

**Facilitating Grief and Fostering Remembrance Through  
Architecture and Landscape**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

Today's multicultural and spiritually non-religious Western society seems to be moving away from notions of death and the grief caused by it, requiring its concealment to avoid disrupting everyday life. This is evident in how society stigmatizes public expressions of grief and the apparent lack of virtual and physical spaces outside of homes and institutions. Society has limited space for grief, and we are left to our own devices to navigate the complex, confusing, and painful experience of bereavement. Considering the important role the physical world and our bodies have in accessing memories, this research will navigate the expansive field of grief research and implement a crossover to the field of architecture. Through photo documentation and a process of making, this research suggests grief-related spaces can be expanded outside of homes and institutions to provide accessible therapeutic spaces that facilitate the various needs of the bereaved and foster remembrance.

**Keywords** | Death, Expressive Arts Therapy, Grief, Memory, Remembrance, Ritual, Windsor.



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# Table of Contents

Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xix
Preface	xx
Introduction	1
<b>Chapter 1 - Frame</b>	<b>11</b>
Grief, Bereavement, and Mourning	12
Observations	13
<b>Chapter 2 - On Grief</b>	<b>21</b>
Primer on Grief	22
Grief Theory - Towards a Contemporary Understanding	26
Psychology of Grief - Theoretical Coping Models	29
<b>Chapter 3 - Medium</b>	<b>39</b>
Expressive Arts Therapy	40
Memory	42
Cremation	46
<b>Chapter 4 - Ruminations</b>	<b>51</b>
Ruminations: Craft	52
Ruminations: Place	68
<b>Chapter 5 - Precedent</b>	<b>103</b>
Case Studies	104
The Site - Brunet Park	120
The Network	128
<b>Chapter 6 - Intervention</b>	<b>133</b>
Response	134
Intervention	136
Conclusion	170
Bibliography	174

## List of Figures

<b>Figure i</b>	xxi	Jacob (Jake) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 1</b>	15	The Kübler-Ross DABDA Model <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 2</b>	22	Aspects of Grief <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 3</b>	23	Immediate Reactions <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 4</b>	23	Longterm Reactions <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 5</b>	24	Spectrum of Grief <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 6</b>	31	Stage/Phase Model by John Bolby <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 7</b>	32	Task Model by William Worden <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 8</b>	33	Cognitive Path Model by Susan Folkman and Nolen-Hoeksema <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 9</b>	34	Dual Process Model by Magaret Stroebe and Henk Schut <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 10</b>	41	Expressive Arts Therapy Example: Painting <i>By Jadson Thomas. Photograph. Nov 24, 2013.</i> <i>Retrieved from <a href="https://www.pexels.com/photo/pain-brushes-inside-clear-plastic-cups-542556/">https://www.pexels.com/photo/pain-brushes-inside-clear-plastic-cups-542556/</a></i>
<b>Figure 11</b>	41	Expressive Arts Therapy Example: Pottery <i>By Regiane Tosatti. Photograph. Apr 15, 2013.</i> <i>Retrieved from <a href="https://www.pexels.com/photo/selective-focus-photography-of-person-molding-clay-22823/">https://www.pexels.com/photo/selective-focus-photography-of-person-molding-clay-22823/</a></i>
<b>Figure 12</b>	42	Two Loonies <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 13</b>	42	Coffees <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 14</b>	43	Ink Infused with Cremation Remains <i>By Andrew McCann. Photograph. 2022. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.wuft.org/news/2022/02/28/literally-inside-of-us-loved-ones-given-new-life-within-cremated-ash-tattoos/">https://www.wuft.org/news/2022/02/28/literally-inside-of-us-loved-ones-given-new-life-within-cremated-ash-tattoos/</a></i>

<b>Figure 15</b>	45	Senses and Memory <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 16</b>	46	Representation of Ashes Released into the Wind <i>By Vecteezy. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.vecteezy.com/photo/7115153-abstract-sand-cloud-golden-colored-sand-splash-against-dark-background-yellow-sand-fly-wave-in-the-air-sand-explode-on-black-background-throwing-freeze-stop-motion-concept">https://www.vecteezy.com/photo/7115153-abstract-sand-cloud-golden-colored-sand-splash-against-dark-background-yellow-sand-fly-wave-in-the-air-sand-explode-on-black-background-throwing-freeze-stop-motion-concept</a></i>
<b>Figure 17</b>	47	Canadian Cremation Statistics <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 18</b>	53	Woman with Dead Child (Frau mit totem Kind) <i>By Käthe Kollwitz. Print. 1903. Retrieved from <a href="https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ANGAIG_10314020494">https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ANGAIG_10314020494</a></i>
<b>Figure 19</b>	53	Your Age and mine and the Age of the World (Dein und mein Alter und das Alter der Welt) <i>By Anselm Kiefer. Painting. 1997. Retrieved from <a href="https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10310640214">https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10310640214</a></i>
<b>Figure 20</b>	53	City of Models <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 21</b>	54	Passage <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 22</b>	55	Stress <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 23</b>	56	Labryinth <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 24</b>	57	Light at the End of the Tunnel <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 25</b>	58	Memory <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 26</b>	59	Carcass <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 27</b>	60	Weight <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 28</b>	61	Wave <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 29</b>	62	Pitt <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>

<b>Figure 30</b>	63	Tactility <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 31</b>	64	Pressure <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 32</b>	65	Broken <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 33</b>	66	Illuminated Model 1 <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 34</b>	67	Illuminated Model 2 <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 35</b>	69	Collage - Commemorative Trees of Brunet Park <i>By author. Photograph Collage. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 36</b>	70	Fortitude (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 37</b>	71	Fortitude (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 38</b>	72	“Resting” Place (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 39</b>	72	Plaque (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 40</b>	73	“Resting” Place (Victoria Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 41</b>	74	Celebration (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 42</b>	74	Marcel Pronovost (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 43</b>	75	Celebration (Heavenly Rest Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 44</b>	76	Ritual (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 45</b>	76	Ritual - Budweiser (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 46</b>	77	Ritual (Victoria Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 47</b>	78	“Tending to a Loved One” (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 48</b>	78	Plaque and Embellishment (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 49</b>	79	Tending to a Loved One (Heavenly Rest Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>



<b>Figure 50</b>	80	Decay (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 51</b>	81	Decay (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 52</b>	82	Approach (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 53</b>	83	Approach (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 54</b>	84	Temporality (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 55</b>	85	Temporality (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 56</b>	86	Nature (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 57</b>	87	Nature (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 58</b>	88	Presence (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 59</b>	88	Helena's Way Bench Plaque (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 60</b>	89	Presence (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 61</b>	90	Return to Earth (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 62</b>	91	Return to Earth (Victoria Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 63</b>	92	Fading Sidewalk (Brunet Park) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 64</b>	93	Fading Headstone (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 65</b>	94	Growth (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 66</b>	95	Overgrowth (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 67</b>	96	Materiality (St. Alphonses Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 68</b>	97	Materiality (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 69</b>	98	Monumentality (Victoria Memorial Gardens) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>

<b>Figure 70</b>	99	Monolithic Forms (Windsor Grove Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 71</b>	100	Monolithic (Heavenly Rest Cemetery) <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 72</b>	104	Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden Site Render <i>By Gunnar Cerwén. Illustration. 2021. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.longdom.org/open-access/does-more-time-in-a-therapeutic-garden-lead-to-a-faster-return-to-work-a-prospective-cohort-study-of-naturebased-therapy.pdf">https://www.longdom.org/open-access/does-more-time-in-a-therapeutic-garden-lead-to-a-faster-return-to-work-a-prospective-cohort-study-of-naturebased-therapy.pdf</a></i>
<b>Figure 73</b>	105	Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden Site Plan <i>By Ulrika A. Stigsdotter. Illustration (annotated by author). 2003. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.hybridparks.eu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/Presentation_Grahn_Lund.pdf">https://www.hybridparks.eu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/Presentation_Grahn_Lund.pdf</a></i>
<b>Figure 74</b>	106	Windhover Contemplation Centre Exterior <i>By Aidlin Darling Design. Render. n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.archdaily.com/411379/aidlin-darling-design-breaks-ground-on-windhover-contemplative-center-in-stanford?ad_campaign=normal-tag">https://www.archdaily.com/411379/aidlin-darling-design-breaks-ground-on-windhover-contemplative-center-in-stanford?ad_campaign=normal-tag</a></i>
<b>Figure 75</b>	106	Windhover Contemplation Centre Interior Artwork <i>By Matthew Millman. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.archdaily.com/608268/windhover-contemplative-center-aidlin-darling-design">https://www.archdaily.com/608268/windhover-contemplative-center-aidlin-darling-design</a></i>
<b>Figure 76</b>	107	Windhover Contemplation Centre Reflection Pool <i>By Matthew Millman and Marion Brenner. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://acochran.com/work/windhover-contemplative-center-landscape-architecture/">https://acochran.com/work/windhover-contemplative-center-landscape-architecture/</a></i>
<b>Figure 77</b>	107	Windhover Contemplation Centre Meditation Labyrinth <i>By Matthew Millman and Marion Brenner. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://acochran.com/work/windhover-contemplative-center-landscape-architecture/">https://acochran.com/work/windhover-contemplative-center-landscape-architecture/</a></i>
<b>Figure 78</b>	108	South Haven Centre for Remembrance Exterior <i>By Ema Peter. Photograph. n.d. <a href="https://www.canadianarchitect.com/governor-generals-medal-winner-south-haven-centre-for-remembrance/">https://www.canadianarchitect.com/governor-generals-medal-winner-south-haven-centre-for-remembrance/</a></i>

- Figure 78.1** 109 South Haven Centre for Remembrance Tower  
By Ema Peter. Photograph. n.d. <https://www.archdaily.com/972369/south-haven-centre-for-remembrance-shape-architecture>
- Figure 78.2** 109 South Haven Centre for Remembrance Interior  
By Ema Peter. Photograph. n.d. <https://www.archdaily.com/972369/south-haven-centre-for-remembrance-shape-architecture>
- Figure 79** 110 Stiva da Morts Interior  
By Petr Smídek. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://hiddenarchitecture.net/stiva-da-morts/>
- Figure 80** 111 Stiva da Morts Exterior 1  
By Petr Smídek. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://hiddenarchitecture.net/stiva-da-morts/>
- Figure 81** 111 Stiva da Morts Exterior 2  
By Petr Smídek. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://hiddenarchitecture.net/stiva-da-morts/>
- Figure 82** 112 Iguadala Cemetery Exterior Gabian Wall  
By Manel Armengol. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/cementerio-igualada>
- Figure 83** 112 Iguadala Cemetery Exterior Wall Crypts  
By Flickr User: Dharmesh. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/cementerio-igualada>
- Figure 84** 113 Iguadala Cemetery Exterior Pathway  
By Flickr User: Dharmesh. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/cementerio-igualada>
- Figure 85** 113 Iguadala Cemetery Unfinished Interior  
By Flickr User: Dharmesh. Photograph. n.d. Retrieved from <https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/cementerio-igualada>
- Figure 86** 114 U House Exterior Aerial  
By Koji Taki. Photograph. n.d. <https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito>
- Figure 87** 114 U House Exterior Aerial Timelapse  
By Wikiarquitectura. Photograph. n.d. <https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito>

<b>Figure 88</b>	115	U House Interior of Light Gesture <i>By Koji Taki. Photograph. n.d. <a href="https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito">https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito</a></i>
<b>Figure 89</b>	115	U House Interior into Courtyard <i>By Tomio Ohashi. Photograph. n.d. <a href="https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito">https://www.archdaily.com/345857/ad-classics-white-u-toyo-ito</a></i>
<b>Figure 90</b>	116	The International Children's Memorial Place Ever Living Forest <i>n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/international-children-s-memorial-place-grieving-parents-1.4116265">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/international-children-s-memorial-place-grieving-parents-1.4116265</a></i>
<b>Figure 91</b>	117	The Labyrinth of Life and Love <i>n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.icmplace.org/features">https://www.icmplace.org/features</a></i>
<b>Figure 92</b>	117	The Gazebo <i>n.d. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.icmplace.org/features">https://www.icmplace.org/features</a></i>
<b>Figure 93</b>	120	Windsor Region <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 94</b>	122	Town of LaSalle <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 95</b>	123	Trail Network <i>By author. Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 96</b>	124	Brunet Park <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 97</b>	125	Spaces of Brunet Park <i>By author. Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 98</b>	126	Commemorative Trees and Benches <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 99</b>	127	Brunet Park Gazebo <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 100</b>	129	Windsor Network <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 101</b>	137	Site Parti <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 102</b>	138	Site Plan <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 103</b>	140	Pavilion Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>

<b>Figure 104</b>	140	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 105</b>	141	Pavilion Render - North-West <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 106</b>	141	Pavilion Render - East <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 107</b>	142	Longitudinal Section <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 108</b>	143	Pavilion Floorplan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 109</b>	143	Transverse Section <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 110</b>	144	Pavilion Render - South-West <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 111</b>	145	Pavilion Render - Interior <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 112</b>	146	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 113</b>	146	Illumination Room - Floorplan <i>By author. Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 114</b>	147	Illumination Room Render <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 115</b>	148	Exploded Axonometric <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 116</b>	149	Exploded Details <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 117</b>	150	Longitudinal Section <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 118</b>	151	Transverse Section <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 119</b>	152	Memorial Wall Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 120</b>	152	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 121</b>	153	Memorial Wall Render - South-West <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 122</b>	153	Memorial Wall Render - North <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 123</b>	154	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>

<b>Figure 124</b>	154	Lattice Render 1 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 125</b>	155	Lattice Site Plan <i>By author. Graphic (aerial by Google). 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 126</b>	156	Lattice Plan <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 127</b>	156	Lattice Section <i>By author. Vector graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 128</b>	157	Lattice Render 2 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 129</b>	158	Reflection Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 130</b>	158	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 131</b>	159	Reflection Render - South-East <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 132</b>	159	Reflection Render - South <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 133</b>	160	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 134</b>	161	Passages Renders <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 135</b>	162	Stress Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 136</b>	162	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 137</b>	163	Stress Bird's Eye View Render <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 138</b>	163	Stress Render <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 139</b>	164	Fragements Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 140</b>	164	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 141</b>	165	Fragements Render 1 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 142</b>	165	Fragements Render 2 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 143</b>	166	Cavern Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>

<b>Figure 144</b>	166	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 145</b>	167	Cavern Render 1 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 146</b>	167	Cavern Render 2 <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 147</b>	168	Reminiscence Site Plan <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 148</b>	168	Key Plan <i>By author. Vector Graphic. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 149</b>	169	Reminiscence Render - North-West <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 150</b>	169	Reminiscence Render - South <i>By author. Illustration. 2023.</i>
<b>Figure 151</b>	171	Adam's Rock <i>By author. Photograph. 2023.</i>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1: Health Outcomes</b>	25
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## Preface

Why focus on grief and bereavement? This is a question that was continually asked during the development of this thesis. Such an inquiry is justified. After all, it is a depressing and often avoided topic. The answer to this question is twofold. Firstly, my experience with my best friend Jake's sudden passing in 2019 and the solace I found within a semi-rural park initially inspired me to pursue this topic. Although surrounded by support at home, living with my two parents, older brother, and dog, my home was not my primary healing ground. Instead, the looping trails of Brunet Park are where I began coming to terms with my experiences and acknowledging the strung-along feelings. Brunet Park became a ground for my reflection, meditation, and remembrance. Naturally, most theses have a personal connection with their authors. This was mine. However, personal experience or interest alone isn't enough to justify dedicating a year to researching a topic. The second part of answering this question is found in four key observations, which will be presented later in this research. Ultimately, these observations will serve as an initial probe into how contemporary architecture can better accompany the bereaved in the Western world.





Fig. i | Jacob (Jake)

*How can Windsor's network of grief-related spaces be expanded outside of homes and institutions, and how can an accessible, uplifting space(s) be designed to accommodate the various needs of the bereaved and foster remembrance?*

# Introduction

# Introduction

*“Bereaved people – at least those in Western culture – don’t simply ‘recover’ or ‘get over’ their loss and return to normal; there’s no resolution or completion per se, but rather they adapt, adjust, and are to some degree changed forever.”*

*- Richard Gross in The Psychology of Grief<sup>1</sup>*

This research is a unique take on the idea that grief over the loss of a loved one lasts forever, and the act of remembrance is a continuation of grief.<sup>2</sup> The death of a loved one and the associated grief that follows is an imminent human experience that will affect everyone over the course of their lives. Yet, within an increasingly multicultural and spiritually non-religious Western society, there seems to be a lack of purpose-built spaces for grieving and helping us “return to normal” outside of our homes and institutions. This research will address this concern by exploring the spatial needs of the bereaved and expanding the network of places servicing them through a new therapeutic typology in Windsor, Ontario. This observed lack of space (virtual and physical) for processing grief results from Western society not allowing grieving to be part of a larger societal routine and concealing grief to avoid disrupting everyday life.<sup>3</sup> However, research suggests isolation and ignoring one’s own grief can lead to complications in adjusting to a loss and negative health outcomes.<sup>4</sup> From a different perspective, the everyday places within routine life can play an important role in a person’s adjustment to a loss.<sup>5</sup> Such places can come in the form of parks, nature reserves, cafes, or other spaces not associated with a commodified form of therapeutics.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, these places can serve as possible grounds for a new typology to facilitate a grieving process in the Western world. The leading question for this research is: how can Windsor’s network of grief-related spaces be expanded outside of homes and institutions, and how can an accessible, uplifting space(s) be designed to accommodate the various needs of the bereaved?

Although often attached to religious institutions, cemeteries are perhaps the best example of a construct meant to fulfill the partial needs of the bereaved. They have practically always existed within Western culture and the

fabric of our cities.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, whether a survivor belongs to a religious sect or not, they will most likely find themselves within one following the death of a loved one. Considering that grief is bounded by culture, the cemetery subjects this research to a cultural and ritualistic imperative. With that said, Western society still distances itself from the reality of death.<sup>8</sup> This is seen in what Richard Gross describes as the professionalization of death. This is where the traditional duties of the family in taking care of the deceased have been deemed inferior and become the responsibility of industry professionals.<sup>9</sup> Foucault, too, observes this distancing by noting how the cemetery was pushed to the outer suburbs during the nineteenth century amid an “obsession with death as illness.”<sup>10</sup> The distancing from death itself is an additional example of how themes of concealment persist in Western society. This research asks, how can the functions of cemeteries in Windsor support this research, and how can this research counter a distancing from death?

Grief caused by the loss of a loved one is an intrinsic human experience not fully acknowledged by Western society.<sup>11</sup> Death has become separated from life-culture, and we are left to our own “depleted resources” to navigate the continuous non-linear stages of grief as we try to return to a normal routine.<sup>12</sup> We may even be misguided by society and popular culture. This is exemplified in the perpetuation of the five-stage coping model that professionals no longer recognize because it does not accurately depict grief.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, careful research on topics of grief reveals that bereaved individuals confront grief through three intrapersonal and interpersonal modes: privately by themselves, socially through their support network, and therapeutically with mental health professionals.<sup>14</sup> Yet, many built places for grieving do not fully recognize these three modes. With this perspective, this research argues for healthy habits when processing a loss and the importance of social and private programmatic spaces to serve the various needs of the bereaved.

Grief is a complex emotional syndrome associated with countless reactions and coping methods.<sup>15</sup> It is unique from person to person as it is a multi-dimensional idea, having bodily, cultural, social, philosophical, and behavioural components.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary research in grief understands it as pathological and challenges the commonly used Freudian understanding of grief as an individual psychological phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> Although lacking, new

research which can be viewed from a phenomenological perspective also posits that historical, social, cultural, and material factors will inform experiences, practices, and interpretations related to death and loss.<sup>18</sup> Understood today, grief as a pathology has become privatized, specialized, and treatable by mental health professionals.<sup>19</sup> The most recent contribution to the pathologizing of grief is Complicated Grief (CG) as a disorder (Specifically Prolonged Grief Disorder/PGD) which only became a recognized disorder by The World Health Organization within the ICD-11 in 2018 and The American Psychiatric Association within the DSM-5-TR in 2022.<sup>20</sup> With this insight, this research will consider a scientific understanding of grief that looks at how people process and cope with a loss to inform design strategies.

Although the sciences are making a valuable effort to fully understand how people process and cope with the loss of a loved one and the effects of grief, it fails to provide a concrete explanation for a highly individualized phenomenon. This is evident through a convoluted series of coping models and research that is heavily disconnected from our spiritual body and social landscapes. The science within bereavement research also fails to recognize our engagement with the physical environment and its role in accessing memories and changing perceptions.<sup>21</sup> We understand ourselves and live through engagement with many physical environments. Memories also develop from a material or physical grounding, such as rites and rituals, strengthening our continued bond with the deceased.<sup>22</sup> Mark L. Johnson notes that all perceptions, feelings, emotions, thoughts, valuations, and actions are informed by our “embodied transitions with our physical surroundings, interpersonal relations, and cultural institutions and practices.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise, the general psychological state of someone can often be evoked by sensory experience, including touch or smell.<sup>24</sup> Reliving memories and finding meaning in events are important things for the bereaved to acknowledge. This can be done through sensory interaction with the physical environment, movement through space, and individual rituals. This research asks, how can an understanding of the effects of grief and the way the physical environment changes our perceptions be exploited through design?

A methodology grounded in a framework of research into the psychological, health, social science, and cultural aspects of grief must be supported further. To develop a

unique understanding of grief as it relates to architectural design, a process of head-to-hand must be utilized. The juncture of scientific research and creative design will be dealt with intuitively through creative inquiry. Or, as anthropologist Tim Ingold may say, “thinking through making” and “knowing from the inside.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, this research embarks on an exploratory process through material analysis and form-making that speaks to the extensive research done on the topic of grief over the loss of a loved one, including concepts of memory. Additionally, it is also a process heavily aligned with the emerging field of expressive arts therapy, which is an interdisciplinary, integrative, arts-based approach to counselling and psychotherapy to reveal “latent meaning to a receptive witness.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the process speaks to the background research this project has exposed itself to and taps into a deep insider account of personal grief. Lastly, to complement this process further, there will be an exploration of how grief is currently manifested within the proposed site presented through photo documentation. As Avril Maddrell writes, “If we recognize the mobility of embodied and relational grief, greater understanding of the complex dynamic spatial patterns of grief, mourning and remembrance will follow.”<sup>27</sup> This process is further supported by architect Juhani Pallasmaa who writes about his admiration for painters’, sculptors’, and craftsmen’s “ability to grasp the essence of things through their hands and bodies” rather than only through intellectual and verbal analyses.<sup>28</sup>

The proposed site for the architectural intervention is Brunet Park in Windsor, Ontario. Currently, it serves as a place for various social, emotional, and physical activities strongly interwoven with nature. It is also a place where I found solace in navigating the many trails following the death of my close friend in 2019. This connection with nature, which seems to tend so well to themes of death and life, will be an important metaphoric device for the bereaved. Across the site will be several interventions ranging in size and use. The proposed interventions will focus on reconnecting death with society by providing spaces of remembrance and reflection embedded in nature. Near the entrance will be a flexible-use pavilion that will replace the site’s existing gazebo and provide conditioned space for small gatherings or events. A circular public memorial for interred cremated bodies within planters will be visually connected to the pavilion. In this way, the bereaved can continue their bond with the deceased through continued ritual and witness

them contribute to the growth of a natural landscape. The memorial will also allow others to learn about the deceased through the display of unique personalization, affording them a chance to reflect on their memories and forge new ones. A building dedicated to private gatherings and rituals will also be situated near the main entrance. Named the Illumination Room, this building allows for diverse ways of honouring the dead and connecting through unique memories which form through social interaction. In the center of the park's clearing will be a large-scale landscaping feature that serves as a memorial wall. Lastly, a series of contemplative interventions are thoughtfully positioned on the site to speak to themes of grief. Through multi-sensory and sensitive design strategies that engage an occupant on emotional and physical levels, these pavilions propose a personal and social way to relive memories and encourage discussion (intrapersonal and interpersonal) about the experiences of grief. The goal of this project is that Brunet Park not only becomes a place for remembrance and solace but can also become a therapeutic typology that extends the network of grief-related spaces of Windsor. As a final speculative question, how can the park attend to mourners as they prepare to say goodbye to the deceased, and how can it serve as a place to return to when in need of solace?





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# Chapter 1 - Frame

This chapter will briefly clarify the three terms *grief*, *bereavement*, and *mourning* found throughout this document and which are important definitions within the framework of this research. This research is also framed within four key observations discussed in this chapter, providing the initial probe into how contemporary architecture can attend to themes of grief.

## Grief, Bereavement and Mourning

Grief, bereavement, and mourning are important terms that must be defined in the framework of this research. Often these terms are used interchangeably, but they each represent different aspects related to the experience of a loss. Specifically, this research is interested in these terms as they relate to the loss of a loved one. More specifically, this research focuses on a Western understanding of these terms.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, **grief** is mental pain, distress, or sorrow caused by a loss.<sup>29</sup> The experience of grief is called *grieving*.

*Grief* is caused by being **bereaved**. To be *bereaved* is to be robbed or dispossessed of something, usually immaterial, such as hope, joy, love, or a relationship with someone.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, when someone close to us dies, we are left *bereft*.

**Mourning** is to display or express sorrow, grief, or regret.<sup>31</sup> Richard Gross describes mourning as the cultural expression or display of grief, such as funerals or wearing black.<sup>32</sup> Ester Holte Kofod also argues that the phenomenon of grieving is intrinsically connected to social, cultural, and normative conditions.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, these conditions are not solely tied to mourning.

# Observations

## Observation 1: The Lack of Spaces Specifically Built for Dealing with a Loss & the Concern with Exceptional Therapeutic Landscapes

Grief over the loss of a loved one is an intrinsic human experience that affects everyone over a lifetime. However, there is a lack of virtual and physical spaces for grieving in everyday life. Although bereaved individuals can often find themselves in established spaces associated with grief, for example, homes, hospitals, churches, or cemeteries, none are designed specifically to explore one's own grief or only partially meet their needs. These places also do not directly address the psychological nature of grief or concern themselves with therapeutic approaches to design. Other places promoted for their therapeutic qualities are often centred around therapeutic landscapes but are heavily commodified within a globalized economy. These therapeutic landscapes also tend to focus on exceptional landscapes, assuming they have an inherent therapeutic quality.<sup>34</sup> A prominent example of this form of commodification is Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals within the Swiss countryside or the historical example of Epidaurus Theatre built in ancient Greece.<sup>35</sup> Although nature and landscape are often used to promote healing, Alette Willis notes that continued research into therapeutic landscapes is too often focused on non-ordinary places and continues to ally research more closely with themes of palliation rather than healing.<sup>36</sup> Willis' notion of palliation, which means to cloak or conceal, will be touched further in this chapter. Additionally, the unequal opportunity to access commodified therapeutic landscapes presents health inequalities.<sup>37</sup> It is a privilege to access these sites and the architectural interventions on them. In other words, there is a cost associated with travelling and attending these places that most people can not afford.

## Observation 2: Western Society's Stigma and Concealing Grief

Western society stigmatizes public displays of grief, requiring it to be concealed to avoid disrupting everyday life and furthering the notion that there is no room for grieving within everyday Western life. Furthermore, Western society doesn't fully acknowledge death, and we are left to our

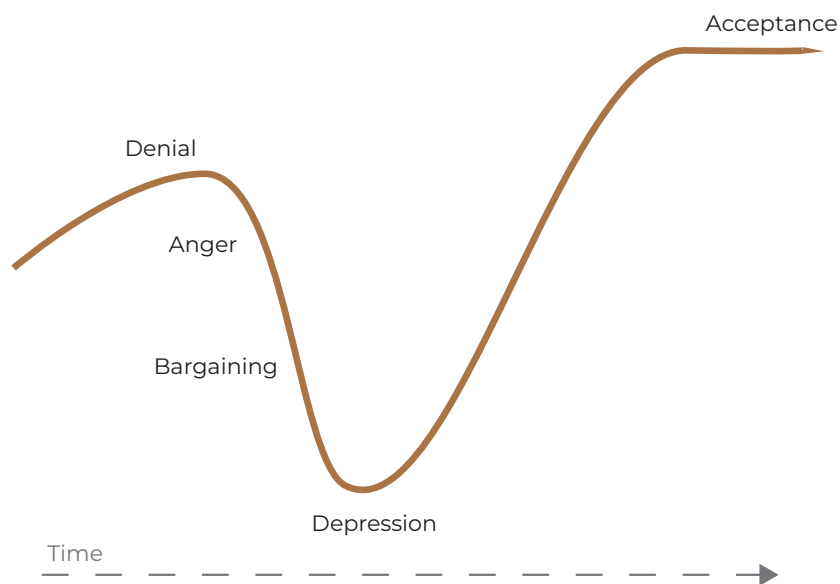
“depleted resources” to navigate the continuous non-linear stages of grief.<sup>38</sup> The disappointing reality, as Wolfelt writes in his manual for overcoming grief, is that “we have little preparation for the new life as a bereaved person. We may even fail to give ourselves permission to display grief and usually will not receive it from others.”<sup>39</sup> As bereaved individuals, we are required to conceal our grief to return to our everyday lives as quickly as possible. Willis adds to the conversation by arguing that the conceptual and physical separations of places of healing from everyday spaces are too often paired with themes of palliation.<sup>40</sup> In her words, “painful physical and emotional symptoms can be catalysts for healing transformations. However, if they are cloaked and ignored, they cannot sound their warnings, and people may not realize that they require healing until it is too late to affect the needed changes.”<sup>41</sup> Although palliation can be useful within the grieving process, as shown in Worden’s Task Model, which states that the final stage of grief is a reinvestment of energy from the deceased to new relationships, palliation alone does not suffice as a therapeutic device.<sup>42</sup> Richard Gross also comments on the concealment of grief, stating that professionals now deal with the “messy reality” of death instead of the immediate survivors of the deceased.<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, there has been minor progress in the “revival of death” within Western society, mostly seen through public vigils for prominent social figures or roadside memorials for victims of road accidents.<sup>44</sup> However, the stigma of public displays of grief, its taboo nature, and themes of concealment are still too often encouraged in Western society.

### **Observation 3: Misconceptions within Society and a Convoluted Scientific Understanding**

Thirdly, misconceptions surrounding grief over the loss of a loved one can lead to unhealthy coping habits.<sup>45</sup> This is evident with the heavily popularized yet discredited DABDA model (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance – see Figure 1) by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.<sup>46</sup> Her model, originally introduced in 1969, suggests that there are five sequential stages to grief, starting with denial, then anger, bargaining, depression and finally, acceptance<sup>47</sup>. In popular culture, this model is typically illustrated as a curve with two peaks and a valley in the middle. It also assumes that time is a variable, implying there is a given amount of time to reach the final stage. One major critique of this, which will become clearer when the Acceptable



Theoretical Principles of Adaptation are presented later, is that the experience of grief is not linear. The bereaved can go through stages in different orders or can move through multiple stages simultaneously. It's also possible that they can encounter each stage more than once. Furthermore, prescribing the five stages can be detrimental to the recovery of the bereaved if they think they must go through each stage.<sup>48</sup> For example, not everyone will encounter depression or anger but can be misled into manifesting these stages because they believe it is part of a process. Margaret Stroebe provides major insight for this research, writing, "perpetuation of the DABDA model not only by professionals but also among the bereaved themselves and those around them is unfortunately still rampant... our plea is to abandon this stage model and move on to theoretically based and empirically tested/testable process models."<sup>49</sup> However, within the hard sciences community, the psychological nature of grief is supported through a series of convoluted theoretical models (some of which will be presented later in this research), which attempt to rationalize grief as an orderly process. It is unclear if or when such models are useful tools to be used by the bereaved, but they attempt to postulate a workable series of approaches to be adopted by practitioners.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, there are various myths continually supported in society. Authors John W. James and Russell Friedman cover some of these myths by telling stories of their personal experiences with grief in their book *The Grief Recovery Handbook*.<sup>51</sup> Inferred from these stories are six *false lessons*: *don't feel bad*, *replace the loss*, *grieve alone*, *just give it time*, *be strong for others*, and *keep busy*.<sup>52</sup> The authors elaborate on each myth, but the main takeaway for this research is that many myths do not align with what is considered a productive way of grieving in Western society.



**Fig. 1** | The Kübler-Ross DABDA Model (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance)

#### Observation 4: Secularism, Multiculturalism, and Grief bounded by Culture

Western society is continually secularized, and there is increasing support for multiculturalism. Within the dialogue of bereavement, the secularity of Western society is evident through the rise of contemporary funeral practices and places of remembrance, which abandon tradition and focus on individual choice.<sup>53</sup> We also live in a diverse world and must meet the needs of various groups. Architecturally this can be difficult to accommodate. However, in terms of ritualistic and remembrance spaces such as funeral homes, architects have been looking toward non-denominational facilities void of religious connotations. Architect Dwayne Smyth's South Haven Centre for Remembrance in Edmonton is a recent example of a remembrance centre that utilizes a non-denomination approach (see Chapter 5).<sup>54</sup> Although it's a project that relies heavily on the landscape it's embedded in, the project utilizes a great understanding of spatial design in conjunction with the changing seasons to provide a unique multi-dimensional experience without religious themes.<sup>55</sup> Highlighting the continued secularized and multicultural society of today's Western world will help position an architectural intervention that is usable to all. Furthermore, grief is ultimately bounded by culture and is influenced by social pressures within a given context.<sup>56</sup> Culture is a significant factor which shapes a person's grief response from the loss of a loved one and should not be separated from psychological processes.<sup>57</sup> Instead, the psychological and cultural nature of grief should be approached dualistically.<sup>58</sup> This dualistic approach can be tackled by acknowledging that "memory making constitutes a key aspect of cultural and social responses to the death" of a loved one.<sup>59</sup> This "materialization of memory" happens through embodied practices via a wide range of material forms, rituals, and environments that "act as, or are made to provide evocative stimuli."<sup>60</sup> Therefore this research will explore the use of materiality, bodily movement, and the engagement of the senses in design.



