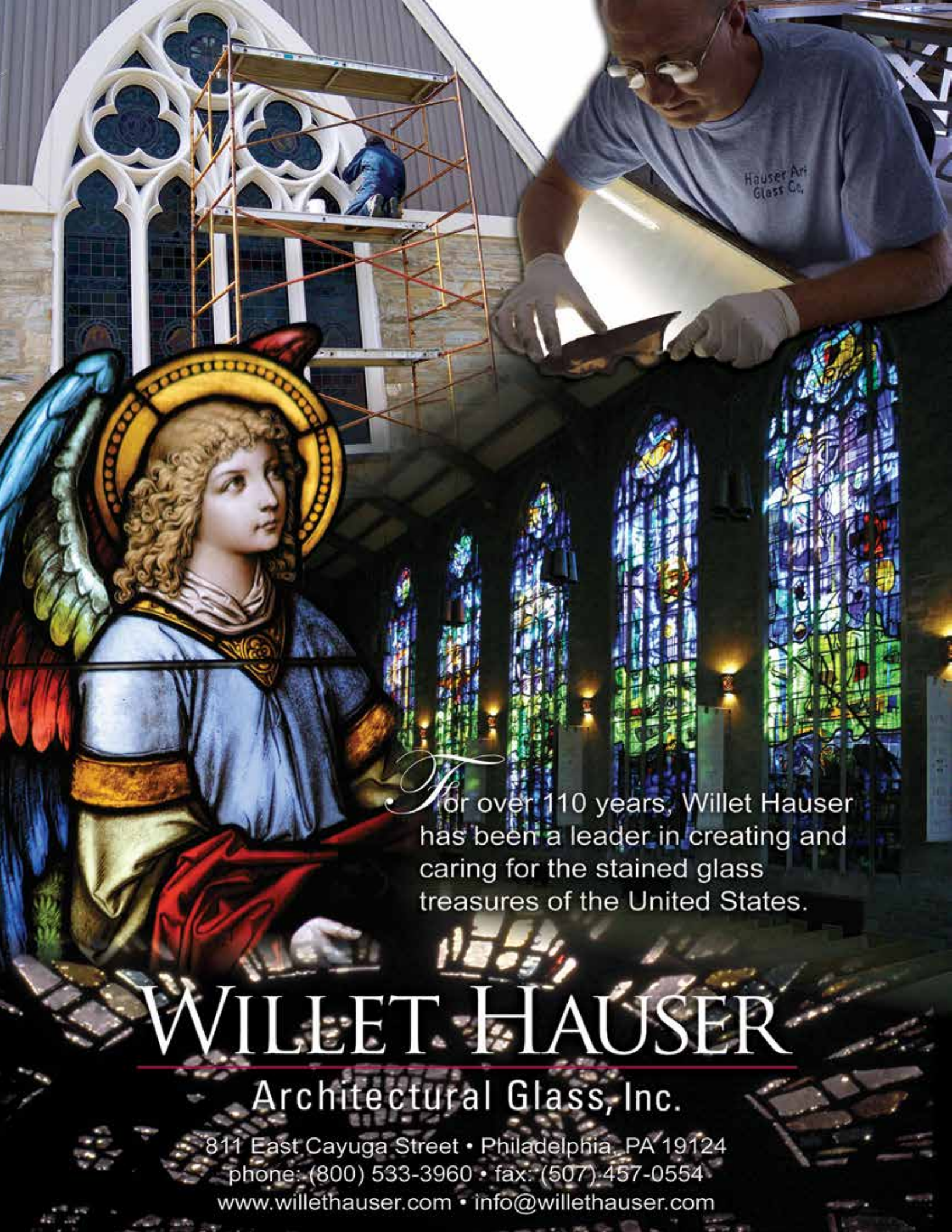


# FAITH & FORM

THE INTERFAITH JOURNAL ON  
RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE  
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Theme Issue:  
Framing  
Sacred Art &  
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# CONTENTS

## THEME ISSUE: FRAMING SACRED ART AND ARCHITECTURE

### Architecture as Art and Frame for Art

*By Anat Geva* ..... 6

### Art Transforms a Church

*By Robert Habiger* ..... 9

### Restoring a Masqueray Cathedral

*By Randall Crook* ..... 12

### An Oasis of Stillness

*By Rebecca W. E. Edmunds, Assoc. AIA* ..... 16

### Sacred Ancestors: Images of Unity and Peace

*By Richard S. Vosko, Hon. AIA* ..... 20

### Divining the Art of the Divine

*By David Pfeifer, AIA* ..... 23



#### ON THE COVER:

Detail of the Quiet Room at the Duke Cancer Center in Durham, North Carolina, by Duda Paine  
Architects and the Kaiser/von Roenn Studio Group (*article begins on page 16*). Photographs © Robert Benson Photography

## DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Page	4
Architects Directory	25
Artist/Artisan Directory	25
Notes & Comments	27
The Sacred and the Mundane	30
The Last Word	31

#### INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Connect to Faith & Form	28	KML	5
Conrad Schmitt Studios Inc.	4	Progetto Arte Poli	32
Dekker/Perich/Sabatini	4	Rambusch Studios	5
EverGreene	31	Subscribe to Faith & Form	28
Faith & Form/IFRAA Awards Program	29	The Verdin Company	31
Faith & Form Theme Issue	24	Willet Hauser Architectural Glass, Inc.	2
J. Sussman, Inc.	29		

#### NEXT ISSUE:

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





## GAME ON

ARE PROFESSIONAL SPORTS REPLACING ORGANIZED RELIGION? That question was at the root of a recent *Washington Post* article that pointed out that as membership in organized religion has declined, the number of people who identify themselves as sports fans has increased. According to a Pew study, two-thirds of those polled say that religion is losing its influence in the U.S. In contrast, 50 years ago only 30 percent of those surveyed said they were were fanatical about sports; today it is double that. The article asks: "Are Americans shifting their spiritual allegiances away from praying places and toward playing places?"


The article generated quite a bit of comment among members of the Forum for Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality (acsforum.org), which circulated it for discussion. There were lots of comparisons to the sports spectacles of the ancient world, and how closely they were tied to the religious beliefs of the times. Others noted that the sacred places created for religious spectacle, now often sparsely populated, still have the power to move us through their mere presence. The sanctity of the work of the architects, artists, craftspeople, and builders has outlived that of the high priests who once marshaled the masses in unwavering belief.

Still others questioned whether the rise of sports and the decline of religion is a false correlation. After all, American pop culture is heavily invested in all kinds of spectacles that consume the attention and devotion of millions: sports, music, movies, fashion, the Internet in general. Sports are really just a part of a rampant commercial spectator

culture, one that only asks the participants to watch, passively, and not tune out the ads.

Might it be possible that the number of adherents of organized religion is shrinking not because sports have become more dominant, but because religion is undergoing a seismic shift that will, maybe someday, change everything in the culture, including sports? Is it perhaps that today people are defining modes of spirituality and religious devotion with different forms of transcendence, beyond that of spectator religion? Are we seeing the transformation of passive believers into active seekers, whose spirituality asks for more than spectacle, and demands more than mere observation?

Harvard theologian Harvey Cox puts his finger on such a transformation when he describes the spiritual awakening that he detects throughout contemporary culture. He notes that the new generation of believers is not passive. They are more open to the mystical, transcendent nature of faith, but they are resistant to doctrine. They are more oriented to first-hand religious experience not interpreted by intermediaries. They have a thirst for questioning received wisdom. They disdain organized religion's exclusivity and are suspicious of "the only way." They see connections between science and religion, because both are part of the human search for knowledge. They are more empathetic to the poor and the marginalized.

"Do you follow sports?" is a common query, but I have never heard anyone ask, "Do you follow religion?" The question is absurd, and it points to the false comparison between the two, especially today. Spirituality is not a spectator sport. 

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

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# Architecture as Art and Frame for Art

## Mario Botta's Church in Seriate

By Anat Geva, with photos by the author

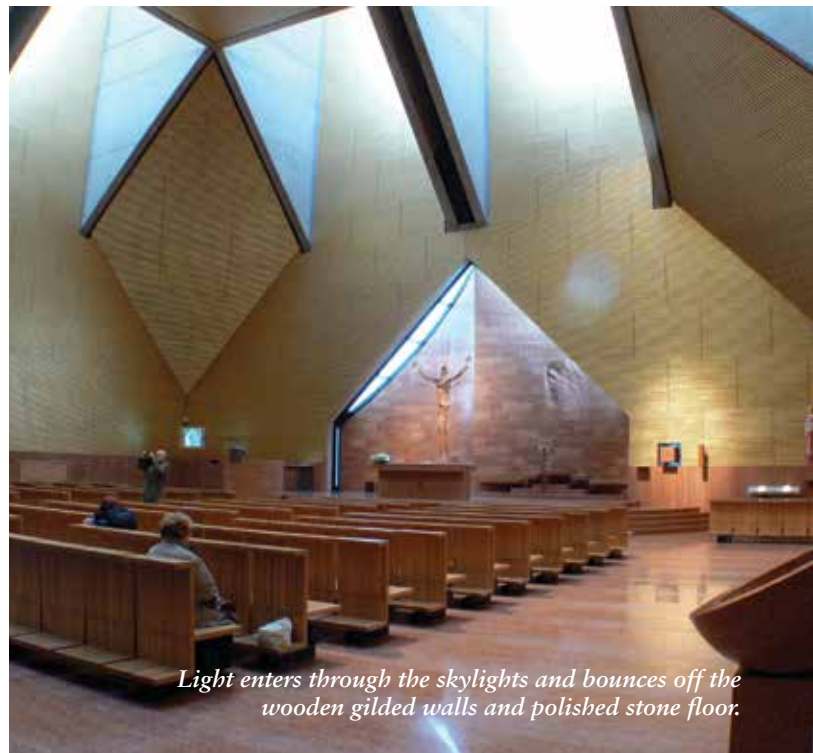
The relationship between architecture and art in houses of worship can be addressed through two approaches. The building itself or parts of it can become sacred art, where art develops as an organic part of the structure (such as Frank Lloyd Wright's sacred architecture<sup>1</sup>). Or, architecture can provide the space/frame for the artwork, allowing the sacred art to express its own independent voice. This latter approach calls for a collaboration between the architect and the artist (one thinks of Percival Goodman's synagogues<sup>2</sup>).

The church in Seriate, Italy, designed by Mario Botta in 1994 and opened in 2004 exemplifies a combination of these two approaches, integrating sacred design and art concepts. Botta designed this Catholic church as a piece of sacred art, introducing symbols in stone; in the interior he designed two apses that frame and exhibit a crucifixion scene carved into the stone wall by the famous Italian artist Giuliano Vangi.

