I, Daniel J Weigel, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
The Story of Death

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This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: John Eliot Hancock, M.Arch.

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THE STORY OF DEATH

A thesis submitted to the University of Cincinnati
Division of Research and Advanced Studies
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ABSTRACT

Each civilization from around the world has developed distinct rituals to cope with death. These customs are deeply rooted in the local culture and reflect the experiences of the deceased’s life, their journey to the afterlife, and the emotional suffering of the loved ones. In today’s transient, secular society, knowledge and attitudes about these rich funeral customs have become more fragmented and superficial. This thesis provides an educational and architectural exploration of the funeral process and the multicultural transition from life to death and beyond.

As home to the world’s leading maker of caskets, Batesville, Indiana, will be the setting for this new Museum of Death. The architecture will explore the timeless and universal themes associated with death, life, and grieving, such as earth/sky, light/dark, order/chaos, and anguish/serenity. Meanwhile, the exhibits, aimed at both general tourists and funeral directors, will acknowledge the importance of ritual in the difficult process of mourning through the art of storytelling. Artifacts, photographs, and interactive displays will document a journey through permanent and temporary exhibits. Much like the grieving process, visitors will be encouraged to progress through different stages focused on a different period or culture.

The experience of this project will aim to reintroduce meaning and reflection into contemporary funeral practices so as to encourage deeper exploration of the meaning behind these rituals and to help redefine the funeral’s role in coping with the death of a loved one by telling the story of a life well-lived.
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Fig. 1 Batesville Welcome Sign
The majority of us probably think of death, and the emotional pain and suffering that it often entails, as something we would like to forget. Just like we had no control of how or when we entered this world, we will have no control of how or when we will leave it. In reality, death is something that we will all face sooner or later. For many, our own death is a distant reality that is not possible; however, the death of a family member or close friend is much easier to understand thanks to the mourning rituals that have developed which focus on the transition of loss to acceptance.\(^1\) Currently, there are over seven billion humans on our planet, spread over six continents, and living in more than 190 countries. The people who call these countries home have created distinct rituals over many generations to cope with death. These customs are deeply rooted in the culture, history, and geography of the area and reflect the experiences of the deceased’s life, their journey to the afterlife, and the emotional pain and suffering of the loved ones.\(^2\) Sadly, over time, as our world has become more globalized, the uniqueness of some of these rituals has begun to erode.

I first became interested in the topic of death having grown up in Batesville, Indiana. Batesville is home to Batesville Casket Company, the largest casket manufacturer in the world. Slightly less than half of the town’s population of 6500 earns their living working for Batesville Casket Company. My father was one of these for more than a decade. While the death care industry is slightly unconventional and definitely morbid, Batesville Casket is committed to helping families honor the lives of those they love.

2. Ibid, xii.
“The fear of death is nothing other than considering oneself wise without being so, because it is believing to know about that which we don’t know. Maybe death is the greatest blessing for human beings, no one knows, and yet everyone is afraid as if they knew with absolute certainty that it is the worst of evils.”

Socrates
Despite the reality that we all will face death, the subject often is avoided because of the emotional pain and suffering that is associated with it. Additionally, over time our world has become more globalized and the uniqueness of the funeral rituals has begun to erode. With each passing generation, the United States is also becoming more and more diverse. The traditional American funeral, dating from Victorian times, is no longer relevant for many, nor wanted by others. Since 1900, each generation has developed tastes and fashions that define that generation and reflect its unique world view. Sadly, the same cannot be said for the funeral customs that celebrate the life lived, the love of the survivors, and the promise of an afterlife.

**Definition**

When discussing the topic of death, two key words often are used interchangeably. These two words are grieving and mourning. Many view these words as synonyms, but in the context of death, the words have different meanings. According to author and grief counselor Dr. Alan Wolfelt, grief describes the internal thoughts and feelings that are experienced when a loved one dies. Mourning describes the external expression of grief. Because death is a topic that our culture tries to avoid, few Americans actually mourn. The added years to the average life span may give us more time to achieve our goals and spend time with loved ones, but as we live longer we seem to diminish the importance of the rituals and customs that surround death and detach it from the process of mourning.
Fig. 2 Incense Used During Funeral Prayers
During the grieving process, it is natural that the loved ones of the deceased perform rituals to help ease the emotional burden. These rituals have become so commonplace that few even think of their origins. Mourning rituals are not something new but rather have been around for thousands of years. New evidence suggests that the first burial rituals date from the time of the Neanderthals, more than 50,000 years ago.³

But how did rituals come about? For thousands of years, there were no scientific answers to the unknown. Religion is believed to have originated from the awe and fear that people felt when confronted with the phenomena of change.⁴ Attempting to overcome these feelings of fear, the ancients joined together and began performing rituals to reconcile with the supernatural powers they believed to be the cause of the change. Thousands of years ago, each tribal family unit performed distinct rituals that were based on their geographical and social environment. Overtime as the world became more developed, these individual rituals were combined to form what we know as religion. With this amalgamation of rituals, specific, standardized meanings became associated with them. Unfortunately with the birth of formal religions, indigenous funeral ceremonies based purely in sentiment and emotions began to disappear and were replaced with systematic ceremonies based in logic and reason.⁵

4. Ibid, xii.
5. Ibid, xii-xiii.
Fig. 3 Zambian Cemetery
GLOBAL FUNERAL RITUALS

Funeral rituals are often repetitive because they serve as an important means of channeling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups. This repetitive nature also serves as a form of distraction, allowing the mourner’s mind to focus on something other than the deceased. For most cultures, the funeral is the crucial moment in which the mourners formally part with the deceased. This parting is often performed within some sort of religious context, a shared belief in a larger or higher power, since ritual and religion are so intertwined.

As Western society becomes more and more developed, our culture as a whole has placed less value on the religious context of the rituals surrounding death. Death is something that is worried about less and less and the afterlife is no longer yearned. However, many of the funeral customs of the world are customs that have been passed down from one generation to the next. With each generation to which the custom is passed, meaning is lost as our modern society moves more and more towards secularized uniformity. Much of this can be derived from our reliance on pop culture and our desire to conform to society’s expectations. These rich religious traditions have given meaning and significance to death by framing it in relation to larger themes and forces. This includes the idea of salvation being replaced by a secular mindset that is only concerned with trying to cheat death and live as long as possible. Centenarians will soon be the new norm as each generation lives to be older than the last. Some scientists are now even touting that immortality will be a possibility for those with money within the next few decades. For the rest of us though, death will become a reality that no medical advance can outwit.

For greater clarity, each of the world’s major religions – Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism – were examined to better understand both their funeral customs as well as their views on the afterlife.
Fig. 4 Awaiting Incineration
Death of the physical body is certain, but only a part of an ongoing process of re-incarnation until one receives enlightenment. After death, it is believed that the dead person goes through a transformation in which they discover death and prepare for their rebirth (if there is one).  

In early times and commonly today, Buddhists cremate the bodies of their dead. The first seven days after death are the most important for final and funereal prayer. 

Prayers are said weekly, during a 49-day funeral period. It is during this period that the prayers of the mourners are believed to help the deceased during the post-death transformation and awaken their spirit to the true nature of death.

Fig. 5 Indonesian Catholic Funeral Service
CATHOLICISM

Belief About Death

Catholics see death as a passage from this life to the new, everlasting life promised by Jesus Christ. The soul of the deceased goes on to the afterlife, which includes Purgatory as well as Heaven and Hell. According to Catholic belief, the bodies of the dead will be resurrected at the end of time.\(^7\)

Funeral Practices

The Catholic funeral service is called the Mass of the Resurrection. During it, Jesus Christ’s life is remembered and related to that of the deceased. Eulogies are not allowed during the funeral mass, but may be delivered at a wake or other non-religious ceremony. There is also a final graveside farewell, and additional traditions depending on the region. The Church encourages Catholics to be buried in Catholic cemeteries. In 1963, the Vatican lifted the ban on cremation for Catholics. However, the cremains must be interred, not scattered or kept at home.\(^7\)

Mourning Rituals

The community and the church support mourners through the funeral mass and through non-religious services like wakes.\(^7\)

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Fig. 6 Symbolically Preparing the Path for the Coffin
CONFUCIANISM

Belief About Death

Salvation can be achieved if the believer lives and behaves in a manner that promotes ideal social relations.  

Funeral Practices

The corpse is washed and placed in a coffin. Mourners bring incense and money to offset the cost of the funeral. Food and significant objects of the deceased are placed in the coffin. A Buddhist or Taoist priest, or even a Christian minister, performs the burial ritual. Friends and family follow the coffin to the cemetery, bringing a willow branch, which symbolizes the soul of the person who has died. The branch is later carried back to the family altar where it is used to “install” the spirit of the deceased.

