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### The architecture of multifaith spaces: God leaves the building

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# The architecture of multifaith spaces: God leaves the building

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In multifaith rooms people of all faiths, as well as those of no faith, enemies even, time-share a space that takes on one of a set of sacred modalities on a sign outside. Multifaith has become the default form of religious space in hospitals and airports and has introduced sacred space to places like shops, football grounds and offices where none formerly existed. What is the architecture of this new type of universal sacred space? Usually they are mundane spaces without an aura whose most characteristic form is an empty white room. In order not to be meaningful in an inappropriate way they use banal materials, avoid order and regularity, and are the architectural equivalent of ambient noise. The most extreme examples resemble works of conceptual art. The results are sufficiently anti-architectural to suggest that architecture depends upon a particular culture for its existence.

## Introduction

Multifaith spaces<sup>1</sup> are a new kind of sacred environment in which anyone can pray whatever their religion. Their design is an open problem.<sup>2</sup> The most common and characteristic type is a windowless white room with a few religious texts on a shelf and the paraphernalia of religion, when not actually in use, kept out of sight in boxes (figs 1, 2).

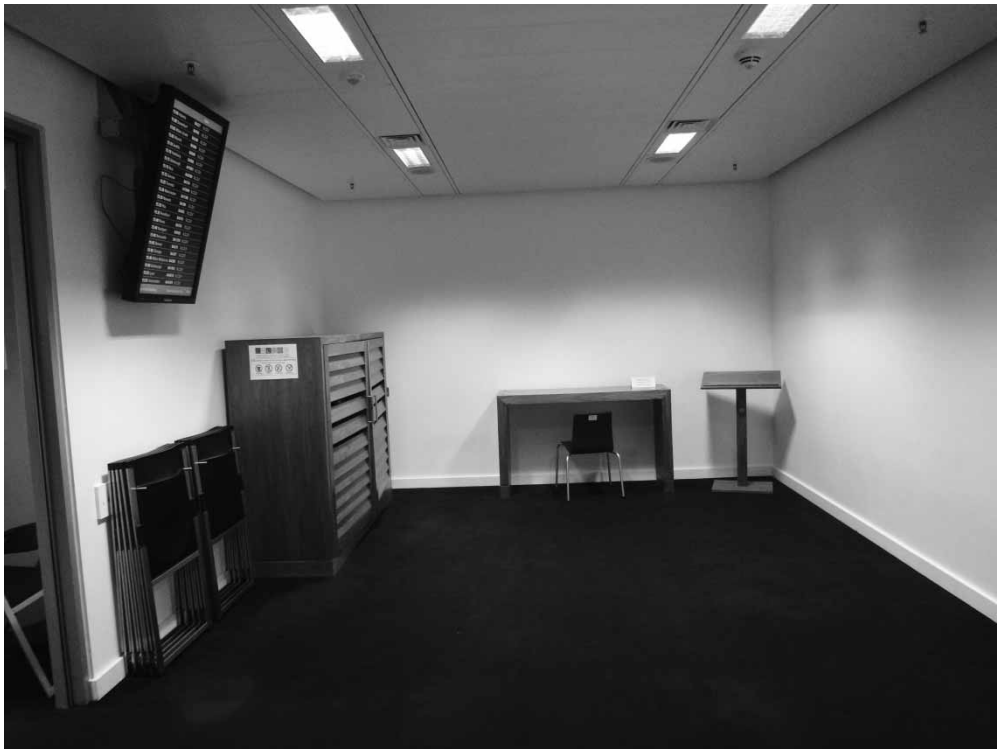
These universal interfaces with God are not, as one might have thought, a sublime expression of a deep unity of which individual religions are merely a particular expression. Here is a building problem for which architects seem to have no answer. Are these blank white rooms even architecture at all? Why is it so difficult to transcend different faiths and create places that are sacred for all?

Empty white rooms have become the default solution because there is an assumption that we should not be exposed to symbols of other people's faith if that can be avoided. Whether shielding people from

other religions is reasonable or legal seems not to matter.<sup>3</sup> In practice the most important issue in multifaith design has become how to prevent a space becoming meaningful in an inappropriate way. Furthermore this purity is protected by the law.<sup>4</sup> A multifaith room cannot afford to look like a church or a mosque or a temple. Nor should it have a style associated with something non-religious or national. Nor should it be modernist if that projects a secular or scientific outlook. Almost any concept introduced by an architect will be either irrelevant or partisan and in practice most multifaith rooms are built without an architect being involved in a significant way.

This iconoclastic conflict is deeper than that which occurred during the Reformation.<sup>5</sup> Stripped of paintings and sculpture Luther's whitewashed chapel at Torgau became the prototype of those churches in which the word of God could be heard but no images of God could be seen. The results were,

Figure 1. Heathrow  
Terminal 5: landside  
multifaith room.



however, still recognisable as churches. With multi-faith the iconoclasm now extends to the image of the building itself. In the most extreme multifaith spaces we have reached one of the ends of architecture. How can this be understood? The problem of representing the unrepresentable is one that has already occurred in painting, music and literature, with results that make some sense of what is being built.

### **The origins of multifaith**

Even though there is no organisation to promote them or any explicit legal requirement to provide them,<sup>6</sup> there are now at least 1,500 multifaith spaces in Britain and even more in the USA and Europe.<sup>7</sup> They can be found in non-places like airports, shopping centres, hospitals and prisons, as well as in universities, schools, police stations, offices, government buildings and service stations.



