



**Politecnico
di Torino**

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Atmosphere of Farewell

An Architectural Proposal for the Ceremonial
Spaces of SOCREM Turin

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the design of ceremonial and support spaces for SOCREM Turin, an institution that has been central to the development of cremation practices in Italy since 1883. In the contemporary context, crematoria increasingly function as civic facilities, requiring an architectural approach that balances technical performance with spatial and emotional considerations. The project focuses on the spaces associated with the period preceding cremation, including ceremonial halls, waiting and gathering areas, administrative offices, and related support functions, where individual mourning and collective rituals take place.

The research is based on a critical examination of the architectural culture of death, drawing on the historiographical work of Philippe Ariès and on typological studies by Howard Colvin, Hilary J. Grainger, and Tom Wilkinson. These references are complemented by contemporary research on deathscapes by Maddrell and Sidaway, as well as by Michel Ragon's reflections on funerary architecture. Taken together, they inform an understanding of cremation architecture as a spatial framework through which ritual, memory, and social experience are negotiated.

Two contemporary precedents have been particularly formative in shaping the design methodology: The Crematorium in Ostend by OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, and the Crematorium Heimolen in St. Niklaas. The former is exemplary for its radical clarity, geometric precision, and disciplined abstraction demonstrating how silence, order, and conceptual rigor can generate spaces of profound emotional resonance. In contrast, Crematorium Heimolen offers a model of spatial gentleness and landscape integration, where procession, materiality, and calibrated light shape an atmosphere of contemplative intimacy. These case studies, approached not as templates but as intellectual catalysts, informed a design attitude rooted in restraint, continuity, and measured spatial sequencing.

The thesis adopts a critical architectural position that privileges conceptual coherence and the ability to transform references into autonomous design reasoning. The aim is to conceive a project that navigates between abstraction and empathy, between the civic role of funerary architecture and the private emotional journeys it houses.

The resulting proposal seeks to construct a dignified, subdued, and carefully choreographed environment one that supports mourners through calibrated atmospheres, spatial pauses, and a nuanced dialogue between built form and landscape. In doing so, the project reinterprets the crematorium not as a technical container, but as a civic and existential threshold where architecture becomes a discreet companion to grief, memory, and the finality of departure.

Keywords - Funerary architecture; Crematorium architecture; Ceremonial space; Spatial atmosphere; Ritual and procession; Civic architecture.

Introduction

Death is a universal human experience, yet the spaces associated with it remain some of the most complex, emotionally charged, and symbolically significant environments in architecture. Across cultures and eras, architectural forms related to death, mourning, and remembrance have reflected society's evolving relationship with loss, ritual, and the meaning of life itself. As Philippe Ariès observes in *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident*, attitudes toward death have transformed over centuries from collective, ritualized encounters to more intimate, individualized expressions of grief shaping the spatial and ceremonial frameworks that surround the end of life. Contemporary cremation architecture must therefore negotiate both the emotional weight of bereavement and the functional requirements of an increasingly essential public service.

The design proposal investigates the formation of farewell halls as a sequence of spaces integrated within an existing structural framework. Spatial continuity and progression are achieved through the controlled articulation of enclosure, openings, and thresholds, allowing movement, light, and collective gathering to be carefully modulated. Technical solutions are employed in support of these spatial intentions, enabling an architectural setting that accommodates ritual practices while reconsidering how space can shape the moments preceding cremation. The project aims to establish an environment in which solemnity and clarity coexist, respecting cultural rites while offering a calm and measured spatial response to loss.

Cremation Procedures in Turin, Italy

Cremation in Turin is governed by national legislation, municipal regulations, and operational protocols established by SOCREM Torino, the primary institution responsible for cremation services in the city. The process reflects a carefully structured sequence of administrative, technical, and ceremonial steps designed to ensure legal compliance, traceability, and dignity throughout the procedure

1. Institutional Framework

Cremation services in Turin are primarily managed by **SOCREM Torino**, operating the *Tempio Crematorio* located within the **Cimitero Monumentale di Torino**. This location serves as the city's central cremation facility, integrating both ceremonial and technical functions. Families may, however, choose to carry out the cremation at another authorized plant, with SOCREM facilitating the administrative coordination.

The facility includes:

- **Sala del Commiato** (Farewell Hall) – for religious or civil rites before cremation.
- **Technical cremation chambers** – where the combustion process is executed.

- **Sala della Memoria** – where the ashes are formally returned to the family.
- **Columbarium** – providing spaces for the long-term preservation of urns.
- **Ash-scattering fountain** – designated for families who choose the dispersion of ashes as a form of commemoration.

2. Operational Process of Cremation

2.1 Reception and Verification

Upon arrival at the crematorium, the coffin is checked into the facility. All accompanying documentation authorization, medical certificate, identity statements is verified by the staff. If the family requests an *immediate cremation*, this is typically scheduled after the verification stage.

2.2 Identification and Traceability

To ensure absolute traceability, a numbered, heat-resistant identification tag is attached to the coffin before it enters the cremation chamber. This marker remains with the remains throughout the process and is later placed in the urn, preventing any possibility of misidentification.

2.3 Cremation Procedure

The sealed coffin is introduced into a **cremation chamber (retort)** using specialized handling equipment. The process is fully automated, with computer-controlled combustion cycles ensuring consistent temperature regulation, safety, and efficiency. During combustion, emissions and heat levels are managed according to environmental standards and national norms.

2.4 Processing of Remains

Once combustion is complete, the remains primarily bone fragments are allowed to cool before being mechanically refined into ashes. This procedure is standardized across Italy to ensure uniformity and compliance with national guidelines.

2.5 Ash Collection and Delivery

The ashes are placed inside a standard metal urn (included in the official service fee), unless the family has chosen an alternative model. The urn is labelled with the deceased's identity and the same identification number used before cremation.

A brief, dignified **ceremony of delivery** may be held in the *Sala della Memoria*, where the urn is formally entrusted to the family.

3. Post-Cremation Options

Families in Turin may choose among several permitted destinations for the ashes:

- **Interment in a cemetery niche or columbarium**, including spaces within the Monumental Cemetery or other municipal cemeteries
- **Custody at home** (*affidamento fa miliare*)
- **Reunion with another urn**, often used for spouses
- **Ash dispersion**, permitted only in designated municipal “Places of Remembrance” or in accordance with specific legal authorizations
- **Place of Remembrance (Luogo della Memoria) – SOCREM Torino**

Within the SOCREM area at the Monumental Cemetery of Turin, a dedicated Place of Remembrance is designated for the lawful dispersion or deposition of cremated remains. Conceived as a non-confessional memorial space, it reflects SOCREM’s secular and civic principles while offering families a setting for reflection beyond traditional burial forms. The use of this area is subject to municipal and regional regulations and requires formal authorization. Its presence illustrates contemporary shifts in funerary practices toward symbolic, individualized, and environmentally conscious forms of commemoration.

These options follow strict municipal and regional regulations ensuring that the handling of ashes remains respectful and legally aligned.

4. Cost Structure

The official cremation fee in Turin, managed by SOCREM covers:

- the cremation itself,
- the standard metal urn,
- the use of ceremonial rooms (Farewell Hall, Memory Hall),
- administrative processing, and
- basic commemorative services.

Additional costs apply when families engage private funeral service operators for transportation, ceremony planning, and coffin provision.

The cremation process in Turin represents a carefully regulated and sensitively managed system in which ceremonial respect, legal compliance, and technical precision operate in parallel. For architects and designers, this framework provides critical insight into how spaces of farewell, procession, and cremation must accommodate both emotional needs and procedural requirements. Understanding these dynamics is essential when designing contemporary farewell halls, ceremonial routes, or integrated cremation facilities within the Turin context.

SOCREM- Torino

Within this context, the Turin Cremation Society (SOCREM Torino) represents a significant historical and cultural institution. Founded in 1883 and formalized as a non-profit association in 1892, SOCREM has long played a central role in expressing and safeguarding the funeral wishes of its members throughout Italy. Its evolution into a social promotion association in 2005 reflects a broader societal shift toward greater transparency, dignity, and personalization in end-of-life rituals. The architectural environment of such a place must therefore respond not only to technical and logistical needs, but also to the emotional, psychological, and ritual dimensions of mourning.

SOCREM Torino, officially known as the Società per la Cremazione di Torino, is a non-profit social promotion association dedicated to providing cremation services in Turin, Italy. Established on April 6, 1883, it became a recognized moral entity in 1892 and transitioned into a social promotion association in 2005(www.socremtorino.it).

The organization offers a comprehensive range of services related to cremation, including:

- Cremation procedures
- Farewell ceremonies
- Ash delivery and preservation
- Provision of urns
- Monthly commemorations
- Mutual support initiatives

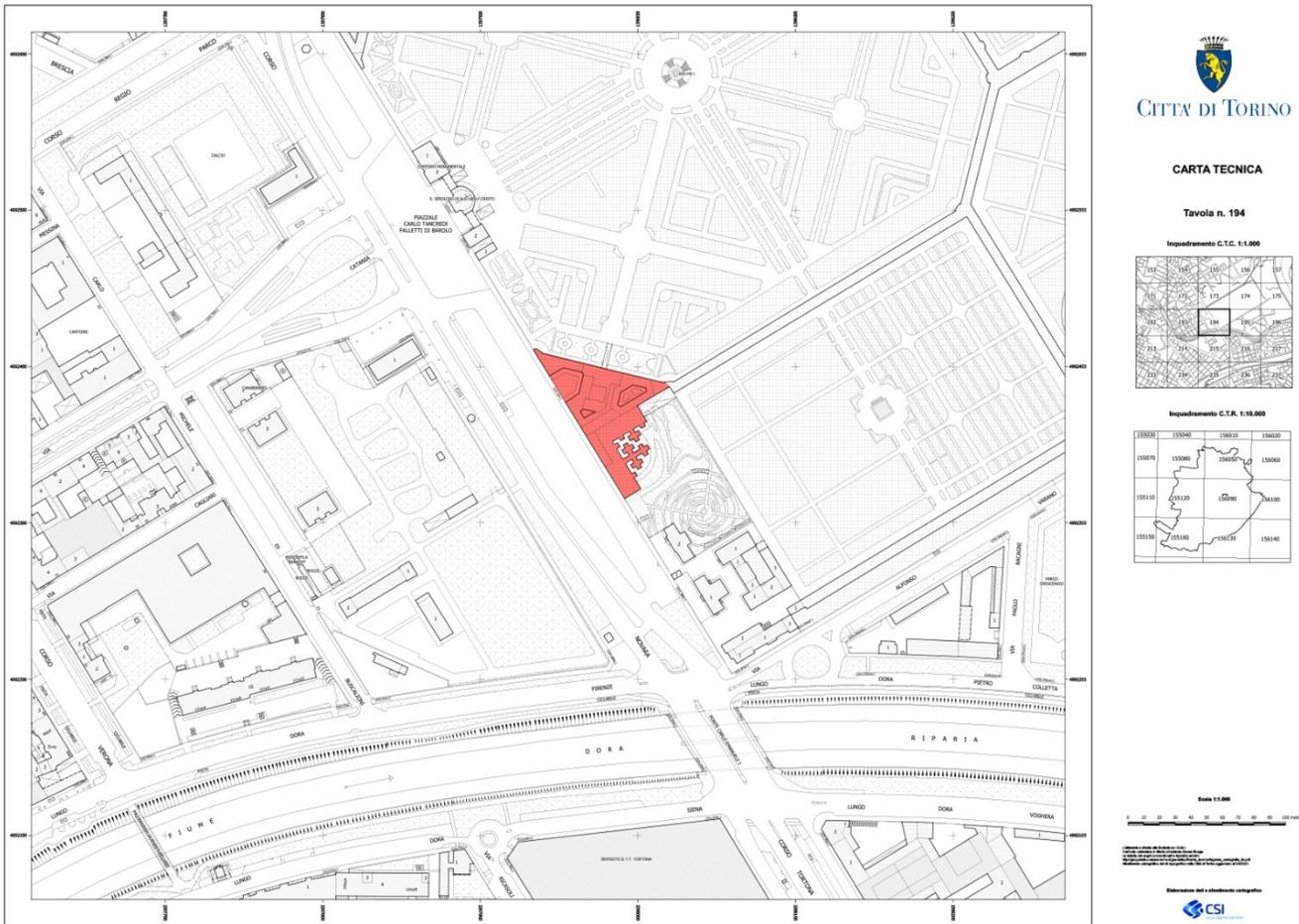


Figure 1: Carta Tecnica of SOCREM Torino ,Citta Di Torino

SOCREM Torino operates with a strong ethical framework, emphasizing principles of equality, impartiality, fairness, and transparency. It manages facilities such as the Temple of Turin, Italy located at Corso Novara 147/b, and the Temple of Mappano, Turin, Italy situated in Via Argentera, Turin, Italy to serve the community's needs.

As a legally recognized entity, SOCREM Torino upholds the institutional responsibility of documenting its members' wishes regarding cremation across the national territory. The association is committed to providing dignified and respectful services to both the deceased and their families, ensuring that all procedures are conducted with the utmost care and professionalism. (www.socremtorino.it).

While the structure retains strong cultural and symbolic value, its spatial layout is rooted in an older model of cremation services, offering limited ceremonial space, minimal gathering areas, and constrained circulation. The coexistence of technical cremation functions and visitor areas within a heritage-bound footprint restricts flexibility and modern adaptation. As contemporary funerary practices demand larger, more diverse, and emotionally supportive environments, the existing SOCREM facility struggles to meet current expectations, making architectural expansion and reinterpretation both necessary and contextually significant.



Figure 2: Location Map of SOCREM Torino, Citta Di Torino

Existing Problems & Spatial Limitations of SOCREM Torino (Cimitero Monumentale, Turin)

1. Limited Number and Capacity of Farewell Halls

- The *Sala del Commiato* (Farewell Hall) is **small** and cannot accommodate large groups.
- Only one main hall is available, which causes:
 - Scheduling congestion.
 - Lack of flexibility for multicultural, multireligious, or personalized ceremonies.
 - Overlap between families, reducing privacy and emotional comfort.

2. Public Flow Conflict: Procession, Technical, and Operational Paths Overlap

The existing crematorium was built for older, lower-demand procedures. Today:

- Visitors entering for ceremonies often **share circulation routes with operational staff** and funeral vehicles.
- There is no clear **processional journey**: arrival → gathering → farewell → transition to cremation → exit.
- Family members sometimes encounter:
 - Coffins being moved,
 - Technical equipment,
 - Staff performing logistical tasks.

3. Lack of Adequate Waiting, Gathering & Post-Ceremony Social Spaces

Modern funerary culture increasingly involves:

- communal remembrance,
- receptions,
- small gatherings before or after the farewell.

SOCREM currently offers:

- Minimal waiting areas,
- No proper lounge, reflection garden, or communal gathering space,

- Few transitional spaces for emotional decompression.

4. Architectural Constraints of Being Inside a Historic Cemetery

The Tempio Crematorio sits inside the Cimitero Monumentale, a heritage-sensitive environment. Constraints include:

- Strict limits on new construction on cemetery ground.
- Strong visual and symbolic context dominated by historic monuments.
- Difficulty expanding horizontally.

