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Memorializing the Threshold

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ABSTRACT

Built memorials are becoming increasingly generic despite the diversity that exists within memorial culture. They are based on the use of prescribed forms after physical deaths have occurred and rely heavily on the designers' interpretations of the deaths that are being commemorated; people literally has no say on how they are being remembered after death.

This thesis seeks to expand the definition of the memorial by starting the memorialisation process when people are still alive. The memorial is therefore not so much a built form that a designer creates that visitors respond to as outsiders, but a space that encourages memorialisations to take place spontaneously and informally.

As a result of this encouragement, a greater reflection on the issues of death will be made by visitors that inform how they lead their lives. This thesis will also raise questions on the limits of architecture with regards to death and memory.
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PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS I: What is a memorial?

What are the common characteristics of existing memorials that qualify them to be recognized as memorials? The first portion of the thesis investigation focused on defining what a memorial is and the characteristics of memory during the process of memorialisation. The investigation was simultaneously carried out in two ways:

1. Poem Representation
2. Scroll
Poem Representation – Behavior and Characteristics of Memory

Memorials serve a cathartic purpose. The method of representing a poem in different ways is used here as making visible the behavior and characteristics of memory over time. In addition, each representation also alludes to existing types of memorials.

In the absence of actual physical death in the investigative process of the thesis, the mental anguish felt by a poet and the resulting cathartic act of him writing a poem are borrowed as a starting point of memory-making. The content of the poem is not important in this investigation apart from the fact that it conveys a sense of anguish.

The printed poem currently exists in multiple bound copies of compilations of the poet’s work:

Every print of that same poem is a memory of the initial cathartic need that was felt by the poet. Every print of that poem is also meant to be read by different people and subject to different interpretations.

As a first step, the image of the poem was therefore subjected to different digital manipulations that represent the above principles of cathartic interpretations. Zooming in to various degrees represents partial or biased readings or the search for an essence. Mirroring the image renders it a pictorial reminder of the image of the poem, alluding to a figurative sculpture that memorializes the initial anguish. Truncating all text but the title alludes to memorial plagues that do no more than naming an event. Overlaying the same image on top of one another results in rhythms of opacity that allude to memory that condenses and dilutes over time.

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1 Image was taken from reference 6 page 29. All images in this particular exploration are manipulations of this image.
Berlin Looms

The dry park of linden trees spread across the street, the moist shade of barges rippled on the pharmacist.
The prints were later photographed as a way of memorializing those prints. They were then multiplied and rearranged digitally to constitute a landscape of collective memorials. In doing so, the resulting patterns highlight the way memory is created in public consciousness through the presentation of material in a repetitive and ordered manner, alluding to the concept of mass propaganda and prescription. In addition, an optical illusion of grey spots that occur between the images highlights the phenomenon of an illusionary quality of memory over time – what we recall of an event may not be the same as what actually occurred. This could be due to representation by mass media over time and how individuals receive and respond to those representations.

6. Multiply
The second step of the investigation process involves developing the technique of digital overlay to illuminate further qualities of memory over time.

Overlaying opaque images in different scales results in ink pigments that start to connect unintentionally. This speaks of the unexpected connective structures of a memory - it is impossible to exhaustively identify and comprehend the different ways in which people remember an event.

Overlaying enlarged images of full opacity results in an image that alludes to a defensive quality of memorials – heavy-handed prescriptive representations stem from preserving an event's memory within a single perspective. This can in fact hide what actually happened during an event. In other words, we forget the event. This quality is evident in many existing memorials as we often mistake permanence in material such as stone for permanence in memory. We rid ourselves of the burden to remember by transferring this responsibility to built memorials. Overlaying enlarged transparent images results in a much more fluid image of various tones of white, grey and black that refer to the absence of precise memory – one is able to make his own interpretations.

7. Overlay

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2 Concept as highlighted in reference 12 page 94
Repeating the same process, but with added functions of scaling and rotation about a central point results in condensations of ink pigments. This again illuminates how underlying motives can influence the ways a public memory can be created – while not coercive, it is still a form of prescription. This refers to how some memorials, while supposedly encouraging various interpretations, already impose underlying conditions that reduce the widest range of interpretations.

8. Overlay+ rotate + scale
Scroll – The End-Start

The idea of the scroll came about during the process of studying various types of memorials. From memorial jewellery to built structures, one is overwhelmed with the number of events and dates that needed to be remembered. There was a cathartic need to organize and remember every bit of information once and for all.

The scroll allocates an 11" x 1" column of paper space to each day in the solar calendar during a leap year. Each column is marked by one number at the top and one at the bottom, which represent the month and day respectively. Each memorial that is studied is then recorded in the date that corresponds to when the commemorated event occurred.

Someone personally involved in a particular event would naturally search for that corresponding slot in the scroll - it is like searching for a name on a memorial wall. The rest of the dates would at best serve to demonstrate that other tragedies exist apart from the one he is concerned with. In other words, the scroll is highly personal. Yet, for others who are not personally involved in any recorded events, the scroll could just be a handy documentation.

When the scrolled is fully revealed, it measures more than thirty feet in length. A person viewing it from one end sees lines of numbers and words blur into the distance towards the other end, reflecting the diminishing clarity of records over time and space.

When rolled up, the scroll hides all memories, highlighting that memories can be turned on and off. It lives not just in consciousness, but in subconscious-ness and unconscious-ness. This indicates that memory is a function of focus and attention. The question of what stimulates focus and attention arises.

When rolled up, one is able to conveniently carry the scroll with him. It is a placeless memorial.

The use of numbers for the months and dates in the scroll subconsciously reveals characteristics of the culture of memorialisations. People from all over the globe understands what “9/11” stands for. The month and day are given greater importance than the year that an event occurs – the
cyclical nature of the calendar renders memorialisations possible, but at the same time reduces the significance of the year itself since it is the only number that cannot be repeatedly visible in the calendar each year. As if to make up for the loss of significance of the year by which an event occurred, arbitrary occasions such as “10-year anniversaries” and “50-year anniversaries” are given, as if commemoration during those years are more significant than those of other years.

In the process of making records onto the scroll, the difficulty of deciding whether each record should be made according to the date when the event occurred or the date when the memorial was dedicated arises. Is this a memorial of all recorded tragedies or a memorial of all memorials?

Lastly, the scroll is at once an end and an empty slate at the same time - all slots are always waiting to be filled, regardless of whether they are all already jammed with records. It is a threshold - there is no once and for all.
DEFINING THE MEMORIAL

Existing definition

Existing memorials serve a cathartic purpose. They are various interpretations of death by the living after physical deaths have occurred as a means to rationalize death in dealing with the emotional distress that death brings. The built and tangible is the memorial.

Definition to be explored in thesis

They serve a cathartic purpose. They are various interpretations of death by the both the living and dying before physical deaths occur as a means of rationalizing life and death in dealing with the emotional distress that death brings. The built and tangible may or may not be the memorial.
LITERATURE REVIEW I

Since existing memorials are related to death and only occur after physical death, it is necessary to consider what life and death have been defined as. What are some of the qualities that separate successful memorials from less successful ones? What is the nature of memory in memorial culture? This section provides a spectrum of definitions and concepts on death and highlights some of the important points in key texts that have been written about built memorials in reference to the above questions.

1. Death

2. Memorials
Death - Aristotle on life and death
R.A.H. King

- Nature is “a principle of change”\(^3\) and the growth and demise of living things is seen to epitomize that principle; *life and death are natural phenomenon.*

Living things are “complex, active and tightly organized”\(^4\). The shape that living things have are due not to an external maker but to their own growth and activities. These activities protect them from external harm and repair damages incurred to them. Since both the living and the non-living can be destroyed by unfavorable environments, it follows that the activities and abilities of living things to protect themselves have limits. The inquiry then involves questioning what these limits are. Are they “in the stuff that they are made of, or is it imposed from outside?”\(^5\)

- The body is seen to be given life due to its consumption of simple matter. Since simple matter, like a sand-castle, decays over time, it is argued that *the body which depends on simple matter for life will therefore ultimately decay and die* as a result.

Mary Louise Gill interprets Aristotle’s view on matter as that which sustains and decays life at the same time. This relates back to Aristotle’s view of living beings as being made up of complex matter. Complex living things, in their constant exertion against simpler matter from the surroundings, decay as a result and return to the surroundings as lower-level matter\(^6\).

- Aristotle sees *life and death as defining each other; death is seen as a limit to life.*

Since death causes the permanent cessation of life, “treatment of death has the task of saying what it is that ceases – that is the definition of death depends on understanding life... The growth that nutrition causes allows living things to run through a series of stages in their lives, what one

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\(^3\) Quote from reference 7 page 2  
\(^4\) Quote from reference 7 page 1  
\(^5\) Quote from reference 7 page 2  
\(^6\) Reference 7 page 8
would call their life-cycle.” Aristotle defined the stages as of coming to be, youth, prime, old age and death and life is lived from birth to death, not the reverse. Death can thus be seen as a robbing of stages in life.

- Death occurs in people “as their cells replicate and so preserve themselves, they become increasingly erratic: errors accumulate and tissues and organs become increasingly liable to various kinds of malfunction, finally ceasing to be able to function at all”.

