

STUDIES *in* RELIGION *and the* ARTS

A HERETICAL HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

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BRILL

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Introduction

In the last decades of the twentieth century, scholars in various disciplines combined critical theories with architectural samples to substantiate the most groundbreaking insights. For example, Michel Foucault disclosed how the Panopticon's building had given a material form to the Enlightenment-era objectification of individuals. Michel de Certeau discussed how walking in the city reconfigures the otherwise quantitatively abstract and superficial knowledge of living and dynamic social environments. Fredric Jameson used buildings to illustrate how the post-modern shift in design practices indicated the emergent logic of late capitalism. Even the term "post-modern," widely accepted across the humanities, was coined by Charles Jencks, an architecture historian, who used it to describe the end of the so-called International Style dominance. Yet, that critical interest in the frequently unsettling revelations faded in the world of neoliberal pragmatism and populist politics. Schools of architecture have never stopped referencing the stylistic periodization terminology and only gradually embraced a more global perspective, mainly by expanding the catalog of building types. The radically novel scholarship, which transformed the analysis of spatial practices into a critical instrument in the humanities, has not substantially altered the prevailing model of architectural history.

In contrast, this study shows that extant buildings still provide untapped sources of information about significant but little-known cultural processes. *A Heretical History of Architecture* intentionally challenges the conventional understanding of important developments in Western design practices as reflections of progressive alignments among dominant ideologies and artistic programs, arguing instead that, from the fifth to the seventeenth century, the most consequential changes in the evolution of design across Europe were motivated by tensions between local religious or cultural traditions and centralized power. Whereas the elites benefited from coercing artists and architects and creating lasting and influential ideologically laden trends, dissenters disrupted these processes and inspired novel design ideas. According to this work, lesser-prominent structures or lesser-known aspects of famous buildings represent how dispersed traditions triggered religious and intellectual dissent and stimulated socially relevant architectural experimentation. This examination of symbolic environments' idiosyncratic characteristics thus supports insights into how localized and covertly shared beliefs informed design decisions, which inadvertently tested the relationship between the evolving

socio-political reality and people's culturally ingrained sense of identity.¹ Such designers, the book asserts, treated buildings as representational devices capable of negotiating different religious legacies and political ideologies, especially in eastern and southern peripheries of Europe, where communities were the most exposed to non-Christian worldviews and preserved cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity.

That architecture could serve as an agent of nuanced exchanges and that those processes motivated important developments in the history of design may sound abstract until specific examples illustrate the claim. However, even before particular structures are discussed in detail, it is necessary to outline how reframing epistemic assumptions enables this argument. Therefore, this work counters the obsolete teleological vision of civilizational progress as resulting from the alignment of various social, political, and artistic processes. The most common understanding of European architecture—that historians have organized as the sequence of dominant styles, such as Classical, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance ...—conforms to the teleological Hegelian philosophy of history. That point of view was the most popular in nineteenth-century nation-states because it glorified those supposedly superior socio-political systems that had created a cohesive progression of common-purpose-driven actions by well-known historical figures, including political leaders, artists, architects, and other intellectual or religious luminaries together pursuing high-culture objectives and national interests. However, as Sanjay Subrahmanyam once said, it was exactly the overemphasizing of nationalism that “has blinded us to the possibility of [fragile] connection[s]” among cultures and their “connected histories.”² To counter such biased attitudes, this book focuses on the function of cultural diversity and inner-cultural conflicts in design experimentation. Paraphrasing Roberto Esposito's observations about the “*immanentization of antagonism*,” it could be said that new design practices frequently reflected how heterodox strife was constitutive of new architectural decisions because conventions, which silenced tensions among different beliefs, became obsolete—were no longer sufficient to contain the discord.³ In this study,

1 Such an attitude is similar to what Roberto Esposito, after Remo Bodei, has identified as Italian philosophers' historically unique propensity to consider “thought that is not inward-looking but open to the influences of people and the force of circumstances.” Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Press, 2012 [2010]), 11.

2 See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 735–762, (761). Matthew P. Canepa has also discussed similar issues in his “Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction Among the Ancient and Early Medieval Mediterranean, Near East and Asia,” *Ars Orientalis* 38, (2010): 7–29.

3 Esposito, *Living Thought*, 24.

however, buildings—more than discourses—provide insight into how people conformed to the coercive conventions, but also how they resisted the dominant norms. Any concentration of architectural references to diverse but coexistent worldviews and their conflicted character indicated that designers who created such compositions represented communities involved in a social and political change “in the making.”⁴

Another important aspect of this argument’s grounding is how it reframes an equally detrimental presumption underpinning the Hegelian legacy: its explicit Euro-centric bias. The periodization of architectural styles inherently reflects an aversion to foreign cultural influences, which appeared to him incompatible with the belief that the superior European identity had originated and matured in the West and that it best exemplified supreme universal values.⁵ By validating what teleological scholars might have dismissed as low-culture exchanges, this study opens an opportunity to explore Europe in a multifaceted and lasting relationship with those traditions and ancient visions of the spiritual universe, which nowadays are deemed quintessentially non-Western. Indeed, compositions analyzed in this book exemplify how often foreign beliefs, especially those infusing natural phenomena and vitality with spiritual agency, triggered the most consequential changes in design practices. And it should not be surprising that to many scholars, those compositions’

4 The term “things in the making” was used by William James in his *A Pluralistic Universe*, eds. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977 [1909]), 117. This kind of approach to the history of architecture could also be seen as similar to Donald Preziosi and Louise Hitchcock’s search for those features of built environments that were simultaneously “constitutive and reflective—as much instruments that function to fabricate and maintain social realities as themselves products of such ongoing and dynamically changing realities.” See Donald Preziosi and Louise Hitchcock, *Aegean Art and Architecture* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

5 Following the lead of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who dismissed many other cultures as inconsequential to European history, multiple traditional art surveys have made no effort to trace such relationships. In his *Philosophy of History*, especially in the chapter devoted to the Oriental World, he expressed limited interest in people whose cultural production had supposedly been stationary and fixed, inferior because based on inspiration found in mere nature. His biased distinction between productions involving what he termed flawed Imagination versus precise Thought was equally epistemically detrimental. No wonder that not a long time ago, in art history books as popular as the one written by Horst Waldemar Janson and Dora Jane Janson, major non-European cultures were entirely excluded. See their *History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day* (New York, NY: Abrams, 1962).