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## Chapter 2 - On Grief

A literature review bringing into conversation several relevant authors, this chapter will provide an overview of a Western understanding of grief as established by field professionals. This research values advancements in the understanding of the human condition and therefore engages with relevant literature to provide an informed discussion on topics of grief. This chapter also provides an account of the psychology of grief by including historical background information and a review of several published theoretical coping models. In other words, if architecture is the dwelling of scientific and artistic thought, then this chapter satisfies the former.

## Primer on Grief



Fig. 2 | Aspects of Grief

Bereavement is a life event which will sooner or later affect everyone, and therefore grief caused by the loss of a loved one will be experienced by everyone at some point in their life. Grief is a complex emotional reaction that is associated with countless reactions and ways of coping.<sup>61</sup> It is unique from person to person as it is a multi-dimensional idea, having bodily, cultural, social, philosophical, and behavioural components (see Figure 2).<sup>62</sup> Today, grief in Western culture is becoming an increasingly psychologized and pathological phenomenon.<sup>63</sup> In other words, contemporary research is understanding grief through causes and effects to enhance practitioners' ability to provide treatment. Several categories of grief-related reactions include *affective/emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physiological-somatic, and spiritual* (see Table 1).<sup>64</sup> Each can lead to various health outcomes, and bereavement, in general, is linked with increased mortality risk (including greater risk of suicide).<sup>65</sup> Some immediate reactions to grief can include denial, altered perception of time, disbelief, chills, or heart palpitations (see Figure 3).<sup>66</sup> Some long-term reactions can include anxiety, fear, anger, dizziness, memory problems, or physical ailments (see Figure 4).<sup>67</sup> Although the effects of grief can become less painful within the first year following a loss, painful feelings and emotions can remerge on significant dates. Common reactions to grief can vary from



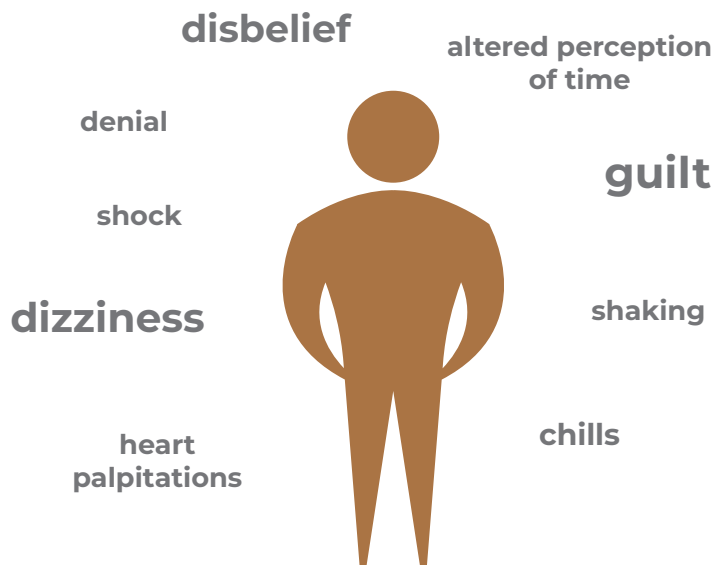


Fig. 3 | Immediate Reactions

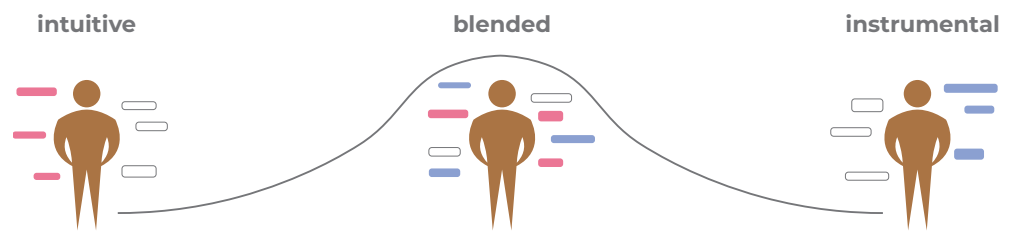


Fig. 4 | Longterm Reactions

person to person and can also vary in intensity and duration. There can also be different social and cultural pressures which ultimately bind it.<sup>68</sup> In fact, culture is a significant factor in shaping a person's grief response to losing a loved one.<sup>69</sup> Although the cultural aspect of grief is important to note, this section is primarily concerned with bringing to light the universal manifestation of grief.<sup>70</sup> By better understanding the manifestations of grief, an architectural intervention can better serve the bereaved and take on a more sensitive design approach.

Grievers are typically observed to display three primary patterns, *intuitive*, *instrumental*, and *blended grief* (see Figure 5).<sup>71</sup> This can be viewed as a spectrum where *intuitive* and *instrumental* patterns are positioned on opposite ends and differ according to “the cognitive and affective components of the internal experience of loss and the individual’s outward expression of that experience.”<sup>72</sup> Typically, most people will display a *blended* pattern of grief but will lean towards one end of the spectrum. Grievers can also bounce between the two extremes of the spectrum as they navigate different events and circumstances following the death of a loved one (e.g. suppressing feelings to make funeral arrangements). Very few people will display a purely *intuitive* or *instrumental* pattern but it has been observed that women will typically display *intuitive grief* patterns while men will display *instrumental grief* patterns. Additionally, bereaved individuals will confront their grief through three intrapersonal and interpersonal modes: privately by themselves, socially through their support network, and therapeutically with mental health professionals.<sup>73</sup> Regarding architectural intervention, spaces and programs must address these two distinct patterns and the three modes. The intuitive griever would benefit from calmer interpersonal spaces that enhance communication with a receptive listener and the ability to express feelings and emotions. The instrumental griever would benefit from an intrapersonal tactile environment focusing on contemplation and inward reflection.

Fig. 5 | Spectrum of Grief



#### intuitive

- Affective domain (emotional + attitudinal based)
- Grief consists of more profound painful feelings
- Spontaneous expressions and wanting to share feelings
- Typically displayed in women

#### instrumental

- Cognitive Domain (intellectual + knowledge based)
- Painful feelings are suppressed, the experience is more intellectual
- Energy is channelled into activities
- Typically displayed in men

**Table 1: Health Outcomes**

**Affective/Emotional**

- Depression, despair, dejection, distress
- Anxiety, fear, dreads
- Guilt, self-blame, self-accusation
- Anger, hostility, irritability
- Loss of pleasure
- Loneliness
- Jealousy
- Yearning, longing, pining
- Shock, Numbness

**Cognitive**

- Preoccupation with thoughts of deceased, intrusive ruminations
- Sense of presence of deceased
- Suppression, denial
- Lowered self-esteem
- Self-reproach
- Helplessness, hopelessness
- Suicidal ideations
- Sense of unreality, fantasising
- Memory, concentration difficulties

**Behavioural**

- Agitation, tenseness, restlessness
- Fatigue
- Crying
- Overactivity
- Weeping, sobbing, crying
- Social withdrawal
- Increase use of alcohol, smoking, and other substances

**Physiological-somatic**

- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Energy loss, exhaustion
- Somatic complaints
- Physical complaints similar to deceased
- Sensitivity to noise
- Pain
- Menstrual irregularities

**Spiritual**

- Searching for meaning
- Changes in spiritual feelings or beliefs
- Asking about the meaning and purpose of life without the deceased

# Grief Theory – Towards a Contemporary Understanding

*“Life is death and death a life”*

- Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, trans. Richard Sieburth.<sup>74</sup>

“Grief Theory” is the term used to capture the proposed psychological understandings and discourses of grief. It’s important to note that contemporary researchers and practitioners work from a diverse group of theoretical models that capture how the bereaved navigate and cope with the loss of a loved one. However, these models result from changes in the understanding of grief over time. This section will provide a brief overview of the shift towards a contemporary understanding of grief as an increasingly psychologized and pathological phenomenon within Western society. This psychologized and pathological understanding of grief will provide this research with a scientific understanding of grief. It will also aid the architecture’s ability to directly address the concerns of grief relating to losing a loved one. The shifting notions over time and diversity in understanding grief make the topic interesting, especially for being something directly related to the intrinsic human experience of death.

To better understand current grief theory and establish a framework for this project, a historical overview of the developments in grief theory is required. Leeat Granek and Ester Holte-Kofod mostly provide this. Grief as pathology is a relatively new paradigm that became popularized after Sigmund Freud pioneered the concept of “grief work” in his seminal publication *On Mourning and Melancholia*.<sup>75</sup> However, before Freud was English theorist Robert Burton in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who was the first to define the concept of grief in psychological terms.<sup>76</sup> For Burton, grief was a “kind of transitory melancholy that affects everyone at some point in their lives.”<sup>77</sup> Granek notes Burton’s distinction of “melancholy as a disease and melancholy as a normal reaction to life events” as one of the first contributions to pathologizing grief.<sup>78</sup> This observed shift during the late 17th century and later in the nineteenth century, as

popularized by Freud, influenced future research and became the foundation for contemporary psychiatrists to diagnose and treat grief mentally and physically.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to note the historical transformations of grief before returning to Freud and outlining current models of grief. Ester Holte-Kofod provides an intriguing account of a philosophical transition in Western culture which saw grief transition from a moral practice into the “increasingly psychologized and pathological phenomenon” observed today.<sup>80</sup> During Greek Antiquity, grief was interpreted within a cosmological framework that provided a moral compass<sup>81</sup>. Grieving and the reactions to losing someone were not only involuntary human reactions but were also meant to serve as a moral practice to develop virtue. For the person of antiquity, something was to be learnt in someone else’s death. This aligns with the new idea of *Post-Traumatic Growth*, presented by Richard Gross in his book *Understanding Grief*, which states that personal gain can be found in suffering or that growth can be a positive outcome of a grieving process.<sup>82</sup> Holte-Kofod further elaborates on the transformation of grief during the Middle Ages when death became omnipresent in everyday life.<sup>83</sup> The Medieval person’s relationship with death was primarily a straightforward, non-dramatic acceptance of death and focused solely on the deceased individual rather than on the survivors. Grief was again transformed during the Romantic era, which saw society’s focus change from the deceased individual to the survivors’ inward expressions of emotion resulting from the era’s search for rationalism and secularization. The Romantic, unlike the contemporary, would’ve dwelt in feelings of sorrow and suffering as sources of knowledge and carried their grief onward throughout their life. Modernity would later challenge the Romantic’s view of grief when Freud argued for the “detachment from the deceased” in a process he calls *Grief Work*.<sup>84</sup> This, as Holte-Kofod states, would be the beginning of grief being understood as a “psychological phenomenon concerning an inner realm of mental dynamics, representations, emotions, and dispositions of the individual” and an important transformation that influenced contemporary understandings of grief used in this research.<sup>85</sup>

Freud’s *Grief Work* model, or mourning as detachment, involves the concept of “working-through” grief to detach from the mental distress of a loss.<sup>86</sup> His

notion that one 'has to do one's grief work' to avoid detrimental health consequences and come to terms with the loss reflects an inward focused mental exercise that has been widely adopted in Western culture.<sup>87</sup> However, researchers now question the effectiveness of this model, proposing that it may have negative impacts on the bereaved individual and lacks the ability to be adopted by different cultures.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the linear DABDA model by Kubler Ross (the five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, anger, and acceptance) has also been popularized and widely adopted. Still, researchers position it also to be potentially detrimental.<sup>89</sup> Since Freud's Grief Work Model, many theorized models on grief (described in the next section) have been developed and disseminated within a Western context. This created a convoluted approach to understanding grief and its effects. Granek expresses that the contemporary understanding of grief "has been constructed as a pathological condition necessitating psychological intervention in order for people to heal as quickly as possible."<sup>90</sup> In other words, contemporary research is understanding grief through causes and effects to provide treatment in a timely manner.

# Psychology of Grief - Theoretical Coping Models

*“For many, the experience of grief is varied and discontinuous.”*

*- Avril Maddrell.<sup>91</sup>*

Now that the historical transformations of grief have been presented, it's worth exploring the theoretical coping models of grief that have been developed since Freud's pioneering work in grief psychology. Although a wide range of models presents a convoluted structure of approaches to grief, separately, they offer precise psychological insight into how bereaved individuals may experience grief and cope with the loss of a loved one. Two authors who extensively research the topic of grief and provide comprehensive coverage of the theoretical models of coping are Richard Gross and Margaret Stroebe. The importance of selecting literature by them is due to their interest in providing research grounded on empirical evidence and models regarded as acceptable theoretical applications by psychologists.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, they also thoroughly scrutinize these models, reflecting a need for continued research. This will aid this research's holistic approach to understanding grief caused by losing a loved one. The models they present are typically related to individual involvement and will illustrate some of the cognitive processes the bereaved undergo when they're affected by the loss of a loved one. Stroebe provides a broad spectrum of four coping theory categories which are commonly utilized by practitioners: (1) *General Psychological Theories*, (2) *General Coping (Life Event) Theories*, (3) *Broad Spectrum Models of Grief: Phenomena/Manifestations*, and (4) *Specific Models of Coping with Bereavement*. Each category has various established models. However, this research will probe the last category, *Specific Models of Coping with Bereavement*, for its relevance in contemporary bereavement research, compatibility with previous older models, and common usage by practitioners.<sup>93</sup>

As alluded to earlier, there is no inclusion of the commonly understood DABDA model by Kubler Ross (denial, anger, bargaining, anger, and acceptance).

Professionals now generally agree that bereaved individuals do not move through these stages in any order and may not necessarily encounter all the stages. Most likely, the DABDA model was adopted by mass culture due to its simplicity in understanding. Stroebe notes that this model should never be prescribed to a bereaved individual as it could cause harm to them if they think they must move through each stage.<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, the model has become so commonplace that some mental health practitioners still use it to treat grief, and bereaved individuals will resort to it for self-treatment.<sup>95</sup>

This research will present the four commonly used theoretical models that grief researchers and practitioners employ. Important to reiterate, these models represent a bereaved individual's intrapersonal process. Due to the individualistic and sensitive nature of grief from the loss of a loved one, it's important that this research analyzes the interpersonal aspects of grief to get into the minds of the bereaved individual without relying on personal accounts. Furthermore, these are also founded by prominent figures within bereavement research, grounded on empirical evidence and studies. Therefore, the need to resort to sparse studies on bereavement is eliminated while also being subjected to an objective scientific understanding of the mind. At their best, the theoretical models incorporate an understanding of the underlying cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes related to bereavement.<sup>96</sup>

### **Stage Phase Model by John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980)**

John Bowlby's *Stage Phase Model* suggests that an individual's response to a loss of a loved one will *usually* move through a succession of phases.<sup>97</sup> The first phase is the *Phase of Numbing*, which states a sense of numbing, disbelief, and outburst of extreme distress and/or anger can occur, lasting from a few hours up to a week immediately following the loss. The second is the *Phase of Yearning and Searching* for the deceased, which can last for months and up to years. The third is the *Phase of Disorganization and Despair*, representing a period where old patterns associated with the deceased are discarded, and feelings of depression and apathy occur.<sup>98</sup> Finally is the *Phase of Greater or Lesser Degree of Reorganization*. This phase represents a recovery from the effects of grief and acceptance of what has happened. Throughout each phase is a continued relationship or bond with the



deceased, which will “fill a central role in the bereaved person’s emotional life, although this generally changes form over the months and years” following recovery.<sup>99</sup> Although Bowlby argues that an overall sequence can be discerned over time, he admits that an individual can oscillate back and forth between phases.<sup>100</sup> (See Figure 6).

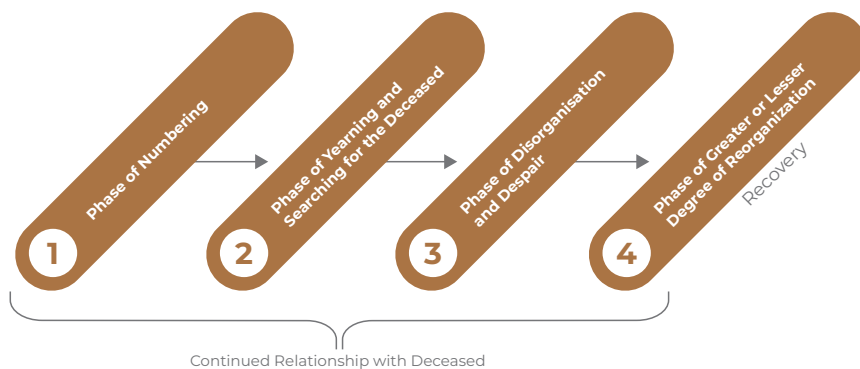


Fig. 6 | Stage/Phase Model

### Task Model by William Worden (1982,1991,2002,2009)

William Worden’s *Task Model* considers engaging in an active process of mourning comprising four tasks to help cope with the loss of a loved one. Although the word *task* is included in the name of this model, Worden suggests there is no particular order to follow, a sequence is just implied.<sup>101</sup> This model also posits that a griever must put in the effort to successfully complete each task and move beyond the traumatic event of a loss. This means that the bereaved are assumed to participate in their own healing actively. The first task in the model states to *accept the reality of the loss*. It involves a process of overcoming shock and disbelief of death, acknowledging its reality. Rumination as a side effect is an example of what someone might need to move past in this task. A common example of rumination is keeping a deceased person’s possessions in the condition they were left or keeping a loved one’s room exactly as it was before their death.<sup>102</sup> The second task is to *experience the pain of grief*. In this stage, the bereaved are expected to experience physical, emotional and spiritual pain. It is necessary to acknowledge the various pains, or they will manifest into unhealthy symptoms or unproductive habits. Everyone will experience pain at different intensities, but Worden states

it is impossible to lose a loved one without experiencing some degree of pain.<sup>103</sup> The third task is *adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing*. Worden explains that this task is used to discover the significance of the now-severed relationship with the deceased and adjust to the fact that the deceased is no longer filling the roles they once had. It is noted that a bereaved person is not usually aware of all the roles of the deceased until after their death.<sup>104</sup> The fourth task is *withdrawing emotional energy and reinvesting in another relationship*. This task is often the most difficult, especially for bereaved spouses. It represents a restructuring of the survivors' life following the death of a loved one. Additionally, it is possible not to finish each task entirely, leaving the bereavement process incomplete. (See Figure 7).

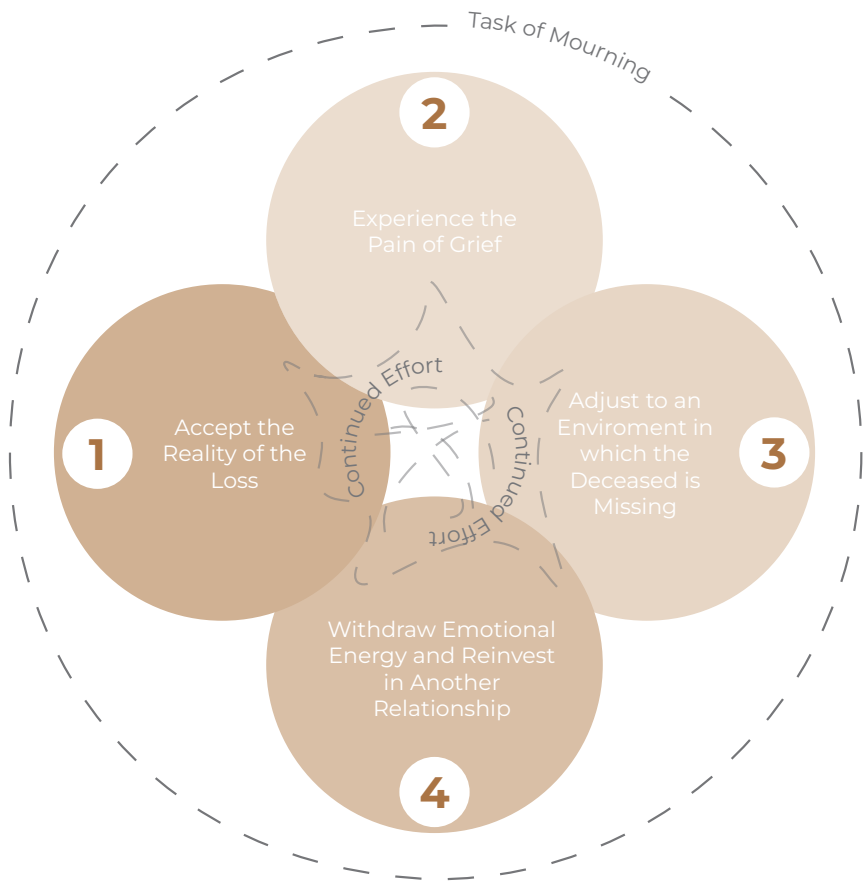


Fig. 7 | Task Model

## Cognitive Path Model by Susan Folkman (2001); Susan Nolen-Hoeksema (2001)

The *Cognitive Path Model* is a combination of the *Rumination Model* by Susan Folkman and the *Positive Reappraisal Model* by Susan Nolen-Hoeksema. The *Rumination Model* involves confronting the negative aspects associated with a loss through four means.<sup>105</sup> Each can lengthen or worsen the impact of a loss. The *Positive Reappraisal Model* works along the same lines, but instead, it involves confronting the positive aspects associated with a loss. Like the *Rumination Model*, each means can shorten or lessen the impact of a loss.<sup>106</sup> Together the two models represent a push and pull effect of the negative and positive processes the bereaved undertake after the death of a loved one. (See Figure 8).

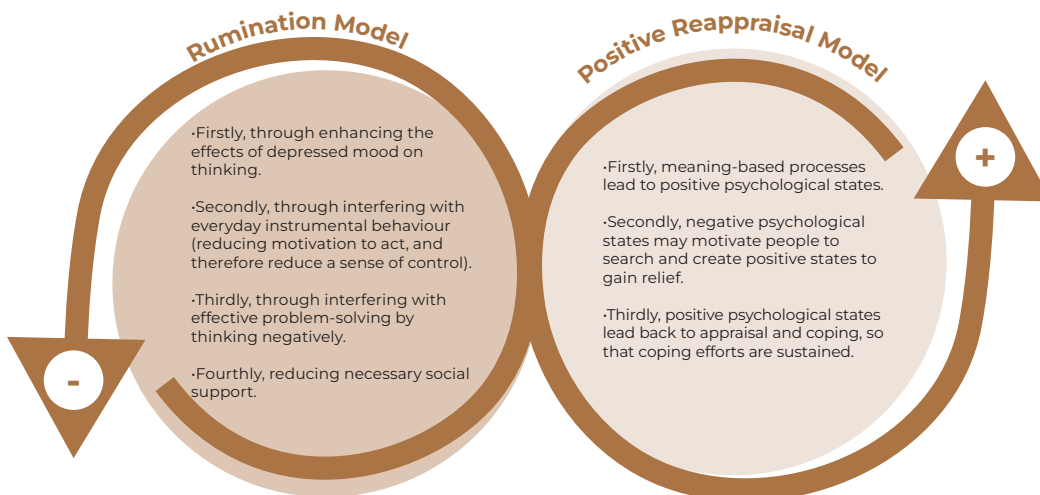


Fig. 8 | Cognitive Path Model

## Dual Process Model by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut (1999, 2001)

The final model presented in this research is the *Dual Process Model* by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut. Noted by Richard Gross, this model was created to provide a model of coping with a loss that aims to better understand individualistic differences in coping.<sup>107</sup> It distinguishes two orientations within everyday life experiences: *Loss-orientation* and *Restoration-orientation*. Similar to the previous model, *loss-orientation* includes rumination, and *restoration-orientation* includes positive appraisal. The idea here is that both orientations are “sources of stress,” people oscillate between the two, and at times

will have a “time-out” from the effects of grief.<sup>108</sup> *Loss-orientation*, or the primary stressor, refers to the bereaved person’s “concentration on, appraisal of, and processing of some aspect of the loss experience itself and, as such, incorporates griefwork.”<sup>109</sup> It also involves a painful yearning and searching for the lost one, including rumination about the deceased and the circumstances surrounding their death. A series of emotional reactions may also take place during *loss-orientation*. *Restoration-orientation*, or the secondary stressor, refers to the reorientation and restructuring of oneself following the death of a loved one. Richard Gross explains that the focus of *restoration-orientation* is on the “needs to be dealt with (e.g. social isolation) and how it is dealt with (e.g. by joining social organizations), rather than the result of this process (e.g. restored well-being and social integration).”<sup>110</sup> Similar to *loss-orientation*, a range of emotional reactions can result from the relief or stress of dealing with challenges. (See Figure 9).

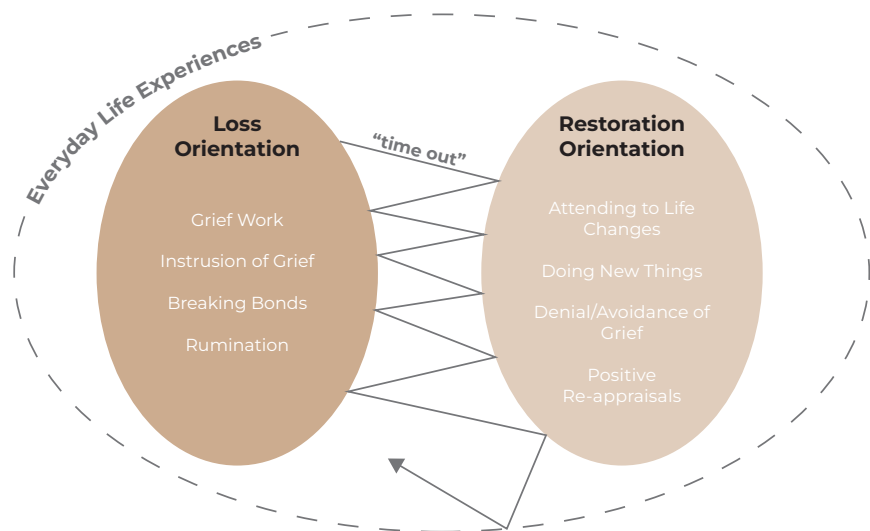


Fig. 9 | Dual Process Model



# Endnotes

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## Chapter 3 - Medium

This chapter will present two core concepts parallel to bereavement research but are foundational to the methods used in this research. A brief description of the emerging field of expressive arts therapy, a tool used in bereavement therapy through artistic mediums, will provide insights into how the previous research into grief can be manifested into the design proposal and justify allowing a personal account of grief to inform the design process. This chapter will also explore the role of memory and how it can aid architecture in guiding people through their emotions and experiences of grief. Furthermore, this chapter includes cremation statistics to position this research within societal trends.

## Expressive Arts Therapy

A relatively new and emerging field, expressive arts therapy is an “interdisciplinary, integrative, arts-based approach to counselling and psychotherapy” that works with different artistic mediums to expand the expressive capacity of a client (see Figure 10 and 11).<sup>111</sup> It is something that is equally scientific as the coping models discussed in the previous section but is also a clinical example of inquiry through creative making. In addition, the art that is produced can also serve as tangible material for an architectural research project. Aligned with the philosophy of phenomenology, it emphasizes pre-reflective awareness (unconscious response) and expression of lived experience through the process of making art and engaging auditory, visual, kinesthetic senses, and emotions.<sup>112</sup> It has a broad set of users, including people of any age, people with disability, people experiencing grief due to a loss (including anticipatory and complicated grief), or people experiencing other mental disorders. Importantly, it can be used by virtually anyone regardless of whether they consider themselves creative or not. Expressive arts therapy aims to reveal a “latent meaning to a receptive witness without the need to impose additional meaning.”<sup>113</sup>

Regarding bereavement, It allows images of grief and loss “to take shape in whatever artistic medium is indigenous to the experience, constant with the particular circumstances, and needs of the individual and community.”<sup>114</sup> It uses various mediums (individually or in combination) to express the intangible and ineffable, such as imagery, symbols, storytelling, ritual, music, dance, drama, poetry, photography, movement, dreamwork, and the visual arts. The most prominent examples are paintings. Specific examples include remembrance boats, memory boxes, commemorative flags, photomontages, or ceramics. Similar to how architects utilize specific design strategies to address many aspects of a project, a therapist can employ different mediums or activities for specific users, traumas, or conditions. The probe into expressive arts therapy not only establishes an argument for an intuitive, creative methodology but also provides examples of how to access a personal account of grief and loss.



**Fig. 10** | Expressive Arts Therapy  
Example: Painting



**Fig. 11** | Expressive Arts Therapy  
Example: Pottery

## Memory

*“My eyes have forgotten what they once saw, but my body still remembers.”<sup>115</sup>*

*Juhani Pallasmaa.*



**Fig. 12 | Two Loonies**

I have never felt the need to place anything at Jake's grave, but various items would often appear and later be removed. However, there are always two loonies in a small porcelain container left nearby and almost easy to miss. It's been some time since my best friend committed suicide in 2019, and I still don't know the significance of the two loonies. Was it left for him as a commemoration, an unpaid debt for a coffee he bought for someone, or was it the change left in his pocket for a final bus trip?



**Fig. 13 | Coffees**

Probably stale, two coffees are left at a burial site as a form of ritual for a lost one. There were several occurrences of coffees being left at the resting place of the deceased during site visits to cemeteries in late December 2022.

Reflected in the coping models and at the core of expressive arts therapy for griever, retrieving memories of the deceased and the formulation of meaning are key processes in overcoming the loss of a loved one. As the bereaved are cast into a dark state of confusion and sorrow, they require a means to revisit various memories and to find meaning in past events which occurred or in the new life as a bereaved individual. In other words, memory processes and remembrance are integral parts of the grieving experience, continuing relationships with the deceased, and adjusting to life post-bereavement. Presented primarily by Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey in their book *Death, Memory & Material Culture*, this section will attend to the importance of memory as it relates to the experience of grief by exploring how Western society engages memories through the material world. This will then open a discussion on how architecture can facilitate grief, foster remembrance, and offer a therapeutic environment for the bereaved.

Setting the tone for this section, architectural scholar and phenomenologist Juhani Pallasmaa's quote poetically captures the essence of memory. Even in today's ocular-centric world, memory is engaged through all the senses. And not only are memories stored inside "electrochemical processes of the brain; they are also stored in our skeletons, muscles, and skin."<sup>116</sup> In other words, memory is also visceral, and our whole body is engaged in remembrance.<sup>117</sup> It is this notion that will inform the methodology and the environment of the architectural intervention proposed by this research. Before engaging in architectural dialogue, it's necessary to examine the importance of the material world in experiences of grief and preserving memories. Quoted in *Death, Memory & Material Culture*, philosopher Gaston Bachelard argues that the "sites of our intimate lives can be revisited imaginatively, just as the events of one's childhood are encountered during psychoanalysis," and past events or spaces can be reanimated in fragments.<sup>118</sup> Catalysts for this process can include photographs, clothes,

or other ephemera attached to the deceased. However, there is a distinction between the lived experience and the remembered experience. To remember is to recall and reinterpret experiences, thoughts, dreams, and sensations.<sup>119</sup> This form of embodied memory can be engaged through many means, including the everyday places and mundane objects we encounter. In aspects of grief, memory is maintained through embodied practices, for example, maintenance of gravestones, adding flowers, cleaning of the deceased person's room, or partaking in other rituals.<sup>120</sup> The act of spreading ashes or creating "markers" (specific objects or places of importance) only visible to the bereaved are further ways to form and maintain memories. In short, memories are sustained through the conjunction of material space, bodies (living or dead), and objects (see Figures 12 and 13).<sup>121</sup> With respect to grief, "memory processes can be regarded as attempts to counter loss caused by death, making connections with absent individuals, and bringing them into the present."<sup>122</sup>

As previously alluded to, memory is not confined to only physical objects or visual stimuli. It is also engaged through the rest of the senses. Movement through spaces and spatial orientation contribute to how we formulate memories, such as funeral rites or frequented walking trails.<sup>123</sup> Familiar smells, touches, sights, and events can also stimulate memory. Even seeing specific motions or people interacting with objects stimulate functions of the brain as if the task was being done by the observer themselves and can give rise to memories.<sup>124</sup> Hallam and Hockey elaborate on this further by explaining that modern memory in the Western context is continually located at material sites rather than through bodily gestures that are important means of experiencing and transmitting memories.<sup>125</sup> Often ignored or overlooked, personally meaningful actions, usually associated with mundane aspects of social life, can form creative links to the deceased.<sup>126</sup> For instance, tattoo ink infused with cremation remains has become an option for survivors (see Figure 14).<sup>127</sup>

Within modern memory, there are increasingly diverse ways survivors create new memories and bonds with the deceased. Hallam and Hockey also note the emergence of "diversified, fragmented attempts to connect the past and present" and imaginative attempts to remember the deceased, maintain their social presence, and reintegrate their shifting memories of them into daily



**Fig. 14** | Ink Infused with Cremation Remains



life.<sup>128</sup> Hallam and Hockey also stress that within the social realm, conversations and discussions of the deceased contribute largely to maintaining memories and their continued integration in the “flow of life.”<sup>129</sup> As presented earlier, this also reflects how the bereaved will reach out to their support network to help cope with the loss of a loved one, further empathizing with the importance of the social realm in topics of grief. This research further argues that separate individuals can connect with memories through external stimuli, environments, and movement through space and of the body. What has been mentioned so far is a brief description of the ways memory attends to relationships with the deceased and how there is a diversity in ways individuals can engage in memory processes. In short, memories are stored within the mind and body, and because they are also physical, they can be stimulated by the senses, bodily movement, and the surrounding material environment.

We understand ourselves and live through engagement with many physical environments. When coupled with memory processes, our perception of the world is welcome to change. This is especially true for the bereaved. As Mark L. Johnson notes, all perceptions, feelings, emotions, thoughts, valuations, and actions are informed by our “embodied transitions with our physical surroundings, interpersonal relations, and cultural institutions and practices.”<sup>130</sup> Additionally, as Pallasmaa explains, “our existential space is never two-dimensional pictorial space, rather, it is a lived and multi-sensory space saturated and structured by memories and intentions.”<sup>131</sup> As we move through the world, we continuously project meaning and significance onto everything we encounter, and at the same time, our memories, real or imagined, are aroused.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, the general psychological state of someone can also be evoked by sensory experience.<sup>133</sup> Noting again that reliving memories and finding meaning in events are important things for the bereaved to acknowledge, this section argues that architecture can play a role in the grieving experience – primarily through sensory interaction with the physical environment and movement through space. Important to clarify, architecture, according to Pallasmaa, does not have the capacity to create feelings but can only “evoke and strengthen our own emotions and project them back to us as if these feelings of ours had an external source.”<sup>134</sup> This research aims to create evocative spaces that foster healing and remembrance, allowing an individual to fully

understand their new self or situation through reappraisal while facilitating support through a social network.