Mourning Rituals

Liturgies are performed on the seventh, ninth, and forty-ninth days after the burial, and on the first and third anniversaries of the death.

Hindus believe death is part of the continuing cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The soul of the dead transfers to another body after death.⁹

Hindus generally cremate their dead. In preparation for cremation, the body is bathed, laid in a coffin, adorned with sandalwood paste and garlands, and wrapped in white cloth. In the cremation ceremony, the body is carried three times counterclockwise around the pyre, then placed upon it. The chief mourner hits the cremation switch.⁹

The days of mourning are considered a time of ritual impurity. Mourners cover all religious pictures in the house and do not attend festivals or visit swamis or take part in marriage ceremonies. Mourning period length varies, though Hindu scriptures caution against excessive mourning.⁹

Fig. 8 Muslim Bangladeshi Burial
**Belief About Death**

Muslims believe that there is another world after death for which the believer should prepare during his/her life on earth.\(^{10}\)

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**Funeral Practices**

The corpse is bathed, wrapped in a plain cloth called a kafan. The deceased is buried in the ground after the funeral service. Only burial in the ground is allowed according to Shari`ah, the Islamic law.\(^{10}\)

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**Mourning Rituals**

Mourners gather and offer Janazah, prayers for the forgiveness of the deceased. Once the body is buried, Muslim mourners offer one final Janazah prayer.\(^{10}\)

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Fig. 9 Israeli Infant Funeral
Belief About Death

Jews believe death in this life will eventually lead to resurrection in a world to come.\(^\text{11}\)

Funeral Practices

The dead are buried as soon as possible. The body is washed to purify it and dressed in a plain linen shroud. The casket, a plain wooden coffin, remains closed after the body is dressed. The body is watched over from time of death till burial, as a sign of respect. The kaddish, a prayer in honor of the dead, is said.\(^\text{11}\)

Mourning Rituals

There is an intense seven-day mourning period, called shiva, following the burial. Mourners traditionally rend their garments as a symbol of grief. Today, people often wear a black ribbon instead of tearing their clothes. Mourners also cover mirrors, sit on low stools, and avoid wearing leather. The full mourning period lasts a year, after which mourners observe the dead’s yahrzeit, or yearly anniversary of the death.\(^\text{11}\)

Japanese Floating Memorial Ceremony
While the major religions practiced today have their unique differences, there are just as many similarities. All religions describe some concept of an afterlife or the lack of an afterlife. Many also provide a guide for their faithful on how to reach this next life. Thus, death in some way is associated with a journey and a destination.

Besides a belief in the afterlife, the world’s religions all incorporate the four classical elements: earth, water, wind, and fire. For centuries, each of these elements has held a universal meaning that is reflected among all faiths.

**Earth** is seen as a grounding element, the element that forms the basis for everything else. We came from the earth, and when we die, we return again to the earth, the place where all life originates, through burial in a casket or the sprinkling of our ashes into the soil.

**Water** is said to symbolize rebirth and cleansing. Before burial or cremation, the body is bathed and wrapped in a special garment. This washing not only cleanses the physical body but also purifies the spiritual body. This purification allows the soul to enter the next world.

**Wind** is the lightest element. Cremation ceremonies often involve matter becoming spirit, or air, and allowing the wind to scatter ashes. By allowing the wind to scatter the deceased’s ashes, the mourners are accepting death by reaffirming their lack of control entering and leaving this life.

**Fire** symbolizes passion, intensity, and transformation. During cremation, the body is burned by fire and changed from matter to spirit. Fire is also used to describe an eternal spirit that lives on after a person dies. Candles are lit during memorials as a reminder that the deceased’s spirit lives on after death.
Fig. 11 Butterworth Funeral Home Seattle, 1900
American funeral customs as we know them are a modern invention that date back to the late 1800s. Some of these traditions originated out of necessity, while others originated from the writings of the European scientific revolution that influenced the Enlightenment. During this same time, American society was in transition. With the success of the Industrial Revolution, the upwardly mobile middle class was born. While the Industrial Revolution brought increased wealth, it also brought the concept of leisure time. Because most Americans were no longer solely focused on survival, they had time to read books and periodicals that covered the many advances in science and medicine. Few of these middle class business owners had a college education, but through mass media the scientific knowledge and hypotheses of the intellectual elite trickled down to the common man. Now, science and logic became a means to explain the unknown, including death. By the late 1800s, death was viewed as a natural process, controlled only by the laws of nature. Throughout his book *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920*, author James Farrell attempts to explain the origin and history of contemporary funeral rituals in the United States. These customs were influenced by such events as the founding of the National Funeral Directors Association, the birth of the embalming rituals, and the transition from coffins to caskets.  

Just as with the founding of medical and public health organizations such as the AMA (American Medical Association) and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration), the founding of the NFDA (National Funeral Director’s Association) in 1882 brought a level of professionalism and respect to the newly founded death industry. Prior to the 1880s, the deceased’s family was responsible for many of the rituals that we now associate with funeral directors. Funerals tended to be very simple and often varied by location and the seasons. Money was scarce for many families, but as the wallets of the middle class continued to grow, families could choose to be more particular in their funeral selections for their deceased. The role of the funeral director, or undertaker as it was called at the time, was not defined and revolved around the selling of goods, not services. Around the turn of the 20th century, the funeral roles performed by family members, ministers, and friends slowly began to be performed by undertakers as they began to sell services, not just commodities.\(^\text{13}\) These two changes in the undertaking profession, the demand for more elaborate funeral customs by the middle class and the selling of services, were a turning point in the development of the undertaking profession.\(^\text{14}\)

In order to further legitimize undertaking as a career, states began to require a set amount of formal schooling followed by an apprenticeship. Because the education requirements varied by state, the inconsistencies in the undertaking profession and the pricing of services only continued. In order to combat the varying levels of service and pricing, the forming of a national organization was necessary. In 1882, Allen Durfee of Grand Rapids, MI, organized the first national meeting of undertakers. Delegates from all over the country traveled to the first annual convention in Rochester, NY, where the goals of professionalism, education, and financial security were established.\(^\text{15}\) More than the establishment of goals, the simple changing of the professional title from undertaker to funeral director had a profound impact on the public’s perception of the career. Finally with the establishment of a national convention and the changing of the title, the role of the funeral director became clear.

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15. Ibid, 150.
Fig. 13 Confederate Soldier Burial
Along with the establishment of the NFDA, the establishment of a standardized procedure of embalming rituals was necessary in order for early funeral directors to succeed. Embalming was first practiced during the Civil War when the dead were transported home for burial. Because the funeral would not occur for a few days or even weeks, the preservation of the deceased’s body was a necessity. The blood was removed and preservatives were injected to slow the decaying process. Prior to the Civil War, embalming was seen as an unnatural concept that was performed only by ancient societies and not respectful of contemporary burial practices. After the war, this thinking began to change as embalmers returned home from the war and began marketing their services to funeral directors. Embalmers also offered cosmetic services to make the deceased appear more “natural.” This more natural appearance was then marketed as a coping mechanism to the deceased’s family. By maintaining a lifelike appearance of the remains, the distinction between life and death could become blurred. Before embalming became a routine practice, the only way to preserve the dead was to place the corpse in a large tub of ice. Seeing embalming as a more “sanitary” practice, and also recognizing the advantage of having more time to plan the funeral, funeral directors more frequently began calling on the services of embalmers.

One of the most well respected embalmers of the late 1880s was Auguste Renouard, who was originally trained as a doctor. By 1890, embalming became the norm and schools were established throughout the country. From its first meeting in 1882, the NFDA was instrumental in the promotion of embalming. A second method of dealing with the body of the deceased, cremation, also originated at this time. Cremation, however, did not achieve the same success as embalming. This trend has reversed in recent years as cremation now follows more than half of all deaths in many parts of the United States.

17. Ibid, 161.
18. Ibid, 158.
Fig. 14 Batesville Casket Company Factory
Another step in the birth of the modern American funeral industry was a series of changes in the design of the burial container. With the acceptance of funeral directing as a professional career and the standardization of embalming rituals, the birth of the casket industry was the next logical step in the evolution of modern funeral customs. Prior to the Civil War, local furniture makers produced the typical wood coffins. These coffins were simple wooden boxes with a door that could be opened to place the dead inside. These boxes were purely functional and were made out of rough wood that was often crudely fitted together with no interior upholstery. With the increased affluence of the middle class, the public was no longer satisfied with a simple burial box. Instead, they demanded coffins that were more in touch with the eclectic motifs present in Victorian architecture and tailored to their individual tastes. Similar to the way that the Industrial Revolution had a lasting impact on building materials and decoration, it also had revolutionary effects on coffin making. Large casket factories replaced local furniture shops. Their ability to offer a customizable product at a competitive price helped companies such as Batesville Coffin Company, now Batesville Casket Company, cement its role in the death industry.

