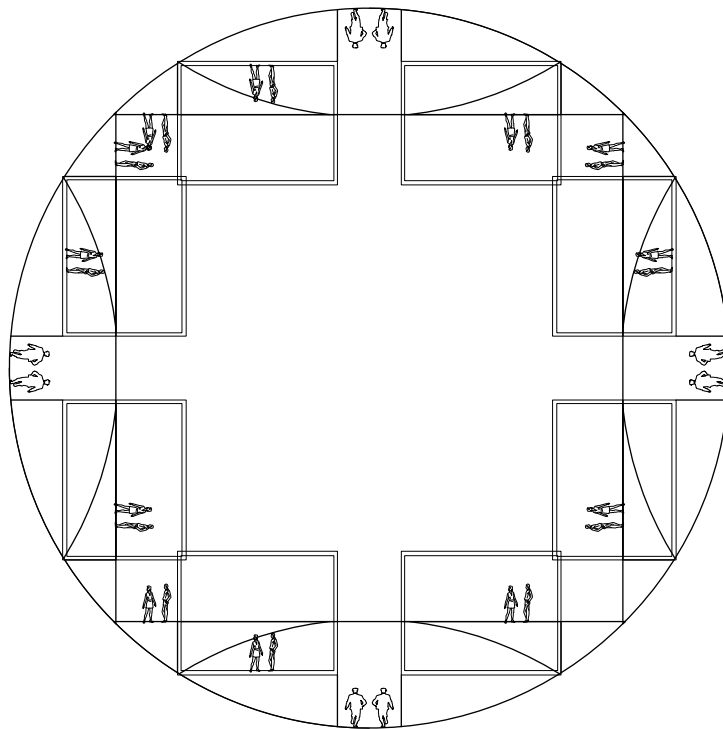


# BEAUTY IS TRUTH

a thesis about bridging life and death



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January, 2016



# Bridging

The following texts from Heidegger introduce the core of my work: the act of bringing together, connecting life and death.

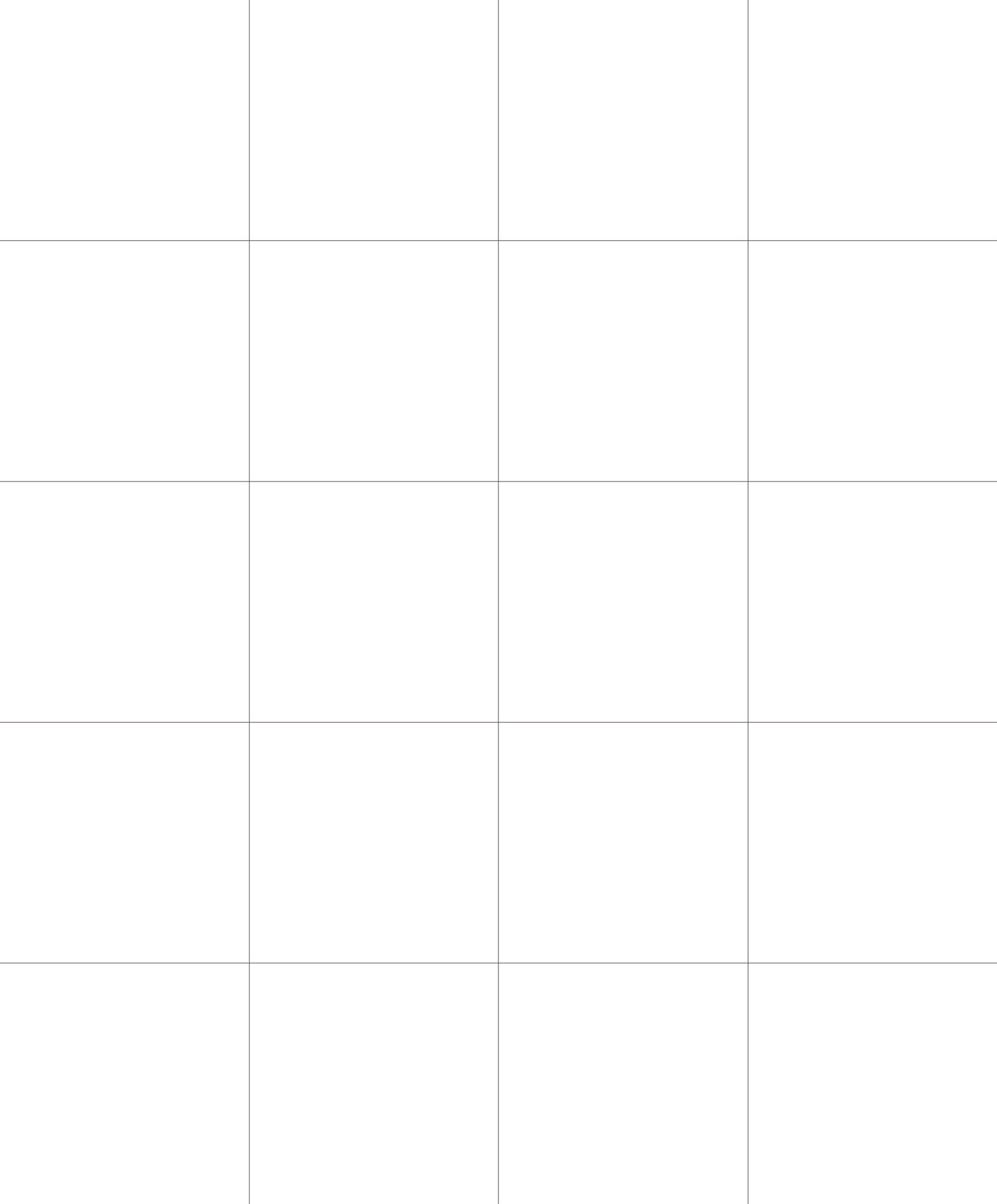
*The bridge swings over the stream with ease and power. It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows. Resting upright in the stream's bed, the bridge-piers bear the swing of the arches that leave the stream's waters to run their course. The waters may wander on quiet and gay, the sky's floods from storm or thaw may shoot past the piers in torrential waves-the bridge is ready for the sky's weather and its fickle nature. Even where the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more.*

(Heidegger, 1971, p. 4)

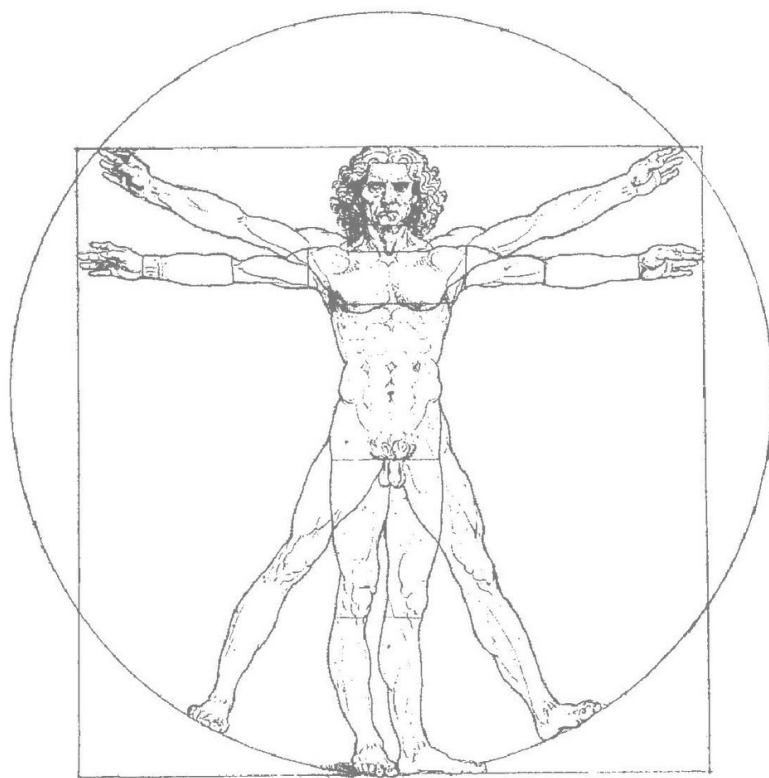
*As a thing, the bridge allows the simple onefold of earth and sky, of divinities and mortals, to enter into a site by arranging the site into spaces.*

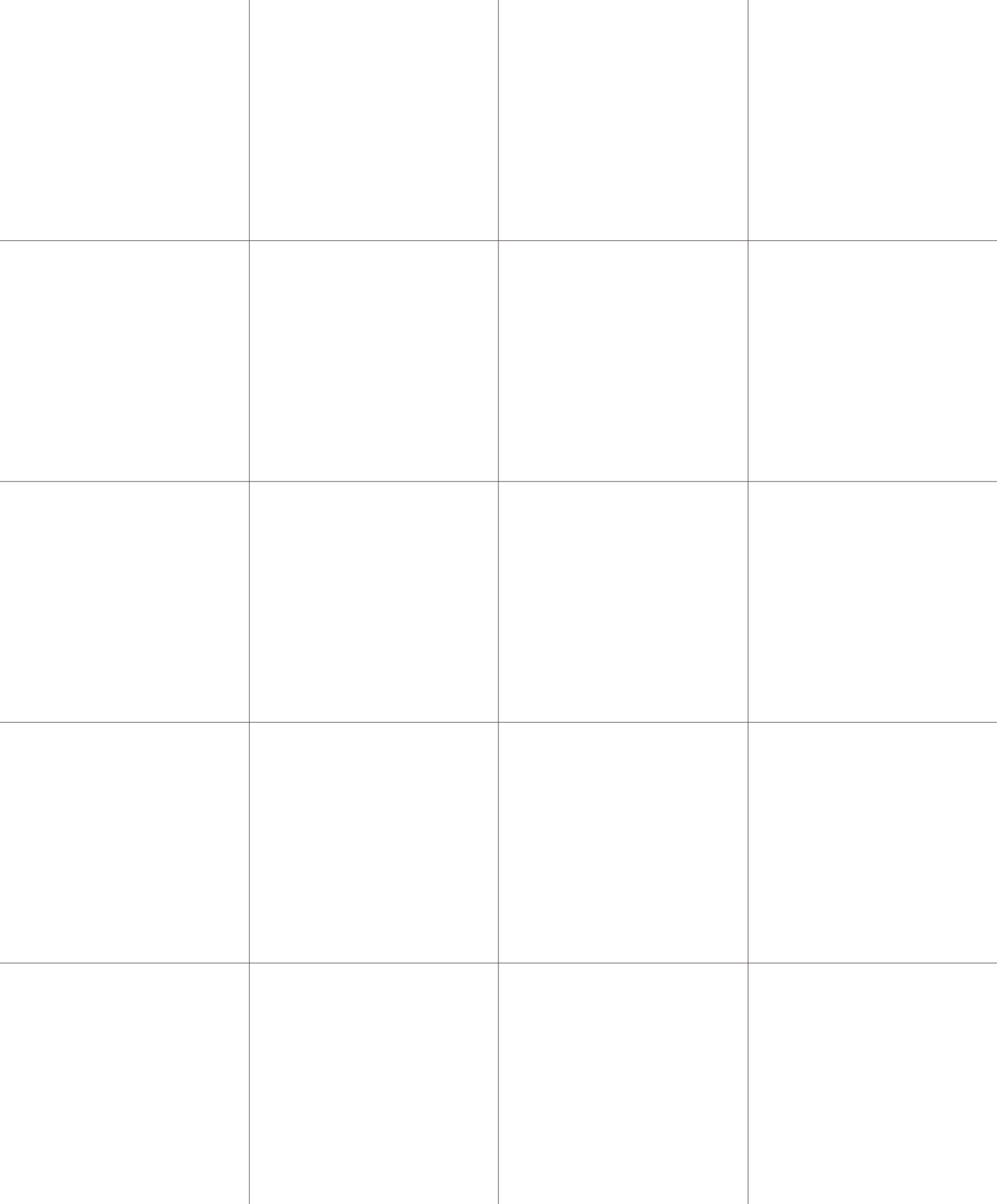
(Heidegger, 1971, p. 7)

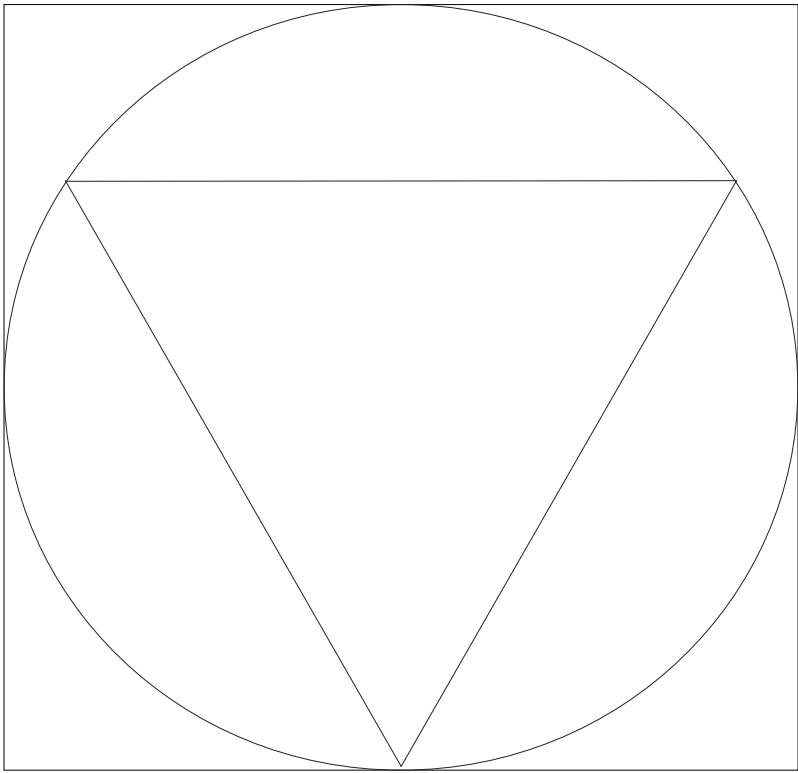
Martin Heidegger - Building, Dwelling, Thinking











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Figure 1.1 *Martin Heidegger*

The idea of having a more meaningful life when embracing death.





Figure 1.2 *David Bowie*

The easier you can accept that fact (dying) makes the rest of one's life a lot easier to enjoy.

# 1. Introduction

My journey began with a fascination for meaningful architecture. I believe space could have the potential to do more than merely work as a place that allows a certain function. My way of thinking about this topic is very much influenced by the architect Wim Cuyvers (Cuyvers, 2005), who thinks of space as a universal way of speaking and hearing each other. Like looking each other really deep in the eyes and understanding what the other person wants to say without using words. To me this kind of conversing is communication *pur sang* and I would like my architecture to have this kind of interaction with its user. Therefore, my goal is to create meaningful architecture, which is increasingly important with a topic that makes people silent, the traumatic event of death.

I believe the silence has arisen because of our inability to give a meaning to death. Therefore we have turned it into a stigma, a distinguishing mark of social disgrace. We banned death as a part of life, which has led to a distancing between the two. To me this is a worrying development. German philosopher Martin Heidegger emphasises in his book 'Being and Time' (Heidegger, 1996) on the preparedness for death as a fundamental key to living a better life. He worked on the idea of having a more meaningful life when embracing death. Acceptance of death as a part of life leads to a more complete, more conscious and more appreciated life. Recently passed away artist David Bowie has a similar message in an interview with Ivo Niehe in the Dutch television show 'de TV show'. He stated: "It is absolutely ridiculous to be scared of dying because there is nothing you can do about. It is the one given. If you can let go of that fear it is much easier to live the rest of one's life more fully." Therefore I believe it is evident to shatter the stigma and reunite life and death. However, without people talking, a third party would prove beneficial as a means of starting the conversation.

With my project I intend to form that third party. I will create meaningful architecture as well in my research as in my design. Bringing together life and death forms the essence for the meaning I intend to create. The whole could be seen as a personal journey, my journey towards finding my meaning in case of the architecture of death. England shows and enlarged image of the problems caused by the silence around the topic. The English are more reserved in showing their emotions compared to other countries. Furthermore, most issues I distinguished take place in a metropolis. The combination of the two resulted in choosing London as my point of departure. From here on I conducted my research on the universal architectural language of meaningful architecture and on finding the meaning I want to formulate in case of the architecture of death. There has been a lot of discussion about meaningful architecture. However, the definition and purpose of architecture has never been settled. In order to find my own definition, I make use of the opinions of others on the matter.

The introduction sets out the role of death in modern society. It creates understanding in how we arrived at a silence around the subject, the resulting issues, the necessity of addressing these issues and the way to change the current situation. The outcomes form the basis of the meaning I want to bring forth with my architecture. The next part of the thesis focuses on how to create meaningful architecture in case of death. It creates understanding on the basics of the universal language of meaningful architecture and its elements for creating a message. Ultimately I will arrive at a formulation of my own message.

## 1.1. Stigma

The first step in creating meaningful architecture in the case of death involves understanding the landscape of death. Death is one of the greatest stigmas of our time. That means that the public has put a distinguishing mark of social disgrace on it. Death became shameful and forbidden. We try our best to avoid the subject and do not wish to speak or think about it. How did death arrive at such a status? With the help of 20th century historian Philippe Ariès I have considered several events that have led to the stigma.

Ariès studied the western attitudes towards death from the Middle Ages to the present. He believes the revolution that led to our thinking about death started in the United States and spread to England and to industrialized Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. During the Middle Ages, death was considered as both familiar and simple. People usually knew they were going to die. They were forewarned; knew their time was running out; knew death was near; and therefore prepared for it. This usually happened in the person's own home. From their sickbed they organized the ritual of death themselves. It was a public ceremony, with the dying man's bedchamber at the centre of it. The chamber basically became a public place, which was to be entered freely. It was essential that parents, friends, and neighbours were present, even children were brought in. I believe this represented the coexistence of the living and the dead. Ariès states that people had been dying like that for centuries or millennia. Until the 18th century, when the approach changed from both familiar and near, evoking no great fear or awe, towards thus frightful that we dare not utter its name. (Ariès, 1974, pp. 2-8) (Ariès, 1974, pp. 11-13)

However, since the 18th century on this notion has changed. Certain moments triggered the change that led to the current stigma. The first was the desire to spare the sick person (to assume) the burden of his ordeal. This motivation was accompanied by the intolerance of another's death and the fact that relatives had no longer the courage to tell the truth themselves. That notion was quickly followed over by a new sentiment characteristic of modernity: "one must avoid - no longer for the sake of the dying person, but for society's sake, for the sake of those close to the dying person - the disturbance and the overly strong and unbearable emotion caused by the ugliness of dying and by the very presence of death in the midst of a happy life" (Ariès, 1974, p. 87). The rituals of death were emptied of their dramatic impact. The procedure of hushing-up had begun. Ariès continues with the period between 1930 and 1950, when the pace of change accelerated. This was due



## **stig · ma (stigma)**

N. PL. STIG · MAS OR STIG · MA · TA

1. An association of disgrace or public disapproval with something, such as an action or condition;
2. A distinguishing mark of social disgrace;

to “the displacement of the site of death” (Ariès, 1974, p. 87). Instead of dying at home amidst friends and family, one died in the hospital, alone. Besides, because of developments in healthcare and medicine, it was possible to extend life. Death had to be fought until the last moment. The notion of ‘do not give up the fight’ became society’s drive. Accepting and surrendering to a disease was no longer an option. Besides, the battle took place in hospitals rather than at home, distancing people from death and costing the patient his or her wellbeing in the last days. Death has become institutionalized, 55% of the people in the UK end up dying in a hospital. Many factors in society, policy and the medical world feed this so called ‘coalition of hope’ (de Lange, 2015; Eng, 2015). In other words, a technical process replaced the ritual of death. A technical process directed by doctors, who made the decision about the moment of death. They dissected death and made sure the person dying no longer knew when his time was about to come. Ariès considers this as the true shortcoming since “it became impossible to know which step was the real death, the one in which consciousness was lost, or the one in which breathing had stopped.” He continues: “All these little silent deaths have replaced and erased the great dramatic act of death, and no one any longer has the strength or patience to wait over a period of weeks for a moment which has lost a part of its meaning” (Ariès, 1974, pp. 88-89). Instead of the process of dying, we now focus on an acceptable style of living while dying. Even in the actual process of dying is no longer a place for death. This does not even revolved around the dying person anymore. It is about how the living are able to deal with the death of their loved one. How we can make death acceptable or tolerated by the survivors. The act of graceless dying caused too strong an emotion for society. Therefore it had to be avoided, just as the sorrow of the bereaved. “When expressed to evidently it does not inspire pity but repugnance, it is the sign of mental instability or of bad manners: it is morbid. Within the family circle one also hesitates to let himself go for fear of upsetting the children. Solitary and shameful mourning is the only recourse” (Ariès, 1974, p. 90). However, hesitation in expressing one’s emotions is not beneficial for the mourning process. In the old days, the panoply of mourning scarcely concealed a rapid resignation. Widowers often remarried a few short months after the death of their wives. While today, it appears that widows of widowers more often pass away themselves after the death of their loved ones. This was concluded after a study on the mortality rate of this group, where they were compared with a control group of people from the same age (Ariès, 1974, p. 91). According to sociologist Geoffrey Gorer in his work ‘Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain’ (Gorer, 1965), “the choking back of sorrow, the forbidding of its public manifestation, the obligation to suffer alone and secretly, has aggravated the trauma stemming from the loss of a loved one.” In a family in which sentiment is given an important place and in which premature death is becoming increasingly rare, the death of a beloved one is always deeply felt. “A single person is missing, and the whole world feels empty. No longer has one the right to say so aloud” (Ariès, 1974, p. 92).

The cause of the stigma has become apparent. It has evolved from a combination of the need of happiness, the moral duty and social obligation to contribute to that, and the avoidance of sadness or boredom. One is obliged to always show happiness even when one feels deeply disturbed. Obligated to not disturb the on-going society. Obligated to maintain the *raison d’être* of our existence.

Death has become an object of commerce and profit (think of the costs of a funeral and the disposal of the body). Mourning is no longer a necessary period embraced by society; it has become a morbid state, which must be treated, shortened, erased by the doctor of grief (funeral director). (Ariès, 1974, pp. 85-92)

### 1.1. Western culture

Basically, the stigma could be seen as a consequence of our changed western culture. Since the 20th century society changed drastically, causing death to disappear even further on the back-ground. It could be seen as a reaction to the previous century: the Industrial Age, with its increased productivity (due to production in factories), growing cities, and problems as pollution, health issues and slums. The 20th century formed a turning point. Many advances in science and technology led to light, airy, green, healthy cities for the masses. Life had to be better and longer. The narrative was about life, increased productivity, efficiency, and progress. Death was left out of this story. (Eng, 2015)

Our current western culture revolves around order and productivity (Fuchs, 2011). We plan in order to remain continues and to eliminate each conflict, including death, which we see as the greatest disturbance. The fact that society distinguished death as a stigma has everything to do with this. Our world of productivity and efficacy reduces people to things, or perhaps automatons. This is in line with the goal of the productive world, which strives for homogeneity and individuation. Stigmas and prohibitions keep a person individuated. They encourage productivity and discourage the opposite. Our behaviour is accordingly; it includes hard work, duty, and sobriety.

“Not only are humans discouraged from experiencing something beyond individuation, also, man is afraid of the intimate order that is not reconcilable with the order of things” (Bataille, Botting, & Wilson, 1997, p. 214). That is, “modern society generally suppresses modes of unproductive activity. Hence the opposition to sexual indulgence, gambling, drunkenness, and all forms of waste” (Bataille et al., 1997, p. 23). In line with individualization, our Western culture is conditioned to possess and not to let go. The individual is stimulated to purchase items that he thereafter owns. The possession of these things will ultimately build on the individuals’ image towards society. However, there is no experience with letting go. (Parks, 2011, p. 355)

Our planned life ends in a not to plan but certain death. We have to learn how to let go eventually. Having had no experience with that beforehand makes that process extra difficult. To quote Wim Cuyvers: “We plan and set apart all different aspects of life. And we make the strongest separation at the end. That makes architects and designers the servants of a society that puts death in a separate closed off reserve.” (Cuyvers, 2005)



Figure 1.3 *Sarah Dillwyn's Deathbed* (Leslie, 1829)  
Dying surrounded by family and friends





Figure 1.4 *A hospital bed*  
Dying alone in the hospital

## **1.2. Primary issues**

The fact that death deteriorated to a stigma had many consequences for society. Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher who lived from 1889 till 1976, focused his career on the field of existential phenomenology and particularly on the topic death. In the following chapter I will expand on his theory about 'Das Sein' - Being (life) versus 'Das Nichts' - The Nothing (death), in his best known work 'Being and Time' published in 1927 (Heidegger, 1996). The emphasis of this book lies on the preparedness for death as a fundamental key to living a better life. It is important to be aware of the meaning Heidegger gave to death. He saw it as one of the pillars of his poetic vision of Being: the unified interplay of the fourfold of earth, sky, gods and mortals. Life represented the temporary, the fragile, and the finite state of being.

Death on the other hand stood for the eternal, firm, strong final state. I will set out Heidegger's issues of modern society. How people fail to live a full life and how our distancing of death is the underlying reason behind this failure. (Watts, 2014, p. chapter 5)

### **1.2.1 Forgotten to notice we are alive**

Heidegger's first theory states that "we have forgotten to notice we are alive" (Heidegger, 1996). It is only in theory that we are aware of our state of being. However, in practise we are not in contact with the sheer mystery of our existence. The reason for our disconnection is fear for 'The Nothing'. The fear of the inevitable nothingness makes us want to escape from it. We deny its scary presence. Being fully aware of our 'Being', starts with asking the right questions. Asking why we do what we do, why the world is like it is. The next step involves acceptance. When one accepts certain things for as they are, one is able to learn how to truly appreciate them. Appreciation for the temporality of one's existence. A great deal of Heidegger's philosophy is devoted to accustoming us to the understanding of the fragility of our lives and the uniqueness of living on this very delicate planet. He presents his work in such a way, that it appears like he wants to make us feel small, humble, and insignificant in the vast universe. Heidegger promotes activities that create awareness of our existence, like the reflection on the mystery of our origin. These activities ought to take place in a suitable environment. An environment that offers one a certain feeling of focus, like in a graveyard. (Heidegger, 1996)

### **1.2.2 Forgotten that all Being is connected**

The second issue revolves around the fact that "we have forgotten that all Being is connected" (Heidegger, 1996). We are not the only living things on the planet. All creatures should be treated with respect, and considered as equal. In our current egoistic state of mind we treat nature as a means, instead of living in synergy with it. The consequences of our behaviour are all around; global warming as a rising threat; the extinction of species; the depletion of natural resources; et cetera. Our jobs and daily routines foster a focused mind-set. Focused on being productive and being efficient. By going outside our daily routines we are able to broaden our perspective. Walks in the countryside are conducive to this realisation. It is about noticing the nature around you

in order to sense, what Heidegger termed 'the Unity of Being'. The ability to notice the fact that other creatures are in existence beside you. All living beings are fundamentally united by the basic fact of our common 'Being'. When people are able to learn to identify with others (exceeding from only humans to animals and other things in nature), they could gain a deeper form of generosity. Identification in order to overcome egoism and to create a more profound appreciation of one's brief time on earth. (Heidegger, 1996)

### **1.2.3 Forgotten to be free**

Third, "we have forgotten to be free" (Heidegger, 1996). We are, in Heidegger's formulation, 'thrown into the world' at the start of our lives. By birth we are put in a particular social milieu, from where we will develop ourselves within the rigid attitudes, archaic prejudices and practical necessities of that milieu. Because of our lack of influence on the matter, Heidegger classified this given as 'Throwness'. We hide our true nature under a mask, and act in a way society aspects from us. In Heidegger's terms we surrender to a socialised and superficial mode of being called 'they-self' (as opposed to 'our-selves'). We follow The Chatter ('das Gerede') or trends, the so-called 'noise' from newspapers, television and large cities.

In order to be free we will need the same broadened perspective as with 'the Unity of Being'. Rise above our narrow view to a more universal way of thinking. By this transformation we will take on the journey away from 'Uneigentlichkeit' (Inauthenticity) to 'Eigentlichkeit' (Authenticity). This means pulling away from the 'they-self' and start living your own life. An intense focus on your own upcoming death could help in this journey of transformation. It creates awareness in the inability of other people to save us from 'the Nothing' and thus the uselessness of trying to please that same people. (Heidegger, 1996)

To summarize Heidegger's message; by removing death as part of life we have forgotten to notice we are alive, forgotten that all being is connected and forgotten to be free. By acknowledging death and by being conscious of it, one is able to live a more aware, a more wise and a more true to one-self life. Heidegger promotes to however intense, focus on one's existence.

### **1.3 Secondary issues**

We now understand the necessity of bringing life and death together. I believe when embracing death one could live a more meaningful life. In order to fix the broken relationship between life and death one first needs to encompass the scope of the problem. In the previous chapter I looked upon the main issues Heidegger recognised as the result of the distance between life and death. To extend this list I want to add my own findings that I discovered in modern society. These issues I think are secondary compare to Heidegger's theories.

### 1.3.1 Space

The first issue that comes forth out of the distancing between life and death is the lack of room for the dead. In metropolises and other big cities there is hardly any space for the living, let alone for the dead. London is no exception with its high housing prices and rising costs of dying. Journalist Ana Naomi de Sousa wrote an article about this issue in *The Guardian* on the 21st of January 2015 called 'Death in the city: what happens when all our cemeteries are full?' (De Sousa, 2015). The main statement of the article was: "metropolises the world over are running out of room to house their dead". According to Dr Julie Rugg of the University of York's Cemetery Research Group the UK is in an acute crisis mainly because law bans grave recycling. Rugg predicts London's cemeteries will be full within the next 20-30 years. The scarce numbers of burial spaces are pushing up the cost of dying and indirectly create a lucrative business of death. In London you currently already pay around £4,500 for a burial. In other countries solutions as high-rise cemeteries, mechanised columbaria, virtual cemeteries, green cemeteries using GPS to find the burial place instead of headstones have arisen. However, these solutions are based very much on the issue of space, they do not meet the affordances of the family and friends. (De Sousa, 2015)

### 1.3.2 Outdated typology

The architecture of death has rarely changed since the last 200 years. With the Enlightenment death is condemned, under the guise of hygiene, to peace and silence. Leading to a park landscape model, 'the eternal resting fields', used for cemeteries in Western Europe and the US. This model is used to house the dead in a beautiful, hilly, semi-natural environment, with meandering paths, dark cypress trees and yellow-green weeping willows. Here and there small buildings arise, temples, pyramid and cupolas for the dead, to increase the symbolism of the passing and the value of eternity. The identical stones of a military cemetery make the affect of passing time even bigger. It seems as if the thought of death passed unnoticed away in the landscape, as if the severity of the death of one specific person fades away because of all these similar gravestones close to each other. These types of cemeteries are a place for meditating and daydreaming. We want to make a stroll in a pleasurable park, where we can forget about death, where our negative thoughts fade away. The first example of this natural type is the cemetery Père-Lachaise by Brogniart in 1804 in Paris. It became the prototype for many western cemeteries, like the Mount Auburn in Boston and the Highgate cemetery in London. The storm of silence has arisen and will rule for at least 200 years. Since the opening of Père Lachaise no other architectonic of urban idea of cemeteries is developed. There have been varieties on this model, like the park-, garden-, open field- and landscape-cemetery. But they are all based on the notion of forgetting about death, about shifting our minds away, instead of for example a more conscious dealing with death. To be exposed in a focus manner to the themes related to death, ultimately to arrive at acceptance. (Cuyvers, 2005)

### 1.3.3 Public space

The dead are housed in cemeteries, which are public spaces. Public spaces that used to be parts

of neighbourhoods; easy to visit on a daily basis. However, today cemeteries have an underused capacity, which is not surprising since their location far out of the city. It suits the notion we have today about the public space, namely that it is not public at all. With the Enlightenment death is condemned, under the guise of hygiene, to peace and silence. And in the wake of the dead, follow the sick, the prisoners, the disabled and the elderly. They stand for everything that is not the smiling, young, active and productive person. Therefore they have to be accommodated in peaceful, areas, far away from the cities.

