



INSIGHT

HERITAGE REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC SPACES

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Chalmers School of Architecture + Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering

2026

Examiner: Joaquim Tarasso
Supervisors: Maja Hjerten Knutsson, Peter Christensson



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Note of acknowledgment

Thank you deeply to those that helped me in the process of developing this thesis.

To my friends who stayed up on late nights and overly-expansive calls to discuss with me, my colleagues that put their own work aside to entertain my at times unserious inquiries, the teachers who have shown me trust and support, and my family for always being by my side.

This could not have been done without all of you. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

Heritage in urban public spaces is often mediated through static monuments, which can struggle to engage contemporary audiences and convey meaningful experiences. This master's thesis investigates heritage as a lived and experiential phenomenon, examining how memory, atmosphere, and perception intersect in the representation of cultural and historical values. The work integrates phenomenological perspectives on sensory and atmospheric experience with a visual narrative approach that operates as both an interpretive and expressive medium.

The research approaches heritage not only as a historical subject, but as a spatial and sensory condition encountered within the urban environment. Through thematic analysis and comparative investigation of memorial and heritage spaces, the thesis explores how spatial design, atmosphere, and contextual conditions influence the ways in which visitors perceive, inhabit, and emotionally engage with sites of cultural significance. Particular attention is given to the role of bodily perception, environmental qualities, and experiential engagement in shaping moments of reflection and remembrance.

Alongside this analytical inquiry, the project develops a photobook-based visual narrative that translates the theoretical concerns of the thesis into an experiential form. Through the sequencing of images and text, the work explores how heritage may be encountered beyond fixed representation, allowing meaning to emerge through perception, atmosphere, and association rather than through direct symbolic communication alone.

The outcome of the thesis is twofold. Academically, it proposes a framework for understanding heritage as an experiential and relational condition linking architecture, perception, and cultural memory. Creatively, the photobook functions as a design-oriented artefact through which these ideas are explored and communicated experientially. Together, these components offer insight into context-sensitive approaches to heritage representation, demonstrating how contemporary urban spaces may mediate cultural meaning and human experience beyond conventional monumentality.

KEYWORDS: HERITAGE, URBAN DESIGN, MEMORIALS, PHENOMENOLOGY, ATMOSPHERE, PERCEPTION, PHOTOGRAPHY

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PROLOGUE

Heritage-linked architectural works, such as monuments and memorials, often become background objects in contemporary life. This realization marked the beginning of this inquiry. It emerged from years of personal observation and an increasing discomfort with the growing distance between these spaces and the people who move among them daily.

Perhaps not a consciously formed thought at first, but one long rooted in memory, I came to believe that spaces and objects carrying profound cultural, historical, and emotional weight should never become afterthoughts.

A specific image comes to mind when reflecting on memorials and monuments and their role within society. I imagine them as pillars of light within a darkened city. Presences that rise high up to sky level while casting orientation across their surroundings. These objects and spaces do not impose a singular path upon those who encounter them, rather, they reveal the field of possible paths already available. Through their presence, individuals become situated within broader connections of memory, identity, and collective belonging. In this sense, monuments operate less as objects of reflection and more as silent guides embedded within the deeper structures through which individuals come to understand themselves and their place in the world.

This prologue serves to position my personal standpoint as the starting point of this inquiry. It invites the reader to momentarily step into my perspective, establishing the honesty with which this study is conducted and maintained throughout the thesis. Having acknowledged this subjective position, the work that follows approaches the subject through structured critical and academic rigor.

CONTEXT

Heritage

To define Heritage

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, Heritage is defined as 'Something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor; something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth' (*Merriam-Webster, n.d.*). As per its official definition, it can be understood as a rather vast and inclusive term. An umbrella-term in its own right. Beneath the surface, however, the multiple layers of this concept can be expressed as follows.

Firstly, two distinct definitions are made by official organizations pertaining to the preservation of Heritage, or Cultural Heritage in this case, namely UNESCO. The organization recognizes the Tangible Heritage, or Tangible Cultural Heritage, and Intangible Heritage, or Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH for short) as the two main points of departure going down the list of Heritage exploration. Secondly, each of the two distinct categories defined has its own set of sub-categories, with their very own selection criteria that act as guidelines for what may or may not be considered included in their list.

An important disclaimer to mention here is that the organization also recognizes that certain parts of ICH may be expressed in tangible forms, intersecting with the Tangible Heritage category. This fact proposes new ways and methods of reacting, preserving, and categorizing Heritage, making it an ever-evolving and continuous process.

Past the disclaimer, noteworthy categories to consider in order to achieve a solid understanding of the concepts of both Tangible Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage are the ones described below.

Tangible Heritage can be understood as material aspects and creations of human history and culture that possess value in the fields of history, archaeology, artistry, and science. Such aspects include sub-categories such as: Immovable aspects (Monuments, buildings, archaeological sites), Movable aspects (Objects, paintings, sculptures, etc.), and Underwater aspects (Shipwrecks, ruins) (*UNESCO, 2009*).

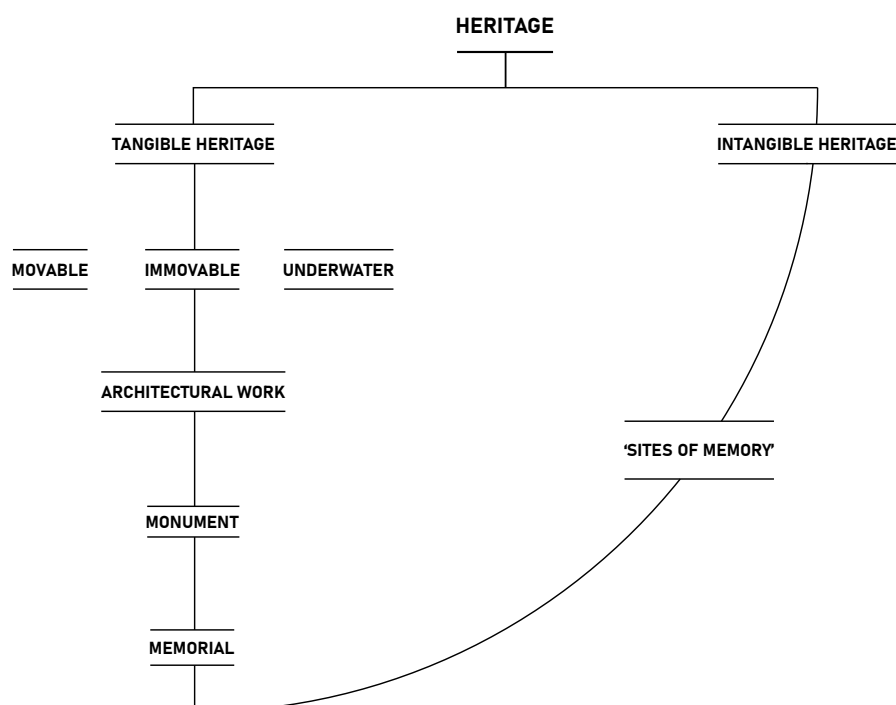
On the other hand, Intangible Cultural Heritage is said to be a culmination of practices, representation, knowledge, skills —as well as the instruments, artefacts, or spaces related to— what communities, groups, or individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (*UNESCO, 2003*).

Connection to this thesis

Following the path of Tangible Heritage a very interesting link can be noticed when enough layers are explored. Within the sub-layers of Immovable aspects, that is where architectural works are situated. One of the many types of architectural works recognized as parts of Immovable aspects of Tangible Heritage are monuments.

A layer deeper, a type of monument recognized is the Memorial. Memorials, thereafter, are specifically categorized as 'Sites of Memory', based on their impact on a nation or group of people and the wish of said nation or group to memorialize the events or values born or supported by them. And here is where the most interesting connection happens.

Precisely because memorials are linked to, and possess, strong associative values, they are also actively intersecting with the Intangible Cultural Heritage itself as a category. This link back to a different fundamental part of the Heritage discourse makes Memorials a unique part that transcends layers, restrictions, and norms within the Cultural Heritage community. This relationship between heritage, collective memory, and contemporary urban environments has also been acknowledged within heritage discourse, particularly through discussions surrounding the integration of intangible cultural heritage into urban contexts (*ICOMOS, 2019*).



Justification of Heritage choice

Memorials are chosen as the primary focus because they embody heritage in its most paradoxical form: materially present, yet dependent almost entirely on lived perception and collective memory for their meaning.

Memorial Concept Timeline

This historical overview presents an interpretive reading of the evolution of memorial representation, tracing shifts in its social, spatial, and experiential logic. While not intended as a comprehensive historical account, this reading aligns with existing scholarship on commemorative practices, particularly in relation to modern and contemporary memorial design (*Tanović, 2019*), and will be further examined through phenomenological and atmosphere theory in following sections. While later developments are supported by dedicated scholarship, earlier periods are approached through a broader historical lens in order to establish a conceptual trajectory rather than a detailed historiography.

▪ Enclosed / Sacred

The representation of heritage—understood here as the ways in which memory, identity, and collective meaning are materially and spatially expressed—has throughout mankind's history been one of great importance. A look back at our timeline will paint this picture clearly when it comes to the concept of the memorial. Tracing back to ancient times, particularly during protohistoric eras, the first traces of such commemorative traits can be observed. Pharaohs were amongst the first figures considered notable enough to be remembered through monumental form. Following this desire to suspend one's temporal existence, classical antiquity presented its own version of transcending human limits and entering into a form of enduring memory, often through the use of stelae, funerary markers, and mausoleums.

Later, medieval practices continued this impulse to inscribe memory into the fabric of time. Tomb effigies and burial monuments enclosed the subject within carefully constructed and symbolically charged spaces. From this, one can observe that early memorial practices were largely defined by enclosure, material permanence, and an association with the sacred, where access and experience were often limited, controlled, or ritualized.

▪ Civic / Central

The periods that followed, particularly the Renaissance and Enlightenment, saw a shift in the spatial and social logic of memorialization. Funerary monuments and equestrian statues increasingly occupied public space, becoming visible within the everyday life of the city. This transition reflects a broader movement toward public monumentality, where memory was no longer confined to enclosed or sacred settings but was instead projected outward into shared civic environments.

This tendency continued into the 19th century, where new typologies such as columns, national monuments, and war memorials emerged as dominant forms. These structures were often positioned in central urban locations and were intended to be encountered collectively, reinforcing shared narratives of identity, power, and history. As has been discussed in studies of commemorative architecture, this period marks the consolidation of the monument as a civic instrument—one that communicates meaning through visibility, scale, and symbolic clarity.

The early modern era, shaped by large-scale conflicts, further expanded this tradition. Cenotaphs and war memorials became central devices for addressing mass and collective loss. While the subject of commemoration shifted from individual figures to collective sacrifice, the spatial logic remained outward-facing and publicly oriented. Across these periods, the memorial transitions from enclosed and sacred spaces to open, civic, and collectively legible forms of representation.

Memorial Concept Timeline

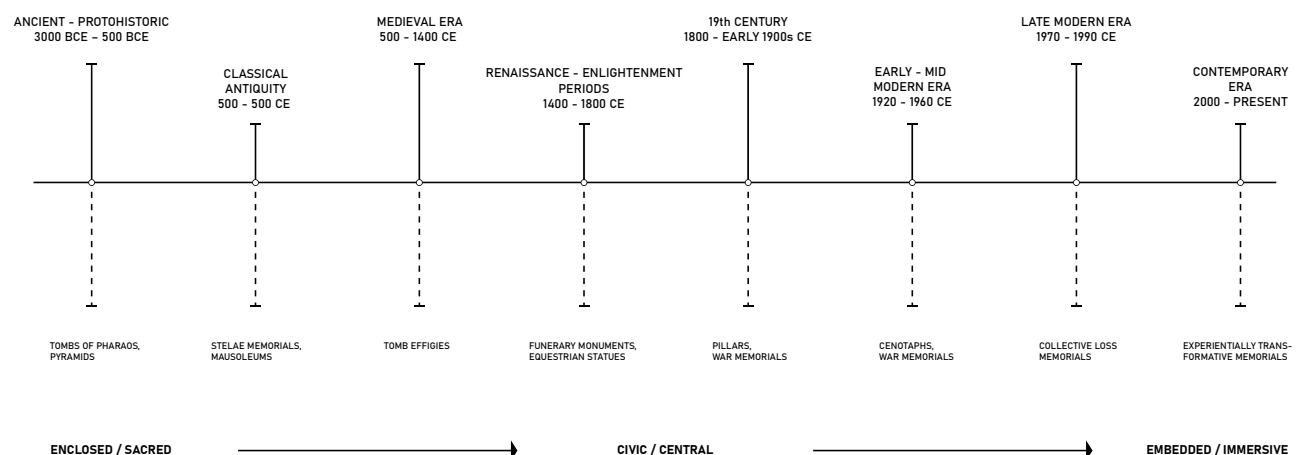
▪ Embedded / Immersive

As the 20th century progresses, the nature of memorialization undergoes another transformation. Collective loss remains a central theme, particularly in the aftermath of global conflicts, but the means of representation begin to shift. Rather than relying solely on symbolic form or monumental presence, memorials increasingly explore spatial experience, material atmosphere, and conceptual abstraction.

In contemporary practice, this experiential dimension becomes central. Memorials are no longer conceived only as objects to be observed, but as environments to be entered and experienced. Through the use of landscape, materiality, and spatial sequencing, they invite visitors into reflective and often affective encounters. This shift has been widely discussed in relation to late modern and contemporary memorial design, where emphasis is placed on participation, ambiguity, and embodied engagement rather than fixed symbolic narratives (*Tanović, 2019*).

This transformation marks a critical departure from earlier paradigms. The memorial no longer operates solely through representation, but through interaction—where meaning is not imposed, but emerges through the relationship between site, body, and memory. It is within this condition that the role of the visitor becomes central, and where the success of a memorial is increasingly tied to how it is experienced rather than simply how it is seen.

It is within this contemporary condition—where meaning emerges through interaction rather than static representation—that the relationship between monument and audience becomes critical, forming the basis for the relational framework explored in this study.



Phenomenology and Experiential Engagement

Introduction to the science

When seeking to view a situation from an experiential perspective, especially in the context of interpreting the relational abilities of memorials, or lack thereof, phenomenology becomes an effective tool. Viewed as a means to clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life (*von Eckartsberg, 1998, p. 3, as cited in Seamon, 2000*), phenomenology can be understood as a bridge between scientific abstraction and lived experience, providing a framework for examining the world as it is encountered.

The term was originally coined by Edmund Husserl, who established phenomenology as a study of consciousness and experience. Later developments, particularly through Maurice Merleau-Ponty, shifted the focus toward embodied perception, arguing that experience is not a detached mental activity but something lived through the body in direct engagement with the world (*Merleau-Ponty, 1962*). In this sense, perception is always situated, shaped by both bodily presence and contextual awareness, forming the basis for how meaning is encountered and understood.

Connection to architecture

As supported by Juhani Pallasmaa in 'The Eyes of the Skin' (2012), the tactile and multisensory dimensions of experience play a crucial role in how we understand the world. Rather than privileging vision alone, Pallasmaa emphasizes the interrelation of the body and its surroundings, suggesting that architecture is encountered through a full sensory engagement.

This perspective is further reinforced in architectural phenomenology, particularly in the work of Christian Norberg-Schulz, who describes architecture as giving form to the *genius loci*, or spirit of place (*Norberg-Schulz, 1980*). In this view, built environments are not neutral containers, but structured settings that shape how meaning is experienced. To inhabit a space is therefore not only to occupy it physically, but to engage with its character, atmosphere, and spatial logic.

But how does the use of phenomenology as a medium establish a connection to the field of architecture? One approach to this question is to consider that meaningful engagement between space and its subject has long been a central concern of architecture. At the same time, architecture also operates through functionality, use, and practical necessity. It is within this tension—between conceptual intention and lived experience—that phenomenology becomes relevant, offering a way to understand how space is not only designed, but encountered.

Phenomenology and the human experience are fundamentally interlinked. The body continuously perceives, interprets, and responds to stimuli, both consciously and subconsciously. To experience space is therefore not simply to observe it, but to exist within it, to engage with it, and to be affected by it. When applied to architecture, phenomenological thinking reveals how spatial conditions—material, light, scale, and atmosphere—contribute to meaning as it is lived rather than merely represented. This emphasis on atmosphere and sensory presence is also reflected in Peter Zumthor's understanding of architecture, where materiality, light, sound, and spatial composition contribute to the emotional and experiential qualities through which spaces are encountered (*Zumthor, 2006*).

To consider in relation to the thesis

The application of phenomenological theory to architecture, and specifically to monuments and memorials, becomes particularly relevant in contemporary life. If meaning is understood as something that emerges through embodied encounter, then the relationship between monument and audience must be examined not only in terms of representation, but in terms of experience.

