



University of Texas at Austin

# TOWARDS A THRESHOLD OF SILENCE

Final Paper  
Theory of Architecture I  
Professor Elizabeth Danze

Brett M. Wilbur  
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## Krematorium Baumschulenweg

Treptow, Berlin, Germany (1996-1998)

*Schultes Frank Architekten  
Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank*

*In honor of Robert C and Linda G. Stack.*

*“A box of rain will ease the pain, and love will help you through”.<sup>1</sup>*

### Thresholds OF SILENCE

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ARRIVAL

EXPECATION

DISCOVERY

TOUCH

ASCENSION

RECKONING

DELIVERANCE

TIME

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<sup>1</sup> *Box of Rain* Words by Robert Hunter; music by Phil Lesh on American Beauty, Ice Nine Publishing, 1970.

## TOWARDS A THRESHOLD OF SILENCE

Diagrams are a narrative using the language of graphics and the tools of modern technology. The story to be told is written in the stroke and shading of the instrument on the page, as much as it is in the formal dialogue of the preconditioned impression with the actual building. The same story told in words must by multiplicity expose the narrative in the actual building and hence in the graphic language of impressions. The diagrams can never replace the actual object.

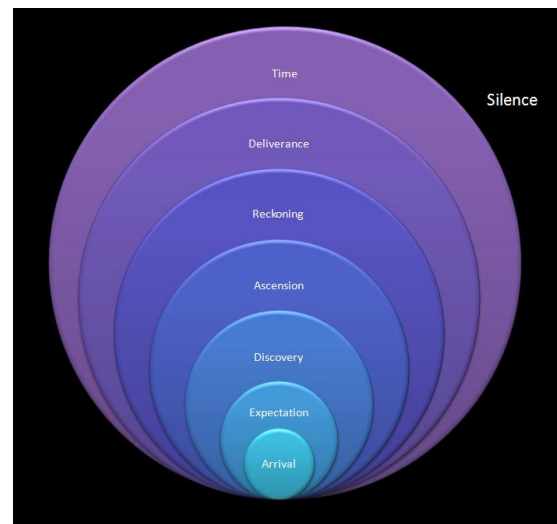
Diagrams are meant for studying. They are by nature hyperbolic. Most diagrams are experimental. All of them should be artistic, in a sense. Lacking experiential facts, they represent speculation as much as concrete analysis. A good diagram embodies both the physical relationships, as well as the essential spirit of the vignette, a snapshot, of the building as a whole, subsequent parts and ultimately its comprehension of reality and human experience. Materials are embodied within the diagram, not as representation, but as essence. Devising a language that sets time, place and movement into a cohesive system of syllabic memes affords us the necessary template for communicative discourse.

### On THRESHOLDS and SILENCE

Thresholds frame our experience, enclosing our body and mind in a series of nested containers. We are both inside and outside each successive boundary.

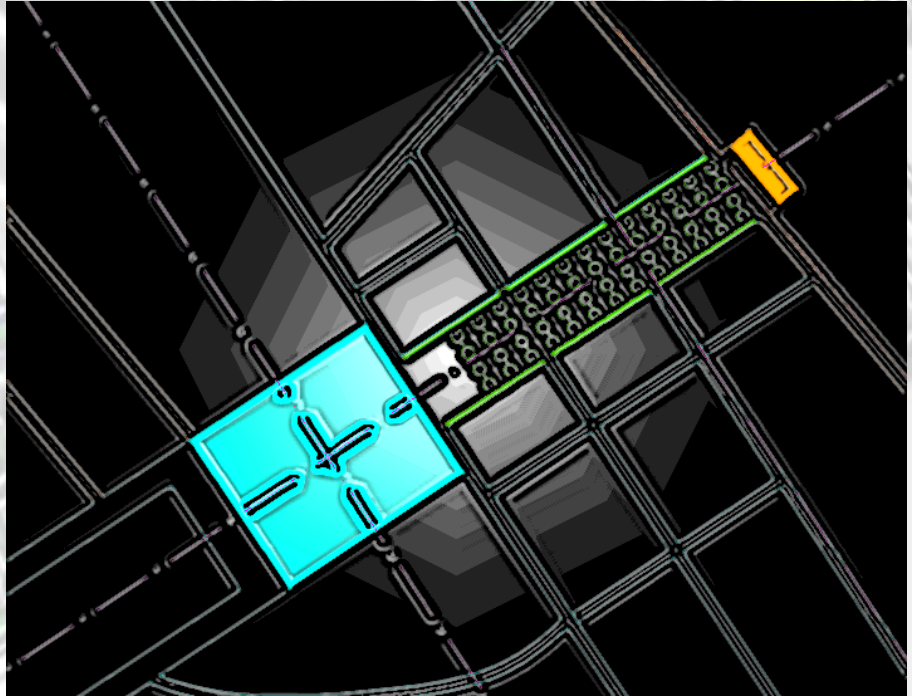
Silence is the ground upon which all experience unfolds.

It is a transitory state, a portal we pass through as a resolution of occurrence.



