

## An analytical study of the interior architecture of post-modern churches

**Prof. Mahmoud H. El Mallah**

**Professor Emeritus of Interior Architecture- Decor Department**

**Faculty of Fine Arts- Alexandria University**

[Melmallah2019@hotmail.com](mailto:Melmallah2019@hotmail.com)

**Assist. Prof. Dr. Marwa Khaled Mahfouz**

**Assistant Professor of Interior Architecture- Decor Department**

**Faculty of Fine Arts- Alexandria University**

[marwakhmahfouz@yahoo.com](mailto:marwakhmahfouz@yahoo.com)

**Assist. Lecturer. George Isaac Guindy**

**Assistant Lecturer in Interior Design and Decoration Department**

**Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 6th of October City**

[George.isaac4@gmail.com](mailto:George.isaac4@gmail.com)

### **Introduction:**

Pioneers of the "Postmodernism" interest in dealing with the neglect of contemporary architecture for the history and cultural heritage, and prefer, for their part, to return to the classic rules in a contemporary and sophisticated form. Many architectural designs have emerged as an application of the "postmodernism" trend, drawing inspiration from the classic styles and architectural vocabulary from different civilizations, and this has appeared in the external form and design of the internal architecture of the selected group of churches that we shed light on by analyzing its architecture and the vocabulary of its internal architecture. With its various determinants and implications in terms of flats, colors, materials and furniture pieces. On the other hand, however, it is noticeable that design solutions of the interior architecture of some modern Coptic churches have been very similar in the use of colors and decorative vocabulary, until they became a phenomenon noticeable in almost all Coptic churches, so that it became rare to find a new church unique design of interior architecture without repetition or similarity found in another church.

### **Church building and postmodern architecture:**

With a careful look, we find that postmodern architecture is the most appropriate and most suitable for facilities of a special nature through which the designer wants to highlight some historical features, local, or even the majestic spiritual character required to be presented and expressed in churches. That is why architecture cannot fail modernity in highlighting these expressions and expressing them. As the architecture of modernity may be suitable for some facilities that do not require special effects on local heritage or expressing the personality of the place and contain large numbers of humans, such as companies and international institutions buildings, lecture halls, hospitals, and government institutions. If it is possible to neglect the heritage or historical aspect of buildings in their diversity and the different functions that they meet - under the pretext of keeping pace with modernity and development to produce abstract buildings that have no taste - except that this historical and spiritual aspects in my opinion

cannot be overlooked in the internal and external architecture of the churches. and this also does not mean neglecting modern technology and advanced design methods.

Postmodern philosophy, as Charles Jenks put it, is based on the concept of double code, meaning that it is a color of the mixing between modernity and other styles, methods and trends in an attempt to dye modernity with trends of humanism. Hence, classicism in postmodernism is a mixture of a classic language with modernity, not separation from it, it aims to create a visual image that achieves communication between architects and the public.

If the different directions of postmodern architecture are like the historical trend that connects advanced architecture with historical classical architecture and the use of its vocabulary with disposition - this trend in the postmodern movement is the most critical of modernism that was separated from the past and cut its roots, as it is not possible for modernity to restore time and break it , to return to the origins and roots, and the historical trend, we must transcend modernity and give a new concept to the continuity of time as well, rejecting the interruption of the present from the past, or the local trend that sincerely expresses the community and the local environment and the building's affiliation with the spirit of the place, and to combine local heritage, materials and environmental elements with technological advancement. Likewise, the trend towards departing from the norm and the buildings it represents, expressing personal abilities to get out of the architecture from the established rules. The buildings here have symbolic overtones and expressively borrow allegations that the architect possessed during the design process.

