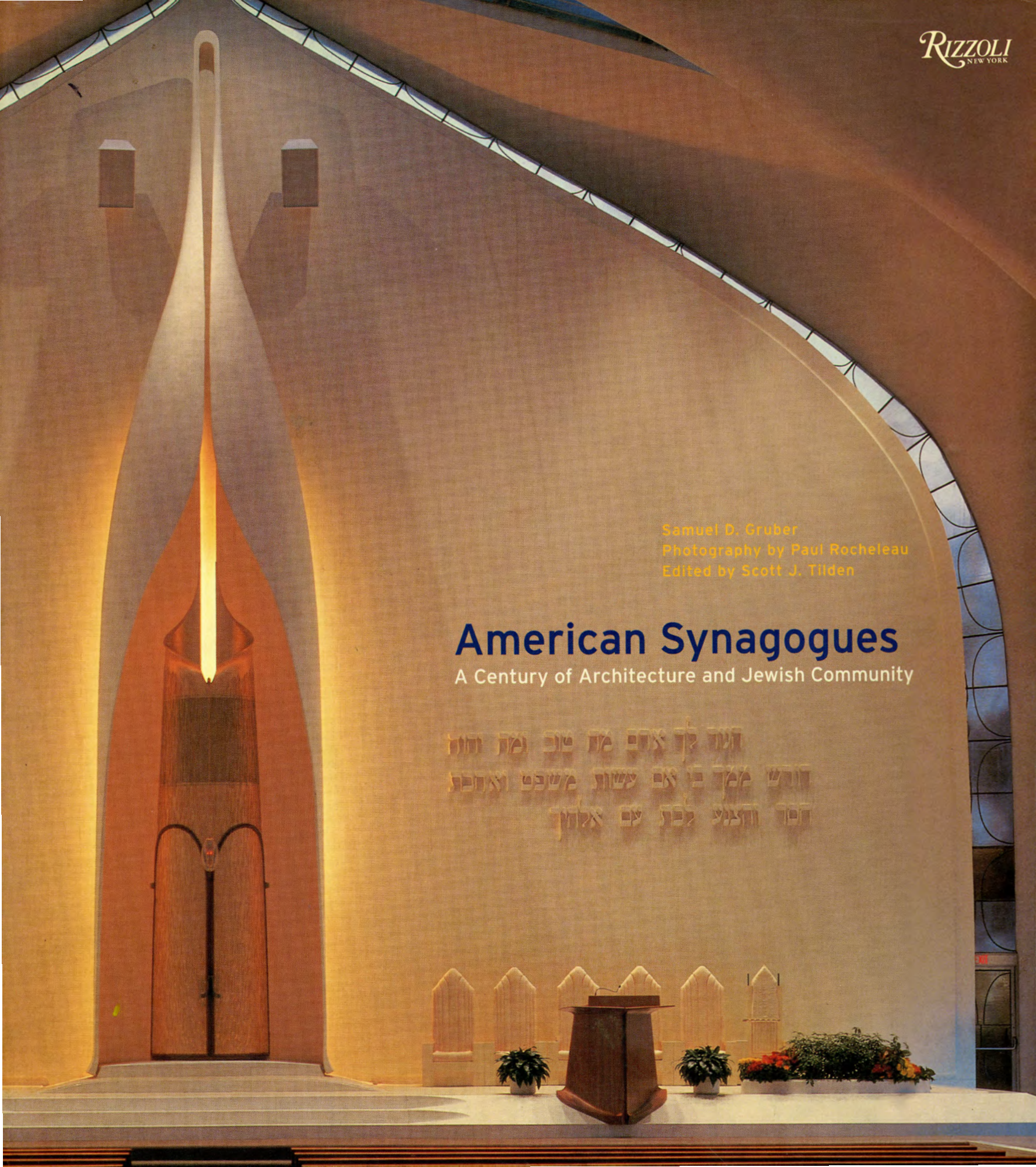


Samuel D. Gruber
Photography by Paul Rocheleau
Edited by Scott J. Tilden

American Synagogues

A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community

וְהָיָה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים מִן הַיָּם
וְהָיָה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים מִן הַיָּם
וְהָיָה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים מִן הַיָּם





American Synagogues

A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community

Samuel D. Gruber
Photography by Paul Rocheleau
Edited by Scott J. Tilden

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

For Judy, Jonah, and Zoë

The photographer wishes to thank Elaine Rocheleau and Raymond Alvarez.