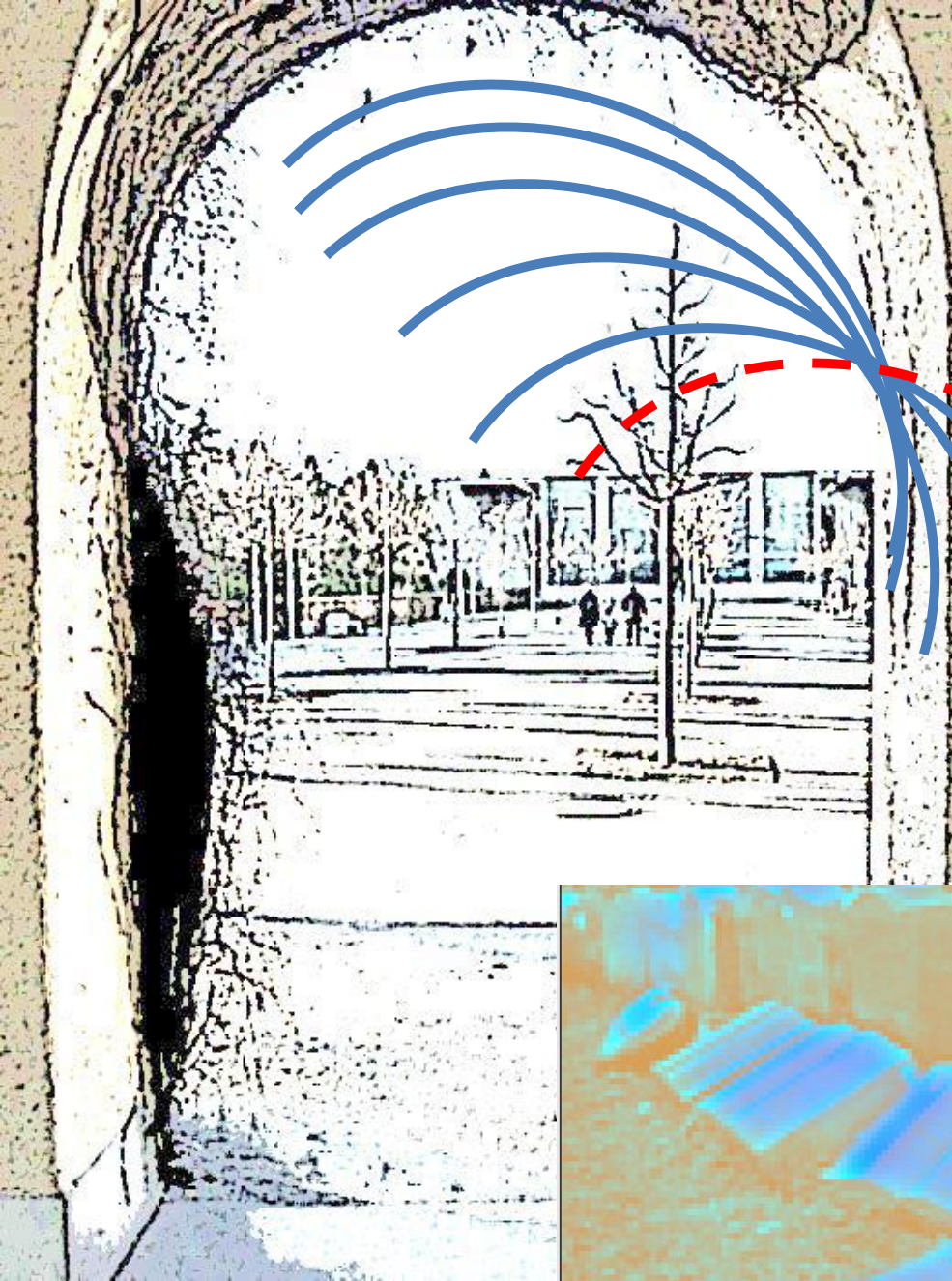
## Threshold of ARRIVAL

The geometry of the cemetery realigns itself with the new building leaving the existing building and neighboring houses and streets behind.

