Interpretation and Conservation
of Sacred Space:
A Ritual-based Approach

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "Interpretation and Conservation of Sacred Space: A Ritual-based Approach" by Tara Kathleen Gaskin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional church buildings negotiate thresholds in a way that supports a program of cyclical and elevating rituals. Each threshold is marked by an architectural image, one that comes to be associated with a particular practice or event. This thesis begins with an analysis of the experience of sacred spaces, then considers ways to emphasize qualities of existing elements. The design inhabits the liminal spaces across thresholds and promotes the contemporary ritual practices of art.

The chosen test site for the design methodology is Central Presbyterian Church on the bank of the Grand River in Cambridge, Ontario. A recent resurgence of the local creative community has drawn interest to the area and provides the basis of the user-based program for this project.

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The people of Central Presbyterian Church for your enthusiasm and kindness.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Churches are extraordinary buildings. They pervade the Canadian landscape as conflicted symbols of once powerful institutions that anchored urban, rural and suburban communities. Initially, the church was built to serve a particular religious creed, yet it was also intended to be community-centric. Moreover, while most places of worship do not hold the same significance they did for generations past, they are still, at the very least, way-finding beacons and, as such, inspire a sense of public ownership.

Nevertheless, Canada's church-going population is in decline, and many congregations find themselves burdened by their aging and oversized buildings. The result is a stock of hundreds of buildings across Canada that are slated to close within a decade. This thesis will therefore consider the following questions: how do people relate to these buildings and their traditional forms? And, inversely, how can the buildings be adapted to better relate to the needs of their communities?

Through this investigation, strategies for adaptive reuse of places of worship will be explored with the intention of developing a methodology for church building conversion, that can be applied in a number of scenarios across Canada. The study exists in the context of centuries of building conversions which reach back to Classical Antiquity, when pagan temples were systematically transformed to Christian churches. Seminal examples throughout history, such as the conversion of the Great Mosque of Córdoba to a Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, as well as recent contemporary works, will be noted in the literature review that follows.

The precedent studies illustrate changes and adaptations in church architecture over millennia, leading up to this project, which is a small piece of a broad history.

This thesis concentrates on Central Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada as a site on which to study the design strategy for the conversion of a church to a new use. Central Church is an apt subject in a number of ways; it embodies the quintessential Protestant church form; and, its location at the centre of the city is receptive to a number of cultural and natural forces that will drive the program and design.

Central Presbyterian Church in downtown Cambridge, Photograph from Shutterstock, SF Photo, annotation by author.

Thesis Question

How can themes of religious ritual define a method for repurposing church buildings?

Methodology

The church, as a site in itself, is rich with carefully articulated transitional moments which allude to traditional organization and operation of Christian ritual practices. This thesis is rooted in an analysis of existing threshold elements and the phenomenological qualities embodied in them. Moreover, liminal areas on either side of the thresholds begin to blur the boundaries between sacred space and its secular surroundings.

The design development of this thesis creates a form which emphasizes the qualities of thresholds in a hierophanic space. Light interventions occupy the space on either side of a threshold element and curate the experience of the space. Meanwhile, complementary interventions throughout the building support the functional program of a new media arts centre.
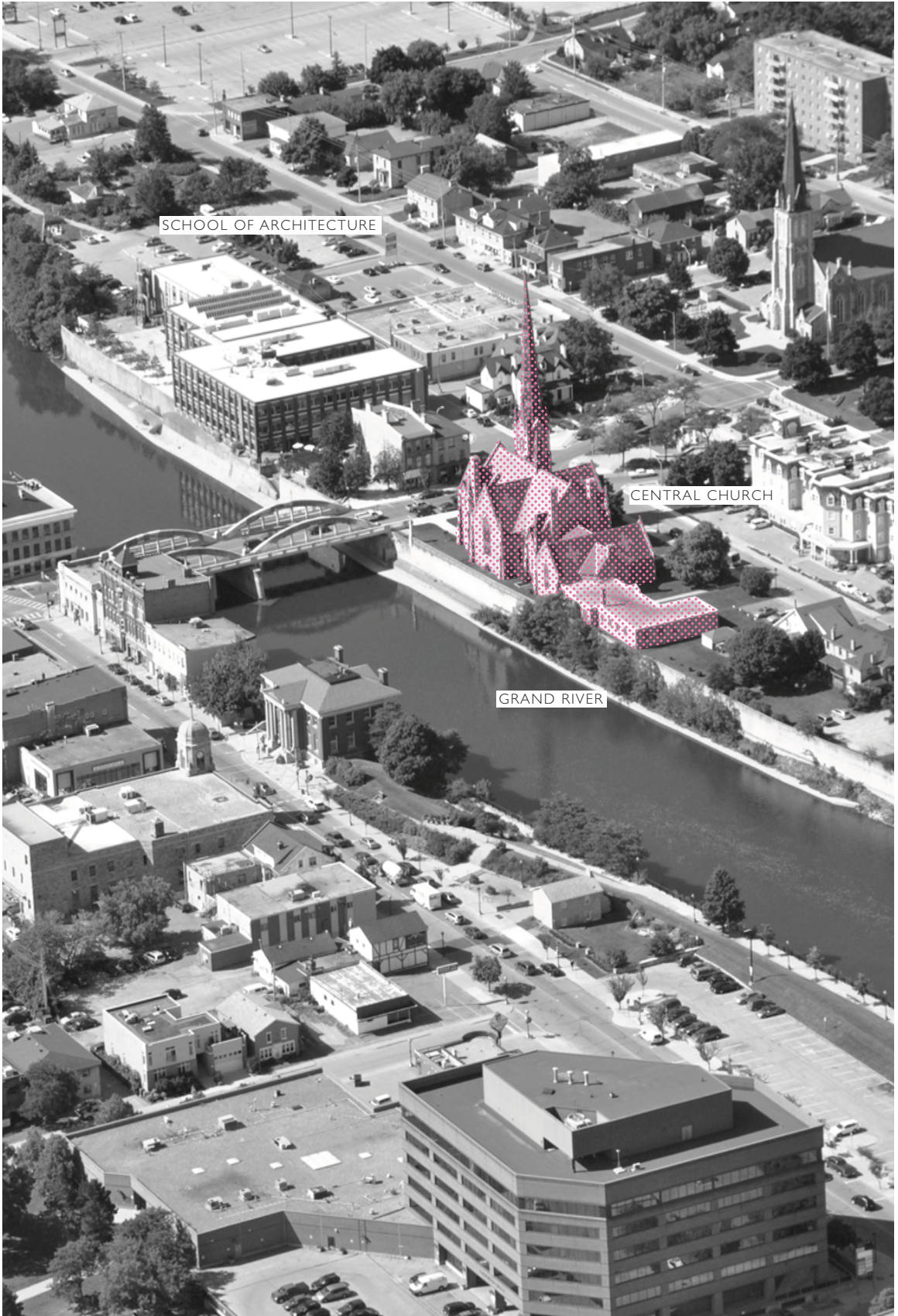
Downtown Cambridge, Ontario. Photograph from Shutterstock, SF Photo, annotation by author.

CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDIES

Adapting and Transforming Places of Worship

Throughout the long history of buildings that house religious congregations, the spaces have continually evolved. In the context of North American Christianity, contemporary reasons for growth and decline have had more to do with demographic change and less to do with political climate. All things considered though, the overarching concept of transformation and reuse is hardly a departure from the norm.

When one reviews the archive of places of worship over the past two thousand years, precedents emerge of temples, mosques, meeting houses and churches undergoing changes to remain relevant to the communities of which they are a part. Chris van Uffelen cites an example from Córdoba when, in the early thirteenth century, a new cathedral was established within the Great Mosque, making use of existing shaft timbers and placing a new nave within the structure.[1]

Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, a seminal work of religious architecture, has undergone transformation in its use and physical appearance over time. It was built as a Christian cathedral and served that purpose for over 1000 years. It was transformed to a mosque under the Ottoman Empire in 1453.[2] Then, following the First World War and foundation of the Turkish Republic it opened as a museum, ending its use as a place of worship.
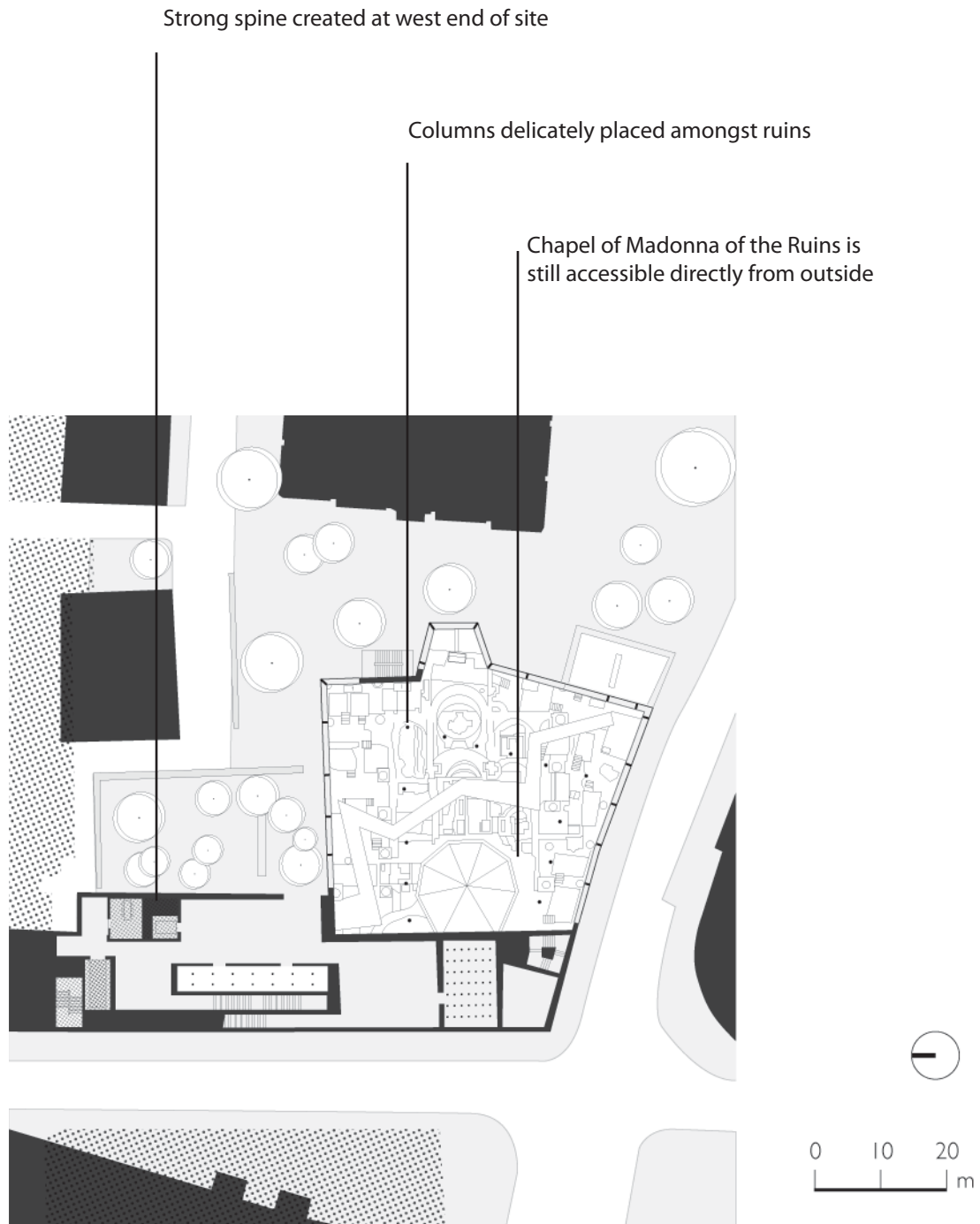
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1   Chris van Uffelen, *Re-Use Architecture* (Salenstein: Braun, 2010), 7.

2   Ibid.

Similarly, in the sixteenth century, great changes affected the organizational structure of many churches following the Protestant Reformation. In this time, there was a shift in perception from the church as the house of God to a place for the people of God, an idea brought about as part of the Reformer's inclination toward Old Testament theology. Often, minimal adaptations satisfied, and the conversion involved a rearrangement of the space to eliminate the threshold between the nave and chancel. All measures taken were controlled by the protestants' emphasis on Word and Sacrament, the unity of ministry and lay people worshipping together in community.

These historic accounts of reorganization and adaptation of places of worship are widely researched and frequently analyzed. However, even though places of worship are closing their doors across the country, little has been published regarding contemporary conversions, short of coffee table books with large, glossy photographs and minimal commentary.

Here, two case studies are presented with discussion of their initial aspirations through to their ultimate expressions. Each one demonstrates a unique position from which to generate discussion of premodern and modern realizations of ritual in space. Peter Zumthor's Kolumba Museum in Cologne, Germany, is the paradigm of a new cultural centre risen from the ruins of a former place of worship. John Hejduk's unbuilt work entitled *Cathedral* provokes a discourse on space, generated through poetry and unabashed spirituality.

Strong spine created at west end of site

Columns delicately placed amongst ruins

Chapel of Madonna of the Ruins is
still accessible directly from outside

0   10   20
m

Peter Zumthor drawing with annotations by the author, first floor plan of Kolumba Museum (2007).
From Capezzuto, "Light in the Castle"

Kolumba Museum, Peter Zumthor

Cologne, Germany

The Kolumba Museum was opened in 2007 as the new location for the Köln Archbishopric Diocesan Art Museum. Its principle purpose was to house a disparate collection of fine art works ranging from classical to contemporary. Although, on account of its situation amidst layers of Roman ruins, first-century city walls, Gallic, Romanesque and late-Gothic remains, it was laden with the responsibility to transcribe the anthology of historic remnants.[3]

Zumthor, a Swiss architect famed for his attention to the individual's experience of space, employed precise tactics to create spatial order throughout the new exhibition spaces winding around the archaeological remains. Three core components, denoted in the plan on the previous page, anticipate and choreograph the path through the building. Thirteen slender columns were placed among ancient stones so as not to pierce them; an addition to the west perimeter of the site created an emphatic lateral spine; and, a 1950 Chapel of Madonna of the Ruins, by German architect Gottfried Böhm, remained accessible from the outside.[4]

With the orientation of the new design intervention established, architectonics and materiality are used to retain intimate and subtle qualities that had existed on the site. A perforated stone wall was developed over years of study, and often tested at 1:1.[5] The experiments were characteristic of Zumthor's thoughtfulness, which goes beyond the visual

3   Rita Capezzuto, "Light in the Castle," *Domus* 909 (2007): 34.

4   Ibid., 36.

5   Ibid.

aspects of a project and considers how materials feel, smell, sound and evoke memories. The screen allows air and light to enter through the warm grey stone of a colour that vibrates between yellow, red, green and blue. The quality of light recalls the atmosphere of the Gothic church that stood on this site, before the almost complete destruction of the city of Cologne during World War II.[6] On the exterior, the poetic and expressive interior is strengthened with outreach and outward glances preserved through street level access to the chapel.

At Kolumba, Zumthor has produced a building that intertwines collective memory and contemporary culture, to create an entirely new experience of the place. The addition makes sense of the ancient site for visitors, while allowing them to create their own memories of the place. The significance of the Kolumba Museum, to this thesis, is in the comparable ambition to intervene on a historical site, with an addition that simultaneously recalls the building's history and promotes its future use. In both cases, this is achieved through a design that augments defining qualities of the existing site. For the most part, the existing conditions are retained and the additions form a further stratum on the layered history of the site.

Cathedral, John Hejduk

The work of John Hejduk sets forth a second approach to the architectural treatment of sacred space. Hejduk was an American architect, artist and educator whose ideas on architecture are carried mostly through drawings, rather than built works. This is seen in his development of *Cathedral*

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6   Christian Schittich, "Kolumba in Koln - Ein Museum fur die Kunst," *Detail* 11 (2007): 1266-1267.

Winding exhibition space and columns of the new construction are pictured here amongst the archaeological remains on the site. Photograph by Jose Fernando Vazquez, from Arch Daily, *Kolumba Museum/Peter Zumthor*

Stone wall exterior with remnants of Roman ruins visible at street level. Photograph by Jose Fernando Vazquez, from Arch Daily, *Kolumba Museum/Peter Zumthor*

in which he uses fictional narrative, rather than structural expression to give form to the design.

Cathedral further differs from Zumthor's tangible work in that it does not seek to transcribe layers of time, but characterizes one moment within a space.[7] The model below gives an overall view of the architectural manifestation of Hejduk's intentions.
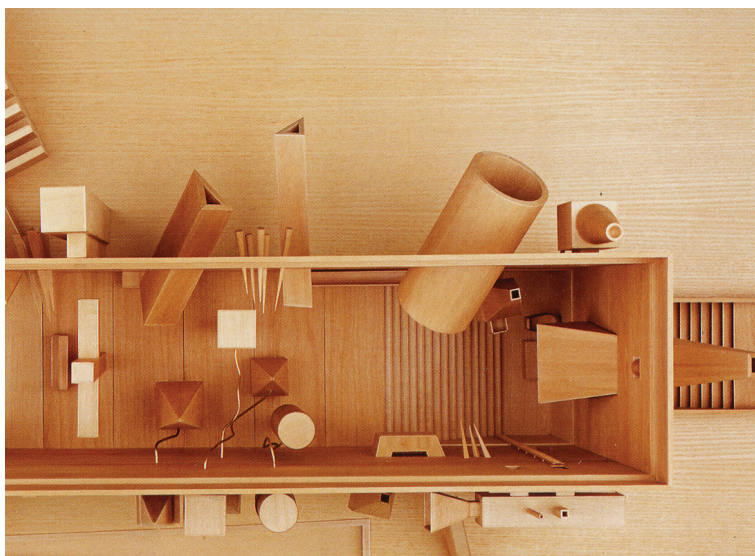
A model of John Hejduk's *Cathedral* completed by the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Photograph from Hays and Hejduk, *Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk*

A collection of drawings by Hejduk are most successful in conveying the program and intent for his design. His drawings are intentional, in that the medium takes an important role in the design process. They go beyond the typical instrumental purpose of drawings as representations of a complete and rationalized design. On the following page is one of Hejduk's drawings, used in the development of

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7   Michael K. Hays and John Hejduk, *Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2002), 5.

