

Project Summaries: Remembrance Crematorium

Yi-Chen Chang

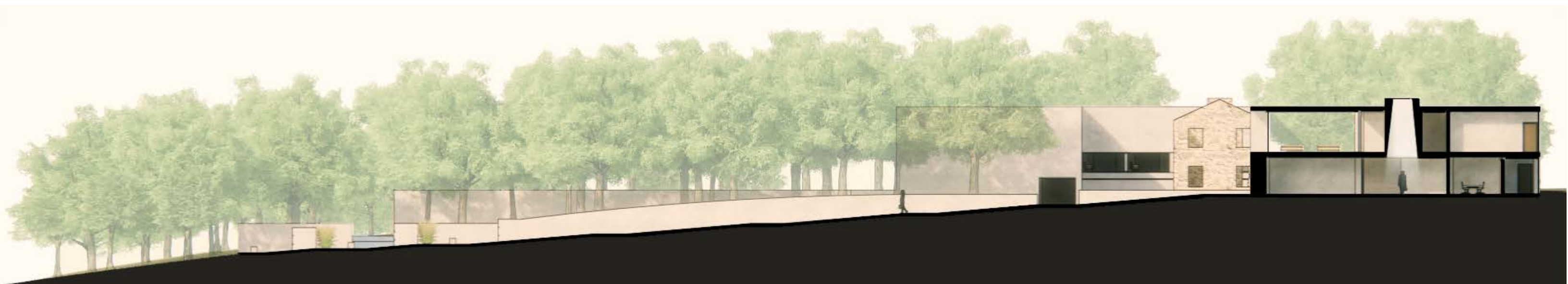
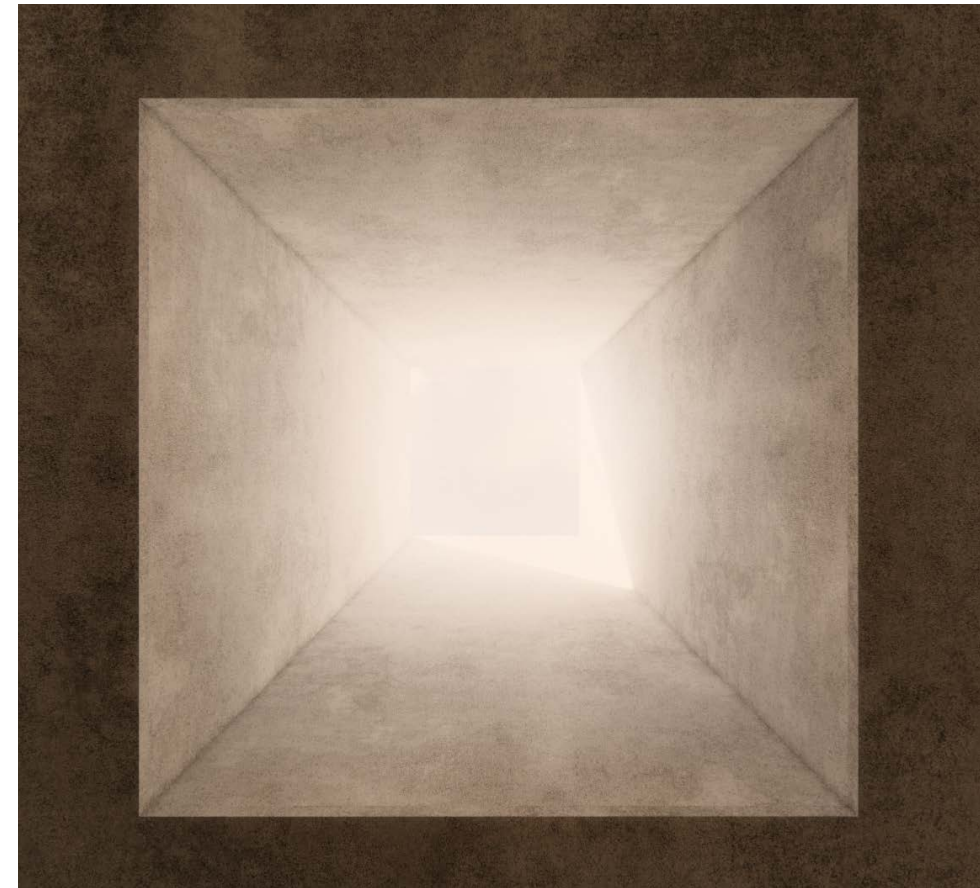
Distinctive cultural responses to death inform how we process loss. Mourning rituals guide how the body is prepared and the nature of the relationship with the deceased.