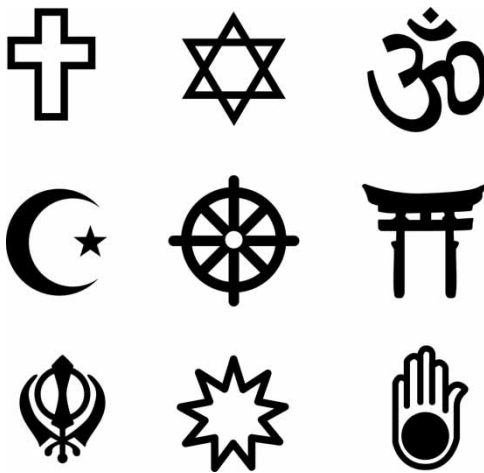
Figure 2. Manchester Royal Infirmary: one box for each religion.

Behind their doors different faiths keep themselves to themselves. In visiting them I have never observed any shared religious service except at opening ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> This separation is reflected in the way multi-faith represents itself by a collection of icons. Like apps on a phone, they show the different states the room can take (Fig. 3). There will be at least six of them: Christianity; Islam; Judaism; Hinduism; Sikhism; Buddhism—more often nine: adding

Jainism; Baha'i; Zoroastrianism. From time to time Taoism and Shinto appear, as do Native American religions; Pagans; Druids; Adventists; Humanists—not to mention people of no faith who are sometimes represented by a blank space. Other religions, sects and cults are uncountable.<sup>9</sup>

Multifaith can be seen as a response to a globalised world in which social life is torn from its locality and we interact with absent others rather than face

Figure 3. Multifaith  
sign.



to face.<sup>10</sup> Traditional religion is out of place in a de-territorialised world like this. Yet it persists, especially in the poor rather than the rich world. Where those worlds collide, in places like airports, the United Nations or the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), religious activity survives, out of sight, in multifaith spaces. Rarely are these conspicuous, usually you have to go around a few corners to find them. Often they are situated close to thresholds. In airports they may be in pairs, both landside and airside. At the shopping centre they will be near the car park, never with the shops. They are worth seeking out. They are special spaces where you can be unobserved and quiet for a while.

The origins of multifaith are obscure, there is no foundation story or any eminent person associated with it, nor is there any famous multifaith space.<sup>11</sup>

Very few were built before the millennium (Figs 4, 5): a room at Vienna Airport, dated 1988, may be the oldest so called multifaith space.<sup>12</sup> It bears stressing that, historically, the sharing of space by different faiths is very rare, especially in the West.<sup>13</sup> European examples are a few Balkan shrines shared by Christians and Muslims,<sup>14</sup> and German *Simultankirche* that have served both Catholics and Protestants since the Reformation.<sup>15</sup>

These examples, like others in India and the Middle East, represent negotiated settlements between two faiths. In contrast, the idea of a universal sacred space seems modern. An early prototype was the Meditation Room at the United Nations building in New York, built in 1948 as a personal project of Dag Hammarskjöld (Fig. 4). Sited off the busy concourse next to a Chagall stained glass wall, its lobby turns back on itself forcing a change of pace before opening on to a windowless trapezoidal space containing a single abstract painting and a nine-ton steel ingot. The room is ambiguously religious: the stained glass seems church-like, the ingot could be a strange altar, but the layout is unsuited to any liturgy. The experience of sitting on a bench facing the painting is like being in an art gallery, not very different to the Rothko chapel of 1971 which is an art space set aside for meditation.

After the liturgical revolution of the 1960s many worship spaces came to resemble art spaces. In both types of building the fabric moved from figure to ground as indefinability and flexibility became important. One priest said of his new church: 'Some people find the idea of unpainted concrete block rather blah, but it is a perfect background for people.'<sup>16</sup> As will be seen, multifaith

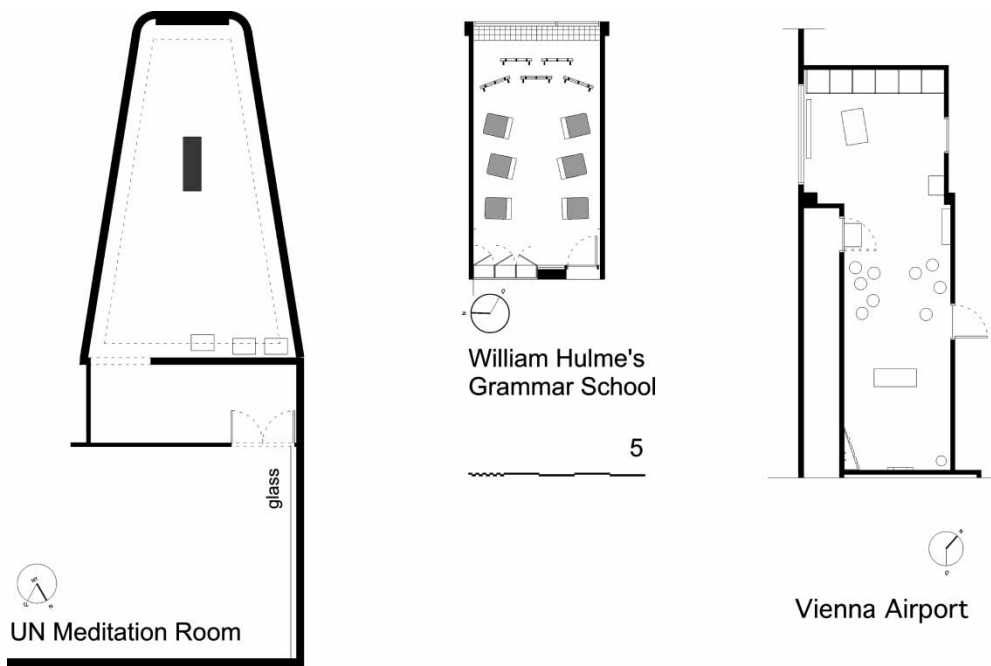


Figure 4. Plans of early types of shared sacred space, left to right: New York, United Nations Meditation Room, 1948 (surveyed 2011); Manchester, William Hulme's Grammar School, 1964 (demolished 1975); Vienna Airport, 1988 (surveyed 2011).

spaces have taken this vanishing into the background to a new extreme.