How can architecture begin evoking a possibility of feelings, both comforting and difficult, and attend to memory processes? The first and perhaps most obvious avenue to venture is the cemetery. Firstly, by looking at the cemetery, this research exposes itself to a cultural and ritualistic imperative intrinsically tied to memory and grieving processes. Here, the diversity in ways people mourn, partake in rites and rituals, and connect with the deceased in their own ways can be directly observed and crossed referenced to the proposed site. Secondly, it is a place that remains attached to most people and cities within the Western world, regardless of a religious sect or burial preference.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, the themes and motifs (as observed and experienced) of the cemetery can have weight and communicative power. The second avenue is exploring concepts of phenomenology in architecture to arouse memories, engage the body, and evoke feelings. For instance, a tactile experience with specific materials associated with the cemetery can evoke special feelings of death and remembrance. The cyclical nature of life and death can be evoked by implementing natural elements in conjunction with solid built forms. Influencing how people move through space can evoke further feelings or sensations reminiscent of a memory. The interplay of lightness and darkness can be used as metaphoric devices of temporality, while hard surfaces can speak to the permanence people seek in persevering their memories. A later section will explore an intuitive process of making, or as anthropologist Tim Ingold may say, “thinking through making” and “knowing from the inside” to further attend to these related themes of grief.<sup>136</sup>

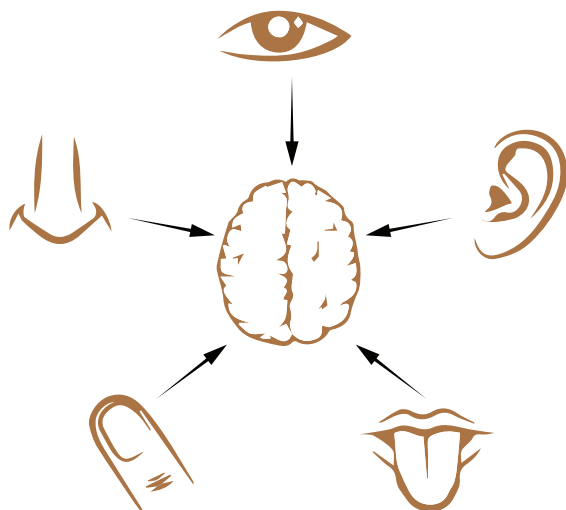


Fig. 15 | Senses and Memory

## Cremation

The cyclical nature of life and death can be metaphorically driven through nature (see Chapter 5). When nature's qualities are combined with the materiality of cremated ashes, the emotional connection with the deceased is heightened—for instance, someone releasing ashes into the wind, a stream, or a plant bed. Cremation, and its diverse use in materiality, is becoming more common amongst the non-religious and religious due to an increasing lack of space. Responding to Western cultural and societal trends, this research will consider the rapid popularity of cremation. For perspective, cremation in Canada has jumped from 72.8% in 2019 to 74.8% in 2021, showing a continued rise in interest. To express this in numbers, of the 309,718 deaths recorded in 2021, there were 231,542 cremations.<sup>137</sup> Although not accepted by everyone, group, or religion, these numbers reflect a considerable opportunity for how death can be revisited. Consideration of the growing use of cremation across Canada and the rituals associated with it will prompt ways users can emotionally engage with the research's proposed site and can also assist in establishing an atmosphere for the site.<sup>138</sup>

**Fig. 16** | Representation of Ashes Released into the Wind





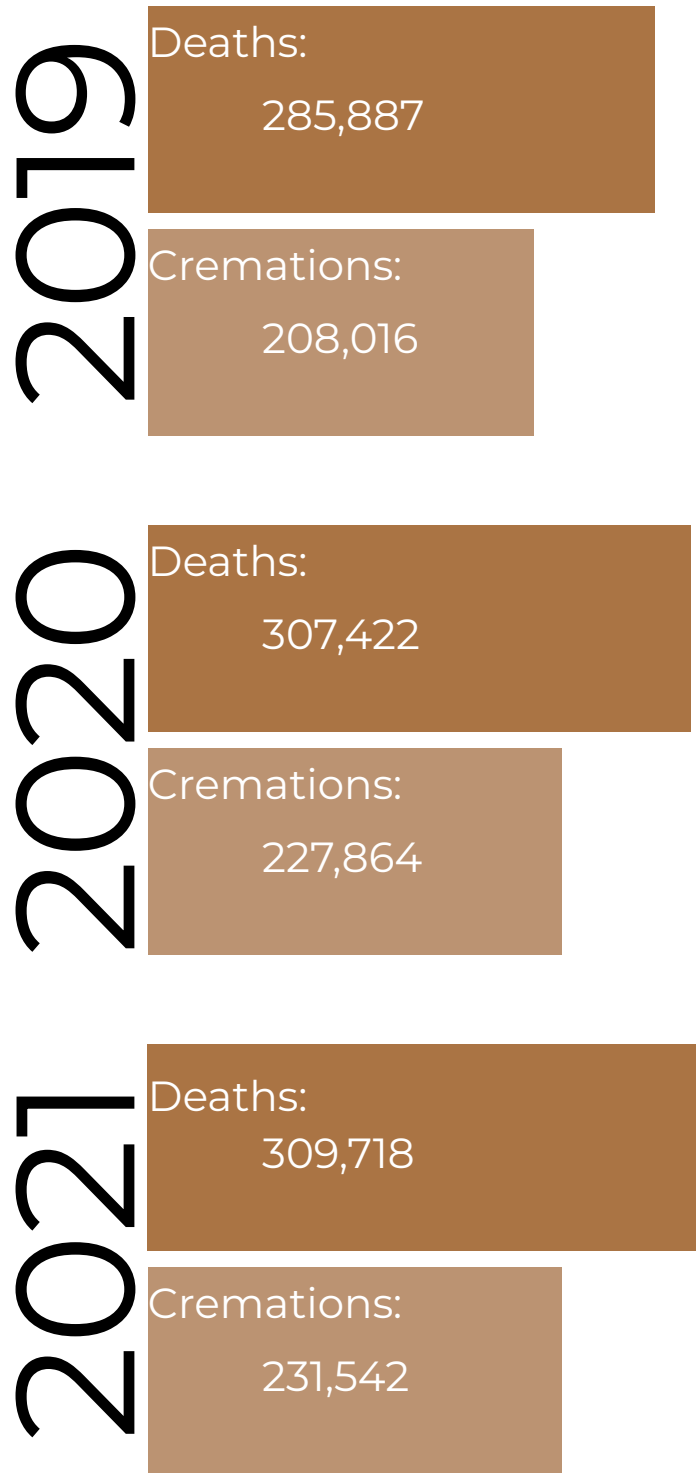


Fig. 17 | Canadian Cremation Statistics

## Endnotes

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# Chapter 4 - Ruminations

Considered to be the pre-design phase of this research, this chapter will present the juncture of scientific research and architectural design. Divided into two parts, there will first be an exploration of the research gatherings through expressive models, a process aligned to the principles of expressive arts therapy discussed in the previous section. The same process also taps into a deep insider account of grief, reflecting a personal journey of loss through making. The later part of this section will explore the proposed site through photographic analysis that cross-references it to various cemeteries across Windsor, Ontario. By exploring the two typologies through photography, similar themes can be extracted and better pair the research's proposal with notions of grief. The title for this section is borrowed from the concept of ruminations found within the coping models presented earlier in this research. In short, this chapter will comprise a self-reflective journey of the research, personal experiences, and to some degree, the shared grief as seen through the cemeteries of Windsor and Brunet Park. In this chapter, I will alternate between hand, eye, and model - a transaction that sees me become an active participant in the site and research.

## Ruminations: Craft

A framework of research into the psychological, health, social science, and cultural aspects of grief thus far will need to be supported further. To form the juncture between scientific research and creative design, an intuitive process of creative inquiry will be conducted. In the words of anthropologist Tim Ingold, this is best described as “thinking through making” and “knowing from the inside.”<sup>139</sup> The goal is to develop a unique understanding of grief as it relates to architectural design through an explorative process of hand-to-head. This process is informed by several aspects discussed throughout this research, in addition to the McEwen School of Architecture’s pedagogical emphasis on craft. Firstly, it is partly informed by my personal experience of losing my close friend in 2019. Although grief is an individual experience, addressing my own experiences allows me to empathize with the potential users of this research proposal. To clarify, dwelling on my own experiences is not a means to attend to my own pains but rather embody feelings that may be shared by others and, therefore, better connect a design proposal to its users. This is not a novel idea either. Architect Dwayne Smyth reflected on the passing of his grandmother in the design of Shape Architecture’s South Haven Centre for Remembrance in Edmonton, leading to a beautifully articulated project. (See Chapter 5).<sup>140</sup> From a different perspective, the works of artists Käthe Kollwitz and Anselm Kiefer can be regarded as embodying an emotional past, both shared and individual to the artists (see Figures 18 and 19). Secondly, this process is also informed by the theoretical coping models that state that addressing one’s own grief is a step to overcoming it. Lastly, it is informed by expressive arts therapy and its principle of revealing latent meaning through creative production.<sup>141</sup> By “ruminating” in the vast domain of grief research and past experiences, I can explore the many themes of grief creatively rather than only through intellectual and verbal analyses.<sup>142</sup>

To further elaborate, this ‘improvisational process’ will entail the creation of various abstracted forms.<sup>143</sup> Each model represents a unique idea related to themes of grief and the supported research. Plaster is primarily used because of its workability and ability to speak to the

hard surfaces found in cemeteries. It also holds a sense of monumentality and permanence while speaking to the passage of time through the barring of imperfections made during creation.<sup>144</sup> As Ingold expresses:

“Materials are ineffable. They cannot be pinned down in terms of established concepts or categories. To describe any material is to pose a riddle, whose answer can be discovered only through observation and engagement with what is there. The riddle gives the material a voice and allows it to tell its own story: it is up to us, then, to listen, and from the clues it offers, to discover what is speaking.”<sup>145</sup>

Although a preconceived form is attached to a theme deemed worthy of exploring, there are no further impositions. The possibilities of the models become clear only after they are created. The use of wood, discarded camera film, and lighting techniques are also explored in this chapter’s making process. It is then important that this research further analyzes each model and provides a written description of observations. The remainder of the first half of this chapter will include photography of each model followed by its description.



**Fig. 18 | Woman with Dead Child (Frau mit totem Kind) by Käthe Kollwitz**

Kollwitz is known for her realism and expressionism paintings, printmaking and sculptures depicting women figures, the working classes, universal human conditions, and social issues. It's noted that the loss of her son during WW2 (which some argue to be foreshadowed in this etching several years prior) led to her lifelong exploration of the subject of mourning. Interestingly, she “found many of her motifs in her husband’s medical clinic for workers and people in need and where she also kept her studio.”<sup>146</sup>



**Fig. 19 | Your Age and mine and the Age of the World (Dein und mein Alter und das Alter der Welt) by Anselm Kiefer**

Anselm Kiefer is a German artist who works with a wide range of mediums. His body of work is quoted as being a “microcosm of collective memory, visually encapsulating a broad range of cultural, literary, and philosophical allusions.”<sup>147</sup>

**Fig. 20 | City of Models**

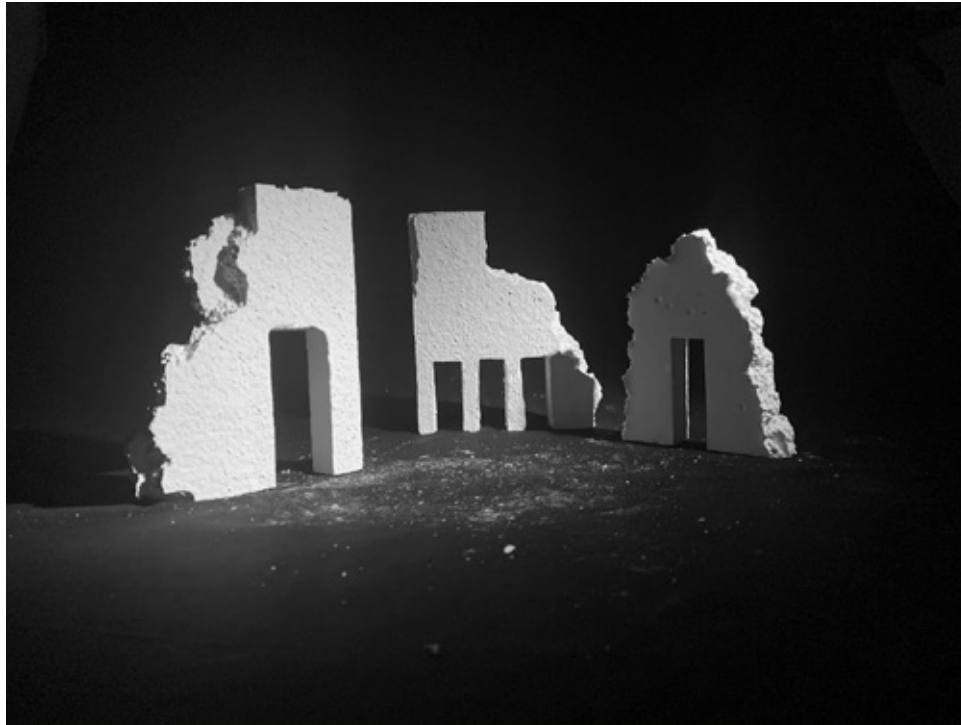


Fig. 21 | Passage

Grief often is represented or viewed as a series of stages one must pass through. Whether or not psychologists agree that there are stages to a grieving process, the idea of the *passage* is a useful analogy for describing the grief caused by the loss of a loved one. Here *passage* represents the new life as a bereaved individual, the time dedicated to mourning, or a major change in one's life. In the model, the ruined form implies that the physical passage, or doorway, belongs to something greater.



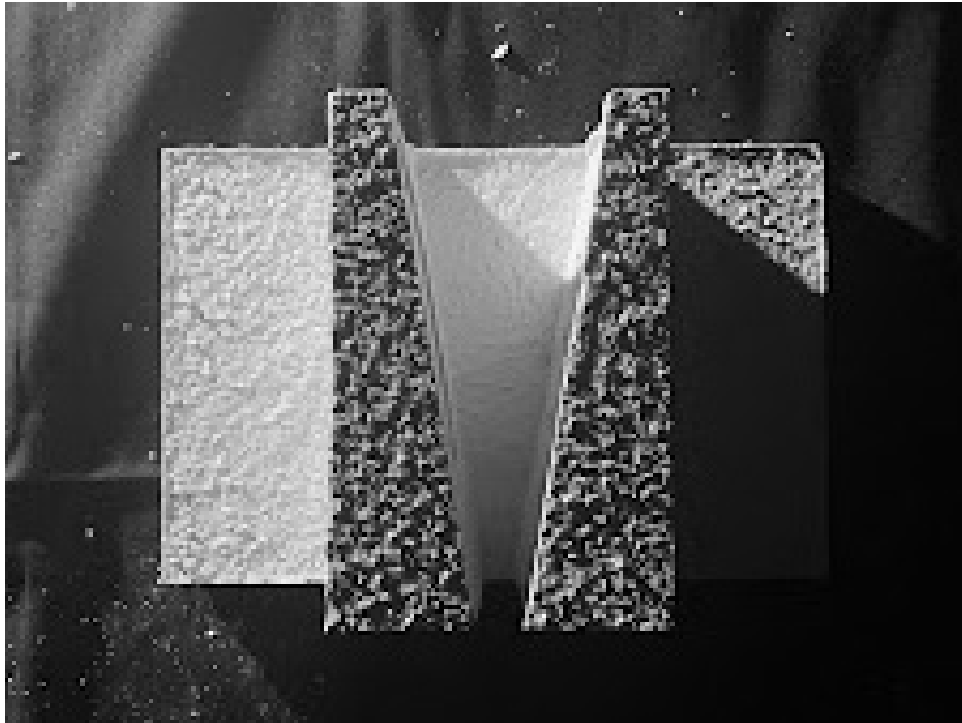


Fig. 22 | Stress

Grief caused by losing a loved one can bring many physical and mental reactions. One of these reactions often felt is stress. To formalize this feeling, two converging masses were positioned next to each other, leaving a pinch point in the space in between.



Fig. 23 | Labyrinth

Navigating bereavement can be confusing, and there may not always be a clear path forward for recovery. This is also evident by the slew of emotions that may take place following the loss of a loved one and the convoluted series of coping strategies presented by psychologists. In this light, grief, and the new life as a bereaved individual, primarily the first year following death, can feel as though one is held within a labyrinth...



**Fig. 24** | Light at the End of the Tunnel

but there is light at the end of tunnel.

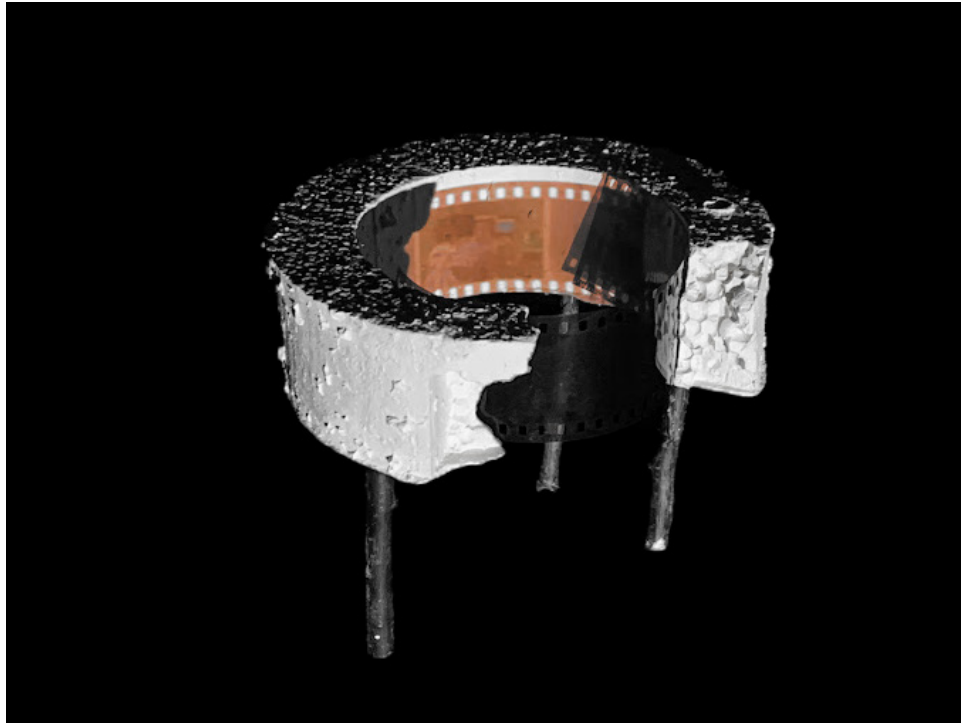
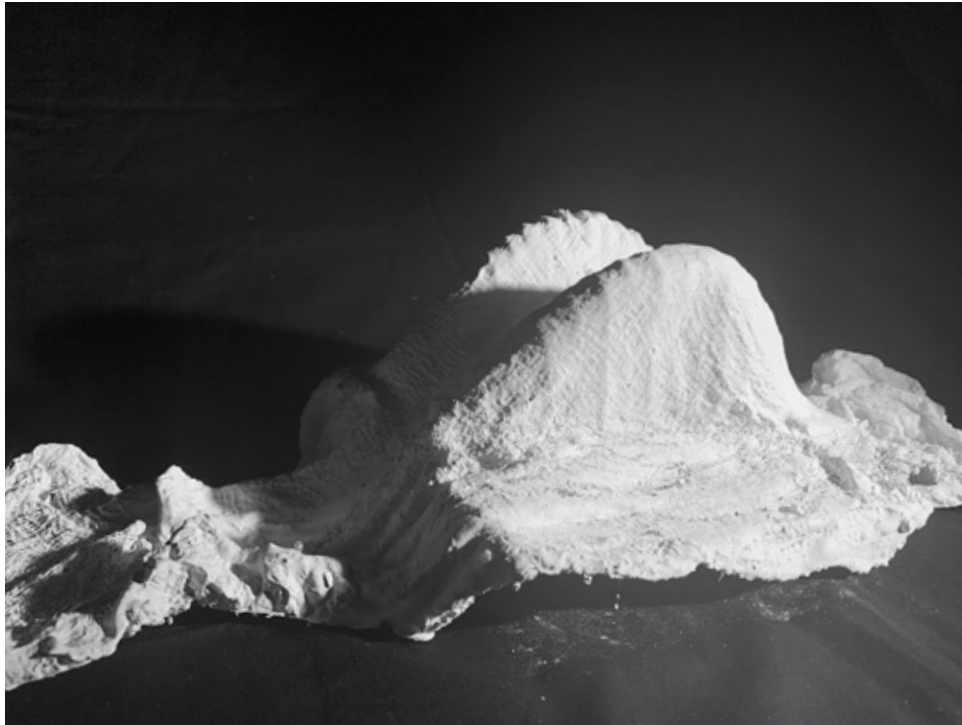


Fig. 25 | Memory

This model was created as an expression of memory and the role the physical world has in accessing it. As discussed in earlier chapters, retrieving memories of the deceased is important for overcoming a loss and continuing the bond one has with them. This model was created by casting a plaster ring onto stilts and then overlaying film negatives into the center. Light was cast through the film to project images onto the plaster ring.



**Fig. 26** | Carcass

Inspired by wind, this model resulted from a material study into movement using hard surfaces as an expression of time. It was created using cheesecloth soaked in wet plaster draped on top of a ribbed wooden object. The unintended result produced something more of a ribcage or a carcass rather than a repetition of parts. The lesson learned here is that some forms can be disturbing in nature and that themes of decay should be explored carefully.

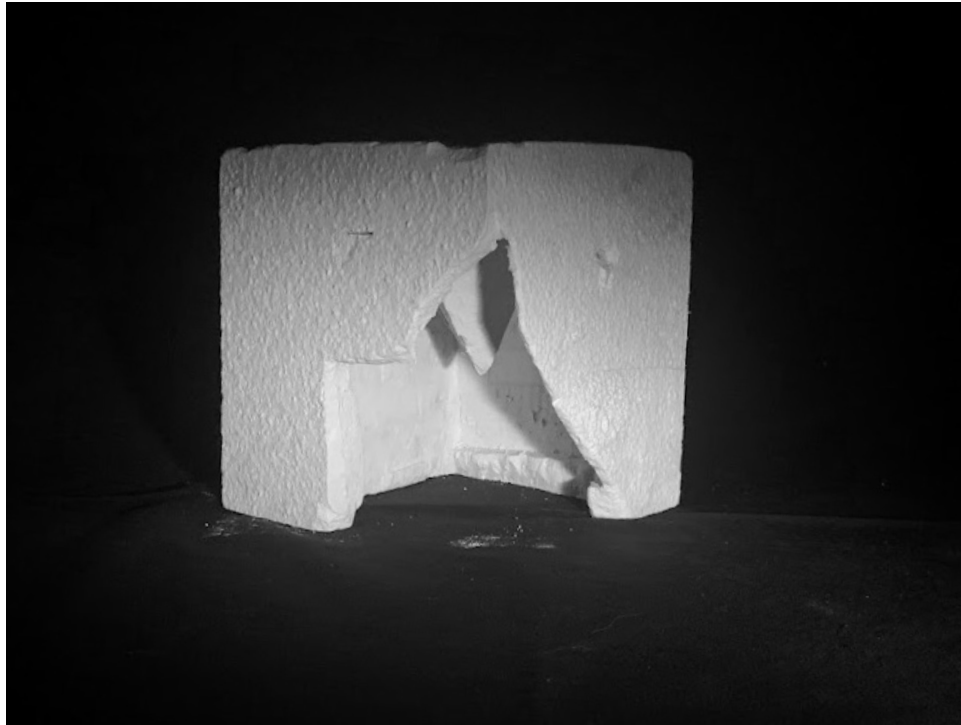
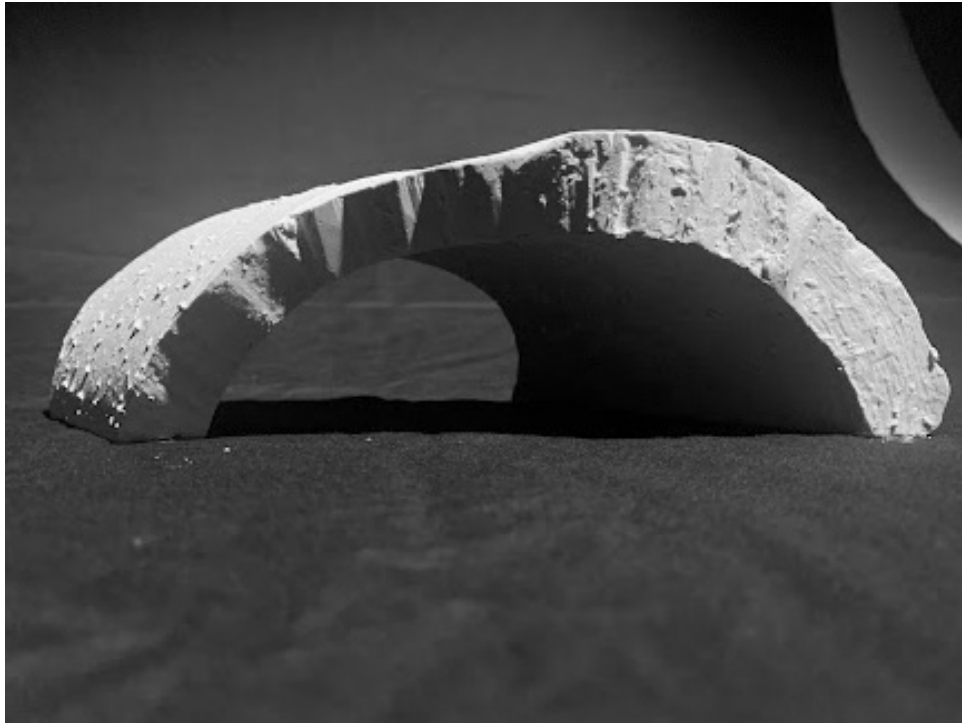


Fig. 27 | Weight

During the first few months following the death of a loved one, the survivor may be greeted by unwelcomed emotions and feelings triggered as they try to proceed with their normal life. To recognize and acknowledge these emotions and feelings, a model was made of a room with a triangular mass from the ceiling pointed downward, possibly crashing at any time. Envisioned here is the notion that unwanted feelings are a normal part of a grieving process and must be acknowledged to overcome them.



**Fig. 28** | Wave

Similar to the previous model, this model represents a wave of emotions that can crash down on someone. It also represents a small shadow that can be cast upon someone following the death of a loved one. This model was inspired by the slouching pin oak trees that appear to be weeping along the bush's edge at the beginning of the main trail (see Figure 56).

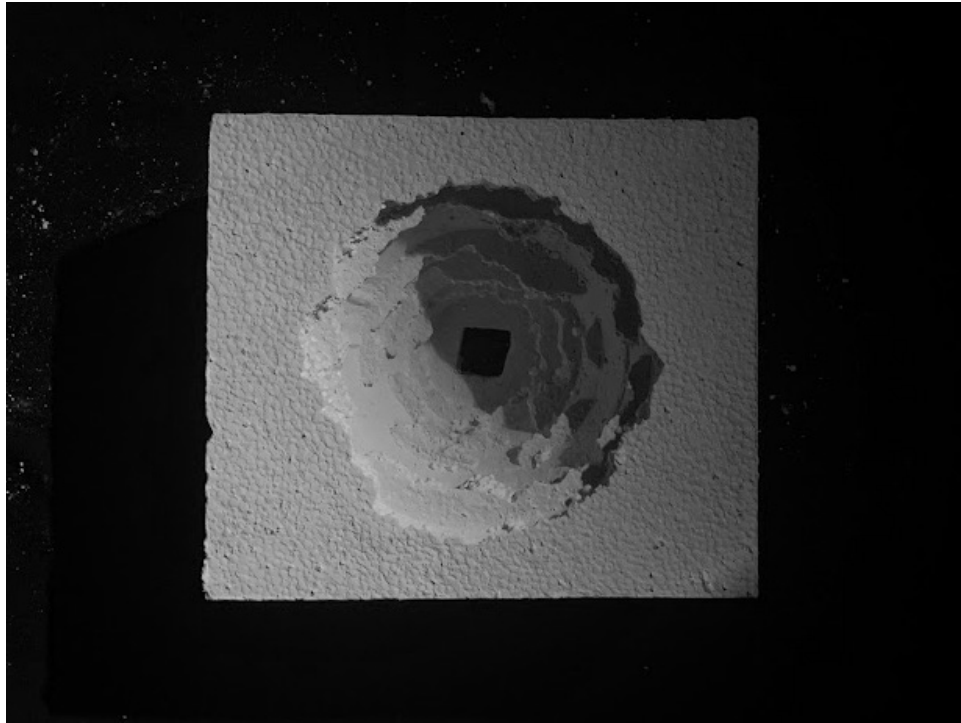


Fig. 29 | Pit

At the worst moments or in extreme instances, grief can feel as though one is trapped in a pit and consumed by emotions. Here the pit is realized but with broken ledges to form an escape, representing the idea that with enough conscious effort, there is a way out.





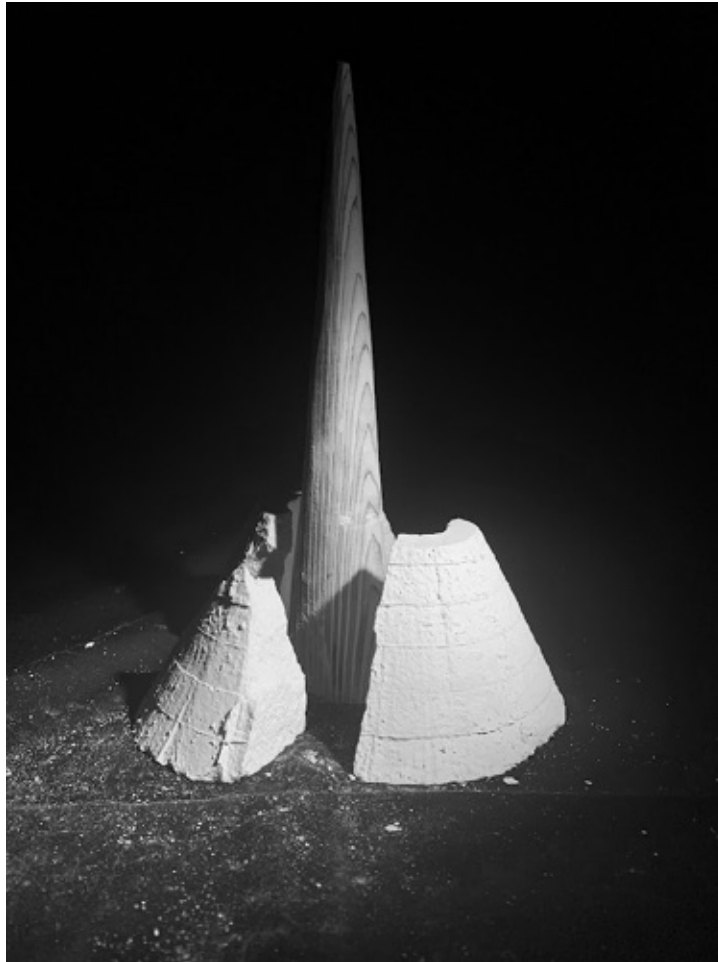
**Fig. 30** | Tactility

This model was conceived as a representation of the research into memory processes and how the physical environment can play a role in forming memories. Envisioned here is a cylindrical room where one can spin around while touching the sides of an abrasive wall. Over time the wall would smooth out from the touch of many people.



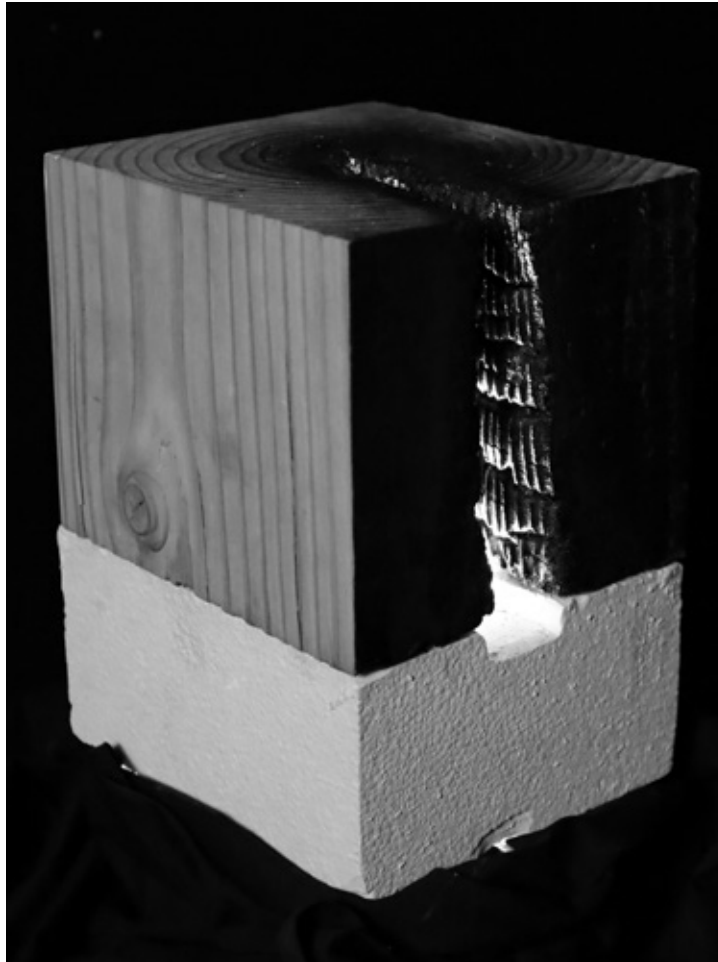
**Fig. 31** | Pressure

This form was made using two undulating walls that created two narrow passages and a void in the center. This model was conceived to represent the pressure one may feel when grieving and the need for shelter or seclusion from others.