Cathedral. In it, one can sense the enthusiastic gestures that encapsulate the artist's ideas of space and sequence.

Hejduk's unconventional approach has heavily influenced the design development of this thesis. In a similar manner to Hejduk, this project uses abstract models to isolate and convey qualities of the existing spaces. Thereafter, a series of drawings establish the outline of the design. These drawings become the main point of reference for the formal design, as opposed to a linear system which calls for drawings to follow the establishment of a spatial organization.

As a precedent study, Hejduk's work does have limitations. *Cathedral,* for example, does not have a specific site. It is interesting to consider the direction his work would take, given the constraints of a defining context.
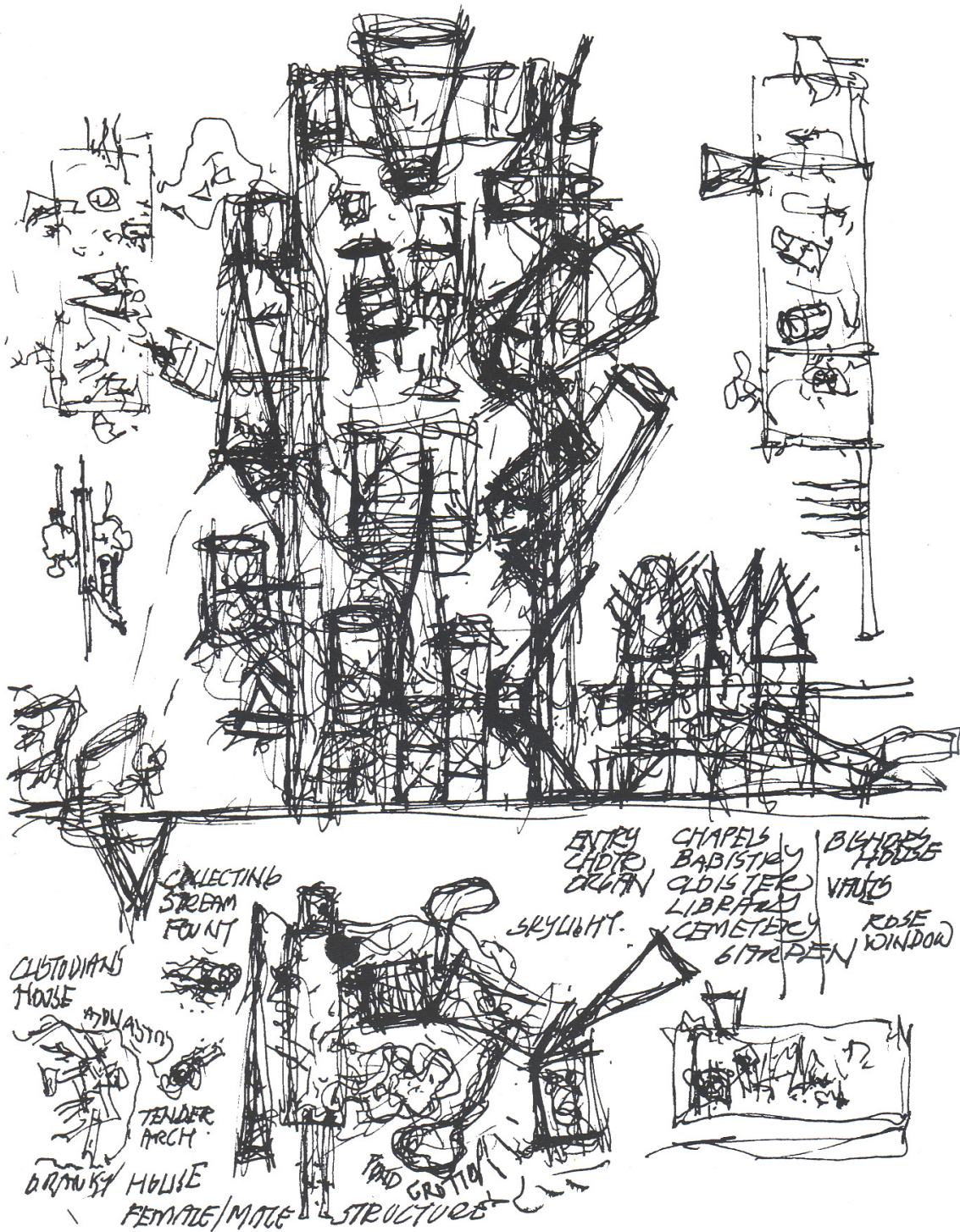
John Hejduk, drawing of the development of *Cathedral*. From Hays and Hejduk, *Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk*

CHAPTER 3: SITE

Central Presbyterian Church

The site of this thesis is in Cambridge, Ontario, in a stone, Gothic-Revival style church, completed in 1882. It is located on a prominent corner in the former town of Galt, now part of the amalgamated City of Cambridge. At the time of the church's construction, it was one of many projects built to accommodate the influx of settlement in what was an important industrial centre. Its impressive size and structure were indicative of the prominence the church held within the community.
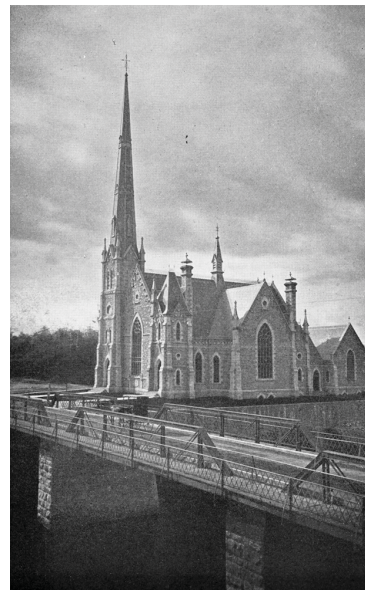
More important than Central Church's situation and surroundings, is the manner in which it stands for a specific system of Christian beliefs, as a quintessential piece of Protestant architecture. Aspects of the traditional rituals–theology and liturgy–are realized through space and materials, congruent with an ideology developed over centuries.

In the context of this thesis, it is important to have an understanding of the complexities of church architecture. Comprehension of the fundamental concepts of the theology of space, will help create a dialogue through the layers of styles and time.

Central Presbyterian Church 1882. Photograph from James A.R. Dickson, *Ebenezer: a History of Central Presbyterian Church, Galt, Ontario*

Ritual Practices

Theology

Central Church is ultimately governed by the Presbyterian Church in Canada and adheres to common beliefs of this Protestant branch of Christianity. Its roots go
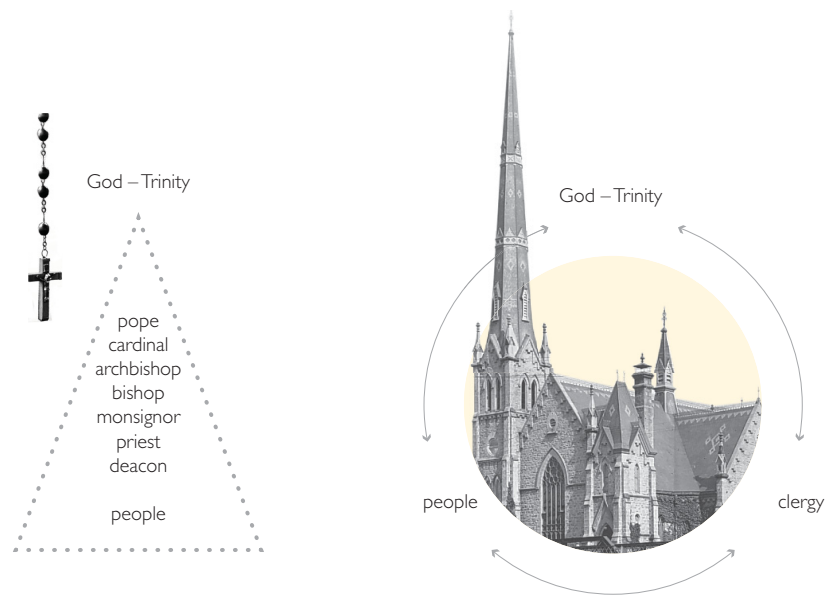
Cambridge

Ontario

Region of Waterloo

Site context within Ontario and Region of Waterloo

back to the early 16th century when the Presbyterian Church, sprang from the Protestant Reformation along with three other main denominations–Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist.

The Reformation was a major event in the history of Christianity. A group of church leaders banded together in objection to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. They were Protestants, insofar as the word is derived from the Latin pro and testare meaning to bear witness. This was their intent, to bear witness to what they regarded as New Testament Christianity. [8] The principle tenets of their theology were that all had equal access to God through prayer and that forgiveness could be directly received. [9] The Protestant church is, therefore, understood to emphasize the involvement of ordained ministers and members of the church in general.

God – Trinity

pope
cardinal
archbishop
bishop
monsignor
priest
deacon

people

God – Trinity

people   clergy

The hierarchy of Roman Catholic Church governance is illustrated on the left. On the right, is a depiction of the Protestant Church order, which is applicable to Central Church. Photo of church from Cambridge Archives.

8   Stephen A. Hayes, *Being a Presbyterian in Canada Today* (Don Mills: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1978), 4.

9   Ibid.

Furthermore, the Protestant belief is that the Bible is the sole authority of the church. By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church views church traditions and teachings as being equally authoritative as the scripture itself. The result is a system of cyclical interaction within the Presbyterian Church and a hierarchical arrangement of clergy in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Protestant Reformation also had great implications for the architecture of the church. Central Church is exemplary of many of the material representations of the Protestant theology. The clergy and the people are not separated by changes in the floor plane. Additionally, the Pulpit from which the minister preaches and the Communion Table are placed near the congregation–not separated in a chancel or behind a rail.

nave   pulpit table   apse   altar   chancel

Roman Catholic plan

Protestant Plain plan
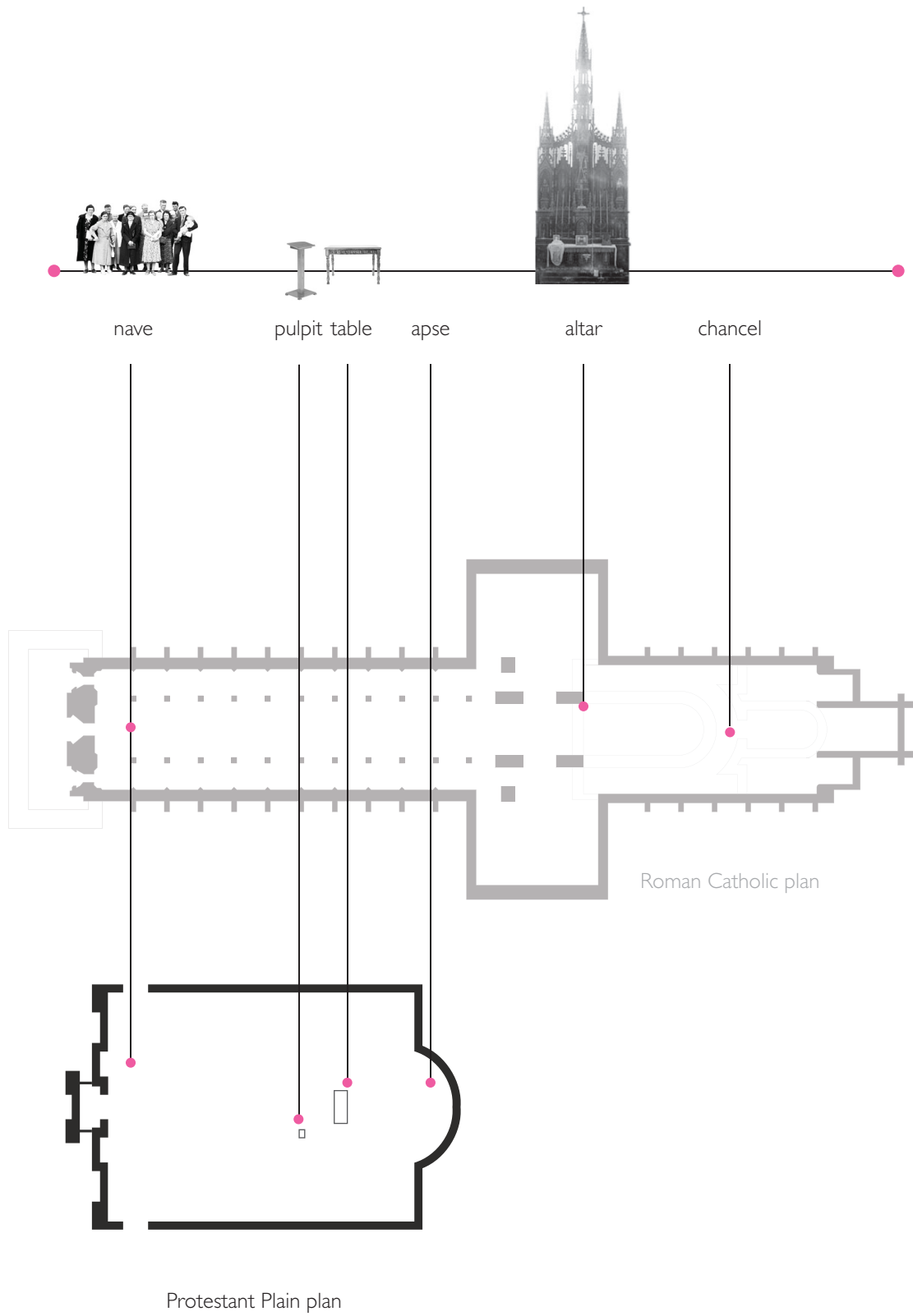
Theology of Space
A typical Roman Catholic cathedral and a traditional Protestant church are compared in plan to make differences in the trajectory through space apparent.

floor level
changes
at altar

no change
in floor
plane
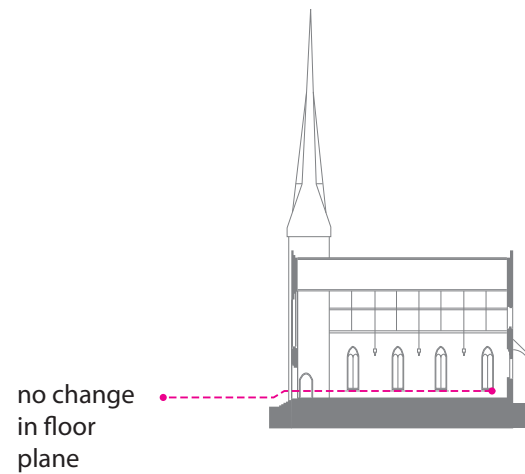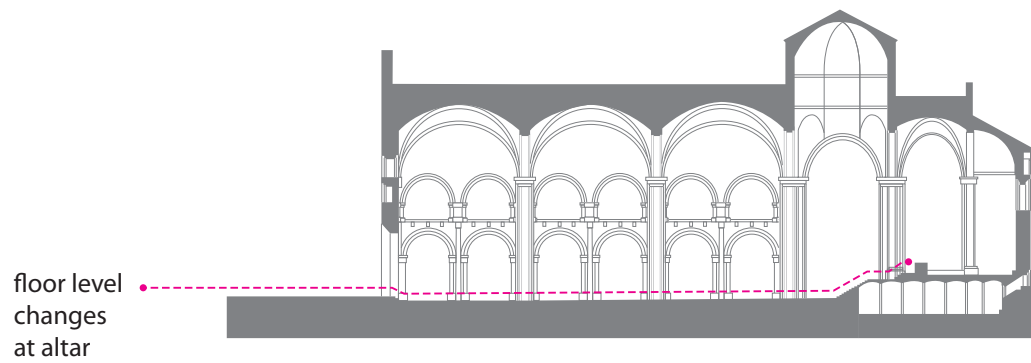
Sections of the typical Roman Catholic cathedral and Protestant church. Here it is evident that the floor plane does not change in the Protestant scheme. This is in contrast to the hierarchical arrangement of the Catholic cathedral.

Liturgy

All material elements of the church are associated with rites and rituals acted out in the space. The relationship between the tangible and the metaphysical, gives life to the architecture and promotes understanding of the phenomenology of a place intended to be a microcosm of all creation. Liturgy is at the heart of the ritual practices as a forum for narration, teaching and communication.

The traditional worship service is carried out in a four-fold model with principle themes: gathering, listening, thanking and going.[10] The liturgy proceeds under these headings as clergy and laypeople participate together in scripture readings, music, meditation and prayer. Though each part has its own purpose and character, these themes are intricately connected and together make up the whole of the worship service. The gathering and going are preparatory in that the first and the last charge the congregation to reenter the ordinary world with intentionality.

A worship service is typically led by one clergy person and all present are invited to participate in aspects of the worship. There are some rites celebrated by the church, however, that must be presided over by ordained clergy, the sacraments.

