Article

The Spatial Translation of Rituality: From Historical Ritual Spaces to Contemporary Experiential Spaces

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Citation: Huang, B. L. (2026). The Spatial Translation of Rituality: From Historical Ritual Spaces to Contemporary Experiential Spaces. *Journal of Global Arts Studies*, 4(2), 60–74.
https://doi.org/10.23112/jgas26063005

Received: May 24, 2026
Revised: June 8, 2026
Accepted: June 11, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026

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Abstract: ***Background:*** From early ritual sites and sacred landscapes to religious sanctuaries and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, rituality has consistently operated as a mechanism for organizing space, behavior, and perception, ultimately constructing spiritual experiences distinct from everyday life. Existing studies tend to discuss historical ritual spaces and contemporary healing spaces separately; consequently, systematic research on the historical continuity between them and the mechanisms of spatial translation is limited. ***Purpose:*** This study examines how ritual spatial mechanisms persist across different historical stages and spatial types and analyzes their translation paths and modes of expression in contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, revealing their contemporary value. ***Methods:*** Drawing on ritual theory, spatial phenomenology, and case studies, this study conducts a comparative analysis of historical ritual spaces, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary experiential spaces. It also establishes an analytical framework based on ritual behavior, spatial paths, sensory atmosphere, spiritual perception, and cultural meaning. ***Results:*** The findings show that the contemporary translation of rituality manifests in the continuous transformation of behavioral procedures, spatial paths, perceptual atmospheres, and mechanisms of spiritual experience. Ritual spaces across different historical periods construct extraordinary experiences through path progression, liminal transition, environmental staging, and bodily participation. ***Conclusion:*** Ritual demonstrates continuous and translational characteristics across the development of historical ritual spaces, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience. Its contemporary value lies in the reorganization and expression of ritual spatial mechanisms in new contexts. From the perspective of spatial translation, the established framework provides insights for the contemporary interpretation of the spiritual meanings of cultural sites and for the design of spaces for spiritual experience.

Keywords: Rituality; ritual space; spatial translation; spiritual experience; spatial phenomenology

1. Introduction

From ancient ritual sites and ritual landscapes of early civilizations, to the religious sanctuaries of the classical period, and further to contemporary healing and retreat spaces, human beings have continuously attempted to construct distinctive places for spiritual experience through specific spatial orders, behavioral paths, and environmental atmospheres. Eliade (1959) and Turner (1991) argued that ritual behavior enables individuals to temporarily detach themselves from their original social state and enter a process of spiritual experience situated between the everyday and the non-everyday. Historically, sacrificial activities, orientation systems, spatial boundaries, and path organization in ritual spaces not only constituted the spatial basis of ritual behavior but also formed the earliest prototypes of such environments.

A substantial body of scholarship has addressed the relationship between ritual and space. First, in the fields of ritual theory and liminality studies, Gennep (1960) and Turner (1991) used a social anthropological perspective to reveal the role of ritual in identity

transformation, the construction of social order, and the formation of spiritual experience, while proposing such key concepts as liminality. Second, in studies of sacred and religious space, Eliade (1959) argued that sacred space differs from everyday space through centrality, boundaries, and ordered structures, constituting a fundamental means by which humans understand the world. Third, in spatial phenomenology and studies of architectural atmosphere, Norberg-Schulz (1980), Pallasmaa (2012), and Zumthor (2006) respectively discussed how architectural space influences human emotion and spiritual experience through *genius loci*, bodily perception, and spatial atmosphere. In recent years, with the development of healing spaces, retreat spaces, and immersive experiential environments, researchers have further examined the effects of spatial environments on emotional regulation, psychological restoration, and spiritual perception (Bains, 2021; Huang & Xu, 2017). Scholars have generally focused on specific historical stages or single spatial types, while the internal connections among historical ritual spaces, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience remain under-examined. Specifically, establishing a research framework from a spatial design perspective is essential to explain how rituality gains novel expressions in contemporary contexts through spatial organization, behavioral order, and perceptual mechanisms. Prior research has concentrated primarily on the cultural symbolism of ritual or the experiential effects of contemporary space, while the spatial translation mechanisms between the two have received limited attention.

To address these gaps, this study divides its objects of analysis into three levels: historical ritual spaces, religious ritual spaces, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience. Combining ritual theory, spatial phenomenology, and studies of contemporary spiritual-experience spaces, it explores how rituality constructs mechanisms of spiritual experience through behavioral order, spatial paths, boundary transitions, and perceptual environments, and consequently analyzes the contemporary translation of these mechanisms. For the design of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, the translation of rituality does not diverge from its historical and cultural roots; instead, it recodes the spatial–perceptual mechanisms embedded in historical ritual sites into contemporary spatial mechanisms centered on bodily perception, emotional regulation, and experiential consumption. This study therefore seeks to establish historical connections and theoretical continuity between cultural heritage sites and contemporary spiritual environments, thereby offering new research perspectives and design insights for the revitalization of cultural heritage and the design of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience.

