Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

RENAISSANCE OF RELIGIOUS ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, 1946-1968

VOLUME II

Robert Olwell
Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and
Stephen Dimitroff
Mark Adams
Victor Ries
Ruth Levi Eis

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

Underwritten by the Flora Lamson Hewlett Fund

Copyright (c) 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

This manuscript is made available for research purposes. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

To cite the volume: Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968, an oral history conducted 1981-1984, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1985.

To cite an individual interview: [ex.] Father William J. Monihan, "The Catholic Art Forum, St. Mary's Cathedral, and André Girard," an oral history conducted 1982 by Micaela DuCasse, in Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1985.

Copy No. _____

September 9, 1996

September 9, 1996

OBITUARIES

Stephen Dimitroff, Muralist, Framer

Stephen Pope Dimitroff, a prominent mural painter and picture framer in Mill Valley, died on August 21 of cancer. He was 86.

An apprentice of famed Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, Mr. Dimitroff went on to create dozens of his own murals in public buildings across the nation. In San Francisco, he and his wife — artist Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff — did murals for the Marine Firemen's Union Hall, St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church and Calvary Presbyterian Church.

Stephen Dimitroff

Mr. Dimitroff also owned The Art Store and a frame shop called Dimitroff's in Mill Valley, where he lived from 1948 to 1965. He was a resident of Gualala, Mendocino County, at the time of his death.

Born in Dobromirka, Bulgaria, Mr. Dimitroff came to the United States in 1920. He worked at an automobile factory in Flint, Mich., joined the AFL-CIO and become a prominent labor-union organizer.

In 1930, Rivera hired him as an apprentice. While studying with the master, Mr. Dimitroff met and then married Lucienne Bloch, the daughter of composer Ernest Bloch and an assistant to Rivera.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Dimitroff is survived by two sons, George Ernest Dimitroff of Tumwater, Wash., and Pencho Bloch Dimitroff of Englewood, Colo.; and a daughter, Sita Milchev of Gualala. He is also survived by eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Donations in Mr. Dimitroff's memory may be made to the Shamli Volunteer Hospice, in care of the Redwood Coast Medical Center in Gualala, or to the Arena Renaissance Company for restoration of the Arena Theater, in Point Arena.

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

INTRODUCTION by Jane Dillenberger i

INTERVIEW HISTORY iii

VOLUME I

Father William J. Monihan: The Catholic Art Forum, St. Mary's Cathedral, and André Girard 1

Elio Benvenuto: High Points, and Low Points, in Contemporary Catholic Church Art 21

Emily Michels: Memories of Father Meehan 39

Monsignor Robert Brennan: Memories of Effie Fortune 49

Ethel Souza: The Junipero Serra Shop, Maiden Lane, San Francisco 60

William Justema: Thoughts of a Concerned Artist and Critic 70

Louisa Jenkins: Growth in Art and Spirit 84

Sister Maria Luisa Wolfskill: Religious Art From the Point of View of an Art Teacher 95

Mary Erckenbrack: An Artist's Religious Works on Tile and in Clay 119

Antonio Sotomayor: "Art That Explains" 129

Paul Ryan: Beaux Art Principles and Church Architecture 144

Micaela DuCasse: The Education and Devoted Life Work of a Catholic Artist 175

Mario Ciampi: Art in Architecture--The Newman Center, Berkeley 227

Stephen DeStaebler: The Newman Center Sanctuary 250

Charles Warren Callister: Creating Places of Worship and Contemplation 288

Vivian Cummings and Harold W. Cummings: Cummings Stained Glass Studio 320

VOLUME II

Robert Olwell: The Greek Orthodox Church, Oakland, and "A Feeling for the Renaissance" 362

Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and Stephen Dimitroff: Art, Music, Family, Fresco, Belief 391

Mark Adams: Religious Art Work Commissions in the Bay Area 464

Victor Ries: Religious Artistic Expression in Metal Sculpture 499

Ruth Levi Eis: The Jewish Artist and the Synagogue 547

APPENDICES 573

INDEX 681

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture
in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Robert Olwell

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, OAKLAND, AND "A FEELING FOR THE RENAISSANCE"

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1983

Copyright (c) 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Robert Olwell

INTERVIEW HISTORY	i
BACKGROUND, EDUCATION, AND SPIKE PRIES	362
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, OAKLAND	366
First Ideas	366
The Plan of the Building, and Economical Solutions	368
Nave and Icons--The Artists and Craftsmen	372
The Sacramental Church	376
Site and Landscaping	378
Other Inspirations	379
CHURCH RITE	381
ARCHITECTURE, "THE ART OF THE BACKGROUND"	384
LIGHTING	387

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Robert Olwell, like a number of architects practicing in the Bay Area and teaching at Stanford and the University of California's schools of architecture today, came to San Francisco after World War II, identifying it as a place that promised a good living, a good life, and that had a name, national and international, for its style, "the Bay Area Tradition." Bay Area Tradition buildings, says David Gebhard, "always end up being domestic, anti-urban, and often picturesque," whether they are schools, houses, or churches. "Self-conscious contradiction is another long-enduring quality found in these buildings. Fragments from the past and even from the present are presented in new and unlikely contexts." (Woodbridge, Bay Area Houses, 1976)

Such a degree of permission for the idiosyncratic often resulted in the "wowser" churches that Stephen DeStaebler rightly objects to. Robert Olwell's work, as well as Charles Warren Callister's and Mario Ciampi's, is way above such sensationalism, and Olwell's Greek Orthodox churches are exceptionally gratifying structures. Not a proselytizing church, but a teaching church, churches of the Orthodox faith require the visitor to enter, and to experience the space. Indeed, in that way the Church of the Ascension in Oakland, completed by Olwell is 1959, is sensational.

Robert Olwell worked with a very talented group of artists in finishing the interior of the Church of the Ascension. Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and Stephen Dimitroff discuss their part in a later interview. Olwell created a church from the Byzantine architectural style that expressed the teaching of the Orthodox churches in the late 20th century.

This interview opens with Mr. Olwell's schooling, where he absorbed the tenet that the student of architecture should learn to do palaces, and understand magnificence, even if he ends up designing temporary storage facilities. Learning to design excellent temporary storage facilities ties and cripples the hands of the potential palace builder. Well, lucky that these splendid opportunities to do heaven-on-earth churches came his way.

The interview with Mr. Olwell took place in the conference room of Reid and Tarics Associates, in San Francisco. The little sketches that Mr. Olwell made at the time of the interview, and later, to round off the images he was describing, have been incorporated in this text.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name ROBERT FREDERICK OLWELL

Date of birth 29 AUG 1917 Place of birth EVERETT, WASHINGTON.

Father's full name WILLIAM W. OLWELL

Birthplace MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Occupation BUSINESS MANAGER - WEYERHAUSER TIMBER CO.

Mother's full name HELEN MARGARET OLWELL

Birthplace BRAINERD, MINNESOTA

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? EVERETT, WASHINGTON

Present community SAUSALITO / SAN FRANCISCO CALIF.

Education EVERETT HIGH SCHOOL - UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON - MASSACHOSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Occupation(s) DRAFTSMAN - ARCHITECT

Special interests or activities WATER-COLORS - MUSIC (ORGAN — I WAS PLAYING FOR SILENT MOVIES IN EVERETT WHEN I WAS 9.)

Mr. Olwell has played a significant role in the design development of Reid & Tarics Associates. A member of the firm since 1952, Mr. Olwell was the associate in charge of design for the Robert Louis Stevenson Chapel, Pebble Beach, California, which won a National A.I.A. First Honor Award in 1965. Other awards include honor awards by the Church Architectural Guild for the Belmont and Oakland Greek Orthodox Churches; awards from the American Association of School Administrators for the Andrews High School, Andrews, Texas; Leone High School, American Samoa; and Greenwich High School, Greenwich, Connecticut.

Mr. Olwell started his professional career with Harwell Hamilton Harris, Architect, of Los Angeles. After five years' active service as Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy, which included duty tours on the USS Monterey and USS Franklin, Mr. Olwell continued his architectural career in the office of Joseph Esherick, Architect.

His educational background covers the University of Washington from 1935 to 1937 and Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1937 to 1940. He served as guest professor at the Bengal Engineering College, Howrah, West Bengal, India, 1956-57, and as part-time lecturer at the University of California, 1957-60.

His planning work with Reid & Tarics Associates includes master plans for the University of Utah and Stanislaus State College. Mr. Olwell has done the master plan and all the building designs for the Robert Louis Stevenson School for Boys at Pebble Beach, California. His more current projects include the new high school, Duluth, Minnesota, approaches to the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California, and the tunnels, portals and ventilation structures for the new H-3 Interstate Highway, Oahu, Hawaii.

Works of Mr. Olwell's have been published in all major architectural publications.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, OAKLAND, AND "A FEELING FOR THE RENAISSANCE"

[Date of Interview: October 21, 1983]

Background, Education, and Spike Pries

Riess: How long have you been with Reid and Tarics?

Olwell: Since about 1950.

It's hard to believe that. Time, as you get older, goes so much quicker. I just realized the other day I've lived in Sausalito for more than half my life, and I still think I just got to San Francisco.

Riess: Did you just come here post-World War II?

Olwell: Yes. I grew up in Seattle, and then I went to the University of Washington first, and then to MIT. Then I worked in Los Angeles for a year in 1940, then went in the Navy for five years. I was really on my way back to Los Angeles, but I stopped in the Bay Area, and there were so many old friends around here, Navy friends and people from MIT, that I never got any further south.

Before the war, I worked for a wonderful architect down there, Harwell Hamilton Harris, who moved to Texas after the war. He asked me to come down there with him, and I went for a quick trip, and though my family, or part of it, lived in Corpus Christi, Texas was just too much. He went on teaching, then he was at Raleigh, and now he's retired and living in Raleigh. He was, and is, a great architect.

I like a little bit more of the kind of Renaissance feeling, for myself. I mean, Harwell was an admirer of Wright, a very wise admirer; he never went near Wright. Oh, he did meet him

Olwell: finally, but so many people who were at Taliesin just sort of feel here's where I start in where "that old fool" left off, and they don't really have the vaguest inkling of what Wright was really saying.

Harwell really understood and loved Wright's work. Wright even might, and I think that he did, actually see Harwell's early things, and say to himself, "Well, that's what I might have done at that age." Wright's own personal aura was so strong and so destructive in some ways to a lot of the people at Taliesin, they just ended up as zombies. But that doesn't make Wright any less enormous an architect; he just destroyed people, and Harwell wisely stayed out of that whirlwind.

Riess: What were Reid and Tarics doing? Is there anything that I can make of the fact that church buildings come out of this firm? Was that something that they were strong on?

Olwell: Not really. John Reid was a professor at MIT when I was there, of drawing primarily, and then he was in the design part. But he was interested in schools, and I really wasn't all that much to begin with. And so after the Navy, I really admired Wurster's and Gardner Dailey's work around here very much, because it had more of a Renaissance flavor. All of which goes back to a professor. Everybody's got one he idolized, and mine was Spike (or Lionel) Pries in Washington. He was a marvelous guy, just a fabulous person. He was a classmate of Bill Wurster's in 1919 in Berkeley, and Wurster admired him very much.

Riess: When you say "Renaissance" about these people, since I brought the word up first, in calling this a Renaissance of Liturgical Arts, and I kind of questioned whether it was appropriate, what do you mean by "a Renaissance flavor"?

Olwell: I know, there's a vagueness about that word to me too. People now commonly use the term "Beaux-Arts" just like a paintbrush, and not in the way I connect the Beaux-Arts at all. But I'm thinking of Italy really, and the enormous influence it had all over Europe. All of Northern Europe is just a wistful imitation of Italy, you know, in wood if they couldn't afford masonry. Those rich Renaissance buildings in England don't fit the climate at all but are still marvelous. Ironically, when they were transferred to India through the East India Company, they worked again; in Calcutta, they were back in their old climate.

Spike was the Renaissance, he breathed Italy. He was really a kind of a teacher who would--and I taught later, and I realized how difficult it is--judge each person, and he had

Olwell: an uncanny ability to guess right whether that person would respond to criticism or sarcasm or praise or whatever. He could pull out of people far more than they knew they had. I remember a kid who was half-Eskimo, who did the most magnificent Renaissance palazzo you could imagine. The school was using the Beaux-Arts teaching methods, not literally, but like Maybeck did, you know; he used those forms and he knew intimately what they all meant, but he used them as his own language. That's what Spike did.

Riess: When you came up here--.

Olwell: Well, I worked first for Joe Esherick, from '46 to about '50. Joe's office folded for a while and he taught at UC, and then it started up again gradually. After Joe's, I was originally thinking of, and I had a tentative offer to work for, Aramco [Arabian-American Oil Company] in Rome, but it was going to be a three-month wait. So here was John [Reid] and his former partner, Burt Rockwell, old friends of mine, and there were a lot of other people in the office who I knew, so I thought, "Well, this is the easy place to work for three months before I go to Rome." Well, the Aramco thing never came about, and that's thirty years ago.

John Reid and I have worked together ever since. He was interested in schools; we were miles apart in design, but he knew that from school. I remember mentioning Spike Pries to him at MIT. He [Reid] had just given us a job of a dog hospital to do at MIT. Well, Spike was giving his students an addition to the Vatican Palace. And I said, "Why don't we get something like that?" John said, "Well, you may have a dog hospital to do, but you're not going to do a palace."

That, to me, is a total misunderstanding of what teaching is about. I mean, that's why Wurster and Spike were so good, because there's a little bit of splendor, Italianate magnificence, that hangs even to their dog houses. But you can't build up from a dog house to a palace; you're dead. I mean school is a place to spread your wings. There's just no sense at all to concentrate on what you actually may get to do.

Riess: You have to have the palace conception.

Olwell: Absolutely. And then school is the only place--. Well, to me, I mean schools should have in large letters over the door, "What do you want?" And then as you step in it's "What's there to be had?" The second question is what the five years of teaching is supposed to be spent at. I mean, the meat and potatoes; who you

Olwell: are, where you are, how you got here. I mean to really soak in the language, not just as cocktail table conversation, but how to do it, you know, with your own hands.

Your mind doesn't matter that much; most architects should have their tongues buttoned up I think, but they ought to work on the past themselves, with their own hands. To do a Renaissance building is a whole different thing than just having some cutting or eloquent phrase about it; that's meaningless for an architect; for everybody else, it's fine. The schools then said in effect (at least Washington did): so you want to learn about your inheritance, that is, about our inheritance, then you're going to do a Renaissance building. And later on, you just go on to whatever you want, but at least by that experience, and only by it, you have in your fingers (not mind) enough to know who you are. But that's very difficult to teach; I found that out. I thought it was easy when Spike was handing it out, but teaching myself in Calcutta in '56 and '57 and then at UC for three years was another matter; it's hard.

Well, anyway, I worked for John for, let's see, '50 to '56, and then I went to Calcutta to teach for a year, and took another half year getting back. I met Bill Wurster in, of all places, Calcutta. I had this marvelous friend, who is still a friend in London, Aileen Aderton, who was a USIS person. She had been there for ages, and had a marvelous collection of stuff, and is a very interesting person. Another professor and I had given the students a big house to do, and we gradually discovered they'd never seen a big house. So, we made arrangements for them to go through the Governor's Palace in Calcutta, which is a kind of a half-baked copy of Keddleston.

We were right in the middle of that, and this elaborately uniformed flunky came up (a telephone conversation across the street in Calcutta is a week's operation) and said, "You're wanted on the phone!" Somehow Aileen had gotten ahold of me and said that this American architect was in town and could I come over that evening, and that was Wurster. I'd always admired Bill Wurster here, but I'd never met him. Anyway, he asked me to teach at UC when I came back, so I did for three years, just part time.

Greek Orthodox Church, Oakland

First Ideas

Olwell: Shortly before I left for India, there was a Greek fellow in the office, Jim Stamos (who has since died, a very nice man), who said that his congregation was planning on doing a new church in Oakland. And I said, "Oh, I'd love to work on a Byzantine church!" (I remember, back in school at MIT, we had a tiny church to do, and six weeks to do it in, and I angrily said to John, "I could do ten in that time." He said, "All right, you do have to do ten." So I did.) But among other things, I loved Byzantine detailing and Romanesque Cosmati pavements and things like that.

Riess: You had learned that in the school, or in your travels?

Olwell: I really learned it in school; I saw it all later, but I had my real tour as a student of Spike Pries; traveling later was just sort of confirming things. I think that, for an architect, traveling a little later isn't a bad idea at all, because you know the language before you see it, and therefore you understand much more, I think. But anyway, I said, "When you bring Father George [Vlahos] in to see John, bring him to my desk because I'll have it strewn with drawings of churches!" So he did. And Father George was just a marvelous, marvelous person, and we got to be good friends.

Riess: The first connection was because it was two Greeks?

Olwell: That's right, yes, and he brought his friend in.

Riess: I'm interested in whether it was a competition or who talked to whom.

Olwell: No, it was just Stamos's friend.

They had a different lot in downtown Oakland then, and I did something for that, and we took it over and we presented it. There was this long silence, and then they burst into Greek, which left us out, and it sounded like rather angry Greek, and they said, "Well, we'll talk to you later." I thought, "Well, that's the end of that." And just as we were leaving, Stamos came out and ran down to the car, and said, "Don't worry. What he's been saying is, 'It's a miracle! Don't change anything.'" [laughter] But Father was really a marvelous person.

Riess: This is George Vlahos?

Olwell: George Vlahos, yes. As his brother-in-law once remarked, "A strong and powerful leader automatically generates a strong and powerful opposition," and he did, and finally left.

Riess: But it's a church that would not have been built without him?

Olwell: Oh, no. No, it's completely because of his support.

Then, John had adopted this young fellow. He worked here in the office as an office boy, and John would bring in some drawings occasionally that he (Brian Tivel) had been doing. And I had the notion, "Well, why don't we get Brian to do the icons," because I was just so depressed by the usual commercial church art, particularly Greek church art, which has such a marvelous heritage, and they were doing, you know, kind of cigar-box-top, Italian cemetery-art practically; awful stuff, to my mind anyway.

Riess: Before we get to Brian, let me ask you a few more questions. What was the reason for building the church? Had they outgrown their old building?

Olwell: Yes, it was a small, wooden building in kind of a run-down part of Oakland.

Riess: Was it a building with great charm and feeling?

Olwell: No, it was a depressing building. I think it had been something else, because I guess their parents, or most of them, had come as immigrants, and they just got an old building. I can't even remember much about it.

Riess: So there were not things about the old building that were much loved that they wanted to have in the new building?

Olwell: No, that wasn't the case at all.

Riess: As far as the design decisions, was there a committee that worked with Father Vlahos?

Olwell: Well, Father George is a pretty strong man, and though there was a committee, he was able to not ride <u>over</u> them at all, but to coordinate their efforts. That was something that John Reid was very good at also. That was one of John's gifts in school work, to get a school board, with every idea in the world, together and going in one direction, step by step. This is a very difficult thing, and a great art in itself.

Riess: Well, that's interesting because you say architects should keep their lips buttoned.

Olwell: Oh, not at that stage, not at all; I just meant in school. In schools they just chatter about this and that, and mostly they chatter about which door they're going to go into, and five years later they haven't gone into any door. You know, they're just really building these "word justifications" for what might have been--but they've never really done anything.

Riess: I see. Because in fact I do think the architect really can save the day by helping people direct their thoughts.

Olwell: Absolutely, yes, he has to be able to.

Riess: I take it when Vlahos came in you just casually had all of these drawings and things out, but you hadn't been given a program for the church?

Olwell: No. We didn't even know where the lot was.

The Plan of the Building, and Economical Solutions

Riess: Had you studied what the needs or the basic symbology of the Greek Orthodox Church were?

Olwell: Not really. Well, I knew it from the experience of looking at the buildings in plan and everything, but Father kind of simplified that. There were some things which they just didn't want, and some of those things were the things I thought made the old buildings so rich. Originally, I thought the basic thing would be just a square with a cross inside the square. Then where the cross is, there's a dome, and to support that, there are columns in the middle of the building. So every place you go in the building your view changes, and as a result it's a very rich experience. Well, they didn't want this; they wanted to have a clear unobstructed view of the altar from any place in the church.

This is the plan. [brings out plan of building] There's an entrance, an outer narthex and an inner narthex, and then the nave, then the soleas, which is the first sort of raised area, then the iconostacion, which is a kind of wall of icons. There are four vital icons that are in every church: Christ, the Mother of Christ, St. John the Baptist, and the patron saint or whatever

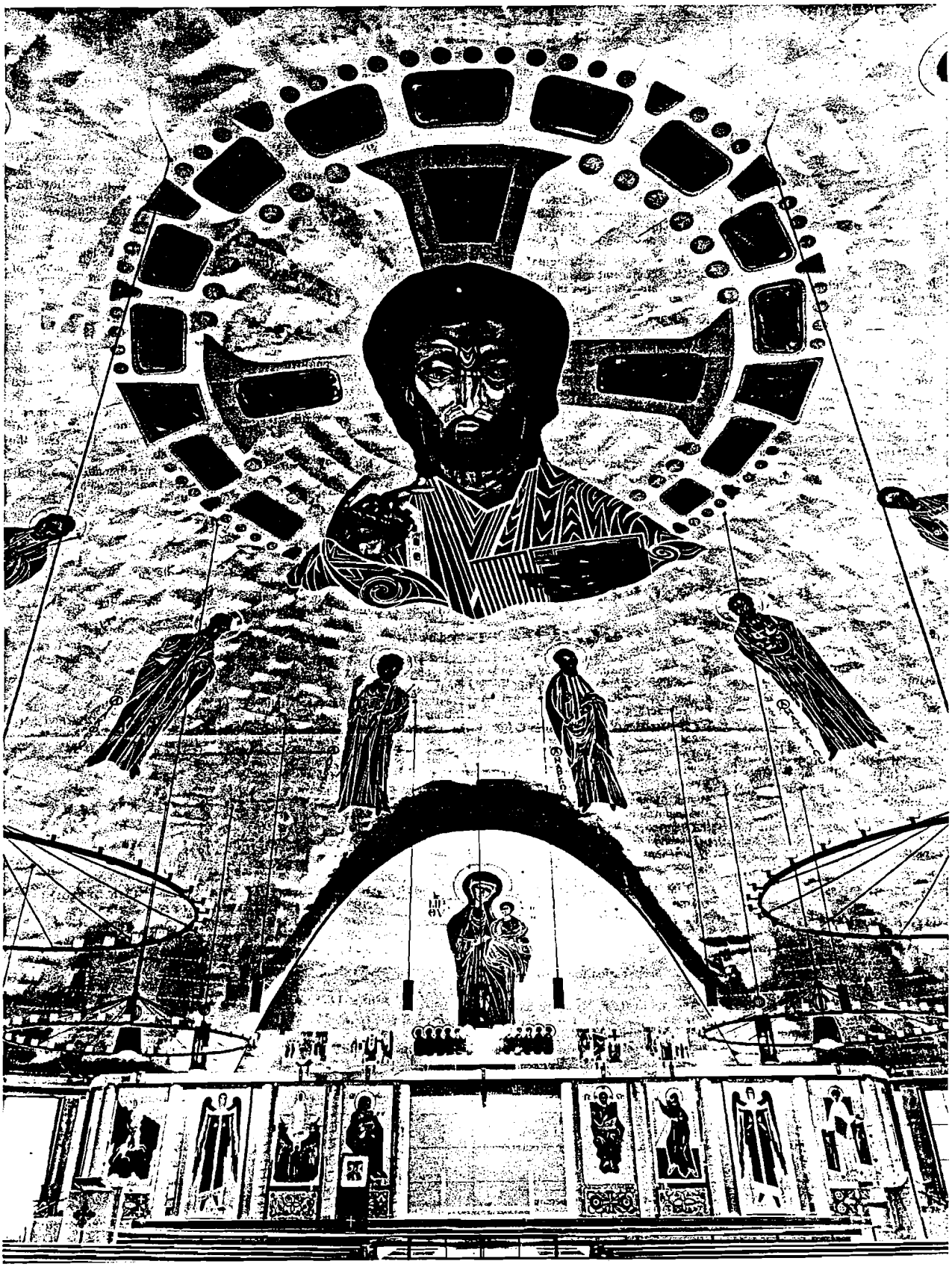
Olwell: the church is named for. After that it can be any other subject wanted. Then there are twelve smaller icons about these that depict the life of Christ, and then, behind the altar, the Platytera, the Mother of Christ with child figure in the apse, and then on the center Dome, the Pantocrater. These are kind of basic things; other things often vary, the dimensions, and the seating and things like that.

The first church design process (downtown in Oakland) had gone on and on, and then I had this offer to teach in India that was just too tempting; it didn't look to me as if the church project was going much further. So I went, thinking, "Well, it will be done or forgotten by the time I come home," but it wasn't at all. They had bought another lot, and changed the whole thing, and were still mulling around. But it had been determined to have a dome over the whole thing.

I thought that you couldn't have a 180-degree dome, because it would look like Mount Palomar, and also would be acoustically impossible inside. Much more important, Byzantine buildings had that wonderful feeling of restfulness; the dome was only partly visible, the rest of the circle you kind of imagined, because the center of rotation was far below the visible part of the dome.

So it seemed to me that you could reproduce the classical form, which is the square, and then the cross within the square, and then just enlarge the crossing, and make just that part the church itself. Your cross is here, and there aren't any visual interruptions in the middle. Thus just put a dome over the whole thing. I tried to reproduce some of the richness and complexity that existed in the old ones by first, a pond out here, then a drive, then an approach, and then some stairs. Then you go under this arcade, which would be the inner aisle in a normal church. Then you step across like a moat. It's not a proselytizing church, and so it has a feeling of austere remoteness, or should have, from the outside.

And then the preparation of the narthex and then the pro-narthex, and in each one I was trying, and even these columns inside, to add what had been lost inside outside, to make it as busy as possible getting in, so you'd have to go through a lot of experiences, changes of light value, all that kind of thing, almost kind of a disorienting thing, before you get to something. Of course, in a really marvelous Byzantine church a whole empire could be bankrupted by what they did inside, and, of course, Oakland couldn't do that. But you still have to produce that sort of Oh! when you come in; that's almost a must, one way or another.



The Catholic Voice

9th year, No. 48
April 6, 1972
Diocese of Oakland
60

Riess: A proselytizing church, what is the difference?

Olwell: Well, I think the outside is a little more welcoming.

I really never did discuss this with Father George. I think that communication in words before you actually do something is very dangerous; words aren't things--they get in the way of things. But I just kind of thought that was the feeling of the old ones. It was impossible to reproduce them exactly, and I wouldn't have wanted to try. The materials they had were marvelous too. So you had to just say, "Well, what is the feeling they produced, and how can we get the same feeling by other means?"

Riess: As you describe it, it is as they describe the church in this brochure; it's almost as if it were written by you, I thought that you took your guidance from them.

Olwell: Where was that?

Riess: This is a handout from the church. [reading from brochure before her] "We then proceed to the inner narthex, the ceiling is lowered, finally the nave is entered, we have dropped our worldly cares." I mean the sort of dramatic process of entering the church as they describe it in this little brochure is very much as you describe it.

Olwell: Well, maybe it's what I already wrote, rewritten! [laughing]

Riess: It's as if it's written by the church fathers, but it may have very well been written by the architect! [laughing]

Olwell: It's funny, when they were almost ready to consecrate this church (the old church was called the Church of the Assumption), it was a revealing picture of Greek immigrants when someone said, "My God, that's not Greek doctrine, that's Roman doctrine," and they didn't really get too upset. They said, "Oh, well, they'd call it the Ascension!"

It's interesting to contrast the Greeks with the Russian ones. There was a Russian fellow in the office, and I remember going to a couple of services with him in his church. Those people came as refugees, you know, and they tried to keep everything they had, their language and everything, and there was this feeling of sadness about the whole thing, because it just can't be kept. But the Greeks came as immigrants, you know, and they're more interested in ball scores. They're very fiercely proud of their heritage of course, but it doesn't really sit on them like a pall. (Sometimes you wish it would a little bit more.)

Riess: Well, that brochure does emphasize the symbolic needs of the church, the light and darkness, high and low.

Olwell: This was a thing I wrote for an overall description of Greek Orthodox churches, and this was this one specifically, and this was about the Belmont church specifically. [referring to materials before him]

Riess: Gee, that's a beautiful book. Do you have more than one of them left? [copy deposited in The Bancroft Library]

Olwell: Yes, I can make prints of these. I don't have the things with all the pictures in all of them, but I can reproduce the text easily.

Riess: In light of my theme here, which is liturgical arts from 1946 to 1966, what are the twentieth-century-influenced aspects of this church? Would you say in fact that there are any?

Olwell: Oh, sure, but there was no deliberate attempt to, I mean it had to be that way. To put a roof over a thousand people, you know that's a lot of money right there, no matter whether it's the simplest possible way you could do it. So there's not too much room left to play in, and particularly then when you have as a goal something that could at least hold, halfway, its own and not be ashamed in the presence of the great ones of the past. When, for instance, all of Rome was looted for Hagia Sophia, it's a big job!

This gets back again to Spike Pries. If you know what you want, at least there are ways to get it. We examined gold mosaic for the inside of this, which even in 1956 would have been $350,000, and gold leaf then would have been about $90,000. Well, they're both out. And there were acoustical problems too. So, I finally thought of doing an upside-down shingle job in gold anodized aluminum, and then we could perforate it with very tiny holes at the top and at fifteen feet around the perimeter to get some absorption, because you get just hideous acoustic difficulties in a dome, where it reenforces things some place and in other places you can't hear anything. But I thought it worked out quite well, the building is still live, and you don't have to use amplifiers. At least Father George had a marvelous singing voice, and he just came through marvelously.

Riess: It's a sung service?

Olwell: A lot of it is, yes, beautiful. I can't still, I'm ashamed to say, understand it. But the consecration service at Greek churches is absolutely marvelous, which usually has to be done

Olwell: after the debt is paid, so it's years later. This happened just a few years ago, and the Archbishop Iakovof was here. Without realizing it, I just made it (the covered walk) perfectly for that, because the whole congregation walks around the church three times at one part of the ceremony. Then the archbishop comes up to the doors, and he takes his staff and pounds on the door. And a person in the choir who sings the responses is in the church, and says, in a faint voice, "Who comes?" Then the archbishop goes BAM again, and then says, "God comes!" [laughing] It's a hard line to follow! Then the faint voice says, "How long will he stay?" Bam! "Forever!"

Nave and Icons--The Artists and Craftsmen

Riess: You knew exactly what the acoustical effect of that dome was going to be, that particular shape and that particular material. Did you experiment a lot?

Olwell: Well, we had a marvelous man named Dariel Fitzroy who helped us a lot who's worked with the office for thirty years. He died about three or four years ago. (His son-in-law, Bill Dobbs, is still running the office.) But we had lots of fights with Dariel too, because most acoustical engineers want to dampen everything, you know, and half of music for the churches depends upon those echoes, so you have to get a combination. You don't want three sermons for the price of one, but neither do you want just one singing voice, you want all that multiplication. I think when you close your eyes in a building you ought to know how big it is. Trick methods of making you feel like you're in a phone booth are just--I mean you're wasting your money. Big spaces should be big in every sense, so you just know that you're in this marvelous, great chunk of air.

Riess: That's interesting. How far had you gotten in your own thinking in terms of the interior decoration, as it were, of the place? You knew that you had to have this panoply of saints and the Pantocrater and all of that?

Olwell: Oh, yes. Yes, I made renderings of the whole thing inside before we had started--

Riess: Placement of the decorative materials?

Olwell: Oh, yes, because that was really what the building was built around; you almost start with that. And the main Pantocrater originally was sort of modeled on the--you know San Marco in

Olwell: Venice? The Pala d'Oro behind the altar, that jeweled altarpiece? Well, there's a marvelous figure of Christ right in the middle of it with a jeweled halo.

Riess: Yes, I took a very unsatisfactory picture of that, but I do know that.

Olwell: We had sort of modeled it on that in the middle, although by the time you work through a dozen artists you have to let go a little bit, not to squash the vitality of the artist; you can't just grab somebody's hand and say, "Do it this way," because then it spoils it. But I did want to simulate the enamels, which were such a great art in the Greek world; gold wire brazed to gold, and then the interstices filled with various kinds of enamels, and each color baked at different times, so it's insanely complex to get them right without cracking everything. But also there's the discipline of the lines, and so I thought, "Well, we'll kind of copy this and leave the aluminum showing through the pieces of color, so it will look like an enamel," which had its own discipline. But Brian [Tivel] didn't like that; he wanted to do the faces and the hands modeled, so finally that's the way they were.

I like them. The church might have not liked the enamel thing either, because a little enamel--usually they're about like that [gesturing], blown up to twenty feet long--might have looked crude and conventionalized. So, maybe they were right in the first place, but it doesn't really look too much like the Pala d'Oro.

Riess: You know, you really had almost the dream commission though.

Olwell: Oh, yes. Every architect prays for just one of these, and then prays that he will be worthy of it.

Riess: You were given the entire job, essentially.

Olwell: Yes. And the lighting fixtures were vital to both emphasize the size of the building and also--well, that's where they were in the old buildings for other reasons, because in that period you had to replenish the oil in the fixtures, so they had to be down low enough to get at. But these things, as many vertical lines as you can get, when you stand and look up the lines are going together with perspective, so that helps you, and this establishes a plane above your head height which really enriches the feeling of the dome actually.

Riess: In the case of Newman Center, Mario Ciampi did the building and then Stephen DeStaebler came in and did the altar and sanctuary. Isn't that more common?

Olwell: Father was aware of the importance of it, because you very rarely find an artist who nowadays will listen to anybody, they want to do their own thing, and so you just have to stand back, and this thing just had to be, I thought--and Father, thank heaven, thought--consistent, still without crushing the vitality of the artist. Brian's sketches, although he was only nineteen at the time, had a kind of a purity and a sweetness that the old ones had, so Father was very enthusiastic, but he had a lot of opposition; a lot of the congregation wanted, you know, the Victorian picture-poster kind of thing, because that's what they were used to. So Father was <u>really</u> the person who forced it through; they never would have okayed it without him.

Then there was a guy in the congregation, Cedric Bourboulis, who was a commercial painter really, but he had had more experience in transferring big things like this, so Brian painted the things about like this [gesturing], and then they were photographed up, and then we pounced them off, you know, you run a pounce wheel like needles over the design and then you take a bag of carbon, and then once it's pressed on the wall, that just makes little like dots for the design. Then Cedric got up on the scaffolding, and he did the ones on the ceiling. I think that he changed them a little bit too much in the process. He had a taste for a little bit more, you know, gaunt-looking things, than Brian did. Brian did the Platytera himself. But then Brian did all the icons here and all the small ones on the top.

Later, in the Belmont church, Cedric started the Pantocrater, but Brian was discontented, myself also, and Brian went up and finished it himself, and I think that it's just a knockout, a really superb drawing and feeling about the whole thing. Mrs. Dimitroff, who is Lucienne Bloch, did the pavings in both churches, but these were really better in Belmont. You can't get a Cosmati pavement in Rome that's any better than that. But yet she didn't feel constricted. She got excited about Cosmati pavements, and she worked out the whole thing herself. She wasn't just transcribing anything, they're free interpretations in their own language, just as Brian's were.

Riess: What is the difference between Cosmati and mosaic?

Olwell: Well, the word is kind of disputed in origin. Sometimes they say "Cosmati the Elder," "the Younger," and you think that it was a family, and maybe there was. But originally in the old

Olwell: Roman buildings, even for instance porphyry as a material, the source of it was lost after the fall of Rome. They would take these old buildings and cut them up. They would slice columns like bologna and they'd have these rounds left. Then with the leftovers and pieces they would make an Oriental carpet of marble around the rounds, like the paving in San Marco in Venice is--well, all over Rome, San Clemente, St. John in Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, all of them have Cosmatesque pavements, and some in Greece, and a few are in Istanbul or Constantinople, though I'm not quite as familiar with the Turkish ones.

But I've always loved that "strap work" pattern. One of Spike Pries's best ideas, I thought, was to have a class in ornament, for the architects, because that's a vital part of the rest of the art. You'd be amazed at architects; they're just unaware of the kind of thing, let alone having had any experience, but one of our experiences at Washington was to do a Cosmati pavement, not just talk about it.

Riess: Otherwise you might have said, "Well, I can do the church, but you'll have to have somebody else do the interior."

Olwell: Well, I don't think the intent in those days was to make the architect the artist, but at least he ought to know about it and know what's a good one, why it's good, and pick out an artist who can do a good one. It's always taken nowadays as that's too restrictive, but Mrs. Dimitroff was just great that way. Though this wasn't her own personal style necessarily at all, she set to work and got wildly enthusiastic, and toured half of Mediterranean Europe looking at things, not finding things to copy but figuring out how the colors vary in very interesting ways, the ways the mosaics are set in and the illogic that can produce another kind of logic optically. She really saw right through to why they are so rich and beautiful.

Riess: How about Brian Tivel's training?

Olwell: I'm darned if I know. I tried to get ahold of him several times, although I haven't been home in the last week every night, so I've just called in the daytime, but his number still rings so he must be around. John Reid died about three years ago, and I talked to Brian shortly after that, but I haven't talked to him recently. But wait a minute, I did too, because the Greek church in Marin, I was hoping to get for him, but they picked somebody from New York.

Riess: Was this [Oakland] an expensive church? You talk about one of the artists touring Europe to get the paving together.

Olwell: Well, she was going anyway. No, it was very inexpensive. The Greek one in Oakland was 500-and-some-thousand dollars for everything; the building itself, not the ornament or inside. I don't know what Brian's fee was, but it was very modest, and hers was even more so.

The Sacramental Church

Riess: The Oakland church seems so rich inside.

Olwell: Well, gold is gold, as a color. The only time I think it comes out really very close to what I had hoped is at Easter, because then it's first black dark; then at one point the priest comes out with a single candle and saying "Kristos anesti," passes around the candle, and so the roof reflects the thousand candles; the light from the flames wobbles and so the roof seems to move too, and you don't get that still, electric, cold thing. And Father George really had a sense of drama and a touch for choreographing a service.

Riess: The exterior feeling of whiteness seems very Greek to me.

Olwell: Well, it did to me too. I hadn't been to Greece then, but I'd seen some marvelous books and pictures, particularly of the churches in the islands, of that stark quality, a kind of staniness. And I didn't really realize it as much until later, reading about the nonproselytizing churches. (Of course, Greece is Orthodox and they don't have to proselytize.)

I grew up as a Catholic, and the part of it that didn't seem to appeal to me was the sort of, well, that they seemed to be obsessed with the Atonement and all that, jots and tittles, and who is going to suffer this and suffer that and all that kind of thing. The Greeks seemed to be a little bit closer to almost Eastern thought, where the Transfiguration is the important part, and that is a kind of a joyful thing, and that's why, in a way, the coming-into-the-church should suggest that, not the next world, but the joy in this one. I'm not a religious philosopher, but that kind of a feeling, you know, should be architecturally expressed in a strong difference between the inside and the outside.

Riess: When you think of some of the churches that were built at that period, they're all pointiness and angles. Pointiness often is symbolically leading to heaven.

Olwell: Well, I don't know, a sacramental church is almost like an envelope around an explosion. You go as a witness to something that's happening, you don't go to cause something to happen; it's already happening, you come there to see it. When you see the building from the outside you should obviously see the reverse side; the important side is the inside, and that's just as true of a Gothic cathedral. You know, their exteriors were festooned with sculptures and things, but really it was the inside that was important.

And that's why, in my opinion, so many modern churches fail. In St. Mary's, the architect's thumb dominates the whole thing, the exterior that is, and the inside is just what is left over. It should be just the opposite way. Or, if you must choose that kind of form, then you have to go into a frenzy to try to undo the effect, and make it look like the explosion it should have been. Especially when there's not much money, the best way is to start that way. And what's better than a dome, you know, that feeling of force within, and also the feeling of it being sort of cold outside. Also, a circle is a very powerful form in design; practically the only thing that can hold its own against it is a square.

So, knowing that, these little squares were made out of flue liners just stuck together, and then these openings are all squares, and everything else. So that there had to be something to contain this energy, and that's another thing, the fact that the curvature of the dome goes down here, it's visually held and contained. Even these half domes, again, are trying to anchor it. The Renaissance domes had lanterns, and these aesthetically held it together. Without that, you've got a planetarium, and it looks like it's about to take off. Interesting. But that is just geometry. There are some shapes that are too strong to be incorporated without some modification.

Now the Oakland dome, for instance: in order to really build it within a budget, there's a steel rib form inside and it's wood in between, so actually it's segmented. Every other one of these ribs is a dummy, in order not to let you know that it's a segmented dome, and makes it seem like it's a true curve, which it is not. The steel with wood in between is by far the cheapest way to do it in our context, therefore the only way.

Site and Landscaping

Riess: How much thought were you giving to this project when you were off in India? I mean you'd had your shot at it and it seemed not to be happening.

Olwell: Well, I did go to Greece on the way home, and managed to see quite a bit of it, but I didn't really know then what was happening. I wasn't even certain I was going to come back here to this office. As it happened, they had started all over again, and this time they really had more energy and direction. Before I left, they were looking at one lot and another lot and another lot.

Riess: Did the site make a great difference in your design also?

Olwell: Oh yes, absolutely, because it had this commanding view, so there was no point in trying to go up any higher, it already was high.

Riess: But it's not a view church at all, it's a totally unview-oriented church.

Olwell: Not from the church interior, but when outside, when you walk around at night--you see that marvelous view of the bay. I put the lights down near the bottom of the columns. That was a heritage from the Navy, so that your night vision isn't spoiled. Otherwise, if it's above you can't see anything but the light. The trees have grown up, rather unhappily. I wanted to control that a little bit more, because originally--I don't know whether this still has some of the old photographs when it was new--you're up there walking along here and the entire bay was out there in front of you.

Riess: Did you also design the landscaping or who did you work with?

Olwell: Well, we really didn't have anybody. We had a few from time to time, and they would submit drawings, but nothing was ever really done from their drawings.

It was kind of amusing, I remember the gardens in Ryonji Temple in Kyoto where every rock took fifty years of contemplation! We had a phone call from the grading contractor--this was a quarry originally--and he said, "The site is cleared and the boulders that were taken out are here. Where do you want them? If you get here in forty minutes, I'll stay." So I went roaring over, and there was the bulldozer [makes noise like running bulldozer]: "Where do you want it?" So we pushed the

Olwell: rocks around here and around there, but there was about that much contemplation allowed, or else they would have just been taken off the site. There were and are some nice eucalyptus across the street, and I thought these would be more, you know, just surrounding up the hill, but they've grown now, the pines, particularly along here, and practically obscure the view. Maybe eventually they'll get big enough to look underneath them.

The chapel has never been built. The church and school buildings and covered walks were built first. I later redesigned, and I think improved, the hall, and it has just been built. The colonnade helps to make sure that any future buildings don't get too close to the church building. Also, you get more for your money worth, in a way, because you really have the feeling that the building covers the entire area, but the only thing that cost the money was in the middle.

There was a wonderful guy--and it never would happen in a school project--a real old man who, when we were finally handing the building over, tottered to his feet, and said, "I was wrong, I was wrong! I didn't want the colonnade," because it cost all of about $20,000, but he could see afterwards what the reason was. If people don't see it afterwards, then you wasted your time. He at least was gracious enough to say so, which most people don't.

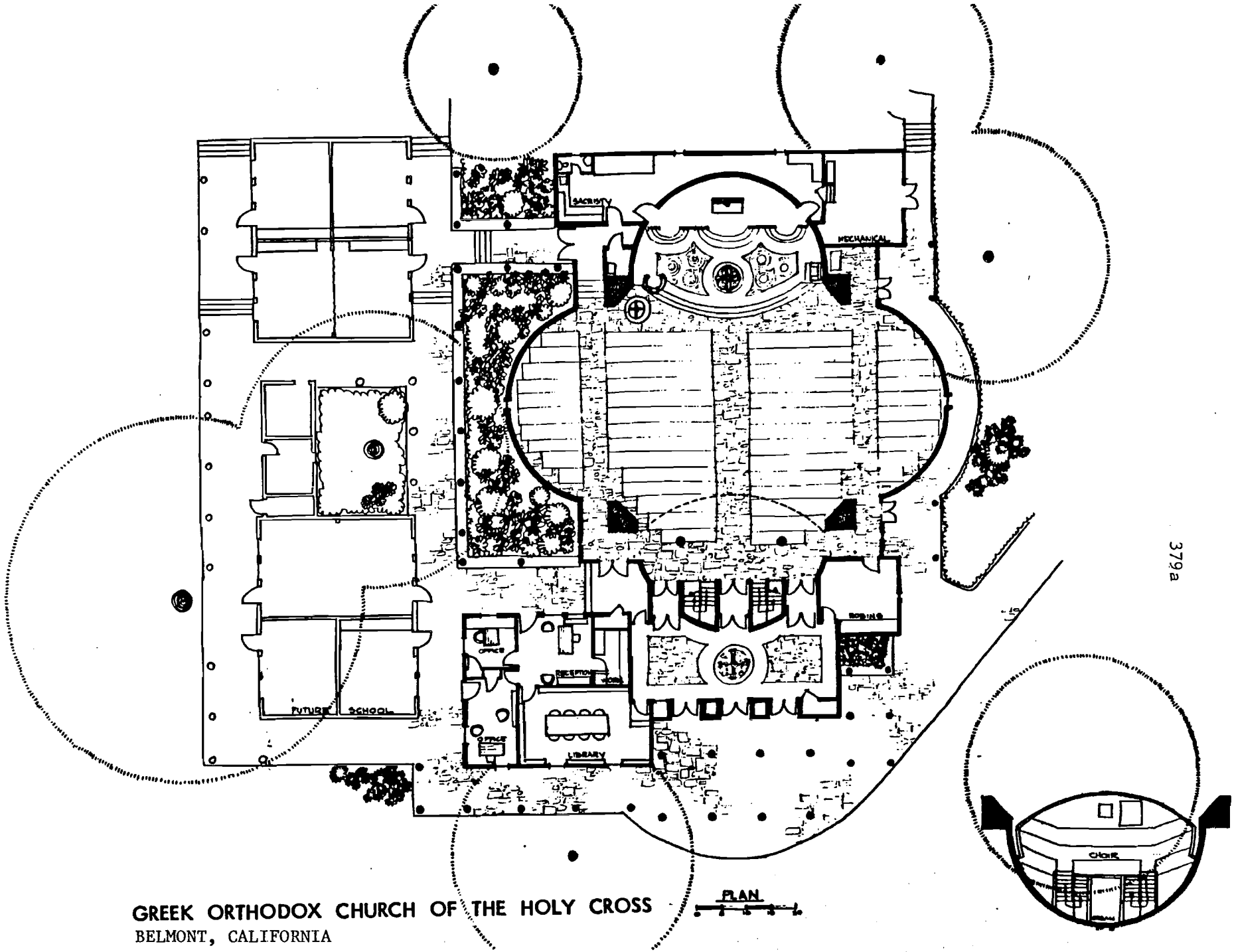
Riess: When it was dedicated, was there a lot of architectural excitement, reviews, articles?

Olwell: Yes, well, it was an AIA award. I guess it was really submitted before it was finished, but we didn't do too much afterwards. It was in Life magazine. There was an article about far-out churches, which sort of depressed me; it wasn't intended to be a far-out church.

Other Inspirations

Riess: How about talking about some of the other church work you've done?

Olwell: Yes. Well, we did do a small Lutheran, an addition to a church out near Golden Gate Park, just a community thing, but this one [the Oakland Greek Orthodox] was liked by the Catholic Bishop of Oakland, who then asked us to do some churches (St. Anthony's and St. Felicitas). I never did any of those except one, St. Agnes, which was a school-church.

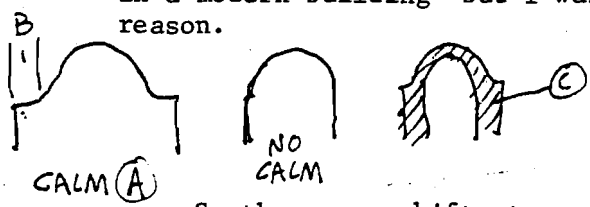


GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
BELMONT, CALIFORNIA

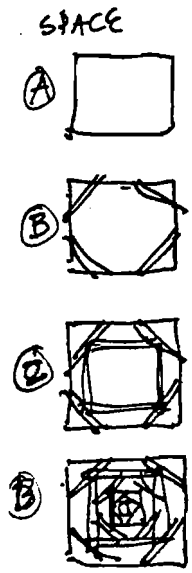
PLAN

Olwell: Father's brother-in-law, Father Steve, was down in Belmont--that's another whole story in itself--and this is a smaller building, and you can be a little bit more playful with a size like that. It's about 500 people, just about half the size of the Oakland church. And this is in concrete.

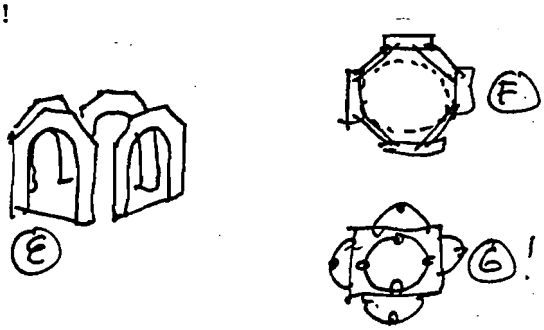
It was an interesting thing in a way. Do you have a piece of paper? I should have one but I don't. [sketching as he speaks] Well, it was just another way to go about it. The old buildings, you know, had always this kind of a feeling of peace, (A), because of the distance of the building to the spring of the arch (B). If you cut this building in two in the Byzantine one you've got a lot of masonry here (C). This wouldn't exist in a modern building--but I wanted to get that effect, within reason.



So the scene shifts to my childhood in Seattle, and there was and still is, thank heaven, a magnificant movie theater, the Fifth Avenue, which was a copy of the Temple of Heaven in Peking! But it's a super building, it really is a stunning thing. The Chinese, for other reasons (they didn't have large timbers), when they went to roof a space (A) they put the shorter ones across like this (B), then they built another square here like that (C), and then more shorter ones, and so on into a middle (D).



Well, I thought why not do the same thing, do four, tilt-up concrete things (E), each one of which is shaped like that, and then with a hole cut in it for the half dome to come out, but then put a concrete beam across here like that that would be hidden, and then you've got the supports for the dome which is within this thing (F), and still within reason in cost and a modern construction because it's a reenforced concrete shell. But still, the effect that came from here and for another reason, and which did and does produce that wonderful feeling of serenity, that's what I wanted, this feeling of serenity. Again, knowing what you want: even if you have to go to the Temple of Heaven, you know, get it!



Olwell: This [looking at picture] is the lid of the baptismal font there [Oakland]. It was sort of like a chalice, shaped in cast stone. That was made by a firm called Western Art Stone--another outfit which is amazing. They used to make abalone-shell birdbaths and lead gnomes, and now they've gone into huge things, partly due to our influence. They started making furniture for us, and now they do the facade of the Transamerica Building, and precast building parts, and things like that. But anyway, Lucienne did a Cosmatesque thing around the bottom. I wanted a really smashing lid, so I found a cooking wok in Cost Plus. Then her father, Ernest Bloch, who used to live on the coast of Oregon, collected agates, so we epoxied agates in these channels, and then I got a cross and stuff. That's the cooking wok! [pointing]

Riess: I was going to ask you about liturgical furniture, and there are some very handsome pieces here.

Olwell: The throne was a play on the Bull of Minos, then a little Cosmatesque inlay that Lucienne did.

Riess: On the Bull of Minos?

Olwell: You know, the horns of the bull in Knossos are the same shape. In this case, they become the arms of the chair, which, needless to say, I didn't explain to them, but it did give a Greek sort of feeling.

Riess: How about other pieces that were commissioned from outside? Were there any people that you turned to other than Lucienne and Brian?

Olwell: Lucienne did the mosaics, and Brian did the paintings. Bourboulis did some mosaics by himself in the narthex, but then on a later commission, Lucienne and her husband did a lot of mosaics in the narthex, which I think are very handsome; the small ones that are all over the place I think are very beautiful. The lighting fixtures were made from my design, by another great firm, Hanchen and Goddard.

Church Rite

Riess: Had there been any changes in the Greek Orthodox church service that you were designing to accommodate?

Olwell: I don't think so very much. I think there's a little more English in it. Not speaking Greek I wouldn't know, but there hasn't been that really violent upheaval.

Riess: There was not a movement, for instance, to turn the priests to face the congregation, to bring the congregation into it in a much more intimate way?

Olwell: Father led me to a lot of books--The Sacred Fire, I've forgotten the name of it, a wonderful book--that explained some of it, but the Greeks always have had that sense of community a little bit more, or kept it. The Romans--I'm quoting Commonweal of years ago--originally the priests were married in the Roman church, and then the whole monastic period began to interfere with that. They were part of the congregation, and the dividing line was between the priest and the bishop, who was literally the successor to the Apostles. And then the priests sort of ooched over, and now the dividing line is between the congregation and the priest. But the Greeks really have to be married as priests, unless they're monks, but they can't be promoted--that is, only if they're monks can they be made a bishop. But they stand with the congregation, and they share--oh, do they share!--all their feudings and everything else, and they're much deeper involved, although I think some Catholic priests would dispute that! Symbolically I like the business where they face the same direction as the congregation, they don't suddenly turn around. I'm not used to that, I grew up in the other Catholic church, and I know my parents were just completely turned off by the new liturgy. But there are some things about it that are, I think quite interesting.

In working on the St. Agnes recently, I've been rather impressed with the rite. At the dedication of St. Agnes a few weeks ago I thought it was rather moving. At first there were, you know, people in lay clothes on the altar and singing Lutheran hymns, and I kind of like the permanent sound of Latin. While you're looking at a ritual, although you should know, and most people did, exactly what it all meant, and you followed it in your book, it was still kind of a one-step removed to something else, something deeper. If you get pulled right back to reality in contemporary English, you never do touch that deep area. At least, that's the way I feel. But this dedication was quite impressive, I must admit.

Riess: Well, one of the things about the new Catholic Church liturgy was an effort to make everyone equidistant for instance, and so that's why you get more churches-in-the-round.

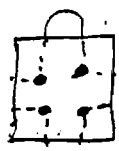
Olwell: Right. Well, that's what in a way was the reason for St. Agnes's being the way it is.

Riess: St. Agnes is out in Concord?

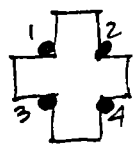
Olwell: Right. And that was surrounded with light, and so every place you look, the congregation is silhouetted because they're all part of the thing now, and I was trying to pull them together. But for economy reasons and other reasons--the chief one being that it had to be cut in two for a community hall so there had to be a door across here--a circle was out of the question.

Riess: Well, do you think that the feeling in the Oakland Greek Orthodox Church is of being in the round?

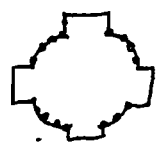
Olwell: It's still the shape of a cross, that's the basic thing. The original was a square and this cross was in between, then they had a little apse, and then columns supporting the dome. Then there're usually other domes, small ones, at the sides, and then maybe an apsidal chapel, and things like that. But I think the basic form was the cross.



When John and Alec, the engineering partner, who is still very much in the office, made a quick tour to Istanbul, they came back with what to me was the most fantastic misinterpretation, saying, "Well, the essence of a Greek church is to support the dome at four points."



Riess: [laughing] The architectural essence!



Olwell: Yes, but I mean at four points, yes, but the Byzantines did it in order to be able to have a cross, not because "Look, ma, no hands." And if you have a round building, which they (John and Alec) originally were talking about doing, supported only at four points, it would have been just idiotic. So we finally ended up with these semi-cross-shaped forms. But to just have nothing but the four points--I mean philosophy is not like mathematics, you can't run it backwards, it just won't add up to the same thing then.

Architecture, "The Art of the Background"

Riess: St. Agnes is way out of our chronological realm, but you said on the phone that they have a concept of the art of today being photographic. You described a situation where they can project anything on their walls. How do they select the atmosphere? I mean what determines what they're going to do from week to week, whether it be Giotto or Pollock?

Olwell: Well, this is right now what we're in the middle of. At the dedication I kind of ran through a demonstration of what it could do, saying again and again that this was not the intent of what it should do. I have a little thing that went along with the introduction that Father more or less read, with some editing. There are liturgical colors for different times of the year. My original inspiration was to have a "church without walls"; you could just erase the walls and be in a planetarium, you know, outside.

Riess: That's when you get the congregation in silhouette?

Olwell: Yes, as soon as the projection starts. The lights only come up from the bottom, and then the projections are up above. But you can have clouds, trees, flowers, things like that, or you could be some other place, like in Chartres or San Marco. Then the whole world of painting is open to you, or mosaic, or anything else. So all of that is available, and it's available in an ordinary 35mm slide.

Originally we went to the people at the Opera House, but every slide is about like this [larger], you know, and it costs $500, and it has to be operated, the projection equipment, by a professional because it's high temperature. These are just Kodak carousels, but they work marvelously. Really surprising.

Riess: This has, it seems to me, a real danger of just being a kind of flashy idea.

Olwell: Oh yes, it could be terrible, and Father Schmidt is certainly aware of that. So now we've got to sit down again and take all the things apart once more, and start from scratch. We want to give him trays for the whole year. One tray will do it really, and maybe only a few, one or two in one service. The whole effort is to support, to underline, to enhance and to clarify the meaning of the liturgy, not to overwhelm it; if they try to compete with the liturgy it will just be nothing. The power of this medium is potentially unlimited, but whether they will have

Olwell: the time and the energy (that's why we wanted to just do our absolute damnedest first) to start it off in the way we think best is only our hope. (Then you just have to pray that they don't vary too much, or that maybe they improve it; I'm sure they can!)

Riess: It's interesting to me that your hand is really, in this case, almost into the liturgy.

Olwell: Well, that certainly never was intentional, because I don't like that kind of suffocating, single-individual notion. To me, architecture is the art of the background; you just set the stage for something to happen, and the moment architects get out in the middle of the stage, you've made a terrible mistake someplace. Tradition is a great advantage; it already is in the background, you don't have to create it, and it's there in the peripheral part of your mind too; it just keeps reenforcing, "I am here, all is well." After that, it's the client's turn to perform.

The trouble with so many modern churches in my mind is that the architects get their elbows in your face all the time; they should stay on the edge of things. You're really making pieces of air primarily, not a building; you're just making an enclosure. How you go from one piece of air and how you make the transition to the next, and the next and the next, and how they all add up is the whole essence of the "art" side of architecture. That was what I really meant by the term Renaissance; they were really architects of chunks of air, not buildings.

I remember teaching years ago. We gave the students an opera house to do, and a friend who was teaching with me got them entree into the [San Francisco] City Hall, and we took them up to the top of the dome and everything. Most of these students were not from San Francisco, and practically all of them had never been in the City Hall, and they'd been told by most of their professors, you know, that Gropius had invented space and Corbu [Corbusier] had finished it. It was just written all over their faces as they stood in that dome, you know, "How long has this been going on?" That marvelous space, compared with those poverty-struck Mexican gas stations they'd been told all these years were the be-and-end-all. Here was this huge, playful, strong thing going on, all unbeknownst. When I was teaching at Cal, believe it or not, history was an elective for architects!

I remember being on a jury in Stanford once, and another member of the jury was a guy named Nanny, who was the head of the music department, and I asked him, just for the heck of it,

Olwell: what he would think of a school of music that had nothing on the far side of Hindemith. He said, "What are you talking about? There wouldn't be any school." Well, in a way, that's what we've been doing, because now even though people are nostalgic once more, they're illiterates. I mean they just put out this stuff that's so pathetic, misinterpretations of things, and little bits and pieces snatched from here and there. Well, I don't want to go into that!

Riess: Well, it is something of what you were saying in the beginning, whether you've learned how to do dog hospitals and then decorate them, or whether you've learned how to do palaces that would make dogs happy.

Olwell: Well, no matter how you strip the palace, it's still a palace. I mean Wurster couldn't do an outhouse without it looking vaguely like Florence; he had a certain tip to the roof pitch and a certain feeling for something. Oh, when Maybeck and those people came back from Paris, they were going to recreate Rome if they had to dip gunny sacks into cement and hang them on chicken wire, which is what they did, but they knew what they wanted, that was the first thing of all.

Riess: What are some other churches that you think of in this period, from 1945 to 1965, that represent something new done very well with an understanding of what a religious experience should be? You know, furniture that strikes you as good and appropriate, et cetera.

Olwell: I sound awful because I can't think of many, except in photographs where I've seen things I admire. There were a couple of architects before that period, oddly enough in Germany, who went right on during the thirties. Dominikus Böhm was one. His churches I've never seen in Germany, but I thought they were marvelous as modern buildings, very powerful. And some of the glass he did in churches, or the churches in which the glass was put were marvelous. I think some of Saarinen's churches are extremely beautiful, a lot of those. Locally, in addition to Maybeck and many others contemporary with him, Polk, Cox, et cetera, Wurster's Woodside and Berkeley Unitarian are great, as well as Warren Callister's Belvedere Christian Science.

St. Mary's I think is a disaster. On the other hand, Grace Cathedral is a very handsome piece of air. It's funny how serial an experience a building is, and that was a perfect example because, remember for years you went in from California Street because that's all there was. They only added about a third more, but now you go in from the end, and it looks like a totally different building, and about ten times as big, because you're able to grasp the whole thing. [Lewis P.] Hobart was a very, very fine architect, I think.

Riess: Do you think it's important in church buildings or in buildings in general to be able to grasp the whole thing?

Olwell: Yes, but I think the best spatial effects are one-at-a-time, cumulative, and I think that's a fault, to my mind, at St. Mary's; you can open the door, and still have your feet outside, and look in, and the whole thing is right there. That's all there is--no development.

[Auguste] Perret, he was certainly a very great architect, but there was one church of his in Rouen I remember seeing that was rather like that; it was almost like a hollow skyscraper of concrete with an altar in the middle; you could just step in, and that's it. A rich experience is hard to analyze, but you know it well enough if you've had it. I think one of the few things you can know about experiences you have had is that there's a beginning, development, first stage (soup?), second stage (entree?), third (salad?), fourth (desert?) and finish (coffee?). Each stage is an enhancement of and preparation for the next; complexity is necessary.

Lighting

Riess: You care a lot about lighting.

Olwell: Well, what you see is line, form, and color, and half of what you see in line and in form and color is produced by the light. I mean if you kill all the shadows, then your form is gone. And if you don't direct the eye where you want it to be, well, then it's going to wander around where you don't want it to be. And so if you can keep it low level (on the outside) so your night vision is not destroyed, that helps. Your judgment is contrasts, really; what is hot is only hot by comparison with what's cold, and dark and light in that way, and you have limits for light.

That's one thing I was unhappy with in this. [referring to the church in Oakland] I thought it was going to be much darker blue, and we even made shoeboxes in the office and tested the glass, and it looked all right. But I didn't climb in the shoe-box and spend a half an hour in it, because then that light becomes much, much lighter. The contrast between exterior light and interior is fierce anyway; your eye and brain have a natural compensator accessory which accommodates this violent change for you without your being conscious of it. I mean, you're comparing millions of candlepower with hundreds, and the contrast is so fierce that when you get outside light into the building, you

Olwell: have to really be drastic in cutting it down if you want that dark feeling, which Father George did want. I thought at first originally most Greek churches I'd seen in Greece were full of light, but he wanted it dark and mysterious, so I thought, well, that's fine. But the blue should have been darker.

Riess: You keep saying what things should have been. I think it's too bad that you've got a number of should-have-beens about this. Why don't you go and darken the blue! [laughing]

Olwell: Well, as a matter of fact we painted the blue. That wasn't painted enough, and we began to have some failures with the glass because blue, unfortunately, picks up more heat than any other color. And when the shadow of those flue liners outside fell on the blue, parts of it were heating, parts of it weren't, and that could have been, though may not have been, the reason for the breakage. There's a half window behind the apse that doesn't have any paint on it and those were breaking too. So maybe the blue panes weren't mounted in the right kind of putty or mastic or something. But it's a very complex thing about colors and how they accept heat.

There's a halation factor too. If you're outside and you hold your finger up looking at the sun, your finger looks about half as wide as it is because you get a sort of halo around it. Well, in the San Francisco church as well as in this--although there was a good reason for these things, these were just stock, stamped metal, I couldn't afford anything else--they're too lacy; if you're twenty feet inside you can't see the pattern. This [referring to Robert Louis Stevenson School] I was able to do in wood, and this is much nicer because then you get this flickery effect of the foliage outside. The slats are identical, just two layers of wood. This building didn't have to be fireproof because it's small--we had to use steel in the larger building.

Riess: This was the chapel of the Robert Louis Stevenson School.

Olwell: Right, yes. That was fun to do because it was a total contrast and nondenominational, so you just had to get the feeling out of the site, which is a beautiful pine forest there, and particularly the flickery light, which I was determined to grab a piece of and get into the building, so it's just all glass, except the north side, when you look out here. That came quite close to what I hoped it would be. Well, the Oakland also. And Belmont is quite close. San Francisco, there were so many changes made that it really gives me the shudders.

Riess: San Francisco is which one?

Olwell: Out on Brotherhood Way.

Riess: What is the name of that church?

Olwell: Holy Trinity. That could have been the most exciting of the three, to my mind.

Riess: When was that done?

Olwell: Let' see, it was almost the same time as the Belmont.

Riess: Was it another Greek Orthodox church?

Olwell: Yes. [looking through papers to find date] Father Anthony is still there. He's a very, very nice person. [referring to papers] Yes, the Holy Cross was '63, so it was about '64, something like that. But they made all kinds of changes, until finally whatever resemblance it had to the original conception was just practically erased. It makes you respect the architects of the past where you can see everything good; you can imagine all the hair-pulling and back-stabbing that must have gone on before someone had his way, or at least a group of people so that the result was coherent.

Riess: Oh, I think you must really be romanticizing it. I think the coherence has to do with the age.

Olwell: The age? Well, true, yes, people had more things in common agreement than nowadays, that's very true. Nowadays, we are always only one jump from total chaos.

Riess: I meant that we see everything as part of the past and it all goes together, there's a common bond of age.

Olwell: Well, everybody had that classical training in common.

Riess: But at the time don't you think some of those things were just awfully disturbing and new?

Olwell: Well, I wouldn't think so. In St. Peter's, I mean, the span was the same as the baths of Constantine, so they knew they could do it. The ornament had been developed in other formats, but it was still basically Renaissance, it wasn't that new. Maybe you are right though; it was an appalling act to destroy the original--the new one just had to be overwhelming!

Olwell: Then, the whole story of everything was so commonly known, every bit of iconography, everybody would recognize in a second whether it was the Blessing of the Loaves, and all that rich source material could be a continual, interwoven tapestry of meaning. We are much poorer today. Everyone, even artists and architects, seems mainly concerned with working within and communicating within themselves. They seem to almost glory in being secret and undecipherable. What a pity! What a waste! Art is said to be that mysterious thing that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts, but if you have a situation where the parts are hardly on speaking terms, the chance that they together might add up to something is statistically very small.

Transcriber: Joyce Minick
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and Stephen Dimitroff

ART, MUSIC, FAMILY, FRESCO, BELIEF

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1984

Copyright © 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and Stephen Dimitroff

INTERVIEW HISTORY	i
FAMILY BACKGROUND	391
Child Artist	391
Ernest Bloch and Marguerite Schneider Bloch	393
Suzanne Bloch	397
DESIGN WORK AND STUDIES	397
Leerdam Glass Factory	397
Ecole des Beaux-Arts and Beniamino Bufano	401
TRANSITION	404
Mrs. Sigmund Stern	404
Diego Rivera	406
Ernest Bloch	408
"Sacred Service," and Paul Robeson	408
Havelock Ellis, and Marriage	410
Creativity and Religion	412
NEW YORK, 1931	414
Frank Lloyd Wright	414
Dinner with Diego	416
Theories	419
DETROIT APPRENTICESHIP	421
Art Institute Murals	421
Frida Rivera	423
STEVE'S STORY	425
Signing on with Diego Rivera	426
Radio City Murals	427
Dimitroff Marriage and Partnership	430
RELIGIOUS WORK, I	432
St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church, San Francisco	432
Temple Emanu-El, Grand Rapids, Michigan	433
POND FARM	436
IMPORTANT INTRODUCTIONS	443
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, OAKLAND	446

RELIGIOUS WORK, II 450
Inspirations 450
Working with the Priests at the Greek Orthodox Church 453

MORE ON ST. MARY THE VIRGIN EPISCOPAL CHURCH 455

CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO 458

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Lucienne Dimitroff was recommended by architect Robert Olwell to be an interviewee in the Liturgical Arts oral history project. Indeed Olwell's initial idea, when he was approached to be a part of the project and to discuss the Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, was to include in his interview the artists--Brian Tivel and Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff--whose work had lit up the inspired interior of that church. Their work together was evidently a satisfactory collaboration for all involved, and Lucienne and Stephen Dimitroff were happy to make themselves available for an interview--something that is far from foreign to them, as they have been key informants for many years on Diego Rivera, and Frida Kahlo Rivera, and on Lucienne's father, the late composer Ernest Bloch (1880-1959).

Since their meeting in New York in the early 1930s through the Diego Rivera connection, the Dimitroffs have been a team; they have supported each other creatively, mutually. They now live in Gualala, California, a coastal community several hours north of San Francisco where they paint, garden assiduously, and offer classes in fresco buono technique, "Two former assistants to Diego Rivera," as they call themselves.

Their class flyer says, "Fresco is an arduous process...not for the faint-hearted," and Lucienne and Stephen themselves are certainly strong-hearted. They are a bright and vigorous and very engaging pair, as their interview will show: Lucienne the painter, very feminine, chatty, and Stephen the plasterer, who redirects his wife's answers to the point; they are active citizens, creative artists, and fully versed in the history of their time-honored art and its traditional uses in religious, educational, and propagandistic contexts.

The fact that Lucienne and Stephen taught one summer at Pond Farm, a workshop in the arts in the Russian River area also north of San Francisco, came out serendipitously in the interview, although it presages Victor Ries's discussion of Pond Farm in a following interview. Serendipitous too were the connections to the Stern, Haas, and Brandenstein families of San Francisco, and the reader is reminded of the interesting family trees and elaborate connecting branches of art patronage in San Francisco.

The first Dimitroff interview was held at the home of their friend Carol Fowler in Mill Valley, where Lucienne and Stephen posed for a picture with their yellow FRESCO Volvo. The second interview was held in the kitchen of the Dimitroff's house on Old Stage Road, Gualala, in the deep woods of the north coast.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name STEPHEN POPE DIMITROFF

Date of birth MAY, 9, 1910 Place of birth DOBROMIRKA, BULGARIA

Father's full name PENCHO POPE-DIMITROFF POPOFF

Birthplace DOBROMIRKA, BULGARIA

Occupation BUTCHER, GROCERY & BUTCHER SHOP BUSINESS LAST 20 YEARS OF HIS LIFE WORKING AT CHEVROLET & BUICK IN FLINT, MICH.

Mother's full name TSVETA NENOVA PENCHEVA POPOVA

Birthplace MITCHKOUTSI (GABROUSKO), BULGARIA

Occupation FANTASTIC HOME MAKER, THE FINEST MOTHER!

Where did you grow up ? FIRST 10 YEARS - IN DOBROMIRKA, BULGARIA CAME TO USA IN 1921 - (JULY 2nd at ELLIS ISLAND) THEN TO FLINT MICH. FINISHED HI, SCHOOL & 14 YEARS AT BUICK MOTOR CO.

Present community GUALALA CALIF. 95445, 125 Mi. NO. OF SAN FRAN.

Education FINISHED Hi. SCHOOL IN FLINT MICH. 1 SEMESTER FLINT JR. COLLEGE. 4 YEARS AT FLINT INSTITUTE OF ART. 3 MONTH AT ART INST. OF ART. NIGHT SCHOOL 1 YEAR LEARNING FRESCO BUONO WITH DIEGO RIVERA AT DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ART - RADIO CITY N.Y. - NEW WORKERS SCHOOL. (3 YEARS AFTER-WORK SCHOOL, GENERAL MOTORS INSTITUTE - FLINT MICH.

Occupation(s) AUTOFACTORY - BUICK - AC SPARK PLUG - FACTORIES - ALL TOLD ABOUT 18 YEARS OF TIME WORKED. TOOL & DIE MAKER JOURNEY MAN STATUS - UNION MEMBER (UAW) PRODUCT ENGINEER. (DRAFTSMAN.) PICTURE FRAME BUSINESS & ART SUPPLY STORES. FRESCO TECHNITIAN. MURAL PAINTER - WATER COLORIST - ART LECTURER - FRESCO AUTHORITY MURAL TEACHER - FRESCO TEACHER

Special interests or activities → TO LIVE - ENJOYING WHAT IS ABOUT ME - TO TEACH FRESCO BUONO - TO PAINT.

Stephen Pope Dimitroff

March 24, 1984

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name LUCIENNE BLOCH DIMITROFF

Date of birth JANUARY 5,1909 Place of birth GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Father's full name ERNEST BLOCH

Birthplace GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Occupation COMPOSER

Mother's full name MARGUERITE SCHNEIDER BLOCH

Birthplace HAMBURG, GERMANY

Occupation PIANIST * HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? Geneva, New York, Cleveland, Paris, Berlin.

Present community GUALALA, CALIFORNIA

Education Elementary School, 1 Year Art School (Cleveland) - Ecole Nationale et Superieur des Beaux Arts - Antoine Bourdelle - André Lhote,; Assitant to Diego Rivera for 2 years in Detroit & New York.

Occupation(s) Artist.- Mural painter, Portrait painter, Designer of glass sculptures, book illustrator, lecturer and art teacher. Photographer (during the depression.) Editor of the Ernest Bloch Society Bulletin for 16 years.

Special interests or activities HOUSEWIFE & MOTHER! Writing my auto-biography after the gardening, pruning, etc. etc. is over. QUILT making while watching KQED in the evening.

PARTIAL LIST OF MURALS BY LUCIENNE BLOCH--1980

(Technical Assistant: Stephen Pope Dimitroff)

1936 - HOUSE OF DETENTION FOR WOMEN, New York City (WPA) 160 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1938 - MUSIC ROOM, GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, New York (WPA) 650 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1939 - SWISS PAVILLION, NYC WORLD'S FAIR, (Lezcase, Arch.) OIL

1942 - FT. THOMAS POST OFFICE, Kentucky (U.S. Treasury Dept.) 160 Sq. Ft. CASEIN

1946 - CHILDREN'S HOME, Flint, Michigan: dining room and nursury CASEIN

1947 - YWCA GYM, Flint, Michigan 1,000 Sq. Ft. directly on brick CASEIN

1949 - GUERNEVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, California, 250 Sq. Ft. Outdoor FRESCO

1951 - CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOC., San Francisco 78 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1952 - MARIN GENERAL HOSPITAL, CHILDREN'S WARD, California 250 Sq. Ft. CASEIN

1953 - TEMPLE EMANU-EL, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1,000 Sq. Ft. OIL & GOLD LEAF

1956 - MARINE FIREMEN'S UNION HALL, San Francisco 200 Sq. Ft. ACRYLIC

1957 - ADVANCE RESEARCH BUILDING, I.B.M., San Jose, California 17,000 Sq. Ft. CERAMIC

1959 - SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC, Concert Hall 160 Sq. Ft. ACRYLIC

1960 - MARIN SAVINGS AND LOAN, California 100 Sq. Ft. WOOD & COPPER ON WALNUT

1961 - REDWOOD HIGH SCHOOL, Outdoor Mural 100 Sq. Ft. TILE

1962 - SAN FRANCISCO NATIONAL BANK 450 Sq. Ft. (in three panels) FRESCO

1963 - SAN FRANCISCO NATIONAL BANK, BRANCH 350 Sq. Ft. (in panels) FRESCO

1963 - CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, San Francisco 280 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1963 to 1969 - GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, Oakland: Narthex, Nave, Sanctuary, etc. Cosmati Floors (1977) 800 Sq. Ft. MOSAICS

1964 - BELMONT GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, Sanctuary and Floor MOSAICS

1966 - ST. MARY THE VIRGIN EPISCOPAL CHURCH, San Francisco FRESCO

1967 to 1969 - PRIVATE HOME, Sheridan, Wyoming: living room and pool MOSAICS

1973 to 1974 - FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, San Rafael, California 260 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1976 - THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE, Olympia, Washington Portable FRESCO

1979 - FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Sheridan, Wyoming 185 Sq. Ft. FRESCO

1979 - FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Sheridan, Wyoming 10 Ft. high cross MOSAIC

ART, MUSIC, FAMILY, FRESCO, RELIEF

[Date of Interview: March 21, 1984]

Family Background

Child Artist

LBD: I was born in Geneva, Switzerland, and came to the United States when I was eight, during the First World War, and I began to be interested in drawing. When I was nine, I drew "The Cat," in black crayon, and my father, who was a composer, was absolutely enthralled with the drawing. He said, "Oh! Anytime you want to look, I've got lots of books on art and you can look at them."

So I started making copies of the Sistine Chapel, of Michelangelo's mural, my first contact. And I did a lot of drawings also. I copied things from Gauguin. Then I illustrated books that I wrote when I was about eleven and twelve, in English. (By then I spoke English.) I illustrated them, and I remember there was one publisher who was ready to publish a book of mine called The Magic Rabbit.

It was called the Volland Company in Chicago, and it was an Irish poet, Padraic Colum, who had told them about me. They do Christmas cards now I think. At that time they were publishing children's books apparently.

So I sent them the manuscript and they suddenly sent me a telegram: "We like your book very much, but we're looking for Pamela Bianco," who had just become very famous. She was a kid of about eleven or twelve and had an exhibit of her work in New York, something very rare for people of that age. So they wanted her to do the illustrations.

LBD: And then we didn't hear anymore. I used to go down, you know, from the apartment house in New York, to see whether there was any letter, and there was no letter. Finally, then we moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and my father had his secretary--my father was the director of the Cleveland Institute of Music--he had his secretary write to the Volland Company and say, "We want the manuscript back."

I forgot to say, in the meantime they had written me, "We have lost the copy. Would you please send us another." And I typed it. I'd learned how to type, you know, without looking, and I typed it as fast as I could, sent it there, and when we insisted on having it back, when the secretary said we want it back, they sent me the first one, the one they said they had lost.

The whole thing was terribly disappointing for me, and I was so depressed when I found that out. Then they sent me a telegram: "You'll get back your manuscript. We're very sorry but--." Mr. J.P. McEvoy, who was the publisher of Volland, had changed his business and a new man, whose name was Clampitt--and I'll always remember that name--had taken over and they were not interested in the book. That was the end of that.

Riess: It's both a very exciting and traumatic story.

LBD: It was so traumatic to me--though at that time so many traumatic things were happening anyway, always in my family--that since then I never got excited about anything. So I just pushed things aside, went about my business.

Finally, Father took some of the book illustrations I had done and he sent them to Nicholas Roerich, who was a Russian painter and he was having a big show in New York, and I think it even went to Cleveland, Ohio, yes, that show. And I went to see it. I remember he said, "You can take all the time you want to look at it. You can stay as long as you want in the museum to look at it." So I remember I really could see it in half an hour; I wanted to go, but I thought it was wrong, so I stayed longer. [laughing]

Anyway, after finishing the eighth grade--I skipped high school; you weren't supposed to skip high school, but I answered all the questions about art for the Cleveland School of Art. I was there at the age of fifteen. I stayed there for a year, and I won the scholarship for the end of the year, even though all the others were much older.

Riess: That was your first formal training.

LBD: That was my first formal training, because Roerich had put down on back of my illustration a dot with a circle, which is a very symbolic thing for people who believe in--

Steve: Extrasensory perception.

LBD: Yes, whatever. I think it's Hindu. It's a dot with a circle, which was also done by Frank Lloyd Wright, only he had a square with a dot, that was a symbol for him. And Beniamino Bufano, who I met in Europe later, he used the circle and the dot.

Anyway, this Roerich made the circle and the dot for all the ones he liked best of the illustrations I did, and he said to Father--Father saw him in New York--he said, "Don't let her study with anybody, not for a while. She must not be forced into the kind of art that is taught in schools. Let her just continue on her own." But then I did go to the Cleveland School of Art, and I learned a lot of different things.

Ernest Bloch and Marguerite Schneider Bloch

Riess: Let me just find out a little bit more about this remarkable father who seems to have done all the right things.

LBD: Yes, he did.

He was a composer. Ernest Bloch.

Riess: He was Ernest Bloch.

LBD: Yes, yes.

Riess: That's what I was finding out indirectly. [laughter]

LBD: And he could not make a living in his own town where he had been born. Typical, you know. A friend of his, a violinist he had known--they both had been violinists together as children--was then the first violinist of the Flonzaley String Quartet. And he used to travel of course all over, they were all famous, the Flonzaley, and he told Father that Father should go to America. And he knew of a woman, Maud Allan, who was a dancer in England, who was looking for a conductor who would be with her orchestra on her tour, and in between her dancing he could then play his own music or certain interludes between the change of clothes and stage settings and whatever.

And so he decided it was worth trying, and in 1916, during the First World War, they went through to New York. After a few months of tour, maybe weeks, I think six weeks, the manager got all the money and flew out the coop, or whatever it's called, and they were left stranded.

LBD: He went back to New York and had very little money, but he met a lot of wonderful people there. One of them was Waldo Frank, who gave him his own overcoat because he had no overcoat; no, because his own overcoat had been stolen in a restaurant in New York. And this man and a few others--Stieglitz was one of them--made sure that he would be introduced to the kind of people in the music world who would appreciate his music. And sure enough, his first quartet was played, and it made a tremendous success. And so he went back to Europe to pick us up, and we left the next year. He was, of course, an extraordinary person, very, as I said before, a lot of trauma was involved.

Riess: Yes, that's what I was thinking, just the few little stories you've told.

Was your mother artistic?

LBD: She was. She was a pianist. But as soon as she married--she was of the old school--only children; she was a homebody. But she was also rather pessimistic. So when I won the scholarship at Cleveland and I came home--I was very ambitious and I really tried my best, you know, to do everything; I had to be better than anybody else in that big art class--when I said, "Mother! I got the scholarship!" she said, "Well, keep it up." She was afraid to praise.

Father was the one. And I understand that so well. For instance, when I started working with clay, I loved it so much, everyday I made a clay statue, and my mother said, "Well, you know, if you want to be a sculptor you have to learn about anatomy." And I thought, "Oh, you have to learn how to draw." You know, she really put a damper.

And it was a beautiful balance between the two of them, actually, because it made me never feel I was good enough, you know. I never was good enough because she was always very cautious about any kind of praise. So I like to know that for when I'm with children. I know to always give them a feeling of encouragement and fun so that they love it.

Riess: Because you think that they get enough of the other voice of the wet blanket?

LBD: Yes.

So my father said, when he found out we were going to high school, he said, "I don't like the way your brother has been taught in high school. He's wasted his time. He could have done better, you know, reading books and things like that." He said,

LBD: "You don't have to go if you don't want to." We didn't know there was some kind of a law or something that made you have to continue.

So my sister went to the music institute and got a marvelous training there, and then I went to the art school. But after a year, our father was going to be the director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and he wanted us to go to Europe. So my mother and my sister and I went to Europe, and my brother went to New York. And it was very interesting because then there were twenty-five years where we never saw each other in a group because we were all spread out, you see.

Riess: And what was the purpose of all that?

LBD: Because he wanted us to study in Europe. He thought we needed a European education.

Riess: The academic part.

LBD: Whatever. He wanted us to have the contact. He felt that the United States was very superficial in education.

And so my sister studied with Nadia Boulanger, and I went first to Antoine Bourdelle, the sculptor, because I was going to be a sculptor. But I found out that going to the sculpture studio of Bourdelle was just a very superficial thing. It was just to get the money of the American. At the time, it was 1925, and a lot of Americans were going to Europe. I remember we lived in the Left Bank.

Riess: Oh, you were in Paris.

LBD: In Paris. And, of course, you got twenty-five francs for one dollar. We took advantage. But it was a marvelous experience.

Riess: It doesn't sound like it would be the most comfortable place for your mother, given her sort of nature.

LBD: Mother was quite delighted to be away because it was difficult living with Father, and it was a sort of separation, you might say. But he used to come every summer and have a vacation with us for about two months, so that it wasn't a complete separation.

Riess: Let me ask a question. When the two of them were separate, was she able to really indulge her more supportive side?

LBD: Well, I used to have my diary in those days. From the time I was twelve I wrote a diary, and it was a lot about food! [laughing] You know, when you're that age you're hungry. You like candy and

LBD: junk food. Of course, the junk food in Paris was something else again. But then, more and more, I realized I was wasting a lot of time talking about all those pleasant things and I got into the deeper things. Twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old you start to be independent, and so it was difficult living with my mother because she didn't adjust too much. She was fun to go out with lots of times, but she was a negative person. So we had to fight.

And when my father was very angry because my sister wanted to get married to an actor in Cleveland when she was eighteen, my father went crazy in California because he said, "Oh, my God. How can you do such a thing, quit the educational work you're doing in Paris to go back to that town." He just felt that it was the most terrible thing that could happen.

So he didn't send us money. He said, "I'm just not going to send any more money." (And he used to send us money all the time, you see.) So I said, "Mother! You love flowers. I make the pottery, and you have a little shop, and we sell flowers." And she said, "Oh. [wearily] You have to know all about business, you have to know all about agriculture."

Riess: [laughing] Oh, poor dear!

LBD: [laughing] She immediately saw all these problems, and here I was ready, and I started already going around finding out if there was a little store she could have, you know. "And so we'll make bonsai and stuff like that." And I was getting excited about it, and Mother said, "No."

Of course I wrote to my father--my sister always said, "My God, the things you wrote to Father and he didn't mind"--I said, "We can get along. We'll get along. Mother will get herself a little shop and she's going to sell flowers. And it's all right. Don't worry about us." So Christmastime comes and he sent a telegram: "You're all forgiven," something to that effect. [laughter]

Riess: You were in Europe for how long?

LBD: Five years. It came out six though. Five years was the limit that an American who had become an American citizen, of course through Father's derivative citizenship, five years is all you could do with your passport. You had to go back to the United States.

Suzanne Bloch

LBD: So my sister went back. She got married. She didn't get married for long, luckily. The man was a wonderful actor and very virile, but he was homosexual, as she found out later. So my father sent her a telegram; never said "I told you so," never said that.

Riess: It was hardly necessary.

LBD: He said, "Just leave." And she had him ask for the divorce. He said, "Okay." Immediately my mother, who always saw the dark side, said, "Oh, my God. You know that if she ever does get married and something happens and she wants to divorce, they'll take the child away from her if she has a child because she's already been divorced once, and her husband divorced her." You know, she went through all those things.

What happened is the very same day that her divorce was granted, her husband sent her a telegram--she was then in Europe, and I remember when she opened it up and read it--he said, "Dear Suzanne: I love you, I love you, I love you. Will you marry me again?" So I told her, "Hold onto that, and so Mother won't be so worried." [laughter] He was that kind. He was a real actor. I mean he was just flamboyant and utterly crazy.

But she had the idea that she could compose music for the theater, because Cleveland Playhouse was marvelous. And she and I both loved it because that was the one place in Cleveland where we felt that we were individuals, we could do our own thing. She and I used to be the--. What do you call it? The mob scene, in back, you know, you don't see us, but we screamed and yelled and shouted.

Well, we really had a lot of fun there, and that saved us from a lot of problems.

Riess: She came back and married, and you came back, also.

Design Work and Studies

Leerdam Glass Factory

LBD: And I came back later. And what was interesting was this: (now this is the crux, this is where you start your story really) I became a sculptor-designer for Leerdam Glass Factory after four years of study in Paris at the Beaux-Arts.

Riess: Where is that?

LBD: That was in Holland. And I designed glass statues. I made them in clay and then in plaster, and then they were produced, and they're still being sold. It was a marvelous glass factory that used to do only the jars, you know, and electric bulbs and stuff like that for Holland. But this man, the director, believed that one could do beautiful things in mass production, and he had great architects from Holland and Germany and the Bauhaus design all sorts of vases and breakfast sets, things made out of glass.

And one of them, the man who was in charge of the art department there, was a man called [A.D.] Copier. So he was the one who would look at the work that I did. I had met Mr. [P.M.] Cochius, who was the director, again through my father.

My father was the only man in those days who was wearing a beard. In America, everybody was absolutely cleanshaven. And he went up to the Sierras with some friends and he let his beard grow, and they thought he looked so good with his beard, they said, "Don't take it off, it's good on you." So he wore his beard.

Then he was coming back from Europe, and he was on the train. In those days there were no airplanes flying passengers. And also those ships caused this long, drawn-out travel. Another man was there who wore a beard, and they were both seated in the observation car--you know, that back end of the car? And so they began to talk because they felt that there was something that they had in common. And he turned out to be the director of this glass factory. And of course they introduced each other, and Mr. Cochius was very happy to meet Ernest Bloch.

And my father immediately said that I was a sculptor, very gifted. And he said, "Well, I'll tell you. Since you tell me that maybe [Rudolf] Mengelberg is going to give you a concert of your works next year, by all means--now make it a serious thing--come to Holland, and if you're coming to Holland, let me know because I will be very happy to meet you and meet your family."

All right. We went when Mengelberg gave Father's works a whole concert, which Father conducted, and we met Mr. Cochius and he took us to show us the showroom of the glass factory. When I saw the statues that were being done--there were a few; there was a man called [Stefan] Uiterwaal who had done some sculpture--I said, "You know, they don't look like glass, they look like melting ice."

I said, "They're too wobbly. If they were all smooth, so that they looked like a lens, they had the glassy quality, it would be much more beautiful." I had the nerve to say that. And he said,

LBD: "Well, make some sketches. Tell us what you'd like us to do." So I remember during rehearsals I would be drawing, making ideas for them.

He invited me to come to Leerdam, which is about an hour away from Amsterdam. I said to Father and Mother, "Goodbye, I'm going to stay here." That was my first independence. And I was so happy, because I had been going to the Beaux-Arts, which was dead; it was academic. And I was fighting it because, though I wasn't yet very much interested in modern art, I had a feeling that it's always the Greek, the Greek--which was not Greek, it's Roman copies of the Greeks.

Riess: That's where you had ended up in your European study, the Beaux-Arts?

LBD: First I went to Bourdelle for about six months, something like that. Then I went to Landowsky. Landowsky was the sculptor who was famous for his Christ in Rio de Janeiro.

Steve: Christ of the Andes.

LBD: Christ of the Andes. I remember he used to always criticize our work about "the planes, the planes." He did everything flat like that [gesturing], in planes.

And each one of the teachers always had their own pet theory. But Bourdelle had no pet theory because he never talked about sculpture. He'd come and talk in French, and all the students there were Americans and hardly knew what he was talking about. Luckily, I could tell, so then I'd start laughing at his jokes. He was fun.

And then the very first time at his class--I'd never seen a nude model before. I remember there was this gorgeous male. He was a taxi driver, but he was a noble from Tsarist times, and that's how he made his living. There he was, completely naked. And, you know, I'd look at everything, but I didn't dare look at the sex, until I realized even the people were coming with their, they were measuring--.

Steve: Calipers.

LBD: The calipers. So finally I realized it was silly of me.

Riess: Had you seen any of the Finnish glass?

LBD: No, not then. The only thing that there was in Paris was Lalique, which to me was not the right kind of stuff at all. I wanted something smooth and clear and very, very modern.

LBD: I think the first thing I did there was a head. I wanted to make it a blown head because a blown head is very, very simple, extremely simple. And Leerdam did it. It had to be done in an iron mold, and it was curved. The opening, instead of being straight like they always are, the vases are, always the mold is absolutely straight here, and then you either have to remove the little bump that's there or else it had to be solid. And even then they didn't want to go into the very complicated kind of mold, but for the head they had to go to Belgium to have it done in iron. So it was a good three or four months before they were all ready.

Steve: May I add something?

LBD: Yes.

Steve: The way I understand that they were done, the design is made generally, the first design, out of plaster of Paris. It's sent to Belgium where a mold is made. It's sent back to Holland, and a preliminary cast is made of that mold to see whether it works, because glass has its peculiarities. If it doesn't cool all at the same time, it will crack. And she had been taught by the engineers of the glass factory how to really design, but she will tell you about that later.

After they discover that the design is correct, it's sent to Belgium where the mold is scraped and polished inside. (She has samples of the original rough glass ones, before the mold was polished.) Sometimes it's only a one piece mold, sometimes it's two pieces, and usually it's on a hinge. I don't know if you need anything more than two pieces.

LBD: No.

Steve: No. Because first of all it's terribly expensive. All these things are done, but what Lucienne may forget to tell you is, they used the artist--herself and a couple of others--only to test new batches of sand. They were not in the business of making art glass. They were in the business of making pickle jars and pop bottles and beer bottles. They were famous for that. But the astuteness of the manager, Mr. Cochius, to employ Frank Lloyd Wright! Wright designed one prism sculpture there. He made some unicas, which were vases made using experimental techniques with color, and accident.

Frank Lloyd Wright told the director, "I don't want you to employ any American until I okay him first." That's Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of what he thought of the Americans, but that's another story.

Steve: So that when Lucienne designed, her glass was so good that the factory then went into the business of manufacturing it.

Riess: Do you have pictures?

LBD: I have a few photos.

Riess: Could I look at them for a minute?

LBD: Yes, sure. [brief tape interruption]

Ecole des Beaux-Arts and Beniamino Bufano

LBD: I was still a sculptor by then. I'd studied anatomy at the Beaux-Arts and I also studied wood block carving and engraving also at the Beaux-Arts. It was all free! Isn't that extraordinary?

Riess: Yes, it is extraordinary. I didn't know that.

LBD: Even the model. No, the model everybody paid half a dollar.

Steve: The French government invited Americans, free of tuition. Where do we invite Europeans to come here, free of tuition? Our big companies, name them, there's a hundred who could afford it and take a tax writeoff. Invite thousands of these Europeans, and Asiatics, all of them, all colors, all ages. That's the way we're going to have friends. Proceed. Excuse me. [laughter]

LBD: He's very idealistic.

Steve: Not idealistic. Look how idealistic it is: you learned a trade, kiddo, thanks to the French government.

LBD: Yes, I did.

Steve: Four years, no tuition.

LBD: But I was fighting them all the time.

Steve: That's all right! [laughter] That's part of the game.

LBD: But at the Beaux-Arts, I decided I don't want those teachers anymore who have all their own pet theories.

By that time I met Beniamino Benvenuto Bufano, who was a friend of a friend of father's who was Mrs. Sidney Joseph, who was a part of the board of the Museum of Art in San Francisco.

Steve: Now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She was a board member.

LBD: Her husband was Sidney Joseph who did illustrations for private books. She was a wonderful person, so was he.

She was in Paris, and she said, "Oh, you've got to meet this crazy guy I know, Bufano." Bufano lived on the money she sent him. She gave him every month forty dollars. He was a vegetarian and he always went to the Chinese restaurant. That's how I learned of him.

Steve: Free rice.

LBD: Free rice and free tea. And it cost him, let's see, five francs for spinach and mushrooms. Delicious. He'd get all of that for five francs, which was five cents.

Bufano was a marvelous reaction for me. For instance, I was doing a bas-relief. Everybody in the Beaux-Arts had to do a bas-relief. This was in a square frame and this was of clay, and the subject was Penelope weaving with the seven suitors in back of her.

Steve: The gal was still married to the guy who was going all over the Aegean Sea. Proceed. [laughter]

LBD: I was going to do mine very archaic, because I couldn't stand all that Roman stuff. I was nauseated. The very first day I was in Paris, the idea of going to the Louvre and seeing the Venus de Milo--I had learned in school that was the greatest statue in the world. So I was expecting to be bowled over. I started walking down this long alley of the Louvre and I'd see thousands of Roman statues that looked like the Venus de Milo--

Steve: Almost like her, but not quite.

LBD: --but they all had arms; the arms had been glued on afterwards. They were Roman copies. And I became more and more disgusted with the whole thing. And then to see the Venus de Milo at the end, beautifully placed, but just the same, the first thing that shocked me was it looked like it was made of many different pieces of marble, and the head did not belong.

Steve: Didn't belong to the body.

LBD: Too small.

Steve: Five different kinds of marble.

LBD: We found that out later.

LBD: So I went there, and the only part I discovered about her was the back. I had never seen a photograph of her back.

Steve: Beautiful in back.

LBD: And just because I discovered her back, I said, "That's very beautiful."

Steve: Well, she is beautiful from the back.

LBD: I made a sketch of the back, because nobody has ever photographed her from the back, you see. But when I saw her I thought of the Venus pencil advertisements. I knew the Venus pencils were the best pencils for drawing, you know, and they always have that little picture of it anyway.

Steve: Bufano, please.

LBD: Everybody else was doing a three-dimensional kind of bas-relief, which is a high relief, it's no longer a bas-relief. I was going to do mine bas-relief. So I made mine, you know, very, very flat. I made her profile and I had her doing this, whatever that motion is. [gesturing] It's supposed to be the weaving, the loom. I didn't know how a loom looked.

Steve: That's all right, it's like a harp, similar.

LBD: Yes, like a harp. And my sister is a harpist at that time.

Bufano came when I was through with it, you know, and it showed her head and her shoulders coming out a little, her cheek comes out a little. And he looked at it, and he went like that. [gesturing] All the other girls--it was a girls' studio; at that time they separated the boys from the girls--they were all standing around to see this little man, they were intrigued by him.

And he came in, with his quite extraordinary face, slightly cross-eyed, tiny but just enough to be interesting, like Charlie Chaplin.

Steve: That's right, that's right.