This creates pressure to think **vertically** which aligns with your thesis idea.

5. Insufficient Separation Between Ceremonial and Technical Areas

Though cremation chambers are hidden, their proximity is still evident because:

- Sound, smells (rare but possible), and vehicle movement may intrude.
- The psychological awareness of furnaces just behind the walls can discomfort visitors.

6. Outdated Spatial Atmosphere: Limited Emotional + Sensory Design

Current architecture is functional but lacks:

- natural light,
- ritual choreography.

Families often seek a **gentle, uplifting environment**, but SOCREM today feels:

- administrative,
- compressed,

7. Limited Space for Multicultural or Multi-Faith Practices

Turin is now culturally diverse, but SOCREM offers essentially **one neutral hall**. Problems include:

- Lack of dedicated spaces for different faiths or secular rituals.
- No rooms for:
 - private spiritual preparation,
 - extended family gatherings,

8. Ash-Related Spaces Are Minimal or Hidden

The **Sala della Memoria** (where ashes are returned) is small and brief in function. Issues:

- No dedicated space for private contemplation upon receiving the urn.
- No architectural prominence given to the ash-return ritual, despite its emotional importance.

9. High Cremation Demand → Scheduling Pressure

Turin's cremation rate has risen sharply:

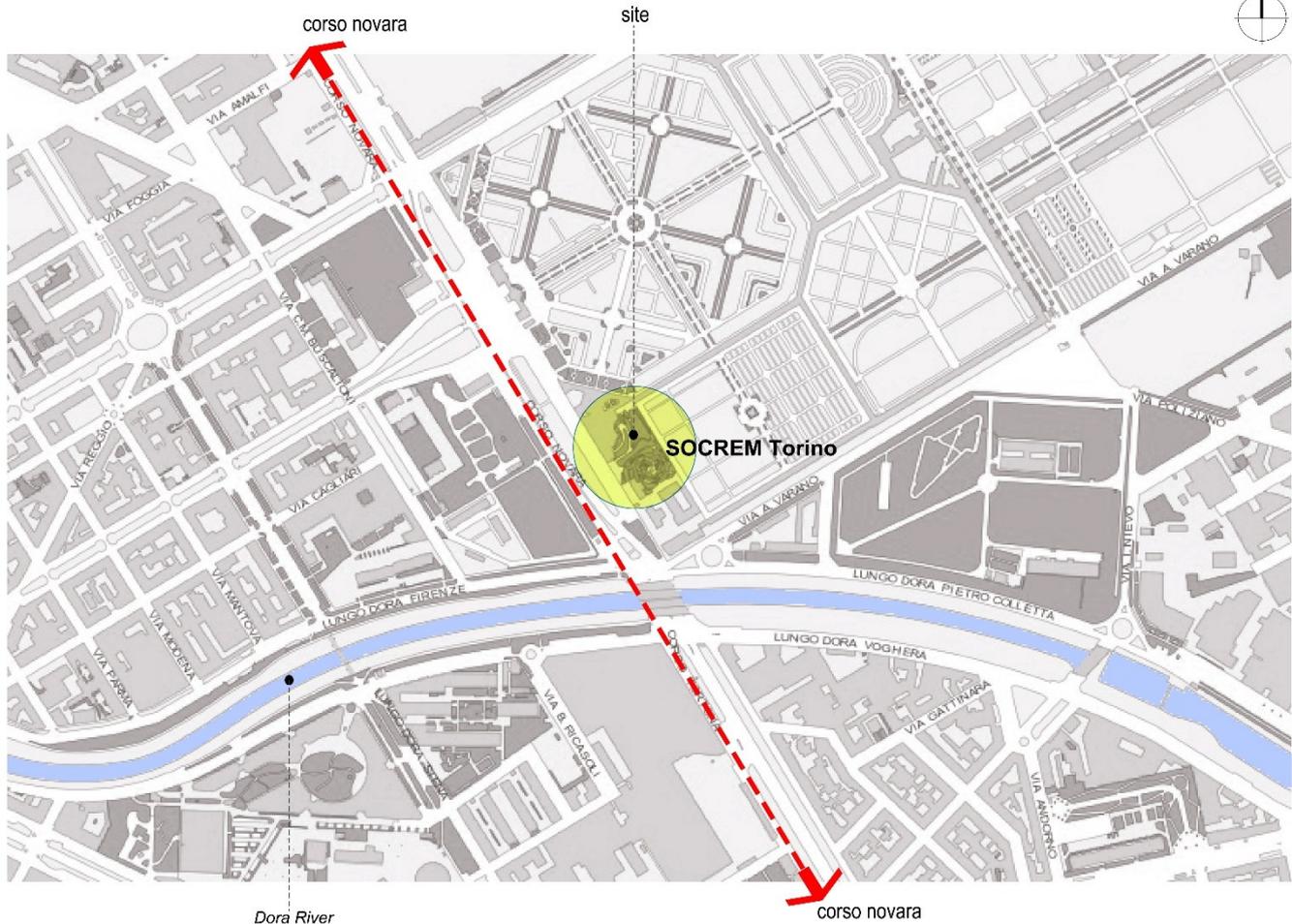
- queues and long waiting times,
- rushed ceremonies,
- limited time slots for families,
- minimal personalization allowed.

Site Documentation

As part of the preliminary research phase, a detailed site documentation study was conducted at SOCREM Torino, Corso Novara. This included multiple on-site visits during which I carried out direct measurements, spatial verification, and systematic photographic documentation of both the exterior and interior areas accessible to the public. The architectural drawings obtained from SOCREM served as an initial reference, but discrepancies emerged when compared with on-ground conditions.

These were carefully surveyed, corrected, and subsequently redrawn to produce accurate base plans for design development. The combination of measured observation, visual recording, and plan rectification allowed for a precise understanding of the existing spatial configuration, circulation patterns, and structural constraints forming a reliable foundation for all subsequent analysis and design interventions in this thesis.

Overall, the site analysis went beyond the production of drawings and measurements, allowing SOCREM Torino to be understood as a living and operational environment. Architectural form, structural systems, functional requirements, and cultural practices were observed as closely interconnected rather than independent elements. This approach informed the development of design strategies that address not only spatial and structural constraints, but also the experiential qualities and symbolic significance intrinsic to cremation facilities.

Context[Crematorium Temple of Turin
Corso Novara, 147/B]

SOCREM Torino, located along Corso Novara, sits in a transitional area of the city where infrastructure, former industrial zones, and residential developments overlap. The surroundings feel utilitarian and fragmented, reflecting the peripheral character of this part of Turin, yet they also provide a certain quiet separation from the historic city centre. Nearby, the Dora River introduces a contrasting natural presence, softening the urban landscape and adding a sense of continuity and calm.

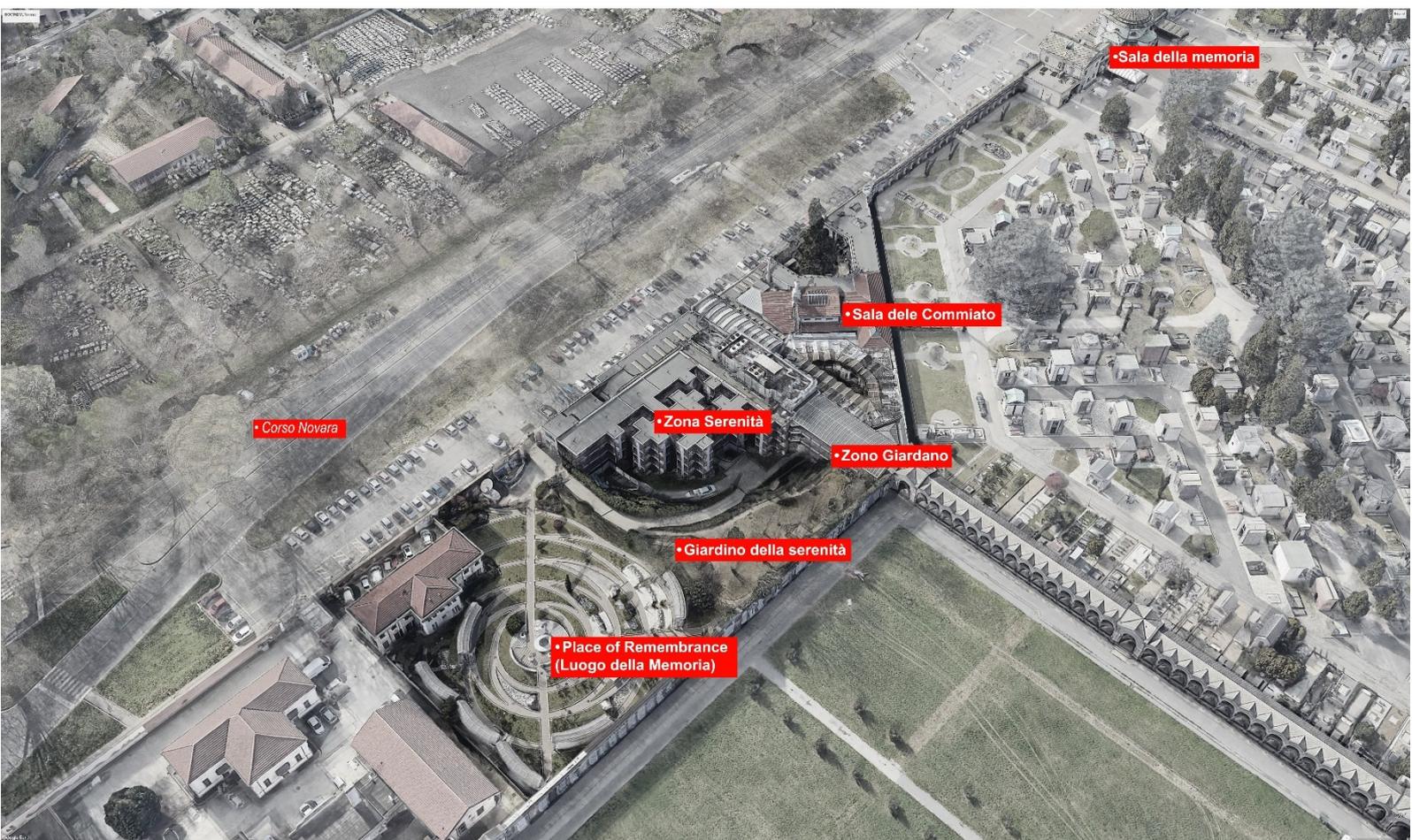
The river corridor functions as both an ecological element and a symbolic threshold, reinforcing the reflective atmosphere associated with the cremation facility. In this setting, SOCREM exists between city and nature, activity and pause, shaping its role as a space for contemplation, transition, and collective ritual. Corso Novara functions as a major urban artery characterized by tram lines, continuous traffic, and large-scale building blocks, giving the area a predominantly functional character. The fast pace of everyday urban activity along the street contrasts

strongly with the quiet and introspective nature of the cremation facility, reinforcing its separation from the surrounding urban dynamics.

This study focuses on the documentation of Zona Serenità within SOCREM Torino as a foundational phase for a future architectural intervention. The analysis examines its spatial configuration, atmospheric qualities, and relationship with the surrounding green space, with the objective of establishing a critical understanding of the existing conditions prior to the design of new architectural functions integrated with the historic structure.

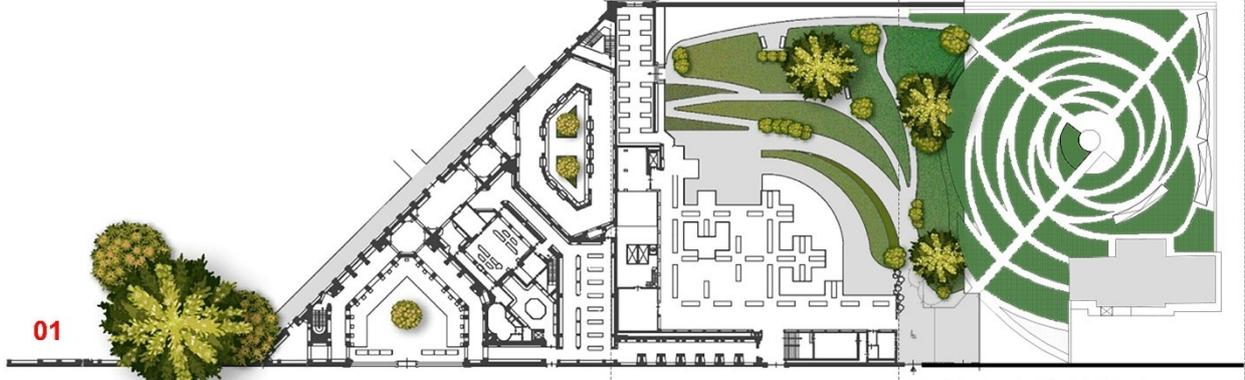
The documentation process investigates Zona Serenità as a place of quiet reflection and remembrance, emphasizing its role as a spatial mediator between the broader urban context and the intimate experience of mourning. Particular attention is given to its function as a space of pause and transition, where architecture supports emotional care through controlled movement, silence, and spatial restraint. Enclosed within the garden are the three levels of the Serenity Area, which contain the columbariums. These spaces accommodate the ashes of those who have chosen cremation and are designed to be visited by loved ones for moments of remembrance, tribute, or prayer.

