


# Interaction/Cooperation. Sacral Architecture and Art in Germany

*Interacción/Cooperación. Arquitectura y arte sacro en Alemania*

Walter Zahner · DG Deutsche Gesellschaft für christliche Kunst, Regensburg (Germany), wzahner@gmx.de

Recibido: 11/10/2019

Aceptado: 11/02/2020

 <https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2020.7.0.6284>

## ABSTRACT

Since 2000, in Germany there are both new built churches (around one hundred, sixty for the Catholic dioceses) and abandoned churches (around 500-600 Catholic churches, as well as some 500 Protestants). The reconverted churches are a reality in the north and east of Germany, up to half the country. In the south, both in the Catholic dioceses and in the Protestant regional churches, there are only some first examples and initial debates on these issues. Most of the relevant works of architecture and art within ecclesiastical organizations are churches reorganized from the point of view of the postconciliar liturgy and for smaller parish groups. At present, there are already very good examples of all the indicated types of church architecture.

## KEYWORDS

Germany, Interaction of Architecture and Art, New Church Buildings, Rebuilt Churches, Reconfigured Churches.

## RESUMEN

Desde el año 2000, en Alemania hay tanto nuevas iglesias construidas (alrededor de cien, sesenta para las diócesis católicas) como iglesias abandonadas (alrededor de 500-600 iglesias católicas, así como unas 500 protestantes). Las iglesias reconvertidas son una realidad en el norte y este de Alemania, hasta la mitad del país. En el sur, tanto en las diócesis católicas como en las iglesias regionales protestantes, solo hay algunos primeros ejemplos y debates iniciales sobre estas temáticas. La mayoría de los trabajos relevantes de arquitectura y arte dentro de las organizaciones eclesíásticas son iglesias reorganizadas desde el punto de vista de la liturgia postconciliar y para grupos parroquiales más pequeños. En la actualidad, ya existen ejemplos muy buenos de todos los tipos indicados de arquitectura eclesial.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Alemania, interacción entre arquitectura y arte, nuevas iglesias, iglesias reconstruidas, iglesias reconfiguradas.

CÓMO CITAR: Zahner, Walter. 2020. «Interaction/Cooperation. Sacral Architecture and Art in Germany». *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea* 7: 2-23. <https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2020.7.0.6284>.



Fig. 01. George Resenberg and Walter Zahner, eds. *Zusammenspiel - Kunst im sakralen Raum*, 2018; cover.

About one year ago the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für christliche Kunst e.V.* (German Society of Christian Art) whose president I'm since twelve years put an exhibition named *Zusammenspiel - Kunst im sakralen Raum* (*Interaction/Cooperation - Art in the sacred room*) (Resenberg and Zahner 2018). This exhibition gives an overview of the artistical and architectural work in German churches (Fig. 01). We have chosen Catholic examples as well as Protestant ones. We show objects from the north and the south, from the east and the west. All the exhibited projects were realized after 2000. Hence we offer with this touring exhibition an overview over two decades of artistical and architectural work on behalf of the parishes or also the ordinariates of the Catholic dioceses and the Protestant national churches.

My today's contribution is based on this exhibition which we worked out during many years. Truly sadly I want to commemorate Andreas Meck who was one of the most creative German architects during the recent years. He, who lived in Munich, died this August: too early, aged only 59. In memoriam I'm going to present two new church buildings of his bureau, a recent one and another one. I remember his cemetery in Riem, nearby Munich, and his Dominicus center (Dennemarck and Jocher 2009), built as a kind of parish center with kindergarten, rooms for caritas and for the parish, and also a chapel.

Below my contribution I will present the development of architecture and art inside the churches of Germany in three parts. In view of the time which I have for my presentation I will limit my view primarily to Catholic examples. To explain this topic I have to say: finally in the years between 2012 and 2016 I have been an agent of the secretary of the Episcopal conference in Germany, fifty years before and now, since 2017, I'm ongoing to work in the Catholic diocese of Regensburg.

In the first chapter I will present some new churches, built in Germany after the year 2000. The second part will mention a few examples of converted churches, examples which shows an extended use of church buildings. And in the third chapter I will show some rearrangements, which presents a lot of creativity and creative power all over Germany.

## 1. NEW CHURCH BUILDINGS - HOUSES OF PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE

According to credible statistics, many church buildings have been demolished and thus irretrievably destroyed in Germany within the last twenty years. During the same period however, about one hundred new buildings—including sixty Catholic ones—have been built. One of the most important architects to mention in this respect is Andreas Meck, who realized three church buildings in the Archdiocese Munich and Freising alone during this time. I have included two of them in this talk. On the one hand in memoriam—I have already mentioned his much to early death—and on the other hand because of their excellent quality and the huge



Fig. 02. Andreas Meck, St. Nikolaus, Neuried (Germany), 2002-09.





Fig. 03. Ulrich and Ilse Königs (Königs Architekten), St. Marien, Schillig (Germany), 2009-12.

acceptance from the parishes for which they have been built.

In 2009, St. Nikolaus (Holy Niclas) church in Neuried near Munich was finished according to plans by Andreas Meck and consecrated (Fig. 02). The parish had had to wait for the new building for a long time. Initial plans to build an ecumenical church had to be stopped quickly after the withdrawal of its Protestant partner parish. St. Nikolaus combines a quiet great community center with special rooms for the younger ones, parish offices, the residence of the priest and the church in one huge complex of buildings. On the outside, its strong presence marked by its brick front strikes the eye. Inside, bright openness and transparency prevail.

The church, the room for the assembly, separates itself from its environment a little, its glass facade at the back faces the inner courtyard. This is understandable since it guarantees the necessary quietness for the service or for praying individuals. The church interior plays with light passing through indirectly from above. Its ambiance reminds me of Le Corbusier's design of Ronchamp or his monastery church in La Tourette near Eveux. On the other hand, the interior is dominated by the central 'altar-ambo sculpture', as I would like to call it. This sculpture was designed by the artist

Rudolf Bott. The table —also named *mensa*— we are invited to sit at is moved into the center here and thus it is made clear that we, as a community, are invited to take part in the divine banquet.

God's people look at the altar as the table of the Lord or in case of a spoken service to the ambo as a table of the Word of God. The altar-ambo sculpture remains the center of the assembled congregation. The worshippers focus on the middle of the room, the visual center of the church interior, the altar that «indicates our only Redeemer Jesus Christ and the one Thanksgiving (the Eucharist) of church» (Berger 1999, 17).

From a liturgy-theological viewpoint, the assembly of the congregation is the spiritually conveyed movement from God to the people and from the people back to Him. Liturgy is the meeting of God and the mankind, as Emil Josef Lengeling is talking about. We find the presence of Jesus in the assembled congregation, in its holy abbot, in the form of the Word and in the Eucharist (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7). This presence takes place in the space of the parish.

Another example is St. Marien (Our Lady) church in Schillig near by the North Sea (Fig. 03). The 'church by the sea' was consecrated in 2012 by the bishop of Münster Felix Genn (Timmerevers



Fig. 04. Schneider + Schumacher, *Autobahnkirche Siegerland*, Wilnsdorf (Germany), 2009-13.