It is also noteworthy that this Euro-centric bias reached beyond understanding Western cultures. As Tomoko Masuzawa discusses it, even the history of world religions (or, more precisely, religious systems) has been shaped by the Euro-centric epistemic perspective. See her *The Invention of World Religions, or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

syncretic intentions appeared so discordant and motivations so incoherent that they have heretofore eluded students of stylistic taxonomies.

This broad approach to architecture evolution also considers post-Hegelian developments, specifically how the shortcomings of current art history resulted from the epistemic reaction to the atrocities of fascism. Although at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, many researchers—mostly German-speaking—started to expand Winckelmann’s classically introverted frameworks of artistic references, the two world wars interrupted the process.⁶ The horrors of the time created a hole in the Euro-centric consciousness so deep that only radical change and common—frequently unconscious—efforts could restore the new sense of epistemic comfort.⁷ First, as Claire Farago notes, the Enlightenment concept of *Bildung*—culture or self-cultivation—was reinstated.⁸ Then, scholars revitalized the uncompromising belief that humanity’s essential goodness could be measured by the mythical perfection of classical Greco-Roman cultures and their legacy. Consequently, according to Farago, the history of the arts became an integral part of a “modernist enterprise.”⁹ Restoring the Enlightenment’s simplicity of judgment required epistemic reduction, in which “most narrative accounts have been concerned with the formal features of theory at the expense of the cultural circumstances out of which accounts of artistic change emerged.”¹⁰ This study attempts to recover the knowledge of those stylistically ambiguous—seemingly dubious and cluttering the post-wars epistemic mythology—examples of cultural exchanges that were silenced by the modernist enterprise’s agenda.

Consequently, at the center of this book’s challenge is identifying which buildings to consider and which architectural features have been eliminated by the Hegelian mindset or the modernist enterprise’s mission. In the teleological approach, answers to these questions would be simple because symbolic

6 Such interest can be found in the works of Jacob Burckhardt, Alois Riegl, Konrad Fiedler, Josef Strzygowski, and Gottfried Semper, for example.

7 An example of how historians struggled with the legacy of Fascism is Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969, [1955]), 253–264. Similarly, Robert Esposito suggests the “neohumanist revival” was a reaction to World War II and those “who sought to wipe out all traces of humanity.” Esposito, *Living Thought*, 40.

8 Claire Farago, “Vision Itself Has Its History: ‘Race,’ Nation, and Renaissance Art History,” in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450 to 1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven, CT, and London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 1995), 67–88, (73).

9 *Ibid.*, 67.

10 *Ibid.*

structures or compositions were presumed at the receiving end of high-culture and political processes—architecture supposedly illustrated artistic and ideological programs. In contrast, this analysis proposes that symbolic constructs served as representational devices designed not merely to visualize various kinds of well-formed religions or political conceptions but to imply those ways of perceiving, imagining, and making sense of the world that the knowledge of textual records has dismissed as too conflicted or inconclusive. This approach to design practices searches for historical buildings that represented thoughts consciously or unconsciously shared by many people—those less-structured ways of thinking inherent in traditions. By the very nature of their informal transmission, traditions have always supported those cultural memories that connect communities without a need for authoritarian oversight or codification. Long-lasting material structures served as repositories of shared efforts to test how local beliefs interfaced with new religious, intellectual, economic, or political developments.¹¹ Studying that kind of representational content is indispensable in any attempt to deepen the understanding of Europe’s past. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, such knowledge of architecture may help “to brush history against the grain” of its politically biased official records.¹²

According to this argument, revealing epistemic gaps in the history of nominally Western architecture requires not only a lesser Euro-centric approach but also reframing disciplinary boundaries, their geography, and temporality. Cases analyzed in this publication redefine the role of specialized knowledge in understanding history and question the very notion of Western architecture and its place in the network of global exchanges.¹³ In addition to structures built in well-known Western locations, this book includes samples of symbolic production from distant places in Siberia, India, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, or lesser-known sites in the Balkans, Anatolia, Egypt, Syria, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland, and their timeframe ranges from the prehistoric to the beginning of the modern era, which is associated here with the Enlightenment. Furthermore, by studying architecture from cross-disciplinary perspectives, this work inherently addresses what Alina Payne once identified as insufficiency or the

11 Such a notion of cultural memory, which traditions preserve, is similar to practices discussed by Jan Assmann in his “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” in *Loci memoriae Hungaricae I: The theoretical foundations of Hungarian ‘Lieux de mémoire’ studies*, eds. Pál S. Varga, K. Katschtaler, D. E. Morse et al. (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2013), 36–43, (37–38).

12 Benjamin, “Theses,” 257.

13 This book argues for adding to architectural history the “geohistorical” approach discussed by Fernand Braudel in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972 [1949]).

“absence of conversation and a shared problematic between” the fields of architecture and art history; in this publication adding information about cultural traditions, archeology, anthropology, politics, religions, as well as philosophy.¹⁴ In this way, lessons learned from buildings will cast new light on the putative understanding of European identity, including its supposedly Judeo-Christian roots, the role of the so-called humanistic ideals of the Greco-Roman heritage, and how that identity evolved in relation to other cultural traditions.

The most nuanced insights forwarded by this study’s argument hinge on the distinction between scholarly and designer’s approaches to buildings. This book exemplifies how the professional expertise of an architect adds a new dimension to specialized fields within the humanities. Conventional discussions of buildings assume the reductive and predetermined character of a design process, namely, that projects are constructed only when initial considerations are distilled to clear objectives, conflicts are reconciled, and only rationally justified decisions are approved by patrons and future users. Yet, the structures discussed in this publication show that their design processes were not reducible to problem-solving, and their compositional outcomes were not meant to communicate messages within the cohesive framework of a philosophical or theological program. Instead, similar to how Alois Riegl once commented on material artifacts he studied, it could be said that design expresses a “perceptual relationship in constant production.”¹⁵ This book shows that constructed environments represented what inspired or perturbed their builders and users in addition to or beyond practical considerations and other rudimentary aspects of problem-solving. The best designers have always developed skills that allowed them to respond to common but frequently unconscious attitudes and emerging or unsettling concerns. While the scholarly approach to architecture often produces a system of interrelated narratives, in such knowledge the cohesion of interdependent arguments sometimes silences the actual complexity of a built structure and instead results in an “intellectual edifice built by scholars.”¹⁶ In this study, however, the author’s designer

14 Alina A. Payne “Architectural History and the History of Art: A Suspended Dialogue,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 58, no. 3 (September, 1999): 292–299, (294).

