

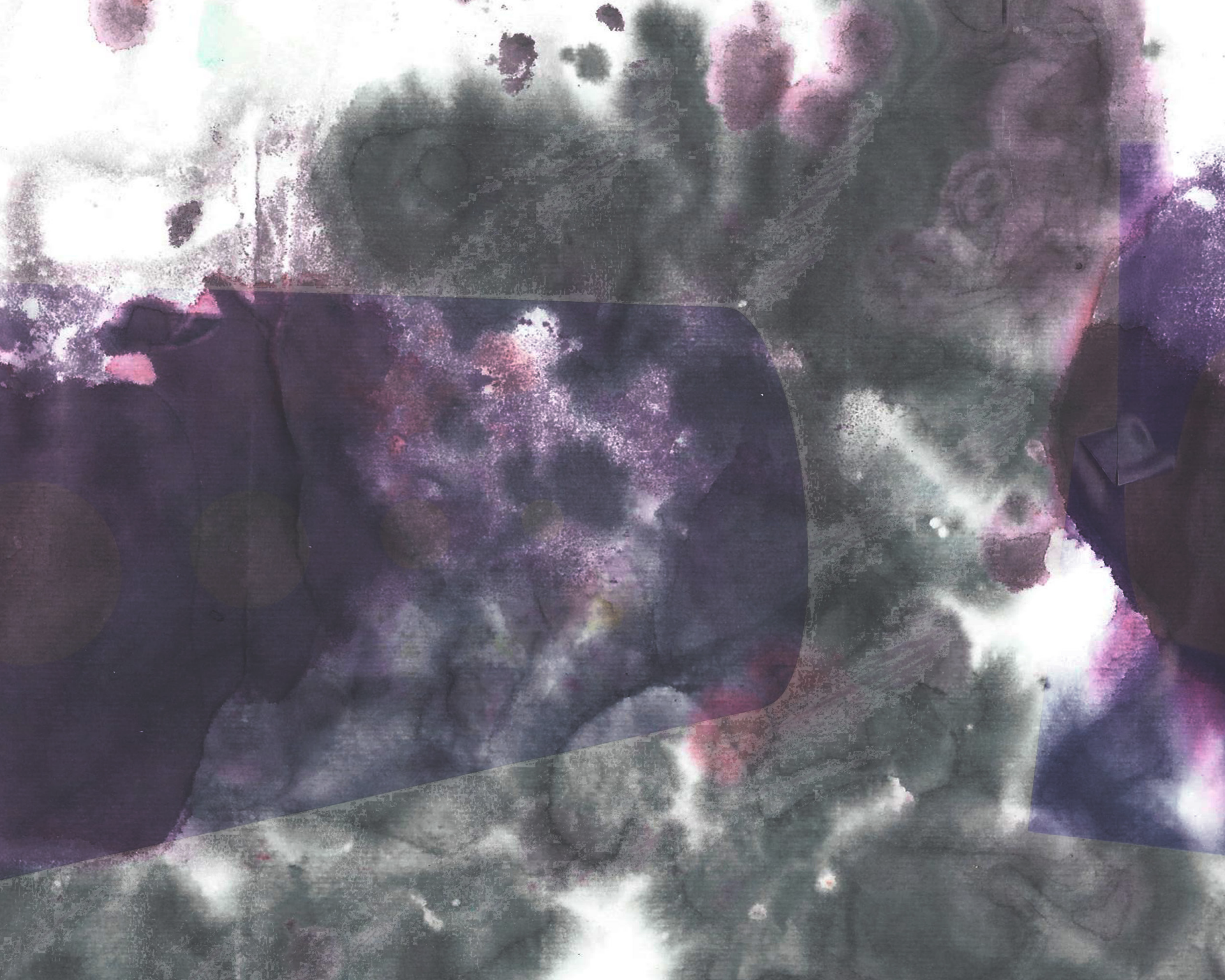
# IT'S THEIR FUNERAL

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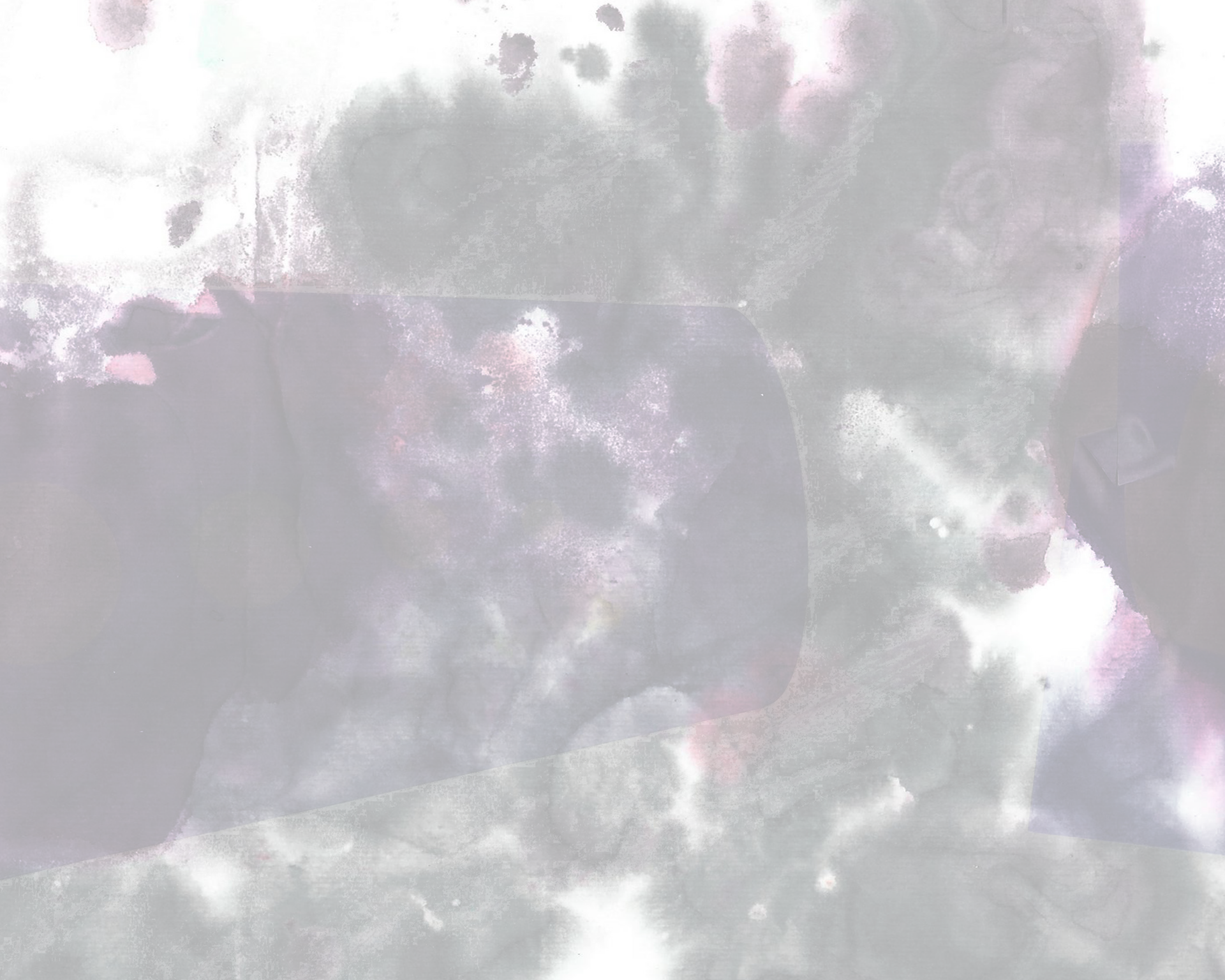




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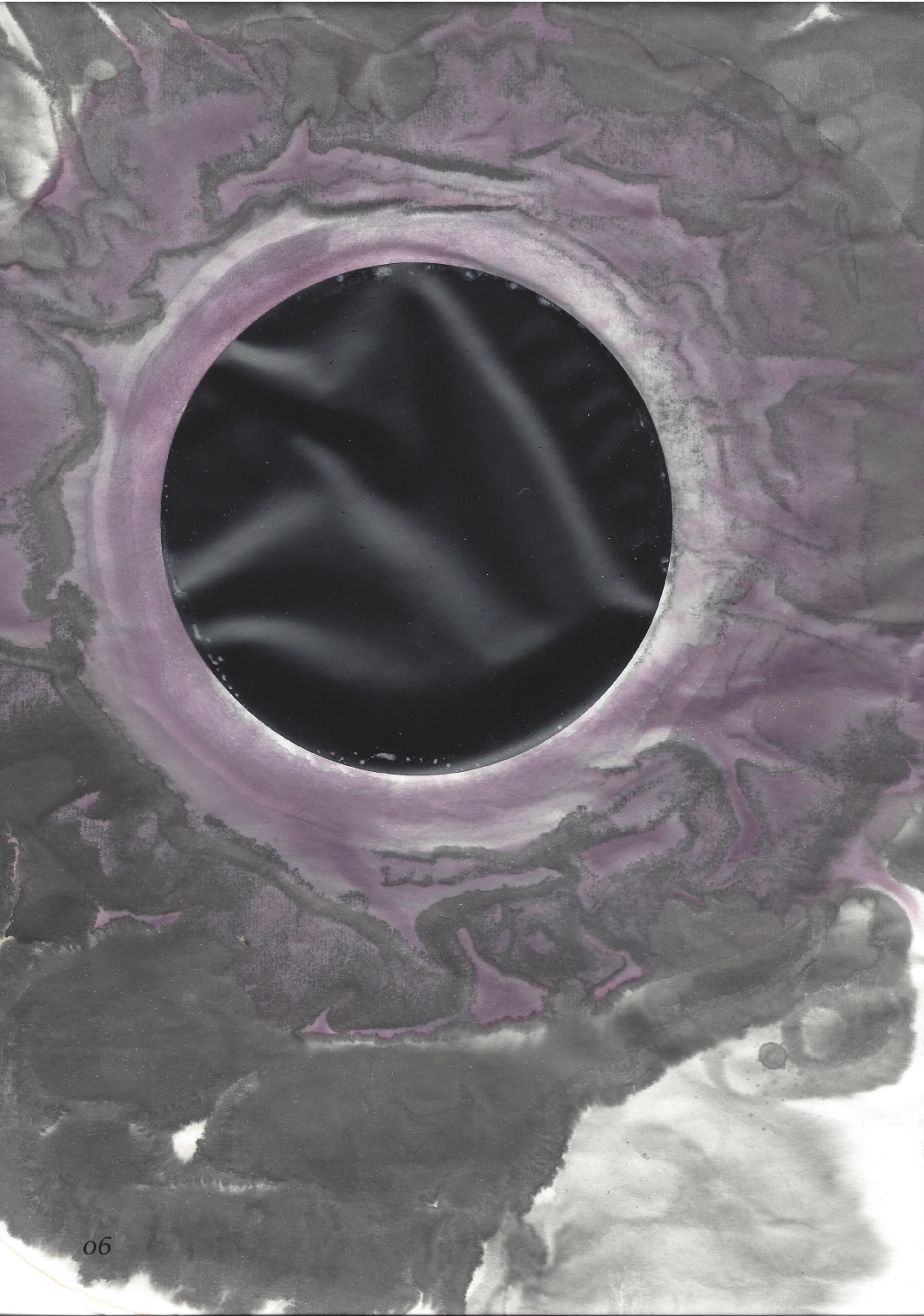
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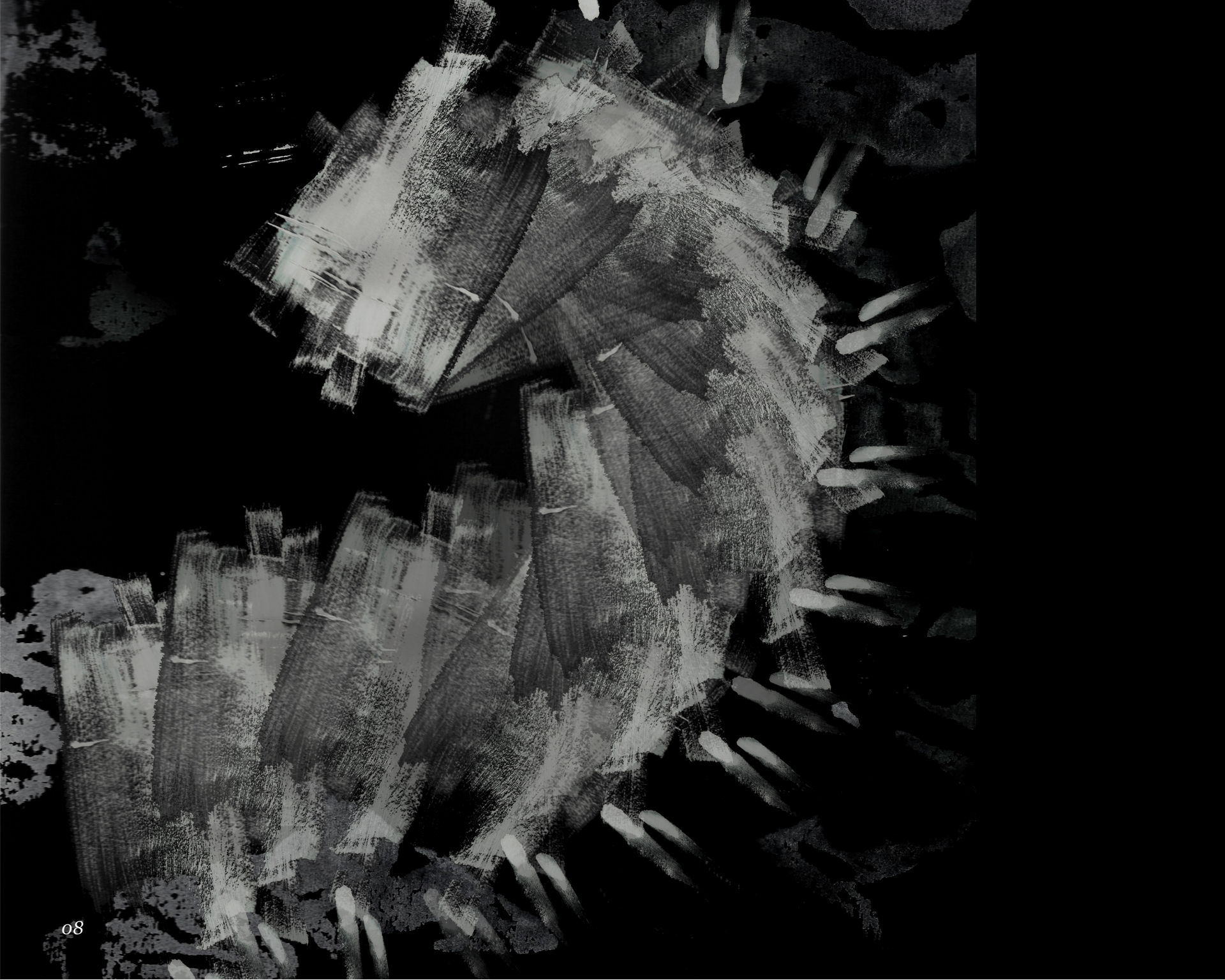
*Abstract:*

Carefully dug graves have shown that even Neanderthals and Homo-Sapiens have buried their dead, indicating a spatial response to death since the dawn of the rational mind. In the “post-modern” age of funeral services, society appears to exhibit a disconnection from spatial rituals of transition and remembrance. This thesis is working toward an understanding of the socioaffective relationships between funerary ritual and the associated spaces and landscapes. Grief obliterates the dailiness of life through accomplishing the end of a relationship; and so, funerary architecture must seek the utility to positively transform through the emotions and psychology of grief, rather than increase the adverse intensity by forcing mourners to move on without closure.



### *Thesis Statement*

This thesis addresses post-modernistic shifts in American funeral services and recognizes that spatial control tactics of social deprivation are maintained by conventional funeral homes. Through spatially promoting improvised circulation, the funeral space would accommodate a varied approach towards death and yield more positive funerary interactions, experiences and transformations.



## *IT'S THEIR FUNERAL: INTRODUCTION*

This thesis addresses funeral spaces, their inadequacies for bereavement, and seeks to understand who exactly funerals are for. Prehistorically, Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens cared for their dead, and ancient civilizations went to great lengths to commemorate their loss. The burial ground became the first centralized home to which we repeatedly returned.

And so, space and landscape have always been inextricably linked to grief and memorialization.

Fast forward millions of years, when humanity's center became our town. Times were tough and survival was in the forefront, not just of ourselves but the continuity of society—and death came as a huge blow. People were once so integral to their cultural context: the blacksmith died, the town crier rang his bells and everybody dropped what they were doing to join in the procession. The whole of the arrangements were made collectively and appropriated by the decedent's overseers. Death was significant, the original undertakers were simply the cabinet makers because they marketed caskets.

The funeral was a whole town affair in which they conceptually moved their neighbor from the realm of the living to realm of the dead and memory.

Moving on and through the modern era, America was born, and out of its Civil War, so was the funeral industry. This was triggered by Thomas Homes who was a Union Doctor that modernized the embalming process that could send soldiers home to their families. As more and more freelance embalmers pitched tents on the battlefield, American funeral services emerged characterized by medicalization and legality.

But death is not a medical state of the body - it is an absent state as there is no human left to diagnose: death leaves our loved ones and enters our lives through this profound loss.

As the Civil War raged on in America, the Victorian era of architecture was largely established and seeping societal influence into the realm of architecture. The war brought unprecedented death to the country—it was so emotionally overwhelming that we regimented social deprivation. Death was locked away into a room, just as everything else— from gender, to status, from separate rooms for all library, study, reading, music, breakfast nooks, rooms for dining, fainting, sitting —life and death—all walled off, closed away from further context.