The cell replication mechanism is seen as a source of aging and death. Also, the fact that a variety of biological wastes is produced hints that the living body is undergoing wear and tear in the process of living, which might eventually lead to death.

**Dictionary Definitions**

Death:

1. The *end of life*.
2. The *state* of being dead.
3. The *act of dying*; the end of life; the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions of an organism.
4. The end of the life of a biological organism. Death may refer to the *end of life as either an event or condition*.
5. An *instance* of this: a death in the family; letters published after his death.
6. *Extinction; destruction: It will mean the death of our hopes.*
7. *Manner of dying: a hero's death*
8. *(usually initial capital letter) the agent of death personified, usually represented as a man or a skeleton carrying a scythe*
The Culture of Death - Medicine and Politics
Benjamin Noys

- Traditional criteria of medical death consist of the cessation of heartbeat and absence of breathing.

The above definition has since been challenged in 1959. Two French neurophysicists discovered a new form of coma, people suffering from which not only will have “no means to communicate but also their bodily functions have to be sustained if they are to survive.”11 This brought into question what sort of life this state of existence constituted, “if it is a ‘life’ at all.”12

- Brain death as criteria of death. “It is the irreversible loss of all the functions of the brain, which is defined by the lack of electrical activity..., the lack of blood flow to the brain..., and the absence of brain function, assessed by clinical tests.”13

In 1968, a special Harvard Medical School committee comprising of medical experts, a lawyer, a historian and a theologian developed the concept of brain death. What is of interest is that death is seen here as crossing different fields of expertise – it resides in a zone of indistinction. Also, the fact that it is to be decided by a select group of people reflects the role of authority in defining death. It is also worth pointing out the two reasons that necessitated the committee and definition. Firstly, it was to reduce the burden on health care facilities by keeping people who are considered “brain dead” alive. Secondly, the traditional definition of death hindered the process of organ transplantation - someone who is “brain dead” can still breathe with the help of machines. Classifying him as clinically dead with “brain death” facilitates organ transplants to be made14.

11 Quote from reference 10 page 56
12 Quote from reference 10 page 56
13 Quote from reference 10 page 57
14 Reference 10 page 57
Summary - The Ambiguity of Death

From the above definitions of death, it is clear that even physical death is subject to interpretation. It can be seen as part of nature, but it certainly is an artificial construct at the same time – how the boundary between life and death is defined is political. It appears that no one has an undisputed definition or concept of death:

“Too often, when we approach death, we are left with the infinite task of searching out the meanings of death, and death itself recedes further and further from our grasp.”\textsuperscript{15}

In short, research shows that the concept of death is ambiguous. This supports the view of the thesis that memorials are a means of grappling with and controlling death, which is an unknown.

\textsuperscript{15} Quote from reference 10 page 148
Memorials

- Memorials are interpreted differently due to different locations.

“The very definition of a Holocaust Memorial depends on its shape and location. What was a Jewish catastrophe to me – the mass murder of nearly six million Jews, or two-thirds of European Jewry – was experienced and is now remembered as an entirely different order of disaster by the Poles and Germans. I will allow every site to suggest its own definition, each to be grasped in its local context.”  

The above shows how the Holocaust means vastly different things to different groups of people at different locations. Clearly, interpretations of events are pluralistic in nature and understanding what an event means to the site at a particular time is a first step in the design process of a memorial in a particular location for that event.

- The built form represents neither the beginning nor end of a commemorative process. It is an intermediate state.

“The 'art of public memory' encompasses not just these memorials' aesthetic contours, or their places in contemporary artistic discourse. It also includes the activities that brought them into being, the constant give and take between memorials and viewers, and finally the responses of viewers to their own world in light of a memorialized past.”

The above quote points out the fact that the memory of an event does not reside in the built forms themselves, but in the processes that shaped its being and how the memorial is being actively used and responded to. The built form can therefore be seen as an in-between.

- “Perfect is always the enemy of good”

This was a comment given by Young to the German Planning Commission at the height of the controversy surrounding the design of the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. It parallels his sentiments given below:

16 Quote from reference 13 page viii
17 Quote from reference 13 page ix
18 Quote from reference 12 page 195
“I would rather preserve the complex texture of memory – its many inconsistencies, faces, and shapes – that sustains the difficulty of our memory-work, not its easy resolution.”\textsuperscript{19}

This suggests that multiple viewpoints, controversies and plurality are seen as favorable factors that keep memory alive.

- Consider the difference between collective and collected memory.

The important difference between collective and collected is that the former represents an assignment of a common meaning to the latter. Collected memory implies discrete aggregates and even if society organizes public memory into certain patterns, the fact remains that one’s memory remains his alone and is different from another person’s memory of the same event. In addition, even if people come from different backgrounds and create different memories, a common public space for commemoration creates the illusion of a common memory of an event.\textsuperscript{20}

- Existing memorials reflect an impulse to forget rather than remember. One needs to remember internally.

“Still others have argued that rather than embodying memory, the monument displaces its altogether, supplanting a community’s memory-work with its own material form. The less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs.”\textsuperscript{21}

As such, current built memorials are seen as shouldering our memory burden. It appears that most of the current memorials have actually reduced our abilities to contemplate and remember on our own.

- Memorials serve a cathartic function.

\textsuperscript{19} Quote from reference 13 page xi
\textsuperscript{20} Concept from reference 13 page xii
\textsuperscript{21} Quote from reference 13 page 5
“Planning and funding a memorial is a way for a shattered community to act again as one. In the aftermath of a disaster, creating a memorial is often one of the acts that bring all groups back together to work toward common, collective goals rather than surviving alone.”

More often than not, these actions not only foster a sense of community, but allows for an avenue to make sense of the tragedy. It can be argued that people expand time and energy in order to exert some form of control over the sudden, unexpected and painful losses as they try to move on in their lives.

- Memorials fulfill both private and public needs in the process of healing.

A dedicatory ceremony makes grief public, setting an example for survivors who may otherwise have difficulty facing their losses in private. Such public ceremonies also give official sanction to private grieving by acknowledging the magnitude of the community’s loss.”

Evidently, a space for public grieving ensures survivors that the victims were not alone in their suffering. A formalized grieving space also indicates to the survivors and community that the entire community shares the pain that is incurred by the loss of life. Memorials thus provide a chance for a sense of closure as a first step to recovery. Durable and successful memorials are those that allow for ritual commemoration to occur even after all other indications of the tragedies have vanished.

- Attitudes to a built memorial change over time

In the immediate years following the New London High School explosion in 1937, people found it difficult to talk about the tragedy and high school reunions were cancelled.

“The well tended memorial remained, however, and gradually attitudes changed. In 1977 some of the survivors scheduled a lightly attended reunion in the face of local criticism. Subsequent reunions held every two years have attracted more and more survivors, and in 1987, a second, smaller, fiftieth anniversary marker was added at the base of the

22 Quote from reference 13 page 80
23 Quote from reference 13 page 81
memorial. Now many survivors look forward to these gatherings in New London around the memorial: ‘it's real, real touching to all of us to reunite again. Because we have something in common that most people don't have. We're survivors.’”

24 Quote from reference 13 page 86
PRECEDENT ANALYSIS I

1. Yellow Ribbon
Yellow Ribbon

Cincinnati, Ohio. USA
2006
Marshall Brown, Brian Davies & Ericka M. Hedgecock

The Yellow Ribbon is competition entry in 2006. It is critical of existing commemorative culture as becoming increasingly generic, capitalist and “generally inconsequential”\(^\text{25}\). Therefore a new paradigm of memorialisations known as the Yellow Ribbon is proposed.

Although we mourn privately as individuals, we still seek to commemorate at a public level due to the benefits of collective healing. As information technology has allowed a tragedy from one place to be known in different parts of the globe, it has also expanded the sense of collective healing to a global level. Increased awareness or death and tragedy and the resultant rise in need for their commemoration has fueled the growth of memorial culture.

The clever reinterpretation of the ribbon to a “Y” is meant to salvage it from its currently diluted quality as a symbol of commemoration and render it a new symbol for the forum for discussion of memorial culture.

The Yellow Ribbon is an “open source archive for the souvenirs of human sacrifice”\(^\text{26}\). It is a project that collects, organizes and exhibits mementos such as drawings, newspaper cuttings and photographs from the public. Instead of prescribing a form for commemoration, the collected mementos will define its own new aesthetic categories and directions for that purpose. Since mementos are collected from the public, they play a fundamental role in the creation of the archive. As such, they will feel a sense of empowerment and ownership to the project. In order to serve the purpose of cataloging and organizing the mementos, only flat precisely dimensioned pieces of 4”x5”, 5”x7” and 8”x10” will be accepted. Mementos will be organized chronologically under various themes such as “patriot acts” and “natural disasters” into 100 volumes, with 100 mementos in each volume. Each memento will be bar-coded into a digital database to facilitate searches. The volumes will be circulated through the Ohio Link library system. The volumes will also be exhibited

\(^{25}\) Quote from reference 19 page 3
\(^{26}\) Quote from reference 19 page 1
nationally and internationally. Like the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the Yellow Ribbon volumes are portable. As such, the memorial paradigm of fixed location and accessibility is challenged.

