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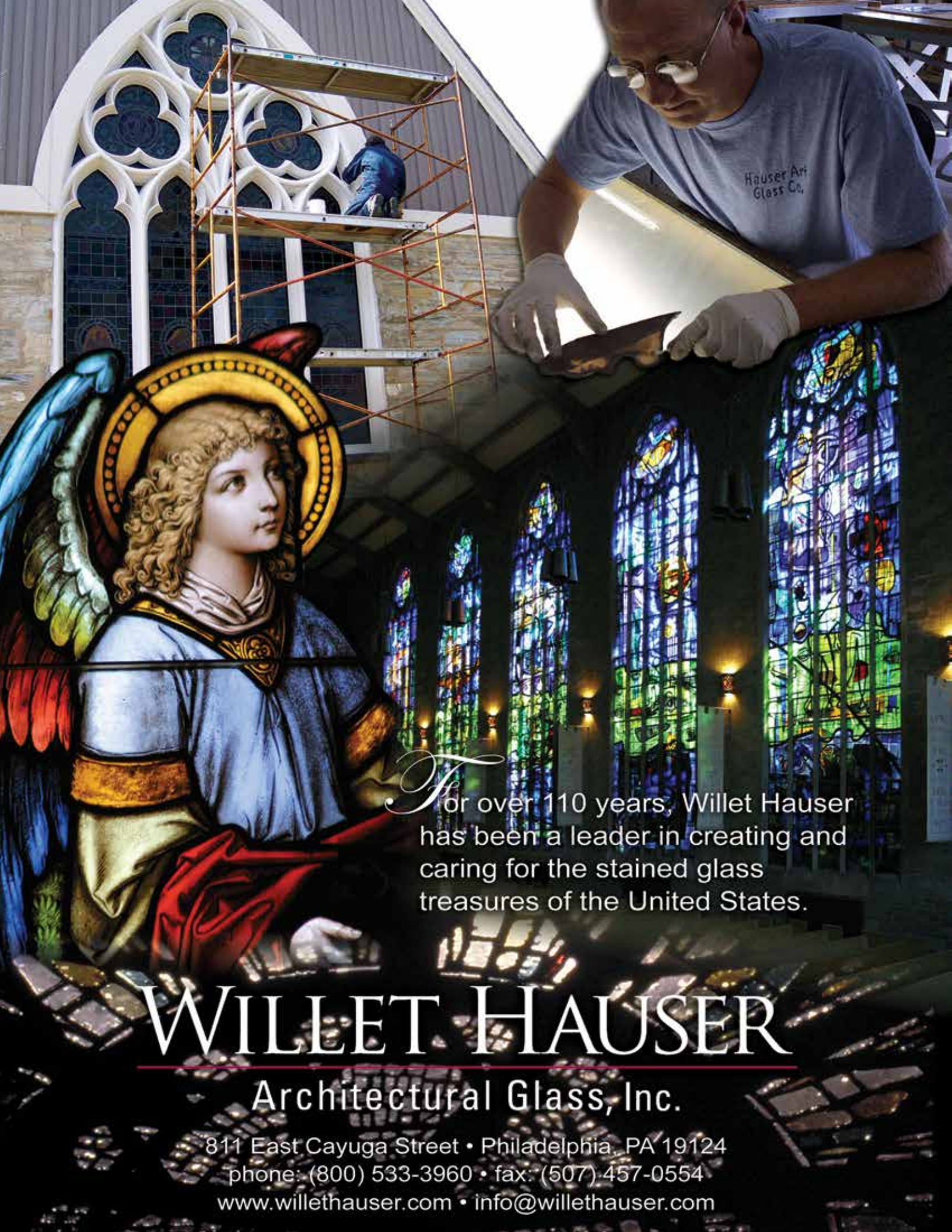
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Annual  
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NEXT ISSUE

Theme Issue: Materials of the Sacred

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### ON THE COVER:

View of the ark at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue Chapel in New York, by FXFOWLE, one of the 27 winning projects in the 2017 International Faith & Form/IFRAA Religious Art and Architecture Awards program. Coverage of the winners starts on page 7. Photo: Chris Cooper.

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# WHEN IS A MOSQUE NOT A MOSQUE?

EDITOR'S PAGE \* MICHAEL J. CROSBIE


**T**he *Guardian* newspaper recently carried a story about a brand new mosque just being completed on a prominent site in Tehran.

The new mosque is a low-slung building, designed by Fluid Motion Architects, built next to a modern landmark, the City Theatre. As it now nears its opening, the new mosque has come under attack from, according to *The Guardian*, "Iranian hardliners" who are "refusing to recognize it as a mosque, complaining that it does not have a minaret, or a proper dome, and that it is dwarfed by the theatre." Funding for completion has been cut off, leaving the building's fate uncertain.

The way the architects explain it, the mosque design is reflective of values found in the Qur'an: "We tried to design this mosque with modesty, simplicity, and good faith, and not a mosque which would get its pride from its structural height," according to *The Guardian* article. They add that the design is in keeping with the tradition of the earliest mosques, which were simple structures. "A mosque is a place for worship," note the architects, "and the Qur'an doesn't dictate a special structure for it. It's what it contains that is important."

The importance of "what it contains" was on display for a group of graduate architecture students and myself when we recently visited a mosque in Connecticut as part of our research for the design of a mosque as an architecture studio project. We were warmly welcomed to the mosque, attended the Friday prayer service, and listened to the remarks of a visiting Imam, Asif Hirani, who spoke about the material

distractions in one's life that compete for our attention to those truly important things—the realm of our faith and our interactions with family, friends, and strangers. Hirani observed how we allow material things in our lives to overtake us, goad us to compare ourselves to others—a better watch, a fancier phone, shiny rims on our car. Such comparisons never have a bottom. It reminded me of a sandwich-board sign that I saw on a New Orleans sidewalk a few years ago; it said: "Comparison is the thief of joy," a quote attributed to Teddy Roosevelt. The Imam's point is that such distractions are not only ultimately empty, but they make us blind to the very treasures before our eyes.

What is a mosque without a minaret? What is a church without a dome? What is a temple without a fine, silver menorah? Perhaps they are not buildings that compare to those of the past. Maybe they are settings of architecture and art that focus on the nurturing of community and acceptance, no matter their "missing" pieces. We all have a tendency to over-value the things of our childhood, the way we remember the religious buildings we grew up in. This is what people mean when they say that they "want a church that looks like a church." It is a wish founded on nostalgia, and a comparison: how we remember the way it used to be, compared to something new, something different. This awards issue has quite a few projects that don't look like the masjid, the church, the temple, or the synagogue you grew up in. Maybe because they are unfamiliar, they invite us to look behind the façade at what's important inside. 

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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St Patrick's Cathedral, Harrisburg PA

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# The 2017 Religious Art & Architecture Awards

By Michael J. Crosbie




Photo: Nell Redmond

A TOTAL OF 27 PROJECTS representing the best in religious art and architecture were selected from a field of approximately 120 submissions. This year saw nine submissions in the category of “Adaptive Re-Use/Re-Purpose,” which was instituted two years ago to recognize the growing trend in sacred architecture to adapt existing facilities, or to transform secular buildings into religious facilities. Members of the jury remarked on how this category seems to be yielding some of the best work they’ve seen. Pointing out the continuing shrinkage of main-line Protestant congregations, jurors speculated that churches are more focused on getting the most out of their existing spaces, in some cases changing the function of these spaces to serve new, more community-oriented needs.

In fact, the jurors detected a strong expression of community-based sacred space—not only for worship and ritual, but also for serving the needs of the surrounding community through outreach. This often manifests itself in less “formal” spaces, as the jury described them, facilities with spiritual spaces were intertwined with more secular uses. Congregations are thinking harder about smaller, adaptive urban spaces. As one juror described it, “There seems to be more emphasis on what the role of the community is, and the sharing of liturgical space, and that is a breath of fresh air.”

A related aspect of many of the award-winning projects is their creativity in solving complex problems with not a wealth of means, often due to the fact that budgets are tight. Several of the projects “took nothing and made it into something,” several jurors explained. Many of these projects documented meager construction costs with an air of pride. Jury members were also impressed with simplicity in design, which they interpreted as part of a growing social value of voluntary simplicity in lifestyle—de-cluttering consumer-oriented lives. This was seen in many of the international submissions, which seem to be growing in number each year. These international projects are almost exclusively designed with a modernist sensibility at a variety of scales. The range of submissions that explored a traditional design idiom seemed narrower, although one is represented among the winners in this issue.

