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## The Sacral Museum: An Analysis and Application of Design Within Museum Architecture

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THE SACRAL MUSEUM:  
AN ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION OF DESIGN WITHIN MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

by

Derek Shultz

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Art in Art History and Visual Culture  
at  
Lindenwood University

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THE SACRAL MUSEUM:  
AN ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION OF DESIGN WITHIN MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Humanities  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master in Fine Arts  
at  
Lindenwood University

By

Derek Jeffrey Shultz

Saint Charles, Missouri

December 2023

## **Abstract**

The Sacral Museum: An Analysis and Application of Design Within Museum Architecture

Derek Shultz, Master of Art in Art History and Visual Culture, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Piper Hutson, Committee Chair

This research focuses on the similarities between museum architecture and architecture found in religious, spiritual, and sacred structures around the world. Personal experience and academic research will be used to help convey and understand the effects of architecture on its occupants. This thesis examines how architectural design can facilitate a profound internal journey through learning, contemplation, and connection. Through analysis of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, it is shown that traditional and contemporary architectural elements can achieve these effects by creating a sacred, ritualistic experience, thereby enriching the cultural, educational, and emotional value of the museum visit.

Keywords: museum, liminal, sacred, experience, ritual

### **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

This thesis work is dedicated to my parents, Johnny and Susan Shultz, who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. This work is also dedicated to Mylene Garcia who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life.

I would like to thank Lindenwood University, including its professors and staff who helped me along this journey. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Piper Hutson, Dr. Caroline Paganussi, and Dr. Jonathan Frederick Walz, who provided invaluable guidance throughout my thesis process.

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## Introduction

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO has been a cultural icon of the city since its completed construction in 1933. Designed by the architecture firm of White and White, this temple of art is a tribute to the culture of the Midwest and the generosity of the building namesakes, William Rockhill Nelson (1841-1915) and Mary McAfee Atkins (1836-1911). It is because of these two individuals, and the trustees that came after them, that this free art museum is available to the public. Through the rest of the 20th century and into the 21st, this building stood watch over a 22-acre garden of culture, and in 2007, Architects Steven Holl and Chris McVoy expanded the dream of Nelson and Atkins. The Bloch Building addition, named after trustee Henry Bloch (1922-2019) and his wife Marion (1930-2013), brought a light, modern element to the traditional Beaux-Arts structure. The addition was met with mixed reviews, but after its completion, much of the world fell in love with Holl's ability to combine architecture, art, and nature into one experience. Holl's design concept of "Stone and Feather" clearly states his intentions to contrast the two structures while maintaining natural harmony.<sup>1</sup> It is this dichotomy that won the Bloch Building multiple architectural design awards and changed Kansas City from a "flyover" city to a cultural hub for the Midwest. The contrasting styles of architecture between the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the 2007 Bloch Building addition manage to form a harmonious bond between art, architecture, and their surroundings that enhances the experience of the visitor and the community.

However, the history of museum architecture has trended toward the idea that a prominent Architect must create an icon that gives culture and financial gain to the city. Works by Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind, and Santiago Calatrava tend to put form over function and

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<sup>1</sup> Hales, Linda. "Letter From Kansas City." *Architect* 96, 8. (2007): 43-47.

consumption over contemplation. The works of these architects, specifically their museums, have no issue bringing visitors to the building, but bringing art to the visitors is another matter. There is an opportunity for museums to become a unifier of society in a world that is simultaneously being connected through technology but segregated through ignorance. Current scholarship provides analysis of architecture, museums, exhibition design, and human psychology, but there is little that combines this into cohesive discussion and examples. Academic arguments have been made that architecture, religion, and psychology are subjective experiences that vary from person to person depending on their experiences and their surroundings. The goal is to find what can unify and traverse the subjectiveness of these topics by referencing the works of Steven Holl and Le Corbusier, along with specific Gothic architecture. Through an analysis of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the argument will be made that religious and spiritual architectural design, within a museum application, can achieve a liminal connection by creating a sacred, ritualistic experience, thereby enriching the cultural, educational, and emotional value of the museum visit.

## Literature Review

There is an abundance of literature available for the subject of museums and museum studies. Every museum has a separate book for the original building, and any subsequent renovation or addition provides its own literature as well. These works provide historical background information, as well as technical information regarding all major aspects of the museum. Many of these books are written by the architectural designers themselves, including Steven Holl, who has been the architect for multiple museum projects around the world. Having the insight and design inspiration provided directly through these writings is extremely beneficial in understanding the how's and why's of each project. For someone who is attempting to emulate many of these great architects, while also forging a somewhat hybrid path forward, there is a great deal of valuable information provided by museums themselves.

In 2007, Steven Holl completed the addition to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City and he wrote *Grand Transparent*, where he examines the new Bloch Building. This writing provides many good quotes by Holl as he explains his design and thinking. It specifically mentions moments of experience inside the building as light and time affect the visitor at all moments of the day and night. "The expansion of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art fuses architecture with landscape to create an experiential architecture that unfolds for visitors as it is perceived through each individual's movement through space and time."<sup>2</sup> There are many other literary resources for this museum, including works from writers Aaron Betsky, Michael Churchman and Scott Erbes, Linda Hales, Julie Lasky, Holly Richmond, and Suzanne Stephens. Expanding to other museums of similar standing to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, authors Leslie Bellavance, Peter Friess, Elizabeth M. Merrill, and Hillel Schocken discuss the many

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<sup>2</sup> Holl, Steven. "Grand Transparent." *Domus*, no. 904 (June 2007): 12–23.

unique qualities that elevate works by world-renowned architects Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Richard Meier, Renzo Piano, and Santiago Calatrava.

Beyond the writings on specific museums, there is also an abundance of literature regarding museum architecture as a genre. This can include architecture, anthropology, restoration/preservation, or memory. Author Amy Sodaro has produced many works of literature regarding this last element, memory. Within the book *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, she provides various articles focusing on the changing form of memorial museums in the last 50 years and what promises and limitations these structures have in the real world. Memorial museums are intended to be about both memory and thinking in the form of historical understanding; they are also aimed at inspiring emotional, affective responses and empathy. This is a broad mandate for any cultural institution; add to this their focus on the most sensitive subject matter and memorial museums emerge as very complex institutions.

Sodaro states,

I have concluded that there are three primary functions that memorial museums are created to fulfill. The first is what we can consider their “museum” function—that is, their role as a mechanism of truth-telling about history and preserving the past; in this sense, they aspire to be houses of history where the past is uncovered, documented, and preserved, and the “truth” about what happened is revealed to their visitors. The second is what we can consider their “memorial” function, which is to serve as a space of healing and repair; in this they are a form of symbolic reparation that seeks to give acknowledgment to the victims and serve as a solemn space of mourning and remembrance in the effort to help heal and repair a community. The final function embodies what is most new and unique about these museums and is the very reason that this hybrid form has emerged: they are intended to morally educate visitors to internalize an ethic of “never again.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sodaro, Amy. “Memorial Museums: Promises and Limits.” In *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, (Rutgers University Press, 2018.) 162-84.

Amy Sodaro also focuses on specific memorial museums such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, whose architect was Daniel Libeskind. This controversial museum is the standard bearer of memorial museums that arguably straddles the line between museum and experiential exhibition. In her article “Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin’s Jewish Museum,” Sodaro writes, “...in rejecting the categorization as a memorial museum and in focusing on a celebration of German-Jewish culture and history rather than the tragedy of the Holocaust, the Jewish Museum is what we might call a counter memorial museum. As such, it challenges the new norms around the creation of memorial museums and other sites of memory to be self-reflexive meditations on the negative past and its trauma.”<sup>4</sup> Memorial museums are integral to the overall understanding of experiential museum architecture. Their subject matter is already sensitive, and many visitors are entering the space with a heightened awareness of their surroundings and situation. Understanding what design elements are used both successfully and unsuccessfully in memorial museums will allow the crafting of a visitor experience that achieves the proper goals for each specific museum environment.

Another evaluation into architectural design focuses on spiritual/religious architecture. This research includes works by Steven Holl and Le Corbusier, as well as historical Medieval Gothic architecture. For these well-known architects and their works, there is an equal amount of literature to the museum architecture mentioned earlier. Each individual chapel, church, or other religious structure has various written works describing their design, construction, meaning and purpose. Many of these spiritual places have been studied and written about by other scholars in a broad range of fields.

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<sup>4</sup> Sodaro, Amy. “Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin’s Jewish Museum.” *International Journal of politics, culture, and society* 26, no. 1 (2013): 77–91.

The works of Le Corbusier have been meticulously studied, which has produced an abundance of literature on his life, his philosophy, his style, and his buildings. Regarding the Chapel at Ronchamp, author Flora Samuel has two important pieces of literature, “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp” and “The Representation of Mary in the Architecture of Le Corbusier’s Chapel at Ronchamp.” Samuel writes, “The architecture of the chapel at Ronchamp is open to two rather different interpretations: one pertaining to the tenets of the Catholic Church and one looking back into more ancient forms of nature worship, Gnosticism and alchemy, the former embracing chastity, the latter sexuality.”<sup>5</sup> Along with these interpretations of Corbusier’s motives, other authors, such as Wayne R. Dynes and Beatriz Colomina, examine his connection to the past. To better understand these motives, investigation of spirituality in Medieval architecture, specifically in Roman Catholic Cathedrals, is required. Authors Edmund B. Ligan, Otto G. von Simson, and Paul Crossley all provide excellent insight into why architecture of this time looked the way it did and what it meant to the people who visited them.

From historical context and examples of museums and religious architecture, attention is turned to the art of displaying and conveying information. There is still a good deal of information regarding museum studies, exhibition design, and gallery design; however, it is dispersed and is restricted to either very old or very new studies. Authors Motohiro Koizumi and Maddalena Dalla Mura study the technological advancements being made in museum design and how digital information can be conveyed to a wider audience. Studies are also being conducted using technology and analytics to understand visitor interaction within museums and exhibitions.

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel, Flora. “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp.” *Journal of Architectural Education*. 53, no. 2 (1999): 87.

In the article “The Museum Experience: Mapping the Experience of Fine Art,” authors Kirchberg, Voker, and Martin Tröndle write,

Our five-year research project, eMotion: Mapping the Museum Experience, interpreted computer-modeled movement-tracking and physiological maps of the visitors in complement with entrance and exit surveys. We tested individual aspects of the visitor, such as her or his expectations of the exhibition prior to seeing it; his or her socio-demographic characteristics; her or his affinity for art, mood just before and receptivity just after the visit; and spatial, individual, and group-related behavior patterns. Our study breaks down three types of exhibition experience that we call 'the contemplative,' 'the enthusing,' and 'the social experience.' The results yield new information about aesthetic arousal, cognitive reaction, patterns of social behavior, and the diverse elements of the exhibition experience.<sup>6</sup>

Author Saul Carliner also reports results of an observational study of museum exhibit design and suggests eight communication practices from museum exhibit design that could be transferred to information design for the internet.<sup>7</sup> This information can be combined with the work of Marco Mason, Michela Magliacani and Daniela Sorrentino, and Jonas Blume as they study visitor experience in a new era of museum and exhibition design for a post-Covid world.

This research will only be beneficial if it can be implemented into a cohesive museum experience. This is where the research of these following authors will be very beneficial to the thesis. Author Barry C. Smith discusses sensory engagement in his article, “Museums and the Embodied Mind: Sensory Engagement with Artworks and Architecture.” Smith writes,

Understanding the multisensory factors that modulate an audience's experiences of artworks in their settings offers museum curators and architects opportunities to enhance visitors' sensory engagement with their collections. This writing looks at how senses and experiences in a museum can be affected by the architecture and spaces it creates. This connects how the mind and body can react to art in a space and how that reaction can be altered by architecture.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kirchberg, Volker, and Martin Tröndle. “The Museum Experience: Mapping the Experience of Fine Art.” *Curator* 58 (2015): 169–93.

<sup>7</sup> Carliner, Saul. “Modeling Information for Three-Dimensional Space: Lessons Learned from Museum Exhibit Design.” *Technical communication* 50, no. 4 (2003): 554–70.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Barry C. “Museums and the Embodied Mind: Sensory Engagement with Artworks and Architecture.” *Architectural Design* 90, no. 6 (2020): 88–93. doi:10.1002/ad.2636.

Like Smith, author Helene Illeris discusses the act of learning and engaging with art in the article, “Learning Bodies Engaging with Art: Staging Aesthetic Experiences in Museum Education.” Inspired by Richard Shusterman, the article focuses on three dimensions of the aesthetic experience: the phenomenological, the semantic, and the transformational. Together with Judith Butler's concepts of performativity and performance, these notions are used to discuss the role of “the learning body” in three case studies carried out in art museums over a ten-year period. The study sheds light on how the concept of aesthetic experience can be used for understanding the pedagogical value of encounters between young people and contemporary art. Another aim is to show how the body, as locus for aesthetic experiences, can challenge traditional understandings and discuss how to develop performative forms of art education that actively involves students' bodies.<sup>9</sup>

A key work of literature for focus in this paper will be “The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison” by Lindsay Jones. Jones's project combines Gadamer's hermeneutics to Joachim Wach's concern with significant organization. It also combines Mircea Eliade's observations on sacred space, and Lawrence Sullivan's suggestion that historians of religions take sources other than texts more seriously. In Gadamerian fashion, Jones insists that because the meanings of buildings are always "superabundant" and transcend any hermeneutical engagement, historians of religions should not aspire to identify the once-for-all-time meanings of buildings as established by their designers, builders, and sponsors. Rather, they should attend to the meanings associated with the succession of "ritual-architectural events" that have taken place at each site. Along with Jones, focus is also given to Victor Turner and his

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<sup>9</sup> Illeris, Helene. “Learning Bodies Engaging with Art: Staging Aesthetic Experiences in Museum Education.” *International journal of education through art* 12. No. 2. (2016): 153–65. doi:10.1386/eta.12.2.153\_1.



study of the ritual process and the ideas of liminality and *communitas*. The combination of these older, established ideologies in religious experience, included with traditional and contemporary architectural principles, like those mentioned in the work of Carol Duncan, will create a well-rounded application for future architecture. Carol Duncan, an art historian, laid a great foundation detailing the connections between religious sites and museums. Her references to anthropological literature backup the argument that museums have become shrines for the practice of civil religious rituals. Her writing challenges the division between the museum and religion even though the museum is structured as a ritual space.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis, a case study of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, will contribute to past research by providing a connection between the phenomenological and psychological effects of sacred architecture and contemporary design decisions within museum construction. Future architectural endeavors will benefit from a thorough analysis of ritual spaces that will bridge the gap between design and the foundational research reviewed earlier. The ideas of Carol Duncan will be supported by architectural examples showing how principles of ritual architecture have been applied in a museum setting. This will add a new perspective of connection between Catholic devotional spaces and museum design to help understand how ritual experience can be fostered among visitors. Furthering this understanding will push museum design and designers toward a more inclusive, understanding, and engaging future while providing tools for society to help better connect architecture to a visitor's sensorial experience.