It is the colour green that reminds us of those who are not active. The colour green that makes up for their lack of liveliness. The results are parks: parks for the dead, industry parks, office parks, et cetera. All with the motive to separate functions and put the ones that do not meet the requirements of society in green environments. We want to avoid confrontation and with that any form of consciousness. Cities are merely for leisure and consuming, for spending money all over the world on the same things. Everything shares the same economical colour and the same appearance. With universalized cities, the streets become everywhere the same, including the same 'H&M', the same 'Ici Paris' and the same 'Burger King'. With these transformations, less and less space becomes available for the public space. (Cuyvers, 2005; Van den Brande)

Ideally the public space is a place for everybody at any moment for any activity. It is the space that is not owned by somebody, not privatised and not private. It is the space of the powerless, not of the power. It is the space for being, not for having. It is the space for transgression and dissipation, the place for shelter, the place for meeting. The place without a function, but a place where any function could take place.

#### **1.3.4 Distance to cemeteries**

The amount of people living in cities increased during the Industrial Age. By the 19th century, cemeteries were full in Central London. Therefore larger cemeteries were built on the outskirts of the city, like Hampstead Heath, Kensal Green or the City Cemetery. The first crematoria were sited on these places as well. Since the city grew further in the 20th century, these cemeteries are not on the outskirts anymore. They are located in a large ring around the city. "The ring of fire," as architect Allison Killing calls it. These events literally created a distance between death and society. It was not possible anymore to visit one's ancestors on a daily basis when one pass by one's neighbourhood cemetery. In order to pay one's respects one had to make a journey. Not only could this be seen as a loss for the individual, cemeteries are an important kind of community space. The loss of a cemetery in the city centre is a loss of emotional intelligence in the city as a whole. (Eng, 2015)

#### **1.3.5 Secularization**

People invented religions to serve the central need of coping with terrible degrees of pain. Religi-



Figure 1.5 *Père Lachaise* (Krech, 2006)  
Cemetery park model



Figure 1.6 *Mount Auburn cemetery (Unknown)*  
Cemetery park model



Figure 1.7 *London cemeteries*

Ring of cemeteries on the outskirts of the city. In red my proposed location at the centre of the city.



on helped us deal with our loss and structured our behaviour around it. This gave support and something to hold on to. Especially with death being difficult to understand and accept. Structuring behaviour was not only beneficial for the bereaved, also it meant a great deal for the church. The church build up their power around it, by making up the rules on how one should live in order to go to heaven. Herewith, they controlled life and even claimed to control the after life. They stated that if one lives a good life on earth one earns a place in heaven, but if one does not one will burn in hell for eternity. Fear proved as a means for creating power. (De Botton, 2012, pp. 11-13)

Indeed, several studies indicate that religion and spirituality have the ability to strongly impact the process of grieving. Crystal Park and Roshi Joan Halifax wrote on the importance of religion and spirituality in adjusting to bereavement. They state (Parks, 2011, p. 358): “For many individuals, religion or spirituality underlies their general approach to life and forms the system of meaning through which they experience and understand the world and operate on a daily basis, making the universe seem benign, safe, just, coherent, and, ultimately, controllable. Clearly, when facing highly stressful experiences such as the death of a loved one, this meaning system will influence one’s responses to it.”

Apart from the ways of coping with grief, like holding out the possibility of the everlasting life and ways to reconnect with the dead, religions also provides more tangible resources to assist mourners in their process of grief, like rites and rituals, prayers, guidance by pastors and fellow congregants, and funeral ceremonies. “These efforts comfort mourners and give them a sense of structure and a sense of belonging to a broader community. Through these resources, individuals may find solace and comfort and, over time, work through their grief in ways that allow them to find peace and acceptance and to return to their normal daily lives” (Parks, 2011, p. 359). Basically they find comfort in what Heidegger described as ‘all being is connected’. Another Heideggerian principle is found in the way that one might grow from the experience of grief. “Many religious and spiritual traditions hold that the suffering experienced through bereavement can be an impetus for transformative spiritual experience. Such a perspective holds that to deny grief is to rob one of the heavy stones that will eventually be the ballast for the two great accumulations of wisdom and compassion” (Parks, 2011, p. 359).

However, since the 19th century, at the time when philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared: “God is dead”, we lost our grip on dealing with death. Of course, normal life is forever changed with the loss of a loved one. Nonetheless, it is important to mitigate negative thoughts in order to continue living.

### **1.3.6 Funeral location**

In the introduction I stated: to experience existential moments we go to the same kind of spaces. For the event of death this means that we go to the church. We have done this for a very long time and even with secularization and only a minority of the population of London attending a church



Figure 1.8 *Atheist funeral location (Killick)*  
A lack of atmosphere



Figure 1.9 *St. Pauls* (Michelle, 2015)  
Religious funeral location full of atmosphere

on a regular basis, most funerals are still celebrated in a church. “However, there is potential lack of convergence between the beliefs of the individual who is conducting any given funeral and the bereaved relatives who are organising it” (Hinerman & Glahn, 2012, p. 117). Leading to very inconvenient situations where relatives have to negotiate with the minister who will be conducting the funeral about the amount of religious references during the ceremony. Instead of the clarity of having a ceremony in the church, the funeral planning becomes a complex negotiation. One minister for example said: “with one family, the son would not even shake hands with me at the day of the funeral, because I would not agree to any of their atheist’s demands.” This minister held on to its principles of neither referencing the deceased during funeral worship nor playing any music at all. The bereaved family, when faced with such trenchant positions, have to decide whether they wish to accommodate themselves to the deeply held beliefs of the minister, or whether they wish to go elsewhere. (Hinerman & Glahn, 2012, p. 129)

That makes one wonder why atheists do not turn to atheist funeral locations. I think it is due to the lack of character and spiritual elements that people require for such an event. The worst are spaces like the example pictured on the left. Non-religious people make an exception at the end of their lives and plan their funeral at a church. This decision does not come as a surprise, since churches used to be places for all the important phases in a life. Death formed no exception. Since churches were thus important, a lot of capital was made available for their realization. Newly build spaces for a funeral location, lack this kind of architecture.

### **1.3.7 Remembrance: visiting a cemetery**

There are many social obligations around death. That what people feel that is need to be done, like attending a grave, keeping it proper and letting people know they were loved. However, to answer these needs requires a great effort. Especially since they have changed in the course of history. According to journalist Peter Stanford from The Telegraph, “cremations, which were hardly known at the start of the 20th century, are now chosen by more than 70 per cent of the population. Scattering ashes to the four winds, dust to dust, leaves no memorial – but it also means no one has to bother with any time-consuming tending” (Stanford, 2011).

I believe cemeteries are based upon the wrong principles and I will explain why. First social obligations like taking care of the gravesite; watering the plants; cleaning the stone; and leaving flowers, has become problematic. In modern society, with relatives living far away from their ancestors or being busy in everyday life, people lack the opportunity to actually visit the cemetery. An article by Stanford ‘Why the miles need no longer keep you from laying flowers at the cemetery’ (Stanford, 2011), indicates the guilt people feel concerning this issue. People often question themselves: “when did I last go to my parents’ grave; I don’t care enough to come more often; my parents own children have forgotten them (every parent’s nightmare); and worst of all, the neglect of their final resting place stigmatizes them as forgettable and unmourned.” It is a dilemma faced by many. Citizen Jenny Barsby-Robinson is one of them. She however started a website called ‘www.tendagrave.

org', where she arranged with other (random) people who live close by her parents, to take care of their grave. In exchange she would return the favour. (Stanford, 2011)

I believe the idea of contracting out the visiting of one's ancestors, sending an unknown proxy, when, at heart, people believe they should be making the time to go themselves more often, is not quite the solution. Therefore, I think cemeteries are based upon the wrong principle. They revolve too much around guilt. Caused by the social obligation which dictates that one should take care of their loved one's grave. Think about the fact that relatives are not even able to take care of their grandparents when they are still alive, how are they able to take care of them after their death? I wonder if a cemetery could revolve around another principle. What are the ways in which we could pay respect? How could we create a cemetery that fits modern society, with its huge amount of residents, where it is hardly possible to maintain actual burying places for? (Stanford, 2011)

### **1.3.8 Poor mourning culture**

Allison Killing also studied people's attitudes towards death. It turned out that people are very pragmatic around the subject. As well for the disposal of the body as for the funeral expenses they base their choices often on financial reasons. People choose cremation of burial often because of the lower expenses. The deeper motivation for cremation over burial is that cremation is the most radical means of getting rid of the body and of forgetting it, of nullifying it. "Also the funeral rites have been reduced to a decent minimum, the inevitable operation necessary to the disposal of the body. It is above all essential that society - the neighbours, friends, colleagues, and children - notice to the least possible degree that death has occurred. The formalities and ceremonies must remain discreet and must avoid emotion" (Ariès, 1974, p. 90). Killing also stated that she learned how deeply death is embedded in the English culture. Yet individuals often lack the possibility of having an outlet through which to air their experiences. When looking at other cultures you could find rich cultures of mourning. In Poland for example there is a national day of mourning every year where everybody goes to a cemetery, lights candles, plants flowers and tidies the grave. This is called All Soul's Day, a day of remembering and praying for all who have died. Mexico has a similar kind of day called Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead). They take it even a step further by making it a holiday, a holiday that honours the deceased, with costumes, parades and lots of colours. It is a day of joy and happiness since people believe they are re-joined with their loved ones. It gives relatives and friends the opportunity to let the deceased know they are still remembered and loved. The Zen Buddhists in Japan believe in the beauty of aging and celebrate this during the cherry blossom festival. The falling of the leaf from the tree, in other words the moment of leaving is celebrated. The transience of the blossom, its beauty and its quick death, have been associated with mortality. Cherry blossoms are considered richly symbolic. Another Japanese tradition takes place in the Ise Grand Shrine. The shrine buildings are rebuilt every 20 years as a part of the Shinto belief of the death and renewal of nature and the impermanence of all things. The renewal process is conveyed through passing building techniques from one generation to the next. Within the Japanese culture death is respected. The children are taught to accept death and to think of it



Figure 1.10 *Día de los muertos* (Drake, 2011)  
Celebration of death in Mexico





Figure 1.11 *Cherry blossom festival (Unknown)*  
Celebration of death in Japan



Figure 1.12 *All souls day* (Solarz, 2012)  
Celebration of death in Poland



as a balance for life.

In the UK these kinds of activities are lacking. When Killing asked people and looked at her own situation she realized that many ancestors do not have a memorial stone because they are cremated. Often the relatives of the deceased person did not even know where the ashes were to be found, or if they do they do not find the occasion to visit the urns or graveside. (Eng, 2015)

We think death will not happen to us, at least not any time soon. But when it hits us, it hits us hard. The unexpected, throws us in a long state of grief. In many cases people lack the knowledge of how to deal with this amount of pain. However, there is a turning point. A trend that stimulates talking about the subject again and supporting each other. Expressions of this trend are for example the School of Life, the Death Cafe and a shift in the media. The School of Life is an institution that tries to answer the great questions of life. At a Death Cafe people drink tea, eat cake and discuss death. Their aim is to increase awareness of death in order for people to make the most of their (finite) lives. In the media in general more attention is given to the subject.

### **1.3.9 Conclusion**

The issues give a definition and delineation of what is excluded in my project and what is not.

The primary issues indicate the importance of bringing together life and death in order to live a more fulfilling life. They tend towards a new meaning for the architecture of death, without hinting towards a possible way to achieve that. While the secondary issues have a more concrete possibility in how to engage with architecture. Namely by taking into consideration the issue of space for burial spots, the fact that it is time for a new kind of typology for cemeteries, as a truly public space and within the city centre. A place for atheists with changed rituals and new possible ways for having a relationship with the dead.

Furthermore, the issues form the motive for undertaking this project. I am dissatisfied with our current situation. My dissatisfaction expressed itself so far by explaining where it came from. The issues show the scope of the problem, the distancing between life and death. From now on I would like to work on a possible solution. In my solution in the form of meaningful architecture, I want to address each one of the issues to a greater or lesser extent.

## 1.4 A bridge

The solution starts with offering an architectural gesture that naturally connects different themes, namely the gesture of a bridge. According to Heidegger a bridge could be a thing that has the ability of gathering (Heidegger, 1971, p. 4). I build on his line of thinking and use the bridge in my design as a means to bring life and death together.

In the prologue of this thesis I quoted the meaning Heidegger gave to a bridge in his book 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking'. He gave great importance to the bridge as an organ that brings different things together. Elements adjacent to the bridge acquire their meaning through the appearance of the bridge. The bridge gathers and it specifies. It brings together earth and sky, mortals and divinities, land and water and could even be a space where life and death meet. It gives space and at the same time provides space; it gives space for the water to run its course and grants a way for people to cross the water. The bridge also leads in many ways. It often leads from one important urban point to another; it leads people from one bank to the other.

People often think of a bridge as primarily and merely a bridge. Occasionally it expresses more, then it has the ability to become a symbol. A symbol of the things it brings together. To quote Heidegger (Heidegger, 1971, p. 5): "Our thinking has long been accustomed to understate the nature of the thing. The consequence, in the course of Western thought, has been that the thing is represented as an unknown X to which perceptible properties are attached." The bridge is a thing; it configures different elements in such a way that new relationships are being formed. The bridge gathers; it connects.

## 1.5 Research and design approach

### 1.5.1 Research goal

I would like to create meaningful architecture. That exceeds the design of merely a building. It starts with choosing a subject that stands at the centre of life. What is more meaningful than life, of which death is the end and at the same time the beginning. I believe death revolves around the fundamentals of life; it touches the essence. Therefore I take it as the subject for creating meaningful architecture.

With the means of architecture I want to create a place that could help bring life and death together; help relate people to death; and help people accept death in order to live a better life. In the end that is something people have to find for themselves, by accepting death and making it part of their lives. However, the circumstances I create and the place of encounter could make a difference. It is a place with a possibility; a guide towards acceptance. If by this encounter, people find the capability to continue with their lives, I had an impact. That is my goal. To make architecture that revolves around more than just beauty. To make meaningful architecture that has an impact on life.

In my research I built on the theories of the great thinkers like Martin Heidegger and Philippe Bataille, about the role death should play in our lives and about how to create meaningful architecture. I am using their theories and other literature to form my own reasoning. It results in a framework for creating meaning in the architecture of death. In the next phase I will use this framework as a starting point for the design of a building, in my case a building on a bridge. At the same time others should have the ability as well to use the framework for their own research and design.

### 1.5.2 Design goal

The design follows the reasoning of my research in a logical manner. By bringing death back in the city of London, bridging life and death, and creating an opportunity for individuals to find comfort, to process death, and to continue with life while keeping the dead close to them. The design offers the application on the theories discussed in my research; it shows how death can be a part of life with the use of architecture.

### 1.5.3 Research question

Research question: *How to create a new meaning in the architecture of death?*

Sub questions:

- in the past, what meaning has been created in the architecture of death?
- what is meaningful architecture?
- why is it important to create meaning in the architecture of death? What does it add compare to architecture without meaning?
- how to create meaningful architecture?
- where does meaningful architecture consist of?
- what are the elements & fundamentals that stand at the basis of meaningful architecture?
- what are the problems you have to address in updating the meaning in the architecture of death?
- how can you solve these problems with architecture?
- what is the meaning of death?

## 1.6 Methodology

My thesis is a personal journey, not an exact science, towards finding how to create meaning in the architecture of death. The journey originated from my dissatisfaction about our dealing with space and death, from my criticism on the issues around space and death and the questioning of my role as an architect. Throughout the process I ask myself several questions at the beginning of each chapter. These indicate my line of thinking, reasoning, and the things I find useful. In looking for an answer to those questions I looked at the point of views from architects of whom I think are helpful. I questioned how others before me have dealt with the issue and how I can make use of their insights. In the end, the result can be seen as a search for my role as an architect, my story, my journey.

The search for meaningful architecture in case of death started with defining the parameters of 'meaning'. With the help of a model I derived from communication sciences I created a framework with the elements that make up meaningful architecture. Following this framework, I created the meaning I wanted to communicate by looking at our current relation with death. I strive towards death as a part of life rather than a stigma. However, since death is intangible, it could only be described. Therefore philosophy proved to be of great assistance. Most of the literature I have used have a philosophical nature and revolve around death, consolation and the meaning of life. Between the different theories are a lot of similarities, which are attributable to their core meaning that is the essence of life; searching for one's own truth; acceptance. I myself do not have much experience with the loss of a loved one. I use the experiences of others to form my opinion. Therefore I take a contemplative stand. Taking into consideration as many ways of perception as possible.

In short I will explain the structure of my research and my design.

### **1.6.1 Structure of research**

My research is threefold, where each element chronologically leads towards a conclusion.

#### **1. Theoretical framework:**

The theoretical framework includes a literature study about meaningful architecture, death and grief. In the introduction I will point out the importance of creating meaning in the architecture of death. The second part offers an insight into the definition of meaningful architecture. It is a search for a new meaning. What should this meaning be. In the following chapters I will look how it could be communicated through architecture.

#### **2. Case Studies Analysis, the architectural elements for creating meaning:**

By a case study analysis, I will investigate the meaning that has been created in the past in the architecture of death. Through the case study I will be able to distinguish all the different elements that together form such meaning. Besides, I will gain insights in how meaning is created and I will create the knowledge about the tools in order to ultimately formulate my own meaning.

#### **3. Fundamentals:**

The architectural elements consist of several fundamentals. In the study of the fundamentals I further investigate how meaning in the architecture of death is created, through another literature study.

By now I have found the insight in how to create meaning in the architecture of death. To create my own meaning, I will take a critical position on the problems around death and I will translate those ideas into a theoretical framework.

The research will act as a framework that guides my process of design. It will also include an empirical element, which will give input for the program of my design. In order to provide a wide variety to accommodate possible ways of grief, I interviewed several different people; people of different ages, from a child to a grand parent; people who have lost a person and people who have not.

### **1.6.2 Structure of design**

My design is also threefold.

#### **1. Location:**

I made a location analysis of the city of London. Especially the Thames with the Southbank, Victoria Embankment and the history of bridges on that site were very important to me.

#### **2. References:**

I did a reference study on tombs, cemeteries and triumphal bridges.

#### **3. Design**

The location analysis, the references and my thesis gave the input to my design proposal; a bridge bridging life and death.

## 2. The components of meaningful architecture

The following chapter explores the definition of meaningful architecture. Starting with the understanding of meaning in general and then making it specific for architecture. In order to formulate my own message, I intend to understand the language of which architecture is made of. Therefore I investigate the very core of that language, its basic elements.

### 2.1 The definition of meaning

People are meaningful creatures. We try to understand and label the world around us. Things we do not understand or we cannot explain generally we tend to dislike. Why is this the case? What is it that defines meaning? Again I turn towards Heidegger in order to find a definition.

#### 2.1.1 Meaning in general

Martin Heidegger uses meaning in reference to “that in terms of which we understand something” (Watts, 2014, p. chapter 2). Understanding extends the comprehension of words to the understanding of things as phenomena. And more importantly, understanding means knowing how to interact with these things. Take for example the image of architect Frank Gehry giving a reporter ‘the finger’. The meaning of this gesture is commonly known and apprehended. It is that which is commonly accepted and accordingly acted upon.

#### 2.1.2 Meaning in architecture

My ambition is to create meaningful architecture. My interest for meaning in architecture started with questioning the definition of architecture. To answer this question one needs to understand the nature and purpose of the genre. To be more precise, the ‘what?’ and the ‘why?’. ‘What is architecture?’, ‘why do we do it?’, and ‘why is there a need for meaning in architecture?’ There has been a lot of discussion about a possible answer. However, the definition and purpose of architecture has never been settled. I want to define my own definition, and in doing so I make use of the definition others created before me.

To start of I looked at Swiss architect Philippe Rahm’s statement: “Architecture should produce meaning, but from within its own language of space and time. It should not illustrate but produce matter to be illustrated. It should not represent, but present spaces and times, climates, geographies, and physiologies. Our aim is to allow the sudden appearance of original practices of space. In place of functional and symbolic constraints, we substitute a freedom of use and interpretation. There are still unexplored dimensions where architecture causes a sudden appearance of times, spaces, and practices” (Rendell, Dorrian, Hill, & Fraser, 2007, pp. 188-189). To me this definition touches a lot of ways of producing meaning with architecture. However, I want



Figure 2.1 *Symbol of the middle finger* (Rinaldi, 2014)  
Architect Frank Gehry at a press conference

to specify this further and turned to architect and writer Simon Unwin. In his book 'Analysing Architecture' (Unwin, 1997, pp. 13-17), Unwin states that the most basic purpose of architecture is "that it allows those who engage in it to know what they are doing". This indicates the user driven role of the profession. It is there to support the activities of the users. These activities do not limit itself to practical requirements. Humans are meaningful creatures and see meaning and significance in the world around them. It is important for architecture to take this into account, to meet these expectations and to challenge them. Further, one could simply look in a dictionary for the broadest definition of architecture, which is 'architecture is the design of buildings'. This may be very much true, but it still does not help much in understanding what architecture means. The meaning of architecture as an activity can be better understood by using it in regard to other art forms, music in particular. In music, the word architecture is used when talking about a symphony; it is the configuration of parts into a whole and therefore it forms the intellectual structure of a piece. Extract this meaning to the architecture of buildings, or a collection of buildings and you find the answer to the question 'what is architecture' in the conceptual organisation and intellectual structure of the spaces, which accommodate the user activities. "Significantly, architecture relates directly to the things we do" (Unwin, 1997, pp. 13-14).

It does so since prehistoric times, when people started establishing places. Place making in order to organise the world around them into functional boxes. First only a fireplace was established as the centre of people's lives. This is considered to be the first place of mankind. From there on more activities were added, asking for different kinds of places. "A place to store fuel; a place to sit; a place to sleep," and so on, until men had addressed numerous places for a rich variety of functions.

According to Unwin, the identification of place lies at the core of architecture. It revolves around understanding a place and the activity, which is, suppose to happen at that specific place. Ultimately it revolves around bringing these two together in a logical, meaningful way. Herewith, different functions are addressed to different kinds of places, which make them recognizable. A bathroom space is clearly different than a place for cooking or a place for sleeping. The fundamental power of architecture is therefore that it identifies place. (Unwin, 1997, p. 14)

In order to do so, the architect needs to define a language. "A language with patterns, arrangements, in different combinations and compositions as circumstances suggest".

It is important that the users understand this language in order for them to enhance the ideas of the architect by using the building according to his ideas. There has to be a match otherwise the architect did not fulfil his job. Together both parties form the message, that what is communicated. As well the user as the designer play an indispensable part in creating the message. In this case the user is the receiver of the message. He perceives the places in terms of how it relates to use, occupation, meaning and other aspects through his needs, desires, beliefs and aspirations which are affected by warmth, touch, odour, sound, as well as by visual stimuli. These are the basic elements that are part of the language.

However, the configuration of the individual words that together make up the message can be done in many different ways, without any incontrovertible rights or wrongs. It depends on



the way in which people organise their places, which is related to their beliefs, their aspirations and their worldview. As worldviews vary or change, so does architecture. In this way architecture is a physical evidence of a society in a certain period in history. (Unwin, 1997, pp. 16-17)

## **2.2 Meaning through a message**

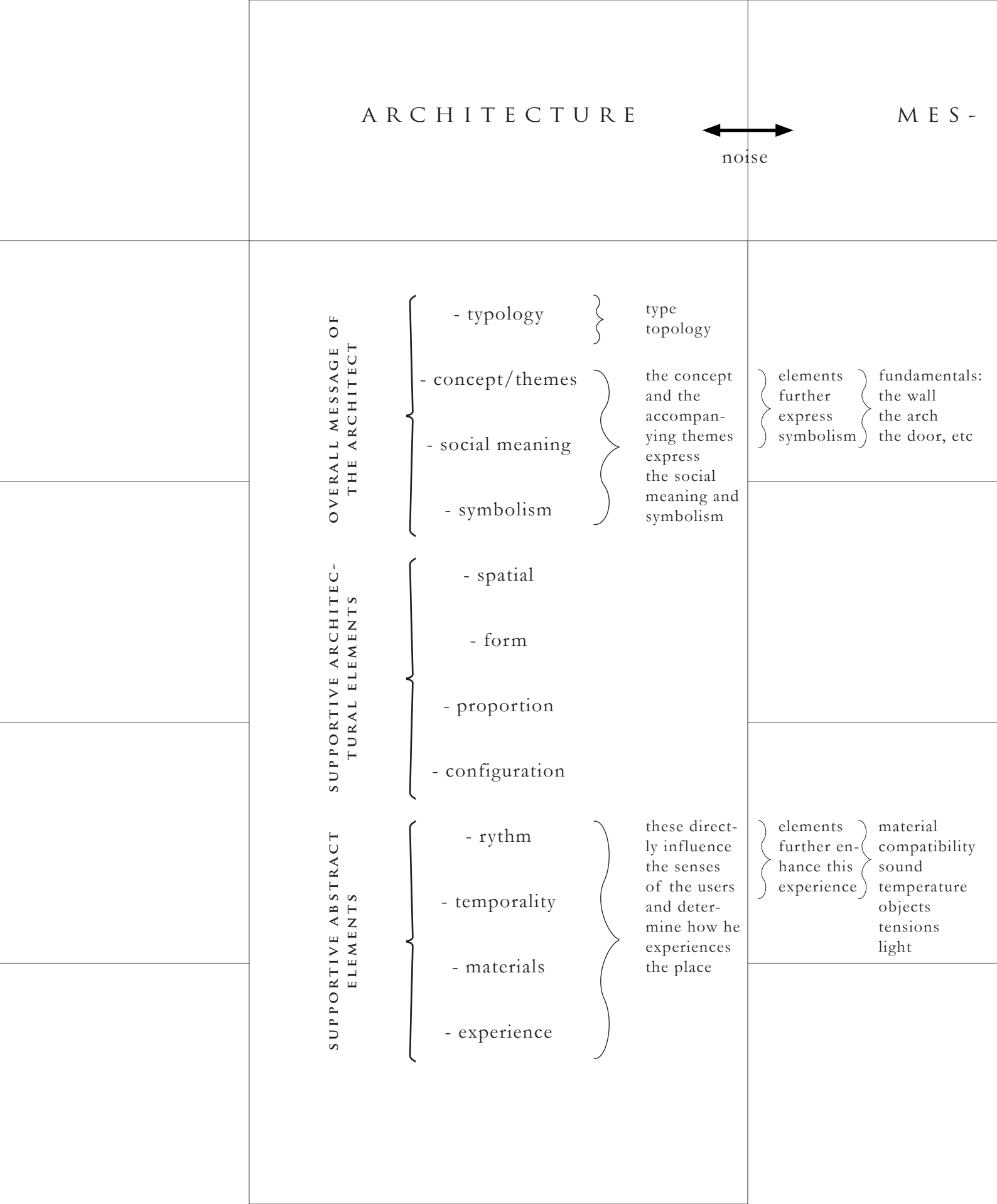
Now that I understand the fact that meaning is communicated through a message, I wonder how this works in architecture? Where does the message consist of? What are the architectural elements that make up this message?

A common language communicates the meaning of architecture. Any profession needs a language in order to communicate as well to clients as to colleagues. However, the language of architecture is often misunderstood or misused. While the most important aspect of good communication is that everybody speaks the same body of words, with the same conventional meanings. Especially if one has the ambition that a building is used according to what the architect intended. (Leupen, 2005, pp. 136-137)

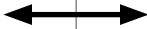
In order for the user to understand what it is that the architect is saying, it is important to understand the process of communication. With the help of the 'sender-message-receiver-model' that I retrieved from the communication sciences, I gave insight to this process. I simplified it and translated it to communication in the case of architecture. I completed the model by adding atmospheric elements with the help of the book 'Atmospheres' by architect Peter Zumthor (Zumthor, 2006). The steps in a communication process are the method by which the sender transfers information and understanding to the receiver. It is up to the receiver how the message is interpreted. The challenge for the sender is to turn thought into an encoded communication in such a way that others will understand the intended meaning. In my case, architecture embodies the transmitter and the user embodies the receiver. The result is a framework, which will be further explained in the following chapters.

### **2.2.1 The framework**

My framework depicted on the following page is a tool for creating meaningful architecture. It is a way of giving insight into the elements that I found useful in the formulation of meaningful architecture. The model consists of three parts: the architecture, the message and the user. Together they make up the meaning. For me this was a starting point to test the language of meaningful architecture. How is this language built up? What stands at the basis of that language? What are its fundamentals? The answer to these questions could be distilled from the first column in the model 'architecture'. The architectural language consists of supportive abstract elements, supported architectural elements and the overall message of the architecture. These are each further specified until the fundamentals of architecture, namely the wall, the arch, the door, etc. The user's input to the message consists of many parts, which I have reduced to human influences and the map of the system of human knowledge. The result could be seen in the following table.



S A G E



noise

U S E R

HUMAN INFLUENCES

- perception
- personality
- mood
- background
- interpretation
- ritual

MAP OF THE SYSTEM OF  
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

- imagination
- memory
- reason

### 2.2.2 Its components

The user, the message and the architecture reflect the issues to whom one is transmitting a message to, what one is trying to submit, and how one is submitting with architecture as a means. The message alone does not bring forth meaning. As well the user as the designer play an indispensable part in creating the message. The architecture forms the encoded message by the use of architectural elements and fundamentals. The users perceive this message according to how he or she relates to use, occupation, meaning and other aspects through his or her needs, desires, beliefs and aspirations, which are in their turn influenced by other external sources. Both determine the meaning that is given to the message.