Funeral homes still largely resemble this style today, credited by architects as timeless, comfortable, and welcomed as expected. However, this defense is absurdly naive and ignores the historical applications of the Victorian style. By enforcing convention disguised as tradition, our ability to mourn is inherently contaminated. These stale and impotent homes presume that a space to mourn should be good enough and disregards progressive shifts in attitudes towards grief and death.

Funerals are facing a post-modernism, directors increasingly being challenged to accommodate imaginative demands or diverse cultural rituals. It has been described as hyper wedding planning, to personalize an event in the short time embalming allows. Today, the deceased is actually becoming less and less present, due to circumstances such as cremation and body donation.

The typical funeral experience, the visitation, officiation, and burial, does satisfy many people, but it depends on their expectations and involvement. The Christian prescription, or singular denominational chapel can dull the effects or further confuse a varied congregation. Reversely, non-denominational space can mute symbolism and sterilize the space altogether.

Fifty-seven percent of Wayne County, Michigan is unaffiliated to any religion, and the others who do identify are everywhere in between.

We are a low-context culture, meaning we promote individual diversity over the group's identity, and this is often to accommodate for our wide variety of backgrounds.

A funeral congregation is no longer composed of just neighbors and bloodlines, but a vast network of friends, colleagues, classmates, their families, dozens of beliefs, all in one room but sharing a common void.

Contemplating death- driving past crosses and stuffed animals on the highway, or seeing bullet-shattered glass, can appear and surprise us; however, a funeral is a *voluntary* method of facing loss.

Through a funeral we want to feel the presence of our loss, be immersed within their essence, not the anxieties of social etiquettes. The event has become a scripted performance, the visitation too often a collection box of anxiously unrehearsed performers, many at a complete loss for interaction.

A funeral strives to be an activated memorialization and that *going* to this space and *being* in it can serve as a ritual of itself. A solution would be to begin conceptualizing architecture that exemplifies soluble circulation and user-curation. Our culture is our interconnectivity, fluid and multiplicit, just as our memories and relationships to the deceased.

The cemetery was a response to overcrowding of church burials, but what will be the response to dwindling use and application due to alternative internment and memorials? What can the funeral space become when it is no longer time-restrained by embalming or quick event planning and can become a more therapeutic planning process?

The funeral space needs to dissociate from its expected context and insert itself into more significant cultural centers and reclaim funerary value. The hearts and efforts of the people will do more for the space than the actual materials and so the physical space in which remembrance occurs must be uplifting.

This thesis prioritizes being able to embed a personal scale of grief, or desire to contemplate in order to achieve positive experience and transformation. It may seem pointless to go to a funeral at all if our attitude is stubborn disdain or passive observation.

What could a funerary space be if it were freed from all previous conformities and instead liberated our interaction with the legacies of the deceased? Working as morphology, funerary architecture can grow with our perceptions of death, rather than working against it.

Funerary space should empower the beauty of a varied approach toward death, to address the spectrum of grief. There has most likely never been a funeral where each person had the same level of emotions, as we all possess different scales of grief due to our different experiences. Some people go to funerals simply because it is socially-acceptable to cry here, but not everyone is as distressed since some attend out of respect or interest in contemplations of loss.

A staple of funeral memorabilia is photographs, printed or projected. In the present, digital age, we take so many photographs and relate our memories to so many forms of technology. What if technology was recruited in such a way that the network of bereaved could collaboratively curate their own digital installation -- a product that augments the healing process by providing a corporeal architectural body exuding memories of the deceased, an experience that could even be recreated for repeated experience.

This could create essentially a display of photos, videos, and favorite media, but the technology could be further manipulated to create atmospheric intent. The culture of the living overseers become the strongest influence on whether or not meaning is created for the decedent and thereafter perceived by the mourners,

and so, a funeral is for the living.

Regarding the passing of a loved one, people are undergoing an emotional change and so the physical surroundings in which remembrance takes place becomes vital to the outcome.

The main objective of this thesis is to address shifts that funeral space and their services are undergoing and to uncover a social architecture funerary space was always meant to be, characterized by response, exchange, and internal change, and not the rituals from which we have become so far removed.

*-Kelly Buczniewicz*

## SECTION 1: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

*To fear death, my friends, is only to think ourselves wise, without being wise: for it is to think that we know what we do not know. For anything that men can tell, death may be the greatest good that can happen to them: but they fear it as if they knew quite well that it was the greatest of evils. And what is this but that shameful ignorance of thinking that we know what we do not know?*

-Socrates (BC 469-BC 399)

Since the appearance of the rational mind, we have thought anywhere from idly to vigorously, the prospects of death and thereafter. From this point, too, there is evidence of culturally shared and extremely unique customs of death; these customs are exemplified through ritual and ceremony, developing over time and through mortuary spaces and landscapes. Even though most archaeological evidence may come from the preservation efforts of high status, the spaces nonetheless possess a record of familial bonds and intent. This bond plays a key role in establishing and upholding mortuary spaces which is further intertwined in the infrastructure of ancient civilizations, strengthening and eternalizing an empowered existence. Furthermore, The burial ground became many ancient civilizations' first ultimate home, or center, to which repeated return to a significant permanence in landscape became culturally necessary.



5. GREEK ARCHITECTURE. This page shows a drawing of the Parthenon, the most beautiful of the world's buildings, a detail of the Caryatid porch, of the Erechtheum, and columns from the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter. Look in your public library for pictures and descriptions of Greek architecture and ornament, that you may appreciate something of the supreme harmony and beauty of Greek art.

### GARDENS MADE FROM SWAMP

A small, white gazebo, or observation building, affords a fine view of the gentle beauty of Cypress Gardens. The swamp, Cypress Gardens has been transformed into a beautiful Wonderland and the Water... color photos of this beauty spot... Page 16.

AS BITTING, I'M

IS THIS HUM I WC

OR DID UP INTO MOUR

WELL, WHY AM I THOSE I DIDN'T LI THE MEL



◀ The Greek made a clear distinction between body and soul, between the flesh that decayed and must be buried, and the wind-breath psyche that left the corpse. Psyche, often translated as “soul,” originally seems to have meant “breath.” It is what leaves the body at death. Though it survives in some sense in Hades, its existence there is vague and shadowy, floating in a pool of personalities left to be activated by memory. Also interestingly, the Greek term *athanatoi*, used to refer to the gods, is translated as “Deathless ones,” and is particularly used in contrast to mortals, or *thnētoi*. The ghost is sometimes called an *eidolon*, or “image”; it is less real than the living person.

▶ The ancient Egyptians made momentous strides in studies of health and medicine—made under the incentive to perfect methods of preserving the dead for the journey to the afterlife. The Egyptians learned that the essence of corpse preservation is dehydration. The bacteria that break down the body thrive on moisture, so if the body is to be preserved, the blood and other fluids, as well as the organs, must be removed. The Egyptians put the organs into canopic jars for safekeeping until they could be reunited with the rest of the body in the afterlife. Amulets were often placed over the heart, the organ believed to be used for thinking, which were commonly a scarab (dung) beetle. The symbolism seems to be that the dead would also be given new life as scarabs turn waste into food and use it to nourish larvae (new life).

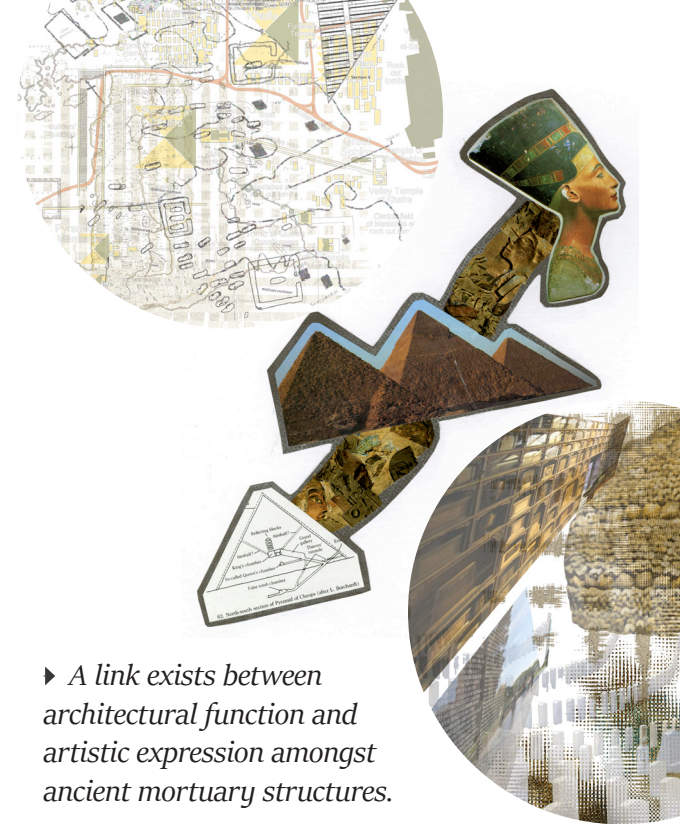






For example, the Ancient Egyptians, thinking the Earth as flat, built the pyramids squarely where they located the center of their earth--art and architecture both spring from our need to give visual expression to our perception of who and where we think we are.

Today we know a lot more about the universe but our existence is no less mysterious. In another example, many cultures believed that thinking did not occur in the head but rather in the heart or stomach because this is where emotions are felt. As spiritual wisdom and findings in the natural sciences and philosophies make gains, the structure of our logic, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies surrounding our perception of death are asked to change, compromise, or resist.



► *A link exists between architectural function and artistic expression amongst ancient mortuary structures.*

◄ *Burial grounds such as tombs and cemeteries continue to offer seemingly endless information about ancient civilizations and the ways people acted and the things they thought about. The kings of Egypt's Dynasty I were buried at Abydos, the sacred city where Osiris was buried in a famous myth: Osiris becomes the God of the Dead; his story is the original lesson in the importance of staying at home and remaining whole. In accordance, citizens were to be buried on Egyptian soil and to be buried complete for resurrection. A second burial site was often prepared at Saqqara, named for Sokar, god of the dead. Why two burials? One burial site was a false one, or cenotaph. Thus, the two represented a symbolic way of denoting power over the north and south. For certain pharaohs, it is not clear which burial was the real one.*

*Toward the end of the 18th century, Étienne-Louis Boullée had designed cenotaphs as well, such as his poetic homage to scientist Sir Isaac Newton who, 150 years after his death, had become a revered symbol of Enlightenment ideals. Though still under a political tone, mortuary architecture began to take on a new perspective with the modern age, having had allowed more experimentation of ancient geometrical patterns with contemporary practices and perspectives.*

# DEATH CUSTOMS OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS



**Egyptian**  
Preservation through  
embalming in  
preparation for the  
afterlife  
Myth  
2850-715 BCE



**Sumeria**  
Standard of Ur  
Found in Royal  
Cemetery  
War and conquest  
3200-2360 BCE



**Indus Valley**  
Burial with everyday  
items such as pots,  
weapons, jewelry  
Family Cemeteries  
3000--1500 BCE



**Minoan**  
Burial locations based  
off social status  
Often had second  
burial of bones -  
conceptually move the  
deceased to collective  
death  
3000-1100 BCE



**Lydian**  
Burial Mounds  
Furnished Tombs  
Mass Graves  
Monuments  
700-547 BCE

**Babylonian**  
Caskets, ranging in  
level of ornamentation  
Viewed death as an  
"inevitable, night-like  
fate"  
Buried the dead, saw  
burning as disgraceful  
1728-1686 BCE (Old)



**Greek**  
Women shown in ritual,  
tearing locks of hair  
Familial rituals  
Repeated  
remembrance through  
libations  
900-200 BCE

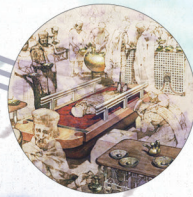


**Etruscan**  
Entombment  
Female/Male Equality in  
afterlife  
Near obsessive care  
for the dead, including  
lavishly furnished  
tombs  
900-396 BCE



**Phoenician**  
Funeral Stele -  
Headstone  
Symbolism in epitaph  
Sun and Moon Deities  
1100-332 BCE

**Hittite**  
Passing of Time  
represented in winged  
hourglass symbol  
Use of elemental  
symbolism in ritual  
Use of funeral pyres  
1640-1200 BCE



**Roman**  
Cemeteries located  
outside of sacred  
boundary of cities  
Myth and Allegory  
Familial Funerals  
Sacrifices, libations  
Eulogy - Praise of dead  
500 BCE - 300 CE

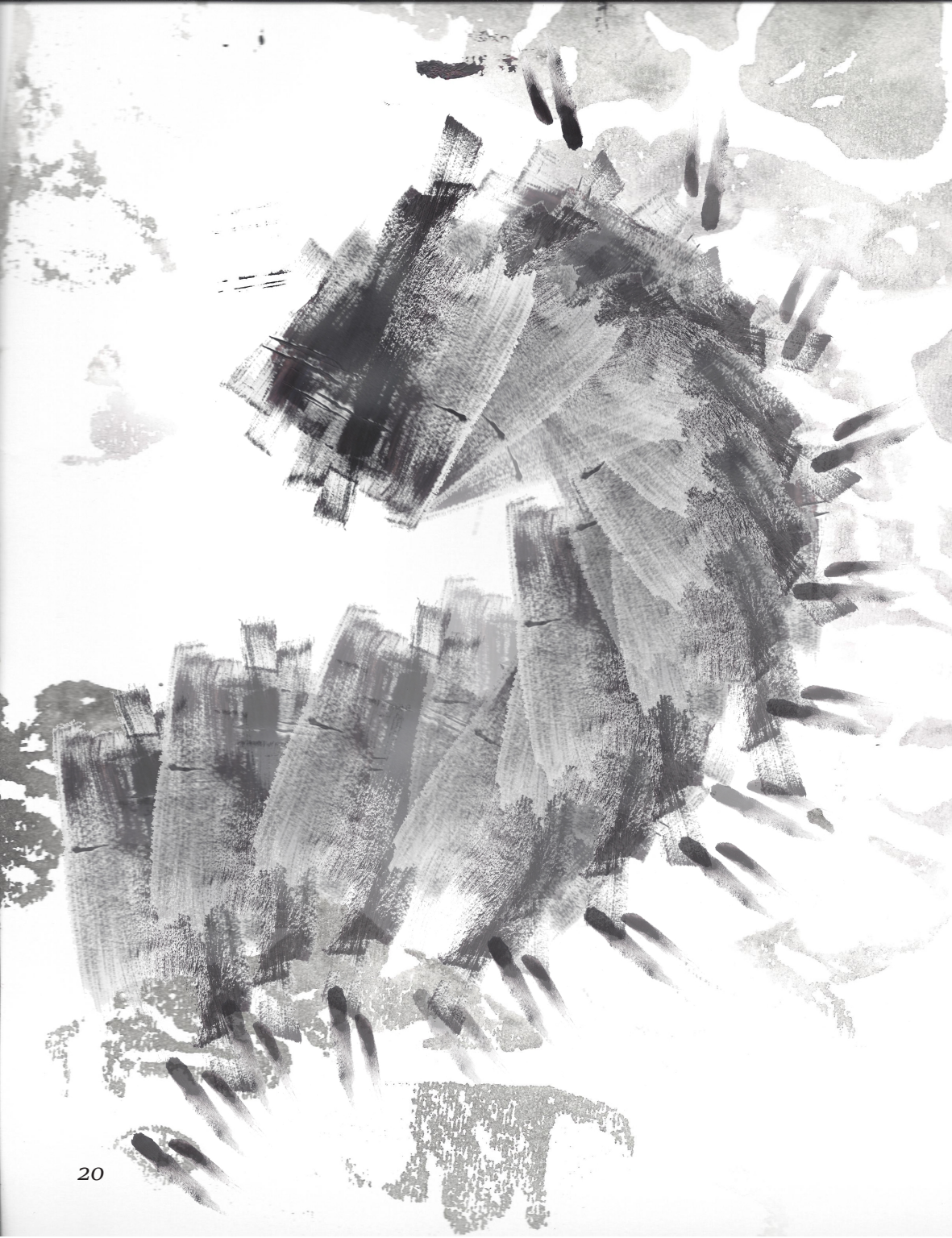


◀ This diagram presents facts of interest regarding many ancient civilization's funerary customs and rituals, as well as depictions of architectural/artistic artifacts. Each facet of cultural history has unique perspectives towards death and methods of commemoration, and further research often reveals that geology is a major influence on formation of funerary customs. The mystery of death transcends time and has always yielded the importance for artistic and architectural endeavors, which remain as some of the oldest relics of humanity's past. Death has inspired myths, paintings, sculpture, structures - culminating into a megalithic response to landscape and space.



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## SECTION 2: EMBARKING ON MORBIDNESS

*“Confrontation of the reality of death can be escaped by remaining as detached as possible from participation in the activities required by death and the funeral. Within the last generations, the preparations of the dead and the arrangement of the funeral has become almost exclusively the responsibility of the funeral director.”*

*-Paul Irion, (1966)*

Through a funerary process, the culture of the living overseers become the strongest influence on whether meaning is created for the decedent and thereafter perceived by the mourners. It would be an empty gesture to present, or otherwise preserve a decedent in disconnection from its culture. Architecture can serve as a record of multiplicity that reveals the soundings of memory; it should manage death that both recognizes its social fabric and the lives that once were and are interwoven, as well as our collective fate. A community is provided a great asset if a space can be accessed that accommodates the transitions associated with grief and acknowledges the human growth that can transpire.