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<sup>10</sup> Robson, James. "Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia." *PMLA* 125, no. 1 (2010): 122.

## **Methodology**

For this Thesis to properly convey not only the progression of architectural design through museum studies, but also the impacts of those designs, several methodological approaches will be used. Beginning with reception theory, this should allow a better understanding of why visitors react in specific ways to not only religious architecture, but museum architecture and exhibitions. There will not be a specific intended audience beyond those who visit these establishments, which are typically open to the public and extend well beyond their cultural surroundings. There is not necessarily a scarcity of research regarding “successful” architecture and architectural “feelings,” but there is some difficulty in developing this information into a quantitative argument. Analysis of the examples chosen will begin by using formalist methodology to analyze their physical features that contribute to their overall effects on the visitor. In addition, meaning will continue to be extrapolated from historical and cultural contexts based on structural analysis. Taking an interdisciplinary approach and touching on elements of psychological, cultural, and post-modernist methodologies, the intention is to find meaning in the architectural design of museums that can then be harnessed and employed in a new innovative experience. The question will be asked, “What makes successful architecture?” When using psychological analysis, the question will be focused on how the psychological and emotional state of the visitor could influence their experience of the architectural space. When using cultural methodologies, the question will be focused on how architectural design both is influenced by and the influencer of its surroundings. When using post-modernist methodologies, the question will be focused on how elements of accessibility and universal design principles can translate around the world and throughout a global civilization to unify cultures, rather than segregate.

The lack of objective observations that can be made to support the success of an architecture aside, a close examination should be the starting point of all critical analysis. This will force the consideration of internal design elements for each structure in order to evaluate them for their effectiveness in evoking emotion while also performing their primary functions. This formal method of analysis will allow a foundation of support to form, which can then move forward within subsequent methodologies. Formally speaking, the connection will be made between design decisions made throughout the history of spiritual/religious architecture and museum architecture. The intention is to show that there is a convincing case for these types of structures to have similar goals and functions that can be translated and applied elsewhere in design. Formal analysis will be followed by psychological analysis, cultural analysis, and post-modernist analysis. These three methodologies share a great deal in terms of goals, as well as approaches, and should allow for full articulation of processes and intentions throughout the thesis. Lastly, the argument will be made that though the goals of various architectural elements can differ, they can still be utilized for a common purpose to evoke feeling, educate, connect, and enhance their environments.

Through these studies, structuralist intertextuality will be used to shift between religion, architecture, museum studies, and history spanning from Medieval Gothic constructions to the present day. Specifically, the intention will be to establish how these evocative moments in architecture have been applied in the past in order to adapt them for the future. It will be demonstrated that spirituality played an important role in the work of museum architecture as it influenced their design, especially through the introduction of modern and post-modern design philosophies. Psychological criticism will be employed to assess and analyze the intended audience to each architectural space. An argument will be made from a psychological standpoint

for the “success” of each building in terms of its emotional functionality and ritual application. Cultural methodology will be used to highlight commonalities around the world that all aim to achieve similar goals in design and function. Similarly, a post-modernist argument will be given to further claims that culture and location are important elements to consider in architectural success even though, in many cases, they have been disregarded. The next step will be to apply these methodologies to a solution that applies their qualities to future museum construction.

## Architecture for Religion

Throughout history, culture has been passed on from generation to generation. Though it is ever evolving, culture is always tied to the past and greatly defines humanity and its future. It could be argued that culture is sacred to humanity as knowledge and experiences are continuously shared across the world. Within this sharing of knowledge and experience comes the need for collection and preservation. Collections can vary from the physical to the spiritual, but to those who find it sacred, they need preservation and protection. As a “shrine to the muses,” museums, have been the physical collectors and preservers of history and culture. In addition to these vital roles, museums are also presenters of information to the public. Though their means and methods have evolved like the cultures they represent, their core purpose is to preserve and educate. Similarly, sacred architecture and places of worship enshrine the collections and experiences of their followers and their histories. Art and religion have shared similar histories as both convey the human condition in a manner that can be praised or shunned, hated or adored, studied or destroyed. Throughout history, art and architecture were used as the visual language for almost all religions and spiritualities. This allows their stories and messages to reach beyond the spoken and written word to a wider audience. Art Museums and places of worship share similar roles to collect, preserve, and educate while also sharing architectural forms that heighten the awareness and elevate the experience of the visitor.

The primary development of architectural design has long been connected to the construction of sacred places. Sacred is an encompassing word for religion and spirituality as these elements can vary from person to person. The connection between “religion” and “spirituality” is often blurred and ambiguous, but it is important to understand the differences so proper communication can occur. *“The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, John Bowker*

notes that ‘a strange thing about religion is that we all know what it is until someone asks us to tell them.’ This statement also applies to spirituality, which is more readily experienced than defined. The close association of spirituality with religion further complicates the effort to speak cogently about them.”<sup>11</sup> Though religious does not directly equal spiritual, both serve that which is sacred. The organization of religion directly correlates with the consolidation of wealth around the world. As a religion grows in the number of followers, so does it grow in the tithes they provide. Certain organized religions found new ways to spread their theologies, beyond word of mouth or the written word. This led to innovations in architecture and design to not only create a sacred place for worship, but to also create a representation of their beliefs. In the case of many religions, this was a physical manifestation of Heaven or Nirvana on earth. The following will focus on examples and references in western ideologies; however, these principles of architecture and design extend throughout the world with similar references and trajectories.

As Christianity, specifically Catholicism, expanded in western Europe, so too did the number of churches and cathedrals. From the late 5th to the late 15th centuries, a time of transformation known as the Medieval Period corresponded to this expansion. Art and architecture were adopted by the Catholic church as visual means to extend the reach of the religion. Thus, as religion grew, so did the art and architecture of the time. Artistic periods including Early Christian, Migration Period, Byzantine, Insular, Pre-Romanesque, Romanesque, and Gothic share their traits and characteristics with the growth of Christianity in Europe during this time. In “The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations,” Ninian Smart discusses various "dimensions" of religion that influence exactly how the faithful experience and practice the sacred in their lives. These dimensions prescribe what position

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<sup>11</sup> Ligan, Edmund B. “The Alchemical Marriage of Art, Performance, and Spirituality.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 31, no. 1 (2009): 38.

worshippers should assume during meditation and prayer (the "practical and ritual" dimension), with whom they should be with (the "ethical and legal" dimension), and the architectural qualities of the buildings in which they worship ("material" dimension).<sup>12</sup> Due to its proclivity to create laws and practices that relate to nearly every aspect of human existence, it is easy to think of religion as little more than a social institution that imposes arbitrary rules and regulations upon seekers of spirituality. In "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography," Paul Crossley argues,

This view is too reductive since religion also enables human beings to ponder spiritual questions both within and outside of the context of specific faiths. The elements of a religion are not inseparable from the religion itself, and when they are transplanted into the context of art their restrictive nature disintegrates. Take, for instance, Rinde Eckert's dance theatre piece, *Horizon*, which was produced at the New York Theatre Workshop in June 2007. *Horizon* explored the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's notion of "Christian Realism." Eckert's production did not embrace this theology or suggest that it was right or wrong. Rather, it contemplated the theology by means of choreography, dialogue, music, and acting. *Horizon* showed that the "doctrinal and philosophical" aspect of religion, which is potentially restrictive, can be transformed by a skilled artist into a flexible tool for exploring profound questions of human existence.<sup>13</sup>

Medieval art and architecture explore spirituality and religion equally. Each began to explore the limits of the other and this ultimately culminated with Gothic Cathedrals. Author Otto G. von Simson explains religious architecture throughout this time in western history in the article, "The Gothic Cathedral: Design and Meaning." Simson explores how Romanesque and Byzantine architectural structure were often concealed behind painted walls and decorative celestial ornamentation to make the visitor forget that they're in a building.<sup>14</sup> Von Simson continues with a description of how this architecture transitioned around the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.

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<sup>12</sup> Smart, Ninian. *The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Ligan, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Simson, Otto G. von. "The Gothic Cathedral: Design and Meaning." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 11, no. 3 (1952): 6-7.

In the Gothic cathedral the relation between structure on the one hand and ornament and its symbolic function on the other is quite different. Here the design is entirely determined by the pattern of the structural members, vault ribs and shafts. It has been remarked that the flowering of the Romanesque mural was in large part due to the technical imperfections of the buildings it adorned, that wall painting declined in the measure in which these imperfections were overcome. In Gothic architecture, the wonderful precision with which every single block was shaped in the vault (leaving no ragged joints that it was necessary to conceal) suggests a new esthetic appreciation of the dignity of structural perfection. This tectonic system is never concealed but rather underscored by Gothic wall painting. Even the stained-glass windows submit, in composition and design, increasingly to the pattern of the stone and metal armature in which they are imbedded. The esthetic function of these windows is not only the creation of a new luminosity; the light they admit dramatically underscores the web of tracery, ribs, and shafts.<sup>15</sup>

At a time when the Catholic church carried tremendous power and wealth, much was done to create sacred structures that represented their achievements. Between the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, these cathedrals pushed the limits of human achievement as towers grew higher and glass replaced stone. In his book, *Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography*, Paul Crossley discusses how Gothic architecture was more than metaphor or symbol, but rather a representation of Heaven. He writes, “Unlike earlier architectural styles, which had merely symbolized or suggested the Heavenly City (early Christian) or the Heavenly Castle (Romanesque), the very structure of the gothic church – its luminous windows and coloured walls, its overlapping faceted surfaces, and especially its baldachin-like vaults – was precisely a reproduction or image of the Heavenly Jerusalem as described in Revelations and in contemporary medieval poetry.<sup>16</sup> Architecture, combined with paintings, statues, and ceremonies were positioned in the light of brilliant stained glass all depicting, in great detail, the stories of the Bible. Beyond illumination of objects, the light permeating through the stained glass of Gothic cathedrals, and subsequent Catholic architecture, provided a direct connection between

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<sup>15</sup> Simson, 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Crossley, Paul. “Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography.” *The Burlington Magazine* 130, no. 1019 (1988): 118-119.



Heaven and Earth through the process of transubstantiation. Light, as a central tenet of the Catholic faith, signals the presence of the Holy Spirit amongst those in attendance and played an essential role in Catholic Communion and the consumption of the Eucharist.

Even after the devastating fire in 2019, Notre-Dame de Paris still stands as a powerful icon in the French capital city. Workers completed construction of the pre-fire design of this cathedral toward the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. The magnificence of its exterior presence can only be matched by its interior. As one approaches from the west, they are stoically greeted by triptych arched doorways, the largest of which is in the center. To either side are the large belltowers, each standing 96 meters (226 feet) in height. Biblical stone figures meet the gaze of each visitor at every level of the building (Fig. 1). As one enters the church, they are greeted with a smell of incense and burning vanilla candles. The light flickers amongst the stone of the large arched colonnade, as the large sacred space opens beyond. The central nave pulls the visitor's eye toward the pieta, a distance of 60 meters (196 feet), while vertical colonnades 6.5 meters (21 feet) on either side extend the gaze toward the heavenly ceiling 33 meters (108 feet) above (Fig. 2). Three levels of stained glass allow light to pour in throughout the day. The sun rises above the pieta to the east and sets through the magnificent rose window above the entry to the west (Fig. 3, 4). The rigidity of stone seems to melt away as the windows rise to the vaulted ceilings that appear to float above the massive open space of the nave. The interior walls are adorned by beautiful carvings and paintings depicting scenes from the Bible. Each is part of a whole story that is being told in this sacred place. On either side of the central nave are the ambulatory side aisles that allow visitors to progress around the central nave at their own pace to pay homage to the holy relics placed inside chapels along the perimeter (Fig. 5).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Simson, 6-7.

This whole experience has been curated for the visitor to provide a spiritual experience with God as they approach a heightened awareness of what is believed to be Heaven. The spatial experiences of these religious structures have evolved from small, and personal areas of reflection in earlier churches to a shared communal experience of epic scale in cathedrals. The memory and feeling of Notre-Dame Cathedral shows how architecture can spiritually speak to its visitors through a choreographed ritual. Beyond collecting, preserving, and displaying relics of the church, the architectural forms heighten the awareness and elevate the experience of the visitor. These architectural forms would translate to the work of modern architects for not only religious structures but a variety of sacred uses.

When the name Le Corbusier is mentioned in architectural vernacular, it is hardly in the same breath with mentions of medieval architecture and design. His smooth style, lack of ornamentation, and horizontality are not consistent with towering Gothic cathedrals. In his book, *Medievalism and Le Corbusier*, Wayne R. Dynes discusses this contradiction by stating, "...the Gothic revival disrupted the aesthetic dictatorship of the classical-Renaissance tradition, represented by such hallowed names as Vitruvius, Palladio, and Vignola. Goths and modernists agreed that tradition had reached a kind of terminal ossification in the teaching of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts."<sup>18</sup> This shared mindset between the medievalists and the modernists to change the status quo would set them on similar paths of discovery and design. Le Corbusier was a self-educated designer who originally went by the name Charles-Edouard Jeanneret. With a lack in available higher education, Jeanneret was not properly accustomed to the subtle historical changes throughout the Middle Ages; however, through his private studies, he developed a thorough understanding of the aesthetic and structural principles of the past.<sup>19</sup> Once again,

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<sup>18</sup> Dynes, Wayne R. "Medievalism and Le Corbusier." *Gesta* 45, no. 2 (2006): 89.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Jeanneret discusses a memory he had at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. He stated, “I was very keen on construction. I spent the whole afternoon in Notre-Dame, equipped with an enormous set of keys from the Ministry of Fine Arts. I got to know the tiniest recesses of the cathedral, right to the tips of the towers, pinnacles, and flying buttresses. For me it was the Gothic epic poem.”<sup>20</sup> The gothic influence was clearly present in the early career of Jeanneret before he ventured into his more commonly known, modern aesthetic. Unlike his familiarity with the preparation of Notre-Dame de Paris, Jeanneret, soon to be Le Corbusier, encountered an even older sacred structure. Dynes explains, “What Jeanneret was not prepared for, it seems, was the Athenian Parthenon, which bowled him over. Not only did this experience finally remove any lingering doubts about his commitment to architecture as a profession, it provided him with a new template, one that featured horizontal emphasis and a kind of sculptural concept of buildings as masses shaped by light (Fig. 6).”<sup>21</sup>

One of Le Corbusier’s most prominent works stands in the Eastern French countryside. A proper introduction to the building is provided by Wayne R. Dynes.

Arguably Le Corbusier’s greatest single achievement, the hilltop chapel of Notre-Dame-du Haut at Ronchamp, blends several religious traditions seamlessly. The relationship with the landscape reaches back to the Neolithic shrines of Western Europe. Evidently, Le Corbusier attributed a solar emphasis to this source. The site marks the emplacement of a venerable image of the Virgin Mary, providing the official justification of the structure. While there are no specific references to Gothic art, the structure’s use of colored glass and its almost pneumatic elan reflect a general understanding of that period. There are important echoes of the architecture of German expressionism of the 1920s, a movement of diffuse, but genuine spirituality. Finally, the surfaces reveal reminiscences of North African mosques Le Corbusier had seen in the 1920s.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Le Corbusier and James I Dunnett. *The Decorative Art of Today* 1st MIT Press ed. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press. (1987). 203-204.

