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DESIGN EXPLORATION:
TOTEM AS ALTERNATIVE FOR
EFFICIENT AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE BURIAL

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

in

The School of Landscape Architecture

by
Mark Evan Bazzell
B.A., Transylvania University, 1989
B.S., University of Kentucky, 1999
May 2004

This work is dedicated to my mother, Marilyn Youngblood Bazzell,

who instilled in me the desire to look for a more creative, more beautiful way for everything. May the sun and the cows perpetually overlook the space where she rests in a rural Kentucky churchyard.

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It would be impossible to consider this thesis complete without thanking certain people. First of all, I must thank Elizabeth Boults who produced a classroom experience that confirmed my destiny to study and practice landscape architecture. Her advice to "milk" this topic was the impetus for its realization and I am grateful for her encouragement to pursue a master's degree in landscape architecture.

Thanks to the very persuasive personal appeal from three important mentors, Sadik Artunc, Van Cox, and Bruce Sharky, I ended up in Louisiana. Their hand-written letters of invitation made my choice of Louisiana State University for graduate school a no-brainer. Ever since there have been no regrets.

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ABSTRACT

American cities are facing unprecedented development pressures. Urban populations in particular are increasing and diversifying, land as a resource is becoming more valuable, and designers/developers are challenged to creatively maximize space for all land uses. As urban populations grow, space for burial of the dead may become limited thereby prompting communities to consider alternatives to traditional burial. The increase in numbers of cremation already points to this trend. In addition to the spatial limitation issues there also exist issues of social and cultural limitation. Ethnic diversity is rapidly increasing and within each group one finds different traditions and needs regarding burial and memorial. This diversity of trends is often ignored in cemeteries today. Considering the pressures for land in urban areas and the dramatically shifting demographic in the United States, it seems appropriate to reevaluate our use of all land including cemeteries. This thesis will explore functional considerations associated with burial, as well as other social needs in order to develop guidelines for efficient and socially responsive burial.

CHAPTER 1

Background

Since the beginning of my studies in landscape architecture I have had particular interest in the cemetery landscape. Indeed, death and the burial landscape are both elements that are present in every part of the world. Though the cemetery landscape is traditionally layered with meaning and is uniquely sacred, the cemetery of the modern day United States is seriously lacking in functionality and in what it offers to the public. As landscape architects we are able to influence the productivity and aesthetics of nearly every landscape, yet the influence we wield over cemeteries is practically nonexistent. Research and scholarly writings about this common landscape are few and far between. For this reason, I have chosen to tackle the woefully underserved topic of the cemetery landscape and answer the question I wanted to answer: Can I create an alternative form of burial and/or memorialization that would appeal to an increasingly diversified and discriminating U. S. populace?

As part of one of my early courses in landscape architecture, I was challenged to choose and explore in depth a particular landscape issue. Cemeteries outside of the United States became my focus and ever since I have been passionate about the topic. Thanks to an undergraduate research grant, I had the opportunity to study cemeteries throughout Western Europe. This cursory research into why cemeteries look and function the way they do revealed many determining factors, among them religion, geography, laws and regulations, economics and social mores. Subsequent and similar research in the United States and Canada revealed the tremendous influence of the funeral and death industries in shaping the appearance and role of modern day American cemeteries.

Building upon this knowledge, I segued into yet another research experience that prompted the selection of this thesis topic.

In 2000, the award of a Fulbright grant to research cemeteries in Mexico made it possible to broaden even further my understanding of the factors that influence cemeteries and our use of them. I found many of the same determining factors that I encountered in Europe, most notable were the landscape, climate and religion. Mexico's great variety of landscapes and climates made for striking backdrops. The fact that Mexico is almost entirely a Catholic nation made for a great contrast with my prior studies in predominantly Protestant countries and clarified the tremendous influence religion plays in the appearance of a cemetery. This, combined with the fact that the Latino population is the largest minority group in the United States, made it obvious that cemeteries as they exist today are lacking in what they offer the living.

Without a doubt cemeteries function by way of disposing of corpses, but I was forced to ask some challenging questions. Is simple disposal enough? Aren't there other and better options? How can we as landscape architects influence a landscape type that already occupies two million acres throughout the United States? (Jackson 1989, 106). This thesis is an attempt to answer those questions.

Introduction

Death is an often-neglected aspect of our cultural environment, yet an obvious and ubiquitous landscape issue. Historically, the graveyard and churchyard were part of our daily community experience. Urban growth and overcrowding led to formally planned cemeteries as public parks removed from the center of town. The most famous example of this cemetery-park in the United States is Mount Auburn, established in 1831 in

Cambridge, Massachusetts. The "new" designs that followed in the United States were essentially the first large-scale public open spaces. The authors of *Silent Cities* claim that the "rural" or "garden" cemeteries were "pastoral pleasure grounds [that] were the precursors of public parks" (Jackson 1989, 5). They were met with such civic approval that they "inspired the American park movement and encouraged the professionalization of landscape architecture" (Jackson 1989, 19).

Even today, well over a hundred years after the rural cemetery movement began, these cemeteries are still visited as botanic gardens and museums. However, as successful as the story of Mount Auburn may be, there are issues that have created challenges for those in charge of today's cemeteries. It is precisely these challenges that present to the landscape architect opportunities to influence the cemetery institution that is significantly responsible for our very existence.

Today's urban populations are rapidly increasing thereby creating unprecedented development pressures and demand for land. Despite this fact, cemeteries within city boundaries have continued to expand, or be created, in the same manner as 50 or 100 years ago resulting in modern "cities of the dead" – ignored and isolated land uses. This trend obviously cannot continue indefinitely. Land as a resource in urban areas is running out and cemeteries will likely be moved even further from city centers.

Aside from development pressures and exploding populations in urban centers throughout the United States, cemeteries face the issue of serving increasingly diverse and discriminating customers. Little thought has been given to the social and cultural responsiveness of the current methods employed for disposal of human remains. For the most part, a contemporary death-burial scenario is handled by expensive funeral industry

professionals who offer few burial options. A dying person along with family and friends are essentially relegated to a passive role during this extremely important rite of passage.

This thesis argues that a new cemetery model is needed. Influenced by burial alternatives already in existence in other parts of the world, such as cremation, vertical cemeteries and recycling of graves, the new model would be more spatially efficient. Due to the sheer space-saving practicality of cremation and its projected increase, especially with the Baby Boomer population, the new model would be based on the dimensions needed for disposal of cremated remains as opposed to those for full body interment. In addition to recognizing the increase of spatial constraints in urban cemeteries, the model will also address social and cultural needs not adequately met in today's cemeteries.

Problem Statement

Development pressures in large cities throughout the world have challenged city planners and citizens to consider alternatives to traditional burial – cremation, vertical cemeteries, and recycling of graves. As urban populations in the United States continue to grow, it is likely that some cities will be faced with the problem of insufficient space for burial thereby necessitating similar, or new, alternatives for disposal of the dead. Apart from the purely functional problem of insufficient space, cemeteries are located far from population centers and are mostly unimaginative landscapes that do not reflect the variety seen in our 'melting pot' culture. The demographics of the United States are rapidly changing and will continue to do so. The new demographic is diverse and discriminating and would likely take advantage of a more socially and culturally responsive alternative for burial and remembrance. Thus, this thesis proposes to explore

socially responsive alternatives to traditional burial within the context of spatially constrained urban settings.

Objective

The objective of this thesis is to design and produce a new, accessible cemetery model that is a spatially efficient and socially responsive alternative to traditional underground interment. The results will hopefully be useful to landscape architects and others who are concerned with the creation and function of spaces for burial and memorialization.

Approach

The approach to this thesis was both research and design oriented. Research of historic and contemporary cemeteries began with a literature review of works written specifically on the subject of cemeteries and the people who have been influential in their evolution. I relied heavily on two sources for the history of cemeteries in the United States, David Sloane's *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* and Kenneth T. Jackson's *Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery*. The two authors are comprehensive in their review of the American cemetery history. Michel Ragon's *The Space of Death: A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration, and Urbanism* was an invaluable source for the history and evolution of cemeteries in Europe. For design inspiration and contemporary prototypes I consulted the works and writings of Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aldo Rossi, and Robert Auzelle. To develop a profile of the Baby Boomers and the Latino population in the United States, I used various sources including government publications and statistical and marketing reports. Also literature of a recent nature from disciplines related to death and its landscape was consulted to develop a

profile of modern burial mores. The related disciplines that were explored included environment-behavior research; studies on death, dying and grief; therapeutic gardens; geography; religion; sociology; and thanatology. The research predominantly focused on Western traditions and mores, yet due to the extensive merging of cultures that occurs in the United States, other non-Western sources and subjects were included when appropriate.

In addition to information gleaned from written sources, I also conducted interviews with landscape architects, planners, cemetery superintendents and others who are associated with cemeteries and their related industries. The research was further supplemented by observation in over 100 cemeteries throughout Western Europe, Canada, the United States and Mexico. Field observations resulted in a compiled inventory of issues and factors that impact the function, appearance, and overall success of a cemetery within the urban fabric. Some issues deal with the physical environment (entry, orientation, climate, vegetation, circulation, service, maintenance, sustainability, etc.), while other issues are social and cultural in nature (religion, laws, politics, economics).

The research phase of this thesis revealed numerous limitations and opportunities for a new cemetery model. With a better understanding of cemeteries and the death-landscape connection, I began a design phase that resulted in the conception of an alternative cemetery model. The new model was constructed from clay at full scale and then erected at the Baton Rouge Farmers' Market for the purpose of monitoring responses and obtaining suggestions for improvement. The ultimate result of both the

research and design aspects of this thesis is a cemetery model that I believe is more efficient and socially responsive than our traditional method of underground interment.

CHAPTER 2

History of Cemeteries Outside the United States

"Show me the way a nation disposes of its dead and I will measure the level at which their society exists." ~ Gladstone

The ritual of burying the dead is an activity unique to humans that represents a special cultural bond within the human family. Cemeteries have been a part of rituals involving death for hundreds of years. The importance of cemeteries has varied from the essential act of disposing of the dead to the everlasting expression of wealth and good fortune. Worldwide, cemetery designs of various cultures reflect aspects of their societies including "economic and geographic realities as well as religious and cultural attitudes" (Jackson 1989, 4). In some countries, such as the Ivory Coast, the idea of a cemetery as we know it does not exist. No separation is made between space for the living and space for the dead. The dead are simply buried near those who are living, whether it is in their vegetable garden or on the town square.

In order to gain a better understanding of cemeteries as they exist today it is important to know about their evolution throughout history beginning with prehistoric times when burial was conducted in dolmens. Dr. Jean Arnal defines the dolmen as "an open sepulchral chamber, usually megalithic, covered by a mound and intended to house several burials" (Joussaume 1988, 18). It is important to begin this discourse with dolmens because they signify the start of a pattern of collective burial and because of their existence in nearly every part of the world: Atlantic Europe, the Mediterranean islands and southern Italy, North and Central Africa, the Caucasus, India, the Far East, and Columbia (Joussaume 1988, 295). Lewis Mumford explains in his book, *The City in*

History, that cemeteries were the first permanent dwellings constructed at a time when humans were struggling to survive in their itinerant lifestyles dominated by food gathering and hunting (Jackson 1989, 4). Like the primitive lifestyles of those who built them, the first burial grounds were crude in form.

Figure 1. Dolmens in Carnac, France.

Structured cemeteries did not appear, however, until humans began to develop settlements and build churches. The introduction of Christianity created the demand for churches. This occurred as early as 1050 A.D. in Denmark where graveyards subsequently began to be constructed near the churches (Nielsen 1989, 33). The proximity of church and churchyard created physical, ideological, and social links between the deceased and the grieving relatives (Mytum 1989, 286), connections that later would be difficult to break.

Since the church was a centrally located structure within the city it gave the cemetery a central focus as well. Such activities as commerce, town meetings, employment seeking, dancing and even prostitution found their place in the cemetery

(Ragon 1983, 143). This pattern continued until the population increase of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries within towns led to overcrowding of churchyards and unhygienic conditions. Occasionally this overcrowding became so extreme that the bacteria necessary for decomposition could not survive (Mytum 1989, 286). An example of hygienic problems was associated with the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris. Even after this cemetery was at maximum capacity it continued to be used until 1780 when "a cellar wall collapsed, decaying corpses fell out and…illness was widespread in the area" (Mytum 1989, 289).

