

**T o c o n t i n u e**

(Approaching the Woodland Cemetery)

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Bachelor of Architecture (1991)

University of the Witwatersrand

Submitted to the Department of Architecture

In partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies

at the

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

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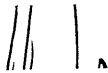
1998

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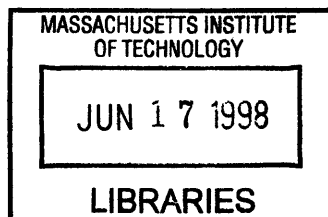
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# To Continue

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Advisor - Stanford Anderson - Professor of History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture

& Head of the Department of Architecture

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, Sweden, designed and executed between 1914 and 1940 by the architects Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz. The study consists of three parts. The first examines the significance of interment, of the return of the body to the realm of nature upon death. The second speculates upon the operation of time in relation to the idea of memory, focussing on the necessity of forgetting in the process of mourning, and in the process of architectural invention. It brings to the fore the impossibility of forgetting that which is most deeply known, and thus suggests a paradoxical relationship between that which is known and that which is new.

This paradox informs those things that must be constructed in the mind and in the world in order to continue beyond a point of traumatic change. The final part is a reconstruction through drawing of eight stages in the evolution of the project. It focuses primarily on the large scale planning of the site, but is related to more detailed elements of the design in order to show the continuity of themes throughout the project, bot in its temporal and physical aspects. Although it comes at the end of the text, it is conceptually prior to the other two sections, which were developed upon the basis of the close reading of the existing drawings, and the interplay between continuity and change in the project. The conclusion seeks to bring some of these ideas together in a form that is not closed, which requires continuation.



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## Preface

My project, if such it can be called, aspires, if towards anything, then towards ambivalence. If it seeks a return to Eden, then it is to the place of the fall, if to Arcadia, to the Arcadia in which death also dwells. My interest is not in death itself, but in the notion that death collapses the separation between the natural and the cultural, in that the body returns irrevocably to the realm of nature. However, at this point of collapse, the living construct some of their most significant cultural artefacts. In the construction of landscape as human memorial, the line between the natural and the cultural becomes perhaps as blurred as is possible. It is that line which I wish to explore, not in order to make of it a clear boundary, but a path between ideas which are usually seen as mutually exclusive, not to construct any sort of synthesis but to seek out areas of congruence, of contamination.

To what end? Perhaps out of sheer distaste for the mentality which requires that architectural projects have 'the one idea', as if the living can find a fitting home in the physical representation of the single thought of a draftsman. Equally, I am not interested in chaos; chaos seems to take care of itself. Nor in a tidy classical narrative with beginning, middle and end, all loose threads tied up. I am not interested in the end

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## Introduction

In setting out to write about the Woodland cemetery, one is faced with the inevitability of failure. It is perhaps impossible to construct a single narrative for a story, which lies at the intersection of so many other stories. The existing published literature is limited; the possible reasons for this are abundant.

The propaganda of utopian modernism would not have been well served by a work dealing with themes of the sacred embodied through death, humanity rooted to place and to nature through death. For the historian interested in the definition of styles, movements, the cemetery would be a case study in the absurdity of such categorisations, given that the original project, in the National Romantic mode, passed through the flowering of Nordic Doricism, through High Modernism and was completed long before Postmodernism had constructed itself and its precedents.

The other art-historical bias towards the celebration of genius as the self-expression of the singular genius does not fit well with the collaborative nature of the work, its profound evolution over time, the significant influence of advisory committees, of circumstance transfigured. The early death of Asplund and Lewerentz's silence have made the production of secondary texts difficult for an academic system which tends to privilege the apparent clarity of written statement over the work on which practitioners major efforts are expended, that is to say the drawings and models and the objects and ideas which they prefigure or represent.



The 1950 monograph on Asplund<sup>1</sup> describes with the Woodland Cemetery in a single paragraph, as the “already abstract” landscape in which the Woodland Crematorium lies. Stuart Wrede, in his 1980 monograph on Asplund,<sup>2</sup> covers the competition project in three pages, one and a half of which draws parallels the design to the painted landscapes of Kaspar David Friedrich, with the admission that neither of the architects are definitely known to have known anything about Friedrich.

In the chapter concerning the Woodland Crematorium, brief mention is again made of its relationship to its dramatic surrounding site, to which the building said to be subordinate.

Whilst acknowledged as a fundamental work in the history of modern landscape design,<sup>3</sup> and the major credit for the design assigned, seemingly on the basis of little more than personal taste or personal bias to one or the other designer, very had been written about the cemetery itself.

If not well known, the basic story of the Woodland cemetery is by now well rehearsed. At the Baltic Exhibition in Malmo in 1914, in discussion over the model of Sigurd Lewerentz’s proposed crematory chapel for Helsingborg, Lewerentz and Erik Gunnar Asplund agreed to collaborate on an entry for the competition for a new cemetery to be developed in the suburbs of southern Stockholm. The two won the competition, collaborated on the design and realisation of Woodland Cemetery over a period of seventeen years, all the while maintaining separate practices. In 1935, Asplund was appointed as the sole architect for the main building complex on the site, the Woodland Crematorium. Lewerentz, never again to communicate with Asplund, was to become a manufacturer of window and door hardware and to build very little. At the age of seventy-one, he was again to be afforded international recognition as a supposed

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practitioner of the New Brutalism. Five years later he would construct another seminal work of twentieth century religious architecture, the Petri Church at Klippan. He died in 1975 at the age of ninety.

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Figure 1

Sigurd Lewerentz and Erik Gunnar Asplund

Asplund, on the other hand, was to have a practice of great intensity over the years from 1935 until 1940, whereupon he would die of heart failure, his funeral taking place in the barely completed Chapel of the Holy Cross. His obituary is to be found in the edition of the Swedish architectural journal *Byggmastaren*<sup>4</sup> immediately following that in which the Woodland Crematorium was published. It is interesting to note that in the very first sentence he credits Lewerentz for his part in the landscape design. And yet the published site plan shows not the whole cemetery, but only that part which includes the Woodland Chapel and the Woodland Crematorium. The photographs and drawings focus on the latter, an exquisite monument to Asplund, and in their monumentality drawing the focus away from the more difficult achievement of the landscape.

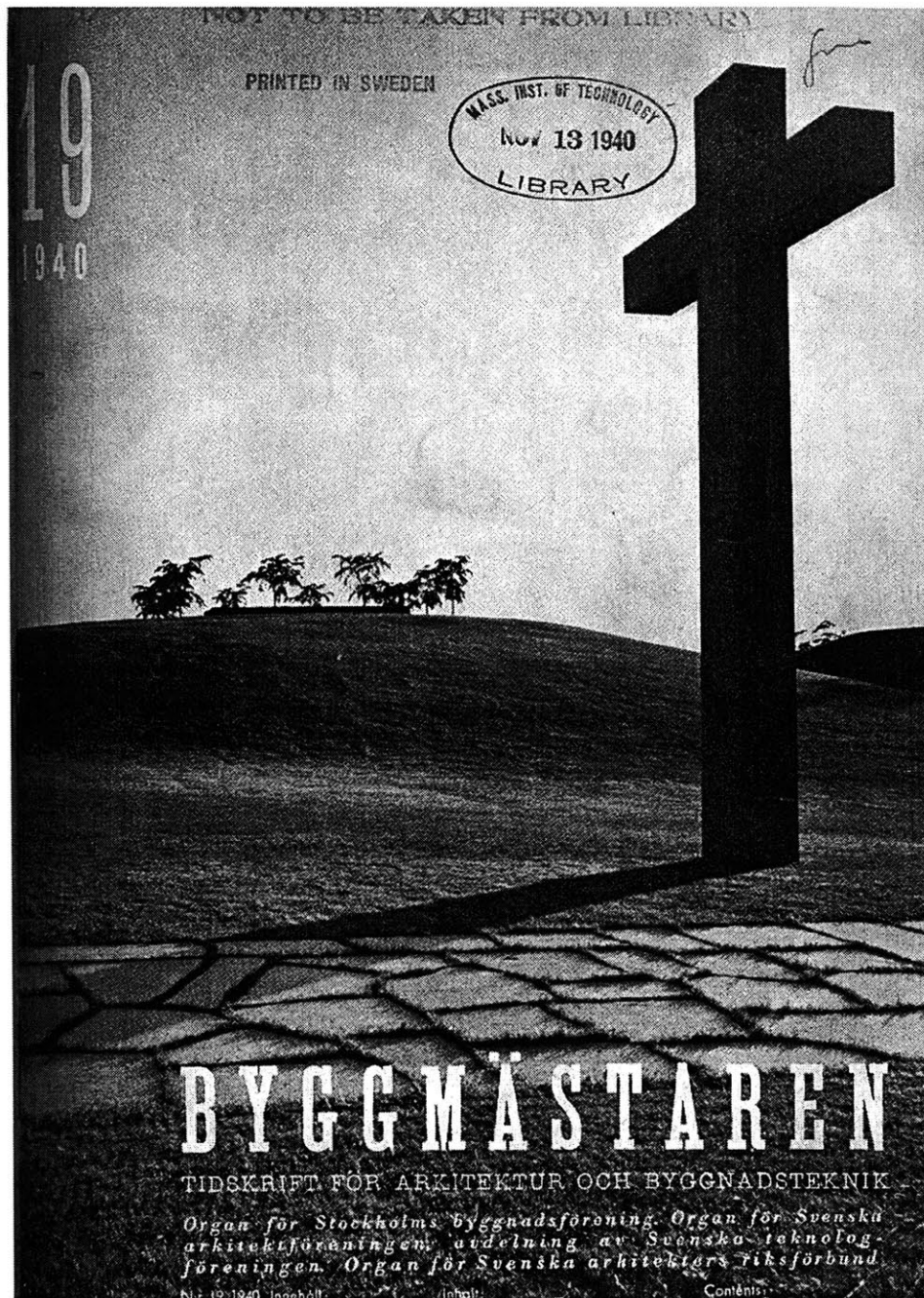


Figure 2

Cover of the Edition of Byggmastaren featuring the Woodland Crematorium

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And so to begin. I have chosen as the object of my research the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, Sweden. It is of course not an object, nor even a single place for all that it has an enormous sense of what Architects are wont to call "place". Designed and gradually executed under the direction of Eric Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz over a period of twenty-five years, a quarter of the twentieth century spanning from the beginning of the First World War until the beginning of the Second. That Sweden was able to retain its neutrality during both of those displays of the ability of technology to enhance the capacity of humanity to act regardless of ethical concerns is probably significant. The twenty-five years in question are the same era on which architectural history has bestowed the title of the Heroic Period of Modern Architecture<sup>5</sup>, whatever that may mean. Sweden stood during this period at the margins of European events, in architecture as much as in political events. It remained relatively stable throughout this period, and in remaining stable was able to make use of the process of modernisation to change itself from one of the poorest nations in Europe into one of the places with the highest general standard of living in the world, a model of the civil society.

Paralleling this social development was an interesting architectural transformation. If there were a revolutionary shift in Swedish architecture, it would be signified by the 1930 Stockholm exhibition, of which Asplund was the chief architect. After a two month exploratory trip to visit the products of the as yet unnamed Modern Movement, he returned to produce a splendid exhibition of its formal tenets. Asplund was also a signatory of the Manifesto of Swedish Modernism. This was named "Acceptera", we accept, not perhaps the most declamatory of slogans.

The question arises as to just what the new manner was being accepted in favour of? What was Asplund doing in 1928? He was working in another manner, and had just

completed the Stockholm Public Library, an incredibly elegant and yet odd, even awkward classical building. Some may object to the word classical, and perhaps I should have written neo-classical. Perhaps the work was at the edge of what could be termed classical, since it was and is a remarkably mannered building. Well mannered in an urban, even an urbane sense, but also remarkably skilfully mannered in its manipulation of the elements as well as the rules of classical composition.

This little piece of potted history is perhaps an unnecessary deviation, especially coming as it does before I have mentioned in anything other than passing the actual matter at hand. But I shall let it stand nonetheless, since it reflects my process of arrival at the woodland cemetery, both literally, in the sense of my travel itinerary in January 1990, and in an analogical sense, for it was my interest in the abandonment of the classical manner by both Asplund and Lewerentz, as documented in 1988 by a pair of exhibitions at the Architectural Association, along with a matched pair of publications entitled "The Dilemma of Classicism", which led, albeit circuitously, to the current investigation.



Figure 3

Stockholm Public Library, Erik Gunnar Asplund, 1920-1928

At this point we could enter both the Stockholm Library and discourse which I hope to pursue. Of all the architectures of the Twentieth century, the work of Erik Gunnar Asplund displays a very special awareness of the human body. This is articulated differently over time. Beginning as figurative ornament relating to the theme of the building, it is gradually absorbed into the architecture itself, both in the manipulation of



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ones movement through the spaces, and as objects with which the body is invited to interact due to their exaggerated ergonomic, almost anthropomorphic form. The benches in the waiting rooms of the Chapels of Faith and Hope at the Woodland Crematorium would serve as an example of the latter. The emaciated figure, which was to have lain in the mosaic of the floor of the hall just beyond the door of the Stockholm Public Library, underlined by the motto "Know Thyself" which was erased from the final scheme illustrates the former. It serves us as a reminder of the price paid for knowledge, whilst imploring us to pay just that price.

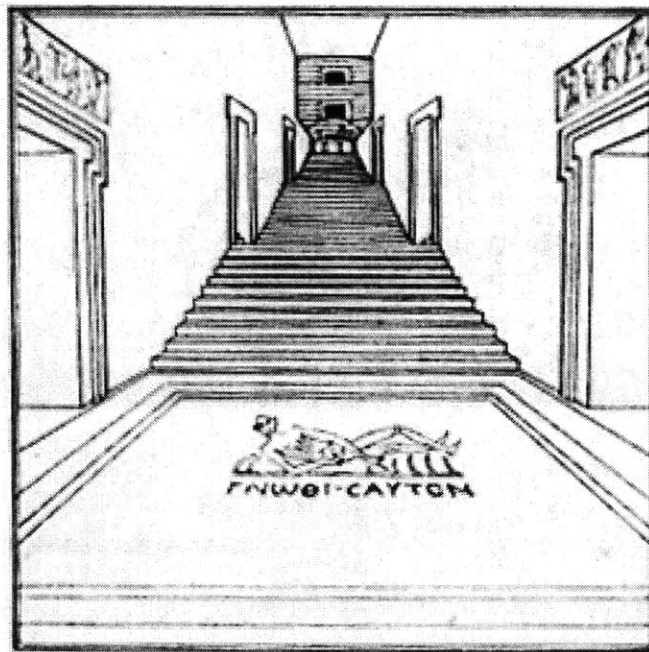


Figure 4

Stockholm Public Library, figure bearing the motto; Know Thyself, 1921

That I mention it, and its disappearance, is not insignificant, for I am concerned with the multiple lives which go into the creation of a work of architecture, the imagined, the drawn and the constructed realities, and their possible co-existence. In the built work a

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small pair of figures communicated the same idea. In order to enter or leave, one had to grasp the naked body of Adam or of Eve, their little brass hands proffering the forbidden fruit, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

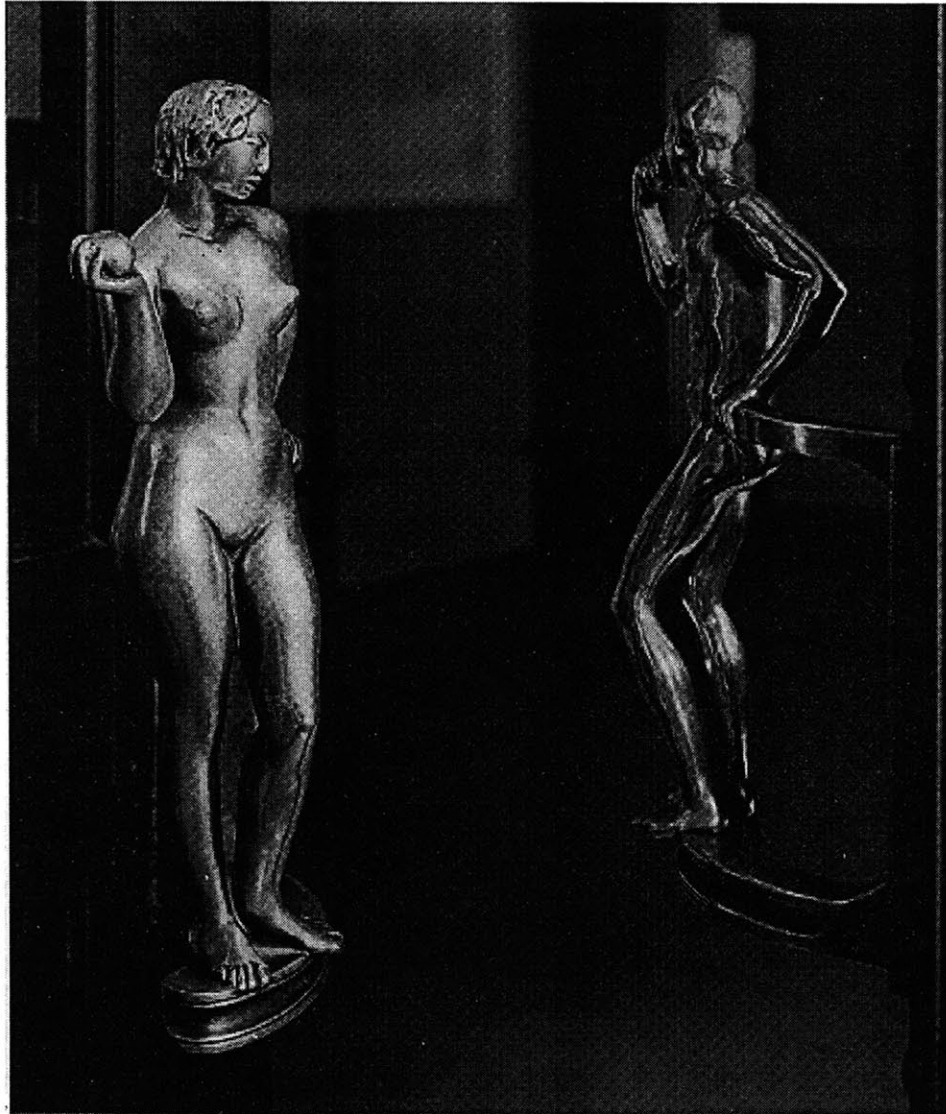


Figure 5

Adam and Eve at the Stockholm public Library

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Each passing through became an erotic transaction, a re-enactment of the Fall, an intimation of mortality, a reminder of innocence exchanged for self-knowledge. It is a remarkably heavy symbolic load to be born by two such small and apparently whimsical representatives. They too are no longer to be found on the front door, promiscuity we have learned is not good for our physical well being, and so they have been banished to a side door in order to preserve them from the attrition of too many grasping hands.

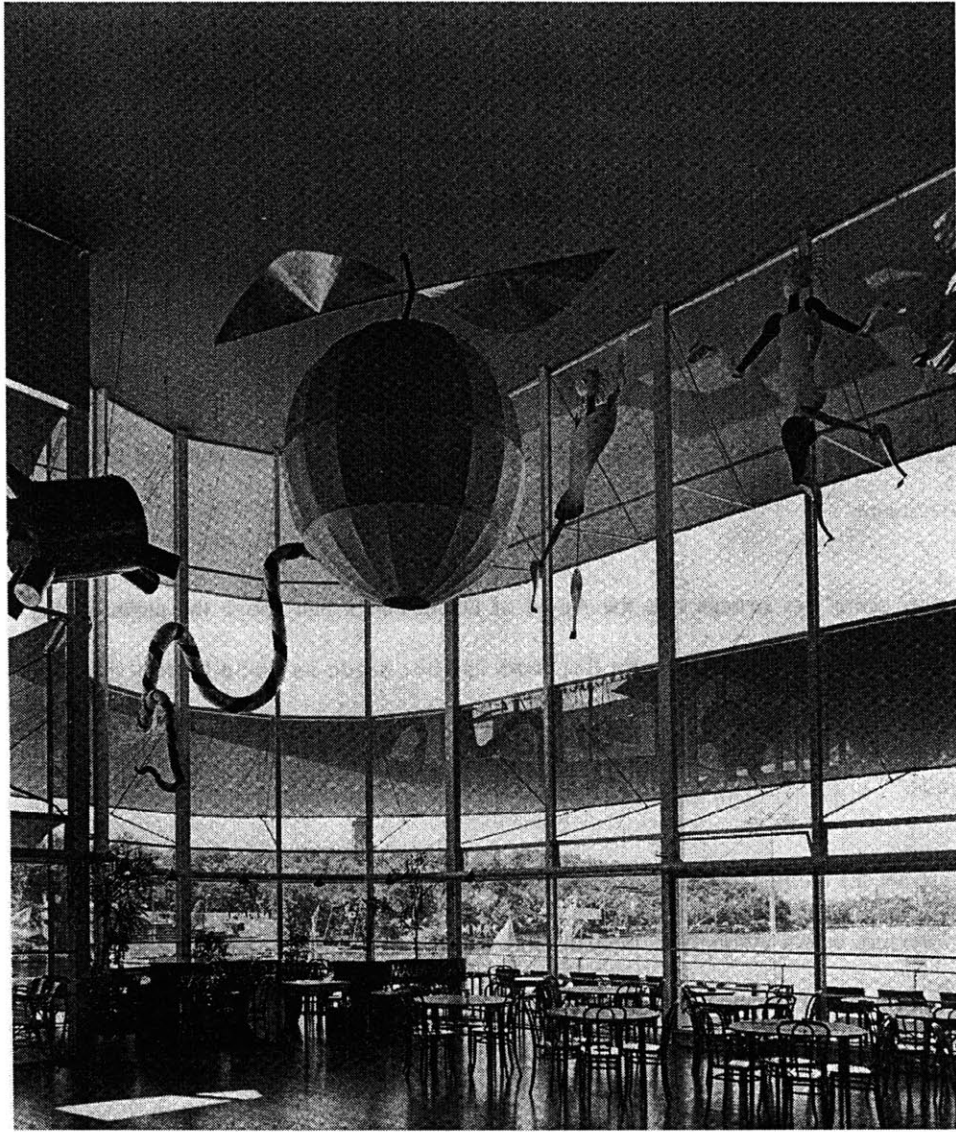


Figure 6

Adam and Eve at the Paradise Restaurant, Stockholm Exhibition, 1930

Adam, Eve and the apple this time along with the Serpent appear again, floating in the air above the diners in the Paradise Restaurant of the Stockholm Exhibition. Here the figures are large and festive, as befits the decor of a festival. But here they are, figurative sculptures animating the space of the work supposed to represent the conversion of Asplund to the cause of functionalism. Biblical figures designed by a person who professed not to “believe in God, but in goodness”,<sup>6</sup> an allegory of the origins of decay and death hovering over the festivities for the birth of Swedish modernism.

