

MODERN ARCHITECTURE *and the* SACRED



Symposium
20-21 April 2017

*Nihon Room, Foundress Court,
Pembroke College, Cambridge*

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SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACT

This symposium will bring together in Cambridge senior international scholars, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers who are investigating the role of the sacred in modern architecture. The rise of architectural modernism in the inter-war period was heavily influenced by rationalism and focused on the question of urban renewal and the modernisation of housing. Technology, tectonics, abstraction and transparency were the dominant motifs of avant-garde movements from North America to Europe and Russia. Yet nearly all of the leading figures of these architectural avant-garde also produced sacred buildings, in the form of churches, cemeteries or mausolea, notably Peter Behrens, Bruno Taut, Le Corbusier, Gunnar Asplund, Alvar Aalto, Giuseppe Terragni and Mies van der Rohe to name but some of the most well known. A closer look at other building types designed by modern architects, such as museums, exhibition pavilions and memorials reveals that these designs could also make more or less explicit claims to some form of sacrality or secular religion.

Modern architects' attempts to compensate for a perceived potential spiritual void at the heart of modern rationalism drew inspiration from contemporary theological discourse and religious reform, as well as engagement with diverse historical precedents (these include secret architectural laws of Gothic building lodges, medieval monasticism and non-western, 'primitive' art). Modern religious and sacred buildings point to significant ambiguities in the deeper aspirations of leading modernists that challenge a teleological account of modern architecture as a secular artistic movement obsessed with the machine age. Studies of the spiritual aspirations of modern architects still tend to limit the focus on particular artistic movements such as German Expressionism. For this reason scholars have frequently ignored the significant body of religious and secular-sacred work by modern architects, or have tended to dismiss this output as marginal, esoteric or reactionary.

Recent research has begun to challenge received ideas about secularism in modern architecture in relation to individual projects and architects or national traditions, but we still miss more transnational and comparative perspectives on interpretations of the sacred in modern architecture. The symposium will explore themes of sacrality and spirituality in modern architecture cutting across Northern and Southern Europe and North America, on the basis of specific case studies.

PROGRAMME

Thursday 20th April

Session 1 (13:30 - 15:30)

Chair: Prof Michael Tawa, University of Sydney

1 Dr Karla Britton, Yale University
'Architecture and Theology'

2 Dr Gabriele Bryant
'Heavenly Caves: The *Gesamtkunstwerk* as 'Sacred Grotto' in Modern Architecture'

3 Dr Matthew Mindrup, University of Sydney
'Anagogical Themes in the *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends*'

Coffee break, Nihon Room (15:30 - 16:00)

Session 2 (16:00 - 18:00)

Chair: Mary Ann Steane, University of Cambridge

1 Prof Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University College Dublin
'The Ordinary as the Extraordinary: Modern Sacred Architecture in Germany, the United States, and Japan'

2 Dr Maximilian Sternberg
'Choreographies of the Medieval: The Schnütgen Museum in Cologne, 1910-1932'

3 Sam Samarghandi, PhD Candidate, University of Sydney
'Structure for Spirit in The Architectural Review and Architects' Journal'

Symposium Dinner (19:30)

Old Library, Old Court, Pembroke College.

Friday 21st April

Session 3 (10:30 - 12:30)

Chair: Dr Maximilian Sternberg, University of Cambridge

1 Prof Gerry Adler, University of Kent
'Reading, Storing and Parading the Book: Between Tradition and Modernity in the Synagogue'

2 Sofia Singler, PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge
'*Città dei Morti*: Alvar Aalto's Funerary Architecture'

3 Dr Hannah Malone, University of Cambridge
'Politics and the Sacred in Military Monuments of Fascist Italy'

Lunch, Nihon Room (12:30 - 13:30)

Session 4 (13:30 - 15:00)

Chair: Prof Nicholas Bullock, University of Cambridge

1 Stephen Gage, PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge
'Compacting Civic and Sacred: Goodhue's University of Chicago Chapel and the Modern Metropolis'

2 Dr Ross Anderson, University of Sydney
'Minimal Ritual: Mies van der Rohe's Chapel of St. Saviour at Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, 1952'

Coffee break, Nihon Room (15:00 - 15:30)

Session 5 (15:30 - 17:00)

Chair: Dr Ross Anderson, University of Sydney

1 Prof Peter Carl, London Metropolitan University / Harvard University
'"The" Sacred, Politics and "Space"'

2 Prof Michael Tawa, University of Sydney
'Atmosphere of the Sacred: The Awry in Music, Cinema, Architecture'

Concluding Remarks and Discussion (17:00 - 18:00)

Chair: Prof Wendy Pullan, University of Cambridge

Session 1

1-1 'Architecture and Theology'

Karla Cavarra Britton

Yale University

Architecture as a field—its design, technology, history, and theory-- can be understood as frequently intersecting the domains of faith, religion, and theology. Architecture is held to be primarily material in its expression; while religion and theology, on the other hand, are deemed to be more immaterial in their investigations. The dominant assumption, in other words, is that architecture is more knowledgeable of the “rational” and earth-bound categories which assess the intellectual assertions which govern built environments.