According to Jan Woudstra, a landscape historian, it was overcrowding such as this that resulted in the idea of cemeteries being located outside of towns. "There was considerable adverse reaction at first to having cemeteries moved outside the towns in this way and attempts were made to make them more acceptable by laying out the cemeteries like parks. Locations for the new town/city cemeteries were carefully selected for their varied, pastoral topography and their distance from city activities, though they were not too far away in order to allow easy access by foot or by carriage" (Linden-Ward 1985, 126). Over the next two hundred years, designed cemeteries became an integral part of the urban landscape and "were influenced by the same fashions in design that have moulded our parks and gardens" (Woudstra 1989, 19).

Two men who were especially influential in fashioning burial landscapes were Alexandre-Theodore Brongniart in France and John Claudius Loudon in England. Brongniart undertook the task in 1803 of designing Pere-Lachaise, the first large cemetery outside of Paris. He began with the park of Mont Louis and incorporated the cemetery "with great tact into the beautiful arbors, the allees, the crossroads which

already existed" (Silvestre de Sacy 1940, 145). His design included three elements: (1) a general composition dominated by the crematorium, (2) enclosing walls that form a corridor originally reserved for the incinerated ashes, and (3) the construction of monuments mostly for famous people (Eloge du Mur 1993, 106).

Although Pere-Lachaise is unique in its interlacing of trees and tombs, it is probably the burial of illustrious persons, following Brongniart's plan, that has created its world-wide recognition. With its tombs including the likes of Chopin, Proust, Gertrude Stein, Modigliani, Pere-Lachaise has "the greatest number of famous [dead] people per square mile and is visited by 800,000 tourists each year" (Ragon 1983, 97). One nineteenth-century visitor to Pere-Lachaise who was influenced by its design and who went on to influence cemetery design himself was John Claudius Loudon.

Loudon's book, *On Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries*(1843), was the first on the subject to be published in English (Simo 1988, 281). In his work Loudon critiques existing cemeteries and gives instruction on everything from proper drainage and correct foundation for headstones to the importance of choosing evergreens over deciduous trees (Curl 1983, 142). Loudon saw the cemetery not only as a necessity for disposing of the dead but he felt it could meet the people's need for education and enjoyment. Loudon wrote that a

> ...general cemetery in the neighborhood of a town, properly designed, laid out, ornamented with tombs, planted with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, all named, and the whole properly kept, might become a school of instruction in architecture, sculpture, landscape-gardening, arboriculture, botany, and in those important parts of general gardening, neatness, order, and high keeping (Curl 1983, 141).

The effects materialized by Loudon and Brongniart during the nineteenth century were not the only significant changes seen in European burial grounds. Richard Etlin claims that during the two hundred year period called the European Enlightenment, people witnessed the development of the five basic types of cemetery design. These types are (1) the *campo santo*, a gallery enclosed on the outside and open to the inside with designated areas for burial based on age or prominence, (2) the field of honor, similar to the *campo santo* yet open on the outside and with burial in a series of terraces, (3) the Elysian field, originating from the English landscape designs, which incorporates monuments in areas of dense greenery, (4) the monumental cemetery, found mostly in southern Europe, with a grid of well-ordered streets, and (5) the geometric absolute, which used simple geometric forms to create a feeling of otherworldliness (Etlin 1994, 134). Woudstra adds yet a sixth design type, that of the forest cemetery which was seen predominantly in Scandinavian countries. Though distinctive in its design it was not very popular due to the small number of burials that could occur in such thick vegetation (Woudstra 19).

History of Cemeteries in the United States

From the beginning of human settlement until today, the role of cemeteries in society has changed significantly. Their location and design have adapted to suit the mood and circumstances of people at any given time in history. To varying degrees the six basic types above have served as models for cemeteries in the United States. Yet David Charles Sloane in his book *The Last Great Necessity* further categorizes cemeteries into eight different classifications that tell the story of the American cemetery's evolution from pioneer days until the present. The classifications in chronological order are:

frontier graves, domestic homestead graveyard, churchyard, potter's field, town/city cemetery, rural cemetery, lawn-park cemetery, and memorial park.

Throughout the last two hundred years these examples of cemetery forms "reflect many aspects of American technology, business practices, demographics, cultural norms, social relationships, and material culture" (Sloane 1991, 1). Though the frontier graves and domestic homestead graveyards are an essential part of the story of burial in the United States, their lack of design or incorporation into the communities eliminates the need for further elaboration here. Therefore, the churchyard concept will serve as the beginning point for discussion of American cemeteries.

Figure 2. Church and churchyard (Jackson).

Just as in their homelands, the pioneers patterned their first settlements in the New World with church and churchyard as the central focus. Burial under or adjacent to the church fed the parishioner's hope for closeness to heaven and an attachment to his church community. Thus the cemetery had its beginnings as an integral space in the urban environment.

This pattern continued until the early years of the nineteenth century when a change in attitudes about death and burial began to take place. Overcrowding and concern for hygiene drew complaints from people about the location of burial grounds within the towns' centers. Around 1800 Yale President Timothy Dwight wrote the following comments on the Guilford, Connecticut graveyard:

> Both remains and memorials of the dead are present to the mind in circumstances so gross and indicative of so little respect in the living as to eradicate every emotion naturally excited by the remembrance of the deceased, and to give to those who remain a coarseness and commonness destructive of a moral influence. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the proximity of these sepulchral fields to human habitation is injurious to health (French 1975, 73).

Concerns such as this eventually led to the relocation of cemeteries outside city limits, and the process by which the sites were chosen in the United States was similar to that followed by European city planners. The founders of some of the best-known cemeteries studied the examples of cemeteries such as Highgate (London) and Pere-Lachaise when developing their own landscapes for the dead. As was the case with their European counterparts, most citizens supported the new locations, but there were still a number of Americans who were "uneasy with the separation of burial and church, death and religion" (Sloane 1991, 4).

New Haven Burying Ground, established in 1796, in New Haven, Connecticut was the first such cemetery. It was different from the churchyards, not only because of its location outside the city center, but because it was privately owned, non-denominational, and completely planned from the beginning (Jackson 1989, 14). Senator James Hillhouse along with thirty-one other wealthy citizens was responsible for the purchase of six acres that would be developed into the New Haven Burying Ground. Their primary

goals were permanence and security. As a private corporation, the proprietors, usually heads of families, were able to ensure that their burial space and that of their descendants would be protected, maintained and undisturbed. Design elements of the cemetery included paths wide enough for two carriages to pass one another, plots of exactly the same dimensions, and all graves facing the same direction (Jackson 1989, 14).

Families were allowed to purchase land for burial, a new concept compared to the previous practice of burial in churchyards that only occurred if one was a member of the congregation or had the approval of the minister. Thus families became central to the institution of the cemetery, opening the way for the display of private wealth (Jackson 1989, 15). Large monuments inscribed with the name of a family would be located in the center of a number of individual burial plots. In addition to "the regular family plots the proprietors granted gratuitous ones…for fellows of Yale College,…strangers…paupers, and…people of color" (French 1975, 75). The development of the New Haven Burying Ground was a great success, visited by many Americans and foreigners alike. However, it was another cemetery, Mount Auburn, outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which ushered in what many cemeterians consider the "golden age" of cemetery design.

Established in 1831, Mount Auburn Cemetery marked the beginning of the rural cemetery movement. In reaction to the growing distaste for interment within cities, Jacob Bigelow and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society joined forces to create a new cemetery for the city of Boston. After six years of searching for a parcel of land, a site was finally chosen which was "affectionately known by local residents and Harvard students as "Sweet Auburn" (Sloane 1991, 45). The combination of resources and

interests between the cemetery's founders and the Horticultural Society proved to be invaluable to the success of Mount Auburn.

Originally, the founders were concerned that the 72-acre purchase being ten miles from the city would make it difficult to sell plots and see a return on their investment, but the response was exactly the opposite. Visitors to Mount Auburn were impressed by the magnificent, picturesque grounds in contrast to the hustle and bustle of the city. Surprisingly, the public readily accepted "the physical isolation for the dead from the living" (Sloane 1991, 46). Mount Auburn was held up as an example that America was not a cultural wasteland, the general impression held by most Europeans at the time (French 1975, 69).

The design of Mount Auburn was influenced by the New Haven Burying Ground, and likewise, the cemetery developed as a family-centered institution. It was expected "that families would decorate the ground with the finest available plants and memorials" (Sloane 1991, 53). Lots were three hundred square feet in order to provide for several generations of burial, and some families bought lots even before they were needed simply to be able to visit the cemetery and their newly acquired piece of property (Sloane 1991, 53). Visits were often not for the purpose of paying respects to a loved one but "to escape the crowded and noisy settings of home and work" (Jackson 1989, 108). They came to consider a visit to the cemetery as a stress reliever.

Because of the extensive supervisory provisions of the cemetery, people did not have to worry about the remote graves of their loved ones. And although affluent citizens were the creators of the cemetery, it was open to and had great appeal for all classes. Ultimately, the founders of Mount Auburn were successful in providing a new cemetery

concept that would be imitated throughout the United States. Even small towns that were not plagued by the problems of in-city burial eventually tried to copy Mount Auburn.

Though Mount Auburn today is “one of the nation’s most prestigious cemeteries, recognized throughout the world as a paragon of landscaping and sculptural beauty” (Cronin 1993, 26), it had a number of detractors by the middle of the nineteenth century. Critics argued that the rural cemeteries were experiencing the same problems that prompted their development in the first place: overcrowding and clutter.

Thus a new concept called the lawn-park cemetery was developed. Adolph Strauch was the leader of this movement and the first cemetery to integrate his ideas of a more formal, less picturesque design was Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio. Replacing at least 23 overcrowded, church-owned cemeteries within the city, Spring Grove Cemetery “was chartered by the State of Ohio on January 21, 1845 as a non-profit and non-sectarian corporation” (Meyer 1993, 109). From the beginning, Strauch had a plan to limit marker size, thin trees and shrubs, and most importantly, open up the cemetery landscape to create a setting in contrast to Mount Auburn and its heavy concentration of sculptures and monuments.

Strauch and his supporters felt that the rural cemeteries had been overdone with monuments, markers and plantings. Instead he promoted a simpler, more controlled approach to cemetery design. He implemented a plan of maintenance whereby private gardeners were restricted from working at Spring Grove. This approach did not appeal to some lot owners who felt that the limits proposed by Strauch imposed on “their authority over the graves of their dead” and prevented them from retain[ing] the cherished practices of their ancestors” (Sloane 1991, 99). Nonetheless, Strauch’s ideas and

innovations prevailed, and today the end result is what has been described as a “barren greensward” with “no individuality, no seclusion, no appeal to the imagination, [and] no stimulation of the emotions” (Meyer 1993, 26).

In addition to his influence on the physical appearance of the cemetery, Strauch can also be given credit for the professionalization of cemetery management. Realizing that acceptance of the lawn-park cemetery plan would take time, the board of directors of Spring Grove set a precedent by offering Strauch a position as superintendent (Sloane 1991, 106). This action reflected the value the board of directors placed on the cemetery’s appearance. Their primary goal was “to improve a community institution intended to serve as an arboretum, historical museum, and artistic ornament for Cincinnati” (Sloane 1991, 107). They recognized Strauch’s potential to accomplish that goal. Indeed, his ideas were responsible for a marked shift in lot-owners’ relationship to the cemetery. Following his example, by the late 1850s, the trend of a superintendent overseeing cemetery operations had become standard. New technologies for maintenance and more efficient operations eventually resulted in the transformation of cemeteries into a business.

The new business of cemetery management occurred about the time when Americans were becoming more isolated from death in general. By 1900 the entire orchestration of death was being performed by professionals: physicians oversaw the death, funeral directors supervised the funeral process, and cemetery superintendents followed with their expertise in interment and maintenance of the grave. These trends culminated in the development of the memorial park, the principal model of funerary landscape in the United States today.