Architecturally the direct ancestors of the modern multifaith room are a few spaces shared by Christians and Jews dating from the middle of the last century, the oldest of which could be found in the United States Army before the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> It is unlikely that they were created for religious reasons, making soldiers share may simply have been cheaper and better for morale than providing separate facilities. Shared spaces in airports and schools followed in

the 1950s and 60s.<sup>18</sup> None of these have survived in anything like their original form; a Quiet Room at a grammar school in northern England (Figs 5, 6) is the oldest image of such a space I have been able to find.<sup>19</sup> Built in 1964 as a substitute for a chapel by a headmaster with many Jewish pupils it had abstract coloured glass, a carpet and art books instead of religious texts. With its white walls and suspended ceiling it could pass for a modern multifaith space. The multifaith phenomenon is now spreading rooms like these around the world.

Figure 5. Vienna  
Airport, Multifaith  
Room, 1988.



### Multi-faith as a design problem

Based on a survey of multifaith rooms I distinguish two contrasting ways of sharing space.<sup>20</sup> Let us call these ideal types, positive and negative. In the positive type images and artefacts from different faiths are on open view and we have unity by inclusion. In the negative type rival images are either absent or kept separate and we have unity by exclusion.

The phrase 'unity by inclusion' comes from the church architect Sir Ninian Comper (1864–1960), who freely combined classical and gothic motifs from different periods in his work. Anachronism and conflict did not deter him; his eclecticism was a response to the layers of style and meaning in old religious buildings. One answer to the multifaith problem might be to mix religions in this picturesque way. This is being attempted at the old chapel at



Figure 6. Manchester,  
William Hulme's  
Grammar School, 1964:  
Quiet Room.

On the other hand, in the empty spaces of the negative type there is no permanent minster or congregation. People come and go but seldom talk, whether a room belongs to one religion or another depends upon who is using it. They can go from Islamic to Christian by changing a mat for a chair. Whether one takes the positive or negative approach depends upon what one supposes the gods to be. If they are taken to be a surface upon which we project our social needs and interests, then mixing religions is analogous to mixing cultures and the positive approach is appropriate. In that case multifaith spaces should be like the chapel at Harvard, rooted in one tradition but open to all in a spirit of hospitality. How affairs are arranged between rival users is a matter for casuistry.

Alternatively, those who believe that their God is real, but, in a spirit of tolerance, recognise that others may hold the same opinion of theirs, will treat multifaith spaces as places where a free choice is made among real alternatives. Time-sharing an empty room is then the equitable solution. Here sacred symbols are taken seriously. Paradoxically the refusal to display them in a public space acknowledges their power. It is those who are happy to use a room like the one at Harvard who are indifferent to them.

Most architects, one imagines, would prefer the positive approach, especially those who, as Joseph Rykwert puts it, like to appear as demiurge master-builders; creators of the whole artificial world.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the second approach in which the architect withdraws is, I suggest, architecturally more significant since it is by far the most common and has parallels in art and literature. In any case

Harvard which, by way of an experiment, has been opened for anyone to use. On the sideboard by the door the Bible now lies next to the Tanakh, Gita and Koran, and the choir has been cleared so that Islam can have a corner to itself (Fig. 7). Left unattended, multifaith spaces like these become de-facto mosques, chapels or new-age spaces, depending on who uses them most. Only if scrupulously maintained in unstable equilibrium between these modes of failure can they provide universal access to the divine. Maintaining this balance requires a diplomatic inter-faith minister.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 7. Harvard  
Chapel: Islam in the  
Choir.



the positive approach has many problems. The arrangement at Harvard privileges what is still, more or less, a Christian chapel, in much the same way that what is called a multifaith room at Abu Dubai Airport turns out to be, more or less, a mosque.

Designing a space that avoids this partiality is difficult because there is no core of shared truth upon which a universal space can be founded. In their symbols and practices, religions do not form a classi-

cal set based on accident and essence. Up to the 1970s it might have been possible to say that different religions were like planets orbiting a sun, but this Copernican model seems hard to believe in today.<sup>23</sup> Anthropologically sacred space has been conceived of as a place where heaven and earth are joined, metaphorically a navel of the world.<sup>24</sup> But even something as broad as this does not apply to every religion.<sup>25</sup> The most general possible definition of sacred space treats it as somewhere set apart from

the profane world by a threshold. It appears that any room with a door will suffice, but even here you cannot please everyone; many pagans prefer to worship out of doors.

Modernism seems to offer a way out of this dilemma. It rejects regional and traditional forms and, being based on universal principles, allows the possibility of a universal sacred space. It is difficult to imagine the United Nations space being in any style other than modern, and in the same spirit, except for a few converted spaces like the Harvard chapel, all multifaith spaces are in fact modernist. Unfortunately, modern architecture strains to embody narrative and symbolic forms, and is not completely neutral from a religious point of view. The work of Tadao Ando, for example, is commonly spoken of as being spiritual yet his sophisticated minimalism seems Protestant rather than Catholic. Furthermore it looks Japanese; one does not see mosques or temples in this style.

Some designers have looked to universal themes such as Nature. A luxurious prayer room at the University of Toronto makes a display of wooden walls and a suspended ceiling made of translucent onyx.<sup>26</sup> The same material has been used in the subterranean prayer room at the FIFA Headquarters in Zurich (Fig. 8). Many multifaith rooms have abstract art works based on sea and sky, bowls of pebbles or bare branches artfully arranged. The difficulty is that nature, especially picturesque nature, is not culturally neutral. When presented in a religious setting without any other religious symbols to modify it, it produces a New Age, or even a pagan atmosphere.