A sense of personal touch is emphasized in the Yellow Ribbon project. Although we now enjoy various means of communication such as instant text messaging and e-mail though technological advancement, they lack a tangible sense of personal touch and the majority of people still lack access to those technologies. The Yellow Ribbon Project thus made the proposal of using the U.S. Postal service as means of information and resource transfer, to not only reach out to wider audience but provide evoke a greater sense of inter-human communication in the process\textsuperscript{27}.

\textsuperscript{27} All descriptions of the Yellow Ribbon project are based on reference 19.
PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS II

1. Sand Block
**Sand Block**

The sand block is made up of a foam core held together by tape that is covered with layers of glue and sand. It is a piece of work that allows me to investigate the qualities of threshold and pose questions that might help in the design for the thesis.

From non-living to living...and back
Like the gathering of atoms that make up a body which embodies life, gathered sand particles are able to form an entity that registers forces of life. Every dent, print or mark on its surface points to certain forms of life, be it palm prints that indexes human activity or fluid contours that refers to movement of the wind caused by transfer of heat in the natural world. Individually, a sand particle appears inert and dead to its surroundings. A gathering makes life visible.

However, every mark or form of the sand block is subject to change, and it becomes apparent that each gathering is constantly lost to an irretrievable past while new ones take its place. The cycle repeats endlessly. The past predicts the future and the future reminds one of the past. Each temporal concept, past, present and future informs one another due to change, and that is what makes them recognizable to one another. How can one then remember the past in relation to just the characteristic of change? It appears we need to see the future and experience the present.

Threshold – Indices and Curiosity
I was unable to affect all areas of the sand block at one time. Making a dent at one spot requires a diversion of my attention from another area of the block. The block is an indexical topography of my shifting consciousness – changes in one area of the block register a certain focus on my part while a lack of change in another area registers non-focus. Each realm of focus and non-focus can also be said to point to each other, as such, they are indexical of each other. Similarly, life is defined by death and vice versa.

In addition, changes were made intuitively, with a certain rationale or a combination of both. A lack of change could be said to follow the same principles. It follows that the threshold between focus and non-focus, registered change or non-change, is rationalized, left to intuition or a combination of both.
It is perhaps a coincidence that a person on the verge of death often contemplates on whether his life or death can be rationalized or not. One of the most common questions that undertakers receive from loved ones of the deceased is also the huge philosophical question of “Why?”

Crystallization
A variety of possibilities exist within the sand block, but it has been pre-determined by the nature of its materiality and overall shape. A select variety has been made within this threshold. This could relate to the spatial condition and behavior of those on the verge of death. They may be less mobile than before and the places that they can travel to have been reduced as a result; the physical world may become smaller to them. Due to their illnesses, their last wishes tend to be less numerous than the average living person who may have more plans ahead. The parting of personal possessions tends to be selective as well. For example, the writing of the will necessitates an accounting of what is of value to him and what is not. He also selects who to include and exclude from his death will. In addition, a gift that is passed on to someone by the dying will also be embodied with memories. As such, the threshold of life and death can be said to result in a form of crystallization, a selection of what is of essence and greatest value.

Ease of Remembrance
The sand block is both surface and form at the same time regardless of its changes as there is only one material involved in each change. As such, each form, although different, is similar to one another. This raises the question of whether it is easier to remember certain things (such as the exact shapes of each form) when conditions (such as when only one material is present) are identical or different. For example, is it easier to remember a specific male in a room that is full of males, females or of mixed gender?

Multiple Images
Viewing the same form of the sand block from different angles, at different scales, under different lighting conditions, or even under the same point of view can cause multiple images to emerge. For example, the same form can be both an object and landscape. The implications for design of a facility for those on the verge of death can take this into consideration.

28 Concept from reference 9 page 34
12. Photographs of manipulations of sand block
LITERATURE REVIEW II

Two books are of interest to the thesis with regards to the attitudes and behavior of people who reflect on the concept of death.

1. Dying Declarations
2. Tuesdays with Morrie

In addition, in considering the idea of threshold, the following text was reviewed:

3. Felix Gonzalez-Torres Chapter 3: The Trace
"Death strips away all of the superficial and mundane details of living and leaves behind life’s bare essentials." – David B. Resnik

This book provides insight into the thoughts and emotions of people who are dying. While it describes the impact that dying people can have on the life of hospice workers, the training sessions for hospice volunteers are applicable to everyone. They involve education on “active listening; bereavement and the five stages of grief (denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and acceptance); religious beliefs about death and dying; spirituality and the dying process”.

One of the main skills that a hospice worker has to learn is active listening, which involves learning how to ask questions such that the patient speaks more. This can be done in tactful ways without appearing intrusive. Active listening is a useful skill to have as the patients often like to talk about themselves at that point in their lives. As patients may reveal secrets, prejudices, lack of faith and other personal concerns about themselves, it is important that the listener remains non-judgmental in the process. A lack of input from the listener also allows the patients to come to terms with their own words and deeds by themselves. Active listening is a critical part of palliative care and it is in this area that a hospice worker may excel in ways that nurses, clergy and even family members cannot. Nurses often have less time to listen due to heavier work loads. Patients may refrain from revealing their religious views to the clergy who may not share their beliefs or who has the tendency to sermonize or pray. Family members may have unresolved issues with the dying patients or may feel exhausted from providing care. These factors can limit their abilities to listen without emotional baggage or judgment.

There is also a common misconception about hospice care as having to deal with bitter and depressed individuals which might lead to frustration and emotional and mental drainage for the hospice care provider. Surprisingly, it has been learnt that people who stares at death in the eye are often humble, grateful, compassionate and honest. Hospice workers, from their experiences in

29 Quote from reference 11 page 5
30 Quote from reference 11 page 1
31 Reference 11 pages 3 to 5
providing care and being entering the private worlds of such patients often find themselves uplifted, invigorated and rewarded as a result. As such, palliative care is seen as a win-win situation\textsuperscript{32}.

From the above, it can be seen that active listening and being involved with people who actively think about death can be a highly beneficial experience for everyone. The memorial design for this thesis will seek to incorporate these factors in providing such experiences.

\textsuperscript{32} Reference 11 page 5
**Tuesdays with Morrie**

Mitch Albom

This international bestseller is about the true story of Morrie Schwartz and his relationship with student Mitch Albom. It chronicles the lessons about life that Mitch learns from his professor, who is dying from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. The book is thus relevant not just in revealing the life of a person who is facing death, his needs and perspectives but also in terms of themes of life and death that are useful in the design of a facility for the terminally ill. The concept of this book, of verbal lessons in life and death given by Morrie to his student Mitch, provides evidence that people at this stage of their lives have a need to not only talk about themselves, but find a sense of closure and continuity in the lives of others in the process of doing so.

**Types of Memorialisation**

The fact that a book was published with regards to those weekly sessions is a form of memorialisation. Other types of memorialisation was taking place with regards to Tuesdays alone. The title of the book “Tuesdays with Morrie” remembers Morrie with regards to that day in the week; every Tuesday can be seen as a memorial day for Morrie.

“I glanced around the cemetery. Morrie was right. It was indeed a lovely spot, trees and grass and a sloping hill.

‘You talk, I'll listen,’ he had said.

I tried doing that in my head and, to my happiness, felt that the imagined conversation felt almost natural, I looked down at my hands, saw my watch and realized why.

*It was Tuesday.*” 33

After more than 3 months of weekly sessions with Morrie on Tuesdays, the day itself has clearly taken a new meaning for Mitch. It is also not difficult to imagine that for Mitch, any form of private conversations he has with people in the future, especially with those who are dying, can subconsciously remind him of Morrie. This highlights the point that memorials have an indiscrute

33 Quote from reference 3 page 188
and dynamic nature which is only limited by individual interpretation and experiences in variety. They can occur within one’s consciousness or subconsciousness.

In addition, Morrie held a living funeral for himself after attending the funeral of one of his colleague, who died suddenly of a heart attack:

“What a waste,” he said. “All those people saying all those wonderful things, and Irv never got to hear any of it.”

Morrie had a better idea. He made some calls. He chose a date. And on a cold Sunday afternoon, he was joined in his home by a small group of friends and family for a “living funeral.” Each of them spoke and paid tribute to my old professor… His “living funeral” was a rousing success.

Only Morrie wasn’t dead yet.34

Evidently, the living funeral serves both the needs of the living and the dying. It also shows the power that people have even in the face of death.

Threshold

The body and physical needs that Morrie had due to his illness serve to provide an example of the threshold between life and death.

“ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body in a pile of wax. Often it begins with the legs and works its way up. You lose control of your thigh muscles, so that you cannot support yourself standing. You lose control of your trunk muscles, so that you cannot sit up straight. By the end, if you are still alive, you are breathing through a tube in a hole in your throat, while your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk,…, the man frozen inside his own flesh.”35

Questions of what life constitutes and what death limits are highlighted. The realms of physical function and cognition are seen here as characteristics of life. While limitations in one area does not define death, it certainly questions one’s concept of being fully alive. In this instance, not only does

34 Quote from reference 3 page 13
35 Quote from reference 3 page 9
the medical debate on the criterion of death relate, one’s perception of what constitutes living becomes the larger question that needs to be considered as well:

He would not wither. He would not be ashamed of dying.

Instead, he would make death his final project, the center point of his days. Since everyone was going to die, he would be of great value, right? He would be research. A human textbook. Study me in my slow and patient demise. Watch what happens to me. Learn with me.

