

Project

Oratory of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette

Michael Nicholas-Schmidt
michael@larkinarchitet.com

Recognizing 400 years since their arrival in Canada, the Jesuits of Upper Canada gathered in Midland (Northern Ontario) for pilgrimage, reflection, and future planning. A temporary chapel was erected to transform a hotel conference room into a place for prayer and contemplation. The oratory was named after the temporary mission church of Our Lady of Loretto, which in 1649 was created in a Huron longhouse in Quebec. Following the destruction of the mission settlement Ste. Marie Among the Hurons, Our Lady of Loretto represented a new beginning: a core desire of the contemporary gathering.

In the design, several key themes arose: to construct a temporary space that was sustainable and ecologically sensitive, to acknowledge Jesuit history, and to express the ongoing values and spirit of the contemporary Society.

Materials were selected which had minimal environmental impact, and could be easily recycled, or broken down after the conference. Paper and paper products were used, including cardboard tubes for structure, and large sheets of handmade paper for enclosure.

The longhouse and tree, are evoked by the structure of the central lantern. The paper enclosure is embedded with symbolically significant plants including maple & birch leaves, rose petals, cedar, and pine needles. The tabernacle is placed on a slate base from the Canadian Shield. The strong vertical axis places the Eucharist at the heart of a spreading network. Cedar trees which help define the sacred perimeter were transplanted in a circular formation at the end of the congress as a commemoration of these themes, the installation, and the anniversary.

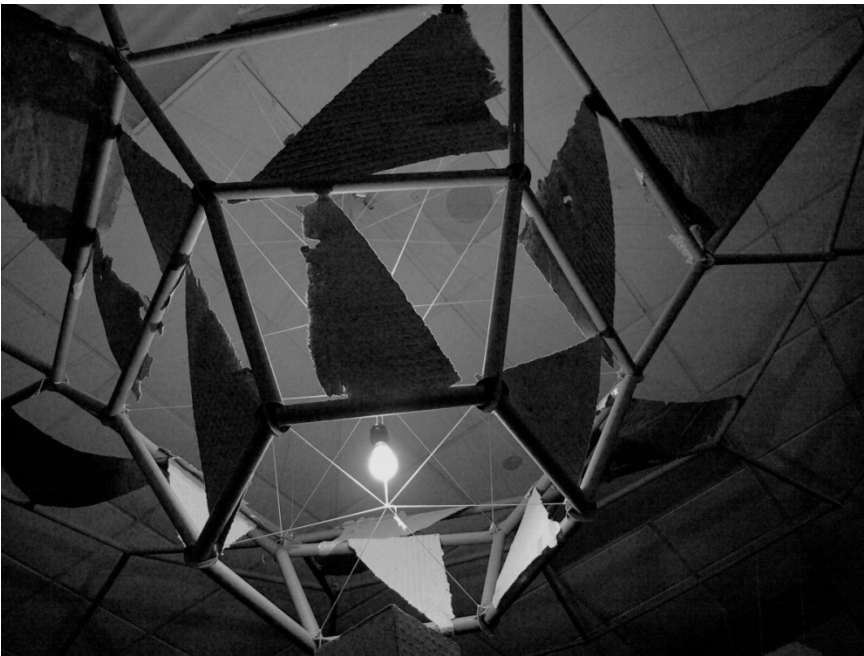
This installation meant to capture a spatial and temporal sacredness by crafting together materials and forms seen in Jesuit history, theology, and mission.