Forest Lawn, established in 1913 in Glendale, California, became the paradigm for the memorial park. Under the direction of Hubert Eaton, most traces of death were removed from the landscape, the business operations of the cemetery improved, and lot-holders were offered a safe, secure burial place in the midst of grand artworks (Sloane 1991, 159). Eaton "eliminated the family monument, restructured the grounds to expand the lawn, and established a suburban like pastoral environment" (Sloane 1991, 159). He successfully marketed flush markers by offering incentives to those lot holders who used them and he aggressively sold services on a preneed basis. The cemetery was openly commercial, and this was one of the main attractions of the memorial park to the public. "By 1935 there were over six hundred memorial parks in America" (Sloane 1991, 160). Forest Lawn and other memorial parks were successful because they operated as though they were in the real estate business.

Similar to Strauch's principles for the lawn-park cemetery were the "four principles that formed the basis for the memorial park's landscape design:

1. Professional management was essential to control the appearance of the landscape and to insure its unity.
2. Nature acted as a passive backdrop to artistic memorials.
3. Memorials emphasized the community of the dead instead of the individual and the family.
4. Memorials were designed to evoke the values of a joyful religion and a united patriotic community" (Sloane 1991, 168).

The memorial park was both “a private sacred place for burials and a public recreation space intended for the education and enjoyment of the visitors” (Sloane 1991, 168). A large attraction to visitors was the collection of artwork, particularly sculpture, which Eaton amassed within Forest Lawn. The aim was to reinstate the goals of the rural cemetery by introducing classical art of the past, and by emphasizing the celebration of life within the landscape of the dead. However, the goals put forth were not purely for the enhancement of the visitors’ experience. Instead, the appeal to cemetery operators of easier and less expensive maintenance was at the source of the memorial park’s creation.

Like all large-scale gardens a substantial portion of their budget is reserved for upkeep. The expense of maintenance has been an issue for those concerned with the cemetery landscape. Aside from the expense of maintaining the landscape there is the additional cost of preserving the sculptural monuments, especially in the rural cemeteries that are celebrating their centennial years. It is these monuments that lend special appeal to many cemeteries by representing the history and rich cultural heritage of the United States.

However, the memorial park concept eliminates many maintenance issues, in particular, those dealing with monuments. Whatever statues may exist are often mass-produced and not reflective of any specific ethnic or religious group and all grave markers are level with the ground, thus allowing for ease of mowing and overall maintenance. The strict regulation of the appearance of the memorial park creates a more expansive type of park in contrast to the intimacy of the garden cemeteries. Due to the money saved on maintenance by both the cemetery operators and also by those interring

the remains of their loved ones, the memorial parks have become the principal model of funerary landscape in the United States.

Aesthetically, the memorial park trend may be questioned by those who love the rural cemetery, but for the sake of practicality it has its merits. Without a doubt, this style of cemetery has become widely accepted because it appeals to our mechanized, functionalistic society. As J.B. Jackson explains, memorial parks are places "where one aspect of death – the disposal of the corpse – is promptly and efficiently taken care of" (Jackson 1989, 28). He adds, "The memorial park is particularly valuable to transients who will soon move on and perhaps never see the grave again" (Jackson 1989, 28).

A highly original concept when it was introduced, the trend of memorial parks spread across the United States until the mid-1900s when the need for new burial grounds began to decline. Since then no truly new concepts have appeared in the evolution of cemeteries in this country. Instead, one can increasingly see the modification of the rural cemetery, the lawn-park cemetery, and the memorial park as modern technology is utilized to streamline the business aspect of cemeteries. New technologies have continued to improve the operation and maintenance of cemeteries.

When discussing technology and its effects on the cemetery landscape, one can see both direct and indirect influences. The direct influences are the most conspicuous, and they deal primarily with the construction and maintenance of a cemetery. The indirect influences, however are not readily obvious. One example is the automobile which has had a huge impact on cemeteries. To a degree the automobile's impact has been direct – cemetery roads are now designed, or have been modified to accommodate vehicular traffic. But indirectly, the automobile, or rather mobility in general, can be

credited with the increasing addition of certain cemetery features such as parking lots, columbariums, and scattering gardens. Without a doubt technology has had an unmistakable impact on the American cemetery landscape.

The most conspicuous examples of technology's influence are seen in the operation and maintenance of cemeteries. Significant improvement in cemetery maintenance has come about with the advent of string trimmers, chainsaws, electric pruners, leaf blowers and vacuums, and, of course, the lawn mower. Having its origins over a century and a half ago, the lawn mower has evolved from a "hand-operated…unwieldy and back breaking apparatus into a gas powered, easily maneuvered machine which can cut up to a six foot swath in one movement" (Jenkins 1994, 30). Indeed for cemeteries like Rose Lawn in Los Angeles which "boasts the world's largest lawn mower" the mower is seen as a selling point and source of pride (Jenkins 1994, 30).

The lawn mower's influence is seen in rural and lawn-park cemeteries as any present day expansions take into account the mower's ability to maneuver. Its impact, however, is most easily evidenced in the memorial park, the concept of which was developed at about the same time that Americans began their obsession with lawns. Though the U.S. Patent office first issued patents for lawn mowers as early as 1868 (Jenkins 1994, 29), the devices were mostly seen as novelties until the turn of the century when the City Beautiful Movement, influenced by the Garden Club of America, "helped spread the front-lawn aesthetic" (Jenkins 1994, 36). The Columbian World's Fair – 1893, and the Pan American Exposition – 1901, were also important in that they introduced American participants to landscape gardening and formal lawns (Jenkins 71). Thus, as

Americans embraced the lawn for their homes and parks, so did they accept (perhaps, expect) the sweeping lawn in their burial grounds.

Another noteworthy innovation in the operation of cemeteries is the mechanical backhoe. Until the middle of the twentieth century graves were dug by sheer human physical strength. The chore could occupy a person for several hours – maybe even an entire day depending on the type of soil and whether or not the ground was frozen or wet. Today the same task can be accomplished by one person and a backhoe in an hour or less. Just as the process of opening a grave has been simplified by technology, so has the process of filling the grave.

As recently as twenty-five years ago, the introduction of the mechanical maul replaced the manual tamping of soil in graves. Needless to say, mechanized equipment has saved many cemetery workers from sore muscles, as well as up to 75% of former costs (Mitford 1963, 127). Yet for all of the time and money saved by the advances of technology, cemetery visitors have paid a price. Their cost is less tangible and results from the noise pollution produced by the assorted machinery used for maintenance. The cemetery as a serene, stress-free landscape has changed.

Not only has technology impacted the operation and maintenance of cemeteries above ground, but changes have occurred below ground as well. The asphalt roadway is the first such change one would encounter on a cemetery visit. Whereas pathways in rural and lawn-park cemeteries and memorial parks were once composed of compacted soil, or maybe gravel, modern pathways are constructed for vehicular traffic which requires several inches of subsurface foundation.

Another significant change below grade would be the nearly ubiquitous usage of concrete vaults. Early in the 1930s many cemeteries began to adopt permanent vault rules requiring that burials be contained in brick, metal, or preferably concrete. Americans were initially repulsed by the idea of concrete vaults but through efforts on the part of those in the funeral industry the rate of vault usage is at sixty percent today. “All that was needed was to persuade their customers that the vault was more chic than bare earth, that the embalmed body resisted the deterioration of time much better in a vault than in a mere coffin” (Ragon 1983, 292).

Opponents of what is perceived as a scheme purely for profit-making are not considering the improved security of cemeteries thanks to the concrete vault. Prior to the rules requiring concrete vaults, the deterioration of a casket combined with natural settling of the soil could result in extremely hazardous twelve to eighteen inch holes (Scalf 1998). Though Catherine Howett’s description of these concrete substructures as “a permanent warren of 8’ x 3’ cubicles supporting a shallow layer of turf” (Howett 1977, 13) may sound depressingly accurate, it is undeniable that this technological innovation has truly improved the safety of cemetery workers and visitors.

Aside from the technological inventions that have resulted in an overall tidier appearance, technology has also resulted in a change in the physical elements found in the cemetery. During the peak of the rural cemetery and lawn-park movements, monuments were hand-sculpted and, therefore, one-of-a-kind. A new monument in today’s cemeteries frequently resembles the one next to it, and the one next to that, and so on – a result of modern day factory production. Even the few unique details found on monuments such as names, dates, and epitaphs are not untouched by technology. The

design of such details is often computer generated and sandblasted into the stone using a plastic stencil (DeMarcus 1998). Even the personal mementos which graveside visitors leave as tokens of remembrance show technology's influence. Plastic flowers, Mylar balloons, and electric lamps are relatively new introductions to the cemetery landscape. Thus one can easily see that technology has altered the appearance of burial spaces, from the macro scale of general maintenance, to the micro scale of kitsch left by loved ones.

Turning from the direct and conspicuous impacts of technology on the cemetery scene, an argument can be made that the prevalence of technology in twentieth and twenty-first century society has also had indirect impacts. Modern technology has successfully masked death through the industries most closely associated with death. The medical field has taken the care of the sick and dying away from families since today eighty percent of deaths occur in hospitals. The care of the body after death is then afforded to those in the funeral industry who, in turn, hand off to the cemetery industry. Therefore, the biological transition of death is removed from, and almost made invisible to, contemporary American society.

Another indirect link of technology's influence stems from the increased mobility of our society. Before this age of tremendous demographic shifts, it was not uncommon for a person to live his or her entire life in one community. Thus, the cemetery served as an important institution to which one had many generations of connection. This is no longer the case. It is not unheard of for many Americans to have numerous addresses in widely dispersed locations throughout a lifetime. This phenomenon is credited by those in the funeral and cemetery industries as being partially responsible for a steady increase

in cremation. The theory is that by not having roots in one place a person is less likely to see the need for burial in a place where no one will visit.

Though people may have trouble justifying their burial if no one will visit their grave, the fact remains that each one of the six billion people on this planet will leave behind a corpse for disposal. I believe that due to economic and land use concerns the high level of art and architecture seen during the golden age of cemetery design is a thing of the past. A look at the history of cemeteries in the United States and abroad reveals that, like most other landscapes, the cemetery has evolved and adapted to the forces of necessity, religion, fashion, and above all, economics. This evolution continues.

CHAPTER 3

Existing Alternative Cemetery Models and Methods of Memorialization

The focus of this thesis is the need to update the American cemetery. Just as city planners studied Pere Lachaise and Highgate cemeteries in Europe when designing the rural cemeteries in the U.S., it once again seems appropriate to consult and learn from some of the current trends of burial that are in existence today outside of the United States. Precedents set in other parts of the world present three viable trends – cremation, vertical cemeteries and the recycling of graves. Here I will provide an overview of these trends along with other current alternative methods of memorialization.

Recycling of Graves

Probably the biggest concern facing large cities around the world is limited land availability and overcrowding. In England, for example, officials at the 200-acre City of London cemetery, the largest municipally run cemetery in Europe, predicted that soon they will run out of space (Schmidt 1994, 4). Venetians face similar problems with their island cemetery of San Michele. Actually, all of the spaces are filled and they are already recycling graves after a twelve-year interment (Toth 1993, 16). And the dilemma of overcrowding is even more acute in Asian cities such as Hong Kong where the density of their government burial grounds is so high that interment lasts for only six years after which the graves are reused (Brauchli 1992, 1). In fact exhumation is becoming a big business in some areas where limited land areas are creating a demand from developers for more space.

As far back as 1852, the British Parliament formed a company called Necropolis that would be authorized to exhume and reinter human remains. These exhumations

usually involve small, outdated churchyards that are moved to make way for roads, housing, office complexes or shopping centers. Since its creation the rate of exhumations and reburials in England has reached record levels of 40,000 per year (Pepinster 1988, 20). Opposition to these exhumations has not been particularly strong in England. But in areas involving Jewish cemeteries, such exhumations can create a great deal of resistance as "Jewish law clearly states that a cemetery cannot ever be sold or used for any other purpose" (Kinzer 1992, 4). In Hamburg, Germany in May of 1992, a group of Orthodox Jews protested against the planned construction of a shopping center on the site of a former Jewish cemetery. And even as recently as November 27, 1995 in Jerusalem, thousands of Orthodox Jews stopped traffic for hours as they protested the unearthing of two thousand year old tombs (Jews Protest Arch. Dig 1995, 2). Therefore one can see that problems involving cemeteries are not only land use related, but also are connected to social or spiritual issues.