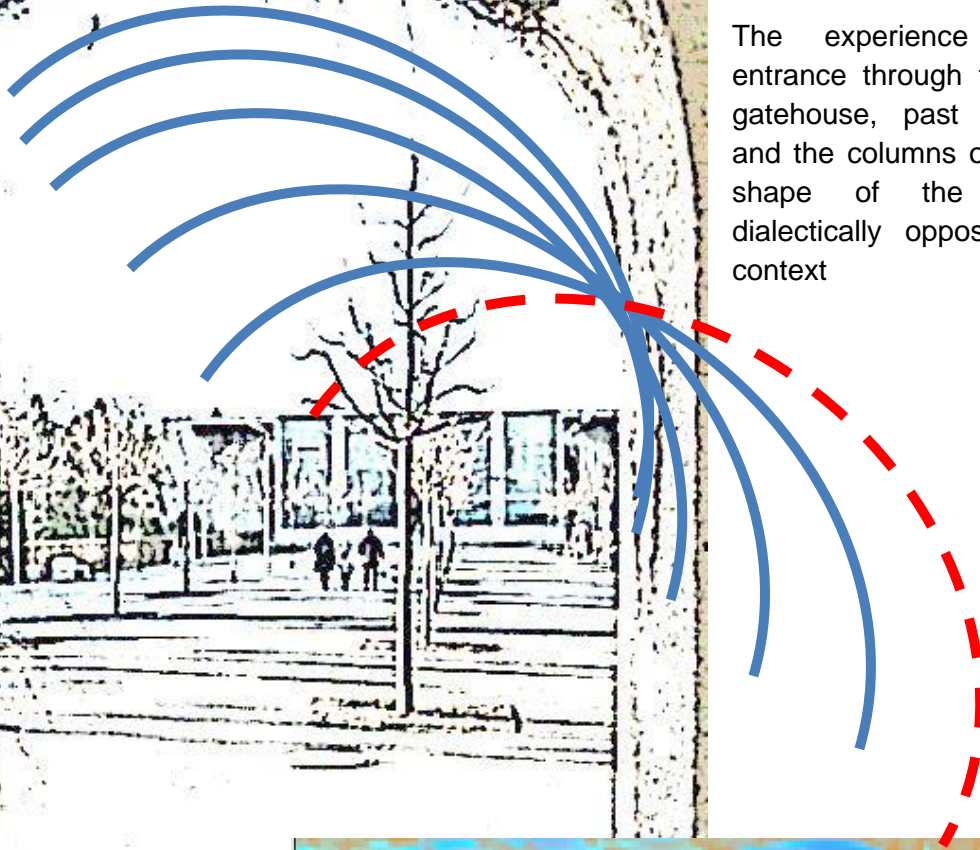


Axial vectors converge towards the river to the North.





The experience begins upon entrance through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century gatehouse, past the tombstones and the columns of trees. Even the shape of the new building dialectically opposes the existing context.