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10 Presbyterian Church in Canada, "What is Important to Us," http://www.presbyterian.ca/about/pcc/whatwebelieve/ whatisimportanttous (accessed January 11, 2012).

gathering

listening
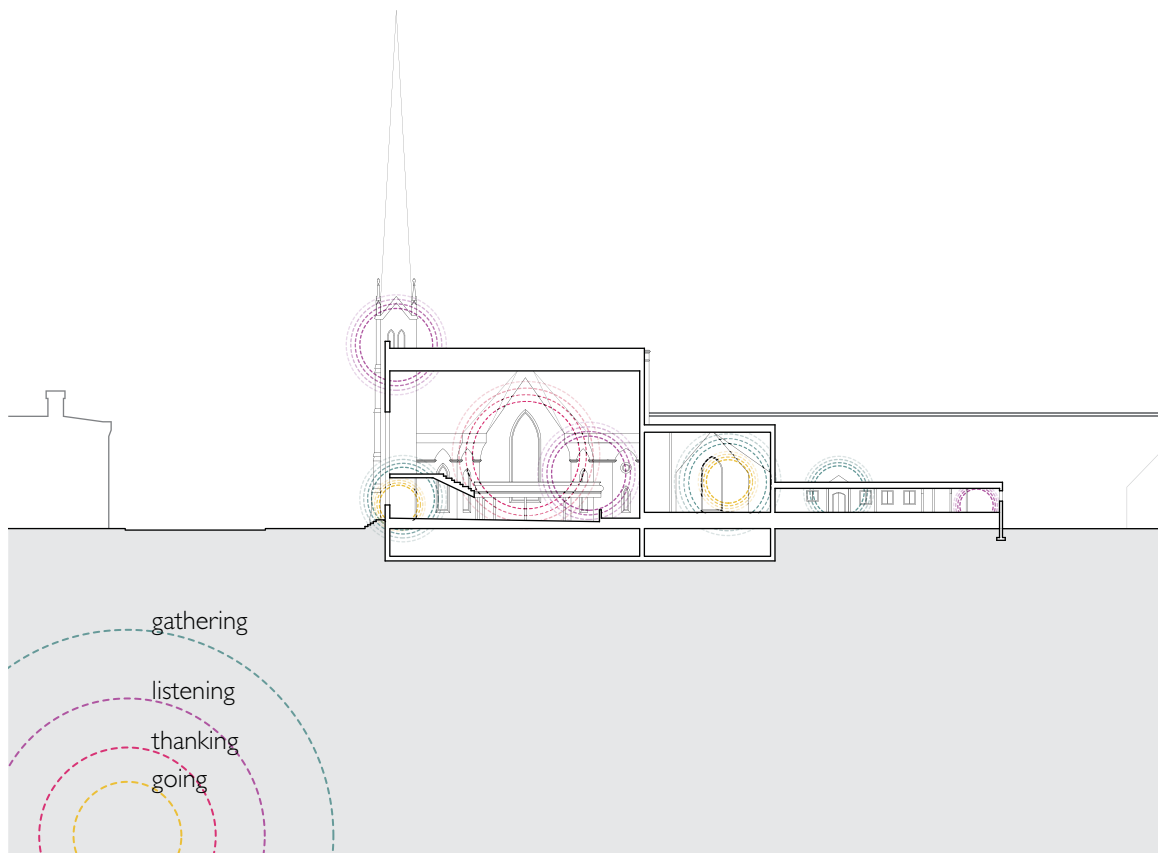
thanking

going

Ritual Themes
The four themes, gathering, listening, thanking and going, are shown in the spaces where they occur in
the context of the worship service.

Sacraments

The Presbyterian Church professes two sacraments only–baptism and communion. This is notably different from teachings of other churches, including Roman Catholic, which recognize as many as seven.

The first one, baptism, may occur at any point in the church year, for a person of any age, but only one time in a person's life. Most often, believing parents bring their child for Baptism and promise to raise their child to serve God. At this moment, the church congregation promises to support the child. This act of refreshment and new life is symbolized by the waters of Baptism which are held in a symbolic Baptismal font.

The second sacrament, communion, the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, happens several times a year. It is a symbol that unites the congregation with each other and with Jesus in thanksgiving and memorial of Christ's life and death.[11] Traditionally, communion was celebrated four times each year, but many Canadian churches now practice it more frequently, as often as every Sunday.

Cyclical Ritual

Services and community programs take place within the church at regularly scheduled intervals. The daily programming, most prominent on Sunday mornings, punctuates the weekly schedule and involves many parts of the church building. Furthermore, each of these activities occurs in sync with the established liturgical calendar. The church year moves through ordinary time, preparation

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11 Ibid.
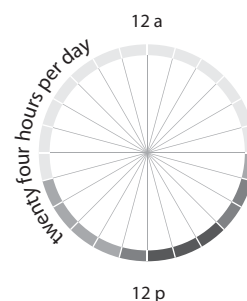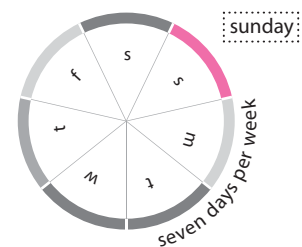
Daily and weekly cycles of programming in Central Presbyterian Church

seasons (Advent and Lent), and festival seasons (Christmas, Epiphany and Easter) in the same length of time as the Gregorian calendar.

Throughout the liturgical year, changes are made to the sanctuary interior which are consistent with traditional annual seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter. Sound, light and ornamentation evoke sensory responses which connect the material world to the narrative of sacred time. The changes are decorative and mostly apply to surfaces in the interior of the building. Banners, flowers and candles are common adornments. In this way, a phenomenological program is established and supports the daily, weekly and annual rituals of Christian life.

Forces of Influence
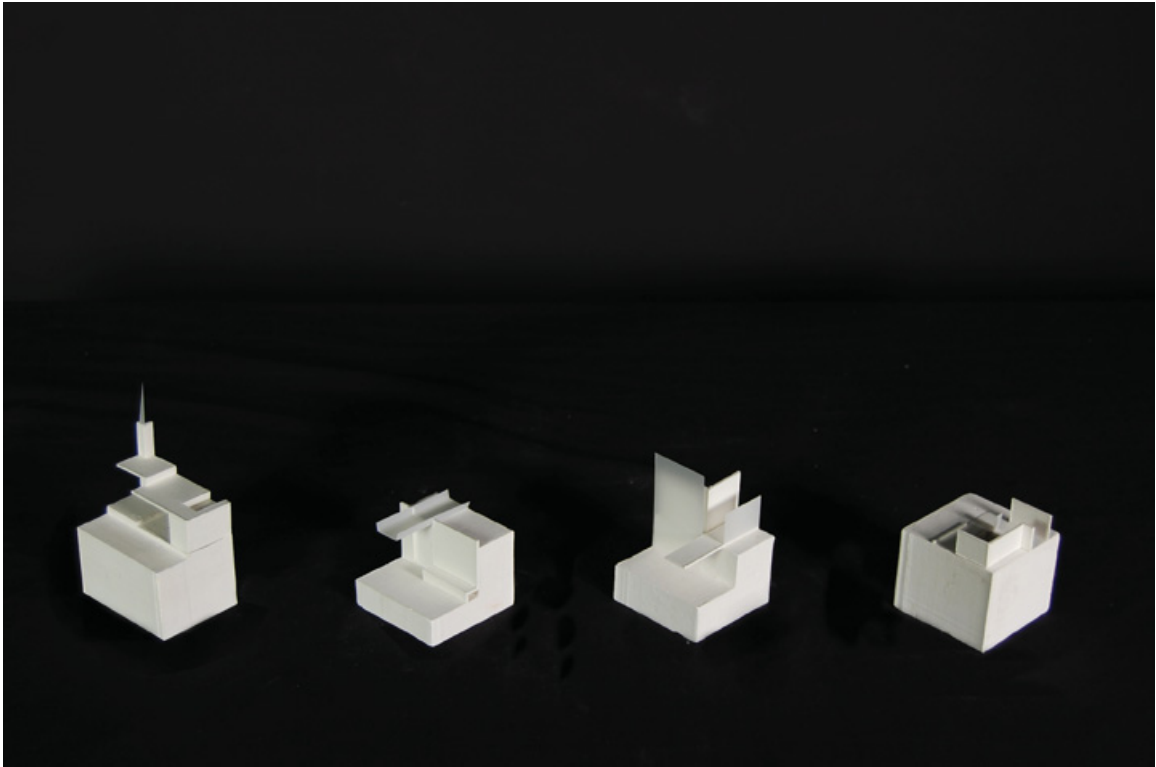
Four external forces of influence to be discussed are depicted in model form. Left to right: industrial legacy, flood control infrastructure, creative community, school of architecture.

Outside of the church precinct, a number of factors have contributed to the life of the church in both its use and physical form. The community has evolved from an industrial manufacturing area to a light commercial centre, and now, to a reinvigorated downtown area bustling with students and creative professionals.

The image below outlines the area referred to as downtown Cambridge; this is the area of concentration for the study. On the following page, four maps of the downtown-area chronicle major changes of land use since the settlement of City of Cambridge. Furthermore, four principle forces in the downtown are drawn upon to describe the influence the community has had on the church.

POST-1970 DEVELOPMENT

DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE

City of Cambridge, place of historic settlement and area of contemporary development. Photograph from Shutterstock, SF Photo, annotation by author.

1875

industrial

commercial

institutional

residential

Figure-ground map of downtown Cambridge in 1875 with land uses indicated

1885

industrial

commercial

institutional

residential

Figure-ground map of downtown Cambridge in 1885 with land uses indicated

1955

industrial

commercial

institutional

residential

Figure-ground map of downtown Cambridge in 1955 with land uses indicated

2005

commercial

institutional

residential

Figure-ground map of downtown Cambridge in 2005 with land uses indicated

Industrial Legacy

Historically, the area was heavily influenced by industrial development. Mills and dams still stand as remnants of Galt's former life as a centre of textile manufacturing. The network of canals and railways established in the 19th century is also evident today. The Parkhill Dam, slightly upstream from the site, was built in 1837. At the time of its construction, the dam gave an impetus to industrial development along the waterway. Its presence created a mill pond which stored water and was released down a Mill Race channel to power textile and grain mills on the east bank of the river. Today, the lowhead, overflow weir is used to control water flow and prevent flooding. The only remnants of its industrial use are the mill at Parkhill and Water street; now a restaurant, and Mill Race Park.

Regulated rivers across Canada have afforded citizens inexpensive electricity, navigable waters and decreased risk of flooding and drought. However, side effects of dam construction have begun to surface in ways not previously considered. A weir, like the one in Cambridge, will affect the oxygen content of water as it passes over the crest and artificially increases the river's upstream velocity. This can have serious detrimental effects on the Grand River's local ecology. Additionally, many fish species cannot cross the dam and the local fauna is affected.

In general, human settlement along the Grand River since the early 19th century has drastically upset the natural balance on the watershed. Forests that once retained water were cleared for agricultural purposes. Towns and cities developed near the river with complex drainage systems that
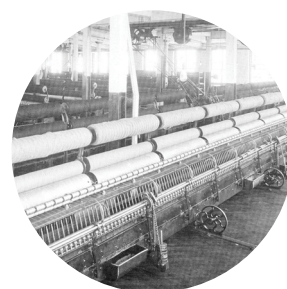

The Riverside Silk Mill as place of industry then place of education. Upper photograph from McLaughlin, *Cambridge: The Making of Canadian City*. Lower photograph by Ben Rahn, from ArchDaily, *Waterloo School of Architecture/Levitt Goodman Architects*

channeled excess water into the river. The river was a critical resource for industry and development in the area.

Flood Control on the Grand River

Today, the river's role in industry has diminished and it is no longer a critical source of power. The region has become one of the most densely populated watersheds in Canada, placing great demands on the river system. The draining of swamps and bogs and continued cultivation of the Grand River watershed have reduced the land's ability to retain water. Consequently, communities in the region have been routinely submerged by damaging floods. Flood control measures were instigated by a number of municipalities throughout the 20th century, and a more serious impetus was placed on the City of Cambridge following a devastating flood in 1974. Major flood control infrastructure, in the form of dyking and channelization, was completed in 1995 and has radically changed the city's relationship with the water.
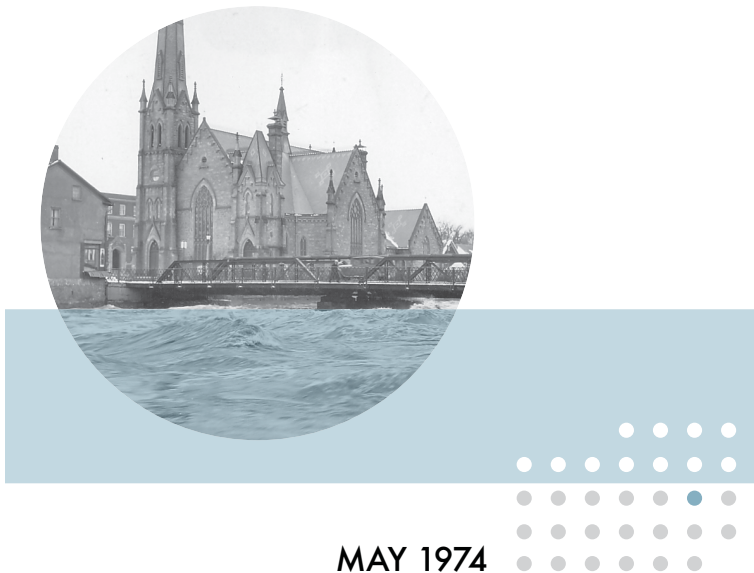
MAY 1974

May 1974 flood at Main Street Bridge near Central Presbyterian Church. Photograph from City of Cambridge Archives, annotation by author.
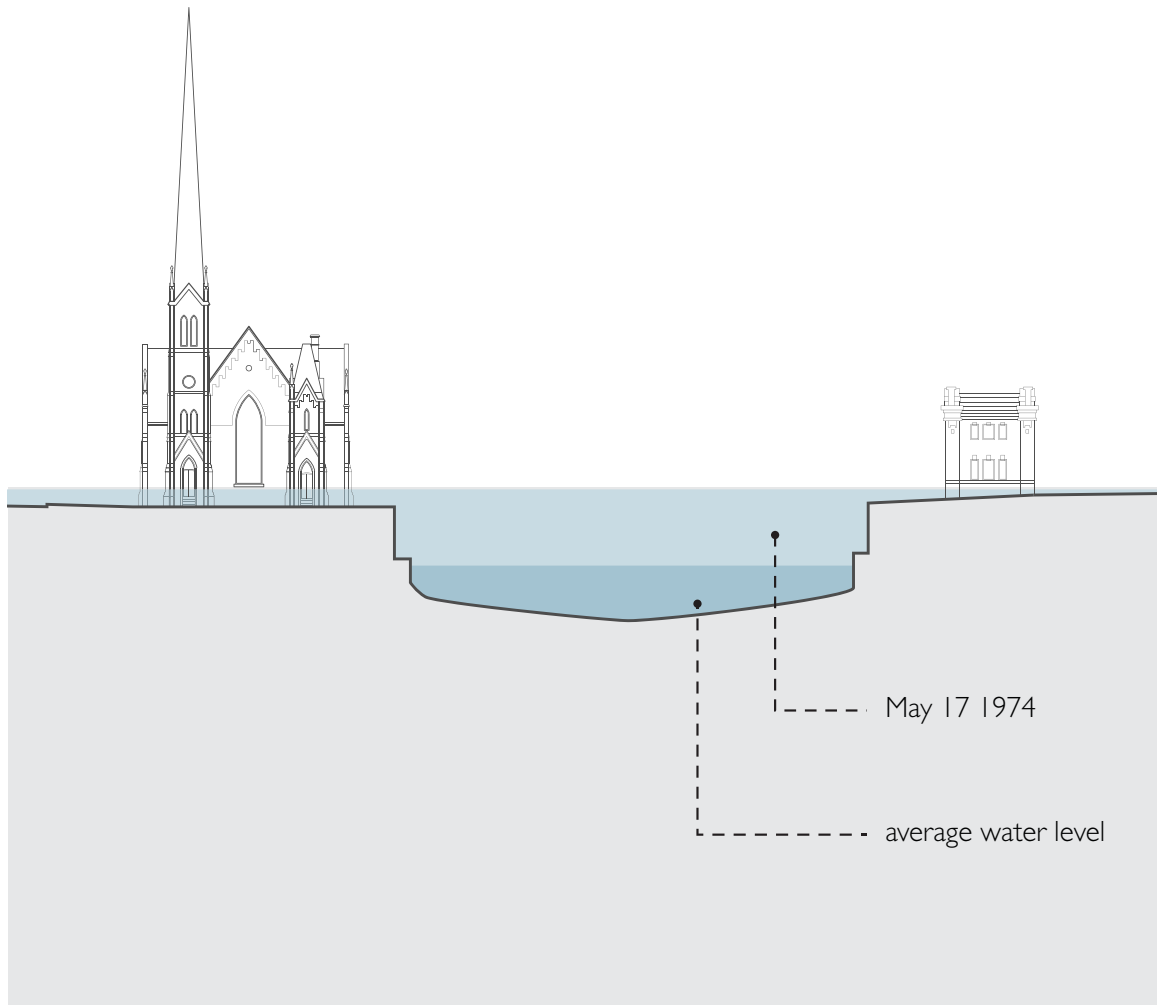
The average water level of the Grand River at Galt compared to the level at the time of the May 1974 flood.

University of Waterloo School of Architecture

Over and above the natural systems affecting the site, the most significant cultural force on the site is the recent influx of creative culture, which began with the relocation of the University of Waterloo's School of Architecture in 2004. The school operates under a unique circumstance, it is the only Canadian architecture school not based in a major city. Consequently, the infusion of 400 students into the city's core made a discernible difference to life in the city. It is estimated that the new location of the school has resulted in economic gains of between $55 million and $65 million to the local economy in the eight years since the school's opening.[12]

Thousands of new housing units have been created to accommodate students and other people recently attracted to the area. Approximately 3,000 new jobs have been established while millions of dollars in extra property tax revenue have been generated. The school has sent ripples through the downtown and the city-wide economy.