2012, Königs 2012, Denzinger 2012, Höhns 2012, Resenberg and Zahner 2018). The old church of Our Lady was dilapidated, a renovation was not profitable. Ulrich and Ilse Königs from Cologne won the competition in 2009 and finished the church for tourists (its home parish is rather small) in February 2012. They completed the task to create an assembly room for a small parish which grows rapidly during the summer months due to numerous tourists especially appealingly. A small congregation can come together around the central altar: up to ten people can stand in a three-quarter circle, a few more people can form a three-quarter circle with two or three rows. This seems a little bit like the Last Supper, the evangelists are talking about. When the parish grows during the summertime, it fills up all the space, including the chairs in the chapel of Our Lady.

The white church interior only receives light from above, the passing rays of sunlight are supposed to play on the walls. This makes the church interior, whose walls currently only feature a cross and a Madonna, vivid and never completely static, also in the winter months.

There are not so much pieces of art; a historical corpus of the crucified Christ and an old gothic statue of St. Mary, a window of Jochen Poensgen, the tabernacle and a cross of Schwerdt+Förster, design by Fritz Schwerdt (all the three objects just has been parts in the further St. Mary church of the 1950th).

A form of church that only exists in Germany are the so-called motorway churches. These are church buildings close to motorways or in motorway service areas that offer travelers a place of quietness despite the hectic place or a 'rest area for the soul'. This phenomenon has existed in Germany since the end of the 1950s, when a private citizen donated such a church for the first time after his daughter had died on the road. Till today there are more than forty five motorway churches; some are elder churches nearby the motorway, some are special ones, built directly for a indicated place.

A motorway church is not more than one thousand meter away from a motorway departure. There have to be a labeling on the motorways and it have to be open all days the week between 8 o'clock in the

morning and 8 o'clock in the evening; or longer. A quiet great parking area for some cars and also some trucks must be offered. And it is the imperative of bathrooms. From time to time there is a person which offers to talk with the visitors. Additionally, mass is celebrated or the opportunity for collective praying is offered, often only once a month, sometimes weekly.

One of the newest and one of the spectacular examples of a motorway churches in Germany is the Autobahnkirche Siegerland (motorway church Siegerland), about fifty kilometers in the south of Dortmund, motorway direction to Frankfurt and Aschaffenburg (Resenberg and Zahner 2018) (Fig. 04). A small private company starts with the idea in 2009 and invites some interesting architect's offices to participate to a competition. The winning team was Schneider+Schumacher, architects in Frankfurt which has built in Berlin after the year 2000 the red box, an elevated room in the midtown of Berlin which have had to offer the plans and small exhibitions during years of the re-building of the Berlin castle for the Humboldt-Forum, or in Frankfurt the expansion of the Städel museums complex. The idea was simple and a rendering as well. The white chapel is placed at the border of a hill. With it's towers it seems like a re-built image of the official labeling of the motorway churches.

Outside you can approach over a small bridge. And your first view is a citation of a verse of the Bible. Inside there is a lot of laminated wood. Certainly because of the limit of money, but also as a sign and an invitation to be welcome, to come down and to get still. In the front there is a lighted area, the altar, the ambo and the cross. In the behind you can light-up a candle, you can write something down into a book: an intercession, a petition, a request or something else. You can feel certain, this book is full of wishes and other memorandums and often must be changed. This motorway church and all others as well are specific places, resting areas for the soul, topics where long-distance truck-drivers or families with children, bikers and salesmen and women are gathering and relaxing or praying, for him or herself and of course also for others.

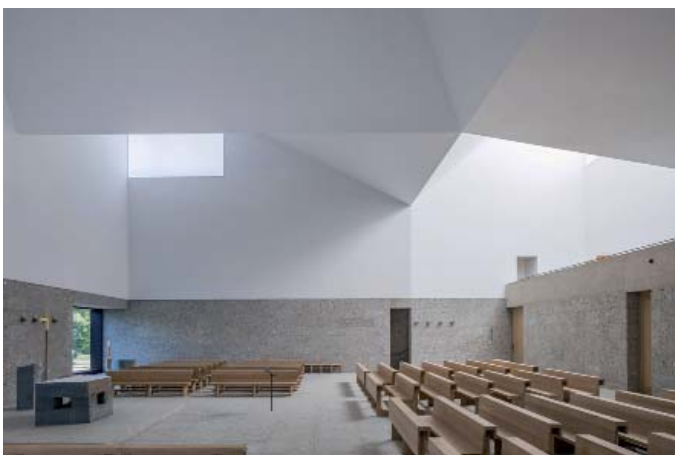
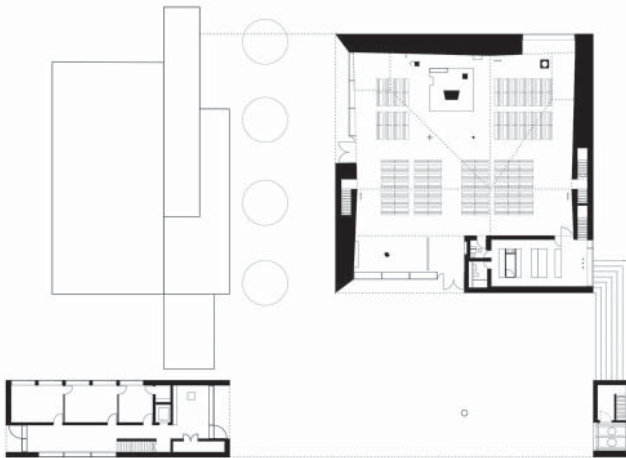


Fig. 05. Andreas Meck, church of Seliger Pater Rupert Mayer, Poing (Germany), 2008-18.

Finally I will show you the second example, which Andreas Meck has finished last year in the arch-diocese of Munich and Freising: the church of Seliger Pater Rupert Mayer in Poing, situated in the east of Munich (Resenberg and Zahner 2018) (Fig. 05). Primary Poing was a village, today we have to talk of a small town. The planning process took a long time, some decades of years; the first turn began in 1990 and ended with in the time of 2002, meanwhile a center for the Catholic parish with a kindergarten was realized. In this time exists also a plan for a church, but the ideas aren't very convincing. Because of financial reasons only the parish center was built. But in 2008 the old St. Michael church in the historical center of the town, which has only about two hundred seats, rests really too small for the growing city with more and more Catholics. Therefore a new competition must be executed; and Andreas Meck one it (in 2011) with the idea of a building like a *Stadtkrone* (the Crown of the Town), this is the citation of a well-known book of Bruno Taut, published in 1919.

The roof is built of 15.000 glazed tiles, white and three-dimensional, based on a non-centered cross-wise form. The overglaze produces with sunbeams as well after rainstorms and also meanwhile an overcast sky a charisma of luminaire, a light that seems as well as a bright corona.

The building is moved behind the street, therefore arises a small place in front of it. The interior of the church has a transverse rectangular shape. The space provides silence to the entering persons. The walls are constructed till the level of four meters of molasse conglomerate, which seems like a foundation, a basis for the interior space. Sinistral to the entrance there is the chapel; here we find an painting of Jerry Zeniuk and a sculpture of Our Lady of Carola Heinz. The center of the assembly is the isle for altar, ambo, seat of the priest and tabernacle. All are works of the well-known Cologne sculptor Ulrich Rückriem. His material is often the specific stone of Anröcht, Anröchter dolomite, it depends to a region in Westfalia in the west of Germany. He works always very simple, he cuts the block of stone and put one to the other piece as if he hasn't done anything. For us there is not so

much interaction, perhaps we only see something like a small channel. In reality the sculpture is big and heavy, but also it seam to interact.