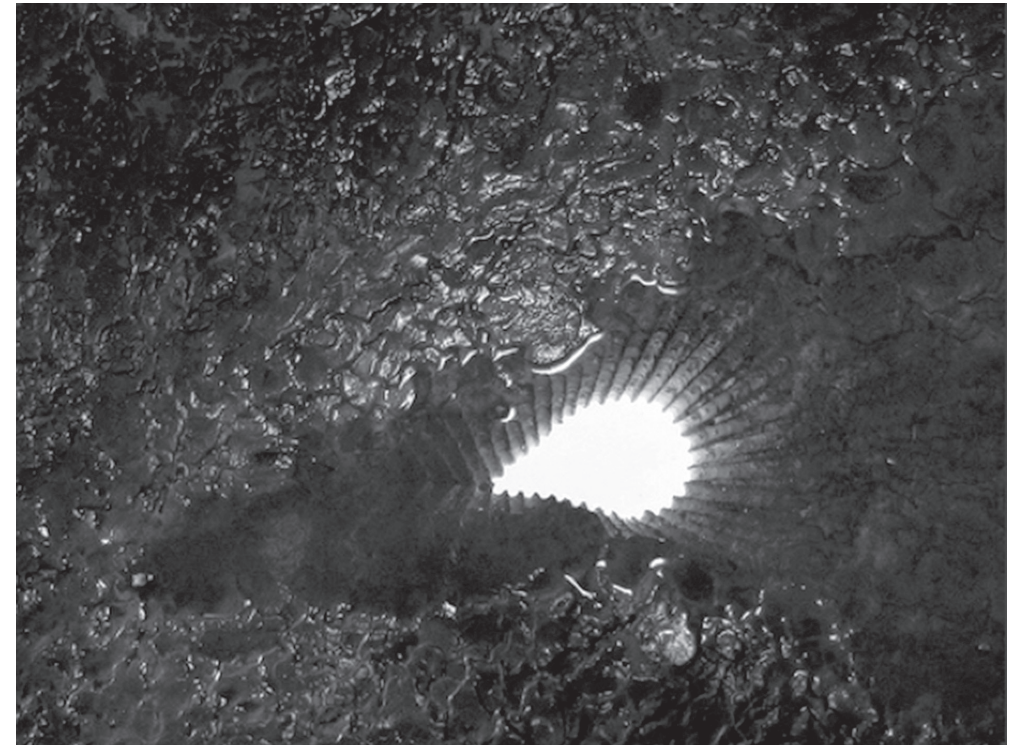
This talk proposes to address a different discourse in the domain of architecture which explores not only interpretations of overlap between buildings and their ineffable potential but also the symbiosis between theology and architecture in the twentieth century. This exploration is bracketed by two texts: the first is the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier's essay on “Ineffable Space,” first published in 1946, and then translated into English in 1948 as the opening of *New World of Space*; and the second is an address made on the occasion of the opening of the New Galleries and Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art in 1964 by the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich, which addresses the religious potential of the art museum. Le Corbusier and Tillich both died in the year 1965, and each was directly influenced by the violent political turmoil that Europe suffered between 1914 and 1945. Their voices therefore carry an especially telling set of implications with respect to architecture's revelatory potential.

The considerations addressed by Le Corbusier and Tillich raise important questions for a consideration of Modern Architecture and the Sacred: How were concepts of the sacred given physical expression in the twentieth century? And conversely, how might concepts of the holy or the sacred be informed by architectural form?

1-2 'Heavenly Caves: The Gesamtkunstwerk as 'Sacred Grotto' in Modern Architecture'

Gabriele Bryant

The ancient idea of the cave as a place of refuge and utopian space of renewal has exerted a powerful influence on the imagination of modern artists and architects. From the Jugendstil and Expressionist utopias of the early twentieth century to more recent examples of sacred spaces, e. g. Peter Zumthor's Brother Claus Chapel near Cologne (2005-07), architects have employed the cave archetype to create spaces of retreat and 'insular utopias' in and from the modern world. In this context, the modern idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its various manifestations will be explored in the context of religious and 'secular sacred' spaces.



PAPER ABSTRACTS

1-3 'Anagogical Themes in the *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends*'

Matthew Mindrup

University of Sydney

One of the most significant contributions to the early twentieth century German avant-garde, Kurt Schwitters' *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* (The Cathedral of Erotic Misery) provides a unique point of entry into a critical point of contact between sacred and modern architecture. Shortly after the end of the First World War, Schwitters invented Merz in 1919 as a method for using found materials to make art. By the end of 1923 Schwitters extended his Merz art to the construction of an architectural environment he called the *Merzbau* (Merz building). Schwitters, who studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Hannover for two semesters, initially based the design of his *Merzbau* upon the ancient Greek Temple. Following the Greeks, who used the proportional measures of a single anthropomorphic column to define the measures of the temple, Schwitters assembled found materials into a *Merzsaule* (Merz column) surmounted by the death mask of his son Gerd. Similar to the Greeks Schwitters' column was sublimated into the entire *Merzbau* as a model. Schwitters' later called his *Merzbau* the *Kathedrale des erotische Elends* (Cathedral of Erotic Misery) to associate the aims for his Merz architecture with that of Cathedral architecture.

For Gothic architects, the use of proportional geometry in cathedral architecture, like the precious metals and gems of the micro-architecture is contained, had an anagogical function, that is, to lead the mind from the world of appearances to the contemplation of God, the final cause underlying all things. In his Merz art Schwitters employed a similar interpretive strategy in the selection and rejection of found materials depending upon how well they contribute to an ineffable *Ausdruck* (Expression) emerging in their critical evaluation as art or architecture. In the tradition of Aristotle's hylomorphic combination of material and immaterial form, Schwitters' *Ausdruck* was contingent upon a process of transubstantiation by which a found object must be able to *Entmaterialisiert* (dematerialize) its immaterial identity or purpose, he called its *Eigengift* (inner poison) and take on a new one in a work of Merz art or architecture. By associating his use of found objects with the anagogical interpretation of the Gothic cathedral, Schwitters sought to domesticate the sacred in his Merz architecture. In this way, Schwitters Merz came to embody Charles Baudelaire's concept of modernity by exploiting the ephemeral, transitory nature of meanings in contemporary life. This chapter explores Schwitters' sublimation of anagogical themes into the construction of the *Kathedrale des erotische Elends*, not as a model for the eternal and immutable ideas of a benevolent god, but for a new architecture whose final cause emerges from the creative mind of a modern architect.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND THE SACRED

Session 2

2-1 'The Ordinary as the Extraordinary: Modern Sacred Architecture in Germany, the United States, and Japan'

