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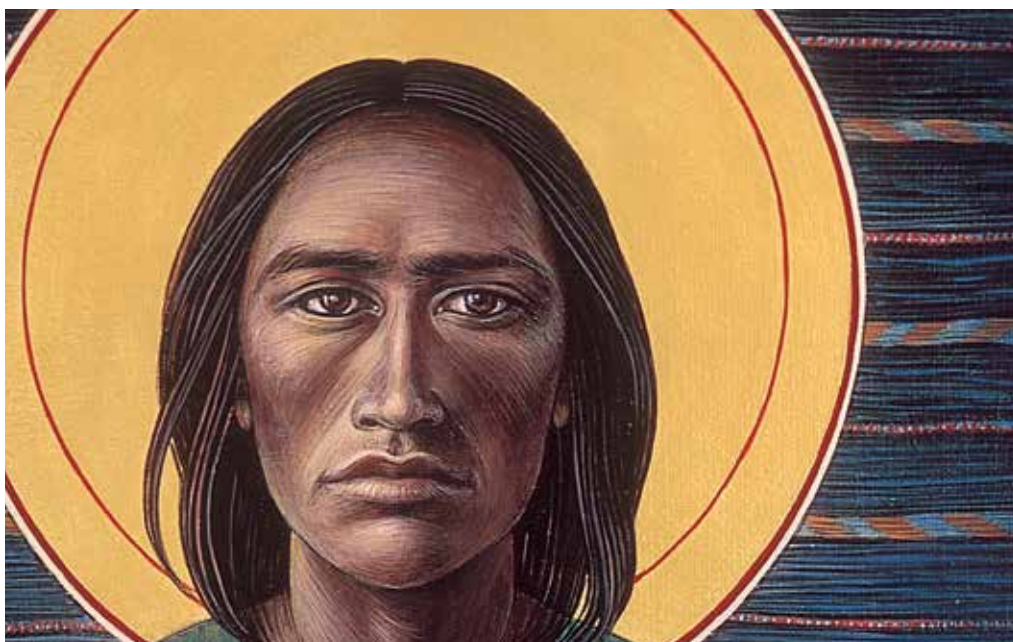
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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Painting as Prayer <i>The Art of Father John Giuliani</i> By Judith Dupré	6
The Sacred Artist-In-Residence By Joseph Malham	13
Bodies of Faith <i>Feeling the Spirit in the Art of Dance</i> By Liz Lerman	15
A Master Plan for Art By Richard Vosko	18



ON THE COVER: "Compassionate Christ" (1998) by Father John Giuliani, whose work is the subject of a profile by Judith Dupré that begins on page 6.

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Page	4
Views	22
Notes & Comments	23
Artist/Artisan Directory	26
Architects Directory	29
Just One More Thing	31

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Bendheim	5	Meyer-Vogelpohl	22
Botti Studio of Architectural Arts, Inc.	31	R. Geissler, Inc.	30
Church Restoration Group	31	Rambusch	25
CM Almy	25	Rohlf's Stained and Leaded Glass	4
Holy Rood Guild	22	Verdin Company	25
IFRAA Conference	32	Willet Studios	2

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THE ART OF BRIDGING SACRED AND SECULAR



EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

Art has always been part of religious experience. From the very dawn of human consciousness, art has played a role in how humankind worships, how we pray, how we relate to God. Great art, either secular or sacred, can transform us. It has a power similar to prayer. Art is a way for our spirits

to speak, and a way for us to listen.

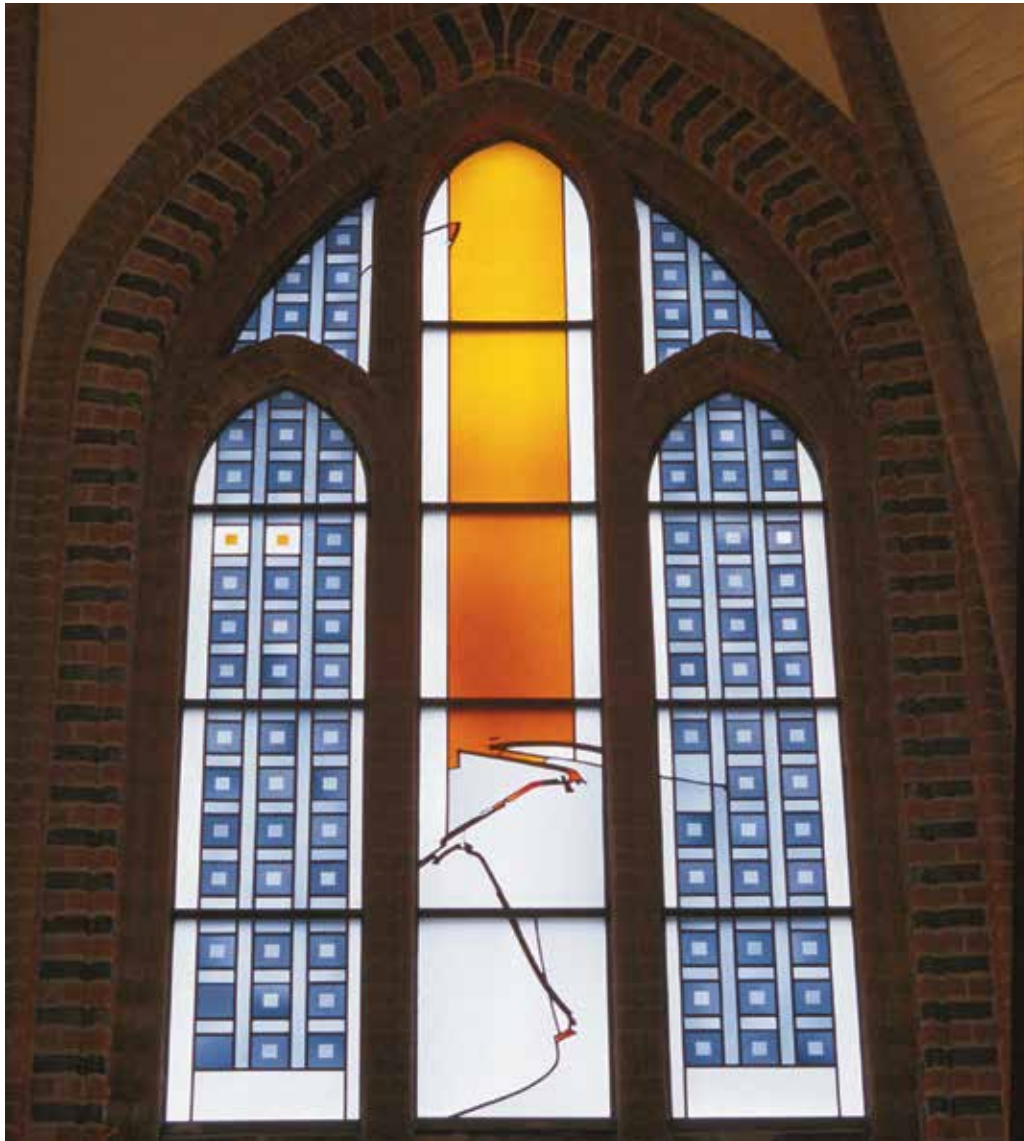
Part of religious art's special power lies in the fact that it can transcend the confines of a church or temple. It can reach out into the community, and make the "everyday" sacred, although this doesn't happen often enough. In a recent article in the *Seattle Weekly*, Mike McGonigal explained how the city's white-dominated art scene is benefiting from a good shot of gospel song. Specifically, Seattle's Total Experience Gospel Choir, founded 31 years ago and led by Pastor Patrinn Wright, makes it a point to sing anywhere it can outside of church. The choir has performed in prisons, restaurants, shopping malls, and festivals, "anywhere that people least expect to hear church music," McGonigal notes. Pastor Wright has her reasons: "People are less judgmental at a restaurant and more likely to actually listen to what you're doing," she says. The choir's reach is considerable. They performed for President Clinton, appeared on a Dave Matthews album, and even sang with the late, great Ray Charles. The Total Experience Gospel Choir doesn't hide its light under a bushel basket, and neither should any sacred artist. If art can change us, then sacred art has a duty to push the doors open and meet people where they live and work the other six days of the week.

In this spirit, this issue considers sacred art's transformative power. Father John Giuliani talks with Judith Dupré on painting as a form of prayer, and the power that sacred art possesses to reflect ourselves in God. Father John's iconographic images of deities rendered as Native Americans are startlingly spiritual and visually captivating. Artist Joseph Malham writes about how artists-in-residence can affect a worship community's notions of art, and how being part of a family of faith contributes to the artist's work. The kinetic power of bodies in motion to express delight in the divine is the subject of Liz Lerman's article on her work as a choreographer working with congregations of many faiths. Lerman writes about how dance expresses our spiritual beliefs, and how her own experiences of sacred dance have carried over into her secular work. Rounding out our feature articles, Richard Vosko discusses how liturgical art consultants can work with congregations to commission and guide sacred art that is a true expression of faith.

This issue is also an opportunity to announce the release of a new publication, *Sacred Meaning in the Christian Art of the Middle Ages*, by Stephen Fliegel, who is a curator of medieval art at the Cleveland Museum of Art. This lavishly illustrated book is the first in the Sacred Landmarks Monographs series, published by *Faith & Form* and the Center for Sacred Landmarks at Cleveland State University. Fliegel reminds us, as do the articles in this issue, that art and faith are evidence of the divine in each one of us.

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM

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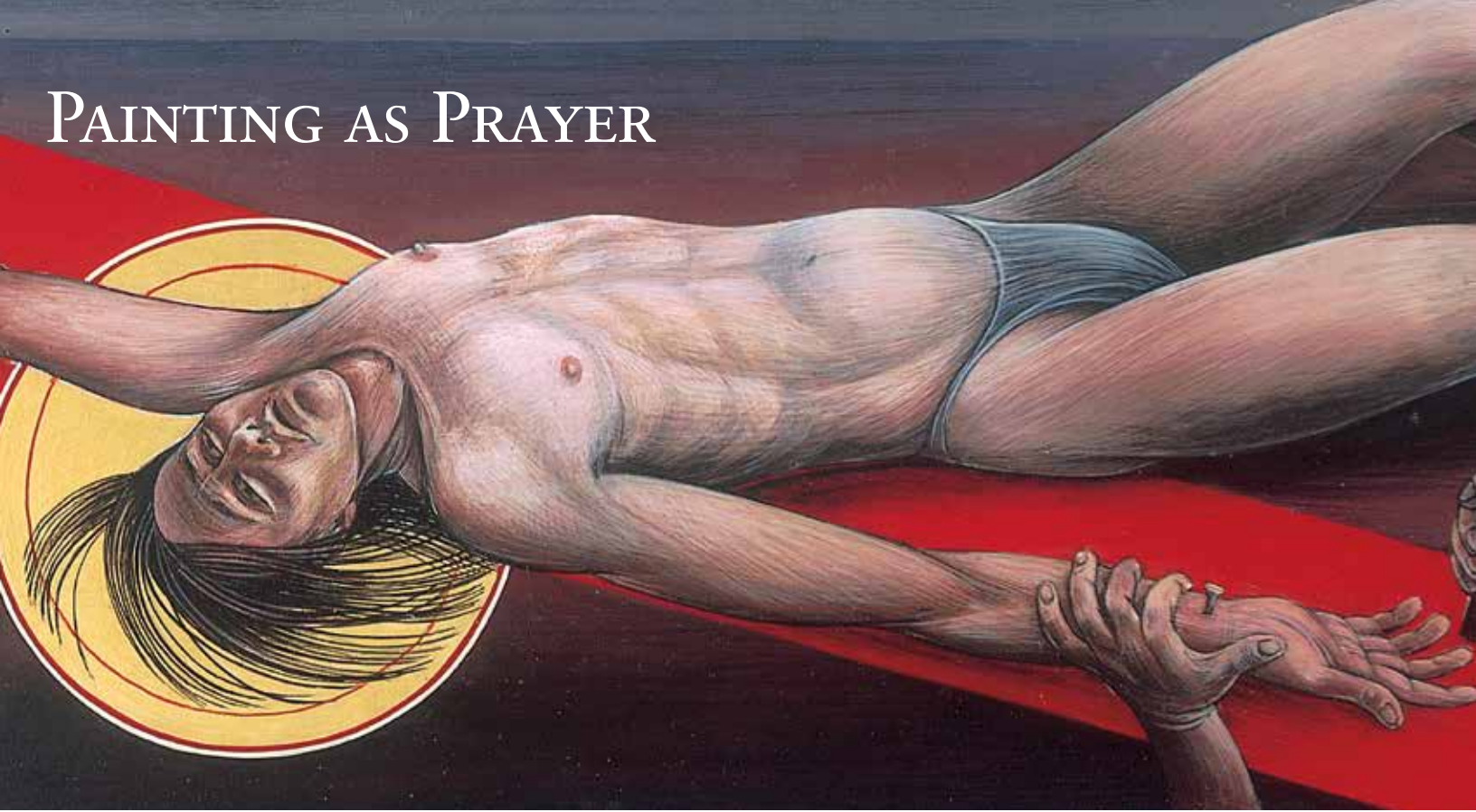
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PAINTING AS PRAYER