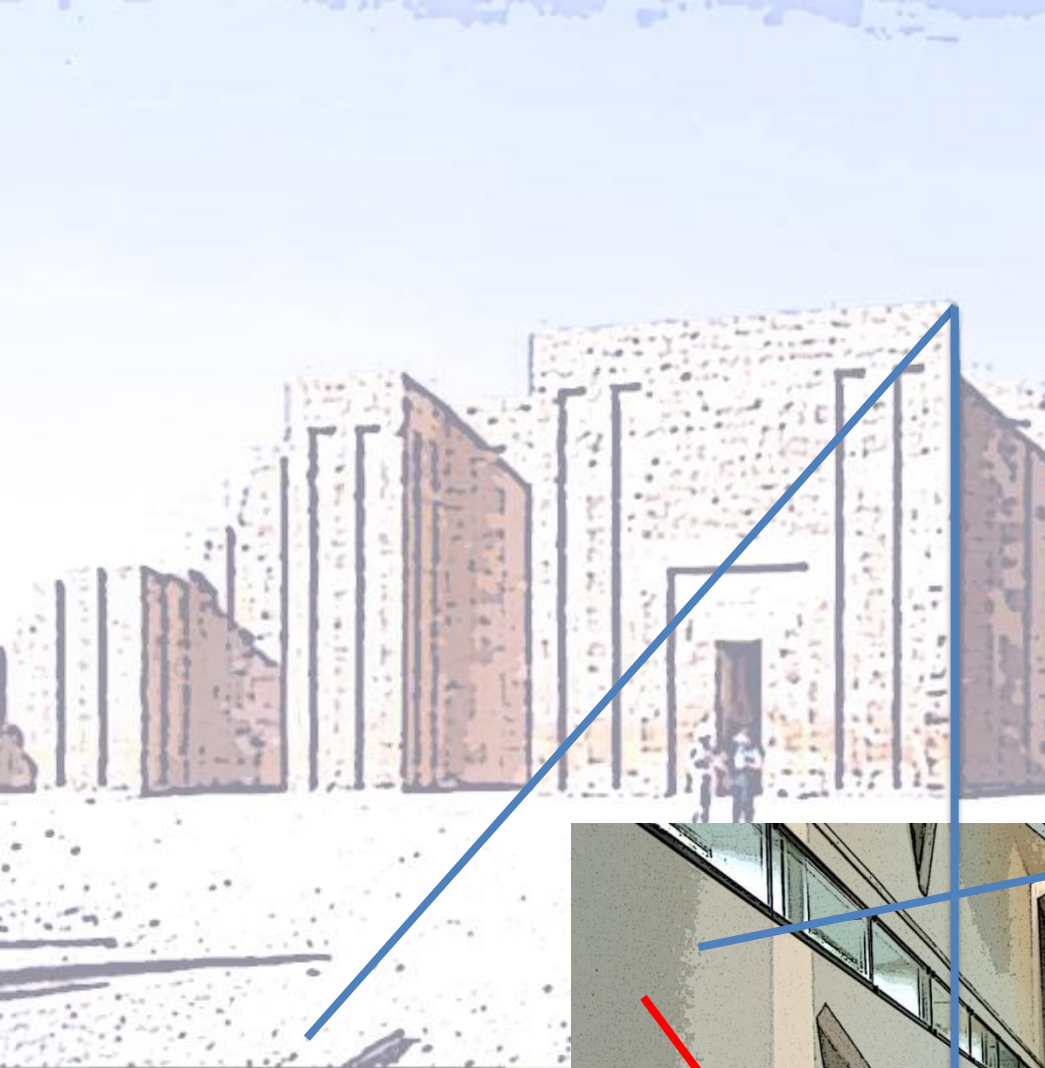
### Threshold of **EXPECTATION**

The rows of trees in the outer courtyard remind us of the marching columns of Karnak, orienting our journey towards the new building. Daydreaming begins the procession towards silence. It is rhythmic and cyclical.

Karnak



Looking back towards the gatehouse from the entry hall to the main inner chamber.

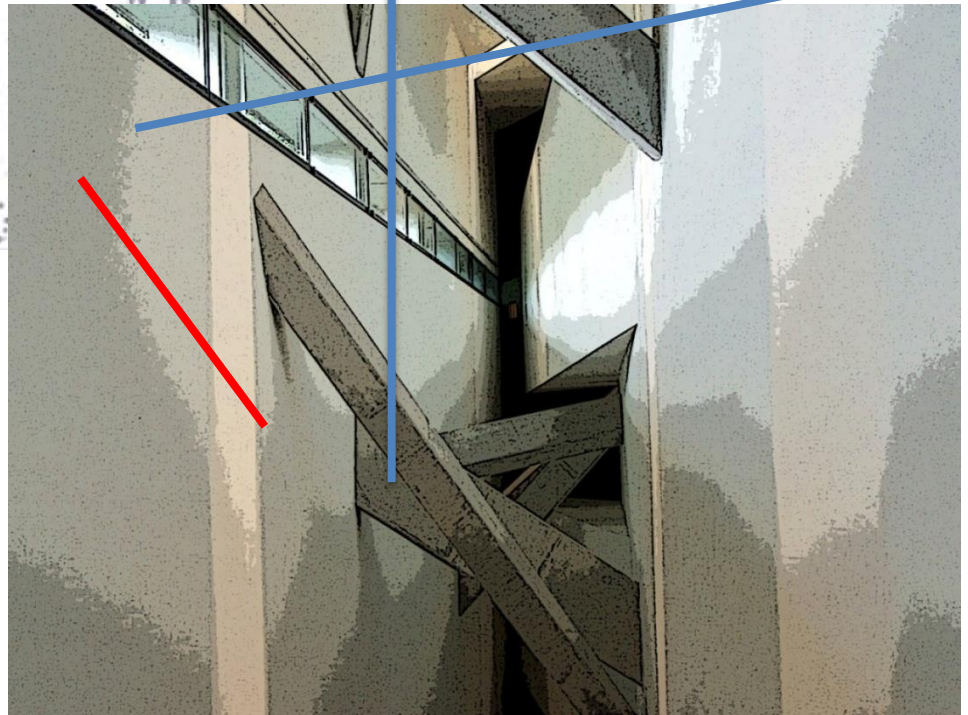


## Threshold of **DISCOVERY**

The visual apprehension of envelope immediately takes us to forgotten memories and dreams.

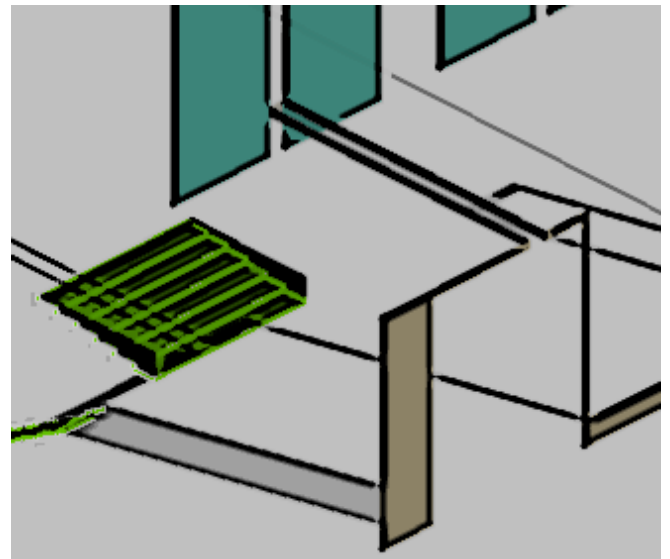
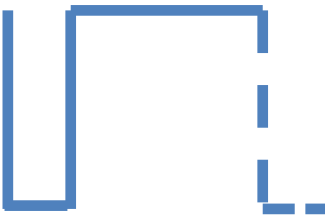
Saqqara connects our memory of size and scale. Its truth in materials creates a heaviness echoed in the crematorium.

