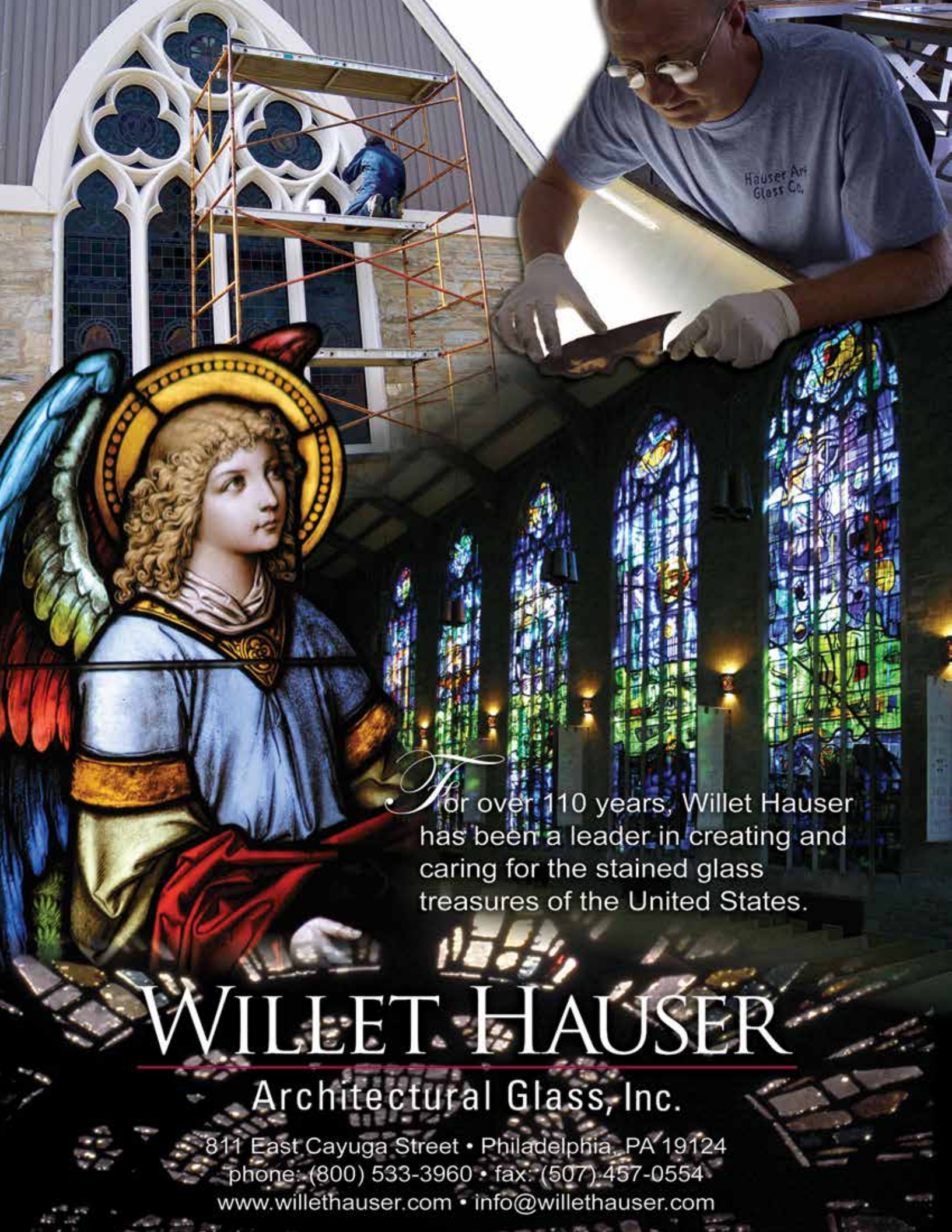


FAITH & FORM

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RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE
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THEME ISSUE
The Shape of Memory



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Michael J. Crosbie, Ph.D., FAIA
47 Grandview Terrace
Essex, CT 06426
860-575-4702 cell
mcrosbie@faithandform.com

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Photo: Paul Crosby

ON THE COVER:

View through the oculus of a crypt room of the Garden Mausoleum and Reception Center at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota. (article begins on page 6).

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NEXT ISSUE:

A potpourri of
articles on the best
in religious art and
architecture.





HOUSE PARTY

EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE


"GOD'S HOUSE" AND "THE HOUSE OF THE LORD" are such commonplace terms for religious buildings that they barely register their implications of intimacy and domesticity. Many people raised in mainline religions—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or even Islamic—have difficulty likening a place of worship to a home. Our religious buildings are formal, for the most part. One is expected to dress and act differently there than one would at home. God's House can be more like visiting grandma's house, if you're of a certain generation: watch where you sit, keep your feet off the furniture, ask permission, no running!

But what if we took the term "House of the Lord" literally? God's house would be our house. We would want to relax there, be totally ourselves. We would love it with all its idiosyncrasies and drawbacks: its drafts, its want of a paint job, its gaping screen door. We could forgive these shortcomings because we might appreciate them as part of the charm of a home: the place where we have lived for a long time that is sacred for its memories—of birthday parties, picnics, holiday get-togethers, and storms weathered. Home protects us and reflects us. In so many ways our home is just an outer layer of ourselves to the rest of the world, while its interior is a sanctuary where we come for respite and solace. Doesn't that sound like a church, a temple, or a mosque? These places, too, are treasured for the memories, the celebrations, the family members who live within them (and with whom we may disagree or argue, even if we love them).

The role of our religious buildings as literal houses was impressed on

me when I read an article by Anthony B. Robinson, "Building a Front Porch," recently published on the Faith & Leadership website of the Duke Divinity School. Robinson talks about how a church needs to meet new members where they are, and to welcome them inside, perhaps enticing them with a glimpse of fellowship. Writing of congregations, Robinson encourages them to create "... an intermediate space between street and interior, a space for casual interaction that might grow." Such a "front porch," notes Robinson, would be a place where people could develop relationships before coming inside. Robinson uses the words "porch" and "space" metaphorically for such outreach opportunities as seeker services, community fairs, and congregational efforts such as building for Habitat for Humanity.

What if our religious buildings really did have porches, back and front? These spaces would extend the spiritual life of the congregation beyond the temple walls; Robinson suggests coffee shops or small cafés as part of God's House. Back porches, accessible from surrounding streets or yards, might be settings for fellowship that could be shared with passersby. Conversation at most house parties happens in the kitchen. Such a place, where the community gathers for a shared meal, is already at the heart of many religious buildings. How might we make them more inviting for spiritual hospitality?

Finally, as suggested above, God's House often needs some work. In this issue *Faith & Form* begins a new department, "The Sacred and the Mundane," which offers insights and guidance on taking care of the premises. Each column, written by architect Walter Sedovic and others at Walter Sedovic Architects, will help keep the House of the Lord in good repair. 

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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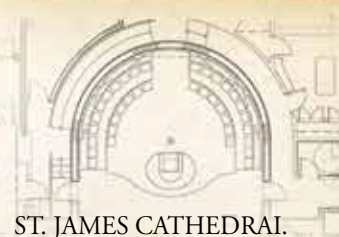
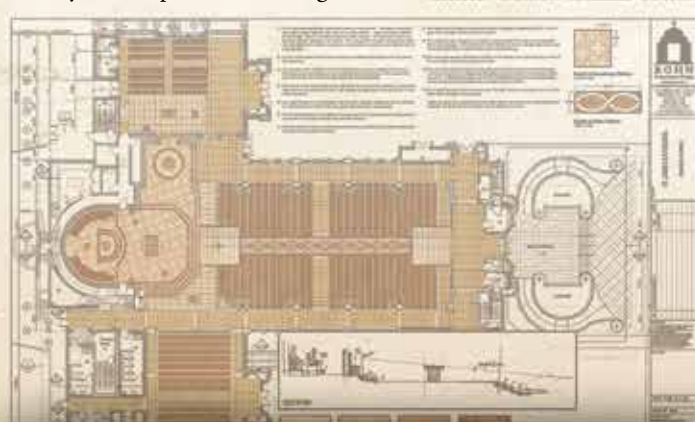
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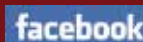
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Mausoleum as Mnemonic Device

By Thomas Fisher, Assoc. AIA » Photographs by Paul Crosby



One enters through a small building on the upper level, while the mausoleum cascades down a level into the site.



Overall view of the mausoleum from the southwest; one enters on the obverse side of the two-story element.

A CEMETERY DOES NOT JUST CONTAIN THE REMAINS OF THE DEAD. It also aids the memory of those who remain alive; it is a kind of physical mnemonic device that helps us remember those who have passed away, with names and dates carved in headstones or on columbaria walls to trigger our thoughts about those buried there. As time passes and those who knew the deceased also pass away, the older parts of cemeteries become less visited, like memories that fade away when no longer tapped. The one exception lies with those whose accomplishments in life keep bringing people back to their gravesites, like memories that we keep revisiting and that as a result stay fresh. For example, Henry David Thoreau, buried in Concord's Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, continues to attract visitors who leave pencils and other artifacts at his headstone because of the effect his writing has had on them. No cemetery can bury someone who remains so alive to so many people.

On occasion, cemetery buildings affect us in the same way, their accomplishment as a work of architecture prompting us to return to them again and again because of the inspiration they offer as much as for the memories they evoke. The new Garden Mausoleum and Reception Center in Minneapolis's Lakewood Cemetery is such a structure. Designed by a team led by Joan Soranno, FAIA and John Cook, FAIA of HGA in Minneapolis, with Halvorson Design Partnership in Boston as landscape architects, the structure has qualities that will likely draw people to it for centuries to come. The building not only helps us remember the dead; it also reminds us of what it means to be fully alive.

The Halvorson master plan for the cemetery located the new mausoleum to the west of the main gate, along one side of a sunken terrace that linked a gorgeous Neo-Byzantine chapel, built in 1910, to a somewhat ponderous Neoclassical mausoleum completed in 1967. Soranno and Cook wisely chose not to compete with either of those two substantial

structures; instead, they buried most of the new Garden Mausoleum below ground, facing a redesigned, recessed garden with a relatively small reception center at grade. "I didn't want the building to dominate the landscape," says Soranno. "I wanted it to sit lightly on the land, with only 5,500 square feet above ground." Such an arrangement respects the organization of the surrounding cemetery, with its headstones and monuments having a much smaller footprint than the graves over which they stand.

Soranno and Cook draw that analogy to the gravesite almost literally in the landscaped roof that covers the mausoleum's subterranean columbaria and crypts. The three skylights illuminating the rooms below have glazed openings that rise up from the ground as if ready to receive a burial, with gently sloping berms and angled steel retaining walls that turn these evocative forms into a kind of earth art. At night these gravelike openings in the ground emit light from below, as if to remind us that death involves not just a passage into darkness, but also a form of illumination at least for the living as we contemplate our own lives in light of those we have lost.