BY JUDITH DUPRÉ

life changed. He put down his paintbrush and entered the seminary. In 1977, after nearly two decades of diocesan ministry, he founded the Benedictine Grange, a monastic community in rural Connecticut where Mass is celebrated weekly by some 200 neighbors in a spare, 18th-century barn. Inflamed with the desire to communicate the dignity of all persons, especially those whom society has marginalized, he began painting again in 1989. Widely exhibited and praised, his meticulous acrylic-on-gesso panel paintings marry the mysticism of traditional iconography with the sensuality of the Italian Renaissance, and transcend both genres in their depiction of indigenous peoples rendered with joy and closely observed detail. His works are in churches throughout the United States, many of them on Native American reservations. Father John spoke with me at the Grange in July 2004.

JUDITH DUPRÉ HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS ON ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN. SHE ALSO SERVES AS ONE OF THIS JOURNAL'S EDITORIAL ADVISORS.

Judith Dupré: What made you start painting again after a hiatus of four decades?

John Giuliani: Although my sensibility was one that was attracted by beauty and form, and the liturgy itself was an avenue of expressing beauty, form, and ritual, I didn't paint once I entered the seminary. I moved here with the brothers in 1977. Our life was extremely demanding. We followed the Benedictine rule of life, praying seven times a day. We were manual laborers. We did everything—cut the grass, built outdoor sheds for tools, divided rooms into cubicles for the brothers, cleaned, shopped, cooked, did all the chores as monastics do. This continued creatively and productively for over a dozen years, until 1989. When the last brother left, finding myself alone, I realized that I would have to do something profoundly creative to sustain my solitude. I established the Grange believing that I would be a brother among brothers until the end of my life. Although there was enough ministry and manual labor to fill my hours, I needed something that would bring my solitude into communion, into solidarity.

One Easter morning, my friend Elizabeth and I began speaking about art as ministry. Liturgical art is a ministry. Every object within a liturgical setting is utilitarian. You design a chalice as beautifully as you can for the purpose it serves. We can speak of such objects as works of art, but for me they are works of craft because they exist in the service of others. I thought that I might return to painting. However, not primarily as self-expression. I identify myself

as a priest, as one whose identity consists in being ministerial. The art, whatever it might be, had to be mediational, the way a priest is a go-between, a bridge-maker. In this sense, I have never considered myself an artist. The word is too big for me. At most, I can say I'm an artisan, which is very different.

Dupré: How does your faith inspire your paintings?

Giuliani: I cannot live without a sense of beauty, but it is not separate from my life of faith and worship. They are complementary. When I experience the rush of something that is beautiful, standing within a magnificent architectural space, before a painting or a sculpture, being at the theater, listening to music—this to me is little different from faith experience. Beauty brings us into communion with all that we call God, the transcendent, the sacred, the holy. The experience of “at-one-ment” with a work of beauty is communion. Like prayer, beauty puts you in touch with the source of creativity.

Dupré: Does nature also inspire you?

Giuliani: Yes, it does. However, for me, inspiration comes more from the productive aspect of creativity. The making. I'm a doer, a *homo faber*. I'm Italian. I not only talk with my hands, but I *do* in order to realize. I *make* in order to see. As I grow older, doing becomes less necessary, the more I can simply be and still experience everything that I was talking about earlier. Age brings one into a deeper, more gentle sense of being with greater patience and contentment in simple observation.

Dupré: You enrolled for a time at the School



THE ART OF FATHER JOHN GIULIANI

of Sacred Art in Greenwich Village and studied Russian iconography. How did that influence you?

Giuliani: It was both grueling and rewarding. Orthodox iconography exists within a canon of hierarchical precepts, meaning it's full of do's and don'ts. Executing a traditional icon calls for obedience and humility. The first week we spent sanding and gessoing the wood—eight, nine, ten coats until the surface was like glass. From the beginning, my teacher would say, Giuliani, you must not paint, you must float. Meaning the technique of floating, permitting the color to float on the surface to create an illusion of the patina of an icon.

Ultimately, I could not get past my proclivity toward line and depicting the human form more realistically than stylistically. This was at odds with traditional Orthodox iconography which consists in being faithful to surreal, or unreal, perspective and sources of lighting. It was a marvelous discipline, but after a year I realized, I'm not Greek, I'm not Russian, I'm North American. That epiphany was wonderfully liberating. Being a first-generation Italian-American, I easily identified with Native Americans and their sensibility, which is tribal. Italians, with their extended families of relatives and friends, are tribal people. We also shared the same sense of economics—of recycling, and producing more with less. My father was a shoemaker, my mother crocheted and knit. Her kitchen was a room of artistry. All of these indigenous characteristics became iden-

tifiable among the Native Americans as I began to reflect upon them and study their craft. It was a wedding.

Dupré: Your Native American icons defy traditional representations of religious subjects. Is the viewer empowered by seeing the saints rendered in their own likeness?

Giuliani: My intent in depicting Christian saints as Native Americans is to acknowledge their original spiritual presence on this land. Many have been converted to Christianity with little of their indigenous culture remaining. It is this especially that I celebrate in rendering the beauty and excellence of their craft as well as the dignity of their persons. It is work of personal reparation. I have no intent to proselytize. When the Lakota Sioux throughout the Dakotas, most of whom had been evangelized by Jesuit missionaries, first saw themselves depicted in my works as saints, they were ecstatic. Many of them contacted me, weeping even, and said, We have never before seen ourselves depicted as Mary, as Jesus, the saints. So the flood began.

I met Bishop Charles Chaput of South Dakota whose mother is Potawatomi. He was totally supportive, and put me in touch with the Jesuits

who were running a spiritual retreat in South Dakota. Father Hatcher asked me if I would paint a trinity because the Native Americans were having a hard time understanding, intellectually, the concept of the Trinity. They were visual people and if they could see the Trinity depicted, they would understand. I painted the Father as an aged wise man, and Jesus as the victorious warrior in his warrior jacket, and the Holy Spirit as a red-winged hawk, the sacred bird, and, in another painting, as an eagle, the most sacred bird. He also asked me to paint a resurrected Christ as a Sundancer with bear claws and wounded body. They understood what the Sundance sacrifice is all about.

Dupré: I worked at Fort Belknap in Montana, also an extremely isolated and poor reservation. Many aren't aware of the role of prayer in Native American art. I was always struck that prayers were offered before any object was made, in thanks for what was being given to the artist. The art was given to the artist, as opposed to the artist giving the art.

Giuliani: That is what is so powerful about the orthodox iconographers. They are considered priests. They don't even call them painters, they



"Bolivian Christ Breaking Bread" (1996)



Joseph have no fear in taking mary as your wife

are writers. One "writes" an icon. The icon writer is a priest, a mediator, a servant of the image that becomes the window through which, both ways, the human and divine are operative. All of this connected with me, and that's why I didn't abandon the spiritual principles of iconography in painting Native Americans. I wanted these paintings to reflect back onto the Native American viewers their own dignity and sacredness.

Dupré: What is the particular power of figurative, realistic work?

Giuliani: What do we know better than the human body? We are utterly familiar with it. Such beauty, such sensuousness. That for me is the ultimate attraction of the human form. As Christians we believe that we are incarnate beings, that divinity resides within us, and that makes the body all the more to be revered.

Dupré: How does an icon mirror the soul?

Giuliani: The icon invites the viewer to look upon the divinity it depicts, as into a mirror, and then to see oneself reflected in that light. As I look upon that which is holy, I see myself reflected as a holy one. At first I did not intellectualize this. When I painted an icon, especially as the facial features began to emerge, I realized that I was looking into the soul of the image which had taken on its own identity. I came into relationship with that soul, and it was no less relational than you and I are at this moment. The image took on its own reality. It was no longer me. It called for a response of reverence and humility.

Dupré: You were being reformed by the very thing you were painting.

Giuliani: Precisely. That's why I could stand back, look at the image, and say, with no regard whatsoever to myself, "You are beautiful." The image had come into a life of its own. And I was amazed, as I am each time this happens. As I fall into the painted folds of the fabric, I sense myself as a weaver with a brush watching something marvelous emerge. The more marvelous it becomes, the less I'm aware of the maker. The work takes on its own life.

Dupré: On one hand, your work is tethered in by the portrayal of specific ethnic identity, yet, at the level of the brushstroke, it foregoes any such limitation. At close range, the very fine surface marks are apparent, and the paintings become cosmic, completely liberated.

Giuliani: Within the first year of painting, I needed new eye glasses because my eyes were so strained from rendering detail. I am drawn to detail because of the beauty and fineness of Native American artistry—the beadwork, quill embroidery, weaving. I wanted to emulate that fineness in a different medium. What you say about meditation describes my state while painting. Once I enter into a painting—after the pragmatic prep work is done—the painting becomes an invitation, a contem-

plation when the mind ceases operation and the soul is at one with the Other. It claims more and more of my time and energy without my thinking of time and energy.

Dupré: You enter the transcendent state of prayer.

Giuliani: Yes, enter no less than a contemplative prayer in which five hours could be one minute or one minute could be five hours. Time is a fiction. When one is rapt in prayer, not so much intercessory prayer while praying intentionally for particular concerns, but prayer in its purest form, in wonder and awe, self-forgetfulness, puts us in rapturous communion. There is no separation.

