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Garden of Gardens

An interfaith memorial park in Milan

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Abstract

The requirements regarding places related to death and burials are changing.

As a result of migratory phenomena European cities are increasingly assuming a **multicultural** character, different religious orientations coexist so that the definition of new spaces for ritual celebrations becomes necessary. At the same time and in an inverse way we are witnessing an increase of **secularism** in Western society along with the rise of new forms of spirituality. The combination of these two trends is testing the current organization of the cemetery, imposing essential adjustments aimed at obtaining proper spaces for funeral ceremonies of new religious minorities as well as for the celebration of laic farewell.

The goal of this work is to design an **interfaith cemetery**, not only by giving an answer to the new burial needs in terms of functionality, but rather translating these demands with awareness, proposing a new model of space that represents the **integration** of different cultural, spiritual and ritual identities.

From this perspective the cemetery can be considered as a **cultural landscape**, a burial park that supports **diversity**, where the theme of pluralism is interpreted as a “**collection**” of cultural and religious differences. Like in a picturesque garden in the new universal cemetery nature meets architecture, and different identities, places and landscapes are represented using artifice and metaphor, thus promoting an aesthetic of **multiplicity** and **complexity** instead of a neutral and uniform one.

Milan, with its cosmopolitan identity, is the ideal scenario to experience this new form of cemetery, confirming and expanding its role as a leading city of cultural integration.

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