It may seem less strange that the Angel of Death hangs just above the eaves of the Woodland Chapel, but then again this death has just begun its life, a healthy infant, a cherub, a cupid of non-specific gender with the fertile thighs and belly of a Neolithic Venus.<sup>7</sup>

These are the themes from which I wish to proceed, the human body and the landscape, architecture which attempts to mediate between them: and death, which collapses any difference, any distance, between them.

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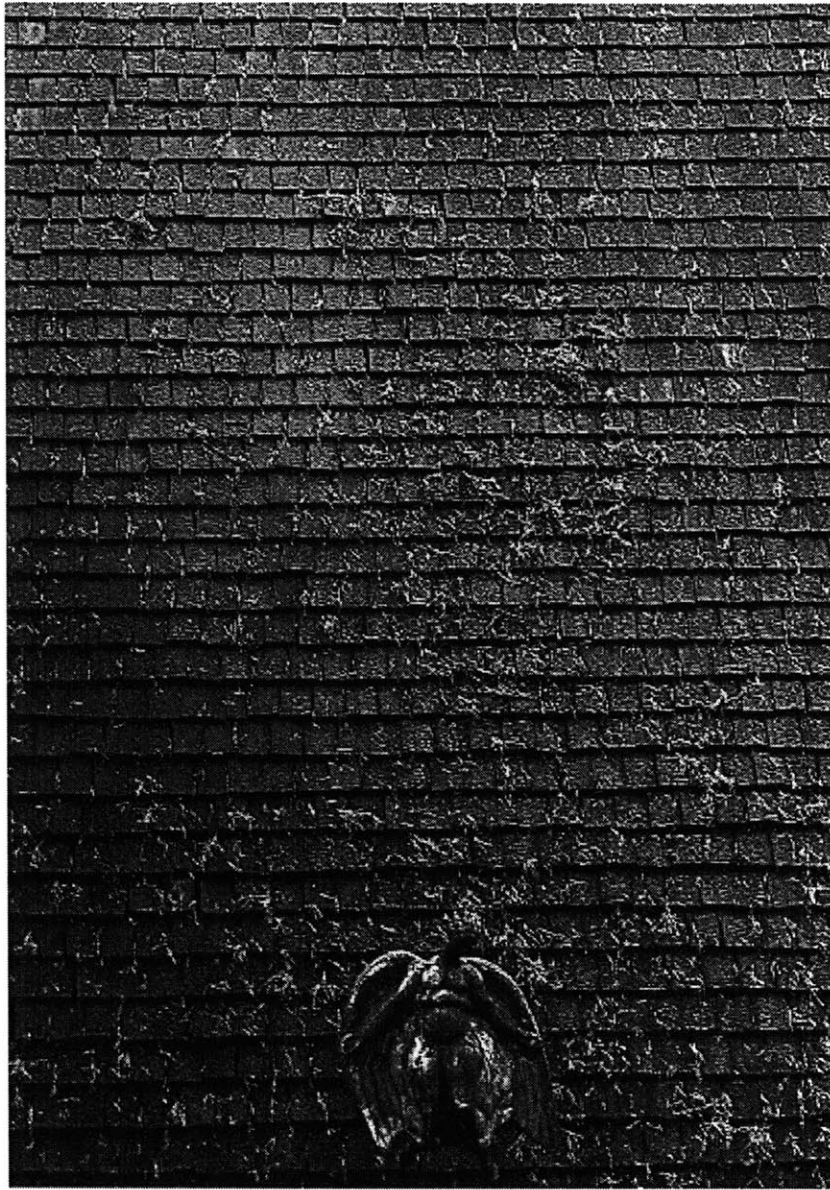


Figure 7

The Angel of Death, Woodland Chapel, Carl Milles, 1920

And so again to the beginning, or at least to a point not far from it.

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## Part 1

### The Garden

7 And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. 22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 4

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground...a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, [that] every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name

“There is no doubt that architecture was invented by man, but we cannot be certain who was the first man to build houses and habitations. It is to be believed that when Adam was driven out of Paradise, it was raining. Since he had nothing else at hand to cover [himself], he put his hands over his head to protect himself from the rain. Since he was constrained by necessity to [find his] living, both food and shelter, he had to protect himself from bad weather and rain. Some say that before the flood there was no rain. I incline to the affirmative, [for,] if the earth was to produce its fruits, it had to rain. Since both food and shelter are necessary to the life of man it is to be believed for this reason that after Adam had made a roof of his hands and had considered the need for sustenance, he thought and contrived to make some sort of habitation to protect himself from the rain and also from the heat of the sun. When he recognised and understood his need, we can believe that he made some sort of shelter of branches, or a hut, or perhaps some cave where he could flee when he needed. If such were the case it is probable



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of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.<sup>8</sup>

Genesis

In the Garden, there was no death. There was also no architecture. Adam and Eve's first house was not Paradise. There was also no need for cultivation; nature in the garden was sufficient unto itself, and to the needs of man and of woman, for they were in a state of nature.

that Adam where the first..."<sup>9</sup>

Filarete

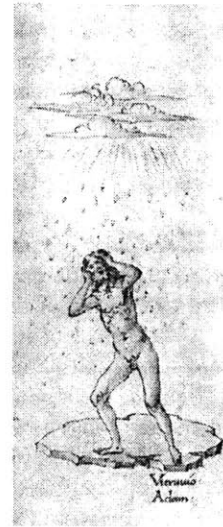


Figure 8

Spring, or The Earthly Paradise, Nicolas Poussin, 1660-4

Figure 9

Vitruvio/Adam, from Filarete's Treatise on Architecture

And then they fell, attaining self-knowledge in exchange for Eden. That is a beginning, and it may seem presumptuous to begin from this point. I do not wish to belabour it, but it seems to be a constant point of return in the history of western landscape design. The garden as an image of Eden, a paradise on earth. It could be called a basic metaphor.<sup>10</sup>

## DEATH IN THE GARDEN

I would like to start architecture again, for myself at least. The first house outside of the garden, an imitation of a bodily gesture, not of a body. A house situated on cultivated earth, needed to carry out the work of survival, of deferring the inevitability of death I am not interested in the form of that dwelling, rather in its location, and its reason for being. . I want to find a way of coming to building through life. It may seem a paradox to set out on such a path through approaching the Woodland Cemetery, but I hope that my reasons will become, if not clear, then at least comprehensible.

Were there seasons in Paradise, and if so, had they any significance other than providing a rhythm of eternal repetition? East of Eden, where Adam and Eve were banished, those seasons would have assumed a new significance, a marking off of a time of limited extent, seasons of growth and of loss, the land renewing itself, always almost the same, the body echoing the seasons of birth, growth, maturity and decay over a longer cycle, but only once.

These are the themes with which I wish to deal; the body and the knowledge required to maintain it, cultivation, and culture, a pair of words, of activities, very close to one another in origin. And the Garden, somewhere nearby but denied. Viewed in this way, we do indeed construct nature, the nature of Eden, of myth, for it exists for us only in our imaginations. As to the world outside of our minds, our relationship to it is far less clear. Certainly we cultivate it, use it, but it remains a wilderness. For even those parts remade in our own image are not completely under our control, tamed perhaps, but always with the potential of becoming feral. We also, because we too have come from that wilderness, our bodies and our culture both.

## DEATH IN THE GARDEN

My real interest here is rather to try and understand how the facts of ordinary life, the cultivation and construction that they require may enter the realm of ideas. How does an unspectacular piece of woodland become transfigured into something sublime, and yet remain quite ordinary, suburban, even?<sup>11</sup>

This research has taken place in three phases, and the structure of this text is an attempt to document that process, to follow the development of some ideas, rather than to fit the ideas to a predetermined structure. The first part is a study of the relationship of the dead to the landscape, of, if you like, the presence of death in the garden.

The second is an attempt to understand the operation of memory in and through design, to view how time is marked both in the process of design, and as the purpose of design. It is perhaps about the necessity of forgetting that which impedes the ability to go on in the face of the loss of that which was once taken for granted, and yet to continue to know, to remember that which is at the core of what has gone before, both in terms of life, and of architecture as a part of life. To go on.

The third part, which has been informed by the first two, and it in turn has informed them, takes the form of a close reading of the design through a process of drawing. It is an attempt to understand the completed project as a product of many earlier proposals, to show how ideas were encoded into the landscape over time, how things that are no longer visible led to an environment in which their absence is palpably felt. A landscape in which everything that is there, or is not there is so as the result of intent, even if in response to unforeseen circumstance, even if the result of intent is not always that which was intended.

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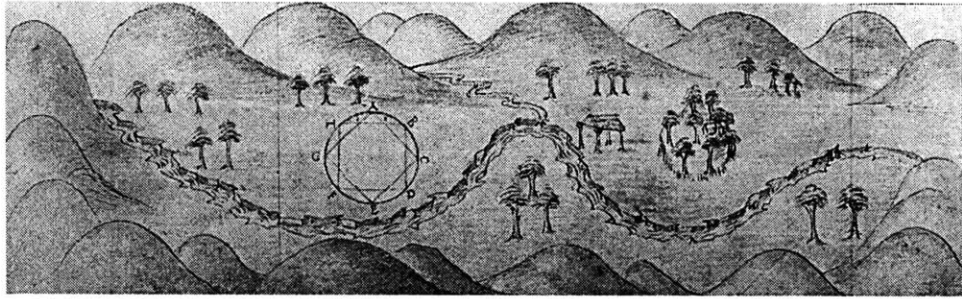


Figure 10

Landscape with hut, from Filarete's Treatise on Architecture

DEATH IN THE GARDEN

## The Figure in the Landscape

“Already the landscape on which the Woodland Crematorium rests is abstract. Here was once a Swedish pine-covered slope, later a gravel pit, now it is something unreal, something at once gripping and alien. Asplund, who together with Lewerentz created it, has himself described it with the epithet “Biblical”; to me that epithet seems all too severe and not as suitable in the same way as, for instance, when applied to the bare natural scenery around the Kviberg Crematorium. Perhaps there is something more “Elysian” over its rolling green fields and its mirror pool, which in all its beauty cannot conceal its artificial origin. It is as though one expected one of Puvis de Chavanne’s groups of figures in this landscape. It is art- even great art.”<sup>12</sup>

That is what Asplund’s friend Hakon Ahlberg had to say about the Landscape of the Woodland cemetery. That is all. It is a strange little description, relying as it does on refuting Asplund’s one word description, and putting forward in its stead another epithet, “Elysian”. But he was not alone in being incapable of pinning down the qualities of the place. Perhaps that is in the nature of anything which is at once “gripping and alien” ‘simultaneously familiar and strange, commonplace and yet unprecedented, if you will, ambivalent. It is odd too that he should expect that a pool, of irregular but definite geometry, sitting where no pool would gather, on the brow of a ridge should want to be seen as natural, as if a pool would be capable of intent, let alone intended dissimulation. Also it is strange that its projected means of deception would be beauty. Nature is not beautiful, it simply is as it is, or if we are to accept the current opinion that nature has indeed reached its end, was what it was. Beauty is an element of human cognition, sometimes the result of artistic intent competently executed, or of a perceived identity

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between something experienced and an already formed opinion of what is beautiful. Similarly, a pine-covered slope is no more Swedish than a gravel pit, if both are to be found within the boundaries of that piece of the earth, which we agree for the moment to call Sweden. Implicit in this short paragraph is an entire ideology of place and identity, based on an assumption about the inherent beauty of nature. It is an ideology which will not disappear for all the analytical light we may choose to shine on it, perhaps because we too are part of nature, even if we perceive ourselves as being able to separate ourselves from its system through the exercise of our intellectual powers. Even if, as it appears to be the case that we have forever distorted that system, at least on the planet on which we have developed those intellectual powers. For the foreseeable future, at least, nature dictates that we will die, and that through the irreversible tendency towards entropy over the long term, that so too will our world.

But let us return to the few acres of earth about which this text is concerned. A stone wall enclosing a number of trees and rolling green meadows, five chapels, a few service structures, roads, footpaths, earthworks, a large black stone cross and thousands of graves.



Figure 11

The Way of the Cross

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Upon entry, however, there are no tombs to be seen, and precious few trees, given that the place was once a forest. What is to be seen is the cross, standing as it does just off the entrance axis, its cross piece suggesting a cross axis between the buildings to the left and the swelling mound to the right, crowned by a little wall and a peripteral ring of deciduous trees. Beyond the cross are the sky and the edge of the woodland, just visible over the brow of the ridge, the horizon. The view is one of those to be found in a multitude of general histories of modern art and architecture, most of the monographic studies of Asplund and of the cemetery.



Figure 12

The Entrance Landscape

A variant graces the slipcover of Caroline Constant's book on the Cemetery<sup>13</sup>. Two men in overcoats, one carrying a mysterious object, perhaps a shrouded tool of some sort are about to walk out of frame left. Their presence underscores the emptiness beyond, the cross, positioned slightly closer to the works of human creation than to those of an apparent nature.



Those images for all their familiarity to myself, for all their aesthetic appeal did not prepare me for the shocking power of the cross as I walked towards it between the rough stone walls. The cross is black and empty. It is of stone, the arms placed high. The shaft has the same entasis as the pale stone columns of the portico beyond. It is aligned with the end of a slightly projecting wall of the columbarium. It is cross, cross axis, architectural fragment and icon at once. But its slender proportions suggest something else. Beyond it, beneath the trees one will find a multitude of iron crosses of similar proportion marking many of the graves. The cross stands substitute for the graves of the dead. That is why the green lawn is empty.



Figure 13

Grave Markers Beneath the Trees.

Its emptiness is palpable. Ahlberg chose to project into its void an imagined group of figures. He imagined those figures to be in the manner of Puvis de Chavannes. Puvis is no longer thought of as a great artist is, and I will refrain from offering an opinion. The character his art has is however of interest in this context. The landscapes are terribly neat; occasional architectural fragments, often classical in form stand bout at some indefinite distance from the picture plane. Human figures, pale, and also somewhat classical in appearance dispose themselves about the setting, even though they appear not quite to be in contact with the ground. Mostly these figures are in a state of complete or partial undress, coyly, for their attitude is that of the painter and his late Nineteenth

century audience, displaying their sensual charms to the observer.



Figure 14

Antique Landscape, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes

Similarly coy displays of voluptuousness were of course not unusual in art of the late nineteenth century, but it is strange to contemporary sensibilities that they are also not uncommon in funerary art of the era. Young women in a state of partial disrobement are to be found weeping over tombstones, our sense of voyeurism doubly piqued, for not only are we seeing parts of the body normally kept covered in polite society, but we also find discomfort in the observation of another's grief. What is the significance of such displays of promised fertility seen as fitting symbols for the passing of the body into death? <sup>14</sup>At this point I would remind the reader of Asplund's various Adams and Eves. They too array themselves for our delectation, whilst reminding us of our mortality. But they are not to be found in this landscape, be it Biblical or Elysian. The only fertile body to be found is that of the earth, a softly contoured mound,<sup>15</sup> its covering of trees carefully removed.

DEATH IN THE GARDEN

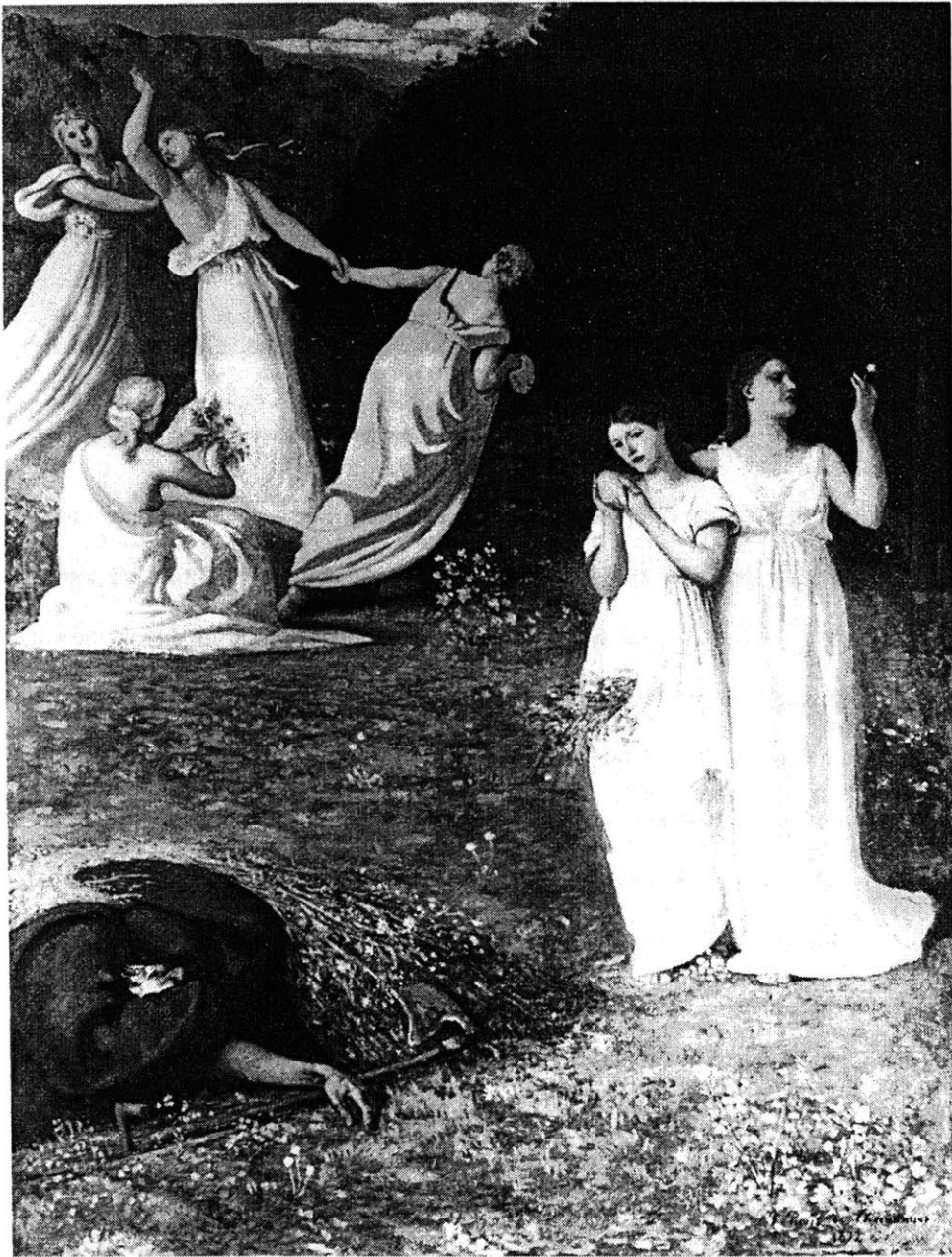


Figure 15

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Death and the Maidens

## The Body in Death

“Death is really the opposite process to the process ending in birth, yet these opposite processes can be reconciled. The death of the one being is correlated with the birth of the other, heralding it and making it possible. Life is always a product of the decomposition of life. Life first pays its tribute to death, which disappears, then to corruption following on death and bringing back into the cycle of change the matter necessary for the ceaseless arrival of new beings into the world. Yet life is none the less a negation of death. It condemns it and shuts it out. This reaction is strongest in man, and horror at death is linked not only with the annihilation of the individual but also with the decay that sends the dead flesh back into the general ferment of life. Indeed the deep respect for the solemn image of death found in idealistic civilisation alone comes out in radical opposition. Spontaneous physical revulsion keeps alive in some indirect fashion at least the consciousness that the terrifying face of death, its stinking putrefaction, are to be identified with the sickening primary

conditions of life. For primitive people the moment of greatest anguish is the phase of decomposition; when the bones are bare and white they are not intolerable, as the putrefying flesh is, food for worms. In some obscure way the survivors perceive in the horror aroused by corruption a rancour and a hatred projected towards them by the dead man which it is the function of the rites of mourning to appease. But afterwards they feel that the whitening bones bear witness to that appeasement. The bones are objects of reverence to them and draw the first veil of decency and solemnity over death and make it bearable; it is painful still but free of the virulent activity of corruption. ...When somebody dies we, the survivors, expecting the life of that man now motionless beside us to go on, find that our expectation has suddenly come to nothing at all. A dead body cannot be called nothing at all, but that object, that corpse is stamped straight off with the sign “nothing at all”.<sup>16</sup>

Georges Bataille

Death returns the body to the earth, closing down whatever distance that may be placed between humanity and nature. In the absence of life, of volition, the body becomes an object, no longer a being, it simply is. Deprived of the possibility of action, the dead body is capable of bearing significance only in the manner that any other object might, that is to say that it assigned meaning by the community of the living. The human body has of course a most privileged place in the history of representation, particularly in the visual arts. It is telling that in categorising the arts, the term figurative is often used synonymously with representational. So dominant is the depiction of the human body, that its absence from any work is seen as significant.