LBD: And he looked and he said, "Do you mind if I do something to it?" I said, "No, go right ahead." So he picked it up, he held it this way [gesturing], and he dropped it on the floor and he stepped on it. [laughter] Everybody went, "Ahhh!" (said with a scream) And he picked it up and it was perfect. It was a real bas-relief.

Riess: He dropped it on its surface.

LBD: Yes, and stepped on it.

Steve: That's the way you learn from another sculptor.

LBD: I learned more from his doing that than from anything that all these other teachers ever told me.

The others, there was one of them--and this one was at Beaux-Arts--he had a little Legion d'Honneur button, and he had what they call catarrhe in French. He would [making noise to imitate him]. [laughter] He had a little grey beard, and he would come around like this. [imitating him] He'd look, you know, with his eyes half closed, and he was short so he only really saw the belly button. He would go from one to the other student statues, and he would talk about the planes of the stomach. "Make sure that you take care of the muscles of that area." That was about all he could talk about, because it was as far as he could see. [laughter]

So that was nauseating. I started doing things that were freer, and of course he said, "That won't do. That won't do. It just won't do." And on the way to the Beaux-Arts, all around me on the Rue de Seine and on Rue Jacob were all these modern things going on. The Surrealist Gallery--Dali and Yves Tanguy were nearby.

Transition

Mrs. Sigmund Stern

Steve: How about coming to cases now?

LBD: So then I met Mrs. Sigmund Stern of San Francisco. She called me up one day, and I was ready to go back to America. I had already gotten my ticket on the American Farmer Line--it was a cargo boat. I was in a little hotel. I'd given Father my address, and this woman calls up, and I didn't know who she was, except I'd met her daughter, Elise Haas, at one time.

Steve: Elise is still living.

LBD: Mrs. Stern said, "I'm Mrs. Sigmund Stern, and your father told me to get in touch with you. How would you like to go out to dinner with me tonight?" I thought, "Well, that's a nice idea," so I said, "Fine."

LBD: She said, "Do you know of a good restaurant?" as though she didn't know a good restaurant. I didn't know how rich she was or how poor, and I thought, "What am I going to say?" So I said, "Oh, I know a good restaurant my mother always likes to go to which is Alsatian, called La Cigogne," the stork. "Oh! she said, "Do you know my grandfather was Alsatian." So that was a very nice start.

And then she said, "What about a theater? What would you recommend for a theater tonight?" I said, "Do you speak French? Do you understand French?" She said, "A little bit, yes." So I said, "Well, I'll tell you, if you want to get the real flavor of French humor the best place is to go to the Theatre des Dix Heures," which is the Ten O'Clock Theater. And she said, "Oh, that's splendid. I'll have my--"

Steve: Major-domo.

LBD: Major-domo, or whatever she called him.

Steve: The man who takes care of tickets.

LBD: Yes. "I'll have him get us tickets."

Steve: Her chauffeur, really.

LBD: Yes, he was the chauffeur.

So we went to La Cigogne, and she told me about San Francisco, you know, and I had never been there. I enjoyed the food and I enjoyed her talking, a very charming woman. And then we went to the Theatre de Dix Heures. Of course, I was laughing all the way through. She didn't quite get all of it, but what she enjoyed was the atmosphere, the slapstick, the humor that came out of the audience laughing at the stuff. All political stuff, making fun of the government and so on. At that time in America nobody made fun of the government. Now they're getting civilized; they know how to give a few things, what you get on KQED.

Riess: Did she make San Francisco, in 1925 or so, sound like a place of culture and interest?

LBD: Absolutely. She said, "We are going to have a new opera house, and we have been working on it." And when she said, "we," she really meant we [laughter], because she was giving quite a bit of the money. She was really right there all the time, you know, quite wide awake about what to be done in culture and so on.

LBD: Afterwards, she said, "What shall we do now?" after seeing the theater, so I said, "Oh, let's do what Mother enjoyed doing very much with us, sit on the boulevard and watch the prostitutes go by." And she said, "Oh, let's!" [laughter]

So we went and sat down in a real cheap bar, you know, with sticky circular tables, you know? And the waiter coming along and wiping it off, and saying, "What do you want?" So we each had a liqueur. And as we were sipping and having--. Oh, she had so much fun. I would say to her, "There's one going by," and "There're three of them going by." [laughter] Well, all of a sudden her purser, or major-domo-- Her man came rushing over and whispered to her, "You can't be here, you can't stay, that's not right, that's no good." [whispering] So she looked at him, she said, "Oh, bosh." And then we got up, after having paid for the liqueur.

Then she invited me for a whole month to go with her to Germany, to Bayreuth, and to travel around because I guess she enjoyed my company.

Oh, I went with her to buy dresses for her daughter and herself at Lanvin. [laughter] Never in my life had I ever lived that kind of life. And she got me a room in the Hotel Ritz, which was an apartment. Seventeen mirrors, I counted them. Well, it was just something I never will forget.

I said, "I can't travel, I have to go back, my passport is expiring." And she said, "Oh, give it to me and I'll have it extended for another year. I can do that. A good friend of mine is President Hoover." [laughter]

But first I went to England because I had to see Paul Robeson.

Diego Rivera

Steve: You're digressing.

LBD: Oh, I forgot to tell you the most important thing. I must go back to the main reason why you came here to interview me.

I went to the hotel with her after dinner one time, or lunch. And she said, "Oh, I know you're interested in fresco. You told me about your seeing such wonderful frescos in Italy, and I want to show you what an artist has done in my dining room from Mexico." She said, "Do you know Diego Rivera?" And I said, "No, I don't know." She showed me photographs, eight by ten, of the little lunette, a little fresco.

Riess: How wonderful. Does that exist now?

Steve: Oh yes, we cleaned it even. Do you want me to tell this?

LBD: Yes.

Steve: It was in Atherton, at her house. We think that's the only private fresco Rivera ever made for anybody. It's now at Stern Hall, University of California, on Hearst Avenue. If you go there, right next to the kitchen is this thing. They took it from her Atherton house and brought it over, lock, stock, and barrel. And we cleaned it two years ago. The most beautiful, fresh color you ever saw in your life. It shows her garden in bloom, with a tractor and four children reaching for fruit.

LBD: Three children and then the other boy--.

Steve: Just a minute, now. So Rivera says, "There are three children, I'd like to have another figure, four," so he asked the little girl--

LBD: Rhoda.

Steve: --Rhoda, "Do you have a friend?" she says, "Yes." He says, "Could I see the friend?" She wasn't sure and she says, "Yes." So she began to describe the friend, and it was an imaginary friend. So the fourth figure is an imaginary friend.

Riess: Does it have any sense of the imaginary? Is it less substantial?

Steve: No, it looks like a real person.

Riess: Wasn't that a wonderful thing to do for that child?

Steve: A great thing, a great thing.

LBD: I mean, of course, Rivera at that time was already being accused by the Communists of kowtowing to the rich, and that he was just a no-good, you know. But gee, even in that subtle little mural he shows the men working in back; you see a man on a tractor, through the blooms of the plum trees, and a young man who's working, and then there're one boy and two girls. Walter Haas, Jr., is working in the garden, and then Peter Haas, Rhoda--she's now Rhoda Goldman--and the imaginary little girl are grabbing the food. You see them grabbing the fruit; they've got their hands on the fruit. So he got that in--in a charming way.

LBD: But it's beautiful. When Rosalie showed it to me, I said, "That's beautiful, I love that." And she said, "Well, you know, he's supposed to be coming to New York. Of course, I live in San Francisco, but my sister lives in New York, and I want to make sure that you meet him. And I will tell her and she'll let you know, when you're living in New York." And so she did.

So in October 1931, I was back in New York, and at the same time a very unusual thing happened when I came back to New York.

Riess: Can I just tidy up Europe for a second? Did you take the trip with her to Bayreuth?

LBD: I did all of that, and then not only that, when I was in England she wrote me a letter, she said, "Send me your passport and also your ticket on the ship, your passage, and I will transfer them and you can come back with me on the Ile de France." A snazzy boat.

Riess: Did you rebel a bit at all in this?

LBD: No. [Steve laughs heartily] I thought it was lots of fun.

Riess: Because she could tolerate your independence?

LBD: Oh yes, she was very good that way. Of course, she really had things under control. I mean when she talked, I listened, and I don't remember that she asked me very much about myself. When she did get the tickets to the Ile de France, she said, "I hope you don't mind, I'm putting you as a companion because I don't have to pay as high a passage."

Riess: Right, you could be her "woman"; she had her man.

LBD: Yes. [laughing] No, she had a maid. And the man, of course, was only for Europe.

Ernest Bloch

"Sacred Service," and Paul Robeson

Riess: Incidentally, where was your mother at that point?

LBD: Well, by then Father and Mother got together again. And after four years that Father was in San Francisco, people here in San Francisco did everything they could so he could be liberated financially to

LBD: compose, for that's what he wanted to do. So finally, the Sigmund Stern people gave him a grant in exchange for giving his manuscripts to the University of California at Berkeley. I mean he couldn't make money from his compositions. All he'd ever get was about $250 a year from Schirmer for royalties.

At that time he didn't know about ASCAP, but when he heard about it that's the only organization he ever belonged to. Until then, it was very hard living. He had to do something like teaching.

He went back with Mother and they looked around for a place to live, and they found a beautiful place in Italian Switzerland. That's where he composed his very famous Sacred Service [1931], which was more or less commissioned by the rabbi of the Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, Rabbi Reuben Rinder. It was the first work he composed in Europe, since he had left in 1917. He didn't go back to America until 1938, when Hitler came in, and everybody said, "Get out of there, it's going to be bad." Then he and Mother came back, but until then they stayed in Europe. I left, and I never went back to Europe until twenty-nine years later.

Riess: You made a triumphant return on the Ile de France.

LBD: I came back on the Ile de France, and really I was very concerned because I knew now I'm on my own. There was a depression, and it was very bad, until I got on the WPA.

Riess: What about Robeson? What were you saying about Paul Robeson?

LBD: Oh, I had suggested to Father, "Wouldn't that be marvelous if the cantor part--which is a very beautiful part of Sacred Service--could be sung by Paul Robeson?" And my father knew Paul Robeson quite well, and my sister and I knew him too, and we knew he had the kind of voice, bass baritone, which is exactly what the cantor is supposed to have.

So I went to see him. I won't go into the funny details about when he came to pick me up at the pension. But they were just totally against blacks among the little old people who were in that pension in England. I told them I wasn't going to have lunch because I was meeting somebody, and he was coming to get me. So they were talking about it in the dining room, and I was in the hallway waiting for Paul, and all of a sudden the bell rang and this little old lady opens the door. [imitates woman's reaction which includes a little scream] There was this huge tall black man, and he said, "Miss Bloch?" [imitates a deep, formal voice] Of course, I heard it, and I got up right away and I said, "Hi!" [said in a cheerful tone] And the L.O.L. closes the door behind us. [claps hands to imitate slapping shut of door] [laughter]

Havelock Ellis and Marriage

Riess: Had you gone to England just because you were waiting to get on the boat?

LBD: That was one reason, but also I was going to meet Havelock Ellis.

Riess: Oh gracious, you really were running from one celebrity to another! [laughter] How did he figure into your life?

LBD: Well, Father and Mother didn't get along very well, and so Father happened to read books that were only for professors, lawyers; nobody could buy them in the stores, but they were the Psychology of Sex of Havelock Ellis. He read them and he was absolutely thrilled with the literature, also of Affirmations by Havelock Ellis and a few other books. At that time he had heard of the only one that was really selling in America, which was The Dance of Life. I never read it, but he thought that was second rate compared to the other books that Havelock Ellis had written.

But when he read the Psychology of Sex, he said, "My God, I didn't know any of these things; I was ignorant." And he and Mother talked it over and Mother was too much of a prude to loosen up, let's put it that way. Of course, I'm telling you all those things, but one day I'll write it. I hope my sister writes it. She's been writing a book about Father for twenty years now.

Steve: Stick to the story.

Riess: If this is the beginning of your writing your story, I think that it's very worthwhile already.

LBD: Well, I'm really conscious about all the big names, because the rest of the life I've been with very few people with big names except my husband. [laughing]

Anyway, what happened was, Havelock Ellis had had correspondence with Father, and Father said, "My daughter is coming to England." I also had to see people about Father's music, try to have them go ahead and start playing his works. So on the way I saw Havelock Ellis too, and it was marvelous. I took some wonderful photographs of him that never have been published. They're beautiful.

Steve: Publish them in your book.

LBD: Good idea. [laughing]

Riess: And how was he to visit?

LBD: He was wonderful, a wonderful man, absolutely. He was then about seventy-two. He had a long white beard that was thin, so you could see his beautiful chin right through that beard. He was very philosophical, very calm, very, I would say, very patient with me. [laughing] Of course, I was so terribly much of a kid who did not think she was very good, doing anything good. I still had too much of my mother's influence in me, and my sister also was very--. She and I argued when we became older. We were wonderful companions, and then all of a sudden we were independent of each other, and so there was this clash; it kept us wide awake. And to this day, she's always the older sister--even though she's only one year and a half older than I am--but there's always sort of a feeling, you know. It's fascinating.

And Mother! One never gets rid of one's mother. One day, when I had already three children and one of them was in college, she calls up, and I was downstairs washing clothes. So I ran up--I was living in Mill Valley--ran up the stairs quickly to answer the phone and I was out of breath, and she said, "What? You were still in bed?" I said, "No! I was downstairs." [laughter]

I mean, here I was--.

Steve: I want to put in a good word for your mother.

LBD: Oh, she was marvelous, but as she got older, after Father died.

Steve: She was the finest mother-in-law you'd ever want.

LBD: She loved him. [referring to Steve]

Steve: Fantastic cook. I'm telling you, she was a cook of the first water. She was gentle. And she had opinions; whether you liked them or not was not material, she was positive. And she was a fantastically well-read person. Practically any book that I ever thought of, she read. In two or three languages; I'm sure in three, French, German, and English.

LBD: Yes.

Steve: And that is an educated person.

LBD: She was German, and she was not Jewish; and my father was Jewish.

Steve: She was a Lutheran.

LBD: Well, no. Her father was a Freethinker.

Steve: Well, yes, but she comes from a Lutheran family.

LBD: In those days a Freethinker was something that was very anarchical. No systems. They may believe in something like a God or something powerful, like nature.

One day when I was really getting sick of Father and Mother having problems, I said, "You ought to get divorced. After all, Mother, she's a bourgeois, you know, she didn't come from an artistic family." (Not that Father was from an artistic family either.) And I started, you know, putting her down.

And Father turned around to me and said, "How can you talk like that about your mother? Your mother is the most sensitive, the person who's understood me as an artist more than anybody else." And he had had plenty of other friends. And he said, "How can you do that?" So I didn't say anything.

I went home and I told Mother quickly, I said, "Boy, did Father give me hell! I said to him, 'You ought to get divorced.'" And I quoted exactly what I told him. And she said, "Really? Really? Really?" [imitating her mother's tone of amazement]

So they stuck together after, I don't know, the most tempestuous life, until they had their fiftieth wedding anniversary, and I said, "You know, you ought to celebrate." And Mother said, "Oh, no. Oh, no." [imitating her mother's weary tone] [laughter]

Creativity and Religion

Riess: Was your father interested in any of the Swiss or Viennese psychologists?

LBD: No. Psychiatry, for instance, he didn't have--. He read the books of Freud and was very much interested, but to him this whole psychoanalysis business, his feeling was you have these things that are inner for a reason; there's a reason to be inside of you. To try to get them out is--

Steve: To exorcise them is the wrong thing.

LBD: —is wrong. He thought that this was part of the extraordinary ego of people is the fact that they have this inner life, and you don't go and disturb them and stir up the mud.

Steve: You control it, yes, but you don't exorcise it, you don't cut it off, because you don't put anything in its place.

LBD: We had a friend who even married the assistant of Freud, who had been psychoanalyzed by Freud for nine years in Vienna, every day almost. We just thought he was a great guy, you know, he was jolly and everything.

Steve: Before he went, yes.

LBD: And when he came back he was blank, absolutely blank.

Riess: Well, did your father ever talk about how the inner turmoil fit in with his creativity?

LBD: Oh, he probably believed that very much. He knew. In fact he's written some very interesting things to musicians who wanted to interpret his music--for instance Joseph Szigeti. I have it in the Ernest Bloch Society Bulletin.

Steve: Lucienne published a bulletin, Ernest Bloch Society Bulletin. You ought to have a set.

Riess: Was your father religious?

LBD: Father? No, not a bit. His religion was nature, let's put it that way. He loved to be outdoors.

Steve: In that sense, he was very religious. I went out picking mushrooms with him, he was very religious, but in his own fashion; not in the organized religion as we know it, but he believed in something positive and firm, he really did.

Riess: And one of his compositions, a great one, was for the Jewish service.

LBD: But he was not religious, except for when he was very little. He remembered his father used to sing Jewish songs in the toilet [laughing]--you know, when he was in the bathroom, he would be humming and so on--outside of that and the time when he had his bar mitzvah, which he never mentioned to us. He used to make fun of the rabbi who tried to teach him Hebrew; whenever he came across the name for God, which you don't say in Hebrew, he would start going "ya, ya, ya" [imitating the sounds of the child starting to saw the Word], and the fellow would slap him, you know. [laughter]

New York, 1931

Frank Lloyd Wright

Riess: You said when you got back here it was the Depression. When you got back "here," did that mean to New York?

LBD: Yes, to New York. And the second day that I was back, my brother, who lived in Brooklyn, said, "Hey, you mentioned Frank Lloyd Wright." (Nobody in America at that time, in 1931, knew Wright except for the scandals. And that's what they told me in Leerdam, in Holland. Mr. Cochius said, "See this thing? That was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright." And my face didn't show any excitement, and he said, "You don't know who Frank Lloyd Wright is?" and he turned to his wife and said, "I told you so. Americans don't know about Frank Lloyd Wright except for scandals." Of course, I didn't know anything about scandals either. He said, "He's one of the greatest architects in the world today, and he came here," and so forth.

Frank Lloyd Wright had said, "I do not want any Americans to do any designing for you without my okay." So they sent him photographs of what I had done already, just to make sure that they got his blessings, and he gave them his blessings. So I had written that probably to my brother and he remembered.)

He said, "He's going to speak at the New School for Social Research tomorrow." So I went to the New School in the evening, and I heard his talk, and I'd never seen him before, and I was very enthusiastic. I raised my hand and I asked a question, which was really a little comment. I said, "Don't you think that if artists and engineers got together that wonderful things could be done, with the engineer's knowledge of materials and the artist's sense of aesthetics," and he said, "That's right. I want to see you after. Come over and talk with me." So I went back and I told him who I was and that I had made the statues, and he said, "Oh, I want to see you tomorrow in my apartments." He gave me his address. He said, "I want you to teach at my school, in Taliesin."

So I went the next day. I was thrilled because there was no job available at the time. He said, "I want you to go there, and we're going to start having a school, a school of architecture, and we need people like you. Don't forget now, next time you're going that way, come and visit up." Which I did, a year later, but I didn't stay more than three days.

Riess: What was it, the "scandals?" [laughter]

LBD: No. It wasn't that. He was adorable, he was sweet. He opened the door. I had my suitcase. I took a Greyhound bus. I had just been with Rivera and his wife in Detroit for five months. I was going to go directly to Frank Lloyd Wright's, but I stayed five months with them.

Steve: You're ahead of your story.

LBD: I know.

Riess: Let's finish Frank Lloyd Wright's story.

LBD: And I went on the bus and I said, "Where is Spring Green, Wisconsin?" And it was November and snowy. The bus driver said, "I'll stop you where you're going." So he stopped me, and he said, "You just go up that road." I went up that road with my suitcase, in the snow, uphill, and I couldn't see any houses because his house was so much a part of it, you know, and with the snow you could hardly see it.

I got there and I rang the bell, and Frank Lloyd Wright opened the door and he had a big bandage over his nose. He said, "Don't mind me. I had a fight with a truckdriver and he punched me in the nose." [laughter] It was so typical.

I went in and he introduced me to his wife, and she made me sit down with her, and she said, "Oh, so you're coming to stay with us I see." And I said, "No. I have another job that I have to do in New York, but I did want to come and tell you I hadn't forgotten." I did want to go back and do some lithographs of Detroit because I'd been there for five months and I wanted to do those.

She said, "Oh, you just came to look us over, I see." And she called a young man who had gotten my suitcase, and she said, "Bob"--or whatever his name was--"don't put the suitcase of Miss Bloch in with the students. Put her in the tourists' wing."

Riess: And did you ever get to talk to Wright again?

LBD: No, never got to anymore. I ate with the students. I remember she came in one time suddenly and she said to the students, "You know, from now on the dog is yours"--a big dog--"because you can take care of him and you can feed him" and so on.

The young man who took me around, who was eighteen years old and came from Chicago, said, "You know, this place is so disorganized, it's crazy. We were supposed to build the architectural building; we haven't done it yet. Because they don't tell us 'do this, do that,' they want us to do it all from the inside of the heart. So what happens? Before we could even start digging the

LBD: foundations"--they had already dug the foundation but not for the pipes and electric and everything that was to be put underground--"he said, 'We can't do it now, it's icy cold, everything's frozen, so we'll have to wait until it thaws, sometime in April or May.'" And so they were wandering around doing nothing much, I suppose doing a little reading.

Dinner with Diego

Steve: Now, after Frank Lloyd Wright's speech at the New School of Social Research, what happened the next night?

LBD: The next night?

Steve: Or the night after that.

LBD: Oh no, that was a little later on.

Steve: Whatever. Tell us.

LBD: We were invited--my sister, my brother, and I--to Diego Rivera's banquet. He was coming that same day from Mexico to paint some panels for a museum show, the first one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Steve: First one-man show given to a living painter.

Riess: What year is this?

LBD: 1931. November I think was when his show was. Unfortunately, at that time I didn't know how important it would have been to save the exhibit catalogue. I didn't, I was so young.

Riess: How had you been invited?

LBD: Through Mrs. Liebman, who was the sister of Mrs. Stern.

Riess: Were you staying with her?

LBD: No, I was staying with my sister. I think we paid fifty dollars a month for an apartment in New York, up on Broadway and Seventy-ninth Street. West End Avenue.

Riess: Were you doing some work there?

LBD: Well, I was doing little sculptures in wood in the little apartment. And Mrs. Liebman did ask me to do a bird fountain for her summer place; it was in White Plains.

Steve: Near Katonah, New York.

LBD: So I went there and I worked not every day but whenever I could. I took a big piece of stone and carved a very simple, very rough fountain. And I made little ducks that I put around, and I did it very simply. She would give me lunch. And then she'd have the gardener pack up delicate vegetables from her garden for me to take back to my room in the city.

Steve: Tell how you met Rivera.

LBD: We had known Mrs. Liebman just once or twice, but Rosalie Stern had given her my address, and she said, "You're invited to come and meet Rivera." And so I went, in the evening. It was a big banquet for him, and there were quite a few people. I was so impressed with him. They made me sit next to him because I could speak French with him. He could not speak English at the time.

My sister and my brother were there too, but I don't remember. In fact, in my diary I wrote that they were there, but I entirely forgot, and for years I used to think I was the only one of the Blochs who was there. But my sister told me later, she said, "You were so rude. Here you were, talking with Rivera all the time during dinnertime and you never allowed anybody else to talk to him." Of course it wasn't so. He was the one who was doing most of the talking; you wouldn't believe it though, the way I talk now.

But he was telling me, "You're going to see Frank Lloyd Wright? Ah! That capitalist! This idea of spreading out is only for the rich." The thing is, the center of the town is the important thing, and this idea of spreading out--. We didn't have any television in those days and we didn't have the swift cars and the big freeways, but Frank Lloyd Wright knew what he was talking about when he said we should spread out.

Riess: Diego Rivera was ranting away on his favorite themes?

LBD: Oh, fantastic. And when I talked about machines, you know, he said, "Oh, machines? You think we control machines? We don't control machines. Machines control us." And I thought back at it, you know. I'd never heard that. I thought he'd be like all the other artists that would say, "Oh, machines are terrible. They're destroying the world." No, he didn't feel that way at all about them. I was impressed because it was just so utterly different from all the people I had known, you know, intellectuals and so on.

Riess: Could you get him to talk about fresco making?

LBD: Wait. After a little while I said, "And what are you going to do now?" He said, "I'm starting tomorrow, I'm going to paint frescos, panels, for the exhibit." So I said, "Oh, I'd love to grind your colors"--because I knew that you had to grind colors, that's what I had read about Michelangelo and all the others. So I thought he would say, "Oh, we don't do that anymore; we buy them, they're all ground." He turned to me and he said, "All right, if you want to come, fine. It's at the Heckscher Building. I have a little studio in there." [59th and Lexington, New York City]

Steve: Sixth floor.

LBD: "On the sixth floor, 606." Then he laughed because that was the same formula as the syphilis medical formula.

Steve: But the artists always bandied it around, "606," that's why he was laughing.

LBD: He was like that, very funny. His wife was across the table from me and she was just giving me the dirtiest looks and I was just impressed by her.

Riess: Were you a cute little thing?

LBD: Me? No.

Steve: You? She was fantastic, really and how! Very beautiful! She was out of this world.

LBD: My sister was a beautiful girl.

Steve: No, no, no. This gal [meaning LBD] was fantastic. I'm telling you. I've got photographs of her.

LBD: I was Germanic. When I was a little girl I pushed my hair back. All my family called me "petite boche," which means little German. So I thought I was the ugly duckling.

Steve: She was magnificent. [discounting her comments]

The next morning--.

LBD: Excuse the shine on my nose.

Steve: Never mind, never mind the shine on your nose. [laughter]

LBD: I should have put powder on it.

Steve: Tell us about what happened the next morning.

LBD: I could hardly believe it when he said, "Eight o'clock in the morning, the Heckscher Building." And here he'd just come from Mexico, and this was already eleven o'clock in the evening.

I went at ten. I didn't want to believe he'd start earlier. I knocked at the door, and the assistant opened the door and said, "You're late." They really wanted me.

I loved the idea that he wanted me. Nobody was getting any jobs. Of course, I never got paid for it, I just asked to. And I was thrilled because it was fresco. I knew one girl at the Beaux-Arts and she was taking fresco lessons, but it was a different kind of fresco. It was what they call the Fontainebleu technique, which is totally different. It's not the real fresco. But I knew that Rivera was really painting fresco.

Riess: And how long did that project last?

LBD: Oh, until the exhibit, and that was a good three months.

Theories

Riess: Did he go on about all of his theories all the time?

LBD: No, he was painting, he was painting. He was right down to business. But he told me a few things off and on that were fascinating, like the golden section, which I'd never heard about in Europe, which no teacher--. (André Lhote, by the way, was another teacher I had in Europe; I went there for three or four months, and then I quit, and then I went back again later.)

André Lhote believed that the body was made of curves and straight lines, curves and straight lines. And he's absolutely right. Now, Bufano is just the opposite. Everything is curve, curve, curve, curve. And that was one of the things I was confused with, because Bufano also had a pet theory. And he said, "Only death is concave." But there was Lipchitz, and he was doing sculpture where he had concave and convex.

So all of this was fascinating because I thought about it. It opened my eyes. Then there was another sculptor, and I don't know his name, who really had one of the best of all--

Steve: Maillol.

LBD: No, it wasn't Maillol, it was an unknown. Those days, you know, when you're young, you don't care about names. You care about what they tell you and then that's that.

Whereas he said, on the contrary, "Everything that's important are the highlights in sculpture, and the low light, the shadows, are negative."

And then Bufano told me one thing that's absolutely true, which is really the same thing but done--

Steve: Stated differently.

LBD: He said, "Do all your sculpture in very cruel light, not in good light." He said, "The greatest sculptures were done outdoors."

Steve: That's cruel.

LBD: Because it's cruel. It's the form that is the most important.

I mean if somebody at the Beaux-Arts told me that I could have gone from there on, I wouldn't have had to go through all that other business. Oh, maybe it was good to. I took it and I rejected what I didn't like.

Riess: But you certainly had a lot of theory coming at you.

LBD: Oh yes.

Riess: Talky business. Maybe sculpture is more talky that other art forms.

Steve: It all is.

LBD: My theory, and it still is, anybody who can make a mud pie can do sculpture.

Steve: Continue.

LBD: There's no problem in putting the clay together. The only thing is, if you don't know the way you should do it, you're bound to use your fingers too much, and if you're doing something structural you're more apt to make it soft.

Steve: You knead it.

LBD: We used to have a board, a little wooden board, at the Beaux-Arts, and we'd stick this clay like this and then tap it so that you don't have this contained. Of course, Rodin had made "The Hand of God." And "The Hand of God" had this huge, tremendous thumb. I

LBD: remember my mother told me, "This is the sculptor's thumb, you see, who works with the clay like this." But you don't do it that way. And at the beginning I did it and all the girls at the Beaux-Arts, or one or two of the girls that were real kidding, they would come over and they would go [licking fingers and patting on]. [laughter] So from then on I knew not to touch the clay.

Detroit Apprenticeship

Art Institute Murals

Steve: Tell us about Rivera.

LBD: Oh no, let's not go into Rivera.

Steve: No, no, no, I mean you went to Detroit. In two sentences. You went to see Frank Lloyd Wright, you stopped in Detroit. How long did you stay there?

LBD: Five months. During that time. Please!

Steve: What did you do there during that time?

LBD: He was working on the Detroit Art Institute murals. And this was tremendous. He was making these enormous, huge, huge nudes.

Steve: Four of them.

LBD: Four. On both sides of the big walls, way up. Because he wanted to paint the entire thing, he didn't want to just paint the first panels they suggested. He said, "For the same amount of money I'll make the whole thing."

So there are four elements used in creating machines, and they are the four races. The white woman is lime, and the lime strata is the exact same shape as bricks, below her. The black woman is coal, and coal strata is below her. And the red woman is iron, and iron is the shape of red crystals. And the sand is the Japanese or Chinese, the Orient.

Steve: The yellow race.

LBD: She's very curved and the sand runs over her hand.

Riess: You worked in Detroit, then, for five months?

LBD: Yes. And what was extraordinary was Rivera believed that women were just as intelligent as men. In those days that wasn't usual.

Steve: 1932.

LBD: So he told me, "You help Lord Hastings," who was also an assistant at the time, who is now Viscount Hastings. He's quite an old man now, I guess.

Steve: He must be about eighty.

Riess: He had come to Detroit to be an apprentice?

LBD: Yes. He was an English artist who lived in Tahiti. His wife was the daughter of Marquesa Cassati, who was quite stunning, and Jacob Epstein--

Steve: Made a statue of her mother.

LBD: And I didn't know that, and I told her daughter, Christina Hastings, I said, "You know, you remind me of an Epstein sculpture portrait." And she said, "Oh, that's nothing to be surprised about, my mother posed for him." She had that same structure of face.

So I went and helped Lord Hastings, Jack. And there he was, and he was a little bit flustered because he'd never done anything so big. We had to enlarge one of the nudes to fit the wall space, probably from here all the way to another two feet. Wouldn't you say? [to Steve]

Riess: So you're saying about twenty feet.

LBD: Yes. And we had a drawing that small, one inch to enlarge to three feet.

He'd already squared it, but then he was sort of bewildered. So immediately I started working and showed him how and so on, and we enlarged it, and Diego never questioned whether I could or couldn't do it. He just said, "Go ahead."

Riess: When you were in New York you were helping him with the colors.

LBD: Yes, grinding the colors.

Riess: But in Detroit you were doing the cartooning, then, or whatever?

LBD: Well, he always did everything himself of the final drawings. Enlargements, okay. Once it was outlined he did the rest of the huge drawing. On the actual wall we never did more than the outlines, using charcoal which he could easily rub off if he felt they could be improved.

The assistants would place the enlarged drawing at the place where he would eventually paint. Then he would look at it from down below to make sure the proportion was still correct at that distance, and wherever he felt it needed improvements he would change it. And he would do that then with red ink, which was not ink, it was powdered pigment with water. It was always red because that's a very clear color and it's cheapest, it's cheaper even than the black. And the black is dead because the black has a tendency to pick up. So he used red with water, with a brush, and he'd outline everyplace he thought was correct and do it better than what was on the charcoal, which was done by the assistants.

So then he knew, when he hit it there, on the third coat, he would know how much to paint each day. And everything you do you have to finish on the same day. He would paint as many as eighteen square feet a day. He could paint half of this wall here in one day, finish completely. And you had to work fast, especially on a hot day.

Riess: So it's very physical.

LBD: Very physical.

Then the next day, then he would say, "All right, you can plaster it this much." And then the assistants would plaster that new section. And he was very, very strict about perfect technique. That's why his work is in marvelous condition. Of course, now there was an earthquake in Mexico quite a while ago, and so a lot of them got cracks. Well, those have been fixed, and there are very wonderful artists in Mexico who can repair.

Riess: But this became a major apprenticeship.

LBD: Yes, in fresco.

Frida Rivera

LBD: Then I lived with them, with Frida and Diego, in their hotel. The hotel was right next door to the museum. It was at that time called the Wardell Hotel. Now it's the Sheraton, and it's a pretty sad-looking place.

Riess: Did you say that somebody is doing a book on Rivera and spending a lot of time with you?

LBD: Well, not exactly. He's gotten--what do they call it?--an Endowment for the Humanities since about four years, five years. And his subject was the influence of the Mexican artists in the United States. And he came to visit us. We met him in Detroit during a certain meeting where they wanted to interview us. They were looking all over for assistants who had been in Detroit, and the only persons they found were Steve and Ernest Halberstadt.

Do you know the book Frida? By Hayden Herrera. Steve hates it. I was terribly moved because Frida was my best friend for a long, long time. Even after she died I always thought of her as my best friend. And I didn't really know too much about her after I said goodbye to her.

The last time I saw her was 1938. I know because that's when my son was born, and I took a picture of her with my baby. But, of course, 1931, '32, '33, we were together all the time because Rivera wanted me to stay with her when we were in Detroit because she couldn't stand Detroit, and he thought I would encourage her to paint again. She hadn't been painting.

Riess: So it was a good friendship? Her initial jealousy, or whatever, was gone?

LBD: Oh, it was wonderful. You know, she said, "I hate you," when she saw me, when she passed me on that first day, and I just loved her for saying that because it was so out in the open, "I hate you." And I just smiled, you know, and then from then on we were very good friends.

She saw that there wasn't anything going on; I couldn't ever imagine such a thing. Well, of course, it would be ridiculous to think of it, she was such a marvelous person. And she was wonderful for Rivera. And then, of course, I used to hear them discuss in Mexican Spanish, and she would tell him, "Why, you're a liar," you know, and all that, and he would laugh, he just loved her.

So I stayed with Frida most of the time. I didn't continue to work with Rivera because he really wanted me to stay with her. I did once in a while, of course, but it was only when somebody else couldn't.

Then I left to go to Frank Lloyd Wright, and then I got a bus back and found out Frida and Diego had gone to New York when I was in Detroit. Some people that I had met who were parents of the young man who was at the architectural school drove me to New York.

LBD: They were going to New York and so they picked me up in Detroit and we went to New York. There, I didn't stay with my sister. She was already married by then, really married, to the man she stayed with for the rest of his life.

So I lived in a little apartment, and to earn a little money I worked for a Mexican store, because I knew a man through the Riveras who had a beautiful little store of folk things. Fred Leighton's Mexican Store it was called.

Riess: And then you were working on your lithographs.

LBD: I was working on my lithographs. It was then 1932.

Steve's Story

LBD: In 1933, in winter, in February, I met my husband. He came with one of the assistants of Rivera's, whose name is Arthur Niendorf, and Niendorf knew me. And Steve came to work for Rivera, and this is another story which Steve will tell you. But I met them in New York. They came to borrow twenty dollars. Rivera hadn't paid them enough, and they were preparing the Rockefeller Center mural job. Diego was on his way finishing; he still had a few panels to do, but he was almost finished. So he asked Steve and Niendorf to go down to New York and start working on the Rockefeller Center mural and get it all prepared for his work. From there on, do you want to tell the story? [to Steve]

Steve: What story is there to tell? You're telling it all. [laughter]

LBD: Well, I just thought you could tell about how you got a job working for Rivera.

Steve: Well, I was going to the Art Institute of Chicago, the art school, which is connected with the Chicago Art Institute, the musuem. And the previous summer I had gotten a job at Buick painting signs. "Voltage 220." "AVO"--Avoid Verbal Orders. Everything has to be written down in Buick when you tell somebody. "Men." "Women." "Toilet." I did that for an entire three months, and I earned enough money to go to the Art Institute of Chicago.

I went there and enrolled, and I discovered on my card that they'd started me at the very beginning. Then I discovered that they did not recognize my four years of night school, four nights a week, from seven to ten.

LBD: Which you had in Flint.

Steve: Yes. They put me in the class, and after I attended the first day I could have taught it better than the teacher. The teacher sat around and did nothing, just watched like this from a chair. [demonstrating] The rest of us drew from a model.

Well, they wouldn't expel me, and so another man, Julian Lee Rayford, who was the great American folklorist from Theodore, Alabama--there's a book that's he's written; in fact, there may be two of them, one is a novel--but to gloss over many things, he said one day, "Why don't you go to Detroit and ask the Mexican for a job?"

I said, "Fine." He said, "Let's write to Mrs. Borden for some money." You know, at those times most big hotels had mezzanines. Go to an old hotel, they have mezzanines and free stationery, exactly what the artist needed. We used to go to various hotels. And we wrote a letter from one of the hotels to Mrs. Borden.

Riess: Who's Mrs. Borden?

Steve: She, I think, was the mother of Adlai Stevenson's wife. Borden Milk Company was one of the biggest in the Midwest. And three days later she sent us each five dollars, over the mail.

LBD: It was the Depression.

Steve: I'm telling you.

Signing on with Diego Rivera

Steve: So I took the money, and I bought a bus ticket to Detroit. I got there all right, but it was Monday. Every museum in the world, in the world, is closed on Monday. So I got in by talking to the guard; there were many other things involved. I went inside and I looked at the mural and it was fantastic. I'd say one third of it was done, the upper portions all around, scaffold all the way around.

Then I heard voices upstairs. It has a slight mezzanine on one side. So I went up and I looked through the door and there was Rivera, eating, with a little woman sitting out with him at a table. So he went like that [gesturing]--he was eating--never said a word. Kept eating. Chicken. Practically stuffing it in his mug. He was on a diet; nothing but chicken, morning, noon, and night.

So I sat down and I started in what terrible Russian that I knew. All Slavs understand any Slavic dialect, but they can't answer. I know Bulgarian, I was born in Bulgaria, so I started

Steve: in Bulgarian, then I switched over to Russian, then my high school French. I had failed one year in French, so you can understand how much French I knew. Pretty soon Frida said to him something about "pobrecito."

He kept on eating and kept saying, "No, I don't need any assistants, I don't need anybody. I've got too many now," something like that nature. "No, no, too many. No, too many." He kept eating. I don't remember whether he offered me any chicken. [laughter] I don't think he did.

Finally he said, "All right, you come watch." That's all he said to me. So I got up and shook hands with him. I don't think I shook hands with him; they were greasy from the chicken. [laughter] But I shook hands with Frida. Beautiful woman. The [Herrera] book doesn't do her justice. Terrible book!

And then I hitchhiked to Flint, to my family.

LBD: And your dad was unemployed at the time? And he did give you another five dollars. So he took his bus back, or he thumbed a ride back.

Steve: To Chicago.

LBD: With his clothes and his suitcase.

Steve: And I came back to Detroit on Wednesday. I was with him for an entire year, to the day. We were absent only four days. That's the only days I didn't work for Rivera. That's when we went with Ben Shahn, to Ben Shahn's summer place in Truro, Massachusetts. Ben Shahn was one of the assistants at Radio City.

Radio City Murals

Steve: So when Niendorf and I came to Radio City, I didn't have any money, but Niendorf didn't either. So we went to see this girl who played the lute.

LBD: He saw me with wings and for some reason he's forgotten that I didn't have wings. [laughter]

Steve: We didn't find her the first day, so we went and got these nineteen-cent hamburgers at Rikers. Full-size hamburgers. They have them today. They're called the White Castle hamburgers, in

Steve: Michigan. They're all over the Midwest, east of the Mississippi, not one west of the Mississippi, White Castle. They were selling for nineteen cents then.

So the next morning we found her, and we borrowed twenty dollars, and we made her the chief photographer. She's the only one to photograph the mural before it was destroyed by the Rockefeller interests. So if you see anything of Radio City, thank this gal, and thank us, because we needed the money. We only knew she had a Leica--her father gave her a Leica, one of the first ones that came out--

LBD: 1927.

Steve: --and she's an expert. She used to work for Life magazine as a photographer. She never tells that to anybody. She's a topnotch chess player; she beat me every night for six months.

Riess: And what about the lute? How does the lute fit into this?

Steve: So we see this girl, and she's playing the German lute, six-string lute. She hasn't played it lately.

LBD: For years I haven't played it.

Steve: Her sister is the lutenist, the sixteen-double-string Suzanne plays. Did you know her sister is a performer of the first order? She teaches at Juilliard. But that's another story.

So here we are. We make her the photographer. She photographs all the steps. And one of these days, if we ever get down to brass tacks, we'll write a book on how you do fresco because there is no book as such that's written. And we've only taught fresco in two universities. Redlands University one summer, and all our students were--

LBD: Retired soldiers or colonels or something.

Steve: No, never mind. But none of them were really painters.

And we taught at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, where our son teaches math.

Let me add this thing about the Rockefeller business. We prepared the wall. I looked for water, I looked for lime and various kinds of sand and marble dust; that's what an assistant does. And when Diego came he started working, and going along very famously until Joseph Lilly, one of the reporters for World Telegram, which was in existence then, wrote a story with a banner headline, something to the effect that--

LBD: The title was, "Rivera Paints Lenin and Rockefeller Foots Bill."

Riess: Oh, well, that would polish it off, wouldn't it?

Steve: So, to make a long story short, they paid off Rivera. For your information, put it down, it was the renting agents who objected. We also think today--I'm not positive what my idea was then because I never put it down on paper--that Rivera should not have painted Lenin, or it should have been very inconspicuous, the way he had it to begin with, but that's another story. We could argue over this. There's a book coming out through the Yale University Press.

LBD: That's the one by Larry Hurlburt.

Steve: He'll have all this information. He's gone into it and tried to get the letters from the Rockefellers that went back and forth. But Bertram D. Wolfe, who wrote The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, and Ella Wolfe at Hoover Library had the information, and so on and so forth. The main thing to know, and you're getting it from the horses' mouth because we were there, is that it's the renting agents that objected, much more than the Rockefellers. But Nelson was the final authority, and on February the ninth, the following year, while he was at Dartmouth--he said he didn't know anything about it--they destroyed it, chopped it off.

They could have simply applied water soluble glue and pasted canvas on it, and let [José] Cert do another wallpaper like he has. The banks of elevators on the right as you walk in, pure wallpaper. The bank on the left, listen to this, is by Brangwyn, the English painter. Beautiful oil painting, but they have a religious theme, and one of them is Christ giving the sermon on the mount. And when he delivered it to them, the renting agent says, "You never saw Christ, you don't know what he looks like." So he had to paint Christ with his back; he turned him around. I ask you now! That's a renting agent? Their names were Todd, Robinson and Todd.

Diego took the $21,000, and looked at all the radical schools, and he only found one that suited his fancy, which was a branch in opposition to the Community Party. They lost on that move. On the third floor he painted twenty-one movable panels, movable, six feet by five feet, something in that nature. They were all destroyed except five in a fire. We helped by repairing them, we helped clean them.

Riess: And where was this?

Steve: The New Workers School. You'll only find it in Bertram D. Wolfe's book, Portrait of America, I believe. And the other one is The Life of Diego Rivera by Bertram D. Wolfe.

LBD: It's The Fabulous Life.

Steve: Fabulous, all right. So that's the sum and substance of it.

Dimitroff Marriage and Partnership

Riess: So this is how you met your wife, in other words. [laughter]

Steve: Then after that Diego and Frida went to Mexico; they invited us to go there but we said no. So we went down to the Lower East Side to Madison House, a settlement house for young people in that depressed area, and talked them into letting us paint on a perfectly good wall. We'd plastered before, but we'd never done a complete unit by ourselves. But we finished it.

LBD: We made sketches in color and we had them first okay it.

Steve: They paid us $150, for materials, and our meals at lunch time.

LBD: We built our own scaffold way up to the top of the stage.

Steve: It was a proscenium wall around a stage.

LBD: And the first day that we started working, when you had plastered, and I had to start making straight lines [laughter] I wobbled, I was just trembling. I knew I had to finish that section in one day, and it was bluffing my way through, you know. And Steve painted also.

Riess: And it's still there?

LBD: No, it was destroyed. Of course, I have photos of it.

Steve: Metropolitan Life Insurance put in apartment houses.

LBD: Settlement houses, huge houses.

Steve: And then we gave a number of lectures on this affair of the Riveras. Then we moved to Flint, Michigan. Our children started coming along.

LBD: What about WPA?

Steve: Oh, we were in WPA in New York before the children started coming.

LBD: And while they were coming! [laughing]

Steve: I was never on because I refused to sign the pauper's oath. (I only met one other artist who refused to sign the pauper's oath.) I had an old, run-around Model T Ford. They said, "You've got to sell that." I said, "Absolutely not." But they said, "You can't be on it; you've got to sign the pauper's oath." But Lucienne signed it because if she could get on there as a supervisor, she can employ four or five other artists when she got on.

LBD: When I went to sign up for WPA, for home relief, because you had to be on home relief, I put on my very best coat and hat, and they looked at the questionnaire, "How much money do you have in your bank?" I put down sixty dollars. They said, "But you have sixty dollars in the bank." I said, "Well, by the time I ever get another job it's all going to be gone." The girl said, "Go on," because they had to sign that paper. She let me through. They had to have somebody who knew the technique.

Riess: Now, we only have a few minutes left. When did you get to the Bay Area?

LBD: In 1948. Before that we were in New York, and then in 1940 we went to Flint, Michigan, because Steve knew he could get a job there, but he had a very hard time because he had been in the union and he was blacklisted.

Riess: And what union?

Steve: UAW. I worked fourteen years for General Motors.

LBD: So they would ask you, "But you've been in the union?" He said, "Yes, yes, I've been in the union, international representative of the United Auto Workers of America." [laughter] Then they wouldn't hire him until I complained to the woman whose husband was the head of the banking for General Motors in Flint. I said, "Isn't that disgusting? Here you need people like Steve on account of the war, and he can't get a job." She said, "Leave it to me." And by the back door he got in. And then after that he got raises.

Steve: Then I went to the General Motors Institute of Technology for about three years, evenings, and daytime when I worked nights. So I became a product engineer, a fancy name not to give you a raise. It's a draftsman. [laughter] They call you a product engineer.

Religious Work, I

St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church, San Francisco

Riess: Well, I think I have to get you out here, because the reason I came to talk to you is because of--

LBD: The Bay Area.

Riess: And even more specifically, pieces that you've done in churches. [brief tape interruption]

Steve: Go to St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church. They wanted a mural outside of the church in the atrium. They wanted to have a concours.

LBD: A competition.

Steve: A competition with a number of people. And Lucienne says, "Here's the kind of work I do. I'm not interested in competition, but I'll do one." And they accepted it, which is the five main episodes of St. Mary's life. The Annunciation and so on, through the five points, including the crucifixion. And that mural is dedicated to Reverend Capell Hill, the priest at that time, Father Hill. (The Episcopal Church is the English variation of the eastern church, as close as they can get to it in English. I was born in Bulgaria. My grandfather was an Eastern Orthodox priest, so I know the "Father" business. [laughing])

But Father Hill said to Lucienne, "Please make Christ compassionate." So if you look at it very carefully, he's a mellow Christ, not the one who condemns, but the one who judges. Right?

LBD: Up to a point. When he saw my painting of the crucifixion he said, "Oh, you made him suffering so much." And I said, "Well, you know it's not too easy to be on the cross." [laughter]

Riess: What year was that?

LBD: 1966.

You can have this booklet which was put out by the First Presbyterian Church in San Rafael. The checks are places where I have church murals. The crosses indicate they've either been covered or they've been removed.

LBD: The one at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music we did for nothing because my father had been the director there. They later on rebuilt that section of the conservatory on Nineteenth Avenue and they made a big hall called Hellman Hall. So they gave it back to us. They were big panels of sound board; you know, the board that has holes in it? So we've got them at our place in Gualala. That was nice of them to give it back because they knew we had given it to them.

Temple Emanu-El, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Riess: What was the first church work that you did?

LBD: Believe it or not, it was the one that I was sent back to Michigan to paint. That was under Eric Mendelsohn, the architect.

Riess: Oh, I see, the Temple Emanu-El in Grand Rapids.

LBD: Eric Mendelsohn, you know, was considered one of the great architects of the twentieth century. He had been to a meeting of the Artists Equity Association in San Francisco, which was his home, and we were members of that. There were three people who were to talk, in a sort of roundtable. I was asked to because I'd done murals in other parts of the country. John Bowles was one of the architects, and the other one was Eric Mendelsohn.

My thesis was that I believed in working with architects and that it should be something that goes together, not something that's put on, on top, but something that is part of the architecture. And they liked that very much. Of course, the other artist was accusing the architects of not asking them to help.

Eric Mendelsohn said, "Anyone who would like very much to show me their work, I'd be very happy to see it." So I took the advantage, and I went with my work, and I showed him the work I had done, especially the one in New York, which I liked very much, which was the music mural which was done on WPA. And he liked it very much.

He said immediately, he looked at the slides and he said, "Well, here is the problem. I have this and this and this." And he told me what he wanted me to do. I was just thrilled, absolutely thrilled because this was the first time I was working with an architect.

So I went back and made my sketches, and brought them back and he looked. "Ah!" He was very angry. He said, "You're just like all these others--Chagall and Matisse--you're a big prima

LBD: donna." He really gave it to me. I was so depressed. He said, "I want something very simple. I want something very modest, but I want something very warm and golden like a tapestry." He wanted something more decorative. And of course, since it was Jewish, Hebrew, I did not want to put faces of people in there at all. I was glad not to put them in.

Riess: He had told you that that was a requirement?

LBD: No, I knew that, I knew that. Though I know there are some temples that have the real thing; Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco I think has some kind of very academic work, which shows people.

So I did all the symbols, you know, of the Jewish faith, and he suggested himself symbols like grapes for joy, and wheat for work. Joy and work. Those were delightful. And then the crown was another one.

And then, of course, the letters are so beautiful. So I thought of the letter shin, which means Shalom, and also which is the first letter of the word, Shalom. And Shaddai. I knew that very well because my grandmother, before I left for America, gave me a little heart of gold. She had a jewelry store. And it was a little heart of gold and it had the symbol of the God of love, which is Shaddai. [I think my Swiss grandmother spelled it Shaddail. LBD]

I knew that letter and I was always in love with that particular letter. I decided that that would be very big, very important, and I made it enormous, a big shin. And I wove it, you know, with gold and grey and all different colors. But that's what he said: "Ah! You're like Chagall." [laughter] "Thank you, thank you."

But he was looking for something where the artist would really be subservient to the architecture, and I was willing to be that because I knew I could do something anyway. And the next time he liked it. He said, "Now I like that." I said, "Well, please sign your name to it so that I know that I've got your okay." And he said, "The only trouble is, let me tell you, I don't know whether those people over there in Grand Rapids--they're so dumb." He said, "Those Jews are so dumb."

And my father had warned me. I hadn't told him what Eric had said, but my father had warned me on the phone from Agate Beach, Oregon, where he was living then, he said, "I want to warn you, now get a contract, I don't trust those Jews." [laughter] So I told him what Eric had said, So that's the way they are, you know. The Jews have a sense of humor about themselves.

Steve: That's why they have existed for so long.

LBD: They know how to laugh at themselves.

Steve: That's what's wrong with the administration today; they can't laugh at themselves. If they could, a lot of the harsh things will roll off, you know, believe me.

LBD: What was it Mort Sahl said? I heard that on KQED. [laughter] He said, "If Reagan had run without opposition, he would have lost." [laughter]

Riess: Did Eric Mendelsohn, in the case of Temple Emanu-El, really control that design, or did he have the rabbis telling him what to do?

LBD: Oh, gosh no. [laughter] No, no, no. I said to him, "Look, I know I can convince them. If you will give me your blessing and you will give me the money to go to Grand Rapids, I think I can talk them into it." So he said, "All right."

He gave me the money and I went to Grand Rapids and I had a meeting with the building committee and I said, "Here's my sketch that Eric Mendelsohn has okayed." And I made them look at it and they all looked like that, with blank faces, and I said, "I hope you can't understand it." And I heard a sigh of relief. "I don't want you to understand it."

I said, "Remember, this is not a poster. A poster is made to be understood immediately. You have to pass it at a glance and you've got to know what it says. But a thing like that, you're going to go every Friday to services, I hope, and you will be standing there, sitting there and listening to the rabbi"--who was there also--"and when your eyes wander over the thing that you see in front of you"--which is in back of the rabbi, the sanctuary--"if you immediately know what it is you're going to be bored, after a few years you won't be able to stand it anymore. It's got to be the kind of thing that shows different things, that is your own feeling about it, and it has to be discovered by you, slowly."

Riess: Well, that's lovely, yes.

LBD: And they were so pleased with that. And then I explained to them a little bit the symbolism and so on and so on.

Riess: You have to sometimes tell people how to think about something.

LBD: Yes, yes.

435a

Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff
~~Star Route 2~~ 34844 OLD STAGE RD
Gualala, CA 95445

June 22, 1978

Cynthia Hewman Helms
Coordinator of Research
Archives of American Art
Midwest Area Center
5200 Woodward Avenue
Detroit MI 48202

Copy

Dear Ms Helms:

Thank you for your letter of June 14. Briefly, I am replying to it in a very terse manner, otherwise I will be sending you pages and pages of annecdotes instead of answering your queries.

MICHIGAN ART EXPERIENCE: chronologically. (RESUME FOR MICHIGAN-ONLY)

1932 to Nov. - May 28.- Arrived in Detroit, from NYC. Assisted Rivera on his Fresco murals at the Art Institute. Except for a 6 week stay in Mexico(with Frida Kahlo, Diego's wife whose mother was dying there), I was in Detroit until I left in November of that year to teach sculpture at Taliesin, (at the invitation of Frank Lloyd Wright.) Finding the atmosphere of SprinG Green, WI. rather cloying, I returned to New York to work on lithographs of Detroit from sketchesI had made there during the summer. Rivera gave me the name of Miller, the Lithographer who had printed his own lithos, as the best place to work. I made 5 lithographs of Detroit there. The Detroit Art Institute bought one or 2 of them for their collection. At this time I have only one copy of each left in my personal collection.

Feb. '33- '1936 In New York I met Stephen Pope Dimitroff, a new assistant to Diego who came to Rockefeller Center to put up the fresco wall, with Arthur Niendorf. We were married in Flint in 1936, and after continuing to paint our own frescoes in NYC, we finally moved to Flint with our 1st child, George Ernest/, in Spring 1940. My husband worked in the GM '1940 factories. I taught ceramics and sculpture at the Flint Art Institute which was then located at 215 West First Street, ~~the~~ renovated church building. The director was Richard B. Freeman, To encourage the people of Flint to take interest in Art, I gave many informal talks to clubs, such as Quota Club, Sorosis, University Women, etc. during 8 years there. I painted portraits of small children in Egg Tempera on gesso, exhibited at the Institute as well as in Detroit. Numerous awards. Lectured on Rivera, Technique of Fresco, Art in the Home, etc. in U. Ann Arbor, Midland, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Owosso, Kalamazoo. Permanent collection of the Flint Institute of Arts.

Project organized by S. P. Dimitroff for the Flint Artists to paint murals in the Children's Ward of St. Joseph Hospital was a great success in 1947.

I painted murals all around the dining room of the Children's Home just outside of Flint, sponsored by QUOTA CLUB in 1947.

Another project: YMCA GYM. Three large casein murals on brick wall. To '48 (I think that building is no more.) I have photos of it.

Taught art at the Mott Foundation too.

I illustrated seven books for children during my stay in Flint. The publisher was YOUNG SCOTT BOOKS, leader in the upcoming trend to publish "contemporary scene" books for children.(NYC)

Wrote a colum for the FLINT WEEKLY REVIEW, a labor paper, from January 16 to November 12, 1948. Until July 1948 it was while I was

Still in Flint, then we left Michigan in July '48 after selling our house at Sherwood Drive, to move to the West coast with our three children. I continued to write the colum until November of that year.

July 1948 We had left Flint mainly because our efforts to be commissioned to paint murals there, mainly for General Motors, were fruitless. We felt we had done all we could to bring our talents to a town that was just beginning to take an interest in art, mainly through the enthusiasm and financial support of Mrs. Spencer Bishop. It was time to move.

1952 In San Francisco, the famous architect Eric Mendelsohn sent me to Grand Rapids with my mural sketch of a mural for his Temple Emanuel, to convince the congregation on E. Fulton Street that it should be included in his architecture. In September of that year I painted the mural on the walls of the sanctuary. The building was formally dedicated in 1953.

BOOKS ILLUSTRATED (Young Scott Books)

I want to Fly - Anita Brenner 1942
Willie's Walk to Grandmama - Margaret Wise Brown 1944
* Keep Humming Keep Singing- Bradford & Woodruff 1946
Yo Quiero Volar!- Anita Brenner 1944
The Smart Little Boy and his Smart Kitty - Woodcock 1947
Christmas Stocking- Dorothy Baruch 1946
Everybody Eats -Mary McB. Green 1949
* How Many Kisses Goodnight - J. Monrad 1948
The Flower - Mary L. Downer 1950
Is it Hard Is it Easy - Mary McBurney Green 1947 ?

* Sandpipers - Edith Thatcher Hurd - Crowell (Publishers) 1961
Starfish - Edith Thatcher Hurd - Crowell " 1962

* Veritas - (Yearbook, Dominical Convent College. San Rafael, CA.) 1961
Marin Audubon Society Spot sketches. 1965-1974
Ernest Bloch Society Bulletin - 1970 - 1978

AWARDS (partial list)

* Book Illustrations- Herald Tribune, N.Y. Times "Best illustrations of '62"

1938 - Gorham Award and Procter & Gamble -Professional Sculpture (Soap) Etc.
1937- Gold Medal, Expositions des Art Decoratifs- Paris. (Lithograph
1950- Purchase Award, San Francisco Art Festival. DETROIT)
1954- Graphic " " , " " " "
1955- 2 First Prizes , Marin Society of Artists
1956- Purchase Award, National Academy of Arts & Letters, NYC
1957- Grand Prize, and 2 others. Annual MSA
1957- Purchase Award, S.F. Art Festival
1958- 1959- Best in Show. MSA. On and on to the present day.

(I exhibit only locally. Too much work to send art work to all the national shows. I refuse to pay entry fees! And I have done nothing to advertise my art work.) NO AGENT either.

P.S. After writing the above, I found myself trapped in a sea of clippings, files etc. As I rarely "look back" it took me days to reorganize a swamp of material! At this point, due to pressure from work which needs to be done, I am sending you a motley bunch of clippings which will have to do for "biography".

I suggest that you will find the best information, though it deals only with 1933 to 1942, in the excerpt from the catalog of "7 American Women: The Depression Decade". Also the catalog of the FRESCOES at the First Presbyterian Church, San Rafael.

Most of my paintings are in private collections, and I never took the time to catalog the owners. Someday when I'm incapacitated I might get around to do that.

I have had very few ONE MAN shows, and have done nothing to get them. Having brought up 3 children, and in contact with 8 grandchildren my art production in "easel paintings" is sparse. I have yet to catalog them too.

At the present time I am the editor of the ERNEST BLOCH SOCIETY BULLETIN, (enclosing a sample) as well as secretary-treasurer of same. My Lafest oneman show was at our tiny gallery "THE DOLPHIN" here in Gualala, in February 1978.

The vegetable garden is booming, and so are the 100 fruit trees on our property. I don't know what to do first! But as nature comes first I must close this letter and pull weeds, gather the eggs, and pick the plums.

It's a great life!

Sincerely,

Lucienne Bloch

1483

Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Pope Dimitroff RESUME

EDUCATION: LB- Cleveland School of Art Scholarship, 1924-25
Four years Paris with Antoine Bourdelle, André Lhote, and Ecole des Beaux Arts, studying sculpture, stone carving, painting, wood-engraving.

Assistant to Diego Rivera in New York and Detroit. 1931-1933.

(Stephen Pope Dimitroff: 1 semester Flint Jr. College. Chicago Art Insitute.

Assistant to Diego Rivera, Detroit and New York 1933-33

LECTURES: (Both artists) (Abbreviated list!) New York City College - Dayton Art Institute - Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture,-Taliesin WI. Pan-Hellenic Assn, NYC - Dayton Art School, Madison WI University of Michigan, Ann Arbor - Women's literary Club - San Francisco Art Museum - University of Calif. San Francisco Extension - College of Marin - Redlands University - (etc. in Calif.) Evergreen State College, Olympia WA - Knox College, Galesburg IL - Flint Inst. of Arts - including dozens of Art Clubs/ in the East and in the West. Sheridan WYO.

PARTIAL MURAL COMMISSIONS; (See Page 2)

by L. Bloch, painter
S.P. Dimitroff technician

Madison House, New York City - Fresco
House of Detention for Women, New York City - Fresco
Geo. Washington High School - New York City - Fresco
Swiss Pavillon, New York Worlds Fair 1939
Ft. Thomas KY Post Office (U.S. Dept of the Treasury)
Outdoor wall of Elementary School, Guerneville CALIF. Fresco
Temple Emanu-El, Grand Rapids, Mich. (Gold leaf, oil on wood panel)
ETC.

TEACHING POSITIONS: Redlands University, Redlands, Calif. 1965
University of Calif. Extension, San Francisco- 1958-59
Flint Institute of Arts - 1940-1948
Evergreen State College, Olympia WA. 1976- 1977
Gualala Arts, Gualala Calif. 1970 - 1978
Santa Rosa Junior College, Santa Rosa CA - 1981-83

AWARDS Gold Medal for Lithography - Paris (France) Exposition des Arts Decoratives. 1934
1950 1954 - 1955 - 1957 - Annual Art Festival, San Francisco
Gorham Award, and 2nd Professional prize- Ivory Soap constets. 1936.
Nat. Academy of Arts & Letters, purchase award. 1958
Detroit Art Institute, 1947.
Flint Institute of Arts, Every year from 1941 to 1948
Marin Society of Artists, Kentfield CALif. Ditto 1949-1965
Etc. etc. all the way to 1981. in Gualala.

Even with this "Resumé" I did not have "accreditation" for teaching Art at St Rosa Jr. College! I had to get a "Temporary" permit....

LBD: And it was true that there were so many irregularities in the mural due to the fact that it was a curved wall. And we were using silkscreen. Steve and I, he'd hold that and I would hold it. Because, you know, on a curved wall, the silkscreen was about that big and flat [gesturing], some of the paint that we put on stayed on and some of the paint didn't. And each one of the panels, though they were done with repetition, were all different.

Steve: Let me tell her. Let me tell you the story. You see, this is the design. [showing materials] We did one like this, one like this. See, we did six of them. One like this and like this, so that your eye could not see the repeat.

Pond Farm

[Date of Interview: May 1, 1984]

Riess: How did things proceed after Temple Emanu-El? How did you get handed around so that you met people and found architects who needed you to work for them?

LBD: Well, actually we were so busy with our children that I couldn't do any publicity or anything like that. It just happened that I got publicity. For instance, in Mill Valley, lots of publicity on the temple mural. Though I was hoping that this would happen without any agent, it doesn't happen so fast. If I had an agent I'd probably be working a lot more, and it wouldn't be as much fun as having a job once in a while.

Of course, I had already done one mural, but that was not a liturgical mural. It was the one at Guerneville, for Pond Farm.

Riess: Oh, you did that? I'd like to hear about that. Could we go right into that now?

LBD: It was 1949, the year that we arrived in California with our small children, without any job promised us, but we wanted to get away from Flint. We had tried to get mural jobs there, and it took me about a week to write a very good letter to General Motors to tell them that we would be very happy to do something like that, and never even an answer or an acknowledgment! So we said, "We've had eight years in Flint, okay, now we're going to go and develop ourselves instead of helping the others to develop." So we left, not knowing where we would go. We eventually arrived in Mill Valley.

LBD: Then one day, in the pouring rain, somebody knocked at the door of the house we lived in in Mill Valley, which was up on Mt. Tamalpais. There was no way then of getting through up there; we were locked in. A real estate man later on, hearing that we were going to sell, said, "Are you aware that you're the only landlocked house in all of Marin County?" or something to that effect.

So this woman comes in, soaking wet, and she says, "Lucienne Bloch?" It was a woman I knew when she was fourteen who had gone with us all over Rouen and the museums in Paris, who was the daughter of the lawyer of Father's in San Francisco. She said, "I'm Jane Brandenstein."

And I said, "No, not really?"

And then she said, "I heard that you were here." I hadn't seen her since 1928. And she said, "I'm married to a man by the name of Gordon Herr, and we are putting up a very exciting art school, something like an arts and crafts type of thing, and I'm just telling you about it, and we'd love to have you come and see it when it's all ready."

I told her that we were fresco painters, and so on. I don't know whether she knew. I think she knew through Mrs. Joseph, who I mentioned before. And so we became the mural painters for that Pond Farm School.

Riess: They had enough money that they could ask you to do a mural painting?

LBD: No, we didn't get paid. But we were so excited about the idea of doing this, you see. Any contact or something, we wanted, especially when we just came. We only knew these three people, Mrs. Stern, Mrs. Brandenstein and Mrs. Joseph. And Mrs. Stern was very negative about me because my sister had mentioned that I was lecturing for the Communist Party.

My sister got everything all mixed up. She didn't know that we were with an anti-Communist Party group that was not Stalinist. In New York one time, Mrs. Stern took me out for lunch, and she said, "Oh, Lucienne, I'm so sorry. Is it really true that you met your husband through Diego Rivera?"

And I said, "But that's wonderful. I thank you."

And she said, "But you got married to this Dimitroff, who is a Communist."

LBD: I said, "He's not a Communist. He's an international representative of the United Automobile Workers, CIO."

She said, "Oh, that's worse!" [laughter] So I laughed, you know, and I said, "Oh, don't be so worried about that. This has nothing to do with our life."

Riess: When you did the mural in Guerneville, were there students who you were working with?

LBD: This is the way: We were to teach how to paint a mural, a fresco. We didn't know who would come to a class like that, all the way there, you see. And it turned out that we had three students.

One of them was Forrest Bailey. "Ridge" was his nickname. At that time he was eighteen years old. He was a friend of ours through his mother. His mother was like a little mother hen to us, even though she was only two or three years older than I was, but one of those "Jewish women who like to make chicken soup," a very fine woman. And she met us one of the first times we were here. So he said he was interested, and now he is a restorator who does extraordinary work for the Kansas City, Missouri, Museum, the Nelson Gallery.

So we had three students. And instead of teaching mural, we said we would paint a mural for free if they give us the okay, and we'll make a sketch and do everything to show them how we paint a fresco. Not only the mural technique, but also the psychological thing.

And it turned out that at Guerneville, Jane checked, and there was a new elementary school put up that was on the way to Armstrong State Park, which was also on the way to Pond Farm. So the school was willing. They said, "Sure! Fine. Go ahead." Of course, they didn't pay for anything; fresco is very cheap actually.

Riess: Did you live up there also?

LBD: Not up there. We had our three children with us, and so we had to stay somewhere else. And what was a great thing was that there was a man who lived in Guerneville who was going to have a lovely covered-wagon camp for the children. He was a wonderful fellow. His name was Hallen. And he had a big fire at night, and he cooked for them. So we stayed down there, and we came up only now and then to Pond Farm itself.

Riess: So you didn't get into much of that life that people were leading up there?

LBD: No, we didn't, except whenever there was a time when we had moments, you know, when we weren't going to paint. [brief tape interruption]

Riess: Do you have any particular recollections of Gordon Herr and Trude Guermonprez and all of those people, and that ideal community, and what they were trying to do?

LBD: Yes. Gordon Herr thought he knew it all. And it was very unfortunate. He just had to do that. His wife, Jane, was the one I think who was really the idealist there, mostly. But her parents were just horrified that she had married this man because they had a feeling that he was superficial. I didn't know all that. All I knew is that he was a little bit too much of a boss type.

Steve: He was overpowering.

LBD: Well, to make a long story short, Jane died the next year of cancer.

Riess: In around 1950 or so?

LBD: Yes, 1950, I think so.

Then also, I had a feeling--I didn't say a word to you [to Steve] until we came home--but I had a feeling when we were there that something tragic was going to happen. We had a scaffold that we had built, and it was quite high, sides and the top, and very long and narrow. And it was outdoors, and I think that's also a feeling of, you know--. And it just wobbled a little when we were on top, when I was doing the painting. And when I drew there was no way of holding on to anything. So it was a little wobbly. But because I had that feeling that something tragic was going to happen, I was very careful.

Then there was a narrow, narrow road from Armstrong State Park, one-way, and if you had two cars, there was almost no place where you could pull off. Remember? I often wondered. We just happened never to have passed another car, as far as I was concerned.

And then I thought, "Well, the kids are going swimming in the river," and there'd been already a few drownings.

So I had all these sort of feelings there, and I kept saying, "Forget it, you know, forget it, forget it." But I was still worried. I didn't tell anybody. It was only when we got home that I told Steve. I said, "I'm so glad nothing happened."

Then we happened to mention this to some other people who were friends of ours in Mill Valley, and they said, "Did you know that there was a tragedy, but it happened before you came?" They were

LBD: all living up there: Jane and Gordon and two children. There were only two when we saw them. What happened was, the youngest girl--the oldest was a girl, and she seemed already very silent, she was about thirteen then--.

Steve: Will you stick to your story?

LBD: What happened was he [Gordon Herr] thought he knew all about mushrooms, and they picked mushrooms and one of them was poisonous. And they all got sick, except the daughter.

Steve: Who didn't eat any.

LBD: Who didn't like mushrooms.

The littlest one died.

Steve: They couldn't get a doctor. They couldn't get an ambulance. They both were so sick they couldn't get up to take care of anybody.

LBD: The daughter ran for the doctor.

Steve: It was a terrible mess. It's all right to live off in no man's land, but here's a situation.

LBD: So there was this feeling, and that was the main feeling I had there.

Steve: Jane was terribly sad. They both were so sad about what happened, they didn't pay much attention to the girl. They adopted next a boy. They called him Hugger. When we went there, there was Hugger, and everything was toward Hugger, and this poor girl, they didn't even look at her.

LBD: Yes.

Steve: It's terrible.

LBD: Which happens very often.

Steve: So we tried to compensate by speaking to her more than to anybody else.

Riess: And how about the other people up there?

Steve: Now, wait. There's a legend here. There was an Indian battle in that area where we were driving, which is on the other side of Armstrong State Park, beautiful redwoods. Oh, boy. They're

Steve: virtually like the ones we have near Mill Valley. Be that as it may, there was supposed to be a battle, and that's what Lucienne felt first and foremost, and I felt something very odd and peculiar; that's my story.

Anyway, do you have any other opinions about the people at the school?

LBD: Yes. Claire Falkenstein would come on weekends to teach and the little kids would listen to what she said too. And pretty soon they were imitating her. What was it about space? "This was in space," you know, something in space.

And she took the students who were interested on Saturdays, that's when she came, they would go to Armstrong State Park, and then she would tell them to start painting their impression. What was funny was that if anything looked like a tree, she just wouldn't even look at it. [laughter] It had to be something abstract, not like anything, okay.

Marguerite Wildenhain was tops, absolutely tops, very strict. And a young girl with her husband, who was a lawyer, from Sausalito, came to study, Imlay.

Steve: Imlay. I-m-l-a-y. He was a city councilman for Sausalito at one time.

LBD: And she said, "I can only stay three weeks." Wildenhain said, "You can never learn anything in three weeks!" [laughter] But she had to eat her words because she did beautifully. So it was always a big joke with us.

Riess: I wondered whether there was a lot of Bauhaus theory.

Steve: Theory? Yes. We ate together in the evening, and Gordon did all the talking mostly, but not when Wildenhain was there though!

LBD: Where did we eat?

Steve: In the wigwam. Gordon created sort of a wigwam out of wood. Tremendous.

LBD: Hexagon House.

Steve: Octagon, that's the name of it. Octagon House. Right now there's a restaurant there.

But anyway, we learned a lot ourselves. We lived in one of those cabins that were this way [demonstrating], a butterfly type of a roof. And there weren't screens on the side.

LBD: Butterfly was an invention of Gordon's, who's an architect. And that was because of the heat in summer, the heat would go up in the corners.

Riess: Did it work?

Steve: Oh yes, it works beautifully.

LBD: Victor Ries, of course, was wonderful. Very nice. And his wife was doing some lovely jewelry with driftwood that she found on the ocean.

Riess: That's the first wife?

Steve: Yes.

LBD: Victor was wonderful.

Steve: So mellow and outgoing.

LBD: He was a great artist.

And then Wildenhain's husband was there.

Steve: He went later to Syracuse University, and did a magnificent ceramic mural for one of the chemical companies, out of the chemical symbols. Beautiful, beautiful. Frans, his name was Frans.

Riess: Frans Wildenhain. And how about Trude [Guermonprez]?

LBD: Trude was another wonderful person.

Steve: [laughing] They were all good.

Riess: Why were they wonderful? As artists, or as people?

Steve: As artists and people, both. You see, they knew their stuff, they knew their stuff.

LBD: And it was a wonderful idea to bring those people together. And it would have gone on, I think, if Jane had lived. Jane's parents were the ones who financed him, he didn't have any money.

Steve: He was a very successful lawyer, her father.

LBD: I heard that, of course, through Mrs. Brandenstein. She was very, very disturbed about--. It's possible it's Mrs. Brandenstein who told Jane about us. That's right.

Steve: All I know is, among other things, what Gordon did. I wanted to find out, "What do you do?" He made some fantastic buttons out of ceramic, no two the same. And they were tiny. They were really magnificent. And he made them. Afterwards, Ron Blett--Blett is a friend of ours--did them commercially. He may teach now or he's taking classes at the Mendocino Art School. He lives there, around that area. But that's what Gordon did.

"This is what I do. I don't do it any longer, but this is what I did." I was fascinated because they were so lovely.

Riess: That's extraorindary.

Steve: So he did something.

LBD: You know what's interesting, the woman in Flint, Michigan, who was the angel for the art institute there, whose husband was the banker for Buick and for General Motors--

Steve: R. Spencer Bishop.

LBD: She started something like that called Haystack, in Maine, and it's grown great guns.

Steve: It's still going.

LBD: That's been now thirty or thirty-five years.

Important Introductions

Riess: Was Victor Ries able to make any connections for you? Did Victor and Eric Mendelsohn and you work together?

LBD: No, there was no connection there.

Riess: Did you do any more temple commissions?

LBD: No.

Steve: She went to work on one in St. Louis.

LBD: Eric Mendelsohn told me to go and see what they were doing there. This was his last job before he died, and he had the blueprints and all that, and he was finishing the Grand Rapids business, but he already had plans for the St. Louis. He told me, "There are two little places there that could have a mural, and, please, think about it."

Then he died.

Riess: After Pond Farm did any of you all stick together in any way?

LBD: No, we didn't. In fact, Victor Ries looked at houses in Mill Valley. He was thinking of staying there, and I think he didn't find a house. I don't think he lived there very long in Mill Valley, because we didn't see him anymore.

Riess: So an art center never really continued.

LBD: No, nothing like that.

Then Steve changed jobs, and he decided to have a frame shop. I used to help him there, and I had the three small children, and so it was very hard to become very sociable after that.

Riess: So, then, what was the next liturgical work?

LBD: Again something which is a very amusing story, which I will not tell.

Riess: Oh!

Steve: Come on, let's hear it. What is it?

LBD: We had a very good friend in Mill Valley whose name was Raymond Rice, and he was doing murals. He was doing mosaics and all that. And one day he called up and he said, "I have some people who know me and who want me to teach their daughter the history of art."

(She was going to Katherine Bransten School, and she went diving and busted her leg, a double fracture. Her lower leg. And she was now with a cast, and her mother didn't want her to stop working, so she had tutors for her.)

He said, "I don't want to teach her! So I suggested you. How would you like to teach there?" And I said, "Yes, that would be fine. Very good."

So I would go there. They had a car that picked me up at Mill Valley, because I don't drive, and I'd go up to where they lived, in San Anselmo.

Riess: What was the family's name?

LBD: She was Joan Skewes-Coxe Malone, Adrian Malone's wife. She belonged to the Skewes-Coxe clan.

Steve: From Chile.

LBD: She was English.

Steve: English, but from Chile.

I want to add something. Adrian Malone is the architect who originally designed Squaw Valley. This is on the record. It was stolen from him by some other architects. The reason I say that specifically is because I saw the models in his studio in Sheridan, Wyoming. I said, "My God, I've seen this somewhere in photographs." And the manager of this office says, "Yes, those are the designs of Squaw Valley, the original designs." I just thought I'd tell you that. Somebody who has some knowledge ought to contact him and find out what happened. The brouhaha. Interesting.

LBD: So he was a very mild gentleman and very distinguished, and one of his pals was David Rockefeller. One day his wife asked us to come for dinner, and she said, "We'll have just a small group. We're having Bishop Pike--."

Steve: Go ahead, drop a few names. Go ahead.

LBD: Bang! [laughter] "And David, David Rockefeller is coming, who used to go to school with Adrian."

Steve: And the psychiatrist of Jackson Pollock.

LBD: And the person who owned Safeway, or something like that.

Steve: One of the top-notch people in Safeway.

LBD: And their wives. Just a small party.

Steve: Twelve people.

LBD: So I didn't believe it. I thought, "She's probably going to have a crowd." I'd seen her having crowds. Beautiful house in San Anselmo, designed of course by her husband.

Steve: Lucienne went there because Lucienne had been teaching their daughter. We got to know them. They were a lovely couple.

LBD: Anyway, later on--. We made murals for some of his buildings.

Riess: Bishop Pike.

LBD: Never mind Bishop Pike.

Steve: That's another story. [laughter]

Riess: I wondered if Bishop Pike wanted to have you do something for him.

LBD: No.

Steve: We were going to do something if he had lived, because he was interested. The way we do that, we contact him later; you can't do it at a dinner party. But I did tell him that I would like to talk to him about a mural, and he said, "Fine."

LBD: Steve is my real manager.

Steve: I do that in season and out of season.

LBD: The second mural we did actually was the one for the California Teachers' Association in San Francisco. It has been covered with Philippine grass since the CTA moved out to larger headquarters some years later.

Riess: Did it come out of this dinner party?

LBD: No.

Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, Oakland

LBD: But I thanked Ray Rice for giving me this job, and he said, "Here's another job you might like. There's a big church being built in Oakland, which is a Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, and I don't want to do it." He did abstract, modern stuff, and this was to be probably in the old tradition.

So he told me about Mr. Olwell, Bob Olwell, and I went to see what it was all about. No, there was a competition! That's what it was, a competition. So I started making all sorts of things in the traditional style.

Riess: You mean in Byzantine.

LBD: Byzantine, yes. And I submitted them, and no, they were not going to have me do it. They had a young man. I wonder if he mentioned him.

Riess: Yes, Brian Tivel.

LBD: But he said, "There are some things that you might do. Are you doing any mosaics?"

LBD: I said, "Oh yes, oh yes." I'd done one little mosaic that big.

He said, "Well, I'll show you what it is." They had made a big cement bishop's chair, and there was a circle in the center that was cut in, and that had to be filled with mosaic, and then the arms, the area here, that could be seen from the audience. The bishop chair, the baptismal font, and three or four other things in mosaics.

So I said, "Yes, I'd love to do that." And I made some sketches. I said, "My sketches don't show, they don't give the feeling of the richness of mosaic," and he was very happy. He said, "Go ahead."

Riess: Was it entirely his decision, or did he have to submit it to the fathers?

LBD: Well, he asked the father, and I think I talked with Father George [Vlahos] a couple of times, and I told him that I had seen those things, I had loved those things, and I'd be glad to do it.

Steve: The priest, George Vlahos, Father George Vlahos, is now in practice, he's a logotherapist.

LBD: Don't go into that.

Steve: Just a minute now, please. He's a logotherapist in Ensenada. The thing that was wonderful about him is that he wanted a church which is traditional--. I happen to be a member of the Eastern Orthodox, as that church is. The church is a bit of heaven; that's why the gaudiness, that's why the pictures, the picturesque quality. That's why in Poland, the Black Madonna, those are real jewels, that's real gold, that's pure gold, as pure as you can get it. Same thing with the Mexican Catholics; they believe that that's part of heaven. That's what Father George was trying to do, in a modern manner, where his congregation will be able to understand the transition between the modern and the ancient.

Riess: Those Greek Orthodox churches of Olwell's seem extremely traditional to me, and yet modern.

Steve: It's a bridge, yes. There's a bridge.

Riess: But what is it that makes those modern?

Steve: Well, firstly the icons that the young man did at the church in Oakland are extremely modern.

Riess: But they have that attenuated, Byzantine quality.

LBD: Yes.

Steve: It's the spirit of the thing, the spirit that's involved.

Riess: The spirit is modern or Byzantine?

Steve: Very Byzantine.

LBD: The Byzantine did not believe in showing a real person. It was only a person who was a symbol, and it had to be flat, not three-dimensional like the Catholic church.

Steve: No shadows.

LBD: It was a symbol, and therefore it had to be flat, which is of course modern again, because the modern believed not in making three-dimensional paintings; a painting is on a two-dimensional surface.

Riess: So really it's an abstraction.

LBD: Yes, it's an abstraction. And so it's really much closer to the modern, of course, than anything that the Catholics or Michelangelo did.

Steve: It must be understood that the ancient painters of the icons were just as capable of doing a realistic painting of a person, a madonna, a woman or a man, as they are of doing icons. The icon is something totally different from natural representation; that's got to be understood because it's worshipped as a symbol. In and of itself it doesn't mean anything. [leaves briefly to get something]

LBD: You're not worshipping an object.

Steve: [looking at icon] Somebody brought this to my frame shop and left it there. I know who he was, says it was brought over from the Soviet Union. I don't know.

Riess: Did Olwell understand this distinction very well too? [Steve gestures]

He did, yes.

LBD: He has a wife who is I think wealthy, so that he and she went almost every year to India, to the Byzantine, to Constantinople, Istanbul, and he studied, he knew.

Steve: He's an authority.

LBD: Absolute authority in the whole business of the symbolism and all that. And he would make beautiful drawings to show me what should be done. I have some that he did for churches that we didn't get around to do because the church didn't have the money.

Riess: He seems to take complete control of his commissions.

LBD: Oh, he just goes this way when it comes to the priest, who has totally different ideas. For instance, he had the idea of a lamp--. Oh, the things he did! I don't know if you've been to that church.

Riess: I have, yes.

LBD: The lighting, those beautiful circles of light, you know, are low, and so you get a feeling of hugeness.

He made one mistake, and he admitted it. When I saw what he had done on top of the dome.

Steve: The Pantocrator.

LBD: The tremendous Pantocrator, which is supposed to be the largest one in the world, I said "It's out of scale."

Steve: It's not in scale.

LBD: I didn't know he had decided on that. And I told him frankly what I felt. I said, "It's too gigantic." If it had been small, especially the jewel details, the building would look gigantic. And he said, "You're right. I made an error."

Steve: There's one thing that Lucienne and I have learned. The things in the Mission district and all those Mexican things where they show a torso with a tremendous head. That means nothing; that doesn't make it big. It's merely a big painting, but it's not big in the real sense. But when they show almost a full figure, boy! Are they tremendous!

Riess: Well, that's interesting.

Steve: See? Now, that was one error, but I think that's one of the very few errors that was done in that church.

LBD: This was the <u>only</u> error.

Steve: The thing I must say here, and I hope it's on tape, is that Father Vlahos was kicked out when the Greek colonels took over the Greek government. He was an American, and he believed in the American system in all respects, and he didn't want to tie the American church to the Greek coattails of the colonels. The congregation, the majority, felt otherwise, so he was eased out.

LBD: After the details of the altar, I made four long mosaic panels directly on cement on the north and south sides of the nave doors representing the four elements, air, fire, water and earth.*

It was about two years later that they asked me then, without any competition, to do all of the narthex.

Steve: Entrance, the entrance.

LBD: And at that time we looked at the wall, and we saw that the wall was not cement, not brick, and therefore we had to sort of invent a way of putting those mosaics on there. For instance, instead of having all of that completely mosaic, we put gold leaf in between--it's better to show it. There were little squares of symbols all around.

There were five scenes. Those were big. But they were done in small pieces of panels, three to four square feet in size, panels made out of masonite, and with very little cement on it so they wouldn't be too heavy. And then Steve would drill holes on the side that it had to be put, with toggle bolts. You put them in here and the toggle bolts open up, and they go between the wires, and they hold on.

Steve: You see, it was plaster on extended metal lath. So we left the wall the way it is, except we did all our work on masonite, eighth-inch masonite, with toggle bolts, and those areas where the toggle bolt head was, we left undone. When we got through putting the toggle, then Lucienne put in the mosaics.

LBD: And this is a beautiful photograph of it. [showing Riess]

Religious Work, II

Inspirations

LBD: [looking at scrapbook] That was St. Francis. It was a long, narrow thing, and it was done with pebbles, and here and there a piece of gold.

---

*See the story about "air."

Riess: [reading] "Honorable Mention. Religious Art Exhibit. Grace Cathedral." Now, that's interesting to me, that you were exhibiting in that. Had you been in general interested in religious art, or what prompted you?

LBD: Yes, I was interested. I never went to church as a child. My father would say, you know, "Anytime you want to go and see a church, that's okay." But there weren't any good ones in Cleveland and in New York. And it was only when I was sixteen--.

Steve: What do you mean "there weren't any"?

LBD: That we ever wanted to go to.

Steve: There were synagogues all over the place; what are you talking about?

LBD: No, we never went. So when we got to Paris, my mother, my sister, and I, and that friend of ours, Mark, took us. He said, "Where do you want to go first?"

I said, "Notre Dame." And that was the first church I ever saw; I thought that was a wonderful way to see a church, and for us, of course, wonderful. And after that, of course, I went to churches all the time.

Then I went to Florence, and there I was all alone. I used to stay with Roger Sessions, the composer, and his wife, but I was alone all day long. I took the streetcar down, and I would go to these churches, and I went to the museums too. And I <u>hated</u> the museums. But when I went to a church--! And since I was so dizzy from going to the Uffizi or something, I would go to a church and put on a cover on my head because you had to, a scarf, and then I would sit and close my eyes to get back my perspective again, open my eyes, and there would be a mural that's lit up by candles, that <u>belonged</u>, it <u>belonged</u> to it.

Steve: It was <u>made</u> for candles.

LBD: And <u>this</u> is the most important influence I had that made me interested in church murals: I went to see San Marco, Fra Angelico, and it was, of course, Roger Sessions who said, "You'll see the whole building is made with Pietra Serena," which is a grey sandstone rock that only comes from that area in Florence. And he said, "And you'll see, going up the stairs, you'll see"--

Steve: Tell us how you started going up the stairs.

LBD: So I went there, not expecting much, already so sick of seeing museums in Europe; it was just like loot, you're looking at loot. [laughter] So I started coming up that stair, not knowing what I would see. And there, as I walked up, I saw "The Annunciation."

Steve: From the top you slowly see the whole thing.

LBD: And it was painted in such a way that the same curves that were in the arches of the building were in the painting. And the madonna was just delightful, pink, pale pink, and I never forgot that, and the angel there. It was beautiful. And then all the little panels all around. And I said, "That's painting! That's painting for an architecture." But that was that; I was a sculptor, period.

So I didn't do anything with the idea of painting, and it was Diego Rivera who told me later on, "You ought to do fresco."

And I said, "You know, I'm not a good painter."

He said, "Why aren't you a good painter?"

I said, "I don't believe in using so many colors. I like very few colors. I like black and white, and I like just very simple."

And he said, "Then you're a good painter." [laughter] So that felt good.

Riess: Had you been doing pieces on your own that expressed a religious spirit?

LBD: No.

Riess: Why did you do this St. Francis for the show?

Steve: She did it for the fun of it.

See, what we used to do is we'd take our three kids to the beach, and we'd say, "If you can get a can of pebbles, one color only--red or black or whatever--you get an ice cream cone." [laughter] And the kids loved that.

LBD: Of course, yes.

Steve: That's how they got their ice cream! So we got a lot of these pebbles.

LBD: They were so beautiful, these pebbles were, and then only in one section of Sonoma County.

Steve: Sonoma County has big beaches.

Riess: Did you teach yourself how to do mosaic?

LBD: I taught myself. I won't go into the errors I made the first time, but I really learned from errors, I always learned from errors.

Working with the Priests at the Greek Orthodox Church

LBD: [looking at photographs of Greek Orthodox Church] This thing right here, which is the altar, my daughter came once to see it. They were finally beginning to use the church, and my daughter came running up to see it, up to the altar, and there was a man cleaning the floor there, very fussy man, and he said, "Don't! You can't come on that thing; women are not allowed on the altar."

And later on, Father George wanted me to do things on the altar, squares. He said, "You know, we're tripping over those, these are spaces for mosaics. Would you like to do that?"

And I said, "I'd love to do that."

Then he said, "Come, I'll show you where they are," so I could measure them.

And I said, "Oh, but I don't have a hat, and I don't have a covering on my head."

He said, "You don't believe in those things, do you?" [laughter]

Steve: He is a fabulous man, I tell you, he really is. If Father George had been left in that place, we would <u>still</u> be working on that church. I want you to know that.

Riess: They would have continued to ornament it?

LBD: Yes.

Steve: There's a floor sixty feet long and eleven feet wide. He said, "Think of this floor, we're going to do it in tiles."

LBD: And then he wanted something in back where the choir is.

Steve: Where the choir is upstairs. And what's in front, we began thinking of redwood, of Lucienne being the sculptor, in front of the choir, something a little lighter. And then he was thinking with Olwell about a little church outside, a chapel, for weddings and other religious things.

Riess: I'm glad nothing else has happened.

Steve: And he would do compound curves. He said to me, "have you ever done anything in a curve?" I said, "No idea." It would be wonderful for me to learn how to plaster when it curves in both directions. But when they kicked him out, everything stopped.

LBD: The sketches were all made for the chapel.

Steve: Everything was ready.

LBD: Now, the chapel is in another area.

Steve: Very tiny.

LBD: I don't think it was big enough to toast. [brief tape interruption]

Oh, one thing that's interesting. When I made the first sketches for this, of course everything had to be okayed, and I had made the Virgin Mary in a manger, and that was interesting. He [Father Vlahos] said, "She was in a cave." It's a symbolic thing; it's the darkness and the light comes. Actually it probably came from way before Christianity.

Bishop Pike wrote a very nice thing here, in the Sunday paper [San Francisco Chronicle, December 1966] (This is about St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church.) His philosophy was that Christmas represented the same thing what was done by the pagans. "The custom of the celebration of the winter solstice, which we have adopted from early non-Christian sources, is thus appropriate indeed." And, you see, the solstice, it's a climatic thing. But all of a sudden they found that it was getting darker and darker and darker; it was the end of the earth. Now, the Jews did the same thing. They celebrated every month the coming back of the moon, because at the very beginning they were scared.

Steve: Everybody was.

LBD: When they saw the moon wasn't coming back, they thought, "What have we done? What happened?" So it's a climate thing.

Riess: That's interesting that when you're doing a liturgical commission you have to make sure that you're following the orthodox line of whatever the religion is that you're dealing with. You had to go through that with Temple Emanu-El, and then you had to get the cave for the Greek Orthodox. Can you think of other experiences where you had to change your design in a liturgical situation because the priest said that you didn't have it right?

LBD: No. What's interesting is one thing that he said, and that also Father Steve Katzaris said, that they have to include something which shows the church, the actual church. And so one of the little squares shows the church.

Riess: That's a requirement in the Greek Orthodox Church, that the church itself be shown?

Steve: Inside.

LBD: And they do that in the old churches that you see in Italy. Even in Italy they show a sort of model out of gold or brass that is the church itself, and it's inside; generally, it's not outdoors.

And also, Father Katzaris said--he was watching us doing the floor, the circular floor at Belmont--and he said, "May I help a little bit? You know, a priest is supposed to also do something like that in the church."

Steve: Add his own labor.

LBD: And he picked up a stone, you know, and he said, "I love those stones, they're so irregular." They were tiles, but they were tiles that had been thrown out because they were no good, and we were getting them from a place that was throwing them away, so they sold them to us, and made a little money themselves, at ten cents a pound, and when it's tiles, it's pretty heavy. But to us it was a wonderful way to get to use these accidental things.

So he said, "Where did you get those tiles? They look like they've been used already." I said, "Yes, they have been used. You'll be shocked to know. It's from the ridiculous to the sublime, because many of those came from old gasoline stations, restrooms." And he thought it was marvelous. [laughter] He was a Zen Buddhist probably deep inside.

More on St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church

Riess: Shall we talk a little bit about St. Mary the Virgin? What year was that?

LBD: That was in 1966.

Steve: Seventeen years ago.

Riess: And who came to you first on that one?

LBD: It was to be a competition, and I heard about it. I don't know who told me. I saw that white wall, and in the middle was a plaster cast like this of one of those--

Steve: Della Robbia. Mother, and child in swaddling clothes.

LBD: And it was getting grey, you know, like what happens to plaster.

Steve: It was terrible.

LBD: And you can't clean it, unless you varnish it before you put it up, and even the varnish would yellow it.

So I started making sketches, and I told them that I would like to do the fresco. I told them how much it would cost, and they were worried.

Steve: The word is demurred; they demurred.

LBD: They had other people, I don't know who came, but suddenly I got the job. The man who was the judge, more or less, of the building committee, was an architect, W.P.C. (I don't know his name.) He took my sketch, and then he put it into a three-dimensional type of thing, and signed it W.C.P. I had made mine flat, because that's the way I paint. And I have his, you know, where he showed things in perspective. And he wanted to be part of it, you see, so he said he had done this.

When finally I made the final sketch--I don't know if you saw it there--there was writing all the way along. There were posts at certain spots, and between the posts I made a scene, but at the posts I decided I had to leave a space in between.

Steve: There are four posts, which gives you five areas.

LBD: And so, I thought that I would write everything that the Virgin Mary ever said that's in the Bible. And I had written these words all down. On the sketch it looked really crowded. And they looked at them and they started reading, and in one place she says, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree," and so on. [Luke 1:42] And they got very uncomfortable.

Steve: Oh, they did.

LBD: They said, "Do you have to put all of that in?" [laughter] And I said, "I just put it all in to see whether it would work as a design. But if I find it's too crowded--it looks terribly crowded on a small sketch--I will probably not put everything in, if it doesn't look good." And they seemed a little relieved, because she was really radical.

Steve: So we left it all in.

LBD: So we left it all in, and friends of mine, especially Jewish people, came--

Steve: Ida Geary, our dear friend.

LBD: Ida Geary came up once, and, you know, I was painting the section there when she came, and she's Jewish, but she'd never read that, the New Testament, you see, and she started reading, and she said, "Did the Virgin Mary really say that?"

I said, "It's in the Bible. It just shows that you haven't read the Bible." [laughter]

And what was fantastic, and this is what I felt, and so I told them, I said, "You know, we all read now, while in the old days they showed pictures because people didn't read, so the whole story of the Bible was done in pictures, but now we do all the reading, so we don't need the pictures." And I said, "Well, I put both of them in." And so, much to my astonishment, the people who thought they had read the Bible would start reading that again, and of course, they were quite stunned by what she said. My propaganda!

Riess: It sounds like you really didn't meet much opposition on that.

LBD: No, except at the beginning. When I first started, I knew that in fresco the colors get lighter as the plaster dries. [brief tape interruption] When the plaster dries, it gets lighter and so does the color get lighter. So here the first thing I was doing was the Angel of the Annunciation. First it was the words, and I was trembling, because I always tremble at the beginning when I start, I'm so scared each time. And the lettering was horrible, and my daughter-in-law, who is a calligraphist of the first order, when she first saw it she was just shocked. And I told her that that's again something that is very human; I couldn't start out perfectly.

Riess: So always the upper left-hand corner of anything--

LBD: Yes, upper left hand. So I crowded those letters, and I was not at all free.

And then comes the head of the angels. I made him quite dark because he was of the times when the people didn't live in houses. Especially if you're an angel. Because the sun's shining on you all the time. So I made him quite dark. Now, I had a slight feeling I didn't want to make him a white man, but I didn't think of making him a black man either. So I made him dark.

LBD: Everybody was looking, you know, and they were a little shocked that he looked so dark, and I said, "Oh, that's going to lighten as the plaster dries." I gave him blue eyes. However, it was always dark.

And then, on the last day, when we were cleaning up, I see the garbage man coming, and it was the angel: he was tall, handsome, blue eyes, and dark brown skin. And I said, "Are you the angel?" I hadn't seen him until then. And I said, "Where do you come from?"

He said, "I'm a Hawaiian." [laughing] The congregation loved that story. [brief tape interruption]

Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco

LBD: Now, this is the Calvary Presbyterian Church. That's my favorite. That's the one I like best.

Steve: Four giants of the Reformation.

Riess: Are these real portraits?

Steve: Yes, yes, they are.

LBD: Absolutely. That's Zwingli, and that's John Knox. I started with Luther, then Calvin. This was the idea of the man who hired me. He was the president of the board of directors, Philip Boone, I think.

Riess: And when was this?