This study adopts a method combining literature review, theoretical analysis, and case analysis. First, by reviewing related research on ritual theory, spatial phenomenology, and architectural atmosphere, it constructs a theoretical analytical framework for ritual spatial mechanisms. Second, using historical ritual spaces, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience as its main objects of study, it conducts case interpretation and mechanism generalization across four dimensions of ritual behavior, spatial paths, perceptual atmosphere, and spiritual experience. Finally, by examining representative cases from different historical periods, it explores the continuity of ritual spatial mechanisms and their contemporary paths of translation. The focus of the study is not the direct inheritance of architectural form, but rather on the continuous evolution and reorganization of behavioral order, perceptual mechanisms, and spatial logic across different historical contexts to reveal the internal logic and design implications of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Ritual and Ritual Space

2.1 Ritual and Rituality

Ritual is conceptualized as a symbolic and performative activity. The core function of ritual is to enable individuals to move from an everyday state into a special state of

spiritual significance through specific behavioral procedures, spatial orders, and collective participation (Eliade, 1959; Turner, 1991). Early religious studies often regarded ritual as part of religious worship and emphasized its role in establishing boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Durkheim (1915) argued that ritual strengthens collective identity and social integration by distinguishing the sacred from the profane. Using a structural functionalist perspective, Parsons (1951) further noted that ritual space can translate abstract cultural values into concrete bodily experience through hierarchical order, axial organization, and behavioral norms. In this sense, space is not merely the physical site in which ritual occurs, but also an important medium for maintaining social order.

With the development of religious anthropology and spatial studies, scholars have gradually expanded their understanding of ritual from specific religious activities to the broader concept of rituality. In *The Ritual Process*, Victor Turner (1991) proposed the theory of liminality, arguing that the core of ritual lies in temporarily separating individuals from their original social identities and everyday order and leading them into a transitional, non-everyday state. Catherine Bell (1992) argued that rituality is not confined to religious behavior itself; rather, it is a way of organizing bodily behavior and perceptual experience through paths, order, repetition, and symbolic arrangements. Accordingly, the focus of ritual has gradually shifted from religious content itself to behavioral processes and mechanisms of spatial perception. The paths, boundaries, centers, and orientational relationships formed in early sites can be regarded as early spatial expressions of such ritual mechanisms.

2.2 Paths, Boundaries, and Liminality in Rituality

In ritual space, paths, boundaries, and liminality together constitute an important structure for the transformation of spiritual states. In *The Rites of Passage*, Van Gennep (1960) proposed that ritual first involves a process of separation, in which individuals temporarily detach themselves from their original social order; paths and boundaries in space become important media for this process. Whether in the enclosed spaces, narrow entrances, and central areas of early sacrificial sites, or in the pilgrimage routes, porches, and vestibules of later religious architecture, the core mechanism lies in continuously changing the rhythm of behavior and the psychological state of participants through spatial progression. Boundaries in space are not merely physical separations; they are also mechanisms for differentiating spatial attributes and perceptual states. In crossing boundaries, individuals gradually detach themselves from the everyday environment and enter a spiritually oriented perceptual state.

Turner (1991) further argued that liminality is not a fixed spatial form, but a transitional state between an original state and a new state. In this process, existing social identities, behavioral logics, and everyday perceptions are temporarily suspended, and individuals enter a more open and uncertain spiritual state. Therefore, paths in ritual spaces represent behavioral processes that guide the gradual transformation of body and spirit; boundaries not only perform a separating function but also continuously reinforce transitions in spatial state and psychological passage. Thus, historical ritual spaces do not create a sense of the sacred through static form alone; rather, they construct a continuous process of spiritual perception through the combined action of paths, boundaries, and liminality.

2.3 Spatial Translation

Spatial translation refers to the process by which spatial logic, behavioral patterns, perceptual experience, and spiritual meaning within a specific cultural context are reorganized, reconstructed, and expressed under new social conditions (Massey, 2005; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). In architectural and environmental design research, translation generally emphasizes the continuity and adaptability of cultural meanings across

different historical contexts, while also involving the reproduction of behavioral mechanisms and values carried by space. Andersen (2018) argued that translation means the reactivation of original spatial experience within a new cultural context, with the continuation of perceptual relationships and spatial mechanisms at its core. Spatial translation, therefore, reflects a form of continuity from historical spatial prototypes to contemporary experiential spaces.

For ritual space, spatial translation is mainly manifested in the continuous evolution of ritual mechanisms across different historical contexts. Although early sites, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience differ significantly in function, social structure, and cultural background, they still share certain stable spatial logics.

