

# FAITH & FORM

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RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE  
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Inside the Komyo-ji Temple in Saijo, Japan, designed by Tadao Ando (story begins on page 6).  
Photo: Mitsuo Matsuoka

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**NEXT ISSUE:**

“Faith and the Feminine” will explore the expression of female-gendered sacred space and the expression of the feminine in religious art and architecture.



# THE NEW NEIGHBORS



EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

Europe is in the throes of a mosque building boom. According to an article in a recent issue of *Travel + Leisure*, London, Rotterdam, Munich, Cologne, Copenhagen, Berlin, Athens, Rome, and Amsterdam are just some of the cities with mosques in the planning stages, under construction, or newly opened.

And these are not small buildings. London's new mosque (which you can read more about in this issue's Notes & Comments section) is designed to accommodate 40,000. A mosque for 10,000 was completed in 2004 in London's Whitechapel neighborhood.

Some have expressed concern about the blossoming of mosques across Europe, and not only because they believe that mosques may be allied with terrorist organizations; they also object to the traditional architecture and decoration of many mosques, which they see as not quite fitting in. The plethora of new mosques also gives the Muslim religion a greater presence that makes some people uncomfortable. Islam is not only the fastest growing religion in Europe, but also the fastest growing in the U.S.

According to Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard, the establishment and building of mosques in America began apace 40 years ago (as the Immigration and Nationalities Act of 1965 allowed more people from different parts of the world into the U.S.) and has escalated in the past decade as Muslim populations continue to grow. Much of this development has been in the suburbs, notes Eck, where land is cheaper, less regulated, and where Islamic Centers can reach a regional audience.

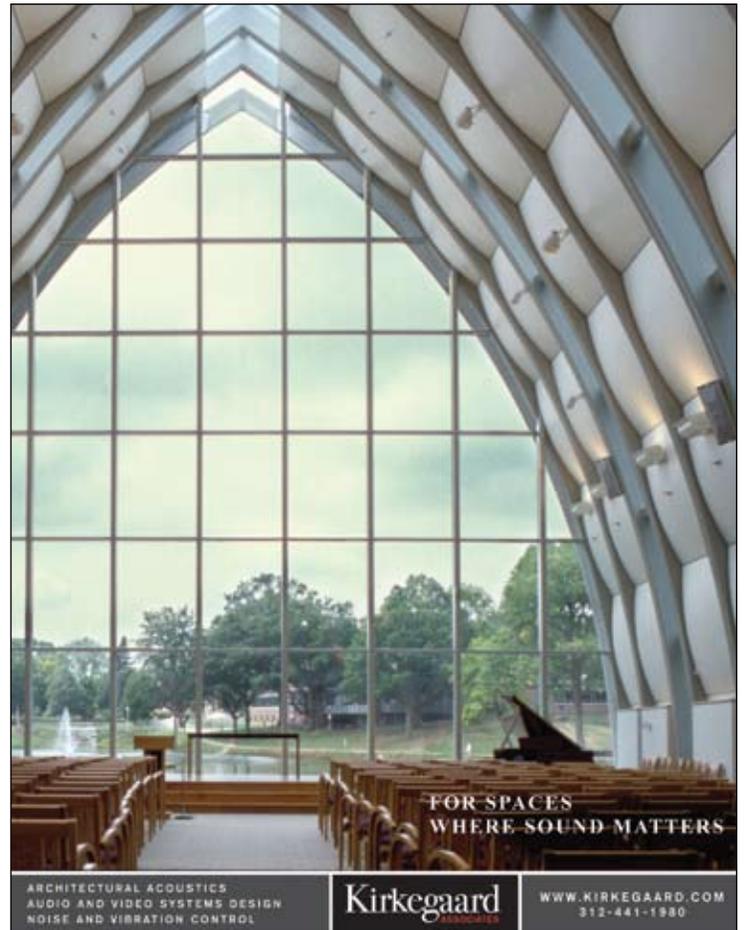
Architect Bob Apel writes in this issue about a new Islamic Center he designed in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. Because of the structure of the project's financing, it was built over several stages, which allowed the surrounding neighborhood to get used to the idea. Apel reports that the completed stages of the building were open to visitors, who were invited in to ask questions about Center. The architect explains that the building's design was adjusted to make it more at home in Ohio in terms of color, materials, and form. Borders, in other words, were blended.

In her column, Betty Meyer discusses a Christian theological school and a Hebrew college which now share a campus in Massachusetts. According to Betty, this marriage of convenience has developed into an exploration by students and faculty of both schools into what they share, and what they can learn from each tradition. As Jewish, Christian, and Islamic systems of belief have points of overlap, their borders blur.

A glance at the news doesn't offer much hope of reconciling differences among faiths. If anything, most of the hot spots in the world today appear to be fueled by religious differences. The answer is not to sand the sharp edges of faith so that the differences in belief are dulled. Religions thrive in contrast to each other, and a space designed to be all things to all faiths is worthy of none.

As our sacred places continue to grow they will touch each other more and more. The world's hot spots are the boiling points of intolerance, but the general drift around the world appears to be greater tolerance. As we live in closer quarters, will religious tolerance grow? No religion in the world can help us if it doesn't. 

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



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# A Temple Reborn

By TADAO ANDO PHOTOGRAPHS BY MITSUO MATSUOKA



*Komyo-ji Temple from the south, near the site entry.*

Photo by Kinji Kanno

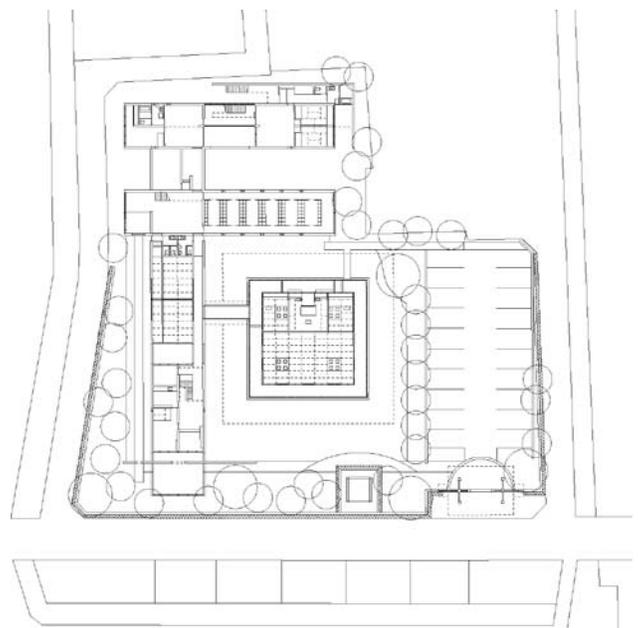


The Komyo-ji Temple is a reconstruction of a Pure Land temple (Pure Land is a dominant form of Buddhism) dating from the Edo period (1606-1867). Its site is on the eastern side of Saijo City in Ehime Prefecture. A small city on the Inland Sea, blessed with a mild climate, Saijo is known as the entrance to Mt. Ishizuchi, at 1,982 meters the highest mountain in Western Japan. Natural

springs are everywhere, and the city is crisscrossed by a network of waterways brimming with fresh mountain water.

About 250 years had passed since the construction of the main temple and it was no longer able to withstand the assaults of time. It was to be rebuilt, together with an adjoining guest hall and priests' quarters. From the temple's standpoint this was a monumental undertaking, one that would go down in its history. Nevertheless, the temple's chief priest (the client) had no requirements regarding the architecture. He simply explained the general program and said he would like it to be "a temple where people will come to gather together, a temple that is open to the community."

We proposed for the new temple a main building of wood, shrouded in gentle light and floating over water. In the overall configuration, the new wooden main building, with the guest hall, chapel, priests' quarters, and other ancillary buildings, floats over a spring-fed pond. This



*Plan of the site, with square temple structure at the center.*

arrangement stresses above all the material wood, with water as the essential feature of the local landscape. The main theme is an exploration of a space in wood. Though we did not need to be preoccupied with an existing style of temple architecture, we did wish to respect what had been built up through history.

The essence of traditional Japanese wooden architecture, in my view, is "assembly." A tremendous number of wooden parts are cut for a sin-

AN INTERNATIONALLY CELEBRATED ARCHITECT, TADAO ANDO HAS DESIGNED A NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS IN HIS NATIVE JAPAN.



*New structure appears to float on water, with entry gate to right.*

gle building, and the building takes shape as these parts are assembled and fitted together. For examples of how this configuration was refined to an extreme degree to realize a powerful structural beauty, we looked to the Nandaimon (great south gate) of Todai-ji Temple and to Jodo-do of Jodo-ji Temple, by the medieval monk Chogen. I wanted to create a space that would return to the origins of wooden architecture. It would be a single structure made up of multiple parts, each full of tension. I also felt that it would, like the framework of the main building, express the image of people gathering and joining hands, supporting each other in a single community.

