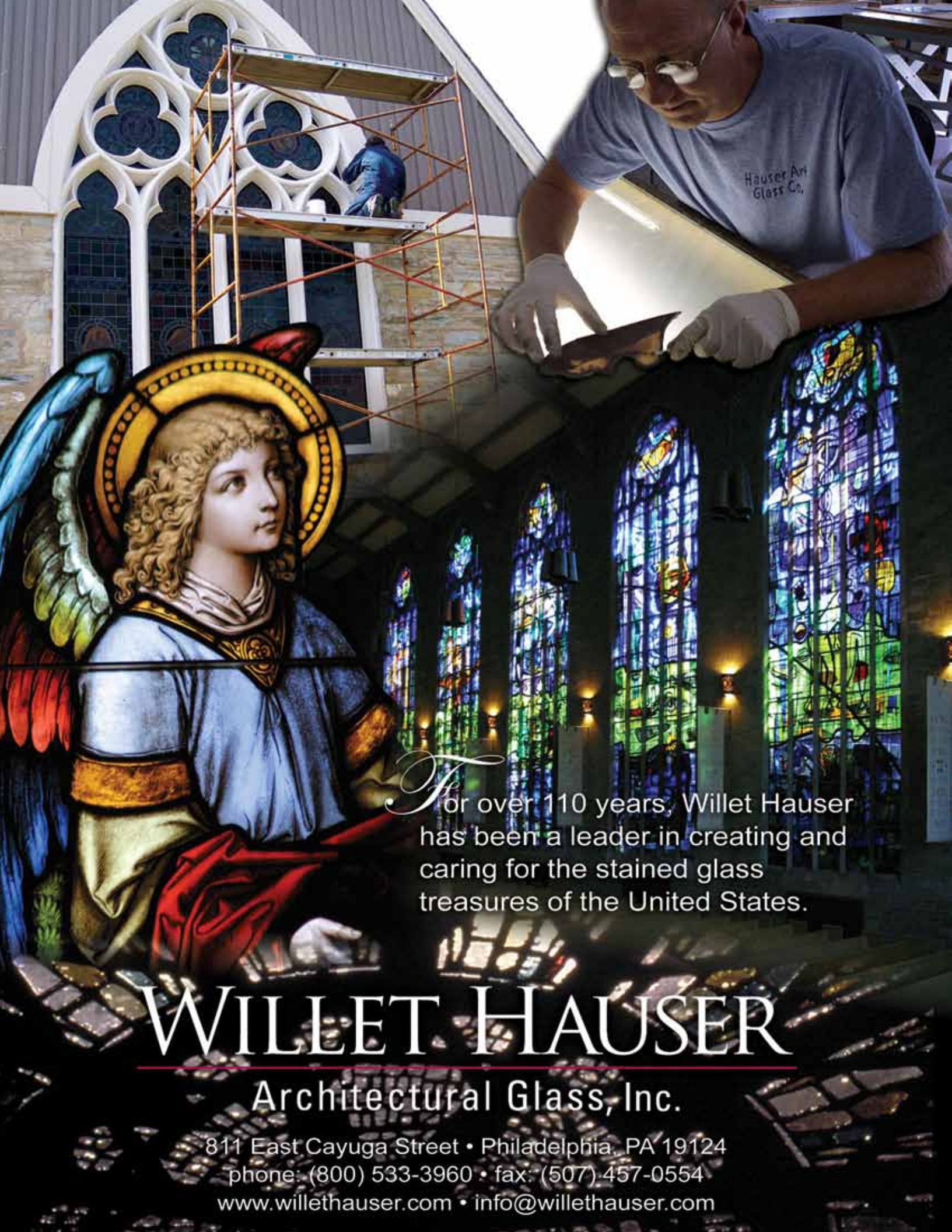




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RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE
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ON THE COVER:

Box pews, looking down, Rocky Hill Meetinghouse (1785), Amesbury, Massachusetts, from photographer Paul Wainwright's book, *A Space for Faith* (Philip E. Randall, Publisher, 2009). (article begins on page 20).

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NEXT ISSUE:
Special Theme
Issue: "Out of the
Mainstream," the
shifting prominence
of faith communities
in the U.S.





BETTY'S WAY


EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

It is difficult to argue with a 92-year-old. When Betty Meyer told me she had decided to retire her *Faith & Form* column, "Just One More Thing," I protested and tried to talk her out of it. But Betty has more than earned the privilege to stop. Writers do not easily put down their pens. There is something life affirming about having a publishing outlet for your ideas and views, about knowing there is a space and some ink for you to tell a story, reflect on an experience, or champion a cause. Betty did all of these things so well. That is why her leave is particularly bitter. Such a talented and thoughtful writer should just go on writing.

I first met Betty more than 15 years ago, at a meeting of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture. In the lobby of a hotel she was surrounded by a court of friends and admirers, all sharing a drink and their reflections on the day's events. I was not yet part of the *Faith & Form* staff, just a freelancer covering the IFRAA tour for the journal. What impressed me was how very much at ease Betty made people feel, how unguarded she was. She appeared to have no ego, no thirst for attention, no tiresome pedantic tendencies. Instead, Betty thrived on drawing people out, gently, about their impressions. She asked many more questions than anyone else in the group, and she would sit quietly

with a knowing smile while others held forth. This was my first impression of Betty. It is a lasting one, and it has been confirmed by dozens of encounters with her over the years, and by the experiences of others.

Her column in *Faith & Form* has always been an opportunity for Betty to ask questions. Many of her essays started with a query: Have you ever wondered; did you ever consider; how might we make it better? Betty knows that the act of writing is really an exercise in thinking. You can feel her ideas taking form and evolving as she writes, following her question to an answer. This is completely different from reading an article where the author has already formulated an idea, an agenda, an answer, and is merely there to convince you she is right. Betty, instead, writes to invite us on a voyage of the mind and the spirit. She writes less about the destination than about the journey. In this way, I have always most admired Betty as a teacher.

I have provided Betty with an escape route from retirement: if she ever wants to pick up her pen again, the last page is hers once more. Until then, the space that was occupied by Betty's column will be devoted to a guest essayist. In each issue we will invite someone to tell us about whatever fires her or his passion for religion, art, or architecture. Just as Betty always invited others to speak, sit back, and drink in their ideas, it will be a place for us to welcome new ideas and new points of view. It seems like the most fitting way to follow Betty's example. 

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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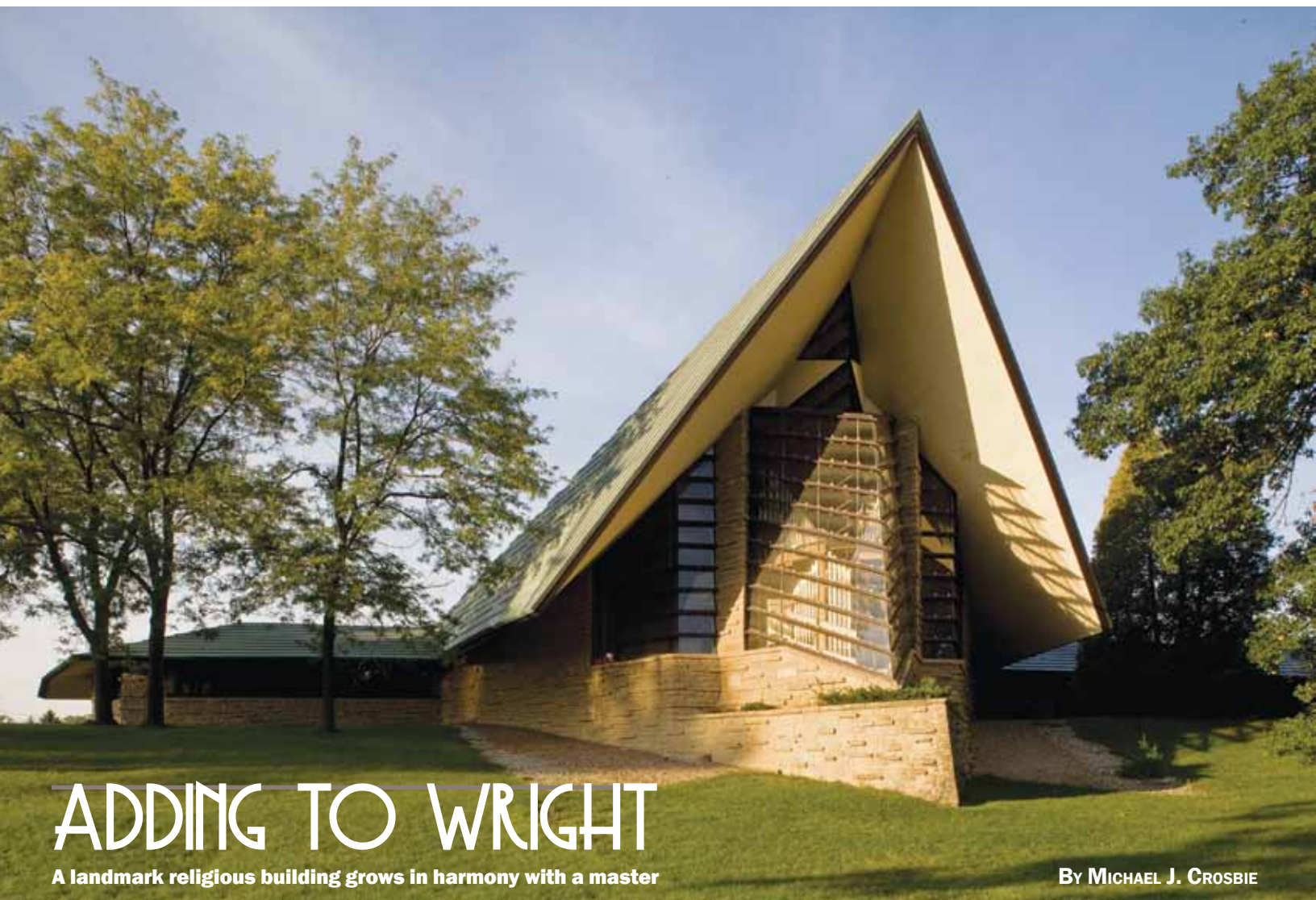
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ADDING TO WRIGHT

A landmark religious building grows in harmony with a master

By MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

Adding to a National Historic Landmark on the National Register of Historic Places would be intimidating enough for your average architect. But to design an addition to such a building that was also designed by Frank Lloyd Wright really cranks up the anxiety level. If there was any sense of insecurity on the part of the new building's designers, The Kubala Washatko Architects, about planning an annex to an American masterpiece of religious architecture, you cannot detect it in this new, 20,000-square-foot addition to Wright's First Unitarian Society Meetinghouse in Madison, Wisconsin. The addition, which contains a 500-seat auditorium, social/fellowship space, offices, a library, and support spaces, looks as though it was always meant to be there, showing deference to Wright's opus yet asserting its own quiet identity. In the spirit of Wright's approach to

