

PERSONAL STATEMENT

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A *bsence | Silence* is a conceptual image explored in the abstract to generate the metaphor of the body and the smoke from the chemical gas on March 16, 1988, in the town of Halabja, Kurdistan (North Iraq). This is a study of spaces and voids that respond to the dead bodies and to the people who are visiting the site. The transparent quality of the material responds to the idea of remembrance and fading away in space, as well as being inside the body and seeing outside of oneself. When people are not around, the dead bodies communicate among themselves, and when people are around they intertwine. Through this study, the relationship between the dead and the living bodies occurs. Here, where people are visiting this site of death, they can commune with the dead and feel as if they may be dead themselves.

Within this concept of exchanging life and death, a living human being goes inside these bodies and gives breath to the dead. As a corpse, the soul no longer lives within the body, and the individual, as living soul, reacts with the metaphorical dead—bodies that meet the sand and create a new space of mazes and silence. The study also deals with the psychological experiences that emerge from this investigation. The visual impact is increased by the rattan cloth, which is used when Muslims are buried.

This design solution reflects the plight of the Kurds through architectural intervention, which recollects the traces and the absence of the dead bodies. Overall this study demonstrates that architecture reaches beyond the mass of a building; that architecture becomes a storyteller who transforms from the ground surface to the underground, transforms the flat sandy region into a high topography. Bringing back a tragic moment from a forgotten culture, this architecture brings forth issues of identity, marginalization, traces of the Kurds, deformation, and tragedy.