Cambridge's Creative Community

A number of galleries have been established near the site. A printmaking shop operates out of the first floor of the School of Architecture. The Cambridge Sculpture Garden is within walking distance. The construction of a large community theatre is underway a few blocks to the south, and another small theatre performs in a former church located on the east side of the Grand River. Already, Central Church is used by the architecture school as an ancillary

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12 Kevin Swayze, "Redesigning Galt," *Waterloo Region Record*, July 3, 2004: J1. http://global.factiva.com (accessed February 20, 2012).

silk mill to architecture school

Melville Café

Design at Riverside Gallery

Lecture Hall
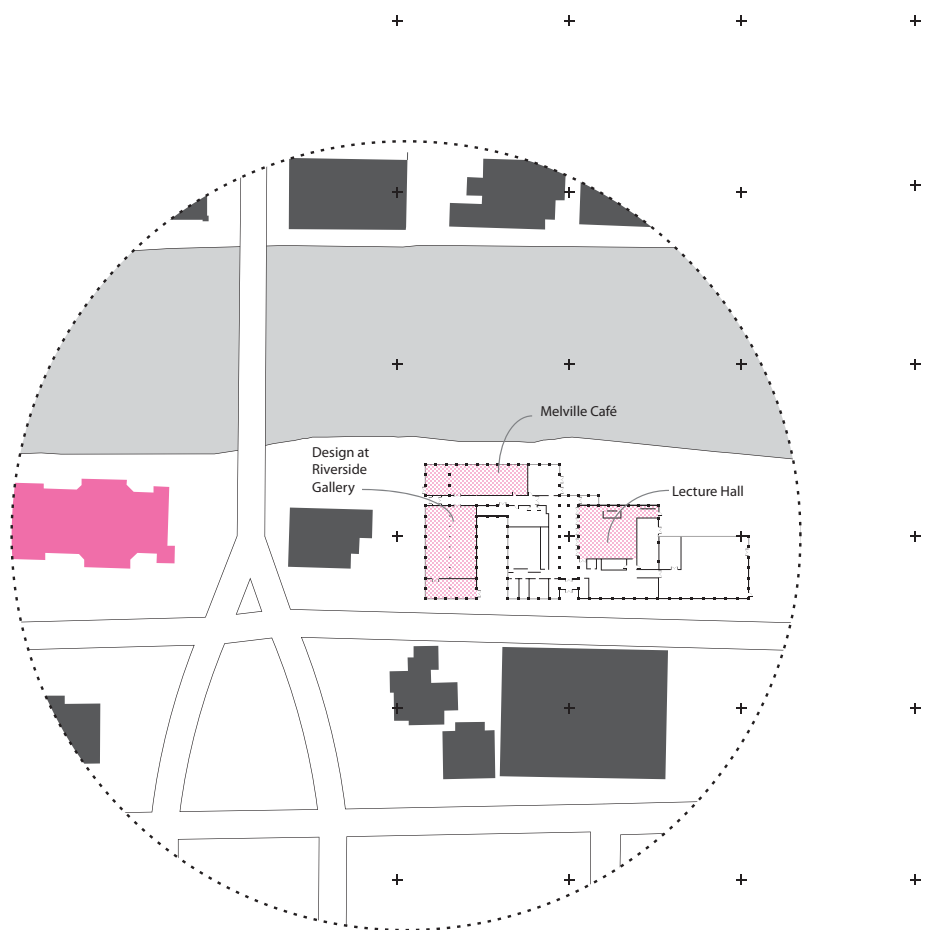
+ 1000 residential units
3000 new jobs

Adaptive reuse of the Riverside Silk Mill. In 2004, the University of Waterloo School of Architecture relocated to a former silk mill along the Grand River. Since then, the community has seen an increase in activity in the designated public parts of the school and throughout the area.

Industrial legacy

Central Church's steeple has long been a point of reference amongst the long, low profile buildings of the industrial area
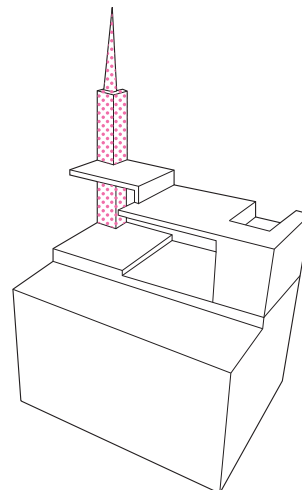
Flood control

Following the destructive flood of 1974, flood control measures were implemented along the river. These included the construction of concrete walls along the river banks which permanently changed the relationship between the city and the water.
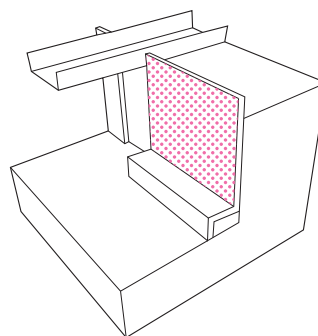
School of architecture

The north facade of the school provides access to the building's public functions in the café, gallery and library
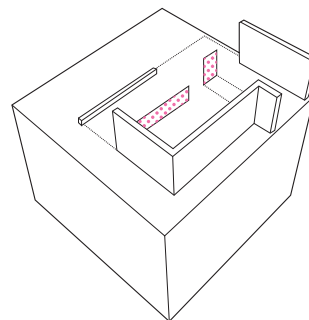
Creative community

Unsilent Night, an outdoor participatory audio and visual installation event is represenstative of the impact of Cambridge's creative community. During the event, buildings in the downtown are used as projection surfaces.
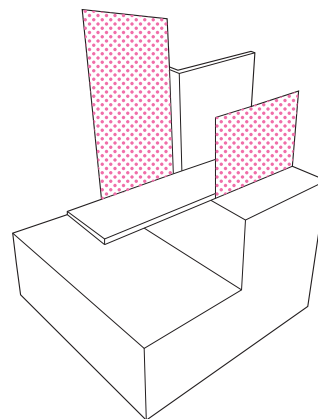
Abstractions of four forces of influence on the site

lecture hall. Through these existing community resources the site figuratively extends beyond the church property.

Internal and external forces have had direct impact on the day to day function of Central Church, as well as the physical form of the building. This can be seen explicitly in the additions and alterations made to the building to date. Since its opening in 1882, Central Church has seen the addition of a pipe organ and gallery level around 1890,[13] a ten-bell chime in 1906,[14] an addition to the north-end of the building in the 1950s and, most recently, the addition of a mezzanine in the church hall in 2004.[15] On the following page, three principal apparitions of the building are illustrated in section.

13   James A.R. Dickson, *Ebenezer: A History of the Central Presbyterian Church, Galt, Ontario* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1904), 142.

14   Jon Fear, "Flash from the Past: Cambridge Church Got its Chime in 1906," *Waterloo Region Record*, September 2, 2011, http://www.therecord.com/print/article/588590 (accessed June 12, 2012).

15   Dates inferred from architectural drawings courtesy of Central Presbyterian Church.

1882

1910

1960
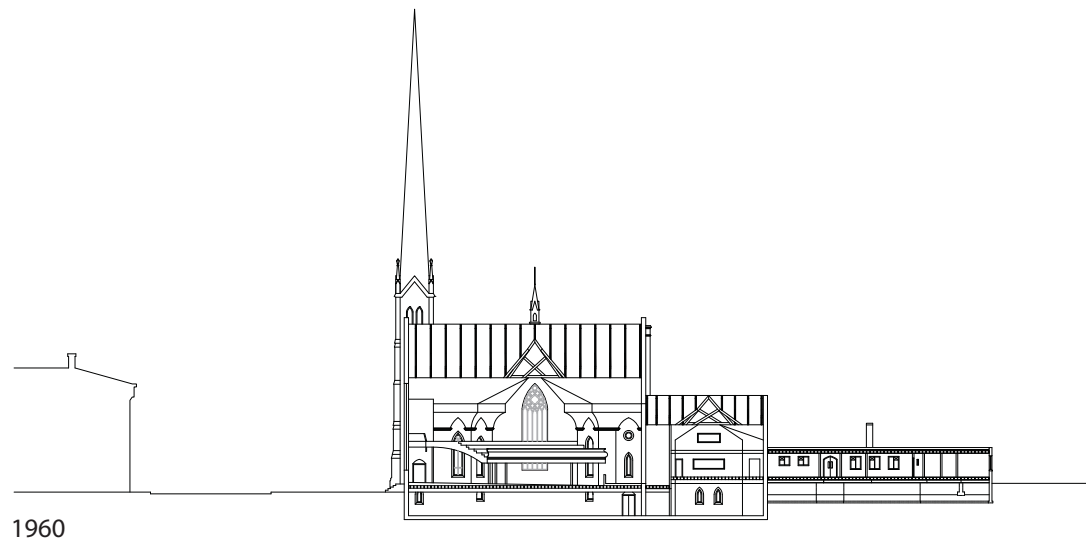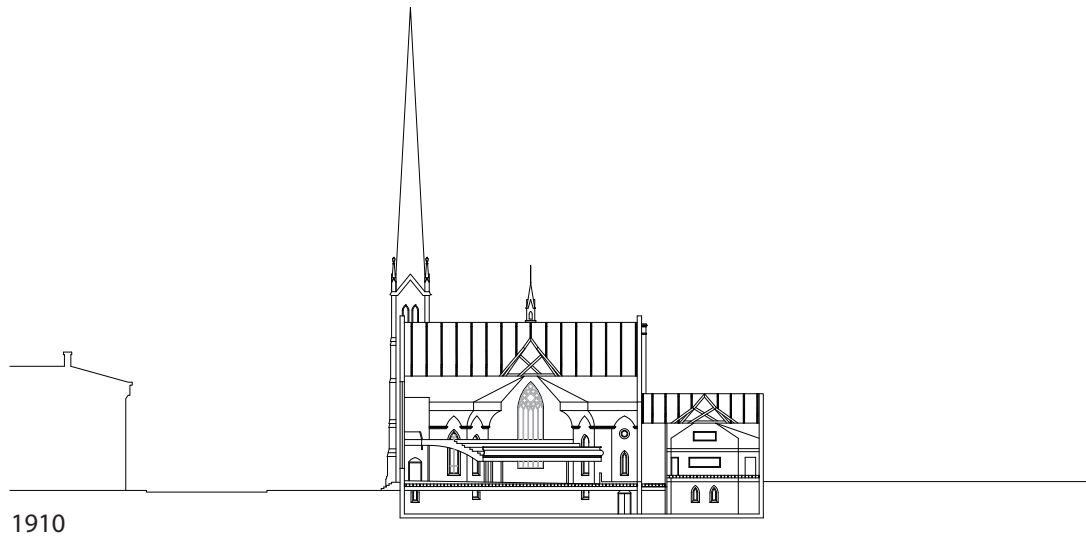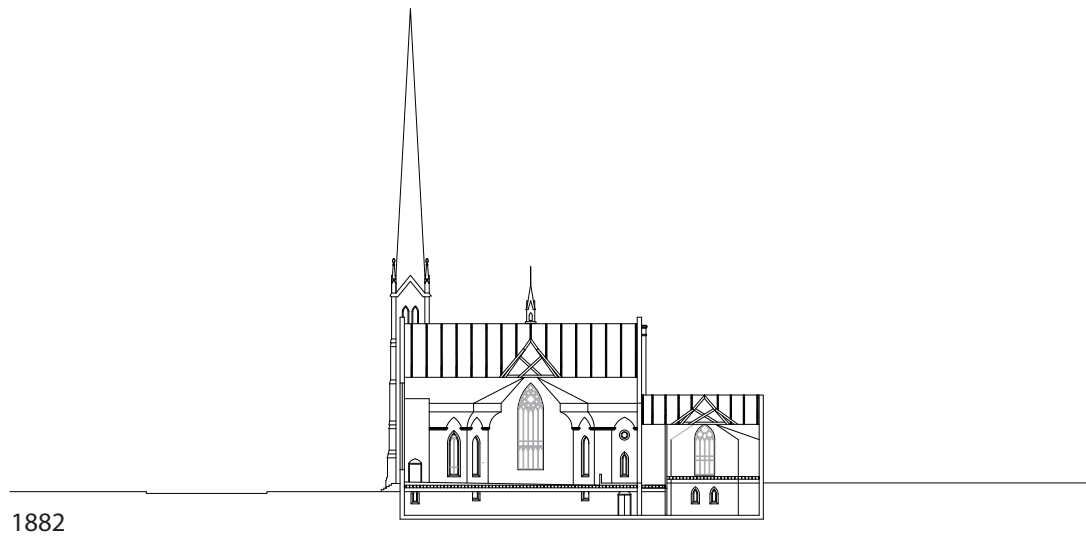
0 5 10 20 m

Three apparitions of Central Church through time

Massing model of downtown Cambridge with Central Church emphasized

Analysis of Church Thresholds

The design of Central Church speaks to the mission of the church at the time of its establishment. Aspects of the configuration, furnishing and ornament can be read as indicators of a church's function beyond providing shelter for the act of worship: as a medium for communication of Protestant and Christian theology and values. And, though the church would describe itself as being defined by the people–not the place of worship–the space of gathering is valued as an instrument of communication. Maurice Halbwachs wrote about this in his seminal work, *The Collective Memory*, "religions are rooted in the land, not merely because men and groups must live on land but because the community of believers distributes its richest ideas and images throughout space." [16]

A study of defining thresholds throughout the building reveals both theological and ecclesiological principles of church organization. Consequently, this is used as a point of departure for a thorough reading of the place. Distinct thresholds are isolated and abstracted to articulate the qualities of each element as they appear today. What follows is an analysis of the phenomenological characteristics of eight identified thresholds and the significance they hold for the church building and its greater context.

Here architectural elements of the existing building are identified and represented in a way that depicts qualities of each place but not its exact appearance; it is an interpretive description rather than a survey. Volume, enclosure, solidity, voidness, sound and light are modelled using a palette

16   Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper and & Row, 1980), 139.

of plaster and paper. The identified elements have been highlighted for their significance as part of the traditional ritual of the church. Moreover, beyond their uses as markers of the sequence of Christian ritual, they warrant attention as pieces of architecture that heighten the senses and enhance one's experience of a place. For these reasons, the elements will be purposefully conserved in the next phase of the church's life.

Abstract threshold models placed into the model of Central Church

Abstract threshold models placed in to the model of Central Church

TOWER
preparing

ORGAN
listening

EXIT
going

NARTHEX
gathering

WINDOWS
gathering
listening

TRANSITION
going
preparing

ALONG THE WATER
going

OFFICE
responding
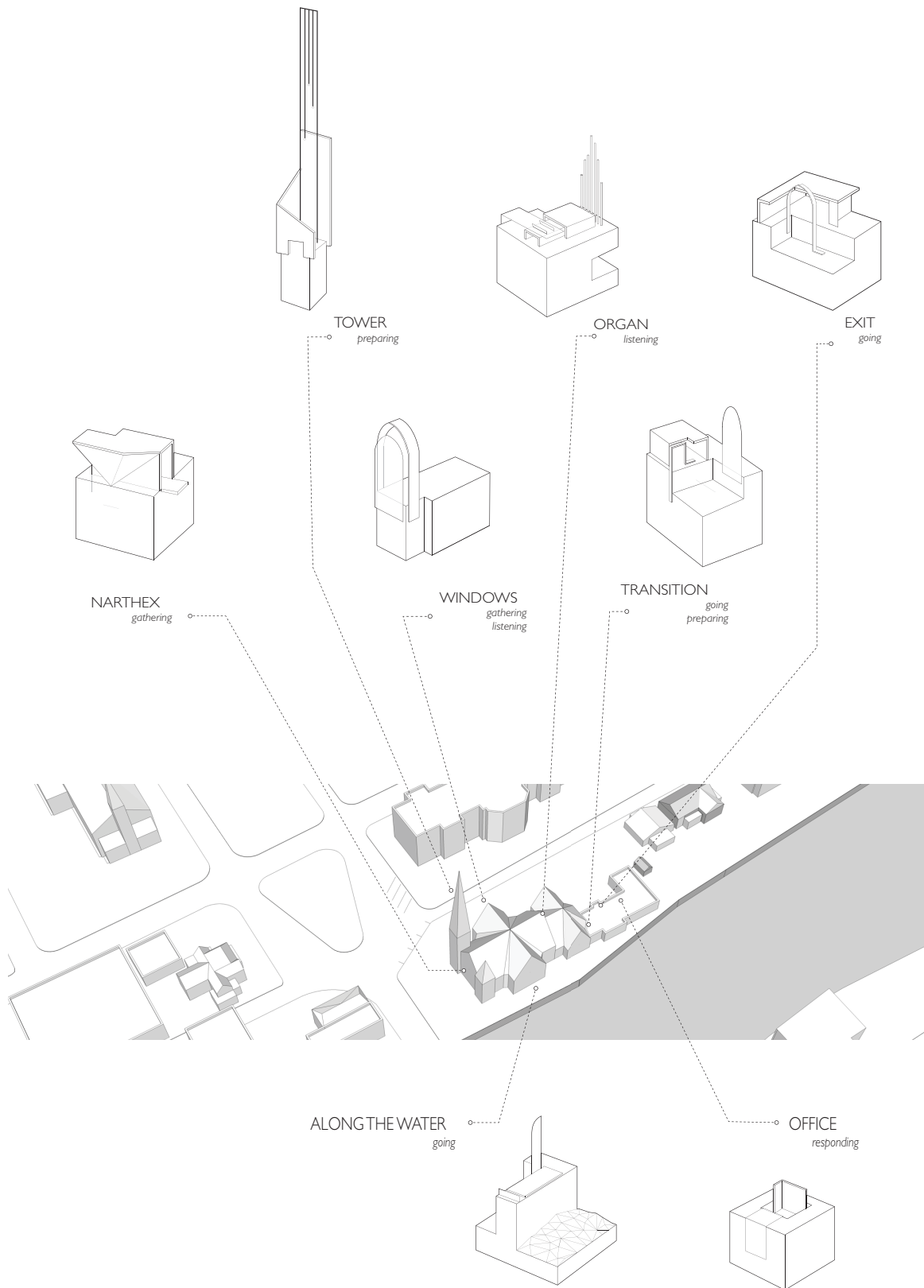
Diagrams of abstract threshold models shown in relation to their location in Central Church
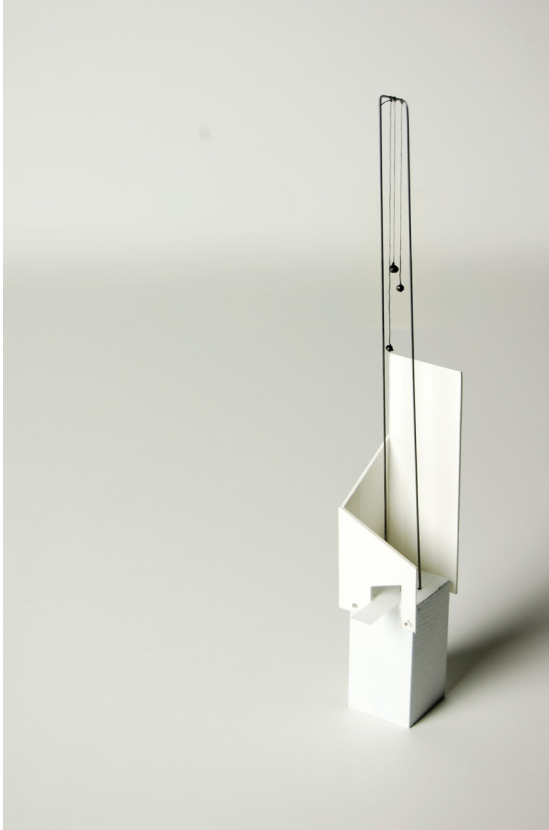
Tower