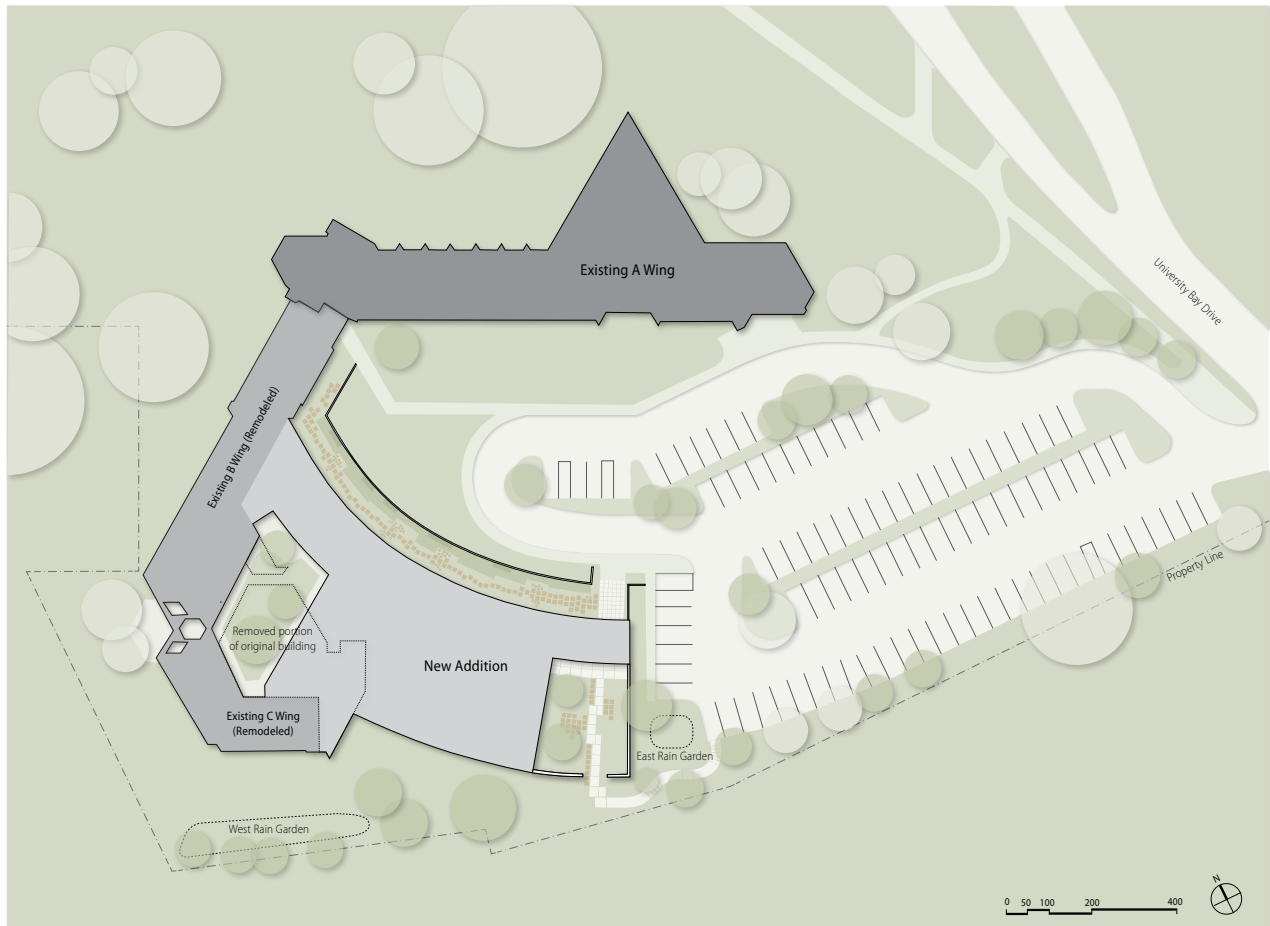
designing with nature (as he often described it) the Meetinghouse addition is green. It earned LEED Gold certification and was recently cited for a Top Ten Award by the 2011 Committee on the Environment (COTE) of the American Institute of Architects.

This addition had a long genesis. Wright's original building was designed in 1946 and completed in 1951 (relatives of the architect had been founding members of this Unitarian congregation, and Wright himself was a member). Wright designed a building to accommodate 150 parishioners. Today the congregation numbers 1,600 and is the largest Unitarian Universalist congregation in the country. Wright's building is iconic in its triangular glass prism form under a broad A-frame roof, an architectural composition inspired (it has been suggested) by Albrecht Dürer's drawing, "The Hands of the Apostle." This ele-

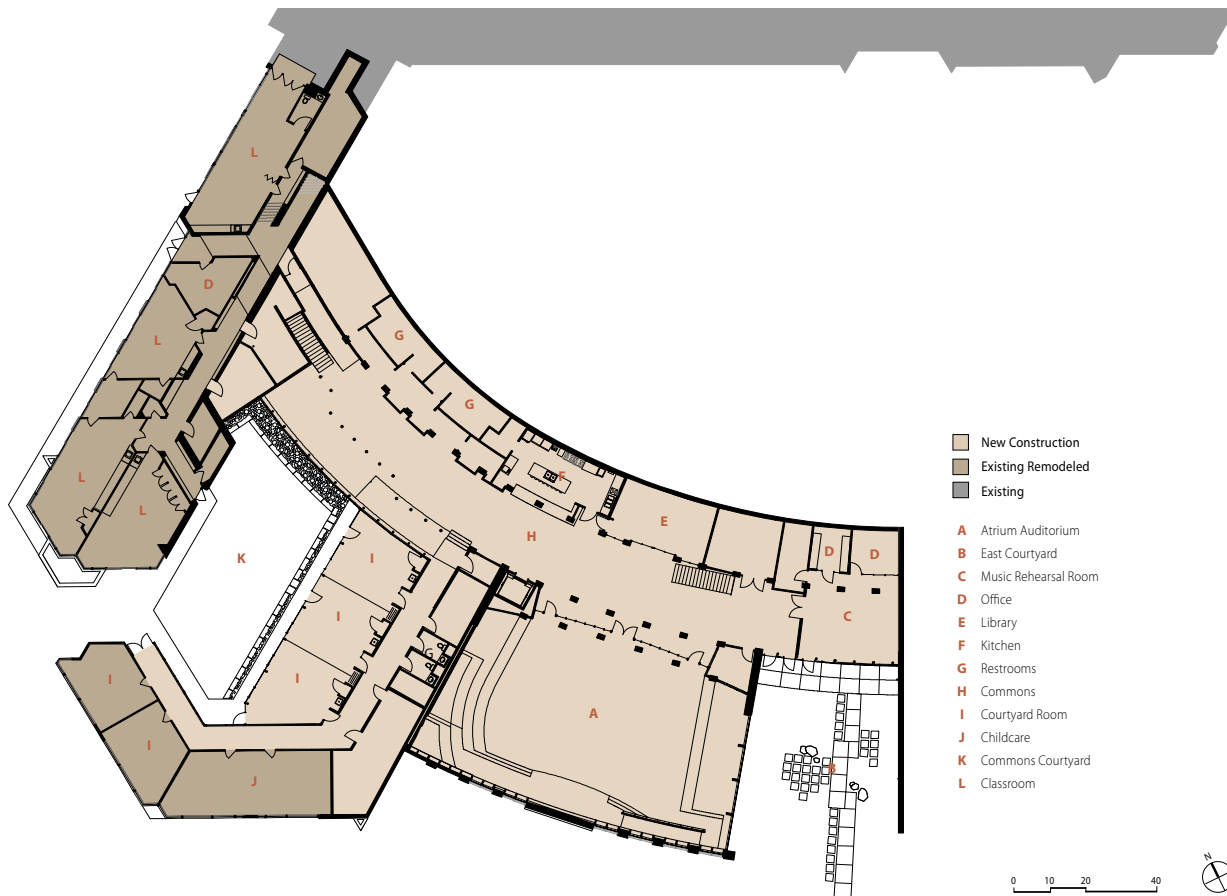
ment contains the tall worship space, with a low wing extending to the west containing classrooms and social spaces. In 1960 an addition extending to the southwest, mimicking the long west wing of the original, was added; another addition was constructed in 1990, creating a C-shaped "claw" off the original. The predominant materials throughout were limestone, glass, and wood. Consideration of a third addition commenced in 1999, with the organization of a building committee and extensive meetings.

The Kubala Washatko Architects used a design method that seems perfectly aligned with the congregation's belief that they should stay on their historic site and work within "an interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part." That translated into the desire for not only a green addition, but also one

text continues on page 10



Site plan.



Lower level.

*New, curved addition
is distinguished by
a green roof.*

©The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc. / Mark Heffron





Panorama of the original Wright meetinghouse (at far right) and new addition (at far left).

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Circulation interior of the addition, known as the 'Crossing,' is light-filled and structurally expressive.

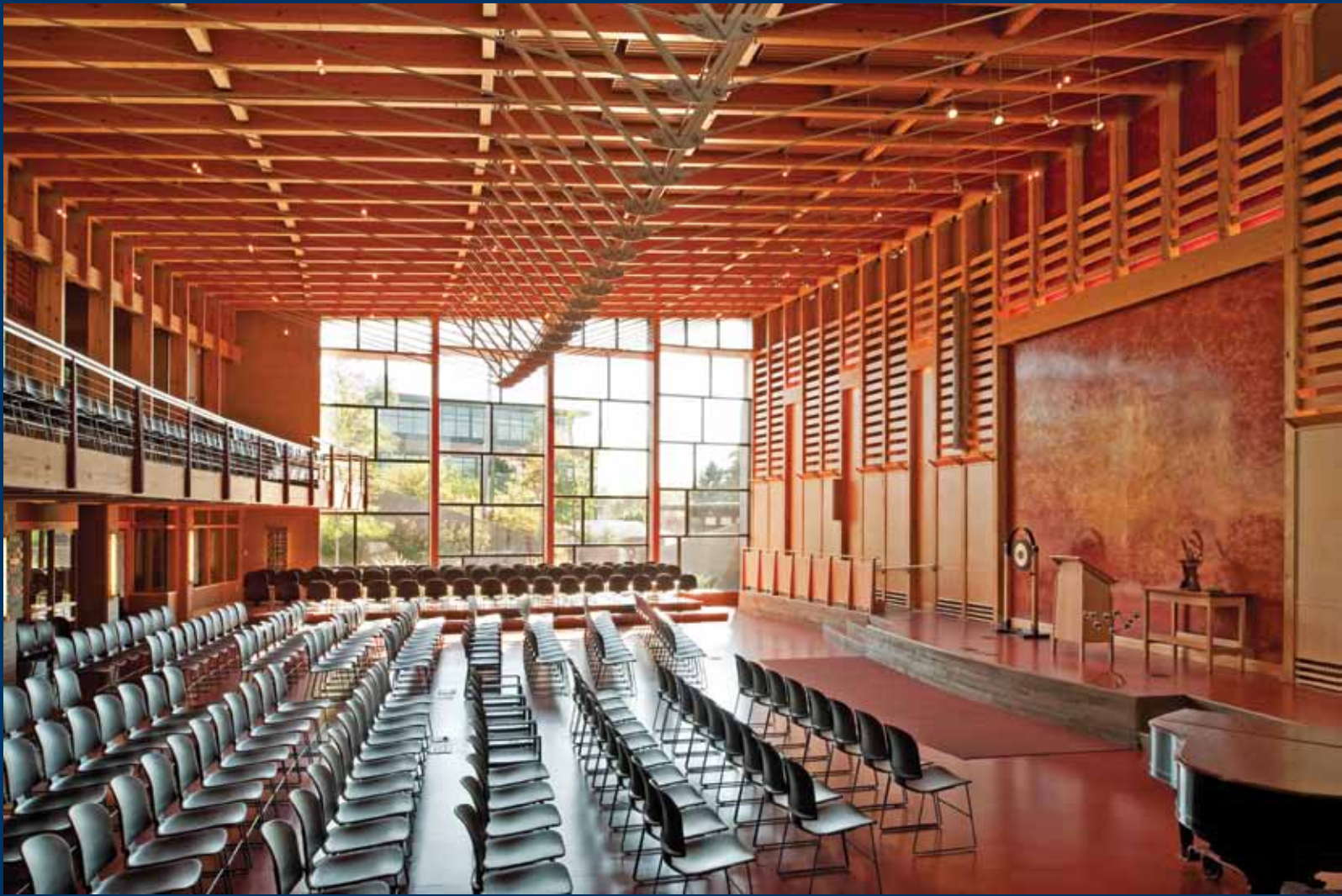
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that would build upon the history of the location, the congregation, and its mission. The firm has a unique approach to design, which it describes as “Wholeness,” or the “interconnectedness of all things.” According to Design Principal Tom Kubala (who worked on the project with Senior Project Architect Vince Micha) Christopher Alexander’s Pattern Language has greatly influenced the firm’s working method by helping them understand how a design should unfold in response to the myriad wants of the client, the context of the

site, and the materials at hand. After extensive time spent listening to congregants and drawing them out (there were 31 user groups for the First Unitarian Society addition) the architects formulated patterns to guide the design and set the goals for the final building. This project had 30 patterns, each structured as an Issue Statement (which articulates a desire, a need, or a problem that the design must address) and a Solution Statement (which suggests how the design might respond). All 30 patterns for this project may be found on the architects’ Web

site (tkwa.com/first-unitarian-society/).

“During the discovery phase of design,” says Kubala, “anecdotal information, emotional information, information gathered from user groups may be recorded, but it does not find itself in the details of the design. But if we write patterns, a lot of that information becomes clear as a network of intentions. It codifies the issues that the design needs to resolve. It is a non-reductionist approach to design.” The patterns are guideposts for the design, yardsticks by which the finished project can be judged.