The 2018 awards program opens for submissions (at [faithandformawards.com](http://faithandformawards.com)) on April 1, 2018. 

*The 2017 Faith & Form/IFRAA Religious Art and Architecture Awards Jury, left to right: Fr. Gilbert Sunghera, SJ (liturgical design consultant); David Roccasalva (artist and jury chair); Carolyn Peterson (architect); Rev. W. Joseph Mann (clergy); Thomas Barrie (architect).*

## 2018 for Call Entries

### Faith & Form/ IFRAA International Awards Program for Religious Art & Architecture

**Award Categories**

**Religious Architecture** New Facilities • Renovation Restoration • Unbuilt Work Adaptive Re-use/Re-purpose

**Sacred Landscape**

**Liturgical/Interior Design**

**Religious Arts** Visual Arts • Liturgical Furnishings • Ceremonial Objects

**Student Work** Architecture • Arts • Design • Landscape

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Raleigh, NC

**Architect /**  
Stephen C. Pickard  
GFF Architects  
Dallas, TX

**Liturgical Designer /**  
Christine Reinhard  
Thornridge Studio  
Naples, FL

**Architect /**  
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## Dynerman Architects, PC

Calcagnini Contemplative Center » Bluemont, Virginia







“Contemplatives in Action.” This phrase captures the essence of Jesuit intent perhaps more than any other. At the core of the teachings of St. Ignatius Loyola and the traditions of the Society of Jesus are spiritual exercises that are the basis of the ritual of retreats within this order. Georgetown University’s program of retreats is quite varied; some are religious (covering all faiths represented at the university) while many retreats are secular. Historically, the university has rented multiple venues to serve this broad agenda. In 2004, Georgetown purchased land in rural Clarke County, Virginia to build a center to house all its retreats. The Calcagnini Contemplative Center serves the 20 retreat programs at Georgetown University.

Organized around two quads, the Contemplative Center comprises multiple buildings. The entry court, chapel, dining hall, community building, and an existing, circa-1885, farmhouse, bound a public courtyard with westerly views to the mountains and Shenandoah Valley. The cabin ranges center on a smaller and more private court. This Contemplative Center serves the core mission of Georgetown University unlike any other facility in the school’s 225-year history.

#### Jury Comments

*The buildings, landscape, and materials all work strongly together. It is simple, well presented, and feels like a clear and consistent architectural language, carefully controlled site plan, and a very simple parti. The community building with its folded roof works well with the other buildings. The scale of the spaces created for individuals is the result of very subtle planning and attention to vernacular architecture.*

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*Photographer*  
**Alan Karchmer Photography**



## Ricardo Yslas Gamez Arquitectos

RLJ Chapel » Jalisco, Mexico



This chapel is part of a complex that includes a vacation house and an events venue, besides the chapel itself. It is situated inside a ranch, and the land's natural topography was incorporated into the architecture to preserve the existing vegetation. Besides concrete and steel, stone, tile, and wood from the region were incorporated.

The chapel has a 2,772-square-foot access patio near the roadway that is built primarily with local stone. The chapel can be accessed either from the outside or the inside of the ranch. The access from the inside is also used to connect it to the events venue in the same complex. The access patio leads to the sacristy,





the chapel interior, and restrooms. The main chapel space is defined by two large concrete walls and a steel roof that houses a choir, 12 benches to accommodate 72 people, and the altar area--a total area of 3,183 square feet. In the chapel interior, simplicity was sought by introducing only essential furnishings.

The concrete walls also enclose a 1,950-square-foot exterior courtyard with views into the chapel. A steel cross hangs in the middle of the courtyard, suspended from the walls. At the back of the courtyard, a quarry stonewall was geometrically designed to accentuate the depth of the space in which the cross appears to float.

#### Jury Comments

*This chapel is distinguished by a beautiful, focused space, minimizing the use of usual interior furniture. The truss roof creates an incredibly powerful energy on the interior. The architecture is a careful blend of modernism and vernacular. The floating cross in the courtyard becomes a major element visible from the interior behind the altar. It is spatially sophisticated and exquisitely detailed.*

*Architect*

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*Photographer*

**Jaime Navarro**



## Walters & Cohen Architects

Vajrasana Buddhist Retreat Centre » Walsham le Willows » Suffolk, UK



The London Buddhist Centre sought to refurbish and extend its retreat center in rural Suffolk. The goals were to increase capacity from 34 to 60 people, create a new meditation room, and improve accessibility. This was achieved within the footprint of dilapidated farm buildings that were removed at the start of the project.

As the first purpose-built Triratna Buddhist retreat in the UK, the designers had no precedents to consult. They educated themselves about Buddhist practice and retreats, then worked out how to express

this through the architecture. The design team attended a weekend retreat and had detailed discussions with the client before starting design work. Having understood the needs of those on retreat and of those operating such a facility, the architects consulted the Buddhist community to fine-tune the program.

The client's vision for a serene, beautiful center is reflected in the scale and quality of the new buildings and a series of inter-connected courtyards that create a strong sense of place. Close collaboration

with the landscape architect resulted in a landscape scheme that contributes to the aesthetic of calm contemplation.

Simple materials and local techniques create a balance between a modest architecture and the reverence of the spiritual shrine room and courtyards. The use of charred timber is a response to the rural context and adaptation of the typology of the Suffolk barn. The project had a limited budget from donations and bequests. The construction cost was \$4.7 million.



### Jury Comments

*The iron spot brick and charred wood has a wonderful scale to it. Through a series of open spaces the natural materials are animated, which all work to put you into a frame of mind to be contemplative. The filtered light in the temple space is very sensitive. The composition of the campus is nicely controlled. The landscaped courtyards create a world within. The meditation hall uses subdued materials and light, suggesting a truly contemplative place.*

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## Alejandro Beutell, Arquitecto

Stella Maris Chapel » El Pris, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain





The small, irregularly shaped, and sloping site is on a rocky headland next to the old pier. The church's design is intended to complement the façades of the nearby houses. The challenge was to integrate the new volume without imposing it.

The chapel is a single cylindrical volume with a diagonal cut. The space rises in height, as one approaches the altar. Adjacent to the chapel is a small prayer space that resembles a cave, as well as the sacristy. The arrangement of the volumes creates open space between them both, forming an entry patio protected from the strong winds.

A single monolithic bank projecting from the wall provides seating around the altar table. Within the wall is incorporated the Stations of the Cross composed of 14 stars. Above the concrete altar and apse is a skylight with blue glass, creating an ambient atmosphere. The rough plaster finish is "tiroliano" (made of crushed volcanic stones from the island) and contrasts with the concrete. Overall the material palette is austere and simple, lending the chapel an ascetic character.

The statue of the Virgin del Carmen, the patron saint of sailors, presides in the space and is located in the north end of the plan--a metaphor of the guide for sailors: Stella Maris, or Star of the Sea.

### Jury Comments

*This beautiful chapel is respectful of its site and fits with it perfectly. The entry stair leading from a forecourt is reverential. The building is very Corbusian in its use of mass and surfaces, textured walls and ceiling, while the stars have a Matisse quality. Light is judiciously manipulated with skill. The plan is very simple and elegant.*

### Architect

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## archimania

Garden Chapel Pavilion » Memphis, Tennessee



One of the nation's largest faith-based hospital systems planned to add a new cooling tower amidst a variety of aged buildings in an urban, land-locked environment. The campus has virtually no outdoor respite amenities and only a tiny, windowless space for reflection and prayer for its almost 10,000 associates, caregivers, and ambulatory patients. The hospital had scheduled a 1970s concrete cooling tower for costly demolition and removal. The architect suggested re-purposing

this once nationally heralded engineering achievement into a work of architecture—a chapel pavilion. A massive amount of embodied carbon exists in the well-crafted Brutalist concrete structure. Its oversized cylindrical openings naturally lend themselves to the needed program of spiritual connection between the user and the open sky above. The project reveals an architectural solution while also making a statement about respecting and repurposing the nation's aging infrastructure.