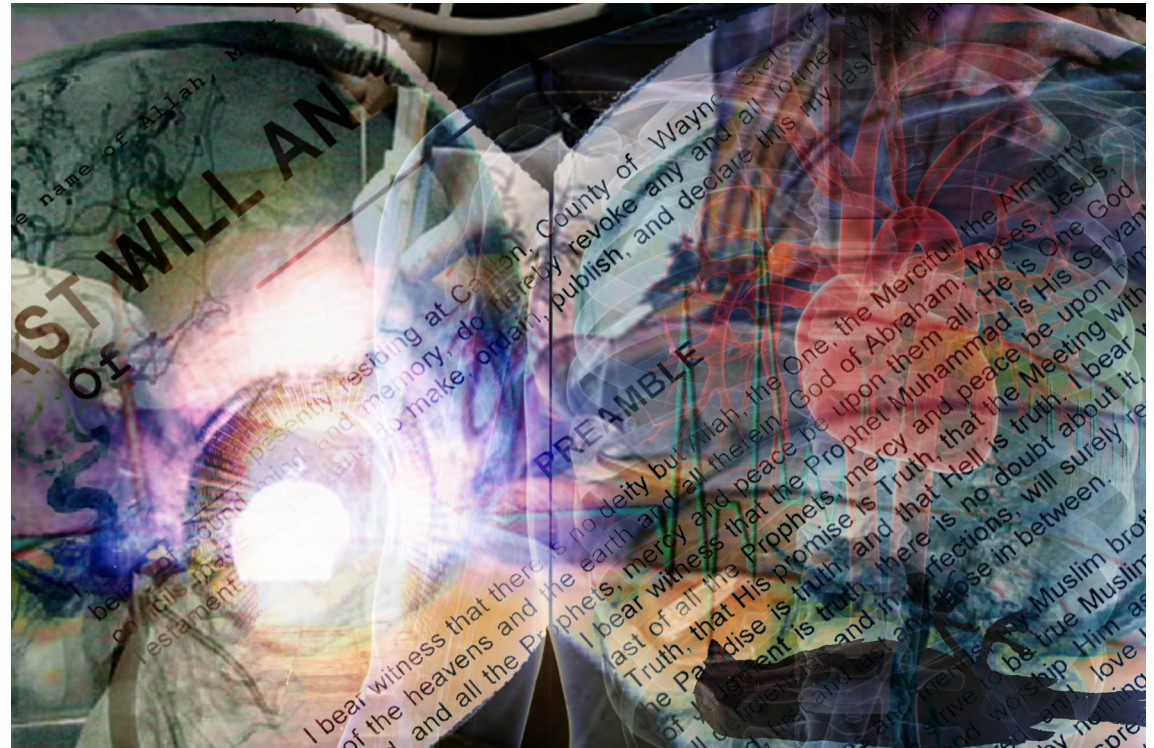
Of modern funeral services, many illusionary preparations occur “behind the scenes,” such as the restoration of a damaged body or the literal conversion of space into a funeral chapel. In this way, the funeral director most often becomes the prevailing influence on how meaning is created. An incentive of this thesis is to reconcile an

understanding of the funeral director essentially as a set designer. In what effect could funerary architecture better facilitate the funeral director's responsibilities, and in turn make it easier for mourners to achieve more positively affective, or even sought out death-meditations?

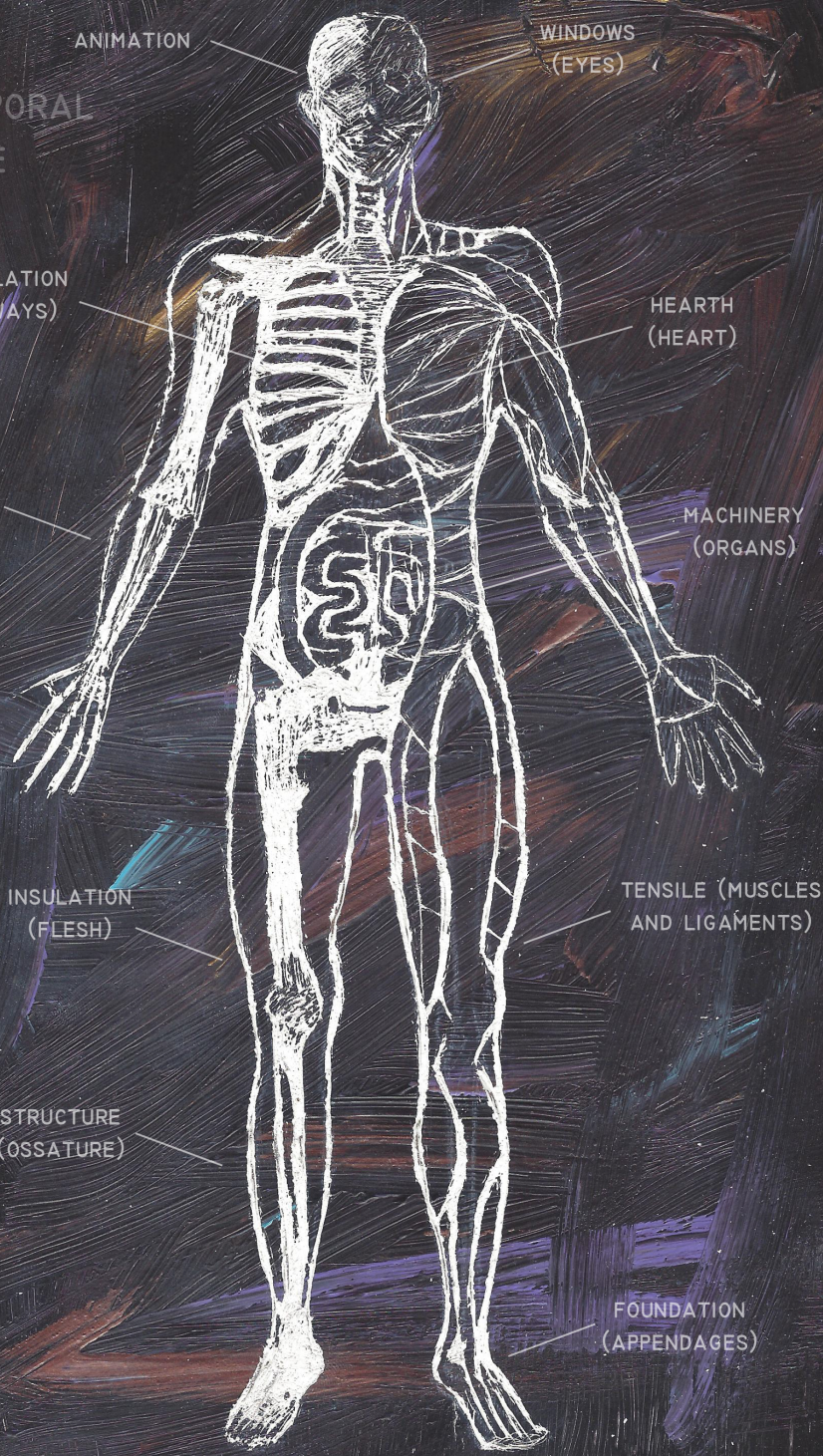


▲ *Illusion is maintained through funerary ritual and ceremony, often performed in a way which brings comfort for individual loss and the reminders of our own collective fates.*

▼ *Defining Death – Death is often thought of to occur simply as a last moment of existence, when death plays a much more ambiguous and consistent role throughout our lives, existing as a paradoxical drive to achieve moments of life. When the definition of death is sorted out, one can easily start to see the complications that arise even in the purely biological sense (i.e. does death occur when the heart stops beating or the brain stops sending signals?). Once the layers of spirituality, culture, and legality are interlaced, the complexity only escalates. Some similarities are upheld across time and culture, such as a prescription to properly care for deceased bodies and the universal inclination to believe that a certain essence is released after the event of death, and that this essence resides elsewhere apart from the grave.*



# OUR TEMPORAL HOME

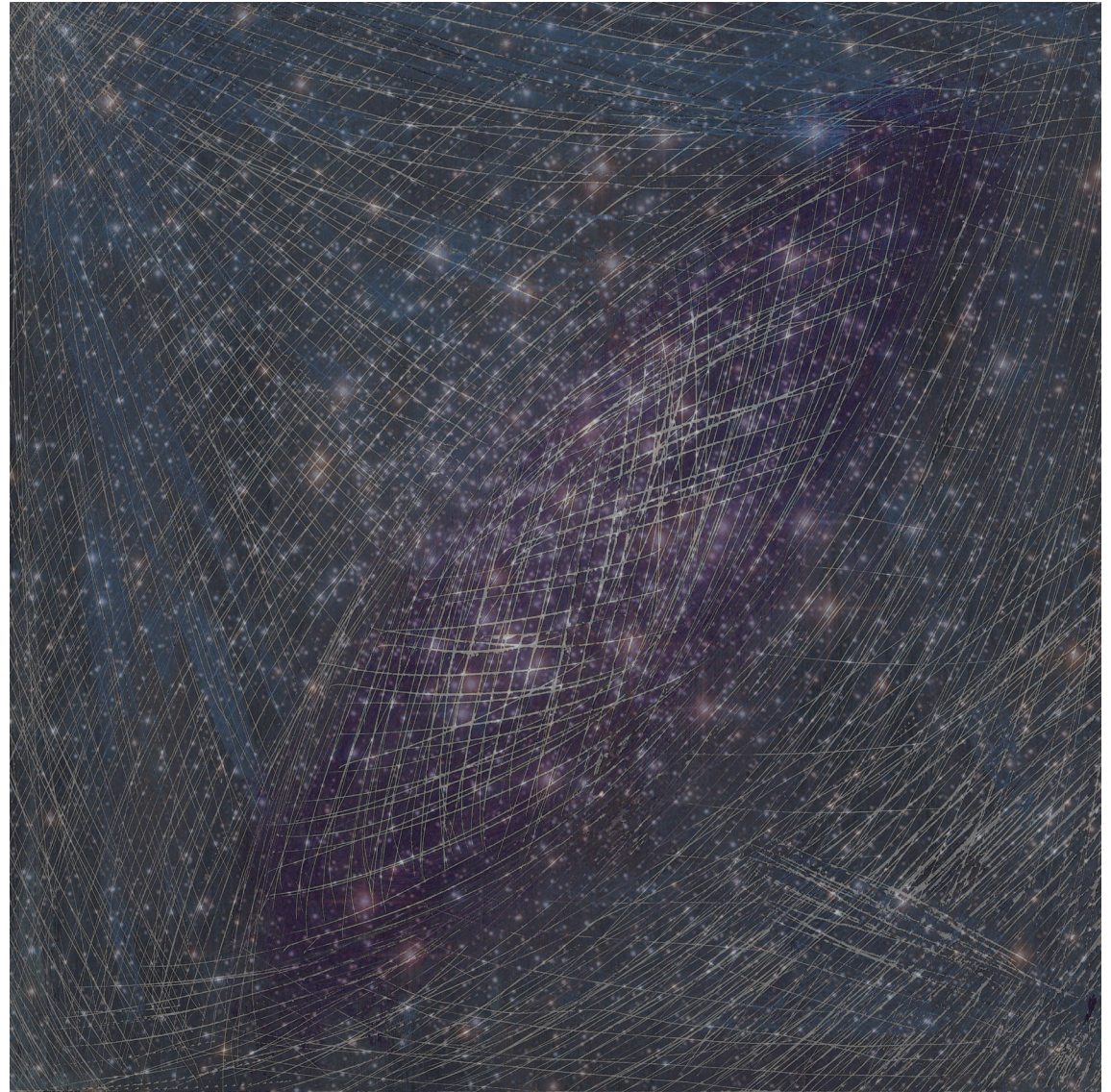


At the moment a body is contained, either by architecture, our skeleton, a coffin, or urn -- A 3-dimensional space innately speaks to the body. Containing our essence presides as one of the ultimate goals of many funerary customs, spiritually, symbolically, and physically. If our body is our first home, then our place of final disposition becomes our second, profound in its eternity and potential for remembrance and new encounters. Spaces can be dictated by the bio-politics of the deceased, meaning a corpse can politicize and transform space due to the political construction of what a human is. Thus, the act of the present (i.e. the funeral ritual) brings the historical space (i.e. the cemetery) back from its place in history.

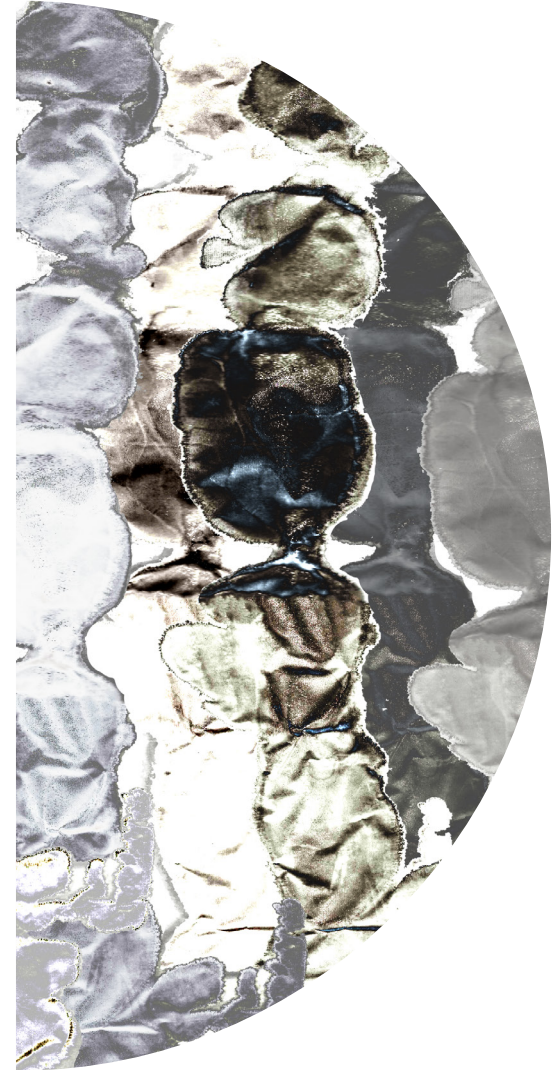
Further, the public cemetery is archival in nature, existing for possibility but in a state of doubt involving both endless recovery and record, as well as simultaneous erasure and revision. A "completed" archival cemetery is a culturally compelling fantasy, as the space, interestingly, promises total recall but never fully delivers it. The cemetery exists as not only a stark geological contrast, but a sociological reflection of the town it is situated in. The decedent, while no longer functioning on a biological level, has no needs for the restraints and boundaries preserved by the body, and may remain "alive" as memory of the living still function. As a concluding thought, remarkably positive effects can result from thinking about death.



► *Space has become an essential mechanism for explaining social and political processes for non-architectural disciplines, for example—death. Not only does space act as an interpreter, such as culture, architecture and landscape can be a medium, such as religion, through which we may attempt to understand death and what it means to interact with the living world. Our body is our instrument of experience, and so reality is defined by our body's ability: Architecture breaks down the totality of a sensory experience, while making the nonetheless partial experience impossible in any other way. Through careful intent toward immersion, can architecture enhance a death experience by harnessing the relativity of permanence?*



In an anthropological study of 73 cultures only the island people of Bali taught calmness and undisturbedness at funerary functions. Success of death spaces (i.e. funeral homes and cemeteries) should not be based off economic measures, but rather how well they present and collect the memories and emotive defenses against loss. The funeral director needs to provide a ritual that coincides with the needs of the bereaved. They need to find out whether there are postmortem ritual actions or symbols which are familiar to these mourners and, on an intuitive level, must decide how these symbols will be spatially perceived in a way which might bring a sense of a comforting connection with other mourners over time.



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### SECTION 3: FUNERAL TRADITIONS IN THE US

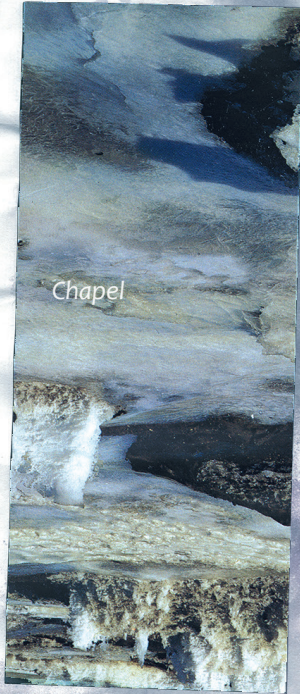
*“One of the most significant ways in which death rituals differ among faith traditions is in the method they use for disposing of the corpse. Consider that societies are often judged on how they treat their most vulnerable members. The dead, who can no longer care for themselves, are perhaps our most vulnerable of all..”*

*-Mark Berson, Ph.D. (2016)*

As for the history of American funerary customs, we are heavily influenced by Puritan practices in which the decedent's family cared for their body, so that it could be available for viewing in the home or church. The burial would then take place within the next few days

In the 19th century, the Civil War brought Union doctor, Thomas Holmes to invent a modern embalming process that allowed the bodies of soldiers to be sent back home to family. The process also allowed the 3-week cross-national funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln and the exhuming and transport of his youngest son to the same tomb.

Freelance embalmers on the battlefield would lead to the establishment of the American funeral industry, characterized by professionalism and medicalization, establishing the typical funeral home which has ironically been loosening the familial and cultural bond to funerary space.



Chapel



Lounge

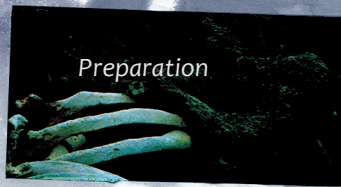
Lobby



Restrooms



Offices



Preparation



Selection



Garage

150 years later, the funeral director walks its clients through the logistical and emotional challenges of the funeral process, which is becoming increasingly unfamiliar and avoided. Through the spaces we have access to, American society has become removed from the actual rituals and ceremonies involved with the funeral and its spiritually impactful and insightful experiences.