Though not terribly prevalent in the U.S., recycling of graves is practiced widely in first and third world countries alike. Apart from its occurrence in Europe and parts of Asia, Mexico and Brazil also practice grave recycling as a means of reducing pressure on municipal cemeteries. In Mexico City the normal rental period of a grave space is seven years, and in some areas, such as the Brazilian shantytown of Bom Jesus da Mata, burial space is rented for as short a period as one year for adults, six months for a child. After this short period of time "[t]heir bones will be tossed unceremoniously into the municipal bone yard – ossuary we would call it, if our desire to be sensitive were allowed to override our knowledge of the indignity it is to land there" (Grimes 2000, 237). To speed the process of decay the bodies are buried without coffins. Similarly, in Thiais, a suburb

of Paris, the poor deceased are afforded space for a maximum of six years after which time the communal ossuary receives their remains. Small chimneys are inserted into each burial space to facilitate rapid decomposition.

In the United States the option of recycling graves is not widely practiced. However, it does exist and we can see varying degrees of turnover. First, in New Orleans there has been a long tradition of what is mostly reuse of graves within the same family. In many of the city's historic cemeteries a single crypt may contain bodies from several generations. When a newly deceased corpse is added, the former most recent addition is simply pushed aside. This creates a sort of familial ossuary. But one also finds in New Orleans examples of what is seen in Thiais and in Brazil. Mostly reserved for indigent people who cannot afford the right of burial in perpetuity, a body is given an unspecified amount of time to decay, after which the grave space is given to another person of similar status. The time period afforded each corpse is variable based on the demand created by new deaths.

Graves are almost universally seen as sacred space, and local, state, and federal laws provide for the protection of a grave. But when urban space that is occupied by graves is needed for other purposes, those same legal systems provide for a means of reclaiming the space. For example, San Francisco found itself overcrowded with cemeteries in the early 1900s. Cemetery industry executives presented the solution by incorporating the city of Colma, just south of San Francisco, and moving tens of thousands of corpses to a new resting place (Goldberg 1996).

Even as recently as October 2003, African American slaves were reburied in New York City. In 1991 construction workers at the site of a new federal office building at 290

Broadway in Manhattan discovered several acres where 20,000 Africans were buried in colonial times. Though the discovery stalled the development, it was not stopped altogether. (Kaggwa 1993, J1)

The General Services Administration which oversaw the project "promised to draw up plans for proper excavation and preservation of the site, [yet] none materialized, and construction continued until New York City Mayor David Dinkins and other politicians intervened"(Kaggwa 1993, J1). Construction actually did not stop until the following year when the GSA was pressured by Congress (Keyes 2003). Then, after a decade of research conducted by Howard University in Washington, D.C., the bones were reinterred on the site in hand-carved mahogany caskets from Ghana (Howell 2003, A32).

Instances of exhumation and reinterment, or of recycling graves, are indeed rare in the United States but their precedence is firmly established. However, another alternative that is more readily used in the United States is vertical burial.

Vertical Burial

The fact that bodies are no longer being exposed to soil and thus not completing the proverbial transition of "ashes to ashes and dust to dust," does not seem to be of great consequence given the fact that many cemeteries are building upwards rather than outwards. Vertical burial as a space saving alternative has been widely embraced both abroad and in the United States. Crypts in New Orleans have long been a part of local burial traditions and often contain five or six levels for bodies. Similar crypts in Mexico and France contain as many levels below ground as above grade, thus extending further the idea of vertical burial. But aside from the use of crypts in New Orleans, the even larger structures of mausolea have become relatively popular nationwide.

Mausolea are seen throughout the U.S. and they are increasingly being constructed in order to allow cemeteries that are full to continue to receive bodies (and revenue). Mausolea can greatly increase the capacity of a cemetery just as high-rise housing can accommodate more living bodies. In this sense "the habitat of the living and the habitat of the dead show a parallel development" (Ragon 1983, 272). Ragon goes further to justify this phenomenon: "At a time of housing developments and high-rise apartment buildings, it is natural enough that cemeteries should also be expected to inter a maximum number of bodies in the minimum amount of space, and as cheaply as possible. The standardization of death will reflect more and more the normalization of life"(Ragon 1983, 299).

Figure 3. Mausoleum at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Glendale, California.

Unfortunately, like the housing developments after which they are patterned (especially those produced as a part of the 1960s Urban Renewal) mausolea are often lifeless, bland structures. Historian Kenneth T. Jackson explains their sad status: "Mausolea have become public buildings without a public…[u]nlike earlier examples, they are bare and functional storage cubes whose tombs face outward" where "visitors

may bring flowers to fill small attached vases, but otherwise the burial spaces are standardized" (Jackson 1989, 113).

In areas of urban sprawl, vertical burial is not simply evident in the form of mausolea or crypts at a relatively human scale. Already existing in France, Italy, Mexico, and Brazil, cemeteries are constructed on a scale that compares with modern day high-rise buildings. The newest addition in Mexico City, Gayosso, features ten stories of niches for cremated remains, a crematorium, three chapels, a cafeteria, and parking space for 500 vehicles. Having one's service and "burial" at Gayosso is expensive and seen as a status symbol for the family.

Figure 4. Sitting area at Gayosso Cemetery, Mexico City.

In Sao Paulo, the most populous city in Brazil, the development of vertical cemeteries has become favored. According to Jose Elias Flores, whose company has over twenty-five years of experience in building these above-ground, multi-storied mausolea, these structures offer many advantages: (1) they occupy less space than traditional cemeteries and can be located in more urban areas; (2) their compact nature makes it easier for families to locate grave sites; (3) services are easy regardless of weather; (4)

they can be constructed on virtually any type of terrain; there is no direct soil contact, thus they are cleaner and pose less risk of contamination; and (6) night services or visits can be conducted with no inconvenience or threat to safety (Elias Flores 1995, 8).

Cremation

Previously disfavored by some religions "as a desecration of the body and an obstacle to resurrection, [cremation] is now encouraged by many churches" (Jackson 1989, 110). Looking again outside the U.S. for trends, one sees a "near-global shift from burial to cremation" (Grimes 2003, 269). According to Sam Weller, public relations consultant for the Association of Burial Authorities in Kensington, England, an issue in his country is the possibility of a compulsory cremation law such as that found in Japan (Ragon 1983, 299). Weller says that regardless of cremation in England being at a high of 70%, the cemetery industry is trying to change the law to make cremation mandatory to allow for anticipated future growth. He also says that even though cremation is already heavily preferred that there is a small portion of the English population that is clearly opposed to it, mostly on religious grounds.

The connection to one's descendents may be as great a determinant as the connection to one's ancestors when a person chooses their method of burial. In Mexico City I spoke with an elderly woman who wanted to be cremated even though she had agreed with the Catholic strictures against it for most of her life. Her reason stemmed from the fact she had no relatives or friends who lived nearby who would visit and clean her grave. She preferred to go against her religious convictions rather than be buried in a place without attention (Jimenez 2002).

For over a decade a third of all deaths in California, Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington have resulted in cremation, and predictions claim that those statistics will soon be representative of the entire United States. “The likelihood that cremation will continue to increase in popularity was confirmed by a 1986 survey of one hundred students at the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Dayton and Columbia University. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents expressed the desire to be cremated at death, and the overwhelming majority wished their ashes to be scattered in some reunion with nature” (Jackson 1989, 111).

Cremation advocates attribute the broad range of choices available for disposal and memorialization as one of cremation’s greatest advantages. Many unconventional methods of disposal have been practiced, as in the case of Timothy Leary whose ashes were shot into space, or the option of having your loved one’s ashes incorporated into a glass sphere to be used as garden decoration. However, more popular options for disposal of cremated remains (cremains) include scattering, in ground burial (with or without container) and vertical burial in a columbarium.

Columbaria, created exclusively for cremains, provide yet another vertical option for disposal of remains. This option can accommodate up to 100 times more bodies than traditional burial (Ragon 1983, 272). In addition columbaria also provide cemeteries with a source of revenue, even though they cannot charge quite as much for a columbarium niche as they do for a burial plot or mausoleum cubicle. With the increase in cremation and the reduced amount of space needed for cremain disposal, the funeral industry has begun to realize that in order to stay in business they must acknowledge that

“Memorialization is what is selling ”(Jackson 1989, 111). Thus “cemeteries are frantically attempting to retain their function as active burial places” (Jackson 1989, 111).

Figure 5. Columbarium at San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena, Italy.

Cyber Memorials

Disconnection from the cemetery institution as a result of cremation does not automatically mean there no longer exists a need to memorialize. On the contrary, grief is still a powerful emotion that requires a forum for expression. Increasingly popular is the use of virtual space for such memorialization. One observer notes that “[a]ll the major rites of passage are making their appearance on the World Wide Web, but none with such persistence and verve as death” (Grimes 2003, 272)

Technology which has significantly impacted the cemetery landscape may actually provide a viable replacement via computers and the Internet. There exists today dozens of memorial sites on the information superhighway. In the World Wide Cemetery,

virtual monuments are accessible from anywhere in the world and are guaranteed not to weather or require maintenance. And, according to Jennifer Michael, a visiting assistant professor at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University-Bloomington, formulation of a virtual monument can have a tremendous healing effect. The creative process of doing a Web site is therapeutic in that it allows a person to "[channel] their sorrow into something beautiful, something interesting" (Alloy 1998, 36). She also mentions that visiting a virtual memorial can be very comforting to someone who lives too far away to visit a grave.

Multi-Use Cemeteries

Current cemetery models are not sustainable as they require high energy inputs. Therefore, to maintain viability and justify the enormous land mass allotted to cemeteries, some people advocate introduction of multiple uses within the cemetery. Michael Hough in his book, *Cities and Natural Processes*, promotes the introduction of other uses into existing or proposed cemeteries. Among his suggestions are the practice of animal husbandry and the enhancement of qualities for creating wildlife habitat.

Citing the prohibitive costs of maintaining most cemeteries, Hough proposes the use of animals to allay some of those costs. He suggests among other things that "[b]ecause cemeteries have fences they are appropriate urban open spaces for the grazing of sheep"(Hough 1995, 135). During a visit to England, I witnessed this unconventional practice of lawn maintenance in several rural cemeteries. Although the sheep added a romantic, picturesque dimension to the cemetery, they also present a maintenance issue of their own – someone has to clean up after the sheep.

Figure 6. Sheep grazing in cemetery at Canons Ashby, England.

Apart from introducing domesticated animals into the cemetery landscape, Hough presents another idea that may be more practical and beneficial in urban environments. Recognizing the value of cemeteries as open space in cities, he points out that "[t]he role of the cemetery in the conservation of wildlife habitats is also significant, since they enjoy seclusion from intense human activity and often provide conducive environments for animals and birds" (Hough 1995, 152). Enhancing cemeteries with water features and certain plant materials would improve wildlife habitat and could only expand existing passive recreation possibilities within the urban landscape.

Sharing similar objectives as those presented by Hough for promotion of cemeteries as wildlife habitat, Billy and Kimberly Campbell have introduced a truly new cemetery concept to the United States with their business, Memorial Ecosystems Inc. Inspired by Ian McHarg's book, *Design With Nature*, their creation, Ramsey Creek Cemetery in South Carolina, is designed to halt the ecological damage caused by current cemetery models. They argue that contemporary cemeteries wreak havoc on the ecological systems where they are located.

William J. Thompson, who covers the story of Ramsey Creek Cemetery in *Landscape Architecture* magazine, makes the observation that "[c]onventional burial in this country bears a lot of resemblance to toxic waste disposal" (Thompson 2002, 74). Indeed, contemporary cemetery landscapes are multi-layered toxic creations. To begin with, the majority of bodies today are embalmed with a chemical cocktail of formaldehyde, glycerin, borax, phenol and alcohol (Stowe 2001, 15). They are subsequently encased in caskets and vaults which "may contaminate soil and groundwater by leaching varnishes, preservatives, sealants and metals" (Thompson 2002, 76). And finally above the ground, maintenance crews use regular applications of herbicides and pesticides to present a manicured, but heavily contrived appearance.

The ecocemetery idea, on the other hand, seeks to preserve the existing ecosystem while providing affordable burial (less than half of a typical, conventional burial). Unembalmed bodies or ashes are buried in biodegradable cardboard boxes or simple pine coffins. Local stone is used for the markers, and only native species are used for plantings. The end result is a sustainable cemetery concept that the Campbells hope to export to other states with the goal of saving "a million acres in 30 years" (Thompson 2002, 79).