Kathleen James-Chakraborty

University College Dublin

The importance of sacred architecture to the story of modern architecture is typically only acknowledged when churches (and more rarely synagogues) are the work of the most celebrated architects of the twentieth century. And yet in few arenas did modern architecture make earlier and deeper inroads, especially in Germany, where already during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) very few churches or synagogues resembled anything that had been erected earlier. Many of these buildings were of extraordinarily high quality, but very few are examples of the canonical International Style. The architects such as particularly Dominikus Böhm and Eiel Saarinen, who in their day numbered among the most widely respected and influential members of their profession, deployed abstraction and modern technology, especially reinforced concrete, in buildings whose deft use of light and of natural materials, including wood and brick, created understated and inexpensive sacred spaces that have been widely appreciated ever since by the congregations that worship in them. Too often the results, which are relatively similar in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, are simply labelled regionalist. Since the middle of the last century their international impact, while considerable, has been almost entirely limited to those interested in the topic of sacred architecture, rather than modern architecture as a whole. Leaving structures like Böhm's Christ the King in Bischofsheim and St. Joseph Hindenburg (now Zabrze), Erich Mendelsohn's Jewish Cemetery in Königsberg, Otto Bartning's Gustav Adolf Church in Berlin, Eiel Saarinen's Christ Church in Minneapolis, and Togo Murano's Memorial Cathedral for World Peace in Hiroshima out of the history of the mainstream of the history modern architecture diminishes our understanding of the history of modern architecture. It ignores the symbolic power of new forms, it excludes the many modern buildings that did not share an industrial aesthetic or a socialist purpose, and it over-emphasizes the importance of a small number of architects based in a handful of countries. Writing a more inclusive history demonstrates as well the continuing importance of the sacred in the daily lives even of people who only walk by rather than enter these structures.



PAPER ABSTRACTS

2-2 'Choreographies of the Medieval: The Schnütgen Museum in Cologne 1910-1932'

Maximilian Sternberg
University of Cambridge

The Schnütgen Museum in Cologne holds one of the most significant collections of western medieval art in the world. Opened to the public in a purpose-built extension of Cologne's Gewerbemuseum in 1910, it was moved to the refurbished St Heribert Abbey in Deutz-Cologne in 1932 and became an autonomous museum. While the collection survived World War Two, the buildings did not, and the architecture and curation of the Schnütgen Museum between 1910 and 1932 has received next to no attention by architectural historians. Yet the successive designs for it that were necessitated by the need to accommodate the increasingly diverse collection of medieval art in this period offer a window into the changing reception of the Middle Ages during the advent of modernism. More specifically, it reveals how curators viewed the role of modern architecture in mediating the legacy of the Middle Ages as a living issue for contemporary society. This was not least due to the Schnütgen Museum's continued institutional commitment to informing and inspiring artists and patrons in the creation of contemporary ecclesiastical art. The interior of the new building to which the collection was moved in 1932 presents one of the earliest instances of a modern 'white cube' curation of any modern art collection, at a time when modernist architectural discourse was only beginning to embrace the institution of the museum for its own purposes. The medievalist Fritz Witte served as the Schnütgen Museum's director from its inception as a public museum up to his death in the mid-1930s. Witte was not only a leading voice in church reform circles, he was also closely integrated with the Werkbund, cultivating close links with Richard Riemerschmid, Peter Behrens and Gottfried Böhm, amongst others.



What has been overlooked in the limited literature available on the early history of the Schnütgen collection, is that Dominikus Böhm had already been asked to adapt St Heribert Abbey for the Catholic pavilion of the 'Pressa', the international media exhibition in 1928, which included a significant medieval section curated by Witte (noted in scholarship for Otto Bartning's Steel Church for the Protestant pavilion, and for El Lissitzky's seminal constructivist Soviet pavilion). Witte's austere curatorial stance of 1932 developed as a response to Böhm's more expressive choreography of 1928. These dual approaches anticipate an oscillating pattern between purism and evocation characteristic of post-war museographic representations of medieval art. More importantly, references in the literature to the ostensible *Sachlichkeit* of the curatorial character of the relocated museum of 1932, do not sufficiently acknowledge the extent to which the Schnütgen Museum was conceived of as part of a wider urban context of Cologne – a city that since the nineteenth century had been imbued with strong medievalising tendencies which endured throughout the twentieth century right into the present.

2-3 'Structure for Spirit in The Architectural Review and Architects' Journal: A critical reading of the discourse on religious architecture published in The Architectural Review and Architects' Journal during 1945-1970'

Sam Samarghandi
University of Sydney

Published in Britain since 1896, *The Architectural Review* remained prominent through the twentieth century as a monthly journal of architectural news, critique and trade-literature. It covered local and foreign subject matter for a predominantly professional audience of architects and planners in Britain and abroad. The subject of church building continued to feature regularly during the period 1945-1970, particularly on account of the post-war rebuilding programmes that saw significant building activity of new churches and urban centres. Its weekly sister publication, *Architects' Journal*,



covered local developments and provided a forum for discussion and dissemination of projects and ideas. A critical reading of these publications reveals the transformation taking place in the conception of new worship space during this period. Theological reformation called for a reconsideration of the social dimension in the modern worship setting. Architects were also to contend with the economic realities of building parish churches in increasingly secular new communities, repurposing or replacing redundant and war-damaged churches, and the ongoing defence of *tradition* in church design. Contemporary scholarship has begun to examine the social and cultural conditions which generated modern worship settings.

This paper will explore whether church buildings were absent or contrary to the dominant modernist historiography. Revealing the ideological impulses that surrounded the discourse on church buildings, it will be argued that despite their fettered associations to history, church buildings were a valid and indeed compelling subject in which to engage with modernism. By the 1970s, the simple dichotomies that had come to characterise early modernism began to disintegrate amongst failed urban utopias and new political realities. The complexities of form-making, meaning and representation, and the value of craft were once again valid concerns. Along with it, we find the re-imagination of the church and the religious dimension in architecture.

Session 3

3-1 'Reading, Storing and Parading the Book: Between Tradition and Modernity in the Synagogue'

Gerry Adler

University of Kent

The history of synagogue design since the Enlightenment offers fascinating commentaries on tradition and modernity, and their expression in building. The paradox to be explored in this paper is the tendency towards architectural expression that mimics Christian forms within more reform-minded Jewish communities, as opposed to the continuation of traditional layouts that communicate a specific Jewish identity. Two historic moments in Britain are recalled, the late-nineteenth-century flourishing of the synagogue echoing the eclecticism of contemporaneous church buildings, and the mid-twentieth century, when Modernism produced two completely different synagogues at different ends of the tradition/modernity debate.