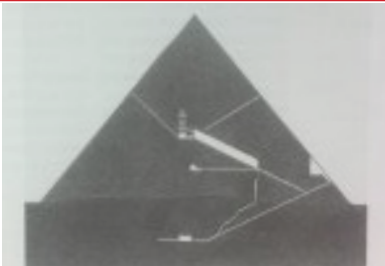
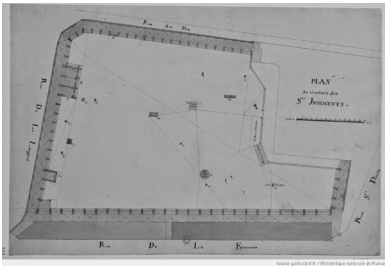
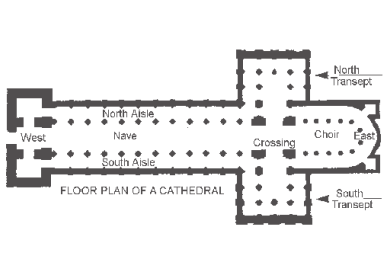



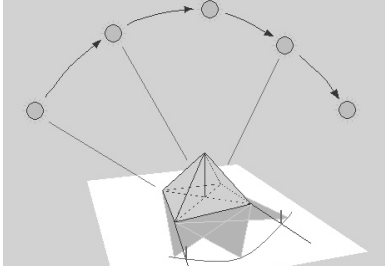
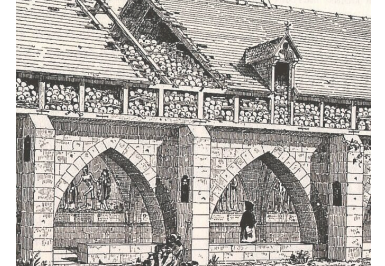

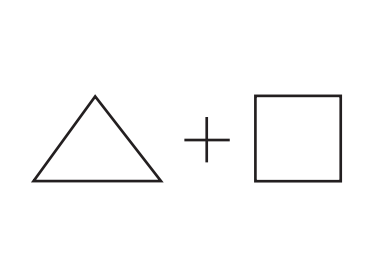

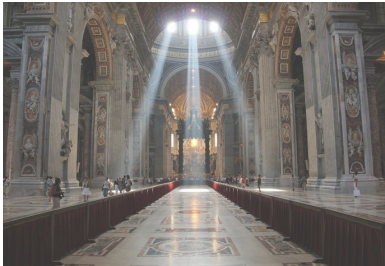
Each of the individual components will be further specified in the following three chapters: 3. The architecture, 4. The user, 5. The meaning. The results will form the direct input in order to specify the framework towards creating meaning in case of architecture of death. Ultimately, I will be able to formulate my own meaning through a carefully orchestrated symbiosis of each of the individual parts.

### 3. The architecture

Architecture forms the first component for the framework of communication. By analysing the architectural language I have studied how architecture can give input for a message. First, I will distil the meaning architects gave in the past to their architecture of death. Further, I will formulate the different architectural elements that together carry out this meaning. By doing so for several buildings, I will create understanding in what stands at the basis of their story; the fundamentals. The case studies will work as an instrument to discover the similarities and differences between several examples of death related architecture in order to derive the meaning and the possible ways in which it is exemplified.

#### 3.1 Case studies

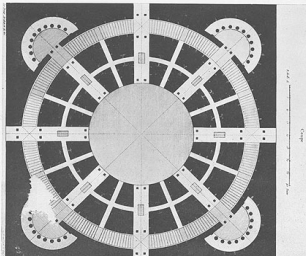
For the conducted case studies I analysed seven different projects spread throughout time. I have chosen these particular cases because I believe together they give a good representation of meaningful architecture in case of death. They all know a strong underlying concept that echoes the spirit of their time.

	<div>PIRAMID OF CHEOPS</div> <div>2625 BC - 2500 BC</div>	<div>LES SAINTS INNOCENTS CEMETERY</div> <div>1400 - 1786</div>	<div>CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY</div> <div>700-TODAY</div>
<div>TYPOLGY</div>	<div>  </div> <div>pyramid as abstract concept labyrinth as world of experience</div>	<div>  </div> <div>charniers are the boundary of public square, isolating order/ranks</div>	<div>  </div> <div>floorplan symbolizes Jesus cross</div>
<div>CONCEPT / THEMES</div>	<div>  </div> <div>stairway to heaven &amp; monumental building to show power of pharaoh</div>	<div>  </div> <div>intermingling of spaces of the living and the dead</div>	<div>  </div> <div>house of god, divine transcendence</div>
<div>SOCIAL MEANING</div>	<div>  </div> <div>orientation towards sun: crosspoint heaven/earth, source of life, interest astronomy &amp; the calendar</div>	<div>  </div> <div>holiday walk around the cemetery: living expression of vanitas</div>	<div>  </div> <div>orientation towards sun: crosspoint heaven/earth, to be made small: critical function to minimize human egoism</div>
<div>SYMBOLISM</div>	<div>  </div> <div>triangle: symbol cosmic trinity square: symbol corners universe</div>	<div>  </div> <div>equality of all men in death</div>	<div>  </div> <div>visitor transition, north: darkness, south: light &amp; warmth, altar: holy space &amp; eternal life, dome: heaven</div>



LEDOUX, CHAUX  
CEMETERY

1804



*neo-classical: symmetrical*

E.K. ASPLUND,  
WOODLAND  
CEMETERY

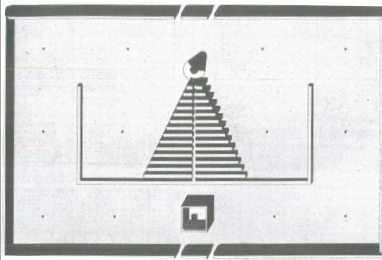
1940



*romantic naturalism meets antiquity*

A. ROSSI,  
MODENA  
CEMETERY

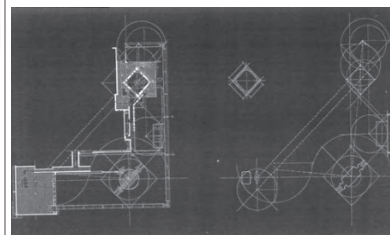
1972



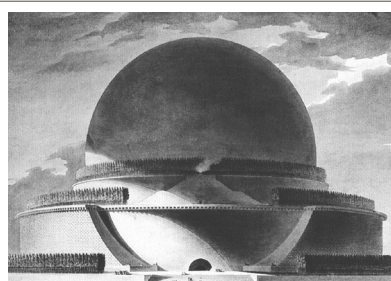
*configuration of archetypes:  
triangle, square, circle*

C. SCARPA,  
BRION  
CEMETERY

1972



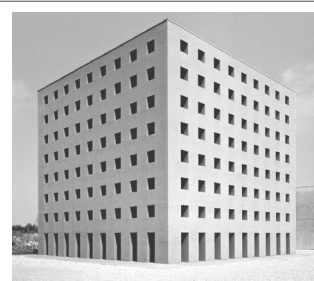
*5 main focal points*



*cosmic vision*



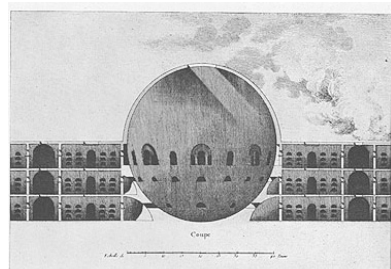
*the woods as point of departure, blending  
of art and nature*



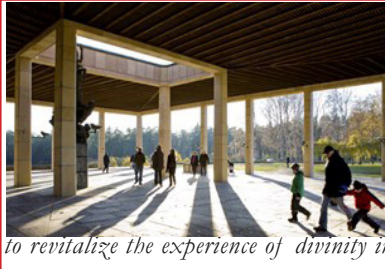
*house of the dead*



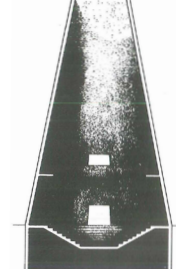
*a teaching place of life, a place for the  
living to engage in contemplation*



*dissolving in the universe, believe in  
bigger force*



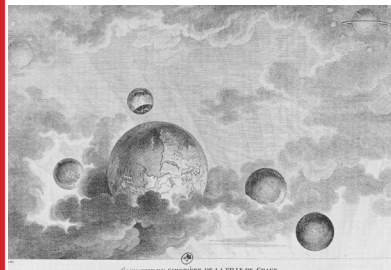
*to revitalize the experience of divinity in  
a secular world, to speak in the language  
of beauty to the bereaved of peace which  
passeth all understanding*



*idea of memory*



*architecture to produce meaning and  
feeling a pathway on how to engage more  
fully in the world*



*floating planets in the clouds*



*nature is the dominant force and man but  
a small presence*



*abandoned house*



*non-duality & water the symbol for both  
death and rebirth*

# PIRAMID OF CHEOPS

2625 BC - 2500 BC

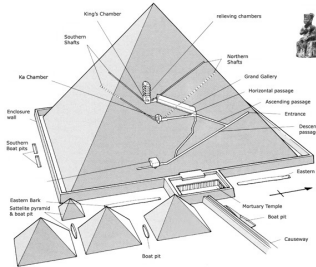
# LES SAINTS INNOCENTS CEMETERY

1400 - 1786

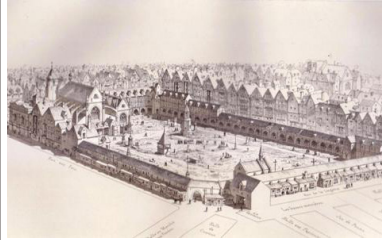
# CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY

700-TODAY

## SPATIAL



*massive monolithical structure with a steep narrow hall cut out*

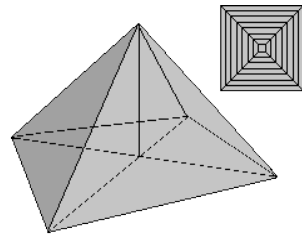


*enclosed square*



*enclosed high space, light coming only from above*

## FORM



*geometrical*

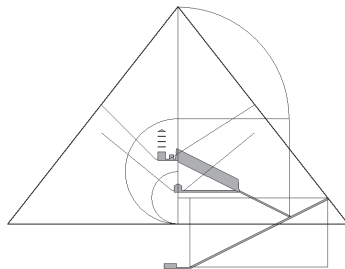


*bone galleries: architecture of the dead same as surrounding houses*

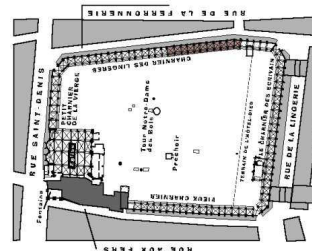


*the crossing of the arms is marked with a high reaching icon*

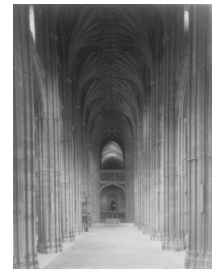
## PROPORTION



*great height(147m) combined with structural stability(230x230m)*



*area of 130x65m*

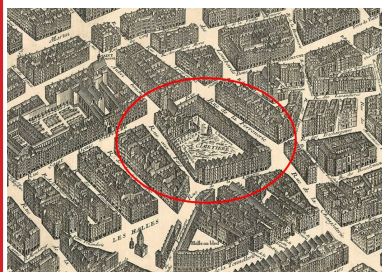


*inhuman size, large dimensions, extra height in order to impress*

## CONFIGURATION



*collection of pyramids*



*market square in the centre of the city paris & part of daily city life*

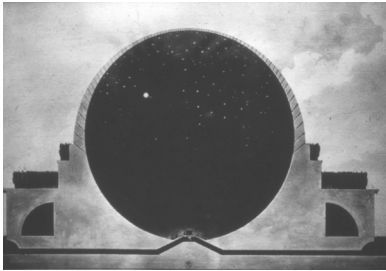


*designed to invite the congregation inside, collonade defined space*



LEDOUX, CHAUX  
CEMETERY

1804



*from low abrupt to high space, absolute void*

E.K.ASPLUND,  
WOODLAND  
CEMETERY

1940



*the space is defined by the openness/density of the forest, architecture free from time and space*

A. ROSSI,  
MODENA  
CEMETERY

1972



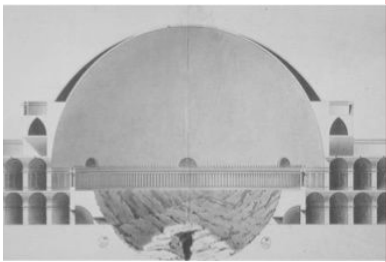
*emptiness*

C. SCARPA,  
BRION  
CEMETERY

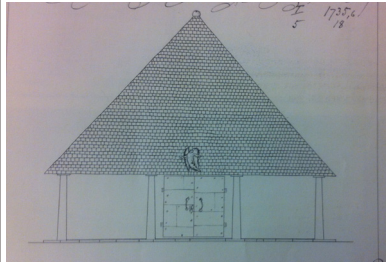
1972



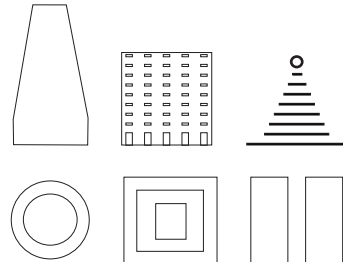
*a poetic resting place as much as a sculptural memorial in a green, calming garden*



*coupling of a dome above ground & a reversed dome in the earth*



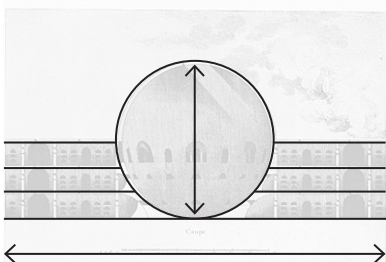
*Minimalism and elemental quality of its forms, pure geometric forms*



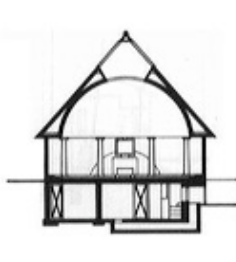
*elementary forms*



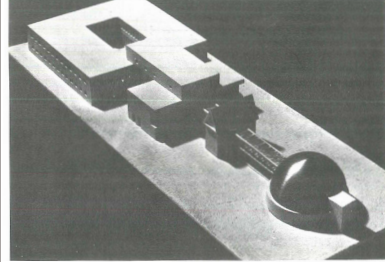
*symbolic mostly elementary forms*



*harmonious: tall forms inspirational, horizontal forms ennobling*



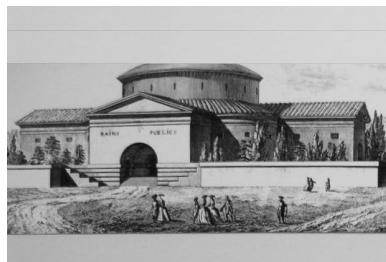
*enormous disparity between the large roof and the small dome - like a cave*



*supports expressive value*



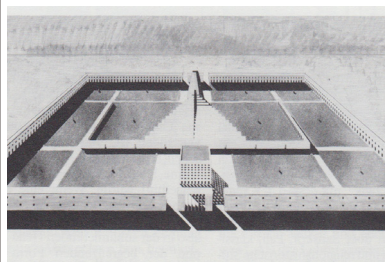
*a human scale, not a huge shrine or memorial*



*temple for the dead in city Chaux*



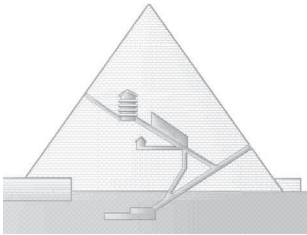
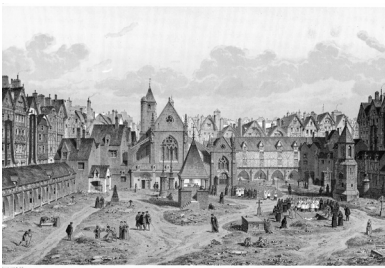





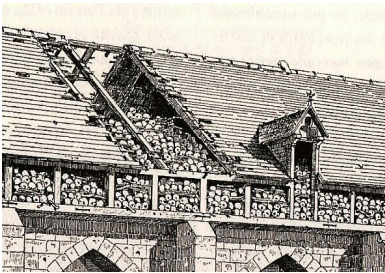



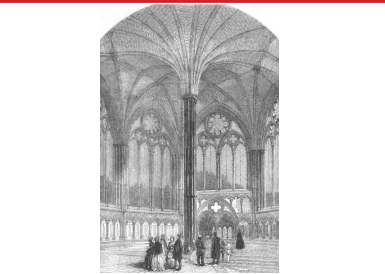
*following the structure of the forest, little chapels/cabins in the woods*



*like a city*



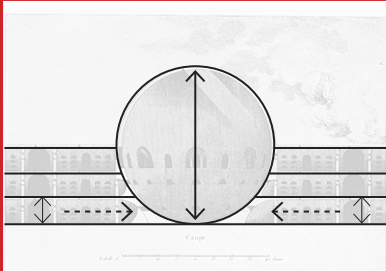
*a whole of separate elements linked by pathways*

	<p>PIRAMID OF CHEOPS</p> <p>2625 BC - 2500 BC</p>	<p>LES SAINTS INNOCENTS CEMETERY</p> <p>1400 - 1786</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY</p> <p>-</p>
<p>RHYTHM</p>	 <p><i>spiraling route within monolithical structure</i></p>	 <p><i>rythm of normal city life</i></p>	 <p><i>directing visitors towards alter</i></p>
<p>TEMPORALITY</p>	 <p><i>eternity: eternal house for the dead</i></p>	 <p><i>focus on the living: life goes on when you die, lively market</i></p>	 <p><i>accent on alter: symbolizing the passage from death to eternal life</i></p>
<p>MATERIALS</p>	 <p><i>massive limestone blocks</i></p>	 <p><i>visible bones</i></p>	 <p><i>massive, antique-looking stones</i></p>
<p>EXPERIENCE</p>	 <p><i>long narrow heigh route to scare intruders from entering</i></p>	 <p><i>hardly recognizable as a cemetery, but as market &amp; meeting place</i></p>	 <p><i>moving along determined path: sense of exhilaration, open/ close, light/ dark, aesthetic quality</i></p>



LEDOUX, CHAUX  
CEMETERY

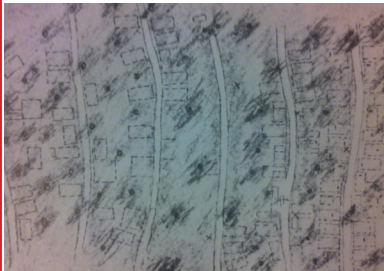
1804



*transition ritual: lower entrance and arriving at immense sphere*

E.K. ASPLUND,  
WOODLAND  
CEMETERY

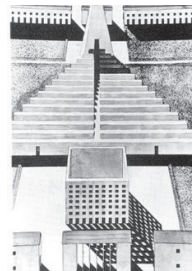
1940



*system of narrow winding paths to keep the forest untouched & road of cross*

A. ROSSI,  
MODENA  
CEMETERY

1972



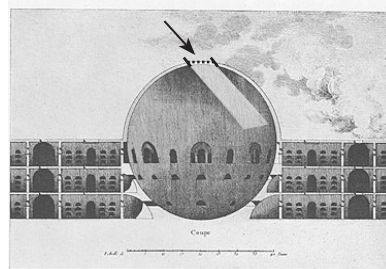
*one long line*

C. SCARPA,  
BRION  
CEMETERY

1972



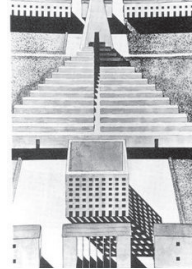
*a varying journey*



*reflections of the sun's itinerary on walls through one zenithal gap*



*landscape sensibility, dissolve in nature*



*a linear path with a varying sequence and altering perspectives*



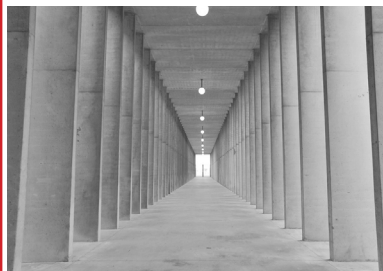
*to be at rest, one is encouraged to sit down and experience the world around*



*monumental: natural stone*



*uniformity of material and colour, no contrasts in order to produce the effect of something unreal, of an exalted calm not belonging to life on earth*



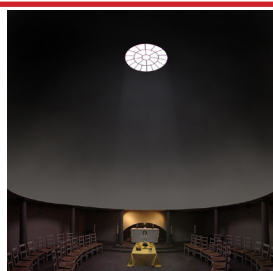
*natural in their original state*



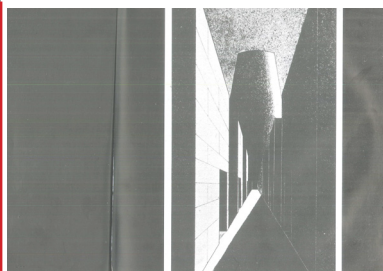
*variations of patterns and materials, main material layered concrete*



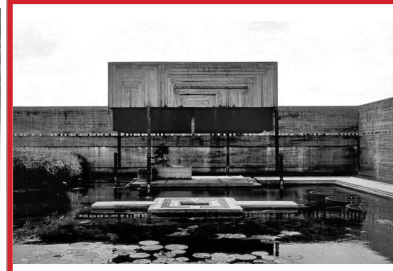
*feeling of immensity and spectacle of the universe*



*feeling of peace, pure light atmosphere*



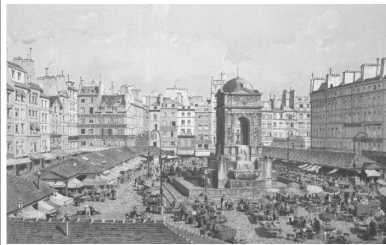
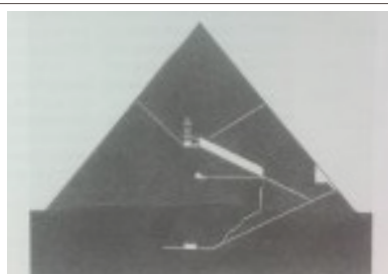
*conscious manipulation*



*becoming more aware of life*



# ARCHITECTURE

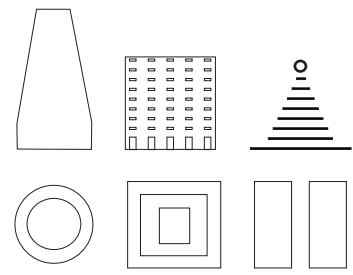
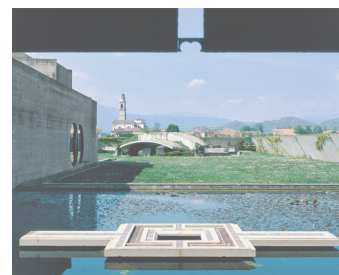
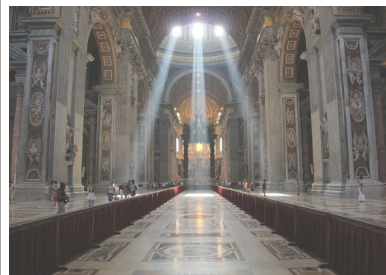


*Typology: pyramid as abstract concept  
labyrinth as world of experience*

*Concept: intermingling of spaces of the  
living and the dead*

*Concept: a teaching place of life, a place  
for the living to engage in contemplation*

*Social: to revitalize the experience of  
divinity in a secular world, to speak in  
the language of beauty to the bereaved of  
peace which passeth all understanding*

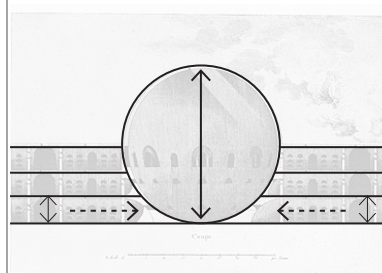


*Social: architecture to produce meaning  
and feeling a pathway on how to engage  
more fully in the world*

*Symbolism: visitor transition, north:  
darkness, south: light & warmth, altar:  
holy space & eternal life, dome: heaven*

*Spatial: a poetic resting place as much as  
a sculptural memorial in a green, calming  
garden*

*Form: elementary forms*

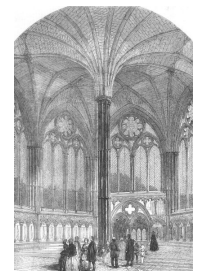
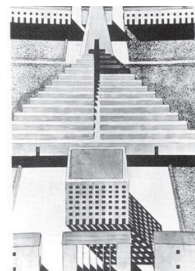


*Proportion: a human scale, not a huge  
shrine or memorial*

*Configuration: a whole of separate  
elements linked by pathways*

*Rhythm: transition ritual, lower entrance  
and arriving at immensive sphere*

*Rhythm: a varying journey*



*Temporality: focus on the living, life goes  
on when you die, lively market*

*Temporality: a linear path with a  
varying sequence and altering perspectives*

*Materials: uniformity of material & colour,  
no contrasts in order to produced the  
effect of something unreal, of an exalted  
calm not belonging to life on earth*

*Experience: moving along a determined  
path, sense of exhilaration, open/close,  
light/dark, aesthetic quality*

### **3.1.1 Conclusion**

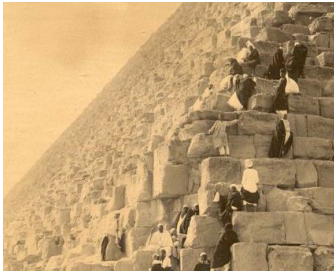

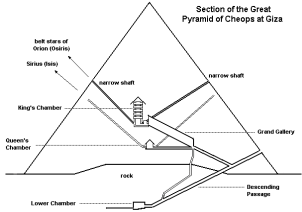

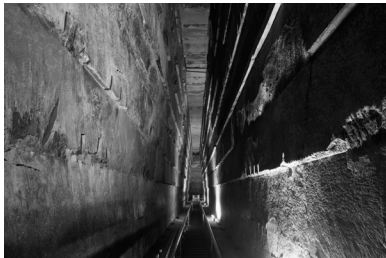
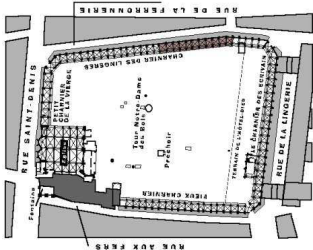
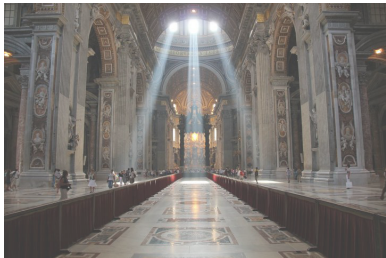
These are the most important elements I withdrew from the case studies. The message I want to communicate consist of two things, bringing life and death together and with that live a more meaningful life. I intent to do this by offering a journey. A journey towards finding truth in case of death. The journey takes shape by a linear path with a varying sequence and altering perspectives. Moving along this path you experience a sense of exhilaration, obtained through the variation between open and closed space, light and dark space. The constrasts between the experiences makes that you feel them more strongly. It leads to a dynamic rhythm, full of variety.



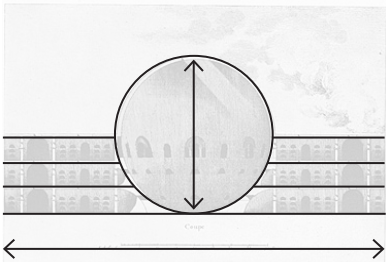

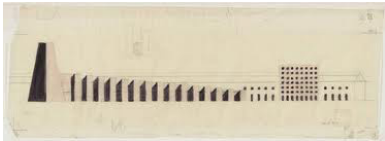

The fundamentals used to enhance this meaning are the stairs as an extra barrier to enter a space. The labyrinth that resembles the personal journey of growth and the journey towards finding one's true self. It is a way of representation of human life and experience. The path as a tool for sense making en creating an experience by its embedded sequence. The wall as a barrier, the door as a weak point in this barrier. And the port as an invitation towards another world. A markation between two things.

### **3.2 Fundamentals**

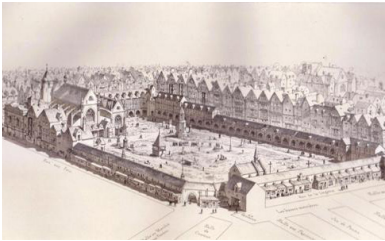
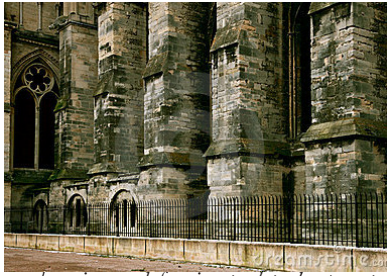


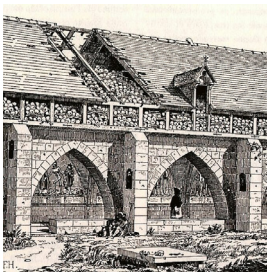

By means of the case studies I have studied the architecture of death. After analysing all its elements I will now zoom in on the fundamentals of the elements. For example the stair, the labyrinth, the path, the door, the arch and the port. I will operate as a pathologist, decomposing the buildings; pulling them as it were apart in order to derive to their origin.

I distinguished several architectural fundamentals that came forth out of the case studies. The selection is based upon the ones that appeared in multiple projects. I wanted to know what made these fundamentals thus important, what they mean and how they are applied.