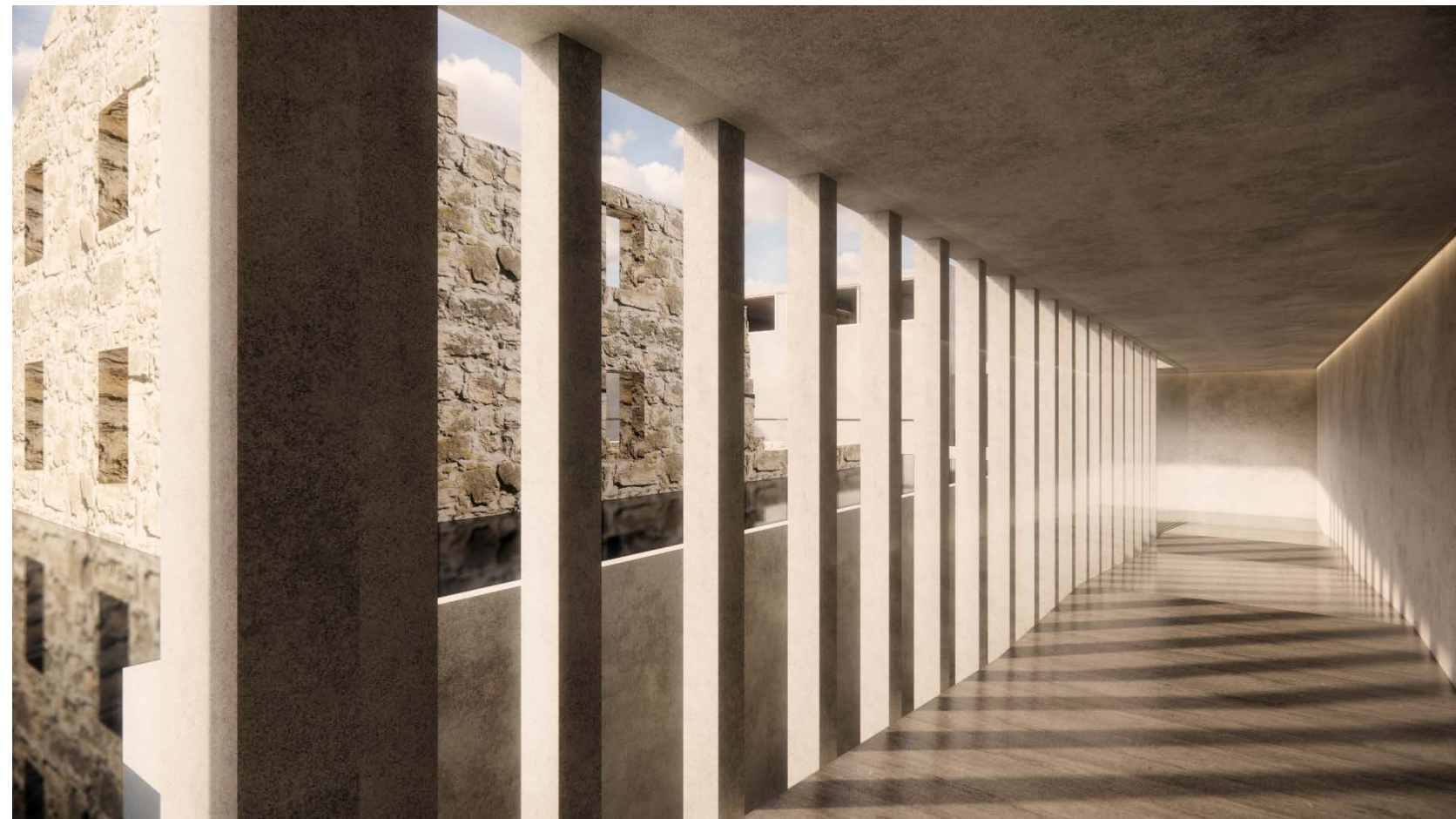
In Eastern tradition, when a loved one passes away, a two-week blessing ceremony is held. Incense is the traditional medium bridging the living and the spirit world. As the solid stick fades to smoke, we are connected to the sacred, reminded of the fragility of life and must seize the day.

Ruins of the McKinney homestead in Austin, Texas become a focal point for a crematorium complex. The symbolic omnipresence of death encourages us to cherish life and live deeply. References to death, burial, permanence/impermanence and the eternal are captured throughout the sequence of spaces providing quietude and time for reflection.



Transition area with a chimney-like skylight, the moment to make people pause and feel the connection with the spirit. Terrazzo was widely used as flooring in the 60s-80s in Taiwan, and my great-grandmother's house also used terrazzo on the floor, but the structure no longer exists anymore. Therefore, this important moment also connects my childhood memory.

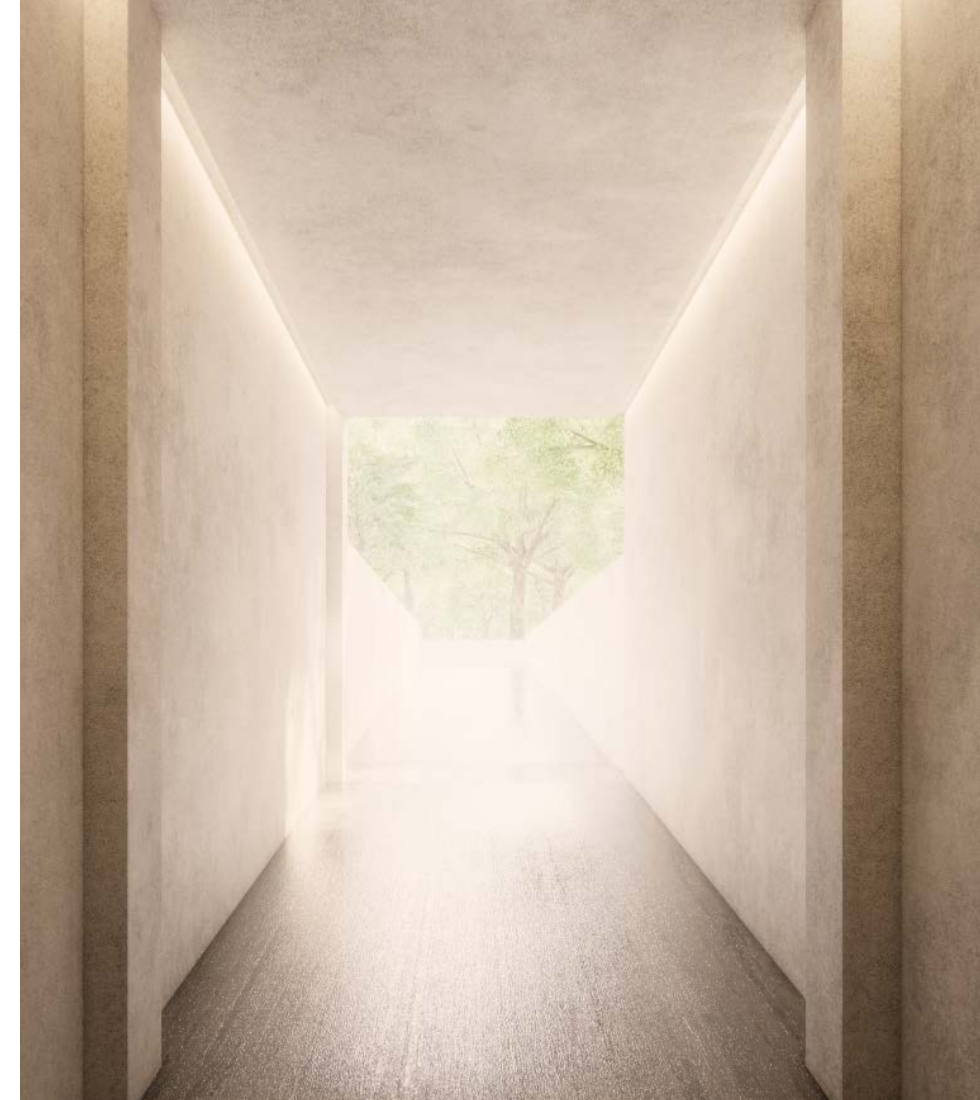




The west building is partially submerged under the ground as a reference to a burial. This is the moment while the family and guests are descending, the ruin is starting to reveal. The ruin view was blocked by columns first. And when they turn to the corner, there is a full view of the ruin, which implies that sometimes we realize death surrounds us at the moment that we are really facing death.



The idea of the walkway surrounded by reflecting pools is inspired by the east myth. After people died, the spirits will pass a bridge, called the Naihe Bridge. While passing the bridge, the memories will gradually fade away then towards the afterlife. So, the walkway spiritly represents the family's walk with their loved ones at the final time.



After the ceremony, family and guests will ascend again, return to the ground level. When family and guests come out of the ceremony hall, the ascending ramp area is semi-outdoor to make them directly breathe and feel the fresh air and feel alive.





The ruin is a reference to death. By placing the ruin at the center of the reflecting pool is the fact that when people lost loved ones and having that relationship is no longer attainable. It is no longer the physical thing that people can share with somebody.