Across town, the Jewish Museum Berlin twists and grinds our sensibilities and imagination.





This is a story told  
both forwards and  
backwards in a  
language that begins  
where it ends.





## Threshold of **TOUCH**

Hapticity supplements what the eyes cannot see and exposes the details of our experience. It is a contemplation of material, assembled and constructed in gravity.



## Threshold of **ASCENSION**:

The ascension is the gradual climb through the asymmetry between earth and sky, the splitting of the horizontal horizon. Ascension is a change in the trajectory of our perspective.

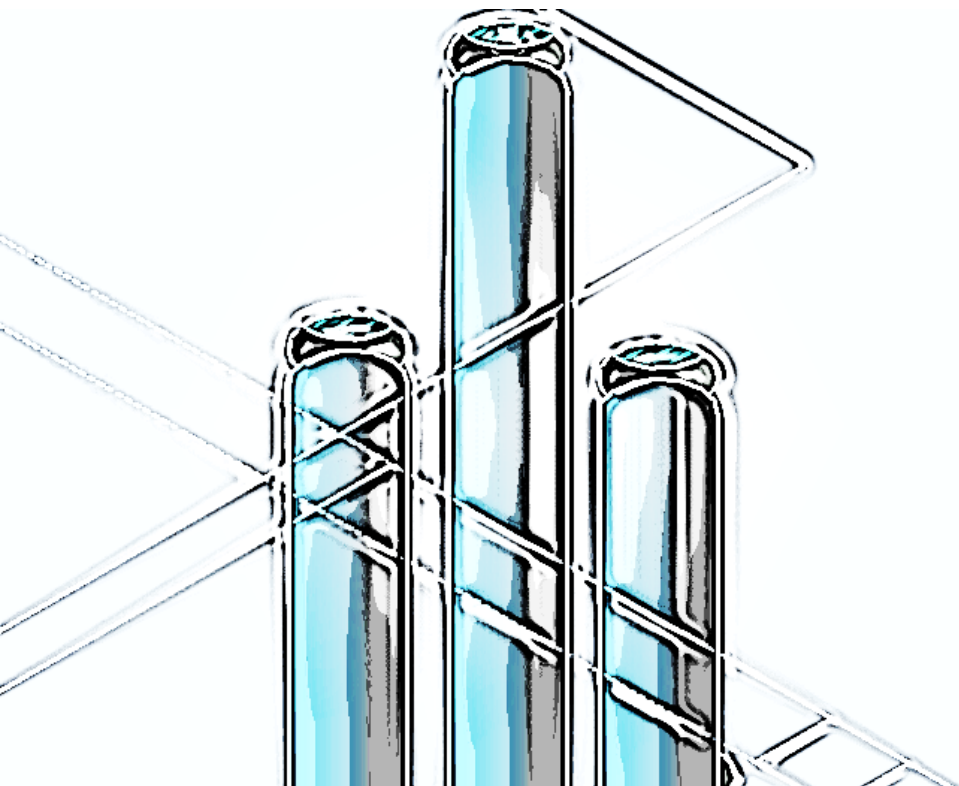
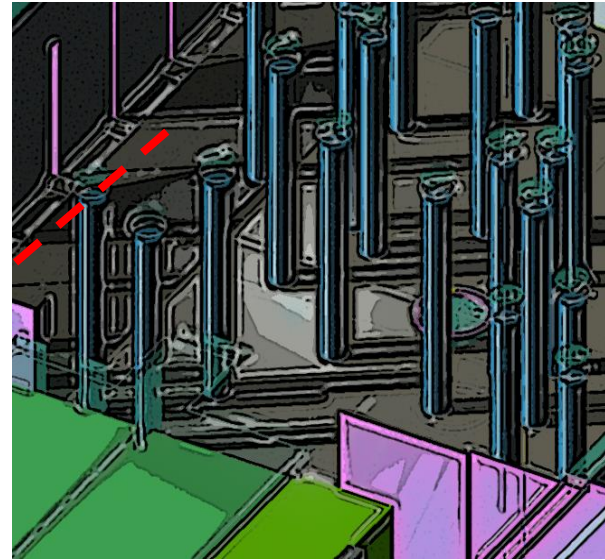
Glimpses of the inner courtyard invoke anticipation. Not only is this a threshold of movement, it is a transformation of consciousness. We have left the earthly plane in pursuit of higher goals, of stories to ease our saddened souls.



## Threshold of RECKONING

This architecture is not about looking outwards. It is about looking forward, upwards and inwards. It is the temporal metaphor of architectural motion.