This paper will give an account of the contested natures of the *bimah* (the raised platform where the Torah scrolls are read) and the Ark (where they are stored), and their relationship that largely configures the synagogue. In Davies & Emmanuel's West London Synagogue (Upper Berkley Street, London: 1869-70), for Nikolaus Pevsner, 'one of the finest of Victorian synagogues', the centralised *bimah* was unceremoniously moved from its central, and traditional, location beneath the 'Greek Cross' dome and fused with the raised platform on which the Ark sits. This a mere 27 years after its completion, in a move that coolly assimilates the interior with traditional patterns of church architecture, with the clergy removed to the far end, pre-liturgical reform, C of E style. In mid-twentieth century two synagogues were built close to each other in North London, both owing much in terms of form and materials to the prevailing Brutalism, but expressing quite opposite attitudes to tradition and assimilation. Heinz Reifenberg's Belsize Square synagogue (1958) for an exiled German Reform community has the *bimah* upfront, sharing its raised platform with the Ark, whereas South Hampstead, for the orthodox United Synagogue, maintains the tradition of the central *bimah*, embedded within the congregation (Lyons Israel Ellis, 1962; though incorrectly attributed by Pevsner).

A pair of synagogues must suffice to demonstrate the persistence of this identity crisis, architecturally (and, arguably, liturgically) today. Two newly-built synagogues in Saxony, Germany: Alfred Jacoby's at Chemnitz (2002) and Rena Wandel-Hoefer and Wolfgang Lorch's at Dresden (2001) problematize the situation in a stark manner. Jacoby's patently Modernist exercise in curvilinear form juxtaposing a rectilinear community centre block hides the by-then conventional 'church-like' pairing of ark and *bimah* at the eastern end; Wandel-Hoefer and Lorch's subtle play of two cube-like forms (prayer hall and community centre) on a raised podium houses the orthodox tradition of central *bimah* separate from the ark. The Dresden synagogue (on the site of Gottfried Semper's famous building that was destroyed during the Kristallnacht holocaust of 1938) is arguably a more distinctively 'Jewish' synagogue than Chemnitz's post-unification one.

Modernism's universal creed has tended to suppress local difference (at least, until Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism came along in the 1980s), so it is rather telling, in these postmodern days, to look at Germany with its growing Jewish population and see identity politics played out again, in buildings whose external forms are abstractly modern, connoting little of the internal manifestations of assimilation (in the case of reform Judaism) and tradition and difference (in the case of orthodoxy). This paper (really a work-in-progress, as I am still engaged in archival and on-site research) considers what the absence of a liturgical reform movement (in the architectural sense as it applied to Western Christian denominations in the twentieth century) has meant for synagogue layout.

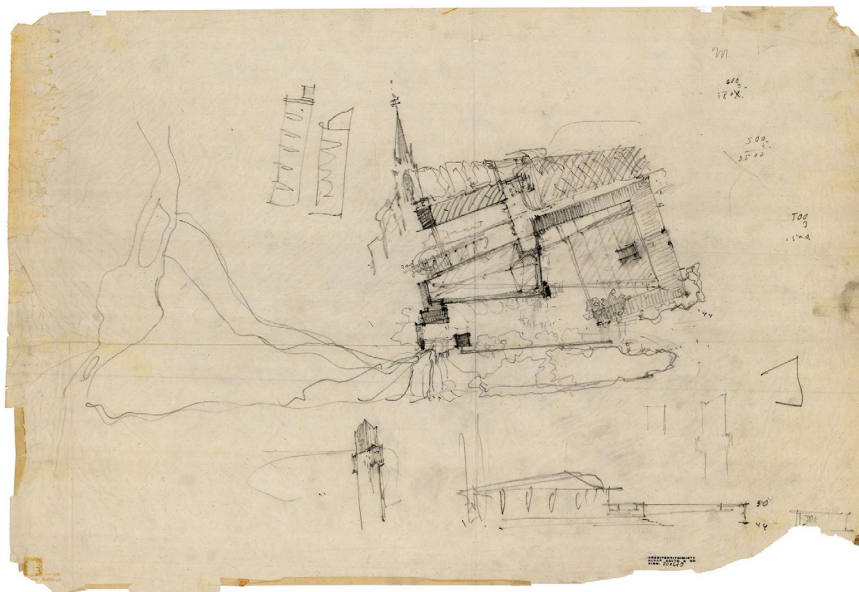
3-2 'CITTÀ DEI MORTI: Alvar Aalto's Funerary Architecture'

Sofia Singler

University of Cambridge

The Finnish modernist Alvar Aalto (1898–1976) designed four funerary projects during his prolific career, all of which remained unrealised. This paper situates Aalto's funerary oeuvre – funeral chapels, crematoria and cemeteries – in relation to Nordic traditions, precedents and contemporaries, and aims to contextualise them in the framework of the historical, cultural, religious, political and social developments of their time.

Industrialisation, hygiene and health movements and the changing status of the church, among other factors, significantly transformed burial praxis in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Cemeteries were to be laid out further away from city-centres, and they were to serve larger sections of the population than churchyard burials had done before; in essence, the question of burial related in increasing measure to planning and urban design at a larger scale than mere internal church operations. In the Finnish context, the early 20th century saw the founding of several significant cemeteries designed not only to respond to changing societal conditions but also to reinforce the national identity of the newly independent state; these efforts were continued in the post-war planning efforts of the 1950's and 1960's.



Alvar Aalto's funerary oeuvre spans from a small crematorium from the 1920's to a grand cemetery in Denmark from the 1950's. All four of his funerary projects were designed for Nordic Lutheran parishes; the Evangelical Lutheran church holds a special status in the Nordic countries even today, for it is the state church of Iceland, Norway and Denmark, and a recognised national church in Sweden and Finland. This paper reads Aalto's funerary works in relation to other 20th century Nordic funerary design by considering the following key characteristics: landscape, siting and massing; spatial syntax and composition; technology and servicing; and ornament and symbolism (or lack thereof).

In addition to contextualising Aalto's funerary works within Nordic architectural and cultural history more broadly, this paper aims to enrich Aalto historiography by developing current understandings of the role of the individual and the community in Aalto's architecture. The idea of the 'little man' – Aalto's own verbalisation of his concern for individual comfort in his projects – has been discussed at length in extant scholarship; additionally, if less rigorously, the importance of an idea of community has been hinted at in various texts, particularly in relation to Aalto's civic projects, most famously his libraries and town halls. Cremation and internment are rituals whose enactment remains persistently collective even in the face of increasing secularisation; simultaneously, however, the significance of providing for the individual's comfort is particularly pronounced in settings defined by loss and sorrow. With this duality in mind, the paper seeks to read Aalto's funerary projects in terms of their expression of ideas of the individual and the community, both within the church and within society more broadly, and expand on extant interpretations in Aalto scholarship concerning the 'little man.'

