Project Report

[Outline]

- Project name : Saemoonan Church

- Architect in Record: SEOINN DESIGN GROUP)

- Principal architect : Dongkyu Choi (SEOINN DESIGN GROUP), Eunseok Lee (Kyunghee Univ.)

- Design Team: Alex Yoocheol Choi, Seungyong Jeong, Daeksuk Kang

- Location : 97, Saemunan-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

- Program : Religious facility

- Site area : 4,219.2㎡

- Building area : 2,452.9㎡

- Gross floor area : 31,909.57㎡

- Building scope : B6, 13F

- Height : 67. 93m (79.93m including bell tower)

- Building to land ratio : 58.14%

- Floor area ratio : 379.91%

- Completion : 2019

- Construction : CJ Engineering & Construction Co., Ltd.

- Interior design : Kukbo

- Lighting design : Eon Design

- Photographer : Juneyoung Lim

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[Architect Profile]

Architect Dongkyu Choi

After graduating from Hanyang University in Architectural Engineering, he practiced as an architect in JINA Architectural Office and Space Group. He founded Seoinn Design Group in 1978. He was awarded numerous prizes including the 1998 Gyeonggi-do Architecture Culture Award Grand Prize, the 2001 Gyeonggi-do Architecture Culture Award Silver Prize, the 2005 Korean Architecture Award Special Prize, and the 2007 Seoul Architectural Work Award Encouragement Award.

He served as an adjunct professor at several universities including Seoul National University as well as Konkuk University, Hongik University, and Hanyang University, and he served on the award committee of the Korean Architecture Awards. He designed numerous churches, residential and commercial spaces. His representative works include The Sarang Community Church, Shinchon Church, Jesus Hope Church, Hansomang Church, Mosegol Renew Valley, Manrihyun Church, Pyeongchang-dong Housing.

Professor Eunseok Lee

After graduating in Architectural Engineering from Hongik University and from University of Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne, he obtained a Ph. D. in Art History. He is a certified architect of France who graduated from the National School of Architecture, Paris-Belleville.

He is currently an architecture professor at Kyunghee University. Since establishing Atelier KOMA in 1996, he has carried out various projects including numerous churches such as the Bujeon Global Vision Center, Heavenly Gem Church, and Pomo Church, cultural facilities such as Son Yang-Won Memorial Museum and TapJung Cafe, residential facilities such as Lyann House, the Sejong Housing Complex, educational facilities such as the Chongshin University Lecture building and Dream School and commercial facilities such as the Sinsa Blue Stone, and the Cheongdam Entra Hotel. He is the author of Beautiful Church Architecture, Unfinished Modernity and OPEN, BGVC.

He was awarded various awards including numerous Korean Institute of Architects awards, as well as Seoul City (Excellence Prize), Busan City (Gold Prize), Daegu City (Silver Prize), Gyeonggi Province (Gold Prize) Architecture Awards, an Architecture Design Institute of Korea award (Grand Prize) and an Architectural Institute of Korea (Best Architecture).

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Saemoonan Church as a public place of Loving Neighbors

Established as the first Korean protestant church, Saemoonan Church constructed a new church on Sinmunno, Gwanghwamun, celebrating its 132nd anniversary. The shape resembles a mother's arms stretched out toward the sky. At the time of the design competition in 2010, the Korean Christian community had put functionalism as a top priority strategy for church construction, and many large churches were showing off their existence on a large scale. However, Saemoonan Church proposed four distinct church construction themes as basic guidelines; ① the historicity as the mother church of Korean protestant churches, ② the symbolism of doors open to heaven ③ the spatiality of expressing Christ as light, and ④ presenting a water space as a meaning of baptism and harmony. Hence, we adapted the themes with Loving God and Loving Neighbors and included them in the design. Loving God was mainly portrayed through the use and symbolism of the space, and the aspects of Loving Neighbors were expressed with the publicness through the external appearance and layout effect of the building that are revealed in the city center.

Shedding the decorations of the spire and the gothic image, which have dominated the archetype of Christian church construction for two thousand years, seems to be the main value contemporary church construction has faced. Therefore, in the construction of Saemoonan Church, the conventional spire was replaced by a soft curved effect that is open to the sky, and the excessive ornaments were converted into simple and abstract expressions. In addition, rather than focusing on showing the authority of the church, the love and mercy of God were metaphorically expressed with the curve of the soft front. Furthermore, instead of creating a solemn spatial atmosphere with the common long corridor form, a new periodic worship space was proposed with a fan-shaped chapel plane that encourages the dynamic participation between believers.

The public construction intention of Loving Neighbors is clearly visible throughout the architecture of Saemoonan Church, and this seems to be an architectural assignment that 21st century churches must deeply consider. In other words, a public nature and a space management program that supports the daily lives and comfort of citizens must exist in the church, rather than mass producing church architectures in a symbolic and reified one-dimensional form as a method of enlightenment for missionary work. The yard of Saemunan-ro created by the hollow front and bent arch gate, which are church architecture typologies that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, is intended to become a practical resting place of citizens by opening the church to neighbors rather than pursuing a reverent worship space with a closed nature like a monastery. The fact that a continuous communication was plotted through the lobby towards the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts also illustrates the openness of the church. Here, the small chapel as well, which will bring back the history by downscaling the existing brick church, will be used as an actively open cultural space. In Seoul's forest of office buildings, Saemoonan Church provides plentiful rest to the packed city center through its freely unfolding spatial works by opening and emptying, rather than reacting with a commercial philosophy of scale like the buildings of maximum volume in the surrounding. This is how a contemporary church expresses their love of neighbors to the city through publicness.

The transparent glass box, intended to seem as if it was disappearing into the sky beyond the curved wall, not only angles for a morphological harmony that is in contrast to the soft curved wall, but is also an architectural strategy that aims for it to protect the future generations from the congested streets and become a bright Education Hall with a rooftop garden. Furthermore, the top floor of the Education Hall building and the high altitude space of the Cross Tower can become a memorial space open to every citizen, just as the many churches of the world often open their top floor dome to their neighbors, since Seoul’s beautiful downtown panorama can be enjoyed to the utmost. / Article provided by DongKyu Choi, Eunseok Lee