Narthex

Tower

Although many traditional churches oriented their altars toward the east, facing Jerusalem and the rising sun, that is not the case in Central Church. The guiding principles for the orientation of Central are more responsive to the urban condition of the site. Two sets of front doors are located at the south of the building–one in each of two asymmetrical towers. The primary entrance faces south onto Main Street. This tower also holds the bells and the spire. The height of the steeple–once the tallest point in the Cambridge skyline–and the ringing of the ten bells, mark this entrance threshold. The front corner tower is typical for a church sited at the intersection of two streets and the North-South orientation corresponds to the position of Grand River, which runs parallel to the site.

Narthex

The symbolic purpose of a narthex was to establish a boundary between the sacred interior and the secular world. It was a holding area for people who had not been baptized. Today, the narthex does not have such a defined role. It is typically a place to hang coats or shake hands with the minister. The shift in connotation is representative of a reformation of the Christian belief system. The way the narthex is used now, as an interior vestibule without profound significance, does not imply it is entirely without value. It does serve to frame views and direct entry to the sanctuary. Furthermore, its low narrow volume creates a feeling of intimacy requisite of a place of gathering.

Windows

Light is a means of interaction with the community which is especially evident at night. The glow of the stained glass windows causes the church to stand out visually from its neighbours. Colours are cast on the walls and floor as sunlight passes through. In effect, the windows are a threshold through which light, sound and drafts may pass, yet they are also a barrier against rain and wind. Each window is bordered by robust stone walls. These two elements, one of substantial depth and the other of noticeable delicateness, are complementary and inextricable. Another notable feature of the windows is their grand verticality. They complement the height of the space and allow light deep in to the plan.

Organ

At the front of the sanctuary, a pulpit and communion table are provisional fixtures. The organ is the most permanent component and it orients the act of listening in the sanctuary.

Windows
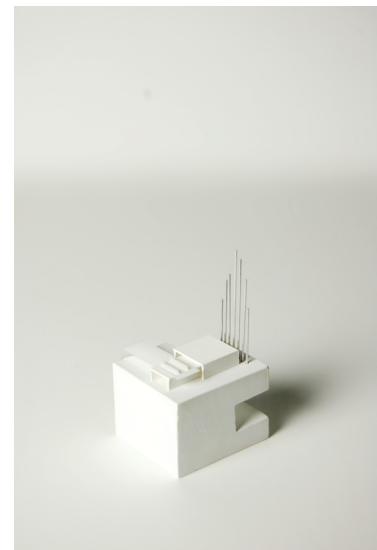
Organ

Transition to banal space

Office

Transition to Banal Space

       The tendency of people to gather for coffee after a worship service, reception after a funeral, congregational dinners or various public events, has been enclosed in an area intended to house all of these functions, appended to the back of the church building. This area is ordinary in its design, yet frequently used, as people often do not recognize the adaptive potential of the sacred spaces in the building.

       This church presents a distinct condition as it acts as a diagram of the dichotomy of sacred and profane, of hierophanic and banal. The 1953 addition to the original building was intended for use as office space and Sunday School classrooms. It's construction is subordinate to the load-

bearing stone masonry and articulated hierophany of the 19th Century Gothic-Revival style sanctuary.

This is another space which holds significance outside of the liturgical ritual, however, it does play a part in the sequence of gathering, listening, thanking and going, identified as the programmatic essence of this building.

Office

Despite its importance as a place of preparation, the office is characteristically plain. This space, and all rooms in the addition to the church, are much less interactive than the sanctuary and other sacred spaces. Dividing walls are left to the periphery and do not have the same depth of interface, as the stone walls of the rest of the building.

Alternate door

Alternate Door

On the west facade is the secondary entrance to the church. It is less symbolically rich than the primary entrance and used most often for access to the multipurpose areas of the building.

From here, the question is about how the identified elements are connected. The ritual links these spaces together with four themes and the design takes place amongst the ritual architectural-elements.

Space Between the Church and the River

This area is currently cordoned off. While this threshold does not hold significance to the liturgical ritual, it is important in a different way, as it has potential to stitch together built and natural elements of the city.
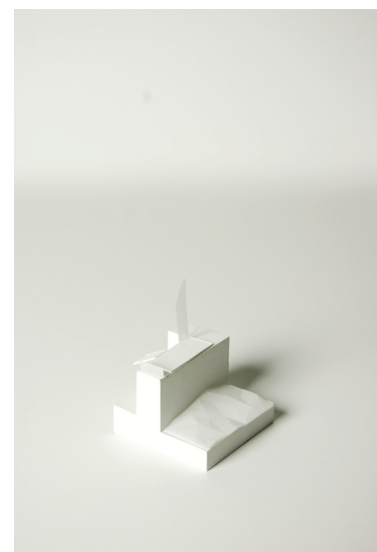
Space between the church and the river

CHAPTER 4: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Program

Gathering, listening, thanking, going: these themes, which give structure to the traditional four-fold worship service, are compelling. They transcend the boundaries of the ritual event and hold relevance in secular society. In their temporal form, these four activities are the program for this design. Hereafter, they will be referred to as gathering, listening, responding and preparing. In their manifestation in this thesis, the themes are not attached to specific architectural briefs. Instead, they will be considered for the nature of the activity and the context that would aptly accommodate the users' experience of gathering, listening, responding and preparing. Each theme may appear multiple times throughout the design intervention, as the traditional program is superseded with that of a place for contemporary ritual acts of new media art creation.

In gathering, people are invited to come together in a group and prepare, through interpersonal and media interaction, for the experience they will embark on in the next phase of the trajectory. A place to listen follows. Listening is defined broadly here and might include listening to music or speech, reading or otherwise absorbing information. These actions may take place in solitude or in cooperation with groups of two or more. Next is a space for responding. Here people give, receive and reflect. The actions of response are interactive, so the space will accommodate communal activities. Finally, the sequence continues through a place of preparation. Preparation involves an experience that recognizes the changes that have occurred through the ritual

progression– whether they are intellectual, social, artistic or educational.

How the Intent Propels the Program

For over 100 years, Central Church has stood in the centre of the Cambridge and marked the place of the city's earliest developments. Its very character is indicative of the mores and values of the Scottish settlers, who first laid claim to the land on this stretch of the Grand River. The church's architecture was intended to evoke a sense of permanence and influence of a powerful institution. The load-bearing stone masonry is imposing. Neo-Gothic elements such as the pointed-arch windows and emphasis on height, which were incredibly popular at this time in Europe, denote the aesthetic preferences of the Europeans. Concurrently, the flexible interior arrangement and undivided floor plane express the Protestant emphasis on Word and Sacrament, the unity of ministry and lay people worshipping together in community. The church is a vessel for the collective memory of the community: an artifact that embodies a centuries old belief in architectural form.

However, the church building has become an ambiguous presence in the community. It is encountered now as its intended use is eroding, and a burgeoning creative community sits at its precipice. The boundaries of the church precinct can be perforated, and the possibility arises to invite people inside and, in a sense, reconsecrate the church to a serve a new purpose and its new community. A series of atmospheric experiences within the building will serve to connect those who dwell in the space with material and spatial qualities of the sanctuary and create a portal between the people and the water.

As enchanting as the notion is, of spontaneous inhabitation of post-industrial cityscapes by Bohemian collectives, spoken word poets, experimental painters and sculptors, these trades are facing a similar fate as the idyllic centre of corporate worship. However, it is perceivable that many traditional principles of art can be reinvigorated through contemporary immersive media arts. What makes new media all more appropriate for the setting of a sanctuary, is its power to mediate between inner and outer realities, a concept that recalls the capacity of ritual-architectural events in the church to orient, commemorate and contextualize.[17]

Phenomenological Program

The proposed program is based on the analysis of the thresholds in the church. In certain places, the design will intervene on the existing elements, emphasize and clarify the distinctness of the place and the atmospheric qualities of the thresholds. In the area of liminality that surrounds each threshold, the ritual sequence of gathering, listening, responding and preparing is played out in response to the experience of the design elements.

The existing qualities of the church create distinct spaces which have similar functions, yet embody very different properties. In this way, the objects and ornaments in the building are of secondary importance to the unique interactions between the objects, the people and the place.

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17   Lindsay Jones, *Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), xvi.
Orientation, commemoration and contextualization are defined in Appendix A in the discussion of Lindsay Jones', *Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*.

The users' experience of the previously discussed threshold of the church continues to be significant in the design proposal.

User-based Program

Fragments of the city's history stipple the length of the Grand River as it runs through Cambridge. They create a special condition much like the deconstructed image described by Boyer in *City of Collective Memory*. There are memories of industry, development and social customs all along the riverbank which will pervade, so long as their stories are remembered by the people. They "give meaning to a city in new ways, tracing them back to their origins as city tableaux, drawing out their associations and projected ideals, and constructing our own story line as we travel from picture to picture." [18] As the church stands as a monument of the collective memory of the city, it invites a new interpretation as an instrument to engage the community in creating and housing new memories.

New media is not easily categorized by medium, geography or chronology, as the traditional art museum works would be. Some artists go so far as to describe it as a set of behaviors rather than a medium, [19] though many people may be more familiar with new media in forms such as large scale, interactive installations, online galleries and digital projections. However the movement is defined, the category is of secondary significance within the context of this thesis,

18 Christine Boyer, The *City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 375.

19 Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), xiv.

which will concentrate on celebrating the artists' creative process.

Within the church precinct, this thesis design proposes a reading room containing print, audio and visual media stacks, work spaces for new media artists, areas for group collaboration, a soundstage equipped for film and audio recording and places for art installation.

The program is drawn from the surrounding sites of ritual activity: the industrial area, the river, the school of architecture and the creative community. On the following pages, connections between Central Church and other sites of ritual activity are indicated. The spaces in between, where the pathways overlap, form a dynamic center. In a future study, they could be incorporated as part of the design of the site.
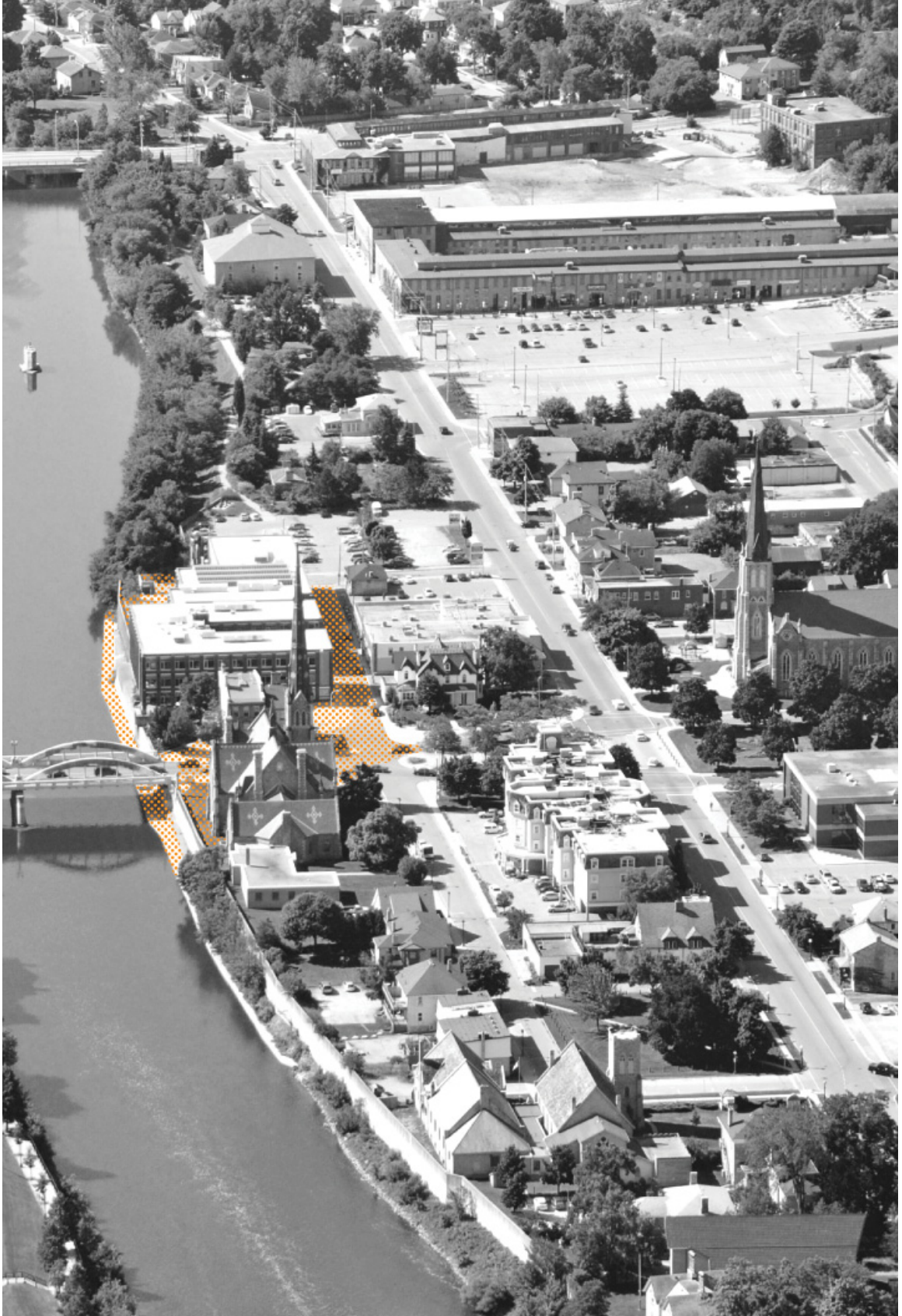
Pathways to the School of Architecture

Pathways to the public library

Pathways across the square to Knox's Galt Presbyterian Church

CHAPTER 5: DESIGN

Development of Design Parameters

Of prime importance to this thesis, is the retention of the existing qualities of the space. These have been identified and isolated in the analysis of church thresholds. The interpretation of their phenomenological qualities, of light, solid, void, temperature and material, guides the design development. In response to the intended phenomenological program, the design heightens the experience of the thresholds. Simultaneously, the design supports a user-based program of a new-media arts centre.

Throughout the building's history, its function has evolved slightly. What has remained are the architectural elements associated with the ritual events. The same is true for this iteration of the church's history. The proposed use may be adapted and change over time, but what is most important is that the phenomenological program succeed as a timeless addition.

Design Methodology

To make the leap from analysis to application and towards a formal design intervention, a series of drawings were created which outline the space where the design would take place. The drawings are gestural; they are meant to encapsulate intentions developed through the analysis of the existing conditions. Their purpose is not to be a record of a premeditated architectural image, but to be an instrument from which to derive the form.