15 Michael Gubser, “Time and History in Alois Riegl’s Theory of Perception,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 3 (2005): 451–474, (473). His interest in attentiveness followed the theories of Wilhelm Wundt. See Margaret Olin, “Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl’s Concept of Attentiveness,” *The Art Bulletin*, 71:2 (1989): 285–299, (290).

16 Alina Payne, “Introduction: Renaissance and Baroque Architecture,” in *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture, The Companion to the History of Architecture, Volume I*, ed. Alina Payne (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), xxvii. Henri Zerner identifies this issue,

perspective, combined with the textually based knowledge of history, helps to identify how architecture's symbolic dynamism was instrumental in negotiating cultural differences.

Another key aspect of framing this book's argument is identifying places where people most likely used buildings as representational devices to negotiate inner-cultural tensions. In contrast to the well-established logic of dominant influences, it may seem arbitrary that many examples come from cities not known as revered intellectual or artistic centers. However, in this research strategy, the history of the contentious relationship between religious traditions—especially those rooted in Scytho-Siberian and Middle-Eastern legacies—and institutionalized Christianity informs which buildings to consider. Consequently, the choice of examples frequently follows clues offered by known instances of religious dissent; that is to say, discussed buildings identify communities where heterodox traditions and hegemony created strained relationships and even resulted in significant heretical movements or religious prosecution. Such places are essential for this book's argument because people living in them used architecture to reshape modalities of symbolic thought and redefine the relationships between ecclesiastically controlled religiosity and personal spiritual beliefs.¹⁷

This emphasis on faith and cultural diversity helps to structure this book's content. Whereas discussed examples identify the lesser-known geography of dissent, the narrative unfolds according to processes revealed by three better-known political events exemplifying periods of heightened tension between localized religious practices and dominant powers: the Byzantine Iconoclasm, the Cathar (Albigensian) Crusade, and the Protestant Reformation, which mark important steps leading to the period when the modern era emerged. And thus, after the "Introduction" outlining the argument, the

which he terms "reductionist criticism," as that which Riegl treated as a major problem in the discipline of art history. Henri Zerner, "Alois Riegl: Art, Value, and Historicism," *Daedalus*, vol. 105, no. 1, (Winter, 1976): 177–188, (185).

17 Mircea Eliade first systematically introduced such a distinction as the difference between the clerical tradition of religious ideas and popular religiosity. See Mircea Eliade, *History of Religious Ideas*, trans. Willard Ropes Trask (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978–1985 [1976]). Donald Preziosi has observed that because of "the fundamental fragility of instituted and enforced systems of thought (established religions in a strict sense)," ecclesiastical religiosity is always threatened by beliefs grounded in the human imagination. Donald Preziosi, *Art, Religion, Amnesia: The Enchantments of Credulity* (Abingdon, Oxon, U.K.: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 77. The term religiosity refers here to multifarious modes of faith, similar to what Barbara Holdcroft summarized in her "What is Religiosity?," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 10, no. 1 (September 2006): 89–103.

book starts with the “Beliefs and Imagery that Supported Resilient Ancient Worldviews” chapter summarizing those religious traditions and theological systems, which covertly inspired European artists, designers and infiltrated the supposedly Judeo-Christian identity of the West. It also samples built environments manifesting such attitudes and the symbolic forms transmitting those spiritual visions across cultural and political divisions.

The following “Byzantine Iconoclasm and Architecture” chapter shows how issues that triggered Iconoclasm resonated with ideas motivating church builders in the Eastern Roman Empire and the Caucasus, regions where ancient East-West relations shaped the emerging institutional and material structures of Christianity. Design practices of the time help identify the historical competition between two different models of religiosity: first, in which ecclesiastical authorities controlled the comprehension of the divine, and second, involving contemplative and imaginative modalities of faith infusing the living world and natural phenomena with symbolic meanings. Discussed buildings recorded how the Byzantine prohibition of icons disrupted architecturally productive attempts to reconcile these two models when the weaponized Iconoclastic controversy inflamed the distinction. After Iconoclasm, however, when Orthodox theology was again aligned with governance and its institutions controlled religious art in Byzantium, church designers in politically fragmented Armenia found more culturally inclusive ways to define human existence in the material and spiritual world.

“The Bogomils, the Cathars, and Christian Architecture” chapter then uses the history of the rise and eradication of the Cathars in southern France to provide an insight into how religious movements and architectural practices spread from the Balkans, inherently transmitted their Inner-Asian traditions and Scytho-Indian beliefs, and inadvertently prompted the centralization of political power in Western Europe. The discussed buildings show that pre-Gothic ecclesial structures in southern France were heterogeneous and represented beliefs in the spirituality of nature. In the first half of the twelfth century, remnants of the Visigothic legacy strongly resonated with ancient pagan mythologies and dualistic conceptions imported by the warriors returning from the First Crusade. Yet, the analysis also shows how, in response to that outburst of pagan curiosity and tolerant support for the heretics, ecclesiastical authorities conceived of Gothic cathedrals as sophisticated instruments helpful in suppressing uncontrollable religiosity.