Another change occurred when the factory owners began to remarket their products as “caskets” with the hope of selling more burial containers. By changing the name as well as the shape, casket makers hoped to ease the public’s aversion to death. The shape of the box became rectangular to mask its contents, replacing the six-sided form that followed the contour of the body. The rectangular shape also allowed for more decoration to be applied. Like funeral professionals and embalmers, casket makers founded their own national organization, the National Burial Case Association, to help standardize the industry and set pricing. Over the last 100 years, numerous revisions and refinements have been made to ensure that the caskets being sold appeal to contemporary tastes.

22. Ibid, 149.
Through his book *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920*, James Farrell attempts to explain the influence of the NFDA, embalming rituals, and mass casket production on American burial practices. The late 1880s saw the birth of a new industry that was centered on a subject that was often seen as taboo. While Farrell focuses on the many changes that occurred during the turn of the last century, the current thinking that is occurring in this century, in the years since this book was published in 1980, should not be ignored. American burial is no longer centered in the European context of science, reason, and Christianity. More and more immigrants of varying cultures are moving to the U.S. Each of these new cultures has a unique story to tell and a different set of funeral rituals that they perform to celebrate this story. One such ritual is the eastern tradition of cremation.

The baby boomer generation is another group which is forcing funeral directors, embalmers, and casket makers to reshape the current funeral customs to better reflect their diversified interests and hobbies. Yet another shift in the death industry is occurring in the manner in which caskets are produced and sold. Inexpensive caskets from China can now be purchased at wholesale stores such as Costco for a fraction of the price of traditional American-made caskets. These current challenges could do as much if not more to shape the funeral customs of the future as the challenges of the Victorian era shaped our current traditions. By overcoming the general public’s aversion to death, the industry has been able to thrive over the last century and will continue into the future. Death is a natural process, something that we will all experience at one time in our life. Tastes and fashions may change with the decades, but the need for the industry does not.
Fig. 16 Southern Indiana Cornfields
At first glance, Batesville, Indiana, may look like your typical Midwestern town. Rolling hills dotted with cornfields stretch as far as the eye can see, nondescript brick structures surround the downtown square, and regal church steeples dominate the skyline. Batesville, however, is not the typical small town. Inside the old factories outside of town, more than 1100 caskets per day roll off of state-of-the-art assembly lines. Batesville is and has been the casket capital of the world for generations. While other rural towns in the area have struggled in recent years to maintain their populations, Batesville has thrived, attracting engineers and businessmen from all over the nation. As quirky as it may seem, Batesville is also my hometown.

Batesville Casket Company is the leader in a $17 billion-a-year industry that everyone will eventually confront, but few understand. Once bound by tradition, Batesville Casket is reinventing itself for the 21st century to better serve its mission of assisting families at the most difficult time of their lives as they honor their departed. In recent years, Batesville’s wide range of burial caskets has given way to a growing number of cremation urns and other funeral products that reflect new ways to cope with the loss of the deceased and celebrate their lives. These new insights are constantly evolving with every generation, and like architecture and design, there are definite trends and fads with each era. Batesville Casket tries to position itself differently from its main competitors, Matthews Casket and Aurora Casket, by being aware and receptive of its clients’ ever-changing needs and expectations.

2012 Funeral Costs
NFDA General Price List Survey

Cost of an Adult Funeral
NFDA General Price List Survey

*Does not include price of vault

Cost plus inflation

Fig. 17 2012 Death Care Statistics
Fig. 18 2012 Death Care Statistics
Funeral Home Ownership
National Directory of Morticians Redbook
- 86% Privately owned
- 15% Corporations

Funeral Homes that Sell Batesville Caskets
National Funeral Directors Association
- 87% Customers
- 13% Non-customers

Casket Prices
Batesville Casket Company
- Promethean: $30,000
- Roman: $1,095

Number of Caskets Sold
Batesville Casket Company
- 10,000 caskets

Number of Funeral Homes
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- 1,000 funeral homes

Number of Embalmers
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- 1,000 embalmers

Number of Employees
Batesville Casket Company
- 1,000 employees

Number of Funeral Directors
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- 1,000 directors

Fig. 19 2012 Death Care Statistics
MISSION STATEMENT

The aim of the project is twofold. The first is to help funeral directors become familiar with the customs and religions of the increasingly diverse clientele who will be using their services to bury their loved ones. The second aim of this project is to ensure that Batesville Casket Company’s products will be able to continue to meet the needs of its diversifying market. As a “museum of death,” the facility’s appeal to tourist will also elevate the company’s profile.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The forces that will be involved or affected by this museum of death are the casket salesmen and the funeral home directors who work within the death care industry, the visiting public, and local residents. Indirectly, future caskets and other funeral products developed by Batesville Casket will be affected. Through feedback, these three user groups will have the ability to voice their opinions on specific issues and provide insight on current trends. By partnering with this new museum of death, Batesville Casket Company can ensure its success as both an educational tool, tourist attraction, and place of community pride.
Fig. 20 Santo Stefano Cemetery Amoretti + Calvi + Ranalli
During the last few decades, our world has become more and more secularized. In the place of funerary rituals, some cultures are looking to architecture as a means of healing during the grieving process. Similar to the desired outcome of the ancients’ mourning rituals, architecture can serve as a powerful tool. While architecture has the ability to provide such physical necessities as shelter and security, it also has the ability to help heal our emotions and our empty hearts. Instead of just being the vessel in which the rituals are performed, these contemporary spaces blur the boundaries between architecture and ceremony, and between this world and the next. Much like the journey through the grieving process, these new cemeteries, funeral homes, and mausoleums explore the lasting and universal themes associated with life, death, time, and eternity.

One similarity that many examples of contemporary funeral architecture share is the relationship between the earth and the sky. Many cultures, including our own, have lines of text in their memorial services that incorporate some concept of returning to the earth. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” a phrase from the Anglican burial service, is used to contrast the temporary nature of worldly existence to the eternity of the spirit. Whether cremated or buried, the body is believed by most cultures to physically return to the earth, thus completing the circle of life. Furthermore, most cultures also have some concept of the afterlife or a final resting place for the soul in the skies. By representing this contrast between the two extremes, contemporary funerary architecture is able to reintroduce some of the meaning that has begun to erode from the grieving process.

25. Gen. 3:19 AV.
Seven examples of funeral architecture will be analyzed as precedent. While all the projects are quite similar in their adherence to minimalism, the differences among them are also apparent. Some of the projects are located here in the U.S., while others are located in Europe and Asia. Some were created by well-respected architects such as Carlo Scarpa and Fumihiko Maki, others were created by young, upcoming designers.
narrative
Fig. 30-32

contemplative
Fig. 33-36

secretive
Fig. 37-39

etherial
Fig. 40-43
Fig. 44 Approach to Entrance
According to an interview Fumihiko Maki gave for *Australian Design Review* magazine, he considers the Kaze-no-Oka Crematorium, located in the rural town of Nakatsu, Japan, to be his greatest work. The crematorium is said to be a direct response to the crematory in which he celebrated his mother’s funeral. Because Tokyo is so densely populated, many deceased bodies need cremation simultaneously, particularly during the winter flu season. Consequently, the typical crematorium has become more institutionalized, almost resembling an automated assembly line of sorts.\(^{26}\) As Japanese and many other first-world cultures have become more globalized, the reliance on religion as a mechanism to cope with death has been greatly reduced. With each generation to which the customs are passed, meaning is lost as our modern society moves more and more towards uniformity. The rituals that once surrounded the mourning process have now become independent of the religions in which they once originated and now form their own social behavior. Therefore, the behaviors associated with the grieving process in contemporary Japan often resemble the behaviors that occur in a large airport terminal.\(^{27}\) Even though memory serves as an important symbol during the funeral customs of many cultures, these memories have lost their richness, as more and more funeral customs have become rote. In one large room, multiple cremations occur at once with so much efficiency that little thought is given to the lives of those who have passed. Instead of remembering the life of the deceased, contemporary society is focused on death and the uncertainty that lies ahead.

With the intent to reestablish dignity to a difficult time, Maki set out to make a crematory that physically orchestrated the transitional procession from life to death to afterlife. Here, architecture serves as the bridge between the two realities of life and death. Much like his contemporary, Juhani Pallasma, who wrote in his book *Encounters*, “I see the task of architecture as the defense of the authenticity of human experience...”\(^{28}\) Maki set out to create a circulatory progression of spaces that was heightened by Japanese ritualistic experiences. While the rooms are all of different sizes and have different locations, they are unified through treatment of material and light. Unlike Western classical architecture, the process or journey is far more important than arriving at a particular focal point.\(^{29}\) After cremation, the family of the deceased has to wait one-and-a-half hours in a waiting space, then come back to the enshrinement room to collect the ashes and bones, and then return to the arrival path.