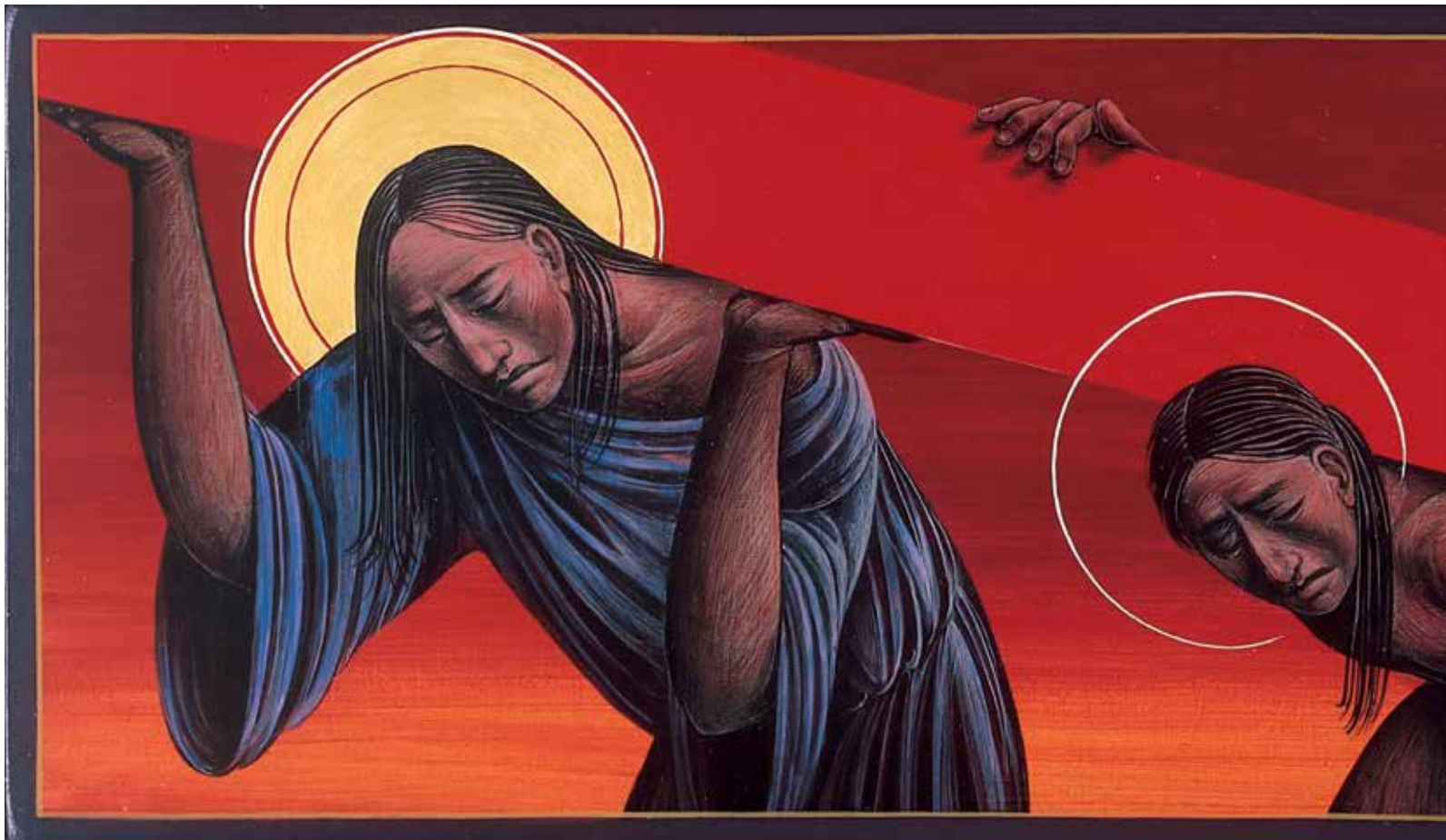
Dupré: The idea of no separation from each other, from God, from the past, present, or future, is the most beautiful thought. Let's talk about Our Lady of Guadalupe, whom you've painted and to whom we are both devoted.

Giuliani: Guadalupe falls into the category of revelation. It is a vision given, a vision not relative to the artist. I am not talking about faith here. I am talking about the visual fact, the miraculous imprint of a revelation. While there is room for stylistic variations, the essential canon of the image is set. The image is not subject to the suggestion of the artist. We don't have any visions of John the Baptist, of Francis of Assisi. We have endless stories that can stimulate any number of creative expressions, but there is no canon. There's something sacrosanct about the vision that

Text continues on page 12



"Andean St. Christopher with Child Jesus" (1998)



"Simon Helps Carry the Cross" (2001)



"Jesus and the Disciples" (1999)



"Lakota Trinity" (1995)



is given, especially since it rests in a material basis: Guadalupe imprinted on the mantle of Juan Diego.

Dupré: I appreciate that your diptych broke with convention and showed Juan Diego at the same size as Guadalupe. He is so often seen as an accessory to the story, the poor soul who got the ball rolling, but his faith and courage were exemplary. Faced with the same mission, most of us would be daunted into inaction. We would not have the faith to believe, quite simply, that we were the one who was called to deliver the message.

Giuliani: When I was asked to paint Guadalupe and Juan Diego, I

intentionally saw them side by side, in relationship. One without the other does not truly exist. I wanted to convey Diego's awe at the gift given him. What must have he experienced in that encounter! He looks, like most of the men in my paintings, like my brother Vin who died several years ago. There he is, Vin, with his huge eyes, dark brows, full lips, and innocent gaze. His spirit gave life to Diego's wonder and amazement. I want to say that

Guadalupe's face is one of the most beautiful that I've ever painted. Again, I say this only because the painting has a life of its own. I look at her and wonder, "Where did she come from?"


Dupré: What periods or paintings have had greatest influence on your work?

Giuliani: I'd have to say the Italian Quattrocento, and of those artists, without question, Piero della Francesca. There's something mysterious about him. His work is not psychological at all—that is what he *doesn't* offer. In a sense, his figures are lifeless, more statuesque, simply there, gazing at the viewer like gods and goddesses waiting upon some response. Some 20 years ago at the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts, I stood before a della Francesca—"Virgin and Child Enthroned with Four Angels" [c. 1460-70]. How remarkable that out of the small number of surviving della Francescas, one of such beauty is here among us in New England! As I stood in front of it something happened. I don't know what. When I came out of "it," I knew without protestation that I had painted this work. I knew how I had painted it—to the brushstroke. It was a mystical experience. I felt an intense *simpatico* and soul identification with della Francesca. This has never happened before or after.

Dupré: What do you think you experienced?

Giuliani: What happened at the Clark Institute was unique and, I suspect, the result of the soul's openness to the sheer power of beauty. I believe in the communication of souls. What is time, what is space? These are the big questions. We succumb to conventional imposition of limitation. In reality, there is no limitation.

Dupré: Would you say your experience was a divine gift?

Giuliani: Only in the sense that I believe divinity is experienced in the ordinary. Each of us would be capable of entering into such an experience not only once in a lifetime, but many times if we were able to see past cultural impositions. This is why art is so powerful, why beauty like prayer is so powerful. It enables us to see through imposed obstacles. It liberates us. 



Father John Giuliani at the Benedictine Grange

THE SACRED ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

By JOSEPH MALHAM

About three years ago I had the good fortune to become acquainted with Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church on Chicago's north side. By profession a creator and restorer of sacred art, I was looking for a church that needed restoring, and by coincidence Reverend Bart Winters, the new pastor of St. Gregory, was looking for an artist to restore the interior of the splendid 80-year-old Gothic Revival church.

If not exactly a case of the man and the hour having met in terms of historical destiny, it did prove to be a fortuitous encounter from which sprouted a giving tree whose branches have spread wider and further in my life than I possibly expected.

Beginning with several large devotional shrines whose gilded glory lay buried under thick coats of sooty grime, faded pigment, and tarnished gold leaf, I began restoring paintings, appointments, decorative panels, and other devotional works in the sanctuary and the side altars. Soon Father Winters and the parish offered me a loft in the parish center as a studio, and my joy was complete by having a base of operations from which I could restore artwork, paint icons, write, and guiltlessly indulge in the occasional *dolce far niente* essential to the life of any artist.

I became, and remain, an artist-in-residence with a wonderful faith community that continues to nurture and support me in my endeavors to use my talents for the glory of God's house.

The sense of responsibility, if not *gravitas*, that accompanied my newfound position within the community made me come to several conclusions regarding the nature of the religious artist-in-residence. The first is that while the title is appropriate in a church or synagogue setting, it is rather limited in terms of its fullest expression of what that artist should be. With all respect, the sacred artist is called to a different vocation than an artist-in-residence in an academic or civic setting. The second is that the artist-in-residence phenomenon is a vital and eminently relevant link in the life of the faith community and one, regardless of the artistic discipline, that needs to be revived and encouraged in denominations of all faiths.

The answer to what is the fullest expression

of the artist-in-residence, and why it is so integral to the life of the community, can only be answered in looking at the history of the concept and how it enriches our journey of faith.

ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE ACROSS THE AGES

While the term "artist-in-residence" is a fairly modern expression, the phenomenon of art patronage is a much older reality that is rooted in the collective memory of Christian Europe itself. Beginning with the gilded glory of Byzantium, where artisans served God by creating churches, mosaics, and icons for dynasties of the ruling emperors, the concept of patronage reached an apogee of sorts with the late medieval and high Renaissance periods in Western European history. Raised from the servitude and ignominy that was part of life in the artisan class, painters, sculptors, musicians, and poets evolved into celebrities of sorts whose works not only helped define but actually survived Europe's golden Age of Faith.

Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael are the most stellar examples of artists whose works flourished under the patronage of communities as disparate as monasteries, art guilds, city-states, and even the Vatican itself. For hundreds of years, no self-respecting monarch or potentate was without some household artistic genius whose paintings, sculpture, verse, or philosophical musings would act as an eternal testimony to the real or imagined glories of their reign.

Despite the fact that by the dawn of the 20th century the intimate bonds between artist/faith and artisan/faith community were disintegrating from the effects of the Industrial Revolution, secularism and the rise of the "Super-Artist" celebrity cult, some legendary collaborations shine forth. Between 1950 and 1960 alone, there was the relationship between the communist Giacomo Manzù and Pope John XXIII, the Protestant Le Corbusier and the Dominican friars at Ronchamp, and the Sensualist Henri Matisse and the Dominican nuns at Vence.

These examples, typifying the new spirit of ecumenism and inclusiveness that characterized the post-war era of faith, were but fleeting moments of glory, and by the close of the millennium the religious artist-in-residence had become as much a museum piece as the works of art of the masters who had gone before them.

At least in terms of the visual arts, there are many reasons one could cite for the growing

gap between the individual sacred artist and faith communities, all of which are valid to some degree but none of which can be labeled as definitive. Regarding ecclesiastical environment and art, there was a major shift in architectural languages. The 20th century saw a shift from venerable styles such as Gothic and Romanesque to a modern vernacular of functionalism and relativism that celebrated light, materials, and "the people" rather than ineffable mysteries of faith manifested in representational art.

With a renewed understanding of the liturgy there came an emphasis on the communal as opposed to the spatial elements of worship, which dictated stripping sacred space of all that was superfluous or distracting from the primary focus on the people of God. These noble intentions worked well when done properly and with a sense of balance, but more often than not many essential babies were tossed out with the bathwater of renewal. What was junked or painted over was replaced by bland paint jobs or pre-fabricated appointments bought indiscriminately from catalogues specializing in tinny kitsch that was as cold and generically "modern" as the old stuff was Victorian or "old church."

