Into the Mystic
Perspectives on Sacred Architecture
Into the mystic...
Consecration
The Making of Sacred Space
“Neither the indigenous experience nor the academic interpretation of sacred architecture is ever definitive or complete.”

Lindsay Jones
Professor of Religions, Ohio State University
What *is* sacred space?

- How do we make – and unmake – sacred space?
- Why do we make sacred space?
- What work does sacred space do once made?
Kerameikos, Athens
The casket of St Bridget of Sweden, Vadstena monastery
“There are no unsacred places, only sacred places and desecrated places.”

Wendell Berry
“Homo microcosmus, hoc est- parvus mundus, macrocosmo, id est...”

Martin Meyers, c.1669
God the Geometer
(Architect, Builder, Craftsman)
Frontispiece from the Bible Moralisée
(c. 1220–30)
Sacrifice to Capitoline Jupiter. Relief panel from (presumably) a triumphal arch, now in the Capitoline Museums, Rome.
Pantheon, Rome
Procession of Pope Gregory X
Illumination from a liturgical manuscript made for Pope Gregory X (1271–75)
“Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim” by H. Kessler and J. Zacharias (2000, p. 66)
Church of Eke, Gotland
North door at the church of Väte, Gotland
• Sacred spaces are universally and automatically perceived as sacred by all.

• Sacred spaces are “open works” with a virtually infinite range of possible meanings.

• Sacred space is neither infinitely mutable nor automatically affixed as sacred – the locus of meaning resides in the negotiation or interactive relation that subsumes both building and beholder.
“We may be completely incapable of saying anything meaningful about it, but we still have a strong emotive response to and memory of it.”

– Juhani Pallasmaa
2. Me at St Mary’s in Wroxham, Norfolk (@ Christopher Traynor, used with permission)
3a. Bookshop Dominican Church Maastrict, Netherlands. Photo: Ben Bender. CC BY-SA 3.0 (Wiki Commons)
3b. The demolition of St Michael’s Church, Albert Road CC BY-SA 2.0 (Wiki Commons)
3c. Vesper’s deconsecrated Methodist church in Brightwater, Nelson. CC BY-SA 2.0 (Wiki Commons)
7. Kerameikos, Athens (@ me)
8. St Brigid of Sweden’s casket, Vadstena (@ me)
10. Homo microcosms. No restrictions/public domain (Wiki Commons)
11. God as Geometer. Public domain (Wiki Commons)
12. Roman relief panel at the Capitoline Museum, Rome (@ me)
13. Joulurauhan julistus. Public domain (Wiki Commons)
14. Pantheon dome and oculus (@ me)
16a. Tree roots. Photo: John Fowler. CC BY 2.0 (Wiki Commons)
16b. Bronchioles. 1899 from “Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene” by Jerome Walker. No restrictions/public domain (Wiki Commons)
16c. Confluence of the Caroni river and Guri reservoir (Venezuela). Photo: NASA. Public domain (Wiki Commons)
17. Parish priests and their people in the Middle Ages in England. No restrictions/public domain (Wiki Commons)
18a. Spring flower. Photo: Aaron Burden CC0 (Wiki Commons)
18b. Fireworks at the summer festival in Anan. Photo: CC BY-SA 3.0 (Wiki Commons)
18c. Sunset over water at Kanyakumari. Photo: Yano. Nirav Umaretiya. CC BY-SA 4.0 (Wiki Commons)
18d. Winter scene. Photo: Enoch Leung. CC BY-SA 2.0 (Wiki Commons)
19. Font at Eke church, Gotland (@ me)
20. North door at Väte church, Gotland (@ me)
21a. Kaaba. Public domain (Wiki Commons)
21b. Mycenean walls (@ me)
21c. Durham Cathedral set above the River Wear (@ me)
23a. Me at S. Maria in Cosmedin, Rome (@ C. Traynor, used with permission)
23b. Chris at St Govan’s Chartel, Wales (@ me)
23c. Anonymous lady in Livia’s Garden room, Rome (@ me)
24. Contextual shot of Fra Angelico’s Annunciation in San Marco (@ me)
27. Gotland church door (@ me)