Rizzoli editor: Ellen R. Cohen
Copyeditor: Elizabeth Johnson
Design by Binocular, New York

First published in the United States of America in 2003
by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.
300 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010
www.rizzoliusa.com

Copyright © 2003 Samuel D. Gruber, Paul Rocheleau, Scott J. Tilden

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior consent of the publishers.

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

ISBN: 0-8478-2549-3

Library of Congress Catalog Control Number: 2003104756

Contents

- 9 Acknowledgments
- 11 Preface

- 12 Introduction

- 15 Chapter One
House of Gathering

- 23 Chapter Two
Jews in America: Older Traditions in a New Homeland

- 27 Chapter Three
A Jewish-American Renaissance: High Style Architecture (1900–1914)

- 47 Chapter Four
Between the Wars: Simpler Forms and Complex Functions (1920s and 1930s)

- 83 Chapter Five
Towards a New Architecture: The Modern Synagogue (1945–1955)

- 119 Chapter Six
Baby Boom and Building Boom (1955–1970)

- 175 Chapter Seven
Reflections and Recollections (1970–1990)

- 191 Chapter Eight
Synagogues for a New Century: Creating a Stylistic Synthesis (1990–present)

- 226 Conclusion

- 228 Notes
- 235 Bibliography
- 238 Glossary

List of Synagogues

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 30 Temple Society of Concord
Syracuse, New York
Arnold Brunner
1910 | 95 Temple Beth El
Providence, Rhode Island
Percival Goodman
1954 | 146 Temple B'nai Jehudah
Kansas City, Missouri
Kivett & Myers
1967 | 196 Kol Ami Synagogue
Scottsdale, Arizona
Will Bruder
1995 |
| 37 Stone Avenue Temple
Tucson, Arizona
Ely Blount
1910 | 100 Temple Beth Shalom
Miami Beach, Florida
Percival Goodman
1956 | 151 Temple Beth Zion
Buffalo, New York
Harrison & Abramovitz
1967 | 201 Hampton Synagogue
Westhampton, New York
Edward Jacobs
2000 |
| 40 Congregation Rodef Shalom
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Palmer & Hornbostel
1907 | 105 Beth Shalom Synagogue
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania
Frank Lloyd Wright
1957 | 158 Congregation Sons of Israel
Lakewood, New Jersey
Davis, Brody & Wisniewski
1963 | 206 Temple Israel
Greenfield, Massachusetts
Louis Goodman
1996 |
| 48 The Temple--Tifereth Israel
Cleveland, Ohio
Charles R. Greco
1923 | 110 Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel
Port Chester, New York
Philip Johnson
1956 | 164 Temple Brith Shalom
Cortland, New York
Werner Seligmann
1969 | 211 North Shore Hebrew Academy Synagogue
Kings Point, New York
Alexander Gorlin
1999 |
| 54 K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation
Chicago, Illinois
Alfred S. Alschuler
1924 | 121 Chicago Loop Synagogue
Chicago, Illinois
Loebl, Schlossman & Bennett
1958 | 169 Gumenick Chapel at Temple Israel of Greater Miami
Miami, Florida
Kenneth Triester
1969 | 214 Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
Great Barrington, Massachusetts
Michael Landau Associates
1999 |
| 61 Wilshire Boulevard Temple
Los Angeles, California
Abram M. Edelman, S. Tilden Norton & David C. Allison
1929 | 122 Temple B'rith Kodesh
Rochester, New York
Pietro Belluschi
1962 | 176 Temple Beth El of Great Neck
Great Neck, New York
Armand Bartos & Associates
1970 | 221 Congregation Agudas Achim
Austin, Texas
Lake/Flato Architects, Inc.
2001 |
| 68 Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York
New York, New York
Robert B. Kohn, Charles Butler & Clarence S. Stein
1930 | 128 Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore, Maryland
Walter Gropius
1960 | 181 Perlman Sanctuary at North Shore Congregation Israel
Glencoe, Illinois
Hammond, Beeby & Babka
1979 | |
| 76 The Temple
Atlanta, Georgia
Philip Trammel Shutze
1931 | 134 Temple Sinai
El Paso, Texas
Sidney Eisenshtat
1962 | 184 Jewish Center of the Hamptons (Gates of the Grove)
East Hampton, New York
Norman Jaffe
1989 | |
| 86 Park Synagogue
Cleveland, Ohio
Eric Mendelsohn
1953 | 140 North Shore Congregation Israel
Glencoe, Illinois
Minoru Yamasaki
1964 | 192 Gordon Chapel at Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore, Maryland
Levin/Brown
1988 | |

