

MEMENTO MORI VIVI**Natural Organic Reduction in Sihlfeld Cemetery: Ecological Gardens and Forests of Remembrance****INTRODUCTION**

I would like to extend my gratitude to all who have opened your eyes, mind, and soul to celebrate Sihlfeld Cemetery. Let us start with the following quote by Walt Whitman: "I bequeath myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love; If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles".

Sihlfeld, 3000 bc was a forest. Gradually, as man started to build the city of Zürich, the region of Sihlfeld became used for agriculture and for the clay quality of its soil. Brick fabrics, quarries and crops marked the landscape of the beginnings of Sihlfeld. Then, as the city grew and burial became insalubrious within the city, Sihlfeld Cemetery was born: the first central cemetery.

Since 1877, Sihlfeld has been known as a "central cemetery": a cemetery for all regardless of religion. It has witnessed burial and has been the innovator of cremation with Switzerland's first crematory. It has also gradually shifted and become partially a park. Nowadays, it is the biggest open green space within the city of Zürich. However, if I have covered an entire wall (c.f. poster full submission, size 6.2 x 2.9 meters), it is to propose a rebirth of Sihlfeld.

Indeed, cremation and burial have become somewhat anachronistic. The way we deal with our deathcare system is linked to a religious and cultural past that has evolved and is evolving rapidly. Moreover, the word "cemetery" carries a sad, gloomy and often scary connotation. I therefore believe that it is time to rebuild our deathcare system to find new meaning in our mortality and that of the one's who surround us.

The full poster submission is divided into 3 parts. On the left, the storyboard illustrates the three main cycles that guide the design and intentions of the project. On the right, the masterplan and architectural design. In the centre a site axonometric drawing (scale 1:200), divided into three stages: 2023, 2050 (first phase of the project) and 2150 (developed phase of the project in time). This central part is also underlined by a section throughout the whole site.



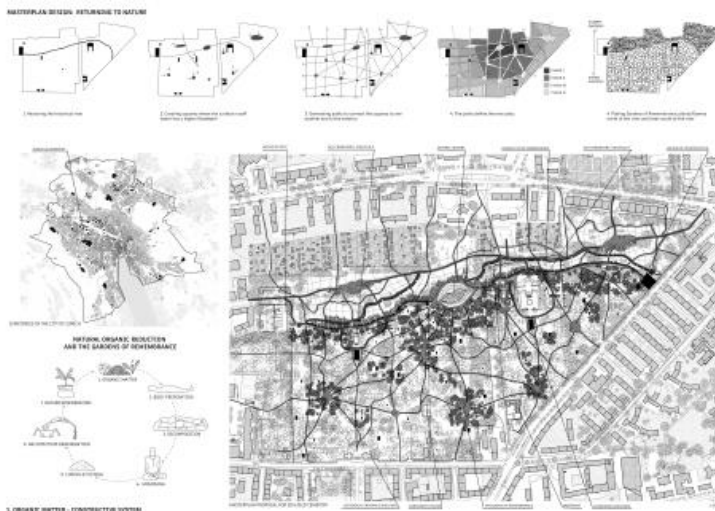
LEFT PANNEL: STORYBOARD

It is in 2050 that Sihlfeld's rebirth starts. At this time, all deaths go through a process of natural organic reduction also known as: human composting. Thus, transforming the cemetery of Sihlfeld into Ecological Gardens and Forests of Remembrance.

The proposal tends towards a balance and cohabitation of three main stories: spirituality, nature and technology. The aim is to design with nature and technology to generate a new form of spirituality in the process of natural organic reduction.