This perspective also allows for a reconsideration of the apparent disconnect between people and heritage in contemporary contexts. Rather than assuming that meaning is inherently embedded within the monument itself, phenomenology suggests that meaning arises through the interaction between subject, space, and prior understanding. As such, both bodily experience and contextual knowledge contribute to how a memorial is perceived.

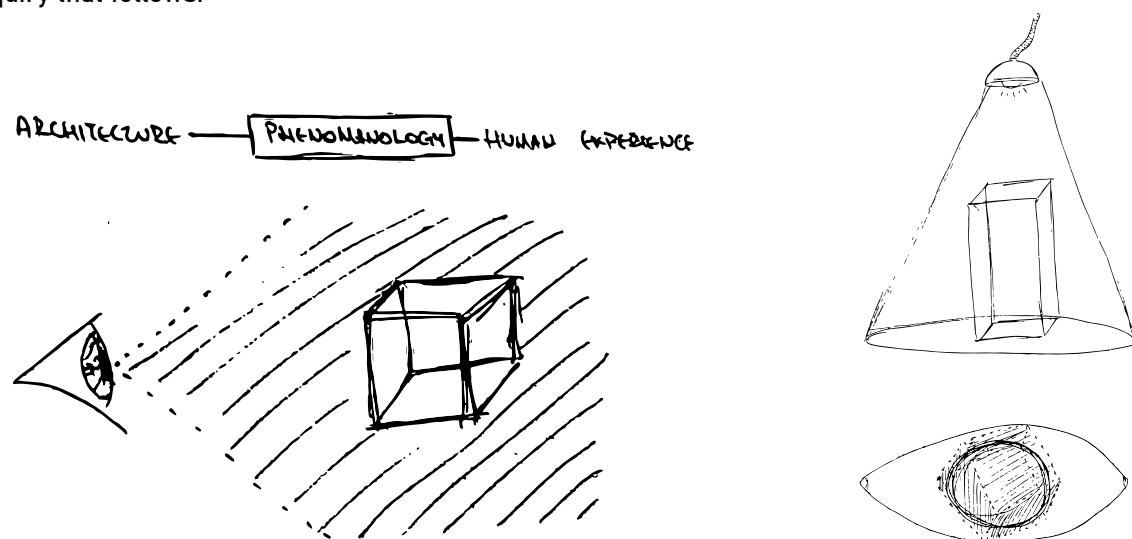
In support of this, the weakening of this relationship can be associated with multiple factors, including the passage of time and the dominance of vision as the primary mode of engagement. While time acts as an inevitable force that alters both material and meaning, the privileging of sight has had a more direct impact on how space is experienced.

As argued by Juhani Pallasmaa (*Pallasmaa, 2012*), contemporary culture has increasingly become ocular-centric, often neglecting the role of other senses in shaping experience. In an environment dominated by visual media and screen-based interaction, engagement with space risks becoming superficial, reducing the depth of embodied perception.

In this context, the experiential potential of memorials becomes critical. If monuments are encountered primarily through vision alone, their capacity to engage meaningfully may be diminished. However, when approached as spatial and atmospheric conditions—rather than purely visual objects—they may regain the ability to ground experience, inviting reflection through the body as well as the mind.

Closing note

If experience is understood as an embodied and situated condition—emerging through the interaction between subject, space, and context—then the question of how heritage is encountered in public space becomes critical. This shifts the focus from what monuments represent to how they are experienced, forming the basis for the inquiry that follows.



INQUIRY

Motivation

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this thesis are structured around a central conceptual inquiry. The primary focus of the investigation is the representation of heritage in public space, and the possibility of understanding it as an experiential condition rather than solely as a static monument. In this context, the research explores how heritage environments are perceived, inhabited, and remembered through sensory experience and spatial interaction.

To address this central inquiry, several supporting questions examine the role of phenomenological approaches in shaping the experience of heritage sites, the ways in which different modes of spatial engagement influence the activation of memory in public environments, and how experiential qualities of heritage may be translated into design representation through narrative and visual storytelling.

The main research question is therefore:

- How can heritage in urban public space be understood as an experiential condition rather than a static monument?

And the sub-questions follow:

- How do atmosphere, sensory perception, and embodied presence influence the experience of heritage sites?
- How do different modes of spatial engagement shape the way memory is activated in heritage environments?
- How can narrative and visual storytelling translate experiential qualities of heritage into design representation?

Scope of the Research and Delimitations

This thesis investigates heritage in urban public space as an experiential condition, focusing on how monuments and memorial environments are encountered, perceived, and interpreted through embodied presence and spatial atmosphere. Rather than approaching heritage primarily as a historical or conservation-based subject, the research examines how meaning emerges through the interaction between subject, space, and context.

The study is situated within a phenomenological framework informed by architectural theory, including the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Christian Norberg-Schulz, as well as Peter Zumthor and Juhani Pallasmaa. Within this context, the research explores how spatial and atmospheric conditions influence the ways in which monuments are experienced rather than solely how they are interpreted symbolically.

The inquiry is conducted through a series of case studies that represent different modes of engagement between monuments and their audiences. These cases are not intended to form a comprehensive survey, but instead function as investigative tools through which distinct relational conditions—such as indifference, denial, and respect—can be identified and examined. Through this approach, the thesis seeks to understand how different spatial and contextual factors shape the experiential qualities of heritage sites.

In addition to analytical investigation, the thesis includes a visual and narrative component that explores how experiential qualities of heritage can be communicated. Through the use of photography, image editing, and spatial storytelling, this component operates as a means of translating embodied and atmospheric conditions into a representational format. The scope of the research is therefore limited to the experiential and perceptual dimensions of heritage in urban public space. Broader discussions of heritage policy, conservation practice, or comprehensive historical analysis are acknowledged but remain outside the primary focus of this study.

Methods and Tools

Research question investigation methods analysis

For the purposes of this thesis, two primary methods have been selected to explore and address the research questions:

- a.) case study analysis, and
- b.) the development of a visual narrative - photobook.

These methods operate at different but complementary levels. While case studies provide a grounded, analytical understanding of how heritage spaces are experienced, the photobook functions as an exploratory and representational tool through which these insights are translated into an experiential form.

a.) Case Study Analysis

Case studies have been selected as a primary method due to their capacity to engage directly with the lived and situated qualities of memorial and heritage spaces. In alignment with the phenomenological grounding of this thesis, site-based investigation enables first-hand, embodied encounters with spatial atmosphere, sensory conditions, and patterns of use as they unfold in real time.

Beyond observation alone, the case study method is employed comparatively, allowing the research to examine how different monuments establish distinct relationships with their audiences. Rather than treating heritage sites as fixed objects of analysis, this approach considers them as relational environments in which meaning emerges through interaction between subject, space, and context.

To support this investigation, the case studies are structured through an analytical framework that identifies varying modes of interaction between monument and audience. By examining sites that exemplify contrasting experiential conditions, the method enables a focused exploration of how spatial design, atmosphere, and contextual factors influence perception, engagement, and reflection.

b.) Visual Narrative - Photobook

In addition to case study analysis, this thesis employs the development of a visual narrative photobook as a complementary tool. While not functioning as a primary analytical method, the photobook serves as the main design-oriented output through which the research is articulated.

The photobook is composed of original photographic material supported by short textual fragments. The images depict a range of subjects, from monuments and urban elements to everyday spatial situations, selected for their capacity to evoke perception and atmosphere rather than to document specific sites.

The choice of this medium stems from the limitations identified in conventional architectural representation, particularly in conveying the experiential and interpretive qualities of heritage. Through its sequential and narrative structure, the photobook allows for an exploration of how meaning can emerge through perception and association.

Within the scope of this thesis, the photobook functions primarily as a means of representation. At the same time, its development has informed the investigative process, offering a reflective tool through which ideas related to memory, atmosphere, and embodied experience are explored.

Case Studies and Contextual Exploration

Selection logic

The case studies examined in this research were selected in order to explore how monuments and memorials in public space establish different relationships with their audiences. Rather than approaching heritage sites primarily through stylistic, historical, or geographic comparison, the selection focuses on the experiential conditions that emerge between the object of memory and the people encountering it.

Initial observations suggested that monuments do not engage their audiences in a uniform way. Some remain largely unnoticed within the everyday flow of urban life, others provoke disagreement or resistance, while certain memorials appear capable of fostering moments of reflection and meaningful engagement. These differing responses indicate that the relationship between monument and audience is not fixed, but shaped by spatial conditions, context, and perception.

Based on these observations, the research investigates three distinct modes of interaction that can arise between an artefact of memory and the public experiencing it. These interaction types serve as an analytical framework for understanding how monuments operate within their environments and how visitors respond to them.

The case studies were therefore selected to represent these varying conditions of interaction. Each site exemplifies a particular relational situation between monument and audience, allowing the research to examine how spatial design, atmosphere, and context influence the ways in which heritage is perceived and experienced in public space.

The following section introduces the interaction types that structure this investigation and through which the selected case studies will be examined.

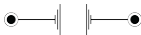
Case Studies and Contextual Exploration

Introduction to Interaction types

The relationship between monuments and their audiences is rarely neutral. Objects of memory placed in public space inevitably establish some form of interaction with those who encounter them, whether through deliberate engagement, passive observation, or rejection. In this research, the notion of interaction is understood phenomenologically, emphasizing the relational encounter between the artefact of memory and the individual experiencing it.

A meaningful encounter requires a certain degree of reciprocity. Monuments are designed with the intention of addressing an audience, while visitors approach them with their own expectations, memories, and interpretations. When these two directions of attention meet, an interaction is formed. In this sense, the encounter between monument and observer can be understood not as a static relationship but as a dynamic condition shaped by perception, spatial experience, and context.

Through observation and preliminary research, three recurring modes of interaction became apparent. These modes do not represent a hierarchy or a sequence of stages, but rather differing relational conditions that may arise between monuments and their audiences. For the purposes of this thesis, these interaction types are described as Indifference, Denial, and Respect.



INDIFFERENCE	DENIAL	RESPECT
LACK	COLLISION	AMPLIFICATION
DISTANCE	RESISTANCE	RESONANCE
INDEPENDENCE	DEFLECTION	ALIGNMENT
APHASIA	CANCELLATION	UNIFICATION
BLUR / FADE	SHADOW / OVERLAY	SHARPEN / FOCUS
TILT / DIRECTION	LOAD / POLARITY	FREQUENCY

Indifference

Indifference represents a condition in which a monument exists within the public realm without establishing a meaningful connection with its audience. In such situations, the object of memory becomes absorbed into the background of everyday urban life. People pass by without acknowledging its presence, and the monument itself fails to generate curiosity or engagement.

This condition is increasingly common in contemporary urban environments, where the pace of daily life often leaves little time for reflection on historical artefacts embedded within the cityscape. Monuments that once carried strong symbolic value may gradually lose their capacity to attract attention, becoming familiar yet unnoticed elements of the urban fabric. Indifference therefore reflects a state in which both monument and audience coexist without forming a significant experiential relationship.

Denial

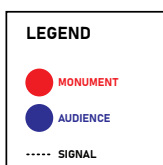
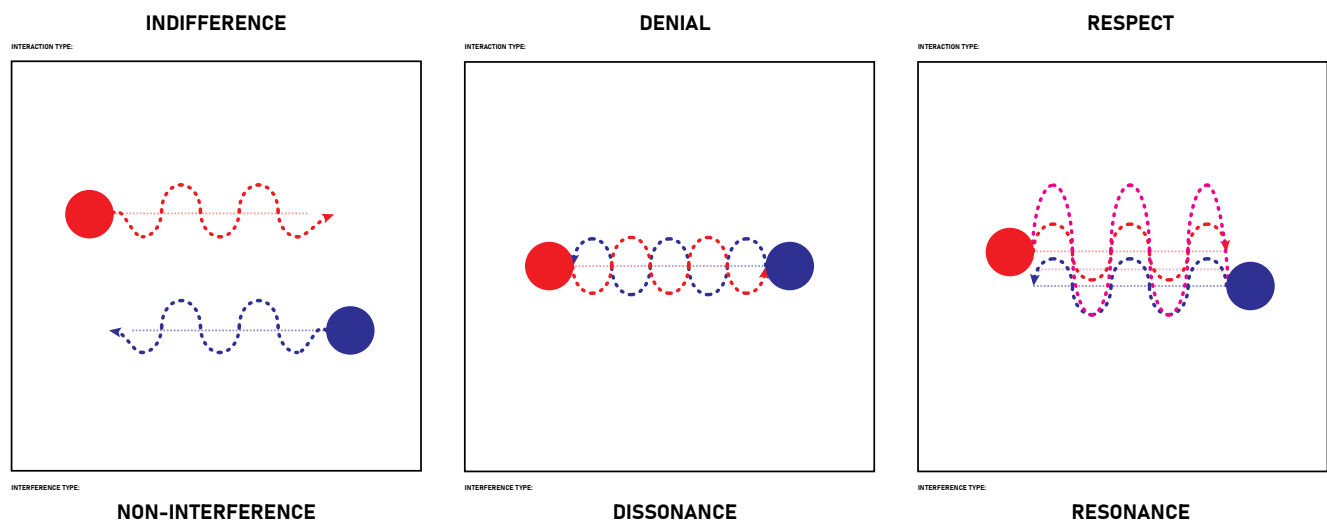
Denial describes a condition in which the relationship between monument and audience becomes confrontational or contested. In this case, the presence, meaning, or spatial configuration of the monument generates disagreement or resistance among those encountering it. Rather than fading into the background, the monument actively disrupts its surroundings and provokes reaction.

Historically, such situations have often emerged during periods of social or political transformation, when previously accepted symbols lose their legitimacy or when new artistic interventions challenge established expectations of public space. The resulting tension can lead to public debate, legal disputes, or even the removal of the monument itself. Denial therefore represents a form of interaction defined by conflict, where the encounter between monument and audience produces friction rather than resonance.

Respect

Respect represents a condition in which a balanced relationship is established between monument and audience. In this situation, the memorial or artefact of memory is capable of inviting engagement without imposing interpretation or demanding attention. Visitors may choose to pause, reflect, or simply acknowledge the presence of the site within their experience of the space.

This form of interaction does not imply ideal or perfect harmony between monument and observer. Rather, it reflects a state in which the spatial qualities, atmosphere, and meaning of the site allow visitors to engage with it in a manner that feels natural and voluntary. Respect therefore emerges when the monument and its audience achieve a form of equilibrium, enabling moments of reflection while remaining integrated within the broader environment.



These diagrams attempt to visualize the relational conditions between a monument and its audience through simplified wave-form interactions. By imagining projected values and attentiveness as signals, different forms of engagement can be understood through the ways these signals align, interfere, or resonate with one another. The diagrams are intended as interpretive tools that support the conceptual framework developed throughout the thesis.

Case Study - Individual

Selection (Case study 1 - Gustav Adolf II Square, Gothenburg)

The first case study was selected primarily based on prolonged personal observation of the site. Over time, what became evident was a condition of mutual disinterest between monument and audience. The plaza is mostly used as a thoroughfare, a place for photographs, or the occasional site of public gatherings, while attention directed toward the memorial itself remains minimal.

Conversly, the monument occupies a grand, centrally positioned space that interrupts the surrounding urban fabric, yet does not appear to actively invite engagement or interaction. Its scale and placement assert presence, but they coexist with a sense of quiet detachment from the everyday life unfolding around it.

This stable condition of Indifference, both observed in daily use and reinforced through repeated visits, made the site a compelling example for examining how a monument can exist in relation to its audience without commanding reciprocal attention.

Site visit (Case study 1 - Gustav Adolf II Square, Gothenburg)

Critical to mention here is the fact that each site visit has been conducted with different means, and investigation has followed with its own set of rules of engagement. Every approach to every case study's site visit was done by following an instinctual method to space understanding.

What follows is the two transcripts of both site visits done for Case study 1. The format followed is an interview with the space in the form of asking questions and allowing the answers to emerge naturally through presence within the site. Photography, note-taking, and reflections are also included.



Figure 1 - Gustaf Adolfs torg, Gothenburg. Photograph by Axt, 2008. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Site visit A

Raw notes

INTERVIEW (MYSELF - THE SQUARE)

WHO ARE YOU?

- THE COMMANDER OF SPACE, THE COMMANDER OF TIME. I SAY WHERE AND WHEN. I SAY HERE AND NOW.

HOW DO YOU COMMAND SPACE AND TIME?

- I FLATTEN SPACE. I MAKE IT VANISH. I BREAK RHYTHM, SET THE PACE, AND TIME FOLLOWS. BECAUSE I PROCLAIM IT.

WHAT IS THAT SOUND?