The typical funeral services used in America consist of three parts: the visitation, the funeral, and the burial service.

#### THE VISITATION

The visitation is generally open to the public and occurs with the display of the decedent which serves as the symbol of meaning behind the social gathering. Here, most often at a funeral home, friends and relatives seek to give and take comfort in each other's presence.

Aside from displaying the casket or urn, common aspects of the visitation include signing a register book and showcasing memorabilia of the deceased such as photographs, possessions, or representations of hobbies and interests. Flowers are often sent by those who cannot attend and the viewing may end with a prayer service; in the Catholic tradition, this may include a rosary. The visitation is also known as the "viewing" or "wake."

#### THE FUNERAL

Usually one or two evenings later, the funeral is officiated and takes place at either the funeral home, a church, or someone's home if necessary. The funeral's services generally include prayers, readings of sacred texts, hymns, a eulogy or other words of comfort and sharing of memories. This event also possesses the last moments for closure as a part of a social ritual and, as such, have many lineages of social standards that must be addressed during preparations by the funeral home.

In America, tradition most obviously manifests in the funeral procession, developed from the shape of worship spaces and social/familial hierarchies. With remains present, a tradition that seems to transcend religious distinctions is the reservation of the final farewell for the immediate family members.

#### THE BURIAL SERVICE

The burial service, or the form of final disposition, is lastly performed immediately after the funeral or at a later time when the resting place is ready. If occurring immediately after the funeral, a procession will mark the beginning of the service. Typically, male relatives or close friends will be pallbearers who will carry the casket from the place of the funeral (usually the chapel)

to the hearse which will then take the deceased to its place of rest (i.e. the cemetery, columbarium, mausoleum, or consecrated ground at the church).



*Renegade's Funeral, Detroit, 1967*

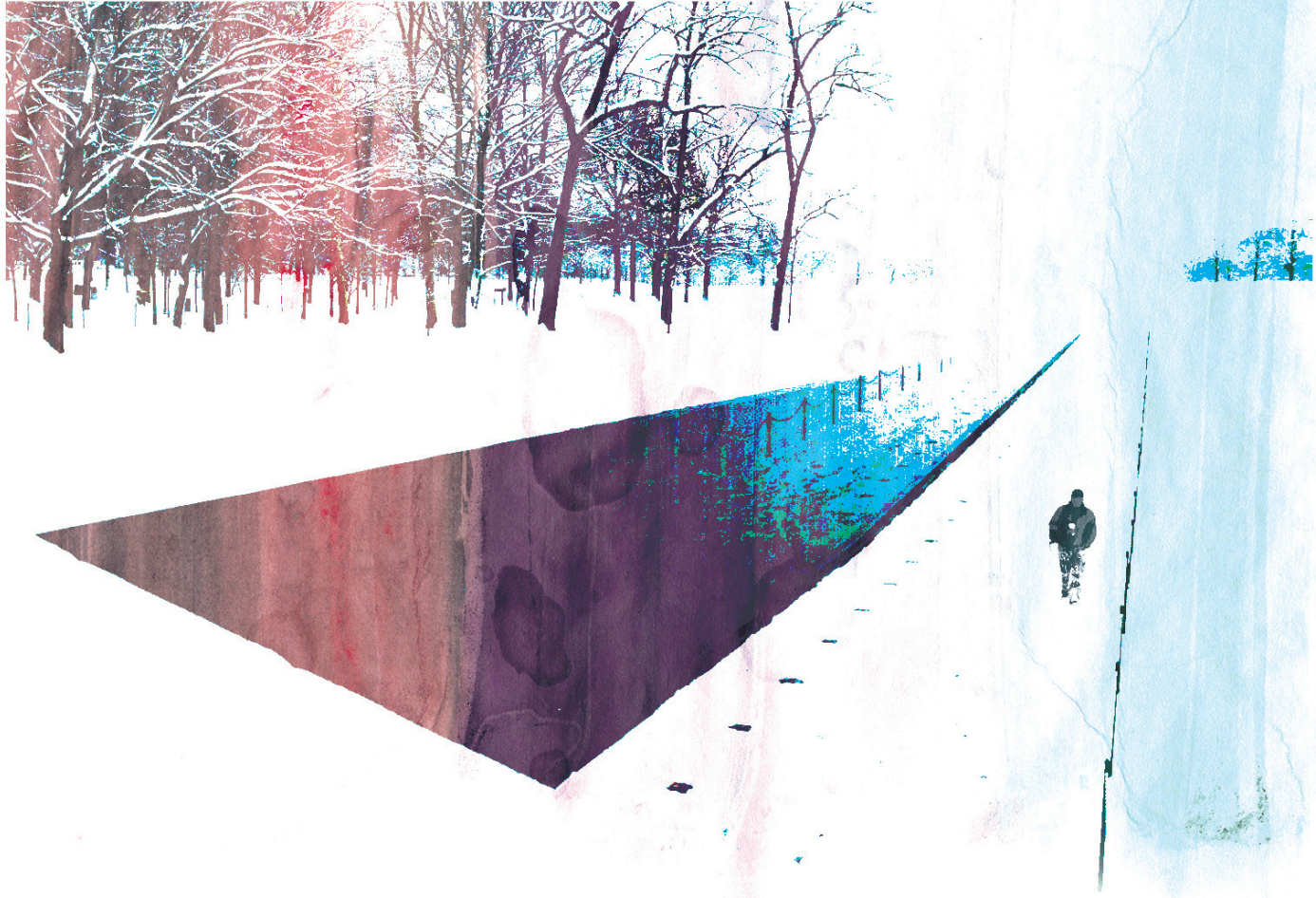
#### OTHER TRADITIONS

**Luncheons and Gatherings:** In many traditions, a meal or other gathering follows the burial service, either at the decedent's church or another off-site location.

**PRIVATE SERVICES:** Private services are attended by only those that are invited by the family that arranges it. In many cultures, and America is not an exception, those convicted of crimes often will not receive a public funeral due to unwanted press coverage and intrusions of those with hostile reservations. Other reasons for a private service include that the deceased was an infant or stillborn, that the family is financially or emotionally incapable, or that the family decides to schedule a public memorial service at a later time.

**MEMORIAL SERVICES:** Increasingly, traditional funerals are being replaced by memorial services. These are often less formal than a traditional funeral, and include such things as eulogies, music and fellowship. A member of the clergy often participates in these services, usually to open and close the proceedings and offer prayers and a brief message of comfort.

**CEMETERY VISITATION:** Informal visitation and remembrance in cemeteries have come a long way from cramped, unsanitary graveyards through reformation of old landscapes into rural park destinations. Funerals and the actual act of burial is increasingly uncommon.



## NOTES ON MAJOR US RELIGIOUS FUNERAL TRADITIONS:

### CATHOLIC

In the Catholic Church, it is not now common practice to notify the clergy upon death but the Anointing of the Ill/ Sacrament of the sick is still common in cases of expected death. The church no longer prohibits cremation, as long as the choice is not made in anti-Christian motives or antagonism. During the preparation of the body, there are no restrictions of laypersons' remains, but religious objects are often placed in their hands.

During the visitation, Roman Catholics (and the Anglican denomination) strongly discourage eulogies in order to preserve respect for traditions. A Rosary Service or Wake is often provided and held at the funeral home and meant as an opportunity to share prayers with the family and to offer a time of reflection on the meaning of life, death, and eternal life. The coffin is traditionally closed at the end of the wake and is not re-opened for the funeral service. For the funeral, Mass is to take place at church, which begins when the casket is moved into the narthex or vestibule and then the procession meets the body.

### THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

1. Wake service (with body present)
2. Funeral Mass (with the body present)
3. Final Commendation to take place at:
  - a. Cemetery for earth burial
  - b. Mausoleum for entombment
  - c. Cemetery for Cremation
  - d. Church for cremation
  - e. Crematory chapel for cremation

Note: Remains NOT scattered but to be buried or entombed in consecrated ground or a columbarium; Ashes not to be brought to Church for the funeral Mass; Post cremation Memorial Masses are not to be confused/substituted with a Mass of Christian Burial



▲ In America, funeral directors have to be increasingly educated and aware of cultural funeral traditions in order to fulfil their services of grief counseling and provide the appropriate space to mourn.

◀ Catholic funeral rites are centered around the mythos of resurrection. As mentioned beforehand, attitudes toward death are ever-shifting and history presents some explicit examples of misconceptions that have been adjusted later. For example, victims of suicide were once denied a Christian burial, having been seen to have committed a damning sin. Today, victims of suicide are understood to have had a mental affliction and are given funerals deserving as any other.

## PROTESTANT

The Protestant denomination refers to any Western Christian who is not an adherent of the Roman Catholic Faith; A Christian religion that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation; Examples include Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, Church of God and Nazarene.

For Protestants, the choice of embalming is left to the family. For commitment, earth burial is the most common (interment). Other choices include entombment, cremation, burial at sea, or donation to science. During the funeral, some Protestant denominations structure their worship through a Liturgical format, the architecture of worship spaces being often in the shape of a cross; non-liturgical worship is less formal.

The typical funeral of this denomination includes scripture reading and prayer, a musical selection, a eulogy and/or obituary, sermon, prayer and the benediction.

In Lutheran services, the preference is to hold the funeral in the church with the use of rubrics, acolytes, the pall, and incense; but these, as well as the processional and recessional may be eliminated when the service is to be held in the funeral home or elsewhere. Cremation is often discouraged.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN FUNERALS

For African Americans, funerals are often the most sacred and respected social events of their lives; many travel long distances and the events have strong emotional and religious overtones and are often held in accordance with Sunday Worship. The minister is often contacted first to make recommendations for funeral services. The Funeral Director requires meticulous attention to detail, and continued close contact to the church and minister.

## LATTER-DAY SAINTS (MORMONS)

Example of a Funeral:

1. Prelude
2. Invocation
3. Eulogy/Obituary
4. Musical selection
5. Speaker
6. Benediction
7. Postlude

Committal: Burial most common, cremation or alternatives are not prohibited

## JUDAISM

In Judaism, the body is to be kept intact as much as possible - even blood stained clothes of a violent death should be placed inside the casket, as well as blood if the body had to be embalmed by civil laws. Funeral customs also outline specific dressing requirements,

and grief takes place in structured periods of mourning. Funerals are almost always held in funeral homes, not the Synagogue, nor on the Shabbath. The body is never displayed and flowers are not appropriate. There are some Jewish communities that believe the life cycle of flowers should not be interrupted or cut short in order to create floral arrangements for a funeral. Judaism also performs a procession to the grave.

## ORTHODOX

Orthodox Christianity is an ancient, liturgical, sacramental, and eastern form of Christianity. Orthodox doctrine emphasizes the Trinity and Jesus Christ's incarnation. Many Orthodox jurisdictions have immigrant roots from Greek, Arab, and Slavic nations, although Americans from other ethnic groups also convert to these churches. In treatment of the deceased, cremation is often objectionable as the deceased cannot receive the full rites of the church. The funeral begins with the Trisagion (Eastern Orthodox), and is usually held in the funeral home. According to most religions, caskets are kept closed during the burial ceremony. In Eastern Orthodox funerals, the caskets are reopened just before burial to allow loved ones to look at the deceased one last time and give their final farewells.

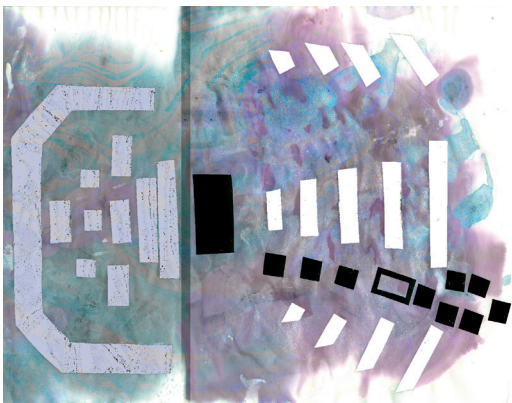




## ISLAM

When it appears to those accompanying a dying person that death is near and certain, someone, usually specifically trained, is called to read verses of the Qur'an. Among the traditions of Islam is one describing the visit of Iblis to the one who is dying, tempting him or her to deny god and adherence to Islam by offering water to the parched victim. Drops of water (or in India, honey) are placed in the mouth of the dying. At the moment of death, eyes are closed and the jaw is bound up, and the body is carefully arranged while waiting for a physician's examination.

One of the most important proponents of the funerary process is the washing of the body. Embalming is not practiced as it is believed that the body should be able to return to the earth as quickly as possible. Under such restraints, most US funeral homes will require the funeral *with the body present* must occur within 24 hours of death, as well as immediate interment. To speed decomposition, the body is removed from its simple wooden coffin before final burial.



◀ *Top: Chapel Arrangement; Center: Procession I; Bottom: Procession II*  
*These abstractions were digrammatic tools used to familiarize the funeral procession as it differs and shares similarities across religions and subsections of culture. The procession is linear/horizontal, and generally constructed by social influences, such as familial status and religious boundaries (like the sanctuary).*

## HINDU

Traditional Hindu rites have developed under the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya classes, these rites called *samskaras* (sacraments); these fall under the five major divisions of prenatal rites, rites of childhood, educational rites, the marriage rites, and the funeral ceremonies. It is said that through the *samskaras* performed in life one conquers this earth, and through those performed by one's relatives after death one conquer heaven. In America, the funeral procession takes place in cars.

Cremation of the body is regarded as an offering into the sacred fire, which transforms the crops and takes it to heaven as a sacrifice. To further purify the sacrifice, cremated remains are deposited into a river (must be a moving body of water). North American Hindus often will either send the ashes back to India to be deposited in a river (especially in the Ganges) or they will take the ashes back to India themselves when there is an opportunity to fulfill this sacred duty.



## ASIAN TRADITIONS IN THE U.S.

Asian funeral rites are influenced by a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The dead are respected at the Buddha Shrine, or Deceased Shrines of ancestors, and Taoism observes the Burning of Paper Joss with dedicated altars known as the Buddha Altar, the Deceased Altar, and the Burning of Joss Paper, or votive money. Depending on wealth, some of those from Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Japanese Cultural backgrounds may want to put rice, pearls, or gold coins inside the deceased's mouth.

## BUDDHISM

The Japanese death rite Makura Gyo is a bedside prayer. Buddhist funerals require two separate altars and the tradition has one service per week for 7 weeks (49 days) which is held at home or the Pagoda, and the mourning period may last 6 months to 3 years.

## ORDER OF BUDDHIST FUNERALS:

1. Tolling of the temple bell
2. Procession:
  - a. Ministers
  - b. Casketbearers
  - c. Funeral Director
  - d. Casket (Head end First)
  - e. Funeral Director
3. Chanting of sutras before the casket  
by the officiant
4. Presentation of Buddhist name  
- signifying Nirvana
5. Offering of incense - very significant
6. Gatha
7. Opening remarks by Chairman
8. Eulogy
9. Sermon
10. Gatha
11. Condolence Message
12. Words of Appreciation
13. Recessional
  - a. Ministers
  - b. Casketbearers
  - c. Funeral Director
  - d. Casket (Foot end first)
  - e. Funeral Director
  - f. Family
  - g. Congregation

## MILITARY FUNERALS

Funerals with military rituals reserved for active personnel and veterans may include both a chapel service and a graveside service or, as is more common, only the committal service at the graveside.

If the deceased was not on active duty, but a veteran, he or she would still be entitled to some benefits provided by the government including a plot interment allowance, a monument and an American flag.

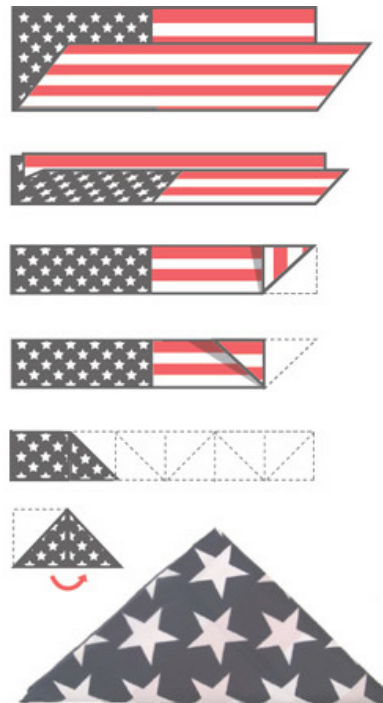
For Veterans, the American flag is to be folded in a very specific way and presented to the decedent's family. The graveside service will be conducted by the Military Chaplain or the Clergy; a 21-Gun Salute follows scripture reading and prayers.

### *Order of the Military Funeral Cortège*

1. Band
2. Escort (including firing party and bugler)
3. Colors and guard
4. Clergy
5. Caisson and Casketbearers
6. Honorary Castketbearers (if any)
7. Family and friends



◄ *During the military commitment ceremony, the flag which was used to drape the casket should be held waist high over the grave by the casketbearers and should be folded immediately after the sounding of TAPS.*



◄ *Correct Method of Folding the United States Flag:*

- 1) *Fold the lower striped section of the flag over the blue field.*
- 2) *The folded edge is then folded over to meet the open edge.*
- 3) *A triangle fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.*
- 4) *The outer point is then turned inward parallel with the open edge to form a second triangle.*
- 5) *Triangle folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in the triangle shape of a cocked hat with only the blue field visible.*

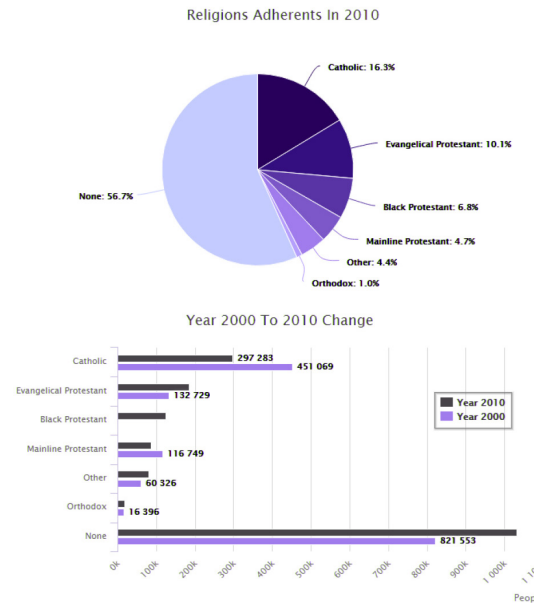
## RELIGIOUS PROFILE STATISTICS

According to the latest US Census, 51% of Michigan's population identifies as Protestant, 18% as Catholic, 5% as non-Christian, and 26% are unaffiliated with a religion. The religious statistics for Wayne County, Michigan are represented to the right (2010, city-data.com); also, according to City-Data, the US Census observes 29 religious denominations that fall under the "other category," which is singularly represented as "Other 4.4%" for Wayne County.

