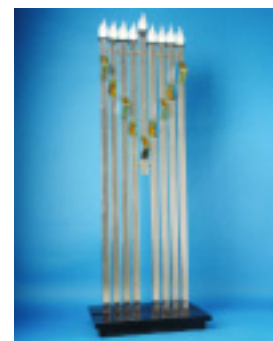


ent shape, are suspended over the Cathedral's baptismal font. (It was only after making the pieces that Doering realized that the World Trade Center towers each had 110 floors.) "The release of molten metal into cold water is a ritual performed in cultures all



over the world," explained Doering, who is 2002 Artist in Residence at the Cathedral. The union of these two groups of metal frozen in water, the artist notes, "is intended to formalize the connection of birth, death, and the rebirth that is attributed to the rite of Baptism."

At the World Trade Center site, two Chanukah menorahs that once proudly graced each of the towers have been recreated as a memorial to the victims of September 11. The two menorah, designed for the Trade Center in 1982 by Bonnie Srolovitz (an industrial designer who worked for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey) were warehoused at the Trade Center as a result of litigious debates over public displays of religious symbols, and were never found in the clean-up efforts. Srolovitz and her partner/husband Michael Berkowicz of Presentations Gallery, Ltd., decided to recreate the design in commemoration of the first anniversary of September 11.



Kudos to Betty Meyer

Faith & Form Editor Emeritus Betty Meyer was honored by her alma mater, Drury College, with the Special Merit for Career Achievement in Honor of the Arts. Betty was cited for "recognizing beauty and sharing that beauty with others, for contributing to the study of religious art and architecture, for her outstanding leadership as Editor of *Faith & Form*, for her devotion to teaching others the importance of recognizing beauty." Congratulations, Betty!

Prayer Carpets from the Islamic World

With a distinctive design and relatively uniform size, the prayer carpet ranks as one of the most recognizable and popular forms of weaving from Muslim culture. At the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts is an exhibit that brings together prayer carpets from the eastern Islamic world. The exhibit, which runs through December 15, 2002, considers prayer carpets from two approaches: the structural design dictated by the weaver's technique, and the decorative design governed by iconographic and aesthetic traditions. The rugs in the exhibition date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Notes & Comments (continued)

Land Rich and Building Poor: Caught in the Middle

Many congregations in urban areas find themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma: their buildings are aging and in desperate need of repair, but the land on which the buildings sit are becoming quite valuable. How are congregations to respond? The *New York Times* recently reported on the predicament of Brown Street Community Church in Queens, New York, which typifies the problem. The church's 1892 Romanesque Revival building, which includes five Tiffany windows, is in need of nearly \$700,000 in repairs, an investment that its small congregation of 160 souls cannot possibly meet. The church building committee considered an offer from a developer, who would pay the church \$1 million to build a 20-story luxury condominium on the site, and would also build a new church there. The congregation, with the support of local preservationists, rejected that idea. A new strategy now being considered is to preserve just the church's sanctuary, and erect an eight-story building adjacent to it to house meeting rooms, day care facilities, and rental apartments.

IFRAA in Boston

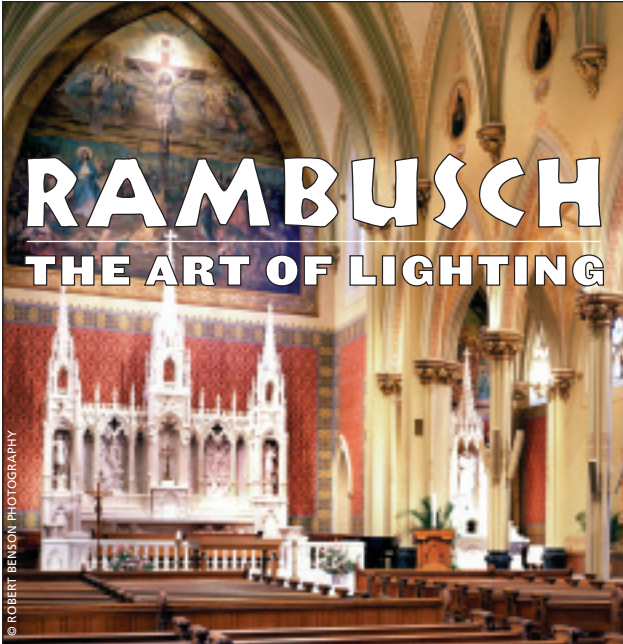
For all those in the Boston area, you should know that a local group of IFRAA members is meeting regularly at the Boston Society of Architects, and welcome others to join them. The group meets at noon for lunch (free) at the BSA on the third Tuesday of each month. The chair is Jenn Sanborn. The BSA offices are at 52 Broad Street in Boston. For more information contact Sanborn at: jsanborn@sacrisdesign.com.

