

# BEIRUT MEMORIAL PARK

On the day of the Beirut explosion, I was at Sassine Square in our apartment then. When the blast occurred, my immediate thought was that it was a car bomb, something tragically familiar to a city that had lived through so much violence. Without fully understanding the scale of what had just happened, I rushed down to see the damage for myself.

What I encountered was beyond words. People, bloodied and in shock, were carrying children, running through streets that seemed to have been torn apart. The air was thick with dust and confusion. The apartment was severely damaged, windows blown out, walls cracked, doors shattered, but more than the physical destruction, it was the overwhelming sense of vulnerability that struck me. In that moment, no place felt safe, no one was untouched.

But amidst the chaos, one image remains etched in my mind. As I went down to check what happened, I came upon an older gentleman, standing resolutely in front of his store, sweeping up the shattered glass with a broom. In the middle of a city in ruins, his simple act of cleaning, of restoring order immediately, was almost surreal. It was a moment of quiet resilience, a small yet profound act of human determination to reclaim a sense of normalcy.

The day after, I went down to Mar Mikhael to find that the collective effort to restore had already begun. The streets, though still broken, were already being cleared. Hundreds of people, armed with brooms, worked tirelessly to clean up the debris. It was a sight of immense solidarity and mobilization. Amidst the rubble, I picked up a broken broom, a tool that had been used in the aftermath of the explosion until it had worn down to nothing. I turned that broom into an art piece, naming it "Weapon". It was a stark reflection on the violence of the explosion, but also on the power of simple, unassuming acts of rebuilding. The broom, a tool meant for cleaning, had been transformed into a symbol of both destruction and renewal, a quiet weapon in the battle to restore the city.

This image of the broom, alongside my own experience of that day, has shaped the design of the park. It is not just a memorial; it is a space to reflect on the profound journey through loss and resilience. Each element in this park speaks to the collective experience of the city: the Wall of Light, rising from the lake in place of the silos, symbolizes both protection and loss, and the spheres scattered throughout represent the different layers of memory, hope, and healing.

The park is an invitation to walk through the process of remembering and rebuilding. It is a tribute not just to the explosion but to the countless small acts of resilience, like the man with the broom, that defined the response to that day. Weapon is a symbol of the power of ordinary tools in extraordinary moments, reminding us that the most fragile objects can carry the heaviest weight of transformation.

This park is a personal journey, yes, but it is also a space for the city to heal, to reflect, and to rebuild—step by step, just as we have done since that fateful day.



**WEAPON**



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August 4, 2020: A devastating blast tore through the heart of the city of Beirut, leaving over 200 lives lost, thousands injured, and vast parts of Beirut shattered. The explosion created a crater by the sea, disrupting not only the physical terrain but also the emotional and cultural fabric of the city.

This site, now both a scar and a symbol, carries layers of memory—trauma, resilience, and transformation. Each remnant, from the damaged silos to the surrounding urban void, bears witness to that day. The silos, initially intended to shield the city, became an enduring emblem of destruction and survival.

The blast site is not merely a location but a locus of collective memory, where absence speaks as powerfully as presence. As we begin to reimagine this space, we must allow its history to echo—not to recreate what was lost, but to provide a setting for reflection, reconciliation, and renewal.

This torn landscape sets the foundation for a journey into the reconstruction of meaning, grounding the design approach in the intricate interplay of memory, space, and presence. The design weaves the visible and the void, connecting the lived past to the ongoing present.



The design begins with an act of identification—mapping the traces of what once stood. Each destroyed storage building, the crater near the sea, and the silos are carefully noted, not as mere fragments of ruin but as carriers of meaning. This act of recognition is foundational, treating the site as an archive of loss and transformation.

At ground zero, where the explosion left its indelible mark, I propose enclosing the area and creating a saltwater lake. This body of water will preserve the connection to the sea, allowing the saline waters that breached the land to remain as a permanent presence—a liquid memorial to the rupture between what was and what became.

The silos, standing as a controversial and fragmented remnant, are removed, intentionally. Their absence, however, does not erase their memory. In their place, a freshwater lake emerges, a deliberate counterpoint to the saltwater lake. The contrast between these two waters—the saltwater symbolizing rupture, the freshwater evoking renewal—creates a silent dialogue between loss and possibility.