This is a slight digression but it does point to two major causes underlying the rupture between artisan and community: namely that of economics and expediency. The idea of "adopting" an artist to create sacred works of art in and for the community smacks of added economic burdens and seems impracticable when everything an artist creates for sacred worship can be ordered from some catalogue or another.

And yet this is neither the tradition of sacred art nor the teachings of the great religions.

THE ARTIST IN THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP

From the earliest days of monotheistic worship, the faithful were commanded by God to create objects and appointments that would render that worship beautiful, dignified, and sublime. In the Book of Exodus, God spends some six chapters giving the Israelites specific, detailed instructions on how objects for the sanctuary were to be fashioned. They were intended for the worship of the Lord, and the shoddy and second-rate were not to be tolerated.



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Creativity is an integral part of our journey to God, and in a metaphorical way our own creative impulses mirror the Lord's supremely benevolent act of creating and sustaining the universe. Regeneration within families insures the continuation of that particular family as well as the human race in general. Spiritual regeneration within a faith community insures the continuation of that community and the handing down of its core beliefs to future members.

In the sacred arts, creativity transforms the artist into creator as well as window; creator in the sense that the artist is consciously making things of beauty to serve God and humanity, and window in the sense that the artist becomes transparent so that the beauty of the Word may shine through them. In that sense all sacred art is a true icon and all sacred artists are true iconographers.

A VOCATION OF FAITH AND ART

In our day, too many sacred artists have become discouraged due to a lack of interest in their work and a hesitancy of communities to hire them to create original, unique works of liturgical art. Unable to compete with the impersonal and ubiquitous catalogue out of which comes altars, arks, vestments, furniture, statues, paintings, and appointments, many drift discontentedly from convention to convention in hopes of a sale or large commission. Many in the end abandon their calling and out of economic necessity find another way to make a living.

If living and serving as a sacred artist is indeed a vocation, then there is, without doubt, a vocational crisis in the field of sacred artists. As is true for the active ministry and religious life in which men and women are called to live consecrated lives of service, the vocation to the sacred arts must be seriously nurtured by families, communities, and the artists themselves. Unlike the current vocational crisis in the ordained minis-

try, where dwindling numbers can be traced to numerous socio/psychological reasons, the crisis in the field of the sacred arts, as stated before, usually stems from the more mundane problem of economics and expediency.

"Where are we going to put an artist when we are busting at the seams already?" is what most faith communities would probably say to the offer of welcoming an artist-in-residence. Or, "How can we afford to have an artist hanging around when we don't know how we are going to meet next month's payroll and light bills?" Again, fair enough.

However, since a sacred artist searches for a community primarily to give support and encouragement, money is an important issue but should not be a problematic one. An oversupply of unpaid bills is the traditional *bête noire* of both artist and faith community, but a nemesis one could help the other overcome in creative and mutually beneficial ways.

Even a small church always seems to have a preponderance of rooms, offices, and halls from which a space could surely be spared for an artist. What would it take to give an artist a small room or suite of rooms (attics seem most appropriate!) in which they could create their art, compose their music, or write their books and poems? The presence of an artist brings good energy to a community, and an extra set of hands around the place keeping a room occupied, lit, and warm is itself no small reward.

The second problem, the money question, is one that has to be worked out according to what each side needs to take in and can afford to pay out. Actually, the optimal situation is to avoid exchange of cash altogether (a stipend for the artist or rent for the community) and see the relationship as reward enough. On a pragmatic level, the cost of one more room to light, heat, and maintain can be offset by the extra-curricular activities of your artist-in-residence.

Being people of creativity and resourcefulness, they could lend their talents in myriad ways to meet the needs of the parish. I personally help offset the rent of my space at Saint Gregory by using my writing skills to craft support materials, create website text/imagery, and promote spiritual and cultural events in the parish.


THE BLESSINGS OF SUPPORT

In the final analysis, the mutuality of this spiritual bond, this sacred union, is expressed in the three major benefits of adopting, nurturing, and supporting a sacred artist-in-residence:

- **Honor of God** — the artist puts the fruit of their art to the service of God, and honors the Lord through the exercise of the gifts given to them from birth.
- **Support of a Sacred Vocation** — since all churches and faith communities hold to a policy of social outreach and peace and justice, supporting an individual with a vocation to sacred artistry is consonant with Scriptural exhortations and sacred tradition.
- **Enrichment of the Community** — as continually stated, sponsoring and supporting a sacred artist-in-residence not only energizes a faith community, but also instills a great sense of pride and ownership of talent and creativity.

While the emphasis of this article has been primarily on the visual arts, there is in fact no limit to the sacred artist that could serve and nurture any given faith community. Imagine the vast possibilities and the rewards to a church or temple having their own poet, musician, dancer, sculptor, writer, or painter who would not only utilize their God-given talents for the glory of God, but direct them back to the community as well.

Imagine if instead of phoning in an order for a veneered altar, a plated chalice or polyester prayer shawl, an artist-in-residence would create the same item but only this time as a hand-crafted, unique masterpiece that would be the pride of the community. Or if to commemorate a centennial, anniversary, or death, a community's artist-in-residence wrote a poem, composed a piece of music, choreographed a dance, or cast a bronze sculpture group. Imagine a faith community commissioning an icon or fresco from their household iconographer or a book from their own author. Sacred art is the art of the possible.

For nearly three years I have been an intimate part of St. Gregory's community as an artist, restorer, and friend. While the bond of faith has cemented us together, what allows the friendship to continually grow is the mutual commitment to not only the art of holiness, but the holiness of art as well. 



The author at work in his studio at St. Gregory the Great Church.

BODIES OF FAITH

FEELING THE SPIRIT IN THE ART OF DANCE

BY LIZ LERMAN

I never expected it to happen. When I first began to take my work as a choreographer into religious institutions, I imagined many possibilities for connecting dance and congregational life: dance thriving in religious school workshops, study retreats, or women's gatherings. And indeed, all these events did come to pass. But in the last decade I have seen a renaissance of activity through various denominations that have allowed dance and movement to happen best, and be most accepted, as part of the actual worship experience.

The path that led me to this witness is a long one. I am Jewish, raised in the classical Reform tradition. My own childhood synagogue in Milwaukee was a huge, hushed, but welcoming room. I loved its oddly painted ceiling and plain white painted walls. At that time in Reform Jewish practice (it was the late 1950s and early 1960s), most of the prayer "work" was being handled by others. The choir sang for us, the rabbi spoke to God for us, and, except for occasional responsive readings, there wasn't much for congregants to do during worship. So I kept

myself in an intimate relationship to the service by looking around this distinctive environment and musing on what I saw. One day during my adolescence, I returned from summer break for the High Holy Days to find new velvet seats and my beloved paintings covered with a repetitive gold pattern. I never felt engaged in the same way again.

Years later, in 1976, after a long and



"In Praise of Borrowed Blessings," part of Liz Lerman's national "Hallelujah" project, performed at the project's culminating residency at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland.

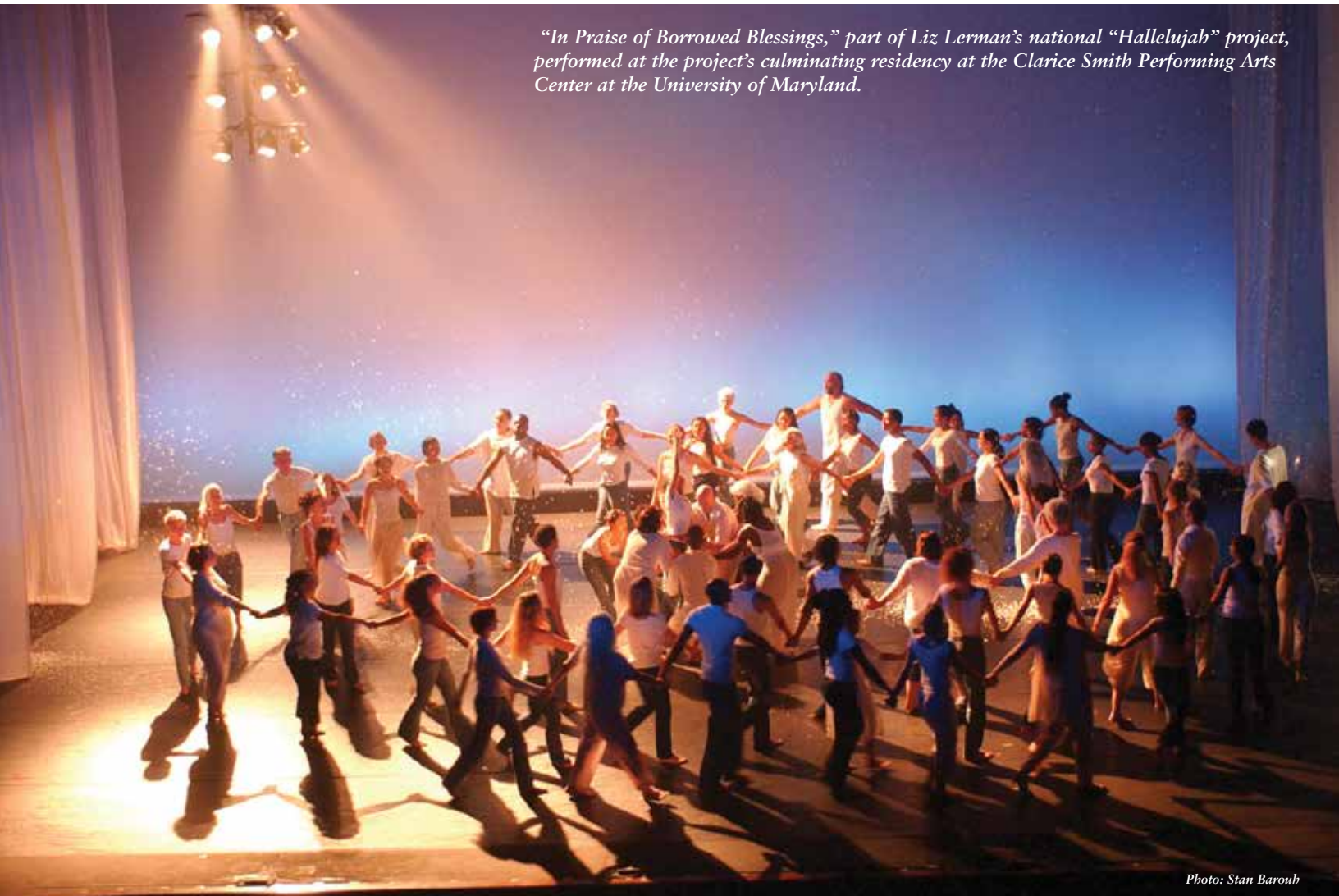


Photo: Stan Barouh

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somewhat torturous coming of age in the professional dance world, I founded a dance company on the idea that professional artists had a role to play in community life, and that both would be the better for the interaction. Central to this work from its start was a vital

relationship between concert choreography and the participatory activities we conducted in community settings. Among those settings, eventually, were many communities of faith. Because of my own background that most often meant Jewish settings.