The church, dedicated to Holy Pope Giovanni XXIII and a winner of a Faith & Form/IFRAA Award in 2005, is located near the small 17th-century church of San Alessandro Martire in the suburb of Paderno-Seriate south of Bergamo. Botta's church includes a sanctuary that stands perpendicular to the old church, and a one-story rectangular oratory opposite the old church. These two parts and the historic church create

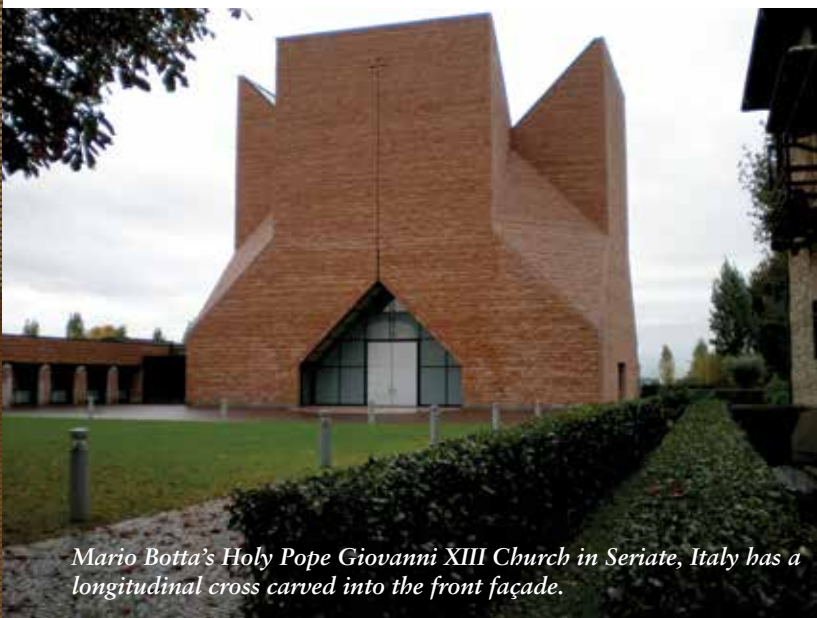
ANAT GEVA IS AN ARCHITECT WHO TEACHES AT THE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

*The apses of the church incorporate the sculpture by Giuliano Vangi.*

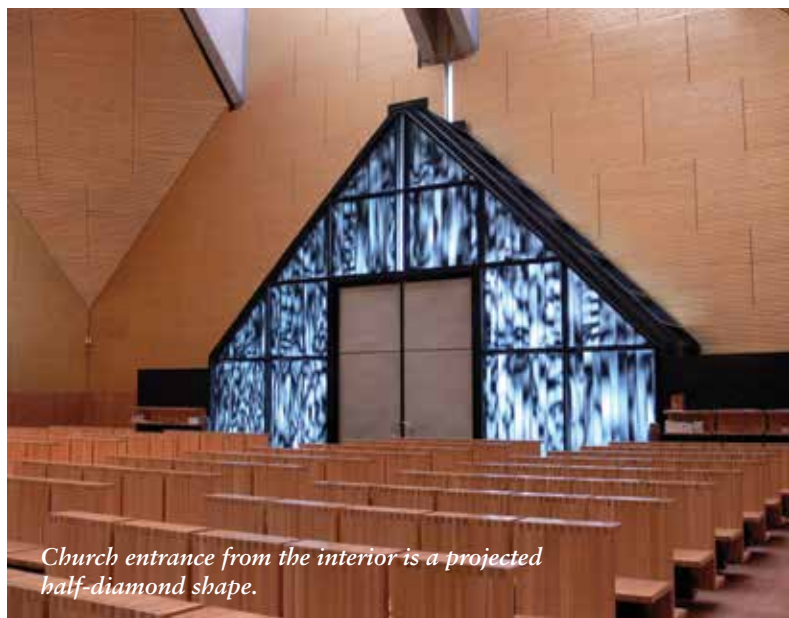


*Light enters through the skylights and bounces off the wooden gilded walls and polished stone floor.*





Mario Botta's Holy Pope Giovanni XIII Church in Seriate, Italy has a longitudinal cross carved into the front façade.



Church entrance from the interior is a projected half-diamond shape.

a complex with a defined courtyard where the new church serves as the centerpiece.

#### ARCHITECTURE AS ART

Botta's use of simple transformation of geometry, natural materials of stone and wood, and his articulation of light enhanced his fundamental idea of design: "architecture has its roots in earth. The idea of ornamentation is secondary to this.... They [people] are not distracted by decoration. The wall itself becomes an ornament."<sup>3</sup>

Botta transformed the plan (81 feet square) of the sanctuary into a volume shaped by diamonds. These configurations created four sloped roofs designed as skylights hidden by the 75-foot vertical walls of the facades. This verticality, the simple longitudinal cross carved in the front stone wall, and the diamond corners give the exterior its artistic value. Some can interpret the facade as a sacred image of angels' wings.

The church was conceived as an intermediary between earth and heaven. Leonardo Servadio called it "The Golden Gate to Heaven."<sup>4</sup> Earth is represented by the Verona split-slab stone that clads the reinforced concrete building, while the light entering through the church's skylights symbolizes heaven.

As earth and heaven are universal sacred elements, so are fire and water. The red color and the rough texture of the Verona stone on the exterior shines in the sun like fire. Manipulating the light and shadows on the exterior facades deepens the artistic composition of the church and its sacredness. Botta designed the gutter as an artistic detail representing water. It is indented into the diamond shape of the façades' corners.

The interior floor is finished with reddish Verona polished stone, which extends upward to the plinth of the walls. The lower part of the wall serves as a base for the rising gilded wood planks that clad horizontally the rest of the walls. The effect of light bouncing off the gilded, soft material draws the worshiper's eyes upward to meet the cross in the ceiling. This cross divides the concrete slab into four parts where the four skylights converge. Botta utilized this structural design to serve as a sacred symbol enhanced by light. Moreover, the ceiling slab is clad with gilded wooden planks, which remind us of the gilded art/decoration in historic churches.

It should be noted that Botta designed the furniture of the church as well as other sacred elements, such as the altar and the baptistery. He treated the latter as pieces of stone art rising from the floor. The half-sphere shape of the font contains sacred water, while the stone and rectangular shape of the altar represent earth and fire.

The two apses behind the altar, the focal point of the sanctuary, are framed as half-diamond polished Verona stone walls indented into the major back wall of gilded wooden planks. This indentation mirrors the half-diamond entrance, which protrudes into the sanctuary. The geometric relationship of indentation and projection of the two half-diamonds on each side of the sanctuary and the corners' diamond-shaped walls enhance the longitudinal axis of the space, which caters to the Catholic faith. While the walls themselves become the ornaments accompanying the axis, they turn into a background frame for the sacred sculpture in the apses.

#### ARCHITECTURE AS A FRAME FOR ART

Botta believes that stone sculptures express the earth and the depth of time and serve as a discovery, which offers a "new terrain that can stir other emotions."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, he left two Verona polished stone walls behind the altar as a stone block where the artist would carve his composition. In addition to the form and material of the space, Botta's lighting design defines the architecture as a frame. A skylight above each side of the apses and a slit window on each of their sides light the art carved in the wall. Though the art becomes a part of the whole design, it was given a place to breathe and unfold its own interpretation of the sacred.

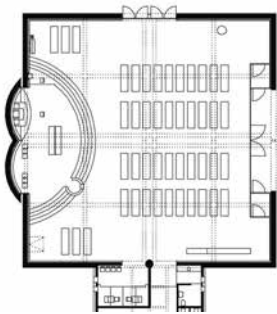
Giuliano Vangi transformed these walls into a "Christ with the Pious Women" scene with the pathos of his figurative language. The wall became the "landscape in which to evoke thoughts and fantastic visions," and caters to the tactile aspect of our impulse to touch and explore after we trace the wall sculpture's outlines with our eyes.<sup>6</sup>

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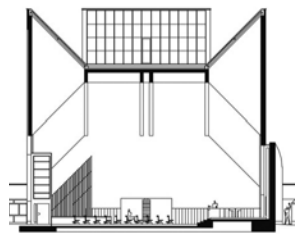
*"The reconciliation of the functional principle with the deep need to express a building's inner purpose gives the problem of the relationship between art and architecture a measure of special urgency today."*

---

Avram Kampf



*Floor plan of the sanctuary*



*Section of the sanctuary*

In the exhibition book *Giuliano Vangi*, the curator Massimo Bertozzi describes the work of the sculptor as “seeking in its own existence spatial balance.”<sup>77</sup> In his architecture and natural lighting design, Botta emphasizes this balance and left Vangi’s solid figuration to evoke rich expressive emotions that enhance the spiritual experience of the church. This is an example of a juxtaposition of architecture and art where both follow the major design concept of linking earth and heaven while preserving their own specific interpretations of the sacred.


Vangi’s approach to the sculpture of Christ as a humanistic figure was similar to his Christ sculpture in the “Crocefisso” of the Padua Duomo. In both, although different in materials and techniques, his Christ “maintains an absolutely anti-heroic attitude: this man wanting to prove he has vanquished the fear of death... and the memory of the pain and solitude which the final journey implies for him, just like for anyone else.”<sup>78</sup> Light from the skylight above the apse illuminates the figure

and creates the illusion of Christ raising from the stone (earth) to heaven.

On the other apse, the Pious Women sculpture is carved deeper in the stone, emphasizing profound inner earthly emotions of pain and sorrow. Botta’s skylight throws light and shadows on the sculpture, enhancing the unity of Vangi’s expressive force, which “made up spiritual suggestions as well as formal value.”<sup>79</sup> In the background of the figures we notice two elements. A deeply carved line connects one wall to the other, and Christ to the Pious Women. However, the line continues beyond the figures, referring to a ground line representing earth rooted in stone. The second element in the background is the contour of a cityscape (is it Jerusalem?). This is carved more shallowly, above the figures, barely visible, as if afar. The light from above helps to blend the carving into the wall, as if the city is rooted in the stone. With this backdrop Vangi uplifts the sculptures of Christ and the Pious Women, emphasizing their importance and

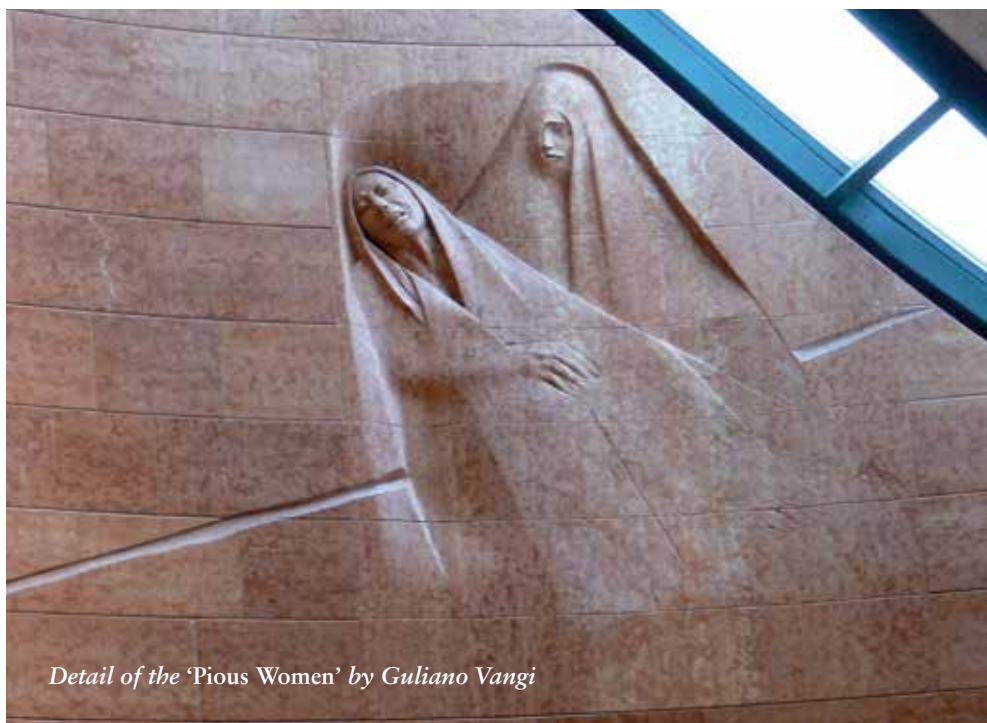
their sacredness. Botta frames the sculpture with light that lifts it to another level. Gianni Contessi describes it this way: “For Botta, light takes on a broadly symbolic value... It is a quiet architectural drama, which the architect seeks to create through light and through the construction’s gravity.”<sup>80</sup>

The two apses’ walls, their sculptural outlines, the light penetrating from a skylight above that wall, and the background soft light bouncing off the gilded wood walls and ceiling become the ornament of the sanctuary, and witness the collaboration between architecture and art.

In my visit to Botta’s church a few years ago, I felt that the balance between Botta’s architecture as art and the architecture framing sacred art reaches a perfect harmony. The integration of materials, textures, colors, and the morphology of simple geometry generated a spiritual ambience in which the sculptural work punctuates the sacredness. It left me filled with awe. 