References

Jean Danielou. "Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises," *Cross Currents* (1950): 357-366

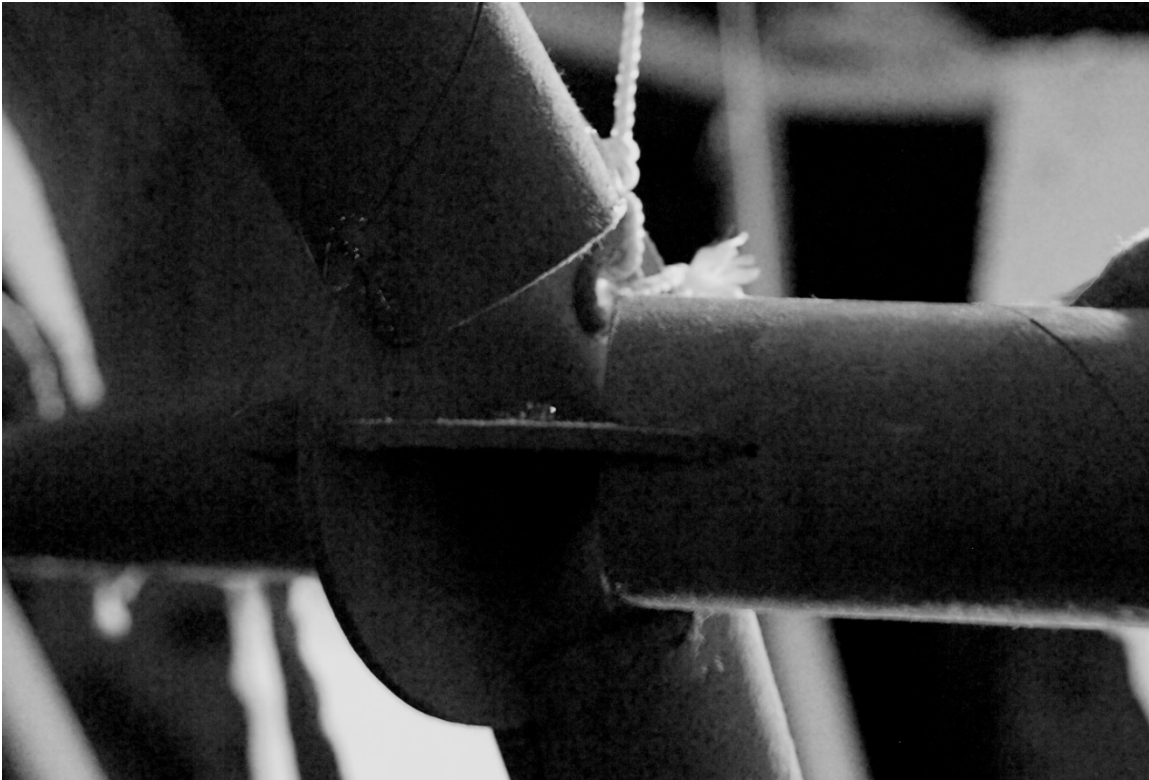
C.E. Heidenreich, "Ste Marie Among the Hurons," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified April 3, 2015. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ste-marie-among-the-hurons/>

Images:



(above) central lantern enclosed by large sheets of handmade paper. The perimeter of the sacred space was defined by a circle of cedars. Photo by M. Nicholas-Schmidt