After considering various alternatives, the scheme we devised for the main building was a large space, with three layers of interlocking beams supported by 16 columns in four groups. The circumference has, first of all, a screen of frosted glass, then a corridor around the screen, and then a latticed exterior wall around the corridor. It is a configuration that is doubly surrounded from the outside. The latticed exterior wall has posts of 15 x 21 centimeters (6 x 8 inches) at 15-centimeter intervals, with glass inserted between the posts. This results in an indeterminate demarcation between interior and exterior. Light filters through the latticed exterior wall to fill the interior with soft, natural illumination. It is a bright, open, and ceremonious space.

Inside events are also transmitted indistinctly to the outside. At night, the mystical appearance of the main building, with light overflowing from the interior, is reflected by the waters of the spring-fed pond. Aside from the fact that it is a wooden structure and that the roof has gently sloping eaves at its edges, this building has almost nothing in common with traditional Japanese wooden architecture; it is

*Corridor space between the temple's outside walls and its interior.*





*Temple sanctuary, framed with four groups of columns and lattice walls.*

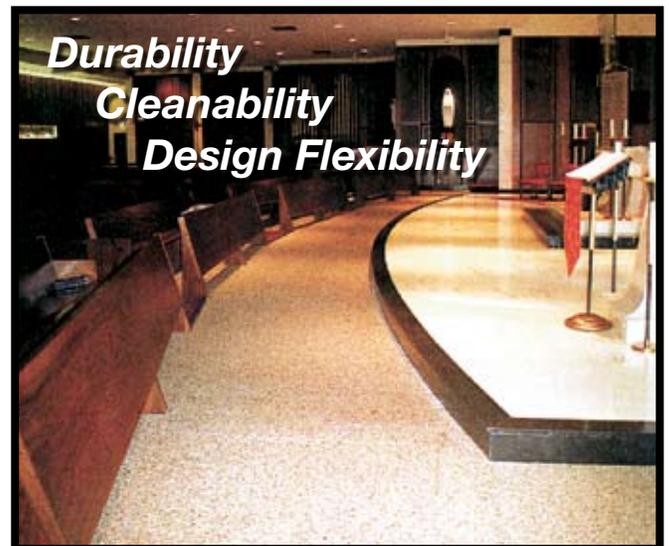
made completely of laminated timber. This was the result of our search for structural methods which, while inheriting the spirit of “assembly” from traditional Japanese architecture, would be simple, logical, and in line with contemporary building technologies. Laminated timber is extremely effective because it provides material uniformity and especially because it allows all of the wood to be used with no waste. Since the material itself is made up by layering smaller parts, it seemed especially appropriate to the intent of this design.

Every attempt was made to leave the stone walls and trees around the site undisturbed. We were given permission to demolish the main gate and bell tower, but we preferred to leave them in their original locations, in their original state. Of course, refraining from modifications to the existing site lowers the degree of freedom in the design and leads to troublesome problems. In this design, the decision to leave the bell tower near the entrance meant that the original purely geometrical plan for the approach along the pond would not fit. Finally, we decided to abandon pure geometry and take a course around the bell tower.

When the whole project was finished, these unanticipated parts fit in surprisingly well. They gave depth to the whole architectural space and functioned as important elements. Instead of following a uniform logic to the end, here was an opportunity to accept the memory of the place and hold repeated conversations with the site while assembling the architecture.

The process of building the Komyo-ji Temple was a chance to rediscover and become conscious of the origins of my own architectural methods: water and wood, history and landscape. I hope that it becomes a place where a variety of elements come together and speak to the visitor. 

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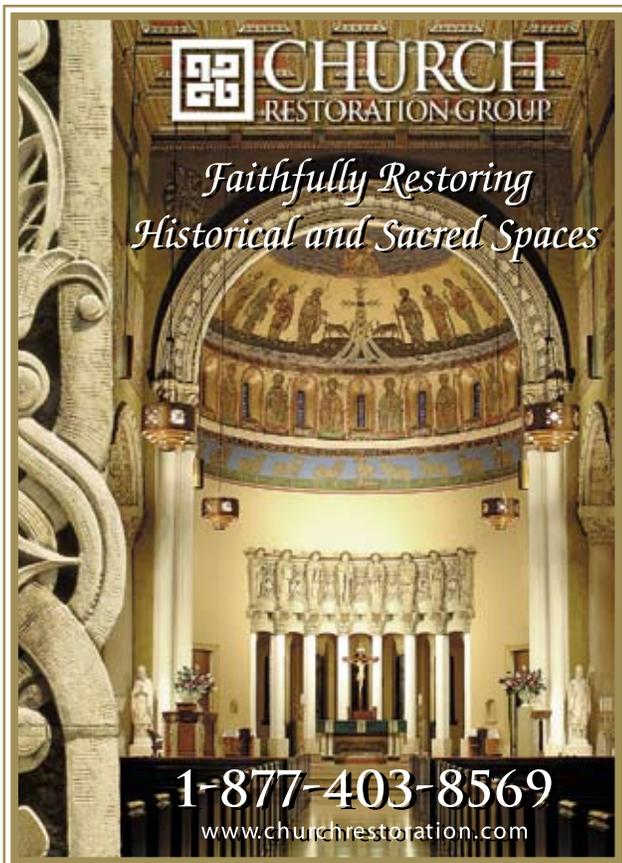


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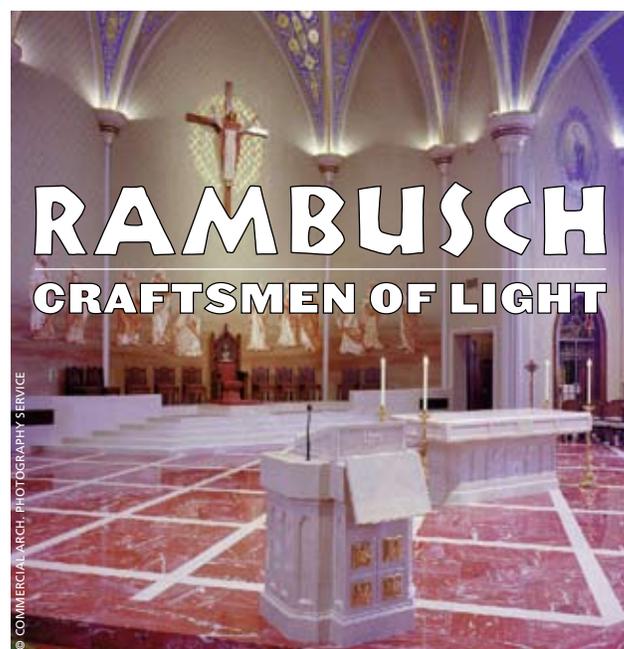
*For Ando, the temple is a ‘...building of wood,  
shrouded in gentle light and floating over water.’*



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# Orthodox Architecture in the New Century



*Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Milwaukee, designed in 1956 by Frank Lloyd Wright. Photo: Peter Beers*



BY INGA LEONOVA

activity should ideally be directed toward worship of the divine, it therefore assumes theological significance. While this might seem a stretched argument in some areas of life, it is certainly a valid principle in ecclesiastical art and architecture.

It has been argued that the theological significance of places of worship is an acquired quality. Colin Cunningham, for example, states that “a church building is not the essential basic element in Christian worship,”<sup>2</sup> supporting his statement by evidence that the first Christians often worshipped in the open air or in various enclosed spaces of no

particular significance, and that the symbolic definitions associated with sacred space developed very slowly. I would like to argue that architectural space is highly significant in Christian worship, that its organization derives from both the functional requirements of the liturgical process and the spiritual aspects of people’s perception of their environment, and that its development is an organic process which should ideally follow the living tradition of the Church as well as progress in other human activities such as building technology.

ity of Orthodox architectural tradition, as it relates to other aspects of Orthodox art and theology, has suffered various interruptions at different points in history, resulting in the somewhat disappointing current condition of Orthodox Church architecture. An explanation for this can be found in the political history of the Eastern Orthodox world, with Orthodox countries either suffering under Muslim occupation for many centuries (Middle East, North Africa, Greece, Bulgaria, and the Balkan states), or going through vio-

*“No architect can rebuild a cathedral of another epoch embodying the desires, the aspirations, the love and hate of the people whose heritage it became. Therefore the images we have before us of monumental structures of the past cannot live again with the same intensity and meaning. Their faithful duplication is irreconcilable.”*

- Louis Kahn<sup>1</sup>

Understanding what the theological definition of space means in terms of material reality can help redefine the architectural principles that govern the design of contemporary Eastern Orthodox churches. Unlike Western ecclesiastical architecture, the live continu-

lent internal political changes that were often unfavorable for the Church (Russia).