The core objects of spatial translation discussed in this study comprise five levels: the translation of behavioral procedures, spatial paths, sensory atmosphere, spiritual perception, and cultural meaning. These different levels together constitute a continuous genealogy from early ritual space to contemporary spaces for spiritual experience. The subsequent case analyses will examine these five dimensions in order to reveal how rituality transcends differences in historical period and spatial type and gains new forms of expression in contemporary environmental design (Massey, 2005; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). As summarized in Table 1, these five dimensions provide the analytical framework used to compare historical ritual spaces with contemporary spaces for spiritual experience.

Table 1. Analytical Framework of Spatial Translation Mechanisms

Translation dimension	Manifestation in historical ritual space	Manifestation in contemporary spaces for spiritual experience	Corresponding section(s)
Translation of behavioral procedures	Sacrifice, pilgrimage, healing rituals, collective action	Meditation, retreat, healing courses, guided experience	4.1
Translation of spatial paths	Ritual paths, boundary crossing, liminal transition	Spatial progression, sequence organization, circulation guidance	4.2 / 5.1
Translation of sensory atmosphere	Changes in light and shadow, echoes, water, fire, natural landscapes, and material textures jointly constitute the ritual environment	Light control, material atmosphere, soundscape design	4.3 / 5.2
Translation of spiritual perception	Establishing connections among people, deities, ancestors, communities, and cosmic order	Self-awareness, emotional healing, inner reflection	4.4 / 5.2
Translation of cultural meaning	Myths and legends, ancestor worship, regional culture	*Genius loci*, reconstruction of regional culture, cultural identity	5.3

3. Case Selection and Analytical Framework

3.1 Logic of Case Selection

This study adopts a qualitative research method that combines a literature review, a theoretical analysis, and case studies to explore the continuity and translation of ritual spatial mechanisms across different historical stages. According to their historical attributes and cultural backgrounds, the research objects are divided into three categories. The first category consists of early ritual spaces, including the Niuheliang Hongshan Culture site, the ritual spaces of the Ndembu in Africa, and Maya sacred landscapes, all of which are spatial types centered on sacrifice, ancestor worship, and cosmological expression. The second category consists of classical religious spaces, including the healing sanctuaries of Asklepios in ancient Greece, which integrated religious ritual, healing activities, and public performance. The third category consists of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, including modern religious architecture, retreat spaces, healing spaces, and wellness resort environments. Representative examples include the religious spatial designs of Sigurd Lewerentz and the Doshi Retreat at the Vitra Campus in Germany.

The case selection in this study focuses on whether a case contains clear ritual procedures, spatial progression, liminal transition mechanisms, sensory atmosphere construction, and behavioral guidance. The research focuses on the continuity of ritual spatial mechanisms in different historical contexts. The core of the comparison lies in analyzing how these cases jointly construct spiritual experience through behavioral organization, spatial order, environmental atmosphere, and perceptual experience. The contemporary cases mainly focus on non-religious spaces with attributes of spiritual experience. Through comparison between ancient and contemporary cases, the study demonstrates the tendency of ritual translation to move from object worship toward the bodily and mental perceptual experience of the human self, thereby presenting the reconstruction of ritual spatial mechanisms in contemporary contexts.

3.2 Comparative Analytical Dimensions

Based on ritual theory, spatial phenomenology, and studies of architectural atmosphere, this study establishes five principal analytical dimensions: ritual behavior, spatial paths, sensory atmosphere, spiritual perception, and cultural meaning. These dimensions are used to interpret cases and generalize mechanisms across ritual spaces from different historical stages.

First, ritual behavior focuses on how space constructs non-everyday experience through bodily action, repetitive order, and collective participation, thereby enabling individuals gradually to detach themselves from everyday life. Second, spatial paths analyze how paths, boundaries, and liminality guide psychological and perceptual changes through spatial progression and state transition. Third, sensory atmosphere examines how light, sound, temperature, scale, and other factors jointly participate in the construction of spiritual experience. Finally, the dimension of spiritual perception focuses on how rituality establishes connections between people and the natural environment or the inner self through the organization of space and behavior.

Through these analytical dimensions, this study places early ritual spaces, classical religious spaces, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience within the same research framework, explores the translation of ritual spatial mechanisms in different contexts, and reveals their continuing expression in contemporary spaces for spiritual experience.

4. Historical Formation of Ritual Spatial Translation Mechanisms

4.1 Translation of Behavioral Procedures: The Generation of Non-Everyday Experience

The non-everyday experience generated by rituality represents a critical mechanism through which historical ritual spaces facilitate spiritual perception. In *The Ritual Process*, Victor Turner (1991) argued that ritual is essentially a process of constructing a liminal state, in which participants temporarily detach themselves from their original social identities and everyday order and enter a transitional state between reality and non-reality. The sacrificial paths, central areas, and enclosing boundaries of early sacrificial sites, religious sanctuaries, and ritual fields were important media for this transformation of the state. Altars, high places, and central spaces jointly formed ritual environments distinct from ordinary settlements, while spatial progression and central order intensified participants' spiritual engagement. Ritual behavior therefore often has a clear rhythm, repetition, and processual quality, continuously guiding perception through behavioral processes and spatial order.