This combination of elements conspired to bring me to a collaboration where I have had the opportunity to explore, in depth, the possibilities for dance in a worship setting. Around 1991 I was choreographing a performance work, “The Good Jew?,” that examined the challenges of Jewish identity and the possibility of living in both the secular and religious worlds. As part of its development, we did a small tour of synagogues presenting a work-in-progress version followed by conversation. During one of these a congregant suggested adding a scene in which one of the characters, the Sabbath Bride, would be lifted on a chair as the group danced around her, a tradition at Jewish weddings. The temple’s rabbi suddenly rose at that point to say, “No. No more Eastern European images,” and turning to me he said “we are looking to you, the artists, to show us new images to take us into the next century.” The congregation was Washington D.C.’s Temple Micah, the rabbi was Dan Zemel, and the incident sparked a collaboration that made Temple Micah the laboratory for over a decade of work exploring the role that dance could play in worship and the community life of a faith institution.

In this laboratory, the aesthetic rigor of concert work and social value of participatory engagement have become united in the act of prayer, danced by the whole congregation, sitting or standing, committed to using their

bodies in connection with their minds and the ancient texts, in order to reach what I think each individual calls a spiritual place.

Because my concert work often uses a combination of movement with text (usually spoken by the dancers), I devised many methods for words and dancing to be combined. This proved to be most useful in religious settings, since spoken prayer, torah text, psalms, and commentary are of such import to participation. And, specific to Jewish settings, it probably helped my work gain recognition in a culture where so much respect is accorded to scriptural study, spoken discourse, and the written word.

In the powerful traditions of liturgical dance, typically, some people dance while others watch. But being a person who is sometimes restless with prayer and who needs an active connection to the service, I decided early on that if I were going to involve dance in worship, the dancing would have to be for everyone in the room. And I was interested in developing a means by which even those who thought they couldn’t or wouldn’t dance might somehow be convinced to join in.

DANCE OF THE POSSIBLE

In worship settings, or anywhere else, there are countless ways to make dance, and to think about dance while doing it. Hence, I try to offer variety in order to call up different parts of the self and avoid predictability. At the same time I strive to teach the skills that people will need to accomplish the dance. When we put this into practice, each event is unique, but I will try to give a sense of the possibilities by describing a kind of composite service that offers several

creative experiences.

It starts as the congregation gathers outside the closed doors of the sanctuary. We are in a tight group. Before we enter, I ask people to close their eyes, to breathe, and to bring to mind all the people they love, whether still alive or not. Then I ask them to move in the smallest way, or to move as they might in preparation for prayer. With my own eyes open, I collect a few of the movements that I see. Then I show them some of the moves that they made, emphasizing nuance, because no one takes their arms above their heads in exactly the same way. The group repeats these moves with me. We sing or listen to some familiar music as we do the dance. People find this activity deeply moving. Often people cry.

We prepare to enter the sanctuary, holding hands in lines. I tell those at the front of each line just to wander through their beloved chapel, leading their line to snake behind them as they go. They can move through the seats or around the seats. Lines may encounter each other, resulting in gentle chaos. It is fun, simple, a way to connect to others who have chosen to come that night. Sometimes, at a signal, everyone goes to their seats. At other times, I get all the lines to connect and we will form a moving spiral that brings us all into close contact. We may stop, say a prayer, listen to the rabbi, resume the spiral, and then go to our seats.

After several regular prayers, we will dance to a particular prayer, repeating a dance that I have re-taught each time I was present. This is a rote activity: we are not improvising or creating new choreography, not talking to each other, not particularly connecting, unless to simply touch the shoulder of the person next to us as part of the choreography. The movements in this prayer dance usually depict words and images in a straightforward “readable” way. Many people enjoy this kind of direct relationship, so the literalism of the choreography combined with the clarity of the task offer useful points of entry for different kinds of participants.

One of the interesting paradoxes of moving in congregational settings is the architecture itself. Many congregants find comfort in their memories of the setting, their accustomed view from where they sit, the repetition of the seating, and the relative physical space between each individual. The first thought people often have about choreography in such an orthodox setting is “wouldn’t it be great if the seats could be moved?” Well, yes and no. Yes, if everyone had the skills and the comfort level to move



Photo: Lisa Metzger

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange company members Pene McCourty, Margot Greenlee, Martha Wittman, and Marvin Webb perform “In Praise of Fertile Fields,” part of Liz Lerman’s “Hallelujah” project.



Photo: SheShooters

The Reverend Noriaki Ito, Higashi Hongwanji Temple, performs with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange and Los Angeles community members in "Stones Will Float, Leaves Will Sink, Paths Will Cross," part of Liz Lerman's "Hallelujah" project hosted by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles.

large, to fully explore the space, to find their "place" even when there is no fixed place for them (as they experience in their assigned or chosen seat). In reality, at least at first, it works better if people are dancing within the same environment they always associate with prayer, even if it's two banks of tightly packed, immovable benches.

If the seating is movable, we do often change the arrangement. We have tried concentric arcs, two large groups facing each other with space in the middle, chairs in triangular shapes in the four corners, leaving the center free. We did one service without sitting at all, and others that reached beyond the sanctuary to move through lobbies, social halls and outdoor grounds, concluding the service under the moonlight.

BIG STORY, LITTLE STORY

Finally, at some part of the service, we will make a new dance. Often, I will use an idea I call "Big Story, Little Story," where we look to our lives for a personal story that relates to the larger story of the prayer or the Torah portion. This usually reflects some advance planning with the rabbi or cantor to develop a question for people in the congregation to consider. I'll ask people to join with one or two others near them and talk for awhile in response to the question. Then I ask people to tell me some of the images that they described or that they heard. We make a dance (mostly gestured) from these images. Here movement expands further from the intuitive, communal, environmental, and literal roles it has played so far in the service. To demonstrate the artistic rigor, I like to bring people into my process of choosing the movements we combine into the dance. Sometimes they come directly from the person telling the story, as they gesture (often unconsciously) to make a point. At other times I listen for a verb, or a detail, or gather together two or three ideas that might be conveyed in one movement. After we have col-

lected some eight to ten moves, we will do the dance, accompanied by the prayer or reading that was our starting point. The juxtapositions that occur between the movement and the text quite often seem amazing. But what seems like coincidence, when a movement expresses the meaning or spirit of a spoken phrase, is really a testament to the many meanings a single movement can have.

For instance, recently at a synagogue where I was a guest artist, the Torah portion included Exodus, Chapter 20, where God speaks the Ten Commandments. The rabbi wanted the congregants to answer the question: "How had you been holy in the past week?" One person responded that he had helped a blind woman cross the street. As a movement we used the simple act of turning the head side to side to watch for cars. Later, when we danced to the text, that movement occurred at the words "honor your father and your mother." The alignment of words and movement was striking, so when we finished the dance, I asked what turning your from head side to side could mean about honoring your parents. One person responded with a clarity that probably came from personal experience: "That is what you have to do if your parents are divorced."

This is what art can do. It can help us create meaning, make meaning, make sense and purpose of our lives, of our rituals, of our texts, of our sacred spaces.

THE SACRED INFORMS THE SECULAR

In my early years of working at the synagogue, I mostly found myself using what I had learned from other community and choreographic projects to inform my explorations. But over time I began to see something distinctive in the work in congregational settings. I noticed that the clergy and I were asking the participants to do many things at once: read prayers, listen to others, stand and sit, ask questions and bring up memories, decide to dance or not to dance, be part of a group and be an individual, notice their surroundings and the people with them, to let go of the outside world, and then remember the outside world. It was, in fact, much more than I ask of the most sophisticated postmodern-savvy audiences who come to see my company perform in elite concert halls around the country. As a result, I began to let my work in congregations teach me how to be a bolder artist in the work I create for secular settings.

Working in secular settings has not limited me to secular subjects. The concert work and the congregational presence have also

cross-fertilized to influence the themes that my choreographic projects addressed. In the mid-1990s we created an evening-length work called "Shehechianu," which took the Jewish prayer of sustenance as its point of departure. From 1999 to 2002 we toured a project called "Hallelujah," which collaborated with people in 15 communities across the U.S. in creating dances "in praise of" unique and vital topics, engaging in the process Buddhist reverends, Jewish rabbis, faith leaders from the Christian and Native American traditions, gospel choirs, within a wide range of on-stage participants that eventually totaled over 1,000.

Right now I am beginning a project about prayer as a radical act. How do we define prayer? Where do personal spirituality and larger social questions intersect? When is prayer a form of activism and activism a form of prayer? I'm expecting to pursue these questions on a wide playing field, hoping that we can engage teenage girls, rabbinic and seminary students, my own performing company of inter-religious beings, and some of our international partners. At this very early stage the discoveries are already very stimulating. For instance, in my research for a recent partnership we undertook in Japan, I discovered that during World War II, Japanese communities would stitch pillows to send to their soldiers to "warm their stomachs." Each pillow had 1,000 stitches, each stitched by a different person. When I mentioned this to Kazu Nakamura, a Japanese man who dances with my company, he said, "Oh yes, those pillows were considered prayers."

From its beginnings, dance has been a way for human beings to grasp what they otherwise could not comprehend. This function of dance has always been a motivating force for me as I've made dances out of my own struggle to understand things in the world that challenged or perplexed me. So I am taking my restlessness about prayer and faith to people with different perspectives and making a suite of dances. At the same time, I continue to make dances with the congregation at Temple Micah, and with the other congregations who invite me to join them—Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and spiritualist. I continue to look for the links between the mind and the body, knowing that when they combine people experience something that transcends both, whether it happens on stage, in a studio, or in a place of worship. I am convinced that it is the human connection to the body, and the body's connection to the mind, that provides a ladder, a safety net, or a trampoline, enabling people to experience the spiritual. ■

A MASTER PLAN FOR ART

BY RICHARD S. VOSKO



Just over two years ago, Cardinal Roger Mahony and the people of the Church of Los Angeles dedicated their new cathedral. The Cardinal indicated from the beginning that two major themes – journey and light – should guide the creation of the structure. The Spanish architect Rafael Moneo was commissioned to design the building with these particulars in mind. Cardinal Mahony hired me to join the design team to direct the artistic enhancement of the cathedral and to be sure that the art and appointments were, in his words, “familiar to the faithful.” This article is a succinct overview of the process used in developing the master plan for art in the cathedral. It is a course of action that could be adapted for any church or synagogue building project.

MEETING THE ARCHITECT

A cathedral, like any house of prayer, is built upon the understanding of the worship practices of the faith community and the liturgical function of various spaces, appointments, furnishings, and works of art. My first task was to visit with Moneo in his Madrid offices to become more familiar with the plans that were already underway. Throughout the process, in addition to monthly meetings held in Los Angeles, both of us would occasionally meet in New York City to review the art program and decide whether or not the concepts were on the right track. Often differences of opinion were exchanged in the interest of arriving at appropriate solutions. I thought at this time what it would be like to have the artists present to participate in the design of the spaces in which their art would be placed.

THE OWNER'S VISION

Once I had a better grasp of the details for the building, I wanted to learn more about the expectations of the owner. It was important to listen to Cardinal Mahony talk about his ideas for the cathedral as well as its art and

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Our Lady of the Angels above the great bronze doors by Robert Graham.

furnishings. Although clear and concise in his thinking, he was open to other possibilities. The largest cathedral project in the modern era would be a costly and complex undertaking. Mindful that critical eyes would be watching the Cardinal generated and sustained enthusiasm throughout the process. Money could

not be spent irresponsibly. There were certain works of art that had to be in place on opening day: the font, altar, ambo, cathedra, crucifix, and tabernacle. After many discussions, other pieces would be added to that list. Everything had to be an original work of art. Nothing was to be picked out of a catalogue.