We must have another look to the interior. I talked about the wall, which surrounds the assembly. But there are also some openings, one window we find inside the chapel; another one at the opposite corner. There is the place of the baptism. And the window opens a view to a lake with common reed. In this direction we can find the Protestant church of Poing, but there is no direct connection. There is a third window in the ground-floor, entering to the room left-hand-side, in the direction of the elder parish center; this one is only translucent. The other windows are on top, one on top of the altar on high of thirty meters. And this one and another one backside, over the gallery, are an illumination in an indirect way. One more time we have a special handling of direct and indirect light inside the room for the service; one more time it is evoking special sentiments.

The attender at church, sitting inside one of the benches, can have a look upside; and up to the basic walls he will see a cross. A cross which is not centered at all, it seems to be the model for the glazed tiles. The wooden benches, European oak, organized like *Circumstantes* around the isle of the altar, and the spotless white blanket with the invisible spring of light, all together is an invitation to come down, to arrive in the spirit of the unit of God. Focusing the center you can have a look to a small cross, designed by the young artist Juliane Schölß, and you enter one more time to the idea of the holy assembly, the meeting of the invitees — this broken cross is for me one of the convincing craftwork pieces of the last years in Germany— for me it is craftwork as art. She also designed the candleholders on the mensa, the baptism bowl and chalice and paten.

In spite of all differences in details, in the dimension or in the use of the materials, these are examples of churches which follow the demand of the contemporary liturgy. These are all sacred spaces in their own way, but all in good sense. All are spaces which expands the spirit, which are setting free and opens the notion of the non-available. They open the space for prayer as well as for the service, authorized by the revelation.



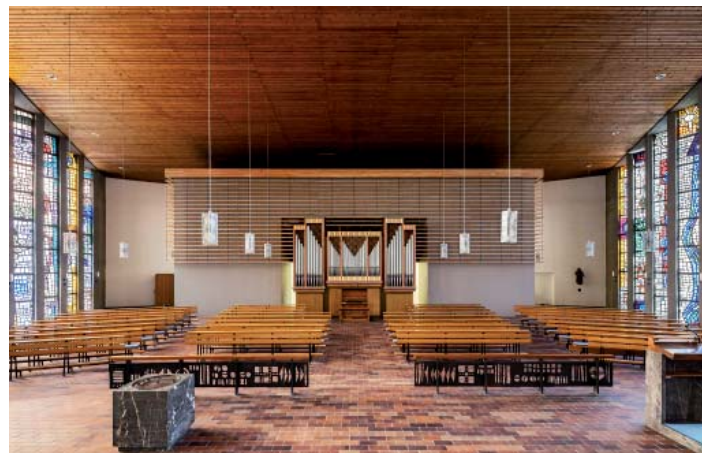
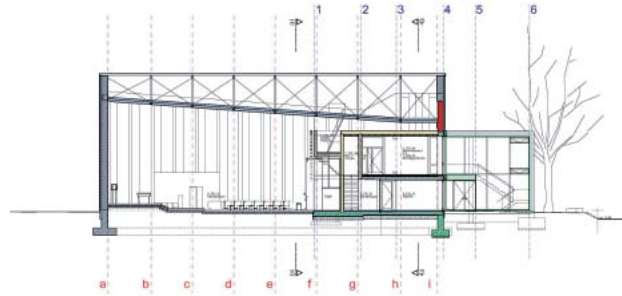
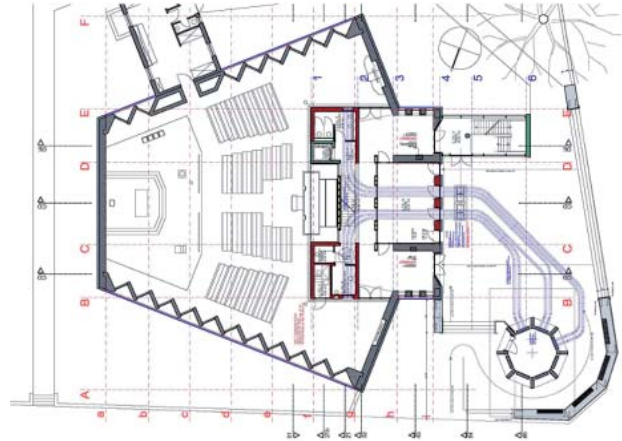


Fig. 06. Technical Office of the Archdiocese of Freiburg, St. Martin, Meckesheim, (Germany), 2015-16; energy renovation.

## 2. CONVERTED CHURCHES - FORMING THE FUTURE, NOT EXECUTING THE RUIN

In Germany the discussions about the conversion of churches or the demolishing of them calms itself in the public a little bit (Zahner 2018). From time to time there are announcements all around Germany that the preservation of a church cannot be financed by the Catholic diocese or the Protestant national church and it should be posted or perhaps demolished. The Online-portal 'katholisch.de' talks in autumn 2017 for Germany overall about more than five hundred churches (Glenz 2017, 500 Kirchen 2017). Since the year 2000 about one hundred and fifty of them should be really demolished. But in the same time, we can find also reports about one hundred new constructed churches: I just talked about.

On the international panels there are also a lot of disputes about this question of converted churches. For example in the Netherlands (Coomans et al. 2012) or in England (Truman 2012) and also in Canada there are a lot of conversions of churches (Morisset et al. 2006; Noppen 2012). Last November the Vatican Pontifical Council for Culture organized an international hearing with agents of more than twenty five states all around the world. The title was a question: «Does God live no more time here?». And the answer was a paper with the focus, that all churches will be preserved as long as possible. And also they decided that each case is a special one.

Back to Germany and our questions and problems with converted churches.

The first public discussion about this thematic took place in 1987 in Berlin. The first official talk *Berliner Gespräche* started in 1987, the fifth one was executed in 1994. The specific problem in Berlin are the churches of the ending 19th century. Regular they are built for more than one thousand believers. And just in the end of the 20th century there are no more so much visitors of the churches. The same time there has been the necessity of greater renovations. And therefore the question was for which-one the church should be renovated.

In the beginning 90th there was also a first Catholic discussion about this question. The master-builder of the diocese of Trier Alois Peitz pub-

lished a book with the wise title *Raum geben* (Giving space, 1991). Firstly he talked about the necessity to think about this question and in the same way he showed some good and interesting examples of historical and first contemporary conversions. One of the eldest churches in Trier, St. Maximin (Weber 1995), has had long times other uses than a Catholic one. Some decades it has been a horse stable, and now, in the end of the 20th century, there was also no possibility to re-built it as a church (nearby there are three other one's). But the Catholic secondary school have had the need of a coliseum (a hall for sports); and they changed the use of the former church into a hall for sports, for greater events like concerts and all interested find, this is a good solution.

Since this first catalogue of Alois Peitz in 1991 till today you can fulfill a lot of shelves, quiet a small library, with the publications about this topic. Important to see is, that not only representatives of the churches but also departments of the regions and the state are involved in this question. One small publication carries the name: *Kirchen in Not* (Matzig 1997), in English churches in emergency, and this title get a little bit as special description.

Most of the churches belongs to the organized churches, but these churches are also buildings in the middle of the towns. They are landmarks, they are points of identification and they are spaces of silence and peace for all mankind.