- DO YOU MEAN THE ORDER I HAVE SET? THE RESPECT I BRING ABOUT?
- I MEAN THE DEAFENING SILENCE OF THIS PLACE.
- SILENCE OCCURS WHEN THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO BE SAID ANYMORE.
- AND IT ALSO OCCURS WHEN NO ONE IS AROUND TO SPEAK EITHER.

WHY ARE YOU THIS DISTANT?

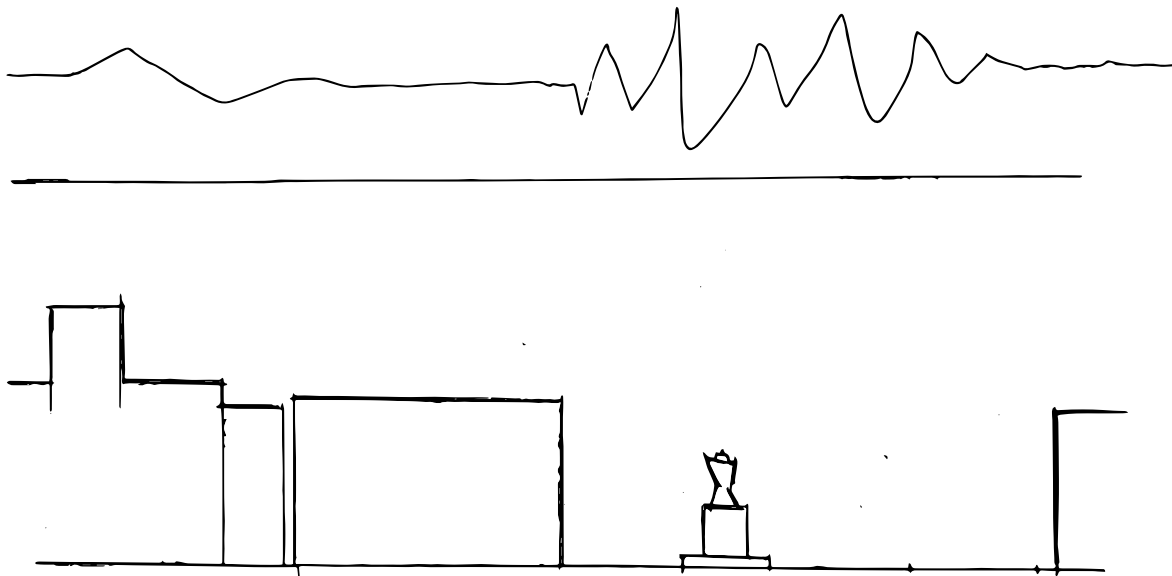
- GREATNESS IS TO BE ADMIRER FROM AFAR AND BELOW.
- NOT TO BE INCLUDED?

Reflections

Snow covered the site, that was the first thing I noticed. Only visible part of the ground were the paths made by people walking to go through the square. Still, even with most of the paving hidden, the small amounts felt were enough to provide. The cracks, the swelling in places, the once symmetrically and evenly distributed stones on the ground that no longer were. They were all too present when walking through the grounds. An ironic note, for in one's eyes this square could be perceived as the singular point of declaration of stability. Of order and structure. Of beginning. Yet the signs on the ground showed nothing but inconsistency, irregularity, and chaos. Mixed with the snow that crept between the smaller cracks amongst the stones on the ground, this idea of a fading through time, or through the seasons, could be felt. It is almost as if this random snowy day told more about the setting than what an extended analysis over a long period of time ever could. Perhaps this is bias, but at the same time, what is not bias to an extent?

The sounds were quite telling too. The distance of the trams going by. The quiet of the cars driving along the road. A couple with a stroller passes by after that. Then a few footsteps are heard carrying tiny pebbles as they hit the ground. It was all so profoundly quiet. This central place had no mouth to speak. It echoed nothing as if it had no words to offer.

The placement of the statue as well, that could be seen as intentional. In a way, it seemed as if the king had turned his gaze towards those people. The people that passed him by. The people that went through his space to reach their destination. As if longing to be there himself, he seemed fixed not on the horizon ahead, but at the place he would now prefer to be. In a sense, he did seem lonely. It is said that 'corner is king', I am starting to question this phrase now.



Site visit B

Raw notes

INTERVIEW (MYSELF - THE SQUARE)

WHO ARE YOU?

- I STILL AM THE COMMANDER OF THE SPACE.
- DOES THE SEAGULL SITTING ON YOUR HEAD FEEL THE SAME WAY AS YOU?
- IT PROBABLY FEELS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.

IT STILL IS RATHER QUIET, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?

- SHOULD IT BE ANY OTHER WAY?

ALL THIS COMMOTION AROUND YOU, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

- DO YOU HEAR THE SPEAKER PROCLAIM HIS LOVE FOR LIFE? FOR PEACE?
- I DO HEAR THAT. EVEN IF NOT IN YOUR SPACE, THE SOUND OF THAT SPEECH STILL REACHES YOU.
- THAT IS THE POINT.

YOUR COMMAND OVER SPACE, IT WAS FOR THIS ALL ALONG, WASN'T IT?

- IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN. EXERTION OF POWER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE.
- YOU OPENED UP THE SPACE TO LET OTHERS IN.
- ANYONE AND EVERYONE.

AND YOUR GAZE, WHAT IS IT TURNED TOWARDS?

- HOPE.
- FOR ANYONE AND EVERYONE?
- YES.

WAS IT EVER ABOUT YOU, THIS WHOLE THING?

- OF COURSE IT WAS. YET, I AM GLAD IT IS NO LONGER ALL ABOUT ME.

Reflections

The snow was still present, but this time the sun was around as well. This, in combination with the day being the celebration of Valentine's Day and the fact that it was a Saturday, brought a different climate to the scene all together. More people passed through the square. Some even sat on the benches found on the sides. One man in particular sat on the steps of the statue itself, disregarding the clear boundary set by the chains surrounding the monument.

For some reason, the cracks on the paving did not hold much weight this time around. The paths formed by people walking through the square too. It felt as if the intent of the space itself had changed.

A few things could be considered responsible for that. Apart from the man sitting on the statue's footing, the other clearly different thing noticed this time around was a very persistent and proud-looking seagull. The bird had found its place on top of the King's statue's head, and it refused to move. It sat there, looking down and around, as if scanning the area while simultaneously assuming a sense of control over it. Despite the hilarity found in that moment, the overall atmosphere appeared to be calmer and warmer. Another thing that could be blamed for the intent's switch would be the number of people occupying the square. Rest stops on the side benches, couples holding hands crossing the grounds, strollers rolling over the solidified ice on the stone, phone calls to loved ones as a bus passes by. And then, of course, a speaker preaching love and peace echoed from the next square over, in Brunnsparken. The words spoken would fill the space and almost paint it anew with his passion. I believe this sole factor might have changed my perception of the space, or perhaps the joint forces of all the aforementioned elements played equally potent parts in the internal change I experienced.

Lastly, as time went on, an hour into the site visit, people gathered around to begin their protest. A political one, who's kind this space invites openly. This to was to be expected, and it honestly felt like the space invited it too. There was a specific kind of openness sensed this time around. No longing for anything specific, only trust in the current state of things. The now had become absolute and weightless at the same time.

Case Study - Individual

Selection (Case study 2 - The Tilted Arc, New York)

The second case study was selected deliberately to represent the interaction type of Denial, following the establishment of Indifference in Case Study 1. Cases in which monuments are actively denied by their audience are rare, as works provoking strong opposition often face removal or destruction. Historical investigation led to the selection of The Tilted Arc, a long steel angled wall originally installed in a Manhattan plaza serving as an entryway to two prominent buildings.

The work faced criticism for disrupting pedestrian flow, impairing visibility, and raising security concerns. Friction between the piece and its users escalated over time, drawing public attention, legal challenges, and widespread debate about its presence. Ultimately, the accumulated opposition culminated in court proceedings and the work's removal, making it a telling example of Denial and a compelling case for investigating how monuments and audiences can collide in public space.

Site visit (Case study 2 - The Tilted Arc, New York)

The method of approach for this site visit was dramatically different from the previous one. Limitations presented in this case were the fact that this site was only researchable digitally, since it no longer exists, due to its destruction after public appeal.

The means of investigation thusly turned to attempts at immersion emulation, rather than physical and bodily immersion brought by presence.



Figure 2 - Richard Serra's Tilted Arc at Federal Plaza, New York. Source: Wikipedia/Wikimedia (used for academic discussion purposes)

Raw notes

- FIRST STEP IS TO DISTANCE MYSELF AS AN OBSERVER FROM FAMILIAR WORKING ENVIRONMENTS
- SECOND STEP IS TO INCLUDE AMBIENT SOUNDS FOR INCREASED ATMOSPHERIC IMMERSION

PERSONAL NOTES - FIRST LOOK THROUGH DIGITAL EVIDENCE

- THIS SPACE IS SO BUSY, BUT SO EMPTY AT THE SAME TIME
- I DO NOT FEEL AS IF THE SPACE WOULD BE ACCEPTING OF ME
- WHAT WOULD MY LIFE BE LIKE THERE? HOW DOES THIS SPACE IMPACT IT?
- MY PATH IS BEING BLOCKED, MY VIEW, SHAPING MY EXPERIENCE FOR ME
- THE ARC HAS INCREDIBLE PRESENCE AND POWER OVER SPACE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SPACE ACCESSED

- ARCHIVED IMAGES
- IMAGES AFTER THE ART PIECE'S DESTRUCTION (OF THE SPACE)
- IMAGES AFTER THE ART PIECE'S DESTRUCTION (OF THE PIECE)

VIDEO MATERIAL OF THE SPACE ACCESSED

- DOCUMENTARY ON THE CASE OF THE ART PIECE'S REMOVAL
- VIDEO ESSAY ON THE HISTORY OF THE ART PIECE
- RECORDING OF THE TRIAL CASE FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE ART PIECE
- INTERVIEWS FROM PASSERBY'S DURING THE ART PIECE'S REIGN
- TAKEAWAY QUOTE FROM RICHARD SERRA DURING THE TRIAL: **"THE EXPERIENCE OF ART ITSELF IS A SOCIAL FUNCTION."**, WHEN HE WAS CRITICIZED FOR NOT PROVIDING ANY FUNCTIONALITY WITH HIS INSTALLATION.

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE PROCESS

- LIMITATIONS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CASE STUDIES ARE VERY APPARENT
- TEMPORAL CO-EXISTENCE IS CRITICAL TO THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EMBODIMENT OF AN EXPERIENCE
- PHENOMENOLOGY CHANGES CHARACTER WHEN DIRECTED TOWARDS SOMETHING THAT SURVIVES ONLY THROUGH ITS REMOVAL
- MEMORY AND PRESENCE ARE TWO VASTLY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

Reflections

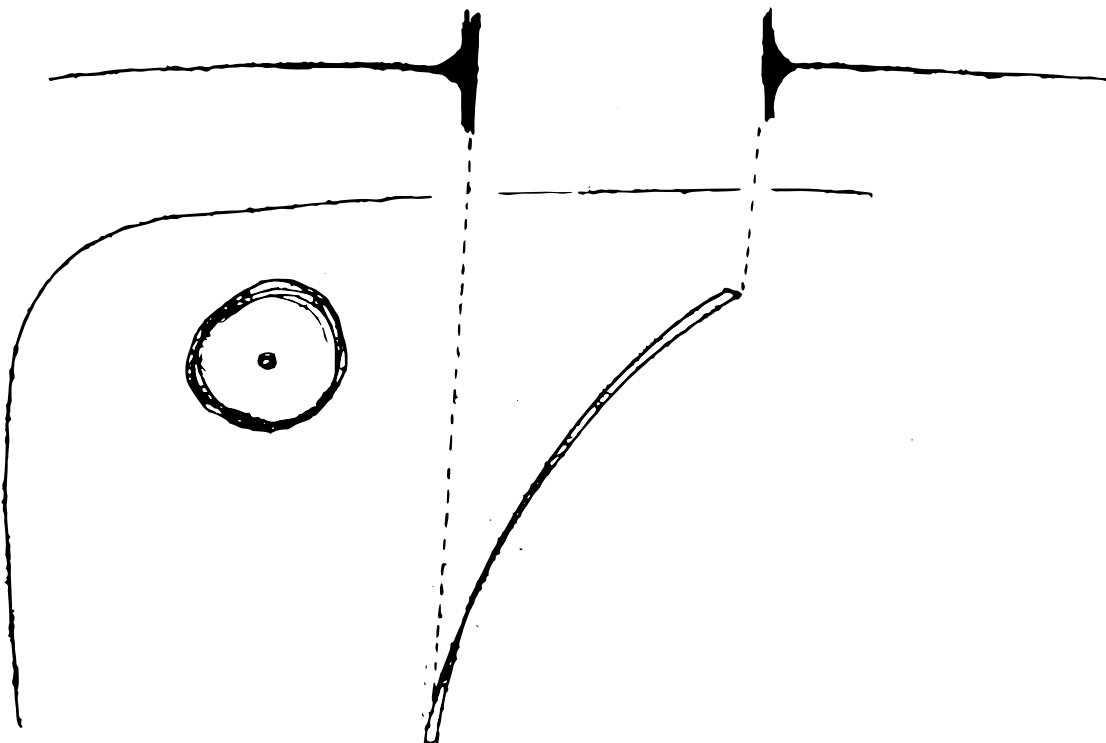
Approaching this site visit required an adjusted methodological position from the outset. The artwork's absence, both temporally and physically following its removal, necessitated precaution in how immersion could be pursued. Direct phenomenological encounter was impossible, and therefore an alternative mode of engagement had to be constructed.

The investigative method adopted resembled a form of controlled simulation, establishing artificial environmental conditions intended to invite sensory immersion. Two preparatory steps structured this process. First, familiar working environments were deliberately avoided, relocating the investigation to an unfamiliar space within the University's Architecture building. This decision aimed to mirror the uncertainty and spatial discomfort frequently described in accounts of the installation. Second, ambient audio conditions consisting of low-volume urban sound and atmospheric tones were introduced in an attempt to situate the investigation within a context removed from immediate reality.

Once these conditions were established, the investigation proceeded primarily through mediated material. Engagement remained noticeably detached, an expected outcome. Photographs, recordings, and testimonies may approximate spatial experience, yet they cannot fully substitute lived encounter.

Initial observations were recorded through direct note-taking, treating the material as though encountered on-site and postponing phenomenological interpretation. The process then expanded toward examination of the legal proceedings surrounding the artwork's removal. Following testimonies from both supporters and opponents introduced an unexpected form of immersion, generating empathy toward Richard Serra and reframing the conflict as one rooted in competing understandings of public space and the art displayed within it.

Final reflections centered on the methodological differences revealed through this investigation. Comparison with previous site visits made evident the limits of mediated phenomenology, emphasizing how absence transforms both the character of experience and the role of the observer within it.



Case Study - Individual

Selection (Case study 3 - Utøya Memorial, Utøyakaia)

The selection of the third case study emerged during the search for contemporary memorials capable of fostering meaningful engagement between monument and visitor. During this process, the National Memorial at Utøyakaia came to attention through photographic documentation, despite having had no prior familiarity with the site.

Designed as a memorial to the 77 victims of the 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway, the project presents a carefully composed spatial sequence formed through a curved arrangement of steel elements and timber structures. The memorial unfolds across multiple levels and incorporates natural, locally sourced materials, creating a spatial experience that emphasizes continuity, reflection, and quiet movement through the landscape.

Even without direct documentation of visitors inhabiting the space, the design suggests the potential for contemplative engagement. The spatial configuration appears to invite presence without imposing it, allowing visitors to approach the memorial in a manner that feels natural and voluntary. In this sense, the site exemplifies the interaction type of Respect, where monument and audience are able to establish a balanced and receptive relationship.

The memorial therefore provides a compelling example for examining how spatial design and atmosphere can foster meaningful engagement with heritage while maintaining both solemnity and openness.

Site visit (Case study 3 - Utøya Memorial, Utøyakaia)

The method of approach for this site visit was closely related to the prior one presented. The means of investigation were digital in nature as well, but important to mention is the fact that immersion did not need to be emulated in this case. This notion is further developed in the notes and reflections that follow.