Interpretive south elevation drawing of Central Church

Interpretive plan drawing of Central Church
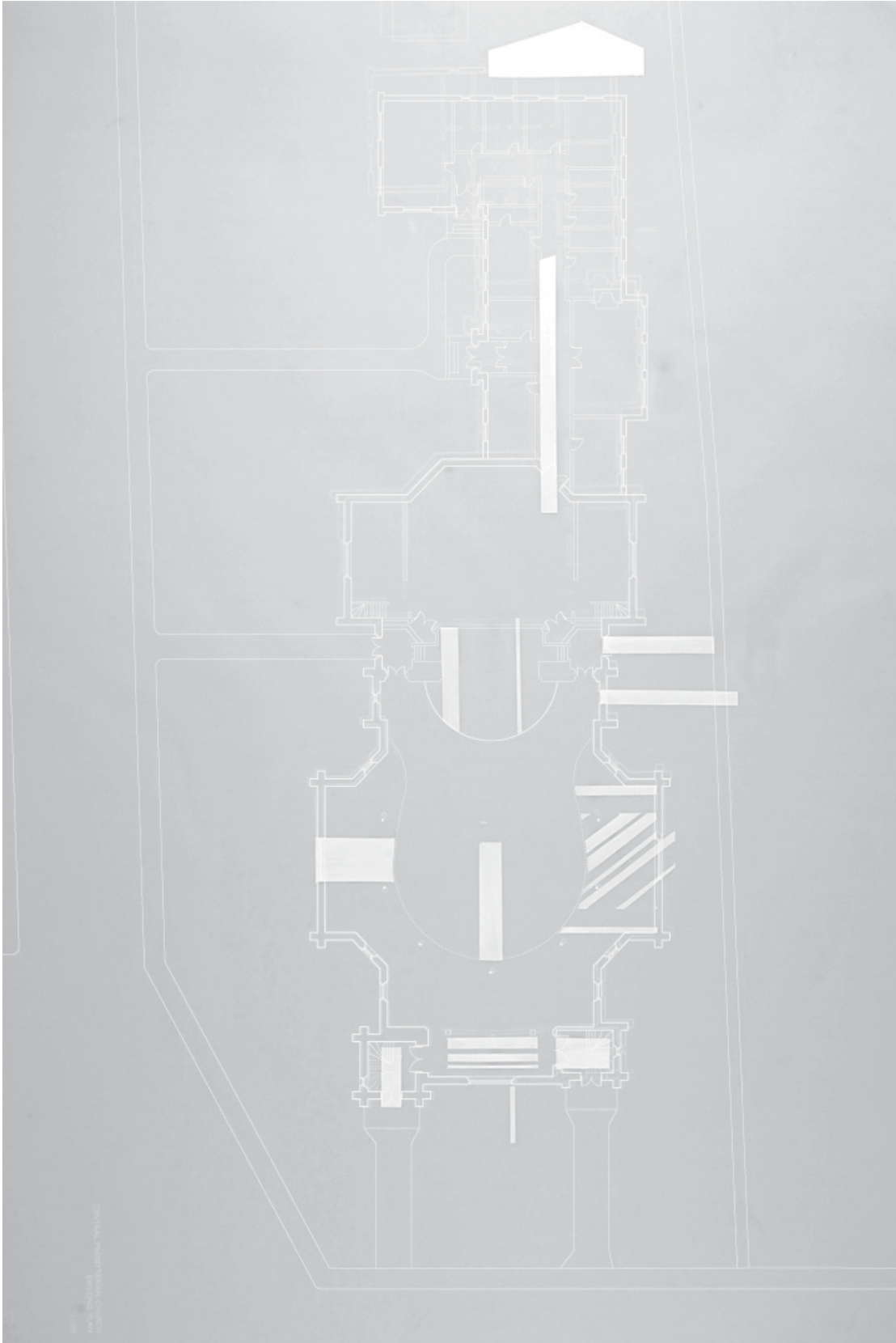
Interpretive north-south section drawing of Central Church

This method of design has been influenced by the work of John Hejduk, in that its primary concern is with an understanding of symbols and experience rather than the creation of an individual monument.

Design Intervention

In the Church

Upon entering the building, one experiences the full height of the tower as the stairs have been removed and the volume is opened up to the level of the chimes. A heavy curtain separates the tower from the narthex. Within the narthex, the warmth and colour of the south facing stained glass permeates through a cut in the gallery level and is captured on the vertical surfaces. The threshold between the narthex and the sanctuary has been altered to orient users to the central axis of the building. When one passes through into the sanctuary, there is an option to remain on the current main level, or to descend the long stairs to the lower level. On the main level, rooms are created by the separation of the space beneath the gallery from the main volume. Within each of these rooms are places for individual work and stairs that accesses the gallery. On the west side, the primary function of the stairs is to provide access and to promote inhabitation of the window. On the east side, the stairs have the additional function of creating access to the outside, next to the river.

Alternatively, should one move below grade, he or she would descend a long stair that doubles as seating, with a view to the central projection surface at the front of the sanctuary. Below grade are areas for working in a more light-controlled area, conducive to editing of visual and photographic material.

To the north of the sanctuary is a full height space that houses a sound-stage. This area is central to the production function of the centre.

The 1960s addition, historically a more banal space, is altered to allow a more flexible arrangement of spaces. The corridor is opened on both sides and continues north, to complete the trajectory through the entire building.
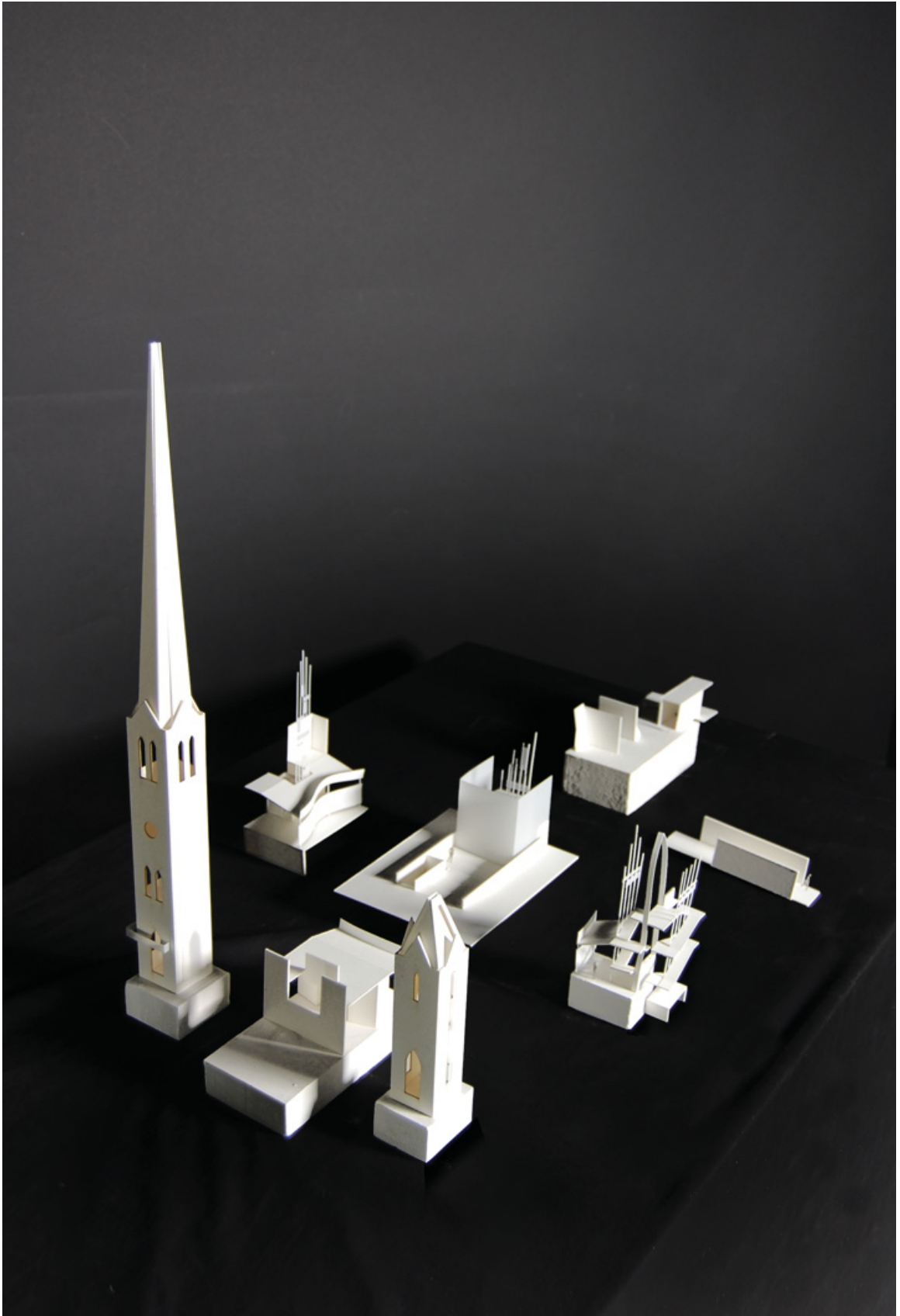
Models of design elements
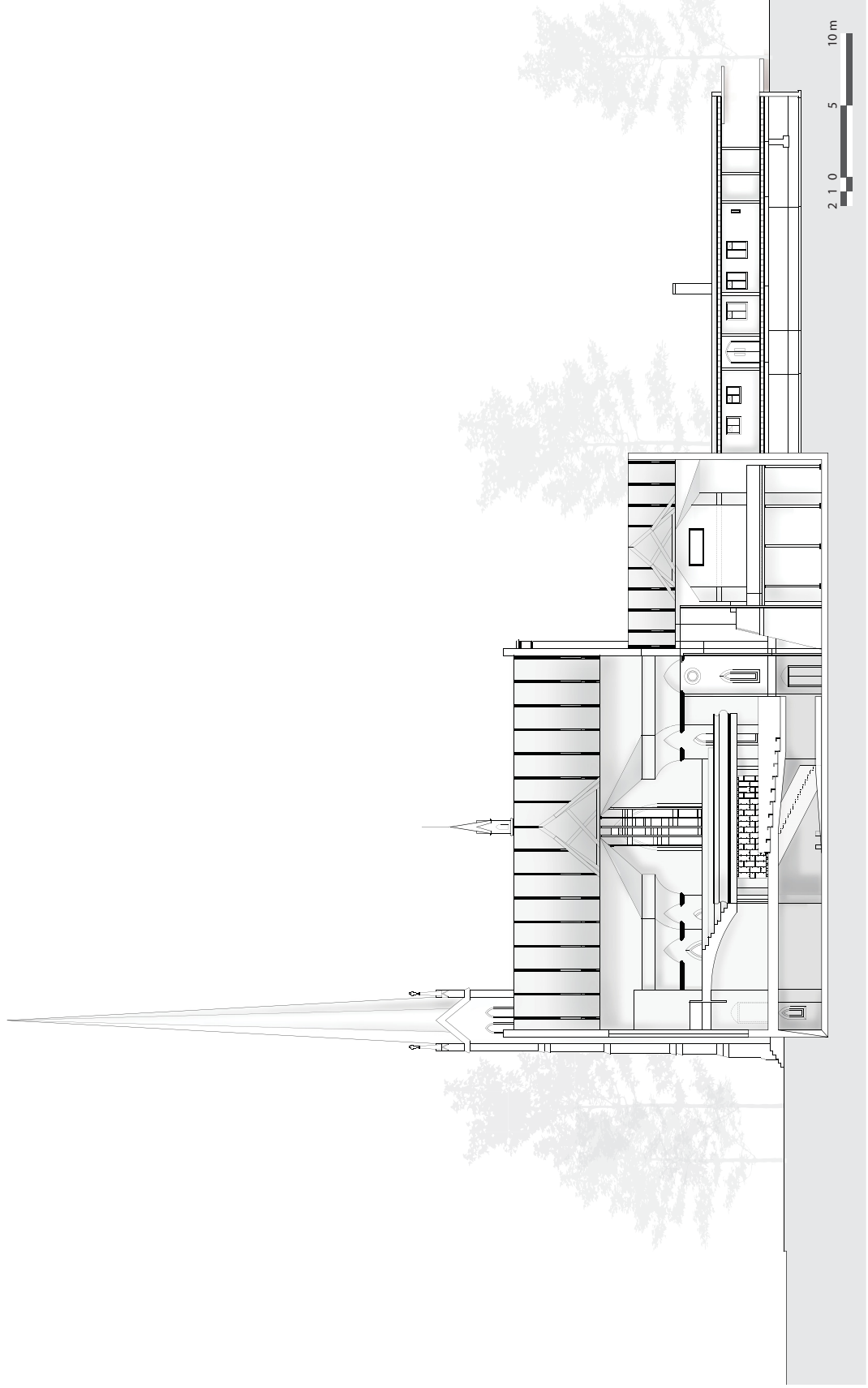
Central Presbyterian Church, proposed south–north section

2 1 0   5   10 m

archival collections
and reading rooms

production and
sound stage

projection
and viewing

working

gathering
and entering

2 1 0   5   10 m
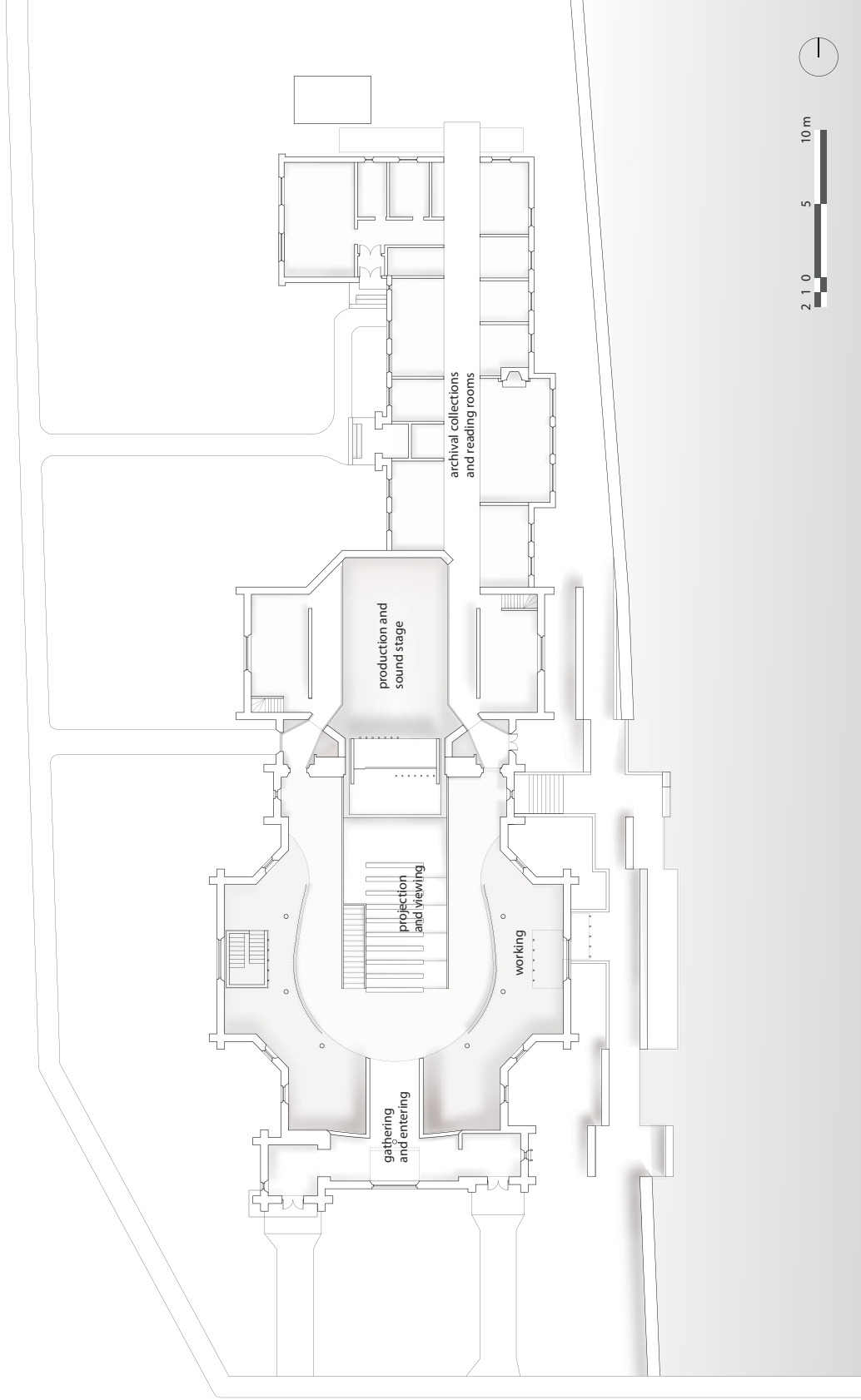
Central Presbyterian Church, proposed ground floor plan
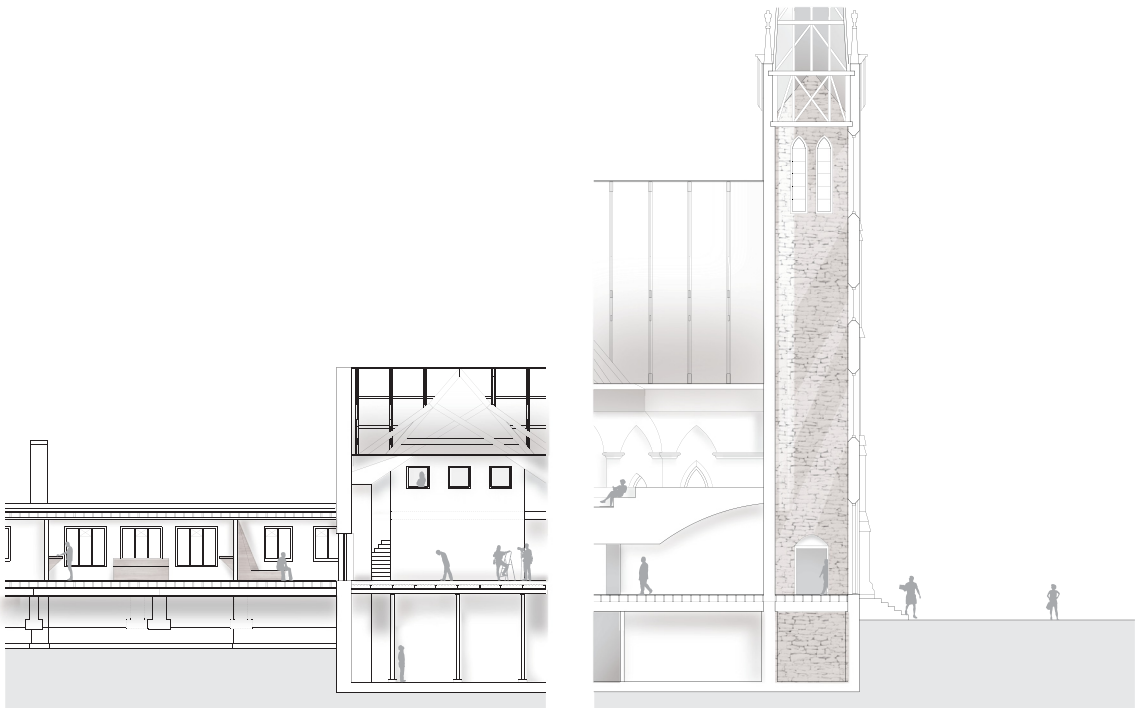
Quadriptych of four important sections of the design

