Physical Context.

The physical context of this endeavor exists within a dipartite matrix. The first of these matrices are those of the ancillary satellite shrines. These exist within the existing urban fabric of population concentration centers across the United States. The second of these matrices is that of the ultimate holy focus or point of dematerialization, meaning and ascension located in the Utah desert - Canyonlands National Park, Island in the Sky District - 36 miles northwest of Moab, Utah. Contextual relation to existing form and iconography associated with the artificial box which we know as reality is nil. It is an architecture of the body and soul, but most importantly of the mind - that is, it exists within the landscape of the mind (the meaning is conveyed within), yet it manifests itself here in our plane of physical understanding - it has crossed over.
Cultural Context.

A need for societal, political, and religious reconciliation served as a major conceptual crux - a perpetual force which fueled the endeavor. This condition therefore warranted a universal cultural context. The philosophy was one of a gravitational vortex - a journey for all creatures of all cultures to experience the cleansing realization of spirituality - an ascension to oneness with the creator.
Design Objectives & Methodology.
Design Objectives.

In concert with the objectives put forth in the preceding sections, two lists consisting of forces of reconciliation were developed and subsequently used as guidelines for design methodology and realization.

01. Forces of Reconciliation
   (Sociological Agenda)
   01. Religion
   02. Religion(n)
   03. Science
   04. Society
   05. Information
   06. Technology
   07. Politics
   08. Morality
   09. Nature
   10. God

   01. Religion
   02. Science
   03. God
   04. Man
   05. Nature

   01. Religion
   02. Science
   03. Nature

02. Forces of Reconciliation
   (Architectural Agenda)
   01. Iconography
   02. Awe
   03. Presence
   04. Peace
   05. Tranquillity
   06. Fulfillment
   07. Meaning.Life
   08. Understanding
   09. Procession
ARCH 452
FACILITY PROGRAMMING
THESIS PREPARATION
department of architecture
college of architecture and planning
Ball State University

FALL SEMESTER 1994
professor a e sonny palmer

THESIS • THESIS PROJECT • THESIS COMMITTEE

thesis proposal / premise / postulate: identify/describe in a brief statement below your thesis.

thesis project: identify/describe below the project, or project type, which will be used to explore or test the thesis described above.

thesis committee: architectural design thesis professor: identify your architectural design studio professor.

architectural professor / thesis critic: identify, from the architectural faculty other than your or the other three thesis studio professors, your architectural thesis critic.

non-architectural faculty / thesis consultant: if appropriate, identify your thesis consultant, outside the architectural faculty, with name, title/position, affiliation.
- Parity Amidst Profanity: The Natural Mysticism of the Living Machine

A society lost - such is our own. This is our plight - the reward which we reap from a technological arrogance that has lost control. Hypertecnoity, a statement present day societal obsession - the status of the rapid paced, "fast food", chemically processed pop culture which we live. Through our scientific and mechanical attempts to create order and understanding, we have succeeded in achieving a higher grade of complexity and disorder. The inadvertent result of this residual byproduct of technological advancement is chaotic confusion. All is pre-programmed. The spiritual, the very mysticism of life’s essence is lost. Nature rests in the sweaty palms of the special interest. Religion has fallen prey to the hypocrisy of the bureaucratic machine, and the events in our lives rush past us as objects outside the window of a moving train - a train with no apparent destination - the window a looking glass into our days. Man is lost to himself. God is lost to man. Nothing is yet fully understood.

From ancient times, mankind has been engaged in an ongoing attempt to further his understanding of himself, his creator, the world around him, and his relative place in the universe. Beginning with the animist cults of tribal, nomadic clans to the mathematical and scientific enlightenment of the renaissance leading through the industrial and hyper-industrial revolutions, philosophies regarding these issues have existed in a dynamic flux, and shrouded with debate - science opposing religion - the mechanical versus the organic. Though discrepancies are evident from one culture to another regarding the treatment of this philosophical conflict, there lie common threads among them as well. Here, in this time that is our own, we still (whether we are willing to admit the fact or are even conscious of it) are offered a search for closure, for peace, for understanding. Somewhere along the way we have lost the meaning - and that meaning must once again be found - through spirit and the means of our age.