Nor does a formal unity seem to be possible. The only geometrical shapes that appear in multifaith

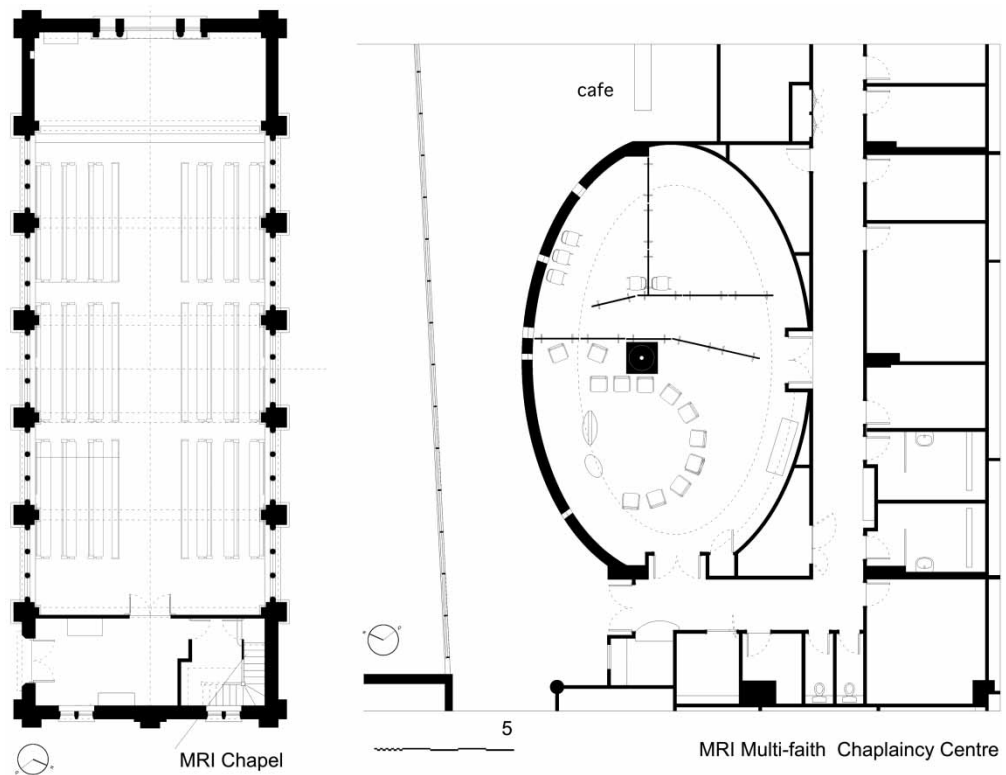


Figure 8. Zurich, Headquarters of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA): Prayer Room.

rooms are circles and ovals, but every round room I have seen has been subdivided.<sup>27</sup> The new oval prayer space at Manchester Royal Infirmary is typical, having been partitioned into areas for Christians, Muslim men and Muslim women. It is part of a multifaith complex which has replaced an Edwardian chapel abandoned in the 1990s and now in ruins (Fig. 9).<sup>28</sup> In a hundred years the Chaplaincy has gone from a unified structure in which people faced each other, to a cluster of separate rooms in which the major space is buried like the amphitheatre beneath the Piazza Navona. Architecturally it is difficult not to see this as a decline, whatever the improvements to worship.

Attempts to frame diverse prayer practices in a unified interior design often seem incomplete. At Northeastern University, Boston, USA, a room with an elegant art metal ceiling is divided into backlit glass alcoves by plywood piers (Fig. 10).<sup>29</sup> Each one is slightly different and supplied with its own hand wash or tissues and a few religious or natural objects to contemplate. There are no overt religious images, and anyone wanting to face an alcove and

Figure 9. Manchester  
Royal Infirmary, 1908:  
New Multifaith Centre,  
2008.



pray can have some measure of privacy and choice. Even this is not suitable for everyone. Muslim women have screened off a corner for themselves, while Muslim men have moved to another room entirely.

Attempts have been made to unify the faiths mechanically. At a Virginia Marine Corps base in 1953 a lazy-susan altar, worked by a lever, could rotate to be Catholic, Protestant or Jewish.<sup>30</sup> The cir-

cular MIT Chapel, by Eero Saarinen, 1955 (Fig. 11), began as a shared Christian-Jewish space. Its ingenious poché walls reflect flickering light from a moat and a sparkling metal curtain hangs over the altar. Behind it a Torah cabinet rises hydraulically through a trap door at the press of a switch. What is particular to these faiths is hidden; what remains on open view are things they share. In this case the lighting, the focused space, and the sensuous



Figure 10. Boston,  
Northeastern University.

brick interior are sufficient to create a sense of sacredness.

When more religions are included there will be less to show. The Trafford Shopping Centre, Manchester, has a prayer room (figs 12, 13) where Jesus and wudu washing facilities can be concealed or revealed at the visitor's convenience. By and large mechanical solutions to the multifaith problem have been theatrical, expensive and potentially comic. An

extreme example of mechanised religion is the *Gebetomat* (Fig. 14), by the German artist Oliver Sturm.<sup>31</sup> It is a slot machine that delivers prayers in thirty-five languages. Behind its curtain it is like being in a confessional booth, but with a computer in place of the priest. It is hard to know whether it is serious or not.

All these complications are bypassed in spaces of the negative type. Multifaith rooms like these are

Figure 11. Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Chapel altar: Torah cabinet in lowered position.



Figure 12. Manchester, Trafford Shopping Centre.



Figure 13. Manchester, Trafford Shopping Centre.