<sup>21</sup> Dynes, 92.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 93.

There are two important religious works in the oeuvre of Le Corbusier, and Wayne R. Dynes explains their dichotomy: "...La Tourette monastery and Ronchamp chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut, may be called Romanesque-like and Gothic-like respectively. To be sure, they are not imitations of the revival mode, but reflect a thorough assimilation and rethinking – so much so that many are unaware of the medieval influences that inform their extraordinary formal language."<sup>23</sup>

Ronchamp Chapel is a culmination of the lifework of Le Corbusier. Since its completion in 1955, the experience of the visitor begins with a winding road from the small town of Ronchamp, France at the base of the hill on which the chapel sits. Along it, the visitor is surrounded by nature as the sounds of the town fade away and nothing remains but the sounds of animals, trees, and wind. Present day guests to the site will first be met with a contemporary gatehouse and monastery by architect Renzo Piano. Built into the landscape, it does well to accentuate the hillside without interfering with the sights or the views of the chapel further up the hill (Fig. 7). Flora Samuel, in the book *The Representation of Mary in the Architecture of Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp*, describes the initial visuals as the chapel comes into view. "Sitting at the top of a hill the blazing white forms of the chapel defy description, so unorthodox are they in form. Its three towers are connected by an enormous convex roof which covers the remarkable interior."<sup>24</sup> The large megalithic forms appear to defy gravity and evoke the same feelings experienced in front of Notre-Dame de Paris (Fig. 8). Ronchamp bears a similar orientation to the Paris cathedral which allows the sunlight to illuminate the apse in the morning as the entry to the chapel is left in sunlight throughout the day. The approach allows the viewer

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<sup>23</sup> Dynes, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel, Flora. "The Representation of Mary in the Architecture of Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp." *Church History* 68, no. 2 (1999): 407.

to see the entire southern façade of the chapel. Curious punctures of varying size allow only for curious glimpses rather than full views of the interior. The large roof slopes down to a point where it converges with the closest of three towers. At this convergence is the entrance to the chapel, a large modern expression of color and shape on an oversized pivoting door. All other ornamentation is absent from the building except for this door (Fig. 9). In his earlier years as Jeanneret, he was obsessed with surfaces as part of design. However, in his later years as Le Corbusier, he denounced ornament as a distraction from the real work of architecture, which lay in the interior structure. Le Corbusier recalled, “One must build with perfection; decoration generally hides a want of perfection.”<sup>25</sup> Corbusier would also express his intentions with the doors separating interior from exterior around the building. He states, “Sometimes there is a door: one opens it – enters – one is in another realm, the realm of the gods, the room which holds the key to the great systems. These doors are the doors of the miracles.”<sup>26</sup>

The interior of Ronchamp Chapel balances an open volume with areas of quiet reflection and worship. Every motion of the eye and action of the visitor is predetermined by the architect. Light is diffused as it cascades down the interior tower walls, illuminating individual chapels within. The mysterious punctures in the wall on the exterior are revealed in breathtaking fashion. Each opening, of varying size, is filled with colored stained-glass, evoking the spectacular effects seen in Gothic cathedrals. Colors spill into the open volume of the nave as a feeling of warmth in an otherwise unconditioned interior (Fig. 10).

The entire structure has subtle design references to the female body in both sexual connotations and motherly comfort. Author Flora Samuel states, “The architecture of the chapel

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<sup>25</sup> Le Corbusier and James I Dunnett. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Le Corbusier, *Modulor* (London: Faber, 1954), p. 224. For Samuel, Flora. “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp.” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 53, no. 2 (1999): 86.

at Ronchamp is open to two rather different interpretations: one pertaining to the tenets of the Catholic Church and one looking back into more ancient forms of nature worship, Gnosticism and alchemy, the former embracing chastity, the latter sexuality.”<sup>27</sup> Feminine forms and features are likened to a flower vase. The caressing nature of the curving white walls can be seen as a womb or caressing touch while the sensual curves of the ear are referenced in the floorplan (Fig. 11).<sup>28</sup> Corbusier has confirmed these observations throughout his career when referencing the “cries of the subconscious, sensual or chaste, and everything you can imagine.”<sup>29</sup> Ronchamp Chapel is a carrier of spiritual, architectural traits that grew through the Middle Ages until the Gothic culmination. Richard Krautheimer wrote the following about Corbusier’s process, stating he,

...joined the notion of symbolism both to the intentions of the patron and the response of the medieval onlooker. He noted that certain ancient and venerable structures were frequently copied in early medieval architecture, not accurately in order to produce an exact reproduction, but approximately and vaguely, with just enough of the essential features of the prototype to evoke its meaning, to allow the viewer to experience, at second hand so to speak, the essential qualities of the original.<sup>30</sup>

Each of these examples amplifies the spirituality within their walls and around their forms. The towering presence in either scale or location is combined with precise structure that can either caress with loving forms or open itself to the world. A choreographed story with smells and textures aligns with the architectural experience in one cohesive ritual experience. The examples chosen are all inherently religious with spirituality built right into the foundations.

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<sup>27</sup> Samuel, Flora. “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp.” 87.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel, Flora. “The Representation of Mary in the Architecture of Le Corbusier’s Chapel at Ronchamp.” 408-416.

<sup>29</sup> Le Corbusier, 1948. *The New World of Space*. Reynal and Hitchcock, New York. In Samuel, Flora. “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp.” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 53, no. 2 (1999): 74.

<sup>30</sup> Crossley, 116-117.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how these design decisions transcend religion to accentuate other sacred spaces like art museums.

Though the experience of an art museum and chapel are not necessarily the same, they both inspire and educate their occupants. In “The Alchemical Marriage of Art, Performance, and Spirituality”, Edmund B. Ligan states, “The spiritual attitude does not presume to provide answers; instead, it seeks to contemplate.” He continues, “For artists who share this attitude, spiritual inquiry is an ongoing action, not the end of a metaphysical pursuit.”<sup>31</sup> Art and religion have shared similar histories as both convey the human condition. The stories being shared by the chapel and the museum are sacred to those who visit and their design elements allow the visitor to fully experience these personal places through a ritualized performance of viewing.

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<sup>31</sup> Ligan, 40.

## Ritual in Architecture

The interaction between person and building occurs daily throughout each person's life. Out of necessity, shelter was developed for warmth, protection, and ultimately survival. The most basic of necessities for humanity (air, fire, water, and shelter) hold a special connection to not just our species, but all living things around the planet. We are all connected to each other through survival and shared life experiences. Architecture can expand this primal physical connection and truly link the built form to its inhabitants through a sacred feeling of safety, comfort, and ritual. Author Lindsay Jones, in their work, "The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison," suggests "...the locus of meaning resides neither in the building itself (a physical object) nor in the mind of the beholder (a human subject), but rather in the negotiation or the interactive relation that subsumes both building and beholder—in the ritual architectural event in which buildings and human participants alike are involved."<sup>32</sup> Meaning is not created by the building itself, but rather through situations within and around it. Lindsay continues, "The meaning of a building, then, must always be a meaning for some specific one at some specific time in some specific place."<sup>33</sup> Decisions by the architect can elevate these situations as one inhabits a building and performs their own procession and function through the various spaces. To understand how architecture plays this pivotal role, it is important to understand the idea of ritual and how it can be applied to the built environment.

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<sup>32</sup> Jones, Lindsay. "The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison," *Vol. 1 Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, (2000) 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 41.



The term, ritual, has many definitions with the simplest being a repeated and standardized action of communication. Beyond that, rituals have also been seen as not only functional or technical, but aesthetic as well. Author Stephan Feuchtwang elaborates, "...ritual is a dramatic performance, one that is stylized, distorting normal, everyday repeated action." He continues. "Its structure is that of a separation from the everyday, a state of suspension, and a return that is also a separation from whatever was disclosed in the state of suspension from the everyday."<sup>34</sup> Ritual can be both verbal and nonverbal and extends beyond religion, though its origins are heavily tied to religious ceremonies. Ritual is ultimately an expression of power negotiated between those with authority and those without. Feuchtwang states,

Familiarity that determines choices of action and composition tells people that something is different and that it is ritual. What alerts us is what brings about the separation of ritual from habit: the heightening of color, noise or the percussive transport of music, the pungency and selection of smells, the performance of peculiarly stiff formality and switches from noise to silence, the avoidance of foods ordinarily eaten and the eating of foods not ordinarily eaten, anxiety and fearful anticipation and then the shock of pain (of a puberty or another initiation rite), the revelation of secrets, the inducing of an experience that is or is not named as that of a god or God, the situational oddity.<sup>35</sup>

Though Feuchtwang argues that ritual is a "learned repetition and a discipline," it can be argued that ritual, especially through architectural space can be experienced without any prior knowledge and minimal rules.<sup>36</sup> In addition, contrary to Feuchtwang, ritual is not solely tied to repetition or habit. It can be a single performance within a built environment that is tied to its time and lasts through memory.

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<sup>34</sup> Feuchtwang, Stephan. "Ritual and Memory." In *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, Fordham University Press, 2010. 281.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Anthropologist Victor Turner famously studied the idea of ritual as it applied to the daily life of individuals and societies around the world. His study spanned gender, religion, wealth, and location to form a thorough understanding of what he saw. According to Turner, “Ritual is ‘a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests.’”<sup>37</sup> He describes rituals as a collection of meaningful symbols associated with community values and transformative for human attitudes and behavior. “In sum, Turner's definition of ritual refers to ritual performances involving manipulation of symbols that refer to religious beliefs.”<sup>38</sup>

The term “liminal” is introduced in Turner’s studies of initiation and ritual as part of a critique of Western society in the 1970s. Author Richard Rohr attempts to clarify this word’s meaning in comparison to the similar, but less transformative, “liminoid.”

Let's clarify the distinction between liminal and liminoid: Liminoid is the Catholic control freak, suddenly teary eyed while the choir sings "O Holy Night" at Midnight Mass. Liminal is the mother in the hospital waiting room who finally hears the meaning of the song for the first time, and she is interiorly changed. Liminoid is the sudden "United We Stand" bumper sticker appearing everywhere, when there have been no noticeable movements toward American healing, forgiveness or reconciliation on any real level. Liminal is the very real fragility, compassion and humility that I have seen on the faces of World Trade Center widows. Liminoid is the camaraderie at football stadiums and rock concerts -- which does take away some momentary alienation. Liminal is the amazing trust I have experienced at the county jail here in Albuquerque, when the macho Mexican guys go to their knees after Communion. The same men who normally would never be caught off guard or close their eyes in one another's presence. In each case, the first is pseudo-religion, which is everywhere. The second is church, which is also everywhere, but does not have a sign out front.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Deflem, Mathieu. “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis.” 5.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Rohr, Richard. "We need transformation, not false transcendence. (Lenten series: liminal space)." *National Catholic Reporter*, (February 15, 2002), 13.

The liminoid is a means of artificial transformation without true ritual while the liminal is pure transformation through veiled ritual. The idea of liminality, specifically 'shared liminality' contributes to another term of Turner's, "communitas." Rohr explains, "Communitas in a spiritual sense does not come from manufactured celebrations or events." He elaborates, "It is forgotten the next day or even the next hour. It depends on artificial stimulants of food, drink, music, shared common space and energy. It is really lovely, and probably necessary, but it does not transform. It merely sustains, and it is often unfortunately diversionary from the deeper task. True communitas comes from having walked through liminality together -- and coming out the other side -- forever different."<sup>40</sup> Academics provides a unique opportunity to understand that these feelings are shared across humanity and can be a tool for bringing people together. Liminality and communitas are difficult to imagine and even more difficult to recreate. This is where the idea of architectural ritual can be utilized, not just for religious purposes, but for a collective human experience. Ritual is, "a formation, a conveyer, a trigger, or a screen for the mutual recognition of memory, emotion, and event."<sup>41</sup> It is not history or memory, instead it produces memorable experiences through the sharing of memories and expression. Through architecture the ritual can be provided, but not prescribed in order to facilitate an experience as close to liminality as possible.

Turner identified three phases to a ritual process that promotes the transition of an individual from one state of mind to another through liminality. First, sacred symbols are communicated to the on-looker through exhibitions, artifacts, or actions. Second, familiar cultural elements are presented in a distorted manner to force the viewer to think about their

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<sup>40</sup> Rohr, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Feuchtwang, 295.

society and reflect on basic values and order. Last, social structure is simplified so that all ritual subjects are viewed as absolute equals. These cultural and ritual situations, Turner argued, “could open a space in which individuals can step back from the practical concerns and social relations of everyday life and look at themselves and their world – or at some aspect of it – with different thoughts and feelings.”<sup>42</sup> It is this sense of assurance combined with an enlightened connection to the spiritual realm that provides both guidance and freedom throughout the religious ritual and architectural experience.

To be effective, architecture must be enlivening, but also assuring. It can not only provide guidance, but also freedom to explore. These seemingly contradictory missions are often achieved through the creation of ritual around and within the architecture itself. Religious buildings of all denominations are inherently built to provide shared liminality, this ritual experience and progression as one approaches a state of connection and contemplation with a higher power that ultimately changes the person’s status and engagement with the community. This spirituality is transferred throughout the site among the landscape, the architecture, and the people. It is suggested by some phenomenologists that the sacred manifests itself only in certain places/buildings and these sites and structures thus become “loci of divine power or energy, and, as such, exercise a sort of transcendental tug on people’s religious sensibilities.”<sup>43</sup> This connection is unavoidable by those who pass-by as the architecture itself seems to summon you to enter. Author Lindsay Jones again quips, “Once the dialogue between pilgrim and pyramid is initiated, it must be dialogue about something; the pilgrim must come to know something he had

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<sup>42</sup> Duncan, Carol. “Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums”. New York: Routledge, (1995). 11.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison, 75.

not known before, or perhaps be something he had not been before.”<sup>44</sup> This dichotomy of cultural distortion brings the known and the unknown together in one place.

