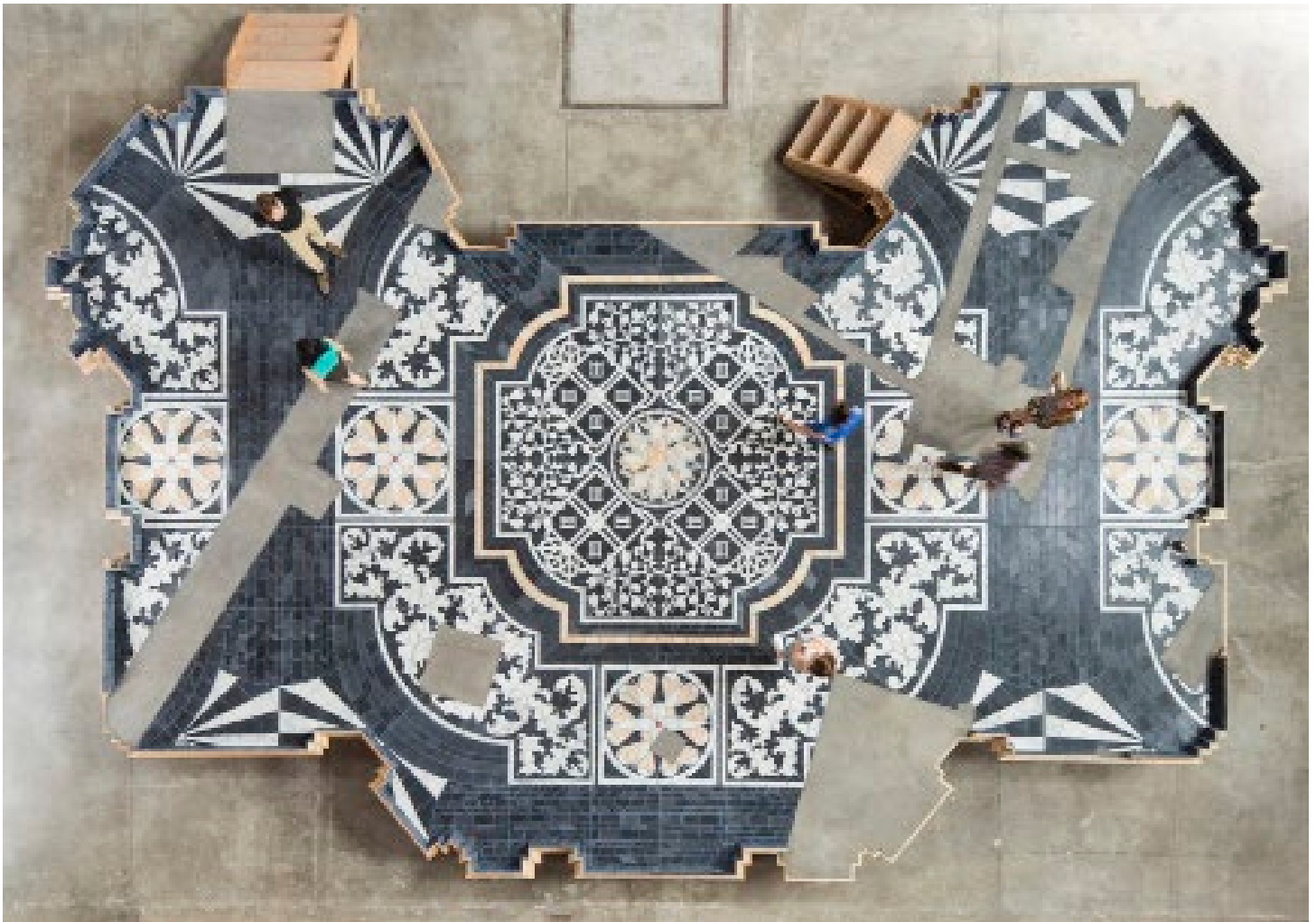


Katrin Sigurdardottir  
Proposal for Garsthuizen Cemetery  
Prepared for Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken, 2018