In anthropological research, this mechanism of constructing spiritual experience through behavioral organization is also widely observed. For example, in the *Ilembi* healing ritual in Africa, participants collectively enter the forest under the guidance of a ritual specialist to gather medicinal materials. The whole process emphasizes collective participation, shared movement, and sustained bodily involvement. Its significance lies

not in the gathering of herbs itself, but in establishing spiritual connections among people, space, and community through behavioral processes, enabling participants to enter a special state of cohesion and immersion.

The healing rituals in the sanctuaries of Asklepios during the ancient Greek and Roman periods further intensified the performative and perceptual dimensions of ritual behavior. Prior research shows that from the late classical period to the Roman imperial period, rituals in Asklepian temples gradually developed into comprehensive forms of spiritual experience that integrated music, poetry, drama, and public performance (Melfi, 2010). At sanctuaries such as Pergamon and Epidauros, patients recounted and even enacted their healing experiences on the sacred stage (*hieron bema*). Some hymns also used rhythmic changes to imitate patients' gait and bodily states, thereby strengthening participants' bodily perception of the process from illness to healing during singing and viewing. This experience was no longer merely a passive acceptance of miracles, but an immersive experience formed through bodily behavior, rhythmic order, and spatial performance.

As ritual studies developed, scholars gradually recognized that ritual is not simply obedience to established power structures. Bell (1992) argued that ritual is not a simple reproduction of an existing order; rather, it continuously generates, reinforces, and may even challenge that order in the process of performance. By understanding ritual logic and actively entering spatial order and behavioral rules, participants gradually gain a sense of mastery over the ritual system. Accordingly, the non-everyday quality of ritual means not only a temporary departure from reality, but also a process through which individuals come to recognize their relationship with themselves and the group.

This feature is equally evident in rituals of identity and gender. In his study of Ndembu rituals, Turner (1991) found that even in a matrilineal society, certain important rituals still strengthened relationships and identity among male relatives through symbolic behavior. In the *Vuyang'a* cult of armed hunters, symbols related to hunting and masculinity were intensively emphasized, and participants were required temporarily to enter a role state distinct from their everyday identities. These findings demonstrate that ritual often strengthens individual spiritual involvement and communal identity by reorganizing bodily behavior and identity states. As shown in Figure 1, the entrance courtyard of the Asklepieion at Pergamon illustrates how enclosure, approach, and spatial sequencing contribute to ritual transition.



Figure 1. Entrance Courtyard of the Asklepieion at Pergamon
Note. Reproduced from Entrance Courtyard, *Pergamon Asklepieion, Aeolis, Turkey* [Photograph], by Carole Raddato, 2023, Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved May 28, 2026, from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Entrance_Courtyard,_Pergamon_Asklepieion,_Aeolis,_Turkey_-_53324528845.jpg. Copyright 2023 by Carole Raddato. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

It can therefore be seen that spiritual experience in historical ritual spaces essentially derives from the non-everyday experience jointly constituted by behavioral order, spatial transformation, and bodily participation. The continuity of this mode of behavioral organization has also become an important basis for constructing spiritual experience in contemporary healing and retreat spaces.

4.2 Translation of Spatial Paths and Liminality: Boundaries, Progression, and Centrality

The translation of spatial paths and liminality is a key mechanism through which ritual space extends from historical contexts to contemporary experiential spaces. In contrast to ordinary circulation routes, ritual paths do not aim at reaching a destination by the shortest route. Instead, through a sequence of entering, pausing, turning, crossing boundaries, and arriving at a center, they enable the body gradually to complete a transformation of psychological state during movement. The separation–transition–incorporation described by Van Gennep (1960) is often spatially manifested as contracted entrances, boundary crossings, delayed paths, and central convergence. Turner's (1991) concept of liminality is similarly perceived in the transitional process between inside and outside, before and after, everyday and non-everyday. In early ritual sites and religious sanctuaries, paths usually form order together with topography, orientation, enclosure, and central space. For example, altars, high places, porches, colonnades, forecourts, and cave entrances do not function separately; rather, through continuous spatial progression, they change people's speed, sightlines, and bodily postures. When crossing boundaries, people do not merely change position; they continually detach themselves from everyday environments, accept the guidance of spatial order, and enter a spiritually oriented perceptual state.

Thus, spatial paths and liminality are not formal factors subordinate to ritual behavior, but structural media that connect behavioral procedures, bodily perception, and spiritual meaning.

