

# The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture

*Thomas Barrie*

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The Sacred  
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THOMAS BARRIE



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**Thomas Barrie : The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A richness of thought with poetic-like discourse By Dennis Alan Winters Engaging in the art and spirit of sacred architecture is fundamental to our contact with divinity, revealing our most profound ways of being with the world. Here, author Thomas Barrie offers his insightful, scholarly and beautifully written book, *The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture*, on the profound relationship between architecture and spirituality and how this transaction provides meaning for us. By introducing David's biblical lament, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?", Barrie sets the stage for sacred architecture's role of bringing people and divinity together. The author assures us that sacred architecture is more than merely the messenger, articulating archetypal expressions of spirituality that infiltrate our very core and the content of our religion: as God, pantheism, nature, and/or complete awakening itself. For sacred architecture can become the voice of divinity itself, preparing us for communicative connections that surface from deep within ourselves, placing "who I am" and "where I am" in the world and the cosmos. Early in the book, when the reader would want to know, the author clearly states his philosophical intentions and interpretive interests in

sacred architecture's mediating role: through its use and ritual in direct response to cultural beliefs and imperatives; as a communicative media expressing symbolic, mythological, doctrinal and historical content; and as precedent for understanding shared patterns. He writes, "Sacred architecture embodies the messages of divinity, whose full meaning is revealed through the serial tableaux that unfolds as pilgrims ambulate its spaces — a participation in the nature of form and space." Like Emerson's, "Art is the Creator's Path to the Work." Or Plotinus's, "Materiality's becoming beautiful, flowing from the Divine." Certainly, the author's presentation of sacred architecture is a many-splendored theme. Drawing upon his expansive knowledge of linguistics, phenomenology and hermeneutics as analytic foundation, Barrie undertakes profound inquiry into how sacred architecture is viewed through varied approaches to spirituality. No pedantic ecclesiastical discourse here, he provides a richness of thought and poetic-like discourse to present the trajectory of provocative ideas one would expect to deeply analyze the grounding for sacred architecture. The author's sketches and black and white photographs are well placed throughout the text to supplement the written with the visual. Leading the reader through diverse and extensive resources like Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Buddhist Pali Canon support the author's ideas. His perceptive analysis of Carl Jung's house at Bollingen, Switzerland, is a highlight that presents architecture as an image of the psyche, Jung's means to reconcile his outer and inner worlds, as it could be the reader's own. One criticism is the author's reliance on the pedagogically priggish phrase, "I argue," to declare a point made, perhaps demanded by academia. However, as the author generally writes with "the sensual engagement of sacred architecture" — that's his writing style that continually engages the reader. Here is the author's being touched by beauty, art and architecture, and his expressions of architecture and spirituality as one is writing with which the reader will synch.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Comprehensive, Thoughtful, and Brilliant

By Anisahoni Thomas Barrie widens the important exploration he began in his first book, *Sacred Path, Sacred Place*, by reminding readers that sacred architecture is a global language embedded in historical, cultural context. And he is an outstanding interpreter for those less familiar with its characteristics. His comprehensive and erudite surveys transport us to the "sacred in-between" of an array of monasteries and abbeys, Sarasvati's shrine, the Pantheon, the Western medieval church, exemplified at Saint Foy in Coques, and many other locales. I found his discussion of the Hopewell and Adena mound-builder locations really fascinating, particularly in giving evidence of a resilient and complex cosmology that still survives after nearly two thousand years (despite deliberate and incidental attempts to destroy it). His recognition and understanding of the place of symbol and archetype is first rate. But it is in-between the lines where we find his strongest thesis reminding all of us, but particularly today's architects, of the philosophical depth and zeal of their predecessors and thereby challenging us to consider what currently passes for sacred architecture more critically. A generous array of beautiful illustrations, schematics, and photos compliment Mr. Barrie's analysis throughout this book. This is a great book!

The sacred place was, and still is, an intermediate zone created in the belief that it has the ability to co-join the religious aspirants to their gods. An essential means of understanding this sacred architecture is through the recognition of its role as an "in-between" place. Establishing the contexts, approaches and understandings of architecture through the lens of the mediating roles often performed by sacred architecture, this book offers the reader an extraordinary insight into the forces behind these extraordinary buildings. Written by a well-known expert in the field, the book draws on a unique range of cases, reflecting on these inspiring places, their continuing ontological significance and the lessons they can offer today. Fascinating reading for anyone interested in sacred architecture.

About the Author Thomas Barrie is Professor of Architecture at North Carolina State University whose scholarship on the symbolism, ritual use, and cultural significance of architecture has taken him to sacred places around the world. He is an award-winning architect and the author of *Spiritual Path — Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual and Meaning in Architecture* (Shambhala Publications, 1996).