LUMEN

BYZANTINE FRESCO CHAPEL
Houston, TX

Lighting Designers
Fisher Marantz Renfro Stone, Inc.
Paul Marantz, Barry Citrin

Architects
Francois de Menil

Owner
The Menil Foundation

In 1993 two mid-13th century Byzantine frescos, which had been stolen from a small chapel near Lysi, Cyprus, were recovered and restored by the Menil Foundation. Francois de Menil was commissioned to design a new home in Houston for the frescos. The design evokes the original chapel in luminous diffuse glass.

The lighting challenge was to evoke a spiritual quality for the chapel and the frescos while still providing adequate light for varying functions. The chapel, though part of a museum, is consecrated and used for religious functions. The spiritual effect was achieved by making the glass panels appear to glow and by uniformly highlighting the frescos. A preset dimming system provides flexibility to control the contrast, color and intensity. An essential requirement was to insure that no shadows were cast onto the frescos or the glass.