RIGHT PANNEL: TOP THIRD, MASTERPLAN DESIGN

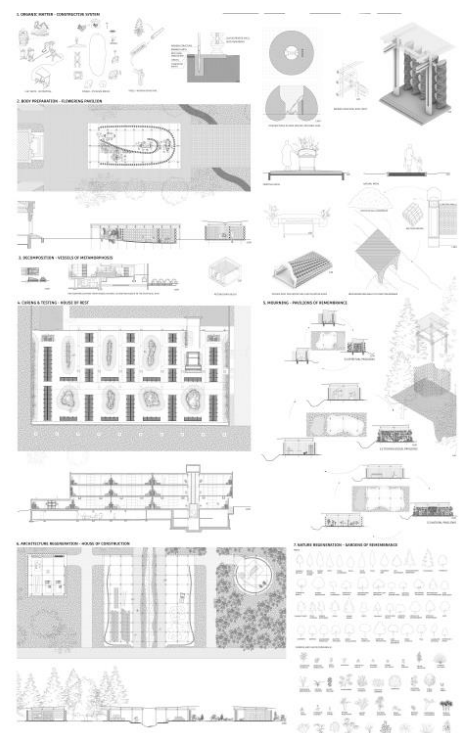


The first steps in designing the master plan tend towards a return to nature, therefore the historical river crossing the site is restored. Then public squares are placed where there is a higher depth of runoff water, thus attracting a higher density of trees and plants around these squares. These are connected with paths that create the new plots. On the north side of the river gardens of perennials are planted whereas on the south side, trees are planted.

RIGHT PANNEL: TWO THIRDS BOTTOM, ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

On the other hand, the design of the construction is based on a minimal and natural approach. Following the process of natural organic reduction: a process of decomposition. Decomposition is therefore at the foreground of the design. There is a decomposition of bodies, of the grid of the cemetery, of buildings and ultimately of our current perception of death.

1. The first element in the process of natural organic reduction is the **organic matter**. Organic matter is used for the constructive system. Clay is used to 3d print shells that are covered by wooden structures and mycelium bricks are used as cladding for the shells. However organic matter is also used in ceremonies.
2. So on the first ceremony day, people enter the gardens and collect plants. They then head to one of the historical crematories where a funeral is held. After that, in one of the loved ones of deceased are invited to participate in a flowering ceremony for the **body preparation**. They enter



the pavilion, first expose the body that is wrapped in an organic shroud and cover it with organic matter such as woodchips, alfalfa and straw but also flowers collected upon entrance.

3. The body is then taken to one of the 3d printed Vessels where last goodbyes are said before the laying in. The air and temperature control in the Vessels accelerate the **decomposition**. The heat generated by the decomposition is transformed into energy that lights up these Vessels.
4. After the decomposition of the body, it is brought to the house of rest where the bones over 1 cm are reduced to powder and mixed back into the earth. A earth transferring ceremony takes place and the earth is placed in a resting block. Gradually, during this time the microbial activity ceases and mourners are welcome to enjoy the tranquillity of the house of rest, by sitting on one of the benches and observing the resting block of their loved one. This house is the technical space for **curing and testing** of the earth.
5. Meanwhile during this phase that lasts approximately two months, people are invited to the pavilion's remembrance. These pavilions are divided into 3 categories: the spiritual, the technological and the natural. They follow a cycle of decomposition as well and their programmes change according to the state of decomposition of the mycelium bricks. Not only are these spaces available for public activities but they also allow the people who are **mourning** to participate in activities relating to spiritual meditation or natural workshops.
6. As there is a process of decomposition there must also be a process of regeneration. Therefore, the house of construction is responsible for storing clay and wood, in the wings that mark the start of the river. In the small pavilions connected there is on one site: the wood and mycelium workshop and other the tech lab. The house of construction aims to build, re-build and maintain all architectural pavilions, thus contributing to an **architectural regeneration**.
7. Ultimately, nature is also regenerated as the body has fully become earth it can either be taken home or planted within the gardens or forests of remembrance. The quality of the soil that has been diminished due to earthen burial and prior agricultural uses is nurtured and thus **nature is regenerated**.

The souls linger in the plants and trees that build these gardens and Sihlfeld is reborn. These gardens become places where one can fully immerse in the regenerative qualities of nature. So, my question to you now is, what plant or tree would you want to become when your life on this planet becomes earth?