



SACRED SPACES LARGE AND SMALL HAGIA SOPHIA & PANAGIA ISODION

Photographs by A. Cemal Ekin

November 5 - December 3 2014

Central Congregational Church • 296 Angell St. Providence, RI



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1 Center of the dome; 2 Looking up the dome; 3 The dome with its 40 windows; 4 Seraphim on the pendentive; 5 Looking from the dome to the entrance; 6 Windows and dome ribs; 7 Top of the arched wall of the window; 8 The gold mosaics in the window walls.



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1 Chased silver cover on painted icon; 2 Iconostasis; 3 Iconostasis; 4 Half dome of the altar with painting; 5 Looking at the ceiling from the second floor; 6 Looking towards the altar from the second floor; 7 Looking towards the rear on the first floor; 8 Looking up to the ceiling in front of the iconostasis.



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Sacred Spaces Large And Small Hagia Sophia & Panagia Isodion

I had the privilege of having two special visits to the largest and one of the smallest churches in Istanbul. Built more than a millennium apart, the two churches gave me an opportunity to experience the truly magnificent space and works in *Hagia Sophia*, and the jewel-like presence of *Panagia Isodion*. My interest in these spaces was, and still remains, photographic. That said, it was impossible to escape the extraordinary feeling when I touched the gold mosaics inside the window wells of the Great Church. It was like shaking hands with the artisans who laid them there over 1,400 years ago. The small but intricately ornate *Panagia Isodion* was mesmerising with its cozy feeling and the overwhelming details all around.

These photographs represent my choices of frames, selected from an infinite number available; the view from the vantage point I had the privilege of attaining; the detail I chose to include in my photographs. One of the photographs in the *Hagia Sophia* collection, looking towards the entrance from its great dome, invariably elicits questions about the blue floor noticeably strong on the second floor. “How did you get that area to be blue?” is the typical question, often followed by “why?” Truth be told, that is the natural color of the blue sky reflecting on white marble on the floor after white balancing for the interior color. It appears striking because most people have not seen it from the vantage point of the great dome to experience the blue sky bouncing off the floor. Even then, our eyes would correct that to remain “white marble”. Such is the nature of photography.

Some of the photographs in the *Panagia Isodion* collection look like cutouts with non rectangular shapes. In the small space of the church I took quite a few photographs with a rectangular format fish-eye lens which produced extreme distortions. As I corrected the distortions I noticed the organic shapes that were emerging as a result of the extreme corrections. Instead of cropping the rectangular center area I chose to keep the organic forms.

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My only addition to that was to make sure that they were symmetrical by eliminating the parts that disturbed the symmetry. The shapes that emerged have to do with the angle of view, distance from the objects, and whether I decided to correct vertical or horizontal distortions or both. There is one photograph in the collection that is fully corrected which is hard to distinguish from photographs taken with a rectilinear lens with no distortion.

ArtStor.org, the art and art history research center, acquired 50 photographs from my Hagia Sophia collection, catalogued, and made them available to researchers. I am pleased to have provided unique views of the Great Church to the scholars. Hagia Sophia is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and rightly so. Recently restored and cleaned, interior space of Panagia Isodion gleams with gold paint and *riza* (or revetment, chased silver icon covers), has a mesmerising quality.

Print information

All the photographs are printed on aluminum using dye sublimation process. It is an exacting process that takes several steps and much time, but the results have a feeling of depth unlike other substrates. The resulting print has the image “in” the substrate rather than “on” it. The surface is resistant to image damage and can be wiped with a damp cloth if needed. Like other substrates and art work, it is best to avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight. The prints are ready to hang using an integral aluminum frame on the back and are quite light weight.

Purchase information

These open edition prints are priced at \$500 each. Should you wish to purchase any please contact me. The prints on exhibit will be available for pickup after the closing. If a photograph you would like to purchase is sold you may place an order with payment.

About The Photographer

I retired from Providence College as Professor Emeritus of Marketing in 2012 after 36 years of service there. Teaching has been a terrific experience for me and has influenced how I share what I know about photography. I have been involved in photography for over 60 years, but switching to digital photography around mid 1990s has proved to be a very fertile ground for me. I have very eclectic interests in photography from salt and pepper shakers to architecture, from landscapes to flowers, from people to macro photography. I photograph my experiences, I photograph life and what grabs my attention. Recently a collection of dried orchid blossoms gave birth to a ballet *Orchis*. It was performed first in 2013 and then again in 2014 featuring my photographs as an integral part of the performance. I have had nine solo exhibits in three different states, issued limited and open edition folios, and my photographs are in public and private collections in the US and abroad. In 2014 I was honored with the title of Master Member (MNEC) by the New England Camera Clubs Council. More information on my Web site.