In the next “The Architectural Renaissance of Pagan Representations” chapter, the so-called Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation are studied as other significant moments of tension. The discussion of that time’s

architecture reveals how the fall of Byzantium coincided not with the epistemically idealized rebirth of classical humanism in Italy but with a convergence of the resurging Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean philosophies and the legacy of Scytho-Indian interest in the spiritual significance of life. Buildings show that the infusion of vitality into concepts as abstract as those of intelligible Platonic Forms helped to divinize material reality and revitalize pagan attitudes towards nature. However, unlike when Gothic had emerged, this time, dissenters, especially those associated with the Protestant Reformation, took the initiative, and produced compositions that critically reshaped the perception of ecclesial authorities and challenged the status quo of Catholic domination. They questioned religiously sanctioned conventions and experimented with different sense-making processes. These efforts were particularly intense in heretically inclined Lombardy and the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, where designers revived ancient beliefs persisting in the eastern peripheries of Europe. In those regions, architects used buildings to envision Christianity inclusive of other worldviews in a new framework of economic and social relationships.

Then, the “Architecture and the Early Modern Modality of Thought” chapter discusses the consequence of the prolonged and politically charged religious dissent and shows how the emergence of the modern era can be traced to a new kind of design experimentation. In an almost ironic twist of history, architects of the Counter-Reformation appropriated mannerists’—their opponents—artistic inventions, reversed the process of questioning the status quo, and turned so-called baroque buildings and ordering principles into refined but covert tools for manipulating thought and spiritual attitudes to preempt critical insights. The modern era started, the chapter concludes, when the elites no longer needed religious justification to control how people interrelated and perceived the world.

This approach to studying the history of design practices requires a particular research methodology. When scholarship involves an exploration of found and seemingly unrelated conditions known mostly in specialized disciplines as discrete pieces of information, such a search for a new understanding resembles what Michel Foucault termed the archeology of knowledge. However, in this case, the approach hinges on the need to reveal difficult-to-identify relationships among those findings. In this publication, those connections will be primarily discovered in visual constructs—how they were designed to shape perception and thought processes. Although new in pre-modern architecture studies, a similar methodological approach to exploring cultural phenomena was employed by scholars such as Alois Riegl, who focused his work on perception control as the critical issue in art history and traced human subjectivity or

temporality in all forms of material production.¹⁸ Like his early attempts, this investigation also discerns perception-related design decisions in buildings, art objects, ancient artifacts, textiles, and other material outcomes of vernacular practices.

The book's methodology also relates to how Aby M. Warburg, a "historian of those areas of human culture that resist hard-and-fast classification and interpretation," used images in his *Mnemosyne* to study obscure interconnections in Renaissance and Medieval arts.¹⁹ Like many early modernist artists and architects, he operated on the cusp of the modernist enterprise turn and believed in the cultural agency of new image reproduction techniques.²⁰ Similar to this study's objective, his goal was to decipher "those areas of human culture that resist hard-and-fast classification and interpretation," and to do so, he turned his extensive collection of reproduced pictures into an analytical tool helpful in deciphering traces of social or collective memory amounting to the "history of human thought."²¹ However, whereas Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, and their contemporaries injudiciously applied principles of iconology—the theory that took for granted that images transmitted symbols with well-defined meanings—in this analysis, visual constructs are not merely treated as means to communicate coded messages, but as historical instances of perception management. This work involves multiple pictures precisely documenting material compositions, some regular photographs, and other

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- 18 Riegl addressed the issue of the relevance of all kinds of material production in the history of art in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze*. See Alois Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, eds. Karl M. Swoboda, and Hans Sedlmayr (Augsburg-Wien: Dr. Benno Filser, 1929), 64. To emphasize his indiscriminate approach to such diverse sources, Riegl once told Dvořák that "the best art historian [was] the one who has no personal taste because art history is about finding objective criteria for historical development." See, Max Dvořák, „Alois Riegl,“ in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, eds. Dvořák, Max, Johannes Wilde, and Karl M. Swoboda (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1929), 280–298, (285). Such methodological emphasis may also be seen as related to Riegl's discussion of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Dutch art. Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 141, cited in Olin, "Forms of Respect," 289.
- 19 Kurt W. Forster, "Introduction" in Aby M. Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 1–75, (2). See also Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012).
- 20 See Richard Brilliant, "Winckelmann and Warburg: Contrasting Attitudes toward the Instrumental Authority of Ancient Art," in *Antiquity and Its Interpreters*, eds. Alina Alexandra Payne, Ann L. Kuttner, and Rebekah Smick (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 269–275.
- 21 Forster, "Introduction," 2 and 598. Warburg's methodology has been discussed in Ernst Hans J. Gombrich and Fritz Saxl, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970).

digitally constructed illustrations, all meant to interact on pages of this publication. Cases discussed here focus on the visually recorded perseverance of certain ways of perceiving and thinking about the world, showing when and to what degree they were developed, imported, received, or revived. Such a methodology resonates with what David Summers discussed as the “functionalist” approach.²² It is necessary, he argued, to focus on how particular examples of art (and architecture) were constructed to operate—how they directed human thought rather than what messages they communicated.²³ Because modes of perceiving and making sense of what one sees reflect an attitude toward reality—a difficult-to-track, almost psychological phenomenon—it is more feasible to study how a particular design implies observations’ relevance. Hence, tracking the control of attention is crucial in this investigation.

In many discussed cases, deciphering how things or interiors were organized to direct viewing—how a building shaped perception to suggest the importance of its particular attributes or relationships—provides clues about how architecture worked as a representational device. For instance, it does matter here how the relationship between an edifice and its environment activated a selective perception of the material world. It is also significant whether or not a figurative fragment of an interior was perceptually singled out or made dependent on attributes in its vicinity, whether the visual field operated in consort or included discordant elements. In this approach, cases of intentional ambiguity or tension are as relevant as deliberate and unequivocal communication of a visually coded message or conforming to a well-established symbolic convention. Understanding such nuanced design decisions reaches far beyond the limitations of iconology and has little—if anything—to do with architectural problem-solving.