An explicit connection between the dead body and the represented body exists in that genre of art in which the body is represented as dead, a death carved perhaps in stone so as to ensure its continued presence, defying the decay to which both flesh and memory are subject. Seemingly countless such monuments inhabit the aisles and niches of Europe's churches, a host memorialised not in some heroic action whose importance time has more or less eroded, but in eternal sleep, each much like all the others, their individuality perhaps forgotten as their images persist beyond any significant memories of themselves. They serve to remind us of how much is forgotten, that memory is part of life, not the product of history.

In marked contrast are those tombs I have briefly mentioned, in which the bodies represented are not those of the dead, but those of blooming, often female, youth. The dead body is returned to the earth, from which it came. With the passing of time it literally returns to the earth. The process of decay literally turns the dead body into the place in which it was laid to rest. The body, living within time becomes place. That process takes time, to be sure. But when it is complete, when only irreducible minerals remain, it is only geological time in which it can act. The abject nature of that decay, the horror of worms and maggots, represents nature reclaiming the fertility which

remains in the body, even if that was insufficient to maintain human life, That which nature can make use of within the cycle of life will be used, and will engender new life, even if it is of a lower order of sophistication than human life. But it is precisely those lower orders of life which ensure the higher of survival, be it the worms that aerate the soil, or the plants which we cultivate upon the soil for our own sustenance in time. It is death which make mother earth fertile, our own as much as that of any other form of life. In nature there is no difference between the death drive and the drive towards life, Eros and Thanatos are part of the same system. Hence perhaps the erotic symbolism of fin-de-siecle funerary art, the little Angel of Death, with its smile and its fertile loins.

But what about cremation? The Woodland Cemetery owes its existence to the reform of burial practice that was undertaken in Sweden in the early part of this century. Asplund's masterpiece is after all not the Woodland Chapel, but the Woodland Crematorium. Gustav Schlyter (1885-1941), secretary of the Cremation Society of Sweden, coined the motto "To death- To life" for the Society's pavilion at the 1914 Baltic Exhibition in Malmo. His architect was Torsten Stubelius, at the time Sigurd Lewerentz's partner, and it was over the model of Lewerentz and Stubelius" proposed Helsingborg Crematorium within that pavilion that Asplund proposed that he and Lewerentz collaborate on the competition for Stockholm's new cemetery.

Cremation has obvious hygienic and economic benefits. It makes available for agriculture or settlement, land that would otherwise be turned into graveyards and it circumvents the process of rotting and decay. One could think of it as a process of sublimation in which the body is reduced to a sterile mineral state without going through the phase of putrefaction. It is a very modern way to go, quick, clean and efficient, like an ideal railway system. Sven Eriksson's mural behind the catafalque in the main chapel of the Woodland crematorium is entitled "Life-Death-Life". Amongst other things it shows a train on a viaduct, steaming off into the sunset. One of Asplund's earlier designs for this chapel was rejected by the commissioners and their advisory body for

having too much of the character of a railway waiting room, with the mourners seeing a loved one off on a long journey. There is also a clock outside the porch that looks as if it might belong in a station, except that it is wilting. Of course I don't want to make too much of all this.

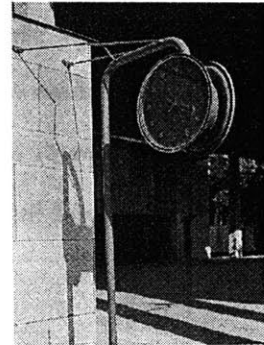


Figure 16

The Collapse of Time

Sweden had a tradition of cremation, which died out with the Bronze Age, which obviously did not partake of modernist ideology. Then again, the motives of those in favour or reintroducing the custom were apparently not motivated entirely by practical matters. Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), the Belgian symbolist wrote in 1911 on the topic of cremation: "Purified by fire, the memory lives in the heights as a beautiful idea; and death is naught but an immortal birth cradled in flames. ... The figure of death, in the imagination of men, depends before all upon the form of burial; and the funeral rites govern not only the fate of those who depart, but also the happiness of those who stay, for they raise in the very background of life the great image upon which their eyes linger in consolation or despair."<sup>17</sup>

In sterilising the actual return of the body to the earth, the cremation movement replaces the actual return of life in another, probably lower form with metaphor. Interestingly it is a metaphor of sublimation, with the free soul as final state, the ashes as a residue of the transubstantiation, a

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reworking of the apparent physical process on a higher register. Of course, ashes must go somewhere, and usually they go to ground, in a tightly sealed urn, or more generously, scattered on the earth, where once again, but perhaps more diffusely the body returns to the soil.



## Death in the Garden- Et in Arcadia Ego

The presence of death in the landscape has a distinguished genealogy in western culture. That nature is both the provider of life and the guarantor of death is a problematic that has engaged artists from the very beginning. Virgil, a Roman and a pagan addressed the same theme in his Eclogues. He speaks of the discovery of the tomb of the Arcadian shepherd, a juxtaposition of death and verdant nature which served to make the pleasures of that mythic place all the sweeter for the knowledge that those pleasures would pass, and yet to make death all the more bitter an end to such earthly bliss. In the world of painting, death in the form of a skull first speaks its presence in Arcadia into the stone of a tomb in Guercino's 1618 picture, *Et in Arcadia Ego*<sup>18</sup>.



Figure 17

*Et in Arcadia Ego*, Guercino, 1618

The inscription and the title are identical and do not appear in literature prior to Guercino's use of them; the actual formulation however may be that of his patron Giulio Rospigliosi, a humanist familiar with the writings of Virgil. The theme would be repeated many times, but has come to be associated most strongly with one artist. There exist two paintings by Nicolas Poussin named "The Arcadian Shepherds" Painted approximately ten years apart, they are very similar in size, and almost identical in content. Both show a small group of youthful shepherds and a young woman in the presence of a tomb; a sarcophagus inscribed with the motto ET IN ARCADIA EGO. The paintings are however quite different in form.

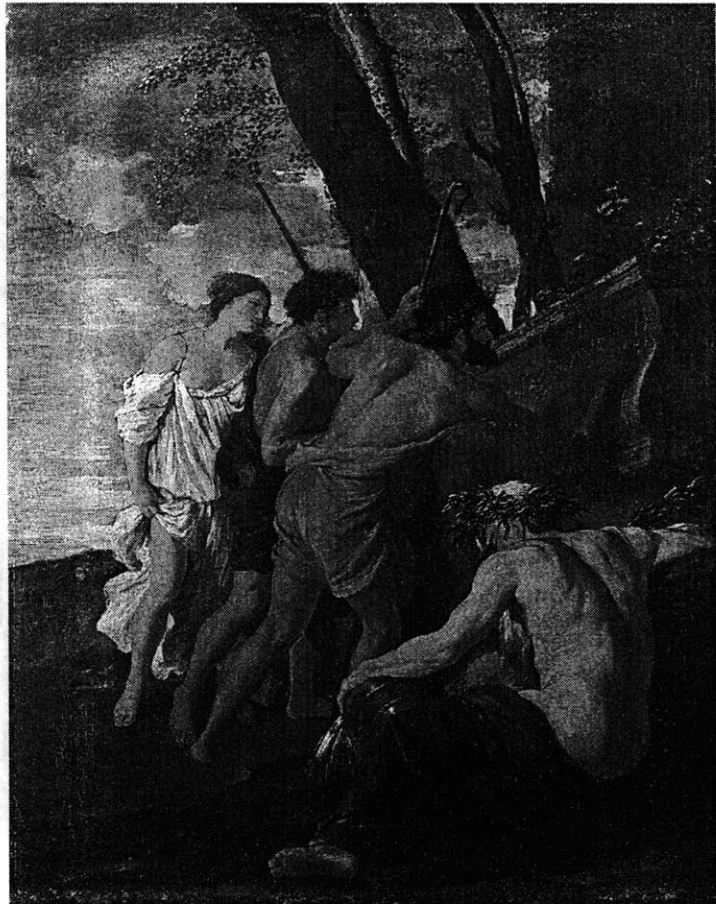


Figure 18

The Arcadian Shepherds, Nicolas Poussin, c1628-9

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In the earlier work, the youngsters seem to have come suddenly upon the scene. The format is vertical, the scene tightly framed in a shallow space given an obvious dynamism by the diagonal of horizon, tomb and trees. The style is quite painterly, emphasising the sensuality of the youthful flesh in opposition to the morbid decay. The palette shifts from warm and bright on the left, to dark and lifeless on the right, and as if to make the contrast more explicit, the young woman stands to the left facing us, her face flushed, her right breast and right thigh exposed to our view, but drawing no attention from the shepherds, her presumptive beaux, poring as they are over the inscription. From atop the tomb, the empty eye socket of a skull gazes out, its angle of view and lack of a pupil enabling it to take in both the Arcadians and ourselves. The scene is completed by a grey bearded but virile river god, whose drowsing inattention allows a stream of water to flow towards the sunlit meadows, perhaps the Styx, perhaps the river of life.



Figure 19

The Arcadian Shepherds, Nicolas Poussin, 1638-40

The later work is horizontal in format, with the action, such as it is taking place in the foreground of an expansive vista. Whilst the gestures of two of the shepherds impart a local movement focusing on the inscription, another more subtle dynamic is set up between the foregrounding of the slightly rotated tomb, its frontality framed by the now decorous woman and one of her deeply contemplative companions, and the distant backdrop of sky and mountains. The sky seems to promise both fair weather and ill, a contradiction made possible by a small group of trees located just behind the tomb, the tall trunks, one living, one dying, bisecting the sky. The middle ground is inhabited only by two trees, the roots of which are obscured so as to make them float at some indeterminate distance from us. These trees also occupy an indeterminate place in time, the leaves of one verdant, the other turning before the fall. The river god is no longer present to perform his obviously, if ambiguously, symbolic role. The skull too is gone, and the tomb too has lost its ornamental trappings. Rather than looking at the tomb, the woman now contemplates the bare earth before her, whilst her companion turns his head to speak to her of the text.

It is not known, nor would it be particularly interesting to know, if either Lewerentz or Asplund knew anything about these two works by Poussin, or of the genealogy of these works. I have described them only to illustrate that the theme of the living confronting the representation of death, or even its presence, within the realm of nature in its most idealised image is not in itself an original concept. Nor is it a Romantic concept, nor necessarily even one of particular interest to the Nordic Soul, whatever that may be construed to be.



Figure 20

Kaspar David Friedrich, Winter Landscape, 1774-1840

The attempt to ground the artistic power of the cemetery in the Romantic tradition, as exemplified by Kaspar David Friedrich, or the metaphysics constructed around the Movement for Burial Reform in order to popularise the process of cremation is something of a disservice to the immediate force of the cemetery itself. Whilst I am keenly aware that artistic production is always bound by context, and in the case of landscape design, physically inseparable from context, the ability of any work to speak to those unfamiliar with the social roots from which it springs implies another order of discourse, an order that runs across cultural and temporal boundaries.

The human body, its unavoidable death and thus inevitable return to nature are just such themes. The distance placed between that which is human and that which is natural cannot but be closed in the dissolution of the body into the elements, be it by fire or decomposition. The location in which this return to nature takes *place* cannot avoid taking on a particular capacity for signification regardless of the particular meaning which any culture, or any individual, may assign to such a place. As the absence of life burdens the body with the need to remember, to represent that very life, so the return of the body to the earth conflates memory and location, in as much as the body literally becomes the place in which it is.

Apart from the commonality of theme between Poussin's two Arcadias and the Woodland Cemetery, another parallel can be structured. The second work is an intentional reworking of the first in which the compositional scheme and detailed execution are reworked in order to modify the meaning of the theme common to both. Whilst the objects within the picture are very similar, the content of the works are radically different. Gone from the latter are the most obvious bearers of metaphor, the Deaths Head and the River God. Gone too is any representation of emotion on the part of the living, along with the picturesque composition, the painterly impasto, the dramatic

hues and murky shadows, those things usually associated with artistic “expression.” The later painting is for all that no less full of meaning, no less expressive. The means of expression are however of a different rhetorical order, an order in which aesthetic force is generated precisely through the suppression of those things generally accepted as expressive, an absence which is actively felt, and which charges those symbols allowed to appear with an unusual strength.

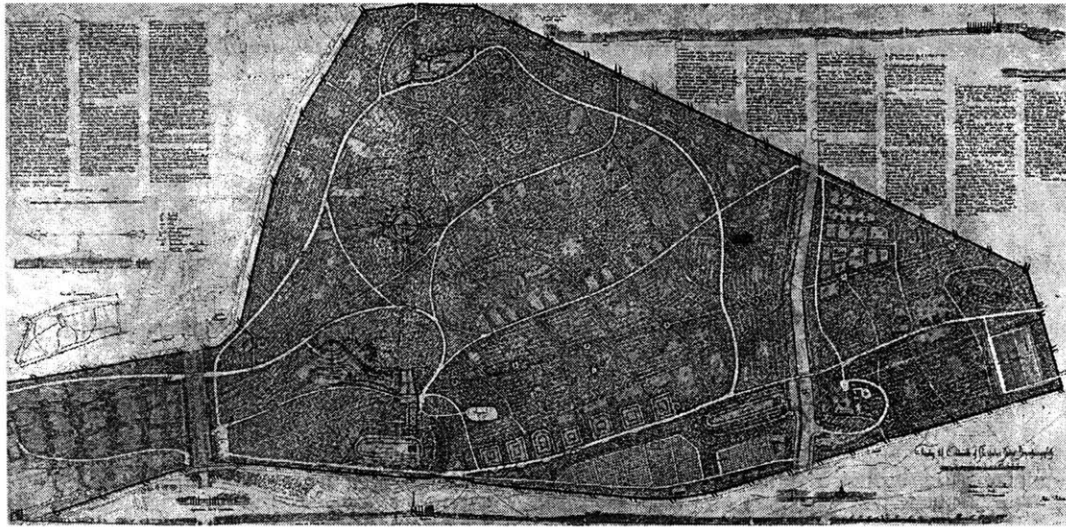


Figure 21

Tallum, Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, 1915

The original competition drawings for the woodland cemetery are artefacts of great beauty in and for themselves. They were drawings intended to win the competition, and did so resoundingly. They bear the motto “Tallum”, which refers both to the pines (tall in Swedish) and to the villa “Tallom”, an exemplar of Swedish National romanticism designed and inhabited by Lars Israel Wahlman, a former teacher of Asplund, his first employer, and one of the judges of the competition for the cemetery.

The calligraphic finesse of the inscription and the text is found equally in the sweeping curves of the roads. A network of sinuous paths forms a grid of sorts, providing access to the burial grounds, rendered as a scattering of graves across the forest floor, sheltered by the pines, which thin out to

open a clearing at the centre of each rough quadrant. The gravel pits, which scarred the site, are reworked so as to appear intentional, archaic. A reworked version of Lewerentz and Stubelius' Helsingborg Crematorium crowns the highest point of the site, linked to the entrance by a curving path, marked at its beginning by a leaning wayfarers cross, at its end by a bell tower whose roof curves inward and upward to form a precipitous spire. The southern portion of the cemetery, separated from the rest by a public thoroughfare repeats the elements of the major part in a reduced form, as does the existing graveyard to the north, reconfigured so as to make the three parts read as iterations of a single theme.

All of this incident is held together by a great wall girding the perimeter, and a series of straight paths which skewer the various parts. At least two of these paths were existing forestry cuttings, integrated, like the gravel pits and existing forest roads into the overall composition with great care.

In addition to the plan, a series of fifteen vignettes, eleven of which are in the hand of Lewerentz, illustrate various details of the scheme. The most famous of these shows the leaning wooden cross in character more of a grave marker than a symbol of Crucifixion, its black cross-bar very high on its equally black shaft. Perhaps the most powerful of these sketches is the study in which the forest graves are drawn onto the face of three photographs of the site, each of markedly different character, below which is a very abstract plan of the orthogonal grave sites, slightly meandering paths and almost randomly disposed trees. As a representation it is both absolutely literal (photographic) and highly abstract, qualities which make it almost iconic of the project as it would eventually be realised.



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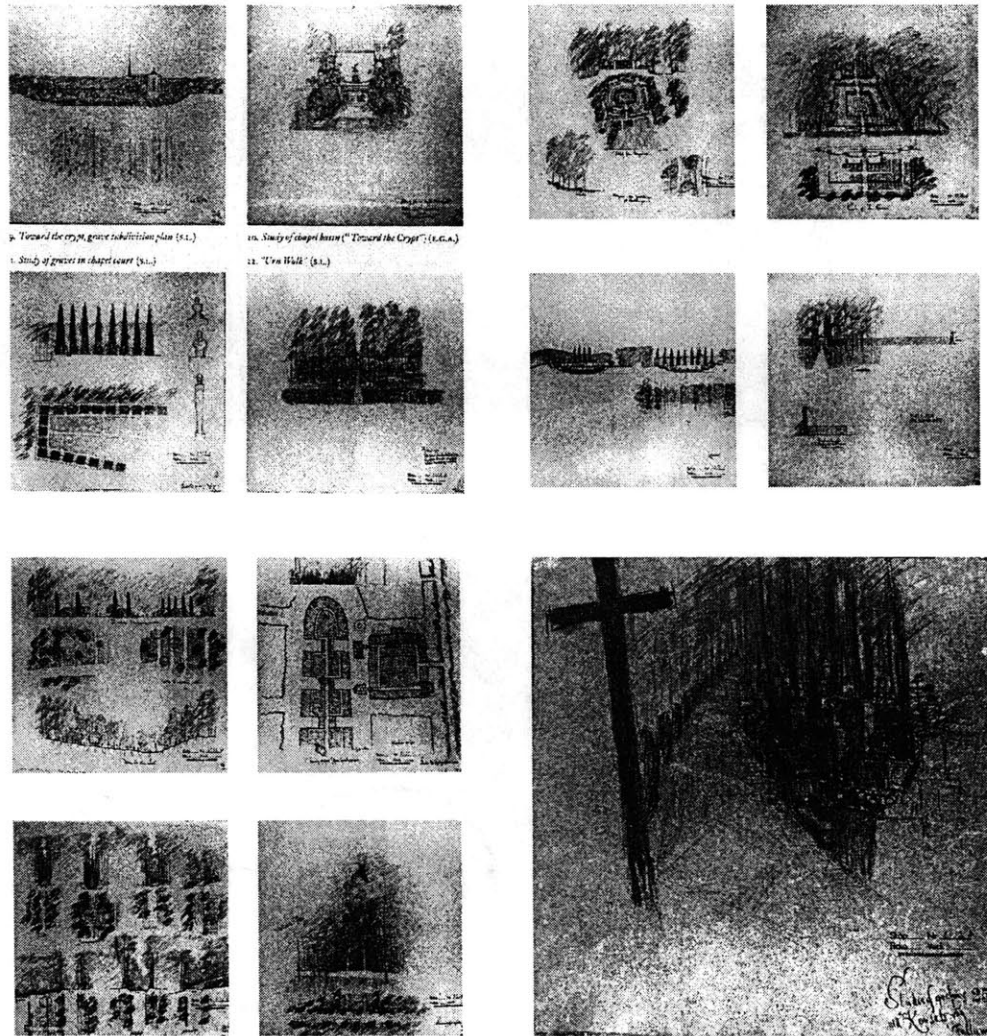
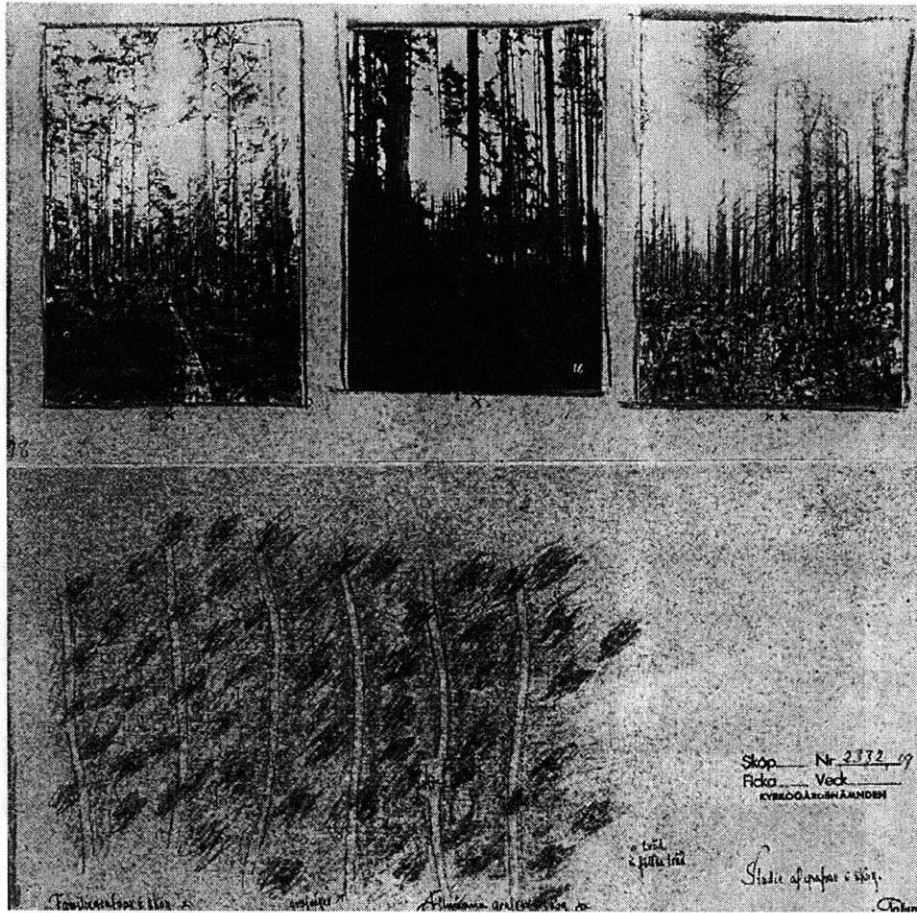


Figure 22

Vignettes from Tallum, Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, 1915



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. Figure 23

Graves Beneath the Trees, Sigurd Lewerentz, 1915

## **Part Two**

### **Forgetting Architecture**

Memory is that which stands between time and forgetting. Difficult subjects are often best sidled up to, particularly when one has already been stared down when attempting a face to face confrontation. Never one to bear the burden of excessive valour, I will attempt to discretely broach the topic of memory in architecture between the territories of forgetting and time, with whom memory is, and always will be, at war. The Issue at hand is that time consumes everything; experience, knowledge, matter itself. Memory attempts to preserve experience, to retain and increase knowledge, and memory in architecture attempts this conservation through the articulation and conservation of matter. Forgetting consumes experience, disarticulates knowledge from matter, renders past architectures mute, a muteness possibly far more interesting than anything the architecture was ever intended to say.