## NOTES

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2. Kampf Avram. 1966. *Contemporary Synagogue Art*. New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations.
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4. Servadio Leonardo. 2005. “John XXIII Pastoral Center: The Golden Gate to Heaven: Seriate, Botta’s New Church” p. 108. In Capellato, Gabriele (ed.) *Mario Botta, Architetture Del Sacro, Prayers in Stone*. An Exhibition. Bologna, Italy: Editrice Compositori. Pp. 102-108.
5. Botta, Mario. 2005. “Building A Church (Lugano, April 2004)”; and “For Giuliano Vangi (Before a sculpture)”. In Capellato, Gabriele (ed.) *Mario Botta, Architetture Del Sacro, Prayers in Stone*. An Exhibition. Bologna, Italy: Editrice Compositori. Pp. 193-196.
6. Ibid, p.195-196.
7. Bertozzi, Massimo. 2001. “Vangi in The Hermitage” p. 95. In Bertozzi, Massimo (curator) *Giuliano Vangi*. Exhibition Pp. 95-104.
8. Ibid, p. 96.
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10. Contessi, Gianni. 2005. “John XXIII Pastoral Center: Consecration of The House” p. 105. In Capellato, Gabriele (ed.) *Mario Botta, Architetture Del Sacro, Prayers in Stone*. An Exhibition. Bologna, Italy: Editrice Compositori; and Capellato, Gabriele (ed.). 2004. *Mario Botta, Light and Gravity: Architecture 1993-2003*. Munich Germany: Prestel.



*Detail of the ‘Pious Women’ by Giuliano Vangi*



# Art Transforms a Church

By Robert Habiger



Photo: Chas McGrath

*The sanctuary is a welcoming space surrounded by art, which helps to define its character.*

HOW DOES ART TRANSFORM A WORSHIP SPACE AND THE PEOPLE WHO ENCOUNTER THAT SACRED ENVIRONMENT? I have seen it happen at Santa Maria de la Vid Church for the Norbertine Community in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 1997, as the architect, I designed a place for worship and devotion for this religious community. Known for their promotion of the liturgy, they told the design team that a worthy space for worship and devotion was not only desired but was the most important aspect of our task ahead. They requested high-quality architecture, liturgical furnishings, and art.

As is true of many church projects, this community could not yet afford the sculptured artwork planned for the devotional shrines. With a shortage of funds the approach was to create an exceptional church space with appropriate furnishings but defer sculptured art until a later date. Now, 15 years after the church was completed, the remarkable story is not how seamlessly art was incorporated into the building fabric, but how the art changed the building physically and emotionally.

Because the design was done with future art in mind, it purposefully highlighted both the centrality of worship and the spaces being set aside for future devotional shrines. Such an approach meant that when construction was finished the shrine areas were noticeably incomplete. These incomplete shrine areas immediately became a magnet for

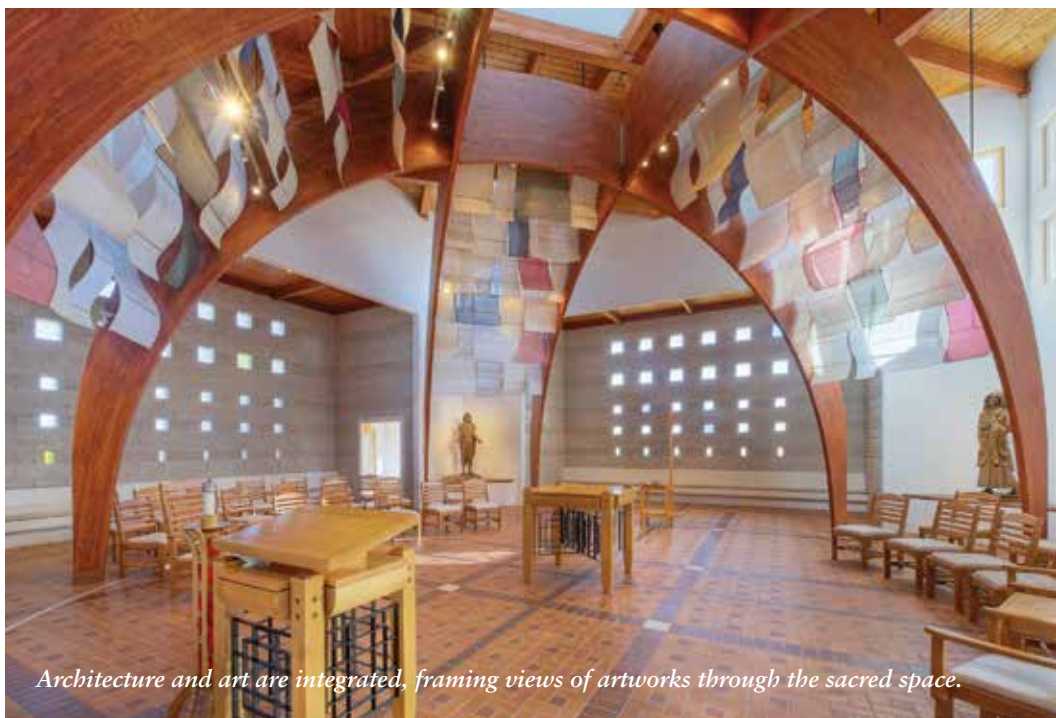


Photo: Chas McGrath

*Architecture and art are integrated, framing views of artworks through the sacred space.*

alternative expression. At one point a naturalistic association occurred with the placement of tumbleweeds in the shrine areas. This demonstrated how, when a space feels incomplete, people try to fill that void. Without question the absence of art made the church feel emotionally empty, incomplete.

When it came time to finish the shrines, the community saw this opportunity as a “bridge project,” where the art was to bridge multiple relationships. This multiplicity of purpose was to express the soul of the artist, to provide opportunity for personal reflection, to

be inclusive of the greater Church, and to be ecumenical. The overarching theme was that the art was to be experienced within the theological statement “One Mind and One Heart.” A specialist in acquiring public art for the City of Albuquerque was asked to help the community with artist selection. Thirty-five artists submitted information, 24 were interviewed, and three selected. Two female sculptors were commissioned to illustrate the women saints and a male sculptor was commissioned to illustrate the male saints (see sidebar on page 11 for list of artists).

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*'Our Lady of the Vine' sculpture is located adjacent the sanctuary.*

Photo: Chas McGrath



*The tapestry art work helps to set the mood for prayer in the sanctuary.*

Photo: Jerry Turba

These three artists were asked to work collaboratively, although none had ever done so before. Before starting their commissions they attended a half-day meditation at the church. They were asked to meditate on a mystical word that would animate each statue. They received a one-page biblical background and a one-page history of each saint in the monastic tradition. They were instructed not to compete but to harmonize with the environment and their art was to provide for both an individual and a communal experience. It was this approach that predestined the worship space to become a place for the art rather than simply acquire art for a place or worship.

The process of selection and acquisition took several years. During that time the sense of incompleteness, first felt after construction, continued even as each sculpture was installed. Fr. Francis Dorff of Santa Maria de la Vid said that as each bronze sculpture was installed, the physicality of the place changed, but the empty, forsaken emotional feeling remained unchanged. It was only after the fourth and final bronze sculpture was installed in the worship space that Dorff said that something exceptional took place. Immediately there was a spiritual connection among the statues that completed the circle supporting the community's prayer life. He explained this as being an integrative and unconscious thoughtful feeling which generates the essence of home and reverence.

My visits to the church are primarily in solitude. My emotional experience includes wonder and awe but there is also something deeper that I feel. Calmness overtakes me, I find my pace slowing, and I linger in the church. For me the atmosphere is charged with an unexplainable spirituality. I believe this experience comes in part from the attention to design details and the mystical qualities of the sculptures.

Upon entering the church, one is greeted by "Mary: Our Lady of the Vine." She has one hand at rest on her womb, with a basket of grapes in her other arm as a precursor that she will become the Mother of the true Vine. Mary greets me, and everyone who enters the space, with warmth and anticipation. A fabric art piece, titled "Dawn," frames the statue and heightens this experience of joy and gladness as I bless myself at the baptismal font. The same artist who sculpted the welcoming "Mary" also sculpted the "Madonna and Child" located in one of the four corner shrines of the worship space. This corner placement reinforces the inward focus developed by the architecture. While I am greeted warmly by a pregnant Mary, now I am welcomed by Mary offering the baby Jesus to me. Unlike a mother who protects and holds her child close to her heart, Mary's gesture makes me feel that Christ is given to me. I am mystically drawn into the sculpture by the reminder that Christ is freely given to everyone.

Early in my career I believed that the art and architecture needed only to be complementary to the liturgy and the faith community's daily and weekly spiritual rhythms. This project altered my perspective. I learned that building design and art installations undertaken in complete harmony with each other and with the liturgy evoke previously unexpected outcomes. It is the exceptional marriage of liturgy, art, and architecture that allows this to happen.

In addition to the profound emotional shifts for the community that have occurred, an appreciated aspect is that the art has transformed everyone using the space. After the art was finished, people felt differently when they were in the church; just as I did, they had a desire to linger in the space, and they repeatedly expressed having a sense of wellbeing and joy. Today, in addition to worship, the church is a setting for lectures, retreats, and contemplative prayer. A wonderful example of this experiential change is the implementation of Taizé Prayer, initiated a year ago by an outside group and now held monthly at the church. On those evenings of Taizé Prayer, the church seems transformed into a medieval chapel.