Figure 14. The Gebetomat, automatic prayer machine.



modern because they make a clean break with traditional expressions of sacredness. They can be seen as the endpoint of a process in which religious artefacts are confined to smaller and smaller spaces, first individual rooms, then corners of rooms, then cupboards, then boxes. Finally they vanish altogether. This journey towards an empty white room can be seen diachronically on single sites



Figure 15. Brandeis  
University,  
Massachusetts: Chapel.

where old chapels have been replaced by multifaith spaces.<sup>32</sup>

When mosques, churches and temples enter an architectural relationship they begin to resemble each other. At Brandeis University, Catholic and Protestant Chapels and a Synagogue stand side by side around a pool in a romantic multifaith landscape (figs 15, 16). Built in 1960 by the same architect these buildings share details and materials, and are difficult to tell apart.<sup>33</sup> When religions get even

closer and occupy adjacent rooms those spaces become plain and interchangeable. Coventry University Hospital has separate rectangular cells for Catholic, Anglican, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim worship (figs 17,18).<sup>34</sup> A collection of mono-faith rooms like this is a common arrangement in many hospitals, the true multifaith space is then the shared corridor. In a single space religions will repel each other and go to opposite ends of the room, if it is large enough. It is at the end of this

Figure 16. Brandeis  
University,  
Massachusetts: outdoor  
pulpit



sequence, in small multifaith rooms with no windows, that space is truly shared. Spaces are like these are now common in commercial premises such as offices, football grounds and shopping centres (Fig. 19).

### **The architecture of an empty white room**

With walls of plasterboard or fairfaced blockwork and a suspended ceiling they resemble their own lobbies.<sup>35</sup> Only one in ten of them have a window.

If architecture is taken to be something manifest in simple forms in light, then these negative shapes under artificial light are anti-architectural. None of them express their structure, never is there an axis or any rhythm. They are unrelated to their elevations, if they have any. Their irregular plans have an accidental quality with awkward corners that architects normally go to lot of trouble to eliminate. This slight disorder is typical of vernacular buildings. Architecture without architects, that is, vernacular,

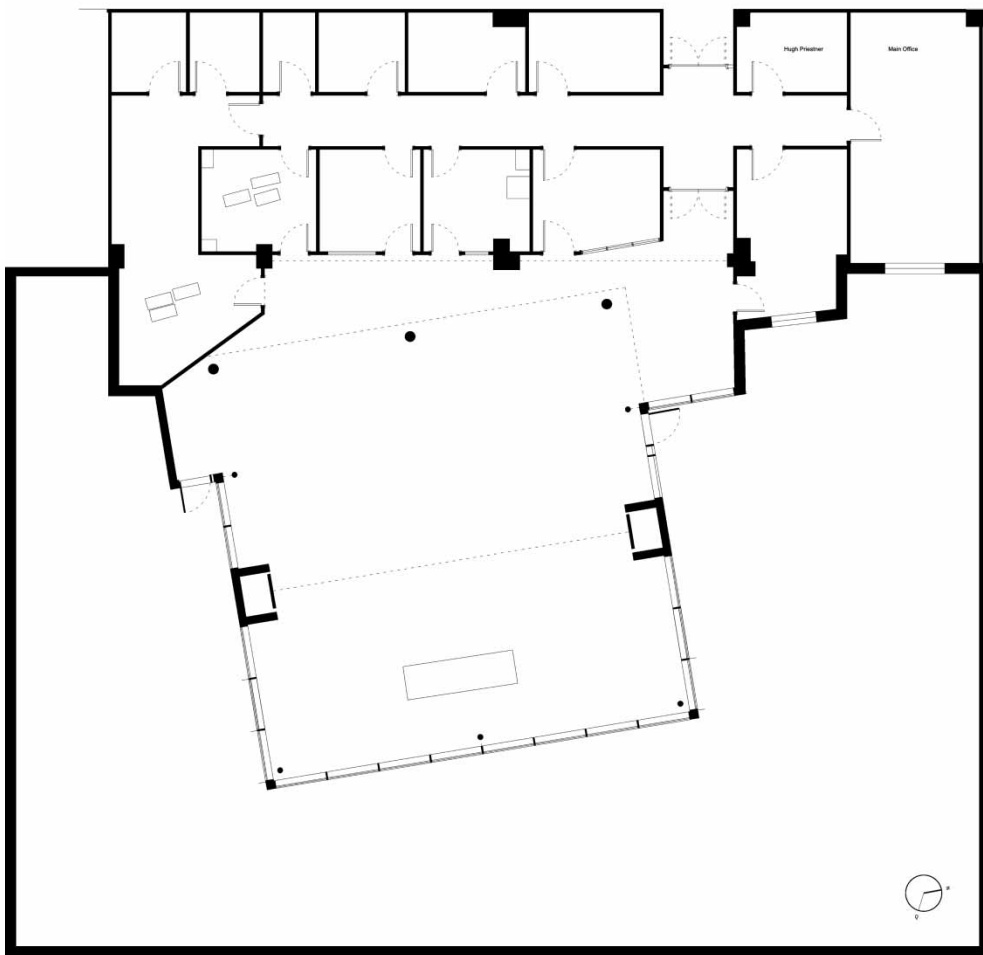


Figure 17. Coventry  
University Hospital:  
multifunction centre.



Figure 18. Coventry  
University Hospital: Sikh  
shrine.



as opposed to polite architecture, is usually thought of as local and traditional. In using global materials borrowed from the non-places they serve, they are an example of a new phenomenon, a vernacular modernism.

Any furniture, a few chairs perhaps or a low table, will often be from Ikea. This is not necessarily because it is cheap but because it is universal. There will normally be a few prayer mats, and sometimes a prayer

tree,<sup>36</sup> but many rooms are empty. Maintaining this emptiness requires stores, cupboards and washing facilities supplementary to the main space. The imam or priest, if there is one, will have an office or a store to which the public has no access. These adjoining spaces (which can be seen in the plans in Figure 19) are normally similar to the multifaith space itself as if no special effort has been made to distinguish them from their surroundings.