Morrie would walk that final bridge between life and death, and narrate the trip.\(^{36}\)

Loss and Stages of Grief

Due to the deterioration of his body, Morrie grew increasingly dependent on others for his physical needs. Actions that most people take for granted, like adjusting one’s reading glasses, eating and going to the bathroom had to performed by friends and family members who visited Morrie. The accompanied loss of privacy and self-worth can arguably be more devastating to the loss of physical abilities themselves. While most would find it a humiliating experience for someone else to help them with basic needs, Morrie embraced them as being part of life:

"I began to enjoy my dependency. Now I enjoy when they turn me over on my side and rub cream on my behind so I don't get sores... And it seems very familiar to me. It's like going back to being a child again. Someone to bathe you, someone to lift you. Someone to wipe you. We all know how to be a child. It's inside all of us. For me, it's just remembering how to enjoy it...We all yearn in some ways to return to those days when we were completely taken care of – unconditional love, unconditional attention. Most of us didn't get enough."\(^{37}\)

The above indicates the stage of acceptance that a dying person has arrived at in the face of his death. Like others, Morrie had to undergo the previous stages of grief that Kegler mentioned, such as that of denial and anger, when news of his illness were first revealed to him. Also, the concerns of his family members were also highlighted:

\(^{36}\) Quote from reference 3 page 10
\(^{37}\) Quote from reference 3 page 115
“Charlotte had a million thoughts running through her mind: How much time do we have left? How will we manage? How will we pay the bills?

My old professor, meanwhile, was stunned by the normalcy of the day around him. Shouldn’t the world stop? Don’t they know what was happening to me?”

Coming to terms with the knowledge of one’s impending death takes time as most people do not think about death. Also, it was mentioned that actively considering one’s eventual demise would lead to better living:

“Everyone knows they are going to die,” he said again, “but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently.”

So we kid ourselves about death, I said.

“Yes, but there is a better approach. To know you’re going to die, and to be prepared for it at any time. That’s better. That way you can be more involved in your life while you’re living.”

“The truth is, Mitch,” he said, “once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.”

From the perspective of those who are dying, it is shown that consideration of death would benefit life in general. This supports the design proposal of a memorial for the living so that they can actively consider their mortality.

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38 Quote from reference 3 page 8
39 Quote from reference 3 page 81
40 Quote from reference 3 page 82
Index as Threshold

The index is defined as sign that refers to its own causation. Some works of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, while having indexical qualities, display qualities of threshold as well and therefore are of interest to the thesis. Examples of indices include cast shadows, footprints and medical symptoms.

Photography

In the case of photography, the trace of the visible world is imprinted by light onto a prepared surface. Like a finger pointing to a certain location, the photograph refers to the visible world by having it “printed” on its surface. As such, a photograph can be referred to as an indexical sign.

“The image is a sign – an index – that directs attention to “what was, but no longer is.”

While a photograph refers to the visible world in past tense, it also makes apparent the absolute control that time exerts over everything. Time’s progression is unstoppable and its ability to predict the future is without doubt – a man captured in photography will eventually die. Not only is the past frozen in time, the notion of imminent death subsists in photographs, rendering them a form of threshold. It is also ironic that in trying to remember someone through photography, we have essentially given him his death sentence.

“They serve to remind us of what has already been lost to time and what will, eventually, be lost again – in death.”

Gonzalez-Torres’ Untitled (The End) is made up of a stack of white paper, each framed with a black border. They are blank photographs, signifying the wait for a past to fill their surfaces;

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41 Definition from reference 20 page iv
42 Reference 1 page 111
43 Reference 1 page 111
44 Quote from reference 1 page 113
45 Quote from reference 1 page 129
empty coffins for whatever one fears losing the most. The ephemeral human life as well as the futile ways we try to stop time-induced losses are depicted.\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{itemize}
\item Top to bottom: 13\textsuperscript{47}. \textit{Untitled (The End)} 14\textsuperscript{48}. \textit{Untitled (Bloodworks)} 15\textsuperscript{49}. \textit{Double Fear}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{46} Reference 1 page 133
\textsuperscript{47} Image from reference 1 page 132
Medical Symptoms

*Untitled (Bloodworks)* makes visible medical symptoms as empirical data.

“Gonzalez-Torres maps the primary medical symptoms of AIDS – a waning T-cell count. Each set of graphs – whether comprised of two, twenty-one, or thirty-one charts the correspond to the number of days of blood testing – shows the plunge of a diagonal line from the upper left corner to the bottom right, marking the reality of AIDS’s destructive force in the most graphic of terms.”

By showing the depletion of blood cells in the body, the graphs index the passing of life - a state that will no longer be.

Double Images

A threshold refers to being on the verge of realms. Works of double or multiple images possess this quality. *Double Fear (1987-88)*, a series of paintings and rubbings, shows circular photographs of clusters of people who are packed closed to one another. Rendering them slightly out of focus and apparently magnified, they resemble enlarged microphotographs of HIV-infected cells. The fear is two-fold in that they refer to the fear of both death and possible ostracism and incarceration due to homophobia.

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48 Image from reference 1 page 121
49 Image from reference 1 page 128
50 Quote from reference 1 page 120
51 Reference 1 page 120
52 Reference 1 page 129
PRECEDE NT ANALYSIS II

1. The Igualada Cemetery
2. The Golden Gate Bridge
Igualada Cemetery

Igualada, Spain
1985-1991
Enric Miralles & Carmen Pinos, Architects

The Igualada Cemetery is a place where tension between binary opposites is made palpable in defining its quality of a threshold. Winding through a landscape of ravines, cliff and pine trees, the two-storey burial chamber walls of the cemetery creates a commemorative space where stillness meets movement. The architecture stimulates visitors to question relationships between site and body, the living and the dead. A sense of uncertainty is played out through various means of associations.\(^{53}\)

The ground is designed as a system of overlapping exchanges. Temporal concepts of past and present exist in the same space due to program, articulation and circulation. The sculptural ground condition is defined by a body moving through the cemetery, reflecting one of the mythic narration of the place’s origins, as if a “giant’s finger had drawn a line through the earth”\(^{54}\). This reveals that from the stage of design conception, myth and reality, body and landscape were meant to meet within the architecture. By lining the incisions made in the landscape with burial chamber walls on the sides, body and landscape are physically combined to define the spaces. The sense of depth and materiality of the ground is highlighted by a form of terracing which snakes over three levels. The material presence and role of the ground as a threshold of what is hidden and seen is most clearly seen in the sectional drawings.\(^{55}\)

\(^{53}\) Reference 4 page 68
\(^{54}\) Quote from reference 4 page 68
\(^{55}\) Reference 4 pages 71
From the same perspective, incisions also become evident as metaphorical and physical archaeological mining of the site, which used to be a quarry. Not only do incisions reveal its geological character, the shared notion of removing soil from the ground establishes a link between its past and present function as quarry and cemetery. The difference lies in the quarry being a place where earth is removed to another location while the cemetery is a place where earth is returned to it. Analogies such as these imbue the site with a sense of beginning and end that one finds reflection in the notion of life and death of a body⁵⁷.

In addition, the rusting steel gabions, old railroad ties and vines that permeate concrete screens are all material expressions of a sense of transition. Together, they become subtle indicators of decomposing bodies that are buried in the space. Blending with the surrounding natural with materials such as rocks, earth and aggregate, the architecture prevents itself from standing out as

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⁵⁶ Drawings from reference 4 page 72
⁵⁷ Reference 4 page 71
an artificial construct of excessive sentimentality. In other words, by affiliating architecture to nature, the humanity is seen as a part of nature.

The idea of threshold can also be seen through manifestations of the condition of “embedment”. Railroad ties in the cemetery floor, bodies in the ground and burial chambers in the hillside represent multiple scales of embedment in signifying that architecture, landscape and memory are found within one another in the same space. A rich experience is thus available as one moves through the cemetery that brims with associative connections.

In terms of materiality, spatial arrangement and metaphorical associations, the Igualada Cemetery distinguishes itself from the everyday spaces in which we live in. While it has the ability to move human beings through those qualities, it is not a space that is meant for their inhabitation. This is where the cemetery exerts its most profound quality as a space which represents a “breach that cannot be closed or filled, but it also suggests that it is possible to live without the certainty of closure”.

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58 Reference 4 page 73
59 Reference 4 page 74
60 Quote from reference 4 page 75
The Golden Gate Bridge

Spanning across the Golden Gate, the opening into the San Francisco Bay from the Pacific Ocean, the Golden Gate Bridge connects the city of San Francisco on the northern tip of the San Francisco Peninsula to Marin County. It is part of the US Highway 101 and State Route 1. The Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge in the world when it was completed in 1937 and has since become an internationally recognized symbol of San Francisco and the United States.61

The bridge is a popular tourist destination and is possibly the most photographed bridge in the world. On an average day, 100,000 cars pass by the bridge. As such, the bridge can be said to signify the exuberance of life. The bridge however is also one of the most popular suicide spots in the world. Over 1200 suicide attempts from the bridge have been officially recorded. In 2006, an average of about two suicide attempts a month take place from the bridge.62 The bridge thus becomes an interesting study as a threshold between life and death. In the poem “Musee des Beaux Arts,” W.H. Auden wrote,

“All about suffering they were never wrong, The Old Masters: how well they understood/Its human position; how it takes place/While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along.”63

Auden’s poem refers to a painting by Dutch master Pieter Brueghel, Landscape with the Fall of Icarus. The death of Icarus, far from being central and tragic, is shown only in a quiet corner of a busy frieze as a pair of legs that vanishes with a small splash into the water. The poignant truth of how people lead lives of quiet desperation while the rest of the world goes by, oblivious to their sufferings, manifests itself in the Golden Gate Bridge.