Location Map [Google Earth]

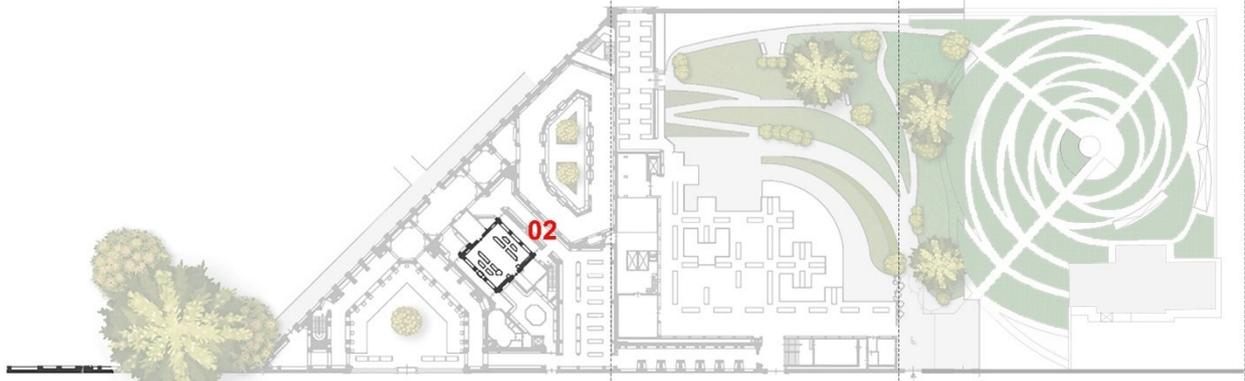


key plan

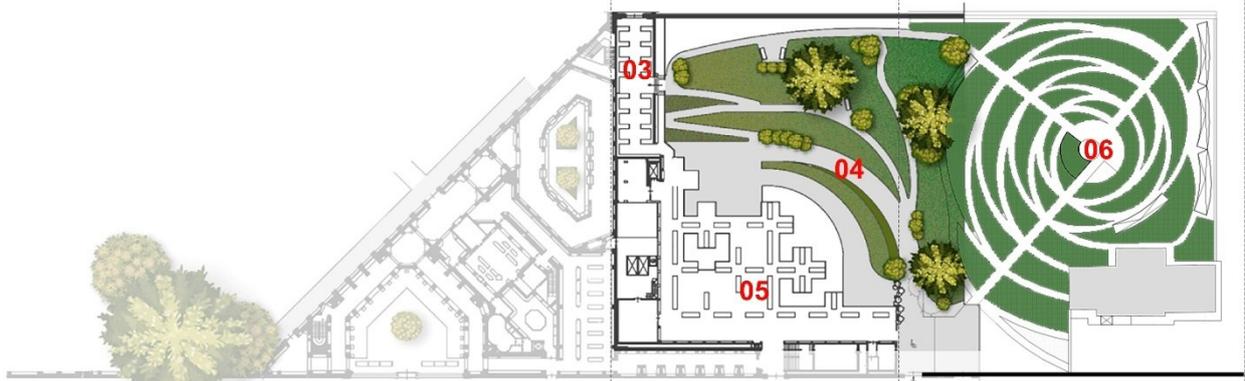
[from socrem website]



01_Sala della memoria



02_Sala del Commiato



03_Zona giardino (balconata)

04_Giardino della serenità

05_Zona serenità

06_Luogo della Memoria

+

+

01_ Sala del Memoria

An open space and portico that houses numerous historic tombs and urns, the cloister is located opposite the Ancient Garden in a welcoming embrace towards the Farewell Hall and the Hall of Honor. In addition to its fine architectural and sculptural details, it is one of the oldest areas of the Temple and houses the ashes of people who, over the years, have chosen cremation.



Figure 3: Sala della memoria_a [www.socremtorino.it]



Figure 4: Sala della memoria_b [www.socremtorino.it]

02_ Sala del Commiato

Enriched with works of art such as the painting by Andrea Vinai above the entrance door and the funerary monuments by the sculptors Borgogno and Fumagalli, the hall extends toward the marble pyramid that defines the passage space toward the ritual door marking the conclusion of the farewell rite.

On either side, two sculptures by Pietro Della Vedova: the Pietà, which raises the olive branch as a symbol of peace, and the Winged Genius, which lifts the veil to access the mystery of death. Their gazes meet at the point where the coffin stops for the ritual ceremony.

The funeral procession is welcomed and seated in the hall by the Ceremonial Master, accompanied by background music that accompanies the ceremony, consisting of moments of mourning, silent remembrance of the deceased, reading of poetic passages, and possible interventions by those present. The farewell rite ennobles and skilfully regulates the painful moment of separation from the sight of the coffin. At the moment when the coffin pauses in the center, the converging gazes of the sculpted figures heighten the emotional resonance of the space, framing the ritual not only as an act of farewell but as a passage into mystery, memory, and transcendence.



Figure 5: Sala del Commiato _a [www.socremtorino.it]



Figure 6: Sala del Commiato _b [www.socremtorino.it]



Figure 7: Sala del Commiato _c [www.socremtorino.it]



Figure 8: Sala del Commiato _d [www.socremtorino.it]

03_Zono Giardino

A solemn and majestic structure that connects the Garden to the Serenity Zone with a continuity of sight and thought, and that houses the ashes of the deceased who chose cremation. The exterior and interior interact directly, with an airy brightness and a calm relationship between the sky and the spaces that hold the memory of individuals and the stories they lived. Architecturally, the Zona Giardino functions as a transitional balcony-like structure that mediates between built form and the surrounding cemetery landscape. Its elongated, open configuration frames a sequence of views outward toward the monumental grounds, allowing the eye to move freely across greenery, sky, and distant memorial elements. The balance of openness and enclosure ensures that the ashes housed here are held within a dignified architectural frame while still maintaining a perceptible connection to air, light, and the natural environment that surrounds the crematorium.

04_Giardino della serenità

Enriched by the bronze sculptures by Riccardo Cordero “Infinito” and “Segno di Luce,” geometries projected towards open space that signify the release from the weight of matter, the Garden is a space for reflection and contemplation, a place where loved ones of the deceased can pray or dedicate thoughts and memories to their relatives. A complementary place to the Serenity Area, which embraces and welcomes, in a direct relationship with nature and a dialogue between the outside and the space where the ashes rest. (www.socremtorino.it).

The garden's layout subtly guides movement along quiet paths and seating areas, offering moments of solitude or shared reflection. In this way, the Giardino della Serenità not only enhances the emotional depth of the site but also serves as a vital therapeutic landscape, where nature, art, and memory converge to support the mourning process.



Figure 9: Giardino della serenità _ Documented Photo 01



Figure 10: Giardino della serenità Documented Photo 02

05_Zona Serenità

Within the embrace of the Garden, the three levels of the Serenity Zone develop, the space that hosts the ashes of the deceased who chose cremation and can be visited by loved ones for remembrance, tribute, or prayer. This area of the Temple is dedicated to reflection and gathering, featuring a more modern design with highly symbolic sculptures by the artist Riccardo Cordero, compared to the historic area that forms the original core of the Temple, adjacent to the Farewell Hall. (www.socremtorino.it).

The spatial configuration creates a vertical rhythm of niches, walkways, and contemplative platforms, where visitors can circulate softly between levels while maintaining visual connection with the garden outside. Because of its emotional significance and delicate integration with the landscape, the Zona Serenità becomes the most protected and sensitive zone in any design intervention. In this thesis, it is treated as a structural and symbolic foundation over which a new architectural layer can be added without imposing physical strain or spatial disruption. The proposed elevated structure spans above the existing volumes through an independent beam-and-wall system,

ensuring that the serenity of the interior spaces, their sculptural compositions, and the surrounding landscape remain untouched. This strategy allows the new ceremonial and gathering spaces to emerge as a respectful extension hovering lightly above the Temple while preserving the integrity, atmosphere, and sacred stillness of the Zona Serenità below.



Figure 10: Zona serenità _ Documented Photo 03



Figure 11: Zona serenità Documented Photo 04



Figure 12: Zona serenità _ Documented Photo 05

The Zona Serenità forms the contemporary heart of SOCREM Torino a three-level spatial system carefully nested within the surrounding Garden and dedicated to the quiet preservation of ashes and the ritual of remembrance.

06_Luogo della Memoria

The *Luogo della Memoria* holds shared memory. It is not private, yet it feels personal. Each person brings their own thoughts, their own grief. Together, these quiet moments form a collective ritual. The place does not explain death. It simply gives room for remembering.

This green space is not a park. It is a place of care. Nature moves slowly, offering comfort without asking anything in return. Leaves change with the seasons. Light filters through branches and falls softly on the ground. Life continues, quietly, beside loss. People enter this space carrying weight in their hearts. Their steps slow down. Voices lower. The greenery surrounds them, not to distract, but to hold them. It gives shape to silence. It allows tears, memories, and long pauses.



Figure 13: *Luogo della Memoria*_ Documented Photo 01



Figure 13: *Luogo della Memoria*_ Documented Photo 02

Documentation of Zona Serenità

The documentation began with the collection of available archival drawings and reference plans for Zona Serenità. As the original documentation was partial and, in some instances, inconsistent, a systematic process of verification was required. Each floor of the Serenity Area was carefully studied through on-site observation and measurement. Dimensions were physically measured, cross-checked against the available drawings, and verified through repeated comparisons between floors and sections to ensure accuracy.

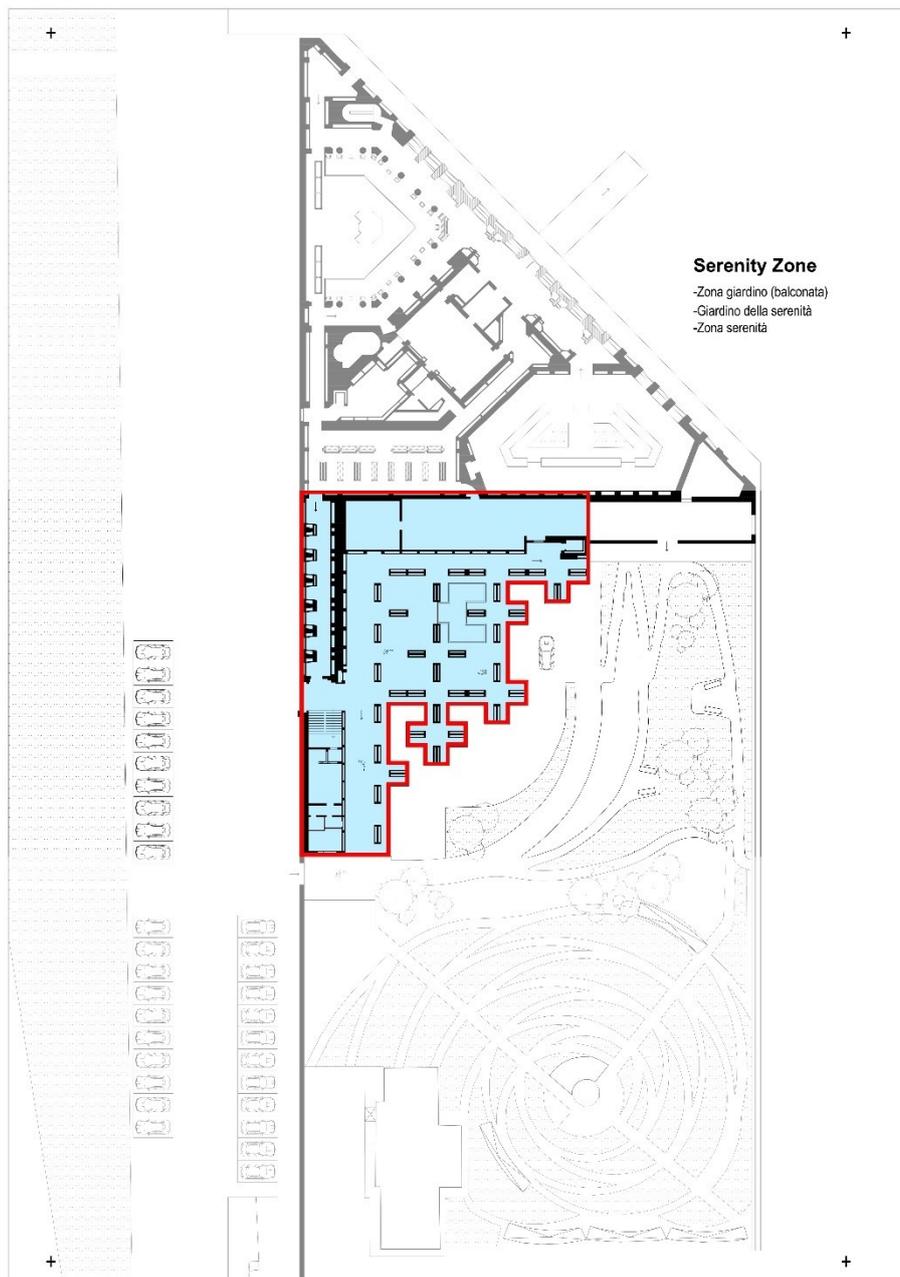
As a preliminary and essential phase of the thesis project, a detailed documentation of Zona Serenità at SOCREM Torino was carried out prior to any design intervention. This phase was fundamental in developing a precise understanding of the existing architectural structure, spatial organization, and dimensional relationships that would later inform the proposal of new functions integrated within and above the existing fabric.

The study involved a careful analysis of the ground floor, first floor, second floor, and third floor plans, as well as the adjacent Giardino della Serenità. Each level was examined individually to understand its spatial logic, circulation, and relationship to both the interior program and the surrounding open space. On-site measurements

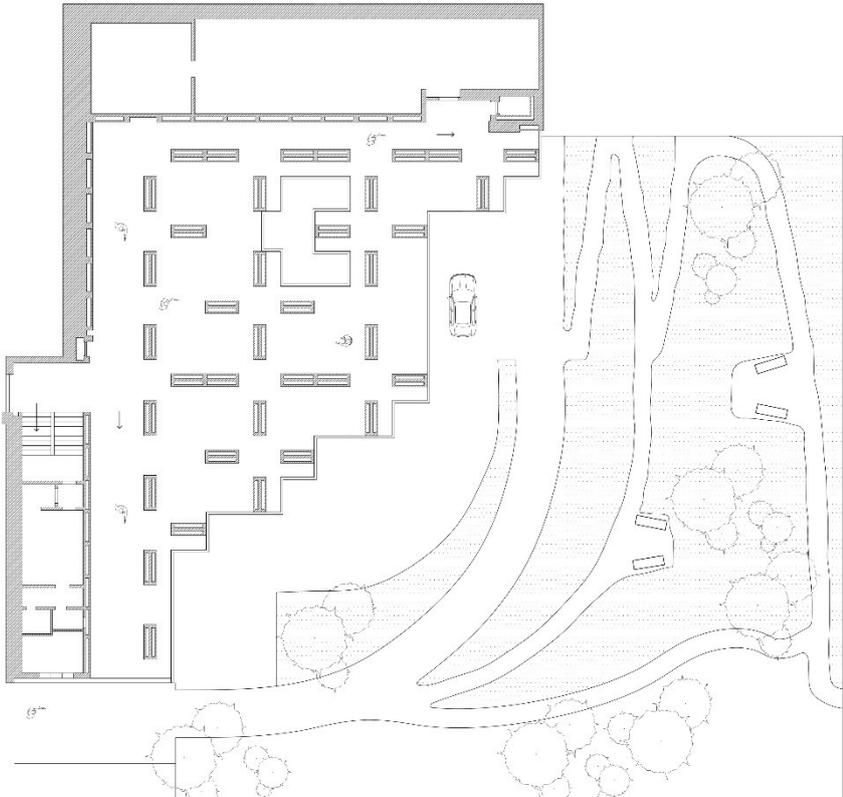
were taken and systematically cross-checked with available drawings in order to verify accuracy and resolve inconsistencies.

Based on this process, the plans for each level were redrawn in their entirety. Discrepancies between the existing drawings and the actual built conditions were identified and corrected, resulting in a coherent and reliable set of plans that accurately reflect the current state of the building. Particular attention was given to circulation paths, spatial proportions, structural alignments, and the relationship between the interior spaces and the surrounding garden.