### **Time**

Time and memory are of course intimately interwoven. Were life lived all at once, memory would be unnecessary, were all memories retained with the clarity and intensity of the original events, time would appear to disappear, a constant present of which no sense could be made, as the changes wrought to all things that exist within time would constantly, and progressively come into conflict with memories which would have the appearance of only just experienced revelations. All things must change in time.

Life is lived as much within time as it is within space (the inter-relation of which I shall be wise enough not to broach). Building has always served to shelter humanity from the rigours of space and the elements which operate within that space. Architecture, as an intellectual discipline, has in addition to providing shelter been able to reflect upon its purpose and its methods, to question the nature of the shelter provided, and at its very margins to question even the necessity of providing that shelter. But what does architecture have to say about time. We live in time, but can we feel at home in time, or even construct a place for ourselves within time.

How does time operate within architecture? Design, construction, inhabitation all take time, operate within time but have each a very different relationship to time. Design looks towards a future reality, construction progresses with time, marks time in the manner of all growing things. Inhabitation follows a number of cycles, all marked by their rituals, the longer the cycle, perhaps the more important the ritual. But alongside the repetitions, the recurrences, time also moves on, sometimes creeping, sometime in a rush, but always towards entropy, towards decay. In this our buildings are no different from us, spring with its attendant cleaning will always come around again, but we will be older, and eventually spring will come around and we will not, but our house may well be. It might take a little longer for inanimate matter to be worn out by time, but worn out it will be.

Paradoxically, those constructions which are most ephemeral, those tied to cyclic rituals may have the longest existence. To be sure they will rot, or tumble, or burn, but they will do so again and again, given that the materials will be renewed, replaced and so they will not be quite the same even if the form is just the same.

Given that all that is material must tend towards entropy. It is not just architecture that alters over

FORGETTING ARCHITECTURE

time, but so does the environment in which it is placed. The change might be cataclysmic, cyclical, or so slow as to appear invisible. But we are told that even space changes with time.

## Marking Time

Is it possible to make architecture which has a more intentional relationship to time, open to receive the marks of time's passing, or even capable of making us more aware of the passing of time, of its cycles and lines. There are architectures whose purpose is the understanding of time. Stone circles, observatories, atomic accelerators designed to illuminate where space, time and matter become ambivalent. There are also architectures constructed to display time, clock towers, neon signs alternating time and temperature in an apparently endless stream of variations on a theme. There are buildings to which we go to experience different times of year, summer pavilions and winter cabins. Following the ecological imperative, there are, increasingly, buildings, which change with the weather, the seasons, in order to preserve energy, to fight quixotically against time's law of entropy.

Within our homes, if we are fortunate, different activities are each assigned a particular time and a particular place. We are not supposed to sleep out the daylight hours on the kitchen table, or stay up all night in our bedrooms eating oatmeal raisin cookies, the crumbs falling into our keyboards for which monthly payments may still be due. Although we may not always be aware of it, architecture marks time as we spend it, the fact that it should outlast us serving as an apparently still point relative to our erratic progress.

Monuments and memorials are conceived to have an intended memorial function, to mark memory against time, to make a point in time as a point in space. Based upon their operation in time, there is however a distinction to be made between monuments and memorials. The monument is an object erected to mark an event or a person, a patron, as significant relative to other persons or events. Viewed in this light, the monument is an act of bravura, of ostentation. The monument

signifies relative to the present in which it is formed. The memorial attempts to embody memory, it hopes to convey the significance of some person or event to those who will come after it in time. The memorial seeks to operate in its own future tense. Not all monuments become memorials.

This distinction is significant. Rather than being seen as synonymous, it allows for an opening out of the discussion. There may be monumental memorials, but equally it is possible for there to be non-monumental memorials, non-memorial monuments and even non-memorial non-monuments. A field is opened up between terms usually seen as mutually exclusive, and that field can become fertile ground, or even be played upon, which in the realm of architecture amounts to the same thing.

It is at the moment of death that we can no longer operate in time. If we are to continue to have a presence across time, we must be remembered. This task falls to those who knew us, and to the monumental mason, whose work it is to record our dates, our names, in stone. "Family name and family fame mememoreme" is how James Joyce described the vain hope of the traditional inscription. There is little in most of our lives that merits monumentalization, and the very banality of the inevitable failure of our monuments lends very little dignity to that for which we would be remembered, little solace to those who must mourn us. Given the ordinariness of most of our lives, our anonymity even in life to all but a few who know us, the indignity of failed monumentality, what is a fitting memorial architecture?

## Forgetting

“So-called intelligent behaviour demands memory, remembering being prerequisite to reasoning. Yet, dramatic instances of sudden forgetting (as in amnesia) can be seen to be adaptive. In this sense, the ability to forget can be interpreted to have survived through a process of natural selection in animals. Indeed, when one's memory of an emotionally painful experience leads to severe anxiety, forgetting may produce relief. Nevertheless, an evolutionary interpretation might make it difficult to understand how the commonly gradual process of forgetting survived natural selection.”<sup>19</sup>

“In speculating about the evolution of memory, it is helpful to consider what would happen if memories failed to fade. Forgetting clearly aids orientation in time; since old memories weaken and the new tend to be vivid, clues are provided for inferring duration. Without forgetting, adaptive ability would suffer; for example, learned behaviour that might have been correct a decade ago may no longer be. Cases are recorded of people who (by ordinary standards) forgot so little that their everyday activities were full of confusion. Thus, forgetting seems to serve the survival of the individual and the species.”<sup>20</sup>

B J. Underwood

There is a deep ambiguity at the heart of the mourning. It is an attempt to stitch together the fabric of life left by the trauma of loss. Those remaining need to forget the pain caused by the loss whilst keeping alive the memory of the lost. The very sweetness of those memories makes all the more bitter the loss, which inevitably ends that strand of thought. The problem is to break the thread between memory and loss.

To forget that which has been lost would unravel the web of memories, which is all that experience leaves behind it in time. Life would simply come undone. To ignore the thread of loss would result in the same thing. Memory and loss both need to be worked back into life, a flaw to be sure, but not the end. The rituals of mourning serve to make private grief public, to join one's own loss to that of others according to a collectively held pattern. Architecture capable of giving a fitting place to public mourning should analogously be collectively graspable.

Aldo Rossi designed the extensions to the Modena cemetery as a formally reduced reflection of the old cemetery adjacent to which it lies. The traditional village cemetery of northern Italy expanded to the scale of the industrial city. The dead are interred in an enormous collective dwelling which grows in time as dead grow in number. A construction crane stands always at the ready; its tracks already laid out in preparation for the future into which it will move. The image which comes to mind is the rationalised housing production of the Pre-war Germany viewed through the eyes of one who grew up in the equally rationally produced war. With each addition, the level of anonymity of those contained in each concrete cell is increased. Time here is as linear as the tracks down which the crane will move into the future. Memory and loss throw one another into sharp relief.

At the Woodland cemetery, time functions differently. Sure enough, as the years pass, so the dead increase in number. But here, the landscape is always already complete. Growth occurs, and re-occurs each year with the passing of the seasons, as does decay. The bodies of the dead literally return to the earth to become part of that cycle of life. Should no one remain to tend the graves of those long gone, the sites will return to nature, or at least to the subtly manipulated nature conceived by Lewerentz and Asplund. The horror of decay is allowed to join into the process of new growth, the dead very literally become one with the place of the dead.

This return to nature is not unedited by culture. Beneath the trees there is not a wild profusion of undergrowth, but a cultivated lawn, covering the graves and the ground between equally gently, covering in time the graves of the important and of the ordinary.



“When we come across a mound in the woods, six feet long and three feet wide, raised to a pyramidal form by means of a spade, we become serious and something within us says: someone lies buried here. This is architecture.

Adolf Loos<sup>21</sup>

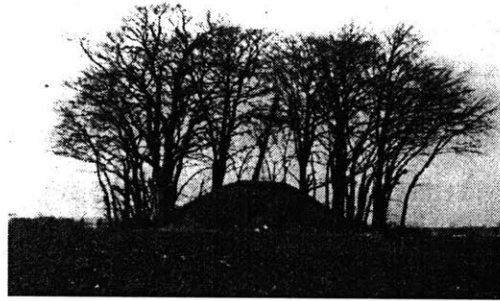


Figure 24

Malmo Eastern Cemetery,  
ancient burial mound with cross drawn in by Sigurd Lewerentz, 1916

### **Imagination Dead Imagine**

The title of this section is taken from a short piece by Samuel Beckett. It succinctly poses a paradox central to his work. Any attempt to imagine the end of imagination is predestined to fail, either as soon as it begins, or if rigorously pursued, at a place very close to the core of imagination. To succeed would be to transcend imagination. A similar paradox can be thought of as lying at the heart of the work of Sigurd Lewerentz when viewed as a life's-work. What would result from the attempt of a consummately rigorous architect to forget everything he had learned about architecture, through architecture? Certainly a number of failures, but also something else.

Whilst the landscape of the Woodland cemetery is the result of ideas jointly arrived at by Asplund and Lewerentz, the latter was largely responsible for the translation of those ideas into form. The landscape design was reworked several times in the twenty-five years between the winning of the competition and the completion of the work. The changes in the design closely follow the changes in Lewerentz's work as a whole, changes which echo, in an altered key, the shifts in style of Scandinavian Architecture. Lewerentz was no mere weathervane of architectural fashion; he was a

highly idiosyncratic weather vane.

It was in turning away from the Swedish National Romantic work of his early years towards the brief and very late flowering of classicism that occurred in Scandinavia around 1920 that he produced his first truly significant building, the Resurrection Chapel in the Woodland Cemetery.

Its porch stands at the end of a path cut straight and narrow through the forest. One hesitates to call it a portico, for although it is of the most refined neo-classicism, it is also quite unprecedented. A portico in its origin is a reduced statement of the temple form, affording both entry and external presence to the cella. Here the entire peristyle is present, but it encloses nothing. The hall stands removed, in orientation, material, articulation, a body far larger than that of the peristyle, which we would expect to contain it. It is almost as if the Erectheion has been dissected, the parts analysed, purified, and then placed back together, or not quite together, so that we may see and understand the clinical procedure that has taken place. The significance formed in this gesture of dismemberment, in the cut opened up into the body of architecture is as sharp as the displacement is acute.

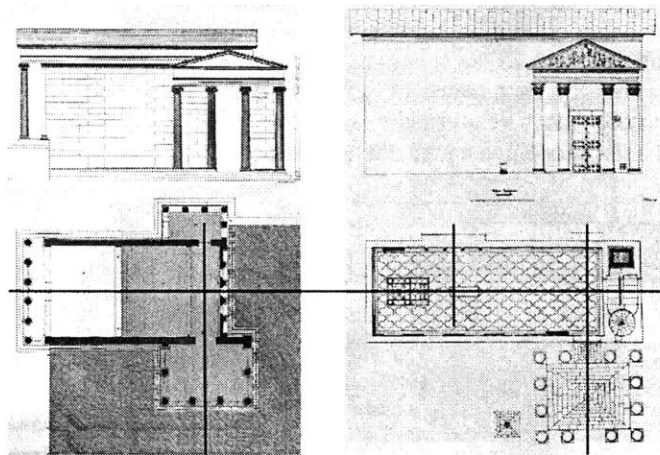


Figure 25

The Erechtheion and the Resurrection Chapel

The decision to sever the portico from the chapel, and the decision to rotate the two relative to one another followed two different logics. The porch of the adjacent mortuary is also detached from the less articulated body of the building, but lies parallel, articulating the difference between component with different structural systems, each fitting to its particular purpose, setting up a dialogue between the parts. The portico of the chapel was to have been similarly aligned with cella, but was twisted to straddle the axis of the Way of Seven Wells only after construction had begun.

The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.

Eliot, T. S.

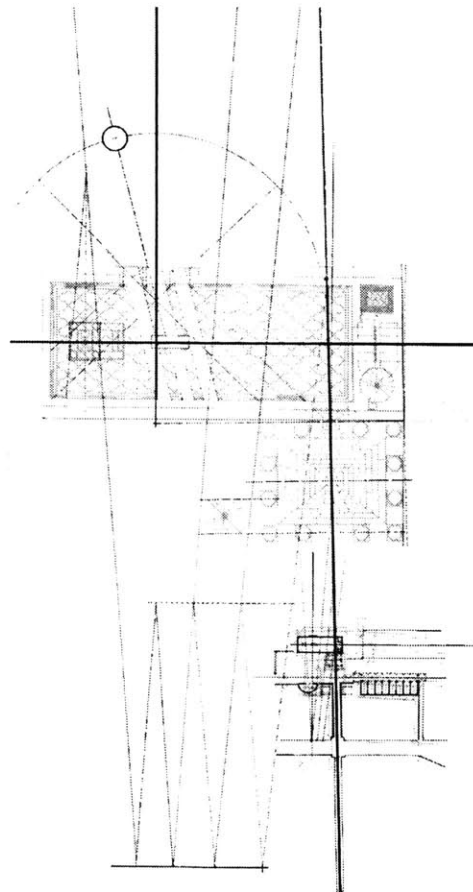


Figure 26

Resurrection Chapel, Sigurd Lewerentz, 1924

Precedent for the distortion of rectilinear geometry can also be found in Lewerentz's earlier work. For example, the little chapel of Forsbacka cemetery dating from 1914-20, but there it is a single body adjusting itself to its setting. At the Resurrection chapel it is as if the forces of the site have actually broken the architecture, but then again not, because each element is complete, apparently perfect. But not quite perfect, for the west facade of the cella, its doorway opening out to a sunken garden co-axial with the cella and its aedicular altar is aligned not with this axis, but with that of the approach, the portico, the major axis of the cemetery. That axis was not imposed on the site by either Asplund or Lewerentz, but was an existing forest path. One can no longer simply speak of a dialogue between elements. Decisions, each made for different reasons and at different times, are brought together and played off against one another, each allowed to compromise the unity of the architecture, and in so doing each leave their traces. In this way the architecture remembers the process of its own formation. The history of architecture, of the site, of the design can be read off one against the others as each distorts the other. It is this articulation of conflicting requirements which charges that sliver of space between the hidden pediment and the blank wall.

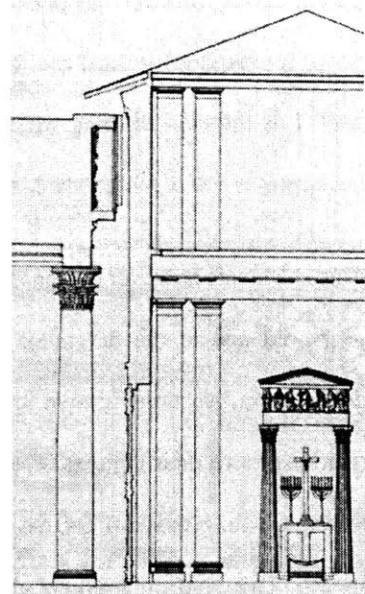


Figure 27

Resurrection Chapel, section showing Gap

## Paradox

Paradox, apparently self-contradictory statement, the underlying meaning of which is revealed only by careful scrutiny. The purpose of a paradox is to arrest attention and provoke fresh thought. The statement "Less is more" is an example. Francis Bacon's saying, "The most corrected copies are commonly the least correct," is an earlier literary example. Modern critics view it as a device, integral to poetic language,

encompassing the tensions of error and truth simultaneously, not necessarily by startling juxtapositions but by subtle and continuous qualifications of the ordinary meaning of words. When a paradox is compressed into two words as in "loud silence," "lonely crowd," or "living death," it is called an oxymoron.

Definition<sup>22</sup>

Just alongside the Resurrection chapel stands a service building erected in 1960. It is of unplastered brick, with mortar joints, which look as if they may overwhelm the brick. The roof is a very shallow monopitch, flashed over the edge of the wall with a thin strip of metal. It looks as if good building practice has been forgotten. Below the flashing, the ends of the rafters are visible. Metal louvered grilles and rough laminated timber doors are set flush with the outer surface of the wall. It is the kind of thing which public authorities erect long after the architect has left the site, because it is just a garden shed, and who needs an architect for a shed.

This shed, was however designed by an architect, and that architect was Sigurd Lewerentz, then 73 years old and at the height of his powers. The Service buildings were the products of long deliberation, sections drawn through the whole adjacent site in order to determine their relationship to their context. That relationship seems to be one of calculated affront, an old man telling a young man off for the excessive refinement of his work, for his excessively rhetorical speech. This confrontation paradoxically draws our attention to just how elegant the work of the young man is, how refined its rhetoric. But the young man and the old man are the same man and

the new and the old buildings affirm the qualities of one another in their discourse. For the shack is a statement of how it is possible to build without rhetoric, conceived of as an act of rhetoric, a statement of one who had worked rigorously throughout his life to forget every convention within architecture in order to achieve the direct solution.

Many of the great Modern architects had been trained, and worked, in inherited architectural languages. Lewerentz, like Asplund was not in the forefront of the development of the so-called International Style. The language of white walls, strip windows, pilotis etc. came to them as another received language. Asplund leaned that language with great facility. For Lewerentz it does not appear to have been so easy. The international Style was a language developed to speak of the secular, the industrial, and the transient; to speak of Modernity. Lewerentz's early modernist works for such programmes were skilled if not brilliant. He learned the language. His religious works of the period are entirely other. They are awkward compromises between the modern and the classical. Stripped down pediments, bald domes, and windows floating uncertainly in the unarticulated facades. He appears to have accepted that the Classical language was dead, but was haunted by his memories of it, for it was the language which he had learned and loved more thoroughly than most of his contemporaries. His conversion to modernism appears to be more of a turning away than a joyful acceptance. That is if modernism were accepted in the form officially sanctioned by those within the fold.

For there are many ways to think of the modern. Lewerentz's important work dealt mainly with the sacred in a secular age. If it was required to construct the realm of the sacred without recourse to the signifiers which had been taken to represent the sacred, it would be necessary to discover those attributes of the environment which are capable of evoking a sense of the sacred. If those elements were as prosaic as possible, if it were possible to invoke the sacred through the everyday, then the distance between the ordinary and the transcendent could be narrowed. In closing down that distance, it would be the commonplace that would be ennobled, rather than the sacred

desacralised. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to forget conventions, however well loved, and to search the memory at a more fundamental level, to bring to recall the moments in which the ordinary and the transcendent appear as the same thing.

I would like to suggest that within the development of Lewerentz's work is to be found a profound attempt to recast the sublime within the realm of the everyday. Not Architecture, but the activity of building. Not the primordial forest, but the tended woodland, not the desert but the farmers field. The green hill rather than the precipice, the problem of mourning for the living, rather than the horror of death.