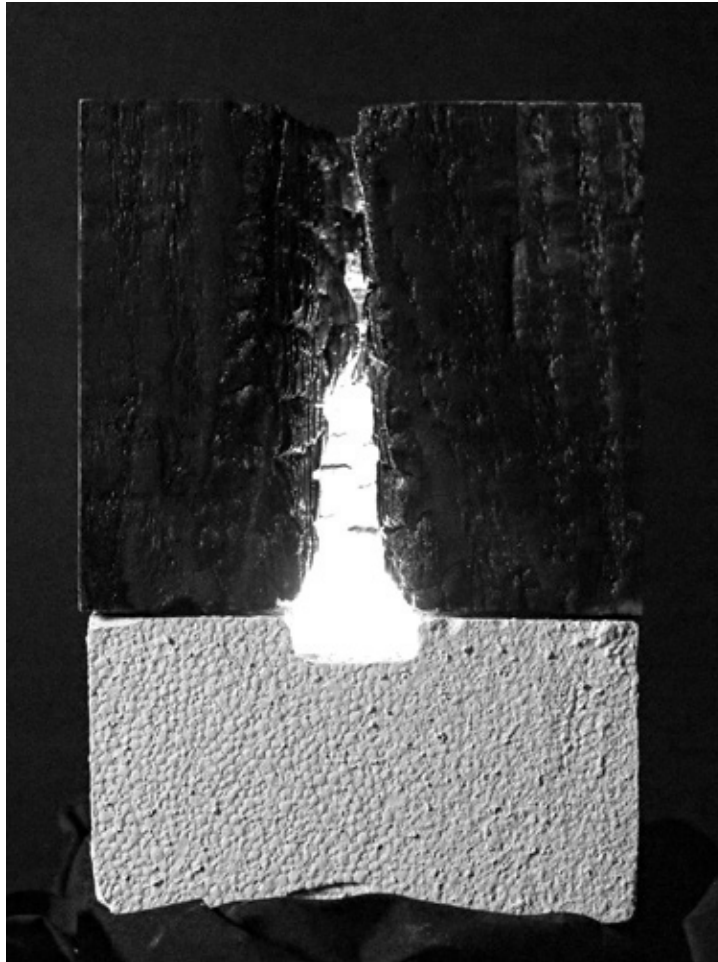
**Fig. 32 | Broken**

This model was part of a failed test model that broke during release. Instead, an opportunity was found in the broken pieces to make an arrangement around a spire to represent growth through tough conditions while also acknowledging the fragility of life.



**Fig. 33** | Illuminated Model 1

To explore the use of soft and hard materials, an eighteen-inch block of douglas fir was cut to size to fit on top of the previously shown Pitt model (see Figure 29). There was a noticeable split in the wood at the time of cutting that was made centred with the model. The center of the wooden block was also hollowed out using a drill press to reveal the interior. This also released the pleasant fragrance of the wood. (Continues...)



**Fig. 34** | Illuminated Model 2

The use of charred wood for this research proposal was discussed in a previous conversation with my advisor after disclosing that my family's cottage had caught fire a few weeks before the creation of this model. To further explore the materiality of wood, the hallowed section of the wooden block was set ablaze, allowing the interior to char. To accentuate the charred interior, a light was directed beneath the model. The original plaster model was chiselled to provide visual continuity.

## **Ruminations: Place**

The remainder of this chapter will include a three-part photo essay to capture the commonalities between Brunet Park and several cemeteries located across the Windsor region. The first part collages many of the commemorative trees within the park's clearing. By presenting the existing commemorative trees, this project can better align with notions of remembrance, memory, and celebration of life. Each tree is a person, a life, and a memory that belongs to the greater landscape of everyday life. The second part of this photo essay, and the longest, cross-analyzes moments of the park with moments found in the cemetery. The process involved extensive photography of the park and cemeteries, after which similar themes were generated along with accompanying photos. Each spread in this part contains an image of Brunet Park on the verso and an image of a cemetery with a sepia highlight on the recto. Each theme being captured can be found in the captions of the images. Some spreads include a third image to provide further context. The last part includes black-and-white photos of additional themes that were important to include in this research. By ruminating in place, the research familiarizes itself with the underlying themes of grief and the nuances of the explored sites.





## Part 1

Fig. 35 | Collage - Commemorative Trees of Brunet Park  
In sepia are the commemorative trees and in black-and-white are their associated plaques.



## Part 2

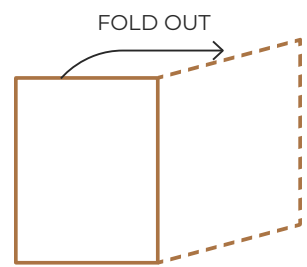


Fig. 36 | Fortitude (Brunet Park)





Fig. 37 | Fortitude (Windsor Grove Cemetery)



**Fig. 38** | "Resting" Place (Brunet Park)



**Fig. 39** | Plaque (Brunet Park)



Fig. 40 | "Resting" Place (Victoria Memorial Gardens)





Fig. 41 | Celebration (Brunet Park)



Fig. 42 | Marcel Pronovost (Brunet Park)

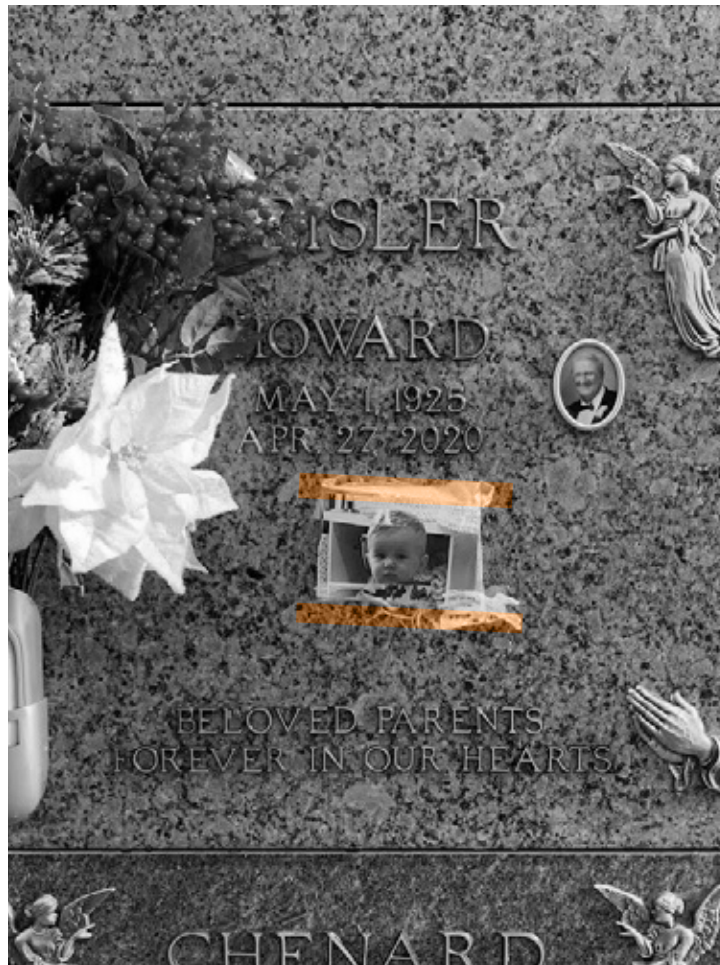


Fig. 43 | Celebration (Heavenly Rest Cemetery)



Fig. 44 | Ritual (Brunet Park)



Fig. 45 | Ritual - Budweiser (Brunet Park)





Fig. 46 | Ritual (Victoria Memorial Gardens)



**Fig. 47** | "Tending to a Loved One"(Brunet Park)



**Fig. 48** | Plaque and Embellishment (Brunet Park)





Fig. 49 | Tending to a Loved One (Heavenly Rest Cemetery)



Fig. 50 | Decay (Brunet Park)



Fig. 51 | Decay (Windsor Grove Cemetery)





**Fig. 52** | Approach (Brunet Park)



**Fig. 53** | Approach (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens)



Fig. 54 | Temporality (Brunet Park)



Fig. 55 | Temporality (Windsor Grove Cemetery)





Fig. 56 | Nature (Brunet Park)



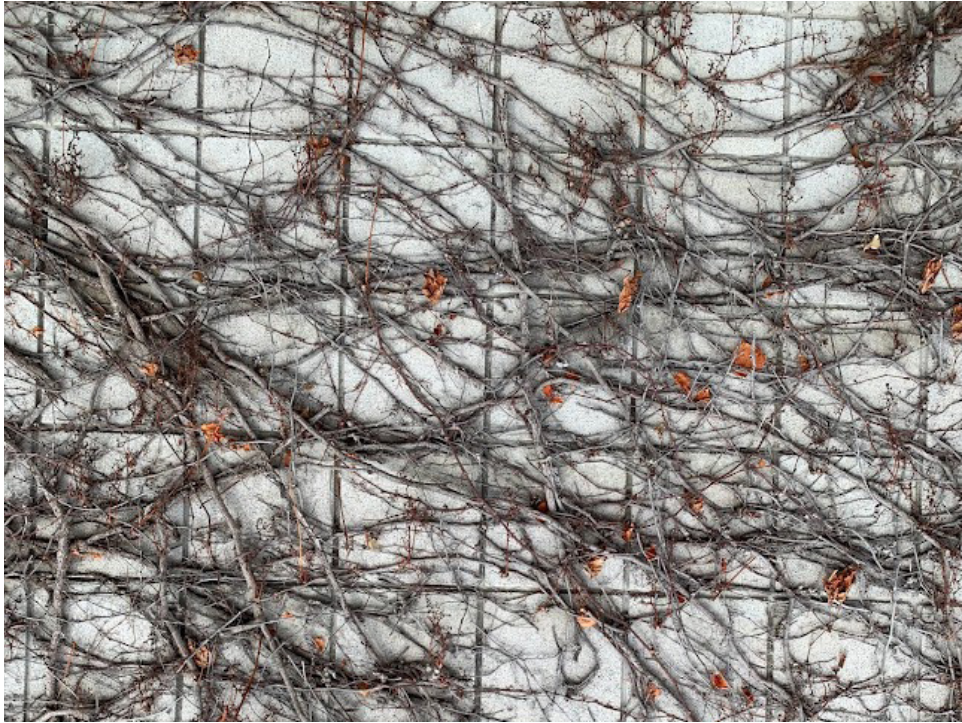


Fig. 57 | Nature (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens)



**Fig. 58** | Presence - Helena's Way (Brunet Park)



**Fig. 59** | Helena's Way  
Bench Plaque (Brunet Park)





**Fig. 60** | Presence (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens)



Fig. 61 | Return to Earth (Brunet Park)



Fig. 62 | Return to Earth (Victoria Memorial Gardens)





**Fig. 63** | Fading Sidewalk (Brunet Park)



Fig. 64 | Fading Headstone (Windsor Grove Cemetery)

## Part 3



Fig. 65 | Growth (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens)





**Fig. 66** | Overgrowth (Greenlawn Memorial Gardens)



**Fig. 67** | Materiality (St. Alphonses Cemetery)



**Fig. 68** | Materiality (Windsor Grove Cemetery)



Fig. 69 | Monumentality (Victoria Memorial Gardens)



Fig. 70 | Monolithic Forms (Windsor Grove Cemetery)





Fig. 71 | Monolithic (Heavenly Rest Cemetery)

## Endnotes

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# Chapter 5 - Precedent

This chapter reviews architectural projects that this research aligns with most and ultimately sets up the discussion for pre-design requirements. This chapter also includes an introduction to the site, Brunet Park, and explores an existing array of spaces associated with bereavement, themes of grief, and death in the Windsor region. By seeking precedent, this research positions itself within an existing body of relevant work.

## Case Studies



### Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden

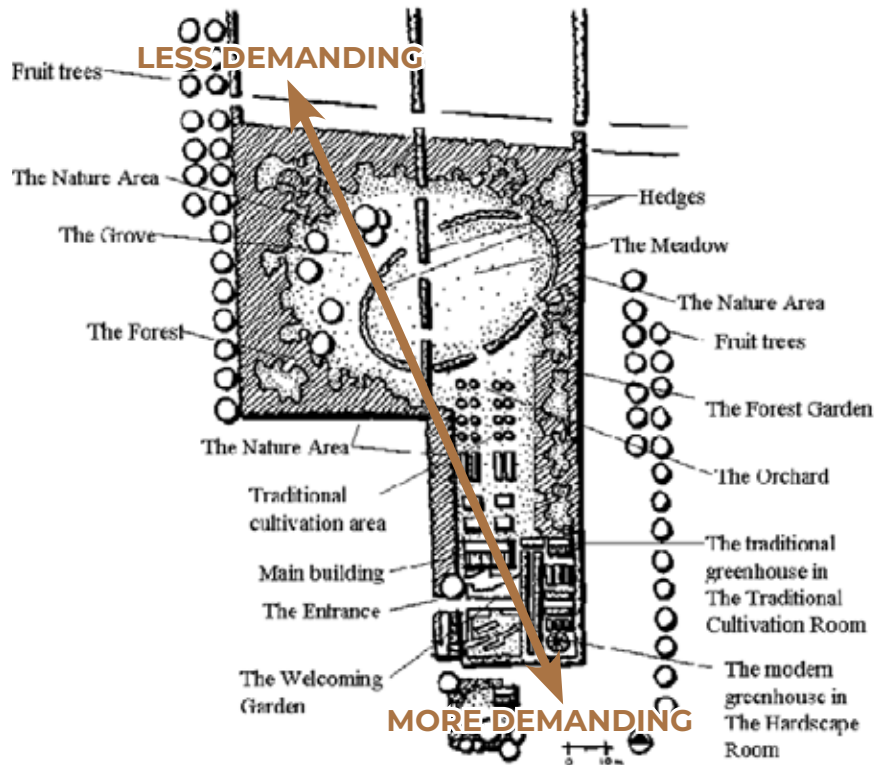
*Year: 2001*

*Location: Alnarp, Sweden*

*Designers: Patrik Grahn, Ulrika A. Stigsdotter, Sarah Lundström, and Frederik Stauchnitz*

**Fig. 72** | Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden Site Render

The Alnarp Rehabilitation Centre is a five-acre garden on the edge of The Swedish University of Agriculture in rural Alnarp, Sweden. It is a project that is closely tied to horticultural therapy and exemplifies the important role of nature in a transformative process. It is designed specifically for people suffering from stress-related diseases as well as a facility for conducting research on how the garden assists these specific people. It proposes that health benefits arise from being in the garden or being involved with nature, partaking in physical gardening activities, and being cognitively engaged in a combination of experiences and activities. The staff includes an Occupational Therapist, Horticultural Therapist, Landscape Architect, Physiotherapist, and Psychotherapist who work scheduled days throughout the week. People are referred to the garden by a doctor, and then they will undergo treatment as a patient. For example, patients can receive psychotherapy, art therapy, horticultural therapy, or psychotherapy. People who come to the garden can range in age and occupation.



**Fig. 73 | Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden Site Plan**

Towards the bottom (or the south) of the plan is the main entrance and the main building that houses the staff. There is also a discreet entrance to the east. Also in this area are greenhouses and planting beds for cultivation. To the north are hedges, a meadow, denser vegetation, a grove, and a nature area. There are various species of plants, trees, fruits, vegetables, and other flora throughout the site. The southern end is focused on demanding activities such as cultivating, horticultural therapy, and handicrafts (see Figure 73). The aim here is to encourage participants to access the relative benefits of the more demanding activities versus the intrapersonal experiences in the nature area to the north. The northern end is focused on restorative and emotional aspects of healing within nature (otherwise less demanding activities – see Figure 73). Here the grove and meadow are supposed to be reminiscent of the Swedish countryside and have a strong association with Swedish people and culture.<sup>148</sup>



### Windhover Contemplation Centre

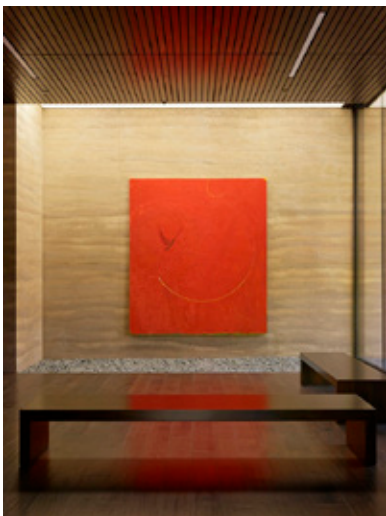
Year: 2014

Location: Stanford University, California, USA

Architect: Aidlin Darling Design

Fig. 74 | Windhover Contemplation Centre Exterior

Fig. 75 | Windhover Contemplation Centre Interior Artwork

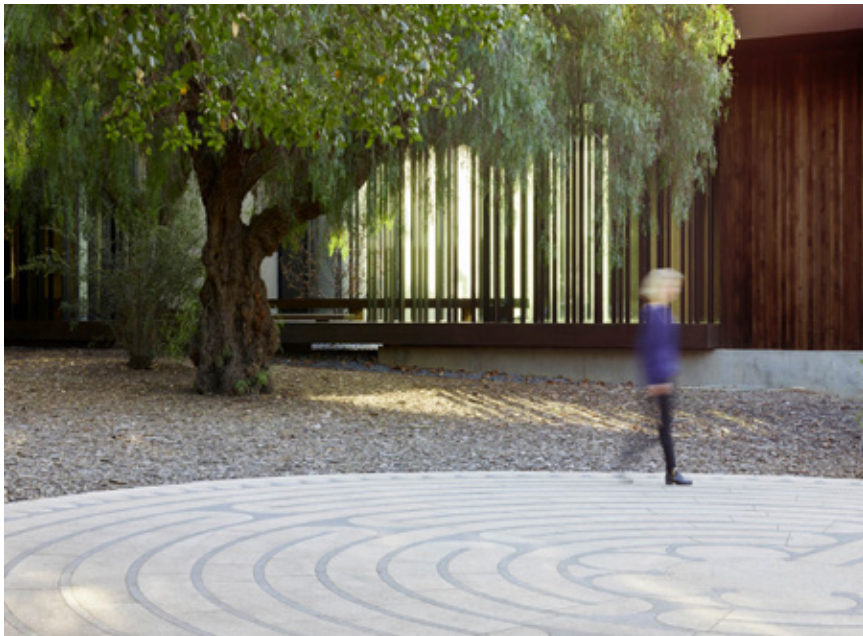


Windhover Contemplation Centre is a 4000sq.ft open sanctuary that functions as a spiritual retreat facility for Stanford University's staff, faculty, and students. The designers created a unique typology for contemplation and reflection that utilizes art, landscape, and architecture with the goal of promoting renewal and well-being. The building has an open-ended program with an "ecumenical" or non-denominational approach, allowing a variety of users to benefit from its spaces. It is also designed so that the art can be viewed from outside when the facility is closed. Various art pieces from Nathan Oliveira's *Windhover* series, where the project gets its name, are scattered throughout the building, with benches accompanying each one (see Figure 75). The art, inspired by kestrel birds in flight, is envisioned to help the observer's mind and spirit wander to wherever they want to go and are described as being meditative vehicles. The designers played with hard and soft natural materials, directing and reflecting light, lightness juxtaposed with heaviness, embracement of shadows, a sense of permeability yet desire for privacy, Asian influences through small garden features, peek-a-boo windows, and other carefully articulated gestures. Meditation through movement and resting is also encouraged with the inclusion of an outdoor meditative labyrinth and water feature (see Figures 76 and 77). This building is a great example of how architecture, landscape, and art can unite to promote contemplative healing.<sup>149</sup>





**Fig. 76** | Windhover Contemplation Centre Reflection Pool



**Fig. 77** | Windhover Contemplation Centre Meditation Labyrinth



### **South Haven Centre for Remembrance**

*Year: 2019*

*Location: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

*Architect: Dwayne Smyth*

**Fig. 78** | South Haven Centre for Remembrance Exterior

The South Haven Centre for Remembrance is a 7000 sq.ft public inter-denominational facility situated within an existing semi-rural cemetery. It is described as a place for solitary or regular visits. It was built with the mandate, issued by municipal officials, of being able to speak to everyone. Therefore, it contains no literal references or iconography. The building facilitates the public who uses it for services and ceremonies. It also facilitates the cemetery ground staff, who perform landscape and headstone upkeep. Specific spaces included service rooms for maintenance and upkeep, administrative spaces for business operations, private rooms for families, groups, and small gatherings, and a public space that spills onto an outdoor patio. Interestingly, the architect was awarded this project just after the death of his grandmother, and he notes channelling his experience with grief into the project. The design focuses on themes of transience, permanence, lightness, and darkness. The architect speaks to themes of grief, loss, and remembrance by incorporating the use of charcoal black timber next to light glass windows, referencing the headstones, monuments, and columbarium scattered across the landscape.<sup>150</sup>



**Fig. 78.1** | South Haven Centre for Remembrance Tower



**Fig. 78.2** | South Haven Centre for Remembrance Interior





### **Stiva da Morts**

*Year: 1996*

*Location: Vrin, Switzerland*

*Architect: Gion Antoni Caminada*

**Fig. 79** | *Stiva da Morts Interior*

Stiva da Morts is noted as being “a community mortuary building and not merely a room or hall for viewing the deceased.” The project is a response to shifting attitudes away from traditional funeral practices and a distancing from the reality of death in society. The building is primarily used for the rites of transition that occur before the funeral itself and “symbolically, physically and in terms of its ambiance lies somewhere between the everyday life of a village and the sacral grounds of a church and cemetery.” The building is contextually positioned next to the village’s existing church and cemetery but resembles in construction and materiality the homes surrounding it. By doing this, the architect metaphorically situates the building between the functions of a religious institution and the villager’s residence. The building has two storeys that account for the change in emotions of mourners. The lower level is orientated towards the village and is used for gatherings and viewings. The upper level is used for complementary services and more intimate pre-funeral rites. The building includes many large windows that grant occupants expanding views of the Swiss village’s landscape while remaining private and seclusive. Made almost entirely out of timber, the building rests on a concrete foundation that lifts out of the sloping hillside. The outside is finished with a humble white paint, while the inside finish is left in a more natural golden state.<sup>151</sup>





Fig. 80 | Stiva da Morts Exterior 1



Fig. 81 | Stiva da Morts Exterior 2



### Iguadala Cemetery

Year: 1994

Location: Barcelona, Spain

Architect: Enric Miralles

**Fig. 82** | Iguadala Cemetery Exterior  
Gabian Wall

**Fig. 83** | Iguadala Cemetery Exterior  
Wall Crypts



Enric Miralles' Iguadala Cemetery is an example of the expression of time in architecture. Here, time is embraced through "materials, spaces, ritual events and opportunities for participation to connect people to changes in their natural and social environment."<sup>152</sup> As part of a competition to replace an older cemetery, Miralles envisioned a "new type" of cemetery that considered both the deceased and the surviving.<sup>153</sup> The driver for this project was "understanding and accepting the cycle of life as a link between the past, present and future," strengthening the connection the living have with the dead.<sup>154</sup> Although it is a "city of the dead" for those to be laid to rest, Iguadala Cemetery is also a place for the living to "come and reflect in the solitude and serenity of the Catalonian Landscape."<sup>155</sup> Program for the cemetery includes traditional and contemporary burial plots and an unfinished chapel and monastery. A sense of fluidity and procession is also reinforced through pathways that are carved into the hilly landscape.

To capture the essence of time, Miralles uses a combination of various natural materials that reference surrounding landscape. Gabion walls, worn concrete, and railroad tiles embedded into the stone pathways speak to the rough and hard surfaces of the surrounding hills. At the cemetery, rainwater flows between openings, leaves and



pine needles accumulate in crevasses of the gabion walls, and timber cast into concrete floors decay. With these elements, and in combination with seasonal changes and sun patterns, the project evokes a philosophical attitude towards time, embracing the cycle of life and connecting visitors with the natural environment. Iquadala Cemetery also embraces ritual in other ways not provided by the program, such as providing various spots for visitors to leave flowers, spaces for contemplation, and empty wall tombs to be filled with shadows until they find future use.<sup>156</sup>



**Fig. 84 | Iquadala Cemetery Exterior Pathway**  
Timber planks are cast into the pathway, requiring frequent maintenance.



**Fig. 85 | Iquadala Cemetery Unfinished Interior**



## U House

Year: 1976

Location: Najano, Japan

Architect: Toyo Ito & Associates

Fig. 86 | U House Exterior Aerial (left)

Fig. 87 | U House Exterior Aerial  
Timelapse (right)

After the family moved out, the house was left untouched until its eventual demolition.

A spiritual and meditative building, The U house was designed by Toyo Ito for his older sister to mourn the loss of her husband, who died after a battle with cancer. Initially, the house was to take on an L-shape out of his sister's desire for visual connection between different areas of the house. However, the design transformed into a U shape in response to an increasing "focus on the symbolic nature of what the house meant to the grieving family." This led to an introverted design that isolated the family from the outside world. The building consists of minimalistic materials and spaces to encourage contemplative thought. The layout is also minimalistic, consisting of a long curved corridor that terminates on each end by a bedroom – one for the mother, the other for the sister. The primary source of lighting is from openings in the courtyard and a few small skylights that provide directional lighting. The white-washed walls and surfaces also helped to strengthen the lighting effects. Once the family was finished mourning and had moved out, the U House had thus served its purpose and was then demolished.<sup>157</sup>



**Fig. 88** | U House Interior of Light Gesture



**Fig. 89** | U House Interior into Courtyard



**Fig. 90 | The International Children's Memorial Place Ever Living Forest**  
Each tree is a commemoration for someone deceased. Growing in popularity, there is now limited space available for future trees.



### **The International Children's Memorial Place**

*Year: 1999*

*Location: Kinkora, Prince Edward Island, Canada*

*Designers: Bill and Myra MacLean*

Incorporated in 1999, the International Children's Memorial Place is the endeavour of Bill and Myra MacLean who sought to honour their son, Trevor, who died in 1995. Inspired by the healing power of nature, and quoted as being "nature's hospital," Trevor's parents set out to transform a former provincial park near the Dunk River into a place where not only them but other parents and families could visit and reflect on their loss of their children. The location is a 12-acre site in a countryside known for its natural amenities, outdoor recreation, and hydropower generation. In 2009 the site was subject to damage after a dam breach, but with government assistance, was returned to its former beauty. The site includes the 26-acre Scales Pond, a dam, a fish ladder, and a "very-serene" walking trail along the Dunk River.<sup>158</sup> Other focal points for reflection, socializing, or meditation include a commemoration forest named the Ever Living Forest, historical buildings, a brick pathway made with the engraved names of the deceased, a gazebo for weddings and entertainment, and a mediative labyrinth inspired by the medieval labyrinth of the Chartres Cathedral in France. Throughout the park are many places to rest and reflect on the sounds and sights of nature. In 2017 an article





**Fig. 91 | The Labyrinth of Life and Love**  
Inspired by the medieval labyrinth of the Chartres Cathedral, it is used to promote meditation.



**Fig. 92 | The Gazebo**  
Used for a range of activities, including entertainment, this feature shows how social activity is an important feature in emotional places.

was published by CBC noting that the park is running out of room for commemorative trees due to continued popularity and increased size (see Figure 90).<sup>159</sup> However, Bill MacLean states that this is a “Feel-good challenge.”<sup>160</sup>

## Review

Through these case studies, this research can position itself within an existing paradigm related to the constructed environment and bereavement research. The most noteworthy, as well as a common theme amongst many of the examples, is nature's role as a healer. This is best observed at Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden, where nature, specifically horticultural therapy, promotes the healing of a client. Similarly, The International Children's Memorial Place cultivates nature to provide spaces for healing and remembrance. Nature can also attend to grief beyond therapeutics, as seen in the evocative landscapes of Iguadala Cemetery, South Haven Centre for Remembrance, and Windhover Contemplation Centre. Here, materials, gestural forms, and manipulated landscapes establish an emotional connection with a site. For the South Haven Centre for Remembrance and Windhover Contemplation Centre, this is primarily done through visual means. On the other hand, Iguadala Cemetery encourages movement through the site and expresses the passage of time through the natural degradation of materials. Meditative thought encouraged through nature can further be seen at Stiva da Morts, where carefully placed windows offer private views of the Swiss valley. Broad in function, these examples show that nature plays a key role in how people choose to approach grief, introspection, and remembrance. By exploiting the qualities nature provides, this research can create spaces that connect people better with it while not imposing any belief or culture on mourners.

These examples also show that materiality plays a vital role in the engagement of the architecture. For instance, reflecting on the passing of his grandmother, architect Dwayne Smyth used a wood façade blended with a steel panel base layer to instill the themes of permanence and transience and lightness and darkness at the South Haven Centre for Remembrance. This can also be seen in the contrast between the interior and exterior. The careful articulation and use of materials are again seen in Stiva da Morts and U House, where surfaces are muted so that lighting and spatial qualities are heightened. In the lens of this research, this promotes inward thinking rather than outward projections. Although these two examples are considered works of art in the architectural community, their lack of space, privacy, and bareness encourages seclusion. As for the Iguadala Cemetery, using naturally

degrading materials means that the facility requires frequent maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions. In these examples, we see how healing, reflection, and remembrance can be engaged through many means, including water, art, gestural forms, lighting, and materiality. However, the focus throughout many of these examples remains nature.



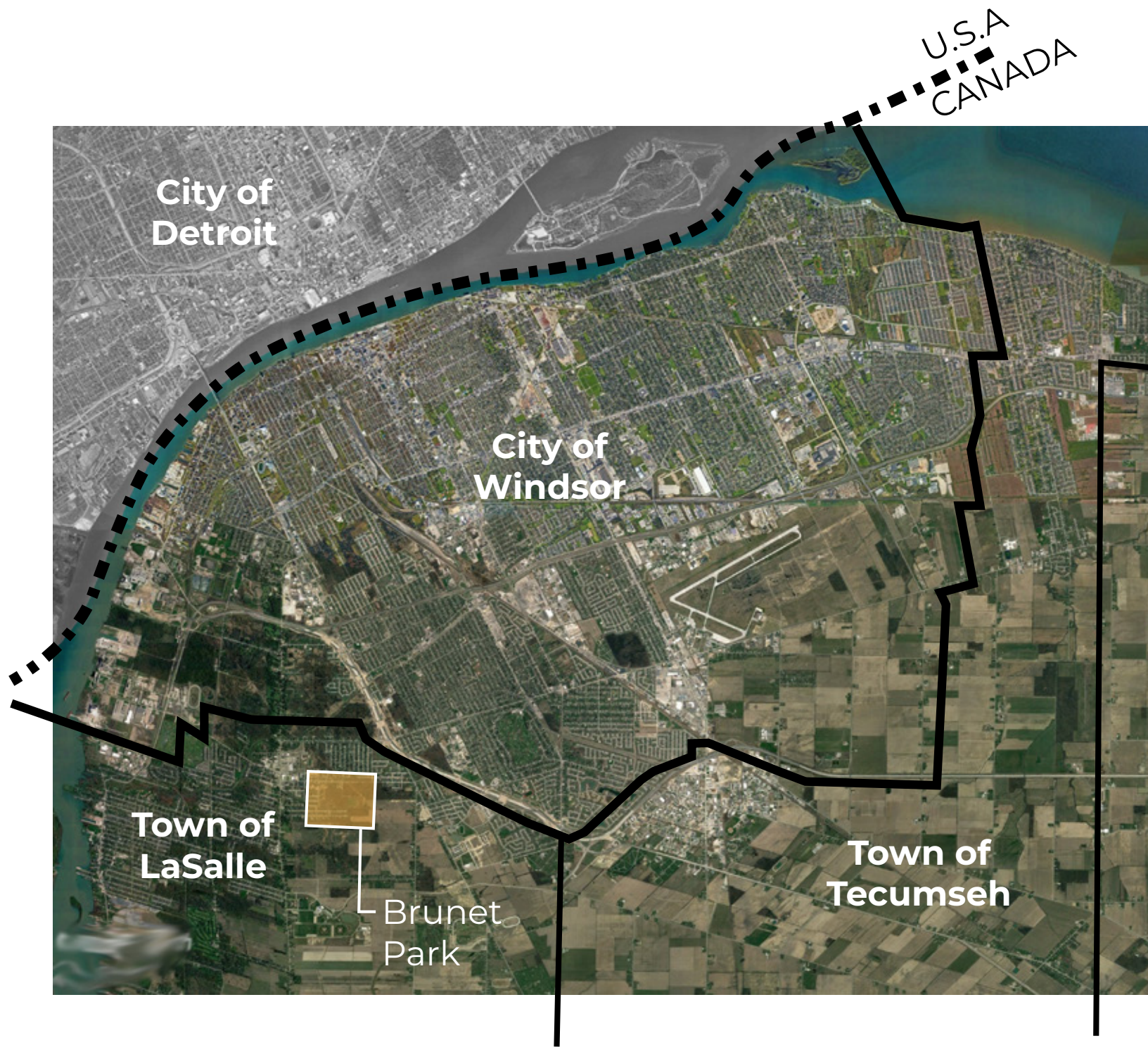


Fig. 93 | Windsor Region



## The Site - Brunet Park

Based on thorough research observations and information gathered from case studies, it was important to choose a site that has the potential to speak to everyone, be accessible, have a strong connection to nature, and is already a part of people's regular routines. Therefore, the proposed site will be Brunet Park outside Windsor, Ontario, in the Town of LaSalle (see Figure 93). Importantly, it is located within a large established neighbourhood, meaning it is already embedded into the routine of many people. This also makes it accessible and supports the notion of strengthening society's ties with death and grief. Additionally, as observed in a later section, the site is already an established emotional ground and includes approximately twenty different memorials for various deceased individuals. As noted by Hallam and Hockey, the spatial setting of public spaces can undergo transformation when new objects attached to memories of the deceased are positioned or arranged on the site (see Chapter 4).<sup>161</sup>

The park is roughly seventy acres of woodland with about five acres of clearing. Being part of the Carolinian Forest, common species found in the park include maple, beech, cherry, and oak. It includes narrow tributary streams that form part of Turkey Creek, a retention pond, multiple paved and dirt trails, and a gradual hill in the clearing. Small wildlife roams the park, including coyotes, deer, ducks, geese, and other semi-rural species. The park is typically used for light recreation such as walking, biking, picnics, small informal events, and socializing.