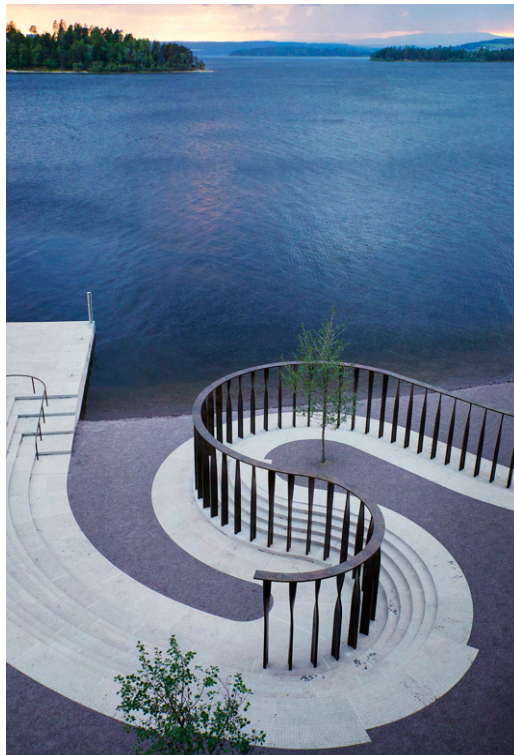


Figure 3 - National Memorial at Utøyakaia, Norway. Photograph by Sopsjaned, 2022. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Raw notes

- THIS APPROACH DOES NOT USE LOCATION OR AMBIENCE AS METHODS TO EMULATE PRESENCE
- IMAGINATION EMULATES PRESENCE INSTANTLY
- NOTES AND QUESTIONS FORMED FOLLOW OR HAPPEN IN PARALLEL TO THE RESEARCH OF VISUAL MATERIAL RELATED TO THE SITE

PERSONAL NOTES - FIRST LOOK THROUGH DIGITAL EVIDENCE

- THE FIRST THING I NOTICE IS A FEELING OF SERENITY.
- I CAN IMAGINE HEARING THE TRANQUIL SPLASHING OF WAVES ON THE SHORE WHILE A LIGHT BREEZE BLOWS BY.
- THE SILENCE IMAGINED IN THIS SPACE FEELS INVITING, NOT REJECTING, IN NATURE.
- I FEEL WELCOMED, TO SIT ON ITS STAIRS, TO WALK ALONG AND IN BETWEEN ITS PILLARS, AND TO HEAR MY OWN FOOTSTEPS ON THE PEBBLES FOUND ON ITS GROUND.
- PEACEFULLY RESTING ON ITS PREMISE FEELS POSSIBLE.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- DO YOUR PILLARS HOLD HEAT, AND DO THEY WARM UP WHEN THE SUN HITS THEM LONG ENOUGH?
- DO THEY TURN GOLDEN DURING THE SUNSET?
- DO YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED WHEN THE WATER LEVEL RISES AND SLOWLY SUBMERGES YOU?

SIDE-NOTE

- VIDEO OF INTERVIEW FOUND WHILE THE MEMORIAL'S CONSTRUCTION WAS UNDERWAY.
- LOCAL RESIDENTS (2 PEOPLE) VOICED COMPLAINTS AND DISAPPROVAL OF THE MEMORIAL'S PLACEMENT WITHIN 100 METERS OF THEIR HOMES.
- THEIR CLAIMS CARRIED WORRIES REGARDING THE LINGERING FEELINGS OF DREAD AND GRIEF WITH SUCH AN INSTALLATION THIS CLOSE TO THEIR PROPERTIES.
- SIMILARLY, IT WAS EXPRESSED THAT THE SITE BECOMING A TOURIST ATTRACTION COULD ALSO HINDER THEIR OTHERWISE QUIET LIVES.

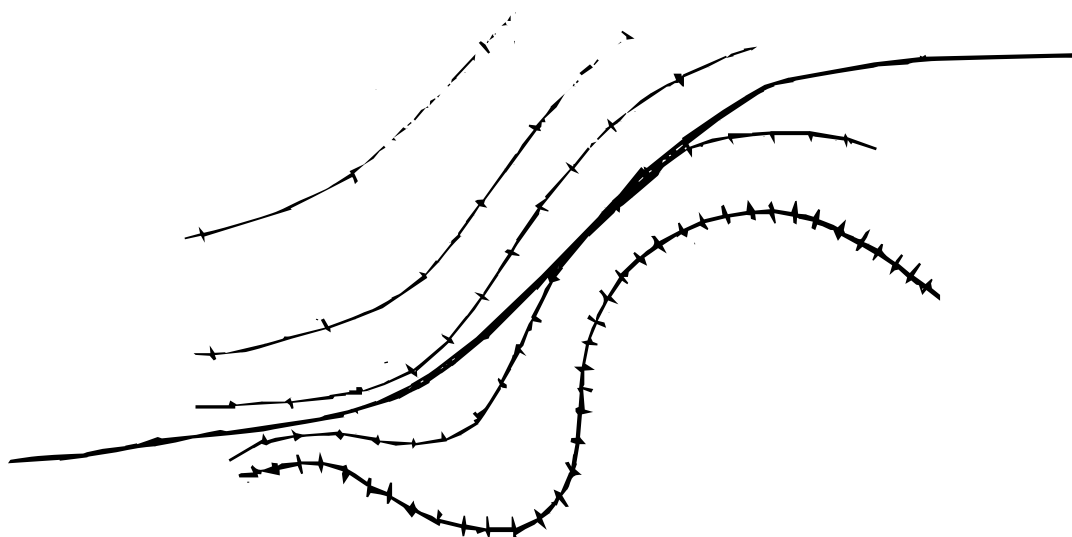
Reflections

The nature of this site visit can only be compared with the one done before it. Both being less physical, and more digital in nature. There is a difference between them to be noted, however. In this site visit, immersion came naturally. The imagination was engaged from the beginning and the experience was felt, rather than being observed.

As a starting point, looking at images of the memorial and site it is situated in, the atmosphere can already be grasped. Tranquility and calm, mixed with a quiet grief, were present in my thoughts. Embodiment within the space was also very noticeable. I could imagine myself walking on the site, and oddly enough, feeling welcomed by it. A genuine openness was felt at this stage, despite the silence perceived.

Moving past the initial impressions, a turn to the materiality of the elements within the site and of the memorial came naturally. Question asked about the warmth of the pillars, or the sense of connection to the sea the monument could have emerged. My intention was not to analyze the material use itself, and it quickly became about noticing how gracefully it all created its own character.

Lastly, a video of small interviews with locals was found, in which the locals express discontent with the memorial's placement. The video is situated at the same time as when the memorial was being built. The locals, one of the two being a rescuer of survivors from the tragic attack that took place in Utoya, explained their thoughts with conviction. They argued for the relocation of the proposed memorial, because if it were to be placed there, not one hundred meters from their homes, that would spark grief, uneasiness, and negative emotions for themselves throughout their days. Another local also voiced the opinion that a memorial such as the one proposed could affect the area's otherwise quiet atmosphere, by bringing in tourists of all kinds. All complaints have their pros and cons, even when they come from people with the best intentions in their hearts. What is important to recognize as a takeaway in this case is that respect for a work of historical, cultural, and deep emotional significance can still be existing, even if some opposition may come its way.

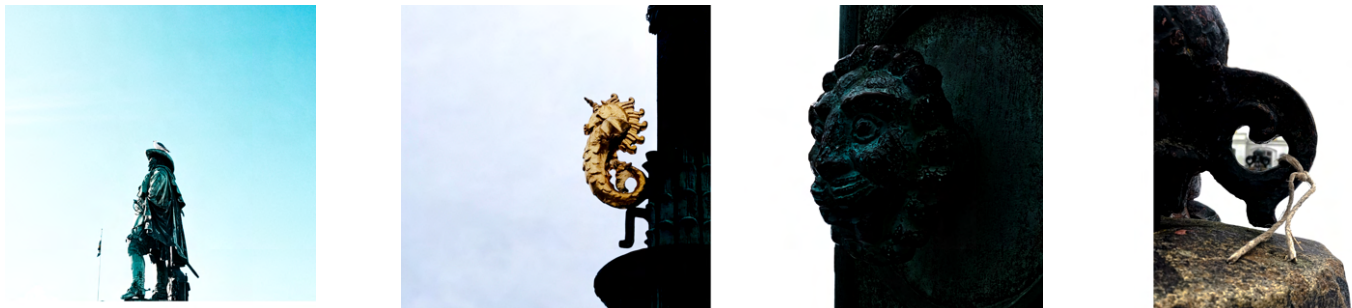


Photography and Visual Narrative — Photobook

In addition to case study analysis, this thesis uses photography and visual narrative as a method for investigating experiential qualities that are difficult to address through written analysis alone. Photography is used not primarily as documentation, but as a perceptual tool through which atmosphere, memory, spatial relation, and moments of attention can be observed and collected.

The image-making process was based on attentive walking, looking, and framing. Rather than searching only for monuments themselves, the photographic work focused on fragments, surfaces, shadows, thresholds, spatial relations, and situations in which meaning seemed to emerge indirectly. This approach allowed the research to examine how heritage may be sensed through conditions surrounding objects, rather than only through the objects themselves.

The photobook was therefore introduced as both a method of visual exploration and a later design outcome. During the inquiry, it functioned as a way to test how images, text, sequence, pacing, and association could produce a slower form of engagement. Through this process, visual narrative became a tool for translating the thesis's phenomenological concerns into an experiential form.



First set of images produced during the initial site visit, marking a shift from documenting monuments toward observing surrounding perceptual conditions.

These first photographs were produced during the early site visit, before the photobook sequence had been fully defined. Their role was not to resolve the visual language of the project, but to begin testing how monuments, fragments, surfaces, and surrounding conditions could be approached photographically. Through this first act of image-making, the research began to shift from looking for heritage objects toward looking for the perceptual conditions through which heritage might become noticeable.

OUTCOME

Case Study - Cross-critique

Cross-case reflection

With the completion of the site visits and the necessary elements of the investigation in place, a broader reflection on the research process becomes necessary. Conducting a cross-case reflection serves several purposes, most importantly providing an opportunity to examine the findings of each case study in relation to one another. Through this comparative perspective, clearer patterns and relationships can begin to emerge across the different encounters with monuments and memorial environments.

In pursuit of this clarity, the reflection is structured through two complementary analytical frameworks. The first framework, referred to as Structural Clarification, adopts a more disciplined and analytical approach. Through a series of focused questions, it seeks to establish clear points of contrast and alignment between the three case studies. The primary outcome of this stage is a distilled collection of observations that highlight structural differences and similarities in how the monuments operate within their respective contexts.

However, analytical comparison alone cannot fully capture the experiential qualities that form the foundation of this research. Monuments and memorial environments are encountered not only through spatial configuration or observable conditions, but through the sensory and emotional responses they evoke. For this reason, a second framework, referred to as Phenomenological Re-synthesis, revisits the reflections gathered from each case study and reinterprets them through questions oriented toward lived experience.

Rather than emphasizing contrast, this stage of the reflection seeks to identify shared patterns of perception, atmosphere, and engagement across the three sites. In doing so, the interaction types of Indifference, Denial, and Respect are reconsidered as experiential relationships between monument and audience. Together, these two frameworks provide complementary perspectives through which the broader insights of the thesis can emerge.

Section 1 - Structural Clarification

▪ HOW DID IMMERSION OCCUR?

In Case Study 1, immersion came from strict embodied presence. The occupation of the same space and time between audience and monument created a solid sense of immersion.

In Case Study 2, immersion had to be constructed through artificial means. Not being able to have temporal and spatial co-presence with the subject of the research minimized the possibilities of true immersion.

In Case Study 3, immersion came naturally, despite the spatial co-presence being absent.

▪ WAS IMAGINATION IMMEDIATE OR CONSTRUCTED?

In Case Study 1, imagination came immediately and vividly.

In Case Study 2, imagination had to be supported by artificial means, such as the physical location of the researcher and their auditory experience being influenced.

In Case Study 3, imagination came immediately and vividly.

▪ DID MEMORY FEEL ATMOSPHERIC, SYMBOLIC, OR DISCURSIVE?

In Case Study 1, memory felt discursive, and at times symbolic. The lack of atmospheric elements to support the monument was a clear influence on this matter.

In Case Study 2, memory felt symbolic. Unable to co-exist in the same space and time as the subject of the research, situated the researcher in a mode of documentation, rather than experience.

In Case Study 3, memory felt atmospheric and sensorial. The experience of grief surrounding the monument was felt to the degree of remembrance.

▪ WHAT ROLE DID MATERIALITY PLAY?

In Case Study 1, materiality was in the background. No elements captured the researcher's attention when it comes to the memorial itself. Surrounding objects, such as a decorative golden-plated sea-horse statue found in the site's boundary lines, placed at an overlooking position on a pole, did.

In Case Study 2, the materiality was profound, yet background as well. The main and most visible material that was used in this case, steel, did not manage to capture the researcher's curiosity.

In Case Study 3, the materiality became almost a foreground object as the study was developing. Balance with and reliance on the surrounding environment had an impact on this matter.

Cross-case reflection

Section 1 - Structural Clarification

▪ WAS CONFLICT SPATIAL, SOCIAL, OR PERCEPTUAL?

In Case Study 1, conflict was noticed to be of social and spatial nature. The indifference noticed between monument and audience was the social aspect, and in comparison with the monument's placement and its centrality, the spatial aspect appears.

In Case Study 2, conflict was noticed in all three modes. Spatial conflict was noticed from the path-alternating the art piece induced, but also from the ground-level visibility impairment it caused. Social, and even political, conflict was noticed from the amounts of complaints against the work, leading to a court hearing regarding its removal itself. Perceptual conflict was noticed vividly in the legal battle that unfolded in the process of the aforementioned court hearing, where both sides supported their own perceptions of what art should be, what its contribution to public space should be, and how its representation and management should be handled.

In Case Study 3, conflict was noticed to be of social and perceptual nature. One side regarded testimonies of two local residents that revealed clear opposition against the memorial's placement due to it making negative emotions resurface and unwanted traction being brought into their lives. In contrast to that, the researcher's and actual on-site visitors exclaimed feeling of serenity being brought by the memorial and its placement was present to rebalance the scale.

▪ WHAT WAS THE EMBODIED PLACEMENT (ROLE) OF THE RESEARCHER?

In Case Study 1, the embodied placement was that of the observer. A space not fully welcoming, but not in opposition to one's presence either, leaves only space for observation.

In Case Study 2, the embodied placement was that of the negotiator. A space and the story around it being shrouded in resistance can only leave space for negotiation between all parties present.

In Case Study 3, the embodied placement was that of the inhabitant. A space that seemingly invites a visitor without having expectations of them only leaves space for presence and appreciation.

Cross-case reflection

Section 2 - Phenomenological Re-synthesis

• CASE STUDY 1

ARRIVAL

Entering the square, the first impression was the space itself, not the monument. Its central placement was evident, but it did not command attention or curiosity. The square felt vast, quiet, and almost lost in its openness. Snow muffled sounds and flattened the visual field, emphasizing the absence of invitation. The monument seemed to exist, yet not to interact; it was present without presence, an object in place but not in dialogue with its audience.

EMBODIED PRESENCE

The body remained still, moving only as required to survey the space. There was no impulse to approach the monument or linger in specific areas; no bodily cues suggested engagement. Even walking through the site felt neutral, the spatial arrangement neither facilitated nor resisted movement. My posture and orientation mirrored the monument's detachment: the observer, acknowledging without participating.

ATMOSPHERE

The atmosphere was subdued and neutral, a mixture of solemnity and emptiness. No strong emotion was transmitted by the space or the monument; instead, the feeling was one of indifference, mirrored between object and audience. Only environmental factors, such as sunlight shifting across the square, snow crunching underfoot, or occasional passerby movement, brought subtle variations in perception. The monument did not assert itself emotionally, and the surrounding space offered no cues to prompt interaction.

MEMORY ACTIVATION

Remembrance, in the sense of experiencing historical resonance or emotional recall, was minimal. The memorial's subject, a historical figure removed from contemporary life, offered limited relatability. Memory did not emerge through atmosphere or materiality; it existed as a concept, acknowledged intellectually rather than felt sensorially. The experience reveals that without active engagement (sensory, spatial, or social) memory remains abstract and unembodied.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHT

The phenomenological experience of the site initially suggested a lack of engagement between the monument and its audience. The space appeared quiet, indifferent, and largely devoid of sensory or emotional activation. However, this apparent absence can be reconsidered through another lens. The monument's role may not be to actively evoke remembrance through symbolic presence or experiential intensity. Instead, the surrounding square functions as an open stage for everyday civic activity. In this sense, the monument operates less as an object demanding attention and more as a quiet spatial anchor within a larger field of public life. What initially appears as emptiness can therefore be understood as a form of civic canvas; a space that allows the city's inhabitants to continuously occupy and shape the site themselves. Memory here does not emerge through sensory immersion, but through the ongoing continuity of civic presence.

Cross-case reflection

Section 2 - Phenomenological Re-synthesis

• CASE STUDY 2

ARRIVAL

Arrival on this site came with a set of conditions set by me in order to be situated closer to the subject. Construction, or attempts at re-construction, of the experience had already placed a certain distance between researcher and subject matter. Through simulating environmental situations, an attempt at spatial co-presence could be attempted, however a temporal one proved to be a difficult feat to achieve. This, in combination with limited documentation on everyday life around the site overall enforced a feeling of denial in terms of accessibility.