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\(^{27}\) Matsunami, *Funeral Customs of the World*, 327.


Fig. 45 Transitional Courtyard Space Representing Oku
To reintroduce meaning into the contemporary funeral customs, Maki literally and symbolically creates a place that uplifts and comforts the grief-stricken by looking to the future. Between the prayer hall and the room in which the body is cremated lies a small courtyard or waiting space. The movement between spaces is carefully choreographed around a shallow pool of water. The ritual of loss and mourning unfolds architecturally. Mourners enter in darkness, turning towards the light only when leaving the remains of their loved ones in the retort, then wait in a quiet, serene, enclosed space. Looking upward to the sky through the skylight that pierces the darkness, the eye is drawn upwards towards the clouds. This heavy and visceral space is modeled after the idea of Oku, or inner Japanese space. The roofless space does not have a programmatic function, but instead functions as a transitional space that mourners pass through to get to other spaces. Because it is open to the sky above, the loved ones of the deceased are given the opportunity to stare up at the heavens and reflect upon the meaning and purpose of their own life. In Japanese culture, the death of a relative is seen as a crossroads. Maki wants the loved ones to acknowledge that they are standing at the intersection between their memories of the distant past and their aspirations towards the future. According to Maki, “All you see is the sky and some clouds – and possibly a dragon”. The idea of a dragon is a rich symbol in Japanese ritual as a means to leave reality and awaken the imagination. Instead of focusing on the negative reality of death, the loved ones are to imagine a future full of meaning that is rooted in positive memories of the past.

32. Edgar, “Beam me up, Fumihiko Maki.”
Fig. 46 Prayer Hall
Besides the transitional courtyard space, the prayer hall is also a symbolic reality between death and the afterlife. Some mourners might even describe this prayer hall as a circle of hell that is midway between cremation and entombment. In contemporary crematories, it is often a room that is filled with isolation and grief, as it looks to the past. Like the courtyard, Maki strives instead to have this space look to the future as a means of achieving a powerful, emotional connection. The room is intentionally very minimal in its detailing. The walls are a bare canvas onto which loved ones can attach memories of the deceased. Similar to the courtyard, there is a skylight to allow mourners to gaze up at the clouds as a way of humanizing an otherwise empty space.

The juxtaposed transition between life and death is further heightened through Maki’s mixing of unexpected materials. In a gesture to the ruins left from ancient times, Cor-ten steel walls rise out of the gently rolling landscape. Overall, the building looks and feels quite somber, accepting its emotional and ritualistic roles. Maki’s typical palette of luminous light has been muted. Instead of his typical palette, Maki claims that gray and black colors, seen in the natural stone, plaster, and concrete, are used along with brown colors, reflected in the Cor-ten steel and wood, to establish a natural look that manifests the relationship between life, death, the earth, and the sky. Natural stone in muted colors follows the paths of the mourners through the crematorium, while severe black accents frame the moments of transition. The Cor-ten steel panels form the overall skeleton of the building, piercing the stone and black accents. While modern in style and built out of contemporary materials, the building references not only the surrounding rolling landscape but also the historic Japanese building traditions that lie nearly forgotten in Japan’s quest for modernization.

33. Edgar, “Beam me up, Fumihiko Maki.”
“It is time that offers the ultimate evaluation of architecture. Time alone judges its usefulness to society and its durability as an object. Moreover, time determines whether or not the architecture has acquired a symbolism, which will allow it to serve as a memory device throughout history. Meanwhile, the work of architecture maintains its autonomy as society and architect look on. As long as a work of architecture continues to exist, it questions our present.”
Looking at the photos of Maki’s crematorium, I am reminded of his carefully orchestrated series of events. I am also reminded of his austere material palette of blacks and grays. While I understand that materials were chosen to reflect the natural landscape, I have a much more difficult time accepting them as contributing to the sense of serenity that Maki envisioned. For me, the concrete walls and oxidized Cor-ten steel are too austere and ugly to feel appropriate here. I understand that the interior rooms were intended to have a minimal look to function as a sort of blank canvas, but I would imagine the rooms might be too severe and depressing for someone who has just lost a close family member or friend. I know that I personally connect with spaces that have rich, natural materials. These materials give a sense of warmth and if well-detailed can be seen to wrap themselves around the occupants. I imagine a cozy room wrapped in wood paneling and anchored by a stone fireplace, not bare concrete walls. I understand however, that Maki intended the space to be experienced, not just glanced at on the glossy pages of a magazine. The cold material choices of gray and black might also not carry the same connotations in Japanese culture, although in Western culture black symbolizes death and white symbolizes rebirth. In addition to the material choice, I also question the minimal detailing. Yes, the walls can serve as a blank canvas to allow the mourners to disassociate from the past and look to the future, and emptiness has an important place in Japanese aesthetics, but what happens if the vast expanses of wall remind them of how empty their life is without their loved one? Besides the material choice and the detailing, I also question the use of darkness. I understand that the darkness is part of the symbolic procession that Maki wants the mourners to experience, but the intention of forcing grieving individuals to experience dark confined rooms seems a little brutal.
UNCERTAIN
Santo Stefano Cemetery Amoretti + Calvi + Ranalli

Fig. 47 Overlooking the Sea
Located along Italy’s famed Amalfi Coast, the Santo Stefano Cemetery, designed by Aldo Amoretti, Marco Calvi, and Giancarlo Ranalli, consists of approximately 70 rectangular internments, arranged on a 30-centimeter module that is both methodical and disorienting. Referencing the unfamiliar and uncomfortable transition into the afterlife, Santo Stefano Cemetery forces mourners to travel through an unfamiliar and uncomfortable world. Mourners must travel down narrow paths compressed by rows of internments. While there are clean lines, straight edges, and a sense of order, the cemetery ultimately feels chaotic and uninviting. As the mourners progress towards the sea, the Carrara-clad tombs appear to grow taller and more ominous as the sunlight dims. The sloping topography creates subtle waves in the ground that cause the marble blocks to rise from different levels. Upon pushing past the final row of tombs, the mood completely changes. Unexpectedly, the darkness and gloom gives way to bright sunshine.

Drawing from the sensitivity of the subject matter, the cemetery expresses feelings of absence, emptiness, and uneasiness through its choice of materials, lack of wayfinding, and bold geometries. The tombs appear to be unmarked and quite utilitarian in their aesthetic, even while clad in marble. The ritual of loved ones placing flowers as a means of paying respect has been replaced with something entirely new and very internal. Unlike the old tradition, which focused more on the deceased, the new custom places the emphasis on the mourner. Similar to the deconstructivist notion of “decentering,” visitors to the cemetery are taken out of their comfort zone in an attempt to strip their minds of any negative preconceptions about death. Instead of focusing on the past, the mourners are to focus on the possibilities that live in the future.

Fig. 48 Narrow Path Between Tombs
CRITIQUE

What strikes me most about this project is not the architecture itself but the beautiful vistas of the ocean. Knowing that they could not compete with some of the most celebrated natural landscapes, Amoretti + Calvi + Ranalli consciously chose to design a simple set of tombs that instead gestures toward the unspoiled scenery. From a distance, the tombs probably look like one of the many small whitewashed towns that dot Italy’s coast. This understated simplicity serves as a powerful reminder that worldly exterior appearances and possessions are not nearly as important as what lies within, under the surface.

Another feature of the cemetery that I appreciate is that there is not a prescribed path that mourners are to take. In many of the other precedents, the architects design a form that orchestrates a sequence of events. Here, mourners are allowed to freely meander among the narrow paths that surround the tombs, and the journey can take as little or as long as the mourner wishes. For me, this seems like it is more reflective of the mourning process – a process that is very unique for everyone.
Fig. 49-50 Contrast Between Exterior and Interior
Inspired by the rugged landscape that surrounds it, the new funeral home for the Valencian town of Pinoso does little to mask its true purpose from its hometown. Unlike its counterparts here in the U.S., which rely on an abundance of pastel colors and Victorian antiques to create an atmosphere of polite reflection, Pinoso’s funeral home is painfully minimalistic. By stripping away all unnecessary decoration, COR & Asociados made certain that mourners would have no other choice but to focus on the deceased.

The interior and the exterior of the funeral home is a study in contrasts and careful space planning. Because the funeral home is located on the edge of a town, privacy was a huge consideration to ensure that mourners are focused on the deceased, not the happenings of the outside world. In order to solve this problem, a series of five courtyards were developed to allow natural light while still offering the necessary privacy. Wrapping around these courtyards are the major programmatic spaces. The interior of these spaces references the fragile mental state of the grieving mind. Hidden beams and cantilevers free the interior spaces from structural constraints, creating an interior that soothes and displaces the mourners from the realities of death.\textsuperscript{38} Contrasting the fragile interior is the blunt and heavy exterior, which represents the finality of life. Through these contrasting aesthetics, the architecture aims to slow down the speed in which we live and force us to focus on the present, which in this case is the death of a loved one.