The mausoleum's green roof begs to be trod upon. "We wanted people to be able to walk on grass even though it was the roof of the building," says Soranno, "and to let nature serve as a record of the passing of time." The roof also has the uncanny quality of seeming to extend to the horizon, with stone terraces and planted parterres that mask the roof's edge, and with glass railings that are apparitional in their transparency and near invisibility. That lack of an apparent barrier also makes us remember, in a subliminal way, our own mortality and the thin line that separates safety from danger, life from death. It is almost impossible for a visitor not to walk over to look into the garden, which spreads out below like a miniature version of the Eden that so many of us carry in our collective memory.

The sunken garden has a broad sheet of shallow, still water at its center that reflects the sky like a mirror of the heavens above. The water

THOMAS FISHER, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF DESIGN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, IS ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF *FAITH & FORM*.



Lobby at the upper level, which leads down the garden level.



The green roof of the garden level becomes a lawn that one can walk on.

drips over the thin edge of the pool, evoking the falling of tears while also providing a welcome, soothing sound in that place of mourning. Around the expansive pool stand elevated grass parterres, long stone benches, and orderly alleys of trees that offer a place to retreat from the world above and that revive an older tradition in which people came to cemeteries to relax and reflect, whether or not to visit a gravesite there. “The bowl was already a beautiful place,” says Soranno, “so we decided: why fight it?” Instead, her design opens out to the sunken garden while also beckoning visitors to come into the mausoleum, reminding us that we will all, one day, come to rest in such a place.

That accordance with our memory of how people once used and viewed cemeteries continues in the design of the mausoleum building itself. Like the weathered retaining walls elsewhere in the cemetery, the reception center at grade level has a cladding of granite masonry laid in thin, horizontal courses like geological strata, with corbelled window and door surrounds that emphasize the thickness of the walls and evoke the permanence of the place. Like the ornamented entrances of the cemetery’s older crypts, the

reception center has a wide, swooping entryway with large, bronze doors surrounded by a white marble mosaic-tile wall, whose intertwined pattern (*see photo, bottom of page 10*) brings to mind the linkages that bind generations of families together, be they the double helixes of our DNA or the intersecting lines of our relationships with each other.

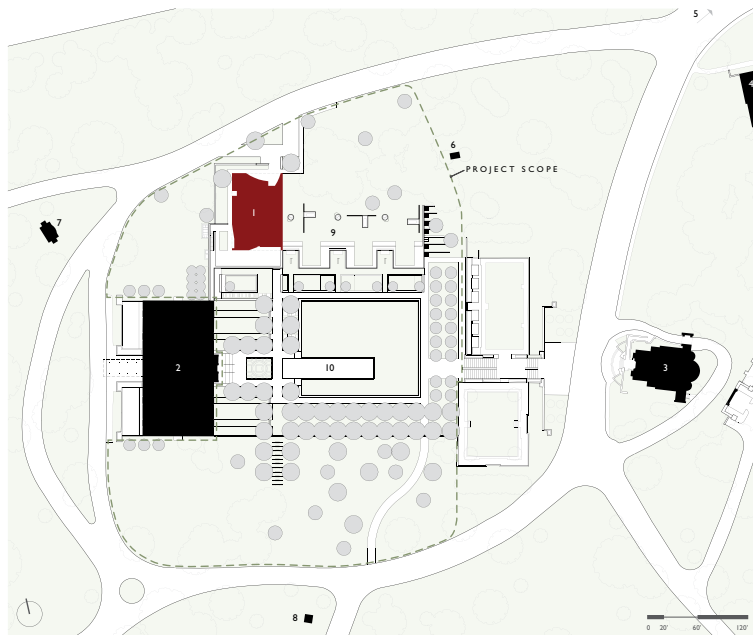
Soranno wanted the building to have such diverse interpretations. The reception center’s “abstract form,” she notes, “allows people to read different things into it,” depending upon their spiritual tradition, cultural background, and personal memories. “I wanted it to appeal to multiple faiths,” she adds, “and to relate to the iconography of various religions.” The building also evokes a universal sense of the human condition. Its serrated wall of clerestory windows, for example, looks closed and solid from some perspectives and open and vulnerable from others, like life itself. And that contrast between strength and delicacy continues in the building’s mix of exterior materials—gray granite and white marble—which Soranno saw in terms of “the juxtaposition of life and death, the temporal and the eternal.”

Mausoleums may contain the ashes of our loved ones, but they have as their primary purpose the consolation of the living and our recollection of those who have died, a role that this building handles with great skill and sensitivity. As you enter the reception center, an angled wood-clad wall and daylight from the clerestory windows, hidden from view, seem to point the way either down the wide stairway to the crypts below or back to the brightly lit reception room for gathering before or after a service. The deepset openings in the exterior walls create shadows that have long been, says Soranno, “metaphors for death,” but the interior, she adds, helps visitors “reconnect with the landscape and with the sun, with indirect light and expansive views.” That contrast between loss and reconciliation, darkness and light, continues downstairs, in the main, subterranean level.

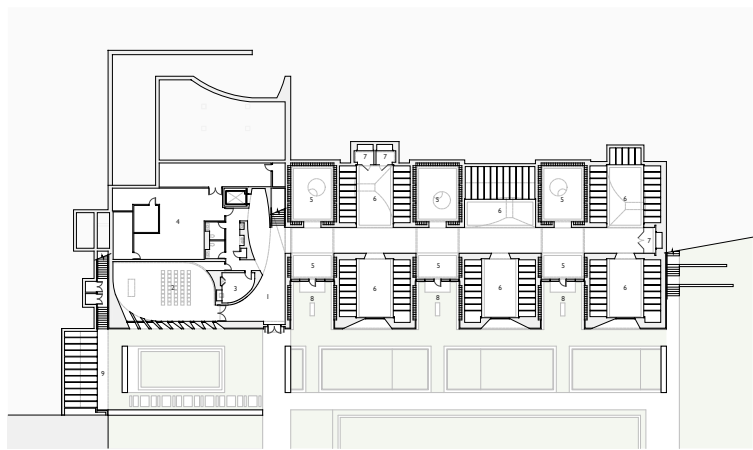
That level counters any memory we might have of mausoleums as dim and gloomy places. The stair and a nearby elevator descend to a wide hall, whose expansive glass doors lead out to the garden terrace while letting ample daylight into the space. A white marble floor and curving, white plaster walls lead visitors to a committal room, whose deepset windows let indirect light into the small chapel, whose enveloping walls and ceiling seem to embrace the bereaved. Soranno says the design tries to balance “a sense of community and privacy” as people participate in a ceremony while sitting there, alone in their memories of the person who has died.



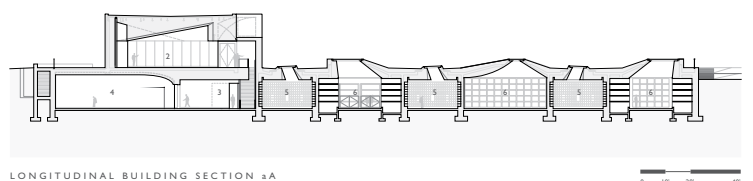
Arriving at the garden level, one finds crypt rooms and columbaria to the left in the photo.



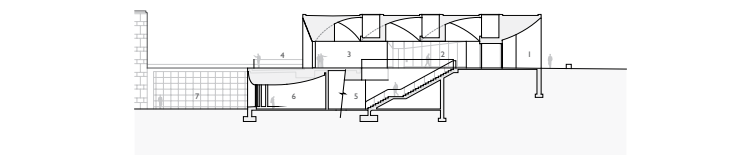
1 New Mausoleum 2 Existing Mausoleum 3 Lakewood Chapel 4 Administration Building 5 Cemetery Entrance
6 Walker Monument 7 Fridley Monument 8 Pence Monument 9 Green Roof 10 Reflecting Pool



GARDEN LEVEL PLAN
1 Lower Foyer 2 Committal Chapel 3 Grieving Room 4 Mechanical 5 Columbarium Room 6 Crypt Room 7 Family Crypt Room
8 Columbarium Garden 9 Garden Crypts



LONGITUDINAL BUILDING SECTION a-a
1 Foyer 2 Multipurpose / Reception Room 3 Lower Foyer 4 Committal Chapel 5 Columbarium Room 6 Crypt Room



TRANSVERSE BUILDING SECTION b-b
1 Street Level Entry 2 Foyer 3 Multipurpose / Reception Room beyond 4 Terrace 5 Lower Foyer 6 Committal Chapel
7 Garden Crypts beyond

In the adjacent crypts and columbaria, “we wanted to provide variety,” says Soranno, “inside and out.” The plan of the mausoleum consists of a wide, granite-clad, marble-floored corridor connecting a series of large rooms—six crypt rooms, six columbaria rooms, and three family crypt



Columbarium, with views out toward the garden on the mausoleum’s south side.

rooms—that contain 4,400 cremation niches, 900 crypt slots, and a wall of memorial plaques for those buried elsewhere.

While the sheer number and repetition of spaces might suggest a somewhat monotonous interior, the opposite is the case. The architects have provided a remarkable diversity of spaces, each subtly different and equally stunning. All of the mausoleum’s rooms have white marble walls and floors, although inset panels of red, green, and yellow onyx in the floors help differentiate one room from the other. Daylight also enters each room in different ways. Some spaces look out to the sunken garden through large glass windows, while others frame the trees and sky above through circular, angled, or curved openings in the ceilings.

These spaces, with their quiet solitude and ample benches, provide places in which to revive the memories and recount the stories of those interred there. The mausoleum, however, also embodies the ways in which we remember. Our long-term memory of people and events depends upon the frequency and durability of our interaction with them, and the emotional centrality and intensity of the relationship. Such factors obviously play a role in our memories of departed friends and family, but we see some of those same characteristics in this building: the emotionally charged way in which it uses light and views, the visual power and intensity of its forms and spaces, and the enduring quality of its materials and finishes.

In this way, the mausoleum reminds us of the creative and even joyful aspects of memory. When we remember, we bring together



Columbaria and crypt rooms are illuminated by ethereal light from above via skylights on the green roof.

elements from the past in new ways, often leaving out some parts and embellishing others. In that sense, memory—like imagination—forges new combinations of ideas and knowledge out of the experiences that we have accumulated in life. We do this when we remember people, but this mausoleum

does the same through architecture. It takes creative leaps that draw from our collective memory to combine forms that look at once modern and primeval, spaces that seem simultaneously ephemeral and eternal, and materials that appear both ancient and new. As with memory, the building glances

backward in order to look forward. While many of us rarely visit a mausoleum and may not want to think about being interred there, this building does so much more than house the remains of the dead. It helps us remember in ways that are, frankly, unforgettable. ⁸⁸

Detail of exterior tile work found around door and window surrounds.