4.3 Translation of Sensory Atmosphere: Multisensory Environments and Spiritual Experience

From the perspective of architecture, the spiritual experience of ritual space is established through the combined action of the overall sensory environment. Light, sound, materials, smell, temperature, scale, and natural terrain all participate in the construction of spiritual perception during ritual processes. In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Pallasmaa (2012) argued that spatial experience is essentially holistic bodily perception rather than spatial cognition based solely on vision. Zumthor (2006) similarly argued that architectural atmosphere can directly affect human emotion and spiritual state through light, material, sound, and temperature (Pallasmaa, 2012; Zumthor, 2006). For example, caves, high places, enclosed landscapes, water sources, and natural environments in early sites were all selected or created in relation to ritual activities and became important media for shaping spiritual experience.

Ritual spaces often strengthen the difference between people and everyday space through environmental atmosphere. The sense of compression produced by narrow spaces, the silence formed by enclosed environments, the perception of time produced by changing natural light, and the sensory stimulation brought by flames, smoke, and echoes all enable individuals gradually to enter a more focused and immersive spiritual state. Many cave spaces in early sites themselves possess darkness, humidity, low temperature, and intensified echoes; such environments can significantly weaken everyday perception and heighten experiences of the unknown and the mysterious. The alienation of spatial scale and material objects is also an important way in which ritual spaces intensify spiritual experience. At the Niuheliang Hongshan Culture site, the large clay sculptures excavated from the Goddess Temple clearly exceed the scale of the human body, with

some volumes reaching more than three times human size; this difference in scale directly intensifies the perception of non-everydayness. The three-ring stone altar discovered at Locality II, with its concentric circular structure, red andesite boundary markers, and height differences, jointly constitutes a ritual environment with strong order and centrality. Related studies suggest that its spatial structure may be associated with the early cosmological concept of a round heaven and square earth (Li, 2024; Qiu, 2018; Zhang, 2018). To some extent, the liminal state proposed by Turner (1991) is gradually established within such perceptual environments.

At the same time, natural factors in early ritual spaces often carry clear symbolic and cosmological meanings. In the healing rituals of Ndembu, for example, the diviner deliberately located the ritual site near a cave or animal burrow; the blocked entrance symbolized the closure of female fertility by ancestral spirits, while the opening of the entrance signified the restoration of life force, as Turner (1991) documented. This indicates that the spatial environment itself has already been endowed with spiritual meaning, such as cultural symbolism and nature worship. Similarly, the Mesoamerican Maya concept of a quadripartite universe developed a system of sacred geography through architectural orientation, plaza layout, altars, caves, and water sources, as Reese-Taylor (2012) demonstrated. Sacred space was made concrete through color, orientation, terrain, and architectural hierarchy, thereby transforming cosmic order into a spatial order that could be bodily experienced.

It can therefore be seen that ritual spaces often possess multidimensional perceptual mechanisms that influence the senses through sound, light, scale, materials, natural terrain, and cultural symbolism.

4.4 Translation of Spiritual Perception: From Object Worship to Self-Perception

With the gradual weakening of traditional religious functions in modern society, many experiential environments have departed from sacrificial and theological contexts, yet they can still generate strong spiritual perception through path organization, environmental atmosphere, and behavioral guidance. This indicates that the modern transformation of rituality is a continuation and translation from religious worship toward mechanisms of spiritual perception, shifting our scholarly focus to how ritual space organizes people's own perceptual experience.

This shift is evident in modern religious architecture. Campo-Ruiz (2015) argued that after the twentieth century, religious spaces began to weaken traditional religious imagery and symbolic narratives, placing greater emphasis on how space itself influences people's spiritual states through light, materials, scale, and atmosphere. In his church designs, Lewerentz greatly reduced religious decorative elements and instead used dim light, heavy materials, and a strong sense of silence to create a more inward, contemplative experience. This sense of the sacred no longer derives primarily from religious symbols, but rather from the continuous guidance of human bodily perception and psychological state by space.

In fact, rituals in many early societies were not strictly forms of divine worship; rather, they were closer to spiritual behaviors centered on life, the body, and social relations. In his study of the Ndembu Isoma ritual, Turner (1991) noted that the Ndembu term *chidika*, meaning ritual, also carries the meanings of special agreement and obligation. Its core does not lie in praying to a supreme deity, but in reestablishing relationships among people, ancestors, the group, and the natural order (Turner, 1991). In the Isoma ritual, the recipient must undergo a stage akin to regrowth, and her husband builds a small circular grass hut (*nkunka*) for her seclusion. The same spatial form is also used in the puberty rites of adolescent girls. Turner (1991) argued that the focus of such rituals lies in reorganizing a person's life state and social relationships through the combination of body, space, and symbolic behavior.

Therefore, from historical ritual spaces to contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, the continuity of rituality does not depend entirely on the preservation of

specific religious symbols or objects of worship. Instead, it is manifested in the ongoing translation of mechanisms such as behavioral order, spatial organization, and perceptual environment across different cultural contexts. Its core lies in guiding individuals, through the coordination of space and behavior, to complete the transformation from an everyday state to a state of spiritual experience and to reestablish perception of their own life state. As shown in Figure 2, Lewerentz's church interiors translate rituality through subdued light, heavy materiality, and an inward spatial atmosphere rather than through dense symbolic decoration.