### Jury Comments

*The jury applauds the idea of reusing an industrial space in a truly imaginative way. Moving the chapel out of a hallway and into a beautiful public space is very creative. It becomes so much more than a chapel. The volume and verticality of the space because of its former use as a cooling tower is exciting. The foresight in the use of this functional building has the potential to inspire other people to reuse these kinds of buildings in a variety of new ways. Good stewardship and very sustainable.*

*Architect*

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## Dake Wells Architecture

Liberty United Methodist Church » Liberty, Missouri



With a long history in the city of Liberty, this Methodist congregation had outgrown its current campus on a prominent hilltop in the city. At 18,000 square feet, this project is the initial step to relocate the church to a 32-acre site that supports and encourages growth of the church membership. With an emphasis on serving young families through a contemporary worship style, the project provides a new, flexible worship space combined with classrooms for children and adults. The central gathering area offers spaces for building personal relationships while framing views of the nearby neighborhoods. This framing of views reminds the congregants of their ultimate mission to serve their community.

The church has a strong history filled with tradition and symbolism, not the least of which is the Cross and Flame. Researching the origins of the symbol and finding connections to Renaissance depictions of the Holy Spirit led to the development of an architectural expression of biblical scripture, Acts 2:3. Although the expression is largely symbolic, it served to unify a congregation wrestling with the change required to reach people in a new era.

White terra-cotta shingles clad the upper portion of the exterior, representing the up-swept wings of a dove. The shingles never touch the ground, hovering above masonry, symbolic of earth, with colors of red and orange representing elements of fire from the Holy Spirit. In the entry court, the colors are most vibrant as one enters below the Methodist insignia and the historic bell from the congregation's original church.

### Jury Comments

*This design presents a strong form in the landscape, appropriate especially when viewed from a distance across the plain. The brilliant white of the building and its materials break down the scale and adds interest in light and shadow. There is a restrained palette of elegant materials.*

#### Architect

#### **Dake Wells Architecture**

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## Harding Partners

### New Faith Baptist Church Worship Center » Matteson, Illinois



This new worship center for a growing African-American congregation represents a new approach in the design of large, contemporary, multi-media-based religious facilities by integrating daylight to elevate the worship experience. Daylight is incorporated into the space while preserving the quality of the theatrical lighting and digital projection system. The curved façade is screened with a suspended sunshade that changes profile in response to solar orientation. The foyer beyond is filled with light diffused through the sunscreen and skylight.

In the sanctuary, daylight fills the space through the coffered ceiling. Wood accent panels, rich fabrics, and daylight bring a sense of warmth to the space. Absorptive materials and an engineered sound system deliver natural-sounding acoustics that reinforce the connection between the congregation and the message. The worship center demonstrates that the experience in a large religious space can be elevated through a connection to the natural environment

and the careful composition of technology, sound, color, texture, and light.

Green strategies, including the horizontal sunshades, rain-screen wall systems, high-efficiency mechanical equipment with demand ventilation and a heat-recovery system, reduced annual energy costs by 45 percent.

#### Jury Comments

*This project has a great expression of the structure, and its transitions through various sized members. This gives it a lacy texture, which humanizes the scale of this mega-church. The worship space exudes warmth. All of these elements represent a commendable application of design to a building type that has traditionally not emphasized architectural quality.*

#### Architect

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## Epstein – Principal Designer Andrew Metter

### Park Plaza Synagogue » Chicago, Illinois

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**Ballogg Photography**



The program required a new synagogue worship space and socializing area for an existing Jewish senior living facility. The project develops two types of spaces: The linear/secular galleria, (utilized as a social/exercise space) and the concentric/ sanctuary. The secular and sacred are separated by an 18-inch-wide exterior space, connected only at the synagogue entry portal. Similarly, the synagogue is separated from the existing building by a 30-foot-wide courtyard. The galleria glass tubular form slides through, and is embraced by, the screen-wall of the synagogue volume. The screen-wall is open to the sky and the south, providing shading, privacy, and security, while affording an abundant amount of natural light to the inhabitants.

The design takes the form of nested boxes that convey eternal values in Jewish culture. “Community” is symbolized in the outer box of hard metal, conveying the idea of unity and commonality of purpose. The glass box conveys “tradition.” It is protected by the metal skin, because it is fragile, and also is the “glue” which holds all together. “Faith” is communicated in the fabric box, which consists of a moveable, woven cascade-coil gold metal curtain, the individual links of which express the idea of the responsibility of individual faith. When the curtain is drawn, it wraps and defines the space with the same gesture as one who dons a Jewish prayer shawl. This creates the intimacy necessary for worship, while forming a powerful communal space.

Utilizing layered facades and extruded materials, the project creates a sense of intimacy and continuity that reinforces the idea of prayer as an extension of the individual soul.

#### **Jury Comments**

*This is a very skillful expression of the tradition of exacting detailing in Chicago architecture, a skillful interpretation of Chicago modernism. It is very Miesian in its composition and use of materials. The gold mesh screen gives it an ethereal quality. The idea of the “nested boxes” lends great coherence to the volumes and how they relate to the existing facility.*

## Shoji Oshio + UA architects

### Tegami-Dokoro» Funabashi, Chiba »Japan

This project, subtitled “The place to write a letter for praying,” provides a setting in a cemetery for writing to the deceased as a form of prayer or communication. According to the designers, “Writing a letter is the good way to communicate with one’s whole heart.” The letters are stored in the cemetery to deliver to the addressee after the writer has passed away, or during the memorial service.

The space for letter writing was designed to achieve a feeling of calmness. The construction is based on the traditional building style “Azekura-zukuri” for its appropriateness in the storage of letters.

Tegami-dokoro visually floats above the ground to communicate the sense of a letter’s feathery lightness. Slender steel columns support the building above the undulating topography. The wooden interior of the “Azekura-zukuri” style appears to hold people’s hearts gently between the two floating horizontal surfaces of the floor and the ceiling, like two sheets of thin paper. Included in the building is a lounge space for visitors to rest. The ceiling is plastered with reflective stucco so that the greenery of the trees is reflected to create a space connected to the natural environment of the cemetery.

#### Jury Comments

*This building has an ephemeral quality unlike heavy funerary architecture. It seems to occupy an in-between space—a place to write prayers to one’s deceased relatives and friends. The simple palette of materials is elegantly detailed with a spectacular level of craft. The building exudes a warm austerity and poetic rationalism.*



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#### Contractor

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#### Producer

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## L.E.FT Architects

### Amir Shakib Arslan Mosque » Mukhtara Village, Shouf Mountain, Lebanon



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*Conservation Architect/Owner's  
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**Ieva Saudargaite,  
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The design brief included the restoration to the original form a masonry-vaulted structure, and the grafting onto it of a minaret, next to an 18th-century palace. Fulfilling the liturgical properties of the small mosque is nominal, achieved through the simple re-orientation of the existing space towards Mecca with the carpeting layout, opening the opportunity to expand the design to shape its context. In response, a new civic plaza was created in what was previously a parking space. The frontage and the uncovered roof of the mosque are turned into public spaces with seating, a fig tree, drinking water fountain, and an ablution area that is fed by the historic water canal serving the palace.

The new mosque envelope is formed out of steel fins framing the existing structure into an ever-changing silhouette. Seen from one side the fins stack to form a solid surface of an affirmative mosque envelope. Looked at straight on, the envelope is rendered transparent, merging with the terracing landscape background. Rather than hermetically enclosing the mosque through the typology of the dome and the cube, the extroverted curved concave and convex planar geometry shapes multiple exterior readings. The structure armature is slowly populated by ivy vegetation, increasing its integration with its natural ecology.

On the inside, a minimal intervention involved a “white-out” of the surfaces of the vaults, using Aleppo lime mix, and the introduction of a new skylight that cuts the vault to register the direction of the qibla wall. The polished stainless steel mihrab produces a depthless focal point.

With the folding of the mosque's steel envelope, a three-dimensional typography is created: the words Allah (God) on the minaret and Al Insan (human being) at the base. This is also the structural drawing of the envelope, blurring the edge between ornament and armature, meaning and essence.

#### Jury Comments

*The new work makes a very clean, modern expression of itself, a new function within the project. It frames views into the project, and views of the mountains beyond. Going to a different material, light metal juxtaposed to stone is quite nice. Makes a strong statement.*

## atelierjones, llc

Bellevue First Congregational Church » Bellevue, Washington



One of the oldest churches in an exurban city outside Seattle, Bellevue First Congregational Church was established in 1896. In the 1990s the church's social service and congregational needs outgrew their existing building, and in 2013 the congregation sold their well-located property in downtown Bellevue. Reinvesting, only a half-mile away, the church acquired a low-rise suburban 1970s office building to transform into their future space of worship and community outreach. The adaptive reuse of a tired commercial building into a spiritual space not only commits to ecological sustainability by reusing an existing building, but is a twist on the broader trend of converting existing spiritual spaces into commercial uses.