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Dream to Reality

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How do project teams work together, and how are congregations and clergy involved?

What are the roles of consultants such as construction managers, engineers, sound experts, lighting designers, liturgical designers?

An upcoming issue of *Faith & Form* will explore the opportunities and challenges of realizing art and architecture that serves the congregation, and working with faith communities to achieve their goals. *Faith & Form* is looking for creative, effective examples of designers, architects, artists, clergy, congregations, and consultants working together to make the dream a reality.

Send your projects, case studies, and ideas to: mcrosbie@faithandform.com



While planning the piece, Samuels affixed full-scale printouts to the wall. She realized that if she could see the elements from across the room there was no reason to come closer to look at the piece, so she made them increasingly smaller.

Photo courtesy of the artist, © Frederick Charles

A Manuscript Luminous with Memory by Judith Dupré

According to a beloved Jewish folktale, an angel whispered to the 16th-century mystic Isaac Luria that there was a man living in the mountains near Tiberias whose prayers were particularly powerful. Finding the man, a poor farmer, Luria asked how he prayed. The farmer replied that since he could not read, he prayed the entire alphabet with all his strength, over and over again, and asked God to form the letters into prayers.

For the past two decades, artist Diane Samuels has worked with this story which forms the basis, sometimes visible, occasionally hidden, of many of her public sculptural

works and artist's books. In "Luminous Manuscript," a monumental stone and glass tablet commemorating the breadth of Jewish history, she has assembled a wondrously intricate array of letters and numerals that looks capable of expressing every prayer and hope in the world. "Luminous Manuscript" is located in Manhattan's Center for Jewish History (CJH), one of the largest repositories of Jewish cultural history. The work was selected through an international invitational competition organized by independent curator Dara Meyers-Kingsley and judged by leaders in the arts and the Jewish scholarly community.

From a distance, "Luminous Manuscript" looks like a shimmering page from the Talmud. It is in fact organized according to the format of that sacred book: the central

text is flanked on the left and on the right by two columns of commentary. The multilayered relief consists of 80,500 pieces of clear glass tesserae, ranging in size from ¾-inch to 1¼-inches high, adhered to 440 Jerusalem stone panels arranged on a grid measuring 22 feet high by 20 feet wide. The wall support, designed by the architectural firm of Beyer Blinder Belle, is a honeycomb panel hung with zee clips.

Engraved into both faces of the glass and the stone panels underneath are some 170,000 numerals, alphabetic characters, and handwritten documents from the CJH archives. The relief incorporates 170 archival documents, including copies of Albert Einstein's scribbled notations; Emma Lazarus's 1883 sonnet, "The New Colossus," which is inscribed

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The word ‘manuscript,’ defined as a document produced by hand or handwriting itself, was chosen deliberately by Samuels so the piece’s title would reflect its unique manufacture.



Photographs can only approximate the relief’s delicacy and reflective qualities. In the foreground is ‘Biblical Species,’ an inlaid terrazzo floor piece by Michele Oka Doner.

on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty; an Auschwitz prisoner’s registration form; and a page from Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer’s manuscript, “Must Yiddish Literature Disappear?” Most, however, are mundane documents that emphasize that history is written daily by everyone. At the very top is a piece of Yiddish music and a cookbook recipe; “I loved starting with music and food,” says Samuels.

It also includes handwritten letters representing 57 languages and writing systems, ranging from Hindu to Italian to stenography, which were collected from about 500 members of the CJH community and sandblasted onto glass tiles. Additionally, more than 33,000 pieces were etched with numerals from 0 to 7000, representing dates in the Gregorian and Jewish calendar that extend far into the future.


Translating the characters from ink on paper to glass and stone involved a mind-numbing production sequence. Individual characters were digitally scanned and then cut from vinyl. Letters were handpicked from the vinyl stencils, applied to the final surface, and then sandblasted, cleaned, and polished. The archival documents were scanned, engraved into the reverse side of the glass, spray-painted silver, and then scraped so that only the handwriting

remained silver. Samuels estimates that by the time they had been peeled, scrubbed, ground, polished, and hand assembled, each piece was handled at least 10 times. Bordering the columns are 23,200 narrow glass strips that recall the faint laid lines in handmade paper. The ochre-colored Jerusalem stone includes fossils and mineral veins that, along with the alphabet characters engraved into them, were lightly stained to create further visual depth. Meyers-Kingsley compared the variations in the limestone to “lines that evoke the look of a map, or a system of veins and arteries—a bloodline, perhaps—and yet another visual representation of the Jewish people’s connection to each other throughout time and history.”

Photographs can only approximate the delicacy and texture of “Luminous Manuscript,” how light emanates from its center, the way the hieroglyphic layers dissolve into pure abstraction. One’s gaze shifts constantly between the magnitude and the complexity of the work overall and the individual tiles. Because the tiles were placed by hand, there are infinitesimal variations in the relief’s surface that cause them to catch light and sparkle like crystal, like shattered glass, like water dappled by sunlight, like tears brimming in the eyes.

Visual complexity has long been employed as a metaphor for one’s innermost being as well as for the entirety of creation. That of “Luminous Manuscript” is comparable to the sumptuous detail found in the stained glass windows of medieval cathedrals, in Islamic ceramics, and in Buddhist mandala paintings, to provide archetypal examples of exponential multiplicity as a reflection of the Creator’s hand.

Jewish culture is reflected in preserved ruins, museums, and memorials throughout the world that commemorate its breadth and depth, and its freighted political history. These sites have kept alive crucial debate about fundamental commemorative issues, including the nature and function of memorials, where and how the demands of memory and politics intersect, and the necessity of keeping unresolved issues such as racial hatred and genocide at the forefront of the global conscience.

“Luminous Manuscript” exists in the realm of those abstractions, like eternity, that can be grasped only viscerally and cannot be measured by standard ledgers. Like the peasant’s prayers, it gathers humanity’s ordinary and most noble enterprises in a form that reminds us of what is highest and best in human nature. 

A Cross as Memorial

By Quentin Warren

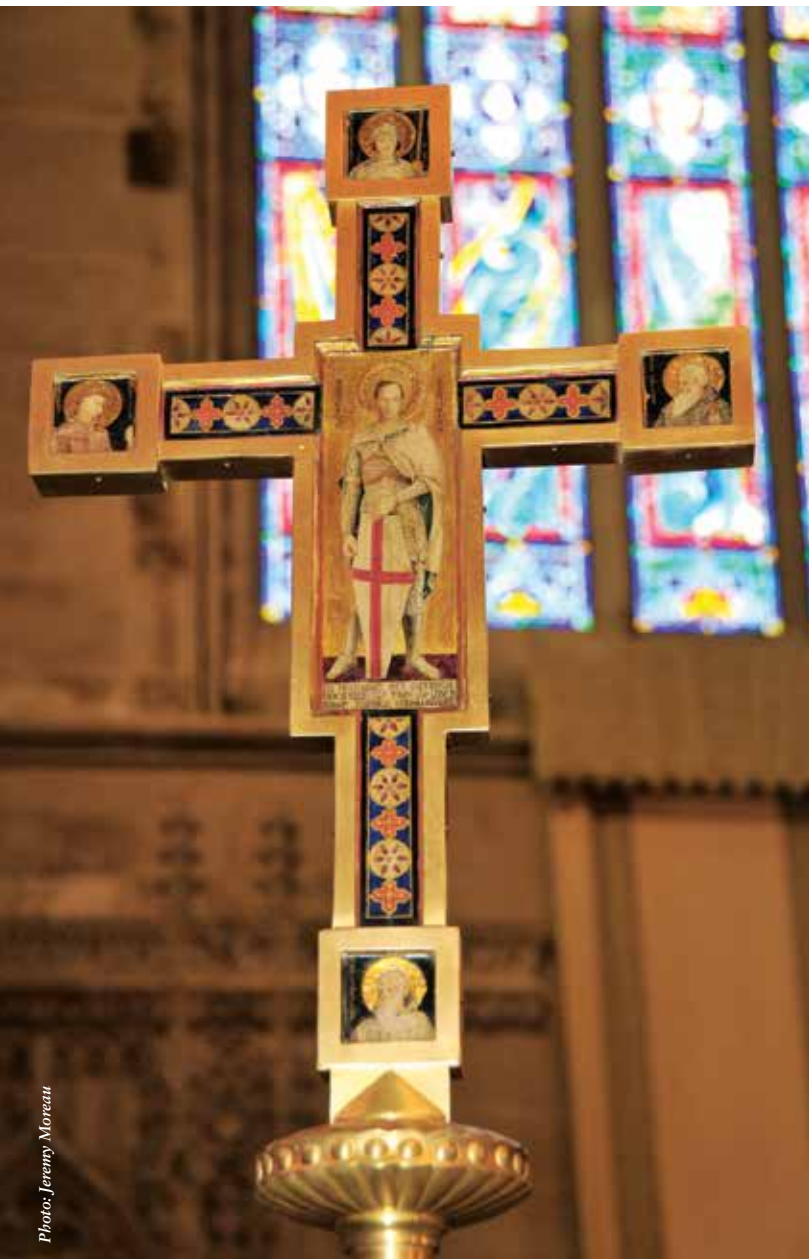


Photo: Jeremy Moreau

St. George is portrayed with the likeness of alumnus Ronald Hoskier, who died in combat in France on St. George's Day, 1917.



Photo: Kathryn Whitney Lucey

Restored Peaslee Processional Cross in chapel.

SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS. The great chapel designed by Ralph Adams Cram at St. George's School in Middletown, Rhode Island, is more than towering limestone, inspired sculpture, and shimmering stained glass. Among its treasured features is a processional cross that has heralded choirs and celebrants down the nave since the building's consecration in 1928. To be sure, the cross predates the chapel by ten years, having been given to St. George's by mathematics teacher The Reverend Arthur Newton Peaslee in 1918 to honor members of the school com-

THE AUTHOR IS A STAFF WRITER IN THE ALUMNI OFFICE AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL.

munity killed during World War I. An ornate artifact rendered in wood, copper, and gold-plated brass, hand painted in bright colors and adorned with several religious and allegorical references (including the regnant Christ) the Peaslee Processional Cross is as important to the deeper religious psyche of the chapel itself as it is to the daily lives of the students and fellow communicants who rally behind it in worship and prayer week in and week out.