CHAPTER 4

Favorable Climate for Change in Burial Practices

The various alternatives for burial and memorialization that are presented here strongly indicate that a shift in burial traditions is taking place. A look at the evolution of cemeteries reveals that, periodically, there is a shift in burial traditions. These shifts are prompted for a variety of reasons, among them economic factors and social trends. I contend that the climate is right for another shift and that it will be driven by rapidly changing demographics, in particular, two groups, Baby Boomers and the ever increasing Latino population in the United States. I propose that we, as landscape architects, should take the lead in affecting the 115,000 cemeteries already in existence (Thompson 2002, 74), in addition to others that may be developed.

Changing Demographics

In the increasingly diverse climate of our society there are many groups that need to be accounted for when examining death and memorialization. The editors of *A Cross-Cultural Look at Death, Dying, and Religion* say that we should pay attention to "groups includ[ing] men and women, those who practice different religions, those whose sexual practice is different than the norm, and those of varying ethnic backgrounds" (Parry 1995, viii). Indeed, the ethnic makeup of our cities has dramatically changed within the lifetime of a generation. According to Dolores Hayden, author of *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, only thirty years ago 75 percent of New York's citizens were white. More recently in 1990 the former white majority now represents 38 percent of the population. The majority today is comprised of African Americans,

Latinos, and Asian Americans, and she claims that these demographics are characteristic of the top ten cities in the United States (Hayden 1995, 6).

One might expect that the increased mixing of ethnic groups in our cities might be represented in our cemeteries. But Richard Meyer states that "[a]lthough the American cemetery has at times been portrayed as a symbolic ground where the diverse population of the nation is united in a "sacred unity," an examination of actual memorialization practice reveals the cemetery to be as rent with social fissures as any other institution of American life" (Meyer 1989, 14). In fact, though certain cemetery models have become ubiquitous nationwide, it is dangerous to assume that any one cemetery landscape has succeeded in melding together such a diverse nation. A walk through most municipal cemeteries will reveal many forms of segregation and separation: blacks and whites; children and adults; poor and rich; Protestants and Jews. Kenneth T. Jackson contends that segments of the American population "have been separated in death even more than in life" (Jackson 1989, 6).

The current largest minority group in the United States, Latinos, has been known for its distinct practices related to death and burial. As early as the 1920s, landscape architect Ray F. Wyrick, noted the differences between Latin cemeteries and those of the United States. In the trade journal *Park and Cemetery* he found:

> …another example of the Latin lack of quiet lawns, natural groupings of trees, or subordination of monuments to the restful green of our better cemeteries. Their ideal seems to be to try to keep alive the fame or the wealth of those who have died, whereas ours is to make the living forget the trials of death in contemplation of the present beauty of our earth. They seem to try to keep grief alive for a long time, and we try to soften grief and think of the graves of our dead as melted into the peace of a quiet landscape (Meyer 1989, 14).

Nearly 100 years later, the Latin population maintains its distinct reverence for the dead. Jackson describes an exemplary scene: “Every weekend, hundreds of Hispanic visitors crowd the newer sections of Saint Raymond´s Cemetery in the Bronx and as many as fifteen thousand people come on Mother´s Day. At Saint Raymond´s, well-tended family graves display fresh flowers, plantings and greeting cards. Families pray together in front of their markers while mourners weep without embarrassment” (Jackson 1989, 109).

Saint Raymond’s Cemetery appears to accommodate the practices of their Hispanic visitors, however this is not the case in every U.S. cemetery as many of them limit or control what can be done in the name of remembrance. At the entrance to numerous American cemeteries today a visitor is informed that only certain mementoes of a visit may be left behind. Often those items are limited to flowers, and even they are restricted as to the type (real or artificial), the season of the year when they can be left, and extent of time that they will be allowed to remain. Many items left by Latino visitors in their homeland cemeteries are simply not allowed in most U.S. cemeteries.

Such restrictions do a disservice to the Latino and Hispanic populations. For example, consider the Mexican traditions related to Day of the Dead. It is a common occurrence to spend the night in the cemetery while awaiting a visit from the spirits of one’s ancestors. As a means of welcoming the spirits, the living leave a wide variety of offerings that might have had significance for the deceased. Items could be as varied as toys, balloons, cigarette packets, photos, food or a bottle of beer. These items would not be allowed in the majority of cemeteries today because they interfere with maintenance

operations, raise the cost of doing business, and because their clutter does not match the U.S. suburban aesthetic of clean lawn.

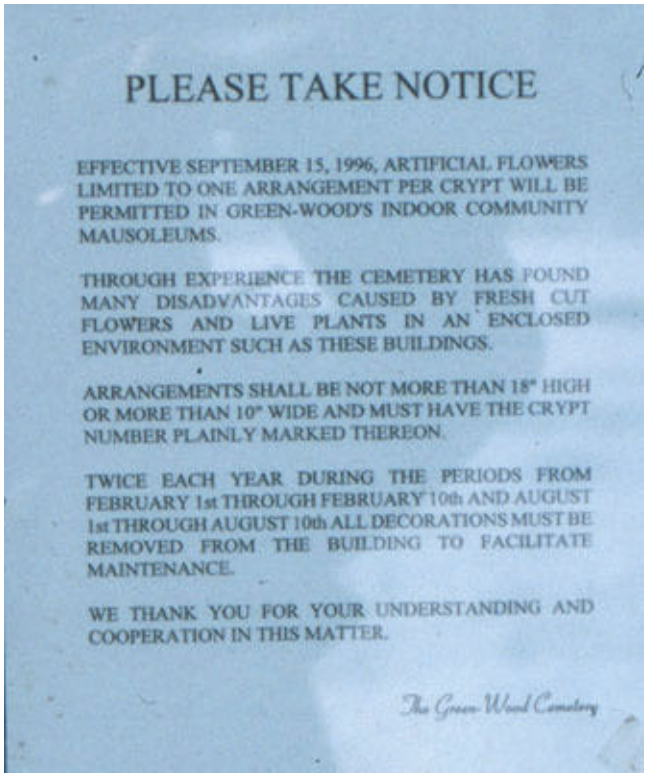

Figure 7. Notice restricting flowers in Green Wood Cemetery, New York.

Not all Latin groups are alienated by the restrictions imposed by cemeteries. An interview with Alex Herrera, a second-generation Cuban who works for the New York Landmarks Conservancy, says that many Latinos and Hispanics in New York prefer to accept the burial traditions and restrictions enforced by the cemetery and funeral industries. He explains that death is a complex matter where practicality prevails.

In New York a family vault or mausoleum costs around $100,000, a prohibitive expense for many. If a family can afford it, most bodies are sent back to their homeland for burial in an existing family tomb. This option is possible for few people, also because of the expense, therefore a majority adopt the customs of New York, including the

purchase of a grave space and traditional monument. He claims that assimilation into the dominant mainstream culture is seen by some as a source of pride.

Baby Boomers

Aside from the Latin population which has the potential to impact traditional U.S. burial customs, the Baby Boomers are even more likely to exact a change. An estimated force of over 75 million boomers (Simmons 1992, 2) will approach the average age of mortality in the next couple of decades, making it likely that they alone could induce a national shift in the cemetery landscape model. Indeed the demand for physical cemeteries may be more important than ever in the early part of the 21st century. Those in the cemetery industry anticipate that the boomer's desires for quality, recognition and individual expression may create cemeteries as unique as those of a hundred years ago (Whyte 1994, 15).

Profiles of Baby Boomers reveal that they "share an important characteristic that sets them apart from any previous American generation – educational achievement…. High school graduation [became] the norm for this postwar generation" (Simmons 1992, 7). One might infer that cremation will be popular among the well-educated Baby Boomers especially if a national funeral association director is correct in his observation that "[i]ntellectuals don't have the same attitude as others. They like cremations. They are not interested in the body" (Bowman 1959, 101).

Education is an important key to the approach boomers will take when they contemplate death rituals. Robert Abrams, author of *Boomer Basics* dispels the characterization of the Baby Boomer by some as self-centered, shortsighted, or apathetic. Instead, he sees the boomer as "seeking new and innovative ways not only to address and

prioritize…personal and familial challenges but also to do so in the most beneficial way for [their] families" (Abrams 2003, 1). As a boomer himself, he claims "[they] are constantly seeking more information to either do things on [their] own, or at least, participate in the decision-making process" (Abrams 2003, 2). This take-control-attitude is another indicator that they will embrace cremation since its movement has "been independently led" (Bowman 118) unlike traditional funeral rituals of embalming, display, and burial that have been led by the funeral industry.

In essence, cremation gives people more power to decide what they want. As Bowman puts it, the importance of cremation is that it

> serves to redress the imbalance of bargaining power between undertaker and customer, by counteracting the emphasis on the body and allowing for a more wholesome attitude toward the funeral on the part of the family. Logically, resorting to cremation eliminates the need of embalming, "restoration," and lavish expenditures for casket and all funeral "goods," but allows for all the social and spiritual aspects of the funeral period (Bowman 2003, 119).

Yet another component of their profile suggests that Baby Boomers may readily adopt a new cemetery model and/or concepts of memorialization. The Simmons Marketing Study describes the pattern of a "shift to the nest rather than flying free, an acceptance of familial responsibilities rather than self-fulfillment, a settling down and settling in" (Simmons 1992, 16). This level of stability is in direct contrast to the transitory nature of our culture which played such a key role in acceptance of the memorial park. If Baby Boomers are staying near home as they age perhaps the cemetery as a tie to one's roots will regain some of its importance within the community.

Cemeteries in the Urban Fabric

A favorable climate for change in burial traditions has been around for some time. Much has been written by planners, architects and landscape architects about how to improve our urban experience. Michael Hough in *Cities and Natural Process* asks the following questions which are pertinent to the discussion of the cemetery landscape within the urban fabric: “What are the role and function of parks and open spaces in creating healthy and dynamic places? How can the realities of multi-cultural communities in cities be recognized in design and as a relevant basis for an urban aesthetic?” (Hough 1995, 2).

In his book Hough makes a key point when he calls for “approaches to urban design that focus on existing cities, since it is here that the opportunities lie and where the effort must be made” (Hough 1995, 3). He paints a grim picture when he says, “We are faced with the destruction of priceless landscapes and cultural heritage in the face of urban development” (Hough 1995, 20). However, he provides hope and encouragement when he points out the enormous availability of land in most western cities, and posits, “If it can be shown that there are cheaper, more socially valuable ways of shaping urban landscapes than has traditionally been the norm, then we have a realistic and practical basis for action” (Hough 1995, 2). Unlike many writers on the topic, he mentions cemeteries and groups them with public utility properties, vacant lots, and industrial lands among other land use types which together “form a major part of unbuilt-on land that has been, and remains, sterilized or ineffectively used” (Hough 1995, 224).

Unlike in the days when Loudon, Olmsted, and O.C. Simonds wrote comprehensively on the subject of cemeteries, few modern day writers even feign interest

in the death landscape. Essentially nothing has been written of late by landscape architects, architects, or planners which might serve as contemporary guidelines for cemetery construction or management. Of course, much is written about cities and the open space within them, yet the cemetery is nearly always forgotten. Lawrence Halprin in *Urban Open Spaces* asserts that "[o]ur collective perception of cities depends on the landscape of open spaces" then proceeds with an extensive list of open spaces: "streets, alleys, passageways, malls, boulevards, avenues, marketplaces, plazas, underground shopping malls, parking spaces, arcades, leftover triangles, parks, playgrounds, waterfronts, railroad yards, tracks, rooftops, hills, valleys, freeways, bridges, interchanges" (Halprin et al. 1968, 4). Where is the mention of cemeteries as open space in the city? The book contains contributions from dozens of design and planning experts, including gurus such as Halprin, Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and explores the evolution of urban open space from ancient Greek cities to modern planned communities. Yet the setting for one of our most important rites of passage, the cemetery, is never mentioned.

