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Abend Singleton Associates Incorporated

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An Addition to the Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral

Kansas City, Missouri

Abend Singleton Associates Incorporated

Background

Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral is comprised of parts erected over the past century. The sanctuary was built between 1887-1890, its tower added in 1893-1894, according to a new design. The Guild Hall was constructed in 1938, the school building in the 1950's. Abend Singleton's 1980 addition seeks to respect the complex's accretive character, while strengthening a sense of harmonious relationship and giving focus to a heretofore neglected portion of the site.

Program

The program required a two-phase development that provided an administration facility for the Episcopal Diocese in the first stage, and a chapel and columbarium for the congregation in the second. The clients requested separate identities for the two facilities, but wanted them to be compatible with other components in the complex. The clients also expressed the desire for designs that reinforced their symbolic role in and service to, the downtown community.

The site lies on the southwest edge of the cathedral grounds. The surrounding area is visually and functionally diverse. To the south is a sunken freeway connector, Interstate 35. One of the freeway's off ramps, a principal entrance to downtown, diagonally intersects the site at its corner. The adjacent blocks to the east are occupied by Bartle Hall (1977), an enormous convention center, utilitarian in appearance.



1. View of cathedral complex and sunken courtyard from freeway ramp.

The site's western edge is lined with rundown apartment buildings dating from the early 19th century. The skyline to the north is punctuated by the tower of the Roman Catholic Cathedral (1882), among the few remaining 19th-century landmarks in the city's center.

Program included several demanding requirements: relating the new elements to a heterogeneous complex; relating the scheme to its larger physical context; designing a phased development intended to suggest completeness; creating a unified whole, both formally and functionally, that maintains the identity of each component; and developing an outdoor space that provides a cloister for numerous activities and becomes a unifying element for the compound.

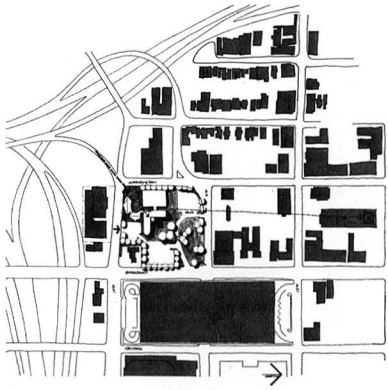
Solution

A circular organization was

developed to integrate the three functions — chapel, diocese office and columbarium. Extensive model experimentation reinforced the use of this form. The circle's geometry and symbolism is also conducive to a place for celebration of religious, social, and community activities. At the center, the courtyard serves as both a transition space and unifying element, restating the traditional plan relationship between church, cloister and graveyard. Due to site restrictions, the circle was modified into an ellipse. The geometry was further changed by opening up the corner to establish a visual link between freeway ramp and the cathedral. Phase one of the addition establishes site and building relationships, which respond to and reinforce urban vistas. The new Diocese offices look out on the gold dome of the Catholic cathedral. From the other direction, they terminate the view from the Episcopal

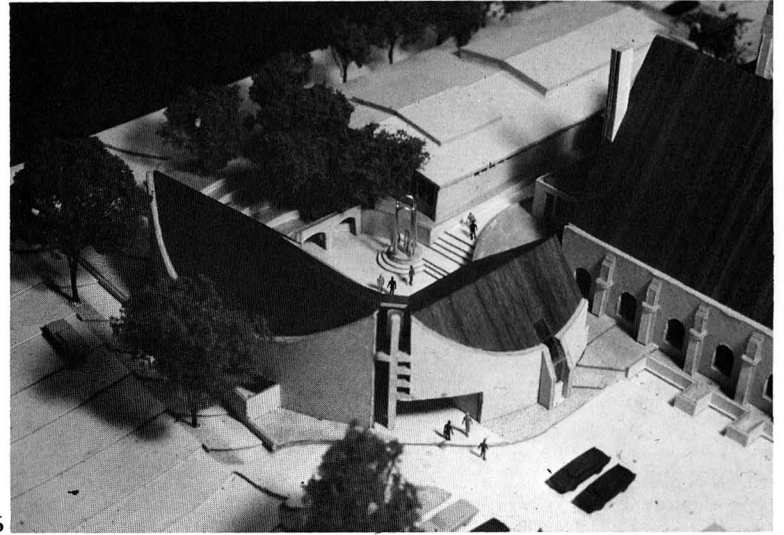
cathedral's north parking lot entrance. The new courtyard is a procession of spaces terminated by the reconstructed reredos from the original Grace Church.