The architecture opens a dialogue between spirituality and visitors. Each detail (symbol) becomes an important piece of information for those who are open to its guidance:

For instance, while many interpreters describe the transformation effected by Gothic stained glass as a simple matter of pedagogy—that is, the illiterate learn the sacred stories of Jesus Christ—some commentators, including Abbot Sugar, credit these windows with fostering a much more profound and mysterious contemplative process of ‘anagogical illumination’ wherein worshipers are magically transported from the material world to a realm of ethereal bliss.<sup>45</sup>

The sources of these effects can often go unnoticed or become lost in the overall composition of the religious structure, but this is not necessarily a negative thing. The purpose of these architectural creations is to connect those who seek answers to those who provide them. These design elements, like the stained glass in Gothic cathedrals, can work seamlessly within the overall design to symbolically educate while also illuminating the space and transcending the visitor to an altered state through colors and shapes. Jones poetically states, “Religious buildings arise as human creations, but they persist as transforming, life-altering environments. They are at once expressions of and sources of religious experience. They are invariably both ‘faithful products of the dominant society’ and catalysts or ‘triggers’ for change. In the metaphorical language of Wassily Kandinsky, every work of architecture is both ‘the child of its time’ and ‘the mother of our emotions.’”<sup>46</sup>

The transformation and fluidity of religion, spirituality, ritual, and architecture allows for transference from any cultural institution to its visitors. All sites, not just those associated with

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*. 87.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 96-97.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*. 22.

religion, become sacred when they share these ritualistic qualities. To quote Lindsay Jones once more, “No built form, however plain, however meticulously planned, is, in principle, exempt from this quality of ontological plentitude.”<sup>47</sup> Another built form worthy of these ritualistic and sacred observations is the museum. Prominent intellectuals promote the way these institutions “showcase the artistic and cultural heights” from all over the world while demonstrating “the possibility that certain objects can transcend cultural context.” It allows for a sharing of knowledge through artistic inspiration.<sup>48</sup> Author Susanna Sirefman, in the article “Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture” states, “Museums of all stripes serve as our multicultural crossroads, drawing together a vast diversity of people to admire art, artifacts, themselves, and each other.”<sup>49</sup> Their effect on world culture, for better or worse, is immeasurable. In “The Problematics of Collecting and Display, Part 1,” the authors explain, “Since their invention in late eighteenth-century Europe as one of the premier epistemological technologies of the Enlightenment, and of the social, political, and ethical education of the populations of modernizing nation-states, museums most commonly have been constructed as evidentiary and documentary artifacts; as instruments of historiographic practice.”<sup>50</sup> To those individuals affected by the subtle rituals within a museum, it is understood that the sacral nature of a place is not just limited to religion. Author Carol Duncan makes the following observation:

A ritual site of any kind is a place programmed for the enactment of something. It is a place designed for some kind of performance. It has this structure whether or not visitors can read its cues. In traditional rituals, participants often perform or witness a drama – enacting a real or symbolic sacrifice. But a ritual performance

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<sup>47</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Robson, James. “Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia.” *PMLA* 125, no. 1 (2010): 121.

<sup>49</sup> Sirefman, Susanna. “Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture.” *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (1999): 317.

<sup>50</sup> Berlo, Janet Catherine, Ruth B. Phillips, Carol Duncan, Donald Preziosi, Danielle Rice, and Anne Rorimer. “The Problematics of Collecting and Display, Part 1.” *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 1 (1995): 13.

need not be a formal spectacle. It may be something an individual enacts alone by following a prescribed route, by repeating a prayer, by recalling a narrative, or by engaging in some other structured experience that relates to the history or meaning of the site (or to some object or objects on the site). Some individuals may use a ritual site more knowledgeably than others – they may be more educationally prepared to respond to its symbolic cues.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to understand how ritual is applied to the museum setting and ultimately how architecture can help the museum experience to meet its full potential. Any mention of the liminality, regarding museum architecture, should be understood to be as close to absolute liminal as possible. This phenomenological experience of architectural ritual is transformative, but it will not achieve a change of form or status for the visitor outside of the context of the building. As another point of clarity, the term, museum, is broad and somewhat undefined. At their core, these spaces serve as storytellers. Differentiating between art museum and artifact museum only creates unnecessary confusion and should ultimately be looked at interchangeably. It is an antiquated notion to elevate an art museum over the artifact/theme museum; however, it is important to understand that no two museums are alike, and any architectural features must be choreographed specifically for the time, place, and content at each location (physical or virtual).<sup>52</sup>

Art museums made their appearance in the late eighteenth century and have consistently been compared to palaces, temples, and older ceremonial monuments. This was, in many cases, a deliberate design choice, but it is argued that rituals and museums are antithetical because of the secular nature of a museum. As discussed, rituals are associated with religious practices as they contribute to a sense of magical or miraculous transformations. This is viewed by many as a

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<sup>51</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Sirefman, 315.

direct contradiction to the contemplation and learning provided by museums.<sup>53</sup> However, it is this contemplation and learning, combined with connections through ritual and design that bring museums and religion closer to interchangeability. Author James Robson examines this contradiction in the article, “Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia.”

Modern museums do not function in exclusively religious ways, and religious sites have not all become like museums, but each kind of institution has been able to adopt the other’s role with little alteration in infrastructure or content. We are insufficiently attuned to the religious facets of museums not because too few examples exist but perhaps because of the specious modernization-secularization theories that have for too long drawn a clear line demarcating the secular (museums) from the religious (temples and monasteries) and because of a reluctance to account for the persistence of religion in the modern world.<sup>54</sup>

Art museums, especially those constructed prior to World War II, are generally windowless, imposing structures that carry the classical forms typically associated with sepulchral and religious structures. Carol Duncan explains, “Commonly regarded as repositories of spirit, places where one may commune with artistic souls of the past, art museums already serve a purpose that is congruous with that of tombs, mausolea, and memorials to the dead.”<sup>55</sup> She continues to describe how it is the visitors who enact the ritual of the museum by performing on the “stage” designed by the architect. This includes a sequence of spaces, arrangement of objects, lighting, and architectural detailing that all create a script for the visitor to follow. Duncan likens the situation to certain aspects of medieval cathedrals when pilgrims would follow a similar structured narrative created by the church. She concludes by stating that, “museums offer well-developed ritual scenarios, most often in the form of art historical narratives that

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<sup>53</sup> Berlo, Phillips, Duncan, Preziosi, Rice, and Rorimer. 10-11.

<sup>54</sup> Robson, Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Duncan, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums. 83.



unfold through a sequence of spaces. Even when visitors enter museums to see only selected works, the museum's larger narrative structure stands as a frame and gives meaning to individual works."<sup>56</sup> Throughout their history, museums have acted as time capsules, collecting, and displaying a time of reverence and nostalgia. A tribute to those who came before us as well as our contemporaries. Author Susanna Sirefman explains how museum architecture is constantly associated with cultural myths, rituals and lore. She states, "Both myth, rituals, and architecture are narrative metaphors for social construction, defining boundaries for human interaction with other humans and nature. Posturban museum architecture revolves around fresh rituals and contemporary myths—those of site, fragmentation, scale, technology, programmatic flexibility, and cross-cultural connection."<sup>57</sup>

Experiencing religious and museum architecture is more about a conversation between building and person rather than a one-sided observation of the inanimate. This dialogue encompasses everything within and around the building. People, artifacts, and senses, come in and out of the conversation, but the visitor and the building remain constant. Museum space, like many ritual sites, is culturally designated for contemplation and learning. "Liminality" can be used to describe this designation as it describes a mode of consciousness "betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending."<sup>58</sup>

Author James Robson provides his own stunning narrative describing the ritual approach to a museum. He recalls,

A visit to the Miho Museum involves a long journey by train, bus, and foot. During the last leg of the journey, one meanders along a path lined with cherry trees, passes through a cave-like tunnel, and crosses a suspension bridge before arriving at the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Sirefman, Susanna. "Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture." 298.

<sup>58</sup> Berlo, Phillips, Duncan, Preziosi, Rice, and Rorimer. *The Problematics of Collecting and Display*, Part 1. 11.

museum. According to the Shinji Shumeikai (the New Religion behind the Miho Museum), the journey to the museum and the carefully chosen art inside it can positively influence the spiritual development of a visitor. The visitor should, in theory, return a changed person.<sup>59</sup>

The totality of a museum is best understood as a ritual setting and ceremonial monument, rather than just a container or vessel for knowledge. There is more to these structures than pure architecture or pure object preservation; rather, “they are complex totalities that include everything from the building to the selection and ordering of collections and the details of their installation and lighting.”<sup>60</sup>

It cannot be quantitatively known why people respond to some buildings with passion and others with disdain. Peoples’ interactions with architectural works are a dynamic and interactive process in which both the inanimate and animate must contribute to the transformation.<sup>61</sup> Lindsay Jones explains,

Where phenomenologists, like van der Leuw and Eliade, tend to attribute a person’s attraction only to certain buildings to the presences (or absence) of a transnatural sacred quality, psychologists are more likely to explain diversified tastes in relation to the idiosyncrasies of one’s familial history. Sociologists might, for instance, emphasize the influence of class, race, or gender factors on the relative appeal of various works of architecture; art historians might appeal to something like that which Panofsky termed the “mental habits” of the age; and historian of religions Bell contributes the intriguing possibility that what is at issue is a socioculturally specific “sense of ritual”. But regardless of one’s disciplinary orientation, there is certainly more at stake in the variable ways that people respond to specific works of art and architecture than either thoroughly individualized preferences or calculated decision making.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Robson, *Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia*. 124.

<sup>60</sup> Berlo, Phillips, Duncan, Preziosi, Rice, and Rorimer. *The Problematics of Collecting and Display*, Part 1. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*. 45.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

A museum can always give something unexpected in the form of the art, the artifacts, or the performances within its walls. It will always be inherently familiar, just like the feeling of being in nature or sharing a good story. This provides both a reassuring continuity along with a component of otherness or strangeness. The architecture manages to soothe and surprise, orient and disorient, beckon and withhold.

## Disconnect Between Content and Design

Museum architecture has developed as the needs and functions of the museum and community grew and changed. As symbolic representations of their culture and purveyors of knowledge, money, and status they have always been dedicated to these growing centers for the arts and sciences. Beginning with forms that resembled the classic architecture of the ancients, museums are now advancing all aspects of architectural design, construction, and function. Museums are evolving from a symbol of strength, knowledge, and wealth into what is now a showcase of the modern architectural masters; however, this renaissance of design can sometimes come at the expense of the visitor and their connection to the culture within.

Some museum architecture, in the last 50 years, has trended toward the idea that a prominent Architect must create an icon that gives culture and financial gain to the city. Works by Frank Gehry and Santiago Calatrava tend to put form over function and consumption over contemplation. "...the array of non-art-related diversions contained in the new museum is often more important to the institution's success than the art itself."<sup>63</sup> For most visitors, the architecture of a museum is the first thing they see upon arrival. It often stands as a symbol of the community, the city, and in some cases, the country. A building like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, designed by Frank O. Gehry, is an iconic statement in the city, "but the bulk of the museum is an architectural tour de force that competes with the art exhibited within. Remove the art and the space seems to lose nothing."<sup>64</sup> Architect Philip Johnson, while speaking about the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, stated, "When a building is as good as that one, fuck the art."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Merrill, Elizabeth M. "Zaha Hadid's Center for Contemporary Art and the Perils of New Museum Architecture." *ARQ: Architectural Research Quarterly* 23 (2019): 210–24. doi:10.1017/S1359135519000204.

<sup>64</sup> Schocken, Hillel. "Packaging the Evolving Museum." *Curator* 49 (2006): 12–15. doi:10.1111/j.2151-6952.2006.tb00193.x.

<sup>65</sup> Merrill, Elizabeth M. Zaha Hadid's Center for Contemporary Art. 210-24.

In America, the trend continues with an architectural museum addition from Santiago Calatrava at the Milwaukee Art Museum. The original museum building by Eero Saarinen and an addition by David Kahler are very much overshadowed by this new structure that “includes the Quadracci Pavilion with the now famous Burke Brise Soleil, a delicate but massive movable sunshade.”<sup>66</sup> This shading device towers over the art center and has become a symbol and cultural icon for the city. Despite this visual connection to the city and its people, the connections between the Calatrava addition and the original buildings are stark and, in some ways, disrespectful.

In volume, color and concept the Saarinen and Kahler buildings mesh inside and out, constructing a conversation between weight and weightlessness. However, there is no question where the old buildings end and the Calatrava begins. It sutures the twenty-first century to the twentieth; passing from one interior to the other is like traversing a space station dock. Outside, the brilliant white of the Calatrava upstages the existing buildings. Add the elaborate form of the main pavilion with the wingspan of the brise soleil and it becomes clear who is stealing the show.<sup>67</sup>

It is evident as more museums go through this cultural rebranding that it is extremely difficult to create financially viable, iconic works of architecture for the city that also respect the original buildings and the artwork inside. Internationally acclaimed architect Matthias Sauerbruch described a “good museum” by stating, “A good museum will open a field of possibilities where there did not seem to be much before. It will ‘recharge your batteries’. Life will suddenly be possible again and will be full of unexpected potential.”<sup>68</sup>

Modern design and immense budgets do not always coalesce with the collection inside. Instead, it can become a jewelry box, forever obscuring what should be more readily seen. The experience with the objects, the cognitive and introspective interaction that occurs within a

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<sup>66</sup> Bellavance, Leslie. “Museumania.” *Art Papers* 27 (2003): 22–27.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>68</sup> Matthias Sauerbruch quoted in Guerzoni, Guido. “Cultural Buildings as a Resource or How to Design a Museum.” *Museums on the Map 1995-2012 ed.* (2014) 210.

gallery, and the social experiences are now skewed and, in some cases, removed because of the architectural design of the building. The charisma and presence of the museum is now the dominating feature of the site and, if done incorrectly, can overshadow the effectiveness of the exhibits within. Museum architects, moving forward, must walk a fine line between being a part of this dialogue versus being the only voice that people can hear.

As museum architecture grew in popularity toward the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so too did memorial museums. Their focus is to create an experience for the visitor above more standard museum functions such as the collection and display of artifacts. Amy Sodaro elaborates, "...rather than simply telling the story of the past, experiential museums seek to make the visitor 'experience' it."<sup>69</sup> This global trend can be seen, in its purest form, in Berlin, Germany where one can find the Jewish Museum. This collection of buildings is meant to celebrate Jewish culture and people while refusing to disregard the painful moments in their past, including the Holocaust. Sodaro states, "While challenging traditional museological practices of collection and display, it also challenges the new norms around the creation of memorial museums and other sites of memory to be self-reflexive meditations on the negative past and its trauma."<sup>70</sup> Architect Daniel Libeskind left an indelible mark on this museum as his design for an expansion completed its construction in 2001.

The building is shaped in a zigzag pattern that has been described as a distorted Start of David. Jagged slashes are cut through the zinc façade, not as windows, but as a reference to scars and that this is no ordinary punched opening building (Fig. 12). Sodaro describes the interior space stating, "The Jewish Museum is disconcerting from the outside, but even more so inside. The building design is comprised of two lines, one straight, one jagged. Where these lines

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<sup>69</sup> Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum." 80.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 78.

intersect, they form voids, which run through the building and are the central focus of the Libeskind design (Fig. 13).<sup>71</sup>

Sodaro continues with her description of the experience as the visitor enters and moves through the building for the first time (Fig. 14).

