

UPON THIS ROCK: ARCHITECTURAL, MATERIAL, AND VISUAL HISTORIES OF TWO
BLACK PROTESTANT CHURCHES, 1881-1969

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dissertation comparatively analyzes the architectural and visual histories of two black churches as examples of the material contribution of African Americans to the nation's built environment. As cultural repositories, Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) (1881-1886), Washington, D.C., and the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1, Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (1925/1957), Detroit, MI, are two sites that represent distinct forms of Black Nationalism. The history of Metropolitan AME uncovers aspects of late nineteenth century Classical Black Nationalism cultural practice. The Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 reflects the revisionist agenda of the Black Cultural Nationalist Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The objective of this study is to expand through a cultural lens the growing body of scholarship that seeks to excavate under-recognized African-American visual and architectural traditions.

This study contrasts different modes of claiming space for cultural affirmation: construction and real estate acquisition. Chapter one offers a rationale for the artifactual interrogation of African American churches and outlines the interdisciplinary methodologies employed in the case studies. In chapter two, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's architectural history presents an instance of an African American community using popular architectural and artistic styles in an associative manner to articulate racial advancement. Chapter three documents the aesthetic legacy of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church by considering the sanctuary's stained glass window program, mural commissions executed by two rarely-discussed African American artists, donated art objects and the circulation of images of the religious site.

Chapter four explores the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1's 1957 purchase of a 1925 Colonial Revival ecclesiastical structure. This assessment contextualizes the lived

interventions of a radical congregation to understand how shifts in material and visual patterns expressed cultural identity. Chapter five critically explores the aesthetic history of the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 that begins with the *Black Madonna and Child* (1967) chancel mural by Glanton V. Dowdell. As the conclusion indicates, African American churches contain visible but hidden histories that expand African American art by introducing new iconographic considerations and revealing new art communities.