Like the Santo Stefano Cemetery, Pinoso’s funeral home caters more to the loved ones than to the deceased and accommodates its guests by looking to the future. All of the views from within are controlled. When looking through the windows, only two physical features can be seen – the earth and the sky. Similar to the courtyards, the abundance of glazing allows mourners to gaze up at the clouds as a way of humanizing an otherwise empty space. Throughout the funeral home, the rooms are intentionally very minimal in their detailing. Similar to the design intent behind the interior of Maki’s crematorium, the funeral home’s walls act as a blank canvas so that mourners can remove any negative preconceptions about death. After allowing mourners the opportunity to cleanse their minds of negativity, they can then attach memories of the deceased’s life.

Fig. 51 Interior-Exterior Permeability
While this building is a little stark for my taste, I do admire the innovative space planning, incorporating a series of courtyards. These courtyards blur the line between indoors and outdoors, filling the interior with an abundance of natural light and framing views of the surrounding countryside. Typically, funeral homes are very private spaces that tend to be very dark because of the lack of windows. While still very private, the Pinoso Funeral Home’s interior is vastly different. Instead of being surrounded by depressing and ornamental interiors, mourners progress through a series of spaces that are simple and bright. Despite the difference in appearance, the interiors are still quite somber due to the architect’s minimalistic detailing.

In addition, I also admire the long hallways that wind around the courtyards. In many cases, hallways can be a negative because they add extraneous square footage to the program. In the case of a funeral home, hallways can be a benefit because they provide a clear circulation path for mourners to take during a visitation. The paths also allow separation between those who want to say their final goodbyes and those who want to visit with family.
Fig. 53-54 Front and Rear Facades
Lakewood Garden Mausoleum in Minneapolis is known for its masterful use of materials. The overall material palette can have a profound effect on the mourners. While very simple in form, the mausoleum has an understated elegance that is very rich. As the spaces progress from one room to the next, different combinations of wood, stone, and metal are added. The contrast of textures – light and dark, rough and smooth, rustic and refined – call upon visual and tactile senses to calm the mind.

These beautiful and exotic materials are a key design focus of the mausoleum and are intended to provide comfort and distraction. According to the project architect Joan Soranno, Lakewood Garden Mausoleum is a contemporary expression of an enduring building type. The historic nature of the materials allowed this traditional funerary architecture to be reinterpreted in a modern way. The split-faced gray granite that covers the façades gives a sense of permanence and timelessness. Unlike most funerary architecture in America, which tends to be dark, somber, and inwardly focused, Lakewood Mausoleum is outwardly focused through expansive windows and skylights, abundant natural light, and a strong interior connection to nature and the landscape.39

Embedded in these materials are carefully choreographed symbols. These symbols not only speak to the relationship between the architectural past and present, but also the living past, present, and future. Framing each of the windows are billowing surfaces of white marble mosaic tiles. The tiles are laid in a delicate pattern of criss-crossing circles. The pattern and the material help to subtly reference the century-old Byzantine chapel that faces the new mausoleum. These intersecting circles represent a *vesica piscis*, a common motif in ancient architecture that can also be found in much of Carlo Scarpa’s work. These intersecting circles can be described as a link between this world and the next. This same motif is present in the decorative iron railings and screens of the mausoleum’s columbarium and crypt rooms.

Fig. 55-57 Interior Materials and Circular Motifs
Fig. 58 Concept Diagram
Fig. 59 Site Plan

1 Chapel (1909)
2 Mausoleum (1967)
3 “Garden Crypts” (1960's)
4 New Mausoleum + Reception Center
5 Green roof
6 New garden niche "rooms"
7 New garden crypt "room"
8 Terraced lawn steps
9 Reflecting pool
10 Central gathering space
11 Knot garden
12 Service drive
Besides the masterful use of materials, the mausoleum presents a carefully choreographed sequence of events that manipulates the ground plane. The mausoleum has a long, linear format in which the mourners gradually enter deeper into the earth. Frequently through the experience, glimpses of the earth and sky are included so that the mourners are reminded to focus on the possibilities of the future and not dwell in the emptiness of the present. Internally, the mausoleum is organized into two halves with very different functions. The first half houses the entry and reception rooms. A grand staircase divides the space and travels to the lower level made up of six crypt rooms. Partially tucked underground, the crypt rooms are illuminated through large skylights. Each skylight is of a different shape and design. Because the heights and widths vary so much in relation to the ground plane above and the ceiling inside the rooms, the feeling of traveling deeper and deeper into the earth’s surface is heightened. In addition to glimpses of the sky, glimpses of the surrounding gardens are framed in such a way that the vistas appear to be fine paintings.

Fig. 60 Upper Foyer
Fig. 61-62 Columbarium and Crypt Rooms
CRITIQUE

I am really drawn to the Lakewood Garden Mausoleum, perhaps in part because as an American, I do not fully appreciate the subtle beauty of minimalism, and find Lakewood’s approach to be more capable of healing someone who is mourning. While the projects by COR and Amoretti + Calvi + Ranalli were intended to have a minimal look to function as a sort of blank canvas, the spaces become too severe and unengaging for someone who has just lost a close family member or friend. On the contrary, the rich, natural materials used at Lakewood Garden Mausoleum give a sense of warmth and can be seen and felt to wrap themselves around the occupants. Compared to the other two precedents, Lakewood has an intensity that is absent in the other two projects. While the cemetery and funeral home add interest only through subtle shifts in geometry, view, and scale, the Lakewood Mausoleum presents a varied set of experiences. Not only does each room have a different look and feel, but the relationships among these rooms is different. The jamb conditions change from small cased mahogany openings on the upper level to monumental stone jambs on the lower level. The subtle use of natural and artificial lighting is also exemplary. The ceilings of the six crypt rooms are adorned with a series of monitors and skylights that are placed at different heights and oriented at different angles. Because of these subtle differences, each of the crypt rooms is bathed in a different kind of light. Prior to entering the crypt rooms, the mourners are surrounded by dim light, so that the concentrated moments of bright sunlight can be seen to symbolize the earthly gateway into the next world.
CONTEMPLATIVE

Brion-Vega Cemetery Carlo Scarpa

The viewing device of the cemetery’s meditation pavilion represents a *vesica piscis*, a common motif in Scarpa’s architecture. These intersecting circles are seen as the union between man and woman during the cycle of life from beginning to end. Over the years a ritual has developed in which visitors pass through the overlapping circles to obtain water from a small stream in order to water the flowers that adorn family graves.

**Fig. 63 Vesica Piscis Motif**
Located in a dense residential neighborhood, the funeral home is situated entirely underground and made of solid concrete like a burial vault. Its only exposed facade, the roof, is covered by a sheet of water that reflects the sky overhead. Piercing the pool are tall, angular skylights that appear to be reaching up to the heavens. To enter the hidden structure, mourners must walk down a long ramp that slowly descends deeper and deeper into the earth.
Within the intimate space, visitors are surrounded by windowless walls made of undulating bricks. The bricks are intentionally rough and imperfect to add interest. Like a cascade of light, a full-height metal sculpture by Harry Bertoia glitters from the circular skylight down to the simple, unadorned marble altar. Outside, a similar effect is created as natural light filters upward from shallow slits in the brick walls and catches reflected light from the moat.
CRITIQUE SUMMARY

Maki, COR & Asociados, HGA, and BAAS talk in great detail about wanting the mourners to be able to transition from loss to acceptance through a series of prescribed spatial, symbolic, and sensual sequences, comparable in a way to the functions of traditional rituals. In deploying architecture to affect people’s moods and behaviors, these architects are seeking to interpret, highlight, and influence the way people mourn. Behavior is manipulated in the material cues that indicate what path to take, when they should look up at the sky, when and where they should pick up the deceased’s ashes, etc. Similar to the way that the funeral customs of the world’s major religions channel emotions, intensify moods, and guide cognitive functions, these crematoriums, funeral homes, and mausoleums guide or influence the visitors to think and feel a certain way about the death of the deceased. While it cannot be verified whether the architects’ intentions actually hold true, they do seem well-informed and plausible. Maybe the stark interiors, while not warm and soothing, are effective in forcing the mourners to think about death because it so unexpected. Yet, the mourners also have the conscious power of choice to dwell in the present. Instead of simply focusing on the negative and the loneliness and uncertainty that lies ahead, mourners have the opportunity instead to engage in the rituals and focus on the meaning of the life-transition they are experiencing and the future.

Grieving is a very personal process. No two people will experience a death in exactly the same way, and therefore, as with any example of funerary architecture, some people will complete the journey in the intended sequence and others, for example, will rush through the sequence of steps to simply get to the final stage in order to avoid actually grieving. This notion of people simply going through the process without thinking and hiding their true emotions is described by Guy Debord as “false images concealing authentic experiences.”