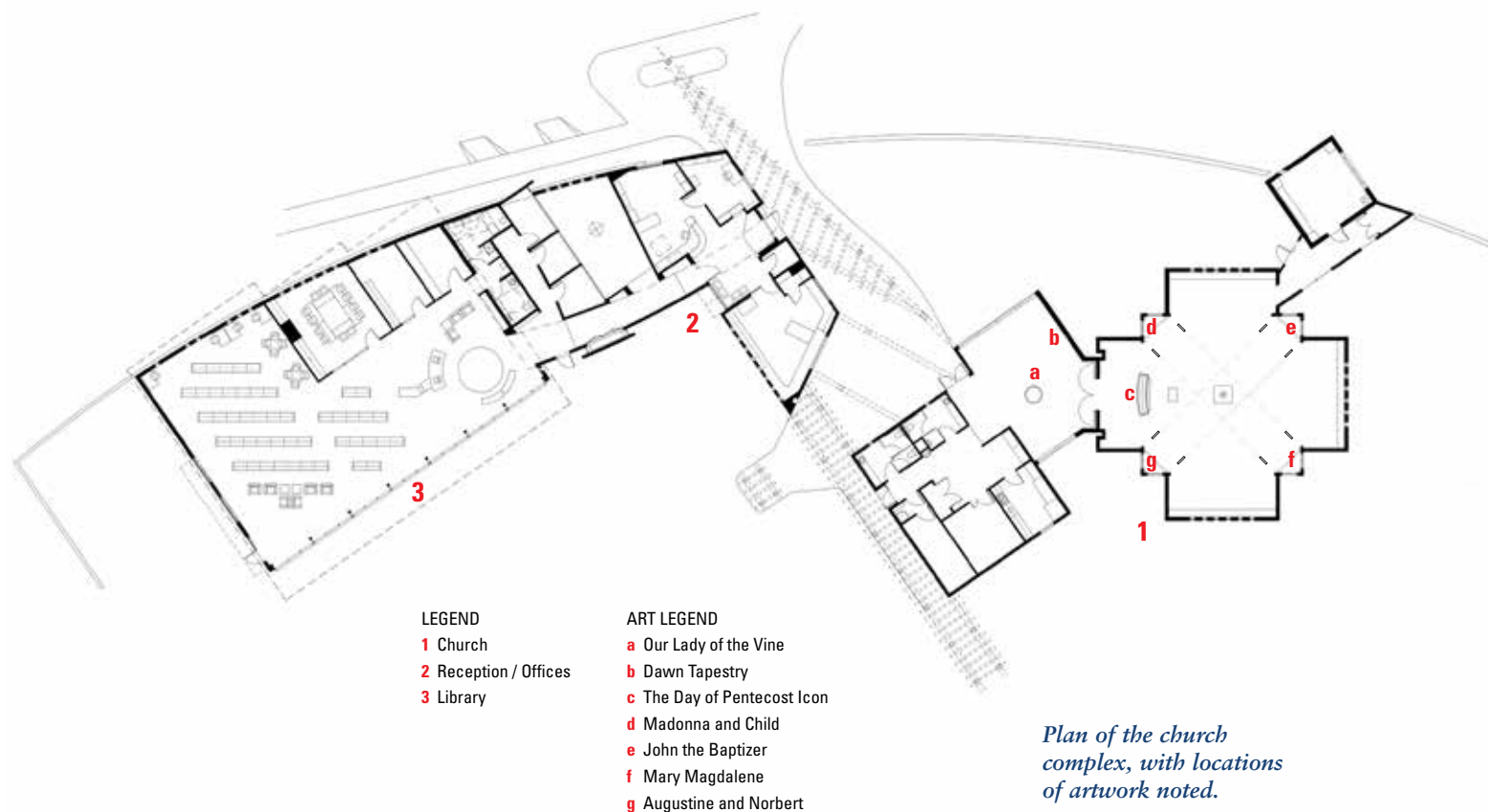


Photo: Ken Criesemer

#### ARTIST CREDITS

Susan Vertel: “Madonna and Child” and “Our Lady of the Vine” bronze sculptures

Troy Williams: “John the Baptizer” and Augustine and Norbert” bronze sculptures

Alison Aragon: “Mary Magdalene” bronze sculpture


Peter Pearson: “The Day of Pentecost” icon

Susan Klebanoff: “Dawn” contemporary tapestry

*Taizé prayer service incorporates several of the art pieces.*

Buildings can transform over time. This church transformed first physically and then atmospherically with the installation of art. Because each devotional setting was prefigured as part of the overall design, the space felt incomplete until the art was installed. The space transformed into more than just the

spiritual center for the community, but a place of refuge and contemplation for people outside of the community. A design that would welcome the art was created, then each artist made his or her own spiritual journey to create sculptures that articulated experiences of mystery, significance, joy, and peacefulness.

Why do some spaces transform into spaces of great richness while others become just an art gallery? I believe the former can happen because of the process of considering the place for art in the original design, and by the process through which the art is inspired and created. 

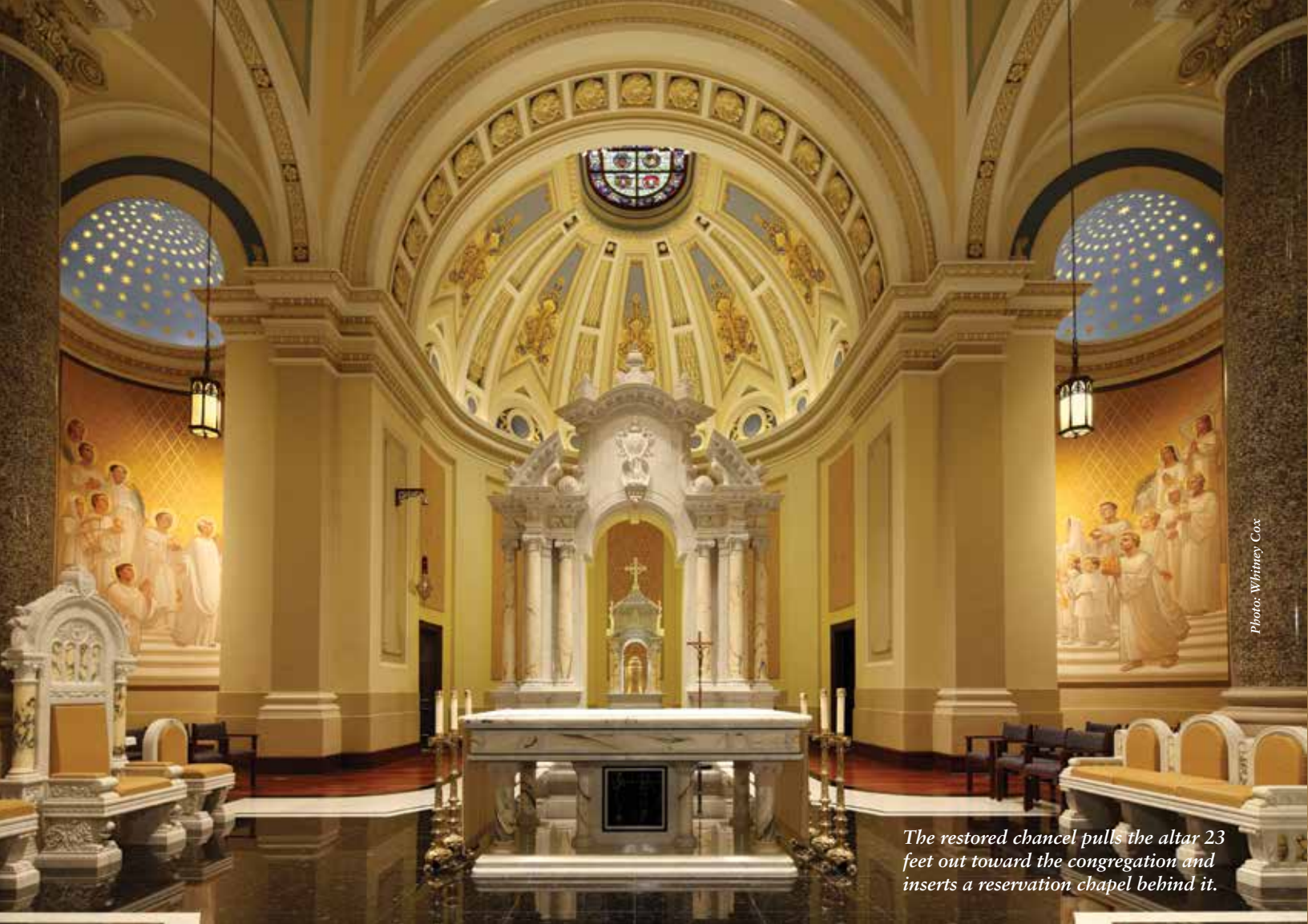


Photo: Whitney Cox

*The restored chancel pulls the altar 23 feet out toward the congregation and inserts a reservation chapel behind it.*

# Restoring a Masqueray Cathedral

Designers, artisans, and architects collaborate on an ambitious restoration

By Randall Crook

When Emmanuel Masqueray originally oversaw the decoration in the early 1900s of his traditional design for the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Wichita, Kansas, it likely included a rich color palette characteristic of Victorian-era buildings at the turn of the century. One hundred years and several renovations had been cruel to the building. A 1970s-era whitewashing and the introduction of a mishmash of marbles had taken their toll. Bishop Michael Jackels knew it was time to restore the diocese mother church to its former glory. He hired our firm, Architectural Innovations (AI), to oversee the remodeling as well as to coordinate the artisans who were commissioned to provide the teaching tools the bishop needed for his mission. An arts committee was formed and chaired by Monsignor

Robert Hemberger; it met numerous times to make the decisions on the art and décor of the church required to enhance a modern liturgy.

The cruciform church had one transept devoted to the tabernacle, with a rich mosaic triptych on the wall behind. The decision was made to move the tabernacle back to the central axis of the church. The blue and gold mosaic tile arches seemed the perfect backdrop for a Marian shrine. The existing Mary and Joseph statues were removed from the niches on either side of the sanctuary. The committee commissioned Oregon artist Rip Caswell, and a narrative was formed:

Mary would be slightly pregnant. Joseph would be beside her in a supporting role. Mary has a hand on her womb and is looking across to the other transept at her son crucified. Jesus would be uttering his words from the cross, “behold your mother.”

Caswell went to work on this dialog between the two art works, sculpting Mary and Joseph during Advent and the paschal mystery

THE AUTHOR IS A PROJECT MANAGER FOR ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATIONS AND IS A CO-OWNER OF CRUX AND FREUND CUSTOM LITURGICAL FURNISHINGS.





*Newly decorated niche incorporates an image from the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.*

Photos: Whitney Cox



*New font at the entrance to the nave incorporates a dome with an image of the Holy Spirit.*

scene during Lent. The architecture team continued on to provide a setting for the two shrines. A triptych of three arches was added to the opposite transept to match the style of the work behind Mary. EverGreene Studios of New York was hired to paint the image within the three arches. After many design attempts had been made, a photo was found from the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center that showed a light piercing the darkness. It seemed to represent the hope of resurrection the arts committee was looking for, and it served as the inspiration for the final image.

EverGreene Studios was also commissioned to design and execute an image for the dome and for the surrounding pendentives. The four Evangelists, being the pillars of the Church, would adorn the pendentives, and God the Father was chosen to adorn the peak of the dome. God's image replaced an image of the Holy Spirit. A new baptismal font at the entrance to the church was a more appropriate location for the image of the Holy Spirit. AI had plans to expand the balcony, and created a dome above the water. EverGreene artists painted a descending dove in the dome. Lighting consultants Yarnell Associates made extensive use of LED lighting, especially in the dome and in places where changing light bulbs would be difficult or even dangerous.

The niches that once housed the statues of Mary and Joseph were also painted by EverGreene Studios. Taking note of the work of John

Nava at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, the team wanted a similar theme of saints processing toward the altar; the saints bearing gifts reinforces the idea of stewardship that is a concept the Wichita Diocese wanted to promote.

The church originally had two main types of marble incorporated into its décor: a common white Carrara marble and a black-veined yellow Paonazzo marble. AI removed all the dissimilar marbles and designed new liturgical pieces that incorporated the marble that already existed in the cathedra, ambo, and reredos. All the marble and granite work in the cathedral was executed by Rugo Stone of Lorton Virginia. The existing reredos was completely dismantled and rebuilt 23 feet forward of its location in the apse. This created an intimate reservation chapel behind the reredos. The tabernacle was placed within its arch where a red onyx was removed. The base of the tabernacle is new. The carved marble reliefs of the four Evangelists were original to the church's ambo but were thought to be lost. They were found in a church in eastern Kansas and were given back to the cathedral.

The balcony, which houses the choir and includes a large pipe organ, was expanded 12 feet into the nave. This allowed the architect to bring the space up to code, with two exits cut into existing mechanical grilles within the bell towers. A gathering space addition includes an elevator and a bridge to the balcony, making the entire building





*Newly painted dome with  
God the Father at the apex,  
and the Four Evangelists on  
the dome's pendentives.*






Photo: Randy Crank

*(Inset) Interior of the cathedral before the restoration.*



*The restoration articulates the variety of decorative plasterwork, which had been painted out white in an earlier renovation.*

ADA accessible. AI designed the gathering space, using the same Indiana cut limestone used on the existing church. The attachment to the existing building was carefully detailed to match the context of both the existing church and the other buildings on its campus. A new mechanical plant in the basement of this addition supplies the HVAC for the cathedral and for a three-story school building that was remodeled for the local Catholic Charities.

The entire project took five years to plan and build. The collaboration of owner, architect, consultants, artists, and builder was exciting and humbling for this writer to have participated in. From the initial groundwork done by liturgical consultant Ken Griesemer and RRTL Architects to the coordination by Simson Construction services, all involved sought to maintain the original vision of Emmanuel Masqueray, while updating building systems, color palette, and artwork to provide for a modern liturgy. 