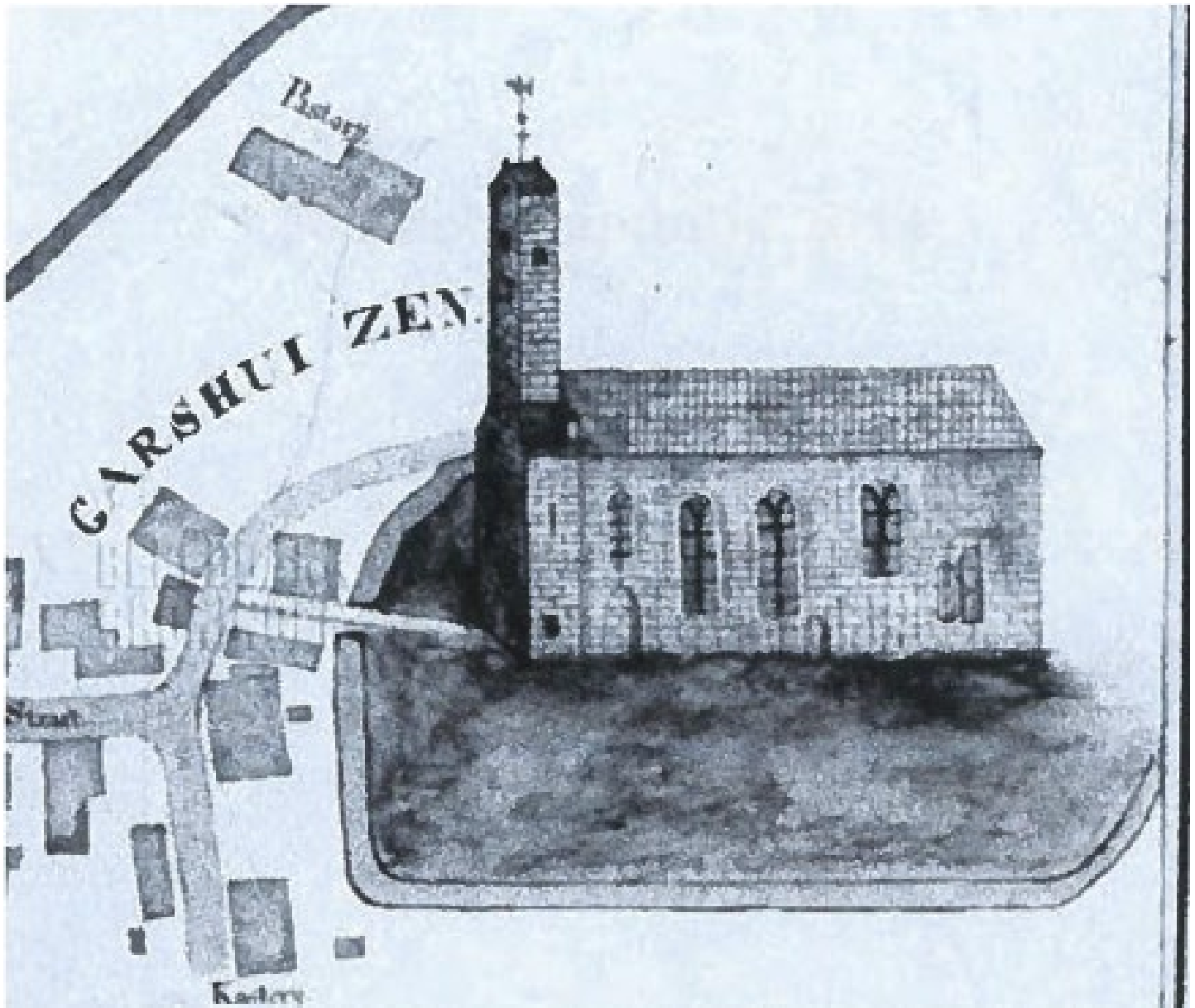


In her work, Katrin Sigurdardóttir explores the way physical structures and boundaries define our perception. Through unexpected shifts in scale, she examines distance and memory and their embodiments in architecture, cartography and traditional landscape representations. While alluding to real locations, her works question the verity of these places, as well as our account of them.

Sigurdardóttir's work crosses the boundary between perceptual and embodied space, between vision and experience. She takes on the uneasy confrontation, when the viewer has to negotiate a new relationship with the miniature, see it as not representing other than itself, a disproportionate constructed object in the full-scale world. "Sigurdardóttir's work reminds us that the production of space is a complex phenomenon, in which perceptual and representational aspects cannot be separated from function or use.... Sigurdardóttir works with a representational space that is conceptually used and perceptually lived", writes Giuliana Bruno, professor of visual and environmental studies, Harvard University.