At least two films have been made about the Golden Gate Bridge that focus on its popularity as a suicide destination - Jenni Olson’s experimental film, The Joy of Life (2005) and Eric Steel’s 2006 documentary The Bridge, which recorded 23 of the 24 known suicides during 2004.64
Series of stills from Eric Steel's *The Bridge*

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65 Images derived from reference 35
Site Visit

- Path and destination

A visit to the bridge in December 2007 was made in trying to examine its qualities. It is an interesting place because it is both path and destination at the same time. Walking along the bridge naturally allows someone more time to capture the scenic views of the San Francisco Bay Area compared to driving. It took an average of about 50 minutes to stroll across the bridge and about 25 minutes to do so by brisk walking. With regards to people contemplating suicide on the bridge, the idea of path and destination takes on an additional poignant dimension.

18. Pauses along a path

19. Drivers, cyclists, pedestrians
• Warning signs

Many warning signs can be seen along the bridge, testifying to its place as a suicide destination. Although the signs seem to be logical and necessary, I wonder how often they are actually heeded or if someone would actually pick up the telephones to call for help. Heavy traffic on the bridge causes the bridge to be noisy and in conducive for telephone conversations, especially for people who are emotionally and mentally distraught.

20. Warning signs and helplines

• Beauty and danger

Scenic views of the ocean and city as well as the structure of the bridge all contribute to a sense of beauty to the bridge. Warning signs, the sense of height as well as vibrations of the bridge due to heavy traffic and strong winds create a sense of danger on the bridge. This sense of danger will be used in the design of the memorial as it intuitively causes one to think of his own mortality.
The main reasons people chose the Golden Gate Bridge to end their lives include:

- **Ease**

  "I had heard that the Golden Gate Bridge was the easiest way to die. I heard that you hit the water and you're dead. It's this simple. A 4-foot rail. A tall 12-year-old could fall off."\(^{66}\)

- **Beauty and Glorification of Death**

  "On those halcyon afternoons when fog threads the bridge's harp strings and suspension cables, when clouds settle over the East Bay hills and the sun catches diamonds in the bay, this greatest of vistas exhibits itself proudly: tawny hills of Marin, shimmering bulk of Angel Island, raw beacon of Alcatraz and the lazy, Mediterranean contours of San Francisco.

  This is the view, on a good day, that greets the suicide before he jumps -- a panorama enthralling in its harmony of land, sea and sky. Even when the cooling fog blunts the view, the vast majority of jumpers take their last step facing east instead of west toward the Pacific."\(^{67}\)

In 2005, the Bridge District considered implementing preventive barriers on the bridge for the eighth time. While barriers have been known to reduce the number of suicides in other popular landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Harbor Bridge and Empire State Building, physical preventive proposals for the Golden Gate Bridge have faced opposition from aesthetic, economic and structural points of view\(^{68}\).

\(^{66}\) Quote from reference 25 page 2  
\(^{67}\) Quote from reference 25 page 2  
\(^{68}\) Reference 23
SITE DESCRIPTION

The region around the Golden Gate Park in the city of San Francisco, CA is chosen as the site for the design as it possesses rich qualities of a threshold. They include:

1. Water/ land
2. Nature/ urban area
3. Fog (visible, non-visible)
4. Fault (stable, unstable)
5. Diverse population (cultural exchanges)
6. Rich memorial culture (temporal linkages)
Site – San Francisco

Physical Geography
Located at the tip of the San Francisco Peninsula on the west coast of U.S.A., the city of San Francisco is bounded by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay on its western and eastern fronts respectively. As such, the edge condition of water meeting land as a threshold is useful for design considerations. The meeting of urban development in the city with natural landscapes such as water bodies, conservation areas of protected forests and hills in the fringes defines another type of threshold.69

The city also consists of more than fifty hills and valleys. The slope thus becomes a pervasive representation of the idea of threshold between higher and lower grounds. In addition, the boundaries of natural and man-made land are not clearly defined due to the use of displaced earth to extend inhabitable living areas in certain parts of the city. For example, the entire neighborhood of the Marina and large sections of the Embarcadero rest on landfills. In the event of earthquakes due to the Hayward and San Andreas faults, these landfills are vulnerable to liquefaction and instead become killing sites rather than living areas. This is evident in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake which caused substantial damage to life and property in one of America's most popular cities. As such, the everyday space that people live in thus acquires the quality of a threshold between life and death.70

Climate
The quality of physical threshold between land and water manifests itself through climatic changes. San Francisco is commonly known as Fog City. This is due to the frequent formation of fog that shrouds the western part of the city all day because of cold currents of the Pacific Ocean and warm inland temperatures during spring and early summer. Hills in the central area protects in the eastern parts of the city such as the Sunset District from the fog during summer. It is evident that the sharp topography and maritime influences cause different micro-climates to form in the city. In addition to the fog, the western and eastern parts of the city experience differences in rainfall and the number of clear and sunny days.

69 Reference 24
70 Reference 24
The characteristics of San Francisco as mentioned above indicates that the city is a dynamic landscape of constant climatic changes that occur on a cyclical basis. As such, climate in the city can be seen as a threshold due to its nature of representing unstable states of change at any one time. Since these climatic conditions are pronounced to the extent that they have become culturally significant in terms of descriptions of the city, life in the city can be said to literally take place in a condition of change.71

Social Diversity and Exchange of Information
Approximately 39% of the residents in San Francisco were born overseas. This statistic testifies to the diversity of social groups in the city. The large Asian and Hispanic immigrant populations in the city blur the geographical boundaries of American national identity. Since the 1960s, liberal activism and progressives have also dominated the city politics. Gay leadership and contributions to city culture since the 1970s have led to a strong presence of the gay and lesbian community in the city. This is evident in the San Francisco Pride, one of the world’s most well-known gay parade and festival.72 It is thus evident that different forms of cultural exchanges and communication are defining characteristics of San Francisco.

Rich Memorial Culture
A wide variety of physical memorials currently exist in San Francisco. From the Holocaust memorial by George Segal and AIDS memorial grove to commemorative stone benches that line The Presidio, it is clear that memorial culture is readily embraced by the city of San Francisco. However, almost all the memorials are there to commemorate significant people and events. Even the stone benches that commemorate individuals are allocated to people who are wealthy enough to afford them. Figure 21 on the following page shows the locations of several significant memorials in the city.

71 Reference 24
72 Reference 24
21: Memorials in San Francisco
Lack of Burial Space
The San Francisco National Cemetery can be seen on the right of figure 21. It is a historic burial site for soldiers who died in various wars both within and outside the borders of the US. For example, soldiers who battled in China, Philippines as well the Spanish American war were interred in that space. No new interment takes place in the cemetery. In fact, it is now illegal to cremate or bury anyone in the San Francisco Bay Area due to a lack of space. The only place with available space for the dead is the Columbarium of San Francisco. Most new cemeteries are found in South San Francisco in the town of Colma. In fact, due to the influx of burials from deaths in north San Francisco, Colma is known as a place with more dead than living residents.

Need for Memorial
From the above information, it is clear that the city of San Francisco is ripe for a memorial that is dedicated to the everyday individual. The memorial should also not contribute to the lack of space in the city and be universal in its appeal in reflecting its diverse cultures.

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73 Reference 27
74 Reference 26
Specific Site – Lands End

A scenic location known as Lands End located along the Coastal Trail was chosen as the design site. It is the rockiest coast in San Francisco and has a history of numerous ship wrecks. In fact, the remains of several wrecks such as the triple expansion steam engine of Lyman Stewart and Frank Buck’s stern post can still be seen along the Coastal Trail during low tides. The site offers both a rocky beach and a cliff top walk through shadowy cypress. Standing on top of the cliff, one is treated to a 30-mile view up and down the Californian coast.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{75} Reference 17 page 46
\textsuperscript{76} Photograph taken by Will Yokel
Site Qualities and Activities

As can be seen from the pictures in figure 23, the site is stunning in its natural beauty due to its expansive view of the Pacific Ocean, Golden Gate Bridge as well as the Marin County. In addition, the meeting of land and sea within a backdrop of lush vegetation provides visitors a sumptuous treat of sensory pleasures. The calming sounds of waves and strong winds perpetually fill the air, punctuated occasionally only by the low horns of passing ships and fog warnings. The constant feel of cool wind on one’s skin from the ocean reinforces one’s direction of view away from the land and informs one of the expansive spaces of the site at an intimate tactile level. For some reason, the rocks that cover the beach encourage visitors of all ages to interact with them by walking and climbing – balancing acts of moving around and feeling the rocks seem to be widely seductive. Low sun angles in the late afternoons cast sharp shadows on the rocks and accentuate their texture and seductive quality.

