

## ACS SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Open Session 2: "Current Work on ACS", Moderator: Anat Geva - Wednesday 25 March 5pm

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### Architecture in a Sacred Society

Tom Bender \* 10 Feb 09

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***Note: This presentation covers considerable material outside conventional architectural education and practice.***

***This outline is intended to give access to resources in advance to familiarize with some of the concepts.***

***The 10 min. presentation time will focus on how this plays out through actual projects in practice, plus discussion and questions.***

#### **1. CONTEXT:**

Our culture has moved into a new, and profoundly different, era – which is transforming every aspect of our lives, culture, architecture, and education. Profoundly different values, operative principles, culture, and quality of life are inherent in this new era.

Four factors underlying this shift are currently framing a profound new context for architecture:

- The end of fossil fuels, empire, and the return to the sacred.<sup>1</sup> (*We are entering a sacred world because the world IS sacred. We're just letting go of cultural dogma connected with our old culture.*)
- Renewed direct spiritual experience of the sacred.<sup>2</sup>
- Emerging new understandings of the electromagnetic nature of our universe.<sup>3</sup>
- Acknowledgement of the physics of qi energy and its implications for culture and architecture.<sup>4</sup>

These developments profoundly change our understanding of the nature and purpose of architecture, how it affects us, what and why we build, and our relationship with our world. Awareness of them needs to be integral with our lives and professional activity.

Our culture's move into this realm demands a new approach to design. Experience working with the sacred in architecture suggests that soul and vitality are restored and enhanced in architecture when we approach it from the sacred and the world of qi energy.

## **2. EDUCATION:**

Institutions reflect culture. We were trained, we work within, and we have been deeply shaped by this matrix. It affects our perceptions, actions, design, and valuation of what we experience. Our recent materialistic/growth/corporate culture aligned education and architecture to focus on:

- Surface appearances rather than inner qualities.
- Absence of soul or sacred.
- False economics.<sup>5</sup>
- Mental, intellectual, literate processes without integral consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

Our recent educational and architectural systems have therefore been:

- Supportive of, and as exploitive as, their underlying corporate culture.
- Soulless.
- With separation rather than integration of architecture, landscape, design services.
- Single focus (engineering) rather than integrative/wholistic (architectural).

### **3A. ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE:**

- With integral consciousness, we can't lie, and therefore truth is the heart of design.
- Invisible influences affect architecture and use of places.
- Esthetics is no longer a viable parameter.
- Place, not space is a central focus.
- Relationship, not structure is important.
- Different truths, and role of familiar elements such as beauty and goodness, pertain to architecture.<sup>7</sup>



### **3B: LIFE-FORCE ENERGY AND DESIGN:**

Life is powerfully nurtured by the energetics of place, which is integral to a sacred culture. This relationship demands a new approach to design.<sup>8</sup> The parameters of architecture and its effect, in cultures which base their architecture on qi or life-force energy, is profoundly different than in a materialistic culture.

#### **Scope:<sup>9</sup>**

- The Three "I"
- Honoring
- Giving
- Gardens of the Spirit
- Energy and Place
- Human and Natural Places of Power
- Wholeness
- Economics
- Sacred Work, Inner Products of Work
- Portals to the Sacred
- Living Art/Architecture
- The Role of Truth in Our Lives, Culture, and Places
- Sacred Art, Sacred Space
- Working with Chi Energy in Design

**Historical Case Studies:** As an architectural historian, I've revisited the architectural traditions of Egypt<sup>10</sup>, the Cave Temples of India<sup>11</sup>, Machu Picchu, Native American, Hawaii, etc.<sup>12</sup> from a perspective including the qi energy dimensions of architecture and culture. Shift towards sustainable society and architecture can find vital resources in the architectural traditions of cultures based in the sacred and awareness of life-force energy.