*Statues of Mary and Joseph, commissioned of sculptor Rip Caswell.*

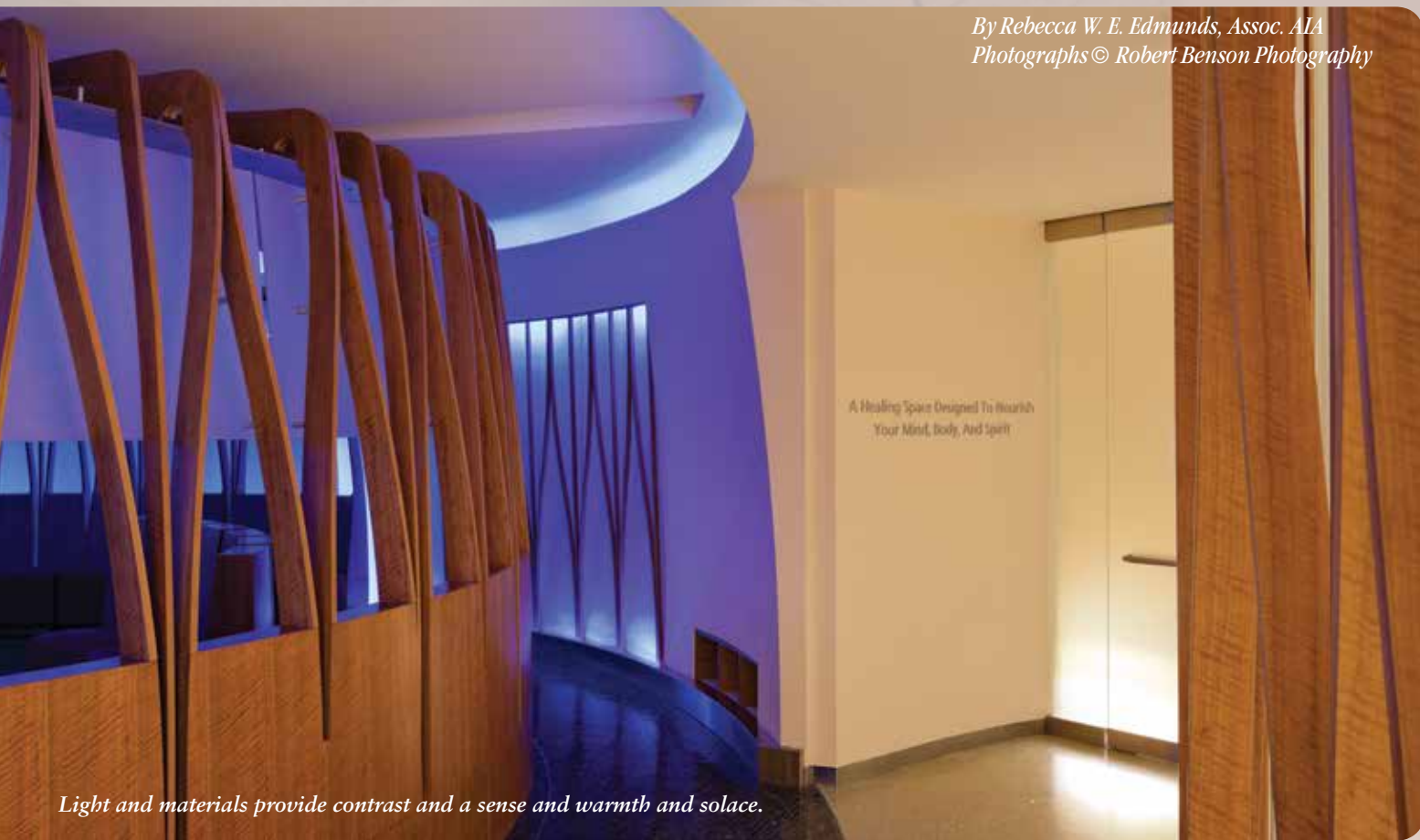
Photo: Whitney Cox



# An Oasis of Stillness

An architect and a glass artist collaborate on the Duke Cancer Center's Quiet Room

By Rebecca W. E. Edmunds, Assoc. AIA  
Photographs © Robert Benson Photography



*Light and materials provide contrast and a sense and warmth and solace.*

THE INTEGRATION OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE can be one of the greatest mechanisms for defining and transforming human experience. At the Duke Cancer Center in Durham, North Carolina, the sense of this interrelationship is first understood in the contrast between the rectilinear, institutional spaces of the Center's lobby level and the curved, organic exterior of the Quiet Room. This sacred space is situated incongruously across from a wig shop and a pharmacy, backed up by elevators and beneath public restrooms, without access to skylights or daylighting. Yet, as one leaves the Center's corridor and slips behind the translucent curved wall that marks the room's entry, the conversation between space and art begins.

At the center of the room's series of labyrinth rings that are defined by layers of translucent screens, semicircular benches, rich material, undulating sound, and changing light rises a mythical, glowing pool. The surface of this layered, circular, glass form ripples like water, changing and moving. Within the

self-contained space's shifting light and sound, the piece presents multiple readings—water, ice, core, fountain, heart, centerpiece, and even table—and creates a subtle animation of light amidst the room's embracing enclosure and inherent stillness. The result is a meditative oasis for individuals, families, and staff facing emotional, life-changing events.

The Quiet Room's five-foot-diameter, layered-glass installation, by artist Kenneth von Roenn, is the product of the long-term relationship of artist and architect. Von Roenn of the Kaiser/von Roenn Studio Group in Miami, Florida, and Turan Duda, FAIA, of Duda Paine Architects in Durham first met in graduate school, where the artist sought to advance the placement of art and space, and where Duda was already expanding his understanding of design's impact on human experience. From there, the two have collaborated on projects as diverse as the Bank of America Corporate Tower Lobby ceiling in Charlotte, and "One Market" in San Francisco. Von Roenn approaches art as an intricate balance between functional issues and aesthetic desires, particularly in public art. For Duda, design provides the opportunity to transform individuals and

communities, but his approach is in itself artistic, relying on form, thematic consideration, and a dedication to technical process. Together these individuals bring a reverence for the transformation possible at the intersection of art and architecture.

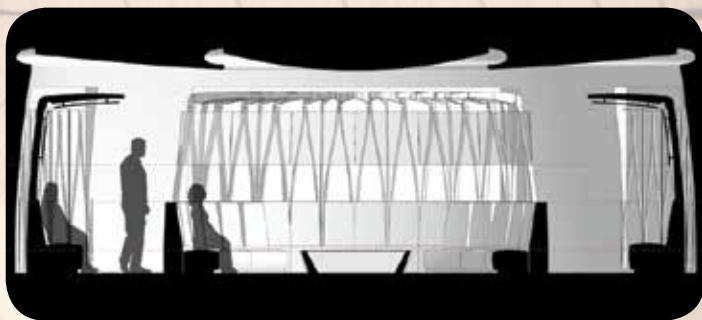
The Quiet Room transcends the traditional notion of a health facility chapel to address the many levels of human experience involved in cancer care. Health and safety regulations prohibit a fountain in a hospital environment, yet Duda's vision was to provide a central focal point for the space that would offer the calming influence of water. Bringing an understanding of care that results from design for health, wellness, and medicine, Duda wanted to evoke nature and mystery with a piece that wasn't static, but constantly changing and moving. "Something to lose yourself in," he says. "Time is an essential part of both treatment and healing, so I also wanted the room's experience to transcend and echo the passage of time." Lighting designer Francesca Bettridge of Cline Bettridge Bernstein Lighting Design, New York, utilized programmable LED technology to infuse light into the room's architecture and to provide a sense of shifting time. Hidden

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*The fountain is the focus of the space, which constantly changes color.*



*Section through the Quiet Room.*

*Background of this page:  
Detail of leaf motif used in the translucent panels.*



*The fountain's surface seems to ripple, while  
the floor tiles suggest a glistening plane.*

fabric-wrapped acoustical panels, bench upholstery, a curved ceiling, and acoustical treatments within the surrounding structure cocoon the room's visitors from outside distractions and envelop occupants in sounds tailored to the lighting programs. Variations of light and sound, which visitors can easily select from a panel by the door, mimic the changing light across the day and the seasons. Layered

circumferences of translucent panels and seating, which vary in height and texture, create a sense of multiple spaces within the room, and accommodate a variety of individual and group configurations. The presence of Von Roenn's art as the centerpiece of this environment had both to provide a strong central focal point and to further the variety of distinct experiences the room accommodates.

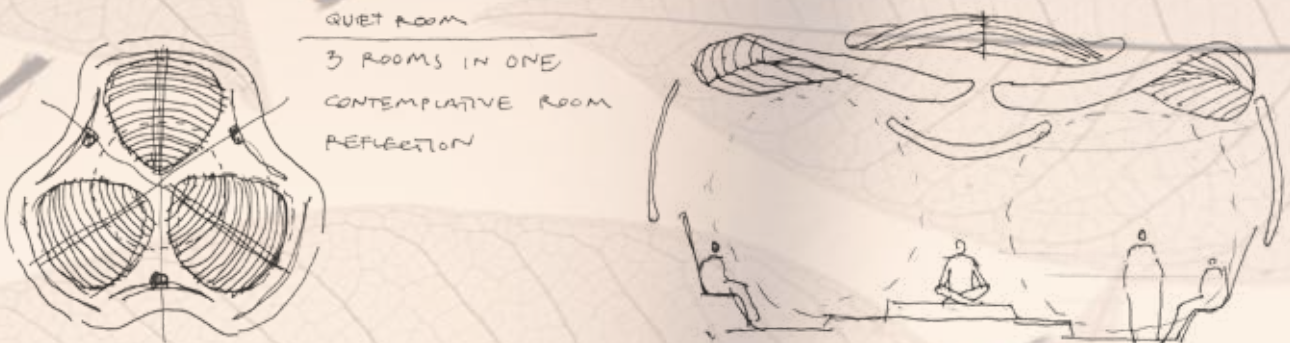
Essential to the creation of the Quiet Room was the collaborative spirit of the artist and architect, which involved both an understanding of the power for art and architecture for transcendent human experience and an awareness of technology's role in that experience. Technology became an indispensable part of the collaboration. The team first used three-dimensional modeling to create the





*The room offers a variety of carefully calibrated spaces for sitting and standing.*


*Conceptual sketches of the three rooms in one, an enveloping space.*



fountain's shape electronically, allowing the computer to generate a basic cone geometry. Computer technology also removed the core and divided the remaining perimeter ring into 48 individual layers. Each layer had a unique pattern in the electronic model. To release heat and transmit sound from the core, the form required vents. Voids inserted randomly between solid pieces of glass in each layer create a pattern at the fountain's perimeter. Clear and frosted glass alternate randomly with the voids, and produce an enhanced sense of movement and texture. Von Roenn worked closely with Duda Paine's design technicians to verify the pieces, which he used to fabricate into glass elements in an intricate system of stacked glass to allow the needed spaces between the individual pieces.

Duda's vision also included rings rippling out across the piece's surface from three water drops. The rings reflect how human relationships overlap and are interdependent in the process of healing and care. Von Roenn's insight led to a gentle eroding of this surface at the

cone's edges to mimic the natural action of water. Again, the surface was electronically generated. The shadows of a photograph of rippling water were used to create topography for the piece's surface. A kiln board fabricator used a negative of the topography to produce a form for the molten glass that would become the surface of the piece. This surface was laminated to a smooth piece of glass to create a reflective, water-like finish.

The Quiet Room's success as a sacred space lies in the dialogue and the interplay between architecture and art. Together, the collaboration and contributions of these two endeavors engage occupants at every level—visually and acoustically—in an envelope that is both calming and uplifting. The room's experience is complete, whether one is alone or with others, yet it allows occupants choice in a situation where much is beyond their control. For the patients and staff of Duke Cancer Center's Quiet Room, the effect is comforting, rejuvenating, reflective, and spiritually healing. 

