



Sacred Spaces

Sacred Places

Religious Architecture and Sites



**Vermont Humanities Council
2012 Annual Fall Conference**



November 9 and 10

Begins Friday afternoon and runs through Saturday

StoweLake Mountain Resort and Spa, Stowe, Vermont





Sacred Spaces, Sacred Places: Religious Architecture and Sites

Vermont Humanities Council 2012 Fall Conference
Friday and Saturday • November 9–10, 2012

Sacred buildings and sites offer us ways to enter into and better understand the cultures that sanctify them — from Gothic cathedrals to Muslim shrines, from Buddhist and Hindu temples to New England meetinghouses and American churches. Compelling in their own right, these buildings are also visible signifiers of spiritual beliefs and practices. How do they manifest the values of the cultures that sanctify them? What do they have in common? Join us at the Vermont Humanities Council's 39th annual fall conference to examine these places and the beliefs and values they embody.

The conference begins Friday afternoon with two concurrent presentations: illustrated talks on Islamic sacred sites and Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe and their role in preserving and transmitting both religious belief and secular culture.

New this year is an optional dinner buffet Friday night at the Stoweflake. After dinner, Professor Robert Oden, former president of both Kenyon and Carleton Colleges and a former professor of religion at Dartmouth College, will examine the persistent power of place in religious life across a variety of religious traditions.

The Saturday morning plenary features Glenn Andres, professor of the history of art and architecture at Middlebury College, who will consider the convergence of form and function in New England's iconic meetinghouses. In the afternoon, Dr. Nasser Rabbat, the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at MIT, will speak about the importance of three different mosques to the Islamic world.

Morning and afternoon breakout sessions offer conference-goers the opportunity to interact with Professor Oden about what we can learn about Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam from studying their sacred spaces; to consider with Professor Andres how and why American church buildings changed through the 19th and 20th centuries; to examine the sacred role of ritual; and to learn about the sacred spaces of many world religions, including Hinduism, Christianity, Native American culture, Judaism, Islam, and Japanese Buddhism.

Throughout the conference, enjoy the exhibit *White on White: Churches of Rural New England*, featuring Steve Rosenthal's photographs of the early churches of New England.

Key Speakers



Glenn Andres

Professor of the History of Art and Architecture, Middlebury College

A member of the Middlebury College faculty since 1970, Glenn Andres has taught, published, and designed exhibitions on the history of American and New England regional architecture. He is a member of the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and co-author of the forthcoming *Buildings of Vermont*.



Robert A. Oden, Jr.

Former President, Carleton and Kenyon Colleges

A distinguished scholar of Near Eastern languages and religions, Robert A. Oden, Jr. has been president of both Carleton College and Kenyon College, headmaster of the Hotchkiss School, and professor of religion at Dartmouth College. He is the recipient of Dartmouth's first Distinguished Teaching Award.



Nasser Rabbat

Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at MIT

Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at MIT where he has been teaching since 1991. His interests include Islamic art and architecture, medieval urban history, and post-colonial criticism. His research focuses on the intercultural spaces where peoples have always met and exchanged ideas, views, beliefs, and practices, and, in the process, created art and architecture.



VHC Sacred Spaces, Sacred Places Fall Conference Schedule

Friday, November 9

- 1:30 PM – 4:15 PM** **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*
- 4:15 PM – 5:30 PM** **Breakout sessions (session descriptions)**
- 5:30 PM – 7:15 PM** **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*
- 5:45 PM – 7:00 PM** **Buffet dinner, optional, reservations required (see below)**
- 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM** **The Roles of Sacred Spaces across Belief Systems.** The shapes of a Christian cathedral, a Hindu temple, and the Holy Mosque in Mecca are quite different, as is the behavior of adherents in these sacred spaces. Professor Robert Oden, former president of Carleton and Kenyon Colleges and former professor of religion at Dartmouth College, asks what roles sacred spaces play in religions across the globe? What do we learn about religion by studying a variety of sacred spaces and the religious behavior that takes place in them? *Room: Pinnacle*
- 9:00 PM – 10:00 PM** **Reception and book signing, *White on White: Churches of Rural New England*.** Meet photographer Steve Rosenthal whose photographs are on exhibit (see lower right). *Room: Atrium*

