

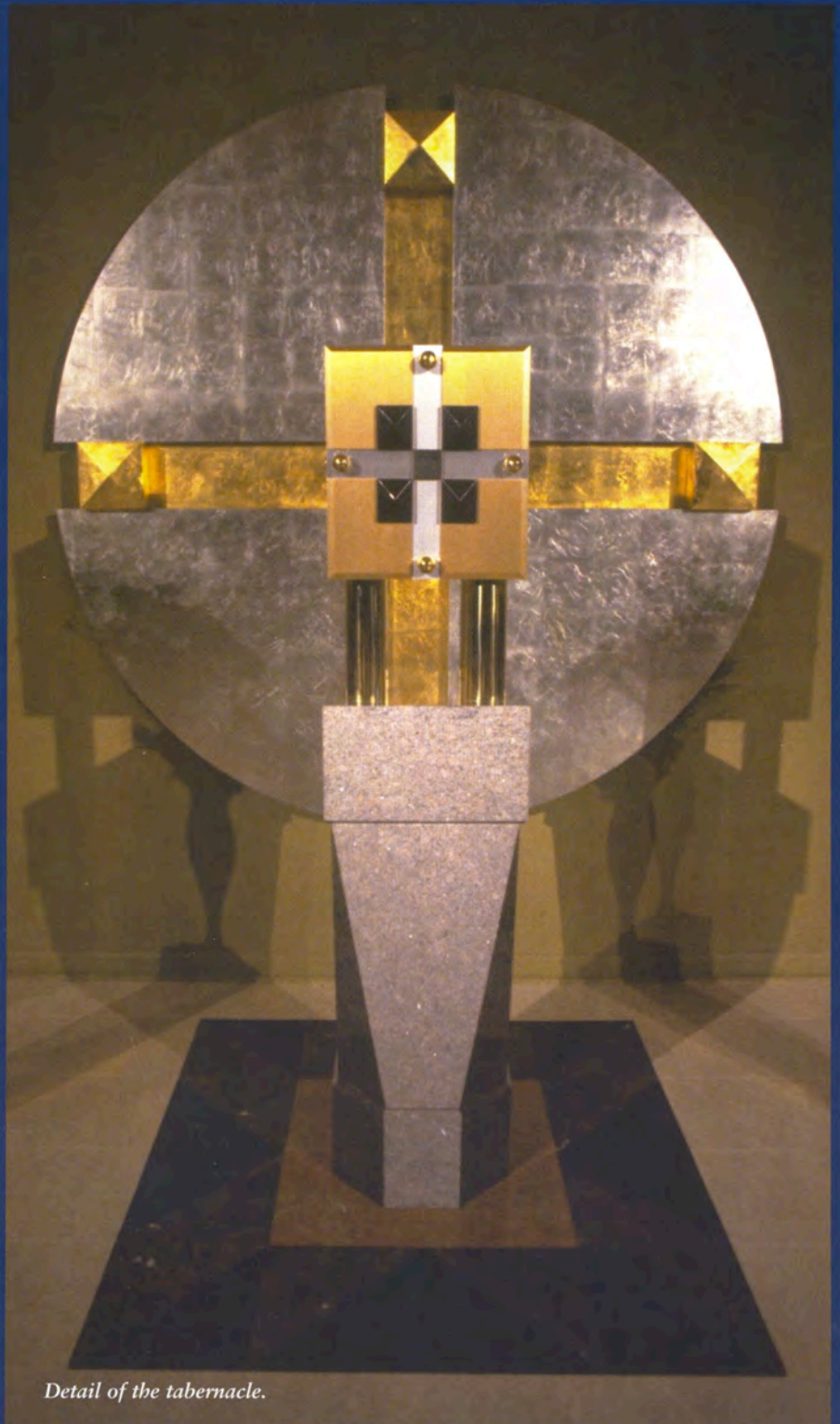
# St. Joseph of the Holy Family

Lawrence Hoy, Renovata Studios › Harlem, New York, New York

This project began with design and consultation meetings with the pastor, Reverend Philip Kelly, and a renovation and building committee from the parish. Their two main requests were to stay within budget and to respect the African-American heritage of the congregation. The parish was founded by German immigrants, and the church was built to emulate the churches they left behind. The new congregation wanted a shift from this pseudo-European design to something "Afro-centric." Renovata Studios researched the art and furniture of several African tribes including Zulu, Yoruba, and Swahili, which inspired a design direction for the new liturgical elements.