In his book "Beyond Culture" (1976), anthropologist Edward T. Hall presented the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures. High-context cultures are efficient in communication amongst peers, as culture can provide most of the context (i.e. Japan or Finland). Low-context cultures often must provide more explanation as more value lies in phrases than in singular words.

Wayne County and similar cultural pockets in America are low-context cultures, which is not a negative critique but rather acknowledges that their social/public services (such as architectural and funerary) require a diverse approach to survive and be able to accommodate the whole of its population.

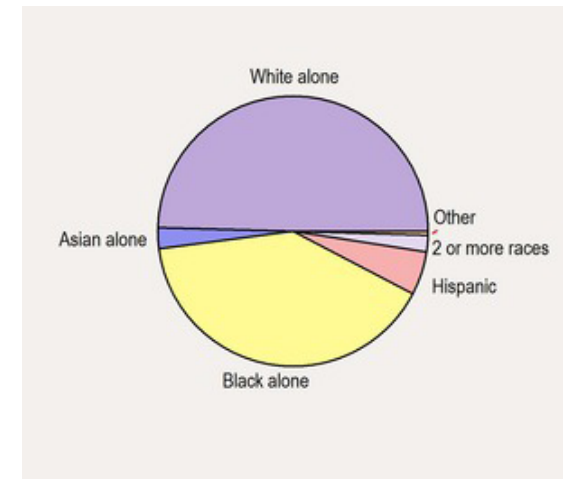
## RELIGIONS ADHERENTS IN WAYNE COUNTY, MI (CITY-DATA 2010)



## 29 "OTHER" DENOMINATIONS:

- Association of Messianic Congregations
- Baha'i
- Buddhism, Mahayana
- Buddhism, Theravada
- Buddhism, Vajrayana
- Church of Christ, Scientist
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Community of Christ
- Conservative Judaism
- Hindu, Indian-American Hindu Temple
- Hindu, Post Renaissance
- Hindu, Renaissance
- Hindu, Traditional Temples
- Jain
- Jehovah's Witnesses

## RACIAL STATISTICS IN WAYNE COUNTY, MI (CITY-DATA 2010)



- Muslim Estimate
- National Spiritualist Assoc. of Churches
- New Apostolic Church of North America,
- National Organization of the
- Orthodox Judaism
- Reconstructionist Judaism
- Reform Judaism
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Swedenborgian Church
- Tao
- Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations
- Unitarian Universalist Congregations
- Unity Churches, Association of
- Zoroastrian

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## Section 4: New Trends in Funeral Services

*“As funeral directors welcome in the New Year, many will be questioning how they can set themselves apart from their competition. Significant changes in architectural and interior design over the last decade have paved the way for funeral directors from coast to coast to step out of the lines of the traditional funeral home and venture in to new and exciting spaces. Growths in the industry and consumer awareness have forced funeral directors to look to the future and commit to that next step of increasing their share of the market. Architectural trends in the funeral industry are focusing on creating an atmosphere that is welcoming to the celebration of life and giving the funeral director a better opportunity to service their families.”*

*-Greg Bryant, Behrens Design (2014)*

The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) acknowledges that today's families are bringing new values, preferences and opinions that are changing the world of funeral service. Partly due to the relatively new availability of information, many are thinking differently about how they want to be remembered or want to honor their loved ones, and have new perceptions of the funeral service profession.

## TECHNOLOGY

As the profession is no exception to the growing importance of internet-presence, as many funeral homes are now publishing their services online and providing information about the business and their products such as urns, caskets, and other memorial products. Funeral Directors are also looking to expand their services by upgrading to high-quality audio/video technology for clearer acoustics and showing memorial slideshows and videos. Achievable online-broadcasts are also becoming popular for bereaved that are unable to physically attend.

## CREMATION ON THE RISE

The public's preference for cremation continues to rise. In 2015, NFDA projects that the rate of cremation will exceed that of burial. As the popularity of cremations has grown, so has its acceptance among various religious faiths. Religions that previously frowned upon cremation are

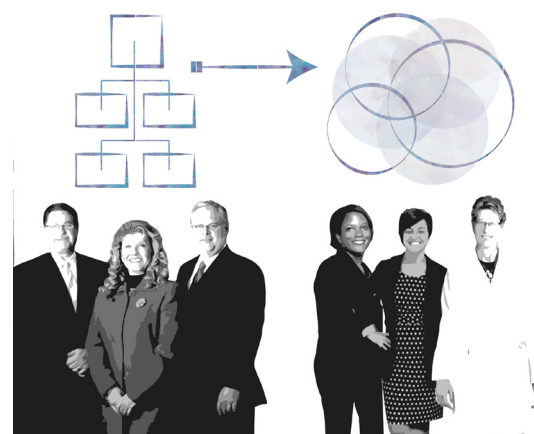


now understanding its value to families and adjusting their doctrines to accommodate this choice.

Cremation is just one way a family can lay their loved one to rest; it is another option in addition to earth burial or entombment in a mausoleum. Cremation does not preclude a visitation or funeral service. A visitation and/or funeral with the body present can be held prior to cremation. Alternatively, a memorial service with the cremated remains present, can be held after the body has been cremated.

## CHANGES IN THE WORKFORCE

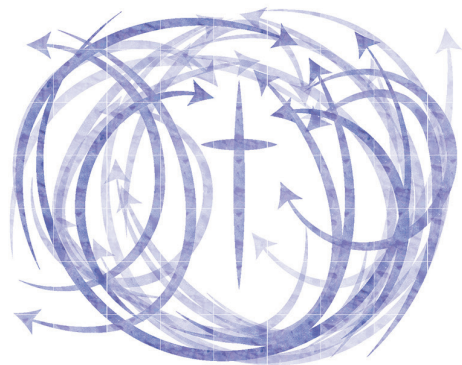
Funeral service has traditionally been a male-dominated profession. It also has been a "family" profession, with firms being passed down from one generation to the next. Today, people who didn't traditionally choose funeral service as a career are joining the profession and finding it very rewarding.



In fact, many of today's mortuary school graduates do not have family members working in funeral service and have decided to join the profession as a second career. Rather than a stagnate set of a single family's values, funeral homes are being enriched with an intersectional array of backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise. Today, more than 60% of mortuary science students in the United States are women. Many of these women have discovered and are attracted to the skills and traits needed as a funeral director, including communication skills, compassion, a desire to comfort those coping with a death, as well as organizational and event-planning skills.

## GREEN FUNERALS

The rise in green-funerals is reflective of consumer attitudes such as lifestyles and values grounded in conservation, spirituality, and philosophy. A green funeral practices environmental consciousness by encompassing natural burial, alternative to embalming, and eco-conscious funeral home design.



◀ *When guiding the bereaved through this process, the funeral director may ask questions such as...*

*What could your loved one do better than anyone else?*

*When you think of your loved one, what do you think of?*

*What were your loved one's hobbies or special interests?*

*What were some of your fondest memories of your loved one?*

*What was your loved one passionate about?*

Depending on a family's preferences, a green funeral can include any or all of the following: a small gathering in a natural setting, use of only recycled paper products, locally-grown organic flowers, carpooling, organic food, no embalming or embalming with formaldehyde-free products, the use of sustainable biodegradable clothing, shroud or casket, and natural or green burial. Traditional standing headstones are not permitted. Instead, flat rocks, plants or trees may serve as grave markers.

#### PERSONALIZATION

The funeral home is changing not because funeral directors want it to but because of what their customers want. Furthermore, the funeral home should not be designed for the funeral director, but for the families it serves. As baby boomers age and find themselves having to plan funerals for loved ones and themselves, they are making funeral choices based on values that are different than previous generations. The potential meaningfulness of personalization has resulted in an explosion of unique services that reflect the hobbies, passions and interests of decedents.

The current quest of the proactive funeral director is to find ways to incorporate not only the deceased's religious traditions, but also their hobbies, interests, or a certain quality that makes them unlike any other person.



► This diagram, titled “Klicker’s Funeral Service Compendium,” was composed in 1996 and now more than ever is relevant to not only the funeral director, but customers of funeral services who wish to understand the full scope of services available to them.

As the diagram suggests, the funeral home houses services at levels of pre-need (planning and information), at-need (the funeral event), and after-need (grief counselling). At the very center of this wheel is stated, “Location, Reputation, Facilities” – all of which make impressions under the architecture of the funeral home itself.

The spaces in which these arrangements are made becomes innately important to bereaved clients but also those who may be simply curious about the services and then the funeral directors themselves. Seeking funeral services can be a surreal experience and each director can offer unique perspectives and counseling which can make the ordeal positive and interesting. To a certain degree, however, funeral services can only be successful to what the facilities and site can provide.



Klicker’s Funeral Service Continuum © 1996

## PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Zooming out to the entirety of the US, 22.8% of the population is non-affiliated to a religion; in Wayne County, 51%. What is to be done for this giant portion of society, or for those who identify with a religion not for choice but as circumstance? Ambiguities lie throughout all statistical data but it can't be denied that 100% of those sampled will face death, either physically of their own or, until that point, emotionally of others.

The loss of life is a social experience and we, as social animals, require a social space to affectively grieve and remember through external/performative rituals and internal/personal processing. As more people are not affiliated with a church, funeral homes were once locked in the past but now need to be contemporarily relevant in atmosphere and service. Regarding the passing of a loved one, people are undergoing an emotional change and so the physical surroundings in which remembrance takes place becomes vital to the outcome.

As we as people grow with our society, individuals are drawn to certain death-symbols and rituals that were rooted by a collective. For example, this photo was captioned, "My little cousin's turtle died. He made the grave, built the cross, and got dressed without any parental supervision. My uncle caught this towards the end of the ceremony" -conor\_goggles, Reddit.



Though this child may or may not be particularly religious, his actions were done out of love and respect for his little companion. In fact, some may see hypocrisy in the plot's cross, since the doctrine it's associated with doesn't deem turtles an everlasting afterlife. Taking offense in this display would be fruitless and teach this boy only other harsh lessons of life; the significance here is that this child understands mourning as mimicking social norms and found solace from grief through respectful and ritualized actions and familiar symbols. He communicated his grief with the heaviness of the soil as he dug, had a last moment for farewell as he placed the turtle in the plot and filled it, and

took meditative care in the procurement and arrangement of stones.

In the legal realities of American death, a licensed funeral director is the traditional middleman whose practice of managing our deceased is required and historically ingrained. In the states of Michigan and Wisconsin there are total restrictions on funeral establishment owners from further owning crematoriums or cemeteries, and vice-versa. This is done to protect consumer interests but at the same time prevents a "one-stop-shop" and creates a chaotic network of options and personnel.

The death of a human entails more intricacies than the death of turtle, and those that are tasked with arrangements aren't usually in the place to make the most informed decisions. The best funeral director will be a fluid mediator and be updated on all available trends and options.



▲ *The Peaceful Petal Flower Water Burial Urn is made of French paper, and is biodegradable and water-friendly*

Funeral directors can offer ideas on how families can personalize their loved one's funeral and are open to family suggestions and creativity to ensure an individualized ceremony fitting of the person who died.

Accordingly, the best funeral directors wouldn't be able to do much without their facilities. For the designer, a worthy question becomes which phenomenological aspects of the contemporary "funeral home" are essential? What qualities of a funeral home serve in accordance to all variations of customers seeking services in America? Unlike most products and services, the target market for funeral services can't be defined much further than people who know people that die – everyone.



▲ *A funeral director must know their customer's options. "The Pizza Box Cremation Urn is a beautifully handmade urn, in the USA. Made of fine poplar, hand painted and laser engraved. The pizza box urn makes a perfect memorial to your loved one who enjoyed this very popular American food. It is the good memories that can often be remembered with the right urn." Are funeral spaces too contained?*

Of course the market can be projected by local culture and religion but we know that to be harmfully presumptuous; current trends show the funeral home's place in the diverse public consciousness is expanding. Even the face of the typical American funeral director is changing – it's no longer a middle-aged white male or his sons, but people of all backgrounds that are integrating the workforce from an attraction to hospitality.

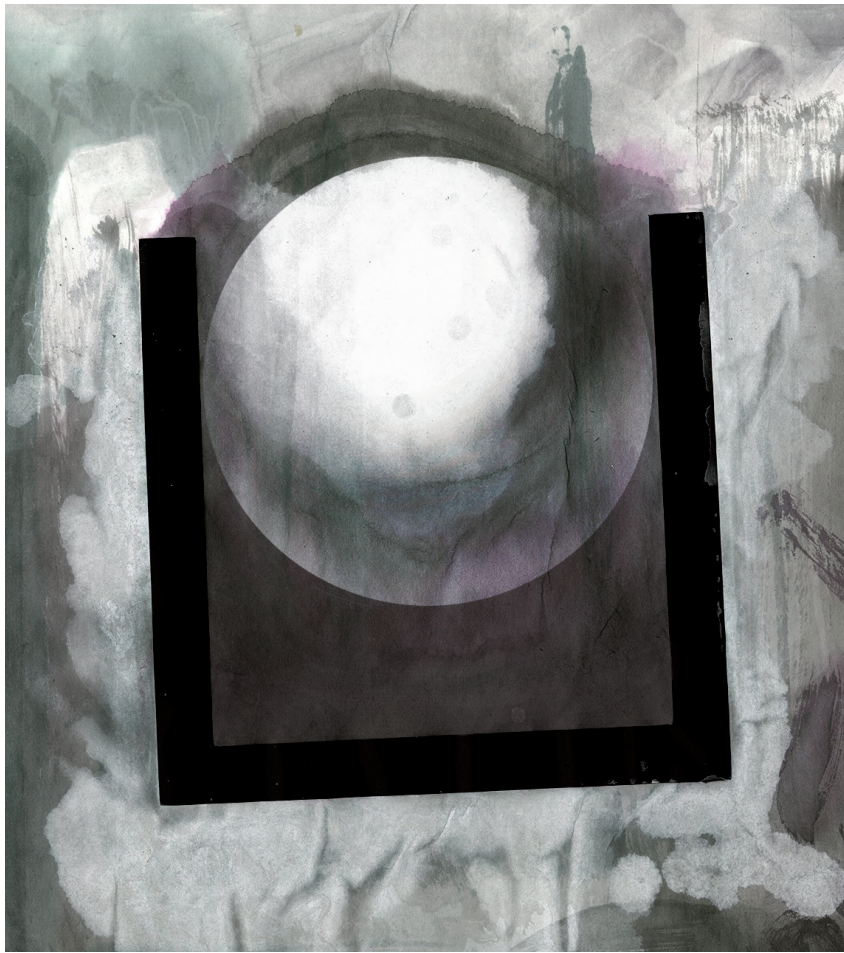
Death is no longer restricted to one sector of culture: we have multiplicities in our identities that can transcend borders, physical and mental, that touch people from various perspectives—our friends, family, colleagues and day-to-day interactions. With one death comes innumerable affected. If the individuality of the decedent is being commemorated, then the individuality of the mourners should be accommodated. After all, isn't personalization the focus of the contemporary life celebration?

As a business, a funeral home's design should be relevant to the wants and needs of today's families and to meet the needs of the current market. As the event coordinator, the funeral director's equipment includes the funeral home, personal contacts, or the whims of the mourning family. When left to their own munitions, funeral directors are tasked with creating in-house highly individualized celebrations populated by people brought together by death—not something that can be done idly. If religion or bloodlines are not

common threads throughout the service's gatherings, then the only cohesion is an obligation to the deceased which brought them there. For many, this obligation is pure in that a portion of the decedent's identity had once resonated with the mourner and, in absence, resonates again.



Funeral homes seek to sanction potent authentic emotions; and so mourners should seek spaces that are inspiring and transform communal grieving into a positively memorable experience about celebrating individuality. In service oriented professions, the consumer's entity is the American mentality and questions are being asked from more informed perspectives than ever before.



Funeral trends parallel many of the consumer obsessions that affect architects, an easy example being eco-consciousness seen in the rise of green funerals. As in the business of architecture, environmental concerns find their way in virtually all aspects of funeral services, from whom to go to base on philosophies, state and federal laws, facility designs, internment alternatives, and ceremony location. Alternative burials not only reflect eco-consciousness, but also methods of personalization. Other endeavors of funeral homes include reducing the casket selection room or removing it altogether to be online.



- ▲ *Are funeral spaces too contained? The funeral space is beginning to emerge as a power-structure which opposes the notion that a funeral should sanction authentic emotion. The image on the left speaks to the heaviness that broods over the contemporary funeral chapel. What if the image to the right spoke more to funeral spaces, encompassing an enclosure that still connects to an external reality and resonates within the mourner's colorful imaginations.*

The Electronic Death Registration (EDR), which is the new death certificate, saves paper, fuel, and man-hours; these examples might not seem significant but represent how static norms in a static business can comfortably change with the proper momentum. New funeral facilities implement outdoor gardens and water features, indicating a gravitation to nature during times of bereavement.