Let it be said that today the stage is set - the mind and machine has been given motion and cannot be stopped. The power of knowledge is poised to be unleashed, and the answers (those which we are meant to understand) lie on the horizon. The time has come for a reconcilation of these two opposing world views - the organic and the mechanical - the holistic and the reductionist. - To effectively articulate the marriage of nature and technology, the duality of God and man - of sacred and profane expressed in holistic union within the fabric of a place of worship.
a process of reconciliation (neuropsychological approach)

a. evaluation
b. evaluation

c. evaluation
d. evaluation

e. evaluation
f. evaluation
g. evaluation

a. education
b. education
c. education
d. education

e. education
f. education
g. education

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f. education
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a. education
b. education
c. education
d. education

e. education
f. education
g. education
CONSTRUCTION SECTIONS.

- 1. Dike (masonry) — seaward section of mole (100).
- 2. Concrete embankment (pontoon) — a pair approx. 100 ft.
- 3. Tug, beacon, etc.
- 4. Access, threshold.
- 5. Crib, pier, etc.

REMARKS:

- Plan view, section, elevation. 20% NPS.

- Access, threshold.
- Tug, beacon, etc.
- Piers, etc.
- Site elevation — rendered mark.

Test or proceed as needed.
Methodology.

The process of reaching the ultimate design solution was, as the underlying concepts and objectives would suggest, one of linear gravitational focus - an implosion of design decisions made to follow the path of pilgrimage from threshold to point of ascension. Transmission, reception, and reverberation.

The process began with the design of the satellite shrines. As mentioned earlier, these were to be located within the urban fabric of various centers of population concentration across the United States common. These entities serve as locators, collectors, and transmitters or thresholds to the spiritual journey. Located on plots 1/4 of a city block in size, structurally are essentially sunken cantilevered mushrooms. All material within the matrix of the superstructure is stainless steel. All material of the substructure is polished granite and reinforced concrete with granite cladding veneer. Relation to existing context is nil. All contextual relationships exist with the focus. Access is infinite 360 degrees along the ground plane. Reorientation takes place in the sunken meditation chamber within, and threshold or exit is in the direction of the focus only. The fluidity of water and the soft glow of life guide the way.
The United States common was then sub-divided into a series of six zones concentric to the focus. This provided a framework for some degree of variety among the satellite shrines. The initial skeleton of the shrine prototype is identical within each separate entity. In each case, the threshold exiting plank is directed toward the holy focus. In each separate case, depending upon exact geographic location, fenestration is strategically placed within the skeletal matrix to allow natural sunlight to strike patterns on the interior. As the zones gravitate toward the focus, the outer shell of the structure becomes more holistic and pure - an implosion of form and space; likewise, the process is evident in the opposite direction as well - form and space unfolding, spreading, and dispersing as a single drop of water striking the surface of a still pool. Depending upon zonal location, the angle of trajectory relative to the threshold exiting plank varies from three degrees relative to the horizontal in zone one to nine degrees relative to the horizontal in zone six. (zonal graduation interval of one degree)

The next step in the process was to address the focus or point of ascension.

The location of the point of ascension lies atop a broad mesa in Canyonlands National Park appropriately dubbed the Island in the Sky. The landform lies approximately 36 miles Northwest of Moab, Utah - just north of the
confluence of the Colorado and Green rivers. A framework for placement of elements upon the land was developed as follows. It was important to realize the importance of numbers to world religions and relationship to the earth. The number three became important to this endeavor due to the three cardinal forces of reconciliation under the sociological agenda. These are Science (Machine), Nature (Being), and Religion (God). The mesa was tripartite in nature - its surface divided into three equal quadrants.

01.Man is creation of God.
02.Science is creation of Man.
03.God is creation of None.