This duality uses absence to reinforce presence. The silos, though physically gone, resonate through their absence, allowing the void to echo more powerfully than the object itself. The lakes, together, form a narrative of continuity and contrast, linking memory to the living present.

Here, the ground becomes a storyteller, articulating the delicate balance between remembrance and renewal. As the design moves forward, these waters will act as a guide, offering a space for reflection that acknowledges both the weight of history and the hope of transformation.

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Between the mapped areas of the site, a new layer emerges (Violet)—a connective tissue that binds the fragmented spaces into a unified whole. This layer is not imposed but grown, weaving organically around the saltwater and freshwater lakes, and through the voids left by the explosion, and the spaces of remembrance.

This network avoids the rigidity of straight lines, instead embracing fluid, curvilinear paths that echo the unpredictable nature of memory and healing. The weaving creates a spatial narrative that invites visitors to move through the site in an intuitive and contemplative manner, as if tracing the threads of a story that unfolds with each step.

This layer acts as both a guide and a canvas, offering spaces for pause and reflection while linking the distinct memorial elements. It does not erase the fragmentation of the site but rather transforms it, creating a rhythm between absence and presence, isolation and connection.

The organic nature of the weaving mirrors the human experience—imperfect, evolving, and deeply interconnected. It acknowledges the ruptures caused by the blast while suggesting a pathway forward, one that respects the scars of the past and allows for new growth to emerge.

In this way, the memorial fabric becomes a living entity, responding to the memory of the site and the people it commemorates. It invites visitors to walk not just through space but through layers of meaning, creating a collective journey that is as much about reflection as it is about reconciliation.



At the heart of the memorial park, seven large spheres are proposed, each a vessel of memory and meaning. The number seven is deeply symbolic—representing completeness, cycles, and the intersection of the physical and the metaphysical. Here, it stands as a tribute to the victims, the resilience of the city, and the enduring echoes of the event.

Each sphere is a distinct yet interconnected memorial element. Scattered across the site, they create a constellation of remembrance, visible both as individual entities and as parts of a greater whole. The placement of the spheres is intentional, guided by the weaving layer that threads through the mapped areas, ensuring that each sphere feels both rooted and connected.

The spheres are not merely objects but experiences. Visitors can approach, touch, and even enter them. Each one offers a unique sensory encounter, from soundscapes that whisper voices of the past to light installations that shift with time, symbolizing the impermanence and continuity of memory.

The spheres also embody the dialogue between rupture and renewal. Their perfect form contrasts with the fractured landscape, offering a sense of balance and harmony. Yet, their scattered placement reflects the randomness of the blast's destruction and the scattered lives it affected.

Together, the seven spheres create a rhythm of reflection, inviting visitors to navigate their own paths of remembrance. They act as anchors within the fluid landscape, grounding the emotional experience of the site while symbolizing the collective resilience of a city that continues to rebuild, remember, and rise.



The proposed memorial park transforms the once-flat terrain into a dynamic landscape of hills and valleys, rises and drops. This reshaping of the ground echoes the emotional topography of the blast's aftermath—its upheavals, voids, and moments of resilience.

The gentle hills offer elevated perspectives, inviting visitors to reflect on the site from above, while the valleys create intimate spaces for contemplation and shelter. The interplay of elevation and depth mirrors the journey through memory—rising to moments of clarity, descending into spaces of introspection.

Meandering paths weave through this sculpted terrain, connecting the mapped areas, the lakes, and the spheres of memory. These pathways are intentionally fluid, avoiding rigid geometries to reflect the organic nature of healing and the interconnectedness of the elements. Visitors are encouraged to wander, to find their own rhythms and routes, engaging with the park as an unfolding narrative rather than a linear journey.

The reshaped terrain does more than guide movement; it transforms the site into an active participant in the memorial experience. The hills and valleys create spaces where sound, light, and shadow shift throughout the day, adding layers of sensory engagement.

This topographical transformation is both physical and symbolic. It allows the land itself to speak, to bear the weight of memory while offering spaces for renewal and hope. The park becomes a living memorial—an evolving landscape that honors the past, grounds the present, and gestures toward a resilient future.