0 1 2 3 m

Section through gallery and west wall
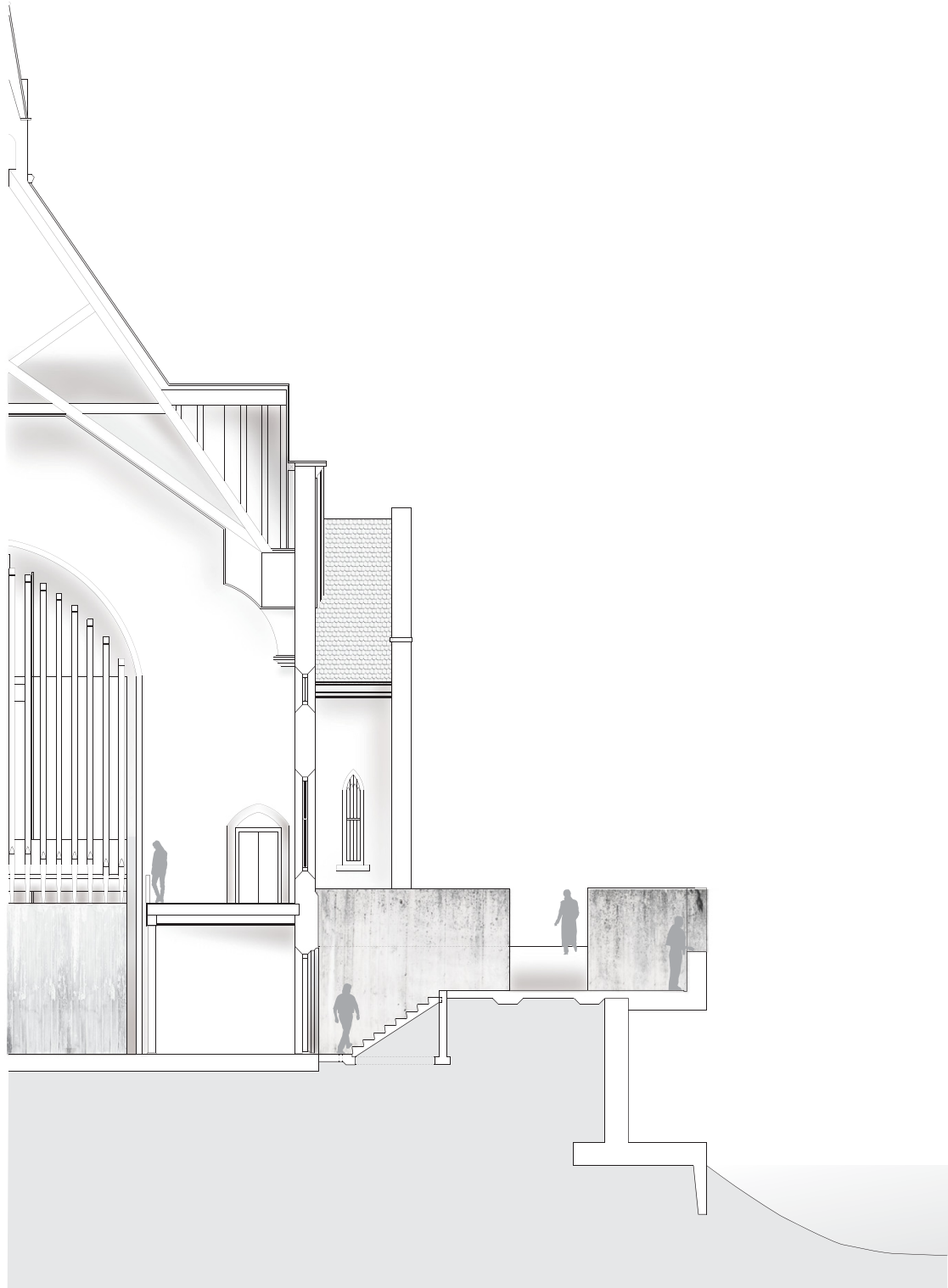
Section through east wall showing access to the river

0 .5 1   2   3 m
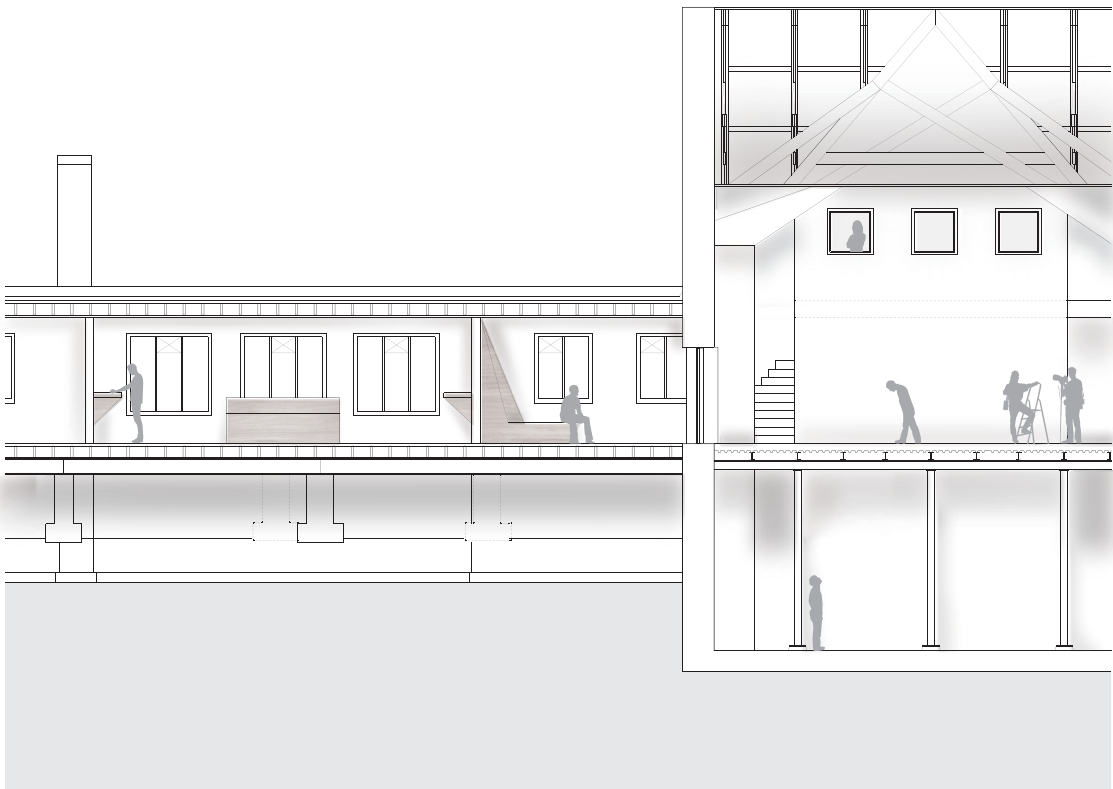
0 .5 1 2   3 m

Section through reading rooms and soundstage/production area
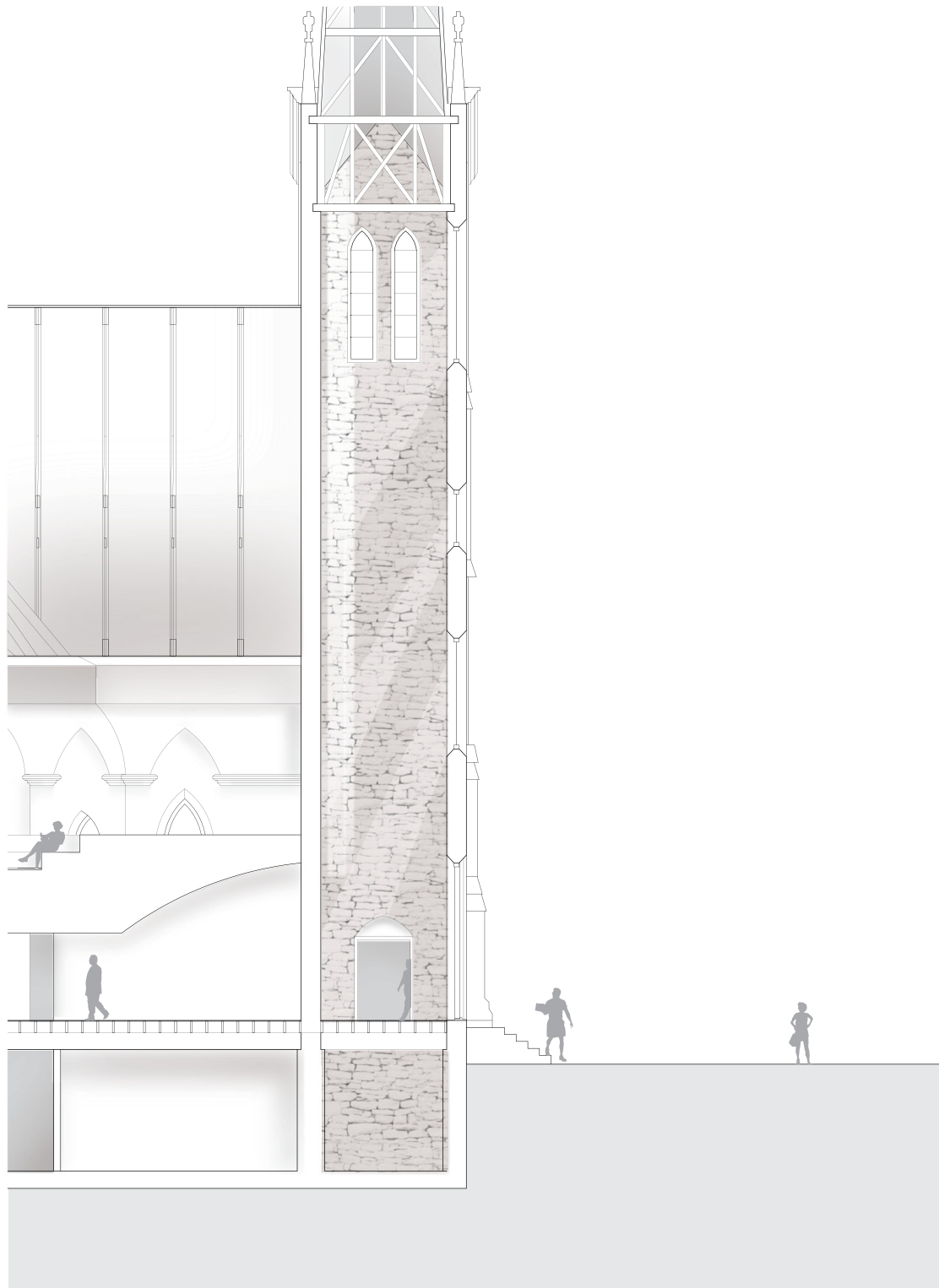
Section through tower and entrance to sanctuary

0 .5 1 2 3 m

ACCESS FROM BUILDING TO WATER

MODIFIED FLOOD WALL

EGRESS
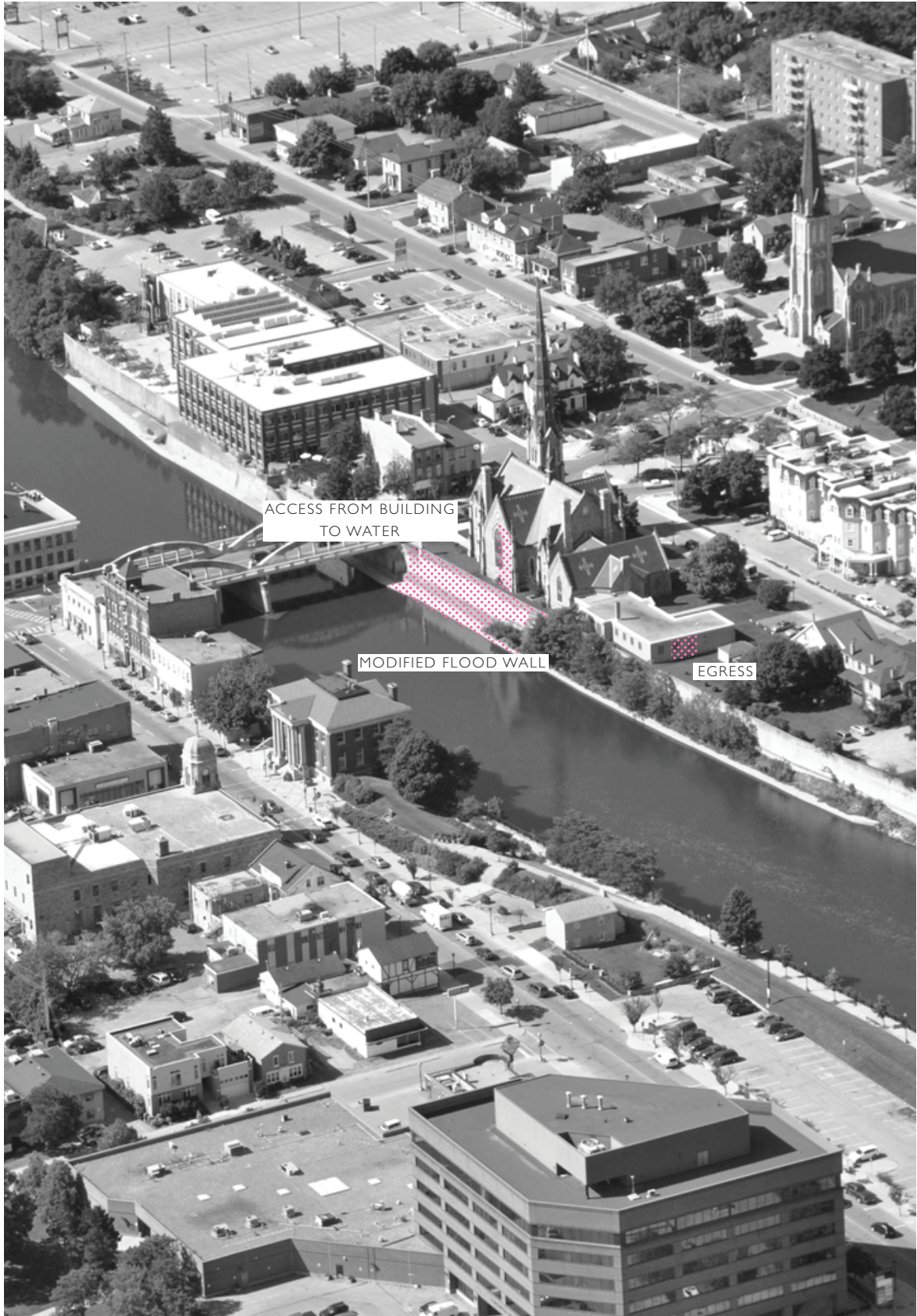
Diagram of design elements that extend beyond the church precinct and consider the church as part of the greater community

In the City

The design interacts with the greater Cambridge community in response to four forces of influence previously discussed: the industrial legacy, flood control infrastructure, the School of Architecture and the creative community.

Industrial Legacy

Historically, the spire atop Central Church has been a beacon among the low industrial buildings in the area. It has created a visual threshold and the design preserves this notion. A cut made to the spire allows light to be emitted; the tower becomes a signal to the community that changes are occurring within the building.

Flood Control Infrastructure

In the late-1970s, the construction of flood control infrastructure dramatically changed the relationship of the city and the Grand River. This design is seen as an opportunity to reconnect the people with the water. The area between the church and the river, which is currently blocked off from the public, is opened. Additionally, the direct connection is made between the church, below grade, and the river. From here, one may see and hear the water and increase his or her awareness of the historic connection of the urban settlement and natural landscape.

School of Architecture

The University of Waterloo School of Architecture becomes part of a programmed reciprocity of resources. The urban situation of the school and the church places them within a network of libraries, galleries and amenities that benefit from one another. Aspects of the new program, such

as the gathering and listening spaces, will welcome users from the architecture school. Similarly, users of the new media centre will have access to the school's library, gallery and café.

Creative Community

Evidence of Cambridge's burgeoning creative community is both tangible, with the construction of a theatre and the opening of galleries and shops downtown, and ephemeral, as in the events and installations that pass through the area. Unsilent Night, is one such event. Annually, in the winter, a number of installations are displayed for a crowd that moves between and through them. Buildings throughout the downtown are used as projection surfaces. It would be a natural progression for Central Church to become part of this event. The south facade might receive projections which highlight the architectural detail of the existing building, while the east elevation would receive a different projection, in response to its relationship with the river.