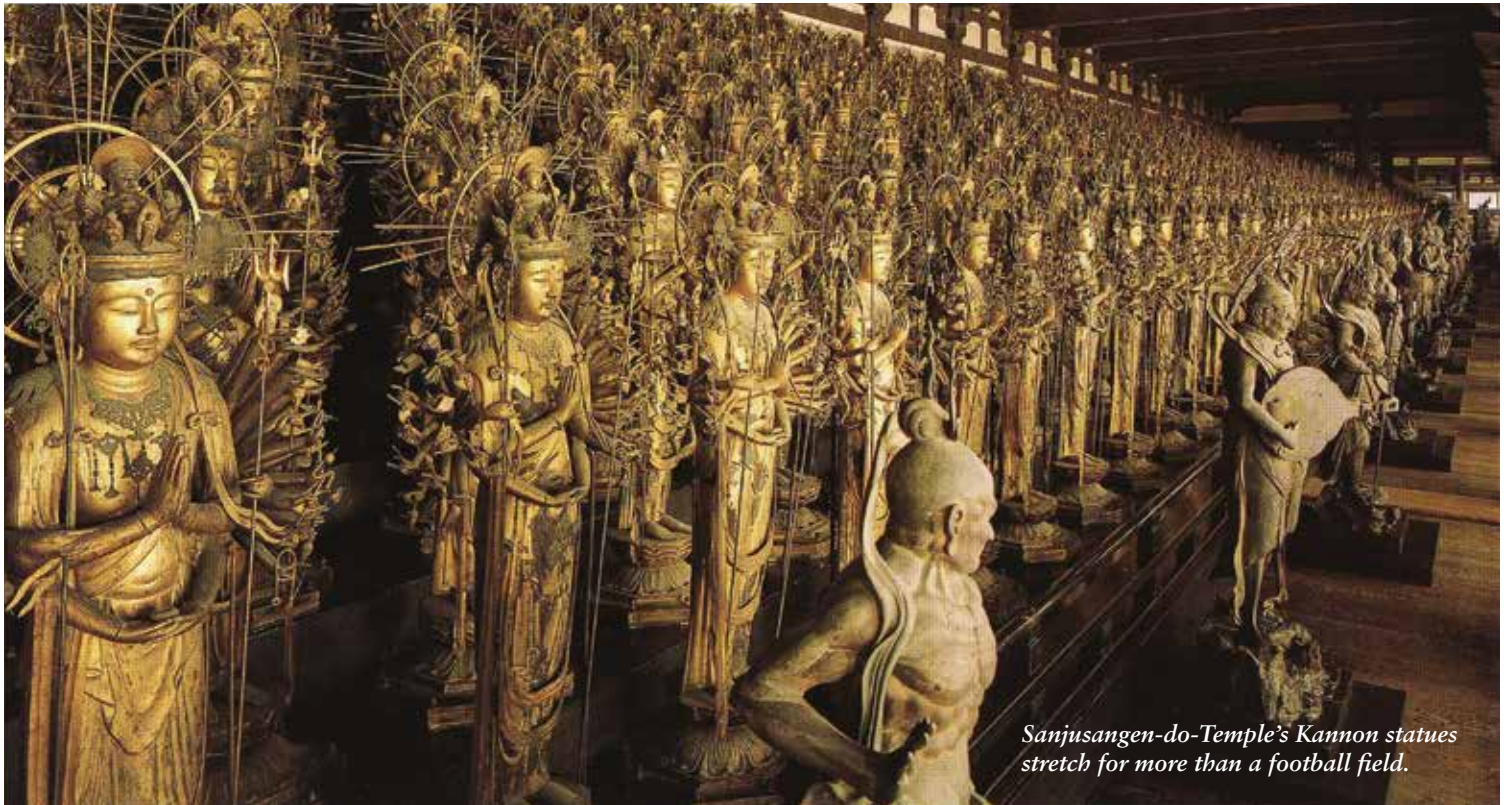




*Seating materials and screens exude a sense of a calming forest environment.*



# Sacred Ancestors: Images of Unity and Peace



*Sanjusangen-do-Temple's Kannon statues stretch for more than a football field.*



*Left wall of Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, with its rank of saints.*

The Sanjusangen-do-Temple in Kyoto is one of the largest, longest temples in Japan, if not in the world: it is the length of an American football field, and is home to 1,001 statues of Kannon Bodhisattva carved in cypress and covered with gold leaf. They surround the sitting statue of Kannon Bosatsu, the lord of compassion and the goddess of mercy. This statue is the work of the renowned Japanese sculptor, Tankei.

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The veneration of Kannon dates to the first centuries, CE. In the late-17th century many Christians in the Nagasaki region of Japan made statues depicting Mary the Mother of God as Kannon. These two Mothers of Mercy served as a link between very different religious traditions. They were manifestations of goddesses who treat everyone as equals, just as a tender and compassionate mother would her children. No wonder they are so revered.

Paying homage to religious heroes and heroines is nothing new. The veneration of and the supplication to sacred ancestors exist in almost every culture, in every hemisphere. Different societies have used a range of sacred art—paintings, icons, sculptures, mosaics, tapestries—to remind them of their sacred ancestors. Many religions have created rituals to tap into their presence, strength, and wisdom. These practices emerge from an instinctive belief that deceased relatives and friends and larger-than-life goddesses and gods, saints and sinners, martyrs and prophets, are still at work in the world and have powers to influence life.

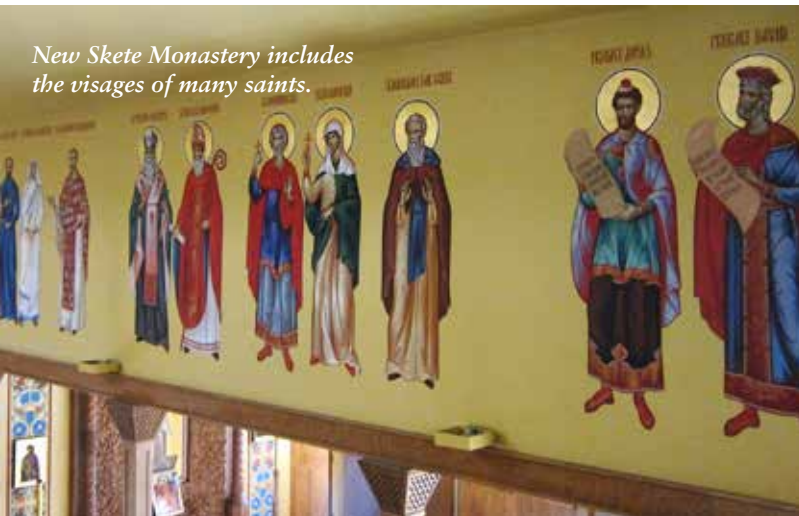
There is a new interest in some religions in re-engaging with sacred ancestors; some worshippers are designing environments to include depictions of these spiritual members. A close look at these images reveals also a concerted effort to eliminate barriers that continue to classify people. In this article I present just a few notable works of architecture, ancient and new, that make a place for works of art that attempt to reinforce the collective strength and wisdom of sacred ancestors.

## BASILICA OF SANT' APOLLINARE NUOVO

The Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy, was constructed in the Byzantine style by Theodoric between 493 CE and the early 6th century. Originally intended for Arian worship, the building was converted to a Catholic church and dedicated to St. Martin around



*New Skete Monastery includes the visages of many saints.*



*Detail of New Skete Monastery's collection of saints, including Ramsey and Pope Paul VI.*

560 CE. It was rededicated again in the 9th century to Saint Apollinaris, the first Bishop of Ravenna.

The church is a treasure trove of outstanding mosaics. The oldest ones date to the end of the 5th century, the Theodoric period, and depict scenes from the life of Christ. The remaining mosaics date from the Catholic period. The middle band in the nave consists of 32 figures of prophets, 16 on each side of the space. Along the lower band, on one side of the nave, is a procession of 22 male and female saints moving from Theodoric's Palace to the image of Christ in the east end of the church. The saints are labeled with their names. On the other side of the church is a procession of 26 martyrs attired in white robes. In 1995, when the church was put on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the building and the art were described as illustrations of the "fusion between the Western and Eastern styles characteristic of the late 5th and early 6th centuries."

Today, theological, ecclesiological, and liturgical tensions continue to divide churches in Eastern and Western Christianity. The images of the saints and martyrs in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo remind us that in the house of God there is space for all people regardless of religious tradition.

#### HOLY WISDOM TEMPLE, MONKS OF NEW SKETE

A "skete" is a small monastery under the aegis of a larger one. The monks of New Skete in Cambridge, New York, began in 1966 as a small



*Photos to left by author; photo to right by David Sanger*

*At St. Gregory of Nyssa, worshippers dance around the altar, under the dancing saints.*

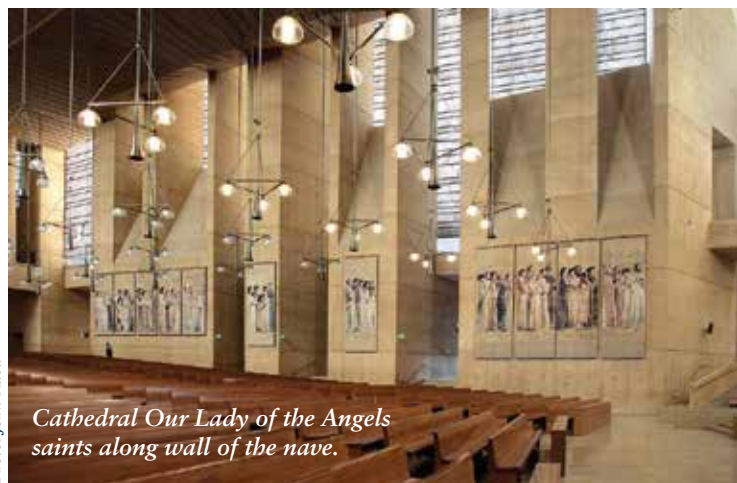
group of Byzantine Rite Franciscans within the Roman Catholic Church. In 1979 the monastery joined the Orthodox Church in America as a stavropegial monastic foundation.

The members of New Skete are tireless advocates of the reconciliation and understanding of all Christians in the East and West. They offer hospitality to peoples of all faith traditions. The members of the New Skete communities (monks, nuns, and "companions") have created works of art, architecture, prayer texts, and music that resonate with their simple lifestyle and their vision for Christian union.

The first church at New Skete was dedicated in 1970 to the Transfiguration of Christ. The present larger Church of the Holy Wisdom was designed by Brother Marc and completed in 1983. Along the clerestory level of this church are murals or images depicting saints and non-saints from both Western and Eastern Christianity. The Western images include Francis and Clare of Assisi, Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, Pope Paul VI, and Edith Stein. They stand side by side with the traditional Eastern saints.

Deacon Jacob Ferencz, a Polish immigrant belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church, created the saints in procession. He painted them at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, between 2000 and 2003 and then mounted them in the Holy Wisdom Temple. The Christ with other figures on the east wall were painted directly on the wall by the late Brother Sergius.





*Cathedral Our Lady of the Angels  
saints along wall of the nave.*



*Detail of a group for four saints from the Cathedral Our  
Lady of the Angels.*

According to their Web site, the New Skete communities of men and women want to demonstrate possibilities that are open to everyone living in peace and harmony, for the benefit and welfare of all. The inclusive renderings of the holy men and women in this temple reflect New Skete's spirit of hospitality for all peoples from both Eastern and Western Christian traditions.

#### ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

The people of St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco also seek to bridge cultures by bringing people together. The community describes itself as "made up of children and elders, families and singles, straight and gay people, lifelong Christians, interfaith couples, converts and seekers ... creating a community that shares the unconditional welcome offered at Jesus' table."

In 1995 the community built a new church designed by Goldman Architects (San Francisco). It features two main halls dedicated to its worship practice. In one area, the assembly sits to celebrate the word of God. In the other space members of the assembly stand around a centralized table to celebrate the Eucharist. And, in keeping with the spirit of Psalm 150, the community dances! High above on the walls of the rotunda of this room are depictions of "Dancing Saints" in step with the worshipers below. According to the church, "As the congregation dances around the altar, the saints dance above, proclaiming a sweeping, universal vision of God shining through human life."

Created by iconographer Mark Dukes with the people of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the 2,500-square-foot iconographic mural depicts traditional and non-traditional saints from diverse cultures and countries. There are 90 larger-than-life saints, four animals, stars, moons, suns, and a



*St. Gregory Nyssa grouping of saints.*

12-foot-tall dancing Christ. Historical figures are shown: King David, Teresa Avila, Francis of Assisi, as well as more contemporary ones such as Malcolm X, Anne Frank, and Margaret Mead.