Figure 2. Interior spatial atmosphere in Sigurd Lewerentz's church architecture.
Note. Reproduced from "Sigurd Lewerentz," by Architecture Lab, n.d. Retrieved May 29, 2026, from https://www.architecturelab.net/architect/famous/sigurd-lewerentz/.

5. Contemporary Translation of Rituality in Spaces for Spiritual Experience

5.1 Contemporary Continuity of Ritual Behavior and Spatial Paths

For the design of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, the continuity of rituality remains closely related to spatial order, path organization, and behavioral procedures. The religious spaces of Sigurd Lewerentz reflect a transformation in the construction of spiritual experience: from modes of expression dependent on religious imagery and symbolic narratives toward the shaping of spirituality through spatial experience, bodily perception, and environmental atmosphere. He translated spatial meaning into an experiential logic that is gradually generated through behavioral processes (Campo-Ruiz, 2015). This method essentially continues the processual characteristics of early ritual space, in which spatial meaning depends on behavior rather than static form.

In contemporary secular settings, this ritual order is further experientialized and proceduralized. The Doshi Retreat at the Vitra Campus in Germany serves as a typical case of ritual translation in contemporary spaces for spiritual experience. Its sense of sacredness does not derive from religious authority or commemorative meaning but rather from the transformation of bodily action into an inward spiritual experience through ritualized spatial mechanisms. At the level of ritual behavior, the retreat weakens the functional mode of entry typical of conventional architecture and instead makes walking itself the core of the experience. Users do not arrive directly at a room; instead, through slow movement, pausing, turning, and descending, they gradually detach themselves from the everyday order of the external campus. This entry process, established by bodily participation, indicates that the building is no longer simply an object to be viewed, but a behavioral procedure that must be experienced. In terms of

spatial paths, the plan and circulation diagrams show that the project organizes space through winding and interwoven flows, forming a progressive relationship by curving, encircling, and gradually sinking. Its plan utilizes a double-spiral form of path organization, which suggests a transitional process from the external world to an inner spiritual space. The nonlinearity of the path obscures the directness of destination, prompting users to continuously adjust direction, speed, and bodily perception during movement, and establishing a spatial logic similar to that of early ritual space: crossing boundaries, entering liminality, and arriving at a center. The central contemplative space ultimately reached becomes the spiritual condensation point of the entire ritual path. The overall plan and spatial sequence are shown in Figure 3, while Figure 4 illustrates the sunken path and bodily progression through the retreat.

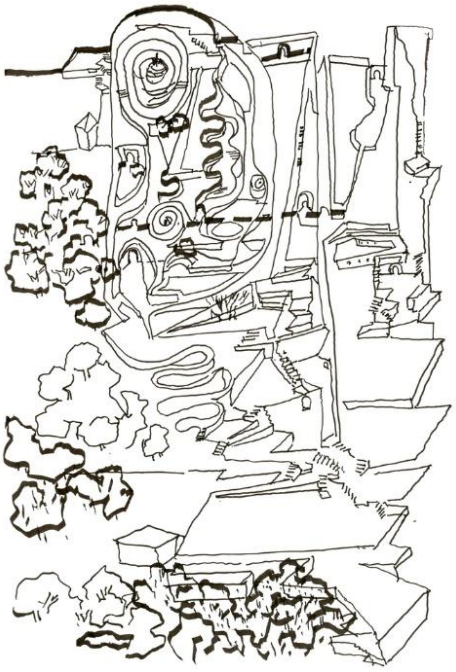


Figure 3. Plan and Spatial Sequence of Doshi Retreat at Vitra Campus
Note. Adapted from "Doshi Retreat / Balkrishna Doshi + Khushnu Panthaki Hoof + Sonke Hoof," by ArchDaily, 2025. Retrieved May 29, 2026, from https://www.archdaily.com/1035656/doshi-retreat-vitra-campus-balkrishna-doshi-plus-khushnu-panthaki-hoof-and-sonke-hoof. Copyright 2025 by ArchDaily.



Figure 4. Doshi Retreat, Vitra Campus: Spatial Path and Sunken Ritual Sequence
Note. Reproduced from "Doshi Retreat / Balkrishna Doshi + Khushnu Panthaki Hoof + Sonke Hoof," by ArchDaily, 2025. Retrieved May 29, 2026, from https://www.archdaily.com/1035656/doshi-retreat-vitra-campus-balkrishna-doshi-plus-khushnu-panthaki-hoof-and-sonke-hoof. Copyright 2025 by ArchDaily.

