



BEAUTIFUL DIRT

*Exploring the American Taboo of Death
through the things we leave behind.*

JAKE DANGSTORP . MID RISD 2020

SIGNATURES

BEAUTIFUL DIRT

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Industrial Design the Department of Industrial Design of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

By Jacob Dangstorp, 2020.

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'Beautiful Dirt' is a project meant to help people think about death as a way to learn and grow, rather than a 'never happening' taboo. Contemporary research into western dialogues around death show a consistent anxiety towards being forgotten, as well as a fear of being a burden when passing away. The abject nature of the topic leaves people diminishing the weight of the things they leave behind, and the things they forget to. This perpetuates a cycle of denial in order to avoid stress, emburdening loved ones with an unplanned mass of personal items and piecemeal stories to assemble, culminating in an anxious end-of-life care experience, all due to the lack of any platform to process these inaccessible emotions.

In order to help break down the fears around death planning in aging populations, this project proposes the introduction of a new 'tombstone' archetype, alongside a prompted 'on-boarding' journaling method meant to be filled with life stories. The tombstone functions as a family memorial archive which houses all of a deceased person's journal stories, alongside any physical mementos people choose to place when visiting. The purpose of creating these two active objects is to:

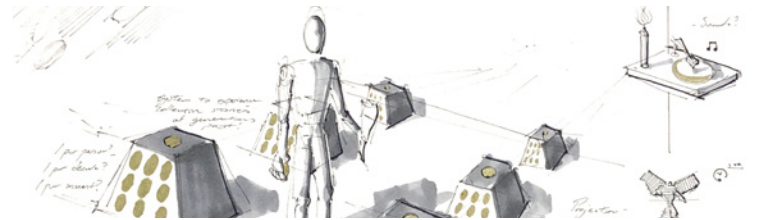
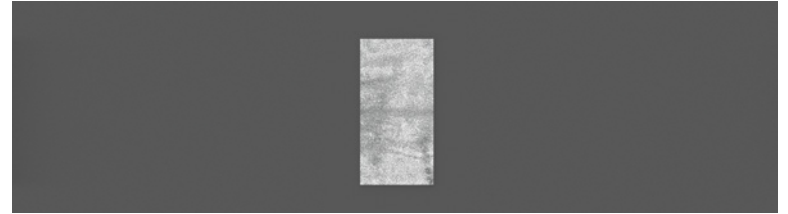
- a) Help localize a person's stories in a ritualized space, so they maintain meaning and allow family / close peoples to access intimate moments that would otherwise be lost.
- b) Facilitate intergenerational understanding through publicly accessible personal histories.
- c) Familiarize western people to a communal and reciprocal death dialogue, relieving stress in the death-planning process through habit-formed self-reflection.
- d) Mitigate the common sense of purposelessness and anxiety found in elderly retirement communities.
- e) Break away from the classist and traditionally hierarchical tropes of 'lot-style' cemeteries, shifting to a more space conscious and ecologically circular alternative.

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I would be remiss to not mention my grandfather's ring. It was my introduction to the odd archaeology of heirlooms, the little things people leave behind. My grandfather bought it in the grand bazaar in Istanbul, decades before I was born. It was one of the only things he left to me when he passed away. It looked much different when I was given it. The gold was burnished, browned as if it had somehow been sun-dried. The shank was bent and scratched from a lifetime of wear. And the markings were a mystery, swirly patterns embedded in the flat signet. I became fascinated with the ring. My mother told me that he wore it every single day without fail, but I learned nothing more about why he bought it or what it meant to him. Years after receiving it, I decided to use my semi-literacy in jewelry making to reform the ring. It was an awkward moment of custodianship where the wish to preserve the object's story coincided with a lack of ability on my end to wear the ring. I would be consigning the identity-intricate ring to a 'Toy Story' life within a drawer, muting it forever. I chose the route of reforging. If I could wear the ring, I could keep telling its story, and I could add onto it. So I hammered, soldered, and polished. I started to wear it proudly, knowing the layers of history caked beneath polishing compound. After a year or so of having it on, a friend of mine told me that the embossed scrawlings on the top were in fact stylized arabic writings. Not only did the halved diameter allow my skeletal fingers to fit the colossal hole, but it allowed its old meaning to face the world again, expanding its dual identities through a peer-to-peer network of knowledge. The ring's inscription reads Ishtar, the goddess of love. I don't know if my grandfather knew that, or if he just liked how it looked, but I love that I get to keep telling my family's past through it, and to build my own in tow.

In a hunch over my laptop, my slowly spiralling spine leans me closer to an article. “As millennials reject heirlooms, boomers ask, ‘What do we do with all this stuff?’”, by Denise Crosby. This is my introduction to the double-edged side of heirlooms and memory. My personal experience was more “National Treasure”, than it was the involuntary episode of “Hoarders” it makes for some people. Crosby writes about a massive painting that her mother bequeathed, and the burden it brought. “Any joy that wheat silhouette I inherited has given me over the years is now dulled by the thought of it laying in a pile of other once-upon-a-time treasures on a shelf at the local Goodwill. It’s chipped and it’s worn and it really is out of date, so it will probably look right at home. But as long as I’m hanging around, so shall Mom’s favorite piece of art.”



0.1

Denise is hardly alone, the devil’s bargain that binds her, was the same that bound so many in my research. Jan Dorr, in an article for NPR, “The Value Of Family Heirlooms In A Digital Age”, articulates the difficult balance of this conversation. Asking “How long can we expect mementos to remain valued by a younger generation three generations removed from the original owner?” While still struggling with that fact that “These objects tell [Jan] that [her] ancestral family is not a dream or a boring romance novel. They lived, worked, saved, and died with these heirlooms left in [her] care.”

This idea of facilitating intergenerational dialogue through memories, and understanding the small histories of those that came before us, as a means of societal empathy, became a core motivation for my research.





Image: Courtesy of NYTimes. By T.J. Kirkpatrick. "Just Use the China' or 'Call 1-800-Got-Junk': Readers on Inheriting...

The stories didn't stop with these two authors. My "Tutankhamun's Tomb" of research came in the form of a quantitative analysis by Carolyn Folkman Curasi in "How Individuals' Cherished Possessions Become Families' Inalienable Wealth". In this scientific take on such an emotional topic, a number of discoveries come to light:

1. "Personal items successfully passed forward through the lineage have the ability to grant the original owners a symbolic immortality... Research suggests at least one way that consumers are socialized about values that their older family members hold dear is through storytelling rituals associated with intergenerationally transferred possessions... Attaching vivid stories to cherished family possessions increases the potential for future family members to remember key ideas in the stories which can be translated into morals and values."



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2. "A concern often heard from older individuals: the fear that younger family members will not remember and retell stories associated with their most cherished possessions... They feared their younger loved ones might... instead return these items to the market by selling them, discarding them, or by simply not passing them forward with their stories and meanings attached (Curasi et al., 2004b)."

3. Price et al. (2000) also found that "heirloom quality" items are not necessarily expensive items. Instead, transferred items were often inexpensive objects that had grown dense with personal meaning over time."

4. "Overwhelmingly, individuals of all ages, young and old, reported they planned to pass forward familial possessions to family members."

Image: Photo courtesy of Armoury Watches. "Why Watches Are Great Family Heirlooms". Armoury.pb.



These points of data laid out by Carolyn Curasi defined what would be the jumping off moment, and running thread of my entire thesis. Aging American people are scared that their stories, traditions, and memories will be forgotten. And on the other side of the equation, family members are worried that they will have to maintain and pass down identity-laden possessions that take up unavailable space in their lives, becoming vessels for resentment. My goal from this teeter-totter of emotional weight was to create a means of mediating this interaction, so that each side felt satisfied and less burdened. From here I started experimenting by 'designing for remembrance'.

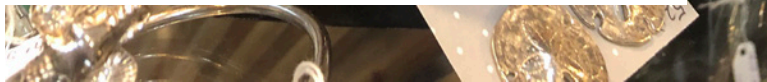


Image: Personal photograph. Five Dollar Jewelry at a Providence Thrift Store.



Image: Personal photograph. Historically passed down wine containers on display in the Okanogan Valley, BC, Canada.

“The Ship of Theseus” is an age-old thought experiment about the nature of object permanence. I found it while productively browsing Reddit one day. To my bruise-poking interest, a question so central to my project was still being debated after thousands of years. The gist of the experiment is the question - ‘if a boat has every plank of wood and every piece of its being replaced, is it still the same boat?’ I started to think about how the combination of identity and temporality worked in the world of heirlooms. The perspective about an object (in my case an heirloom) being able to be itself without actually being itself, spurred me in a direction to see if the heirloom qualms people were having could be remedied by a dedicated memory object. I wanted to explore how the idea of the ‘original’ factored into the situation, and if the dissemination of an object’s identity would further its life and meaning, or snuff it out. This premise crystallized after finding Peter Stallybrass’ writing.



I came across Peter Stallybrass' writing in the book "Worn Worlds" on a day trudging through the steep pile of secondary research that one amasses in a Master's program. A beaver dam of html files made to house my own mammalian thoughts. In the book, he reflects on the death of a close friend, and how "They...literally inhabit[ed] [him] through the "habits" which they bequeath[ed]." (37) The work as a whole inspired a number of experiments centered around dissecting people's heirlooms. I tried to break down heirlooms into their sensory elements, in an attempt to see whether meaning could be transplanted from one object to another. One of the experiments which came from this quote, compared whether having participants mimic an heirloom-related experience could elicit the same level of connection as a photograph of the memory/event. The goal was to see if Sol Lewitt style instructions coupled with a story would embody a



0.4

memory in a more powerful way than a photograph/object. People were asked to read a story about a pictorial game I was a part of, and they had to draw the prompt in the story. Of the 20 odd people that engaged in the activity, the majority responded that a photograph of the event still felt more connected to the story, but the activity made the participants' empathy towards the struggle of the people in the story stronger. This experiment highlighted that designing for remembrance is multi-faceted, and that you have to design different experiences to produce different sections of memory. Because I was trying to create for people that are seeking an emotional connection through an heirloom, I decided that there was merit in the idea of having a level of interactive mimicry in the memory object that would circumvent an heirloom.





Image: Personal photograph. Random tags delivered to individuals who had to care for a precious item for one month.

In my early teens, the full dvd set of “The Chappelle’s Show” was a prized commodity. Looking back, I think I owned it? Or my brother did? Or my friend Jeff? It’s hard to tell. It was passed from house to house in an underground network of tweens trying to access comedy locked away by the ever-vigilant “R Rating”. Sleepovers, hangouts, clandestine corner store drop offs, one way or another, this DVD would make its way to a social gathering. In a strangely teary-eyed moment, when I moved from my hometown in Saskatchewan to Vancouver, it was gifted to me. The ragged cover was holding on like a medieval wall nearly torn down over many ‘tween’ sieges. I honestly don’t think it was mine, but to have custodianship over something so strangely nostalgic has forced me to keep a useless (DVD is dead-ish) item for close to a decade. It sits upright in a bookshelf, and in essence, looking at it has the same transporive ability as its paper neighbors.



 0.5

Having an unexpected ‘heirloom’ is a weird experience. It leaves the recipient in an odd arbiter role. How does this thing fit into my life? For me, I deliberated for far too long on where it should go. I tried to simulate this strange feeling from both sides in an experiment where I temporarily gifted some of my actual precious items to people who had little idea of the experiments’ premise. In doing this experiment, it was interesting to see just how quickly the participants stopped enjoying the experience, and when they had difficulty incorporating the objects into their daily life. As the gifter, I also started to feel anxiety about the state of these possessions after the first day. For the greater end of my project, this experiment stifled my burgeoning idea that advancing some death-planning processes like heirloom transfers would mitigate the anxieties felt by both parties.

Image: Personal photograph. Participants incorporated the precious items into their daily lives.

I went to Switzerland with my brother as part of a gallivanted tour across continental Europe, which was kickstarted by our dual graduation (his masters and my undergraduate). It was the last time we got to see each other for an extended period, and it's a moment that I look back on really fondly. At the time of the trip, one of my most cherished things was a pair of silver sneakers, which were a gift from years prior. In a spontaneous moment during the trip, the group of us tried to hike the Prealps, and through some thoroughly unqualified navigation we ended up hiking to France (designers and economists don't make the best cartographers). A four hour hike tripled, and by the end, my once pristine silver sneakers were now battered, looking as if they were hand-hammered into shape from metal plates and rivets. I remember after that trip, looking at those shoes, thinking about how each scratch represented a story.



0.6

It wouldn't be until this project, that I would find kinship in the love for cataloguing wear and tear. Peter Stallybrass wrote quite eloquently about how his dead friend lived in the imperfections of the things he left behind, "He was there in the wrinkles of the elbows...he was there in the stains at the very bottom of the jacket; he was there in the smell of the ampits". I ended up using this idea of 'worn moments' as means of tying the stories of heirlooms into things more closely tied to the lives of the people receiving them. I created a series of objects that had memorable wrinkles and scratches overlaid on any tangibly interactive aspect of the product. I made two, the first was a knife with a handle that held the wrinkles of an inherited leather jacket, and the second was a french press with the texture of a handmade sketchbook from Vienna that I received from my brother as a gift.

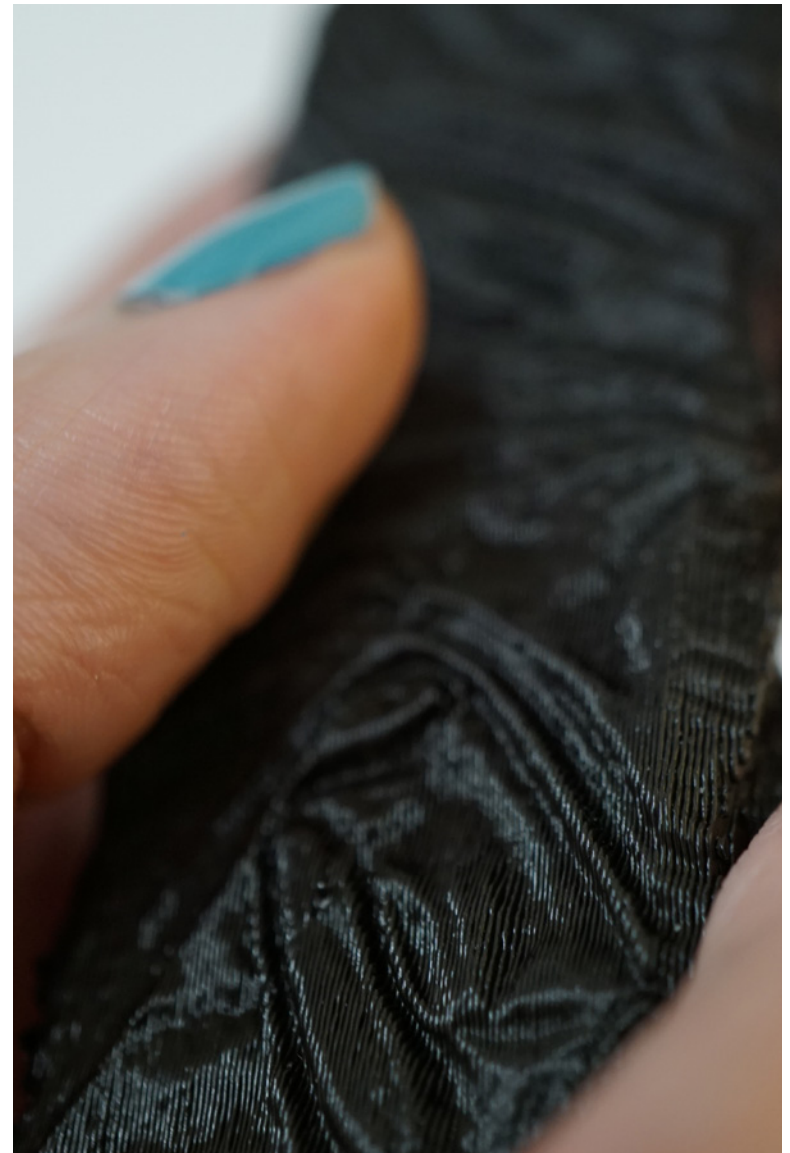




Image: Personal photograph. Reference image of heirloomed leather jacket.

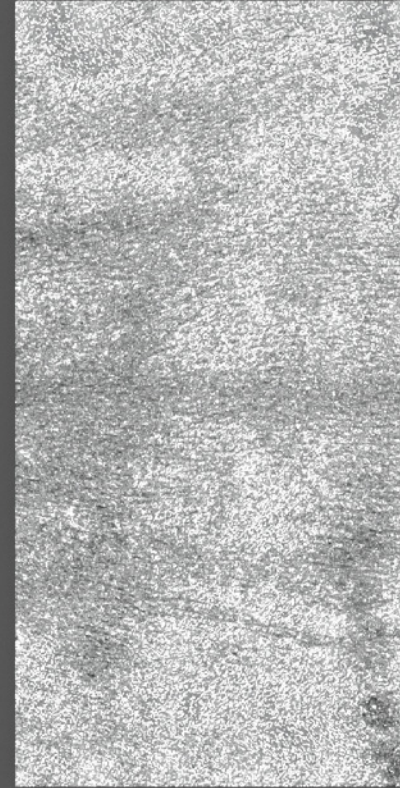
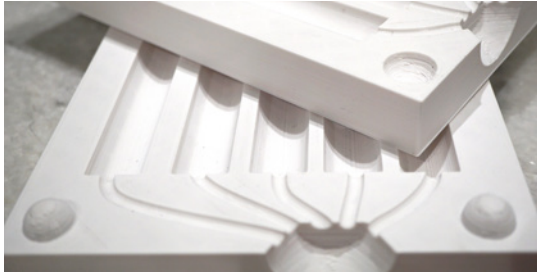


Image: Personal photograph. Heightmap of leather of heirloomed leather jacket.

I paint miniatures as a hobby, and as a way to make a little money on the side through commissions. While it doesn't do any good for my struggling posture, it makes me think about the fact that I have a growing collection of objects that mean an incredible amount to myself, but not to anyone close to me. They're small, but as a group, take up a sizable portion of my office. I tried to explore how 3D scanning and photogrammetry could shift collections into a virtual space, thus existing in a spaceless parallel. I developed this idea after I came across a project called "Technology Heirlooms" by a group of researchers at Microsoft Research Cambridge. I tried to incorporate their mission statement around technological memories, as a way to consider how heirlooms could exist as 'digital originals'. The researchers asked if "[i]t[s] possible... to turn this notion of how we relate to digital technical artefacts on its head?... Would it be possible to create technological artefacts that are used, resold, bequeathed or otherwise given continued life much as is done with antiques in our current culture?" I tried to take a symbiotic approach to their proposition, seeing how the value of a memory changes when it is translated into a digital state from a physical origin. In running this idea by Richard Banks, one of the team members who worked on the aforementioned project, he explained that the pure idea of replication poses difficulty. He told me that "the lack of curation in a digital space makes it a difficult space [to design memory objects in]... When...we see these objects, digital things being 'strange' will make the [design] speculative [in people's eyes]" (para. Richard Banks, Interview Nov. 2019). Rather than designing a service where people could access digital replicas of heirlooms, he asked how I "[could]... make heirlooming a byproduct of this system" (2019).

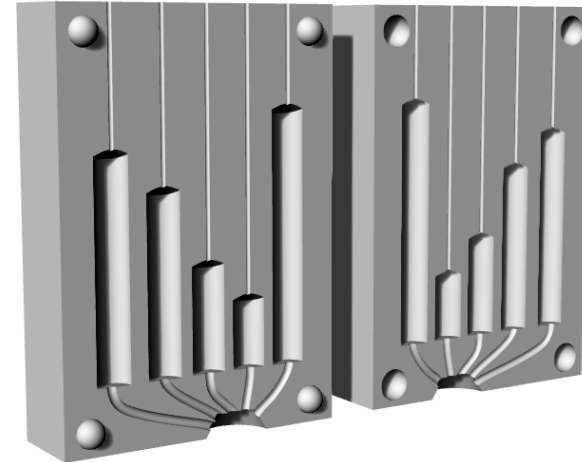


I was in my partner's apartment building a couple years ago, and the elevator had this insanely familiar smell. Like metal patina and old books, and I was so desperately trying to find out what it was reminding me of. She lived on the second floor of the apartment and there was rarely any need to ride it, but I would go on it whenever I was going to visit because it had a uniquely transportive ability. It made me remember the water-warped floor and the uneven pool table in my grandparents's basement, memories left in a lint-filled recess of my brain. Being in the elevator with that smell brought back moments that did not have the dignity to be photographed, but brought about as much joy as those deemed so noteworthy.



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I decided to use this as an inquiry into how smell could forgo my attempts at making a physical memory object. My motivation to start investigating the olfactory aspects of memory swelled after reading an article by Geoffrey Batchen, titled "Ere the Substance Fade: Photography and Hair Jewelry", from 2012. In the work he claims that "Photograph[s] [are] never, in essence, a memory... but [they] actually block memory... Photographs replace the immediate, physically embracing experience of involuntary memory (the sort of emotional responses most often induced, before conscious thought, by smells and sounds) with frozen illustrations set in the past; Photography replaces the unpredictable thrill of memory with the dull certainties of history." I was taken by this concept of natural memory, seeing it as another avenue to explore a memory system.