The addition illustrates the idea of a harmonious contrast between old and new architecture. This reciprocity is more complex than cosmetic compatibility and is achieved through relationships that are not concordant in a superficial sense. The contrast can enhance the old elements and emphasize their place in an historical continuum. The juxtaposition of the elliptical walls and rectilinear roof acknowledges this relationship. The convex, concrete form encloses the courtyard and is an urban solution in opposition to the cathedral's pastoral imagery. The addition's tiled roof makes direct reference to that of the cathedral. The contrasting forms are intended to create contrapuntal sculptural consequences which define stage one and stage two buildings, identify each client's building with a distinguished but unified character, emulate cathedral building forms, and generate symbolic religious allusions. Executed in concrete, the curving form of the addition is a contemporary response to the varying stonework of the existing structures. The hammered concrete incorporates smooth surrounds and joints to express the casting technique. Relief sculpture, fountains, rain spouts, lanterns, an iron gateway and wood-glass curtain walls of the new facility also recall qualities of the existing architecture.



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2. Site plan.
 3. View of Diocese office cloister from north cathedral entrance.
 4. Cloister entry gate with restored raredos in background.
 5. View from Diocese office cloister to the north entrance.
 6. View from the southeast showing future chapel.
 7. Southeast view.
 8. Aerial view from the southwest.
- Photos by Paul Kivett.



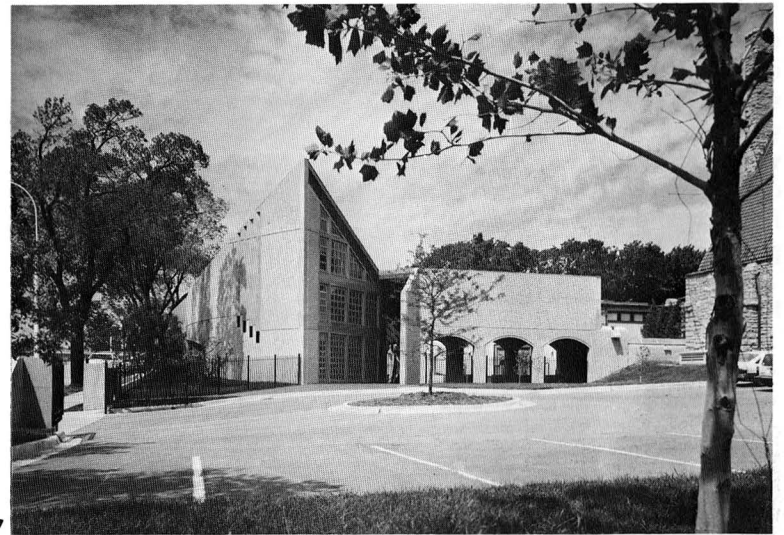
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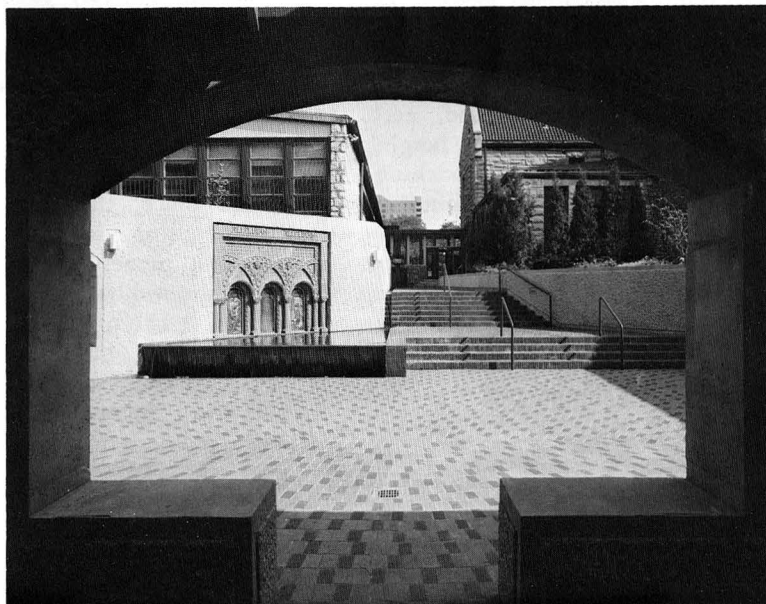
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