Creating awe out of a mundane, multi-tenant office stucco and steel-frame building was the brief. Within the grid of the two-story building, a new form of the sanctuary was inserted, pushing out existing walls/roof, creating presence facing the street. Delineation between the northern interior wall and ceiling was collapsed by using cross-laminated-timber panels (CLT), as structure and finish material. The 37-foot-high CLT panels behind the chancel appear as an irregular, folded plate structure — a backdrop of rich interplay of light, shadow, and the warm texture of the Canadian White

Pine of the white-washed CLT panels. Shafts of skylights and 20-foot-high narrow side windows (concealed behind the visible space) dissolve the edges of the 40-foot-tall space with high northern light. A new bell tower, landscaped plaza, and pathway at the street edge are scaled to announce the new use to the vehicular-oriented context. Designed and built within 30 months, the building was completed for a highly competitive budget of \$160 per square foot.

### Jury Comments

*The CLT wall is just phenomenal, a beautiful folding wall expressed on the exterior. It is a fantastic reuse of an existing building. The campanile works well to announce the project on the street, creating a gateway. The combination of the folding wall and the way light is introduced into the space is beautifully done.*

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CLT Fabricator  
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## FXFOWLE

Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue Chapel » New York, New York



The Ramaz Lower School began a phased campaign in 2009 to renovate and reprogram their existing 63,000-square-foot facility. During the summer of 2011, a fire destroyed the roof and interior of the adjacent 110-year-old Kehilath Jeshurun (KJ) Synagogue. While tragic, the fire presented an opportunity to resolve space constraints that had emerged in the renovation. The design team worked with the congregation and its leadership to re-envision and revitalize the synagogue and the Lower School. The addition of an 8,000-square-foot educational and fitness wing above the synagogue allowed the existing below-grade gymnasium to be repurposed and transformed into the KJ Chapel.

The chapel is a modern composition of space and objects that reimagines the traditional synagogue at an intimate scale for quiet meditation, connection, and prayer. The space is inspired by ancient texts that describe the holy ark as a simple, acacia wood box, housed in the tabernacle, and erected under God's command in the Wilderness of Sinai.

The project's signature design element is its deep blue ceiling. Its pyramidal form creates an asymmetrical soffit that can be read as both "roof" (a traditional "house of gathering") and "celestial sky," referencing the night sky in a forest clearing. At the top of the soffit, a luminous opening creates a skylight effect, symbolizing God's presence. An ethereal eternal light (*ner tamid*) is suspended above the ark. The Jerusalem stone wall fragment behind the ark is an iconic symbol of the sacred Wailing Wall. The material also reminds congregants of the project's below-grade location amongst fragments of history: renewal built upon strong foundations.

### Jury Comments

*This project takes a challenging, nondescript gymnasium space and creates a spatially rich architecture. The restrained palette of materials works well, reinforcing the spatial sense. The lighting effects are transcendent. For a basement space, it is remarkable creation.*

### Architect

#### FXFOWLE

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### Owner's Representative

#### VVA Project Managers

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### Lighting

#### Tillotson Design Associates

### Photographer

#### Chris Cooper

## archimania

Redeemer Presbyterian » Memphis, Tennessee



A young congregation purchased an abandoned building for their new home to reinvigorate and enhance their presence and permanence within the community. Since its founding the congregation has worshiped in a school auditorium, away from its office in a leased tenant space. The congregation purchased a small 1960s building in a historic Memphis neighborhood undergoing resurgence. The existing structure once served as a shelter for battered women. The design concentrates on the worship space and the building's exterior relationship to the street. Making minimal improvements to back-of-house spaces kept the project in line with a very tight budget. The exterior of the design project consists of a few interventions that generate an active presence along the street and establish an entry sequence. These include a weathering steel parapet, a low site wall that bounds an outdoor gathering space along the street, and a large front window. The new outdoor gathering space and the interior gathering space provide a welcoming atmosphere. One enters the space beneath a low ceiling of acoustical, textural Tectum panels. The space opens to the roof deck, maximizing the height of the low structure. Overhead, north-facing light monitors emphasize the feeling of height and affording glimpses of sky and natural light. Over the stage, a single penetration of light accentuates the pulpit. Sealed MDF "light-giver" window boxes filter light from southern openings. Final construction cost was \$875,000, or \$116 per square foot.

### Jury Comments

*This very low budget, "bare bones" sacred space makes something out of nothing. It is a great adaptive re-use for urban space. Within the limits of the existing building the designers express a place of gathering, maximizing the use of new materials to create it. It is now a threshold on a commercial strip. The cross outside is very inventive.*

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## Touloukian Touloukian Inc

SGI New England Buddhist Center » Brookline, Massachusetts



ing appearance. To transform it into a religious facility, the design mission was to create a new environment that would be light, airy, and inviting. The design response was to replace the windows with glazing that is more translucent, create a new entry with visibility from the street, and to paint the existing masonry an off-white that appears to virtually change color throughout the day.

Located along a busy street, the architecture responds to this movement by implementing a vertical, undulating louver wood wall. When viewed from a moving vehicle, the screening system transforms the existing facade into an interactive and dynamic street-front landmark.

A palette of light tones and greenery create a welcoming atmosphere that reflects the ideals and identity of SGI. The motif of wood and light carries through the public entry and into a revived atrium space. Expressive skylights in the two-story atrium

allow natural light to penetrate deep into the multi-function rooms and demarcate the path of procession to the main worship space at the second floor.

### Jury Comments

*Worked with little and got a lot. The interiors are very strong, wonderful. The front façade really becomes much more open, took a dark building and made it very open and light. A great presentation of the design and what was built. Created some drama taking what was already there. It's a very busy strip.*

*Architect*

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*Structural Engineer*

**Souza, True and Partners, Inc.**

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*Photographers*

**Anton Grassl Photography**

This existing building had previously been through many adaptive re-use projects. Originally an office building, then an art institute, it has recently been transformed into a new culture center for the religious institution of Soka Gakkai International. The renovation includes a spacious lobby and grand stair, multi-function rooms, accessory offices, large meeting room, and an outdoor landscape plaza open to the public.

In its previous incarnation, the community referred to it as the "Darth Vader" building because of its dark and brood-

## DeBartolo Architects

Redemption Arcadia » Phoenix, Arizona



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The challenge was to create a new life for a 60-year-old church campus. The design approach was to remove all non-essential elements to reveal the pure simplicity of the three existing masonry structures. This seemingly simple strategy required research to determine the essential elements of the structure (both inside and out). Surgical demolition and abrasive blasting of the structures revealed three types of masonry, laid in both stack and running bond. The colors of the buildings revealed themselves as the layers of paint were removed: masonry units with dense black scoria and the pale red of hollow core brick. The proportions of the outdoor spaces between the buildings was discovered by a rigorous process of demolition and removal. Left with three, simple rectangular structures, the program of worship space, classrooms, and administration was efficiently distributed.

Another aspect of the design was to use a singular new device—a shade scrim—to create identity, community, and delight. The shade scrim accomplishes a new identity for a nondescript building on one of the major streets in Phoenix without depending on signage. It also protects the un-insulated masonry structures from the harsh desert sun to reduce the solar gain on the building. The scrim shades a community gathering space that functions as a lobby for the church that seats 300. And it connects the three buildings along the new outdoor spine.

The combination of new and old has created a unique environment of material richness and lightness, accomplished for a construction cost of \$1.7 million.

### Jury Comments

*This intelligent intervention wrings much out of very little. It is carefully delineated, downplaying what is already there. A judicious use of materials changes how the complex responds to the street (providing screening), and creates shaded space in what can be a brutal climate. The surfaces work well horizontally and vertically. The result is visually arresting, editing out the ugly of what was on the site.*



## BNIM

### Westport Presbyterian Church » Kansas City, Missouri

Constructed in 1905, Westport Presbyterian Church stood as a symbol of fellowship and community—one of the most recognizable structures in historic Westport. In 2011, a fire destroyed a majority of the church's roof, interior structure, and finishes, leaving only the exterior limestone shell. Delicately sited in and around the rough-cut stonewalls, the new church is a complementary contrast to the original Romanesque Revival building.