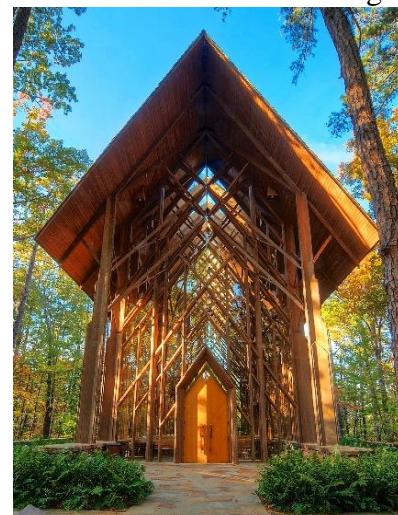
The use of postmodernism in the architecture of churches linking architecture with history, heritage and the environment is not its only role, but evoking religious and theological symbols and vocabularies, and expressing them in the vocabulary of the internal architecture of the church through inscriptions, icons, colors, columns and evoking the prestige through the design - which according to postmodern architecture does not necessarily contain as many complex details as the architecture of medieval churches - the worshiper is giving a feeling of being in the presence of God as if in heaven, and this is the primary goal of the church and the ultimate goal of the designer when he can communicate this feeling through his/her designs.

Here are some examples of churches from different parts around the world that are designed internally and externally, according to the different intellectual and **architectural trends of postmodern architecture:**

#### **1 - Anthony chapel, Garvan, Arkansas:**

The exterior of the church is in the form of a log cabin suitable in its form for the local character of the surrounding area, and oak and pine wood spread in the surrounding forests have been used in the construction of the wooden structure of the church as well as the seats. (Figure 1)

It appears that the internal architecture of the church, influenced by the historical direction in its rectangular hometown, which is inspired by the birthplace of churches of the famous basilica style, as well as overlap and complexity, so to speak, in the form and formation of wooden beams bearing the truss roof of the church (Figure



(FIG.1) THE SHAPE OF THE CHURCH FROM THE OUTSIDE IN THE FORM OF A COTTAGE  
[Https://Www.Pinterest.Com/Pin/7135397531921927/?Lp=True](https://Www.Pinterest.Com/Pin/7135397531921927/?Lp=True)

2), which gives the spirit of high-rise roofs with beams and complex struts detail for medieval churches.

The church was also affected by the local environmental trend of postmodernism in terms of the exterior design of the cottage, and the use of local wood at a high altitude in the general structure of the church, similar to the trees intertwined with the surrounding forest and emphasizes the general sense of the area as well as the use of natural stones in the floors, and glass walls that makes the external spaces as if they are an extension of the church space and greatly benefit from natural lighting .



(Fig.2) A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE CHURCH FROM THE INSIDE  
[Https://Www.Baldwinshell.Com/Projects/Item/47-Anthony-Chapel-At-Garvan-Gardens](https://Www.Baldwinshell.Com/Projects/Item/47-Anthony-Chapel-At-Garvan-Gardens)

## **2 -Mildred B. Cooper Memorial chapel, Bella Vista, Arkansas:**

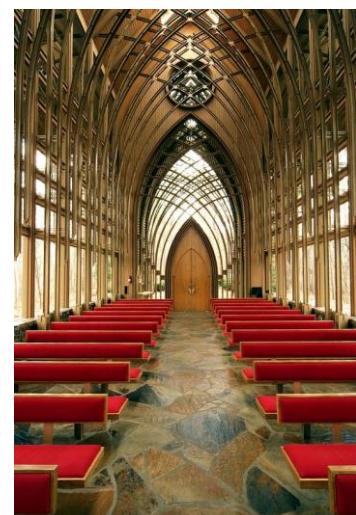
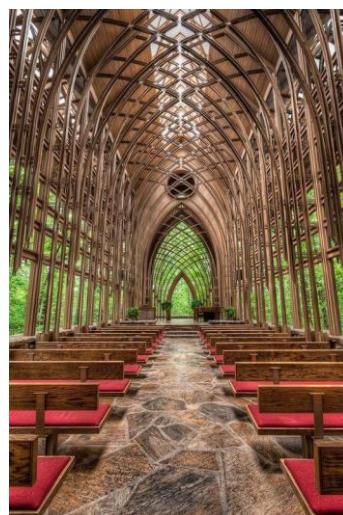
The design of the church has a rectangular basilica character inspired by the medieval cathedrals when the huge structural structures in the architectural design often give a sense of awe and sacredness as in the case of the cathedrals built in the Gothic style with repeated architectural elements (Figure 3). The same effect occurred in the Gothic Church, its structure is based on fifteen pointed Gothic nodes with a height of fifty feet for one and is made of metal, as each major contract of these construction contracts contains inside it from three other nested nodes that range in size from the largest to the smallest. (Figure 4)

This historical trend was chosen to revive the Gothic style and draw inspiration from it because of its enduring quality in design and to return us to the fourteenth century architecture in Europe which is famous for the shape of the famous pointed contract which is considered the most prominent element in the church which gives its architecture a unique appearance.