It is this development I wish to trace in the Woodland Cemetery, the transformation of sentimentality into something much stronger, something much closer to life as it is lived, and yet far stranger than it could ever be imagined.

## Part Three

### Drawn From Life

#### Proposition- A Note on Method

Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of architectural drawings is that they are separate entities from the constructed works they enable or represent. An architect's drawing may well have aesthetic qualities, but any such qualities are incidental, rather than necessary. Architects draw in order to enable a second party, a builder to construct an object conceived of by the architect. An architect's drawing is a presentation of a set of proposed material facts. In order for those facts to conform to the designers intention, it is necessary that drawings are made using an agreed upon set of conventions, and are carried out in a systematic manner, in order that they may be consistently understood and implemented.

In making a drawing, an architect attempts to make clear his or her intentions, whether they be intuitive or empirical, in such a manner that an object can be constructed in which those intentions, aesthetic as well as technical can be seen to exist. The intervention of the construction process forces those intentions to be encoded as an agglomeration of purely objective information, which when carried out in an entirely disinterested manner, will result in an object conveying the original intentions, subjective, aesthetic, as ephemeral as they may be.

This encoding is entirely at odds with the other visual arts, in which intent is traditionally drawn directly into the work, without a process of mediation by a secondary executor. An architect's drawing is a notation more than it is a visual representation. Indeed, the fact that drawing is the



## CONCLUSION

customary format used by architects is essentially arbitrary; the same instructions could be given as a written text, an annotated model, a score of some sort. Having just stated that drawing is an arbitrary medium, it is not the case that it has no influence on the form of architecture. The form of architecture is circumscribed by the system of notation to an enormous extent because the conventions of geometric drawing are used not only to convey information, but also as the mode of production of that information.

## **The Collapse of Time**

In attempting to move from a more general set of themes to a specific understanding of the Woodland cemetery I have chosen to focus on the drawings of the various projects, specifically on the overall plans of the landscape as they, and it, developed over time. Partly this is as a necessary expedient, a path chosen to give direction to an otherwise impossible maze of interesting byways. It is also a decision made with a particular intent. Whilst most contemporary historical discourse appears to take as its material those writings which surround the architectural or environmental object, to rigorously excavate historiographic deposits, in this case the writing about the work is rather sparse, and in comparison to the actual terrain, of a fairly low order. The architects responsible for the design remained almost mute as to their intentions, or even as to their methods, depriving historians of a solid base of primary verbal material, very little text to inhabit, if you will.

What they did leave was a place of compelling interest and an archive of drawings through which the precise form of that place was determined. I have chosen to focus my attentions on the drawings not simply because of geography, but because of a specific interest in the place as it was imagined over time, and through assembling and reconstructing those drawings, allowing for the collapse of that time, so that the many forms may exist at the same time and in the same place. I hope to argue that in some sense, traces of the past forms of the proposal can be found in the finished work, allowing in some sense for one place to bear the traces of many times, many other drawn realities.

## CONCLUSION

### What Can be Said

What in all honesty can be said to those who are bereft? Faith. Hope. The Holy Cross. Resurrection. These are words that speak of an other life, an other earth, an other body. They are also the names of four of the five chapels within the walls of the Woodland Cemetery. The fifth is named after the Woodland, which surrounds it. What is it that this piece of the earth offers to those who must of necessity go through the hard work of mourning?

Asplund and Lewerentz won the competition because of the sensitivity of their response to the character of the place as it existed. "The proposal's most distinctive feature is the way in which it retains the area's own singularly beautiful qualities. In this regard, the roads are laid out very practically, and the incorporation of the existing Tyresovagen is executed in an especially commendable manner, all without neglecting pragmatic considerations. The main entrances are well situated, in particular with regard to the difficult question of access from the railroad station. The proposal is further distinguished by its use of the existing gravel quarries in an ingeniously effective design of natural simplicity. Few changes have been made to the natural vegetation, and replanting where it has occurred, has been carried out with discretion."<sup>23</sup>

The design as executed bears apparently very little resemblance to that originally proposed. And yet it too retains the area's own singularly beautiful qualities." Practical lay out, pragmatic consideration become more so. The gravel quarries leave little trace, as does "ingeniously effective design of natural simplicity." Simplicity there is, but it in no way natural. Discretion and ingenuity are not attributes of the same order. Nor design and nature.

## A Place in Time

But have we a right to assume the survival of something that was originally there, alongside of what was later derived from it? Undoubtedly. There is nothing strange in such a phenomenon, whether in the mental field or elsewhere...Since we overcame the error of supposing that the forgetting we are familiar with

signified a destruction of the memory- trace -- that is, its annihilation- we have been inclined to take the opposite view, that in mental life, nothing which has once been formed can perish-that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances...it can once more be brought to light.<sup>24</sup>

A particular characteristic of landscape design is its intimate relationship to time. It takes a great amount of time for designed landscapes to be completed, if indeed they can ever be said to be finished, for they will inevitably change. Landscapes grow and die and decay. Given that what is manipulated is natural, often living material, change over time, both seasonal and historic is more marked than in other fields. The Landscape garden at Stowe was developed over almost a century. It was formalised, extended, demolished, modified, made picturesque, all at great expense and with enormous physical effort. As we know it, it bears the traces of all of its former incarnations, a palimpsest of fragments carefully restored, arduously maintained.

The Woodland cemetery was formed over a period of twenty-five years. It too bears the marks of changing aesthetic climates. It was worked and reworked assiduously, but with one significant difference. Very little that was actually constructed was destroyed. Rather, its evolution took place largely on the drawing board of Sigurd Lewerentz, a record of an ongoing conversation between the landscape, Asplund and Lewerentz.

In assembling, reconstructing and redrawing the project over the period of its development, I have focussed particularly on the large scale design moves, and looked at issues of detail as they stand

## CONCLUSION

in relation to the broader strategic moves. Fundamental to this analysis is the observation that as early as the Town Engineers proposal for developing the site drawn in 1910, the site planning drawings included contours. By overlaying the contours extracted from the plan of 1924, it was possible to confirm that even the earliest topographic drawings are in close accord with what is obviously the product of detailed survey, and that subsequent revisions are at the level of increased detail rather than a correction of fundamental geometric errors. Due to the intense rendering of the competition plans, and due also to the fragmentary nature of the subsequent drawings, it was not clear how the design related to the pre-existing character of the site on anything other than a general level. By extrapolating backwards from the disposition of elements in the realised work. Through producing plans, at the same scale and in a unified manner, of the scheme at eight stages during its development, it became possible to trace the design process in its precise relationship to its context, and to reconstruct the relationship between the various schemes, locating both in temporal and geometric terms the decisions and revisions which are the theme of this research. The motivations for all of the changes of mind are not straightforward. Some were programmatic, revisions to the brief by the Cemetery Authority. The increasing use of motor vehicles caused certain modifications to be made to the layout of the roads. Practical difficulties with the laying out of surveyable grave plots in relationship to the irregular geometry of nature and of picturesque simulations of nature needed to be overcome, and for similar reasons, the natural undergrowth had to be cleared. Other decisions were apparently modified due to a greater understanding of the experiential qualities of the site, both through the simple process of growing familiarity with the landscape, and in a more complex manner, through reflection on the problems and potentials brought to light as the incremental modification of the landscape in accordance with earlier plans. That the project could deviate so completely from its original form, undergo a multitude of circumstantial modifications and yet emerge as an apparently unified solution raises an obvious question. How was this achieved Clearly a process far different to mere problem solving was in operation.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps more important than any of the practical necessities in the process of ongoing modification is the question of aesthetics. There a number of shifts in aesthetic climate during the period, of which Asplund and Lewerentz were not only a part of, but also instrumental in, and those shifts modified the relationship between necessity and form. The story of the conversion to functionalism is well known, but the historical reality revealed in the design process modifies that text subtly. I will return to this in some detail later. Of more direct importance to understanding the evolution of the scheme is the manner in which the architects worked. Asplund certainly, and Lewerentz even more so obsessively pursued aesthetic problems through a process of reworking, or even abandoning design solutions in favour of alternatives which more closely approximated their desired solutions.

### 1913

Even in the earliest drawings of the project, an essential design strategy is evident, one that will remain fundamental to each stage of development of the scheme. A geometrical matrix is established, which takes as its vertices a number of significant topographical points. A ridge, which runs down from the chapel of the existing Sandsborg cemetery, is crossed at its lowest point by the cutting for a new avenue. The ridge rises as it proceeds southward, and reaching its apex, bifurcates. This apex is to become the key point for the development of the design.

A cutting through the forest runs off to the south, traversing a shallow bowl of land, sinking gently and then rising again as it disappears into the distance. From the summit of the ridge, the eastern branch dips to form a shoulder of land, divides to form two knolls of which the northernmost is more significant. An existing woodland road passes over the saddle between the two hilltops. Beyond the northern hill, the ridge divides again, on branch petering out, the other

## C O N C L U S I O N

going further east to end in a small transverse ridge

At the southern extremity of the site rises another small hillock, but the dense growth of pines obscures its presence from any distance. The western boundary of the site is defined by the curve of a planned railway line. A series of dihedral angles connected by shallow arcs. Just inside this line are a series of gravel pits; one cutting deeply into the flank of the main ridge, the other paralleling another slightly skewed road. Across this road, a certain amount of thinning has taken place, limited by another cutting through the trees, not quite parallel to the one that lies beyond it, the same one which leads back to the summit of the ridge. Just to the north-east of that summit is another quarry, cutting into the angle of the slope between the ridge and a minor spur, Water is likely to accumulate in it.

The northern boundary of the site follows the road beyond it, and thus also the contours. On the south-facing slope beyond, suburban development is beginning. The eastern boundary is dead straight. On one side, the side that is to be the cemetery, the abrupt edge of the forest, on the other cleared land. The site is fairly typical of the fringes of Stockholm in 1913, the natural landscape marked by roads and footpaths, the forest fairly uniform, and yet not untouched, the earth dug up where it could be put to some or other use, and to the north, and inevitably spreading south, the expanding dormitory suburbs.

## CONCLUSION

1914

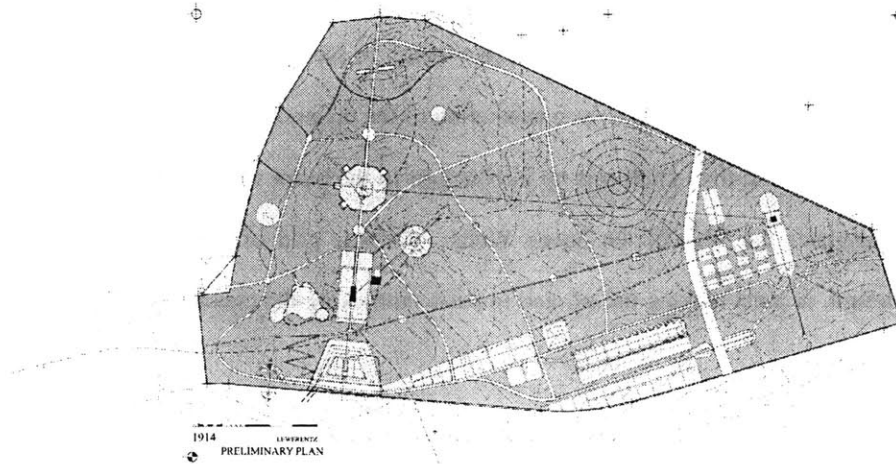


Figure 28

1914

Lewerentz, in his preliminary design drew a line connecting the high points of the ridge running from west to east. The line connects the dominant features of the topography with the major excavation, which is transformed into a dramatic forecourt, and runs out to the railway line, setting up an unequivocally axial sequence of events. A ceremonial plaza occupies the plateau adjacent to the main ridge, and in its centre is the main chapel, co-axial with path, plaza and landscape. The forest cutting is used as a path running into the distance, terminating in a minor chapel, ones progression punctuated by seven wells. A minor diagonal axis links the major chapel and its plaza to the knoll on the secondary branch of the ridge, transforming the hilltop, into a centralised plaza, in the sane manner as the octagonal urn court dominates the other knoll. Counterpointing this move is the other quarry, treated as a picturesque valley, perhaps including a circular pond.

The lowest part of the site, the shallow bowl is formalised as a series of concentric rings. It is likely that these would step down gradually towards the centre, in the same manner as the



## C O N C L U S I O N

ceremonial plaza later built by Lewerentz at Malmo, an architectural reinforcement of the existing landscape. The thinned portions of the forest are articulated as a series of formal gardens flanking the road. The last of the excavations is treated as if it were the remains of a small classical stadium tuned over to a new use, its bowl full of plants and tombs. A second road severs the southern portion of the site, which is treated almost as a reiteration of the elements of the northern part, but in a more subdued tone. The final knoll sets up a cross axis to the plaza with its chapel, the same chapel which terminates the Way of the Seven Wells. A loose grid of gently winding roads completes the design, in parts making use of, and in parts mimicking the character of the existing forest roads.

Already there is a tension set up between different formal systems. An axial, formal matrix links the elements of the landscape, a paradoxical move which treats the topography as if it were part of an architectural scheme. The linking axes are pedestrian ways, and in moving along these lines one measures the topography. Like Roman roads they take the shortest path. One could say they take the straight and narrow, rather than the easiest, way. In contrast, the roadways follow the vernacular manner of making roadways; they find the easiest path through the landscape, linking necessary destinations and incidental points of interest into a matrix of possible movements.

## CONCLUSION

1915



Figure 28

1915

The competition winning plan of 1915, the joint work of Asplund and Lewerentz is essentially a reworking of the preliminary project. The tentative triangulation of axes present in the earlier drawing has become explicit, with the result that the Way of the Seven Wells simply comes to an end, rather than terminating in any significant manner. The southern chapel has been moved closer to the railway line and the second proposed cross street. It is an inversion of the part of Lewerentz's Forsbacka cemetery chapel, begun in collaboration with Stubelius in 1914.

The main chapel too is a reworking of a Lewerentz and Stubelius project, in this case, the 1911-14 project for the Helsingborg Crematorium, which has already been mentioned in the context of the origins of Asplund and Lewerentz's collaboration. The belltower, which stands on the high point of the site, with its inverted trumpet shaped conical roof has as its double the chapel of Valdemarsvik Cemetery, a project begun in 1915 by Lewerentz and Stubelius. In this case, it appears that the form of the roof may have originated in the Stockholm project, given that the

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chapel was constructed in 1917. The main columbarium of the urn walk has been transformed into a series of concentric circle, stepping first up to a bounding wall and then slightly down to a central point, possibly a well. The minor knoll just to the south-west of this is articulated by an oval clearing surrounded with trees and tombs. The eastern ridge is crowned by series of walled enclosures, planted with individual deciduous trees. The walls are traced from the contours of the topographical base drawing.

From the circular columbarium, a straight path, an imitation of the existing cutting runs almost due south almost to the end of that original line. Near its southern end, it bisects and gives access to a series of clearing designated for family graves. These are like rooms laid out 'enfilade', the poche for their individual forms by the dense walls of trees. South of these is the final hillock, adjacent to the southern entry. Across the entry road is a rectangular plot of cultivation, its access road pointing to the high point of the knoll. Seven gardens still flank the existing north-south road, as does the stadium like excavation. Occasional clearings are scattered about the forest, which is otherwise left as a uniform, dense carpet. Along with the Sandsborg cemetery across the northern road, the two portions of the proposed design form a sort of triptych, each part aesthetically related to the others, but each being articulated differently. It is worth pointing out that a Jewish cemetery was proposed to be, and eventually was, laid out adjacent to the southern boundary. Beyond this, unbuilt land and collective gardens running to the waters of Drevviken. Together they form a finger of greenery pointing from the countryside into the older suburbs just south of the city.

The general atmosphere of the competition plan is rather less formal, perhaps more picturesque than its predecessor. This is due to the simplification of the main chapel complex, the grand entrance court replaced with a more incidental approach from the railway station proposed as a bridge over the northern cross street. Access from this entrance to the chapel is via a curving path, The Way of the Cross as shown in Lewerentz's famous sketch with its leaning wayfarers cross. Entrance into the forecourt is beneath the bell tower at the peak of the ridge, an unequivocal

## CONCLUSION

beacon. The winding footpaths and roadways also lend support to the generally picturesque air. The formality of the three straight and narrow paths sits slightly uneasily in amongst the apparent naturalism, and yet, paradoxically it is this geometry which is most closely tied into the form of the earth, even if it is a relation more naturally made on the drawing board than on the ground.

## 1916-1917

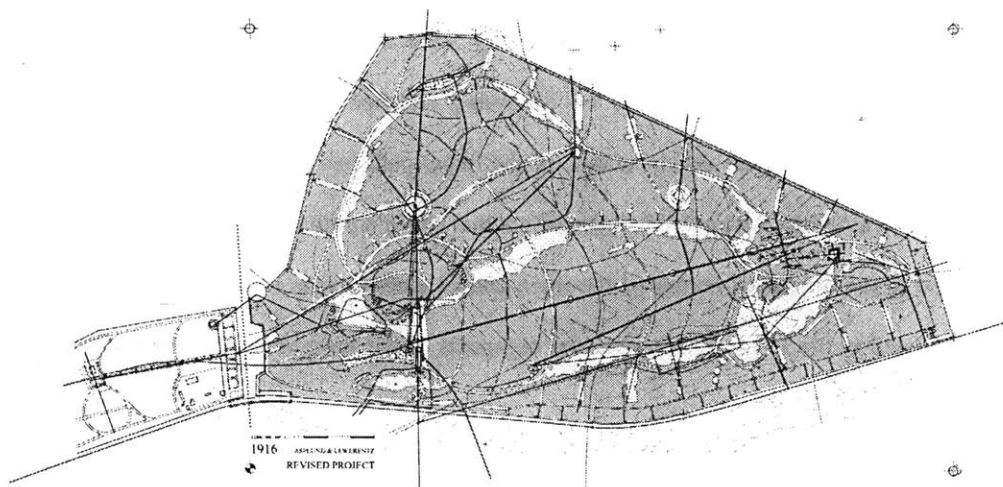


Figure 30

1916-17

The project of 1916, presented to the cemetery authorities in February of 1917 modified the winning project in response to criticism from the jury and with reference to Osvald Almqvist's incomplete and unrewarded entry.<sup>25</sup> These modifications served not only to introduce a greater variety of spatial arrangements, but also to strengthen and clarify the processional sequence through the landscape. From Almqvist was taken the idea for reformulating the entrance sequence so that chapel and woodland could be seen from some distance from across the first gravel pit, now treated as a bowl lined with lawn. This entailed moving the entrance court to the centre of the northern boundary. Directly across Sockenvagen, the northern cross street, the terrace at the foot

## CONCLUSION

of Sandsborg cemetery was transformed into the Seven gardens, which henceforth are not to be found in the Woodland Cemetery. Leading up the hill, in the manner of a traditional ridgeway, a straight path lined with trees leads to a forecourt to the chapel. This echoes in a minor key the theme of the main chapel precinct at the peak of the same ridge further to the south.

Also under the influence of Almqvist and the advisory body, a more coherent series of openings were carved out of the forest. These are woven in between the roadways and the footpaths, the whole articulated as a sequence of vistas, much in the manner of the circuits of the picturesque English Garden. The small clearings, which formerly were scattered about the quadrants of woodland, are now drawn into coherence by becoming attached to the roads and pathways. Another significant change is the disappearance of the linear path from the circular columbarium to the end of The Way of the Seven Wells. Instead, another straight path is cut from a little circular chapel attached to the Southeast corner of the main chapel garden. This runs along the diagonal axis first articulated in the 1914 project, over the highpoint of the little knoll and ends in a small ceremonial plaza.

The Way of the Seven Wells now terminates in a revised version of the family grave clearings. These are planned like a series of catacombs, cut out of the woods rather than of the earth. The main axis, which is an extension of the forest cutting, is intersected by a cross axis, which links a series of variations of the main sequence of rooms. One of these has an axial relation to the southern chapel's forecourt. This resolution of staggered axes in order to accommodate architectural elements to site conditions is to reappear in the later versions of the plan, both in the layout of the southern chapel, and as a recurring theme in the overall composition.