LBD: It was 1962. I had just finished murals at what was called then the San Francisco National Bank. And almost immediately after that, I was called about this one. They wanted mosaics, and the man said, "We'd like you to do that in mosaics." Then he started to show me the plans; they were still working on the building. And he told me that on the opposite side of the wall there were going to be stained glass windows with big, thick chunks of glass, very modern, embedded in cement. And immediately even though I loved to do mosaics, I said, "You want me to do mosaics on the opposite side? It's like making a baked Alaska with whipped cream and jam and ice cream and everything else on top, and maraschino cherries." [laughter] He was a man who didn't smile very well.

I said, "I would want to do something that would be extremely simple, because otherwise it'll be a fight between the two things. If the color is going to be in the stained glass windows, I would

LBD: want to do something that had more of the symbol of the religion, of the Protestant religion." Because stained glass windows are Catholic to me.

And also he said, "We thought of the four leaders of the Reformation." And that in mosaic didn't seem to fit, but I didn't say that exactly. I said, "I can see that, I can imagine that. I'll have to read up on them, and I'll make some sketches, and then you can see what I've done."

Riess: That's interesting to me, that kind of diplomacy that was involved there in what you were saying.

LBD: My mother, she's the one who taught me that; you don't just blurt out things. You have to also understand that a person who is not an artist can't visualize. And that was one of the first things we learned: you've got to make a sketch, and you've got to make a good sketch.

Steve: In color. Everything on there.

LBD: Oh, this is the Guerneville one. [referring to materials] This is the original.

Steve: Right outside the school.

LBD: This shows Guerneville.

Steve: It was called Stump Town, first, before it became Guerneville.

Riess: Is it still there?

LBD: It's still there. It's outside in the sun and rain and floods. Parts are a little bit faded. And here, I didn't work long enough, because I was afraid of the scaffold. And then the kids have thrown balls against it, you know, playing ball games. Then, they planted things in front, and then they watered them, and the sand, you know, and all that stirring up, so the lower part is--. Well, we tried to fix it with acrylics, but it's faded. And it's hard to get to it now because they've put in fences.

Steve: Barriers.

Riess: All right. So anyway, you were very diplomatic and persuaded them somehow that the four fathers would be best in fresco.

LBD: I'll show you some sketches. So then that's when I started to read up. I happened to know Calvin was from Geneva, and I was born in Geneva; that one was a very nice thing, I didn't have to worry so much.

LBD: Luther. I remember I went with a sketch, to finish the sketch when my mother invited us to come to Agate Beach. Father had died already, two or three years before. And that was the year before she died. Remember, we made a tape of her, and she said, "Oh! Luther. He was a great man." [laughter] She started telling us about Luther, and that was fascinating. Of course, also I read up on him, and I thought he was pretty marvelous, a real revolutionary guy if there ever was one.

In the mural I show how, when the Pope wanted him to stop that, you know, and brought in this papal bull, how he put fire to it, and stepped on it.

Steve: Burned it and walked on it.

LBD: And I show him with his foot on the top where it's burned. I found a picture of how it would look, and I used that.

Riess: In the Presbyterian church, you worked for a board of the elders or something like that?

LBD: That's right. At the Episcopal church, it was to be done in honor of Capell Hill. And they asked me to make a little bronze plaque, made in black and white, and then they had it cast. Capell Hill was retiring, so it was in his honor.

Concerning the Reformation leaders, one of the problems I had, as I've shown here, I decided to show the things that were most important for them, the most dramatic part of their lives. And the one of John Knox, everything that I read about him, they were such long sentences, they were just going on, flourishing more and more and more. And I said, "I can't do that, it's too much work!" And I had already done one important thing about him, which was a very exciting story, that he was punished by the Queen of Scotland.

Steve: Mary Queen of Scots. He was talking with her.

LBD: He argued, he had a tremendous dialogue with her, which is all written down. And I read that. But he had been put in jail, and for ten years he was a galley slave because he refused to worship the Catholics.

So they went over to him while he was in the galley, with bloody hands and whatnot, to ask him to recant. They said all he had to do is kiss this icon of the Virgin Mary. But he took the icon and he threw it in the ocean. So I showed that. [referring to materials]

LBD: That's Zwingli, who smashed all the stained glass windows in the churches in Zurich. And he also smashed the bells. Everything that was Catholic. And the bell, the bell is symbolic. You can't see it very well here. But the whole thing is done in black, greys, and tan. The only red is in the Bible, the edge of the Bible.

And then I put down exactly all the quotations.

Riess: How is that done on fresco? To write, you have to do it very, very quickly?

LBD: Yes. This was the first piece right here.

Steve: First day.

LBD: The second day was this. The third day was probably this, and the last day was here.

Riess: But can you just block out the areas where you're going to write, and then do the writing later?

LBD: No.

Steve: No, you do not. Everything is done in one day.

LBD: But Diego didn't. On all the murals at the New Workers School, Diego finished, leaving areas empty for me to do the writing with India ink. At that time that was the only kind that you could use, waterproofed India ink.

Steve: There were no acrylics.

LBD: Later on I could have done it with acrylic; it would have looked better. But I did it with India ink. And he hated to letter anyway. But at Calvary Presbyterian Church this was fun because the documents I copied were all exactly from reproductions of the old books. And I got those at San Anselmo, at the Theological Seminary there. And then I went to the man to show him what I had done, so that he would be the one to okay.

But about the mural panel of Knox--. Finally, in the middle of the dialogue with Mary Queen of Scots, there was one place where he said, "The word of God is enough," meaning that the Bible was the real thing, the rest doesn't count. "The word of God is plain in itself."

Riess: It's a fine line.

LBD: Beautiful. beautiful. And typical Protestant--"is plain in itself."

Riess: You could convince anyone you were any religion. You look a little Greek too. [laughter]

Steve: Yes, she could.

LBD: Well, I haven't done anything in the Catholic Church yet.

Steve: Wait, at the Dominican Convent she did a yearbook.

LBD: Oh yes, I won a prize for that.

Steve: But what destroyed us is instead of allowing the students to do the drawings, the sisters had Lucienne do them. I think that's despicable. The sisters should allow the students to do that. In my high school, the students did all the drawings. They were terrible, but they did them.

The sisters didn't allow these well-to-do girls to do it, and they were capable of doing beautiful things, let's not kid ourselves. I believe in the young people doing their own work. Sure they could have done it. You did a good job. [brief tape interruption]

Riess: It sounds like an important part of your role is explaining to your client what they're looking at, and that that really makes it possible for them to appreciate what you've done. A lot of artists can't explain it.

LBD: They're sort of proud, and they think, "If it can't show, well, it's too bad for them!" But I don't feel that way at all. I still remember too clearly my own experience. I used to love, you know, Raphael and stuff like that when I was fourteen or fifteen.

Roger Sessions taught me a little bit about ancient Greek writing and grammar. (He was a composer, you know, and he was a student of Father's.) He showed me once a book he had, and he said, "Watch and see. Look at those beautiful things that are there in Italy. Beautiful frescos, beautiful murals."

To me they were so stiff and flat--Giotto--I didn't get it. I had to go to Europe myself and get sick of all the gooey stuff that they had in the Louvre and all that High Renaissance. I became tired of it, because it was still being done, for today. Of course, then I became attracted to the moderns, Picasso, Juan Gris, Yves Tanguy.

And then, of course, to the ancient, and that was the early, early flat type of painting, of Fra Angelico and Giotto. It took a while to become mature enough. So I understood these people who

LBD: didn't have my background, my precious background, and it was a pleasure to be able to give them a little bit to understand what they had missed, because, after all, they were the ones that wanted the work done. They can learn by the actual problems of the mural conception.

And today, at the Temple Emanu-El, they love the mural there, and they appreciated the fact that I told them, "I don't want you to understand it right away."

Transcriber: Joyce Minick
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture
in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Mark Adams

RELIGIOUS ART WORK COMMISSIONS IN THE BAY AREA

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1983

Copyright © 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Mark Adams

INTERVIEW HISTORY i

BACKGROUND, AND CATHOLIC ART EXPERIENCE 464
Carmel Mission 466
Real Renaissances 470
The Church, Social and Mystical 473

SAN FRANCISCO 474
Commercial Work 474
"Queen of Heaven," 1952 475
On Quality 477

MAJOR WORK: TAPESTRY AND STAINED GLASS 479
Jean Lurçat 480
Competitions and Commissions 482
Faceted Glass Windows 484
Bay Area Church Commissions 486
Temple Emanu-El, 1972-1973 490

LOOKING BACK AT THE "RENAISSANCE" 492

RELIGIOUS SPACES AND ARTISTIC TRADITIONS IN THE BAY AREA 496

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Mark Adams's name means different art to different decades of Californians. Now, in 1984, his glorious tapestries are being installed at the north terminal of the San Francisco Airport, while his delicate, transparent watercolors are collectors' favorites at the Berggruen Gallery in San Francisco. The two techniques are far apart in scale and application, but the same awareness of blocks of color, and shadows and shading, relate them to each other and to his murals and his faceted and stained glass work--all of which brought us to Mark Adams for an interview.

For the purposes of defining the Liturgical Arts Oral History Project, Mark Adams could be considered the ideal informant, having achieved success in at least three of the media traditional to religious art, and having his work commissioned by Roman Catholic, Jewish, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian churches. As well, he is a convert to Catholicism, and an artist with an inquiring and experimental frame of mind.

It is clear that one of the pleasures for Adams was in the engagement with the client, and the opportunity to take on a challenge. On a visit to Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, where Mark Adams's work can be seen in the great Fire and Water windows, I had an opportunity to talk with Rabbi Joseph Asher. His insights were a reminder of the importance of the client, the patron. When asked if Temple Emanu-El's was an unusually sophisticated congregation, open to the originality and abstraction of the Adams conception, he turned the question to praise the sophistication of the donors--and laughingly noted that,"It took three years before the congregation stopped gazing at the windows and looked back to the Ark."

In the interview Mark Adams responded with some considered doubt to the premise of the project that there was a "renaissance of work in architecture, painting, sculpture, weaving, stained glass, wood, and metal..." Could a phrase such as "inspired period" or a powerful word like "renaissance" be applied to work which has not gone on to generate greater work? What kind of a rebirth is that? He suggests that what had been found in churches, most particularly in the Catholic churches, was of such poor quality that anything was an improvement; the work of the fifties and sixties was eminently successful, but it did not entail the effort and risk that might have broken through to new concepts of liturgical and artistic religious expression. A number of issues were raised and not completely resolved because of Adams's sensitivity to the sound of what seemed to him his unfairly loaded critical judgment leveled at what was well-intentioned work.

The interview was held in the studio-home-firehouse of Mark Adams and his wife, the distinguished print-maker, Beth Van Hoesen.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486
The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Your full name MARK ADAMS

Date of birth OCT 27 1925

Place of birth FORT PLAIN, NEW YORK

Father's full name EARL D. ADAMS

Father's place of birth

Mother's full name EDITH WAHLGEMUTH ADAMS

Mother's place of birth

Where did you grow up? FORT PLAIN

Education 3 years Syracuse U. (Fine Arts)
Hans Hofmann School of F.A., Jean Lurcat

Employment

MARK ADAMS

Born in Fort Plain, New York, 1925
Education: Syracuse University, Hans Hofmann, Jean Lurcat.

ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS

Gump's Gallery, San Francisco, 1953
Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., 1957
San Diego State College, San Diego, Calif., 1958
M.H. deYoung Museum, San Francisco, 1959
San Jose State College, San Jose, Calif., 1959
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Oregon, 1961
California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1961, 1970
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1962, 1972
French and Company, New York City, 1964
Hansen-Fuller Gallery, San Francisco, 1966, 1968
Fountain Gallery, Portland, Oregon, 1970
Smith Andersen Gallery, Palo Alto, Calif., 1972
John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, 1978
John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, 1980

JURIED AND INVITATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York City, 1957, 1958, 1962, 1965
American Federation of Arts Traveling Exhibitions, 1957, 1958
Religious Art of the Western World, Dallas Museum, Texas, 1958
San Francisco Art Institute Annuals, 1953, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962, 1965
American Business and the Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1961
Fresh Paint, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., 1961
California Design, Pasadena Art Museum, 1962, 1966
Religious Art, City Art Museum of St. Louis, Missouri, 1964
International Biennial of Tapestry, Lausanne, Switzerland, 1962, 1965
400 Years of Tapestry, Norfolk Museum, Virginia, 1966
Fiber and Clay, Calif. State University at Hayward, 1976
Contemporary Tapestries, Allrich Gallery, San Francisco, 1976, 1978
Five Centuries of Tapestry, Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1976
(lectured as panelist of International Tapestry Symposium)
Contemporary Tapestries, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, Calif., 1977
Invitational American Drawing, Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, 1977
Works on Paper—3 Artists, Smith Andersen Gallery, Palo Alto, Calif., 1977

ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS—TAPESTRIES

Unicorn, Frances Mihailoff Interiors, San Francisco, 1957
The Phoenix and the Golden Gate, City of San Francisco, 1957
Fireworks, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, San Francisco, 1960
Owings Residence Tapestries, Big Sur, Calif., 1960
Profusion, The McGuire Company, San Francisco, 1965
Douglas Fir, Weyerhaeuser Co., Tocoma, Washington, 1966
St. John the Baptist, St. John the Baptist Catholic
Church, Napa, Calif., 1966
Koshland Residence Tapestry, Lafayette, Calif., 1966
Man Flying, Bank of California, San Francisco, 1968
Rose, Santa Rosa—Sonoma Public Library, Santa Rosa, Calif., 1968
Vines, Commerce Clearing House, Terra Linda, Calif., 1971
Abstract, Weyerhaeuser, Co., Tacoma, Washington, 1971
Halperin Residence Tapestry, Atherton, Calif., 1971
Roscoe Residence Tapestry, Walnut Creek, Calif., 1975
Raffin Residence Tapestry, Palo Alto, Calif., 1978
Large Tapestry for the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas, Texas, (work in progress), 1980

ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS—MISCELLANEOUS

Painted Mural, Crown Zellerbach Building, San Francisco, 1959
Bell Tower Cupola, mosaic, St. Brendan's Catholic Church, San Francisco, 1960
Swimming Pool Mosaic, Summit Vineyard, St. Helena, Calif., 1962
Painted Exterior Murals, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, San Francisco, 1963
Mural, Altar, Cross, Door Designs, St. Andrew's, Saratoga, Calif., 1963
Glass Mosaic, Golden Gateway Center, San Francisco, 1967
Painted Stations of the Cross, Old St. Mary's Rectory, San Francisco, 1966
Painted Mural, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, San Francisco, 1967
Glass Mosaic, BART Station, Oakland, Calif., 1969
Mounted Policemen, Acrylic on Canvas, San Francisco Art Commission, 1969
Stainless Steel Doors, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Saratoga, Calif., 1978

ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS—GLASS

Clarendon School Monitors (4) leaded, San Francisco, 1960
Window with Green Cross, St. Cornelius Catholic Church, Richmond, Calif., 1961
Seven Windows, faceted, Woodside Village Church, Woodside, Calif., 1962
Monitor, leaded, Precision Instruments Company, Stanford Industrial Park, 1963
Robinson Residence Window, leaded, San Francisco, 1964
White Rose Window, faceted, exhibition piece, 1965
Four Windows, leaded, Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 1966
Dove Windows, faceted, Old St. Mary's Rectory, San Francisco, 1966
All windows, leaded, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Napa, Calif., 1966
Six windows, faceted, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Saratoga, Calif., 1963-1970
Baptistry, leaded, All Saints Episcopal Church, Carmel, Calif., 1968
Holy Spirit Window, faceted, Pinole Valley Baptist Church, 1969
Traub Residence Window, leaded, San Francisco, 1971
Fire and Water Windows, leaded, Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, 1972-1974
Sanctuary and Chapel windows, leaded, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, San Francisco, 1974-1975
Clerestory Window, leaded, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, 1978

TEACHING

Design, San Francisco Art Institute, 1961
Painter in Residence, American Academy in Rome, 1963
Drawing, San Francisco Art Institute, 1972
Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of California Davis, 1978

from Mark Adams, Recent Watercolors,
April 16-May 17, 1980, John Berggruen
Gallery, San Francisco, California

RELIGIOUS ART WORK COMMISSIONS IN THE BAY AREA

[Date of Interview: July 29, 1983]

Background and Catholic Art Experience

Adams: I was born in upstate New York, went to Syracuse for three years, and decided rather than going back for my fourth year and graduating from Syracuse, I would take that time and go and study with Hans Hofmann in New York, which was a revelation, because Syracuse was completely academic--very good academic training, for which I am very happy now.

Riess: You had gone there for art training?

Adams: Yes, I was working toward an B.F.A.

Riess: You had always known you wanted to be an artist?

Adams: In high school I got mixed up with music and theater, and so for a while there was real confusion as to which one I should go into, but the art work really started earliest and was the strongest, and I'm very pleased that that's the one I did.

Riess: So the revelation with Hofmann was the abstract?

Adams: Yes, it gave me a connection with what was going on in the avant-garde and what became the mainstream of American art, so I thought it was very good.

Riess: Did you live in the Village?

Adams: Yes, on West 11th.

Riess: And were you doing easel painting then?

Adams: Yes, I was working with oils and charcoal and pastel and some watercolor.

Then, I think a very important thing that was going on at that time was my own interest in Catholicism. I had been raised a Methodist, and had sort of taken it for granted, but had a fairly strong personal feeling about it. I'd never known much about Catholicism, and I met some people who knew some of the intellectual answers to questions that had always been objections or stumbling blocks. So I became interested in Catholicism and eventually became a Catholic.

Then--I'd forgotten this--I went up to the Maryknoll fathers a couple of times, up in Ossining, and made a couple of friends of young men studying for the priesthood. I was eventually instructed in the faith by a Maryknoll father in New York City in their chapter there, but was baptized by a parish priest in New York City. So this was one of the reasons why I was so interested in liturgical arts at such an early time.

The first time I came to California, I hitchhiked out, which was still safe to do; it was just after the Second World War when people were picking up people and not getting mugged. On the way out I stopped at several monasteries, just to see what the whole thing was like. Of course, at that point after being newly converted there's always this thing in your mind, "I might be interested in becoming a monk." I didn't think so, but there was that possibility. So I went to several monasteries on the way, one, Gethsemane in Kentucky where Thomas Merton had recently gone.

Riess: That was the time of his The Seven Storey Mountain?

Adams: It was before that was written. I think he had published Thirty Poems, a small, very thin, softbound book, and was just beginning to be known. I mean he hadn't come on as the big superstar of monkdom at that point.

I saw some really terrible art all the way across the country!

Riess: In those monasteries?

Adams: Yes. I went to St. John's, a Benedictine monastery in Minnesota. I spent several days there. They were a group who were originally from Germany. I think the motherhouse was known as Marialach, or the art movement that the motherhouse had started was known as Marialach. It was very stylized, sort of harkened back to

Adams: Gothic and Byzantine; everything was very carefully worked out, and I didn't react very kindly toward it, I felt it was very dead. I didn't have anything better to offer at the time, but--.

Riess: To make this kind of journey, both religious and looking at the art, meant that you had a plan?

Adams: Not really. I knew there was something I wanted. I wanted to be an artist, and at that point I was very excited and interested in religious art, and some of the greatest had been done for the churches. And I didn't see why it wasn't happening. This was before there was very much going on in Europe. The war was just over. So that renaissance hadn't really been written up in this country; there was very little publicity about what was going on.

Riess: About the reconstruction of churches and--

Adams: And also things like the church of Assy. That was one of the first ones. I think it had been conceived before the war and it was being built. That was the one that had the mosaic façade by [Fernand] Léger, and the tapestry by [Jean] Lurçat, stained glass by [Georges] Rouault, and tiles by Henri Matisse. It was really a blockbuster. But that wasn't finished yet, so I wasn't aware of what was going on in Europe.

But, no, there was not a clear plan. I knew that I wanted to go to California because I'd heard a good deal about it. I hadn't been in the army; I was 4-F because of my eyes. And everybody else came back talking about what a great place California was, so I decided I should go see it.

Carmel Mission

Riess: Were you looking at other kinds of art as you traveled?

Adams: Oh, yes. Right.

Riess: Though I don't really know what you would have seen between here and California.

Adams: "Here" <u>is</u> California. You mean between New York and California. Where are you from?

Riess: <u>There</u>. From Pennsylvania.

Adams: Well, while I was in New York I went to all the museums and spent time looking.

Adams: Actually when I came out here I stopped in Berkeley for a couple of weeks, and the idea, I decided, was to go to Carmel, because it looked like a nice place to live. I thought I'd go down and see if I could get a job. There was a Catholic group down there who were very helpful, helped me find a place to live and sort of gave me moral support. Among them was Kai's [Micaela DuCasse] mother, Xavier Martinez's wife Pelle. [Elsie Whitaker Martinez] And she was full of life and great enthusiasm both for Catholicism and for religious art and for artists. She and a friend who was living with her--who I only know by the name of Pal at this point [Harriet Dean]--there was a lot of discussion and intellectual talk about Catholicism and about art. So it was a very helpful climate, because I was really misplaced, you know, being a new Catholic and being in a different place and not really having made my living very much before. I'd worked at a bookstore and that sort of thing.

But they were very helpful there, and I guess the first job I had while I was there was at the Carmel Mission, helping Harry Downie. By helping Harry Downie I mean I was digging ditches, I was working as a laborer. They were putting up the new small wing of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. In other words, all that outside quadrangle was being constructed.

Harry Downie should definitely be in this history. He was a very important man in restoring a couple of the missions, a very fiery Irishman who always chomped on a cigar and could take a strong drink and swear with the best of them. He had a marvelous sense of the very realistic approach to reconstructing these missions.

Riess: But within the style of the mission?

Adams: Absolutely, yes.

Riess: We have been looking at people who were doing the new things.

Adams: Yes. But I think he has to be included though, because he was doing them in a new way but it was the style. I don't know where the originality was, but what he did was much more beautiful than the reconstruction they later did of a more accurate rendering. He had a beautiful, simple solution of the apse of the church down there. And now it's all carved gold and--I should be careful of this, I don't know who did that! I may be stepping on some very sensitive toes. But anyway, I didn't see why they did it. What was there was a beautiful simple solution, very much in the feeling if not the actual sense of the original.

Riess: You were on the labor force.

Adams: I was on the labor force, but he decided I really wasn't a very good laborer! I didn't do the kind of ditch digging he really expected. So he offered me a commission of doing a set of stations in the new little chapel they were building. The only thing is they had to look as though they were done by the Indians, influenced by the Spanish! So I did them. They're in oil on gessoed board. When they were finished I was to bring them over to Harry and he was going to age them so they'd look as though they'd been dug up after a hundred and fifty years.

Well, his way of doing this was attacking them with paint thinner and rottenstone. And the first swipe of it took most of the painted surface away! So he called me all sorts of names and what the hell kind of paint was I using, and I really didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do, I'd never had a painting attacked with those two things before. With that he turned around and started to work on the confessional that he was also antiquing. The first swipe of the rag took the paint off, so he realized that it was not my fault, it was something else. He either had a stronger paint thinner or a different kind of solvent.

Riess: So that wasn't an example of <u>your</u> kind of work then?

Adams: Well, my wife says it is. It has the primitive, sort of straightforward approach to it, but the compositions she feels are really mine and the whole thing is mine.

Riess: They're still there?

Adams: Yes, they're still there, fourteen of them.

Riess: That would be just post-war. Then what did you go on to do?

Adams: I stayed in Carmel I think for about a year and a half. Halfway through I moved to Monterey. And then I decided the thing I wanted to do was go back and study again with Hofmann. The time had actually been cut short because I had to go to work and get a job in a bookstore which really took a lot of time. So I felt I wanted to go back and work some more with him, and I went back to New York and spent another winter there, again working at Brentano's and Gimbel's in the book department.

Riess: There was nobody in the Bay Area that was an inspiration? Those teachers at San Francisco Art Institute? [Clyfford] Still and [Mark] Rothko and people like that? [Adams apparently indicates no] No? I see.

Adams: No, I think that the mystique that has grown up around Still is very unreal.

Riess: It's a mystery to you, this mystique?

Adams: No, it isn't a mystery to me; I think it's a real con job. Beth studied with him. (Beth is my wife.) I mean he had a philosophic approach that was admirable, but for him to become enshrined as this great painter, I think he's really in over his head.

And Hofmann had taught out here in Berkeley in the thirties. Erle Loran I think had been responsible for getting him out here.

Riess: That's right, and Glenn Wessels.

Adams: Glenn Wessels.

Hofmann was sort of the daddy of all the abstract painters and teachers out here. I felt that he had something I still hadn't understood fully.

After that I came back to San Francisco, and decided I'd better settle down and put some roots down, get a job and make enough money so I could buy some new clothes and, you know, get on with living. I mean that kind of travel is very--. I mean you're spending your money to move around, and clothes wear out and so on.

Riess: What about the idea of becoming a monk?

Adams: Well, there was a good deal of Catholic interest and discussion in both Carmel and Monterey. The woman who is now Reverend Mother of the Carmelite Monastery in Carmel at that time had just quit a job as a reporter on Modern Screen in Hollywood, and had come to Carmel as a self-imposed retreat, not in a monastic situation but just getting a small apartment and living there and trying to get her thoughts back together. Her mother had recently died of cancer, and I guess there had been a closeness that developed toward the end of her mother's life.

So she began to go back and reevaluate the religious ideas that she'd thrown out or ignored, and that gradually ripened into a full-blown vocation and she went into the Carmelite Monastery. And there was another girl, Diana Cary, who was a convert and interested in writing for Catholic magazines. There were several other Catholic friends, and we'd get together for dinner or talk, go to mass on Sunday.

Riess: Did you actually talk about what the possibilities were for beautiful art in Catholic buildings?

Adams: Oh, everybody thought it was a good idea, but nobody actually had any concrete approach.

Real Renaissances

Riess: Were there any new Catholic churches being built that you can think of?

Adams: Not in that area. The Monterey church--I think it was the original Presidio chapel--had been refurbished by Effie Fortune and she had done a very nice, simple job, and I think most of it was using local artisans in designing.

Riess: St. Ann's Chapel in Palo Alto, by André Girard. I wonder if it was that early?

Adams: It was earlier, finished before 1946, when I saw it. I think St. Ann's was after the war. [It was dedicated in 1951.] Why do I associate Louisa Jenkins with that church, that chapel? [Jenkins did mosaic and iron baldacchino.] [brief tape interruption. Riess and Adams look at Liturgical Arts Quarterly, Vol. XX, Nov. 1951, article on a prototype church designed by Jean Labatut and André Girard.]

The individual panels may all be interesting, may all be well done, but altogether it's a mess. There's entirely too much going on and it really doesn't relate to anything else. With all that business on the outside wall, you have to have a busy wall behind the altar too?

Riess: Look at the right-hand side of the page, all the episodes in the life of St. Matthew or something like that, the evangelists in detail.

Adams: I think this is one of the mistakes that we made when we went back to this Renaissance idea. You went back to the idea that art is supposed to inform and instruct the laity, and I think that since the printed page that is unnecessary.

Riess: The "illiterate" laity.

Adams: The illiterate laity. I don't think that they learn from these any more than they do from books, and it seemed to me that the kind of instruction we should be giving is much more a mystical one. The eighty-two episodes in the life of St. Matthew are not really very pertinent to what I'm doing today or to what most people are doing today.

So what we're really talking about, I think, is some kind of an attitude about the good life or doing well or doing the right thing in morals, ethics--that there is more to life than appears on the surface. I mean all of these things I think are the direction we should be going.

Riess: Is that the direction that things are going in the Church?

Adams: No, I don't think so.

Riess: We're looking at something that was done in 1950, and here it is thirty years later. Things may have changed.

Adams: Oh, I think things have changed. I think better designers have gotten involved or there have been artists who are better designers.

There are some brutal things that could be said about this whole movement. It's a very positive thing because things were being done and there was interest and excitement in it.

I think there's a thing that has happened that would never happen again. It happened in the past and this was not comparable to it. When the Church really blossomed, when the Renaissance grew, the Church was in a much different position, it really controlled much of man's preoccupation, thought, time, effort, and that really is no longer the case. The Church is not the kind of universal force it was in the sixteenth century.

And at that time any artist who was worth his salt--I mean the best artists--were interested in doing things for the Church. I think after the Second World War, the best artists were not interested in doing things for the Church. I mean there were artists interested in doing things for the Church, but they were not the best. The best were off doing something else. And I think that's one of the problems we have.

Riess: Then there is the question of whether the non-Catholic artist should be represented in the church.

Adams: That's right. And there were great discussions and arguments at that time as to whether or not one had to be Catholic in order to really do a good liturgical piece of work. Of course, the people who were Catholic all said "absolutely." And the people who weren't Catholic just said it was ridiculous, "of course not." I mean so there was no answer to it.

But this brings back to mind the problem that I was not fully aware of at the time. It seemed to me that there were artists who were not--

[doorbell rings] I've been saved by the bell! I think I'm just getting deeper and deeper in it. If you don't mind I'll stop right there. [leaves to answer bell]

Adams: --and those artists were commissioned by people who wanted something decent for their churches and something original for their churches, which is fine. Let's leave it at that.

Riess: All right.

Adams: But I wonder if we could go back and erase some of that which I said, because I realize that I'm getting into something that is not what you're after.

Riess: We can correct it. [tape interruption. Adams talks off tape about church buildings and the religious/artistic experience]

Now, you were describing a happy Sunday in Lent, at Vence.

Adams: We arrived on Friday in a small town down on the Mediterranean, Cagnes sur Mer, and we took a bus up to Vence to see the chapel, and we found out that it was closed to the public. There had been so much interest and so many people going through that they only opened it on Tuesdays and Thursdays from ten 'til two. Well, it was a whole week away. We couldn't stay until the following Tuesday, we had to be someplace else.

So we finally talked to one of the women--I guess she was a housekeeper--who came out, and we talked and we told her of the plight and she said, "Well, there is a mass for the townspeople on Sunday morning at seven o'clock. If you get up here by seven you can go in just as a townsperson would go to mass." So we did, and it was absolutely marvelous.

All the townspeople were dressed in black or dark blue or dark brown, in this entirely white interior of shining marble floor and shiny white tile murals, the glass reflecting on everything. The choir sisters were singing in the short leg of the L-shaped chapel, and this priest, who was middle-aged with a white goatee, came out in the rose vestment and was just like a sorcerer. It was such a moving experience, this whole thing of color and light.

I think that he [Matisse] achieved something truly religious in that church, and I think there have been a couple of other artists who've done similar things. But [long pause] --I'll stop there! I'm in a very peculiar position.

Riess: I think it's interesting that you use words like "mystique" and "sorcery" so much in talking about the Church.

The Church, Social and Mystical

Adams: I perhaps am in a unique position. I've found a great deal of interest in the whole aspect of mysticism in Catholicism, which had never been a part of my Protestant upbringing. I feel that the social aspect of the Church is very important, but I feel the mystical part of it has really been given short shrift.

It refers back to Christ's admonition to Martha and Mary. Mary was sitting at Christ's feet listening to what he had to say, and Martha was running around getting dinner. And Martha got sort of upset with Mary because she wasn't helping, and Christ said that Mary had chosen the better part, which is or was at that time interpreted as being the difference between the active social life--by social I mean not society in the sense of having a social life, but the social aspect of caring for human beings, that they have enough food and shelter and so forth--as opposed to the mystical aspect of religion, the communion of saints, that we're all one, that the people who are dead and the people who aren't born yet all have a common quality with us. And this thing I think is really being neglected.

Riess: Okay, then we are talking about the street-corner church?

Adams: Yes, I think that's an important part, and I think the Church should be as fair and should be behind all of the important social issues, but that isn't enough. You know, there are a lot of worker priests and priests working among the poor who say that you can't give them mysticism until they have a full stomach, which I think may be true, but I think there are all levels of need within the human race, and that once you get food in your stomach that isn't enough. There has to be more than just social justice, and if that's all it is, then an idealized United Nations should be able to do that. But the Church has something far greater, and that's what I think is being kind of ignored.

Riess: It's very interesting.

Adams: This isn't what you were getting into, is it? [laughing]

Riess: Since you obviously have ideas of what the Church can do, then what are your ideas of what the art can do? In Old St. Mary's, in the rectory there, what's the experience that you're trying to give people then?

Adams: Well, I think the window there is pretty much sort of a direct visual experience. Stained glass seems to have this quality of going right to the pit of the stomach, particularly faceted glass; it's such a rich medium you almost don't have to do a design for it, you just put it together and stick it up and it hits you.

Riess: You sure you want to say that!

Adams: Yes, yes. No, I've seen some terrible examples of faceted glass, but if you have a halfway decent design it will enhance it.

I'm getting into all sorts of problems here! But I had to tell you this because that really was one of the reasons I was interested in going into it. My approach to religious art was from that direction rather than workers carrying loaves of bread and sheaves of wheat. I mean it was trying to say this thing which essentially is noncommunicable in words. Well, it's noncommunicable anyway, it's a direct experience, at least that's what all the mystics have said. As soon as you put it in words you've lost it because the words become a trap.

San Francisco

Commercial Work

Riess: Now let's take it back to your first work. You came back out here and settled down after New York.

Adams: Yes, I came back here, and got a job at Gumps's in the display department, because it didn't require very much work experience. If you had the art background, they would rather train you in their own way.

Riess: You were doing windows?

Adams: Windows, yes. And the interior also. I stayed there from '48 until 1950, at which point I decided to try freelancing, and I went into freelancing, advertising, point-of-purchase displays, things that were silkscreened on cardboard, folded and sent out to various stores. So it was really commercial work.

No, there was a thing in the middle. I'm sorry. Between the time that I left Gump's and when I started doing the commercial work, I decided I was going to try to paint seriously, and so I got a job as a timekeeper on the graveyard shift at the American Can Company and worked from twelve until seven-thirty in the morning and then slept and painted in the afternoon, which didn't work very well. So I got into the point-of-purchase display design. And I did that off and on for quite a while, changing clients, up until probably the end of the sixties. Even though most of my time by then was spent in fine arts it still wasn't paying the bills.

Adams: I had one very good friend who had been an advertising manager for a paint company and eventually went on his own and started an advertising agency. He kept using my work, and he was very supportive. He would buy my paintings as well as give me jobs to make a living on. His name was [Bernard] Barney Blake. It was of tremendous, tremendous support.

"Queen of Heaven," 1952

Adams: In the meantime I had enough time then to try and start working on other things, and I knew that this religious show was going to happen at the de Young. It was about 1952, I'd just met Beth a while before because of the hungry i--I digress!--which I named and designed. You haven't heard of the hungry i?

Riess: I haven't heard of it for a long time.

Adams: No, it's long gone. In 1950, I was acting and designing sets for an amateur theatrical group. One of the men said he wanted to start a small club where actors could go after rehearsals and have coffee, pastry, a beer, et cetera, and sit around and talk--unwind from the work. He asked if I would design the interior, and also think of a name. I came up with hungry i--which referred to all the various hungers of the first person singular.

The other man changed his name and personality as the club developed, and became Big Daddy Eric Nord of the Beat Generation.

My reward for all this was that through a series of happenings because of the hungry i designs I met Beth Van Hoesen and we married.

But anyway, Beth and I started going together while I was working on this "Queen of Heaven," which was a design six-by-nine feet. I was intrigued with tapestry because of the French show that came over right after the war. I think it didn't come out here, but there was a show of Lurçat tapestries that came out here. But there was a lot of interest in the French arts and a lot of write-ups and photographs of tapestry. This was a tapestry show including I think some of the Apocalypse and the Lady and the Unicorn. They took them out of storage and their safe hiding places during the war and lent them to a show in New York.

So this whetted my appetite, and it certainly was in the back of my mind for a while. I finally decided I would try doing it, and I did a large sketch in cut paper, using Matisse's medium, but not in the way he designed it. I mean I put pieces together and fixed edges where it didn't turn out right; it was not the direct cut-out.

Adams: And from this I decided I would embroider on theatrical scrim something that was actually an imitation tapestry, because I couldn't find a weaver who was interested in doing it, and I wasn't interested in getting into weaving to that point. I was living on Potrero Hill at that time, and my landlady and a couple of her Russian friends would come and help embroider, to cover this theatrical scrim solidly with sweater yarn. We finally did it.

There was a date for the entries to this religious show at the de Young to be shown for the jury, and this was only about half finished. So I took this thing, with balls of yarn attached to it and needles, and it hadn't been stretched, but I took it with a photograph of the design and it was accepted, and this was the first piece of mine that had ever been accepted for a show in a museum.

There were big pieces by Louisa Jenkins and there was a tremendous cross that went floor to ceiling by Antonio Sotomayor.

Riess: Was this the show that was curated by Ninfa Valvo?

Adams: Yes. And it got a great deal of interest, and it was as a result of this that the Dallas Museum invited the piece to be shown.

Riess: Was yours the only tapestry work in it?

Adams: No, there were a couple of others. There was a fellow named Del Lederle, who was also interested in liturgical work, who had worked in France and been a friend of Frank Kazmarcik.

Frank later became a Benedictine monk and was fairly iconoclastic in that Benedictine monastery, so much so that I think they invited him to leave. But he was very interested in using modern art in liturgical work. So there were several embroidered pieces--there were no actual woven tapestries in that show--and one of them was Del's.

Riess: Was your piece recognizably religious?

Adams: Yes, it was called "Queen of Heaven."

Riess: But here you were, Hans Hofmann's student.

Adams: Well, I tended to use a lot of red and orange and yellow and pink! [laughter]

Riess: It was a religious figure?

Adams: Yes, it was a woman more or less floating. I mean she was not sitting on anything and her legs indicated she was kind of flying in from the side.

Riess: What became of this piece?

Adams: I later had it rewoven. It was technically so bad. When you hang theatrical scrim, it's woven on the diagonal, so after a while it just began to pull toward the middle. I finally put it on a wooden frame, and then I had it rewoven and the Dallas Museum bought the woven piece. I still have the original in a box in storage.

Riess: Was this important in terms of giving you an identity as a tapestry person and as a religious art person?

Adams: Yes. That's the piece. [looking at a picture in a catalogue]*

Riess: It's wonderful, it's beautiful. That's the Dallas version?

Adams: No, this is the original embroidered version. You see, the whole thing was done with an even stitch so it looked like it was woven. It was not the free stitch on burlap that embroiderers were doing. at the time.

Riess: Lovely. What kind of colors?

Adams: The bottom is a very intense orange, the lower part of the dress is two shades of pink, the dark area is black, and the upper right-hand corner is dark yellow and yellow orange, and those flowers are sort of pale blue and pale pink and white. It's pretty colorful.

Riess: May I have this catalogue?

Adams: Let me see. [steps away to look for another] Yes, I've got another one.

On Quality

Adams: There is a tendency that was part of this, and is also endemic in contemporary art, that many artists have talent and are able to do things that have a certain accomplishment about them, but they

---

*"Mark Adams, An exhibition of tapestries, paintings, stained glass windows and architectural designs," California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1970. Eight pages of the catalogue of the exhibition are reproduced, following p. 479.

Adams: are too easily satisfied with the results and don't compare themselves to the best, but are content with, "Well, I did it, and there it is."

I think the secret about art is hard work. That's not an original idea. Michelangelo said it. I think Matisse said it. You really have to work hard at it and not be so easily satisfied with what you produce. And I think this is one of the main problems with the art world today.

Riess: It's a matter of education, and knowing what you're comparing yourself with?

Adams: Right, and the standards have sort of been let down. All of the abstract painters, the first set of abstract painters, had very good academic backgrounds. Then that was all tossed out within the next generation, and the art schools began to feel, "Well, it's ridiculous to teach all this stuff, nobody is going to use it." So they didn't teach anything. This is still the case in some of these schools, although the pendulum is beginning to swing back.

Mostly they taught creativity and spontaneity, which is a very shallow background on which to build a career in art. And as soon as the current fashion passes, if that's what you've been thinking in terms of, you have nothing to build on. But that I think is part of this whole thing, that I think there was too much talking and not enough hard work.

Riess: "This whole thing" being the failure of really great achievement in religious art.

Adams: What was being done was so bad that anything was an improvement. So people with talent did things, but I don't think they pushed themselves hard enough.

I think that kind of finishes up my thoughts on the liturgical arts renaissance and doesn't make it quite so arbitrary a statement. I mean it certainly explains what I feel about it, and I don't mean it to be a damning, a totally damning, statement.

Riess: Well, I'm sorry that we don't have your entire statement on there, particularly what you were saying about the difference between a time 500 years ago when the only commissions were religious commissions, and you included the patron, you know, down on his knees at the bottom, and today when only half of one percent of the population ever goes to church.

If you're doing liturgical art in order to get people back into the Church, why it certainly must fail at that also. The buildings themselves, there's an awful lot of, as Stephen DeStaebler said, "wowser" architecture.

Adams: Wowser! [laughter] That's true. There are two things that architects like to do: one's a church and the other is a shopping mall, or a summer house. Do you know Pajaro Dunes?

Riess: Yes.

Adams: It's sort of a collection of graduate architectural students' theses.

Riess: Yes, the individual houses.

Adams: Chinese pagodas and medieval castles. But the church was the other place where you could just throw everything to the wind and build something completely "wowser," as Stephen said.

Major Work: Tapestry and Stained Glass

Riess: How did you get your commissioned work for churches?

Adams: It was a struggle. A struggle either because they didn't like the work I was doing or I didn't have a big enough reputation for them to be interested in me. I mean there were several things at work as to why a commission might not go through, and I had more trouble I think with Catholic churches than any other group. I think it's because at that time there were still so many of the parish priests who were raised in the old country and had a preconceived idea of what was religious, and that was Gothic. So they were just not receptive to new approaches.

Riess: What kinds of things were you doing?

Adams: I was interested in either tapestries or painted murals.

Riess: For the sanctuary.

Adams: Yes, or anyplace in the church. I would have been glad to get one out in the narthex. But my main interest at that point in religious art was trying to get something in the church. I did several more tapestries on my own that had religious themes. One in hanging in a church now, but it's because it's on loan; it's a very poor church and they can't afford to buy it. It's a small mission church, an Episcopalian church up on Diamond Heights. It's called St. Aidan's, or the "hippie church," as people refer to it up there.

In

Mark Adams

Introduction

Mark Adams has worked creatively in several very diverse media and has expressed himself in gradations of style ranging from meticulous realism through complete abstraction. The present exhibition illustrates these several aspects of Adams' work, including as it does tapestries, paintings, faceted and leaded stained glass work and architectural designs. With tapestries and paintings, the actual works are shown; windows and architectural designs are illustrated, for the most part, by color transparencies although in several instances it has fortunately been possible to display the work itself, or models. Among these are the faceted glass window, *White Rose* (Cat. 55), and the full-size working model for the Baptistry for All Saints' Episcopal Church in Carmel (Cat. 63).

Born in 1925 in Fort Plain, New York, where he lived and attended school until he left to begin his university training, Adams early evinced an active interest in the arts. During his senior high school years, not only the visual arts but also those of music and drama were his chief preoccupations; music, for a time, was his major field. This early diversity of interest, more contrapuntal than divisive, has continued to be characteristic of Adams' personality. It has also been productive, providing a cross-fertilizing of artistic ideas and sensitivities among these several disciplines.

When he entered the University of Syracuse in 1943, he enrolled in the School of Fine Arts. The visual arts, then, became and have remained his career although music and drama have continued to play their enriching secondary roles. It was not long, however, before Adams began to be impatient with the University's art curriculum, feeling that it was overly restricting and academic. In retrospect, he would qualify that feeling, realizing that this disciplined and academic training is a background for which he is most indebted. After three years at Syracuse, he left to go to New York City where he studied with Hans Hofmann and later, for a short time, with Stanley William Hayter. The four months that he spent with Hofmann was Adams' introduction to abstract art and to Hofmann's theories and philosophy concerning abstract painting. These involved maintaining the two dimensions of the canvas and the equalizing of the dynamic forces of "push and pull."

Mark Adams: Photograph by Richard Gross.

Embroidered tapestry: *Queen of Heaven.*

Adams first came to California in 1946, going to Carmel where he worked with restorer Harry Downie on the restoration of the Carmel mission. His particular assignment was painting the "Stations of the Cross" in Spanish Colonial style. In 1948 he returned to New York City and spent another four months studying with Hans Hofmann. In the same year, he visited the large Matisse retrospective exhibition held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Prior to this time Adams had experienced no particular enthusiasm or affinity for the work of Matisse. The exhibition proved a revelation for him, and he responded deeply to the decorative line and vivid colors of this great French artist. During this same sojourn in the East, Adams visited the Cloisters in New York City where he studied the medieval tapestries of the museum. This experience and his first acquaintance with modern French tapestries (through a catalogue of an exhibition of such work held in France at that time) created in him an enthusiasm for the values and demands of the medium, with its rich decorative possibilities. Especially appealing to him was the potential of architectural size and the quality of color in wool.

He returned to California, this time coming to San Francisco, and obtained employment as a designer for display windows with Gump's, a large San Francisco specialty store noted for its elegant displays. Simultaneously and later, he also worked as a free-lance commercial display designer. Both occupations bore on his later work. Working in the enclosed area of the display window, surrounded by areas of vivid color on all sides, was a curious experience to Adams. In effect he experienced what we would call today a psychedelic reaction to being inside of the object which he was creating, leaving him with a whole new concept as to the relationships and effects of color and space. Similarly contributive was his work in commercial display design in which he worked with large blocks of solid color on flat planes.

Stimulated by these varied experiences which related to or involved tapestries—design, color and space—he decided to try his own hand in the design and execution of such a work. The result was the *Queen of Heaven* (illustrated) which was not, properly speaking, a tapestry, but a large panel (6′ x 9′) of embroidery on theatrical scrim which he patiently executed himself with help from an encouraging landlady and her friends. This was displayed at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in the same year, 1952. As a design, the "tapestry" worked well, but from a technical standpoint it was less successful. The scrim proved to be an inadequate support for the needlework and the panel failed to hang properly. (*Queen of Heaven* was later rewoven at Aubusson and now belongs to the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts.)

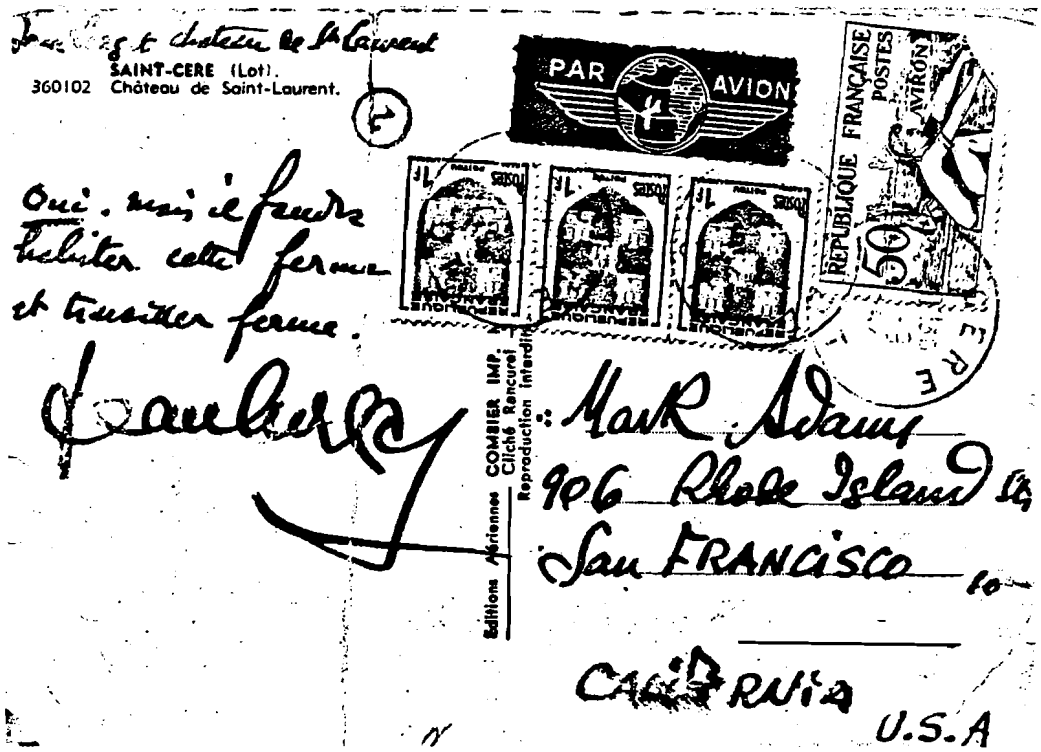
Wishing to experiment with French weavers, he sent a small design to Aubusson for execution. This step also proved a limited success, for when the completed weaving was returned to San Francisco, not only was the design woven, but also the unerased pencil guide lines.

At this point, Adams realized the need for further study of tapestry design and techniques. His wife, Beth Van Hoesen, a distinguished print-maker whom he married in 1953, urged him to apply to Jean Lurçat, the French tapestry designer, for opportunity to study and work with him. This Adams decided to do, and with Miss Van Hoesen joining him, they wrote a more or less formal letter of application, listing at some length their backgrounds, qualifications and goals. In reply they received an ordinary postcard (illustrated) from Lurçat with the succinct message in French, "Yes, if you'll come and live on this farm and work hard."

Jean Lurçat (1892-1966) was one of the great names of the renaissance of tapestry design which began in the 1930's. During the preceding centuries, the art of tapestry design and weaving had become increasingly imitative of paintings. Also, not only were the painters slavishly imitated, but by the late 19th and early 20th centuries the most banal styles and subjects became the models for the "painting-tapestry." To achieve such painterly effects, of course, required a great technical proficiency and also an array of variously colored yarns. During the 19th century a palette of 14,400 tones was available to the Gobelin weavers. In reaction to this complexity and decadence of design, Lurçat and others made use of strong mural-like designs. They stressed value contrast rather than subtle gradations and shadings, thus greatly reducing the number of colors needed. Lurçat also returned to the coarser weave of the Gothic tapestries, stressing the essential weaving character. This direction, Adams has carried still further. This new movement grew in influence and following, and in the years immediately after World War II was enthusiastically accepted as a strong and flourishing revitalized art form.

It was, then, to join in this movement and to study under its most distinguished exponent that Adams and his wife left in 1955 for St. Céré, France, where Lurçat's home and workshop was located. En route, they visited North Africa and Spain where they studied Moorish art and architecture which influenced Adams' later work.

However, when the Adamses reached St. Céré, they were to be disappointed. Lurçat's wife had recently died and he had left the village for an



Postcard from Jean Lurçat to Mark Adams accepting him as an apprentice.

indefinite but prolonged period of time. While awaiting Lurçat's return, they visited Italy where Adams was to return eight years later to become Painter in Residence at the American Academy in Rome.

They returned to St. Céré to find Lurçat at work and they began their apprenticeship, joining four others, three young Frenchmen and an Australian. Adams' work with Lurçat was roughly in two parts each day. The first part consisted of the working on Lurçat's own designs and cartoons, the drawing, for example, of flower or animal details to be included in a cartoon. In the second part, he worked on his own designs which were then discussed and criticized by Lurçat and his pupil.

After a four month stay at St. Céré, the Adamses went to Aubusson where Adams worked at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs d'Aubusson for a two month period. Here he worked at tapestry design and did actual weaving to acquire

M. and Mme. Paul Avignon. Photographs by Paul Hassel.

greater understanding of the work and problems of the weavers. It was at this time that Adams became acquainted with weaver Paul Avignon and his wife whose photographs are reproduced in this article. They are shown at their looms, the low warp or horizontal loom common to the Aubusson area as opposed to the high warp or vertical loom used by the Gobelin weavers. Of the twenty-eight tapestries included in this exhibition, all but four were woven by the Avignons. The remaining four were woven by Anne de Quatrebarbes who also lived at that time at Aubusson. She has since married and moved to Vallauris where she has established her studio, Atelier Lagarde-de Quatrebarbes.

The greater number of his commissions have been religious in nature as can be seen in the catalogue listing. Religion, both intellectually and emotionally, has always been important to Adams, and the opportunity to design for religious architecture has been a welcome one to him. In practically all of these commissions, he has combined several media and makes ingenious and sensitive use of light and space, both for background and accent.

The major commission included in the present showing is the Baptistry for All Saints' Episcopal Church in Carmel. It is represented in the exhibition by a full-size working model (Cat. 63, illustrated) and by a color transparency showing a detail of the leaded glass window (Cat. 64). The basically rectangular shape of the chamber is broken by the irregularly formed window which comprises part of one corner and of the ceiling. Colored light from the window falls across the opposite walls and floor making a dramatic contrast to the starkly-painted white plaster. As the daylight hours progress, the colors gradually move to reflect the changing position of the Sun.

Adams also has made important contributions to the architecture of other buildings, both public and private. The earliest one shown in this exhibition is the forty-four foot mural in the cafeteria of the Crown-Zellerbach Building in San Francisco (Cat. 42). In 1962, he designed the monitor for the Precision Instruments Co. Building (Cat. 46) in Stanford Industrial Park, California. This is a stunning ring of clerestory stained glass windows which has a height of three feet and a diameter of thirty feet. His latest works are the glass mosaic (Cat. 65, illustrated) for the MacArthur Station of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System in Oakland and a faceted glass window (Cat. 66) which he has designed for the Pinole Valley Baptist Church, Pinole, California. Both works were completed and installed in December, 1969.

In conclusion, the common denominator of the several aspects of his work, whether tapestries, murals and mosaics, or windows is a breadth of spirit which calls for big designs for large wall expanses. In both his designs for tapestries and church decoration, he has joined with contemporary design and artistic movements which have rescued these fields from their prevailing triteness and sentimentality.

William H. Elsner
Curator of Museum Services

Jean Lurçat

Adams: Well, I should get you to Lurçat. There are big holes in this so far.

Riess: Yes, there are.

Adams: Okay. In 1953, Beth [Van Hoesen] and I were married. The next year I sent a tapestry off to a weaver in Aubusson. I got the name from the French cultural attaché here, and sent a small design. I decided that if I was going to do tapestries I should have them woven, not any more embroidery like that, and I should go to the source, and Aubusson I thought was a good place to go.

When they returned the finished tapestry, they had even woven in some pencil marks I'd forgotten to erase. So Beth said, "If you're planning to do that seriously, you better go there and study and find out how to design for it and how to get what you want from the weaver." So I wrote a letter to Jean Lurçat and sent a couple of slides--the "Queen of Heaven" was one--and asked if it might be possible for Beth and me to come and work for him, study with him.

So we got back a postcard written in French. On the front side was a picture of a sixteenth-century chateau with two eleventh-century Moorish towers in somewhat disrepair, and on the back of it it said in French, "Yes, but you must live on this farm and work hard." In French that's a play on words; it's habiter cette ferme, et travailler ferme. And on the basis of that--not knowing what he meant by work hard, whether we were going to be out taking care of the cows or what--we decided we would go.

So four or five months went past while we sort of arranged things to go to Europe for a year, and finally we took off in January of '55. We took a freighter to Morocco and spent two weeks traveling in Morocco, and went to Spain, spent two weeks in Spain working our way up to southern France. And finally in early February we presented ourselves at the chateau of M. Lurçat in St. Céré, and there was nobody there. We finally found who the housekeeper was, and talked with her. It seems that M. Lurçat's wife had died the month before, and he had gone to Italy to recover from the whole experience. She had been ill for a long time.

So here we were with very little money. We called his secretary in Paris and she arranged through friends to get us an apartment that we could stay in, because he would probably be back in a few weeks. We stayed for a few weeks in a small apartment in the middle of winter, freezing cold, with a little coal stove for heat and hot water, and finally decided, when we found he wasn't coming back for another month, that we would go on to Italy--we were planning to go after we'd studied with him--and do our travel there and then come back.

Adams: So when we came back he was there, and he was very nice, he greeted us very cordially and said, "Why didn't you write?" But we spent about three months with him, and what he meant by working hard was working on his designs. We both started working at nine o'clock each morning on his big cartoons.

He had a theory that the best way to design tapestry was by using a black and white, numbered cartoon, sort of like a Craft-master paint set, where you wouldn't get involved in nuance of paint. If you paint a cartoon you could repaint an area and then there would be a marvelous quality that wouldn't come out in the wool. So you outlined each color area and gave it a number.

He would lay out this rough design and then there were tracings of leaves and birds, and later on we were asked to draw birds and roses and owls, various things that would be used in them. Then you would do a tracing of this, what they called a calque, with a charcoal pencil, and we'd put that on the working cartoon and rub it, which would give you a transfer. Then you'd go into this and outline all the areas, and he'd say, "Well, it's going to be blue and yellow at the top," So you'd put all the blues in. Really amazing.

Well, I felt this was a good way to produce a number of tapestries in a relatively short period of time, but I didn't feel it was a good way to design, because when you were working down in this corner with all these colors you knew what was happening, but when you got up to this corner there was no way you could remember how it was going to look in relation to the first area.

So when I came back I started working in full-color designs, and then Beth would trace them and put them into pencil outlines in order to send off to Aubusson. That worked for a couple of years, and then we finally decided we'd just send them painted cartoons. The weavers I worked with really preferred to have a colored design; they didn't like Lurçat's idea, they thought it was very difficult and very boring.

Riess: But then if you send them a color design, do you delineate each of the areas?

Adams: Oh, yes. The areas are quite well delineated and each color is given the number of the wool color, so there isn't any question as to what color is to be used.

Riess: And you have a complete set of the wools too?

Adams: Yes.

Riess: You said that there was no way you could remember what was going on "down here" in the piece when you got "up there." Do you think that Lurçat could?

Adams: I think he had troubles with it, and what happened later in his life is there began to be more and more black backgrounds. He told me at one point--I was working on a design with a white background--"white is extremely difficult, everything shows, you can't get any richness, and everything has to be put in." But with black it's all very rich and deep and it looks as though there's more there than there is.

And I was sorry to see that happen, although it worked very well for that last big group he did of the "Song of the World," I think it's called. But I thought some of his earlier designs were really better. He was trying harder.

Riess: But in any case it was an important thing to have spent that time there?

Adams: Yes. And I spent a couple of months in Aubusson working with the weavers, understanding what the problems were in weaving.

Competitions and Commissions

Adams: Then we came home, and the next thing that happened was that I won a city competition for the public library [Marina Branch], for a tapestry design. And that was the first thing that gave me any prominence--or notoriety. It came out in the headlines of the morning paper that the tapestry had been rejected by the library commission. It was a big to-do.

Riess: Who were your advocates?

Adams: Alfred Frankenstein was the critic for the Chronicle, and was quite a power in the arts. He said, "Bring over your tapestries and come down. There's going to be a library commission meeting today and I want them to see what the problems are." One of the library commissioners had said, "Well, we thought the boys and girls in the high schools should be able to do that." (The weaving.)

So we went down, and I saw him just casually mention to one of the commissioners that Spring Opera was opening in a month. There was no threat, but there were just things said that made everybody realize that they should go ahead and approve it! [laughing] That was my first insight into the way public things often happen, and particularly in city government.

Riess: Then did you concentrate on tapestry for awhile?

Adams: Yes, I had my first show at the de Young in 1959, which was I think about fourteen tapestries, a considerable accomplishment since I was paying for them.

I had been commissioned by Frances Mihailoff, a decorator here in town, to do a tapestry for the opening of her new quarters. She and Mike [Michael] Taylor had worked together at Kasper's, an important local decorating firm, in the forties. And she and Mike went into business for themselves, and they opened a nice white decorating shop right next to the St. Francis on Post Street.

Riess: What do you mean "a nice white decorating shop"?

Adams: It was a storefront about the size of this studio, maybe a little bit smaller. It was all painted white. The floor was white vinyl, which hadn't been done. (As a matter of fact there was an article on Mike Taylor about three weeks ago in the Sunday California Living section of the paper. His photograph was on the cover.) As part of my freelance work, I had been doing some architectural renderings for them of rooms that they were doing for clients and wanted to show the client what it was going to look like.

The room also had a floor-to-ceiling screen at the back with an entrance on either side of it, a fixed panel with a Kuan Yin and a fountain in front of it. Very simple, very understated, very expensive, big pieces and not too many of them. So it was very elegant. And at one point after the de Young show, after the religious show--and I'd shown the piece again at Gump's, the gallery there, in 1953--they asked if they could show it in their showroom. It made a marvelous wall piece I might say.

Well, later on they decided they would separate and each open their own white decorating shop--they began to be known as "the great white decorators"--on either side of Elizabeth Arden's space over on Sutter Street, and Frances asked me if I would design a tapestry for her opening. So that was the first commission, and that piece was returned in time for the city commission so that I could show that as an example.

Riess: When somebody commissioned you back then, were you dealing with Aubusson? And how long did it take?

Adams: I always dealt with Aubusson, up until about 1970, later than that even. It would usually take, depending on the size of the piece, I would figure three months for designing and six months for weaving. So it was a matter of nine or ten months. It was very unusual for people to wait that long for something, you know. They got into the idea of they want everything now. But I didn't have much trouble with that.

Riess: And did you feel nervous when you opened the package?

Adams: Always! [laughing] The first couple of years I did, I always wondered what it was going to look like, but then I began to become familiar enough with what the changes were. It's as though you took the tempera cartoon and sprayed it with oil, that kind of difference; the wool was always richer and deeper. There's no way you can get a rich tempera color, it always goes greyed when it goes dark.

Well, for instance, the background of that design [on wall of room where interview is taking place], the lower part, is the same color as the upper woolen part of this woven piece. [gesturing] You see the difference in richness and intensity?

Riess: Yes, yes.

Adams: And darker colors are even more dramatic in their change.

Riess: That piece for Mihailoff was your first commission? Now let me see. I'd like to sort of finish the idea of tapestry.

Adams: Well, actually it doesn't get finished. [laughter] What happened was I did a couple of pieces for Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. I did a woven design for their offices in the new Crown Zellerbach building, which was about 1959, and also a painted mural for the cafeteria there.

Faceted Glass Windows

Adams: Then I started working with Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons, and I did some faceted glass windows in the Woodside Community Church that Wurster designed [1960]. They were fabricated by the Frenchman, the one who started the whole thing, Gabriel Loire. I sent fullsize transparent cartoons for him to work by; I didn't know how else to communicate what I wanted, and generally speaking they turned out very well.

Riess: Well, wasn't there Harold Cummings around here?

Adams: Cummings was here. I had gone to see Cummings when I first left Gump's. And Harold was still alive at that point, the man who really started the business. He so overwhelmed me with impressing me with how much one had to know to design stained glass that I really felt I couldn't in any way talk with him about doing it.

Riess: Did he have a whole stable of designers that worked for him?

Adams: Yes, he had a couple of designers and he had a whole group of craftsmen who fabricated. He had a fairly sizable operation. I think his bread and butter came in doing the kind of work that Connick Studios of Boston is known for, very good, traditional leaded glass for a fairly traditional church.

They had done an experimental panel for-- I forget who the artist was. But anyway, Cummings was not terribly sympathetic to new people going into the glass field. So when this commission came up and the architect wanted faceted glass, I didn't go to Cummings. I don't think he was doing much faceted work then, it was still fairly new. It was really developed by Gabriel Loire after the Second World War.*

Riess: Well, in fact, you were competing perhaps in all of these media with companies that produced religious art.

Adams: Yes. There was that big one in New York--I'm sorry, this is way, way back--you know the one I'm talking about, the liturgical arts company. [brief tape interruption] Rambusch. They did things for St. Patrick's Cathedral, they did things for St. John the Divine. I mean they had the corner on the important, expensive vestments and liturgical pieces.

Riess: And so the parish priest was best advised to simply get the catalogue and order.

Adams: And if you wanted something important and really good, it should be done in bronze or marble or brocade. I mean it's sort of the same thing that happened with the new St. Mary's Cathedral. They put travertine all over the outside of it, which really isn't necessary; I mean it was a beautiful form and statement in concrete.

Riess: The few churches that did commission somebody else become very interesting, like Newman Center.

Adams: Not that there were people who were not satisfied with that kind of turned-out product, which is what it amounts to. I mean they had designers who just did designs and they didn't necessarily have to go into any particular setting.

Riess: They didn't have to know the place they were working for.

---

*In answer to a later question, Adams explains that after Harold Cummings died he was approached by the Cummings Studio. "The elder son was taking over and he had an entirely fresh view." Gabriel Loire's work is only in the Woodside church.

Adams: No, no. They just made baptismal fonts, and they had a dove on top, and it was really turned out, on a high plane, but turned out nevertheless.

Bay Area Church Commissions

Riess: Okay, so the places that you did work for. The ones I had picked out were St. Brendan's, St. Aidan's, Old St. Mary's, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Grace Cathedral, and Temple Emanu-El as being local.

Adams: There's also the baptistry in Carmel. [All Saints Episcopal Church, 1968]

Riess: [Adams shows picture to Riess] Oh gosh, isn't that beautiful?

Adams: It was a very nice situation. It was being donated by the Firestone family, and I had been called down by the architect. What they had in mind was a much more ordinary idea of the stained glass. It was going to be a fieldstone wall with a strip of glass around it. And I finally got them to let me get involved in the architectural aspect of it also. So what I did was build a fullsize model here in the studio to show them what I had in mind, that the glass could be this irregular shape and cut across the whole corner of the room. It was an exciting thing to design and full of problems, but they were very happy with it.

Riess: When you were presenting it, did you talk about its symbolic value? Did you talk about color? Did you try to sell them on the religiousness of it?

Adams: Listen, I have all sorts of real good reasons why people should buy things and the real meaning it has, but it's been my experience in not only religious art but in other art also that the art happens first and the reasons come afterward, if it really is a good piece of work. I mean you're creating on a much more emotional level. If you're creating step by step with good reasons you're not going to get art, you're going to get a good design.

I have been fortunate I guess in being able to come up with good reasons, because most people, most building committees don't really know what they want, and they don't really know when they see it if that's all right for them to have or not. So you have to think of what all the objections are going to be and what all of the good reasons are for it. And you never really tell them that the real reason is because that's the way it looks best. You've got to give them intellectual ideas, intellectual arguments.

Adams: This is another problem with the art world today; the intellect has taken over so much that people don't bother to look at the paintings anymore, they discuss them. You may have read Tom Wolfe's essay called The Painted Word?

Riess: No, I haven't.

Adams: You would find it very interesting, the way this has come about, that concept is the all-important thing in some areas in this time. Whether you actually do it or how you do it is really relatively unimportant, but the concept is the thing that really makes you a great artist. And it seems to me that this is putting the cart before the horse. Art is essentially visual, and if it's so clouded with intellectual ideas that you can't see what you're looking at, you're missing the point.

Riess: I will have to read that.

Can you talk about any of the people who have commissioned you, or any of the churches as being remarkably enlightened? Can we pick up on that idea?

Adams: Yes, there were a couple. I think the first really enlightened group was the Episcopal church, St. Andrew's Church, in Saratoga. And in that case I also worked with the architect and made quite a few changes to the outside texture and design of the building.

Riess: But that's 1978?

Adams: No, that's 1963.

Riess: [reading] "Stainless steel doors."

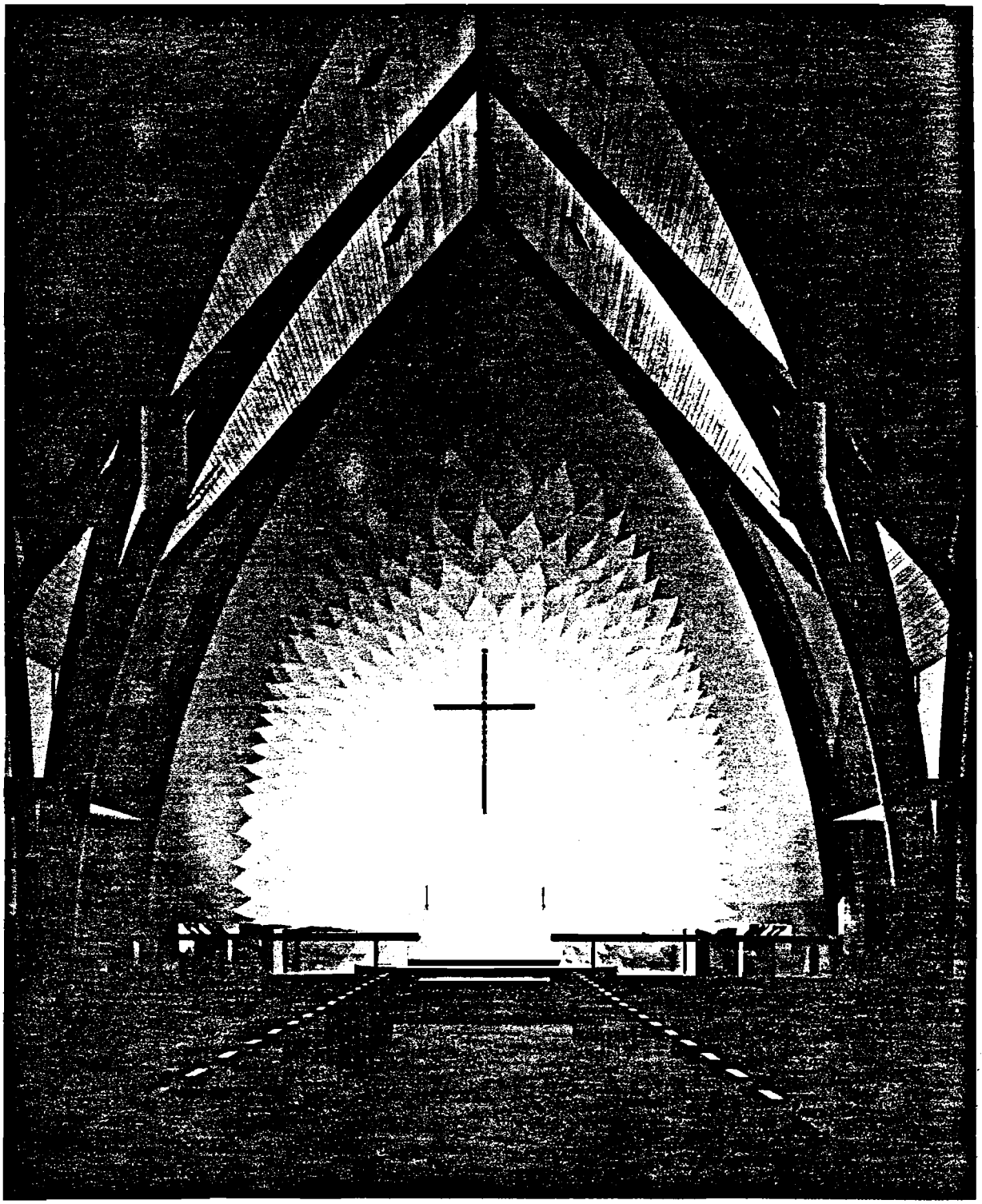
Adams: Well, there's been an ongoing thing, they keep asking me to do work. The windows were done over a period of fifteen years.

Riess: [reading] "Mural, altar, cross, door designs, 1963." Was that in mosaic or stained glass or both?

Adams: Both, all three. [gesturing] This is one of the windows, which doesn't look like much without color, but it's all swirling red and orange; it's "Creation."

The painted mural at St. Andrew's is all in shades of grey, and the altar is white marble. And I designed the cross, which is wooden with silver leaf. It's all just values of grey.

Then around the sides there are six windows that are about twelve by twelve feet. The architect had wanted to do small, two-foot-wide panels, and I suggested that we put them together so we got some real scope out of it, some real scale.



52. *Painted mural and silver-leafed wooden cross*, 1963.
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Saratoga, California.

Riess: Are they in color?

Adams: Yes. Brilliant color.

Roy Strasburger is the pastor there, and he's a real ball of fire, a real go-getter, and they had a very intelligent building committee. We had a marvelous relationship. I still am designing for this one, and when they get enough money to do something then they call me.

There was a Monsignor Jackson up at Napa who did the church that Gerry [Germano] Milono designed. He was quite open also.

But even more helpful and interested was Monsignor Vincent Carroll out at St. Thomas More. He started out with a church that had all the qualities of a supermarket; it was just a huge space all painted a light tannish ochre color and banks of windows on both sides that poured enough light in for a ball game. It was the coldest place. So I think I was brought in through the architect, and I went out and talked with him--we got on very well. He was a very intelligent man.

Riess: Who was the architect?

Adams: Jorge-- [tries to think of last name] It's a Spanish name, and he's doing quite a few things around town. I think he did Opera Plaza. Jorge DeQuesada.

What I did for them--because the building was going to open soon and they had spent all their money--was this painted mural, which is just painted on concrete with acrylic. He was very enthused about it, but his assistant priest thought it was a monstrosity and was really upset about it, but Monsignor Carroll convinced everybody that it was worthwhile and that it should be there. And I guess about four or five years later he called me up one day and said, "I'd like to have you design some stained glass for me."

It was a wonderful working relationship. He was just very open. We'd argue about points, but I could usually convince him, and he was very pleased with the whole thing. So that and Temple Emanu-El are my two largest commissions.

Riess: On something like this it's simply your design and somebody executes it? I don't mean "simply," but it's always a case where somebody else executes it?

Adams: This was one of the funny things that happened when I was first doing tapestries. I had a letter from a weaver in the East who thought my work was just beautiful, and then he said, "I really

Adams: like your work. Do you weave them yourself or do you merely design them?" [laughing] Which I was really upset with at the time, but now it's become sort of a joke because so many people say it, and I know they don't mean it that way.

Riess: Yes, it's the language tripping one up.

Adams: Well, the tedious part of it obviously is the weaving. I mean you sit there day after day doing the same thing over and over. (Weavers don't agree with that.)

Riess: This mural has, of course, a tapestry-like quality.

Adams: That's because of the rough concrete. It's essentially flat color.

Riess: In the case of, say, your work on St. Aidan's, does this still remain beautiful or have people done things to it? Has it lasted?

Adams: People haven't done things to it. It's been repainted three or four times because the fog really attacks the exterior; it's quite exposed to wind.

That was an interesting project. I had been doing tapestries in the bedroom of our rented apartment, and I'd finally gotten to the point where they were beginning to go up on the ceiling because the ceiling wasn't high enough. We bought the firehouse from the city at an auction, and the first project I had to work on after we'd moved in here was St. Aidan's. Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill designed the building. John Woodbridge, one of the men who worked there then, sort of had it as his baby. And they brought me out this little model for me to design painted murals and other things that were going to go into it. So I sat in the middle of all this space with this tiny model painting little murals to go on the walls!

Riess: Have the interiors--the place in Napa for instance--remained as you and the architect conceived them, or have you had the problem of people coming along and sort of "improving" things.

Adams: Napa I haven't seen in quite awhile. I don't know what the story is there. I have a feeling they were not really walls that could be cluttered.

Riess: Potted plants are possible, of course, and there are other possibilities, banners for instance.

Adams: Well, that's what's happened at St. Aidan's.

Riess: How do you feel about all that?

Adams: They like it and they're very enthused. It's a young congregation and they sing and play guitars and bake bread and break bread and several people have designed banners and vestments. It's sort of gotten out of hand, but I figure it's working. The point is the church is a very living group of people and it's very active and they're all very strong in their participation. So I think it worked.

A church can't be just a beautiful thing that has no connection with people. It's like the Matisse chapel [Vence] that really came to life when all those black-clothed people were sitting there. It was much more exciting.

Riess: True, but I thought a little of what you were saying about those black-clothed people is that at least they weren't wearing, you know, flossy hats and-- [Adams laughs] You see, I got the aesthetic ring to what you were saying, that that was very right, to have the black-clothed people there, but not people who were contributing too much of their own color.

Adams: Well, it would be all right that way. They'd have to be pretty brightly dressed to come across as being bright in that chapel. The dark-clothed people just happened to be perfect for it at that time. Since we're farther along in time now I doubt if as many people would be wearing black.

Temple Emanu-El, 1971-1973

Riess: Tell me about the commission for Temple Emanu-El. Did the Haases come to you in that case?

Adams: Yes, that was interesting. I guess a lot of people made pitches over the years for those windows. The original windows were done in 1925. They were very pale, seedy glass; some of it was English I think, English hand-blown glass.

Riess: Seedy?

Adams: Tiny bubbles in some of the glass. It was beautiful glass but it was almost non-color, it was such pale pastels that the effect was really of white glass.

And a lot of the biggest companies in the country had been after them to get that commission. I'm not sure which company it was talking with the rabbi and making another pitch when Mrs. Haas happened to be walking by within earshot and heard what they were

Adams: talking about. I don't know exactly whether she came up and joined the conversation or said that she had an idea on that. And at a dinner party that we both happened to be guests at the following week, she asked me if I was doing stained glass and could she talk to me sometime about it or could the rabbi give me a call. There was nothing definite, just kind of wondered what I thought about it.

Riess: Was that Rabbi Rinder?

Adams: No, Rabbi [Joseph] Asher. So I got a call from Rabbi Asher the following week; he invited me over to his study to just chat about what I thought about the stained glass in that place and did I think stained glass would be appropriate. And if I did something would I be able to work within the existing fretwork of the arches piled on arches that was there, that was part of the original design of the building?

I think what had happened just before was that Mrs. Haas had contacted Marc Chagall with the idea of commissioning him to do it, but his wife--I guess his wife, maybe it was he himself--said that he was so booked up with commissions that there was no way he could possibly take on another commission of this size, with the Paris Opera and New York, the opera house there, he just couldn't do it.

So she sort of dropped the idea for awhile, but then she saw this man talking about it, and she thought, you know, "This could get out of hand." And she liked my work, she was a great supporter of my work. She had bought a couple of pieces of mine.

So it started out very cautiously; then finally I was asked to give them an idea of what it would cost to do. We started out that I would do a sketch and then they would see if they liked it or not. Anywhere along the line we could stop. I told them I didn't think that the window structure should be changed. I think Chagall may have thought about this a little bit, and said they would have to take all that out, put in two steel columns that would support the arch. And I said I wouldn't do that, I would do it within the pre-existing forms.

They wanted something that was not representational in the strict sense of representation because there are strong tenets against it in the Jewish faith. But they wanted something that wasn't just a cold symbol either, an abstract symbol, and it seemed to me that fire and water were wonderful symbols of the whole history of the Jewish religion, the flood and Moses and rain of fire and, you know, all sorts of things that these symbolized. They liked the idea very much.

Adams: So we dickered back and forth and got the whole thing figured out. George McKeever was doing most of my glass work at that time, and I wanted him to fabricate it because I enjoyed working with him, he was very open and very helpful, very supportive, and did beautiful work technically.

"Well," they thought, "Shouldn't we have one of the big solid companies do it who had a rating with"--? What do you have a credit rating with? Dun and Bradstreet. "I mean McKeever isn't even listed in Dun and Bradstreet! How can we have this guy do it? Suppose he dies in the middle of it?" I said, "Well, suppose I die in the middle of it?" So they worked out an arrangement where he was bonded, and they were very pleased with his work. He installed the thing single-handedly--it was a tremendous job.

Mr. and Mrs. [Walter A.] Haas donated one of the windows, "Fire," the west window. Madeleine Haas Russell donated "Water," the east window. [brief tape interruption]

Looking Back at "Renaissance"

Adams: You know, I've known Kai [Micaela DuCasse] for a long time, never well, but always in a nice way. And I think Ninfa [Valvo] also has been friends with many of the group who were producing at that time. And there is this kind of personal, emotional, sentimental attachment. You like them so well, you just can't come out and be objective because your outlook is colored by the friendship.

I was a little bit unique in this group because I was sort of a loner. There was a group of young Catholics who got together for mass out at St. Benedict's, and they did very forward-thinking things. I mean they would invite blacks to go to mass with them. This was unheard of at that time. And there was this whole Catholic group that sort of supported each other. Ethel Souza, who had the shop down in Maiden Lane, and Mary Moore, whom Beth had met in France. And it sort of all came together when Beth and I got married and we realized we both knew Mary from different areas.

Riess: I don't know that name. Is she an artist?

Adams: No, she's not an artist, she was a very interested and active young Catholic, intellectually-oriented. But the group, that was not what I wanted, and I never became part of it. I would go to things occasionally, but I wasn't a joiner really. And I think there's that aspect to this whole art-group movement. They were all friends and helping to support each other.

Adams: It was a very interesting time, and I think it was marvelous that it happened. But I think if it had been a true "renaissance" it would have continued. Am I wrong in that? I mean it should have generated wider and wider circles and it shouldn't have been just a local movement. And I didn't see much sense of inter-exchange with other parts of the country, other than [Fr. Frank] Kazmarcik who was the monk at St. John's. He sort of came back and forth to the West Coast I think and various people met him.

Riess: Perhaps there are too few new churches to have a renaissance; putting new things into old buildings is kind of dead end. What do you think of that?

Adams: No, I don't think so. I think a lot could be done. There's a cathedral in Mexico, in Cuernavaca I think, where they stripped all the nineteenth-century, Victorian stuff out of this cathedral, took it right down to the bare walls, and I think plastered it white and put up an iron baldachin, very severe, but a beautiful job. Do you know that one?

Riess: No, but I can imagine.

Adams: This was part of--. Oh, what was that group? They were controversial, and finally the pastor who was in charge of the whole thing was recalled and put in some other church because he was too avant-garde thinking.

In the fifties there was a building boom, churches, and into the sixties. But I don't think of it as being the same thing as what was going on in '46 or '48. I think it was a different group of people involved partially.

Riess: The Catholic Art Forum is the group that put on that 1952 show at the de Young.

Adams: I think the fact that I was a convert eliminated all sorts of carry-overs from my youth as far as what was the way to do things and who to be nice to, so that I came at it with a fresh eye and could see what was wrong in the existing situation because I didn't have any preconceived idea about it. Whereas I think many people who grew up in it accepted so many of these things as positives and necessary parts of doing anything for liturgical work.

Riess: What kinds of things? Where things were placed?

Adams: Where things are traditionally placed, attitudes toward the priest. I mean if you grew up and the priest was this huge sort of father figure to you, it's hard to make a transition when you're dealing with him as a co-creator on a building. If he says something it

Adams: always has a slightly added weight of the church authority coming in with it, when it really is just his personal idea, it has nothing to do with whether it's right or wrong, or whether the Church says that or not, it's an aesthetic judgment on his part.

Riess: Well, in fact one of the reasons for this renaissance of art interest is that the liturgy of the mass had changed.

Adams: We didn't change until recently.

Riess: The priest turning to face the congregation.

Adams: None of that was going on in the forties. That's Vatican II. And so is the use of English, which I think was ill-advised! I think there was something marvelous about the fact that no matter where you went or what country you went to you could understand the mass because it was in a language that was dead and was foreign to you anyway but you knew what it meant. Now you go to France and it's in French, and in Italy it's in Italian.

Also there's a real pet peeve I have and that's the translation from Dominus vobiscum et cum spiritu tuo; they translate that into "The Lord be with you, and also with you." It is not only sort of ungrammatical and unphonetic, it's unmusical, it's un-everything. Why couldn't they say, "and with you" or "and with your spirit?" But, "and also with you!" Well, I get caught up on these little things.

But I actually began to have less interest and concern for both liturgical art and being a participating member of the Church when I got into the fifties. I began to see the hand-writing on the wall that you didn't get anywhere as a small Catholic artist, you had to become an artist on your own feet and make a reputation in the world before you could carry any weight in the Church. If you really wanted to do a big thing you couldn't, they wouldn't trust you. I mean, "Who are you?" I mean, "You're just the local artist."

Riess: It seems to me that the ones who continued to find a successful artistic life in the church were the women artists. There must be a sex difference in this too.

Adams: I'm sure there is, I'm sure there is.

What I wanted to do were some really big architectural jobs, big architectural commissions. Glass or tapestry, even painted murals, anything. I was all gung ho for it, it was very exciting to me, and they just weren't there. And I realized if I wanted to do what I wanted to do I was going to have to want to do something else and look in other areas for large-scale work. So that's what happened, that's why I let the renaissance down! [laughter]

Riess: Well, that's only our term, the renaissance of liturgical art. And really, what are the liturgical arts? The building itself, or just what is in it, and used for the mass?

Adams: Not just the artifacts of the actual mass, that would only give you the chalice, the vestments, the altar, et cetera. It has to be the whole environment that it's done in. I think that whole thing is considered part of liturgical art, at least that's my understanding of it. Otherwise you get into sort of craftsmanship, hand-weaving and so on.

Riess: Well, it seems to be a lot of craftspeople.

Adams: That's right. And that's because they were usually asked for specific pieces. The thing that I was interested in and the thing that I think would have helped the renaissance a lot more was a much grander concept, and beginning to work with the architect at the beginning, not after the building was finished, which is usually the way it happens. They hire an architect, he does a building, and then they go around and buy piecemeal. "Well, we need a baptismal font, we need some stained glass windows over there, maybe we should have some nice lighting fixtures with crosses on the bottom or something."

This is the other thing that I found very annoying, and that is being tied to the symbolism so completely that if it had a cross on it it was automatically religious. It could be an absolute abomination of design and completely wrong for the place it was going in, but if it had a cross on it it was religious, and the priest would say, "That's fine, it's got a cross, so I know that's a religious piece."

Riess: That's a reflection of that sort of basic idea that the congregation is illiterate, but at least they can see the cross?

Adams: But I think the thing that was missing was the grand concept. Girard [the prototype church], that was a grand concept, but it was poorly handled.

Riess: Nobody developed it. Why not?

Adams: I'm not entirely certain what happened on that. I know there was a lot of picking at the design.

Nervi, his original sketch for St. Mary's Cathedral I thought was very beautiful. They did some things to it--as I recall they put that porch on it, ostensibly to make it earthquake-proof. And I think there were some other changes also that kind of perverted the original flow of the design.

Riess: How is it that in Europe they've been able to create wonderful post-war churches and not in this country?

Adams: I'm not sure. For one thing there's a tradition of it. I think perhaps--I'm not sure of this--the priests in charge had a broader education or broader appreciation of all of the arts that are involved in putting up a church. I'm not sure, I don't know what it is.

Riess: I guess if there's a problem in educating artists, why there's certainly as much of a problem in educating the priests. If they start asking for nontraditional work, well, they're really out of their element.

Adams: I think there has to be a kind of sensible approach to this "wowserism." I mean you really have to think in terms of what the building is for. An awful lot of things have to go into it, and I think maybe too many people go into it with a preconceived idea of what it should be. It all boils down to a matter of individual taste I guess.

Religious Spaces and Artistic Traditions in the Bay Area

Riess: Let's wind this up by letting me ask you what you think are good religious spaces in the Bay Area.

Adams: Well, that Christian Science church of Maybeck's, I think that's a beautiful building. And I think it probably is right for their religion. It may not do for me all I would ask it to do!

I think the Temple Emanu-El is a very exciting space, just because of the scale of it.

I think it's a beautiful space that Wurster did in that church in Woodside; it's a beautiful church, sort of classic but modern, a very simple adobe building with a beautiful spire on it, steeple, all of which are done in contemporary terms, very simple, not trying to imitate anything, but just proportionate and right.

I think the space of St. Mary's Cathedral is pretty exciting. The beauty of it is really engineering, and that's why I think that travertine was unnecessary. I think that the thing I like best in it is the pipe organ; I think that's just a beautiful solution, the organ and the pipes. It sort of functions in the same way the building does; it's really an engineering solution, but such a beautiful engineering solution, very satisfying to look at.

Riess: How about "little jewels?"

Adams: St. Chapelle!

I think that the little chapel that SOM [Skidmore, Owings, Merrill] did in the rectory of Old St. Mary's is very fine.

Riess: They did that?

Adams: Yes, they did the whole rectory. I think it was because it was right next door to the Hartford Building, and so they had a common border. I think they may have done it for a charitable contribution or at least for a modified price because it was to their advantage to have something there that would work well with the Hartford Building. They tried to design something that would go well with Old St. Mary's without trying to imitate it, but be compatible and still be contemporary. I think they did a good job.

There was an interesting concept on the small chapel there. Chuck Bassett was the chief designer on it. What they were trying to do was to produce a small area for worship that looked as though it hadn't been designed. I mean it was so carefully designed, even the posts up in the front wouldn't necessarily have to be in that particular place, or they might not even have to be at all, but it was to give a kind of intimate scale and make it look as though the space had happened rather than as though it was planned. And it turned out to be the most expensive design job per square foot they ever did! It's an interesting turnaround.

Riess: Louisa Jenkins made a major contribution with her mosaic work in churches. What other mosaic-work was there around here?

Adams: Louisa, and her small, personal, intimate things did create quite a bit of interest, and I think the other thing that did it in this area was Byzantine Mosaics, which was a company from Mexico. And what was his name? Alphonso Pardinas. A very ambitious and enthusiastic young Mexican. I have a feeling it may have been his company. And he did Safeway's S's, and he did fronts of Bank of America, he really went around selling mosaic. He approached me on a couple of jobs to do designs for him. So it came from the supplier rather than from the artist.

Riess: And has tapestry developed as an art in the Bay Area other than with you?

Adams: Yes, I think it has. There's been a complete reversal of the attitudes I encountered when I first started doing tapestry in the early fifties. Everybody was antagonistic, almost all the hand-

Adams: weavers were antagonistic. First of all because I wasn't using various textures and sizes of wool or ferns or bits of bark, because I was being so traditional, because I wasn't a weaver, I wasn't weaving them myself.

This was something that had to do with, I guess, the artist-craftsman idea in this country. In Europe, even in printmaking, the printer and the artist were separate. It's a classic tradition in Europe. The designer of stained glass and the fabricators are separate. The weavers are separate from the designers of tapestry.

In this country we've had this idea that everybody can do everything, and that the way to do it is by the designer and the fabricator being the same person. And you do, you achieve a very different kind of end result, many of them very beautiful. It's a very valid hypothesis to work with, but it's not the only one. When I started I was getting the business from that point of view, that if I didn't weave them myself, I certainly couldn't design them.

Now that's completely changed. Because Beth has been largely involved with printmaking I see that the same thing is happening in printmaking. At that time you had to work your plate, you had to do all the inking and wiping and printing yourself, and you couldn't put any watercolor on it after it was done because that wasn't kosher. And now it's come to the point where there are very well-developed craftsmen-printers who are given an artist's watercolor or other work and they reproduce it and they would prefer not to have the artist come in and screw things up.

So there's this complete turnabout in all things to do with craft and art. There is still the other idea prevalent; I shouldn't say prevalent, it's still in existence. But there are two camps of printers and craftsmen.

And now, as a matter of fact, as a result of a show at the Legion of old tapestries that the Legion owned and were refurbished by Anna Bennett, they put on a big show and they wanted to have a demonstration piece woven so that people could understand how it was done. So they asked me if I would produce a cartoon for them. They built the loom and asked some of the weaving graduate students at San Francisco State if they would weave in public each day of the exhibition. As a result, three of the women, Phoebe McAfee, Ruth Tanenbaum and Ernestine Bianchi, became so enamoured of tapestry weaving that they formed the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop. Recently I have been able to use two of the best weavers to produce my designs locally.

Transcriber: Joyce Minick
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture
in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Victor Ries

RELIGIOUS ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN METAL SCULPTURE

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1983

Copyright © 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Victor Ries

INTERVIEW HISTORY	i
BRIEF FAMILY HISTORY	499
GERMANY, 1907-1933	500
ISRAEL, 1933-1947	505
AMERICA	511
Impressions of Artists and Religious Art	511
Culture, Age, Art and Taste	515
RELIGIOUS ART	520
The Catholic Art Forum	520
The Clients' Wishes	522
The Power of the Words and Images	525
Sources Within--a Sacred Heart	527
An Identity and a Discipline as an Artist	530
Importance of Communication	532
POND FARM	533
Beginnings--Gordon and Jane Herr, and Marguerite Wildenhain	533
Cast Metal Work	539
Integrating Industrial Forms into Artistic Work	541
The Last Days of Pond Farm Workshops; On to Forest Knolls	543

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The name of Victor Ries has come up several times earlier in this series of interviews on liturgical arts in the San Francisco Bay Area as an exemplar of the principled man and artist in a broad religious context. In his vita he says, "I executed many orders for Catholic churches, Episcopalian churches, Lutheran churches, Buddhist temples, and many synagogues throughout the Bay Area and other cities of the United States."

Victor Ries came to the Bay Area with the encouragement of the architect Eric Mendelsohn, who had known Ries in Jerusalem. Soon after his arrival, Ries taught at Pond Farm, a workshop for the arts in the Russian River area, north of San Francisco, and he showed in San Francisco at V.C. Morris and at the de Young Museum. Of his de Young Museum exhibition he says, "I worked one year hard for this show. There I was showing many religious pieces for Jewish and Christian religions, and other handwrought pieces of jewelry." It was at that time that he met the founding father of the Catholic Art Forum, William Monihan, S.J., and Ninfa Valvo, museum curator, and William Hartnet, "who wanted to be my agent for church work."

The ability to transcend denominational bounds is encountered several times in this series. That ability, and that issue, were given a good deal of thought by Victor Ries:

> Here in the U.S.A. I started to be interested in religious art for all religion; as an 'artist' creating 'good' art for churches and synagogues I studied the different types of religion and created accordingly. I tried to understand their beliefs, as an outsider, and I created free what I think was right. I got always accepted and praised. I worked for many different denominations and often I admired the tolerance of priests, since I mentioned always that I am Jewish. At the time I started to work for churches and synagogues most American artists were not willing to work for religious organizations, and a lot of old and ugly stuff was on the market, made in factories. Today many good artists are working for religion. In the meantime, the destroyed churches and synagogues in Europe got rebuilt, including very good modern art, and our artists learned from it.
>
> It is hard to explain why I worked for many different denominations, but I got interested to work in a field new to me. First of all I saw the possibilities for an artist to create good art for groups of people who really need it. I found people believing any type of religion need for their churches or synagogues always many types

> of good art pieces. Bad, sweet, sentimental pieces or over-rich, overdone or phony pieces don't belong to any real true religious belief. Any religious symbol should be simple, straightforward, expressing only what it means in the best, strongest way possible. Actually any religion has the same aim, but it is expressed in different ways.
>
> I for myself feel very Jewish and I am proud to be Jewish, but not religious or orthodox. But I am very much interested to understand and recognize ideas and beliefs different than mine, and create for them as good as possible pieces, as good as I make for our religion. If everyone would try to understand first the differences in people, second their different thoughts and feeling and beliefs, we would have a better and more friendly world.

The passages quoted are from a summarizing by Victor Ries of the material dealt with in the oral history interview. The oral history transcript was shortened and tightened considerably before being given to Mr. Ries to check over. He made many changes and further tightened it. Nevertheless, the results left him wishing "to sink into the ground," and he preferred it not be used at all. Our thought was that his handwritten pages were a fine addition but not a substitute for the oral interview, and so both are offered here.*

Victor Ries was interviewed at home in Berkeley. In this oral history series, and particularly in interviewing Mr. Ries, we have been grateful that a group of gifted artists would talk willingly about the meaning of their work, and their life and growth as artists.

Suzanne Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

*Victor Ries's handwritten history follows page 499.

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Victor Salo Ries

Date of birth October 26, 07 Place of birth Berlin, Germany

Father's full name Gustav Ries

Birthplace Scharmbeck (near Bremen) Germany

Occupation Business

Mother's full name Agnes Ries (former Silberman)

Birthplace Berlin, Germany

Occupation Housewife Mother

Where did you grow up ? Berlin-Charlottenburg, Germany

Present community Berkeley, Calif.

Education Highschool, Apprenticeship, City Art School, Academy for fine and applied Arts - Berlin, Germany

Occupation(s) Metal Arts: Jewelry, Silversmithing, religious Art, Metal Sculpture + Teaching

Special interests or activities archaeology, anthropology hiking

VICTOR RIES

One Man Shows at Museums:

New York World's Fair, 1939
Rockefeller Center, New York, 1946
Jewish Museum, New York, 1947
Art Museum, Seattle, 1953
De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, Fall 1954 to Spring 1955
Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, 1955
Crocker Gallery, Sacramento, 1956
Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1957
De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, 1963 and 1965
Temple Emanu-El Museum, 1966 and 1967
Magnes Memorial Museum, Berkeley, 1968

Group Shows:

De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, 1949-53-54
California State Fair, 1949-50-51-52
Los Angeles County Fair, 1949-50-51-52-53
University of Redlands, 1951
Art Association, Fort Worth, 1951
University of Chicago, 1952
Art Festival, San Francisco, 1952-53-54
Museum of Art, Civic Center, San Francisco, 1954
Museum of Art, Oakland, 1954
University of San Francisco, 1955
Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, 1955
Museum of Contemporary Craft, New York, 1956
California Concordia College, Oakland, 1957
Jewish Museum, New York, 1958
San Francisco Art Festival, 1959-61-66
OTA Gallery, San Francisco, 1968
Three Dimensions Gallery, Berkeley, 1974

Teaching:

Bezelel Art School, Jerusalem, Israel, 1935-37
Pond Farm Workshops, Guerneville, California, 1949-53
College of Marin, San Anselmo, California, 1953-55
College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, 1955-75
St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, 1972-78

Works:

I executed many orders for Catholic churches, Episcopalian churches, Lutheran churches, Buddhist temples, and many synagogues throughout the Bay Area and other cities of the United States.