The design of the revitalized church needed to be as clear as possible to support the congregation's needs and position them to add to the existing programs. The *parti* is organized around a historic tower, reimagined as a two-story volume with views of the sky through clerestory glazing. The strong, north-south axis becomes the communicating link between two distinct wings of the building: a worship wing that offers private programmed spaces for the congregation, and a fellowship wing that is more open to the community. After the fire, the team salvaged as much of the existing material as possible, including stone for new landscaping and wood from the original structure. Reclaimed wood served as the theme for an authentic and simple materials palette that provides a delicate, modern backdrop supporting the rich texture of the existing stone and the new insertion. Daylighting elements flood the sanctuary and chapel with natural light.

The new sanctuary required significant modernization of its acoustics and technology. The church's delicate stained-glass windows were some of the few pieces to survive the fire. The stained glass was installed into the new chapel and sanctuary spaces.

#### Jury Comments

*This renovation is very respectful of what was there, working with the existing material palette. It is a lovely way to move the church forward in a new direction while also respecting the history of the existing buildings. It creates exterior spaces for respite for the community and also to reach out to the neighborhood. New buildings are placed with respect to the landmark older structure.*



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## Architecture Research Office

Congregation Beit Simchat Torah » New York, New York



Within a landmark Cass Gilbert-designed warehouse is a new home for the world's largest LGBTQ Jewish congregation. Practicing in divided spaces almost since its founding in 1973, the congregation's history and mission required that the architecture of its new home reflect the synagogue and congregation—a proud, radically traditional and inclusive group, at the forefront of gay rights advocacy, unaffiliated with one particular Judaic movement.

The new synagogue embodies the community's core values through an architecture of accessibility, transparency, and warmth. The first floor includes a 16-foot-high lobby for multipurpose use, administrative offices, and a luminous sanctuary for 300 people. The south

sanctuary wall, a mass of fluted concrete, anchors the synagogue and emerged from a fundamental aspect of the synagogue's services: music. Cantled to admit daylight, the wall reflects a changing play of light and shadow and was designed to calibrate acoustics within the space. The ark is centered and set within this wall, asymmetrically divided by a structural column that holds the *ner tamid* (eternal flame). Screened by a sliding panel of bent oak boards within the ark, the *parochet* or curtain to the torah is a gold sheer fabric below a laser-cut pattern. Memorial walls in the sanctuary and the chapel commemorate individuals lost to AIDS and in the Holocaust, reminding CBST of its struggles and perseverance. The sanctuary is a flex-

ible space and adapts easily from a sacred space to a hall for life-cycle events. A gracious stair leads to a lower common area wrapped by classrooms, a chapel/library, a small kitchen, and support spaces.

### Jury Comments

*The insertion of natural light into the temple space is very sensitive. The space itself is sensual with its curved balcony. In a space with columns, it has been configured to work liturgically. The column in the middle of the worship space is resolved and made into an important liturgical element. There are stories on almost every surface, of who the congregation is and where they came from. This is a rich series of narrative spaces within a tight urban building.*

#### Architect

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**Contractor**  
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**Photographer**  
**Elizabeth Felicella/Esto**



## Jackson & Ryan Architects

The Sheridan Center » Houston, Texas



This chapel is in a facility for women involved in Opus Dei. The chapel is an extension of the living spaces for the residential women's congregate living center located in a residential neighborhood. The client requested a liturgical space that is welcoming to young women for daily mass, special services, and private prayer. The chapel is on the first floor adjacent to the main entrance. Large wooden double doors open into the narthex with stained-glass windows and a second set of double doors inset with stained glass providing a view into the chapel. Natural materials such as wood and stone help achieve the goal for a simple and traditional, yet light and airy worship space. The ceiling features exposed beams and Italian marble for the altar and its surround. Traditional elements of stained glass and mosaic are incorporated in the chapel. The altar mosaic inlay of the Opus Dei emblem is surrounded by a delicate floral pattern. The stained glass has a tradi-

tional shell pattern executed in soft colors that filter the natural light which fills the space during mass. The painting behind the altar guided the color selection for the entire space: neutral colors for the altar, rose for the sanctuary lamps, restrained colors for the delicate stenciling on the walls, beams, and ceiling. The entire composition resonates as an extension of the painting. To accommodate evening private prayer, special light switches control single lighting fixtures illuminating a selected place in the darkness for reading and quiet prayer.

### Jury Comments

*The chapel is a very warm and welcoming space, with artistic qualities. As a traditional space it captures beauty. The ceiling is the most memorable, and the detailing of the elements in the space tie it to the residents of the building who use the chapel. The jury notes that the altar is positioned for the Extraordinary Rite, not the Ordinary Rite.*

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### Acoustical Consultant

#### **SLR International Corp.**

### Contractor

#### **Pepper-Lawson Construction**

### Photographer

#### **Mark Scheyer**

## Ellen Hunt, AIA

### Chai Spice Box » Chicago, Illinois

*Havdalah* marks the end of the Jewish Sabbath. At the end of the day on Shabbat, when three stars are seen in the night sky, *Havdalah* is celebrated with a blessing over wine and lighting a candle. The finality of Shabbat is signified by extinguishing the candle in the wine. Spices, typically held in a perforated metal spice box, provide a fragrant reminder of the joy of the Sabbath and serve to reawaken the senses for the week to come.

This silver Chai Spice Box was made by the artist for her nephew Jacob's 18th birthday. The Hebrew word "chai" means "life" and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are enumerated. The numeric value of the word חַי or chai in English is 18, so 18 is life. For Jacob to have survived to his 18th birthday is a miraculous and joyful event, because he was born with a genetic disorder. Yet he is very active in his congregation and attends weekly services. The artist wanted to commemorate the miracle of Jacob's life and his love for Judaism. Because of his disability, Jacob does not have good manual dexterity. To address this challenge, the spice box has both a ring and a wand to make holding it easy and natural. The box is made of sterling silver sheet, and tube. A synthetic topaz, Jacob's birthstone, is a final flourish at the bottom of the wand. It is hand forged and soldered, filed, and sanded. The texture is coarse. The fragrance of the cloves and cardamom seeds waft out through 18 perforated "stars," which represent the constellation Sagittarius, Jacob's birth sign.

#### Jury Comments

*The box is shaped so you want to hold it. It is beautifully crafted. It helps to recuperate a lesser-known ritual that is part of Judaism that marks the end of the Sabbath. This is a sensitive design for a person with disabilities, and it is carefully controlled and gentle.*