Fig. 66 The Acropolis
MUSEUM PSYCHOLOGY

While the previously described crematoriums, cemeteries, and mausoleums provide excellent precedents for funerary architecture, they fail to address the programatic needs of this thesis project. This new death museum will be a hybrid museum and educational center that teaches casket salesmen, funeral home owners, and the general public about the latest trends in burial and cremation. Therefore, understanding the thought and rationale behind museum layout and programming is paramount.

Museums tell important stories by collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting objects, living specimens, and historical records. Museums also help communities better understand and appreciate cultural diversity. According to psychologist Stephen Bitgood, the success of a museum can be compromised if the museum patrons and staff fail to understand their audience. In his noteworthy text Social Design in Museums: the Psychology of Visitor’s Studies, Bitgood coined the term “museum fatigue” to describe this unfortunate situation when guests become overwhelmed by the information presented through the exhibits.  

The word “museum” comes from the Greek Μουσεῖον (Mouseion), meaning a place or temple dedicated to the muses. As the building relates to the muses, the word “museum” came to be known as a building designed for the study of the arts. The first museum is considered to be a small hill opposite the Acropolis where a man named Mousaious would sing. After his death, the hill was renamed Mouseion in his honor.

EARLY MUSEUMS

The earliest museums in the modern context were located in the private homes of the wealthy elite who would add special galleries of rooms in their palaces for the purpose of displaying their unique collections of rare art and artifacts. The oldest museum that is still in operation today dates from the Italian Renaissance: the Musei Capitolini in Rome was founded in 1471 by Pope Sixtus IV and exhibited the pope’s rare collection of ancient Roman, Greek, and Egyptian sculpture.

Fig. 67 Musei Capitolini Michelangelo
The Ashmolean Museum is considered to be the first public museum that was open to everyone regardless of social status. The museum was founded in 1677 in association with Oxford University and houses the rare and antique manuscripts of Elias Ashmole. The oldest museum in the United States is the Charleston Museum, founded in 1773 in Charleston, SC. Because the earliest museums were associated with the aristocracies, and often part of their elaborate palaces, the museum has come to serve as a grandiose, landmark structure that is often located in a prominent place within the city. Many times the architecture is very formal and imposing. More modern museums have replaced the classical ornamentation with daring, avant-garde skins, like those of Frank Gehry or Santiago Calatrava, which have become works of art in themselves. These buildings are also still very elaborate and can be quite imposing, as they are often designed to ensure that all eyes are focused on them.

**Fig. 68 Ashmolean Museum** Charles Cockerell
INFORMAL EDUCATION

Museums are informal learning institutions. As educational institutions, museums share several characteristics with formal education classrooms. Both usually formulate objectives or teaching points. Both employ common media: lecture, film, slides, computers, and demonstrations. In addition, both organize their subject matter into academic chapter headings and rely on text materials to deliver messages.42

Fig. 69 Beyeler Foundation Renzo Piano

One way to describe environmental design in museums from the visitor perspective is to focus on the major programatic elements that make up this building type: the entrance/lobby, exhibition galleries, and amenity areas. More than these spaces, the macroarchitecture of the museum has a profound impact on the way that visitors experience the museum. It narrates the story, complements the artifacts, and sets or adds to the ambience.

The architectural style expresses meaning to visitors. In terms of archetypal precedent, a connection can be made between the classical buildings that sit atop the Acropolis and the classically-inspired museums like the Louvre, Metropolitan, or Smithsonian. The Greek temple with its pediment, detailed cornice, and perfectly proportioned columns seems to have been used for centuries as the exterior motif of choice for museums. Inside, the idea of a white box has become synonymous with the word “museum.” The museum serves as the canvas to which the art or artifacts can be applied. This seems especially true of contemporary museums.

Three prominent approaches to the architecture of museums characterize the most distinguished recent examples. These are avant-garde art, transparent minimalism, and unexpected juxtaposition.
Avant-Garde Art
Fig. 70-73

Transparent Minimalism
Fig. 74-77

Unexpected Juxtaposition
Fig. 78-81
AVANT-GARDE ART

While art museums are envisioned as vessels to hold artifacts and artwork, the architecture of the museum itself can often be considered art in its own right. The new addition to the Jewish Museum takes its unique, twisted form from the iconic Star of David. The interior of the museum consists of three intersecting spaces or tunnels that help connect the museum to its site and represent the different facets of modern Jewish life.
TRANSPARENT MINIMALISM

The Beyeler Foundation is known for its simplicity. In the age of the Daniel Libeskind and Frank Gehry “look at me” museums, this design instead exudes a quiet sense of confidence. Instead of angular metal forms that twist and turn in every direction and hide their underlying steel structure, the building is comprised of three linear cubic forms that seem to hover above the surrounding landscape.

Fig. 83 Beyeler Foundation Renzo Piano
UNEXPECTED JUXTAPOSITION

Like the Beyeler Foundation, the Barnes Foundation was envisioned as a series of linear galleries in a garden. The new design was predicated on the arrangement of the galleries within the original building. From the exterior, the historic windows of the galleries punctuate the monolithic stone facade. This dichotomy between old vs. new and material richness vs. spatial ingenuity sets the tone for the interior.
IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE VISITOR PERSPECTIVE IS KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF A MUSEUM. THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CAN BE APPLIED TO SOLVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE MUSEUM SETTING. THIS MUSEUM OF DEATH PROJECT WILL HAVE THREE PRIMARY AUDIENCE TYPES:

- **Funeral Directors**: Comprise the largest museum audience. Guided by Batesville Casket employees. Supplementary educational material present. Motivated by business interests.

- **Local Residents**: Personal connection to museum. Focus on specific content areas. Similar set of values and demographics. Motivated by personal connection.

- **Leisure Visitors**: Groups of families and friends. Very heterogeneous and multigenerational. Unguided and unscheduled. Motivated by curiosity.
CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

Information about what to do, alternative choices, and where to go is often provided in a visitor guide, on orientation signage, or by museum staff. Below are design guidelines to consider when laying out museum interiors:

Fig. 85 Beyeler Foundation Renzo Piano
WAYFINDING

Wayfinding information is also critical at the beginning of the visit. Hand-held maps, fixed “you-are-here” signage, directional arrows, and museum staff are all used to decrease confusion. However, with the availability of iPhones and iPads, the value of printed material is beginning to diminish. Below are some guidelines to consider:

- **Visitor Guides**: A visitor guide may increase the total time visitors spend in the museum and result in overall increased satisfaction with the visit.
- **Redundant Cues**: Redundant wayfinding cues are helpful to visitors because such cues provide a feeling of security and give a choice of options.
- **Simplicity**: Maps should be simple but give enough information so that visitors can locate where they are at any moment.
- **Standard Principles**: “You-are-here” maps should be oriented forward up, contain a “you-are-here” symbol, and have a landmark that is visible in the environment.
- **Hand-Held Maps**: Hand-held maps are preferred over other wayfinding devices and should be conveniently located as needed.
- **Digital Wayfinding**: Interactive websites and downloadable apps are quickly replacing hand-held maps as the preferred wayfinding device.

EXHIBITION GALLERIES

The essential format for the museum galleries is often considered to be a white box. Over the years, the idea of a white box has become synonymous with the word “museum.” The museum serves as the canvas to which the art or artifacts can be applied. This seems especially true of contemporary museums like Renzo Piano’s Beyeler Foundation and the Modern Wing at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Fig. 86 Beyeler Foundation Renzo Piano
GUIDELINES

Three interrelated principles of attention explain and help organize what is known about visitors’ reactions. More important than the artifacts, it is crucial that museums narrate a clear story through their exhibits.45

- **Principle 1**: Attention to exhibits is selective, visitors attend to one thing at a time, and what gets attention is determined by distinctiveness of the object.

- **Principle 2**: The resources for attending to exhibitions have a limited capacity and are depleted by mental and physical effort.

- **Principle 3**: Visitors must be motivated in order to focus their attention on exhibits.