Since 2005 we have to enregister an explosion in German newspapers about our thematic: all greater daily and weekly newspapers found transcriptions which one was more eloquent than the further one. «Germany is dragging its churches. Case studies: an iconoclasm is sweeping over the land, hundreds of churches will be sold or demolished» (Pehnt 2005), «say quietly amen to the farewell. The diocese of Essen closes about one hundred churches. A journey across the land of the injured souls» (Kammertöns 2006) and the last one, which just have a new not so despotic note «Empty churches. The divulgation of churches inaugurate also chances» (Pehnt 2009).

It was evident, the diocese of Essen hasn't any other possibility, because of the fact, that they really had too much churches; each five hundred meters

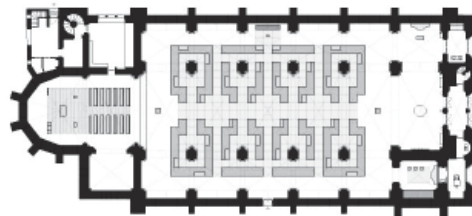
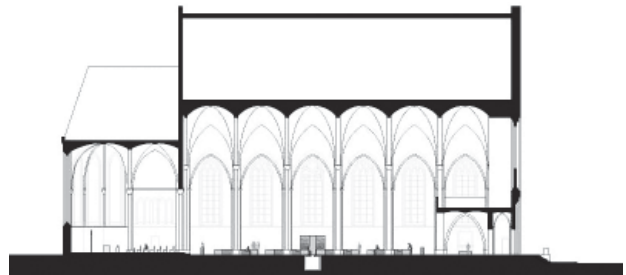
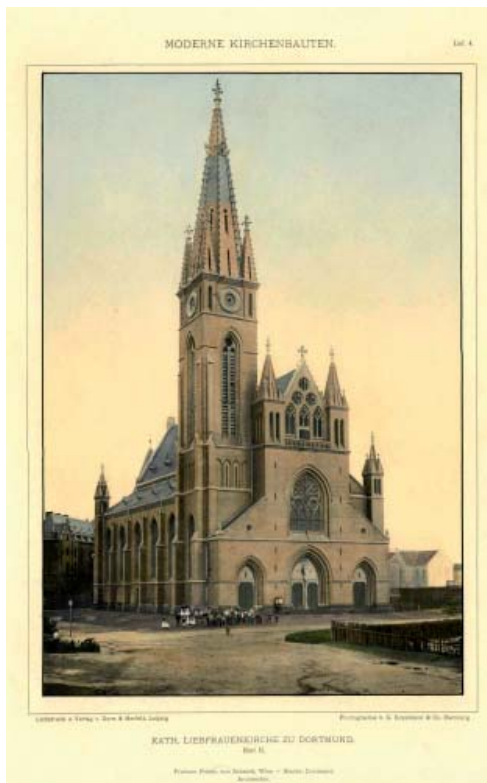


Fig. 07. Staab Architekten, *Kolumbarium Liebfrauenkirche*, Dortmund (Germany), 2011.



organized churches to think about this question intensively. But in the same way it is also a question of the public, of the politicians and the inhabitants of villages and towns. Anyway in 2000 the national comity of monument conservation in Germany, an organization nearby the government, arranged a great congress in Erfurt which mauled this questions under the cover of *Nothing for the eternity? Church buildings between estimation and legacy* (Nichts für die Ewigkeit 2001). And the enterprises converted churches of the ministry for building and transport in North-Rhine Westfalia shows on one hand divers models and on the other hand the recognition of the problem of conversations as a question also under political item. The idea of a foundation for these churches will not be realized, but the forty eight enterprises are models in sense of diversity and imaginativeness (Meys and Gropp 2010). A further step of attention took place with a contest of the Wüstenrot foundation in 2016. They have had a look to ‘churches and their future - restoration, rebuilding, conversion’ (Wüstenrot Stiftung 2017). And the two winner projects — a Catholic and also a Protestant one— both presents to be opened for the urban quarter. This shows us, that for the future the use of a church can also be a religious and an civic one. The actual contest is one more time of note for us: ‘Country and people. The church inside our village’ (Wüstenrot Stiftung 2019). I don’t know the new outcome, but I’m sure it will be one more time in our interest to have a look to it.

The conversion of a church adds a new task to the building; one quiet meaningful example for me is the Liebfrauenkirche in Dortmund (Resenberg and Zahner 2018). Constructed in the end of the 19th century 125 years later there has been no use corresponding to the normal function of the parish. Placed in the center of the greater town, near to two hospitals, the arch-diocese of Paderborn, the Catholic representatives of the pastoral care of the city and the agents of the parish arrived at an agreement. The solution was to modify the function from a parish church to a columbarium: it is by no means the first one in a German Catholic church; the first one took place quiet thirteen years ago in Aachen St. Joseph (2006). But in Dortmund the arch-diocese have had

the idea to organize a competition. And the winner was the architect Volker Staab, working in Berlin and recently known as one of the very good draftsmen in Germany. He just constructed divers museums (in Nürnberg and Schweinfurt) and other public buildings; his last religious building is the new synagogue in Regensburg (2018). In view of Liebfrauen in Dortmund he proposed to put the urns from the top into a tenebrous furniture (Fig. 07). Therefore entering to the nave you have the impression of a church with normal benches. And it needs a second view for registering that there is another use inside. Staab managed a transformation of the interior. Today, some years after the inauguration the quasi-banking impressions are interrupted, because of the multitude of flowers which are put at each urn in use. The primary proposal is realized in a very considerate form. There is a calm and silence inside that each one who wants to take a photo is waiting because she or he don’t want to trouble any bereaved person.

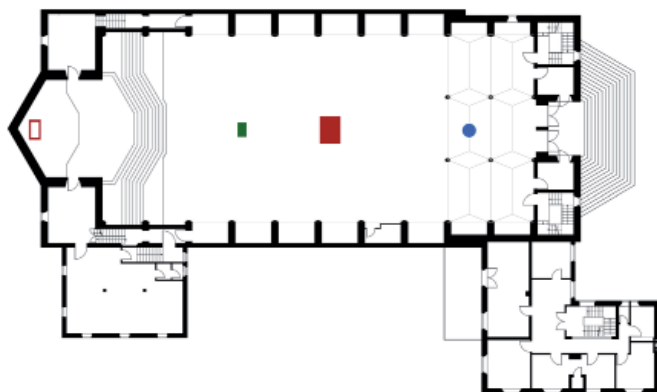
Perhaps we can stop here for a moment, because there is a theological problem which we till today don’t focus really. If we convert a church to a columbarium we invite the public to burn the dead people. But the normal Catholic position in view of a funeral (in Germany) is the burial. This means that the fact of a columbarium inside a former church finally is a contradiction to our official position. I think we need more discussions about this new form of converted churches. On the other hand the columbarium is also a competitor to the communal or religious cemetery.

And, there are some other points to have a look to. The raise of a columbarium consider also more transformations of the society: the cremation of dead people is much cheaper than a burial, and also the supply of the grave is as well cheaper. In modern times the children of dead people often don’t live nearby and, therefore, another reason for the urn in the living-town of the dead parents, for example, is that there is no-one who can visit the grave weekly or monthly.

But let’s come back to our presentation of the columbarium Liebfrauen in Dortmund. The operator of the columbarium has to verify that the livelihood of the columbarium is possible. It means that the



Fig. 08. Martin Weber, St. Bonifatius, Frankfurt (Germany), 1926-27; reconfiguration, 2015 ca.



from each front-door you can find a Catholic church in this diocese. This was the desire and the will of the bishop, Joseph Cardinal Hengsbach, in the 1960th: and just this is the problem of the bishops since the beginning 21st century, because the diocese of Essen hasn't enough of income of the German church tax.