The budget of \$75,000 was extremely tight, as it included painting the sanctuary with a new color scheme and extending the altar platform. The liturgical furnishings were designed with forms and details that could be fabricated at low cost. Renovata built all of furnishings in its studios. The total cost for the liturgical furnishings was \$43,300, including the altar, ambo, celebrant's chair, tabernacle with a throne, and tabernacle doors, along with processional candle stands and a crucifix.

The solid granite altar was affordable thanks to its simple yet sculptural forms. The ambo, celebrant's chair, and tabernacle screen are of African wood veneers, Bubinga and Anegre, on plywood construction, which is both easier to use than solid lumber and more stable in large fabrications such as these. The great symbol on the tabernacle doors was created on birch plywood decorated with a combination of aluminum, copper, and imitation gold metal leaf. The imitation leaf is nearly as lustrous as the real 23-karat gold leaf, but must be treated with a sealer to preserve its brightness. The effect is a shimmering backdrop that visually separates the tabernacle from the Eucharistic ritual. When opened, the doors are decorated with a radiance that accentuates the tabernacle for devotional worship after mass. All of these methods are visually effective without breaking the bank.



*Detail of the tabernacle.*



*The new sanctuary is decorated with themes derived from African art.*



*The tabernacle doors swing open to create a setting for Eucharistic veneration.*

## Assumption B.V.M. Church

Lawrence Hoy, Renovata Studios › Feasterville, Pennsylvania

By the time Renovata Studios became involved in this interior renovation, the contract had been arranged to restore the pews and a “faux stone” vinyl tile had been chosen to replace the red carpet. However, there was no overall vision for the finished worship space. Renovata requested a moratorium on further design decisions until a cohesive program and master plan could be completed, along with a strategy to squeeze as much as possible into the limited available budget.

The goal of the master plan was to respect the existing architecture and to create a vibrant space for liturgy. The new program suggested a redesign of the sanctuary platform to include wheelchair access and better placement of altar, ambo, chair, and tabernacle. Some elements in the sanctuary needed to remain, such as the beautiful altar and communion rail of

Indian Rosewood created for the parish in 1958 by famed woodworker George Nakashima.

The new designs were approved in time to schedule the site work along with removal of the pews. The choice for new flooring material was changed to ceramic tile, which was under \$3 per square foot and installed by a local company, owned by parishioners, which helped keep costs down. To improve the appearance of the walls and ceiling new accent colors were added to the recently whitewashed interior. By painting the ceiling beams with a three-color treatment and the columns with the same brick color as the walls, the columns virtually disappeared. A crew of artisans from Renovata traveled to Pennsylvania to do the work, and spent the week lodged in the church rectory, with meals provided by parish volunteers, which saved more money.



*Renovated worship space enlivened with color, giving the altar more focus.*

This created a wonderful bond between the parish and the crew, and by the end of the project crew members were considered honorary parishioners.

The new design for the sanctuary platform was built by Renovata. Special care was taken to carefully remove the original Nakashima communion rail and incorporate it into the new platform as the railings for the access ramp. The other Nakashima furnishings were removed and the original oil finish restored by hand. A former side altar that had been previously modified was used as a base for the ambo with a new reading desk fabricated of similar wood. The new granite font was designed so that the bowl would be installed for the completion of Phase I, allowing the parish to perform baptisms; a temporary immersion pool can be used until the permanent one is installed.



*Worship space in its original condition.*



*Original Nakashima altar and furnishings, behind which the original communion rail serves as an access ramp rail.*