Katrin Sigurdardóttir was born in Reykjavik, Iceland. In the last 20 years, her works have been shown extensively in Europe, North- and South America and are included in numerous public and private collections. She is representing Iceland in the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013. She has had notable solo exhibitions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2010), MoMA PS1, New York (2006), FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon, France (2006), Sala Siqueiros, Mexico City (2005) and Fondazione Sandretto, Turin, Italy (2004). In 2014, her large-scale work for the Venice Biennale traveled to The Reykjavík Art Museum, and SculptureCenter, New York and in 2015 she staged solo exhibitions at The List Center at MIT, Boston, and at Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art in London. Upcoming projects in 2018 include FRONT International, Cleveland Triennial of Contemporary Art and





### Objectives of the Artwork

The idea developed for the cemetery and church ruin at Garsthuizen aims to preserve the memory of the church as a site for sacred ritual. Even if the site does not serve any religious functions at this time, it evokes contemplation and spirituality, with the graves and the memory embedded in the ruined structure of the two church building previously there. The proposed work aims to extend this function of the site into the present, and to commemorate its ancient role.

The work will have certain references to biblical narratives, but in a way that is pan-religious and non-denominational. These narratives will be presented outside any organised faith and will be stripped of any doctrinal detail.

The garden refers to the story of creation, and presents the interior of the church as a microcosm, a condensed view of all creation. At this specific site, the garden also emphasises renewal, new life springing from an old foundation and the cyclicity of nature.

The tiles/ bricks used to lay the pathways in the garden which will be designed by the artist and will be





cast from local soil in a local brickmaking facility. Today, the remains of the church buildings, from the 13th and 19th century are present only in the form of the clay bricks. These bricks can be seen as “human remains” of sorts, in that they are the remains of human activity through the ages, human devotion to the building of a church and yet they are a timeless material in comparison to a human life, the geological timespan of clay sediments, that then are momentarily transformed to bricks. “A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night.” (Psalm of David, 90:4) By producing tiles for the creation of this artwork, a third marker of time and devotion are made, yet all of the bricks from each of the three constructions on the site, are simply the earth, returning back to earth, from being fleetingly touched by the human hand.

The glass dome that covers part of the garden refers to the building of the church itself and while being a structure that provides shelter, its transparency emphasises transcendental vision, of looking from the church up to the sky, infinite vision.

The work aims to preserve the function as a place for communal gathering as well as individual contemplation. Today, the site carries a somber atmosphere of loss, with graves and a torn down building. The artwork seeks to balance this existential tone, and gives it a new role that is in continuum of its previous function as a place of gathering, a social place.

The structure of the glass dome will be very visible beyond the site and will also serve as a cultural marker in the landscape. The work will therefore contribute to the overall architectural profile on Gartshuizen and will be enjoyed beyond the boundaries of the site and the village itself.

As a whole, the artwork reflects on the notions of internal/external, with the walls of the church leveled and presenting what used to be the floor of the church as an outdoor space. The glass dome emphasises this character of the work, being half a greenhouse for the garden, and half a transparent memorial to the outline of the church.



## Proposal

The remaining walls of the church are left as is. They serve as the defining boundary and locus of the artwork. The area previously inside the church will be cultivated as a garden. Tiled pathways will be designed to allow foot traffic, or grass that can tolerate foot traffic. In choosing plants for the garden, emphasis will be made on plants that are perennial, native and historical breeds. The garden should be self sustaining and not need more tending than the rest of the graveyard (see examples on pages 13-15). The plans for tiled walkways and areas will be designed in tandem with the horticulture. Tiled pathways and the entrance area to the church are made with tiles/bricks designed by the artist and cast from local soil at a local brickmaking facility.

Above the approximate altar area there will be a glass dome, at the same height as the nave of the previous church, approximately 9 meters at its highest point. This structure will create partial greenhouse for the



garden, and will provide covering for the interior gravestones.

The structure supporting the glass dome is a laminated glass system, thereby the entire structure will be fully transparent. (see example pages 10-11). Proper draining of rainwater will be designed, so that water runs off outside the boundary of the old church. The supporting structure will be fastened to the walls of the church with steel plates and bolts. Therefore there will be no need to cast a foundation in the ground. The design of the glass dome in this proposal is made in consultation with an architect, and is fully realisable at the height of 9 meters.

