



By  
Donald D'Haene

# Interfaith Sanctuary



*"All [religions] answer, though in different ways, to the given condition of human existence."*

*Emile Durkheim*

**W**e all share issues of life and death, but when it comes to spirituality - the one thing we have in common is our difference.

Architect Bradley Skinner took that reality to heart when he designed the Interfaith Sanctuary at the London Health Sciences Centre Westminister Campus. Skinner says, "This place is about accepting our differences and sharing and communicating different thoughts and ideas."

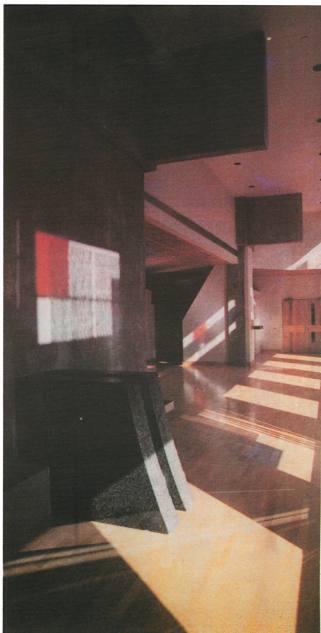
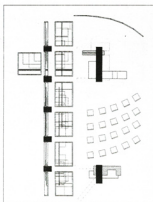
This belief is demonstrated in Skinner's thoughtful plan for a sanctuary. In this place of worship, accessible to all faiths, he has created an atmosphere of shelter, spirituality and peace.

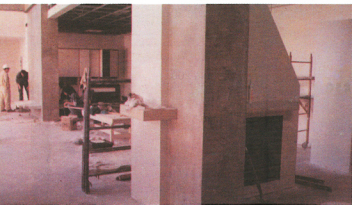
The hospital itself touches lives in many different ways. From within, people experience all ranges of emotion: joy to sorrow, anxiety to relief, celebration to grief. Its Interfaith Sanctuary is a place in which visitors will find a place to seek solace, a respite for those in



- Left Page:** Functional spaces: meditation area with fireplace, gathering area
- Right Page:** Top left: Floor plan of 420-square-meter room  
 Middle: Entrance doors. Materials: beechwood, granite, steel, concrete, glass.  
 Bottom left: Stained glass windows punctuate the space at rhythmic intervals.  
 Top right: Intense spectrum of light traces the sun's movement across walls and floor.  
 Bottom right: Brushed steel focal point functions as podium, altar, bench or surface.

Photographs Courtesy Of: Bradley Skinner





need, a retreat to reflect on the vicissitudes of life.

Skinner's design skillfully draws upon nature's elements – air, light, water, fire and earth – as a means to express commonality. The final product showcases the results of human imagination, skill and hard work.

Within the sanctuary, existing window openings are turned into delicate assemblies of overlapping planes of stained glass. When two windows of different coloured glass are reflected inside and cross each other they create a third colour. Each colour keeps its identity but when combined, they share the light and create something new.

This same concept is demonstrated in the choice of materials. Within the gathering and meditation areas, existing massive concrete sheer walls support key pieces that sculpt otherwise free space into functional areas.

The main concrete wall braces a slab of solid granite cut by flowing water and a cantilevered plane of stainless steel. The brushed steel serves as a focal point of the gathering space and functions as a podium, altar, bench or surface. There is a purposeful attempt to make this ambiguous to evoke a sense of questioning. Taken together, the wood floors and panels imbue warmth and comfort; the concrete and stone, strength and stability; the steel, smooth, cool relief.

The natural elements blend to affirm a sense of space, movement and life in the room. Each element of the sanctuary's unique design has something special to offer. Together they create a sense of community and universal spirituality.

Donald D'Haene is the Editor of Q Magazine and author of Father's Touch, [www.fatherstouch.com](http://www.fatherstouch.com).

## Interfaith Sanctuary London Health Sciences Centre, Westminster Campus

Design team:  
Bradley Skinner,  
Sandra Bukowski,  
Lucien Iribarne,  
Laura Klinger

Specialty Construction:  
Edwards Glass Co. Ltd.  
London Ltd. Sheet Metal  
Bernardo Marble & Tile Ltd.  
Total Concrete Maintenance

General Contractor:  
Norlon Builders London Limited

Top: Continuous sound of water through solid granite, suggests regenerative cycles of life.  
Centre: Existing massive concrete walls sculpt free space into functional areas.  
Bottom: Before renovation.

Photographs Courtesy Of:  
Bradley Skinner