However, over the course of the last 150 years the geopolitical climate in Eastern Europe had changed, and it became possible for the Orthodox tradition to begin to rein-

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*Chapel of Hieromartyr Dmitry Solunski, Snegiri, Russia,  
designed in 2001 by A. Anisimov.*

vent itself. Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th century. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Communist revolution in Russia and the banishment of religion led to the exodus of the Orthodox to the West, to Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, and finally, America. The second event, more than the first, led to a resurgence in interdenominational communication, and to the subsequent creation of the ecumenical World Council of Churches. Orthodox theological thought has experienced a true renaissance, fostered by the necessity to redefine the Church's position in the transformed world. In the early 1990s, Russia overthrew the Communist regime, and the Orthodox Church regained its position as the principal religion of the state.

It is worth noting that the globalization of the Western world over the 20<sup>th</sup> century has redefined its cultural and ethnic boundaries. Whether the Orthodox Church chooses to be aware of it or not, its churches no longer exist in a vacuum, neither liturgically nor architecturally. The International Style of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century virtually erased ethnic architectural frontiers, and nowadays it would be possible to construct an entire homogeneous city out of buildings selected at random and indifferently from Moscow, Paris, Jerusalem, or New York. By the same token, the Orthodox population of the world is also no longer limited to Eastern Europe. In Western Europe and in both Americas, there are several Orthodox churches with numerous congregations, each struggling to define its identity in the context of the larger Orthodox world as well as in the world as a whole.

Re-establishment of an independent mentality in the Orthodox Church, as well as in other areas of cultural and political thinking, has not been a smooth process. In church architecture, although new construction has been quite prolific, especially in the last 20 years, it appears that, more often than not, designers opt to fall back on vernacular origins. The architects of the present-day Orthodox churches struggle with both the burden of the nostalgic ethnic vernacular (such as the notion that there can be no Orthodox church without an onion dome), and more importantly, the lack of a clear understanding of what defines the Orthodox worship space beyond the familiar paraphernalia. Numerous attempts to force the Orthodox liturgical process into the religious forms of the West, without a clear understanding of what defines a particularly Orthodox space, have always been unsuccessful. The problem is not in the change of form as such, but rather in the deliberate imposition of an archetype on a particular existing function, forcing the function to adopt rather than transform the archetype. As a result, those churches become merely "Easternized," decorated with multitudes of icons and other Orthodox paraphernalia, perpetuating the stereotype of Orthodox space as one delineated by a multitude of icons.

Unfortunately, or perhaps consequently, there is also a scarcity of architectural research on the subject of contemporary Orthodox liturgical architecture. The rich and diverse study of sacred space in contemporary Western architectural theory is typically oblivious to Orthodox architecture, perhaps because there is a shortage of notable modern buildings, and because of the low profile the Orthodox Church maintains in the contemporary world. One example can be found in Richard Kieckhefer's seminal book *Theology in Stone*, which, although it begins with Byzantine examples of "sacramental churches," eventually gravitates toward Western "sacramental liturgy" thereby leaving a whole archetype beyond the limits of the book.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, most of the writing on Orthodox architecture is produced within theological liturgical research. At best, this work considers these buildings from

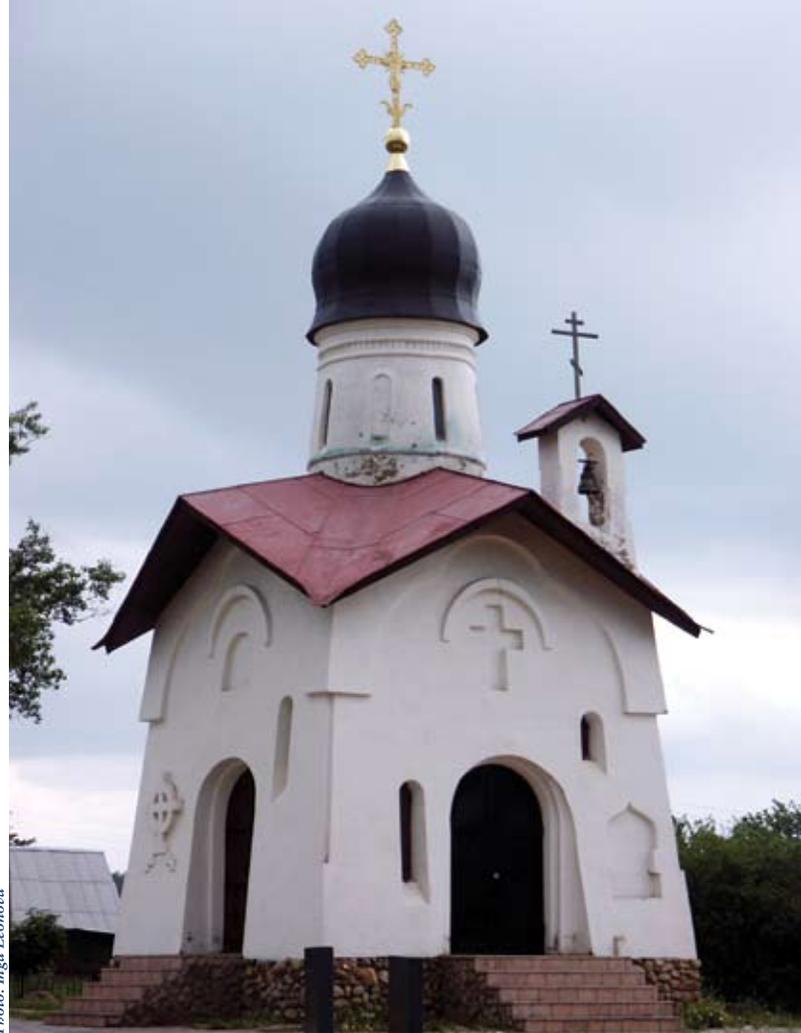


Photo: Inga Leonova

the purview of art history, and is typically concerned only with historical examples.

Ample architectural research is also focused on the religious buildings produced during the 70 years of the Communist regime in Russia. However, political constraints obliged this research to limit itself to the physical and historical properties of church buildings, completely ignoring the theological aspects of worship space.<sup>4</sup> Sadly, the inertia of this imbalanced approach carries into the present day. On the other hand, the proliferation of churches built by immigrants in Western countries over the past century has not yet attracted the attention of architectural researchers. Even Frank Lloyd Wright's amazing Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Milwaukee remains one of the least studied of his buildings. Surely the time has come to fill this void in architectural thinking, and to endeavor to suggest the contemporary understanding of space and material in the Orthodox church building.

To this end it appears necessary to determine what, if anything, defines the uniquely Orthodox perception of built space. It is essential to separate what can be considered fundamental to the concept of space as it reflects the function of the liturgy, and what is the veneer of local traditions and ethnic stereotypes that have obscured the utilization of space and consequently the understanding of the liturgy. The liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church is considered by many to be the most conservative of any currently practiced in the West. Both the content of the services and the attire of the clergy have varied very little from the times of John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. To some, it means that Orthodox church buildings should also remain frozen in time. A body of apologetic writing, typically by architects of "revivalist" churches, argues that since the tradition has been interrupted the only appropriate path for a modern church designer is to go back in time and faithfully replicate the forms and materials of what is considered the "high age" of a



*Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, Boston, designed in 1960 by A. Pertzoff.*

particular ethnic liturgical architecture.<sup>5</sup> But, to me, Louis Kahn's quote at the beginning of this article is highly valid. I contend that there must be a way to acknowledge the past without resuscitating its forms.

Architecture, like any other art form, is rooted in its time and culture, and while its best achievements transcend the confines of time, still the distinction must be made between the objective principles, and the subjective particulars of a given period. To use an example from the realm of music, the classical overtures in Alfred Schnittke's Concerti connect his works to the great classical music tradition, but had the composer written a pseudo-Baroque piece, of which he was certainly technically capable, it would have been, no matter how skillfully done, nothing but a pale shadow of the period, since it would have been completely misplaced in music history.