	<div>PIRAMID OF CHEOPS</div> <div>2625 BC - 2500 BC</div>	<div>LES SAINTS INNOCENTS CEMETERY</div> <div>1400 - 1786</div>	<div>CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY</div> <div>700-TODAY</div>
STAIR	 <div>stairway to heaven</div>		 <div>connecting heaven and earth</div>
LABYRINTH	 <div>a journey full of obstacles to make it unable for the intruder to reach the center</div>		 <div>a symbol for a pilgrimage; a meaningful journey towards a place of spiritual</div>
PATH	 <div>great height(147m) combined with struc- tural stability(230x230m)</div>	 <div>walk around the market and the bones, galleries as a guiding principle</div>	 <div>spiritual journey towards redemption , path towards God, towards the holy altar</div>

<p>LEDOUX, CHAUX</p> <p>CEMETERY</p> <p>1804</p>	<p>E.K.ASPLUND,</p> <p>WOODLAND</p> <p>CEMETERY</p> <p>1940</p>	<p>A. ROSSI,</p> <p>MODENA</p> <p>CEMETERY</p> <p>1972</p>	<p>C. SCARPA,</p> <p>BRION</p> <p>CEMETERY</p> <p>1972</p>
	 <p><i>extra barrier, threshold to another type of space</i></p>		 <p><i>extra barriere to memorail space</i></p>
 <p><i>embedded sequence, opposing experiences to enhance the impact, transitional space</i></p>	 <p><i>roman cross road &amp; walk in the woods, narrow pedestrian walks</i></p>	 <p><i>endless path that crosses several objects</i></p>	 <p><i>path that prompts the visitor to engage, lots of turns and tresholds</i></p>

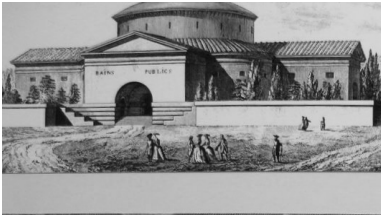


	<div>PIRAMID OF CHEOPS</div> <div>2625 BC - 2500 BC</div>	<div>LES SAINTS INNOCENTS CEMETERY</div> <div>1400 - 1786</div>	<div>CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY</div> <div>700-TODAY</div>
WALL		<div>  <p><i>enclose a space, define a space, a sort of interior and exterior</i></p> </div>	<div>  <p><i>a barrier, a defensive tool to keep out intruders and keep apart two different worlds, a symbol of power</i></p> </div>
DOOR			<div>  <p><i>instrument of change, of passing through to another world, the inbetween space</i></p> </div>
PORT	<div>  <p><i>only opening in the very closed structure clear markation</i></p> </div>	<div>  <p><i>inviting, opening, marks two types of spaces the open vs the more intimate</i></p> </div>	<div>  <p><i>the entire ship acts as a portal to God</i></p> </div>



LEDOUX, CHAUX  
CEMETERY

1804



*like a fort*

E.K.ASPLUND,  
WOODLAND  
CEMETERY

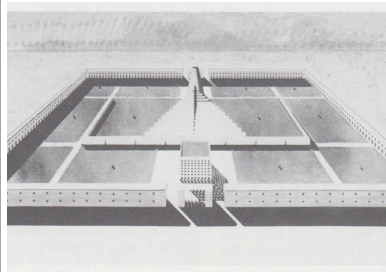
1940



*encloses the space & a guiding element,  
taking the visitor by the hand.*

A. ROSSI,  
MODENA  
CEMETERY

1972



*enclosing the space, suggesting a different  
world behind it*

C. SCARPA,  
BRION  
CEMETERY

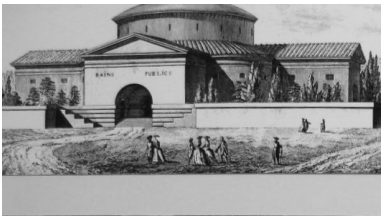
1972



*blocking views for intimate privacy*



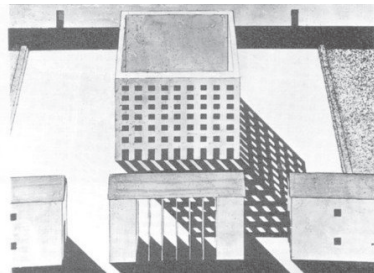
*symbolic for opening 'the secret' behind  
the door*



*gateway, opening to a closed of world,  
acts as a gate*



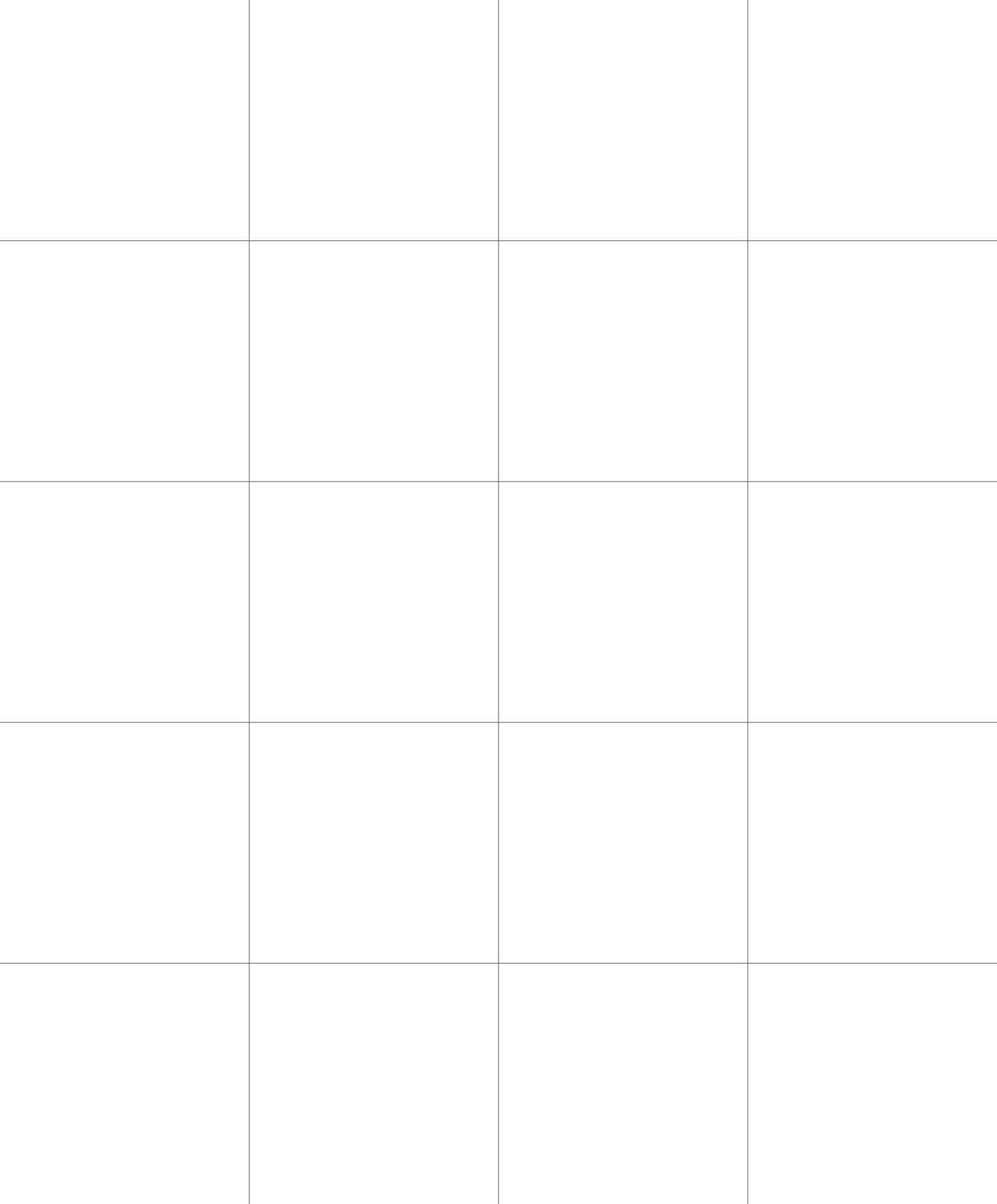
*Markation of different worlds*



*opening entrance gate*



*symbolic physical structure without the  
function of security*



# S T A I R

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS



Figure 3.1 *Ettore Sottsass (Sottsass, 1974)*  
Design metaphor of the stair

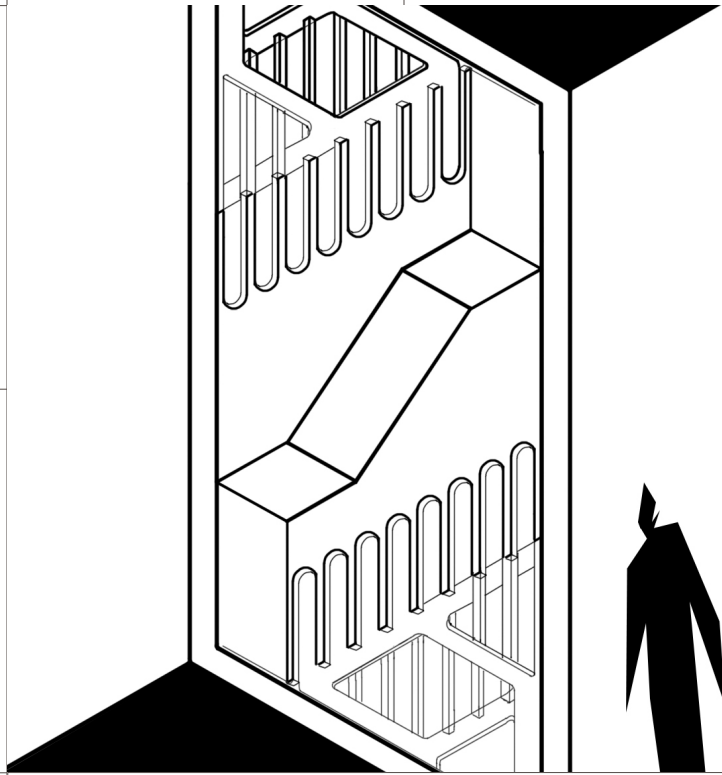


Figure 3.2 *The Immortal* by Jorge Luis Borges (Rafique, 2014)  
Escher type of stairs to drive the visitor crazy

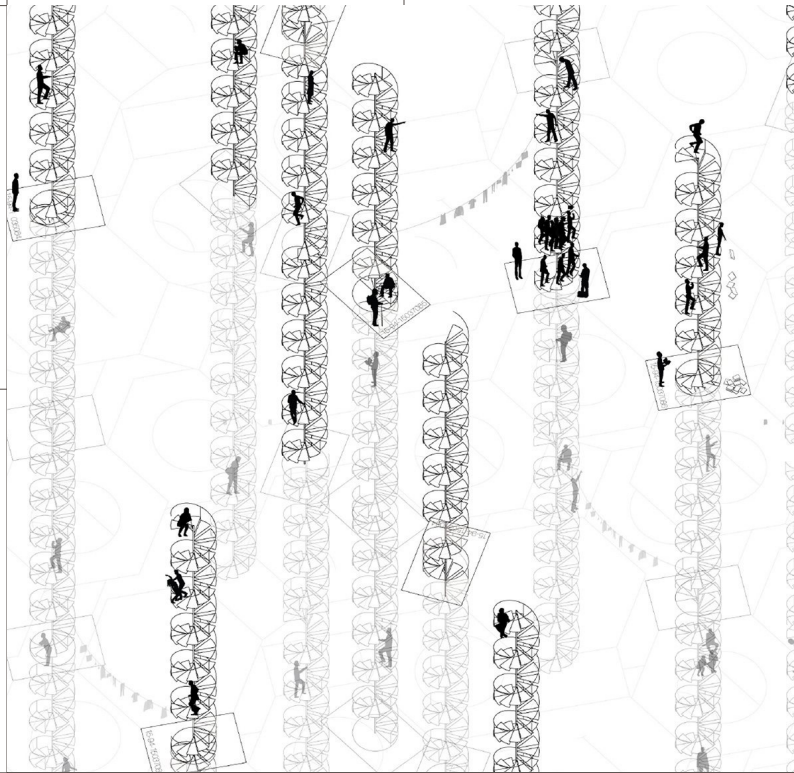


Figure 3.3 *Luis Borge Library of Babel* (RICE+LIPKA, 2013)  
Travelers and Inquisitors on Borge stairs

	<p><b>3.2.1 The stair</b></p> <p>In many different cultures and religions a stairs is refered to as an object that connects the two planes earth and heaven. (Eliade, 1961, p. 48) The rupture with the living in case of death is symbolised by a climbing of the stairs. The spirit ascends the steps on his way to heaven and takes distance from life on earth. It has to literally break his ties with earth, and has to pass from one mode of being to another. I looked at the work of Mircea Eliade, a Romanian historian of religion, for the symbolic meaning of the stairs.</p>		
	<p>“The ladder gives expression to the break through the planes necessitated by the passage from one mode of being to another, by placing us at the cosmological point where communication between Heaven, Earth and Hell becomes possible. That is why the stairway and the ladder play so considerable a part in the rites and the myths of initiation, as well as in funerary rituals, not to mention the rites of royal or sacerdotal enthronement of those of marriage. But we also know that the symbolism of climbing-up and of stairs recurs often enough in psychoanalytic literature, an indication that it belongs to the archaic content of the human psyche and is not a ‘historical’ creation, not an innovation dating from a certain historical moment (say, from ancient Egypt or Vedic India, etc.).”</p>		
	<p>(Eliade, 1961, p. 50)</p> <p>“The act of climbing or ascending, symbolises the way towards the absolute reality; and to the profane consciousness, the approach towards that reality arouses an ambivalent feeling, of fear and of joy, of attraction and repulsion. The ideas of sanctification, of death, love and deliverance are all involved in the symbolism of stairs. Indeed, each of these modes of being represents a cessation of the profane human condition; that is, a breaking of the ontological plane. Through love and death, sanctity and metaphysical knowledge, man passes from the ‘unreal to the reality’. But it must not be forgotten that the</p>		

	<p>staircase symbolises these things because it is thought to be set up in a ‘centre’, because it makes communication possible between the different levels of being, and, finally, because it is a concrete formula for the mythical ladder, for the creeper or the spider-web, the Cosmic Tree or the Pillar of the Universe, that connects the three cosmis zones.” (Eliade, 1961, p. 51)</p> <p>In many traditions all over the world we meet with this concept, from the Christian church to Ancient Egypt. The processs of ascending is central and has multiple ways of expression. Often in a very literal way a ladder is placed upon a tomb to enable the deceased to ascend to the after world. Already in Ancient Egypt, the Egyptians use this principle of the stair. For the important Egyptians a stair was placed on top of the tombs, in the other cases it was in the form of an engraving. Pyramids could be seen as giant structures of stairs. Another example is the cross floorplan of the Christian Church. The cross is in fact a symbol for a ladder, a column or a mountain, which are universally known symbols for the Centre of the World. It is by the Cross (= the Centre) that communication with Heaven is opened and that, by the same token, the entire Universe is ‘saved’. (Eliade, 1961, p. 49)</p>	
	<p>“To ascend it is equivalent to an ecstatic journey to the Centre of the World; upon reaching the highest terrace, the pilgrim experience the break-through into another state; he transcends profane space and enters into a pure region. Here we are in the presence of a rite of the centre.” (Eliade, 1961, p. 43)</p> <p>Eliade helped me understand the symbolic meaning of a stair. To me it is most important that the stair works as a tool to help the deceased in his journey towards a different state of being. The state of being in case of death. The location of this state of being can either be heaven, hell, or any other equivalent. This is up to the traveller to decide.</p>	





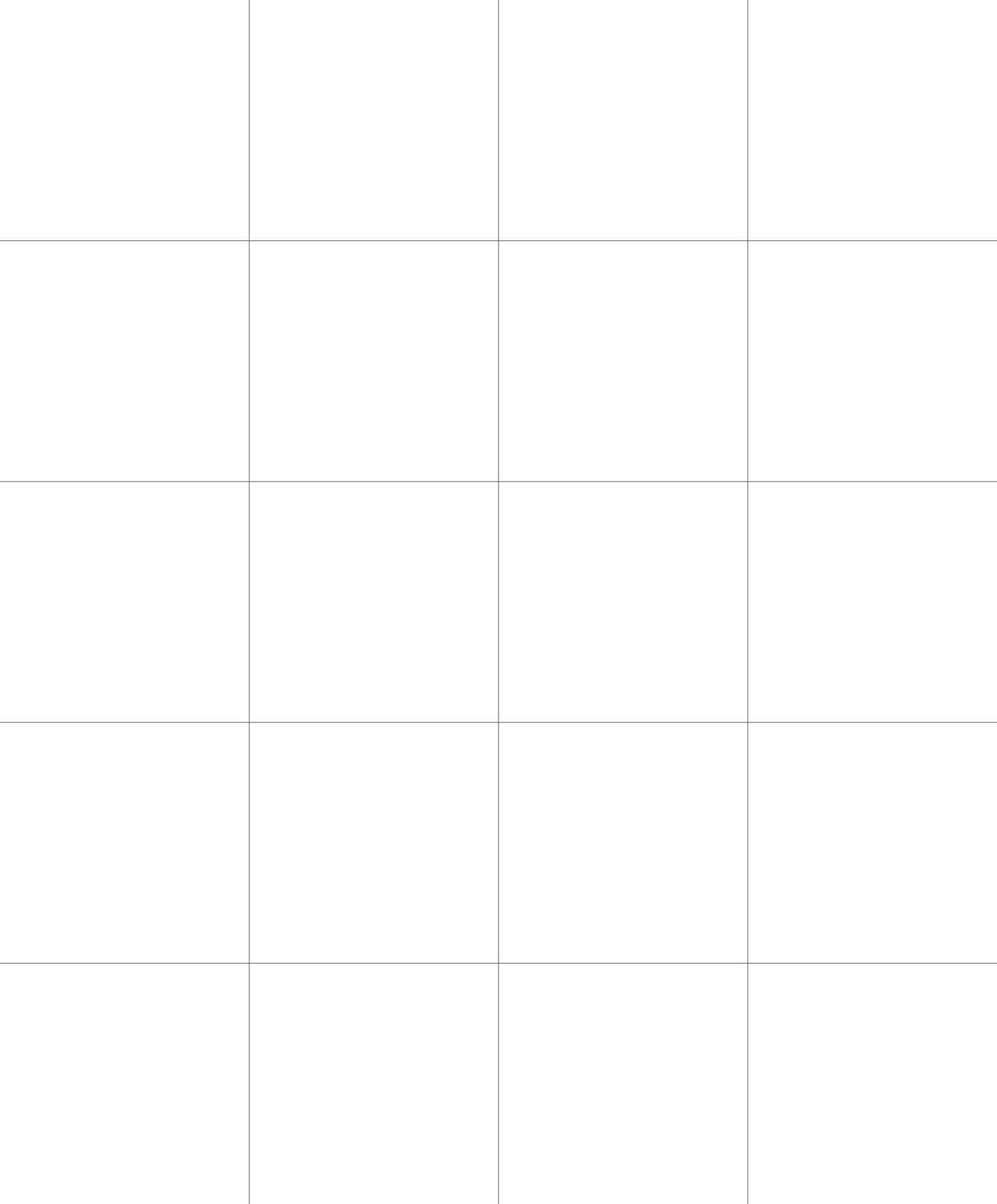
Figure 3.4 *The ladder to heaven* (Watson)

Christian life as a ladder with thirty rungs. The monks are tempted by demons and encouraged by angels, while Christ welcomes them at the summit.





Figure 3.5 *Freemasonry (Unknown)*  
Steps towards heaven & hierarchy within the Christian religion



# LABYRINTH

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS





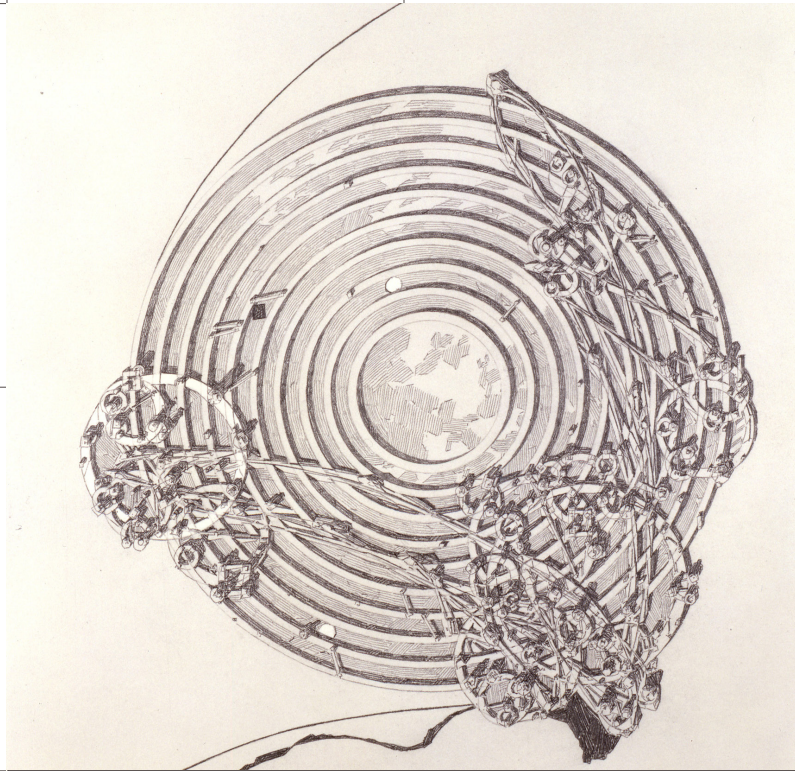


Figure 3.6 *Concentric Field* (Woods, 1987)  
Lebbeus Woods' series Centricity



Figure 3.7 *The Labyrinth of the Minotaur* (Unknown, 2012)  
Greek mythology

	<p><b>3.2.2 The labyrinth</b></p> <p>One often recognizes a labyrinth as a way of recreation. However, the labyrinths that I analysed in my case studies transcend the mere visual representation. With the help of the book ‘Europe’s mazes: on labyrinthine thought in architectural design’ I defined the meaning of a labyrinth as a way of representation of human life and experience. It resembles the journey towards finding one’s true self. In contradiction with a maze, a labyrinth exists of one continuing path with no dead ends. It does not rely on the element of choice but on the element of perseverance; trusting upon oneself in eventually finding a route through. (Wengiel &amp; Fund, 2008, p. 3)</p>		
	<p>There are many examples that adopted the concept of a labyrinth. The Christians used it as a metaphor of the path towards redemption. It was a symbol for a pilgrimage; a meaningful journey towards a place of spiritual significance. In many cathedrals one could find a labyrinth depicted on the floor, which usually forms the first obstacle on the way to the holy altar. The famous 14th century poet Dante based his entire poem ‘La Divina Commedia’ around a spiralling labyrinth. It symbolizes the journey of an individual towards finding heaven. In the 17th century the symbolic of the labyrinth altered when it appeared at grant villas. Here it expressed the human concern for finding the way to a certain goal in life. (Wengiel &amp; Fund, 2008, pp. 5-8)</p>		
	<p>From the examples it appears in how many ways the labyrinth could take form. However, there are four elements that stand at the basis of all of them. The journey starts with a path. The path resembles the difficult journey towards a better understanding of the self. It does so by confronting the main character with several challenges and unexpected hardships. The path ultimately ends in the Center, which is the most important element of the whole. The Center embodies a system of values and ideas; it is the point where the traveller can properly reflect on life; the point of reaching self-awareness. Between the path and the Center is a dialectic process through which the Center gives the path</p>		

	<p>its meaning and signification. In a second, complementary movement, the Path forces the human being walking through it to undergo the essential transformation enabling him to reach the Center. The state of reflection is usually depicted through the metaphor of a Mirror, or another element with similar characteristics. A final element, also found in the Center, is the Monster. The monster forms the counterbalances the Mirror. “Whereas the looking glass shows the traveller the image of what he wishes to be (and to some extent is), the Monster represents all that he fears and aims at defeating in his own self.” (Wengiel &amp; Fund, 2008, pp. 3-4)</p> <p>Furthermore, I distinguished a few principles, which I think provide the labyrinth of its meaning. First, in the traditional labyrinth there is the element of choice. The visitor is invited to choose one’s own experience, by taking one of the multiple paths. One path offers at the beginning an overview of the journey and its obstacles. Therefore one reaches the end after having known all the limits on forehand. By taking the second path the journey can only be understood in its whole once the Center is reached. The second principle is the element of wonder, formed by the varying impressions and perspective. It causes one to loose one’s sense of space and time. Last, the visitor feels the tension between the path and the obstacles, which intensifies his overall experience.</p>	
	<p>The central idea behind the labyrinth is a journey towards finding oneself. Therefore it forms an allegory for life. The labyrinth symbolises the idea of reaching to one’s core, via an initiation test about one’s personal qualities. In time it became more associated with spiritual progress and the discovery of the self. One has to trust upon one’s own strength to find a way trough the hardships on the way. The concept of maze implies, in addition to those challenges, the necessity to choose between two or more different possible Paths to the Center. The inclusion of the element of choice in the traditional labyrinth reflects the existence of a deep cultural and political change, which gave rise to the idea that freedom, and the possibility of making mistakes, are intimately connected to the very essence of the human condition.</p>	



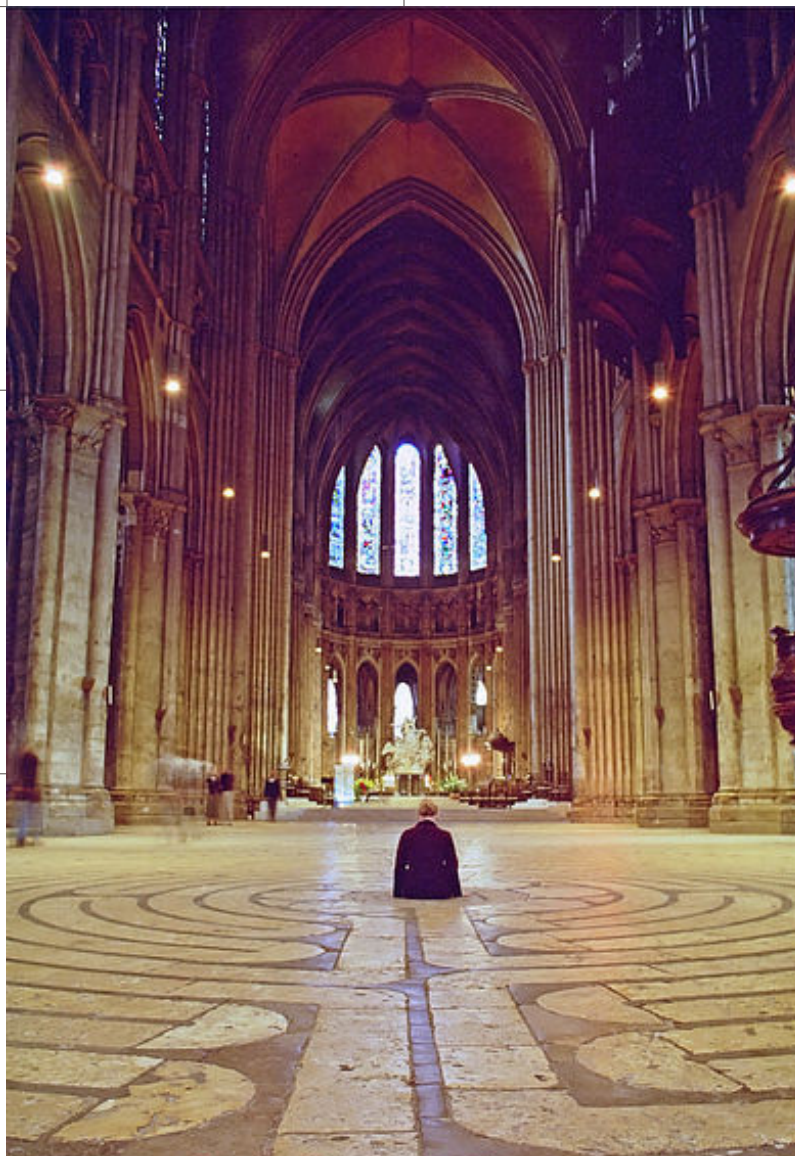


Figure 3.8 *Labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral (Pavlinac)*  
Journey towards the altar



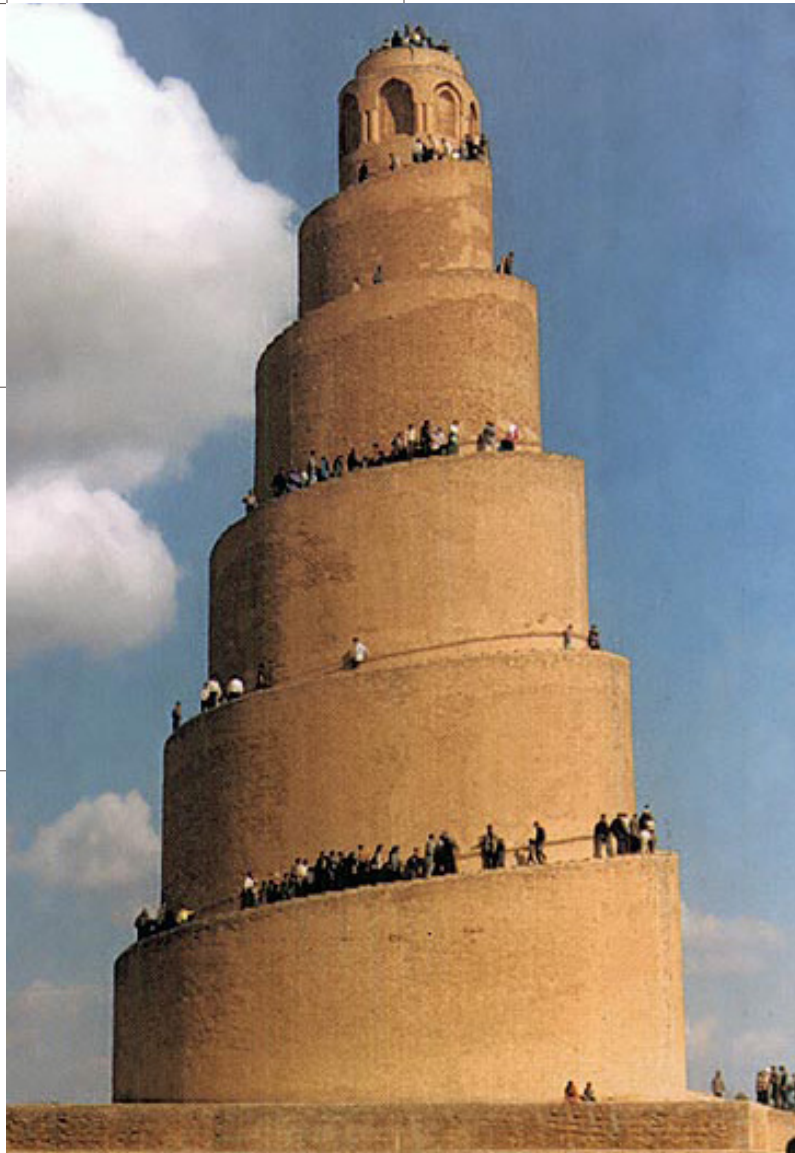
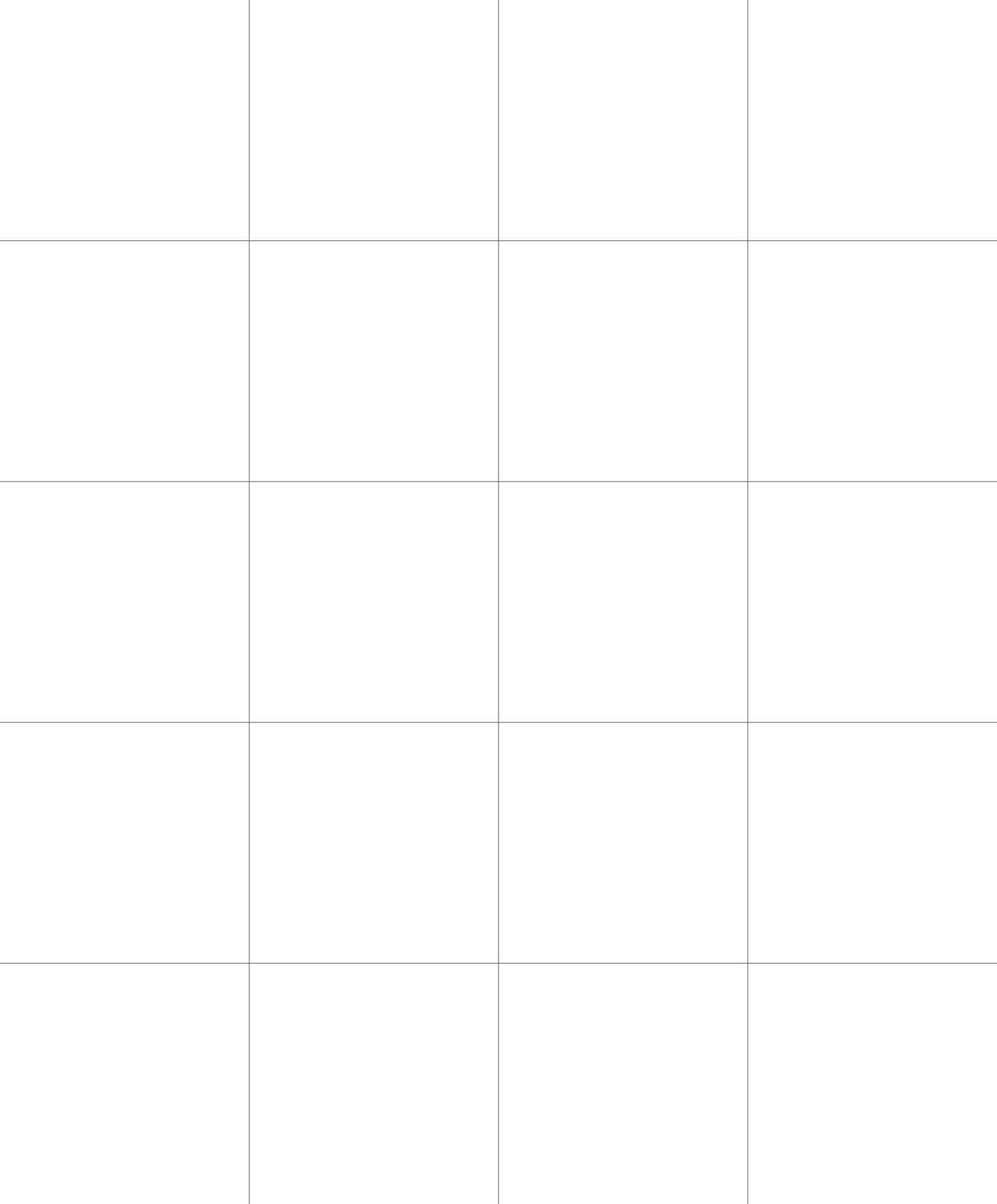


