

April 26-28, 2004 Experiencing Sacred Spaces Columbus, Indiana

The *Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture* in conjunction with the *Columbus Area Visitors Center* and the *Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture* welcome you to the “**Experiencing Sacred Spaces**” workshop.

First, welcome to our gracious host city, **Columbus, Indiana**, home of the Cummins Architecture Program, truly one of America’s most fascinating civic commitments - more about that in a moment.

The Academy was founded almost exactly one year ago at the 2003 convention of the American Institute of Architects. Its purpose is to build intellectual bridges between the two disciplines that will work synergistically:

- Intuitive notions about the effect of architectural features of space on human behavior will drive the creation of hypotheses and experimentation by neuroscience researchers.
- The rapidly growing understanding and knowledge base related to processes of the brain and the mind will be absorbed into architecture education and professional practice.
- The outcome, eventually, will be a steadily increasing level of thoughtfulness in design so that environments such as schools, healthcare facilities, offices, laboratories, public places and – as regards the reason for our gathering – spiritual spaces may be developed with a significant amount of knowledge as to why specific features of architectural settings have the effects they do on the individuals who occupy those spaces.

The Academy is engaged in a discovery process. Essential to its exploratory program is the convening of a series of workshops to think about the connection between neuroscience and architecture as it pertains to specific fields – education, healthcare, spirituality. We have gratefully accepted the invitation of the Columbus, Indiana community to meet in this place marked by a decades-old dedication - long preceding the emergence of neuroscience - to rethink the particular purpose of a space and to apply a design logic accordingly.

The Cummins Architectural Program pays the architectural costs for schools and public structures by designers chosen from ever-changing lists of highly regarded, independently selected modern architects. The program has had the salutary effect of encouraging other groups that would not specifically benefit from its largesse to commit also to the creation of extraordinary architecture.

This is the case with the design of Columbus’s architecturally significant churches which have been built with funds privately raised by each congregation. In fact, the genesis of

the architecture program goes back to the development of the city's first important piece of modern architecture, First Christian Church, which initiated the practice of using the design process for a new building as an opportunity to reconceptualize the spiritual purpose of that structure and its role in the faith lives of the people who make use of it. That has been a consistent part of the unique architectural scene of Columbus ever since, realized in its educational, commercial, healthcare, workplace and governmental structures as well as in the sacred spaces that will be the focus of our workshop.

MONDAY, APRIL 26
2:00 – 5:00

*(Note: Columbus Inn open for
check-in and registration)*

The program begins with tours of Columbus's church architecture via shuttle buses circulating among all the featured buildings. Every person may stay as long they wish at each location before proceeding to the next. This tour is offered as a stage-setter from which to ground our conversations in the experience of innovative sacred space from a particular tradition.

We will use these contemporary approaches to an ancient human need as a point of departure for our broader consideration of the nature of spiritual settings from the various vantage points that we bring as architects, faith leaders, neuroscientists and educators:

As you tour the churches, in preparation for the next days' discussions, please imagine serving on a steering committee for designing a new prominent church or meditation space.

- As an architect, what are the salient design considerations the clients need to understand?
- As a representative of the faith community that will use this space, how would you articulate what will be taking place there and how the space should contribute?
- As a neuroscientist, what are the cognitive, emotional and sensory processes that likely modulate the individual experience of the space as well as the spiritual experience fostered by it?

5:00 – 6:00: Meet and greet cocktail hour (*Columbus Inn*)

6:00 – 7:30: Dinner and formal introductions (*Smith's Row Restaurant – private room*)

8:00 – 10:00: Keynote presentation by the Rev. Dr. Robert Schuller – introduced by Norman Koonce, FAIA after welcomes by Dick Johnson representing Columbus, Michael Berkowicz representing IFRAA and Alison Whitelaw representing ANFA
open to the public (*St. Peter's Lutheran Church*)

TUESDAY, APRIL 27

7:00 – 9:00: Breakfast (*Columbus Inn*)

9:30 – 10:00: Presentation of workshop plan (*Visitors Center*)

One of our tasks in this workshop is to discover how our differing perspectives can lend assistance to other disciplines in articulating relevant issues. For example, can our expanding knowledge of human consciousness complement centuries of reflection on human spirituality with scientific rigor? Can the religious experience of individuals and communities serve as fruitful substrate for investigation of some of the more subtle manifestations of human consciousness? Most germane to the Academy's interests would be the question of scientific-evidence-based design of architecture for the sacred encounter.

We will seek possible points of convergence in theological reflection, architectural design, and neuroscientific investigation for a plenary session:

10:00 – 12:30: “What do we bring to the table?”

to hear overview presentations from representatives of each discipline: Rita Carter, neuroscience; Norman Koonce, FAIA , architecture; Ryan Hazen, faith practice as we seek to learn each other's specialized vocabulary and style of reflection.

1:00 – 2:00: Lunch (*Force Construction Co.*)

Next, on Tuesday afternoon from

2:30 – 3:15: Charge to the group and discussion time (*Visitors Center*)

we will build on the morning's initial conversations with a plenary discussion of possible points of convergence. A panel of the morning's presenters, Patrick Russell moderating, will engage all participants in dialogue regarding the potential intersections among the three disciplines.

3:15 – 3:30: Break

3:30 – 5:00: Breakout groups will take on specific assignments.

5:00 – 6:30: Tea and informal time for reflection and conversation (*Columbus Inn*)

7:00 – 9:00: Dinner (*Cummins Engine Co.*)

9:00 – 12 midnight: *Columbus Inn lounge remains open for continued conversation*

Wednesday, April 28

7:00 – 8:30: Breakfast

9:00 - 11:30: Conclusions (*North Christian Church*)

Finally, on Wednesday morning we will meet in a session that will consider the reports from breakout groups of the previous afternoon and will then work to refine promising issues into possible areas of experimental investigation (resisting the temptation to design explicit experiments at this early stage) – open to the public.

11:30 – 12:30: Response to the workshop by ANFA's John Eberhard and Alison Whitelaw (*North Christian Church*)

1:00 - ? : Lunch and farewell (*Columbus City Hospital*)