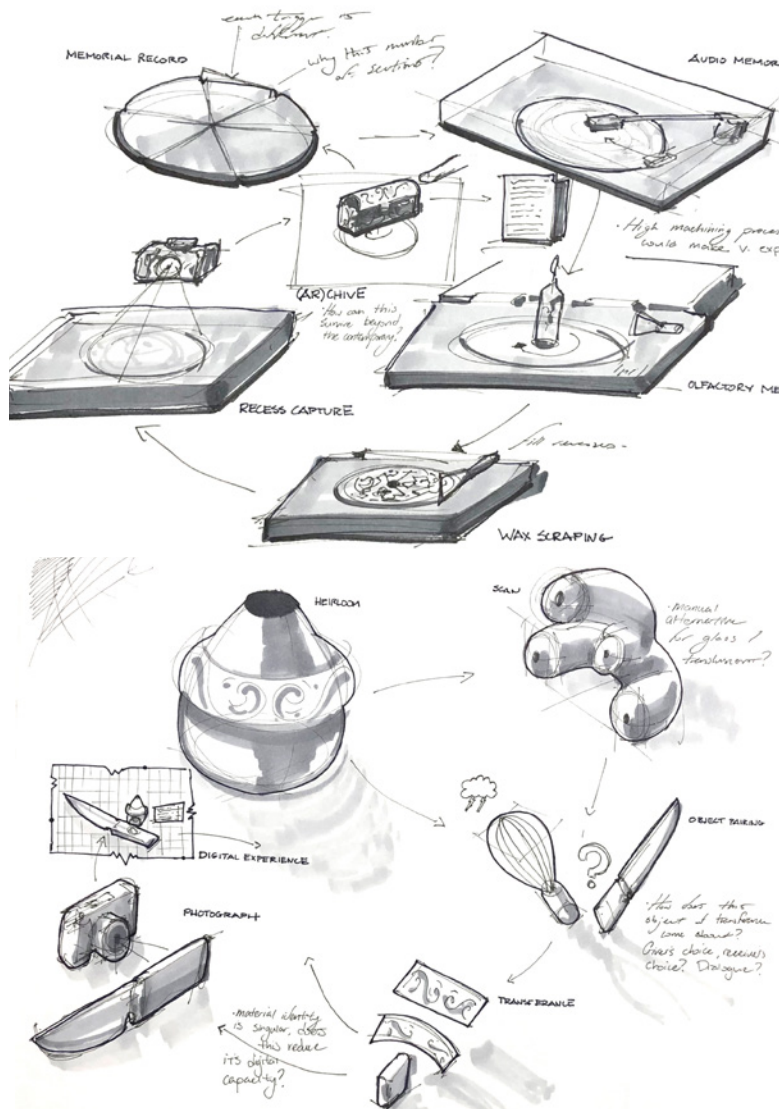


Image: Personal photograph. Sketch exploring systems of memory-accessing through smell and digital spaces.

Much like a harsh unwanted smell, a key moment diverted my attention away from furthering my olfactory research. Richard Banks, a lead researcher at Microsoft Cambridge, at last responded to an email I thought was long-since dead. The digital hail mary was caught months after my initial lob into the ether. He and a team of designers investigated the process of translating heirloom-related memories into a digital space.

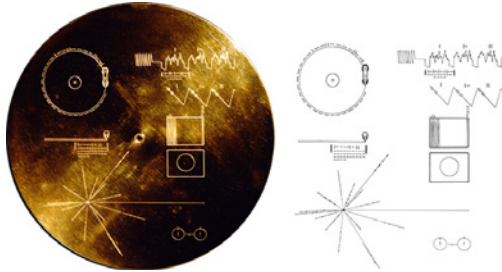


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In my fever dream 6:00am conversation with him, he said “The image had such an unfair advantage..[the image represented] A complex interplay between...different aspects [of memory]” (para. Banks, November 2019 Interview). I would come to find out that those levels of memory centered around identity and possession, and that designing for different elements of memory, required the addition of unique systems. The synthesized perspective from the team was: “if you are designing a system to support recollection, then we know there are some kinds of cues that are better triggers than others. For example, rich visual images seem to be good cues for recollective memory. Also, place, event and people cues are stronger than using time as a cue...[and] if you are designing a system to support reminiscing, you need to think about optimising the experience of sharing either for people who are together, or for experiences to bring remote people together. Such systems might also support the elicitation and recording of spontaneous storytelling” (Banks, Richard. et. al. Things We’ve Learnt About Memory. Microsoft Research Ltd. 2012). In his many gifts, Richard left a prophetic question which guided my new visual direction, “We know a lot of knowledge is in the head, and could never be represented. What does your head do in filling in things, where is your head’s place” (2019). With that, I turned my torchlight up another path.

Image: Personal photograph. Sketch exploring how memories could be sewn / added into clothing.

My friends and I have a running joke that I'm a human bird. If something's shiny, or metallic, there's about a 50% chance I'll think it's an amazing design. It's a flaw, but as someone that loves to make jewelry, there's a perpetual 'kid in a candy store' feeling for every project that's even remotely jewelry-esque. In looking at the world of heirlooms, it was hard to disconnect the association towards precious shiny things, despite what the research suggested. My preconceptions led me to believe that heirlooms were generally expensive. However, when I looked into Carloyn Curasi's research about American heirloom tendencies, "heirloom quality" items are not necessarily expensive items. Instead, transferred items were often inexpensive objects that had grown dense with personal meaning over time. The intention to create and maintain family heirlooms was common among their middle class informants, providing data that allowed



1.0

these researchers to explain how many middle class families in the US successfully create and maintain inalienable wealth" (Curasi et al., 2004). Learning this, I decided to run an experiment to see whether a somewhat mundane object decidedly meant for memory could replace an heirloom, taking up less space and storing more. My avian brain thought about the Voyager record made by NASA. I thought the idea of inscribing what the human race was, in a way that could be understood by anything, for eternity, in GOLD no less, was a fascinating and beautiful idea (go figure). I tried to emulate the same methods on an individual scale, a petit four to a bridal cake so to speak. I interviewed three people aged 25-35 to get a sense of milestone moments in their lives, which would be represented on their own voyager record. I then CNC'd the objects, and encoded the sections as AR triggers for them to virtually flesh out their stories.

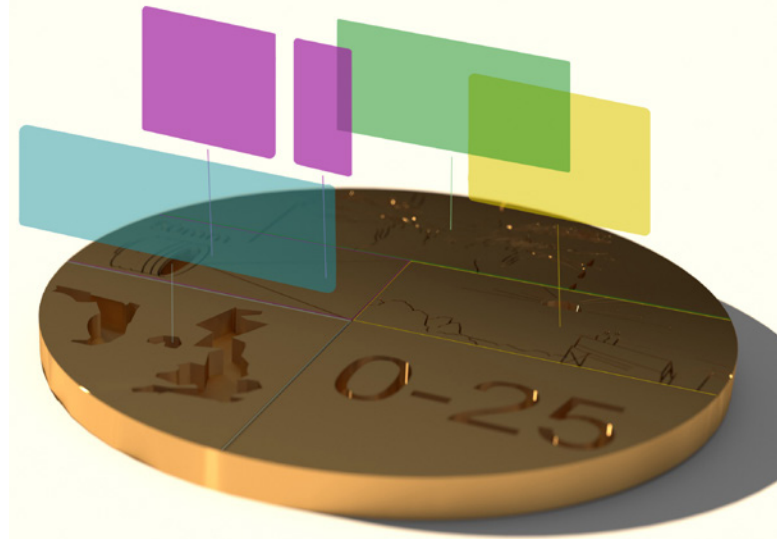
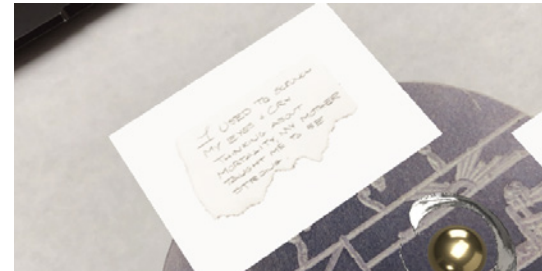




Image: Personal photograph. First CNC Trial of a voyager record. Set in plaster wall-feature. (Broken to get it out).

In practice, the participants were interested, but the actual item had little practical use, and because of its scale, the item was seen more as an art object rather than a tool for cultivating memory. However, the choice amongst the participants to use the record as a form of decoration, either affixing it to a wall, or as a coaster, made me start to think about how these memory objects could potentially pattern in a way that compiled either multiple layers of someone's personal history, or multiple persons altogether. I started to think about how a mosaic of memory could exist as a form of architecture. It was after this experiment that I looked back at "Things We've Learnt About Memory" from SDS systems at Microsoft Research (2012). Something that piqued my interest was their discussion of "Another aspect of keeping things, and one that is rarely considered, [which] is the extent to which we archive items to forget them" (Banks et al. Things We've Learned about Memory. 2012).



1.1

In their research "One young woman told [them] about letters she had received from her mother, which she still keeps, but which are painful to her. They are kept because they are important, but they are stored in such a way that they are out of sight" (28). This put a flip on my approach to this point. Everything I had been designing was meant to be readily accessible in the home, but it lacked any proper justification for being something that could cause pain just by existing there. So as an extension of 'heirlooming' as a home-based death practice, I started to explore how I could remedy some of America's death planning problems through something outside of the home, thus being accessible but not ever-present. I started to investigate a space that I felt was entirely connected to heirlooms and remembrance, which was the cemetery.

Image: Personal photograph. Initial attempts at placing AR story features in specific visual moments.

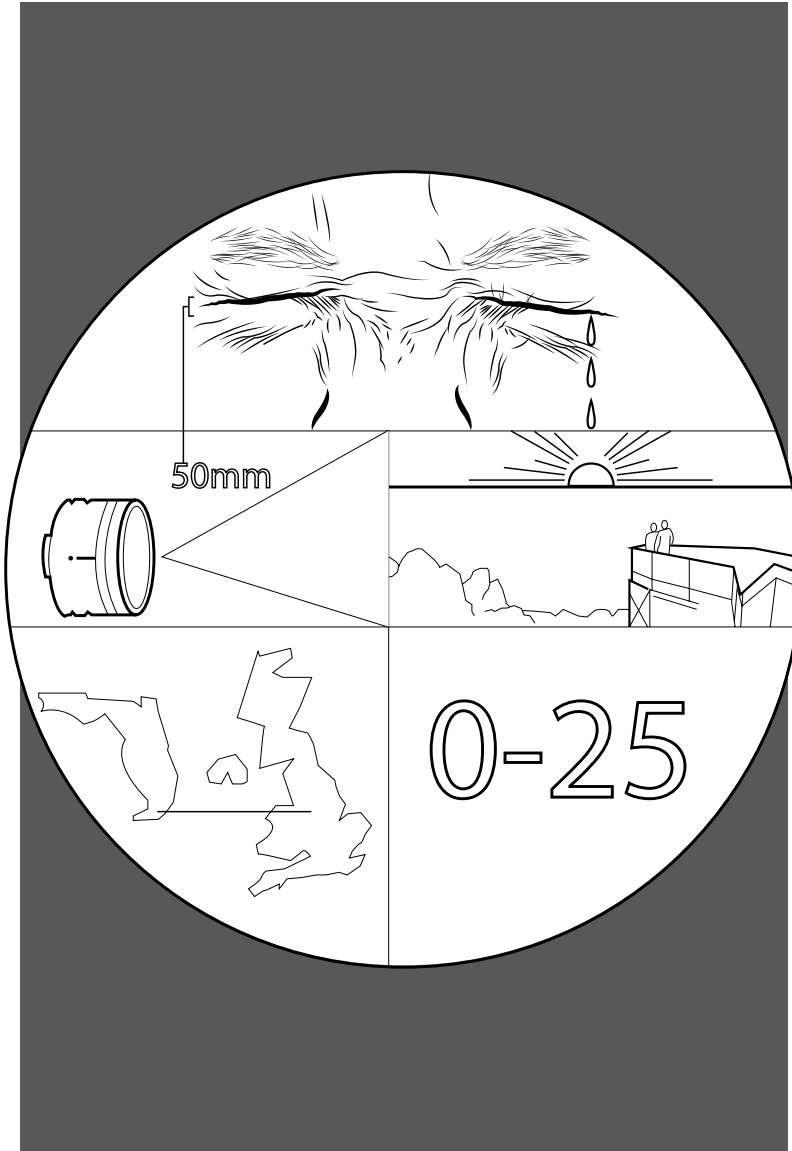


Image: Personal photograph. Vector Image of user chosen moments to display.

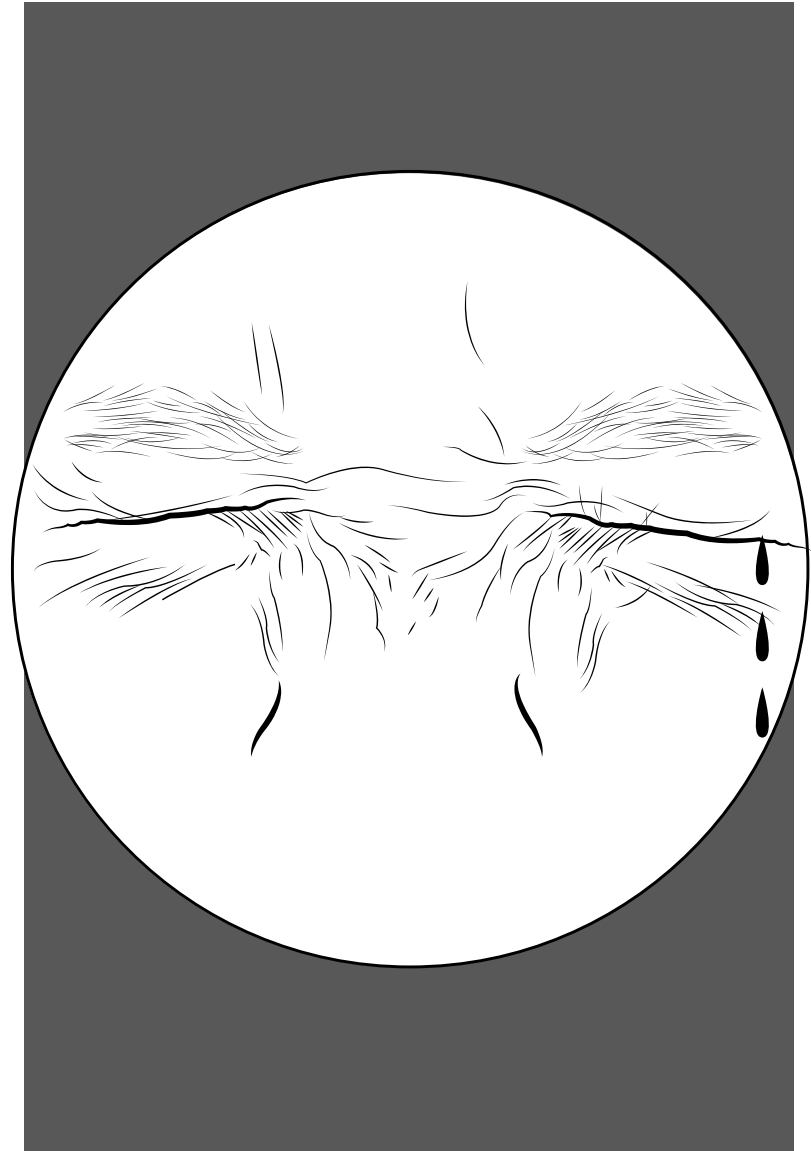


Image: Personal photograph. Potential version with individual memories creating a larger collection of 'records'.



Image: Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Calvert Lithographing. Birds Eye View of Detroit Michigan. 1889.

This symbolism was a power that the tombstone lost when urbanization and industrialization removed the human touch, ownership, and proximity that the markers used to have. The gridding of urban planning, and sequestration of cemeteries that accompanied these major drivers, meant that “death [was removed] from everyday life...chang[ing] the appearance of death...[and] it’s meaning...as well” (Gary Laderman. *The Sacred Remains: American attitudes toward death, 1799-1883*. Chapter 3. 39, 45). The gradual removal of the topic from daily life, meant that privatization was able to rear its ugly head, turning death into “a shameful final act to be dealt with by medical specialists in hospitals and to be disguised by funeral directors” (Thomas Kselman. *Death in Historical Perspective*. 1987. 591.). With the total control being in the hands of corporate enterprise, the tombstone turned into a ‘minimum viable’ style of product.

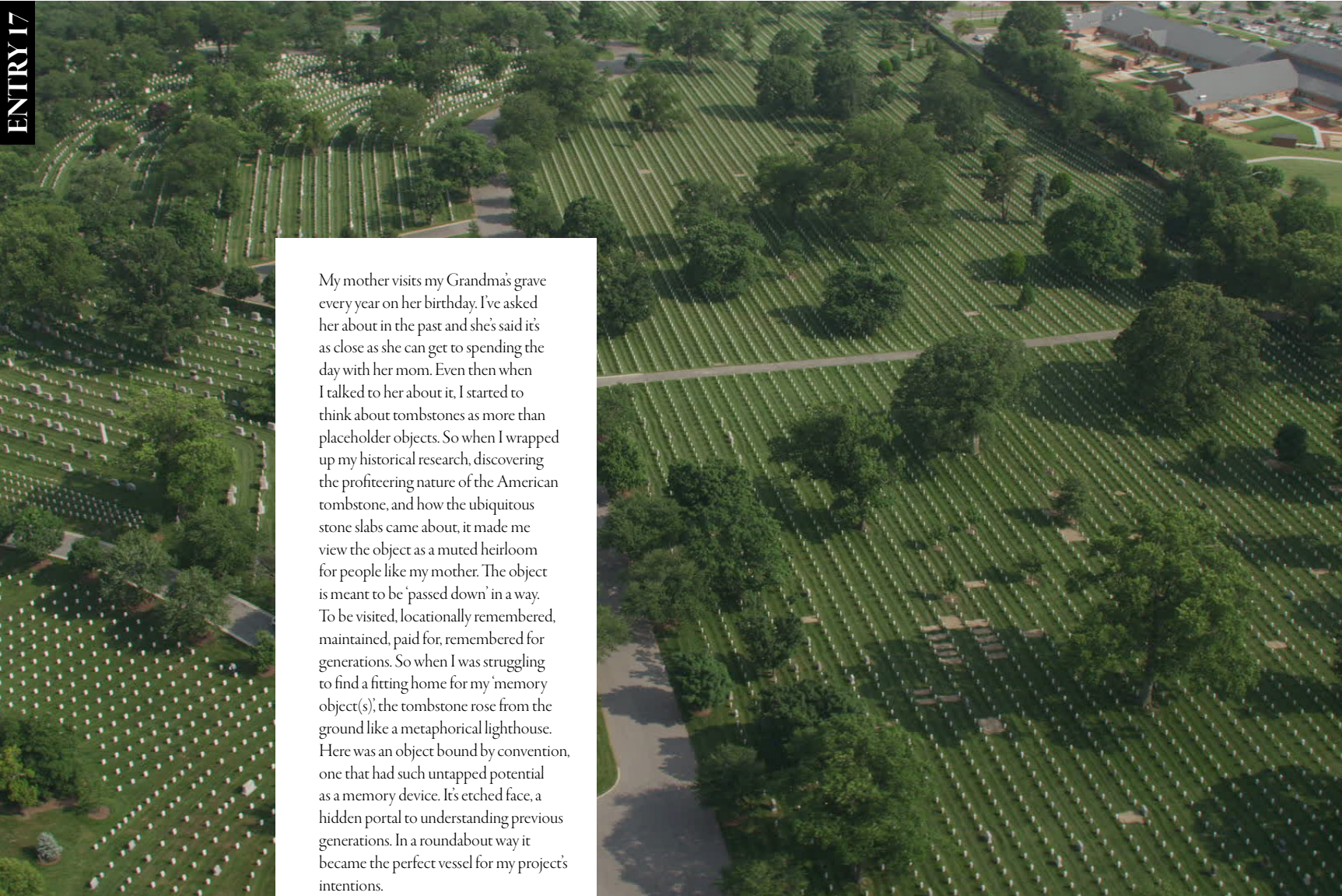


I.3

Mass manufacturing combined ‘perfectly’ with “the uniform culture of mid twentieth-century America, where normalcy was highly valued... [reflecting,] the man in the gray flannel suit” (Richard Francis, *Nonestied, Mark; New Jersey Cemeteries and Tombstones: History in the Landscape*. 235.). The funeral industry was able to prey on the gestalt drive to fulfill the ‘American dream’, which in the end, included a lavish casket, and an archetypical grave marker. With this information I felt equal parts motivated and frozen. On the one hand it was a relief that the american cemetery was a changeable place, albeit at a molasses pace. On the other hand, having such a stunted social dialogue around death increased the difficulty of my idea to put proactive planning tools into the hands of an unaccustomed audience.

Image: Courtesy of user blocher900 - hippostcard.com. 1950 *Lua A. Minns Memorial Gardens*, Cornell University, NY.