EMBODIED PRESENCE

The body remained still during the research, even though the proclaimed obstacles it created in people's lives at the time could be felt. Mentioned obstructions of movement, or hinderances in visibility were easily imagined. Apart from the limited amounts of presence to be emulated, I was found mostly in the role of the investigator. This is supported by the quantity of the art piece's petition for removal's court hearing evidence I found myself following. Overall, the embodied feeling was that of investigating a case unfold only after the fact.

ATMOSPHERE

As mentioned previously, conditions put in place to emulate atmosphere and overall presence were artificial in nature, and combined with the lack of approachability felt, a weak sense of atmosphere was there to be experienced. Apart from a casual feeling of everyday life and walking through a corporate plaza, no major atmospheric elements showed up to influence my perception. In a sense, the atmosphere itself can be said to have been denied from the researcher in this case.

MEMORY ACTIVATION

Through the mediation of the experience, memory was activated deeply. This can be easily attributed to the fact that the work investigated existed only in the past, no matter how it has affected the world at present time. Researching such cases of the past is perhaps a surefire means to establish memory engagement, since reminiscing and looking back are the only viable options left. Memory was therefore activated not through sensory remembrance, but through reflective engagement with the historical record.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHT

The phenomenological encounter with this case differs significantly from the others due to the absence of direct spatial experience. The artwork exists primarily through its historical traces rather than through its physical presence. As a result, the encounter becomes investigative rather than immersive. The work is accessed through documentation, testimonies, and the legal discourse surrounding its removal. In this sense, the memorial quality of the work does not emerge from atmosphere or embodiment, but from the conflict it generated. The controversy surrounding its presence in the plaza, the objections raised by workers and officials, and the court proceedings that followed have become integral to how the work is remembered today. Memory here is therefore not anchored in sensory experience but in the persistence of debate. The artwork survives not through its material presence, but through the discourse that continues to define it.

Section 2 - Phenomenological Re-synthesis

• CASE STUDY 3

ARRIVAL

Arrival on this site came in similar fashion to the previous one, through digital means alone. In contrast to the case prior to this one, however, immersion and presence were easily and vividly explored with minimal effort on my part. Imagination was instantly captured with sensorial qualities of the space speaking for themselves with ease, and a welcoming feeling was experienced.

EMBODIED PRESENCE

The embodied presence of this case was one of quiet captivation. I found myself being in the role of the inhabitant quite naturally. Thoughts of traversing the space, feeling the material on my feet as I imagined walking through it, and even being invited to sit on its stairs for a moment of contemplation and respite flooded my mind.

ATMOSPHERE

The atmosphere was exceptionally potent in my research. Even before engaging with video footage of the space, the environment around it spoke of its qualities in a very clear way. Tranquility, serenity, and quiet grief all invited me to experience them, even through digital means of research. Sounds of waves, a breeze blowing against the reeds, footsteps crushing the small pebbles found on site, they all exuded the aforementioned qualities in abundance. Materiality was felt before it could be analyzed.

MEMORY ACTIVATION

Remembrance appeared through atmosphere rather than through direct symbolic communication. Despite the memorial having elements to impose remembrance through imagery and narrative, it instead allowed it to surface through the sensory qualities of the space itself. The tranquility of the water, the openness of the structure, and the quiet rhythm of the surrounding landscape created a setting in which reflection could emerge naturally. Grief was not imposed upon the visitor, but gently suggested through the atmosphere surrounding the memorial. This subtle presence of grief allowed remembrance to occur without force, creating a space where visitors could approach memory at their own pace. In this sense, remembrance was experienced less as an act of recalling events, and more as an emotional resonance with the atmosphere of the place. A statement that emerged through the research for this case study was this: 'Memory lies within our senses'.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHT

This case reveals the capacity of atmosphere to carry memory through sensory engagement rather than through explicit representation. The memorial does not attempt to recreate the tragedy it commemorates, nor does it overwhelm the visitor with symbolic gestures. Instead, it establishes a quiet spatial condition in which reflection can occur naturally. The surrounding landscape, the proximity to the water, and the material simplicity of the structure all contribute to an environment that encourages presence rather than explanation. In this way, remembrance is not dictated by the monument itself, but emerges through the visitor's own sensory and emotional engagement with the site. The memorial therefore functions not only as a marker of loss, but as a space that allows grief and contemplation to coexist with tranquility.

Final reflections - Insights

The completion of the cross-case reflection brings forth a series of recurring conditions through which heritage is encountered, perceived, and interpreted. Instead of acting as fixed carriers of meaning, monuments operate within relational and experiential frameworks that shape how memory emerges. Thus, the following insights are the distillation of all key findings of this investigation:

1. *"Heritage is not experienced through presence alone, but through the conditions of its encounter."*

The findings challenge the assumption that physical co-presence between monument and audience ensures meaningful engagement. While direct spatial encounter can enable immersion, it does not guarantee it. Conversely, strong experiential engagement can occur even in the absence of physical presence, provided that sensory and atmospheric cues are sufficiently evocative. Heritage, therefore, cannot be understood as dependent on proximity alone, but on the conditions through which it is encountered.

2. *"Memory does not reside in the monument, but emerges through how it is encountered."*

Across the case studies, memory was activated through fundamentally different mechanisms: as abstract knowledge, as historical discourse, and as sensory experience. This variation demonstrates that monuments do not inherently contain memory. Instead, memory is produced through the interaction between subject, space, and context. Where sensory and atmospheric engagement are absent, memory remains intellectual and distant; where such engagement is present, memory becomes embodied and affective.

3. *"Experiential meaning emerges through sensory and spatial engagement, not through representation alone."*

The comparison reveals that atmosphere plays a decisive role in shaping how heritage is perceived and internalized. In cases where atmosphere was weak or absent, engagement diminished and memory remained detached. In contrast, environments rich in sensory and spatial qualities were capable of evoking reflection, emotional resonance, and sustained attention. Atmosphere, therefore, operates as a key medium through which heritage becomes experientially accessible.

4. *"Conflict can function as an alternative mode of remembrance."*

In the absence of direct experience, memory may persist through discourse. The second case demonstrates that controversy, opposition, and debate can become the primary vehicles through which a monument is remembered. Here, heritage is not sustained through sensory or spatial engagement, but through its continued presence in collective discussion. This suggests that conflict, while often disruptive, can also act as a form of cultural persistence.

5. *"The relationship between monument and audience is relational, not fixed."*

The interaction types identified—indifference, denial, and respect—are not inherent qualities of the monuments themselves, but conditions that emerge through the interplay of spatial design, context, and perception. This indicates that heritage environments do not produce a single, stable meaning. Instead, they establish fields of possibility within which different forms of engagement can occur.

Design outcome - Photobook

Reasoning for a Photobook

Building on the use of photography and visual narrative as a research method, the photobook became the design outcome through which the thesis could be experienced sequentially. Rather than functioning as an illustrated summary of the written investigation, the book was developed as an experiential object in its own right: a curated sequence of images, textual fragments, pauses, and atmospheres through which the viewer is invited to engage with heritage indirectly.

The photograph itself can be understood as a form of “ready-made monument”; a preserved fragment of time carrying traces of memory, atmosphere, and perception. In an era defined by the saturation of images and the dominance of visual media, photography occupies a central role in how contemporary experience is documented and interpreted. Yet within this increasingly ocular-centric culture, the need arises not merely to look, but to perceive more attentively. Much like monuments and memorials, photographs possess the capacity to preserve moments, emotions, and associations beyond their immediate context.

At the same time, representations remain subject to ephemerality. Images, like monuments, risk fading into the background once they lose their ability to sustain attention and engagement. This thesis therefore approaches photography not simply as a tool of documentation, but as a medium capable of revealing overlooked experiential qualities through deliberate acts of observation and perception.

The photobook is consequently employed not only as a format for presenting images, but as an artifact that reflects the experiential concerns of the thesis itself. Through the sequencing of images and text, the work seeks to encourage slower forms of engagement and interpretation, allowing meaning to emerge through atmosphere, association, and sensory reflection. In this sense, the photobook functions both as a representation of the research and as an extension of its central inquiry into perception, memory, and lived experience as conditions through which heritage is encountered and understood.

Perceptual Engagement

The photobook is structured around the possibility of sustained engagement through perception. Rather than relying on direct explanation or fixed symbolic readings, the work allows images and text to unfold gradually through sequence and association.

Within this process, moments of ambiguity and familiarity coexist. Certain images appear closely connected to conventional notions of heritage and memorialization, while others shift attention toward more ordinary spatial situations and objects. This movement between the recognizable and the uncertain forms part of the perceptual rhythm of the work, encouraging the viewer to remain attentive to relationships that may not be immediately apparent.

The intention is not to obscure meaning, but to avoid reducing experience to singular interpretation. Through pacing, fragmentation, and shifts in visual focus, the photobook seeks to establish conditions in which perception becomes more deliberate and reflective. In this sense, engagement emerges less through direct representation and more through the act of attentive encounter itself.

Image-Making Strategy and Influences

The photographic strategy developed gradually throughout the thesis. At the beginning, the act of photographing was closer to a form of searching or hunting. The camera was directed toward recognizable subjects: monuments, figures, details, and objects that appeared to carry an immediate connection to heritage. In this early stage, the photograph still operated partly as a way of locating the subject of the research within the city.

As the work progressed, this approach began to shift. Influenced by Luigi Ghirri's writing and photographic work, particularly *It's Beautiful Here, Isn't It...* and *The Map and the Territory*, the act of photographing became slower, more distanced, and less dependent on finding a clear subject. Ghirri's work offered a way of engaging with reality and its representations through ambiguity, framing, distance, and attentiveness. His images often remain expressive without becoming fully readable, allowing ordinary scenes, surfaces, and fragments to open toward wider questions of perception and meaning.

This influence helped reorient the image-making strategy. Rather than forcing images to declare their meaning, the photographic process became a way of opening the possibility for encounter. The camera was used to remain with things slightly longer: to observe surfaces, fragments, spatial relations, shadows, atmospheres, and moments where surrounding conditions seemed to gather significance. The process moved from chasing scenes toward allowing scenes to align themselves with the observer.

By the later stages of the project, photographing became less about searching for monuments and more about becoming available to perceptual events. I would go to places without a fixed image in mind, allowing certain moments to ask for attention. In those moments, the experience would briefly settle into something photographable. The image was then taken not because the subject had been identified in advance, but because a relation between object, atmosphere, light, distance, and attention had momentarily formed.

This development can also be seen across the images themselves. Earlier photographs are more portrait-like and object-based, often centered on identifiable monuments or decorative fragments. Later images become more relational and situational, focusing less on singular objects and more on conditions in space: proximity, atmosphere, partial visibility, material traces, and the quiet alignment of elements. In this sense, the photographic method began to mirror the larger argument of the thesis: heritage is not encountered through objects alone, but through the conditions that allow objects, fragments, and situations to become perceptually active.

The construction of the photobook was also informed by Miho Kajioka's approach to atmosphere, image editing, materiality, and sequence. Books such as *Flowers Bloom*, *Butterflies Come*, *So It Goes*, and *And, where did the peacocks go?* became important references for understanding how a photobook can breathe across multiple pages, using quiet images, fragments, paper, rhythm, and material decisions to create a gradual atmosphere rather than a direct explanation.

Image-Making Strategy and Influences

Sophie Calle's *Because* offered another reference for the relationship between image, text, and revelation. In this work, the usual order of reading is interrupted: text is encountered before the image, and the image is physically concealed or delayed. This was relevant to the thesis because it showed how an image-text work can structure attention through withholding, sequencing, and partial revelation rather than through immediate visual access. Alec Soth and Francesco Zanon's *Ping Pong Conversations* informed the later idea of conversation fragments accompanying the images. The book uses dialogue around photographs as a way of opening interpretation, allowing each image to give rise to reflection, association, and discussion. This became important for the exhibition direction, where conversation slips were developed as a way of extending the photobook's image-text relationship into a tactile and spatial form.

These references were not used as direct stylistic models, but as methodological supports. They helped clarify how photography could operate within an architectural thesis not only as documentation, but as a perceptual tool. Through image-making, sequencing, editing, and material handling, photography became a way of investigating how atmosphere, memory, spatial relations, and attention participate in the experience of heritage

From Script to Poem

The written component of the photobook developed through a process of reduction and re-formation. Earlier versions of the text were in the shape of an original script, using the allegory of sight and familial heritage in a Sci-Fi setting as a means to explore the themes of the work. As the book developed, this text was gradually transformed into a poem sequence, allowing it to operate in a more atmospheric, rhythmic, and orientative mode.

This transformation was important because the photobook does not seek to instruct the viewer on how each image should be read, or to implore a full-length narrative script, but still is in need of creating atmospheric immersion. Thus, the text establishes a condition of attention before the images are encountered. Through spacing, fragmentation, and shifts in tone, the written passages act as pauses within the sequence, guiding the viewer without fixing the meaning of the visual material.

What follows is the original version of the script, which the poem found later in the photobook was based off of:

PLOT - *INSIGHT*

Act 1: The Discovery

- The protagonist learns from his father that a box of heirlooms belonging to his late grandfather has been found.
- Inside the box is a symbolic letter from the grandfather, along with several heirlooms.
- Among them, the protagonist takes his grandfather's sunglasses—an object he fondly remembers.

Act 2: The First Awakening

- Upon wearing the sunglasses during a walk, the protagonist realizes they have supernatural abilities.
- He begins perceiving aspects of existence invisible to others: subtle, intangible layers of the world around him.
- A particular object—a door—captures his attention, appearing to “call” to him.

Act 3: Entering the Mystical Space

- The protagonist passes through the magical door.
- The sunglasses break during this passage, and he temporarily loses his enhanced vision along with his actual vision.
- Inside this new, mysterious space, he must navigate without the visual aid he previously relied upon.

Act 4: The Three Trials

- The space contains three doors, each hiding a solitary character who embodies a unique concept.
- The protagonist does not initially know the number of trials nor the nature of these encounters.
- Each encounter with a character involves a challenge or “affliction” that the protagonist must understand or resolve to regain parts of his vision.

Door 1: The Character of Indifference

- The protagonist meets the first character, Indifference, who is associated with apathy and detachment from monuments and society.
- Initially, the character exists in total darkness, unseen.
- As the protagonist engages with the character and resolves the related challenge, he gains the first layer of vision: Light.
- He can now perceive vague, hazy forms of the character and the space, recognizing presence without clarity.

Door 2: The Character of Opposition

- Behind the second door, the protagonist encounters Opposition, representing conflict and a stance against monuments that clash with social ideals.
- With the previously gained Light, the protagonist can perceive the character’s outline from the start.
- Resolving the second challenge grants Focus, allowing him to discern precise forms, details, and features of the character and environment.
- The character remains in position and colorless (black-and-white), symbolically echoing the first character’s unresolved nature.

Door 3: The Character of Respect

- The third door reveals Respect, the only benevolent character who restores the protagonist’s full vision.
- Respect embodies understanding, appreciation, and connection to society and monuments.
- This character is seated peacefully, inviting the protagonist to approach—unlike the first two characters who were standing and unapproachable.
- Resolving the challenge of Respect grants Color, completing the protagonist’s supernatural vision.
- Color is associated with Soul and Movement, allowing the protagonist to perceive depth, vitality, and subtle dynamics in existence.

Act 5: Restoration and Return

- With full vision restored, the protagonist exits the mystical space.
- The sunglasses, while physically returned to him, are no longer necessary; he can now perceive the invisible and essential aspects of the world unaided.
- The protagonist’s understanding is enriched: he now possesses a profound perception of reality and a deeper comprehension of human and societal connections to monuments and memory.

As mentioned before, the poem acts in an orientative way, preserving the original script's intentions and taking advantage of its overall arc structure, while now acting under its own weight and in its own atmospheric world.

Attached next is also the full version of the poem, for reading purposes:

- It called back to me, that shared past spoke again. / We are so familiar.
 - Traces of it revealed themselves anew. / Your words reach me, clearly.
 - Accepted, taken in – my words too few. / I hold you now in silence. Live through me, in me.
-
- Blinding clarity that shone like the sun. / Should it be this way? No matter, it's now begun.
 - Feeling deeply, now, no surface crashing as the dive has depth. / What's being shown now? Could not yet tell and could not yell.
 - Pulling, drawing in. Cross me. / Why resist its power? The threshold is across me.
-
- Sudden, yes, it was. / We move along in this new space.
 - Blurred and lost now, no telling of its start or end. / We must start navigating, passage or a race?
 - Severed. / We, or I and you. Let's find a way out, it's now a cage.
-
- These rules are meant to be followed, that is the way this goes. / Not the shape of a friend, nor the presence of a foe.
 - I need to see. So, light a match for me. / You became light itself. Blazing with intensity inside the haze.
 - I need to understand. So, come and take me by the hand. / You were now clear. Detailed as ever, as if you were once near.
 - I need nothing from you. So, come and be just like the one before you. / You became color, alive. Moving through me as I through you, finally had drive.
-
- Everything restored now, it seems it must be so. / No longer in the haze, the darkness, or the cold.
 - No absence leaves you empty now, no use for a new vice. / Know what matters, no jab and no advice.
 - Know this, what once was may never again be. / Let it last if you must, it's just a memory.