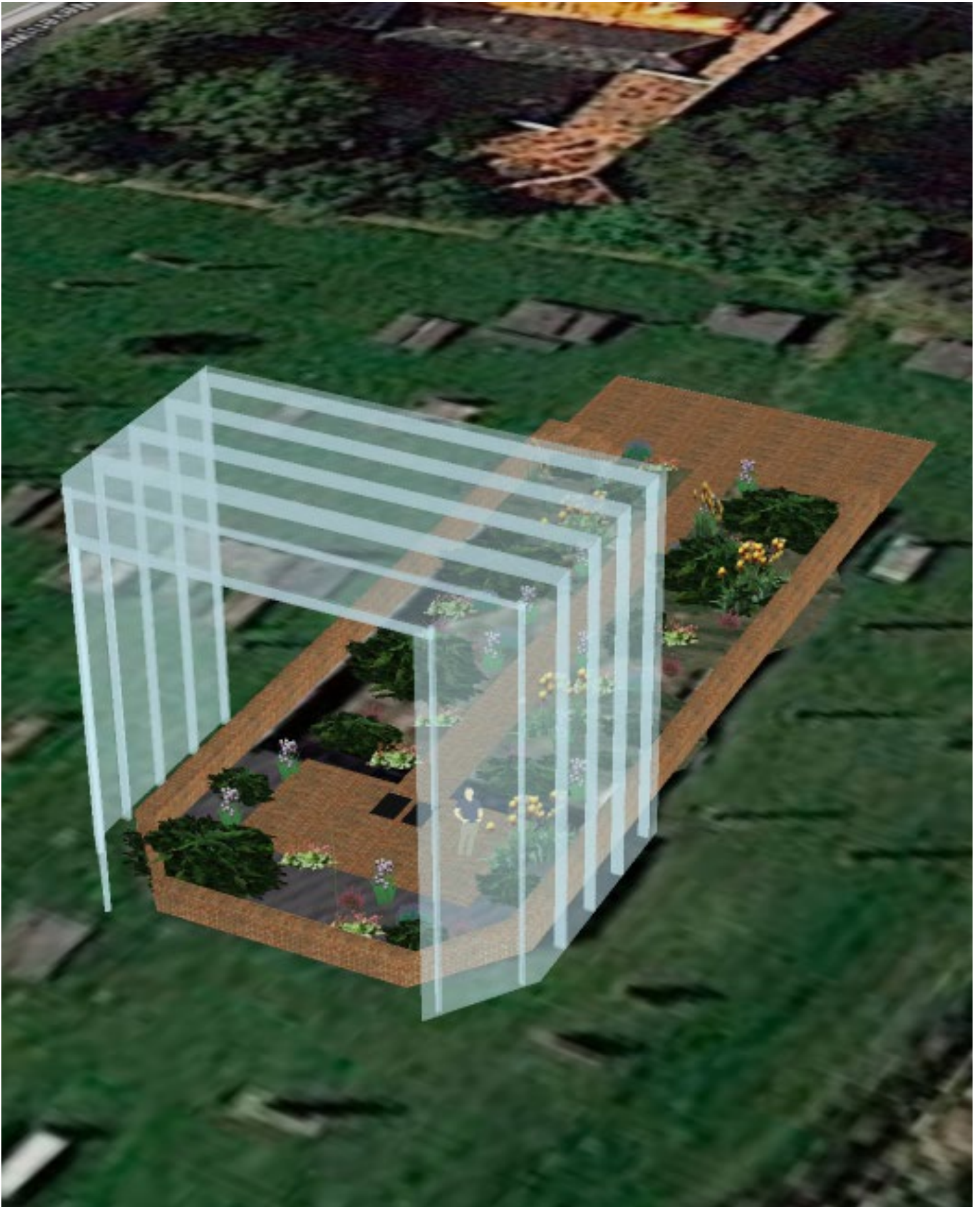
As an alternative, the supporting structure can be made with steel tunnel system that the sheets of glass are fastened to. (see example page 12).

The artwork does not need electrical lighting.