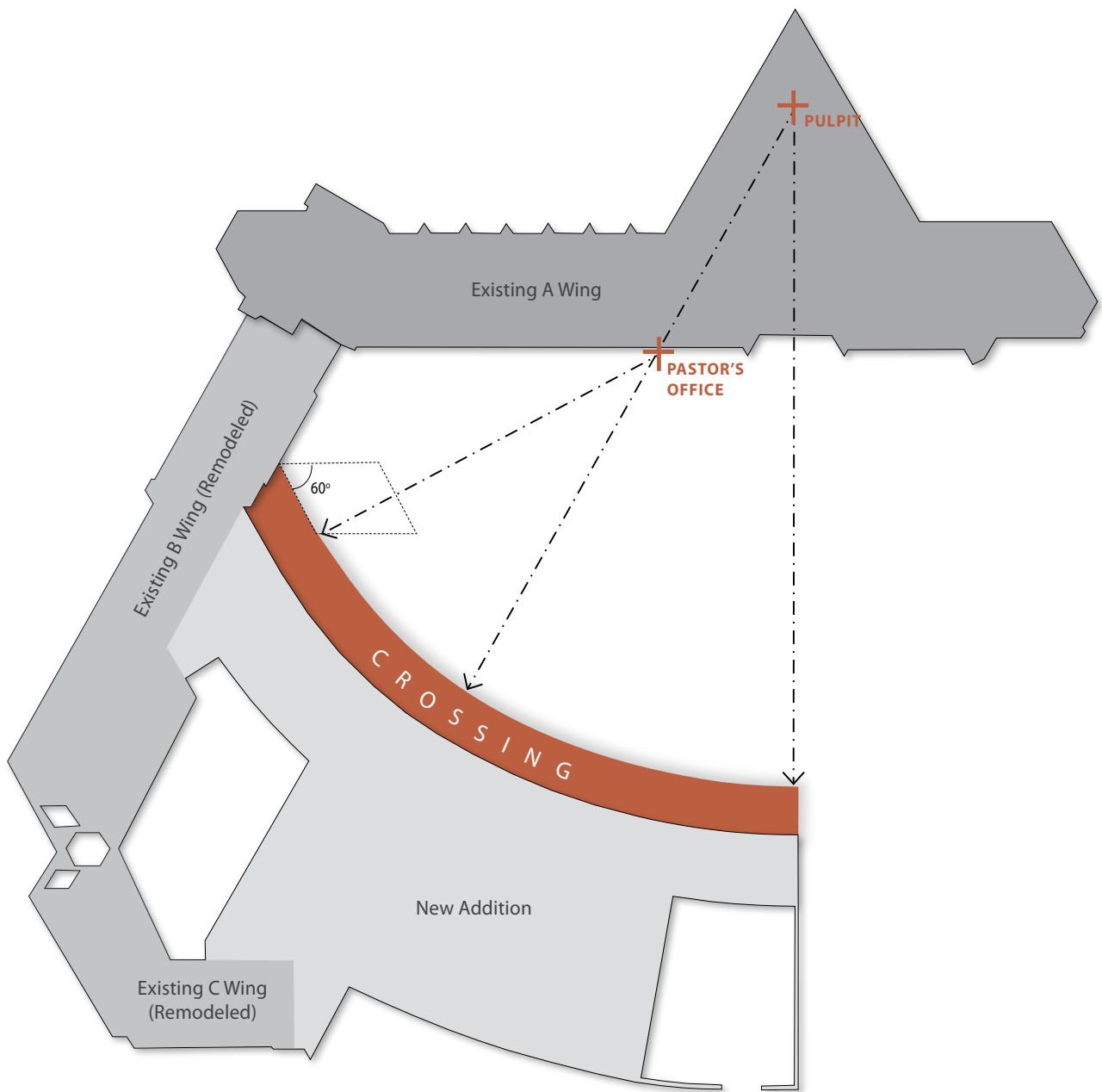
Interior of the new 500-seat auditorium.

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Another guiding factor was a committee of Wright experts, an advisory board of peers assembled by the firm to help critique the design as it developed. The board consisted of Neil Levine from Harvard University; John Garrett Thorpe, AIA, a Wright restoration architect from Chicago; Gunny Harboe, FAIA, of Harboe Architects, PC, Chicago; John Eifler of Eifler & Associates Architects, Chicago; and representatives from the Wisconsin Historical Society. Besides giving the design architects direction, the advisory board helped reassure

the congregation that the new building would be a fitting addition to Wright's original design. The congregation wanted the new building to lower the intensity of use of the original Wright building, but not to upstage it architecturally. An early design scheme took its layout from the original building, using an equilateral rhombus as the overall plan shape. When a consultant informed the parish that its fundraising targets were unrealistic, the architects had to scrap the strong geometrical scheme and "re-grow the design," as Kubala puts it.

The answer was an entirely new, simplified geometry: an arc that gently curves around the original building to the south, creating a circulation spine and a focused exterior space that help frame views of Wright's church. The primary pivot point for the arc is the pulpit in the original building, with a second pivot point being the pastor's office (*see diagram, page 12*). "The circulation is in constant visual connection to the building original," explains Kubala of the geometry generated off Wright's building. "As people move from old to new, it



Plan geometry.

is clear where the master is, and the addition is the servant to the older building.” The exposed structural members, the window frames, the column grids, and the angle of the north walls all radiate from the pulpit, in deference to the elder building.


Materially, the new addition is sympathetic to the old. Instead of stone, board-formed concrete is used to give the base a sense of weight akin to Wright’s church. Colored concrete flooring and fiber-cement siding are also used. Glass curtain walls are framed with locally sourced wood; pine tree trunks (wind-felled trees from tribal lands in northern Wisconsin)

are used for structural timbers, and the roof is copper, where it is not planted with vegetation. Materials have high-recycled content.

Material choice is only part of what makes this building sustainable. The green roof and the new permeable surfaces around the site have virtually eliminated storm-water runoff. Rainwater collection and storage onsite, efficient plumbing fixtures, and other recycled water strategies cut consumption by approximately 30 percent.

Passive solar design, along with a low-power-assisted natural ventilation system and abundant natural light help to cut energy

consumption. The addition uses geothermal heating and cooling delivered through a radiant floor system. Kubala says that the design team used extensive energy modeling early in the project to guide sustainable choices throughout.

Some clients choose to build sustainably to reduce life-cycle costs, to improve comfort, or to enhance building performance. However, more religious communities, such as First Unitarian Society, see a strong connection between earth stewardship and their religious beliefs. This new addition honors both the father of the original, and the sun. 

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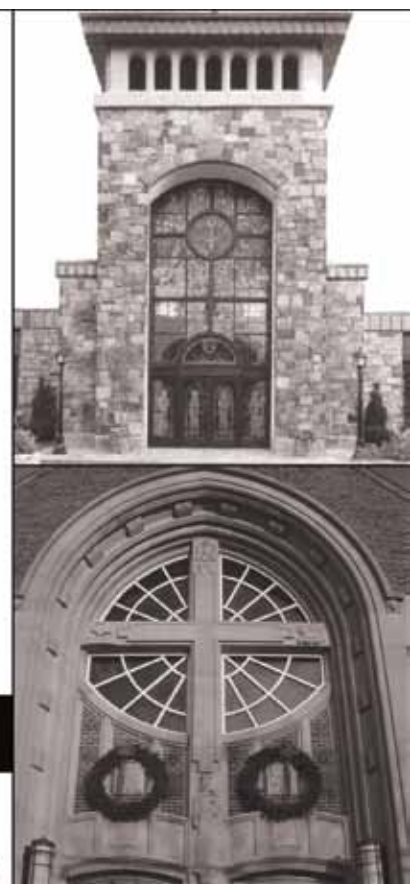
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Thomas Merton & The Arts

By JOSEPH M. MALHAM

Thomas Merton is without doubt one of the great spiritual lights of the last century; his books continually find new generations of eager, thirsty seekers of truth. The wisdom, wit, and even the anger of this monk, author, spiritual master, social activist, and prophet of peace cut across cultural as well as spiritual boundaries, and crackle with power and cogency that resonate with our still very broken world.



Thomas Merton

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Merton is known primarily for his early canon of books on prayer, mysticism, and the monastic life and for his later works encouraging interfaith dialogue and addressing the evils of war, racial injustice, and nuclear war. His life, however, is often and somewhat erroneously divided into his early “pious” phase, when he renounced the world, and his later “activist” phase, when he re-engaged in it. The truth is that Merton was simply a lifelong spiritual pilgrim, a fascinating though often tumultuous work in progress, whose restless search for truth took him to distant horizons in many directions. A man, as it were, composed of many parts and seeking the transformed unity St. Paul referred to as putting on “the new person.”

In this polarization of Merton’s life between the extremes of the silent, contemplative life

and what he himself termed a “vow of conversation” in the late 1950s and 1960s, what is sometimes overlooked is Merton’s passionate interest in and commitment to the arts, both sacred and profane. Thomas Merton was at heart an artist, the son of an artist who in words, verse, and even images expressed a sense of the beautiful, the true, and the good in God’s creation. Art was a large component of the substrata upon which his thought and work rested and out of which sprang the greatest urges of his endlessly probing mind. Like his teachings on prayer, peace, and justice, Merton’s ideas on art continue to have meaning and relevance; they therefore bear some examination.

Born in 1915 in Prades, France to bohemian, free-thinking parents (his father, Owen, was a painter from New Zealand and his mother, Ruth, was an American Quaker), young Tom was raised in an intellectually stimulating but spiritually dry and indifferent atmosphere. By the time he was a teenager Merton had lost both his parents to cancer, and his nominal, pro forma Christianity gave way to a militant, intellectual atheism. Later, as a campus swell at Columbia University in New York City, Merton acquired the reputation of being a rebellious and randy big man on campus. Throwing himself headlong into the underground art, jazz, and literary worlds, he dabbled in left-wing politics, helped edit the campus satirical magazine (where he proved to be a highly imaginative and whimsical cartoonist), and engaged in alcohol-fueled, novel-writing contests in an attempt to become a serious and published author. Art, whether in the realm of literature, poetry, music, or visual art, remained the only line that tenuously tethered Merton to any concept of the Transcendent and the Eternal.

By the late 1930s, however, through grace and examples of faith from devout and genuinely spiritual friends, Merton was drawn deeper and deeper into the mysteries of faith and God’s mercy. In 1938 he was baptized a Catholic and, taking a post at a Franciscan University in upstate New York, he pondered on how and where God wanted him to serve. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, tens of thousands of young men marched into recruiting stations and depots in preparation for a long and bloody war across the sea. Merton, who had found his answer, quietly entered the Trappist abbey of Gethsemani in the rolling hills of Kentucky.

GIFTS OF THE ARTIST

Merton was content to slip into the sweet oblivion of the cloister, but his superiors knew they had a gifted young author in their community, and they gave him a typewriter and the time to use it. Merton’s first book after professing his monastic vows, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1949), was a spiritual autobiography that became an international bestseller and electrified a complacent and overstuffed post-war generation. The now-renowned Merton soon followed *Mountain* with a similarly well-received series of spiritual classics such as *The Waters of Siloe*, *The Sign of Jonas*, *Thoughts in Solitude*, and *No Man Is an Island*. However, as the 1960s dawned and brought with them Birmingham, the Missiles of October, Dallas, and escalating wars of liberation in Southeast Asia and Africa, Merton once again turned toward a world he loved but felt was hurtling itself madly into the abyss.

At that same time the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) initiated seismic changes in the Catholic Church, seeking to reclaim not only clarity of purpose in the liturgy and religious life but in the very essence of the faith so as to make it more dynamic and relevant in the modern world. The two words often applied to the Council that genuinely expressed its spirit are the Italian word *aggiornamento* (updating) and the French *ressourcement* (a return to the sources). For Merton, whose intellectual maturity and voluminous output of work peaked at this time, these concepts were relevant not only in the realm of the sacred but also in the social and the aesthetic.

From his early years as a Thomist (Etienne Gilson’s *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* was a key element in his conversion to Catholicism) to his later years when he was greatly influenced by Buddhism and Eastern philosophies, Merton always saw art as an expression of truth, a solitary or communal experience of creation and enrichment that led to a deeper mystical union with God. With the upheaval in the Catholic Church during the Conciliar years, Merton saw opportunities aplenty in which the whole language and nature of sacred art and architecture could be renewed, purified of artifice, and could become the spiritual expressions of a here-and-now people with all the uncertainties, anxieties, aspirations, and hopes of the age. While the 1950s and 1960s saw an unabated stream of books by Merton on the subjects of prayer, monasticism, social action, and his own considerable oeuvre of

highly regarded verse, Merton also wrote extensively on the subject of art. As Pope John Paul II would say much later in his lauded “Letter to the Artists” (1999) Merton believed that art, even when it shocks, unsettles, and challenges humanity, has the potential to reveal truth and holiness.

THE HABIT OF SEEING

In his essay “Sacred Art & The Spiritual Life” from the book *Disputed Questions*, Merton addressed what he felt to be the heart of the matter regarding the nature of aesthetics and holiness. Beginning with the premise that the tendency is either to cling in comfort to artistic languages that are old or to blindly embrace that which is new, he declared that both attitudes produce bad art and that one ought instead to develop the habit of seeing. For Merton, genuine sacred art comes from and takes one back to a place of prayer; to unhesitatingly accept or deny a particular form without weighing its intrinsic merit in the intellect as well as in the soul is an affront to both “God the Creator” and “the Sanctifying Spirit of Truth” (*Disputed Questions*, 154).

