

Bispebjerg Crematorium + Chapel, Copenhagen

1998-99 ACSA Design Award

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The Bispebjerg cemetery is located north west of the old port city of Copenhagen and is just south of a small chain of lakes. The garden landscape surrounding the proposed crematorium and chapel is constructed of hard and natural surfaces, and is occupied by ephemeral architectural volumes. The overall building form of the Bispebjerg Crematorium is perceived in two essentially opposite conditions. Initially from the arrival point at the cemetery gates, a blank, austere and massive stone wall rises from the reflecting pool and the building appears floating within a canal. After a passage along a drive lined with Lombardy Poplars and large shady Elm trees to arrive at the building's public entrance, the building appears as a skeletal structure revealing internal volumes that are wrapped with translucent and diaphanous skins.

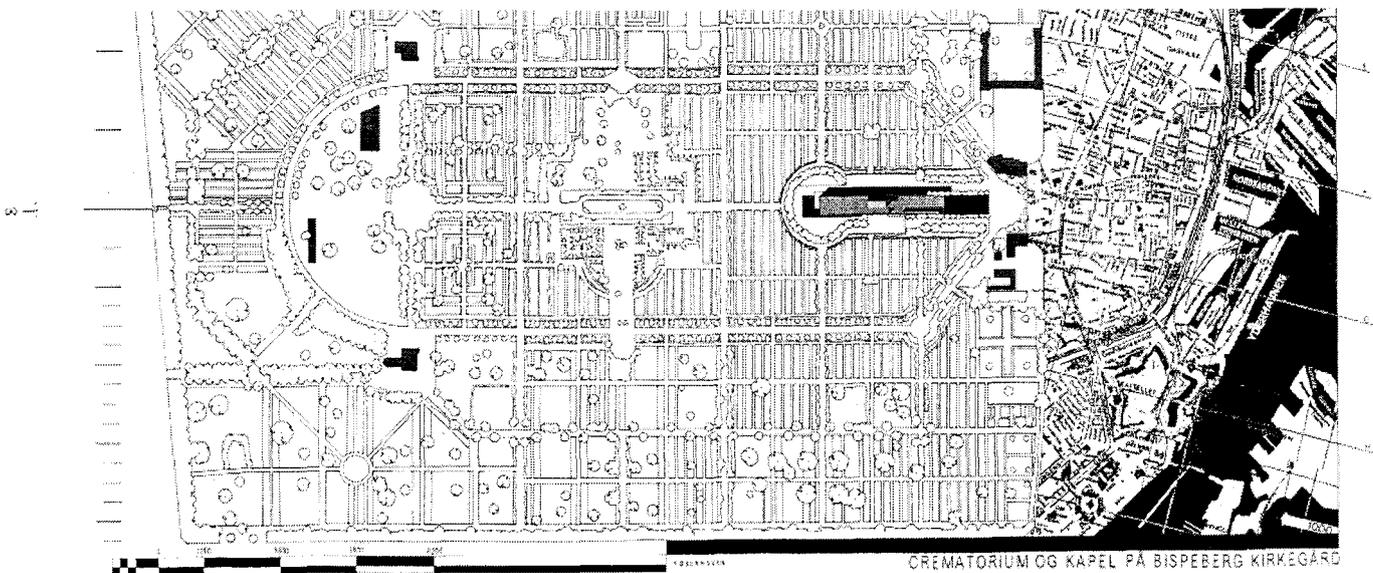
Building Program: The three level compact building form accomplishes a high level of functional efficiency, and constructional economy yet through its aesthetic minimalism a compelling austerity and spirituality. The building program of the crematorium is proposed as two discrete programmatic entities:

- program of the functioning crematorium: This service oriented

program performs seven thousand cremations a year. (twenty cremations per day).

- program of public visits: These programmatic elements are public, yet often contemplative and spiritual. Approximately seven hundred services a year will be held in the non-denominational Chapel. In addition, the program of public visits will also accommodate a family's delivery of the casket, and the retrieval of the urn. In contrast to the spatially dense and functioning conceived crematorium, major elements of this public program are distinguished as a collection of materially diverse volumes which are composed within the boundaries the skeletal building framework. The program of public visits is defined by an architecture that is merging with a garden landscape. The primary figure in this landscapelarchitecture composition is the ephemeral translucent box that houses the Chapel — it is a building within a building.

Building Walls: Layered wall construction captures and employs the useful space, cavities and air spaces between its layers. The



Bispebjerg Crematorium's exterior skin is of open jointed stone panels that acknowledge the usefulness of an air circulation cavity that allows water penetration and then evaporates this moisture upward and out of the open cavity. At the building's dense western end, a vertical cavity is developed between the enclosing rain screen assembly and the building's steel structure to deliver the necessary fresh air and the building's exhaust air. Metaphorically, the building breathes in and exhales out through these thick layered walls. Over the length of the building, from west to east, the buildings exterior layers are shed as the building "dissolves" toward the garden landscape. The eastern portion of the building is skeletal in expression and is comprised of three layers: a concrete frame, an operable curtain wall system and the building's structural steel frame. Sited within this interior garden landscape are two translucent and transparent volumes that have gravitated toward the building's perimeter and phenomenally engage the layered skin, providing inhabitable spatial cavities to further delay the boundaries of inside and outside.

The program space surrounding the Chapel is considered as a garden landscape and is therefore not a mechanically conditioned space. Large panels of the curtain wall slide upwards, to provide a summer time ventilation flow that will exhaust through the open upper level louvers. During the winter months, the water of the reflecting pool is heated, by captured mechanical heat exhaust, to provide through the floor heating: a rising warm layer of air — which will hover as a steam cloud over the open air reflecting pool. The Chapel is constructed of teak wood stud framing that is clad on the exterior and lined on the interior with translucent glass panels. The enclosing double layers of glass capture and modulate the southern light, yet obscure vision to the outside world to create an isolated and contemplative world.