PRINCIPLE 1: SELECTIVITY

Attention is selective in that some items capture our attention while others do not. In addition, we can only attend to one item at a time. Capturing visitor attention is the first step in the process of communicating the educational message. Two factors required to capture attention are the distinctiveness of the exhibit elements and the traffic flow patterns in the environment. The more unique the element, the more likely it will be noticed. Traffic flow also influences whether an exhibit element will be detected. Objects located outside pathways have little chance of receiving attention. 46

Fig. 87 Avant-garde exhibits capture attention

Fig. 88 Too many artifacts can overwhelm

Fig. 89 Circular flow alleviates bottlenecking

PRINCIPLE 2: LIMITED CAPACITY OF ATTENTION

The second principle of attention states that the resources of attention have a limited capacity, as there appears to be only so much available room for knowledge. After a few seconds, the information is depleted with physical and mental effort. The reserves are renewed slowly over time by cognitive-emotional arousal. “Museum fatigue” increases over time as the brain tries to process and understand more and more information. Visitors’ attention to exhibits drops rapidly after 30 to 45 minutes in museums.47

fig. 90-92 The consequences of an over-stimulated brain

PRINCIPLE 3: MOTIVATING FOCUSED ATTENTION

The third principle of capturing attention in exhibition design is focused attention requires motivation. Motivating visitors to focus on labels and objects is the most challenging task when designing exhibits. There are three general factors involved in motivating visitors to focus their attention on exhibits: minimizing the perceived effort required to obtain information, increasing cognitive-emotional arousal, and minimizing distracting factors.48

Fig. 93-94 Information walls rethought for today

One such solution in helping visitors focus their attention is the use of digital media to replace artifact labels. Gallery One at the Cleveland Museum of Art is one such example, where visitors create their own works of art and understand creativity by being creative themselves. Through interactive games, visitors can put their own bodies into the experience, matching poses with figurative sculptures, or browse the museum’s collections by making different facial gestures. All of these interfaces are experiences that invite visitors to understand art and art-making through intuition and play.

Fig. 95 Gallery One Cleveland Museum of Art Local Projects + Gallagher Associates

Fig. 96 Jewish Museum Berlin  Studio Daniel Libeskind
Successful museums choreograph a set of experiences for users that transcend the presentation of artifacts, exhibits, and knowledge. The Museum of Death design is comprised of two linear bars that appear to be rising up out of the earth into the sky. These two gently sloping bars are internally divided into three levels containing approximately 40,000 square feet of conditioned space. Where the two bars intersect is a central atrium space. The top floors contain the main programmatic elements of the museum galleries and the showroom. On the bottom floor, the secondary programmatic spaces, consisting of the auditorium, library, seminar room, and a small restaurant, can be found. Upon entering the museum’s lobby, guests will immediately head through a series of stairs along one side of the central atrium. After visiting the galleries and showroom, guests will then descend down a series of stairs on the opposite side of the atrium.

For this museum to be a success, its floor plan must have flexibility. The exhibit space will need to be periodically reworked as new exhibits and artifacts are included in the permanent and visiting collections. Also, each of the three visitor groups is coming to the museum for a specific reason that is very different from the other two groups. Therefore, a circular layout is used to organize the major spaces, accessed off a hallway so that guests can be free to pick and choose what interests them.
**PROGRAM LIST**

**Town**
- Highway sign at interstate exit
- Way-finding through Batesville
- Signage at entrance along Highway 46
- Batesville Blvd. entry sequence

**Landscape**
- Views to countryside and Batesville Casket
- Parking area with drop-off area adjacent to building
- Reflecting pool and courtyard
- Meditation garden

**Museum**
- Lobby overlooking landscape
- Reception desk
- Interior atrium connecting galleries
- Vertical circulation
- Permanent exhibit gallery
- Visiting exhibit gallery
- Reflection room
- Showroom
- Interactive library
- Large auditorium for guest speakers
- Seminar room
- Restaurant
- Exterior terrace
- Commercial kitchen
- Audiovisual equipment
- Artifact storage and preservation
- Mechanical room
- Staff offices
- Restrooms
Below is the intended path of movement for the three user groups. Because each group is visiting the Museum of Death for a different purpose, each group will follow a different path.
The diagrams to the right graphically illustrate the breakdown of interior space by programmatic usage. As illustrated, the circulation spaces comprise the largest portion of the interior. Also, the support spaces, consisting of offices and storage, are greater in size than the gallery rooms.
Fig. 99 lower level
SPACE ALLOCATION
Beyeler Foundation Renzo Piano

These diagrams also graphically illustrate the breakdown of interior square footage by programmatic usage. However, the gallery rooms comprise the largest portion of the interior. In this scheme, less space is given to the offices and storage rooms, unlike the Barnes Foundation.

Fig. 100 first floor

Fig. 101 lower level
Fig. 102 parti
SPACE DERIVATION

The following diagrams show appropriate dimensions for interior and exterior programmatic elements.

Fig. 103 Parking Area 100 spaces at 9’ x 18’
Parking Lot Design
Virginia Asphalt Association
Fig. 104 Lobby 50’ x 30’
Beyeler Foundation
Renzo Piano

Fig. 105 Gallery 50’ x 100’
Beyeler Foundation
Renzo Piano
Fig. 106 Auditorium 40’ x 60’
Barnes Foundation
Tod Williams + Billie Tsien

Fig. 107 Seminar Room 20’ x 60’
Barnes Foundation
Tod Williams + Billie Tsien
Fig. 108
Restaurant 42’ x 35’
110 people
Kruse Funeral Home
TWP Architecture

Fig. 109
Private Office 11’ x 15’
Kruse Funeral Home
TWP Architecture

Fig. 110
Kitchen 33’ x 17’
Kruse Funeral Home
TWP Architecture

Fig. 111
Restrooms 18’ x 24’
For 5-piece men + women
ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Permanent Gallery ← Central Atrium → Visiting Gallery

Central Atrium ↓ Showroom ↑ Auditorium

Fig. 112
Fig. 113
Fig. 114 MIT Chapel Eero Saarinen
During the grieving process, many cultures follow a prescribed set of rituals to ease the pain and suffering of the mourners. The death of a close friend or family member is something that we often try to avoid, but this painful time can become much more manageable through a series of rituals. These funeral customs are often tied to the local religion. Rituals were first practiced thousands of years ago as a way for the ancients to enact, explain, and participate with the unknown. Over time, the repetitive actions and sayings evolved into what we now know as modern religions. As the religious beliefs and practices evolved to suit the changing times, the architecture in which the funeral rituals were held also evolved. Crematoriums, mausoleums, and other sacred spaces began to manipulate the surrounding environment to affect the way people mourned. Some set up a series of framed events in which visitors had to pass through a series of transitional spaces to reach the next programmatic element. These transitional spaces were marked by unexpected architectural gestures such as abrupt periods of darkness, quick glimpses of nature, and heightened architectural drama. Other crematoriums and mausoleums symbolically presented a journey during which the mourner traveled deeper and deeper into the earth. Each step could be marked by a change in material. One room might be light and airy, detailed in a soothing palette of creamy stone, while the next room would be dark and moody, detailed in a palette of rich wood. A final architectural technique that some contemporary crematoriums employ is the idea of presenting a blank canvas onto which mourners can attach different memories of the deceased’s life. Using these ideas of spatial progression, abrupt changes in material, and minimalism, I aim to create a similar mood in my museum, which reflects the symbolic rituals that are practiced as well as mark the transition from loss to acceptance.
Fig. 115 Mandarin Oriental Barcelona
Patricia Urquiola

Fig. 116 Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec
OMA
CENTRAL ATRIUM

The central atrium acts as the hub of the museum. Visitors will continually pass through and around it to get to all of the different galleries and interior functions. This space will be bathed in natural light and ultimately act as a vast transitional space between the various programmatic elements. At the entries of the various rooms, a thick millwork casing detail will compress visitors before they pass into the adjoining spaces. This compression zone will feel quite dark and act as a secondary transitional space. The walls of the space will be clad in the same stone as the exterior of the building so the space feels like it is outdoors even though it is protected from the elements.

PERMANENT GALLERY

The main gallery spaces will be comprised of a series of adjoining rooms that house the various funerary and burial artifacts. The galleries will wrap around the interior courtyard in a circular motion to mimic the different phases in the grieving process. Because these spaces function as galleries, the detailing will be minimal so that the artifacts remain the focus. The intended path of movement will be denoted through a series of skylights that physically and symbolically guide guests through the adjoining galleries. The transition between galleries will be marked by an abrupt change in material to indicate the end of one gallery or phase and the beginning of another.
Fig. 117
Jewish Museum Berlin Studio Daniel Libeskind

Fig. 118 The Barnes Foundation
Tod Williams + Billie Tsien

Fig. 119 Windmill Hill
Stephen Marshall Architects
VISITING GALLERY

Adjacent to the permanent gallery will be the visiting gallery. Following the progression of spaces established in the main galleries, this space will be very minimal in detail so that visitors can attach their own insights and experiences to the displays. Because the space constantly will evolve to house new exhibits, interior partitions will be flexible.

SEMINAR ROOMS

Located on a separate level from the galleries, the seminar rooms will mark the beginning of the more private wing of the building. Batesville Casket staff and guest lecturers will hold educational workshops to instruct the public, funeral directors, and salespeople. Instead of being a conference room setup where everyone sits around a long table, the space will be more reminiscent of a family room in a residential home. Small intimate seating groups will encourage conversation and warm wood paneling and a fireplace will provide a calming atmosphere where people will hopefully feel comfortable talking about death.