In the same essay, Merton unblinkingly praises the sincerity of faith that produces plaster statues and sentimental lithographs of the saints and the Sacred Heart, but deplores the style in which that faith is expressed. Quoting the leonine St. John of Damascus, best known for his writings encouraging the use of icons and condemning the eighth-century iconoclasts, Merton says that non-Christians should be able to look at our churches and understand what our faith is all about. The only problem, he concludes, is that most of us would be ashamed to show anyone many of the statues and much of the stained glass found in the majority of the aforementioned churches. While as a people, he says, we cannot slavishly imitate the glories of Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic art and architecture, we can strive to attain not only the universal truths they achieved, but their commitment to good taste as well (*Disputed Questions*, 158–162).

Merton pulls no punches in his critique of modern and classical sacred art and does not hesitate to put even great artists in his cross hairs. Declaring that Henri Matisse is indeed a great artist, Merton goes on to say that his decoration for the chapel of the Dominican nuns at Vence is at best a noble experiment but, lacking a certain sacred ineffability, can in no way be called perfect (*Disputed Questions*, 159).



Photograph by Thomas Merton.

Used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University.

El Greco, the 16th-century Cretan painter long considered the herald of expressionism, gets a thumbs-up from Merton with many reservations. A contemporary of Teresa of Avila and of John of the Cross, and a forceful virtuoso in the use of dramatic gesture and lighting, El Greco is nevertheless seen by Merton as an overrated religious painter. He says that great artists, like Byzantine iconographers, should hint at hidden spiritual realities and that when artists, like El Greco, telegraph them with dramatic facial expres-

sions and sensual contortions, the results are fatuousness and “theatrical falsity” (*Disputed Questions*, 161–163).

In another essay, this one from *No Man is an Island*, Merton expands on the question of what makes sacred art just that, adding a refreshing note of transcendence and inclusiveness that bears a reappraisal in our own time. In the creation or contemplation of a work of art or a sacred space, Merton believed, an individual is raised above the mundane confines of his or her own needs



Calligraphy by Thomas Merton.

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and wants, and in that elevation—that exultation—can discover new horizons of “thought, vision, and moral action.” (*A Thomas Merton Reader*, 387). In this short but quite profound meditation Merton neatly dovetails the aesthetic experience with humanity’s common obligation to transform the world through prayer, peace, and social justice. Inasmuch as, he opines, one cannot reject plaster saints because of their syrupy sentimentalism, or fawn over a minimalist Crucifixion because it is new and chic, one also cannot ignore social ills out of passive conformity or protest them because doing so is subversive and “cool.” Merton declares that in both the aesthetical and social realms when one acts out of moral conviction and intellectual honesty rather than from blind passivity and current fashion, he/she will then become an agent of the truth and beauty that reveal the face of God.

ART AS A COMPONENT OF BELIEF

From the early 1960s up to his death in 1968 Merton himself embarked upon an ever widening voyage of exploration into his own artistic consciousness, tackling various disciplines with the heart of a poet and the thirsty curiosity of a wayfaring adventurer. Leaving aside his verse, Merton once again took up drawing and, under the influence of his Eastern studies, immersed himself in the mystical language of Zen calligraphy. A tireless and generous correspondent with the prominent and the obscure from all walks of life, Merton seemed particularly content when in dialogue with other poets, writers, and artists. Through his lifelong friend (and fellow convert) Robert Lax, Merton established a longstanding friendship with Abstract Expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt and, while living in his hermitage on the monastery grounds, became close friends with the author and photographer,

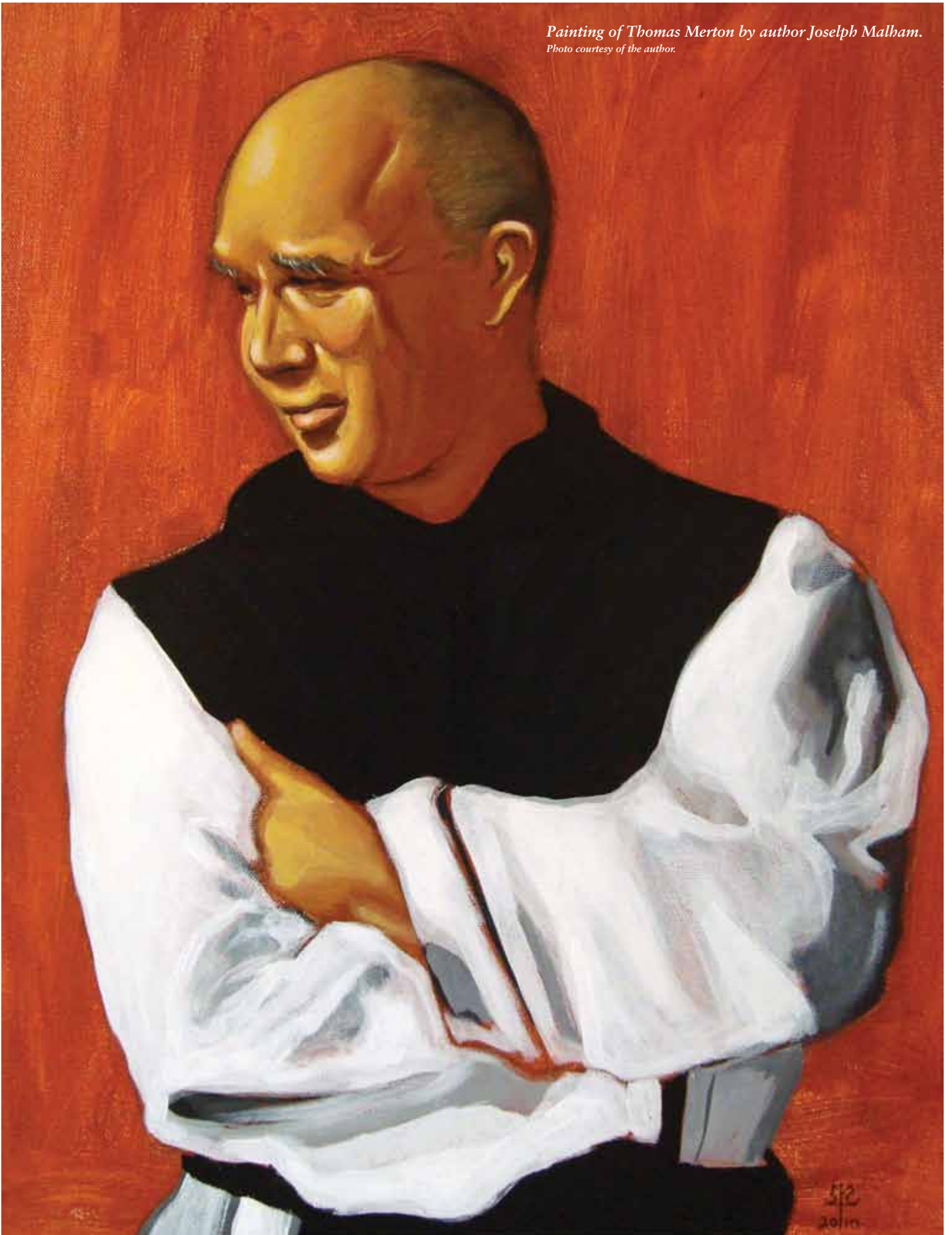
John Howard Griffin (*Black Like Me*). Under Griffin’s tutelage, Merton took up photography and soon evolved into a talented and sensitive poet with the lens. With his genuine and prophetic appreciation of the passions of the younger generation, he was constantly putting his finger on the pulse of contemporary cultural trends. Merton was fascinated with the music of Bob Dylan (whose records he played for the aged philosopher Jacques Maritain), the Beatles, Joan Baez, and the transformative effect they were having on an increasingly restless and rebellious youth. Young people responded and many of his youthful admirers, far from turning away from institutional churches or faith itself, embraced the monk as a sort of chaplain to the counter-culture movement.

It would be not only wrong but also unfair to his memory to say that Thomas Merton was merely an angry and incorrigible rebel who, even in the areas of sacred art, music, and architecture, sought to challenge authority and to overturn existing orders for the simple thrill of challenging and overturning. Merton was steeped in the tradition of Christian art but not bound to either the “old” or the “new”; rather he sought the good and the beautiful. A passionate lover of the mystery of Byzantine icons, the simplicity of Shaker furniture, and the works of Eric Gill (whom he considered one of the few authentic geniuses of modern sacred art) he could also express reservations about the works of celebrated artists of the past and the present.

In our own time, when sacred art seems to be pushed further into the back pews if not lost in the complex and problematic realities of maintaining healthy and vibrant faith communities, Merton’s words ring with a crisp clarity for all faiths, Christian and non-Christian. In the final analysis, Merton held that sacred art is not a decorative adjunct to a particular space but a vibrant and essential component of expressed belief. Like prayer, liturgy, and the Gospels themselves, sacred art needs to resonate with truth, sparkle with beauty and, most important, to lead to the edification and service of all God’s people. 

JOSEPH M. MALHAM IS AN AUTHOR AND ICONOGRAPHER WHO HAS BEEN ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT ST. GREGORY THE GREAT CHURCH IN CHICAGO FOR TEN YEARS. HIS FIRST BOOK, *BY FIRE INTO LIGHT: FOUR CATHOLIC MARTYRS OF THE NAZI CAMPS*, WAS PUBLISHED IN 2002. HIS NEWEST BOOK, *SEARCHER: THE ARTISTIC VISION OF JOHN FORD*, WILL BE RELEASED IN 2012 BY LAKE STREET PRESS. HE CAN BE CONTACTED AT JOE@TRINITYICONS.COM.

*Painting of Thomas Merton by author Joselph Malham.
Photo courtesy of the author.*



A Late-Modern Temple Gallery

By BRIAN CARTER

Delaware Avenue in Buffalo is one of those grand American avenues that was created late in the 19th century and defined by large houses and civic landmarks. Many of the houses were designed by notable architects including McKim Mead & White, Richard Upjohn, E.B. Greene, and H.H. Richardson, while several of those civic buildings were places of worship. They include Trinity Episcopal Church, which opened in 1886, and the Delaware Avenue Baptist Church, with its Richardsonian towers, that was dedicated a few years later.

The original synagogue of Temple Beth Zion was a few blocks south of Delaware Avenue. A large brown sandstone building, originally constructed in 1890, was destroyed by fire in 1961 and the design for a new building, which was to be built on a site that fronts Delaware Avenue, was commissioned from the New York architects Harrison & Abramovitz. That building, a conspicuous example of mid-century modernism and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was completed in 1967.

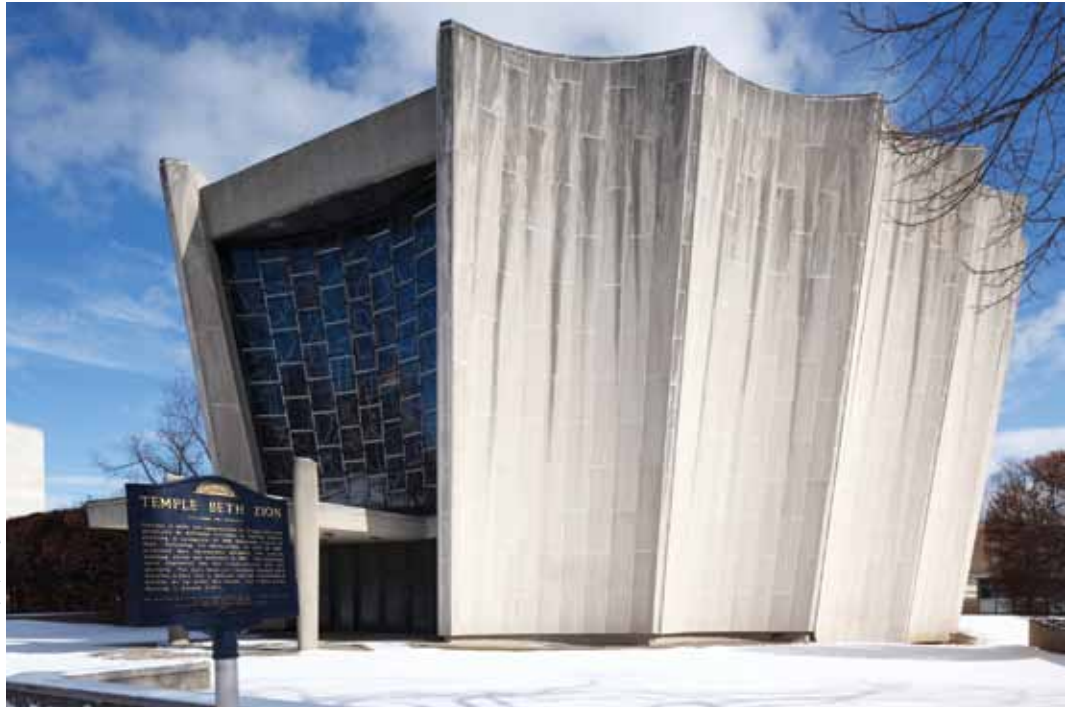
The scheme that Harrison & Abramovitz developed proposed a long two-story building built parallel to Delaware Avenue. This building, which housed offices, meetings rooms, and classrooms, was connected to a sanctuary elliptical in plan and designed as a sculpted limestone-clad, poured-concrete monolith. A large colorful stained glass window created by the artist Ben Shahn faces west and fronts onto Delaware Avenue.

