

Visual literacy in RE teaching and learning

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Case study 1

Church of the Light; RESEARCH: Subject

Show the pupils different pictures of the church. Can they recognise how the different views fit together? Using the pictures can the pupils instruct the teacher to draw a floor plan of the buildings, or draw their own plans individually or in small groups. What are the different areas of the building used for?

A deeper journey of exploration

The second and third parts of the RESEARCH stages could be explored by pupils or referred to by teachers to make deeper investigations and follow up lines of enquiry. This will depend on the age group and skill level of the pupils.

Sample responses from applying the remaining stages of the 3 R's toolkit to this case study are provided as a reference and to demonstrate the value of developing the investigation with pupils. Teachers can select distinct sections, related key questions and activities to suit their teaching and learning objectives.



B RESEARCH: 2. **Subject**

Content: The building communicates Christian theology and worship. The way the architect has incorporated



dramatic Christian symbolism in the building through the design and structure and its interaction with the natural environment is powerful. The building is engaging because of the simplicity, beauty and dramatic symbolism.

Message: The message of the Church of the light is one of 'hope' because it is underlining the Christian message about Jesus being the 'light' in a dark world. This idea is theatrically communicated in the way the inside of the building represents darkness (wrong) in the world, with only the brilliant light of the cross illuminating it bringing light and hope.

Title: 'The Church of the light' as a title adds meaning in that it underlines the fact that the building is about spiritual light, it is not simply a celebration of neutral natural light. For the worshipping Christians, for

whom it was designed and built, it is a physical and symbolic testimony to Jesus as the Light of the World. It is also didactic, in that it is a visual form of John 1.1-6 and John 8.12.

Theme: The theme of celebrating and communicating about the nature of the light of Christ is incorporated in the title – the church of the light and expressed powerfully in the conception of the building.

Type/Genre: The style of this building is unusual but it is in keeping with traditional architecture in Japan in its simple style, arrangements of shapes and space.

B. RESEARCH: 2. Context

When? The church was designed and built in 1989

Where? Ibaraki, Japan, a residential neighbourhood 25 kilometres north-northeast of Osaka.

Who? The architect is Tadao Ando

Histories: This style of church forms part of a tradition in contemporary church building in Japan, which takes the qualities of Japanese Zen Buddhist architecture but fuses it with Christian symbolism.

The Present: Compare this building with styles of church buildings past and present, western and non-western.