1918

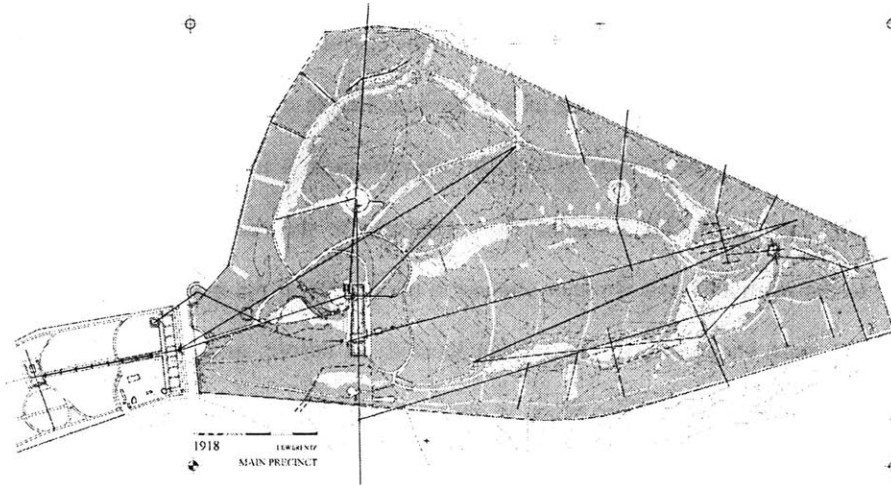


Figure 31

1918

The project of 1918 focussed on the main entry and chapel precincts. Lewerentz's drawing extends from the Sandsborg chapel to the precinct spanning the plateau to the south and west of the main ridge, but implies no changes to the overall site plan approved for execution the year before. The axis descending from the Sandsborg chapel garden is deflected as it meets Sockenvagen. The reception and deflection of the axis from the north is achieved by the transformation of the broad entrance forecourt into a semicircular apse. Rather than bending the axis at the centre of the implied circle, as would be expected, the kink occurs at the perimeter, where the circle touches the edge of the northern terrace. Also slightly perverse is the opening out of the end of this apse into a rising road, flanked by rough stone walls. The rising of the road induces a strange distortion of perspective. A pair of classical columns, crowned with small impost blocks, bearing sculptural figures flank the entrance into the roadway. Another pair of columns related to a curved wall echoes these columns at the upper end of the entranceway. This pair is however in antis, although no entablature connects them. The cylindrical wall forms the perimeter

## CONCLUSION

of a roofless building, ringed on its interior by twelve identical columns. This drum separates the single approach route into three. To the left is a roadway for vehicles, to the right a flight of stairs rising between the flank of the cylinder and the leaning cross. The path straight ahead leads between the columns into the tholos. Beyond the second opening, the path bifurcates around the grassy valley. Straight ahead on the rising axis is the rear facade of the little chapel, a primitive classical building straddling the terrace wall of the main precinct, a sunken arch giving access to the crypt the only opening visible from the entry sequence to the cemetery. The chapel is not perpendicular to the main axis, but is rather aligned to the terrace of the main precinct. It is to be assumed that the main chapel was to have been located, as before, at the western end of the terrace, aligned with the axis of the Urn Walk, its rear face looming out over the valley beyond the railway line.

The kink in the entrance axis appears to have been induced by two considerations relating to the site. The first is that the entranceway would have had to cut deeply into the flank of the ridge if it had been aligned with the Sandsborg axis. The other is the diagonal path heading south-east from the main precinct, along the secondary ridge. This intersects the axis of the Little Chapel at the entrance to the plaza. This would result in a similar relationship between the minor chapel and the minor path into the woods and the Way of the Seven Wells and the main chapel.

The Little Chapel was designed By Asplund; the Entrance sequence came from the board of Lewerentz. They are stylistically in remarkable accord, a slightly vernacular or primitive classicism, tinged with the sentimentality of the National Romantic manner. This is not of merely stylistic interest, for it prefigures a more sophisticated interplay between the formal and the picturesque modes of composition which would mark the further development of the project. Also, for all their stylistic similarity there is a subtle differentiation between the moods of Asplund's and Lewerentz's Contributions, perhaps it is just a matter of different drawing styles, but the latter is a

## CONCLUSION

little stranger, a little less charming.

**1921**

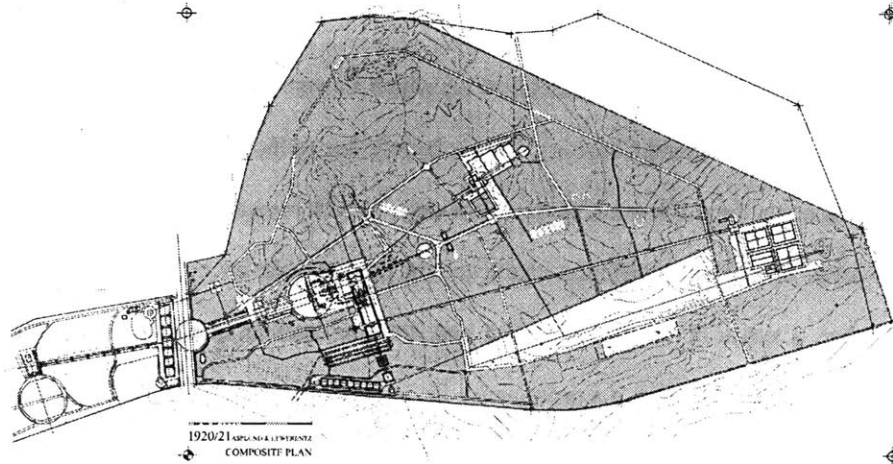


Figure 32

The overall plan of 1921 was never drawn. It has been assembled from Lewerentz's proposals for the entry drive from April 1921, for the northern part of the cemetery, from late 1920, his June 1921 proposal for the South Chapel and Asplund's Woodland Chapel site plan, developed between 1921 and 1923.

Under the influence of increased use of the automobile, Lewerentz had begun to modify the form of the roadways, replacing the long sweeping curves with a series of straight sections joined by shorter, tighter curves. For all the change in character, the new road layout follows quite closely that of the earlier plan. This change in character is probably also due in part to a desire to clarify the layout of the burial quadrants, both so that individual grave sites would be both easier to locate and to define. In addition, it proved impossible to retain the natural appearance of the forest floor with the graves scattered about beneath the trees, forcing a more artificial treatment of the surface of the earth. It was decided to plant the entire ground surface with grass, and to lay out the graves



## CONCLUSION

in a more geometric manner, a pair of decisions at odds with an apparent naturalism. Perhaps more significant than any of these practical considerations, however, is the influence of two other cemeteries on which Lewerentz was working concurrently.

The Eastern Cemetery in Malmo, the competition for which Lewerentz won in 1916 is of a very different character to the Woodland Cemetery. This is largely due to the nature of the site, an open swathe of farmland on the broad Scanian plain. A low ridge, which runs across the plain, was used to form burial areas of markedly different character, on the one side an open extension of the plain, on the other, a series of hedges sheltering and defining smaller quadrants. The ridge in between was subtly modified to give it a prominence far in excess of what one would expect from a topographical feature a little over two metres high. It was planted with wheat, and all of the major buildings were arranged in relation to it, either facing onto, standing upon, or cut into its topography. The whole complex is a reworking of the typical Scanian agricultural landscape, fused in parts with the traditional manner of graveyard design customary in the region, and yet conceived of as a classical landscape. There is very little of the picturesque in the scheme, perhaps very little charm, but it is a landscape of great power, and yet a power difficult to define in that it is apparently very ordinary, very close to the everyday.

Between 1919 and 1924, Lewerentz was working on the design of Kvarnsveden Cemetery. The graveyard was laid out on existing agricultural land. The internal layout of the site was determined by allowing the geometry of the surrounding fields to enter into the site, setting up a skewed pair of axes, which terminate in the porch of the chapel. This Chapel is a reworking of Asplund's Woodland Chapel, but of a harsher aspect as befits the bleakness of its locale.<sup>26</sup> The Chapel has something of the character of an agricultural building, a barn in the middle of fields. The layout of the graves following the linear geometry of the fields, draws an analogy between the resting-places of the dead and the working, productive lands.

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By the beginning of the twenties, Lewerentz's architecture was moving towards a stricter neo-classicism. Asplund was to follow this direction shortly afterwards. The lyrical fusion of the classical and vernacular which the Woodland Chapel is said to exemplify is less evident in his design for the burial quadrants surrounding it.<sup>27</sup>

The design for this area, the only landscaping drawing by Asplund found amongst Lewerentz's drawings, is in extremely close accord with the latter's 1920 scheme for the main chapel precinct, both in manner and in terms of its geometry. The underlying matrixes of the two complexes are iterations of a single parti, modified in relationship to the immediate context. A chapel sits in towards the end of the longer axis of a walled enclosure. Perpendicular to this is the mortuary, partially sunken into the earth. Also perpendicular to the body of the chapel, a long axis reaches into the landscape, held at its end by a circular plaza. The terraces of the main precinct are reiterated in the zigzagging paths of the sunken burial area of the Woodland chapel, both held by a linear garden skewed off of the orthogonal in response to a passing roadway.

Far from being an idealised formal exercise overlaid on the site, Lewerentz's necropolis holds the key to understanding of the further development of the project. It sets up the strong axis extending from the entrance, through the main chapel and on into the woodland beyond. The main Chapel no longer dominates the high point of the site, which due to the moving of the main precinct further from the entrance is now made independent of the main precinct. The precinct rather connects the entrance axis to the Way of the Seven Wells.

The Urn Walk is suppressed, implying a less ambiguous overall layout, emphasising the original path through the woods. This is now flanked by a pair of roads which follow the topography on either side, setting up with the cross paths a grid of roughly rectangular burial plots. This layout,

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too has precedent in the work of Lewerentz. His design for Rud Cemetery places a composition of chapel, lawn and pond in front of a gridded forest. Bisected by a long, straight path. The frontal aspect of the dense planting of trees gives the appearance of a facade of trees, the forest seen as a figure from outside, as a ground from inside the whole like the ghost of an urban layout, streets with blocks, but instead of built fabric, the dense fabric of trees.

The cross paths articulate the length of the Way of the Seven Wells, each offering a slightly different view down its length. A major cross axis is set up near its end, where the two vehicle routes are joined together, and to a secondary entrance. This opening out to the sky, and to the distance provides a moments pause before the path continues on to the Southern Chapel, and on into the woods beyond. This chapel was to have been a small timber construction, as was the Woodland Chapel. It once again reiterates the elements of the other precincts, but in a more subdued manner. Rather than a major walled enclosure, there is a small entrance forecourt surrounded by low walls. The long axis of the chapel opens out to an open, sunken graveyard. Adjacent to this are four enclosures, slightly sunken into the ground, the excavated earth thrown up as bermed walls around their perimeters. These are laid out around a perpendicular crossing of paths, in the manner of a Roman encampment, long since abandoned, occupied now by the dead. The western pair of quadrants is axially aligned with the high point of the southernmost knoll, a device much like that used in the main precinct to connect the entrance axis to that of the Way of the Seven wells.

This use of a local axial alignment to the topography occurs several times in the layout of the roads, a straight section of road aligning with a slight rise in the land beyond. Or a small structure placed at the end of a long stretch of road as it divides at the low point between two hills. The Mortuary mound of the Woodland Chapel is similarly aligned with the knoll to the north. This tactic also accounts for the strange kinks of the roads surrounding the main precinct. In concluding

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this section, we could return to the main Entrance. At the place where the little tholos had earlier been proposed is now a small open plaza, held in tension between a pair of facades, the way forward blocked a pond, around which the path bifurcates to provide access to the main chapel beyond, and to the peak of the ridge. These elements will return, differently arranged certainly, but still recognisable.

**1924**

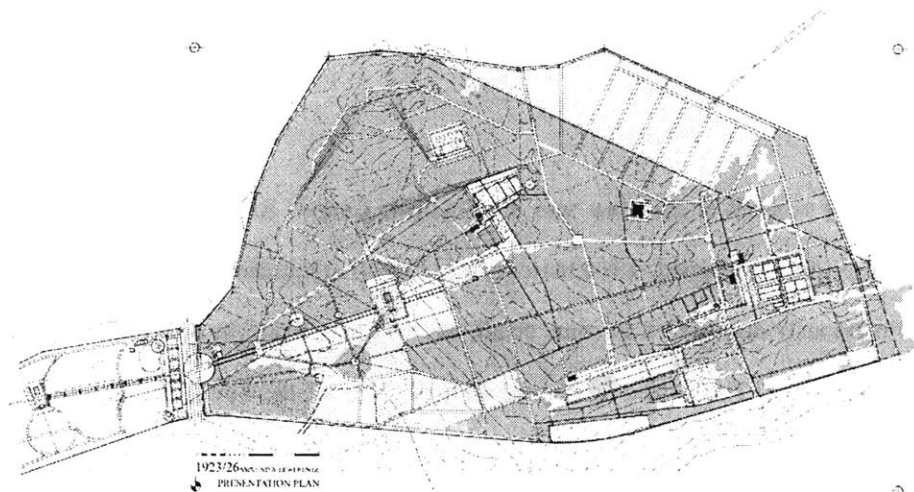


Figure 33

1924

The geometrical diagram of the 1924 plan is almost indistinguishable from that of the scheme as finally realised. There is however a great difference in the overall character of the project at this stage and as completed. The difference lies both in the manner in which the buildings are integrated into the overall design scheme, how they are placed on the axes which bind the parts of the project into a coherent composition.

The low point of the site is now occupied by Asplund's strange service building, an encampment of five metal tents clustered around a small entry court. They occupy the position of what was

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once proposed as a small pond, nestled into the centre of the bowl of land that forms the centre of the landscape, a point significant in terms of the overall topography. The building itself is fairly significant; it does not seek to hide itself between the trees, or to bury itself in the ground. It is a building for the living, for those who are daily confronted with the difficult task of maintaining a landscape inhabited only by the dead. Perhaps this accounts for its slightly forced air of festivity. It is unlikely that an architect as aware of the character evident in any work of architecture as Asplund would have produced an object which strikes a slightly jarring tone, as this does would have been unaware of that tone. Perhaps it is a mistake, but perhaps not one of intention, so much as one of overstatement.

The other building realised at this time was the Southern Chapel. Rather than a small timber building, as was originally planned, it is a masonry structure of significant size, and of significant merit. I have previously discussed it in some detail, and will here focus on its relationship to the overall landscape design. The portico is aligned with the Way of the Seven Wells, and indeed terminates the considerable thrust in a meaningful manner. After much vacillation, it was decided that the axis should be brought to a definite end, rather than fading to nothing, or ending in the Seventh well. This corresponds to the relation of the woodland chapel to the path that was extended along its major axis, a move suggested by Asplund, recorded as a line drawn over Lewerentz's plan for the main entry drive of 1920.

The body of the chapel however sits almost perpendicular to the main approach axis, the slight misalignment quite possibly the result of an error in the setting out of the burial quadrants to which it aligned. The decision to sever, and to rotate the portico, was perhaps in part a response to this situation, but far from a simple response. Lewerentz and Stubelius 1911-14 project for the Helsingborg Crematorium had proposed a building laid out according to the Rites of Passage of the funeral ritual. This implied that the mourners would not exit from the chapel through the same door as that through which they entered. Because of the Chapel of the Resurrection's traditional

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orientation, with its altar to the east, the catafalque lying in front of this, held in the light of the southern sun. It was desirable to place the entrance at the west end of the building.

This was also the ideal location for the exit, the mourners moving out through a low and deep threshold too the open garden, sheltered in its recess in the earth, open to the sky and the view of the rising ground to the south. This duality was resolved through its clear statement rather than through obfuscation. The portico stands, as it should, perpendicular to the axis of approach. A properly classical entrance door opens into the north-west corner of the cella, which is quite improper.

This impropriety causes the ghostly pilaster strips to be forced out of their normal perpendicular relationship across the main axis. It is only at the cross axis of the enormous south-facing window that geometrical normality is restored. On the north wall, this axis passes between a pair of pilasters, to the south it passes through the centre of the window and out to the sky. Where this axis crosses the centre line of the chapel, where it makes a cross, is the head of the catafalque, the head of the one lost to death.

The main chapel sits astride of, and perpendicular to the entrance axis. This axis, rising between walls, slices right through the body of the building, which sits atop the ridge, its axis aligned with the rise in the ground which was to have been the central element of the urn walk. The walls of the main entrance way focus one's view and one's movement unequivocally on the fragment of sky visible through the porch of the chapel. From within the porch, the main axis descends into the forest, its end held by a small chapel, to the east of which the main drive can be seen winding off between the trees. The chapel is placed squarely within its precinct, which opens out at its north-west corner to an outdoor ceremonial plaza and mortuary, setting up a diagonal view to the meditation Grove located at the high point of the site, surrounded by a knoll of trees.

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The character of this peak has been transformed. A vehicle road was cut through the ridge, transforming the topography into a rising ridge, cut through by a winding valley, the top of the ridge now reading as rounded hilltop. This rounding was the result of careful shaping at the hands of the designers and their workers. The peak of the hill was in fact lowered to reduce its precipitous aspect.

This hill, now isolated from the ridge, and positioned closer to the entrance, was to open the way for the final reworking of the landscape, for it now read as a figure, rather than merely a prominent part of the ground.

1932

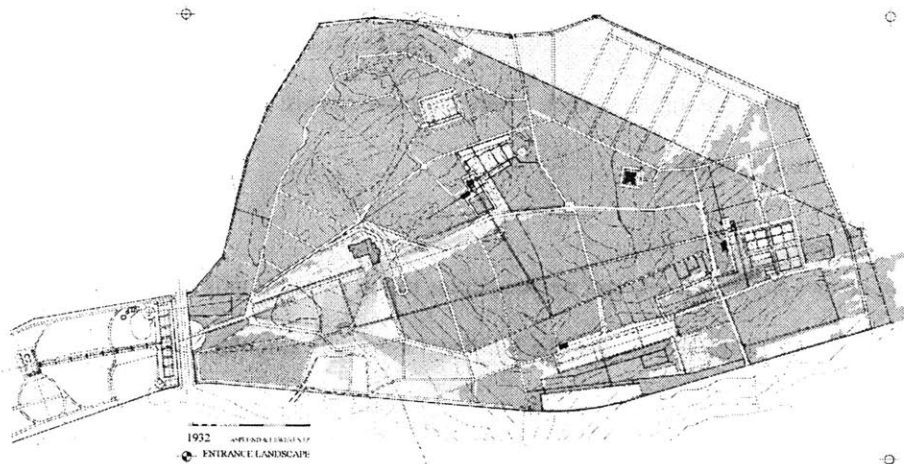


Figure 34

1932

The drawings submitted by Asplund and Lewerentz to the Cemetery Authority in 1932 focus exclusively on the main entry area. In terms of the landscape design they are definitive. It is only in matters of detail, specifically the placement of the sculptural group, The Resurrection, and of the obelisk, which would eventually become the cross of stone. The main path up the hill towards

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the chapel has been shifted to the east, held now on one side only by a wall, which restates the rise of the path towards the portico and the sky. The plaza of the main chapel has been opened out to the landscape. The trees to its south-west, which had been removed, replanted but now on a square grid. Any false naturalism has been removed from the project, that which is the result of human action is allowed to read as such. Across the way of the Seven Wells, a row of trees has been planted, reinforcing the reading of the northern edge of the woodland as a facade, suggesting perhaps that the woodland itself is not so much a natural forest but a tended plantation, the earth beneath the trees covered in a carefully tended lawn.

This lawn is marked only by rows of small crosses and headstones flowers clustered around their bases, arranged in lines broken by the trunks of the trees, following the apparently irregular geometry of nature. We have returned to the one sketch of 1914 which still has an obvious presence. Even so, the tone is now one of careful cultivation, tender maintenance, rather than of slightly sinister decay. This could be seen as the working through in terms of landscape design of the tenets of modernism, simplicity, order, a sanitary aesthetic. The problem with this reading is that the overall character of the burial landscape had already been determined between 1921 and 1924, indeed the completed landscape conforms almost completely to the plan of 1924, and careful reconstruction has clarified just how much of that plan was fixed by 1921. This coincides with the period of the most overtly neo-classical work by both Asplund and Lewerentz.

As significant difference between the 1932 project and its predecessor is the nature of the chapel, particularly the character of the portico. A joint proposal from 1930 for the main chapel, signed by both architects, but probably the work of Lewerentz, given its close similarity to his other work of the period, proposed a stark white cuboid, its portico formed by the penetration of the entrance axis through the mass of the building, supported at its western edge by a series of unarticulated fins, presenting, when viewed from the Way of the Seven Wells an almost impenetrable wall. The



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siting, and surroundings of this proposal echo those of the 1934 project, but stripped of all traditional articulation. Significantly too, the crematorium and ancillary functions are articulated as a collection of cubic masses, subordinate to the chapel, but in no way screened or suppressed. The 1932 project appears to adapt the functional layout of this scheme, but pushes the whole complex of buildings further back along the axis set up between the first well of the Way of the Seven Wells and the knoll beyond. The result is that the entrance axis no longer passes through the body of the building, but rises unimpeded to the woodland and sky beyond. The portico is also of a far more obviously traditional form, an entablature borne on closely spaced circular shafts. The Cemetery commission had rejected the 1930 proposal as being too harsh, too unfamiliar, too modern.