Jewish Temples:

Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama
Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, California
Temple Beth Abraham, Oakland, California
Temple Beth Sholom, San Leandro, California
Temple Beth Israel, Long Beach, California
Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge, Oak Ridge, Tennessee
Oak Park Temple, Oak Park, Illinois
Park Synagogue, Cleveland, Ohio
Congregation B'Nai Amoona, St. Louis, Missouri
Congregation B'Nai Israel, Sacramento, California
Congregation B'Nai Rodef Shalom, San Rafael, California
Congregation Beth Israel, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
Congregation B'Nai Sholom, Walnut Creek, California
Congregation B'Nai Emunah, San Francisco, California
Congregation B'Nai Israel, Daly City, California
Sharon Memorial Park, Sharon, Massachusetts
Chapel of the Chimes, Hayward and Oakland, California
Temple Beth El, San Mateo, California

Churches:

Christ the Victor, San Anselmo, California
Cameron House, San Francisco, California
Orinda Community Church, Orinda, California
St. Rita's Rectory, Fairfax, California
The Episcopal Church, Novato, California
St. Anne's Chapel, Newman Center, Palo Alto, California
College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Monterey, California
St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, San Rafael, California
St. Stephan's Church, Orinda, California
Convent of the Presentation, San Francisco, California
College of Holy Names, Oakland, California
All Souls Parish, Berkeley, California
Most Holy Redeemer Church, San Francisco, California
University Lutheran Church, Berkeley, California
St. Bede's Church, Hayward, California
First Lutheran Church, Oakland, California
St. Edward's Church, Newark, California
Presbyterian Church, Joliet, Illinois
St. Vincent De Paul Church, San Francisco, California
Savior Lutheran Church, Livermore, California

Churches, cont.

St. Raymond's Catholic Church, Menlo Park, California
St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Walnut Creek, California
Buddha's Universal Church, San Francisco, California
St. Mary's College, Moraga, California

I received fourteen awards (first and second ones) and an honorable life membership at the Jewish Community Center at San Rafael. I also served as judge on art juries at the California State Fair, Women's Art Association, and the Metal Arts Guild of California, and I gave lectures to the Metal Arts Guild, the Rabbi Convention in San Francisco, Universities Women's Association, Sisterhood of Temple Beth El, Berkeley, and Catholic Art Forum.

RELIGIOUS ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN METAL SCULPTURE

Brief Family History

[What follows is a summary of a discussion by Victor Ries of his family history]

Victor Ries's ancestors came from the area of the Ries Mountains. At the time when Jews in Germany took surnames, they took the name Ries. Victor Ries's father, Gustave Ries, was born in Scharmbeck, near Bremen, and left Germany in 1880 in order not to have to go into the army--an unpleasant experience for the already-persecuted Jews--and emigrated to the United States. He spent time in New York in business, and also in San Francisco where he got his citizenship.

In 1897 he went back to Germany, to attend a family wedding, and there he met Agnes Silberman, whom he married. Her parents came from eastern Germany. She did not want to live in the United States, and so they emigrated to England, and took English citizenship. In England Gustav Ries opened an import business, which was successful until trade with Japan ceased because of the Russo-Japanese war. The family returned to Germany, with four children. Victor, the fifth and last child, was born in 1907, in Berlin.

In Berlin, Gustav Ries opened a millinery factory. Victor's mother, Agnes Ries, took care of the children. She was an artist, a painter who had studied in an atelier, and she encouraged the children's interest in art by taking them to museums, et cetera, in Berlin.

Victor hated school. The combination of being German and Jewish and considered English--while in England they were considered to be German--cut the Ries children off from their schoolmates.

I

Before my father got married he Left Germany and went to the United States in the year 1880. Arround 1897 He married and left U.S.A and moved to England. He opened an Import business, but during the Russian-Japanese War his business got broke and he decided to return to Germany with his family, as a citizen of England. 1907 I was born as the fifth and last child. He opened a new business in Berlin. 1914 I started with school. Soon after the first world war started. My father got interned and we children had to Leave school as foreigner. The paradox was, that I was born in Germany but recognized as english, since my parents were english citizens, According to German Law. My mother took care of us five. She was an artist. Before her marriage she had studied in an art studio painting. Now she often took us to museums and art galleries and we all Loved to draw and paint. One year Later we were allowed to return to School. But I hated school, since we were by everyone recognized as english and jewish. Some of my teachers hated jews and made it known to us. My parents tried the best to solve this problem. They send me to a jewish privat school. Later to the Waldschule, a government school, Located in a forest near Berlin. Most of the students were jewish and the teachers very friendly. At this school we were sitting under the trees. In cold weather ~~we~~ wraped into woden blankets, and in rainy weather sitting under a roof but all arround open air. Waldschule was the only school were boys and girls were together. All other schools were segregated by sex.—

We were not orthodox. But on Holidays my father went to a orthodox synagogue and my mother to a Liberal synagogue and we children didn't go at all. After one of my sisters Left us and got catholic, I joint a zionistic youth organization. I was then about 12 years old. Our aim was to go Later to Palestine. When I stepped going to School, I get an apprenticeship in a silversmithing workshop. There I felt more than ever the hate against jews. Never before I mixed a jewish boy in that workshop. The moment the 4 years of apprenticeship were over and the examination passed, I Left. I went for one year to the City Art School to Learn design and drawing, perspective and Lifedrawing, then I entered the Academy for fine and applied Arts, after I worked as silversmith for a year and a half in a commercial workshop. Soon after I entered the Academy, Hitler came to power in 1933. I was thrown out as a jew.

First I tried to get a visa for the U.S.A. but that was impossible. Then I got an visa for Palestine. I Left Germany in October 1933 together with our zionistic organization the Hechaluz. The name Hechaluz means: „Pioneer".....

Before Leaving Germany I married a girlfriend of mine. We left together and arrived in Tel-Aviv. Short after our arrival, she found a job as teacher in an agricultoral School. A few days Later I found a job as silversmith in the first and only metalworkshop in Tel-Aviv. There I met another artist. After about one year we both Left and opened together a workshop. One of our first orders was to make a Life size Camel with wings in aluminum, for the first worlds fair in Tel Aviv, in 1934. The Camel was finally mounted high up on an about 30 ft high colomn, as the symbol of the Fair. Afterwards I worked with art galleries and good shops and had plenty to do. 1935 I moved to Jerusalem and started teaching on the only Art School "Bezalel". I didn't Like it there and after one year teaching I Left and started my own work-shop. At this time I met the well Known architect Eric Mendelsohn. He gave me a large order for a bank building. I designed and made in bronze a relief map of Palestine, about 6 ft X 12 ft., and a map from Europe and the near East in Nickelsilver about 10 ft. X 24 ft., and a large Mezuzah for the Main enterance door. That was my first religious piece of work. It followed 300 Mezuzoth for the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Then I made many menorah, Chanukah Candle-sticks and Mezuzoth for shops and privat people. Jobs for synagogues I did not get, since I was not orthodox.

I want especially mention that all work small and Large I made by myself in my own workshop, with no outside help. End of 1947 I Left Palestine and came with the help of my oldest sister to the United States. First I was in New York, but didn't find my way. I contacted in N.Y. the Jewish Museum and got a one man show of all my work, still done in Jerusalem for the worlds fair and a few new pieces. Tiffany wanted to hire me as designer, but I didn't Like this idea. I made a few designs for a jeweler, but soon gave up trying to find work. ——— Eric Mendelsohn Lived in San Francisco. He wrote me I should come to San Francisco and build up a workshop. He and his daughter would help me. In winter 1948 I arrived in San Francisco and started again

my own shop. My first show was at V.C. Morris, Maiden Lane. 3
Then I started to work with Agnes Brandenstein who carried my
work in her shop. I was still struggling when I met Gordon
Herr. He wanted to open an Art school on Pond farm together
with Margarite Wildenhein and Trude Germaprez. I decided
to join them and to move to Pond farm. I worked and taught
there for 3 years until the whole idea collapsed. We taught
Summer school, but a few students stayed for the whole year arround.
I with my family, Margerite Wildenhein and husband Franz, and Trude Gerz
maprez and Herrs lived on Pond farm. Claire Falkenstein and Varda
came every week ones from outside, to teach and to meetings. I left
Pond Farm after the death of Jane Herr and rented a little house and
workshop in Forest Knolls, Marin County. Short after starting to work
in Marin, I get a long article about my work in the Local newspaper.
*I forget to mention that I sent some of my new work to the show at the
DeYoung Museum with the title: "Design in forty nine". Short after I sent
some pieces to the Calif. State Fair and received many first prices. Mr.
Petterson, Director from the Los Angeles fair ask me to give him all pieces
for his fair. There again I received first and second prices. Short after
The DeYoung Museum offered me a one man show. I was happy and
accepted it. I worked one year hard for this show. There a was
showing many pieces religious pieces for jewish and christian relig.
and other hand wrought pieces and jewelry. At this time I met
Father Moriyan, Director of Gleeson Library, and Ninfa Velvo.
All these shows were good poblisity. I met Mr. William Hartnett
who wanted to be my agent for Church work. At that time
I started to get a Lot of orders for Synagogues and

4.

Churches. I made very large pieces, 10 ft. high crosses. 12 ft. high Menorah and many other pieces. I want especially mention, I had one helper. We made everything in my own work= shop, sometimes outside in the garden, all by hand. I don't under= stand these sculptors who design, make a small model and give it for full size execution into a factory. It never comes out as it should. The right proportion and final touch is always missing! — Besides I was always teaching.
I loved to work for Synagogues and churches, but it is difficult to explain why since I was not religious. — or a member of a Temple. In school (heartyears) I just didn't understand „antisemitism". When my sister got baptised to catholicism, my first awareness for jewishness appeared. In time it got strengthened. Finally when Hitler came to power I felt positive jewish, first fighting against the nazis then leaving for Palestine (Israel). Here in U.S.A. I started to be interested in religious art for all religion, as "artist" creating "good art" for churches and synagogues. I studied the different types of religion and created accordingly. I tried to understand their beliefs, as an outsider, and I created free what I think was right. I got always accepted and praised. I worked for many different nominations and often I ad= mired the tolerance of priests, since I mentioned always that I am jewish. — At the time I started to work for Churches and Synagogues, the american (most) artists were not willing to work for religious organizations and a lot of old and ugly stuff was on the market, made in factories. Today many good artists are working for religion. In meantime the in Europe distroyed Churches and Synagogues got rebuilt, including very good modern art and our artists learned from it.
It is hard to explain why I worked for many different nominations, but I got interested to work in a field New to me. First of all I saw the possi= bilities for in artist to create good art for groups of people

(over)

who really need it. I found people believing in any type of religion, need for their churches or Synagogues always many types of good art pieces. Bad, sweet, sentimental pieces or over rich, overdone or phony pieces don't belong to any real true religious beliefs. Any religious symbol should be simple, strait forward expressing only that what it means in the best strongest way possible. Actually any religion has the same aim, but express it in different ways according to the different people, different cultures, different races. Many races, which were more or less forced to get christians, mix often their own old religion with the new one or they are christians officially, but inside they believe in their old one. I, for my self feel very jewish and I am proud to be jewish, but not religious or orthodox. But I am very much interested to understand and recognize ideas and beliefs different then mine and create for them as good as ~~possible pieces~~ possible pieces as good as I make for our religion.
If everyone would try to understand - first the difference in people, second their different thoughts and feelings and beliefs, we would have a better and more friendly world.

Schools in Berlin were structured so that at the gymnasium one learned Latin and modern languages, and prepared for university; at the realschule one learned French and English, and prepared for business; and the volkschule was for the poor people. One paid to attend gymnasium and realschule.

One fondly-remembered school, attended by Victor Ries in summer, was in a forested area outside of Berlin. It was a waldschule, and the students had little huts, and blankets to wrap themselves in when it was cold. That was a special and expensive school. It was a government school, but unusual because 90 percent of the students there were Jewish. The teachers were like friends. When the First World War began Jews were thrown out of school. The children stayed home to study and do art. Victor says, "At school there was always hate around."

Victor's father attended an orthodox temple; his mother attended a liberal temple. There was not a Sunday school, as there are in temples today. Instead the city schools offered religious instruction: Christians received their religious instruction in school, and the Jews (usually 10 percent) received their instruction from a rabbi at school. The family spoke German at home. [End summary]

Germany, 1907-1933

[Date of Interview: November 7, 1983]

S.R.: You were twelve when you joined the Zionistic Jewish boy scout group?

Ries: Yes, about twelve. This was a time--I don't know whether I should go so deep into personal things, but this is all part of it, you know. The strange thing is, a life, and a profession, and everything has a background.

S.R.: I'm convinced.

Ries: Anyway, I was the youngest in the family. My sisters were much older. My oldest sister is nine years older, and the next one is eight years older, the third four and a half years older. The second sister started studying medicine. My father didn't have the money to give her to study somewhere other than in Berlin. But she wanted to study in Freiburg in Breisgau in southern Germany, because this was the best faculty for medicine. So she left and tried on her own, and had a very hard time. And she got into the hands of a professor who cared very much for her, a professor teaching medicine. He helped her a lot and I think took her in and gave her a room, and so on. He was a very good, religious Catholic, so she switched over to Catholicism after she had this experience. This was kind of a blow to our family.

Ries: Then I went into the Jewish boy scout group and emphasized these lines and went more into Jewishness, which was before not so important to me. We all went into the direction of Zionism.

S.R.: Your sister's decision might have opened the family up to turning from Judaism.

Ries: That's right, and we didn't want that. Since we were always hated by the Christian population because we were Jewish, we emphasized Judaism.

So I went into this Jewish boy scout group, which was Zionistic and educated us toward Palestine. This was really the beginning of everything.

S.R.: And you were already thinking then of going to Israel?

Ries: Yes, through the whole education and the whole direction of the organization, at least I thought about to leave and go to Palestine.

First I got an apprenticeship. I wanted to go to the professor of my youngest sister, who studied already at the Academy of Art--my oldest sister also studied art--and he didn't allow that. He said to go first and get an apprenticeship and learn techniques, and when you have techniques, then you come and learn designing.

S.R.: Had your sister had to go through an apprenticeship also before she went to the academy?

Ries: No, I don't think so. But drawing is different. She went into painting and drawing. I wanted to go into sculpture work, metal arts. So for that you had to have an apprenticeship. The academy didn't teach techniques. You had to come with techniques, and then you could go on and learn about designing, develop your sense of design, I would say.

S.R.: Did they recommend an apprenticeship situation for you?

Ries: No, they didn't. I went out with the help of my boy scout leader and got a very good company in silversmithing. I didn't want to make jewelry. I wanted to work in big--in enlarged dimensions. So it was recommended, silversmithing. I got an apprenticeship in one of the best German Jewish companies. [Gebrueder Friedlaender]

S.R.: That was a four-year apprenticeship?

Ries: This was a four-year apprenticeship. After I was through with it I passed my examination.

S.R.: Did you have to produce one work or something?

Ries: Yes. I had to design something and execute it by myself. And so I did.

Then I went to the City Art School to learn more about designing and life drawing and perspective drawing.* I stayed one year at the City Art School and I thought to go and work outside for some other company as a journeyman.

I wanted to get away from home. This was a time when every young person wants to get away from home. I went to Hamburg and got there a job. But it was not very successful. At least, I thought I was better than my master thought. So I left him and came back to Berlin and worked there in a very, very good shop for a while.

But the time was already very bad in Germany.

S.R.: What years are we talking about now?

Ries: The late 1920s, '27, '28. This workshop in which I worked was a very good workshop for handmade artwork, but I had to leave. I was the youngest; I had to leave because there was not enough work.

Then I went back to the academy and asked my professor whether I could now join, and he said that's fine. So I had to go through an examination again.

S.R.: You mean to join as a student.

Ries: Yes. Then I studied at the Academy of Art.**

S.R.: When you say things were getting bad, this was the period of inflation?

Ries: Inflation was before. Inflation was shortly after the First World War, and the mark, which was actually pretty good, was at the end nearly worthless. We paid in billions. It was a piece of paper and it said ten billion, and you got an egg for that.

Then they started to stabilize the whole situation and started with dollars. This was still when I was an apprentice. I got for my work half a dollar or a dollar or four dollars. It was nothing but a yellow piece of paper stamped with "dollar."

S.R.: That's interesting. But when you say that things were getting bad, you mean the persecution?

Ries: Persecution was always. You had to get used to it, otherwise you couldn't get through. Of course, when I learned as apprentice--this never happened before, that a Jewish boy coming from a realschule

*Kunstgewerbeschule (School for Applied Arts)

**Akademie fuer Freie und Angewandte Kunst (Academy of Fine and Applied Arts)

Ries: went as an apprentice into such a shop. Starting about in the early 1800s, Jews were not allowed to learn any craft. After the First World War was over, everyone could learn what they wanted. So they had to take me, but it had never happened that a Jewish boy went into one of these workshops to learn.

Of course I heard a lot of ugly and bad things. I had constantly to fight against that. Constantly. In school, and later on as an apprentice. Wherever you had something to do with business or learning or working, this was all around you, constantly and all the time.

S.R.: I thought that you were an apprentice in a workshop that was Jewish.

Ries: This was a Jewish company, but the master was Christian, and all the employees were Christian. There were no Jews which did that.

And this was also more or less new--a Zionistic education which asked that we do everything, not only lawyers and doctors and so on, or business people. They said when we got to Israel and established our own country, we have to do everything. So I went into that.

But this was connected actually with something else which I didn't tell you before. One of my sisters had a boyfriend who was a silversmith. I was constantly sitting at his home where he had his little shop in one corner of the room and worked for himself. And I was watching and watching, and I played a little bit around with the metal, and I loved that.

During the inflation my parents rented some rooms to foreign students. There was one foreign student who went to art school and came home and brought all the silver pieces she made home. I saw constantly what they were doing and was in touch with that and found I wanted to do the same.

S.R.: It seems that it's the joy of <u>doing</u> it that inspired you.

Ries: That's right. The joy of working with a material which gives all these possibilities. I never liked soft material. I learned to work in clay in art school, and I hated it. It was wet and soft and I couldn't do much with it. I needed a hard material to work with.

S.R.: You didn't do sculpture in stone or anything like that?

Ries: No. At the time when I went to the academy we had to say what direction we wanted to go. Sculpture work--you sculpture in clay or stone, you could sculpture in wood, and you could sculpture in metal. You could, of course, take one semester in metal and the next one in stone. But then you split up; you already didn't get everything in one field. And I really wanted to learn everything about metal, so I stayed with it.

S.R.: Because your work has been an integral part of beautiful religious buildings, I wonder if you remember being impressed by the buildings, the churches, for instance, in Berlin?

Ries: First of all, I want to say how did I get to religious art. I told you last time that I worked in Israel with Eric Mendelsohn.

S.R.: All right, but I was actually asking you about buildings in Berlin, so I don't want to skip ahead.

Ries: Oh, Berlin. No, I wasn't interested in Berlin. In Berlin I was interested in doing my own work, designing and executing my own work, smaller pieces, not very large pieces, pieces I could handle by myself. My friend studied architecture and we often talked about it, otherwise I wasn't interested in buildings.

In this period I learned to work in sheets, in large sheets, and I do it here, too. When I made a sculpture for Temple Beth El in San Mateo, a thirty-foot high sculpture on the outside front of the temple, I did everything by hand. I didn't use any machines. I worked with big sheets. I had people who held them, and we bent them together, and we worked them together, because one person can't do it. But I didn't work at all with a machine. I think that most sculpture work is factory work.

When you do something, you can have the most beautiful model in paper or clay or whatever, and you go to a factory and ask them to do that, they do exactly that. But you have a piece without any feeling. You had your model made, but they don't care for details. I care for details. When I do something, it has to be worked out into the finest detail. And that is the difference between my work and the work of other people. Because they don't have details. I think the detail is very, very important.

S.R.: Now, you were finishing your training in Germany and looking very much towards going to Palestine.

Ries: No, actually I didn't look at all. Actually I wanted to study and wanted to finish my studies. And get my examination so that I can teach or do anything I wanted to do later on. But then came Hitler. Hitler got elected. First he was elected as minister, and then very soon afterwards he got elected as president. He got elected in January, and in April he established his "1st of April throwing-out" of all Communists and Jews and closing all shops and throwing us out of school, and so on. Such was the end of it, of my studying at least, and of getting a job.

S.R.: How old were you? What year are we in now?

Ries: Twenty-four or twenty-five

S.R.: So it was 1933.

Ries: Yes, '33.

Israel, 1933-1947

S.R.: Not many were able to emigrate.

Ries: At first I tried to come to the United States, because my sister was here. It was absolutely impossible. They let in, I don't know, a few hundred people, and there were about ten thousand on the list, and I knew that was impossible. Then I went through my organization and got very fast my visa for Palestine.

S.R.: Were you among the first?

Ries: I was, yes. In October there were three full trains for our organization, "Hechaluz," to leave the country, and I was one of them.

S.R.: What was your organization?

Ries: The name was "Hechaluz." It was for people going organized to Israel. Most were going into kibbuzim, mostly young people without money.

S.R.: How many in your family went, or was it just you?

Ries: Just I went to Israel. My oldest sister was already in the United States. My brother left in June '33 and went back to England and established there a business. My sister was already married in '28 to a Swiss artist, and she went to Switzerland and is still there. There was only one sister left over in Germany, who was a doctor, an M.D. She was married to another physician. He was a plastic surgeon. The Nazis needed that very much for war. They knew exactly that they were going to war. So as long as he could leave, he left, made a trip to the United States shortly before the war and got a job in a hospital for my sister, and went back and sent her immediately out of Germany, and she got then the job in a hospital in New York State. He had to go back.

S.R.: Did he get out?

Ries: No, he couldn't.

S.R.: So that was only you, then, and your parents.

FHE★★ PAGE 43
Wednesday, Mar. 20, 1963
San Francisco Chronicle

VICTOR RIES AND HIS SISTER JULIA
"Religious art requires research"

Reunion, Exhibit For Brother, Sister

By Michael S. Willis

"I am against ugly church art," says Victor Ries, the Mill Valley metalsmith who has gained an international reputation for his liturgical art.

The M. H. de Young Memorial Museum is currently exhibiting metalwork by Ries along with paintings, drawing and prints by his sister, Julia Ris, who prefers the Swiss spelling of their last name.

The current show is the occasion for the first reunion for the pair, now in their late 50s, since adolescence. Julia married Fritz Heid, a Swiss sculptor and industrial designer, and moved to Basel in 1925. Victor remained in Berlin until 1933, when he migrated to Israel and then to this country.

Ries said recently at the museum that his own Jewish religion aids him in his work for Christian churches because he can view a problem from a distance. "I sit down with a priest and talk about his needs. I confer with the architect. I study the problem.

"Religious art requires research in order to understand and interpret. All religions have symbols. My work is to find the origin of symbols, where the real meaning is, and then make a bridge to our own time, leaving behind all that has come in between."

DISTINCTION

Ries is particularly concerned with the distinction between tradition and convention.

"Convention," he explained, "is some form of expression in past times which has taken over with, perhaps, no meaning. It is dead and always bad.

"A tradition comes from the oldest times to our own time always with the same meaning. I must bring the old tradition or symbol back to life. The expression or representation must change and fit into our time and our life."

LETTERS

One of Ries' favorite devices is the use of lettering, but he confesses that in his art student days in Berlin he hated his lettering classes, which he frequently skipped.

"In the past, people needed pictures or sculpture. Now everyone can read. Most of the things we know are written, including the Bible. Mosques and Chinese temples are covered with lettering of their scriptures. It has a deep meaning as both an artistic and a spiritual expression. If people cannot

SISTER

His sister, Julia, said that she is concerned with catching "the melody" of a subject. "Hieroglyphics, picture writing, was for primitive people the most direct writing. I try to write, with nonphotographic pictures, a language every man can understand with his eye and heart. I think colors, forms and proportions can tell us life directly. I try to give a direct expression to experience without any detour. Victor and I are working for the same thing in different ways."

Ries: Yes. My father died in '34, a normal death. My mother stayed on, and in '39 my brother in England got a visa for her to leave the country. The Nazis took everything away from her, the house and property and everything she had. She came with nothing. But anyway she came with her life at least out to England. Then we were all out.

S.R.: That's good. So in 1933 you got on the train.

Ries: Yes, in 1933 I got on this train, October 1st, to Palestine. To Italy first and then on a boat over to Palestine. In Palestine I started absolutely without money.

S.R.: Was Jerusalem the city that you all went to?

Ries: We were first brought to Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv was a Jewish city, so we were brought over to Tel Aviv to a home for immigrants, which was lousy.

I didn't say that before I left Germany I married--one day before I left Germany. I didn't want to marry before. I wanted to know that I was going to get out, and then I married. My wife was at the time a teacher for agriculture and got, of course, very fast her visa for Palestine because they needed people with those qualifications.

When we arrived we both together had ten English pounds. That was all we had. We went into a hotel and rented a bed on a balcony. This was very strange. The whole hotel was full of people, and they just could offer us a bed on a balcony outside. So we took that. It was still better than before.

She got very fast a job in an agricultural school in Tel Aviv, and I went out looking for a job and got after two or three days a job in the only metal factory which was in Tel Aviv. This was also a German immigrant who owned it. There I worked a few months.

At that shop I met another artist. We left the factory and started together our own shop. The name of my colleague was Judah Wolpert. He and I opened our own shop and I made mainly jewelry at the time, because in Palestine people had very little money and everyone who came had to start a new life, so they didn't need large art work.

Very soon, after about half a year, Tel Aviv wanted to make a world's fair, in '34. We two got an order to make a life-size camel in metal as a symbol of this fair. This was our beginning! Of course our workshop was a very small workshop. You could hardly turn around in it. How could we make a life-size camel? So we asked them whether they could give us a room, and they said, "Of course, you come to our fairgrounds and we'll give you the auto salon, and this will be, I believe, big enough for you."

Ries: So we went out to look at it, and the whole auto salon was four posts in the sand of the beach!

S.R.: No roof.

Ries: No roof, no doors, no nothing. No floor--just sand. But we did it. We brought our tools out and worked on the sand, because we had to work anyway on sand. We worked on sandbags normally. So we did it direct on the sand of the beach. And it worked wonderfully.

S.R.: Was the camel standing or kneeling?

Ries: It was flying. It had two big wings and had to stand high up on a column, which was concrete, about, I don't know, thirty feet high or so, far above the fairgrounds.

S.R.: Did they tell you that it should have the wings?

Ries: Yes, they told us. It was a symbol of the fair. So this was the first big work which we did together.

And then after this our name was around. I worked with art galleries, and shops like Gump's, smaller of course, but good shops, and they bought my work and I made a living.

S.R.: Good shops that were importing from Tel Aviv?

Ries: Shops from people who came from Germany or Austria and opened new shops. Of course, they didn't want to import from these countries from where they came, so they wanted to work with Jewish people in Palestine.

S.R.: I thought you had a shop of your own.

Ries: No, I had a workshop or studio, not a shop.

Later on I moved up to Jerusalem. In '35 I was asked by Bezalel School to teach at the school. This was the only Jewish art school in Jerusalem. So I got hired as a teacher and established then my workshop in Jerusalem. But I didn't teach for a long time. I didn't like the school. So I left the school and started to work with Eric Mendelsohn. He had an architect's office and I had my shop, but we worked together. He gave me orders, and I designed and executed them in my shop.

S.R.: What kinds of pieces were you doing for him?

Ries: He built, for instance, a big bank building, and I made for the bank two very large maps. The name of the bank was Anglo-Palestine Bank, from London to Jerusalem, so I had to make England and the

Ries: whole of Europe, including Palestine. And Jerusalem was specially marked. This was for a very large wall in the room where the tellers are. The relief map of Palestine was a solid bronze map, all handmade, not cast, and covered a wall about twelve feet high and six feet wide.

Then I got another order from Eric Mendelsohn for the Schocken Library. Schocken came to Israel to live there for a short while. He later lived here in the United States. I made a lot of things for his library.

Eric Mendelsohn built a new Hadassah Hospital. I made for the hospital a lot of things. There I started with religious art. He gave me an order to make two hundred mezuzoth,* which are little metal containers with parchment handwritten with the sentence: "Hear o Israel, our Lord is One."

S.R.: Isn't there a traditional way that they are made?

Ries: No, that's the point. Of course there's a tradition, but the tradition is changing, generations are changing and people are changing. So life gets different and everything gets different and is moving and changing. My feeling is why should we stay with the so-called tradition, go on with the old-fashioned stuff which doesn't fit anymore into our lives? So, I designed them by myself and made them differently.

S.R.: So they were many mezuzahs, one for each door?

Ries: Yes. Hundreds.

S.R.: Were they all different?

Ries: No, they were all the same. For the doors of the rooms where the sick people are. But then I made very large ones for outside doors in different designs.

I worked, of course, with rabbis. For instance, I designed for the Anglo-Palestine Bank a very large mezuzah. I sent my design to the high rabbi and asked him whether it was allowed to do it. He gave me permission to do it, because he said there's no law which doesn't allow that. It was never done, but he said, "There is no law broken through your design," so I made it.

---

*Among the orthodox Hebrews, a piece of parchment bearing the passages Deut. vi. 409 and xi. 13-21 written in twenty-two lines. It is rolled up in a wooden, metal, or glass case or tube and attached to the doorpost as both passages command.

Ries: After I mounted it on the outside door at the big bank building, I got a telephone call to come immediately down to the bank. There are hundreds of Hasidim standing, shaking their fists. They wanted to tear it down. So I had to rush over. I couldn't do anything with them. First of all, I can't talk Yiddish, so I hardly could talk with them. But of course I had someone who talked for me. I couldn't leave it. I had to change it at least a little bit.

S.R.: So there was some element which was very offensive to them.

Ries: Yes. There was one element which was not prohibited but which was offensive to them.

S.R.: That taught you to compromise.

Ries: Yes, I did a lot of compromising afterwards, but not in the matter of design.

Now I come actually to the main point, when I came to the United States.

S.R.: Can I ask two questions? Was it a satisfying thing to be in Palestine? Did it fulfill your expectations in terms of the Zionistic feeling that you had?

Ries: That's very difficult to say. I will say, when I arrived there I went out and got immediately work. Actually the first day I could go and work. And anyone who came to Palestine or Israel got immediately work, immediately, and could make immediately enough money to make a living. Not a good living, but a living. Anyone who could do something, in any field, could make it very fast and got a name and made a better living. Everyone had to work hard, of course, very hard. But anyway, you could make a living. I had a satisfaction in my work.

So it was a beautiful feeling to come into a country where everyone was full of enthusiasm and had work and didn't have to wait for work. Everyone had food to eat. You could see day by day how everything was built up--new shops, workshops, offices, and new theaters and new orchestras. In each field, new buildings were shooting out of the soil. The architects had a lot to do and the carpenters had a lot to do and everyone had a lot of work, and everyone was in a good mood. It was really beautiful to see how this country grew out of the desert.

When I arrived, of course, there were already quite a number of Jews but there were mostly Arabs. They didn't do anything with the country. Even when I came back in '59 to visit my friends, wherever there were Jewish fields, everywhere were sprinklers going. And

Ries: everywhere where Arab fields were, there it was dry and nothing was growing there. You really could see the difference. So as long as the country was building up and everyone was enthusiastic and in a good mood, everything was really fantastic.

S.R.: It was the land of plenty.

Ries: "Land of plenty" I don't want to say, but you really had the feeling you could build something up, you could get somewhere, and it was beautiful to be there.

Then came the war, the Second World War. The times got pretty bad, of course. No materials. Palestine had no raw materials whatsoever, except potash or chemicals, but no wood, no metals. They had to come from other countries. They had to be imported. But nothing came during the war. So everything was pretty difficult. The metals came from Europe, and we couldn't get them. But I had enough metals because I ordered before the war enough material that it lasted quite a while. But then came the regulations, and we were not allowed to use metals for artistic reasons or for war production and necessary things.

So I started to repair medical instruments, for instance, which from time to time broke, and they needed them, so I repaired what I could save from the old. I repaired musical instruments which were made with metal, like flutes and drums and trumpets. I worked a little bit for war industry. I made by hand frames for photography which they could turn around in all directions. I got through.

And then I worked for the museums, Rockefeller Museum and the university's museum for the archeological department. I got through the war in that way. And besides, I worked in jewelry with the little bit of material that I had and could get, and sold all that. And I made Shabbath and Chanukah candlesticks.

S.R.: Had Eric Mendelsohn also come out of Germany? Was he a Zionist?

Ries: Yes, he was a Zionist and he came from Germany. He was the most known architect in the whole of Europe, not only Germany--like Frank Lloyd Wright here. He went to England, established in England an office and home, and in Israel, and he went back and forth. He was half a year in Israel, half a year in England. He had in London his office and work, and had in Israel his office and work too. Designed buildings. He gave me a lot of orders.

America

Ries: Then I came to the United States to my sister. My health was very, very bad, and I couldn't stand the constant war and the constant shooting and killing and bombing and all that. We were bombed out of our house where I lived, and we got through the government another apartment. This was in an Arab neighborhood in Jerusalem. Now, living as a Jew in an Arab neighborhood was very dangerous and very difficult. So I felt I had to get out. At the end of the war I got my visa through my sister, and came to the United States at the end of '47.

S.R.: Had Eric Mendelsohn already come?

Ries: Yes, he was already in San Francisco. He wrote that I should come to San Francisco, where the climate is much better than New York and more similar to Israel, and he will help me to build something up. I looked around in New York, and I got an offer from Tiffany to design for them. I didn't like it. And I took off and came to San Francisco.

Impressions of Artists and Religious Art

S.R.: That reminds me that we had a little tangent last time talking about good design. It was interesting to me. You felt that there was no good design in this country?

Ries: No, I didn't say that. It's the opposite. I said there was Margaret de Patta and Keith Monroe, and they made very good, excellent designs. They were excellent designers. They worked in jewelry. They were very, very good. I said about religious art, there was no good art.

Still at this time the artists--. For instance, Margaret de Patta was in a group of artists which were known as Communists or Socialists. I don't know. There was, I think, a school in San Francisco, the Labor School, which was known as left, and all the good people, architects and jewelers, like Margaret de Patta and other people, very good designers, were involved in this school, and taught there. I think they had to close, they couldn't go on, there was too much pressure from outside.

But in religious art there was nothing. For one reason. All the good artists here rejected to work for religion at that time.

S.R.: Rejected or were never commissioned?

Ries: They would have been commissioned if they wanted it. I tried and I got it. And then more artists got orders. But they really rejected to work for religion.

My case with a little bit different. After I showed in several shows and my name got named in newspapers as new, good art, I got an offer from the de Young Museum to have a one-man show. I had to work very hard for two years to get enough work together for this show.

I showed Jewish religious art--which I'd started already in Israel but couldn't really do it because I was rejected for synagogal art--and I made besides a few pieces for Christian religious art, crosses, holy water fonts, and so on. And I showed jewelry and sculpture work and silversmithing work. I had a big variety of work which I made by myself. A big show in one line is very boring for the public. To see only jewelry is terrible, because when you see one showcase you are interested, the next one you already feel this is a little bit too much, but seeing twenty others is just much too much, and you can't see anything, and you forget everything. So on purpose I made a big variety of work, in all fields in which I work, not only one field. And I had a big success in this show.

S.R.: Who offered you that show? Who was the curator?

Ries: Elizabeth Moses. She was the curator for crafts at the de Young Museum.

S.R.: Where had she first seen your work?

Ries: The strange thing is she was a relative of ours, but I never met her. She saw my work here for the first time at the show "Design in Forty-nine," and at the California State Fair in 1950.

S.R.: When Eric Mendelsohn suggested that you would enjoy living here rather than in New York, did that mean that you came here and started working for him here?

Ries: I didn't start working for him. I rented a little shop and started working for myself. Also in different fields. First to have a show. He arranged that I got a show at V.C. Morris, which was a very good shop.

S.R.: Was that jewelry mostly?

Ries: Jewelry and silversmithing work, and some religious work, Jewish religious work. Then I got an invitation, after I had the de Young Museum show, from the Hadassah. They had a fashion show at the Legion of Honor, and there they gave me showcases to show my work. So I had again Jewish religious art and jewelry.

Ries: The best friend of Elizabeth Moses was a curator for fine arts, Ninfa Valvo. I met Ninfa Valvo and we became very good friends. She introduced me to Father Monihan, who is a good friend of ours. I gave Father Monihan a present, a holy water font. In this way, I got known in the Catholic circle.

Then came a man--I don't know how he found out--through the de Young show, I think, Mr. Hartnet. He studied as a priest and went out of that and started to sell good religious art. He was my agent and sold a lot of work for churches, all the work which I did here.

S.R.: Do you remember Mr. Hartnet's first name?

Ries: Bill, William.

S.R.: That's interesting. Because of that connection there are pieces of yours all over?

Ries: Mostly Bay Area. Bay Area church work. I named all these on a paper for you. Jewish religious artwork is more or less all over the country. I started with a show at the Jewish Museum in New York.

I forgot to tell you that when I came to New York in '47 I met the director of the Jewish Museum in New York. I forgot his name. I had a lot of things here through the World's Fair which was in New York in '39, and the pieces were not shipped back. They were all here in this country. Part of these were bought by an import shop for religious art or Jewish art, Israeli art, and part were stored somewhere, and I got all the pieces and had a show at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Later on this import shop which bought my things in Israel from the show gave all my pieces to the museum, so I got known over there in that field.

Then I was invited by some religious organizations and gave some talks. So I got into this line, too.

S.R.: You were giving talks on this very subject, new religious art?

Ries: Yes.

S.R.: You were considered a modern religious artist, or contemporary? How would people talk about you?

Ries: Contemporary. I must say, I got my own style. There is hardly anyone who does work which I'm doing. Sometimes they copy my work--okay. But anyway, I have my own style--which they call here "European,"

Ries: which is nonsense. I learned much more in Israel about religious art from Arabic and Jewish art than from Europe. Of course, I'm educated in Europe, and I will never lose that.

S.R.: The influence of the old Arabic art is because they were such good metal smiths?

Ries: Not only metal. In everything, in stone. And in design--they used calligraphy in many ways. But you see, my whole feeling, my whole philosophy in religious art, or I would say in art at all, is to simplify, bring very good shapes in very good proportion. Never overloaded, never overdone. As simple as possible.

S.R.: I think you're describing what was wrong then with religious art.

Ries: What was wrong was--especially in churches, and synagogues partly, too, but especially in churches here in the United States--it was very overloaded, fakey. I'm sorry that I express it in that way. I don't have enough words to say it in different ways.

I would say since the end of the '50s they started here to work in a very good, simplified way. Very often through trips they made to Europe and saw what is done there in churches, they learned and started to simplify here, too. And now there are pretty good things in churches. But in these older Catholic churches, they are still terrible.

S.R.: There's a tradition of sentimental doll-like madonnas.

Ries: Yes, for instance Father Monihan showed me in his church at the University of San Francisco a painting of Christ which is a beautiful blonde, softish-looking, more girlish man. Which is not Christ at all for my feeling. For my feeling he was a very strong revolutionary who knew what he was doing and even sometimes kind of brutal, asking for things of his people around him which were very difficult to do. I don't believe that he ever was softish and feminine and so on.

S.R.: That's interesting. And yet when you go back to the Renaissance you find those blonde baby Christs.

Ries: For instance, the Madonna by Raphael I hate. I think it's terrible.

S.R.: What are the traditions in the synagogues?

Ries: In synagogues today it's very, very different. We Jews got always persecuted wherever we were. We never had the possibility to have a fancy building. At the old time in Israel we had the temple. We don't know anything about the temple, because they both were destroyed two different times. All we excavated today are fundaments, stone-walls.

Ries: Afterwards Jewish people, who were all over the world, used any room facing East. It is not necessary to have a temple. Any ten people, a minyan, can pray in any house or room facing East. They must have a Torah, and a mezuzah on the door, of course, and that was all that was needed. Very often in Poland and Russia they had to hide because of the pogroms. So they had only very simple rooms for that.

Of course, in Germany we had real synagogues which were good buildings, sort of ornate but not overdone. Mostly really beautiful. In most cases the smaller temples were simple, They had the necessary things. They had the bust shields on the Torah, and the crowns on the Torah, this decoration which is used through the oldest times.

There are also different types. The Oriental Jews or Yemenites, they had very Oriental decorations and the European have more European decorations. You can find them in art books and see that. Each synagogue has a menorah, a seven-armed candlestick. Some are kind of overloaded. Some are very simple. Mostly simple.

Culture, Age, Art and Taste

S.R.: It sounds like there are not the same possibilities for vulgar sentimental, decorative pieces.

Ries: No, but there are still small religious pieces made in bad taste, and bad design.

Israel exports a lot of things, and there are a lot of people who knowingly make kitsch for the United States. We don't get the good things over here. I was very, very astonished when I got a catalogue from Israel into my hands, a catalogue which was printed for Europe, not for America. All very good work. And in Israel you can find very beautiful work all over in shops. They send only the bad pieces to the United States.

There is of course one thing. If an American Jew goes to Israel today, they have to bring a lot of presents back from Israel. They don't want to spend a lot of money. The good work costs money, like here, like everywhere. They want to have more pieces for less money. So they get only that cheap, ugly stuff.

S.R.: But you're not saying that cheap stuff has to be ugly.

Ries: For my feelings, the cheap stuff doesn't have to be ugly. But this is an idea of the Israelis: Americans buy only bad stuff.

S.R.: Disturbing idea.

Ries: It's a very disturbing idea, but that's a fact.

S.R.: It's true when you think about liturgical art that there were perfectly beautiful churches--I'm only speaking about churches, because I don't know--after all, postwar you're not going to have a lot of wonderful synagogues in Europe given what had happened to the Jews--but thinking about the churches, beautiful things were done postwar in England and in France.

Ries: But look, you have to go back to the old time--at least older time, I would say two hundred years, a hundred years, something like that, you have to go back. Or more. Don't forget that the whole of Europe has a very old culture. It's much older than the United States. Not the Indians. I don't talk about the Indians. The Indians lived here since thousands of years, but they were killed off. But Europe really had a culture going back I would say a thousand years. Europe produced very good religious art in all periods.

It was first baroque, then came rococo, and then came jugendstil--how do you call it here?

S.R.: Art nouveau.

Ries: Art nouveau, that's right. And then came the very modern--away with all the gingerbread and all that, and only good forms, back to simple and good. This was Bauhaus which produced that. Study first material and then create something simple and good. This was the actual idea which we still have today. But we are not so radical to stay only with the most simple form. We have to stay with the good simple form, but we can decorate it in a good way. Any decoration on any form has to first of all fit the form, has to underline the form, in a good way. And this was a good education for us, to come back to simple, good pieces. But this didn't stay on in such a strict way.

Through the bombings, through the war, a lot of churches and monasteries were destroyed. You find today in Europe very modern buildings, very modern, good church art. Very good. Much better than here. It was a development, but it's a very old culture. But here you can't compare that, because this country is very young, and the people from this country were from other countries, immigrants who came and couldn't bring their culture with them. They had to start to make a living and didn't care about culture so much. Then more and more people came from more and more different countries, and everyone brought for themselves from their old country something. So this is a big mixture here. It's a big mixture and it could be very good, but it isn't very good.

S.R.: I guess America has not led in any of the arts other than painting, and in painting America has been very avant garde. But perhaps that's because in painting you can get away with an awful lot.

Ries: You get away with an awful lot, that's right. I must say, maybe I'm old-fashioned because I can't go along with our art today. For instance, the whole anti-art movement in art, and all the plaster of Paris people whose works are very realistic and very ugly, all with shoes in plaster of Paris or the typewriter and these things. I can't go along with that. I can't help it. I think it's horrible.

S.R.: You don't think it's like dadaism or those movements?

Ries: No, that was something entirely different. To our time, to my time, when I studied, cubism was something entirely different. Okay, they painted in a different way, but they were still good paintings with a standard which was known as good. They were very beautiful. Or Kandinsky or Klee. They were very new ideas at the time, but they were very good paintings. And they meant something. They talked to people. Whatever they were, they talked.

But now this big red stuff with dropping down something--it doesn't say anything. Not to me. This is not even, I would say--how do we call that?--at the Academy of Art when I was studying there we had fine arts--I don't have to explain that--and there were applied arts, which were posters. And they were very, very good, but not art. Or, when I say applied art, art which is used for something, which has a particular purpose. But today art is nothing else but applied art, for my feeling, lots of it.

S.R.: And it's transitory, capturing the public imagination.

Ries: The public is misguided. They don't know by themselves what is good or bad.

But there was again a difference. The artist of our time, or older times, didn't look at all to the public. They produced good art, and they found their circle, and there were plenty of people who liked this art and needed it and bought it. The public as a whole was never art educated. Of course, in a country where you have mainly good art you are not even able to sell very bad things. For instance furniture: in Europe there is very simple, good and cheap furniture. It's well designed. Some is in very good, beautiful woods, and some is in very simple woods. This is actually the difference. Some have very beautiful handles and others have factory-made simple handles which are okay. But the taste is still good.

Ries: The same is with lamps. They have in all shops in Europe beautiful lamps, simple lamps. Cheap. They are not expensive. You can have the most expensive ones. Most are contemporary. Most are fitting into our lifestyle. Here nothing fits. When you look into a kitchen, for instance, the refrigerator is very contemporary design, the kitchen stove is very good design, and everything in the kitchen is very modern and very contemporary and fits into any very modern home, also in a simple one. But then go into the living room and see the so-called old American lamps, there's glass around and hanging down a lot of stuff, and lots of gold all over. This just doesn't fit, you know. So you find here all these terribly mixed-up styles.

In Europe there is one style. When you come into a contemporary house or in the house of an average person, they live in a modern house. The kitchen and the bathroom are modern, and all their furniture fits with that. And everything they have. Maybe they have something which was an heirloom from their grandmother or from another generation left over, and it doesn't fit entirely, but they put this in a little showcase, and it's not standing around. But everything fits better together.

S.R.: The more you talk about it, the more I understand it to be a matter of the youth of this country.

Ries: No, I think it's a matter of business. Businesses are not interested at all in bringing new and good designs. They know the public as a whole is not educated, not art educated, doesn't have taste. They can sell everything. So they produce only bad things. And the shops are full with cheaply made, cheaply built, not designed at all, maybe fifty-years or a-hundred-years-ago-designed things. They don't have to change the design because it can sell. And when you see only these things on the market and nothing else, then they just sell it. And people get used to it.

S.R.: And yet here in Berkeley and in the Bay Area we probably have more good, well-designed things than anyplace in the country.

Ries: Okay, Berkeley is very different than any other town. Mill Valley, too. Berkeley and Mill Valley are here the best towns for shops. And in San Francisco, of course, we have very good shops. But who is buying in these shops? You have one good shop, and a hundred bad ones.

I'm very negative, you see.

S.R.: I have a German friend who's good at pointing out what kitsch is.

Ries: Kitsch is something--I can tell you, more or less--it's very, very difficult to explain. Kitsch can be very pretty or eye-catching, I would say. Kitsch is something which is--do you have a piece of paper? This piece of paper has an edge, and here is good, and there is bad, and kitsch rides exactly up here, on the edge.

S.R.: So when does it become good?

Ries: I would say kitsch as a rule is very bad. But kitsch can be in such a way that it catches your eye and you love it, and it's still kitsch, it's still bad. A little bit less, a little bit better color, a little bit better shape, and it would be very beautiful. Can you understand that?

S.R.: I think I can.

Ries: It's really sometimes directly on the border. For instance, in older times--I would say fifty years ago--you could find in Chinatown these--I don't know whether they came from Japan or from China--these dolls or puppets in rice paper, faces and hands in rice paper very beautifully painted and in very elaborate dresses. They were really very beautiful. Now they do the same--not in rice paper, not hand-painted. Factory-made. The same elaborate dresses in cheap materials. And that is kitsch. Okay? This is only one example.

I told my students at the college to go through Macy's and look through porcelain and ceramics and silverware, and whatever there is, and find out about the basic shape of everything, and cut everything away which is gingerbread, and they will come up to very good shapes.

This again, especially in the United States--it's not very nice when I say that. In Europe a designer has to learn first of all material. When he wants to design for one particular material, he has to know the material from beginning to end. And then he can design for it. Here a designer studies half a year at art school, gets hardly in touch with different materials, and believes he knows everything. And then he designs for porcelain and for metal and for ceramics and for furniture and for whatever, whoever needs a design, with no idea about the material. And no idea about the fucntion. They just design, and this gets always kitsch. And always bad. Never good.

Religious Art

The Catholic Art Forum

S.R.: I don't think I'm entirely done with liturgical arts. Could we go back for just a minute? When you met Father Monihan, you met him through Ninfa Valvo. Did you at that time then hear anything about this group called the Catholic Art Forum?

Ries: Yes. I was never a member, but I was very often invited to their meetings and lectures.

S.R.: Of course, they were people who were as artists appalled by the work that was in the Catholic churches.

Ries: That's right. Louisa Jenkins was one of them, yes?

S.R.: Yes, that's right.

Ries: And Mark Adams, too.

S.R.: Yes, we've talked to both of them for this series. They talked about the mediocrity of art in the churches.

Ries: Yes, that's right.

S.R.: The question, though, that I have is whether they were really able to effect any change in that ten-year period.

Ries: They were not very effective, but they changed something.

S.R.: They changed some individual things in some churches?

Ries: No. I would say they changed as a whole the taste for artwork which goes in churches. But they were not very effective. Of course, there were single people who had great success, like Louisa Jenkins. And like Mark Adams. They are very good artists, both of them. They had such success because they are good artists. The Catholic Art Forum worked for better art in churches, but in time the organization fell apart. Their idea trickled down through the brains of ministers and priests. But they were not effective in really executing something. Not as a group.

I had one very interesting experience, a very nice one. Through Hartnet I got in touch with a priest of St. Vincent de Paul's Church in San Francisco, a very old priest--I forgot his name--a very nice

Ries: man. I got in touch through Hartnet, and the priest asked me to design something, and he said, "But I have to tell you that I asked the Catholic Art Forum to design for me, too." He wanted to have a baptistry, a baptismal font and the gate, a three-part gate, and he had some other things, too, which I forgot. But this was the main thing.

I said, "It doesn't matter. I give you designs and you decide whatever you want to." I did not come as a member of the Catholic Art Forum; I came as a private person, as a designer.

So I delivered him my designs, and he asked me to come to his office, and I came to his church. He told me that I got the order. He liked my designs a thousand times better than any other designs, and I got it. Then I said, "But I don't understand, because I know the people in Catholic Art Forum are very good people." He said, "Victor, your designs are a thousand times better than from the Catholic Art Forum." And I told him I'm Jewish, I don't want to do anything without him knowing that I'm Jewish. He said, "This doesn't matter. Your designs are very good, and I want to have them."

Then I made these gates. [shows photographs]

S.R.: That's very beautiful. Who did the mosaic?

Ries: A mosaic man in San Francisco. I've forgotten his name. But the metal work I did, the legs, around, and the top, and the cross.

S.R.: Did you do the windows?

Ries: No, the windows were in the building, the old church.

S.R.: But they work very well with the new design, don't they?

Ries: Yes. At least they don't disturb.

S.R.: I wonder why the Catholic Art Forum couldn't be more effective. Perhaps no group ever can.

Ries: Yes, I believe this is the reason. You see, with all groups--I was in Designer Craftsmen, the Metal Arts Guild--there are I would say three people or five people who are good and they have good ideas. And dozens of people who are nothing, old ladies with a hobby who enter these groups, or people who don't know much but want to be carried by a few good craftsmen. You see? In this way if the Metal Arts Guild or Designer Craftsmen had a show, then all members showed, of course, and so they get carried. They got into a show which they never could otherwise. So all these groups are built up in this way.

Ries: And now there is something very bad. Don't think that I'm against democracy. But the democracy in these organizations is in such a way that when one or two or even three work together on a very good idea, then everyone has a right to talk about it. And everyone talks it to death. Because everyone has another idea, and then it gets changed in this direction, and in that direction. The whole idea, the main thing, gets talked away, taken away through other ideas, and what is left over is nothing. Absolutely nothing. It can't go on. Mostly in these organizations are a lot of people who love to talk and hear themselves talk. Everything gets talked to death. And never comes anything out.

The Clients' Wishes

S.R.: This will be my last question, because I know you're getting hoarse. I thought of that old question of whether the best things are by a single designer. Like Frank Lloyd Wright designing a building and all the furniture and picking the fabric--.

Ries: No, I think this wouldn't be the right thing. I can only tell you what I think, not about other people. When Eric Mendelsohn, who was a very good architect, as you know, built a building and he needed something for his building which is not in his field, he can't design that. He can, but it won't be good. He knows that. So he called me and I designed for his building the right thing. And he liked it always, and I always made it.

When an architect comes to me who built a building and tells me to design this and that, I straight reject to work for him. I'm not a craftsman who only executes other people's ideas. I'm not a factory. I can't do that, because I won't <u>feel</u> that. I won't feel that it is good. I would constantly feel if I could change this and if I could change that, then it could be good. But I have not the right to change designs designed by other people.

So the only thing is I design, and they decide whether they like my design or not. I think this goes with everyone, actually. Every artist. Not craftsmen. A plumber gets a plan from the architect. The pipes are to be laid there and there in this way. And he will do it. That is his work. And the electrician will come in and put exactly the boxes where the architect said and run his wires through the walls, and so on. He's a craftsman and does what the architect asked. But not artwork. That's something else.

You see, the architect is the one who chooses. Mostly in a church the priest, the architect, if it's a new building--even an old building--the architect and one other person sit together and decide whether they like the design or not and want to have it.

S.R.: But then when they decide to have Victor Ries come, then already they'd looked at a portfolio of your work, so they know that it's going to be all right.

Ries: Of course. They looked at other work in other churches or synagogues.

S.R.: Often times churches have to work with committees.

Ries: Of course. I know that. But you can reject that. For instance, I worked for Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland, made the window and the ark and all this. They came two years ago and wanted to have a Holocaust sculpture. It was a rabbi and a committee.

I said to the rabbi, "I wish that you and one lady that knows about art decide, and no one else. Because I know in a committee of fifteen people are twenty-five ideas, and never comes anything out of that. And when I design I want to work with you, because you are the rabbi, and one person who knows about art. Otherwise I wouldn't do it." And they accepted it.

S.R.: That sounds reasonable. Well, I'm going to let your voice go. Thank you.

[Date of Interview: November 21, 1983]

Ries: I got to religious work through two things. It sounds maybe strange when I say it. Through Hitler I went to Palestine, the Holy Land, where you got more or less in touch with religion. But I say it right now, that I never was really religious. I felt Jewish and stayed to that and feel it as a nation or as people, but not as religion so much. I never would change my religion, but I'm not religious. Do you understand that?

S.R.: Yes.

Ries: But I got, of course, in touch with it because people asked to have mezuzoth made, and I made many, and then through the work with Eric Mendelsohn I got into it too. In Israel they even rejected religious artwork from someone who was not real religious for synagogues. But I made for private people menorahs, mesuzoth and so on.

Then I came to the United States, and I found not for religious reasons but for artistic reasons that a lot of religious artwork was necessary in the United States, but what they had at the time when I started was kind of horrible. Made by mass production through factories in the East, and they were sent this catalogue stuff which they sell all over the country. And in very bad taste and very badly made. Churches and also synagogues were full of these tasteless, bad things, which don't belong in a church or a synagogue.

S.R.: Was it a problem equally for churches and synagogues?

Ries: Yes, equally. And this had the reason we talked last time about, because the artists at this time didn't want to have anything to do with religion. So there were very, very few people--hardly any--who created, made handmade specially designed church art or synagogue art. I found to try something in that field.

S.R.: Why were artists not wanting to have anything to do with religion? The greatest art is religious.

Ries: But not in our time. Just to give one little example which bothered me terribly much. St. Mary's College, which is actually brothers, monks, which ran the college, they have, of course, a church, and this church in Moraga is built in Mexican or old Spanish style. Which is fine. I have nothing against that. They have a church tower like any old church. These church towers have normally bells, and bells are very beautiful and traditional. At least the whole Europe and the whole Asia, and also Palestine, all churches have beautiful bells, old bells, new bells, whatever. And the bell has a meaning. The college has a Japanese architect, and he found bells are not anymore right, especially for this tower--maybe the tower was not anymore too strong—and so they took the bells out and put a tiny little electric box in and a loudspeaker, and they imitate bells. Now, they have also artificial plants in the church instead of flowers.

I revolted against that. I said, "Religion is something you have to believe in; whatever religion it is, you have to believe in that. How can you believe in fake? That's not possible."

I think a church tower with bells should have real bells and not a little electric box which imitates that. And flowers are a symbol of life and beauty, and when you have wax flowers and leaves, that is a terrible fake. It just doesn't belong in a synagogue or in a church. That's my feeling. But they feel different.

S.R.: You were doing a commission for them?

Ries: I didn't get the commission because I criticized.

S.R.: What did they want you to do?

Ries: A synagogue with artificial flowers and plants wanted to have--I don't know what. They wanted to have something--I worked very much at the time with synagogues, but I didn't get it because I criticized them.

S.R.: But what did St. Mary's want you to do?

Ries: St. Mary's I did even something--it didn't matter. A symbol connected to the altar.

S.R.: That's interesting. Did they have a philosophy to justify that kind of fakery?

Ries: No, they don't justify; you have to take it. You see, with the Catholic church, the priest decides for something and the people have to go along with it; they take it, they believe in it, they don't say anything, they never criticize.

S.R.: Because of the hierarchy of the church, you're basically arguing with God if you start arguing.

Ries: Yes.

S.R.: Tricky.

Ries: Very tricky. So I did, and they knew I'm Jewish and they knew I'm an outsider. I criticized openly, and this was just put aside.

The Power of the Words and Images

S.R.: You said once that in Israel you learned some of the traditions of Arab art.

Ries: Yes, but this has only to do with design, the decorative or artistic way of thought.

When I started in Israel, this field was very new to me, even the language was new to me, the Hebrew, and I found that the printed Hebrew was kind of square. In Europe, or even in early Italy, Rome, and so on, they had very beautiful writing, but this was hand-written and hand printed, not from beginning on printed. I didn't know that you can design your own lettering. But I learned through Arabic, the Moslem religion, that they redesigned the Arab writing accordingly to the decoration they wanted to have on their mosques. They designed sometimes very elongated small lettering, and then some very wide, spread-out, and some very squarish ones, according to how the whole mosque was decorated, inside and outside. Fitting to the decorations. And they used always lettering from the Koran, sentences from the Koran, in any decoration.

S.R.: That's very interesting. In Christian churches the whole reason for having so much art is because you assume people are illiterate.

Ries: Okay. I'll come to this point, too. Actually, I don't know whether I started it, but I think I really more or less started that, when priests came to me and wanted to have particular churches--St. Stephen's Church in San Francisco--I told them all these pictures were made because most people couldn't read and write, so they had to see in pictures what is meant. We are today at another point: everyone who goes to church can read and write, and we can write whole sentences of the Bible, New Testament or whatever. And he went along with that. So I showed you the screen which I made for the baptistry.

I didn't get too far, because not everyone went along with that. It would mean breaking down the tradition, you see. But I used in synagogues very much lettering, because it belongs there more than anything else.

S.R.: But in the orthodox Jewish synagogue there were no representations?

Ries: It is not allowed to show any human being. There are very few animals allowed to show, and mostly what you can show is any ornament, any symbol connected with any ornament and any plant. But not people. So the right thing is to use sentences from Old Testament or Torah or whatever it is.

But this was not so terribly important to me. To me was important to get good art, good, sincere, simple art into churches and synagogues. And not elaborate ugly ones.

S.R.: But with a sense of the spiritual?

Ries: Spiritual, yes, but not sentimental. That is the point. Spiritual doesn't mean sentimental, you see.

S.R.: What does spiritual mean?

Ries: [pause] First of all, to believe in the story which is connected--history, I will say, which is connected with any religion. And laws which were created to better people, their beliefs and their lives. This is how I see it.

S.R.: But for anyone to look at it, it is an uplifting experience?

Ries: It should be an uplifting experience, accordingly to their experience. Now I feel that in every religion, but especially in the Christian religion, people learn things which don't stick to truth, falsification of historic matter of fact, <u>verfällchung von Tatsachen und History</u>.

S.R.: Like what do you mean?

Ries: Christ's identity, killing of Christ, killing children, and so on; all these terrible things which the church teaches against the Jews throughout the centuries are not true. This is all creations, unsincere, untrue creations which they needed to fit this to blame the Jewish people.

S.R.: It sounds like it was a good thing they didn't expect people to read!

Ries: Yes, that's right.

S.R.: Really, it's an assumption of basic illiteracy on the part of the congregation.

Ries: Yes, but it's still going on. I was reading a book written by a nun. This book was full of untrue things. It was written for children, to educate them. This was so horrible that I was shivering. How they turned everything around!

S.R.: Do you think that it was done in innocence?

Ries: No. I don't think so.

Sources Within--A Sacred Heart

Ries: Okay, this is another matter. We went off again, and I want to come to the point. Every person who creates for religion, for churches, has of course different ideas, comes from different feelings, I would say. I can't express myself in the right way.

Most people ask me when I work for a Catholic church, or a synagogue, it doesn't matter, or for a Lutheran church, everyone of the people who gave me the order to work for them thought I'm very religious and I'm very much religious in their feeling and their way. Which is not true.

I'm an artist, and I make research for these people for whom I'm working, and create accordingly to that. Not to my feeling. Only feeling for art, but not for this particular religion. I want to underline that, that you don't have to be a member and a believing member of this church or religion. You don't have to. It's not necessary. It is common that the artists come from this group and create accordingly. I believe even this is not so good. Because someone who is a very religious Catholic, for instance, or a very religious Jew, is so much stopped on so many points through the law that they can't express themselves in the right way. Can you understand that?

S.R.: Yes.

Ries: I'm not a religious person, so I can make research without being kept to any law.

S.R.: You can be more objective.

Ries: Yes. I can go ahead and create something straight ahead, what I feel.

S.R.: But in every case you had to submit your interpretation to someone.

Ries: Yes. I want to explain how I do that. Again, when I create for a church, which is stranger to me than for a synagogue, I talk first of all with the priest or minister. I ask him about his feelings, what he thinks about, what he wants to have in his church.

Second, I ask what type of people are coming to the church. There are different people coming to church. There are very sophisticated people coming to church, or very primitive people who came maybe all from Italy and are very simple people. They are all different. All these churches have different congregations.

S.R.: Are the priests sensitive to that, do you think?

Ries: Maybe he's not sensitive, but he knows his congregation.

And then, if it's a new building I talk with the architect. If it's an old building I look at the church, at the architecture. And then I sit down and make research about it, what they want to have expressed, because I don't know it.

(I can give you an example, too. But later on.)

And then I sit down and create for them what I would feel is right and beautiful and fitting to this particular people, to this priest, and expressing his idea. You understand?

S.R.: Have there been situations when you had to compromise because there was so much trashy stuff around that you had to make your thing somehow fit in?

Ries: I didn't take care of that at all. I can give you an example. I showed you a picture of a sanctuary lamp in a Catholic church which was very modern, and behind was a very old-fashioned crucifix and everywhere gingerbread around. It was astonishing how beautiful this looked, this very modern lamp.

S.R.: The very beautiful thing can rise above its surroundings?

Ries: Yes. See, it has a contrast, and I say always everything needs contrast. Good proportion, good taste, but contrast is important. And this gave me the right background to contrast.

But this one example I wanted to give. Miss Valvo came and she wanted that I make a Sacred Heart for her, and I didn't know what it is. She came with a lot of books, and I knew I don't read these books because I'm not interested in it. So I went to Father Monihan and he explained in a few words what a Sacred Heart is. So I was sitting down and made something accordingly to my feeling. He showed me terrible pictures of Sacred Hearts and I said, "That is not that." And I did something which I felt. I gave it to Ninfa, and she was delighted. Then she asked me whether Father Monihan and she could come to my house with the Sacred Heart and talk about it. I said, "Yes, of course."

Then we three were sitting at a table, and they talked, and they talked something into me which didn't exist. They believed in that, that this came without knowing spiritually out of me. It didn't, but they believed in that.

S.R.: Perhaps what they felt was correct.

Ries: I can't say.

S.R.: What is a Sacred Heart?

Ries: It's Christ who offers his heart to the people openly. He gives everything to help people.

S.R.: So, how did you depict that?

Ries: I made in silver something that looked more like fire or the burning bush or something like that, which means the same more or less. And a heart which was not exactly a heart-shape, it was more flames. And this I built into a little box which was very dark. It got light only through a little hole. So it was starting to flicker and glitter. To see it they had to open the doors. I showed it entirely in a different way. But they were delighted, which was the main thing.

S.R.: Why was she commissioning you directly? Was it for her own collection?

Ries: Not collection, but use. She is very orthodox Catholic.

An Identity and a Discipline as an Artist

Ries: Ninfa Valvo and Elizabeth Moses worked together. They were both curators, Ninfa for fine arts and Elizabeth Moses for crafts. But they constantly worked together and were good friends. And in my one-man show at the de Young Museum I showed openly in which fields I'm working. At that time, of course, I had no orders and no connections with anyone. But people could see what I'm doing.

S.R.: When did you join the Catholic Art Forum?

Ries: I didn't join the Catholic Art Forum. I was invited to talk to them, and I was invited to meetings. Once I went, but I never went again because I'm not a Catholic.

S.R.: It wasn't just Catholics, was it?

Ries: Yes.

S.R.: Was it really?

Ries: Yes. I said always straight-out I'm Jewish. And they have to know that I'm Jewish. Whenever I got an order, whenever a priest or a minister asked me to do something for them, I said, "But you have to know I'm Jewish. I'm glad to do it, but you have to know I'm Jewish." And they took it and we worked together, or they said, "I'm sorry," and then I didn't get it.

I didn't like to work for someone who wouldn't work with a Jew. So I made it very clear, and I was never sorry about that. In most cases they didn't care. They wanted to have good art and didn't care who it is. I think this is even very typical American, very sympathetic--can I saw that?

S.R.: You also had done some work for the Buddhists?

Ries: Yes, a Buddhist church. They wanted to have good art, good design. They didn't care whether I'm Jewish or not. They knew that I'm not Buddhist.

I explained to you how I work with an architect, if there were one, and with the priest, and with the congregation, and then I make up my mind. Now, there is something very strange with me. I wouldn't be able to sit down now and make a cross, or something for a synagogue, just for fun, for myself. It wouldn't interest me. But the moment I get approached, then my brain starts to work.

Ries: And there is another thing which is very important for me. I need pressure. If they tell me it has to be finished, and then they move it forward, at the minute that they want to have it, I'm finished. I work under pressure better than not. I sit down and get involved. Then my imagination starts to spit out, and I get a lot of ideas. And it goes very fast. In the first ten minutes mostly I have the idea of the design, which I have to work out, of course.

S.R.: That's very interesting. Is that something in the training or in you, do you think?

Ries: I was not like an American artist, who lived always in peaceful times. They can develop slowly and work for themselves. I couldn't. I was thrown out by the Nazis. I went to an entirely strange country and had to make a living. So I had to see that I work in such a way to please not only the customer--not through making concessions--but do good work. And do it fast, otherwise I wouldn't make it.

S.R.: In a way you're saying that when you know who the customer is, then you can create.

Ries: I didn't make concessions. I was always very much involved in my work, which I accepted, and I had full responsibility for that. And it has to be good technically, it has to be good in design.

S.R.: Are you talking about some difference between perhaps the artist and the craftsman, where the artist is compelled from within to create?

Ries: The craftsman--now I give you another example. A good or bad craftsman, perhaps a plumber, gets from the architect or engineer the plan where to put the pipes and where to put the bathtub and the toilet. He can make it bad or he can make it good, but he is a craftsman. He can't design or figure out by himself. He gets the drawings and has to go along with that.

This is an entirely different thing. When you have an artist, I think an artist has to be a craftsman, which is very often not the case. The artist has to have first education in his craft, in his field. I chose metal, so I had to know all about metal and had to learn about that. And somebody who works in wood has to know about wood, and who works in stone has to know about stone and how it splits and how it works. And when he knows that and he's, besides, an artist, has it in him to be able to create and design, then he should always make his own work.

I reject a hundred percent what most people do. For instance, a man who designs on paper and makes tiny little models in cardboard and goes to the factory and gets it made, I reject that. I worked in the biggest size of metalwork. Thirty-feet-high sculpture for a

Ries: synagogue is pretty high. Very big and very heavy. I made it by myself with my own hands and tools. With help, of course. I can't handle this alone. But not one thing was there which didn't go through my hands. And when I saw it was not good, I changed it. They can't do that. They can't change. The factory does it according to the drawing.

Importance of Communication

S.R.: One of my notions about the artist is that he has an enormous amount of stuff within that he "has to get out." But you say that you didn't begin to think about a project until you had the project outlines.

Ries: This is not quite this way. I made a lot for myself, had no commission and made it for myself, to solve a problem. I have things that are experiments that I play around with. When I see they are bad, I destroy them. When I liked them, I left them, have them around, don't even try to show them to anyone. This is my own. Maybe I'll show it, but don't try to sell. These are two different things. Getting orders or working for yourself.

No one actually works for himself. You need communication. You can't work for a very long time without an audience, I would say, without people who criticize or admire, which tell you what is good and what is bad. You absolutely need that.

Some communicate with just talk. Others communicate with writing books or with making poems. Others communicate with paintings, with sculpture, with craftwork. These are all ways of communication. You always work for people. And if somebody says, "I'll do it for myself," it's nonsense. You can work for yourself, you can experiment, you can express some things you have in mind which work inside you which you are not required to do. You can do that. But still, you need people and criticism.

Now, there is, of course, one point which no one can ever bring out; even if somebody tries to bring it out and explain it, no one will understand it, because everyone is different. Why creates a person or an artist something? His inner feelings from where it is coming, this is very, very difficult to explain. This is the urge, an inner urge. How come that somebody sits down and makes a sculpture or writes a book? Because he has the urge. He must. He has to get it out of his system.

S.R.: When you were going through your years of apprenticeship and rigorous study, was the urge to create sort of pushed aside by all of that?

Ries: No, nothing was pushed aside. Since I always created only what I wanted, I would say, of work I wanted to do, or was interested to do, was interested to research for it and do it, this didn't hurt me at all.

Pond Farm

Beginnings--Gordon and Jane Herr, and Marguerite Wildenhain

S.R.: Let's turn to Pond Farm, now. How did you get there?

Ries: My first connection was through Agnes Brandenstein.

S.R.: Agnes Brandenstein had a shop called Cargoes.

Ries: Yes, that's right. She saw my work at V.C. Morris, my first show here in the West. I was shown first in New York, at the end of '47, at the Jewish Museum. Then Eric Mendelsohn helped me to have a show at V.C. Morris. Through the show at V.C. Morris I met Agnes Brandenstein, and she bought several pieces of my work.

Then Gorden Herr, whose wife was a Brandenstein, was looking to open a school at Pond Farm, a working group of artists and craftsmen who worked at the farm for themselves and took orders and taught.

S.R.: Took orders?

Ries: Took orders, executed orders for other people. And taught over there.

S.R.: Year-round?

Ries: Year-round. In some way he heard of me and came to me and asked me whether I would join. At this time I was very, very much struggling, because without money, without knowing the language enough--my school English wasn't very much--starting a new business in another country was very, very difficult. And my former wife got sick and had to go to a hospital, and I had to pay all that. So it was a very big struggle for me. I didn't want to work for someone else. I went on working for myself, getting enough work to be able to show.

Then Gordon Herr appeared and asked whether I would join. He would give me a workshop and he would give me a house to live in and this would be very cheap. "And we want you to teach and work over at Pond Farm."

Ries: So I joined, because I didn't find another way.

S.R.: Gordon Herr was in charge of the architectural design workshop at Pond Farm?

Ries: He was a typical American art school-goer, who didn't stay and didn't finish. All the money was Brandenstein money that his wife Jane brought with her marriage. All of a sudden he was rich. He didn't have to work.

S.R.: And yet you said he had a real nose for fine teachers.

Ries: His biggest gift was to have the nose for the right people and I would say to organize something, a nose for organization. I think he was in Holland and there he met Marguerite Wildenhain, and they stayed in touch with each other. He had, I believe, this idea before, and had it constantly in his head.

S.R.: Where did he get the idea? Were there any other such schools?

Ries: I believe in that time there were several.

For instance, I had a very good friend who went from here, California, to New York, and joined such a group in New York or around New York. And he was a friend of Gordon Herr. His name was Harold Gregg. He was an art teacher and he was an architect.

He was a fantastic man, a self-made man who had nothing, nothing, nothing. His father, his family had no money. And he went to work, I think, when he was ten years old, and lived in Petaluma, a little town at this time, went to college later on, studied, got his art teacher's credential, went on studying, made his credential as architect, and then he built up his business as an architect, as art teacher, and opened then a summer camp for children. He was a fabulous man. Very different than Gordon Herr.

S.R.: Was his own place successful?

Ries: Very successful.

S.R.: Where was that?

Ries: In Forest Knolls. The most successful children's summer camp. And in wintertime he worked as architect.

S.R.: Aside from the fact that Pond Farm was supposed to be an art school, was it supposed also to be a utopian sort of community?

Ries: I don't know exactly what you mean.

S.R.: Was there a philosophy that went beyond the teaching?

Ries: Maybe, but I believe not much.

Gordon Herr needed--how can I say it?--recognition and didn't get it. He was very ambitious and didn't know anything. As I said, he organized very well, but he had otherwise all crazy ideas which never could be realized.

S.R.: Like what?

Ries: Like this whole Pond Farm business, for instance. He wanted to have a group on Pond Farm, all artists, who worked together in art, in all fields and as a school. But he didn't want that we are members of the group. We wanted a long-lasting contract for the property the school needed, or buy it. He rejected that. We wanted to manage the school together as a group, but he didn't want that. He wanted to have it alone in his hands.

S.R.: It seems as if he created the place, and then filled it with people, but he didn't expect the people to be anything more than in a way furnishings.

Ries: Yes, that's right.

S.R.: Was it very beautiful?

Ries: The setting was absolutely beautiful. The buildings, okay.

First I want to talk about the setting. It was far away from the town. You had to go through Armstrong State Park, through the park, on a small road going high up into the hills. It was nested in between redwood forests, groves, running creeks, and this one big pond. And all mountains and landscape around, and no human being whatsoever as far as you could go and see.

There were a cluster of buildings, a tiny little house which Marguerite Wildenhain built, I believe, from her own money. But still it didn't belong to her. He didn't want to sell the property.

There was an old barn which he rebuilt to his studio, which was kind of nice looking. Normal barn, which he built into his studio upstairs, and downstairs my studio and Marguerite Wildenhain's studio--on one side mine and Marguerite's on the other side. Another little studio he built for the weaver, Trude Guermonprez. That was all. The pottery workshop was also used by Frans Wildenhain, who left very soon.

S.R.: Why did he leave?

Ries: He was teaching painting, pottery, sculpture, together with his wife. But he couldn't make it with his wife. He was a real man, but she was a "man," too. And this didn't work. And she gave the whole tone on Pond Farm, since Gordon was not able to handle the situation. In meetings, which were mostly evenings, there was a terrible situation between Gordon Herr and Marguerite Wildenhain. They hated each other! They fought each other. He sometimes took his hunting knife, which he always had here, and threw it in front of her into the floor. And things were going on that way all the time, unbelievable.

In the morning he was wandering from his house to Marguerite's house, and then they were peacefully sitting together drinking wine and coffee, and were the biggest friends. And in the evenings they were again the big enemy. This was a very strange situation.

Anyway, Marguerite actually dictated what has to be done and what has not to be done on Pond Farm, and he had no word whatsoever. But we had nothing to say, too. Marguerite was the one who dictated about everything.

S.R.: So Frans left.

Ries: Frans simply couldn't stand her and couldn't stand the situation and fell in love with somebody in the neighborhood, and they both left, he and she.

S.R.: How about Jane Herr, Gordon's wife? Where was she?

Ries: Jane died. She had cancer and died, shortly after Agnes Brandenstein died. This was in the family, and she had it since many, many years. Then she got treated and it stopped for a while, and then it broke out again, and then she died of cancer.

S.R.: Gordon was on his own when he was at Pond Farm?

Ries: No, he was not on his own. I think everything which came from him came from Jane. She was highly intelligent.

S.R.: But she was never at Pond Farm, is what I'm trying to find out.

Ries: Jane was living with him on Pond Farm. They had a house there.

S.R.: Was she a power herself at Pond Farm?

Ries: No, she was only the wife of Gordon Herr. But as far as we knew, whenever something decent was said from the side of Herr, then she said it, not he. She was very intelligent and understood us and understood the situation and understood her husband and whatever. She didn't mix very much with us, but when she mixed with us she was very decent and very good in what she said. Never what he said!

S.R.: Now, what role did you play in all of this?

Ries: I was teaching jewelry and metalwork, and worked there and had orders and executed them. I worked for myself.

S.R.: No, but I mean in the evening drama.

Ries: In the evening drama I was sitting there and saw all that and never said a word. What I had to say I talked it over first with Trude Guermonprez and Marguerite Wildenhain, and when they found it good, then they wrote it down and Marguerite knew about it. I never said a word in these meetings, because I felt they are so silly and so unpleasant that it had no sense even to say anything. And since Marguerite was intelligent and knew what she wants--good artists, good craftsmen with a lot of ideas--I didn't have to talk with Gordon Herr at all.

S.R.: From looking at the brochure, it was a group of all refugees?

Ries: Yes. Marguerite Wildenhain taught at the Bauhaus in Germany and then she went to Holland. I believe she opened her own shop. And when the Nazis came she went to England, and from England to the United States.

Trude Guermonprez studied in Germany, in Halle. In 1933 she went to Holland, married a Dutch. They fought the Nazis in the underground movement. He got killed by the Nazis. And after the war she came to the United States.

I left Germany in 1933 when the Nazis came, went to Palestine, came then after the war to the United States.

Frans Wildenhain was a German, not Jewish. I think he got caught in Holland by the Nazis, put into the army, fought for the Nazis. After the war he came to the United States.

S.R.: Claire Falkenstein?

Ries: Claire Falkenstein is a hundred percent American, who at the time was still here in the United States. She didn't live on Pond Farm. She came once a week to teach.

[Jean] Varda was from Greece, lived here in Sausalito a long time, and came once a week to teach. On Pond Farm lived also a family of John Allen, art teacher, and a family of Mr. Lang, a carpenter and painter. Mr. Allen and Mr. Lang worked on Pond Farm as carpenters, building log cabins.

I think these were all.

S.R.: Do you think that Gordon Herr had some kind of rescue fantasies?

Ries: I can't tell you that. It's very difficult to say afterwards. I didn't like him very much, so I stayed away. I was much better with Jane Herr. There I was able to talk in a friendly and decent way. After she died I left Pond Farm. Everything broke down. He made terrible mistakes. He threw his money around. Jane kept money together for the children apart from him. He made lots of debts which he couldn't pay.

Then the bank took the Hexagon House away, which he built with other people together.

S.R.: The Hexagon House?

Ries: Yes, the Hexagon House, which is still standing at the entrance of the park. This was built for the students to live in. He designed it and Allen and Lang executed it.

So the whole thing broke down after Jane's death, and I left. Trude Guermonprez left before, and Frans Wildenhain left even earlier, and only Marguerite stayed on.

S.R.: I should think that this group of people would have very little tolerance for the dictator aspects of Herr.

Ries: No, no tolerance at all. But it was not the dictatorship like the Nazis had or any other dictator. He had crazy ideas and wanted to transfer this to us. It just didn't work. We were all similarly educated, had a very good education in Germany. We knew what we want; we made our life, after we were thrown out from the Nazis, so we could live. He couldn't live. He lived off the money from Jane and had these crazy ideas. He was never able to make a living, but we did. So we knew what we wanted and how we wanted to work. He didn't.

S.R.: Did he actually train any architecture students?

Ries: No. He had no students.

S.R.: The architectural workshop that he ran was of no consequence?

Ries: No consequence whatsoever.

S.R.: Did the rest of you take students all the way through the two-year program?

Ries: We took in summertime students, yes. We had a very few students all year round, in summertime mainly. One year we taught summer school for the San Francisco State College, on Pond Farm.

S.R.: Did Gordon arrange that?

Ries: I can't tell you. I think Marguerite arranged most.

Cast Metal Work

S.R.: Did people do a complete apprenticeship with you?

Ries: Yes, there was one man--I lost his track--he lived in Los Angeles, a very nice guy. His mother lived in San Diego and he lived in Los Angeles. After he worked with me on Pond Farm for one or two years, all year-round, he opened his own shop in a Los Angeles neighborhood and visited me several times, and I visited him in Los Angeles. This is many, many years back. And then I lost the connection.

There is another person here in the Bay Area. Marianna Fletcher is her name. She lives in Inverness. I could even give you the address if you want to. She studied with me all year-round and is still making some jewelry.

S.R.: Knowing how you were trained, were you able to offer them, in that period of time, an adequate kind of training?

Ries: I believed I offered them more than any school could have offered. We worked daily at least five hours.

S.R.: Did you have a foundry and everything?

Ries: No. You see, there is another point. I learned even to cast artwork in Germany at the Academy of Art. This was an entirely different type, to cast real sculpture work. But I didn't have the time and money in the very beginning, after I came to the United States. I had not the money to have something like that, because it requires a lot of tools and materials and a special building and a furnace and I couldn't.

But for jewelry, I was never interested to cast, for the following reason: what you did here out of cast as an art form, I was against it. I feel that cast is very good for reproduction. When you make a piece and want to reproduce that, then you cast it. It's the cheapest and fastest way to get it exactly. But to make an art form out of cast, it's against all my feelings. Because you don't work with the metal. When I work in metal, then I have to feel the metal and have to work with the metal. But when I cast, I work with wax, and wax is a very soft material. So I create in a soft material. I don't create for metal; I create for wax. When this gets through heating out of the

Ries: negative form, and then metal just poured in, it's no metalwork. And all this singly-created cast-work here looks like pudding, and I hate it.

S.R.: Oh, my pretty ring! [laughs]

Ries: Excuse me, I'm sorry. Your ring is not exactly like what I call pudding. Most of all cast pieces look like a piece of brain taken out of your head, all these bumps, bumps on bumps, all smooth, nothing metal-like, very smooth and flowing, shapeless stuff which I call that pudding, pudding jewelry.

S.R.: The lost wax method was terribly popular, in all of that time.

Ries: Yes. This was the easiest way of making jewelry. They didn't have to learn a technique. You could pour into a can with a piece of asbestos on top and a cover. You poured into a negative form, which burnt out the wax. You put the cover down, and the wet asbestos evaporated the water and pressed the metal in. In a tin can you could make a cast. You didn't need much equipment. Everyone could learn it in five minutes and make the most so-called beautiful jewelry, without knowing any technique. But they didn't realize, for instance, that when you didn't take very good silver or gold--mostly scraps and old spoons and so on, it will break apart because the alloy was bad.

I built everything up by hand. I'm not interested in casting because I want to work directly with the metal. I hold the metal in my hands and work with the metal and can shape it into any shape, whether I chisel it or I shape it or I fire it or--there are hundreds of thousands of different techniques. I can create anything I want to, but I want to work directly in the metal.

S.R.: That's interesting. Maybe what is attractive about the other is the magic of transformation that takes place.

Ries: But you never get metal character. Don't you understand that? Whenever you work in a softer material, whether it is wax or clay to make your model, it's never the character or nature of metal.

I feel when I work in a particular material, I have to work with that material and not in another material. And in this way, it will be always good. Because this particular material has particular techniques, and when you use these particular techniques, this must be good. It must be at least metal, a good metal piece. Whether it is a good design is another question. But when you have a good design and work directly in metal, with your own hands and tools which are created from metal, then it must be a good piece.

S.R.: This philosophy, this way of working directly, was true also of Trude and Marguerite?

Ries: That's right. This is, I believe, our European education. In England it's the same, in France the same, in Switzerland the same, in Italy the same, everywhere in Europe the same education and the same build-up. First learn technique, and then go into art, but very intensively learn drawing, learn perspective, learn live drawing and learn designing and express this in the right way.

Integrating Industrial Forms into Artistic Work

S.R.: In a description of how the school worked, I read that one day a week a student went to the "form and color workshop," which was a workshop to integrate everything else. You might have been working on your specialty for four days, but then on the fifth day there was a workshop called form and color. I wondered if you remember anything of what went on there.

Ries: I don't remember. But we had, of course, discussions at this time, discussions with our American friends. We talked about new expression of art. Not the way like it was done by a [Peter] Voulkos, for instance, which I think is horrible and ugly and--how can I say?--unartistic. Not artistic. You can work with industrial forms, with things which industry creates, pipes, square and round and so on, and sheets. You can work with that and create with that. It's absolutely possible. And create good art, too. But it must be always a creation by yourself and then put together not by a factory. We had lots of talks about that.

S.R.: With American artists? People who had come up to Pond Farm?

Ries: Claire Falkenstein, for instance, and Varda. Actually, Claire Falkenstein was the one who put our thought into that.

I believe this is absolutely possible, to create decent things with half-finished industrial-made forms. For instance, before I came here to the United States, before I went to Palestine, I made already in Germany lamps, electric lamps, lamp fixtures, very simple, very modern ones. They were all made by industrial finished parts which I put together the way like I felt was right, in proportion and so on.

In Germany--and I believe here it is the same way--they made very, very long rods with threads, and for these threads they made endless parts which can be all screwed into that. The wires,

Ries: electric wire, go through this one pipe, and the fixture starts there with wiring which goes in and the electric setting underneath. And in between you can do what you want. Now, they made many, many parts, very beautiful parts, very simple parts, just tubings and balls in all sizes and half-balls, and shades, and all very flat and very round and whatever. And you could buy these as single parts and then you put it together what you wanted. And cut it where you wanted.

S.R.: You couldn't do that in this country, could you?

Ries: No, it's impossible.

Now, I want to mention another thing which is very important for my work, only for my work. As long as I worked in Israel and in Germany, I could find in metal shops--like Pacific Metals here or Alcoa or whatever--I could buy many, many shapes in metal. Shapes which I could put together. Much, much more than here ever. Or I bought sheets and tubes and rods, and shaped them by myself into shapes. This was my work. I was not connected with many catalogues, like here in the United States. I designed something without knowing whether I can buy it or not. I knew I can make it. I created my own shapes; if I couldn't buy the finished ones, I made them. Okay?

When I came to the United States I found that I can't buy anything. They produce only certain things, and these are very limited. Only certain moldings for windows, for doors, for buildings, and tubings. That was all. So I had to re-learn to design, so that I could execute my work. I had to go along with that, what the factories here produced. It's a different type of work. And still I bought many sheets and created my own shapes, which no one else does.

S.R.: Why were those things available in Germany? Was it for craftsmen?

Ries: Yes. There were many possibilities. For architecture. There were many architects who designed, made very beautiful buildings, wanted to have their design and not just what the factory dictates.

In England it's the same. You find there the most fabulous buildings. They are all individual. They are specially made for that. Not that the factory says, "We have only this for the windows and for the doors." So we have to take that. We don't produce the other things.

S.R.: Someone like Frank Lloyd Wright running a big operation?

Ries: We went along with that. Everyone who works here in the United States has to go along with that. They have a whole library of catalogues, and you have to take what the factory produces.

The Last Days of the Pond Farm Workshops; On to Forest Knolls

S.R.: How were the students affected by the drama on Pond Farm? Were they aware of it?

Ries: Mostly they were aware of it, and very disgusted. And there was reason for being disgusted. Because it was very open what was going on there. Gordon Herr had his sick wife, and was coming together with Marguerite Wildenhain, and coming with another girl together, who lived in Guerneville, in the village. Everyone knew when he was not on Pond Farm he was down there.

And Frans Wildenhain, who was married to Marguerite Wildenhain, came together with Trude Guermonprez and the other girl up the hill above Pond Farm. There was one tiny little cottage where this couple lived and had their affairs.

That was all over. Everything crisscrossed all over the farm in the most strangest ways. Some people lived still on Pond Farm property but below Armstrong State Park, nearer to the village. And everything went crisscross.

S.R.: Did they do other arts, like dance or poetry readings or bring in things like that?

Ries: No. Maybe they tried, but it never came to that. It broke down before it was built up. Once they had a theater group up on Pond Farm.

S.R.: And when Marguerite took it over, she didn't continue to build it?

Ries: At this time the state wanted to buy all the properties to make it into a state park. After a very short time, everyone who lived there had to get out, and the state bought the property. So Marguerite should have to get out, too. But since she had to move around in Europe, leave Germany, leave Holland, leave England, and finally she thought to stay here on Pond Farm--she was already pretty old then--she didn't want to move again. So all her friends, including we on Pond Farm and outsiders--many, many hundreds of friends she had and students--wrote to Governor Brown, who was at the time governor, whether Marguerite could stay, and he gave the

Wednesday, Dec. 25, 1963 | Homestead Valley's Victor Reis Creates Great Religious Art

Mill Valley Record

Local Artisan is Top U.S. Artist in Church Works

Take time this season to study carefully the symbolic art that enhances the beauty of your house of worship and its service—the candle holders, the chalices, the cross and so on.

One of the foremost—and one of the few—liturgical artists in the country, Victor Ries of Mill Valley is in the vanguard of a quiet revolution in religious art.

The tall German-born metalsmith who teaches at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, sat in his studio at 420 La Verne this week and talked of his work, his approach to religion and the future of this special craft.

When you talk with him, you remember the critics have noted that his is a rare ability to translate conventional religious symbols into inspirational, universal art. Reis talks with a modest but firm authority and the uncompromising honesty of a craftsman who values his integrity.

What he had to say, we think will give you a fresh appreciation of church art.

AT WORK—Victor Ries works on a silver chalice for the Lutheran church in his Mill Valley studio. Ries is one of the foremost liturgical artists in the country.

PROVOCATIVE APPROACH

Ries does not identify his work with any one faith. He has created objects for all faiths. These range from a pure, chaste silver chalice for a Lutheran church, to a mighty brass and bronze menorach for a synagogue to an upreaching lotus flower for a Buddhist temple.

His provocative view is that all religions are a variation on the same theme. "They are all different stories around the same central idea," he will tell you.

"Holidays all fall around the same time, and are celebrated in about the same way, the world over," he continues. Christmas, for example, is a particular manifestation of a larger, universal event which Ries describes as "going from the dark season into the light season." The Jews have another name for this celebration, the Buddhists another, says Ries.

One activity shared by all faiths during this particular season, as Ries pointed out, is the burning of candles, from darkness into light.

LIGHT IS SYMBOL

Light is a quality and symbol of particular interest to Ries. He quotes, "Light is the symbol of the Divine." A great many of his works for churches involve light in its many aspects—such things as processional candlesticks, altar candlesticks, vigil lights, sanctuary lamps, and chanukah candlebra. One of his most illustrative works in this vein is the recent translucent canopy he designed for St. Raymonds' Church in Menlo Park.

Ries' home too exalts further this artist's attention to light and to symbols of light. Silhouetted agoinst broad floor to ceiling windows is an original Chanukah candlebra of black iron and brass. Its very form, ascending in pattern, uplifts the eye and the thought of the observer.

Over his fireplace hangs a bronze Eternal Light for a synagogue, radiating out from a central point like a giant sunburst.

GLORIFIES LIGHT

In one of San Francisco's oldest churches is the Ries baptistry. This eloquent contribution to the St. Vincent de Paul Church, in even its smallest detail is designed to glorify new life—from the dove of peace on its grille-work to the shimering mosaic baptismal font.

CRUCIFIXES MAGNIFY

Ries' crucifixes, adorning altars across the land, magnify anew his belief and faith in life and rejuvenation over sarrow and death. Rarely is the body of Christ to be found on a Ries crucifix. This is in line with his feeling that he cannot honestly depict the body of Christ because he has no idea what the body of Christ really looked like.

And more than that, the "corpus" is the least significant element of the crucifix for Ries. The important thing is that Christ lived and worked and left his ever-present spirit and his teachings as a heritage for mankind.

BRONZE CRUCIFIX

To illustrate his words, Ries

showed us two crucifixes. The first, a streamlined, graceful crucifix in bronze, incorporated the words "Corpus Christi" into the design. He pointed out that the crucifix was designed in such a way that it abstracted the body of Christ.

A second crucifix showed an outline of the human form which Ries had cut out of the crucifix leaving only the shadow suggestion of the body. Ascending this silhouette, bursting into bloom at the top, was a delicate vine—"always a symbol of life," Ries explained.

MUCH RESEARCH

Hours of historical research go into Ries' works to uncover the symbolism and historical sigificance inherent in each object. For instance, when commisisoned to do a six foot lotus flower for a Buddhist church, Ries studied the botanical and theological implications of the flower. He learned that a lotus flower bursts through mud and mire to open into full and glorious bloom. In line with this development, the Buddhists see the lotus flower as a symbol of man's soul which eventually bursts above the mire and sod of the material body to burst into beautiful bloom.

STAYS IN DOCTRINE

In all of his liturgical work, Ries strives to say something new and yet to remain within the framework of church doctrine. A vigil light stand, for instance, can be transformed by Ries into a delicate latticework of crosses which, when attached to a church wall, becomes both a functional piece and a unique wall piece. His aim, in his own words is "to make a piece of art out of an object that is a necessary part of worship."

"FAITH-BOUND" ARTISTS

There are many artists working in liturgical art today, but in Ries' opinion, few excellent ones. Some, he points out, are wholly one-sided and "faith-bound" in their approach. Others are good artists but do not ever grasp the religious feeling or the significance behind the symbols.

"It may be a good piece of art, but not of religious art," said Ries. Religious art must be meaningful to everyone—not the artist alone. As Ries pointed out, there is little inspirational value in a piece that is totally unrecognizable until the artist informs us it is a Madonna.

CHURCH AS MUSEUM

Ries believes that because the church opens its doors to all mankind, it has a responsibility, similar to a museum, to educate them aesthetically. "The church has to educate them in just showing them the good things," he pointed out.

The demands on the liturgical artist are many. He must understand to some degree the dictates of the belief controlling his design. He must be a good artist, But most important of all to Ries, he must be able to make compromises without losing his individual sense of expression.

Contrary to other silver and metal smiths, Ries does not ascribe to the "casting method."

"In casting, all designs are first carved in wax, and then a mold is made. This wax is soft and the artist never is in direct touch with the metal. Thus, he never understands the material, and so can never create the right thing from the metal," explained Ries.

A direct knowledge of the metal with which one is working is an esential for a metalsmith. "I work directly with the metal, do all the carving, all the hammering, all the shaping myself," said Ries.

He pointed to a delicate coiled pearl ring which he said had taken him about two hours to complete. More complex jewelry, on the other hand, can take as much as a day to complete.

Ries had a one-man show at the De Young Museum last spring which introduced his work to a great many Bay Area enthusiasts. This show was invaluable in collecting his versatility into a coherent whole and thus illustrating the significant contribution Ries is making to the contemporary scene.

Although Ries is widely known for his liturgical art, he designs and makes, mainly to order, gold and silver jewelry. He is also frequently commissioned to hammer out hoods, screens, room dividers, wall sconces in copper, bronze, brass, silver and gold.

GEAMAN BORN

Born in Berlin, his father wanted him to go into the famliy business—millinery. Ries objected. He had already decided what he wanted to do. As a child, his fingers were constantly busy drawing, sketching, making small objects out of paper. Neighborhood friends who had already begun studying metal work whetted his interest. Eventually, he served a four-year apprenticeship in a metal smith's shop, went on to a year of study at the City Art School in Berlin, and three years study at the Berlin Academy of Fine and Applied Arts.

In 1933, with the advent of Hitler, he left Berlin for Palestine. He remained in Israel some 14 years. One piece from this period is a magnificent "Document Box" in silver and wood, he had designed to be given as a special gift from Israel to the British diamond king, Sir Herbert Oppenheimer.

After World War II, Ries came to America and almost directly to San Francisco. Soon after his arrival he discovered that few people were working or even interested in liturgical art at that time. So, he felt there might be opportunities for him to contribute in this work.

SHORTAGE OF TOOLS

One of his chief laments, directly after his arrival in America, was the shortage of good tools. He had sold his before coming to America expecting to find "better, more economical" tools here. He was disappointed. Fortunately, he located his former professor from the Berlin Academy, who was at that time teaching in Providnce, R.I. This man was able to give him the tools he needed, and he has been using them ever since. Ries feels that one of the main reasons that little of significance has emerged in his particular field is a result of the poor quality of the tools in America. "The big machine tools are perfect, but tools for smaller production are quite bad," he concluded.

Ries: permission to Marguerite to stay for her lifetime on Pond Farm in her house. This belongs to the state. She has to pay a very small amount on rent and can stay. She has not the right to sell. She can only stay as long as she lives and wants to stay.

S.R.: She continued to have students also?

Ries: Yes. And anyone else had to get out. This is part of the state park, where she is now.

S.R.: When you came back down to the Bay Area, what was your community?

Ries: I went to Forest Knolls in Marin County, where I found a little house with a little workshop.

S.R.: Where is that?

Ries: Forest Knolls is behind San Rafael on the way to Olema, to the ocean, on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, behind Fairfax. This is a tiny little town, and I rented the house and shop of another artist who is a famous potter, Mary Lindheim. She owned the house. She got very sick and needed money, and then I bought the house. My friend Harold Gregg helped me to buy it. He lived in Forest Knolls, and we were very often together.

S.R.: That would have been about 1953?

Ries: In between '53 and '54, the end of '53, I believe. When I came to Forest Knolls, we got already known through Pond Farm, because we made a lot of advertisements.

S.R.: The school itself advertised?

Ries: Yes, and I got known through the show I had at V.C. Morris and de Young Museum. And when I moved to Forest Knolls, the newspaper which was printed in San Rafael sent someone and I got a long article into the newspaper, two pages, about my work in the United States, and then I was made. Lots of people came and I sold a lot and got a lot of orders. It was very good for my business.

S.R.: That's rather amazing, actually. That particular piece of publicity, you think, really turned--

Ries: Yes. Turned everything to the good.

I think another thing was that when I came to Forest Knolls, Marin County, I joined the Jewish Center there, and they were just building a new tiny temple. So they ordered all the metalwork for

Ries: the temple, and this too got into the newspaper. And then came the big article into the newspaper, talking about my Jewish work there and on Pond Farm and the show at the de Young. And then I was made.

S.R.: There was no problem about being in a remote area? That was not a problem for business?

Ries: No. The opposite. People from the city called me, they wanted to come and see my studio, and wanted to see me and talk with me personally after they read the article. So a lot of ladies came. They came and talked a while with me and I showed them photographs I had of my work.

