

has a pretty strong defense in the fact that he was hired. If MIT had studied his work, knowing it was habitual for him to overrun budgets and design a building that was very late in construction, I think a lawyer can make a good case for saying, "You get what you pay for."

TO WHAT EXTENT DID YOU RUN UP AGAINST "ARCHITECTS OF THE ABSURD" WHEN YOU WERE PRESIDENT OF BU?

I had one or two architects who would come up with what I refer to as "theoryspeak," using Tom Wolfe's phrase. They would talk about the very important element of some outrageous design that would cost more money but had the effect of accomplishing some aesthetic goal. I reminded more than one of them that I wasn't interested in their philosophical theories. I was interested in their work as architects.

ARE THERE BUILDINGS ON THE BU CAMPUS THAT FALL UNDER THE CATEGORY OF WHAT YOU CALL ABSURDIST ARCHITECTURE?

The Mugar Memorial Library, the law school building, the student union. Spanish architect Josep Lluís Sert put a patio in the middle of the student union, where Metcalf Hall now stands. It was absolutely useless space, could never be used. It was hot as the devil in the summer because of the high walls around it. There was no breeze. And at other times of the year, it was filled with water or snow. It was a swimming pool. It would cost us \$100,000 a year just to stop the leaks. We put a roof over it and made it into the Metcalf Hall ballroom. It cost about a million dollars to out-engineer Sert on that building. But over a ten-year period, we saved a million dollars in repairs.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF A PERFECT BUILDING? IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE WHIMSICAL AND PRACTICAL AT THE SAME TIME?

Sure. Look at Antonio Gaudí's work. Güell Park in Barcelona is a beautifully whimsical park with serpentine benches

for people to sit on and those wonderful animals he has over the staircases. Almost everything that Gaudí has done has a whimsical attitude about it. One of his buildings has a dragon roof, for example. Why would you make the roof in the shape of a dragon? It's a good idea to shed water. It wasn't absurd. It was quite harmonious. It fit with the rest of the building.

A FAIR NUMBER OF THE BUILDINGS YOU CITE IN THE BOOK ARE IN THE UNITED STATES. IS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT AMERICA THAT LENDS ITSELF TO THIS PHENOMENON?

You have a lot of very wealthy 501(c)(3) institutions in the United States. But there's the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the addition proposed by Daniel Libeskind to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. I think the worst is Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ARCHITECTS LIKE GEHRY STRICTLY IN TERMS OF ARTISTRY?

I really don't know. I think Gehry has begun to make jewelry for Tiffany's. That's a perfectly suitable thing for Gehry to be doing because you don't live in your necklace or bracelet or earrings. Consequently, he can use all the whimsy and imagination he has, and it'll be perfectly consistent with the purpose of what he's doing.

I don't think his Disney Concert Hall is beautiful. I think it looks like a junkyard. I think it's captured the imagination of the public. So has Bilbao. But the buildings are not weathering well. They can't because of the exposure.

If Daniel Libeskind's Denver Art Museum were a sculpture instead of a building, it would certainly have an interesting shape. It probably would be very pleasing to people who like that type of sculpture.

HAS ANYONE IN THE GEHRY CAMP COMMENTED ON YOUR BOOK?

They haven't commented to me. I imagine they've commented among themselves.

Better Than Sex

IS SPIRITUALITY AN ANTIDOTE TO TODAY'S HOOK-UP CULTURE? BY BARI WALSH

THIS WEEKEND, on college campuses across the country, young men and women will dress up for parties with themes that would make their parents seriously queasy: "maids and millionaires" is a popular one, or "golf pros and tennis hos." They'll drink; they'll dance; they'll make out with someone; maybe they'll go home with someone.

And, according to Donna Freitas, a College of Arts and Sciences visiting assistant professor of religion, the majority of them will regret almost everything about the party and what followed, although very few will ever let on as much.

It's all part of the curious dynamic that drives what Freitas refers to as "hook-up culture," the anything-goes attitude toward sex that she sees on today's college campuses. That permissiveness has left many students looking for something that might just bring parents back from the ledge: boundaries, and a moral and spiritual structure that offers the chance at real, meaningful connection.

Freitas is the author of *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Funded by a grant from the Louisville Institute, she spent five months talking to students at colleges of all types and sizes. Those



Author Donna Freitas says most college students are not comfortable with the sexual behavior they see on their campuses.

discussions revealed a stark dissonance between what the students told her they wanted for themselves — meaningful relationships, romance (which they construe as asexual) — and what they felt everyone else wanted: partying and hooking up. “There’s the peer campus culture, where students assume that what everybody wants is this sexually permissive culture,” Freitas says. “But the vast majority of the students who promote and buy into this culture don’t like it for themselves. They think people don’t take sex seriously enough. They’re not comfortable with the behaviors they see on campus.”

That dissatisfaction, she thinks, is at the root of a trend cited in recent studies: a resurgent interest

in religion and spirituality among college students. Freitas had noticed it among her own students, particularly in a popular religion and gender studies class that she taught at St. Michael’s College in Colchester, Vermont, in 2005.

“The word *spirituality* often appeared in the titles of papers,” she says, “but I found that lots of students were resisting traditional religion in many ways. They felt the teachings didn’t make sense in their lives and in what they were experiencing on campus. They were latching on to spirituality as a space where they could hang on to meaning or search for it.”

Their search for meaning took different forms, Freitas says, but it often revolved around struggles with sexual identity, with gender

roles, and with what they were doing, and seeing others do, sexually. When she explored the dynamic between religion and sex on other college campuses, a remarkably consistent picture emerged. *Sex and the Soul* is made up of interviews with students at public and private universities, including Catholic and evangelical schools. The book reveals that, with the exception of evangelicals, students everywhere are encountering campus cultures that feel far too sexually explicit, but they fear the consequences of standing against that culture and lack the guidance that might come from an open dialogue. Some students look to spirituality to help them navigate these waters, but privately; spiritual beliefs are rarely discussed in public.

In her CAS courses on spirituality and sexuality in American youth culture, Freitas encourages students to talk about what they believe or don’t believe and to find an anchor in those discussions. “Part of what I do is provide students with possible structures around which to build a spiritual identity, some of which involve staking claims and drawing boundaries. I see in students an attraction to boundaries, even though that’s what kicked them out of traditional religion in the first place.”

Evangelical universities, with their expressly religious missions, allow students to assert their beliefs in a very public way, and Freitas believes secular institutions could learn something from that openness.

“The ivory tower still doesn’t look very favorably on inviting personal experience, whether it’s that of the professor or the student, into the classroom,” she says. “I think that’s doing a disservice to students. There’s so much angst about sex, so much desire with regard to religion and spirituality. As a teacher, my impulse is to address it.” **B**