Sequential and Narrative Construction

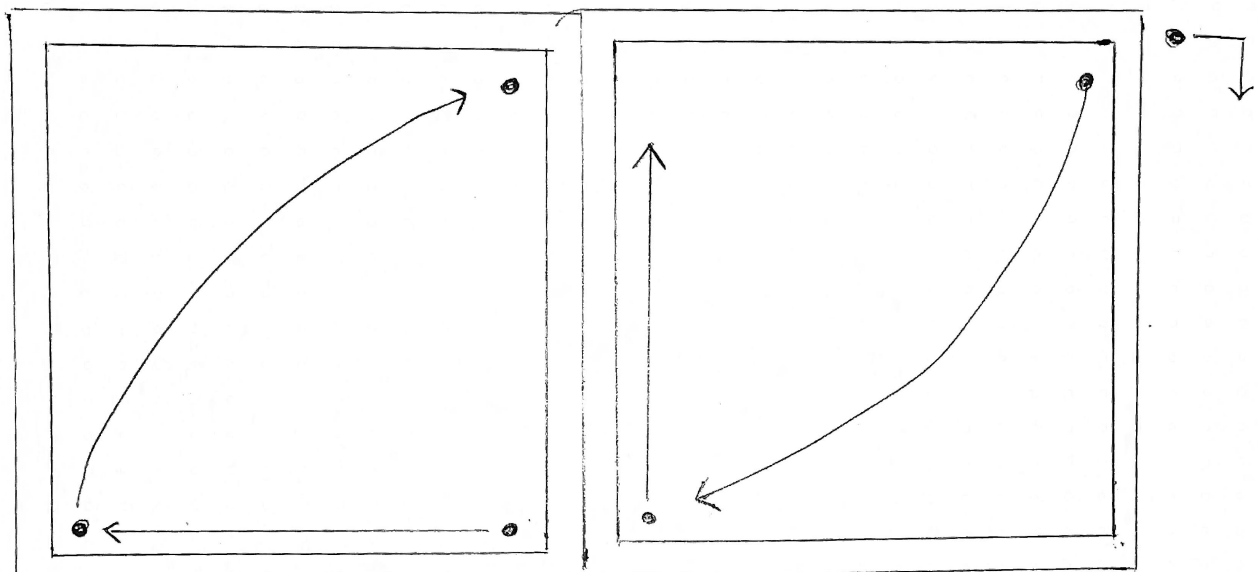
The photobook is structured through an alternating sequence of textual spreads and individual image pages. Each textual spread acts as a threshold, establishing a tone or rhythm before the following images appear. The page-turn is therefore important to the work: it allows each image or spread to be encountered in isolation, while still carrying traces of what came before and forming expectations for what follows.

The textual spreads do not function as direct explanations of the images that follow. Instead, they establish shifts in tone, rhythm, and orientation between sequences. Their arrangement across the page changes throughout the book, allowing the visual construction of the text itself to participate in the atmosphere of each section.

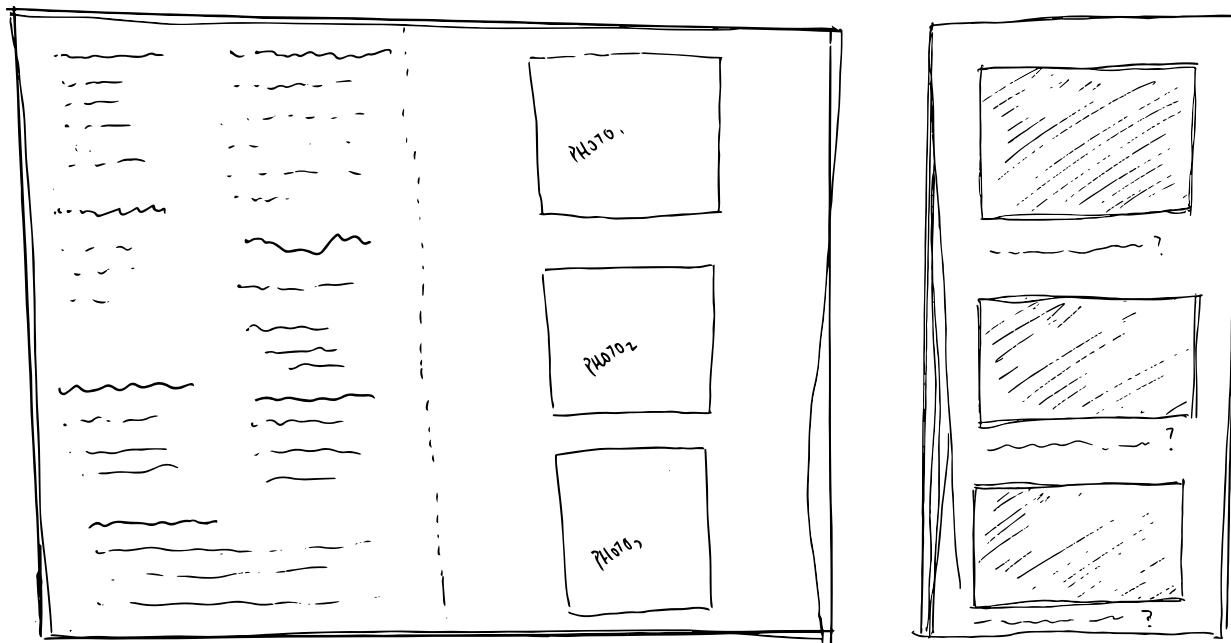
While the photobook maintains a gradual progression across its five acts, this progression is not intended to produce fixed narrative conclusions. The sequence moves from images more closely connected to monuments and recognisable heritage objects toward more fragmented, atmospheric, and relational scenes. Through this movement, the book shifts attention away from heritage as a singular object and toward the conditions through which perception, memory, and association are formed.

The structure of the photobook ultimately mirrors the broader concerns of the thesis itself: not to provide singular readings of heritage and memory, but to establish conditions through which perception, reflection, and experiential engagement may unfold. The sequence therefore operates as a design method, using pacing, omission, repetition, and association to shape how the viewer encounters the work.

What follows are sketches and concepts of ideas as they occurred in the process of making the Photobook:



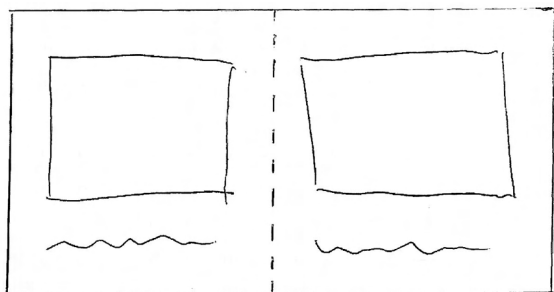
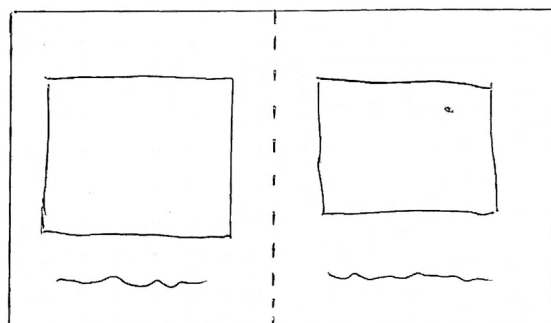
Early concept of a mechanism to flip parallel pages within each spread of the book



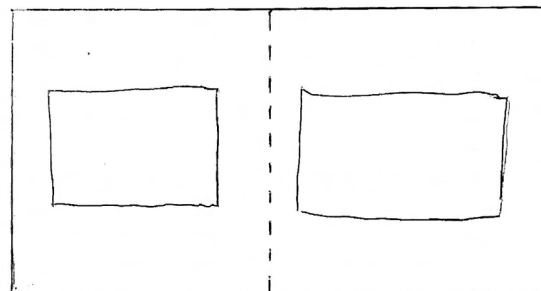
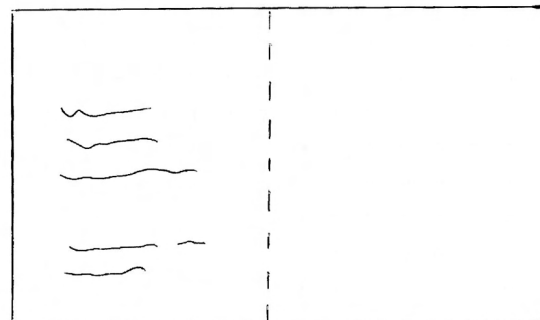
Rough sketch of early ideas about text-image composition within a book format

PHOTOBOOK

INSTRUCTIONAL



"LESS INSTRUCTIONAL" ?



Sketches of text-image format comparisons

This final set of diagrams formed part of the exploratory process behind the development of the photobook.

The diagrams were created as abstract studies investigating relationships of positioning, alignment, proximity, and spatial movement in relation to the text formations used throughout the work. Rather than functioning as direct translations of the textual structure, they explored ways in which certain spatial qualities of the text could be represented visually without relying on language itself.

Diagram 0 operates primarily as a field of possibilities, presenting the full range of potential arrangements and positions from which the following diagrams emerge. From this initial state, subsequent diagrams introduce gradual shifts in alignment, spacing, and relational proximity. Some configurations maintain balanced or neutral arrangements, while others begin suggesting movement and spatial tension within the spread.

While these diagrams loosely parallel certain structural and perceptual tendencies explored within the photobook, their inclusion within the final work was ultimately avoided. Their explanatory clarity risked reducing the openness of interpretation that the photobook sought to preserve. For this reason, they remain external to the photobook itself and are instead presented here as part of the broader developmental and reflective process behind the project.

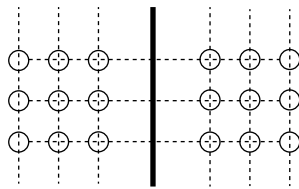


Diagram 0

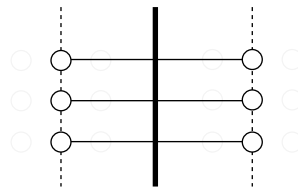


Diagram 1

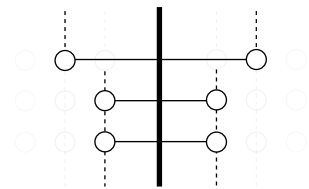


Diagram 2

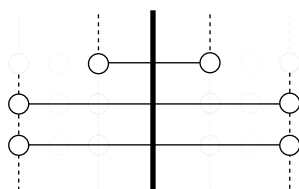


Diagram 3

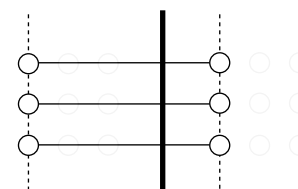


Diagram 4

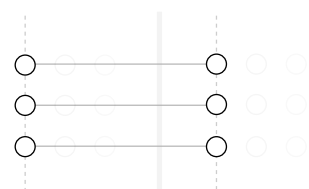


Diagram 5

In addition, a conversation was conducted around the images produced for the photobook. The aim for this endeavor was to bring forth a discussion that may showcase the different views, opinions, and other perceptual insights produced when one is placed across said images.

As part of the larger scheme of the thesis' exploration material, snippets of the aforementioned conversation between colleagues and friends will be displayed in physical form as part of the final installation the course demands. These snippets will occupy a place within a number of the presented images, and will invite members of the audience to approach and engage with them, as they will be able to be extracted from their respective image. This will hopefully become a bridge of sorts, assisting members of the audience in stepping into the conversation that the work itself aims to bring to the forefront.

Reflections on the Photobook Process

The making of the photobook revealed both the potential and the difficulty of using photography as a method of experiential representation. One of the strengths of the process was that images could hold qualities that were difficult to stabilize through written analysis alone: atmosphere, ambiguity, distance, proximity, silence, and moments of attention. Through sequencing, these qualities could be placed in relation to one another, allowing meaning to emerge gradually rather than through direct explanation.

At the same time, the process also revealed a central limitation. The openness of the photographic image can easily become too ambiguous if it is not supported by structure. For this reason, the sequence, textual passages, pacing, and format of the book became essential. They do not explain the images directly, but they create a framework through which the viewer may remain attentive to them.

What worked most effectively was the ability of the photobook to slow down the act of looking. By moving between text, image, blankness, and association, the book allowed the thesis to test how encounter might be constructed through visual rhythm. What remained difficult was the balance between clarity and openness: the book needed to reveal enough of the research to be understood, while still preserving the uncertainty and perceptual freedom central to the experience.

Through this process, the photobook became more than a final presentation format. It became a way of testing the thesis itself. If heritage is not understood as a meaning permanently contained within an object, but as something activated through encounter, then the photobook operates as a small-scale environment in which such encounters can be staged, delayed, interrupted, and renewed.

Exhibition as Spatial Continuation

The exhibition extends the photobook into a public presentation context without replacing the book as the primary site of sequential encounter. While the photobook depends on page-turning, withholding, and the gradual accumulation of images and text, the exhibition must operate differently: it must make the research legible at a distance while still directing attention back toward the physical book.

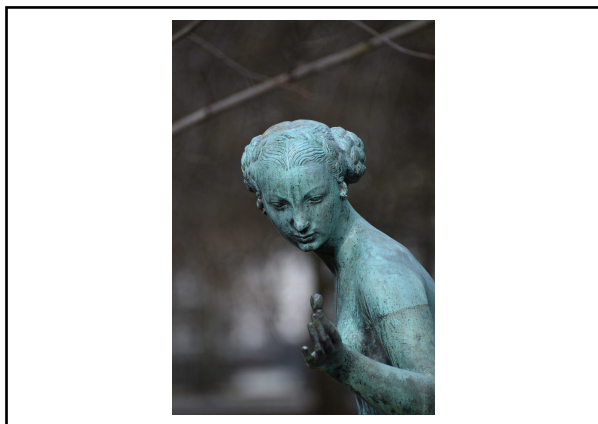
For this reason, the exhibition is approached as a spatial continuation rather than a separate narrative. The wall layout presents the thesis structure, methods, case-study framework, and key insights, while the booklet and photobook remain available as objects to be handled and read. In this arrangement, the exhibition does not attempt to reproduce the full sequence of the photobook. Instead, it creates a threshold through which the viewer can understand the research and then enter the slower encounter offered by the book.

The conversation slips developed for selected images continue this concern with encounter. They introduce an additional tactile layer, allowing fragments of dialogue around the images to be physically accessed. Rather than functioning as fixed explanations, these slips act as invitations into interpretation, extending the photobook's relation between image, text, memory, and perception into a spatial and bodily form.

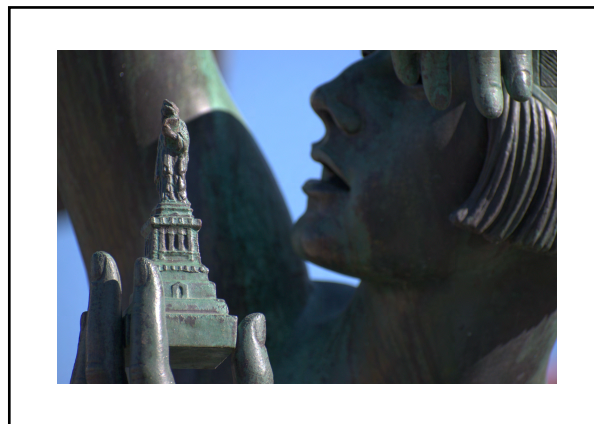
Image Notes - Sequential Reflections

The following notes do not aim to define the meaning of each image in the photobook. The images were selected and sequenced to remain open to association, memory, and personal interpretation, and their meaning is not intended to be fixed by the author. However, each photograph entered the work for particular reasons: because of a condition it held, a relation it suggested, or a perceptual shift it introduced within the sequence. The notes that follow therefore describe my own reasons for including each image and the role each one plays in the progression of the book and my own journey within photography as a tool for architects. They should be read not as final explanations, but as reflections on image-making, selection, and sequence.