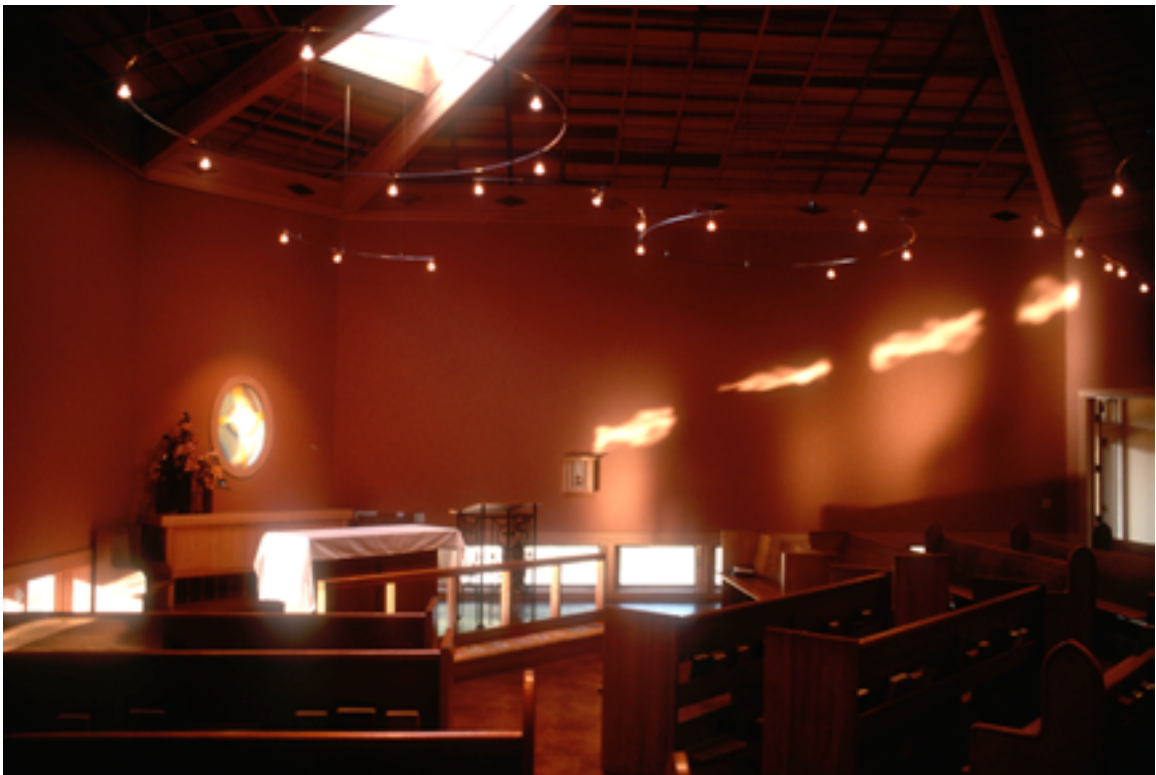
### **3C - ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE:**

The role of architecture and the power of its interweaving with our lives is immensely transformed in a sacred culture. These "new" design parameters form the basis of the architecture in the world we are moving into.

Experience working with the sacred in architecture suggests that soul and vitality are restored and enhanced in architecture when we approach it from the sacred and the world of qi energy.

### **Examples:<sup>13</sup>**

- Co-Creation, Alignment with the Spirit World
- The Role of Place in Direct and Shared Connection with the Realms of Spirit
- The Role of Architecture in Wholeness and Connection with the Sacred
- The Changing Role of Work and Play
- Serving Sacred Community - Human and All of Life
- Creating Sacred Architecture
- Celebrating
- Welcome
- Mirrors
- Emptiness
- Invisible Servants
- Putting Love into a Place



### **Current Design Case Studies:**

Bank of Astoria<sup>14</sup>, St. Catherine's Episcopal Church, Shrine of the Mountain and the Waters<sup>15</sup>, various residences and other recent design projects.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusions:

The practice of architecture, as well as its teaching and intellectual basis, is deeply transformed and empowered as our culture, life experiences and professional work moves into the context of a sacred culture.<sup>17</sup>

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*Please note re access to articles, etc. below: I've just uploaded 95 more articles to my website. They currently are directly linked from the chrono-biblio or the alpha-biblio, until I have time to update specific subject indexes. -Tom*

<sup>1</sup> See <[www.tombender.org/indexpages/global\\_warming.html](http://www.tombender.org/indexpages/global_warming.html)> for links to articles on several aspects of this.