#### Artist

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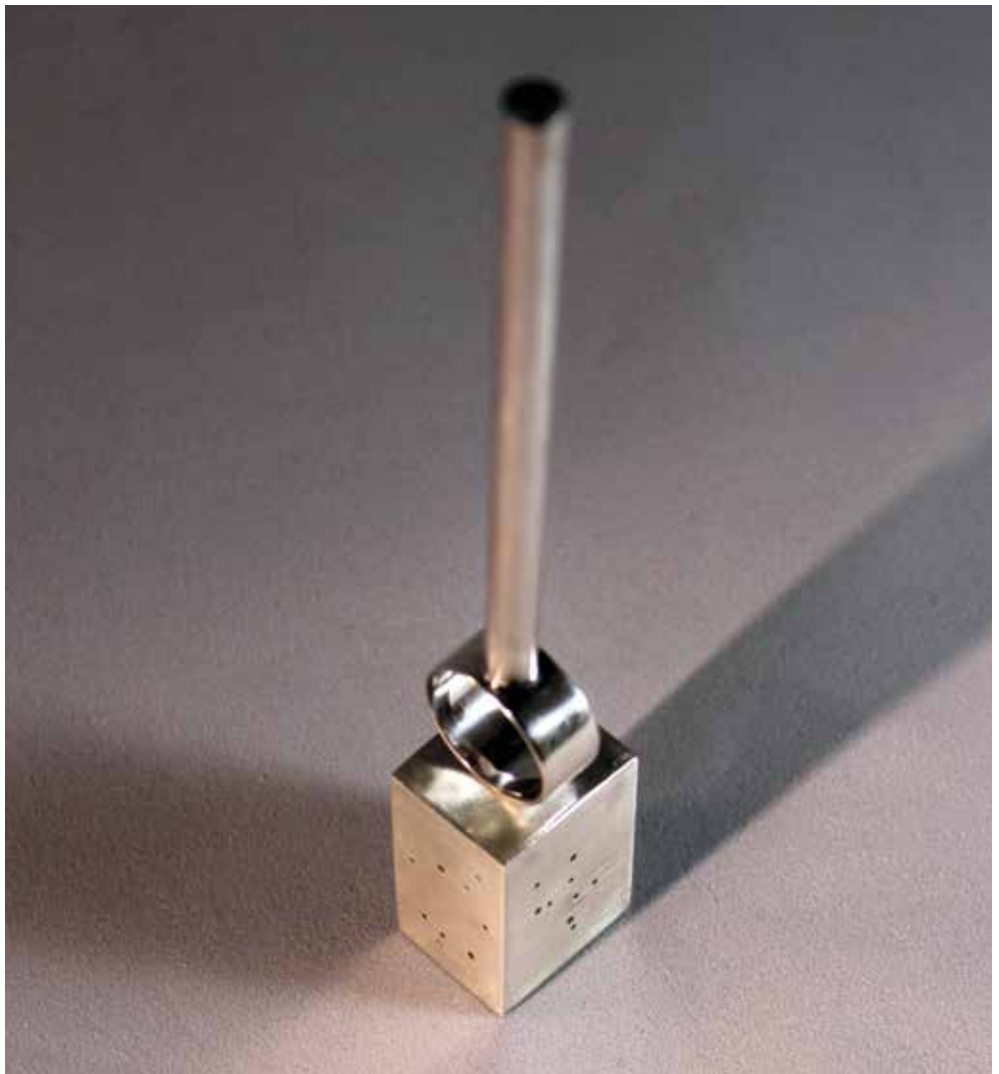
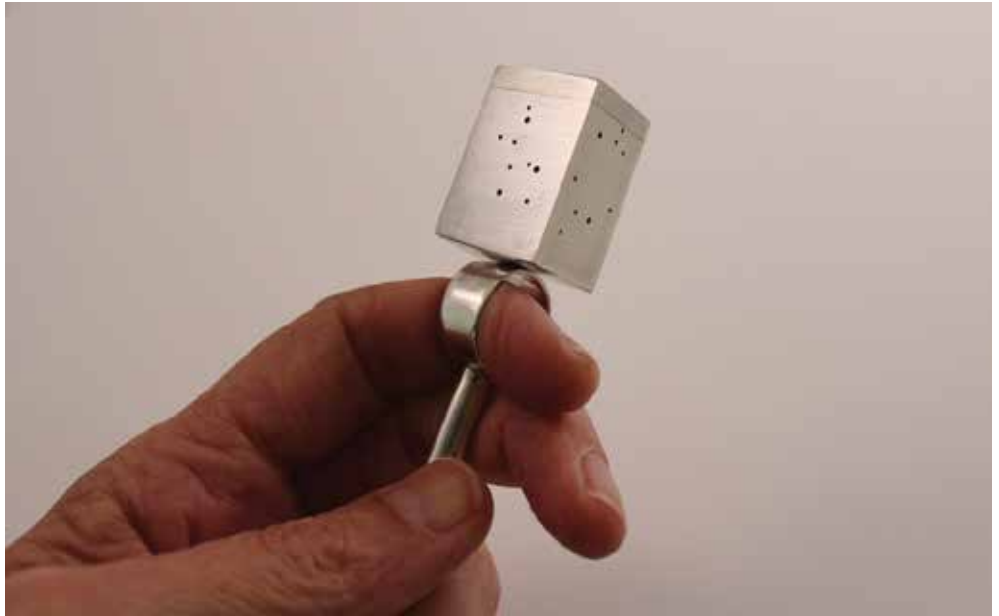
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#### Photographer

**Ellen Hunt, AIA**





## The Century Guild

Woodwork Restoration » Duke University Chapel » Durham, North Carolina



Restoration of the woodwork in the recently restored Duke University Chapel included repairs to damaged woodwork and carvings, as well as cleaning and conserving 80-year old, well-worn varnish on everything from the pews to the organ casework.

The top priority was preserving the character of the woodwork. Screens, choir stalls, and chancel furnishings were removed to climate-controlled storage before being moved in groups to the Guild's studio where they were restored over the course of four months. The remainder of the woodwork was restored in situ. In both cases, the mandate was to make the woodwork look well maintained, not "like new." Frequently, the original finish was severely scratched and worn, as well as mottled due to an uneven application of tinted varnish—either originally, or over the years. If the wood had simply been sanded and then lacquered, the original finish and patina would have been lost. To prevent that, a method was devised to remove scratches yet preserve the fumed color and character original to the wood, merge in new-wood repairs, and finally build up a new finish that blended with the original. This was especially challenging as much of the in situ woodwork was originally "sandblasted" with walnut shells to establish "old world" character. Filling that open-grained effect would have totally changed the character of the original. Cleaning was done with mineral spirits and abrasive pads. In some cases, the finish had to be completely removed by hand scraping and then restored.

### Jury Comments

*This project celebrates the material of an existing place. The close grain of the old wood is wonderful to see. The restoration is technically adept, not over-doing the restoration to lose the warmth of the original. It is a restoration that is "just enough," balanced and sensitive.*

#### Artist

### The Century Guild

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thecenturyguild.com

Michael Stewart,  
Jim Mette,  
Meredith Strange,  
Nick Strange (project team)

#### Organ Casework Cleaner

### Bob Koeck

#### Photographers

KC Ramsey  
Nick Strange

## Salvatore LaRosa

“Pieta” » Collection of the Artist



Artist  
**Salvatore LaRosa**  
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60 Furman St., Apt. 540  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
917-885-4728  
bfivestudio.com



Fabricator  
**Studio del Arte**  
Photographer  
**David Mitchell**

The genesis of “Pieta” was a root of a pine tree that had worked its way up above the soil and in time broke away. Coming upon it on a walk it was easy for the artist to see it was a special find. This root sat on a shelf near the artist’s desk for well over a year, one of nature’s discards that the artist routinely collects.

The artist projected on this branch the contours of a head, perhaps with hair or the outline of a shroud. What the root became developed from what the artist describes as a “constant gaze,” going over and over its shape and surface. The “character” of “Pieta” became evident through its making. The root was cast in bronze

and gently bent inward to give more clarity in the reading of it as a head. The brow was bridged with a veil of screen much like the headscarves worn by women in Medieval and Renaissance paintings. Behind this veil, to support the “head” and to lift the root from the wall, a cross gently curves to a small platform, which holds an oval vessel, an offering.

Creating “Pieta” was not a linear process. Each formal move revealed other possibilities and multiple associations. It was significant to the artist that the root could be viewed as both male and female. Not a traditional “realistic” rendition of Jesus and his mother, this is a work of

symbolic, juxtaposed elements. Initially the artist named it “Madonna,” but after hanging in on a wall, the name was changed to “Pieta.”

### Jury Comments

*The gestural movement provides a face that could be anyone’s. Its composition leads to a sense of release and remorse over a loss, contrasting to the way the artist discovered the root and did not know what to do with it. The artist listened to the materials very carefully, and used them just when they were ready. The size and placement of the bowl in the front seems compelling--catching tears, something captured, a repository.*



## Allies and Morrison

Eid Prayer Ground » Doha, Qatar



This project reinstates Doha's oldest Eid prayer ground on a hillside in the heart of the city. Located beside a historic fort and souk, it was critical that the landscape design and the architecture of its edges respect the prominent cultural context and strike an appropriate balance between openness and enclosure. Conceived as an outdoor room at the scale of a city block with a prayer area of approximately 4,000 square meters, the design resolves the contingent alignments of the surrounding street pattern with the pure geometry of a space orientated to Mecca, defined by the qibla wall.

At Eid the openings enable a sense of connection between the worshippers on the street and those within. Regionally sourced limestone is used for the prayer surface, the qibla wall, loggia, and wall base. Granite is used for stairs and ramps, while the remaining wall surfaces are rendered (echoing the local vernacular) with traditional patterns in recessed GRC panels and bronze metalwork. Differences in the paving delineate the lines of prayer, while the qibla wall is articulated by split, recessed panels that allow indirect permeability of light and air. The mihrab is adorned with gold mosaic that glows brightest in the early morning light of Eid. The qibla wall is embellished with a Qur'anic ayah, inscribed by master calligrapher Sabah Arbilli. Vent shafts and egress stairs from four levels of underground, district infrastructure are integrated in the versatile space between the prayer-ground walls. The result is a place that not only embodies a distinctive religious identity but takes part in the sustainable development of the city.