To consider how interrelated the discussed issues were, in this work, they are frequently represented by multiple illustrations clustered together or placed on a full spread for comparison. When pictures are positioned in close proximity or might be easily found on pages of this publication, they reveal to what degree their features resonate—their relationships become discernable. However, this collection of examples requires special efforts to show those design attributes—especially in three-dimensional space of architecture—that a book’s reader could otherwise miss. Therefore, in many cases, a photogrammetric shell model accompanies regular photographs of a building. Such a digital illustration shows not a single view but a more comprehensive

22 David Summers, “‘Form,’ Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1989): 372–406, (393).

23 The “functionalist” approach is Summers’ remedy for the preemptive character of the idealistic and materialistic episteme and essentialist assumptions.

representation of the entire enclosed space, allowing—like interiors—the environment to guide the reader’s attention. Such models accurately depict shapes and sizes of spaces and the nuances of visual stimuli, be it the distribution of light, colors, the iconographic program, or exposed materiality. Pictures showing these virtual shells are new in architectural history books but essential in this methodology. They shift focus away from considering buildings as typological formal patterns or a collection of internal views affirming stylistic characteristics. Digital shells afford a more holistic—almost immersive—interaction with the discussed environment.

By so doing, the book reveals that idiosyncratic perceptual experiences were crucial in the evolution of design practices. Experimental architecture empowered the imagination to reconfigure verbal thought processes. Evocative visual constructs played a similar role in the history of religions. For example, Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, the fifteenth-century Italian philosopher and theologian, when he studied the location of pagan mysteries in ancient Orphic texts, uncovered evocative visions’ disruptive and stimulating role in controlling a reader’s attention. Edgar Wind identifies Pico’s understanding of this “poetic theology” as leading to the revival in the Renaissance of other, Mosaic and Pauline, secrets linking pagan, Hebrew, and Christian theologies.²⁴ In this work, such information resonates with many other instances of religious and intellectual dissension, which employed disruptive and stimulating visual experiences to challenge the integrity of dominant theologies or their ideological underpinning.

Consequently, judiciously selected illustrations of symbolic environments and forms help here to counteract the conventional expectation that historical architecture represented a progression of cohesive artistic and ideological programs. The sequence of pictures emphasizing design experimentation thus reaches beyond the so-called history of ideas—the epistemic tendency to exclusively ground arguments in well-formed conceptions.²⁵ The shortcomings of that scholarly convention can be traced to the emergence of philosophical systems. For example, Arnold Hermann asserts that, between the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, narratives associated with Greek gods were abstracted; concepts such as “Love, Strife, Being, Change, Mind, Justice, Good,

24 Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), 20 and 17.

25 This epistemic problem is similar to how Machiavelli’s work relates to philosophy, as Esposito discusses in *Living Thought*, 46.

and Necessity” were decoupled from imperfect deities personifying them.²⁶ While undoubtedly helpful in turning existential issues and dynamic aspects of cultural interactions into principles of rational analysis and with consequences reaching the Hegelian teleological philosophy of history, that kind of epistemic reduction would not be productive in the search for material traces of frequently inadvertent or unconscious negotiations between diverse traditions and political forces.²⁷

At the other end of the methodological spectrum are the disciplines entirely focused on studying religiously charged visual practices decoupled from any dogmatic system. Radcliffe Edmonds, for example, discusses the same Orphic legacy in Greek culture as explainable by the so-called “imagistic” mode of religiosity.²⁸ The term was coined by Harvey Whitehouse, an ethnographer and cognitive theorist who studied nondoctrinal religious practices in traditional societies.²⁹ He documented in Melanesia rituals and symbolic forms mostly devoid of any theological structure and without institutional authorities to control them.³⁰ In such ancient communities, “virtually no attempt was made [by the faithful] to communicate religious ideas as bodies of doctrine. Revelations were codified in iconic imagery, transmitted primarily through the choreography of collective ritual performances. Religious representations were structured as sets of revelatory images connected by loose (and

26 Arnold Hermann, *To Think Like God: Pythagoras and Parmenides, the Origins of Philosophy* (Las Vegas, Nev: Parmenides Pub, 2004), 1–2. The cohesion of a philosophical system could be measured by its ability to withstand the “integration challenge,” which George Karamanolis discusses as the relationship between ontology and epistemology. George Karamanolis, “Plotinus on Quality and Immanent Form,” in *Philosophy of Nature in Neo-Platonism*, eds., R. Chiaradonna, F. Trabattoni, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 79–101, (85).

27 See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (Kitchener, ON: Batoche Books, 2001).

28 Radcliffe Edmonds addresses such religious practices while discussing the Orphic legacy in his *Redefining Ancient Orphism: A Study in Greek Religion* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 246.

29 Harvey Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons: The Cognitive, Social, and Historical Implications of Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

30 Whitehouse’s observations are also similar to Julian Baldick’s notes about the Inner Eurasian model of religiosity, which more directly applies to cases discussed in this book. Julian Baldick, *Animal and Shaman: Ancient Religions of Central Asia* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000). Similar references to symbolic performances can also be found in Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972, [1951]), but they are already colored by the “modernist enterprise” agenda. See, for example, *Ibid.*, 399.

somewhat fluid) thematic associations, rather than as cohering strings of logically connected dogma.”³¹

Yet, neither the knowledge of those practices nor the behavioral methodology used to record them would be helpful in this book. The discussed architecture, especially that related to dissenting movements, will show that design practices frequently reached far beyond spiritual infatuation, and their agency depended on more than emotional stimuli. This work suggests that syncretic environments and symbolically experimental forms operated in a manner closer to how Walter Benjamin defined “thinking-in-images,” the sense-making process in which the latency of the impression an image initially creates affords a slow mental response involving unconscious associations and cultural memory.³²

Altogether, this publication focuses on visual constructs to discern how compositions created by diverse communities or nonconforming designers critically engaged the imagination to open up or reshape the dominant mode of thought. Consequently, it uncovers how the diversity of worldviews informed lesser-known modes of cultural production. Rather than analyzing architecture in terms of its behavioral or economic determinants or as an artistic expression of purpose-driven political programs, this study searches for those design decisions that turned culturally resilient issues or concerns into instruments of social and political change. Just like the discussed buildings, this work is motivated by questions such as: what was it about people’s lives that the advancement of religious, philosophical, and scientific systems could not put to rest? Why could ways of thinking about the world, known from places distant in space and time, reappear in a seemingly completely different socio-economic reality? Why—as Heinrich Wölfflin once regrettably admitted he could not explain—did certain formal developments in arts end and begin again?³³ Why was material production—architecture in particular—more likely to receive and explore these perturbing dilemmas than philosophical or theological discourses?