<sup>2</sup> See "**Sacred Art, Sacred Space**" 2006.  
<[www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/SACRED\\_SPACE.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/SACRED_SPACE.pdf)> and

**"Places Touching Spirit"** 2006.  
<[www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/PLACES\\_TOUCHING\\_SPIRIT.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/PLACES_TOUCHING_SPIRIT.pdf)> for a sense of how this affects architecture.

<sup>3</sup> "**Notes on Our Plasma Universe**" 2007.  
<[www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/PLASMA\\_UNIVERSE.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/PLASMA_UNIVERSE.pdf)> gives an introductory summary. This is an incredibly fast-breaking area.

See <[www.thunderbolts.info](http://www.thunderbolts.info)> for links to recent major breakthroughs currently occurring in areas from archeology to electric gravity.

<sup>4</sup> "**The Physics of Qi**" article, 2006.  
<[www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/qi\\_physics.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/qi_physics.pdf)>

**The Physics of Qi DVD**, 2007.  
<[www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/qiphysics.html](http://www.tombender.org/energeticsarticles/qiphysics.html)>

**Learning to Count What REALLY Counts: The Economics of Wholeness**, 2002.  
<[www.tombender.org/books/ltc.html](http://www.tombender.org/books/ltc.html)>

<sup>5</sup> See overview to **Learning to Count What REALLY Counts: The Economics of Wholeness**, 2002.  
<[www.tombender.org/factor10econarticles/econofwhole.html](http://www.tombender.org/factor10econarticles/econofwhole.html)>

<sup>6</sup> See "**Sacred Art, Sacred Space**", above.

<sup>7</sup> "**Sacred Art, Sacred Space**", above.

<sup>8</sup> See **SSS** and **BOL**, above.

<sup>9</sup> **Silence, Song & Shadows: The Sacred and Chi Energy in Our Surroundings**, 2000, focuses on these elements. Excerpts in some articles in sacred bibliography. <[www.tombender.org/books/sss.html](http://www.tombender.org/books/sss.html)>

<sup>10</sup> <sup>10</sup> **Building with the Breath of Life**, Chapter 3, on my website.

<sup>11</sup> **THE CAVE TEMPLES OF INDIA**, DVD, Sept. 2004.

<sup>12</sup> "**Sacred Art, Sacred Space**", above.

**"Places Touching Spirit"**, above.

<sup>13</sup> **Silence, Song & Shadows: The Sacred and Chi Energy in Our Surroundings**, 2000.  
<[www.tombender.org/indexpages/TBsacredarchbiblio.htm](http://www.tombender.org/indexpages/TBsacredarchbiblio.htm)>

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**Building with the Breath of Life**, 2000.  
<[www.tombender.org/books/bol.html](http://www.tombender.org/books/bol.html)>

**"Bank of Astoria: Building Community Sustainability"** 2001. Top 10 Green Buildings, 2002.  
<[www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/Bank\\_of\\_Astoria.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/Bank_of_Astoria.pdf)>

<sup>13</sup> **"Sacred Art, Sacred Space"**, above.

**"Places Touching Spirit"**, above.

<sup>14</sup> **"Bank of Astoria: Building Community Sustainability"**, above.

<sup>15</sup> **"The Shrine of the Mountain and the Waters"**  
<[www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/sacredplaces.html](http://www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/sacredplaces.html)>

<sup>16</sup> See <[www.tombender.org/indexpages/designprojects.html](http://www.tombender.org/indexpages/designprojects.html)> for links to project pages.

<sup>17</sup> For a bibliography of articles by the author relating to architecture and the sacred, see  
<[www.tombender.org/indexpages/TBsacredarchbiblio.htm](http://www.tombender.org/indexpages/TBsacredarchbiblio.htm)>

For an article summary of many of the topics referenced here, see **"Living Architecture"**, Bringing Buildings to Life Symposium, 18 May 2006. Chapter in BIOPHILIC DESIGN, Kellert, Heerwagen & Mador, ed, 2008.  
<[www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/Living Architecture copy.pdf](http://www.tombender.org/sustdesignarticles/Living Architecture copy.pdf)>