It is arguable whether or not cremation is more environmentally safe than burial, however the rise in cremation nonetheless indicates that the decedent's body is becoming less present during services. This further indicates that a collective necessity for the body's display is waning.

Another trend of the American consumer that has made its way to the funeral facilities is the incorporation of food services. This may arise from the desire to provide a "commonality" besides a relationship with the deceased, so as to pull mourners into a gathering centered on abundance rather than void. This can further be analyzed as the importance of sensory experiences. A third trend worth analyzing is the obsession for technology and investing in customer's need through highquality audio/video capabilities, such as for clear oration and projecting memorial videos. The emphasis of the funeral space is moving from the traditional formula to a high-functioning mode of performance, favoring modifiable community spaces that

utilize new technology yet provide warmth, ambience, and clear function of spaces. As performances go, the actors don't want muddled stage directions or to act without motivation—in other words, the mourners don't want to be made felt "unrehearsed" or to perform hollow volitions for stale rituals (like teenagers doing the Hustle with the elderly).

It would be counterproductive to conclude as a list of components for the "new" funeral home since a prescription is not the goal. An outline of inferences from common trends is useful, however, to anticipate patterns of deathattitudes and corresponding architectural designs that meet mourner's needs but exceeds in constructing memories by doing so with death, rather than in impenetrable denial.

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## SECTION 5: ANALYZING THE FUNERAL HOME

*“Death is a personal matter, arousing sorrow, despair, fervor, or dry-hearted philosophy. Funerals, on the other hand, are social functions. Imagine going to a funeral without first polishing the automobile. Imagine standing at a graveside not dressed in your best dark suit and your best black shoes, polished delightfully. Imagine sending flowers to a funeral with no attached card to prove you had done the correct thing. In no social institution is the codified ritual of behavior more rigid than in funerals. Imagine the indignation if the minister altered his sermon or experimented with facial expression. Consider the shock if, at the funeral parlors, any chairs were used but those little folding yellow torture chairs with the hard seats. No, dying, a man may be loved, hated, mourned, missed; but once dead he becomes the chief ornament of a complicated and formal social celebration.”*

— John Steinbeck (1935)

The steps of grieving the death of a loved one are recognized as separation, transition, and incorporation, with emphasis on the different steps varying across cultures. Separation accomplishes accepting severance and loss. When being moved to an afterlife, incorporation to that realm is most important. Without this need, a culture’s focus is on cutting ties with the dead and transitioning into life without their biological presence.

► *In general, a funeral is a multistep process that conceptually moves the deceased from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead. Embedded with ambiguity and possibility, rituals express an affinity for elemental symbolism, such as ships set on fire and sent to sea by the Vikings, or Hindus who continue to deposit cremated remains into the Ganges River (or other moving body of water).*



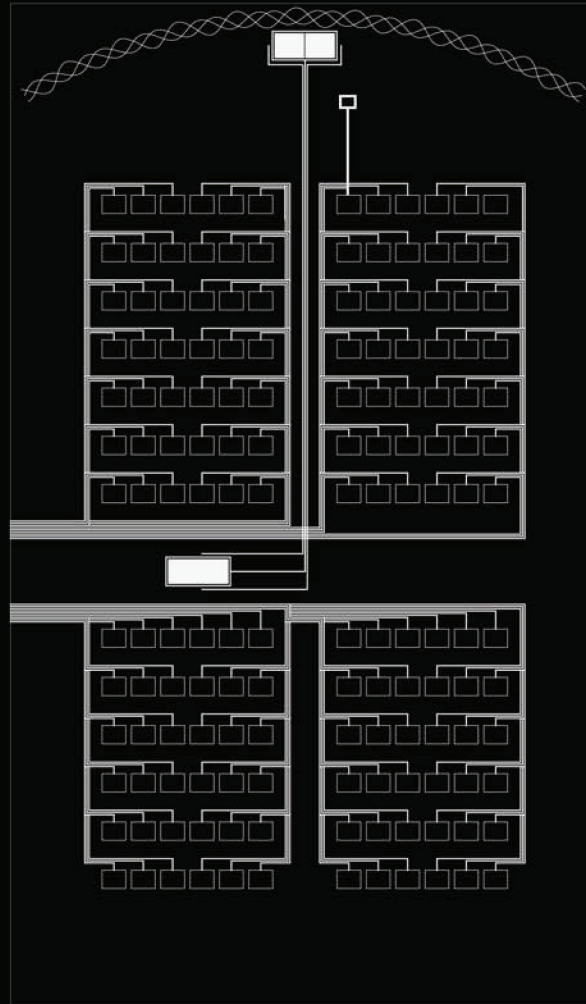
The space where the funeral takes place-- the funeral home-- provides the physical means to accomplish the varied spectrum of funerary rites; however, modern funeral homes are having difficulties addressing the shifts brought on by post-modernizations. At a typical funeral, the shifts of American funerary customs are evident in the mourners themselves: a funerary chapel can hold potentially dozens of beliefs at one instance, and the mourners are now not solely related to the deceased by blood or neighborly ties. Though loosened to spatial death-rituals, familial bonds have broadened and multiplied, strengthened by, if not religious, then spiritual or humanist beliefs.

During a highly sensitive time, funerary space has the potential to disregard a portion of beliefs by highlighting another, or to sterilize the event all together. Particularly faced with post-modern clientele demands and imagination, funeral directors are asked to arrange a more participatory process of memorialization for loved ones, which at this point focuses more on eulogy with woven elements of music, poetry, and art that are expressive of the decedent's personality. Accommodating for ritualistic actions can provide for establishing a sense of stability when we most need it, as the structure of a tradition gives the comfort of familiarity in a time of great upheaval and disruption (i.e. the end of a relationship).

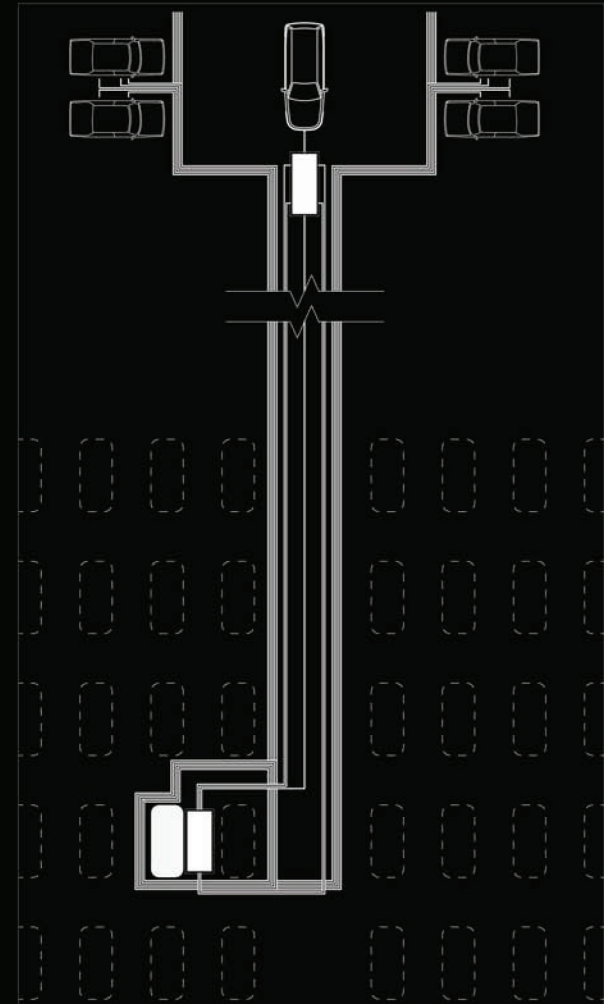
VISITATION



OFFICIATION



BURIAL





For the funeral director, the problem has been described as “hyper wedding planning,” in which the very personalized gathering event must be planned in the short time embalming allows or the otherwise gathering of people on short notice.

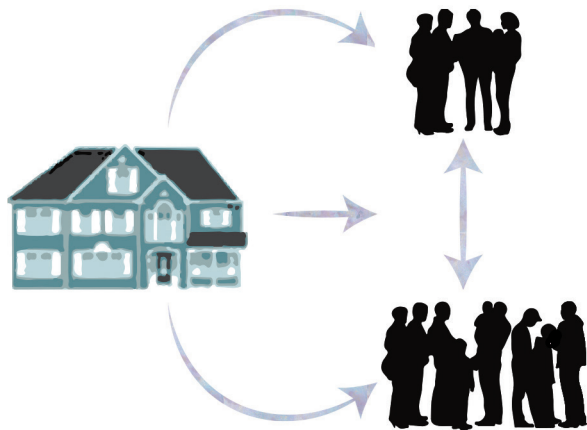
For the architect, the problem becomes creating spaces that accommodate rapid transformation for personalization. Mourners, on unfamiliar ground and often already uncomfortable, can readily be made to feel intrusive of the space or invasive amongst strangers.

Death spaces and landscapes need to possess the utility to work through the emotions and psychology of grief, rather than force us to move past without closure which would only

further increase adverse intensity. We must “forget the constructed nature of the game” to fully take in the meaning systems we have created within life and have become a part of for the continuity of culture. There is potent meaning behind the development of death-rites and ceremonies, but newer generations may not have the emotive equipment to make deep connections if the symbolism becomes too convoluted with time.

Death is a powerful teacher and through its medium of space it should be enforced that our relationship is not inherently abusive. Positive effects arise from embracing wisdom we gain from reflecting on the impermanence around us and aid in experiencing wiser, richer, more fulfilling lives while we have them.

There exists cultural bonds between mourners and their motivations and needs are fascinating on an architectural scale. A reenvisioned funeral space could accommodate those who are grieving but willing for transition or those already well in the process, and will reach out to the unfamiliar and have gotten lost in bereavement. In departure from the typical understanding of a funerary space, innovations could adapt communicative properties of light and color in their ability for fast transformation and individualization. This is to challenge a stagnation and staleness in funerary customs and how spaces associated with death can be more inclusive of both ceremonious and informal remembrance through traditional and personal rituals.



◄ *The funeral home services the public by being available to offer information on their services. Further, individual families become customers and then the funeral home must facilitate the families' relationship to the public. It shouldn't be stressed enough that funerals don't simply "happen" and the service is as complex as any other business. The funeral home and its design can become a vital tool for public relations.*

*Left Page: Abstracting the movement of the procession during the conventional "three-part" funeral. More and more often, these events will occur within the same day, rather than two or three. The processional movement is rigid and minimal, illustrating society's general confusion and lack of participatory action during funerals.*



## Notes on the Preparation Room

The preparation room is where the decedent's body is prepared for its funeral. Michigan law requires licensed funeral directors to equip their facility with on-site body preparation. The room is first and foremost a medical workspace, and as such should be designed to be safe and comfortable. The space should also be dignified for the sake of the remains, and as a public relations tool for tours - if it is not included it can heighten unfounded suspicions and misconceptions regarding the process. Also, note that besides funeral directors and other embalmers, others who enter this space will include staff members, maintenance, hairdressers and cosmetologist, and those who dress and casket the remains.

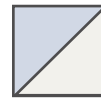
The space must house proper equipment for disposing of waste, various mechanical apparatus, medical supplies, tables, first aid, storage cabinets and countertops. Other specific features of the preparation room include outstanding ventilation, shielded windows (for privacy), private signage, sound insulation, and that ingress and egress should be separate from other functions of the funeral home.



### Key ▶



Arrangements

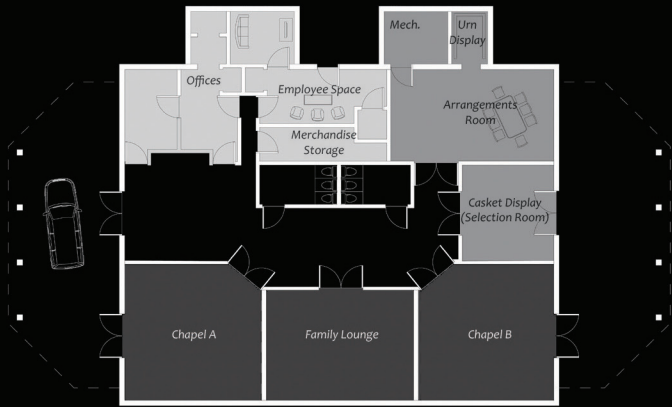


Community

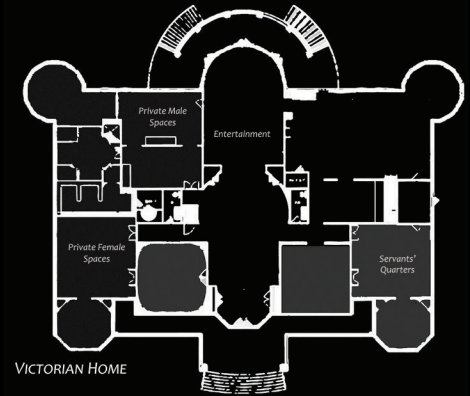
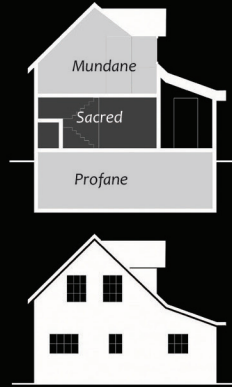


Employee

- ▲ *Division of function in the funeral home generally occurs to separate rooms for arrangement purposes, community gathering purposes, and employee space. This type of floorplan can begin to manipulate funeral-goers, or those that stop by and are curious about the facility's services. What can be done for the funeral home that can dissolve this herded circulation? Perhaps funeral-goers would be less anxious if floorplan were to open and encourage exploration.*



FUNERAL HOME



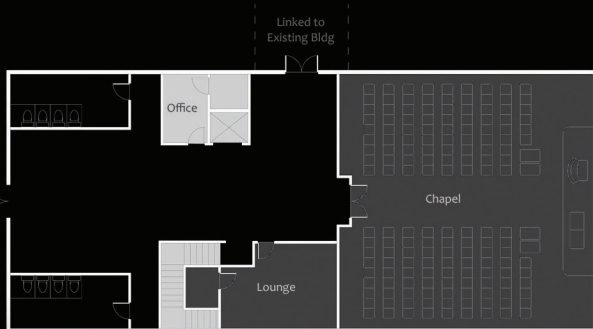
VICTORIAN HOME



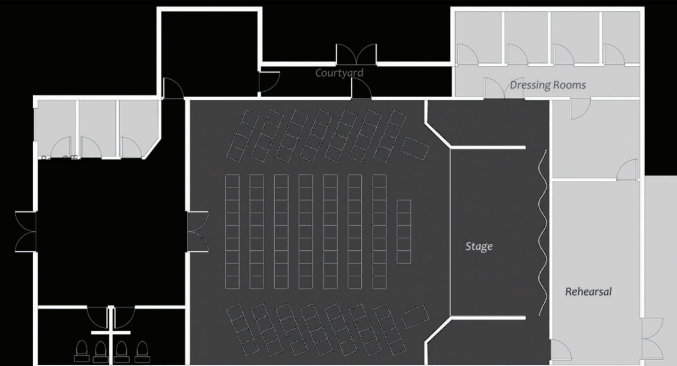
FUNERAL HOME



DANCE STUDIO



50 FUNERAL HOME



THEATER

The architectural style of funeral homes more often than not resembles a Victorian house with elements of Classic-Revivalism. Architects and funeral directors claim it's a timeless, comfortable style that families are accustomed to and the warm comfortable feelings they evoke are expected. Historically, the Victorian style began in the early decades of the 1800s with upsurges in population and then alongside the Civil War which brought unprecedented death to the country.

The era regimented social deprivation, boxing every function into separate rooms seen through segregating family, staff, sexes, ages, and then life and death. The concept has emerged as an inherent flaw that death has yet to escape this room (the funeral chapel) and that funeral services seem uncomfortable to break from prescribed rituals.

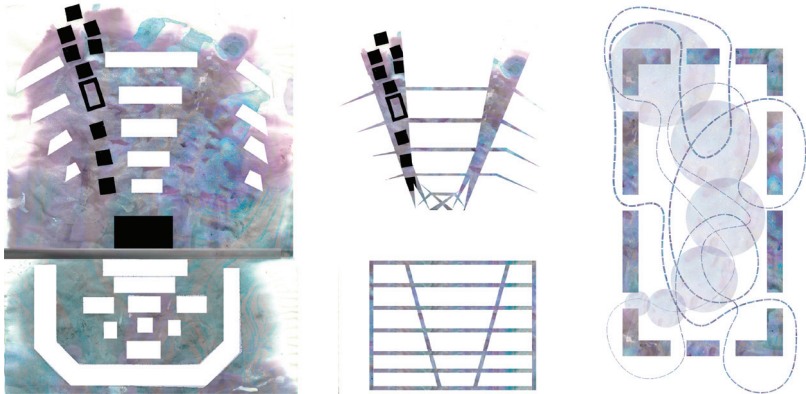
A funeral home very readily resembles a Victorian floor plan, with each function of services occurring a separate room and even having a buffer system of ante-rooms to dissuade intrusion. Public services happen on the main floor, professional on the lower level, and then upstairs contains more private space for 24-hour employees. Force-fitting contemporary funeral methods into a Victorian-style house holds many societal implications that disregard progression and shifts in attitudes toward grief and death. Status often depends on the power to control some form of knowledge, whether

it is scientific, religious, entrepreneurial, political, or psychological, and spatial instruments of power are apparent in haphazard floorplans which instill a fear of the unknown. Status exists in the funeral home, from social lineation such as male pallbearers, and the non-resonating scripted essence of convention. The floorplan itself separates family from family, and keeps certain professional areas out of reach, like the embalming room.