The sanctuary is defined by an encircling wall composed of ten scalloped concrete panels that represent the Ten Commandments. Each of these panels leans out and symbolizes arms raised in prayer. The angled walls also made it possible to create a continuous roof-light around the perimeter of the temple, which allows daylight to wash the interior concrete walls with light and at the same time illuminate the circulatory ramps within the space.

In 2004 HHL Architects of Buffalo were invited to prepare a master plan to develop future uses for all of the spaces except the main sanctuary and chapel. The first phase of that plan included the design and construction of a new secondary lobby that has improved accessibility and defines the internal circulation within the complex of buildings more effectively.

This new lobby space connected to an existing corridor that runs the length of the two-story building and creates a new gallery for the display of significant artworks including a series of drawings by Ben Shahn. It also provides an entrance into the Cofeld Judaic Museum – a facility that houses more than 1,000 Judaic artifacts, some of which date back to the 10th century. In addition the new lobby was planned so as to create new seating areas that can be used for contemplation and informal meetings.

Two tall cabinets, each made of glass, were designed by the architects as a part of this project in order to display selected objects from the collection of Temple Beth Zion. Located within the new lobby space, and in clear view along the newly vaulted corridor, these elegantly detailed cab-




Exterior of the original 1967 temple, designed by Harrison & Abramovitz.

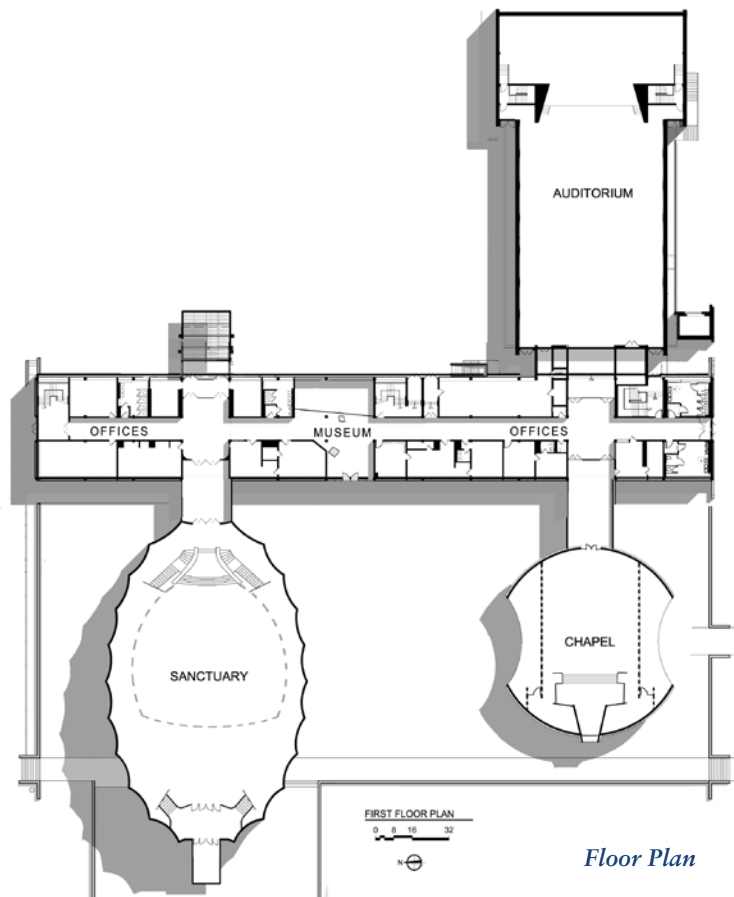


Sanctuary interior features a stained glass window by artist Ben Shahn.

inets are light, transparent, and virtually free-standing units within the space. Lit from fittings that have been recessed into the top of the cabinets, they have also been thoughtfully incorporated into the design of the ceiling so as to emphasize their lightness. In addition the cabinets are set at different angles and create distinct objects that not only house a beautiful collection but are themselves beautiful objects within the lobby.

This modest project of approximately 4,000 square feet effectively introduces new views of existing spaces and brings a distinct lightness to this solid sculpted building that was designed almost 50 years ago. It also offers a greater awareness of the many beautiful artifacts collected by the congregation over time while underlining the significance and character of this particular building and the communities that it was designed to serve. 

BRIAN CARTER, A REGISTERED ARCHITECT IN THE UK, IS A FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS. HE IS CURRENTLY PROFESSOR AND FORMER DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO.



Floor Plan



Cabinets designed by HHL Architects to display objects in the synagogue's collection.

Gravestones and window, Pelham Town Hall (1743),
Pelham, Massachusetts, 2006.



A Space for Faith

Text and Photographs by Paul Wainwright

Editor's Note: **A Space for Faith**, by photographer Paul Wainwright, comprises 77 duotone images of New England meetinghouses. The book recently won the 2011 Gold Medal Award from the Independent Publishers' Association as the best northeast regional non-fiction book of the year. In this excerpt from the book, Wainwright explains his working methods, his choice of meetinghouses as subject matter, and his hope for their future preservation.

My passion for photographing old buildings reflects my curiosity about exploring the experience of living by examining the structures we build, which, without our realizing it, become monuments to our way of life.

New England's colonial meetinghouses were built to serve the needs of a community to gather both for town business and religious worship – concepts that were not at all distinct in colonial New England before the separation of church and state. While many of these meetinghouses have been torn down or renovated well beyond their original appearance, the structures shown here look much as they did when they were first built. I feel a “presence” whenever I am in one of these places—not in a haunting way, but with a sense of wonderment about the people who built and used them. My photographs of these structures are devoid of people, yet to me they are all about our nation's ancestors, whose lives—the day-to-day joys and cares—are not much different from mine today. Sometimes when I am in one of these meetinghouses I love to sit and contemplate those who came before me. I wonder how many others have had the same experience.

In photographing these buildings, I have made every effort to omit any reference to the 19th, 20th, or 21st centuries. For example, my preferred interpretation of exterior views is straight on and square. Telephone wires frequently require that I relax this approach. Also, when photographing the interior spaces, I always use natural light. I feel that artificial illumination would detract from the sense of space and light that I experience in these places. Furthermore, most of these meetinghouses to this day do not have electricity.

Steeple, Old South Meetinghouse (1729),
Boston, Massachusetts, 2008.





Sun on windowsill, Old Walpole Meetinhouse (1772),
South Bristol, Maine, 2007.



Interior, Old Meetinghouse (1773), Sandown, New Hampshire, 2005.

While architectural photographs are usually seen as illustrations of what a structure looks like, this is not my primary intent. Rather, I see beauty and mystery in these meetinghouses. I love the textures of the wood. I am impressed with their regularity and symmetry—they are beautiful in their austerity and simplicity. Perhaps romantically, I suspect these qualities reflect the lives of those who built them. Their religious beliefs were unambiguous and the simple lines of their meetinghouses reflect this.

In many ways, the location where each photograph was made is unimportant. I approach meetinghouses in much the same way that an artist who works with the human form approaches a model. It is not important what the person's name is. Rather, the artist sees in the


model a quality that can, when properly posed and lit, yield a piece of art. These meetinghouses are my “models” for making art, and my photographs reflect my emotional response to them – my physical location when I made each photograph is not of primary importance. Therefore, the images are sequenced for artistic purposes, and not by where they were made.

I made my first photograph of a meetinghouse in Fremont, New Hampshire, a town not far from where I live. That led to several nearby meetinghouses in Sandown and Danville, New Hampshire. Following my curiosity, I started to do some reading to find additional structures that would pose for me as models. I began to understand the importance of the history embodied in these places, and the project began to take shape.



Doors, Friends Meetinghouse (1706), Pembroke, Massachusetts, 2006.

My photographs are first seen in my mind before they are made. My craft with working the camera, developing the negative, and making the print is then harnessed to produce the desired image. The slow pace of working with a traditional wooden field camera, sheet film, chemicals, and photographic paper causes me—forces me—to slow down and think. I enjoy the tactile quality of working with traditional photographic media. There is an intimacy in going under the dark cloth and looking at an upside-down image on the ground glass or in working in the darkroom on a snowy winter day. I hope that this feeling is reflected in my photographs. There is certainly a Zen-like quality to my pace of working, and I think my photographs are better for it. I know I am.

This book and the companion exhibition, “A Space for Faith,” are my tribute to New England’s colonial meetinghouses and the people who built and used them. It is my hope that my photographs will illuminate both the graceful beauty and rich history embodied in these structures, and thereby awaken an interest in the importance of preserving this vital part of our national heritage. 

PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL WAINWRIGHT IS BASED IN ATKINSON, NEW HAMPSHIRE. MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIS BOOK, *A SPACE FOR FAITH*, PUBLISHED BY PETER E. RANDALL PUBLISHER, IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THIS WEB SITE: ASPACEFORFAITH.COM

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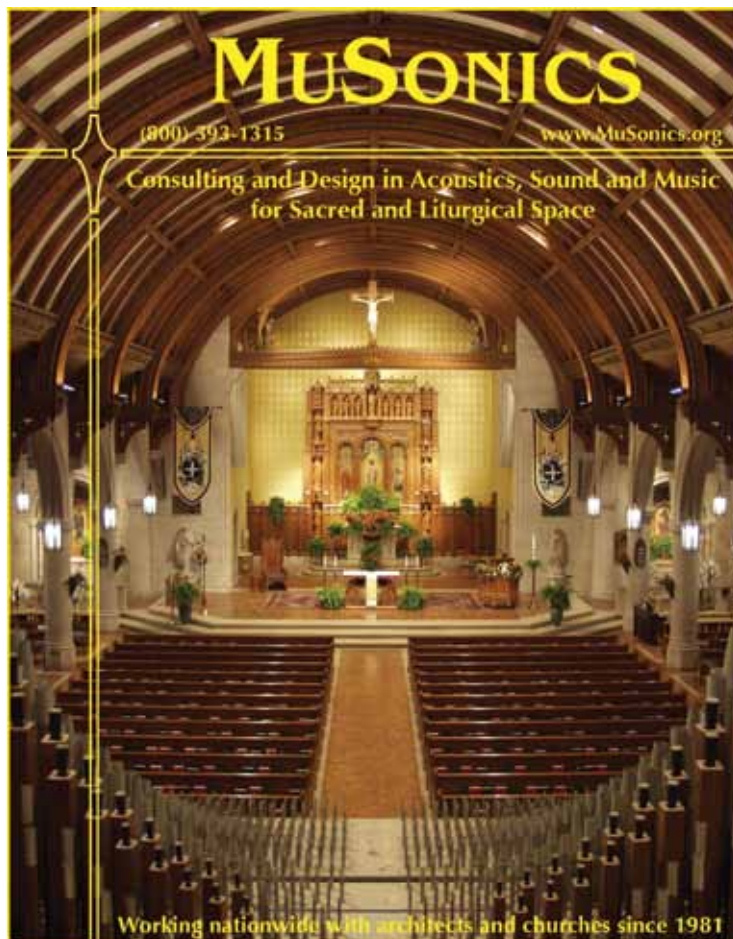


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A Mosque in Somalia

By Steve Padget, AIA

In November of 2009, I had a visit from a former student, Hassan (Osman) Nur, in his last year of architecture school at the University of Kansas. As he is one of the most enjoyable people I have ever known, I looked forward to our conversation. What he had to tell me led to a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Weeks earlier, Hassan's father, Aabow Mo'Alin Nur, had died. On hearing of his death, Hassan returned to Somalia, where his father had served as a Sufi religious leader. Many years earlier, when Somalia first fell into civil war, Aabow had sent his family to the U.S. while he stayed in Somalia to see to his followers. The emotions of Hassan's return were made all the deeper by his long separation from his father for whom he had deep respect and on whom he had depended for direction in his life. On Hassan's first telling me all this, I was prepared to offer my condolences and to listen with as much sympathy as I could muster. But he hadn't come to me for that. He had come to me and to another faculty member, Marie-Alice L'Heureux, for design advice. What follows is my involvement with Hassan in the making of his project.