S.R.: If they came that far, would they also buy a piece at the same time?

Ries: Yes, they did. Or they ordered something. They didn't buy immediately, but they ordered. Mostly they came back. Very often it happened that people came visiting me, they saw an unfinished piece in my workshop, liked it, and said, "When this is finished, we must have it."

"You don't know how much it costs. I even don't know when I'm finished with it."

"It doesn't matter. We wait. Send it to us and we'll pay what it costs."

So, I got rid of it before even it was finished. This was very often the case.

S.R.: Was that a real heyday for good jewelry, a special time in this area, do you think?

Ries: No, it was not a special time. You see, America is very large and has everything, has people which are cultured and uncultured. But through Pond Farm, through the students, who came from everywhere, and from articles, I got letters from everywhere that people wanted something. And from the East somewhere. So I got only per letter in touch with them and sent them drawings. If they accepted my drawings, I made it. Partly through advertisement, partly from mouth-to-mouth.

People were very happy with what they got in my workshop. They bought a piece of jewelry and people saw it and said, "Where did you get that?" From mouth-to-mouth, I got my customers. I didn't work with shops. And shops didn't like that I worked directly with the customer.

S.R.: So you had no outlet in San Francisco?

Ries: Later on, Nanny's shop found out she must carry from me. Because so many people ask for my work, she said she is going to buy.

S.R.: Your own community of artist friends, did they include a group of jewelers like Margaret dePatta?

Ries: I met Margaret dePatta at this time on Pond Farm, but she was not connected with Pond Farm. When you work in a group of people, you meet more people in different fields. And I met Margaret and we were very good friends. I visited them quite often in Napa. They lived in Napa. Then she had work at Nanny's and I had work at Nanny's. So we got quite often together and exchanged ideas.

S.R.: That's what I wondered.

Ries: There was even something very strange. I work in an entirely different way. I don't have any principles or rules. I work with my feeling. When I'm in a good mood and get particular ideas, I just make it. And whatever comes out, it comes out.

Margaret dePatta was very intellectual. She couldn't do anything without a law. Everything had to have a principle, a law, a frame in which to work. And she worked very architecturally. I worked exactly the opposite way. When I worked for myself, I hardly had any drawing. I made a little sketch, and only I could read it, no one else. Didn't tell enough. She had to have it exactly figured out.

But we were very good friends. And the strange thing is that sometimes she came up, without knowing, with exactly the same idea I made moodily, and she figured out architecturally. And we came out with the same thing. They were so alike that one decided not to go on showing it or producing it. Because I could have done it or she could have done it. Isn't that strange?

Transcriber: Sam Middlebrooks
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture
in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Ruth Levi Eis

THE JEWISH ARTIST AND THE SYNAGOGUE

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1984

Copyright © 1985 by The Regents of the University of California

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Ruth Levi Eis

INTERVIEW HISTORY	i
ART-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, GERMANY	547
EDUCATION, AND THE OAKLAND ART WORLD, 1950s	551
THE SYNAGOGUE AND ART	557
Temple Sinai, Oakland	557
Relationship of Artist to Client	559
Victor Ries	561
ISRAEL, THE SOURCE?	563
HEBREW SCRIPT; MICROGRAPHY	565
LITURGICAL ART SOURCES; "INTERPRETING ART"	567
SUMMARY, AND CONTROVERSY	569

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The liturgical arts oral history project has moved a long way from the first group of interviews with the founders of the Catholic Art Forum to this interview with Ruth Levi Eis, curator at the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley. The reader has been asked to cross many conceptual lines in the process.

The members of the Catholic Art Forum were concerned with fostering a greater interest in and appreciation of liturgical and religious art of the Roman Catholic tradition, "with particular emphasis on the contemporary in so far as it does not contradict tradition." In the oral histories we counterpointed changes in the liturgy and the arts of the liturgy of the Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s with the changes in worship and new approaches to religious artistic representation that have come about in rthodox, rotestant, and Jewish houses of worship.

Ruth Eis is an artist and an authority on Jewish art, the author of catalogues on Jewish art and artifacts. We came to her to ask questions about Jewish ritual artifacts, assuming that they held a place of importance in the Jewish temple parallel to the liturgical furnishings of the Catholic churches. We asked whether there had been changes in the design of those ritual objects that reflected new thinking about their importance in the temple, new views of what is perceived as beautiful and worthwhile and acceptable, or possibly even reflected changes in the religion. The questions elicited interesting but inconclusive material. Assumed parallels probably do not exist.

A "Jewish Art" is not found in the temple. A "Christian Art" is not emanating from the churches. It is far truer that artists no longer reflect religious traditions but create and express new spiritual perceptions, the sources for which are many--to paraphrase historical theologist John Dillenberger in his introduction to "Perceptions of the Spirit in Twentieth-Century American Art" (1977). Although our motivating interest was in liturgical art, it has been difficult not to open the thinking to religious art more generally, and on that subject, our interviewees have been "liberated."

Ruth Eis was an agreeable and thoughtful informant, readily sharing her own history and her background in art. We met first in a corner of the Magnes Museum, where the sounds of unpacking a new exhibition triumphed over a quiet interview. It was a pleasure to carry on, a few days later, in the Eis home in Oakland, where much of Ruth Eis's own fine art work is on view.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name RUTH SUSANNE LEVI EIS

Date of birth FEB 6th 1920 Place of birth MAINZ GERMANY

Father's full name SALI LEVI

Birthplace HALLDORF, GERMANY

Occupation RABBI

Mother's full name MARGARETE WEISSMANN LEVI

Birthplace BRESLAU, SILESIA

Occupation CONCERT PIANIST

Where did you grow up ? IN GERMANY

Present community OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Education

Occupation(s)

Special interests or activities

RUTH EIS

Birthplace: Mainz, Germany.Lived in the United States since 1937.

Education: Private school, Lyceum, Mainz.
Art school Feige-Strassburger,Berlin
Traphagen School of Fashion Design,New York
Alliance of Art,New York

Graduate of Oakland Junior College,A.A. 1956
Graduate of University of California , Berkeley, B.A. 1958

Graduate of Lone Mountain College, San Francisco, M.A. 1976

Continueing studies in Fine Art, Arts & Crafts
Ackerman (Jewelry)
Park, Siegrist (Painting)
Kalymos (Graphics) a.o.

Exhibits: Lynn Kottler Gallery, New York
Lucien Labaudt, San Francisco
S.F. Art Institute, Museum of Art
Oakland Museum
U.C. Associated Student Center a.o.

Professional Activities:

Religious School teacher (certificate 1955 East Bay School for Teacher Training)

Art Docent, Oakland Museum, 1967 (Associate)
Television panelist, lecturer, writer

Publications: National Poetry Association,1959
German Quarterly,1960
The Hanukkiah, Our Voice,1973
Fallen Arches,1974-1978

Hanukkah Lamps (catalog)1977
Torah Binders (catalog) 1979

Affiliations:
Oakland Art Association(Board member 6yrs.)
San Francisco Women Artists
Oakland Museum
American Assn. of Museums and ICOM
Brandeis University Women (life)
Hadassah (life)
O.R.T.
Temple Sinai, Oakland (Board)
U.C. Alumni Assn. (life)

Occupation: Curator , The Judah L.Magnes Museum, Berkeley, California,94705

THE JEWISH ARTIST AND THE SYNAGOGUE

[Date of Interview: January 23, 1984]

Art-Historical Background, Germany

Eis: I was born in Mainz, Germany. My family dates back two hundred years in Germany. I had one sister and one brother. My parents stayed, and made us leave Germany, because my mother was quite a wise woman and she saw what was coming, and she wanted her children to be safely out.

Riess: Was the whole family artistic?

Eis: My mother was a concert pianist, and there was always music in the house. My father [Sali Levi] in his student days had painted; although he was a rabbi by profession, he was very artistic. The whole feeling of the home was an artistic one. And that included everything--music, literature, art.

Riess: Were they collectors of Jewish art?

Eis: Yes. It's quite amazing to me to hear today about Jewish artists that I have practically grown up with. My father was on the eastern front during the First World War, and he became enamoured with all the Eastern European Jewish way of life, which was quite new to him. He came from Baden, southern Germany, from an assimilated house, assimilated in the sense that this was a very small village and everybody was sort of equal and accepted. Today we talk about assimilation; it was practiced at that time.

When he came to East Europe, he was really amazed at this whole culture; it was completely new to him. And when he returned, he brought with him drawings, etchings by Regina Mundlak--which is a name that's very unfamiliar now, and I'm just going to give a lecture on this because we have some of her works in the museum collection

Eis: here.* And a beautiful wooden sculpture by Mark Antokolski that was probably done with the most primitive tools. It's a massive thing. And many other paintings that I remember.

One that I wish I had today is called the Witch of Endor. I don't know if you remember the story. Saul went to find out what was going to be his fate. This painting I think has been done by other artists once in a while. There are, I think, three different ones that I remember, but we had one hanging at home. I was very small and very impressed with the mood of this, the sort of mystery.

There were certain things that I recall very clearly; they stayed with me.

Riess: You are talking about Jewish artists; you're not talking about necessarily synagogue art.

Eis: No, but the fact is that Jewish artists were very taken up with the whole idea of a Jewish people and the fate of the Jewish people, and we could hardly call that secular art. When they were portraying rabbis or people praying, it's not the same as church art, but still it isn't secular art either.

Riess: That's right, the subject matter is not secular. But the objects that are part of the worship, of the service, the candles and the ritual art--

Eis: Ritual objects. You see, ritual objects in Judaism are part of the home because so much of the ritual is done at home, and that comes through always because it's not that you only have certain things for use in church, which in this case would be the synagogue. As a matter of fact, there's very little that is done in the synagogue. It's a house of prayer and a house of coming together, but not necessarily embellished with precious things. They have to be meaningful. And most of the objects that are being used are really functional, like the candlesticks. The candlesticks are part of the ritual on Friday night, and they have to be in the home; otherwise you don't do the ritual.

Riess: When did modern Jewish art begin?

Eis: Contemporary Jewish art was, as always, bound up with the surrounding culture, and as soon as you start talking about contemporary art, whether you're talking about Art Nouveau--starting from 1900 on, it always depended on the surroundings, and the whole Bauhaus era was definitely reflected in Jewish artists' work. This is something that's very often forgotten today.

Riess: I suppose that Victor Ries would be a good example of that.

---

*The interview was held at the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley, where Eis is curator.

Eis: Yes, he would. But there were antecedents to the art of Victor Ries.

Riess: But not someone like Boris Schatz, for instance.

Eis: No, because Boris Schatz wanted to do something completely different. He wanted to create a Jewish art from the land, and he really forced things. He transplanted ideas, and they were very set ideas. They did not grow naturally. This is not a value judgment on my part at all. I'm simply stating the fact that there was a big difference between what happened at Bezalel school, where he took certain elements and combined them--he wanted the arts and crafts of the Orient to be represented, and he combined Oriental Jews, Yemenite Jews, and those from the North African countries that had done this type of craft before, and said,"See here, this is a Jewish style because they were Jewish craftsmen." And I think Schatz developed that. Those Jewish craftsmen were influenced by their Arab surroundings, always seeing the Mohammedan type of art, because a lot of this is very close to what we call Middle Eastern art.

The time of expressionism in Germany had a very strong influence on Jewish artists, because of what happened afterwards. You see, sometimes ten years can be very important, and sometimes ten years is too short a time to really make an imprint on this history because something else may overshadow it. So the time from the First World War to 1933, when of course the whole art scene had to change in Germany as far as the Jews were concerned because their art wasn't recognized--not only that, it was destroyed--but that brief interlude I consider terribly important. It was the start of modern art.

It was then transplanted to Israel, yes, but also to other countries. I think that there was a general dispersion. Everybody was so dispersed that you couldn't even find which way the art was going. There were artists that worked in South America; there were artists that worked in South Africa. Some went to England; some went to Denmark. It's almost impossible to say how all this worked itself out.

The reason why we know about Israeli art is because this was one place where a real effort was made to consolidate. But I think many of the Israeli artists and the teachers at that time were already so influenced by their own earlier experience that they brought all this together. But that's not to say that there wasn't anything there before.

As I look back now, I know that it's wrong to let one thing take over completely, because you don't do justice to each time. I'm not a political person at all. As a matter of fact, I turn away when it comes to politics. But the whole emphasis on the Holocaust today bothers me very much. I think there is a better way to show

Eis: reverence to the memory of the people that have been killed, and that is by going back and seeing what they did before they got killed. We had so many lives that were just ruined, you know, they're gone. But what they did before--.

Riess: Right, their life is forgotten in the face of their death.

Eis: What I'm personally doing now is reading a lot in the journals and magazines, whatever is left of that time before. There again, the pity is that so much of it was lost and burned and couldn't be kept. Some of these books and journals have become rarities today. I think they should be translated. I think they should be published again. Articles must be read because they give you the picture of what happened at the time.

It's quite amazing to me to see that after '33, after everything was being cut back and down and really there was hardly any way of being free to do what you wanted to do artistically, that still at that time there were theater groups going on, there were dance groups--there was such an active Jewish culture, in my estimate it's unbelievable.

Riess: Well, it was your period of growing up, too, and you must have images of it.

Eis: Yes, I do, absolutely.

Riess: How assimilated was that ten-year period? When you go back and look at the journals and things like that, how did Jewish artists fit in? Were they identified as such?

Eis: I would have to read up on that, really. I don't think at that time there were any restrictions. Funny enough, the restriction might come more from the home, when parents would say, "Oh, I don't want you to study art," or "I don't want you to study architecture. What kind of a profession is that for a nice Jewish boy?" [laughter] You know, this kind of thing. But I don't think that there were restrictions.

Riess: To summarize what you're saying, it's not even a simple background that I can lay for all of this, because you're saying that the history has really been lost or badly obscured anyway, of what predated that exodus.

Eis: Yes. And this probably went hand in hand with an interest in Jewish ceremonial art or ritual art, because there were new groups forming that had as their main interest the study of Jewish art. And the earliest books about Jewish art came from Germany, I think. I don't know if you would have any of the material from Kassel, from

Eis: Braunschweig, from Frankfurt, from Cologne. All over in these cities there were groups who got together and who started to study Jewish art. The first person who initiated that was not Jewish; it was [Heinrich] Frauberger, a German Catholic, who systematically started to study, which was something new again, had not been done before. And all the information that we today have in the museums comes from that. That's our source.

Education, and the Oakland Art World, 1950s

[Date of Interview: February 2, 1984]

Eis: There are so many different streams coming together in thinking back over this that there's a danger of going off on tangents.

Riess: Oh, well, tangents we can live with.

Eis: I did try to go through some of the early records. I told you that I keep almost everything, and looking around here you can see that I was telling you the truth.* [laughter] So I find all kinds of other things that may or may not be interesting. If I had it all together, it would be a book, and then it would be very easy to say chronologically this is what happened, this is what happened. But as it is, I have just thrown the things each in separate boxes--a box for the Oakland Art Association, a box for my personal papers, and so on--but they're not in order, so that now in going through I'm backtracking and I don't know how it will fall into place. The only way to do this is to mark everything on three-by-five cards and put them in order. [laughter]

But, for instance, here, a show at Jack London Square, 1967. Here, August 1969, a lecture at the Berkeley Art Center by Carl Worth. I introduced him. Now he is at the Walnut Creek Art Center, and at that time he was at the Berkeley Rotary Art Garden Center. Certainly he's had a tremendous influence on the area here. That's why I said about tangents; where do I stop?

Riess: Why did you introduce him?

Eis: I was program chairperson for Oakland Art Association. I just found this, "the third and last presentation of ours here is Aspects of Art in Our Community." So obviously there was something going on. And I have his bio--at that time quite short. [laughs] We did go to the same class at UC.

Riess: That's the point where you really came into the scene, 1953?

---

*This interview took place in Eis's home.

Eis: We got here in, I think, 1953. As soon as the children were in school and settled, I wanted to take some courses. I went to Grove Street, which was at that time just changing from University High to the Oakland Junior College. That was the first year that they were converting it to a junior college. They were still fighting for accreditation to UC and got it. So I went there for two years, and I was in the first graduating class from there that went on to UC. I think I even have some pictures--[looking at date on pictures] that was '56, so I started in '54.

I went from there to Berkeley and made my BA at Berkeley. And then I went on for graduate study at Berkeley. But that was actually the beginning for me to get into the scene here. If I hadn't been in school, I don't think I'd ever have met all the different people that I did meet. Because I would have simply been a housewife taking the children to school, maybe to the Brownies and to the Boy Scouts, and it would have stopped right there. But I sort of stumbled into this whole thing by accident.

This began [laughs]--it's very funny. When I came into the office that morning, I wanted information, and instead, there was a lady there who said, "Are you coming to take subject 1A? You are late. You'd better hurry up. Go to room 48." I had no idea what subject 1A was, not having gone to school here. But when I'm told to go somewhere, I go! And especially in that tone, that I'm late: "Hey, hurry up!" [laughter] So I went into room 48, and there were all these people sitting there writing studiously, and I came in, the teacher motioned to me, handed me a sheet, two sheets of paper, and pointed to a chair to sit down quiet.

I sat down, I looked at the sheets, and I'd never before seen a multiple-choice test. I looked at this, and I saw these questions, and I thought, My God, these people here must be crazy. What kind of a question is that, it's so obvious wrong, you know. The very simplest things. And I thought, Well, if that's what they want, okay. So I filled out all these things and I handed in my sheet, and then I got a notice that I was accepted to courses. This was very, very strange.

Then, of course, when I realized that this was a prerequisite, that you had to have English language skills, it was much easier for me to understand why they did this. They were testing several other things besides intelligence. But that's how it started that I even went to school.

I was fortunate, I think; I had wonderful teachers there. I think that the teachers there were perhaps better than at Cal. First of all, everybody tried very hard because they were after

Eis: accreditation. The courses were set on a very high level. I took the language arts. In French Mrs. Chapman, Jean Chapman, insisted that we only speak French. Mr. Barroca in Spanish insisted we only speak Spanish. You were thrown into a situation where you either swim or sink.

The same was the case in public speaking. I took a public speaking course. Everybody had to get up there on the podium, and it did not matter what the subject of your speech was all about. I remember I took the egg. How much can you talk about an egg? It's very funny that today they have on television an advertisement, "the incredible, edible egg." Have you ever heard that?

Riess: [laughs] No.

Eis: But anyway, at that time I had to do research on eggs, and it was fascinating to me. I'd never done anything like it before. And when I got up there, I knew what to say.

We had to make two speeches. The other speech was about bullfighting. The same thing happened. You know, you get enthused about a subject. It might have been completely foreign at first, and then you really become involved in it. It taught me how to get involved in different things.

Riess: I think we should move you right to your involvement in art. When you came you already thought of yourself as an artist.

Eis: Right. I had experience in art from childhood on, I should say. When I had been in New York, I tried to continue there, and I think I couldn't do it because, first of all, I had to make a living, and secondly, the New York art scene was so tight, and there were so many extra things to consider. It was all commercialized. I didn't understand that at the time; I just felt that I didn't know what to do, where to start. Having been brought up traditionally to go to a lot of museums and to see classic art, I continued with that. I was a regular visitor at the Metropolitan.

Riess: Were your interests in art history?

Eis: No. That's the strange thing. I was not interested in history at all. As a matter of fact, I wasn't interested in any kind of a history at that time, and that's a complete switch. Because I was interested in history before and after, but at that time I was just turned off.

When I came to Cal, I got very much involved in painting. And that was actually a new experience because I had painted on my own in a smaller way. I had done a lot of graphic work before, but not

Eis: so much painting. And I got so thrown into this wild scene. You know, Glenn Wessels was here at the time. Everybody was painting like Hans Hofmann. Everybody was outgoing, you know. The bigger the canvas, the better.

I had painted on maybe nine-by-twelve little pieces, and here I was told to take a huge canvas, and I was scared. You know, there is nothing like the experience of standing in front of an empty canvas, and you want to express something on that. It is overwhelming really. What was wonderful was to be with other people who had been doing this already and didn't feel self-conscious about it. See, I felt self-conscious about it: How am I going to attack this thing?

I must say that David Park, who was my teacher here at that time, was the most helpful, because he was a very human--he was so understanding in every respect, and he could really feel his way into each individual. That was the most remarkable thing about him. He could talk to each person in the class, and they would feel that he was only talking to them.

Riess: He was doing figurative work?

Eis: Yes.

Riess: Were you also?

Eis: Yes. And that's why I could relate more to it, too, because abstract painting was pretty new to me at that time.

I still have my first abstract painting. I don't think I'll ever sell it. I don't want to get rid of it because I want to see how far I've come. There are certain milestones that you've got to hold on to.

Riess: At the same time that you were becoming so immersed in the painting, were you also working on the history?

Eis: Well, I had to take history courses. It was rather painful for me. I didn't really want to spend the time on it. I realized it was necessary. But there again, I was fortunate in having Herschel B. Chipp for the history part, and he was a wonderful teacher. He made things interesting.

Also what I enjoyed very much was the aesthetics course that was taught by Stephen C. Pepper. And there again, you have to be able to relate personally to things like that; otherwise it's like water on a wet duck, it runs off.

Riess: What would you say was your subject matter?

Eis: Well, I was gathering funds, I would say [laughter], by learning different ways of looking at things at that time, because there were a lot of technical aspects that I learned, and somehow the subject matter at that time did not come so much from inner workings, but I did have to do certain things. It was a way of really--well, you had to learn, you had to do certain things and restrict yourself, which sometimes is good, because then you can go out from that on a very secure basis. That was what school was good for. Sometimes it doesn't hurt to go back and to become--not to know things. At the age of thirty-three, you think that you've learned something, that you have certain experiences, and to be in a situation where you realize that you're not that smart at all and that you should keep an open mind, is very healthy.

Riess: Of course, at the age of thirty-three everyone around you seems very young in terms of their life experience.

Eis: Well, yes, they were young compared to the way I felt. Maybe I was even a little bit envious. You see, I felt that there was a part missing. I hadn't had high school, and I hadn't had the experience that these kids had about junior prom and they were going out to the ballgames and they were full of pep and all this, and I felt, My goodness, I missed out on all this. In a way, the realization also comes that you can only do certain things at certain times of your life. I mean, you can't go back. You can't become childish, and you can't become child-like either. Because you have to grow on from wherever you're at at the time.

So anyway, it was a wonderful time to be being taught all the different ways of looking at things, all the different ideas that were going on in every area. I'm only sorry that I did not have more variety in the courses I took, because I could have gone to San Francisco for a while, you know, and I maybe could have taken a few art courses at [California College of] Arts and Crafts, which was again a different group of people. But on the whole, I feel that I met a lot of artists through this.

Riess: You were a member, you said, of the Oakland Art Association?

Eis: Yes. For a while also I was a member of the Society of Western Artists, and I am still a member of the San Francisco Women Artists--Madame Labaudt was the driving force there!

The Society of Western Artists were a lot of watercolorists, and they were quite traditional. The Oakland Art Association was quite avant garde, I thought. It was Virgia Ann Hensley--I don't know if that name means anything to you.

Riess: No, I don't know that name.

Eis: —who was for several years the president, and she was a driving force. She was marvelous. A wonderful woman. She encouraged many women at that time to come into the association. We had exhibitions at the Gray Shop at that time, at the Mezzanine Gallery of the Gray Shop. On a regular basis. The whole art association was set up along very well-defined lines. There was a committee for hanging. There was a committee for deciding who was going to show. There was an annual committee for the show. It was very well organized. There were lots of names in there that you probably would be familiar with.

Riess: How involved was Paul Mills with that? And was it involved with the Oakland Art Museum?

Eis: Paul Mills, as far as I remember, was the director at the Oakland Museum.* He was not involved in the art association.

Riess: And the art association didn't have its shows at the Oakland Museum?

Eis: Some, when it was still in the old building at 10th and Fallon during the sixties. I got involved with the Oakland Museum later, when they started having the docent program, but artistically no, not at all. As a matter of fact, I think that was one of the complaints, that the Oakland Museum did not give enough chance to the local art scene. They wanted new things, and the names. Really it was a funny separation; it didn't have anything to do with the Oakland Art Association or some of the artists up there working very hard.

Riess: Was the Oakland Art Association considered to be amateurs and hobbyists?

Eis: I don't know. If they were so considered, it was a big mistake.

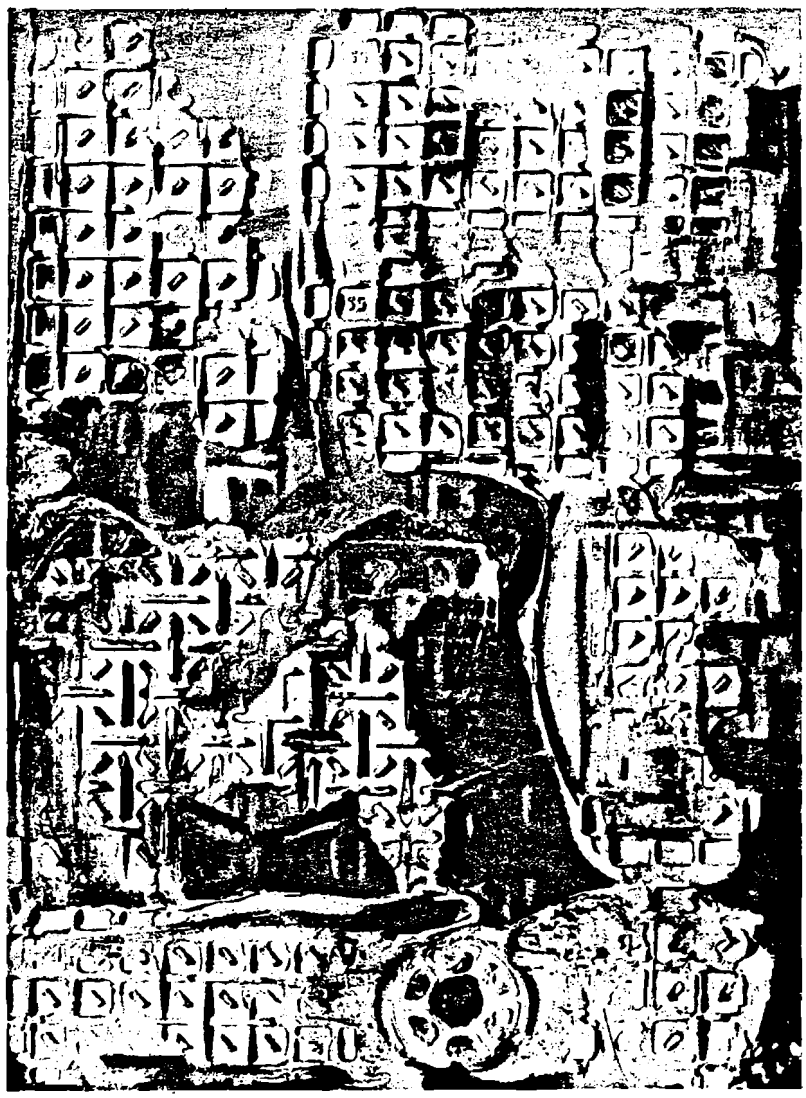
These are the annual exhibit programs of the Oakland Art Association. You can see that this is a very together group. You had there, in 1963, the Elsochts, who are still painting. Stella Finley was from way back. Here is Virgia Ann Hensley. Jay Green, H.B. Tilton--these are all people that were well-known in the area, I think, and not just Sunday painters.

Riess: Well, that's one development, the development of the Oakland Art Association.

---

*Paul Mills was titled "Art Museum Curator" when James Brown was Director.

Spotlight on Ruth Eis



This painting of Ruth Eis reveals her current interest with textiles.

The curator of the recent CVA show at the Kaiser Center Gallery is no newcomer to the role. She's been the curator of the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley since 1968. Established in 1962, the museum is the Jewish museum of the west and takes its name from one of the founders of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. With Eis' guidance, the museum's collections have flourished and the museum's exhibitions have grown.

But Eis is more than a curator; she's a fine artist in her own right. Born in Mainz, Germany, Eis' early art training included book binding, jewelry making, fashion design and metal crafts. Her later art career reflects this diverse background.

Getting an AA degree from Oakland City College and a BA from UC Berkeley, Eis began to do abstract painting along with museum studies. (In fact, she received one of the first MA's given by the Center for Museum Studies at J. F. Kennedy University.) "I don't adhere to one style or medium", she explained, "although I still paint and always will. It's the most direct way of expression."

Ruth Eis curated the Kaiser exhibit.

She has exhibited throughout the Bay Area including the Oakland Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and various galleries. In 1975 she had a retrospective of her abstract paintings at the Magnes Museum.

"Right now I'm interested in textiles, in the concept of making various environments." Her foray into textiles finds her creating wall hangings, combining "ceremonial art with the contemporary. But I'm not at the point of showing any of it. I'm still experimenting.

"Every art form I see, like paper cutting for instance, I want to try. I want to see if I can do it too," she said.

Combining curating with being an artist is difficult, she admitted. "It's the difference of being a public and a private person. I work in spurts. Sometimes you feel dry and then, when the creativity comes to the forefront, I have to work night and day, especially at night," she laughed.

Eis has been a member of CVA since its founding, having known Lillian Paley since her arrival in northern California. She feels its artists have "done a lot of high quality work. The Kaiser show proved that."

Her goal? "To keep on working. Always working."

The Synagogue and Art

Temple Sinai, Oakland

Riess: When you came to this area, did you join a synagogue, and were you involved with the art there? Let's focus on that a bit.

Eis: The first thing, of course, when we moved here, was to look for a proper Sunday School and education for the children. We lived on Oceanview, and Temple Sinai was closest, just down Broadway. So without much investigation, actually, we became members there. On first glance everything seemed very nice. They had this nice Sunday School. They were very friendly and welcoming. They were not too orthodox and not too reformed; although they're called a reform temple, they're not really way out reformed.

Riess: Could you tell that on glance? Could you tell just by looking at what was up and what was around how orthodox or how nonorthodox they were?

Eis: No, that's hard to tell, but if you attend a couple of services you certainly would know. You would understand how much they had reformed the whole way of presentation, whether they use a lot of Hebrew, whether they use all the traditional things in the service. Just a few attendances would tell you that. And then, of course, you talk to the principal of the school and you find out what they teach in Sunday School. If there is a great emphasis on history or on customs or on teaching Hebrew, you get a pretty good idea from that.

Riess: Do you think now it might be more the case that one could walk in and just by looking at the artifacts around say something about the synagogue, or would this not be likely?

Eis: No, that would not likely be the case because the same implements are used.

Riess: The frame of mind that would commission an extremely modern or abstract work--?

Eis: No, I think this has nothing to do with orthodoxy or reformed. I think that's a personal preference of the board of trustees, maybe, or of the members. They will clamor sometimes for something more contemporary. Or they will say,"No, we don't want this, we want a traditional set-up."

Riess: They wouldn't be saying at the same time,"We want more Hebrew in the service because we don't want to lose the traditional"?

Eis: Oh, they might say that, yes.

Riess: But the same group, the same impetus, you don't think would be there to have traditional art and traditional service, and modern art and modern service?

Eis: I don't think necessarily. I've seen some traditional services held in very contemporary surroundings, and vice versa.

Riess: Let me continue along with Temple Sinai then. You stayed?

Eis: We stayed all these years, yes. And as is usual, you are invited to join the different groups within the temple. There's probably a brotherhood or a sisterhood, a young people's group. Today there are singles' groups, of course. And you have various people getting together for specific purposes, like the music committee. I was in the choir for a while, too. You sort of float around and see whatever suits you best. So for a while I was on the committee for--what do they call it?--F.A.F., Fine Arts Foundation. Here I think I'd have to interrupt and look through some of these papers.

There was an adult education committee, which was very serious about education. We would invite guest speakers and guest artists. I see here once Elie Wiesel was invited, but that was really almost de rigueur because everybody had to have a drawing card for these things.

Riess: Why was that de rigueur?

Eis: Well, Elie Wiesel, of course, is the exponent of fighting for remembrance of the Holocaust, and he would only speak on that subject.

We would try to find a very broad basis of raising the interest within the congregation. And it was not always just art. We did have art shows and music and so on, but generally you grab what you can that'll be a drawing card.

Riess: Was there a specific committee that had to do with the interior and the art?

Eis: If there were such, I think the ritual committee would be responsible, and that really did not have anything to do with art; it had to do with ritual.

Relationship of Artist to Client

Riess: In this book, Contemporary Synagogue Art, 1945 to 1965,* there were some interesting discussions. Particularly interesting to me was the feeling that still there was far from an ideal relationship between the artist and the architect and the building, that people hadn't learned really how to work together. The artist might in fact not even be given a clear kind of message about what he was to do. Basically it was a far from satisfactory relationship. I wonder if you can talk about that issue insofar as you know it, certainly from the point of view of the synagogue, but maybe as an onlooker yourself.

Eis: I think that it's quite true that there was a gap between the individual artist who would have liked to do more for the synagogue and the synagogue structure. And I think it has to do with structure, because there were just too many people involved in these committees, and if you have that many different opinions and views, it's very difficult to come to a conclusion. And what might have been liked by one person might have been detested by another.

I think that a very nice way of avoiding that was always the way Victor Ries worked, because he was easy to work with. He did not have this artistic temperament, and he would try to please in order to do something that really was at the bottom of his heart. I think he got much further with this attitude than a lot of other people that might have stormed in and said, "Well, this is my point of view and I am the artist, this is the way it should be." Because that makes it difficult for everybody to agree.

Riess: Is the standard sequence that the group picks the artist and then the artist presents his idea, or would you have competitions?

Eis: Both. It could be handled both ways. You could have competitions, but very often you would ask knowledgeable people in the community who did they think was the best artist to choose, and then they would ask that person to present maybe a portfolio, and then they would commission him or her.

Riess: In the Catholic church it's the diocese that has the last word. How about in the synagogue?

---

*Contemporary Synagogue Art, by Avram Kämpf. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 1966.

Eis: It all comes together. Of course, a rabbi will look at everything from the religious point of view, whether it's fitting, whether there is not anything in there that doesn't belong in a synagogue or that might be offensive. But the decision comes from the board, from everybody together.

Riess: Do you have any specific examples?

Eis: The latest thing that comes to mind is at Temple Sinai. They were going to put in a memorial wall, and they wanted that decorated. I'm sorry, but the name of the artist escapes me. He was not a Jewish artist.

Riess: How did that happen? That's not usual either, is it?

Eis: Well, that can happen, too. I don't know, because I wasn't in on this at all. I only know that there was a committee, and they brought the artist with them--they came to the museum--to let him [chuckles] immerse himself in the Jewish subject matter. Now, I find that also unusual, because you would think that someone is chosen because he comes from the background, because he brings the feeling to it. But in this case it was not done, and it was the choice of the temple committee in that case. So that's also possible.

Riess: [reading] "Today the relationship of the artist to the community is in most cases a strictly contractual one. The artist often does not see the building in which his work is to be placed. He only sees the plans and the blueprints." (This of course would be on a new building.) "He often does not even meet or talk with the people of the community. He's not acquainted with their personal histories, nor does he know the history of the congregation. More often than not he lacks an elementary knowledge of Judaism and its history and literature, not to mention knowledge of the particular religious and congregational problems faced by the synagogue. Nor can it be said that his clients have a clear idea of what they want, what they believe in, what the work of art should represent." [p. 50, Kämpf]

Eis: Yes, I think it's quite true, and it just proves again what I said a moment before, that there was an artist here who did not know anything about it, who did not have any background, and still he was chosen. So I think this is true.

But I also think that it's changing. And I would hope so, because I think that the artists themselves don't want that, of course. They want to be more involved. It's not only the commission. It's wonderful to get commissions, of course, and the artist needs the money and all that, and the recognition, but I think every artist wants more than that. They need involvement.

Riess: It seems to me that it's a very significant commission for any artist. In a way it's the highest--

Eis: It's the highest thing that he can aspire to. And that's one of the reasons why an artist wants to be involved, he wants to know the background. To come cold into a synagogue building, or maybe an unfinished building, and just be told, "Look, we want something that's forty by forty-five and shouldn't be too expensive, and look out that the kids don't fall against it and open their head"--that's not the idea.

Victor Ries

Riess: When did you first get acquainted with Victor Ries? Was he part of a group of Jewish artists who were working in some way together?

Eis: I don't remember when I first met Victor Ries. I really don't remember that. I do know that he became our artist in residence in the '60s at the Magnes Museum, and from that time on I was more aware, of course, because he was always there with some pupils going in and out, and sometimes he'd work out in the yard on a large piece. And we talked a lot. But I don't remember when was the first time that I was aware of Victor. It may have been when I first saw the Temple Abraham interior probably. Also, Temple Abraham had art shows--annuals, I think--and at that time we all got together, all the artists got together, and got to know each other.

Riess: All what artists?

Eis: Well, the Jewish artists. I will say this, that it had nothing to do--you know, there are three temples in Oakland, the reformed, the conservative, and the orthodox, and between the conservative and the reformed and the Jewish Center on Sheffield Avenue, there was no distinction, they were all Jewish art shows. It was a complete overlapping of the artists and their work that was shown.

Riess: But you did get together as a group.

Eis: Yes.

Riess: What was the name of the group?

Eis: There wasn't a formal group at that time. We just knew each other through these annual shows.

Riess: Was Victor's work at Temple Abraham considered to be modern?

Eis: Oh, it was considered to be modern at the time. Yes, definitely.

Riess: Was there any controversy about the windows?

Eis: If there was, I wasn't aware of it. The people that I talked to all liked it very much. It certainly was new to the people here. I don't think they had any comparison to make to anything else. I don't know of any other windows in the area, for instance. The front with the wood paneling you might find anywhere else, it's very traditional, very nice, very simple.

Riess: You mean the pulpit area?

Eis: Yes. But the windows, I don't think that they could compare to any other ones in the area, and therefore it was something new, and they looked, and they found that there was a lot of symbolism in it and that it was done in a very contemporary way, and they liked it.

Riess: Was the rabbi or the group there particularly enlightened?

Eis: Who was the rabbi at the time?

Riess: I don't know.

Eis: Because there have been many coming and going. I really don't know.

Riess: If I go back into some of the histories of the various Catholic churches and parishes, occasionally there'll be a Father So-and-so who will come along who stands head and shoulders above the others in terms of awareness, whereas this book would say that in general the rabbi, who might very well be the artistic leader and coordinator, is in fact more often not.

Eis: Well, even the fact that I have to ask now who was the rabbi at the time certainly doesn't mean that there was somebody that promoted this intensively. Again, since Victor had other commissions in the whole area, it probably was not the rabbi. It must have been the public that clamored for him, and especially if they go to a different temple as a visitor and they see something--"Well, why can't we have this?"

Riess: Is the role of the artist in residence at the Magnes Museum to work on liturgical pieces?

Eis: No, not necessarily. It's simply to make it easier for the artist, to give him a place to do his work. And at the same time, to benefit from the experience of the artist and ask whoever is in residence to

Eis: give a certain amount of lectures at the time, which Victor did, and also David Moss when he was there. Because then you have a source right there that you can tap.

Israel, the Source?

Riess: There were a couple of religious art shows in San Francisco--I don't know if there were any in Oakland--in the fifties and sixties. I wonder if you recall anything of that.

Eis: Well, I really was not involved in that, because I had not visited that many churches. I think there was only one time, and that was when St. Mary's was built, that I really felt the overwhelming urge to at least take part in this, it was so different.

You know, it's very strange, I didn't really think of any impact of the arts on the church. To me a church, especially here out West where you have the mission style, and when we went to Mexico and saw the traditional cathedrals with all the embellishment, the overwhelming gold all over, this to me was church, and I never thought of it, really, that there should be a change. I think at that time there were a lot of articles that I found from Germany, and I was amazed to find out that there had been this tremendous movement for modernization of the church, and they were the ones who started the glass windows and fabulous things, whole sheets and walls of glass in the churches. That's really very, very late when the realization came to me.

Riess: That in fact is really where it all started, in Europe, in the period of rebuilding after the war--synagogues and churches. It was an opportunity to just put a whole lot of stuff behind.

Eis: And also the technology--they were, I think, advanced in trying to use all the newest materials and the newest ways of doing things. I wasn't that involved at the time with Europe.

Riess: Was there a change in the way the service in the Jewish synagogue was conducted that came postwar?

Eis: No. I think really, if you want to be philosophical about it, if there had been any new wave of religious art, it should by rights have started with the state of Israel, because after all that was the focal point for Jews. But perversely, religion was not the most important thing for the state of Israel, and the only faction who really was vitally concerned with religion were the ultra-

Eis: orthodox, who certainly did not want to have any new art or they didn't want any art in the synagogue. So that's the reason, I think, why there wasn't an art explosion.

In Israel, the architecture that's exciting, I think, has to do with building homes, building dwellings, and not public buildings. I think most of the public buildings are atrocious. And yet they have some of the best architects there, and I've wondered why that is the case, that there are so many awful things happening when they have the good architects.

Riess: This is very interesting. Maybe Israel is kind of the parallel to the Pope. If nothing is emanating from there, then you don't have a movement--unless there's some grassroots movement. You're saying that the synagogue just doesn't have that place?

Eis: I don't think so. I personally can't see it. There are hundreds of synagogues there that are just like they were forever. They're good enough even if they're just one room, because you go there to pray, and it doesn't make any difference. But when you want to get excited, you look at the building for the Shrine of the Book. That is different, that is new, that is inventive.

Riess: In Israel?

Eis: Yes. But it has nothing to do with prayer. It's like the idea "we are the people of the book" has been transferred to something different.

Riess: Is there some controversy about that in Israel, about art in the synagogue?

Eis: No, I've never heard controversy about it, except that the very religious orthodox factions feel that there is not enough religion, because there are the young people who say, "Well, we live religion; we don't have to go to pray in order to repeat all these things, because we live here." But that isn't artistic controversy. That may be a philosophic controversy or whatever.

Riess: Philosophic controversy certainly is what changed the mass in the Catholic church.

Eis: Well, maybe we're too close to it, because, you see, since the state was founded, they did not want any reformed synagogues in Israel. I think it's only within the last few years that there is a reform movement, and that came from America. It did not come from there. It's simply because some of the reformed people from here go to Israel and want to transplant the movement.

Hebrew Script; Micrography

Riess: One of my questions earlier was about the new decorative motifs in Jewish art; the use of lettering was something that Ludwig Wolpert and Victor Ries brought from their stay in Israel.

Eis: Yes, well, you see, this is another good question. Now, there was a reform in the lettering, the script. I don't know--I'm not really familiar with all the facts--whether this was a movement because of artistic feelings or because simply of expedience, because you had to print newspaper, you had to make advertising copy, and maybe the old was not very efficient. So there may be a completely different reason for it, but of course, what happened was a renewal of the script.

Riess: [reading] "One general malady among synagogue architects and artists has been the insensitive choice of Hebrew letters suitable only for printer's type for decoration of the walls, arks, and facades of their buildings. Because of the pioneer work of Reuben Leaf, followed by Ismar David, Francesca Baruch, Ludwig Wolpert, and others, there are now different typefaces of the Hebrew alphabet available to the artist. Even more important, the freedom to create new representations has been established."*

Eis: Well, you know, I said before that you have to adapt to the purpose. Now in this lettering, which is done in metal and cut out, you also have to make it workable so that you don't lose your letters, you know; they still have to hang together.

Riess: Structurally.

Eis: Right. So there are all different ways of looking at that. It's not necessarily only the artistic eye that's in play here, you know. There may be lots of other reasons.

When you see the hieroglyphics, for instance, do you feel that they are an art form or that they're just ways of communicating? In the simplest form, you know, you make an eye because you want to say the word "eye." All kinds of different ways of looking at that thing. Because if you are a visual person, you only see the symbol, and if you are a thought person, then you only transfer the idea. And maybe the same thing happens with the lettering, I don't know.

---

*Kämpf, p. 70.

Riess: "The manifestation of religious zeal through punctilious penmanship is a Jewish characteristic."

Eis: [after thinking it over] Yes, that's true. The more meticulous the work, the higher it is regarded. That's true. That's why you have micrography.

Riess: What's that?

Eis: When you write in the tiniest way possible, but the outline shows you a different symbol. It's like a carpet page. Have you seen carpet pages? I can show you this.

Riess: Good.

Eis: [finds an example in book]

Riess: Yes, so it does take on an artistic form.

Eis: Yes. That takes definitely an artistic form.

Riess: One doesn't necessarily have to deal with the words? I mean, I can't read it, so I don't have to deal with it at all.

Eis: I do the same thing. I can't read all the lettering. And I think it would be terribly difficult to read all the lettering there. But you have, for instance, a picture of Moses with the whole story of Moses.

And then we have--I don't know how we got it up here--the Baroness of Rothschild, done in that fashion. [Eis goes to find it]

Riess: Oh, that's wonderful!

Eis: So it's a double purpose. You have the whole history on it, and you also have the picture of the person. That was done a whole lot at one time. It's a form of artistic endeavor. I don't know that it's very free, you know. You're really very bound, and that's why when you read this about being meticulous, that's true. There isn't much leeway. You're really bound. And still, it's some form of artistic endeavor, I suppose. [laughs]

Riess: Is it the idea that it rationalizes art to make it instructive?

Eis: Maybe so. Could be. It has to serve a purpose, yes. Never art for art's sake. [laughter]

Liturgical Art Sources; "Interpreting Art"

Riess: Let's talk a little bit about the Magnes Museum and, given the parameters of my interest in liturgical art, what it's trying to do, what it's trying to save and say and show, and how it's an influence for art in this community.

Eis: Well, by supporting the individual artists, of course, in whatever they want to do. The museum does not have to prescribe anyway; the synagogue might have to prescribe but not the museum. Therefore each artist is free to really let go, as long as we don't offend the public. I think that's the same for every museum.

Riess: But it was interesting to think of the museum functioning as one of the source places for an artist who knew nothing about the traditions in Jewish art, who was about to do a memorial wall.

Eis: Well, yes, because we have all the resources if you want to do research. We have books and we have pictures, and we have maybe the people to talk to.

I think that's a combination of things that an artist needs. I know that if you have an idea that you want to paint or sculpt or whatever, it takes up a tremendous amount of time to go into the background first and to do research. It's not something very spontaneous, because you have to be correct. It's just like in writing a book, too. If you don't do your research, people will let you know, also, and say, "Hey, can't be, it's just not right this way." Now, you do that for a major piece of art, too.

I don't think that an artist can make a sculpture without first knowing anatomy, so you have to go into that field. You can't draw a bridge and leave out a support. You can take artistic license, yes, but you do that by indicating maybe that there should be something. You don't have to spell it all out, but you have to know it should be there. In order to do that, you need your background, you need to study up on it. And that takes a lot of time before you even get to doing creative work.

Riess: I just don't know how free the artist really is. As Mark Adams did at Temple Emanu-El, if you do a window and it deals with fire, images of fire and the color of fire and the direction and flames of fire, and a window about water, what does he need to learn about there?

Eis: I wonder about that. I have never talked to him about it, but let's say someone would come to me and say, "I want you to do a window about fire." I would have to think of a hundred different things

Eis: that come into play there. How do I want to depict fire? I don't want to have the pagan image. Do I want to take a particular period within the Jewish history where fire was important? Which occasion do I want to emphasize? Do I want to remember that when they went through the desert at night there was a wall of fire showing them the way, or do I want to make fire come down as a light, because fire is also light?

All those things come together. If it's not there and you say to someone, "I want you to do a fire window," and they just put a fire window there, it's missing, and people will feel it. People will feel it. That's why I say it's a big thing, even when you do just one single subject like fire.

Or water for that matter--how do you want to depict water? Do you want to do what the primitive people did by making a waveline, just a line? It's enough, you know; it's water. Or do you want to show a tremendous wave coming at you that's overpowering, or do you want to make a spring? All these different things you have to consider before you even think of how am I going to really do it--you know, physically how to show it.

Riess: You're saying that the spirit and passion is definitely communicated.

Eis: Yes. It has to be there. It just has to be there.

And very often it's the only way that the artist <u>can</u> communicate to others, because I think artists are not always very good at explaining things in words, and perhaps they don't have to, perhaps they shouldn't even. I have read a lot of writings by artists, and I always feel they should stick to their paintings or craft or whatever it is and should not write.

Riess: When they submit their idea to the committee, let's say, or to the rabbi, I guess that's their opportunity to sell the committee on the meaningfulness of the whole thing.

Eis: Yes, I would think so.

Riess: Do you know whether that was the way Victor worked?

Eis: I don't really know. I hope it was. I hope that they let him explain first what was in his mind. I think that's perhaps the best way of convincing other people.

Riess: But on the other hand, you're saying that perhaps the best thing is they shouldn't have to do it at all.

Eis: No. They may not always be very successful, but I think they have to. Perhaps in the simplest way that's possible. But what I said about not writing--there is a great temptation to become somewhat pompous when you put things into words, you know, and you get all mixed up in your ideas. It's difficult, I think, to find a way to explain something that you want to communicate through another medium, really, because you have to transfer it from one medium into another.

Look, for instance, at the green of the fern. You see that there are different greens, and you see light and shadow, and the whole thing becomes an image. You know that all these different things are there. That's how you look at a painting or a work of art. It's all there, and you in your own mind can take each part and put it together again. But the moment that someone starts talking about it or writing about it, it becomes almost overblown. You say the light green, the dark green, the bluegreen, the yellow green, and each one brings up a different image, and you lose the whole thing, how it affects you.

I think it was Oscar Wilde who said that very well. "If you"--I have to translate it from the German--"If you dress a thought into words, it loses all freedom of movement. What you say can never be quite true." That's what he said. That really stuck with me. I think there's truth in it.

Summary, and Controversy

Riess: I have to try again to sum up, to answer a question about the existence of a movement in liturgical art in the synagogues. It sounds like the answer is no.

Eis: As far as the synagogue is concerned, I don't think there was. There were a lot of Jewish artists, and a lot of expression of Jewish feeling, but I don't know that it was really based on synagogue art at all. And then it's very difficult to say what comes first--is it the pressure of the artists that say, "We want to apply our Jewish art now to the synagogue, and you have a duty to recognize that there are Jewish artists who are working on Jewish themes"? Or is it the other way around, that the synagogue says, "Well, we have so many Jewish artists, let's put them to work"? I don't know which was the stronger.

Riess: Those shows that you participated in, was there a lot of interest in that?

Eis: Yes. I really think so. All the art shows were always well attended and all the sales were always high.

Riess: Were they to benefit the synagogue?

Eis: They did benefit, yes. They were usually put on as fundraisers, and the artist would get a percentage, or be asked to give a percentage to the organization that put it on. That's generally the way it was handled. And it worked very well, because it brought people to the temple. It brought customers to the artists. And it brought names to the artist. I don't know if it's still going on that much or not, because I think there comes a saturation point, you know, when people say, "Let's have something else for a change." I don't know what is the most going thing right now. I think for a while it was cookbooks. [laughter]

That's exactly why it's so difficult to talk about a whole trend and a whole wave, because we are so close. I think unless a hundred years go by first, you can't really assess what was important and what wasn't. That has to come out much later. I mean I run up against this all the time in the musuem, because people want to have a feeling that a tremendous thing came out of Israel, that they're really developing in art, or there are important Jewish artists. I think it's much too young--since 1948, what is it, historically speaking?

Riess: Why do you think people want to have that?

Eis: Oh, because they want to feel that there was a national way of recognizing it, but there is no such thing.

Riess: That's the whole problem?

Eis: We can't get into this now, because this is a whole other issue.

Riess: That is like Schatz, the idea of having a national art. But basically it's anathema to the artist.

Eis: This is the biggest controversy of all in what is art. Is there such a thing as national art, or are there just certain things that develop from being in a confined area or a point of time? It's the same thing like different races, you know. Why have you developed a darker skin? Because you needed to adapt. I don't think we should speak of Italian art, French art, Spanish art; you should speak of art in Italy at that time, or the art in Spain at that time. And the same way, you can talk about art in Israel at this time, but to say Jewish art is missing the point completely.

Riess: And yet it is a debate apparently.

Eis: A very big debate, very big debate. And you find all over "Jewish art, Jewish art." I've used it myself now, because it's the only way to communicate what other people think, you know. But to me it has to be a qualified statement: art done by Jews in Poland, let's say, in the nineteenth century, or art done in America in the twentieth century by Jewish artists. But I wouldn't say one is more Jewish art than the other. I wouldn't call it that at all.

Riess: When you had the show at the museum with the work from Bezalel, people came to that hoping to find evidence of new Jewish art?

Eis: I don't know if that's what they expected, to find new Jewish art, or they simply wanted to know what kind of art is being done in Israel.

Riess: It was very interesting and very different work.

Eis: Innovative. But there's nothing Jewish about it. I would hope that people realize that when they look at it.

Riess: Well, we're really on a very big topic. As you're saying that, I'm thinking about Native American art and what the Indians do in this country and whether, if you were to think of the Eskimos and the Canadian Indians and the Hopis and the Iroquois, whether you can even say "Indian art," since those are regions as big as the whole United States and they've never even met each other. And that's what you're saying about Jewish art; it's all over the world, they've never met each other, so how can we talk about a Jewish art? It's just a kind of nice thing for argument's sake.

Eis: But the argument gets very heated, very. [laughs] From the lay person up to the most erudite professor, you find this, and there's never been any conclusive word said about it, because you can't. It goes so far that even the artist themselves are confused. There are artists who resent it bitterly if you say that they're not creating Jewish art. They are creating Jewish art. They insist they're creating Jewish art. Well, should they have the last word on it or what? I don't know.

Riess: Maybe they're saying that that's what's meaningful for them, to be doing something that they call Jewish art. In the service of something or other.

Eis: All right then, say it's in the service of that. That's exactly my point. I feel very Jewish. I am very Jewish. I hope I create art. But I would not put the two together, because I really would like to create good art regardless of where it all comes from. The end effect should be overall, for everybody.

Riess: Then is there really any reason to look for Jewish artists for the synagogues, for doing art in the temple? You might as well just have anyone who can go in there and learn enough so that they can do a respectable and beautiful piece of art. Which way would you argue on that?

Eis: Well, again, there are other things that come into play. Of course, you want to promote a Jewish artist if it's for a Jewish cause, but that's not to say that a non-Jewish artist couldn't do a very beautiful, maybe even more beautiful thing. But they're two different aspects of commissioning someone. What are you really after? I mean, if Michelangelo would live today and happen not to be Jewish, would a Jewish community say, "But we don't want a painting by him"?

Riess: A Jew would have something in his blood and bones and life and everything that would make his work more meaningful for the synagogue?

Eis: Well, I may be sticking my neck way out, but I would argue that life is life, and there are those that have life experience and that will be open to experience, and there are those that are not, and I think you should simply go by that. I'm sure that there are people who would argue, maybe even Jewish artists would say, "How can anybody else feel like that?" It's true. Nobody can exactly feel like somebody else. Everybody's got their own feelings and personal things. But it shouldn't be a value judgment.

Transcriber: Sam Middlebrooks
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

APPENDICES -- Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

A. Exhibition of Contemporary Religious Art, by California Artists, October-November 1952, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco. 575

B. Catholic Art Forum 591

1. Descriptive pamphlet 591
2. Articles of constitution 592
3. Announcement of lecture, 1954 594
4. Interview with Micaela DuCasse, 1957 597
5. Membership list, 1966 598

C. "Sources of Style for Christian Art," by William Justema, Liturgical Arts Magazine, Vol. 20, November 1951, pp. 31-37. 602

D. "Adventure in Light-Color-Polychromy, A Church Prototype," an interview with Jean Labatut and André Girard, with illustrations, Liturgical Arts Magazine, Vol. 20, November 1951, pp. 2-8. 609

E. St. Ann's Chapel, Palo Alto 619

1. "Visit at St. Ann's Chapel," by Jacques Maritain, 1951 619
2. Descriptive pamphlet, 1960 633

F. Exhibition of Church Art Today, April 3 - May 1, 1960, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. 634

G. Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, Oakland 636

1. Descriptive pamphlet 636
2. Plan, aerial views 638
3. Interior, dome 640

H. St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco 641

1. Program, by Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken, ca. 1963. 641
2. "The Anatomy of Transition: Cathedral-Building and Social Justice in San Francisco, 1962-1971," by James P. Gaffey, Catholic Historical Review, Vol. LXX, January 1984, pp. 45-73. 647

I. Newman Center, Holy Spirit Chapel, descriptive pamphlet, with plan. 662

J. Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco. Statements by Rabbi Joseph Asher at dedication of West Window (June 16, 1972) and East Window (August 11, 1973). 667

K. School of the Pond Farm Workshops, 1950 catalog. 671

APPENDIX A

Exhibition of Contemporary

M. H. De Young Memorial Museum

Golden Gate Park San Francisco

Exhibition of CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS ART

by California Artists

EXHIBITION COMMITTEE

RUTH CRAVATH, Chairman
MRS. EDWIN L. JENNINGS, Secretary
THE REVEREND GEORGE M. BENIGSEN
NORMAN K. BLANCHARD
THE RIGHT REVEREND KARL MORGAN BLOCK
MARIO J. CIAMPI
THE RIGHT REVEREND MONSIGNOR HAROLD E. COLLINS
MICHAELA MARTINEZ DUCASSE
THE REVEREND E. C. FARNHAM D.D.
RABBI ALVIN I. FINE
LOUISA JENKINS
PETER MACCHIARINI
THE REVEREND LEO T. MAHER
DR. ELISABETH MOSES
ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR
NINFA VALVO

JURY OF SELECTION

RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER, Chairman
MARGARET BRUTON
DOROTHY PUCCINELLI CRAVATH
MICHAEL GOODMAN
THE REVEREND JOHN E. MEEHAN

FOREWORD

The alliance of Church and Art is ancient and powerful. For centuries the Church was almost the exclusive patron of the arts. Not only did Art serve the Church as her faithful "handmaiden," interpreting the holy stories to the illiterate, but religious themes gave inspiration to the greatest of all artists for their most sublime works: to Giotto and Jan van Eyck, to Michelangelo and Gruenewald, to Greco, Rubens and Rembrandt.

Gradually, the alliance loosened. Artists devoted themselves more and more to worldly subjects, leaving church decoration to minor artisans, if not to outright commercial hacks. This sorry state of affairs cannot solely be ascribed to the artists. The church authorities, too, had changed their attitude toward and their understanding of the arts. Compared to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the extravagant sponsorship, the keen and enthusiastic appreciation and, last but not least, the encouragement for bold innovation of the arts had ceased to exist among the clergy of all denominations.

As a result, in the art of the nineteenth century, Christ, formerly the tortured Hero or the triumphant Lord, had become a meek man, well groomed but without strength and true dignity. The stark and stirring realism of the old masters' Passion scenes, which touches the very heart of the beholder, had given way to conventional presentation, feeble in spirit and saccharine in concept. Architecture, too, had become stereotyped and uninspired.

In recent years only, a reaction or, better, one should say, a re-inspiration has set in. Artists of all kinds, architects, painters, sculptors and craftsmen have, in ever increasing numbers, devoted themselves to work related to religion: to the building of churches and temples and their adornment or to the rendering of holy themes. Quite naturally many of them have sought inspiration and even found models in the profound and powerful art expressions—often wrongly called "primitive"—of the Middle Ages rather than in the insipid productions of their immediate predecessors.

If now some of the works in this exhibition should strike visitors as "unusual," it seems advisable that they would refrain from adverse criticism before attempting to appraise the artists' intention. The sincerity of most of them can hardly be questioned.

Walter Heil

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

*ARMER, RUTH
1. The Nativity (linoleum on plyboard)

BOLOMEY, RODGER H.
2. Crucifixion (oil)
3. Entombment (oil)
4. Pieta (oil)

BORATKO, ANDRE
5. The Burial (egg tempera)

*BUFANO, BENIAMINO
6. St. Francis (drawing)
Lent by Right Reverend Karl Morgan Block

CHANG CH'UNG-HO
7. The Lotus Lamps (watercolor)
8. The Five Poisons (watercolor)

*CORNIN, JON
9. Apostle (oil)
10. Station XII (oil)

*DE EDERLY, FRANCIS
11. Archangel (wash)
12. The Descent (wash)

*DUMAS, MARY A
13. Ikon #1 (dyes on silk)

FAISS, FRITZ W.
14. New Testament Scenes (encaustic)
15. New Testament Scenes (pastel sketch for stained glass)

FARALLA, D.
16. The Last Supper (oil)

*GIBNEY, LUKE
17. Madonna (oil)

*GIRARD, ANDRE
18. Sketches for Stations of the Cross

HAASE, MADELINE
19. Psalm 113 (collage on paper)
Lent by Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles

KENNEDY, LOUISA
20. Wedding Feast at Cana (drawing on glass over collage)
Lent by Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles

KNOOP, MARILYN NARDON
21. Psalm 77 (opaque watercolor)
Lent by Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles

*LABAUDT, LUCIEN
22. Upon the Cross (oil)
Lent by Marcelle Labaudt

*LEBRUN, RICO
23. Woman of the Crucifixion (duco)
Lent by the University of Nebraska
24. Soldier of the Cross
Lent by Mr. Vincent Price, Beverly Hills, California

*McCLELLAN, DOUGLAS
25. The Crown of Thorns (drawing)

MORONEY, MARGARET
26. The Manifestation (oil)

*MOYA DEL PINO, JOSE
27. Franciscan Monks (tempera)

*SHEETS, MILLARD
28. Day of the Cross (oil)

SIEGRIEST, LUNDY
29. Crucifixion (oil)

*SOTOMAYOR, ANTONIO
30. Altarpiece (oil with superimposed terra-cotta Sculpture)

*STRAWN, BERNICE HERGER
31. Station VI (egg tempera)
32. Station VII (egg tempera)
33. Station VIII (egg tempera)
34. Station IX (egg tempera)

*WARSHAW, HOWARD
35. Illustrations for the Song of Solomon (pen and ink and gouache)
Lent by Mr. Vincent Price, Beverly Hills, California

WAYNE, JUNE C.
36. The Advocate (oil)

WESTPHAL KATHERINE
37. Daniel 5-5 to Daniel 6-16 (egg tempera)

ZAJAC, JACK
38. Descent from the Cross (oil)

SCULPTURE AND CERAMICS

*ANARGYROS, SPERO
39. Holy Water Font (ceramic)

BAXTER, FRANCES
40. The Seen and the Unseen (teakwood)

*BENVENUTO, ELIO
41. Station I, Judgment of Pilate (oakwood)
42. Station VII, Jesus Falls the Second Time (oakwood)
43. Station VIII, The Crying Women (oakwood)
44. Station IX, Jesus Falls the Third Time (oakwood)
Stations lent by Corpus Christi Church, San Francisco

*CRAVATH, RUTH
45. St. Francis of Assisi (chocolate Tennessee marble)
46. Station XIV, The Entombment (black marble)
Lent by St. Leo's Church, San Jose, California

*DUCASSE, MICAELA MARTINEZ
47. Station XII, Jesus Dies on the Cross (cast stone)
48. Station XI, Jesus is Nailed to the Cross (cast stone)
Stations lent by Convent of St. Joseph, Capitola, California

ERCKENBRACK, MARY
49. Holy Water Font (terra-cotta)
50. Station II (sgraffito on terra-cotta tile)
Lent by Hanna Center, Sonoma, California
51. Station XI, (sgraffito on terra-cotta tile)
52. Holy Water Font (terra-cotta)

*HASS, JUNE FOSTER
53. Pieta (limestone)
54. Nativity Set (terra-cotta)

*HERBERT, BARBARA
55. Christus (plaster)
56. Madonna (plaster)
57. The Penitent (bronze)

*HOFFMAN, MIRIAM
58. David (cast stone)

*HORD, DONAL

59. Rest on the Flight into Egypt (black diorite)

LEMON, DAVID
60. The Prophet (walnut wood)

*NICHOLS, TRYPHON
61. Crucifix (mahogany)
Lent by Holy Trinity Church, San Francisco

*O'HANLON, RICHARD
62. Mary (quartzite)
Lent by Mrs. Rae Engebretson, Vienna, Virginia

*PUCCINELLI, RAYMOND
63. Madonna

*RICH, FRANCES
64. St. Francis of Assisi (bronze)
65. Crucifix (bronze)

*ROSENTHAL, BERNARD
66. Scene of the Crucifixion (forged bronze)

*SCHNIER, JACQUES
67. Moses and Aaron (mahogany)
Lent by Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco

*SCIOCCHETTI, FATHER LUIGI
68. Fray Junipero Serra (enameled terra-cotta)
69. St. Anthony with the Child Jesus (enameled terra-cotta)

*STEWART, ALBERT
70. Crucifixion (wood)

VON MEYER, MICHAEL M.
71. St. Francis (Wood)
Lent by Helen Edison, San Francisco

*WARING, PEGOT
72. Head of Christ (walnut wood)

WESTPHAL, KATHERINE
73. St. Veronica (terra-cotta)

WEYGERS, ALEXANDER G.
74. Triptych (orange wood on teak)
75. Descent from the Cross (madrone wood)

WILLSON, GENEVIEVE
76. Crucifix (magnesite)

*ZOELLAN, ROY
77. Crucifix (bronze)
Lent by Monterey Guild

METAL CRAFTS

*ADLER, ALLEN
78. Silver Chalice and Paten and Bible cover

*BRYNER, IRENA
79. Rosary (silver and gray culture pearls)
80. Icon (silver)

CLANCY, FRANK W.
81. Chalice (sterling silver)

CONAHAN, PEGGY
82. Crucifix (silver)

*DAVIS, JACK (Executed by Arnke Ironworks)
83. Votive light stand and two candlesticks (iron)

*FORTUNE, CHARLTON
84. Monterey Guild Tabernacle (brass)
Lent by Rev. Mother Superior, Providence Hospital, Oakland

*FOURTANE, LOYOLA
85. Brooch cross (gold and topaz)
Lent by Dorothy Manning, San Francisco

*LAWENDA, HARRY
86. Electric ceiling fixture (brass and white enamel)

*LESLIE, JEAN M.
87. Group of Crosses (silver, gold, bronze, semiprecious stones)
88. Baptismal shell (silver)
89. Pyx and Spoon (silver)

*MACCHIARINI, PETER
90. Set of six candelabra (iron)
91. Model for tabernacle (to be executed in metal)

*MEEHAN, REVEREND JOHN E.
92. Ciborium (gold-plated silver, diamonds and jade)
Lent by Dominican College, San Raphael, California

93. Monstrance (gold-plated silver, ivory, malachite, lacquer)
Lent by St. Peter's Church, San Francisco

94. Chalice (gold-plated silver, amaranth wood, one diamond)
Commissioned by Mrs. J. P. Foley, San Mateo, California

*RIES, VIKTOR
95. Breast shield for Torah (brass, nickel-silver, pearls)
96. Chanuka candlestick (brass and iron)
97. Altar Cross (brass and iron)
98. Devotional Cross (iron, brass and silver)
99. Pair of candlesticks (copper and silver)
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Ucker, San Francisco

100. Mazzuza (copper, silver, semiprecious stones)
Lent by Ernst Bloch

*ROYSHER, HUDSON
101. Thurible (sterling silver)
102. Processional Cross (sterling silver and rosewood)
Lent by St. Mary of the Angels Episcopal Church, Hollywood, California

103. Baptismal bowl (sterling silver)
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Babcock, La Crescenta, California

*SERVICE, BOB
104. Candleholders (brass)
Lent by Bill Brewer Associates, San Francisco

*TOLERTON, DAVID
105. Cross (wrought iron)

*VANDEN BROECK, FRANS (SHREVE & COMPANY)
106. Monstrance (sterling silver ivory and pearls)
St. Catherine's Parish Church, Burlingame, California
107. Chalice and paten (sterling silver)
Lent by Shreve and Company, San Francisco
108. Chalice (gold)
Lent by Shreve and Company, San Francisco

*VAN ERP, DIRK
109. Chalice and paten (silver)

MOSAICS, ENAMEL, STAINED GLASS, PLASTIC, ETC.

*BRUTON, HELEN
110. Nativity (mosaic)

*BRUTON, MARGARET
111. Station XII (terrazzo)

*DEGAN, IDA DAY
112. Trinity (marble mosaic)

*GRAHAM, CECILIA B.
113. Cross (mosaic)

HAASE, MADELINE
114. Votive lamps (oven paint on glass)

*JENKINS, LOUISA
115. Saint Teresa of Avila (mosaic)
116. Station IV (mosaic)
117. Station V (mosaic)

*JOHNSON, SARGENT
118. Christus Rex (enamel)

*KOBLICK, FREDA
119. Holy Water Font (plastic)
120. Station III (plastic)

*MERRILL, GEORGE D.
121. Give Us Peace O Lord (translucent mosaic and stained glass)

*MIKOUN, MIKA
122. Head of Madonna (enameled copper)
123. Head of Christ (enameled copper)
Lent by Noel Sullivan, Carmel, California

*MONTGOMERY, MARGARET
124. Station IX (vitreous enamel on copper)
Lent by Mills and Miramar, Claremont, California
125. Madonna and Child (enamel on copper)

*NORMAN, EMILE
126. Station VI (plastic mosaic-multiple plane laminate)

*SPENCER, JEANNETTE DYER
127. The Mighty Angel of the Apocalypse (stained glass)

WEAVING, TAPESTRY AND EMBROIDERY

ADAMS, MARK
128. Queen of Heaven (embroidered tapestry dossal)

*AHRENS, JIM
129. Frontal (silk and lurex) (handwoven)

*AHRENS, DOROTHY
130 Altarcloth (linen) (handwoven)

*DUMAS, MARY
131. Batik

*GANTNER, VALLEJO
132. Chasuble for Whitsunday
Lent by Church of St. Mary the Virgin, San Francisco

*GROSS, LOUIS
133. Dossal (handwoven)

*GUERMONPREZ, TRUDE
134. Dossal (handwoven)
135. Hanging for Synagogue (handwoven)

*HALL, ANNA HAMMOND
136. Low Mass Vestment Set (handwoven)

*HIGBEE, RALPH
137. Dossal (handwoven)
138. Altarcloth (handwoven)

*HILDEBRAND, BEULAH
139. Frontal and Superfrontal (handwoven)

*SISTER IMELDA MARIE, MITCHELL, O.P.
140. Set of Liturgical Vestments (handwoven)
Lent by Santa Catalina School for Girls, Monterey, California

*JOHNSON, DULCIE
141. Set of Vestments

LEDERLE, DEL
142. Assumption (embroidery)
143. Annunciation (embroidery)

*SISTER MARY CLARE, O.P.
144. Set of vestments
145. Set of vestments

*FORTUNE, E. CHARLTON (MONTEREY GUILD)
Lent by Dominican College, San Raphael, California
146. Antependium
147. Antependium

*GIRARD, ANDRE
148. The Last Supper (oil on celophane model for stained glass)

*ROLLER, HELEN M.
149. Surplice (handwoven linen)

SMITH, JOHN
150. Angel (embroidery on burlap)

VETTER, VESTA
151. Dossal for Chapel (handwoven rayon and metal)

PRINTS, BOOKS, CALLIGRAPHY, ETC.

BERLINER, AND McGINNIS
152. Bookmarks, etc.

BRUCKMAN, ROBERT L.
153. Missal (binding of English niger)
154. Order of Confirmation (Artist—Jorge Wilson Walker)
Lent by the Right Reverend Karl Morgan Block

CONAHAN, PEGGY
155. Children's Book (handmade and illustrated)

*EVERSON, WILLIAM**FABRILLI, MARY
156. Triptych for the Living (a volume of Christian poetry)

FRIEL, PATRICIA
157. The Three Marys (serigraph)
Lent by Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles California

KING-FISHER, EDITH E.
158. Chapters of St. Augustine's Confessions (ink and watercolor)
159. Gospel of St. John (ink and watercolor)
160. Chapter of St. Augustine's Confessions (ink and watercolor)

*SISTER MARY CORITA
161. Christ Suffering Over Jerusalem (serigraph)
162. The Lord is with Thee (serigraph)

McVEY, MARY MURPHY
163. Life Patterns (serigraph)

POLLAK, MAX
164. Annunciation (color etching)

*WEBSTER, GRACE MARGARET
165. Bible (binding English oasis niger leather)
166. Jewish Prayerbook (binding English oasis niger leather)
167. Book of Common Prayer (binding French morocco leather.
Lent by Dr. Margery Bailey, San Francisco

ARCHITECTURE

*ANSHEN and ALLEN
168. Chapel of the Holy Cross, Sedona, Arizona

*BOLLES, JOHN S. (WARD and BOLLES and MARIO CIAMPI ASSOCIATED)
169. Chapel, Archbishop Hanna Center for Boys

*BORN, ERNEST
170. Studies—Chapel for a School of Religion

*CALLISTER, CHARLES WARREN
171. Model of stained glass window for First Church of Christ, Scientist

*CIAMPI, MARIO J.
172. Corpus Christi Church
173. Church of Nativity—alterations to existing building

*CORBETT, MARIO
174. Presbyterian Church, Northern California

*CRILEY, THEODORE JR. (IN COLLABORATION WITH MONTEREY GUILD)
175. St. Michael's Church, Los Angeles

*GOODMAN, MICHAEL
176. Memorial Chapel, Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco

*GRUNSFEILD, ERNEST JR.
177. Sinai Congregation, Chicago

*JONES, KINGSFORD (WILLIAM SIMRELL JR. ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT)
178. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, California

*MENDELSOHN, ERIC
179. Park Synagogue, Cleveland, Ohio
180. Mt. Zion Hebrew Congregation, St. Paul, Minnesota
181. Temple Emmanu-El, Dallas, Texas

*MARSH, SMITH AND POWELL
182. Oneonta Congregational Church

*TAYLOR, JULIAN (TAYLOR AND CLARK)
183. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Walnut Creek, California

*WONG, WORLEY K. (CAMPBELL AND WONG)
184. Chinese Buddhist Church, San Francisco

*WRIGHT, LLOYD
185. The Wayfarers' Chapel, Palos Verdes, California

CUSTONWOOD FURNITURE SHOP
186. Altar

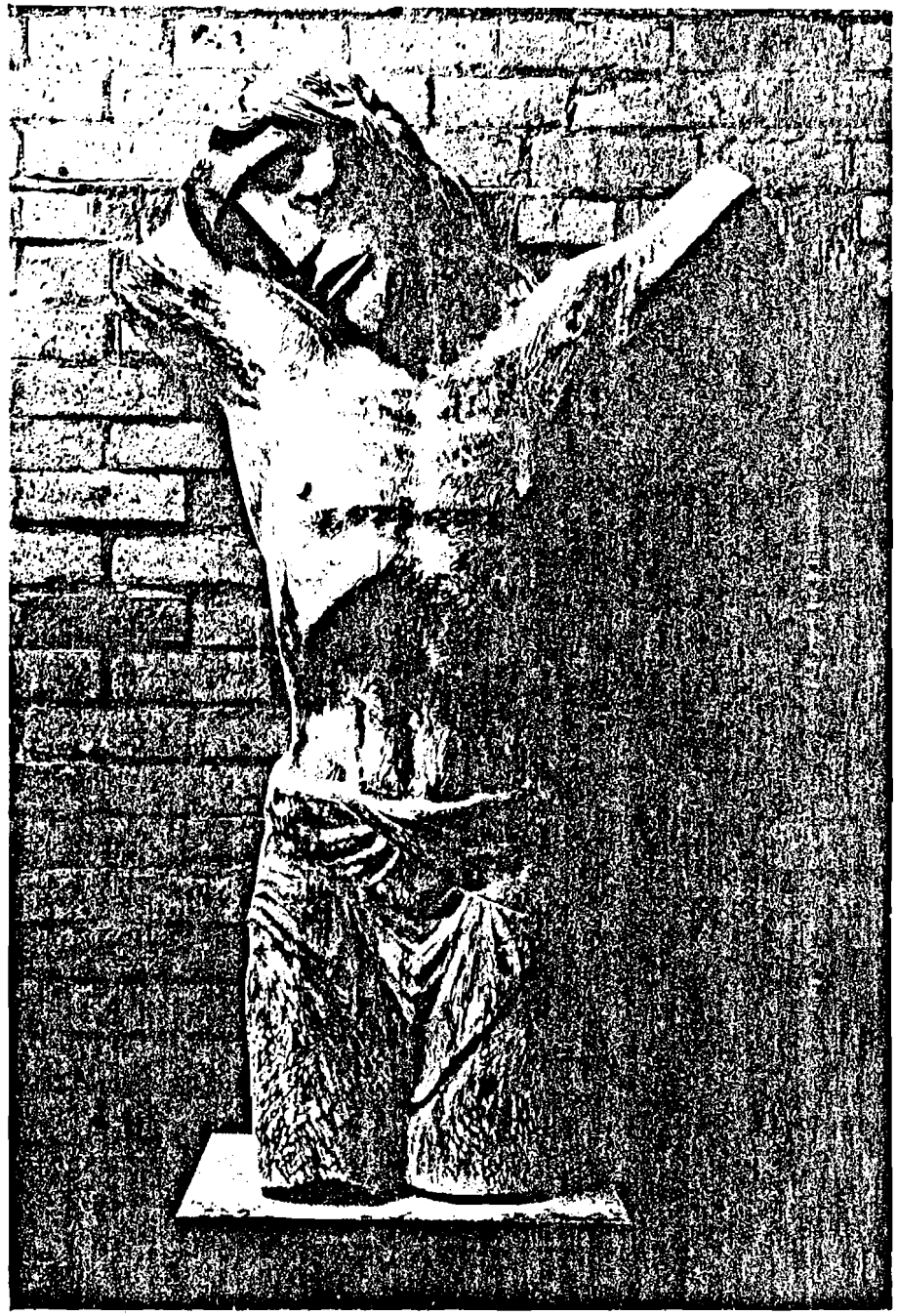
* Jury-free invited works.

The undersigned clergy of three faiths have been asked to advise the officials of the de Young Museum as to the religious acceptability of items which may be displayed in the exhibit of Contemporary Religious Art. We have been most happy to have had a part in this worthy undertaking. Religious sanction is not to be inferred, necessarily, by reason of the presence of any item in the exhibit. Some items will not be liked by some persons. We varied in our reaction. But we believe in the sincerity of the artists. Art is creative, a struggle to express through various and often unusual materials and deepest thoughts and feelings of the soul. We commend this exhibit to the earnest consideration of the viewers that each may find for himself, insofar as possible, the message as intended by the artists.

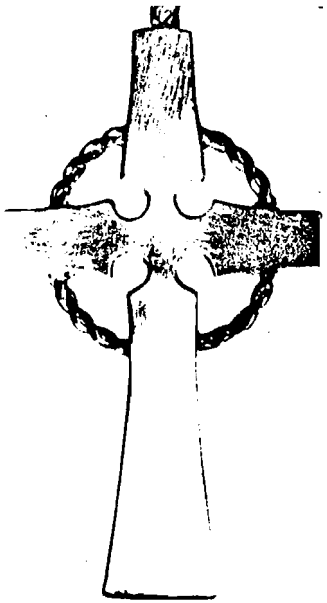
Signed by:

The Reverend E. C. Farnham D. D.
Rabbi Alvin I. Fine
The Right Reverend Monsignor Harold E. Collins
The Reverend George M. Benigsen
The Reverend Leo T. Maher

*JENKINS, LOUISA — Station IV (mosaic)

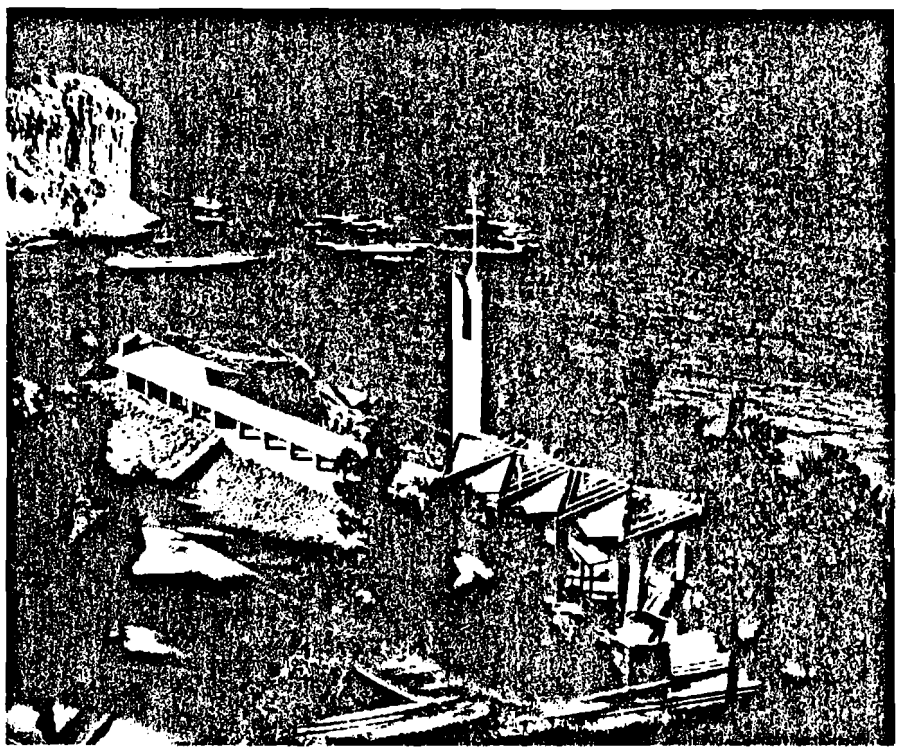


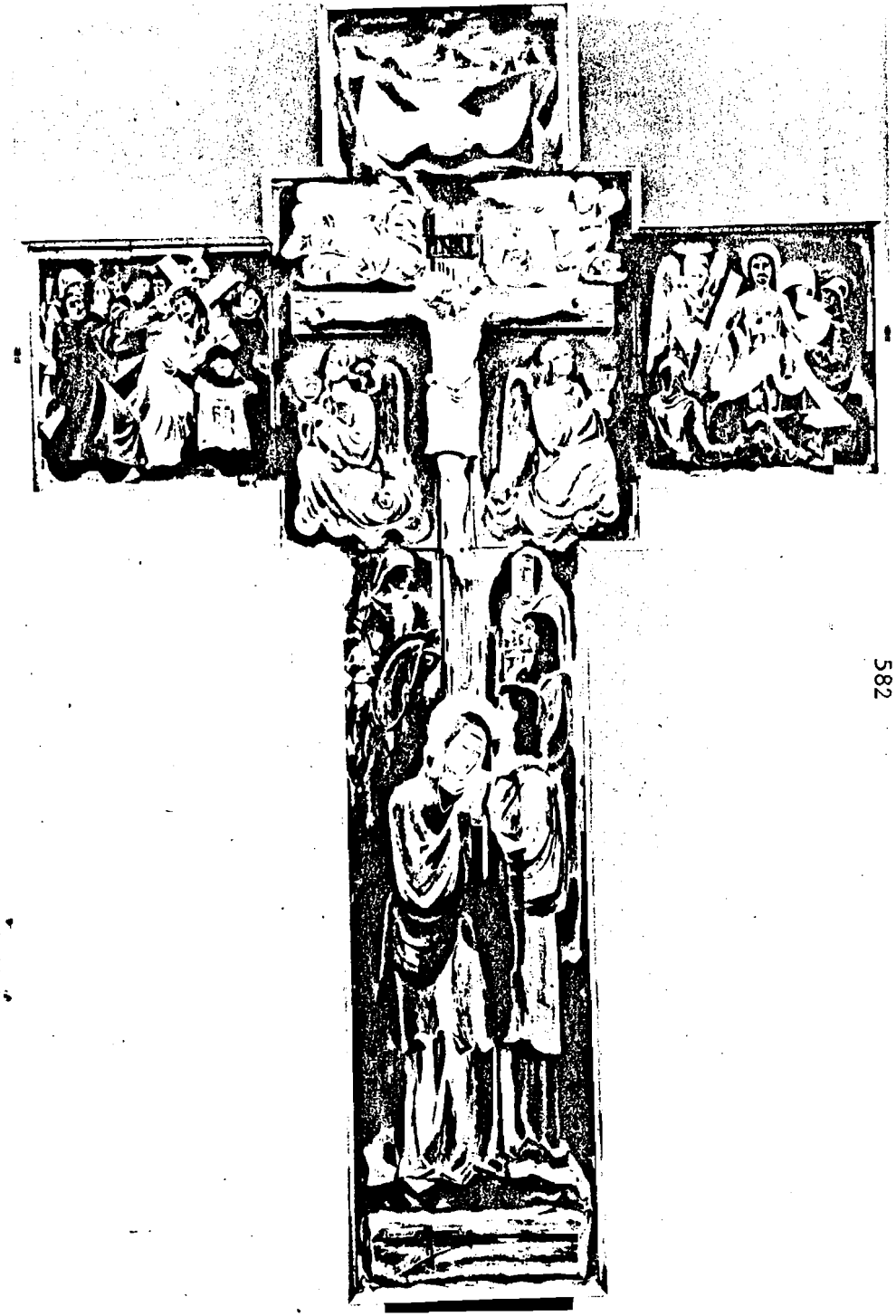
*STEWART, ALBERT — Crucifixion (wood)



*LESLIE, JEAN M.

*WRIGHT, LLOYD
The Wayfarers' Chapel, Palos Verdes, California





*SOTOMAYOR, ANTONIO Altarpiece (oil with superimposed terra-cotta Sculpture)

*SCHNIER, JACQUES

Moses and Aaron (mahogany)

*SISTER MARY CORITA

The Lord is with Thee (serigraph)

*BRUTON, HELEN

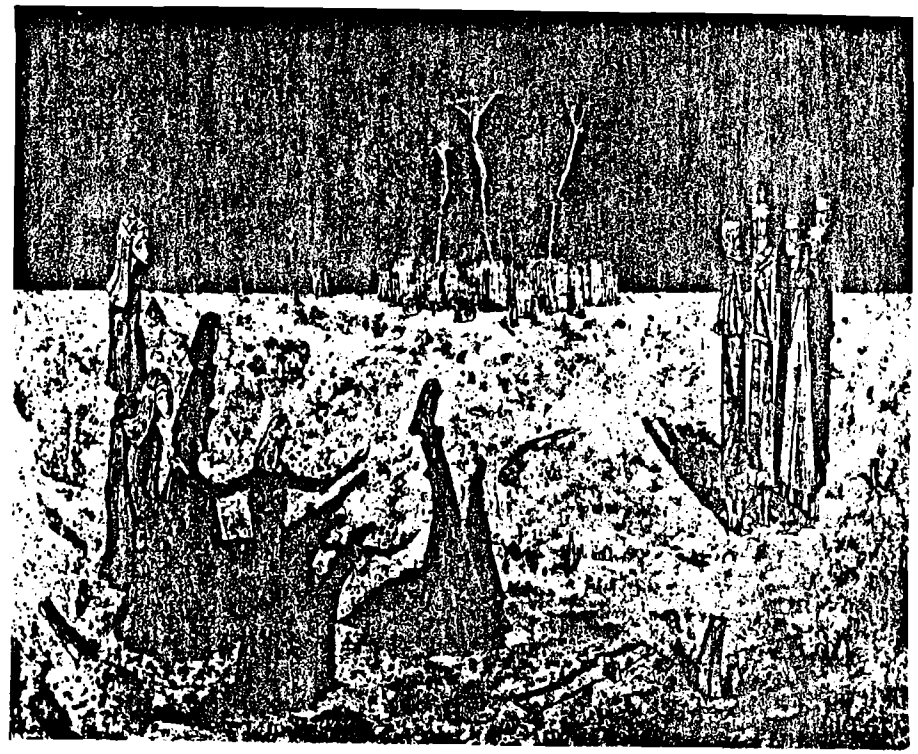
Nativity (mosaic)

*CORNIN, JON

Apostle (oil)

*RICH, FRANCES

St. Francis of Assisi (bronze)



BOLOMEY, RODGER H.