# BEIRUT MEMORIAL PARK



## SPHERE X

Sphere X is the central element of the memorial park, positioned at the precise location of the explosion and floating within the saltwater lake. Crafted from glass, it symbolizes fragility, the vulnerability of life, the city, and the intricate connections between them.

Inaccessible to visitors, Sphere X is meant to be observed from a distance, reinforcing its role as both a boundary and a beacon. Its transparency reflects the surrounding water and sky, creating an ever-changing dialogue between the sphere and its environment. This interplay emphasizes the ephemeral nature of memory and the delicate balance between presence and absence.

By floating in the water, the sphere captures the tension between stability and instability, evoking the precariousness of the moment that changed Beirut forever. Its isolation within the lake creates a contemplative void, a space where visitors are invited to pause and reflect on the fragility of the world we inhabit.

Sphere X stands as a silent witness to the event, resisting touch or intrusion. Its inaccessibility underscores its role as an untouchable memory, one that cannot be reclaimed but must be honored and carried forward. It reminds us that while wounds may heal, their scars remain fragile yet enduring, transparent yet deeply profound.



## SPHERE ( )

Sphere ( ) is a profound representation of silence, an absence made visible. The pierced sphere, with its reflective surface and large hole at its center, embodies the notion that silence is not an empty void, but an opening, a break in the continuity of sound, memory, and presence.

Sphere ( ) disrupts the traditional expectations of form and function. The absence within the void does not create a vacuum but instead transforms the surrounding space, allowing the silence to reverberate outward. This creates a tension, reminding us that sometimes, silence speaks louder than sound.

Unlike a passive monument, Sphere ( ) invites people to break the silence. Its accessible form and reflective surface encourage interaction, offering a space where visitors can approach, speak, or simply sit in contemplation. The sphere transforms from an abstract symbol of absence to an active participant in the memorial experience. By breaking the silence, visitors contribute to the shared memory, filling the void with their presence, their voices, and their reflections.

Through this interaction, Sphere ( ) becomes not just a symbol of what was lost, but a space where the act of remembering becomes a collective, living moment—a shared commitment to speaking the unsaid and honoring the absence left by tragedy.



## SPHERE NUR

Sphere NUR embodies the transformative power of light as a symbol of memory, hope, and renewal. Its illuminated surface glows softly at night, offering a tranquil beacon within the park. By day, it reflects sunlight, casting a dance of light and shadows across the landscape, creating an ever-changing interplay that evokes the fluidity of time and memory.

Unlike a distant or untouchable monument, Sphere NUR is accessible, inviting visitors to step inside and become immersed in its light. Within its illuminated interior, visitors are enveloped by a warm, ethereal glow that inspires contemplation and connection. The space inside feels both intimate and expansive, allowing individual experiences within.

By night, Sphere NUR transforms into a radiant sanctuary, its light spilling outward to guide and comfort those who wander through the park. It becomes a space for reflection, where the boundaries between the personal and the collective blur, and the light symbolizes the resilience of memory and the enduring hope that emerges from even the darkest moments.

Sphere NUR is not just a symbol of luminescence; it is an active participant in the memorial experience. Its light reminds us that even in the face of profound loss, there is a radiance that persists as a powerful testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit.



## SPHERE RRR

Sphere RRR embodies the multifaceted concept of resonance through its rippled surface and symbolic presence. The ripples etched into its design capture the force of the explosion's shockwave—a powerful and haunting testament to the event's magnitude and the lives it affected.

At the same time, these ripples extend beyond the moment of destruction, symbolizing waves of reflection and renewal. Sphere RRR invites visitors to engage with its surface, tracing the ripples as a tactile connection to memory and meaning. The act of interaction becomes a journey through the layers of time: the past's impact, the present's reflection, and the future's resonance of hope.

Sphere RRR, Ripple, Reflect, Resonate, captures its essence. The ripple represents the physical and emotional waves set in motion by the event. The reflection prompts visitors to consider the enduring effects of memory. And the resonance symbolizes the hope and connection that emerge as the responses to loss and renewal.