**1940**

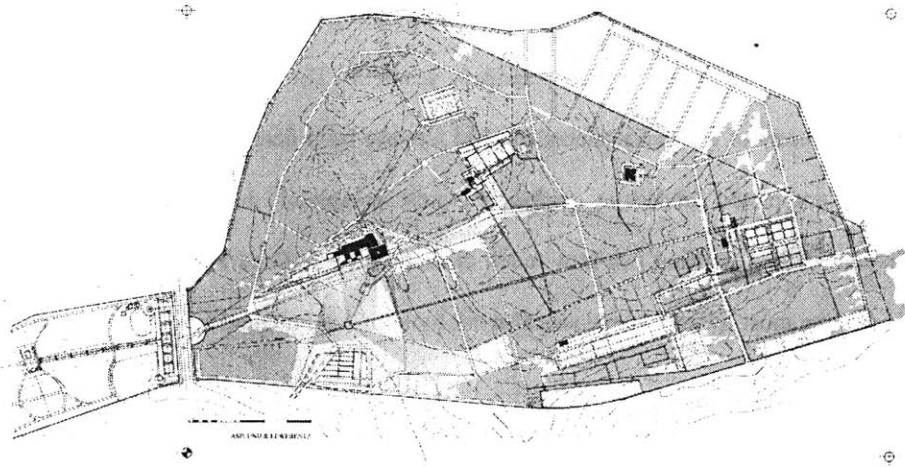


Figure 35

1940

Asplund died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1940, six months after the opening of the Woodland Crematorium. No mention that I have been able to trace is made as to the presence or absence of Lewerentz at his funeral service. When, in 1935, Asplund was appointed to design the main chapel

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complex without Lewerentz, the latter severed all connections with his collaborator of twenty-one years. Asplund remains were interred beneath a plaque in the columbarium wall just where the path to the main portico cuts through it. The epitaph reads, "His Work Lives." In so far as he worked with Lewerentz on the design of the landscape, this is literally true. In terms of his architecture, it is rhetoric. Architecture does not live; it is as dead as any stone. But unlike mere matter architecture is shaped in the service of life, it helps to make life possible.

Asplund revised the landscape only on the level of detail in relation to the joint proposal of 1932. He pushed the chapel the east, so as to allow for a portico of great depth, its front row of columns lined up with the columbarium wall which flanked the Way of the Cross. He placed the minor chapels, those of Faith and Hope parallel to the axis of the main chapel, now named the Chapel of the Holy cross. Between the chapels he placed a series of walled gardens and waiting rooms. Lower down the slope, towards the east he placed the crematorium and mortuary facilities. From the Meditation Grove, atop the hill, all that is evident of these facilities is a trinity of smokestacks. In contrast, the chapels, gardens and portico present a series of layered planes of stone, white marble cut with an iron saw so as to ensure a change of colour over time to a mellow gold.

From the Meditation grove, with its stair that becomes shallower as one rises, as one tires, a diagonal axis links the mound, the outdoor ceremonial plaza, pond and the impluvium, beneath which the Resurrection group rise towards the light. To the left, held in line by the wall beneath which Asplund is buried, is the Cross, returned from its banishment.

The mound and the buildings confront one another across open space. Lewerentz defined its final form, its low stone wall and ring of trees only in 1940.

## Conclusion

“Across artistic, theoretical, and popular cultures (in SoHo, at Yale, on Oprah) there is a tendency to redefine experience, individual and historical, in terms of trauma. On the one hand, in art and theory, trauma discourse continues the poststructuralist critique of the subject by other means, for again, in a psychoanalytic register, there is no subject of trauma; the position is evacuated, and in this sense the critique of the subject is most radical here. On the other hand, in popular culture, trauma is treated as an event that guarantees the subject, and in this psychologistic register the subject, however disturbed, rushes back as witness, testifier, survivor. Here is indeed a traumatic subject, and it has absolute authority, for one cannot challenge the trauma of another: one

can only believe it, even identify with it, or not. In trauma discourse, then, the subject is evacuated and elevated at once. And in this way, trauma discourse magically resolves two contradictory imperatives in culture today: deconstructive analyses and identity politics. This strange rebirth of the author, this paradoxical position of absentee authority, is a significant turn in contemporary art, criticism and cultural politics. Here the return of the real converges with the return of the referential, and to this point I now turn.” “The reaction against poststructuralism, the return of the real, also expresses a nostalgia for universal categories of being and experience. The paradox is that this rebirth of humanism would occur in the register of the traumatic.”

<sup>2829</sup> Hal Foster

The quote above refers to a shift currently being observed in the arts and their surrounding disciplines, and serves perhaps to ground my reading of the Woodland cemetery, for I my education has taken place within the philosophical context of structuralism and its unruly offspring, its more or less distant relatives in the world of architectural design and theory. Of course, the real is not really returning, it has never left the field of day to day existence. For all the awareness of the mediated nature of much current experience, even the most thoroughly constructed, or perhaps deconstructed subjectivity is subject to traumatic experience which rips through whatever cultural fabric which veils unmediated reality.

Death is precisely an event of this order, perhaps the most basic, in that it not only rends the weave of culture, but unmakes life. Death destroys any illusion that we have of controlling nature, no matter how successfully we appear to be able to manipulate the world around us. Death is a part of

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nature, as is life in its most basic sense, and yet death is the absolute other of life. Therein lies a fundamental paradox, one of which we can in all honesty say nothing, but about which people have always spun an endless thread of words, of mythology, of rhetoric. Rhetoric is that form of language which attempts to say that which cannot be said, to express that which has no meaning within language. Figure of rhetoric, we are accustomed to labelling them as figures of speech attempt to capture the space which lies between the words which we all understand. They do so by means of manipulating the placement, the stress, the order of words. This is off course within the realm of language, whilst architecture, the body, the landscape are within the realm of things, and the order of things does not constitute a language.

What architecture has in common with language is that it is conventionalised, both in its elements and in the rules which govern the assembly of those elements into larger figures. and this is particularly so in the realm of the classical canon. It is a system of taboos, if you will, and taboo invites transgression.

Georges Bataille posited that it is an awareness of death is the fundamental element of humanity, of culture. It is the ultimate taboo. In order to live, primitive man and woman had to break this taboo, had to kill and eat another creature, had to form his or her own, cultured, flesh from the substance of nature. It has been suggested to me that disposing of the dead within an intentionally constructed image of nature is in some way a replaying of that fundamental taboo, an attempt at sublimation. This is all metaphor, rhetoric if you will, but I will let it stand as a starting point for my own speculation.

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### Sublimation

“Sublimation, in physics, conversion of a substance from the solid to the vapour state without its becoming liquid.”<sup>30</sup>

“The fundamental premise that permitted Freud to examine cultural phenomena was called sublimation in the Three Essays. The appreciation or creation of ideal beauty, Freud contended, is rooted in primitive sexual urges that are transfigured in culturally elevating ways. Unlike repression, which produces only neurotic symptoms whose meaning is unknown even to the sufferer, sublimation is a conflict-free resolution of repression, which leads to intersubjectively available cultural works.”<sup>32</sup>

### Sublime

Sublime, in literary criticism, grandeur of thought, emotion, and spirit that characterises great literature. It is the topic of an incomplete treatise, *On the Sublime*, that was for long attributed to the 3rd-century Greek philosopher Cassius Longinus but now believed to have been written in the 1st century AD by an unknown writer frequently designated Pseudo-Longinus. The author of the treatise defines sublimate as "excellence in language, "the "expression of a great spirit," and the power to provoke "ecstasy." Departing from traditional classical criticism, which sought to attribute the success of literary works to their balance of certain technical elements--diction, thought, metaphor, music, etc.--he saw the source of the sublime in the moral, emotional, and imaginative depth of the writer and its expression in the flare-up of genius that rules alone could not produce.<sup>31</sup>

The judgement of beauty has its origin in our social feelings, particularly in our feelings toward the other sex, and in our hope for a consolation through love and desire. The judgement of the sublime has its origin in our feelings toward nature, and in our intimation of our ultimate solitude and fragility in a world that is not of our own devising and that remains resistant to our demands. In Burke's words, "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling..."

## CONCLUSION

Sublimation is the diversion or deflection of instinctual drives, usually sexual ones, into noninstinctual channels. Psychoanalytic theory holds that the energy invested in sexual impulses can be shifted to the pursuit of more acceptable and even socially valuable achievements, such as artistic or scientific endeavours.<sup>33</sup>

In Kant, the distinction is recast as a distinction between two categories of aesthetic experience and two separate values that attach to it. Sometimes when we sense the harmony between nature and our faculties, we are impressed by the purposiveness and intelligibility of everything that surrounds us. This is the sentiment of beauty. At other times, overcome by the infinite greatness of the world, we renounce the attempt to understand and control it. This is the sentiment of the sublime. In confronting the sublime, the mind is "incited to abandon sensibility"--to reach over to that transcendental view of things that shows to us the immanence of a supersensible realm and our destiny as subjects of a divine order. Thus, from the presentiment of the sublime, Kant extracts the ultimate ground of his faith in a Supreme Being, and this is for him the most important value that aesthetic experience can convey.<sup>34</sup>

The series of definitions that I have quoted above serve to outline the territory of the ideas which I wish to develop, both here and beyond the scope of this thesis. A piece of the earth seen as a picturesque landscape is a piece of earth at least doubly mediated. The term "landscape" came into the English language from the old Dutch word "landskip", which refers to a representation of the land through pictorial means. "Picturesque", speaks for itself, it is something which appears as if it is, or should be, an intentionally conceived picture. Without labouring the point, the early schemes for the Woodland Cemetery fit well within the category of things accepted as picturesque landscapes. Within that broad category, they fall within a narrower subset of the picturesque, that of the sublime landscape. For all the ominous tone implied by the term "sublime", it too entered the field of landscape theory by way of painting. The sublime landscape was one that looked as if it were a scene from a particularly rugged, or even frightening picture. The competition project can be seen to be a very fine example of a sublime, picturesque landscape, not only in terms of style, but because it is a landscape that exists only in pictures, it is an imaginary landscape.

If we turn to Kant's definition of the sublime, we can escape from the problem of the picturesque.

## C O N C L U S I O N

A place set aside for the burial of the dead, with a mound set within it explicitly named, and thus intended, as a place for meditation upon loss and death, should surely qualify as sublime. If it is accepted as a place imbued with great “moral, emotional, and imaginative depth... and its expression in the flare-up of genius that rules alone could not produce”, it would in addition fulfil the requirements of the Pseudo-Longinus for a sublime work.

But to return to the completed landscape. It is a landscape both in the usually understood, and in the more technical sense. It was designed through a process of making pictures. Those pictures take the form both of the more abstract, notational type, that is to say architectural plans and sections, and of pictures in the normal sense, perspective views which try to capture the visual experience of the place as it was intended to be. Through the reconstruction of the design process that I have attempted, it appears evident that the shift of the design towards a more minimal expression of the inherent themes occurred while the designers were exploring a fairly strict form of neo-classicism. I say fairly strict, in that while the elements themselves are generally of a strongly normative character, the articulation for those elements, the spaces set up between them are in transgression of the compositional norms. It is at this level where the work of Asplund and Lewerentz moves apart. In Asplund’s architecture, composition is subservient to appearance; a freedom of composition often termed, to confuse issues further picturesque. An ability to improvise enables elements to be connected, both physically and metaphorically, which in their pure, undistorted form could never be joined. When successful, the manipulations are invisible, when not, the results are a little awkward. But successful or not, a certain strangeness is always present, even if its presence lurks in the background. Lewerentz’s architecture is somehow stricter. During the twenties, that strictness was expressed through classical means. Very purely classical elements are arranged according to very classical compositional rules. But those rules are brought into conflict with programmatic and constructional imperatives. Form and function, to lapse into rhetorical banality, are brought into an equivalent relationship, neither follows the other, but both

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are allowed their say. Rather than any sort of resolution, of synthesis, tension is produced, difficult questions are asked of both. That is perhaps exactly the relationship which existed between Asplund and Lewerentz, between the people themselves, and between their contributions to the design of the cemetery. A tension between intentions which, given Lewerentz's ultimate responsibility for producing the drawings, if not the designs, for the landscape underlies the apparent peace of the place. Perhaps that is why it is "a peace which passes understanding", if you will excuse a second and second-hand quotation from the bible this time by way of Asplund.

This length digression has been necessary to bring us once again to the beginning, both of this thesis and of its conclusion, to the figure and to the figurative. Both are essential aspects of classicism, and both are conspicuous by their absence within the landscape of the Woodland cemetery, particularly in the landscape that one confronts upon entry. The cross has no suffering Christ, no graves are visible, and the central axis is occupied by nothing but the sky. This state of absence is the result of clear aesthetic intent. Indeed, the cross only returned to the composition after several years of banishment. Study of the design process has shown the slow evolution of this apparently modern composition. The Way of the cross was originally conceived of as being a curving path through the woods, lined closely with a profusion of tombs and sarcophagi. Leading unequivocally to a tower on the peak of the hill. Through a series of reworkings, this was transformed into an explicitly classical composition, the last of which represented a simplification, a distillation, of both organisation and form. The presentation plan is organised around an axial figure of great coherence, and almost baroque articulation, a figure which is drawn out of the geography of the site, refined through manipulation of that geography, and reinforced by the architectural elements. The landscape is treated as a single architectural figure, determining the disposition of all of the smaller figures, buildings included. But that explicit figure is not visible in the place as realised. Between 1924 and 1932, it was apparently removed. But its absence is felt, for although it has been buried beneath the unbroken turf, it is what has determined the position of



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everything that is present. Like the cross which stands substitute for the many graves, its empty axis holds together the landscape, mediates between Lewerentz's Grove of Remembrance with its minimal architectural emphasis, and the just present memory of classicism of Asplund's crematorium.

Although this is a place of the dead, for those who have no functional requirements, it is a place for the living. If it has any purpose, it is to enable the living to come to terms with loss, with irreversible absence of that which has been of most value to themselves. I believe that it is to this end that Asplund and Lewerentz shaped their project, that the emptiness is not the apparent emptiness of the modern, but the absence of an earlier architecture, one much loved by the architects, but one which they buried, an architecture which was no longer alive to them, no longer capable of saying what needed to be said. I have suggested that the design was transformed, both through necessity, and through desire into something closer to the commonplace, the cultivated, a human landscape. Perhaps still with something of the picturesque, but the subject of the picture in question is the landscape that has been wisely used to sustain life, the landscape of meadow and woodland, of iron age burial mounds and long abandoned settlements. All of these images serve to bring the landscape closer to the ordinary, even to the suburbs that surround it.

Perhaps that is the reason for the suppression of explicit classicism, its distance from the workaday world, even in its ubiquity. It speaks of the sublime in a language very far in time from its roots, it speaks of death. The cultivated landscape speaks prosaic tongue, an ordinary language in which rhetoric is not so loaded with academic convention or perhaps it is that to speak in figures, whilst using only the simplest of words grounds metaphor in the ordinary, requires of the person who wishes to speak in such a manner to invent rhetoric anew, whilst inventing no new words. To invoke the sublime through the ordinary. Perhaps that is how the Woodland Cemetery speaks. It states difficult facts through very conventional elements, but is utterly strange; it speaks of death

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through living matter. "It is art, even great art". But art is not life. In art absence can be made beautiful, but in life, loss is not beautiful.

The last of the quotes that began this conclusion talks of Freud's notion of sublimation. He used the concept to explain how the repressed could be expressed without breaking the fundamental taboos which make us civilised. Dark urges are turned into beautiful thoughts much as a dull solid may be sublimated into evanescent vapour. The basic drive towards life, the erotic could be sublimated into artistic creativity. But he also posited another fundamental drive, towards death and destruction. Into what that could be sublimated, he was less specific. I will go no further than this, but will instead return once more to the first part of this paper, to the observation made of the sensual, if not erotic sentiments expressed by others towards the landscape of the Woodland cemetery, and not even to ask whether in the realm of art, life and death can become one, or at least very close together, just as they were for the first organisms, perched as Freud tells the creation story, on the infinitely thin edge between the organic and the mineral.

## Notes

### Introduction

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<sup>1</sup> See Holmdahl, Gustav: Ed Gunnar Asplund, architect, 1885-1940.

<sup>2</sup> See Wrede, Stuart. The architecture of Erik Gunnar Asplund

<sup>3</sup> The Woodland Cemetery was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Asplund was editor of the journal, but wrote relatively little, and that mostly of a technical nature. This technical bias is also the case in his presentation of the Woodland crematorium. Similarly, in his teaching at the KTH, he seldom focussed on aesthetic matters. See Engfors, Christina E.G. Asplund: architect, friend and colleague . For these and other intriguing insights into Asplund's working methods. Although anecdotal, it is as useful a source, as may be had as to Asplund's methods and motivations.

<sup>5</sup> I am referring to the title of the book by Alison and Peter Smithson, which has become one of those ill defined catch-phrases of which architects are so fond.

<sup>6</sup> Asplund's daughter, Kerstin Asplund-Julliusson, quoted by Christina Engfors.

<sup>7</sup> The Angel of death is the work of Carl Milles, whose own garden is an extraordinary piece of landscape design, and clearly warrants further study.

<sup>8</sup> King James Bible Genesis 16:3 (Network Version, 1994)

<sup>9</sup> Filarete's Treatise on architecture. Trans. John R. Spencer Volume 1 (New Haven and London, Yale university press), 1965

<sup>10</sup> Liane Lefaivre summarises Alexander Tzonis: "The difference between simple metaphors and basic metaphors or epiphoric objects is the extent of their influence: the latter reverberate more. They represent in a condensed way a whole paradigm, a whole mentality." Such metaphors are often used unconsciously, and yet entail a whole construct of "ready-made" structures, subsidiary metaphors. See: Liane Lefaivre, Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (Cambridge Ma, MIT Press), 1997

<sup>11</sup>At the outset, I would like to express a certain disquiet with the notion of our bond with the soil, of belonging to a place and of that place belonging to us. This disquiet is both personal and political. I am aware of the sense of unease brought about in myself in being separated from the Land in which I was born, and of my perhaps spurious sense of identifying with the place from which I come. I am equally aware that such an identification is promoted, perhaps instilled, by the propaganda of the nation state. I cannot read Martin Heidegger's *Bauen Denken Whonen* without the image of the man in his Nazi Party uniform, a little moustache on his lip. Which brings to mind another image that of Sigurd Lewerentz with a similar moustache, one that he shaved off upon Hitler's accession to power in Germany. I am uncertain of how to maintain the practice of everyday life and the espousal of ideas.

<sup>11</sup> Asplund was editor of *Byggmasteren* during the 1930s but wrote relatively little. Most of the articles presenting his work were, like his teaching at the KTH, largely technical in focus.

**Part 1**

<sup>12</sup>Hakon Ahlberg in Gustave Holmdahl ed. Gunnar Asplund Architect (Stockholm: AB Tydskriften *Byggmasteren*, 1950)

<sup>13</sup> Constant, Caroline. The Woodland Cemetery: toward a spiritual landscape: Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, 1915-61This is the first book to contain a thoroughly researched and detailed history of the Woodland Cemetery, and has been the source of much of the factual content of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> The only literature that I have been able to locate which deals with this issue is a recent collection of photographs entitle "Beautiful Death". In general, there is very little academic literature dealing with death, and the art and ritual which surrounds it that deals with western culture.

<sup>15</sup> The sensuality of the landscape has been noted by many, amongst the Professor William Portet of MIT.He has spoken of the mound as a "heaving breast".

<sup>16</sup> Bataille, Georges: Erotism: Death and Sensuality (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986), 55-56.

<sup>17</sup>Maurice Maeterlinck quoted in Constant, Caroline The Woodland Cemetery; Toward A Spiritual Landscape(Stockholm: Byggforlaget,1994),17

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<sup>18</sup> The history, meaning, and shifts in meaning of this motto were explored in great detail in Panofsky's classic essay of 1955.

### Part 2

<sup>19</sup> "Memory" Britannica Online

<<http://www.eb.com:180/cgiin/g?DocF=macro/5004/12.html>>

<sup>20</sup> "Memory" Britannica Online

<<http://www.eb.com:180/cgiin/g?DocF=macro/5004/12.html>>

<sup>21</sup> Adolf Loos, from "Arkitektur" in *Samtliche Schriften*, Vienna 1962, 317.

<sup>22</sup> Paradox" Britannica Online. <http://www.eb.com:180/cgiin/g?DocF=macro/451/22.html>>

<sup>23</sup> Competition Jury Report, *ibid.* Constant

<sup>24</sup> Freud, Sigmund *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1961) 16, 17

### Part 3

<sup>25</sup> Lewerentz, was particularly moved by his friend's proposal commented that it opened his eyes to the path for developing the scheme s. See Ahlin , Janne, Sigurd Lewerentz Architect , 39

<sup>26</sup> The remarkable similarity, and yet difference in character of these chapels is an intriguing display of the relationship between the work of Asplund and Lewerentz. The ultimate precedent for both is Lewerentz and Stubelius' assembly hall for the Fare glassworks of 1914. The works together are the record of a conversation, perhaps an argument, through design.

<sup>27</sup> This shift is exemplified by his Karl Johan School, which began construction in 1923, a remarkably strict building, both when viewed in relation to its earlier schemes, and given that it is a primary school.

### Conclusion

<sup>29</sup> Hal Forster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1996), 168 & footnote 274.

<sup>30</sup> "sublimation" Britannica Online.

<<http://www.eb.com:180/cgi-bin/g?DocF=micro/570/70.html>>

<sup>31</sup> "Sublime" Britannica Online.

<<http://www.eb.com:180/cgibin/g?DocF=micro/570/71.html>>

<sup>32</sup> "Sigmund Freud: Social and cultural studies." Britannica Online

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<sup>33</sup> "defence mechanism" Britannica Online

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<sup>34</sup> ."Aesthetics: TASTE, CRITICISM, AND JUDGEMENT: Concepts used in aesthetic evaluation."

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Figure 2

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Figures3,4

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Figures5,16

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Figures 14,15

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All other figures are by the author.





