

highlighting the out-of-the-ordinary in the realm of structural engineering

Although STRUCTURE® magazine strives to be, first and foremost, the premier technical resource for practicing structural engineers, we also consider it important to serve the "soft side" of the profession from time to time. Someone who regularly helps us do this is Erik Anders Nelson, P.E., S.E., a structural engineer with Odeh Engineers in North Providence, Rhode Island, and an adjunct professor at Rhode Island School of Design. Erik's unique perspective is once again evident in this poem inspired by Saint Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco, California. The building was designed by Pier Luigi Nervi, the Italian practitioner of "structural art" who was first introduced to many of us by Mario Salvadori's book, Why Buildings Stand Up. Any comments regarding this poem are welcome and may be sent to erik.nelson@odehengineers.com and/or chair@STRUCTUREmag.org.

the Structure that Sings


Two straight lines
 One VERTICAL
 The other...
 not PARALLEL
 nor PERPENDICULAR
 but OUT OF PLANE and inclined.

What remains?
 Complex double Curvature

Eight hypars from a simple gesture


CONSTRAINED by the rightful mandate. "form
 from simple grid".

This is how the structure wins
 And can be freed by thoughtful purpose.

Skeletal ribs  pose
 Suspend-- and prop this cupola between an open

cruciform of light

on four enormous feet.

Oh how this structure can laugh!
 but instead —
 chooses to Sing 

at today's architecture of free form.

Nervi has done it again!

Truth in form as the means, and beauty as the end. ■