The church did not derive its uniqueness from its design that connects us only with the past, but rather it connects the past with the present using modern materials, which are steel iron and glass implemented with the latest



(Fig. 3) the church from the outside  
<http://beautifulbellavista.com/chapel.htm>



(Fig. 4) Two perspectives for the interior architecture of the church  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/386535580511415748/>

advanced technology, thirty-one tons of steel were used with 4460 square feet of glass, which gives Strength to the structure of the church, despite its subtle external appearance, which is only possible through modern technology .

### **3- Cardboard Cathedral, Christchurch, New Zealand: (figure5)**

The historical direction appeared in the structural structure of the new building, which was designed in the form of a triangle that was inspired by the triangle truss of the old cathedral of the city that was demolished, also the use of stained glass pieces - with drawings of angels and saints brought from the stellar round window that decorated the main façade of the old cathedral - in a different artistic approach at the facade of the new cathedral, which brings us to some influences of the spirit and character of the old original building that was designed according to the Gothic Revival style.

The historical side also combined with modern technology and advanced raw materials that were demonstrated in the use of modern raw materials such as concrete, steel, and paperboard insulated against water, flame, polyurethane and polycarbonate, in addition to modern and advanced lighting such as LED .

As for the interior design of the church, it is a simple design devoid of decorations and delicate architectural details, and the structural structure of the ceiling appears from the cardboard tubes with the LED lights shining on these tubes from below to create a light and chromatic gradation that gives a lot of beauty (Figure 6). As for the eastern wall above the altar, it is empty except for a large cross that is suspended in the middle and is also made of cardboard tubes. (Figure 7)



(FIG.5) CARDBOARD CATHEDRAL FROM OUTSIDE  
<https://www.theverge.com/2013/8/15/4624914/christchurch-cardboard-cathedral-opens-in-new-zealand>



(Fig.6) The Western Wall & The Stained Glass Effect On It



(fig.7) The eastern wall

<https://www.theverge.com/2013/8/15/4624914/christchurch-cardboard-cathedral-opens-in-new-zealand>

#### 4- Lutheran Church of Siófok, Hungary:

The church is distinguished by its architecture, which mixes the trend of departing from the familiar and the new local trend, where the direction of departing from the familiar appears at the front of the church entrance from which the shape of two large wings looking like angel's wings for protection, or perhaps they inspire the recipient as they are forming a huge owl, and the tower comes as an eight-sided conical - shaped like a hat over the head of this owl (figure 8), the architect left the choice to the recipients

to infer the shape as their imaginations suggest. The new local trend appears in the reuse of the traditional local buildings in Hungary .

The church from the inside is mostly made of natural wood that was used to cover the walls and make the staggered roof trusses of a distinctive shape that suggest to visitors that they are inside a ship symbolizing the ark of Noah, and the altar is located in the eastern wall in line with the traditions of churches building, and come from behind four wooden partitions in the form of angel wings topped by configurations of stepped wooden arches of wood bearing a statue of Christ, opening his arms. The simple pieces of furniture and benches came in designs that are keeping up with the spirit of the church design and are entirely made of wood. (Figure 9)

#### 5- St. Pius church, Lafayette, Louisiana:

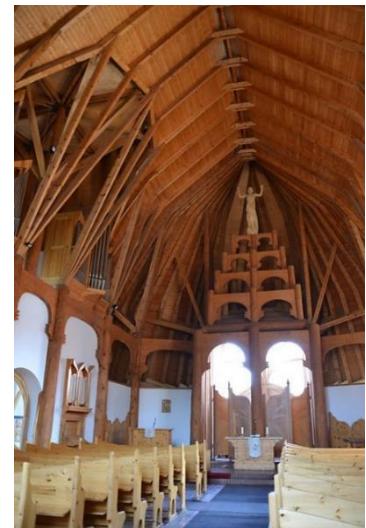
The historical trend appears in the architectural form inspired by the Romanesque style of church construction alongside the main church tower and on top of it the cross. (Figure 10)