31 Whitehouse, *Arguments*, 14; cited in Edmonds, *Redefining*, 246.

32 For a discussion of thinking-in-images as an epistemic construct, see Sigrid Weigel, “Temporality of Images: Walter Benjamin’s Image-Based Epistemology and Its Preconditions in Visual Arts and Media History,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 41, no. 2 (Winter 2015), 344–366, (347 and 351).

33 Heinrich Wölfflin, and Mary Hottinger. *Principles of Art History, The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (New York, NY: Holt, 1932), 233; discussed in Summers, “Form,” 387, and in Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2009) 142.

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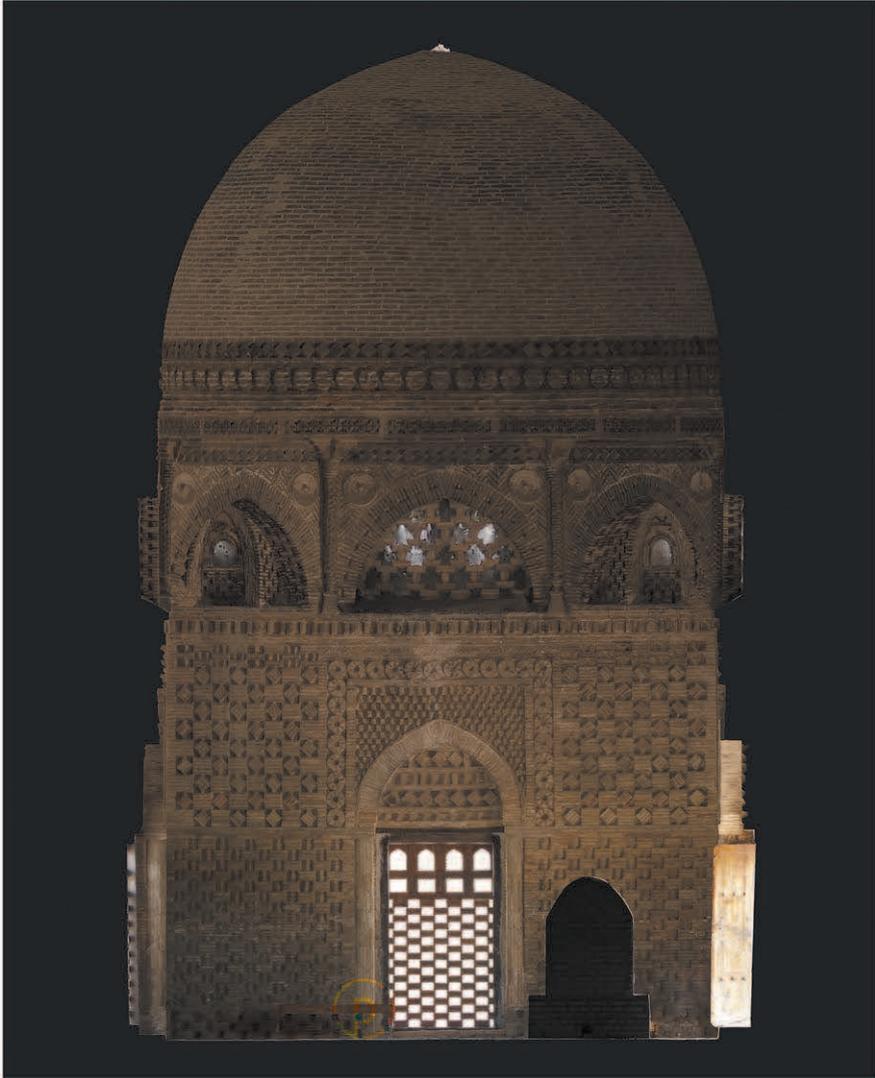
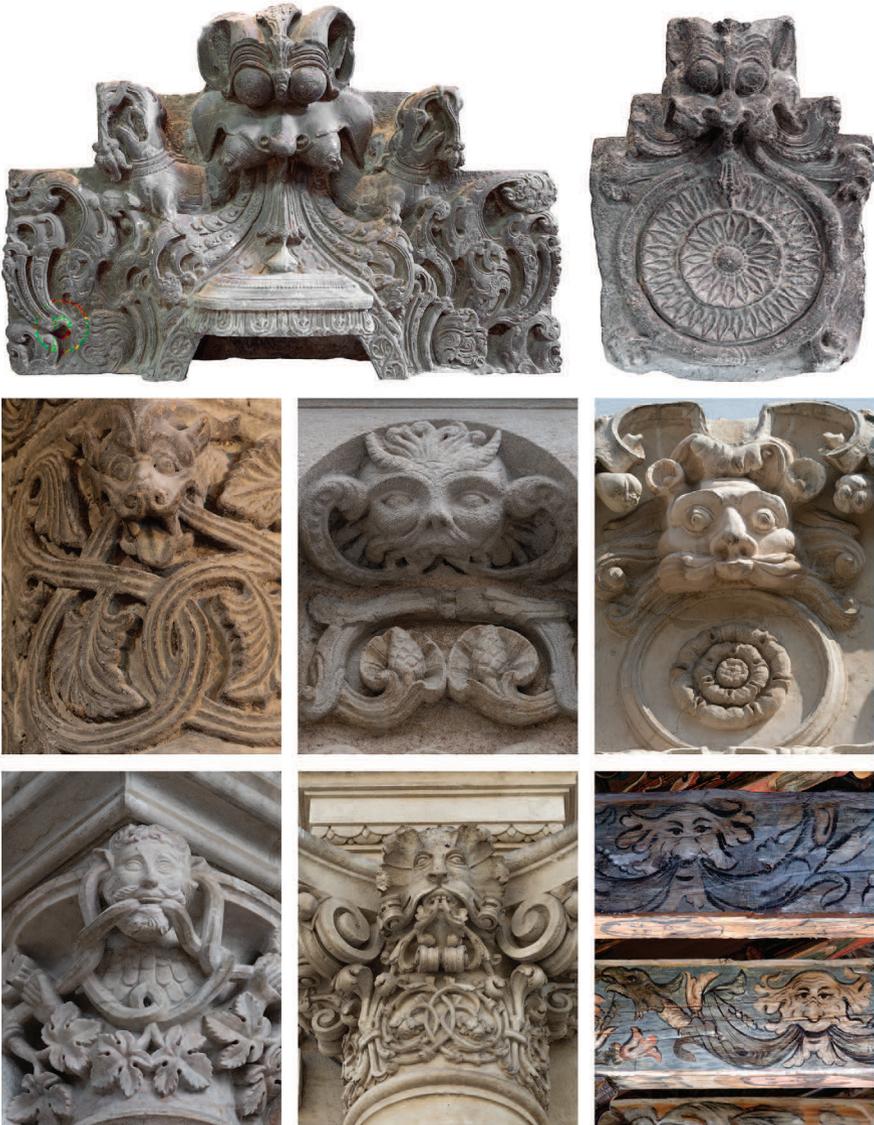