24: The seductive quality of the rocks
Existing Spiritual Quality

Apart from being rich in history and incredibly scenic, the site exhibits an existing spiritual quality. This is evident from the labyrinth that was found on the top of the cliff as seen in figure 25. It is a spontaneous piece of art that was created with stones by Eduardo Aguilar. According to him, the site inspired him to create a spiritual piece of work that visitors can engage in.

25: Visitors engaging the Lands End labyrinth

26: Spontaneous use of tea lights by visitors

77 Picture from reference 28
The spiritual quality of the site has encouraged people to place photographs as well as personal items of loved ones who have passed away on the labyrinth as a form of spontaneous commemoration. An example is seen in figure 26.

**Soil and Tidal Information**

The rocky beach of Lands End rests on Serpentine soil and rock. Serpentine rock, the Californian state rock, is poor in nutrient content. Conservation and recovery plans have been devised to save endangered species of plant life in the San Francisco Bay Area of California because of this reason.\(^{78}\) Less than 1 percent of California State is Serpentine. The rock is soft, slippery, greenish-gray in color and has a waxy feel to it.\(^{79}\)

The coast in the area experiences semidiurnal tides, meaning that there are 2 high tides and 2 low tides each day. The maximum tidal range is about 7 feet, which occurs in the middle of June.\(^{80}\)

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78 Reference 33  
79 Reference 32  
80 Reference 31
PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS III: Design

1. Brainstorming
28: Ideas for a physically ephemeral memorial
29: Quick iterations for a physically ephemeral memorial
Brainstorming – Discarded ideas for a physically ephemeral memorial

Several weeks were spent in coming up with ideas for the design of a memorial that changes with time and engages the site in terms of accumulation and erosion. Preliminary design proposals shown in figure 29 that sought to express some of those ideas were generated to test their feasibility. All of them were subsequently rejected for the reasons given below.

- Tying to control what is uncontrollable

Most of the preliminary design proposals involved the making and accumulation of physical objects. They posed severe challenges in terms of their distribution, accumulation and erosion in relation to the weathering of the design structure itself. Since the memorial is meant to be used freely by individuals and there is no way to predict how people might want to do that in future, seeking solutions to those problems seemed like a pointless endeavor.

- Establishment of rules contradict the freedom to self-commemorate

Ideas for the preliminary designs revolved around the setting of rules that visitors have to follow in commemorating themselves. Since it has been shown in earlier research that the forms in which memorials can take are limited only by one's imagination, giving specific options to visitors, however numerous, is limiting.

- Using site as machine rather than spiritual inspiration

Lastly, the preliminary design proposals appeared to place too much emphasis on using the site and design as a machine that creates and destroys physical memorials. The essence of the site - its natural beauty and spiritual quality - did not play a central role in the design when it ought to.
LITERATURE REVIEW III

In order to know more about labyrinths and appreciate the site better in terms of understanding what might have caused the site to take on a spiritual quality, two books were looked into.

1. Pondering the Labyrinth: Questions to Pray on the Path

2. Patterns in Comparative Religion

In considering the limitations of physical forms alone to relay specific messages and ideas, the following text was reviewed.

3. Power By Design: Archetypes as a “Natural Language" - Using Design to Communicate Over 10,000 years, the Danger at a Radioactive Waste Burial Site
Labyrinths...

Characteristics and Purposes

A labyrinth is an energy field, a pattern that contains a single pathway that leads to a center. It is therefore unlike a maze, as it seeks to lead one to a central destination rather than prevent one from doing so through multiple pathways that aim to confuse. One therefore cannot physically get lost within a labyrinth.\(^{81}\)

A labyrinth serves many purposes, most of which are spiritual in nature. For example, it is a place where one problem solves, meditates, finds guidance and inspiration and explores himself psychologically. It can also simply serve as a distraction from daily schedules or a place for one’s amusement as he walks path. The labyrinth is considered a safe spiritual tool as one is free to step away from it anytime he chooses.\(^{82}\)

Using the Labyrinth

There is no prescribed way to use the labyrinth; however one feels he should engage it would be considered the appropriate way. The following is a description of some of the ways labyrinths have been used:

- Allow intuition to guide one after one enters the labyrinth
- Follow the path from the entry to the center before walking out
- Observe those within the labyrinth while remaining on the outside
- Walking around the labyrinth instead of within it
- Spend time at a particular spot within the labyrinth

Regardless of how one decides to engage a labyrinth, consideration, for self and others, is the single most important labyrinth etiquette. It is imperative to be conscious of and control one’s own

\(^{81}\) Reference 18 Page 2
\(^{82}\) Reference 18 Page 3
pace, even as it changes during the same walk. Some walks take place in silence, while others do not.\textsuperscript{83}

In addition, one may not fully understand the meanings of his labyrinth encounter until a time lapse of weeks or even months is allowed to take place. Also, it has been found that people may not be able to verbalize what they feel immediately even though they sense in themselves the occurrence of something profound.\textsuperscript{84}

\textit{The Unknown Formula}

There is no conclusive explanation on how labyrinths are successful as spiritual tools, although several theories have been raised in attempting to do so. Some think that it allows one to feel more relaxed than usual and insights are allowed to occur within this heightened sense of peace. This could be due to the balancing of activities within both hemispheres of the brain as one walks back and forth in engaging the labyrinth. Others feel that because people anticipate something to happen, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Regardless, labyrinths would not have persisted through the ages if not for the fact that people have found them to be important tools for spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{83} Reference 18 page 7
\textsuperscript{84} Reference 18 page 9
\textsuperscript{85} Reference 18 page 8
...As Thresholds

- Private yet public

Labyrinths that are mentioned above are physically defined places where one is involved in a process, be it one of inquiry, exploration or inspiration. The experiences are intimate, personal and private while simultaneously relating to the world at large.

- Physical yet metaphysical

One engages with the labyrinth physically with his body, but mentally and spiritually connects with it at the same time:

“Our spiritual journey and our physical journey are united. When walking the labyrinth, we get comfort because we find ourselves on the Way. We do not have to act as if it is the same way for all people. Instead, we should think of it as our way.” 86

- Condensation of time

As one walks the labyrinth in the present and reflects on the past or ponders the future, time is condensed.

“What labyrinths do best is to link the old to the new. We can walk them today and feel quite modern while hearing the echoes of many feet behind us. We are not the first to want a way home, nor will we be the last.” 87

- Order within chaos

While the patterns of the labyrinth may appear chaotic and convoluted, there is but one path to the center. This can be interpreted as a metaphor to a personal experience that can exist within the multitude of those of others who engage with the labyrinth.

“Walking the labyrinth helps seekers to find a pattern in the chaos and to see the pattern of the chaos. We do not claim something that is more than just a text or just a story or just one account...we like the mix of stories that constitute humanity. We like the twists and turns that history and peoples have taken. We walk our talk, and we talk our walk.” 88

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86 Quote from reference 18 page 13
87 Quote from reference 18 page 29
88 Quote from reference 18 page 30
Water - The Waters and Water Symbolism

• Cycles of potentials

Water is generally seen as representative of potential. It is the source from which life springs and to which life ends before a new cycle begins. This can be seen in the mythologies of Indians in Brazil, and New Mexico, Babylonians, Iranians, Greeks and Christians\(^ {89}\).

"Principle of what is formless and potential, basis of every cosmic manifestation, container of all seeds, water symbolizes the primal substance from which all forms come and to which they will return either by their own regression or in a cataclysm. It existed at the beginning and returns at the end of every cosmic or historic cycle.\(^ {90}\)

• Curative quality and immersion

Water is also seen as capable of curing diseases, restoring youth and providing eternal life. This is evident from the healing rivers and fountains that can be found in France as well as certain Indian beliefs. Water can be seen as being curative due to its ability to absorb all impurities and destroy them. In addition, it has an element of annihilation as well. In various mythologies, all forms can be seen to dissolve when immersed in water; all signs of life and past are viewed as being destroyed. At the human level, this can relate to death or the cleansing of sins. At the cosmic level, it can be symbolic of the dissolution of the world “into the primeval ocean”. It is the ability of water to destroy that gives it the power to purify and regenerate simultaneously.\(^ {91}\)

• A different plane in time

"In whatever religious framework it appears, its work is to precede creation and to take it again to itself; it can never get beyond its own mode of existence – can never express itself in forms... Everything that has form is manifested above the waters, is separate from

\(^ {89}\) Reference 15 pages 188-190
\(^ {90}\) Quote from reference 15 page 188
\(^ {91}\) Reference 15 page 194
them... as soon as it has separated itself from water, every 'form' loses its potentiality, falls under the law of time and of life; it is limited, enters history.”

From the above quote, it is clear that water itself is seen as free from the constraints of time. In fact, it can also be seen that it is from water that time begins and ends.

Sun – Spiritual Symbolism of the Sun and Moon
Alvin Boyd Kuhn

- Solar cycles as basis for spiritual cycles

The rising and settings of the sun has been linked to the death and birth of divine figures. The tilt and journey of the earth round the sun, resulting in the four seasons of the year has also been taken as forming the basis of several religious systems.

“The zodiacal chart is divided into four quarters to match the four seasons, the four cardinal points, and the fourfold segmentation of man’s nature. At the junction points of each two of these divisions, or at the two solstices and equinoxes, the ancients celebrated the four great religious festivals of the year. In June came the great Fire-festival, symbolic of the highest expression of the fiery nature of deity; in September came the festival that commemorated the incarnation, under whatever name; in December was celebrated the end of the dark night of death, and the birth or quickening of the Sun-god to new life; and at the vernal equinox in March followed the joyous festival of the bursting of the bars of death in matter, or the resurrection.”

