

# Genius Loci (Sense of place) in sacred places : A case study of La Sagrada Familia

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to identify and extend understanding on the space perception of interior architecture space and form. Increasing the concern about the importance of the feeling about space, form and collaboration between interior architectural design and human senses. Positive influences of interior design of religious spaces effect on people's perception and emotional senses. It will study spatial impressions, with special purpose to demonstrate and illuminate the importance of religious interior space insight. It will emphasis on the environment and simulations of spaces for religious experience. The research objective is the relationship between religious interior design and genius loci, which has been shown to have strong psychological impacts on human's sense and perception. Moreover, experience and feelings have a significant role in perception of effective interior architectural design. Understanding forms in space for making a balance between the religious activities and space perception, reaching harmony with the surrounding atmosphere, sense of place or Genius Loci and integrating with spirituality are crucial in this essay.

Research method of this reading is kind of qualitative, descriptive and data gathering method based on documented study. It is deductive and analyzing the case study according color and lighting perception and sense of place of the La Sagrada Familia, in Spain, which is one of the most exceptional and significant sample of the religious places in the world. Finding and result of this article is features and impact of light, color, visual forms of religious areas which create positive distraction from real life difficulties.

**KEYWORDS:** Space Perception, genius loci (Sense of Place), Religious Architecture, Lighting, Color.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A summary of significant thoughts about architecture and interior architecture can be useful for helping designers select and apply a suitable interior architectural design that match psychological needs from space through relations between architecture, interior architecture. Aesthetic sense of space is appreciated in religious architecture and interior architecture which is normally represented by the maximum point of motifs and decoration. Contemporary mosque, church or temple and other meditation space designers normally focused on the magnificent looks of the exterior part of the building as well as interior that gives pleasure to the users.

The research question is, can interior environments of religious spaces involve people in pleasurable and meaningful experiences and in this manner have a positive influence on their sense of happiness? This study is limited by the role of natural lighting in the contemporary interior architecture of sacred architectural spaces. There is a wide range of religion and religious places such as, ancient Greek temples, Jewish synagogues, Taoist and Shinto shrine, Buddhist and Hindu temples, Islamic mosque, and Christian churches. Nonetheless, in this research only the one famous church that achieve excessive uniqueness in relation with sense of place according sun lighting and color in their interiors is concerned, which is La Sagrada Familia church located in

Barcelona, Spain. So, Study of sacred spaces of all beliefs and all places is not possible within the limited time frame.

The research problem is Lack of detailed studies on qualities of religious interior space, identity of form, aesthetic sense like color, lighting and space perception that have potential to stimulate human senses and affect humans in a healing manner.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this article include data collection and analysis. This study has qualitative research method; Following a brief historical over-view of religious interiors, it will continue in terms of sense of space analysis and relevant contemporary case study according color and lighting and effects of that on human sense and perception. The case study is La Sagrada Familia church, which is selected according some factors such as having adequate characteristic of effective religious space through the best samples in the world.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Architecture and interior architecture is not about only a building and it is look of that but how it is experienced, as sense of place is crucial. Observer experiences can be dissimilar by architectural design style, plus, multi- sensory atmosphere, genius loci, embodied God spirit in human soul (Day, 2014). Religion, which is also, called tradition and belief is accurately means the way and method. People can choose it and deduced. In addition, religion in terms is a worldview and established of beliefs that it pursues is an explanation for a sequences of questions. There are three core parts of argument to speak for this topic; they are the effect of Color and Lighting in Religious Architecture, Sacred/Holy Architecture and Spiritual Aspects of Religious Architecture and Sense of Place /Genius Loci. Additionally, I will be analyzing the case study which is La Sagrada Familia, located in Barcelona one of the most well-known religious spaces in the world which has incredible effective interior's color and lighting.

### The Effect of Lighting and Color in Religious Architecture

In this sub chapter, I am deliberating about sacred architecture and relation of them to color and lighting. In fact, History of architecture commenced with religious architecture. Using sun light in religious buildings, it goes back a long time ago, even before finding artificial light. Religious buildings were dependent on sunlight for supporting worship activities. Also it has direct connection to existence of God (Antonakaki, 2007). Egyptians believe the sun as God, and Christians believe that light was indorsed in the start of genesis.