Richard Fabian, who founded St. Gregory of Nyssa with Donald Shell, describes the icons in the church. "Our list includes people who crossed boundaries in ways that unified humanity, often at their own cost." The Dancing Saints in this church are invitations to young and old people from all walks of life to dance with them in the hope of unity and peace. It is a dance of possibility and opportunity.

#### CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS

In the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church we read: "What is the church if not the communion of saints?" (No. 946) José Rafael Moneo designed the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, which was dedicated in 2002. Originally, there were no plans for including sacred imagery in the main nave of the cathedral. As the art consultant I proposed that the cathedral would be incomplete without images of sacred ancestors. The idea was quickly embraced by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of the Los Angeles archdiocese and by the cathedral's art committee.


John Nava, a highly respected artist from Ojai, California, was chosen to paint the realistic images using a fresco technique. After consultants pointed out some acoustical concerns in the nave of the cathedral, it was decided that tapestries would be a more practical and aesthetic medium.

Nava proceeded to collaborate with Donald Farnsworth of San Francisco to develop a method of making digital files in order to weave the tapestries precisely duplicating Nava's original art. The tapestries were woven by Flanders Tapestries in New Bruges, Belgium.

There are 25 tapestries in the cathedral depicting 135 saints and blessed ones well known to the many different cultural groups that make up the archdiocese. They each average about 18 feet tall and 7 feet wide and together cover about 340 square yards of wall space.

This inclusive collection consists of men and women of all ages, races, occupations, and vocations from around the world, a mix of people from the first centuries of Christianity with modern-day folk. Twelve unidentified characters including children represent the anonymous holy people in our lives. Nava said he constructed the images so they would "look like people we know rather than using a stylized form."

All the images in the tapestries are positioned to face the altar table and ambo at the east end of the cathedral. This posture is reminiscent of the procession of saints and prophets in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna.

What do these depictions of sacred ancestors in different places of worship have in common? They are expressions of radical hospitality, proclamations of inclusivity, and seekers of common ground. In each example we find an artistic statement married to the architecture that celebrates something to complement and expand the doctrinal and dogmatic teachings of different faith traditions: that all people, regardless of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic class are equal in the eyes of God. 



# DIVINING THE ART OF THE DIVINE

*By David Pfeifer, AIA*

I have often thought about the question, What makes something sacred? As one matures through a career as a design professional or via any other vocation, one's skills, processes, and techniques are honed and refined. You become more adept and proficient at what you do through practice; your work is heightened to a fine craft and a professional level. And these questions: What makes something sacred? What makes something inspirational? What makes something stir the spirit within? are all tied to time. The answers are revealed only through the tread of human experience.

Sometimes one locates the sacred in the discovery and the celebration of human talent, where those without vision might never detect it, and exercising it as a form of prayer. Such is the sacredness of the work of the Artesanos Don Bosco, based in Baltimore, Maryland, a group of missionaries whose purpose is to "preserve the livelihood of the skilled individuals who craft these masterworks of art." They do this through the creation of beautiful liturgical art pieces. The missionaries train the poor local people of the Peruvian Andes in woodworking, stone carving, metal fabrication, and glass making, providing them with skills to support their families. All of the proceeds from their work are reinvested into their apprenticeship and charity programs. The leadership of this organization is deeply spiritual, following the path of the 19th-century missionary St. John Bosco, who was committed to educating disadvantaged youth to better their lives. Artesanos Don Bosco describes itself as "...an association of artists who work in cooperatives, dedicated to their art and their community. These artists, among them sculptors, painters, carpenters, produce furniture and religious pieces for export and for Peru. They are committed to helping their neighbors by building homes for the most disadvantaged people in the town." The cooperatives allow the graduates to remain in their villages while earning



*Rearados of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was created by Peruvian artisans.*

*Photo by Jay Dorniny*

THE AUTHOR IS A PRINCIPAL IN DOMUS STUDIO ARCHITECTURE (DOMUSSTUDIO.COM). BASED IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, THE FIRM SPECIALIZES IN RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE.

an income and improving life for themselves and their families. You can learn more about Artesanos Don Bosco on their Web site: [sacred.artesanosdonbosco.com](http://sacred.artesanosdonbosco.com).

The collaboration with these artists in the design process for Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in San Diego, California, was a rich and fulfilling experience. Our firm, with





*Detail work of the reredos being carved in Peru by a native artisan.*


me as the project architect for the new sanctuary, Deacon Robert Holgren as the parish's voice, Mark Heying and Mike Bonetto with Anthem Sacred Furnishings, and Mirko Codenotti, the lead artist for Artesanos Don Bosco, all lent our particular skills, vision, and voice to the refinement of the artwork. The process that unfolded led to solutions that were not personal but collective, deeply spiritual, and tailored to the parish family. Ideas would build, be tested, and refined. There was a melding of design, liturgy, tectonics, and materials that was inspirational and moving. There were many multi-day sessions when we immersed ourselves in the design of the liturgical art pieces; these sessions were at the same time invigorating and exhausting. There was unseen energy in the room that drove our team, guided our hands, and moved our hearts to create the pieces that transformed this sanctuary into a spiritual space. Members of the team have spoken about those sessions; all share the common thought that the Holy Spirit was with us on those days to help us do the work.

Photo by Artesanos Don Bosco



Photo by Artesanos Don Bosco

*Artisans shoulder the corpus for the crucifix of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.*

I believe that, working collaboratively with Artesanos Don Bosco and Deacon Holgren, we all discovered that the difference between craftsmanship and art: the divine touch of God, inspiration delivered by the Holy Spirit. We were blessed to experience and share this divine touch. We believe it has manifested itself in the art and detail of the new worship space for Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We all believe and trust that those who see the art and the space will be stirred, inspired, and will experience the sacred. 

## Special Theme Issue: The Sacred in the City

For the first time in human history, more people on the planet are living in urban areas than in rural places. What is the impact on sacred architecture and art? How do religious environments accommodate the urban-based congregation? How do places for worship adjust with increasing urban density, or changing neighborhoods in the city? Where do we find evidence of the sacred in the city?

**Send your projects (built or unbuilt), article ideas, and questions to:**  
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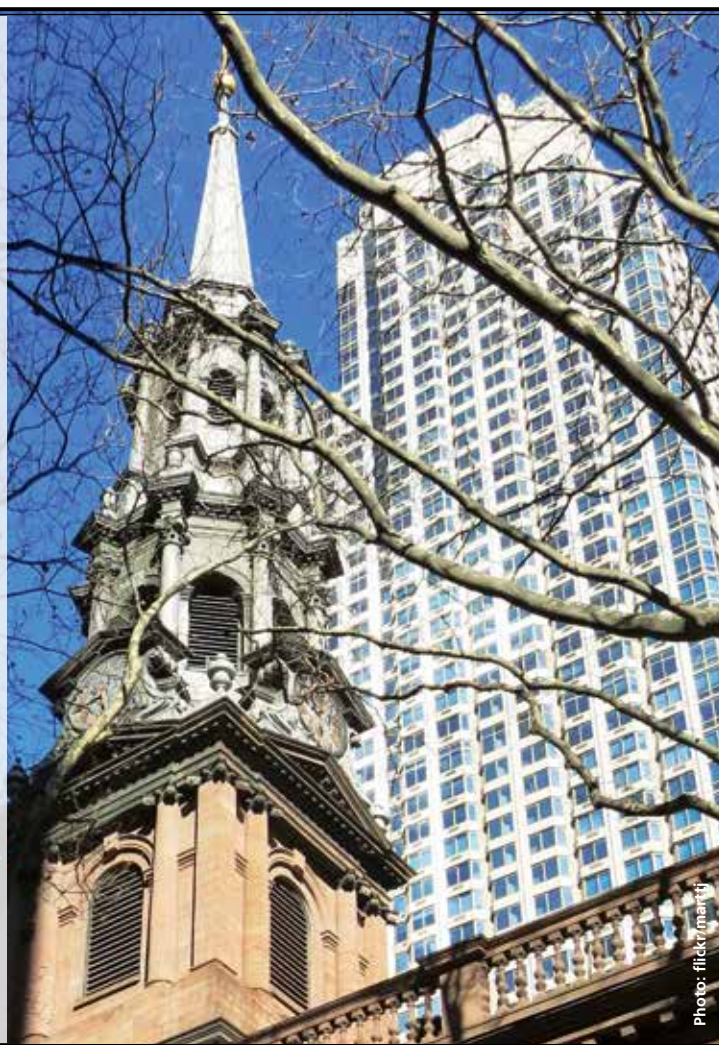


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# NOTES & COMMENTS

## BOOK REVIEW: A MODERN CONVENT WITH DEEP, MEDIEVAL ROOTS

*An Architecture of Ineloquence: José Lluís Sert's Carmel de la Paix*, J.K. Birksted, Ashgate, 2013, 146 pages, \$104.95 (cloth)

Why write a book about José Luis Sert's Carmel de la Paix convent in the rural village of Mazille, France? J.K. Birksted, who teaches at the Bartlett School, University College London, argues that this is the least known of Sert's works and the most scantily documented. Also, because of the intense involvement of the client in the design, Sert's authorship has been questioned—a criticism that Birksted seeks to resolve. Birksted also delves into what makes a Carmelite architecture, and the medieval Carmelite practices of union with God achieved through female bodily experience. He asks: Does the character of this building, designed with the intense involvement of the sisters, make it “so extreme as to be beyond architectural propriety?” without really addressing the extremity or the propriety. But he convinces the reader that this building is an important one in Sert's oeuvre.

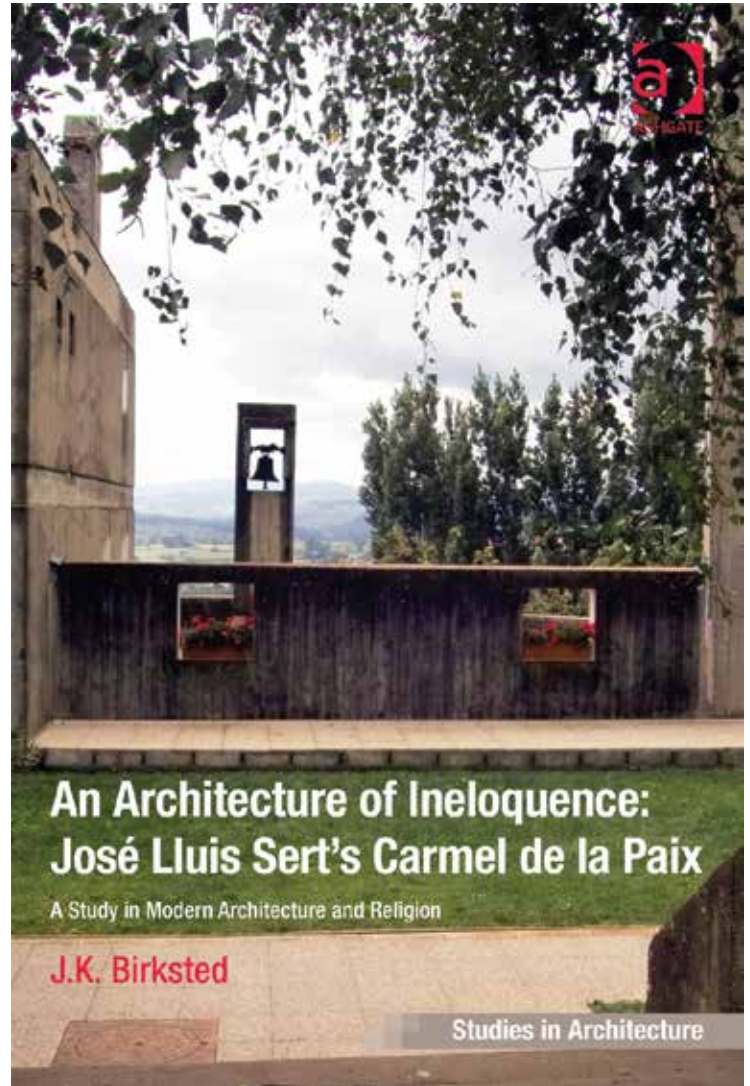
Although engaging, Birksted's account of the project's history and his interpretation are marred throughout the book by maddening repetitions and misspellings. A good editor would have helped. Many of the photos are dark and (amazingly!) there is not a single finished floor plan of the convent in the entire book, which makes Birksted's descriptions of spaces and their adjacencies difficult to follow and impossible to verify.