A MOSQUE OF HONOR

On arriving in his father's town near Mogadishu, Hassan found the preparations for his father's funeral well under way. He also found that not only had the local community begun to plan a mosque including his tomb to be built in Aabow's honor, they had already begun construction. This took the form of excavation and the pouring of a foundation of 18 meters by 30 meters subdivided into 6-meter-by-5-meter bays. Given that the site was constrained by adjacent structures and a major street, this construction was oriented with the cardinal directions consistent with the street grid. Hassan asked to see the drawings, but was told there were none. At that point, Hassan convinced the elders to slow down construction (they were reluctant to stop) while he would prepare a design for the mosque based on what had already been built. During fewer than three weeks in continuous consultation with the elders he worked tirelessly to prepare design drawings. The elders were, according to Hassan, impressed by his abilities and by his use of the laptop he had brought with him.

The design Hassan showed me included a screen wall to the west that formed a transitional space between street and main space, and an entry court to the south of the main space off of which were ablution and toilet areas for men and women. The provision for ablution and worship areas for women was perhaps Hassan's most notable inclusion, as they were not in the elders' original plan even though many of Aabow's followers were women. A contemplative space was also included to the south. This space centered on a tree of great symbolic importance; its canopy had shaded Aabow as he sat for his meditations.

After Hassan explained his story and early design to me, I was impressed and asked how I could help. He explained that he wanted someone of experience to help him make detailed decisions as the design (and construction) progressed. He then told me of a particular problem that was yet to be solved. The elders were particularly concerned about security. Specifically, they wanted to make the mosque as bullet-proof as possible. Therefore, the construction needed to be of solid concrete and stone, with a very limited number of openings and with no glass near ground level. Given the climate and the very



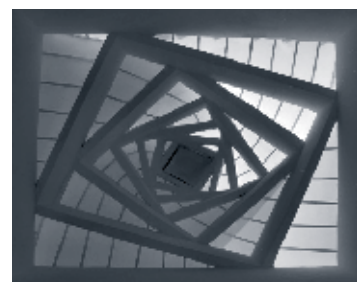
Hassan (Osman) Nur.



*Aabow Mo'Alin Nur,
Hassan's deceased father
and spiritual leader.*



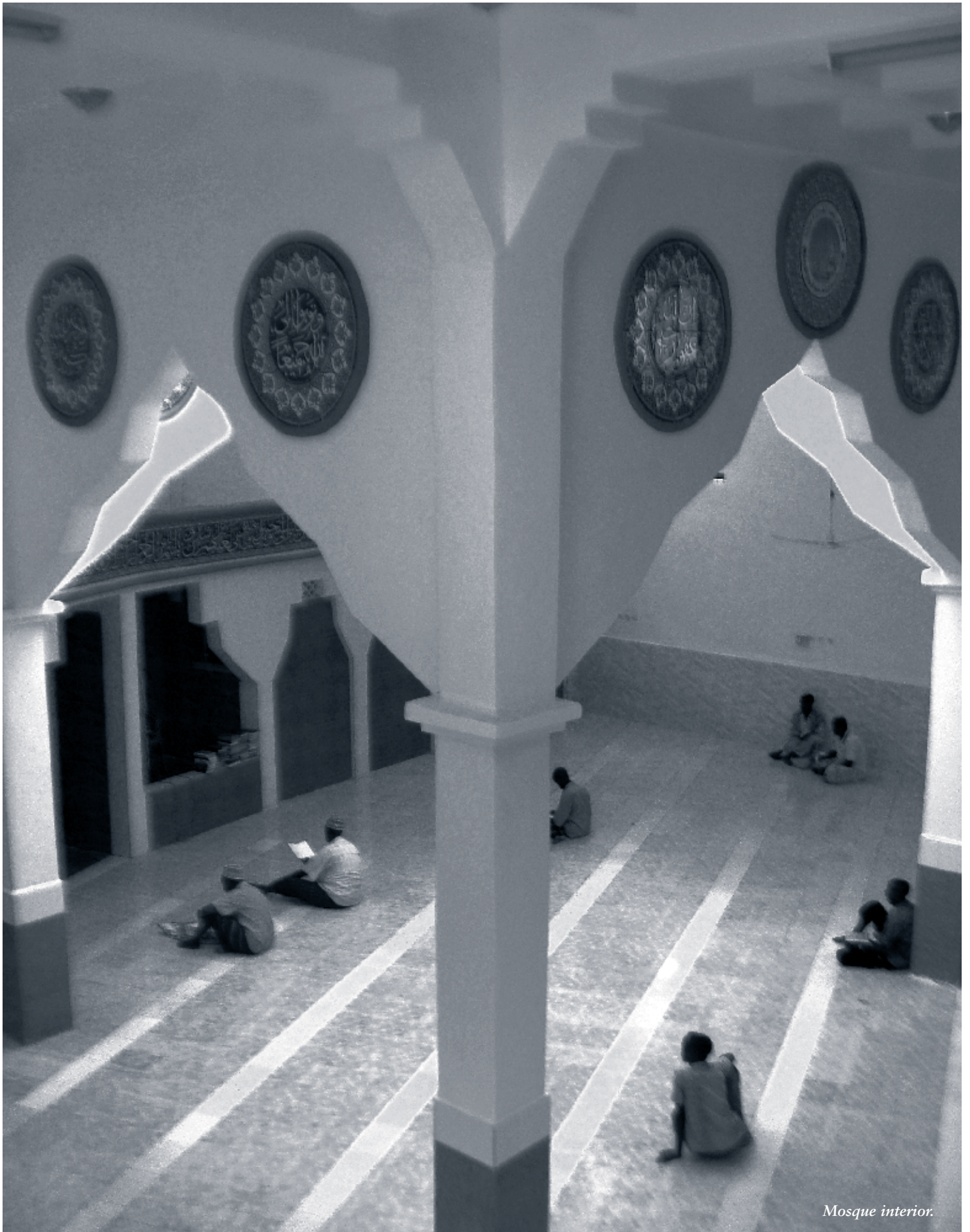
*Spiral domes under
construction.*



*View up into one of the
spiraling domes.*



*One of five completed
spiral domes.*



Mosque interior.



Aabow's grave in a separate building that incorporates some of the same design elements of the mosque.

limited availability of electrical power, natural ventilation and day lighting were critical. Hassan had included in his early design windows high on the walls of the main space, which would provide for some ventilation and light around the perimeter, but would leave the interior dark. Hassan proposed domes as a potential answer to the interior illumination problem. This had the advantage of being a traditional element used in mosque design and therefore acceptable to the elders, but the local builders were unsure of how to build them.

Over the course of my discussions with Hassan, I found pieces of information that proved to be

crucial in making future decisions. The first was that concrete and reinforcing steel were easy to obtain and were therefore the materials most familiar to the local builders. Second, structural steel was difficult to obtain (the site being far from any steel fabricators); the same was true of other manufactured elements such as skylights. Almost everything needed to be built on-site by relatively unskilled labor. The typical approach to structural requirements was to use a lot of concrete to cover a lot of reinforcing steel. It was clear from construction photographs Hassan had of other projects that the builders were using two or three times as much concrete and steel as would typically be used in the U.S. This was partially in compensation for there being no engineering done on most buildings. I asked Hassan how they were proposing to construct the roof slab. He said the 5-meter-by-6-meter bay would be spanned by a two-way slab of approximately 30 inches in depth. I suggested that a great deal of material would be saved by employing a waffle slab. The local workers could then be put to work making the boxes necessary to form the coffers of the waffle slab. Fortunately, a Kenyan developer who had access to engineers was one of Aabow's followers. He was able to get his engineers to run calculations and provide the builders with enough direction to execute the waffle slabs. The coffers also serve as frames for light fixtures and for decorative discs with calligraphic sacred text.

OF AXES AND ORIENTATION

Another important factor affecting design decisions was that the orientation to Mecca was 15 degrees west of north. In response to the orientation issue, the local construction practices, and the desire for light and ventilation throughout the space, I suggested the construction of a series of rotating concrete boxes as elements rising out of the roof. The rotation would be 15 degrees west of north. Each successive box would rotate another 15 degrees, and so on, until they comprised a spiral of seven levels. The triangular spaces between each box were then covered by sloping translucent polycarbonate sheets, each one hinged so as to be operable, allowing for the spiraling domes to act as ventilation stacks. The final dome form with four supporting columns defines a modern version


of the Chāhar Tāq, a traditional spatial element of mosque architecture.

According to Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar in their book *The Sense of Unity* (University of Chicago Press), the Chāhar Tāq symbolizes "... the lightness and total mobility of the Spirit ... Its sole point of reference is its center, through which develops the metaphysical axis that links it with the axis of the square resting below it." This vertical axis, also known as the axis mundi, links the horizontal plane of earthly experience with the dome of heaven. It seemed symbolically appropriate that this element would also serve as a primary source of light in the space.

The 15-degree offset from the cardinal directions and from the orientation of the town also gave rise to an offset of 15 degrees of other important elements of the design in order to orient to Mecca. The lines set out on the floor of the main worship space are there to orient the worshipers in prayer. These are set at 15 degrees south of west so as to be at a right angle to the direction to Mecca. In addition, the minbar (the pulpit or lectern from which the imam speaks to the congregation) and the qibla wall (on the north wall of the main worship space with its mihrab) were designed to be "normal" to the Kabba in Mecca. These act as spatial guides for the worshipers in their ritual of prayer. So, the prayer lines, the qibla wall with the minbar and mihrab, and the spiraling domes all reinforce each other in paying homage to the Kabba in Mecca.

PLAN BECOMES REALITY

Over the course of several months, Hassan kept in constant contact with the elders by emailing them files of the latest version of the design. They would in turn send him pictures of the construction; it didn't always agree with the design. However, enough of the design intent was incorporated that we felt that we had contributed to its success.

Hassan returned to Somalia in the summer of 2010, and went to work directly with the builders to complete the mosque and to refine some of the things already completed. One of the most important alterations was to address a serious threat to the security of Aabow's grave. Al Shabaab, a militant Islamic group with the intent of taking over the government of Somalia, had begun desecrating the graves of revered former religious teachers such as Aabow. Their practice included not only the destruction of the graves and any memorial built in honor of the dead, but also the destruction of their bones. It was felt that Aabow's grave was not safe in its location in the mosque, so a separate memorial building was constructed to contain a reinforced grave. It provides a place for meditation and includes some of the same elements as the mosque: the brightly colored windows whose geometry was influenced by Keith Critchlow's *Islamic Patterns (Inner Traditions)*, the calligraphic tile work, and the spiraling dome. The grave itself is placed on the same 15-degree orientation as the prayer lines, qibla wall, and mihrab in the mosque. It is placed directly under the dome and in the place of the tree. The tree acts as an axis mundi for Aabow. His grave now acts as the foundation of a new axis mundi for his followers —out of the grave and into the light. 

STEVE PAGET, AIA, TEACHES ARCHITECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS. HIS RESEARCH AND TEACHING HAVE FOCUSED ON WESTERN CIVILIZATION, SACRED PLACE, AND THE ARCHITECT'S ROLE IN SOCIETY.

THE LEGACY OF FAITH & FORM

BY BETTY H. MEYER

It all began with a church waiting to be built. In 1949 my husband, Eugene W. Meyer, and I were asked by the Board of Extension of Congregational Churches to create a new church. Webster Groves, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, had been surveyed and studied as a location with high potential for a new church. After a time of having services in the parsonage designed for that purpose, we were ready to think about the first unit of our new building. To our surprise, the building committee insisted that it wanted a typical New England Colonial design. My husband and I were acutely aware that we had had no courses in the seminary that prepared us for this responsibility.

We began to read and talk with architects, and it happened that the theologian Paul Tillich came to St. Louis as a commencement speaker at Eden Theological Seminary. We asked him to come to our home and talk with the building committee. He spoke eloquently about the importance of architecture and its relationship to contemporary religion.

I remembered reading something about an organization, the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (IFRAA) and decided to go to one of its conferences. There I picked up literature and bought numerous slides from its extensive collection. Listening to speakers made me determined to take our committee to visit churches of many styles and to meditate on what the Midwest had to offer that differed from what New England offered. In the end they voted unanimously and enthusiastically to ask Kenneth Wischmeyer to design a modern church. When we dedicated the Church of the Open Door, we felt that it expressed architecturally what we believed theologically.

My friend, Robert Rambusch, a liturgical consultant, tells me that *Faith & Form* was born when he, Ben Elliot, Nils Schweitzer, and Edward Sovik gathered together after a conference session in the bar of the Netherland Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati. The first issue was published in 1967. Sovik was its first editor, Ben Elliott was the business manager, and Dorothy Adler served as executive secretary. The magazine was published quarterly and was sent free to 22,000 members of the AIA and to 1,800 officials in religious organizations. Later this gift became economically impossible.

Questions that appeared in early issues may remind us that the more things change the more they remain the same. Do these early titles sound familiar?: “The Transcendent in Everyday,” “The Architect as Liturgist, as Theologian, as Artist,” and “Church-Sponsored Housing or What Makes Architecture Religious.” We are still discussing these questions today.