In January 2006 the bishop of Essen decided that 30% of the churches of the diocese not can be further-on supported with money of the diocese. You notice, that doesn't mean that each of these ninety six churches must be closed or perhaps worse, demolished, no. The bishop only told that the diocese cannot pay anything for these churches. And therefore if a parish have enough money, there has been some of them, they could think about and organize a new statue for this church. We can find a *Tafel*, this mean a place where something to eat is given to all people, who haven't enough money to buy normal food (this is a temporary station inside the former Holy Family church of Rudolf Schwarz in Oberhausen, 1958); it may be a kind of charity center inside a previous church or there is an archive inside another one. But clearly some of them must be sold, some of them (about 30%) are till today demolished (Fendrich and Kronenberg 2012).

In general we have to state:

In Germany there are a lot of non-simultane-ness. There are Catholic dioceses ore Protestant regional churches which have to discuss since fifty or twenty years about the question of the conversion of churches and they have to abandon churches today more than in formerly years: we talk about the diocese of Essen, of Aachen, of Hildesheim or the Protestant churches in the middle west and the north of Germany. And in the same time in the south of Germany these discussions just begin. In the arch-diocese of Bamberg or Freiburg or the Lutheran church of Bavaria there are only first examples (Hein and Ludwig 2010); and always the resolution is the integration of parts of parish centers into the churches. For example St. Martin in Meckesheim in the arch-diocese of Freiburg (Nicola 2019); there we can find the integration of the great parish center (a hall with a kitchen, smaller assembly rooms and offices) inside the church; all instead of the great gallery with

the pipe organ. And the second idea was an ecological one. The windows now have added sheets of polycarbonate: and it is one of the first plus-energy churches in Europe (Fig. 06).

All around Germany we have less new priests and we have less churchgoers. And in the outlook we will have less money. But with the church-tax which rises till the last year —particular not in each diocese as well— we have in some regions of Germany —generally in the South— till today not this real pressure that we have to look to solutions which are valid for al long period. My opinion is that actually there is more and more sensibility to these questions. This appreciation is fed of the invitation which I reached two weeks ago for a meeting in November: the organizers are the commission of pastoral questions of the bishop's conference of Germany and an assembly of catholic housing developers. And the question is nearly the same one as in Rome last year: *Does God have any living-room here?*

An emblematic conversation seems to be the negative growth of the *Dornbuschkirche* (church of thornbush) in Frankfurt (Zahner 2007; Resenberg and Zahner 2018). In some degree it can be named as a demolishing in parts which is like a bring to life as the better alternative to a complete destruction. So the church is restaged, the choir rests, but it is enough space for the very small community. The architects Meixner Schlüter Wendt of Frankfurt have had the idea. On thinking about demolishing and construct a new smaller church at the same place, they could verify that demolishing only the part of the nave and reorganize the choir as space for the assembly it will be much cheaper. And therefore they get the order and the singular example of a subtraction had been presented in the pavilion of Germany in the Biennale of architecture in 2012. This exhibition have had the self-explanatory title *reduse-reuse-recycle!* (Petzet and Heilmeyer 2012).

In a newspaper I find the tip that temporary in the Netherlands each week should be closed ordinary two churches (Selbst Kathedralen, 2018). In Germany this is not at all the reality, but it is a frequent thematic inside the Catholic dioceses and the Protestant regional churches. It is a duty to the

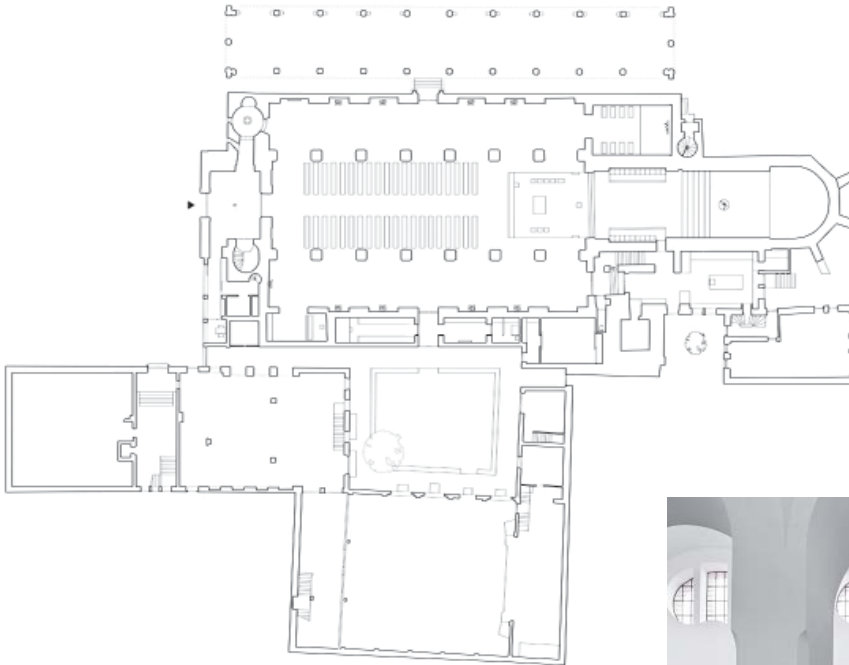


Fig. 09. John Pawson, St. Moritz, Augsburg (Germany), 2008-13; reconfiguration.

operator must present a calculation (how much persons must be cremated inside the columbarium per year and how high is the prize for a urn, etc.). And then there will be established about 1.500 or 2.000 places of urns: here in Liebfrauen there was no problem because of the great nave. But in the same time you have to offer not only personal urns but also assembly points for urns; and also for greater bouquets of flowers. And you cannot imagine how much problems arises on these questions. Here in Liebfrauen we have a assembly point for urns in a chapel. The wall is organized with cubes as assembly points; and the problem is the memory. Here only one flower is allowed, no picture. But what can you do, if someone takes a personal memory of someone to another place? Here you can see the new instructions. This are last-ditch attempts of the operator; I don't know the conclusion.

How to continue?

Ecclesiastical edicts or guidelines for the conversion of churches just exists in different versions in Germany (Ludwig and Schwebel 2006). For instance the Catholic bishop's conference published in 2003 a guideline which now will have a remake (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2003). In the last fifteen years the problem of conversions grow up, in particular a lot of convents (for nuns) and monasteries (for monks) surrendered; and there are not so much sparkly ideas for the application in the future.

In Bavaria meanwhile a region with quiet good financial schedule and till today only less problems with conversions the arch-diocese of Munich and Freising, the regional Protestant Lutheran church and the department of preservation of ancient monuments work together and initiated a range of congresses. It is better to have a look to the problem of conversation in the time while it is not absolutely on top. Other dioceses want to work about the thematic and also the German society of Christian art is thinking about new forms of working. We propose for 2020 and 2021 an exhibition with artists we want to invite to project new forms of handling churches, those which are too great and also those which shall not be in use at all.