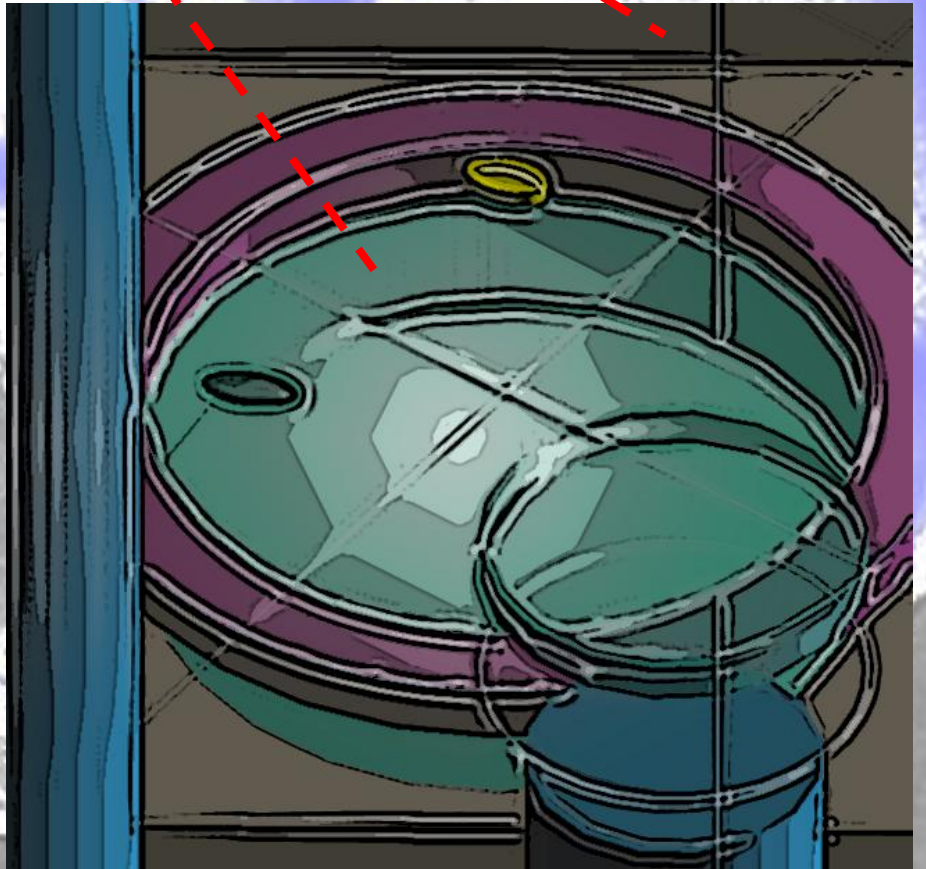
Again, we are reminded of the forest of columns at Karnak. Ancient song floats on the wind.



The capitals of light hide the attachment of the roof to the columns, allowing sunlight and shadow to seep in near the sky.

## Threshold of **DELIVERANCE**

At the center of the grove, towards the end of the path, the solitary pool reflects our rebirth. We see ourselves, but not as others see us. We see ourselves as the mythological beings of an ancient ancestral rite, a pilgrimage of humility in the face of death.



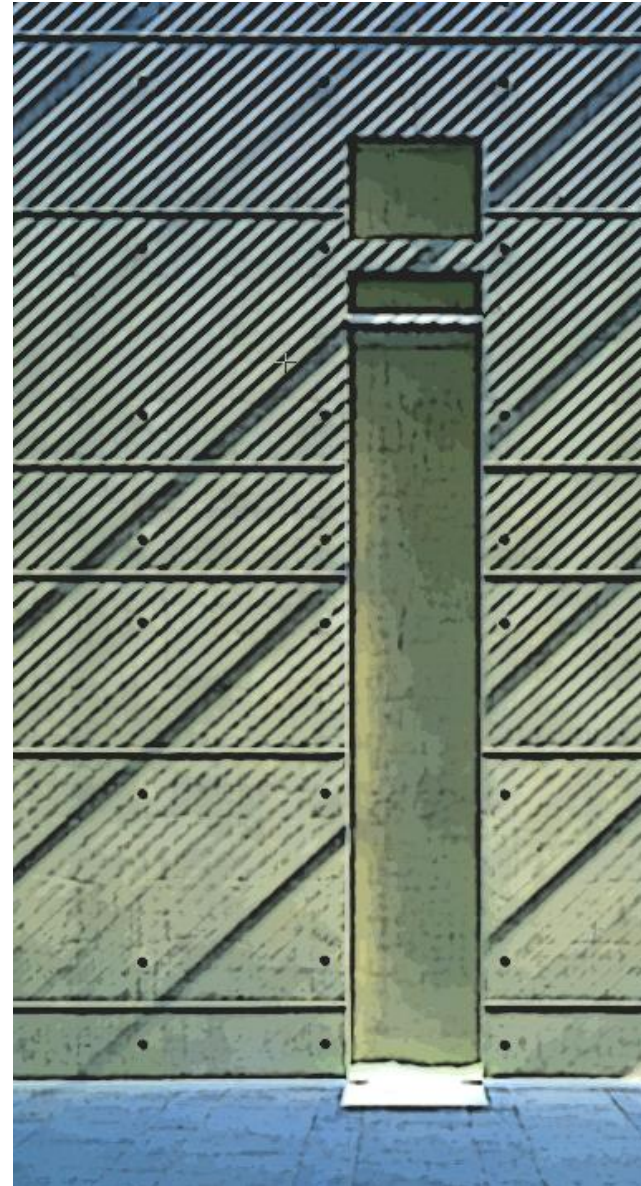
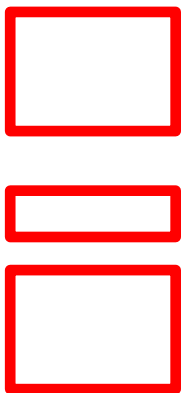


### Threshold of TIME

Blue skylit louvers rain shadows upon the cast-in-place concrete walls. The coffee-bean aroma of burnt sunlight, wind and rain washes down the timeless walls. It is the thinnest of rebar that holds our dreams together.