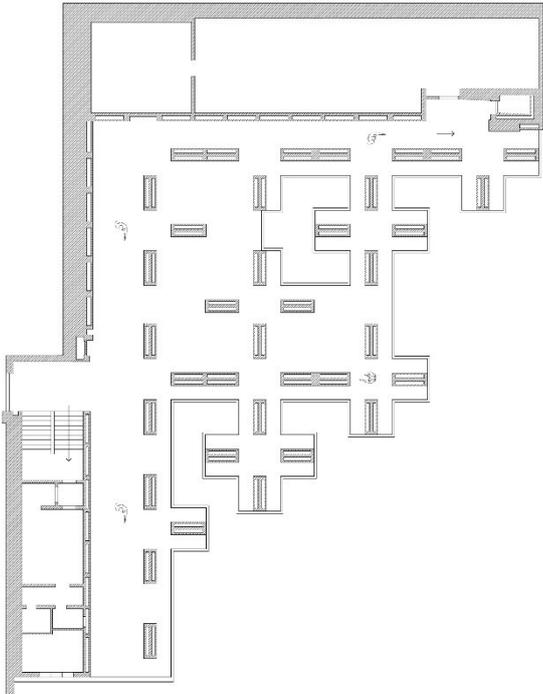
The corrected drawings presented below represent the outcome of this rigorous documentation process. They do not merely reproduce existing material but constitute a critical reconstruction of the architectural reality of Zona Serenità, achieved through direct measurement, analytical verification, and careful redrawing.



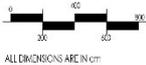
Thesis Design Programme on
Socrem Torino



GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE - 1:200



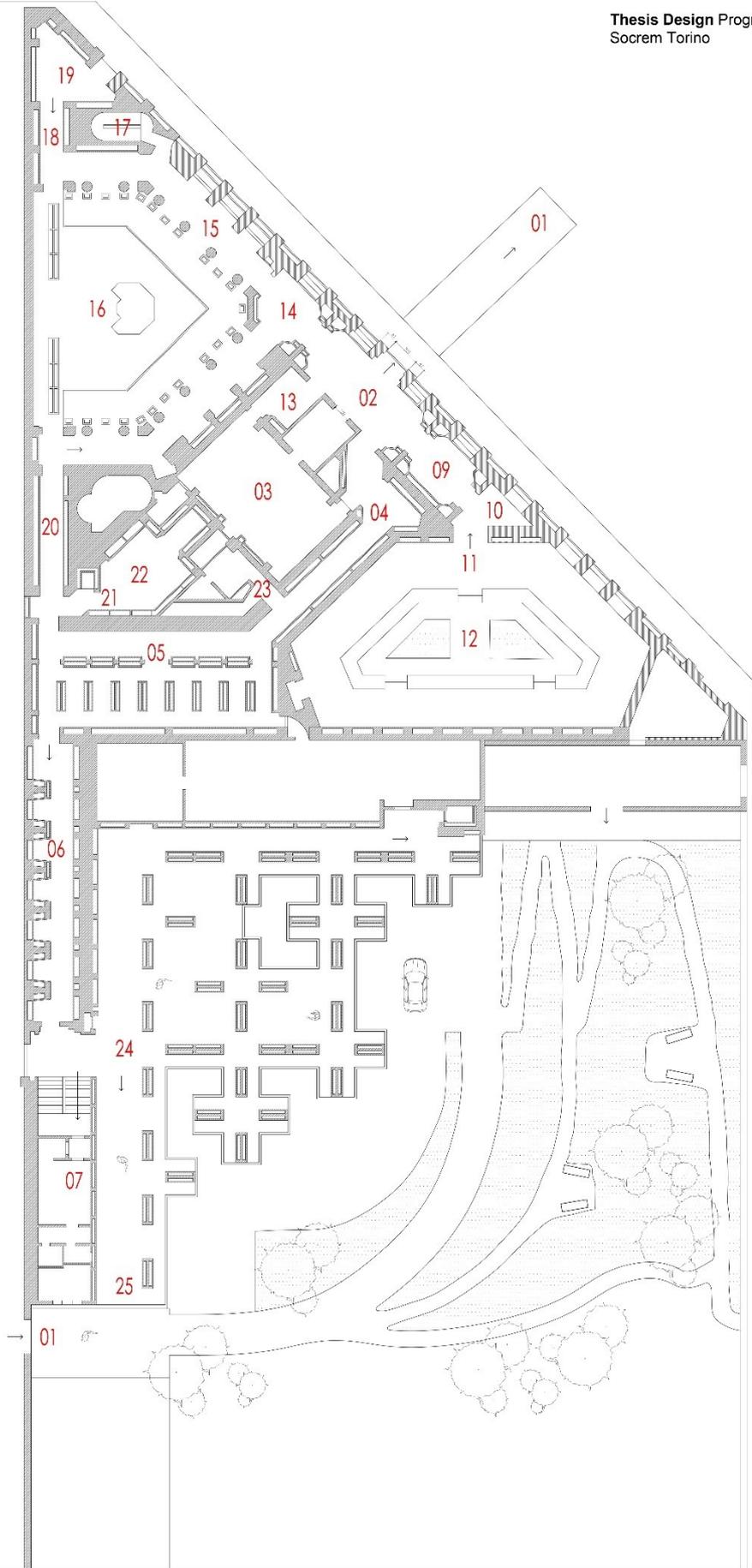
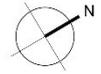
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE - 1:200



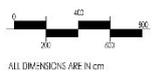
ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN cm

Drawn By: Aswin Raju

Thesis Design Programme on
 Socrem Torino

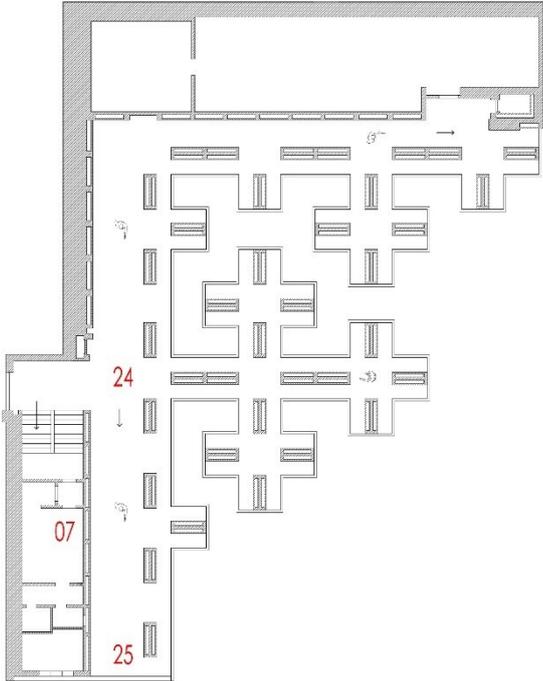


- 01- Entrance
- 02- Hall of Honor
- 03- Farewell Room
- 04- Central Corridor
- 05- Living Room
- 06- Nave
- 07- Temple Secretariat
- 09- Room
- 10- Cloister Atrium
- 11- Cloister
- 12- Chimeric garden
- 13- Ambulacrum
- 14- Atrium to the Ancient Portico
- 15- Ancient Portico
- 16- Ancient Garden
- 17- Crypt Underporch
- 18- Atrio
- 19- Corner Room
- 20- Stair
- 21- News Kiosk
- 22- Niche
- 23- Access to underground areas
- 24- New area Entrance floor
- 25- Exit towards Corso Novara

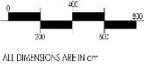


SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 SCALE - 1:200
 Drawn By: Aswin Raju

Thesis Design Programme on
Socrem Torino

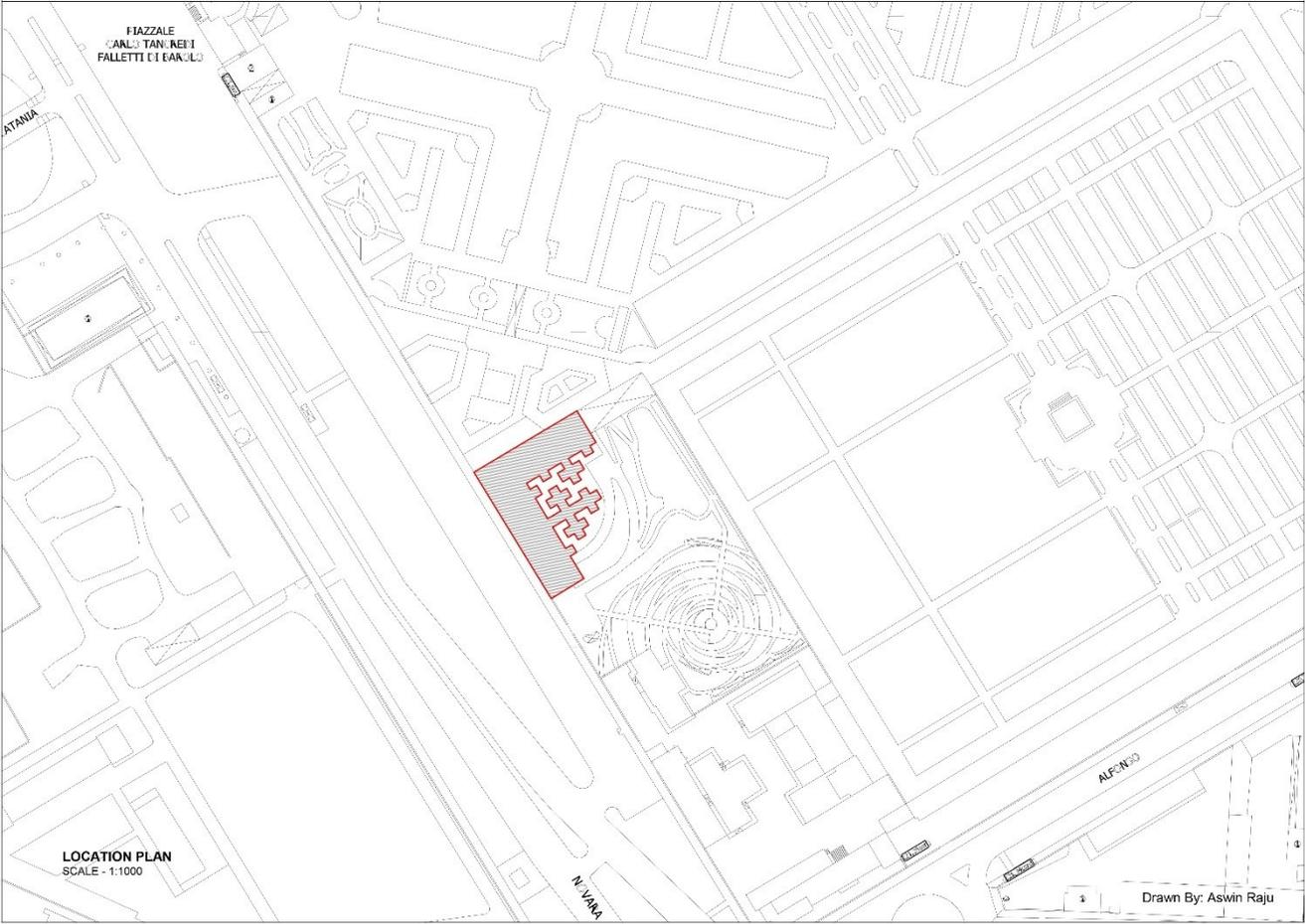


- 01- Entrance
- 02- Hall of Honor
- 03- Farewell Room
- 04- Central Corridor
- 05- Living Room
- 06- Nave
- 07- Temple Secretariat
- 08- Room
- 09- Colster Atrium
- 10- Colster
- 11- Colster
- 12- Chimney garden
- 13- Ambulacrum
- 14- Atrium to the Ancient Portico
- 15- Ancient Portico
- 16- Ancient Garden
- 17- Crypt Underporico
- 18- Andito
- 19- Corner Room
- 20- Stieve
- 21- News Kiosk
- 22- Niche
- 23- Access to underground areas
- 24- New area Entrance Floor
- 25- Exit towards Corso Navarra



ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN CM

THIRD FLOOR PLAN
SCALE - 1:200



LOCATION PLAN
SCALE - 1:1000

Drawn By: Aswin Raju

State of Art

State of the art establishes the broader contemporary landscape of architectural ideas, technologies, and ritual-space typologies relevant to this thesis, the case studies provide the concrete architectural manifestations of these themes. In other words, the state of the art outlines the disciplinary context how crematorium design, memorial architecture, and vertical interventions are being approached today while the selected case studies translate these trends into specific spatial strategies, material choices, and organizational models.

Together, they form a coherent foundation for the project: the state-of-the-art frames what is currently possible and meaningful in the field, and the case studies illustrate how these possibilities have been tested, refined, or challenged in built examples. This dual approach ensures that the design for SOCREM Torino is grounded both in contemporary architectural discourse and in practical, precedent-based understanding.

Crematorium, Ostend, Belgium

Architects: Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen

The Crematorium in Ostend is conceived as a radically simple and serene architectural ensemble, situated within an expansive landscape. It is defined by a large, square volume that encloses a central courtyard, creating an introverted world that separates visitors from the industrial surroundings of the site. The building acts as a contemporary cloister: a silent, monolithic form where a repetitive colonnade and a continuous perimeter wall generate calmness and rhythm. The design's strength lies in its abstraction there is no overt symbolism allowing the rituals of farewell to unfold with dignity and emotional clarity. [Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen (2012)

Crematorium Ostend: Project Description. Available at: <https://www.kgdvs.com>]

Programme

The crematorium integrates all ceremonial and technical components required for a complete funerary process:

- **Public and Ceremonial Spaces:**
 - Main ceremony hall
 - Secondary, smaller ceremony hall
 - Foyer, waiting rooms, and family spaces
 - Viewing room for private goodbyes
 - Processional routes and memorial paths

- **Technical and Service Areas:**
 - Cremation chambers
 - Ash-processing rooms
 - Coffin-handling and preparation areas
 - Staff facilities and logistics

- **Landscape Elements:**
 - Large inner courtyard
 - Perimeter memorial gardens
 - A landscape designed by Bas Smets that frames the arrival and departure sequences

The Crematorium in Ostend is constructed with a disciplined and minimal material palette that reinforces its serene and introverted character. The building is formed primarily from cast-in-place reinforced concrete, which defines both the thick perimeter walls and the structural grid of columns and slabs. This monolithic concrete shell gives the architecture a sense of permanence and silence appropriate to its funerary purpose, while also providing the acoustic and thermal stability required for ceremonial spaces. Inside this heavy outer ring, the materials become lighter and more refined: glazed partitions, timber finishes, and smooth stone or polished concrete floors create a calm and neutral interior atmosphere where light and landscape can act as the primary expressive elements.

The construction method is based on modular repetition and precise detailing, allowing the square plan to function as a clear, continuous spatial system. The flat concrete roof, punctuated by carefully controlled openings, diffuses light gently into the halls and corridors, enhancing the contemplative environment. This combination of structural solidity and interior delicacy supported by a landscape of gentle earth berms designed by Bas Smets results in a crematorium where materials and construction work together to produce a dignified, timeless setting for mourning and remembrance.