The geographic center was determined to serve as the ultimate location for the focal point of ascension. Three lines were then drawn to intersect this point. The first was north and south in direction, while the other two followed in 120 degree intervals. Wherever these lines crossed the perimeter of the mesa, a point was struck; the result was a series of six points. The interior points became points of access, while the outer-most three became westwork locations or point of reorientation toward the focus after secondary cleansing. These points were then connected three at a time through a quasi-rational process by a series of intuitive arcs. Where these arcs crossed the land became the framework for locating the system of secondary cleansing trenches, tunnels, and
contemplative spaces which connect the access towers with the westwork entities.

The architectural elements existant within the immediate context of the mesa are of an extremely grand, almost surreal scale. This is to effectively articulate the dichotomy of Heaven and Earth, of God and Man.

After secondary cleansing and reorientation toward the focus, the faithful pilgrim is carried toward the focal point of ascension. Within its walls is the light of life and the warmth of meaning; the music of nature fused with technological glory. The spiritual stair leads to the altar or spiritual energy center – the middleground between Heaven and Earth. Here, water is collected and purified for baptism of faith. Here, one is taken care of. Realization is achieved; ascension is near – to touch the face of God.

The procession of pilgrimage is one of spiritual cleansing. This yields a philosophical realization of self – a oneness with the creator.

The truth is one. The paths are many.
Project Design Solution.
Presentation Layout.

Process.

Access Tower.
Satellite Shrine.
(Zone 05 Prototype)

Tower. Beacon. Westwork
Focal Point of Ascension.

Satellite Shrine.
(Zone 06 Prototype)
Model.
Spiritual Focus.
Model.
Satellite Shrine. Zone 06 Prototype.
(Boston, MA)
Satellite Shrine. Zone 05 Prototype.
(New York, NY)
Satellite Shrine. Zone 04 Prototype.
(Atlanta, GA)
Satellite Shrine. Zone 03 Prototype.
(Dallas, TX)
Satellite Shrine. Zone 02 Prototype.
(Oklahoma City, OK)
Satellite Shrine. Zone 01 Prototype.
(Denver, CO)
Spiritual Focus.
Reflection.
Assessment. Conclusion.

This creative design endeavor has served me as a source of great personal satisfaction in two ways. The first of these is existent within the capacity of a final culmination of scholastic effort - a closure to my academic career. The second I cannot yet thoroughly reflect upon because the philosophical doors to the questions which materialized during the course of investigation and exploration have not yet been answered. My journey is not yet complete. Life, love, and faith will show me the way. I am haunted by curiosity, yet content with mystery.
Appendix.
Appendix.
The dark side of organized religion

Tragically, religions have often split rather than united humanity, have oppressed rather than freed, have terrified rather than inspired.

Since the human needs that religions answer are so strong, those who hold religious power are in a position to dominate and control their followers. In fact, in many religions, leaders are given this legitimized authority to guide people's spiritual lives, for their wisdom and special access to the sacred is valued. Because religions involve the unseen, the mysterious, these leaders' guidance may not be verifiable by everyday physical experience. It must more often be accepted on faith. While faith is one of the cornerstones of spirituality, it is possible to surrender to spiritual leaders who are misguided or unethical. Religious leaders, like secular leaders, may not be honest with themselves and others about their inner motives. They may mistake their own thoughts and desires for the voice and will of God. Some people believe, however, that the most important thing for the disciple is to surrender the ego; even an unworthy leader can help in this goal simply by playing the role of one to whom one must surrender personal control.

Because religions paint pictures of life after death, they may play on people's fears of death or fears of punishment, both here and hereafter. This excerpt from a sermon by the New England Calvinist minister Jonathan Edwards illustrates the terrifying images that can be conjured:

"You are thus (sinners) in the hands of an angry God: it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire: he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire." 

Religions try to help us make ethical choices in our lives, to develop a moral conscience. But in people who already have perfectionist or paranoid tendencies, the fear of sinning and being punished can be exaggerated to the point of neurosis or even psychosis by blaming, punishment-oriented religious teachings. If they try to leave their religion for the sake of their mental health, they may be haunted with guilt that they have done a terribly wrong thing. Religions thus have the potential for wreaking psychological havoc in their followers.