Of the four cardinal points that relate to the start of each season, greater emphasis has traditionally been placed on that of the autumn and spring as they relate to the idea of the demise and rebirth of divine figures. A reflection of that cyclical process is the cycle of death and rebirth in man’s spiritual realm.

92 Reference 15 page 212
93 Quote from reference 30
Earth – The Earth, Woman and Fertility
Mircea Eliade

- Potential and regenerative cycles

Many belief systems and rituals are derived from relationships with the earth. Like water, it is representative of potential.

“As the foundation, in a sense, of the universe, the earth is endowed with manifold religious significance. It was adored because of its permanence, because all things came from it and all things return to it.”\(^{94}\)

The act of burial has sometimes been linked to the notion of being reborn in future. Various cultures, such as Laws of Manu and that of Andaman Islanders bury dead children with this idea in mind. In addition, like the cleansing qualities of water, burying someone can be seen as the purification of sins and diseases and some cultures, such as that of the Mayans and Scandinavians. Regardless, spiritual cycles in relation to the earth are evident in these cases.\(^{95}\)

- Formal presence

The main difference between the earth and water is that unlike water, which is seen as essentially being formless, the earth exudes a strong formal presence.

“Only one thing can be said with certainty... that is, that they appear as forms, that they reveal realities, that they must, of necessity, obtrude themselves, that they strike the mind.

The earth, with all that it supports and contains, has been seen from the first as an inexhaustible fount of existences, and of existences that reveal themselves directly to man.”\(^{96}\)

\(^{94}\) Quote from reference 15 page 240
\(^{95}\) Reference 15 page 250
\(^{96}\) Quote from reference 15 page 243
Sacred Time – Sacred Time and the Myth of Eternal Renewal
Mircea Elaide

Since the memorial engages the cycles of nature, which is a temporal concept, in the processes of commemoration, research into the qualities of sacred time is done to inform the design.

- Rhythms of cosmos

Time can be considered sacred when rituals are being performed, thus distinguishing those time periods from otherwise profane periods of time. More important to this thesis is the second way of considering sacred time – that which

"indicated the rhythms of the cosmos (like the hierophanies of the moon) in that those rhythms are seen as revelations – that is, manifestations – of a fundamental sacred power behind the cosmos."\(^{97}\)

It is due to the spiritual quality of the rhythms of cosmos that different cycles of the natural elements on site will be considered for the design.

- Non-homogeneous from profane time

Scared time can be considered to be non-homogenous since they represent insertions in the passage of profane time. Moreover, in many cultures, certain times of the day are given higher priority and are seen to have a greater concentration of energy over other periods of more “diluted” periods of time. For example, children born during Sunrise are considered lucky by the Dyaks while Friday 13th is considered an unlucky day by Christians.\(^{98}\)

- Continuity of sacred time

While sacred time can be viewed as being distinct from profane time, each period of sacred time can be seen as being part of a continuum.\(^{99}\) For example, a Chinese family sweeping the tombs of their ancestors during the Ching Ming festival reconnects with the memories of the same festival in

\(^{97}\) Quote from reference 15 page 388
\(^{98}\) Quote from reference 15 page 389
\(^{99}\) Reference 15 page 391
previous years. The concepts of recurrence and repetition are important characteristics of sacred time. It is also for this reason that the use of cyclical time concepts for the design of a memorial is appropriate.

- Eternally present

Each time a person in the present engages in a spiritual activity that people before him were involved in, he can be considered to bring a past to the present through re-enactment.

“Every time the rite, or any significant action (hunting, for instance) is repeated, the archetypal action of the god or ancestor is being repeated, the action which took place at the beginning of time, or, in other words in a mythical time.”

The question of how “significant action” can be defined comes to bear. As acts remembrance, it is common that people engage in activities that a person who is being remembered were fond of. For example, a family may remember someone in the family who enjoyed fishing by going on fishing trips annually.

- Repeatability

An important quality of sacred time is that the activities that are performed during those periods of time have to be repeatable. This quality forms the basis of rituals and rites, the ability of people across different time periods to repeat a performance. It is precisely due to this reason that the criteria of story-telling is important in the design of the memorial for this thesis, regardless of the ways users of the design choose to commemorate themselves in relation to cosmic cycles. It is through the ease of re-telling of personal stories of commemorated individuals that their memories will be sustained over time.

- Regeneration

Lastly, the idea of regeneration is present in various activities that take place in sacred time. In Japanese and German cultures, for example, end of the year rituals are associated with the extinguishing of fire and rebirth.

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100 Quote from reference 15 page 394
101 Reference 15 page 395
“At the cosmological level, ‘darkness’ is identified with chaos, as the rekindling of the fires symbolizes creation, the re-establishment of forms and of limits.” 102

102 Quote from reference 15 page 399
The main reason why the concept of a permanently build memorial is not advocated in the thesis is that permanence of material gives a false sense of the permanence of memory. In addition, the limits of architectural language to provide specific messages to every person over time can be understood at an intuitive level. The following section of the thesis seeks to provide an example to support this view.

The US Department of Energy expressed their intention to bury more than 40,000 barrels of existing low-level radioactive waste about a third of a mile below a sand desert in New Mexico. The 1991 design project was thus a response to this intention by providing a formal warning mark that "must endure, be discovered and understood".\textsuperscript{103}

The design team consisted of an architect, an anthropologist, astronomer, materials scientist, archeologists and a linguist. Since it had been argued that none of today's languages will be spoken in a thousand years from now, the use of archetypal forms were proposed, based on the idea that archetypes “may have come before culture, may work independently of it, and will probably exist even after any ‘cultural discontinuity’, as long as humans remain biologically unchanged.”\textsuperscript{104}

A long list of guidelines was given for the design proposals. However one only needs to examine one of the more important guidelines to see the futility of the intention to communicate specific messages using physical forms over long periods of time:

\begin{itemize}
\item The design of the whole site itself is to be a major source of meaning:
\end{itemize}

\textit{“This place is a message... pay attention to it! Sending this message was important to us. We consider ourselves to be a powerful nation-state. This place is not a place of honor... no highly esteemed deed is commemorated here... nothing is valued here... The danger is

\textsuperscript{103} Quote from reference 16 page 14
\textsuperscript{104} Quote from reference 16 page 14}
in a particular location... and has a particular size and shape, and is below us. The form of the danger is an emanation of invisible energy. The danger is unleashed only if you substantially disturb this place physically."\textsuperscript{105}

The following are some of the design schemes that were perceived to be more successful:

\textsuperscript{105} Quote from reference 16 page 16
It is the intention of the designs to be able to communicate specific meanings, such as those described in the design guideline given above. Hence, no written description of the design proposals is provided here. They can be seen in figure 30. While a sense of danger can be readily perceived from some of the designs with the use of archetypes, it is equally likely that there are those who find beauty in the same forms in today's culture. It is thus clear that none of the above design schemes are able to convey all the specific and well-meaning messages to every single person today, not to mention every person in 10,000 years.

In addition, there is also no conclusive evidence given in the article to prove that meanings derived from archetypes are constant across time and culture. Besides, even if archetypes have conveyed unchanging meanings to us over the last few thousand years, it does not mean that they will continue to do so in the next 10,000 years due to the unpredictability of human perceptual changes over such a long span of time. The attempt to convey specific messages through physical forms over time, however well-intentioned it might be, is therefore seen as futile.

As such, this example provides evidence that specific meanings are unable to endure over time solely within physical forms. Similarly, in order for memory to persist in memorials, the use of formal language alone is insufficient.

106 Images from reference 16 pages 20, 21 and 22
PRECEDENT ANALYSIS III

1. StoryCorps
2. Projections
Storycorps

StoryCorps is a non-profit organization that uses the idea of storytelling as a way of connecting people with one another. Started in 2003, it has since recorded tens of thousands of stories of the lives of everyday people in celebration of lives, history, hopes and humanity.107

- Places

Stories are recorded in sound-proof booths in various physical locations. They are no bigger than 10’x10’. According to the organization website, all it needs for a story to be recorded are “two microphones and a willing subject”108. Mobile booths in vehicles have also been used as a means of reaching out to as many participants as possible. In addition, the stories are recorded on CDs and archived in the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC so that they can be retrieved for listening.

- Media

Each story is recorded on 2 copies CDs, one to be archived while the other is given to the participant. A 40 minute time limit is given to each story. A book entitled “Listening is an Act of Love” that translated the spoken words to written texts has been printed and many copies of it have been sold. In addition, one can also listen to the stories on the internet by downloading them as Podcasts or even on one's cell phone.

- Cost and support

Each recording session costs $250. The organization relies on the donations, sponsors and volunteers as support for its operations. Donations can be made through snail mail or online. One can either choose to donate a pre-determined amount or specify the sum of donation. In addition, StoryCorps encourages people to donate in honor and memory of their loved ones.