Light has symbolic role in religious spaces. There are several ways to guide lights in sacred spaces, for example

rising brightness degree of lighting gradually from entrance to the main hall, which lead to from darkness to the most brightness (Humphrey & Vitebsky, 1997). For instance, in Islamic architecture, daylight bring together with openings around the dome and gathers prayers together below that bright area (Antonakaki, 2007). Moreover, light can produce spatial impact. It is firm by its characteristics, the longitudinal features and notably by people's perception. Human being has diverse perceiving from each space. People wants facilitate a better place by creating suitable religious experience, with proper lighting for prayers to change their perception for making them better feeling. Human needs to have the best lighting design for obtaining natural light during the day, for making connotation with God (Hughes, 1933).

For having spiritual experience and making connection to God, people should have believed in the existence of God in the first place, they have to acquire the skill to feel it. For the reason that, there is no way to see, hear, smell, touch or taste God. Therefore, people make religious places for pray to happenings and using day light for having pleasing figurative aspiration of religious (Wardono & Wibisono, 2018). Furthermore, color also was used in religious places since old times. The temple of Heliopolis in ancient Egypt had some wonderful rooms, which they were designed to disperse the sun's ray in to a number of colors of spectrum. In another part of the world there was hanging garden of Babylon which they used color of the plants and flowers proliferate there. It was a kind of color therapy for stimulating people's health and feelings.

### Sacred, Holy Architecture

Sacred architecture mentions about the building and designing of structures that are places of worship or house of worship, which they have special designed spaces, where human, individually or together go there for acting veneration, devotion or other religious studies. Such as, Temples, churches, synagogues and mosques. (Raunek, n.d.)

Holy architectural building's structurers reflect to the ceremonial and custom of the people who live close to them. They are as presents and inherits from ancient time to current world, which are considering as public places and evolve over centuries for worship and even meditation. Hence, there are two important purposes for architect's designs, which they have to consider: functional and aesthetic aspects; however, in different circumstances sacred architecture mission is delivering human space for attaining spiritual knowledge. Thus, for better understanding of sacred place it needs knowing about spiritual procedure. (Raunek, n.d.)

Additionally, there is sacred geometry in religious building study, which accordingly, building orientation are selected. Religious architecture frequently consuming sacred geometry in building structures which is needed mathematical proportions, harmonies and percentage. Based on people's religion, health and spiritual growth

building's orientation is chosen. For instance, in Islam, Mecca is in the direction of the east as a focal point orientation. In various Inherent American belief assemblies, each of the four directions has individual meanings that effect on people health and spiritual senses (Schweitzer, Frampton, & Gilpin, 2004). Spiritual architecture mentions to any building system that simplifies the consciousness. This achievement means inspiring yourself not only by refusing the problem, but also via countless stages and multiple forms indicating it in a matter.

#### Sense of Place/Genius Loci

In Roman religion, they believed that the world engaged by gods or with holy spirits. Genius loci is the Latin meaning of sense of the place (Jackson, 1994). Used, the Latin type of sense of place as genius loci, interpreted as "the genius of a place" which in old times means spirit of the place. There is a well connection between place and human being. The place should be identifiable and must have uniqueness for making the sense of place leading to place add-on. At all times creating sense of Place inspired by physical, historical, social, and cultural features.

Sense of place is assembled from common articulations of social experiences specific communications and implanted in intuitive and passionate attachments (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2014) According (Tuan, 1975) which he emphasizes that a sense of place is attained by an experience in a specific place, made by our senses. (Relph, 1976) Explained it in other word, which sense of place is environmental human interaction which made of experiences, whit two concept of visualization and time. Consequently, sense of place considers as the genius loci and the atmosphere of place like sharing sense of the spirit of the place (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2014).

Aesthetic has very important role in satisfactory feelings of observer or prayers, when they are staying in religious buildings.it has direct connection to human spirit and pleasure. Reaching to an aesthetic space depends on architects and interior architect's realizing human senses and feeling of them about beauty and their perception of the space. Being aesthetic often depends on users of the building and their definition about beauty (Mahmoud, 2017). Designer should know about quality of aesthetic and concept of beauty, which is separated from time, place and goal. It should be universal understanding, beyond horizons of only some part of the world's people. It should represent all human senses (Cheung, 1997).

Interior architects using the factors which has impact on forming aesthetic such as color, lighting, texture and form. These factors produce design and combination of them together has direct effect on human perception. The effect of color considered with maximum influence of the place elements that has connection with psychological feeling. For reaching to emotional response light can be useful. We as interior architects can create several emotions from illumination stages of lighting, for example activity, restfulness, make sense of place cool and warm.