# To Continue

(Approaching the Woodland Cemetery)

Kevin Fellingham

1998

## Portfolio of Drawings

(The Collapse of Time)

### Thesis Committee

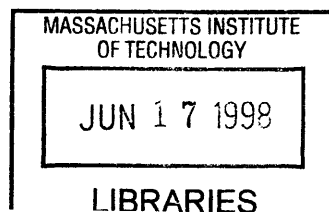
#### Thesis Advisor

Professor Stanford Anderson

#### Readers

Professor Julian Beinart

Associate Professor Ann Pendleton-Jullian



ROTCH

# **T o C o n t i n u e**

(Approaching the Woodland Cemetery)

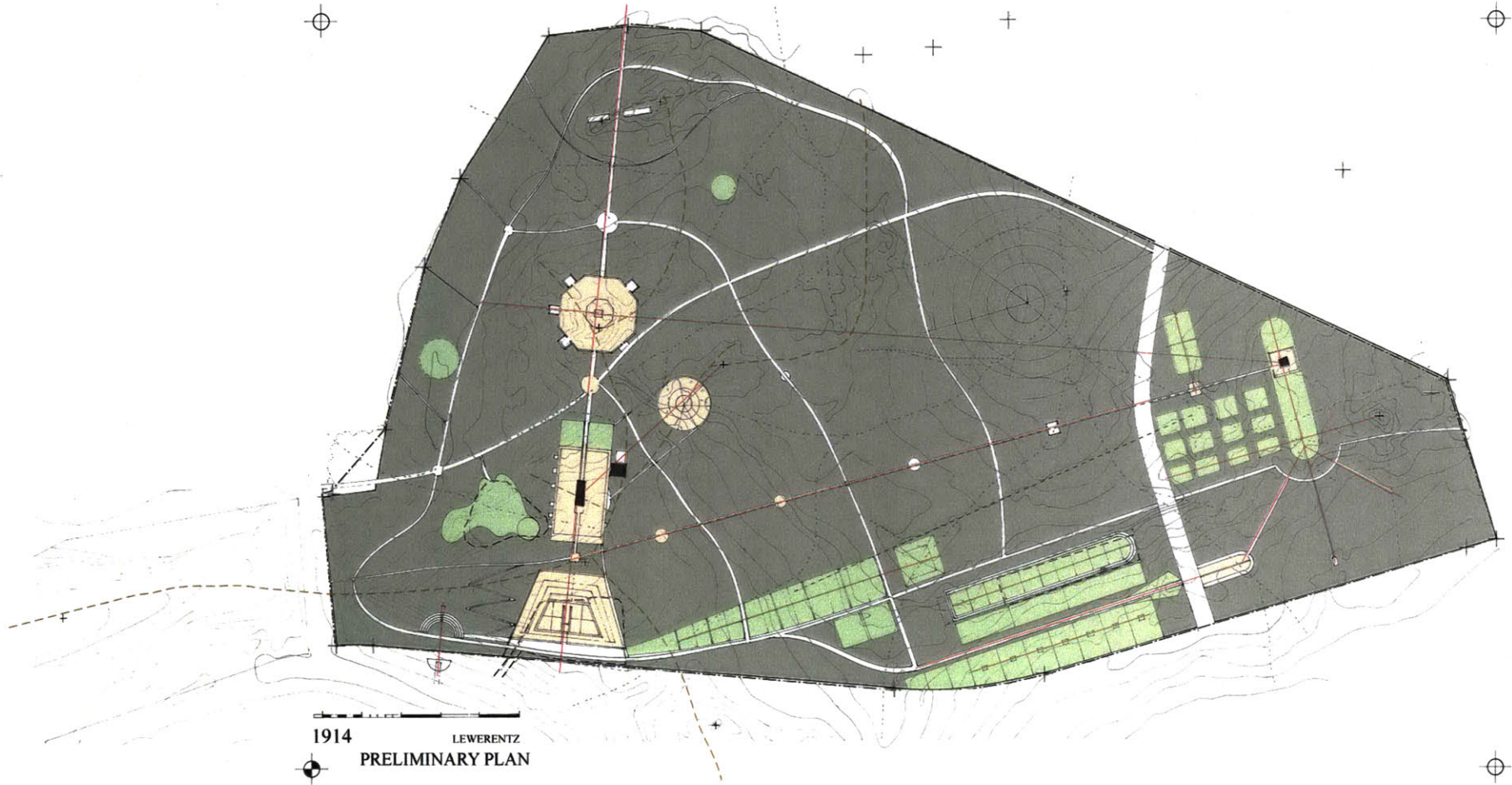
K e v i n F e l l i n g h a m

Submitted to the  
Department Of Architecture  
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
on May 8 1998 in partial fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies  
A d v i s o r - P r o f e s s o r S t a n f o r d A n d e r s o n

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, Sweden, designed and executed between 1914 and 1940 by the architects Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz. The study consists of three parts. The first examines the significance of interment, of the return of the body to the realm of nature upon death. The second speculates upon the operation of time in relation to the idea of memory, focussing on the necessity of forgetting in the process of mourning, and in the process of architectural invention. It brings to the fore the impossibility of forgetting that which is most deeply known, and thus suggests a paradoxical relationship between that which is known and that which is new.

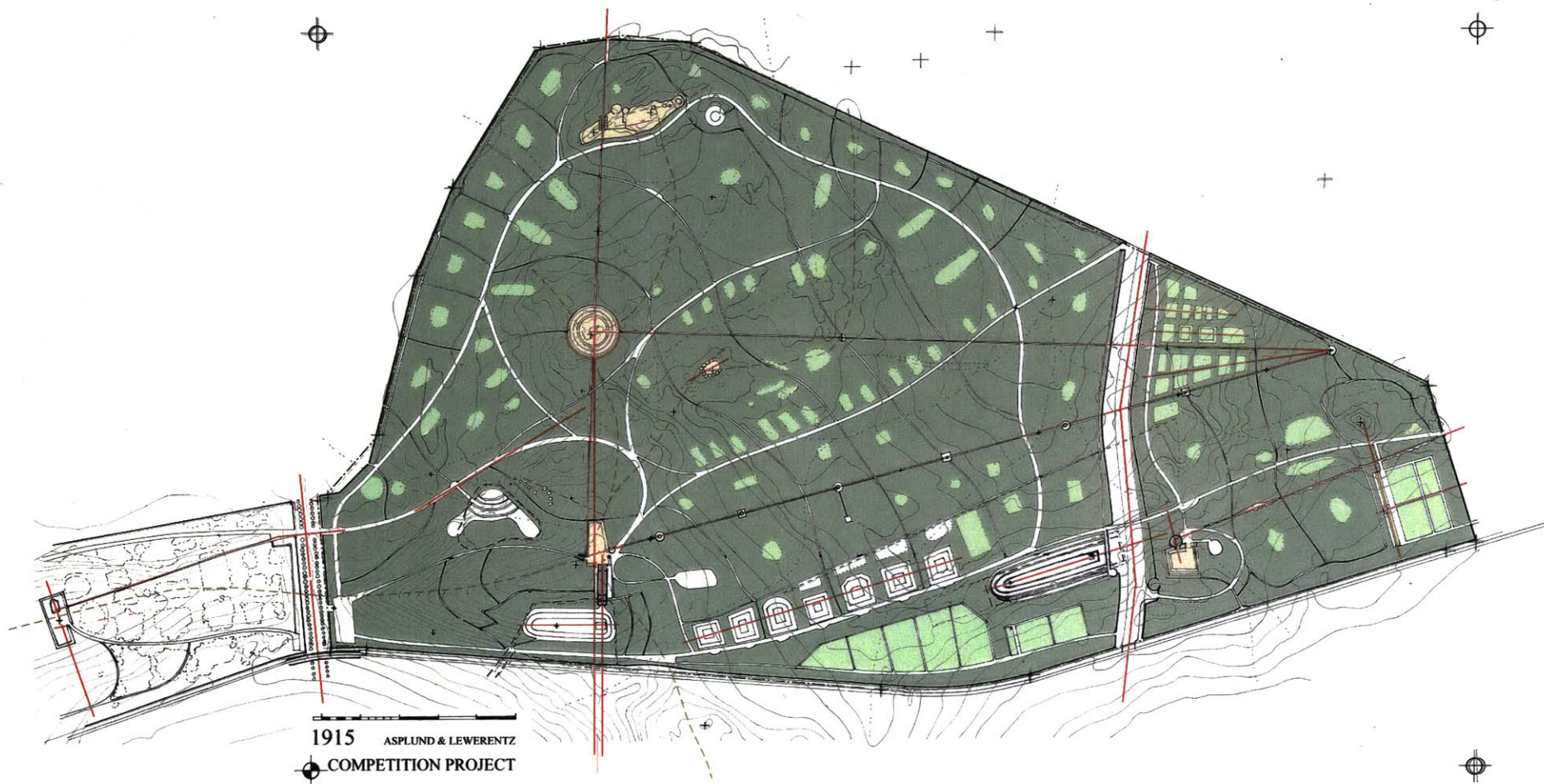
This paradox informs those things that must be constructed in the mind and in the world in order to continue beyond a point of traumatic change. The final part is a reconstruction through drawing of eight stages in the evolution of the project. It focuses primarily on the large scale planning of the site, but is related to more detailed elements of the design in order to show the continuity of themes throughout the project, bot in its temporal and physical aspects. Although it comes at the end of the text, it is conceptually prior to the other two sections, which were developed upon the basis of the close reading of the existing drawings, and the interplay between continuity and change in the project. The conclusion seeks to bring some of these ideas together in a form that is not closed, which requires continuation.



1914

LEWERENTZ

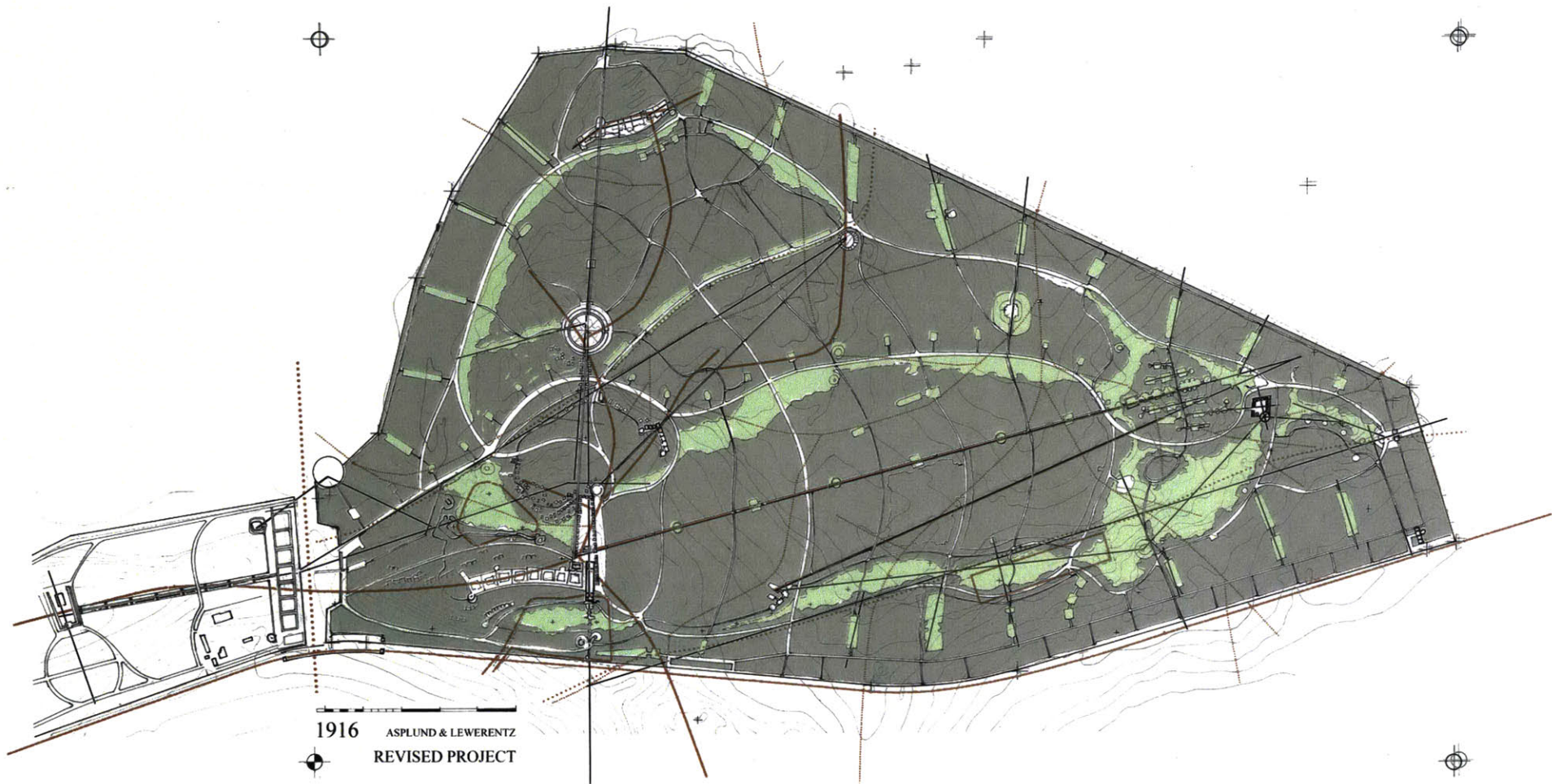
PRELIMINARY PLAN



1915 ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ

COMPETITION PROJECT

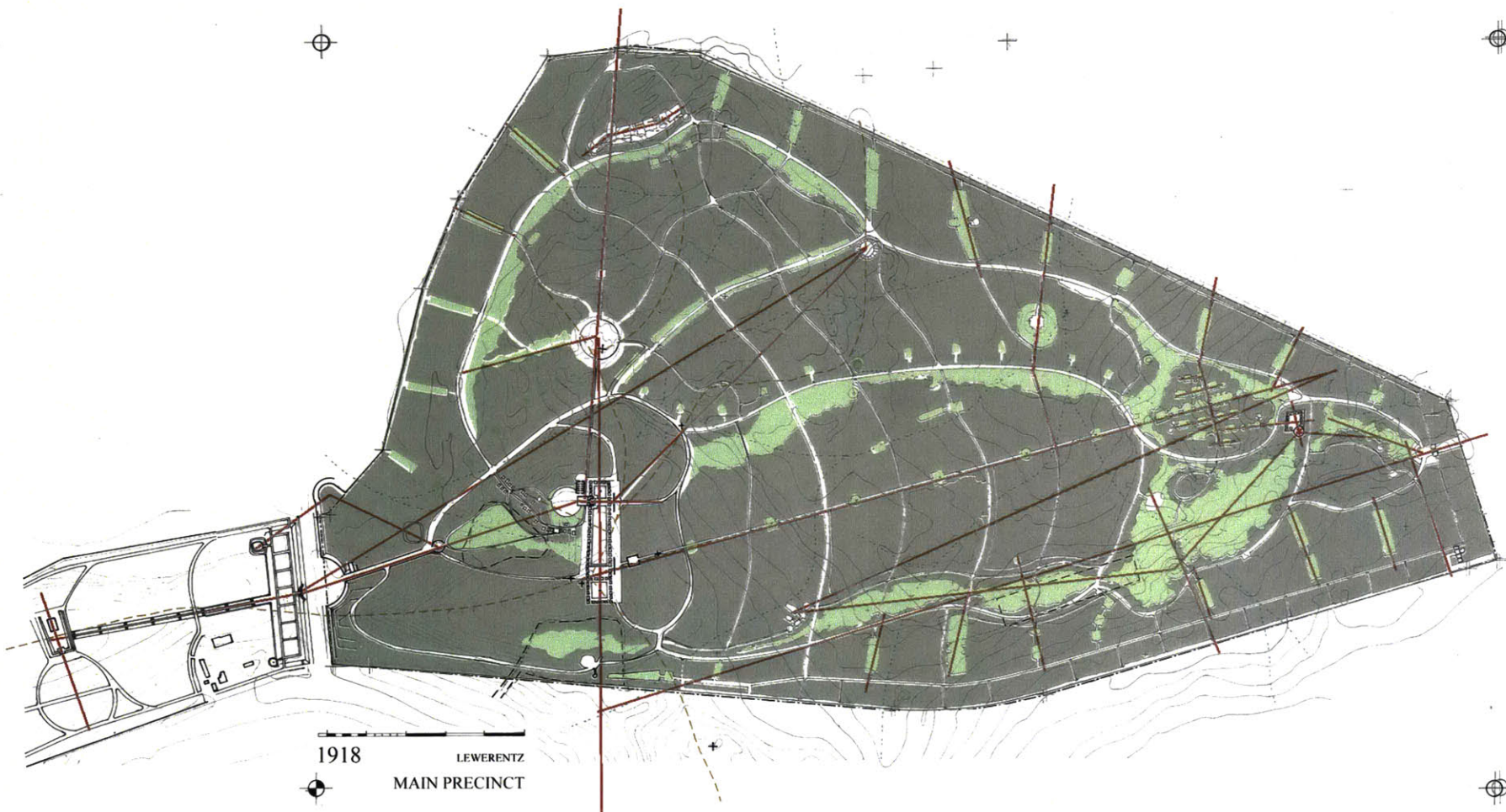




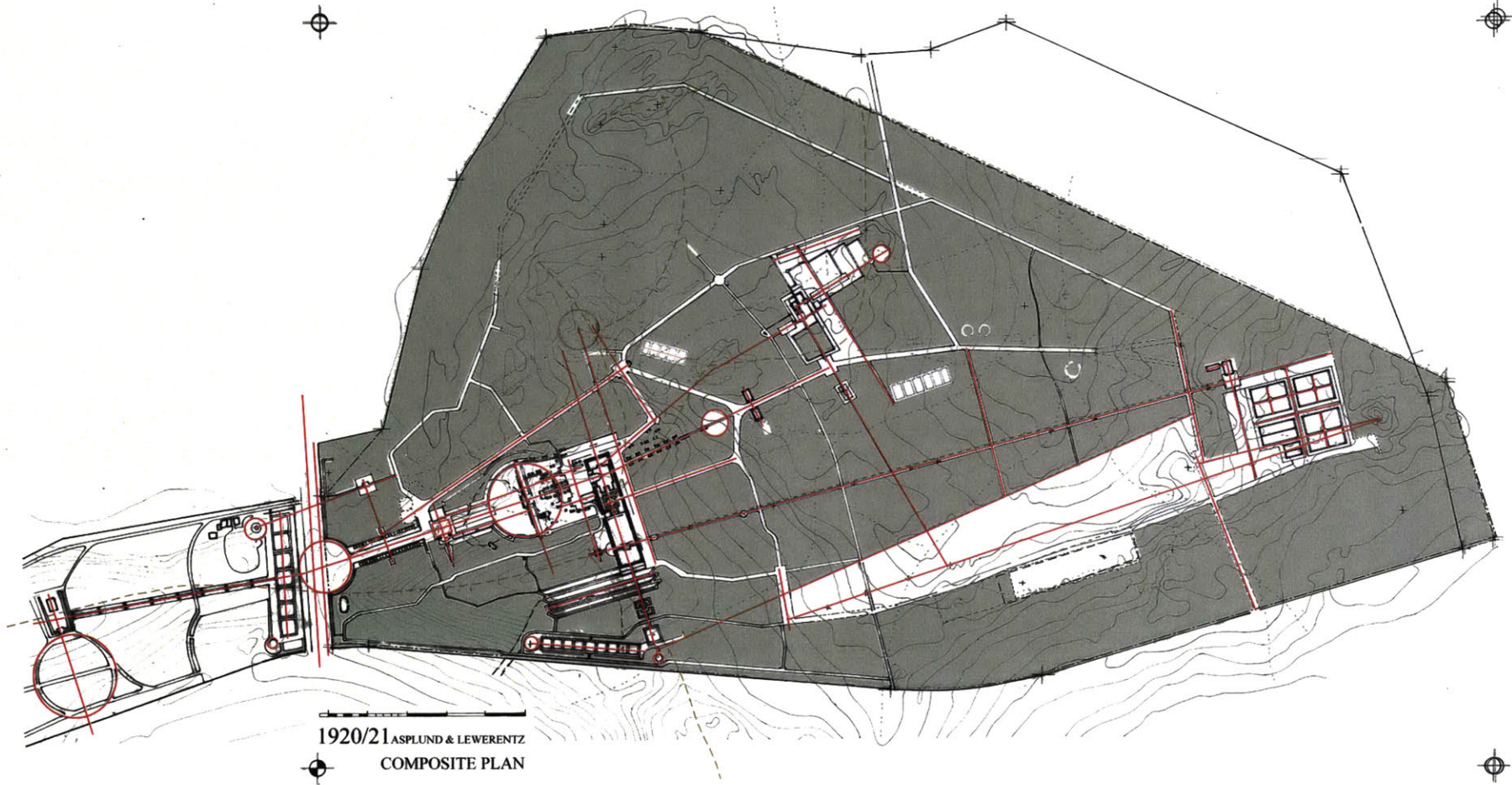
1916

ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ

REVISED PROJECT







1920/21 ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ  
COMPOSITE PLAN



1923/26 ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ  
PRESENTATION PLAN





1932 ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ

ENTRANCE LANDSCAPE



1940 ASPLUND & LEWERENTZ  
FINAL PLAN