Although the cemetery landscape is conspicuously nonexistent in this volume, there are a plethora of recommendations for the use of urban open space that, when applied to the cemetery landscape, suggest that it could significantly contribute to the urban experience. For example, Dora Polk Crouch presents the idea that in the "Greek city, it was possible to be more richly human and to engage in a far greater variety of human activities [because] the pattern of urban arrangements – the diversity of urban open spaces and proximity of such spaces to the working and living quarters of the people – made a richer common life possible" (Halprin et al. 1968, 7). Peter Calthorpe

suggests that "[t]he best utilization of existing infrastructure and the best opportunity to preserve our open space will come from infill and redevelopment" (Halprin et al. 1968, xiii).

Perhaps even more applicable are the comments of Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides who say

> A city is a human artifact which is a collection of places and things. It is what we are born into and what we leave behind. What we hold in common is not only what we share in living, but that which we share with those before us and those after us. The city is therefore based on permanency….An accessible (socially and physically) and truly shared common place can be guaranteed at the most elemental scale through the following urbanist principals. These tenets prefer the human scale over that of the auto" (Halprin et al. 1968, xxii).

What, then, is more permanent than a cemetery, or more appropriate when discussing human scale than the measure of the human body and the space of a traditional grave? In the book, *Urban Open Spaces*, New Urbanism is touted as the answer to diminishing social, class, and racial segregation as well as the cure for many environmental ills. Nonetheless, the cemetery landscape, as a venue for addressing many of our social, cultural, and environmental imbalances, is noticeably left out.

Neglecting the subject of cemeteries in a book about urban open space is difficult to understand, however, exclusion of cemeteries in the plan of an actual community is another matter. Towns planned with the principles of New Urbanism conspicuously do not include cemeteries. The developers of the planned community Columbia, Maryland, initially forgot to include a cemetery (Jackson 1989, 118), but eventually constructed an environmentally-conscious memorial park. Unfortunately, the planning oversight that occurred in Columbia is not unique. Review of the recently planned communities of

Bamberton, British Colombia, and Seaside, Florida, both by Duany and Plater-Zyberk, and Laguna West in California designed by Calthorpe, reveal developments for thousands of inhabitants. Amenities in these communities are endless, but one necessity, the cemetery, is not among them.

Despite the criticism presented above and the acknowledgement that cemeteries as large scale landscapes are unwieldy when attempting change, I believe that change is indeed possible. As far back as 1939, O.C. Simonds wrote extensively about cemeteries and observed that, "We Americans are a fickle people and are much inclined to change our fashions, not only in dress, but in more serious things" (O.C. Simonds 1939, 330). Two decades later Leroy Bowman, on the subject of funerals, asks "Why are they taken as a matter of course without an evaluation of their worth or the adequacy of the manner in which their non-religious aspects are conducted? As a nation, and as states and communities, we are a daring people when it comes to change" (Bowman 1959, 1). Other more recent funeral and burial observers mimic the sentiment of Simonds and Bowman. The authors of *Deeply Into the Bone* suggest, "it is possible, whether by legislation, imagination, or some combination of both, for death rites to be reimagined, reconfigured, or reinvented" (Grimes 2003, 269). Within death rituals they note "cycles of ceremonial elaboration followed by movements toward simplification" (Grimes 2003, 240) and declare that although death rituals are "stubbornly resistant to innovation.…mortuary change is not impossible"(Grimes 2003, 268).

A final quote from this source provides impetus for my design of an alternative burial model:

> North American mortuary history, too, continues. It did not end with, or even culminate in, the introduction of embalming and professional

death workers. Two of the most visible mortuary innovations in recent decades, the growing acceptance of cremation and the establishment of hospices…are evidence that death rites, like other rites of passage, evolve (Grimes 2003, 268).

CHAPTER 5

Inspiration for a New Cemetery Model

When conducting my literature review, I encountered one quote from the electronic source, *Deeply Into the Bone,* which essentially supported my search for a revitalized interest in burial traditions and the cemetery landscape: "In effect, we need a renewed mythologizing of death and the dead, one that does not require naïve belief but depends on dramatic storytelling and bold, performed images of Old Death….we must overcome excessively pristine and falsely hopeful images of death.…We need graphic myths rooted in tactile rites and passionate engagement without the requirement of literal belief" (Grimes 2003, 282). Throughout the design and construction process these words served as inspiration to create a three-dimensional piece that might rekindle the excitement seen in funerary art and architecture during the golden age of cemetery design.

With the new cemetery model I addressed three issues that I feel are being neglected in today's cemeteries: (1) efficient use of space, (2) closer proximity of cemeteries to their users, and (3) the ability to memorialize a person as a unique, multi-dimensional being. Regarding the efficient use of space, the new model utilizes vertical burial and cremation, two prevalent options for disposal that are exceedingly appropriate given the modern demands for urban development. In an attempt to make cemeteries more user friendly it is evident that accessibility, especially for those who are transportation challenged, is a key element for change. Therefore, the smaller scale of the new model makes it possible to incorporate memorial/burial space within the urban

fabric. Finally, the new model provides a means to memorialize a person beyond the simple recording of names and dates.

Totem as Alternative to Traditional Burial

The new cemetery model that I created is a product of various influences and observations that I conducted in cemeteries over a span of several years. A singularly important precedent was the totem created by American Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest. These sculptural poles were used to communicate various information to visitors and to the community. Defined as "a creature or object that a person holds in great respect and religious awe" (Stewart 1990, 7), the totems "proudly and publicly proclaim[ed] family lineage, achievements and rights" (Stewart 1990, 19). As many as six different types of totems could be found, each of which served a different function. Especially applicable to the subject of this thesis were the memorial and mortuary poles. The memorial pole "depicted special achievements or events in the chief's life," while the mortuary pole was elaborately carved and decorated and contained space for the cremated remains of a high-ranking official and sometimes his relatives (Stewart 1990, 26).

The vertical, compact nature of the totem along with its use for memorialization confirmed for me its appropriateness as a template that could be adapted for contemporary use. Germane to my development of a new memorial alternative was the process by which the original totems were created. The tribal chief selected the crests and figures to be used and designated their order on the pole while the carver had the license of design and representation (Stewart 1990, 28). Their collaboration resulted in unique, three-dimensional sculptures that were used to memorialize their chiefs and to record the past for communication with those in the present and future.

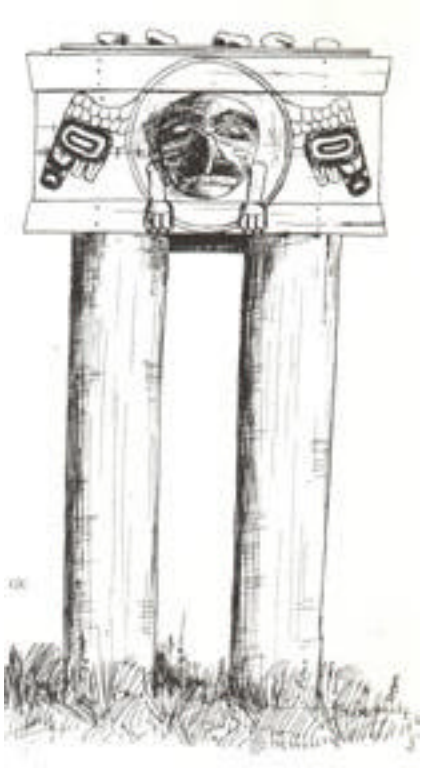

Figure 8. Double mortuary totem pole in Pacific Northwest.

The personalized totems appeal to me as a way to remember a loved one for the person they were and to recognize the place they had within a family or community. Memorials to great public figures are not uncommon to us, and they often include summaries of their work and/or the ideas for which that person was famous. I believe that each person should and could be memorialized similarly, and that a simple record of a name and dates is not only boring but does a disservice to the memory of individuals. Thus, the idea of the modern day totem is born.

Approach

With the idea of a contemporary totem in mind, I wanted to see how people would react to this nontraditional memorial in an urban environment. I felt that the best way to test its acceptability was to construct a model at full scale, to install it in an urban setting,

and to monitor reactions from passersby. In addition, the process of building at full scale gave me a better sense of how things should be constructed and presented.

Process of Designing and Building the Totem

Pinpointing a single factor that prompted the creation of the totem as an alternative is very difficult. There was no real moment of epiphany. The design solution was a culmination of observation in hundreds of cemeteries, several years of research on death, dying, and the burial landscape, and a serendipitous day at the library when I encountered books on the totems of the American Indians of the Pacific Northwest.

From the beginning of my studies in landscape architecture, finding a space efficient burial model has been a motivating drive. As a precursor to the design challenge presented in this thesis, I entered the 1999 American Society of Landscape Architects' student competition with my vision of cemeteries in the year 2099. At that time I identified space saving as a major issue for cemeterians and a significant opportunity for landscape architects of the future.

The idea of creating a more socially responsive cemetery developed during my Fulbright studies in Mexico where I sketched and photographed elements that were different from what I had seen in Europe or elsewhere in North America. Those images were ultimately responsible for the personalization opportunities presented in the totem.

The creation of the totem from design to completion took approximately four months. The first step was to recruit five friends who were willing to participate by first allowing me to make plaster masks of their faces. A thick coat of Vaseline was applied to their faces so that the plaster would not adhere. The plaster was mixed and applied. Then, each person had to lie still for approximately half an hour until the plaster solidified.

Figure 9. Plaster mask.

When creating the masks I was faced with two challenging areas – the nose and the eyes. Due to the length of time required for the plaster to set up, I could not fully cover the nose and mouth of each person. I chose to cover the mouth and leave the nostrils free for breathing. Thus, when the final molds were made in clay I had to manipulate the nose area to make as close a resemblance as possible. Likewise, because I was concerned that the plaster would irritate the eyes of the participants, I put cotton over their eyelids before applying the plaster. As a result the eyes are not as realistic as they could be.

Beyond allowing me to cast their faces, my friends were asked to provide a quote that would serve as a sort of epitaph. In some cases these quotes were serious and made reference to the cycle of life and death. But one quote was humorous and helped to mitigate what would have been a serious, perhaps morbid exercise. Finally, each participant was asked to make a stamp from clay which I used to decorate his or her

respective section of the totem. Some stamps were purely decorative, while others carried a sentimental significance for the person.

Figure 10. Stamps and hands of clay.

Figure 11. Example of stamp impressions.

After the faces were cast and each participant's stamps were made, I created two additional sets of stamps of the alphabet and numbers in different sizes. They were used to imprint the quotes, names, and dates into the totem. To ensure their durability for

repeated use, all of the stamps were then fired at a low temperature. With the masks, quotes and stamps ready, I began the process of creating the columnar portion of the totem. Rather than the planar forms used for most monuments today, a circular form was selected. The faces and beginning of each quote were placed so that the action of reading the totem occurs in a rotating, spiral sequence. The circular shape and the spiral positioning seemed suitable since they have long been symbols of the continuum of life and death**.**

Figure 12. Example of two segments for each person.

The section of the totem for each person is subdivided into two parts, one which contains the mask, stamp and quote and the other which contains the name and dates of birth and death. Each segment was constructed at approximately the same size, based on the proportions of the human head. Coincidentally, the dimensions are roughly the same size as a columbarium niche or burial plot for cremains (Ragon 1983, 272). Subsequently,

the plaster casts of the faces were used to create clay moulds of the five faces that were then attached to the individual section for each person.

Each segment of the totem was constructed in sequential order from bottom to top with each segment interlocking with the next. This interlocking system was used in order to provide stability for the piece when constructed as a whole. When completed the entire piece was fired, this being the final stage before erection and testing.

Discussion of Materials

The totems of the Pacific Northwest were created of wood, a natural material obtained with relatively minimal environmental impact. For the modern day totem, I felt that the use of a similarly natural product, clay, was appropriate. Stone and bronze monuments seen in most cemeteries today are expensive, mass-produced and have a very cold, rigid appearance. In contrast, clay is inexpensive and, when fired, morphs and takes on a very organic quality. Too, clay plays symbolically in the idea of “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

I opted not to use glazes or color in order to maintain the integrity of the material and to compose a monochromatic backdrop for the personalizing mementoes that could be left by visitors. The dark red clay body I chose can be fired at a temperature high enough for vitrification which is important for its durability and ability to withstand harsh weather conditions.