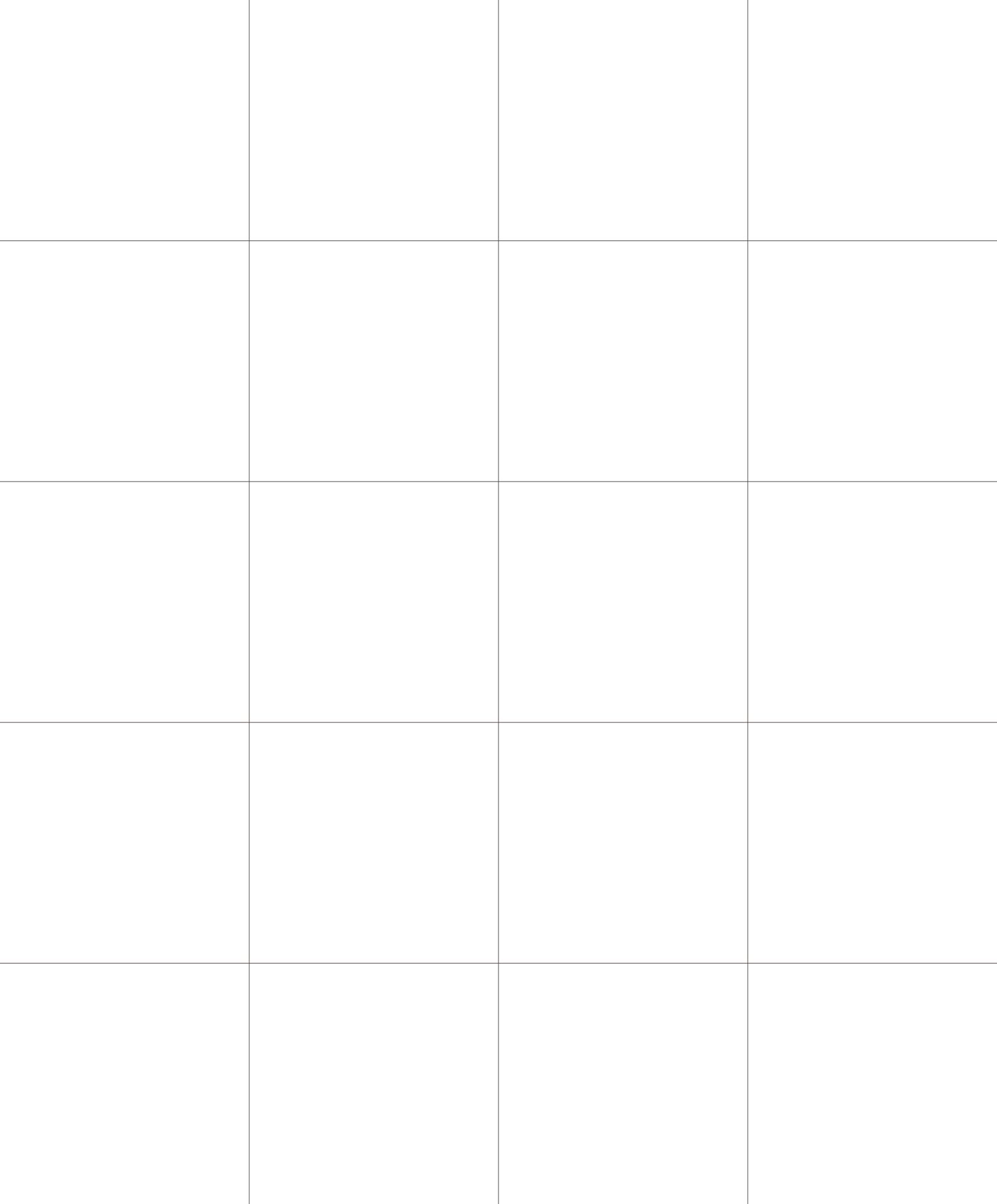
Figure 3.9 *Mosk of Samarra* (World Heritage Committee, 2014)  
Spirally labyrinth



# P A T H

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS







	<p><b>3.2.3 The path</b></p> <p>Humans are meaningful creatures who constantly try to make sense of the things around them. Part of that sense making involves tracing a pathway, first with their eyes and then with their feet. (Unwin, 2007, p. 10)</p> <p>As a fundamental element in architecture, the path is a means through which people move from one place to another. Either moving within a building or in between buildings. Either towards a central point, around a holy place, or naturally through a landscape. Apart from sense making the path receives meaning from the ensemble to which it belongs. The simplest structure could contain</p>		
	<p>enclosed pathways. Therefore, it is not only an incidental connection from one place to another, but also an intrinsic part of the architecture, even if it is not 'built' or intended. A visitor walking over the path as symbolic or mythic gesture further enhances the meaning. For example the Christian church, which was built around the spiritual journey towards redemption. This becomes evident in the ship. The path to the altar resembles the transition of less holy space in the west to holy space in the east. The colonnade on both sides of the church defined the important spaces of the interior, the aisles and the nave, and guided the spectator's eyes to look up towards the altar. They give the impression of a lane with trees on both sides. The ensemble draws the visitor in, intensified by</p>		
	<p>mosaic floor tiles with directing patterns. All these features come together in the east, directing the eye on the final destination, the altar.</p> <p>(Molyneaux, 2001, pp. 218-220)</p> <p>Not only the Christian church designed such directing paths. There is a vast repertoire of building types that posses this architectural feature. Art historian Kurt Weitzmann gives another example in his book 'Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century'. "Earlier Roman builders delighted in disposing their differently shaped spaces sequentially along axes to form complex spatial chains. Moving along such paths predeter-</p>		

		<p>mined by the architect, through diversely illuminated open and closed spaces, drawn on by distant vistas, the beholder was treated to a sense of exhilaration. Both the Pantheon and Trajan's Forum offer splendid high imperial examples of this aesthetic quality" (Weitzmann &amp; Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York N.Y.), 1979, p. xxviii). But also several classical villa's such as Villa giulia.</p> <p>To conclude, I believe the most important feature of a path is its embedded sequence. When a path consist of opposing experiences the impact is much more significant. Think of how light appears brighter after passing through a dark room. Or how a small room feels much smaller after passing a big room. Churches in southern Europe express this quality very well. The transition between the warm and bright outside environment and the cool dark interior of the church increased the feeling of stepping into another world. When using these qualities and varying perspectives in a design, one could truely create a unique experience.</p>	

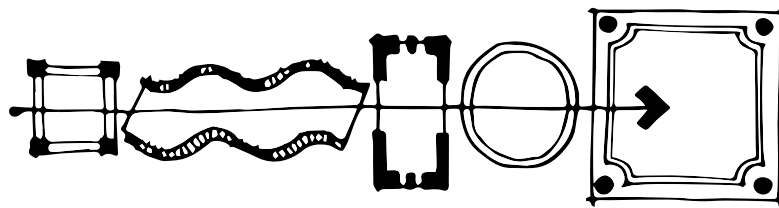


Figure 3.10 *Embedded sequence* (Frederick, 2007)  
The impact of opposite experiences along the path



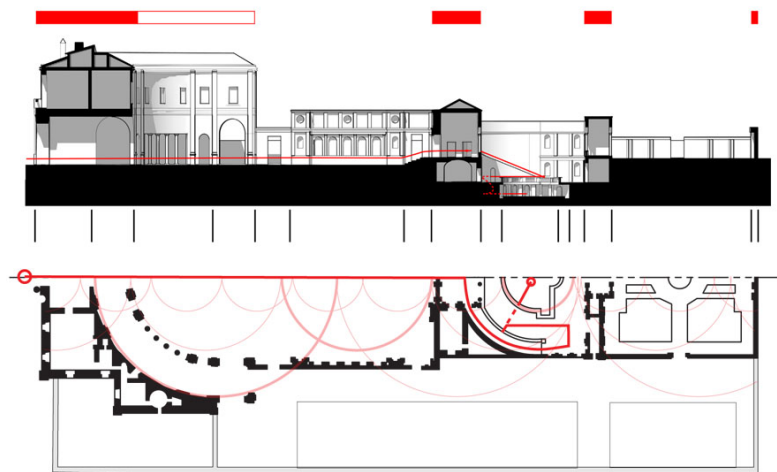
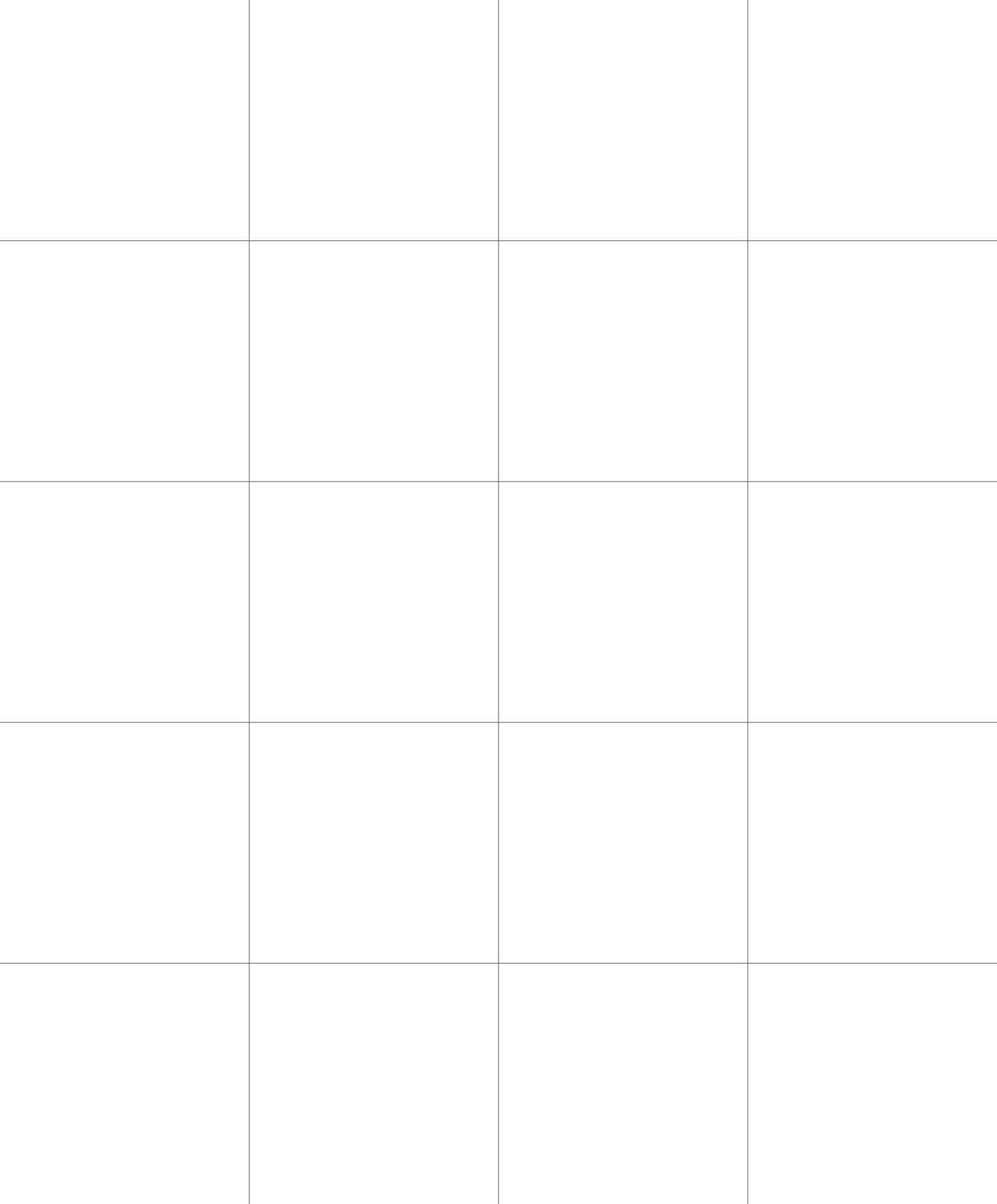
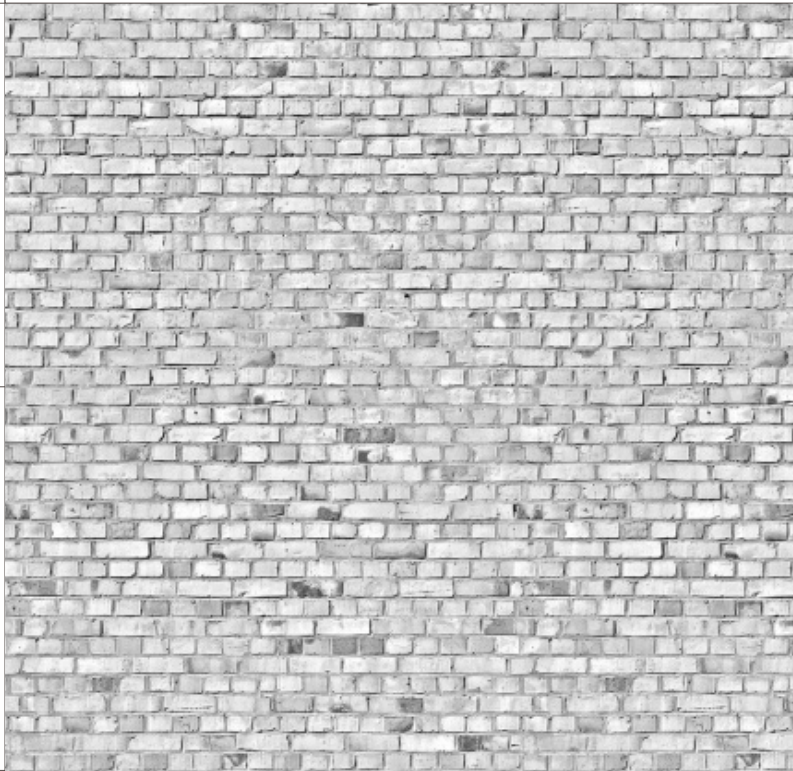


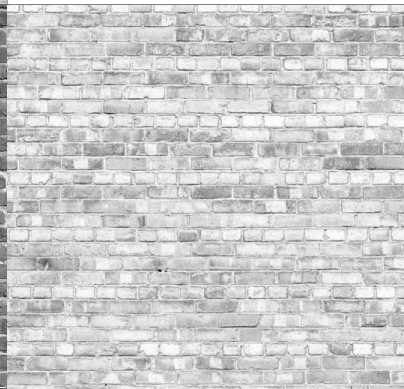
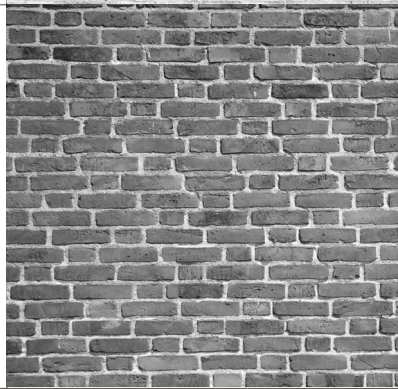
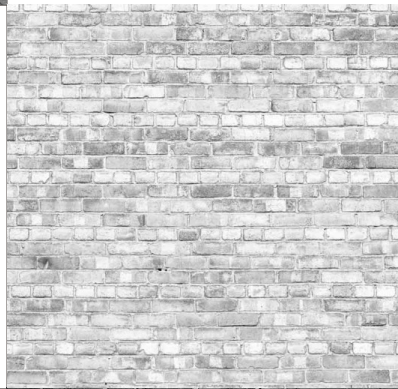
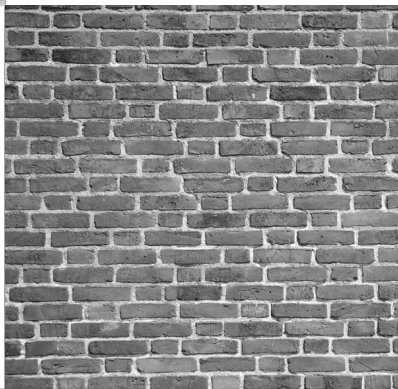
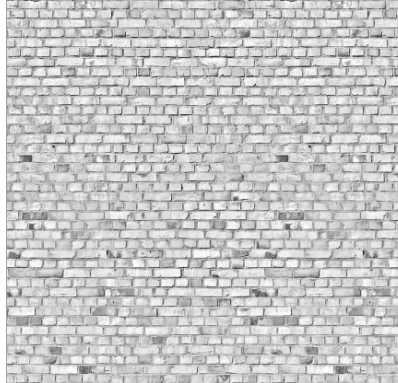
Figure 3.11 *Villa Giulia*  
 Section through the building, the embedded sequence becomes apparant



# W A L L

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS









	<p><b>3.2.3 The wall</b></p> <p>The projects in my case study showcase how the wall can be used for more than one function. In Rossi's Modena cemetery and Scarpa's Brion cemetery it blocks out all views for intimate privacy. Also it worked as creating an enclosed place and for guiding a visitor along a certain path. In the Christian church it acted as a form of protection of the holy inner alter; a guarantee of safety.</p> <p>In most of the buildings I analysed the wall as a barrier; as an object that keeps apart two different words. Historically this was often the case. The wall acted as a defensive tool to keep out intruders. That applied on different scales, either on the scale of one single house or on the scale of an entire city. For a city apart from being a barrier, the wall simultaneously defined the border. That indicates that a wall can have multiple functions at the same time. It could function both as a form of keeping enemies out and as a form of defining space.</p> <p>I gained most insights about the wall by analyzing the work of modern architect Rem Koolhaas who studied the Berlin Wall. In this case the wall acted as a symbol of power. It imprisoned West Berlin as a means of keeping East Berlin out. A paradox since the part that was enclosed was thought of as free.</p>		
	<p>The wall consisted of other objects; absorbed buildings along the wall's path that together formed a defensive system. It was not one cohesive thing, but the condition it created was striking. It had an enormous psychological effect. People massively wanted to flew towards East Berlin and many attempts, no matter how dangerous, were made to accomplish that.</p> <p>In the profession of architecture a wall is known as the leading star in the floor plan. It defines spaces, the boundary of the building and interior partitions. Of all the functions I believe the wall obtains most of his power by forming a demarcation between two worlds. The effect of separation makes us believe</p>		

[illegible]

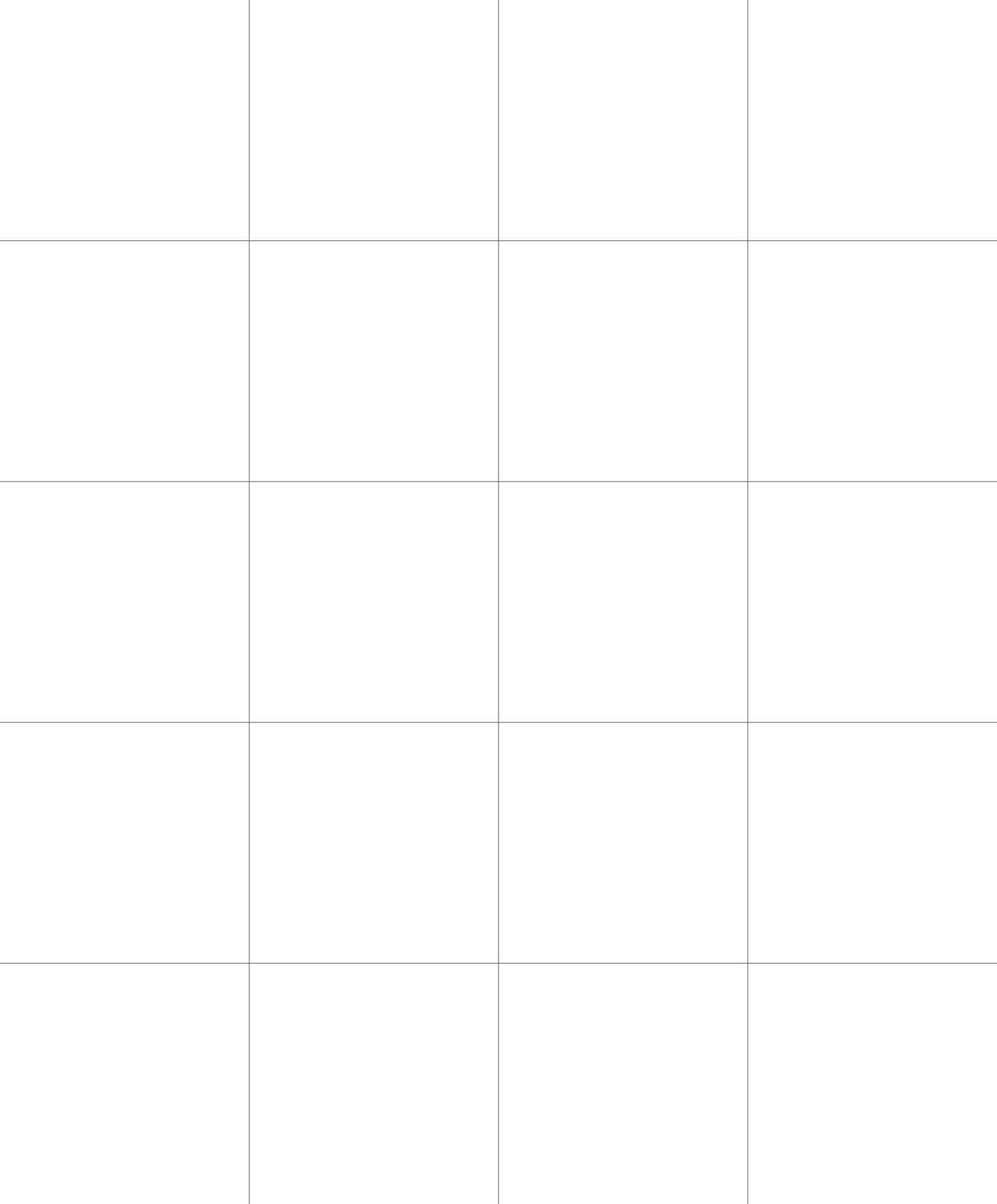


Figure 3.12 *Fall of the Berlin Wall*  
Psychological impact of the wall





Figure 3.13 *The Berlin Wall*  
A way of separation, a barrier



# DOOR

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS



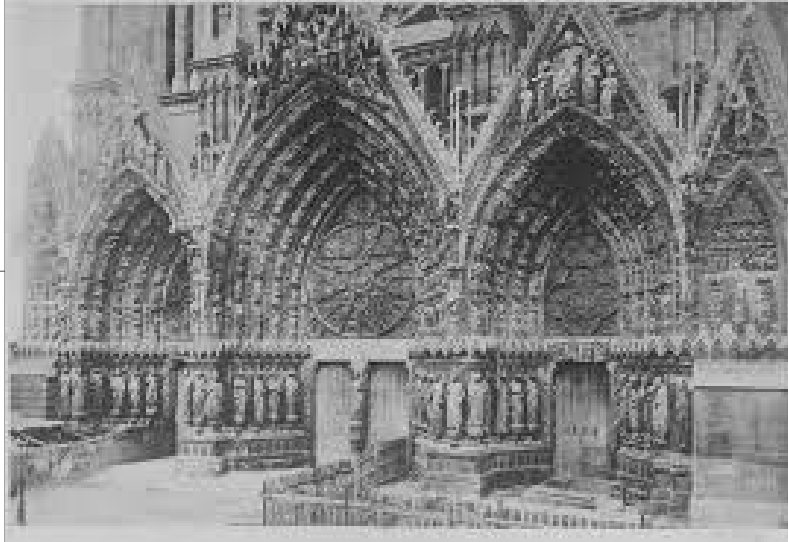


Figure 3.14 *Entrance of the Notre Dame*

The external conical form of the door promotes only the inwards movement to the holy spirit.