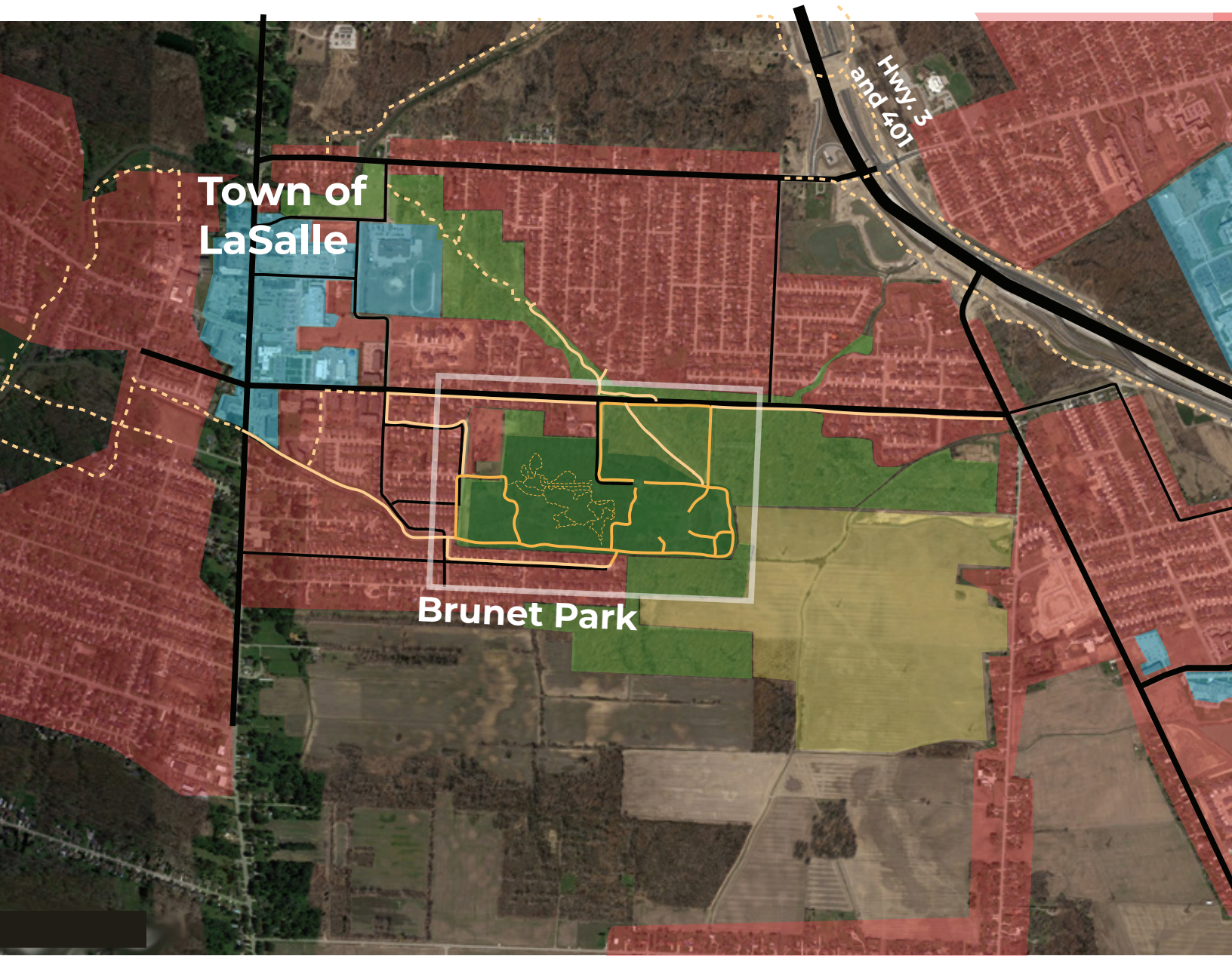


Fig. 94 | Town of LaSalle





Figure 94 further shows the park's location within an established residential area (highlighted in red) and on the edge of the town's central development. More urban development (in blue), comprising offices, businesses, civic buildings, and educational institutions, is within proximity of the park, and many patrons of these establishments frequent the park or live in the nearby neighbourhoods. As part of the town's development plan, many trails run through the neighbourhoods and connect to other areas of the town. These trails also connect to the newly developed Right Honourable Herb Gray Parkway (forming part of the 401), allowing pedestrians further access to other amenities and communities nearby the Town of LaSalle and the City of Windsor. Due to the park's location and the trails leading to it, there is a looping effect within the park (see Figure 95), adding to the park's role as a central hub within the town.

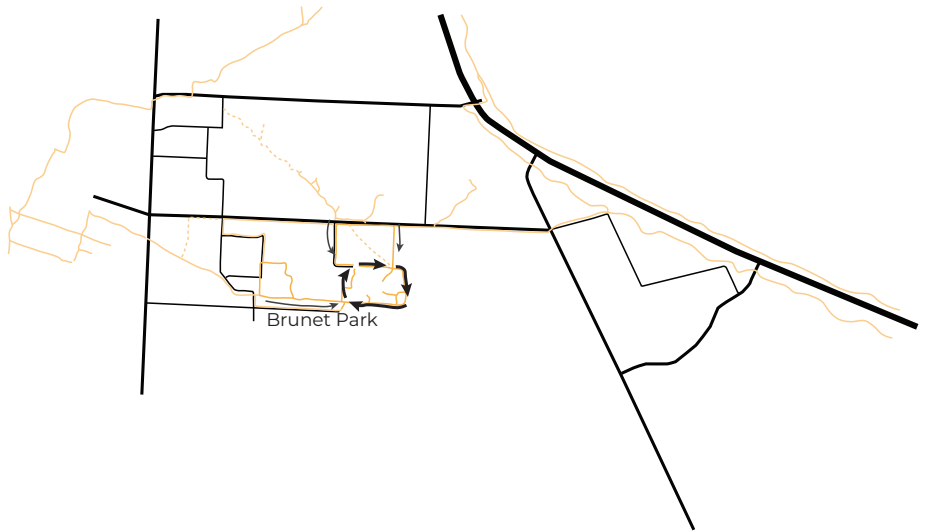


Fig. 95 | Trail Network



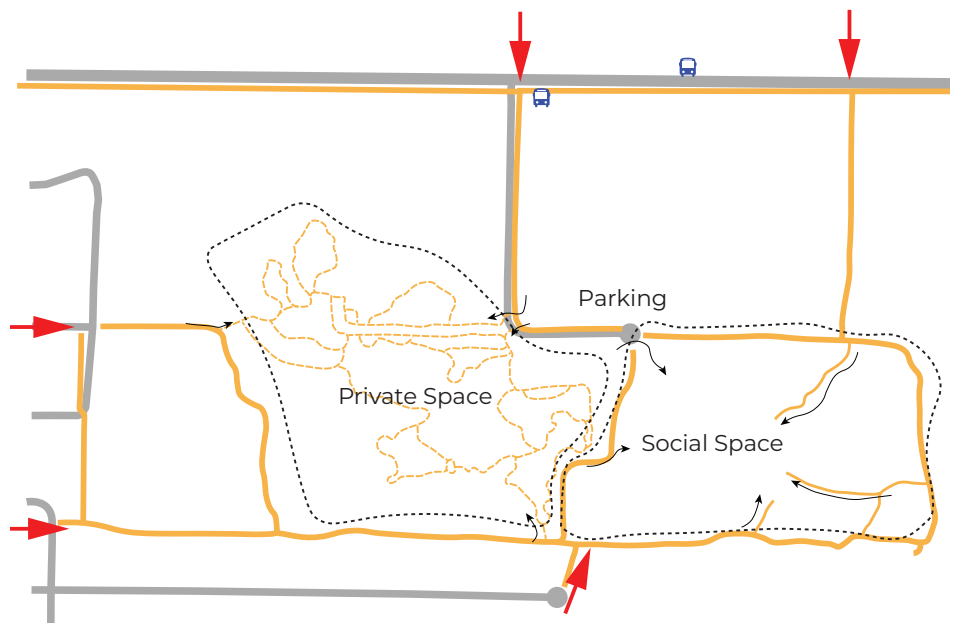


Fig. 96 | Brunet Park



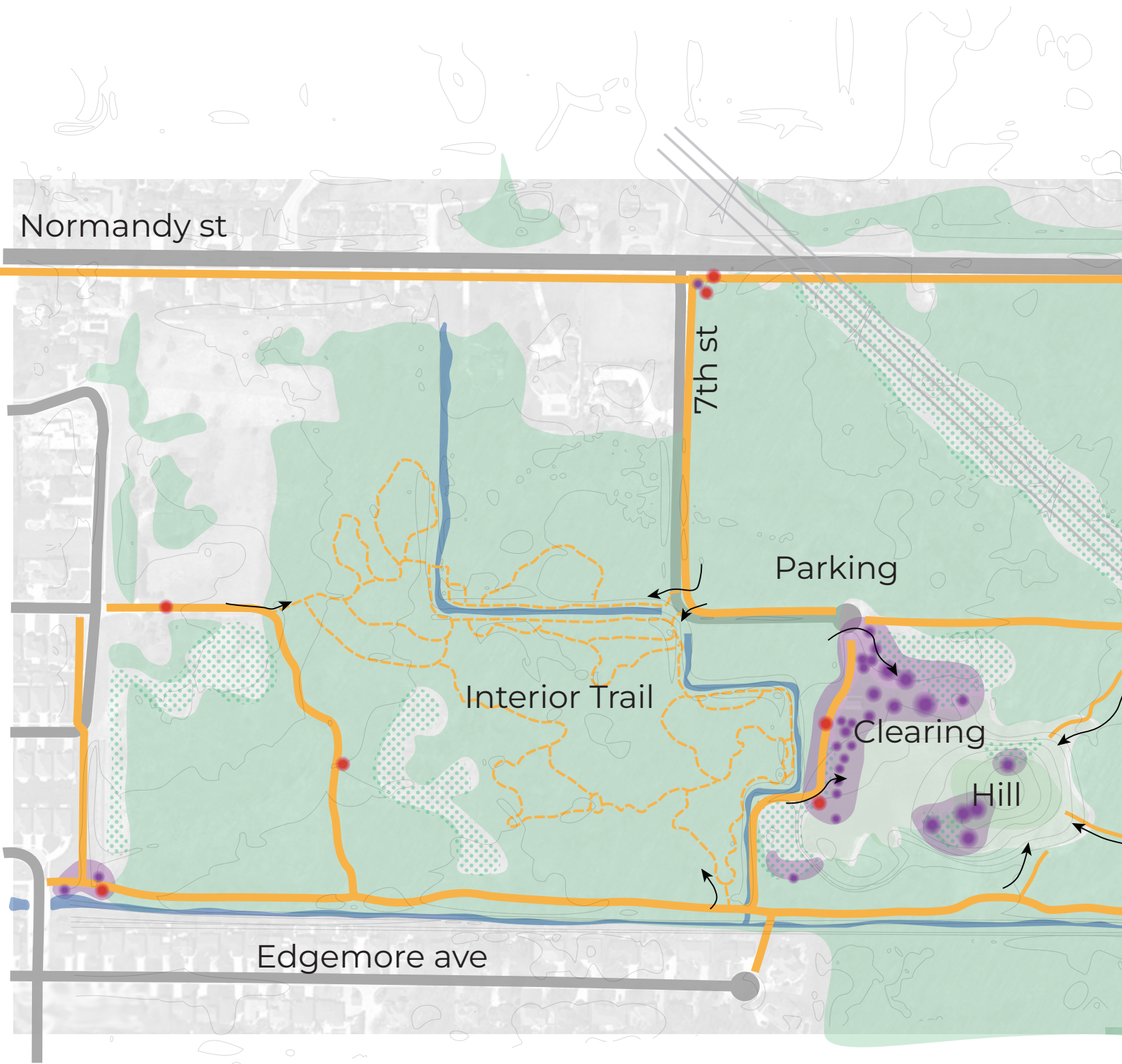


In the centre of the park, near the entrance parking, is also a Gazebo that can be rented out for a low hourly rate (See Figures 96 and 99). It serves as a hub for many activities, for instance, yoga and fitness classes, group sessions, talking circles, elderly groups, and more. Within the park's bush is also a winding trail that is secluded from the rest of the park. Several entrances to this bush connect it with the main trail network, one being an overgrown entrance named Helena's Way (see Figures 58, 59, and 96). Attempts were made to enter the bush from Helena's Way, but the trail was too overgrown and effectively lost. Considering the organization of the parks (natural and planned), and after thoroughly experiencing the park, two general spaces can be discerned (See Figure 97). The first is a social space incorporating the park's clearing, gazebo, and where the trails meet. The second is a private space comprising the park's bush and windy interior trail. The park feels like a small sanctuary, natural retreat, or place of solace. This sense of place is reinforced by several factors: 1) Turkey Creek acts as a physical and visual separator, 2) the edge of the bush creates a natural barrier, 3) farmland and thick bush cushion the southeast side of the site from a distant residential neighbourhood, 4) hydro lines slicing through the corner of the site act as further barrier and line of separation, and 5) the clearing has no views to anything outside of the park, isolating visitors.



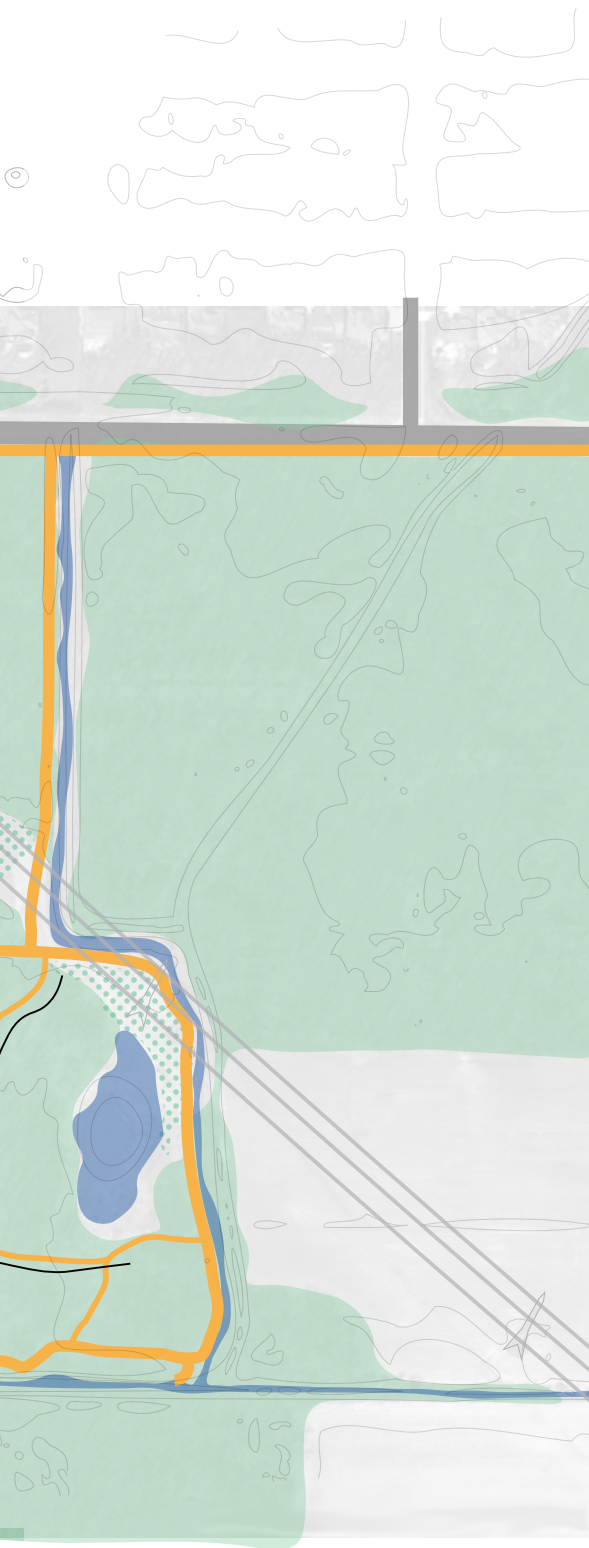
**Fig. 97 | Spaces of Brunet Park**

Entrances into Brunet Park are shown as red arrows. Two bus stops belonging to a busy bus route are situated just outside of the park's main entrance off Normandy Street.



**Fig. 98 | Commemorative Trees and Benches**  
 Shown as purple dots are the commemorative trees.  
 Shown as red dots are the commemorative benches. The solid purple areas represent the area of commemorative tree growth.





As photographed in Chapter 4, Brunet Park features an estimated twenty-four commemorative trees and seven commemorative benches (see Figure 98). This is a feature tied to remembrance and the desire for ritual. Each tree is a mediator between the deceased and the survivor. In a way, the trees and benches are also a performance ground for ritual and contribute to the park's atmosphere. For instance, the trees and benches are often embellished with decorations or flowers. Birdhouses, pictures, or other small items are also seen to be part of the commemorative trees.



**Fig. 99** | Brunet Park Gazebo

## The Network

An exercise mapped many places traditionally associated with bereavement, themes of grief, and death outside of religious institutions (apart from the cemetery) in the Windsor region. This includes mental health offices, hospitals, hospices, bereavement support groups, cemeteries, funeral homes and crematoriums, and woodland parks or nature reserves. Although this research values inclusivity, this map does not include places of worship such as churches, mosques, or synagogues because the research argues a lack of space outside these institutions in an increasingly non-religious society. As seen on the map, there are several funeral homes located within the city; however, these are only used immediately following a death as part of a ceremony and ritual. Windsor also has many mental health offices, but these places are not typically accessible without an appointment. The same can be said for hospitals which would also only be used in extreme cases (for instance, during a depressive episode following the death of a loved one.) Windsor does have several cemeteries, but they're located in non-ideal locations. Each of these places also only represents a partial function of the grieving process and does not necessarily respond to the complete needs of the bereaved. Lastly, Windsor and its surrounding area have several woodland parks. These are scattered fairly across the region and could point toward potential future spots worth exploring.



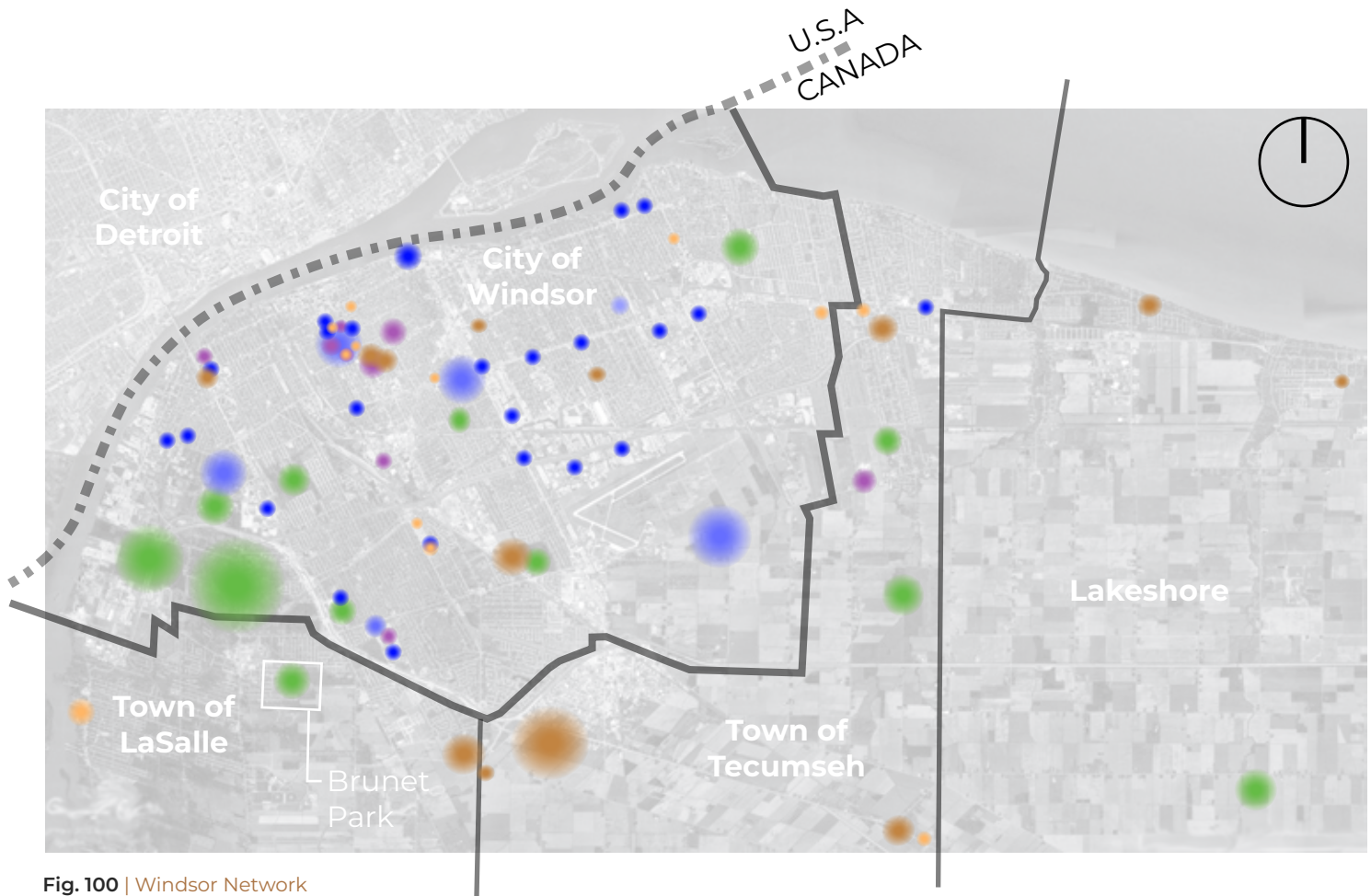


Fig. 100 | Windsor Network

**Network**

**Mental Health Offices**

Hospitals

Hospices/Palliative

Support Groups (Bereavement)

Burial/Cemeteries

Funeral Homes/  
Crematoriums

Woodland Parks/Reserves

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# Chapter 6 - Intervention

This section describes the interventions this research proposes to be situated in Brunet Park and concludes this research.



## Response

This research proposal will be a response to the observations and research explored on the topic of grief. Presented in this subsection, and segueing into the proposed design, will be several key points that will serve as strategies to be employed. The primary goal, and one most visible throughout the proposed design, is to use architecture with landscape to facilitate a grieving process, promote healing, and foster remembrance. Not only is nature a great metaphorical device to tend to the theme of life and death, namely through seasonal changes, but it also has important therapeutic qualities (see Chapter 5). The design must also respond to a need for more purpose-built spaces for grievers by providing spaces for the various dimensions of grief. This will require programs and spaces to be more fluid, spaced out, and at times more intimate. The site itself, too, must also be accessible to a large group of people by being in a residential neighbourhood (see Chapter 5). In doing this, and promoting a communal setting, the proposal can dampen and remove a stigma towards expressions of grief. Finally, continuing the notion of accessibility, the proposal must provide an atmosphere that acknowledges a growing spiritual and culturally diverse body in Canada by not imposing any belief or culture onto visitors but instead connecting people through the universality of nature.

The design proposal must also counter the misconception of grief as a linear process by allowing visitors to freely move around the site and interact with the architecture on their own accord, helping them navigate a grieving process on their own terms. Additionally, this research proposes a design informed by extensive research, as established by the discipline's professionals in an early chapter, into a contemporary understanding of grief and further supported by a personal account (see Chapter 2). Specifically, the proposal will respond to the two patterns of grief (intuitive and instrumental) by offering a physically and emotionally engaging design. Reflecting a historical attitude, the overall design should promote the learning and growth of oneself through the experience of grief. In this way, the proposal can counter the prevailing Western thought that coming to terms with a loss is mostly an inward-focused task by encouraging a shared physical experience.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, by evoking the passage of time

through materiality and nature, the design can counter the notion that there is an expected time for recovering from the effects of grief.

This proposal will also emphasize encouraging the self-acknowledging of feelings and emotions to promote healing. This can be brought primarily through a series of contemplative interventions. To counter loss and foster a continued relationship with the deceased, the proposal should provide grounds for individual rituals, sharing of memories, and markers of remembrance. The proposal must also allow for the formation of meaningful connections with friends and family who help create rituals and recount memories. Additionally, to lessen or shorten the impact of a loss, the design should focus on providing a calming, motivating and secure atmosphere centred on nature and community. This research also recognizes that there are “time-out” periods and intrusion of grief in bereavement by providing an accessible site and offering places to rest when needed.<sup>163</sup> Lastly, the proposal should respond to the growing use of cremation by offering the opportunity to attend to personal rituals that incorporate ashes. Presented next, the design proposal will be focused heavily on the physical and emotional aspects of grief and bereavement.

## Intervention

Guided by a methodology-driven process, this research proposes a transformation of Brunet Park into a ground where patrons can navigate bereavement and continue their bonds with the deceased on their own terms – establishing the park as a ground for healing and remembrance. As shown in Figure 101, the park is divided into two programmatic zones. Firstly, reflecting the need for outward expression and support through social groups is the Remembrance clearing. This area represents a celebration of life, individual ritual, and communal gathering. These are important aspects that are necessary for continuing relations with the deceased and the formulation of memories. Four features belong to the Remembrance Clearing: (1) The Pavilion, (2) The Illumination Room, (3) The Memorial Wall, and (4) The Lattice. The Second programmatic zone is the Contemplative Trail, a series of interventions that are established based on the need for introspection and individuality within a grieving process (6a-6e). Also belonging to this group of interventions is a small seating area to the southeast for quiet reflection (5). The general layout allows patrons to freely move around the site on their own accord and navigate grief on their own terms, leaving and coming as they wish.

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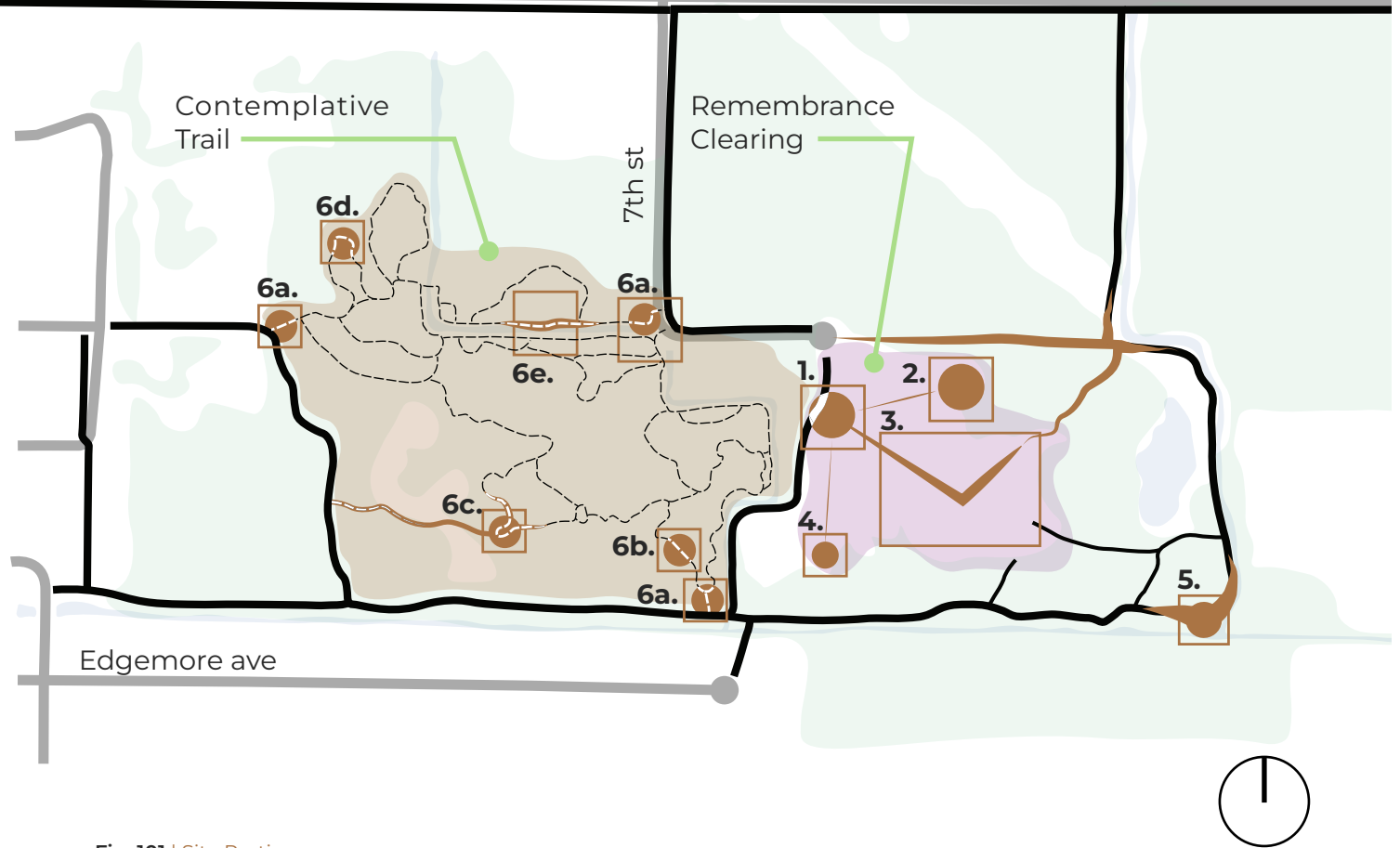


Fig. 101 | Site Parti





Fig. 102 | Site Plan





Exit

Parking

Main Trail →

Main Trail ↓

Illumination Room

Pavilion

Memorial Wall

Remembrance Clearing

Lattice

Reflection

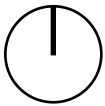


Fig. 103 | Pavilion Site Plan



## The Pavilion

The first building visitors approach when accessing the park from the main entrance is The Pavilion. It stands in the same location as the existing gazebo as a nod to the existing layout of the park but is articulated to offer visual passage into the Remembrance Clearing, greeting visitors as they enter. This building serves to facilitate the many community groups which currently function out of the existing gazebo, which includes fitness classes, elderly groups, painting lessons, and more. Serving as a third space, The Pavilion is a more public or open facility and is not necessarily restrained to being used only for bereavement-related needs. However, it was also important to give the existing bereavement-related services located across Windsor an outlet to function out of on the site (see Figure 100). In this case, the building can be used for specific therapeutic sessions.

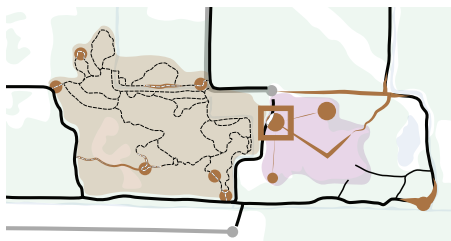


Fig. 104 | Key Plan



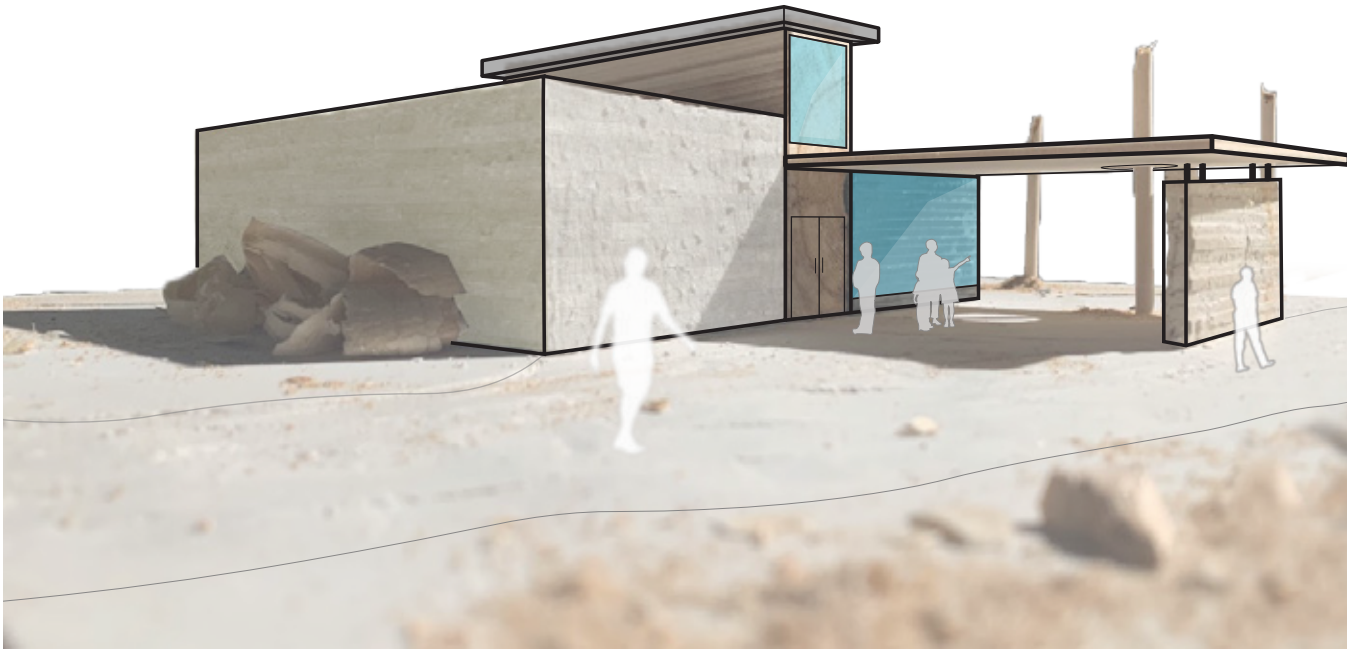


Fig. 105 | Pavilion Render - North-West



Fig. 106 | Pavilion Render - East

Reflecting the variation in users and the need for different activities is a 2000-square-foot open floor plan (see Figure 108). It includes a covered entrance and a separate pergola on the opposite end. This allows for spill-out from the open space inside the pavilion, with the pergola being more private-focused. Included in The Pavilion is a universal washroom for when the building is open during events or activities. Service spaces include a mechanical room and storage room which can house event-related equipment. The building is constructed with wood-formed concrete walls, a rammed earth feature wall beneath the clerestory (see Figures 107 and 111), and a timber structure for the open area. Charred wood siding is also used at the pergola (see Figure 106). In contrast to the exterior treatment, which is finished with harder surfaces, the interior is lighter and treated with softer materials. This provides a more calming atmosphere and relaxing space to be in. Large windows on the south end open onto the clearing, providing visual connection across the site.