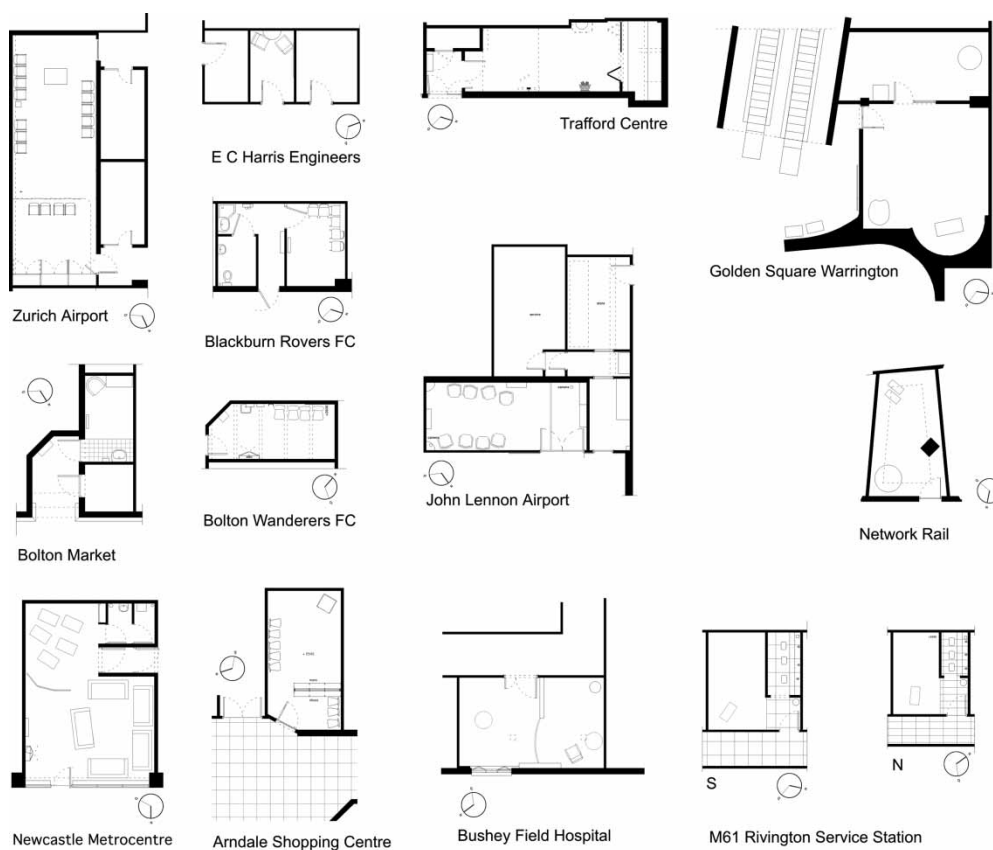


Figure 19. Plans of blank multifaith rooms.

Architecturally these spaces are self-effacing and silent. This saying nothing provides opportunities for unintended messages. Any table can become an altar; every shoe rack is Muslim. At the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston the prayer room is dominated by exposed beams crossing in the

ceiling above a circular frieze displaying the familiar icons of world religions in a subordinate position, (Fig. 20). On the other hand, at Glasgow Airport the prayer room seems like any other chapel with its Macintosh style chairs and lectern. You might not notice that it is at an odd angle to the framed

Figure 20. Boston:  
Brigham Women's  
Hospital.



building in which it sits because it is exactly oriented to Mecca. Examples like these could be multiplied.

These comic undertones and difficulties with saying nothing remind us of John Cage's noiseless *Four minutes, thirty-three seconds* of 1952. The composer, who treated silence and ambient noise as the same thing, described his work as being for any instrument.<sup>37</sup> It could equally well be called multi-instrumental. Perhaps we should look upon multi-faith rooms as ambient spatial structures and

treat their plasterboard walls and suspended ceilings as the architectural equivalent of silence. These mundane materials are as close to nothing as we can get whilst marking the distinction between the sacred and profane world with a physical enclosure.

It is all a long way from Butterfield, Street or Comper. If there is a richness and depth in their religious architecture comparable to, let us say, Dickens or Hardy, then, with its minimalism, absurdity and black comedy, it is as if with multifaith spaces



Figure 21. Lancashire, Rivington Services: two rooms, not quite the same.



Figure 22. Lancashire, Rivington Services: two rooms, not quite the same.

architecture has caught up with Samuel Beckett. Inside a windowless multifaith room we are in limbo, like the non-place where the action of a Beckett play occurs. Are not the prayer trees and the shoes by the door that we see in many multifaith rooms like the tree and the boots we see when the curtain rises on *Waiting for Godot*?

Beckett wrote in English and French, and cross-translated between them to reduce the influence of a single language. Multifaith has obvious affinities with this approach.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the real architectural question should be this: what is the very least we can say, supposing we actually enclose space? A remarkable pair of prayer rooms at Rivington Services on the M61 motorway in Lancashire<sup>39</sup> takes the idea of architectural emptiness to a new level by duplicating a room so as to remove even its dignity of being unique (figs 21, 22). Here, as in *Waiting for Godot*, nothing happens, twice.<sup>40</sup>

Because the Rivington prayer rooms serve shops on opposite sides of a motorway, getting from one to

the other means crossing a narrow bridge over a roaring river of traffic. This can easily be seen as sublime and makes a sharp contrast to the emptiness of the rooms. At first sight they appeared identical, but a survey showed that one was wider than the other and that in each room the *qiba* was in a different direction. They are neither unique nor quite identical to themselves. Together they could pass for an artwork by Gregor Schneider, a German artist who has created several pairs of blank rooms that differ in small ways, either in layout, or by one of them containing an object or a person that the other does not. In his sinister work absence becomes as significant as presence.<sup>41</sup> Spaces like these invite scrutiny that renders the smallest thing significant. Likewise in multifaith spaces we look for evidence of the presence of the Other in the form of traces of other people. Anything left in, or stolen from, a multifaith space becomes meaningful.<sup>42</sup>