INPUT FROM THE LAITY

It would also be important to understand the expectations of the laity. This was a difficult task because unlike any other project there was no cathedral congregation. When the St. Vibiana Cathedral in Los Angeles closed due to severe structural damage caused by the 1994 North Ridge earthquake, the parishioners joined other faith communities. Because meeting with the laity was not possible, I requested a meeting with the Archdiocesan ethnic groups ministry, which is dedicated to understanding the many and varied backgrounds of the people who make up the Church of Los Angeles. I felt the art program for the cathedral had to reflect this diversity. The pastoral instincts of Monsignor Kevin Kostelnik, the first pastor of the cathedral, were most helpful in this regard. Like the members of the ethnic groups' ministry, he offered valuable insights regarding the customs and traditions of the people.

THE MASTER PLAN FOR ART

Once I collected enough information I began to write the art program that would serve as a foundation for the work ahead. The document contained the needs of the owner, expectations of different archdiocesan committees, liturgical and legislative documentation, and my design recommendations for implementing the program. In hindsight I wish there were a way to include stories from people throughout the Archdiocese. The plan was presented to the Cathedral Advisory Board for its approval. This same board, which had been advising the Cardinal on all aspects of the project from the beginning, would also later review the artists' proposals. Toward the end of the project I prepared a master plan for art, which continues to be modified and completed in phases.

ART AND FURNISHINGS COMMITTEE

Having worked as a design consultant for many years I've learned that no one of us knows more than all of us. I requested that a committee of local artists be created to work with me. Our first task was to sort through the hundreds of unsolicited portfolios sent by artists and vendors seeking to work on the cathedral project. We selected a small number of candidates from this inventory. I then personally invited other artists to submit their credentials. Rather than conduct an international search, I felt confident that I could find outstanding artists from Southern California. The art committee acted as a jury not only in interviewing the artists but also in reviewing



Detail of bronze doors by Robert Graham.

and critiquing their proposals. I established only three criteria for selecting the artists: they had to possess extraordinary portfolios; they had to have experience in working in a collaborative manner; and although they did not have to be Catholic, they had to display sensitivity to what I described as the unique phenomenon of the Catholic religion.

FINDING A BUDGET

As each artist was retained and commissioned by Cardinal Mahony, my responsibilities became more involved. One of my tasks was to participate in conversations regarding the art budget. All of the energy of the cathedral development office was focused on getting the structure built and paid for. The understanding was that art could be added to the space in phases later on. Only essential objects were required for opening day.

However, as the project developed it became obvious that other items would also become priorities. For example, the great bronze doors had to be an important work of art. In the Christian tradition, the door is a symbol of Jesus Christ. These cannot be ordinary doors and so the artist, Robert Graham, was commissioned to design a portal that would not only function efficiently but would make an artistic statement about the symbolism of this passageway.

The tapestry collection of the communion of saints by John Nava was another example of a work of art that could not be phased. Once my proposal to surround the worshippers in the cathedral with images of the saints and blessed ones of the Church became widely accepted, the commission found its way into the budget. Funding the commissions could not have been done without the help



Altar design by Cardinal Roger Mahony; bronze angels beneath the altar by M.L. Snowden; altar candles by Marirose Jelicich; crucifix behind the altar by Simon Toparovsky.

of the development office and the director of the archdiocesan construction office, Brother Hilarion O'Connor, OSF, who always seemed to know how to get things done in a timely and diplomatic manner.

BALANCING IDEAS AND OPINIONS

Probably my most demanding task had to do with managing the expectations and insights not only of the owners but also the donors, the artists, the art committee, and the design architect. And, of course, I had to figure out how to blend my opinions about each work of art into the mix. I was challenged to stand firm in my convictions while being attentive to the input of some very influential and creative people. The crucifix for the cathedral was a good example where various opinions had to be balanced. Some wanted the crucifix to be in scale with the interior of the building, which is immense. To do so would require a crucifix of enormous and heroic stature that would be suspended from the ceiling near or above the altar table. I proposed that a crucifix with such dimensions would be out of the reach of the many people for whom embracing the cross is a powerful gesture of veneration. Today, the life-size crucifix is planted in the floor near the altar table, where hundreds of people wait to embrace it throughout the week.

*Font by Richard Vosko;
baptism of Jesus tapestry by John Nava.*

WORKING WITH THE ARTISTS

Another task was most rewarding. It was essential for me to work closely with the artists especially during the all-important conceptual phase of each commission. The artists for the cathedral were not given a free hand. This was especially true of the two or three commissions that were completed to satisfy the requirements for public art on the property. All artists were expected to understand the function each piece played in the worship life of the Church before creating their own proposal. It was in this context that I happily spent endless hours with each artist. There were lively exchanges about history, culture, theology, and how art can be in the service of faithful people. Once the artist became aware of the purpose of the piece, he or she was then at liberty to generate the work of art. Although I believe the cathedral artists responded creatively and faithfully to this approach, many critics have questioned the appropriateness of some of the art, given the unique architectural style of this cathedral building. Again, the challenge was to


Photo: Julius Schulman and David Glomb

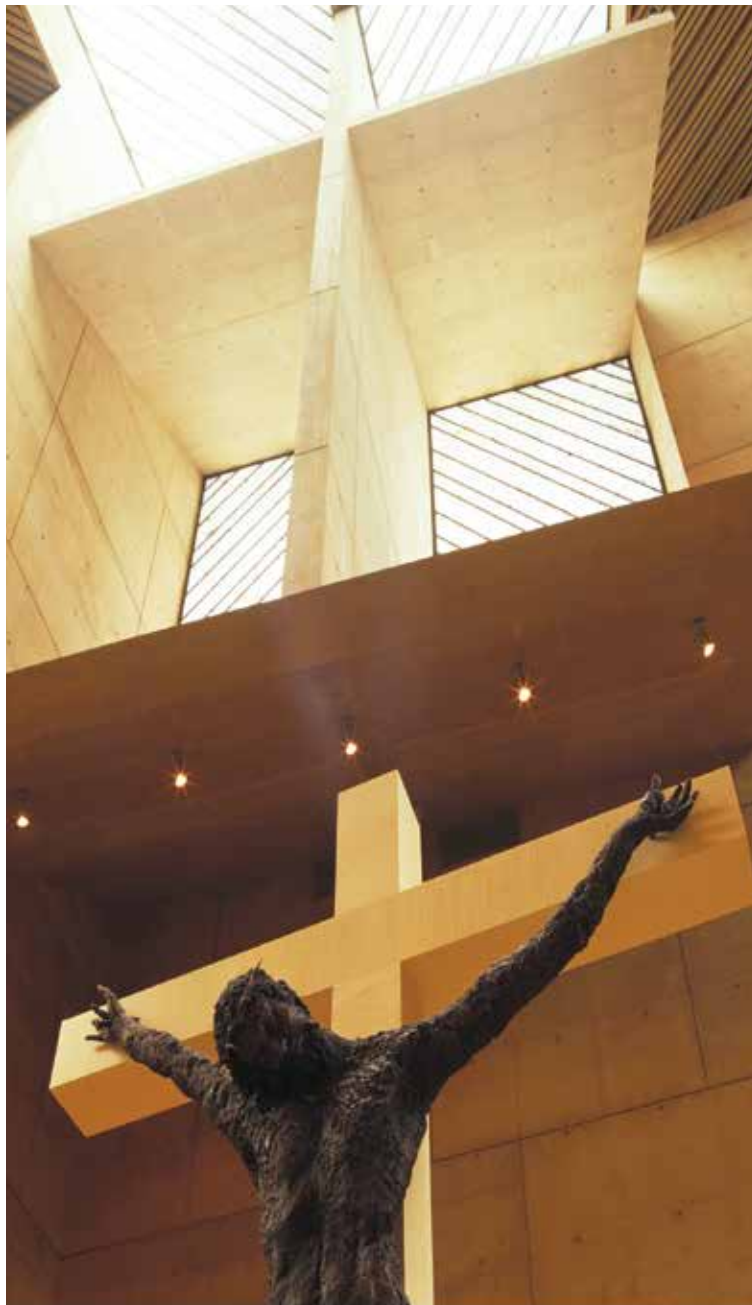


Photo: Julius Schulman and David Glomb

incorporate art that would be familiar to the people in an edifice that was obviously very modern.

CELEBRATING THE ART

Finally, the installation and dedication of each piece was a celebratory moment not only for the artists, but for all of the people involved along the way. The artistic process utilized in this cathedral project is an indication that art for worship can be planned and guided by more than one person as long as someone—the art consultant—is capable of managing assorted opinions, unpredictable schedules, and fluctuating budgets. The end result of this collegial effort is apparent in the cathedral today. The building, a contemporary interpretation of Mission style churches, certainly provides a stirring experience for all visitors. It is now apparent that worshipers and tourists alike are also inspired as they encounter the images and furnishings that enhance the cathedral inside and out. I am confident that these works, like the cathedral building, will stand the test of time. 



Detail of crucifix by Simon Toparovsky.

Photo: Julius Schulman and David Glomb

ARTISTS

- The Gateway Pool and Water Wall*
Lita Albuquerque
- Children's Garden Animal Sculptures*
Claro Creative Studios
- The Native American Memorial*
Johnny Bear Contreras
- The Tabernacle and the Dedication Candle Holders with Angels*
Max De Moss
- The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe – Plaza and Freeway sides*
Lalo Garcia
- The Great Bronze Doors*
Robert Graham
- The Donor Wall Angels*
Hakob Jambozian of The Judson Studios
- All Liturgical Vessels*
Marirose Jelich
- Restoration of St. Vibiana Cathedral Stained Glass for the Mausoleum*
The Judson Studios
- The Altar Table*
Cardinal Roger Mahony
- Eighteenth-Century Mural*
Frank Martinez
- The Tapestries: Communion of Saints, John the Baptist, New Jerusalem*
John Nava
- The Altar Table Angels*
M.L. Snowden
- The Crucifix*
Simon Toparovsky
- All Ritual Furnishings*
Jefferson Tortorelli
- The Baptismal Font*
Richard S. Vosko

PROJECT TEAM

- Owner*
The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- Archbishop*
His Eminence Roger Cardinal Mahony, D.D.
- Design Architect*
José Rafael Moneo
- Executive Architect/Engineer*
Leo A. Daly
- General Contractor*
Morley Construction Company
- Project Managers*
Stegeman & Kastner
- Structural Engineer*
Nabih Youssef & Associates
- Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing Engineer*
Ove Arup & Partners California
- Civil Engineer*
Rba Partners, Inc.
- Landscape Architect*
Campbell & Campbell
- Acoustic & Audio-Visual Design*
Paoletti Associates
- Lighting Design*
Francis Krahe & Associates
- Pipe Organ Consultant*
Manuel J. Rosales
- Pipe Organ Builder*
Lynn Dobson

VIEWS

KEEP IT UP

Congratulations on the recent changes to *Faith & Form*. The recent issue is especially thought-filled and beautifully organized.