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107 All information in this section is obtained from reference 29
108 Quote from reference 29
StoryCorps supports the recording and listening of stories of people whom they feel deserves special attention. For example, the September 11th Initiative is concerned with stories of those who are affected by the event while the Memory Loss Initiative records the stories of people who are affected by memory losses. Special staff and interviewers are present for the latter initiative.

31: Participants from StoryCorps

109 Images derived from reference 29
Projections

Krzysztof Wodiczko

Different projections by Krzysztof Wodiczko are of interest to the thesis because they involved the sharing of stories by different people in serving cathartic and educational needs. The successes of his projections demonstrated that it is sometimes easier for someone to speak to a large group of strangers rather than to a close friend or family member.110 Also, the processes that were involved in his projects, as well as the ways his works related to the site are interesting to consider for the design of a memorial.

St. Louis Projection
The St. Louis projections took place in the St. Louis Central Library Building. Crime victims and inmates shared their stories through projections that only showed the hands of the main speakers. A studio where cameras focused on only the speakers’ hands was necessary for the projection. People gathered in the open lawn facing the façade of the building to not only listen to the stories, but ask questions and relate their own experiences as well, through microphones that were installed on site. It was an opportunity for people to share something private in public space. The design process involved Wodiczko producing sketches to ensure that the projected body part of the speaker matched well with that of the building façade. The boundary between building and human body was also blurred as a result.

Hiroshima Projection
The project took place on a night after an anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing at the Hiroshima Atomic Dome. In encouraging the bomb survivors to share their stories, Wodiczko had to quickly develop a sense of trust between him and the survivors. What is of special interest about this projection is the use and interpretation of the Dome as well as site elements. The Dome, located by a river and directly below the hypercenter of the atomic bomb, is one of the few structures to survive the bombing. As such, the symbolic significance of the Dome is indisputable.

110 All information in this section is obtained from reference 34
The river was seen as a graveyard to both people and building and body gestures of the speakers were incorporated with it. This is seen through the pouring of water into the river, which was considered as both a witness to the tragedy and a symbol of hope due to the constant arrival of new waters. The river acted as a convergence of the past, present and future, which is a desired quality of memorials. Relating to the definition of memorials given in this thesis, the question of what the memorial is, site or projection, in the case of the Hiroshima projection, comes to bear.

32: St. Louis Projection

33: Hiroshima Projection

111 Image from reference 34
112 Image from reference 34
PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS IV: Design

1. Design Concept
2. Site Model
3. Glass Explorations
4. Design Project
Design Concept

Inspiration through Nature
Death is not final but an expression of the cyclical quality of nature, within which life is able to reflect upon itself and memory takes on a life of its own. Juxtaposing natural cycles such as the risings and settings of the sun and tide with a carefully selected man-made attempt to commemorate, a visitor is given the chance to be inspired to conduct his own commemorative work. As defined earlier in the thesis, the built and tangible may or may not be the memorial.

Commemoration – On and Off Site
The visitor’s commemorative work may take any form he chooses. As shown in previous research, memorials come in a wide variety of forms. Hence, there is no reason for the design to purposefully restrict the visitor in any way of self commemoration he chooses. It could be a photograph he decides to leave on site or a poem he decides to write after he leaves the site. What is important is that the site inspires a commemorative impulse at a personal level.

The success of the memorial depends on visitors’ participation, both on site and off site. The on site projected stories will be a seed, planted within a catalytic space in facilitating a commemorative process to begin on site.
Site Model

The making of the site model presents a variety of challenges and opportunities. The metal wire was chosen as the material for the model for several reasons. Firstly, it is a material that I believe will allow me to create the angular and rough forms of the rocks on the site while at the same time achieves a sense of fluidity that refers to the sea – one material embodies the qualities of “solid” and “liquid”. In addition, it relates to the steel columns that will be used in the design eventually. Burning of the form from which the wires were wrapped parallels the site as a relic from the past.
Glass Explorations
As the conceptual design was developed, glass as a material was manipulated in different ways in the process of seeking design possibilities. Included below are some qualities of glass that shaped the final design.

Figure 35: Density and ambiguity

Figure 36: Crushed glass

Figure 37: Water with glass
Design Project

The Provision of Triggers

Stories

This benefits of listening and telling stories have been elaborated earlier in the thesis. Every person has a story to tell and listening to the recorded stories of others can easily inspire one to do the same. By tapping into the archives of Storycorps and accumulating stories in digital form that can be stored on the net, the problem of physical space scarcity that faces the everyday resident in San Francisco with regards to personal commemoration will be avoided. In addition, as mentioned earlier on the section of Sacred Time, repeatability is key to the sustaining of spiritual practices and memory. This is clearly achievable in the exchange of stories.

Glass boxes of different sizes are included throughout the structure to record and project stories. Visitors can therefore commemorate themselves easily within the building. The glass boxes are arranged in the form of loops to not only relate to the cyclical processes of nature, but to provide a variety of choices for listening locations. These can be seen in figure 38 shown below:

![Figure 38: Arrangement of glass boxes](image)

81
Figure 39: Design showing bridge above and glass pit in inter-tidal zone
Bridge
A bridge that spans 240 feet is included in the design, shown in figure 39. It is lower than the existing cliff so that views from the cliff will not be destroyed by the building. The function of the bridge is to seduce visitors to walk on it and absorb breathtaking views of the site. However, the walk can also stir a feeling of danger in visitors that can lead visitors to reflect on their own mortality. This is supported by the study on the Golden Gate Bridge. Combined with the commemorative program of story exchange that exists in the building, it is likely that visitors will develop a commemorative frame of mind, thus increasing their tendencies to self-commemorate, whether on or off site.

Pit of Crushed Glass
In addition, a pit that will be filled with crushed glass is included in the building that lies in the intertidal zone directly below the bridge. It draws reference to the typology of sand pits in playgrounds, where people register activities and create spontaneously. Crushed glass instead of sand is used in order to contrast with the pristine quality of glass panels in other parts of the design. This is done to increase one’s sensitivity to the lifespan of physical materials. Glass panels in other parts of the building that wear down and break over time will be crushed and added to the glass pit. The memorial, therefore, has characteristics of the anti-memorial, in that it seeks to dispel the illusion of the permanence of materials - memory is sustained by people, not physical constructs. It is also a subtle reference to Aristotle’s view on error accumulation and reduction of complex matter to simpler matter as death occurs. An impression of the memorial in partial ruins is shown in figure 40.
Figure 40: Partial ruins
Figure 41: View from top of memorial
Figure 42: Bridge, sky
**Glass and Steel**

The design will be constructed from mainly two materials, steel and glass. Steel is chosen for its ability to span long distances with members of relatively small cross-sectional areas. Glass is chosen for its ambiguous quality with regards to transparency and its ability to reflect its surroundings. Visitors both inside and outside the building will see people framed within vertical and horizontal planes of glass, walking, resting or moving about. This emphasizes that the design is about remembering people through people.

People are watching others and being watched at the same time, either directly or indirectly through reflections on the glass. With no other physical objects on display in the memorial, people can naturally start to question the definition of memorials in general as a result of the design – is it object, person, physical or non-physical? This question and the lack of specificity can encourage visitors to commemorate themselves in more creative and personal ways.

The spaces of glass and steel also identify with the stacks of black-bordered white paper of Gonzalez-Torres’ *Untitled (The End)*, the Scroll and the Sand Block - they all are capable of accommodating new commemorations while remaining empty at the same time. In addition, the dead and the living share the same spaces, a befitting expression of the threshold quality of death.

**Why not**

In the process of design, it has been questioned whether additional ways of commemoration should be included in the design besides the listening and recording of stories. It is a natural reaction to the design, a reaction that visitors are likely to develop too. The design is meant to inspire and trigger spontaneous commemoration. The question of "why not" is therefore an indication of the successful triggering effect that is being evoked by the design.

Indeed, why not?
Figure 43: Degrees of connection
Figure 43 shows an interior view of a large glass box within the memorial. Listeners gather around a central square, defined by speakers mounted on the glass floor and a reduced number of floor joists in that area. Stories that are projected from the speakers on the floor imbue the central square with a degree of sanctity. It is a space that will naturally be connected with the presence of the story teller. If desired, a visitor can choose to cross the threshold of the speakers and stories, and experience that presence in a more intimate way.

Engagement of Site

Earth
The cliff is interpreted as a natural memorial in the process of erosion. Relating to the section on the spiritual qualities of earth, it’s physical presence is striking. It defines the beach area which has been eroded over time. The design, measuring 480 feet long by 40 feet wide and 80 feet tall, is a direct formal reference to the natural memorial of the cliff. It locates itself on the beach with a commanding presence, underscoring man’s attempt to commemorate and preserve that which inevitably will be lost; it is a reflection of the nature of all memorials.

Water
The design engages the ocean by allowing the tides to periodically wash away spontaneous creations or mementoes that are left on the pit of crushed glass. Retention of the seawater around the design during periods of low tide draws attention to the element of water. It’s symbolic and spiritual characteristic as an element of renewal is therefore manifested.

Sun
The use of 2-way mirrored glass to define the glass boxes allows the design to engage the sun over the course of the day, since the side of a mirrored glass that faces the light source will be read as a reflective mirror while the other side will be transparent. This not only changes the opacity of the design and underscores its ephemeral nature, but affects the privacy of the glass boxes as well. This would lead visitors to move from one box to another at different times of the day and listen to different stories in the process.
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