Design elements that extend beyond the church precinct include alterations to the flood wall, access through the sanctuary windows to the exterior and a new egress door at the north end of the building

Exterior sketch from river looking toward church

Exterior sketch from Main Street looking toward tower

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to develop a design method that is considerate of the hierophany and memory embodied in places of worship yet flexible enough to be compatible with the changes in the building's use. The designed architectural elements' primary purpose is to enhance the quality of the place within Central Church and commemorate the sanctity of the space. Of secondary importance is the ability for these spaces to support the functional program of the new media arts centre. The specificity of the program is a lesser priority which allows for the possibility of continual change as the community evolves.

The development of the design was an exercise that led to discoveries about the space of the church and the role of architecture in this context. First, it became clear, a deep understanding of the theological significance of hierophanic elements was necessary prior to making design decisions. In this way, an appropriate intervention could be conceived within an established set of parameters. These parameters presented a challenge. For example, it was determined that light interventions would be best for the building, yet there was a desire to make a noticeable impact on the site. The designed elements presented here are minimal in material and size, but they still are able to enhance perception of the space and influence a visitor's experience.

It is believed, the role of architecture in the realm of interpretation and adaptive reuse of sacred space is to promote understanding of the sacredness of space. Architecture has the capacity to orient the experience of the

space while curating the qualities that distinguish the place from its surroundings.

Over and above that, architecture is required to be forward-looking and should anticipate future adaptations as its function changes over time. Changes in the Cambridge community up to this point are evident in the downtown area surrounding Queen's Square. Historically, nodes of ritual activity were at the two churches on the south-west and north-east corners of the site as well as the former opera house. The community changed, as time went on. Patterns of activity shifted to a new public library at the north end of the square and the former industrial area, which now includes the school of architecture and a number of shops and galleries.
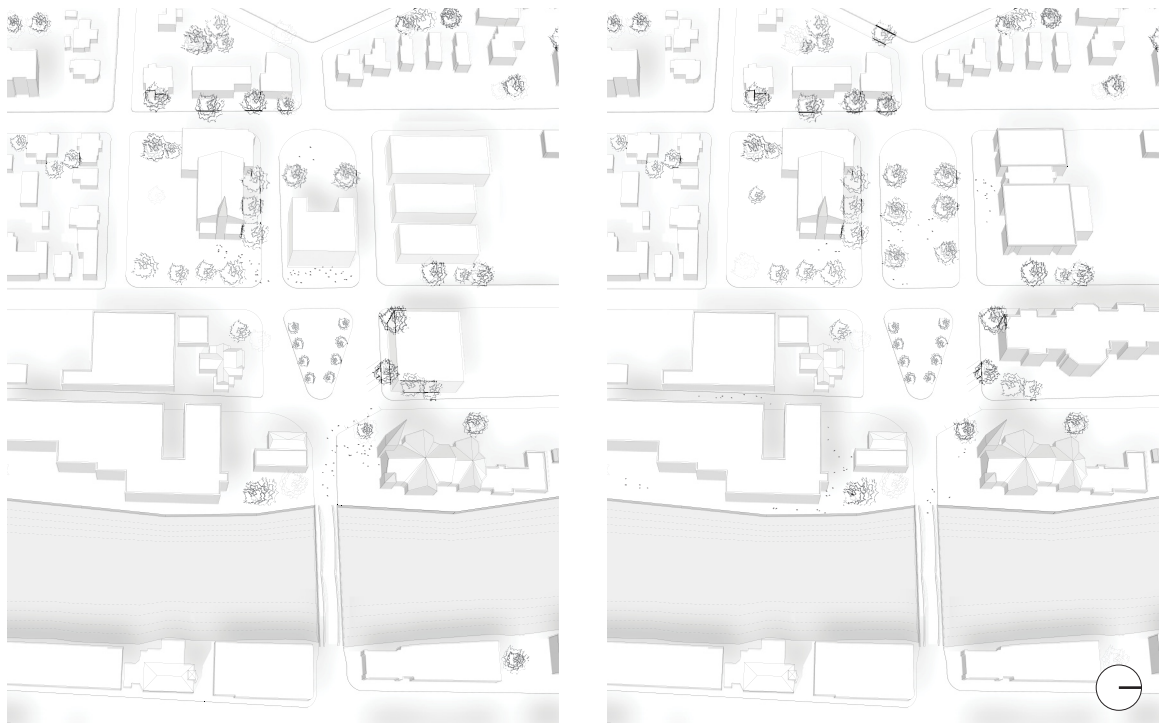
Historical pattern of site activity

Current pattern of site activity

preparing
responding
listening
gathering

Proposed pattern of site activity and ritual themes

It is conceivable that the proposed adaptive reuse of Central Church would reinvigorate the north-east corner of Queen's Square. Central Church could be used as a prototype, and the methodology used for its design applied to any number of sites across Canada, including the church situated diagonally across the square. This would, in effect, activate all four corners of the site with activities rooted in ritual, as opposed to pragmatic or prescriptively programmed uses. The ritual-based approach is favourable, as it responds to inherent tendencies of the community and is likely to result in a design that endures and does not expire as the building's use changes.

Future studies might consider how a broader project scope could more effectively break down the barrier created by the walls of the church. While the intent of this thesis is to blur the line between the sacred space and the profane, the design is mostly internal. A more outward facing design, incorporating more of the surrounding area, would foster the ideal of public outreach and communal ritual interaction.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH CONTEXT

The following is a review of pertinent literature on sacred architecture, memory of place and spirituality and adaptive reuse, written with the intention of identifying aspects of the existing church architecture most suited to conservation and adaptation. The concepts reinforce the design component of the thesis by providing a theoretical foundation. To begin, perspectives on the interpretation of sacred architecture are presented. These references will be drawn upon in the analysis of Central Church. Next, a number of authors are cited for their descriptions of the collective memory embodied in sacred spaces. Likewise, this thesis aims to recognize the significance the place of worship holds for the community as the building is reconsecrated to a new purpose.

Experience and Interpretation of Sacred Architecture

Sacred space is a slight misnomer, when used in reference to the place where people come to gather and worship. We often refer to the character of a physical place, a church, mosque, temple, meeting house or otherwise, as being sacred. However, many theologians would refute this assessment and suggest the sacred cannot be created or built. Louis Nelson, an architectural historian, discusses in *American Sanctuary*, some of the many forces involved in understanding the sacred spaces of all organized religions. He is of the mind that we must avoid, "the common misconception among designers that the genesis of sacred meaning is found in the design process and that an architectural form can itself

besacred."[20] In fact, the space itself, constructed to house the functions of worship, is purely a reflection of the beliefs of the worshiping community.

      This is not to say that the space itself holds no value. Historically, religious groups have distributed their richest ideas and images throughout space and this fact strengthens the rooting of religion in a place. Maurice Halbwachs touches on the issue in his writings on the collective memory of religious groups. Halbwachs visited the Holy Land twice in his career to chronicle the accounts of Judeo-Christians, crusaders and foreign Christian believers upon visiting sites of religious significance. His findings showed, "these observers, on their visits to the Holy Land, imposed what was in their own eyes on the land they thought they were only describing."[21] Furthermore, this is understood to be a common tendency among visitors to places of worship around the world today. Halbwachs writes, "Religious groups may recall certain remembrances on viewing specific locations, buildings, or objects. This should be no surprise, for the basic separation between the sacred and the profane made by such groups is realized materially in space."[22] Evidently, the spaces designed for worship, of all creeds, hold great meaning for their congregants.

      To identify these places as inherently sacred is tempting, but inaccurate. Nonetheless, it is a common perception and has contributed to the way we experience monumental places. In the context of this study, sacred

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20 Louis Nelson, *American Sanctuary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 11.

21 Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27.

22 Ibid., 12.

space will refer to places that are intended for religious ritual practice and that make this condition apparent through materiality and form.

In order to move beyond the interpretation of sacredness as a physical quality, one should advocate for attentiveness to intangible aspects of the space, such as the experience of ritual. Lindsay Jones, whose writings on perception of religious architecture through time and across contexts, presents an idea that the sacred is formed primarily through inhabitation, as opposed to construction. This concept is articulated as "ritual-architectural events," which, through their association with symbolic aspects of the building, give meaning to sacred space. Jones' writings are not specific to Christian churches. Instead, they are intended to be universally applicable in discussions of all religions. Comprehension of such a broad range of religious mores is made complex by the ephemeral nature of so many spiritual practices, so Jones attempts to clarify a process for interpretation using his identified ritual-architectural events.

Jones puts forth eleven discrete relationships that exist between monuments and associated rituals. In a sense, an interpretive framework is laid out for a discussion of the narrative associations of ritual-architectural events and their tangible manifestations. The purpose for this classification system is to establish a set of universally understood nodes from which to derive a discussion on the human experience of sacred architecture and shift the focus away from the architectural objects. The framework covers aspects of the ritual-architectural events relating to orientation, commemoration and contextualization. Through ritual-architectural events, the sacred space can orient participants

in three ways: 1) to the universe represented as a microcosmic replica; 2) to precedents, standards and conventions displayed in sacred architecture; and, 3) to the stars and heavenly bodies to which the place is aligned. Sacred architecture commemorates: 4) the deities recalled in the architecture; 5) miracles in sacred history; 6) the social order of authority, and its evolutions in the developments of organized religions; and, 7) ancestors of the church body. Furthermore, sacred architecture contextualizes ritual performances such as: 8) theatre enacted against a backdrop of sacred architecture; 9) contemplation and meditation; 10) presentation of offerings; and 11) being in the place of pure sanctuary. [23] These principles form the basis for a system of spatial analysis that is inclusive and provocative.

In summary, Jones' work maps human responses to sacred architecture. He itemizes the relationship between the person and the monument to give clarity to the discussion of sacred space. Taking a cue from Jones' method, this thesis identifies meaningful thresholds throughout Central Church and isolates defining qualities. The analysis furthers this process by abstracting the qualities of the existing spaces and proposing a form that will enhance the user's understanding of the ritual, while simultaneously supporting an evolving program.

Instruments of Memory

The readings on interpretation of sacred spaces are consistent in one belief–the place is a forum to register the memories, identities and beliefs of the community, as well as the voice of the church as an institution. Architectural

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23   Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, xvi.

forms and spatial relationships act as placeholders of these narratives and have the ability to evoke memories of a culture through sensory experiences.

The tradition of religious imagery embodied in architecture is centuries old. However, there was a marked departure from the ornate decor during the Renaissance, which Juhani Pallasmaa discusses. Juhani reminds the reader, "In an era that preceded printing and mass reading, the cathedral with its sculptures, frescos, and stained-glass windows was a seminal medium for conveying biblical texts and events to the largely illiterate congregation."[24] However, the advent of the printing press, which had widespread ramifications on multiple disciplines, also affected the communicative potential of architecture. Victor Hugo in the eighth edition of *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831) went so far as to pronounce a death sentence for architecture in a paragraph entitled 'ceci tuera cela' ('this will kill that'). He wrote, "In the fifteenth century [...] Human thought discovered a means of perpetuating itself in a more lasting and resistant form than architecture. It was simpler and easier as well. Architecture was dethroned,"[25] While this may be true of many buildings constructed since that time, churches continued to be very deliberate about the symbolism of their spaces, through to the mid-twentieth century.

In fact, contrary to Hugo's premonition, the Bible, printed in common vernacular, has become central to the beliefs of the Protestant church, grounds its theology and informs church architecture. Therefore, even though

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24   Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image: Imagination and Imagery in Architecture* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2011), 17.

25   Quoted in Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image*, 18.

churches since the Renaissance have been devoid of much ornamentation, the church typology has continued to exist and serve as the fundamental vessel for religious practices. There are features of the church that remain present and persist today. These omnipresent qualities are the very things to preserve as the community's integral rituals continually evolve.

Though there have been adaptations, the church has been able to represent itself with a distinct typology through time. Generally speaking, the space of the church was not changed by the printing press. Its imagery, however, was. Halbwachs notes, "The Church has preserved the image of its past, but it has done so selectively, and thus has achieved continuity through selection."[26] This continuity provides a natural framework for recollection of lived experience and of the comprehensive history of the place.

The communication of memory is critical in the recognition of a place through the continuum of history. Christine Boyer, an urban historian, has written extensively on methods for reading the city. In her book *City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, she discusses the importance of memory to this reading. In her opinion, there are two main agents which establish a context for recollection: lived experience and spatial reconstruction. It is a reasonable system she presents. Lived experience is oriented by memory, which is in turn located through spatial reconstruction. In Boyer's words, "Memory orients experience by linking an individual to family traditions, customs of class, religious beliefs, or specific places." It orients in the sense that it creates a place for one among

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26   Halbwachs and Coser, *On Collective Memory*, 27.

Portions of a stained glass window found in the west wall of Central Presbyterian Church. The text reinforces the belief that the building itself is subordinate to the worshipping community of the church.

many. This is essential and prevents memory from being reduced to "'history' becoming abstract or intellectualized reconstructions, debased or faked recollections."[27] Here an impetus emerges to reconsider how architecture can communicate the complex narrative of places of worship as they continue to serve their communities in new ways.

Monuments to the Past

As the city surrounding the church evolves, the value of the place is inevitably reevaluated. Alois Riegl, an Austrian art historian and philosopher, wrote extensively on the competing values to be considered in the conservation of historic structures. A tension arose in the nineteenth century when the concept of historic value began to be applied to monuments.[28] As a monument, to be anointed with this value would protect places and artifacts from further degradation due to age. However, the aging and deterioration nature inevitably wrought greatly increased the perceived value of these monuments. As such, "the artifacts of history were placed in direct opposition and conflict with the values of age."[29]

Riegl's belief was that, "all art possessed intentionality, transparently expressing the collective will of a period and age."[30] His seminal 1903 essay *On the Modern Cult of Monumen*ts, divides the history of monuments into intentional and unintentional monuments. Intentional monuments, he contends, were, "designed egotistically by

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27 Boyer, *City of Collective Memory*, 26.

28 Ibid., 144.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 141.

their makers to be memorials recalling specific moments in time. They, like Halbwachs' collective memory, continued to be memorials as long as the conditions that brought them into existence remained alive."[31] Unintentional monuments, on the other hand, were, "originally built for other purposes then abandoned or ravaged by time; they received their monumental status artificially when an epoch bestowed on them the value of history."[32] The church can be described, under these parameters, as both an intentional and an unintentional monument. They are intentional in their original mandate to commemorate the development of the organized religon and unintentional as some desire to preserve their expression of imposing architecture. It should be noted, Riegl's work was just translated to English in 1982, in support of the widespread criticism of the imitation of historical forms, later known as "post-modernism."

Riegl pronounced three types of present-day values which affect our understanding of the above-mentioned unintentional monuments: historical value, age value and use-value.[33] Boyer aptly paraphrases Riegl's thinking and states, "Although a monument might contain nothing of value for a historian of art or of culture, it might be valued because as a ruin or fragment it moved the spectator in mysterious ways."[34] It is an antiquarian approach to history that Riegl presents here. By this logic, one can attribute some type of value to nearly any thing of the past. And, while these values could help to formulate an argument for the conservation of a place such as Central Presbyterian Church, there are other,

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31 Ibid., 144.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

more essential, methods for endorsing the merit of the place of worship.

A physical monument is one way to preserve memory, but there are qualities of the church building that provide another, more ephemeral, context for the collective memory of the community. Pallasmaa quite eloquently illustrates the power of the architectural metaphor in *The Embodied Image*. He suggests that, "Architectural metaphors are grounded in the very faculties of our being-in-the-world, and they are grasped by our existential and embodied sense rather than the intellect."[35] The metaphor is more than a reference to ornament or object within the space. It is often a sensory experience that refers to, but is not synonymous with, the place's symbolism. "Symbolism only fixes the image to a distinct context, such as mythical, religious or ideological connotations, but this connection does not provide the work with emotive power beyond acknowledging the convention, or a reference to a system or tradition of belief."[36] In essence, it is not explicit iconography which gives a place its sense of being sacred. It is the metaphor that begins to evoke an image and elevate the experience of dwelling in the space.

Architectural metaphor is congruent with theories of recollection and collective memory. The architecture itself, which historically was the primary locus for the communication of ideas, has the capacity to tell a story and further one's interpretation of the life of the community. As Pallasmaa put it, "Architectural structures… are lived metaphors, that mediate between the world and the human

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35   Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image*, 68.

36   Ibid., 60.

realm of life, immensity and intimacy, past and present." [37]
The church then, which was originally built to negotiate the
divine and the profane, will be compelling as it transitions to
become liaison of historic and contemporary thought.

Retaining the memory of the population is pertinent
in a society that is often preoccupied with novelty and
newness. Boyer warns this preoccupation will spark a memory
crisis in the contemporary city. She writes, "If the purities
of modern urban planning have left us face to face with
displacement, disengagement, and disenchantment when
it comes to the urban experience … then today's memory
crisis seems to rest on our need to interweave disjunctive and
noncommensurable images to establish connections across
the city and reappropriate its utopian promise." [38] There are
considerable gaps in the urban fabric, both physical and
cultural, as developments in transportation and information
technologies encourage individualism and egocentrism. The
transmission of ideas has moved so far from the built form
and beyond printed media and is lacking a relationship with
the people who desire it. Boyer addresses this issue. She
states, "Remembering and recollection today have achieved
new importance as the contemporary metropolis becomes
a source of constant exchanges in and relays of information,
and represents a physical site in which images and messages
seem to swirl about devoid of a sustaining context." [39] The
adaptive reuse of Central Church, so rich with symbolism and
cultural significance, acts as a catalyst in reconnecting the city
and anchoring the artistic collective.

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37   Ibid., 68.

38   Boyer, *City of Collective Memory*, 29.

39   Ibid., 28.

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