Architecturally, blank rooms like these parallel an end point in art that occurred a century ago in

paintings, such as those of Malevich, that were all black or all white. There have been a surprising number of empty canvasses like these; an article by Peter Weibel has a long list of them.<sup>43</sup> They were the culmination of a move away from representation in painting that began after photography. Instead of depicting objects painters thematised the material means of expression, even down to the frames and surface, which led to the aesthetic of absence that we see today in the white-room art gallery. This is little different to the loss of images in multifaith rooms. These rooms are still places of prayer, what has vanished are the historical forms of expression of sacredness. Nor are the results necessarily uninteresting, as a recent collection of photographs of them has shown.<sup>44</sup>

The analogy with painting suggests how multifaith may evolve. The blank paintings did not destroy art, rather they were a motor of its evolution, part of the dematerialisation of art that has continued to this day.<sup>45</sup> One line of development introduced physical objects into the picture space, then the body itself in works that were the result of some bodily action such as performance art or painting on the skin. Similarly, the empty type of multifaith room does not show what it is for, in a way that Adolf Loos would have approved, because it is the person who is praying who turns it from a mosque to a chapel or some other sort of space. Religious symbols have migrated from the building on to our clothes and belongings and our bodies, in tattoos, a certain sort of beard and so on. The iconoclastic conflict that began in multifaith rooms continues in controversies about jewellery and headscarves. This process can be summed up in a sentence: God has left the building.

## Conclusion

Multifaith is politically significant because it is replacing Christianity as the face of public religion in Europe and America. Whether it is also architecturally significant is open to argument. All the same, it is surely remarkable that the thread which connects such marvels as Karnak, the Temple, the Parthenon, Santa Sophia, Sant Ivo alla Sapienza and so on, now passes through plasterboard boxes. By and large popular culture treats multifaith spaces as objects of ridicule.<sup>46</sup> If they are meaningful it is only by comparison with Malevich and Beckett. If they are appealing it is only to those who follow the *via negativa*. Insubstantial and empty, they can be taken in at a glance, the polar opposite of baroque spaces that are full of depth and mystery. A baroque church is an integrated work of art in which music, painting and architecture project a unified viewpoint. Many of the most glamorous buildings of our own time have a baroque sensibility; most conspicuously the massive curved and blended compositions of practices such as UN Studio or Zaha Hadid. Oddly many of these buildings contain hidden inside them, undigested, their anti-architectural antidote; a multifaith space that stands outside any particular stream of culture or faith.

The idea that we can transcend culture and start with a clean slate in a breach with the past is a modernist idea, of which architects since Gropius have provided some of the most visible examples.<sup>47</sup> Yet the very idea we can make a complete breach with the past is questionable. The historian of science Stephen Toulmin has depicted the universal system of Descartes, from the early modern period after the wars of religion, as well as the ideas of the

Vienna Circle after the First World War, as attempts to start with a clean slate in just this way. At the same time he criticised the hope for a comprehensive theory that is capable of giving us timeless certainty and coherence as an illusion.<sup>48</sup>

If he is right, and it really is impossible to start from scratch, then multifaith should be seen not as a timeless resolution of the problems of religion but as something of our own time. It certainly seems to be the case that the search for monistic unification is a modern longing. According to George Steiner it reflects a deep-lying anguish in the face of intractable ethnic and cultural conflicts.<sup>49</sup> The sort of unifications Steiner is thinking of, whether they be in linguistics, particle physics, cosmology or evolutionary biology, involve things whose existence is disputed, such as the Nosratan language, the Higgs boson, the un-thing that preceded the Big Bang and the missing link.

Perhaps the perfect multifaith space, an elusive zone where all people are at home, should be added to that list of numinous objects. How ironic it would be if this attempt to represent timeless truths in built form has resulted in a sacred nullity that turns out to be one of our era's most representative architectural achievements.

### Acknowledgements

AHRC Religion and Society Programme; Ralf Brand, Chris Hewson.

### Notes and references

All plans are to the same scale.

1. Also known as: Quiet Room, Prayer Room, Stiltecentrum, Raum der Stille, Room for Reflection, Meditation Room, Rest and Faith Room, Faith and Reflection Room, Contemplation Room and, as at Wembley stadium, Peace Room.
2. The *RIBA Journal* (December, 2011), pp. 42–6.
3. Whether this is reasonable or legal is an open question: see Daniel Whistler, Daniel J. Hill, *Religious discrimination and symbolism: a philosophical perspective* (2012), from the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project: Philosophy of Religion and Religious Communities: Defining Beliefs and Symbols.
4. The militant atheist Harry Taylor, who left anti-religious cartoons taken from the *Guardian* inside Liverpool Airport Prayer Room, received a suspended sentence of six months at Liverpool Crown Court for religiously aggravated harassment, (23/04/2010).
5. Iconoclastic conflicts (or *iconoclashes*) correlate with social conflicts: see P. Weibel, B. Latour, eds, *Iconoclash* (Karlsruhe: CZKM and The MIT Press, 2002), p. 588.
6. In the UK their provision may be implicit in the *Equality Act, 2010*. The *Sharing of Church Buildings Act, 1969* specifically allows the Church of England to share space with other denominations.
7. This 2011 UK estimate was made by counting the frequency with which they are found in shopping centres, airports, hospitals, universities, schools, public buildings and government offices.
8. Multifaith is not the same as interfaith. In an interfaith encounter people of different faiths meet as equals around a table, with multifaith they do not necessarily meet at all.
9. A religion can have as few as two people: Eileen Barker, personal communication, 3 November 2012 (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements).
10. D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1989), p. 141; A. Giddens, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), p. 141.

