

We Wish to See God: Places of Worship

The primary function of a place of worship is to inspire an intimate relationship between man, woman and God. The place of worship transcends religious boundaries as a sacred structure. It reflects the solace of sanctuary that is found in communion with the Divine.

One aspect I enjoy about exhibiting my work is discovering the various reactions of my audience because some immediately recognize the “church” environment while others do not see it at all. They simply see an abstracted space or object. It doesn’t take long for either to pose questions concerning the message of my work. It seems that the human mind cannot resist the urge to attach some social commentary to my photographs in an effort to compartmentalize and simplify my view on religion and spirituality.

I do not propose any particular point of view on religion or spirituality, except to present the simple fact of its invariable presence manifested by the architecture that is the main subject of my work. The objects depicted in my photos are proof of the mortal human, in this case the men and women who built the place of worship, attempting to express in matter the intangible qualities of God, such as Grace, Love, Spirit, Power, Beauty, Simplicity, and Peace. The human desire to seek these experiences is universal and independent of any particular religious or cultural alignment.

This work is representative of my experiences in these places. When I go into a place I take time to walk around and use all of my physical senses to absorb the space. Most of this is looking and looking again. Each place has a certain smell, temperature, and a spiritual and visual lightness (or darkness and heaviness). Some of the nuances of the spaces are highlighted in my work. The reoccurring themes of elements used in worship, irrespective of faith, like hymnals, pews, pulpits, pipe organs, and general similarities in structural design are

(over)

acknowledged. It is not, however, just the object's meaning that is important to me, but also its physical and formal qualities as well as how it connects and functions within the space overall.

I try to capture the serenity of the spaces in the photos. These places of worship are rich with a spiritual fervor that is expressed in the architectural craftsmanship of centuries past and the loving maintenance of the well-used implements for connecting with God.

Kristen M. Watson

About the Artist

Kristen has been making art since her youth, spent partly in Ohio and Virginia. She recently graduated from the University of Vermont summa cum laude with degrees in Psychology and Studio Art. Kristen considers herself a generalist, but as of late has been most enamored with black and white photography and traditional darkroom processes. She also paints and draws. Kristen is considering graduate work in Art Education, but for now is taking time to enjoy life after almost a decade of part-time school and a full-time career in medical device sales. She and Dave, her husband of four years, are now making their home in Georgia, Vermont. They enjoy outdoor adventures, movies, public radio, social activism and playing with their two kitties, Lily and Mikey. Kristen is a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist.