

Project Brief Description:

The project is named the AI, meant to be read as the eye, AI is a pronunciation word play on the word love and mourn in mandarin, which is both read as AI.

This project, sited at Yishun columbarium a government owned columbarium site in Singapore, aims to create a columbarium space that moves from traditional to modern. Allowing the bereaved to conclude the journey of life of their loved ones, contemplate, and gradually ease them from grief.

As the cremation organisation UK reports that in Singapore more than 80% of the total population is cremated after death due to land scarcity. (Even if burial is preferred, the lease for the land from the national environment agency (NEA) is only 15 years after which the body would be exhumed and cremated.) Hence, cremation is mandatory and will happen eventually. The time between the announcement of death and cremation is only a span of mere 3 to 5 days, and with ongoing funeral rites the actual time spent grieving is only very little.

With cremation being eventual, CNA states that for more than 50% of the population, based on religious beliefs, the final resting place is in a columbarium. However, regardless of the religious beliefs the act of placing the urns in the columbarium lacks in ceremonial process. This leaves the last step of the funeral hastily concluded and is unfavourable for mourning.

The design intent of this project is to instil a sense of ceremony to conclude their loved one's journey in life and allow them to grieve and contemplate when they visit. Allowing columbarium to have a poetic and meaningful existence, as a space that contains memories of these people that come to visit their loved ones.

Allowing columbarium to have a poetic and meaningful existence, through manipulation of its space, light and shadow, instead of just serving its sole purpose as a practical ash depository location. Creating a sense of ceremony to conclude their loved one's journey in life, through circular architecture forms connecting the blocks together, through ramps or bridges. These forms allow the visitors to grieve and contemplate using the space between niches, through redistribution of the niche's placements, and decentralising them. Niches are also at various heights and light up when the user interacts with each unit, bringing the focus to only one unit amidst the wall of many units.

In the case where the niches are not taken up, the units may remain as empty for the users to view outside. This creates an ever-changing façade as the niches makeup the façade, and the niches may be present or empty in the timeline of this entire architecture.

Singapore does not stipulate a validity period for ashes and niche urns, the A-I proposes that after a certain period the ashes can be removed from the niches and scattered into the water (reflective pond) or the inland ash scattering garden to free up more niche spaces for others in the years to come.

As such the AI hopes in redefining the act of these funeral activities, how the urn niches look like and their purpose in supporting the way the living can remember the deceased, how these people continue to live on in our memories.