Crucifixion (oil)

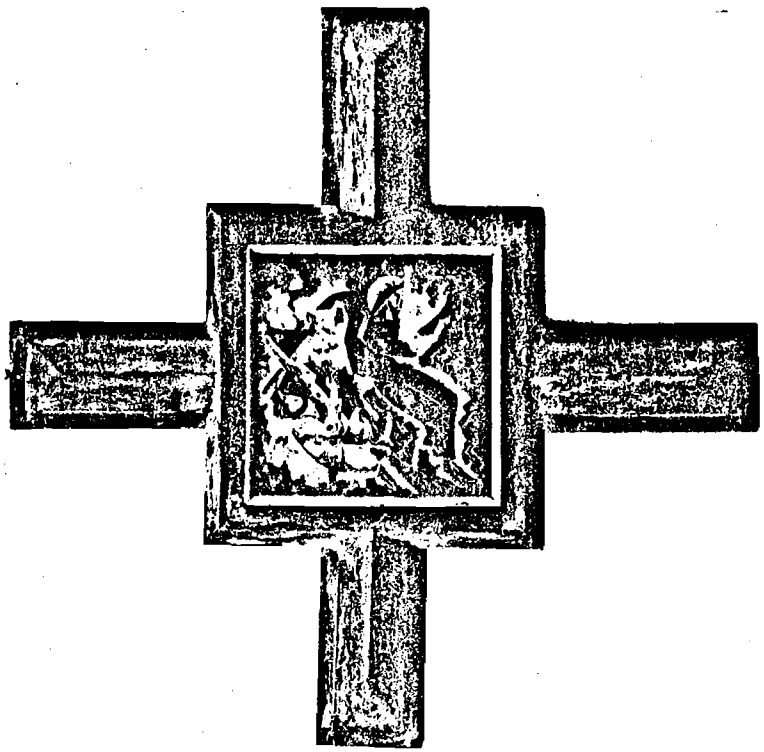
*DUCASSE, MICAELA MARTINEZ

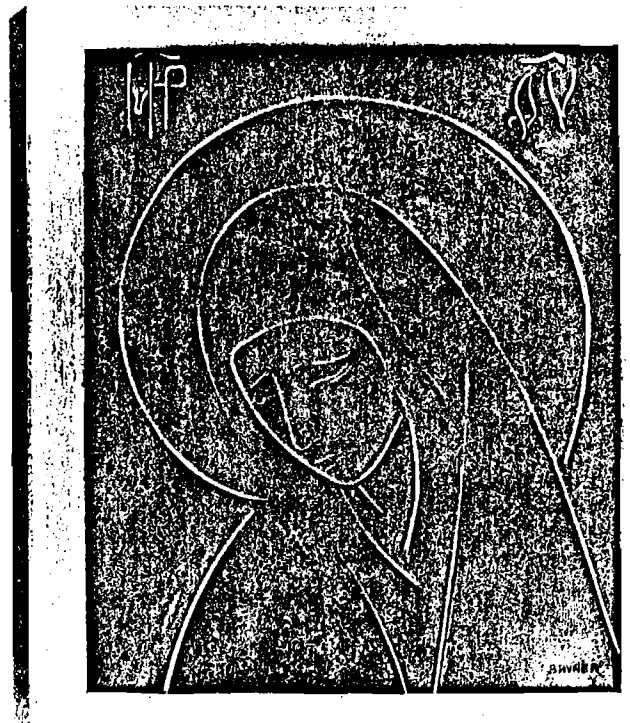
Station XI, Jesus is Nailed to the Cross (cast stone)

ERCKENBRACK, MARY Station II (sgraffito on terra-cotta tile)

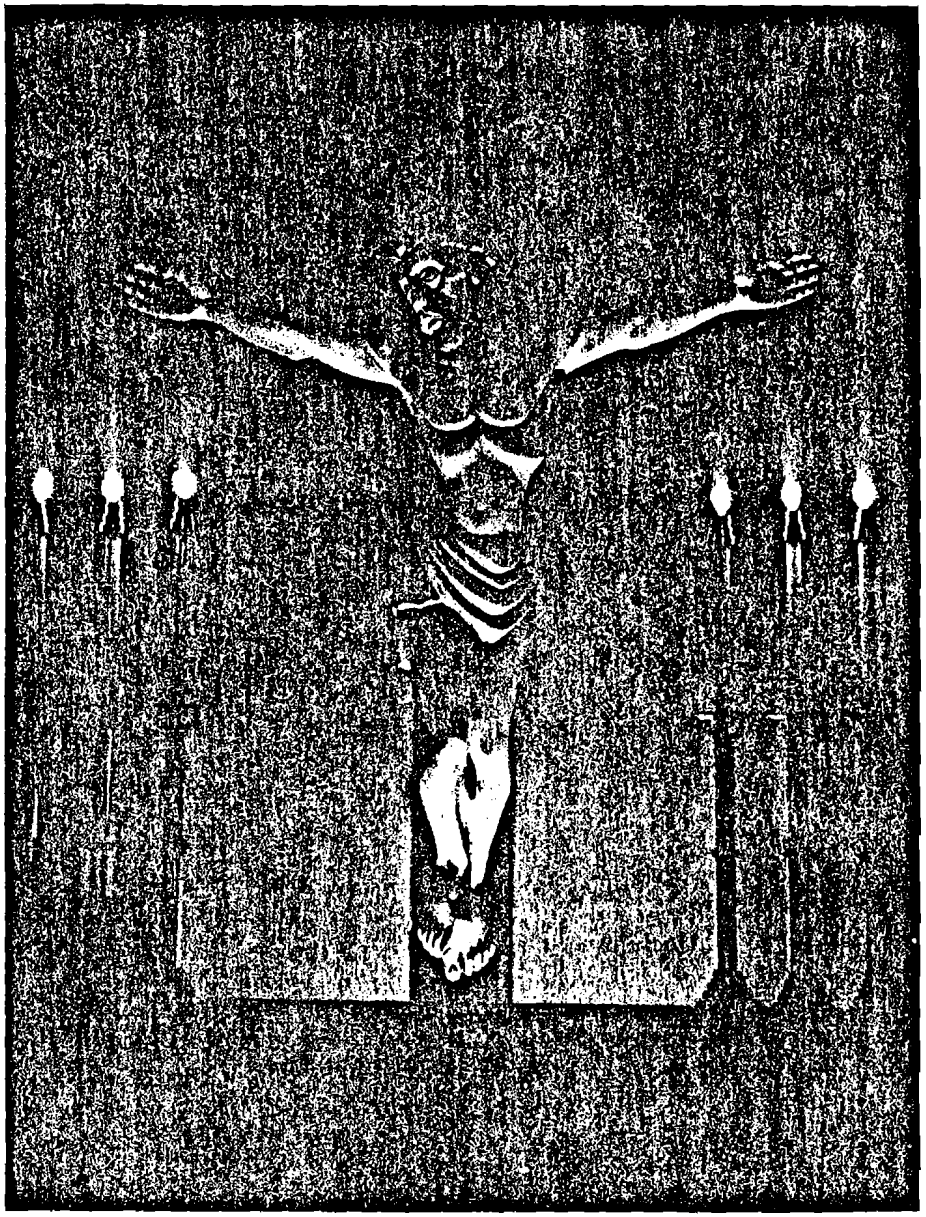
*MONTGOMERY, MARGARET

Station IX (vitreous enamel on copper)



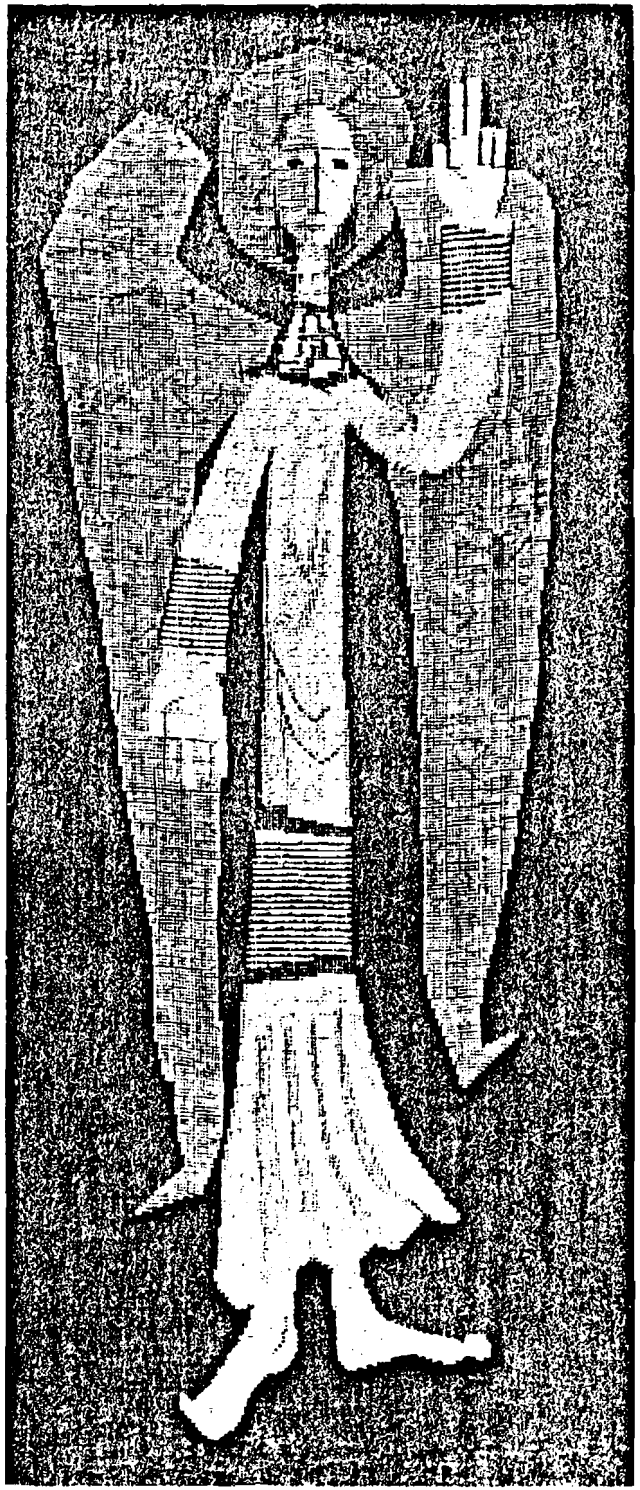


*BRYNER, IRENA Icon (silver)



*NICHOLS, TRYPHON — Crucifix (mahogany)

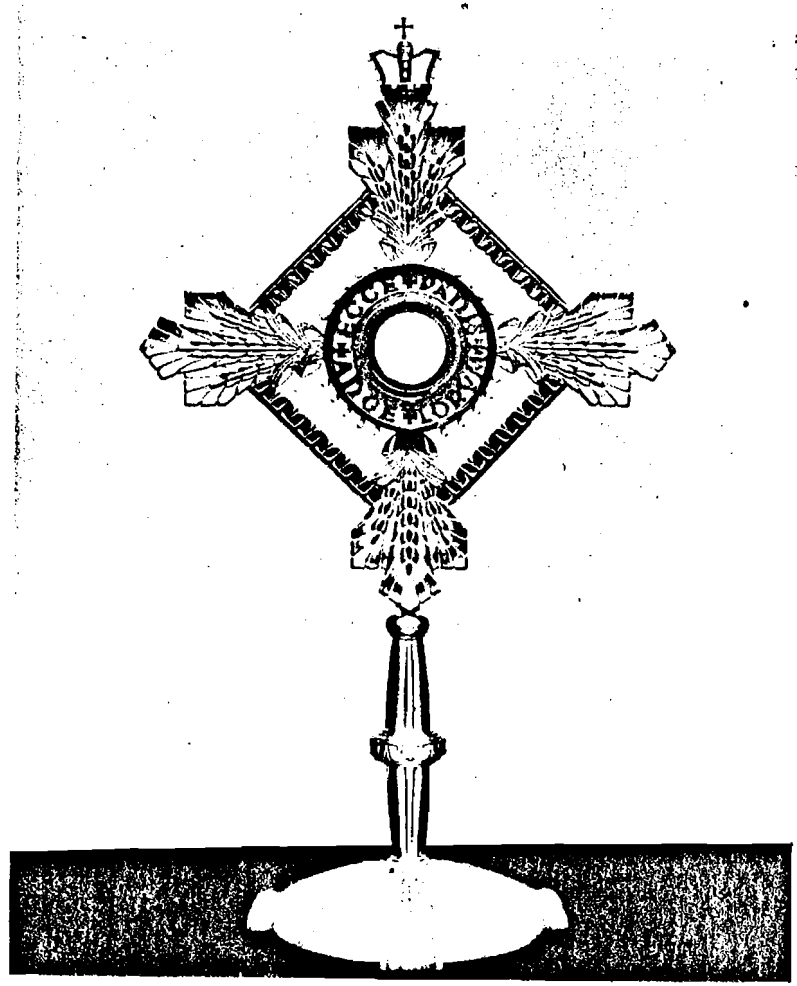
*MOYA DEL PINO, JOSE — Franciscan Monks (tempera)



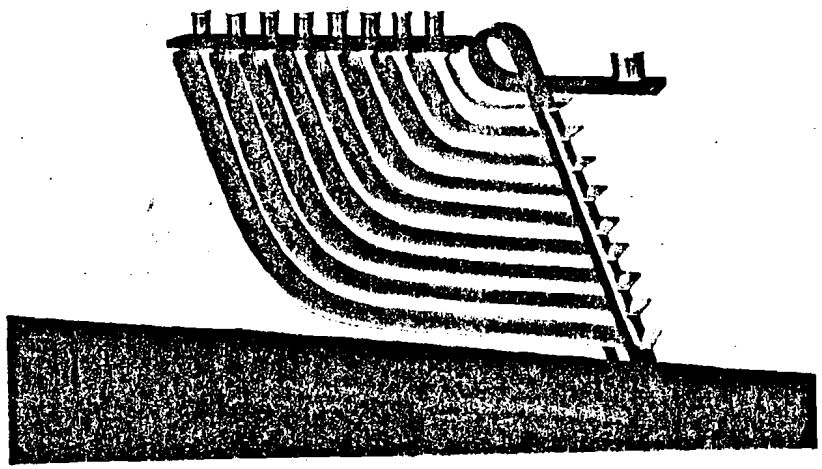
SMITH, JOHN

Angel

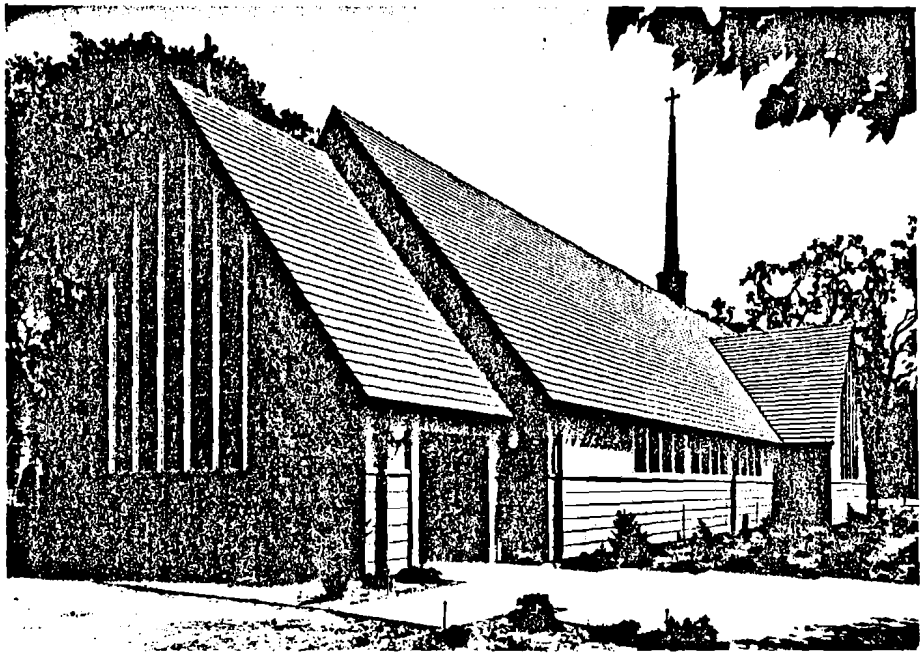
(embroidery on burlap)



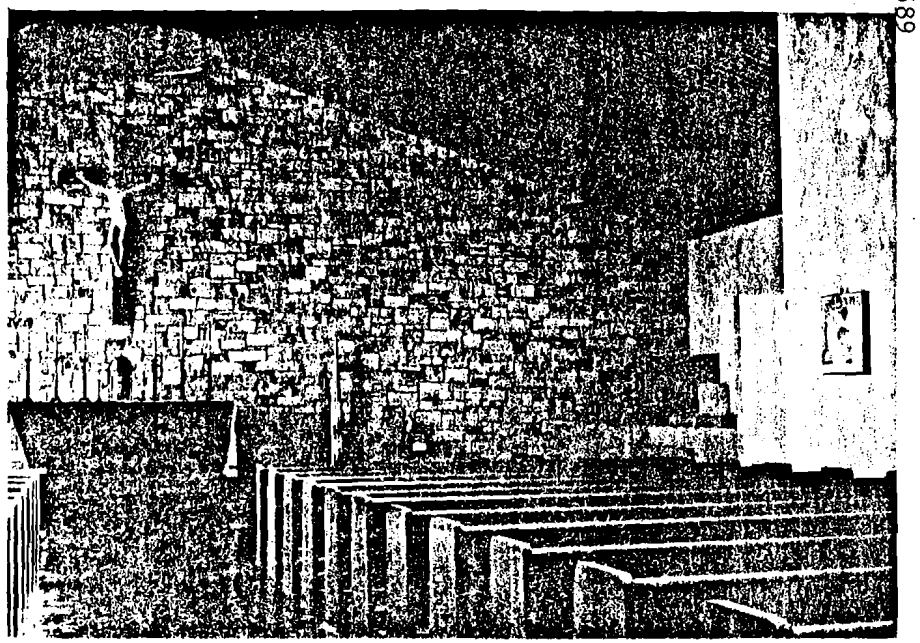
*VANDEN BROECK, FRANS — Monstrance (sterling silver ivory and pearls)



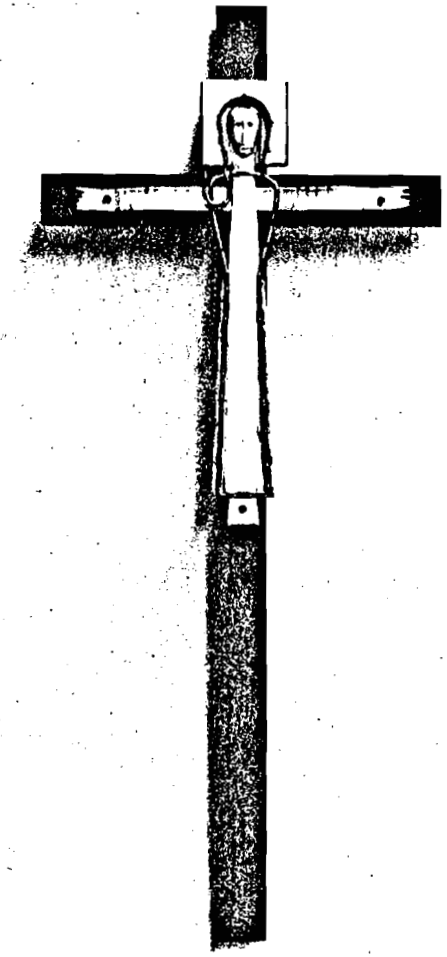
*RIES, VIKTOR — Chanuka candlestick (brass and iron)



*JONES, KINGSFORD (WILLIAM SIMRELL JR. ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT)
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, California



*BOLLES, JOHN S. (WARD and BOLLES and MARIO CIAMPI ASSOCIATED)
Chapel, Archbishop Hanna Center for Boys



*JOHNSON, SARGENT — Christus Rex (enamel)

*CRAVATH, RUTH — St. Francis of Assisi (chocolate Tennessee marble)

CATHOLIC ART FORUM

"...it is altogether necessary to *give a free hand* to that contemporary art which, with due reverence and honor, serves the sacred places and sacred rites."
Mediator Dei
Pope Pius XII

AIMS

The aims of the Catholic Art Forum are to foster a greater interest in and appreciation of religious art of the living Catholic tradition---with particular emphasis on the contemporary form.

HISTORY

The Forum is composed of artists, art educators and others interested in the problems of Church Art, and desirous of carrying on the work begun in our area by the large exhibit of religious art held at the De Young Museum in the Fall of 1952.

Since its organization in 1953, the Forum has held quarterly meetings. Included in the list of speakers on these occasions are the following: Rev. Terrence R. O' Connor, S. J., Louise Jenkins and Alfred Frankenstein.

While the Forum is not sponsored by the University of San Francisco, the facilities of the Gleeson Library have been made available for its exhibits and meetings.

TRAVELING EXHIBIT

The Forum has also assembled a traveling exhibit of religious art by well known local artists, which includes paintings, sculpture, mosaics, textiles and metal work. This exhibit has already been shown at several colleges and seminaries. It is available to schools, clubs and libraries.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Forum is open to all, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who are in sympathy with its aims.

ARTIST FOUNDERS

Among the founders of the Catholic Art Forum are the following California artists:

ELIO BENVENUTO
MARIO CIAMPI, A.I.A.
PEGGY CONAHAN
RUTH CRAVATH
MICAELA MARTINEZ DU CASSE
JUNE FOSTER HASS
LOUISA JENKINS
DEL LEDERLE
ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR

INFORMATION

Address all inquiries to:

The Secretary, Catholic Art Forum
Gleeson Library, University of San Francisco
San Francisco 17, California

CONSTITUTION OF CATHOLIC ART FORUM

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be CATHOLIC ART FORUM OF SAN FRANCISCO, although it is hereinafter referred to under the briefer title of CATHOLIC ART FORUM.

ARTICLE II - AIMS

The aims of the CATHOLIC ART FORUM shall be to foster a greater interest in and appreciation of liturgical and religious art of the living Catholic tradition, with particular emphasis on the contemporary form. In all its policies, the FORUM shall be guided by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Membership in the CATHOLIC ART FORUM shall be open to all who are in sympathy with its aims.

Section 2: All members of the CATHOLIC ART FORUM as of the date of the adoption of this constitution are members of the organization existing under this constitution.

Section 3: All applications for membership shall be presented to the Executive Board and voted upon by it.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

The officers of this organization shall be as follows: President, Secretary and Treasurer.

ARTICLE V - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1: The President shall preside at all meetings of the FORUM and of the Executive Board, and shall appoint all committees with the exception of the Nominating Committee, and shall be ex-officio a member of all committees except the Nominating Committee. In the absence or disability of the President, his duties may be performed by the Secretary or the Treasurer.

Section 2: The Secretary shall attend all meetings of the FORUM, and shall keep a record of the proceedings of said meetings. He shall attend to the correspondence of the FORUM, including the mailing of notices of meetings.

Section 3: The Treasurer shall receive all dues to be paid by the members, and all other moneys paid to the FORUM, and shall disburse the same under the direction of the FORUM. He shall deposit moneys belonging to the FORUM, in the name of the FORUM, in such bank as the Executive Board shall from time to time direct. Money shall be withdrawn from said bank only when the drawing of the same is authorized by the President, and by check signed by the Treasurer. In the absence or disability of the Treasurer, checks shall be signed by the President or the Secretary.

ARTICLE VI - EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1: This organization shall be governed by an Executive Board of fifteen members, of which Board all officers of the organization shall be ex-officio members. The remaining twelve members of said Executive Board shall be elected at an annual meeting of the FORUM. At least five members of the Executive Board must be practicing artists.

Section 2: The President of the FORUM shall be the Chairman of the Executive Board, and the Secretary of the FORUM shall be the Secretary of the Executive Board.

Section 3: The Chairman of the Executive Board may appoint such committees as appear necessary and proper for the conduct of the affairs of the FORUM and the achievement of its aims.

ARTICLE VII - DUES

The dues to be paid by the members shall be fixed by the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VIII - MEETINGS

Section 1: The time and place of regular meetings of the FORUM and the Executive Board shall be determined by the Executive Board. Special meetings may be called by the President.

Section 2: Fifteen members shall constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting of the FORUM

Section 3: Eight members shall constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting of the Executive Board.

ARTICLE IX - NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Section 1: At the meeting of the Executive Board immediately preceding the annual meeting of the members of the FORUM, the Executive Board shall elect a Nominating Committee of three members, who shall immediately after receiving notification of their election from the Secretary, meet and nominate members for the various offices and the Executive Board. The Nominating Committee shall make its report at the annual meeting.

Section 2: Any member may be nominated for one of the elective offices or the Executive Board by filing with the Secretary, at least three days prior to the annual election, a nomination signed by three members of the FORUM.

Section 3: Nominations in any manner other than those authorized by this Article will not be accepted.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any meeting of the FORUM, provided all members have been advised in writing of the proposed amendment in advance. A two-thirds vote of the membership present shall be necessary to amend.

Catholic Art Forum

Catholic Art Forum

presents

Reverend Terrence R. O'Connor, S. J.

lecturing on

Visual Arts in the Teaching Church

This is the first of four meetings
tentatively planned for 1954 to further the
special interests of the Forum members
and their friends

Gleeson Library
University of San Francisco
February 7, 1954

The sacred image of Our Lord Jesus Christ should receive honor and veneration equal to that given to the book of the Holy Gospels. For as all attain to salvation by means of the words contained in Scripture, in like manner all, whether learned or illiterate, draw profit from sacred images, which speak directly and lucidly by means of color. For the painted picture teaches and fosters the same truths as does the written word.

From the decree condemning iconoclasm,
Fourth Council of Constantinople, 870

The cover was designed for the Catholic Art Forum by a local contemporary artist in illustration of the quotation above.

The Monitor Interviews: Mrs. Micaela DuCasse

The Church has always nourished art, and in some places at some times has been its chief and generous patron. The recent news that the Vatican Galleries would devote special space to "modern art" leads us to Mrs. Micaela Martinez Du Casse, president of the Catholic Art Forum, and a member of the faculty of San Francisco College for Women, who answers some questions about art today.

What is the Catholic Art Forum, how did it come to exist, and what is its purpose?

The Catholic Art Forum is an organization of artists and interested laymen. Holding membership also, are several priests, Sisters and Brothers. It came into existence in 1953 as a direct result of the exhibition of liturgical and religious art by regional artists held so successfully at the deYoung Museum in November and December of 1952.

At that time it became obvious to a group of artists and laymen, who had participated in this exhibition, that there was a great need for a concerted and continuous activity in the field of liturgical and religious art, to educate the taste of the general public, especially Catholics, as concerned contemporary art in our churches. From its beginning, the Forum has enjoyed the never-failing guidance and encouragement of its moderator, Father William J. Monihan, S.J., librarian of Gleeson Library, University of San Francisco.

The purpose of the Forum is set forth very clearly in Article 2 of its Constitution, which reads: The aims of the Catholic Art Forum shall be to foster a greater interest in and appreciation of liturgical and religious art of the living Catholic tradition, with particular emphasis on the contemporary art form. In all its policies, the Forum shall be guided by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

A secondary, but no less important, purpose of the Forum is to make known to the Catholic community the best work of regional artists available for use in new church buildings.

Who belongs to the Forum? What are qualifications for membership? May interested persons join?

Among the members of the Forum are many professional artists, architects, sculptors, painters, mosaicists, graphic artists, metal workers, etc.

There are also many art teachers, as well as representatives of other professions among the members.

Qualifications for membership is primarily to be completely in sympathy with the aims of the Forum as set forth above. All interested persons are welcome to join, and may do so at any of the quarterly meetings, where membership applications may be obtained.

What do members of the Forum do? What are some of the Forum's achievements? What are some of the Forum's current projects?

A board of directors, 15 in number, composed of artists, architects and interested laymen, meet at frequent regular intervals to conduct the business of the Forum, which is to plan for quarterly programs, exhibitions and any and all other activities which promote and further the aims of the Forum.

Among the Forum's achievements have been the traveling exhibition of liturgical art by regional artists, which for a period of two years was booked successively by all the Catholic colleges and universities of the archdiocese: At St. Patrick's seminary, Menlo Park, where a particularly gratifying response from the student-body and faculty, to the exhibit and three speakers supplied from the membership in the Forum, was recorded with full coverage in a recent issue of the seminary magazine The Patrician; St. Albert's college, Oakland; Newman hall, Berkeley; as well as, several local art galleries.

Also there were quarterly programs of lectures, panel discussions and motion pictures, drawing interested audiences from all over central California. The Forum also has been interviewed on the archdiocesan TV program, Our Catholic Heritage.

Some of the Forum's current projects are: For the membership, during the early part of this month, while he was in the Bay region, a two-part instruction in the history of the Liturgical Revival Movement and its meaning and application for artists of the church, given by one of the world's leading authorities in the field of the liturgy, Father John Hofinger, S.J.

How does one get to know "good" art from "bad"—are there any rules?

One must study and learn in order to know what is "good" or "bad" art as in any other field of endeavor. There are definite rules laid down by tradition in aesthetics and art practice. There are books which can be found in any of our main public libraries under the general category of Art in the catalogue files. There are courses given in many of our colleges and universities in Art Appreciation. They are adult education courses and even such courses on TV (KQED, 9), which set forth basic principles and rules of Art and Aesthetics.

How about so-called modern art—is it generally good?

Modern art, or as I would rather say, contemporary art, is generally good, in that it is the sincere expression of artists living in, and conditioned to, our particular period in time.

It has been said that man's art reflects his times and his concerns at given stages of growth. Would you, as an artist, care to comment, in the light of this, on the trends of modern art?

I believe that contemporary art is following the logical pattern for our time, that all other great art forms followed in their own times and countries, (in which, incidentally, they were modern and not imported from some other country!)

Present day art does reflect the scientific and industrial age of the 20th century. Twentieth century artists explored fully the ways and means of art practice from the scientific point of view, advancing the technical knowledge of art tremendously, from the impressionists of the turn of the century, to the present painters of today. The very fluid, transitory and individualistic styles among artists in all branches of art today reflect the state of flux, generally, in industrial, scientific, psychological and metaphysical developments of the moment; as well as the devastating chaos of life lived

in the shadow of war and its turmoil and threats of total annihilation, aggravated terribly by man's disorientation from his logical end: God.

What about religious art: Does it seem to you that what you would call good art has found proper favor in the Catholic market? (We ask this question because much has been said concerning so-called religious junk).

Good contemporary religious art has not found favor in the Catholic market, in general.

The reasons are many and complex, of which these few are most obvious:

1. A general lack of good taste in art, either of religious or secular nature.

2. A tenacious clinging to so-called "traditional" art forms because they are familiar and "safe," but which in themselves are only literal and dead copies of what was a living contemporary expression in a past century, but which is no longer suitable for, or expressive of, our own day. Inferior copying of past styles is not the answer to the problem of contemporary religious art. It will be faithful to the great tradition of religious art of the past only if it has a form expressive of our own day.

3. Ignorance of the lofty part art rightfully plays in liturgical functions as well as in devotional practice, therefore demanding that the quality of such art be of the highest, and most sincere and representative of the spirit of the time in which it is made.

In the recent Directives on Sacred Art issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, it is strongly said: "Let them (the Ordinaries) severely forbid second-rate and stereotyped statues and effigies to be multiplied, and improperly and absurdly exposed to the veneration of the faithful on the altars themselves or on neighboring walls and chapels." This is a direct blow at "religious junk."

Lastly, do you believe Catholics as a community—not individual cases are developing a taste for good art?

From what I have observed during the past twenty years in the field of Liturgical Art as a professional artist, teacher and lecturer, I must admit, all too reluctantly, that Catholics as a community, are not developing a good taste for art.

But happily, there are many individuals among the clergy, religious and laity who have not only very good taste but enthusiasm for what is good and acceptable in contemporary art. They are the "leaven" which will eventually permeate and affect the whole, to bring about the awakening of the Catholic community to what is good and right in contemporary religious art.

The Forum will be glad to answer any inquiries about membership and/or its activities, if addressed to the Secretary, Catholic Art Forum, c/o Gleeson Library, University of San Francisco.

membership list
THE CATHOLIC ART FORUM OF SAN FRANCISCO February 1966

Executive Board members:

Paul Dachauer, President
4299 - 23rd Street
SF 94114
285-0567

Mrs Micaela DuCasse, Vice-Pres.
324 Scenic Avenue
Piedmont 11, Calif
654-2347

Mrs Ruth Dunavon, Secretary
3272 California Street
SF 94118
921-7425

Miss Emily Michels, Treasurer
325 Valdez Avenue
SF 94127
587-8604

Rev Daniel O'Connor, Moderator
St. Catherine's Church
1310 Bayswater Avenue
Burlingame, Calif

Elio Benvenuto
870 - 45th Avenue
SF 94121
221-3221

Mario Ciampi
425 Bush Street
SF 94108
362-6314

Mrs Ruth Cravath
893 Wisconsin Street
SF 94107
647-0560

Mrs Margaret Krebs
1540 O'Farrell Street
SF 94115
346-1432

Rev Terrence O'Connor
Alma College
Los Gatos, Calif

Rev Vital Vodusek
Church of the Nativity
245 Linden Street
SF 94102
431-7933

Miss Jeanne Heiberg
4171 Opal Street
Oakland

Miss Ninfa Valvo
1249 Taylor Street
SF 94108
775-8835

Robert Dunavon
3272 California Street
SF 94118
921-7425

- - - - - - - - - - General members: - - - - - - - - -

Mrs B. Abrott
866 Vermont Street
Oakland

Mark Adams
3816 - 22nd Street
SF 94114
648-5262

Mrs Ann Andrewson
15333 Woodard Road
San Jose 24

Byron Alvarez
2756 - 21st Street
SF 94110

Mrs Virginia Arrington
1537 - 33rd Avenue
Oakland 94601

Elizabeth Daniels Baldwin
4728 Balboa Street, Apt 3
SF 94121
752-6373

Miss Minna Berger
2001 Pierce Street, Apt 56
SF 94115
567-5466

John Bertolino
905 California Avenue
Mill Valley
388-4012

Blanchard and Maher
40 First Street
SF 94105

Miss Vivienne Blanquie
167 Corbett Avenue
SF 94114
621-6905

Zette Bleeker
134 Joice Street #5
SF 94108
281-0050

Mayo Bryce
121 Garden Lane
Colma, Calif
755-3983

Delphine Caire
3672 Fillmore Street
SF 94123
931-1929

Mrs Audrey M. Campbell
2721 Turk Street
SF 94118
751-2521

Mrs Elizabeth Carroll
16 Central
Sausalito, Calif

Henry V. Chescoe
1636 Bush Street
SF 94109
776-8778

Donald Cochran
2191 Powell Street, Apt 2
SF 94133
421-6394

Mrs Marjorie Connell
106 Westwood Drive
SF 94112
333-2654

Mrs Anna Crossley
447 Dolores Street
SF 94110
567-5752

Miss Brunhilde Diemand
1101 Green Street
SF 94109
885-1676

Mary Fabilli
2445 Ashby Avenue
Berkeley 5
273-3941

Miriam Feilds
1440 Clay Street
SF 94109
474-1456

Miss E. Charlton Fortune
465 Post Street
SF 94102
421-8400

Mrs Gael S. Garmire
1406 Michigan Street
Fairfield, Calif
425-3724

Mr & Mrs W.A. Gherardi
17 Ashbury Street
SF 94117
221-5952

Edith Hamlin
38 Josiah Street
SF 94112
586-2180

Donald A Holm Jr
710 Moraga Street
SF 94122

Mrs Aleta Jennings
1013 Vallejo Street
SF 94133
775-6074

Dorothy E. Jones
39-A Bernard Street
SF 94133
673-6792

Mrs Gladys M. Chandler
2254 Union Street
SF 94123
346-2680

Mrs Evangeline M. Clarke
2500 McAllister
SF 94118
751-9831

Miss Emily W. Colby
Route 1, Box 232
Carmel, Calif
624-2843

Mrs Marie Cronin
8989 Dublin Blvd
Hayward 94546

Mr & Mrs Darrell Daly
445 Magellan Avenue
SF 94116
681-5008

Kathryn Doran
1267 Chestnut Street
SF 94109
985-1423

Robert W.C. Fahey
264 Milagra Drive
Sharp Park, Calif.

Mrs Mary Stella Flynn
5506 Colusa Avenue
Richmond, Calif

Mario Gaidano
2134 Van Ness Avenue
SF 94109
474-1142

Robert Gerbracht
1521 Parkview
San Jose 30, Calif

Mr & Mrs Robert Givens
3030 Castro Street
SF 94112
585-0199

Mrs June Hass
1844 Yosemite Road
Berkeley 7, Calif

Mrs Louisa Jenkins
Big Sur, Calif.

Joan Johnson
The Monitor
441 Church Street
SF 94114
863-5115

Emily J. Kartes
1170 Lincoln Avenue, #31
Walnut Creek 94596, Calif.

Mrs R.J. Kearns
4409 Edgewood Avenue
Oakland, Calif.
532-8795

Angela Kinkead
2302 Divisadero Street
SF 94115
567-0092

Sister Mary Luke
College of the Holy Names
3500 Mountain Blvd
Oakland 94619, Calif.

Robert Allen McClay
4434 - 23rd Street
SF 94114
824-1260

Sister Mary Margaret
College of Notre Dame
Belmont, Calif.

Louise Masten
85 Walter Street
SF 94114
586-3890

Patricia L. Medvecz
1743 Union Street
SF 94109
776-5954

Elsbeth Nagel
1215 Bay Street, Apt 9
SF 94123
775-2492

Clement O'Dea Jr.
139 Flood Avenue
SF 94112
587-8018

Patricia Owens
P.O. Box 2128
SF 94126

Mrs Theresa J. Paulian
55 Emerson Street
SF 94118
781-4211, Ext 2310

Mary Pedri
360 Bell Avenue
Fairfield, Calif

Milton T. Pfleuger
580 Market Street
SF 94104
781-8872

Rev Joseph Quinn
Newman Hall
2630 Ridge Road
Berkeley, Calif

Victor Ries
420 LaVerne
Mill Valley, Calif.
388-3198

Miss Lucille Kelley
355 Farmer's Lane, Apt 10
Santa Rosa, Calif.
545-6986

Miss Rose E. Luis
811 - 60th Street
Oakland 8

Emi Luptak
1518 Jefferson Street
Fairfield, Calif.

Albert Magee
1425 Broadway
Burlingame, Calif

Mrs Elsie Martinez
RFD #2, Box 70
Carmel, Calif.

Mrs John McNally
45 Pleasant Hill Road
Pleasant Hill, Calif
934-7567

Rev William Monihan
Gleeson Library
University of San Francisco
SF 94117
752-1000

Mrs Marie C. Nitikin
50 Golden Gate Avenue
SF 94102

Miss Irene M. Otto
2600 Union Street
SF 94125
931-7683

Anthony Parrinello
4299 - 23rd Street
SF 94114
285-0567

Joan Jockwig Pearson
571 Lombard Street
SF 94133
986-4575

Mrs Helena Perry
3834 Fulton Street
SF 94118
386-6383

Very Rev Msgr Francis Quinn
Editor, The Monitor
441 Church Street
SF 94114
863-5112

Eleanor Reidy
124 - 26th Avenue
SF 94121
751-1853

Richard Rodriguez
Route 3, Box 866
Carmel, Calif
624-2530

Jan Rosefield
1821 Delaware Street
Berkeley, Calif

Paul Ryan
305 Grant Avenue
SF 94108
986-5950

Mr & Mrs David M. Scoville
1252 Cone Street
LaJolla, Calif

Helen Shea
598 Quinan Street
Pinole, Calif.
758-3613

Mary Anne Sorg
770 Bay Street
SF 94109
885-0879

Ethel Souza
Junipero Serra Bookshop
157 Maiden Lane
SF 94108
986-4888

Mary Helen Stull
2467 - 45th Avenue
SF 94116

Genevieve Tobin
1353 Green Street
SF 94109
673-3453

Elisabeth vonRuffini
25 Bayview Avenue
Los Gatos, Calif

Frederick O. Whisman
465 - 32nd Avenue
SF 94121
751-7815

Charles F. Woods
National Hotel
Nevada City, Calif.

Mrs John J. Ryan
622 - 38th Avenue
SF 94121
221-7302

Henry Schubart Jr.
52 Vallejo Street
SF 94110
421-4832

Eleanor G. Shea
2145 Larkin Street
SF 94109
474-0816

Dr. Albert Shumate
490 Post Street
SF 94102
362-4236

Mr & Mrs Antonio Sotomayor
3 LeRoy Place
SF 94109
673-6193

Mrs Vivian Spencer
249 West Napa Street
Sonoma, Calif
938-3312

Blanche Tobin
1353 Green Street
SF 94109
673-3453

Miss Teresa Tze
3600 Diamond Ave, #13
Oakland, Calif

Miss Anne Ward
1714 - 34th Avenue
SF 94122
731-3152

Mrs Stephanie Wilhelm
1739 North Point Street
SF 94123
346-0475

Barbara Zrnich
11 Ayala Court
San Rafael, Calif
479-9117

APPENDIX C

Sources of Style for Christian Art

WILLIAM JUSTEMA

I *The Situation*

EVERYONE at all interested in this subject knows the historical facts, knows that the Church has, from the beginning, used whatever talent was available, starting off, in the catacombs, with a style crudely similar to that employed at Pompeii. And while it may be an irritation to remember that pagan Rome has supplied Christian art (whether it be art religious chiefly in subject-matter; or art made expressly for sacred purposes) with most of its inspiration, right up until to-day — it need not be cause for discouragement. If St Thomas could sanctify Aristotle, it should not be too difficult to make a good woman out of Cubism.

Because once again we are taking over from the pagans. Or rather, we are filching from them certain stylistic devices they developed after looking long and hard at the arts and crafts of various primitive peoples and exotic civilizations. By doing so, each of the great modern artists has gradually achieved his own easily recognized style, or styles. But if, by their efforts, they have saved us the trouble of going to, of exposing ourselves to, their sources — it does not relieve us from the responsibility of examining their findings with the greatest care. Otherwise, in an access of enthusiasm for everything "contemporary," we will find ourselves, in a decade or two, worshipping among Congo saints in drive-in supermarkets.

It is a visual problem, first and last — a game of recognition (we might call it) for the highest possible stakes. The difficulties which almost inevitably will enter — the financial, the personal, the so-called "political" difficulties — will mainly serve to provide distractions from the responsibility which rests upon the educated, or at least the open, eye.

To-day there is no question of a serious art expression which attempts to imitate nature. Art imitates art (i.e., other artists) even in its occasional, distant bows to nature, and although we may be confronted with the most extreme, the most outlandish examples of modern art, the eye will make its judgments — of acceptance or rejection — entirely on the basis of what it has previously seen and grown accustomed to. Moreover, the eye has always done so, regardless of intellectual or even of practical considerations. That is what gives the plastic arts a tremendous advantage over some of the others. The evidence — in sufficient amounts — surrounds us: it has done so all our lives. Our task, then, as Christians interested in "art," is simply to keep our eyes open for the best available means for giving praise to God.

That these means change, from time to time, should surprise no one. The confusion, nowadays, results from the fact that the plastic arts are changing so rapidly as to outdistance and contradict the esoteric criticism which tries to lend them support. That this jargon is often ludicrous; that the feverish search for novel appearances is certainly suspicious (to say no more) does not alter the situation, at present so confused that many people out of weariness are willing to concede that, in modern art, "anything goes." Our own attitude differs. *What we must do, as far as we are able, is to appraise the leading tendencies in contemporary art from the standpoint of their possible usefulness to the Church.* (And to do this, while we still may, before some Non-Objective juggernaut overtakes us!) In the years immediately ahead, when the clergy and the faithful who are now middle-aged and in the majority shall have died, the Church will consist of those to whom most of the Christian art of the past century (whatever its avowed use, or its excuse) is rubbish. They will have been educated to another world of appearances, to a different "look" to things. And they will demand that look (including abstraction and distortion) of everything they admire, let alone venerate.

They will be partly wrong, of course. What they condemn as downright bad, may merely be repetitive (and I doubt

Drawings by Jean Charlot

A conservative Gothic setting . . .

if any age of art was ever more overgrown with pretentious repetition than the "advanced" art of to-day). Still, they will know what they like; indeed they will be utterly conditioned to like what they do like, and consequently it will be the business of capable artists, working with the clergy, to produce works of art, architecture, and furnishings which the intelligent majority will find acceptable.

Is this too much to ask?

Then it is too much to ask hard work of the artist, good will of the clergy and the faithful. Because there must, in fact, be a considered and a considerable effort made — all around — if the well-publicized rebirth of the liturgical arts is not to end in disappointment, with the faithful misunderstanding, the artist (as all too frequently, all too conveniently) misunderstood. And everyone cheated out of the chance for a first-rate, fully shared, aesthetic and spiritual experience.

However, in this particular field, nothing of that sort need happen.

Not if we know what we are looking at, what we are looking for.

OUR actual survey of the art of the past, whether sacred or profane, can afford to be quite brief. As inheritor of the ages, our own age might be said to have unlimited resources. Who bequeathed us what is less important (to the present inquiry) than how we are going to spend our vast resources with intelligence.

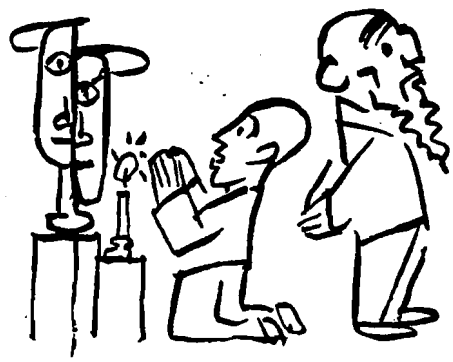
There is little point in reviewing historical styles, as such. Byzantine, romanesque, baroque are so many labels for varieties of artistic expression which can be more usefully described by their qualities and by the way they affect us — that is, through their splendor, or strength, or intensity. Even should a whole congregation decide at this late date that nothing but a "gothic" setting would do for them, the choice would be an emotional one, whether or not their group "aspiration" (best expressed, as we have been given to understand, by converging verticals) was altogether spiritual. Indeed, so much of the finest art of the past is anonymous that only the expressive, the truly affective qualities really count and, as with gargoyles or paintings merely attributed to this or that "school," seem to gain by their anonymity. In a similar manner, without undue benefit of names or dates, each of us has, over the years, built up a conception of what is or is not "Christian" art. This conception, as I have tried to indicate, eludes verbal definition. The most excellent of the principles laid down for the guidance of the Christian artist are all of them (to my mind) too general. In other words, the personal concept must be demonstrated from cases, since it consists of what each one of us has been privileged to see, and of how we have reacted. When enough of us react in the same way, we achieve what is known as a tradition. These traditions can be rather disconcerting; for instance, in their ability to line themselves up with Tradition, as a whole, after seeming to break with all traditions completely. (They do this largely by persistence; by creating a demand such as Picasso-and-company created for cubism, producing so many examples each day that it became impossible to ignore them.)

That is what is happening in the Church now. New visual traditions are being born, not always because they are "wanted," not always of the happiest marriages. After a protracted period of half-hearted modernism, of attempts to freshen up this or that historical style, a courageous minority has apparently decided that compromise is useless. Henceforth it would seem that we are to worship either in strictly clinical surroundings, or in the weighty atmosphere of an art gallery, depending on the preferences of those in charge, preferences for which, I am sure, they feel they have ample authority.

So we are advised, also, to look into the art of the past, albeit from a somewhat different point of view. For although a fragment from the past often constitutes the last word in "modern" art, that does not necessarily mean it speaks to Christians. Antiquity of itself is no criterion of truth (of Christian values) any more than newness is, persuasive as newness may be.

What we should look for, first, are the particular qualities we would like to stress again to-day, and then look intently at the techniques by which they are made effective, yet held under control. Because just as there is to-day no serious art expression which attempts to imitate nature, so is there none which can successfully ignore either the medium it uses or its duty to communicate a bonafide experience through that medium. (A duty which becomes, in Christian art, obligatory. Christian art which is not intelligible — to use Maritain's word — is neither Christian nor is it art, not Christian, because the Church is universal; not art, because it has refused to declare itself, in the terms of its medium, for exactly what it is: whether pattern or representation — or comprehensible combination of both — so that it may be judged.)

These dangers lie directly ahead of us. Beyond any doubt, dishonesty on a large scale, part of it unconscious, has entered, one might say has "moved in on," contemporary art as gangsters move in. It is no longer a question of whether an individual artist is "sincere": most of them, with their muses the art dealers, are deadly in earnest. But conscientious, or the least bit humble regarding their God-given talents — most of them are not. Eager to try anything (supposedly to extend the limits of a particular medium) the typical artist of the day is continually over-reaching himself, and then calling upon a living tradition (presumably of standards of excellence) which he is doing his utmost to destroy. We need not explore the psychological implications here, nor exaggerate the pathos of these lonely ones. At one time I considered the more fierce or the more austere of these "innovators" as martyrs; now I am more inclined to look on them as suicides. And I view their all-out, wanton self-expression so uncharitably mainly because it puts under suspicion



Two generations react to "that look"

so much that needs to be redeemed. Redeemed, that is, for the Church of to-morrow.

How far away it sometimes seems!

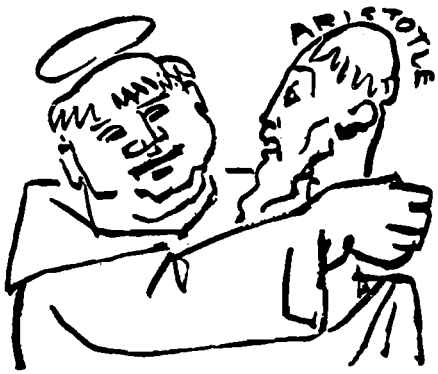
Looking around us, how seldom do our eyes single out anything which even begins to measure up to our conception — unformed as it admittedly is — of what should constitute modern Christian art! Furthermore, in what we do find, is there not invariably an error or an emphasis which could easily have been corrected? I realize how carping this seems, but consider the seriousness of the task. *Unless a large number of concerned observers, continuing to scrutinize everything around them, start to draw a few firm guidelines, for the clergy as well as the artist, the faithful of to-morrow will be both overwhelmed and deprived by an art which is in every way as ostentatious and as essentially trivial as the manufactured article of the last century.*

PERHAPS not quite.

Modern art does show an appreciation for the materials it uses, even though it tends to exhibit them shamelessly. This may be unavoidable in an age where the methods of the laboratory and of advertising predominate.

But these methods are readily enough separated from the wellsprings of Christian art, whereas the materials, and the uses they are put to, are not. Accordingly it is to the older, less facile mediums, and the day-before-yesterday attitude toward those mediums, that we should turn for the hints we will require to single out from the jungle of contemporary art what we want to keep and see cultivated.

And a jungle it is, at once more extensive and more dense than any of the cultural periods which preceded it. This being so, with so much to choose from, why do we have to go either to fetishes or to pseudo-scientific experiments such as impressionism for our Christian inspiration? Why, for that matter, continue to go to pagan Rome via the high renaissance which capped its climaxes, but lost its clarity? These sources are not only tainted; they are nearly dry. In any case they are out of our path. The arts and crafts of Oceania (a principal source of present-day art) were devised to serve magic rather than to record mysteries; while art for art's sake (battle-cry of perennial bohemians) or art for the sake of showmanship (so dear to crowned heads) are equally far removed from the comparatively simple and direct art we need to minister to our souls.



Saint Thomas sanctifies Aristotle

For nothing else will do.

Nothing else at all.

So it is in the *craftsman's* light shed by the mosaics, frescos, sculpture, metalwork, tapestry, and glass, from the third century to the eighteenth, that I will presently invite you to glance, one by one, at thirty-four of the leading and less-known talents of to-day.

The listing is alphabetical but otherwise informal. No complete roll-call or general survey is intended, and artists who are already identified as "religious" may, for that reason, be omitted, either because their contributions to Christian art already have approval, or, in the case of Rouault, because his famous stained-glass style of painting and drawing (which owes much to Daumier, and is related to Hokusai) is the most obvious example of how a liturgical technique may be adapted to less exacting ends: certainly some of his works are "Christian" only by courtesy.

Actually, our principal concern will be to point out stylistic devices which, like Rouault's leaden lines, have been hallowed, somewhat, by Christian use, yet are capable of being used still more specifically for the jobs that constantly come up — from what to do with a certain wall, to where to go for a holy-water font.

The coöperation of the artists mentioned is not under discussion. They are being tentatively "commissioned" (one of them is dead) for what we have seen of their style: their handling of their mediums, their grasp of designing problems. Other artists might, with intelligent guidance, handle the medium, and the problem, equally well. All artists are more anonymous than they like to believe, and the value of the signature, except on the very best work of the best-integrated talents, is decreasing rapidly.

In some of his recent "periods," notably the tomato-plant period of the German occupation, and the more vivacious one he lifted from Van Gogh — chair, straw hat, and all — the most famous of living painters produced, in dozen lots, pictures which were barely the equivalent of a single good painting worthy of his signature. With American know-how at work on the problems involved, can we not expect almost any dozen students to produce, among them, one latter-day Picasso?

Artist's guardian angel assailed with doubt

The established artists, and Fifty-seventh Street, should have fought, tooth and toe-nail, that bill to give every GI who wanted it a free art education.

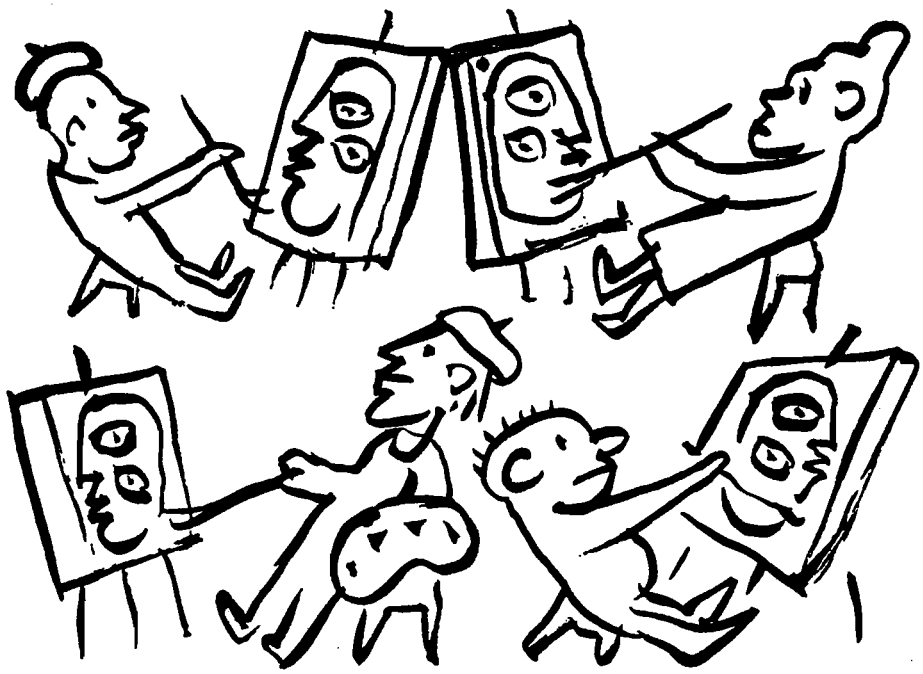
Let us hope that some of tomorrow's clergy were among them.

II *A Solution*

FOR practical reasons the coöperation of the artists who are to be "commissioned" might be discussed in passing. Not their mere willingness to coöperate — that, conceivably, can be purchased — nor even their conscious attitude toward taking a religious assignment — with few exceptions artists of repute are described by their admirers as "religious, in the *real* sense" (!) whatever subjects they favor.

No, it is something more subtle than money, more concrete than artistic integrity. The question, put bluntly, is: *Does the artist we have in mind for this particular job possess the ability to be humble?* Will he be on the defensive of his hard-won signature, or is he really capable, as a craftsman, of submitting his art to the limitations which will be placed upon it? Limitations which will be inevitable, despite every effort to meet the artist half way.

Because now that the instruction of the faithful is no longer the prime requirement of Christian art, the emotional possibilities, through sheer deco-



American know-how

ration, become boundless. And so does the need for their control. But not — I would implore — control from any composite, common-denominator point of view. *A cross-section of good taste, set up as a standard, would soon give every sanctuary in America the "liturgical" look of a dignified exhibit at a world's fair.*

Neither should the artist's fame nor his piety be the deciding factor. I am convinced that the most successful results will come from giving commissions primarily — as I have said — on the basis of what we know of an artist's "style" and how it can be utilized for the project under consideration. That this project should, in turn, be based on some deeply-felt Christian conviction ought to go without saying. Taking into account the function of the various details, it might pertain to any teaching of the Church, or to any of the true feelings which they instill: the more particularized the better. But the important thing to remember is that no commission should be given at random, and that the over-all idea — whatever it is — should be "followed through" to the end (allowing such variations and minor discrepancies as naturally occur and make for charm). Only then will we have total effectiveness and know whether our effort to give visible praise to God has succeeded or has failed.

A last observation.

The principal advantage which artists who are of the faith have over the others is that they will handle Christian themes less self-consciously. In view of the great pagan talents around us, this seems a rather negative advantage, yet what is the sense in asking an artist to comment upon something — one of the mysteries, say — about which he knows little and cares less? The result is apt to be either commonplace or else outrageous. Again — just possibly — it may be imaginative, thought-arresting, and entirely appropriate to its purpose.

These possibilities we proceed to look into.

(Works by eleven of the artists discussed below appear on pages 26–7.)

ARP. It is fortunate that this name is first on our list. Of the half-a-dozen devices which characterize the current international style, none is more typical than the amorphous, kidney-like shapes we call "free forms" which were impressed upon us in the Twenties, modestly but inescapably, by the little jig-sawed painted wood bas-reliefs of Hans (now Jean) Arp. Widely used by such artists as Miro and Calder, and widely abused in architectural and advertising layout, their greatest usefulness has been neglected: that of an assymetrical cartouche, or frame, to vary or repeat — to "set in motion," as it were — the shapes contained within it. I am not, at this time, advocating a distribution of free-form halos, but the handling of areas of special significance in religious subjects has become a real problem. Whether for a nimbus or a whole vision, undefined radiations of light look more phony than they do spiritual, unless the surface is so textured that it has a reality of its own. Nonetheless, the contrast values of the free forms employed, as well as their scale, should be carefully planned. It should take a moment to detect them. Otherwise they are about as subtle as the "balloons" issuing from the mouths in comic strips.

AVERY. This name poses a different kind of problem, — that of ingenuousness. Because of childlike drawing and strong color, Milton Avery is often compared to Matisse, whereas he is, in fact, more closely related to Gauguin: Gauguin flattened and thinned out dangerously near to emptiness. Even so, his unrelenting search for simplicity sets him apart from the deliberate and the inadvertent primitives alike, and suggests ways in which miracles might be depicted. Ways so forthright that they would compel belief.

BALTHUS. Something to sigh about is the thought of what Klossowsky Balthus could do with subjects like the visitation and the flight into Egypt. The last thing the Church needs is more illustrations and illustrators, but the realism, here, is of such uncommon order and solemnity that it could persuade us to accept almost any scene from scripture and see it clothed in modern dress without feeling a condescension to its quaintness. Surely, in the past discrepancies of costume and architecture cannot have been the embarrassment that they are to-day. Is our awareness of history or our lack of fervor to blame? Whatever it is, only the most earnest and the most unassuming pictorial talents can be trusted to handle sacred subjects realistically. This has been true ever since Caravaggio, the unwitting Luther of religious painting.

BAZIOTES. We come upon this name somewhat too soon — as most students come upon that enormous section of modern art which, for all its fascination, consists largely of witchcraft warmed over. But unlike many young painters whose ostensible ambition is to "disturb" the spectator, William Baziotes does not resort to showcases of eyes, and seems dissatisfied with forms which are neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral. He, too, is hot after "the myth" — yesterday it was the anecdote, remember? — but apparently is determined to people it with creatures substantially of his own creating. Since this desire to play God is in evidence everywhere, may we suggest to young fantasists that they exercise themselves in the "creation" of creditable angels (of which there are, if you recall, three hierarchies, each consisting of three choirs). Sub-human types are too easy.

BERMAN. Despite the impression that Eugene Berman spends all of his time in theatrical warehouses, his is the most opulent talent of the day. If there is to be Baroque splendor and allegory, this is the place to seek it. Berman alone of modern painters could do full — yet discreet — justice to the assumption of the Blessed Virgin or to her coronation because, with him, the emphasis would be on the draperies and on the sky effects: there would be no question of whether his "mistress" had posed for him. Unfortunately, so full-blown a talent would require, in any interior constructed to-day, a truly ingenious presentation. To give it anything resembling its usual architectural support would be unthinkable. On the other hand, the architect and the decorator who succeed in reactivating the baroque spirit — along the lines of the California missions, but without their sense of impoverishment — will have done the Church invaluable service.

BRAQUE. The third person in the trinity of contemporary art, Georges Braque's alter-

nate daring and caution with regard to the development of his handsome decorations should be brought to bear on all of our Christian symbols. Immemorially old, yet sadly out of date — except in their essential forms — they need to undergo the changes to which other "still-life" material, bottle or guitar, has, ever since Cézanne, been subjected. Then, when they have met the requirement of being a functioning part of a formal composition, I believe that the Christian symbols might be lifted out of it, renewed. For I see little chance of our getting vigorous new interpretations of them by working over them singly, out of all context, on a drawingboard. Distortions must fill definite aesthetic requirements (and become satisfactory shapes in themselves) before they can begin to implement spiritual conceptions.

CALDER. Alexander Calder's superb gift for psychological toys could work wonders with abstract themes-for-contemplation to be set up in monastery and retreat house gardens — made mobile by the wind and rain.

CAMPIGLI. And now, none too soon, we approach, in the Greco-Egyptian inspired paintings of Massimo Campigli, the earliest days of Christian art. Why have so few painters been able to reduce the portrait and the human form to such expressive simplicity? Here — more than in El Greco — is the art of the authentic gesture, engraved on the memory by means of flatly modeled silhouettes, one after another, as the saints must have seen themselves, and we ought, in time, to see the saints, in the same opalescent light, each with his attributes, engaged in his habitual pursuits.

DALI. The respite was brief. The work of no other living painter displays the inner agitation of Salvadore Dali's, despite its technical excellence (which stops short of its color, however, for miniaturists are not colorists). He is always showing off: first by putting too many things in a picture, second by dwelling upon each of them until what might have been a fine symbol becomes a singular, literal statement of fact. It is the reverse of the poetic process, and here, again, in spite or because of the tenderness with which this prodigious talent treats details. Without curiosity we await his first cover for the *Saturday Evening Post*, due nearly any week.

de CHIRICO. If he only realized it, there is a time in every artist's development when his work "signs itself" more indelibly than it ever does later. For Georgio de Chirico this time came early. He had little facility; he scarcely seemed able to draw. All he could do was to create long distances and immense melancholy. We would like to see the shadow of the early Chirico fall across the fourteen stations.

DUFY. Like Dali, Derain, and a surprising number of the school of Paris painters, Raoul Dufy does not have any direct contribution to make to Christian art. He might have had earlier, as a designer, but the calligraphic style on which his fame rests is — to us — a warning more than anything. At its best, in the hands of its several masters, it displays admirable control of the nervous system; as usually practised it is an art of happy accidents. To use Duchamp's phrase, everything depends on "the success of the brushstroke." Technical vanity, such as this, cannot be encouraged.

ERNST. As the most serious of the surrealists, Max Ernst, in his own work, seems doomed to depict beautiful horrors (and might, without offense, continue with other martyrdoms, after his prize-winning Temptations of Saint Anthony). But easel painting has a commodity value which will always make it a bit suspect, for Christian art, whereas I see widespread use for two of Ernst's most highly developed techniques: the collage, in devout hands which may not have learned how to draw; and the pigment-incrusted surface for sacred precincts where wood is too warm, marble too cold, and their frank imitation is too theatrical.

FEININGER. The distances we observed in the early Chirico are squared off arbitrarily (regardless of perspective) and also made "atmospheric" (by shading) in the seascapes of Lionel Feininger — as though Turner had been triangulated — while they stop short of the fathomless vistas of Yves Tanguy. Honestly employed, all these ways to indicate space and atmosphere can be useful to Christian art, especially when we come to think of heaven and the communion of the saints.

GIACOMETTI. Considerably more tangible is the sculpture of Alberto Giacometti, regardless of its increasing attenuation, from "The Palace at 4 A.M." (which inspired a whole erecto-mechano school of sculpture) to the recent elongated figures (which complete the death-interrupted work of Lehmbruck). Giacometti is one of the few first-rate sculptors not deeply indebted to Brancusi — that Montparnasse god absorbed in his own avoid cosmos — and because of his delicate position between the skewers-and-doughnut idol-makers on one side, and the neo-naturalists with their brutalized art-nouveaux bronzes on the other, he alone possesses the purity of heart to cope with a representation of the Sacred Heart. And it cries out to be sculptured, abstractly, for it defies flat illustration in color.

GRAVES. Here the problem raised is part psychological, part technical. It is the problem — to religious art a constantly recurring one — of detecting true mysticism when the conventional modes of mysticism (haze, and sudden emphasis) are used overmuch. Fra Angelico saw his visions in a clear and equitable light; Morris Graves waits for his to emerge from a cloudbank. Perhaps it is a difference in the times.

HOFFMAN. Kandinsky could never have seen where his Improvisations were to lead, and that his own spontaneous reaction to expressionism would finally be turned into a series of athletic exercises by Hans Hoffman, teacher of thousands. Let us face the facts. Lincoln Kirstein calls improvisation the prevailing practise in to-day's art, and Hoffman has given it canons. These "pushes" and "pulls," this over-familiarity with the medium (oh for a painter who would *not* be "not afraid of paint"!) are high on the list of hallmarks that to-morrow's art-minded, the faithful included, will be looking for. I would only suggest that if this approach to plastic art is to be regarded as something more than intellectualized fingerpainting, its more successful examples (at least) might be translated into one of the *awkward* mediums, like stained glass, or one of the *tedious* mediums, like tapestry. Then we could see what it has to offer besides the beauty we have, for some time, known was inherent in paint.

KLEE. Mischief-maker supreme, Paul Klee quickly looked beyond cubism and post-impressionism into tribal art, on the whole, and presently succeeded in reducing large slices of it to vignette size. The tastefulness of this little master is indisputable, and yet it must be pointed out that his is an altogether contrived art, an art of odds-and-ends which has about as much relation to "magic" as your dead aunt's china-painting. Here and there a brilliant painter like Loren MacIver seems to be building an impressive style on it, but by going directly to its strong, formal qualities: the framework, the ideogram; and avoiding its pitfalls: the pastiche, the doodlings (known in *avant-garde* circles as "graffiti"). Finally: observe that Klee puts most of his imagery across by utilizing textured surfaces which simulate antiquity. I can see how liturgical designers might employ this device for special effects, but it amuses me to see how frequently the most "advanced" of contemporary artists invite the softening stains and scratches that normally come with age. The fake antique in furniture would horrify them; the fake archaic in art fills them with rapture.

LIPSCHITZ. The demand for crucifixes must be the hardest of all to satisfy. Every thoughtful sculptor is probably capable of one or two meaningful versions of Christ crucified (I am thinking of specific works by Mestrovic, Pablo Gargallo, and Clare Sheridan) yet I find myself mistrusting the most powerful of living sculptors, Jacques Lipschitz, to make one which could even be tolerated. That is the curse on virtuosity: that to some subjects the artist can — and should — bring almost nothing. The cross in particular is not an idea on which artists can hang their egos (and for this reason, if no other, the "found object" crucifix of Germaine Richier at Assy had virtue: it appeared to be humble). With due respect to the dramatic genius of Lipschitz, it would be gratifying to see his burgeoning forms used for a crown of thorns — alone — or as the rays on a monstrance. This is the man who could bring back the baroque if he did not insist on hitting us over the head with it.

MARINI. The archaisms of Klee take on a third dimension in the figurines of Marino Marini. Presumably there are not enough Chinese tomb figures nor Pre-Columbian artifacts to go around: half of our present-day artists are turning out their equivalents, complete with patina. But it is impossible to resist the appeal of the primitive, and of time, even when it is synthetic, and our objection is not to these *objets d'art* in themselves; it is to their anticipation of antiquity in order to get into the museums. (Out-and-out forgery would be too difficult, I dare say.) Sculptors like Marini should supply us with the figures and animals we need for our Christmas cribs. For Marini, there would be the inducement of the Magi on their camels.

MATISSE. And now the central problem of contemporary art is stated, at its most paradoxical, in the work and personality of Henri Matisse. The problem: how virtuoso, how

naïve can an artist be? How carry conviction while he is giving pleasure? For "charm" is conceded to be indispensable to art, and never more so than in works which are strongly conceived and executed. At bottom, it is the problem of being disarming, of exhibiting one's abilities without flaunting them. For fifty years Matisse has been unlearning how to draw, as he produced works of increasing sophistication. This divided effort is over at last. Illness has now reduced him to using cut-out colored shapes which amount to "free forms" with an eye on natural forms (mediaeval glass is full of them) and line drawings whose power of expression he dares to test on large walls ingeniously preserved in fired tiles. By this very oriental means, Matisse returns from Persia — to Vence. The "oriental origins" of Christian art may be more plentiful in the future than they proved to be in the past.

MATTA. The title — poetic in Chirico, a key to Klee, a strain upon Miro — reaches absurdity in the paintings of Sebastian Antonio Matta Echaurren, who, all labels aside, is among the "ten" best-equipped painters of our time. But who would suspect this from such a title as "Lets Phosphorece by Cleartivity." (?) Practical jokes (whatever their domestic delight) should be left to the die-hard academicians — I mean those of yesterday's academy — and to the journalists. Matta, with this strange chemical-architectural style (which at one time was the most original to be seen, but now is getting nebulous again, and easy to imitate) should essay some of the more *difficult* religious subjects: pentecost, the transfiguration, the economy of our redemption, or the poor souls in purgatory. It is assumed that his gift for abstract invention does not need to be aided by irony. (Though how seldom, to-day, can anyone resist it!)

MIRO. At first glance Joan Miro seems to owe to Klee all that he doesn't owe to Arp — or, recalling earlier, bucolic canvases, you are putting him down for a bushman Breughel — when you suddenly see he is our leading iconographer. How easily, given grace, these mild indecencies might become sprightly pieties! This is the energetic kind of vision we want for the "illumination" of our book-of-hours of to-morrow. (Not Eric Gill's prim, starved style left over from his lusty living.)

MOORE. Henry Moore the sculptor has little to bring to Christian art. His perforated forms logically limit themselves to lance-wounds, his cleft or contorted members to special martyrdoms — for Christian figure-sculpture is bound to be taken rather literally — and it is oddly enough in his wash drawings that Moore reveals a remarkable way to represent Biblical scenes and persons without the least sense of anachronism. True, the drawings we know, having been based on memories of air shelters, all look like variations of an entombment. But these heroic bodies, with their tiny impersonal heads, would merely need to rise, rearrange their draperies, and walk through the whole New Testament.

MULLICAN. What has become of impressionism? is a question the young painter Lee Mullican has answered practically single-handed. Applying his paint with a palette knife, using motifs derived from Indian sand-painting, he far surpasses the impressionists in luminous color, and is the equal of any of his immediate contemporaries in alluding to subject-matter, in encompassing a mood. Meanwhile one cannot refrain from asking: If so much is given, why not a little more? "The capacity for taking infinite pains" was never better demonstrated than in making mosaics: *pointillisme* believed in.

O'KEEFE. The economically-painted canvases of Georgia O'Keefe are, when all is said, the most indigenous plastic expression of modern America. We are happiest in our art when realism and abstraction coincide, as they do in the work of our best photographers. O'Keefe, wife of the late Alfred Steiglitz, with her photographic eye, selects subject-matter which, in itself, is abstract (i.e., the elements of design are stressed) and proceeds to give a chromolithographic account of it. Due to her thin pigment, her disdain for paint quality, the original oils are not very ingratiating (the pastels are more so) but it is this middle-of-the-road vision which is so typically American. One eye is on nature. The other is on Paris. And while this disposition could — and I am afraid will — lead us into an era of religious poster-making, it could also lead into a valuable method for formal composition (to be added to the one that follows). For the open secret of this "American style" is of course the photographic enlargement, the "blown-up" detail. Christian literature abounds in instances of generalities pointed up with particulars (what else are the parables?) and how could this be better shown than by combining long shots with closeups?

PICASSO. Along with untold harm, the most famous painter alive has done Christian art two great services. He has shown it, in his neo-classic period, how to handle the mother-and-child subject in tender and more "playful" yet firmly related arrangements (this, for to-morrow's Madonnas) and, in the Guernica panel, with the hundreds of sketches made for it, he has demonstrated, step by step, how to *compile* a masterpiece: breaking down the separate subjects, section by section, and then bringing them up to their permissible strength, until the impact of the whole is greater than any of its parts. The qualified success of Lebrun's "Crucifixion" depends on his having used this process, but I see it applied still more successfully where the intention in mind is not so obviously to produce another masterpiece of emotionally charged cubism. Most masterpieces are best left unfinished; furthermore, why does the process of abstraction necessarily mean the doing of violence? Cannot the "strong feelings" of the artist — which, in mural painters, seem occupational — be expressed in harmonious shapes as well as those that defy being put together? They were at the portals of many cathedrals.

POLLOCK. If the main psychological problem of modern painting — that of deciding how, for one's self, to practice the art of concealing art — is stated at full paradox in the work and person of the venerable Henri Matisse, the technical side of it, reduced to the medium itself, may well be represented by young Jackson Pollock. His is a great love for paint, with a great contempt for its usual uses, combined. (Although I wouldn't be surprised if he professed an admiration for Ingres, or maybe George Innes. Painters are like that.) All the mistakes, all the happy accidents of modern painting find a place on the floor of Pollock's studio. Well and good. They had to go *somewhere*. What interests us most: how does he know when to stop? How does he judge his successes? For this is an extreme sensitivity, protected by a casualness that appears callous. Nevertheless it is honest and (except in size) unpretentious, and I would not suggest — as in the school of Hoffman — that the results ought to be "checked" (and curbed) by translation into one of the more awkward or tedious mediums. It is merely for the record that we point out that the method used here is that of elaboration, of embroidery. We leave it to others to consider the possibility of buying this rich coloring by the yard, for use on vestments.

RATTNER. For those whose sails are trimmed to Byzantium, Abraham Rattner is the man. Stabilizing Chagall, breaking Rouault into prisms, Rattner's canvases are worth their weight in jewels, and it is because they first catch the attention, and then lead it deeper and deeper within, that I wish we might have the fifteen mysteries of the rosary pictured by this brush, and reduced to a small spiral-bound size — like a series of enamels — for use along with beads. Then we would see whose minds could wander.

ROTHKO. Another young painter has gone in the opposite direction from Pollock — the direction of simplification — and ended up, with him, just as completely dependent on paint quality. Mark Rothko spent the required neo-expressionist's amount of time in improving on Kandinsky; now he seems all set to give Mondrian the sensuous appeal the old boy lacked (although not, I believe, burdening him with cosmic implications as do the non-objectivists). In the meantime, while they are uncomplicated and unsullied, let us burn into our brain Rothko's glowing or limpid bands of color. Recalling Mediterranean days, their storms, sunsets, and noon shade — they are just what we need for the plainer church walls, to-morrow.

STELLA. American art lost one of its finest talents with Joseph Stella: a talent ready to take up where the fresco painters of Avignon left off. It is customary to call these talents "decorative," whereas, to themselves, they were undoubtedly depicting things as they saw them. With all his skill, Stella had an innocent vision. A vision lacking, we must suppose, at Beuron, where the skill developed led to endless and sterile ornamentation. Since none of to-day's great artists (except possibly Jean Charlot) seems likely to project a decorative vision ultimately suitable for widespread use, it might be well to forget, altogether, the notion of thus enhancing the interiors of the churches we are building. The illustrators of children's books are hardly the solution to the problem.

TCHELITCHEW. Neither, at first glance, is Pavel Tchelitchew. This formidable name is that of the anti-decorator: a giant who, for years, has been standing squarely in his own light. Combining the romanticism of Courbet with the science of Leonardo, Tchelitchew's work has all too often been more rewarding to read about than to look at: which is no reflection on writers who recognize something worth

writing about. The trouble was that the program notes became exceedingly fancy, and the performance valiantly tried to keep up with them. A lesser talent would have succumbed to so much interpretation. It is to Tchelitchew's genius that we owe his survival of simultanism, metamorphism, and the triumph over his own dexterity in some of the "interior landscapes" (others become gem-studded reliquaries, as elegant as they are repellent). We realize that geometrical marvels will not long hold his attention, either, but — having stripped bare the flesh — Tchelitchew could now apply his compasses to the human figure with more appreciation of its *wonder* than Michelangelo or indeed any draftsman who ever lived. Moreover, these figures for the ceiling of tomorrow's "Sistine Chapel" would have, in addition to being marvelous, that rare quality the schoolmen call effulgence. Or would have, if they came into being at all. With artists of a certain stature, who have carved their careers out of their nervous systems, we should be prepared to expect some fear of interference. And draw up the "contract" accordingly.

TOBEY. A painter like Mark Tobey might be easier to work with. Not because he has shown a liking for religious titles (we hope we have seen the last Last Supper, whether representational *or* abstract, for a long time) but because he has perfected a notable device for evocation: that most-sought-after of qualities to-day. In brief, the rôle previously played in art — whether religious or secular — by instruction and representation has been supplanted by an expressionism (more disciplined than that which stemmed from the Fauves) whose apparent aim is to create such sympathy for its more-or-less-abstract contents as to clearly "evoke," through them, the ideas or the emotions the artist intends to communicate. All of this supposes participation, and involvement, to a high degree: we are but one step away from ritual, and Mark Tobey's "white writing" is the closest we have come to visual incantation. The next step is to incorporate it into architecture, to make visible plain-chant out of it. This would not be as difficult as one might think, and I especially like the idea that the result, in its strict avoidance of recognizable forms, would be equivalent to a Mohammedan art for infidels — in our case, Christians. (Speaking very generally, all "abstraction" in the churches should seek a maximum of purity, of self-effacement, even though it is, accordingly, labeled mere ornament or decoration. Failing real modesty, assumed modesty might be considered, and minor religious subjects sought after, or subject material of simple and self-evident piety. For it is the jarring *title* which has most often been to blame for the confusion since the first days of modern art, and it is difficult to understand a Christian artist who would create puzzles — if he is able to shed light.)

VARDA. What we have failed to say — since it is frequently *said* — about the more spiritual values of two-dimensional art, the mosaics and collages of Jean Varda exemplify. Superficially the works themselves seem superficial (a gay, dressmaker's kind of artistry) but in their refusal to compromise with the illusion of depth, by which artists win their easiest approval while naturalism slyly enters and spiritual values depart, they are unequaled (even by the admirable Stuart Davis). In addition, they demonstrate a detachment from self, a devotion to color, shape, and texture that amounts to prayer. No word is so much leaned upon in writing on religious subjects as the word "love," and now I must lean on it too. Without love, Christian art does not exist, because, from first to last, it is the measure of the artist's effort: the demands he makes of himself in order to arouse the feelings he hopes to arouse. Although he is quite pagan, the purity of Varda's artistic intentions, the care he expends on them, and the completeness with which they communicate themselves are a rebuke to most Christian artists. Unfortunately for wide coinage — through reproduction — his work is almost entirely dependent upon color, which, for him, means constantly to strike discords and then unexpectedly to resolve them. In his early mosaics he used broken mirror plate scratched with color, underneath, which suggests a way of handling the "portraits" of sacred persons by reflecting only the diffused image of the onlooker. By such devices as this we might put off the next iconoclastic persecution. Otherwise it seems imminent and, in many quarters, desirable.

WATKINS. The last name on our list can stand for the whole problem of putting modern art in America at the service of the Church. As a young nation, we are a nation of gifted illustrators, and (to quote myself) "the last thing the Church needs is more illustrations and illustrators." Yet that is our outstanding talent; we are too restless, perhaps too guileless for the sustained, probing efforts which produce fine design. It is exhilarating to try to outdo the school of Paris demigods by being more free-and-easy with the media than they: we are only fooling ourselves. Except in fidelity to rendering what we see around us, our efforts at modernity are all based on hints from European art, from the first time Picasso, painting a harlequin on a screen, saw the paint run raggedly down from his brushstroke, studied it, and found it good. Consequently, here in America, we can best come to terms with our own talents by studying the exercises in sensibility of an academically trained painter like Franklin Watkins who, throughout years devoted largely to portraiture, has been steadily coming closer to a fresh, bold style: one so firmly based on observation as to be capable, from time to time, of projecting authoritative spiritual images as few have done since Ensor and Redon. (Corbino, in his crucifixion dated 1950 carried great conviction, but entirely of the scene, as it probably was, busy and garish and mundane.) Watkin's religious canvases promise much more. At present there is an air of improvisation about them, of an inspired charade — but this could be remedied by strengthening any of the component elements: the lines, the shapes, or the colors (and of course by keeping the brushwork with its vague allusions to space more firmly under control). The fact is that a painting by Watkins seems impatient of its frame, and when images such as these are ready for consecrated walls, the era of Christian art in America will be well under way — in a direct line from the catacombs, from which, for its own sake and safety, Christian art must never stray too far.

APPENDIX D

Adventure in Light-Color-Polychromy

A Church Prototype

An Interview

SOME years ago, during World War II, experiments and training in camouflage were conducted in and around Palmer Stadium at Princeton University by Professor Jean Labatut.* One of the buildings, a former polo stable located in that area, has since been transformed into an architectural laboratory in which advanced students in architecture study the way of controlling architectural forms by means of structure, light, color, polychromy, and texture, under conditions of natural and manufactured light and under various weather conditions. In a general way, these students can engage in preprofessional activities and study not possible in the drafting room.

Through a series of fortuitous circumstances M. Labatut acquired control of these erstwhile stables and proceeded to alter and to add to them to suit their new purpose. The most recent alteration and addition is the observation hall or glass "cage" — a cube of twenty-five feet — in which can be studied architectural elements at varying heights and orientations. Next to this glass cage is a large workshop, part of which can be used as a studio, as was the case during the study of the plan and decoration of the Church of the Four Evangelists which forms the theme of this interview. The remaining space is devoted to a machine and tool shop and workrooms. This architectural laboratory is open to graduate students, also for special research to faculty members and practicing architects for those subjects which can be of value for the development of students.

It was about a year ago that Labatut, showed the laboratory to the painter, André Girard.† Girard was then planning a one-man show of his work for the Carstairs Gallery, in New York. An idea for a unique type of research was the result — an idea having its origin in the experience of André Girard, at Stowe, Vermont (November, 1949, LITURGICAL ARTS) and in the experience and point of view of Labatut in relation to color and light in architecture, as shown in his work for the fountain at the New York World's Fair, and in his guidance in the development of several theses for professional degrees, which included research and composition in church architecture and where, as he remarks: "Space-time is taken into consideration, not only for the proper use of free space, but also for the control of illumination of structural elements, for the control of illumination by day and by night, from inside and outside." Thus the architect and the painter decided to work together with the idea of expressing complete unity between architecture and painting rather than to express *a church* in which a painter is called to decorate an already existing architectural frame, as at Stowe; or in the Church of El Jesús, Mexico City, by Orosco; or in the case of Michelangelo, in the Sistine Chapel. "When I was searching for the structural solution," said Labatut, "I was thinking, among

* Professor Jean Labatut has practiced architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture in several countries. He is a member of the American Institute of Architects and the Société Centrale des Architectes in France. One of his major accomplishments in the United States was the planning and compositions of the fountain spectacle at the Lagoon of Nations for the New York World's Fair in 1939–40. Mr Labatut has been associated in city planning in France, Cuba, Portugal, and Spain. He studied at Toulouse and Paris, where he won a Grand Prix de Rome of the Institut de France in 1926. In 1932 he successfully participated in a competition for the development of Paris. He is a former director of the American School of Fine Arts at Fontainebleau and has been at Princeton University since 1928.

† Girard first came to prominence with the design of the winning poster for the Paris Exposition in 1925 (Arts Decoratifs). He was artistic director of the French Pavilion at the World's Fair, San Francisco, in 1939, where he executed several large murals. He also executed murals in the French Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939–40. In addition to his work at Stowe, readers of LITURGICAL ARTS will recall his triptych for the crypt at Saint Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, illustrated in this magazine, August, 1950.

other things, of the character of Girard's approach to painting, and in doing that I was only following one of those basic principles used for centuries in order to achieve unity, continuity, as well as uniqueness and monumentality by proportion and scale, rather than by sheer size."

It was at this point that the interviewer was privileged to take part in the discussions with a view to presenting the birth of an idea, and perhaps of a style, to readers of LITURGICAL ARTS. In a way, instead of being invited as a guest at a formal dinner, he was invited to come into the kitchen and discuss the cooking where it was done.

Anyone who collaborates with Girard can expect the shock treatment! First, a fairyland of color; then unlimited capacity for hard work. In addition, Girard's knowledge of the subject matter, linked to imaginative power, makes these experiences unforgettable; experiences of the type seldom, if ever, met with in normal practice.

At Stowe the subject matter ranged from a survey of New Testament events through a way of the cross and the life of Father Damien and Brother Dutton at Molokai. In Latrobe, it was the life of Saint Bernard and the Canticle of Canticles, based on the Saint's commentaries.

In the present instance, the artist's knowledge of the subject and his pictorial interpr etation are evident, if the reader will study the four black and white illustrations and references in this issue. The two-page spread (serigraph prints) will give the reader an idea of the detail and color which makes these compositions sing.

Discussing these matters with Labatut and Girard, I reached the conclusion that the elaboration of their thought could best be given form through the medium of an interview, or quotations from previous conversations: the answers of the two principals to the questions of a third interested person — the writer.

Question: Since the initial idea for a proposed Church of the Four Evangelists is the result of your visit to the Princeton University laboratory of architecture, would you, Mr Girard, tell us what you think of a fresh approach to polychromy in architecture to-day; in particular as it concerns the planning of a church?

Girard: At the risk of seeming dogmatic, I will say that I feel a modern church should be polychromed. This applies primarily to the interior, but there is no reason why the exterior — at least portions of it — should not also be polychromed. In this way the painter can work toward and achieve more fully that *transmission of ideas* which links the work of the composer to the understanding of the beholder.

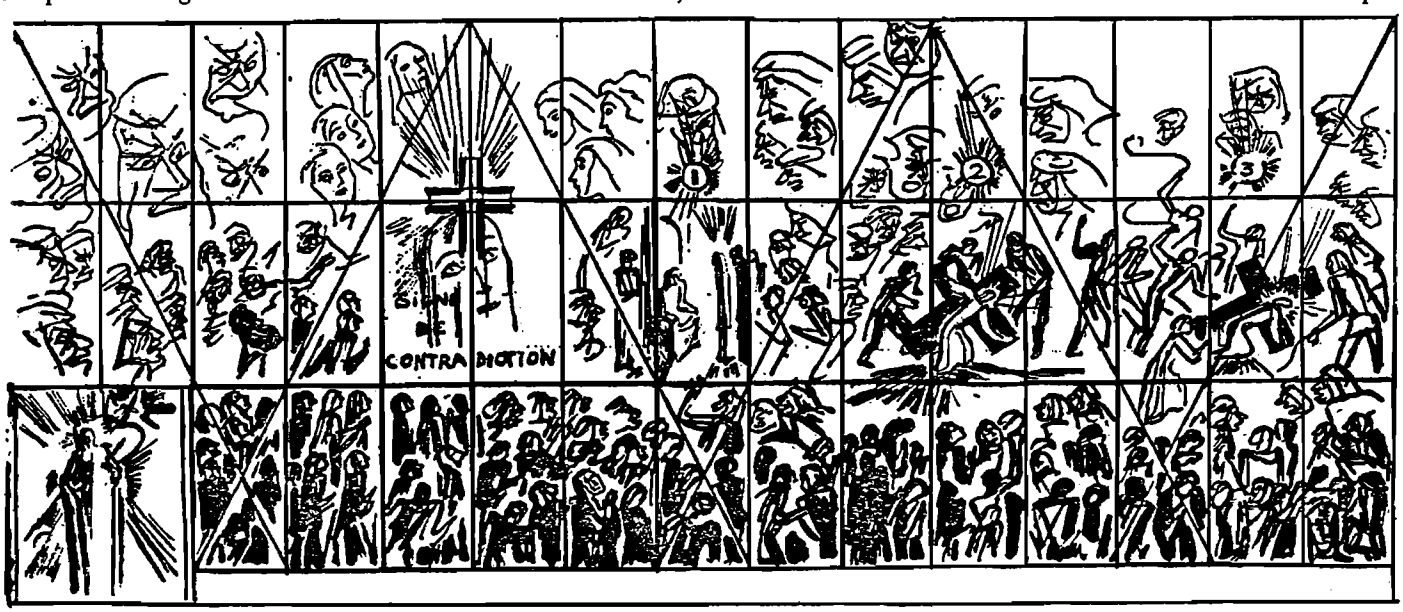
Question: Knowing your views on the subject of color, I feel safe in saying that you assume an immediate collaboration with the architect at the very outset of any job, and not the more usual method which consists of planning *and building* the church, then calling in the artist to apply a layer of decoration — the "art work," as it is often called?

Girard: Yes, that is my conviction.

Question: In recent years, when I have spoken of polychromy in connection with architecture, I have met with the objections of those who insist on what they termed "the integrity of the material" and for whom paint on wood, stone, marble, or glass was a form of artistic heresy. And yet the Greeks used gold and paint, and so did the old masters of the gothic period. The answer to these criticisms is, of course, contained in the present development of the idea of a prototype church. And we might as well go on to the place the church will occupy in relation to the community and its entire environment, as perceived by the eye. I am sure Mr Labatut can elaborate on this point.

Labatut: This church is a prototype adaptable to size of congregation, condition of site, and financial means. It can be erected on a small corner plot or on a plot allowing total off-street parking. A street corner was adopted in order to bring the church to the foreground of the community, emphasizing its importance by means of extended vistas made possible by its location near the right of way and intersections of streets, rather than by high steeples or bell towers lost and expressing hopelessness in the midst of surrounding buildings often as high or higher than the church. Horizontal vistas can contribute to bring back the dominance that the church should enjoy in the community, a dominance achieved in the past by way of verticality.

By means of proper modification in physical and psychological scale, this prototype can be planned to serve as a church for a community of greater or lesser size, or as a chapel on a university campus. It can even be made to reach the scale of a cathedral. The one pre-



sented in this case is made to serve an average community.

Even on the smallest lot and on relatively narrow streets, the church can be visible from a good distance. The area from which it can be seen is not as formal as the plaza of renaissance days, but it can be as effective as it was in the informal open space and approaching streets in mediaeval times.

The approaches to the nave and sanctuary are through two double doors, a large vestibule or narthex, and two impressive openings, each eight feet wide and twenty-five feet high. The concavity of the polyhedral glass wall, nearly cylindrical, will add to the feeling of limitless space. The convex parabolic wall will act as an inducement to movement, attraction of interest, and clarity of perception. It will play its part as a continuous background giving direction to a concentric plan but without interfering with the main vertical axiality of the altar and canopy illuminated day and night through a plexiglass dome by natural or incandescent sources of light.

Question: Once the relation of the church to the community needs is established, it would interest our readers to know something of your thoughts concerning the integretation of the main theme in the architectural space and structure.

Labatut: This church prototype shows the theme of the four Evangelists, offering a unique composition in the form of a comparative analysis, as indicated in the open model (illustrated on page 16) which creates as much as possible the illusion of penetration into the nave through the removed glass wall. However, as it is shown in the small complete model (illustration on page 16) the parabolic wall can be treated in a great variety of ways and with a simpler theme. In that model, for example, the parabolic wall shows a theme of Saint John the Baptist, a less complex composition than the one of the larger model, which includes three hundred and twenty subjects.

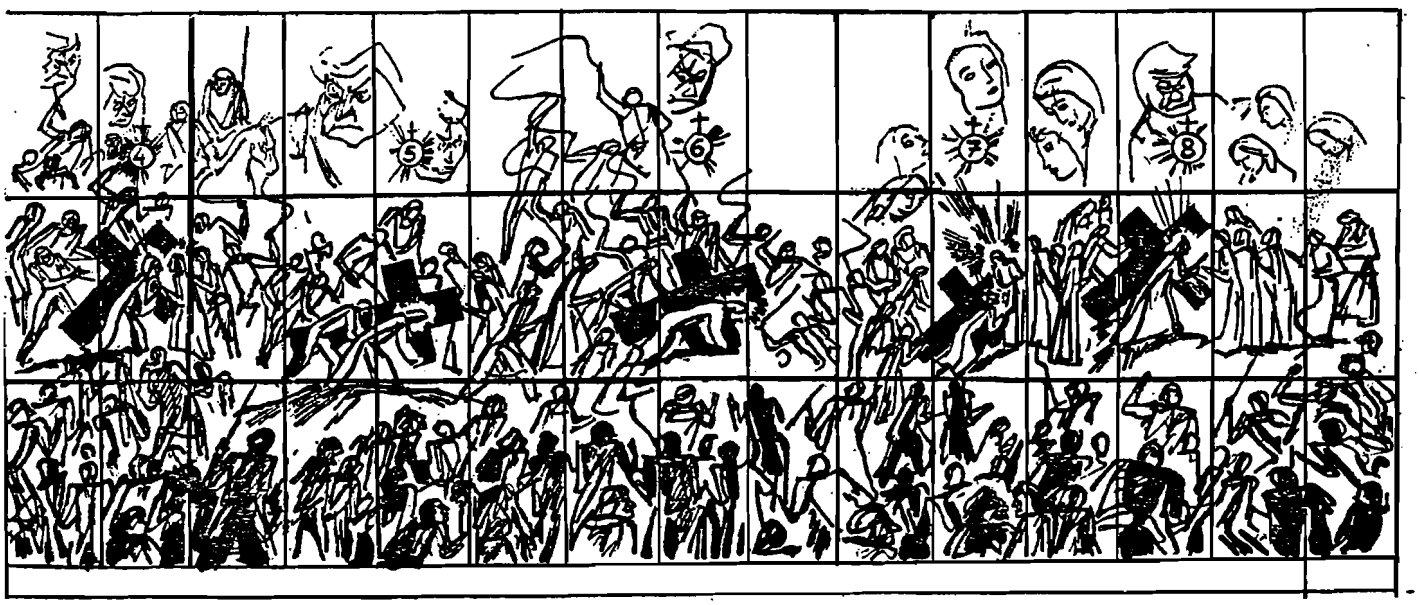
In harmony with the location of the building (latitude and immediate surroundings) the way of the cross, expressed on the glass wall, will occupy a different area than that shown on the model, so that curtains, needed at some times to control the east and the west sun, will not interfere with the visibility of the first and last stations. The curtains, perhaps made of tapestry, can add greatly to the total effect of the paintings and the glass wall. In this church, the painter expresses his message on three different materials — cloth, masonry, and glass. Their property of transparency, refraction, or reflection and the mobility of light and of the beholder will offer the maximum of variety within unity — a church architecture thoroughly alive and in our time. In this church we have followed the point of view of that New England family which decided to have a modern house in order to continue a long family tradition of being pioneers.

Question: It may be well, at this point, to ask the painter how he conceived the elaboration of his theme. The subject of the Four Evangelists is a rather complex one, and I do not recall it having been used before — at least not in this *concentrated* fashion?

Girard: In the composition of each Evangelist I have not attempted to make a series of images which take in all the subjects treated in each Gospel, since the possible number of such subjects is always open to discussion. For example; the sermon on the mount can be considered as being one subject or as being forty or even fifty different subjects. The parables can also be considered as one or several images.

I have composed the panel of each Gospel according to its principal subjects, so that it is possible to compare them to each other in a general way. We will find the scene showing Jesus casting the thieves out of the temple at the beginning of the composition of the Gospel of Saint John and nearly at the end of that of Saint Luke; another example of this juxtaposition is shown in the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus in the centre of the composition of the Gospel of Saint John and not in any of the other Gospels. In the beginning of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, there is the evocation of the genealogy of Christ, which is not found in the other evangelists.

An interesting element flows from these differences in the Gospel stories. When the artist elaborates each composition and attempts to tie together the successive episodes in each Gospel, he finds that each Gospel imposes a composition and a technique of painting in conformity with the character of the Evangelist. For example, in the last written Gospel, that of Saint John, we find that it contains the fewest but nevertheless the most violent subjects. These form a more orderly, a more powerful, and a more striking composition than



the others. With Saint Luke, painter and doctor, amateur of poetry, we have a quasi-impressionist composition of the story of Jesus. In Saint Mark, friend and disciple of Saint Peter, the composition is more concise and tighter, which recalls the sobriety of line in a stained glass window or in an old manuscript, and this because the story told by Saint Mark was treated like separate and condensed anecdotes.

Finally, the first Gospel was written by a witness of the events described, Saint Matthew, and the composition is more detailed. This fact led the painter to conceive of the portrayal as akin to that of an early primitive.

From what I have described so far, it can be realized that the artist, if he simply interprets the characteristics which differentiate the four Gospels, will pass through the techniques of the early primitives, the stained glass painters of the middle ages, the impressionist school, and will end with the most violent expression.

Question: At the last annual meeting of the Liturgical Arts Society [see report in May, 1951, issue] I ventured the thought that the stained glass craft in this country, and elsewhere for that matter, had reached a state of suspended animation, and I suggested that one way of bringing new life to the craft could be through the painters who, while accepting a few basic disciplines, could bring the vitality of their imaginations to bear on the designs and execution of windows. Unfortunately my suggestion did not elicit any response, positive or otherwise, from any members of the craft in this country.

Since you, Mr Girard, are one of the painters I had in mind when I offered this suggestion at our annual meeting, would you care to comment?

Girard: That is truly a ticklish matter. In the polychromy that Labatut and I have visualized in this present case, I feel that the artist is led to use the various techniques based on old and new materials. For example, it is now possible to paint *on* glass or other transparent material by technical means which assure permanency and which were unknown to our forefathers. In such cases, the artist will work along lines dictated by the possibilities inherent in the painted window, but will not seek to translate a painting into a *painted* window. The one does not admit light; the other *is* light. The element of light leads to a conception of painting completely different to that with which we are normally acquainted. This necessary discipline forces the artist to meditate and to seek a right solution. It should be obvious that to translate a *painting* into a *painted* window is like attempting to translate prose into poetry.

Question: Do you conceive of any advantage in the painted window over the usual "stained glass" window?

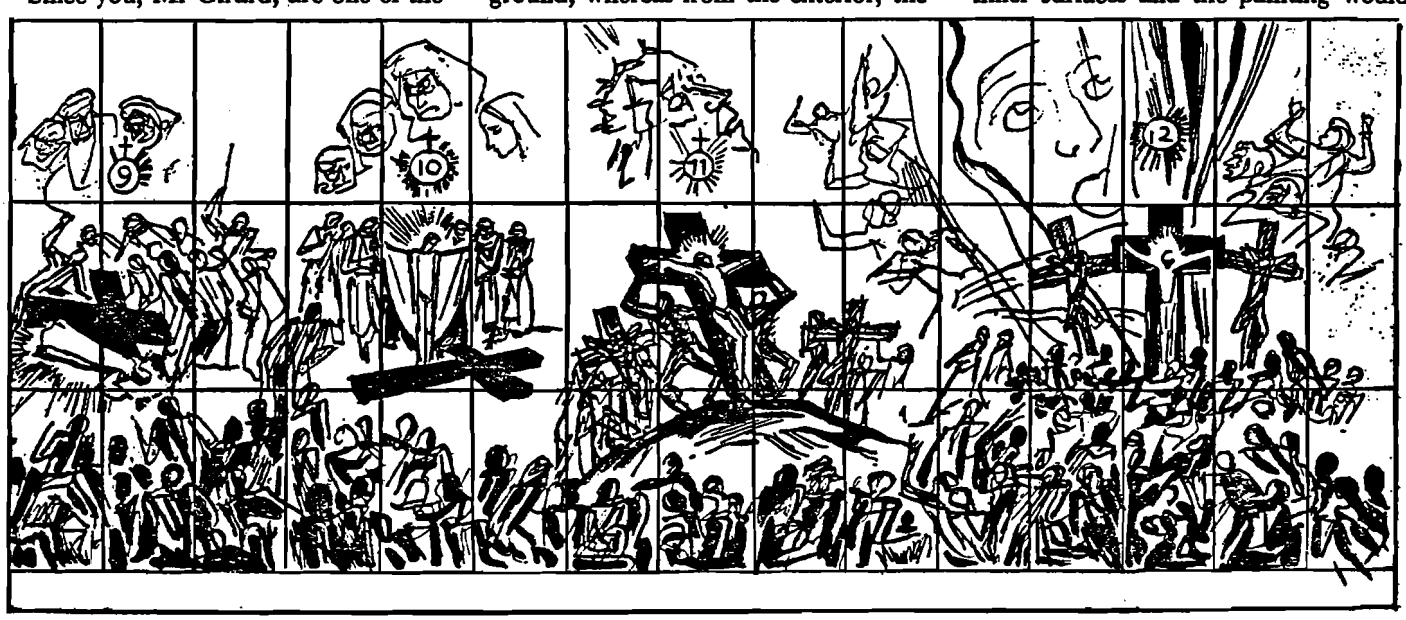
Girard: Yes, I can think of advantages, but only if we think along the lines suggested by the prototype church we are now discussing. It seems to me that a definite advantage of the painted window over the usual stained glass window, using lead cames, is that the exterior appearance of this painted window is quite different from the interior. From the interior of a building, one sees the image on a luminous background, whereas from the exterior, the image is seen on a sombre background, with the result that the same composition affects the eye in opposite ways. From the exterior, the composition must forcibly attract the eye; from the interior, the exterior light does the job.

Exteriorly the whites and the light tones deliminate the drawing and the accents on the sombre background and this, in a way, is an invitation to a certain amount of violent contrasts and a certain strangeness. Interiorly the result will be akin to that with which we are so familiar with the stained glass window. In the case of the stained glass window, the exterior is often devoid of color, and we have only the dead linear effect of the lead cames.

Another advantage which flows from the painted window is that the exterior color vitality invites, and calls for, the use of polychromy on the other exterior details and we can have a truly polychromed building.

Question: And what about the permanency of the medium? That question will pop up at once when your ideas come up for discussion among the craft.

Girard: In the Frans Hals museum at Haarlem there are landscapes painted on several layers of glass, and the paint was not fired in the kiln. These glass paintings have lasted till now and are to-day as fresh as ever — even more so than that master's paintings on canvas. But even if there was any doubt about the permanency of painted glass windows, it is possible to fire them in the usual manner. And if we use thermopane (two or even more thicknesses of glass, with air spaces between each sheet) it would be possible to paint on the inner surfaces and the painting would



be sealed for ever. There are no technical difficulties that cannot be overcome.

Question: In such a church, because of structure and plan, there are certain problems of orientation and illumination by day and by night. A discussion of that would interest our readers.

Labatut: The church is orientated in such a way that the convexity of the parabolic wall is facing north. This orientation permits the greatest variety of illumination during the day from sunrise to sunset, when seen either from inside or outside. The morning sun will illuminate part of the east end of the parabolic wall which describes the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Its blue tonalities will be emphasized by the blue areas of the east painted glass. For the most part of the day, the parabolic wall will act as a screen against the glare of the south sun, and the north sky will then contribute to a restful general illumination. The illumination of the Gospel of Saint Mark with its grey tonalities, and of Saint Luke with its yellow background, as well as their color counterpart on the painted glass, will benefit from that illumination from the north side. From the nave the beholder will have full view of the altar and wall without the usual glare of central windows or the darkness of a tomb-like church.

During late afternoon, up to sunset and twilight, the radiation of light waves from the red end of the spectrum will play its part in the total expression of the church. Then the sun will penetrate through red areas of the painted glass — expressing the last stations of the cross, and will illuminate the west end of the parabolic wall describing the Gospel of Saint John in which warm color pigments dominate, giving it additional luminosity and intensity. This effect will continue through sunset and even twilight by reflection from high clouds.

The narthex and baptistry will be illuminated by the south sky and the sun will be able to penetrate into the "service" rooms inside the parabolic wall. Curtains are used for three reasons: control of light, acoustics, and their contribution to the message expressed by the painter.

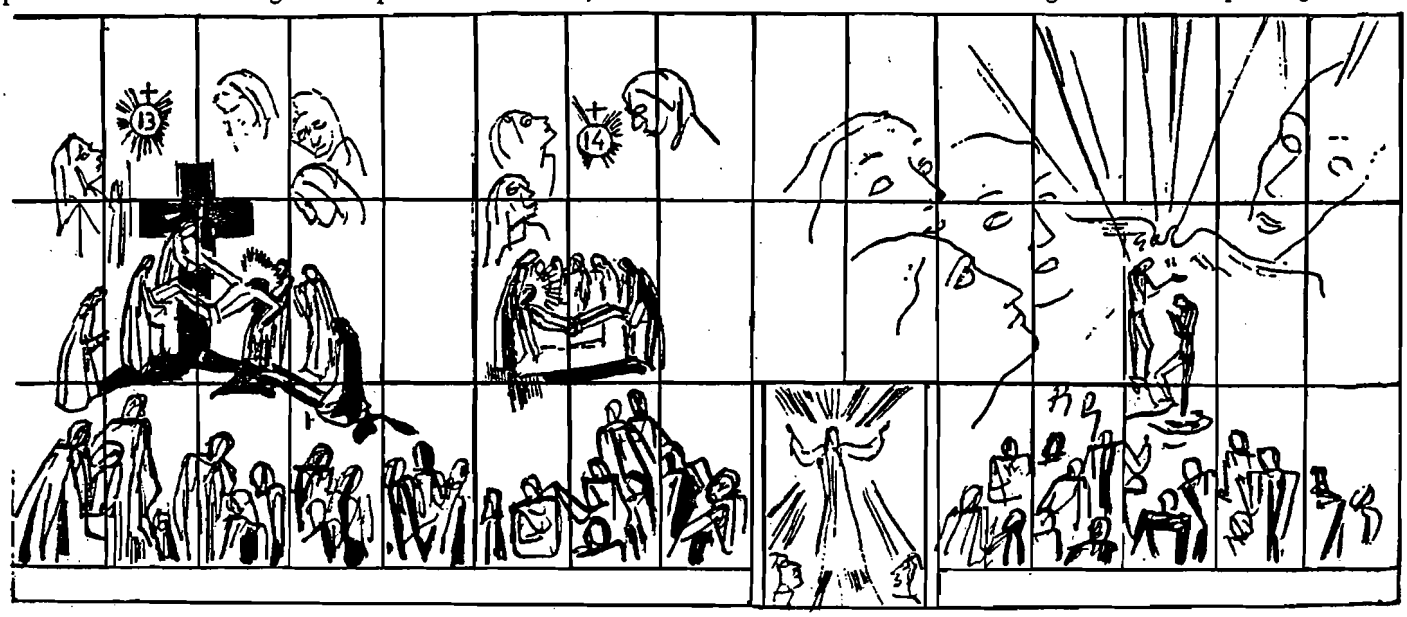
From the outside, the multiple effects of the painted glass will not only be expressed by direct illumination and reflection, but also through the church itself, with the painted glass on the opposite side of the church seen in transparency. Such an effect was inspired by the Sainte Chapelle of Vincennes after the destructive wind of World War II, and by an incidental but grandiose effect seen at the Cathedral of Chartres, when the north windows were already back in place after the war and when only part of the south stained glass windows were in place, thus giving a unique opportunity to see through the entire nave from the outside and with stained glass in the foreground.