At the Doshi Retreat, the designers integrated light, sound, materials, and terrain to foster behavioral and emotional changes. Steel encloses continuously curving walls; the roughness of the material surface, the shifting light on curved surfaces, and the compressed scale between ground and wall continually intensify visual and tactile perception. At the same time, the contrast between sound and silence is introduced into the space. Bells, echoes, and spatial resonance make the building a place that can be listened to. Sound serves as a primary medium for participating in spatial organization; together with curving paths, sunken terrain, and enclosed interfaces, it shifts attention from the external landscape toward the interior of the body. The project completes ritualized behavioral guidance within the context of self-retreat. Through walking, listening, staying, and gazing, the environment guides individuals into states of contemplation, slowing down, and self-awareness. The rituality of the Doshi Retreat derives from the organization of behavior by spatial paths, the regulation of the body by a multisensory environment, and the concentration of spiritual state by a central space. This design demonstrates how the path progression, liminal transition, and sensory awakening of early ritual spaces are translated into a contemporary retreat experience.

5.2 Contemporary Reconstruction of Sensory Atmosphere and Spiritual Perception

In contemporary spatial design, the translation of rituality has gradually shifted from the replication of form to the reconstruction of atmosphere; that is, spiritual experience is rebuilt through environmental conditions rather than through symbolic systems. Campo-Ruiz (2015) noted that Sigurd Lewerentz created an atmosphere of silence, slowness, and introspection through strategies such as black brick, low illumination, compressed scale, and heavy materials. This atmospheric design shapes spiritual experience through the combined effects of overall environmental organization, material expression, and physical perception, thereby establishing ritual spatial characteristics that generate a sense of the sacred within the context of contemporary minimalist design.

This design logic also extends to the construction of contemporary spaces for spiritual experience. Such spaces no longer reproduce the historical forms of sites or religious architecture; instead, they extract their *genius loci* and perceptual mechanisms, reconstructing the spiritual relationship between people and space through modern architectural language. Spatial phenomenology and research on architectural atmosphere both indicate that, through dark passages, screened light, continuous paths, and the organization of central spaces, users can gradually transition from the external environment into a quieter and more introspective perceptual state (Pallasmaa, 2012; Zumthor, 2006). On this basis, contemporary wellness and healing spaces further translate such perception into environmental mechanisms that can be experienced procedurally. For example, The Dukuh Retreat Bali does not directly reproduce religious architectural forms, but constructs an overall atmosphere of spiritual connection through natural landscapes, enclosed scale, and a slow rhythm of life. Studies have pointed out that contemporary healing tourism in Bali is essentially a translation of traditional ritual culture in a modern context, and that its core still relies on local ritual logic and atmosphere construction (Bains, 2021; Huang & Xu, 2017; Zhou, 2017). Fivelements Retreat Bali combines bamboo, wood, water, and natural paths, while also setting up semi-open nodes such as Sacred Space and fire altars, enabling natural sounds and ritual elements to act together on the perceptual system and form an immersive spiritual field. Spiritual experience in such spaces is, therefore, more often activated and strengthened through spatial organization, natural media, and perceptual rhythm. In addition, silence as an atmospheric strategy has also been systematically constructed in contemporary design. Related studies have noted that silence in space is not merely the absence of sound, but a perceptual state jointly generated by materials, acoustic insulation, and environmental control (Pallasmaa, 2012; Zumthor, 2006). In the example of the Silent Room, flowing water, enclosed interfaces, and acoustic regulation shield individuals from

external stimuli and gradually guide them into a state of introspection. This mechanism is structurally similar to cave spaces, enclosed landscapes, and sacrificial fields in prehistoric sites. In essence, both strengthen the generation of spiritual experience by compressing everyday perception through the environment.

5.3 Translation of Cultural Meaning: From Traditional Ritual to Contemporary Culture

From the perspective of cultural translation, the continuity of rituality in contemporary society represents an adaptive transformation under new social structures and cultural needs (Min & Zhang, 2025; Mou & Xu, 2025). In spaces for spiritual experience based on historical culture and heritage sites, the critical inheritance and continuation of local culture are the key to the construction of ritual space.