3-3 'Architecture, politics and the sacred in military monuments of Fascist Italy'

Hannah Malone

University of Cambridge

Mussolini's Fascist regime served its political ends through architecture that was both sacred and modern. The paper will explore that conjunction of religion and modernity through a group of ossuaries, or bone depositories, which were created to house the remains of Italian soldiers of the First World War. Whereas, initially, Italians who died fighting in the war were buried in makeshift cemeteries close to the battlefields, in the 1920-30s, their remains were disinterred and re-buried by the Fascist regime within large ossuaries. Located along the former front in north-eastern Italy, the vast scale and monumentality of the Fascist ossuaries means that they are quite unlike other European memorials. Innovative in form, they drew on elements of European modernism and Italian rationalism, such as tendencies towards abstraction, simplification and reduction of ornament. At the same time, their design deployed Catholic

symbolism in order to imbue the monuments with sacred power and to carry a range of political messages. As secular sites of pilgrimage, they fostered a veneration of fallen soldiers through a rhetoric that was explicitly religious. They depicted the dead as martyrs and their death as a sacrifice for the redemption of the fatherland. By imposing a narrative that spoke of salvation, the ossuaries helped to silence discordant memories of the Great War as pointless slaughter. They were also meant to bolster support for the Fascist dictatorship and to prepare the Italian population to fight in future wars. This combination of religious and political imagery was in the line with the way Fascism operated as a 'political religion', or as an ideology that deployed religious elements of propaganda. As the Fascist authorities operated in a deeply Catholic culture, they borrowed tools of persuasion that belonged to the Church. On the other hand, the regime also endorsed modern architectural styles as emblematic of the modernity of Fascism. This suggests how, far from disappearing from modern architecture, the sacred was re-invented in new and meaningful ways to serve immediate political and cultural functions.



4-1 'Compacting Civic and Sacred: Goodhue's University of Chicago Chapel and the Modern Metropolis'

Stephen Gage
University of Cambridge

The Gothic Revival remained a prominent strand in American architecture through the 1930s, long after it had been eclipsed in England and Europe. Derided by the Modernists, this work remains a largely overlooked tradition. Some of its practitioners have been reconsidered by cultural historians such as T.J. Jackson Lears and Michael D. Clark, but their nuanced analysis centres on concepts of antimodernism, seen most prominently in the figure of Ralph Adams Cram. As a result, their work belies the greater diversity of the late Gothic Revival in the United States, including its adaptation of traditional forms to the complex parameters of the modern city.

One of the key works in this respect is the University of Chicago Chapel, designed by Cram's former partner Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue between 1919 and 1924 and completed in 1928, several years after his death. Conceived on a massive scale, this project was not only part of Goodhue's longstanding search for a distinctive "modern gothic" idiom, but served as the culminating project of the University's vast Collegiate Gothic building programme that began with its founding in 1890. The Chapel's gestation period was characterised by lengthy debates within the University over innovation versus tradition, including extensive research into English cathedral precedents and consultation with Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of the Liverpool Cathedral. These questions of stylistic and typological adaptation occurred along alongside scrutiny of the Chapel's site and setting. The arrangement of its subsidiary structures and exterior spaces came to exemplify an open-ended adaptation of the cloister form that integrated the Chapel into the campus and the larger city.

All of these debates were directly shaped by intense symbolic aspirations, as the Chapel design became a physical manifestation of leaders' desire for the University to become an epicentre of cultural life for all Chicago. Conceived as a place for secular ceremonies and public gatherings, the project was seen primarily as a civic monument that would actively contribute to the life of the modern city; traditional religious symbolism was co-opted for civic purposes in a very literal way. Emphasis on the Chapel's civic status formed the central theme of the University's extensive promotion of the project in print media.



The civic pretensions of the Chapel were further enhanced by its unique position along the Midway Plaisance, a wide boulevard that was integral to Chicago's extensive park system. Thus, invocation of the great "urban cathedral" was combined with an expansive green setting. This tension between urban density and pastoral openness was related to the desire of Chicago's leaders to foster a shared public life that fused recreational parks and civic/cultural institutions. In this way, the modern Gothic expressed by Goodhue's "Cathedral on the Midway" was instrumentally tied to larger conceptions of urban reform.

4-2 'Minimal Ritual: Mies van der Rohe's Chapel of St. Saviour at Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, 1952

Ross Anderson

University of Sydney

The Chapel of St. Saviour at Illinois Institute of Technology is Mies van der Rohe's single ecclesiastical building. As such, the diminutive brick building completed in 1952 commands a unique place in the architect's vast rationalist oeuvre. In a short article accompanying the first published photographs of the chapel he wrote the following knotted statement that sheds some light on the conundrum of religious architecture after the 'death of God' famously announced by Friedrich Nietzsche: "I chose an intensive rather than an extensive form to

express my conception, simply and honestly, of what a sacred building should be... It was meant to be simple; and, in fact, it is simple. But in its simplicity it is not primitive, but noble, and in its smallness it is great—in fact, monumental." The overall appearance of the building is one of spare, taut precision. The long masonry walls are resolutely windowless, while the entry is full-height plate glass, framed in scrupulously minimal black steel frames. The chapel photographs as a lantern, fully exposing the column-free interior focused on the solid travertine altar backed by a shimmering ivory-coloured diaphanous curtain dividing the congregation from the cloistered chambers behind. A gleaming stainless steel altar rail and cross are the sole furnishings. It appears averse to traditional religious architectural decorum, preferring to emerge from the sober minimalist properties of silence and earth, twinned with a paradoxical orientation to technology. However, based on analysis and interpretation of the extensive suite of Mies' architectural drawings and written correspondence held at the Museum of Modern Art, and on observations made at the building itself in Chicago, this study reveals a surprisingly nuanced and largely secret play of geometries and religious motifs. It lends understanding to some of the vexed issues of the sacred in modern architecture.