### Jury Comments

*The design provides a datum for all the buildings around it. Transition spaces allow places for people to gather before and after prayers, and also invite air movement. The architecture suggests that of the Italian Rationalists, particularly in the colonnaded spaces. Lighting is recessed in the ground, making the illumination seem mysterious. The paving helps to orient prayer.*

#### Architect

#### **Allies and Morrison**

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#### Client

#### **Arup for Msheireb Properties**

#### Structural Engineer

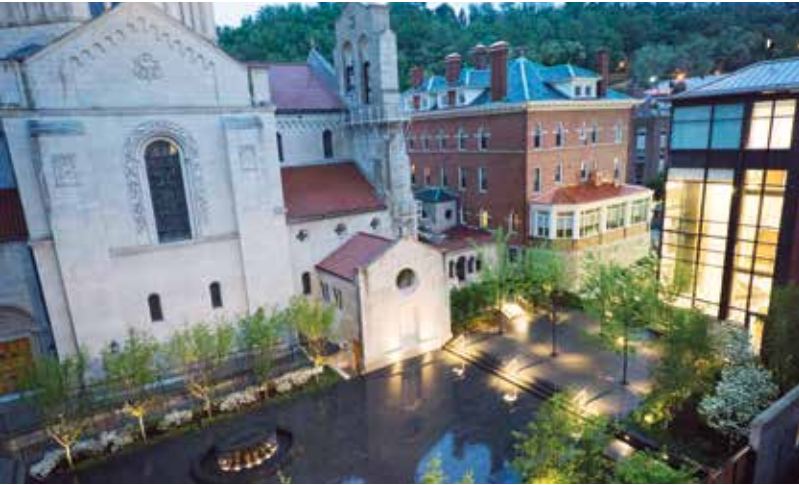
#### **Arup**

#### Photographers

#### **Gerry O'Leary; Msheireb Properties**

## Strada Architecture, LLC

Cathedral Campus » Wheeling, West Virginia



### Architect

#### **Strada Architecture, LLC**

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Michael Stern, ASLA; John Martine, AIA;  
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Claudia Saladin, ASLA; Amanda Miller;  
Nikole Lopretto; Mason Radkoff; Rob Dower, RA;  
Monika Gibson; Jason Franklin (project team)

### Contractor

#### **JDE Incorporated**

### MEP Engineer

#### **Allen & Shariff Inc.**

### Structural Engineer

#### **Atlantic Engineering**

### Civil Engineer

#### **Lennon Smith Souleret Engineering Inc.**

### Lighting Consultant

#### **Clear Story Creative**

### Photographer

#### **Dennis Marsico**

### Jury Comments

*The skillful site plan responds to and transforms an existing site. It really opens up to the city and integrates the cathedral back into the city, providing an outdoor contemplative space. It creates processional moment in moving toward the cathedral. The master planning is excellent, creating a landscaped urban place.*

This project, an exercise in campus place making, creates a new administrative and religious center for the Diocese of Wheeling/Charleston. The result combines selective demolition, adaptive re-use of historic structures, and strategic additions to establish a new religious place focused on the historic St. Joseph's Cathedral.

The Catholic community of Wheeling has naturally been focused on the cathedral, constructed in 1926 as the successor structure to the original building from 1847. While it occupies a prominent corner location in central Wheeling, much of the interior of the block was filled with 1930's structures. A key opportunity emerged when the original 1896 parish school next door was closed.

A redevelopment program quickly emerged to transfer the main curia offices

from the cramped 1950s-era chancery to a renovated school, connected by a new bridge to the existing diocesan offices on the fourth floor of the adjacent high school. To unify all of these elements urbanistically and establish a fitting entrance to the new chancery, the 1930s addition to the historic school was demolished and a new addition containing a dramatic two-story lobby and event space was constructed. An enclosed porch was added to the historic rectory, which together with the chancery entrance frames the processional down to the new Cathedral Plaza, revealing a completely unseen side of the cathedral. Together with the new Mary garden opposite the rectory, these "found" spaces establish new places of contemplation and celebration for the entire religious community.



## Moto Designshop

### Cathedral of our Lady of the Assumption » Port-au-Prince, Haiti

This proposal was part of an international design competition to rebuild the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Haiti, destroyed in the 2010 earthquake. The cultural strength of Haiti is suggested in this project's "woven tree" design, which takes its root from Haiti's traditional arts and crafts. The tree is often expressed in the art of Haiti.

The design abstracts the symbolic tree of hope into a canopy shelter that captures the spirit of this iconic image. Simple but proven bamboo structures weave together to form an elaborate and yet delicate structure under which people will gather and worship. This open-air canopy rises from the old footings of the previous cathedral and references its past by outlining the old structure as it sat on the site. This powerful connection marks a new beginning that grows from a stable and solid footing. In addition to the symbolic nature of the proposal, the nature of the woven design pays homage to Haitian craft. Using these techniques, bamboo, a natural, strong, and renewable material is both the structure and the finish material. The design communicates the skill of the Haitian people. The symbol of the woven tree aims to be a definitive expression of the remarkable people of Haiti. The Haitian culture, known for beautiful fabrics and weaving, continues to maintain its rich history of textile production. These skills highly influenced the design by implementing the skills and abilities of the available into a structural form.

#### Jury Comments

*There is an elegant use of humble materials and vernacular building traditions. There is poetic craftsmanship in the new construction of bamboo (an effective light filter) and how salvaged materials of the cathedral are reused as stone benches. The proposed design really connects with the place, yet recalls religious architectural precedents, such as Thornycrown Chapel. A beautiful project, well presented.*

Architect

#### Moto Designshop

228 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

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motodesignshop.com

Adam Montalbano, Eric Oskey, Roman Torres (project team)



## Edyta Paula Konstantynowicz

Funeral Home » Białystok, Poland



This is a conceptual design for a mortuary with the funeral chapel, located in Białystok neighborhood of Farny Cemetery. The architecture, besides providing a setting to prepare a body for burial and the funeral itself, is designed to accommodate the funeral ceremony for those of various religions as well as for non-believers.

The main body of the building is a cube. The plan is based on a square that positions the most important rooms in its interior, around which a ramp runs both up and down. The remaining administrative and technical functions are separated from the main body of the building and hidden under an artificial embankment placed below ground level. Functions and the spiritual symbolism of the object are combined. This was achieved through the use of several symbolic levels: life on earth, burial, and elevation of the soul to another dimension. The chapel where the family bids farewell to the deceased is located underground, with rooms for relatives on the ground floor. The replacement of the stairs with a ramp linking all building levels is symbolic of elapsed time and combines the stages of life and death. The most important element is the main

chapel located at the highest level. Open space limited only by a glass balustrade with a cube suspended over it is a symbol of a floating soul.

### Jury Comments

*The processional nature, both horizontally and vertically, of the arrival of the deceased and the place of contemplation of a person's life is very strong in this project. It is animated by filtered light. There is a good blend of light and shadow. It is a believable project that demonstrates an understanding of the functional and spiritual aspects of a funeral home with a chapel. It is about movement—both physically and spiritually.*

Student

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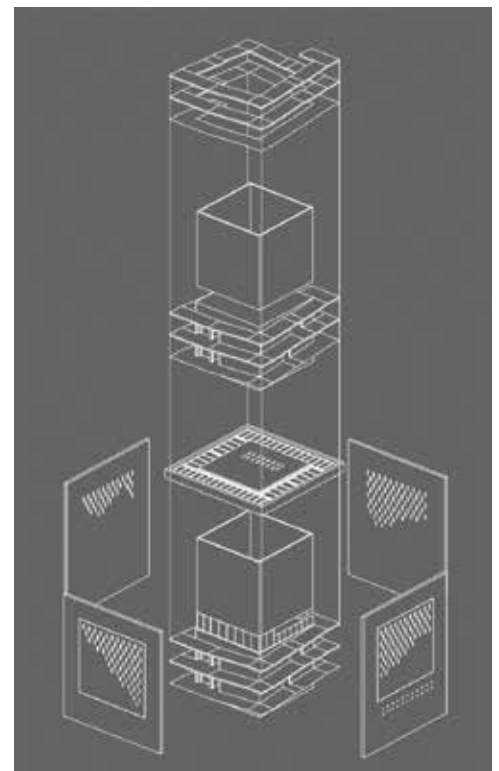
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School

**Białystok University of  
Technology Faculty of Architecture**

Promoter

**Aleksander Owerczuk**





## Joanna Wierzbicka

Sacred Space of a Modern Man » Warsaw, Poland



The theme of this work is the design of a retreat center. Modern man lives in a strictly technocratic space that apart from pragmatic aspects does not provide for spiritual experience. The creation of good architectural space is based on understanding existential human needs. What is certain is that harmonious and a well-known picture of the world provides a sense of emotional security. The design process requires a profound analysis of the essence of sacred space. The desire to know the essence of space is the basic human need, because human existence is spatial, and its relationship with space consists of living in a certain place.