Fig. 107 | Longitudinal Section



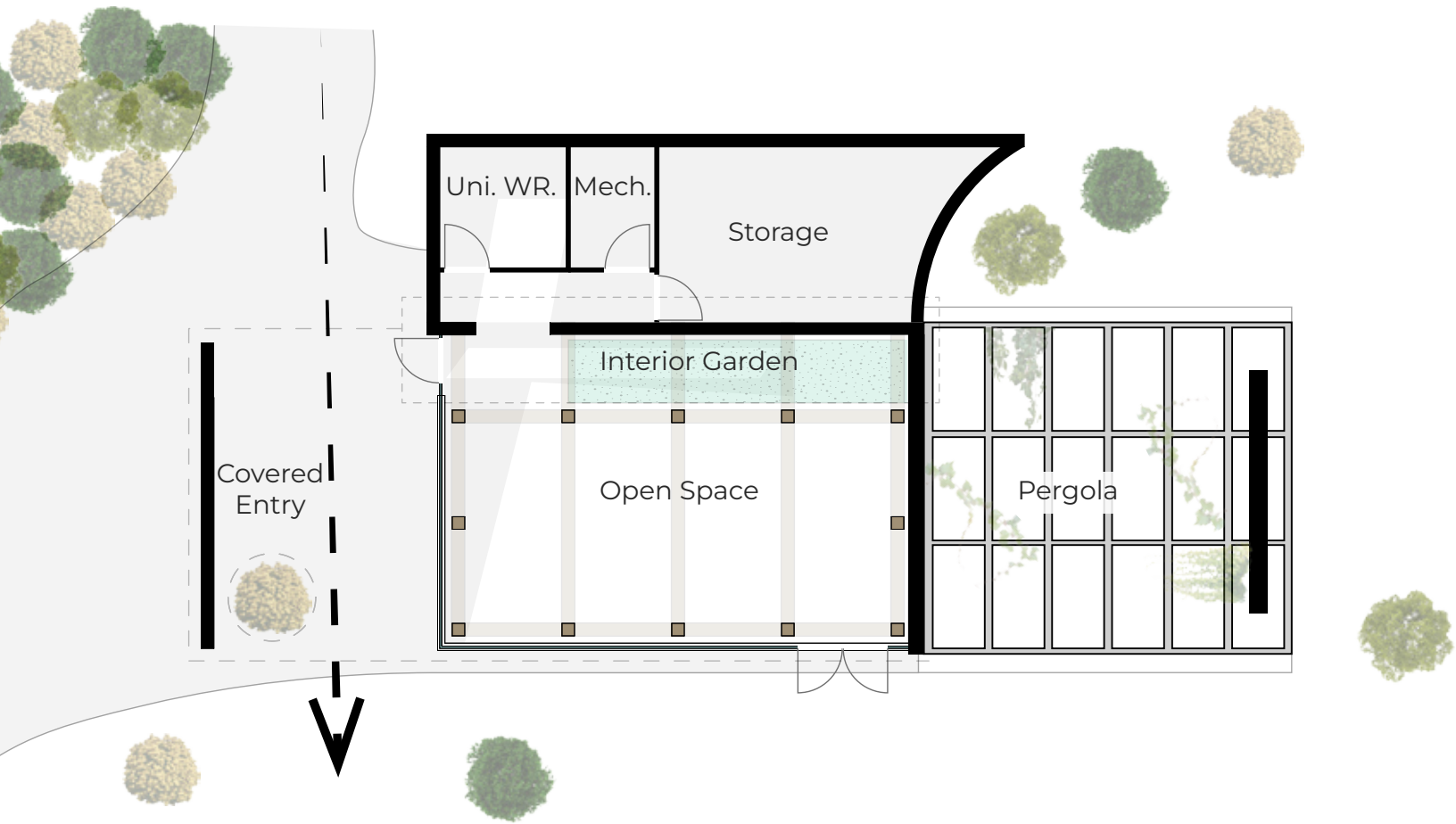


Fig. 108 | Pavilion Floorplan

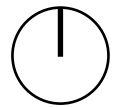


Fig. 109 | Transverse Section





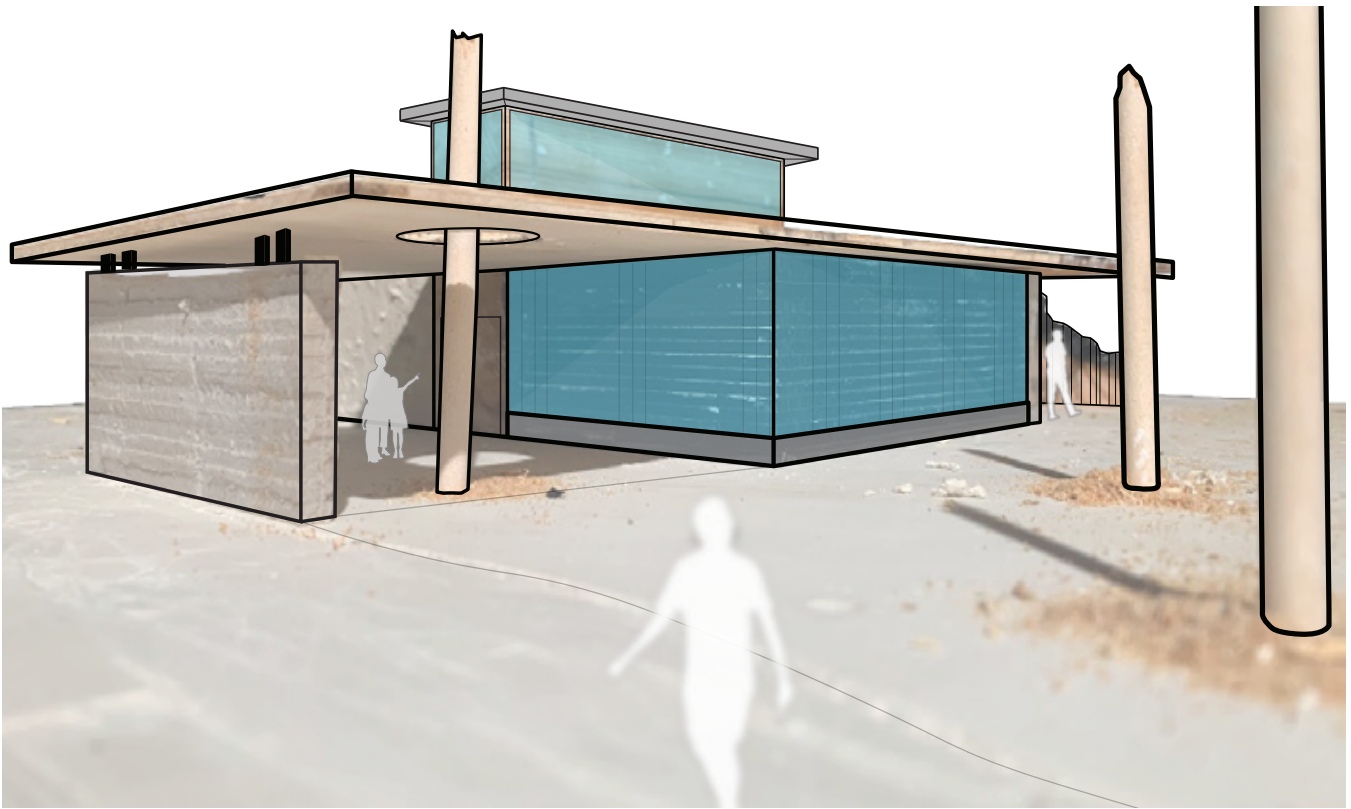


Fig. 110 | Pavilion Render - South-West



Fig. 111 | Pavilion Render - Interior

## Illumination Room

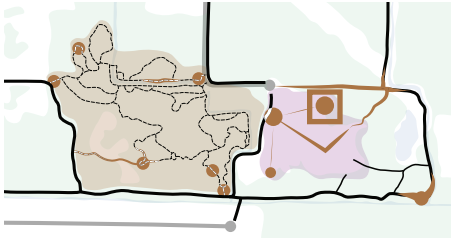


Fig. 112 | Key Plan

The second feature of the Remembrance Clearing is the Illumination Room. This is a structure that was strongly influenced by one of the models and the process in which it was also created (see Figures 33 and 34). The result of the making process is a wood and concrete open-to-the-elements building that is regressed into the ground. The Illumination Room is a building specifically for private ritualistic functions related to bereavement. Here, friends and family can come together in a private setting, share memories, and form new ones around an open seating area with a sacred fire that serves as a form of spiritual release. Through both materiality and form, the building maintains an open dialogue with the natural surroundings of the site. The exterior shake treatment blends the rectilinear form into the tree trunks, while the wood-formed concrete descent provides a sense of sacredness. To heighten the sense of space, the shake façade transitions to a charred interior shake treatment. The minimalistic material palette speaks to encourage the use of new rituals so that the space is not only a place of remembrance and connection but also a platform for diverse modern rituals. With an interior space of 500 square feet, The Illumination Room can accommodate up to ten people seating – otherwise, immediate family members.

Fig. 113 | Illumination Room - Floorplan

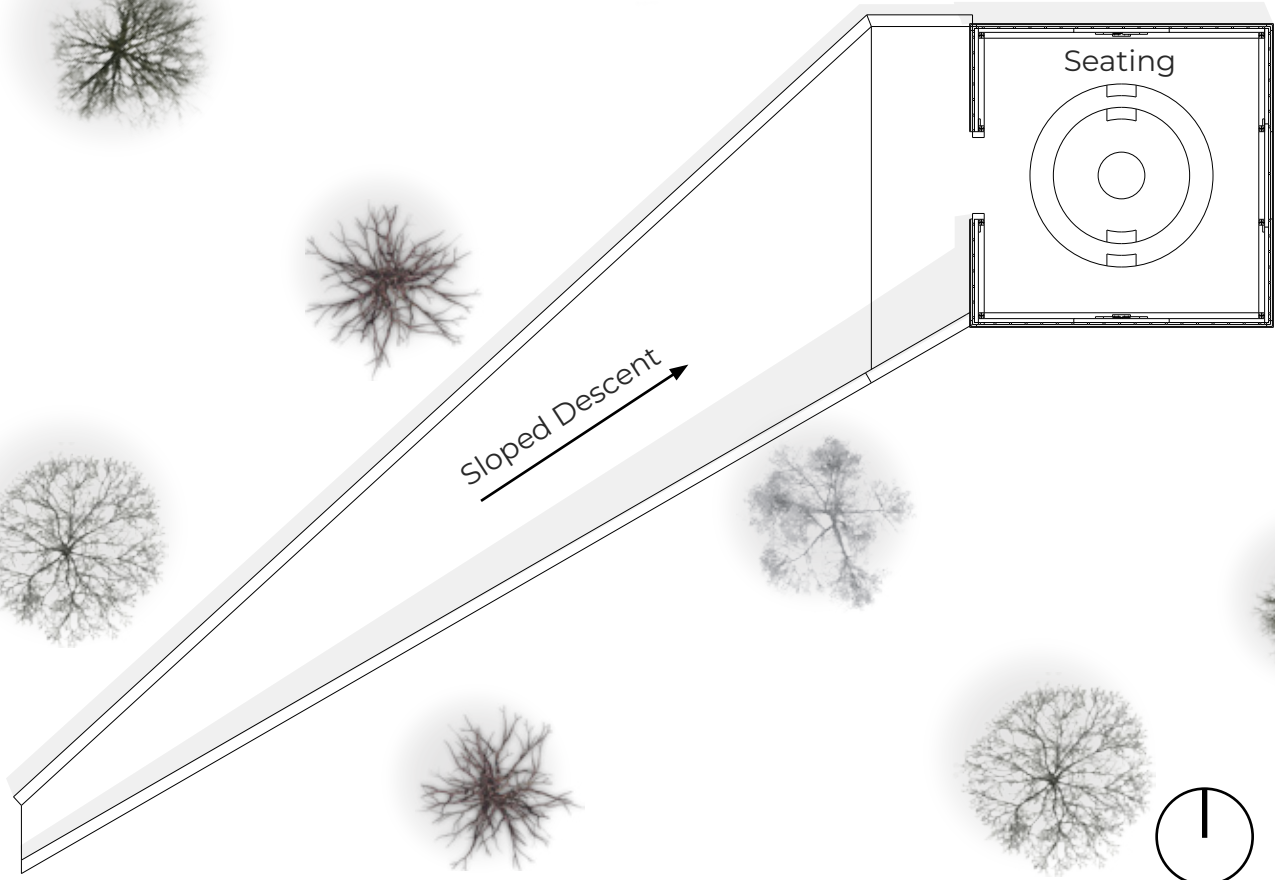






Fig. 114 | Illumination Room Render



Fig. 115 | Exploded Axonometric

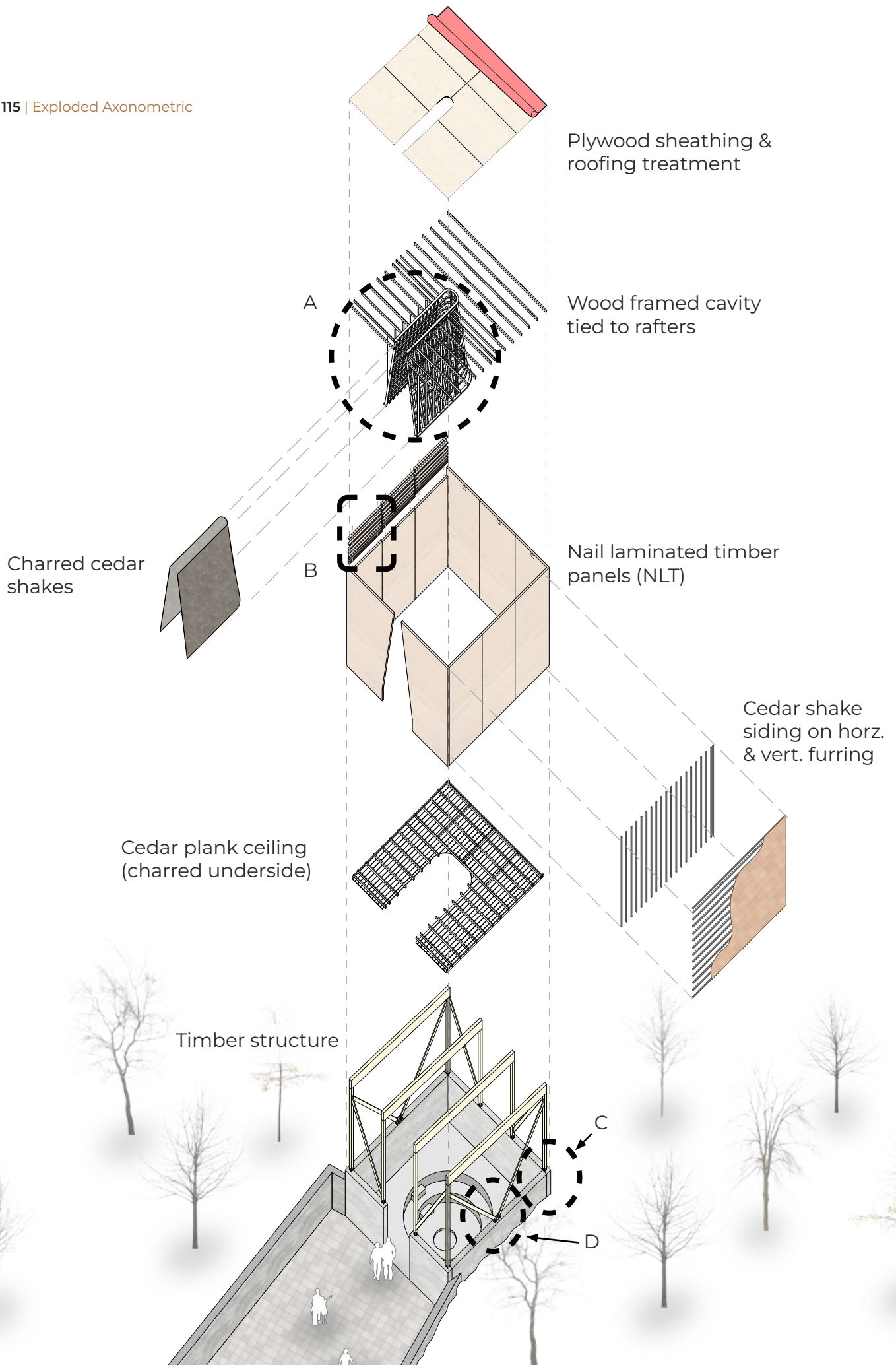
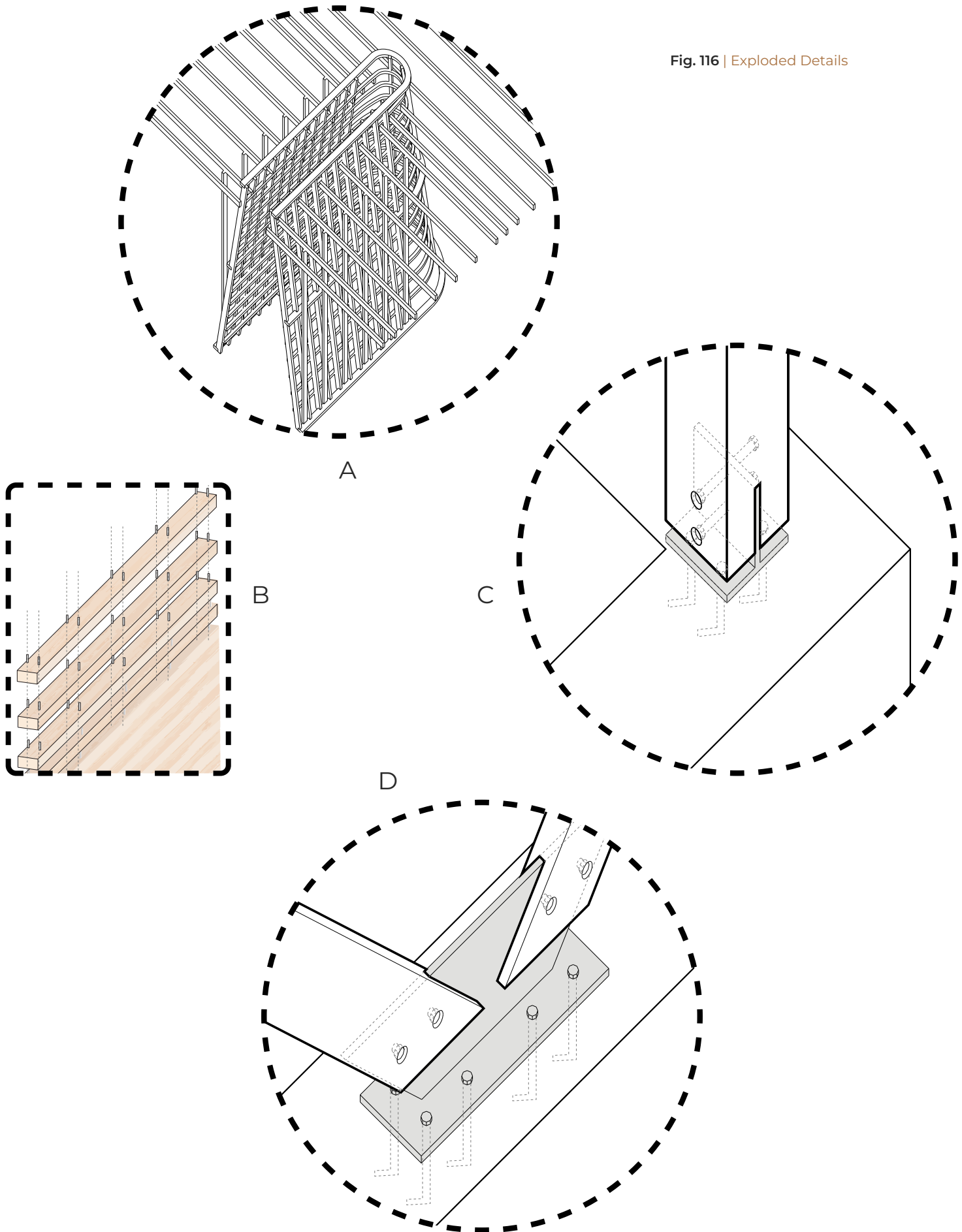




Fig. 116 | Exploded Details



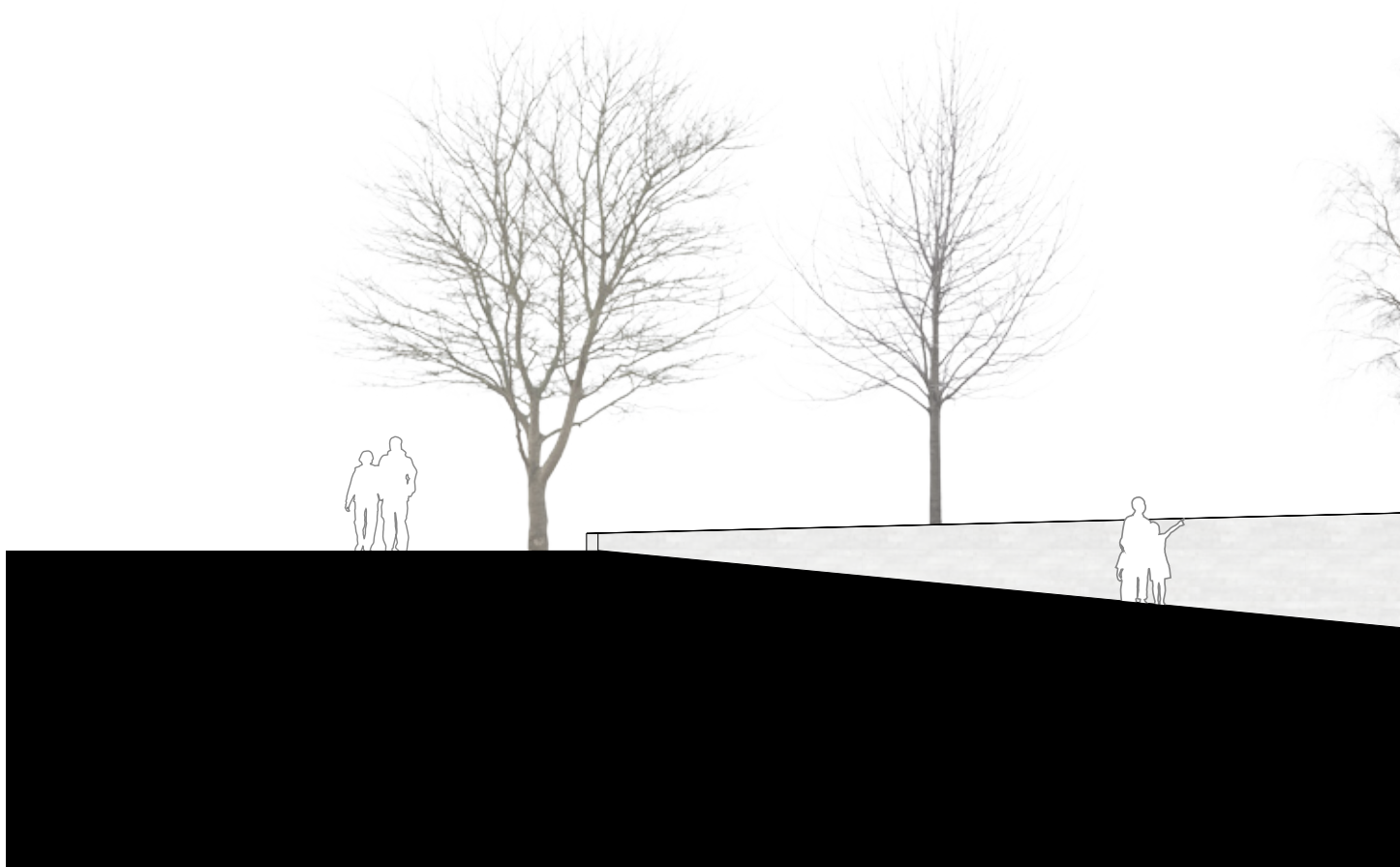


Fig. 117 | Longitudinal Section

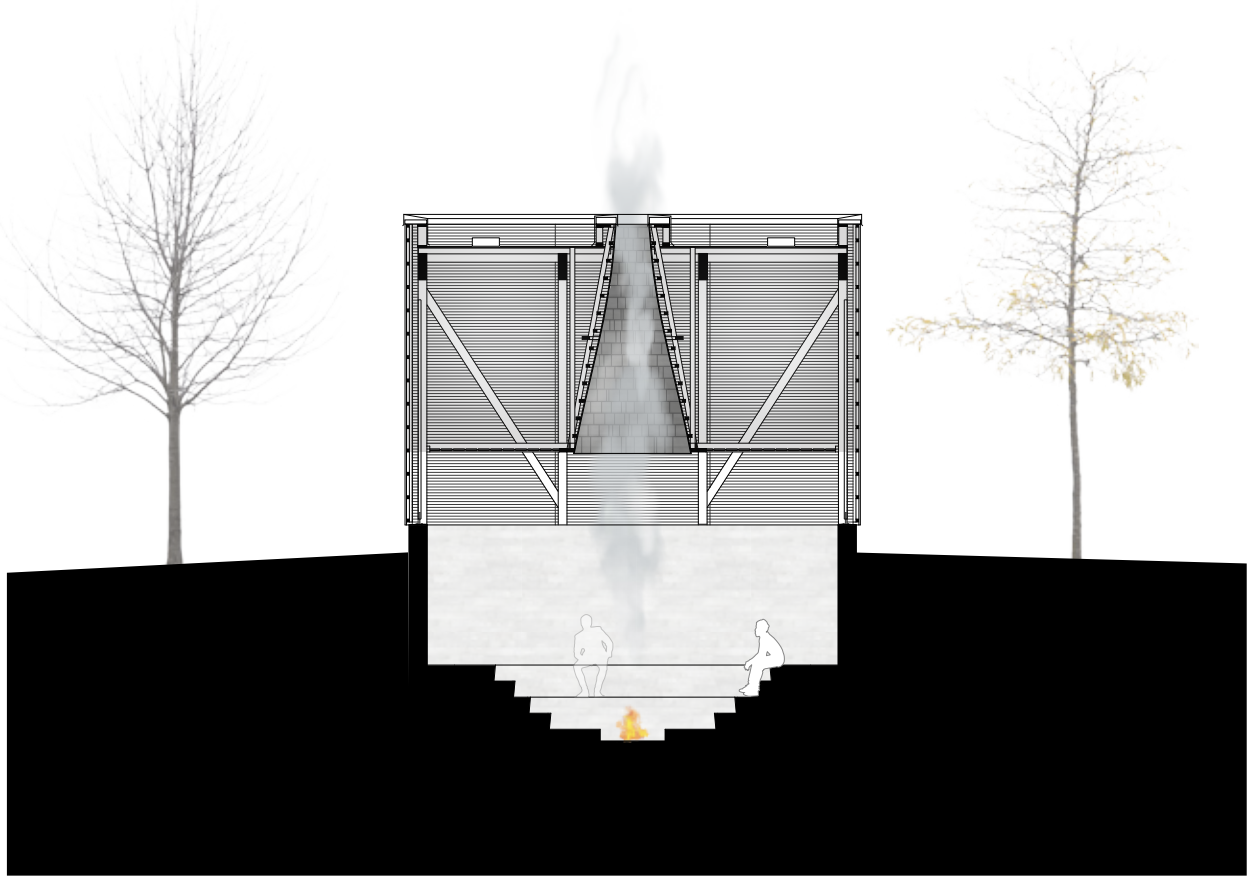
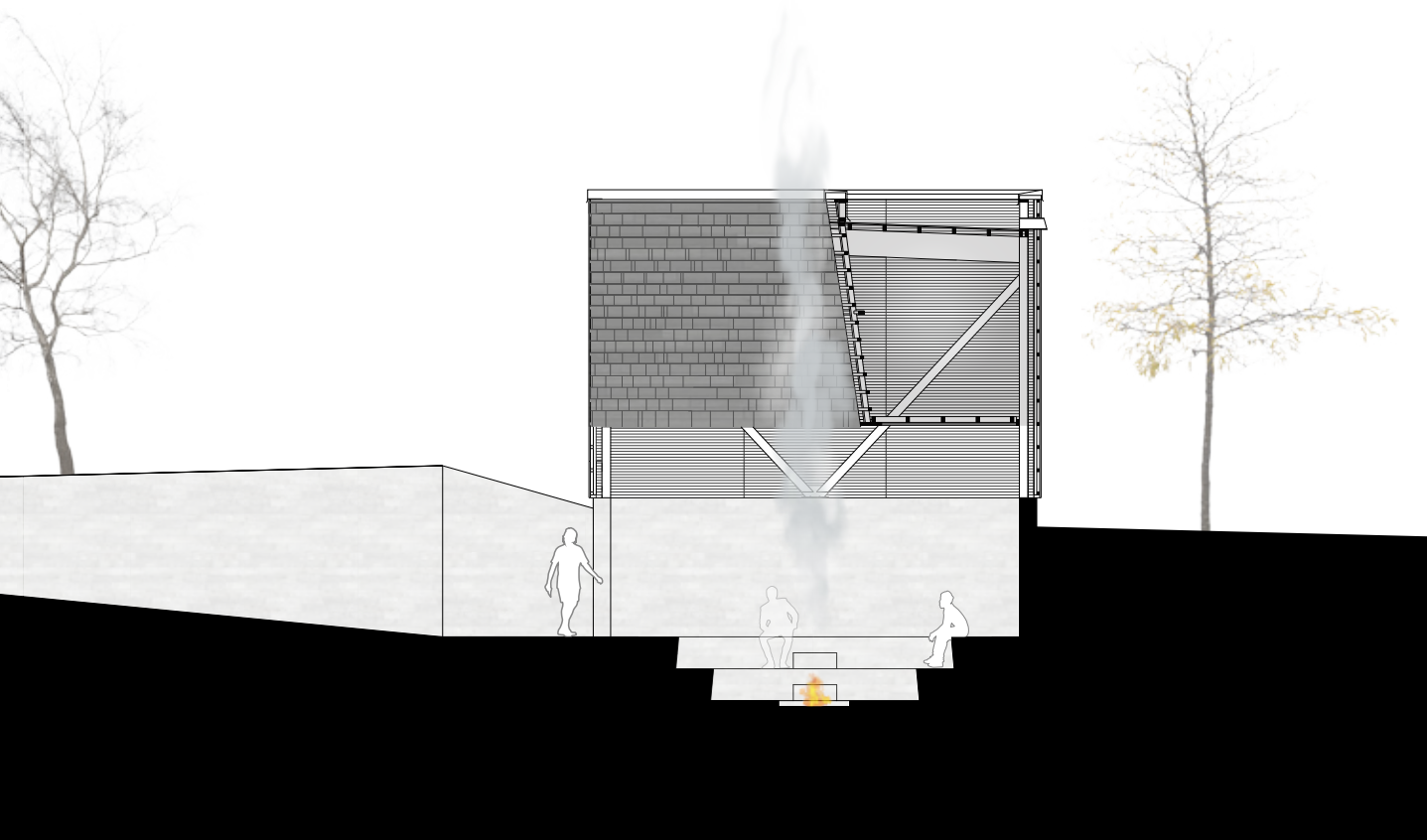


Fig. 118 | Transverse Section



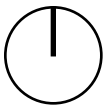


Fig. 119 | Memorial Wall Site Plan



## Memorial Wall

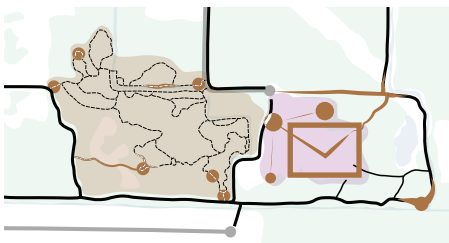


Fig. 120 | Key Plan

The third feature of the Remembrance Clearing is a large-scale landscaping feature that cuts through the park's existing hill. Named the Memorial, it serves to commemorate those who've been scattered across the park or the Windsor Region via cremation. Inspired by the outdoor mausolea of Heavenly Rest Cemetery, the wall forms a passage through the centre of the Remembrance clearing while maintaining a strong connection to the ground and sky. This gesture connects to the existing trail, encouraging visitors to explore the park, and acts to separate the area around the Illumination Room to maintain sanctity and privacy. The wall itself is constructed with wooden piles to form a retaining wall. Once the piles are in place, the walls would then be charred and inscribed with the names of the remembered. The wall stands approximately twenty-five tall, coming to a point at the tallest part of the hill, providing dramatic shadows and a point of intrigue within the park.