Funeral goes especially need to be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from them, and how relations of power and discipline are sincere, not accidental. By claiming the typical funeral home as a timeless style is a naive assumption about shallow aesthetic preferences and ignores the actual historical applications.

Additionally, the funeral program can "fit" inside the proportions of a dance studio and small theater, meaning the prescribed "funeral home" is by no means the "correct" form for the function. The funeral possesses elements of performance, gathering, preparation, the components of a truly valuable social event. It seems that once spatial forms are created, they tend to become institutionalized and in some ways influence future social processes; space and social relations should be complementary and efforts should be made to translate our funerary language into one of spatiality.

(Harvey 1973) Once in place, institutions become taken for granted, unexamined, and seemingly immutable. What is becomes what ought to be, which contributes to the maintenance of prevailing status differences, embedded into our societal perceptions of death. However, death does not recognize status, nor does grief. A friend is a friend, and a child's bond can be unbreakable no matter economic success; a funeral is a social event but occurring at a level of socialness that wants to transcend materiality differences imposed by our ancestors.



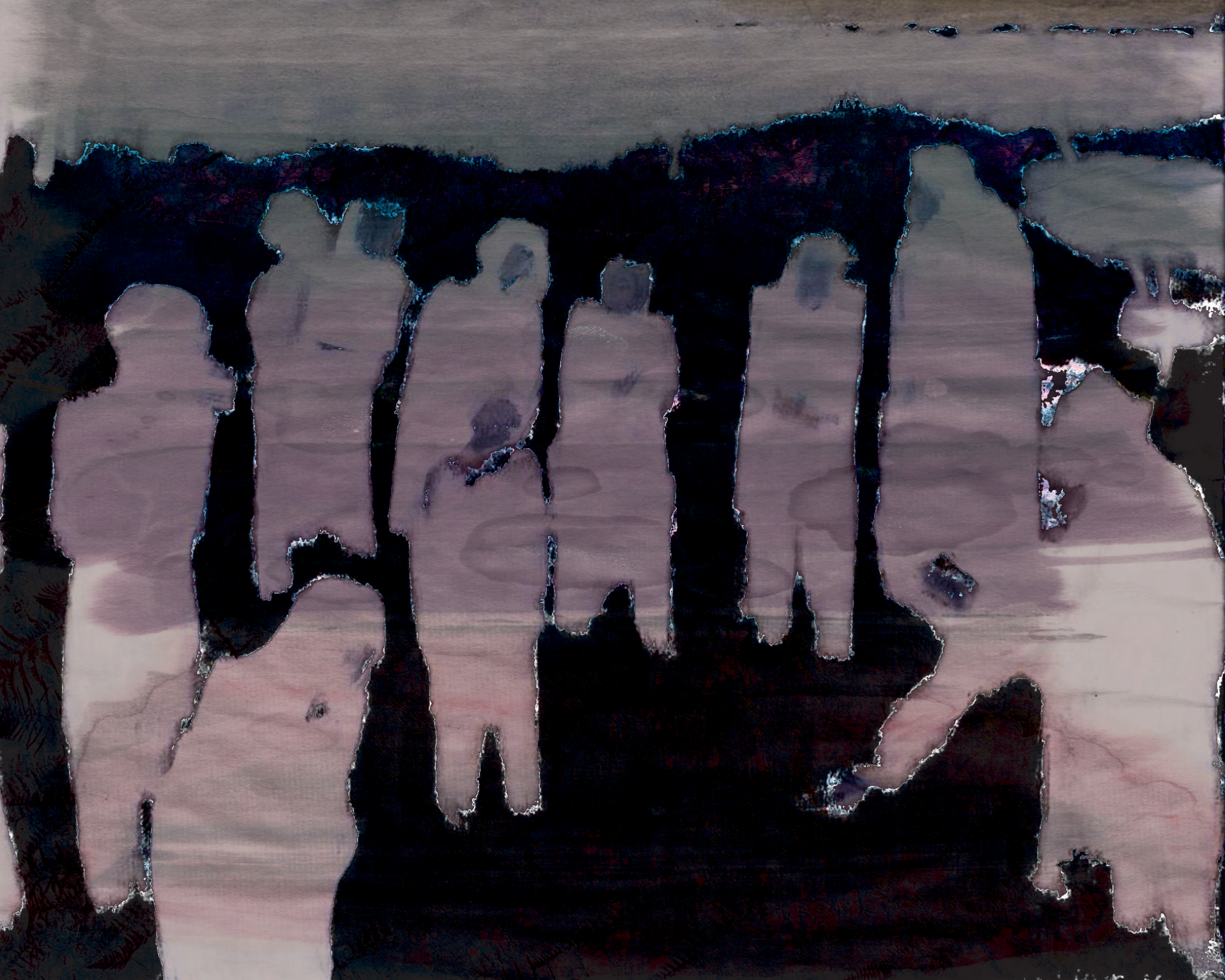
- ◀ *Abstracting the “funeral form:” analyzing the movement of the congregation such as the prescribed way of movement as opposed to how mourners gravitate in a more improvised way.*



- ◀ *Intervention on the loss connection between the present death and the remembered death: What has shifted our ritual and perspectives and how can architecture and space respond to this shift? In the post-modern age of funerals, what is the future of interment and reflection?*

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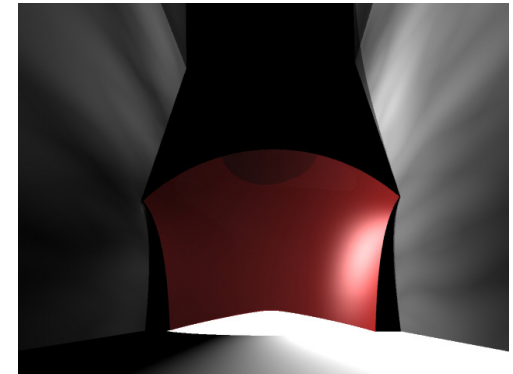
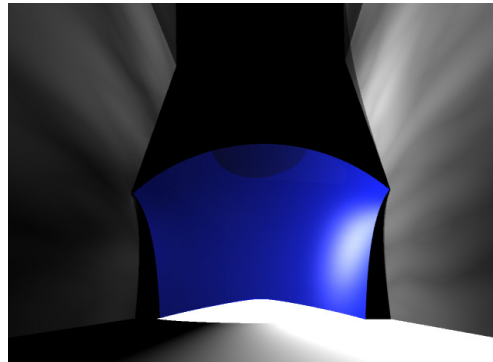
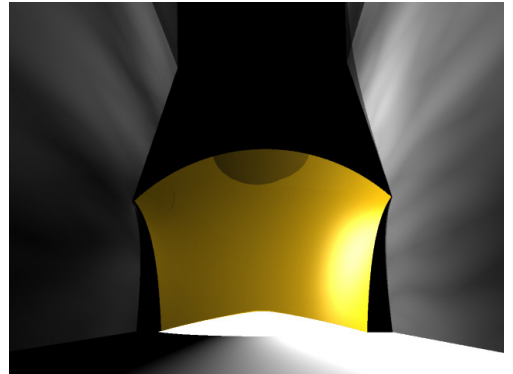
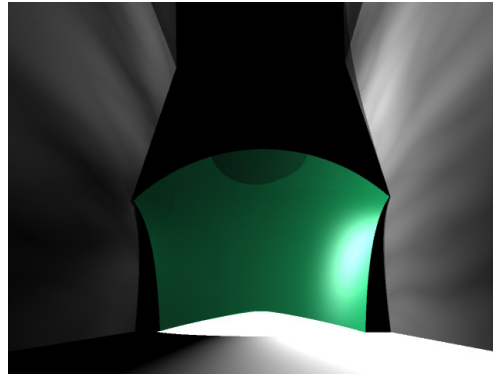
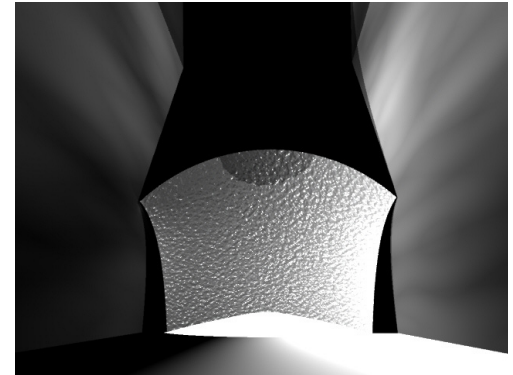
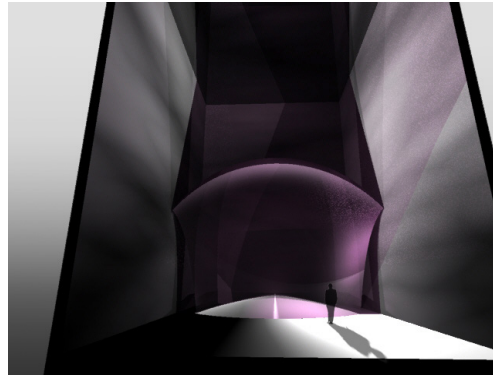


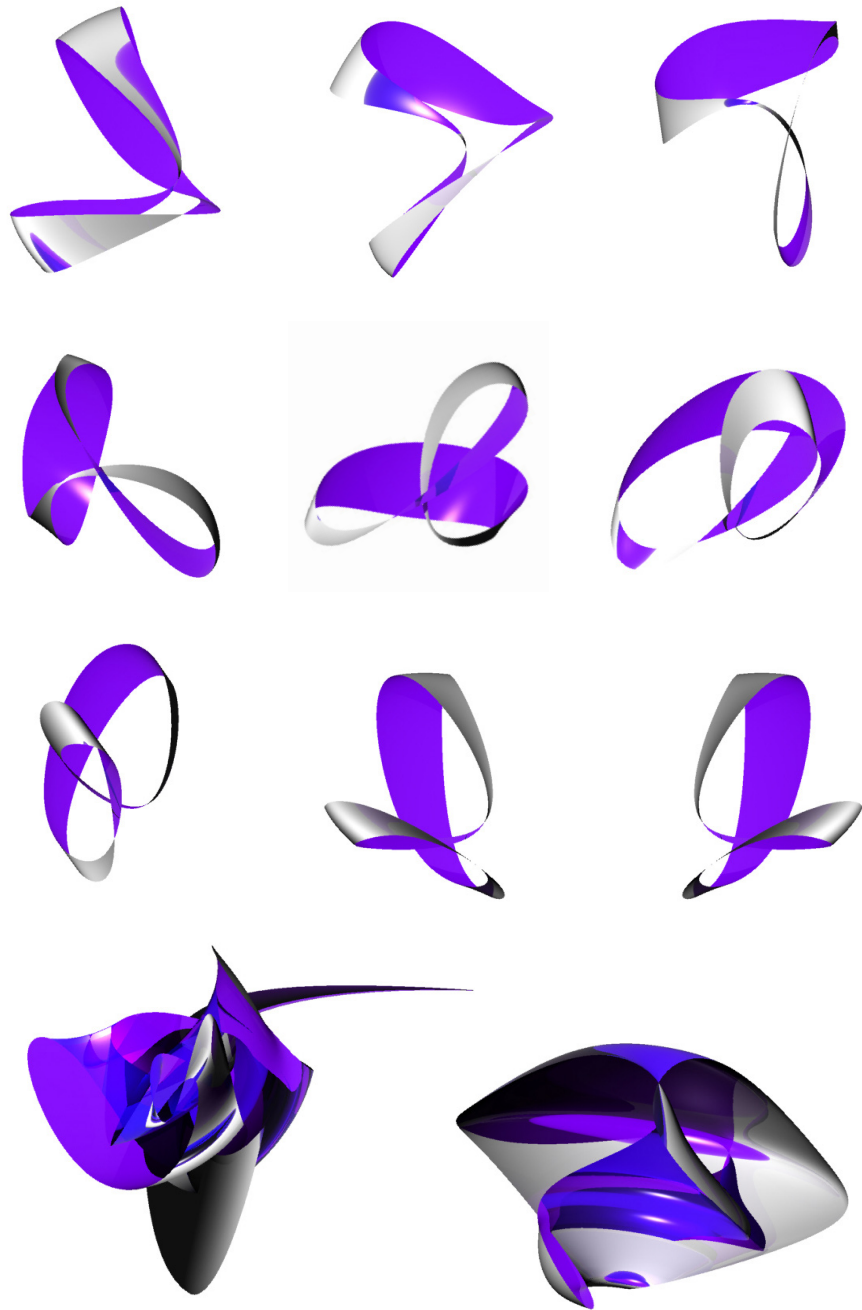
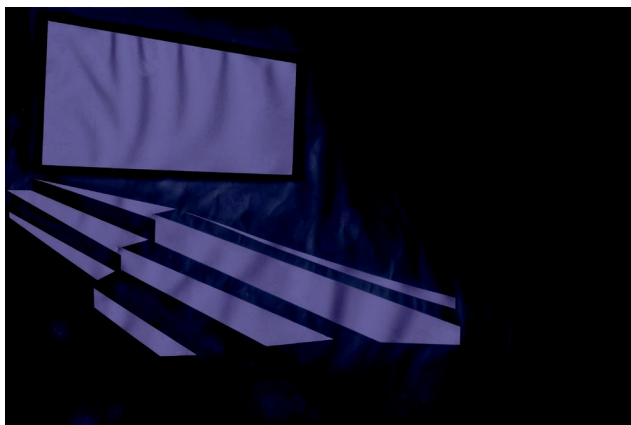
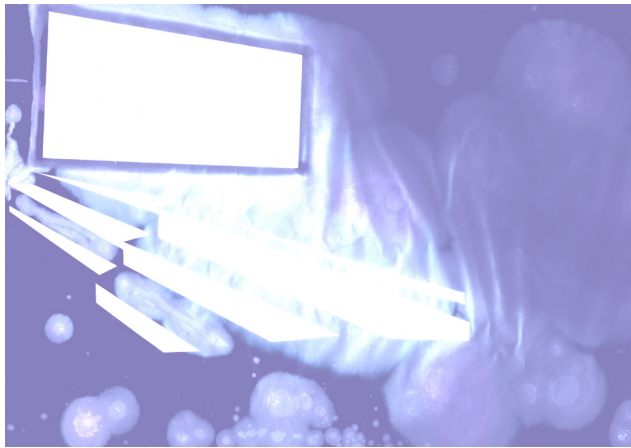
## SECTION 6: THEATRICAL FUNERAL HOME

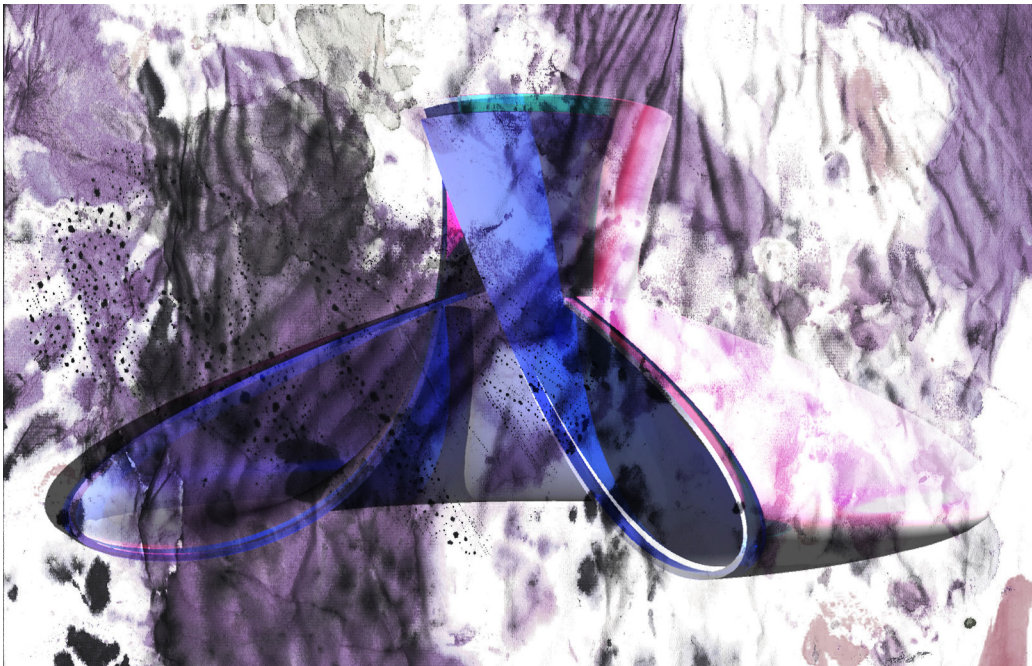
*“Interactive works encourage a playful, childlike fascination for the pleasure of cause and effect, where a simple hand movement or facial grimace causes a domino effect, a ripple through time and space that directly affects and trans-forms something outside of oneself. Interactivity in digital arts and performance is at its vest a marvel of discovery, rekindling childhood feelings of intimate connection it a vast, inexplicable, and beautiful world.”*

*-Steve Dixon (2007)*

Through dissecting funerary services in the United States, incompatibility issues have emerged within maintaining accommodations for contemporary needs. Recall that the traditional services occur in three parts, with first the visitation (or wake or viewing) where the public may gather and pay respects to the open casket. One or two days later the funeral is officiated, followed by the burial and then to end the services the family can hold a luncheon or another gathering. There is no “rule” that any or all of these events have to happen at the funeral home or be held for the public, but the funeral home still provides these services, the expertise and the space where these arrangements are made. However, the fact that this is the “prescribed” funeral, embedded in American societal perception, the majority of the population is thereby



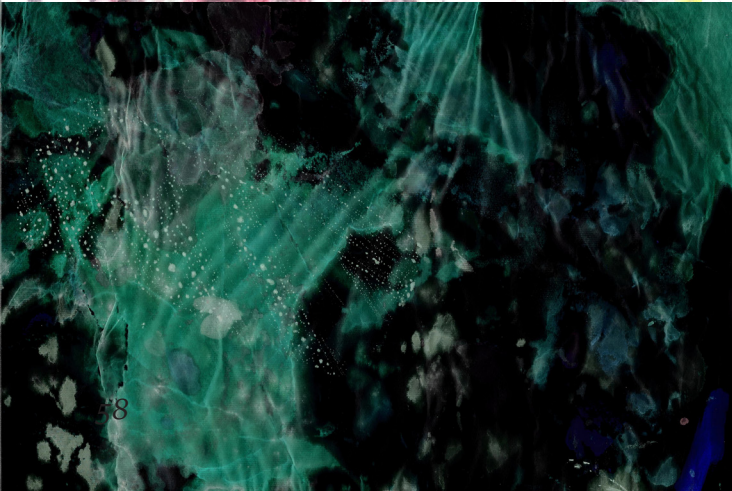
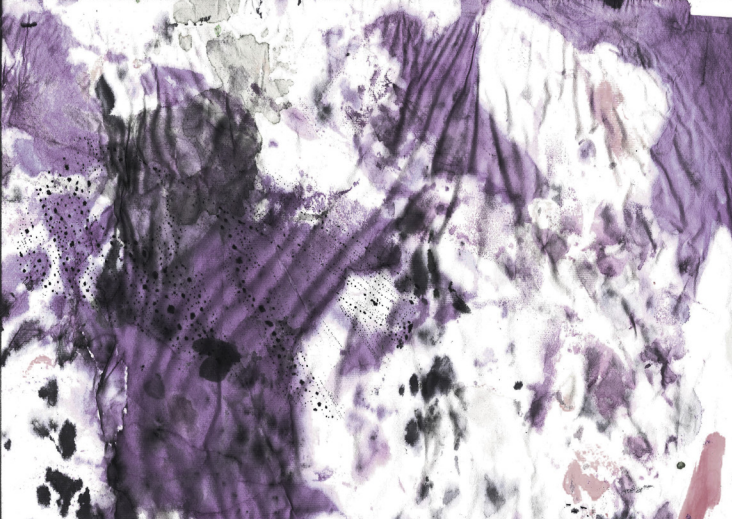




limited by the outcome and potential interaction such an event could evoke. The traditional structure of the funeral is based off Christian rituals (or the major local religion of a certain cultural area) but within mourners of other affiliations this can instill senses of hypocrisy, confusion, and disdain for the funeral all together.