The zone of colored light within the church will vary greatly from a most tangible polychromy east and west of the church (that is, at the two accesses to the nave) to a whiter light toward the altar and the main area of the nave to the north. These conditions of illumination will provoke the crossing of a zone of colored light through the narthex, between the out-of-doors and the nave. This fact, added to the illusion of distance and remoteness from the street, will increase and illustrate the importance of emotional appeal as a function of architecture, used here to create a sequence of visual sensations or a temporal organization of space in harmony with the teaching and practice of the Church, as it was, for example, in the thirteenth century cathedral of Salisbury.

Question: During our many conversations you have referred to a "twenty-four hour architecture." Would you care to elaborate?

Labatut: This church is an example of a truly twenty-four hour architecture, in which illumination by day and by night within and from outside has been considered. This is in contrast with the architectonic forms of the past, conceived by and for daylight only. The thirteenth century stained glass windows were conceived to be seen only from one side and during the day; the painted glass of our Church of the Four Evangelists is conceived to be seen under four different conditions instead of one; from inside *and* outside, by day *and* night. This fact, in contrast to the use of basic principles propagated by the master builders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is only one tangible example of what is permanent or temporary in architectural composition — whatever the time or space. It is an example of diversity in continuity and unity which gives to any work of art a permanent value whatever its physical durability.

The illumination of the church by night will be by a light source out of sight in the oculus above the altar, creating a conical shape of golden il-



lumination, showering the cross and the altar. Pin-point lighting will illuminate the rest of the church for comfortable reading. At twilight there will be integration of day and night illumination and the clear glass, near the top of the glass wall, will let the sky play its part the longest possible time, even into the night, by moonlight or by reflection of city lights from the low clouds.

From the outside by night the church will be dominated by a cone of light or wide light beam directed toward the gilded cross and silhouetting the metallic sculpture of the Four Evangelists at the foot of the cross. The illumination created by this cone of light will appear to be floating over the church in an opposite direction from and on the same vertical axis as the cone of light inside the church, this latter creating a soft illumination visible from a distance through the clear glass and from the nearby painted glass.

Question: Now that the painting and the illumination is taken care of, what of more practical aspects of the problem?

Labatut: Structure and mechanical equipment may vary following climate and financial means. Prestressed concrete, steel or aluminum, or even laminated wood, can be used for the structure. Reasonable standard dimensions were adopted in this case. For example, the window panes are four feet by eight feet. The principle of thermopane was adopted for the glass, the painting being located on the inside face of the plate glass, in order to increase the effect of greater depth and protect the painted surfaces made by the process of serigraphy, a technique so well known to André Girard. Large areas of clear glass will increase the three dimensional effect, an impression of escape toward limitless space, so well expressed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also by the use of clear glass, and so much ignored by mentally blind imitators.

For practical and aesthetic reasons, the glass wall is composed so that it varies from complete opacity near the ground to full transparency near the roof, in order to secure good illumination, as well as the visibility of tree tops, sky, and clouds from inside and in order to screen the nave from the street; only the top part of the parabolic wall, canopy, and ceiling will be more or less visible from the street.

The acoustical problem is solved by baffles and perforations in the ceiling; also by the curtains on certain occasions.

One of the two porches gives access to the rectory and necessary adjuncts, in addition to those included in the parabolic wall, such as sacristies, confessionals, organ chamber, curtain storage, etc.

Question: The plan may present certain difficulties of access from the sacristy to the altar for the celebrant and acolytes; they should not mingle with members of the congregation coming into the church at the same time. Have you any suggestions?

Labatut: In France there would not be any problem since the majestic *suisse* precedes the priest and clears the way. In this connection several solutions are possible. Private passage for the priest and acolytes from the sacristy to the sanctuary can be indicated by a removable roped-off passage, a modern way of replacing the *suisse* or beadle. A removable halberd, located at the point nearest the sacristy may be a more tangible expression of the idea.

Question: What provision do you foresee for the location of shrines and statues?

Labatut: This question can be solved in different ways. The Church of the Four Evangelists, for example, contains a total of three hundred and twenty-nine compositions or subjects, any of which can be a shrine for one worshipper or another. In another church, the desired shrines can become part of the architectonic paintings of the church, taking the place of the theme of the Evangelists. It is also possible to have shrines and statues located in a specific, well-defined area, as shown in the model (Illustration page 16.) In a larger church, chapels and aisles can be incorporated in the composition for that purpose.

Question: Have you any general considerations with which we can bring this discussion to a final conclusion?

Labatut: The convexity of the parabolic wall emphasizes vitality, mobility, dynamism, the temporal in architecture, by contrast with the concavity and concentricity of the glass wall, structure and ceiling, which emphasizes the static and concentration of interest toward the focal point, the altar and the cross; that concentric effect inducing immobility, meditation, and contemplation. This architectural composition offers a tangible expression of an horizontal axiality associated with man in motion and a vertical axiality associated with man in prayer. It offers a composite impression of many separate sensations related to each other within the total spatial composition by the architect, the painter, and, *if built*, by the beholder.

This church is the result of research toward simplicity and clarity in (1) spatial organization, (2) basic visual expression, and (3) structural system.

The permanent architectural values applied to Chartres, Salisbury, the Sainte Chapelle at Paris were also applied to the Church of the Four Evangelists, but at the scale of new physical limitations, at a new human scale, something nearer the home and the community, with an expression of monumentality at a scale of our time, when monumentality should be more than ever before an expression of the dominance of greatness over physical dimensions, and not the product of sheer size, which is the most primitive type of monumentality.

We have tried to reach a monumentality at the scale of our time, when those more or less pagan deities of *deus ex machina* type, like the telephone, radio, and television, have penetrated the home and have made reading and meditation less popular. The lack of desire to read may be compared to the ignorance of reading on the part of the majority of people in mediaeval days, when sculptors and painters were supplying a rich iconography easily legible on porches, choir screens, and windows.

Yes, this church is an expression of a twenty-four hour architecture in which an iconographic polychromy on walls, glass, and curtains plays its part. In such a conception painting *is* architectural and architecture *is* truly polychromy. In this architectural composition, colored light, always with us, but less tangible than color by pigment and materials, is made visible. Here colored light will be tangible as in that other architectural composition I was privileged to realize at the New York World's Fair in the form of fountain spectacles, seen by some twenty million spectators, and in which five sensitive and temperamental materials and techniques, strangers to each other, were placed at my disposal and played their part: water, light, sound, fireworks, and gas flame. There, music and architecture were integrated somewhat as painting and architecture are integrated in this Church of the Four Evangelists. In the case of the fountain spectacles, it was the composer, Russell Bennet, to whom I gave the visual effects of the theme composed within technical limitations, and for which visual effects he

created music, which in turn gave a structure or organized continuity to that ephemeral architecture. For example, among the six spectacles presented, there was one, "The World and the Cathedral," whose gigantic and climactical effects of colored light were sychronized with the gigantic and climactical effects of bells and organ music which, with water and fireworks, were vanishing into the night. With a multiplicity of limitations, five modern mechanical means were humanized in order to express thoughts by means of architecture and music.

In the case of the Church of the Four Evangelists, my rôle was to find the elements of an architectural composition in harmony with the character of André Girard's ways of expression, and a structure with bare walls, clear glass, and bare curtains to be used for the writing of a clear message as means of communication and understanding.

The church, like the fountains, is another example of how the visual arts can contribute to universal language; a universal visual language which permits an enrichment of mind and spirit and leads to better understanding of other peoples in other times, as well as other peoples in our times.

Finally, in this church, iconographic polychromy rather than a geometric or heraldric one, is integrated to architecture, emphasizing by its scale the importance of the church in man's physical environment, in his community, near and at the scale of his home.

We have tried to express "constants" and "variables" in the treatment of expression of time, space, materials, and light; in the treatment and expression necessary to answer the spiritual needs of the individual and the community. We have tried to express time in architecture considered as the product of the treatment of light and the beholder in motion, in architecture considered as a living thing and not as an empty corpse frozen to death and of a more or less short durability. Our intention was to give variety to the eye, logic to the mind, content to the spirit, by conditioning space, communicating and exalting an idea, and establishing a character by way of function, which, if not in its nature physical, intellectual, and spiritual altogether, is only blind, brutal, and inhuman.

New techniques and new forms can be the source of permanent architectural values if used with values permanent in nature, in man, and in the art of creating, inventing, and composing, whatever the durability of materials — a durability often deceiving if we think of fragile thirteenth century glass still in place while monuments made of granite and new gadgets permitting modern fountain spectacles have long since vanished.

This leads me to emphasize one of those many principles, or tools of permanent value, which is architectural continuity from fractions of a second to centuries, and which permits the greatest diversity of expression (individual, regional, or of an epoch) without compromising that fundamental quality which is architectural unity. The resultant whole thus obtained does not express either monotony or a counterfeiting of surface forms, which are the result of a clandestine formula too easy to express truth or the best of our time.

In short, let me state that neither words nor models can replace the totality of the space and time under consideration in which each individual is a centre in motion. Architecture is an expression of space composed for human life and experience.

Furthermore, our colored world is the result of the treatment of light by nature or by the artist, observed by repeated "*coups d'oeil*" These "shots of the eye" are comparable to the inverse action of a machine gun, its bullets penetrating back into the mind. If the mind is not reached or stimulated by the light, treated naturally or by the artist, even good eyes do not *see* color, or see only colors which fight each other — or too often see nothing.

Saint Matthew

Saint Matthew

1. The genealogy of Christ. i. 1–18.

2. ". . . the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep saying: Joseph . . ." i. 20. 3. ". . . she brought forth her first born son: and he called his name Jesus." i. 25. 4. "Herod, privately, calling the wise men . . ." ii. 7. 5. ". . . the star which they had seen in the east went before them." ii. 9. 6. The offerings of the wise men. ii. 11.

7. ". . . behold an angel of the Lord appeared in his sleep to Joseph." ii. 13. 8. The flight into Egypt. ii. 14–15. 9. The massacre of the innocents. ii. 16–18. 10. ". . . an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph." ii. 19. 11. "And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth." ii. 23.

12. ". . . And in those days cometh John the Baptist . . ." iii. 1. 13. ". . . Ye, brood of vipers . . ." iii. 7. 14. Christ is baptized. iii. 13–17. 15. Christ's fast of forty days. He is tempted. iv. 1–11. 16. ". . . John was delivered up . . ." iv. 12. 17. ". . . He retired into Galilee . . ." iv. 12. 18. Peter, Andrew: ". . . Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men . . ." iv. 19. 19. James, John: "they left their nets and followed him . . ." iv. 22. 20. ". . . they presented to him all sick people . . ." iv. 24.

21. Christ's sermon upon the mount. v, vi, vii.

22. Jesus cleanses the leper. viii. 1–4. 23. Jesus heals the centurion's servant. viii. 5–13. 24. He heals Peter's mother-in-law. viii. 14–15. 25. ". . . and all that were sick he healed . . ." viii. 16. 26. He stills the storm at sea. viii. 23–27.

27. He drives the devils out of the men possessed and suffers them to go into the swine. viii. 28–33. 28. Christ heals one sick of the palsy. ix. 1–8. 29. ". . . Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners?" ix. 11. 30. He raises to life the daughter of Jairus. ix. 18–19. 31. He cures the issue of blood. ix. 20–22. 32. He gives sight to two blind men. ix. 27–31. 33. He heals a dumb man possessed by the devil. ix. 32–33. 34. Christ sends out his twelve apostles with the power of miracles. x. 1–42.

35. John sends his disciples to Christ. xi. 1–19. 36. ". . . thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days." xii. 2. 37. ". . . there was a man with a withered hand . . ." xii. 10. 38. ". . . Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without seeking thee . . ." xii. 47. 39. ". . . He went up into a boat . . . and all the multitudes stood on the shore . . . and he spoke in parables . . ." xiii. 2. 40. "Expound to us the parable of the cockle and the fields . . ." xiii. 36. 41. "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house." xiii. 57.

42. Herod puts John to death. xiv. 1–11. 43. ". . . and thy did all eat, and were filled . . ." xiv. 20. 44. He walks upon the sea. xiv. 22–27. 45. ". . . Jesus stretching forth his hand . . ." xiv. 31. 46. Christ reproves the scribes. xv. 1–14. 47. He cures the daughter of the woman of Canaan. xv. 22–28. 48. ". . . and they that did eat were four thousand men . . ." xv. 38.

49. Christ refuses to shew the Pharisees a sign from heaven. xvi. 1–4. 50. ". . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." xvi. 18. 51. The transfiguration of Christ. xvii. 1–9. 52. He cures the lunatic child. xvii. 14–17. 53. He pays the didrachma. xvii. 23–26. 54. "Jesus calling unto him a little child . . ." xviii. 2. 55. ". . . shouldst not thou, then, have had compassion also on thy fellow servant?" xviii. 33. 56. Christ declares matrimony to be indissoluble. xix. 3–12. 57. ". . . suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me . . ." xix. 14.

58. ". . . when the young man had heard this word he went away, sad for he had great possessions." xix. 22. 59. "So shall the last be the first, and the first last . . ." xx. 16. 60. The ambition of the two sons of Zebedee. xx. 20–23. 61. Christ rides into Jerusalem. xxi. 1–10. 62. He casts the money-changers out of the temple. xxi. 12–13.

63. ". . . And there came to him the blind and the lame in the temple: and he healed them." xxi. 14. 64. "and seeing a certain fig tree . . ." xxi. 18–22. 65. He puts to silence the priests and scribes. xxi. 23–46. 66. ". . . Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's . . ." xxii. 21. 67. ". . . woe to you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites." xxiii. 13. 68. ". . . there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be destroyed." xxiv. 2.

69. The parable of the ten virgins. xxv. 1–13. 70. The Jews conspire against Christ. xxvi. 3–5. 71. Christ is anointed by Mary. xxvi. 6–13. 72. The treason of Judas. xxvi. 14–16. 73. The last supper. xxvi. 20–29. 74. ". . . let this chalice pass from me . . ." xxvi. 39. 75. ". . . Could you not watch one hour with me?" xxvi. 40.

76. "Judas . . . kissed him . . ." xxvi. 49. 77. ". . . Then they came up, and laid hands on Jesus . . ." xxvi. 50. 78. ". . . they . . . led him to Caiphas." xxvi. 57. 79. "Then the high priest rent his garments . . ." xxvi. 65. 80. "Peter . . . to swear that he knew not the man." xxvi. 74. 81. "Then Judas . . . brought back the thirty pieces of silver." xxvii. 3. 82. Judas . . . "went and hanged himself . . ." xxvii. 5. 83. ". . . Jesus stood before the governor." xxvii. 11. 84. "Barabbas . . ." xxvii. 17. 85. ". . . As (Pilate) was sitting in the place of judgement, his wife sent to him . . ." xxvii. 19. 86. Pilate . . . "washed his hands . . ." xxvii. 24. 87. ". . . and having scourged Jesus . . ." xxvii. 26. 88. ". . . they mocked him . . ." xxvii. 29.

89. ". . . a man of Cyrene, named Simon . . ." xxvii. 32. 90. ". . . after they had crucified him . . ." xxvii. 35. 91. ". . . they divided his garments . . ." xxvii. 35. 92. ". . . And the selfsame things the thieves also reproached him with." xxvii. 44. 93. "Eli, Eli, lamma sabachtani." xxvii. 46.

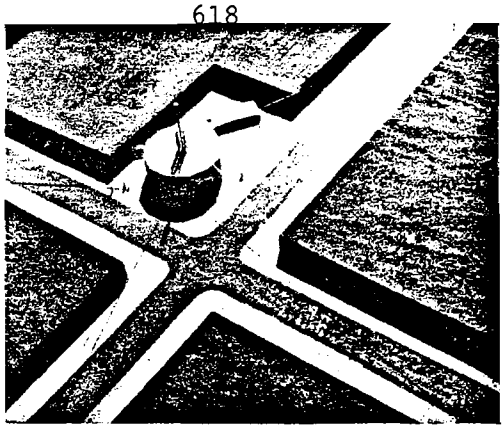
94. ". . . And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." xxvii. 50.

95. ". . . and Joseph taking the body . . ." xxvii. 59. 96. ". . . Joseph . . . laid him in his own new monument . . ." xxvii. 60. 97. ". . . setting guards . . ." xxvii. 66. 98. ". . . and the angel answering said to the women . . ." xxviii. 5. 99. ". . . and behold Jesus met them . . ." xxviii. 9. 100. ". . . the guards told the chief priests all things that had been done . . ." xxviii. 11.

101. ". . . and the eleven disciples went into Galilee unto the mountain where Jesus appointed them . . . and seeing him, they adored." xxviii. 16–17.

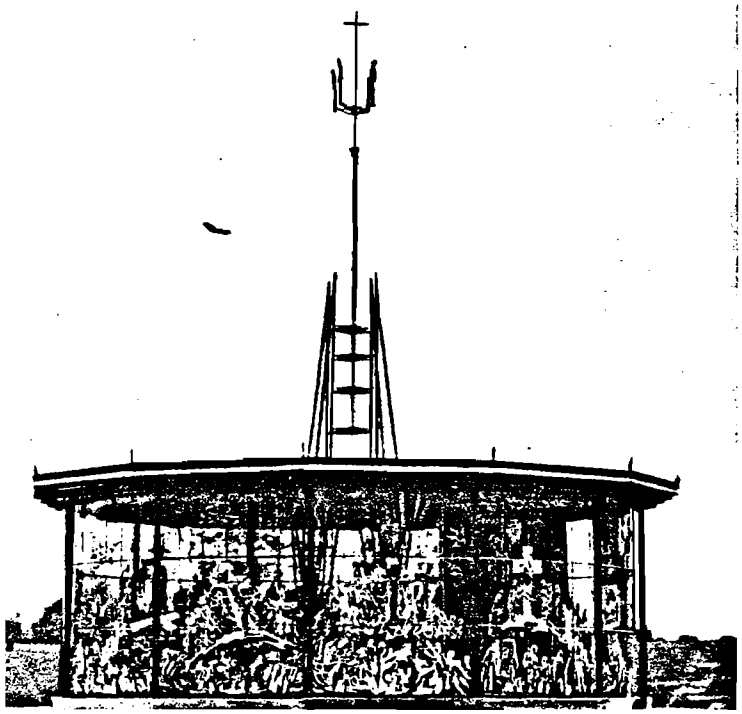
A PROTOTYPE—POLYCHROME—CHURCH

Jean Labatut — Architect
André Girard — Painter

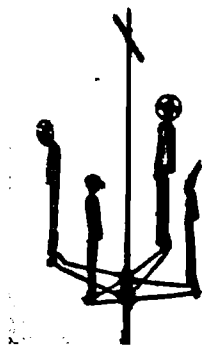


Model of the site plan showing a typical location of the church. A street corner was chosen in order to bring the church to the foreground of the community, emphasizing its importance by means of extended vistas made possible by its location near the right of way and intersection of streets. Horizontal vistas contribute in giving back the dominance that the church should enjoy in the community—a dominance achieved in the past by way of verticality. The street corner expressed in the model shows an average street intersection, either at "State and Broad" or in a residential section. Even the small lot selected (100' x 175') offers an off-street approach to the church. A larger plot would allow a direct access to the church from an off-street parking area.

REFER TO ARTICLE ON PAGE TWO



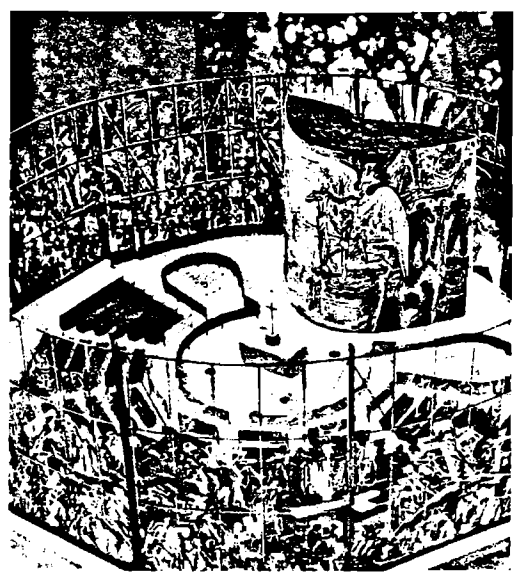
Complete model showing the church as seen from the street intersection on a cloudy day and expressing the contrast between the transparency of the painted glass wall near the ceiling and its opacity near the ground. Part of the central structure supporting the roof of the church and used as a baldachino above the altar appears as a flèche and as a support for the metallic statues of the Evangelists—all dominated by the cross. This cross and statues are even visible from the sidewalk immediately surrounding the building.



See other illustrations on page 25

(Above) Fragmentary model giving the sensation of penetrating into the church and seeing the parabolic wall and ceiling with the same cone of vision as if the church was already built. While the whole church composition is based on iconographic polychromy, the composition of the ceiling is based on the needs of light sources, acoustic control, as well as the desired scale and character resulting from a geometric and 'heraldic' polychromy.

Views of the interior while the model was being assembled. They indicate one of the several possible variations for the treatment and scale of the parabolic wall. In this particular instance the parabolic wall shows a theme of Saint John the Baptist, a less complex composition than the one shown on the large fragmentary model (page 25) which includes three hundred and twenty subjects and where the largest human head would be eighteen inches in height. In the subject of Saint John the Baptist the largest head would be fifteen feet in height. This indicates the wide range of scale possible in the mural iconography.



APPENDIX E

VISIT AT ST. ANN'S CHAPEL

By

Jacques Maritain

VISIT AT ST. ANN'S CHAPEL

By

Jacques Maritain

Chi Rho Press
Stanford, California
1955

VISIT

When I
was putting th
final touches n
dinary care o
satisfied with
equilibrium, h
ment of so co
tecture and pa
changing cond
painter. His a
should be neit
verified the di

VISIT AT ST. ANN'S CHAPEL

By

Jacques Maritain

When I visited the Church of Palo Alto, André Girard was putting the final touches on his work: And you know these final touches may be the task of many weeks, given the extraordinary care of eye and mind with which this painter—never satisfied with himself—considers the slightest requirements of equilibrium, harmony and subtle correspondences in the arrangement of so complex an ensemble as a chapel, in which architecture and painting must be brought to unity in the perpetually changing conditions of daylight. André Girard is a meditative painter. His art gives the lie to those who think that a painter should be neither an intelligent nor a cultured man. In him is verified the dictum of old wise men, that the work is born in the

intellect and the heart
the cleverness and sens

What struck me at
chapel, was a sense of
then, the mastery with
affirmation of color is t
ness of the nuances of

On your left, all a
the stations of the Cr
advance, so to speak,
oblique segments that c
is lighted by a particul

On your right ar
which constitutes the w

The crucial probl
admirable manner, so
a unique achievement,
shining light of the wir
the Cross to resolve in
concerto: Hence the mu
of the ensemble.

If the stations of th
of which they are an i
possible—I do not kn
colors and their drama
or too violent. But act
necessity; there was no
had to counterpoise by
dows. And to have ach

intellect and the heart before being carried into existence by the cleverness and sensitivity of the hands.

What struck me at first, upon entering the mystery of this chapel, was a sense of all-pervading life and vividness; and, then, the mastery with which the frankness and the power of affirmation of color is tuned to the infinite delicacy and sweetness of the nuances of light.

On your left, all along one of the sides of the chapel, are the stations of the Cross, a series of large pictures which advance, so to speak, in tiers; for the wall is composed of oblique segments that overlap one another, each one of which is lighted by a particular aperture.

On your right are the windows—a continuum of light which constitutes the whole other side of the chapel.

The crucial problem, which André Girard solved in an admirable manner, so as to make of the Church of Palo Alto a unique achievement, was to cause the struggle between the shining light of the windows and the panels of the stations of the Cross to resolve in perfect unity, as the conflcting parts of a concerto: Hence the musical quality and alertness and vividness of the ensemble.

If the stations of the Cross were separated from the church of which they are an integral part, and were seen apart, it is possible—I do not know—that the intenseness both of their colors and their dramatic expression might appear as too rich or too violent. But actually this intenseness was an absolute necessity; there was no room for silences and rests. The painting had to counterpoise by its own means the radiance of the windows. And to have achieved such balance and equilibrium is,

an.g

in my opinion, a sign of the exceptional power and science of the painter. He was not vanquished by the sun; he tamed it, by opposing to it a no less impressive and moving fountainhead of life.

As to the windows, it is impossible to describe the melodious variety of forms, the fluid harmony of lines and the fineness, so to speak, the tenderness of the hues and embroidery of light of which their glory is made. You know that André Girard has dedicated a great deal of time to penetrating the secrets of this technique, renewed as it is by modern means, and that he is a great discoverer and master in painting on glass.

The windows of the Palo Alto church are consecrated to the teachings of Jesus: The first to the parables, the second to the Sermon on the Mount, the third to the instructions to the disciples and the announcement of persecutions, the fourth to the last teachings, before and after the Resurrection, and to the symbolic gestures of the Mass. I remember especially the hieratic gravity of this last window—and the grace and joy of the images in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins; or in that of the lily of the valley more splendidly dressed than Solomon; and the spirited, so sweet and so alive grandeur of the scene of the Sermon on the Mount; and some translucid sporadic faces which seem mirrors of mystical love.

An extraordinary generosity animates the art of André Girard, and appears in a striking manner in the entire decoration of the church of Palo Alto. This generosity is nourished by faith and intelligence, an assiduous meditation on the Gospels (did I tell you that he is fond of Father Lagrange's great scholarly commentaries on the four Evangelists), and a contemplative

ıd science of
tamed it, by
fountainhead

be the melo-
and the fine-
nbroidery of
ındré Girard
he secrets of
and that he
ss.
nsecrated to
he second to
:tions to the
he fourth to
ı, and to the
pecially the
: and joy of
irgins; or in
lressed than
grandeur of
e translucid
:.
:t of André
ıtire decora-
ourished by
the Gospels
great schol-
ntemplative

pondering over the things he paints. With the human and divine mysteries of the stations of the Cross he has lived for long years, trying indefatigably to translate them into an appropriate imagery. Never perhaps has he represented them with so powerful a rhythm and so fascinating a pictorial eloquence as in the chapel of Palo Alto. Both in the stations of the Cross and in the windows one feels the rare and invaluable conjunction of genuine religious inspiration and genuine artistic mastery. After leaving this church, one keeps on dreaming of it, and remains under the spell of the emotion it has awakened; and one thinks that despite all the difficulties of our times, the eternal possibilities of sacred art are still alive, depending no longer on the well-established resources and unity of the collective mind but on the personal effort and insight of some heroically disinterested artists.

ıan and divine
for long years,
ı appropriate
with so power-
ence as in the
oss and in the
onjunction of
istic mastery.
ng of it, and
wakened; and
es, the eternal
ing no longer
the collective
me heroically

The illustrations
of this booklet
are
original serigraphs
by
André Girard
hand printed
by
Pied Piper Press

•

(Offset Edition)

St. Ann Chapel • Palo Alto, Calif.

Saint Ann's Chapel is a gift of Mrs. Henry Luce to the Catholic students of Stanford University in memory of her only child, Ann, who was tragically killed in an automobile accident while attending the University. The architect is Mr. Vincent Raney of San Francisco; the artist who has painted the Stations of the Cross and the windows is Mr. Andre Girard of Paris; the sculptor who has executed the symbolic Tree of Life on the teak doors at the entrance of the chapel is Miss Janet de Coux of New York City; Mrs. Louisa Jenkins of Big Sur is responsible for both the Mosaic and Shrine to Our Blessed Lady and for the baldachin that hangs over the altar; Mr. Victor Rie executed the sterling silver candle-holders and the sanctuary lamp; and finally, Mr. Louis Feron of New York and Paris designed and fashioned the the silver Crucifix.

Because St. Ann's is a student chapel dedicated to those who seek the truth, it was thought well to choose Christ, the great Teacher, as the leading idea. The top central panel gives the key to the understanding of each window; the red window contains the instruction given by Christ at the Last Supper; the purple window, taken from the 10th chapter of St. Matthew contains the teaching given by Christ to His Disciples; the green window is simply the Sermon on the Mount as recounted in the 6th chapter of St. John; the yellow window is taken from the 5th chapter of St. Luke and illustrates Our Lord's method of teaching by parables.

The large panel in the red window tells of the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Immediately below is the scene of Our Lord on the Road to Emmaus followed logically and chronologically by the "Ite Missa Est" of the Mass. The small panels tell on the one side the historical events of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross while the panels on the other side portray their analogous part in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The large panel in the purple window recalls the command of Christ to His Disciples to go forth and teach and to announce that the Kingdom of God is near. In the four corners of the large window are the signs that Christ said would accompany the Apostles. The large window is surrounded in the small panels by the familiar symbols of early Christianity.

The large panel in the green window contains the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The man kneeling down in the upper left hand corner of the large window is the artist's concept of the first phrase, "Our Father Who Art in Heaven," while immediately to the right is the expression of the idea, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as It is in Heaven." The remaining parts of the prayer follow in order. The large panel is surrounded by various ideas taken from the Sermon on the Mount.

The yellow window illustrates Our Lord's method of teaching by parables. The large panel reminds us that as the seed must be put into the earth and die before the tree is born, so too the Son of Man must be put into the ground before He can be lifted up. Below the large window is the analogy of the fishermen and the final scene is the Last Judgment. The small panels on the left side are a few of the parables that Our Lord taught with their fulfillment on the right.

Saint Ann's Chapel is almost completely finished. Now that the permanent altar of Italian Travertine marble is installed, there remains only a floor covering to be laid down. When all is done, it is hoped that this chapel will be a radiant jewel in the crown of Our Blessed Lady. The sight of this beauty should move us to pray for her "Whose Beauty alone is now for the King's Delight."

May, 1960

The chapel was dedicated in October 1951.

The 1960 Exhibition of

CHURCH ART TODAY

is dedicated in loving memory

to

JEANNETTE LIMERICK BARTLETT

1915-1959

Jeannette Limerick Bartlett believed that the arts open one of the windows through which we glimpse the vision of God. Living herself in the atmosphere of the Beautiful she drew others into its climate so that they too joined her in giving time and talent to encouraging the production and enjoyment of all the arts.

In 1957 Mrs. Bartlett inspired a committee of artists, community and religious leaders of all faiths to sponsor the first Church Art show under the auspices of the Episcopal Church in California. Just before she died she helped to organize the current ecclesiastical art exhibit at Grace Cathedral.

The committee responsible for this second Church Art Today show is dedicated to carrying on Mrs. Bartlett's ideals and aspirations. In building this exhibit it had three main objectives:

1. To stimulate artists to create individual works in painting, sculpture, glass, stone and other media suitable for liturgical and devotional use, thus carrying on the tradition of the Church as the patron of art.
2. To express unchanging truth and religious insight in the changing vernacular and materials of our time.
3. To present good contemporary works of art in order to form taste for the best in modern religious art.

The judges considered each entry carefully—asking if it reflected a genuine concern with Ultimate Reality and was expressed with competent technique in contemporary style.

We hope this show will encourage both artists and those who use and enjoy their original works to see through and beyond the material object the vision of God which is the true inspiration of all religious art.

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXHIBITION

Mrs. Thomas Fleming, Jr., Chairman
The Very Reverend C. Julian Bartlett
John Bolles, A.I.A.
Elizabeth Bussing
Ruth Cravath
Eleanor Dickinson
Mrs. John Doss
The Reverend Canon David Forbes
James Jewell
Irene S. Meining
Jane Smythe
Mrs. Harold Reid
Ninfa Valvo
Frederick Whittlesey, A.I.A.
John Woodbridge, A.I.A.

1st PRIZE — $300

Jack Zajak — Resurrection (sculpture)

2nd PRIZE — $200

Bruce Connor — Crucifixion (painting)

3rd PRIZE — $150

Henri Marie-Rose — St. Denis (welded copper)

1 PRIZE OF $100

Louisa Jenkins — Madonna (mosaic)

5 PRIZES OF $50

Rear Admiral Jack Bowling — Ebony and Silver Cross
Rudolph Brom — Silver Chalice
John Coleman — Sodom and Gomorrah (etching)
John Paul Jones — Annunciation (etching—aquatint)
Barbara Zrnich — Maternity of the Blessed Virgin (embroidery)

THREE HONORABLE MENTIONS

Karen Devich — Descent from Cross (welded steel)
Harry Leippe — Jerusalem (welded steel)
Catherine Maroney — Veil of Veronica (welded steel)

$100 Prize for the Work Most Suitable to Be Adapted for Use as a Grace Cathedral Christmas Card

Alfred Manessier — Ex Tenebris Lux (color lithograph)

JURY OF SELECTION AND AWARDS

Herschel Chipp, Professor of Art History, University of California, Chairman
Mark Adams, Painter and Tapestry Designer
Victor Ries, Metal Craftsman
David Tolerton, Sculptor
Ninfa Valvo, Curator of Paintings, M. H. De Young Museum, San Francisco

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the following whose donations and cooperation have made possible the installation of this exhibition:

Dinwiddie Construction Co.
French Government Tourist Office
De Young Museum
Holzmueller Corporation
Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Architects
—Committee for Church Art Today

Architectural Contributors

Belluschi, Pietro . . . . . Church of the Redeemer
Clark and Beutler . Christ Episcopal Church, Woodside
Corbett, Mario . . . . Hope Lutheran Church, Colma
Hunter & Iyama . . . . . Proposed Chapel for Salesian Junior Seminary
Marquis and Stoller . . . . . St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, Lafayette
Steinbomer, Henry . . . . . St. Luke's Episcopal Church, San Antonio
Smith, Donald Powers . . . . . Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Livermore
White, Hermann & Steinau . . . . . San Ramon Valley Congregational Chapel
Winslow, Carelton Monroe . . . . . Seaman's Center, St. Martha's Church, West Covina
Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons . . . Woodside Church

Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, April 3 - May 1, 1960

Church Art Today

The Catalogue

Adams, Mark
Resurrection
Tapestry
Burning Bush
Design for Tapestry
Tempera
Trinity
Painting for Ceiling
Acrylic on Canvas

Alexander, Dorsey P.
Last Gospel
Oil

Baskin, Leonard
Tobias and the Angel
Wood Engraving
The Beatitudes
Wood Engraving
From Design by Ben Shahn
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Bearce, Joann Dale
"Word Became Flesh"
Line-Cut

Bechtle, Robert
Christ at Emmaus
Oil
Lent by Landau Gallery, Los Angeles

Bennett, G. K.
Crucifix
Welded Steel and Wood

Benvenuto, Elio
St. Joseph
Stone

Block, Luciennne
Annunciation
Stained Glass

Bowling, Jack
Hanging Cross
Ebony and Silver

Breydert, F. M.
3 Christmas Cards
Prints

Brom, Rudolph
Chalice
Silver

Carbone, Frank
Way of the Cross
Stained Glass

Caravaglia, Angelo
Cross
Silver

Chagall, Marc
Illustrations from Old Testament
Published by Editions de la Verve, Paris
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Clark, Mrs. Nichols
Rose of Sharon
Needlepoint

Coleman, John
The Crucifixion
Etching
The Good Samaritan
Etching
Sodom and Gomorrah
Etching
The Last Supper
Etching
The Return of Prodigal Son
Etching
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Conner, Bruce
Crucifixion
Wood and Wax
Crucifixion
Oil

Cook, John
John 1:1-3
Ink

Sister Mary Corita
Manna from Heaven
Serigraph

Castarilla, John
Golgotha
Oil

Craighead, Charlene
Crucifixion
Lithograph
From the Generation of Jesse
Wood Cut

Cravath, Dorothy
Eucharist
Stained Glass and Concrete Window
Lent by Trinity Church, Sutter Creek

Cravath, Ruth
St. Francis
Concrete and Colored Glass
On Exterior

Cross, Jose
St. Francis
Wood

Crossley, Anna
White Chasuble
Silk
Purple Chasuble
Silk

Devich, Karen
Descent from the Cross
Steel

Dickinson, Eleanor
The Young Christ
Oil

Dirk, van Erp
Chalice
Silver

Duarte, J. Juan
Lamentation
Pyroxyline (Lacquer)

Egert, Russell
Fallen Angel
Redwood
Christ Mocked
Redwood

Feldman, Bella
Lion
Mosaic

Freed, Ernest
Christ on the Water
Color Intaglio

Fullerton, Margaret
Crucifixion
Oil

Freimark, Robert
Apocalypse
Woodcut

Gibson, Patience, Designer & Poole, Alvis, Worker
Kneeler
In Needlepoint

Graham, Elwood
Cathedral
Oil

Greene, Lucille Brown
(Noah) — from Genesis
Oil-Guache

Halbrook, T. Robert
Christ Triumphant
Faceted Glass in Concrete

Hammasch, Monica
David
Noah's Ark
Batik

Hodgell, Bob
The Supper
Linoleum Cut
Crucifixion
Linoleum Cut
"Peace Be Unto You"
Block Print

Jenkins, Louisa
Madonna
Mosaic
Tabernacle Lamp
Concrete and Glass

Jones, John Paul
Annunciation
Etching — Aquatint
Lent by Landau Gallery, Los Angeles

Jusiema, Doris
Altar Cloth
Linen
Lent by Church of the Good Samaritan

Kempe, Margot
St. Francis
Stone

Kerg, Theo
Cathedral
Color Lithograph
Lent by Landau Gallery, Los Angeles

Leippe, Harry M.
Jerusalem
Sculpture (Welded Steel)
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Lehman, Carlton
Cult of the Black Madonna
Oil

Linsley, Joan M.
Mary's Gift
Tempera

Sister Mary Luke, S.N.J.M.
Love Is Stronger Than Hate
Embroidery and Applique
St. Michael the Archangel
Embroidery

Magee, Albert
Our Lady of Guadaloupe
Mosaic

Manessier, Alfred
Ex Tenebris Lux
Color Lithograph
Gethsemane
Color Lithograph
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Maroney, Catherine
Veil of Veronica
Welded Steel
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Marsh, Elizabeth
Chasuble
Hand Woven Linen

Martin, Robert
Cry from Limbo
Woodblock
Genesis II
Engraving
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

McClelland, L. F.
Altar Cloth
Linen

Marchiarini, Peter
Ring — Ave Maria
Gold
Cross
Ivory & Ebony
Christ Symbol
Silver & Ebony

McWhinnie, Harold
Ascent to Heaven
Paper Intaglio
St. Joan

Marie-Rose, Henry
St. Denis
Brass & Copper
Mother and Child
Brass & Copper

Moran, Dennis Edward
Crucifixion
Steel

Morrow, Ken
Raising of the Cross
Oil

Mrozewski, Stefan
Apocalypse
Wood Engraving
St. Francis Receiving Stigmata
Wood Engraving
Christ and Samarian Woman
Wood Engraving

Nelson, Cornelia W.
Stole
Needlework

Osgood, Ruth
Mother and Child
Oil

Patterson, Nancy-Lee
Visitation
Ink

Pozzatti, Rudy
Stone Prophets
Color Etching
Ecce Homo
Wood Cut
St. Martin & Beggar
Wood Cut
Tower of Babel
Etching

Rabus, Charles
Little Universe
Color
Wood Blocks
Lent by Eric Locke Galleries, San Francisco

Ragsdale, Rodney
The Net
Plastic

Reis, Victor
Altar Candlesticks
Brass and Stainless Steel
Lent by All Souls Church, Berkeley

Richardson, Louise
Festal Chasuble
Embroidery

Roper, N. Jo
St. Francis and the Birds
Silver
St. Christopher Medal
Silver

Soccaro, John
Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns
Oil

Sargent, Barbara
"Take Eat"
Blockprint

Schmid, Charlotte
Crucifixion
Mosaic

Sliwinski, Leon
The Apostle James the Elder
Homage of the Magi
Miraculous Fishing
Christ in the Thorny Crown
Prints

Snead, David Louis
Lord's Supper
Drawing in Enamel

Speyer, Judith
Christus Rex
Ink

de Staebler, Stephen
Purging of Nicea
Stained Glass
Cross
Welded Steel

Strecker, Zelda Thomas
Christian Hanging
Silk Screen

Swift, Dick
Garden of Eden
Etching
Holy Night
Color Intaglio
Christ Before Pilate
Color Intaglio

Szymus, John
Pectoral Cross
Sterling & Enamel

Tenkersley, Bee
Psalm 23
Intaglio
What Have We Done?
Intaglio

Taymon, Wayne P.
Fragment Christ
Welded Bronze
Screen
Welded Bronze & Steel

Tolerton, David
Cross on Exterior
Iron

Tucker, Ernest
Processional Cross
Brass & Wood

Wade, Bennett
Entry to Jerusalem
Wood

Wildenhain, Marguerite
Resurrection
Stoneware Plaque

Witter, Mrs. Dean
Kneeler
Needlepoint

Wolf, Warren A.
False Prophets
Oil

Zajac, Jack
Resurrection
Fiberglas
Easter Goat
Bronze
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Felix Landau, Los Angeles

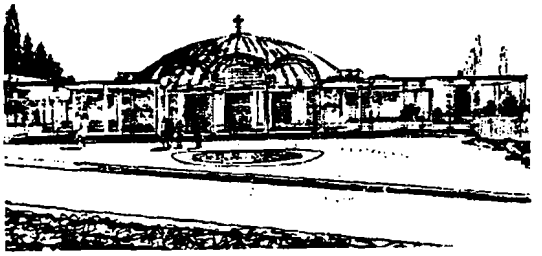
Zirkle, Louis
Bishop's Cross
Gold, Ivory & Lignum

Zirkle, Marie
Bishop's Cross
Gold, Ivory & Lignum

Zraick, Barbara
Maternity of the Blessed Virgin
Embroidery
Chalice
Swedish Design
Silver
From Cathedral Collection

All entries loaned by artist unless otherwise indicated.

APPENDIX G



Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension

Oakland, California

The Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension has been built in the centuries old Byzantine tradition while using material, design, and engineering of the present day.

Traditionally, Orthodox Churches are symbolic, that is, their physical or earthly features are intended to point to, or direct us to a Heavenly significance. For example, the site of this church, high above Oakland and the San Francisco Bay, signified to the community that planned the church, the Ascension of Christ from the earth 40 days after His Resurrection, therefore its name.

The design of the church incorporates an equal sided cross capped by a dome. This Byzantine style cross is formed by a vertical axis and a horizontal axis cross to form four equal sides. The vertical axis represents the creation of Heaven and Earth, and the horizontal, darkness and light. The East, from which the light rises, symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World.

It was important for the community that conceived and built the Church of the Ascension in 1960 that these ancient symbols be rendered in today's modes, as a statement of its conviction that the eternal truths which are symbolized here have meaning and importance for this modern age. The dome is steel, copper-clad on the outside and gold-anodized aluminum on the inside.

Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension
4700 Lincoln Avenue
Oakland, California 94602
Phone: (415) 531-3400

The forms of plywood and paper-tubing that shaped the poured concrete walls and columns have been allowed to leave their marks for the hundreds of years that the church is expected to stand, as a witness to the fact that the church entered the very life of the twentieth century.

It is important for the Orthodox Christian to prepare himself spiritually before entering the Church, which symbolizes the Kingdom of God. The design of the physical church, therefore, helps in this respect. The grounds surrounding the church, have been designed to remind us of the garden of Gesthemene where our Lord prayed. The rocks are there and the olive trees with them.

As we pass through the copper-clad doors of the church, we enter the outer *Narthex.* Historically this room was the place where the unbaptized stood to learn the teachings and beliefs of the Christian Church. It contained many *Icons* (religious paintings) that were used as visual aids to teach the eternal truths. In our Narthex you see four mosaic panels depicting the historic events of the Annunciation, Nativity, Crucifixion, and Ascension. The four lower panels contain an artists conception of four days in the story of Creation as described in the Old Testament.

In today's church, the Narthex, like the garden, helps us to prepare to enter the House of God. We can make an offering, light a candle and meditate, or pray silently.

We then proceed to the inner narthex where we reverence the icons of the Church before entering the *Nave.* The Greek Orthodox Church at Oakland honors the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, hence this mosaic dominates the entrance. Here the light dims abruptly and the ceiling is lowered to emphasize the further removal from the outside world.

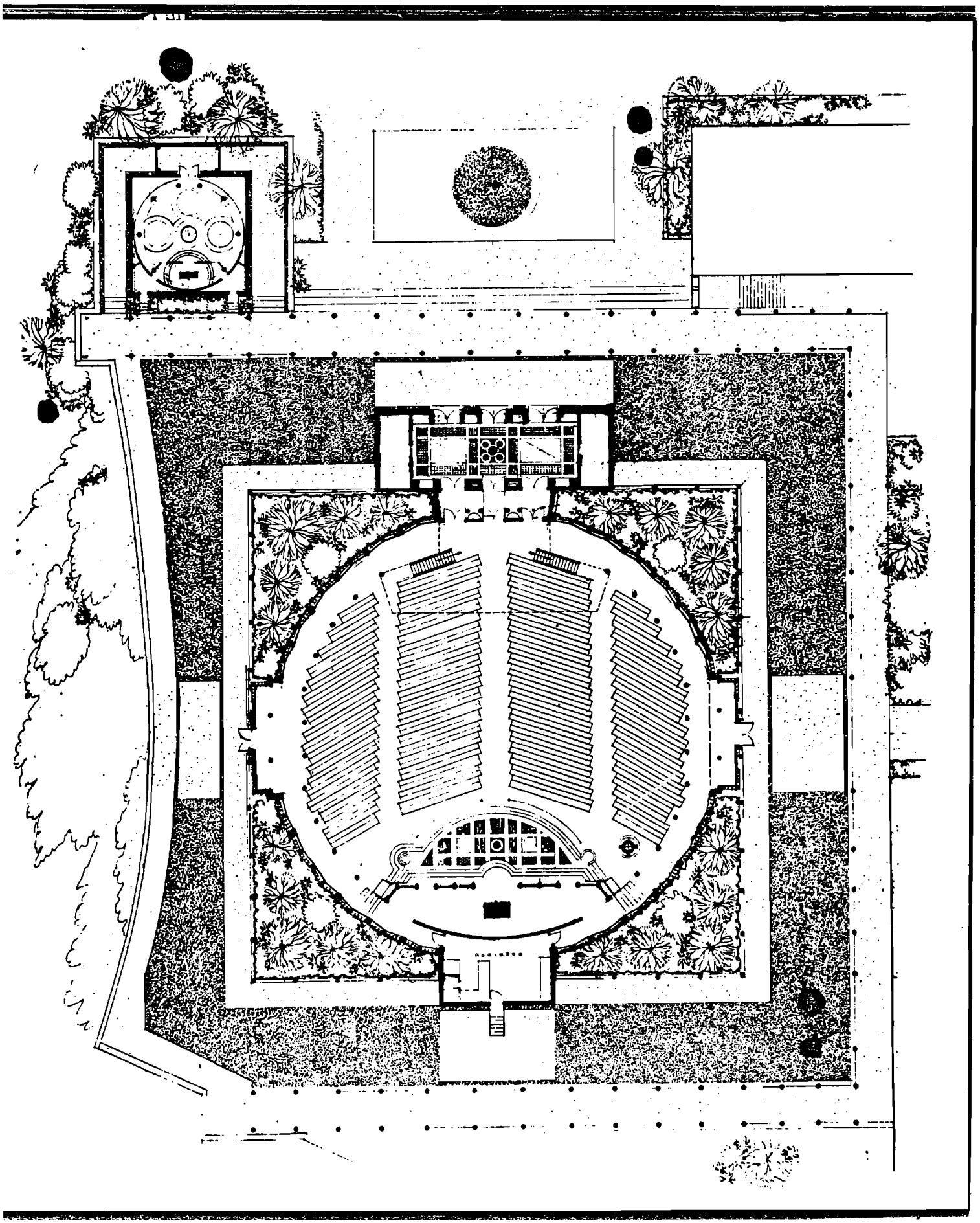
Finally, the nave of the church is entered. We have dropped our worldly cares and made a symbolic entry into the Kingdom of God. We are in the company of the Apostles, Evangelists, and Saints who have gone before us, some of whom are depicted on the *Icon Screen,* and on the dome above us.

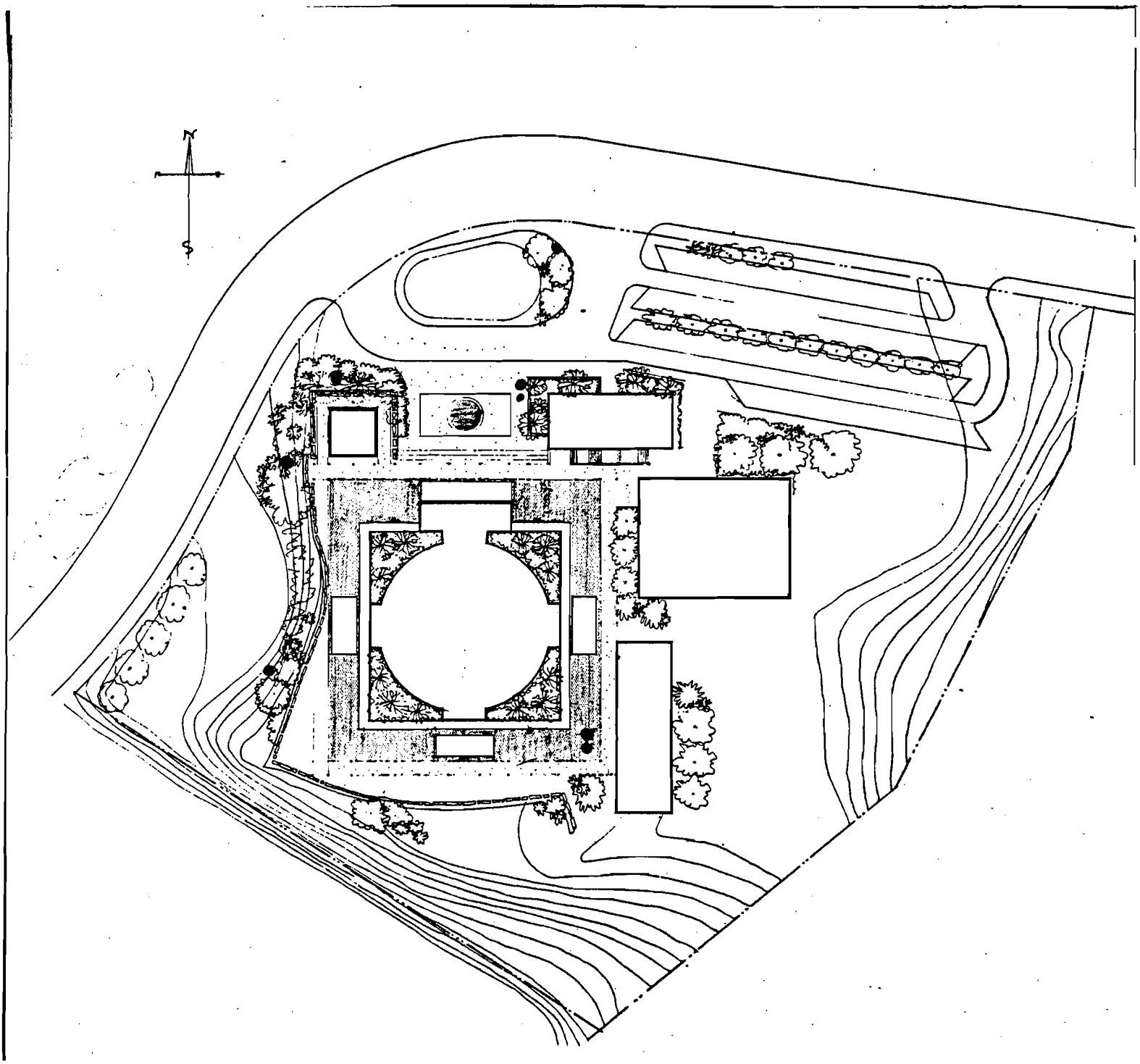
At the far end of the church our eyes are attracted to the icon of the *Platytera,* the title given to the Virgin Mary who is holding the Christ child. As these figures rise above the altar, our gaze is drawn to the icon of the head of Christ, the *Pantocrator* centered in the golden dome above us.

The architecture of our church speaks to us theologically as well as aesthetically. The dome that covers the entire church symbolizes God Who governs all. The floor symbolizes the earth. The Virgin Mother of God holding Christ, centrally situated, symbolizes the ladder of Divine descent by which God entered history through the Incarnation. In this way, Christ offers salvation, accomplished through the crucifixion, symbolized by the *shape of the cross,* within the church. The Resurrection is experienced when one comes forward to receive Christ in Holy Communion.

The Altar, which may be entered only by the clergy in the Orthodox Church, can be seen through the *Beautiful Gates* set in the center of the icon screen.

All of this symbolism, accented by the gentle roundness of the architecture, represents the entire universe, not reaching upward with spires and steeples, but humbly submitting itself to the everpresent God, receiving His saving Grace.




N
S

The Catholic Voice

9th year, No. 48
April 6, 1972
Diocese of Oakland

60

THE NEW CATHEDRAL FOR SANFRANCISCO *

APPENDIX H

The Church is a living Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head and the faithful the members. The vitality of the Mystical Body is our participation in the life of God which flows from Christ, the Head, into the members united with Him--the faithful people who by faith, hope and love share the Divine Life. While participation in the Inner Life of God occurs at all times and in all places, this "sacred commerce" occurs in the most excellent way in the sacred place which is separated from all profane uses and dedicated to divine worship, namely, the church building.

The Church, then, is the House of God and the gate of heaven. There, in God's House, men meet their Heavenly Father, sit with Him at His table, hear His words, and are lifted heavenwards by His unlimited love. Although God is everywhere, the Church is filled with the Divine Presence in a special way, both because of the presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist and because it is the scene of the most intense Divine activity by which supernatural blessings come from God in response to worship on the part of the faithful.

The purpose of a church, therefore, is to provide a sacred space in which the people of God assemble (I) to participate in the offering of Holy Mass; (2) to receive Divine Grace through the reception of the Sacraments; (3) to hear the Word of God; (4) to adore Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist; (5) to exercise various non-liturgical and private devotions in honor of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, as well as the saints united with Him in heaven. (See Directory, German Liturgical Communion)

The Cathedral is a unique and special church. It is the mother and the head of all the churches in the Archdiocese. In it the Chief Shepherd of the flock presides, and from its throne exercises his power to sanctify, to teach and to rule the entire flock.

In the Cathedral, Christ continues His divine mission of offering Himself in expiation for our sins, of sanctifying us by His grace, of teaching us with His authority, and ruling us as our King. In this sacred enclosure the consecrated bishop, the ordained clergy, and the

* A statement by Archbishop McGucken. (ca. 1963)

baptised laity, each according to his proper place and function, are united with each other and with Christ in the most sublime activity on earth.

The design of a cathedral church should be created in the contemplation of these truths and become the expression of them. Its beauty and its message must be inspired by the sublimity and the meaning of its supernatural purpose. If the creative ideas of the architect are expressed only by the skillful use of geometric forms and by clever engineering techniques, he may produce a spectacular building; one which will be a monument to his own fame, but not to the glory of God. These forms and techniques do, indeed, serve their purpose in a cathedral, but they must be the servent of its spiritual purpose, not the master of the design. The form of the cathedral, then, must be inspired by the liturgy.

The architect, then, must be thoroughly imbued with a knowledge of the law and the spirit of the liturgy. He must identify himself with the presiding prelate, the priest at the altar, the layman in the pew during liturgical worship, as well as the individual soul seeking union with God and divine help in personal and private devotion.

He must know the rules that govern the structure of the liturgical appurtenances of the Cathedral and the actions of the clergy, as well as the participation of the laity. Over and above the mechanics of the liturgy, the designer must know and feel the spirit of worship--the spirit of the family of God united in adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, petition.

This intellectual and spiritual preparation must be added to his creative skill and his familiarity with the rich tradition of religious architecture, lest he produce a merely neutral design, lacking true Catholic meaning.

The design of the Cathedral must proclaim a timeless message. Its architectural idiom must not be expressed in archaic terminology- a mere echo of the past- much less may it be what is called modernistic, "just for today". Yet the Cathedral can and must speak to modern

man and to the men of future ages in a language valid and intelligible in every age and culture, that of truth,beauty,and grace.

The Cathedral,then,being the dwelling of the Almighty,must portray strength and endurance, yet as the House of Our Father,it shouldbe neither forbidding or overbearing.The thrust of its lines should be heavenward and all its parts in harmony,proportion and balance,according to their function. The tricks of engineering that startle and bewilder the beholder,that create impressions of stress and tension--the malaise one feels when sheets of concrete above have no visible support,when supporting members seem too fragile for the loads they bear--are as much to be avoided as purely ornamental pilasters,beams and buttresses,which perform no honest function.The desirable effect of peacefullness and grace can best be achieved by the use of modern materials,with simplicity and honesty.

THE EXTERIOR

As divine worship is distinct from wordly pursuits,the Cathedral should be separated from profane buildings.Its approach should not be directly from the street,but through a court or plaza,as an ample intermediate area of quiet,to dispose a worshipper to leave behind the bustle of commerce and his temperal interests as he passes into another atmosphere of serene spirituality.Access to the Cathedral from the car parking area should,as much as possible,lead into this court in front of the building,so that the majority will be inclined to enter the church through its principal portals.This parking area itself can be designed so that the view of the Cathedral will not be marred by a sea of automobiles.This can be accomplished,perhaps,by recessing the paved area and by landscaping mounds to conceal it from view.

The exterior of the church should reveal its purpose. This being a sacred one,the form of the edifice should distinguish it from buildings of any other type or use. It should not look like a factory, a market,a school or a theater,or any other secular building.Neither should its design be dominated by the effort to create symbolism,however religious,that does not display its primary purpose.It should not be built to look like a tent(tabernacle),nor a crown,nor a fortress, nor an arena. It should look like what it is--a temple of divine worship whosewalls enshrine a Holy of Holies and embrace a congregation of worshippers.The external appearance of its various parts should

indicate the sacredness and importance of their ~~exterior~~ interior function. From the outside the sanctuary, the baptistry, the body of the church, and its sacred shrines should be discernible for what they are.

The Tower, from which the sound of bells, as the voice of God, summons the people to worship, should hold the cross, the sign of our redemption, high over the city.

The portals, should invite and welcome all to enter. Perhaps the facade might be adorned with a strong and attractive figure of the Savior with arms extended to welcome and embrace.

THE INTERIOR

A. THE ALTAR

The primary reason for the existance of the church building is the altar. The church is built to house the holy table and extend its influence to the people who are drawn towards it and united with it. The altar, therefore, is the architectural and ocular focus of the church--not an ornament to be added later.

The creation of the planning, then, begins with the altar. The entire church is designed to complement and to exalt it. The architectural lines of the church should lead the eye to the altar, which itself, in strength and beauty, must be the most attractive object in the view of the worshippers. Nothing in the church should obstruct the view of the altar. It should not stand against the wall of the apse, but be located in the center of the sanctuary, approached by steps on all sides, so that mass could be said on either side.

The altar should be flooded with natural light...

(The paragraph of four lines at this point is not decipherable.)

B. THE SANCTUARY

On the gospel side of the sanctuary, provision should be made for the permanent throne. In view of possible changes in the liturgy, provision must be made for ambos [pulpit] at the edge of the sanctuary on the gospel and on the epistle sides. The ambo on the gospel side should not obstruct the view of the throne or the sacred ceremonies. Whether or not there should be a baldachino is a question to be studied from the point of view of the altar itself. There should be nothing in the sanctuary to compete with the altar for the attraction of the people.

A place for the choir and organ console should be arranged at the side of the sanctuary so that male singers can be in the sanctuary,but female singers,the organist and the director concealed from view of the congregation.Space for the organ pipe should be provided nearby,but above and removed from the altar.

The sanctuary itself,by its design and elevation,should express the hierarchical distinction between the clergy and the laity, without,however,destroying the intimate union of the laity with the clergy in offering the Holy Sacrifice,or making active participation of the laity difficult,or destroying the possiblity of dialogue between the celebrant and the congregation.The communion table (if there is to be one) is not to be conceived as a barrier or rail separating the congregation from the sanctuary.Nor is the sanctuary to be conceived as a stage on which the actions of the clergy are watched by a passive assembly of spectators.In other words,the architectural lines should draw the congregation to the altar and unite them with it.

January, 1984 Vol.LXX, No. 1

THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW

The Catholic University of America Press

THE ANATOMY OF TRANSITION: CATHEDRAL-BUILDING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1962-1971

BY

JAMES P. GAFFEY*

> I cannot escape an impression that important history is being fashioned as this great structure takes shape, and I take liberty to suggest that, beyond the blueprints and the slide photographs already available, more of a record should be established of the many facets of this development. So many incidents and features, so obvious to us all at the moment of their occurrence, become elusive and finally forgotten over the years.
>
> —M. Justin Herman (Executive Director, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency) to Joseph T. McGucken, San Francisco, June 5, 1968.

The extended decade which began with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy and ended with the Watergate affair was, by all accounts, a time of upheaval and metamorphosis for America. It served equally as a season of transition for American Catholics. For them the 1960's began with the gathering of an ecumenical council designed to open the universal Church to the contemporary world, and ended in 1971 with the historic "Resolution on Southeast Asia," in which the American bishops ended a long tradition of supporting United States foreign policy by declaring that it was a "moral imperative of the highest priority" to end the war in Vietnam. This divide in time marked a turning point for the American Church. The presence of a Catholic in the White House, coupled with the spirit and legislation of the Second Vatican Council, had sparked new energies among American Catholics. The Church questioned the institutional priorities of earlier generations and redefined itself as the "People of God." It had been called to confront secular society, especially over the issues of

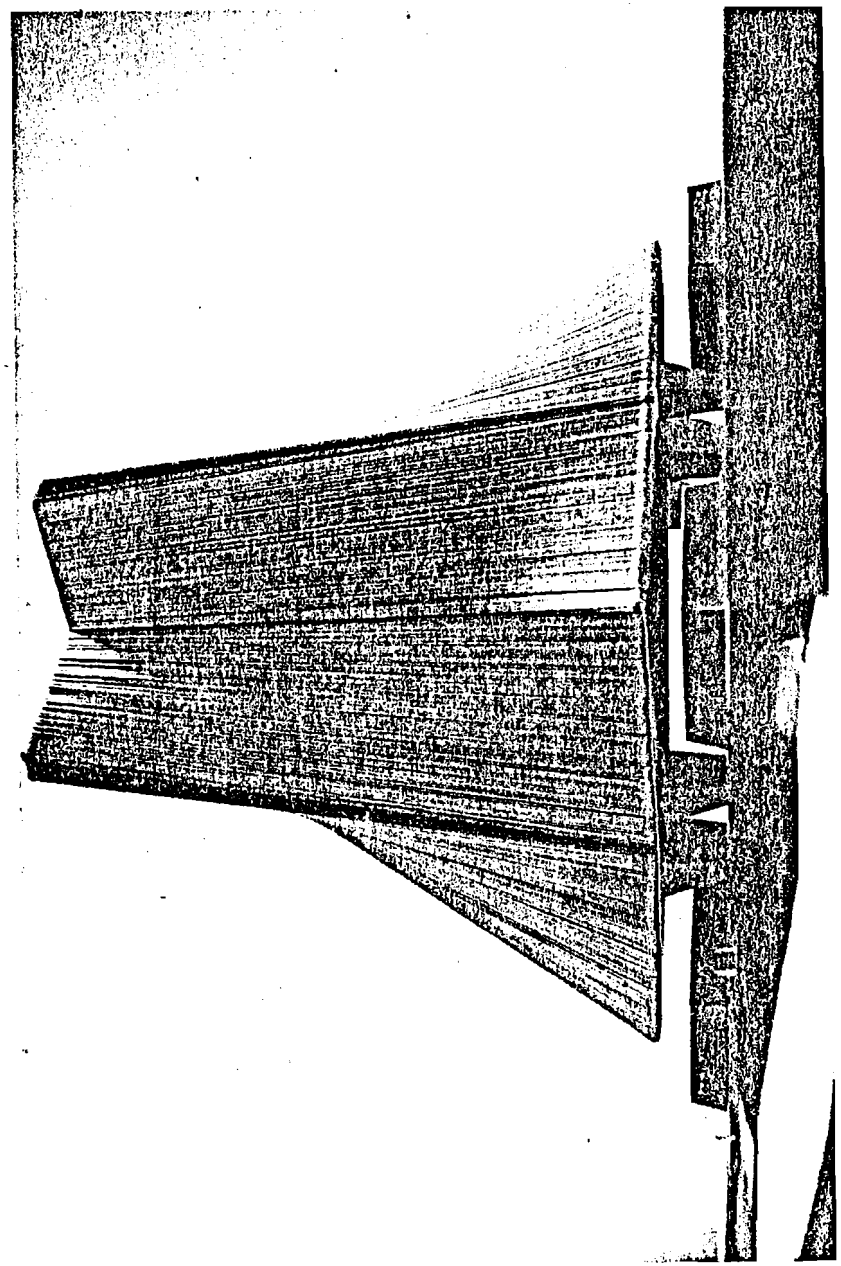
*Monsignor Gaffey is pastor of Saint Eugene's Cathedral, Santa Rosa, California. He read this paper on March 6, 1983, as the annual Catholic Daughters of the Americas Lecture at the Catholic University of America, where he was visiting professor from January to May of that year in the chair endowed by the Catholic Daughters for American Catholic history. Publication of the article has been financed by a grant from the same chair.

social and economic justice. Its leadership, based traditionally in the hierarchy, was forced in many instances to yield its monopoly in representing Catholic opinion, to others who had read the current conciliar and papal pronouncements and who were determined to implement them with or without episcopal help.

These developments occurred in scattered fashion across the country. As Catholic radicals destroyed draft cards in Baltimore, others were marching with César Chavez's farmworkers in California. While a parish priest emerged as the leader of the most militant civil-rights group in Milwaukee, conducting a four-day boycott of the public-school system of that city, another in Los Angeles accused his cardinal-archbishop of despotism and formed the American Federation of Priests to lead the struggle for the "professional freedom" of the Catholic clergy in this country.[1]

It is tempting to describe the transformation of the American Church simply in terms of conflict. One can easily achieve high drama by narrating a procession of collisions between Catholics and their government or between a growing army of social-conscious "prophets" and glacial prelates who were apparently unaware of the new Pentecost sweeping through the twentieth-century Church. Events perceived largely in terms of polarities have seduced many historians who favor Olympian vistas and look for easy and quick answers. A case study, however, often sharpens the focus and rewards the investigator with greater subtleties underlying the forces that find themselves in opposition. The planning and building of St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco occurred during that decade of monumental change. The events surrounding this project present an opportunity to look beyond the stereotypical conservatives and liberals that populate so many accounts of the 1960's. Cathedral-building evoked in one Catholic community a serious discussion of ecclesiastical priorities in the light of the Second Vatican Council. It brought into open conflict the official leadership and those who questioned its right to commit substantial resources of a local church without broad consultation. It arrayed against each other two parties both of whom invoked the council as their inspiration, one arguing that the Church's resources should be expended on the immediate needs of the poor and the other advocating the long-term goal of providing for a spiritually impoverished age a house of worship where the newly reformed Catholic liturgy would be presented in its purest form and where one would find the finest artistic harmonization of contemporary religious and secular symbolism. Cathedral-building in San Francisco thus divided the

[1]William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (New York, 1973), pp. 332-334; *New York Times*, August 30, 1966, p. 30.



The first model by Pietro Belluschi, showing the ideal form

648

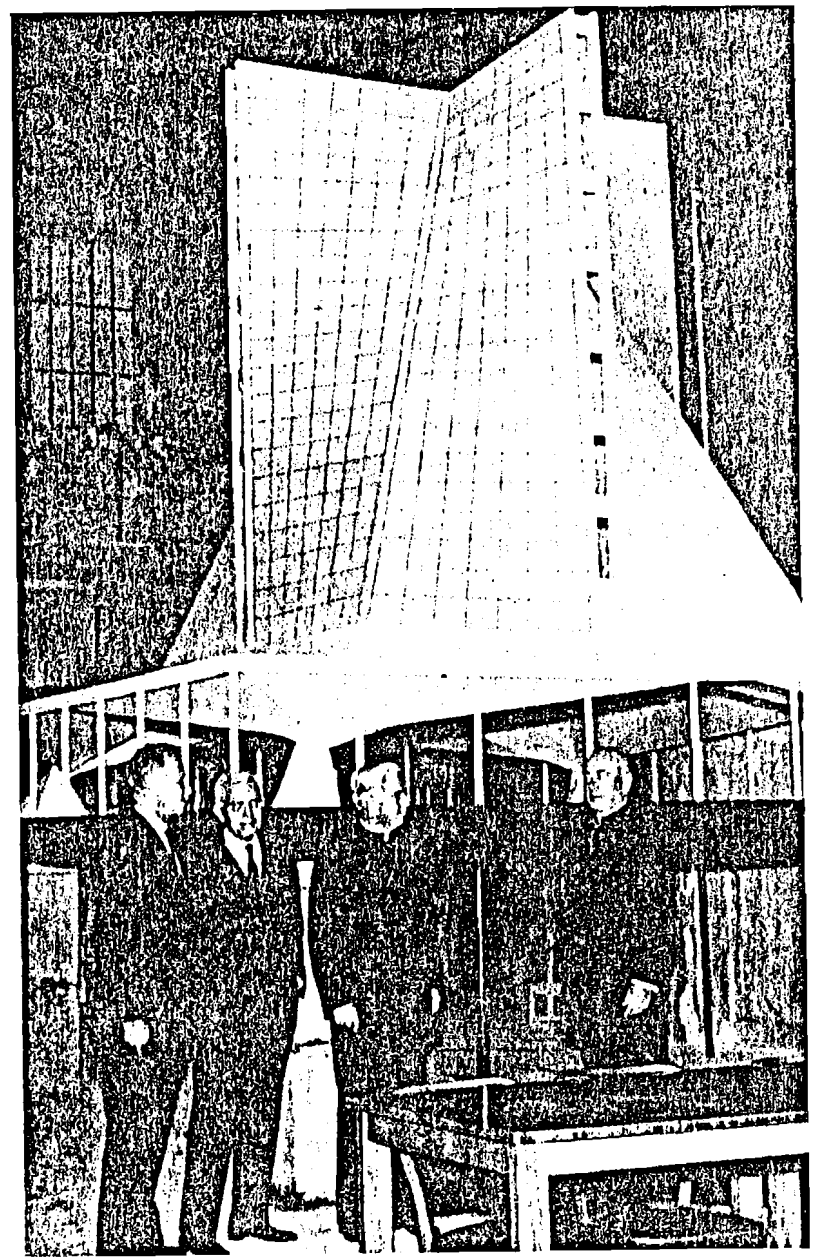
"prophets," who would first nourish and clothe the body, from the institutional leadership which would first create a feast for the soul. Neither party, however, was wholly heroic or villainous; each had set out to implement what it discerned to be the fundamental thrust of the Second Vatican Council. Their dispute centered upon a unique building that could have been built only during that extraordinary season of change.

On September 7, 1962, a small girl accidentally knocked over a rack of vigil lights and ignited the fire that totally destroyed the seventy-five-year-old Catholic cathedral in San Francisco. It was an agonizing end for the red-brick Gothic church where three generations of San Franciscans had been baptized, confirmed, married, ordained, and eulogized. The Bay-Area community, both Catholic and non-Catholic, responded to a call from Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken, who had been promoted to the metropolitan see of San Francisco from the suffragan see of Sacramento and had received the sacred pallium in the cathedral only six months earlier. He promptly inaugurated a fund-raising campaign that would rebuild the cathedral and finance several other projects in the archdiocese. In less than seven months after the old cathedral had burned, some $15.5 million had been pledged, $6 million of which was allocated for the new cathedral.

The problem of raising money was not nearly so difficult as that of spending it to everyone's satisfaction. From the beginning, the archbishop, by temperament a charming, intelligent, but extremely independent man, took complete charge of the project. Although he consulted *ad hoc* committees such as the one set up to advise on the selection of the architects for the new St. Mary's, he regularly bypassed his standing committees, one of which expected to have had a role in this enterprise, notably the building committee which reviewed most construction proposals for the archdiocese.[2] In the early stages, while he inclined toward traditional designs, he rejected largely for reasons of economy the plans of the two newest metropolitan cathedrals in America — Baltimore's massive Cathedral of Mary Our Queen (1959), which was reputed to have cost $12 million, and the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford (1962), whose final cost was estimated at $14 million. The thought of sponsoring a competition in church design tantalized him until he was warned that the most experienced architects work by commission and generally avoid these tournaments.[3]

[2]Interview with an eyewitness who wished to remain anonymous, January 3, 1983.

[3]Archives of the Archdiocese of San Francisco (hereafter cited as AASF), McGucken to Arthur Antinelli, n.p., February 26, 1963; McGucken to Angus McSweeney, n.p., March 21, 1963, copies. See *The Story of Baltimore's New Cathedral: The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen* (Baltimore, *ca.* 1959); and *The Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Connecticut), June 24, 1962.



649

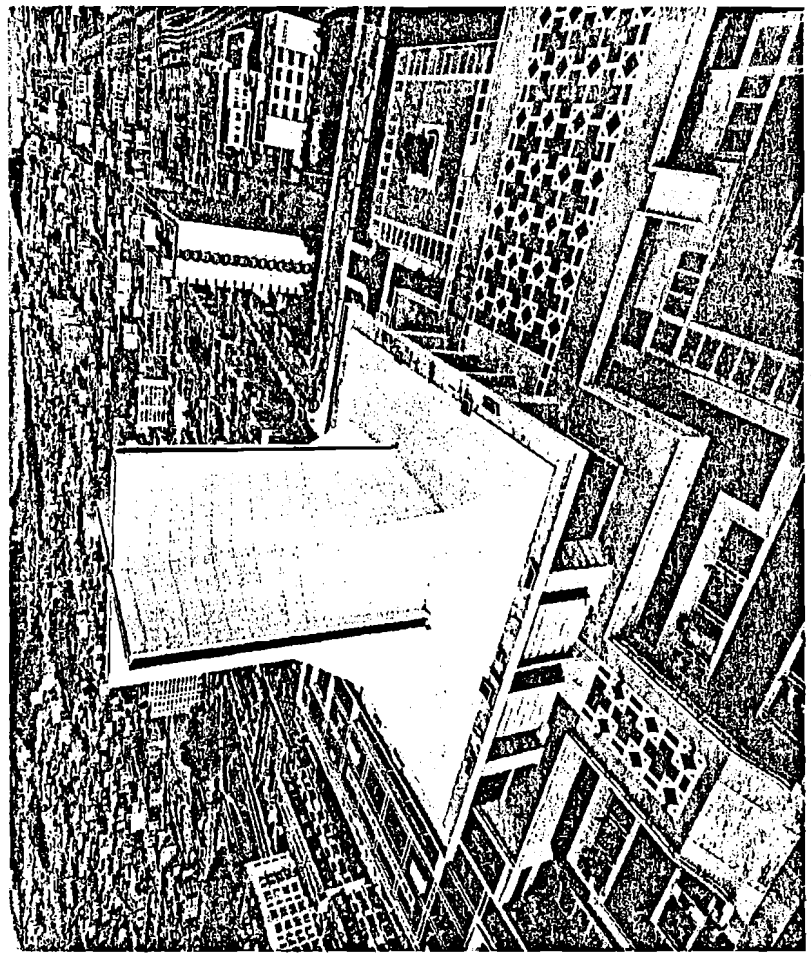
Model of the cathedral being stress-tested in Bergamo. In foreground (from left to right) Belluschi, Nervi, Bishop Merlin J. Guilfoyle (Auxiliary to the Archbishop of San Francisco), and Archbishop McGucken

For this reason, McGucken turned to three local architects — Angus McSweeney, Paul A. Ryan, and John Michael Lee. All three men were reliable veterans who had worked on several churches and schools in the Bay Area. The best known was McSweeney, who had been a partner of Willis Polk, a legendary architect in San Francisco history, and whose recent work had concentrated on large housing projects. A graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Ryan was an acknowledged expert in design and the decorative arts, and Lee was to serve as co-ordinator among the designers, draftsmen, engineers, and contractors.[4] This selection, however, triggered the first public reaction to the project, this time from the community at large which expected the new cathedral to be a building of the future, not a clever replica of a traditional style. A bombshell exploded in an article by Allen Temko, architectural critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Arguing that the souls of the great cities of the world have been enshrined in their cathedrals — as Rome has been in Michelangelo's St. Peter's, London in Sir Christopher Wren's St. Paul's, and Paris in the anonymous masterpiece of Notre Dame — Temko questioned the capacity of the local architects to rise to this exceptional opportunity for San Francisco. The builders named by McGucken were virtually undistinguished, and of the principal one Temko added this blistering comment: "Although . . . McSweeney is an astute manufacturer of the kind of high-rise apartment buildings which now disfigure large areas of San Francisco, one cannot possibly associate his name with a single significant piece of modern architecture." Harsh as this critique was, it raised the issue of cathedral-building to the level of public discussion in San Francisco; it was no longer to be the exclusive domain of the archbishop. Even *The Tablet* of London applauded the "vigorous controversy" surrounding the new cathedral. ". . . San Francisco," reported the weekly's correspondent, "is probably the most articulate of American communities — and it certainly has much to lose, so beautiful a city it is, if the new cathedral should prove to be another piece of triviality."[5]

Undaunted by the press, the architectural team continued to produce a torrent of preliminary sketches, some fifty of them in three months, and most of them following the Romanesque or California-mission styles. None of them struck the right chord. Progress seemed halted until Godfrey

[4] AASF, McGucken to Mrs. Lester Mayne, n.p., April 17, 1963, copy; McGucken to Marshall P. Madison, n.p., March 25, 1963, copy. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 9, 1963, p. 4.

[5] *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 1963, p. 8. Gerald Adams, "The Agony and the Ecstasy," *California Living* (San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle), October 18, 1970, p. 8. *The Tablet* (London), CCXVIII (February 29, 1964), 239.



The finished edifice set against the hills of San Francisco

650

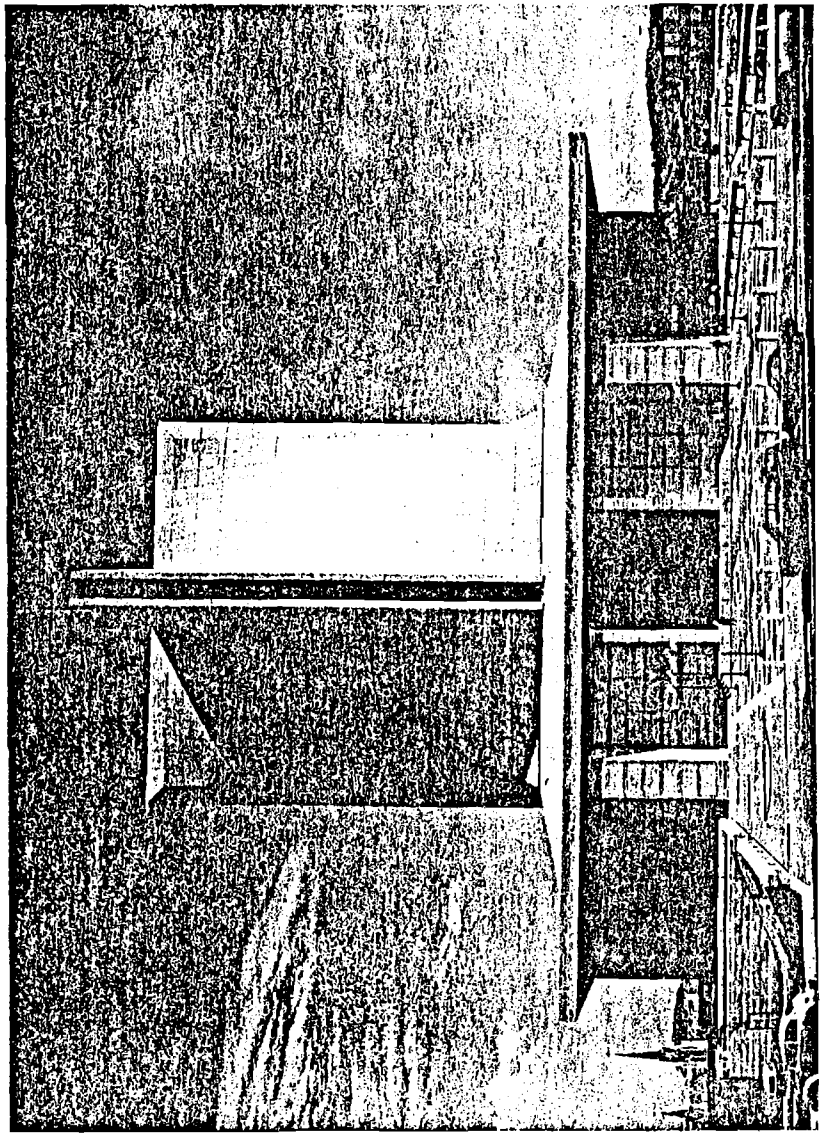
Diekmann, O.S.B., a distinguished theologian and the editor of *Worship*, a monthly that had pioneered in liturgical reform, was invited to review the plans. His immediate reaction was to discredit the traditional approach; and the architectural team agreed to take on consultants. Several names of international repute had already arisen in conversation, but the one that appealed to McGucken at this stage was Diekmann's recommendation — Pietro Belluschi.[6]

Italian and Catholic by birth, Belluschi first earned a reputation in Oregon where he had specialized in what he called "regional architecture." His approach abandoned all recognized "styles," and was derived from a study of the setting and inhabitants of the Northwest, where he had worked for two decades. He was known to be innovative and versatile. His work included homes, office and public buildings, churches, and shopping centers. He used not only the most advanced technology in construction but also local materials and craftsmen in order to blend these buildings into a rustic or urban landscape. Perhaps his most striking early success was the Equitable Building in Portland. When it opened in 1948, this skyscraper was the first office building in America to be sheathed entirely in aluminum, then a new metal developed during World War II, the first building to be completely sealed and therefore fully air-conditioned, and the first to use double-glazed window panels. With these innovations, Belluschi virtually camouflaged this majestic multi-story structure in the heart of the city, its wall of glass serving as a dark, rich mirror that reflected the sky, the hills, and the vigorous life of modern downtown.[7] In 1950 he left Oregon for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where for fifteen years he served as its dean of the School of Architecture and Planning. During this interval he was professionally associated with several monumental projects of the 1960's, notably the Bank of America World Headquarters in San Francisco (1970) and the Pan American Building (1962) and the Julliard School at the Lincoln Center in New York City (1970).

When Archbishop McGucken first approached Belluschi in 1963, the architect's credits already comprised some twenty churches for various denominations, including the exquisite Benedictine church at the Portsmouth Abbey, Rhode Island (1959). This experience had led him to develop some clear principles regarding ecclesiastical design, which he

[6] AASF, McGucken to Mrs. Lester Mayne, n.p., April 17, 1963; McGucken to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald F. Burroni, n.p., July 1, 1963; McGucken to Heather G. Sterner, n.p., July 17, 1963, copies.

[7] Walter L. Creese, "The Equitable Revisited," *Architectural Forum*, CXXVIII (June, 1968), 40-45.



Front view of the cathedral

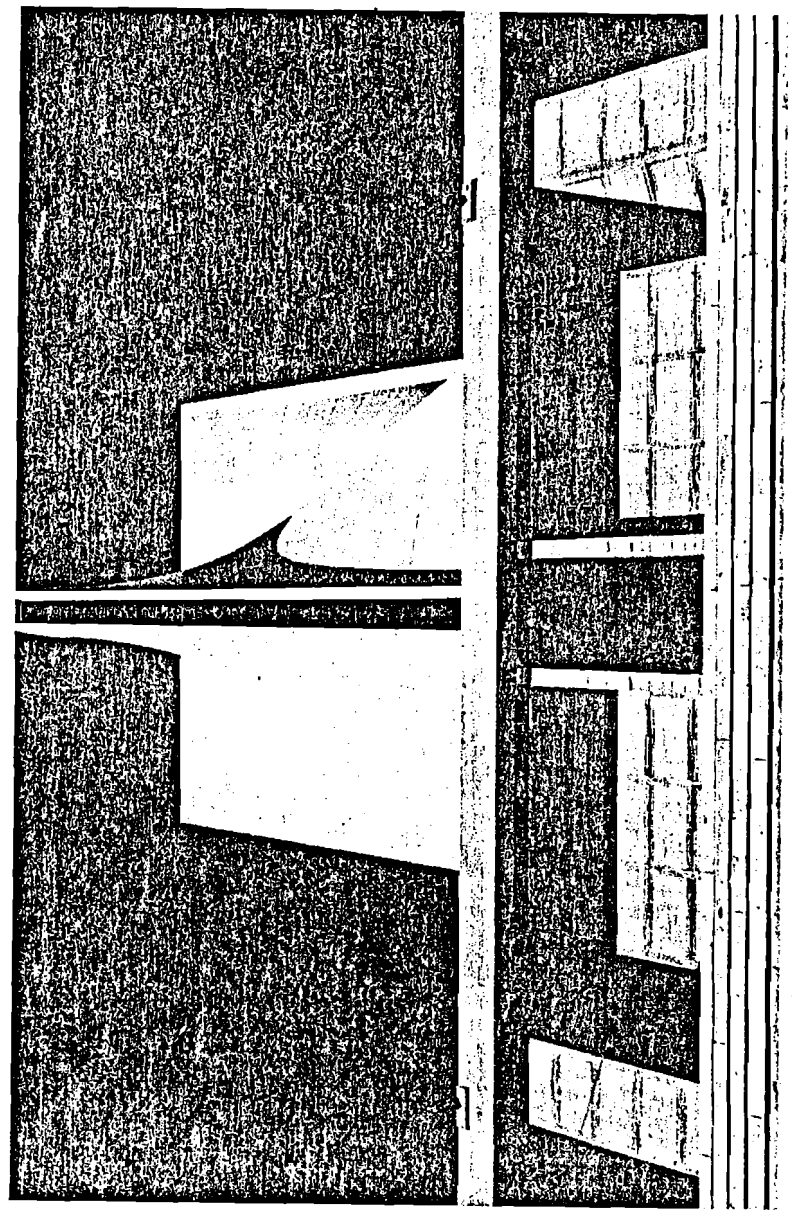
651

expressed in a series of addresses and articles. The "problem" of the church architect was, he proposed, "to create an environment in which the average man may find spiritual shelter; a place where he may draw strength for his daily labors, and courage in his battle and temptations; a place where he may join others in worship and meditation."[8]

In pursuing this end, the designer must avoid two pitfalls. Though religious architecture had strong traditions, he must first eschew a "sterile copying of the past,"[9] and in a creative fashion search out a form that is the "witness and custodian of the spirit of modern man."[10] Second, while he must co-operate with the rules of liturgy, he must never yield to the extent that these rules threaten to produce a building which, when idle without ceremony, inspires no spiritual response from man. Today the architect's avenue toward creating a church which of itself resonates with the presence of God, suggested Belluschi, lies in his capacity to play with space. His tools in this process are "color and light and proportions and the quality of the various materials placed in a harmonious relationship — and above all scale, the subtlest and most elusive of all means to bring space in proper rapport and emphasis to the worshipper. . . ." This approach, he promised, may generate a work that will "stand as a noble symbol of contemporary man's beliefs," a work that "will reveal to his future descendants the depth of his concern, and even the extent of his inadequacies," a work that "will avoid the frivolities of the tastemakers, who continually demand new fashions, soon to be bored by them, as they think of form-giving as a clever game of skill."[11]

When Belluschi was first invited to join the undertaking to build the cathedral in San Francisco, he was reluctant to do so for two reasons. First, he observed that cathedral-building in an age which paid "only lip service to the old images of God" lacked the spiritual conviction and collective vigor which had inspired the Middle Ages. This malaise, he felt, was evident in the failure of twentieth-century artists to translate spiritual concepts into persuasive religious expressions. The two newest Catholic cathedrals at Baltimore and Hartford were, in his judgment, "a mistake" because they appeared to replicate styles and imagery that no longer appeal to the modern temperament.[12] Second, he had never designed a religious

[8] *The Northwest Architecture of Pietro Belluschi* (n.p., n.d.), p. 17.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[10] Belluschi, "Eloquent Simplicity in Architecture," *Architectural Record*, CXXXIV (July, 1963), 134.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[12] AASF, Belluschi to Pier Luigi Nervi, n.p., September 9, 1963, copy.



652
Side view of the cathedral

building of such magnitude. His earlier efforts had been confined to chapels and modest churches, and he questioned whether he had the technical capability of solving the massive structural problems. His doubts, however, were dissolved when he was told to search out and engage an engineer, "the world's greatest if necessary." "My talents had been nourished on less ambitious projects," he confessed later. "But like the reluctant bride, in the end I could not resist the seduction."[13]

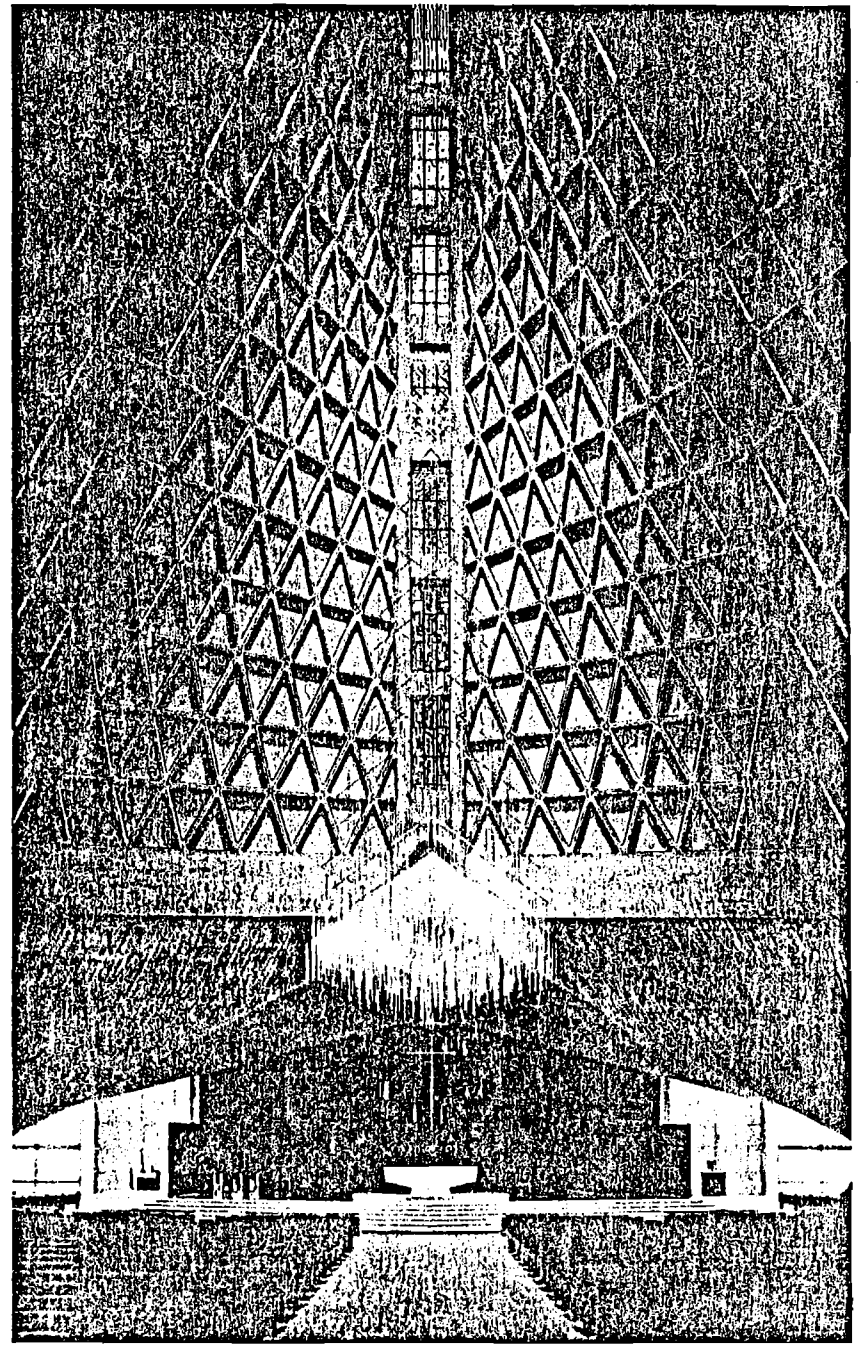
Belluschi's choice for engineer was Pier Luigi Nervi, one of the world's leading builders of large-scale structures. The seventy-two-year-old Italian had dotted Europe, America, and Australia with a chain of dazzling buildings that ingeniously combined massive size and elegance of form. He used newly developed high-strength materials, especially reinforced concrete and prefabricated structural units. This technique led to the basic features of his buildings. The supporting structure was, characteristically, reduced to a concrete skeleton of spaced piers which could stand independently of the enclosing wall. This wall no longer served to support the building and could now become an ornate "curtain" composed of glass, masonry, or any light material. Nervi's vaulting domes, which often appeared ribbed or latticed, were created by connecting precast units welded and cemented together on site, a procedure that permitted vast interior spaces without obstruction. Because his designs were so advanced, a theoretical analysis seldom determined their actual behavior satisfactorily. Often, for this reason, models built according to scale were subjected to stress studies in special laboratories, and this technique frequently called for modifications of Nervi's original design.[14] By September of 1963, the two international authorities had committed themselves to cathedral-building as consultants, Belluschi in total charge of design and Nervi in complete control of structure. Along with the original San Francisco architects this proved to be a productive and congenial collaboration, and even the skeptical *San Francisco Chronicle* welcomed these additions to the planning team.[15]

Once this remarkable team was assembled, two factors governed the architectual form that would soon evolve. The first was what may be called

[13]AASF, Belluschi to Gerald Adams, Boston, June 3, 1970. *The Northwest Architecture of Pietro Belluschi*, p. 18. Elisabeth K. Thompson, "Saint Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco," *Architectural Record*, CL (September, 1971), 114.

[14]Pier Luigi Nervi, *Structures*, translated by Giuseppina and Mario Salvadori (New York, 1956). Pier Luigi Nervi, *Buildings, Projects, Structures: 1953-1963*, translated by Giuseppe Nicoletti (New York, 1963).

[15]AASF, Nervi to Belluschi, n.p., September 2, 1963, copy; Belluschi to Nervi, n.p., September 9, 1963, copy; agreement between Pier Luigi Nervi and McSweeney, Ryan, and Lee, January 27, 1964. *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 5, 1963, pp. 1, 24.



Interior of the cathedral

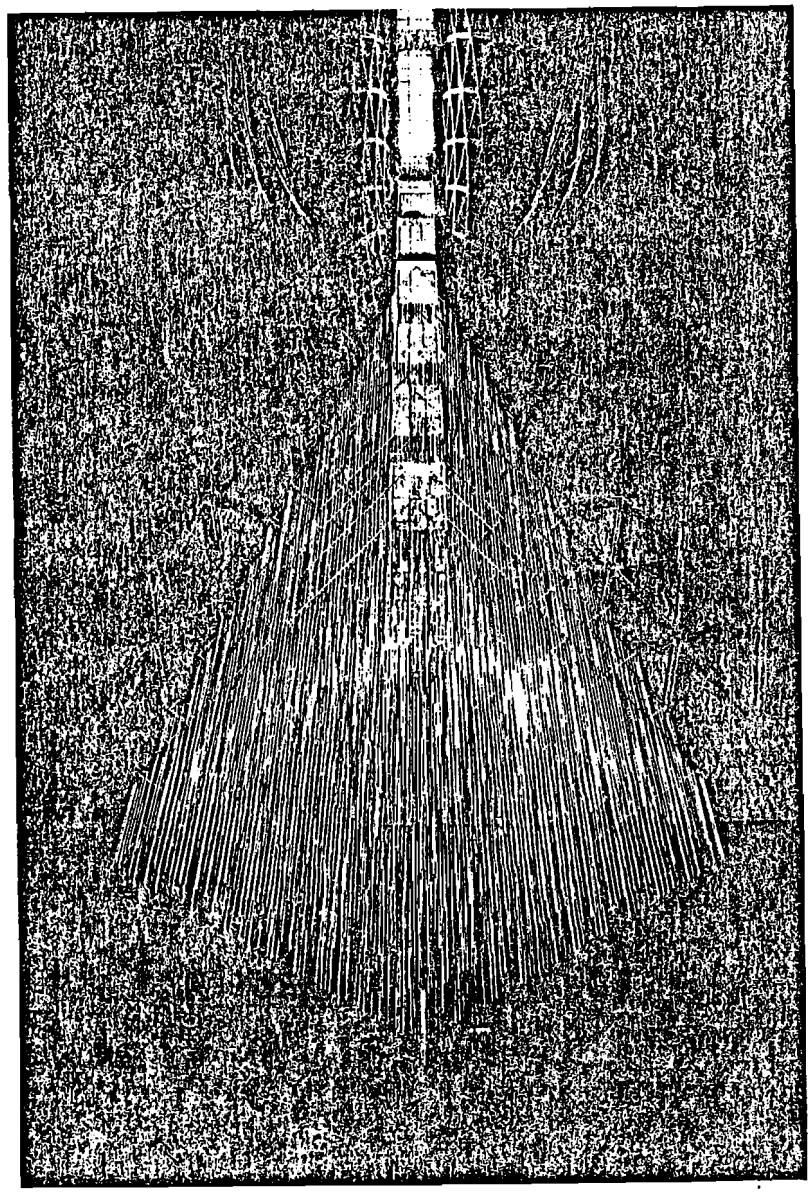
the theology of design, that is, the requirements of the liturgical reform emerging at that time from the Second Vatican Council. ". . . The idea," Archbishop McGucken explained to Belluschi on the eve of leaving for the council's second session, "seems to be to gather the family of God around the altar as one united body, and to keep the people as close as possible to the altar for the sake of participation in the liturgy." The archbishop wanted the liturgy to be the focus of the new cathedral. He rejected a diameter rotunda, or a "church-in-the-round," because in large scale, he noted, "the eye is led upward towards the summit, rather than to the altar." For this reason his original preference leaned toward a Latin-cross floor plan where the altar on a central platform and under a brilliant light would be the center of attention and a dramatic focus for the reformed liturgy.[16]

The second factor was the philosophy of design, viz., Belluschi's search beyond conventional forms. Grasping McGucken's theology of design, the architect's first sketches followed traditional patterns, none of which satisfied him. His explorations had pushed him to the limits of his imagination, and the cathedral had, as he confessed to McGucken, "become a project which is indeed greater and more difficult than any I ever attempted before." It was during this agony of exploration that Belluschi explained his vision for the cathedral. "From the very beginning," he wrote to the archbishop,

> I have felt very strongly that in order to endure the design should consist of elementary forms. It should avoid giving fashionable answers; it should above all enhance the liturgical drama; it must therefore deal with space with clarity and eloquence; its structure must inspire but also convince (all of Nervi's work possesses this quality). The sources of light must be so located and of such nature as to bring poetic quality to the interior; the rich stained glass should shine in a context of simplicity.
>
> Nothing must be faked or superimposed or contrived. The very size and proportions of the interior must echo the craving of the spirit to express its faith. Indeed, this is not to be just another building, but a great symbol . . . . St. Thomas Aquinas in his infinite widsom gave us the three guiding principles for greatness: integrity, proportion, and clarity. Even so, we are finding out how much thought and effort are needed to really understand and apply them to our purposes.[17]

Belluschi's persistence during this ordeal led him to the idea of using a tapering sloped surface for the upper envelope of the cathedral. He had at

[16]AASF, McGucken to Belluschi, n.p., October 4, 1963, copy.
[17]AASF, Belluschi to McGucken, n.p., November 12, 1963, copy.