Saturday, November 10

- 7:15 AM – 8:30 AM** **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*
- Continental breakfast.** *Room: Collins*
- 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM** **Welcome.** Peter Gilbert, VHC executive director; James Wilbur, VHC board chair; presentation of 2012 Victor R. Swenson Humanities Educator Award. *Room: Pinnacle*
- 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM** **The New England Meetinghouse.** The New England meetinghouse is an iconic symbol of American history and values. Dr. Glenn Andres, professor of the history of art and architecture at Middlebury College, considers the meetinghouse's origins, use, and evolution over time, from its earliest forms in 17th-century southern New England to examples from the Federal period in Vermont. *Room: Pinnacle*
- 10:15 AM – 10:45 AM** **Break with coffee and tea.** *Room: Collins*
- 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM** **Breakout sessions (session descriptions)**
- 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM** **Buffet luncheon.** *Room: Pinnacle*
- 1:15 PM – 2:30 PM** **The Three Mosques.** The Prophet Mohammed identified three mosques as sites appropriate to visit: Al Masjid Al Haram (the Great Mosque in Mecca), Al Masjid Al Aqsa (in Jerusalem), and the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Nabawi) in Medina. Dr. Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at MIT, considers what it is about these sites that makes them so important in the Islamic world. What do we know of their histories? And how can those histories help us understand both Islam itself and Islam in relation to the other two Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Christianity? *Room: Pinnacle*
- 2:30 PM – 3:00 PM** **Break with beverages.** *Room: Atrium*
- 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM** **Breakout sessions (session descriptions)**

Conference Details: **Conference fee:** The \$99 (\$69 student) fee includes all conference programs, a packet of conference reading, continental breakfast, buffet lunch, and snacks. An on-site bookstore will be open Saturday. Space is limited; registration is first-come, first-served. **Registration and payment deadline is October 22:** After the deadline, registrations will be accepted as space is available. **Cancellations:** refund less \$25 fee until October 22; no refund after October 22. **Scholarships:** deadline is October 12. Apply online. **Students, teachers, groups:** Students and teachers are encouraged to attend; certification letters are available. Special pricing is available to groups affiliated with an institution such as a school. Contact VHC. **Lodging:** Rooms at the Stoweflake are \$125 (plus tax) single or double on a first-come, first-served basis. For reservations, 800.253.2232 or stoweflake.com. Mention the conference to receive the conference rate (good November 9–10). **Register online at vermonthumanities.org or by fax with a credit card 802.262.2620 or by check to Vermont Humanities Council, 11 Loomis Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602.** One person per form. **Contact:** 802.262.2626 x304 • acaterino@vermonthumanities.org • vermonthumanities.org

*** * NEW * * Buffet Dinner, Friday:** As a convenience to conference-goers, we've scheduled an Italian buffet dinner. It is \$40 per person and includes tax and tip. Wine and beer will be available at a cash bar. Vegetarian options will be available.



VHC Sacred Spaces, Sacred Places Fall Conference Sessions

Breakout Sessions

Friday Afternoon Session

Sacred Spaces of Islam. The sacred spaces of Islam are extraordinarily diverse. What does a mosque in Istanbul have in common with one in Delhi? How might a book be a sacred space? What can we learn from the material evidence about Muslim practice and experience? Beyond housing the rituals of the faith, how might a mosque anchor a community? **Led by:** *Dr. Holly Edwards, Senior Lecturer, Islamic Art, Visual Culture, Williams College*

