

Black Nation Building in Religious Space

St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 230 Lenox Ave

This project aims to evaluate the status of St. Martin's Episcopal Church as a part of a nation building project in West Harlem, NY. Through a study of the church's history, prominent community participation and relationships draw to the notion of non-religious obligation that the church has thus far, and may continue to enact among the Lenox Avenue neighborhood. The architecture of the church reveals significant details of these relationships, as well as the role that European wealth and colonization has played on the speculative imaginary of American societies. Though St. Martin's demographic context has changed due to The Great Migration, White Flight, and current gentrification, the idea of the speculative imaginary remains present and active, holding potential insight into the re-programming St. Martin's church.



Vincent Smith's "Minton's Playhouse (Uptown)" at 116th St Station, 1999



Romare Beardon's "City of Light" at the Westchester Square-east Tremont Ave Station, 1993

St. Martin's Historical Timeline

1878 - Speculative Building, Dutch, English, & Irish settlers

1886 - William A Potter designs Holy Trinity

1903 - The start of the Great Migration to Harlem

1925 - First fire

1928 - St. Martin's organized as a mission (different building)

1937 - St. Martin's Federal Credit Union under Rev. John H. Johns

1933 - "Don't buy where you can't work" protest, Rev. John H. Johnson joins

1939 - Second fire

1935-40s Vacancies rise in Harlem due to white flight & Great Depression. Increase in Black community.

1940 - St. Martin in the Diocese

1940 - Restoration

1950s - Netherlands donates the carillon

1942 - Consolidation with St. Luke's parish

One of the most prominent figures of St. Martin's and clearest case study of this analysis is the late Reverend John H. Johnson. Not only is he responsible for much of these programs and the strong connection between the church and the community in the mid 20th century, but he sheds light on the nuances of these public spaces as a social activist for black rights and as an integrationalist. Resultingly, Johnson developed various relationships with community figures such as law enforcement (NYPD Chaplain), the Dutch community, and politicians. Ultimately, these complex relationships helped Johnson to solidify his agenda as an integrationalist and expansionist for the church. However, one must question what this study implies for the current population of Harlem and meaning (or lack of meaning) of public (faith-based) space in current day. Can an active, symbiotic relationship still exist between faith-based space and the Harlem community today? Is the church a public space, and can this change through architectural intervention?

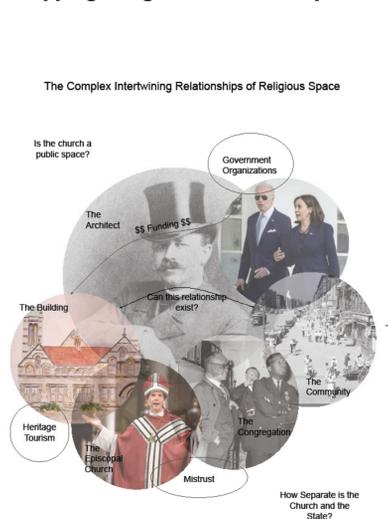
Ornaments

- Chimneys**: Tudor like group of chimneys
- Tower**: The tower has a group of tall thin openings that resemble the ones in gothic cathedrals like in Notre Dame of Paris.
- Gable Windows**: Cluster of large and small windows inserted on a larger room in the gable
- Crosses**: The cross's pinnacles on top of gable roofs have been removed in most cases and replaced. The only surviving crosses are inspired by celtic style crosses that were popular in the UK during the Victorian Age
- Rectory**: The Rectory has the largest amount of different windows in the building.
- Fleche**: A small fleche inspired by european cathedrals
- Main Entrances and Capitals**: The main entrances have the same capitals that are in most windows, sculpted with acanthus leaves. The entrances themselves are modelled on medieval gothic portals.
- Second Floor Windows**: Romanesque inspired small groups of openings

As a nation building project, this intervention of St. Martin's aims to engage the community, bridging the gap between cultural norms of the mid 20th century and 2024, as well as between the public and this Architectural typology. Through this bridging, it is critical to counteract the connotation of European elitism and exclusivity that such formal architecture may allude to, and rather draw in the public as one of few true "third space" that welcome all types of people.