Figure 3.15 *The open door to emptiness* (Rinpoche, 2012)  
Buddhism concept

	<p><b>3.2.3 The door</b></p> <p>Where the wall keeps apart, the door allows. The door answers to the necessity of transportation and at the same time they form a weak point in the defence mechanism of the wall. It stands for both accessibility and controllability; a threshold that is often highly enforced. (Molyneaux, 2001, pp. 217-218)</p> <p>As a means of passing through from one world to another, the door forms an architectural instrument of change. The door itself is the in between space. For the passer-by however, a door is perceived as a barrier. We cannot see what lies behind it; therefore we are reluctant to open it. The secrecy of the enclosed</p>		
	<p>space provides privacy for the ones in it. Only by opening the door, the secret is revealed. Because of these conditions, doors became incredibly symbolic.</p> <p>“The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and the sacred worlds in the case of a temple,” French folklorist Arnold van Gennep writes in 1909. “Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world.” (Koolhaas, AMO, Design, &amp; Boom, 2014, p. 18)</p>		
	<p>On a psychological level entering through a door changes your state of being, into a different holy or social state. Unwin describes: “you move from being a ‘person outside’ into a ‘ person inside’, from being a ‘person at large’ into a ‘person at home’, from being a ‘person lost’ into a ‘person who knows where they are’. The catalyst of this transformation is the doorway” (Unwin, 2007, p. 12). Unwin further characterizes the door as a means to controll the identity of the different spaces on each side of the door. The door as a symbolic obstacle dives the world and therefore provokes a sense of ‘otherness’; the idea of ‘another place’ or a ‘place beyond’, Unwin puts it. (Unwin, 2007, pp. 9-12)</p>		



	<p>In Christianity the door is a metaphor for Christ himself. The testament dictates the door as the gateway to the divine. Christ helps the religious to find a safe way through. For the faithful the door is always open; for the atheist it remains always closed. (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 16)</p> <p>Buddhism has a similar approach, with the only difference that there is not one door to the Promised Land but 84,000 doors to pass to Buddhahood. (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 28)</p> <p>A more modern use of symbolic doors can be found in the story of Alice's in Wonderland. In this fantasy the doors present the unconscious forces of breaking to the fabric of reality. Behind each door a completely different world unfolds, which changes the main character. (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 24)</p> <p>Until now, we looked at the door only as a boundary, as a thing to go through in order to enter another world. I would like to add the door as an object of directing. The cathedrals in my case studies had doors that played a role drawing the visitor in. The external conical form of the door of the Notre Dame for example promotes only the inwards movement to the holy spirit. Which was according to the Christians the only necessary direction. From the inside the door has no significance. Instead you are drawn to the altar and stimulated to remain there as long as possible. (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 14)</p>	



Figure 3.16 *Alice in Wonderland*  
Doors present the unconscious forces of breaking to the fabric of reality

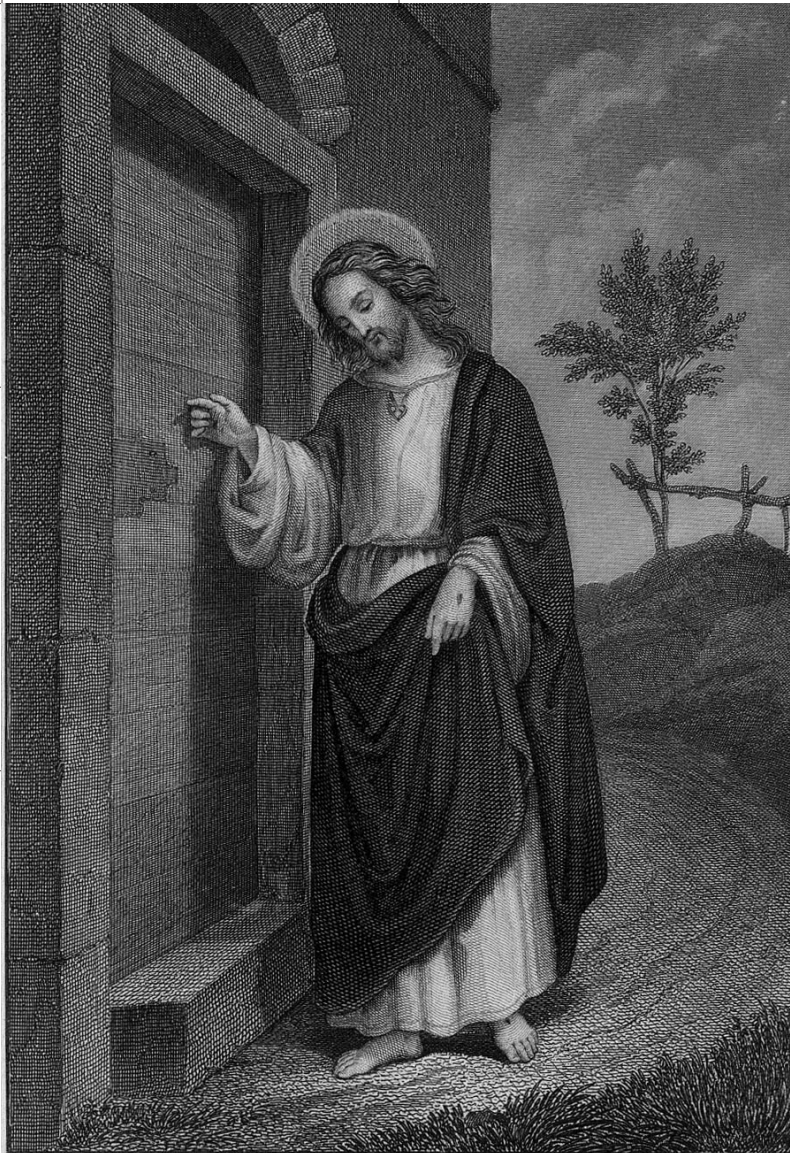
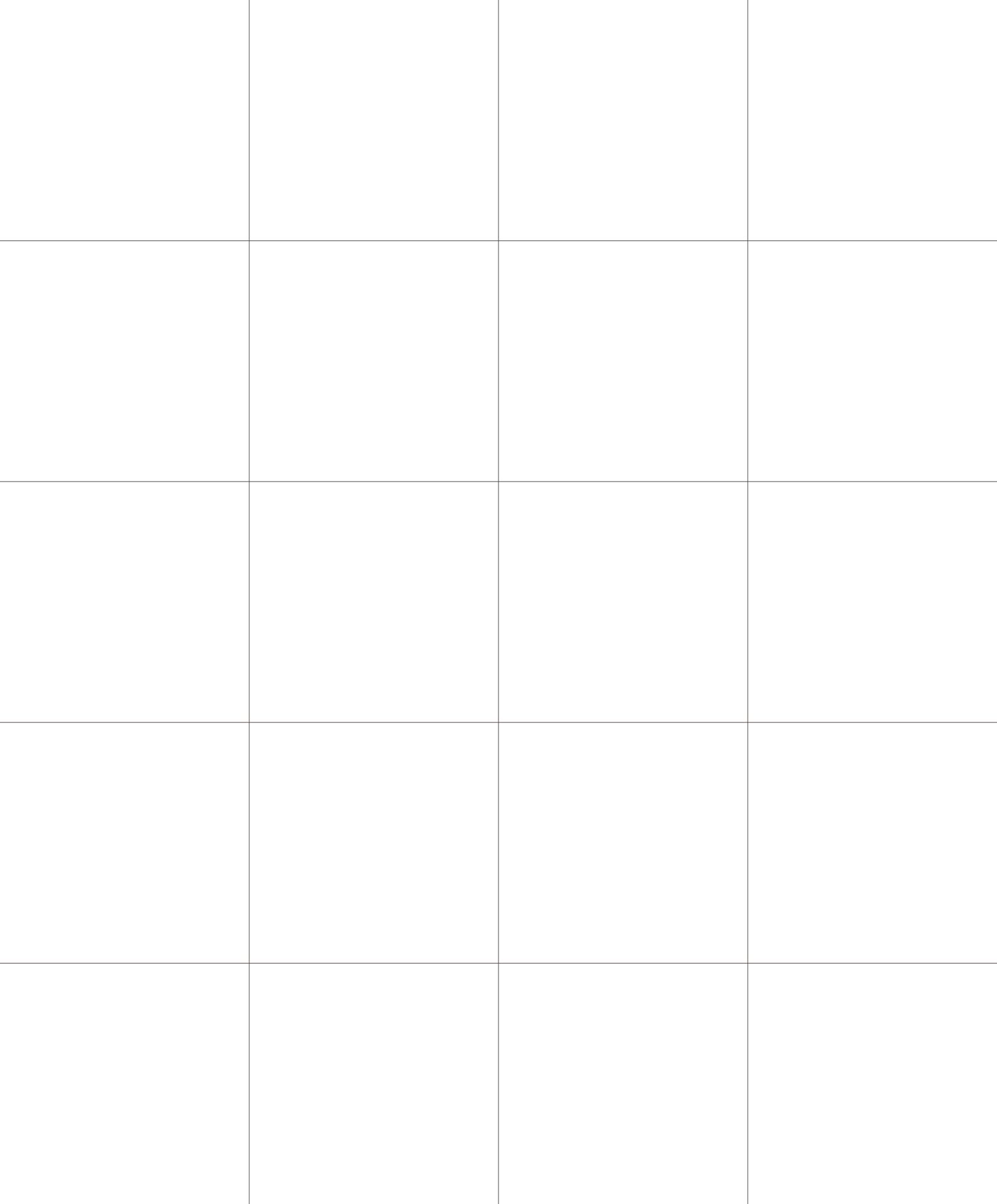


Figure 3.17 *Jesus Christ*

In Christianity the door is a metaphor for Christ himself



# P O R T

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF  
THE ELEMENTS



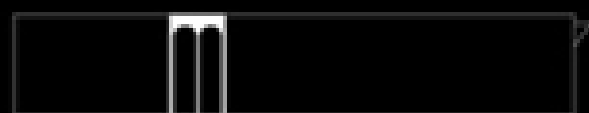
Figure 3.18 *Ettore Sottsass (Sottsass, 1972)*  
The minimal elements of a port





# TECTONIC RULE 2

## The Barrel Vault



EAST

NORTH

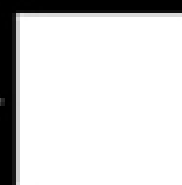
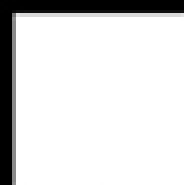
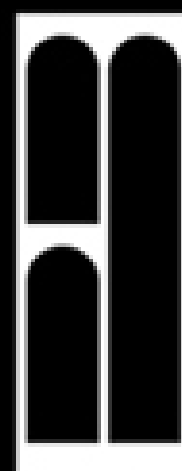
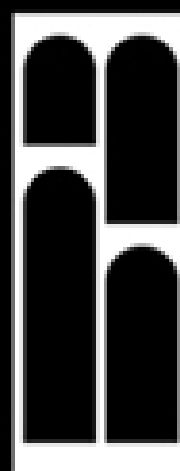
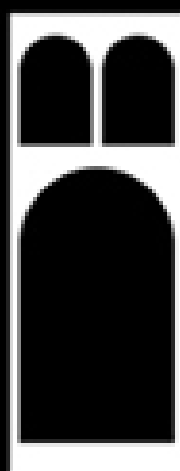
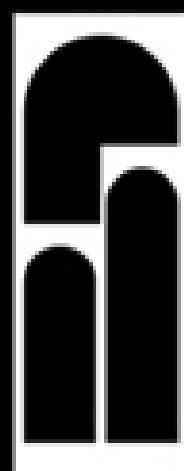
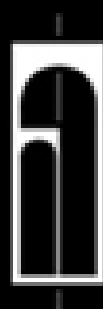
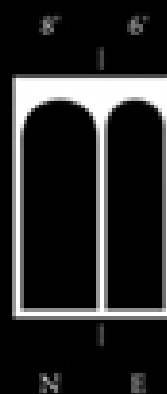


Fig. I

Fig. II

Fig. III

Fig. IV

	<p><b>3.2.5 The port</b></p> <p>The door and the port are basically of the same family. The difference however lays in the fact that the door acts as a barrier and the port as an opening. Koolhaas puts the difference as following: “Without the presence of a heavy, hinged barrier inside the frame, doors become merely openings, ceremonial portals, often liberated from surrounding architecture. Passage can be had all around the free-standing port, but is best had, for symbolic reasons, through it” (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 30).</p> <p>The port goes a step further than the door. Anyone can pass through it at any</p>		
	<p>time. It is like a door that stands open all the time. The port does not need the kind of extra security like the door. Its purpose is not to impede but to mark. Mark the passage from one world into another. Therefore it becomes much more accessible than the door, it invites you to step in. It has a so-called welcoming ‘open door policy’. However, the port still suggest the difference between two worlds on both sides of it. It just is not that secretive anymore, since you can already get a glimps of the world on the other side.</p> <p>Already in circa 1250 BC doors were given significance by the Egyptians. “Ancient Egyptian papyrus depicts the seven gates that lead to the underworld,</p>		
	<p>or the ‘mysterious portals of the House of Osiris,’ the green-skinned god of the underworld. The gates and corresponding guards are described in what is identified as the 144th spell of the ‘Book of the Dead.’ There is no known definitive version of the ancient text, but there are, by most accounts, 192 spells. In this spell, the guards of each gate are described, including what kinds of weapons they brandish on their knees. The spell advises travellers to the underworld to bring offerings of ‘foodstuffs, poultry, and incense’ in order to secure safe passage.” (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 26)</p> <p>“Furthermore, there are certain religious gates, like the Japanese torii, whose purpose is not to impede at all. Free-standing, they simply symbolize</p>		

	<p>passage from one state to the next, to the beyond. They are symbolic doors, the physical structure without the function of security. We are embarking on the reverse: the physical door becomes immaterial; the function of security, absolute.” (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p. 3)</p> <p>From the example it becomes clear that a door does not have a relationship with a wall. It can be a freestanding element. If this can be the case, what are then the minimal elements of the port? In 1972 designer Ettore Sottsass built a doorway in the desert in order to find an answer to this question. His project was called ‘doorway to enter into the darkness’. He only used some sticks, held in place with ropes to create a port. The extra element, which was already given by the location, gave the port its significance. Since the port was positioned on the edge of a great shadow cast across the land, it formed a doorway from sunlight into shade. The effect was astonishing. With the smallest means a division between light and dark became clear. The sticks were interpreted as a portal into ‘the valley of the shadow of death’, a point at where you could cross the barrier between the two worlds. Until now I have spoken about a port as an object that invites you to step through it. In this case the port has made the division between sunlight and shadow seem portentous; this becomes in our mind more a challenge or a date than an invitation. (Unwin, 2007, p. 16)</p>		
	<p>Sottsass has shown us that a port can be any form of demarcation. It can be even two sticks in the desert. Also he made clear that the port does not have to be welcoming. When standing at the barrier between two extremely different and intense worlds, it can become a challenge to pass through it. One could use this in creating boundaries between two different zones in one’s design. Boundaries that are still open, but discouraging to go through.</p>		



Figure 3.19 *The mysterious portals of the House of Osiris* (Penguin Press & Budge, 2008)

Ancient Egyptian portals that led to the underworld



Figure 3.20 *The Japanese Torii*  
Free standing religious gate

### 3.3 Conclusion - thoughtful spacemaking

Through both the case studies and the fundamentals I have gained insight in the architectural language that communicates a message. From the case studies it became clear that every architect creates his own story. There is no formula and no absolute truth. The story is an individual concept that acts as a guide towards making decisions in the design process; a guide towards logically choosing the components of a building; a guide towards “the thoughtful making of space”, according to architect Louis Kahn. I believe this way of thinking creates a certain layeredness in a design; layers that keep a building interesting and diverse.

The fundamentals formed the alphabet of the architectural language. However, every fundamental had its own story to tell. Combined with the overall concept this leads to more layeredness throughout the entire design; stories within a story.

Out of the case studies I selected those elements that were important to me and that could generate meaning to my architecture. Woodland cemetery thought me how to revitalize the experience of divinity in a secular world. It is not preaching that one needs in the dark hour of farewell, but tranquillity and reconciliation. Peace passeth all understanding. By speaking in the language of beauty to the bereaved peace can be accomplished. Asplund achieved this feeling of peace by the absolute absence of all dynamic elements, the avoidance of all contrast effects, the deliberate elimination of the border lines between bearing and resting parts. These design choices have produced the effect of something unreal, of an exalted calm not belonging to life on earth state of mind. It resonates Heidegger's idea of ‘all being connected’. Being connected with something bigger or something unreal.

I saw Brion sanctuary as a teaching place. Scarpa reminds us of how one can engage more fully in a world that is constantly finding more efficient and enticing ways to deflect and distance the sentient body with visually consumable icons. We have to notice we are alive (Heidegger), is the message. The manner in which Scarpa prompts the visitor to engage in the Brion sanctuary at every turn, at every threshold, helps to resist the temptation to distance one's body from the experience of place.

Rossi taught me the possibilities of the path, Les Saint's innocents showed me how to bring the living and the death together, Ledoux introduced me with the transition ritual of space. The large space he created feels much larger since it is counterpointed by a low space. Last, I used the abstract world of the pyramid. I wanted to bring together the labyrinth as a world of experience and the bridge as an abstract concept. They are the symbols for life and death.

By the insights I have thus gained, I am able to formulate my own message with architectural means.



## 4. The user

The second input in formulating meaning in case of architecture of death comes from the user. I have identified two types of users who have one thing in common, which is bridging life and death. The first type of user is the person who consciously visits the place I design. Consciously, since these person has to accept or process the loss of a loved one and goes to my bridge in order to do so. The second type is the passer-by; the person that could be anybody; the person that is not yet aware of death, but has to deal with it anyway. Everybody has to deal with it in the end, therefore the place I propose has for each individual its own meaning. The second person is able to feel certain inner emotions as well. Compare to an individual who steps in a church without being religious, and still feels tranquillity or consolation. This person embodies the overall stigma of society. The stigma I want to take down. Together two types of uses form the input for my framework. They are the ones who I want to transmit my message about death to. Also these are the one's who give input to my message. What are therefore the issues of society and the issues of an individual dealing with death? Who are they? What are their affordances? What is their input in formulating a message in the case of the architecture of death? What kind of message about death do I want to leave them with?

What I am trying to achieve is to understand the scope of the problem as well from an individual point of view as from a societal point of view. It helps me to distil the essence of the problem. After which I try to generate a general message that answers to all of the parties. I believe one could only find this essence by looking at the problems from many different angles, and from many different perspectives. I start with analysing the origin of the problem through understanding the point of view from the society. After which I zoom in to the issues of the individual.

### 4.1 The origin

I have emphasized on the importance for a human being of giving meaning to the things they encounter. For a long time death acquired its meaning from the Christian faith. However, since the 18th century that notion changed. "God is dead", declared Friedrich Nietzsche, a famous philosopher in the nineteenth century. He meant that God as an absolute truth lost his credibility in Western Europe. As a consequence, a hole was created, which could not easily be filled up with another truth. Making death a taboo offered a solution. As long as we cannot find an explanation for it, we deny its existence in the first place.

Many people find in religious and spiritual perspectives resources for understanding and coping with loss. For example viewing loss as illusory rather than real or as a necessary step towards a more glorious future. I do not want to antagonize those people. I merely propose an alternative beside that what already is. For those who are yet unable to find consolation in the existing methods to hopefully find it in mine. It helps for me to look at those existing systems. For example the way

how they hold out possibilities for afterlife (Becker et al., 2007, p. 214). How they tried to make death less terrifying; how they invented rituals to bring consolation and dignity to grief, how they used soil music, lofty mysterious spaces and stained glass. They invented powerful magical stories which said that dying was only a transition to another more real existence, that there was a god that would show us mercy, they wanted to remind us that loss is universal, inevitable but not the end, that the sorrow we feel, though heart-breaking, is part of the plan.

However, with my diagnosis for society, I see religion no longer as a stepping-stone, it no longer speaks for us about the meaning of death. With a subject that makes people silent the question remains. I found an old saying in German, 'Wenn die Menschen schweigen, müssen die Steine reden' (Anonymous, 1841, p. 89). Which means 'if people are silent, stones much speak', referring to gravestones. In the book of Ernst Cassirer 'The Philosophy of Symbolic Form's (Cassirer, 1953), people are described as symbolic creatures, we try to give meaning to everything on our path and death forms no exception. However, we have a little more trouble finding a meaning for this. The definition modern science provides us proves for many to be insufficient. Possibly because it lacks a meaningful element in its explanation. How can we bring meaning back in our dealing with death and how can that helps us in accepting the fact that we are all going to die? And why is that necessary?

## **4.2 Society**

As a first step in answering those questions, I looked at the issue from a societal point of view and I recognized three main problems as a reason of the current stigma. All of them find their origin in Heidegger's principles I already introduced in the introduction. To sum up, the first issue is about our true nature. We do not live our true lives, but hide under the disguise of a mask. The second is that we forgot that all being is connected. Our ego's make us think we are better than the world around us and we act like that as well; treating others and nature as a means instead of a need. The third is that we forgot to notice that we are alive. We are disconnected from the sheer mystery of our existence. Our fear of the Nother (death), make us deny its presence. Fear, because we lack in understanding death and lack in labelling it. This leads indirectly to the fact that we do not appreciate the temporary of our existence.

The three problems make up the stigma of death. In order to fully understand the situation more thoroughly, I have looked how others see modern society in the light of Heidegger's theories, since I belief one is only able to solve a situation, when one fully understands it.

### **4.2.1 Tyson - notice that we are alive**

I would like to start with the ideas of philosopher Lois Tyson. In her book 'Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide', Tyson explores the meaning of death by looking into Freud's theory that death is a biological drive, which he called the death drive, or thanatos (Tyson, 2006, p. 21). The

fear of death developed along with experiences of abandonment, and forms only a small part of people's fear of loss in general. Fear of death often results in fear of life. Since it is responsible, along with other reasons, for fear of intimacy. "When you ain't got nothin', you got nothin' to lose" (Tyson, 2006, p. 23). The fear of life can also be played out as a fear of risk. "The ultimate loss, of which I am utterly terrified, is death. Therefore, I can not take any risk that might result in death" (Tyson, 2006, p. 23). However, this is the kind of thinking that can result in suicide: "My intense fear of losing my life makes living so painful and frightening that my only escape is death" (Tyson, 2006, p. 23).

At the same time, death fascinates people immensely. Tyson concludes: "the greater our fear is, the greater our fascination becomes." Our fascination with media representations of death and death works is another example of how we project our fears and problems onto people and events outside ourselves. This fascination thus operates as a defence mechanism: "If I think about the child abuser on the other side of town (or from a different social class or ethnic background from mine), I divert my attention from the ways in which I've been abused or from my abuse of others" (Tyson, 2006, p. 24). The way people in modern society tend to deal with death is by treating it as an abstraction - that is, to theorize about it in ways that do not allow us to feel its force too intimately - presumably because its force is too frightening. (Tyson, 2006, pp. 21-24)

#### **4.2.2 Durkheim - our true nature**

Emile Durkheim confirms Tyson's way of thinking. He states: "society exerts a moral power over the individual; it has the ability of regulating human needs and desires." Tyson refers to Heidegger's masks each individual acquires by birth. Every person belongs to a certain social group, with certain group behaviour. However in moments of crises (abrupt change of a positive or negative kind), the involved individuals start to realise the inability of their group members or society to save them. They break loose from their mask and society can no longer regulate them. Results are for example increased suicide rates during the aftermath of these events. To regain control, values and needs have to change. During the time it takes for reshaping or regulating the needs of a certain group, individuals find themselves in a state of anomie. It is in the interest of society to minimize this kind of situations. (Durkheim, Cosman, & Cladis, 2001)

#### **4.2.3 De Botton - all being is connected**

Philosopher Alain de Botton is interested in what we could learn from religion in our secular society. To me one of his most important findings is: "A lot of what is attractive about religion is that it brings us in a broader perspective both in time and in place" (De Botton, 2012). It is quite stressful to live every day in the present. However, once a week we used to step outside the ordinary, and into the church. As a way of being brought into contact with something greater; "with very old things, very vast things, things that are much greater, deeper, more mysterious than ordinary life. Those things brought a kind of calm to our inner life. It gives us a nice feeling to be made small

against the backdrop of a vast universe, something larger than ourselves” (De Botton, 2012). I believe that is the reason why the average cathedral works so well, even if you are not religious. Suddenly one becomes calm, when one looks at the grant ceiling and feels like tiny thing in this beautiful, mysterious universe. Suddenly the argument one was having at home does not seem so significant.

How to live life is rather difficult. Especially when posed with the question how to die, people flea overwhelmingly back to religion. We have not sorted the problem out ourselves yet. However, it is possible that non-believers will learn how to do dying in the future. At the medical front atheist already have done a great job, but at the more human front they are beginners. Religion addressed our human needs. “This could inspire us not just to look backwards, but also to look forwards to how much still needs to be done.” (De Botton, 2012)

The text above from de Botton describes the influence of a higher power on a human being. The most important statement about this text is that this power makes us feel small, insignificant against the backdrop of a vast universe. What happens in a church is that you feel like a tiny thing in this beautiful, mysterious universe. You feel that you are a tiny part of a much bigger plan. That offers you dignity and respect for the things around you.

#### **4.2.4 Conclusion**

By now I have identified the issues of the second type of user, who stands for the society as a whole. In order to address these persons affordances I looked again at Heidegger’s issues already set out in the introduction. Namely that we have forgotten to notice we are alive; forgotten that all Being is connected; and forgotten to be free. I believe these to be the primary issues of society. They formulate the users part in my proposed framework the most adequate. Furthermore the secondary issues point out in the introduction like a lack of space, our western culture, the secularization, the funeral location, the out-dated typology, and the issue of public space, are indirectly addressed when one tries to identify the essence of all these problems. Ultimately, finding ones truth forms the essence. My role would be answering to the issues of society (the user), by bringing together life and death and making an end to the stigma.

### **4.3 The individual**

I continue identifying the user by looking at the first type, the bereaved person who consciously visits the place I design. What are the issues and affordances of an individual in case of death?

#### **4.3.1 Grief**

The most noteworthy element of the bereaved person is his grief. This state of mind colours every aspect of the users perspective. Therefore I believe it is most significant to investigate the definition of grief, because I think this could give input to the message from the users part. Professor of

psychology C.L. Parks from the University of Connecticut helped me gain understanding in this area. She states (Parks, 2011): “Grieving is a landscape that is so varied and so vast that it can only be discovered through one’s own most intimate experience. It touches the one who is dying, those around a dying person, and those who survive. The river of grief pulses deep inside all human beings, hidden from view, but its presence informs one’s life at every turn. It can drive a person into the numbing habits of escape from suffering or bring an individual face-to-face with his or her own humanity.” To continue: “Grief refers to the deep sorrow following significant losses, the experience of mourning” (halifax, 2008). “It can be an underlying mental process that avors a life continuously or an experience that one passes through and is resolved in a positive manner, bringing about a greater sense of humanness, compassion, and wisdom. Grief can be seen as a natural human process giving rise to one’s basic humanity, yet it can also be a potential trap, a no-exit, a source of chronic suffering” (halifax, 2008). “And then there is the taste of grief in the landscape of Western culture, which is conditioned to possess and not let go; and yet beings and things are inevitably lost as we live our lives in this all-too-transient world” (Parks, 2011, p. 355).

#### **4.3.2 Stages of grief**

Psychology tells us there are 5 stages of grief. The first stage is recognised by responses of denial and isolation, as a way of defence to the immediate shock of the situation one encounters. Then comes anger, this is the second stage. The reality of the situation starts to sink in and one starts expressing one’s inner feelings of pain in an aggressive way. In the third stage one starts negotiating with faith, asking several questions that begin with ‘if’. “If we only had sought medical help sooner.” The fourth stage gives space to sadness and mourning, and is generally associated with depression. Ultimately, one needs to cope with loss. This happens in the fifth stage of acceptance. (Axelrod, 2006; Kübler-Ross, 1969)

When one understands the landscape of grief, one could start focussing on how one could offer support. However, the described stages do not imply a linear process. In reality, one skips a stage, or one starts with another stage like anger. It is important to understand that each individual has his own path and his own pace. Only by recognising this, it is possible to find how one could help. First one needs to understand that coping with loss is a deeply personal and singular experience. The only one who can go through it and find consolation is the self, the bereaved person. If this is the case, where do I come in? Psychology emphasizes the impact others could have when offering help and comfort. The process of finding consolation for a bereaved individual is very hard, a helping hand or support would prove to be of great assistance. It is about allowing the other person to feel grief, in order to optimise the process of mourning as much as possible.

#### **4.3.3 Opportunity**

As I already stated in the introduction, the cause of one’s grief could be found in the broken relation with the deceased person. One’s affordances in such a case revolve around restoring the broken

connection with their lost loved ones. Even beyond an initial period of grief and bereavement, the emotional bonds which link the survivors to the deceased have usually demanded some form of symbolic commemoration, as well as a belief in the continued existence of the dead in some after-life place or state. The emotional bonds get shape in projecting meaning to a place or object. This could be seen as a result of the fact that people are meaningful creatures. Therefore they want to give meaning to everything, including their dead. Since one is no longer able to give meaning to the person itself because that person is no longer there, one could project meaning to something else. For example to a gravestone, to a ring or even to a place. A place to feel connected with the dead. If societies are to continue to function, the dead must, in a variety of senses, be put in their place. I could offer a place for doing that.

Another opportunity is to be found in by mitigating negative outcomes. This revolves around seeing grief as a opportunity for growth. Growth as a human being, because of the transformation one has to undergo to accept death as a part of life. I will explain this by trough the words of Professor park: "Such a perspective holds that to deny grief is to rob one of the heavy stones that will eventually be the ballast for the two great accumulations of wisdom and compassion. Indeed, grief is a vital part of our very human life, an experience that can open compassion, and an important phase of maturation giving depth and humility to life. Grief can ruin or mature us. Many bereaved individuals report extensive personal growth following bereavement, including increased appreciation for life, enhanced spirituality, and closer interpersonal relationships, and religious and spiritual pathways are a common pathway to this transformative growth." (Park, 2005) (Parks, 2011, p. 359)

#### **4.3.1 Conclusion**

To conclude, I learned that grief can either drive a person into the numbing habits of escape from suffering or bring an individual face-to-face with his or her own humanity. In the last one I see an opportunity. I think the most important element we could learn about the user is that he has the ability to grow as a human being by dealing with his grief. In this process I could help. I could offer the place for establishing the required emotional bonds between the living and the dead. As a respond to the fact that humans are meaningful creatures, I could allow them to give meaning to their dead by offering a suiting place to project meaning on instead. In short I see my role in helping the bereaved (the user) in finding consolation.

The described emotional bonds stand for the distanciation between life and death. This is the same distanciation that caused the stigma in society. I believe by bringing life and death together, I could shatter the stigma and could offer consolation at the same time.

## 5. The message

We have learned from the user's perspective, that society suffers from the stigma around death and that a bereaved individual suffers from great grief because of the loss of a loved one. Both find their origin in the distanciation of life and death. The meaning the church has given us does not hold truth for many. A new message should therefore answer to these events. It should shatter the stigma and bring consolation to the bereaved. What should this new message be?

The message is the last part of the framework that I want to expand upon. In creating the message both the input from the architecture and the user are crucial. In the following chapter I will formulate my message for the architecture of death. The new message encompasses a new meaning for death and a way for how to deal with death. For me, the direction towards a new meaning could be found in truth, consolation, beauty and the relationships between them. First I will explain the three themes, after which I will expand on their relations.

### 5.1 Truth offers consolation

*All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon.  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
What is less or more than a touch?  
Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.  
Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.*

- "Song of Myself," lines 647-655. (Whitman, 2001)

These lines come from a poem about truth written by Walt Whitman, an American poet of the 19th century. I believe truth does wait in all things and that it has the opportunity to offer consolation. In the following chapter I will explain how this concept works by analysing several interviews from a television program called 'Van de Schoonheid en de Troost' (of beauty and consolation), by Wim Kayzer. In the series of interviews Kayzer asked writers, philosophers, musicians, artists and scientists the question: "What makes this life worthwhile, what is beauty and what offers consolation?" In return his opponents tell their most personal experiences. I have analysed a few of these stories in order to distil several ways of consolation. The text I wrote consists largely of quotations.



### 5.1.1 Roger Scruton

The greatest trial that all human beings have to confront is that of death. “How to accept the fact that I will die? How should I think of myself in order to do that?” These are some of the questions British philosopher Roger Scruton asked himself during the interview. “We need to understand death in order to live in friendship with the self. If we have not found that serenity within, we are a problem to others.” I think Scruton refers to the difficulty one encounters when seeing another person battle against death. This is a horrifying battle to watch, like watching a beast driven in the corner. It is a fight against better will, because deep down one already knows the outcome. For the spectators it works like a mirror; a reflection of one’s own struggle. If on the other hand, the deceased person accepts the fact he has to die, it becomes easier for the others to stay around.

Scruton thinks there is a path of renunciation that is also an acceptance. “We should accept the fact that we will die, we have to. We have two choices, the first is to go towards our accepting, the other is to be dragged screaming and kicking towards it. Either way, the outcome is the same. The only thing what we have the freedom to do is to achieve the serenity beforehand, which comes from willing sacrifice.”

To be serene, is to be untroubled. Not because one has had no trouble, but because one has understood one’s trouble, and because one has come to terms with it. With a measure of humility one has recognised that one is not so important that that trouble really matters. You become serene as soon as you see, not are you the most important in the world, and the least important. There are souls in the world that have also lived through troubles, and found in the heart of trouble the seeds of harmony and finally the restfulness with the self. Assistance in finding that serenity helps, according to Scruton. If this is the case, my design could offer a hand towards achieving this.

Scruton further speaks about consolation, as something what we human beings seek. It revolves around a sense of being fully at home in the world, being at one with something and finding your place of rest there. Each individual possess a longing to be at ease, to be in rest with oneself. Therefore one seeks for consolation. Which one often finds in a moment outside everyday activity. As a way of arising above mortal concerns. Being at rest is a respond to all the movement within and around people. We want to bring this movement to a stop, in other words we want to stand back and be at one with things. Be where we are, resting. Dwelling in the land, as Heidegger would have put it. Attached with the place which is theirs and at peace with the people who are there. This is a feeling that is absolutely essential to us, it goes deeply into our species being and touches what is most important to us. Consolation therefore, does not come alone from being at rest with thyself, but also with being at rest with one’s species. To quote Heidegger, “to be connected with all being”. There is in all of us, this need to establish a connection with something greater. A community, which goes beyond the mere living. Something, which is not me, not you, but in some way comprehends us both. Being part of a drama of one’s own life but also being united with others in a community, which absorbs us into the full epoch of the species. Including the dead and the unborn. Being part of one’s species and not only existing as an individual. All our unhappiness and alienation comes from the attempt to be an individual above everything else. Whereas consolation comes when one relaxes in a sense that is greater than the self. That is one’s

species life and also the history and eternity that that represents.