Architects and interior architects should consider psychological factors, which have relation to aesthetic. Such as, making expressive meaningful forms make best use of natural lighting in compare with artificial lighting. Adjusting the illumination level for special jobs, knowing the psychology effect of colors to implement design in the best and effective way, using suitable colors, lighting and geometry according to users feeling and senses (Mahmoud, 2017).

## IV. A CASE STUDY

### Analyzing La Sagrada Familia According Color And Lighting

Antoni Gaudi's the most archetypal architecture is Sagrada Familia. This modern building encompasses spectacular colorful stained-glass windows. He started from 1882 and it is not finished yet. The construction will continue with Jordi Faulí, he announced that the building would be complete in 2026 (Montes & Mafi, 2017). Constructing Sagrada Familia commenced according to the customs of Gothic and Byzantine cathedrals. Whit this aesthetic masterpiece building, Gaudi's purpose was to influence Christian's belief.

Gaudi with his own architecture style found a cooperation among Christian emblem, drawings and form and geometries by modern structure, stimulated by nature, light and color (Centredocumentacio, 2018). Antoni Gaudi became an international character of modern architecture whose observer of nature and phenomenal architect and man of belief. His buildings structures are result of just his own uniqueness and exceptional methodology (Centredocumentacio, 2018).

**Figure1:** Sagrada Familia columns, which inspired by wooden forest's trees. (Centredocumentacio, 2018)



The Sagrada Familia means interconnected form and eloquence of building from side to side. Likewise, is an international midpoint for spirituality that is brilliant scenery, welcoming people of all circumstances and beliefs to share the sense of place based on love, harmony, decent, generosity and peacetime. There are several architectural components built in the church, with hierarchy structured and according symbols of Christians (Figure1).

There are eighteen astonishing towers with special meaning which is offering the sense of place. Such as tower of Jesus Christ, Gospels towers, tower above the ape that crowned by a star represent virgin Mary; and twelve other towers show twelve Apostle. Gaudi accomplished to

making vertical pyramid design for symbolizing building towards God. In each façade when sun moves from east to west in sky the emphasis of the light quality, turn more and more in generosity, harmony and drama (Centredocumentacio, 2018).

He created pleasant interior lighting and put emphasis on the flexibility of that, but above all, he made a favorable place of meditation. Gaudi's concept echoed by branching columns. They have not only structural function but also they are actual aesthetic and eye-catching elements. He wanted to represent wooden temple's interior design which is totally inviting for prayers and observers; it is also appropriate for Christian celebration's ceremony (Figure1).

With using green and golden glass based on hyperboloids, and colorful tiles, he redirected natural light to the interior. All of these stained glasses are implanted for having appropriate atmosphere for meditation and praying.

**Figure 2:** Gaudi used skylights among the columns, for bringing light into the building. Photo: TimBray Commons (Giuffo, 2011)



Gaudi with innovative concept of forest, displayed trees branching out and visual support of astounding leaves which exposed them as vaults. Each tree spirits support each other. If one of the forest tree falls the other does not breakdown. Gaudi used skylights among the columns, for bringing light into the building (Figure 2).

He used lighting with the best way to allowance and demonstration his imperial and effective architecture. Directing sun light on the highpoints of the towers and through colorful windows. Every day rising sun, lights up the symbols of holy saints which displays they are happy Jesus's birth.

Interchange of light and shadow on the main entrance's façade made by the sun shading, increasing the attraction. Receiving mid-day sun which is shine spreading on the sixteen porch's lanterns and it finally lights up the main entrance of cathedral (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Stained-glass windows directing sun light on the highpoints of the towers through colorful windows. Photo by Almay (Montes & Mafi, 2017)



For Gaudi color was the appearance of life. People immediately have noticed vital existence of colors inside of the building, on the peaks and various crowning basics temple's tower and roof. Covered with colorful ceramics, stones and bricks. Color providing by construction material such as different kinds of colorful stones and tiles using in vaults. Along with several colorful symbolical structures, for instance the stained-glass windows and the cornices on the lights, placed in the wealth of the columns, besides beyond belief skylights in the vaults.