Visitors access the Jewish Museum through an underground passage from the old Baroque Berlin Museum building; Libeskind's building has no entrance...One of the voids, the tower is a dark, cold, silent space with just one sliver of light cutting through the blackness. Libeskind's inspiration for the tower comes from the story of transport of a survivor, who was only able to survive the horrors of the train ride to the camp by focusing on a sliver of light through the roof of the car (Libeskind 2009) (Fig. 15). Perhaps more than any other space in the building, the Holocaust Tower experientially produces the nothingness that Libeskind desired his building to represent, while exiting the tower to go back into the museum takes the visitor back to the straight line of continuity that is the other backbone of the museum. The other trace of Holocaust memory is located in one of the five voids, the "Memory Void," which houses Menashe Kadishman's sculpture "Fallen Leaves" (Shalechet). As visitors approach this void, they hear clanking - almost as if they are nearing the kitchen where pots and pans are being used; on entering the void, they see that the sound is that made by visitors walking over the 10,000 steel faces, frozen in horror, that cover the floor of the void, representing the suffering and memory of the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>72</sup> (Fig. 16)

The museum still functions in many ways that are standard to the industry including interactive exhibits, art, artifacts and a continuous narrative of Jewish life and culture. This building is somewhat of a paradox as it attempts to balance itself between memorial and museum. The buildings must function as both a powerful Holocaust memorial and educational museum of culture and advancement. Sodaro states, "It is a museum meant to tell the story of German multiculturalism in a historical dimension in a way that can define German multiculturalism in the present and future."<sup>73</sup> In many ways, the exhibitions and galleries are chronological and concise in their presentation of Jewish life, but the addition created by

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<sup>71</sup> Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum." 84.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 87.

Libeskind causes disruption to this narrative by emotionally stopping the conversation provided by the museum.<sup>74</sup>

Daniel Libeskind reflected on his Jewish Museum design by writing, ....Museums today represent a public discourse, a public activity, and a public attraction... museums today perform a considerable function which gather a citizen's desires, emotions, and visions. [...] Perhaps it is the case today, in a secular world, museums like sporting events, are the places where people are mirrored in artifacts which testify to their existence"<sup>75</sup>

Libeskind clearly did not set out to simply create a memorial, but he also did not shy away from the emotional elements of his design. He wanted to create a full experience for the Jewish culture around the world, but specifically in Germany. This powerful, meaningful, somber experience cuts through any joy that might be had in the building. The memorial is unavoidable and therefore the architecture and the museum are always going to be one entity. "An inhabitable concrete, steel, and zinc sculpture, the architecture is tremendously powerful on its own, sending the visitor through a series of expressive, evocative spaces. Here it is the architecture that inspires reflection, recollection, fear, and reverence. This building is a brilliant monument; it is not a museum, and would do best to remain empty."<sup>76</sup> The cultural impact of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin cannot be denied, and as a memorial for the Holocaust, it succeeds down to an emotional level. However, "Libeskind's spaces make it extremely difficult to exhibit anything within them and whatever is exhibited seems a stranger to its home."<sup>77</sup> The building is a huge financial success and properly conveys the pain of the subject matter through its architecture, but as a museum it falls short.

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<sup>74</sup> Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum." 89.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>76</sup> Sirefman, Susanna. "Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture." 315.

<sup>77</sup> Schocken, Hillel. Packaging the Evolving Museum.



Original museums were developed to protect culture and educate others about that culture. They were a large safekeep of human history for future generations. Created with stone, these fortresses served a basic function to pass knowledge, but also to project wealth and strength. The museum, specifically the art museum, has evolved from a classical symbol of strength, knowledge, and wealth into what is now a showcase of the modern architectural masters; however, this renaissance of design can sometimes come at the expense of the visitor and their connection to the culture within. Twenty-first century architecture would continue to explore new means of elevating the experience and the meaning of a museum. Daniel Libeskind pushed this idea to the limit with his Jewish Museum addition in Berlin, Germany. Unfortunately, the experience often overshadows the culture it is intended to uplift. Though there are many factors that contribute to the success of a museum, the ultimate success is tied to their original purpose as a champion of culture.

It must be stated that the interior architecture of any museum would not succeed without exhibition design as well as the museum's staff, volunteers, and donors who bring life and profit to these institutions. Without the many levels of care that these people bring to the museums, the architecture would not matter because it would not exist. Amy Sodaro gives her description, stating,

...museums are a - or the - key institution through which we understand our past and present identities. They are considered to be trustworthy houses of "authenticity" and "history" and as such they are among the most prominent institutions for education about and preservation of the past. But they are not only spaces for education and preservation. Museums play a number of other very specific and important roles in society: they are centers for education, spaces in which the "ritual of citizenship" is played out; "exhibitionary complexes" in which society learns self-regulation and discipline; important public spaces for the building and fostering of identities of communities and nations; and perhaps most importantly, museums have a "legitimizing function". They are the gatekeepers to

our history and past, but also spaces in which our social, civic, and national identities are preserved, displayed, and shaped.<sup>78</sup>

The physical museum is designed to house a collection while preserving and presenting that collection to its visitors. Architecture can fulfill most of the needs required to accomplish this purpose, but the design of the gallery spaces and presentation of the collection remains in the hands of the exhibition designers and curators. These professionals have studied and trained for the opportunity to bring the museum to life. Years of Museum Studies and museum operation combine to give an insight that few architects could hope to understand. One cannot succeed without the other. Authors Volker Kirchberg and Martine Trondle explain, "...museum studies tend to deal with cultural, historical, or critical analyses of the museum as an institution: its role in society; its politics; its administration; its function as a place for learning, leisure, and self-actualization; its curatorial and collecting practices."<sup>79</sup> This knowledge, combined with true experience both inside a museum setting and with a variety of people, becomes the foundation for the designer to transform what the architect has provided.

The architect can design spaces and manipulate the path to and from the galleries while affecting all the senses, but after the threshold to the gallery is crossed, responsibility for the design is taken over by the museum staff. Beyond the physical demands of changing a "white box" into a gallery space and dealing with elements of light, sound, and accessibility, there is also three sets of issues described by Corinne Kratz. These include categories, narratives, and engagement. "The categories and how they relate to one another are foundations for the exhibit's narratives and humanizing/dehumanizing dynamics, while the narratives simultaneously shape changing notions of those categories and of how they interrelate. All combine in the ways that

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<sup>78</sup> Sodaro, Amy. "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum." 79.

<sup>79</sup> Kirchberg, Volker, and Martin Tröndle. 169.

visitors interpret and become caught up in the Galleries.”<sup>80</sup> It is through these issues that the exhibition begins to tell a story. Categories, interwoven with narratives and engaging with cognitive minds. The story being told by the designer and the curator must be presented in a universal language, one that can connect with people regardless of who they are or where they come from. Kratz continues,

Curators and designers work together to depict and represent such narrative and emotional contours, but their impact is not automatic or entirely predictable. Design can heighten potential connections, but ultimately their apprehension depends on the histories, values, and experience that visitors bring to exhibits, though not necessarily in fully explicit ways. Similarly, it is the rare visitor who pays close attention to every detail of exhibit design. Rather, its effects occur in a ‘state of distraction’. Museum design is seldom foregrounded, rarely a focus of direct attention, and usually absorbed ‘in incidental fashion’. As Edward Ball notes, ‘Exhibition designers are the unacknowledged poets of public history. It is a three-dimensional art, and in a way subconscious in its effects’. Since different visitors respond, understand, and connect with exhibits in varied ways, effective exhibit design should incorporate both interpretive guidance and a certain openness, which together can foster places of potential connection.<sup>81</sup>

Authors Pekarik, Doering, and Karns attribute a mutual connection of expectations, experiences, and satisfactions to the success of a museum visit. This has been translated to a four-dimensional view of exhibition design. These dimensions include, “...the object experience (seeing rare, genuine, or valuable art, or being moved by beauty); the cognitive experience (gaining or enriching understanding of the art); the introspective experience (imagining, reflecting on, or connecting with the art); and the social experience (interacting with companions, strangers at the exhibition, or museum personnel).”<sup>82</sup> Author J. Packer sees a satisfying museum experience as a byproduct of psychological stability. According to Packer, “...the degree of a pleasurable museum visit depends on satisfying object, cognitive, introspective, and social

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<sup>80</sup> Kratz, Corinne A. “Where Did You Cry? Crafting Categories, Narratives, and Affect Through Exhibit Design.” *Kronos*, no. 44 (2018): 232.

<sup>81</sup> Kratz, 248-249.

<sup>82</sup> Kirchberg, Volker, and Martin Tröndle, 169.

experiences plus what she labels ‘restorative elements,’ such as fascination and being away from everyday life.”<sup>83</sup> Author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi viewed the exhibition experience as full immersion into the moment where time stands still. Emotional, intellectual, cognitive, and dialogic encounters can be perceived between the visitors and the art, the visitors and architecture and between one visitor to another.<sup>84</sup> All of these views share a commonality of being linked to the visitor through their own, individual experience through the space. Museums can only be successful if a collaboration of ideas occurs from the architect through to the exhibition designers and curators. Museums are too large and too important to humanity for decisions to be made by one person. The diversity of humanity requires a diverse collaboration of ideas, standards, and connections to best create a museum experience for all.

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<sup>83</sup> Kirchberg, Volker, and Martin Tröndle, 170.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 170.

## **A Museum Ritual**

The ritual of architecture in an art museum can be momentary in a specific exhibit or it can transpire over the course of an entire day. The building architecture guides and informs the visitor, providing comfortable spaces with some surprising twists and turns. Whether it is the very first visit, or the first visit of the week, these feelings should always exist. All experiences of architecture are incomplete and impermanent not only because of the variability of different people's experiences, but also because of the diversity of experiences that any one person can have at a certain moment. The experience of a war memorial, a public library, or a historic plantation are never going to be experienced by two people the same way. The relationship between memory, history, and ritual is always dependent on feelings, ethics, and recollection of each person. The necessary component for all is openness to personal change.

One ritual museum experience holds a special place in the heart of many. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO has established itself as a premiere museum destination, not just because of its world-class collection, but also because of its world-class combination of traditional and contemporary architecture. Both structures, old and new, contribute to the overall liminal experience and help to induce a sacral experience for visitors and employees alike. It is important to understand what some of the architectural features of this museum are and how they can be used in the construction of new museums and renovations of current structures. Architecture is not meant to provide the same experience to all, but rather, a feeling of growth and change for everyone it interacts with. Those with local knowledge and connection to specific architecture will inherently feel more connected to its history and culture. Lindsay Jones explains,

As variation must necessarily be embedded in order, so too ritual-architectural events are necessarily embedded in local and specific historical traditions. In an important sense, therefore, the absolute necessity of a conservative, specific, and stabilizing component of tradition with which the spectator finds some identity (though not always a conscious identity) reins in the superabundance of sacred architecture.<sup>85</sup>

Museums must be connected to everything around them to fully engage the community, the visitor, and the environment. Author Susanna Sirefman echoes this sentiment in her writing, “Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture.” She states, “The ideal museum building cultivates both anticipation and memory while relating to its location and community.”<sup>86</sup> This is all part of the liminal experience that should be built into these places of knowledge and culture as they push to connect the visitor beyond just the physical to the spiritual. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is nestled amongst winding boulevards lined with trees and historical residences. The museum remains hidden until the final few moments of approach when the human scale of the neighborhood is replaced by a green sloping lawn that slopes up to the towering six-story, solid stone form of the original museum building (Fig. 17).

Standing as a temple of culture and a memorial for its founders, the classic Beaux-Arts inspired form includes towering Ionic capitals, perfect symmetry, and limestone of the highest quality. East of the main building are curious objects that, at first, seem out of place. Large glass forms erupt from the earth, the entire length of the hillside. By day, these elements reflect the surrounding greens and blues to almost blend into the surrounding environment, like a gem in a mountainside (Fig. 18). By night, these elements glow from within with a white light that

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<sup>85</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 83.

<sup>86</sup> Sirefman, Susanna. “Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture.” 298.

illuminates the lawn and invites you to come inside. These “lenses” are part of the 2007 Bloch Building museum addition, created by architect Steven Holl.

The prominent location of the original building in the center of the community can be seen in the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Both are community centers that summon all willing subjects to their doors. Though Notre-Dame has a more pronounced exposure along the adjacent river, it remains hidden amongst the other buildings when approached from the north and west portions of the island it sits on. The elevated stature of the Nelson-Atkins acts as a beacon that calls for visitors much like Ronchamp Chapel in France. The elevation of chapel and museum act as spiritual gateways that bring the visitor closer to nature and the Heavens. All of these structures are symbols that connect to everything around them and fully engage with the community, the visitor, and the environment. The Nelson-Atkins Museum can seem mysterious and imposing when you first approach its massive structure, but upon closer inspection, the building starts to become more personal.

To today’s eyes, accustomed to the informal architecture of strip malls and suburban subdivisions, his building seems cold, hard, and elite. A closer look, though, reveals a rich decorative program that challenges viewers to decode and appreciate its many stories. From idealized frontier history to poetry cast in bronze. Wight (the original architect) remembered to include in his temple an intimate, human scale.<sup>87</sup>

Art museums share the experience of straddling the line between history and personal expression. The ritual of these spaces invites opinions and attempts to be a safe place for all ideas and cultures. Carol Duncan expresses her thoughts that controlling a museum narrative is controlling the representation of a community. This includes its highest values and truths. She states, “Those who are best prepared to perform its ritual – those who are most able to respond to

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<sup>87</sup> Churchman and Erbes, *High Ideals and Aspirations*, 140.

its various cues – are also those whose identities (social, sexual, racial, etc.) the museum ritual most fully confirms.”<sup>88</sup> Providing architectural moments for experience and reflection can allow the visitor to curate their own thoughts and opinions while still connecting them to a larger world view as well as local customs and cultures. This is more easily achieved through physical touch that provides a real-world connection between visitors in a shared location. Sirefman states,

The very notion of a museum embodies physicality. The word itself implies a built structure, where the activities on offer revolve around human motion through articulated space. The experiential narrative that a museum embodies is inseparable from its physical condition—its architecture. Architecture represents the museum’s public image, defines the institution’s relationship to its setting, and constructs the framework of the visitors’ experience.<sup>89</sup>

The built form manifests connection through story and ritual, but also through shared physical experiences. This is to say that a portion of the museum experience must be a physical connection between art and visitor to allow for spatial awareness and interaction.

The most common rule of museums is to not touch the art or artifacts. The Nelson-Atkins still manages to play with texture and senses throughout both the old and new buildings without compromising the collection. This allows for a bond to be formed between visitor and building that ultimately heightens their cognitive experience. There is the cold, modern, metal handle of the glass door at the entry to the Bloch Building addition. Further into the heart of the building, in the main lobby, the connection between new and old is an abrupt, but respectful transition. The framed bronze entry doors and solid limestone wall of the original museum building provide a gateway through time. Their presence is shown as a piece of art with clean connection between old and new. This framing acts as a subtle reminder of the past as well as a symbol of respect

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<sup>88</sup> Duncan, Carol. “Civilizing Rituals,” 8.