To understand the challenges facing the modern architects of the Orthodox church, one must begin by examining the historic development of Orthodox architecture, and attempt to reconstruct the aspects of this architecture that are essential for both the process of the liturgy and the Orthodox theological awareness of built environment. The

Photo: Inga Leonova

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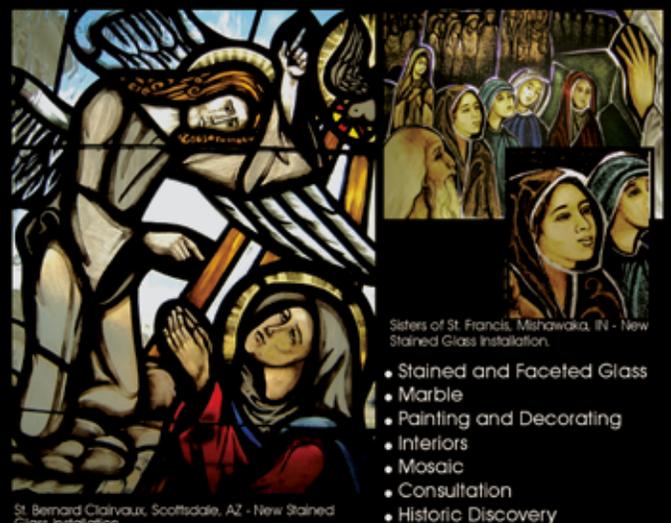
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great wealth of the Orthodox ecclesiastical architectural tradition should inform, but not govern, the church construction of today. I believe that the example of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox theologians can serve as a guide for following a similar process in architectural research. Clarifying the underlying historical principles of the organization of Christian worship space, and engaging in a dialogue with contemporary Western architects on this subject, should help to establish the guiding principles of contemporary Orthodox church design. Orthodox architecture can and should reconcile itself with the profound necessity “to build churches out of that reality which we experience and verify every day,”<sup>6</sup> while remaining faithful to the definition of an ecclesiastical building as that whose primary function is to be an epiphany of divine and human transcendent co-celebration. Ultimately, the design should respect the primary concept of the Church as a body of Christ, remembering that this body is built of “living stones,”<sup>7</sup> growing as the world grows, not suspended in time and frozen in tradition.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Kahn. *Monumentality*, in Peter Twombly, *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts*. W. W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 2003, p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Cunningham. *Stones of Witness: Church Architecture and Function*, Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Kieckhefer. *Theology in Stone*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> I would suggest that perhaps one of the last endeavors to analyze Orthodox art in its living context was made in 1918, at the crest of Russian Revolution, by Eugene Troubetsky. After that, research tended to address singularly historical subjects.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Marina Golokova. *Church Architecture: Tradition and Modernity*. St. Petersburg Construction Weekly, August 2004; A. Anisimov. *Contemporary Orthodox Temples: Construction Experience*. Construction Technologies, No. 1, 2004; and others.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Schwarz. *The Church Incarnate: The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture*. Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1958, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 2:4-6. 

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*Entry to the Western Wall visitors' center is to the left of the pilasters.*



# Chambers of History

BY JEREMY LANGFORD

In 2001, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation and its architect, Eliav Nachleli, commissioned me to create a series of monumental glass sculptures for the new visitors' center at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. My work was to be part of Judaism's holiest site, adjacent to the Al Aqsa Mosque (Islam's third holiest shrine after Mecca and Medina) and close to many of the sites sacred to Christianity. This was Mount Moriah, considered the literal and figurative bedrock of the great monotheistic faiths. Here Isaac was bound by Abraham, Jacob dreamed of a ladder joining heaven and earth, Solomon built the First Temple, the returning Jewish exiles from Babylon began the Second Temple completed by Herod. Here Jesus walked, and here Muslims believe Mohammed ascended to heaven. Virtually no other location on Earth holds such palpable religious, historical, and cultural significance for so many people.

My charge was to create eight glass sculptures portraying the history of the Jewish people, from its inception with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob until the present-day return to Israel. The awesome responsibility of depicting this saga on this site at this time was, for me,

both the ultimate dream and the ultimate challenge. At a site where so much converges, the potential for discord is never far from the surface. I had to find an artistic language that would cut across boundaries, and to which a wide range of cultures could relate. I needed to exercise great sensitivity and discretion in order to avoid offending religious sensibilities, especially the Biblical prohibition against graven images. It was decided, therefore, to use an abstract form in order to symbolize figures from the Biblical narrative. Non-figurative sculpture, something very close to my heart, is a language that can be read on many levels. While not disturbing someone's internal image of, say, an Abraham or another Biblical figure, the lack of definitive form can still convey profound meaning.

I wanted to create my own artistic statement and imprint on this project, while respecting the power of more than three millennia of art, architecture, and life on the site. The place pulsates with the energy of all that has gone on there. The archeologist Abraham Solomon, who carried out the excavations, told me that when he returned home after a day excavating a Roman latrine his wife would complain to him of his odor. "Two-thousand-year-old 'organic matter'" was his explanation. From the sacred to the profane, the place is alive.

Site and sculpture had to work together. As the artist, I was simply adding another layer on the canvas of this site. The whole structure of

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THE AUTHOR IS A SCULPTOR AND HEAD OF THE LANGFORD ART GLASS STUDIO BASED IN BNEI BRAK, ISRAEL.



*'Destruction,' one of eight chambers in the sculpture ensemble. Photo: Max Richardson*

the site is an organic work of art being formed over thousands of years. The result of my encounter is an incredible juxtaposition of ancient architecture and 21st-century art. I have worked all over the world, but this was the first time I had worked with architects from two millennia ago. King Herod was truly an amazing builder. It was an overwhelming experience to create sculptures in these ancient catacombs.

#### THE COLUMN

The project was to be situated in a series of subterranean chambers, the most recent from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the oldest a remnant of 3,000-year-old structures. In these eight chambers I was to place each of the eight sculptures. I felt that the sculptures must make their own statement and express the purpose for which they were created, yet render a feeling of belonging to the site. In order to achieve this harmony of ancient architecture and modern art, I regarded the chambers on the site as a “canvas” on which I would “paint” the sculptures. My medium was the glass column, a basic, simple form used throughout the exhibit.

The column was to be the symbol of the figures from the Biblical narrative and the Jewish people. I chose a column with straight, strong boundaries, yet at the same time, undefined; square, not round or triangular. Four sides, four lines united in form. A column for me is the development of line. Just as the line begins from a point and lengthens and thickens, so too the column in these sculptures is a basic building block of form and function.

The names of individuals from each historic period, from early Biblical times up to the present day, are carved using Hebrew lettering. Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, assigns great significance to the Hebrew

alphabet. Each letter has its own intrinsic structure, a sacred geometry representing complex energy patterns and manifestations of spiritual dimensions.

#### GLASS

I used glass as a medium that could make its own statement, while complementing the architecture and archeology of the site. Glass transmits and reflects light and, in this case, accentuates the essence of the site while endowing these sculptures with deep meaning. I find glass to be a spiritual medium particularly befitting the theme of these sculptures. The production of glass requires a process of heat and pressure. Sand, basically a lifeless substance, is transformed into one of the most beautiful, versatile, and animated materials known to man. Strong yet elastic, transparent but with clear boundaries, glass glows and transmits light. The message expressed in glass is that of these sculptures: they portray the basic history of the Jewish people and can also be seen as a metaphor for transformation and hope. Glass allows a powerful expression of the ideas of the sculptures while blending into the ancient architecture and not overpowering it.

I used mainly the cold-glass method of sculpting and stacking glass. I chose this technique from many possibilities because of its potent aesthetic articulation and its inherent symbolism: layer upon layer of glass representing the layers of the long history of the Jewish people. This layering likewise speaks to the different civilizations, cultures, and history which have consecutively converged upon the site.

The sculptures are constructed from tens of thousands of pieces of specially treated glass that range in size from 160 centimeters to a huge free-form sculpted column of more than *(Text continues on page 18)*



*The column theme is seen in  
'Jerusalem Kings and Prophets.'*  
Photo: Ilya Malmikov



*Detail of Moses, Aaron,  
and Miriam sculpture.*  
Photo: Rona Varter



*'Patriarchs' takes the form of a row of columns.*

*Photo: Max Richardson*



*'Destruction' symbolized by broken columns.*

*Photo: Ilya Malnikov*



*'Remembrance Wall,' expresses the material's layered quality.*

9 meters in height and weighing more than 15 metric tons. The overall combined weight of glass used to create the artwork is almost 150 tons.

#### SCULPTURES OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

The sculptures are designed to represent different scenes from the Biblical narrative, from the early period of the patriarchs through to the return of the Jews to Israel today. The first room sets the tone, with carved glass columns. The columns then go through a process of building, destruction, and rebuilding, to a final long sculpted glass wall that leads out to the Western Wall itself.