### 5.1.2 Martha Nussbaum

For the American, humanitarian philosopher Martha Nussbaum, consolation means confronting the reality of death. She expresses her point of view in her interview with Kayzer: “It was a way for me of taking the fact of death in. It was a way of telling myself that this was final. To me that is what we have to do if we are to have a life after death. That is to see it as a death, not as something else. Also, if you cannot get to the depth of that pain, you cannot get to the great heights of life either. All is about the way you relate to it.” The cause of Nussbaum’s grief was to be found in her feelings of guilt and anger. Consolation would mean coming to terms with those feelings and with the powerful loss as a consequence of death. However, Nussbaum did not know what to do to express her mourning. A problem common to modern society as a whole, which has no room for mourning and does not know how it is suppose to be done. Many people, as a result, hide in their houses, and do not do anything.

Accessing one’s pain should be via a very powerful instrument. Nussbaum found this power in music. Some music can be consoling because it brings you to terms with the finality of loss in such an eloquent way. It helps you feel your deepest emotions, helps you get to the depth of your pain, from where you can rise again. One helpful comparison is between music and dreams. This is something that Proust developed in a very interesting way. Music, because it does not follow a usual temporal sequence in the way that literature does, has a way of depicting emotions in a kind of phantasmagorical and dreamlike character. In a piece one emotion succeeds another rapidly, they are wound up together in strange ways. In that way music can often cut beneath the habits of everyday life and have access to powerful emotions that are buried beneath the routines of habit. We form our deepest emotions at a time when our inner life is rather dreamlike, when we are small infants that cannot speak and are not part of society yet. Nussbaum thinks music has some of the power it does because it is able to tab those deeper layers of the personality and it can bring back to us some of the intense and extremely sharp, but also archaic and unfocused emotion of childhood. In that way it is more able than a lot of literature to jolt us out of our sense of normacy. There is a way in which music pierces like a beam straight to the most vulnerable parts of our personality. There where the pain is too deep for words. Music has the ability to crystallize this pain, it gives it a form so one starts understanding what it means and where it consists of. It revolves around acknowledging all the facets of life, happiness and pain. Only then one truly notices that ‘one is alive’ (Heidegger). It is the starting point for consolation. Consolation in finding the inner self. Coming to terms with thyself and ones emotions. This is part of understanding the circumstances of human life. When you understand how hard it is to live a good life, you are less likely to be angry at other people and more likely to be compassionate and merciful. For Nussbaum consolation revolved all around these themes, about overcoming anger, with a kind of mercy that drives from looking at the circumstances of human life, seeing how many obstacles people have to overcome, and giving life a break. Pardon the people around you, pardon yourself.

### 5.1.3 George Steiner

According to George Steiner, French/British literature critic, writer and cultural philosopher, our fear of death comes out of our fear of not having the world under control. It is through memory that we are able to find consolation. For the next piece I want to quote a large part of the interview, since it is so beautifully said I could not bear to rewrite it.

“If you appear in front of the court of your own remembrance and call for consolation, the best consolation is forgetting, and I am a very bad forgetter. I wish I were not. There are quite awful moments in ones life. But let me step a little away from the anecdote to raise some of the taboo subjects, some of the things people will not face in themselves. For example why they are strangers to themselves. However, if one is unable to forget, the court could offer an alternative, in the form of a personal exam. The questions that follow are to be very harsh and sometimes difficult to answer. And others will judge as they may wish to judge, but perhaps we let ourselves off sometimes a little too easily in our own sense of self. When Socrates said ‘Know thyself’, he meant something full of sunlight like Athens, at twelve o’clock noon, that brilliant light and the blue of the sea. I think he was perhaps a little naive, how dare I say it, but I say it. To really know oneself, like the Montaigne image, is to go down the spiral staircase of the tower into a great darkness, into Piranesi darkness. It is not all sunlight. But one must try and do it. And unless you are prepared to go down that staircase, then you inhabit a ‘marionette’; you inhabit a ‘fait commedia’ of the self. And no one else can do it for you, no psychoanalyst, no father confessor, no therapist, no crying therapy, no group consciousness exercises in the California uplands, no LSD. You damn well have to try it and do it yourself, sitting alone on a rather uncomfortable chair, with no help, and saying: ‘Who the hell was responsible for what went wrong? Answer yourself, answer yourself.’ And to me a great education, the final justification of the education, is if you force yourself down those stairs and if you come up again – certainly damaged, certainly deeply saddened and disturbed – but that you do not take refuge either in blaming others, or in blaming society, or in blaming some organic defect – my God, we will soon have virtues of stupidity – the stupidity is only one’s own.”

Also Steiner refers to Heidegger, specifically to his theory on our true nature. Not blame anyone else is indirectly linked to recognising the inability of other people to save one from ‘the Nothing’. The personal journey Steiner describes, is inherently finding ones true nature.

### 5.1.4 Simon Schama

British historian and writer Simon Schama transforms reality in order to be able to live with it. He liberates himself literally from the tyranny of the present. For Schama history is an act of redress. “It obliges one to make the effort to really encounter and encompass and to live with previous experiences.” In that sense it is always an issue of reaching towards other experiences, of other cultures, of other times. It creates a kind of broad working understanding of what the human condition is of what kind of animal we are and of what kind of world we inhabit. The past is an illumination

of the human condition, of the same kind as poetry. Schama tries to find these illuminations, and herewith find consolation. In history he finds an element of beauty that feels to him like a intimation of kinship. “You feel kinship with a person in the past,” he says. “It is a way to feel kinship with the lost, the dead, with all sorts of worlds.” Schama draws consolation from that experience.

Another way to find consolation is by celebrating life. The feeling of the blood that streams faster, a feeling of rush. A quality of elated vitality. Death is about a validation of life. All the great moments in life are a validation of life itself. Complexity and beauty of the world.

Sometimes no consolation can be found. No music, no art, no history can offer the instrument which one needs in other to console oneself. “When ones grief is to powerful,” Schama says, “then the only thing that remains is to rejoice in the fact that one has lived in the same world with the deceased person. However this will not count as a consolation. In this case it is about the acceptance of the non-existence of consolation that offers consolation.

### **5.1.5 Shakespeare Hamlet**

Throughout Shakespeare’s play Hamlet (Shakespeare, 1998), the main character faces the most ancient and abiding philosophical problem: He must ‘learn how to die,’ i.e., how to live with the fact and thought of death. For me the most important lesson I learned from Shakespeare is the fact that when death comes as a sudden, unexpected event, it could be extra difficult to deal with. The intenseness of the emotions makes one overwhelmed. By creating a different first intimate experience with mortality, one could be better prepared.

Shakespeare offers us several patterns of consolation. Claudius, the one who killed Hamlet’s father, must deal with the gross insult of Hamlet’s ostentatious mourning. In his most suave manner he offers his stepson the consolation of philosophy. However, “Hamlet does not mourn because man dies; nor is he tormented only by the loss of a father. Hamlet’s problem is not to accept his father’s death but to accept a world in which death has lost its meaning and its message for the living - a world in which only the visitation of a Ghost restores some sense of the mystery and awe of the grave” (Stockard).

Mankind has to face the truth of death in order to find consolation. Unlike Hamlet, who was overwhelmed by his first intimate experience of mortality, one could be prepared.

### **5.1.6 Conclusion - a personal journey**

I find it very difficult to arrive at a conclusion. All stories are very personal, unique and essential to understand the vast landscape of how to find consolation in truth. However, I found some shared similarities, which could help me find the essence of consolation and possibly a new meaning for death. The first I would like to point out is the fact that consolation is often found in a moment outside everyday activity, out of our sense of normacy. The second revolves around the element of truth. All of the interviewees relate to the theories of Heidegger. The theories I presented in my introduction: ‘our true nature’, ‘all being is connected’, and ‘notice we are alive’. True consolation

is found in being truthful, truthful like Heidegger's theories. Truthful to oneself and truthful to one's nature by being at one with them. It refers to a sort of accepting relaxing state of mind, a state of consolation. Acceptance could only be found within oneself. Only if one is able to accept the finity of one's own life. Further, in all human beings is the need to connect with something greater. Being part of a community, which goes beyond the mere living, a connection with the dead. We need to understand death in order to live in friendship with the self. Understand the circumstances of human life and coming to terms with it. Truly feeling the depth of one's pain and from there on it becomes possible to rise again, to regain one's happiness. The knowing of oneself is only possible by undertaking a journey. A personal journey into the self where one arrives at the core of the problem, fully understands it, and accepts the fact that the only one who is able to make a change is oneself. The problem is the solution; the end is the beginning; the circle of life.

Too add to the above I have my own theory, which includes the principle of polarity. I believe in this principle in which everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites. In nature these opposites are identical, but different in degree. Together they form a whole truth. If one believes that the truth consist of two opposites, then both opposites are half-true. Only when one knows both of them one has a good understanding of the situation. In life one strives to a complete understanding of the 'Whole Truth'. The whole truth in case of life means understanding both life and death, which are polarities of each other. If one only chooses to know one of the half-truths, one is living in ignorance. One is not truly 'alive', as Heidegger would say. This way of thinking is in line with undertaking the suggested personal journey. Since it is possible to change the vibrations of Sadness to the vibrations of Happiness, in one's own mind, it is possible to change your situation of grief. Many of you people have had personal experiences of the (involuntary) rapid transition from Love to Hate, and the reverse. And one will therefore realize the possibility of this being accomplished by the use of the Will. 'Life and Death' are the opposite poles of the same thing. By means of the application of the Principle of Polarity, one could be able to transmute grief into happiness.

However, undertaking this personal journey towards acceptance is very difficult. One often does not know how or where to start. Therefore I propose to take the above-mentioned personal journey as a starting point for the new meaning of the architecture of death. I believe finding ones own meaning is a great way in offering consolation, since it relies on the power from within. Not some power outside of the human being, where one is than dependent on. If one finds consolation in oneself, one grows as a human being; one understands the great things one is able to do. Not only I believe this could bring consolation; it could also lead to more confidence and appreciation for oneself. However, a helping hand in this process could be of great value. This is where I come in. How I propose to do this will be further explored in the following chapters by adding beauty to the equation.

## 5.2 Beauty is truth

The difficulty of finding the truth, expressed in the previous chapter, started me thinking about my own influence on the matter. Is it possible to help individuals on their personal journey of finding their truth? What external factor could be found that could trigger one to take off? The answer I found in the famous lines ‘Beauty is truth, truth is beauty’. How this works, will be explained in the following chapter. There are many different ways how one may explain the meaning of beauty is truth. In defining my own definition, I set out those that contribute to my own understanding.

### 5.2.1 John Keats

*“Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”*

John Keats (Keats, 1819) - May 1819



Figure 5.1 *Ode on a grecian urn*, sketch  
by John Keats (Keats, 1819)

These lines from the poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, by John Keats conclude the writer’s ideas on the nature of beauty, which are embodied by the Grecian urn. They suggest that beauty can only truly exist in an artificial state, such as the frozen, immutable, lifeless form of the urn. Therefore art does not reflect reality as we experience it. Instead it merely stands for ideals. Ideals humans should no longer strive for. Beauty encourages us to find our liberation, liberation from our artificial obligation to a society. Beauty is truth means we do not have to strive for perfection or an eternal life, simply because it is not possible for mortals to achieve. I think Keats words intent to encourage us to be free, to take of our mask towards society and to start focussing on our own life. In that sense Keats shares the same theory about our ‘true nature’ as Heidegger. (Smith, 2011)

### 5.2.2 Worlds of aesthetic truths

Is it truthful to state beauty is truth? One could say truth, like beauty, is something personally perceived and known; unable to prove with science. How is it then possible to make such a statement? John Lane, British author of *'Timeless Beauty: In the Arts and Everyday Life'* (Lane, 2003), offers us an explanation. He begins by acknowledging the absence of a true reason that could define beauty. However, when we see each individual as a unique universe, truth resides from within, from our own world of aesthetic truths. To quote the author (Lane, 2003): "Although the complexities of both nature and beauty have a subtle mathematical basis, reason by itself cannot tell us why beauty exists nor what is beautiful. There is often something spontaneous, even 'illogical' about these emotions; like love they can never be predetermined, let alone dictated. But neither can the other wise and splendid things, which are most significant in human life, to which the greatest of the human race have contributed most, and in which our real refreshment consists—the love of truth, the sources of inspiration and the production of great works of art. These, like beauty, ultimately pertain to the unconscious, the heart and the soul. They pertain to the heart because it is love which discerns the mystery inherent in those things we see as beautiful; love which abandons arrogance and stands in awe before the mystery of life. It is love that sees beauty which, in turn, is always loved." Lane meant that truth, like beauty, is perceived from the heart and the soul. As Shakespeare would have put it: "To thine own self be true—Hamlet." Underneath the mask towards society, one is able to discover one's inner beauty. "Beauty is Truth' is a simple yet difficult maxim to follow. For in following it, one must be willing to cast off one's 'safe' societal facade and display oneself naked before the often-judgmental scrutiny of society. To look beyond the shallow shores of deception into the deep abyss of truth." (Lane, 2003)

From both Lane and Shakespeare I learned that beauty is all about the self. Each individual has his own universe of truths. Therefore one should no longer pretend, but reveal one's true self. This truth I believe is beautiful.

### 5.2.3 Laws of attraction

On the one hand we have our world of aesthetic views that determines whether we perceive something as beautiful or not. On the other we have the object of our affection. What is it about that object that we find thus attractive? Theoretical physicist Arkani-Hamed offers us an answer (Ball, 2014). "What we mean by beauty," Arkani-Hamed explained, "is really a shorthand for something else. The laws that we find describe nature somehow have a sense of inevitability about them. There are very few principles and there is no possible other way they could work once you understand them deeply enough." These underlying 'laws' are what we refer to when we say ideas are beautiful. They can be found in many works of art. Ludwig van Beethoven for example, "strove to develop his Fifth Symphony in 'perfect accordance to its internal logical structure'." It is by trying out endless variations one is able to find the 'right' path. "Novelists and poets, too, can be obsessive in their pursuit of the 'mot juste'." They are looking for the same perfect assemblance of words. "You notice this quality precisely because it is so rare. What generally brings a work of art alive is not its inevitability so much as the decisions that the artist made. We gasp not because the words,



the notes, the brushstrokes are ‘right’, but because they are revelatory: they show us not a deterministic process but a sensitive mind making, surprising and delightful choices. In fact, pure mathematicians often say that it is precisely this quality that delights them in a great proof: not that it is correct but that it shows a personal, tangibly human genius taking steps in a direction we would never have guessed.” (Ball, 2014)

#### **5.2.4 Symmetry**

To continue with the laws of attraction in math, I turn towards Ian Stewart, a distinguished mathematician at the University of Warwick in England and author of ‘Why Beauty is Truth: a History of Symmetry’. Stewart suggested that what lies at the heart of beauty is symmetry. He concluded his book with two maxims (Stewart, 2008), “the first in physics: beauty does not automatically ensure truth, but it helps; and the second in mathematics: beauty must be true—because everything false is ugly.” For Stewart, symmetry is a key part of aesthetics. It stands for logic and truth. However, there are several others who have a different opinion on the matter. For Greek ancient philosopher Plato it was precisely art’s lack of symmetry (and thus truth) that denied it’s access to real beauty. Art was considered too messy to be beautiful. I propose a third definition, which consists of a combination of the first two. As well symmetry and asymmetry create artistic beauty. It is the tension between the two that make a work of art come to life. I share this idea of beauty with 20th century art historic Ernst Gombrich. He states (McManus, 2005, p. 159): “Beauty is a struggle between two opponents of equal power, the formless chaos, on which we impose our ideas, and the all-too-formed monotony, which we brighten up by new accents”. To me the tension is what makes a work of art interesting and beautiful. It resonates my thinking about polarity and transgression.

#### **5.2.5 Aesthetic experience of freedom**

The last person’s opinion I would like to include is that of Hegel, a German philosopher of the late Enlightenment. His ideas on the power of beauty include the different forms in which it could express itself. Note that art does not necessarily have to express beauty.” Hegel is well aware that art can also be decorative, can promote moral and political goals, can explore the depths of human alienation or simply record the prosaic details of everyday life, and that it can do so with considerable artistry” (Houlgate, 2014). However, true beauty can be found in art that affords us the aesthetic experience of freedom. Beauty is a matter of content as well as form. When it shows us our own freedom, by giving intuitive, sensuous expression to the freedom of spirit, it gives us insight in a central dimension of a truly human life. “The point of art, therefore, is not to be ‘realistic’ - to imitate or mirror the contingencies of everyday life - but to show us what divine and human freedom look like. Such expression of freedom is what Hegel calls the ‘Ideal,’ or true beauty. (Houlgate, 2014)

In other words, freedom is what one needs to embark on one’s personal journey towards consolation. Beauty should help one find this own freedom, showing us what it looks like.

### 5.2.6 Conclusion - variety within unity

*Variety within unity*

*Complexity within simplicity*

*Every pole has its antipole*

- Coco van Weelden, January 2016

For me finding the meaning of 'beauty is truth' started with Keats' statement that beauty is a way of encouragement for one to find ones own truth. He begins by acknowledging the absence of a true reason that could define beauty. However, when we see each individual as a unique universe, truth resides from within, from our own world of aesthetic truths. By showing us how human freedom looks like, beauty can help one find ones truth from within. Such sensuous expression of spiritual freedom is what Hegel calls the 'Ideal,' or true beauty. For me this is some sort of validation that for one to find consolation one has to search for the truth. Knowing that the outcome is for each individual different and very personal. One's truth may be that the truth is thus terrifying that the only way to deal with it is trough forgetting. However, the only way to know for sure is by looking for the truth within. Whichever truth one finds, one should accept in order to live a truthful life to oneself and to others.

Finding ones own truth in case of death is the whole point for undertaking my project. If beauty has possibly a way of stimulating this search, it is reason enough to incorporate it in my design. It will take form by following its own structure. Namely, the things we find beautiful are those things that contain an inner logic. In fact the underlying laws are what one refers to when one says ideas are beautiful. They somehow have a sense of inevitability about them, like there is no possible other way then the way one perceives. Once thoroughly understood, they make sense. Some refer to this inner logic as symmetry. Symmetry stands for both logic and truth, since it consists of certain mathematical rules. However, it could be argued that also the lack of symmetry (and thus truth), is the access to real beauty. I take stand in a third option proposed by Gombrich, in which beauty is the tension between symmetry and asymmetry. His approach relates most to my own way of thinking about polarity, which I already explained in the conclusion of the chapter 'consolation offers truth'.

In my design it will be both symmetry and asymmetry that together make up the beauty and truth of the whole. First by creating a structure (a certain logic), after which I take down that very same structure. The result is beautiful; beauty in variation; as much symmetrical as asymmetrical. This is how the design becomes interesting. It contains different layers and subtlety. There is more to it than meets the eye. So that every time you visit, you find something new, you experience something else, in order for the building to remain of interest, in order for the building to be loved and to be appreciated. This is caused by the variety within a unity, like beauty in nature. A tree is a unit, recognizable with the same appearance each time, but if one looks more closely, no single leaf is

the same as another. Each is unique. This is also the reason why looking at the ocean remains of a continuing interest. The ocean is a unity, but every single wave is different. For me that is the real 'beauty is truth'.

### **5.3 Beauty offers consolation**

In finding the above-mentioned truth that leads to consolation, I believe beauty could work as a catalyst. Beauty has the power to bring one to an accepting, open state of mind. Both Simon Schama and George Steiner acknowledge this definition. In the interview with Wim Kayzer Steiner asked himself the question: "Where do the great movements of consolation come from?" Very often the answer lies in different underlying concepts of beauty: intellectual beauty, aesthetic beauty, et cetera. Steiner thinks of beauty and consolation as two partners in a dance. Schama continuous: "Beauty is like a mirror of our own condition in its stages of decay with its plots and stains which are sort of poignant and which deepens our personal sense of self-awareness. To be more precise beauty could deepen our sense of possibilities of our existence, that is to say, to see that curl of hair on the neck, or to see the wrinkles on a face suddenly as beautiful. This is a sign of tolerance, of compassion, of love. If this is the case than beauty could work as a gateway to love." Love is the antipode of grief. Therefore I think beauty (love) can offer consolation. The message which echoes from these citations is that beauty opens up possibilities to open ones mind to the personal journey inside the self, the journey towards consolation. The logic beauty exemplifies creates a kind of tranquillity in the troubled mind of a bereaved person, for whom the world is destroyed and does not seem to make sense anymore. Beauty for me grants the role of a catalyst in the personal journey I would like to promote.

### **5.4 Beauty, truth and consolation**

Beauty, truth and consolation come together in the message that I am now able to formulate and the meaning for the architecture of death. At the core of this message resonates Heidegger's truth, which states we are distanced from our true being. Therefore I promote the finding of the personal, the knowing of the self and the truly understanding of life and death. Beauty, truth and consolation all revolve around our being. Around our personal experiences, feelings and thoughts. It is not something that can be proved; it is just there. My project is about finding thyself. Finding one's own answer to the great question of life and death.

First I would like to go back to Heidegger's statements. Because people lost the truth about human life many problems have arisen. The truth that human life is finite and that death forms an indispensable part of it. The problems manifest themselves in three ways. First, we have forgotten to notice we are alive and therefore do not appreciate the temporality of our existence. We need a place that brings us back to earth again. To humble us in a way the church used to do. Second, we have forgotten that all Being is connected. In our current egoistic state of mind we treat nature as a means, instead of living in synergy with it. By going outside our daily routines we are able to

broaden our perspective. It is about noticing the nature around you in order to sense, what Heidegger termed 'the Unity of Being'. Identification in order to overcome egoism and to create a more profound appreciation of one's brief time on earth. Third, we have forgotten to be free. We hide our true nature under a mask, and act in a way society expects from us. In Heidegger's terms we surrender to a socialised and superficial mode of being called 'they-self' (as opposed to 'our-selves'). In order to be free we will need the same broadened perspective as with 'the Unity of Being'. Rise above our narrow view to a more universal way of thinking. These issues set out more problems, what I distinguished as secondary problems; issues ranging from stigma, space, western culture, secularization, funeral location, out-dated typology, towards the public space.

The truth that forms the problem could at the same time be the solution. It sounds very simple, finding the truth by accepting death as an indispensable part of life. If it were so simple many would have already done it. However, finding one's truth means going deep inside your soul. It requires undertaking a personal journey. A journey similar to the most difficult labyrinth you have ever encountered, with the most horrible hardships along the way. Also it is difficult to know where to start such a journey. Therefore I propose to step in and offer a hand. I would like my architecture to act as a guide towards finding one's own personal journey in order for one to arrive at one's own truth. It will be a journey of discovery.

My idea has come full circle. The end forms the beginning, the beginning the end. The issues identified by Heidegger in the beginning, are at the same time the answer. The problem of having forgotten the 'truth' can be solved through finding it. 'Truth & Consolation', 'Beauty & truth', 'Beauty & Consolation' make this possible. In each of the paragraphs in chapter 5, I went back to Heidegger. I will briefly sum up my findings.

First truth offers consolation. I have directed my message towards the user, which in the case of death takes form by society as a whole and the bereaved individual in particular. To answer to both of them I found out that both their needs come forth out of their distancing from the truth. The problems Heidegger described. And with truth I mean what life truly means. Following the concept of polarity, the whole truth consists of understanding both life and death. Finding the truth again is the solution; acknowledging death as part of life instead of treating it as a taboo. Taking the fact of death in, and telling yourself it is final. This is what one has to do in order to have a life after death. That is to see it as death, not as something else. Also, if you cannot get to the depth of that pain, you cannot get to the great heights of life either.

I want for people to find their truth. In this truth one can at the same time find consolation. Consolation is found in being truthful. Truthful to oneself and truthful to one's nature by being at one with them. It refers to a sort of accepting relaxing state of mind. Acceptance could only be found within oneself. Only if one is able to accept the finity of one's own life. Further, in all human beings is the need to connect with something greater. Being part of a community, which goes beyond the mere living, a connection with the dead. We need to understand death in order to live

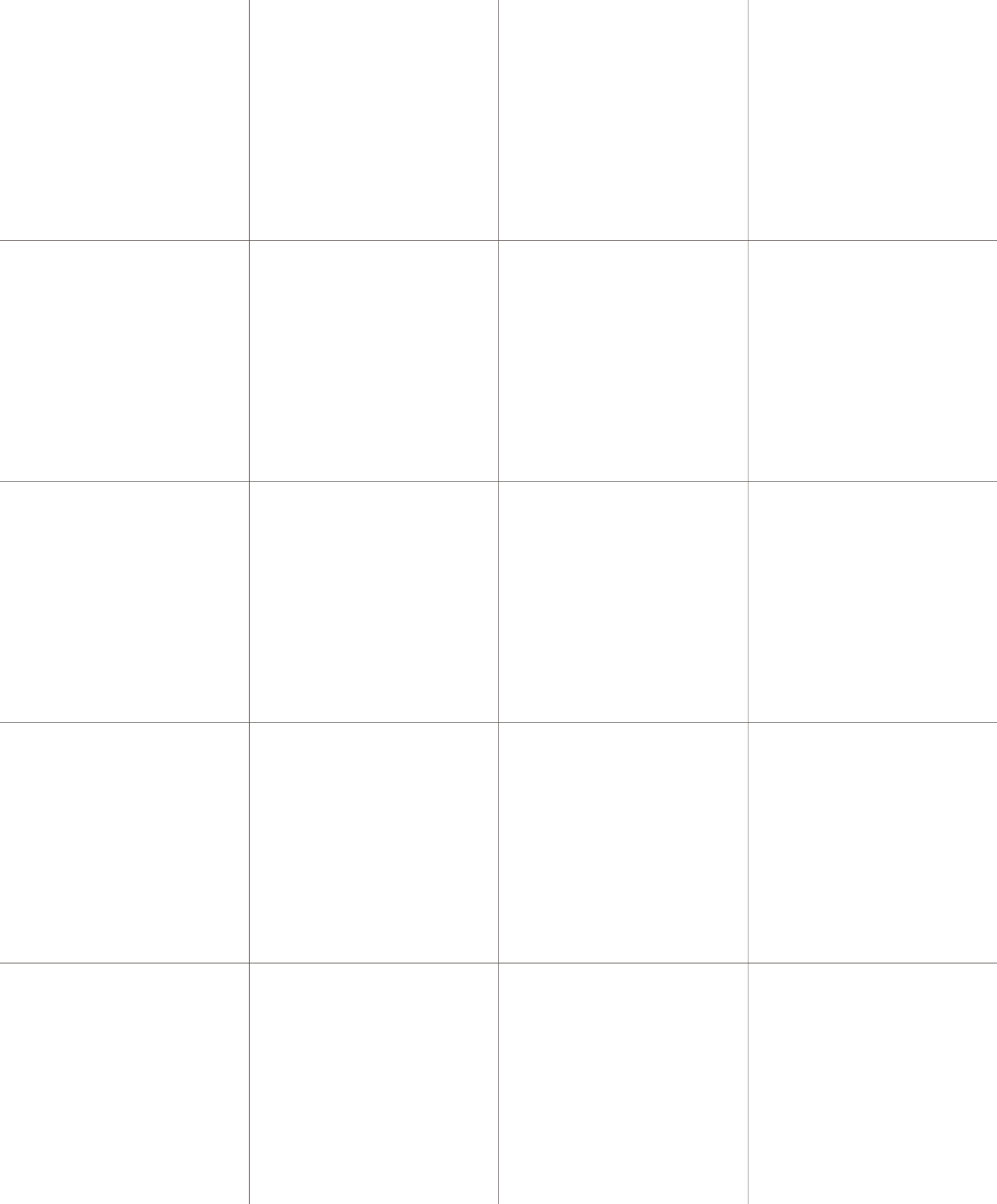
in friendship with the self. Understand the circumstances of human life and coming to terms with it. Truly feeling the depth of one's pain and from there on it becomes possible to rise again, to regain one's happiness. Another principle of polarity is the ability to turn negative vibrations such as grief into its opposites, in this case happiness, by the use of Will. The knowing of oneself is only possible by undertaking a journey. A personal journey into the self where one arrives at the core of the problem, fully understands it, and accepts the fact that the only one who is able to make a change is oneself. The problem is the solution; the end is the beginning; the circle of life.

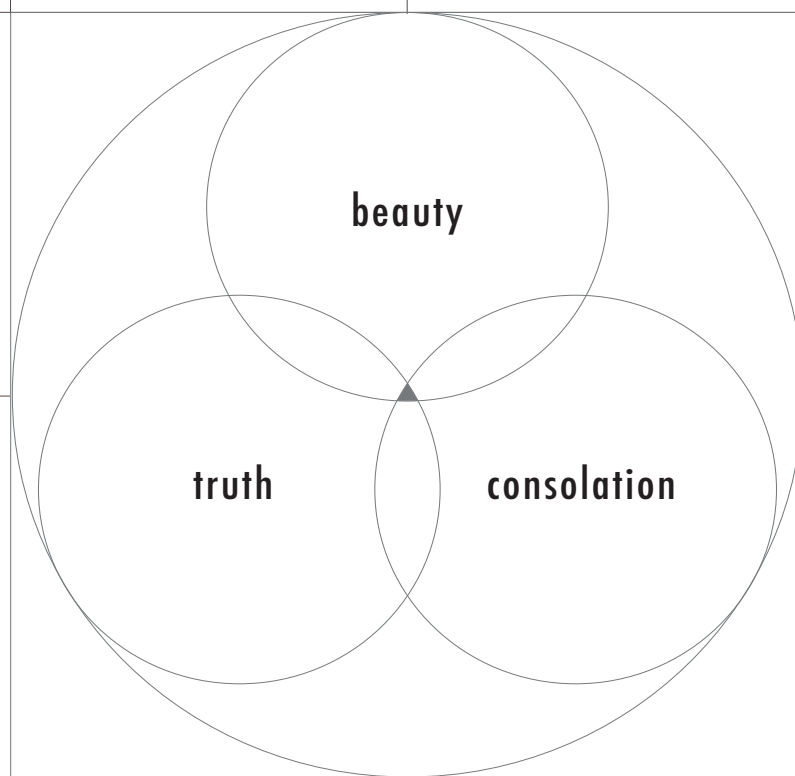
However, undertaking this personal journey towards acceptance is very difficult. One often does not know how or where to start. Therefore I propose to take the above-mentioned personal journey as a starting point for the new meaning of the architecture of death. I believe finding one's own meaning is a great way in offering consolation, since it relies on the power from within. Not some power outside of the human being, where one is then dependent on. If one finds consolation in oneself, one grows as a human being; one understands the great things one is able to do. Not only I believe this could bring consolation; it could also lead to more confidence and appreciation for oneself. However, a helping hand in this process could be of great value. This is where I come in. How I propose to do this will be further explored in the following chapters by adding beauty to the equation.

By beauty is truth I mean using beauty as a way of encouragement for one to find one's own truth. Each individual is a unique universe and truth resides from within, from our own world of aesthetic truths. By showing us how human freedom looks like, beauty can help one find one's truth from within. In fact the underlying laws are what one refers to when one says ideas are beautiful. Once thoroughly understood, they make sense. Some refer to this inner logic as symmetry, in which beauty is the tension between symmetry and asymmetry. This relates to my own way of thinking about polarity. The result is beautiful; beauty in variation; variety within unity, complexity within simplicity. This is how the design becomes interesting. It contains different layers and subtlety.