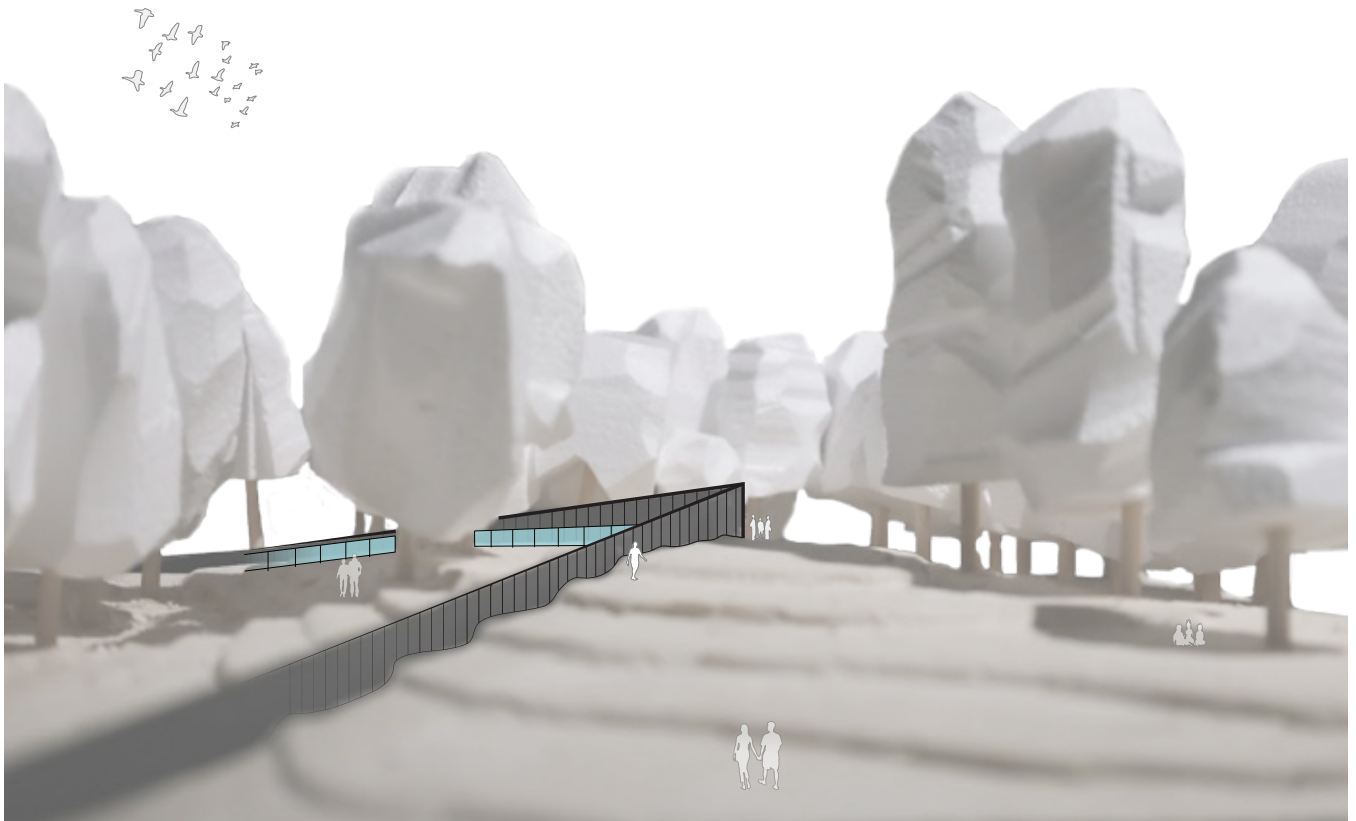


Fig. 121 | Memorial Wall Render - South-West

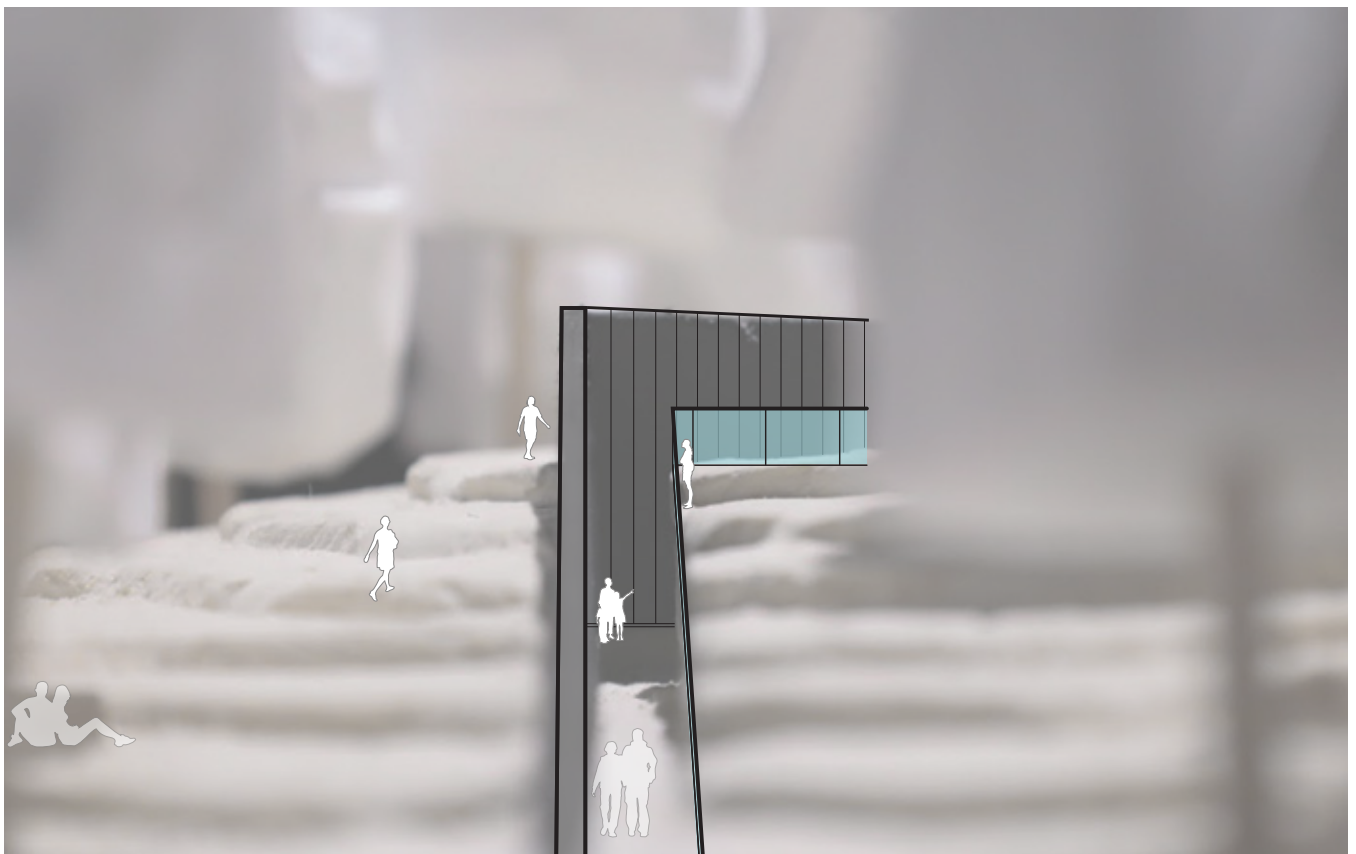


Fig. 122 | Memorial Wall Render - North



## Lattice

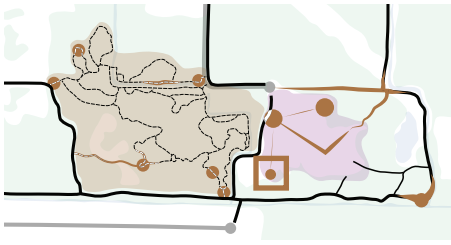


Fig. 123 | Key Plan

The last feature belonging to the Remembrance Clearing is a cylindrical garden that follows the planting of the existing commemorative trees and is situated in a small alcove of the clearing. Named the lattice, it resembles a columbarium and a garden lattice. Envisioned here is a place to attend to individual rituals and the upkeep of personal plants that can hold some of the ashes of the deceased. In this way, each unique plant can serve as a focus of grief, where continued maintenance serves as a metaphor for the continued bond with the deceased. This is not only an important part of easing one's own grief but also serves as an important memory device. The Lattice is constructed from rammed earth walls and a metal lattice ring that allows for plant growth. A concrete seat around a tree allows visitors to sit and reflect.

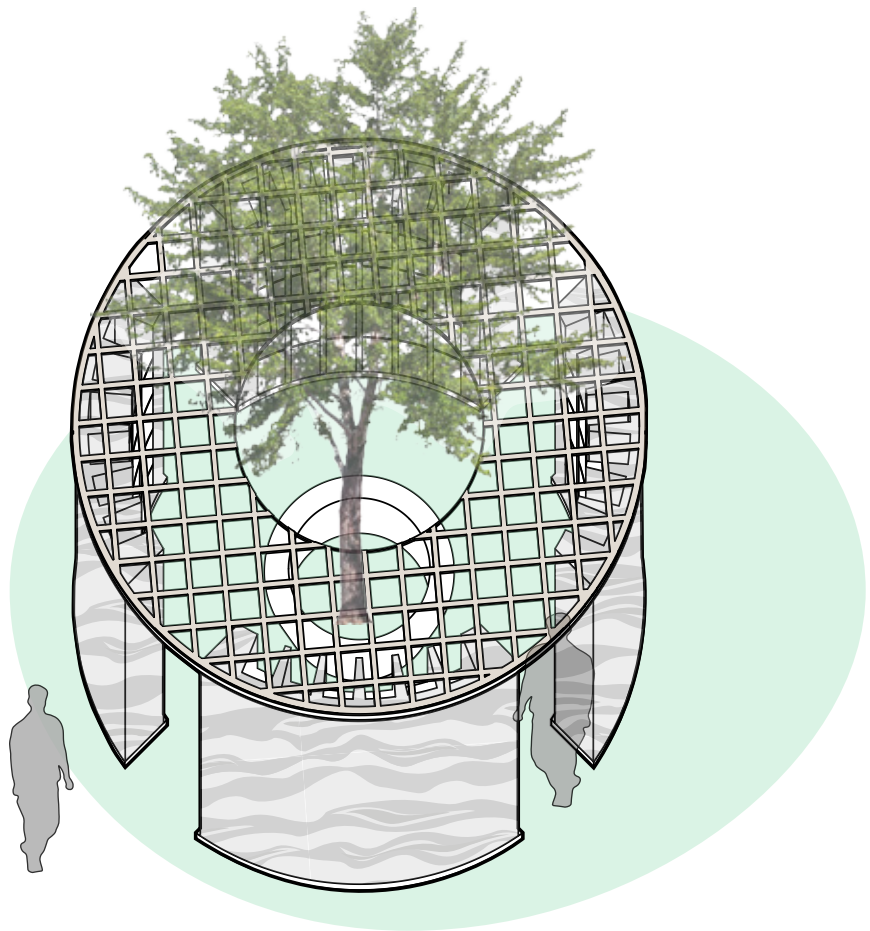


Fig. 124 | Lattice Render 1

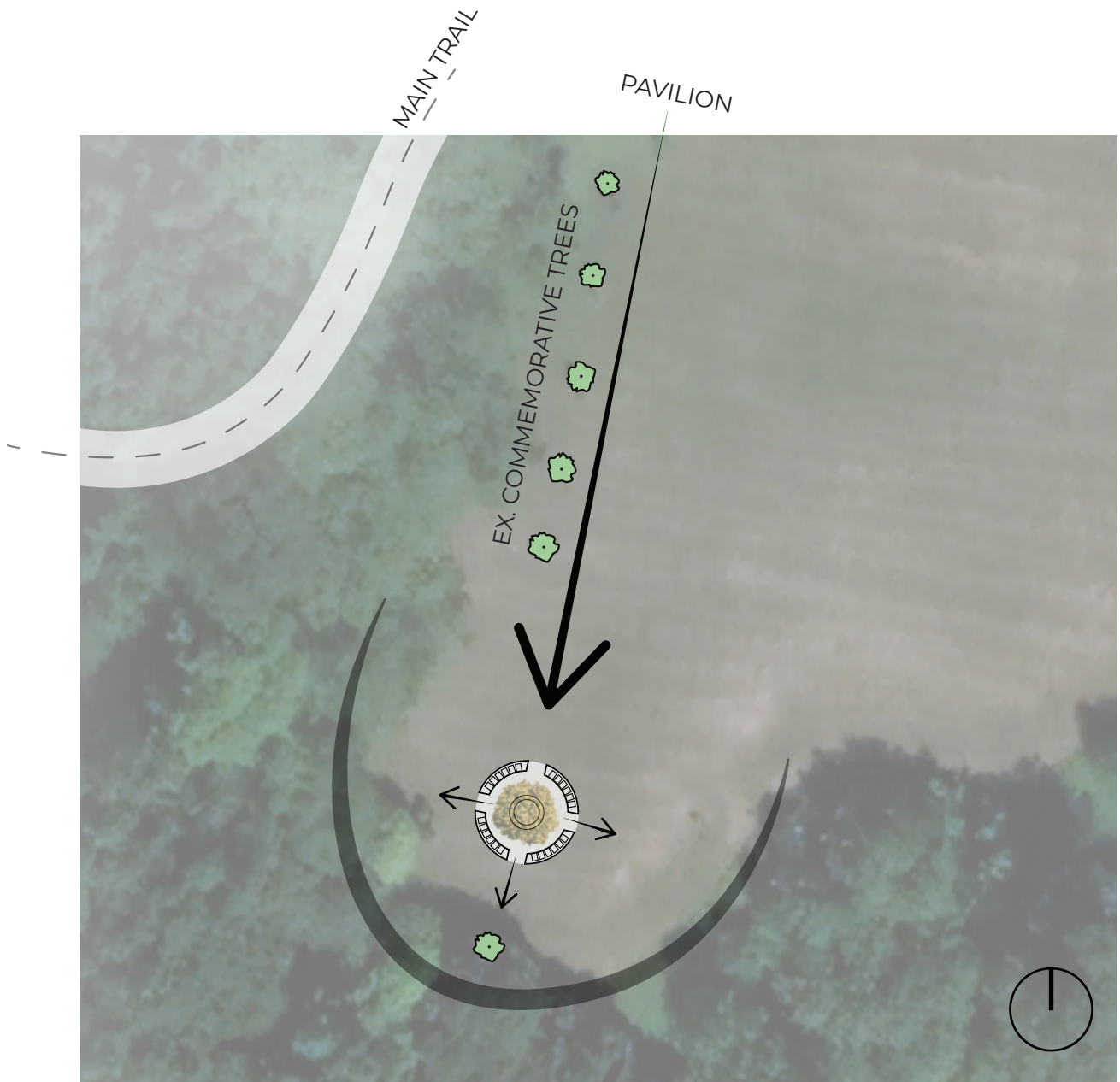


Fig. 125 | Lattice Site Plan

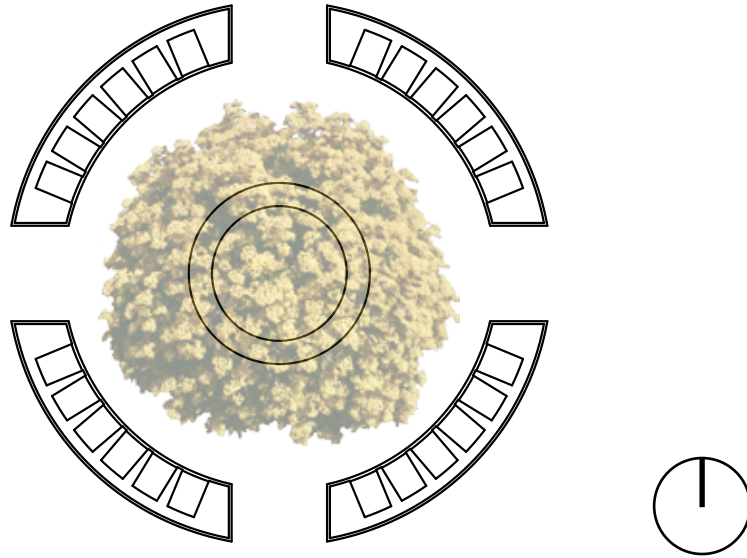


Fig. 126 | Lattice Plan

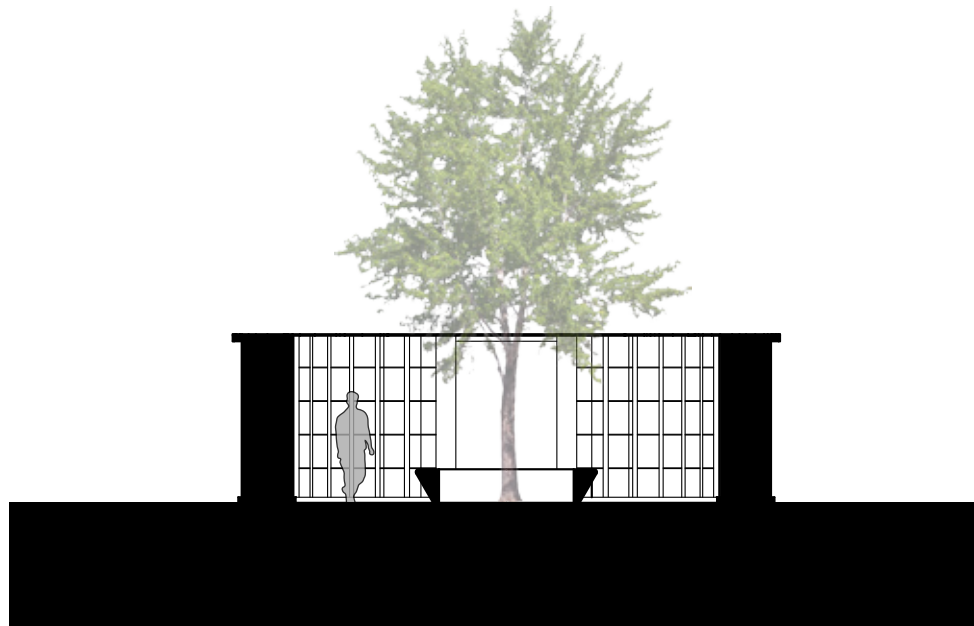


Fig. 127 | Lattice Section





Fig. 128 | Lattice Render 2



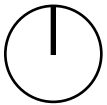
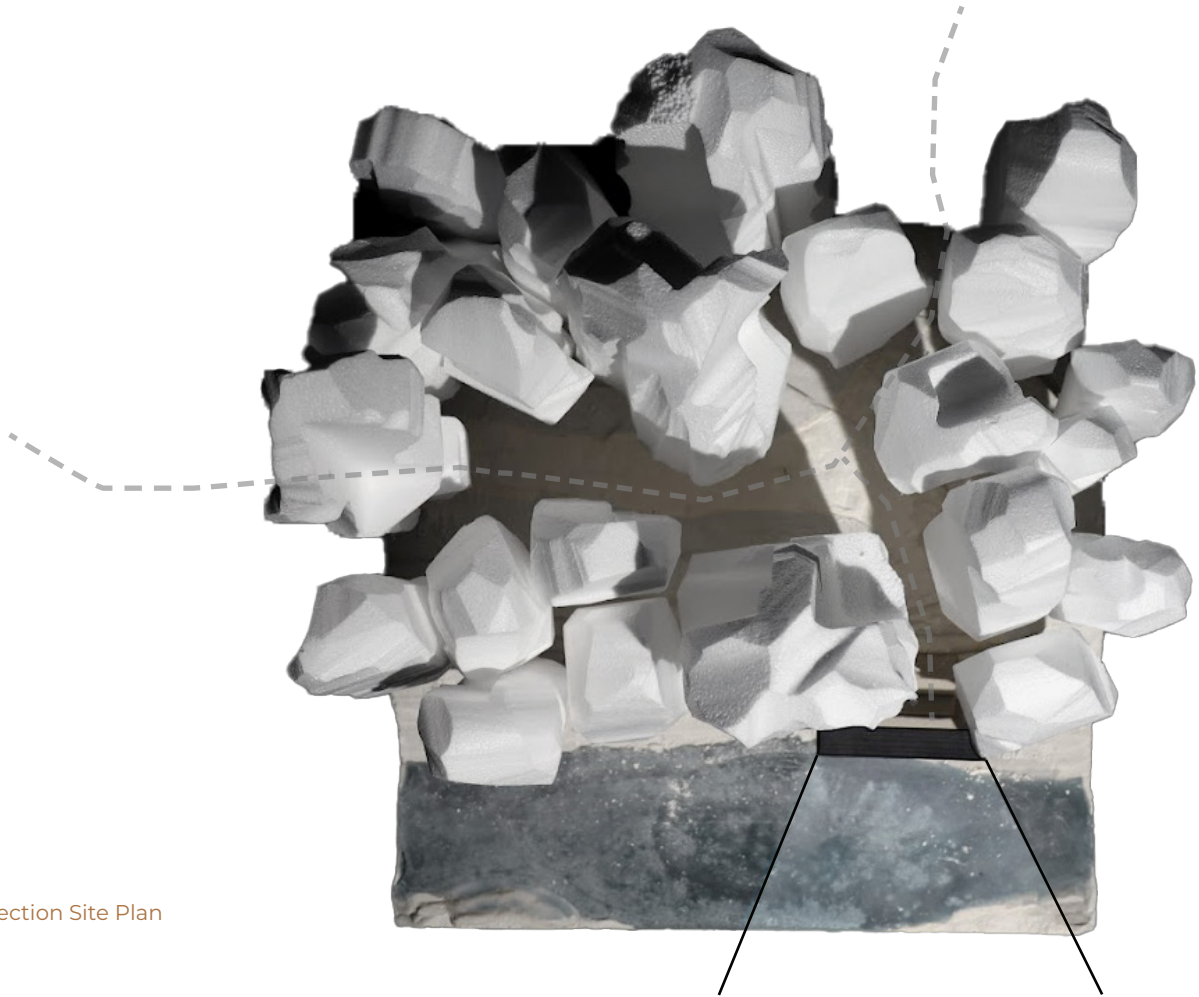


Fig. 129 | Reflection Site Plan

## Intervention: Reflection

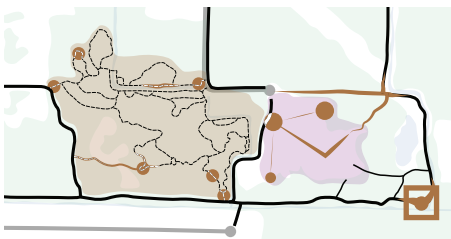


Fig. 130 | Key Plan

Nestled off in the quietest part of the site and off the main trail, a small, covered platform overhangs onto Turkey Creek. Here, visitors can find an intimate place to sit, meditate, talk with a peer, or take in the environment. It is common to see wildlife, such as deer and turkeys, pass through this part of the park. Ducks, turtles, frogs, and snakes can also be found in or around the water. Charred wood is used to build a narrow covering on top of the concrete seating area, directing visitors' view outward to the bush across the creek.



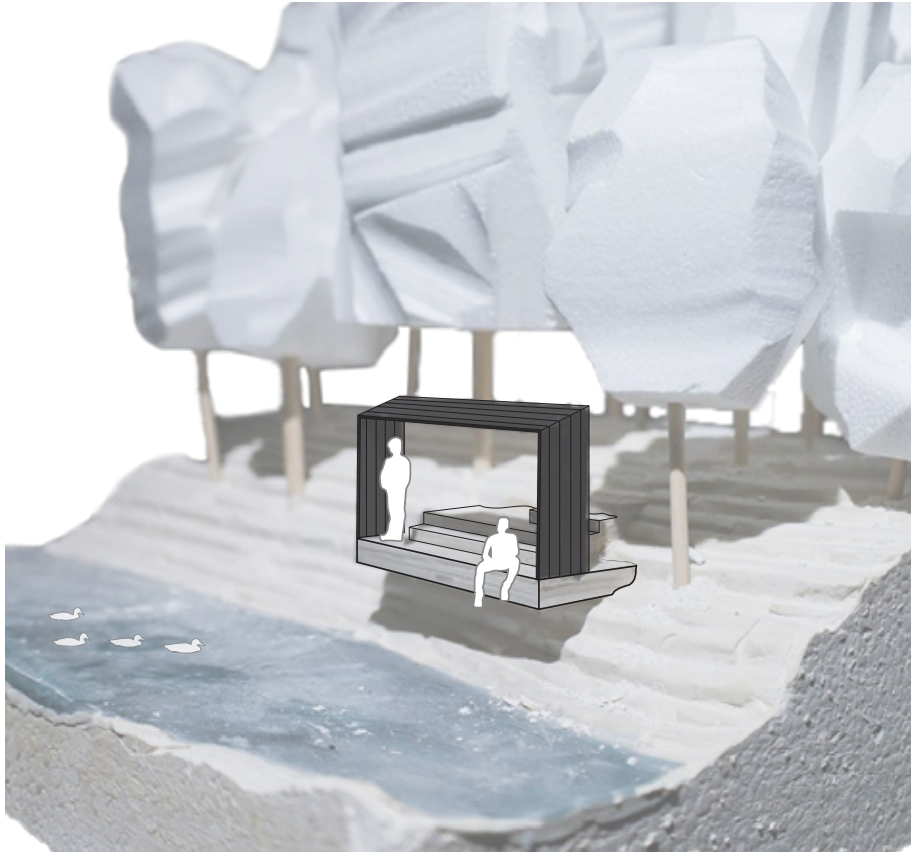


Fig. 131 | Reflection Render - South-East

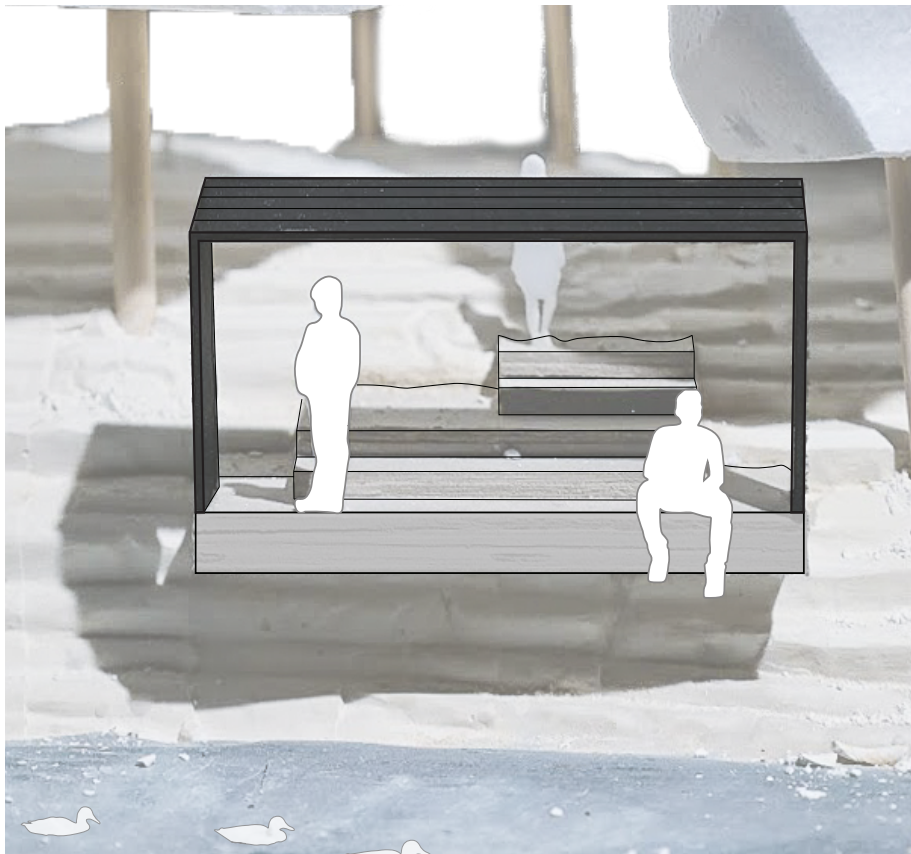


Fig. 132 | Reflection Render - South

## Intervention: Passages

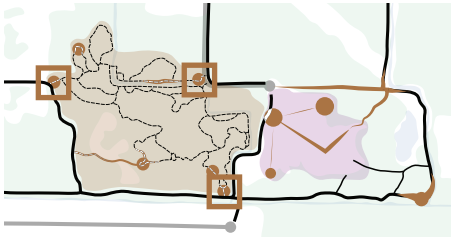


Fig. 133 | Key Plan

Inspired by the *Passage* models presented earlier in this research (see Figure 21), three doorways will demarcate the Contemplative Trail network and mark the entries into it. More sculptural in form, these passages will be made from rammed earth with a limited life span so that, eventually, they may return to the ground and become landforms within the environment. The physical passing through serves as a metaphorical reminder of life's events - while the ruined form implies it belongs to something larger, enticing the mind to complete the image. These doorways can also serve as a tool for wayfinding when entering the trail and are used to initiate a sense of transition as visitors enter the Contemplative Trail.

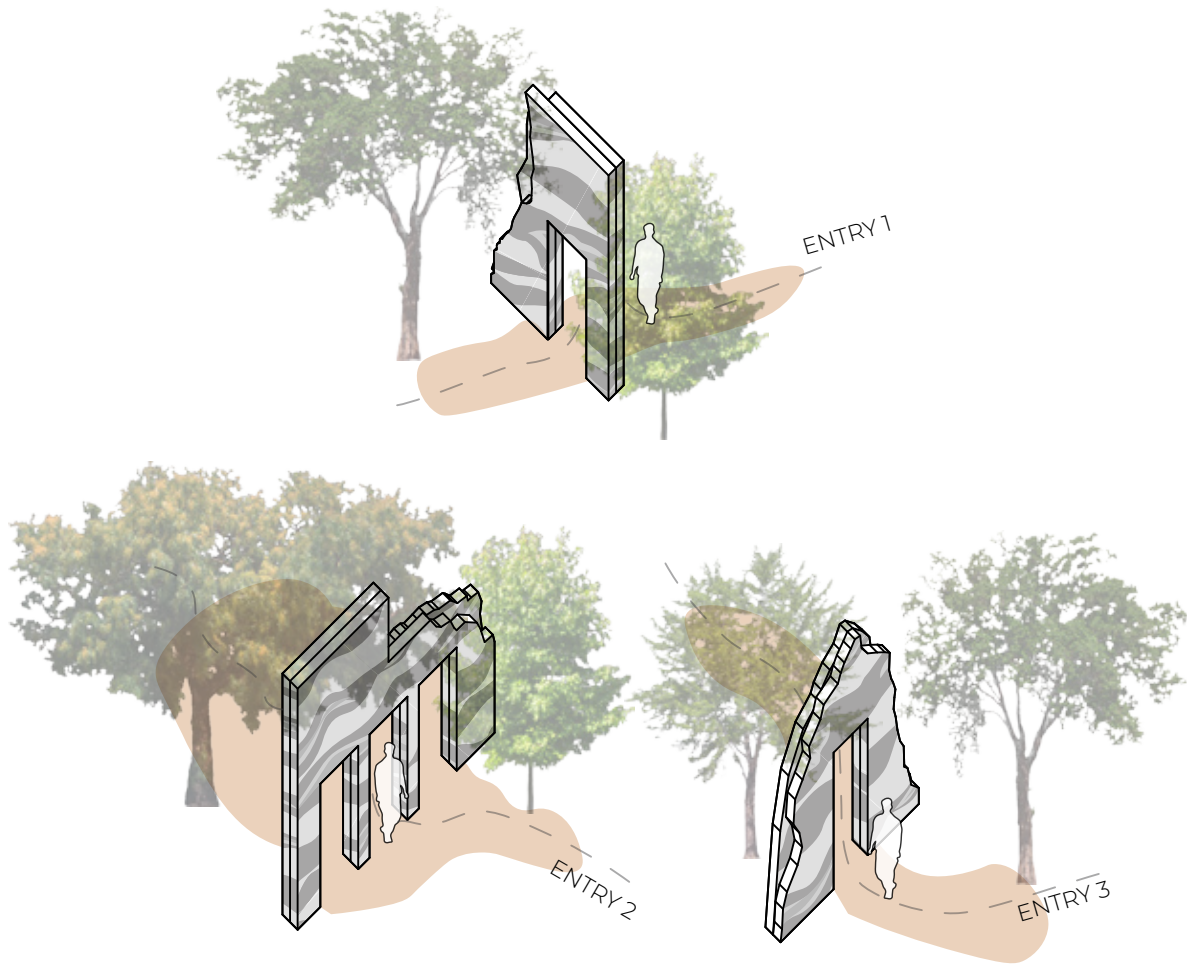


Fig. 134 | Passages Renders

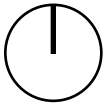
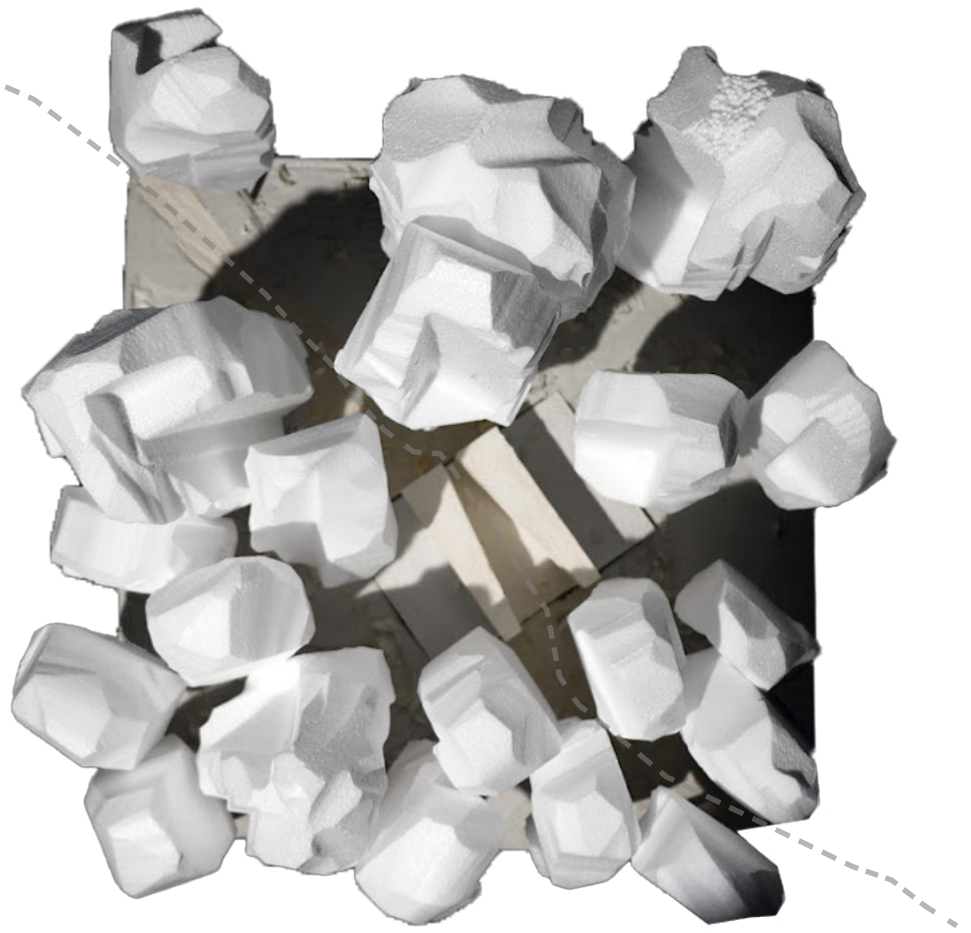


Fig. 135 | Stress Site Plan



## Intervention: Stress

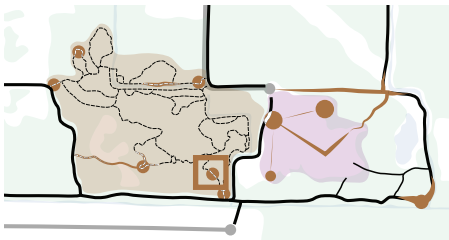


Fig. 136 | Key Plan

Close to the southern entrance of the Contemplative Trail is another rammed earth intervention which forces visitors to navigate a tight opening. Grief affects us physically and mentally, reflecting the intuitive and instrumental coping patterns displayed in bereaved individuals. Therefore, the contemplative trail and the interventions situated on it must engage users in both ways, allowing visitors the chance to recognize their own feelings. Similar to the Passages, this intervention will degrade over time and eventually return to the earth. It will also be worn out over time from human touch, serving as a physical reminder of the people who've passed through the park.





