Synopsis

Death is man’s encounter with the reality of mortality. A question of one’s control of his own life. A realisation of a ‘higher order’ that is in consistent operation. Death is concerned with the ‘sacred’. However, the treatment of death in our modern society is a manifestation of the conflict between the ‘secular’ and the ‘sacred’.

In this thesis, the Christian belief system is chosen. Going beyond the basic functional need of disposing bodies, the thesis focuses on architecture and its partial but crucial ability to affect the psychological and spiritual needs of the bereaved families. This focus is especially appropriate for the Christian belief as funeral rites are minimal and the focus is shifted to the bereaved families.

This thesis firstly questions the insensitivity of a common location for multi-racial funerary practices in Singapore as found in Mt. Vernon and Mandai. As much as the architecture of a Chinese temple does not cater to the spiritual and psychological needs of a Hindu devotee seeking to experience the ‘sacred’ - so much the validity of a ‘universal’ place for the specific needs of a funeral place for a specific belief system. With multi-religious and varying needs to cater for, the architecture of a crematorium/columbarium loses not only its architectural character but also its performance for the spiritual and psychological needs of the users of the particular belief.

The project articulates an architecture of absolute definition and meaning, as it confronts the program of absolute definition and meaning: as there is no ambiguity in death, the architecture aims to approach the same level of precision and clarity.

The cemetery design mirrors its intentions; it is absolute, like death. Calm, pure, and strong, it imposes a solemn presence on the landscape, providing a place for memory and reflection.