### 3. RECONFIGURATION AND REDEVELOPMENT OF CHURCH-BUILDINGS

The reconfiguration of a church is something like a window for interested persons, it is an opening for new groups. This buildings invite all the people to a visit and they can rest inside. This opinion takes place in chapels or churches with a distinguished arrangement. I will show you three very special and very impressive examples:

St. Klara in Nürnberg is a citypoint (Resenberg and Zahner 2018; Kern 2018); there is a specialised proposal of the Jesuits. But in the same time this chapel is a point of religious interest because it is placed directly at the main-street from the station to the inner city of Nürnberg. There are thousands of people each day passing this chapel. And aware of this special situation the Jesuits invited some architects to shape the church and essentially the entrance to the chapel. Brückner and Brückner, two brothers, win the competition and organized a double-space, an incredible entrance as a chapel of Our Lady which is a new form of meeting-point in the city and passing another gate a simple and distinct chapel for the assembly. The approach to the chapel with its green-glimmering light-band and the real candlelight create an amazing impression. Built in 1270 it has been firstly a part of a convent, between 1574 to 1806 a Protestant church for preachers, from 1806 to 1854 it was in profane use, since 1854 Catholic church till today, since 1996 it is a 'open church' guided by Jesuits. The actual reconfiguration exists since 2007.

Another example with a lot of effects is St. Bonifatius in Frankfurt (Fig. 08). This church built in 1926-27 by the architect Martin Weber (Seibt 1999), some years before he has been the copartner of the famous Dominikus Böhm, was titled as church of jubilee and memory for the dead soldiers of the first world war. Martin Weber's churches of the 1920th and 1930th, all constructed in Frankfurt, respire the spirit of the liturgical movement and are instances of modern architecture. St. Bonifatius is an expressionistic construction. In may 2005 JONA a juvenile-church moved into the parish-church and get a part of it (Zahner 2009 and 2011). Deputies of the parish and the juvenile-church talk together.



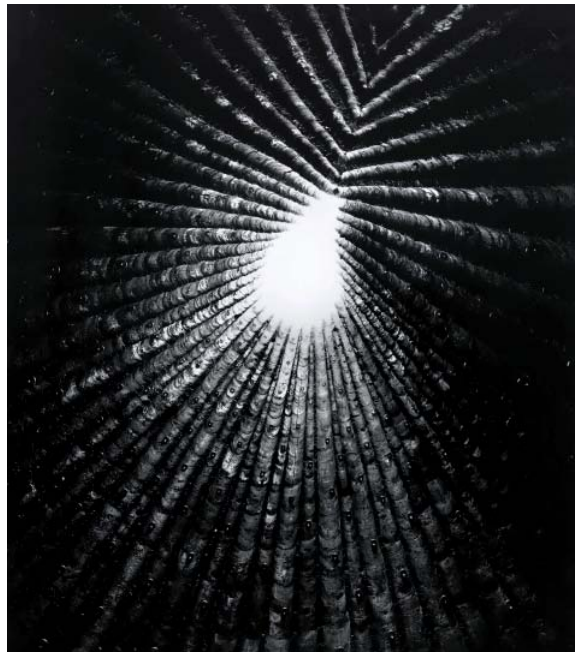
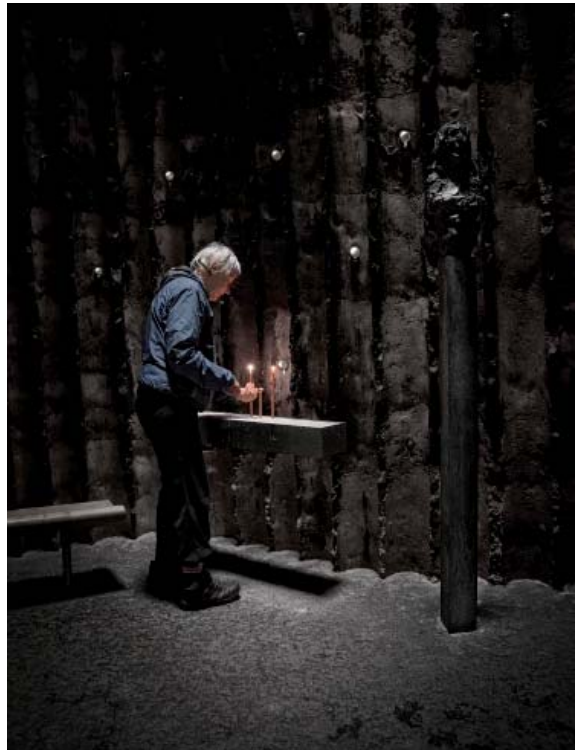


Fig. 10. Peter Zumthor, chapel of Bruder Klaus, Wachen-  
dorf/Eifel (Germany), 2007.

They can recount that the experience to explain from time to time the background of a new idea is a good one. To be considerate of each other is an interesting and blossom out of know-how. In the same time this extended utilization of the parish church is a lively opportunity to introduce new live inside the church building.

After some years there are about two hundred regular believers in JONA each weekend. In this time the lengthwise nave optically will be separated by two canvases. The wooden altar and ambo will be put in the central perspective. And the assembly organize itself like in a monastery from two sides in the direction to the axial positions of the altar and the ambo. This new organization records to the original orientation in direction to the mountain of the old altar. And in the same moment the new assembly organizes in a very simple way a new center. The chairs in the back of the nave can be turned to the new eucharistic center without any problem.

The fundamental idea of the priest is to form an ambitious liturgy. This accompanies a special aesthetic. His personal idea is, to make the church tangible for the youth by inviting them to participate in the service in their own way. He was astonished about more than a quarter hour of eucharistic adoration, which has been configured as a lightshow: a spotlight to the ostensory. Going along with a saxophonist and it was really devotional; concentrated to consciousness and active listening, all covered by a pondering silence.

The eldest church I want to present is the 1000 year old St. Moritz church in Augsburg (Vukoszávlyev 2017; Resenberg and Zahner 2018; Haug et al. 2018), built by bishop Benno in the 11th century, reconstructed in the history many times, also destroyed in the Second World War and reactivated by Dominikus Böhm in reduced strictness in the end of the 1940th, beginning 1950th (Fig. 09). But this reconstruction gets elder and elder; and the task for the church in the center of the town change. The official number of members of the parish drop down, because in the middle of the city there are much more customers than apartments. The renovation started in 2010, in 2013 it was finished. And what we find is quiet a new

or at least another church. The British architect John Pawson, an exponent of minimalism, in religious architecture well-known because of its works in Novy Dvur in the Czech Republic (Pawson 2012; Haepke 2013) or in Pannonhalma in Hungary (Asztrik 2012; Vukoszávlyev 2012), draw responsible.

Task and target had been to create a space which can produce ‘interior pictures’ to all the visitors. His manner to work was simple, aesthetical and clean: a translation of minimal architecture into a historical space. He maintains the lengthwise nave. He reinforces the sense of the road from the entrance to the chorus. He reduced the colors to quiet black in the seats—the wood of the benches was blackened—and quiet white on the blanket and the walls; he replaced the front-windows of Georg Meistermann (of the 1950th) with alabaster glasses and he deployed the statue of Georg Petel (1601-34), a baroque sculpture, the ‘walking Christ’ (beginning 1630th), in the center of the exhausted chorus.

This reorganization leave a special mark to all the visitors. Most of them remember a church which is empty. They don’t recognize that there are a lot of sculptures (of Ehrgott Bernhard Bendl, 1660-1738) in both aisles, only the nave is concentrated to the ‘walking Christ’.