FIGURE 1.15B The Samanid Mausoleum, Bukhara, photogrammetric section

examples of Islamic architecture. This design is different, however, from that of the Mausoleum of Shadi Mulk Aga. In Samarkand, the interior projected the need to decipher and appreciate the logic of its geometric integrity, as if to imply that true faith could be measured by the degree of compliance with arbitrary rules. Conversely, the Samanid Mausoleum confronts everybody with difficult-to-notice and symbolically ambiguous phenomena. The building encourages a person to pay attention to subtle perceptual attributes, implies intimate contemplation of their elusive character, and solicits making sense of



FIGURES 1.35A–H Ancient Kirttimukha and its European versions, examples from Chennai (1.35a, b-Government Museum, Chennai), Pavia, Italy (1.35c), Poitiers, France (1.35d), Lublin, Poland (1.35e), Lisbon, Portugal (1.35f), Lecce, Italy (1.35g), and Agrigento, Sicily (1.35h)

a lotus flower. As will be discussed in detail, such buildings constructed at the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Reformation suggest that, in that region, the Scythian legacy supported the reception of Indian beliefs, and such a mixture of traditions stimulated religious dissent.



FIGURE 2.9 The Avazan Church, Geghard, Armenia, photogrammetric model

people come with small bottles to collect the water and pray. The view from below does not show the basin, but it would be located in the image's lower-left corner (fully visible in Figure 2.10c). That water-filled depression has always separated the main cave volume from a roughly shaped chamber depicted as the dark form at the bottom of Figure 2.9. A believer had to cross the water threshold and then go through a narrow door to enter it. This spatial arrangement indicates that the small room was the pagan shrine's oldest and most secretive part.

The church space looks different now from what Saint Gregory could have seen. The main interior was reshaped in the thirteenth century by enlarging the original cave. The new design reoriented the site. That oldest symbolic axis is still implied by a shallow straight-line channel carved in the floor (visible



FIGURE 2.16 The Chapel of Saint Barbara, Göreme, photogrammetric model

they prayed wherever they found it convenient.⁶⁷ The heretics were also accustomed to saying: “The church is not the one which is built by men, but we ourselves.”⁶⁸ Although they might have considered images and constructed shrines as spiritually deficient, they probably had to compromise and change their old ways after the triumph of Orthodoxy. However, the Saint Barbara Chapel’s architecture shows how dissenters preserved the ancient modality of religious thought. Unlike the nearby Dark Church, which was turned into a medium to communicate illustrated messages unequivocally, Cappadocian

67 Xosrov Anjevaci, *Matenadaran # 8075*, fol. 159, as cited in Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, 162.

68 Nerses Snorhali, *Letters*, 269, cited in Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, 162. In so saying, they were following St. Paul, who said that the sanctuary of God is the community itself. 1 Corinthians 3:16.



FIGURE 3.8B The Church of the Monastery of Saint Naum near Ohrid, photogrammetric model

necessary for an intense and intimate encounter with Christianity as a mystical faith. The building is so composed that its surfaces surround a person as if visually wrapping around a believer. The floor size is only sufficient for a small group of people. A few narrow and tall chairs on its perimeter imply that it is designed for a limited number of monks gathered in meditation. This perfect example of the contemplative model of religiosity transforms Christian imagery and light phenomena into stimuli that lead attention to areas where there is nothing visible in the church to communicate a pre-determined meaning—places for the imagination to reach beyond the limits of theological narratives.



FIGURE 3.15A The Church of the Madonna of the Cross, Matera, Italy, photogrammetric model

historians used similar cross-in-the-circle forms to identify the clandestine presence of Bogomils or even older heterodox movements.⁵⁹ The composi-

59 For example, Nikos Čausidis associates the cross in a circle sign with Kavadarci, possibly a Manichaean site in Macedonia, and the village of Yalyancik, possibly the primary site of the Bogomils (Drogovite). See Nikos Čausidis [Čausidis, Никос Чаусидис], “The Funeral Stelae of the ‘Kavadarci Group,’ in Nenad Cambi, Guntram Koch, eds., *Macedonia:*



FIGURE 3.22 The Church of Saint-Jean, Aubeterre-sur-Dronne, France, photogrammetric section

what is called the crypt. The lowest and probably the oldest part was the subterranean interior. It is vaguely visible in the lower-right corner of Figure 3.22 and in Figure 3.23b. The large monolithic church, shown on the left side of the section (Figure 3.22), represents the last post-Crusade development. It was accessible via an older but now-missing small rock-hewn basilica represented in the section by the only fragment (right to the large church) that survived after a collapsing bell tower destroyed the main nave.⁸¹ Judging by the location and size of the extant windows, the basilica might have been similar in height to that remaining fragment. Pierre de Castillon, viscount of Aubeterre, commissioned the monumental interior to commemorate his participation in the First Crusade and to accommodate precious Christian relics he brought on his return from the Holy Land.⁸²

The history of this structure is and probably will remain unclear. However, this cavernous architecture may help elucidate why the knights' return from the Crusade coincided with the rise of heretical tendencies. Judging by the multiplicity of graves under the floors of this artificial cave and its auxiliary

81 *Aubeterre-sur-Dronne, l'église souterraine* (Chalais Imprimerie F. Berton, 2014). The booklet summarizes some aspects of the studies done under Jean-Luc Piatt's supervision (<http://journals.openedition.org/adlfi/1447>, accessed in 2020).

