



Plan.



Long Section.



run a burial boat aground



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Massive and smooth, fragile and multicoloured: these few key words describe the new funeral building at the Erlenbach municipal cemetery in Zurich. 'We wanted to create a building that is practical and close to life, but sacred at the same time,' says Gabrielle Hächler of Fuhrimann Hächler Architekten. The building's long side borders on the cemetery, while a covered terrace in the end façade overlooks the Zürichsee. Two concrete columns decorated with cut-aways support the roof and frame the spectacular view.

'The plan is in the shape of a stranded burial boat,' says Hächler.

Angled glass walls surround the reception area and the corridor to the vigil rooms. The coloured glass provides a view to the outside, but at the same time protects the mourners from unwelcome prying eyes looking in. The outside world is presented as colourful, but with a matte finish. The architect had Dan Graham's mirror installations in her head while she was designing, she says.

The vigil rooms are completely clad with walnut. The introversion is emphasized by recesses and corners, and by the light coming in at a height. The symbolism does not come from religious attributes but from the pavilion-like building itself. The thick concrete provides a robust, earthy language of form, intended by the architect as a

'symbol of durability'. In contrast, the dark green and brown glass that creates a subdued atmosphere inside 'stands for vulnerability and transience'.

'Our trip through Brazil shortly before the design competition made a deep impression on us,' says Hächler. The multicoloured character of Luis Barragán's work and the concrete weight that typifies Paolo Mendes da Rocha's buildings, are both recognizably present in Erlenbach.

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