I also selected clay as the media for building the totem because I had previous experience working with the media, and I knew it would serve to fabricate a full scale model of the totem. Its malleability makes it possible for all ages to participate in the creation of the totem. Small children can mold or manipulate a piece of clay into a

stamp, and babies' feet can be impressed thereby making it possible to include all ages when adding sections. With this method of memorialization, a revitalization in death-related artistry will generate employment of artists and craftspeople.

Noteworthy and Advantageous Elements of the Totem

The following elements of the totem make it a viable alternative to traditional burial:

- The totem is multidimensional. It is impossible to view the totem from afar, up close, or from a single angle and know all there is to know about the persons being memorialized. It will add a human dimension to the street, blocks, and neighborhoods where we live by accommodating a free and energetic expression of individual people.
- Each section of the totem is extremely personal and individualistic. The face of the person is present in the form of a death mask. Thus, in addition to genealogical information, the actual visual representation tells you something of the person.
- Unlike death and memorialization today which places a dying person in a passive role, the design/creation of the totem returns a bit of control to that person. Just as the creation of a virtual monument can produce therapeutic benefits, the participation of a dying person and his/her family and friends in the creation of a totem could potentially facilitate the grieving process. The increasing trend of preneed sales of funeral services and cemetery plots indicates that many people are preparing in advance for their own deaths. While these mundane tasks are important, I propose that the exercise of creating your memorial can be cathartic.
- Numerous features of the totem were designed to facilitate for visitors the common practice of leaving mementos. Vases and containers are built-in to provide for flowers

and plants, niches are present for candles and incense, and shelves are available for mementos such as pebbles, toys, photographs, or other sentimental objects which visitors might leave behind.

Figure 13. Shelf with mementos.

• This new cemetery model is space efficient. The footprint is small in comparison to the plot of a traditional underground burial, therefore, it is possible to reincorporate the cemetery into the urban fabric.

•The totem is infinitely flexible. It is constructed in pieces that can be changed as a family or circle of friends evolves. Its flexibility also allows for rings to be added for anniversaries, weddings, or other special occasions. For example, each person present can make a handprint or use their stamp to document their presence at the event.

•The face can be cast while the person is young, or in good health. This may appeal to the American public who seems to revere the image of youth and beauty.

•The object is portable allowing a family that moves to a new town to take the totem with them. This provides the opportunity to easily memorialize someone, leave fresh flowers, or light a candle or incense.

•The totem is easy and inexpensive to duplicate thereby allowing several family members or friends to create a memorial in or near their own homes. The small scale of a totem cemetery would also be less expensive to maintain than large-scale cemeteries.

Results of Reactions from the Totem

I decided to erect the totem and get reactions to see if this is indeed a viable option for burial and/or memorialization. Asking people to give me their reactions was an incredible test of its plausibility in an urban setting.

The totem was erected on Saturday, July 5, 2003 at the Baton Rouge Farmers' Market. In addition to the totem itself, items that might be left at gravesites were added. These included balloons, flowers, plants, incense, candles, photos, and stones. Participants were asked to complete a survey that included questions covering the demographic profile of the participant as well as general questions about burial, cremation and cemeteries, and questions specifically related to the totem as an alternative to traditional burial. A sign with the following information was posted in order to get attention and provide an overview of the project:

> Please help a graduate student finish his thesis! This survey will take less than ten minutes.
>
> The sculpture/totem you see here is presented as an alternative to traditional underground burial. The idea is to create a model for burial that is:
> 1. More efficient
> 2. More reflective of those being remembered

Advantages to this alternative are:

1. Requires less space
2. Less expensive
3. Portable
4. Personalized
5. Expandable/changeable

A total of 56 participants completed the survey, of them 32 were female and 24 were male. Over half of the participants were within the Baby Boomer age range (40-59 years old), with a strong representation of those between thirty and thirty-nine years of age. Nearly half had graduate degrees and almost all had some post-secondary education. On the question of personal/household income, almost half responded that they were over $50,000 per year, while the remaining respondents were scattered across each of the $10,000 increments below $50,000.

A significant majority of the participants when asked about their employment level responded that they were white collar. Unfortunately, the ethnic affiliation was not as varied as I had hoped. Each person was asked to choose all affiliations that applied and an overwhelming majority simply checked Caucasian. I was, however, surprised by the significant representation of Native Americans (five), and the low number of African Americans (only two). Finally in the area of religious affiliation, I was not surprised to see that Catholics outnumbered any other specific religion, but taken as a whole, the Protestant faiths comprised the largest number of those responding. Both Eastern and Western religions were represented, and a significant number (thirteen) responded as having no affiliation whatsoever.

Most respondents selected a religious affiliation, however, the majority said that religion influenced neither their reaction to the totem nor their choice for type/method of

burial. Regarding the type of burial, two people offered that religion and tradition influenced their burial choice. Consistent with the following of tradition, roughly two-thirds plan to be buried in an existing family plot.

Regarding cremation, over three-fourths of the respondents knew someone who had been cremated. Nearly the same number confirmed that they were in favor of cremation and that they were considering the option for themselves. Only one person stated outright that he was not in favor of cremation. The remaining responses revealed levels of uncertainty or neutrality on the topic.

Of those responding positively to the idea of cremation as their option of choice, one third of them would have their ashes placed in some connection with nature. Eleven chose water as that connection, while other specific sites included mountains, a family home site, and a deer hunting camp. Only two people opted for a cemetery/mausoleum as their final resting place. Two offered that they were opposed to the idea of being stored indoors. And a significant number (seventeen) had no idea, were indifferent to the location, or were leaving the decision to their survivors.

On the subject of cemeteries, three-fourths said they were comfortable with cemeteries in their neighborhoods with one respondent restricting the cemetery to a small scale. Seven were opposed to the idea and the remaining participants were neutral or had some reservations. Roughly the same number who responded favorably to the idea of cemeteries in their neighborhoods, said they were agreeable to the idea of living next to a cemetery, yet two of those surveyed had concerns about inappropriate behavior (vandalism, running/making noise) that might take place in the cemetery. Two people already had lived next to a cemetery and one woman stated that “being near a cemetery

was unnerving to her" because she believed in and had had experience with the spiritual world.

To the question of whether or not they visited cemeteries, or sites, where the remains of loved ones had been deposited, a large majority said they did visit. Two participants offered that they visited random cemeteries with no connection to loved ones. Fifteen people stated that they did not visit those sites. Of those who visited sites, the distance they traveled for those visits ranged from a matter of minutes to as many as 15,000 miles. Nineteen visitors had to travel less than seventy-five miles. Eleven visitors would need to fly or travel for many hours in order to arrive at their destination. The remainder could arrive, without flying, in less than a day. Seven were fortunate enough to be within a few minutes of those sites.

The frequency with which the participants visited varied from weekly to never with almost half visiting once a year. One responded that each time she went home she visited the cemetery and another mentioned that each visit was on a significant day (i.e., holiday, birthday). Nine responded with answers that indicated infrequent visits (seldom, rarely, very little, not often enough) while three said that they never visited. Perhaps due to the distance to be traveled, six responded that several years passed between their visits.

Upon being asked if they would visit more often if the cemeteries where loved ones were buried were closer to them, two-thirds responded affirmatively, and nearly one-third responded negatively. One participant stated that closer proximity would not prompt more visits but a greater distance would result in fewer visits. Thus, location plays a role in the frequency with which a majority of the participants visit sites where

loved ones are buried/scattered. This idea is consistent with the results of the study performed by the Veteran's Administration.

Of those who visit cemeteries, nearly half of them carry something to leave at the grave. As was expected, the most popular items by far were flowers and plants. But interestingly there were a great variety of objects that seemed to contain a special significance for either the deceased or the visitor: mementos, figurines, a flag, toys, poems, a CD, dog's ashes.

When asked if they found the totem alternative acceptable for themselves or their loved ones, nearly seventy-five percent responded positively. Seven participants were unsure while eight others felt that it was not an acceptable alternative for them. The idea that the totem could be located near where they lived (i.e. on their private property or in a private garden) appealed to more than seventy-five percent of those surveyed. Only ten people were not attracted to the idea of having loved ones buried or memorialized near their homes.

Finally, the survey provided space for additional comments. Most responses were overwhelmingly positive -- an "excellent way to celebrate someone's life" and "This is the greatest idea I have ever seen." Two participants especially liked the personalized aspect of the totem, and one was especially attracted to the faces. She said "I do geneology and would love to see the faces to go with the names of ancestors." Similarly one person stated, "The part of cemeteries I enjoy most is the sculptures and an alternative to the 'classical' appearance would be appealing" Another had a favorable response, but felt that it was "a little hokie for Baton Rouge."

The opportunity to share concerns about the topic revealed the desire of some for a change in burial traditions as seen in the comments, “I’m definitely in favor of revising burial/memory processes” and “I don’t like cemeteries. I think there are better ways to honor the memory of loved ones than to take huge places in cities.” One person liked the idea of the totem’s “portability” but preferred a Christian alternative. Still, others were intrigued by the idea, but they expressed certain reservations such as, “not sure I want my dead around me,” the totem is “an easy target for vandals,” and “it seems so loaded/connected to a culture that is not mine.” But one quote hinted at a vision of totems creating a “cemetery [that] could be something like a forest.”

The response from the participants and observers at the Farmers’ Market was overwhelming positive. One woman was moved to tears when she read the quotes. I was impressed by the number of people older than the Baby Boomer generation who were in favor of the idea.

Three people inquired as to how much I might charge to sell the totem for their private garden. Only one of those people filled out a survey. The others were interested in purchasing and or having one commissioned for themselves. I had honestly not considered the idea of finding a buyer.

Though not a purely scientific survey, the responses received were helpful in determining the degree to which the totem alternative was appealing and also what might be done to improve another version if it were to be constructed. Without a doubt, the results proved my theory that many people are open to alternatives for memorializing their loved ones. Personalization is lacking in our current trends and the ideas presented in this alternative are important for that reason. Also, evident is the fact that people are

not opposed to bringing burial/memorial grounds closer to home. Based on the reaction of people who completed the survey, I have reason to believe that the totem as memorial might help/aid cemeteries to recapture some of the popularity they held in the nineteenth century.

Figure 14. Complete totem.

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

A look at the history of cemeteries in the United States reveals periodic changes in their form, function, and location. The factors that create these shifts are extremely varied. Based on my research and observations, it seems obvious to me that the U.S. is ready for yet another shift. That shift is needed to acknowledge the diverse demographics seen in our country and to allow people to take control over and become active once again in life's final rite of passage. The totem I created is not the only solution, but the encouraging responses I received from those who have seen it confirm that it has definite potential as an alternative to traditional burial and memorialization.

Future Areas of Study

Creating a full-scale model of the totem and presenting it for feedback made evident its successes and limitations. This foundation reveals avenues for future areas of study that might make the totem, or some version of it, more acceptable. Modifications in the form and process by which it was created can also improve its durability and the speed with which the totem sculpture is produced.

A test of materials would be a practical next step in developing a marketable prototype. Instead of the plaster used to cast the masks, there are other materials that would produce more lifelike results. For example, the material used by dentists for casting teeth renders exact duplicates and cures within a few minutes. An exploration into media other than clay may also uncover a less expensive and/or more durable material for constructing the actual totem. If I were to build another totem using the same materials, I

would make a mold to speed the process of constructing the basic segments. A standard mold would also make for easier and more secure interconnection of the pieces.

Beyond exploring alternative materials and methods for constructing the totem, expanded testing of the totem's appeal could only improve subsequent models. Soliciting feedback from those persons being memorialized in the totem, as well as from their family and friends, would produce valuable insight into the totem's potential to facilitate the grieving process. In addition it would be beneficial to focus a future study on the specific groups (Latinos and baby boomers) who I believe will create demand for a new cemetery model.

Conclusion

Before writing this thesis I read the words of architect Lars Lerup who said "to begin a new environment demands an understanding of both the existing and the past," and the subsequent interpretation of landscape architect and architect Walter Hood: "It is a multidimensional understanding, made up of the social, personal, politic, economic and physical" (Hood 1997, 8). These quotations summarize my search for an updated cemetery model. Granted, a single cemetery type may never satisfy such disparate beliefs and customs as those found in the United States. However, if cemeteries are created with a diverse U.S. populace in mind, the potential exists to make them one of the most socially inclusive urban landscapes.