*Ellen Schippert, Liturgical Consultant/Architect
Deckerville, Michigan*

JUBILEE CHURCH

Your article on the Jubilee Church in *Faith & Form* [Vol. 37, No. 2] is wonderful, extremely thoughtful, and beautifully presented. Thank you very much for your kind words.

*Richard Meier, FAIA
New York, New York*

MEIER'S RIVAL IN ITALY

I had a lovely time reading through *Faith & Form* about the Jubilee Church. I have literally pored over and read everything I can get my hands on about the Jubilee Church, and was delighted to read your interview with Meier. I have similarly sought material on the new Renzo Piano worship space in Italy, the Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church. While I'm sure it is designed to cater to the needs of throngs of pilgrims, I am sure it doesn't have the same focused sense of spiritual awareness that the Meier's design evokes. Nevertheless, I am keen to see what Piano has designed.

*Joe Boschetti
Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia*



Photo: Michel Donanée

Editor's note: Above is a sneak peek of Renzo Piano's Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church in San Giovanni Rotondo, which was dedicated in July. We'll have more on Piano's work in a later issue.

PRAISE FOR MONOGRAPH

Stephen Fliegel, Curator of Medieval Art, has done a truly splendid job in writing *Sacred Meaning in the Christian Art of the Middle Ages* and on behalf of the Cleveland Museum of Art I would like to express our gratitude to *Faith & Form* and the Center for Sacred Landmarks, Cleveland State University for having published this book. I would like to extend an invitation to you and to your readers to come and see our forthcoming exhibition, *Dukes and Angels: Art from the Court of Burgundy*, which opens October 24, 2004 and runs through January, 2005. I sincerely hope that you and your readers will have an opportunity to come and enjoy what promises to be a most stimulating and exciting exhibition.

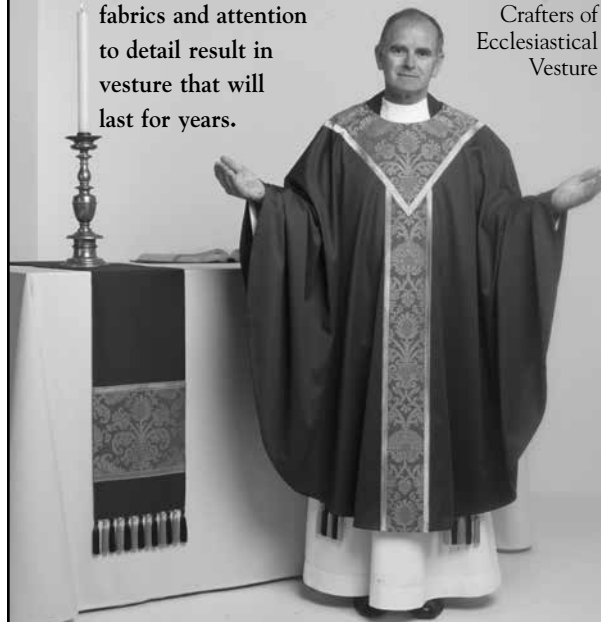
*Katharine Lee Reid, Director
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NOTES & COMMENTS

EXPLORING SACRED SPACE THROUGH 'NEUROARCHITECTURE'

A “tipping point” is the moment when an embryonic idea, known only to a few, becomes so popular that everyone seems to be talking about it. Architect John Eberhard believes that point has come for an idea he’s been nurturing for the past 10 years. It’s called “neuroarchitecture,” and he’s pretty sure it’s going to change the world.

Eberhard, who also holds a visiting scholar appointment in biology at the University of California at San Diego, is executive director of the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture, a research initiative of the San Diego chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In the year-and-a-half since the Academy’s founding, Eberhard has been attempting to engender enthusiasm among architects and neuroscientists for studying the connections between our brains and the built environment. More than 500 curious architects attended a workshop on neuroscience at this year’s AIA convention. And the Academy counts some of the country’s most renowned neuroscientists among its board of directors and advisory committee. “What we’re asking them to do,” Eberhard says, “is shift the emphasis from studying the disease to studying the delight.”

Another way Eberhard is gathering interest is through focused, interdisciplinary workshops where neuroscientists, architects, and their potential clients brainstorm research questions they’d like neuroscientists to pursue. In Columbus, Indiana, this past April, one such group of 32—including clergy and several members of IFRAA—met to discuss the possibility of using neuroscience to study the brain’s reactions to sacred space. Most participants arrived nearly entirely in the dark about the possibilities of this nascent field of study—and left feeling they’d gotten a rare glimpse into the future.

“Most of the architectural design decisions done today are intuitive,” Eberhard says. By that, he means that people use personal feeling and accumulated anecdotes to evaluate the power of different structures and architectural principles, such as the importance of symmetry and light. Journals such as *Faith & Form* are “full of such intuitive studies,” he says. In the social sciences, researchers have attempted to quantify such intuitions about space, especially in the realm of health care. A foundational 1984 study by Roger Ulrich demonstrated that hospital patients who had rooms with views from their windows recovered more quickly and reported less pain than those who looked out onto a brick wall.

But social science can only offer the what, not the why. Eberhard and others believe that neuroscience will offer the opportunity to demystify architecture and bring it fully into the realm of science. Only in the past decade or so, when advanced non-invasive brain-scanning technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have become available, has this been possible. If researchers want to know why windows with views help patients feel less pain, they can examine the brain functions of people looking out windows with views and see what areas are activated. The same goes for learning why certain colors make people feel angry, placid, or hungry, or why different floor plans are easier or harder to navigate.

Already, some neuroscience studies have shown an intriguing connection between space and spirituality, which could be used as a starting point for research into sacred spaces. Andrew Newberg of the University of Pennsylvania and his late colleague, Eugene d’Aquili, found that meditating Tibetan Buddhists and praying Franciscan nuns have reduced activity in the part of their brains associated with spatial orientation. This is consistent with their reports of feeling oneness with the universe and loss of a sense of self. Researchers could examine whether some

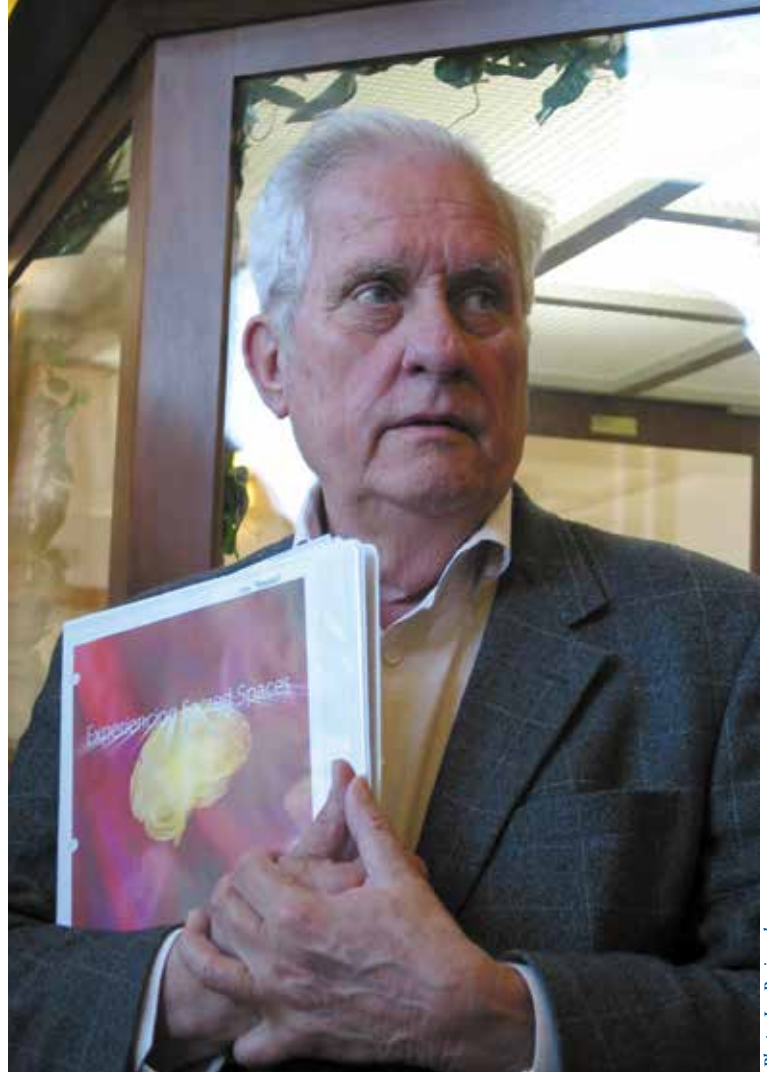


Photo: Joe Parimucha

building designs have similarly “disorienting” effects on the brain.

Discussions at the Columbus conference also produced new research questions about sacred spaces that could be addressed by neuroscience. Why do some spaces foster a sense of intimacy and community while others inspire feelings of transcendence and awe? Why do visual symbols play such an important role in many religions’ sacred spaces? Why do elements such as the narthex and steeple of a church help people prepare for prayer?

Knowing the why, Eberhard says, will ultimately lead to a new paradigm in architecture, one in which “intuition is strengthened, even extended, by evidence from neuroscience studies.” He compares architecture today to the medical profession in the late-19th century, before germs were discovered. Doctors did the best they could to serve their patients, he says, but their knowledge was profoundly limited and they worked largely from anecdote and instinct. In the future, he hopes, architects will be able to access a whole new body of scientific knowledge that will empower them to serve their clients better.

The field of neuroarchitecture, especially as it relates to sacred spaces, risks being reductionist. So far, neuroscientists have more or less successfully appeased concerns from religious sectors by explaining that their studies of the human brain in transcendent states don’t make their subjects’ experiences any less real or meaningful. They’re trying to learn how people experience God, not who or what God is. Architects

NOTES & COMMENTS

in the future who use neuroscience as a tool in designing spaces that inspire feelings of God will likely also have to address such concerns.

Neuroarchitecture may someday provide practical results about color, light, proportion, and many other building elements that all architects will use. But that's not its biggest promise. Whether or not neuroscience ever becomes useful in daily practice, what it's likely to do is reveal the profound effect that our built environment has on our brains and thus on our quality of life, something architects have long intuited and neuroscientists are just beginning to understand. Once people begin to learn how our buildings shape us, they will consider more carefully how we should shape our buildings. If neuroarchitecture leads to such a paradigm shift, it has the possibility of not just transforming the profession of architecture, but also the world in which we live, work, play, and worship. —*Chelsea T. Ward*

CHELSEA T. WALD IS A SCIENCE WRITER WHO ATTENDED THE WORKSHOP ON NEUROSCIENCE IN SACRED SPACES IN COLUMBUS, INDIANA. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT: CTW@FULBRIGHTWEB.ORG.



MAYA LIN CHAPEL FEATURED IN EXHIBIT

A newly completed chapel (above) by artist and designer Maya Lin is featured in an exhibit of her work now on view at the Knoxville Museum of Art. The Riggio-Lynch Chapel at the Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee, was made possible by the generous challenge gift of Len Riggio, chairman and president of Barnes and Noble and his wife, Louise. The chapel joins Lin's other architectural work, the Langston Hughes Library, on the campus of the farm, which is the only place in the world to have two buildings designed by Lin on the same site.