The story of this timeless relic braids elements of school tradition, honor through remembrance, religious devotion, and stewardship of the highest order. Drawing on the Episcopal heritage of St. George's, it

was intended to be, and became, an integral component of the school's routine spiritual observance and remains so to this day. Detailed iconography, conveyed graphically and colorfully through representational art on its front and back, speaks both to that sacred agenda and to the secular veneration of fallen war heroes from the school community. Finally, given the effects of time and recurrent handling, the need for repair and restoration naturally becomes an issue and it was the school, along with support from a generous alumnus, that put the piece into the hands of a professional conservator who returned it to its original brilliant state.



During restoration the cross was disassembled, repaired, and cleaned.



Details of the base of the restored cross.

The cross was made by Alexander E. Hoyle of Boston, and consists of a wood crucifix with painted images on both sides, bound and framed by gold-plated brass and mounted on a wood staff. On the front is the figure of Christ, described by Peaslee as “not the sufferer merely, looking shameful death in the face, but the risen Christ crowned, no longer with thorns, but with the diadem of His eternal universal kingdom.” Below that is the tree of life, around which is coiled the proverbial serpent. The three arms of the cross represent the fruits of that tree, namely the Christian virtues: Faith to the Lord’s right is robed in white, the symbol of purity; Hope is above, clad in green to represent verdant growth

and the promise of an abundant harvest; and Charity to His left is attired in red, “symbol of the fire of love and of the blood which love must ever be ready to shed for the beloved.”

The reverse includes figures related to World War I arranged around a depiction of St. George, patron saint of England and particularly of this namesake school. They represent the principal European allies: St. Columba on one arm symbolizes Britain; St. Francis of Assisi on the opposite arm symbolizes Italy; above, la Bienheureuse Jeanne d’Arc evokes France; and at the foot of the cross, St. Rombold stands in for Belgium and the ravaged city of Mechelen.

Bringing all of this curiously home is the notion that the face of St. George on the Peaslee cross is derived from a photograph of alumnus Ronald Hoskier, St. George’s Class of 1914, who was shot down over France on April 23, 1917 by German fire. Ironically and perhaps fittingly, April 23 happens to be St. George’s Day. Hoskier had left Harvard College after graduating from St. George’s to enlist as an American volunteer in the French Lafayette Escadrille where he became an adept pilot. The St. George’s Class of 1914 contributed 32 of its members to military service in the conflict abroad. To Peaslee, Hoskier’s sacrifice was symbolic of the role played by his school in the war.

In Peaslee’s own words, “This cross is given to be used in the worship of God at St. George’s School in the name of and to honor all members of the school who have consecrated their lives to this war for the freedom of mankind, both those who have paid the full patriot’s debt in one swift moment of final pain, and those who are yet to complete that payment by years of service to God in church and state.”

Early in 2010, it had become obvious that the 92-year-old cross was in need of an extensive overhaul. Given the significance of the piece along with the complexity and multiplicity of its parts, such an undertaking would require the expertise of a skilled restorer. The school contacted local professional art and metal conservator Howard Newman of Newport-based Newmans, Ltd., for an assessment. His findings point to the fragile state of the cross prior to its restoration. The brass and copper ferrule section between the crucifix and the pole had become loose and distorted, and the joint itself had separated. The brass plates framing the crucifix and its painted surfaces had become bent and the edge joints had broken in places. Lacquer coating the gold-plated brass, originally left bright, had eroded, exposing unevenly oxidized base metal. The painted images had become dark with decades of dirt.



Students carry the newly restored Peaslee Processional Cross into St. George’s School chapel.

Restoration of the piece included structural repair and the remediation of lacquer and wax, along with conservation and consolidation of its painted surfaces.

Needless to say, this fell outside the parameters of a normal operating expense. It represented a project that required capital input from a person or people who understood its significance and considered the investment worthy. As it turned out, support for the enterprise came by way of a St. George’s alumnus from the class of 1970 who as Senior Prefect had carried the cross regularly up and down the chapel nave. Of his involvement he said, “Thanks for approaching me with this project.... My year as Senior Prefect meant a lot to me and I am delighted to be able to help restore the cross which was one of the symbols associated with the office.”

Throughout the summer of 2010 Newman engaged in the painstaking process of disassembling, restoring, and reassembling the piece, completing the project in time for the opening of school in September. He documented his work in a fascinating video slideshow currently posted on YouTube (accessible on the *Faith & Form* website, at faithandform.com).

Today, the Peaslee Processional Cross continues in its role as the dynamic symbol of a young congregation led in service and prayer. It moves through the chapel at St. George’s like a beacon. It represents nearly a century of religious and human piety in that uncommon space, viewed with reverence by its stewards and the school community at large. Affectionately, it is “the Stick” to the student vergers and crucifers who carry it, never failing to appreciate its artful presence and its central focus. ¹⁸

In the Service of Yahrzeit

By Robert Bianco, AIA



In the design of the new temple for Congregation Kol Ami, the memorial walls are incorporated into the curtain wall that surrounds the sanctuary.

In the Jewish faith, *Yahrzeit* (meaning “time of one year”) is observed on the eve of the anniversary of a parent or loved one’s passing. To honor the memory of the departed, a prayer is said while lighting the *Yahrzeit* candle, which burns for 26 hours. This special candle is also called *ner neshama*, which translates to mean “soul candle.” In contemporary times, the candle is often replaced by an electrically powered light. Whether by a lamp or a candle, the ritual of “lighting” the *Yahrzeit* memorial has become common practice. Candlelight is an apt symbol for passing. It brings us a brief glimmer of life and beauty, but inevitably the flame starts to flicker, and eventually it dies out. Memory works in a very similar way. We remember a loved one on an anniversary or a special occasion. That memory brings us momentary joy and helps us cope with the constant pain that is grief. As we move on with our day-to-day lives, that memory fades away and we return to the present.

In designing a new *Yahrzeit* memorial wall for his own congregation at West End Synagogue in New York, New York, the late Henry Stolzman of PKSB Architects in New York had a very different concept

of memory. Rethinking the ritual of remembering the dead, the new memorials reference a tradition typically observed at Jewish cemeteries where visitors place small stones on a loved one’s grave. In lieu of a light or candle next to each name, the design for West End incorporates a bronze shelf upon which a small polished stone is placed on the individual’s *Yahrzeit*. In sharp contrast to the warmth of a flickering candle, a stone may connote harshness and finality. At first glance this might seem an inappropriate choice for honoring the dead, but in looking at the origins of different burial customs, one begins to see the ritual in a different way.

In biblical times, the deceased were prepared, washed, and wrapped in a burial shroud or prayer shawl. The body was laid in the ground and covered with dirt. Large stones were then placed atop the gravesite, preventing wild animals from digging up the remains. Over time, individuals would return to the gravesite and continue to place stones, in part as a way to ensure the security of the site, but also in an effort to “build up” the memory of the loved one.

In this sense, stone speaks not of the permanence of death, but of the permanence of memory. The body, the physical form of a person,

ROBERT BIANCO, AN ARCHITECT AT PKSB, IS A GRADUATE OF THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN. HE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF VARIOUS SACRED SPACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.



Memorial wall for West End Synagogue offers stones for placement as a remembrance of those who have passed.



Larchmont Temple memorial is distinguished by a trough of stones at the wall's base.



Detail of the bronze plaques and shelves that accept the placement of stones on Yahrzeit.



Detail of the shelves for depositing stones on the enclosing wall of Congregation Kol Ami.


is not lasting. Like a flower or a flame, it fades over time. The soul is actually quite different. We often forget that it is the body, not the soul, which is buried in the ground. Through carefully selected iconography, the new design for West End suggests that we, the living, must continue to build up the memory of our departed, so that their souls can live on.

At Larchmont Temple in Larchmont, New York, Stolzman and PKSB expanded on the idea by creating a long trough filled with river rocks at the base of the Yahrzeit wall. Here, the act of bending down to pick up a stone before placing it on a family member's plaque became an important part of the ritual. In a cemetery, one would reach to the ground to collect a scattered rock and carry it to the grave of the departed. In this simple motion, the mourner is in effect lifting from the ground the memory of the person buried beneath it.

Variations on the theme continue in several other projects. In a design proposal for Congregation Kol Ami in White Plains, New York, the Yahrzeit plaques take on a new form as an irregular screen wall overlapping floor-to-ceiling windows looking out to the woodlands beyond. A direct connection to nature is a recurring theme in many of PKSB's designs for religious buildings. At Kol Ami, the connection is made even more poignant by introducing the Yahrzeit screen wall. It is the memory of those who have passed before us that provides the link between our physical world and our spirituality.

It seems an apt choice for an architect to look to a stone as the ideal representation of memory, as stone is one of the most common and oldest building materials. Buildings certainly have the ability to outlive generations and remain in our collective memory for ages. Yet, as we have seen in so many of our synagogue

projects at PKSB, congregations grow out of their buildings. Structures need to be modified, relocated, or rebuilt. We have watched several congregations relocate from one facility to another. Some rebuild from scratch, some reuse existing pieces of their previous homes, but in all cases, they consistently continue to honor the memory of the people who helped make the congregation what it is today.

Henry Stolzman passed away in August, 2012. Those of us at PKSB who worked with him knew that he was most proud of the contributions he made to sacred art and architecture. Though he was not demonstratively devout, Henry understood the very personal role these buildings play in the lives of people. Religious architecture offers a roof under which life, love, healing, and death are all honored. In this sense, the buildings are a means to an end. 

Louis Kahn's Place of Memory

By Gina Pollara

Photo: www.amiaga.com



Louis Kahn's finally realized Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park viewed from the south, in New York City's East River.



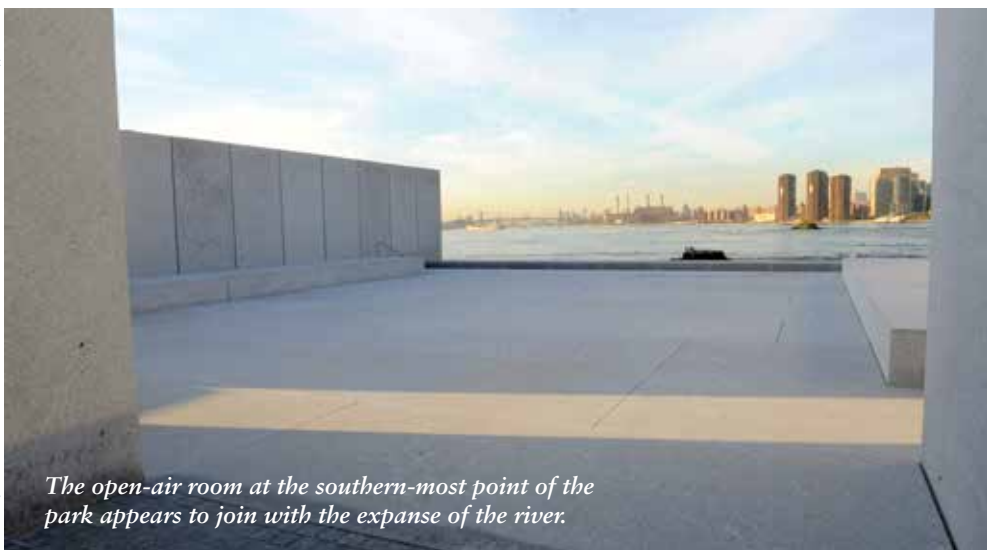
Lawn view from the south, framed by twin allées of Linden trees.

Photo: Courtesy, Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, © Paul Warchol



The large bronze bust of Roosevelt by artist Jo Davidson marks the southern terminus of the lawn and entry to the open-air room.

Courtesy, Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, Diane Bondareff



The open-air room at the southern-most point of the park appears to join with the expanse of the river.



Entrance to the park, with its monumental stair and triangular-shaped lawn that creates a forced perspective toward the sculpture of the president and the open-air room.

In 1973 when Welfare Island, which sits in the center of New York City's East River, was renamed for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the architect Louis I. Kahn stood upon its southern tip and presented his vision for a memorial to a man he revered. Thirty-nine years later, construction of the memorial, which began in March 2010 after decades of delays, was completed. Kahn's masterpiece was dedicated and opened to the public this past October.

This memorial can be looked at as a distillation of Kahn's thoughts on architecture, a marriage of his fascination with ancient forms and with modern thought. Freed from the usual utilitarian building requirements like plumbing and mechanical systems, Kahn could focus instead on pure form and fundamental relationships: eye and body to site, ground to sky, inclined plane to horizon. Here, all those elements conspire to create an experience unlike any public memorial in the nation, and the first and only Kahn construction in the city. Mitchell Giurgola Architects was the Architect of Record.

The project was built in phases, beginning at the southern end of the island, and the subtlety of the design, seemingly so straightforward, unfolded over time. Each aspect augments and illuminates the others: the insistent geometry of the entry, the deliberate symmetry of the central lawn, and the stark lines of the promenades. The allées of Littleleaf Linden trees point to the colossal bronze head of President Roosevelt by renowned artist Jo Davidson. The sculpture itself marks the threshold to what Kahn called the "room," an open-air plaza defined by monolithic 36-ton granite blocks spaced one-inch apart. Carved on the south side of the sculpture niche is the defining excerpt of Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, floating in the cityscape, in dialogue with the United Nations complex it faces.

Certain spatial configurations of the park design were evident from the drawings: the forced receding perspective drawn by the sloped garden plane and the allées of trees, with the portrait head at its focal point. But the real mastery of Kahn's vision emerged only as construction progressed. Drawings




The architect's sketch of the park, which gives a sense of the great sweep of space that Kahn sought.

and photographs cannot convey the power of Kahn's architecture; it does not translate into other media. It is only by direct physical experience that his work is fully comprehensible.

The work is a study in scale and relativity: dimension and shape shift as one moves through the site. The triangular shape of the lawn seen from the top of the garden becomes a rectangle when viewed from the bottom. A row of trees visible from one angle folds into a single trunk from another. A massive granite block disappears into a thin plane. The perception of distance expands and contracts. The tension between the cinematic and the still is palpable.

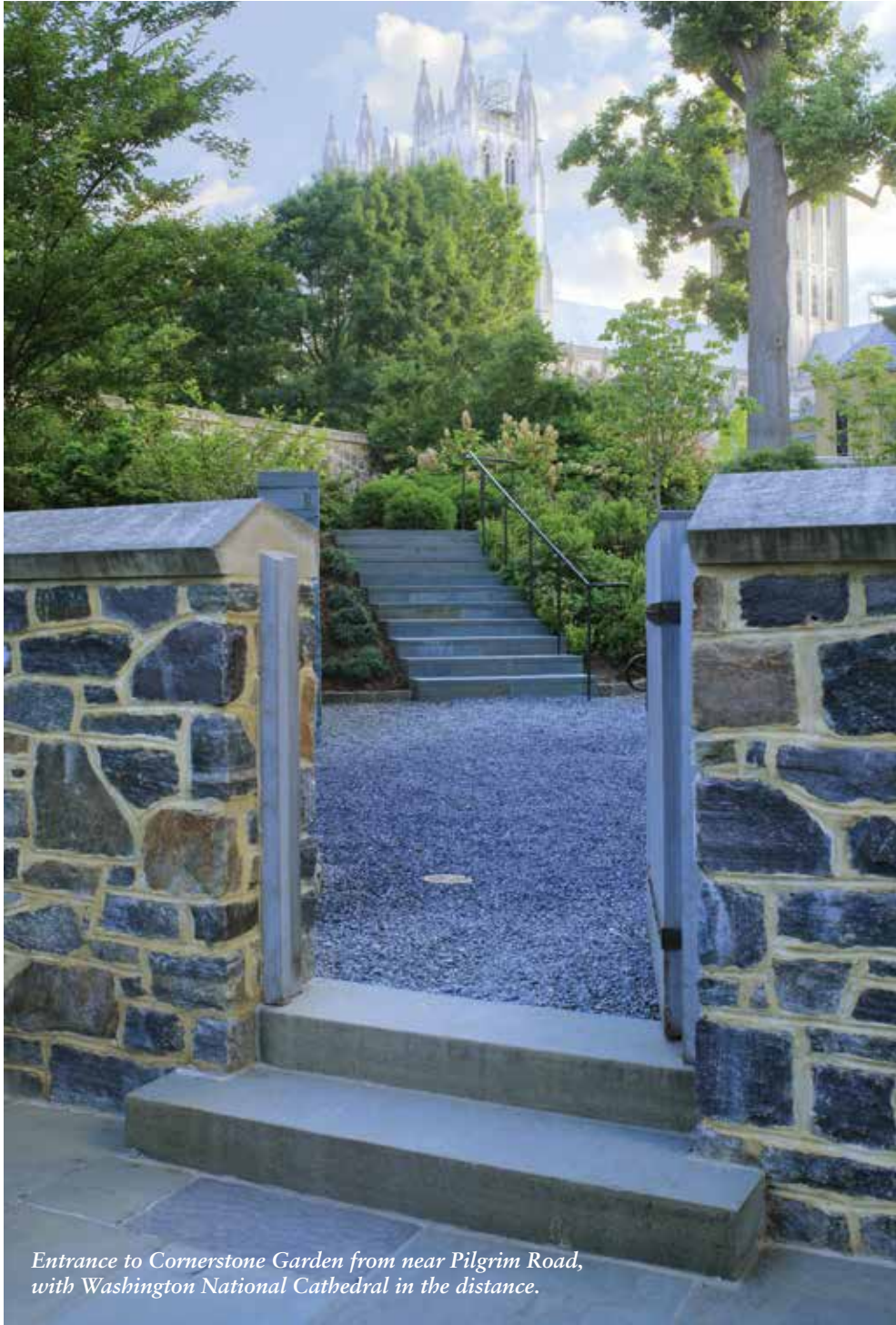
The room itself is simultaneously monumental and intimate. It is bounded by water and sky, embraced by the skyline of the city, anchored by the buildings of the United Nations. On a gray day, the granite melds into the sky above it and becomes one with the water around it; on a sunny day the room's brilliant whiteness vibrates against the blue of the sky and the kaleidoscope of the city's colors. The room invites those who enter it to experience the immediate and the eternal, in motion and in repose, as both open space and shelter.

All of Kahn's ideas become testament to human progress, from the Egyptian scale of the stones to the room's intimacy with raw nature, to the lines of perspective in three-dimensional space. On Roosevelt Island's southern tip, Kahn contends with the meaning of everything about architecture: majesty, scale, shelter, protection, perspective, relativity, and history. Fittingly, none of this can be experienced until a person enters the space Kahn designed for New York's constantly changing center. It is in that exposed and majestic room that we encounter Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and are asked to contemplate the imaginative possibility that gives birth to nations, to cities, to new lives, new creations, and that sustains our vitality throughout time. 

ARCHITECT GINA POLLARA IS CO-CHAIR OF THE FDR FOUR FREEDOMS PARK BOARD OF DIRECTORS. PRIOR TO JOINING THE BOARD, POLLARA WAS THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE IRWIN S. CHANIN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE ARCHIVES OF THE COOPER UNION.

Cornerstone of Remembrance

By Richard Williams, FAIA



Entrance to Cornerstone Garden from near Pilgrim Road, with Washington National Cathedral in the distance.

Photo: Roger Foley

THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT THE CREATION OF A DISTINCT AND INTENTIONAL PLACE OUT OF A NON-PLACE. The new place is a garden, bounded by two historic buildings and a road, designed by my firm, with Richard Burck Associates of Somerville, Massachusetts, as landscape architect. Where formerly there was a hillside overgrown with forsythia and yew,

THE AUTHOR IS PRINCIPAL OF RICHARD WILLIAMS ARCHITECTS IN WASHINGTON, DC.

whose slope and dense planting prohibited the inclination to set foot in this terrain, now there is a series of structured terraces that form a kind of “court” between the two buildings: one a school chapel, and the other a classroom building off Wisconsin Avenue in Washington, DC, near National Cathedral. The garden is removed from the nearby road and the outside world by a new perimeter wall made of

rubble stone that matches that of the historic classroom building, and is capped with limestone that springs from the datum of that building’s water table. This new wall extends to, and nearly touches, the buttresses of the carillon tower of the nearby chapel, and so the two buildings are now joined and not merely proximate, sharing between them the new garden. The creation of this new place, separated from the world outside its walls, but open to the sky, the sun, the rain, and the birds, allows for rich new possibilities.

The first possibility is movement: through the garden, connecting places that formerly were obstructed. Three gates breach the outer wall, allowing passage into and through the garden, as a meandering gravel path ascends from the lower forecourt to the terraces. The two gates at the lower level connect the entrances to the Upper School (grades 9-12) and Lower School (grades 4-8), creating a heavily travelled path between the two buildings. Periodically throughout the school day, the garden is filled with young students running through it, as the older ones meander more casually. The upper-level gate connects the nearby chapel entrance to the monumental cathedral featured prominently in the axial view. These passages make for a lively place.

The second possibility is sanctuary: in practice and in spirit, it is enjoyed as a contemplative garden where students, faculty, and visitors enjoy moments of beauty and refuge. Sights, smells, sound, and touch all serve to enhance the experience of these moments in the garden. Stone ledges built into the perimeter wall and teak benches provide a welcoming place for repose. In a similar vein, those looking into the garden from the classrooms and from the sidewalk outside the perimeter wall enjoy a feast of the senses. In fact the height of the wall was carefully scaled to be high enough to provide a sense of enclosure and privacy for those within, yet low enough for those on the outside to glimpse within.