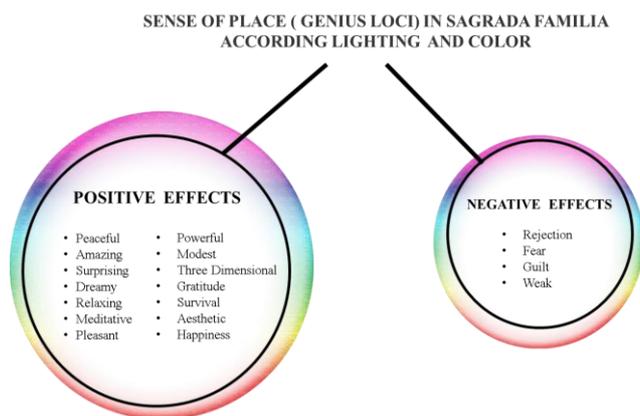
Gaudi moreover, invented trichrome system that is composition of four superimposed pieces of glass, three primary colors (red, yellow, blue) plus, one transparent piece as a seal. His purpose was give the sense of depth to the place's drawings and converted them to tree dimensions. His aim was making flat surfaces of colors and lighting to astonishing tree dimensional volume. He wanted to show the symphony of color with play and producing of color and lighting, according the sunset and sunrise. There is an outstanding phenomenon occurs. Lighting stream to the church windows they are prepared in warm colors such as yellow, red and orange, which is associates sunset warm colors. This gives the place sense of warm feeling same as fire which gives heat (Figure:4).

**Figure 4:** Each rose's windows projects its lights on to opposite vaults, it creates impressive three dimensional reflection with colored light and stones (captive light, 2018)



Furthermore, another sense of place, which it gives at sunset each rose's windows projects its lights on to opposite vaults, it creates impressive reflection with colored light and stones. The wonder is lively and dynamic, then the reds are first estimated on the floor, gradually, they go up the columns, like fire flames, and last expanding while waiting for they reach the vaults, where they finish on the disposed vaults of the church choir. Even though it is about sixty meters extensive to reach to cold morning stained- glass windows on the opposite side with greens and blues glass. Which is displaying fascinating contrast of colors (Figure 4).

**Diagram1:** Positive and negative effects of sense of place of Sagrada Famili



Finally according my personal perception of the building, when I was inside of Sagrada Familia for hours, I had many different feelings while I was there which I briefly explained and displayed in the table 1. I had many positive emotions along with negative ones. Whereas positive sense of place on me was much more than negative impacts. For instance, I had very peaceful feeling but a bit fear from the grandeur of the building which I guess it's made like this deliberately (Diagram:1). Additionally, each part of that specially colors and lighting was surprising and effective with dreamy powerful feeling but I felt myself very weak inside of building which it was looks like a Heaven or God's home!

## V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

With studying the structure of Sagrada Familia in compare with other Gothic churches we can recognize extraordinary design style. For instance, he removed some facades elements like flying buttresses. Also windows of basilica which they make transcendent atmosphere and for reflection.

Most of the time, stained-glass windows placed at the highest part of gothic churches because of the supreme absorbing sunlight from outside.in down points, due to shadow of trees o buildings, there is less color filter. However, it is vice versa in Sagrada Familia.

In one hand, Gaudi procedure extreme contrast. The utmost translucent stained-glass windows are located in the peak, therefore, the light can come in and brighten the mosaics and golden vaults.

On the other hand, the artworks and scripts are in the lower windows, where it can be readable. He wanted to show the composition of color with play and generating of color and lighting, according the sunset and sunrise. There is an outstanding phenomenon happens, they stream to the church windows they are done in warm colors which is associates sunset warm colors. This gives the place sense of warm feeling same as fire which provides heat.

We have a chance to create religious architecture and interior architecture not only aesthetically attractive, but further prominently effect of space and sense of place on people's feeling and emotions is actually vital. This much effort and art works displays impressive effects on human's emotions. sense of place or genius loci and the atmosphere of place shares sense of the spirit of the place, which in this case study we observed one of the most impressive religious place's in the world.

The effective and successful religious architecture embraces people in an enjoyable and pleasant experiences. Furthermore, design for reaching happiness of interior architecture depends on how the designer inventions stability between the most dominant factors such as uniqueness, functionality and community interaction.

Moreover, having positive impact on human's sense. Eventually the success of religious interior architectural design with psychological perception tried by how the design fulfills values, needs, emotional sense and satisfactions of users. Finally, we reach to this point that impact of appropriate light, color and visual forms of religious buildings and its genius loci create positive distraction from people's real life difficulties and give them happiness and pleasure feeling.

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