"This is Not Juan Diego"

A controversy erupted over the visage of Juan Diego, who is considered to be the first Indian saint to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. According to a report by the Associated Press, prior to Pope John Paul II's visit to Mexico in August to canonize Diego, the Vatican replaced traditional renderings of the 16th Century figure, in which he is depicted as a sparsely whiskered, dark-skinned Indian, with a portrait of a light-skinned man with a full beard. "This is not Juan Diego," declared a sculptor visiting the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe. "This is Juan Diego in Spaniard's clothing." With Mexicans muttering about how their Indian holy man had been "Europeanized," the Vatican back-tracked, saying that this portrait is not intended to be the only interpretation of the Indian. However, the new portrait bears the inscription: "True portrait of God's servant Juan Diego." The AP report noted that the controversy had not dampened sales of religious tchotchkes bearing the new portrait of Diego, which were brisk.

Federal Grant for Old North Church

Boston's Old North Church, where the light shone that started Paul Revere's ride, was awarded a grant through the U.S. government's "Save America's Treasures" program. The grant of \$317,000 will be used to renew the windows of the church, which was built in 1723. "Save America's Treasures" is a program sponsored by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and requires that the grant be matched by the recipient dollar-for-dollar.



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Notes & Comments (continued)

L.A.'s New Roman Catholic Cathedral Opens

Over Labor Day weekend, the long-awaited Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels was dedicated and opened to the public. [LAI] Designed by Spanish architect Jose Rafael Moneo, with Leo A Daly as Executive Architect, the 12-story, 3,000-seat cathedral was built at a cost of \$189 million (see *Faith & Form*, Vol. 34, No. 4 for an article on the cathedral's design). It was also built to last 300 years. How was this lifespan assured? According to architect Nick Roberts of Leo A Daly, "The cathedral is designed as a concrete structure. The biggest enemy of concrete structures is moisture penetration through cracks and pores in the concrete that causes corrosion of the reinforcement. Leo A Daly worked with General Contractors Morley Construction and concrete experts in the U.S. and Europe to take advantage of emerging technology in concrete durability and achieve the Archdiocese's planned life for the Cathedral." Planning ahead that far also took into account the cathedral's mechanical systems. Says Roberts, "Engineers Ove Arup & Partners, placed piping and conduit in utility tunnels to make replacement easier. HVAC ductwork is located in accessible crawl spaces. Areaways and panels provide access for removing and replacing all mechanical equipment." And to thwart earthquakes, the cathedral literally levitates above the ground. "Structural Engineers Nabih Youssef & Associates designed a system of rubber isolator pads and sliders that support the building and isolate it from the foundations," explains Roberts. "Oversized seismic joints will allow up to two feet of movement in all directions. By reducing the building's horizontal acceleration, the base-isolation system is designed to minimize cracking in the concrete core."

Award Winner Given Special Recognition

A recent IFRAA/Faith & Form Design Award winner was recognized recently by the American Institute of Architects. The restoration of Old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago, Illinois, which graced the cover of *Faith & Form's* Millennium Awards issue in 2001, won an 2002 AIA National Honor Award. The project was designed by Booth Hansen Associates. And another Chicago project, the Emanuel Congregation Sanctuary Renovation, designed by Ross Barney + Jankowski, was given a "Special Recognition Award" by the AIA Chicago Chapter. Congratulations to both.

St. Jerome Fresco Restored

Five years after the fresco of St. Jerome and eight other saints tumbled from the ceiling of St. Francis Basilica in Assisi, Italy, the restored fresco was unveiled this past September. According to an Associated Press report, the fresco was painstakingly pieced back together by a team of restorers. The fresco, painted by Giotto in the 13th Century, was reduced to some 50,000 fragments after a powerful earthquake that hit central Italy on September 26, 1997. Using large photos of the fresco, restorers carefully pieced together the fragments. Still to be restored is Cimabue's St. Matthew fresco, which now lays in 120,000 pieces. [CIMABUE1] "We're faithfully waiting for another miracle of faith," the Reverend Vincenzo Coli, custodian of the basilica complex, told the restorers who will work on the Cimabue, "and of the capabilities of man."