The first sculpture sets up the language of the entire series – a straight glass column carved with the Hebrew lettering for “Jerusalem.” In the background are etched verses from the Biblical Book of Chronicles, enumerating the generations from the beginning of mankind. From here begins a process of building, development, destruction, and suffering, and the process of returning to self, restoration. The sculptures start with the appearance of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the 12 tribes, the building of Jerusalem and the nine-meter column symbolizing the yearning to return to a spiritual state of fulfillment – the symbolic return to the land of Israel.

*'Holocaust' is portrayed as a cracked glass block.*

#### CHALLENGES AND 'NIGHTMARES'

I worked on the project for more than four years through many stages of design and redesign, coupled with arguments and highly sensitive coordination with archeologists, religious authorities, architects, and engineers. As in every artist's dream, a few small nightmares were thrown in too.

Working in a 3,000-year-old site, I had to take into account many engineering problems. The buildings from the Roman period were

very strong and sturdy but there were some later structures that caused major headaches. The main obstacles were logistics. The cold-work glass studio by the Western Wall was in operation for eight months, with 25 workers, both artisans and manual laborers. Some of the artisans worked on drilling, others on grinding and polishing, others on preparations for carving. Meanwhile there were still other artisans installing different sculptures in the tunnels, which were very narrow. Cranes or mechanical lifting devices could not be used. Laborers transported tons of glass into the chambers by hand. And there was I, in the middle of it all, running back and forth making sure everything was executed as I had originally envisioned it.

One of the most powerful sculptures, “Yearling,” is a nine-meter-high sculpted glass column weighing more than 15 tons. It was to be placed in a 17-meter-high room that had originally been a Roman latrine. While excavating to lay concrete foundations to support the sculpture, archeologists discovered a complete, fully preserved ritual bath from the Second Temple. It was immediately decided that the sculpture should be suspended on steel girders in order to preserve this 2,200-year-old Herodian-era ritual bath. As work continued an extremely rare find was unearthed: a wall from the period of King Solomon's Temple. The result was a chamber spanning 3,000 years. One first views a 21<sup>st</sup>-century sculpture, then looks above at a ceiling from the time of the Crusades and walls from the Mameluke period. Below the sculpture sits the intact purification bath, while next to that is situated one of the only preserved walls from the time of King Solomon's Temple. <sup>18</sup>





'Yearling' sculpture is suspended in a 27-meter-tall chamber.

# THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING DOME

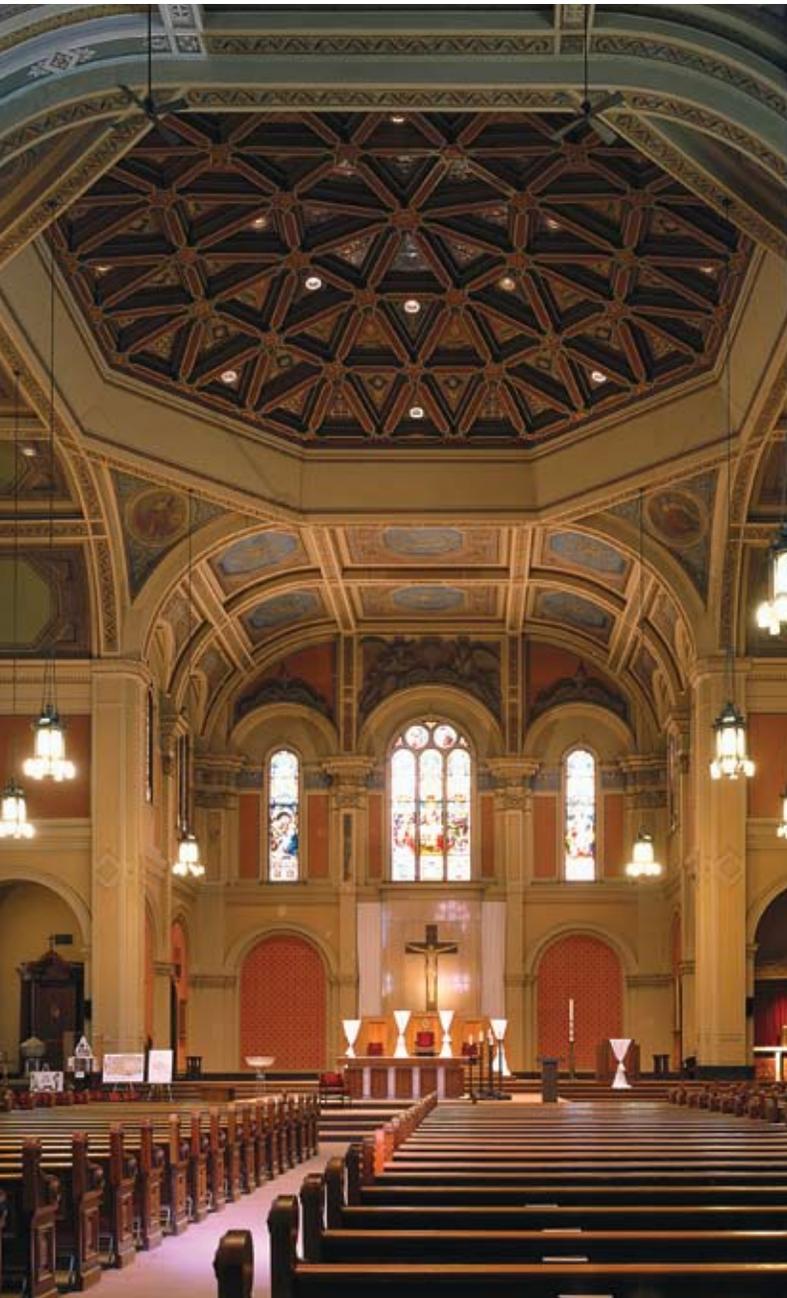


BY JOANNA CORMAN

From inside the cathedral roof, high above the sanctuary, architects stumbled onto a secret. From below, the cathedral ceiling appeared flat, but from their vantage point they could see an intricate wooden frame. What the architects discovered hidden in the ceiling in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento, California, was an interior dome that had been boarded up during a 1932 renovation. Perhaps it lent to poor acoustics, or perhaps there was a leaky roof. Whatever the reason, the dome

THE AUTHOR IS A  
FREELANCE WRITER  
IN CALIFORNIA.

*Interior before restoration, with dome covered with a 1930s-era shell.*  
Photo: David Wakely Photography



in the West Coast's oldest continuously used Roman Catholic cathedral had been covered up for 73 years until it was revealed in a two-and-a-half-year, \$34.5 million renovation that was completed last November.

During the 1930s, architects went to great lengths to preserve the dome's historic structure when it would have been much easier to tear it out. They installed a steel truss system to support a new flat surface. Despite their efforts to keep the dome's wood skeleton intact, they left behind little evidence of its original appearance. During the recent renovation, architects performed what James Shepherd calls "building forensics."

"It's not often you have this beautiful structure left behind, and very little evidence of what was applied to this structure aesthetically," says Shepherd, of the New York-based firm Beyer Blinder Belle, lead architects

*Dome's 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden structure.*  
Photo: David Wakely Photography



on the project. The construction team had only four pieces of evidence with which to recreate the dome: a newspaper description from the cathedral's 1889 opening, a 1930s renovation drawing, the wooden frame, and black-and-white photos showing the dome's bottom perimeter.

"Having only those pieces of information you really have to fill in the blanks," Shepherd says. "It's frustrating on one hand, but exciting on the other, because of the creative freedom it allows."

Although the cathedral has been renovated many times in its 117-year history, this latest project was the most thorough. It included earthquake retrofitting, created a unified decorative scheme, and opened the dome, the project's centerpiece. The false ceiling had blocked out most of the natural light. "They lost the sense of grandeur and a sense of space that a dome creates," says Monsignor James Murphy, the cathedral's rector.

With the installation of fiber-optic lighting and the removal of copper panels from the dome's windows, the sanctuary became suffused with light. The architectural team used modern technology to create

the appearance of a stained-glass oculus. California's earthquake codes are strict, making the cost of stained glass prohibitive. An artist hand-painted a dove, scanned it into a computer, and projected the image onto a plastic sheet, which was sandwiched between two layers of safety glass. Decorating the inside of the dome are 16 medallion images from the Christian and Hebrew bibles.

The dome changes the entire church, adding 50 feet of height to the sanctuary and illuminating it, and drawing one's focus toward the altar. The goal of renovating the Italian Renaissance-style structure was to stir an emotional response in each visitor. "What we were trying to do is breathe life into that building," says Jeff Greene, president of the New York-based EverGreene Painting Studios, who oversaw the renovation. For many parishioners, the renovation increased a sense of God's presence.

"For me, it just exudes the Holy Spirit – every aspect of it," says parishioner Victor Waid. "It's just a beautiful place." 