ENTRY 17



My mother visits my Grandma's grave every year on her birthday. I've asked her about in the past and she's said it's as close as she can get to spending the day with her mom. Even then when I talked to her about it, I started to think about tombstones as more than placeholder objects. So when I wrapped up my historical research, discovering the profiteering nature of the American tombstone, and how the ubiquitous stone slabs came about, it made me view the object as a muted heirloom for people like my mother. The object is meant to be 'passed down' in a way. To be visited, locationally remembered, maintained, paid for, remembered for generations. So when I was struggling to find a fitting home for my 'memory object(s)', the tombstone rose from the ground like a metaphorical lighthouse. Here was an object bound by convention, one that had such untapped potential as a memory device. It's etched face, a hidden portal to understanding previous generations. In a roundabout way it became the perfect vessel for my project's intentions.

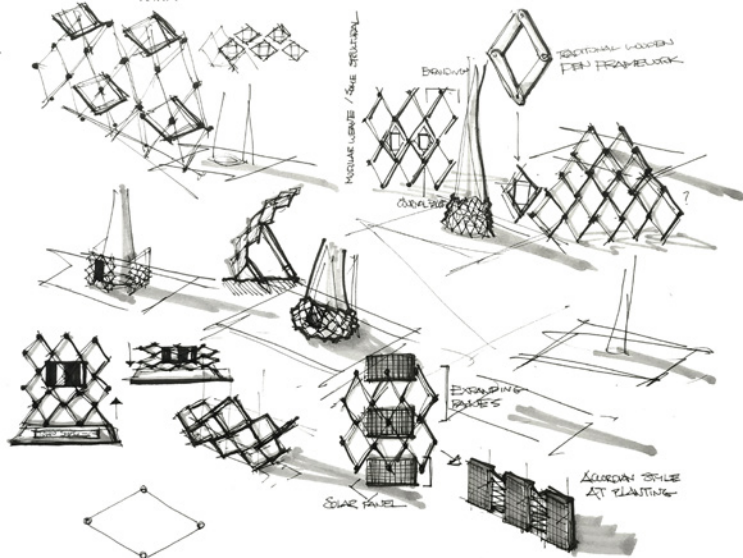
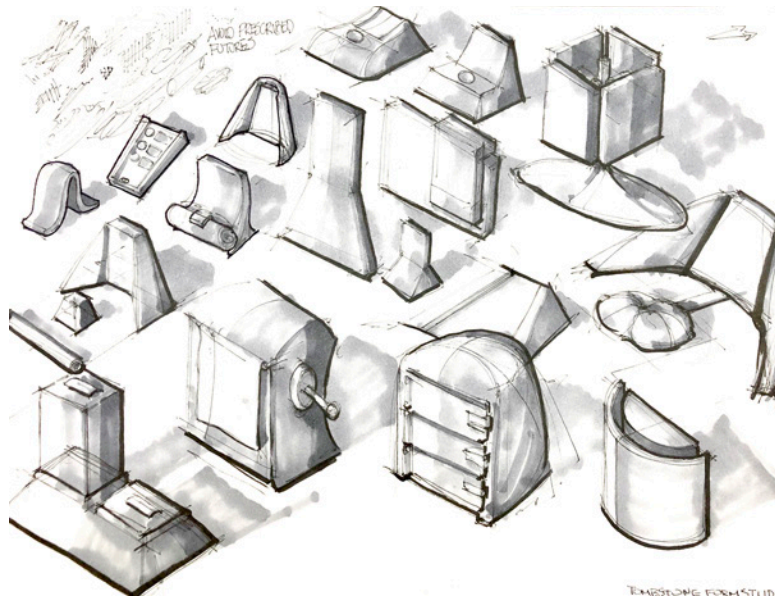
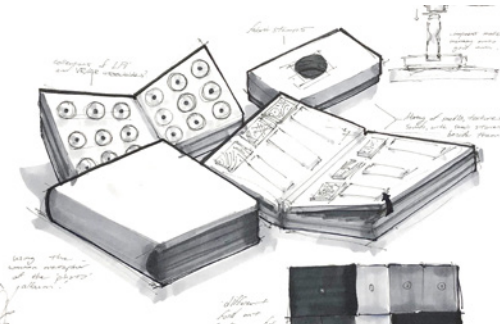


Image: Personal photograph. Sketching the formal possibilities of the tombstone and of a mosaic style approach.

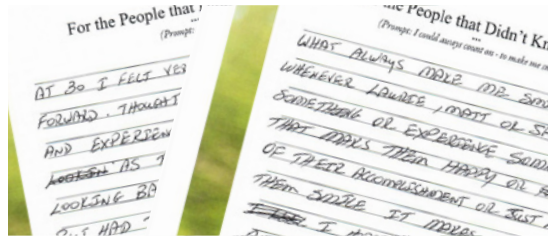
I remember really liking the cemetery in Malmo, Sweden. It's smack dab in the center of town, and people have picnics, go for afternoon walks, and make use of it as a serene public space. The tombstones allowed for intergenerational communication, had the capacity to hold stories, and a dedicated context for remembrance. Justifying why an object solely made to hold memory should take up space and add to the growing piles of 'things left behind' in a home, became more and more difficult, and it left my design direction adding onto the problem I was trying to remedy. So in the end, applying my project's ideals to a new tombstone felt like I was doing justice to people like my mother, who used the object as a way to access the ephemeral memories barred by dirt and rock. My immediate reactionary take was to make some 'MAYA' (most advanced yet accessible) addition to the range of available tombstones. I was being careful not to push the limits of the traditional cemetery beyond the point of familiarity, as the taboo of the whole place could make something too new feel abject.



1.4

Image: Personal photograph. Sketching an 'album' of media to bring to the location which could be inserted and accessed.

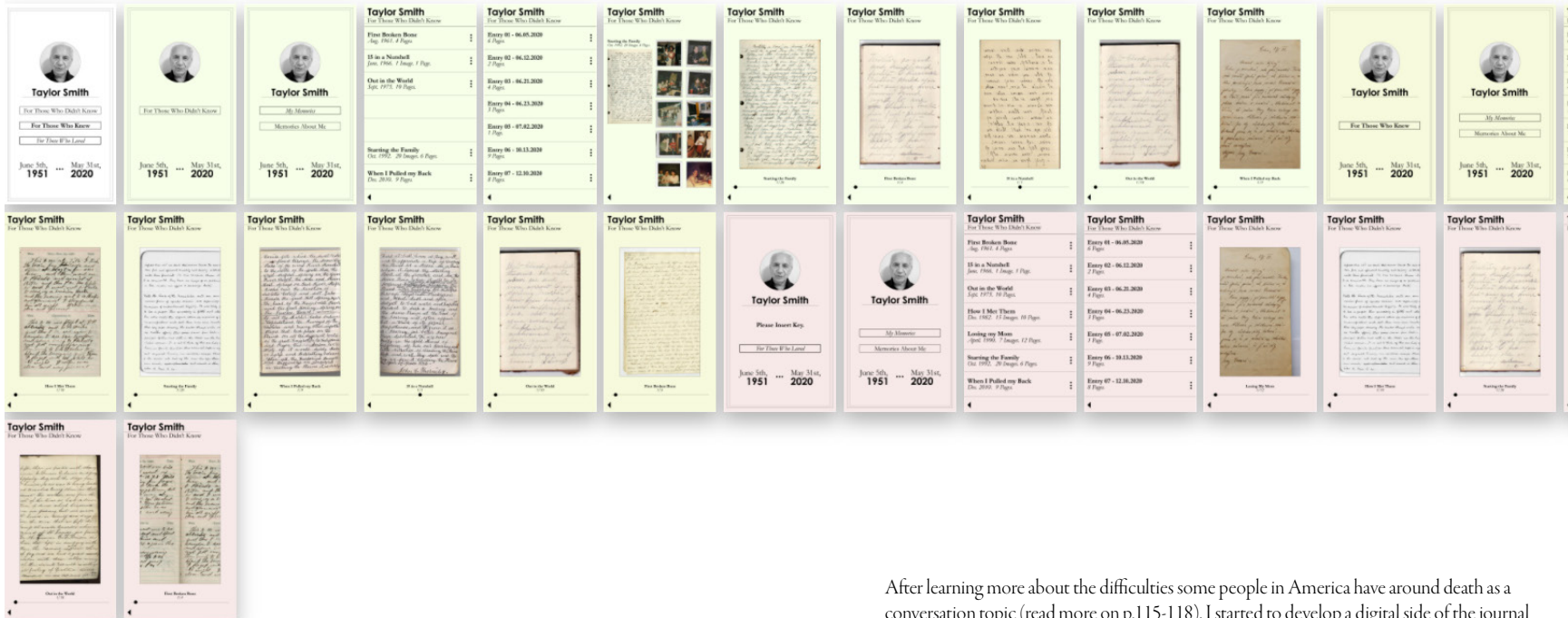
There's a weirdly serendipitous feeling to the fact that I'm using my thesis book as a journal to talk about little life moments and the benefits of proper death-planning. In writing the entries of this book, I've been able to access memories and tell stories to my friends and family that would have otherwise stayed inside my head as afterthoughts. Floating debris in the wake of an unaware seafarer, driving on the last barrel of oil to the thesis finish line. In interviewing Warren Sproule, an estate lawyer, he told me that people consistently say: "I wish he recorded his stories about —" "I wished she wrote down the stories about—". The stories get lost, even with all the technology, they still get lost" (para. Sproule Interview Nov. 2019). So when I had to figure out a way to extract and catalogue the stories that have been so integral into a tombstone, I chose journaling as the most honest medium to gather them. Given that the North American tendency is



1.5

to delay any conversation about mortality until death's door, a habitual component to the project felt necessary to slowly break down the taboo on an individual level. Because the nature of the writing had a generally unfamiliar purpose, the format needed to be understandable and connected thematically in order to help lessen the unfamiliarity of the entire project. I opted for a prompted style of journaling after seeing praise for the most recent Michelle Obama journal, which instead of following a chronological format, used a directed, goal-based journaling system. It is worth mentioning that the purpose of journaling personal histories for intergenerational communication became a much more important choice after this project coaligned with the COVID-19 pandemic. The value of planning and equipping families with the infrastructure to grieve and remember was being felt viscerally in the U.S.. PBS NewsHour was spending its broadcast time remembering individual people that were dying, the New York Times was using its front page to list those that had passed.





After learning more about the difficulties some people in America have around death as a conversation topic (read more on p.115-118), I started to develop a digital side of the journal with layers of privacy, so that a wider range of people could start to engage with their mortality, without having to worry about the public reader having access to something particularly touchy (if they so chose). Given the author's level of comfort, individual entries could be marked for public, semi-private, or private view. At the time, I envisioned the public layer being touch-screen accessed, the semi-private being password protected, and the private layer requiring the presence of a physical key, given to people that the author would choose. I chose a pastel gothic palette at the time because I wanted to give some gravity to the platform, while making it bright. However the fact that I felt like I needed to adhere to a standard of 'respect' through graphic and text styles sparked an idea to question the aesthetics of death.

Image: Personal photograph. Wireframe of digital journaling platform using gothic pastel visual language.

My brother and I have lamented about the fact that so many of our childhood weekends were spent picking weeds out of the backyard, which at the time was infinitely less exciting than cartoons and video games. So when I decided that I wanted an orchid, it felt like a fearful paternity test moment from an episode of *Maurycy*. Over the course of months and months of care, my attitude shifted, and I started to love and care for my desktop buddy. In telling my family about it, I was reminded about my mother's family's long history of orchid growing in England, where they grew flowers for the Royal family.



L.6

With that knowledge and connection to my extended disconnected family, I was all the more proud to continue the tradition. I thought of this memory when I came across “the writer Vera Schwarcz, [who] wisely observes, even if we only have a ‘path that is no path at all’ but simply some ‘broken words, fragments of metaphor, snippets of survivor testimony,’ these are and have been enough to help us connect...after all, we live in a world where nothing is certain but our own fragility and mortality” (Kellehear A. *The Inner Life of the Dying Person*. New York: Columbia University Press; 2014.). The consistently returning trend of small testimonies being what drives people to remember and keep memories alive became fuel for the fire to have people journal their stories, and have them placed in a publicly accessible way. With the motivation to have people display their stories, I wanted to get a sense of what potential authors felt about mortality, and how receptive they would be to the idea of documenting their stories. I made my way to Hallworth House, a retirement home in College Hill, and started to run the idea of an archiving journaling memorial method with the residents.

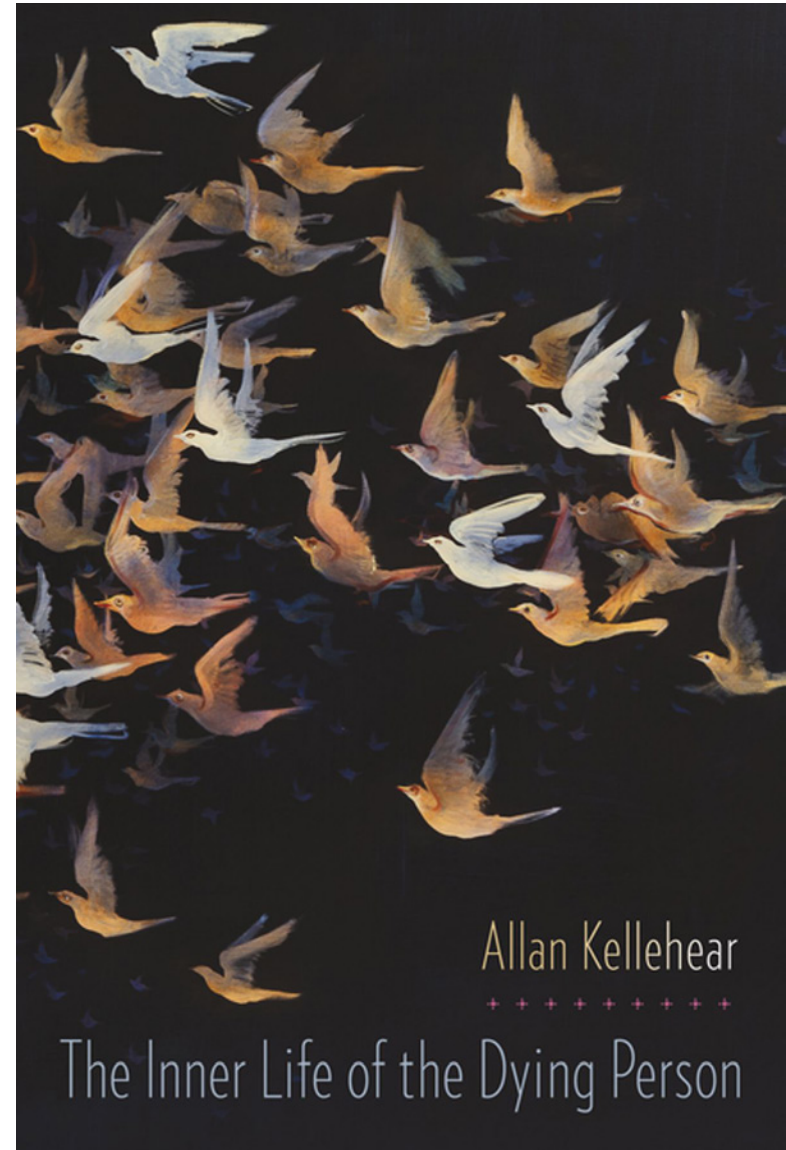
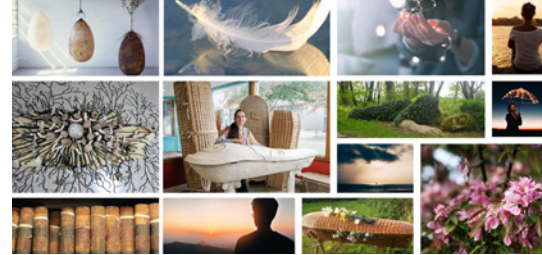




Image: Courtesy of facebook.com. Hallworth House on Halminton Road. Institutions Facebook Page.

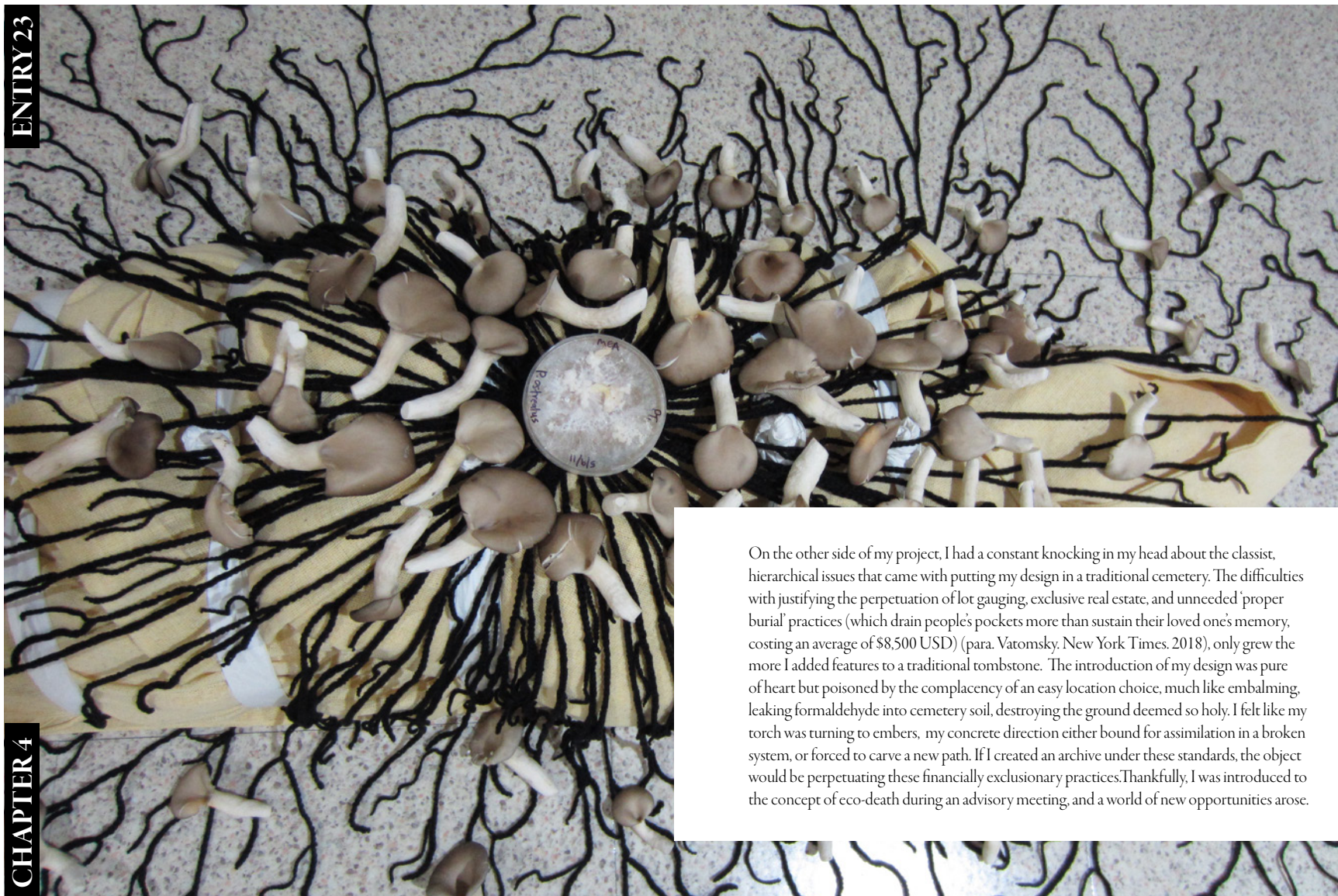
My paternal grandfather commissioned a painting of my entire extended family on that side when I was in my early teens. It was painted from a reference photograph where we all gathered at my cousin's wedding, and let's just say...artistic liberties were taken. Everyone looks like warped cartoon variations of themselves, and it ironically became an envied object in his estate because of its intense comedic value. I would've loved to read about what my Grandpa thought of that demented piece, because the intentions



1.7

were pure, but man did it miss the mark. I tried to articulate this idea of fragmented histories to the residents at Hallworth House, which is also what "David Kessler, who co-wrote *On Grief And Grieving*... recently added [as] a sixth stage to the [grieving] process: 'meaning...' [Which] he theorized, [is the] greater depth and connection [that] can be found in what is left after loss." (How COVID-19 has changed grief and funerals, Sadaf Ahsan, 2020). From the beginning of my research, the residents were very open and excited about the newness of the idea of having young people come to listen to them reminisce. While the administration was deciding on the safety of my research as a result of the Coronavirus hitting America I decided to 'ask' the same questions through secondary research. In academic sources, "Some common themes of importance... were revealed, such as older people's readiness to talk about death and dying, conceptions of death, after-death and dying, and [their] seemingly related...anxiety about death, the impact on and of those close by, having both negative and positive connotations, especially related to balancing closeness, being a burden and dependency, death anxiety and its possible antecedents, the [re] was a] fine line between natural sadness and suffering from depression, and worry about the end-of-life phase" (Hallberg, *Death and dying from old people's point of view*. A literature review, p. 87-103(2004)).

Image: Personal screenshot. Multiple google image moodboard for testing.



On the other side of my project, I had a constant knocking in my head about the classist, hierarchical issues that came with putting my design in a traditional cemetery. The difficulties with justifying the perpetuation of lot gauging, exclusive real estate, and unneeded 'proper burial' practices (which drain people's pockets more than sustain their loved one's memory, costing an average of \$8,500 USD) (para. Vatovsky, New York Times, 2018), only grew the more I added features to a traditional tombstone. The introduction of my design was pure of heart but poisoned by the complacency of an easy location choice, much like embalming, leaking formaldehyde into cemetery soil, destroying the ground deemed so holy. I felt like my torch was turning to embers, my concrete direction either bound for assimilation in a broken system, or forced to carve a new path. If I created an archive under these standards, the object would be perpetuating these financially exclusionary practices. Thankfully, I was introduced to the concept of eco-death during an advisory meeting, and a world of new opportunities arose.