This programme and organizational logic are highly relevant to SOCREM Torino and your thesis proposal. First, the Ostend model demonstrates how ceremonial and technical worlds can coexist without interfering, a crucial aspect for your project since the existing zona serenità and cremation processes must remain undisturbed. Second, the clarity of the square ring void system offers a conceptual precedent for how new farewell halls or gathering areas could be structured above SOCREM

state of art

CREMATORIUM – Ostend, Belgium



Architects: OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen

Year
2014 – 2021

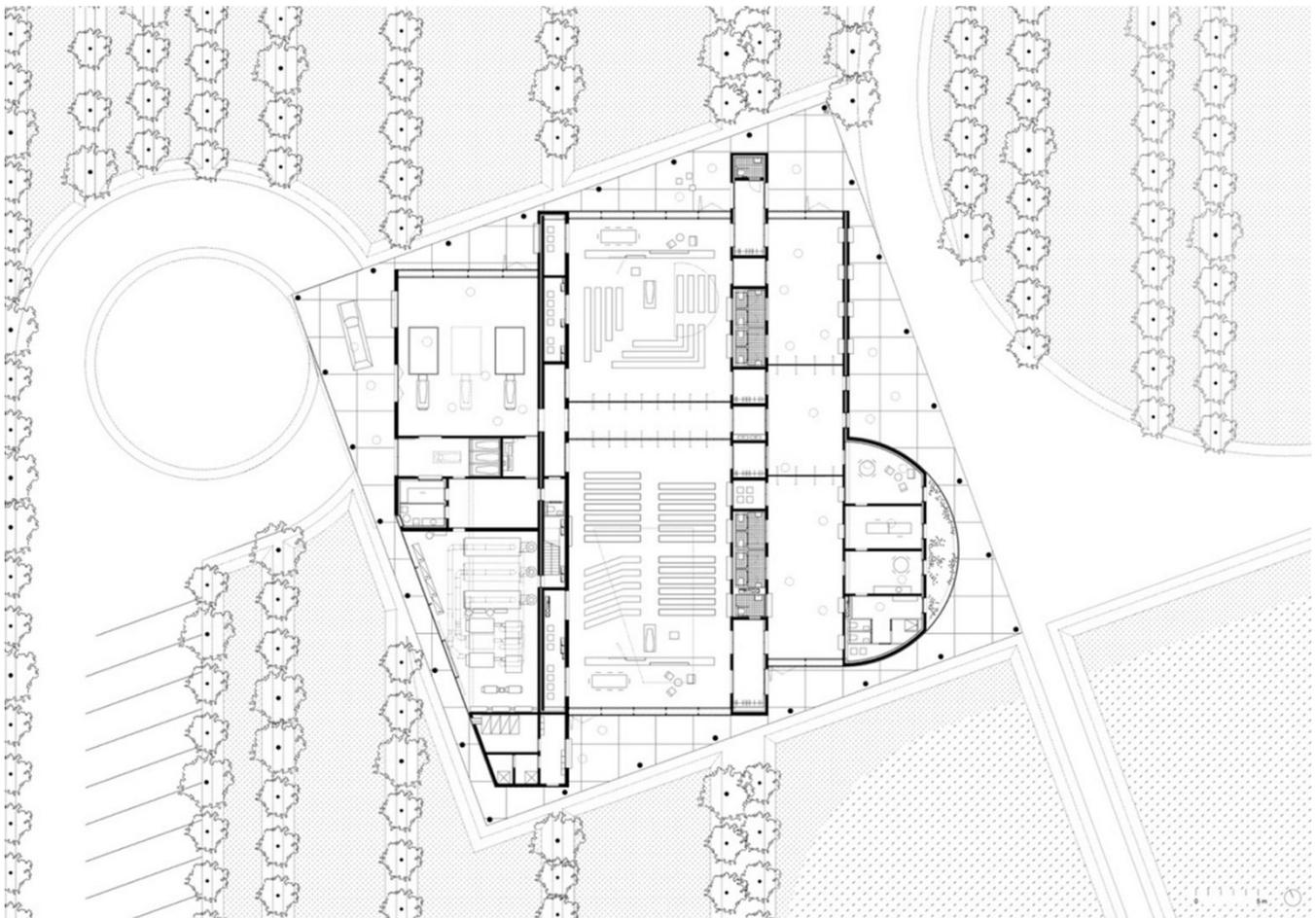
Location
Ostend, BE

Type
Public,

Status
Built

Surface
1750 m²

The plan is organised in lateral strips of varying widths comprising waiting rooms, the central ceremonial halls, technical spaces and thin bands of auxiliary functions and passageways



state of art

CREMATORIUM – Ostend,Belgium

Architects: OFFICE Kersten Geers David
Van Severen

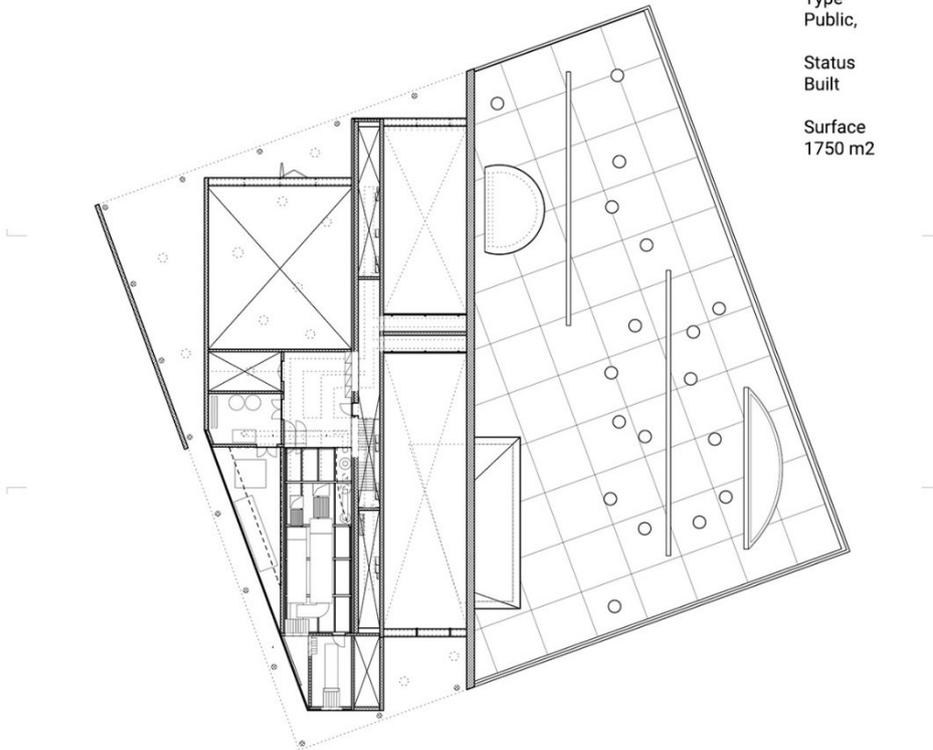
Year
2014 – 2021

Location
Ostend, BE

Type
Public,

Status
Built

Surface
1750 m2



Materials:

The building has a reinforced concrete structure, made of in situ fair-faced concrete with lost timber formwork that gives a wooden texture to its visible exposed surfaces. The facades are steel curtain walls, clad with perforated corrugated aluminium plates.

state of art

CREMATORIUM – Ostend, Belgium

Architects: OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen

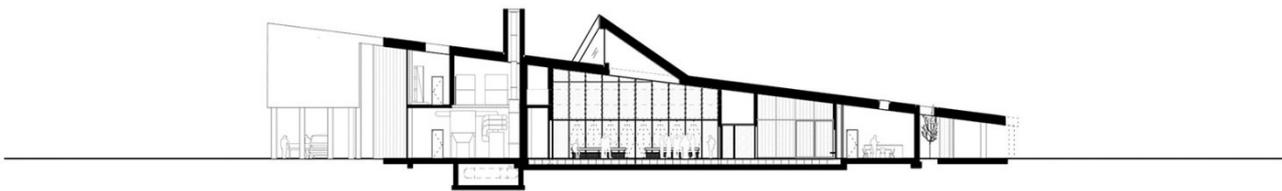
Year
2014 – 2021

Location
Ostend, BE

Type
Public,

Status
Built

Surface
1750 m²



Materials:

Inside, the building had to comply to rigorous sound-absorption requirements, given that multiple ceremonies are expected to take place at the same time. All the interior fittings and furniture around the bare concrete wall surfaces are made to perform in that regard, with special wool textile upholstery, while the roof openings are coated with sound-absorbing spray finish.



Crematorium, Heimolen (KAAN Architecten)

Crematorium Heimolen, located in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, is a crematorium designed by Claus en Kaan Architecten (now KAAN Architecten) and completed in 2008. Embedded within a gently sloping landscape, the project is characterized by its restrained materiality, strong horizontality, and quiet monumental presence. The building is organized as a sequence of calm, linear spaces in which circulation, ritual, and landscape are seamlessly integrated. Large glazed openings frame views of the surrounding forest, while deep canopies and elongated façades create a serene transition between interior ceremony halls and the natural environment. [<https://kaanarchitecten.com/project/crematorium-heimolen/>]

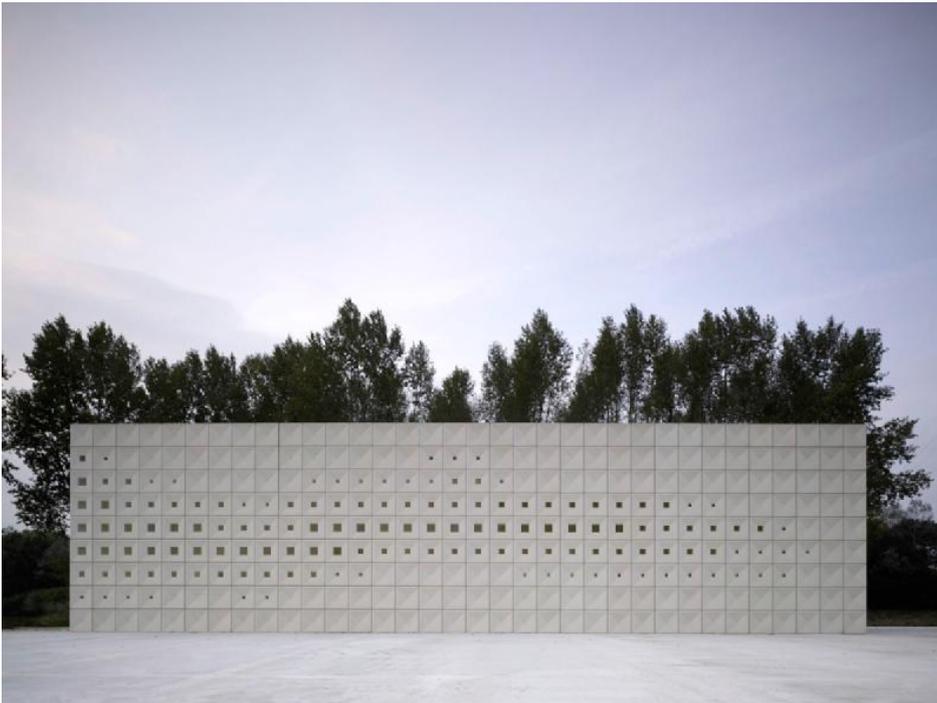


Figure 13: [[KAAN Architecten, Christian Richters, Sebastian van Damme · Crematorium Heimolen · Divisare](#)]



Figure 14: [[KAAN Architecten, Christian Richters, Sebastian van Damme · Crematorium Heimolen · Divisare](#)]

Conceived with the firm's signature minimalism, the crematorium prioritizes clarity, neutrality, and emotional stillness, allowing visitors to experience the farewell ritual within a spatial atmosphere that is both dignified and contemplative. As a case study, Crematorium Heimolen offers valuable insights for the SOCREM Torino project, particularly in terms of how landscape can be used as a mediating element between architecture and ritual, how ceremonial and technical functions can be discreetly separated, and how a composed sequence of spaces can guide visitors through a sensitive and emotionally charged process with care and architectural precision.

Spatial Organization

- **Ostend** uses a *square courtyard model*—an introverted, cloister-like form with all programme wrapped around a central void.

- **Heimolen** adopts a *longitudinal, linear model*—a sequence of parallel volumes and corridors aligned with the landscape.
- **SOCREM Torino** consists of *multiple interconnected historic and modern layers*, with significant vertical complexity and restrictions due to the Zona Serenità and surrounding monumental cemetery.

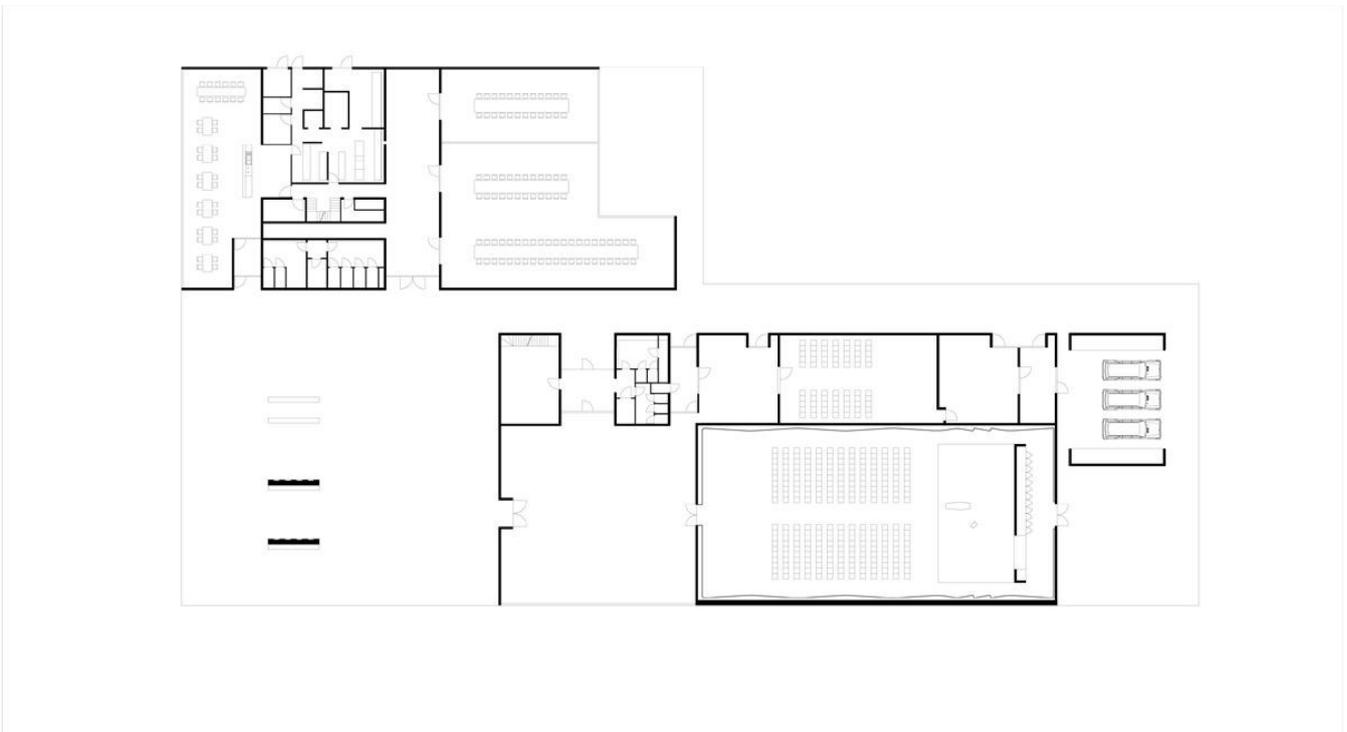


Figure 13: Floor Plan [[KAAN Architecten, Christian Richters, Sebastian van Damme · Crematorium Heimolen · Divisare](#)]

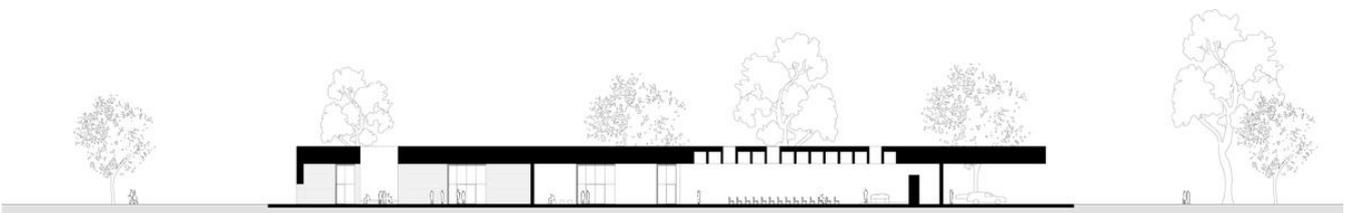


Figure 13: Section [[KAAN Architecten, Christian Richters, Sebastian van Damme · Crematorium Heimolen · Divisare](#)]

Conceived with the firm's signature minimalism, the crematorium prioritizes clarity, neutrality, and emotional stillness, allowing visitors to experience the farewell ritual within a spatial atmosphere that is both dignified and contemplative. As a case study, Crematorium Heimolen offers valuable insights for the SOCREM Torino project, particularly in terms of how landscape can be used as a mediating element between architecture and ritual, how

ceremonial and technical functions can be discreetly separated, and how a composed sequence of spaces can guide visitors through a sensitive and emotionally charged process with care and architectural precision.

