

RELIGIOUS THEATER

# Johnson Fain to revamp Philip Johnson's Crystal Cathedral

By ANTONIO PACHECO • September 16, 2016



This week Los Angeles–based architects Johnson Fain revealed their plans for the first phase of upcoming renovations to [Philip Johnson](#) and John Burgee’s iconic Crystal Cathedral in [Anaheim](#), California. The building, completed in 1980 and part of a larger religious campus that contains notable structures by [Richard Meier and Partners](#) as well as [Richard Neutra](#), will begin renovations this year.

The iconic structure’s continuous glass panel exterior will be preserved during the renovation. A bulk of the new work will pertain to the building’s interior spaces, which are being reconfigured and expanded in order to accommodate a larger congregation. Plans revealed for the renovations include the reorientation of the worship spaces, with the existing, “antiphonal” arrangement with two singing groups on either side of the main stage being converted into a traditional Catholic altar configuration. In this arrangement, the choir will be located behind the altar with the altar itself pushed forward into the nave of the church.

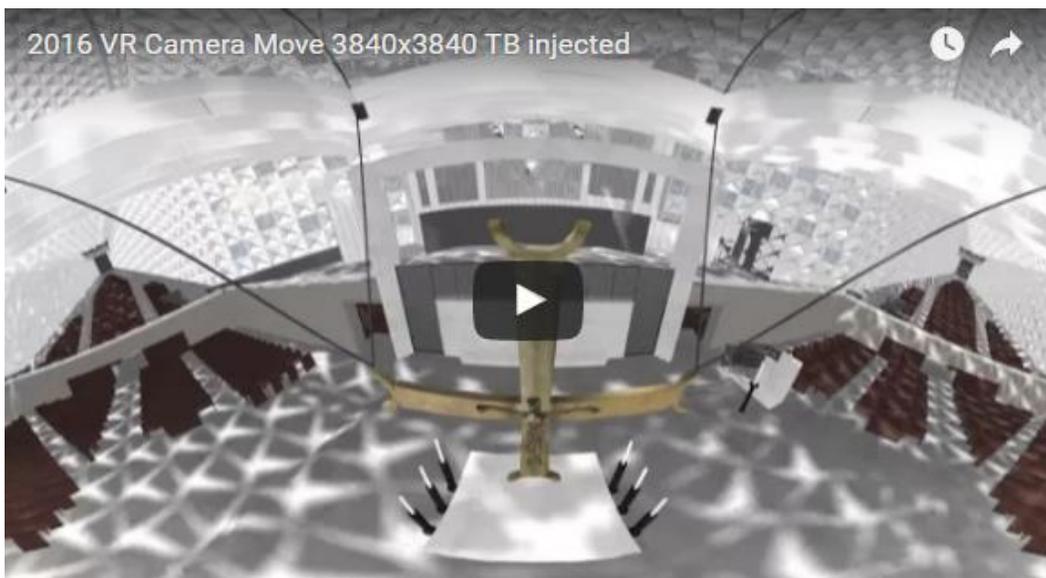
A new organ will be located further behind the choir, creating a new focal point for the cathedral. The new altar will also receive specially-calibrated devices the firm calls “quatrefoils” that will make for a more efficient distribution of light and forced air in the worship space.



Proposed Renovations to cathedral Chapel. (Courtesy Johnson Fain)

The proposed renovations come after several years of uncertainty for the church. The structure was purchased by The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange in 2011, after the Crystal Cathedral Ministries, the church’s original congregation, declared bankruptcy. The building was subsequently rechristened as “Christ Cathedral” and has been awaiting renovation ever since. Neutra’s Arboretum building, a massive drive-in church located adjacent to the Crystal Cathedral structure, was renovated in 2014.

During the public unveiling of the new plans in the cathedral, which took place during a day-long, 40th anniversary for the complex, the architects handed out virtual reality headsets to attendees and played the animation below.



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Proposed Renovations to cathedral sanctuary. (Courtesy Johnson Fain)



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Proposed Renovations to cathedral baptistry. (Courtesy Johnson Fain)



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Proposed Renovations to cathedral altar. (Courtesy Johnson Fain)



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Proposed Renovations to cathedral balconies. (Courtesy Johnson Fain)