From secondary research, eco-cemeteries seemed to emphasize non-hierarchical burial methods that sustained the growth of the surrounding plant life / ecology. The spaces being organized more like parks with loose sectioning, rather than gridded, deforested areas constrained within cities.

With a tweak to the compass needle, I went to Prudence Island to explore and research the opportunities in green death practices at Rhode Island's only eco-cemetery, to consider the opportunity to my intentions of creating a library of intimate histories with this growing trend of more consciously using burial grounds for sustainable purposes. My thought was that if someone's death planning can contribute to the preservation of the living world and engage in an



1.8

active manner physically, then the combination of their symbiotic contribution to the intellectual and ephemeral world through their stories seemed like a match made in rhetorical heaven. From my visit to the island, I saw the opportunity to have my 'tombstone archive' contribute to the environment in order to adhere both materially and functionally to the strict guidelines of the Green Burial Council, (which I was referenced to during my visit), as well as to the greater ideas of eco-cemeteries as a whole.



I think that the name eco-cemetery is a bit reductive because in my experience navigating them, the core values seemed much more a return to the intimate and personal history of death practices from centuries past. Families and loved ones participate in the burial process, physically working the earth, and have a much closer connection to the entire process. The cemeteries exist as parks and integrate with the nearby area, rather than cordone themselves off. The format also seems to use many of the positive components of death's 'sacred' as a way to fight against industrialization.



1.9

Developing more and more natural environments as eco-cemeteries disallows construction on the land over 'burial sites.' As such, the motivation to be buried and used as nutrition for trees and flora is in part a desire to give back, but also as a way to stop development in natural areas as the spaces become designated as conservation land (para. Vatovsky, New York Times, 2018). The lack of many visual markers in the space also had a democratizing effect for me, as I wasn't spending time identifying gleaming memorials, instead focusing on the journey through the pathways, occasionally stopping to see a marker. The serene walking experience made me start to consider how my new tombstones would be engaged as a collection, given that the park-style format facilitates a level of public engagement that gated cemeteries don't by proxy of their disconnection from the everyday. I also learned that the goal of the eco-death movement was largely to offer an alternative for people that were having moral difficulties about the impact they were leaving behind, and who were consciously using the space they were taking up to further the conservation of the environment. There was a level of consideration to the users of this space, which furthered my want to introduce a larger audience to their philosophies.

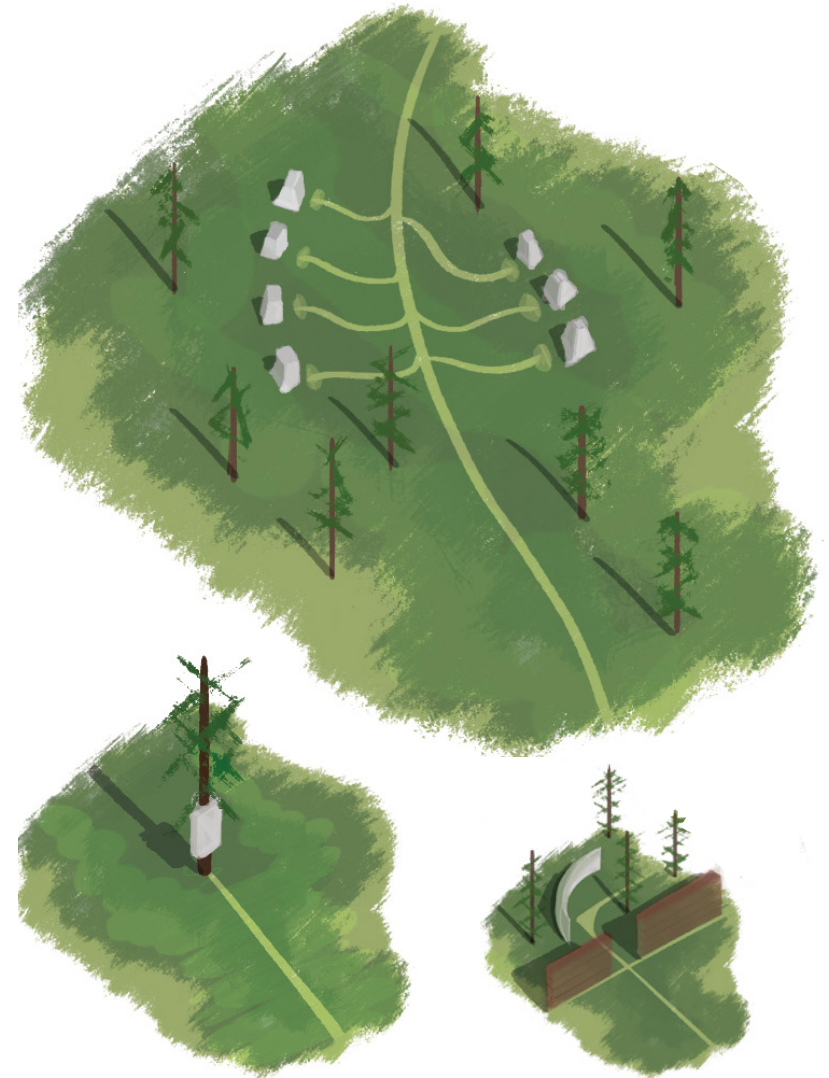


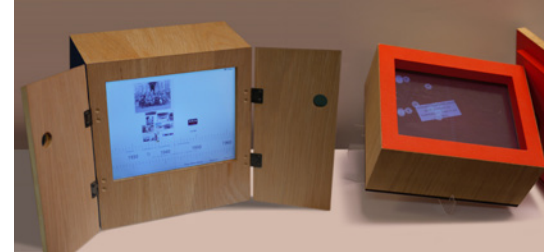


Image: Personal photograph. Initial model for eco-cemetery archive with tree support.

In an interview with the New York Times, a member of the Green Burial Council, (which acts as a certification agency for new eco-cemeteries), laid out the issues surrounding green burials, which serendipitously drove me further into the dirt..

“When it comes to green burials, funeral professionals say the biggest challenge is a lack of awareness and resources. “Thinking about the impact of disposition on the environment is a new idea,” Ms. Acciavatti said. “And, I would say the other big issue is access: Even though there are over 150 green cemeteries in the U.S. and Canada, there still aren’t enough.” Ms. Acciavatti and many others in the industry believe that educating the public as well as continuing to invest in green practices helps not just the environment, but humans, too.” “It’s always really rewarding when someone says, ‘I’d really like to return to the earth.’” she said. “And I get to say, ‘I can help you do that.’”

All in all, the choice to reposition my project in this new space filled major rhetorical gaps surrounding the idea that my design might aid the major funeral industry in price-gouging and propagating undue stigma around improper burials via my intention to create a sleek electronic memorial archive.



2.0

But the eco-cemetery presented new challenges. My lush new garden started to sprout some weeds that needed tending to. The major issue was that my archive tombstone had electronic components... and a computer... and a whole touchscreen display, all of which are not allowed in eco-cemeteries. So it was back to the drawing board, trying to figure out how I could archive histories in a way that would last, but that wasn’t as heavily reliant on the digital side of things.

Image: ‘Designing Technological Heirlooms’ Viewer. Design by Will Odom, et. al. Image Courtesy of WillOdom.com

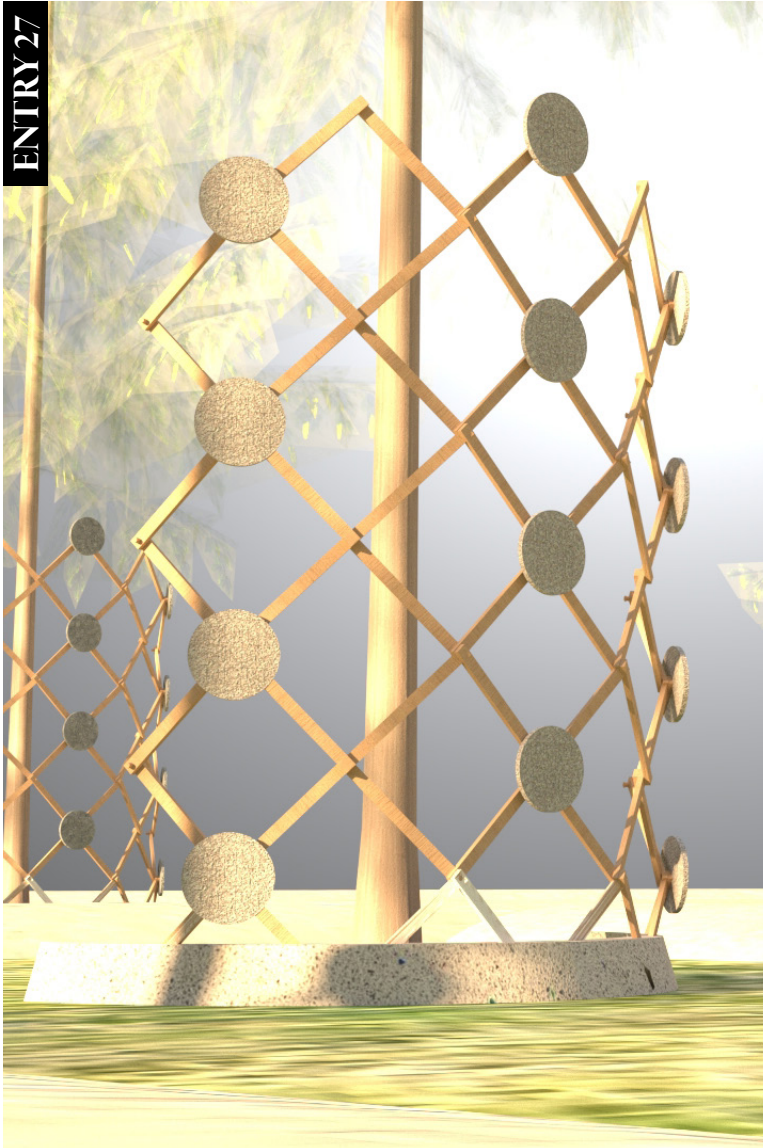


Image: Personal photograph. Iteration of fully analogue and expanding archive with digital triggers.

One major takeaway from my visit to the eco-cemetery was the collectivist nature of it all. As an outsider walking through, there weren't too many noticeable individual headstones, rather you had to look out for them, and it made the spottings more of a discovery by proxy. I started to think about how the stories I was putting in the archive could be 'discovered' by people walking through. I also started to think about creating a lineage-based structure that could more dynamically support the environment around it, taking up less of a footprint for each individual, while maintaining a level of 'passerby accessibility'. I started to design my archive with the walking individual in mind, creating a spatial object that could physically



2.1

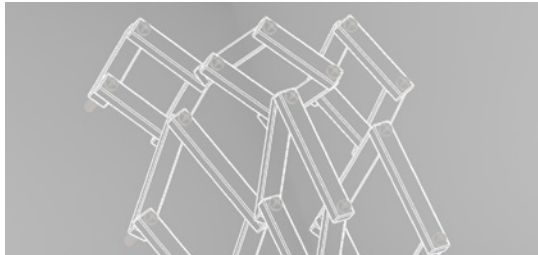
exhibit all the journal entries that were digitally stored beforehand. It is worthwhile to note, that while the mandates of Prudence Island's cemetery dictated flush to the ground grave markers, the GBC regulations on marker size/style are 'cemetery to cemetery based', and if the designs are materially and sustainably adherent, it is up to the individual location's discretion. This is when I started to flesh out the idea of having digital elements in a non-digital space, with the plaques on each lattice intersection being thin stone tablets with engraved QR codes. These would link to the stories written down in the previously developed journal. While the first iteration of tombstone-as-archive put all the ingredients together, this concept started to see the mixture coalesce into what would later be my final dish.

Image: Pathway in Prudence Memorial Park Eco Cemetery. Courtesy of prudencememorialpark.com

Much like the aimless maquette figurines in the picture below, I felt frozen at the time that I made this model. The Coronavirus pandemic had me leave Providence and move all my belongings back to Canada on less than a week's notice. My story in Providence had its cover shut much more quickly than I expected. I wouldn't make an iteration at Prudence Island, I wouldn't hear any stories from Hallworth House. It was an intense turning point for how I would make this project work. On my last day before shipping all my belongings and myself across the continent I made a small scale model of how I would like people to walk through my proposed eco-archive. Ultimately I would opt-out of the gridded format shown, for a style in keeping with Prudence Island's symbiotic approach to pathing, which felt less object oriented, and more experiential.



My earliest memory using a computer is one where I'm playing Star Craft on an old Windows 95 at around 8(?) years old. I loved going into the map editor, shaping little worlds to suit my paper-thin childish plotlines. Funny enough, these were probably some of the first things I ever designed. Small virtual experiences to show my friends. My lifetime in the digital space has since been coupled with creating things, the most recent medium being CAD. My love-hate relationship with CAD is an ever-growing romance. The more confident I get, the more I take on, and then the more I want to tackle the next exciting (difficult to produce) form that suits my fancy. It turns me into a 'big game hunter' of my own ego, constantly shooting



2.2

down my own designs. After my project became relegated to digital progression after moving back to Canada, I began exploring physics simulations in Solidworks, to see how the lattice I was developing could grow and scale up with the number of family members engaging per archive. I was interested in adapting common 'pen-style' fences into an arc, which could coexist with the ecology by offering negative space for hanging, unimpeded growth of greenery. The main problem with my design at this stage, was that it was getting bulkier and bulkier, while only providing opportune plaque placement on intersections, and any hanging ephemera would shift into pinch zones, clumping up. The shifting mechanism I had developed would be counter-intuitive for its purpose, being too reliant on the environment to keep it up. Thus making the lattice a burden. I was nonplussed after I was able to see this clearly, but the prospect of an open frame/communally engageable design seemed in-line with the theories behind designing systems for remembrance and I was dead set on making a version of this work.

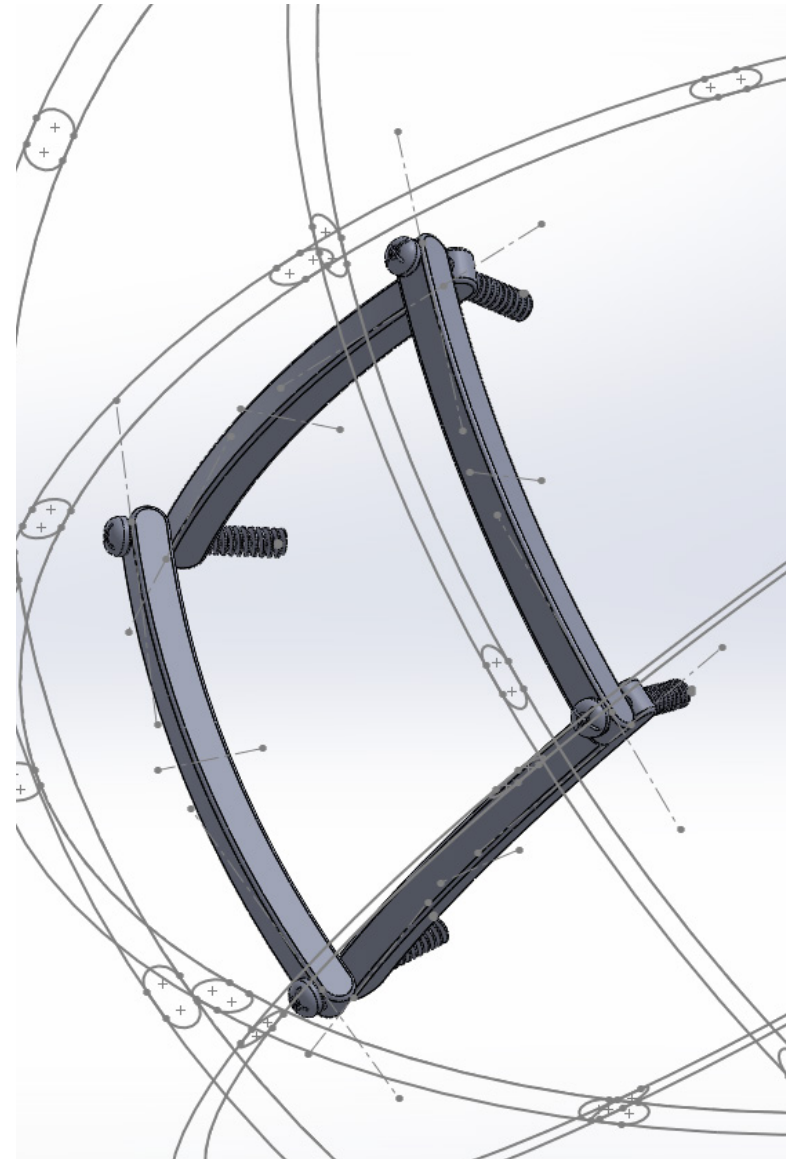




Image: Grave of an unknown British combatant, killed in 1943 during the Battle of Leros. Photo by Nabakov, Wikipedia



Image: Personal photograph. Render of first concrete iteration of memorial archive, featuring digital and physical stories.



Image: Personal photograph. Render of intended reliquary forms. Etched wooden panels.

I remember stumbling across Do-Ho Suh's piece, 'Some/One', when I was maybe 10 years old, in New York. He assembled a kimono out of dog tags from the Korean war, creating a fish-scale like mesh of forgotten names.

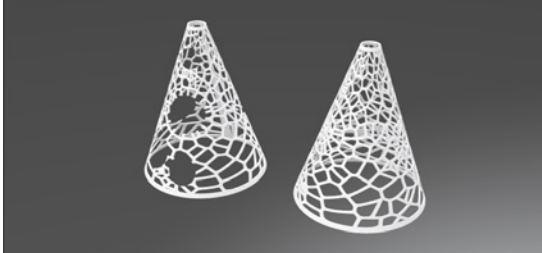


2.3

I was moved by this work at a young age, by the intricacy, and by the scale of the people that died. Because of the overwhelming scale, the viewer is pushed to analyze each tag individually, to search for the person behind the uniform, stamped format. I tried to incorporate a similar idea in the design of what I called the 'reliquaries' of this archive. I wanted them to be fairly uniform on first inspection, but to reveal more to the curious (or intentional) user, painting a deep picture through the volume of engageable moments. I also started to consider how a stronger standalone wireframe structure could support a larger number of entries and outside memorabilia. I decided to make the reliquaries similar in layout to a traditional gravemarker, to create at least a modicum of familiarity from an interactive perspective. The reliquaries would house physical pages behind glass panels, or have laser-engraved QR codes to redirect readers to a digital repository of the stories, as well as the typical nomenclature found on the front of tombstones. In my details for this system, the author could opt for location-based access as a 'semi-private' option, if they wanted their entries digitally stored, but only accessible at the space of their archive.

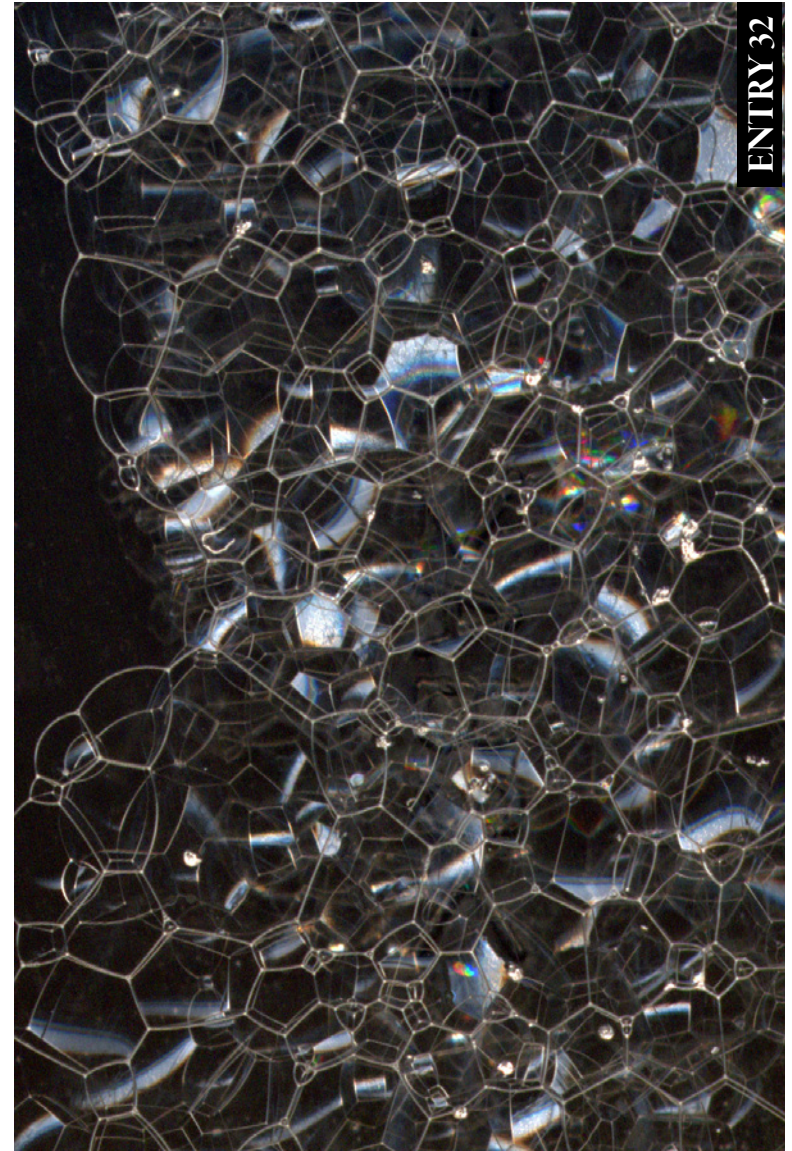
Image: Image: Sculpture 'Some/One' by Do-Ho Suh. Image still from HiroshimaMOCA, from youtube.com

I have an absolute fear of wasps which in its rippling effect, has tainted my view of most insects. It started from an ironic halloween, where I was dressed as spiderman. Before zipping up my costume, a wasp entered and stung me multiple times. In what I'm sure was an unintentional performance of the comic book character, I flailed around wildly until we were able to get the wasp out. My red and black spider webbed costume was meant to make me feel like a superhero, not trap me inside with my new archvillain.