After our church building project I continued to be interested in religion and the arts, and continued to go to conferences and to enjoy IFRAA’s fellowship. I can scarcely believe that it was [in 1981] that I was invited to be the editor of *Faith & Form*. One of the first con-

ferences I attended was in Chicago where Lawrence Perkins was the featured speaker. I was fascinated when he sketched on a machine directly in front of him, which transferred his sketch directly onto a large screen for us to see as he talked. Remember, this was pre-technology as we know it today.

Harold Watkins introduced us to Edward Larrabee Barnes, who had just designed a seminary space for the Disciple denomination. Barnes spoke at the museum, saying that both the building and program must interact with the culture of their time. I was impressed with Pietro Belluschi when he remarked, “Elegant simplicity suggests holiness; the superficial or artificial is intolerable.”

I am proud that in the 1980s articles appeared by architects or clergy from Japan, Scandinavia, India, England, Germany, Nigeria, the USSR, Armenia, and Mexico. I agreed with Gerald Shertzer when he defined kitsch as “the sentimental degradation of religious truth.” I also agreed with Jane Dillenger when she wrote, “We need architects for synagogues and churches who will work with artists from the inception of the building to its completion.” How true this is.

An entire issue was dedicated to the “African-American impact on Ecclesiastical Architecture,” and another to “Towards Understanding the Hispanic Aesthetic.” Several architects including Benjamin Hirsch and Bert Nassuk led us through synagogue design and history. Delbert Crocker wrote the first article on “Computers: Necessary Evil or Invaluable Tools?” Richard Bergmann reminded us fortunately of “The Shrinking Congregation” and the need to make our aspirations concrete.

The decade of the 1990s began with concern about our coverage of fundamentalists and their architecture from the perspective of our interfaith approach. Architect Frank Orr wrote lamenting the fact that we have few articles and awards from the evangelical point of view. I published his letter and asked him to write an article. It was followed by articles by Dr. John Newport of Southwestern Baptist Seminary and Jaime Lara on “The Rise of Evangelical Consensus.” It proved to be a good experience for me and, I hope, for them too.

The 1990s also began with a happy promise. Richard Bergmann and Eduardo Catalano were excited about the growing relationship of gardens and the natural environment to religious architecture. “Humans desire unity with the universe,” they wrote. Dean James Park Morton made this principle reality when he told us about the bio-shelter at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

But I was glad that the external did not close out the internal, that inner spaces were not neglected. The familiar theme of transcendence continued with a review of Joseph Campbell’s “The Meaning of Myth,” and William Schickel’s “The Spiritual Needs of a Pluralistic Society.” I interviewed a group of Brandeis students who were meeting with artist


Editor’s Note:

Betty Meyer served as the editor of this journal for 20 years, from 1981 to 2001, and has written her column, “Just One More Thing,” in each issue of *Faith & Form* for the past decade. At 92, Betty has decided to put down her pen, and this issue contains her last column (although she is welcome to resume whenever she wishes). This article is an excerpt from Betty’s article published ten years ago when she stepped down as Editor-in-Chief. It is followed by testimonials from some of Betty’s friends and colleagues recognizing her accomplishments and contributions as an insightful thinker and writer on religion, art, and architecture.

Jonathan Borovosky on what they called "The God Project." The students' emphasis on abstraction was immediately apparent and it made visible the absence of anthropomorphic expressions. Several articles about synagogue history and design brought us to a discussion of the Holocaust and to an entire issue on the attitudes of three faiths on Life and Death and how architecture expresses the faiths.

Carol Frenning, Richard Vosko, and Robert Rambusch reminded us of the part liturgical consultants play, and that there must be a balance between form and freedom. I was glad that Pamela Hawkes and Joan Carter wrote of the continuing need of places for women both in architecture and in religious institutions. For those who don't think architects live in the real world, John Wilson, Jack Travis, and William Everett told us about all that is being done to help and defend the poor and the homeless. They wrote movingly about ethics and its relationship to architecture.

All of these individuals and many more have expressed closely held convictions and I am grateful to them. I wish I had space to name them all. And there were many others to whom I am indebted, who wrote articles on stained glass, organs, acoustics, and furniture. And without the advertisers, there would be no magazine at all.

I confess that I have sometimes felt cynical about the future of religion in our materialistic society, but always articles that gave me fresh hope and stimulation were contributed. I had worked with Bartlett Hayes on a book, *Tradition Becomes Innovation*; when I saw his thesis in *Faith & Form* I realized that change is inevitable and that innovation is full of creative possibilities. I trust that *Faith & Form* will continue to publish articles that reveal we are moving toward a multicultural world and that our theologies and our architecture will be greatly affected. 

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What Betty Hath Wrought

Colleagues and friends reflect on Betty Meyer's contributions



DEVOTION AND KNOWLEDGE

As Betty Meyer wrote in one of her recent editorials, "Really, I just can't imagine that," that she is putting down her pen for more than a brief hiatus.

I pondered, but couldn't remember, when we first met. My first IFRAA conference was in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1963. The organization was still called the Church Architectural Guild. Later, by the 1970s, our members were well aware of the striking red-haired lady attending the conferences, who knew so much and spoke with authority on religious art and architecture in such lucid words of depth that they shamed many of the hired speakers. She was often able to accompany us on the IFRAA tours led by Dr. Donald Bruggink to all the corners of the world. She was always great company so it seemed natural in the course of events, that because of her intellectual and literary skills she would take over as editor of our fledgling entry into the religious architecture world; she soon transformed *Faith & Form* into the finest magazine in the field.

Betty has been a good friend since we were commissioned to design two stained glass windows for the entry of her husband, Gene's, lovely old Congregational Church in Briarcliff Manor, New York. On several occasions I have enjoyed Betty's hospitality in her lovely home in Auburndale, Massachusetts, which gave us the opportunity to discuss the arts and architecture and particularly the cast of characters who created them from the 1950s up to the present day, memorable interludes and lots of laughs.

Betty's devotion and knowledge, combined with her tireless writing, have helped to keep religious art and architecture on an upward track for decades. It will be a sad day when I turn to the inside of the back cover of a new *Faith & Form* (which I always do first) and do not find Betty's latest candid comments.

— E. Crosby Willet, 2002 Conover Award winner

WEALTH OF IDEAS

Betty Meyer has given us a lot to think about through the years! Her accumulated knowledge of art, religion, architecture, and philosophy, along with her lifelong joy in interacting with so many other leaders in these fields, has enriched her with a wealth of ideas which she has gladly shared with us at conferences and as editor of *Faith & Form*. We owe her our deepest gratitude!

— Lawrence Cook, FAIA, past IFRAA Chair and ARC Fellow

LET THE BEAT GO ON

Betty Meyer is our stellar advocate, friend, interpreter, and communicator of the finest principles and achievements in the art and design of spiritual space, *ne plus ultra*. It was such a joy to first meet her on

our IFRAA 1996 visit to Poland and to join with our fellow travelers in acclaiming Stanislaw Niemczyk's Ducha Swietego Church in Tychy as the most superb fulfillment of our highest expectations in the fusion of contemporary art, architecture, and spiritual ambiance anywhere in the world. At Betty's request I tried to express our shared exhilaration in an article, "In the Presence of Greatness," *Faith & Form*, November 1997. Ever since, Betty's inspirational aura has enriched all of us in so many ways, at gatherings of IFRAA, and the Society for the Arts, Religion and Contemporary Culture (ARC), or wherever we could meet. Thanks so much to Betty...may the beat go on!

—A. Richard Williams, FAIA, ARC member

WRITING TO THE HEART

Betty Meyer spoke and wrote to the heart of art and architecture, to the people who work at these, and to those who find themselves interested time and time again. She was neither critic nor cheerleader, but minister, constantly reminding us all that our parts in the human endeavor are, and must always be, truly human.

It is appropriate that her thoughts appeared in a "Journal of Religion, Art, and Architecture." I wish that there could ever be just one more "Just One More Thing." May God bless her and keep her.

— Duane Landry, FAIA, principal of Landry & Landry Architects

UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCES

On a springtime evening stroll in our neighborhood, my husband and I passed an elderly gentleman walking with a cane on the opposite side of the street. We ignored his glance, clearly an overture for conversation, and kept walking. The next evening when we again passed, he stopped as he had before, but this time he firmly tapped his cane on the pavement, obliging us to cross over to his side of the street. He was 88, visiting from India, most probably Hindu. He had some thoughts he wished to share with two strangers on how we should take care of our health, honor one another, and conduct our lives together. On parting, in explanation for his insistence that we speak, he said "God sees to it that we meet those people in life that he wants us to meet."

Betty Meyer often drew on unexpected experiences when writing, knowing they happen for a reason, if we but pay attention. Betty was a guest in our home for five days when she was honored by the AIA in 1999 at the national convention in Dallas. We had known Betty for many years as editor of *Faith & Form*, and it seemed a hospitable gesture since she was coming a very long way to a strange city. In that time together, our admiration and respect for her work grew into a true and loving friendship. Would the wise man say that God sees to it that we have the opportunity in life to love those whom he wants us to love?

— Jane Landry, FAIA, principal of Landry & Landry Architects

INVITING RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

I think Betty Meyer's remarkable appreciation for the common themes among various religions comes in part from her early life in as a pastor's spouse. In those congregations I am sure she ran into a variety of voices and views on the use of art in liturgy and church life. What Betty did was to invite religious dialogue, and for the fields of art and architecture she represented both religion and art as crucial conversation partners. She never worked from just the one angle—the church person, the religious art lover, the architectural observer—no, she was always pressing on all angles at once!

And she pressed with passion, knowledge, sophistication, and fairness. We love Betty because she always inspires us to think beyond our limited perspectives and to really engage with other cultures and practices. Betty's long tenure with *Faith & Form* magazine was a grace to all of us who knew and worked with her. God bless you, Betty, in your retirement.

— Rev. W. Joseph Mann, 2010 Conover Award winner and past IFRAA Chair

BEAUTIFUL IN MIND AND SPIRIT

I suppose my first direct contact with Betty Meyer was when she rejected a piece I had submitted to *Faith & Form*. She did it with the most encouraging grace and advice. We became corresponding friends and met at occasional conferences, but my appreciation of her deepened after I became a fellow of the Society for Arts, Religion and Contemporary Culture.

Her interventions in our symposia were memorable both for their brevity and for their wisdom. In that she was not unlike Maurice Lavanoux, former editor of *Liturgical Arts*, who always handled the thorniest situations with courtesy and aplomb. Betty is the epitome of that generation of scholarly editors for whom civility and good manners constituted a sine qua non in all discussions. It was a joy to be seated next to her at the ARC lunches in House of the Redeemer.

Afterwards Robert Rambusch, John Dillenberger, and Betty would dine in some pleasant eatery and I was often invited to join them. Those were wonderful evenings, with deliciously good-humored repartee, always about some fundamental question affecting our different fields of endeavor. Dillenberger's wry smirk and Rambusch's gloriously robust laugh were in contrast to Betty's gentle smile, a smile that often accompanied a smooth, rapier thrust of an idea.

She has a remarkably well-tuned capacity to judge the value and meaning of architecture, and expresses her views with clarity and precision. Is it any wonder that she built *Faith & Form* into the reputable journal it is? I have been fortunate to meet some persons of great integrity in my life, persons who could easily be described as beautiful in mind and spirit. Betty Meyer is prominent among them, beautiful in every sense of the word.

— Patrick J. Quinn, FAIA, ARC Fellow

BRIDGE BUILDER

Betty Meyer is a talented and wise bridge builder. For many years, she has connected innumerable religious traditions, architects, artists, and clergy who are interested in design excellence. As an editor and columnist for *Faith & Form*, Betty has used the print medium to link faith, art, and architecture in the interest of serving the common good. Her writings were in the vanguard; always imaginative and on solid ground. Betty Meyer was the winner of the 1996 Elbert M. Conover Award for her contributions to religious art and architecture. Her work will stand the test of time.

— Richard S. Vosko, Hon. AIA, *Faith & Form* editorial board member, 1990 Conover Award winner, and past IFRAA Chair

HIGH BAR OF QUALITY

Having collaborated with Betty Meyer on *Faith & Form* magazine for almost 20 years, I can only say thank you, Betty, for your dedication, for the high bar of quality you established, and for your keen insights shared in every issue for the past many years. You were there from the beginning, helping to collect ideas and creative dialogue into a forum for those with a passion for sacred art and architecture. The rigor of your contribution shaped a magazine of the highest quality, rich with current thought and outstanding exemplars of innovative design. *Faith & Form* has become prerequisite reading for those design professionals and congregants wishing to embark on a religious art or building program. Forty-plus years of continuous publication have yielded a treasury of information documenting the finest works of religious architects and artists, many of whom have had their own work shaped by conversations with Betty, by ideas gleaned from the editorial content she managed, or by the essays she contributed for the past several years. We are in her debt and humbled by her contributions. Thank you, Betty!