Positioned prominently within the park, Sphere RRR transforms the ephemeral nature of waves into a permanent marker of remembrance. It challenges visitors to see how moments ripple outward, creating layers of meaning and impact that shape the world long after the initial wave has passed.



## SPHERE ID

Sphere ID is a solemn tribute to the individuals whose lives were lost in the tragedy, preserving their unique identities within the collective memory of the community. The sphere's surface is etched with the names of the victims, ensuring that each name becomes a lasting beacon of remembrance and reflection.

The design of Sphere ID fosters an intimate connection between memory and the living. The sphere's surface intertwines the names with the reflections of those who stand before it, merging the identities of the past with the presence of the living. This dynamic interaction ensures that memory is not static but alive, resonating through every encounter.

Located in a serene part of the park, Sphere ID invites quiet contemplation. Visitors are encouraged to walk around it, trace the names with their fingers, or simply reflect on the lives represented. Each name etched into the sphere embodies a story, a presence, and a connection that endures.

By uniting memory and identity, Sphere ID transforms the act of remembrance into a living dialogue. It serves as a poignant reminder that the identities of those lost continue to shape the collective fabric of the community, kept alive through the reflections, interactions, and shared humanity of all who come to remember.



## SPHERE ∞

Sphere ∞ embodies the infinite passage of time and the enduring impact of memory. Its design reflects the cyclical nature of existence, where the past, present, and future intertwine in an unending flow. This sphere serves as a reminder that while moments may pass, their echoes persist, shaping the collective narrative of humanity.

Sphere ∞ consists of intersecting rings that create a dynamic interplay of light and shadow. These rings symbolize the intertwined cycles of time, each layer representing a continuum of memory, loss, and renewal. The sphere embodies moments, inviting visitors to reflect on how time shapes and reshapes our understanding of events and their consequences.

Sphere ∞ encourages contemplation and introspection. Visitors are invited to sit around it, immersing themselves in its rhythm. The sphere creates a meditative ambiance, emphasizing that time is both a healer and a keeper of stories.

Through its infinite design and reflective presence, Sphere ∞ connects individuals to the continuum of time. It serves as a poignant symbol of endurance and evolution, where memory and hope coexist, perpetually guiding us toward a deeper understanding of ourselves and our shared histories.



## SPHERE →

Sphere → is a powerful emblem of movement and transformation, representing the continuous journey toward healing, growth, and renewal. It captures the idea that progress is not a straight line but a winding path that traverses through challenges and moments of reflection.

The sphere's unique design incorporates a winding path that passes directly through its core, allowing visitors to physically walk through the sphere. This path symbolizes the journey of life—its twists, turns, and moments of uncertainty. The skin of the sphere is reflective, creating an immersive experience that evokes introspection and the feeling of moving through time and space.

Sphere → is more than a physical journey; it is an emotional and symbolic one. As visitors walk through, they are invited to reflect on their own paths, choices, and the shared journey of those affected by the tragedy. Positioned on a gentle sloped hill, a pivotal point in the park, it connects the various elements of the memorial, serving as a literal and figurative passage that ties together memory, hope, and progress.

Through its dynamic and interactive design, Sphere → encourages visitors to engage with the space and with themselves, reminding them that every journey—however winding—is a step toward renewal and understanding.



## WALL OF LIGHT

In the location where the silos once stood, a tranquil lake now reflects the stillness of remembrance. Rising from its surface at night, a luminous Wall of Light emerges, serving as a poignant tribute to the silos that bore the brunt of the explosion and shielded the city from an even greater devastation.

The Wall of Light is composed of vertical beams of light that pierce the night sky, their soft glow evoking the towering presence of the silos. The lights shift subtly, creating a dynamic interplay of brightness that mirrors the fragility and strength embodied by these structures.

This installation transcends physical representation. It does not recreate the silos but rather reimagines them as a symbol of protection and resilience. The interplay of light and water reinforces the contrast between the physical absence of the silos and the lasting memory of their presence, creating a dialogue between what was lost and what remains.

Visitors to the park are invited to gather by the lake, where the Wall of Light offers a moment of collective reflection. Its glow becomes a beacon of hope and a reminder of the courage and fortitude that define the city's spirit. The installation ensures that the silos, though physically absent, remain a living memory, forever protecting and illuminating the path forward.