Programme Structure — Crematorium Heimolen (KAAN Architecten)



Figure 15: Ceremony hall [interior view 01]



Figure 15: Ceremony hall [interior view 02]

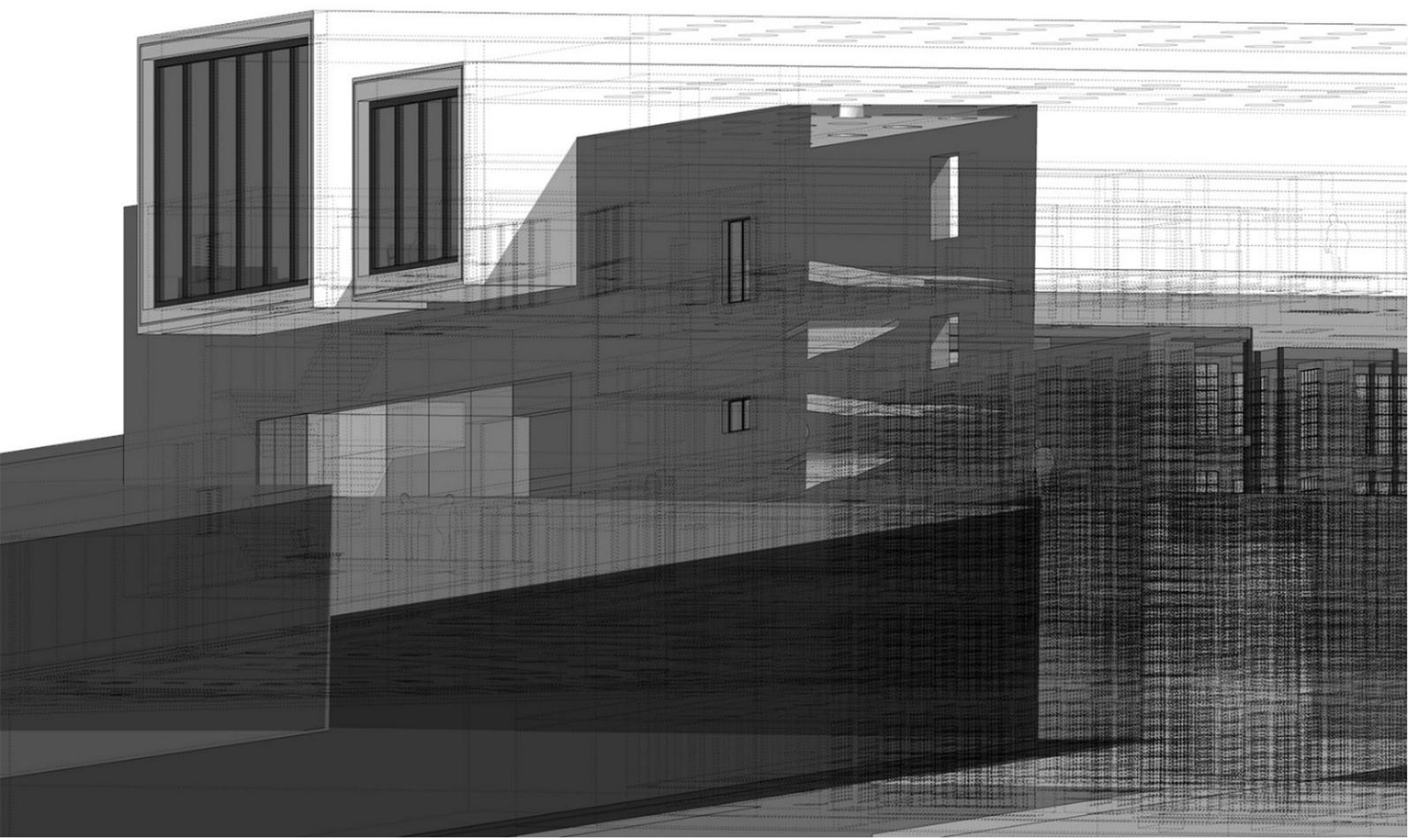
Crematorium Heimolen is organized as a linear and spatially layered programme, divided into two distinct but harmoniously connected volumes: the Reception Building and the Crematorium Building. The Reception Building contains the public-facing components entrance foyer, waiting areas, two ceremonial halls of different capacities, family rooms, and ancillary spaces supporting farewell rituals.

These spaces are arranged along a long, calm corridor that guides visitors in a gentle procession toward the ceremony halls, each framing views toward the surrounding woodland. The Crematorium Building, positioned adjacent but physically separated by landscape cuts and courtyards, houses the technical programme: furnace rooms, ash processing zones, staff and administrative areas, and logistical circulation. This division ensures a complete segregation of ceremonial and operational paths, allowing mourning rituals to unfold without any overlap with the technical handling of remains. Landscape elements, such as planted berms, reflective ponds, and forest-edge clearings, are integrated into the programme to extend the ritual experience beyond the interior and back into nature.

Informed by the Crematorium in Ostend, my project adopts a sense of spatial calm rooted in geometric clarity, the use of internalized reflective spaces, and a disciplined separation between public and technical flows. From Crematorium Heimolen, I incorporate the integration of nature into the ritual sequence through framed views, linear pathways, and an architectural openness that supports emotional stillness. Synthesizing these insights, my proposal for SOCREM Torino becomes a vertical reinterpretation of these principles: a lightweight ceremonial layer positioned above the existing structure, supported independently to preserve the integrity of the Zona Serenità and its surrounding landscape. Within this elevated architecture, light wells and precisely controlled daylight apertures are fundamental, introducing soft, diffused illumination into the ceremony halls and reinforcing their contemplative atmosphere. These calibrated light sources provide both an emotional and symbolic dimension, creating a gentle connection between earth and sky that enriches the farewell experience.

+ **the architectural proposal**

+



Programme

The design programme for the new SOCREM Torino extension emerges from a careful reading of both the functional limitations and the emotional responsibilities of the existing crematorium. As contemporary rituals of farewell increasingly require spaces that are spacious, inclusive, and atmospherically attuned to moments of grief and reflection, the project introduces an elevated architectural layer that expands ceremonial capacity while preserving the integrity of the historic structure below.

By organizing all public-facing functions ceremony halls, gathering spaces, family rooms, and circulation within a new independent platform above the existing Zona Serenità, the programme establishes a clear spatial hierarchy that separates ritual activities from technical operations. This elevated realm, shaped by controlled daylight and framed views towards the surrounding landscape, provides a serene and dignified setting for mourning, memory, and transition. The design programme therefore functions not only as a spatial arrangement but as a conceptual framework that strengthens the **atmosphere of farewell**, ensuring that every movement, space, and sequence supports the emotional journey of visitors while respecting the sacredness of the site.

Core Conceptual Structure of Programme

The design articulates a **three-part circulation logic**, which can be described as:

1. Ascend

Visitors move from the ground-level reality of the cemetery to a **raised ceremonial world**, symbolizing emotional elevation.

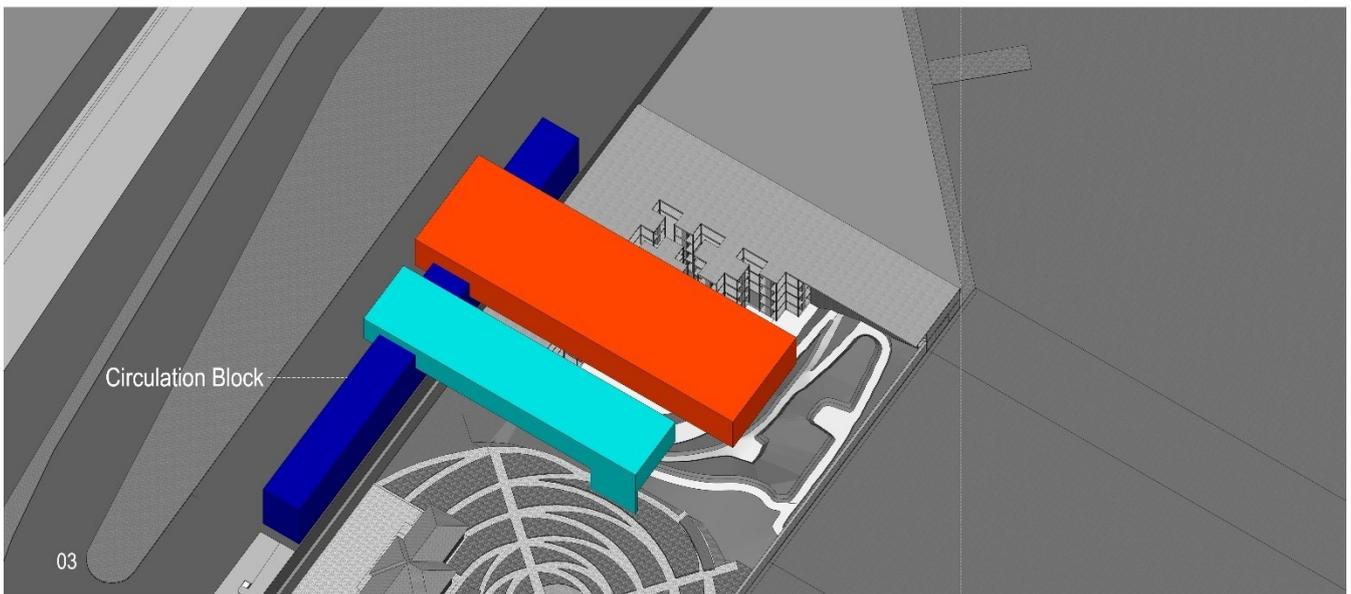
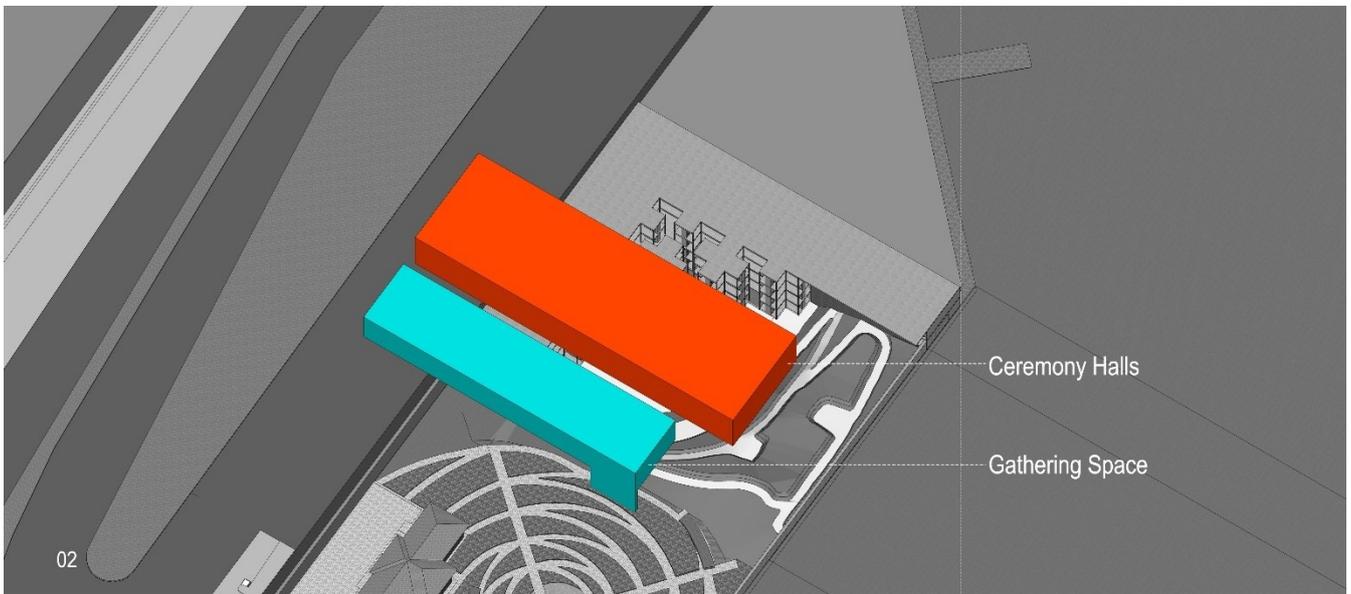
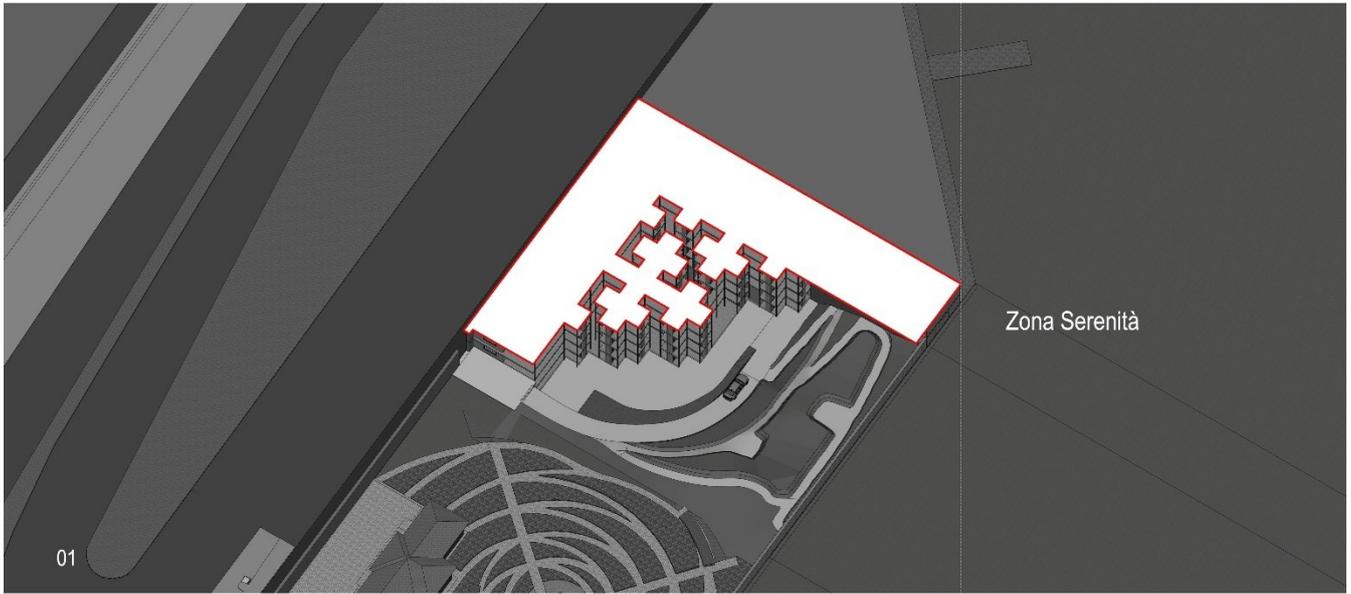
2. Gather + Honor

Ceremony halls act as the **central ritual heart**, supported by gathering spaces before and after. Light wells vertically connect ceremony to sky, framing the spiritual moment.