2.4

All of this to say the upcoming choices came with baggage. My new reliquary design had the potential to be placed in large volumes on the archive, so in order to create something dynamic but accommodating to my hanging needs, I looked to biomimicry for inspiration. I began by looking into the obvious choice for a strong natural lattice, the spiderweb. I was able to extrapolate them into a tapered lattice. The difficulty with this choice was the storied history of the spider web, and its aggressive, dark aesthetic was becoming off-putting for a design meant to bring emotional comfort. So I started to look into lesser thought of structures, and became interested in exploring how the patterns of microscopic foam could be adapted into a more bubbly alternative. If actualized, this version did have the potential to address two of the requirements from the Green Burial Council. Those being to "Limit the type and size of memorial markers so that they do not impair the ecological conditions and aesthetic of the natural cemetery landscape...[and]" "Establish and apply strategies that conserve, preserve, enhance, or restore the historic native or natural habitat and flora of the region." And while this iteration was solving the issue of useable surface area that rotted the diamond-shaped lattice, it was not in a realizable state, and was stuck as a digital fantasy.

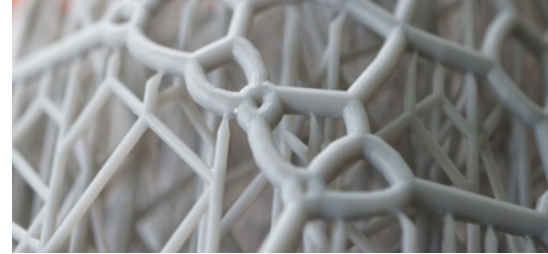


ENTRY 32



Image: Personal photograph. Scale model of foam biomimicry model. Assessing production feasibility.

When I was young, my mom made a foam landscape with urethane rivers and architectural trees for my brother and I to occupy with our toys. I remember being so happy to have a way to physically create my own stories in a polyurethane pocket universe. Because of this, I've always found a power in scale models. I think there's something to do with the fact that the horizons of the world are within eyeshot, and this lets you imagine the rest of the world immediately. In this vein, I decided to make a scale model of my bio-lattice to see if it would



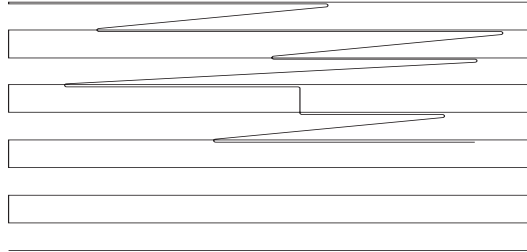
2.5

spur any idea as to how I could turn it from fiction into reality. The complexity of the form was pushing this towards an exclusive market, which was far from the point of this project. I ended up deciding that the lattice could theoretically work if it was fabric loomed on its base and peak, with wood braces being tension held in the dirt and on the tree to maintain the intended height. However, when vetting the idea, finding a suitable fabric that could be either laser-cut or wound into this shape, limited the tensile strength, and cost efficiency respectively. With this ever-shifting chess board of compromises, I had to pull the trigger and say that the bio-lattice was not producible in any scalable fashion. And Lo, I went to the drawing board one last time.

As a side note, in producing the scale model of the archive, I 3D printed the design using an SLA resin printer. The parts that come out of this printer require post-curing using IPA alcohol, but due to the global pandemic, there was no alcohol to be found anywhere. Prohibition 2.0 was happening in my time of need. So in a strange round of ideation, I combined several household and electronics cleaners together, and was able to mimic the effect of post-curing in a pinch.

Image: Personal Photograph. SLA supports which require alcohol post-cure for detachment.

I was always told that I was 'mature for my age', or people thought I 'felt older than however old I was.' I was never too fond of the comments, though I'm not really sure why. I think there was some lingering 'little brother' feeling around being the young inexperienced one, which I tried to avoid. I always felt like a shroud of youthful dismissal was draped over my head when the turn of phrase was used. Thinking back to those moments made me reminisce about the fact that outward age is so subjective to the people you interact with.



2.6

It made me start to think about how inward age would represent itself if people were given the platform to explore the thought. I sent one last request to my group of journaling participants, and asked them to draw the path that they thought their life went. Many people linked jumps in their self-perceived age in relation to major life moments, like the death of a family member, becoming independent from their parents, or with the birth of a child. I thought that the 'journey' that the participants felt was a pathway that I could somehow develop an individual form from, as the lattice-style I had decided on, had an unconscious upward path given its taper. So I ended up using this data as a visual language for the archives. It was subtle, personal, and put everyone participating on an even and semi-uniform playing field. I shifted my intended production method from 'looming fabric' to steam bending wooden dowels in a half circle, mortise and tenoning them at five key junctures. The reception to this form was positive, given its intimacy, and I decided to keep it as the final iteration of the design. With this final portion of decision making done, I was ready to defend my thesis.

Image: Personal photograph. Individual user test result for 'life-mapping' exercise to see what path their life took.

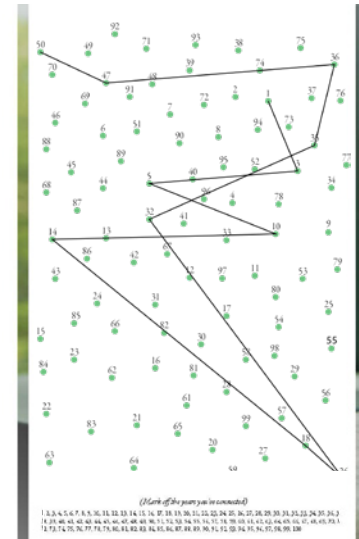
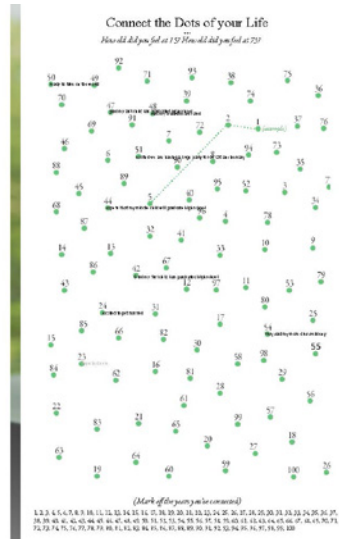
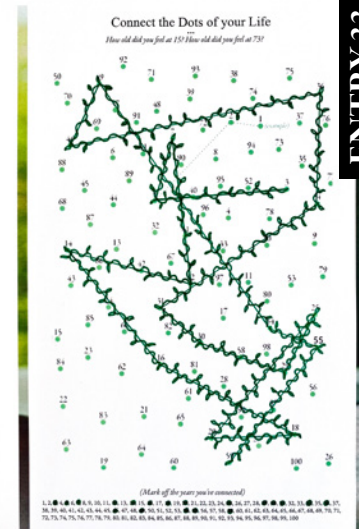
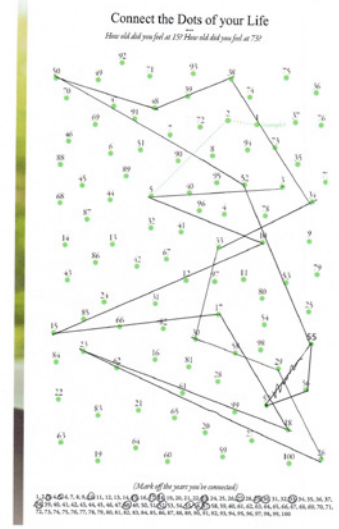
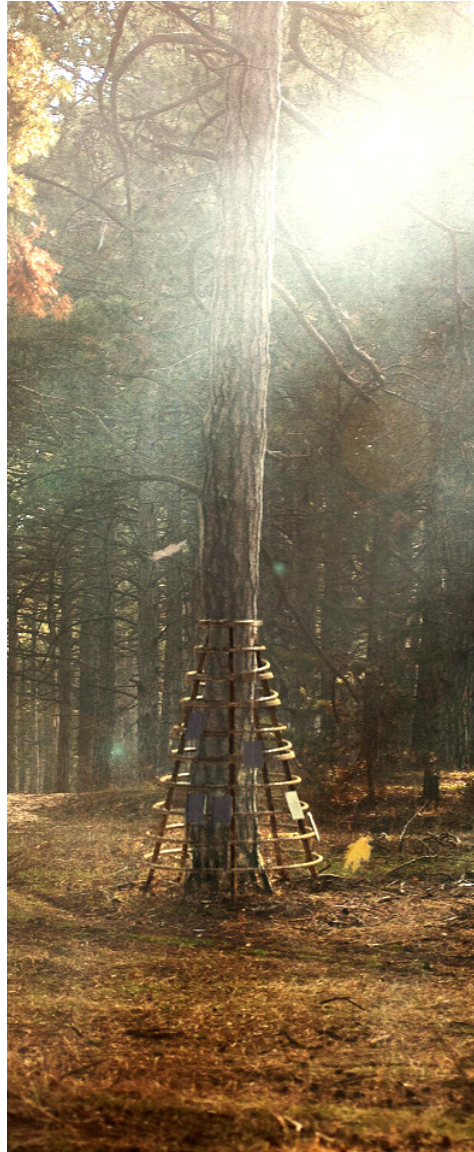


Image: Personal photograph. Iteration on life-mapping exercise, random layout instead of organized.

It feels strange finishing this book. I've been working on this project for a year, but I've been thinking about it solidly for two and a half years before that, and now in reflecting on it, I thought about the topic off-and-on again for years before.

I'm far away from all of my family, life swept me away for the better part of a decade through academia, work, and by the rest of life's whims. I see my immediate family about once a year, and my extended family barely ever. I love them all to death, but I know so little about their day to day, all their 'little moments.' There was a time where the traditions and wants of my grandparents made the whole tree gather, and some of the missed moments got filled in. But when they passed away on both sides, not only were we left with so little of their life stories, but the old braids that let me see the strands of everyone else's lives were now gone. Through all the reading, all the experiments, and interviews, it's funny to think that I ended up solidifying what I'd already experienced. And if anything, I'm glad I'm not alone in that regard, and that these are the same kinds of stories that so many people miss and look for. The designs that came from this year long investigation into some of America's death practices showed me how much emotional, traditional, and multi-faceted depth is required to design something useful for remembrance activities. My initial poetic attempts at recreating heirlooms did not yield any results as the physical items were just a means of easily accessing object-related stories, and any attempt to separate and reconnect in a more space-conscious way did more harm than good, given the perceived hierarchies of 'who gets what' in estate dealings.

In the end, the archive and journal that came out of this project are meant to make sure that the people who want to have their stories remembered, have a permanent space for that desire to exist, and the loved ones that want to access those memories years later have an accessible space to maintain and revisit them in a burden-free manner. The positive feedback and reflection that the journaling users have given after using the final iteration have confirmed the want to catalogue personal histories, and that this method is allowing users to express themselves in a meaningful way. It's development was a fairly smooth process after reading the guidelines for designing systems for remembering and reminiscing by Microsoft Research, and through testing it with multiple age groups.



The final form of the archive is at a point where it adheres to Green Burial Council guidelines, simultaneously: being made of biodegradable materials, fitting in with the naturalistic visual language of its intended space, and contributing to the environment by acting as a trunk support for growing and transplanted trees.

Developing the form of the standing structure was a protracted process, shifting stylistically from man-made, to biomimicry, to poetic data translation. I was trying to navigate the balance of a visually coherent and semi-customizable design that didn't end up forcing the same visual emphasis that the traditional tombstone did, where more expensive or grandiose models created a monetary visual hierarchy of what's important, rather than a level, story-based landscape as I was intending. In the end, when running the poetic data-based aesthetic by testing individuals, there was a more genuine connection to the idea that the form was developed from their interpretation of their own life. The level of ownership was higher, as opposed to a reiterated sentiment that the biomimicry aesthetic was exciting, but too detached from the narrative of the object.

The functionality of the reliquaries on the archive went through several rounds of iteration to properly vet what technology was both materially acceptable in the space, as well as having enough longevity for a multi-generational product. In the end, opting for the physical storage of journal entries on-site, seemed to correspond most closely to the wants of the 'original copy' from grieving parties.

As an alternative to traditional western memorial practices, and as an addition to burgeoning eco-death spaces, this design is at a stage where it addresses the major concerns of both using parties, and on a greater rhetorical level, promotes a healthier dialogue around mortality for the people using it.

THE END



Image: Personal photograph. Composite render of final prototype in eco-cemetery.

Richard Banks Interview Notes / Quotes - Nov. 15, 2019

Moved into research around 2006. Interested in home life, using different surfaces for different purposes. The laziness of home life, family life, memory. Joined at a time in the conversation between “the myth of the paper asophylese”, the tangibility of memory. Interested in memory related objects, collaborated and thought about what the world would be like to inherit “5000 digital photos a year.” The default was not throwing things away.” Conceptual prototypes on a digital thing with a screen that lasts for a long time. Using these accounts as a means of reflection. “Moving from a sparsity of information, to an overabundance of information.” Willow Jem, moved that work into bereavement, talking to people about the qualities.

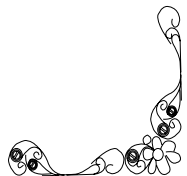
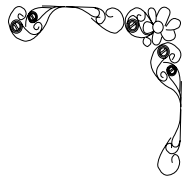
The digital always felt as fragile as the physical, you're beholden to something. Issues of digital possession. Better to have it on a local object than to have them on a cloud service. Less responsibility of the heirlooms but less certainty. People save photos in a fire because they know where they are. It still feels as fragile. David Sweeney, explored the idea of new display technologies, created a new pixel generation method where they all act independently. Displays that are more malleable. Glass storage with photo lasers.

“The idea of the original, the idea of distribution and the power of sharing is quite powerful. The idea of the digital original, what are the positive and negative of each.” Getting the boxes of stuff people had left behind.” “A person who had a 4 inch plastic gear, my first motorbike when I was 18, this plastic gear is only as valuable as the story. Digital things can have more stories connected to them. Can you build a network of information through companies that refer information, you end up with a digital narrative. I was primarily thinking about the value of those worlds. A box, that was a digital box, but you put the physical stories.

Will Odem, twitter history, timecard of grandfathers life, digital slide viewer. This service would archive these things. “Things that family members, thinking of them as continuity, taking a more speculative approach. We had these very passive relationship, the evocation was meant to replicate the ephemera. Subjective to archaeological. The strangeness of connection, the first generation is more close because,

the second and third start to question the idea of it being sentimental. My father left a PC, I took the harddrive. The lack of curation in a digital space makes it a difficult space. The layered aspect of digital memory belies curation. When do we set these objects, digital things being 'strange' will make this speculative. The freedom to pick an era. The sets of software, the idea of bereavement, people don't want to spend their time, can you make heirlooming a byproduct of this system. “The image had such an unfair advantage, we could never get the same impact. A complex interplay between five different aspects. We know a lot of knowledge is in the head, and could never be represented. What does your head do in filling in things, where is your head's place.

The moment you post something or share something it become projection and not reflection.



Warren Sproule Interview / Nov. 5, 2019

Estates; lawyers say to their clients that you should have a will. There will be people appointed as executors. Being an executor is a lousy job. Most cases they are friends or family. Non-paid generally, volunteer. Sometimes horrendously complicated. Time consuming mess. The executor actually has to handle the bequests.

Is there a framework to help executors.

Heirlooms tend to take up a disproportionate amount of time in the process. These objects tend to have much less connection.

Fairly common approach is to seclude the sentimental value of objects in a will, unless there is a substantial monetary value. Small precious but low cost.

'Do a letter to your executor, 'it is your wish', these items go as follows.' The executor will look at the list, and carry out the discussion, far more leeway. Fluxuations in wills are very expensive and heirlooms tend to stand in the 'wishes' letter, which are not legally mandated.

Not much thought is given to the burden being left behind.

Only a burden to the recipients if they choose to make it one, e.g. a moral one, trust arrangements can be set up. Reach beyond the grave for those trust scenarios.

Things that have emotional significance to the children, raise the possibility of gifting it

"You wanna see the dark side of human nature, practice estate law."

"Stuff that can be digitized, usually is, photographs, e.g."

"Store the mimics and the originals, one that got the copy will be no more rational than a photograph."

"Almost never" do people incorporate technology, people dying now were born in the 30s, not technologically literate."

"One of the things now is to list passwords." Creating a law to allow the executor to enter account."

"It's a continuous process, circumstances change. It's one of the least selfish things you will do in your life. When you first get married, do a new will."

Consider redoing the will every 10 years.

There are failsafe clauses to ensure that anything missed gets included. Most wills are fairly basic, 'everything goes to my spouse after 30 days of my passing.' This is 95% of wills out there. Most normal scenarios, the wife will pass these things down.

Severed foreign estate problems, when new marriages come into play.

"Maybe a few favorite pieces stay."

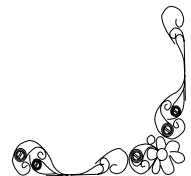
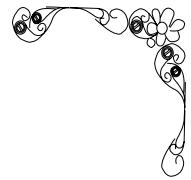
Driven by testators, summarizing what they have, and why it matters. "I wish he recorded his stories about ——" "I wished she wrote down the stories". The stories get lost, even with all the technology, they still get lost."

There is no easy way to capture that information.

"Those things you call heirlooms, have meaning because they have stories.' Generally, if the great grandkids don't know about them, it's gone.

"They would be doing the dishes after Christmas, the grandmother taped everything in the house."

"So much work for things that don't give much."



Todd Lumbard Interview / Nov. 2, 2019

We believe that a funeral service is to share stories and the beginning of the process. We think of that time as a marker.

Mainly to bring people together, to signify that moment. Creating a focal point for the remembrance.

Religious components - some people take great weight into these processions.

Many people break the norms or attempt to:

Main reasons is to represent the way that can represent the person's life.

Embodying meaning into those moments.

This can be through location, allowing for a unique type of service. Sometimes people contrast traditional spaces with a unique ceremony.

Person's body was transported in an ambulance, a fleet of emergency vehicles.

All big trucks for a hardware store owner. In their backyard.

Involving technology”

Video tributes, live streaming of funerals for people in an alternate location.

There is a benefit in planning - brings comfort, bringing a sense of security to where life is going. Funeral planning is usually done in conjunction with estate planning, really considering and letting people know individual.

Livestreaming can create an ability to be there, is a beneficial ability objectively. Breaks the boundaries of the globe. A very positive aid.

More potential for technology to be part of the planning process, having someone record themselves, which is less to do with the funeral. An archive of thoughts and questions to be answered. Talking at their own funeral. Can be an incredibly powerful moment. More common, easy to do.

Variety of ages starting around early 50s-65+.

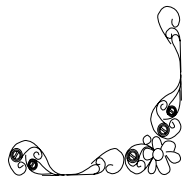
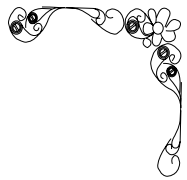
People start to recognize mortality.

When someone dies, there is a belief, it's a good idea to see the body.

People that find meaning in that, are usually religiously motivated. A well planned, meaningful service is what will have the greatest effect in consoling.

The most common request from people planning their own funeral; is to alleviate the burden from their loved ones. Doing it to make sure their family understands their wishes. People want to feel like they're being remembered.

“The most common request from people planning their own funeral is that they don't want to feel like a burden on their loved ones.” - para. Todd Lumbard, Owner of Speers Funeral Homes (Multi-provincial chain since 1907), 11.05.2019



User Testimonies from cumulative journaling experiment:

User 1

“What a fabulous project. Both Wayne and I have been sharing stories ever since we received the [prompts] from you.”

User 2

“Extraordinary work during unprecedented times.”

“P.S. I will go with the “semi-private view” being as I don’t know what that is and probably gives you the greatest flexibility.”

This legacy concept is interesting. I’ve dealt with a few people planning their legacy through rare gifts often art. The challenge they experience is often who will want my “treasures”. That’s an estate burden for people with no family.

User 3

“For me I want to better understand my ancestry.. We’ve been going through planning for our parents. I wish we knew more. An audio option of story telling would be cool.

Your creative legacy concept is a comfortable and safe way to capture stories of important lives lived. In journaling for my real reliquary I would give it more thought.