Session 5

5-1 ‘“The” Sacred, Politics and “Space” ’

Peter Carl

London Metropolitan University

Visiting professor at Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Once sacrality is liberated from specific religious practice and becomes a general concept – carried by the formulation, “‘the’ sacred” – it becomes a collection of attributes apparently able to be redistributed as desired, whether by scholarship (e.g., Mircea Eliade), by artists (e.g., the German Romantics), or by regimes (e.g., the Italian Fascists). These attributes might be behaviours, aesthetic responses, iconography, or largely gnostic speculations like the modernist manifestoes (called ‘gospels’ by Colin Rowe fifty years ago). Eric Voegelin’s term “intramundane salvation” suggests that, beyond attempting to convert the eschaton of the Abrahamic faiths into Progress, we have sought to preserve some of the meanings in the midst of secularization, via notions like ‘religious experience’ (having its roots in Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises) or the transformation of the soul into the unconscious in our post-nineteenth century logos of the psyche. In the three-century contest between metaphor and logic, the primacy of univocal notation demotes language to second position (Hans Georg Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’, in Michfelder and Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, 1989), leaving ethical considerations in limbo.

Perhaps adhering to Schiller’s remark that the temples still command respect, even though the gods have been declared ridiculous (*Letters on Aesthetic Education*, IX, 1794), architecture has played a significant role in supporting ambiguously ‘sacred’ settings. Characteristically, this has been achieved less through appeal to the techno-futurist side of architectural representation than to its so-called primitivist side: the embodying conditions of earth, materiality, light, simple configurations. However, if one looks away from specifically religious settings to political configurations that have borrowed elements of ‘the’ sacred, it is evident the ambiguity is quite ancient. Four stages will be discussed.

The phenomenon has its origins in the culture of princes and priests and we see the reliance upon Hellenistic perspectivity in the transition from republican to imperial Rome with the Augustan/Agrippan arrangement of the Campus Martius, which Strabo (*Geography* 5.5.8) called “the most sacred place of all”. Memories of Rome prevailed in another significant

transition, the Revolutionary Festivals of Paris, where the primary constituents are established of what a century later will be designated, ‘space’. Within that context, two examples will be adduced – the distribution of case del fascio in Italian cities in the 1930s, and Le Corbusier’s parliament building at Chandigarh.

5-2 ‘Atmosphere of the sacred: The Awry in Music, Cinema, Architecture’

Michael Tawa

University of Sydney

“Through wonder men began to philosophize, both now and in the beginning.”
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b

“Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius.”

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Normative oppositional thinking has left unexplored the constitutive identity between sacred and secular: two domains initiated by the same gesture of sequestration that separates and removes, safeguards and abandons, secures and consigns to oblivion. As Giorgio Agamben has noted, between sacralisation and profanation there is only the most infinitesimal shade of sense. Unsurprising, then, that the rational, secular project at the heart of modernity remains interminably haunted by the specter of the sacred.

In John Tavener’s *Nativity of the Mother of God*, from the 1988 composition for cello and orchestra *The Protecting Veil*, there is a pivotal moment when the music goes awry. The sustained melody of the first movement is interrupted, in the second, by glissando figures that slide from consonant to discordant tuning, introducing an element of the strange and uncanny within the musical texture. This thaumaturgical intervention - this wonder-work - that alienates and discomfits the familiar, accompanies a significant threshold in the narrative: the birth of Mary. A structural alteration from consonance to dissonance, from consistency to distention within the musical fabric, signals a structural change in the fabric of the world: a marked intervention of heaven into the affairs of the earth, of the sacred in the normative conditions of human being. A kind of extensive porosity between worlds opens and unsettles things.

PAPER ABSTRACTS

The ensuing astonishment can be usefully read in terms of Martin Heidegger's philosophemes of wonder and awe (*Scheu*) - the shock (*Schrecken*) or startled dismay (*Erschrecken*) before the 'originary rift' or perilous openness left by the withdrawal of Being and abandonment of *Dasein*. Yet awe is not an isolated experience but always shadowed by its foundational counterpart, terror or dread. In Heidegger, awe, "the disposition most constitutive of *Dasein*'s holding itself open to Being in all its richness and ambiguity" (Richard Capobianco. *Engaging Heidegger*), is a fundamentally uncanny (*unheimlichkeit*) ambiance, since in it is produced the precarious, indeterminate and irresolvable double mood (*Stimmung*) of simultaneous angst and curiosity - in the words of Rudolf Otto, a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, that remain in permanent suspension. This undecidability between terror and awe gives wonder its uncanny register.

Undecidability is a foundational condition of atmosphere. In the circumambiance proper to atmosphere, affects or systems coexist simultaneously, but without coincidence or alignment. The discrepancy between them produces porosity, slippage or dissonance within a texture that remains strangely consilient and consistent. This characteristic of atmosphere, founded on unaligned yet coherent multivalency and multiplicity, can be instantiated in music (Mozart, 'L'ho perduta, me meschina,' *Marriage of Figaro*; Tavener, *Nativity of the Mother of God*), cinema (Paulo and Vittorio Taviani, *Kaos*; Godard, *Histoire(s) du Cinema*) and architecture (Markli, *La Congiunta*, Giornico; Zumthor, *S Benedict Chapel*, Sumvig; Lewerentz, *St Peter*, Klippan).

The atmosphere of the sacred - its perfume, savor or fragrance - together constitute an ethics and aesthetics of sapidity, taste and tact, if not sapience and discernment (Latin *sapere*, taste, wisdom). They are marks of difference and differentiation, articulated at the limit, periphery or selva - since discernment is fundamentally a question of severance and distinguishment, and exposure to the sacred is fundamentally imperiling. Yet these marks are also signs of safeguarding, salvation and redemption: "for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." (2 Corinthians 2:15) The elements that deliver such holy fragrance - the temporality of ceremonial substances: incense, recitation, music, the iridescence of sacramental objects, the scintillation of surfaces in churches and temples, the overlay of discrete spatial systems in the same building - produce two radically different but simultaneous affects: materialization of the immaterial circumambiance of space and dematerialization or vaporization of the architecture.