And, more touch.



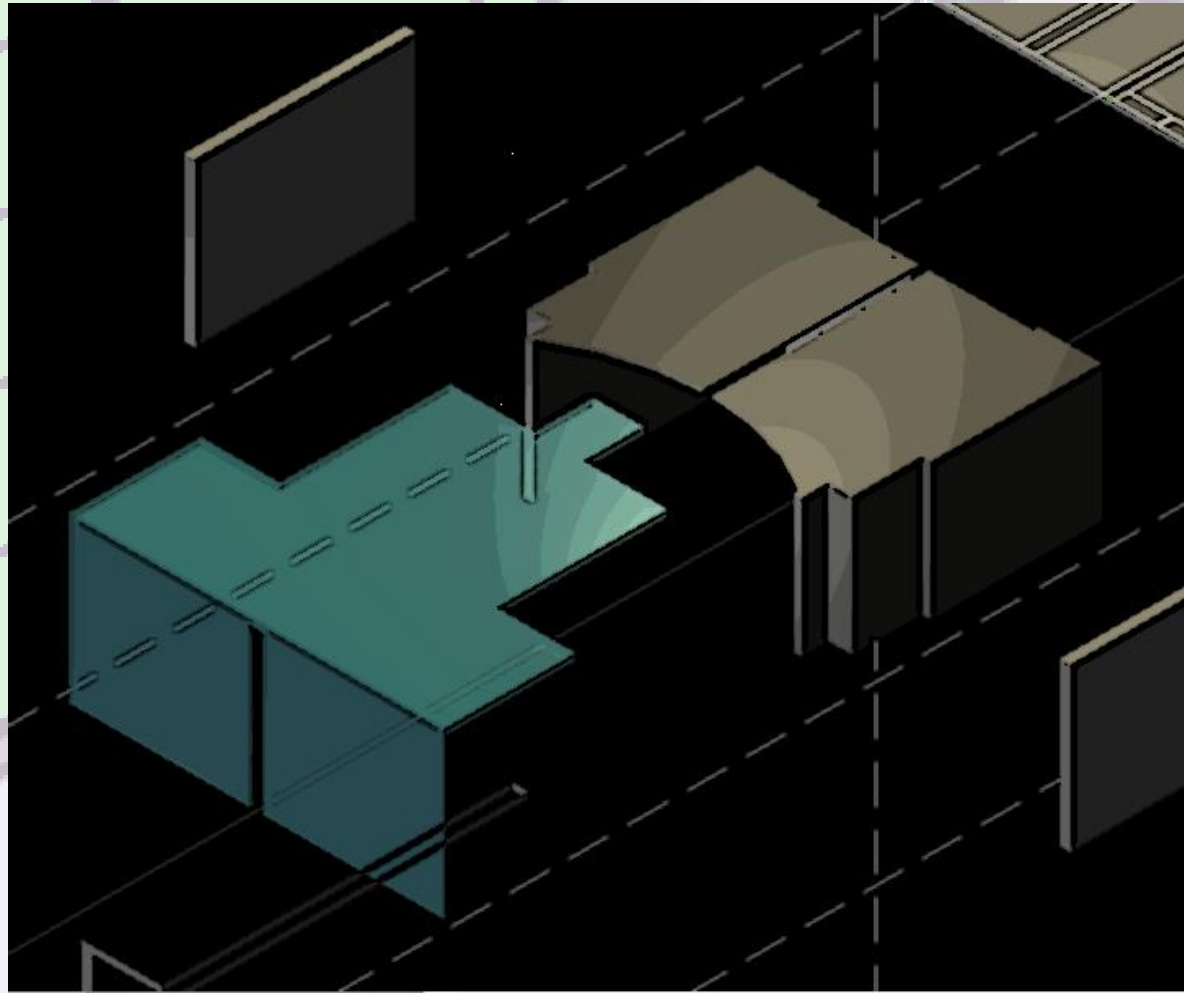
## Realm of SILENCE

In the aftermath of loss, we are asked to remember in silence the loved ones that have passed before us. We dip into the well of the eternal; the heavy building reminds us of the gravity of our loss.