User 5

I wrote it by hand because I think better that way but the bad thing for you is that now you have to try and read my chicken scratch handwriting.

Good luck.

User 6

Hope you are well. Have to tell you that this is a very cool idea and very relevant. I have attached my responses.

Some thoughts for you:

- I have had lots and lots of experience with death/remembrance in the last 5 years
- Years ago, my kids gave each set of grandparents a book that asked them to go through similar questions, family history, etc. Each

side took years to complete, but totally worth it.

· My mom died last summer and there are many, many things that I wish we would have talked about. I believe this journal is a guide for conversations in life, not just memories in death.

· I think that my generation are having conversations about death like previous generations have not. It was passe and private to talk about death. That is changing. This could be a guide for conversations and then a permanent record

· I wonder if there could be a video/audio component to the memories provided.

· For my journal – I would like to leave all of these memories to my family. I would not be concerned about those the I don’t know (unless I was famous!) lol.

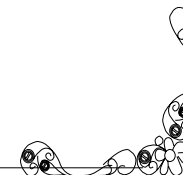
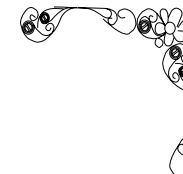
· I love the idea of the journal being online – as it is easy for the family to access, easy for the owner of the journal to update, etc.

· Just a thought about a different label - other than “Tomb Stone” Something happier. For me, not the right connotation. ie. the stories, the memories you are capturing are about celebration of a life well-lived, appreciated memories, goodness and joy.

Thanks for letting me participate – hope this helps.

I would love to read your whole thesis!

Users 4, 9,10,11,12 declined or provided no additional comments.



Experiment 2/(3/4):

Objective: Testing the capacity of heirloom mimicry to illicit the same memory making capabilities as the possessions / memories that create them. The objective of these tests is to see whether or not heirlooms can transcend their original form, thus lessening the burden of ownership and continuation on the people receiving the items, and instead leave them only with the positive memories, in ways more tied to their lives, and in ways that are more democratized / transferable.

Test 2: The Olfactory:

Asking for three separate cherished memories of individuals, to be described in vivid environmental detail, which will be recorded and probed for sensorial information. From these, one smell will be extracted, and translated into an experiential process (e.g. mortar and pestle, candles, raw ingredients).

Accomplish this between weeks, allowing enough time to have passed for the memories to naturally fade from the participants minds.

Call them into a room where the experience will take place, non-descript, trying to find how much power individual senses have in facilitating these memories, as they're unlikely to be accessed in the original space (generalization). Have coffee bean resets.

N/A Results, cancelled after interview with Richard Banks.

Test 3: Creating personal 'golden records.'

Ask participants for three - five photos that represent keystone experiential moments from their story. Include a photo of themselves where their pose represents them best.

CNC these records and cast them in plaster under basic filigree moulds. (why?)

Have other members of the group (unbeknownst to each other) crack open their record cases with mallets? And try to decipher their contents, who is the owner, etc, what's the story.

Results:

- Participant A was able to see the sentiment in the new CNC object but was not nearly as connected to it as they were to the original memories. Visually started to use the record as a stackable / patternable object.

Experiment #5:

Seeing the hurdles / pain points of owning an heirloom from someone not incredibly close / with unknown relationship.

Wear my clothes this week? - Varying levels of information / levels of value.

How much of a role does the factor of me being an active presence play?

What are solutions people use to mitigate responsibility?

If having some active passive check for the objects increases or decreases anxiety towards custodianship.

Results:

All participants stopped using their assigned heirlooms within a week. Some questioned the point of the experiment, others felt safer not taking the heirlooms into scenarios where they could lose them.

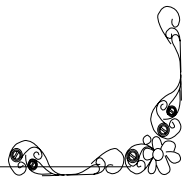
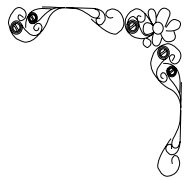
As a participant on the giving side, I felt consistent anxiety seeing people with items I was quite attached too. I wanted to know they were taken care of, and that they were not lost.

Experiment #6:

Begin the experiment with my own interactive methods and create infographic diagrams to have people experience something in the same way that I do it. Ask what thoughts it brings up.

Goal: Can you imbibe a moment / person through the reenactment of its separate components. Contrast with a photo of the same experience, see which elicits certain responses.

Results:



"The History and Future of Tombstones as Susceptible Pop Culture Objects"

Jacob Dangstorp

HAVC-W187-01 Blue Jeans and Barbie Dolls

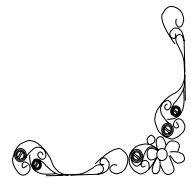
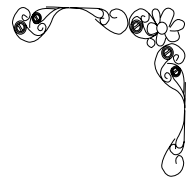
Feb. 8, 2020

The synergies of religion, capitalism, and rapid expansion in America's development created a societal concentration towards the concept of growth and the 'American dream.' Death sits anathema to all of these ideals. Death is the end of consumption and growth. Through its perpetual disparity, "death has become a shameful final act to be dealt with by medical specialists in hospitals and to be disguised by funeral directors." The subject being so taboo as to not even be openly explored until the 1980s¹ with writers like "Philippe Aries...[who] is among the writers most responsible for making death available as a topic for both scholars and general readers"¹. From this chronological stunting, it can be seen how difficult the conversations can be, as a result of the propagated dialogues around the act of dying itself. 'Death-related objects' exist largely outside of regular consumer culture due to their inability to develop personal growth, and because of their connection to this taboo subject. Chief among these is the tombstone, which sits as a monument to anti-american ideals in its finality and eternal advertisement of death. However, despite its nullified presence in a western worldview, the tombstone has been shaped by the machinations of consumer and popular culture in subtle ways. This has been done by twisting the original cultural relationships to the object in order to actively suppress the American understanding of death with the goal of sustaining a profitable death industry. To examine the correlations between popular consumer culture and tombstone evolution, a chronological understanding of urban planning, manufacturing infrastructure, and death narratives are needed in order to highlight how industrialization enabled the stifling of modern death dialogues.

The beginning of this investigation will take place during the late 17th century, the materiality of American tombstones was much more varied than in the coming centuries, as people were bound by localized production. "Once in America, [tombstones] quickly adopted many varied and regional styles...depending on the religious influences, the materials available, and the gravestone carver's own background, the once simple stoic stone inscriptions flourished into

elaborate, ornately shaped and carved headstones." The use of human touch in the stone carving allowed for a concurrent relationship between art movements of the time, and the visual language of the objects, thus enriching the identity within them. The identity enabled the stones to act as greater extensions of people's unique perspectives, and "During the colonial era[,] the symbolism found on many gravestones was not endorsed by the church...[and] headstones may have been the only place this type of folk art was allowed"². The handwrought touch and individual propriety in the space created dialogues otherwise unavailable to religiously bound early Americans. Furthermore, having the objects be works of sculpture let the artisans and their clients communicate more powerful messages through the process of creating the stonework. Having the ability to dissent against greater religious structures made the localized tombstone a powerful vessel for humanistic dialogue around death. Much in the same way that war memorials and dedicated tombstones for soldiers indicate a certain reverence and potential for storytelling, the intimate choices of material, symbolism, and scattered placement, make for very charged objects. Soon after however, "In the Early 19th century[,]...burial grounds became increasingly crowded... and, by the early nineteenth century, urban reformers were advocating new forms of burial in...landscaped cemeteries, outside of the urban core"². Much of the individual character in the early settlers' work was lost with this relocation, in conjunction with "steam power...[which] allowed for speedy and less laborious sawing...of large blocks of stone into memorials."² The intense organization through landscape design and manufacturing capability left its lasting mark on the visibility of the tombstone, with new carvings being "marked only with serial numbers...[with] increasing standardization became the norm in monument design"³. The desire for a more structured cemetery environment had lasting impact on the visual language of society's grave markers.

While a portion of what shaped the manufactured identity of the tombstone were industrialization and expansion, the machinations of capitalism played a major role in manipulating the gestalt american narrative around death. Prior to the industrial revolution, "In rural areas, the dead were integrated into the family and community", which allowed for families to be engaged in death more proactively, and would create a greater connection to the tombstones, as they helped craft and implement them into the mourning rituals. But

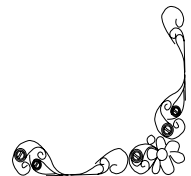
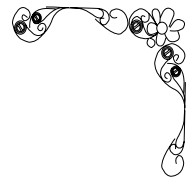


the “entrepreneurial spirit that sought to capitalize on middle class desires... and to turn a profit in a business that would never be short of customers.” So much in the same way that steam-powered manufacturing destroyed the craft dialogue between stone carvers and family members, the privatization of funerals, tombstone carving, and cemeteries, worked in tandem to “remove death from everyday life...chang[ing] the appearance of death...[and] its meaning...as well”⁴. These changes detached the intimate relationship and collaboration required to create a tombstone, and as such, the personal charge and connection to the object was severed.

The impersonalization of the tombstone continues into the 20th century, which sees little development for the object’s visuality and social position. Largely, the designs are stenciled with rubber and sandblasted using technology refined during the industrial revolution (para. Sample, 150). And with the efficient and cheap manufacturing method, the object was moulded into exactly what capitalism wanted, providing only the bare necessity to the general public, while withholding the more evocative potential for those with the economic mobility to do so. Tombstones were becoming so standardized that you could mail order them from sears catalogs with lettering instructions². Not coincidentally, the peak of stagnation in tombstone design coincided with the rise of consumerism in the 1950s. The homogenized aesthetic and cultural practices reflected “the uniform culture of mid twentieth-century America, where normalcy was highly valued... [reflecting] the man in the gray flannel suit”. Further minimization of the tombstone happened with the introduction of memorial parks into western death practices. With the development of suburbia in relation to the American dream, the manicured environmental tendencies bled into tombstone design. The new spaces “rose in tandem with the development of power mowers and as such they show the clear effect of changing technologies on gravemarker form”⁵. The newly minimized presence and visual language of the tombstone as ‘flush to the ground’ markers in the memorial garden also corresponds with growing consumer psychology theories from the time. As Raymond Loewy argues with his ‘MAYA’ (Most Advanced Yet Acceptable) principle, “Mass production of a successful...product by a powerful company...tends to establish the appearance of this particular item as the norm.” With this trend in mind, the development of memorial garden culture allows the larger funeral industry as a whole to continue the associations

that plain stone gravestones with sandblasted text are the ‘acceptable’ standard to be upheld, even if the cemetery around it is changing. The natural progression of the post-war era required a more manicured, idyllic version of the cemetery to take the place of the traditionally morbid cemeteries from earlier American history. The memorial garden struck an appropriate balance of new design methodology, with similar grave marking style. The tombstone is able to ‘evolve’ while staying largely the same as an object during this era. To the same effect, the memorial garden was able to transform the tombstone by proxy of the atmospheric change it brought to the tombstone.

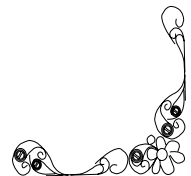
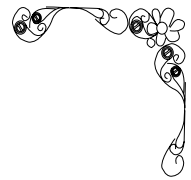
Moving into the late 20th century, an important driving factor was the societal outlook of the generation that was dying. As the baby boomers started to enter middle age, the idea of dismantling one of “[America’s] two great taboos,” ‘sex and death’⁸ became an advertised goal, with the death of their parents fast approaching. But while “sex...could be known...[,] death was an abstraction.”^{8b}. The manipulated marketing perspective led the public to predestined conclusion, duping “This particularly self-possessed generation...to redefine death as they did with pregnancy...decades earlier”^{8c}. The good intention of changing the nation’s understanding of death as a ‘sacred transition,’ saw new imagery enter the graveyard, with “soaring birds and butterflies”⁹ becoming new and enticing symbols for language around death. With the invigorated perspective towards death, the new marketing approach saw a resurgence of tombstone purchases, with “Stone imports from all over beg[inning] to boom in the early 1990s, according to the United States Geological Survey”⁹. Alongside this surge, the advent of new technologies in tombstone production came about. During this boom, the capacity for immortalization in the tombstone becomes quite literal. “Shiny, black headstones...featured photorealistic portraits of the people buried underneath them...a new breed of monument”⁹. The use of laser engraving defined this era of tombstone design, with the quest for a more positive narrative realized through a simple yet effective solution, “A name could have a face”⁹. In a way, this small change in technology harkens back to the simple carvings from America’s founding. The personality contained within the hand-wrought imagery, poetry, and symbolism, created a vessel for empathy. The photographic inscriptions made available by technology strike a similar chord, the viewer is able to draw a clear connection to the body beneath the ground, and the life they might have lived. All



the while, the production and paradigms enable manufacturing to continue the MAYA path of consumption and inking satisfaction. Moving towards the present, the 21st century understanding of memory and remembrance changed significantly, with records of people's lives becoming more and more expansive due to the internet and digital storage. But the tombstone hasn't received many of the benefits that these new technologies allow for. The pace of growth has overpowered the tombstones ability to adapt, with economic, technological, and continued societal barriers regulating the object's position. As such, "Over the last twenty years...75 percent of the monument companies that were around are no longer around"⁹. All of the cultural acceleration spells disaster "[as] it's hard to keep up. [and] For hundreds of years, the memorial industry only had to keep one time: almost eternity." Having such a complacent format for such a powerful object is catching up, and this old and storied moniker is dying off due to the greed and stagnation of a capitalist business model. The mitigated agency they provide over one's own death, makes the tombstone inert in the modern era. However, modernity has the potential to bring ironic rebirth to the tombstone, as "technologies...support a more distanced...representation of...reviewing past experience"⁹, which could allow for a reimagining of what the tombstone could do. As contemporary theory around memory objects suggests, "value is less to do with memory per se, and more about other things such as learning and self-identity". Using this framework for remembrance in the digital age, the tombstone could regain some of the identity it carried in the days of hand wrought stone and symbolism. The inclusion of technology in the object could do more than redirect the visitor through a QR code, but it could aid the bereaved and historiographers in the constant struggle of recording people's intimate histories. Much in the same way that the stylized imagery on the 17th century tombstones acted as a means for subversive dialogue and communication between those preserving and those passing, the layered aspect of digital memory could function in a similar manner. An overlay between public and private meaning would allow for tombstones in the future to break away from the industrialized standard that persisted throughout the 20th century. In the same way that the memorial garden created a shift in public perspective which saw a revitalization of the tombstone, so too may technology and the new understanding of memory-objects create an entirely new format for tombstones to exist again.

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Jake Dangstorp
Beautiful Dirt

"That she "wanted to pass along those hours of pleasure and somehow forge a link between my childhood and theirs." The daughters accommodated her for a few months when she bought them some new Barbie outfits, but without the same excitement that she recalled, mostly "mixing and matching the new clothes with the old, creating some wild, eclectic attires."58

"One woman declared that members of the younger generation "don't have the connection" with their elders' dolls; understandably, they look back not on "my childhood" but on their own. Moreover, the motivation of younger collectors is surely different from the middle aged. Consider an older member who started with hard plastic Madame Alexander dolls (from the 1950s) but, when she later encountered the dolls that her mother and grandmother had as children, switched to collecting these much older antique dolls. Even though she never met her grandmother, she "got to know her" by collecting dolls and making clothes for them just as her grandmother had. She seemed to think that she somehow enhanced her grandmother's memory by owning dolls that her grandmother might have wanted but couldn't afford. Her motive was to link with the past. This was no longer the case with the young. She and other members noted that younger women don't have our "downtime" because today there are "so many stimulants." 58

Cross, Gary. Consumed Nostalgia : Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism. Columbia University Press, 2015.
EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1056618&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

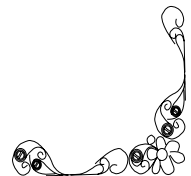
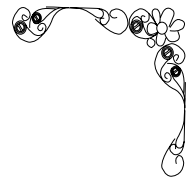
"What I have found is the expensive difficulty of preserving, storing, conserving and generally taking care of photos, textiles, china, tools and all those articles of daily life that we take for granted until we have to store them. How long can we expect mementos to remain valued by a younger generation three generations removed from the original owner?"

"These objects tell me that my ancestral family is not a dream or a boring romance novel. They lived, worked, saved, and died with these heirlooms left in my care. While I can sell my 226-year-old family homestead with significant conflict but minimal tears, I have a hard time disposing of these things so highly valued by my ancestors that they preserved them. What is anyone's obligation in this situation? I am a daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter, not an archivist (says so on my college diploma), a custodian of house and home by default, a job everyone appreciates but no one else really wants. Now, as we prepare to "downsize" our household, I have to consider the fate of these heirlooms as I try to decide which of my own belongings are heirloom-worthy for the next generation, all of which will add to the bins of memorabilia already multiplying in dark corners. It's tempting to procrastinate entirely and leave it all for my children to deal with, as it was left for me. I am only one "family historian" who knows some of the intimacies of these heirlooms, so perhaps it's okay that I be the one to donate, delegate, dispose of and digitize the artifacts and stories that make up my family's long history."

Jan Dorr. The Value Of Family Heirlooms In A Digital Age. WBUR 90.9 NPR Boston. 2015. WBUR.org

"Now, instead of gazing upon my mother's beloved wheat art with sentimentality, I get anxious ... wondering where the heck it's going to end up when my own walls come tumbling down. And it's hardly just this one item I worry about because my home, likely like yours, contains a moving truck full of similar treasures/stuff/junk, including dusty stamp collections, furniture from the Old Country, formal dishes and silverware also from my mom and lovely oil paintings created by relatives my kids have never met.

I do take some comfort in knowing I'm not alone. In August, Jo Moss and husband Rod downsized from their Oswego home to a house in Yorkville, yet the couple still can't get any vehicles into the new three-car garage because it's filled with so much stuff she assumed her kids would want. And it's not just their possessions, but precious items passed down from Rod's mother after her death almost nine years ago. At the time they were packing to move, Moss, 62, asked her three kids what they wanted. "And they turned down pretty much everything."



she said, including a Pennsylvania Dutch rocking chair handmade by their great-grandfather that she eventually gave to a nephew's girlfriend "rather than put it on the street."

Her kids also rejected three sets of formal dinnerware, including Haviland China; vast collections of Lladro figurines and Department 56 Christmas villages; as well as 3,000 Beanie Babies and boxes of soccer awards she and her husband, who both coached for many years, earned with their children.

There's an old writer's phrase — "slay your darlings" — we use in this profession that means tossing out our favorite words which serve no purpose. On the other hand, the gospel according to de-clutter guru Marie Kondo gives us a little more permission to keep the things that bring us joy.

But any joy that wheat silhouette I inherited has given me over the years is now dulled by the thought of it laying in a pile of other once-upon-a-time treasures on a shelf at the local Goodwill.

It's chipped and it's worn and it really is out of date, so it will probably look right at home.

But as long as I'm hanging around, so shall Mom's favorite piece of art."

Denise Crosby. As millennials reject heirlooms, boomers ask, 'What do we do with all this stuff?'. Seattle Times. 2019. [Seattletimes.com](https://www.seattletimes.com)

Yet, despite the highly personal nature of [the cell phone], it would be anathema for most people to keep their mobile phone for more than a few years. Technical upgrades, new abilities, better styling, all contribute to a desire to re-consume. And as such the digital technology is replaced and made to be replaceable. Is it possible, though, to turn this notion of how we relate to digital technical artefacts on its head? Should we consider what it might mean to design an object that a person really would keep with them throughout their life, and bequeath to others when it comes to an end, just as they have done for generations with other physical artifacts? Would it be possible to create technological artefacts that are used, resold, bequeathed or otherwise given continued life much as is done

with antiques in our current culture?

David S. Kirk , Shahram Izadi , Abigail Sellen , Stuart Taylor , Richard Banks , Otmar Hilliges, Opening up the family archive, Proceedings of the 2010 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work, February 06-10, 2010, Savannah, Georgia, USA

such fetishistic behavior is in many respects a fundamental human trait is attested to by the archaeological record of the modern human with its long observation of the use of burial goods to symbolize a person and to testify to their life [Renfrew and Bahn 2004]. In a sense, a great deal of research within the HCI community also pertains to this understanding of human beings as homo faber [Sennett 2008]—man as manufacturer and collector of objects, and as creatures who imbue sentiment in external artefacts.

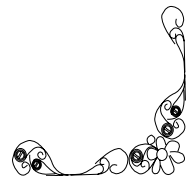
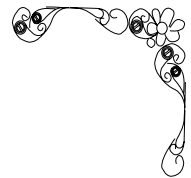
These advances in digital technology have been welcomed by some, such as Gordon Bell [Bell and Gemmell 2009], who paint a utopian picture in which human fallibilities of memory can be circumvented with the effortless digital capture of an entire life, fundamentally altering our relationship to acts of memory [van Dijk 2007]

"Allon and I had always exchanged clothes, having for two years shared a house, in which we were communal in just about everything except our filth - that alone, paradoxically, seemed irremediably individual, the object of the other's disgust."

"If I wore the jacket, Allon wore me. He was there in the wrinkles of the elbows...he was there in the stains at the very bottom of the jacket; he was there in the smell of the armpits, Above all, he was there in the smell."