The "Baldacchino" of Richard Lippold

654

this time been studying the work of Eduardo Catalano, a colleague in the School of Architecture, who had experimented with a new kind of "space-enclosure" known as the hyperbolic paraboloid.[18] These advanced structural systems were inconceivable when Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic cathedrals were built. Depending on non-Euclidean geometry and breaking from traditional "lineal" concepts, the hyperbolic paraboloid permitted the creation of spectacular warped, or double-curved, coverings that appeared to drape delicately over space. This approach to design inspired Belluschi to envision for the cathedral a buoyant four-winged crown, or cupola, of striking simplicity and originality, which seemed to defy gravity and float unencumbered on corner pedestals of concrete. This bold plan, however, presented staggering structural problems, which Nervi addressed with speed and enthusiasm. In his thorough way, he constructed several models that were tested at a special laboratory in Italy.[19] By the summer of 1965, the final modifications had been applied to the original design. The massive dome was reduced by a third in height, and the walls enclosing the church beneath the dome, which according to Belluschi's first sketches were to be ornamental and mostly glass, had to be reinforced in order to prevent any lateral vibrations of the building during an earthquake. Despite these adjustments, Nervi assured the archbishop that the modified design would add mystery to the interior and nobility to the exterior, giving San Francisco "a Cathedral — nay, the first Cathedral truly of our time and in harmony with the liturgical reforms of the Council."[20] The Italian master's comment had struck the right chord: in this project a theology and philosophy of design had found themselves entirely compatible; the concerns of prelate and poet had been successfully met.

Once the exterior shape had been determined, the next stage was to arrange the interior space. Nervi's modified design yielded a square floor plan, 255 feet on each side, a large area that enhanced the reformed liturgy, allowing worshipers to gather around the altar, no more than seventy-five feet away. The furnishing of the sanctuary and nave raised no major

[18]Eduardo F. Catalano, "Two Warped Surfaces," *Student Publication of the School of Design: North Carolina State College, Raleigh*, V, no. 1 (1955), 2-17.

[19]AASF, L. (?) Oberti (director of the Istituto Sperimentale Modelli e Strutture) to McGucken, Bergamo, Italy, August 6, 1964; Nervi to Belluschi, Rome, August 9, 1964, copy. See also Alfred Frankenstein, "Cathedral Hill's Great New Church," *This World* (San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle), May 30, 1971, p. 29.

[20]AASF, Nervi to McGucken, Rome, April 14, 1965. See also AASF, Nervi to McGucken, Rome, March 15 and 26, and June 23, 1965; McGucken to Nervi, n.p., April 19, 1965, copy; McGucken to McSweeney, n.p., November 2, 1965. Interview with Paul A. Ryan, San Francisco, California, January 6, 1983.

problems. Belluschi's primary concern was to mold the enormous space above. For this he called upon two artists of genius with whom he had collaborated in earlier ventures.

The first was Gyorgy Kepes, professor of visual design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose task was to create ribbons of faceted glass that would not only illumine the building within but would also unify the four wings of the cupola above. Hungarian by birth and trained in Europe, he was an artist of astounding versatility, acclaimed equally for his painting and photography, and as a writer and teacher. His core interest was in light and color; and his orientation embraced the "theological" wing of Abstract Expressionism, a vanguard movement which renounced the use of illustration in portraying life's profundities and probed the absolute on the very frontiers of primal language where, it was claimed, truth or meaning is purer than words and more complex than any picture.[21] When he was first approached regarding the cathedral, Kepes was presenting an important exhibition at Harvard University, featuring his ideas on "light as a creative medium." One of man's natural assets, light — according to Kepes — can serve as the raw material for the modern artist as paint and stone have in the past, because it possesses the three qualities essential for great art. It is, first, a basic source of information for man, revealing and delineating his physical context. As an aesthetic tool too, light can evoke in man a "sensuous and emotional awareness of the world." It may likewise be used symbolically, appealing to man's intelligence and sense of beauty and guiding him to explore that ultimate world which is primordial and preconceptual. "The stained-glass windows of the great cathedrals," he wrote for the exhibition at Harvard, "transforming sunlight into a mysterious, infinite extension of richly colored space, brought earthly men in contact with heaven, and provided one of the most deeply moving aesthetic and religious experiences."[22] This idea would serve him well in San Francisco where his windows would not reproduce conventional images or symbols but create through light and color an intense sacred "field," or

[21]Kepes's well-known experiments with light and motion may, technically, place him within the "kinetic" school of modern art, but his paintings, which include the original cartoons for the windows in San Francisco, were guided by the principles more properly associated with Abstract Expressionism. See Jan van der Marck, in *Gyorgy Kepes — The MIT Years: 1945-1977* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978), pp. 22-24. For helpful descriptions of the "theological" wing of this school as represented in the work of Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko, see Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of Art* (New York, 1972), pp. 91-107; and Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York, 1981), pp. 314-323.

[22]Gyorgy Kepes, "Light as a Creative Medium," *Arts and Architecture*, LXXXIII (October, 1966), 28.

epiphany, where one would encounter the sublime presence of transcendent being.

From the outset Kepes responded to the new cathedral with enthusiasm. Though a Unitarian, he was sympathetic to Christian symbolism. "The central issue common to all my work," he explained to a priest, "is the search for the higher values, purer meanings of life scarcely present in our chaotic world."[23] Although the archbishop suggested standard decorations for the windows, Kepes inclined toward abstract forms that would enrich the towering interior with vivid color, and after much consultation the artist and client agreed with the definitive theme for the windows. Much of Kepes's earlier work, especially his photography and paintings, had been inspired by elemental nature, particularly the four basic ingredients of life — earth, air, fire, and water; and this perspective governed his design for the cathedral. "What I hope to achieve with the windows," he told McGucken, "is a clear total unity — an orchestration of the inner space with color." He conceived the interior as "an almost luminous tent," where the amber windows of the ceiling intersected in the form of a cross and represented the source of all life as a pure, intense light. Flowing from this apex down the sides of the honey-combed cupola were the four side panels, each 130 feet in length, each facing a major point on the compass, and each using vibrant colored glass to represent life's raw elements — fire in the red west window, air in the gold south window, water in the blue north window, and earth itself in the green east window.[24] The absence of representational Christian symbols did not obscure a profoundly religious statement. Kepes's windows touched upon a theme that was beyond history and sectarianism, viz., that God is the origin of life in all its parts, that He continues to be so, and that the liturgy enacted beneath these living colors is a grateful response for the gift of life.

Kepes's windows were only the first of two creative media to play with the cathedral's soaring enclosure. The second artist invited to help shape the interior was Richard Lippold of New York. A man of originality and independence, he was renowned for his study of space in a collection of abstract metal sculptures, most of them complex weblike systems of hair-thin filaments suspended in mid-air. Unlike many virtuoso sculptors, he was known to be co-operative with architects, conceiving his pieces

[23] AASF, Joseph Jaszovszky to McGucken, San Francisco, January 8, 1965.

[24] AASF, McGucken to Kepes, n.p., May 20 and August 16, 1965, copies; Kepes to McGucken, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 16, 1970. See also AASF, McGucken to Kepes, n.p., June 2, 1970; Judith Wechsler, in *Gyorgy Kepes — The MIT Years*, p. 19; and *St. Mary's Cathedral* (a limited-edition custombook, 1972), pp. 26-27.

discreetly so as not to dominate their buildings but to enhance them; and his figures are exhibited in several of the most celebrated modern buildings in the country. Under Belluschi, he had created a wire sculpture over the sanctuary in the Portsmouth Abbey Church. Lippold had entitled it "The Trinity," but in an article the Dominican writer Iltud Evans discerned its religious meaning more appropriately as a canopy manifesting the divine presence and called it "Shekinah." It was Belluschi's delight in this piece at Portsmouth that prompted him to recommend Lippold for San Francisco.[25] Archbishop McGucken was interested in a permanent cover over the altar in the cathedral and went to New York to see samples of this art, viewing works in the Pan American Building, the Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building, the Avery Fisher Hall at the Lincoln Center, and the Museum of Modern Art. What especially appealed to him was a carefully crafted explosion of thin gold wire entitled "The Sun," which was the first piece commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[26]

At the time of the visit, Lippold had just finished "Gemini II" for the Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts in Houston, and he accepted the archbishop's commission to provide what the artist would call a "Baldacchino" for the cathedral. He completed the design in 1967, a shimmering aura of aluminum prisms hung from the cupola by slender gold threads and radiating the rainbowed energy from Kepes's windows above. The 120-foot baldachin, its tiered network of spun metal vibrating with hypnotic rhythm, suggests, according to Lippold, "the dual movement of ascent and descent," that is, the gentle flight of prayer heavenward and the hovering presence of God in the sanctuary.[27]

The installation of Kepes's windows and Lippold's "Baldacchino" climaxed the foundational phase of cathedral-building in San Francisco. Additional pieces of art would come, such as bronze doors, mosaics, statuary, and an eighty-nine-rank organ; but by the time of their arrival the tone of this building had been established. In many ways, this project provided, on one level, a context wherein the Church of the Second Vatican Council encountered the secular spirit of the twentieth century. Each of the four artists — Belluschi, Nervi, Kepes, and Lippold — was an acknowl-

[25] Peter Sidler, O.S.B., to the writer, Portsmouth, Rhode Island, February 3, 1983. The most recent review of Lippold's work is Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, "Richard Lippold's Wire Universe of Gold and Silver," *Smithsonian*, XIII (February, 1983), 108-117. See also Calvin Tompkin's early profile of the artist in *The New Yorker*, XXXIX (March 30, 1963), 47ff.

[26] AASF, McGucken to McSweeney, n.p., September 23, 1966, copy.

[27] AASF, Lippold to McSweeney, Houston, Texas, June 20, 1966; and Lippold's statement, "Sculptural Baldacchino for St. Mary's Cathedral," 1967.

656

edged master of some aspect of the contemporary arts. None except Nervi, however, was known to be a practicing Catholic. At certain crossroads questions had arisen in Archbishop McGucken's mind. There lingered the suspicion that at work was a subtle neo-Puritanism, a new iconoclasm, which in the name of "simplicity" strove to erase the ornate beauty and dignity that characterized Catholic churches.[28] Though Belluschi was born a Catholic, some of his austere "tastes" regarding the interior decorations ran counter to the archbishop's expectations.[29] Troubled, too, by Kepes's abandonment of traditional imagery and symbolism, McGucken at first feared that the abstract forms in the windows would disappoint Catholic worshipers and leave them with a sense of "emptiness."[30] In reviewing Lippold's work in New York City, he had wondered if this sculptor's space-cages would fit into a Catholic sanctuary.[31]

Yet, the collaboration between churchman and artist was, by all measures, successful. The artists were supremely sensitive to spiritual values and the appropriate ways to express them today, and they were aware of the momentum of the Vatican Council. The council likewise contributed to the archbishop's tolerance of innovative ideas. In Belluschi's words, he was an "enlightened" client who was willing to break precedent and who, despite initial misgivings, trusted the judgment and integrity of his artists. This harmony of cause produced a sacred building in the idiom of the twentieth century. This is not to say that the cathedral in its finished state fulfilled the vision of these builders perfectly. There had been compromises. Belluschi was satisfied with the interior, the interplay of Nervi's ribbed vault with the windows and baldachin creating "a noble and transcendent experience" and exhibiting "Modern Art at its best at the service of the Church." But he confessed to reservations regarding the exterior. According to his original scheme, the cupola would have been taller, giving the cathedral a more graceful silhouette against the San Francisco skyline; and in place of the sturdy side walls that were eventually planted solidly below the dome, he would have enclosed the congregation with a delicate membrane of glass.[32] But these changes had been dictated by the engineers — not by the churchmen. Cathedral-building at the artistic level demonstrated the possibility of partnership between the Church of the Second Vatican Council and the secular modern world. The result was a stunning triumph; this extraordinary team had created, in Nervi's pert phrase, "the first Cathedral truly of our time."[33]

[28] AASF, McGucken to Belluschi, n.p., September 3, 1965, copy. See also AASF, Robert Dwyer, "Neo-Puritanism," an article critical of modern architecture.

[29] AASF, McGucken to Francis X. Ryan, C.S.P., n.p., May 27, 1964; McGucken to Aelred Graham, O.S.B., n.p., June 12, 1964, *confidential*, copies.

[30] AASF, McGucken to Kepes, n.p., May 20, 1965, copy. See also McGucken to Belluschi, n.p., September 3, 1965; McGucken to McSweeney [Rome], October 4, 1965, copies.

[31] AASF, McGucken to McSweeney, n.p., September 23, 1966, copy.

[32] AASF, Belluschi to Gerald Adams, Boston, June 3, 1970, copy.

The resolution of these artistic issues opened for Catholics of San Francisco a singular avenue, smooth and for the most part unobstructed, along which to move into a more effective relationship with the modern world. Cathedral-building, however, sparked another level of transition, this time along a hazardous mine field, which paralleled the agonies of change elsewhere in the American Church. This second encounter between church leadership and modern world was internal, originating and remaining virtually within the Catholic community. Like most civil wars, it raised more intense feelings, caused more casualties, and ended without resolution or reconciliation. The issue in this phase focused beyond whether the Church should nourish the secular spirit with truth and beauty framed in the language of the artist; the issue this time became, simply, whether the Church should embrace the world by first feeding its poor.

The decade during which Archbishop McGucken's cathedral was built was a turning point for American Catholics, and events in San Francisco corresponded to certain national and international trends. One development was the Church's almost penitential recommitment in the area of social justice. In 1965 the Second Vatican Council produced the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, its longest and perhaps most significant document, which acknowledged the right of everyone to a share of God's created goods. One of its central themes was summed up in this stern warning from the patristic literature: "Feed the man dying of hunger because if you have not fed him, you have killed him"[34] This challenge to share one's resources was repeated two years later in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The core of this papal treatise on the development of nations was echoed in this haunting question from the New Testament: "He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?"[35] Following upon the heels of this powerful appeal to conscience, the American bishops created a National Committee on World Justice and Peace to work in the field of international development, a major concern of

[33] AASF, Nervi to McGucken, Rome, April 14, 1965.

[34] *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (December 7, 1965), par. 69, in Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1966), p. 279.

[35] 1 John 3:17, found in *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967), par. 23, in Claudia Carlen, I.H.M. (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals* (Wilmington, North Carolina, 1981), V, 187.

the Pauline Papacy.[36] The momentum was accelerated even further in 1968 when the same hierarchy issued a pastoral letter, urging the faithful, in part, to pursue the goals of social justice. "Indignity, injustice, and inhumanity at any time toward any man," the bishops declared soberly,

> should arouse in us a deep and burning concern . . . . We were warned once: "It is not your encyclicals which we despise. What we despise is the neglect with which you yourselves treat them." This was said in an indictment of the People of God in another nation and another generation, but there is no point in pretending that it cannot be applied with equal force and fury in America in our decade.[37]

This remarkable decade was climaxed in 1971 with the third general assembly of the Synod of Bishops. This consultative body meeting in Rome produced a series of proposals entitled "Justice in the World," a document that developed the Church's social teaching even further. It not only called for aid to the developing world and for the elimination of poverty everywhere; it also expanded the concept of moral responsibility, indicting as evil all economic and political systems designed to perpetuate inequality among peoples. It likewise urged that if the Church's mission in the practice of justice was to be credible, it must begin with a stern and honest self-critique. " . . . Anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes," the document read. "Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church herself."[38]

The Church's official policy on the issue of social justice did not prescribe specific solutions, but its general direction was unmistakable, a loud summons for a new stewardship of the earth's resources by those who possess them for the sake of those who do not. When, however, a score of American priests and laity attempted to translate this policy into action, there followed an unprecedented chain of painful confrontations. Midway in the decade, writer John Cogley discerned this centrifugal force when he noted in the *New York Times* that

> some of the younger clergy feel that no vow of obedience can relieve the individual Christian of giving positive witness to his faith, in accordance with his own conscientious convictions . . . . The old days when the Roman Catholic clergy seemed to be a solid bloc, never disagreeing publicly, whatever their private disputes with authority is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.[39]

This countertrend surfaced in 1964 when William H. DuBay, a priest serving in a largely black parish in Los Angeles, openly petitioned the Holy See for the removal of Cardinal James McIntyre because of "inexcusable abuses" regarding the principle of racial equality. The priest's action was significant because it not only was the first of a sequence of serious priestly challenges to their superiors but it also introduced into the disputes a note of reaching for the jugular vein, of a strategy of no-retreat in the face of hopeless odds. Commenting publicly on a meeting with the cardinal, DuBay alleged that McIntyre believed that civil rights were not a matter of conscience but a "purely political" issue. The priest further asserted the cardinal's private opinion was that there were many valid reasons for segregation and that, in McIntyre's own words, "after all, white parents have a right to protect their daughters."[40]

A similar dispute followed three years later in Texas, lasting for two years and deploying not a single priest against his bishop but dozens of clergy and thousands of laity. This lengthy struggle erupted when San Antonio's Archbishop Robert E. Lucey punished two of his priests who had participated in a demonstration seeking to organize Mexican-American fruit pickers. The controversy mushroomed eventually into a succession of public rallies, petitions to the Holy See, the closing of the seminary, the intervention of the Apostolic Delegate, and the appointment of a fact-finding committee; and the trouble did not subside until Lucey's retirement in 1969.[41]

These and other dislocations across the country alarmed some scholars who had been studying this countertrend. Appearing at an assembly of delegates of the National Federation of Priests' Councils, a Jesuit sociologist from Harvard University, Joseph H. Fichter, bluntly described Catholic America as "disunited, polarized and pluralized to the point of open disagreement on important issues." What created this emergent collapse, he contended, was that the laity felt like "victims of a 'clerical mystique' "; and that the clergy had actually "been victims of the 'episcopal

[36] NC News Service (issued by the United States Catholic Conference), April 12, 1967. See also the *New York Times*, April 12, 1967, p. 42.

[37] *New York Times*, January 11, 1968, p. 24.

[38] "Justice in the World" (November 30, 1971), par. 40, cited in Joseph Gremillion (ed.), *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John* (Maryknoll, New York, 1976), p. 522.

[39] *New York Times*, January 30, 1966, IV, 10.

[40] *New York Times*, June 12, 1964, p. 19.

[41] *New York Times*, May 1, 1967, p. 28; December 15, 1968, p. 77; and June 5, 1969, pp. 1, 32. Lucey's conflict with members of his clergy and laity is detailed in Saul E. Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority: The Public Life of Archbishop Robert E. Lucey* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 122-162.

658

mystique,' treated like children, allowed to be seen but not heard except to murmur pious approval and give polite applause to whatever directives come down from above." The price of this oppression was the "spectacular and increasing" number of resignations from the active ministry.[42] This last subject was further explored at this time by a second Jesuit sociologist, Eugene J. Schallert of the University of San Francisco. His four-year study of the Catholic clergy revealed that the Second Vatican Council had produced a new type of American priest, open to the world and to change and profoundly aware of his own self-worth and freedom to take action. But the council had also awakened in many of these men a tendency to abandon the institution when church structure seemed obstructive and superiors unresponsive.[43]

The laity were likewise involved in the dual issue of social justice and shared responsibility, and they introduced another consideration — the fiscal accountability of church administrators. During the decade, pressure had been applied in favor of some public accounting of church funds. By 1970 only half of the dioceses had released financial summaries of some kind, and these varied greatly in quality. In that year too, the National Association of Laymen, a three-year-old organization claiming 12,000 members, after an attempt to survey diocesan finances, announced that fiscal reports were either impossible to come by or those published were inadequate, misleading, or self-serving. Though the question was not one of dishonest practices, the association charged that the Church's reluctance to give full financial information "verges on major scandal." This protest by the laity might have had an impact. Soon afterwards the Archdiocese of Chicago, the largest in the country, made its first financial disclosure, and the bishops' conference developed for dioceses standardized accounting procedures, which were published in 1971.[44] Unfortunately, these enlightened moves failed to extinguish the rising concern regarding the use of church funds. Just as the conference published its accounting procedures, there appeared in print James Gollin's *Worldly Goods*, an intelligent and balanced analysis of Catholic institutional wealth which not only dispelled the myth of a papist takeover of the American economy but found the Church as a financial entity to be grossly archaic in structure, "perhaps the

[42] *New York Times*, March 10, 1970, p. 20.

[43] *New York Times*, April 26, 1970, IV, 9. See also Eugene J. Schallert, S.J., "Some Factors Associated with Voluntary Withdrawal from the Catholic Priesthood," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, LXXI (November, 1970), 95-106; (December, 1970), 177-183; and (January, 1971), 254-267.

[44] *New York Times*, November 16, 1970, pp. 1, 41; and September 5, 1971, p. 34.

least effectual investment institution in this country, if not in the world," and in desperate need of reform. "In plain truth," Gollin, a sympathetic non-Catholic, concluded soberly, "the facts and figures mustered in these pages do not reveal the church as a professionally managed institution making most of its available resources."[45]

For many Americans these developments during the 1960's had combined into one overarching issue two concerns, one a concern to serve the poor and the other to participate in implementing this service. The connection between this issue and the cathedral in San Francisco arose during the early stages of cathedral-building when individuals privately questioned the archbishop's proposal to rebuild. Soon after the loss of the old cathedral, the archdiocese raised more than $15 million not only for a new cathedral but also for low-cost housing, job-training programs, additions to schools, and other projects; and of this sum $6 million, less than half, was reserved for the new cathedral. To a host of skeptical inquiries regarding this plan, Archbishop McGucken pointed out in individual letters, remarkable for their patience and personal touch, that there was no contradiction between building a cathedral and helping the poor. From a practical viewpoint, the two projects went hand in hand. The loss of the old cathedral had evoked an avalanche of sympathy from Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and this breadth of support had encouraged the archdiocese to set a target high enough to include both a new cathedral and programs that would assist the poor. Without interest in a new St. Mary's, contended the archbishop persistently, there would have been no opportunity to campaign extensively in behalf of social justice.[46]

This disagreement over priorities became public and frequently acerbic in 1967. This was the year in which Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* confirmed the papacy's commitment to social justice. It was also the year in which C. Kilmer Myers, the Episcopal Bishop of California who was newly installed in San Francisco, invited from his pulpit the Catholic community to share his mammoth Gothic cathedral, a gesture that awakened in some Catholic circles doubts regarding the need for a new cathedral.[47] In this year, too, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, Horace W. Donegan, halted further fund-raising to complete the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. This great structure, he announced, located

[45] James Gollin, *Worldly Goods: The Wealth and Power of the American Catholic Church, the Vatican, and the Men Who Control the Money* (New York, 1971), pp. 196-197, 253. See also the *New York Times*, September 12, 1971, V, 12.

[46] AASF, McGucken to Arthur Antinelli, n.p., February 26, 1963, copy.

[47] *New York Times*, February 5, 1967, p. 3.

659

on the edge of Harlem, would remain unfinished as a witness to the "despair and anguish" of the nearby slums. This provocative move, which received national attention, invited thoughts in some quarters in San Francisco that Archbishop McGucken should emulate this enlightened religious leader.[48]

In November of that year, when construction on the new St. Mary's in San Francisco had progressed beyond the lower levels to the main floor and had become an object of interest on Cathedral Hill, McGucken received a public protest signed by twenty-seven priests who repented their long silence in the matter. All forms of human inequity, they said, "must take precedence over parish and diocesan building programs, which too often produce bigger and more lavish churches and church buildings." Their statement was courteous and restrained; no accusations were aimed at authority. Unfortunately, they acknowledged, the connection between the cathedral and the needs of the poor did not occur until after the drive to rebuild had been launched. The cathedral campaign had already been underway when the calls to social awareness had been issued in the late sessions of the Second Vatican Council and in the pope's most recent encyclical. Despite this poor timing, these priests urged that the monies now being collected be routed entirely to the needs of the poor.[49]

While the clergy voiced their objections with respect, others injected a strident note into the controversy. A body of concerned laypersons known as the Ad Hoc Committee to Reinvestigate the Construction of the Cathedral joined the chorus of opposition, concentrating on the financial aspects. The committee challenged McGucken's original estimate that $6 million would be enough for the cathedral, and charged that the final cost would be as high as $12 million. Even if, they added, only $6 million were sufficient, this sum could have been better used as equity to provide over $50 million in public housing for more than two thousand low-income families.[50]

These objections on the part of some priests and the lay committee damaged Archbishop McGucken's credibility and bestirred in the press reckless charges of hypocrisy. An influential local columnist in the *San Francisco Examiner* was notably harsh in his remarks, calculating the costs

[48] *New York Times*, October 29, 1967, p. 1. AASF, Florence Aspel to McGucken, San Francisco, November 11, 1967.

[49] *The Monitor* (San Francisco), November 30, 1967, p. 7.

[50] AASF, two press releases [November 28, 1967], attached to Albert V. Krebs, Jr., to McGucken, San Francisco, December 3, 1967. The final over-all cost for the cathedral, according to Archbishop McGucken was slightly more than $9 million. Interview with Joseph T. McGucken, San Francisco, January 4, 1983.

at more than double the official estimate given by the archdiocese. "We," he wrote,

> who are tortured in every postal delivery with reminders of the world's suffering, and in every bank statement with the reminder of how little we can do about it, get a solid pain in the gut at the mere thought of lavishing $17 million on monumental theatricality.[51]

An investigative reporter with a reputation for muckraking had interviewed the archbishop at length, a discussion which the writer himself described as "most informative and rewarding," and he had been allowed to view some of the contracts related to the project. But even direct access to the chancery and the files failed to convert him. "The new cathedral," he reported later, "is more than a religious colossus. It is a multi-million-dollar pandora's box of episcopal fantasy, civic holiness and financial intrigue." Even more destructive was his further claim that in the three years since the twenty-seven priests had published their protest of the cathedral, twelve had left the archdiocese because of its "institutional insensitivity."[52] No doubt there are many factors governing the decision of a clergyman to resign from the ministry, but this comment, chilling but questionable, suggested that it was McGucken's unresponsiveness to their viewpoint that largely contributed to the departure of a dozen priests.

The intensity of the opposition did not fade during the score of months before the opening of the cathedral. The first Mass offered in the building took place quietly in October of 1970, a historic event that was orchestrated so as to hinder any public confrontations. No written invitations were sent out, and the Mass was celebrated as seven o'clock in the morning, an hour that drew only the most faithful supporters of the cathedral.[53] Even the solemn dedication six months later resonated with the same spiky tension. On the day before the ceremony the police sealed off the building in order to prevent a bomb scare.[54] These precautions, however, could not subvert a

[51] Dick Nolan in the *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, December 3, 1967, p. B-3. See also *The Monitor*, December 14, 1967, p. 3.

[52] The reporter was Albert V. Krebs, Jr., whose criticism appeared in "The Story of St. Mary's, the 'People's Cathedral,'" an article in galley form [*ca.* 1971] found in the AASF. A check of the twenty-seven signatories in *The Official Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1972* reveals that thirteen were no longer listed in the ministry. See also AASF, McGucken to Patrick J. Quinn, n.p., December 7, 1967, copy; and A. V. Krebs, Jr., "The Bishop's Bulwark," *San Francisco*, X (March, 1968), 31, 51.

[53] AASF, press release on St. Mary's Cathedral, October 14, 1970. Interview with Virginia B. Trodden, San Francisco, January 6, 1983.

[54] Interview with Virginia B. Trodden, San Francisco, January 6, 1983.

099

final embarrassment for the cathedral and its advocates. On the following day, while high ecclesiastical dignitaries dedicated the cathedral within, several groups picketed outside, including the Chicano Priests' Organization, whose handouts quoted the controversial Hispanic labor leader César Chavez:

> We don't ask for more Cathedrals, we don't ask for bigger Churches or fine gifts. We ask for the Church's presence among us. We ask for the Church to sacrifice with the people for social change, for justice, and for love of brother.[55]

Cathedral-building in San Francisco helps to illumine the complexity attending the profound transition that occurred in the 1960's. The new St. Mary's rose during a season of *aggiornamento* that brought not only revolution to the Church but also long moments of anguish and confusion. By the end of the decade Archbishop McGucken had completed in the near-masterpiece on Cathedral Hill the most important task of his episcopate.[56] Through him the Catholics of San Francisco acquired their symbol of the new age, but the consciences of many were troubled.

This mixed legacy has not been confined to the 1960's. Like the cathedral, the controversy surrounding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., was derived from that decade, and its dedication in November of 1982 revived that ghastly spell that continues to divide Americans, a reminder that this decade still defies consensus and final verdicts.[57] Who is to say who were the true patriots? Those who died overseas or those who protested at home. In reviewing cathedral-building in San Francisco, we likewise ask, who were the faithful children of the Second Vatican Council? The archbishop who, having managed his artists and withstood his adversaries so well, enshrined the council's spirit in a

[55]AASF, "Statement of concern submitted by the Chicano Priests Organization." At the time of the cathedral dedication, Chavez headed the United Farm Workers and was leading a heated campaign to organize Mexican fruit pickers in San Diego County, California. *New York Times,* April 25, 1971, p. 43.

[56]Archbishop McGucken retired in 1977 at the age of seventy-five and died on October 26, 1983.

[57]On the surface this controversy centered on the design of the memorial. The original design called for nothing more than a stark pair of black granite walls, each 200 feet long, on which are inscribed the names of the veterans either killed or missing in action. Several veteran organizations demanded that the living receive explicit acknowledgement by adding a flag pole and a large statue realistically depicting a group of fighting men. Commentators suggested that the deeper meaning to this conflict touched on the issue of whether the war had been one of glory or one of tragedy. *New York Times,* October 14, 1982, III, 17; and October 15, 1982, p. A-26. The controversy is summarized in Elizabeth Hess, "A Tale of Two Memorials," *Art in America,* LXXI (April, 1983), 120-127.

triumph of concrete, glass, and metal; or his critics who urged, sometimes with restraint and sometimes irresponsibly, that to care for the world's poor was the first concern of the conciliar Church. In dealing with this decade, the historian is yet deprived of the high ground of perspective and detachment. The clearest lesson for him is that in moments of transition few actors, no matter how well intentioned, perform unerringly, often caught up in forces beyond their control. Outside this, conclusions must be cautious statements, framed in the optative mood and limited to some regrets regarding those elements that flawed what should have been for San Francisco a unifying and liberating experience. If only, he must say, the archbishop had not been so independent and uncritical in his early decision to rebuild. If only his opposition had arisen earlier to present a constructive challenge to that decision. If only the cathedral had not been caught in the passage between a preconciliar compulsion to maintain the institution and a postconciliar conscience that focused on other needs. If these conditions had been met, cathedral-building would not have divided the Catholic community in San Francisco and would have avoided the creation among interested people of two parties which in the end alienated each other beyond reconciliation.

It was, in the final measure, the wrong time to build, but it was the only time to build the cathedral of the conciliar age. If the need for a new St. Mary's had arisen in the 1950's, San Francisco would have received, without murmur, an architectural cliché that would have accommodated a preconciliar church. Had the need occurred in the 1970's, the inflation of that decade would have barred any consideration of large-scale construction.[58] St. Mary's Cathedral is therefore a unique product of the 1960's; it could have been built *only* during that extraordinary period of change. As it stands today, it is marked forever by a peculiar hybridization of what one contemporary called "good art" and "bad politics."[59] Its sacred space crowned gloriously by Belluschi's and Nervi's cupola and enriched by Kepes's windows and Lippold's "Baldacchino," and its history of confrontation and division, of bomb scares and picket lines, constitute a checkered memorial to what one veteran observer has proclaimed "the most dramatic, critical ten years in American Catholic history."[60]

[58]Interview with the Reverend James L. O'Shaughnessy, San Francisco, January 6, 1983.

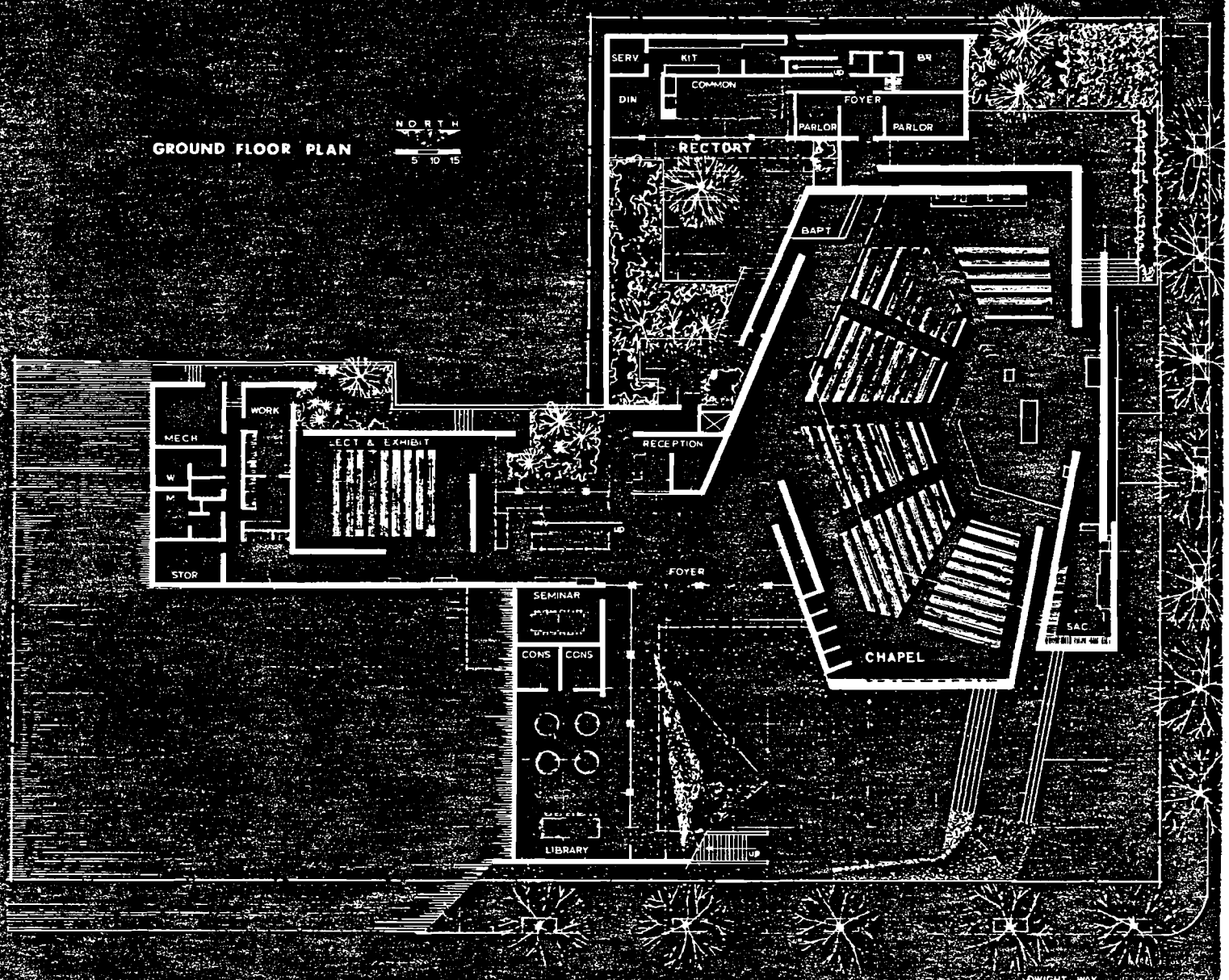
[59]James V. Schall, S.J., "On Building Cathedrals and Tearing Them Down," *Catholic World,* CCXII (March, 1971), 306.

[60]John Cogley, *Catholic America* (New York, 1973), p. 117.

661

APPENDIX I

Newman Center—Holy Spirit



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

NORTH
5 10 15

A Community
welcoming students and faculty within the University of California, persons from the surrounding neighborhoods of Berkeley, and those drawn to congenial and lively participation in the new liturgy.

A dynamic community which comes together in faith, worship and love, as a functioning part of today's academic and urban scene.

First Established
as a spiritual base at UC in 1897 and under continuous direction since by the Paulist Fathers, this Newman Center of the '70s is unique. It combines its mission to the students with service as a community parish, erasing the friction line between town and gown. Newman Centers are established on most U.S. college campuses. They are named for John Cardinal Newman who first linked Catholicism in this country to higher learning. On the Berkeley UC campus Newman has been traditionally a center for intellectual life, free and full discussion, counseling, companionship and community service as well as religious worship, drawing great numbers whether of Catholic faith or not. This commingling of interests has made the center a constructive force in the Berkeley community.

The Building
is a core of substance, of strength, of peace, standing quietly at the corner of College Avenue and Dwight Way.

It looks to be an impenetrable sanctuary. The massive gray concrete wall, the over-hanging slab of roof, the strong lateral lines of the design seem to define a shelter. It suggests the serenity man needs to know himself and to commune with God.

And yet, from the entrance plaza, the whole interior is open. Walls along the full length of inner corridors are of glass and they reveal a bright-lit tide of people coming and going in the daily business of spiritual, academic and community interests. It looks alive.

This is a modern building in materials used, concrete and glass. It has a clean elemental purposefulness. It is practical. Yet the form, the color, the visual impact combine to suggest the primitive. Its substance seems drawn up from the earth itself. In part, the bulk of the building suggests this; in part, the simplicity of its gray cement walls, whose only adornment is the texture imprinted by the planking of the forms against which it set.

At the curbside of a campus city, in the midst of urban life and participant in that life, this Catholic center is in harmony with its surroundings. With its heavy dimensions, its strong lines, its utilitarianism, it fits, where all about it are high-rise dormitories, university building, student centers, the flow of traffic.

And yet the building conveys a sense of the primeval, of spiritual realities that have lasted down the ages. It is an architectural statement of a Christianity that remembers it has roots in the altar of Abraham and in the catacombs of Rome but is compatible with an era when space is explored and human freedom expanding.

Architectual Design
is by the eminent San Franciscan, Mario Ciampi, an architect of international reputation, and his associate, Richard L. Jorasch. Construction was sponsored by the Diocese of Oakland and the university community.

The purposes of this center were defined through ten years of prior planning by Newman advisors—clergy, university faculty and laymen. The intent was to create in the university and in the urban environment a unified complex of church and student meeting place adequate to the dynamism of Catholic religious experience since Vatican II. Architects were admonished to seek a design that would inspire the faithful to "come joyfully" to worship.

There is harmony between the chapel-center and the new liturgy. The building reinforces the relevance of Christ's message to current times. It conveys many of the newly emphasized aspects of Christianity, its concern with man in a joyful and hopeful manner, its openness, its freedom of spirit, its deliberate participation in daily life.

The Chapel
is the principal element in the center. It occupies the largest area. Its back wall is a span of 120 feet and the congregation fans closely about the sanctuary, whose floor is a gentle mound, rather than a formal elevation. There is no barrier between altar and congregation and often the people, particularly the children, move forward to assemble around the altar itself.

The great planes of the bare cement walls, 30 feet high, and the flat white ceiling, create a sense of spaciousness. This vast gray shelter seems a private, protected place, but not hemmed in; the walls enclose but do not confine.

Rather, they open up to the sky, an impression due to the fact that the walls actually do not reach the roof but end short of it and are rimmed completely around at the top with glass in varied, randomly-shaped panes. Above this airy apperture lies the immense six-foot-thick roof which looks to be a massive slab of concrete but is honey-combed inside with steel framework, the whole 133′ by 93′ block so delicately contrived that it rests entirely upon four stainless steel pins imbedded in pillars. It is built to move on these pins in response to expansion or contraction from the weather or to ride out an earthquake tremor.

The contrast between the enormous plane of the roof with its apparent weight and the delicate glass upon which it seems to float magnifies the impression of unimpeded spaciousness within the chapel, the escape from tension and constraint. By the arrangement of space, the architect has established an atmosphere of peace, of protection and yet of freedom.

This is augmented by the extraordinary arrangement of the four walls. Each cement wall is free-standing. Each forms a corner, no two alike in the angles created, and the walls instead of joining, overlap so that the diagonally slanting edge of one wall stands free a few feet in front of the wall behind it and they are thus layed around the room like bent cards balanced on edge. The space between is glass. Architecturally ingenious, this arrangement reinforces the peacefulness and the sense of unobstructed outreach within the chapel.

The Works of Art
within the chapel are expressly created for it by the renowned artist Stephen de Staebler of Berkeley, one of the outstanding ceramicists of the West Coast.

The five pieces of fired clay are: the altar, the tabernacle, the lectern, the priest's chair and the large crucifix against the sanctuary wall.

These were conceived as an extension of the same concepts the architect developed in the building. Such harmony between a structure and its fitting is rare. Both artist and architect strove to project a sense of spirituality rooted deep in primitive, even elemental sources . . . a sense of simplicity and straightforwardness suitable for the contemporary young . . . and a sense of peace. Not a bland, passive peace, but peace which recognizes a potential for action, peace which can be comfortable with energy.

Against the varied grays of the chapel's cement shell and its quiet horizontal lines, the diagonal thrust of the wall edges inject this element of the dynamic. Similarly, symbolic of energy are the shapings of the clay pieces and their colors, light yellow tones and ruddy, fire tones bursting through the surface earth shades.

These are astonishing works, totally different from ordinary church furnishings. It is unusual to find even one work of clay of such size in a museum. Yet here are five pieces of great size designed for functional daily use. Work in clay on such a dimension is difficult for the clay contracts about five per cent in drying and another five per cent in heating, and this shrinkage must occur without rupture in the artist's design.

At one side, the altar of repose, the tabernacle, is like a miniature grotto, the clay formed as though to compress and hold secure the tabernacle. It draws the eye because here the color of the clay is light and most golden.

The priest's chair is a rounded, almost pillowy contour despite its sturdy construction, a ruddy desert red in color.

The lectern presents the congregation a bulky, earth-formed look. This conceals an efficient and comfortable work space for the speaker.

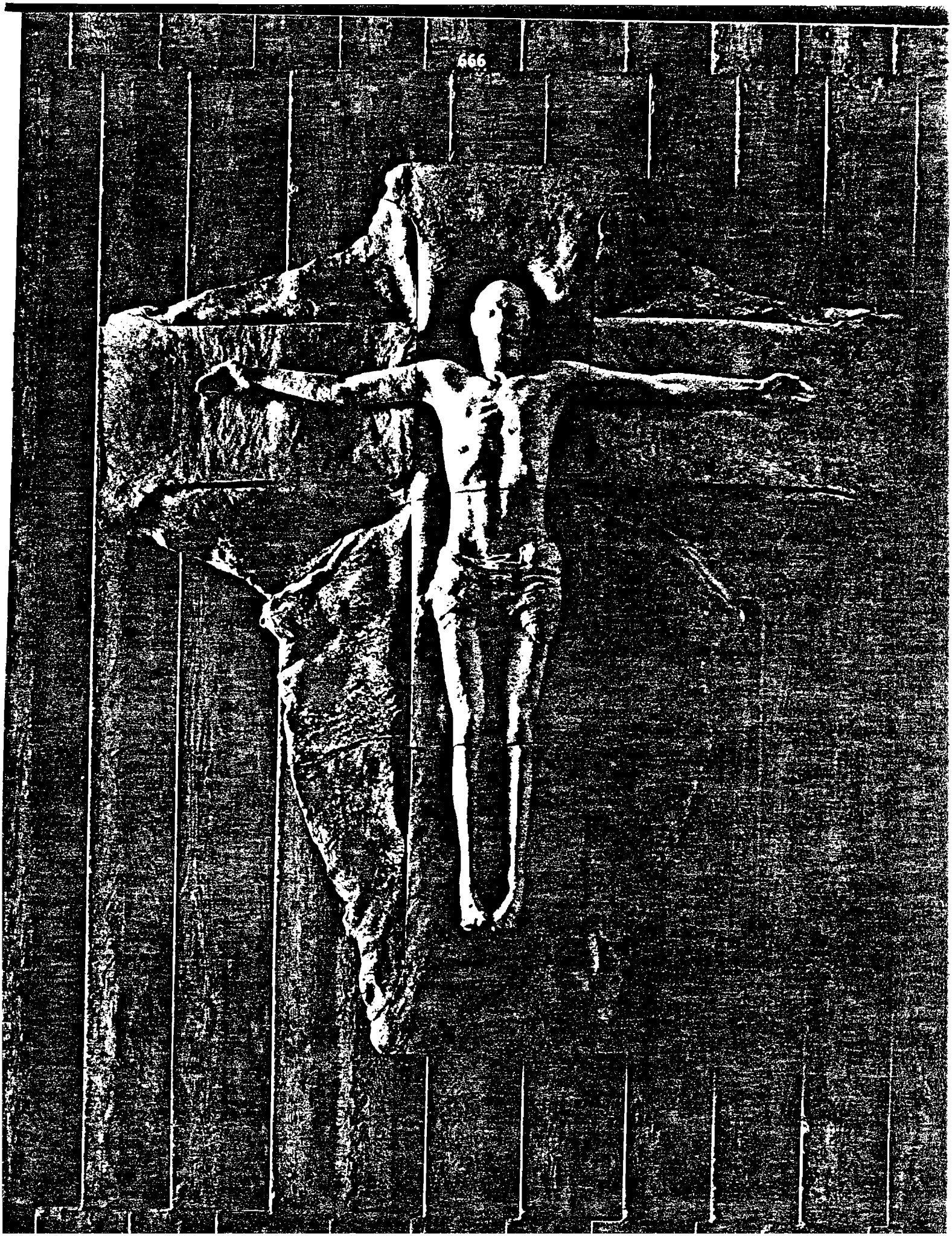
The Crucifix
This Christ crucified, a sculptured life-scale figure on a ceramic cross against the stark gray sanctuary wall, is what first catches attention when one enters the chapel. It makes a strong statement of the church's new turn toward hopefulness and joy.

This is no conventional Christ such as artists have depicted through the centuries, wracked by pain, tormented by a crown of thorns, succumbing to death. This is a Christ at the point of breaking through the agony toward resurrection.

The corpus is still pinioned to the Cross, but the body is luminously alive, the figure alerted, the attentive head uplifted, the eyes open and transfixed upon the distance. A dark cloud surrounds the Cross, a gray massed form with which the artist has framed the crucifix, establishing its place against the wall. The rising Christ seems to be emerging from this surrounding shadow, or drawing it with Him as though He would draw humanity upward.

This is a Man Who has mastered death and is harkening to Godliness. It is a Christ lifting from the Cross.

The altar and its companion pieces seem to emerge from the floor itself as though from the very earth. The huge altar, which looks to be of chiseled stone, is the sturdiest and largest of the five pieces. By its size it dominates the sanctuary, its base pierced by two openings which permit one to see the movement of the priest behind and which reinforce the impression of primitive rock by their shaping.



APPENDIX J

Dedication of West Window at Temple Emanu-El

June 16, 1972

There is a variety of ways to glorify God. Among them, we may do so by worshipping Him, articulating a sense of gratitude and awe for the wonders of his creativity. We can do so by emulating him, exercising the most exalted and exalting talents with which he has endowed us. We can do so by living the Way, acting out His commandments, to care for our fellow men, to uplift and to love them. And we can do so by acknowledging our debt to those who preceded us, to keep alive the memory of the past, whose products we are and whose tasks we pledge to perpetuate; thus demonstrating the continuity of life imparted by the eternal God.

On this eve of our Sabbath, we have that rare and exquisite opportunity of offering our fealty to God in what we call these days a multi-media manner. The majestic words and sounds of the Psalmist which are the model of our Sabbath prayers are matched by the majesty of the artistic creation which we are about to reveal to you. They speak for themselves. The words of the prayers are meant to touch and to illumine the deepest recesses of our hearts. The very physical surroundings that envelop us are to set a mood of beauty and serenity, in which our highest sentiments may be unleashed. In these times, when beauty and serenity must often give way to sterile utility, we have a very special obligation to provide an atmosphere where man can take refuge from the mundane pressures and demands of the daily struggle. These are the obvious media of the fabric of our religious expression.

But glistening among the rays of the sun which will fill this temple, filtered through the great window, there shines the spirit of Walter and Elsie Haas who dedicate their lives to the enrichment of this community. As varied as the colors which will fill this temple, so is their commitment to the living of the Way according to God's highest expectations of his most favored children. The beauty of their lives is evident to all of us. The beauty of what we are about to see is but a reflection of their souls. We have become accustomed to the highest benefactions flowing from them.

There is a special significance also in the location of this monument, dedicated as it is to the loving memory of Fannie and Abraham Haas and Sigmund and Rosalie Stern and reposing in this glorious Temple, it acknowledges their profound attachment to the faith of our fathers which has been a light unto our people and all mankind. That light will now symbolically acquire an ever changing character, much like the many splendored gift of our ancient faith. Yet, even as the hues cast by this window will change from moment to moment and hour to hour, their source remains the unchanging brilliance of the sun.

God, too, is the inexhaustible and immutable source. We, his children, today on this splendid occasion, manifest the power of his multifarious inspiration. Mark Adams wrote these words, not so much to explain--each one of us will be able to read our own interpretation into it--but to put into words the design he created:

About the Fire Window...

It was designed to be a part of the architecture of the Temple, to enrich the strong pattern of the supporting arches and yet keep the interior of the sanctuary light and open, and responsive to the changing sky and seasons.

The subject of the window is fire, an element of great symbolism in the Bible. Often it was a means of communication between God and man. It was also a metaphor of the awesome radiance of God. The window is not predominantly red as the subject might suggest, but rather it is the iridescent colors of a spiritual fire "that burns without consuming".

Technically, the window was executed in the purest form of stained glass. This means that there is no etching or painting on the glass involved - only hand-blown colored glass held together by lead came. In order to achieve the shimmer and subtlety of color that was desired, 8000 pieces of glass in a range of 200 colors were used. Each panel was designed to be complete in itself but also to function as part of the whole design.

I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Haas for their vision and generosity which made this work possible, and Rabbi Asher and the many officers and members of Congregation Emanu-El whose enthusiastic support helped so much in the realization of the window.

And now, my friends, generation follows generation in unforgettable succession. We are happy to see three such generations of the Haas family join together to honor their ancestors. No more words are needed to tell their impact upon this congregation and this city. We ask members of the newest generation of this family to let the light come in and for the light from here to radiate abroad. This is what this temple means. It is open to the world to receive light from it and it seeks to casts its light upon the world.

DEDICATION OF EAST WINDOW
TEMPLE EMANU-EL SAN FRANCISCO
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1973

An ancient rabbinic adage, established by our great teacher Hillel, states: מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין. In matters of the performance of sacred obligations, we should devote ourselves to them in ascending rather than descending order. Each task, in other words, which we perform in behalf of the well-being of our fellow-man should exceed what we have done previously, rather than make us rest on the laurels of one accomplishment and add only a few pro-forma tidbits in grudging succession.

This injunction, as we all know, is meticulously observed by Mrs. Russell, whose gift to our Temple we acknowledge today. No worthy cause in this community and in our country, no cause in behalf of our people here and elsewhere, lacks Madeleine's interest and support, each in ascending order. Her contribution to this magnificent edifice represents another ascent in the exercise of her sacred obligations. I have only one concern: after you will have seen the East window, as I have already seen it, you may well wonder how will Madeleine top this? It completes, together with the West window, for which we are indebted to Walter and Elise Haas, a beautification of, what was even before now, one of the great synagogues anywhere in the world.

There are least two reasons why we have chosen this particular Sabbath for this dedication. Speaking of an ascending order of sanctity - and in Jewish terms that word is synonymous with spiritual joy rather than an otherworldly somberness - this occasion is a fitting prelude for what promises to be an even more uplifting joy, when the Russell family will celebrate the marriage of Madeleine's daughter, Alice, a few days from now, thus continuing to abide by Hillel's principle. May the beauty of this window, the inspiration it will provide this Congregation for generations to come, may it symbolize the beauty and inspiration of the union which these two young lovers will fashion.

A second reason for selecting this day is that the Jewish calendar has a special name for it. It is שבת נחמו, the Sabbath of Comfort. It is the Sabbath following the observance of Tisha B'av, during which we reflect upon all the tragic episodes of our long history, from the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem 2,500 years ago through the holocaust of our own time. What better way to compensate for the ugliness to which our people have been subjected than to recreate out of it something of exquisite splendor. It is testimony of our own optimism, and this window, by its very transparency, will radiate the vitality of our own community to an outside world beset by burdens tending to crush its spirit. Consolation follows despair as the Sabbath of Comfort follows the shattering recollection of the recurring agonies of our people.

Perhaps a few words are now in order to articulate one of the messages that this East window may well convey to us. They are hardly an adequate description of Mark Adam's great artistry or of George McKeever's splendid handiwork. Some concepts defy being imprisoned by our limited vocabulary

and other modes of expression do more effectively transmit them.

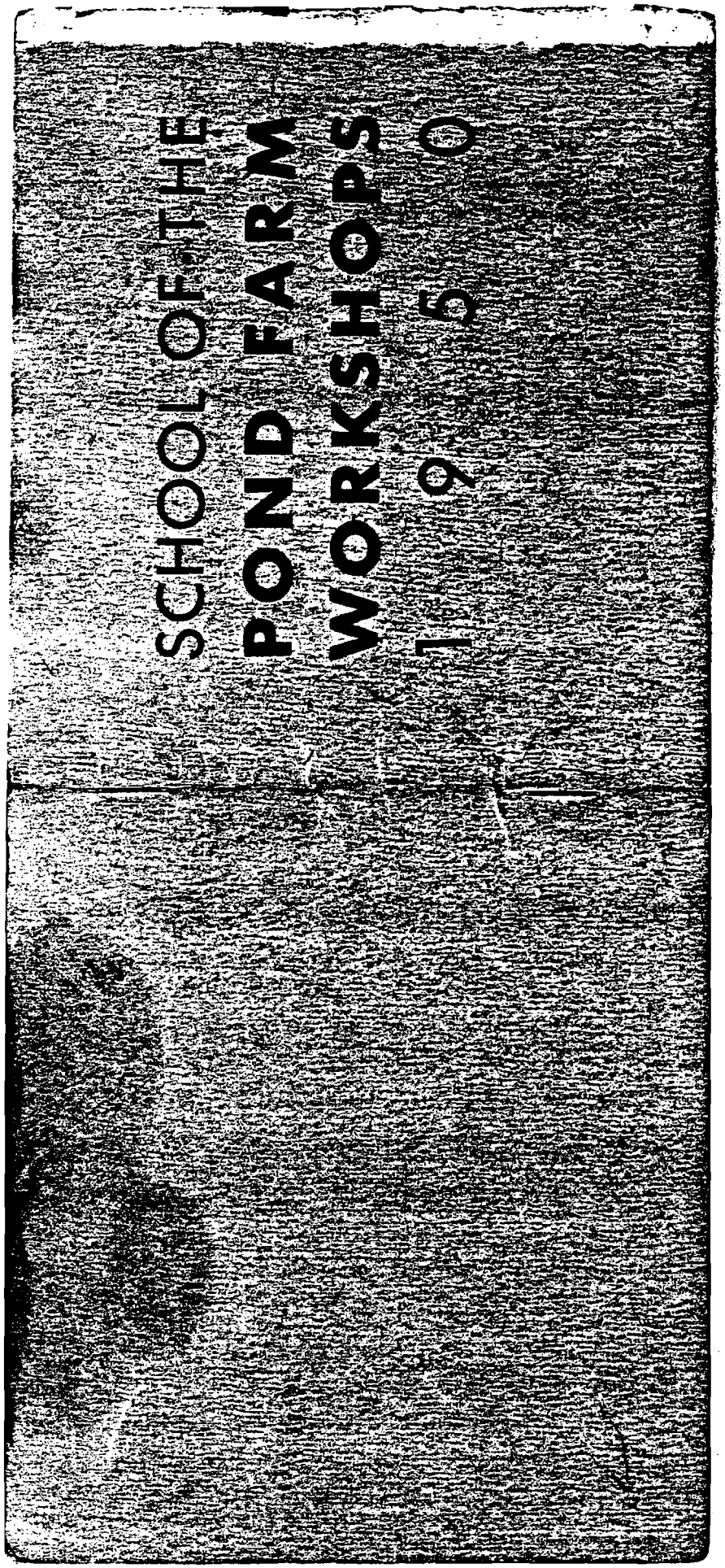
Its subject is water, an indispensable element of nature, both of life sustaining nourishment, but also of fearful destructiveness. We see the gentle rain descending from the heavens and the turbulent waves rising from the depths of the ocean. And between them, the brilliant reassurance of the rainbow, reflected in the water. A sign between God and man and all other creatures on earth of the everlasting covenant established between them. Gentleness and turbulence, like sorrow and comfort, are woven into the fabric of every life. It is the recognition of our covenant with Him which allows us to enjoy to the fullest the beneficence God showers upon His creatures, and endure the awesome burdens which are laid upon us. If we keep the focus of our attention on the brilliant colors of the rainbow, we, at the same time, focus on the source from which all our experiences flow: God's covenant with us.

Now that both of these windows have become a part of our sanctuary, let the themes they portray become part of the essential function of this institution. Let the fire in the West ignite and warm our commitment to our faith, our pledge to create a world of peace and universal brotherhood. And let the water of the East irrigate every seed we plant to that end. And may we live to see the day when these aspirations will come to full fruition.

To symbolize one such enlargement of the heart and spirit of a woman who gives her life to the betterment of the society in which we live, we ask her three children, Alice, Chris and Charles, to share this notable moment with their mother and this Congregation, as they unveil this new creation wrought by man for the glory of God.

Rabbi Joseph Asher

APPENDIX K



SCHOOL OF THE POND FARM WORKSHOPS

Pond Farm is a place where artist-craftsmen live. Working individually but with the same basic concepts as to professional and artistic standards, they have formed a group—the Pond Farm Workshops. The school of the Pond Farm Workshops offers students the opportunity to serve an apprenticeship under the artists of this group. It is their belief that the essential demands of life, work, and art can better be taught in contact with a productive workshop than academically by theory or class room training. The interchange of ideas and experience of students with teachers, and of one workshop with the others, leads to more integrated and basic work in the special fields, while as a group of workshops they can solve together problems related to architecture, industrial design and production.

Each student will work in one shop under the guidance of a teacher who is a productive artist. All students are required to work a day a week in the form and color workshop which correlates the training in all fields. For a certificate of completion a two year course is required.

The summer course of the School of the Pond Farm Workshops is offered to both beginners and advanced students, to professional artists, teachers or craftsmen. It will give beginning students a chance to determine whether or not they want to work on a professional basis in their chosen fields.

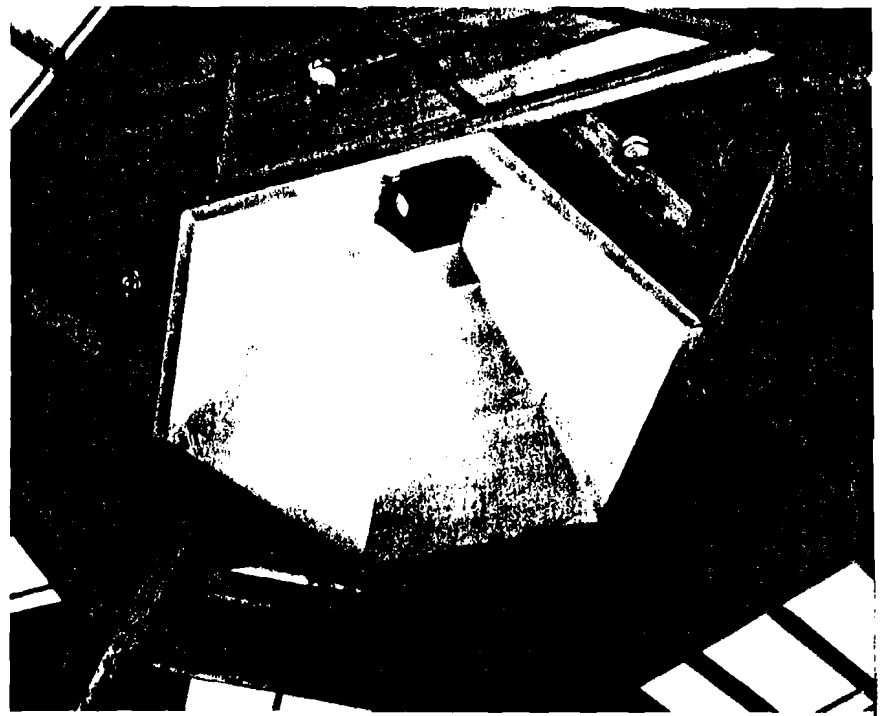
Visiting artists will be invited to week-end discussions on their own and student work.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN WORKSHOP

Planned for the architectural student or builder—for those who would design and build houses professionally, and for those who would plan, develop, and build a house for themselves. Particular emphasis will be placed on the special problems involved in the design and development of low-cost housing. The individual planning his own home will be assisted in perfecting each detail of its design and construction. The workshop, in this case, will serve in an advisory capacity, providing problems and projects for the regular students.

The two year course will include a comprehensive study in theory and practice, of site planning and landscaping, space analysis, structural design, interior and furniture design. materials and techniques, lighting, heating, plumbing, and maintenance problems. Actual building experience and field trips will develop critical capacity, and direct contact with architects and contractors will provide a realistic check on work in progress. Model making and three dimensional projection will supersede paper work in the development of problems.

GORDON HERR, studied California College of Arts and Crafts, California School of Fine Arts; practical training in Architectural and Building practice; basic training in crafts relating to interior design, here and abroad; assistant architect Resettlement Administration, Washington D. C.; Design Analyst for Sears, Roebuck & Company; freelance practice and teaching.



DRAWING, PAINTING AND MODELING

Practice in drawing, using pencil, charcoal and ink as a prelude to the medium of graphic activity—point, line, plane, shape and texture. Painting treated as an introducton to the basic consideration of a pictorial vocabulary.

Knowledge of the materials.

The interpretation of the "model"; the immediate impression of nature; the representation.

Development of the sense of volume, direction, tension and rhythm and their purposeful application.

Modeling—stressing the creative potentialities of three dimensional expression—line, volume and movement.

FRANS WILDENHAIN, studied under Klee and Kandinsky; teacher at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Halle/Saale and at the Art Institute in Amsterdam.

WEAVING

The study of textiles in the weaving workshop aims to develop contemporary-craftsmen designers. The versatility of the handloom allows for a development in fabric construction which can contribute a wider variety of design to industrial production. Hand-weaving re-establishing the link between artistic study and progressive technical development—or as a means of expression for individual creative ability.

The workshop has looms with 4-8 harnesses. The professional training stretches over a period of two academic years of theory and practice.

FIRST YEAR: Color—Texture (Related to weaving) Loom construction. Drafting of weave construction—raw materials—basic weaves—derivative weaves—calculation—analysis of design.

SECOND YEAR: Color—texture (Related to weaving). Dobby—Jaquard-power loom—coated weaves—Dubble weaves—pique fabrics—pile fabrics—Lenoweave—tapestry—rugs—analysis of design.

The summer course will deal with specific topics for beginners and advanced weavers. A minimum of six weeks is desirable.

A nominal charge will be made for materials used.

TRUDE GUERMONPREZ studied textile design and weaving at School of Arts, Cologne; School of Fine and Applied Arts, Halle/Saale. Traveling fellowship for study of textiles in Sweden and Finland. In the Netherlands textile designer for production workshops; board member of the Federation of Arts and Crafts. Faculty member of Black Mountain College 1947-1949.

METAL WORK

Professional methods relating to the craft of metal work.

Introduction to the different materials: Copper, brass, silver, gold. Study of tools and chemicals necessary to this craft. Students will learn to make working drawings; study of simple forms in copper, brass, silver, iron and development of these; study of basic techniques of chasing, mounting, soldering; decorative work with chasing, incrusting, chemical coloring; and application of metal with other materials as wood, stone, plastics and others. More advanced work will permit student to carry out his own designs. Students will learn history of art and handicraft, especially related to metalwork. Production of small tools and emphasis on what can be done with a minimum of equipment. Tools required: Jeweler saw frame; 1 gross jeweler saw blades No. 0/1; 1 triangle scraper; 1 square file; 1 half round file; 1 divider; 1 planishing hammer; 1 flat plier; 1 round plier; 1 pair of tweezers. The cost of these tools will be approximately $17.80. Laboratory fees $10.00 per term. Materials will be charged for on weight basis.

For the summer school students will be accepted for a period of not less than four weeks. The same tools will be required as for other terms. Laboratory fees will be $10.00 for the full summer course and $5.00 for any shorter period.

VIKTOR RIES trained at School for Art and Handicraft and Academy of Fine Art at Berlin. Practical training at Art Studio Friedlander and I. H. Wilm, Berlin, and Kay, Hamburg. Taught metalwork and design at Bezalel Art School and worked as Designer for Wize Organization, Jerusalem. Courses in metalwork for high school teachers in Jerusalem.

POTTERY

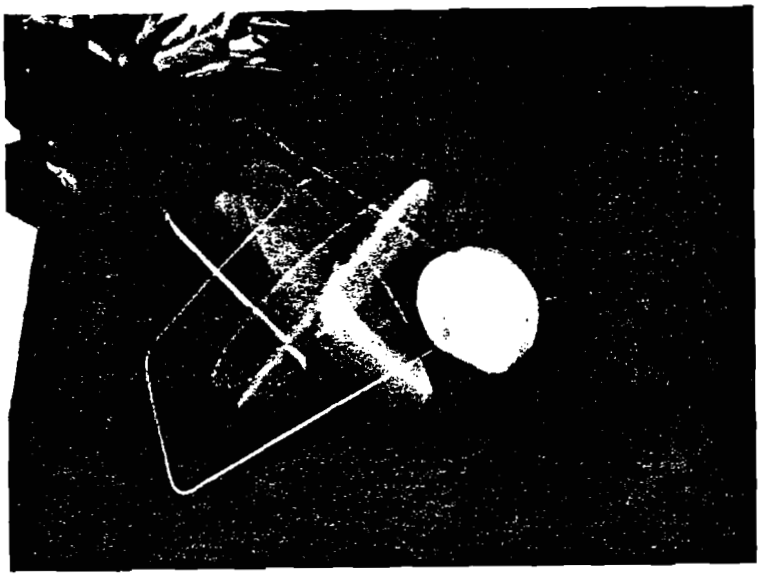
Introduction in ceramics; study of clays as the basic material for different aims in pottery; choice of the suitable materials, their limitations, characteristics and possibilities in relation to the object. Field trips.

Methods of working: with coils, slabs and patches for round, free form, square, and on the potter's wheel. Experiment with form, surface treatment, color, density, warpage, plasticity. Developing the student's own expressive shape out of basic ones. Study of handles, lids, spouts, in relation to use and expression. Decorating with and without glaze, sraffito, slips, relief. Painting on and under glaze. Introduction into glaze figuring, glazing, loading and firing of kilns. For advanced students: Developing forms for mass production out of hand-made forms. Study of those methods. their relations and differences. Plaster work for jiggering and casting. Pottery as a creative craft and as a means of expression for the student's characteristic sense of color, form and method of working.

For the summer term students who want to learn to throw enrollment must be for at least six weeks, beginning any time during the term of ten weeks. For other methods the minimum is a two weeks course. Price of the throwing course is $120; for the general course $20 a week. There will be a minimum shop charge of $5.00 for each student plus firing expenses according to size and materials.

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN studied Bauhaus, Weimer. Teacher of ceramics at School of Fine and Applied Arts in Halle/Saale. Designer for porcelain at State Porcelain Manufacture in Berlin and at Regout Co., in Maasstricht. Teacher of ceramics at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland.

CLAIRE FALKENSTEIN will be on leave for the summer 1950. Miss Falkenstein is teacher of sculpture and construction, California School of Fine Arts; taught drawing at Mills College; drawing and painting, University of California extension division; painting, San Francisco Museum of Art. Represented in National and International Exhibitions, winner of International prize in wall covering, American Institute of Decorators. On Editorial Board and Art Critic for Northern California for Arts and Architecture.



GENERAL INFORMATION

LOCATION AND WORKING FACILITIES: Hexagon House is the Central Building, Dining Hall, Student Quarters and Exhibition Room of the Pond Farm Workshops. It is situated two miles from Guerneville in the Russian River Recreation Area, about seventy-five miles north of San Francisco. Hexagon House and the cabins for students are in a location of outstanding beauty adjoining the Armstrong Redwoods State Park. Classes in painting and drawing, and the Form and Color Workshop will be held at Hexagon House or outdoors. Pottery, Weaving, Metal and Architectural Design Workshops are at a distance from Hexagon House of one and three quarters miles through Armstrong Woods.

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS: Hexagon House can accommodate ten students and facilities for thirty or more are available in the cabins. The cabins are simply built, basic shelters of rustic construction, and are unheated. Students should bring their own bedding and linen.

ADMISSION: Open to anyone over sixteen seriously interested. Students should enroll in a field of major interest for concentrated activities in that field. Classes are from nine to four in the chosen shop four days a week. The fifth day is for work in the Form and Color Workshop.

GENERAL INFORMATION (*cont'd*)

TUITION AND DATES: There will be a ten week summer session from June 26th to September 1st. Preference will be given applications for longer work periods. All tuitions are payable in advance. The School reserves the right to change instructor or to omit a class on the schedule after notification. Rates are for room, board and tuition combined.

HEXAGON HOUSE $52.00 weekly CABINS $45.00 weekly.
DAY STUDENTS (Tuition only) $25.00 for one week—Two weeks or more—$20.00 weekly.

SCHOLARSHIPS: A work scholarship will be offered to an advanced student of outstanding ability in pottery, metal work, weaving and painting. Opportunity will be provided to work for room and board should this be required. Students applying for scholarships should send examples of work and two recommendations from qualified teachers or artists familiar with their work.

RECREATION: Unlimited opportunity for outdoor living, hiking, swimming, horseback riding. An outdoor theatre, Sunday concerts and picnic grounds are attractions of the State Park.

ACCREDITING: Students and teachers may receive university credit for work done by individual arrangement with the San Francisco State Teachers College, Oakland College of Arts and Crafts.

REGISTRATION: There will be a five dollar registration fee. Applications should be mailed to Registrar, Hexagon House, Pond Farm, Guerneville, California. Tuition is payable in advance the day of the student's arrival.

SCHOOL OF THE POND FARM WORKSHOPS

Preference will be given to applicants, in order received, requesting four to ten weeks work.

Name _____ Age ____

Address _____

Field of Major Interest _____

Previous Experience and Education _____

_____

_____

Enroll me for _____ weeks in the

_____ workshop

From _____ To _____

Registration fee of $5.00 should be mailed with application to Registrar, Hexagon House, Guerneville, California.

Signature _____

Over

Use this space if further information is requested

INDEX -- Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968

Adams, Mark, 1, 194, 296, 324, 335, 340, Int. 464-498, 520, 567
Adderton, Aileen, 365
Allen, Harry and Winifred, 293, 296-297, 300
Allen, John 537-538
American Institute of Architects, Committee for arts & architecture, 231
architecture,
  Bay Area, 145-147, 227-231, 288-292, 364
  church,
    Bay Area, 144-174, 229 passim, 250-253, 292-311, 318-319
    Byzantine, 253-255, 277, 366, 369, 380, 383
    Gothic revival, 325-329
    New England, 284-302
  also see religious institutions index
Armer, Ruth, 9
Arnautoff, Victor, 186-187
art, "Ecumenical Art Council," 243-244
art
  caricature, cartoon, 139-143
  ceramic, 120-123, 127-128, 239-241, 251 passim
  fabric,
    hangings, 97, 108-110
    vestments, 41-43
  fresco and mural, 135-138, 186-190, 418-419, 422-423, 428-430, 438, 451-452, 457-461
  glass, sculpture, 397-401
  lettering, calligraphy, 525-526, 565-566
  lights, lighting, 302, 340-342, 381, 387-388
  lost wax casting, 539-540
  metal sculpture, silversmithing, 501 passim
art,
  mosaic, 84-89, 99-100, 124, 254-255 329-332, 348, 446-447, 450, 452, 455, 458, 497
  sculpture, 21-28, 35, 401-404, 420-421
  stained glass, 155, 251, 254-255, 295-296, 298-299, 320-361
    faceted glass, 320, 332-333, 340-342, 350-351, 484-487, 490-491
    lucent mosaic, 329-332, 351
    glass making, 320-321, 352-353
    designing, 322-329, 334-337, 343-352, 357-358
  tapestry and weaving, 475-477, 479-484, 488-489
  tile, Cosmati, 366, 374-375, 381
  wood, 126, 155
art, religious, European, 4-5, 70-74
Asher, Rabbi Joseph, 491

Bailey, Forrest, 438
Baldwin, Madeleine, 63
Bassett, Chuck, 497
Begin, Bp. Floyd, 109-110, 233, 235
Belluschi, Pietro, 14, 162, 164-167, 249, 319
Benigsen, George, 204
Benvenuto, Elio, 9-10, 12, 208, Int. 21-38, 232, 238
Berger, Minna, 69, 182, 195, 199
Berger, Sam, 155
Bethune, Ada, 67, 198-199
Bezalel School, Jerusalem, 507, 549
Bishoff, James, 315, 317
Blake, Barney, 475
Blanchard, Norman K., 204
Blank, Fr. Benedict Augustin, O.P., 326
Bloch, Ernest, 78, 381, 391-399, 408-413, 434, 451
Bloch, Ivan, 414, 416-417

Cravath, Ruth, 1, 8-10, 26, 29-30, 44, 64, 86, 121, 124, 126, 152-153, 203-204, 209, 217, 232, 238
Cummings, Bill (Harold W.), 298, Int. 326-361
Cummings, John, 334
Cummings, Vivian, Int. 326-361
Cummings, Pat, (Harold W.), 296, 298-299, 320 passim, 484-485
Cummings Studios [stained glass], 296, 298, 320 passim

Dachauer, Paul, 36, 213, 218
Dailey, Gardner, 363
Dali, Salvador, 79
Dally, Darrell, 44, 202, 213
Darcy, Sr. Jean, O.P., 12
Dean, Harriet, 7-8, 176, 181, 190-198, 467
de Patta, Margaret, 511, 546
De Quesada, Jorge, 488
De Rosen, John, 137
DeStaebler, Stephen 219, 239-241, Int. 250-287, 478-479
de Young Museum,
  "Exhibition of Religious Art by California Artists," Oct. 1952, See Catholic Art Forum, exhibition
DeWit, Fr. Gregory, 190-193
Diebels, Fr. Joe, 64
Diebels, Paul, 61-62
Dimitroff, Lucienne Bloch, 374-375, 381, Int. 391-463
Dimitroff, Stephen Pope, 381, Int. 391-463
Dobbs, Bill, 372
Dollar, Robert [window], 346
Downie, Harry, 8, 193-194, 467-468
DuCasse, Micaela Martinez, 10, 12, Int. 175-226, 492
DuCasse, Ralph, 195
Dwyer, Abp. Robert, 50

ecumenism, 9
  "Center of Understanding," San Francisco, 243-244
École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 144-146
Ellis, Havelock, 410-411
Erckenbrack, Mary, 9, 77, Int. 119-128, 232, 238
Esherick, Joseph, 364

Fabilli, Mary, 11
Falkenstein, Claire, 441, 537, 541
Farnham, Rev. E.C., 205
Ferguson, Marilyn, 91
Fine, Rabbi Alvin I., 205
Finn, Fr. William, C.S.P., 195-196
Finney, Clem, 263
Fitzroy, Dariel, 372
Fletcher, Marianna, 539
Fortune, Charlton ("Effie"), 6-7, 40-41, 47, 49-59, 68, 71, 95, 116, 196-198, 200, 219, 470
Frankenstein, Alfred, 3-4, 102, 114, 207, 482
free speech movement, and religion, 310-311
Fromer, Seymour, 104-105
Fuller, Buckminster, 92
furniture design, 517-519

Gaidano, Mario, 36
Garwood, William, 349
Geary, Ida, 457
Genung, Lyn, 155
Gibney, Luke, 9
Gill, Eric, 198
Gillespie, David M., 137
Girard, André, 17-20, 245, 349, 470, 495
Golden, Joe and Janet, 63, 66, 116
Golden Gate International Exposition, 1939, Treasure Island, 330
  "Art in Action," 120, 140
  liturgical arts at, 55
Goldman, Rhoda Stern, 407
Goodman, Michael, 207
Gottlieb, Lois Davidson, 299, 304
Graham, Cecilia, 120
Graves, Norbert, 323
Gregg, Harold, 534, 544
Guermonprez, Trude, 442, 535, 537-538, 541

Gulbenkian Foundation, 122
Gump's, San Francisco, windows, 474, 484

Haas, Elise Stern, 404, 490-492
Haas, Peter, 407
Haggerty, James, 192
Halbrook, Bob, 348
Hamlin, Edith, 217
Hanchen and Goddard, lighting, 381
Hanna Center for Boys, Sonoma, Chapel, 8-9, 12, 121, 232, 238, 246
Hannash, Monica, 13
Harris, Harwell Hamilton, 362-363
Hartnet, William, 513, 520
Hass, June Foster, 10, 209, 220, 234
Hastings, Viscount Jack, 422
Hays, Elah Hale, 13, 46, 105-106, 203, 206
Heasley, Clyde, 60
Hedley, George, 306-307, 311
Heil, Walter, 3-4
Henderson, Mel, 268-269
Hennessy, A.E., 119
Herr, Jane Brandenstein, 437-443, 533-539, 543
Herr, Gordon, 437-443, 533-539, 543
Hertzka and Knowles Associates, Architects, 146-147
Hillmer, Jack, 289, 313
Hobart, Lewis, 144-149, 161, 386
Hofinger, Fr. Johannes, S.J., 11
Hofmann, Hans, 464, 468-469, 476, 554
Horn, Walter, 239
Hudson, Robert, 240
Huneke, Carl, 155
Hurley, Msgr. Mark J., 25, 32

Iakovof, Archbishop, 372

Jackson, Msgr. Charles E., 488
Jadez, Victoria, 66
Jenkins, Louisa, 3, 9-10, 12, 17, 64, 74-75, Int. 84-94, 98-100, 102, 114, 205, 209, 470, 476, 497, 520
Jennings, Aleta, 204
Jewish art, 547 passim, Holocaust art, 523, 549-550, 558
Johnson, Sargent, 9
Jorasch, Richard, 239, 256-258, 263-264
Joseph, Emily [Mrs. Sidney] 401-402, 437
Jungmann, Fr. Joseph, 5
Junipero Serra Shop, San Francisco, 5, 10, 13, 45, 60-69, 112-113, 116, 213, 216-217, 220, 225, 492
Justema, William, Int. 70-83, 85

Kahlo, Frida, 179, 418, 423-426
Katzaris, Fr. Steve, 455
Kazmarcik, Fr. Frank, 45, 476, 493
Kelham, George, 146
Kepes, Gyorgy, 324, 335, 356
Kump, Ernest, 290

La Barbara, Louis, 75
Labourett, _____ (stained glass artist), 333
Labatut, Jean, 245, 349
Lang, _____ (carpenter, artist), 537-538
Larkin, Carol, 108, 109
Lavanoux, Maurice, 2, 45, 63, 67, 78, 95, 199-200, 347, 353
Lederle, Del, 10, 12, 29, 63-64, 67, 156, 191, 209, 220, 476
Leipziger, Hugo, 289
Leslie, Jean, 9, 10
Liebman, Mrs. _____ [nee Meyer], 416-417
Lindheim, Mary, 544
Lippold, Richard, 31, 81, 132, 164
liturgical arts, European background, 70-74, 96-97, 200-201

liturgical arts,
"prototype church," 245, 349-350
movement, comments, 470-474, 478, 492-496
See entries under index to religious institutions
Liturgical Arts Magazine, 1, 2, 13, 40, 45, 49, 63, 67, 69, 78-79, 95 112, 199-201, 219, 223, 245, 347-348
liturgical music, 195-196, 285-287
[Eric] Locke Galleries, San Francisco, 214
Loire, Gabriel, 333, 484-485
Luce, Clare Boothe, 88, 90
Luptak, Emi, 13, 29, 112-113
Lurçat, Jean, 480-482

Macchiarini, Lydia, 22
Macchiarini, Peter, 10, 205
McCleod, Ian, 250
McGucken, Abp. Joseph T., 4, 14, 30-31, 158-174, 246, 248-249
McKeever, George, 492
McMillan, Mike, 270
McSweeney, Ryan & Lee, architects, 160, 166, 246, 248-249, 319
Magnes Museum, Berkeley, 104, 547-548, 561-563, 567
Maher, Msgr. Leo T., 25, 33, 46, 205
Malone, Skewes-Coxe, family, 444-445
Manfrini, Enrico, 171
Maritain, Jacques, 181
Martin, Fr. Vincent, O.S.B., 55, 66, 225
Martinez, Elsie Whitaker, 7, 175-183, 190-198, 467
Martinez, Xavier, 7, 175-180, 184, 186-187
Mary Antoinette, Sr., 12
Mary Dolora, Sr., 101
Masten, Louise, 67
Maybeck, Bernard, 245, 252, 255-256, 293-294, 298, 386
Meehan, Fr. John, 6-7, 9, 12, 39-49, 58-59, 68, 105-106, 197, 200, 202-203, 206-207, 209
Meinberger, Walter, 302
Meinicke, Fr. Paul, 188
Mendelsohn, Eric, 433-435, 443, 507-508, 510-512, 522-523, 533
Merton, Thomas, 72, 94, 465
Michels, Emily, Int. 39-48
Mihailoff, Francis, 304, 483
Milhaud, Darius, 78
Miljarik, Louis, 101, 103
Mills College, Chapel, 304, 306-311
Mills, Barbara, 89, 92
Mills, Paul, 102-103, 556
Milono, Germano, 488
Mitchell, Fr. Brendan, O.F.M., 188
Mitty, Abp. John J., 25, 154, 189, 246
Molton, Phil, 307-308
Monihan, Fr. William J., S.J., Int. 1-20, 26, 45, 97, 113, 202-203, 217, 513, 520, 529
Monterey Guild, 7, 40, 50, 52, 54, 57, 69, 71, 197
Montgomery, Joe, 299, 304
Moore, Charles, 315
Moore, Mary Eggers, 60, 63, 492
Morgan, Julia, 253
Morris, Joan, 67, 194-195, 198
V.C. Morris, shop, San Francisco, 512, 533, 544
Moses, Elizabeth, 205-206, 530
Moya Del Pino, Jose, 77
Moyer, Frances, 13, 46

Nanny's, shop, San Francisco, 546
National Council of Catholic Women, 193
Nervi, Pier Luigi, 14, 31, 81, 162, 164-165, 169, 246-249, 319, 496
Neehaus, Eugen, 102
Niemeyer, Oscar, 236-237
Niendorf, Arthur, 425-427
Noguchi, Isamu, 270-271
Nord, Eric (Big Daddy), 475

Oakland Art Association, 551, 555-556
Oakland, Catholic Diocese, 109-110, 233-241, 263-264
O'Connell, Msgr. Michael D., 192

O'Connor, Daniel, 28-29
O'Connor, Mother Mary Raymond, O.P., 53-54
O'Connor, Fr. Terrence R., S.J., 3, 11, 14-15, 28, 40, 46
O'Dowd, Bp. James T., 25, 154
O'Hara, Bp. Edwin V., 51, 56-57
Olette, Arnold, 299
O'Looney, Fr. Martin Joseph, C.S.P., 61, 64, 69
Olwell, Robert, 318, Int. 362-390, 446-449, 453
Oronoz, Fr. Juan, 40

Palace Hotel, San Francisco, 140, 155
Palestine, 1933, 504-510
Pardinas, Alphonso, 497
Paris, Fr. Thomas J., 376
Park, David, 554
Parr, Fred W., 330
Payne, Jack, 294-296, 303-304, 314
Perrinello, Tony, 36
Pflueger, Timothy, 140
Phoenix Day, lighting, San Francisco, 155
Pike, Bp. James A., 445-446, 454
Pinart, Robert, 324, 333-335
Pond Farm, 436-443, 533-539, 543, 546
Pope John XXIII, 216
Pope Paul VI, 215-216
Pratt, Phil, 10
Pries, Lionel ("Spike"), 363-366, 371, 395
Princeton University, 282-287
  Chapel, 251
Probst, Victor, 289
Pryor, John, 289
Putnam, Arthur, 21

Quinn, Fr. Joseph, C.S.P., 234-237, 239, 241

Rambusch, Robert, 45, 64, 110, 485
Ramm, Msgr. Charles A., 147
Raney, Vincent, 36
Ready, Will, 17, 19-20
Régamey, Fr. Pie-Raymond, O.P., 5, 201
Reid, John, 363-367, 375
Reid & Tarics Associates, architects,
  See Olwell interview
Reinhold, Fr. Hans Ansgar, 5, 78
Requa, Mark, 140
Rice, Raymond, 444, 446
Rich, Frances, 74-75, 77, 208
Ries, Victor, 8-9, 15-16, 442-444, Int. 499-546, 548-549, 559, 561, 565, 568
Rinder, Reuben, 409
Rite of Initiation for Christian Adults, 110-111, 117
Ritzius, Fr. John, C.S.P., 236, 257-262, 274, 280
Rivera, Diego, 141, 179, 186, 406-408, 415-430, 452, 461
Rivera, Frida,
  See Kahlo, Frida
Robeson, Paul, 409
Robinson, Leonard, 166
Rockwell, Burt, 364
Rosse, Martin, 295-296, 355
Rothko, Mark, 79, 282
Russell, Madeleine Haas, 492
Ryan, Paul, 14, 126, Int. 144-174, 212-213, 218-220, 246, 248-249, 319, 337
Ryan, Beatrice Judd, 120

Sachs, Hilda, 323, 335, 357-359
San Francisco Art Institute, 256, 313
San Francisco,
  building during Depression era, 145-146, 148
San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 395, 408, 433
San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, 498
San Francisco Yerba Buena Center project, 227-228
San Francisco Magazine, 143
Schaeffer, Rudolph, 207
Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, 292
Schmidt, Fr. Paul J., 384
Schuppel, William, 166

Selz, Peter, 239
Sessions, Roger, 451, 462
Sheldrake, Rubert, 91
Simoes, Santos, 122
Simoneau, Marian, 183
Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, architects, 484, 489, 497
Sotomayor, Antonio, 10, 26, 77, Int. 129-243, 209, 476
Souza, Ethel, 5, 12, 45, Int. 60-69, 112-113, 116, 225, 492
Sowers, Robert, 324, 335, 349
Spaeth, Otto, 13, 78
Spengler, Oswald, 181
Stackpole, Ralph, 187
Stamos, Jim, 366
Stanford, Sally, 297
Staude, Marguerite Brunswig, 76, 93
Stegman, Vincent, 67
Stern, Rosalie (Mrs. Sigmund), 404-408, 416-417, 437-438
Still, Clyfford, 468-469
Strasburger, Roy, 488
Strawn, Marie, 10
Sullivan, Noel, 8, 192, 195-196

Tanaguchi, Alan, 299, 304
Taylor, Michael, 483
Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 90-91
Telesis, group, 289
Temko, Allan, 318
Thiry, Paul, 119
Thomas, George, 283
Tiessielinck, August, 46
Tival, Brian, 367, 373-375, 381, 446, 447
Tolerton, David, 87-88
Traphagen, Peter, 171
Trettel, Fr. Effrem, 36-37

Unitarianism, Unitarians, 304-306, 355, 356
University of California,
Art Museum, 245, 256, 318
Department of Architecture, 365, 385-386
and Newman Hall, 234, 237-239
University of the Pacific, Chapel, 329-330
University of San Francisco,
Gleeson Library, 1, 2, 217
Rare Book Room, 16-17
University of Texas,
School of Architecture, 288-289

Valdespeza, Armando, 183-184
Valvo, Ninfa, 3-4, 84, 102, 203-205, 214, 476, 492, 513, 520, 529-530
Valyermo, see St. Andrews Priory
Vanderbruck, Franz, 8
van Doorslaer, Fr. Maur, O.S.B., 225
Van Erp, Dirk, 9, 58, 340
Van Hoesen, Beth, 469, 475, 480, 492, 498
Varda, Jean, 92, 96, 107, 114, 537, 541
Vatican II Council, 34, 68, 72, 105, 109-110, 132, 160-162, 190, 209-211, 216, 260-262, 335-336, 359-360, 494
Vlahos, Fr. George, 366-367, 370, 374, 376, 388, 447, 449, 453-454
Vlahos, Fr. Steve, 380
Vodusek, Fr. Vital, 26-28, 45, 232-233, 248
Von Ogterop, Wilhelmina, 323
Voulkos, Peter, 240, 541

Waegemann, Gus, 299
Wagner, Msgr. Alvin, 50
Wagner, Dick, 256
Wallace, Joe, 296
Weinrich, Carl, 286
Western Art 381
White, Minor, 313
Wildenhain, Frans, 442, 535-536, 538, 541, 543
Wildenhain, Marguerite, 441, 534-539, 543-544
Wilhelm, Stephanie Alioto, 12, 44
Wright, Frank Lloyd, 362-363, 393, 400, 414-416, 510, 522
Wolfe, Tom,
The Painted Word, 487

Wolfskill, Sr. Maria Luisa, 87
Int. 95-118
Woodbridge, John, 489
Works Progress Administration (WPA), 409, 430-431
Wurster, William, 289, 363-365, 386, 496
Wurster, Bernardi, Emmons, architects, 484

Yang, Fr. Thaddeus, O.S.B., 92

Zrnich, Barbara, 64, 67, 112
Zunino, Fr. David, S.D.B., 23-24

INDEX TO RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

churches,
Catholic,
California,
Church of the Nativity, San Francisco, 28
Church of Our Lady of Loretto, rectory, Novato, 152
Church of St. Angela, Pacific Grove, 53-55
Corpus Christi Church, San Francisco, 10, 23, 218, 231-232, 238, 245
Holy Spirit Parish, Newman Hall, 12, 211, 218, 219, 233-243, 257-280
Old St. Mary's Church, Paulist, San Francisco, 154, 236, 473, 474, 486, 497
St. Agnes Church, Concord, 382-384
St. Aloysius Church, Palo Alto, 47
St. Ann's Chapel, Palo Alto, 17, 84, 88, 90, 470
St. Anthony's Church, San Francisco, 36
Dining Room, 133
St. Augustine's Church, Pleasanton, 131, 138
St. Basil's Church, Vallejo, 148, 153, 155

churches,
Catholic,
California,
St. Boniface Church, San Francisco, Marian Library murals, 187-189
St. Dominic's Church, San Francisco, 325-326
St. Francis de Sales, Catholic Cathedral, Oakland, 110
St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, 329, 336, 347
St. Jarleth's Church, Oakland, 149, 155
St. Leander's Church, Oakland, 110
St. Luke's Church, Stockton, 27
St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, 4, 13-15, 30-32, 80, 81-83, 111, 132, 152, 158, 160-174, 246-249, 318-319, 356, 377, 386-387, 485, 496, 563
on Van Ness Avenue, 14, 147, 246
art museum, 211, 212
St. Patrick's Church, San Francisco, 244
St. Peter & Paul's Church, Salesian, San Francisco, 34

churches,
Catholic
California,
St. Philomene's Church, Sacramento, 348
St. Stephen's Church, San Francisco, 526
St. Thomas More, San Francisco, 486, 488
St. Vincent de Paul, San Francisco, 520, 521
Washington, D.C.,
National Shine, 159, 177
Missouri,
Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Kansas City, 56-57, 71

Christian Science,
First Church, Belvedere, 245, 252, 292-294, 296-302, 340-341, 354, 386
First Church, Berkeley, 245, 252, 255-256, 294, 298, 496
First Church, Mill Valley, 302-305, 308
First Church, Menlo Park, 357-358
Episcopalian,
All Saints Church, Carmel, 486
All Saints Church, Palo Alto, 349
All Saints Church, Pasadena, 294, 304-305, 307, 314
Grace Cathedral,
architecture, 144-148, 386
bookstore, 220
exhibition, "Church Art Today, 1960," 214
mural panels, 135-139
windows, 326
St. Aidan's, San Francisco, 479, 486, 489-490
St. Andrew's, Saratoga, 487
St. Mary the Virgin, San Francisco, 432, 454-458
St. Stephen's Church, Belvedere, 340, 346
Lutheran,
Church of the Good Shepherd, Concord, 122

churches,
Orthodox,
Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, Oakland, 366 passim, 446-450, 453-455
Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Belmont, 371, 374, 380-381, 455
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, San Francisco, 389
Presbyterian,
Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, 327-328, 458-461
First Presbyterian Church, San Rafael, 346
St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley, 253
Unitarian,
Unitarian Church, Kensington, 386
Unitarian Church, Berkeley, 252
Unitarian Church, San Francisco, 250-251, 304-306, 354-356

colleges,
Dominican College of San Rafael, San Rafael, 40, 42, 53, 55, 326, 336
Holy Names College, Oakland, 84, 87, 95, 98-100, 330
St. Albert's the Great, Dominican College, Oakland, 325-326, 336
St. Mary's College, Moraga, CA, 524, 525
St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, 86
St. Meinrad's Seminary, Benedictine southern Indiana, 190-191, 493

missions
Carmel, 1, 72, 190-195, 467, 468
San Jose, 326

monasteries
Mt. Angel Abbey, Benedictine, Oregon, 72-78, 84-85, 91-92

monasteries
Portsmouth Priory, Benedictine, Rhode Island, 164
St. Andrew's Priority, Benedictine, Palmdale, 66, 92-93, 113, 121, 224-226
St. John's, Benedictine, Minnesota, 465, 466
Cristo Rey, Carmelite, San Francisco, 149-150, 173, 218-219
Whitethorn, Cistercian Nuns of the Strict Observance, Our Lady of the Redwoods Monastery, 93
Poor Clares Monastery, Los Altos, 347
Ursuline Sisters Chapel, Santa Rosa, 28-29

other
Casa Maria Retreat, Santa Barbara, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, 65, 66, 92
Fort Ord, First Brigade Chapel, 358, 361
Treasure Island Naval Station Chapel, 221-222
Hanna Boys Center, Sonoma County, 8-9, 12, 121, 232, 238, 246
Mills College, Oakland, Chapel, 304, 306-311
Riordan High School, Catholic, 154
Robert Louis Stevenson School Chapel, Pebble Beach, 388
Vallombrosa Retreat House, Menlo Park, 40, 66, 84, 88, 106

temples
Temple Beth Abraham, Oakland, 523, 561
Temple Beth El, San Mateo, 504, 531, 532
Temple Emanu-El, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 433-436, 463
Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, 15, 205, 208, 434, 486, 488, 490-492, 496, 567
Temple Sinai, Oakland, 557-558, 560

Micaela Martinez DuCasse

Daughter of Xavier Martinez and Elsie Whitaker Martinez. Educated under her father at California College of Arts and Crafts, 1928-31.

Studied fresco painting with Victor Arnautoff in 1938, and sculpture with Ralph Stackpole in 1938-9, at San Francisco Art Institute.

Liturgical mural commission in 1939 at St. Boniface Church, San Francisco. Career in liturgical arts through mid-1950s. Founding member, Catholic Art Forum of San Francisco.

Member, art department faculty, Lone Mountain College; chairman, 1955-78.

Organized a survey course in history of California art, as a preview to the opening of the Oakland Museum in September of 1969. The research and knowledge obtained in preparing this course was background for the oral history interviewing of Helen Clark Oldfield.

Suzanne Bassett Riess

Grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.
Graduated from Goucher College, B.A. in English, 1957.
Post-graduate work, University of London and the University of California, Berkeley, in English and history of art.

Feature writing and assistant woman's page editor, Globe-Times, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
Free-lance writing and editing in Berkeley.
Volunteer work on starting a new Berkeley newspaper.
Natural science docent at the Oakland Museum.

Editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1960, interviewing in the fields of art, cultural history, environmental design, photography, Berkeley and University history.