The religious notion most prominent for Sert's client, the Carmelite nuns who commissioned him in 1967 to design their convent on a hillside near Cluny, is that of the sacredness of the “ordinary.” Birksted contends that architectural historians and critics over the years have dismissed this project from serious consideration precisely because they find it so ordinary. It runs counter to their expectations that religious architecture should be spectacular, extraordinary, or at least, as he writes, “something a bit more obviously ‘religious.’”

Birksted also suggests that the convent is off-putting to architecture critics and historians because a research visit requires one to enter the conceptual world of a pre-modern belief system. This argument is unconvincing: critics and historians of religious architecture around the world seem not to have been deterred in their pursuits of understanding and writing about the connections between architecture and belief systems, pre-modern or not, shared or not.

The nuns were explicit in their desire for what they described as a building that would exhibit the ordinarieness of their daily existence. The Mother Prioress described this as a desire for a spatial order that would accommodate “...ordinary human beings going back and forth.” The nuns wished to avoid any symbolic religious references in the convent because they saw them as obstacles to the direct experience of God's “Presence.” But the chapel was to be anything but ordinary, with a design that would accommodate a range of liturgical movement and ritual, and the placement of sacred objects (such as the altar and the tabernacle). There was also a desire on the part of the nuns that the convent contain large spaces for community and conversation (during those times when they broke their silence), which the 400-year-old convent they then inhabited could not accommodate. The exchange of requests and clarifications between the architect and the client continued throughout design and construction, and was, as Birksted describes it, “intensely dialogical.”

Birksted notes that the emphasis on communal space—particularly the hexagonal shape of the chapel—is evidence of the impact of Vatican



II, concluded just a few years before the design of the Carmel commenced, with its emphasis on a gathered community engaged with the world. Birksted successfully puts to rest any criticism that the Carmel convent is not wholly Sert's design. The architect's prolific sketches of architectural details and furniture designs, even the simple wooden doors and their latches, attest that he was involved in every part of the project, and that it was a collaborative undertaking with the Carmelite sisters who exerted their own wishes, to which Sert responded. He considered the convent the most personally meaningful project he had designed.

Ultimately, Sert and his client produced an architectural work that Birksted describes as “inelloquent,” a word he uses to convey muteness, blankness, emptiness, devoid of the symbols and pomp that one typically associates with religious architecture. This is as the nuns wished their convent to be—simple, spare, ordinary, ascetic—in order to prepare oneself for the divine *Présence de L'Époux* (Presence of the Heavenly Husband), encountered through the frame of nature that surrounds the convent, and with which this important work of architecture seems to meld so seamlessly.

~ Michael J. Crosbie



## NOTES & COMMENTS

### NEW TABERNACLE FOR NORWICH CATHEDRAL

Originally erected in 1897, St. Patrick Cathedral in Norwich, Connecticut, underwent several renovations that resulted in a somewhat bland and diluted aesthetic. The current Bishop of Norwich, Michael R. Cote, had a clear goal in mind for the restoration: give the interior a splendid new setting bridging the unique artistic concept of the original design with the liturgical needs of the cathedral church and the devotion of diocesan congregates.

Part of achieving that goal was the creation of a customized tabernacle (*photo right*) by Granda Liturgical Arts. Standing 48 inches tall, the tabernacle is sited on the back altar in the sanctuary. The design follows the paradigm of the House of God and is modeled on the central and northern European churches built during the Gothic period. Accordingly, the steeple is placed at what would have been the crossing of the nave and transept rather than in the front or in the corner of the facade. The exterior of the tabernacle door features a Eucharistic symbol relief of the Pelican feeding its young, while the interior panels reveal two angels prayerfully engaged in adoration and holding incensing thuribles. The graceful figure in the steeple is a small statuette of Our Lady with Child.

The tabernacle is entirely gold-plated inside and out, with an interior that features engraved walls and polished gold floor.

The completed cathedral restoration was dedicated last July.



### JAMES AUSTIN NEAL, FAIA (1935-2014)

JAMES AUSTIN NEAL, FAIA, FOUNDER OF NEAL PRINCE ARCHITECTS IN GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA, PASSED AWAY ON FEBRUARY 22 AFTER A LONG ILLNESS. HE WAS 78.

After graduating from Greenville High in 1959, Neal pursued his life-long dream of becoming an architect. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Clemson University where he was active in campus activities. After receiving a commission and serving in the Army, he returned to Greenville and practiced with various architectural firms. In 1969, he opened a one-man architectural practice, which eventually became Neal-Prince and Partners, a 30-person firm. Noted for its contribution to religious architecture, his firm designed approximately 300 churches,

including the Billy Graham Chapel at the Cove in Black Mountain, North Carolina, and Bethany Bible College Chapel in Sussex, Canada. In 2010, his office merged with LS3P, a Charleston firm founded by a Clemson classmate and friend. With this merger the company grew to more than 200 employees in six cities in North and South Carolina.

Active in his profession, Neal was past president of the Greenville Council of Architects and involved in AIA activities at the local, state, and national level. In 1997 he was elected to the AIA College of Fellows. The consummate professional, he was on the national board of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art & Architecture. As an avid supporter of Clemson University, he was often a visiting professor and lecturer.

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# WHY PROFESSIONALS MATTER

A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE *NEW YORK TIMES* ascribes the following statement to owners of a newly constructed home: "Next time [we] will forego general contractors, architects, and real estate agents, which added another \$18,000 at the outset."

Embedded in that statement is a basic question that remains unanswered: Did costs associated with these traditional players in the construction industry represent nothing of value? Or could it be that the value associated with those services – cost savings, quality, smooth progression of work, beauty – went unnoticed?

*Dwell* magazine undertook a study relating to design influences on affluent people, which revealed some curious and disturbing results. While art and architecture have gained importance in the mainstream, turning to architects for ideas, programming, or related pre-design and development services came in at just 9 percent. Internet and glossy magazines took the lead, by nearly 10-fold.

In an age of explosive access to information, it often seems as though clients believe they are at least as informed as professionals. But information does not equal knowledge – or experience – and we do ourselves a disservice by not making this point abundantly and universally clear.

## THE VALUE OF VISION AND EXPERIENCE

Vision is critical, and it plays out in important ways, not necessarily as ego, but rather as a more durable, humanistic, and holistic form of expression. Vision helps us achieve multiple design ideas that address singular goals; right-size projects; enmesh elements of environment, energy, performance and codes; and establish an appropriate team of contractors, technicians, and artisans. There are myriad building-related issues of concern, such as weather events (floods, hurricanes, tidal surges, earthquake), environmental (energy use, vibration, radon, asbestos, lead, mercury, noise, oil contamination, electromagnetic fields), indoor air quality (molds, bacteria, off-gassing) and pests (vermin, termites, pigeons). Tools of the trade used in the identification, analysis, and eradication/

correction of issues such as these have been developed for professionals trained in their proper use and interpretation.

Knockoff gizmos and gadgets, now widely available to the general public, are often misused or misunderstood, leading to inaccurate information and conclusions that can induce fear and lead to hasty, impulsive, or rash choices. This easy access can instill a false sense of knowledge that becomes an impediment to a more reasoned approach recommended by professionals who are able to put gathered information into its proper context. Professionals matter by separating symptoms from causes, focusing resources on real issues, and developing appropriate solutions.


Similarly, building plan software and apps, while beneficial as tools for engaging in pre-design discussions, have become confused with the role of the architect in the design and development of a real estate project. Without training, experience, and the insights that come with it, planning proceeds but misses the target relative to local codes, zoning, environmental impact, orientation, daylighting and shading, volume, scale, form, circulation, accessibility, materials, systems, and maintenance – all things that contribute to good design. Add to that constructability and the economic benefits of a well-developed program, and it's clear that an architect's involvement truly matters

THE SACRED AND THE MUNDANE  
WALTER SEDOVIC, FAIA, LEED AP,  
AND JILL H. GOTTHELF, AIA, FAPT

well beyond simply stamping drawings and filing permits.

## VALUE ENGINEERING, VESTED INTERESTS, AND VOLUNTEERISM

Recent studies also suggest that owners are increasingly turning to contractors rather than to architects to scope or "value engineer" a project, inadvertently leaving the door open to supersize projects with scopes that are based more on what is stored in a contractor's warehouse than what is in the best interest of the owner or project. Value engineering, once a team effort that sought to find the most economic solutions without compromising quality, now has the taint of a pejorative, where durable materials and systems are swapped for cheap (and unequal) counterparts. These choices often represent low performance, high maintenance, and an endless cycle of replacement.

Finally, while volunteerism at religious sites has a long tradition, and is essential and greatly appreciated, it is not a substitute for professional involvement. One example – now gone viral – is the botched fresco restoration by an untrained volunteer in the Spanish town of Borja (*photo below*). It illustrates just how wrong things can go. The key lies in knowing when and how to engage volunteers or lay people, but not seek to circumvent the cost of a professional where it truly matters. 



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The quintet sits silently, off center of the pulpit, awaiting their cue from the conductor standing near the first pew. Baton lifted, she quickly makes eye contact with the five, launches the downbeat, and the first notes of Handel's Water Music flow from freshly polished brass. The familiar notes start with measured rhythm, close, near to the group, but at the first crescendo rise quickly over the rows of listeners and quickly bounce from the barrel vaulted ceiling, toward the stained glass lit with candles, and sideways to rest on wool caps and coats askew in the pews. Each breath the trumpeter draws finds a space in the slide of the trombone, and the notes begin to layer over each other as they rise and fall together, in sync and not.


The shape of the music bends effortlessly to the frame of the score, bouncing or drifting, major or minor. The frame, while static, does not restrict the music; the structure allows for the push and pull, the swoop and dip of the A flat as it seeks to find its own moment of understanding. Going it alone, that note shudders in its solitariness; without the frame of a score it lacks sustaining direction. Within the embrace of the staff and time signature, each note draws its courage to soar or settle, to rise when called upon, or move low to rest fluidly, interpreting and reflecting.

My eyes drift along with each note, following them as they go from ceiling to window, some of them coming to rest on my fingers. As a musician, I can feel them coming towards me, the slow air currents of the church emboldened by the sounds. I think of myself as a person of

faith, yet I rarely go to a Sunday service. Like the A flat, my solace is found more in the community of the frame. I am most comfortable in a frame that breathes, that allows for the tattered corners of my notes to have life. The structure seen and unseen is ingrained, an envelope that holds the past in its crease and the future in its opening. I may raise my eyes or lower my lids while seeking what it is that I do not yet comprehend, whether purpose or direction.


It is in the winter that I understand how my earliest memories of space and frame continue to provide sustenance even when I don't realize it is sustenance I seek; the first candle light service, the first prayers, the first recitations and yes, the notes that bounce from ceiling to floor. Handel's composition encapsulates this winter-feeling, the score that holds the darkest season offers a glimmering hint of rebirth as notes climb to the piece's higher octaves. Because the frame exists, because the score exists, the freedom to grow, to learn, to reject, and to renew exists. Without the frame there is no starting place. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Faith... is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods." Water Music, with its enduring melody from its coda repeating effortful passages to high trills and moments of *lentamente*, musically illustrates the enduring yet changing moods of faith. 

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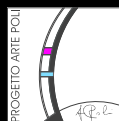


Marble candleholder  
Cathedral of Bari



Stained glass windows  
Church in Milan

Background photo: private oratory - Fort Worth, TX



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