"They do literally inhabit us through the "habits" which they bequeath." 37

"In a cloth economy, though, things take a life of their own. That is to say, one is paid not in the neutral currency of money but in material which is richly absorbent of symbolic meaning, and in which memories and social relations are literally embodied...Vladimir Nabokov, for instance, in his last novel, Look at the Harlequins!, describes how Vadim, after the death of his wife Iris, feels the need to



banish those objects of hers which would overpower him.”

Peter Stallybrass. 1993. Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things. Berg Publishers.

 My mother dying left a wardrobe full,
 A world half-worn, half-new:
 Old-fashioned underclothes; a row of shoes,
 Soles upward, staring, tangles of rings,
 Impatient opals, bargain bangles, pearls;
 And, flowered or jazzy, rayon, cotton, tulle,
 A hundred dresses, waiting
 Left with that ragged past,
 My poor truncated father sold the lot.
 What could he do? The dealer shrugged, and said
 “Take it or leave it - up to you.” He took
 And lost the fiver at the races.
 The empty wardrobe stared at him for years.

Laurence Lerner, “Residue”

 Researchers suggest that older consumers hope to transfer to younger family members their personal narrative, bundled with their cherished possessions (Unruh, 1983; Price et al., 2000; Curasi et al., 2004b) as illustrated in the opening vignette. Further, the literature suggests that older consumers often worry that their loved ones will not care about their most cherished possessions and their associated life stories bundled with these items.

Possessions play a profound role in the construction and preservation of personal identity (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Belk, 1988; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Kleine et al., 1995; Piacentini and Mailer, 2004). We surround ourselves with material objects that communicate to others and to ourselves who we are, what we have done, and who we would like to be (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Through our possessions we are able to extend ourselves, and thus our identities (Belk, 1988).

Personal items successfully passed forward through the lineage have the ability to grant the original owners a symbolic immortality, since the stories of their heroic actions and achievements can live on long

after they are gone, as their stories are passed forward bundled with their personal possessions (Price et al., 2000; Curasi et al., 2004a).

Informant stories offer a glimpse of the life review process, in narratives that accompany these special possessions (Butler, 1963; Price et al., 2000). These cherished possessions provide a foundation for communicating values and teaching important life lessons through the transfer of stories bundled with cherished possessions (Connerton, 1995; Price et al., 2000; Zaltman, 2003).

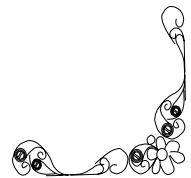
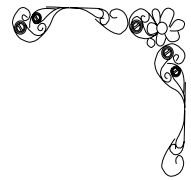
Research suggests at least one way that consumers are socialized about values that their older family members hold dear is through storytelling rituals associated with intergenerationally transferred possessions. Because the human mind functions most effectively, not by processing letters and words, but through processing images and metaphors, attaching vivid stories to cherished family possessions increases the potential for future family members to remember key ideas in the stories which can be translated into morals and values venerated by the older family members (Connerton, 1995).

a concern often heard from older individuals: the fear that younger family members will not remember and retell stories associated with their most cherished possessions.

Other researchers have suggested that family heirlooms will probably not be maintained by future generations in the lineage at least in part because of the decline in the importance of the corporal indexical association (Grayson and Shulman, 2000) between the original owner and descendants (Finch and Mason, 2000).

Price et al. (2000) also found that “heirloom quality” items are not necessarily expensive items. Instead, transferred items were often inexpensive objects that had grown dense with personal meaning over time. The intention to create and maintain family heirlooms was common among their middle class informants, providing data that allowed these researchers to explain how many middle class families in the US successfully create and maintain inalienable wealth (Curasi et al., 2004b).

They feared their younger loved ones might not maintain the inalienable status of their cherished possessions and might instead return these items to the market by selling them, discarding them, or by simply not passing them forward with their stories and meanings attached (Curasi et al., 2004b).



In addition, a majority of respondents reported that their possessions reflected their individual identity and that their familial possessions reflect their familial identity. Repeatedly in non-random interpretive investigations, older consumers communicated anxiety and uncertainty over whether or not younger family members would pass their cherished possessions forward through the lineage.

Hypothesis 1. Seventy-four percent of our informants agreed with the first hypothesis: "A majority of individuals will report they hope their loved ones will care about their most cherished possessions." (See Table 1).

Overall, all age groups responded approximately the same; that is, all age categories hoped that their loved ones would care about their cherished possessions (Table 4).

This statement tests the generalizability of whether or not respondents intend to maintain or to create a family heirloom by passing a cherished item forward through the lineage. This hypothesis was supported with over 84 percent of respondents agreeing that they plan to pass cherished possessions forward through the lineage. (See Table 2) This also suggests that a majority of our respondents hope to craft a type of symbolic immortality (Hirschman, 1990)

Further, qualitative research suggests that possessions received from older family members are more cherished if accompanied with a family story, or if encoded with deeper meaning (Curasi et al., 2004b). "there was no statistical significance between the different age groups and whether respondents planned to pass forward family possessions within the lineage. Overwhelmingly, individuals of all ages, young and old, reported they planned to pass forward familial possessions to family members."

Carolyn Folkman Curasi, How Individuals' Cherished Possessions Become Families' Inalienable Wealth, Georgia State University, Nov. 2004. Journal of Consumer Research.

"Could it be that this object was put together by a loved one after this man's death, combining a watch locket, a sample of hair taken by a loved one in the man's younger years, and a photograph made later in life? This would make it a memorial of mourning object rather than a token of ongoing love or friendship. It would also make this

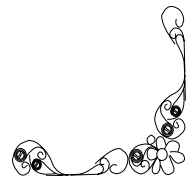
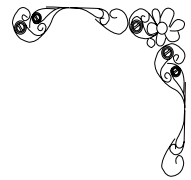
locket the intersection of at least five distinct moments (it's original manufacture, the taking of a hair sample, the making of a photograph, their later combination in this object and its perception now, here in my hand. Demonstrably collapsing any distinction between being and becoming, my locket demands that we acknowledge that all historical identity is a manifestation of this kind of temporal oscillation." 33

"By the late eighteenth century, small portrait paintings of members of the aristocratic class were frequently being incorporated into jewellery and especially into mourning jewellery (a type of ornament that itself goes back to at least the seventeenth century) (see Frank 2000)."

"The addition of human hair to such objects was already a common practice by the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Thomas Laqueur notes, hair began to enjoy a new prominence as the raw material of memory. It became the corporeal auto-icon par excellence, the favoured synecdoche - the real standing for the symbolic - perhaps not eternally incorruptible but long lasting enough, a bit of a person that lives eerily on as a souvenir' (Laqueur 1992: 16-17)."

"What does added hair, whether visible or not, actually do to the photograph that it accompanies? First and foremost the hair serves a metonymic memorial function, standing in, as we have already noted, for the body of the absent subject...could it be, for example that the addition of hair to all these otherwise ordinary photographs is a vernacular commentary on tracing itself, on photography's strengths and limitations as a representational apparatus?" 39

"Photograph[s] [are] never, in essence, a memory... but [they] actually block memory... Photographs replace the immediate, physically embracing experience of involuntary memory (the sort of emotional responses most often induced, before conscious thought, by smells and sounds) with frozen illustrations set in the past; Photography replaces the unpredictable thrill of memory with the dull certainties history...the photograph's capacity to erase memory has been countered by its transformation into an overtly touched and/or touchable object-form. In the process the subject of each photograph has been similarly transformed, from something merely seen into someone really felt, from just an image set in the past into an exchange



you are emotionally (as well as physically) touched by, right now, in the present. The addition of a piece of hair repeats and accentuates this appeal to the mnemonic capacities of touch.”

“Geoffrey Batchen, *Ere the Substance Fade: Photography and hair jewellery*”

This chapter is about the relationship between the historical formation of modern subjectivity and the place we give to memory in the intersection between the individual and culture. One of the premises of my approach will be to suggest that memory does not exist as a separate realm from authorised domains of knowledge, but is itself constituted through historically specific cultural knowledges. At the centre of our understanding of memory is a concept of the subject which, from the late eighteenth century, comes to be constituted as a perceptual, emotional and intellectual centre from which the particularities of an individual's character and life are expressed. This ‘subject’ is a very particular construction, a modern Western subject which embodies a particular, modern way of understanding the world based on its registration on individual consciousness. Such a recognition points us to the conclusion that imagining a ‘self’ — and writing autobiography from this perspective — is a historically specific gesture, a result of seeing subjectivity as a valid centre of meaning and knowledge. As a result of the perspectival nature of subjective perception, though, memory is rendered problematic as an authoritative form of knowledge about ‘the world’ rather than ‘the self.’ (111)

“In his consideration of the development of the modern novel, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) argues that the development of novelistic form is linked to the introduction of new ways of conceiving of time and space, history, memory and the present. In his account, the epic is the world of a heroic past, a valorised and inaccessible world of origin and unity, national beginnings. The world of the epic is the world of ‘fathers’ — ancestors and founders — separated from contemporary reality and distanced from the time of the author and audience, whose only perspective can be that of reverent descendants. The epic is a pre-modern form, then, in which memory acts to sacralise an ‘absolute’ past. This past, which lacks the relativity of a relation to the present,

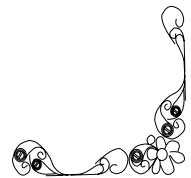
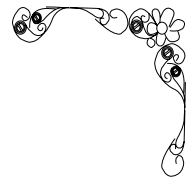
is postulated according to an unchangeable tradition: absolute and conclusive, complete and closed. The epic's claim to an authentic essence ‘beyond the realm of human activity’ precludes open endedness, indeterminacy, continuation, and thus one of the defining characteristics of the modern novel, in contrast, is its operation on the same ‘time-and-value plane’ as that of contemporary reality: ‘the zone of “my time,” from the zone of familiar contact with me’ (ibid: 14). It can thus build in temporal continuation, with all the open endedness, lack of fixed value and meaning, and perspectival relativity that this brings with it. The form of the modern novel, therefore, builds in the contemporary viewpoint, ‘the realm of human activity’, rather than presenting its narrative, through epic memory, as unquestionable and absolute — valorised, impersonal, immutable.” (112)

This is implicit in his argument that both reality and the depiction of the individual in the novel lack ‘essence’. This he sees as following from the disintegration of the integrity of the single and unified world view in favour of ‘varying “truths”’, and the introduction of viewpoint in the construction of the individual character, a ‘tension between the external and the internal man’ which prevents him being ‘completely incarnated into the flesh of existing socio historical categories,’ into the flow of tradition as fate or destiny (ibid: 357). With the introduction of the ‘spontaneity of the inconclusive present’ (ibid: 27) both reality and the individual are given a new sense of continuation and future. They are thereby characterised by a lack of wholeness and completeness, and thus a new instability, which renders them historical. This is what allows Bakhtin to make his claim that the novel ‘is the genre of becoming’:

when the present becomes the center of human orientation in time and in the world, time and the world lose their completeness ... (they) become historical: they unfold ... as becoming, as an uninterrupted movement into a real future, as a unified, all-embracing and uncompleted process (ibid: 30). (114-115)

‘Memory’ in memoirs and autobiographies is of a special sort: it is memory of one's own contemporaneity and of one's own self. It is ... personal memory without pre-existing chronological pattern, bounded only by the termini of a single personal life (ibid: 24). (115)

It is this material everydayness of the novel's formal components and referents which most assure its relationship to a historicised subjective consciousness, and which create a field of convergence in the notion



of memory as it becomes redefined by the ascendancy of the novel. For modern memory is thus constructed on a plane of intimacy, a plane on which history and subjectivity are now able to meet, but one which is inflected by the cultural meaning of the particular rituals and interactions of private life. (116)

Radstone, Susannah. *Memory and Methodology*. Berg Publishers, 2000. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1333535&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

technology could help us mentally “re-live” specific life experiences in the sense of being able to think back to specific past, personal experiences in detail (often called “episodic” memory). This can be for practical purposes such as remembering aspects of an important experience we have forgotten. Examples include: relocating lost physical objects by mentally retracing our steps, recollecting faces or names by remembering when and where we met someone, or remembering things we had promised to do by trying to recall things discussed in a meeting.

if you are designing a system to support recollection, then we know there are some kinds of cues that are better triggers than others. For example, rich visual images seem to be good cues for recollective memory. Also, place, event and people cues are stronger than using time as a cue.

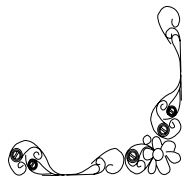
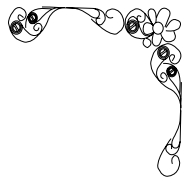
As a special case of recollection, technological systems could also help users spend time mentally reliving past experiences for emotional or sentimental reasons. This can be done either by individuals, or socially, and as an (often pleasurable) end in itself. This kind of recollection is what often occurs when we watch home videos with others, or flip through photo albums with friends and family.

If you are designing a system to support reminiscing, you need to think about optimising the experience of sharing either for people who are together, or for experiences to bring remote people together. Such systems might also support the elicitation and recording of spontaneous storytelling.

Systems could help us retrieve facts or other kinds of digital information we have encountered in the past, such as documents, emails or Web pages. This might involve recollection (we might retrieve a document by remembering where we were or who we were with when we wrote it, for example). Alternatively retrieval might involve keyword searches, looking things up in directories or other databases, or simply looking in likely places. In other words, retrieval need not involve any kind of recollection at all, as long as there are other ways to find the sought-for information. Examples of retrieval include doing a Web search for a person you have met before so you can remember what they look like, or finding the minutes of a meeting for action items rather than trying to recall the events of the meeting.

New technologies might support a more distanced or abstract representation of personal data to facilitate reflecting on and reviewing past experience. This might include examining the patterns of past experiences, such as aggregated data about one’s behaviour over time. Or, alternatively, it might be about looking at one’s past experiences from a different angle or perspective. Here, the value is not in the “re-living” of past events, but in seeing things anew and framing the past differently. That is, value is less to do with memory per se, and more about other things such as learning and self-identity. Examples here include keeping track of your running routes and times to assess your level of fitness, or recording your travel habits to see how you might reduce your carbon footprint. If you are designing a system to support reflection, you need to think about providing users with many different ways of viewing information about their past activities. This could include looking at the data along a timeline, by location, or by associating it with different activities or people. The key here is to provide new views onto the past

Finally, another vital class of memory concerns remembering prospective events in one’s life, as opposed to those things that have



happened in the past. In our everyday activities we are constantly required to defer actions until later, and plan future activities. Examples of remembering intentions or “prospective memory” include remembering to run errands, take medication, attend appointments or carry out other planned activities. If you are designing a system to support remembering intentions, the focus needs to be on how to deliver reminders in a timely manner, perhaps using time, location or other contextual cues to trigger the reminders. If people get reminded at the right time and place, the content of the reminder is less important.

POSSESSION IS MORE THAN SIMPLY HAVING OWNERSHIP OF SOMETHING. IT IS BOUND UP WITH WHAT WE CAN DO WITH OUR BELONGINGS, WHETHER WE CAN MOVE THEM FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER, WHETHER WE CAN COLLECT AND CURATE THEM, AND WHETHER WE CAN GIFT THEM TO OTHERS, OR DISCARD THEM. DESIGN FOR POSSESSION ENTAILS DESIGN FOR ACTION.

Abstracting what would be done with the heirloom, interactive transplantation? Maintenance transplantation
Possession is bound up with knowing where things are, and being able to act upon those things. Do we need a new equivalent to cut and paste, drag and drop and, if so, what might this be?
Through our possessions, real and digital, online and offline, we convey who we want to be, and more so, who we want to be to different people. The updates people post, Identity On - and Offline:

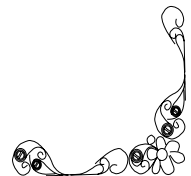
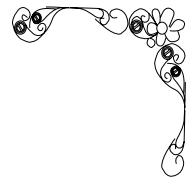
THE THINGS WE OWN AND PRODUCE, COLLECT AND DISPLAY, ALL SAY SOMETHING ABOUT WHO WE ARE OR WANT TO BE. THEY CAN SAY SOMETHING ABOUT OUR PAST AND SOMETHING ABOUT WHERE WE WANT TO GO. THINGS STAND AS REPRESENTATIVE OF US AND HOW WE WANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD: OUR IDENTITY IS NOT MERELY US, OUR BODIES, IT IS THE THINGS WE OWN AS WELL – OUR POSSESSIONS, the collections they build, and the photos they upload all convey facets of identity. We suggest that the vehicles for these interactions can become more than a means of reporting

what is happening now; they can also be a way of understanding the value of digital possessions kept elsewhere, such as on personal hard drives. In the final chapter, we will consider how a richer set of actions could support this bridging of the online and offline worlds, by returning to the issues of ownership, place and possession that were raised in the opening chapter

Banks, Richard. Duffield, Nick. Sellen, Abigail. Taylor, Alex. Things We’ve Learnt About Memory. Microsoft Research Ltd. 2012

“epitaphs on tombstones tell us about relationships, history, ideologies, and life narratives, retaining them for decades to come if not for centuries. What is written on a gravestone is inscribed there for several reasons and usually follows a predictable grammar (Mytum, 1994, p. 255), a recurrent pattern. The engraved name constitutes the core element, frequently together with the relevant dates of birth and death. Identity may however be expressed in many ways: by the grave itself and its materiality, or in the text inscribed on it, or even by the absence of explanatory text. The graves and the epitaphs form common ways of presenting the dead and are, therefore, subject to many conventions. The name and lifespan are crucial, first of all, since they enable the identification of a specific tomb. Names and dates may then be complemented by other components, for example ritual phrases such as ‘Here rests ...’, locations, biblical quotes, photos etc. Family, friends and others may contribute to the text by placing commemorative plaques on the tomb. Taken together, these elements constitute the span of features regarding asserted identities”

A gravestone is designed for the public: visitors who would like to see where a relative has been granted a final rest, mourners, or mere passers-by. In that sense, gravestones form acts of communication and social actions ‘mediated by a confluence of discourses that may include historically situated local and national language ideologies, beliefs about the individuals intended to view public signage, and (dominant) expectations about language functions that contribute to producing the linguistic landscape’ (Hult, 2014, p. 510). The departed may in turn be described and identified by different characteristics,



such as having been a good mother or a beloved husband, by his or her occupation or place in society. The tomb itself, with its materiality, its location, its size, may also signal an element of identity; it provides information about the departed and the community of which they were part, not least through the identifiers that are displayed on the grave.”

Cemeteries mirror the real world of the living and grave inscriptions illustrate ‘the values, attitudes, and social thought at a given point in time’ (Anderson, Sielski, Miles, & Dunfee, 2011, p. 359). ‘The graveyard becomes a metaphor of life’, Guthke comments (2003, p. 59), and Sautkin states: ‘It goes without saying that cemeteries reflect the identities of people buried there, the statuses and roles of their social life. In this aspect, cemeteries can be a source of reconstruction of the social structure, social hierarchies, and the identity contours of a particular community associated with a particular cemetery’ (2016, p. 662). Tombstones for their part carry symbols and traces of social status, family ties, wars, migration and much more, and constitute a text where we find life narratives. Bruner observes that ‘narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative’ (2004, p. 692): ‘In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we ‘tell about’ our lives [...] we also become variants of the culture’s canonical forms’ (2004, p. 694).”

“Which identities are considered essential to inscribe on a grave and intended to remain beyond the death of the person? And how can inscribed messages and meanings have an impact beyond the identity of the individual, at a regional or national level, then gaining an agency on their own?”

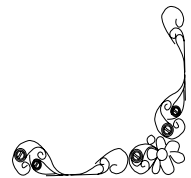
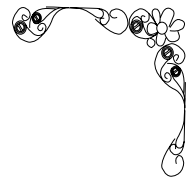
The cemetery will here be seen as a text which produces meanings and furthers a discourse that can be read and interpreted by visitors, and also affect and influence them. These meanings are not always innocuous, and Bellanger and Tartakowsky (2011, p. 11) observe that cemeteries also form political constructions where there is a lot at stake. The same is likely to be true for the graves we look at today in Alsatian cemeteries. We thus have to deal with different levels of identity: an individual level and a collective level, which both may be traced in the cemeteries examined for the purpose of the present study. A starting point of the investigation is that ‘identity is the set

of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person’ (Burke & Steets, 2009, p. 3).

“tombs and inscriptions like epitaphs will not be found outside of the cemetery. Those buried there can often be expected to have a story relating to that particular place, whether as a place of residence or what is casually called ‘roots’ or ‘identity’. McClymont (2016, p. 385) states that cemeteries form ‘an intrinsic part of place identity’ and that they ‘have a role in promoting civic identity and local place attachment.’”

Kotilainen (2013, p. 176) observes that ‘reading the texts on all the gravestones and crosses in the graveyard(s) of a single parish provide us with a miniature collective biography representing of the inhabitants of the whole parish.’ Furthermore, Anderson et al. (2011, p. 359–360), with reference to Guthke (2003), observe that ‘grave inscriptions serve as a “cultural memory”, illustrating the values, attitudes, and social thought at a given point in time.’ Referring to Foucault, who considers the cemetery as a ‘strange heterotopia [that] certainly [is] a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). Wright argues that the cemetery is to be seen as ‘a particularly important rhetorical memory space’ (2005, p. 52) and ‘a sacred space that produces meaning [...] a heterotopia, and a place that represents, contests, and inverts’ (2005, p. 54). In fact, to Wright the cemetery has a memory which is ‘like the mirror and its reflection: real because of the physicality of the grave yet unreal and easy to distort’ (2005, p. 55)...However, it should be taken into account that society constructs a special status of “the deceased”, which is not determined by the social status of individuals within their lifetime.”