In this contribution to the symposium *Modern Architecture and the Sacred*, I propose to analyze the agency of severance, dissonance and undecidability in the production of atmosphere; and further, to show how something like an atmosphere of the sacred can emerge through the essentially *tectonic* practice of suspended discordance - that is, through unaligned and dissonant yet strangely consilient compositional and material conditions of music, films and buildings: tonality, resonance, montage, assemblage, geometry, space and light.

BIOGRAPHIES

Gerald Adler

Gerald Adler is a graduate of the University of Sheffield. His practice experience has been with Kammerer and Belz in Stuttgart, Georg Heinrichs in Berlin, Burkard Meyer Steiger in Baden, Switzerland, Hampshire County Architects in Winchester, Koichi Nagashima in Tokyo, and Ted Cullinan in London. He has recently completed a PhD on Heinrich Tessenow, and has given papers at the AHRA Nottingham and Kingston conferences. He is active in furthering a wider knowledge and appreciation of Tessenow and the position he represents—that of ‘silent modernism’. He is currently researching the place of the ruin in the modern architectural imagination and gave a paper on this subject at the 2007 Cardiff ‘Quality’ conference.

Ross Anderson

Ross Anderson is a Senior Lecturer in architectural design, history and theory at the University of Sydney. He completed my PhD under the supervision of Peter Carl at the University of Cambridge with a thesis entitled *From the Bauhütte to the Bauhaus: The Progressive Immanentisation of an Architectural Paradigm*. Oriented by phenomenology and hermeneutics, his research on German architecture and philosophy has been published in *The Art Bulletin*, *The Journal of Architecture*, *The Bauhaus Annual*, and in edited books and conference proceedings. He is also engaged in creative practices that explore the imaginative roles played by drawing and photography in architectural representation and reception.

Karla Britton

Karla Britton teaches on the faculty at the Yale School of Architecture. Her academic work focuses on the modern architect’s engagement with tradition in twentieth-century architecture and urbanism. Her teaching emphasizes the intersection of classicism and modernization and the relationship between religion and modern architecture. Her books include the monograph *Auguste Perret* (published by Phaidon in both English and French, 2001) and the interdisciplinary *Constructing the Ineffable: Contemporary Sacred Architecture* (Yale School of Architecture, 2011). Ms. Britton received her Ph.D. from Harvard University and she has taught at the Yale Divinity School; Columbia University; and the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of New Mexico.

Gabriele Bryant

Gabriele Bryant is a German art and architectural historian with an MPhil and PhD Degree in “History and Philosophy of Architecture” from the University of Cambridge. She has worked as a lecturer and researcher at the University of the Arts in Berlin, the Central European University in Prague, and the University of Oxford. Her main area of interest is the history of architecture, art and ideas in the 19th and 20th centuries, and she has lectured and published internationally on the modern idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Nicholas Bullock

Nick Bullock is Professor in Architectural and Planning History in Cambridge University and a fellow of King’s College. His current research explores issues of reconstruction in Europe, particularly France and Germany, after the war. He has written on the housing reform movement in 19th and early 20th century Germany and France and on aspects of Modernism both between the wars and after 1945. His publications include *Living with History, 1914-1964: La reconstruction en Europe* (2011), *Building the Post-War World, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (2003) and *The Movement for Housing Reform in Germany and France, 1840–1914* (1985).

Peter Carl

Peter Carl received his MArch from Princeton in 1973, when he also worked in the office of Michael Graves, before pursuing a Prix de Rome until 1976. He taught at the University of Kentucky, Lexington until 1979, then at the University of Cambridge until 2009, when he took up his current post as Director of the PhD programme in Architecture at London Metropolitan University. He has lectured and taught internationally and writes on the history and meaning of the architectural and urban conditions for praxis.

Stephen Gage

Stephen Gage recently completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge, with a dissertation on the planning and development of the University of Chicago campus in the early twentieth century. Broadly, his research explores emergent paradigms of urban planning and landscape design in the modern industrial city. He served as the inaugural Yale Bass Scholar to Cambridge, and in 2014 his MPhil research on the Gothic Revival in Anglo-American universities was awarded the RIBA President’s Award for Research. He also has a background in architectural design, completing his MArch from Yale in 2012.

BIOGRAPHIES

Kathleen James-Chakraborty

Kathleen James-Chakraborty is Professor of Art History at University College Dublin and a former Vincent Scully Visiting Professor of Architectural History at the Yale School of Architecture. Her books include *Architecture since 1400* (Minnesota, 2014) and *German Architecture for a Mass Audience* (Routledge, 2000) as well as the edited collections *India in Art in Ireland* (Routledge, 2106) and *Bauhaus Culture from Weimar to the Cold War* (Minnesota, 2006).

Hannah Malone

Hannah Malone is a historian of modern Italian architecture. As a Research Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge, she is currently working on Marcello Piacentini (1881-1960), the most prominent architect of Mussolini's Fascist regime. Previously, as a Fellow (2013-14) at the British School at Rome, she undertook a project on Italy's Fascist ossuaries of the Great War. Her book, *Architecture, Death and Nationhood: Italy's Monumental Cemeteries of the Nineteenth Century*, will be published by Ashgate in April 2017.

Matthew Mindrup

Matthew Mindrup is Senior Lecturer of Architecture at The University of Sydney. An architect by training, Matthew completed a PhD in Architecture and Design at Virginia Tech University in 2007 on the physical and metaphysical coalition of two architectural models assembled by Kurt Schwitters in the early 1920s. Matthew's ongoing research in the history and theory of architectural design locates and projects the implications that models and materials have in the design process. He has presented some of this research at conferences and published in the *Journal of Architectural Education* (JAE), *Interstices*, *Wolkenkuckucksheim* and his edited volume *The Material Imagination: Reveries on Architecture and Matter* (Ashgate, 2015). In 2015 he welcomed the publication of his co-translated English edition of Bruno Taut's *The City Crown* (1919).

Wendy Pullan

Wendy Pullan is Professor of Architecture and Urban Studies and Head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge. She is Director of the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research at Cambridge. Professor Pullan has published widely on European and Middle Eastern architecture and cities, examining the processes of urban change, both historical and contemporary. Her recent publications include: *Locating Urban Conflicts* (2013), *The Struggle for Jerusalem's Holy Places* (2013) and *Architecture and Pilgrimage 1000-1500: Southern Europe and Beyond* (2013). She is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. Further details: www.urbanconflicts.arct.cam.ac.uk.