<sup>89</sup> Sirefman, 297.



from one architect to their predecessor. As discussed earlier, the entry doors were extremely important to religious structures like Notre-Dame in Paris and Ronchamp Chapel. The architecture becomes a portal and helps the visitor to allow themselves to change as an act of crossing the threshold.

Architect Steven Holl sees his buildings like a narrative and believes that details serve the cause of varied experience. This narrative and the various details of the Bloch Building are captured by author Julie Lasky. “The plaster on the lobby walls is feathered like a fresco. The dark, end-cut squares of wood making up the gallery floors have spider-web swirls of grain. Though the interior hardware is consistent, the railings boast a funky, decorative crimp.”<sup>90</sup> Handmade, earthy textures combine with a sleek modern aesthetic to create a sensorial dichotomy. The original Nelson-Atkins Museum building is a mausoleum of art for protection, tribute, and remembrance.<sup>91</sup> After passing through the bronze doors, from the new addition to the original, one is greeted by a captivating, pristine marble staircase. The smooth railings are formed into the staircase and the cold, rounded stone fully engages the hand and establishes physical connection with the architecture. Compared to the thin, harsh edges of the steel Bloch Building railings, the stone feels natural, comfortable, and elegant (Fig. 19).

The original building is predominantly made of stone. It has warm tones, accentuated by brass, to counteract some of the coldness of the hard surfaces. Galleries are delineated by large marble cased openings that help the visitor transition through space and time. Each gallery is unique as the individual curators have designed the rooms based on their unique criteria. One specific gallery transports the visitor through not just time, but location and culture as well. The

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<sup>90</sup> Lasky, Julie. 2007. “Shine on You Crazy Diamond.” ID: International Design 54 (6): 96–97.

<sup>91</sup> Ampliación Del Museo de Arte Nelson Atkins, 50.

Japanese gallery at the northwest corner of the structure is completely clad in wood. This departure from the cold stone of the rest of the museum is striking, but there is also a warmth and comfortable quality about the space. The sound of the creaking floors and the undulating wood panels add to your sensorial experience of the art in the room (Fig. 20). This is not unlike the handcrafted wood benches and lit candles that warm and humanize the Catholic churches and cathedrals mentioned earlier. The ritual experience commences at first sight of the building, but it continues through physical connection through the senses.

A virtual experience of a museum removes all aspects of the ritual experience and thus eliminates any chance of liminality and emotional change. This is not to say that technology is detrimental to museums, quite the opposite. It should be used as a tool to enhance the in-person experience of the museum by the visitor. Susanna Sirefman explains,

It is a commonplace that technology (the Internet in particular) has begun to remove architecture from the museum, to remove enclosure. In actuality, technology has been catalytic in catapulting the museum (as a physical destination place, therefore as real-time architecture) into a renaissance period. Many well-documented factors now draw people to museums: the blockbuster exhibition, marketing, a common interest in the visual, a dumbing-down of the exhibits. Digital connections and museum web sites are included as a positive influence on this draw. Rising attendance records are evidence that seeing an artwork on-line is an enticement, not a substitute, for seeing it in person. The human desire to gather, to mix and mingle, to engage in a collective activity in the same place, has ineluctably led to the museum's current success.<sup>92</sup>

Advancements in technology allow for museums to reach a wider audience not only in terms of distance, but also through diversity and accessibility. This accessibility extends to accessibility for the elderly and those with disabilities as well. Assistance in access to the building and access to understanding the art through more than just visual sensation is paramount to museum

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<sup>92</sup> Sirefman, 311-12.

operation in the future. The more people who can be brought together to experience a museum will only strengthen the liminal experience of all who are involved.

As stated earlier, a museum's connection with nature and the surrounding context is necessary to establish the museum as a cultural icon for residents and visitors alike (Fig. 21). In the same way that religious architecture establishes itself within a community, museum architecture must create this connection and promote itself as a safe-haven, or sanctuary, for those seeking refuge from the world. This connection also allows the architecture to become the beacon of this connection as it provides comfort and consistency to those who need it. Sirefman adds,

This relationship between outside and inside is of paramount importance to the museum as a building typology, as museums exist in such an eclectic assortment of scale, settings, and contents: urban, suburban, and rural locales, public and private institutions, categorical and encyclopedic collections. Such diversity makes it impossible and undesirable to assign the museum a specific style of architecture.<sup>93</sup>

This diversity that she speaks of is what allows museum (and religious) architecture to connect to the visitor so fully. It is allowed to be expressive and unique, but also comfortable and inclusive. The original building of the Nelson-Atkins only had brief moments of connections with the outside world and most took place in the center of the building at what used to be the main entry hall. Kirkwood Hall is a four-story tall volume flanked by black marble Corinthian columns and surrounded with priceless tapestries. The impressive scale of this immense space is accentuated by diffused natural light from the glass skylight ceiling above (Fig. 22). Kirkwood Hall creates a dramatic north to south axis through the original museum that connects the new reflecting pool and vehicle drop off to the north with the lawn and sculpture garden to the south.

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<sup>93</sup> Sirefman, 316.

On the west side of the building, opposite the sculpture hall, is the Rozelle Court and Museum Restaurant. Developer J.C. Nichols described the effects of the courtyard by stating, “You come in here and drift through the rooms and hallways of this immense building, your mind worked up to a high pitch by one thrill after another, your muscles weary, and suddenly, through an open archway, you catch a glimpse of the green grass [in the courtyard]... Your mind is soothed.”<sup>94</sup> Rozelle Court is now a covered space with a glass ceiling to allow natural light, but also provide protection from the ever-changing Kansas City weather. Medieval vaulted ceilings and a stone balcony circle the second level of the courtyard and allow visitors to gain a unique perspective of the space (Fig. 23). This natural light in these two central spaces provides constant access to the outside as the visitor circles through the main gallery spaces around the exterior.

Today’s museum design has standard lighting levels, hues, and distances to not only illuminate the art or artifact properly, but also to keep the works protected. This is the same reason the Nelson-Atkins uses indirect, diffused light in the Bloch Building galleries. It not only protects the art and allows for proper viewing, but also continues the connection of visitor to nature. Unlike windowless galleries that allow for the museum to have full control over the lighting, galleries with elements of natural lighting further connect the visitor to the outside world. The dynamic of the gallery is still controlled from a design standpoint, but the subtle variations of light throughout the day and into the evening create a constantly changing environment. Each person will experience the gallery differently depending on the time of day and weather. Though completely protected and enclosed in the space, this still gives the visitor a sense of connection and understanding of their surroundings. This all responds to the idea of

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<sup>94</sup> J.C. Nichols quoted in Churchman and Erbes, *High Ideals and Aspirations*, 125.

liminality and an element of familiarity that can be provided as one embarks on their ritualistic journey.

Architect Steven Holl begins to play with light from the moment the visitor enters the museum to when they leave. Entry into the parking garage moves the visitor underground creating a brief period of darkness before the eyes adjust. Above are lightwells, elements of the art installation “*One Sun / 34 Moons*” by Walter De Maria (Fig. 24). The windows beneath a shallow reflecting pool create an underwater light show as the visitor makes their way across the garage to the glowing doors of light at the far end (Fig. 25). Light is already guiding your ritual progression through the museum as it draws you from the dark and invites you to come inside. The eyes must once again adjust as one steps into a volume of light from the dark garage behind.

From the main lobby, facing south, is a ramp leading down into the gallery spaces of the Bloch Building (Fig. 26). The length of this ramp follows the slope and extends the length of the lawn outside. The ramp is clean and elegant as the light streams in from the right through large windows that briefly give a sense of proximity to the site. This little glimpse, combined with the downward angle of the ramp gives the impression of moving underground, but the natural light suggests otherwise. This dynamic is at the heart of the Bloch Building addition as it translates into the gallery spaces adjacent to the ramp. These moments of light and path are created specifically for the visitor to provide interaction with the architecture. Similar effects were not only mentioned with the stained glass of religious structures, but it was also featured prominently in the Jewish Museum addition in Berlin, Germany. Holl manages to avoid the criticisms that plague this last example by separating the experiential direct connections to light from the diffused interior gallery lighting. The visitor is still affected and changed through the play of light and transparency, but it does not change the art viewing experience beyond.

As the galleries recede into the slope of the site, the bright natural light of the lobby begins to fade away and it is replaced by diffused lighting from above. Between the galleries stand the “Breathing Ts” that give the Bloch Building galleries their light, air, and structure (Fig. 27-28) These unique T-shaped structural elements extend the galleries to over two stories in height and allow air and heating ductwork to hide inside. The T-Shape also opens the galleries on each side to a clerestory window system. This creates the lenses outside and washes natural light into the galleries below. The created lighting effect allows the gallery to be ever-changing, as each time of day reveals new lighting possibilities.<sup>95</sup> “These effects may be as subtle as a patch of green light spilling in from the sculpture garden to stain a corridor wall or as dramatic as the shroud cast by a sudden massing of clouds overhead.”<sup>96</sup> Steven Holl initially implemented this design feature in 1997 on a college campus in Seattle, Washington. The Chapel of St. Ignatius gave Holl a starting point to achieve,

...a heightened development of spatial and experiential dimensions through individual reflection on the senses and perception. To open ourselves to perception, we must transcend the mundane urgency of “things to do.” We must try to access that inner life that reveals the luminous intensity of the world. Only through solitude can we begin to penetrate the secrets around us. An awareness of one’s unique existence in space is essential in developing a consciousness of perception.<sup>97</sup>

The Chapel of St. Ignatius is based on the concept of “Seven Bottles of Light in a Stone Box.” This can be seen in the arrangement of program elements and architectural features. Each space would receive its own light signature and Holl would combine this with a combination of sensory experiences including smell, touch, and sound.<sup>98</sup> Holl provides a description of the movement of light throughout the space. He states, “In the narthex and procession hall, the

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<sup>95</sup> “Steven Holl Architects: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Extension.” *A + U: Architecture & Urbanism*, no. 440 (May 2007): 14–29.

<sup>96</sup> Lasky, Shine on You Crazy Diamond

<sup>97</sup> Holl, S. *The Chapel of St. Ignatius*. Princeton Architectural Press, NY. (1999). 14.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

natural light of the sun creates a play of shadows. Moving deeper into the chapel, the light glows mysteriously from the reflected color fields. Each “bottle of light” contains a unique reflected color with a colored lens of a complimentary color (Fig. 29).”<sup>99</sup> Holl took elements of this chapel design and applied them to the museum function.

Further along the Bloch Building, as the depth of the grade increases, the natural light begins to fade away. These galleries house more light sensitive pieces, and this allows the light levels to be manually controlled. Being this far down the length of the building, these galleries are quiet and peaceful. This can provide a moment of reflection before leaving these spaces for the lowest galleries of the Bloch Building. The eyes must once again adjust from the dark to the light upon entering the adjacent naturally lit court. Steven Holl designed the Isamu Noguchi Court for the purpose of housing five great sculptures by the renowned artist in a serene space that merges art, architecture, and nature into one experience. This fusion occurs by “...setting a binding connection to the existing Sculpture Gardens.”<sup>100</sup> The lower level of this two-tier space includes a large wall of glass that gives an unimpeded view to the South Lawn of the museum. Families, with their pets, walk along the meandering paths, while colorful trees, shrubs, and green grass move in silence outside the windows. The space blends seamlessly into the natural world as a stone fountain cuts through the glass to bring the inside, out. The soft sound of bubbling water is the only sound heard in this reflective space (Fig. 30). The fifth and final lens is a continually changing exhibition space, but the “Breathing Ts”, natural light, large volume spaces, and angled architecture are still at the heart of the space and enhance whatever exhibition is there at the time.

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<sup>99</sup> Holl, S. *The Chapel of St. Ignatius*, 82.

<sup>100</sup> “Ampliación Del Museo de Arte Nelson Atkins / The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art Expansion.” *El Croquis* 141 (2008): 36–73.

Moments of contemplation and relief from the crowds are also necessary in all forms of architecture, but especially inside these public, cultural icons. In the discussion regarding religious architecture, architects like Le Corbusier would use tiny chapels contained under towering ceilings to both provide a feeling of singularity with the built space and protection from the outside world. It was described as a “maternal” feeling of embrace as one meditates and reflects in these small, focused rooms. Art museums accomplish a similar goal by providing smaller galleries amongst the larger gallery spaces containing a multitude of works. The presence of art can be overwhelming at times, like what can be experienced upon entering a sacred space. Too much of a good thing, or anything, can leave the visitor unable to process and therefore unable to reach liminality. There is not enough time for one to fully complete the rituals in these buildings and there is even less time to contemplate and digest what you are experiencing. Small gallery spaces, like chapels, can provide the visitor with a much-needed moment of rest and reflection where focus can be given to one or two works outside of the main display. Susanna Sirefman explains: “All these smaller-scale spaces have a symbiotic relationship with the artwork they contain (or encompass). They force the viewer to examine the surrounding interior environment, an objective reflected in the artwork itself. At the same time, it is the intimacy, the private quietude of these spaces, that is so engaging.”<sup>101</sup> Even the comfort of a museum can be lost among large spaces and crowds which provides the opportunity for smaller spaces to really become meaningful moments.

The Nelson-Atkins art galleries have gone through various changes over an 88-year existence, but the overall flow and function of the spaces has remained the same. Early art museums used a series of large, interconnected hallways to display their art, but this could lead

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<sup>101</sup> Sirefman, 310.



to visual fatigue for the visitors. The architect for the Nelson-Atkins created long corridors that stretched the length of the building. Adjacent to these corridors were more private rooms for viewing smaller groupings of artwork.<sup>102</sup> This adds a more personalized experience for each patron, and it also allows the curators and design specialists to mold the space into a form that fits the story they are trying to tell. This mimics the ritualized usage of the ambulatory in Gothic cathedrals. Outside of the towering central nave, these ambulatories provided access to small chapels containing reliquaries and other religious artifacts. The ritual architecture moves the visitor out of the crowd and into small private rooms for worship, remembrance, and meditation. The galleries of the Nelson-Atkins, both in the original building and the Bloch Building, provide similar meditative moments in their smaller galleries pulled away from the higher traffic walkways.

It should be noted that this does not mean large spaces, or an abundance of art is a bad thing in museum design. It just needs to be rationed in such a way that each moment is special and unique while always keeping the visitor connected to the overall ritual experience. Walking down the central nave of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris or entering the grand Kirkwood Hall or Bloch Lobby at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art can profoundly change a person at first sight (Fig. 2, 22, 31). The towering structures, various lighting effects, and the general echo of its inhabitants are very humbling experiences that can ground the individual and force them to focus on something larger than themselves. Every footstep is focused and meaningful as the sound of each one echoes against the solid walls.

Changes in perspective and points of view can also accentuate these large spaces. Balconies, or areas to see the space from above, allow for continued contemplation on where the

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<sup>102</sup> Churchman and Erbes, *High Ideals and Aspirations*, 125.

ritual journey has come and gone. The position of the Bloch Building within the natural slope of the site allows visitors to move around the lenses and experience them up close, including a physical connection as one is able to touch the channeled glass forms. Green roofs above the interstitial spaces of the gallery allow for various views of the South lawn and original building from an elevated and unique position (Fig. 32). Memorial museums are more likely to explore the extremes of these environmental changes as was mentioned with the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In this regard, the focus is firmly on the visitor experience which allows for more freedom in the exploration of the design.