82 *Aube Terre-sur-Drone*, 7. The family also owned Saint-Million and constructed a similar monolithic church there.

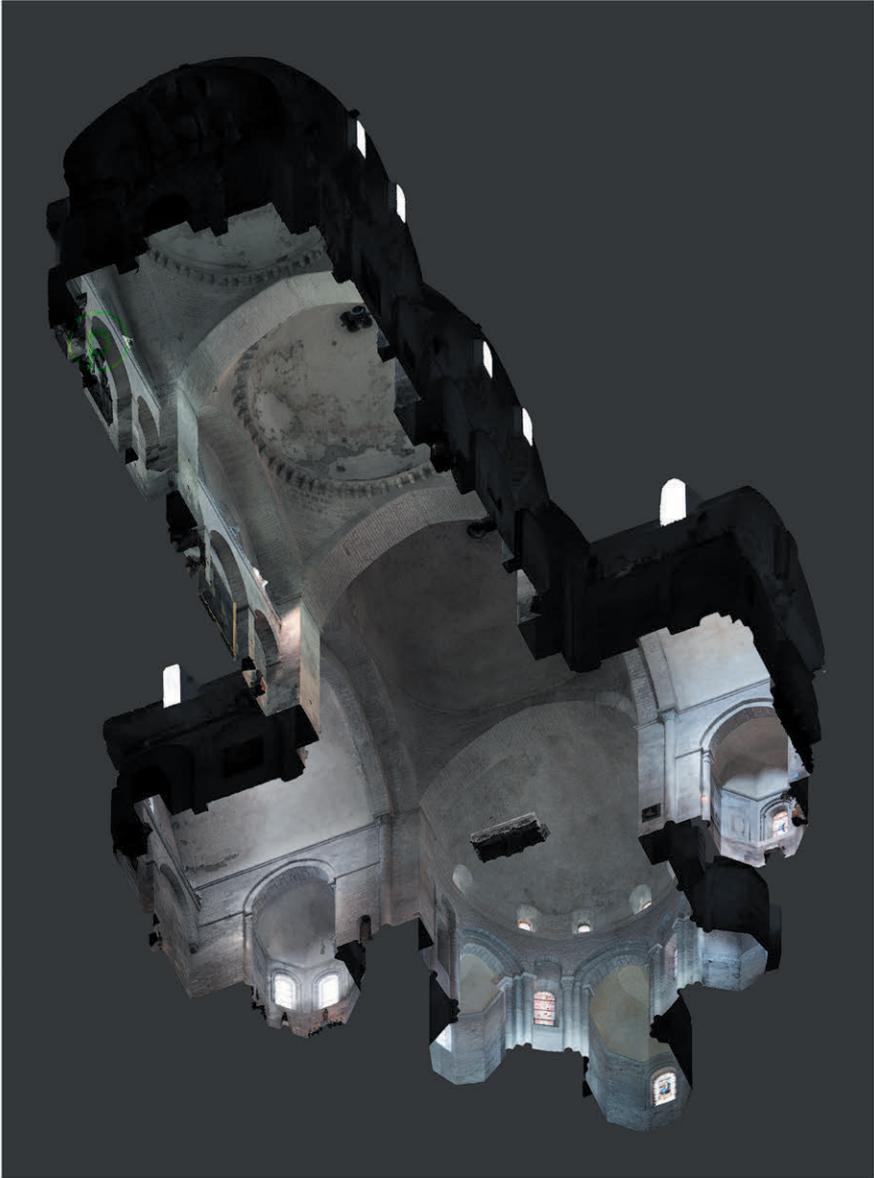


FIGURE 3.32B The Sainte-Marie Abbey Church, Souillac, France, photogrammetric model

that French architecture influenced the Eastern Roman Empire.¹⁰⁹ Strygowski's suggestion that the Germigny-des-Prés church resembles the fifth-century

109 Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque*, 17.



FIGURE 4.7 The Holy Trinity Chapel, Lublin, Poland, photogrammetric model

efforts. The city was closely aligned with the king's political program because its citizens were instrumental in facilitating the alliance.³⁹ In gratitude, in addition to granting commercial privileges to Lublin, the new king designated the Holy Trinity Chapel (*Kaplica Świętej Trójcy*) at the Royal Castle to manifest his vision of religious coexistence. Although the first record referring to the chapel comes from 1326, its completion date is unknown. Some historians believe that the final phase of the construction process coincided with Jagiełło's ascension to the throne.⁴⁰ Whereas the building's structural solution and exterior articulation were Gothic—thus emblematically Catholic—Jagiełło commissioned the Russian-Byzantine painters from territories now belonging to Ukraine.⁴¹ The photogrammetric shell model (Figure 4.7) reveals the tension created by such a decision. While Gothic elements emphasize the logic of construction, paintings envelop a believer in an iconographic environment. Różycka-Bryzek—an

39 Henryk Samsonowicz, *Polska Jana Długosza* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 180.

40 Tomasz Gąsiorowski, in an unpublished study, discussed some rare single-column solutions by Polish and Czech designers, and they helped him date the chapel's construction to around the last quarter of the fourteenth century.

41 Anna Różycka-Bryzek, *Freski w kaplicy zamku lubelskiego* (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2000), 156.



FIGURE 4.27A The Sagrestia Nuova, Florence, photogrammetric section



FIGURE 5.13A The St. Johns Church, Vilnius, Lithuania

appropriate for the new challenge. Therefore, some of the most baroque—in a dictionary sense of extravagantly ornate, florid, and convoluted—church interiors were built in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

For example, the altar shown in Figure 5.13a was constructed between 1738 and 1749 in the St. Johns Church, which at the time belonged to the University of Vilnius, originally the Jesuit College, *Almae Academia et Universitas Vlnensis Societatis Jesu*. The Jesuits faced a particularly challenging task in those territories. The sanctuary embellishment is just a sample from a broad spectrum