Sam Samarghandi

In 2014 Sam Samarghandi commenced his research at The University of Sydney on the subject of twentieth century religious architecture and the modern movement. This research will address the persistent tension between the discourse of religious building practice and the dominant constructs of the modernist movement. The research will develop a greater understanding of the nature and representation of sacred architecture. With the instability of contemporary media practice and endangerment of mid-century buildings worldwide, this research has the potential for broad significance. Sam is a registered architect in New South Wales with 10 years of professional practice.

Sofia Singler

Sofia Singler (BA Hons Cantab, MArch) is an architect and PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge Department of Architecture. Her research interests lie in the history and theory of modern architecture, with particular focus on sacred architecture, Nordic modernism and Alvar Aalto. Her work on Aalto's unrealised funerary chapels and cemeteries was exhibited at the Alvar Aalto Museum in 2015. Her current research looks at Aalto's church and parish centre projects from the 1950's and 1960's and their relationship to post-war architecture and town planning in Finland.

Mary Ann Steane

Mary Ann Steane is an architect by training and a senior lecturer at the University of Cambridge, UK. Her research on the use of natural light in architecture has looked at the range of factors which affect perception of the visual environment. In connection with these studies her 2011 book, *The Architecture of Light*, reviewed daylighting principles and their interpretation across the period in which electricity has been an alternative energy source for lighting. More recently this concern with visual perception has been allied to an interest in how architects learn to read their surroundings, how they acquire understanding of the city through embodied as well as abstract knowledge.

BIOGRAPHIES

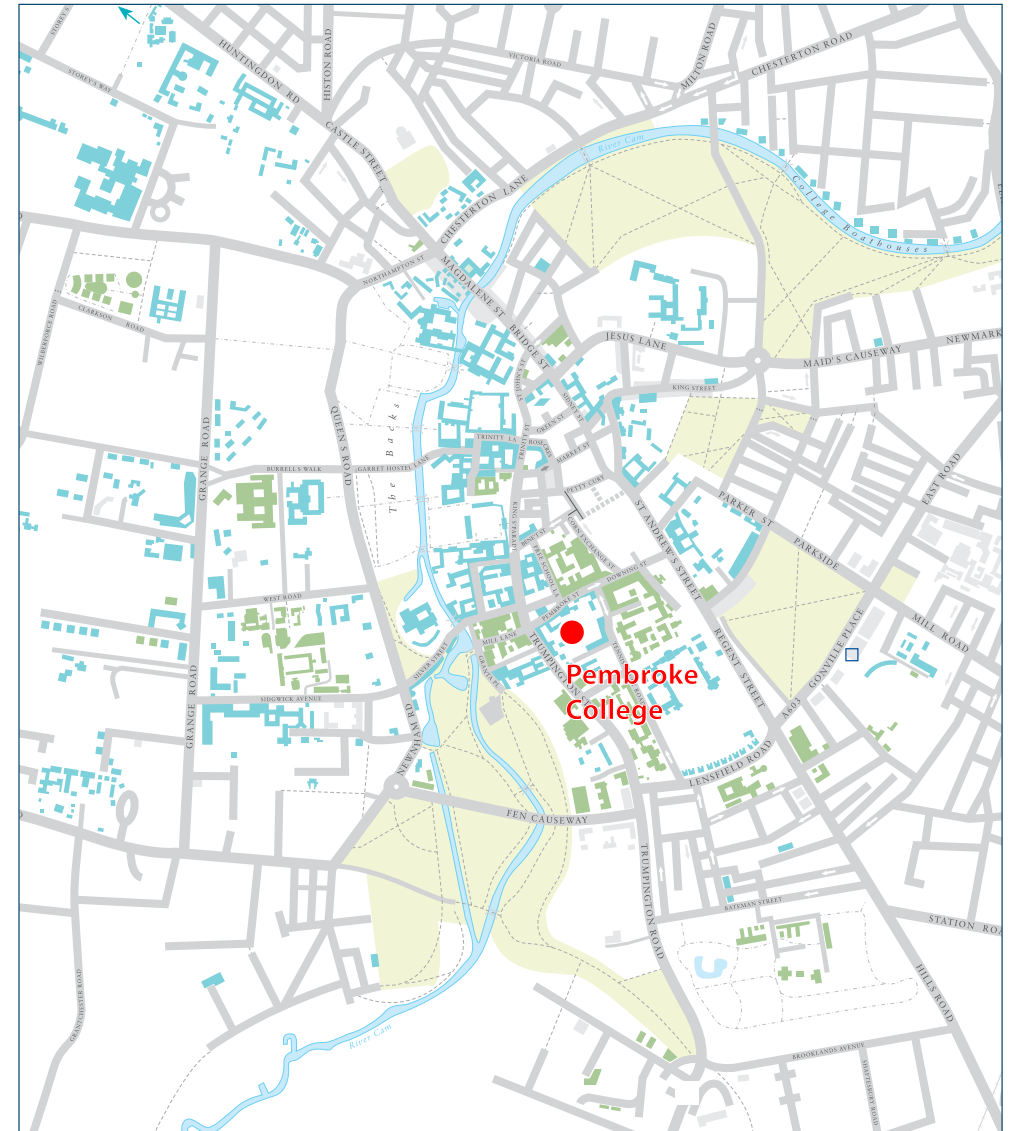
Maximilian Sternberg

Dr Maximilian Sternberg is University Lecturer in Architecture. His research interests cover both contemporary and historical areas of architecture and urbanism, as well as architectural theory. He is author of *Cistercian architecture and Medieval Society* (2013) and co-author of *The Struggle for Jerusalem's Holy Places* (2013), as well as co-editor of *Phenomenologies of the City: Studies in the History and Philosophy of Architecture* (2015). He has published articles in the journals *City, Space and Polity*, *Planning Perspectives* and the *Journal of Architecture*. He is the Deputy Director of The Centre for Urban Conflicts Research and Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Michael Tawa

Michael Tawa is an architect and Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney, where he teaches architectural theory and design. Publications include *Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture* (2010) and *Theorising the Project: A Thematic Approach to Architectural Design* (2011). He is currently working on the theme of atmosphere in architecture, cinema and music.

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