Pawson’s idea was to lead back the space to its original taste. His reference is always the monastery of Le Thoronet in France. He wants to transform his sensation of the historic structure to the church of St. Moritz in Augsburg. Therefore his first building material has been the light. And then he find the figure of the ‘walking Christ’, a monumental and in the same time highly sensitive work of the baroque period. And with the representative priest he discovered a partner in Augsburg who is engaged in a spiritual way to the minimalism.

My last question which is always the same one, what will happen after the actual agent leaves the space? I don’t know, but I hope, there will come another one who is also sensitive and has a creative and constructive leg.

#### 4. PERSPECTIVE

Wherever the ongoing development of the Catholic church is going to, I cannot prophesy anything. In Germany the Catholics inaugurate a ‘synodical process’, which mean the bishops and agents of the believers come together and talk about central questions. After the abuse scandal there is an unbelievable shock and nothing is like once upon a time. The letter of pope Francis and another one of the congregation of the bishops indicate that there will be a lot of difficulties. But the trauma is as deep as possible and there is no other way than to talk together.

In view to our thematic there are also unthinkable challenges. The concentration to the Eucharist is showing that the theological thinking is concentrated to the priest. All transformations in the structure of the dioceses—for example Trier will cut the number of its parishes in a few years from about one thousand to forty—reveals that the only and central point of view is the priest, who is able to guide a greater parish-construction. Of course there are other priests and a team of active lay people full-time and voluntary who helps the leading-priest. There are full-time workers for all around the questions of administration, but the priest who is responsible for five or ten or perhaps much more churches, and not only smaller ones, what does it mean, if he and his co-priests cannot guarantee for a service in each church on each weekend?

If the trend knows only this kind of evolution there will be a change in the view of our topic. In the diocese of Essen, I just talked about, there is a plan for the future in 2030. Today there have about 370 churches in the diocese. In this moment (since 2006) just ninety six are not part of the diocesan financial funding. And in 2030? The actual plan shows there are only eighty to one hundred churches which rests as parish churches. The future of all others is not predictable.

And the next question is, which kind of church will rest, will be part of the small rest of about one hundred? The youngest church which is in use will be one of the ending 19th century! What a shame! All churches of the 20th century will be out of the financial corridor of the diocese. Therefore the newest

question which we are discussing is, in which kind of churches we will celebrate in the future?

The prominent churches will not be destroyed; I’m sure. But it is a great effort to find for each one a new and durable form of use. Churches will rest as buildings who invites the people to come, to come as believer or to come as someone who is looking for silence. It is necessary to leave a door open; really.

Specific functions will be a possibility for some churches, in particular in greater towns. And churches which broadcasts high quality and power—I think about the new configuration of St. Moritz in Augsburg—will be today and also in the future points of faith.

Finally I present a private chapel, which was finished after ten years of planning and organizing in 2007: the chapel of Bruder Klaus in Wachendorf, in the Eifel, a region in the south of Cologne (Bönsch 2009; Zahner 2012) (Fig. 10). Peter Zumthor, the famous architect of Switzerland, had won the competition of Kolumba, the museum of the arch-diocese of Cologne. In knowledge of this event a farmer asked him, if it is possible, that the architect can think about a chapel on the own field nearby the small village of Mechernich. Firstly Zumthor didn’t answer, but in the second manner the idea to dedicate the chapel to Bruder Klaus (brother Klaus), the special Saint of the movement of peasantry who is in the same time a central Saint of Switzerland and one of those which the mother of Zumthor worshipped her full live, he can’t say no. So Zumthor talked with the farmer and his family and he began to think about a form for this chapel.

In the year 2007 the pentagonal wall was executed. In twenty four deposits, each one with about 50 cm of tamped concrete, the chapel grow up. The inner wall has been one hundred and twelve tree trunks which have been deployed like a tent. After finishing the wall of tamped concrete they must be burn out, which take a long time of about three weeks. So now you can see inside the chapel the imprints of the tree trunks on the wall, and on top there is a hole. The floor is a terne metal (lead and common tin); and you find only a bench of oak, a candleholder, the wheel of

meditation of brother Klaus and a bust of the head of brother Klaus, made by the sculptor Hans Josephson.

It is a radical space, radical in the former sense of root; a space which is inviting each visitor to come down, to think about yourselves, a space of silence and peace: and also a sacred orchestration (Haepke 2013).

I don't maintain that these kind of space will be the space for the parish in the future; absolutely not. But spaces like this chapel have such a quality — a quality in the sense of architecture, a quality in the sense of faith and a quality in the sense of education for the mankind— that there is a possibility for the faith to survive. There is so much strength and power, which give us energy and fortitude. Some of the examples I have presented seems to be such powerful spaces.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- «500 Kirchen weniger». 2017. *Gottesdienst* 51:177.
- «Selbst Kathedralen droht heute die Schließung». 2018. *Christ in der Gegenwart* 70:302.
- Asztrik, Várszegi. 2012. *A Pannonhalmi Bazilika felújítása/Remodeling of the Basilica in Pannonhalma*. Pannonhalma: Pannonhalmi Főapátság.
- Berger, Rupert. 1999. «Altar». In *Neues Liturgisches Handlexikon*, 15-18. Freiburg et al.: Herder.
- Berliner Gespräche. 1988-1997. *Neue Nutzungen von alten Kirchen. Erstes (till) Fünftes Gespräch*. Berlin: Wichern.
- Bönsch, Markus. 2009. *Zum Himmel offen. Die Bruder Klaus Kapelle in Wachendorf. Architekt Peter Zumthor*. Köln: Bönsch Design.
- Büchse, Angelika, Herbert Fendrich, Philipp Reichling and Walter Zahner. 2012. *Kirchen - Nutzung und Umnutzung. Kulturgeschichtliche, theologische und praktische Reflexionen*. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Coomans, Thomas et al. 2012. *Loci sacri. Understanding Sacred Spaces*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Dennemarck, Hans-Jürgen and Norbert Jocher, ed. 2009. *es liegt da, als ob es schlief: das dominikuszentrum in münchen*. Berlin/München: Deutscher Kunstverlag.
- Denzinger, Martin 2012. «Kirche am Meer». *Das Münster* 65: 31-35.
- Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, ed. 2003. *Umnutzung von Kirchen. Beurteilungskriterien und Entscheidungshilfen*. Arbeitshilfe 175. Bonn: Sekr. der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz.
- Fendrich, Herbert and Georg Kronenberg. 2012. «'Wind of change'? Was das Bistum Essen mit seinen Kirchen macht». In *Kirchen - Nutzung und Umnutzung*, edited by Angelika Büchse et al., 141-168. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Glenz, Tobias. 2017. «Wir stehen erst am Anfang». Accessed october 2019, <http://www.katholisch.de>.
- Haepke, Nadine. 2013. *Sakrale Inszenierungen in der zeitgenössischen Architektur. John Pawson - Peter Kulka - Peter Zumthor*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Haug, Helmut et al. 2018. *Ins Licht gebaut. John Pawsons Neugestaltung der Moritzkirche in Augsburg/Built Towards the Light. John Pawson's Redesign of the Moritzkirche in Augsburg*. München: Hirmer.
- Hein, Harald and Matthias Ludwig. 2010. «Evangelisch-Lutherischer Kirchenbau in Bayern im 21. Jahrhundert». In *Evangelischer Kirchenbau in Bayern seit 1945*, edited by Peter Hübner and Helmut Braun, 99-107. Berlin/München: Deutscher Kunstverlag.
- Höhns, Ulrich 2012. «Gegen den Westwind». *Baumeister* 109: 56-62.
- Hübner, Peter and Helmut Braun, ed. 2010. *Evangelischer Kirchenbau in Bayern seit 1945*. Berlin/München: Deutscher Kunstverlag.
- Kammertöns, Hanns-Bruno. 2006. «Sag beim Abschied leise Amen. Das Bistum Essen schließt fast hundert Kirchen. Eine Reise durch das Revier der verletzten Seelen». *Die Zeit*, April 12.
- Kern, Karl. 2018. «Es gibt noch Geheimnisse - Offene Kirche St. Klara Nürnberg». In *Wurzeln und Flügel. Brückner & Brückner Architekten*, edited by Brückner & Brückner Architekten, 362-365. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Königs, Ulrich. 2012. «Sankt Franziskus in Regensburg und Sankt Marien in Schillig». *Zur Debatte* 42/2: 17-20.