The third possibility, and the garden’s chief purpose, is for the burial of the dead: it is a columbarium, where ashes are interred beneath the gravel paths in biodegradable urns. Names and dates are engraved on the faces of the ashlar stones of the retaining walls that form the terraces. This new place then is the repository for the remains of select alumni, faculty, staff, and students whose lives intersected with this place and now constitute a kind of community.



Overview of Cornerstone Garden from the northeast, looking back toward entry gate.



Detail of remembrance inscriptions that are found throughout Cornerstone Garden.

Photos: Roger Foley




Courtesy of Richard Burck Associates

CORNERSTONE GARDEN
ST. MARY'S SCHOOL
SCALE 1"=10'

The Cornerstone Garden is an agent of memory in each of these possibilities. As a columbarium, this sacred space serves as a subtle yet powerful memorial for the dead, reminding us, the living, of their ties to this school and this broader place on the Cathedral Close. As a place of sanctuary, the garden provides respite from a hectic schedule or

an opportunity to appreciate fleeting beauty, giving punctuation to a day, a week, a season: memory fastens on these moments. As a beautiful place we traverse for convenience, the garden elevates our comings and goings from banal to memorable. Not least, the act of creating the garden unveiled a formerly hidden face of the first building's cornerstone, around

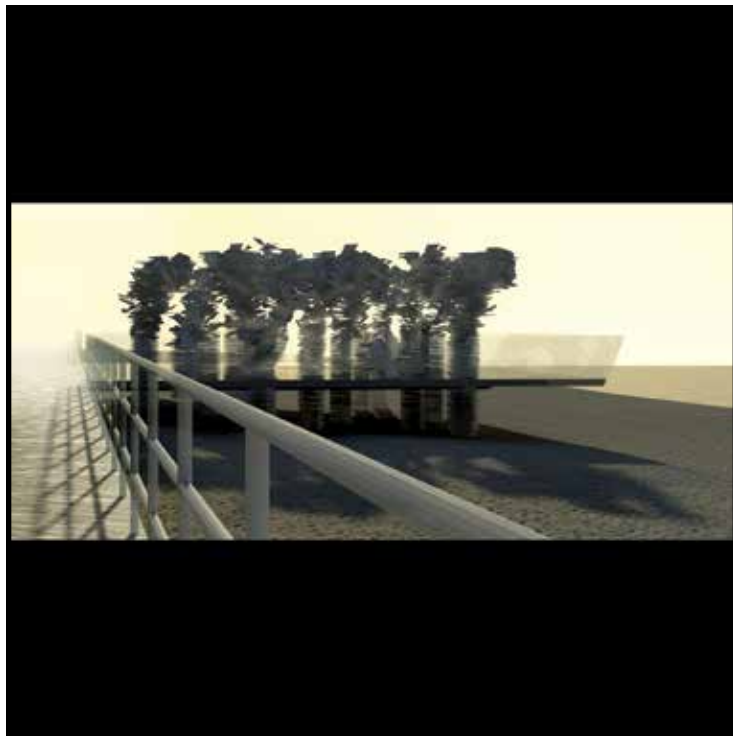
which the L-shaped space is organized. The initial funding for founding the school and constructing its building was given in memory of two sons, survived by their mother, Harriett Lane-Johnston. The unveiled plaque that faces the largest new memorial wall reads: "We asked life of thee, and thou gavest them a long life—even for ever & ever." 

Writing of Wrongs

By Bart Shaw, AIA



Elevation rendering showing the memorial concept: in between the pages in flight, one can discern the outline of figures of those no long with us, who perished in the Holocaust.



Memorial viewed from the boardwalk reveals the figure of a woman glimpsed from only a certain angle.



Sculpture mock-up showing the composition of pages that trace the outline of a young girl walking by.



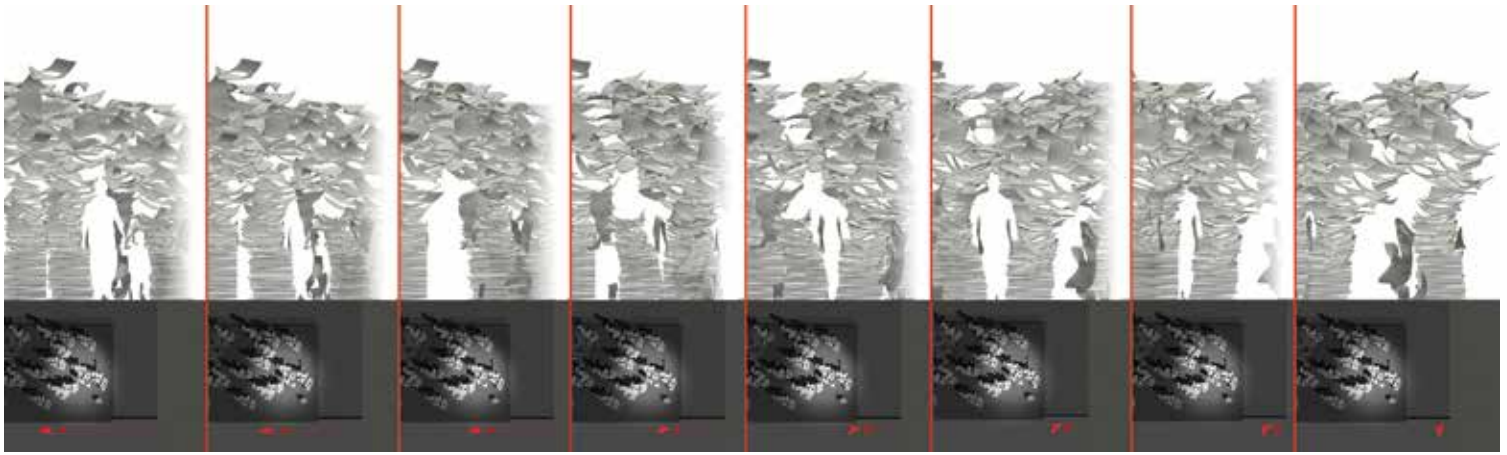
The outline of a boy walking toward or away from the viewer emerges out of the flurry of pages.

DURING THE HOLOCAUST, THERE WAS A JEWISH POET CONFINED TO A CONCENTRATION CAMP. He witnessed the loss of many of his interned brethren while he awaited the day his captors would come for him. As he

was dragged away by the Nazis, he screamed: "WRITE, JEWS, WRITE!"

There are those who proclaim that the Holocaust never occurred. This anti-Semitic denial of history has been nurtured in many

THE AUTHOR HAS HIS OWN PRACTICE, BART SHAW ARCHITECT, BASED IN FORT WORTH, TEXAS, WHERE HE PURSUES COMMERCIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND PUBLIC ARTWORK.



Study of vantage points around the memorial sculpture that reveal the presence of those no longer living.

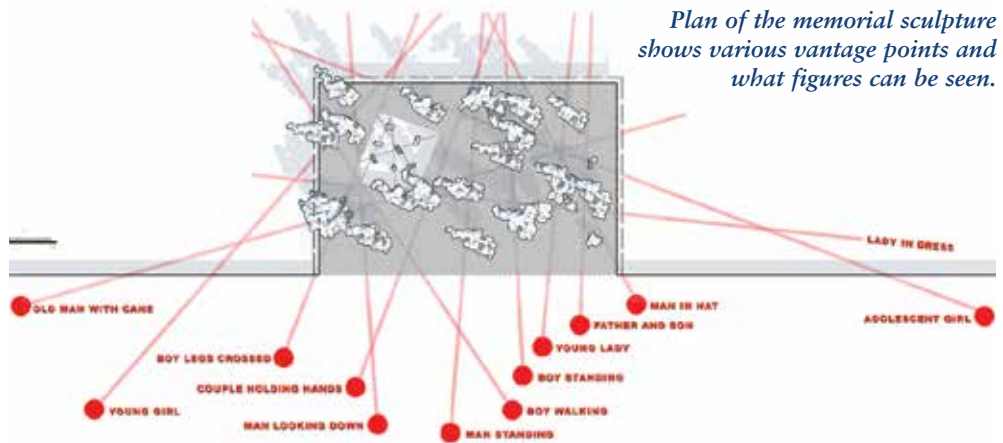
countries, some of which have even sponsored propaganda denying that the Holocaust ever existed.

But, the Jews did write. And the reality cannot be denied. They took up the pen and wrote their accounts. Their proliferation insures their longevity. The poet, through his or her craft, must have been convinced of the timeless nature of the written word and its power to reveal what transpires in the darkest places. These precious documents have become sacred pages. These pages that chronicle the stories of victims are tireless reminders not only of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but of loss. The multitudes of recorded accounts also serve as reminders of so many others that will never be recounted. Individuals were stolen from the world, and with them their descendants who should be here with us. The Holocaust accounts connect with the essence of our humanity and distill resolve in our souls.

This is the essence of what this memorial seeks to convey. The multitudes of pages that document the realities of the Holocaust are permanently enshrined, blowing in the direction of the prevailing wind, seemingly multiplying from the earth. The memorial honors these sacred pages, their proliferation, but also reveals more. They can be seen. In between the pages there are silhouettes of people, figures visible in the voids. These forms honor those who are missing, the descendants of those who should be walking around the memorial, and those whose names we shall never know, those who were wrongfully taken from the world.

There is an intriguing lecture by Richard Seymour in which he talks about the true nature of beauty. It goes beyond the aesthetic to take on a physical reaction. It is a feeling in your gut that is brought on by knowing more about what you are seeing. It is the realization of meaning that renders a deeper beauty.

It is the deepening layers of experience



Plan of the memorial sculpture shows various vantage points and what figures can be seen.



From the boardwalk, the figure of a man emerges from between the stacks of flying paper.

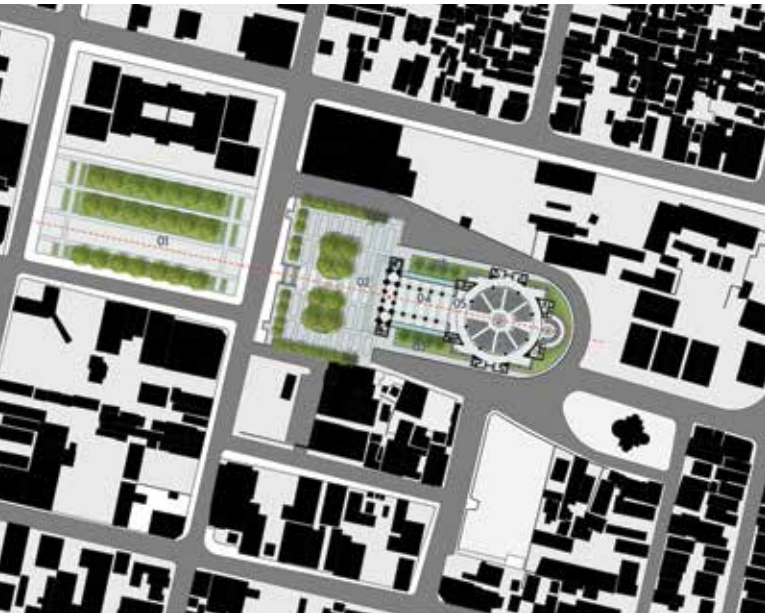
within this concept that make it memorable, that allow you to find beauty in the pages seeming to blow in the wind, and to begin to understand what it is about. But then, suddenly, you catch a glimpse of a figure, a silhouette that might remind you of your husband, father, son, daughter. You begin to grasp the humanness of it. The full-scale figures relay the absence created by these events that happened long ago in a situation we have a hard time imagining today. Yet, in the memorial you relate to its humanity and feel its reality.