Mapping Religious Relationships



- Black Community & Social Activists**
- Non-Black Community**
- Politicians**
- HARLEM ACADEMY** ESTABLISHED 2004
- Academic Community**
- Law Enforcement**

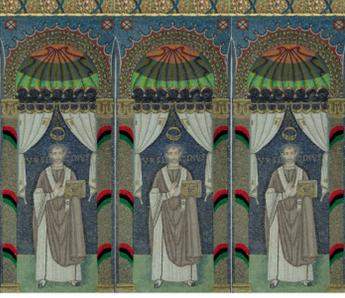
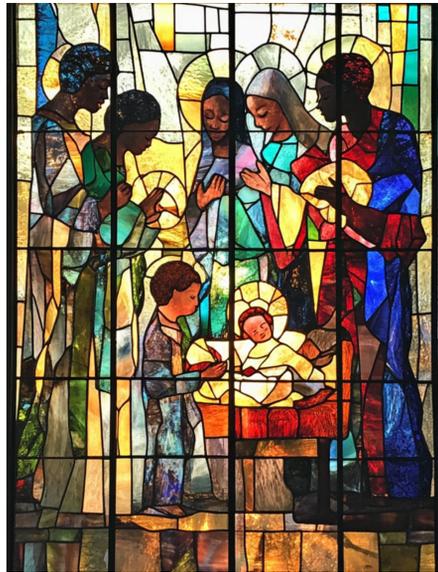
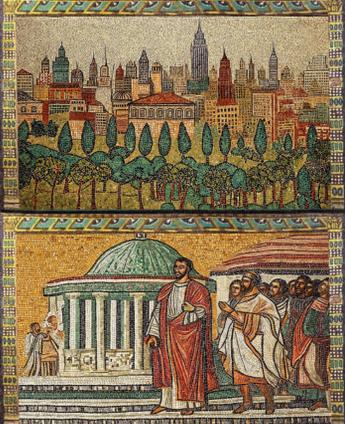
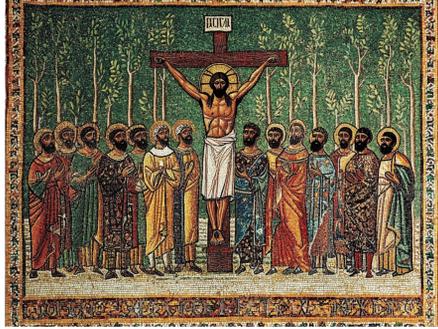
- Amenity Type**
- A1 - Harlem Village Academies West Lower Harlem (Charter School)
 - A2 - Deeper Learning Institute (Graduate School)
 - A3 - IP Tabernaculo de Liberacion y Senkaid Divina (non-profit org.)
 - A4 - Eaton Benevolent Society (social services org.)
 - A5 - Antigua & Barbuda Progressive Society (Association) org.
 - A6 - Got Sports (Sports school)
 - A7 - Mindful Pileas NYC (Pileas studio)
 - A8 - HI Dry Cleaners Inc (Dry Cleaners)
 - A9 - Harlem Children's Zone (Social Services Org.)
 - A10 - Omer's Funeral Home
 - A11 - Full Spectrum Fitness & Performance (Personal Trainer)
 - A12 - Excellence Plus Foundation (Non-profit educational org.)
 - A13 - NYC Housing (City Gov. Office)
 - A14 - 123 Tennis (Sports Club)
 - A15 - Emanuel AME Church Food Distribution Center

Mount Morris Historic District 3rd Spaces





Exterior Perspective A-1



Exterior Perspective A-2

Ornament Details - Interior Panels & Stained Glass