Last beauty offers consolation. The message which echoes from these citations is that beauty opens up one's mind to the personal journey inside the self, the journey towards consolation. The logic beauty exemplifies creates a kind of tranquillity in the troubled mind of a bereaved person, for whom the world is destroyed and does not seem to make sense anymore. Beauty for me grants the role of a catalyst in the personal journey I would like to promote.

Beauty, truth and consolation; each of them touches the other and together they form the new meaning of architecture in case of death. In the centre lies my design, which answers to all three of them. Two would form opponents, three work together. The trinity forms the basis for creating the architecture of death. 'Truth & Consolation', 'Beauty & truth', 'Beauty & Consolation' together form the meaning. It is not an absolute or exact truth. It is my truth, the way I see it and the way I think it should be. There are many other ways of representation, many arguments why my way should be different. All I want to say to those who think accordingly is the following: It is still possible for the other ways to exist beside the one I propose. How beautiful would it be, if my proposal could have a place as well?







## 6. Conclusion

My thesis touches the fundamentals of life and the fundamentals of architecture. In the conclusion I will expand on how I have arrived at a destination for my project and on what that destination beholds. It shows per chapter what I have learned and how that influenced my design. I have visualized the various steps in a framework in order for my findings to become clear at once.

*Truth offers Consolation*

*Beauty is truth*

*Beauty offers Consolation*

### 6.1 Summary - line of argumentation

In order to summarize my line of argumentation I will shortly revisit the conclusions of each chapter.

Intro - My goal was to create meaningful architecture, which is increasingly important with a topic that makes people silent; the traumatic event of death. The common theme running through my story was the relationship between life and death, since this was the cause of the trauma. The distanciation between life and death was as the main issue, which has translated itself into the current stigma. I questioned how to give death a new meaning and how to transcribe this meaning with the means of architecture. Ultimately my research question stated: How can I create a new meaning in the architecture of death?

2nd chapter - First of all by creating a framework. A framework for creating meaningful architecture, which exists of three components; the architecture; the message; and the user. I specified each of these components in the direction of death, in order to concretize the framework towards creating meaningful architecture of death. I found that meaning is communicated via a message. That involves two parties, the architecture that is transcending a message and a user that is receiving a message. Both parties each give their own input towards creating the message.

3rd, 4th and 5th chapter - The new meaning revolved around the input of all three components. Basically what I did is looking at what both parties bring to the table in case of the subject death. From combining their input I could formulate my own message. The new message encompasses a new meaning for death and a way for how to deal with death. For me, the direction towards a new meaning could be found in truth, consolation, beauty and the relationships between them.

I found that in architecture many elements together form a certain message. I distilled each of those elements and by doing this went to the very basics of the architectural language. I selected those architectural elements that I found useful in composing my own message. From the users point of view I found mainly issues concerning death. Most of those issues revolved

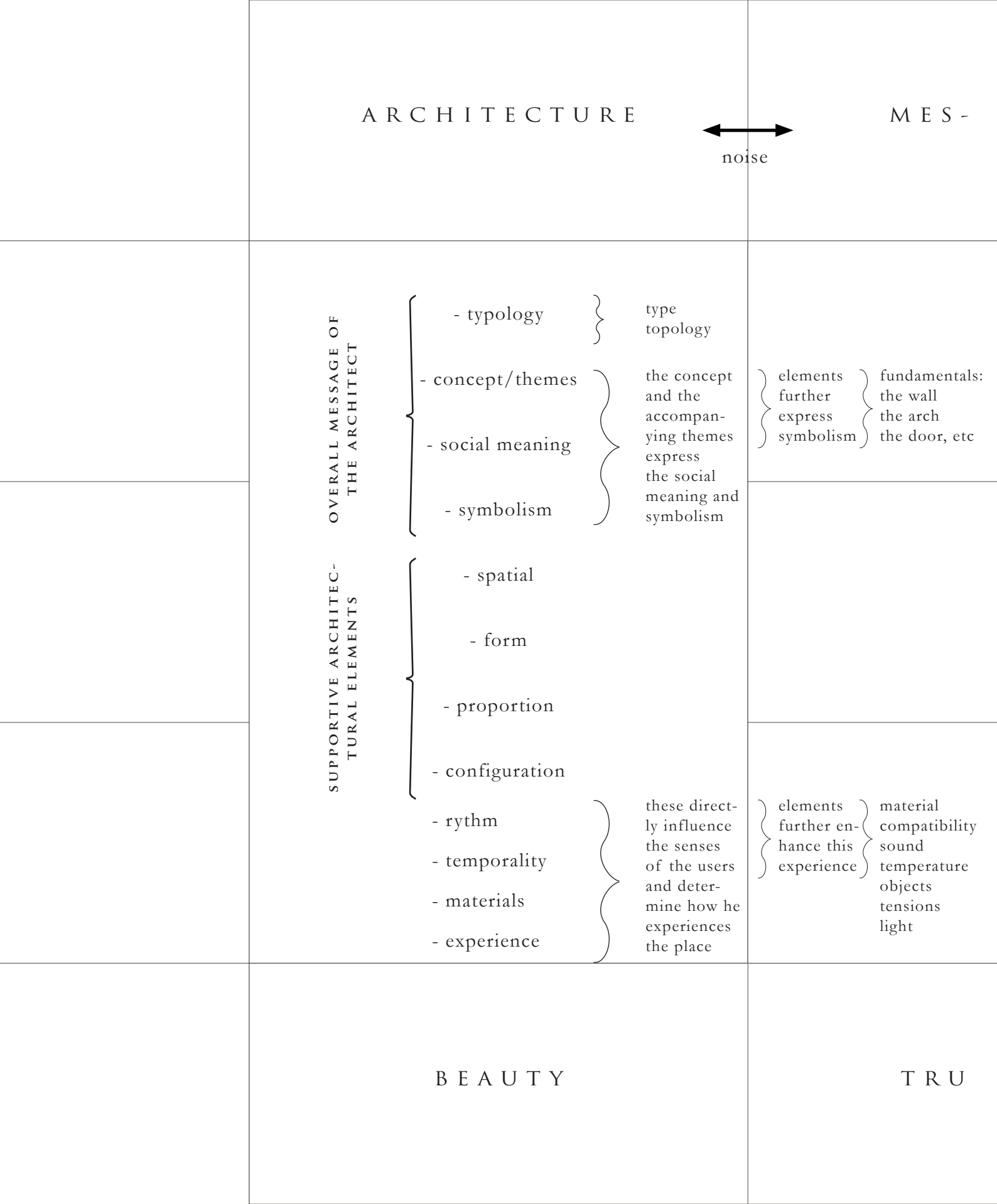
around the distancing between life and death. First on a societal level, where the distancing takes form in a stigma. A stigma since we were unable to give meaning to death therefore denying its very existence proved a solution. On the level of an individual the distancing expresses itself in the form of a broken relationship between the bereaved and their past away loved one. Literally taken distance from a deceased person is very difficult and painful and is often the cause of tremendous grief. The new message both encompasses the architecture and the users. At the basis stands the truth. Finding out your truth about death through a personal journey and arrive at consolation. The architecture could relate to that by supporting the process of finding the truth. The journey could be embodied by the architecture itself. All the architectural elements have been treated in the case studies and the fundamentals. However, the most important input from the architectural point of view is the element of beauty. Whatever architecture brings in has to be beautiful. Beauty as a way to show what human freedom looks like and to encourage an individual in undertaking the journey. Therefore the real message is found in beauty, truth and consolation. A trinity that could help bridge the gap between life and death. Beauty truth and consolation form the starting point for my design. It is that message where I have built my architecture around. It is the meaning I believe in and the meaning I want to bring forth.

Next I will explain the intention of my project. It describes how I used the framework as a guide for my design. In 'chapter 7. Design' I will continue on the actual design principles that followed out of my research. I will conclude in 'chapter 8. Reflection' with a discussion on how far I succeeded in applying the framework for my design and on the feasibility of my results.

## **6.2 The framework**

To reflect on my research question 'how to create meaning in the architecture of death' one could simply look at the framework I have created, which is the result of my research. Basically I have structured my conclusion on how to create meaningful architecture in the case of death, around this model. It consists of three parts, the architecture, the message and the user. To make it more specific for the architecture of death I studied every single part and specified the framework according to my findings. The result is a framework that could be used as a starting point to create a meaningful design for the architecture of death.

The framework consists of three different compartments. With the essence of each compartment my framework is in the end completed. The message should answer to both the grief of the user and to the stigma of society (user). Therefore it should in the first place bring life and death together and in the second place offer consolation. Consolation can be found in the truth. Beauty, by architecture, can facilitate the process of finding one's truth. Together these elements make up the meaning I want to carry out in the architecture of death. The results can be found in the following table.



S A G E



noise

U S E R

HUMAN INFLUENCES

- perception
- personality
- mood
- background
- interpretation
- ritual

MAP OF THE SYSTEM OF  
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

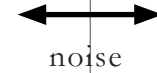
- imagination
- memory
- reason

- T H

C O N S O L A T I O N

A R C H I T E C T U R E

M E S -



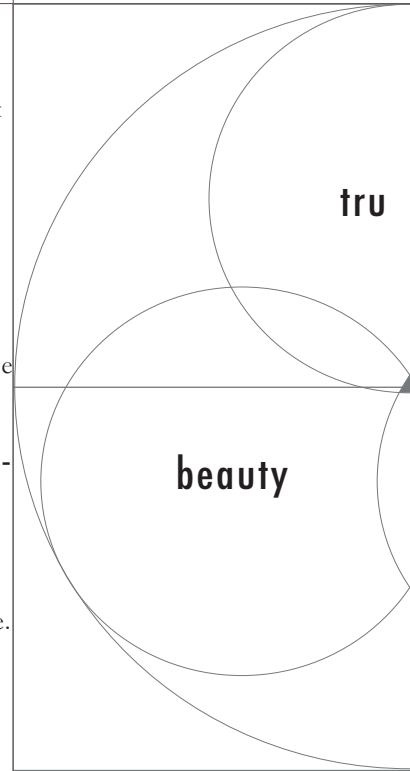
In the case studies I selected in red the things I found useful for my own message. To summarize the most important elements that will formulate my own message:

1. Woodland cemetery - revitalize the experience of divinity in a secular world. By speaking in the language of **beauty** to the bereaved peace can be accomplished. Absolute absense of all dynamic elements, the avoidance of all contrast effects, the deliberate elimination of the border lines between bearing and resting parts.
2. Brion sanctuary - a teaching place of how one can **engage** more fully in the world. We have to notice we are alive (Heidegger), is the message. Engage the visitor in the experience of place.
3. Rossi - the possibilities of the path. The path as a **guiding route** through several experiences.
3. Les Saint's innocents - bringing **the living and the death** together.
4. Ledoux - the **transition ritual of space**. The large space he created feels much larger since it is counterpointed by a low space.
5. Pyramid - the **labyrinth** as a world of experience and the **bridge** as an abstract concept. They are the symbols for life and death.

The architecture has to be beautiful. Why? Since **beauty is truth** and therefore it could offer consolation:

- beauty as a way of encouragement for one to find ones own truth, by showing how human freedom looks like
- underlying, inner logic, in which beauty is the tension between symmetry and asymmetry. polarity: beauty in variation; variety within unity, complexity within simplicity

**Beauty** offers **consolation**: it opens up ones mind to the personal journey towards consolation. The logic beauty exemplifies creates a kind of tranquillity in the troubled mind of a bereaved person.



B E A U T Y

T R U

S A G E

U S E R



noise

-th

consolation

I distinguished two types of users. The bereaved individual and the passer-by. Each have their own route and their own experience with death.

I do not have any control over the input of the user. All I can say is that all the components are colored by the factor grief. This has to be taken into consideration when formulating my own message.

**Consolation** can be found in the **truth**. By undertaking a personal journey into the self.

The actual experience of the journey is coloured by the stages of grief. I analysed each stage and translated into atmospheric qualities. Each stage forms a cluster on my bridge. It divides the bridge up into several segments. Each segment has its own experience. I made a moodboard for each one of them to give an idea of how they have to look like. They are all linked together and form a whole by the tunnel. The tunnel has the appearance of grief in general.

Each individual visitor should have the ability to project his own meaning on the bridge. Therefore it should not have too much a expressive character.

- T H

C O N S O L A T I O N

### **6.2.1 The architecture**

I learned about meaning and symbolic in the architecture of death. The language that one can use to formulate a message. How meaning is embedded in different ways in architecture. How that meaning resonates to the very core of the building. And how every design decision it tested according to that. I took the meaning of each of the fundamentals and used it in my own design to add to my bigger message which is connecting life and death.

I investigated all the elements that contribute to making a message with architecture and now I am able to use them to enhance my own message. I have to make sure that all the elements contribute to the bigger message I want to make, that is to bring life and death together. That also counts for the smaller scale, namely that of the fundamentals.

Most importantly, the architecture should resemble beauty. Beauty as a way to show what human freedom looks like. Beauty by underlying laws. The laws of polarity; variety within unity, complexity within simplicity. Thus, through its many layers the building becomes interesting.

### **6.2.2 The user**

I learned that grief can either drive a person into the numbing habits of escape from suffering or bring an individual face-to-face with his or her own humanity. In the last one I see an opportunity. I think the most important element we could learn about the user is that he has the ability to grow as a human being by dealing with his grief. In this process I could help. I could offer the place for establishing the required emotional bonds between the living and the dead. As a respond to the fact that humans are meaningful creatures, I could allow them to give meaning to their dead by offering a suiting place to project meaning on instead. In short I see my role in helping the bereaved (the user) in finding consolation.

In my design I want to address the affordances of the bereaved. All of the user's elements are coloured by the emotion grief. I want to use the knowledge I gained about grief; about the different stages and how each individual experiences it individually and in their own order. The knowledge of all the facets of the personal journey I am able to use in my design.

### **6.2.3 The message**

The message has to take into account the input from the architecture and the input from the user. It resulted in a combination of beauty, truth and consolation. The user is in need of consolation and shattering the stigma. This is possible by encouraging individuals in finding their personal truth. That truth can be found by undertaking a journey. The architecture embodies this journey and supports it by beauty as a means.



### 6.3 My beautiful proposal

In order to answer my research question 'how to create meaningful architecture in case of death', I have formulated a framework. A framework that enables one to create meaningful architecture. For me it was important that people are able to relate differently to death as the ultimate truth, as the ultimate given. It was about creating understanding for one's own situation, understanding the landscape of death and knowing how to relate to it in one's own way. Inviting people to face their destiny instead of tucking it away. I found meaning in the truth. The truth that could offer consolation and could shatter the stigma. Finding one's own truth, by undertaking a personal journey.

My proposal is an attempt to help the (bereaved) individual in their personal process to find truth in case of death and therefore find a way to accept death and have a relation with it. My design acts as a catalyst in this transformation. It offers an 'out of the everyday experience'; a journey towards acceptance; a voyage of discovery. I merely offer a place of departure. Would it only be to give one a hint in the right direction. To show one how such a journey feels by recreating a similar route with the help of architectural means. A labyrinthian experience with a spiralling structure, transcendence from dark into light, a transition from low to high.

Inspiration for the abstraction of the actual experiences on the journey I gained from the book 'The Immortals' by Jorge Luis Borge (Borge, 1954). This book symbolizes the labyrinthian journey of a man in his search for the city of Immortals. It describes in abstract terms the personal journey towards finding one's truth. I translated these experiences into architectural moments on a route and made them tangible with the architectural elements that I distinguished in my research. The result, an architectural route, guides the lonely travellers, the ones who each individually are about to undergo the great journey towards finding their truth, towards acceptance, towards consolation.

I propose to do this beautifully. Using beauty as an instrument in order to create acceptance, curiosity and serenity. Beauty makes people more willing to undertake the journey with an open mind. It helps bringing one in the relaxing state one needs to be at the start of the route.

*I offer the hand to embark on a journey; it is up to the traveller to finish it.*

- Coco van Weelden, January 2016

## 7. Design

### 7.1 Design principles

- A place for death.
- A place for life.
- A place to meet.
- A place to isolate.
- A place to talk.
- A place to be silent.
- A place to commemorate.
- A place to celebrate.
- A place to say goodbye.
- A place to say hello.
- A place for consolation.
- A place for support.
- A place for living.
- A place for dying.
- A place.

#### 7.1.1 A bridge

My proposal is not a cemetery, not a church and not a funeral space; instead it is all of the above and more. In my introduction I set out Heidegger's way of thinking about a bridge as a way of reattachment. I would like to use this principle in my design; a bridge as a thing that is much more than merely a bridge. It gathers all the different functions and allows for new relationships to be formed. It forms a symbol for the city and a route from bank to bank. But most importantly, it defines and brings together life and death.

First and foremost my design is a bridge. It takes place in the urban tissue of the city London and allows people to travel across the river Thames. Besides the bridge addresses a bigger issue, namely bringing together life and death. This happens on two levels. In a literal way, by placing death in the middle of the city, at the centre of life. And on a more abstract level by offering a possibility for people to take a journey towards acceptance in case of the loss of a loved one. The journey encompasses the five stages of grief. Furthermore, the bridge is a place to turn inwards, to experience a moment outside of everyday reality, to stand still, which is increasingly important in the rush of a big city.

In order to address the space issue, the issue of the distance towards and cemetery, and the issue of the stigma, the bridge proved to be a solution. Placing death in the middle of a city on a

pedestal is pretty dominant. It comes forth from the fact that I really wanted to make a statement against the current situation. The many issues of today's society in the introduction describe the current situation. All of the issues occur in a metropolis. I chose London as the metropolis I wanted to use as the location for my design. To be more specific, the pivot point in the Thames in between Waterloo Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge. This point forms the absolute centre of the city and answers directly to both the issue of the distance towards a cemetery, by placing it in the middle of life, and the issue of space, by using the capacity of empty space above the water.

There are many ways to arrive at acceptance in case of death. This is my way; a possibility for those who are interested. Some people go to the church, some people mourn at home. However, from my research I have learned that there is a big group of people who are not religious and find no moment to mourn in every day reality. To those people I address my design. A place where everyone can find acceptance in his or her own pace and own time. A place where you do not have to make a travel schedule for the journey towards acceptance, but a place where the journey is laid out for you. One just has to take the first step, and the next one. The design works as a guide in taking the journey towards acceptance. Showing the traveller the different elements along the way. The elements towards life. The moments towards acceptance of death, in order to live a full life. Step-by-step one will be able to find one's own route towards one's own acceptance, one's own truth.

To understand the affordances of those people I conducted a literature study, which showed me the several stages of grief. Besides I interviewed people to find out about what could help them in terms of consolation. For me it was about responding to the different possibilities those people indicated.

Important to take into consideration, is the fact that I do not want to force people; instead I want to invite them. Invite them on a journey towards acceptance in case of death. Showing another possibility on how to arrive here. I do not see my proposal as the ultimate solution; I merely consider it as an option.

### **7.1.2 Life & death - goal**

My aim is to bridge life and death and I will accomplish that by making use of a bridge as an instrument. What are the steps in making this possible?

First by giving both life and death a place. A place that answers to the fact that life and death form each other's antipoles and therefore should have an equally important place in order to create balance. I placed life on the upper side of the surface of the water and death on the opposite site.

Second, I will bring life and death together, by answering to the affordances of the bereaved. That is to shatter the stigma and to offer consolation. Offering consolation by showing the journey towards acceptance, to one's truth. And shattering the stigma by making death more approachable.

My design acts as a catalyst in this transformation.

Last, thinking about death often starts in an out of the everyday experience. Therefore I lifted my creation above the level of everyday experience. It takes a conscious step to go there to work on one's grief.

### **7.1.3 Journey - symbol**

The configuration of different architectural elements form the actual journey. The journey consist of the fundamentals described in 'chapter 3.2 Fundamentals' of this thesis.

For the bereaved the journey starts with crossing the river Thames. Similar to the journey described in Greek mythology, where the dead had to cross the river Styx to arrive at their final destination. The next stop is formed by the funeral location, the only place where the bridge makes a connection with the water, which indicates the importance of this gesture. After the funeral one could either choose to go home, or to continue finding one's truth on the journey offered by the bridge itself.

### **7.1.4 Appearance**

Recovering the relationship between life and death has to come from two sides. On the one hand an attempt from the living to reach out to death. On the other hand, a gesture from death, to make it more approachable. For example by changing its appearance. If one googles 'graveyard', one is presented with a terrifying display of gravestones covered in a thick fog; crows circling around; and darkness. If one googles 'death', the image is not any better. Therefore I intent to give death a friendlier face. Also I believe the location makes a huge different in becoming more approachable. By placing death in the middle of the city, in the centre of life, distance does not form an issue any longer.

### **7.1.5 Beauty - expression**

The result is beautiful; beauty in variation; beauty in complexity within simplicity. At first sight the architecture does not ask for that much attention. It does not necessarily stand out against its surroundings. Instead it exists of two simple forms with two perpendicular directions. Elementary forms, following the simple laws of attraction. By this means I intent to prevent the building from becoming a thorn in the eye. I think when combining death with very outspoken architecture, it becomes hard for an individual to project one's own meaning to the place. The combination is too powerful and too imposing, it does not leave room for any personal interpretation. I have stated earlier on that death belongs to everybody. Therefore everybody should be able to relate to it in his own way. I believe my design gives room for any form of relating. It provides the truly public space as a reaction to the issue of public space set out in chapter 1.2.7 of this thesis.

Most beautiful of all is how everything comes together. All the elements contribute; the theories behind the design, the used symbols and the overall appearance. It forms one story with endless variations.

**7.1.6 Affordances - program**

The program reflects as much the affordances of the living, either bereaved or not, as the dead. Through conducting interviews on people between 4 and 76 years old who experienced the lost of a love one, I distilled several functions that could help the bereaved in finding consolation. I want to emphasize on the fact that these functions are merely possibilities. It covers a selection of possible ways for one to find consolation, based on what I think would fit best in the journey I am trying to create. The table on the next page gives an overview of the outcomes of the interviews.

## 8. Reflection

The reflection consists of two parts. First, I will reflect on the limitations of my story and my design. Second, I will take a retrospect of my own personal journey. I will point out the things I have come across and how that influenced my thinking.

### 8.1 Discussion

#### 8.1.1 Process

How do you look back on your process? From what perspective did you approach the process, and with what perspective did you end?

I have started my project from a typical 'Delft point of view'. Meaning: I found a problem and I looked for a possible way to 'fix it'. I believe this is a very functional approach. I have ended up with a sort of worldview. A way of looking at the world from a philosophical approach.

At some point during the process I had to make a choice. I had to answer myself what kind of architect I wanted to be and how my current way of working suited that image. This moment proved to be a turning point. I chose the philosophical instead of the functional road. I approached death from a completely different perspective and changed my way of designing from a rational way towards intuitive. The fact that these two methods were so radically different did not matter. Like two opposing poles, they completed each other and proved to be the cornerstones of my design. In the end I am very happy with this step. It formed the way towards meaningful architecture on a whole other level. A level I had not thought about before. This way of creating architecture by looking for a meaning on a deeper level than just the surface, by really looking at the essence of life, forms from now on my point of departure. It forever changed the way of how I approach an assignment.

#### 8.1.2 Philosophy

How did the use of philosophy influence the final product?

I started defining death from a rational scientific point of view. However, this brought me nowhere. Since death is intangible, it could only be described. Philosophy helped me in coming closer to understanding death; approximating death. Using philosophy influenced my outcomes significantly. Instead of merely a rational framework, the result works almost as a guide on how to live life. A guide towards accepting death. Philosophy worked as a means for helping me create a story. Through the case studies I found that such a story is carried on at multiple levels. Even the fundamentals have their own story. Knowing the layers of the language of architecture opened my eyes to the possibilities in connecting with users. In the end I think changing my perspective has had the biggest influence on my entire process, and on the way I formed myself as an architect. Philosophy broadened my vision. I want to make architecture that uses this philosophy.

### **8.1.3 Left outs**

Were there certain things you did not take into account in your research?

The influence of religion and culture on death I did not take into consideration. This was done consciously and on purpose because it would not help me in formulating an answer to my research question. Instead it would have broadened my area of research, and would have made it too large to comprehend.

Therefore, I limited my research to the western attitudes towards death and more specifically to atheists in London. I did look at the Christian faith since it had long dominated the thinking about death. But I left out other traditions because they stand too far from how things are done in London.

### **8.1.4 The framework**

I have created the framework as a guide for my design. Is it possible for others to do the same? Can a different party use it or change it according to their own findings? With specifying the framework to creating meaningful architecture in the case of death, I imposed my meaning. The result communicates the meaning I want to bring forth. This does not necessarily have to be the meaning others aspire to embrace. Some parties may find great value in using the framework for death as a starting point for their design. Others may find it limiting. In that case I suggest to take a step back. To the framework for creating meaningful architecture (chapter 2.3). This forms the basis for anybody who wants to create meaningful architecture in general. It sets out all the aspects one needs to take into consideration. From there on one could fill in the three components themselves. However, if an external party has a rational approach my framework is not very suitable. The framework is based on intuition and therefore less suitable for a functional design.

The basis of the framework; the model for how to create meaningful architecture could be generalized and used by everybody. After the specification towards death it becomes only useable for people who aim for a sensitive design process.

### **8.1.5 Intentions**

How can one be sure if the intentions like offering consolation and shattering the stigma will actually happen?

A critical stand towards the actual realization of any intention is just. As for offering consolation I believe I will not succeed for every single visitor. For some it will and for some it will not, that is up to each person individually.

The fact that only by introducing my design people get carried away proves the succeeding of shattering the stigma. When I get people to think, talk or discuss about death a part of my goal is already reached.



### 8.1.6 Understanding

My concern is that individuals do not understand the many layers and the symbolic in my design. The architecture has become very complex and the content knows a strong symbolic. Only few will understand all the facets. However, for many architectural buildings this is the case. And the issue does not limit itself to the field of architecture. Many of the arts struggle with communication. However, there is also a beauty in it. Like I explained in chapter 2 of this thesis, meaning is formed by as well the receiver as the messenger. The beauty in this is that because every receiver is unique, the message gains an endless amount of variety. It is never the same and therefore never gets boring. In any case what I do know is that it gave me grip on my design process. I find beauty in the fact that my intended message is interpreted differently.

### 8.1.7 Antagonizing

Do you think people will be antagonized by such a proposal?

Possibly people are antagonized by my proposal. That can be either because it does not match their current world views, it is in contrast with the existing ways of dealing with death, or it will be too dominant in one's life.

I want to emphasize that I can understand those concerns. First of all, I think it is wonderful if people have found comfort in religion or spiritual perspectives. However, there are still those who are unable to find solace in the existing methods. It is those people I would like to address. Would it not be fantastic if they could find consolation as well? Possibly with the help of my bridge.

Further, I believe what my proposal can perfectly exist beside the already existing cemeteries, churches and other death related architecture. First and foremost what I offer is a bridge. Something which relates to everybody. At the same time the architecture is not obtrusive. It does have character, but not in a way that is so outspoken that it qualifies as imposing architecture. Instead I would like to compare it with a bed; the bridge as a bed. A bed is a bed, but how one likes to sleep in it is up to oneself; on one's belly, on one's back, and so on. Basically I offer a comfortable bed myself. Comfortable in order for everybody to feel free to use it to one's own wishes. Comfortable to talk about the heavy topic of death and comfortable in order to offer solace.

Placing death in the middle of the city on a pedestal sounds pretty dominant. And it probably is. Some people do not want to think every day about death. I encountered myself the hardship of thinking everyday of the meaning of life. Do I want to impose the same on the people of London? Do they have to think about death every time they cross the bridge on their way to work? Some people will think about it every day and that is part of what I intend to achieve. To go back to the neighbourhood cemeteries and make death an everyday concern. In the end it is also a bridge. Apart from the fact that the bridge revolves around death it possesses the elements of beauty and order. It is up to the visitor what meaning he affords to the whole. Also, life and death are separated. With death being under water and life being on the deck it is perfectly possible to cross

the bridge and not experience death at all.

Everybody can afford one's own meaning to the place. Like a church, where one could find comfort without being religious. A place that could make one calm and serene. Almost like one has a sort of respect for the building, for the way it is been built. For a moment you feel the rest Heidegger talked about, movement stops and you are able to be at one with things. This out of the everyday experience could just as well take place on my bridge. That is what I aim for.

I have an overwriting message and purpose, which I tried to initiate with a dialogue. I expect that to be met with a lot of resistance. I believe interaction and friction are part of the game when trying to accomplish change.

### **8.1.8 Conflict of interest**

I introduced two different types of users who will make use of the bridge. How will they affect each other? Will their journeys not interfere?

For both the users I have created a layer. The layer to find consolation and the layer to get into contact with death. The first route ends in the second. But it is unlikely for the second to enter the first. People usually follow the stream. The flow of people on the deck does not invite one to go down into the dark tunnel of the bereaved. It is possible, but I believe that it will occur seldom. If it happens, I trust upon the morals of respect. Showing respect like non-religious people show when they visit a church. Also, the users share the element of discovery. Each type of visitor has to make his own voyage of discovery. The way how is for each person unique.

## **8.2 My personal journey**

Looking back at my graduation project I realise it was a personal voyage of discovery. A way of deepening my understanding of life. In the end that was really what it was all about. Deepening my understanding of life with death as the inevitable end.

I always thought of myself as a person who stood at the centre of life. However, death is an indispensable part of our whole truth. As I learned only recently, I have been doing it wrong. By studying death I gained awareness about life; I understand the beauty and temporality of it. I have arrived at this state mainly through reflection. I have been saying to the world "Look I exist, does it matter or does it not?", I wanted a response. As my words became more clear, others began to recognise me, and through them I became more humble in what I was and recognised that I am just one person among many. Both the most important and the least important thing there is. So this was a personal thing, which had nothing to do with the development in my profession. It was a way of understanding myself and understanding human nature as a whole. Also I learned about architecture as a discipline influenced by many other domains. I experienced how closely architecture relates to life. Especially when seen in a broader perspective. I started off my investigation looking

for a story, the story of meaningful architecture. In the end, I have found meaning in the truth. The truth consists of many reasons and together they form my reasoning; my story.

The results include as well a beautiful story as a beautiful design. Beautiful since they come forth out of a certain logic; they express and promote individual freedom; and they consist of many layers of variety within a certain unity. It truly has become architecture as the thoughtful making of space. Architecture with a meaning, a message about life. The journey I undertook was not easy, but it does not have to be. In the end it has been an enrichment of my life; an enrichment that I would like to pay forward. Therefore I will leave you with a challenge:

Durf te leven want doodgaan kan iedereen - Frida Kahlo 20th century artist  
(Dare to live because anyone can die)

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