Because some religions, particularly those that developed in the East, offer a state of blissful contemplation as the reward for spiritual practice, the faithful may use religion to escape from their everyday problems. Psychologist John Welwood observes that Westerners sometimes embrace Eastern religions with the unconscious motive of avoiding their unsatisfactory lives. He calls this attempt "spiritual bypassing":

"Spiritual bypassing may be particularly tempting for individuals who are having difficulty making their way through life's basic developmental stages, especially at a time when what were once ordinary developmental landmarks — earning a livelihood through dignified work, raising a family, keeping a marriage together — have become increasingly difficult and elusive for large segments of the population. While struggling with becoming autonomous individuals, many people are introduced to spiritual teachings and practices which come from cultures that assume a person having already passed through the basic developmental stages."

Because religions may have such a strong hold on their followers — by their fears, their desires, their deep beliefs — they are potential centers for political power. When church and state are one, the belief that the dominant national religion is the only true religion may be used to oppress those of other beliefs within the country. As the 1991 World Conference of Religions in Kochi, India, concluded:

"We found that interpretation of religious teachings has often been used to support social injustices, such as the oppression of women, racial oppression, human rights abuses, genocide, and marginalization of the poor. Religion has been misused to manipulate, exploit and divide people, rather than to draw us into compassionate unity."

Religion may also be used as a rallying point for wars against other nations, casting the desire for control as a holy motive. Throughout history, huge numbers of people have been killed in the name of eradicating "false" religions and replacing them with the "true" religion. Our spirituality has the potential for uniting us all in bonds of love, harmony, and mutual respect. But often it has served instead to divide us by creating barriers of hatred and intolerance.

Because institutionalized religions attempt to follow the teachings of their founders, there is also the danger that more energy will go into preserving the outer form of the tradition than into maintaining its inner spirit. The living nature of any spiritual path can only be experienced. It cannot be solidified into dogma. If rituals are carried out without genuine inner experience, they become empty shells.

Yet religion is free from these distortions. To keep religion alive, true, and vibrant requires a genuine connection with the unseen, scrupulous honesty, and pure-heartedness. As we survey the various contemporary manifestations of the religious impulse, we will find people and groups who are keeping the spark of the divine alive today. They can be found in all traditions.

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**Guidelines for Interreligious Understanding**

1. The world religions bear witness to the experience of the Ultimate Reality to which they give various names: Brahma, the Absolute, God, Allah, Great Spirit, the Transcendent.
2. The Ultimate Reality surpasses any name or concept that can be given to it.
3. The Ultimate Reality is the source (ground of being) of all existence.
4. Faith is opening, surrendering, and responding to the Ultimate Reality. This relationship precedes every belief system.
5. The potential for human wholeness — or in other frames of reference, liberation, self-transcendence, enlightenment, salvation, transforming union, moksha, nirvana, lama — is present in every human person.
6. The Ultimate Reality may be experienced not only through religious practices but also through nature, art, human relationships, and service to others.
7. The differences among belief systems should be presented as facts that distinguish them, not as points of superiority.
8. In the light of the globalization of life and culture now in process, the personal and social ethical principles proposed by the world religions in the past need to be re-thought and re-expressed. For example:
   a. In view of the increasing danger of global destruction, the world religions should emphasize the corresponding moral obligation of nations and ethnic groups to make use of nonviolent methods for the resolution of conflicts.
   b. The world religions should encourage civil governments to respect every religion without patronizing one in particular.
   c. The world religions should work for the practical acceptance of the dignity of the human person; a more equitable distribution of material goods and of opportunities for human development; the cause of human rights, especially the right to choose and practice one's own religion or no religion; the solidarity and harmony of the human family; the stewardship of the earth and its resources; the renewal of their respective spiritual traditions; and interreligious understanding through dialogue.

Father Thomas Keating

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Courtesy Fisher (pp.29-31,387).
Supporting Work.