Ludwig, Matthias and Horst Schwebel, eds. 2006. *Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft. Texte zur Erhaltung und Nutzung von Kirchengebäuden*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Matzig, Gerhard. 1997. *Kirchen in Not. Über den profanen Umgang mit sakralen Denkmälern*. Bonn: Schriftenreihe des Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Band 56.

Meys, Oliver and Birgit Gropp. 2010. *Kirchen im Wandel. Veränderte Nutzung denkmalgeschützter Kirchen*. Edited by Landesinitiative StadtBauKultur NRW, LVR-Amt für Denkmalpflege im Rheinland, LWL-Amt für Denkmalpflege Westfalen. Neuss: GWN Gemeinnützige Werkstätten Neuss GmbH.

Morisset, Lucie K., Luc Noppen and Thomas Coomans, eds. 2006. *Quel avenir pour quelles églises? What future for which churches?* Quebec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

*Nichts für die Ewigkeit? Kirchengebäude zwischen Wertschätzung und Altlast*. Documentation of the congress in Erfurt 5th to 7th october 2000. Bonn: Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Band 63.

Nicola, Bernhard. 2019. «St. Martin, Meckesheim». *Aus unserem Schaffen* 18: 52-53.

Noppen, Luc. 2012. «Kirchenumnutzung in Nordamerika und Quebec/Church Conversion in North America and Quebec». In *Kirchen - Nutzung und Umnutzung*, edited by Angelika BÜchse et al., 109-124. Münster: Aschendorff.

Pawson, John. 2012. *Katalog*. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König.

Pehnt, Wolfgang. 2005. «Deutschland schleift seine Gotteshäuser». *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 30.

Pehnt, Wolfgang. 2009. «Leere Gotteshäuser. Die Preisgabe von Kirchengebäuden eröffnet auch Chancen». *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 2.

Peitz, Alois. 1991. *Raum geben. Werkbericht 11*. Trier: Paulinus Druckerei.

Petzet, Muck and Florian Heilmeyer, eds. 2012. *Reduse - Reuse Recycle. Ressource Architektur. Deutscher Pavillon, 13. Internationale*

*Architekturausstellung La Biennale di Venezia*. Ostfildern: HatjeCantz.

Resenberg, George and Walter Zahner, eds. 2018. *Zusammenspiel - Kunst im sakralen Raum*. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner.

Timmerevers, Heinrich. 2012. *Kirche am Meer. St. Marien in Schillig*. Münster: Dialog.

Truman, Crispin. 2012. «Die Bewahrung historischer Kirchen als Stärkung der Kommunen/ Saving historic churches strengthens communities». In *Kirchen - Nutzung und Umnutzung*, edited by Angelika BÜchse et al., 125-140. Münster: Aschendorff.

Vukoszávlyev, Zoran. 2012. «A téri minimum teljessége. John Pawson térinstallációja Pannonhalmán/The Complexity of Spatial Minimum. Spatial Installation by John Pawson in Pannonhalma». *Magyar építőművészet/Hungarian Architecture* 2012/3: 9-14.

Vukoszávlyev, Zoran. 2017. «Redefining the Sacred Center. Two case studies on recomposing liturgical spaces in ancient architectural interior». In *Patrimonio architettonico religioso. Nuove funzioni e processi di trasformazione*, edited by Carla Bartolozzi, 325-336. Roma: Gangemi Editore.

Weber, Winfried. 1995. *Die ehemalige Abteikirche St. Maximin in Trier. Geschichte, Renovierung, Umnutzung*. Trier: Selbstverlag des Bischöflichen Dom- und Diözesanmuseums Trier.

Wüstenrot Stiftung, ed. 2017. *Kirchengebäude und ihre Zukunft. Sanierung - Umbau - Umnutzung*. Ludwigsburg: Wüstenrot Stiftung.

Wüstenrot Stiftung, ed. 2019. *Land und Leute. Die Kirche in unserem Dorf*. Ludwigsburg: Wüstenrot Stiftung.

Zahner, Walter, ed. 2012. *Baukunst aus Raum und Licht. Sakrale Räume in der Architektur der Moderne*. Lindenberg i.A.: Kunstverlag Josef Fink.

Zahner, Walter. 2007. «Zukunft des deutschen Kirchenbaus - zwei Beispiele aus Frankfurt». *db - deutsche bauzeitung*, 141/2: 50-57.

Zahner, Walter. 2009. «Vom Umgang mit Kirchenräumen. Zur angemessenen Gestaltung und Nutzung von Sakralbauten». *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, 118/6: 16-19.

Zahner, Walter. 2011. «Vom lebendigen Umgang mit Kirchenräumen - St. Bonifatius in Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen». *Das Münster*, 64: 20-23.

Zahner, Walter. 2018. «Zukunft gestalten, nicht Untergang verwalten - Neue Formen der (Um-) Nutzung von Kirchen». In *Zusammenspiel - Kunst im sakralen Raum*, edited by George Resenberg and Walter Zahner, 96-99. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner.

#### SOURCE OF IMAGES

Fig. 01, 02d, 5c. Archive Walter Zahner.

Fig. 02ab. [www.strasse-der-moderne.de](http://www.strasse-der-moderne.de) - Michael Heinrich

Fig. 02c. [www.strasse-der-moderne.de](http://www.strasse-der-moderne.de) - Florian Holzherr

Fig. 03a. [www.goeken-henckel.de](http://www.goeken-henckel.de) - Christian Richters

Fig. 03b. HG Esch Photography - Pinterest

Fig. 04a. <https://bit.ly/2WwV4XX>

Fig. 04b. [www.floornature.es](http://www.floornature.es)

Fig. 05abd. <https://bit.ly/35WIkNe>

Fig. 06abcde. [www.ebfr-bau.de](http://www.ebfr-bau.de)

Fig. 07a. [www.zvab.com](http://www.zvab.com)

Fig. 07b. <https://miesarch.com/work/1247>

Fig. 07cd. [www.baunetzwissen.de](http://www.baunetzwissen.de)

Fig. 08a. [www.nebula.wsimg.com](http://www.nebula.wsimg.com)

Fig. 08b. Wikimedia Commons

Fig. 08c. [www.srassen-der-moderne.de](http://www.srassen-der-moderne.de)

Fig. 09a. Pinterest

Fig. 09b. Afasia Archzine

Fig. 09c. HICarquitectura

Fig. 09d. Hufton Crow - Plataforma Arquitectura

Fig. 10a. WikiArquitectura

Fig. 10b. Aldo Amoretti - Plataforma Arquitectura

Fig. 10c. [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)