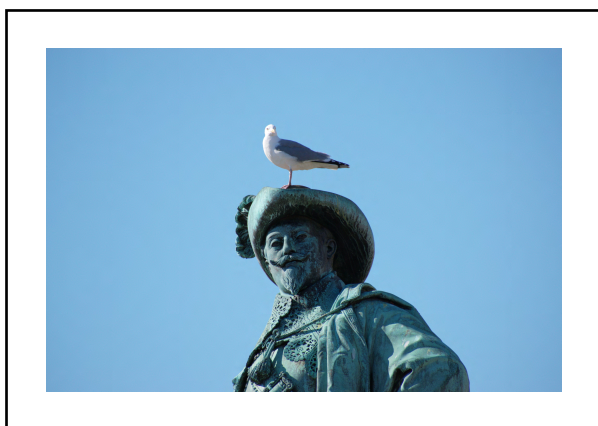
Following are all 23 images that are used in the context of the photobook:



This image was included and placed first in the sequence of the book due to its clear visual reference to monuments. Its framing was meant to focus on the actuality of the subject projected, which is why the photograph uses a portrait style to frame the statue depicted.



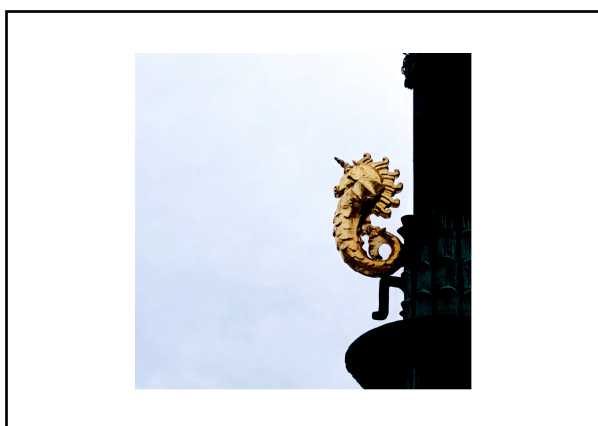
This image was selected due to its ability to reflect the notion of 'a monument looking at a monument'. The framing is purposely focused on the reaction shown to the smaller statue being held up, placing it at the forefront of our attention.



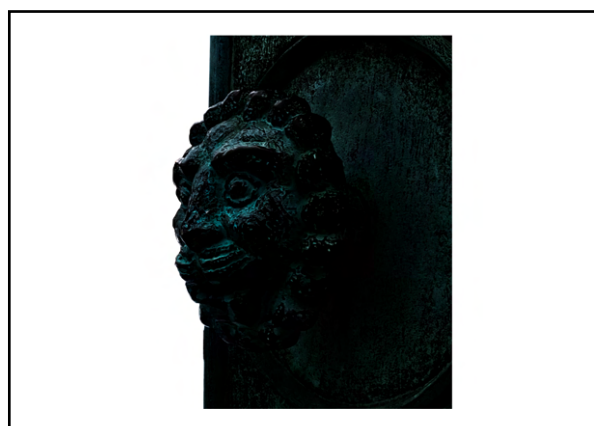
This image was used due to its comedic timing at first. Secondly, the absence of any spatial context and the subsequent use of the pure, blue sky as a background allows for the two subjects to be the ones dictating the relationship expressed as both their gazes fall upon the viewer themselves.



The photograph depicted was selected due to its ability to express monumentality within the book's sequence while departing from the framing of the subject as a human form. Elements such as the sky's color and the grandiose framing help in allowing the viewer to relate thematically, and still sense a change in topic.



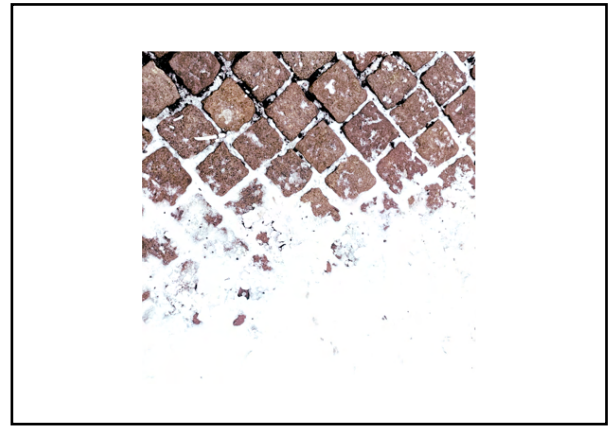
This image was placed in the book due to the sheer presence something can exude depending on how it is framed. In reality, the depicted statue is quite small, yet the method of depiction prevents one from making the association.



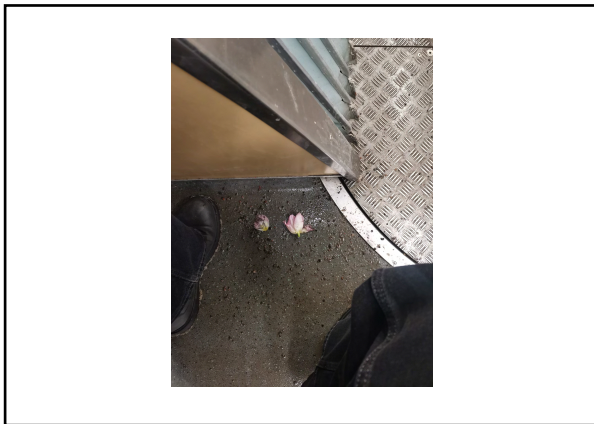
This image was selected from the same site as the one next to it, and almost portrays two different sides of the same coin; Two opposing sides of overlooked elements of monumentality within the same space.



This picture was included as a means to create the first larger shift in narrative, focusing on ground details. Based on the previous images being about comparison, yet not explicitly, this one brings that conflict to the foreground.



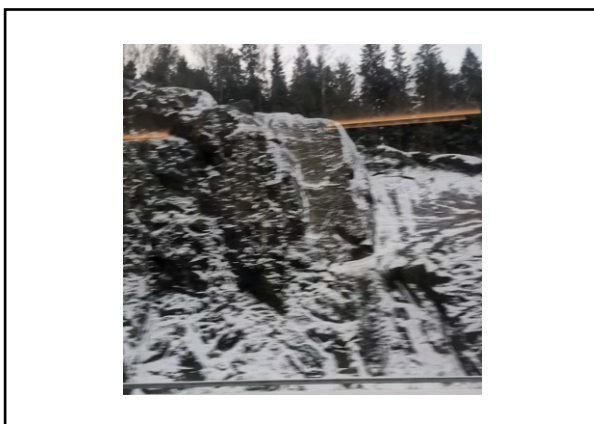
This photograph was selected as a further statement on the shift from literal monument representation, while also signifying the ongoing shift in narrative by displaying it with the snow infiltrating and receding from the cracks in the pavement.



This image was included as an establishing one for the ground-focused theme, while also including a secondary element of reframing by association. The flower's crown on the floor is the first indicator of an element in the image carrying an emergent value by being associated with life (plant) and emotion.



The page on the right side of this spread was purposely left blank in order to fit the overarching narrative, mainly painted by the text and later filled in by the photographs.



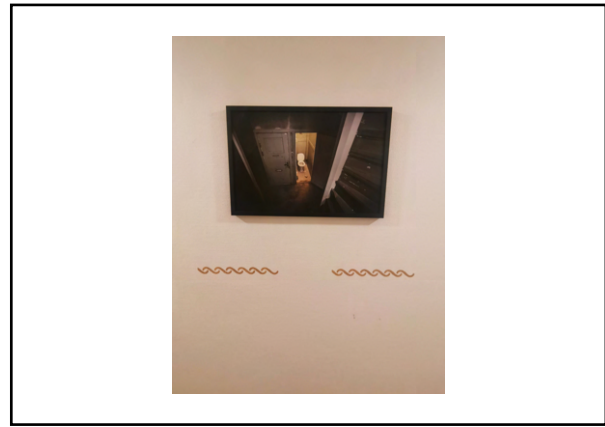
This image was placed in the photobook as the first clear departure point from the literal monumentality-focused visual aspect, delving more into the subject of atmosphere building.



This image was selected for its ability to continue building the sense of ambiguity the narrative needs, while also including a visual indicator of ambiguity with the text reading "are you sure?".



The inclusion of this image was for the purpose of continuing the established 'search within ambiguity' setting the narrative has so far tried to create.



The selection of this image was for the same reason as the one next to it; Matching the colors at first. Then doubling down on the absurdity of the composition's theme.



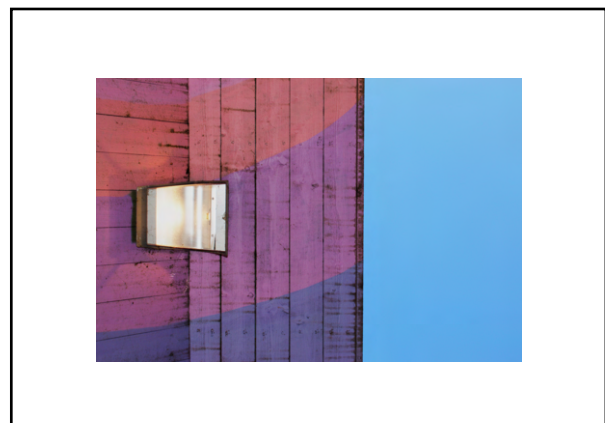
This image was chosen for its depiction of a tree in apparent 'captivity'. It echoes themes mentioned in the text that characterize this act within the book.



The placement of this picture in the book was due to it sharing the tonality with the photograph next to it. At the same time, it also depicts a mode of 'captivity', while presenting a different type of it.



This image was included as a bright contrast to the themes of the previous act, as the narrative needed. At the same time, more nuanced themes of monumentality continue to exist within it, without being explicitly expressed.



This image was selected for its deeply colorful composition and overall different orientation, meant as another means to echo what the context of the act needs portrayed.



This ability of this image to invite a 'slower look' is what made it get included in the photobook. Personally finding myself taking this photograph after a prolonged moment of contemplation about what I was encountering, this photograph carries the same, slow sentiment.



This image was selected for its tonal matching of the one next to it, and also for capacity to hold varied interpretation. Spatial elements, compositional elements, as well as modes of framing lead this photograph to say more by association and relation than by strict depiction.



This image was included as the start of the final act for its distanced, yet still attached qualities. Carrying elements from the previous photograph and theme of act, this image creates a bridge for the viewer inside the narrative and crosses it too.



The selection of this image was for its spontaneous centering of an otherwise normal setting as an absurd composition. The movement from enclosed to open space can be seen, then felt.



This image was included for its strong visual impact, echoing the resolution this act of the narrative aims to bring forward.



The metaphorical and allegorical qualities of this image are what got it included in the book. Positioned at the end of the sequence, it brings the reflective journey of the book toward a quiet sense of closure without fully resolving it.

Closing thoughts - Discussion

From Distance to Encounter

This thesis began with a concern surrounding the growing distance between contemporary audiences and the monuments and memorials occupying public space. What initially appeared as a question directed toward the monument itself gradually unfolded into a broader reflection on perception, attentiveness, and the conditions through which heritage becomes experientially meaningful. Through the phenomenological investigations, case study reflections, and development of the photobook, it became increasingly evident that the fading of heritage objects into the background of everyday life is not necessarily a failure of the monument alone, but part of the ephemeral nature of meaning and human attention itself.

Rather than revealing monuments and memorials as insufficient forms of representation, the research instead highlighted the relational conditions through which engagement emerges. Atmosphere, sensory presence, contextual awareness, and openness of perception all proved capable of shaping the degree to which heritage could be experienced beyond static representation. In this sense, heritage appeared less as a permanently fixed condition embedded within the object itself, and more as a potential for experiential engagement activated through encounter.

Conditions of engagement

The comparative investigations conducted throughout the thesis further revealed that experiential engagement with heritage cannot be understood through singular or universal conditions alone. While atmosphere, sensory qualities, spatial arrangement, and contextual conditions all influenced the degree of engagement experienced across the case studies, none of these elements proved independently capable of guaranteeing meaningful encounter on their own.

Certain environments appeared more capable of sustaining reflection and attentiveness through their atmospheric and spatial qualities, while others relied more heavily on symbolic presence or discursive tension. At the same time, the investigations also revealed the importance of the perceiver themselves within this relationship. The degree to which a site remained experientially present often depended not only on the conditions established by the monument or its environment, but also on the openness of the individual encountering it.

In this sense, meaningful engagement emerged less as a fixed property embedded within heritage objects themselves, and more as a relational condition formed between space, atmosphere, memory, and perception. Heritage environments therefore appeared capable of functioning as experiential anchor points through which reflection and remembrance may emerge, yet without ever fully determining the depth or nature of the encounter itself.

This realization gradually shifted the direction of the research away from questioning the validity of monuments and memorials as representational forms. Rather than understanding these objects as failed or insufficient, the thesis instead arrived at the conclusion that ephemerality and fluctuating relevance are inseparable from the conditions of human perception and attention. Monuments may inevitably fade into the background of everyday life over time, yet their experiential potential is not entirely lost through this process. Instead, the persistence of meaning appears dependent on the continued possibility of engagement between object, environment, and perceiver.

Photobook as extension of research

The development of the photobook became an important extension of the research process itself. While the analytical and phenomenological investigations provided critical insight into the experiential conditions surrounding monuments and memorial environments, certain aspects of perception, atmosphere, and attentiveness proved difficult to fully articulate through written analysis alone. The photobook therefore emerged not simply as a method of representation, but as a parallel form of inquiry operating through visual and perceptual experience.

Rather than proposing a new monument or heritage object directly, the work instead focused on exploring how engagement itself might be cultivated through slower forms of observation, ambiguity, and perceptual attentiveness. In this sense, the photobook did not seek to provide definitive interpretations of heritage, but to establish conditions in which viewers could gradually become more aware of their own processes of perception and association.

This shift also reflected a broader realization reached throughout the thesis: that meaningful engagement cannot be guaranteed solely through representational form. Physical objects, monuments, and images may all function as carriers of experiential potential, yet their significance ultimately remains dependent on the relationships formed between object, atmosphere, memory, and perceiver. The photobook therefore became less an attempt to resolve the questions posed by the thesis, and more an exploration of how those questions might continue to remain experientially active beyond the written investigation itself.

Reconsidering Heritage

Ultimately, this investigation did not arrive at a singular solution for how heritage should be represented within contemporary public space. Instead, it revealed the unstable and shifting nature of engagement itself. No monument, memorial, or representational form appears capable of permanently sustaining relevance or emotional resonance across time. Attention changes, contexts evolve, and even the most significant objects inevitably risk fading into the background of everyday life.

Yet this realization does not necessarily diminish the value of monuments or heritage environments. If anything, it reinforces the importance of the moments in which engagement does occur. Throughout the research, it became increasingly evident that meaningful experiences often emerged not through scale or symbolic intensity alone, but through quieter forms of attentiveness and reflection. Certain spaces, atmospheres, and encounters remained present not because they demanded attention, but because they managed to hold perception for one moment longer.

The thesis therefore ultimately arrives at a reconsideration of heritage not as a condition permanently contained within objects themselves, but as something continuously reactivated through encounter. Architecture, memorials, images, and representations may establish possibilities for engagement, yet the depth of those experiences remains inseparable from the openness of the individual perceiving them. In this sense, the enduring potential of heritage may lie less in permanence itself, and more in the continued possibility for connection, reflection, and renewed perception across time.

Photography, Encounter, and What the Photobook Revealed

The photographic and photobook process clarified that encounter cannot be produced through representation alone. Images may direct attention, slow perception, and hold traces of atmosphere, but they cannot guarantee engagement by themselves. Like monuments, photographs can also become passive objects if the conditions around them do not invite sustained attention. This realization became central to the thesis, as it showed that the problem of heritage representation is not only a problem of object, image, or symbol, but of the conditions through which perception is activated.

Through the making of the photobook, photography became a way of testing these conditions at a smaller scale. The sequence allowed images to be placed in relation to one another, while the textual passages, blankness, pacing, and page-turning created moments of pause and reorientation. In this way, the book did not attempt to explain heritage directly. Instead, it created a controlled situation in which attention could move gradually between recognition, ambiguity, atmosphere, and association.

This process also revealed a limitation. The openness of the photographic image can support perceptual freedom, but it can also become too detached if it is not structured carefully. For this reason, the photobook depends on rhythm, sequence, and textual orientation. These elements do not fix meaning, but they help sustain the viewer's attention long enough for meaning to begin forming. The book therefore became a practical test of the thesis's broader claim: that memory and heritage do not simply reside in objects or images, but emerge through the relational conditions of encounter.

In this sense, the photobook contributed to the thesis not only as an outcome, but as a reflective tool. It showed that photography can help architecture and urban design research engage with qualities that are difficult to measure or define directly: atmosphere, perception, emotional distance, bodily attention, and the gradual formation of memory. The process therefore extended the investigation beyond the analysis of monuments and memorials, allowing the thesis to explore how conditions of attentiveness might be designed, sequenced, and preserved.

