



Course Description

Greek mythology engages the use of muses, goddesses and spirits who inspired creation and development of the arts through song, theatre and dance. Mneme, the Muse for memory, aroused imaginative ways of remembering past events. This independent study will investigate ways of constructing memory through the design of the landscape and columbarium at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Herndon, Virginia. A columbarium is a place where cinerary urns are kept and comes from the Latin word *columba* meaning “dove”, referencing its dovecote origins, an ancient structure with a series of niches recessed into a wall housing pigeons and doves. This investigation will explore how a site can become a collection of lives and stories, a representation of life’s natural cycles and support one through the grieving and healing process.

Site

The community of Herndon, Virginia has asked the students of WAAC to design a columbarium for their Chestnut Grove Cemetery. It was founded in 1872, even though burial sites date back to the 1830s, and occupies 24 acres of land along Dranesville Road. It is a heritage and historic resource amongst the community and is currently completing its first master plan phase. As seen in the photo the cemetery is surrounded by residential development, Herndon High School is located across Drainsville Road and nearby are several churches located on this road as well.



Class Structure

The class will be structured in three modules: columbarium, collections and cycles. The first module will investigate the columbarium in its historical and contemporary context. The idea of a wall, niches, recesses, containment and their relationship and interaction with the earth, floor, overhead structures and surrounding context will be a graphic exploration and record of their findings. The second module will explore collections and how such a monument can allow for personal rituals and unique expressions of each life, yet still retain a cohesive sense of place. The third module will explore cycles, from life to death, transition towards renewal and how the landscape and built work can aid one in this recognition of life’s cycles and support the grieving and healing process. The work will be mainly graphic investigations and oral presentations shared with classmates and the client, in a similar manner that studios are conducted. The final product will be a design proposal and presentation. (This will be conducted like a studio, but for three credits and will meet at a time outside of regular studio, so as to not conflict with your main studio.)

This is an independent study course and meeting times will be determined at the first class meeting.