The stacks of pages are coated steel plate supported by steel columns. A steel sculpture was constructed to test the concept and the fabrication. The steel plate and rods were

assembled at a 1:5 scale; there are three flowing stacks of paper. As you move around the sculpture it reveals the figures of a young boy and girl between the pages. It is a wonderful presentation of the viability of the concept and the beauty of the elements.

This design was entered in an international competition for a Holocaust memorial on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The competition was juried by architects Daniel Liebeskind, Richard Meier, and Wendy Evans Joseph, and by Michael Berenbaum, James E. Young, and Clifford Chanin. The design was selected by jurors as a finalist from a field of 715 entries, but ultimately not the scheme selected for construction. ¹⁸

NOTES & COMMENTS



Site plan of first-place-winning design.



Aerial view of first-place-winning design as it incorporates original cathedral façade and faces a new plaza.

A NEW CATHEDRAL FOR HAITI

SCF Arquitectos in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, has won first place in the international design competition for the Cathedral of Notre Dame de l'Assumption in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The winning design was chosen from a field of 134 entries submitted by entrants worldwide. On January 12, 2010, the city's existing Roman Catholic cathedral was destroyed in Haiti's devastating earthquake. The local diocese mounted a design competition to elicit proposals to replace the lost cathedral.

The winning project, according to the architectural team led by Segundo Cardona, creates a concentric space for worship in the

intersection of the original cathedral's cruciform plan. Remnants of the original cathedral's front façade are stabilized by two new flanking bell towers, which act as buttresses. A new steel roof structure ties the old façade to the new church, creating an open space in front of the cathedral. This space will be covered by a ceiling made of glass-fiber-reinforced concrete with cross-shaped perforations that will cast light crosses on the pavement below. The designers describe this exterior open loggia as "...a civic space, a tribute to the victims of the earthquake, and an overflow space when needed to accommodate a larger number of

people beyond the main concentric space."

The jury, which voted unanimously for this project, commented on the winning scheme's incorporation of elements of the original cathedral into the new building, allowing the new to serve as a host for the past. The main sanctuary space is accessed through two enormous sliding doors, which can be kept open to allow the interior of the cathedral to commune with the portico space. The jury also noted that this was one of the few entries that incorporated art into the architecture, particularly in the rendition of the Stations of the Cross that encircle the interior space.

Three other projects were selected for awards. Second place was won by the firm Estudio Kaleido of Tacubaya, México, whose design relocated the cathedral to a plaza in front of the original structure, and transformed the cathedral ruins into a memorial park. The new cathedral is sheltered under a sweeping roof that dominates the space and rises 25 meters to a lattice wall of concrete, steel, and glass. The roof itself would be planted to provide a green space.

The third-place design by Monteleone Research and Design, a collaborative practice based in Coral Gables, Florida, was selected for its centralized plan (which echoed that of the first-place scheme). Open space fronting the new cathedral's façade (which incorporated elements of the original structure) is designed as a memorial, with a large plaza farther west.

A design by de la Guardia Victoria



Second-place-winning design locates the new cathedral in front of the preserved façade of the old one.

Third-place-winning design includes a marketplace west of the cathedral and preserved ruins.



Architects & Urbanists, Inc. of Coral Gables, earning an honorable mention, proposed that the destroyed cathedral be reconstructed to its original condition to face onto a new square

surrounded by low-scale commercial buildings that incorporate design elements sympathetic to the existing context.

The competition was truly international, drawing entries from Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Dubai, England, France, Germany, Haiti, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, the U.S., and Venezuela.

Shortly after the jury met in mid-December, Yves Savain, a consultant to the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince and the competition's coordinator, presented the designs to the archdiocese, which is free to choose whether to build the winning design or not. Fundraising for the reconstruction of the cathedral has not been

a priority for the archdiocese, as rebuilding housing and other services continues. But the designs offer a vision of what might be built.

The jury, which met at the University of Miami School of Architecture in Coral Gables for its deliberations, included Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the school's dean; Edwidge Danticat, a Miami-based writer and Haitian native; Patrick Delatour, an architect with the Bureau of Architecture and Preservation in Port-au-Prince; H. Kit Miyamoto, an engineer specializing in earthquake-resistant structures; liturgical design consultant Richard S. Vosko; and myself.

More information on the winning designs can be found at: competition.ndapap.org

—Michael J. Crosbie

OPEN HOUSES OF PRAYER IN NEW YORK

New York's magnificent historic churches and synagogues will participate in the New York Landmarks Conservancy's third annual Sacred Sites Open House Weekend, May 18 and 19, 2013, when they will open their doors to visitors to explore their extraordinary art and architecture. Taking part will be more than 100 congregations throughout New York City and statewide. The weekend will also provide religious institutions the opportunity to highlight their history, cultural programming, and social services that benefit the wider community.

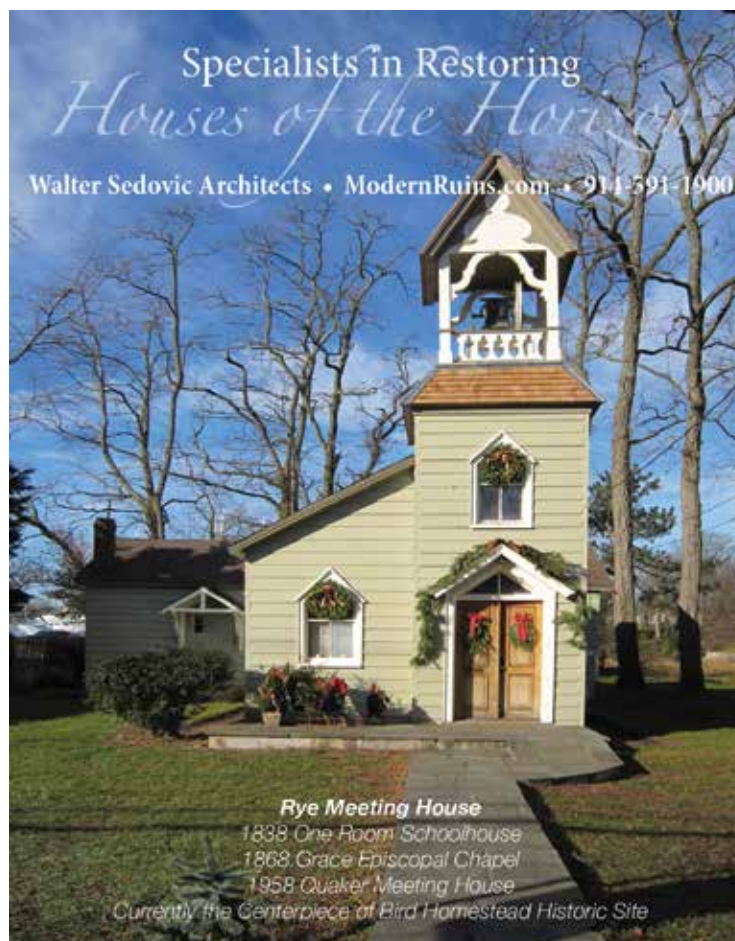
"Religious art and architecture is perhaps our greatest creative achievement. Nowhere in the United States is this better demonstrated than right here in New York, with its rich diversity of religions and ecclesiastical buildings. The Open House Weekend is a wonderful opportunity to truly be a tourist in your own town," says Peg Breen, President of the Landmarks Conservancy. Last year more than 90 religious institutions participated, among them the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine on Amsterdam Avenue, St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue, and the Brotherhood Synagogue in Gramercy Park.

The Conservancy's Sacred Sites program is the only statewide program in the country providing financial and technical assistance for the restoration of culturally significant religious properties. Since 1986, the program has disbursed grants totaling more than \$7.7 million to more than 700 congregations regardless of denomination.

The New York Landmarks Conservancy has led the effort to preserve and protect New York City's architectural legacy for 40 years. Since its founding, the Conservancy has loaned and granted more than \$40 million which has leveraged more than \$1 billion in 1,550 restoration projects throughout New York, revitalizing communities, providing economic stimulus, and supporting local jobs. The Conservancy has also offered countless hours of pro bono technical advice to building owners, both individuals and nonprofit organizations. The Conservancy's work has saved more than a thousand buildings across the city and state, protecting New York's distinctive cultural heritage for residents and visitors alike today, and for future generations.

Faith & Form is the media sponsor for this year's Sacred Sites Open House Weekend. "We are thrilled to partner with the Landmarks Conservancy in encouraging our magnificent religious institutions to open their doors and invite the public to discover their wonderful art and architecture," says *Faith & Form* editor Michael J. Crosbie.

For more information on the Sacred Sites Open House Weekend, please visit www.nylandmarks.org. Congregations that want to participate can find more information at: bit.ly/ssohw



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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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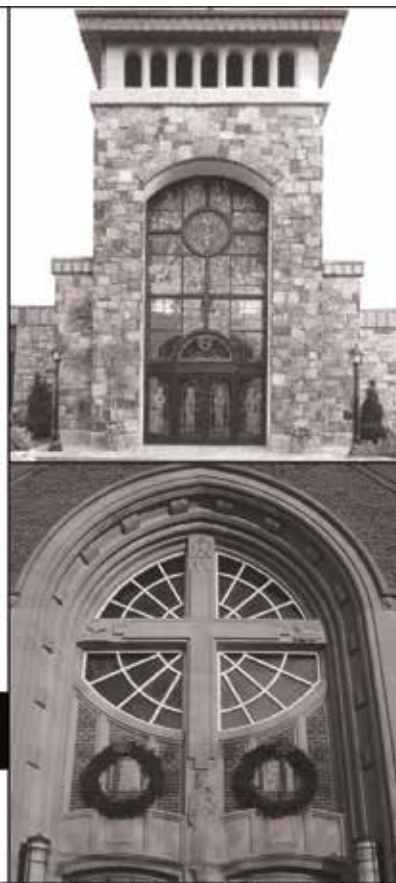
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The surge has receded from Super Storm Sandy. As we assess the damage to our religious buildings, our most valued tools may be patience, prudence, and providence.