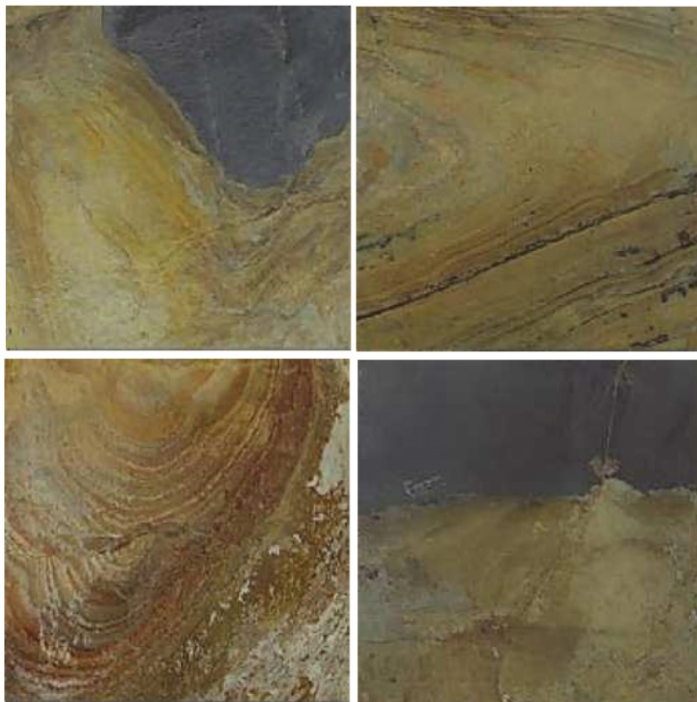
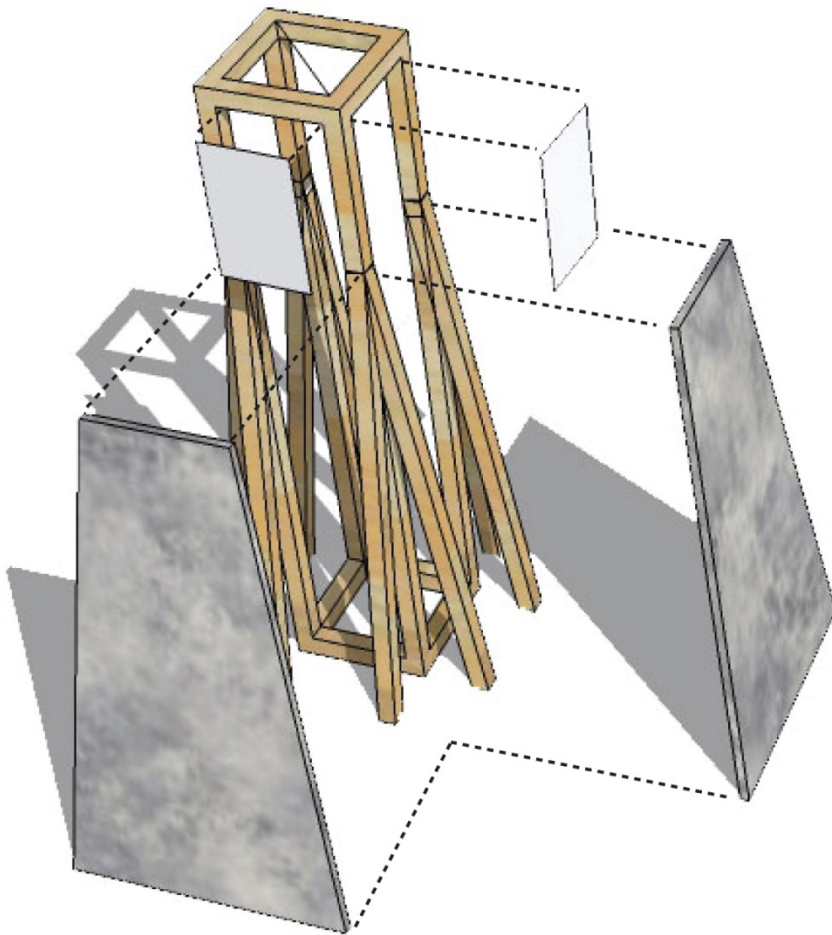
(left) detail of lantern showing structure consisting of cardboard tubes and translucent paper which were recycled at the completion of the conference. Photo by M. Nicholas-Schmidt



(above) detail of joints. All joints were modular pre-fabricated millboard discs which could adapt to any angle. By being a universal connection type, construction erection was simplified. Photo by M. Nicholas-Schmidt



(left) detail of paper enclosure. Custom window screens were drawn through vats of pulp to create 3'x6' paper sheets. Plants were embedded in the surface referencing important species to the early Jesuits and referencing spiritual themes: maple, birch, rose, cedar and pine. Photo by M. Nicholas-Schmidt



(left) design image of tabernacle. A lantern fashioned with translucent paper was mounted on a slate plinth. Variations in the slate depicted the geology of the Canadian Shield. Drawing by M. Nicholas-Schmidt