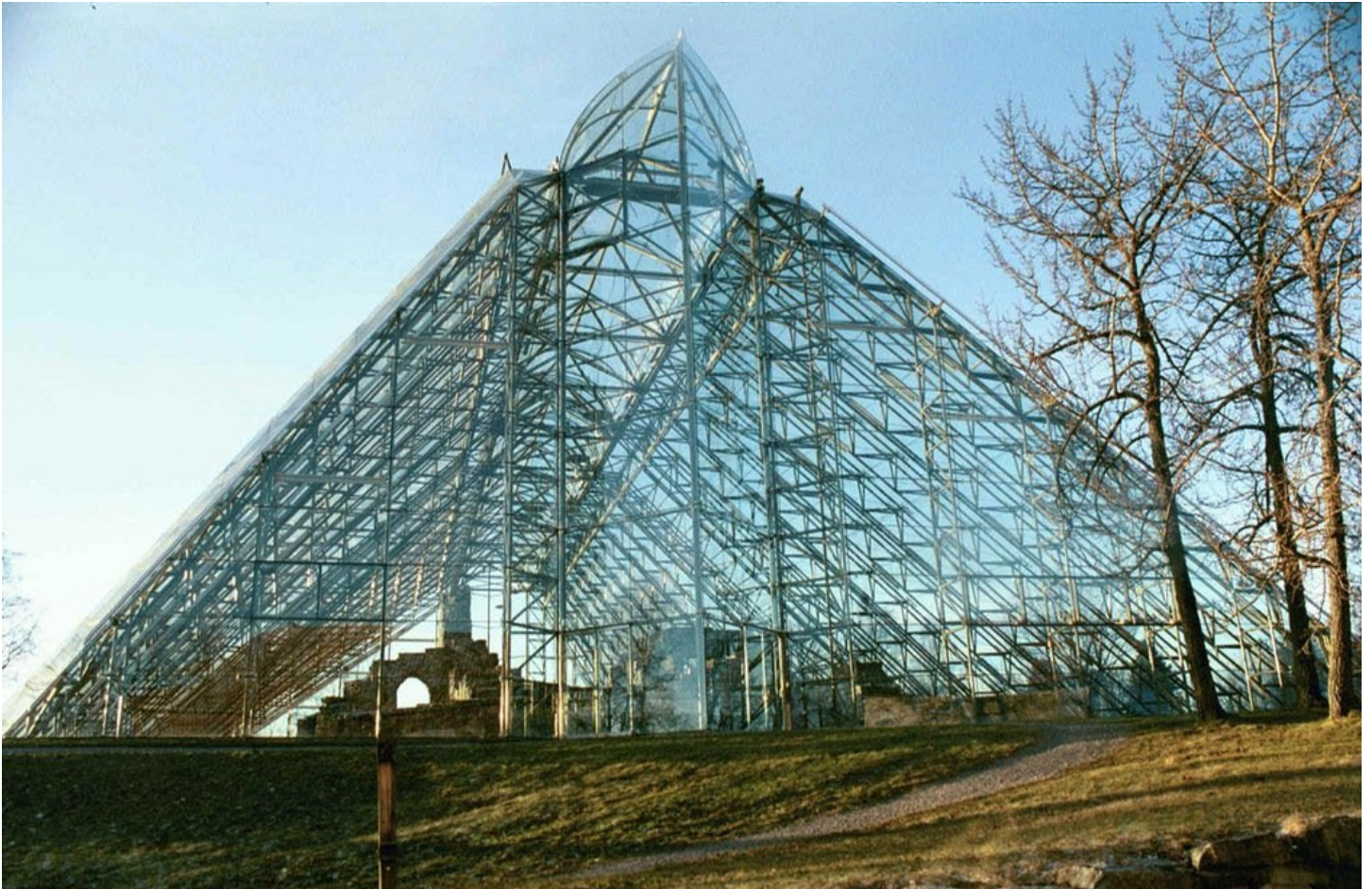




























#### Plan of Execution and Timeline:

Phase 1. Further development of structure with architect and engineer, and design of garden with horticulturist. 3 - 6 months

Phase 2. Prefabrication of glass and structure. Fabrication of tiles/bricks for pathways. Preparation of site. 3 - 6 months

Phase 3. Installation of glass and structure. 3 - 6 months

Phase 4. Planting and cultivation of garden. 3 - 6 months

Total production time: 1-2 years