The World of Pilgrimage. A practice prominent to many faiths, a pilgrimage is animated by the power of place, but also valued in its own right. Professor Kinder examines both pilgrimage and place, focusing on well- and lesser-known destinations and showing how various sites have responded to centuries of the practice. **Led by:** *Dr. Terryl Kinder, Distinguished Visiting Professor, Saint Michael's College*

Saturday Morning Session

Gothic Magnificence. It is in the great churches of Europe that Gothic architecture was most powerfully expressed, and it is in those churches that Gothic design achieved its greatest spiritual purpose. Professor Gaposchkin looks at several examples of high Gothic architecture, including Paris's Notre Dame and Sainte-Chapelle. **Led by:** *Dr. Cecilia Gaposchkin, Associate Professor of History, Dartmouth College*

The Hindu Temple. Enter into a Hindu temple and consider the ways in which Hindu temples in general reflect the broad spectrum of philosophical beliefs of the world's third-largest religion. **Led by:** *Dr. Laura Weinstein, Ananda Coomaraswamy Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston*

"In the Light of Reverence": Native American Sacred Spaces, Spirituality, and the Law. Referencing recent legal cases, scholar and lawyer N. Bruce Duthu examines the legal and cultural collisions that happen when use of public lands conflicts with spiritual practices and beliefs of Native Americans who consider the places sacred. **Led by:** *N. Bruce Duthu, Samson Occom Professor of Native American Studies, Dartmouth College*

Sacred Spaces, Ritual, and Recalling What Matters.

What role is played by the rituals that almost always accompany the building and consecration of sacred spaces? What does the enduring magnetism of sacred spaces and their accompanying rituals teach us about both religion and the human condition? What do rituals and sacred spaces prompt us to remember, and why? **Led by:** *Dr. Robert Oden, former president, Kenyon and Carleton Colleges and former Professor of Religion, Dartmouth College*

Saturday Afternoon Session

The Cistercians: Quiet Simplicity. Given the Cistercian (Trappist) emphasis on self-sufficiency, manual labor, and living in silence, it is not surprising that their abbeys were constructed with elegant simplicity. Professor Kinder traces how, since 1098, the order's beliefs have been embodied in its architecture. **Led by:** *Dr. Terryl Kinder, Distinguished Visiting Professor, Saint Michael's College*

Inside, Outside, and All Around: Sacred Space in Judaism.

Rabbi Boraz traces the concept of sacred space in Judaism from its early expression in the Tabernacle to the present day, noting how historic development in the design of synagogues is a reflection of Jewish history itself. **Led by:** *Edward Boraz, Rabbi and Executive Director of Dartmouth Hillel and Rabbi of the Upper Valley Jewish Community*

The Parish Church. European cities have grand cathedrals and basilicas, but most people in medieval and early modern Europe experienced the sacred in small, parish churches. Though relatively simple in design and decoration, parish churches present a fascinating glimpse into the lives, priorities, and identities of ordinary people in an age of political upheaval and religious change. **Led by:** *Dr. Emily Gray, Assistant Professor of History, Norwich University*

Sacred Space in Japanese Buddhism. Focusing on the conception, construction, and ritual applications of sacred space in Japanese Buddhist traditions, Professor Hockley examines the idea that sacred space, while centered in monastic environments, also encompasses certain types of topography, large geographic regions, and "pure lands" where people are reborn according to circumstances defined in sacred texts. **Led by:** *Dr. Allen Hockley, Associate Professor of Art History, Dartmouth College*

Themes in American Church Architecture. Professor Andres explores the shaping and reshaping of American church buildings through the 19th and 20th centuries in response to changes in use patterns, stylistic associations, and denominational identity. **Led by:** *Dr. Glenn Andres, Professor of the History of Art and Architecture, Middlebury College*

Ongoing

White on White: Churches of Rural New England Photography Exhibit.

The early churches of New England embody a particularly American sensibility. Photographer Steve Rosenthal's work traces the evolution of church styles. His documentary photographs are artistic achievements in their own right.