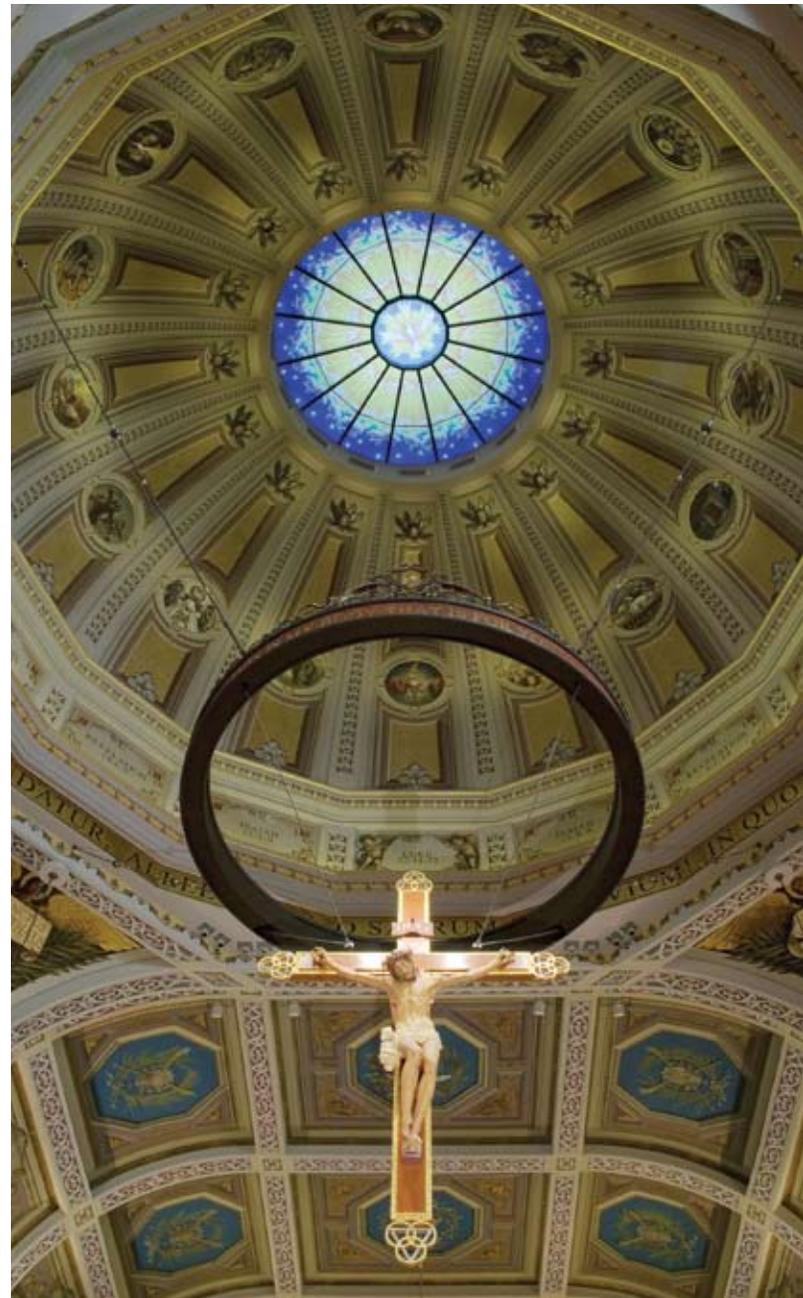
*The new dome as restored, with new altar below it.*

*Photo: David Wakely Photography*



*Decorated dome, with illumination aided by fiber-optic lighting.*

*Photo: David Wakely Photography*



# Designing for Islam

## *An Islamic Center Challenges Western Ways of Building*



BY BOB APEL

**A**s a co-founding partner of Meacham & Apel Architects, I have served as lead designer for many of our projects throughout the Midwest for nearly 30 years.

Practical experience has allowed us to provide wisdom and guidance to our clients while developing a design that meets their vision and expectations. My professional portfolio comprises town centers, residential complexes, schools, and commercial buildings, but religious architecture is my true passion. We had completed more than 40 religious buildings before we took on what was, for us, a unique task.

Dr. Khaled Farag, an active leader in the Central Ohio Islamic community, came to me in 2002 with the dream of building an Islamic

mosque and cultural center in Hilliard, a suburb on the west side of Columbus. Together, we developed a plan for the Noor Islamic Cultural Center (NICC). Noor, which means “light” in Arabic, was the fundamental theme throughout the project.

Dr. Farag serves on the Board of Directors of the American Islamic Waqf (AIW), a not-for-profit religious organization. The AIW envisioned a place of welcome where non-Muslims could observe and learn about the Islamic religion, yet whose primary purpose would be to bring the Islamic community out of its shell, to be proactive and grow in the region. The new NICC facility would encourage Muslims to mingle and interact with others in the wider community.

In traditional mosques throughout the world, the worship space is an independent structure owned by a trust-like public enti-

ty called “Waqf,” administered by the local government. As U.S. laws forbid the government from funding or supporting religious institutions, the directors had to establish an American equivalent of such an “Islamic trust” or Waqf. Consequently, the nonprofit AIW was established to hold ownership of the real estate, donations, and any related assets, keeping them in trust for the Islamic community.

Rather than designing the building solely as a mosque for worship, the directors of AIW, Dr. Farag, and our firm created an Islamic Cultural Center containing several conference rooms, classrooms, youth rooms, and gathering areas in addition to the ceremonial mosque used for prayer. The Cultural Center will thus engage and interact with the entire community.

The Muslim culture forbids interest-based mortgages and loans for financing. This restriction poses certain challenges to Western practices of development where, customarily, construction commences only after financing, usually through loans, has been secured. In the case of Noor Islamic Cultural Center, only 20 percent of the funds were available at the time of ground breaking. To ease the financial burden, we chose to build the facility in three phases. Following the completion of each phase, construction would suspend until new funds were collected and the next phase could commence.

More often than not the building stood idle and empty as we waited for the next round of funding to come in. This financial approach made it very costly for the Islamic community to hire a contractor. Consequently, Dr. Farag, who runs a local development and construction company, served as the contractor and director of the project, at cost.

Contributions to the Cultural Center came from as far away as Texas, California, and Hawaii. The Islamic faith requires members to give 2.5 percent of their income to worthy Islamic causes, such as helping the poor, feeding the hungry, supporting education, and new building campaigns. A member of the local Islamic community even donated the land on which the building was to be constructed.

Fund raising for the project slowed immediately after the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. government stepped up its surveillance of people who had donated to Islamic charitable organizations, suspecting that they might be supporting terrorist-related activities. After overcoming this setback, work began on the building’s exterior



*Architect Bob Apel and his client, Dr. Khaled Farag, survey the Cultural Center interior.*

frame, landscaping, and paved parking lot. This construction sequence differs from most projects, where landscaping is scheduled in the final stage. We determined it was best to complete the project in this unusual order, so that the client had the opportunity to educate the surrounding conservative suburban community. Curious neighbors were encouraged to stop in with questions and could grow accustomed to the Islamic Cultural Center before completion.

Interaction with the local community taught us that sensitivity to color and to a residential-scaled exterior design was crucial. We were challenged to integrate domes, sloping roofs, and Islamic architectural details with the warm tones, flat roofs, and stone exteriors common to Central Ohio architecture.

In the Islamic tradition, Muslims pray facing in the direction of Mecca. To achieve the appropriate orientation we built the mosque and Cultural Center at an angle to, rather than aligned with the existing road.

Other challenges involved the interior design. The Islamic faith requires worshipers to wash their hands, feet, and ankles before

entering the ceremonial spaces (prayer halls). We designed a low-mounted sink and chairs in the foot-washing areas so those using the washing sinks would not have to lift their feet to an awkward, high position while participating in the cleansing ritual.

Traditionally, mosques must include separate entrances for men and women into the ceremonial space. Muslim prayers involve prostration and placing one's forehead on the floor. Our design features an upstairs area for the women and a downstairs area for the men within the same ceremonial prayer space.

To give the Cultural Center an open, well illuminated interior we utilized windows, glass partitions, and high-intensity lights. These tied several separate rooms and hallways together to create a natural flow from room to room.

In keeping with the goal of welcoming non-Muslims, the Cultural Center includes a library of information about the Islamic faith designed specifically to provide a place for members of the community to learn about Islamic beliefs and the spectrum of Islamic cultures. The library windows, in a saw-tooth pattern,

overlook the ceremonial worship space, providing place for non-Muslims to observe the prayer service should they choose not to be in the main prayer halls. The saw-tooth pattern allows the windows to blend into the wall so the profile does not distract those in prayer.