It seems that in this country there is a contradiction of values when we look at modern burial practices. We pay a great deal of money for funeral services, caskets, burial plots, monuments and a high level of maintenance in perpetuity. Yet as soon as possible we leave it all behind. When compared to the cost of a new car or home

addition, the cost of funerals and burials can be just as expensive, yet we are spending our money on something that we rarely see or use in our daily lives.

So what will become of our cemeteries both old and new? This question will probably receive more attention as land for development becomes even scarcer. Cremation, though it is only just becoming an acceptable alternative in the U.S., will most likely increase thereby eliminating some of the need for burial ground. Vertical forms of burial are also likely to increase along with expanded use of grave recycling, and other alternatives yet to be discovered. The possibilities are beyond our wildest imaginations, certainly beyond the imaginations of those who founded the rural and lawn-park cemeteries and the memorial park movements.

We can instill our hope in the idea that one day the issue of disposing of human remains will disappear. With advances in science and technology we may live forever, or the process of cremation through use of laser beams will make the issue moot. More likely, though, the need for physical cemeteries in some form will persist as a visible manifestation of the cyclical nature of life. As landscape architects we should ask, “How can we make this happen in the best possible way?”

We would most likely be safe in accepting that the level of religious veneration and the quality of landscaping and sculpture witnessed at the pinnacle of cemetery development is a thing of the past. Though cemeteries as institutions may no longer hold the same level of importance in the lives of most Americans, a strong case can be made to preserve the historic cemeteries of the past and to find a way to incorporate the burial/memorial landscape into the modern urban fabric of the future.

As significant numbers of cemeteries are being, or have been, surrounded by development it should be a priority of landscape architects and planners to maintain or create these places as retreats from the often cold, lifeless, over-scaled, and sometimes dehumanizing environments of contemporary urban life. This was essentially the goal of rural cemetery founders, and though the connection to death today may not be as strong, the need for relief from the city's hustle and bustle is stronger than ever. Only time and innovation will tell the future of the American cemetery landscape.

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APPENDIX A
TOTEM TEXT

Below is the text found on each segment of the totem if read from bottom to top:

Base

Know the death in life is here
with every breaking day
That one without the other
cannot be
Learn the wisdom of the Mon-o-lah
and then you'll know the way
and touch the soul of all
the Cherokee.
~Forrest Carter

Section One

Jamie Christy
24 October 1965
If you are distressed by anything
external, the pain is not due to
the thing itself, but to your
estimate of it, and this you have
the power to revoke at any moment.
~Marcus Aurelius

Section Two

Salvador Ribera Uribe
13 Enero 1971
Todo hombre debe preocuparse
por ser recordado cuando muera por
su integridad y sus buenas acciones.
Pues ello es por lo que
verdaderamente trascendera
entre los suyos.
~ Salvador Ribera Uribe

Section Three

Mark Bazzell
1 November 1966
Out of the crooked
timber of humanity
no straight thing
was ever made.
~Immanuel Kant

Section Four

Frank Lewis
31 December 1963
Friendship is the only
cement that will ever hold

the world together.
~Woodrow Wilson

Section Five

Ty Williams
19 June 1963
My karma
ran over
your dogma.
~Unknown

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Sex?
Male -24
Female – 32
Total of 56 participants
Age?
under 20 years - none
20-29 years - 2
30-39 years - 7
40-49 years - 15
50-59 years - 19
60-69 years -11
70 or over -2
What is the highest level of education you have completed?
8^{th} grade - none
High school graduate/GED - 4
Some college or technical school - 10
Undergraduate degree - 15
Graduate degree - 27
Personal/household income level?
<$20,000 per year - 3
$20,000-$30,000 - 9
$30,000-$40,000 - 6
$40,000-$50,000 - 8
over $50,000 - 25
no answer – 3
good – 1
Employment?
White collar - 34
Blue Collar - 4
Other – 12
Disabled –1
Student – 1
Retired - 3
Ethnic affiliation? Choose all that apply.
Caucasian - 47
Latino - 1
African American - 2
Asian - 1
Native American - 5
European - 5
Specific countries/origins of any of the above – England, Scotland, Ireland(2), Germany, Cherokee, France, Brazil, Sweden, Turkey

Religious affiliation? None/no answer - 13
Non-believer – 1
Saved – 1
Independent – 1
Lutheran – 1
Protestant/Christian – 5
Jewish – 1
Catholic - 10
World Religion/non-denominational – 1
Episcopalian – 3
Presbyterian – 2
Methodist – 3
Baptist – 3
Buddhist – 1
Non specific – 1
Non-denominational – 1
New Thought/Unity – 1
Islam – 1
Native American Spirituality – 1
Unitarian - 1

Does religion play a part in your reaction to this piece/idea?
yes – 20
no – 31
not really – 2
not at all - 2
about 50% - 1
probably – 1
no, not at first glance – 1
spirituality plays a part – 1

Does (your) religion influence your choice for type/method of burial?
yes – 18
no – 33
hmmm – 1
yes, but it is more of a family tradition – 1
not really – 1
customs more – 1
no because my flesh suit is not my real home – 1
somewhat – 1
yes and tradition – 1
no, but economics does - 1

Does your family already own a burial plot where you intend to be buried?
yes – 15
no – 36
not sure – 1

yes, it is ugly – 1
maybe - 1
Do you know someone who has been cremated?
yes – 45
no – 8
yes, tons – 1
yes, an aunt – 1
Are you in favor of cremation?
yes – 44
no - 1
I'm not against it – 1
not sure, probably - 1
totally – 1
so-so – 1
no opinion – 1
neutral – 1
not for myself, but it is OK – 1
under circumstances – 1
sometimes – 1
OK – 1
not sure yet – 1
if it is the choice of the deceased – 1
not opposed – 1
don't know – 1
neither in favor or opposed –1
Are you planning on or would you consider being cremated?
yes – 46
no – 5
possibly - 1
yes, definitely – 1
yes, after donating my body to science
haven't thought about it - 1
If yes, where would you like your ashes to be placed?
In the Mississippi River
Thrown away or used in glazes
In my kiln
Combo spread over ocean and personal ownership
no preference
?-5
water-2
hmmm
botanical garden or mountain
don't care-3
spread in TR
undecided-3
at a church

at my deer hunting camp
tossed in the Mississippi River, eventually I'll end up in the ocean
scattered in Michigan on the site of my first home
Pacific Ocean
scattered on oceanfront-2
family lake
scattered
probably cemetery
open
to be determined
wherever my daughter wants
once again, my flesh suit is not my real home
don't care
Little River
wherever my survivors want
someplace peaceful
at the base of the Appalachian mountains
in a mausoleum-not on mantel
Gulf of Mexico
not in someone's house
over Caurca Pass at Grand Isle
haven't thought about it

Would you find this alternative acceptable for you/your loved ones?

yes – 39
no – 7
maybe – 5
sure – 1
yes, definitely – 1
no-not substantial/too fragile – 1
depends – 1
? – 1

Are you comfortable with cemeteries in your neighborhood?

yes – 40
no – 7
not really – 1
neutral – 1
no problem – 1
yes/small scale – 1
if in private yards – 1
doesn't matter to me – 1
? – 1
no opinion – 1
yes, not in my neighborhood tho – 1
70% comfortable with time – 1

Would you feel comfortable living next to a cemetery?_
yes – 39
no – 11
ok – 1
why not? – 1
yes, I did – 1
no because of people running/making noise – 1
yes, as a child I used to live next to a cemetery and would play there – 1
yes/small scale – 1
don't know – 1
? – 1
not at night – 1
probably not – 1
yes but not if there was vandalism – 1
not yet – 1
no, I believe in and have had personal experience with the spiritual world…being near a cemetery is unnerving – 1

Do you visit cemeteries/sites where loved ones are buried/scattered?
yes – 34
no – 15
occasionally – 2
not often – 2
seldom - 1
haven't in a long time – 1
yes and random cemeteries too – 1
I just like to walk through - 1

If so, how far are these sites from your home?
in town – 2
6 miles – 2
2 miles – 2
3 hrs.drive - 2
100 miles - 2
50+ miles – 2
60 miles
in California
700 miles
close
depends on whom I am visiting
10 miles
19 miles
30 miles
150 miles – 2
400 miles
5 miles - 2
2000+ miles
25 miles

very far
1,800 miles
3,000 miles
6,000 miles
15,000 miles
varies - up to 750 miles
I visit cemeteries anywhere
1,000 miles or more
2-3 hours
other continent
2 days away
10 minutes
2 blocks
1 hour drive
in TN and Brazil
60+ miles

With what frequency do you visit?

never – 3
rarely – 3
seldom – 4
monthly – 2
once every few months – 2
once per year – 10
1-2 times per year – 2
every two years – 2
very little
everytime I go home
a few times a year
last time was nine years ago
4 year intervals
twice a year
once a year or less
6 months more or less
6-8 times per year
weekly
once a month on significant days (holidays, birthdays, etc.)
not often enough
once or twice a month
2-3 times every five years
every few years
once every month or three weeks

If the cemeteries where loved ones are buried were closer to you, do you feel you would visit more often?

yes – 34
no – 16
yes every Sunday –

perhaps - 1
possibly – 1
well, one is on a beautiful lake in Texas –I'd go there more often if it was closer – 1
? – 1
not really – 1
no, if further less frequent – 1

When you visit a cemetery do you normally carry something to leave at the grave?

yes – 21
no – 19
depends – 1
50% of the time – 1
sometimes – 1

If so, what?

flowers – 27
herbs – 1
plants – 2
water – 1
momentos – 1
windex – 1
memories –1
silk flowers at my mom's request – 1
I like to leave figurines, etc. – 1
flag – 1
toys – 1
CD – 1
poems – 1
dogs ashes –1

Would this option for burial or memorialization be appealing to have near where you live (i.e. on your own property? in private garden/yard?).

yes – 37
no – 9
sure – 2
yes, it is more appealing than an urn on the fireplace mantel – 1
yes, definitely – 1
if it was OK by local regulations – 1
as sculpture on private property, yes – 1
in private garden –1
yes- OK for me – 1
not really – 1
not now maybe later - 1

Any other comments?

Excellent project
Good idea but a little hokie for Baton Rouge
Family always had burial pots at all home cemeteries.
This is the greatest idea I have ever seen. So personal.
I'm from Pennsylvania. We tend to think differently.

Excellent way to celebrate someone's life
Excellent idea
I am an eccentric type person in a very normal family. I love it! It's so personalized.
In general, I'd say that your spirit is the "real" you and the earth is not my home, so where my flesh gets placed is irrelevant.
Would work well for my brother who wants his ashes left at a very old family cemetery.
The totem seems so loaded/connected to a culture that is not mine. The part of cemeteries I enjoy most is the sculptures and an alternative to the "classical" appearance of them would be appealing.
Neat alternative
Nice work
Interesting concept-need more info
Great idea!
Creative alternative
I'm definitely in favor of revising burial/memory processes.
maybe some other design would be more appealing
should be popular for use on columbarium sites
I like the idea of above ground "portability", I do not care for the "totem pole",A Christian alternative would be great
I like it!
I really enjoy the above ground cemeteries in N.O., they seem much nicer than underground ones elsewhere. Especially in S. LA the idea of burying folks underground just seems kind of foolish. With your totems a cemetery could be something like a forest.
Interesting idea, but not sure if I want my dead around me-I like them alive ☺
This question is quite stimulating. It gives me more of an understanding and feeling of connection with the dead.
Why not cremation and earth burial of ashes?
It mixes memorial with artistic achievement, very nice (but an easy target for vandals)
Great idea.
I like the artistry and uniqueness of this idea.
Great idea- especially the faces. I do geneology and would love to see faces to go with the names of ancestors.
I am an artist. I would create my own place, but it is a good idea.
The idea of memorialization appeals to me. As you probably got from my above answers
I don't like cemeteries. I think there are better ways to honor the memory of loved ones than to take huge places in cities: planting trees, flowers, make or have made long lasting or renewable pieces. Good luck!

VITA

Mark Evan Bazzell was born on November 1, 1966. He was reared in Calloway County, Kentucky, where he graduated from Calloway County High School. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in business management and French language and literature from Transylvania University in 1989 and a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Kentucky in 1999. Upon completing course work in the School of Landscape Architecture at Louisiana State University, he moved to Mexico City to work as a landscape architect.