Fig. 137 | Stress Bird's Eye View Render

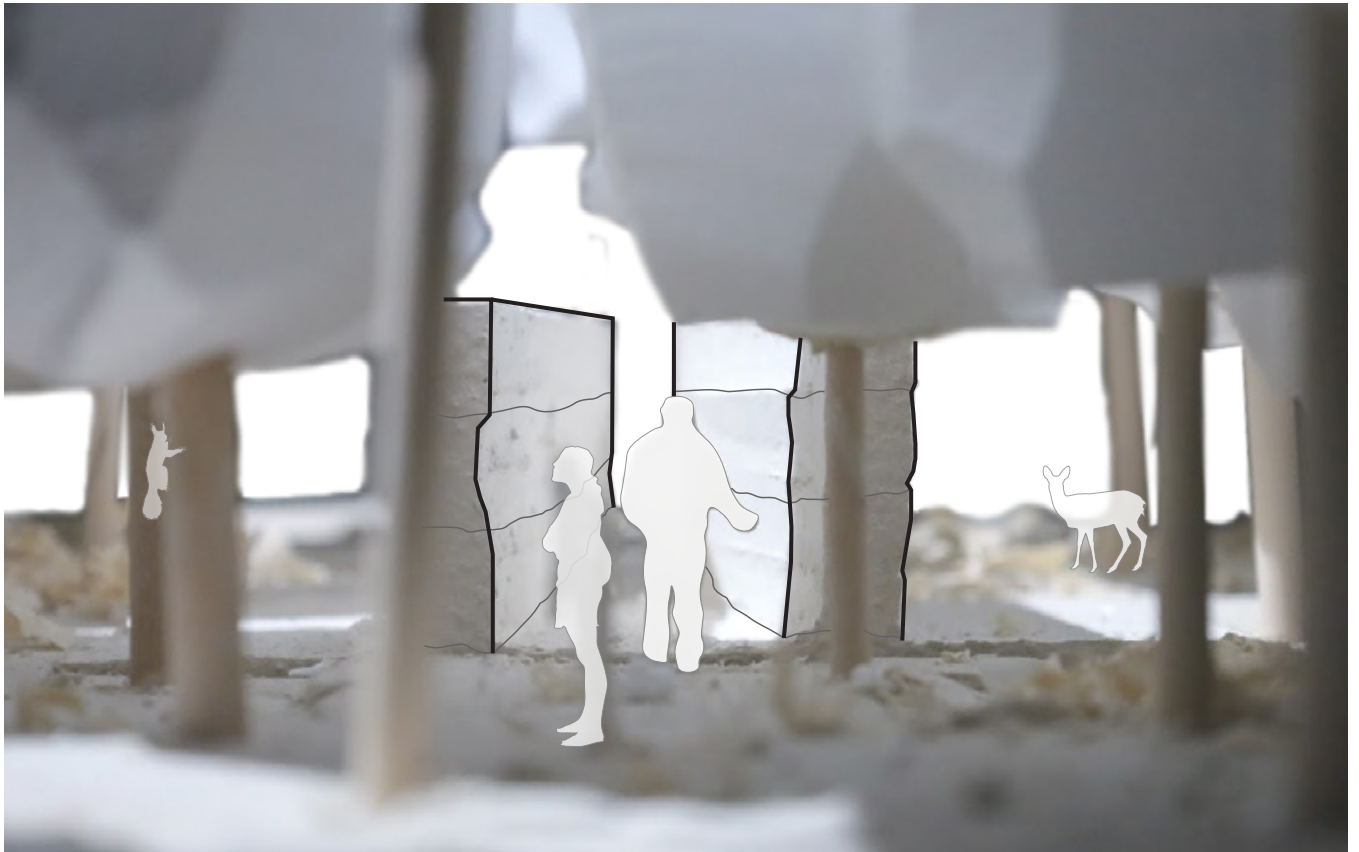


Fig. 138 | Stress Render



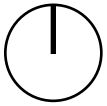
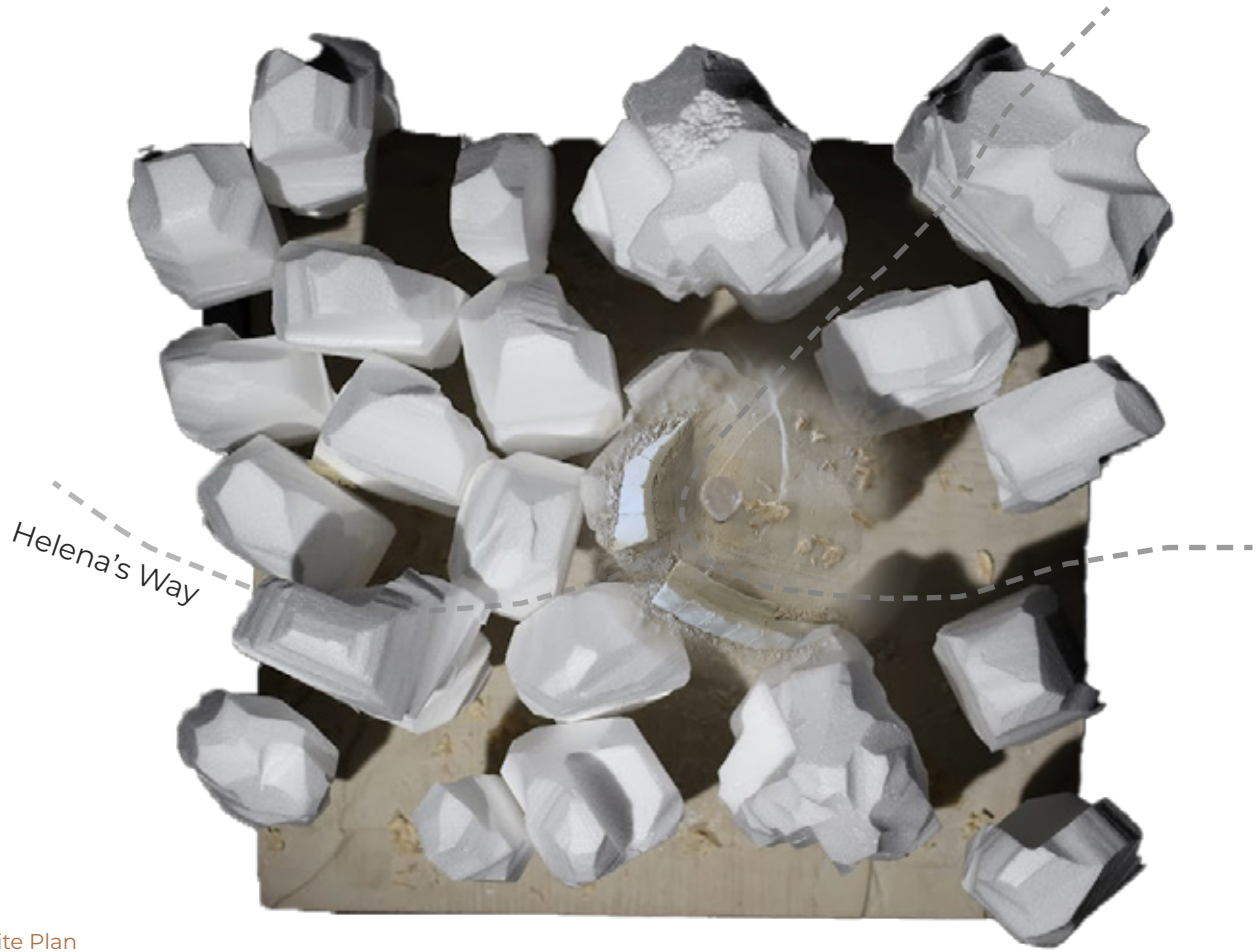


Fig. 139 | Fragments Site Plan

## Intervention: Fragments

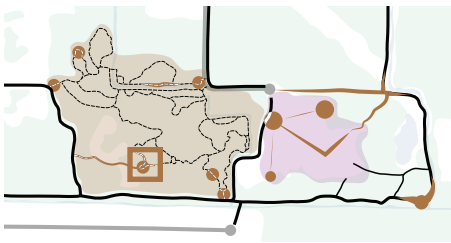


Fig. 140 | Key Plan

Midway through the Contemplative Trail at a tight bend is an intervention that offers a place to rest and serves to reconstitute Helena's Way trail. This intervention is inspired by a failed concept model that broke when releasing it from its mould, which is where it gets its fragment appearance (see Figure 32). It is constructed using large triangular quarried stone pieces that gradually rise from the earth and form a bench around a tree. This intervention also provides an increased opportunity for visitors to cross paths with other people who are willing to share experiences or conversations.

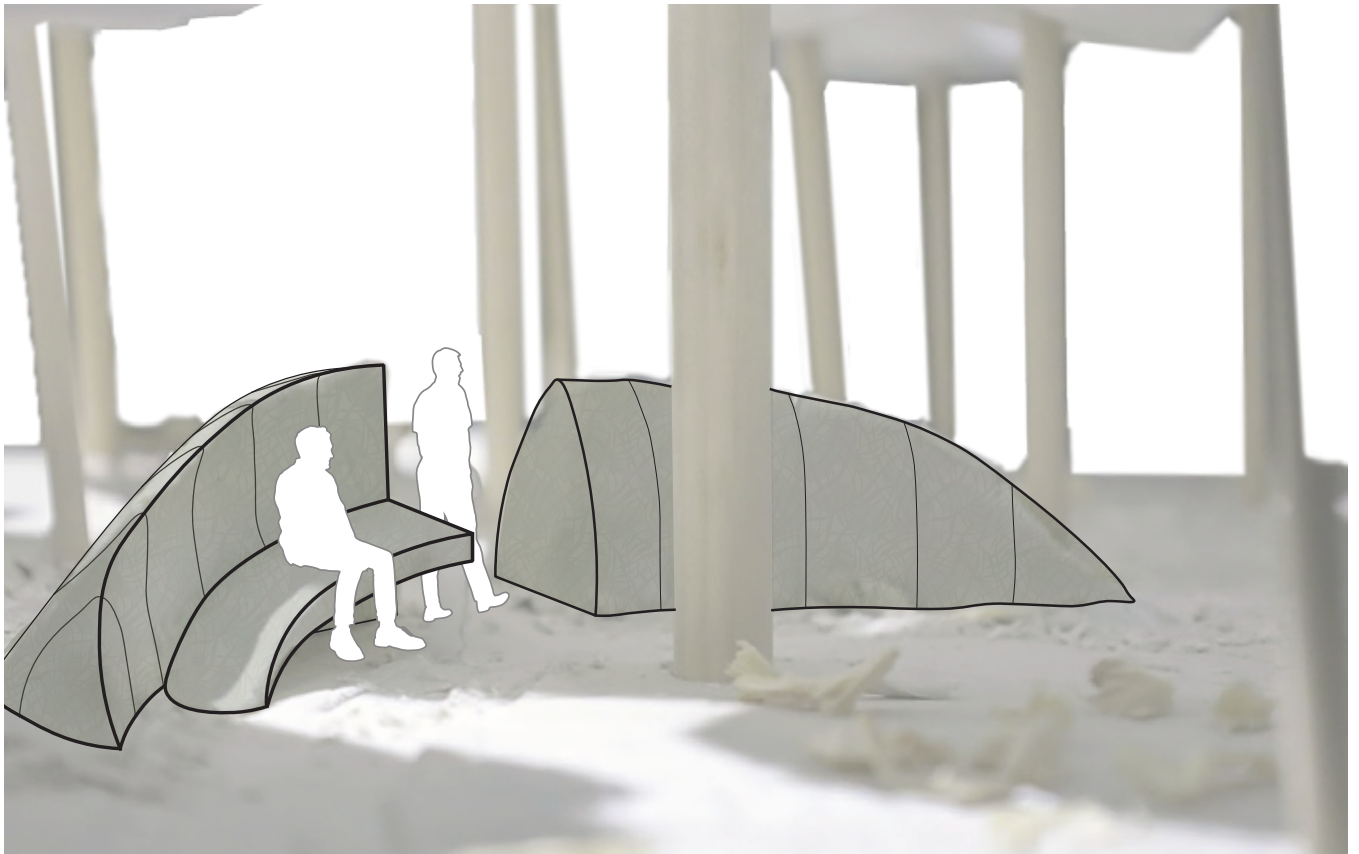


Fig. 141 | Fragements Render 1

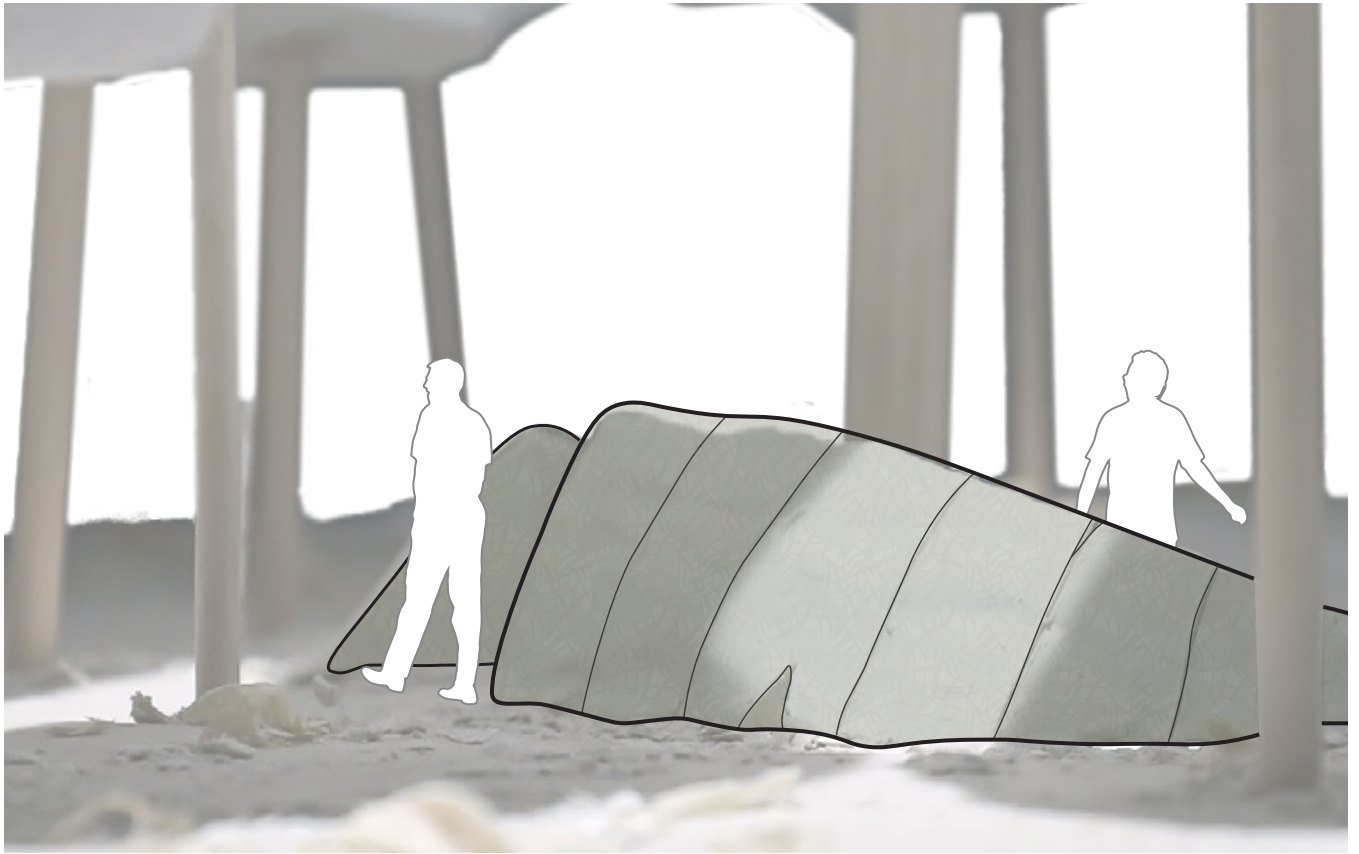


Fig. 142 | Fragements Render 2

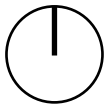
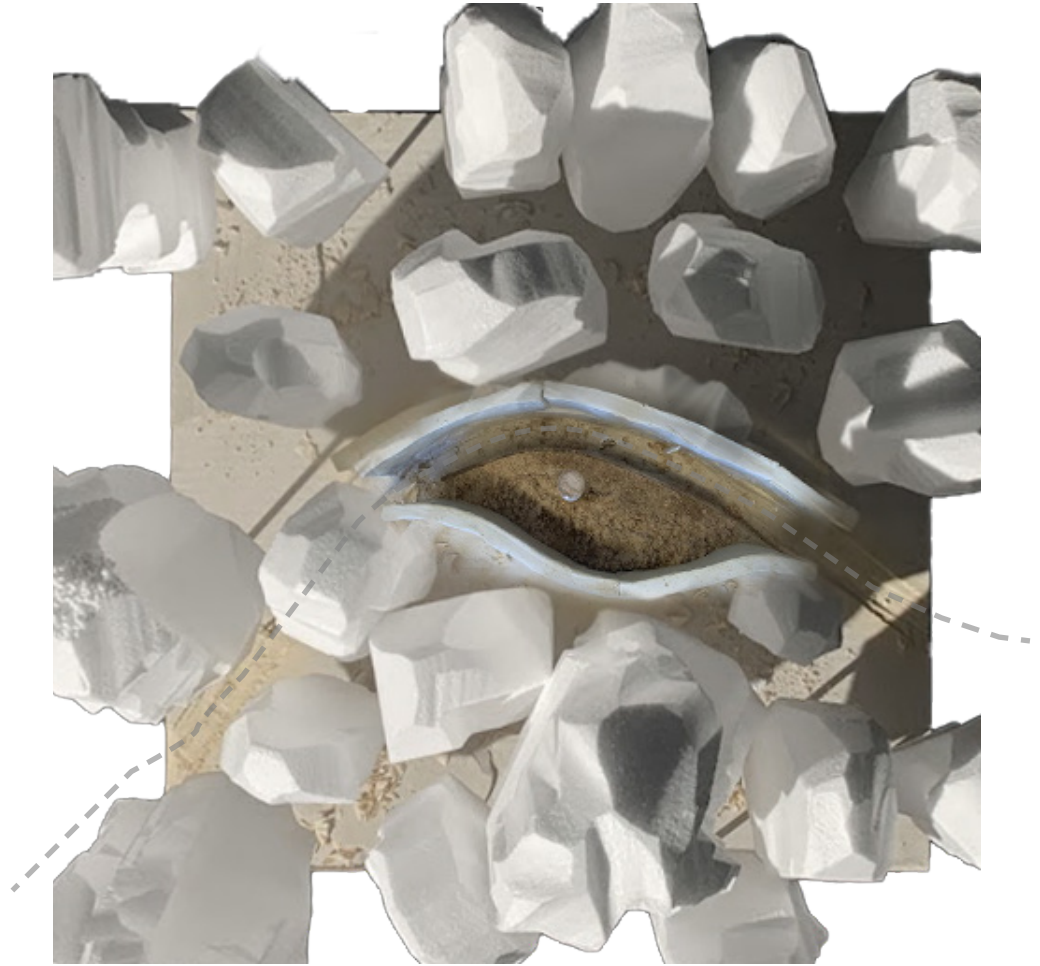


Fig. 143 | Cavern Site Plan



## Intervention: Cavern

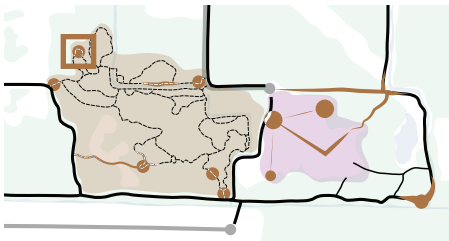


Fig. 144 | Key Plan

Deep in the Contemplative Trail is a cavern-like intervention made from rammed earth. Here visitors descend into the ground and pass a small, secluded garden beneath an existing tree. Given that the Windsor region is very flat, there was an opportunity to provide an unfamiliar landscape element which can offer intrigue and a sense of isolation. This is done through tall wavy walls that disrupt views into the forest and muffle the sounds within. The Cavern is also meant to place emphasis on the canopy of the bush above and on a singular tree that the walls wrap around as a form of celebration of life. Charred wood piles create the planting bed beneath the tree, which can be tended to by visitors passing by.





Fig. 145 | Cavern Render 1

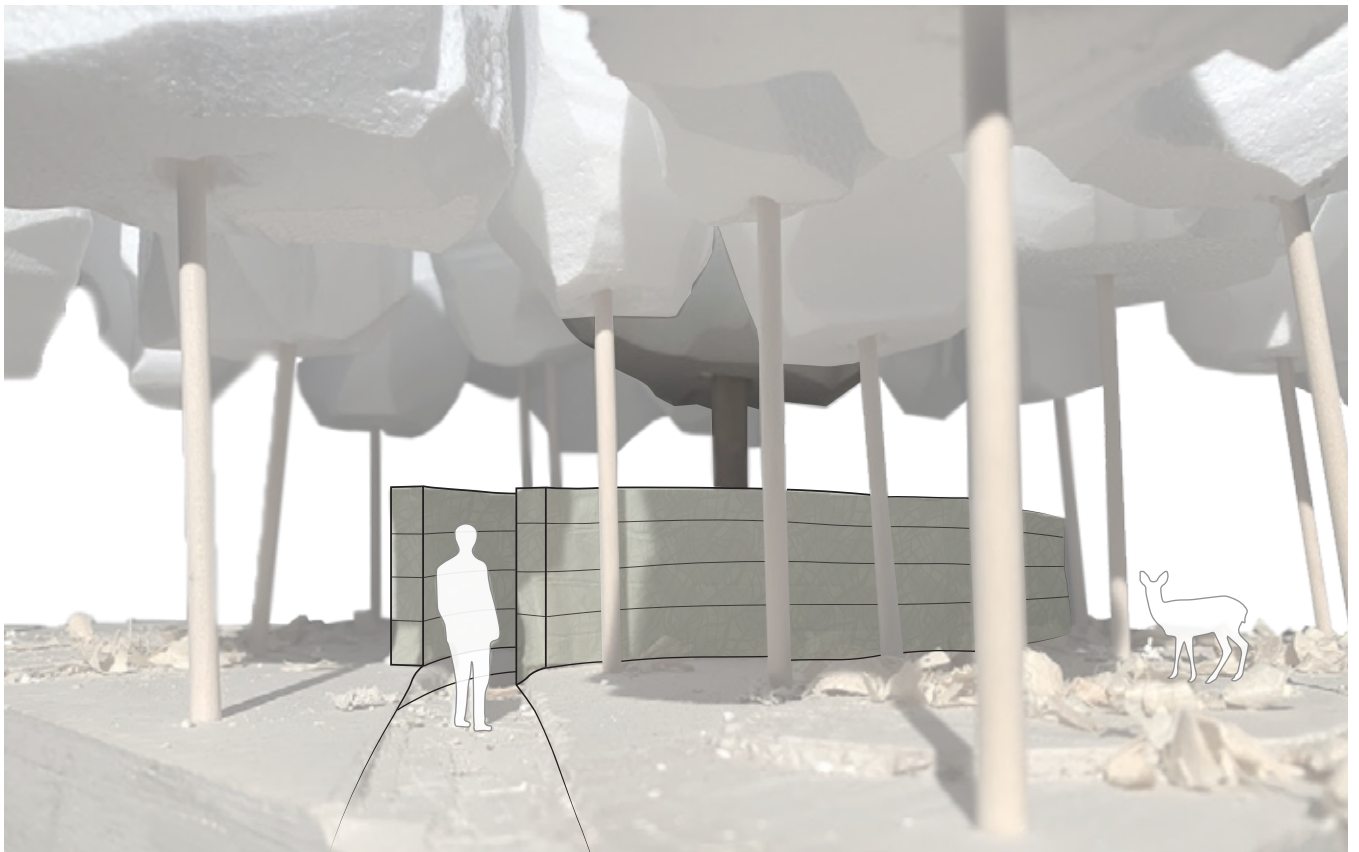


Fig. 146 | Cavern Render 2

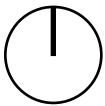


Fig. 147 | Reminiscence Site Plan

## Intervention: Reminiscence

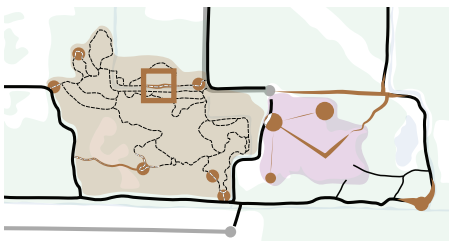


Fig. 148 | Key Plan

The last intervention in the Contemplative Trail is called Reminiscence and is inspired by an earlier model that used light to cast images from old film negatives onto it (see Figure 25). The intervention is a narrow passage made from charred wood walls and louvres on an existing but overgrown sidewalk (see Figure 63). It's unclear why the sidewalk is in the middle of the trail, but it's a unique moment in the bush where the ground surface changes, bringing out feelings of memories or nostalgia. It was, then, important to play off these ideas and create something that could be experienced from different spots on the trail. Here, visitors pass through the passage, rays of light, and the shadows the louvres create, catching glimpses of the surrounding environment as they do. Visitors passing by from the adjacent trail across the creek can also experience glimpses of people as they pass through the intervention.



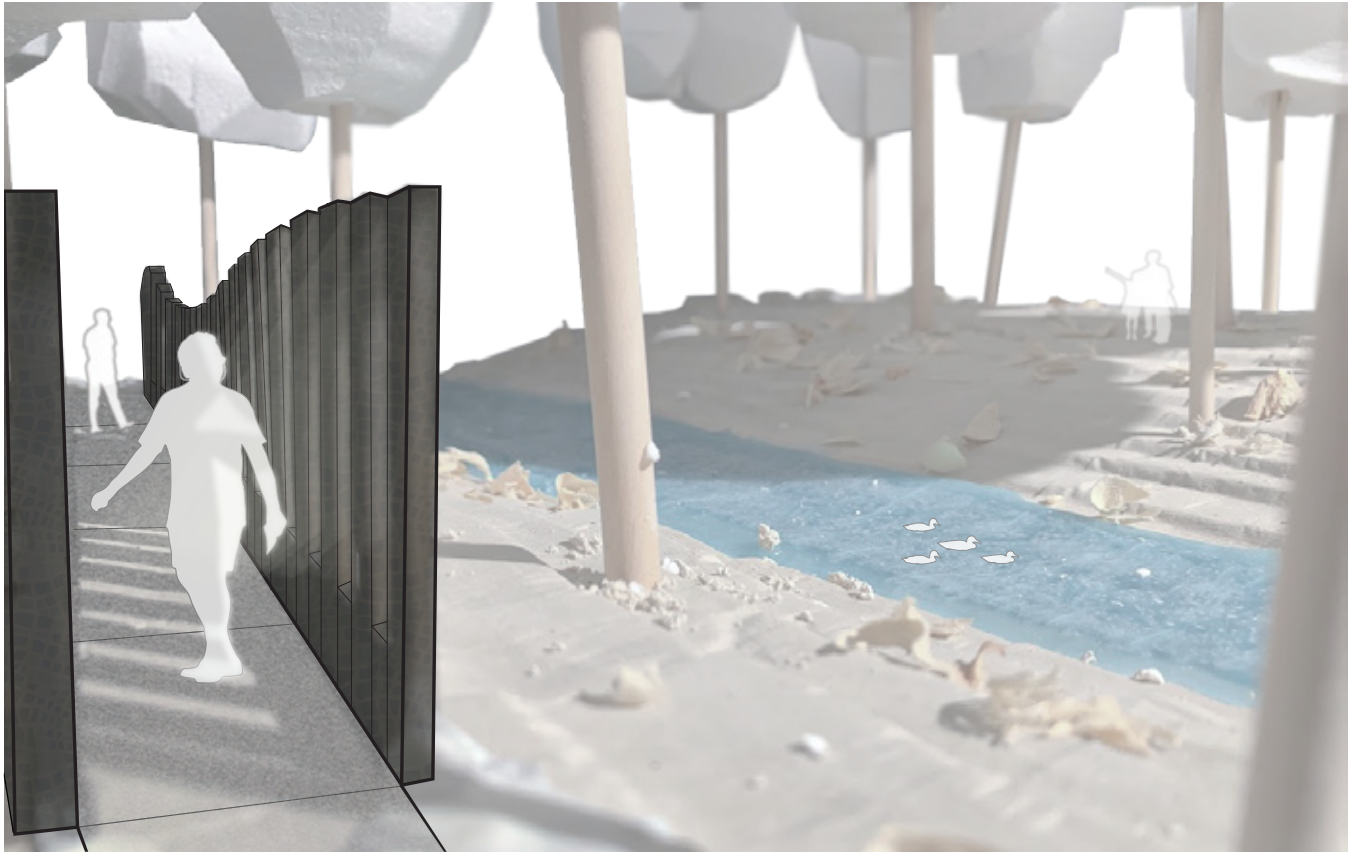


Fig. 149 | Reminiscence Render - North-West



Fig. 150 | Reminiscence Render - South

## Conclusion

This research explores the many themes of grief, bereavement, and remembrance through extensive photo documentation and a series of models. This process of head-to-hand, aligned with the principles of expressive arts therapy, allows for the translation of scientific research and a personal understanding of grief into architectural design. As a result, the final proposal is one that not only speaks to extensive research on grief and bereavement but also is informed by the existing qualities of Brunet Park and cemeteries across the Windsor Region. An understanding of memory processes also informs the research's emphasis on materiality, which enables the proposed project to engage users in both a tactile and contemplative experience. Ultimately, the project celebrates our time on earth and the departed through a connection with nature and the expression of time through carefully selected materials.

This research values a scientific understanding of grief and the effects the death of a loved one can have on someone but recognizes that the current state of the research so far is convoluted and disconnected from our spiritual bodies. This research also recognizes that cultural and social attitudes surrounding bereavement and death constantly change. Therefore, the project suggests no particular way to cope with losing a loved one should be implied. Rather, visitors to the park should be encouraged to attend to loss and remembrance on their own terms. Furthermore, this research also recognizes that in the present moment, there is a lack of purpose-built spaces dedicated to grieving and healing from loss outside of our homes and institutions. By situating a project within a semi-rural neighbourhood park and void of cultural and religious themes, it can remain accessible to everyone and be a part of people's daily lives.

Reflected in the coping models and at the core of expressive arts therapy for grievers, retrieving memories of the deceased and formulating meaning are key processes in overcoming the loss of a loved one. As the bereaved

are cast into a dark state of confusion and sorrow, they require a means to revisit various memories and to find meaning in past events which occurred or in the new life as a bereaved individual. Even in today's ocular-centric world, memory is engaged through all the senses. And not only are memories stored inside the brain through electrochemical processes, but they are also stored in our skeletons, muscles, and skin.<sup>164</sup> Therefore through a series of small-scale interventions, the Contemplative Trail allows for a physical way to cope with some of the effects of grief while also providing many opportunities for introspection. Within the Remembrance Clearing, family and friends can come together in a private and social setting, preserving the remembered in the "flow of life" through increasingly diverse modern rituals.<sup>165</sup> This research proposes, through a material and physical grounding, a way to facilitate grief and maintain relationships with the deceased in the existing grief-laden environment of Brunet Park.<sup>166</sup>



**Fig. 151 | Adam's Rock**

At the base of a commemorative tree for a child named Adam (2012-2015) sits a small rock with an engraving of a house.

## Endnotes

- 162 Ester Holte Kofod, "From Morality to Pathology: A Brief Historization of Contemporary Western Grief Practices and Understandings," *Nordic Psychology* 69, no. 1 (February 2017): pp. 56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2016.1267914>; Richard Gross, *Understanding Grief: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 43-46.
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- 165 Elizabeth M. Hallam and Jennifer Lorna Hockey, "Ritualizing Death: Embodied Memories," in *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), pp. 179-202.
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