LIBRARY

Next to the seminar rooms will be a multimedia library. The library will house a collection of books, recordings, and digital images from some of today’s leading experts on the subject of death and dying. Like the seminar room, the space will intentionally feel cozy to give a soothing ambience. The main room where the stacks are held will have small reading alcoves off of it to invite people to grab a book or digital file to sit and learn.
Fig. 120 Downtown Batesville
Batesville is a small town of 6500 in southern Indiana, surrounded by gently rolling cornfields. For thousands of years, Native Americans roamed the gentle hills made of rich loam and separated by creeks that provided the right climate to grow valuable hardwoods like oak, black walnut, wild cherry, ash, and poplar.

Both the French and British explored the area, but American settlers did not arrive until 1835 when Teunis Amack purchased 120 acres of land and built a log cabin. Seventeen years later, he sold his homestead to the Callahan Trust Company, which split up the acreage into 45 lots for a town along the Lawrenceburg-Upper Mississippi River Railroad. This new community was named in honor of Joshua Bates, an engineer, surveyor, and member of the Callahan Trust Company, who bought the first parcel.50

The surrounding forest attracted German immigrants, many of whom found Batesville while traveling the railroad west from Cincinnati to Indianapolis. Starting in the 1870s, Batesville became a thriving commercial center, thanks to its many sawmills. The German settlers continued their respected craft of woodworking, passed down from generation to generation, by opening furniture factories. For three decades, furniture-making dominated Batesville industry until sawmill owner George Hillenbrand purchased the struggling Batesville Coffin Company in 1906.

Fig. 121 Site Location
PHYSICAL FEATURES

For this thesis project, a site adjacent to the global headquarters of Batesville Casket Company was chosen. The site is currently a grassy field that overlooks a large retention pond to the rear. Two small storage barns are located against the front edge and face the highway. The site is very flat, which can cause issues with runoff water and flooding. This may be fine for agriculture, but it is not ideal for architecture. Looking at the land immediately surrounding the Batesville Casket building, the earth has been mounded up so the building sits much higher on the site. Most likely, dirt will also have to be brought in and the site regraded to create a similar condition in order to eliminate future flooding. Another condition that will have to be addressed is the strong wind that comes from the west. Currently, there is only one office building to buffer the wind as open fields to the west surround the site. Since outdoor space will be part of the program, landscaping will be used as a buffer.

A new drive off of Batesville Blvd. and parking will be added for all visiting salesmen and guests. By adding the new entrance off of the existing road that leads to Batesville Casket Company, it will physically and symbolically serve as a link between the proposed museum and the main office building. New signage will have to be installed so that guests are aware of where they need to turn to approach the structure.

In terms of an overall feeling, the existing site gives visitors an impression of a blank canvas. There is nothing especially defining of the site, which could almost be located anywhere within the state of Indiana or the Midwest. The vast openness of the site can definitely be seen as an advantage, but it also can be seen as a disadvantage. Because the site is so flat and open, the new building will be very low and linear in nature so that it seems to extend out over the landscape. When speaking of the death of a loved one and its impact on mourners, emptiness is a common feeling that many funeral homes and crematoriums try to avoid in their design. Instead, much emphasis is given to make the mourners feel at ease through a series of constructed vignettes that focus on the natural environment and a careful selection of materials. Likewise, similar attention will be given to the landscape and material palette to compensate for the feelings of desolation.
Fig. 122 Batesville Circulation

1. Interstate 74
2. Highway 46
3. Highway 229
4. Highway 129
5. Site Location
1. Batesville
2. Huntersville
3. Ripley/Franklin County Line
4. Batesville Coffin c. 1900
5. Site Location

Fig. 123 Original Settlements
Fig. 124 Batesville Casket Grading Plan
Fig. 125 Forethought Financial Grading Plan
Fig. 126 Schematic Site Collage
Fig. 128 Site Conditions
Currently, there is a rural ecosystem existing surrounding the site. Two-centuries ago, Batesville was virgin, deciduous forest and heavy clay soil. During the 1850s when Batesville was first settled, the land was cleared to make way for agriculture fields. More than 160 years later, Batesville’s agriculture industry is still thriving. Each spring, corn and soybeans are planted in the fields. The crops provide nourishment to small mammals, which provide a food supply for larger predatory birds and mammals. Shallow pools of water frequently form during periods of heavy rain. Because the soil is clay, rainwater often cannot permeate through the soil. As Batesville has grown and developed over the last few decades, roads and buildings have begun to upset the delicate ecosystem. What once were rolling fields and forests that stretched as far as the eye could see are now parking lots and office buildings.
Fig. 129 Climate Consultant Sun Angle Chart
Allow the warm winter sun to permeate building’s interior

Fig. 130 Climate Consultant Sun Angle Chart
Block the harsh summer sun from the building’s interior
According to Norbert Lechner’s *Heating Cooling and Lighting* book and Climate Consultant software, Batesville, like much of the Ohio River Valley, lies on the edge of the subtropical and humid continental zones. The summers tend to be quite hot and very humid, with significant rainfall. The warmest month is July, when the average daily high is above 90 °F. Winters, on the other hand, tend to be cold and snowy. The coldest month is January, when the average daily high hovers around 30 °F.

**Daylight**
Organize floor plan so winter sun penetrates into daytime use spaces

**Temperature**
Glazing should minimize conductive heat loss and heat gain
Tiles or slate can help store winter daytime solar gain

**Wind**
Protected outdoor living spaces can extend living areas
Locate garages or storage areas on building side facing coldest wind

**Heating**
Heat gain from equipment, lights, and occupants will reduce heating needs
Keep the building small to eliminate excess floor area
Extra insulation
High efficiency furnace
Low mass, tightly sealed construction
Face most of glass area south for solar heating
Steep pitched roofs to shed rain and snow

**Cooling**
Ceiling fans can make interior feel cooler by 5 °F
Natural ventilation can store nighttime cool air in high mass interior surfaces

**Shading**
Trees should not be planted in front of passive solar windows
Window overhangs and sunshades should be used

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Fig. 131 Batesville Industry Map
Batesville Casket Company and its parent company, Hillenbrand Industries, have about a dozen office buildings and factories scattered throughout Batesville. The majority of these buildings are approximately twenty years old and the same architect, Pete Lenox, designed nearly all of the structures. Because of this, the buildings have many of the same aesthetic qualities. The buildings loosely fall into the late-modern style and are primarily clad in gray or white split-face block and Dryvit. Many of the buildings, including Batesville Casket, have a large circular tower for their entrance. Overall, these buildings look fine, but the architecture is fairly nondescript and detailing is starting to look a bit dated. The new Museum of Death will to some extent refer to the existing architecture, while at the same time, present something new that pays homage to Batesville’s rich tradition and growing influence as the leader in the death care industry.

Immediately surrounding the site are two office buildings: Batesville Casket and Forethought Financial. Everything else is a wide-open cornfield. Batesville Blvd. diagonally bisects the site cutting it into two pieces. Traffic on this road is light, as it is only a private drive for the two office buildings. The traffic is only heavy during rush hour when everyone is entering or leaving at once. To the south of the site, Batesville Blvd. meets Highway 46, which is a major state highway. Before Interstate 74 was built during the 1960s, Highway 46 was the major thoroughfare that connected Batesville to Cincinnati. Adjacent to the highway is a deteriorating rail line that has limited operation. Water, sewer, electric, and other utilities are buried underground and follow the path of the road to service the two existing buildings.
Fig. 132 Batesville Casket
Pete Lenox

Fig. 133 Forethought Financial
Pete Lenox
Fig. 134 Sherman House
Downtown Batesville

Fig. 135 Nolte’s Pharmacy
Downtown Batesville
Fig. 136 Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec BIG
The overall form will be composed of two linear, angled bars that intersect to form a central atrium.

The two bars will gradually slope out of the earth and appear as if they are reaching up into the sky. The top floors will house the galleries and exhibition spaces; the bottom floors will house all of the support spaces. The library and adjoining reading room will be tucked away in a secluded space on their own private level and serve as a hidden refuge. The central atrium space will serve as the nucleus of the building, connecting all of the different spaces.

Outside, the form and materials will respect the existing landscape and surrounding buildings.

The building will appear low and horizontal to match the gently rolling landscape. The surrounding landscape will be designed so that it appears to be part of the new museum center. Guests will enter the museum through a sunken garden that highlights the natural elements of earth, water, wind, and fire.

The architectural form and interior layout will help to narrate the stories of death that are to be displayed and shared inside the museum.

A natural palette of materials will engage and stimulate the senses while complementing the artifacts. The museum galleries will be a presentation of sensory experiences, not just artifacts.

The building will aim to be simple, elegant, yet impactful in its detailing.
PRINT SOURCES


Gen. 3:19 AV.


TELEVISION


SOFTWARE

WEB SOURCES