The proposed facility consists of three parts connected by a main bridge. Due to the danger of flooding and the natural assets of the area, all structures are placed on poles over grade. The first structure is located around a courtyard and contains a refectory, library, meeting rooms, and administration facilities. The design of the community building references the functional layout of medieval convent architecture. Other parts of the project are small hermitages accessible from bridges. The final point of the bridge line is a chapel at the water level of the Vistula River.

### Jury Comments

*A well-developed site plan, sophisticated planning, and well zoned. There is a thoughtful sequencing of objects in the landscape, and appropriate termination in the chapel out over the water. It is a good connection between the two ends of the project, through the cabins, toward something farther off, a destination. There is a hint that there is something at the end of the pathway, the chapel, providing a sense of mystery.*



Student

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## Travis Price Architects with The Catholic University of America The Mhuysqa Offering » Tenjo, Colombia

The project is a modern sacred center near Lake Guatavita in the high mountains north of Bogota. Lake Guatavita was the true El Dorado raided by the conquering Spanish. The tribe is pre-Incan and is reviving its sacred heritage in a modern world. The design studio is a single elective course over three months including all concepts, tribal approvals, and construction documents. The actual build was completed in nine days. The project has become a sacred hub for thousands of reborn Mhuysqa and related indigenous cultures. The project is currently spawning a larger cultural sanctuary area to be preserved and revived by the Colombian government.

### Jury Comments

*This is a very respectful, humble building that uses local materials inventively. The students had to understand the indigenous nature and symbolism, in fairly contemporary ways, and were able to translate that. The project creates layers of space and entry, hierarchies of space that are remarkable. It is wonderful to have students listen to the local community, and pay attention to their ceremonial needs.*



### Architect

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### Photographer

**Travis Price, FAIA; Ken Wyner**

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# SHOW ME THE ETHER

**A**S A NATURE ENTHUSIAST, I was recently drawn to Tristan Gooley's *How to Read Water: Clues and Patterns from Puddles to the Sea*. In this field guide to the often-overlooked characteristics of movement, Gooley explains that all bodies of water can be evaluated from four distinct perspectives. One of the truest measures of evaluative criteria is the test of whether one can equally apply them in other disciplines. Gooley unknowingly gives us a successful, albeit rough template for homing in on how to measure "sacred" in art and architecture, a subject much debated and a meaning shadowed by elusive definition.

For a time, I adopted approaches to beauty and sacrality from Umberto Eco's, *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea* and his more powerful, *On Ugliness*. When we are striving for some form of expression of beauty, especially one that is transcendent or one that is inspired, we must also clearly know what beauty is not. The old adage, "I don't know what it is, but I know it when I see it," often rings true. And this is why the finalists in this issue are to be congratulated and heralded for their accomplishments and their courage. They've hit pay dirt without a true roadmap.

If we examine the common threads in these contemporary future-forward works in this issue, we might borrow Gooley's taxonomy for looking at water:


1. What is under it (how it is historically informed)
2. What is in it (the relative theoretical sophistication)
3. What is on it (is there practical investment)
4. What is the effect of light (is it critically reflexive)

Certainly, these criteria are sometimes more successfully employed in contemporary works of art and architecture, as we have the benefit of

THE LAST WORD ★ SHAUNA LEE LANGE

a range of reliable knowledge about the people, places, or purposes of a contemporary project than we ever could possess of an historical work. But there is a fifth criterion: the ether. The life ether, the chemical ether, the light ether, and the reflective ether comprise the spiritual ether evidence. It is the spirit element, symbolism, and meaning of the ether that is the celestial energy that fills all sacred space.

Aristotle told us ether is the fifth element, the spirit or the soul for the spiritual force that air, fire, earth, and water descend from. Ether is the personification of the upper air, God's breath. Einstein observed that ether occupies the space between all objects. Some have experienced it as a bridge between earth and body and heaven and spirit. We know this because when we enter a sacred space, or view a sacred work, we sense the ether is overflowing.

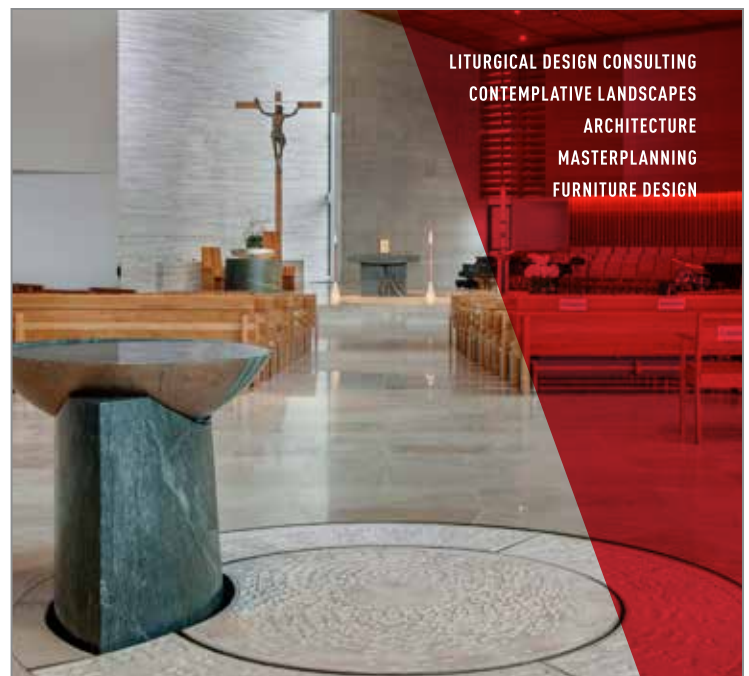
What is beauty in sacred space if it is without activated ether? If anything be void of the substance that enables us to reach beyond and touch something greater than ourselves, then it is simply flat, dull, purposeless, and uninspiring. Where we maximize the potential for ether's flow, in architecture or art, even if we have done so without intention, we have harnessed the essence of its presence and emptiness. It is only then that we have entered much more than a building or an artwork. With the ether, we have crossed over into a more luminous era with an etheric vision toward an Aquarian Age. 

THE AUTHOR IS AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER AND ARTIST, WHO WORKS WITHIN INTERFAITH CONTEMPORARY ART, SANCTUARY, AND CREATIVE PLACE-MAKING REALMS TO FURTHER UNDERSTAND AND EXPLORE THE "SACRED." SHE IS ON INSTAGRAM @SACREDARTADVISORY AND TWITTER @SHAUNALEELANGE.

## Materials of the Sacred

The first issue of 2018 will explore the theme of "Materials of the Sacred," how the very substance of religious art and architecture conveys a sense of the holy. When we choose stone, wood, glass, metal, paint, tile, or any of the materials available to us, how does it help create a sacred place? How do sustainable materials express our love and stewardship of God's creation?

Send your article ideas and projects to:  
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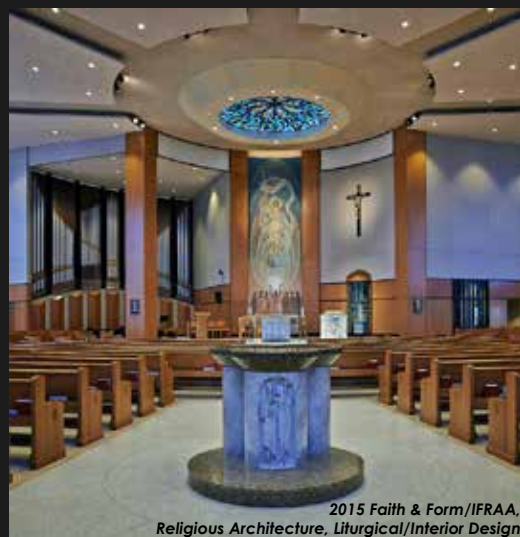
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*Pictured above: Church of the Assumption | St. Paul, MN ~ Interior restoration*