Taking immersive experiential spaces in Bali as a case study, their deeper logic is closely related to Bali's long-standing local ritual culture, cosmology, and understanding of the relationship between people and nature. Michele Stephen (2002) argued that Balinese traditional ritual consistently emphasizes the idea of returning to its original form, whereby individuals restore balance between themselves and the cosmic order through ritual behavior. This concept encompasses the dynamic relationships among the body, nature, ancestors, and the environment. In the spatial organization of the Fivelements Retreat in Bali, the core concept of the nature-body-spirit relationship in Balinese local culture is extracted and translated into the perceptual mechanisms of a contemporary healing space. Bamboo structures, waterways, semi-open spaces, and slowly progressing circulation internally correspond to the natural paths, purification behaviors, and settlement spatial structures of traditional Balinese rituals. The sounds of water and wind, the smell of plants, and the low-light environment jointly heighten the bodily perception of the environment, enabling users to enter a more inward spiritual state. This experiential mechanism exhibits clear continuity with traditional Balinese rituals, which facilitate spiritual purification and state transformation through natural media. Although the designated Sacred Space and fire-healing area at the Fivelements Retreat in Bali incorporate cultural imagery from Balinese fire rituals and purification rituals, their core purpose has shifted toward emotional healing, meditative experience, and physical and mental relaxation for modern people. A similar case is Night Fire Yoga at the Four Seasons Resort Bali, which draws inspiration from Balinese-Hindu fire rituals and translates them into the experiential structure of a bedtime ritual. The cultural symbolic meaning of fire is redesigned as a medium for guiding emotional regulation and other forms of spiritual perception. Contemporary spaces for spiritual experience are therefore not simple transfers of traditional ritual culture, but modern refinements of its spatial order, perceptual modes, and cultural meanings. Traditional ritual conceptions of nature, cosmology, and bodily experience gain new forms of expression in new social contexts and continue to participate in contemporary spiritual life through spatial experience. Contemporary spaces for spiritual experience thus embody the continuous translation of local cultural spirit from historical ritual sites to modern experiential environments. As shown in Figure 5, the healing landscape of Fivelements Retreat Bali integrates natural materials, water, vegetation, and semi-open ritual nodes to construct a multisensory spiritual atmosphere.



Figure 5. Fivelements Retreat Bali: Healing Landscape
Note. Reproduced from Fivelements Retreat Bali: Healing & Wellness Sanctuary, by Fivelements Retreat Bali, n.d. Retrieved May 29, 2026, from https://fivelementsbali.com/.

6. Conclusion

This study examines the continuous relationships among historical ritual spaces, religious sanctuaries, and contemporary spaces for spiritual experience, focusing on the core issue of the spatial translation of rituality. The findings show that the contemporary value of rituality is not primarily reflected in the reproduction of historical forms, but rather in the continuous reorganization of mechanisms such as behavioral procedures, spatial paths, liminality, sensory atmosphere, spiritual perception, and cultural meaning within new contexts. Historical ritual spaces construct non-everyday experiences through sacrifice, pilgrimage, healing rituals, and collective action; religious sanctuaries further organize path progression, boundary crossing, and central arrival into a process of spiritual transformation; contemporary retreat, healing, and immersive experiential spaces translate these mechanisms into spatial strategies such as meditation courses, slow walking, atmosphere construction, bodily awareness, and emotional regulation.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in combining ritual theory, spatial phenomenology, and case studies to construct a five-dimensional analytical framework for understanding the contemporary translation of ritual spatial mechanisms. This framework demonstrates that rituality is not a fixed religious image or symbolic form, but a spatial mechanism that generates spiritual experience through the combined action of behavior, paths, the senses, and cultural meaning. Based on the case studies, this study further proposes three principles of translation. First, the principle of processuality corresponds to the dimensions of behavioral procedures and spatial paths, emphasizing that spatial meaning is generated through entering, walking, pausing, and arriving. Second, the principle of perception corresponds to the dimensions of sensory atmosphere and spiritual perception, emphasizing the joint shaping of spiritual states by light, sound, materials, scale, and bodily experience. Third, the principle of cultural translation corresponds to the dimension of cultural meaning, emphasizing that the spirit of traditional ritual should be reinterpreted in contemporary contexts rather than simply copied.

At the practical level, this study has reference value for cultural heritage renewal, healing-space design, and the creation of spaces for spiritual experience. For the revitalization of cultural heritage sites, designers should analyze their original path organization, liminal relationships, central order, perceptual rhythms, and *genius loci*, and these elements should be transformed into spatial narratives that are understandable and experiential in contemporary contexts (Han & Fan, 2020). For the design of healing spaces, retreat spaces, and wellness environments, sequential paths, low-stimulation atmospheres, multisensory environments, nodes for pausing, and ritualized behavioral procedures can help users move from everyday rhythms into more focused, slower, and

more introspective spiritual states. In this manner, the spatial translation of rituality can become an important design method connecting historical cultural resources with contemporary spiritual needs.

This study still relies primarily on qualitative interpretation and case studies, which present certain limitations in empirically verifying mechanisms of spatial experience. Future research should integrate user interviews, behavioral observations, space syntax analysis, environmental psychology experiments, immersive-experience testing, or physiological perception data such as heart rate, electrodermal activity, and electroencephalography to conduct more detailed empirical verification of path experience, sensory atmosphere, and spiritual perception in ritual space. Researchers should also expand the framework to include more regional and cultural cases to facilitate comparative analyses of ritual spatial translation across cultural contexts, thereby strengthening the explanatory power and cross-cultural applicability of the framework.

Funding: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

AI Use Disclosure Statement: During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used ChatGPT 5.5 for language refinement and literature organization. The author(s) reviewed, revised, and take full responsibility for all content.

Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) declare no conflicts of interest.

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