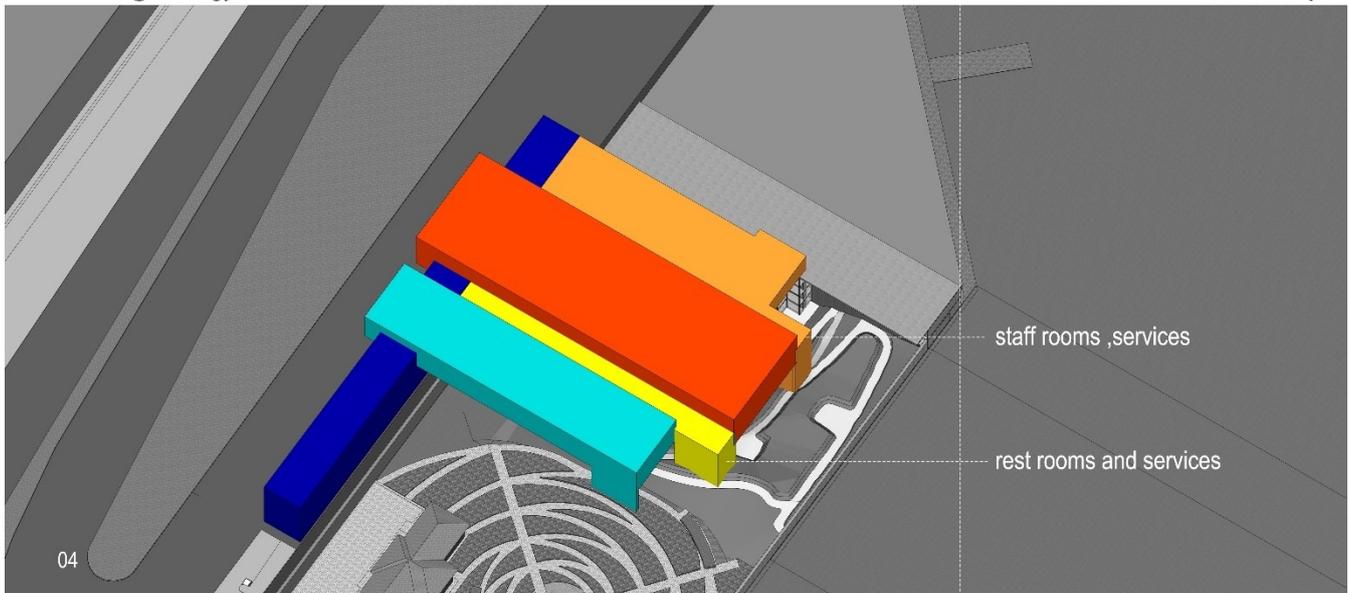
3. Disperse

After the ceremony, paths guide visitors gently to reflective gathering zones, maintaining dignity and psychological decompression.

Zoning strategy



Zoning strategy

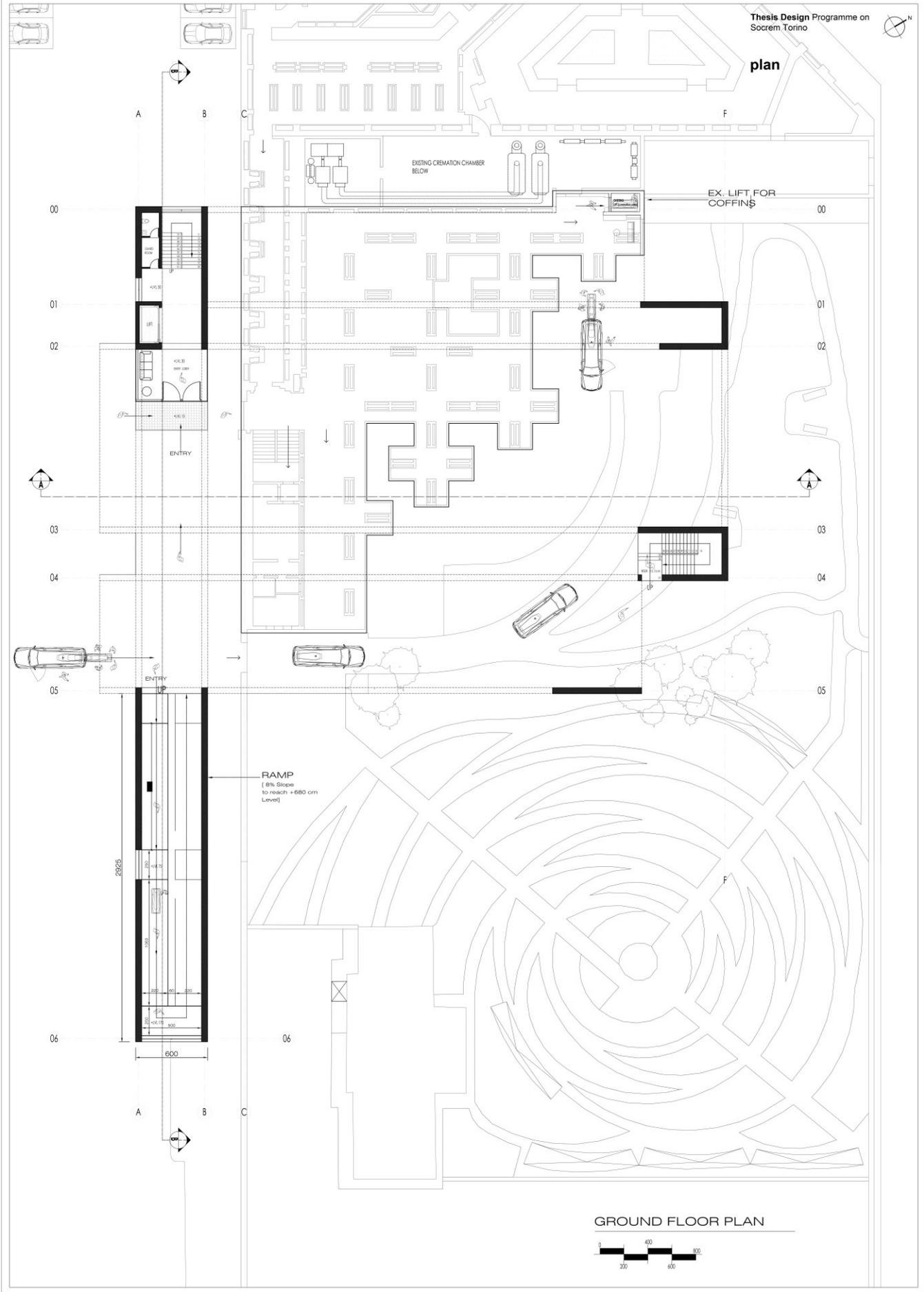


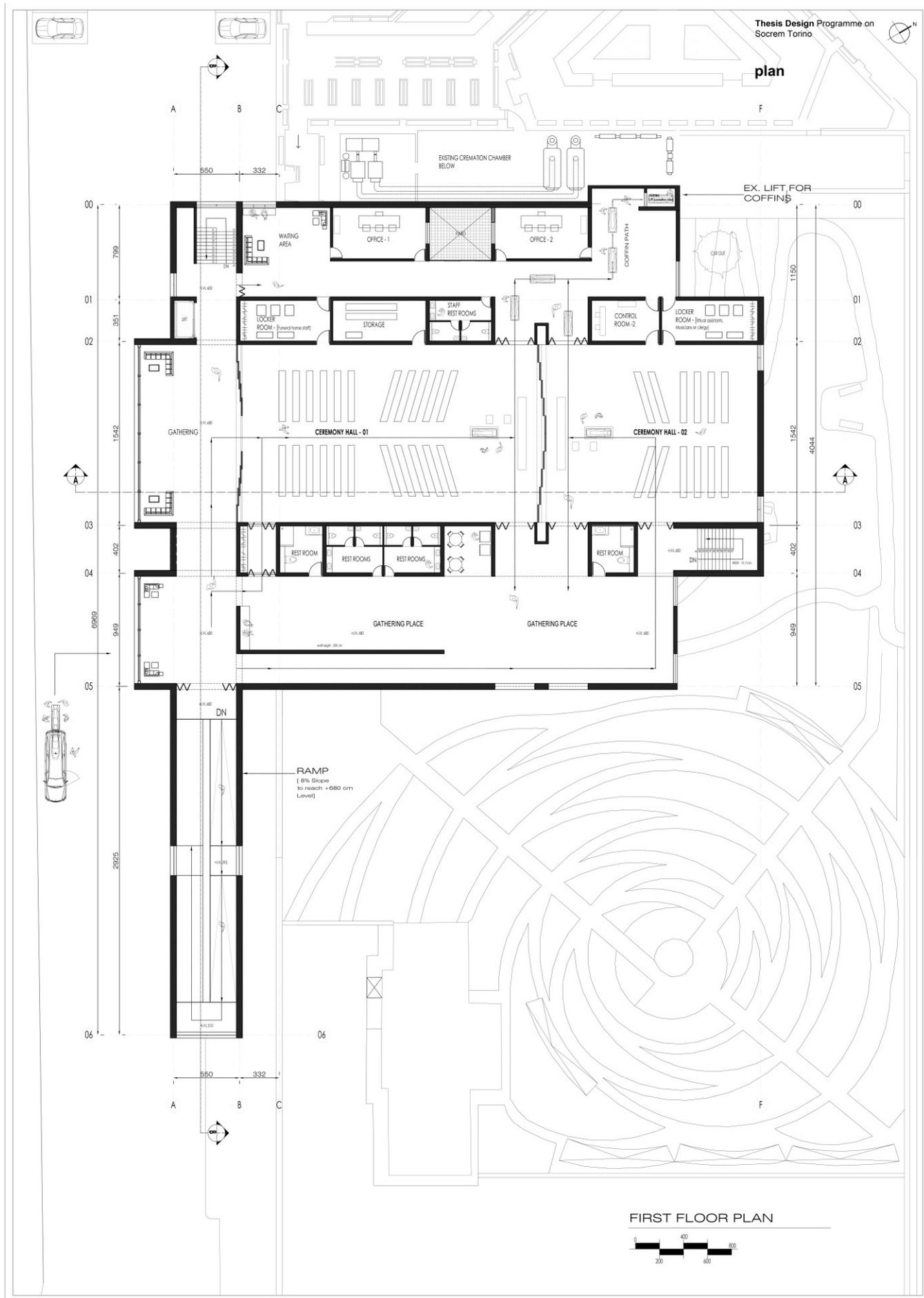
Zoning was an important aspect in planning the intervention at SOCREM Torino, helping to organize the service block, ceremony halls, gathering spaces, restrooms, and staff areas in a clear and functional way.

The restrooms are located in the central part of Zona Serenità, positioned between the gathering area and the ceremony halls so they are easily accessible from all public spaces. This block is designed using beam walls and is structurally independent, avoiding any direct contact with the existing structure.

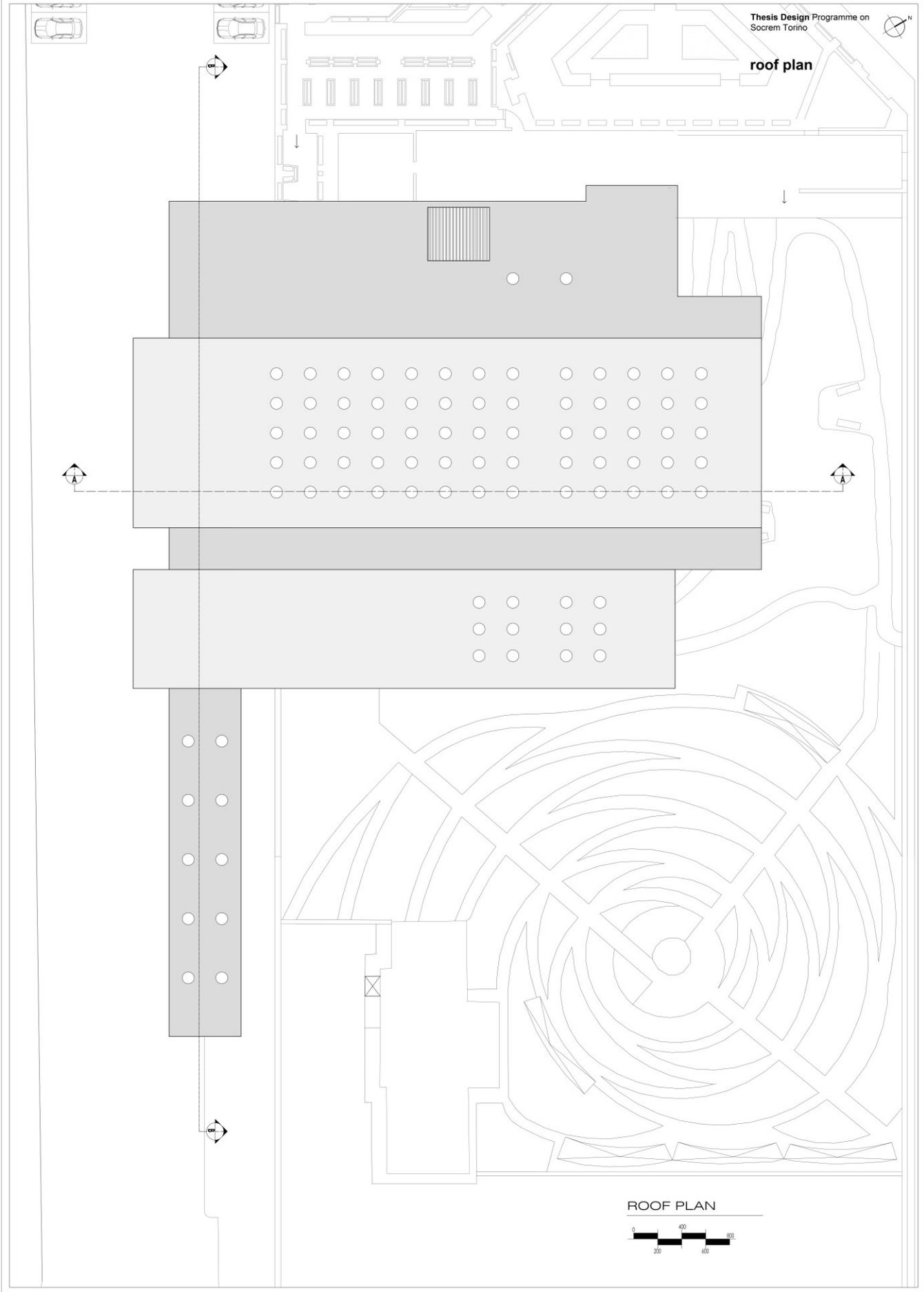
The service block is arranged to allow efficient movement through the building. A ramp is placed at one end, while stairs and a lift are located at the opposite end, ensuring accessibility for all.