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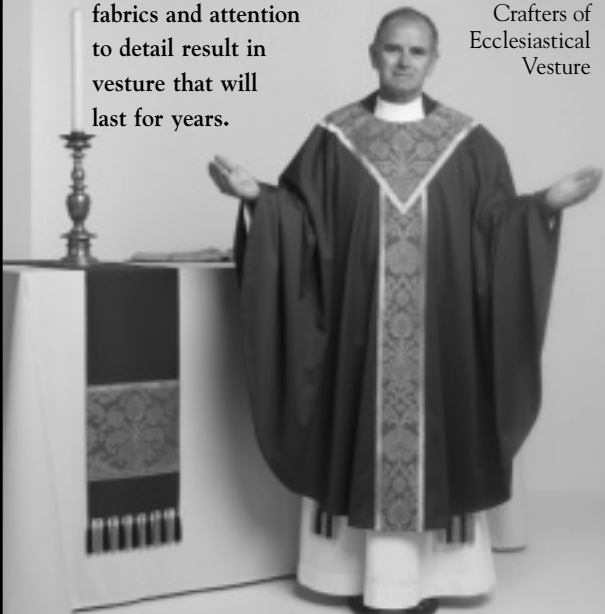
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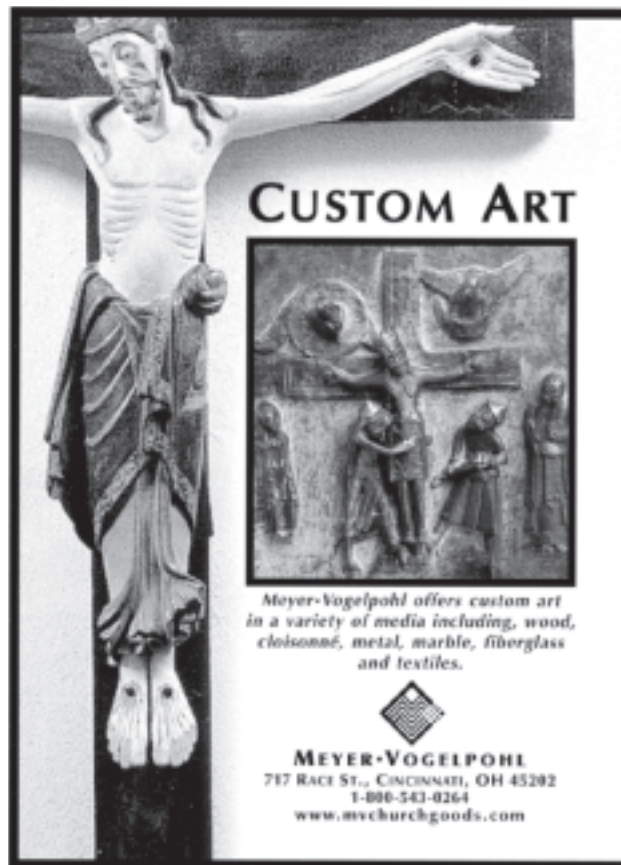
Notes & Comments

Sentence Demands Rebuilding of Temple

As part of his sentence for being convicted of burning down a Sikh temple in Palermo, New York, a 19-year-old man must spend at least 200 hours rebuilding the temple. Mitchel Trumble was one of four teen-agers charged with burning down the temple, which occupied a 100-year-old farmhouse. The community service was requested from the Gobind Sadan USA Temple, an inter-faith community based on Sikh teachings. Sikhs have been mistakenly associated with Arabs and Muslims because they wear turbans and beards. The teens told authorities they thought the temple was named "Go Bin Laden" and burned it down because they thought the worshippers supported the September 11 attacks.