— Douglas Hoffman, AIA, former *Faith & Form* Managing Editor, past IFRAA Chair, and ARC Fellow

GOOD FRIEND AND FAITHFUL GUIDE

We owe a debt of thanks to Betty Meyer for her many years of distinguished service with the Journal and IFRAA. An important shaper of the renowned publication for worship architecture, Betty has been an astute observer of myriad worship design issues. History, tradition, and new ideas have been well communicated through her editorship (early 1980s through 2000), her involvement at conferences, and her participation in IFRAA tours. My wife and I joined Betty on many of these occasions. Her insights to architectural design matters were discerning and refreshing.

Betty has been a good friend and a faithful guide. She will be greatly missed and will remain an inspiration to many. We will miss her appearances in *Faith & Form*. May God bless you, Betty, for your tireless work.

— James M. Graham, AIA, past IFRAA Chair

FORMED AND INFORMED

"Love is rare, friendship is rarer still." For 66 years our friendship both formed and informed me with Betty Meyer through IFRAA, the *Faith & Form* Publication Committee, the Society for the Arts, Religion and Contemporary Culture, and five international congresses on religion, art, and architecture. As the wife of an ordained minister, Betty prophetically articulated the ministry of the visual arts and architecture. Betty personifies the interfaith dimension of IFRAA, respecting and promoting all cultural expressions of religious faiths and epiphanies.

— Robert E. Rambusch, ARC Fellow and 1979 Conover Award winner

NOTES & COMMENTS

BOOK REVIEW

***The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture*, Thomas Barrie, Routledge, 2010, \$34.95.**

Want to explore how architecture is a mediator for what may be called sacred? This new book by Thomas Barrie, professor of architecture at North Carolina State University, reads like a second volume following his earlier work, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambala, 1996). In that study Barrie examined pathways, portals, centers, and the importance of rituals and symbols in natural and built environments. He focused on archetypes that possess primordial meanings for diverse cultures, at least on a subconscious level. This new book builds upon his earlier work and takes the reader deeper into some of the same topics.

The title of the book suggests immediately the author's overarching premise. Architecture is an in-between place that can join people to something that may not be immediately intelligible or accessible to them. If the goal of organized religions is to help give meaning to people in life, then architecture is a means to do the same. By referring to architecture as a mediator, Barrie argues that built forms can be strong symbolic ambassadors of those values and aspirations shared by different cultural groups. He begins his proposal with theoretical, philosophical, and interpretive armatures that enable critical and analytical thought processes to wrestle with complex issues. He frequently uses terms like symbol, myth, and ritual to undergird his premise that human beings value those narratives which give meaning to their lives. Although these stories can be remembered in nonreligious ways, Barrie seems to favor an overarching spiritual context for his work.

The author's understanding of phenomenology is an important foundation for his thesis. He sees it as a counterpoint to a more theoretical or academic interpretation of the role of architecture in society. Understanding the impact of the built environment relies less on the empirical assessment of human experiences (often the conclusion of a single person or research group) and more on the sensual perceptions and interpretations of individuals. In a theological vein this hermeneutic borders on what some theologians call "interactive subjectivity" where divine and human will are understood as partners. People who believe in God are subjects in a collaboration, and are not mere objects of any action handed down by God.

What is the connection with architecture? In order for architecture to mediate the search for the sacred, the holistic experiences of the individuals in a group are important. Finding common ground whereby someone can interpret diverse experiences in an ideologically formed group or a whole culture is the challenge for architects, artists, social scientists, and religious ritual makers.

Barrie moves into a discussion of different spiritual movements that have proven to be successful in connecting people with a sense of the sacred. He examines only two: Transcendentalism and

Buddhism. One of his conclusions is that spatial and temporal settings provide a framework for symbolic or ritual action that can in turn connect people with the sacred. The references to ritual behavior and symbolic systems are significant in any discourse on religious architecture. Not all churches, synagogues, and temples are perceived primarily, if at all, as dwelling places for the deity but as designated centers for ritual actions. In this sense they are sacred or are set aside for a particular purpose.

How does architecture join human beings with the ineffable being who or which is at the center of diverse belief or value systems? The arts are important touchstones which, according to Barrie, are the social media of group activity. If architecture is considered an art form, then it too can shape the ritual and symbolic action of the people who experience that space.

This is a valuable reference work for architects who design religious buildings or who, at least, think about them. Barrie's grasp of a wide range of references is impressive. The plentiful black-and-white illustrations in the book are exceptional. The combination of sketches, maps, and photographs are appropriate to the text. The sidebars provide some explanation of why each image was used. The book is handsomely designed. There is a helpful index and a bibliography. I wish the author had expanded his case studies to include more North American examples. Except for the chthonic architecture of Native Americans, no other pictorial or textual references reflect what may be experienced in sacred architecture in the U.S. Since cultural identity is so important to this body of work it is curious that the author does not treat, for example, the importance of religious buildings in the so-called "bible belt" where he teaches and practices architecture. Maybe this was intentional. However, it raises a secondary observation.

Religious behavior in the United States is going through a very significant transformation. Numerous studies document how religious affiliation in this country is fluid and how many mainline religions are losing members while newer nondenominational sects are thriving. Generally, many of these new religious groups do not consider symbols and rituals as significant in their gatherings. Further, the functional architectural vernacular used by these congregations is almost completely devoid of any archetypal or symbolic language, and yet they are attracting new members. Is Barrie suggesting that these new religious building types do not qualify as mediators of the sacred? Will they not stand the test of time? It is hard to say. What is clear in this thoughtful and thorough study is that the language of architecture is still both forceful and is able to mediate between humans and whatever they might refer to as ineffable and "sacred." Whether architects and their clients want to build and worship in such places is another matter.

— Richard S. Vosko, Hon. AIA

*The reviewer is a member of the Faith & Form Editorial Advisory board.
A longer version of this review appears in the eJournal of
the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (bit.ly/vosko1).*

IFRAA TOURS THE BIG EASY

The Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (IFRAA) sponsored a tour of sacred places and an awards reception with Faith & Form at the recent 2011 American Institute of Architects Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.

St. John Vianney Roman Catholic Church in Baton Rouge was the first stop on the tour. This contemporary place of worship is the award-winning work of Victor "Trey" Trahan III, FAIA. Dedicated in 1999, this 16,000-square-foot building is a lantern constructed of architectural concrete and reinforced steel. The massive doors are cast with congre-

gants' handprints and mementoes. A large baptismal font graces the entrance. The centralized, fixed-seating plan is surrounded by clear windows, three recessed chapel settings, and a 29-rank pipe organ. In the center, a slender, almost transparent altar table rests upon a free-standing concrete platform. This church was designed to express the best interpretation of the Second Vatican Council's call for active and conscious participation in the liturgical event.

Quote of Note

"In the mosque, the believer looks like a fish in water; the hypocrite seems like a bird in a cage."

*Inscription on the Sultan Selim Mosque,
Konya, Turkey, 1567*

The second stop in Baton Rouge was the Healing Place Church, designed by Coleman Partners Architects, LLC, in 2004. This impressive structure is home to an ever-growing non-denominational congregation. The 125,000-square-foot building is designed as a "tool for ministry and a platform for regional outreach." The building exudes hospitality in the lobbies, the coffee shop, the rooms designed for education and care for persons, young and old, with special needs. A flexible 3,000-seat "arena" is the setting for dynamic Evangelical worship experi-

ences. The investment in media technology is evident in the production rooms and the enormous projection screens in the arena that serve as a backdrop to the musicians, singers, and speakers. The roadside sign describes this church best: "A Healing Place for a Hurting World."

The final stop was the First Baptist Church in New Orleans designed by E. Eean McNaughton Architects. The second phase of this 121,634-square-foot church was finished in 2008 to serve a growing regional congregation. The complex, situated on a tight triangular site, includes a three-story education and administration building connected to the worship facility. The 1,350-seat sanctuary, filled with natural light, is furnished with radial pew benches, which focus on the expansive platform and the baptismal pool. A 72-rank refurbished pipe organ was relocated from the previous church building. This church also emphasizes hospitality and outreach. During the tour, meals were being prepared by congregants for delivery to needy persons.

During the AIA Convention IFRAA joined with Faith & Form to present awards to the 15 winners of the annual international religious art and architecture program. Also, the 2011 Elbert M. Conover Award was given to Rev. Lawrence Madden, S.J., for his contributions to religious art and architecture. Until his untimely death on May 29, Madden was the Director of the Georgetown Center for Liturgy and the Web site: EnVisionChurch.org. A future issue of *Faith & Form* will publish an obituary.

— Richard S. Vosko, Hon. AIA

BOOK REVIEW

***Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community Through the Arts*, Edited by Robin Jensen and Kimberly Vrudny (Liturgical Press) \$39.95.**

Whether considered from an aesthetic or a liturgical perspective, sacred art is tethered to its physicality. Unlike prayer, song, or scripture, visual art requires that its spatial presence, and cost, be accommodated. These concrete demands exacerbate two more pressing issues: the lack of contemporary consensus on what constitutes an appropriate and inspiring visual vocabulary, and, more generally, anxiety about genuinely new expressions of faith. Once a powerful, legitimate language of the ineffable, the visual arts have been reduced in the last century to a decorative, didactic whisper.

H. Wilson Yates, to whom this timely volume is dedicated, and 14 theologians seek to expand understanding of the ways in which the arts can enhance worship, encourage spiritual growth, and nurture the sacred imagination.

Essays by Graham Howes and Doug Adams will hold particular interest for liturgical designers. Howes delineates the history of two controversial (now beloved) midcentury commissions for the Anglican church of St. Matthew's. Correspondence by the artists, patrons, and congregants sheds light on the nuances of artistic collaboration and provides practical examples—from siting the Henry Moore sculpture and coupling it with a Graham Sutherland paint-

ing to overcoming the familiarity of the image of the crucifix—that are evergreen. Adams considers large-scale public works by Christo and Jeanne-Claude that, although secular, invite a "priesthood of all believers" by bringing together supporters and detractors alike and, since they require massive fundraising efforts, create opportunities to build community.

Every essay, however, explores ideas that are fundamental to the visual expression of the sacred and to our receptivity to it. Robin Jensen, Rod Pattenden, and Kimberly Vrudny examine the works of artists who eschew the merely decorative and address the overwhelming human need for redemption and reconciliation. Through the lens of the humble ceramic vessel, Don Saliers illuminates the essential hospitality of art. Jann Cather Weaver, Cindi Beth Johnson, and Yates look at the ways that artists, often outsiders themselves, act as intermediaries between alienated communities and mirror through their struggle for authentic artistic expression the often circuitous journey of faith. Fully illustrated in color, the book includes works by eminent artists, and introduces a gallery of refreshingly unexpected works by lesser knowns.

— Judith Dupré

Judith Dupré's newest book is Full of Grace: Encountering Mary in Faith, Art and Life (November, 2010). She is a Faith & Form editorial advisor.

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The editors of *Faith & Form* want to bring its readers the latest news of those involved in the fields of religion, art, and architecture. Send press releases and materials to the attention of Michael J. Crosbie, Editor, *Faith & Form*, 47 Grandview Terrace, Essex, CT 06426; email: mcrosbie@faithandform.com.

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ENJOYING THE PASSAGE OF TIME


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

Lately, I've seen a spate of books aimed at assuring older people that they can still lead productive lives and even find happiness in spite of the aging process. As someone who will be 93 on her next birthday, I have to chuckle at these well-meaning authors. I am quite happy, thank you very much, and many of my friends feel the same way. Happiness to us is not the exuberance of youth but rather the satisfaction of understanding that life is a miracle – that life is unlikely and improbable. Nevertheless, here we are. Each moment is a gift.

I also believe that we grow wiser as we grow older. Yes, my short-term memory is shot, and I have my share of aches and pains. But, over the years, I have acquired appreciation of the long view and have developed the patience and the presence of mind that have seen me through life's many changes. My affirmation may be more of a smile than a cartwheel,

but it is deeply felt and has been forged and tempered by experience. Life is, after all, a journey through time. And as T.S. Eliot famously put it, "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

I have been closely associated with *Faith & Form* since its beginning. But now I feel the time has come for me to relax and just become another loyal reader. So this will be my final column. Michael Crosbie continues to do a magnificent job as editor, and I'm sure the magazine will continue to thrive under his able leadership. I'll look forward to receiving each issue.

In parting, I want to express my gratitude to you, dear readers, and just want to let you know that your positive responses over the years have meant a great deal to me. May you grow old and always have a gleam in your eye. I love you all. 



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