EPILOGUE

Having reached the epilogue of this work, I find myself questioning how to really close it for good. Looking back at the initial discomfort that first brought everything to the forefront, along with the observations and thoughts that followed, I can say that there has been somewhat of a change in me.

In the beginning, I used the analogy of 'pillars of light' as guides that reveal the grander networks to which we as members of society belong, to describe monuments and all heritage-linked entities. That claim still rests somewhere inside me, yet it is held within a gentler light than before. That is not because the importance of heritage has been diminished through my research. It has grown even more, in reality. But along with its growth, now I also carry another understanding. Explicitly, the things we care about and which we allow to define parts of our existence and everyday life, are to a degree ephemeral.

The pillars of light, in this case, may perhaps be better thought of as lighthouses, and not perpetually radiating beams. This thought is meant to echo a point made throughout the research; there can be no constant and undying expression with an equally constant and undying perception of it.

To escape the poetic landslide that threatens this section, I can only say that which I believe to be true henceforth. Monuments, memorials, and heritage itself, are carriers of the human essence. And that essence can only be realized when one is attuned to it. It is precisely about the matching of the internal and the external, of the tangible and intangible, of the audience and the monument. That alignment, emerging through the gradual opening up of one to the other, allows for the way of 'looking beyond' that I initially reached for within this thesis.

As agents in our own lives, we must carry that attentiveness and use it. Otherwise, we may lose sight of something that was staring right at us the whole time.

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Appendix: AI

Artificial intelligence tools were used selectively throughout the development of this thesis as supportive instruments for language refinement, structural discussion, proofreading, organizational assistance, and the identification of potentially relevant academic sources. In particular, OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-5) was used as a conversational support tool in relation to editing, clarification of phrasing, reference organization, and reflective discussion surrounding the written material.

Any suggested references, information, or source material identified through the use of artificial intelligence were independently reviewed and verified by the author prior to inclusion or use within the thesis.

All core arguments, conceptual developments, interpretations, diagrams, photographs, design decisions, and final conclusions presented within the thesis remain the author's own work and responsibility.

Appendix: Photobook

The photobook exists as a separate body of work in relation to the written booklet.



INSIGHT

KONSTANTINOS DEMERTZIDIS



2026

INSIGHT; HERITAGE REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC SPACES

KONSTANTINOS DEMERTZIDIS

Chalmers School of Architecture + Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering

Architecture and urban design, MSc

Urban Design

Examiner: Joaquim Tarasso

Supervisors: Maja Hjerten Knutsson, Peter Christensson

Note to the reader

Perception and insight.

These terms have guided the work and the process behind it.

Between what is seen and what is felt, something else takes shape.

What we sense is not only received, but interpreted. And in that interpretation, experience emerges.

Each moment holds differently. Each perception belongs to the one who carries it.

Take with you what you may. It is purely yours.

Keep your insights and trust them. Do not deny what your truth is telling you.

Quotes that helped articulate this book

Throughout the development of this work, certain thoughts, images, and ways of seeing continuously resurfaced. Some appeared through architectural readings, as was the case with the words of Juhani Pallasmaa, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore. Others emerged through the study of photobooks and the discovery of inexplicable qualities that inspired admiration and fostered a desire to look deeper, as was the case with the works of Luigi Ghirri and Miho Kajioka. Rather than functioning as direct explanations, these fragments became quiet companions to the process, helping shape the way the work was approached and understood.

'The hands want to see, the eyes want to caress.'

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

'To at least some extent every place can be remembered, partly because it is unique, but partly because it has affected our bodies and generated enough associations to hold it in our personal worlds.'

-Kent C. Bloomer, Charles W. Moore

'When experiencing a work of art, a curious exchange takes place; the work projects its aura, and we project our own emotions and percepts on the work.'

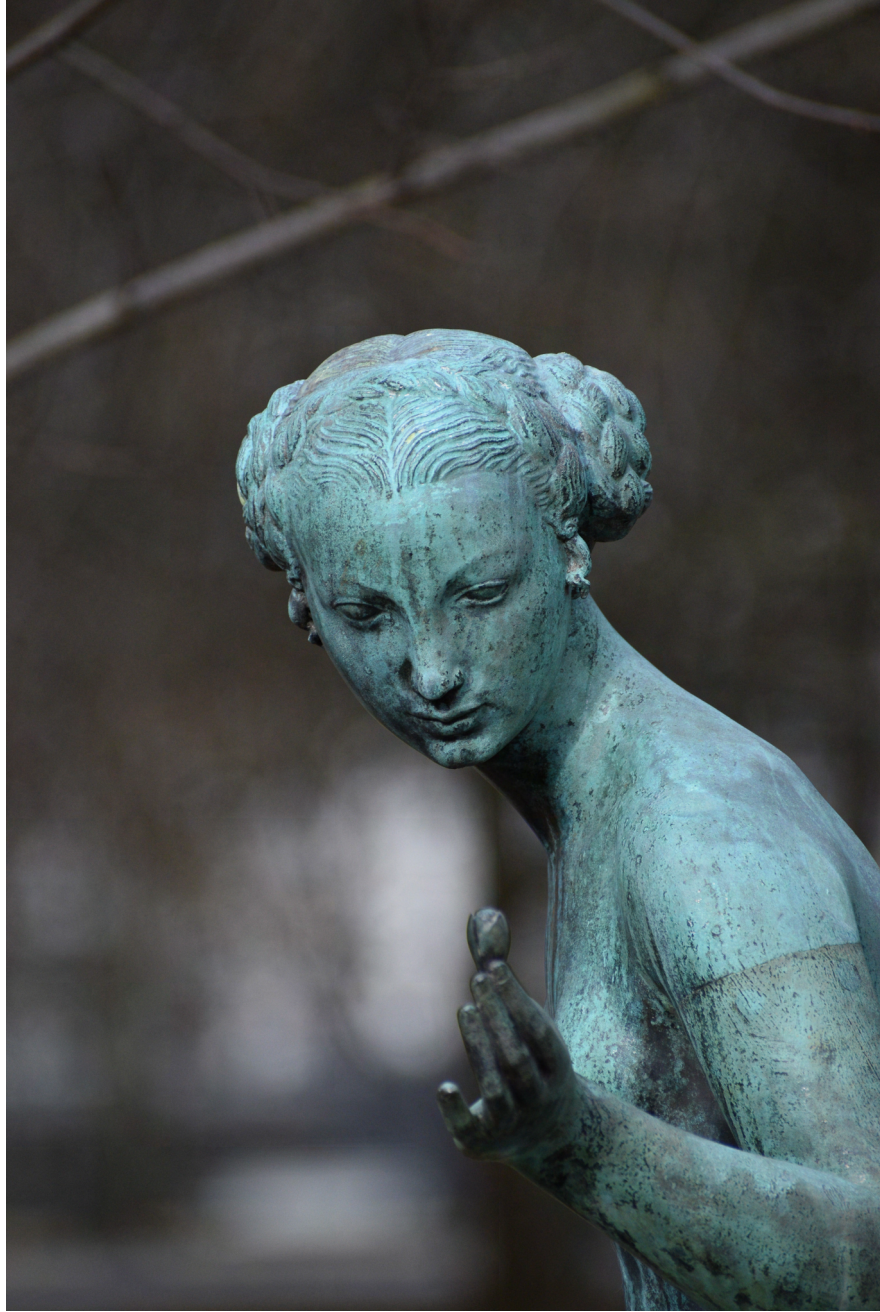
-Juhani Pallasmaa

"I think the voyage on a map, also a preferred theme of many writers, is one of the most natural mental gestures, for all of us [...]. The happy islands cherished by literature and in our hopes have all been described now, and the only possible discovery or voyage seems to be that of discovering what has already been discovered. Likewise, the only possible journey seems to be inside signs, inside images: in the destruction of direct experience."

-Luigi Ghirri

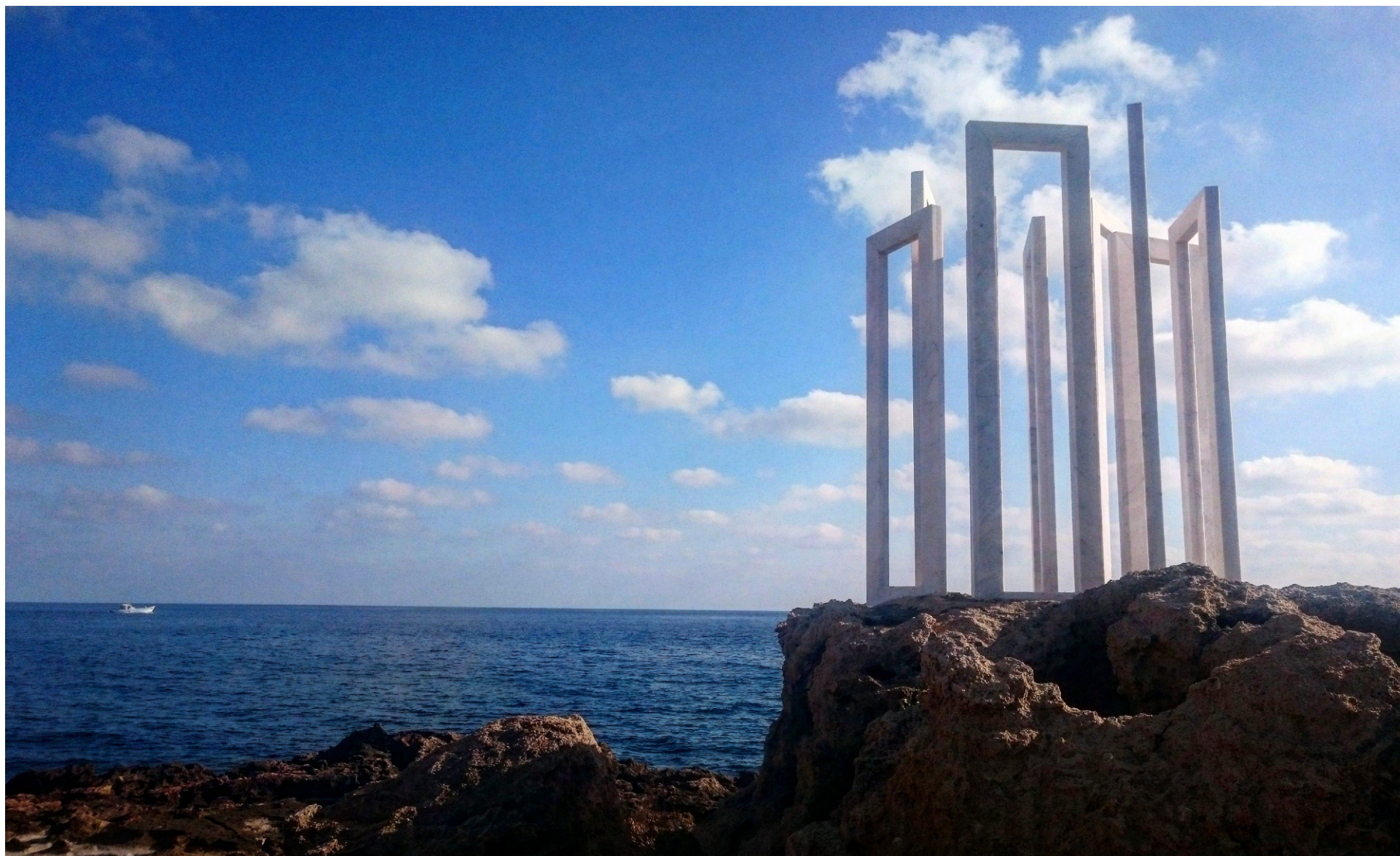
It called back to me, that shared past spoke again.
Traces of it revealed themselves anew.
Accepted, taken in – my words too few.

We are so familiar.
Your words reach me, clearly.
I hold you now in silence. Live through me, in me.









Blinding clarity that shone like the sun.

Feeling deeply, now, no surface crashing as the dive has depth.

Pulling, drawing in. Cross me.

Should it be this way? No matter, it's now begun.
What's being shown now? Could not yet tell and could not yell.
Why resist its power? The threshold is across me.











Blurred and lost now, no telling of its start or end.
Severed.

Sudden, yes, it was.

We move along in this new space.

**We must start navigating, passage or a race?
We, or I and you. Let's find a way out, it's now a cage.**



are you sure?









These rules are meant to be followed, that is the way this goes.

I need to see. So, light a match for me.

I need to understand. So, come and take me by the hand.

I need nothing from you. So, come and be just like the one before you.

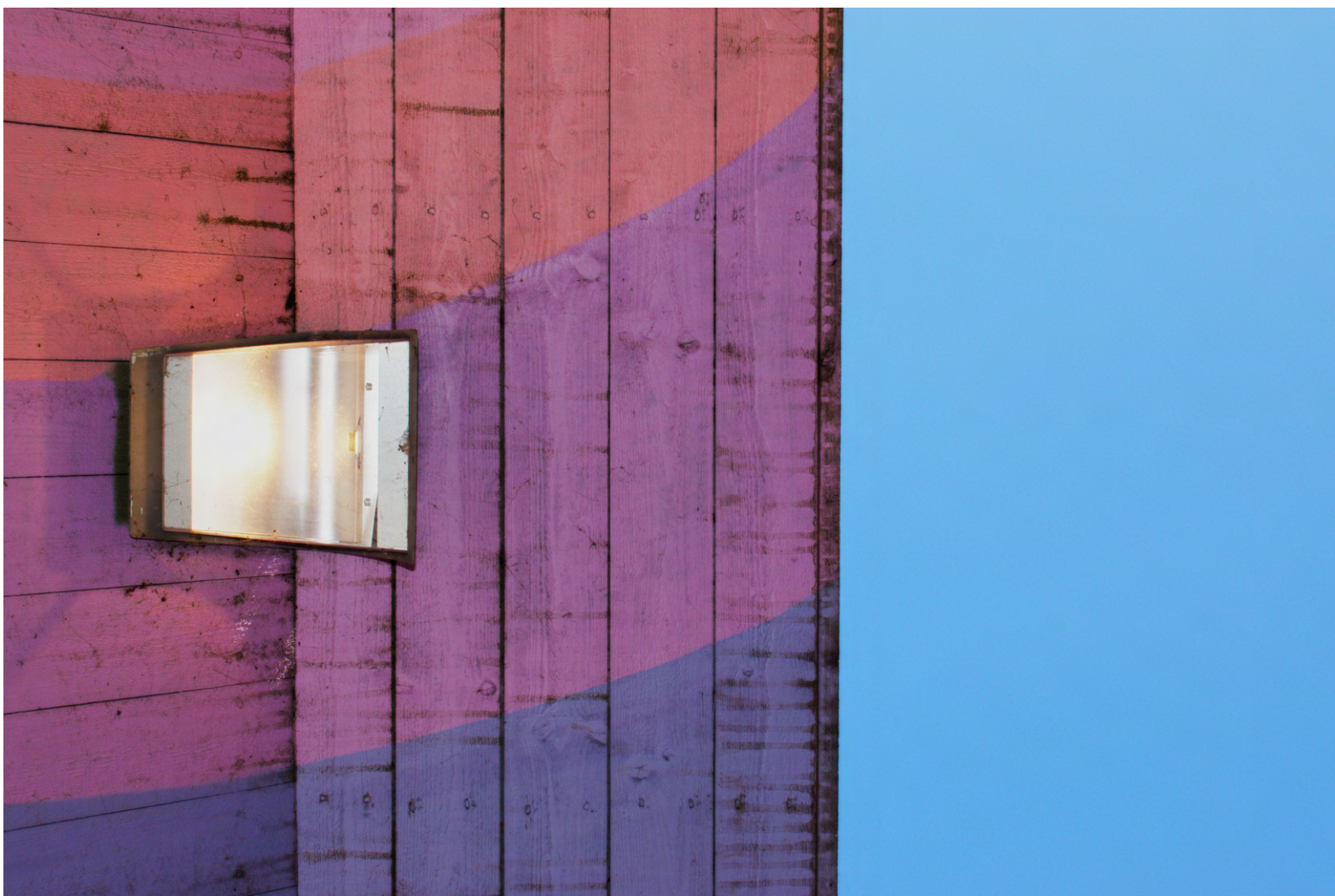
Not the shape of a friend, nor the presence of a foe.

You became light itself. Blazing with intensity inside the haze.

You were now clear. Detailed as ever, as if you were once near.

You became color, alive. Moving through me as I through you, finally had drive.









Everything restored now, it seems it must be so.

No absence leaves you empty now, no use for a new vice.

Know this, what once was may never again be.

No longer in the haze, the darkness, or the cold.
Know what matters, no jab and no advice.
Let it last if you must, it's just a memory.