- quences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA., Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 22.
11. Very little has been written about it. A conference 'Multifaith Spaces, Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change', at St Peter's House, Manchester University was the first to discuss this topic (21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2012).
  12. Spaces that are multifaith in all but name were seen in the 1990s. See, for example, an octagonal chapel at Maidstone General Hospital by Powell, Moya and Partners: Deborah Singmaster, 'A sacred space that can cater for all faiths', *Architects' Journal*, vol. 200, no. 15 (1994), p. 25.
  13. Buildings that have been transferred from one religion to another are more common. In London, the Brick Lane Chapel, 1743, has been successively: Huguenot Protestant, Wesleyan Methodist, a synagogue and, since 1976, a Mosque.
  14. Elizabeta Koneska, *Shared Shrines* (Skopje, Macedonian Centre for Photography, 2009; ISBN 978-9989-9633-3-9). See 'Orthodox-Muslim Interactions at "Mixed Shrines" in Macedonia', in, C. Hann, H. Goltz, eds, *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010), pp. 163-183.
  15. Also known as *doppelkirche*, most date from the seventeenth century, but note the Maria-Magdalena Church at Freiburg Im Breisgau, 2004 (Kister Scheithauer Gross Architekteten, Cologne).
  16. The Reverend Thomas Phelan, describing the Rensselaer Chapel + Cultural Centre, Troy, NY, built in 1967. See '25 Chapel + Cultural Centre', *Sun & Balance* (The Rochester Polytechnic Institute Newman Centre newsletter; 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1992). See also Catherine Fordham, *American Catholics and the Art of the Future, 1930-1975* (Dissertation in Progress, Fordham University, 2012).
  17. As described by Father Walter Cuenin of Brandeis University (conversation, 2011).
  18. The Our Lady of the Airways Chapel, 1952, Boston Logan Airport, was the first airport chapel. It was Catholic but is now multifaith. See <http://pluralism.org/reports/view/82>
  19. Photograph by R.A. Haynes: the space was conceived in 1964 by J.G. Bird, Headmaster at William Hulme's Grammar School, Manchester (demolished c. 1976; architects: Taylor Young Partnership Manchester).
  20. An Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Religion and Society programme project, 2010-12, has surveyed and photographed about 320 examples in Europe and the USA (research team: Ralf Brand, Andrew Crompton, Chris Hewson).
  21. I observe that the most successful of them are run by women, such as Kerry Maloney at Harvard.
  22. Joseph Rykwert, *Adolf Loos: the new vision*, *Studio International*, Volume 186, Number 957 (1973).
  23. John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London, Macmillan, 1973), pp. 120-133: Ptolemaic v. Copernican.
  24. An *axis mundi*: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Willard R. Trask, trsl. (Orlando, Harcourt Inc., 1957; 1987), pp. 28, 29, 60, 74.
  25. Many Abrahamic faiths follow this model, but Australian religions do not, see: Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987; 1992), pp. 1-23.
  26. Architect, Carol Phillips of Moriyama & Teshima Architects, 2005.
  27. Round rooms split along Christian-Islamic lines include: Manchester Royal Infirmary, Dudley Hospital, Leicester Hospital, Manchester Town Hall.
  28. Architect, E.T.Hall, 1908.
  29. 'The Sacred Space' (Office dA, Boston, 1998).
  30. At Quantico Bay: remembered by Father Walter Cuenin, Interfaith Chaplain at Brandeis University, who saw it at his father's Marine Corps base (personal conversation, 2011).

31. In England marketed as the *Pray-o-mat*: see *Daily Mail* (26/07/12); *Guardian* (27/07/12).
32. For example, at Heathrow and in many hospitals.
33. Brandeis, Massachusetts: The Harlan, Berlin and Bethlehem Chapels (1960) are in woodland around a picturesque, approximately heart-shaped pool (architects: Harrison & Abramovitz). As of 2011 fund raising is underway for a mosque to join them.
34. Here they adjoin a large shared space set out like a lecture theatre, all angled exactly east (architects: Nightingales Associates).
35. Fourteen out of every fifteen multifaith rooms, of all types, have suspended ceilings.
36. Prayer trees are actual branches, or wooden models like a small Christmas tree, to which written prayers can be pinned.
37. 'There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound.': John Cage, *Silence* (London, Calder and Boyars, 1939;1973), pp.80, 191.
38. '... the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something.': Samuel Beckett, *Watt*, 1943 (New York, Grove Press, 1959), p.77.
39. The Rivington service station, M61 motorway, between Junctions 6 and 7.
40. That is, Act One and Act Two. *Waiting for Godot* is a play '... in which nothing happens, twice.': Vivian Mercier, *Irish Times* (18<sup>th</sup> February, 1956), p. 6.
41. G. Schneider, *Double* (Frankfurt, MMK Museum; Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011), p. 97.
42. Liverpool Airport Multifaith room consumes a large bag of pebbles every year as passengers steal them one by one from a bowl.
43. P. Weibel, 'An End to the 'End of Art?', in, P. Weibel, B. Latour, eds, *Iconoclasm*, *op. cit.*, pp. 587–670; 636.
44. A. Duscha, *Places of Worship* (von Metro-Verlag, Wein, 2008).
45. 'Invisible: Art About the Unseen 1957–2012', Hayward Gallery, London (June, 2012).
46. For example, an episode of the BBC *Twenty-Two* comedy (30/03/12).
47. '... a breach has been made with the past which enables us to envisage a new aspect of architecture corresponding to the technical civilisation of the age we live in; the morphology of dead styles has been destroyed and we are returning to honesty of thought and feeling': Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 69.
48. 'No neutral "scratch line" exists from which to jump to a self sustaining tradition-free intellectual system. All of the cultural situations from which we pursue our practical and intellectual inquiries are historically conditioned: this being so, the only thing we can do is to make the best of starting with what we have got, here and now.': S. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis* (New York, The Free Press, 1990), pp. 175–9.
49. George Steiner, *After Babel* (Oxford, OUP, 1975), p. 148.