Liturgical Product Designer

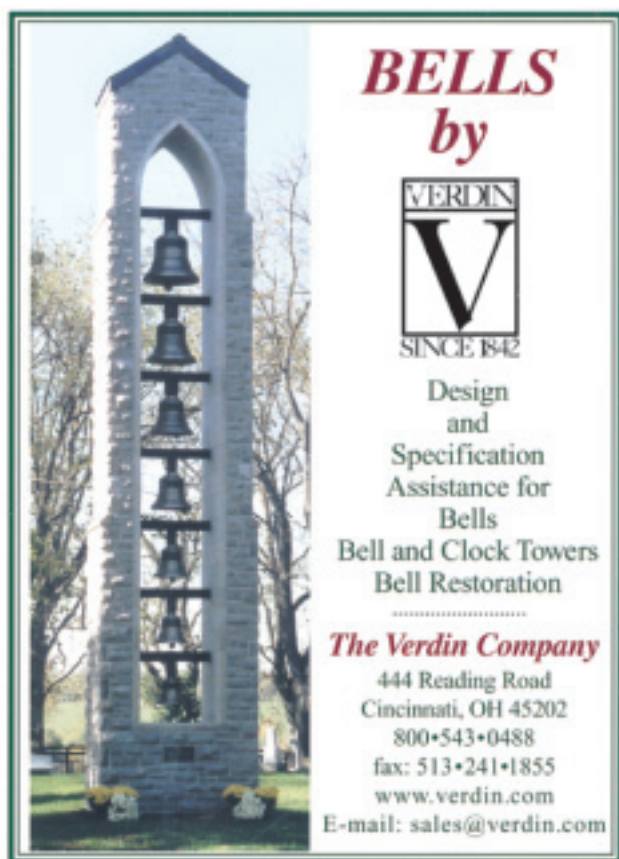
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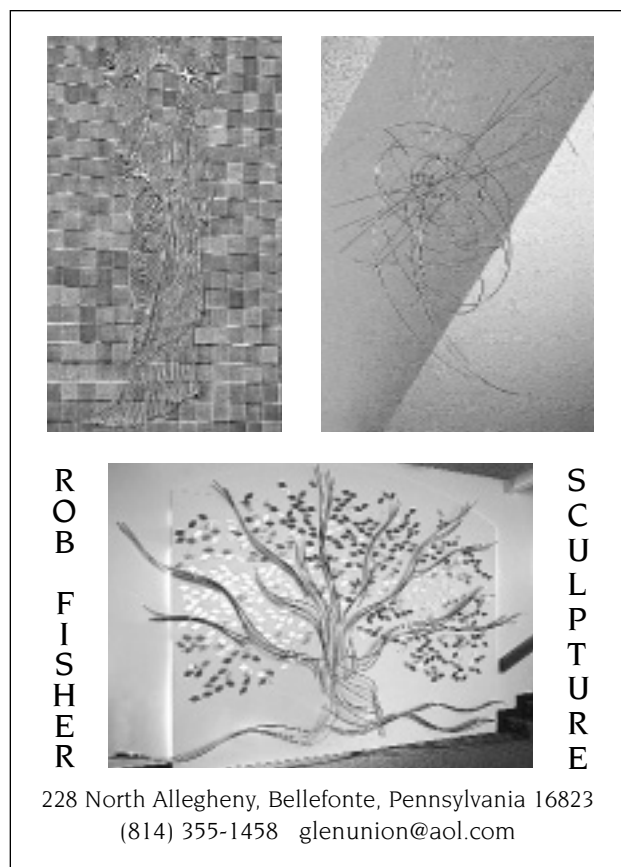
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JUST ONE MORE THING...

By *Betty H. Meyer*



Recently I asked an architect a question about a project of his that was completed a number of years ago. He responded that he would call me back after he had checked his firm's archives.


I have been acutely aware of the importance of archives the last year-and-a-half as I have worked on a history of ARC (The Society of the Arts, Religion and Contemporary Culture) whose archives are at Harvard Divinity School. But somehow I had never seriously considered the importance of an archive to an architecture firm. Have you?

I decided to talk with an architect, Maurice Finegold of Finegold Alexander + Associates, and an archivist, Nora Zarzizar of Payette Associates, both in Boston. They promptly convinced me that an architectural archive is not a luxury but a necessity. They outlined for me the practical reasons this is true, even though adequate space, time, and money are involved.


1. Archives provide a permanent history of the transactions and decisions of the firm.
2. This record can be used as a referral to inform new members of the firm.
3. It can also be useful in educating building committees and the general public.
4. It provides material for fund raising and to enhance the firm's image in public relations.
5. It can introduce firm members to the excitement and fulfillment of research.
6. It chronicles the contribution of individuals and refreshes memories.
7. It furnishes a record of retired, resigned, terminated, or deceased individuals.
8. It preserves newspaper and magazine publicity, audio-visual materials, and transcriptions.
9. It provides files of maps, blueprints, brochures, design plans, photos, etc.
10. It makes exhibits of various kinds possible, including those for television and web sites.
11. It furnishes all you need for key anniversaries and celebrations.

I was interested in one of their comments especially: "Sometimes as one combs through the archive looking at architectural designs of the past, an exciting design for the future will suddenly appear in the mind of the user—almost as a revelation."

If I have convinced you that your firm should have an archive, or you need to expand or improve the one you have, then I am grateful. Just one more thing—to help you with the organization,

equipment, management, and functioning of an archive, contact: The Society of American Archivists, 527 S. Wells Street, 5th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60607-3922; 312-922-0140; www.archivists.org. They will lead you step-by-step until a successful and exciting archive is a part of your firm. 

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