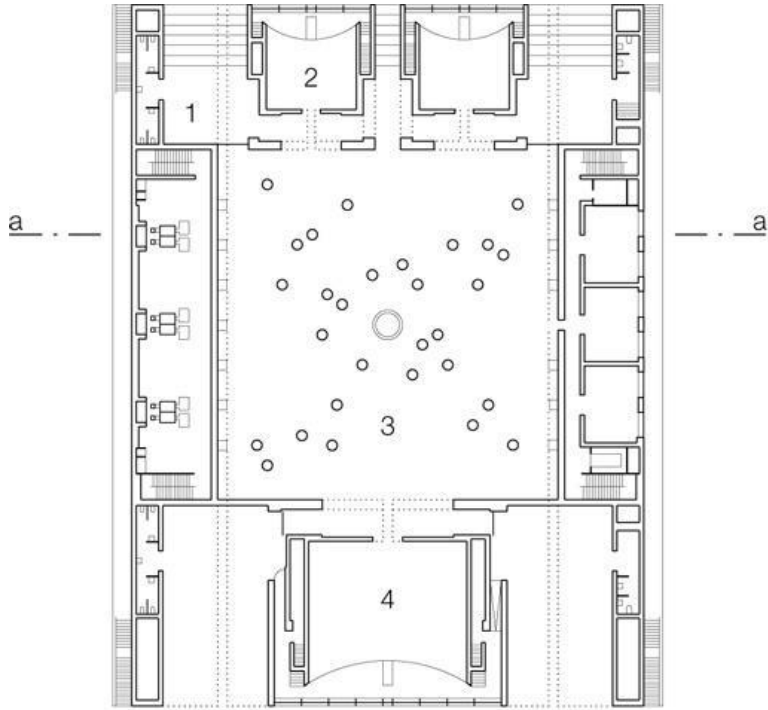
Beyond the container is the realm of silence.

END

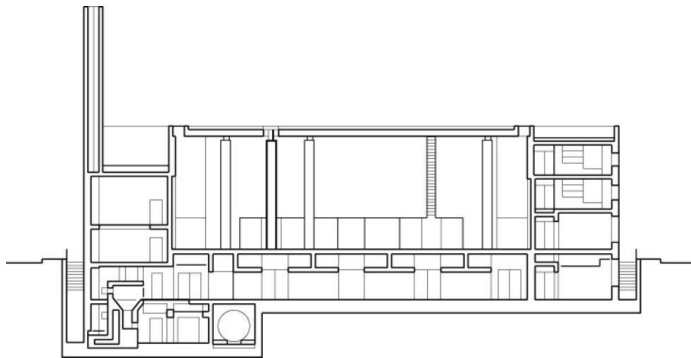
Note: All photos courtesy of [Schultes Frank Architekten](#), or used as found objects downloaded from the internet.



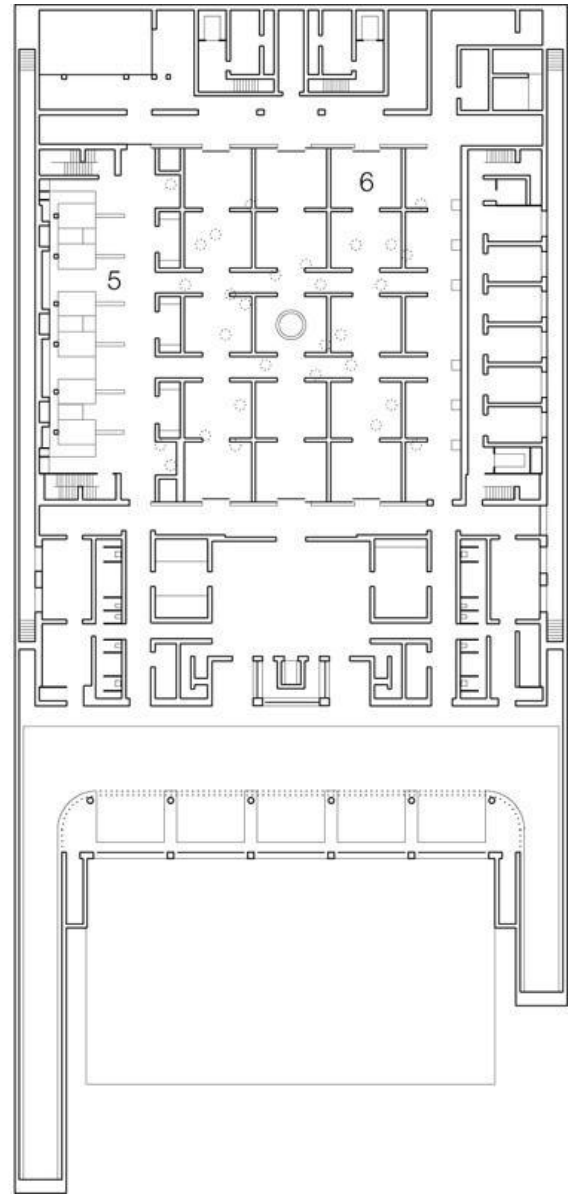
# PLATES



Main Floor Plan



Section



Lower Floor Plan