PATIENCE: HOW TO NOT OVER-REACT

In our zeal to get “back to normal” it is easy to lose sight of the inherent resiliency of traditional building materials. Long before active technologies to control humidity, temperature, and airflow, master builders used passive systems coupled with indigenous materials to adapt to environmental conditions. The power of these systems—materials that absorb and release moisture, operable windows that provide convective currents, solid masonry that promotes thermal comfort in both winter and summer—is often overlooked, and yet these constructions become the key components to restoration and renewal. Perhaps the most pervasive (and misguided) response to episodes of excessive moisture is to turn on the dehumidifiers. But accelerated drying of historic materials can lead to irreparable damage, including delaminated finishes, warped and checked woodwork, open joints, loosened fasteners, and degraded mortar. The water entering a building is rarely clean, and the use of dehumidifiers indiscriminately pulls water-borne salts and other pollutants through historic materials, leaving behind residual efflorescence and staining. Rather, give materials time to respond to the trauma inflicted upon them, and to find balance in their own ways. It can be an eye-opening experience to witness the resiliency of historic masonry, plaster, flooring, woodwork and finishes when provided enough time to acclimate through passive drying. The best way to achieve this is to remove standing water and open the windows, allowing for conductive currents to carry excess moisture away, naturally. A silver lining of this process is the increased awareness of built-in control of internal conditioning via their original “green” technologies.

PRUDENCE: SKILLFUL SELECTION, ADAPTATION, AND USE OF RESOURCES

A prominent insurer once told us that we could not specify “salvaged stone” for a restoration following a devastating flood, even though the specified stone perfectly matched the original. The reason? Because salvaged stone was “old” and the insured’s policy required “new” materials. Isn’t all stone old? This true story underscores the pressures we often face when attempting to make well-informed decisions in the face of a status quo that consistently reveres new over old. We fare better—and so do our buildings—when we seek to educate others about appropriate choices of restoration materials, systems, and technologies that are compatible with the original (whatever its vintage) not just new. Context is critical as we seek to complement inherent quality and durability. For instance, replacing plaster with gypsum wallboard is not an even trade, because one (plaster) is very durable and adapts selectively to changing environmental conditions. It is a more sustainable choice: lower environmental cost, resistance to molds, myriad finish options, and advantageous thermal and acoustic qualities. Gypsum wallboard is cheaper, quicker to install, and readily available, but that hardly makes it an appropriate choice for iconic religious structures that serve as living examples of stewardship, durability, and lasting performance. All-too-common responses to restoration and repair that involve a quick fix and the promise of



“maintenance free” fail to recognize the intrinsic qualities of what we have in hand and the value of keeping it in service. Glues, staples, and plastics will never outlive craftsmanship and natural materials.

PROVIDENCE: AN EYE TOWARD LONGEVITY

In rebuilding, we often face the same dilemma as building anew: lower initial cost or longer performance life? These two extremes are at the heart of Life Cycle Cost Analysis (LCCA), determining the most value-laden approach when all aspects (including anticipated performance life) are evaluated. Considering that the expense of operating a building can be 50 times its initial cost, this is a critical measure that helps balance the scales. Not spending money to do it “right” may very well mean spending money to do it twice. Longevity requires a whole building approach; there is no shortage of examples demonstrating pitfalls of treating symptoms not causes, and their relationship to other building systems. For instance, when water enters a cellar a common reaction might be to seal the space with concrete, plastic, or waterproof coatings. The result is predictable: we don’t eliminate migration, we simply move the water around. Cementing over permeable cellar floors forces water to travel deep into foundation walls, in turn dissolving mortar, causing piles of sand, crystallized salts, and other leachate to accumulate along the foundation wall. Increased levels of ambient moisture in walls leads to rotting floor framing, mold growth, and ice formation. In reaction, coatings applied to affected surfaces trap even more moisture, driving it deeper within the walls. When the objective is to eliminate water, first assess its origin, frequency, and path, then respond accordingly with solutions that work in concert with each building’s inherent DNA and self-preserving qualities.

The healing process begins with damage control, then allowing a building time to restore itself. Patience, prudence, and providence will be rewarded with interventions less invasive, less costly, and more appropriate, especially for religious buildings. Consider this approach akin to the Hippocratic Oath: “First, do no harm.”¹⁸

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THE TROUBLE WITH THOSE S WORDS

THE LAST WORD
JIM WILLIAMSON

Several months ago Michael J. Crosbie wrote an editorial in these pages (*Vol. 45, No. 1, p. 4*) describing his thoughts on a panel discussion that Karla Britton and I had organized, titled “Space, the Sacred and the Imagination.” Crosbie noted the fact that among the panelists several seemed “...uncomfortable with the very word sacred, freighted as it is with requirements of belief....” He also accurately noted that instead of a discussion of the sacred per se, the discussants veered toward a less precise—and perhaps a more comfortable—arena using such words as immeasurable, ineffable, or void, among others. Crosbie speculated, “...the discomfort of many architects, artists, and academics in using the former S word could be a symptom of their own disbelief or uncertainty.” In so doing they are kept distant from the very why of such places and distant also from the sense of awe that lies both behind belief and behind a more profound engagement of that same aforementioned immeasurability, ineffability, and the mysteries they imply.


This is where I might take some issue.

The hesitance to use the word sacred is not entirely—or in my view, even mostly—a symptom of disbelief or doubt. I believe it is, in fact, an acknowledgment of the inadequacies of our language—our symbols, our rituals, and our words—to embrace the sacred in a way that is unburdened by, in the words of Mircea Eliade, “...conventional religious language.”¹ We must admit here that much of what we know as sacred architecture is imbued with conventional religious language.

For Eliade, a truly modern religious art or architecture would be iconoclastic toward traditional religious expression and would necessarily be “unrecognizable.” He believed that this was as true for the work of artists of faith in the normative sense of the word, like Chagall or Rouault, as for those of faith in some other less specific sense—a kind of

paradoxical, areligious faith. In either regard, Eliade held that a new language of religious expression was necessitated by modern circumstances for religious engagement to have deep contemporary relevance—not withstanding the tenacity of religious tradition.

Just as religious expression must evolve, so must the way that we speak or write about it evolve. Words can be just as burdened with tradition, and they can encapsulate just as much of a lack of imagination around their subject, as the most calcified artistic forms. In this light, resisting the use of the word sacred to speak about the complex structure of religious engagement—spatial, material, liturgical, theological, political—is in the service of the sacred and a doorway to engagement rather than an obstacle to it; it can also be as much a denial and a retreat from its subject as it can be a means of access.

Eliade defended a religious art of some difficulty, an art not immediately open to common language. The word sublime and its catch phrases are becoming equally problematic forms of shorthand—as imprecise as the word sacred might be. The panelists certainly revealed this problem. But I defend their deliberate obliqueness. To speak more directly of religious experience in our modern culture would seem important toward arriving at a greater understanding of contemporary religious space and its possibilities. We might even say that to do otherwise might be, well... slightly sacrilegious. 

JIM WILLIAMSON TEACHES ARCHITECTURE AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY. HE IS THE CO-EDITOR AND CONTRIBUTOR, WITH RENATA HEJDUK, OF *THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE: A READER*.

1. Eliade, Mircea: “The Sacred and the Modern Artist.” *Art, Creativity and the Sacred*; ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, New York, NY, Crossroad, 1984.

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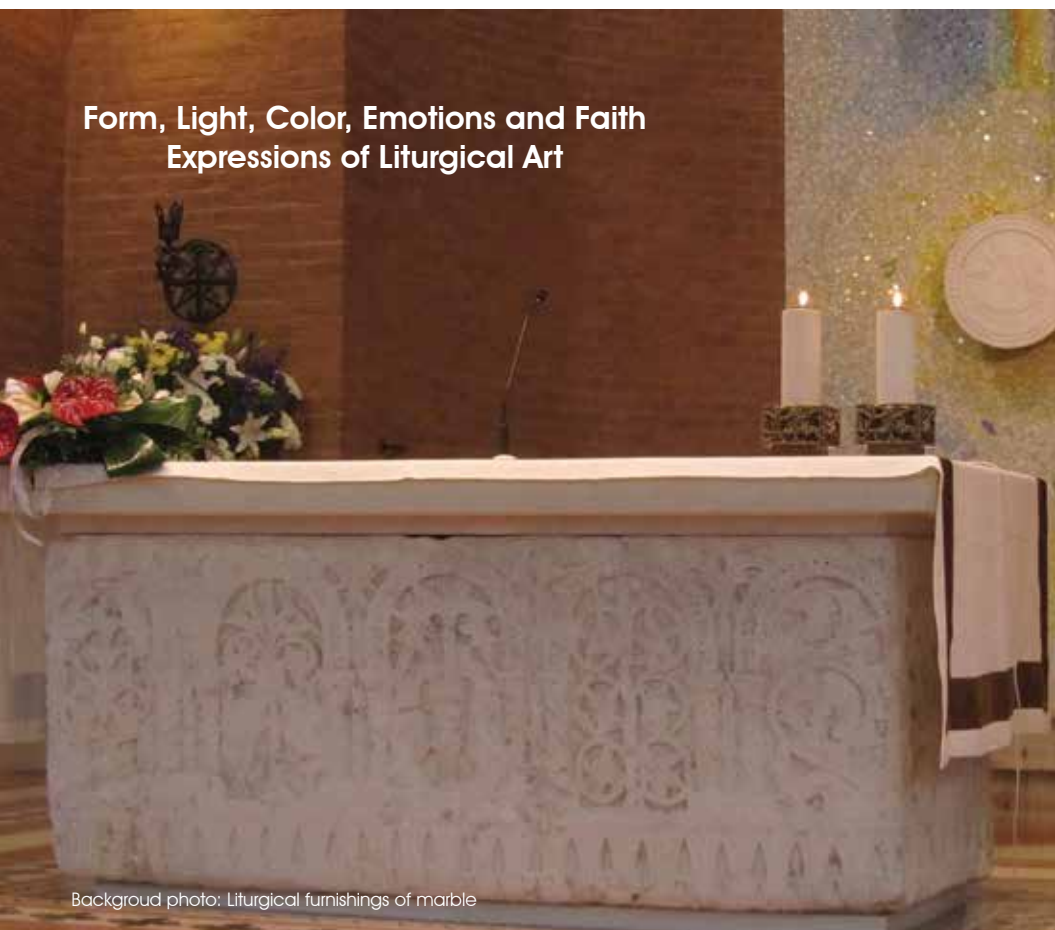
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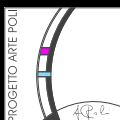
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Headquarter Verona, Via Bresciana 67/b 37139, Italy
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