Large gallery spaces can also elevate the visitor experience and even border on liminal in certain examples. The upper level of galleries for the Nelson-Atkins Museum includes Asian art, along with art from the Americas. At the entry to the largest Asian gallery, a simple marble lined doorway allows view to a large voluminous space, two-stories in height, at the end of which is a reconstructed Chinese Temple. The entire gallery is elevated which is a clever design used to elevate the visitor both figuratively and literally, relating to the experience of the temple in Ancient China. Large, decorative wood panels frame *Guanyin of the Southern Sea*, a larger-than-life statue nestled against a full height Chinese wall mural. The subtle lighting gives a surreal effect as the silence of the space allows for reflection and contemplation (Fig. 33, 34). The sacredness of the art and architecture is felt, and it is understood that respect be shown.

The examples mentioned so far are dependent on the same construct that dictates most of our daily lives. All buildings, old and new, are connected to each other through time. Architecture evolves and ages like the people it is built to shelter. It experiences birth, death, rebirth, and repurposing over the course of days to centuries. Susanna Sirefman contemplates this subject,

Functional and organic, buildings are participants in, not merely witnesses to, the passage of time. This is the position taken by the architects Gwathmey Siegel, responsible for the Guggenheim addition: “architecture is not static, nor is its perception. We believe in the idea of the addition as much as in its realization.” The resulting ten-story limestone annex to the east of the original edifice has considerably transformed the original building. What used to be a freestanding sculptural object now resembles a three-dimensional abstraction of a cubist painting, its volume part of a greater composition. One’s experience of the interior is now skewed as the effect of the enclosed spiral is diluted by adjacent rectilinear galleries. Good or bad, this is part of the life cycle of a building.<sup>103</sup>(Fig. 35)

Architecture must be adaptable and open to change. Human experience, advancements in technology, and new discoveries will constantly force the evolution of religious and museum architecture. Adaptability and the understanding that something is never finished is at the heart of all sacred architecture. When the Nelson-Atkins was ready for expansion to accommodate a growing community outreach and growing collection, it relied on Steven Holl to find balance. The Bloch Building was not met with unanimous approval as its design was a deviation from the traditional. Once the full ritual of the museum is experienced and a visitor moves through this liminal campus, it is the following communitas that has unified the city and its appreciation of this sacral museum.

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<sup>103</sup> Sirefman, 304.

## Conclusions

Traditional and contemporary design strategies, combined with the inherent spirituality found in museums, can be merged to create a ritual experience that ultimately leads the visitor to a sense of *communitas* through liminality. This liminal conversation between building and person, established only through ritual, connects people and their senses to their surroundings. The mind of the visitor is opened to a new or altered state that allows for knowledge, emotion, and community to be transferred freely, leaving them forever changed. A final summarization of this is given by Susanna Sirefman: “Museum architecture is both formed by culture and culturally formative. Occasionally applauded, often overlooked, frequently bemoaned—yet absolutely essential and always there—architecture is integral to the museum experience.”<sup>104</sup> Museums can provide an enlightening, transformative experience, bordering on true liminality when key aspects of sacred rituals and designs are applied to the overall architectural form. Religious and spiritual architecture, old and new, has applied ritual design to elevate the experience of the visitor and bring them closer to enlightenment. Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and Ronchamp Chapel both connect strongly to their visitors through their ritual processions and intimate moments of contemplation. This thesis explores how elements of community connection, lighting, progression, scale, and adaptability all play major roles in not just museum or religious design, but all forms of sacred or meaningful architecture.

Though museums are inherently secular in nature, the architectural design choices in their spaces can evoke a phenomenological change similar to religious or sacred rituals. This thesis examined how museum architecture can facilitate a profound internal journey through learning, contemplation, and connection. Through an analysis of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, it is

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<sup>104</sup> Sirefman, 318.

shown that traditional and contemporary architectural elements can achieve a liminal connection by creating a sacred, ritualistic experience, thereby enriching the cultural, educational, and emotional value of the museum visit.

## Images



Figure 1: Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, West facade. begun ca. 1215. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/AIC\\_1020032](https://library.artstor.org/asset/AIC_1020032)

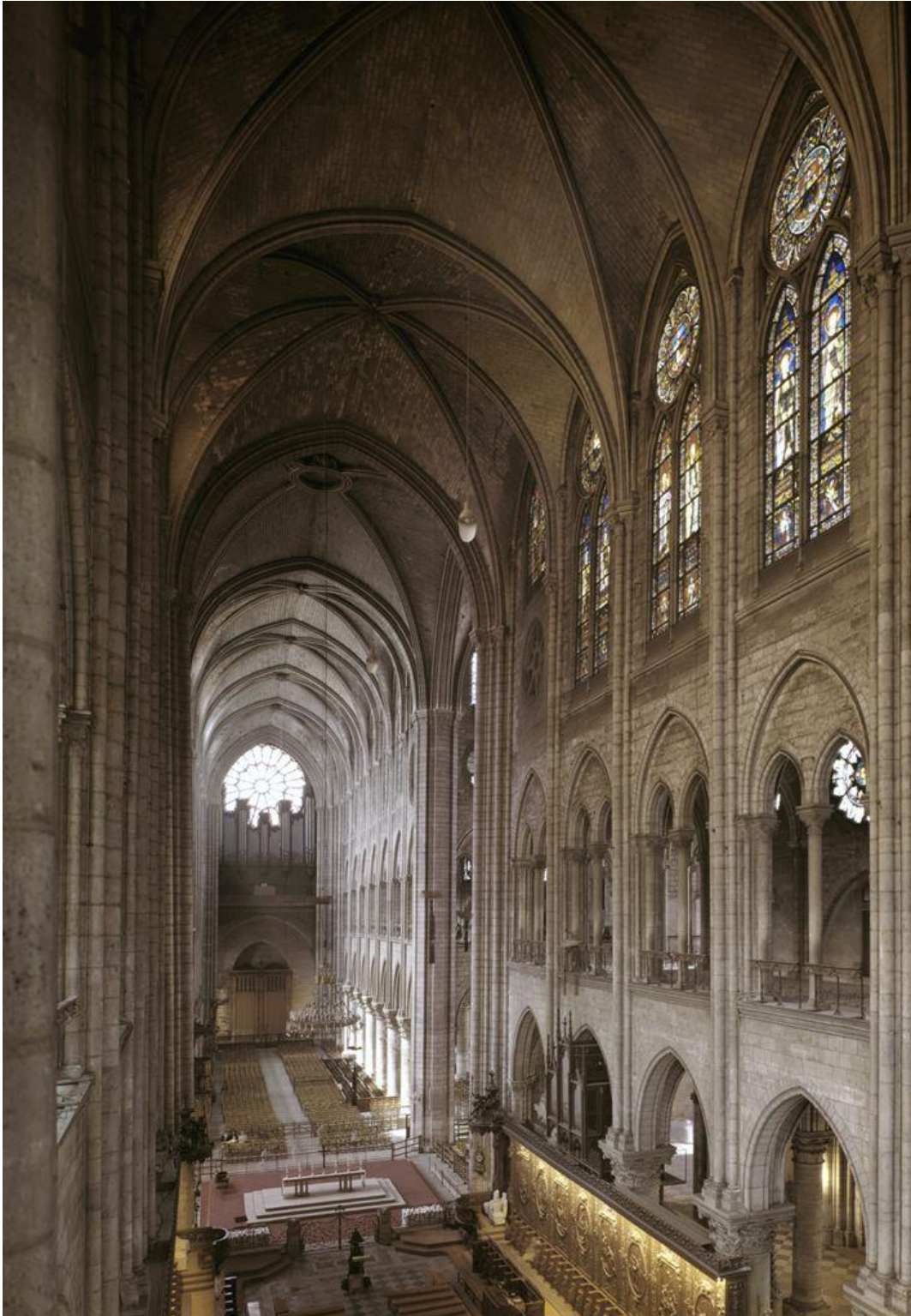


Figure 2: Notre-Dame de Paris: interior view of the nave towards the altar. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/SCALA\\_ARCHIVES\\_10310196172](https://library.artstor.org/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_10310196172)



Figure 3: Paris: Notre-Dame Cathedral Int.: ambulatory: apse view from transept. 1163-c.1250.  
Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822003358510](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003358510)



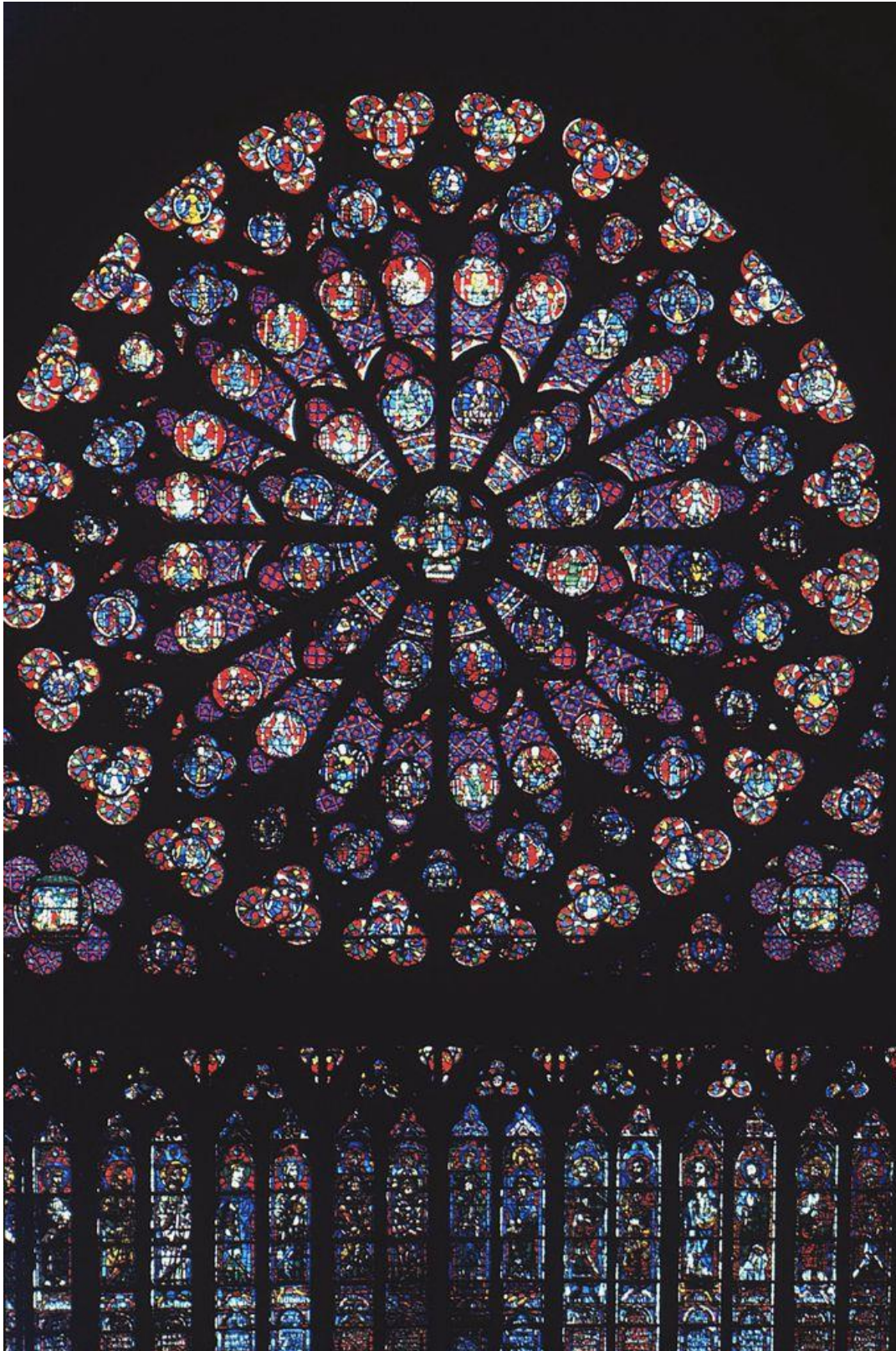


Figure 4: Notre-Dame Cathedral Interior south transept rose window: Triumph of Christ and the Apostles. c.1270. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822001152931](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001152931)

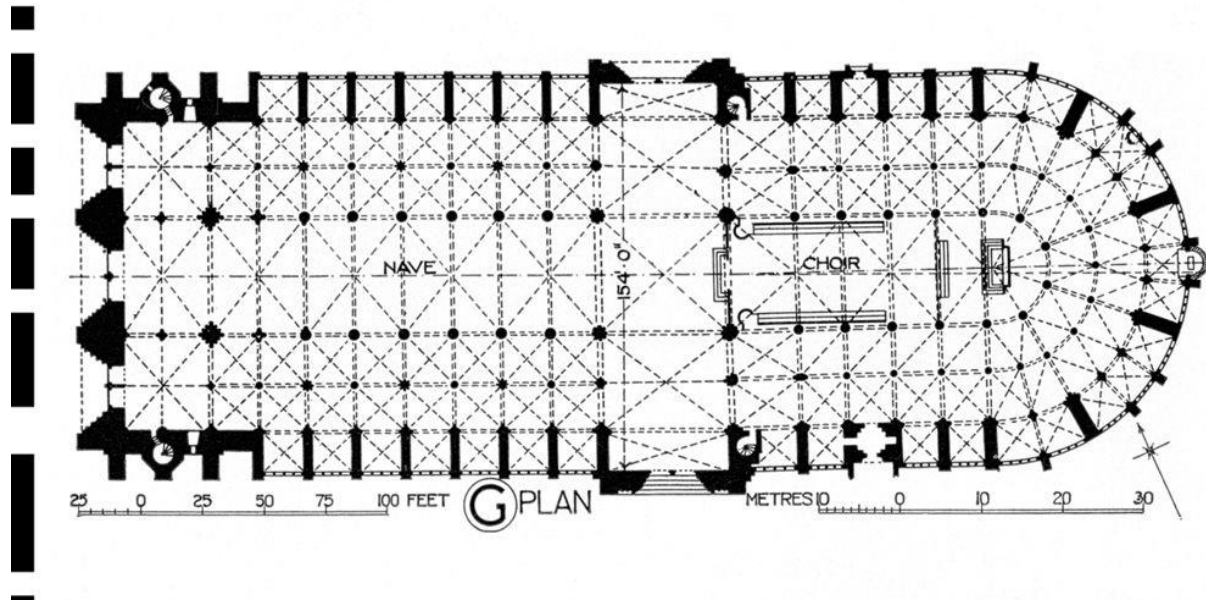


Figure 5: Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris plan.

[https://library.artstor.org/asset/KOHL\\_HISTORY\\_1039765382](https://library.artstor.org/asset/KOHL_HISTORY_1039765382).