The interior of the church is simple and elegant, inspired by the vocabulary of ancient Roman architecture. Perhaps the most important characteristic of the interior design of the church is the frequent use of the contracts, whether they are circular in the ceilings, entrances and the door of the temple, or they are arched by columns in the Roman Tuscan style among the



(fig.8) The church from the outside

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g274908-d8807169-Reviews-Siofok\\_Evangelical\\_Church-Siofok\\_Somogy\\_County\\_Southern\\_Transdanubia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g274908-d8807169-Reviews-Siofok_Evangelical_Church-Siofok_Somogy_County_Southern_Transdanubia.html)



(fig.9) The church interior architecture

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g274908-d8807169-Reviews-Siofok\\_Evangelical\\_Church-Siofok\\_Somogy\\_County\\_Southern\\_Transdanubia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g274908-d8807169-Reviews-Siofok_Evangelical_Church-Siofok_Somogy_County_Southern_Transdanubia.html)



(fig.10) The church from the outside  
<https://jbmouton.com/portfolio-item/st-pius-church/>

ranks of the four church sides (Figure 11). The marble altar is topped by a white marble dome mounted on four columns of red marble with a Corinthian crown.

It is worth noting that modern technologies blended with classical elements in the internal and external church architecture, as the entire church building was constructed with the latest constructional methods of metal structures in trusses, arches, central pillars, beams, walls, and ceilings. and taking into account the latest isolation and extinguishing systems. The church is also equipped with modern and advanced lighting systems such as LED strips and indirect lighting, to highlight the architectural beauty inside and outside.



(fig.11) The church interior architecture

<https://jbmouton.com/portfolio-item/st-pius-church/>

## References:

- Al bahnasy, Afif: men al hadathah ila ma ba'd al hadathah fel fann, demashq ,dar al ktab al araby, 1997. P84
- Al Shayeb, Galal al din: Tarikh al emara al dakheleyya al hadith, al qahera, alam al kotob, 2011, p11
- Albas, abd el hamid: etegahat emarat ma ba'd al hadatha wa atharaha fi al haraka al maemareya be misr, al mo'tamar al elmy al thaleth, al azhar al sharif, al qahera, 1993
- Mohamed, tarek abd el raouf: emarat ma ba'd al hadatha.. derasa le mafhoum ma ba'd al hadatha al alamy wa manteqeyat ma ba'd wl hadatha al mesreyya, resalat magesteir, koleyat al handasa, gameat al qahera, 1996, p95
- Al mosallamy, ghada Mohamed fathy: al tagrid wal tagdid bayn al asala wal mo'asra fel tasmimat al me'mareya fel dowal al gharbeya wal dowal al arabeya (derasa moqarna), bahth manshour be magalat al emara wal fonoun wal oloum al ensaneyya, misr, al adad 8, al kharif, 2017.
- Ata, Ahmed sayed- el nabawy,hosein kamel – metwally, walid mousa: hewar fekry ben al emara al odweya wa etegah ma ba'd al hadatha le estenbat osos tasmeem mostahdatha le ta'theeth al qora al seyaheya be ganoub sina, bahth manshour be magalat al emara wal fonoun wal oloum al ensaneyya, misr, al adad 15, mayo wa yonyou 2019.
- Jencks, Charles: Architecture Today, London, Academy Editions, 1993.
- <https://www.archdaily.com/413224/shigeru-ban-completes-cardboard-cathedral-in-new-zealand>
- <http://www.baldwinshell.com/projects/item/47-anthony-chapel-at-garvan-gardens>
- <http://www.cooperchapel.com/about.html>
- <https://www.commercialarchitecturemagazine.com/church-brings-community-gathering-space/>
- [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=12005](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=12005)
- <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/08/06/shigeru-ban-completes-cardboard-cathedral-in-christchurch/>
- <https://www.theadvocate.com/acadiana/multimedia/photos/collection>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shigeru\\_Ban](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shigeru_Ban)
- <https://welovebalaton.hu/sights.culture/sights/lutheran.church.of.siofok>