The Noor Islamic Cultural Center was completed in May. The four-year project presented us with many new experiences and challenges, and we are thankful to the Central Ohio Community for giving us the opportunity to create a model for future Islamic institutions across the country.

According to Dr. Farag, "The directors envisioned having an American Mosque and Islamic Center designed in such a way as to blend the Islamic characteristics and function with the look and feel of the local community. Despite many challenges, Meacham & Apel Architects quite cleverly designed an ideal Cultural Center for us for which we are extremely grateful." 

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THE AUTHOR IS A PRINCIPAL OF MEACHAM & APEL ARCHITECTS IN OHIO.



*Architect and client outside the nearly completed Cultural Center.*

# NOTES & COMMENTS

## BALTIMORE BASILICA NEARS RESTORATION

An extensive two-year restoration of the historic Baltimore Basilica, America's first cathedral, is nearing completion. Officially known as the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Basilica was the first great metropolitan cathedral constructed in America after the adoption of the Constitution. Its cornerstone was laid in July, 1806, and it became a symbol of the religious freedom that was central to the newly formed United States.

Two Americans guided the Basilica's original design and architecture: John Carroll, the country's first Catholic bishop, later Archbishop of Baltimore; and Benjamin Henry Latrobe, an architect of the U.S. Capitol. Working on the restoration project are historic preservation architect John G. Waite Associates of Albany, New York, and historic preservation contractor Henry H. Lewis of Baltimore.

The principal elements of the Basilica's privately funded restoration and renovation project are:

- Upgrading the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing and bringing the building into full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Addressing conditions threatening the building's structural stability and water-tightness.
- Reconstructing key original design elements, including the dome, windows, balconies, sanctuary, and interior finishes.
- Establishing access to the undercroft, which contains many important architectural and engineering elements, and creating a new chapel in part of the space.

A grand reopening celebration is scheduled for November 4, 2006. A week of tours, open houses, special events, and other festivities will follow the reopening.

## THOMAS WILLIAM PHELAN, 1925-2006

The Reverend Thomas William Phelan—artist, priest, and academic--was known nationally for his work as president of the Catholic Art Association, originally founded in 1937 as the Catholic College Art Association. Inspired by the arts and crafts movement, particularly the guild systems in southern England at the turn of the 20th century, and the work of Eric Gill, the Association included pastors, educators, liturgical artists, and church architects.

Ordained a Catholic priest for the Diocese of Albany in 1951, Phelan had a long association with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

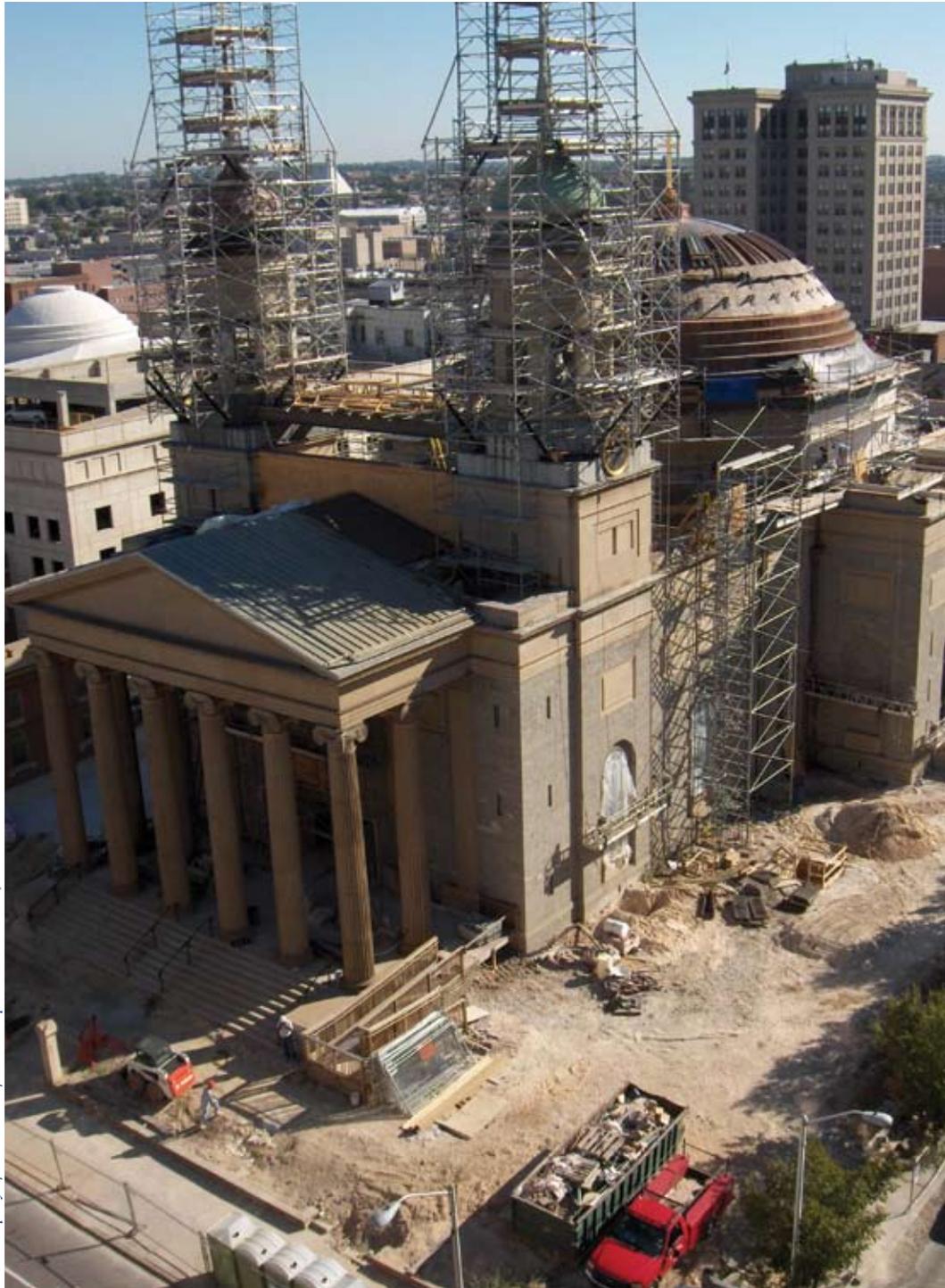


Photo: Property of the Basilica of the Assumption Historic Trust, Inc.

*Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Baltimore Basilica is undergoing an extensive renovation.*

(RPI) in Troy, New York, where he was the Catholic Chaplain until 1972 when he became the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Phelan was the visionary for the Chapel + Cultural Center at RPI, a contemporary multipurpose performing arts and worship facility built in 1968. He was the pastor of the University Parish of Christ Sun of Justice and chaired the Architecture and Building Commission of the Diocese of Albany, one of

the first Catholic Diocesan commissions in the U.S. to help parishes build and renovate churches after the Second Vatican Council.

At a 2005 art and architecture conference in honor of Phelan, Howard J. Hubbard, Bishop of Albany, remembered him as many do -- "a true pioneer."

— Richard Vosko

*Fr. Vosko is a liturgical designer and an editorial advisor to Faith & Form.*

#### NEW STAINED GLASS JOURNAL ONLINE

The Stained Glass Journal of America is scheduled to launch its first issue online this June. The mission of the journal is to elevate the discussion of stained glass as a fine art; to provide information and resources to creators, purchasers, and admirers of stained glass; and to provide an avenue of communication among practicing and aspiring artists and craftspeople. The journal will focus on stained glass created by American artists and/or installed in houses of worship in the U.S. It will not cover other forms of glass art or stained glass in residential, commercial, or civic buildings. According to journal editor Annie Dixon (who is also a *Faith & Form* editorial advisor), the journal will be “a general interest publication designed to appeal to patrons and admirers as well as practitioners of the art.” You can find the Stained Glass Journal of America at: [www.stainedglassjournal.com](http://www.stainedglassjournal.com).

#### Quote of Note

*“Art washes away from the soul  
the dust of everyday life.”*

— Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

#### GIANT MOSQUE PLANNED FOR LONDON

According to an article in the London *Times*, a mosque big enough to accommodate 40,000 worshippers is being considered as part of London’s Olympic complex for the 2012 games. This would make it the largest religious structure in England. The complex would include a garden, a school, a library, and accommodation for visiting worshippers. Designed by London-based architect Ali Manguera, the London Markaz (which means center in Arabic) would include wind turbines in lieu of minarets and a translucent latticed roof in place of a dome. Project cost is estimated at more than £100 million.

#### PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE FRIES

A recent issue of *AIArchitect* reports on a disturbing trend in religious buildings. Steven Papadatos, principal of New York City’s Papadatos Associates and a well-known church architect, notes that fewer people these days sit in pews, but not necessarily by choice. The reason, he observes, is part of a growing trend. In 1970, it took 20 inches to seat an average American; 30 years later, it took 4 additional inches; and today it is 26.5 inches per average person. The reason is obvious, Papadatos, says. “Bigger butts are why. This goes along with bigger portions, bigger candy bars, bigger steaks, bigger everything—which translates into bigger persons. It’s as simple as that.” Papadatos also notes that front-to-back spacing between pews used to be 40 inches, and is now 43 inches, particularly when kneelers are used. “So it is not just big butts, but also bigger tummies creating the demand for larger houses of worship.” Papadatos does not think prayer will help. “Exercise, perhaps!” he says.

#### ROBIN JENSEN JOINS *FAITH & FORM* AS ADVISOR

Dr. Robin Jensen, Luce Chancellor’s Professor of the History of Christian Worship and Art at Vanderbilt University, has joined *Faith & Form*’s Board of Editorial Advisors. Her historical research concentrates on Christian practices and non-textual expressions of the faith of the early Church. Her most recent book, *Face to Face: The Portrait of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Fortress, 2005), examines the development of the portrait of Jesus and the question of the visual image of God in Christian theology and devotional practice. Her current projects include a study

of the architectural space and iconography of early Christian baptism and the practice of Christianity in Roman North Africa. Prior to assuming her post at Vanderbilt, Jensen was Professor of the History of Christianity and Director of the Program in Theology and the Arts at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. She has also served as a Faith & Form/IFRAA Awards jury member. Jensen replaces outgoing advisor Drew Whitney.

#### FAITH & FORM AWARD WINNER WINS ANOTHER

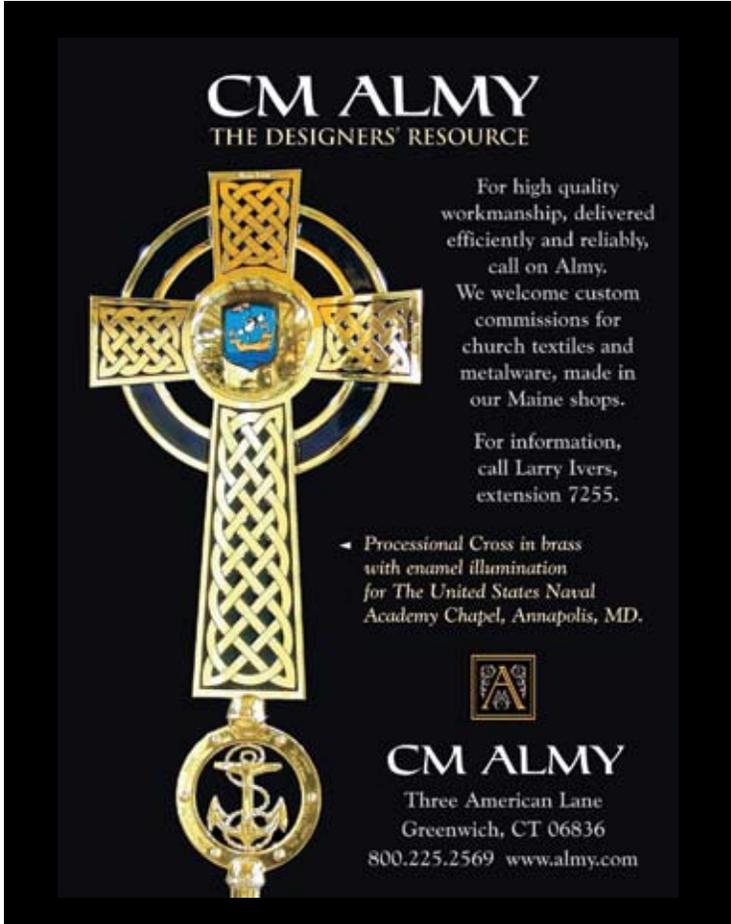
The Renovation of the Mortherhouse in Monroe, Michigan, designed by Susan Maxman & Partners has been selected by the American Institute of Architects’ Committee on the Environment as one of its “Top Ten Green Projects” for 2006. The project won a 2005 Faith & Form/IFRAA award for renovation.

#### COME TO FORM/REFORM

FORM/REFORM will take place in Kansas City, Missouri, July 29–August 2, 2006. This the only U.S. conference devoted to the full range of issues in architecture, environment, and art for Catholic worship. For more information and registration materials visit [www.formreformconference.com](http://www.formreformconference.com) or call 815-332-7084 or 815-509-7158.

#### 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](mailto:mcrosbie@faithandform.com). 



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# CROSSING BORDERS

JUST ONE MORE THING... \* BETTY H. MEYER

I had an experience recently that I would like to share with you because it gave me hope for the future

of our traditional religious institutions. I was invited to tour both Hebrew College and Andover Newton (Christian) Theological School, which exist side by side on a high hill in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. We used to go there for Easter sunrise because of its magnificent view of the city of Boston.

How these two institutions came together side by side is a fascinating story. Dr. David Gordis, President of Hebrew College (which was founded in 1922), was having lunch with his friend Rodney Peterson, head of the Boston Theological Institute, a consortium of Christian schools, and happened to mention that Hebrew College was outgrowing its space in Brookline, Massachusetts. Dr. Peterson immediately said that Andover Newton was looking to sell some land adjacent to its campus, and he scribbled on a napkin what the two would look like as neighbors. The following day plans were already in the making

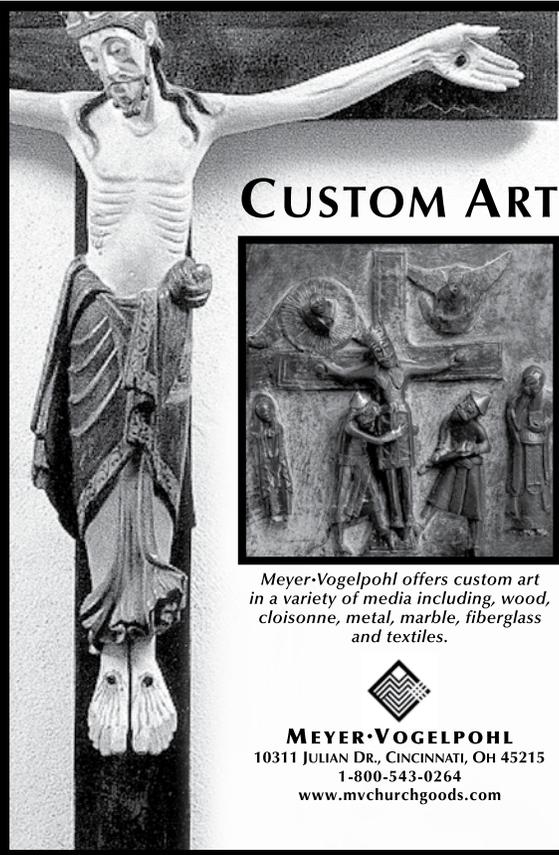
and Hebrew College opened as a neighbor in 2001 to Andover Newton. Both presidents thought the partnership would make an ideal laboratory for studying and promoting religious pluralism in the world.

But change is difficult and the new venture was not easy at first. There were fears that individual identities would become muddled and that collaboration might compromise traditional missions and, of course, finances were limited. Nick Carter came on as the new president of Andover Newton, and both school leaders were determined to make their dream come true. They were encouraged when Steven Spielberg, the film director, contributed \$100,000 to the effort, and new energy was generated when Carter hailed the news of the grant with these words: "The ability to cross borders and meaningfully engage people who don't think or worship the same has become an essential skill for religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The two institutions are becoming a real life story of religious pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which draws together Jews, Christians, and soon, we hope, Muslims." So far the work includes:

- Teachers from different faiths teach courses together;
- The holy days of each faith are celebrated by the entire community;
- Programs and lectures are set up by a group of students from both colleges called "Journeys on the Hill";
- Art courses and exhibits include work of both faiths;
- Students and faculty of both colleges work together on social action projects;
- A lecture series is offered on the subject of renewal and community;
- Each faith worships in the other's sanctuary.

If this religious perspective grows across the U.S., different art and architecture will be needed, and this work will be the responsibility of, and I hope, a pleasing challenge to artists and architects.

I believe the biggest threat to a world torn apart is irrelevance. We need to cross borders so there is better understanding of the commonalities between different faiths. Then our diversity will not be a threat but a blessing, and peace will be ours. 



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