Figure 6: Acropolis. Parthenon. View from Propylaia. Parthenon: 447-438 BC; Propylaia: 437-432 BC, Photographed: 1955. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/ABRMAWR\\_MELLINKIG\\_10310736341](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ABRMAWR_MELLINKIG_10310736341)



Figure 7: Rochamp complex including gatehouse, monasteries and chapel.  
<https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/acceso-y-monasterio-10>



Figure 8: Le Corbusier (1887-1965). Notre-Dame du Haut, exterior. 1950-1954. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/LESSING\\_ART\\_10310752557](https://library.artstor.org/asset/LESSING_ART_10310752557)



Figure 9: Le Corbusier. Ronchamp Chapel, Notre Dame du Haut. 1955. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953\\_35953\\_34610492](https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_34610492)

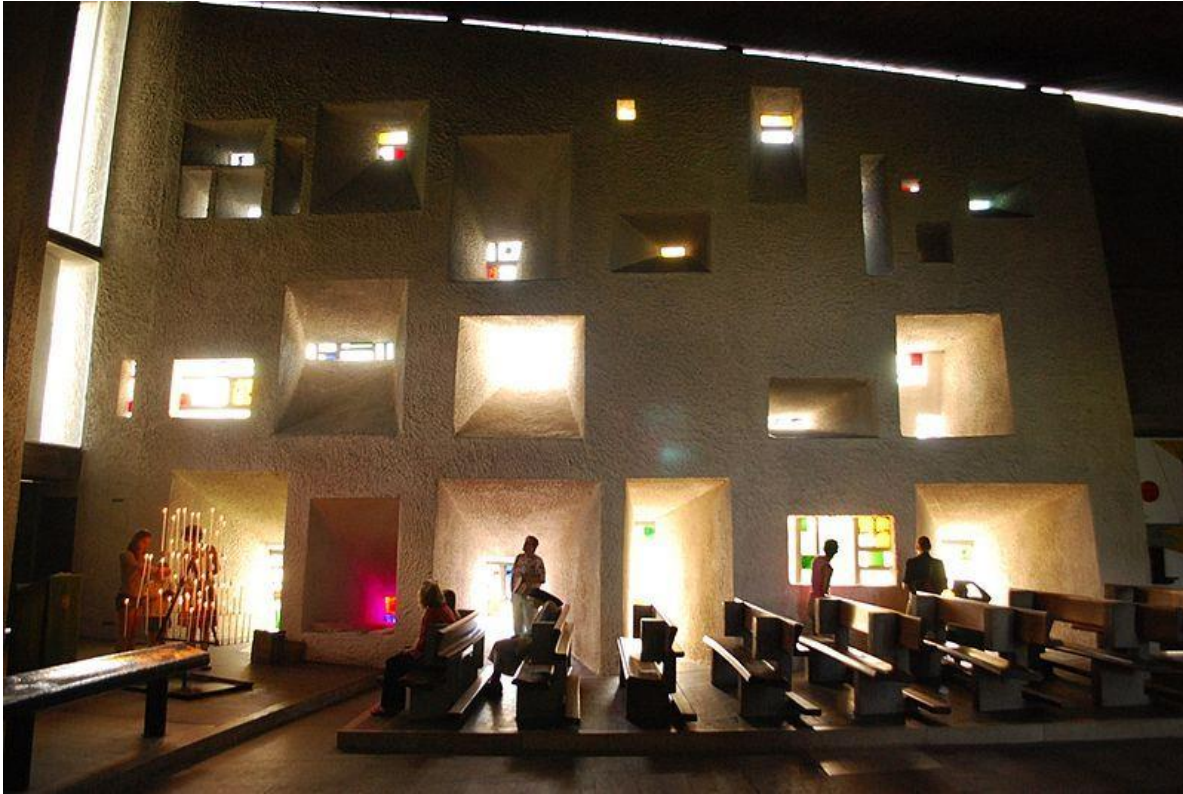


Figure 10: Le Corbusier. Church of Notre Dame du Haut; Interior view #9 of the nave. 1950-54.  
Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/COLUMBIA\\_ART\\_1039657116](https://library.artstor.org/asset/COLUMBIA_ART_1039657116)



Figure 11: Le Corbusier. Notre Dame du Haut. completed 1954. Artstor,  
[library.artstor.org/asset/ASTOLLERIG\\_10311331244](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASTOLLERIG_10311331244)





Figure 12: Le Corbusier, French, Swiss, architect. 1929-1931, Image: Saturday May 22, 2004 -- 01:29:01 PM. Villa Savoye. Residential Buildings. [https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASAHARAIG\\_1113118960](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASAHARAIG_1113118960).



Figure 13: Libeskind, Daniel. 1989-1999. Jewish Museum Berlin, The Extension to the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum.

[https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953\\_35953\\_34648534](https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_34648534).

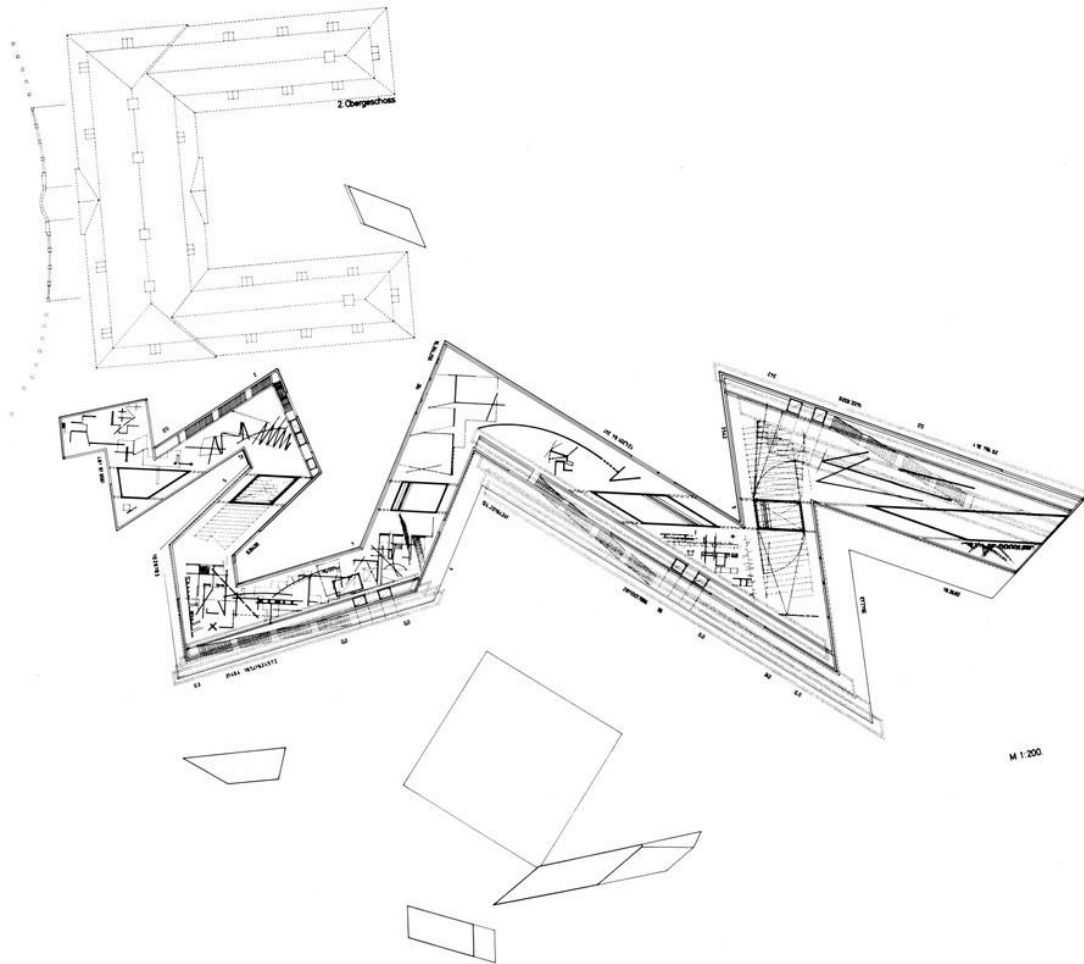


Figure 14: Libeskind, Daniel. 1989-1999. Jewish Museum Berlin.  
[https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953\\_35953\\_29412454](https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_29412454).



Figure 15: Libeskind, Daniel (American architect and author, born 1946). Creation Date: 1989-1999, Image Date: 9/5/2014. Jewish Museum Berlin, holocaust tower void looking up. [https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS36939\\_36939\\_34700602](https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS36939_36939_34700602).



Figure 16: Libeskind, Daniel (American architect and author, born 1946). Creation Date: 1989-1999, Image Date: 9/5/2014. Jewish Museum Berlin, memory void with artist installation. [https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS36939\\_36939\\_34700606](https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS36939_36939_34700606).



Figure 17: Shuttlecock sculptures in front of the south face of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Oldenburg, Claes and Bruggen van Cooseje. *Shuttlecocks*. 1994. Aluminum, fiberglass-reinforced plastic and paint. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.



Figure 18: Exterior view of east wing of Nelson-Atkins Museum and Bloch Building Addition.  
Shultz, Derek. 2009.



Figure 19: Nelson-Atkins Building Grand Staircase. Shultz, Derek. 2020.





Figure 20: Japanese Gallery in the Nelson-Atkins Building. “The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art - Kansas City.” Nelson Atkins. Accessed November 18, 2021. <https://nelson-atkins.org/>.



Figure 21: Kansas City Big Picnic event in south lawn of Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. Accessed November 18, 2023. <https://kcparent.com/>

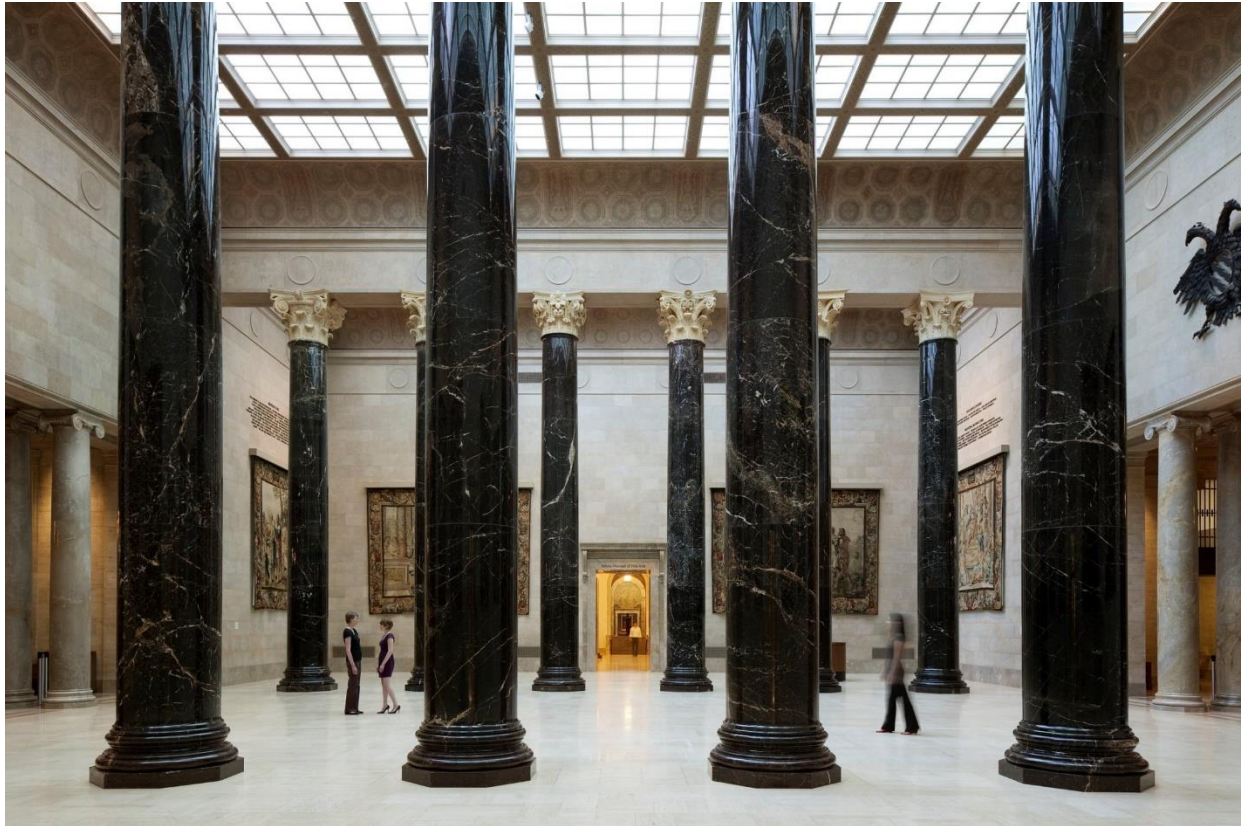


Figure 22: Kirkwood Hall in Nelson-Atkins Building. BNIM. 2005. Kirkwood Hall Renovation. Accessed December 05, 2021. <https://www.bnim.com/>.



Figure 23: Rozelle Court in Nelson-Atkins Building. “The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art - Kansas City.” Nelson Atkins. Accessed November 18, 2021. <https://nelson-atkins.org/>.



Figure 24: *One Sun / 34 Moons* Reflecting Pool in front of north face of Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. De Maria, Walter. *One Sun / 34 Moons*. 2002. Gilt bronze, stainless steel, reflecting pool, neon illuminated skylights. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.



Figure 25: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Parking Garage. BNIM. 2007. Entry Plaza and Parking Structure. Accessed December 05, 2021. <https://www.bnim.com/>.



Figure 26: Information Desk of Bloch Lobby, exit to Sculpture Park and Gallery Walk ramp to galleries below. Shultz, Derek. 2009.



Figure 27: Bloch Building gallery showing ‘Large Stacks’ by Donald Judd and “Breathing T” structural element. Shultz, Derek. 2009.





Figure 28: Bloch Building gallery view. “The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art - Kansas City.” Nelson Atkins. Accessed November 18, 2021. <https://nelson-atkins.org/>.



Figure 29: Steven Holl Architects; Olson Sundberg Architects. The Chapel of St. Ignatius; southern alcove; detail view. 1997. Artstor, [library.artstor.org/asset/ARTONFILE\\_DB\\_10310485053](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTONFILE_DB_10310485053)



Figure 30: View of Noguchi Court in the Bloch Building. Shultz, Derek. 2020.



Figure 31: Bloch Building Main Lobby and entry ramp. Shultz, Derek. 2009.



Figure 32: Bloch Building at Night. BNIM. 2007. The Bloch Building. Accessed December 05, 2021. <https://www.bnim.com/>.



Figure 33: Chinese Gallery in Nelson-Atkins Building. Shultz, Derek. 2009.



Figure 34: *Guanyin of the Southern Sea*. Liao (907-1125) or Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). Wood with multiple layers of paint. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.



Figure 35: New addition to the Guggenheim. Garcia, Mylene. 2023.



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