Atmosphere of Farewell:
An Architectural Proposal for the Ceremonial Spaces of SOCREM Turin



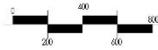
Thesis Design Programme on
Socrem Torino



section & elevation



section_AA

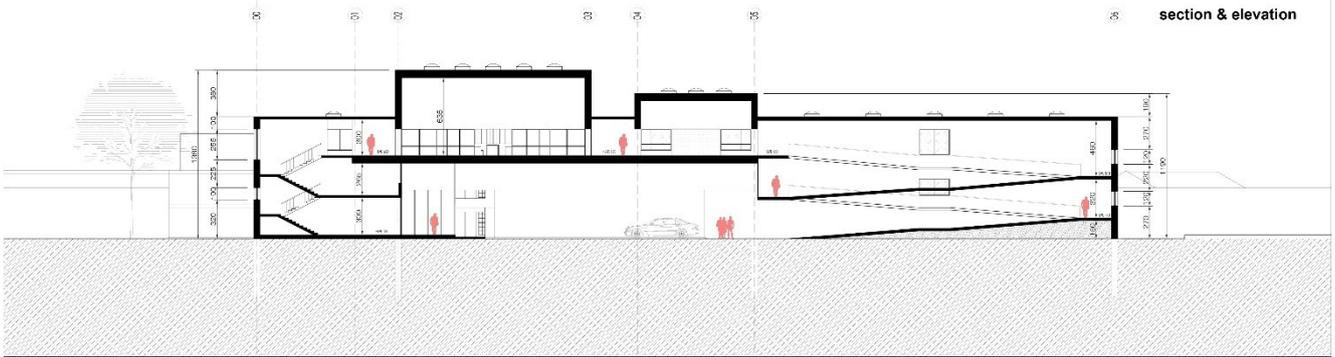


elevation- A

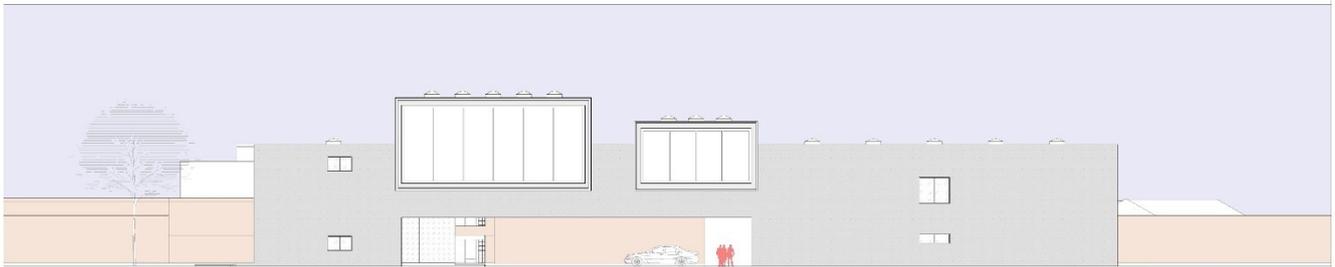


Thesis Design Programme on
Socrem Torino

section & elevation



section_BB



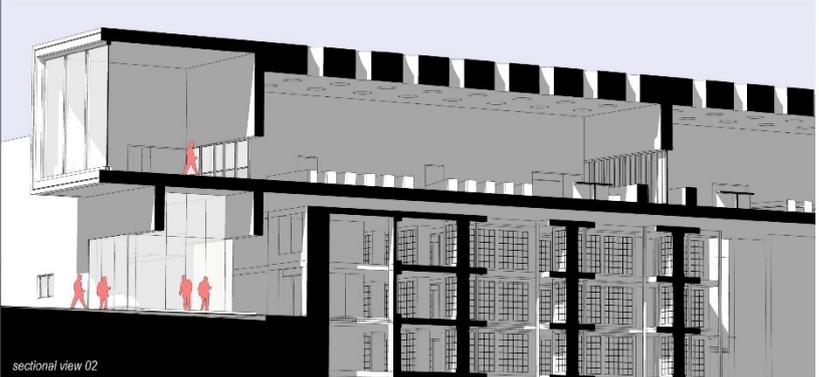
elevation- B



elevation- c [rear side]

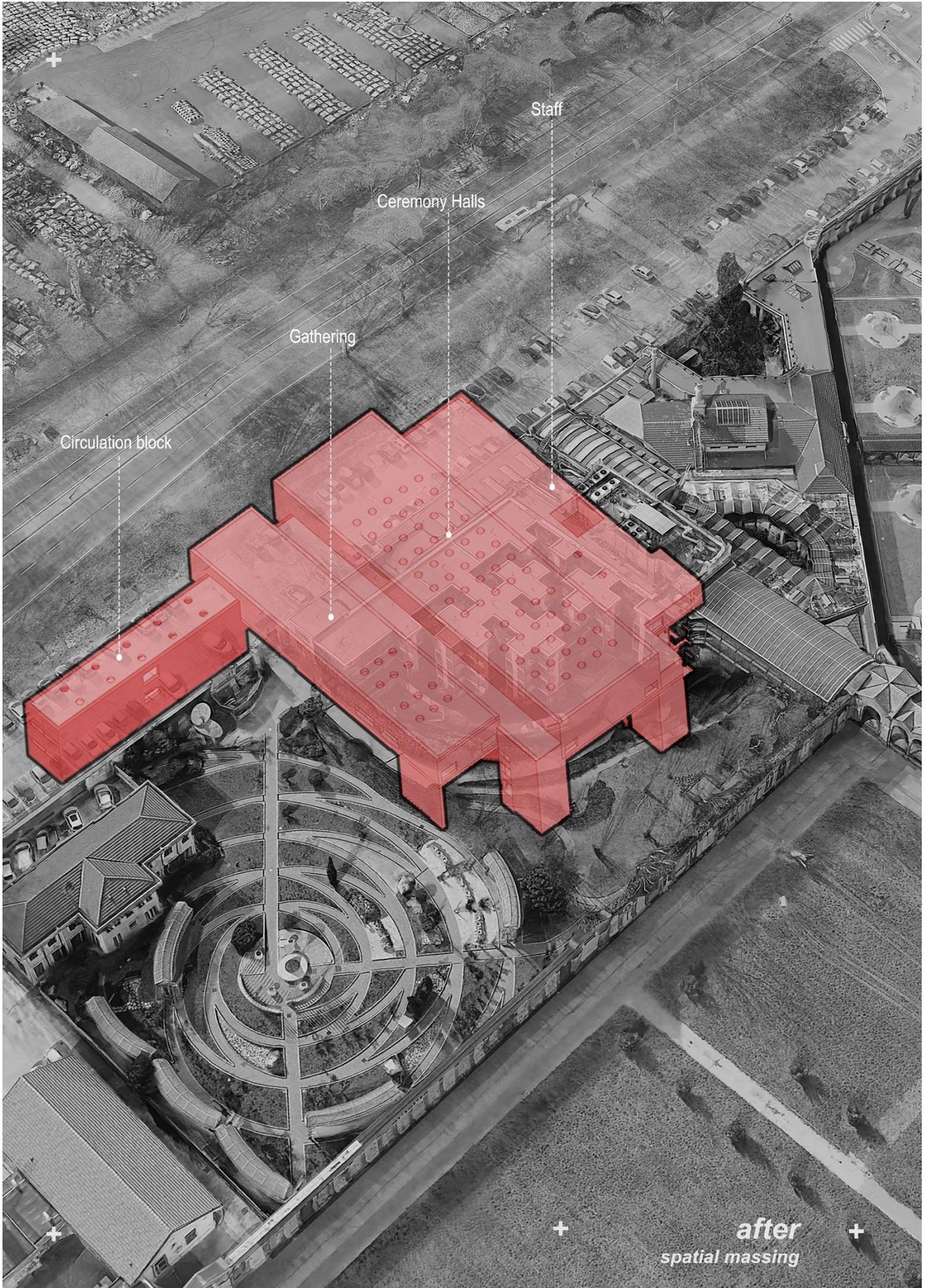


sectional view 01



sectional view 02

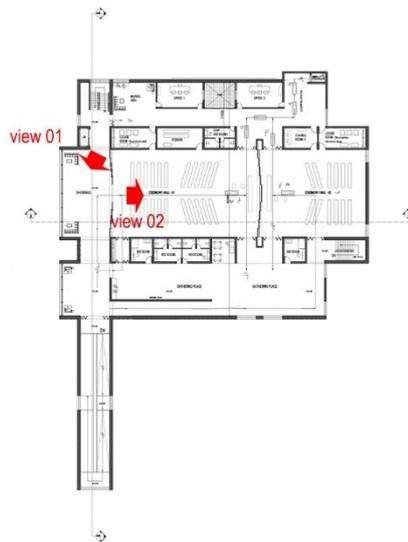




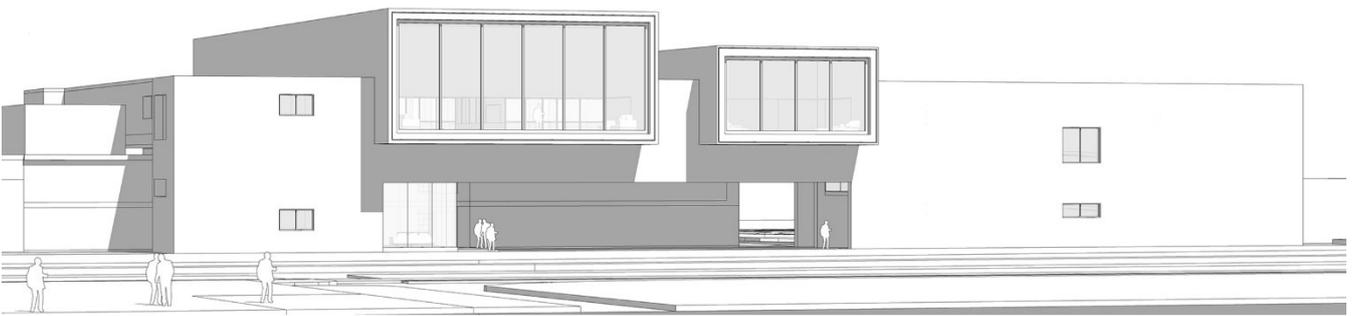
Atmosphere of Farewell:
An Architectural Proposal for the Ceremonial Spaces of SOCREM Turin



view 01



view 02 [ceremony hall 01]



views from corso novara

Rendered Views



Figure 16: Proposed Ceremony Hall_1 [interior view 01]



Figure 17: Proposed Ceremony Hall_1 [interior view 02]



Figure 18: Proposed Gathering Space near Ceremony Hall_1 [view 01]



Figure 19: Proposed front facade [view 01]



Figure 20: Proposed front facade [view 02]



Figure 21: View towards the Ramp

Conclusion

The design proposal for SOCREM Torino emerges from the need to reconcile contemporary ceremonial requirements with the delicate historic and emotional fabric of the crematorium at Corso Novara. Existing spatial limitations, the lack of dedicated gathering areas, and the overlap of public and technical circulation made it clear that a new architectural layer was necessary one capable of expanding the functionality of the crematorium without disturbing its symbolic foundations. As Peter Zumthor asserts, “*Architecture is there to improve the quality of the situation*”; the project takes this position seriously, introducing an elevated ceremonial platform that enriches the ritual journey while preserving the integrity of the Zona Serenità and the Giardino della Serenità below. This approach ensures that the **atmosphere of farewell** a delicate emotional condition that blends memory, presence, and transition is treated with the dignity it deserves.

The independent structural system allows the new programme to “float” above the existing building, creating an architectural stratification that aligns with Rossi’s claim that “*the city remembers its past through its monuments.*” By avoiding physical interference with SOCREM’s historic elements, the project recognizes that funerary spaces carry not only structural but also deep cultural memory. This respect for existing layers guided all design decisions, from the placement of new volumes to the orientation of circulation paths.

The case studies Crematorium Ostend and Crematorium Heimolen offered essential precedents. Their clarity of geometry, separation of flows, and integration of nature provided conceptual foundations for the new intervention. Echoing Louis Kahn’s idea that “*the sun never knew how great it was until it hit the side of a building,*” the proposal uses light wells and carefully controlled apertures to give ceremony halls a quiet, uplifting atmosphere. Here, daylight becomes a participant in the ritual, shaping the atmosphere of farewell through subtle shifts of illumination that support the emotional unfolding of the ceremony.

Circulation is choreographed as a narrative sequence: arrival, ascent, procession, ceremony, gathering, and return. This aligns with Juhani Pallasmaa’s view that “*architecture is the art of making our physical existence meaningful.*” The architectural journey supports moments of collective grief, private reflection, and gentle re-entry into everyday life. Public and technical paths remain fully separated to maintain dignity and calm, ensuring that visitors encounter only the contemplative and ceremonial dimensions of the crematorium.

Ultimately, this project demonstrates that sensitive contemporary intervention can renew the life of a historic funerary site without erasing its identity. The addition above SOCREM Torino does not attempt to dominate or transform; rather, it extends the site’s capacity to serve evolving needs while remaining grounded in respect, memory, and spatial clarity. Through its structural independence, atmospheric intensity, and carefully orchestrated sequence of experiences, the project contributes to what Zumthor describes as “*a beautiful silence,*” offering Turin a crematorium that speaks quietly yet profoundly to those who enter its spaces strengthening the **atmosphere of farewell** as a space of dignity, transition, and human connection.

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