“space is not neutral’ (2013, p. 23). Such statements, proclaimed and reiterated in a public or semi-public space, can be emphasised by the grave itself, whose message and materiality also build identity, as shown by the graves of Küss and the Dauls. The identities and the meanings of the messages must be situated within the context of the cemetery, a context of use where they take on specific meanings (Gee, 2014, p. 157) that are not possible to call in question since death is definitive. The grave turns into a messenger entrusted with an agency



of its own – the agency of those who composed the gravestone gives way to the agency of the grave itself, allowing it to perform, to act and to influence, to reinforce national identity and collective memory, in other words: to exercise power.”

Katharina Vajta (2020) *Identity beyond death: messages and meanings in Alsatian cemeteries*, *Mortality Journal*
 “the dissolving boundary between the living and the dead, and by Kellaher and Worpole’s identification (2010) of a trend toward ‘cenotaphisation’ whereby memorialisation in roadside shrine, memorial tree, bench, etc. is removed from the location of the bodily remains; thus memorials to the dead are everywhere even if bodies remains sequestered in the cemetery. These scholars identify a shift in contemporary Britain from the dead being separated to their ‘increasingly coming to live alongside us’ (Howarth, 2007, p. 19). Howarth, following Foucault, argues that ‘a modernist, scientific-rational approach to social problems demanded ... segregation and classification.’ Prisons protected the law-abiding from the criminal, hospitals the healthy from the sick, and out-of-town cemeteries the living from the dead. ‘The modernist desire to exercise control over mortality has been fundamental to its sequestration from life.’ (Howarth, 2000, p. 128)

British cemeteries today are clearly bounded spaces of death (Kellaher & Worpole, 2010), surrounded by suburbs from whose everyday life they are largely insulated. New crematoria are typically exurban, surrounded by fields rather than houses, even more removed from everyday life (Grainger, 2005). All this combines to remove from everyday life all public traces and spatial reminders of the dead body. Sloane (2018) argues that the American lawn cemetery effected a similar removal.

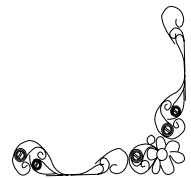
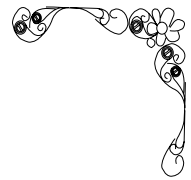
Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, and Stroebe (1992) distinguished two very different twentieth-century understandings of bereavement. The romantic view holds that love is eternal, transcending the grave; bonds of love continue, whether through memory or caring for the dead, for example by tending their grave (Francis, Kellaher, & Neophytou, 2005). The modernist view, articulated a century ago in Freud’s (1984) classic article ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, argues that grief is a process whereby the bonds of attachment are ultimately

broken, freeing the mourner to invest in new attachments. This latter view resonates with cultural modernism which values youth, progress and change, and came to form the ‘conventional wisdom’ of twentieth-century psychologists, counsellors and therapists on each side of the Atlantic (Wortman & Silver, 1989). Both views, however, held up strongly in twentieth-century popular culture. Romantic loss was expressed in pop songs, gravestone inscriptions and local newspaper in memoriam notices such as this third anniversary notice: ‘Though absent you are always near/Still loved and missed and very dear’. Modernism was expressed in advice to ‘let go and move on,’ supported by funeral readings such as Christina Rossetti’s ‘Better by far you should forget and smile/than that you should remember and be sad’ (Walter, 1999).

In modernist bereavement, the dead have departed, and the living need to separate from them. Separation (‘letting go’) represents psychological health, leading to renewed social participation (‘moving on’). Not separating from the dead is deemed pathological. The dead are to be left behind; life is to proceed without them. Drivers of this system include: Protestantism, secularisation, public health, rationalist systems of classification and a modernist faith in youth, progress and change.

First I look at how mourners are psychologically reconfiguring their relationships with the dead, not least through pervasive social media; then how the online dead are spiritually pictured not as souls locked up in heaven but as angels who return to protect the living; and finally how new bodily discourses and practices disperse human remains throughout the environment. Since such phenomena cause us to question whether death is still sequestered, the analysis is a bit more detailed than in the previous section.

This resonates academically with the growth in the same period of memory studies, and culturally with the ‘memory boom’ and the turn from modernism toward a ‘postmodern’ rediscovery of the past, of old buildings, and ‘heritage’. In this cultural formation, postmodern humans march into the future connected to and enriched by, not detached from, their (diverse) pasts and their dead. Thus, behaviour that had only twenty years earlier been almost entirely private and to which most Britons were too embarrassed to admit is now expected of the youthful peers of youthful deceased. (Many young people have now left Facebook for other platforms;



research on how the dead are present there is as yet in its infancy, though see Cann (2014b)).

Addressing someone implies they can hear and/or read you:

Even though it seems silly to talk through Facebook, I know you can see and understand every word I type. (Kasket, 2012, p. 65)

The language of Facebook thus imputes agency to the deceased. It implies they exist, somewhere. Even in rapidly secularising countries like England or Sweden, this somewhere is often 'heaven':

See you in heaven!

Say hello to the angels. (Jakoby & Reiser, 2013, p. 72)

The Facebook dead are, therefore, very much present and active.

Users who live in and through social media encounter deceased acquaintances as well as intimates unannounced, at any time. And with smart phone technology, in any place. These dead belong to the user's own social networks (Walter, 2015b); tweeting grief and remembrance is even more public (Cann, 2014a).

By the late twentieth century, photography, film, colour printing, recorded sound and other media enabled humans to watch Humphrey Bogart movies on their home video, listen to Mozart on Classic FM or Elvis on their Sony Walkman as they drove to work, and eat in restaurants whose walls were decorated with posters of Che Guevara or Marilyn Monroe. Thus, both the family dead and the famous and artistic dead came to pervade everyday social life (Jensen & Jones, 2005; Kears, 2010; Kittler, 1999). Not until the twenty first century, however, have mobile social media enabled the known dead of friends and acquaintances to do likewise.

The spirit

Social media afford researchers a rich vein of vernacular culture. One example is the replacement online of third person references to the deceased's soul ('May her soul rest in peace') with second person messages to the dead-as-angel, researched in a series of articles by Walter (2011, 2016). The tabloid Sun newspaper's online memorial to English celebrity Jade Goody who died in 2009 of cervical cancer contained 1109 tributes; of these only 13 mentioned the word 'soul', while 167 referred to angels – either Jade being with the angels or becoming an angel in order to look after her two young sons left on earth (Walter, 2011). Likewise in many other online contexts the immortal soul that dominated late twentieth-century surveys has

given way to the idea that the dead become angels. To give just two examples, a 51-year-old female is memorialised by a friend:

You are in a better place, and I for one know I have the greatest guardian angel that a person could ask for⁵

And a grandchild writes:

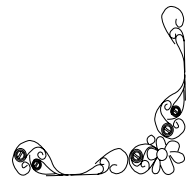
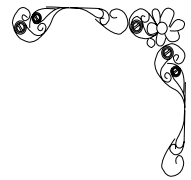
See you in heaven Nana as I am sure you will be one of God's special angels.⁶

Angels, unlike souls, can exert agency, either in heaven or by returning to earth to care for the living – the dead become guardian angels. This idea may be expressed even without the word 'angel', as in 'I know that you're watching over me.' The dead becoming angels who continue to guide and care for the living expresses the romantic notion that the bond with the dead continues. If the eternal but agent-less soul represents the deceased's continuing identity, the post-mortem angel represents an active and continuing relationship. On social media, second-person address positioning the dead as listening has become normative; spiritually this is expressed through the dead-as-angel who has agency to receive messages from the living and to respond by caring for them.

discourse of the angelic dead, found online not only in the rather religious USA but also in more secular Europe.

Dispersal imagery can also frame scattering on land. While the reality of scattering is of ash falling onto the ground, the image of scattering 'to the winds' to become 'Part of all you see/The air you are breathing' (to quote Scottish folk singer Ewan MacColl's *The Joy of Living*, sung at his 1989 funeral by his widow Peggy Seeger and their children) is of dispersal. MacColl's family inhaling micro-fragments of burnt bones as they breathe the bracing Scottish air is figuratively transformed from a health hazard into a comforting sense of MacColl melding into the natural environment that he, and those who mourn him, loved and love. Disposal is figuratively replaced by dispersal, pollution by a comforting pervasive presence.

Cann (2014b) and Sloane (2018) in the USA note that memorialisation is located increasingly distant from the dead body itself. The dead are commemorated in a range of innovative new locations – ghost bikes, car rear windscreen stickers, tattoos, T-shirts,



social media – that are part of everyday life but separated from where body or ashes lie.

As illustrated by Ewan MacColl's song, the pervasive presence of human remains is largely symbolic, figurative, rather than literal. Indeed, Kellaher and Wörpöle (2010) in the UK and Cann (2014b) and Sloane (2018) in the USA note that memorialisation is located increasingly distant from the dead body itself. The dead are commemorated in a range of innovative new locations – ghost bikes, car rear windscreen stickers, tattoos, T-shirts, social media – that are part of everyday life but separated from where body or ashes lie. Some natural burial grounds in Britain ban any memorialisation at the grave. Many natural burial grounds, while promising dispersal into the everyday environment, are located deep in the countryside – geographically much further removed from everyday life than are traditional cemeteries. In these diverse ways, human remains are only imagined to pervade the everyday environment; physically they are even more removed, reminders of the physical body even more absent. Angels and continuing bonds are likewise constructs of the social imagination. So what is pervasive is the idea of the dead. That does not make the new discourse of the pervasive dead any less significant – rather, it raises the question why, when contemporary Britons spatially distance themselves yet further from human remains, at least some want to imagine the dead's pervasive presence – reflected not least in a new ubiquity of memorialisation.

This section has argued that in the twenty-first century a new discourse of the pervasive dead has arisen in which mourners express on social media their continuing bond with the dead who pop up on the screens of friends and acquaintances; the dead are addressed as angels with agency to hear and care; and the body's physical remains are pictured as an active part of the everyday environment. Language reflects this: media analysts refer to pervasive social media, grief counsellors refer to continuing bonds, social media posts depict guardian angels as ever present, while mourners talk of scattering ashes and Rumble et al. (2014) refer to the dispersal of remains. Meanwhile, new forms of memorialisation pervade both public and private everyday space.

The dying, especially the majority who are very old and the minority whose dying bodies are 'dirty' or physically repelling, continue to

be sequestered, not only in institutions but often within separate rooms within institutions – even in hospices otherwise committed to opening themselves up to the surrounding community (Lawton, 2000). Until dying at home becomes not only normal but public in the way Ariès characterised pre-modern dying, dying will not pervade British life to the extent the British dead now do and British death is beginning to. It is the dead, more than dying or even death that are set to pervade life.

Perhaps the dead can remain present in society (in ways that death and the dying cannot) because the emphasis – not least in contemporary 'life-centred' funerals – is placed on the dead 'living on' rather than being dead."

Tony Walter (2019) The pervasive dead, Mortality, Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying, Volume 24:4, 389-404. 2018

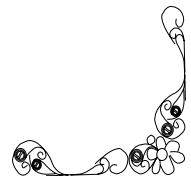
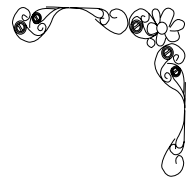
At one point in the book, Gawande speaks with Keren Wilson, the woman who opened the country's first assisted-living facility. And she gave him one of those quotes that every reporter dreams of – a single sentence where, after hearing it, you can't ever look at the issue in the same way again. "We want autonomy for ourselves and safety for those we love," she says.

Sara Kiff. May 2015. "How America's Fear of Death Hurts the Elderly". Vox Media.

"Many of the things that we want for those we care about are the things that we would adamantly oppose for ourselves because they would infringe upon our sense of self.

It's the rare child who is able to think, "Is this place what Mom would want or like or need?" It's more like they're seeing it through their own lens. The child asks, "Is this a place I would be comfortable leaving Mom?"

"I want to be helpful, play a role," she said. She used to make her own jewelry, volunteer at the library. Now, her main activities were bingo, DVD movies, and other forms of passive group entertainment. The



things she missed most, she told me, were her friendships, privacy, and a purpose to her days ... it seems we've succumbed to a belief that, once you lose your physical independence, a life of worth and freedom is simply not possible.

"In our latest research, we had conversations about care experiences and preferences with 33 women and men aged at least 95, some over 100, and 39 of their relatives or carers. Of these, 88% were women, 86% were widowed and 42% lived in care homes.

Death was part of life for many of the older people who often said they were taking each day as it comes and not worrying too much about tomorrow. "It is only day-from-day when you get to 97," said one woman. Most felt ready to die and some even welcomed it: "I just say I'm the lady-in-waiting, waiting to go," said one.

Others were more desperate in their desire to reach the end. "I wish I could snuff it. I'm only in the way," was a typical sentiment in those who felt they were a nuisance. Others begged not to be left to live until they were a hundred, saying there was no point to keeping them alive.

Most were concerned about the impact on those left behind: "The only thing I'm worried about is my sister. I hope that she'll be not sad and be able to come to terms with it."

A literature review conducted in Sweden in 2013 found a total of 33 studies across the world that explored views of death and dying among older people, although very few of these sought the views of the older old."

"A 2002 study found older people in Ghana looked forward to death, seeing it as a welcome visitor that would bring peace and rest after a strenuous life. And a 2013 study in the Netherlands showed many people changed their preferences on how they wanted to die as their care needs changed.

A recent review examined older people's attitudes towards advance care plans and preferences for when to start such discussions. It identified 24 studies, mainly from the United States and with younger old age ranges. The results showed that while a minority shirked from end-of-life care discussion, most would welcome them but were rarely given the opportunity.

These studies support our findings on older people's willingness to discuss often taboo topics, their acceptance of impending death, and their concerns around what the dying process would bring: increasing dependence, being a burden and the impact of their own death on

those left behind.

To plan services to best support rising numbers of people dying at increasingly older ages in different settings, we need to understand their priorities as they near the end of life."

Jane Fleming, Here's what people in their 90s really think about death. University of Cambridge. May 2016.

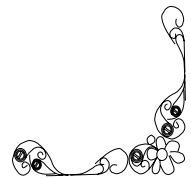
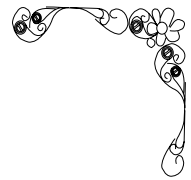
Between the fear
Of the horror of Afterwards
And the despair
In the thought of no Afterwards
We move abraded
Each gesture scraping us
On the millstones.

Levertow Poem

"Katherine Russel Rich, a young journalist who lived with breast cancer that was growing, described her boss's reaction to her continuing to work[:]...he said..."You know...I really felt bad for you. No one here wanted anything to do with you because you reminded them they could die."

"Academics who frequently theorize suffering have also observed that at its existential root it is about grief and loss. Suffering is a state of distress that threatens the very intactness of a person. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz supports this view by arguing that serious suffering is a response to the threat of dissolution to a meaningful part of identity...[and] What could be a more serious threat to identity than the threat of death?" (17)

"Though some believe that deep suffering that threatens the very fabric of our lives cannot really be shared or, if shared by outsiders, commonly becomes trivialized, demeaning, or voyeuristic, many others believe that most of us use our own experiences of personal pain to connect with those who speak or write about their own suffering. This is not total understanding of another, but it is nevertheless the essential meaning of empathy, and this has its own power to make personal social and spiritual connections and identifications.



“Greater understandings come from these small connections and corrections and are themselves prerequisites for broader social, cultural, and political changes in our world. As the writer Vera Schwarcz wisely observes, even if we only have a ‘path that is no path at all’ but simply some “broken words, fragments of metaphor, snippets of survivor testimony,” these are and have been enough to help us connect with those who suffer; after all, we live in a world where nothing is certain but our own fragility and mortality.” (18) “The wolf in our story does not determine how we die, never mind that it should come as no surprise to anyone that the wolf must eventually come. The question, then, is not about the (inevitable) arrival of the wolf but rather what we do when it does arrive[.]...The questions here are: Can you redraw the pattern of your life at all, especially under these fearful conditions? And should you try to do so as a mirror image of the existing pattern or should you redraw it differently?” (51)

Kellehear A. The Inner Life of the Dying Person. New York: Columbia University Press; 2014.

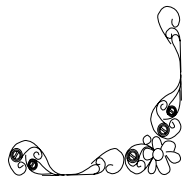
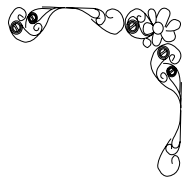
“We are unsettled to the very roots of our being,
There isn't a human relation, whether of parent or child,
Husband and wife, worker and employer,
That doesn't move in a strange situation.
We are not used to a complicated civilization,
We don't know how to behave
When personal contact and eternal authority
Have disappeared.
There are no precedents to guide us,
No wisdom that wasn't made for a simpler age.
We have changed our environment more quickly
than we know how to change ourselves.
TODAY AND TOMORROW By Walter Lippmann. Dec.
15, 1974. New York Times

“There is little evidence of microbiological contamination of groundwater from burial...Microorganisms involved in the decay

process (putrefaction) are not pathogenic.”—PAHO The potential for contamination of drinking water due to body decomposition, though possible and frankly expected if best management practices are not followed, is not definitively substantiated by studies at this time. Areas adjacent to conventional cemeteries, especially historical cemeteries, have been reported to have elevated results when core soil and water specimens were tested for contaminants in a handful of cases. But there is no evidence that these findings are attributable to body decomposition processes. Due to the types of contaminants found, it is highly likely that the problems were caused by leachate from casket, vault, or embalming fluid or other incidental materials. No contamination has been reported from or near any green cemeteries in the US, Canada, Great Britain or Australia since their inception in 2003

This guide was prepared by Lee Webster for the GBC with assistance Requirements for Green Burial Certification

1. Accurately represent earned level of GBC certification in marketing materials, websites, and conversations with the public, clients, and the media.
2. Provide clients and families with the opportunity to participate in the burial and ritual process, in keeping with state law and with these standards.
3. Accept for burial only decedents that have not been embalmed or those embalmed only with GBC-approved, nontoxic chemicals.
4. Prohibit the use of a vault (partial, inverted, or otherwise), a vault lid, concrete box, slab or partitioned liner in the burial plot.
5. All burial containers, shrouds, and other associated products made only of natural, biodegradable materials.
6. Develop a Maintenance and Operations Manual to be utilized by all staff members, contractors, and volunteers to implement site goals, policies, and best practices.
7. Establish an endowment fund to ensure the long-term maintenance of the site by setting aside at least 10% of all burial plot sales.
8. Conduct an Ecological Impact Assessment, starting with a property baseline document that includes existing ecological conditions and sensitive area analysis. Update periodically to assess future property/habitat conditions and plant inventory.
9. Restrict access and burial operations within sensitive areas as identified in the Ecological Impact Assessment.
10. Use operational and burial practices that have no long-term



degradation of soil health, plant diversity, water quality, and ecological habitat.

11. Limit the type and size of memorial markers so that they do not impair the ecological conditions and aesthetic of the natural cemetery landscape.

12. Site conditions as identified in the Ecological Impact Assessment and sensitive areas analysis, will restrict burial density on the property; therefore, Natural and Conservation burial grounds will have limits to allowable burial density. For Natural Burial, the cemetery's average density shall not exceed 500 burials/acre. For Conservation Burial, average density shall not exceed 300 burials/acre. Burial density of sensitive areas may be transferred to less restricted areas on the property to maximum densities of Natural Burial - 600/acre, Conservation Burial - 400/acre.

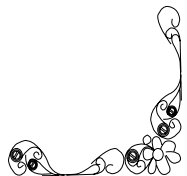
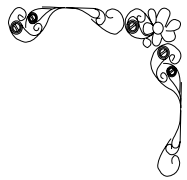
13. Establish and apply strategies that conserve, preserve, enhance, or restore the historic native or natural habitat and flora of the region.

14. Conserve or restore a minimum of 20 acres, or 5 acres if contiguous to other protected land.*

15. Operate in conjunction with a government agency or a nonprofit conservation organization that has legally binding responsibility for perpetual monitoring and enforcement of the easement.

16. Guarantee preservation of the burial ground by deed restriction, conservation easement or other legally binding and irrevocable agreement that runs with the land and is enforceable in perpetuity.

from Carl Anderson, M.S.; Kirsten Bass, MD, PhD; John Meagher, Executive Director, RESET; Lindsay Soyer, licensed FD; Merilynne Rush; and Steven Whitman, M.A., AIC.



FOR ALL THE HELP

*My Wonderful Classmates.
My Family.
Maggie Onedo.
Paolo Cardini.
Ben Jurgenson.
Agi Haines.
Tim Maly.
Emily Shapiro.
Dr. Mimi Gellman.
Beth Mosther.
Jessica Brown.
Emily Cornell du Houx.
Elizabeth Leeper.
Alejandro Borsoni.
Dr. Sandra Potter.
Will Reeves.
Tucker Houliban.
Mark Johnston.
Timothy Sandiford.
Nyk Why.
Diderik Astrup Westby.
Liam Gee.
Louis Dombowsky.
All the Shop Monitors.
RISD Open Studios.
RISD Museum.
Fleet Library Staff.
The Providence D&D Group.
Serendipity Gourmet.
Ellie's Bakery.*

THANK YOU

JAKE DANGSTORP