FAITH & FORM PRESERVED

Good news for researchers and anyone seeking archival issues of *Faith & Form*. The American Theological Library Association (ATLA) in Chicago currently has the years 1968 through 1999 on microfilm and soon will have our entire collection. Bibliographic records of ATLA's entire collection of serials and monographs on microfilm and microfiche is freely available on ATLA's on-line catalog APCAT: http://apcat.atla.com/star/presonline_login.htm. ATLA has been microfilming religious and theological materials since 1957 and currently has over 30,000 monographs and 2,600 serials on microformat.

CELTIC CROSS: MORE THAN A RELIGIOUS SYMBOL

A new book by a British historian claims that the Celtic Cross, in addition to being one of the most enduring religious symbols, was also a device for navigation, astronomy, mathematics, and surveying. In his book, *The Golden Thread of Time*, Crichton E.M. Miller claims that the Celtic Cross was used to design and build the pyramids of Egypt, the



Photo: Michael J. Crosbie

henges of England, and possibly aided navigation in the discovery of America. He notes that the Celtic Cross is not to be confused with the Christian crucifix. "The older pagan Celtic Cross was probably absorbed into the Christian Church along with many other ideas from prehistory," says Miller, who has built a replica of an instrument based on the Celtic Cross that he claims was used for navigation, astronomy, and surveying. He describes the Celtic Cross as "an inspiring inheritance for everyone living in a free world."

RECREATING THE GROTTO AT LOURDES

A replica of the Grotto at Lourdes was built for Our Lady of Lourdes Vietnamese Catholic Church in Houston, Texas. The parish commissioned landscape architect Rod Russell-Ides, who traveled to Lourdes to document the site where, it is believed, the Virgin Mother appeared to St. Bernadette in the late 1850s. The grotto in Texas rises 60 feet, covers an acre, includes 3,000 cubic feet of topsoil, 850 cubic yards of concrete, and 40 tons of rebar. The design incorporates a stream of water to represent the Lourdes spring.



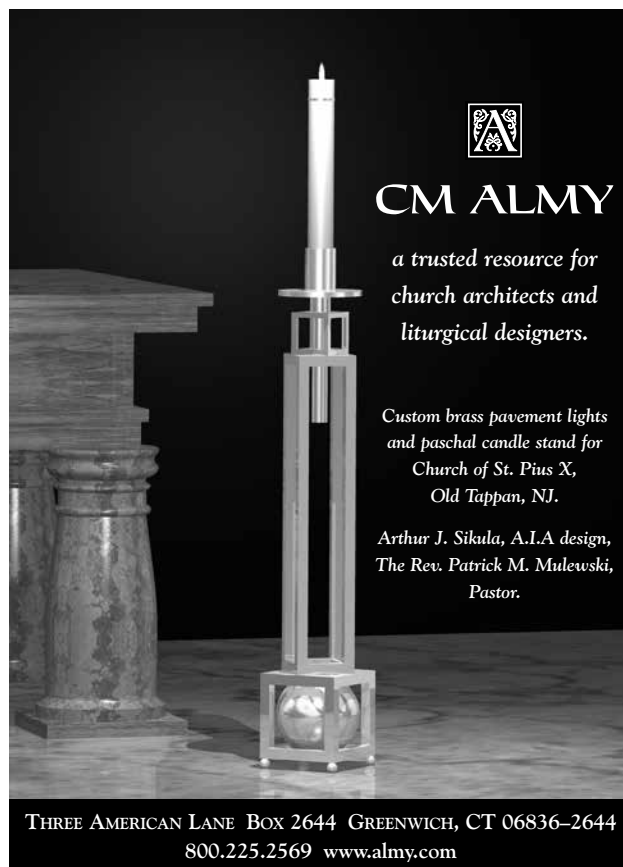
NOTES & COMMENTS

CASTRO BUILDS NEW CATHEDRAL IN CUBA

The first church to be built in Cuba since Fidel Castro took control of the island in 1959 has the added distinction of being paid for by Cuba's Communist government. According to an Associated Press report, the new St. Nicholas Cathedral in Havana was dedicated this past January by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the patriarch of Greek Orthodox Christians and considered "first among equals" of 14 patriarchs representing Orthodox Christian congregations in eastern Europe and the Middle East, including Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq. Castro handed over the cathedral's keys to the leader of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians during a four-hour consecration ceremony. The construction of the new church is seen as a further softening of Castro's official position of atheism. The Cuban government removed references to atheism in its constitution more than a decade ago and allowed religious believers to join the Communist Party. The new cathedral will be used by the island's estimated 2,000 Orthodox Christians. Church members include diplomats and foreign businesspeople from countries such as Greece and Turkey, and people who immigrated to Cuba during the Soviet era.

SEND YOUR NEWS TO *Faith & Form*

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: mcrosbie@faithandform.com.

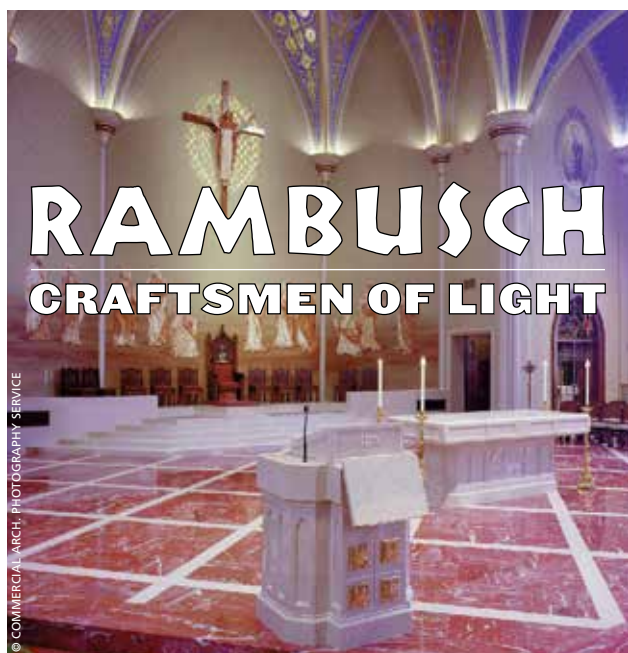


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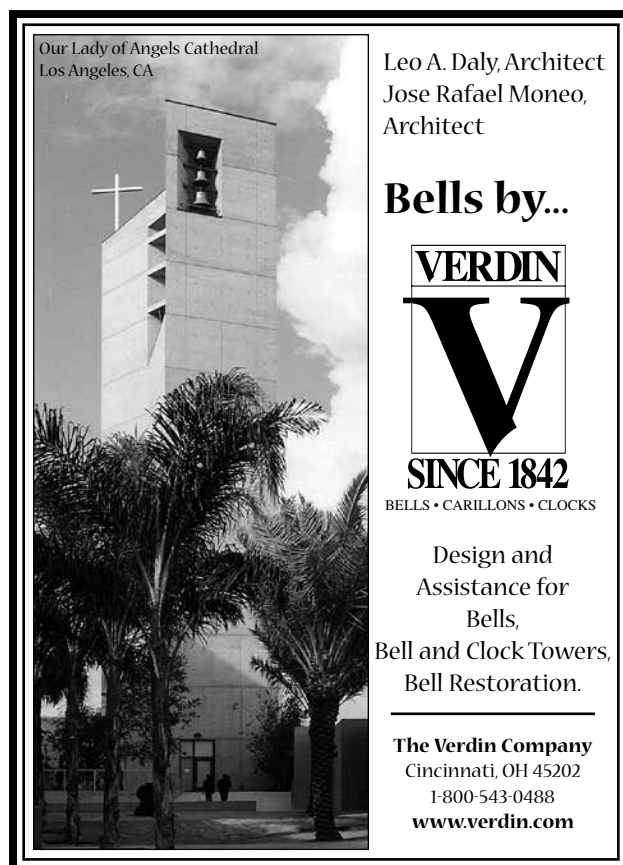
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IMAGINE, IF YOU CAN



JUST ONE MORE THING... ★ BETTY H. MEYER

Do you ever give yourself the pleasure of imagining what you would most like to have happen in your field of interest? Most of us are too hurried with everyday realities to spend precious time just imagining. But when I ran across this sentence in my reading it brought me up short: "You can't work for what you can't imagine." My work or field of interest has always involved the relationship of religion, art, and architecture, and I couldn't help thinking, at this point what do I imagine for its future that I will continue to work for? I came to several conclusions, but will you imagine just one with me?

Let us imagine the meeting of a building committee for a new church and that an artist as well as an architect has been invited. The committee has decided that architects and artists are both explorers of spiritual vision and that it would be useful to have both of them listen to the vision of the congregation.

Imagine a rich discussion about what religious art is and what religious architecture is. Perhaps the committee can be led to understand that to always look for a message or a lesson in a work of art is inartistic to say the least, and that many congregants will respond more verbally than visually. Appreciating art is a growing process, and one must look until one sees, and listen until one hears. Sadly, through the years I have noticed that many artists not only hesitate to speak or write about their work, but refuse to do so. When asked they will say, "My work must speak for itself, otherwise I am inarticulate."

But let us imagine that the discussion speaks further of a Zeitgeist, a spirit of the age, in which this congregation is building. We will ask them to accept that both the artist and the architect will be working to create a connectedness to this spirit, a revelation or a disclosure that will evoke a positive response from the congregants. But importantly, we must tell them to expect that responses will be many and that they will be diverse. As someone has said, "The same ocean washes up on many shores."

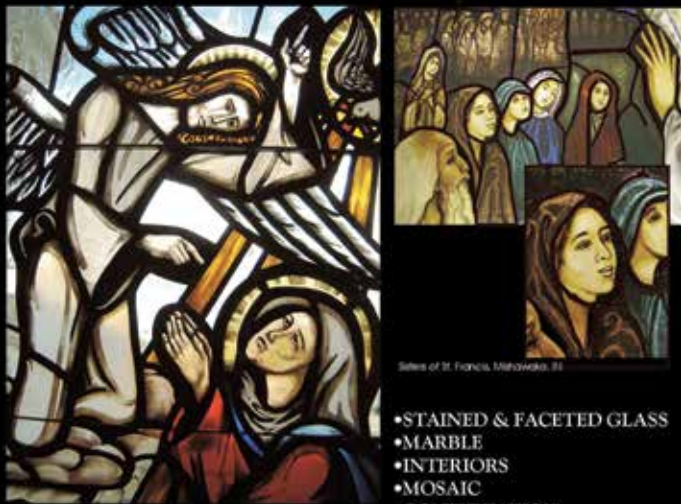
Further, let us imagine that the committee anticipates some new and original art in its plans, perhaps painting and sculpture, and that they want assurance from the architect that he or she will design space for it, as well as for art they already own and that may have been a part of their cherished history. A brochure from architect Michael Landau addresses this issue: "The architect can find a place for significant art work, for exhibit areas and displays for historical artifacts and give new life to ritual objects." This certainly contrasts with architects who feel their building is art enough, doesn't it? It also reminds me of the times I have known visual art to have been used as a later decoration or as a cover-up for a mistake. Hopefully our discussion will have reached an evaluation of what makes a work of art religious and that the artist and architect will finally know what their responsibilities will be in the overall design and that they will be commissioned together.

Now, of course I realize that imagining all this will not make it come true—in fact, far from it. But it was satisfying for me to imagine it and possibly for you, too, as you read it. At least we know that you can't work at something if you can't imagine it. Let us take courage and proceed to work, shall we?

BETTY H. MEYER IS EDITOR EMERITUS OF FAITH & FORM

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