Temple B'rith Kodesh
Rochester, New York
Pietro Belluschi
1962

122

Italian-born architect Pietro Belluschi (1899–1994) moved to the United States in 1922. He began to practice architecture in Portland, Oregon, in 1925, and continued to work there until 1951, when he became Dean of Architecture and Planning at MIT. Belluschi's commercial work is represented by the International-style Equitable building of Portland (1945–48). His religious buildings were quite different in approach. He designed many churches and five synagogues, which together comprise a remarkable body of work. Belluschi's religious structures are relatively modest in scale and adopt vernacular and traditional motifs to create comfortable, warm, and well-lit community spaces. Where his commercial buildings celebrate technology, Belluschi's religious buildings are decidedly natural and low-tech. When Belluschi left Oregon he was already one of the foremost church designers in the United States. While at MIT, and later in retirement, he continued to design, and it was in these late years that his synagogue work took form.⁶

In 1959 Rabbi Philip Bernstein and the congregation of Temple B'rith Kodesh in Rochester, New York, commissioned Belluschi "to design a large complex of religious and educational buildings on a spacious, flat, 15-acre landscaped site in an affluent residential neighborhood of Rochester, New York."⁷ Belluschi designed a 65-foot-tall, twelve-sided domed sanctuary that rises above a cluster of simple one- and two-story buildings.

The sanctuary seats 1,250 and is entered through a broad loggia that leads to a quiet, landscaped courtyard. As in Eric Mendelsohn's plan for B'nai Amoona (chapter 5), the courtyard physically separates prayer and educational facilities, but visually connects them.

The synagogue is a steel-frame structure with low sidewalls of warm, rosy brick over which rises the dome. Its sides are glazed, screened by panels of stained redwood. The sanctuary is vaulted by a tall, framed structure of bent steel beams that meet in an oculus. Narrow, convex panels of sound-absorbing redwood screen the space between the structural ribs so that the sanctuary reads as a screened structure similar to the traditional Judaic tent. The high dome with center oculus is reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome, where Belluschi was in residence when he designed the building. Like Albert Kahn before him (at Beth El, Detroit), he was immensely moved by the simple geometry and the dramatic play of light of the round Roman temple form. The



Right: The dome of the sanctuary.

124 twelve sides are a specifically Jewish reference to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Throughout much of the design process Belluschi imagined that these panels would carry decorations making the numerical symbolism more specific.

While certain features of B'rith Kodesh thus refer specifically to Jewish sources, Belluschi used many similar motifs in his churches as well. He said:

There is no architectural tradition to match the Jewish faith. Architects can contribute to a trend by creating spaces that serve their purpose with clarity and nobility. By emphasizing the special nature of simple materials such as wood and brick, they may achieve beauty without ostentation and with economy of means. The architecture of the synagogue should be an eloquent expression of the spirit of man.⁸

While the sanctity of the space is mostly expressed through the use of natural materials and the focusing of light, there is one prominent artistic statement in the complex—a massive bronze Ark by sculptor Luise Kaish (b. 1925). This large work is composed of a collection of figural panels representing key moments of man's confrontation with God as gleaned from scriptural passages. In its size and medium, and in its central location, this Ark is surely one of the major works of Judaica of the past half-century. Indeed, it is the culmination of an artistic journey of Kaish, who in the years previous had sculpted scores of smaller bronze figures representing biblical scenes. Rabbi Bernstein visited Kaish, a former congregant, at her studio in Rome on his return from Israel just before planning of the new synagogue began. When the time came to design the Ark, Bernstein recommended Kaish to Belluschi, who, after meeting the young sculptor, agreed and gave her free reign for her design.⁹ She transformed an early idea of designing a giant bronze door in the tradition of Italian medieval doors that she loved. Even today, the presence of Kaish's figures on the Ark is an exciting shock. In an act of balance, Belluschi commissioned Richard Filipowski, a colleague from MIT, to design an abstract welded metal Ark in the chapel.



Above: The tall redwood sheathed sanctuary contrasts with the horizontal lines of the office wing.

Opposite: Massive bronze Ark by sculptor Luise Kaish.





Above: The daily chapel with an abstract Ark by Richard Filipowski.

Opposite: The sanctuary looking toward the Ark.