Obvious problems arise by enforcing or promoting a traditional standard, and this assumes that simply providing a space to mourn should be good enough. This isn't an incentive to ignore certain or all societal death rites, as these are important to many families will persist as a certain funeral standard; however, it is crucial to acknowledge ways that the architectural space of these services can begin to systematically empower the beauty in a varied approach toward death. Intersectionality is reflected in the relationships of the mourners to each other and the decedent, and is essential to the funeral's congregation.

- ◄ *Memorial theatre: Could re-personalized funerary space begin to manifest a spatial ethical will, which would allow the sharing of important thoughts with those that are leave behind? Through this intent would come the expressions of personal ideals, used to communicate lessons from life, share memories and hopes, offer advice, ask for forgiveness, and express love.*



Regarding the passing of a loved one, people are undergoing an emotional change and so the physical surroundings in which remembrance takes place becomes vital to the outcome. The chapel, or space most often used for the visitation, acts too often as a collection box of performers that are anxious and feel unrehearsed. They are worried if they will mourn correctly, and some gravitate towards certain symbols while some most certainly do not.

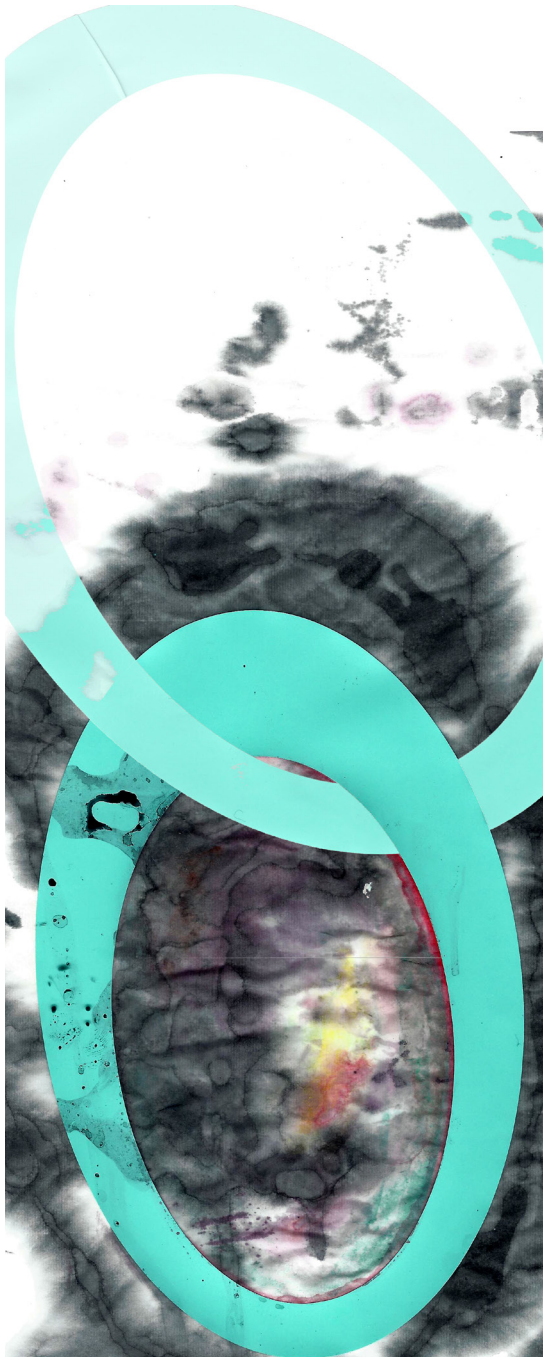
Whether a common belief in the next life is shared, the funeral's congregation is drawn together by a void left by death and they begin to take on a form itself, structured by social signifiers of grief, love and remembrance. We move horizontally around each other, slipping by and making points to pass on our sympathy. We always have proximity to each other and the experience is distinctly delicate, bodily, striving to be uplifting and fluid. An improvised social choreography is in the makings but response and revelation are stifled by the scripted performances of tradition.

- ◄ *“All art is an interaction between the viewer and the artwork, and thus all artworks are interactive in the sense that a negotiation or confrontation takes place between the beholder and the beheld. Where digital interactive artworks and performances differ is in the ability of the user or audience to activate, affect, play with, input into, build, or entirely change it.”*

- Steve Dixon, *“Theories of Interactivity”*

The circulation of the funeral home should be further dissolved because there is an otherwise huge missed architectural opportunity for social interactivity. Taking cues from digital projection and installation applications, funeral spaces could create immaterial experiences that are not immediate through the building itself but rather takes the mourning community into account, as well as phenomena projected light, congregational weight, and sonic and kinesthetic responses in order to maximize public participation.

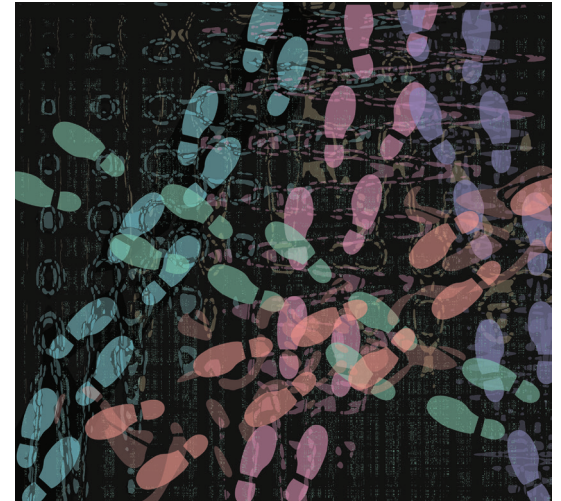
During grief and the other unpredictable emotions associated with death, people want to move not in a scripted way, but improvisationally. And so rather than rely an unfair pressure on the audience to perform for a certain etiquette in a homey space that is losing its familiarity, funeral spaces can really take advantage of the congregation's horizontal form and uncover truer meanings from true intentions.



During a visitation, the congregation is looking for understandings within and outside of themselves, and the funeral's major task is to reconcile these collective and individual perspectives. In a visually and sonic fluid space, rather than sitting anxiously in a funeral parlor, members could be encouraged by their collective form and individual perspectives and compose spatial ensembles. If we fear mundanity, why do we observe a unique passing of a life through passive participation in a scripted system? If the experience is expected, why go to more funerals than we're ever asked?

Rather than a scripted, expected environment where the etiquette is losing commonality and causes more anxiety than comfort, the architectural space should present applications that liberate the funeral from prevailing spatial control tactics, like fear of misconduct or intrusion and imposing Victorian-era social standards of emotional deprivation. Through digital projection and interactive materials, architecture could establish a generative space that isn't so much disorientating, but uplifting, calming, gentle, non-threatening, and provides a chance to immerse oneself in a social experience whose poeticism transcends historical status differences.

The use of digital projection is not intended to be a stale, unimaginative implementation, such as the already wide use of memorial photograph slideshows of the deceased's life. This is a useful tool of memorialization but simply differentiates a "digital" and "actual" space, eliminating opportunities of potent interaction. Instead, digital projection and artistic installation methods (of which many architects and designers are already well attuned) can combine digital and actual into synergetic space, a new mixed reality that is congruent with the ambiguities of death and memory.





◀ *Through architectural modeling and artistic experimentation with the intent of mapping new “funerary forms,” the prospect of a funeral becomes inherently more exciting. To create an “exciting” funeral home, for essentially economic success, is not by any means the objective of this thesis. Rather, imagining a funeral occurring in such a space illuminates the inadequacies of conventional spaces for socially stimulating experiences – and a funeral is a social experience, designed by the living for the living. Funerary value that has always existed is revealed once again, and this value only gets richer as society progresses. Through exercising the mind in such a way, the phrase “theatrical funeral home” does not come to encompass a passive observation or cinematic experience, but rather exploits advantages of the black-box theater. These include top-of-the-line audio/visual capabilities, but more importantly these theaters possess spatial interventions that disguise the technicalities of such a social event but preserves the poetics of an interactive and artistic experience, opening the living body to unpredictable transformations, inward and outward.*

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## Section 7: Departure for Morphology

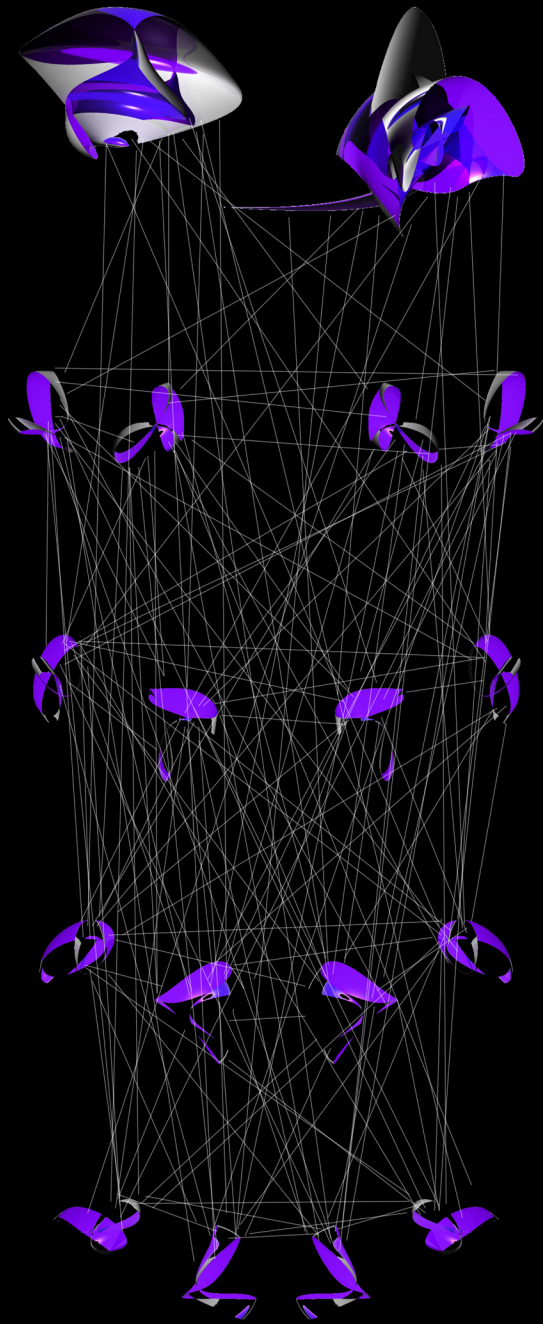
*“Man can find meaning in life, though he is thoroughly mortal. Even the prospect of dying does not destroy this meaning while man lives, because it is possible for man to face death with a certain confidence and hope.”*

*-Unknown*

A funeral seeks to accomplish the end of a physical relationship, but by simply observing a funeral as a “religious service” denies a person the ability to achieve the full effect of such an event which possesses untapped potential for healing social interaction. There are non-theological norms to funerals, and conventional funeral homes actually work against the mourning process, existing as an appearance alienated from reality; however, maintaining a spiritual relationship through memorialization is still possible without false promises of immortality (such as over-compensating embalmmment or an upfront denial of the loss). We cope with mortality as we want to believe that identity is continuous.

The funerary space is not singular form, but should rather exist as a framework for mourners that encourages the cultivation of supportive relationships. Death has affected the entire congregation and establishes an inherent two-way relationship amongst the bereaved to each other. The ultimate objective of funeral goers is to receive strength and provide it amongst themselves in order to



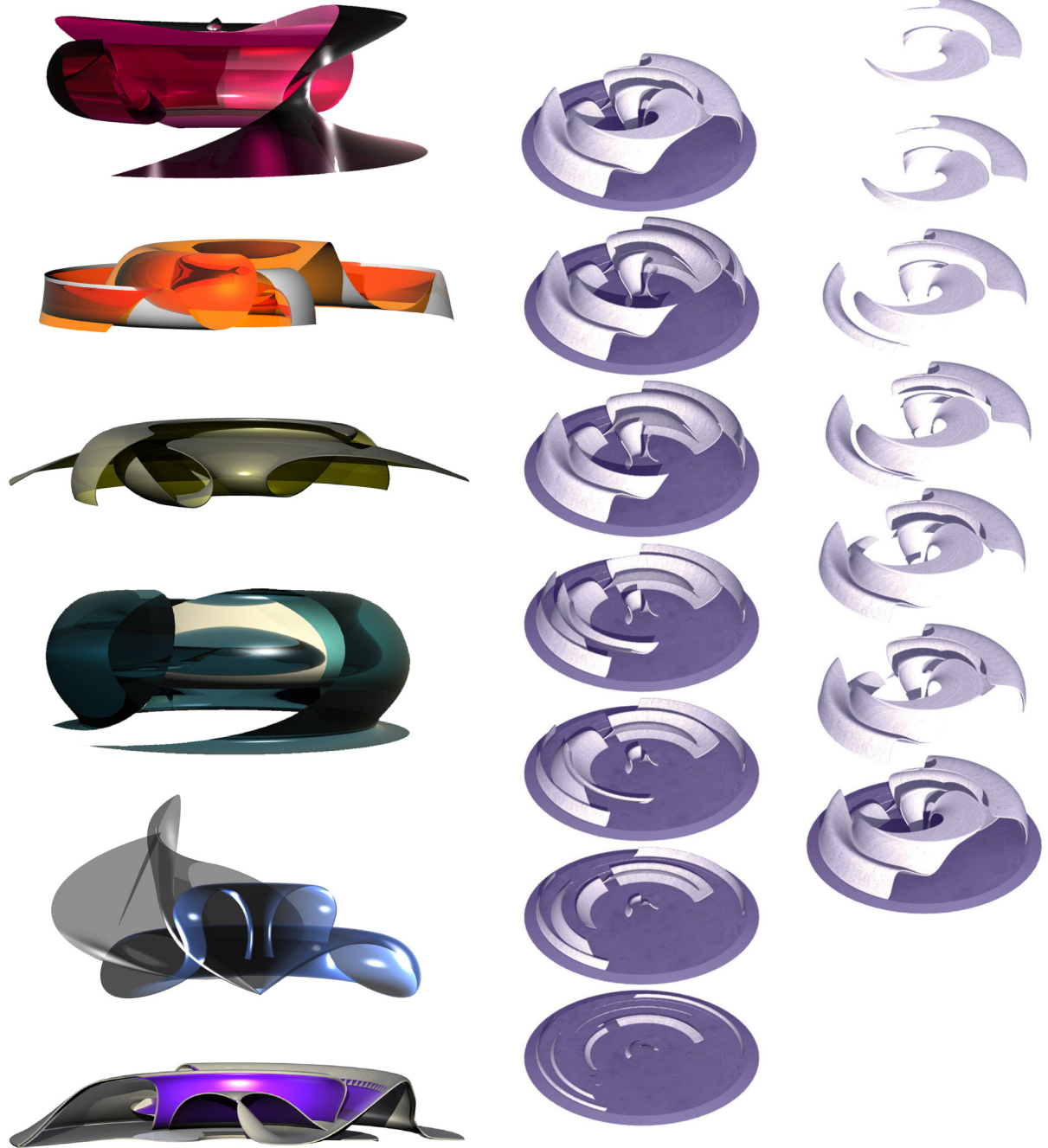


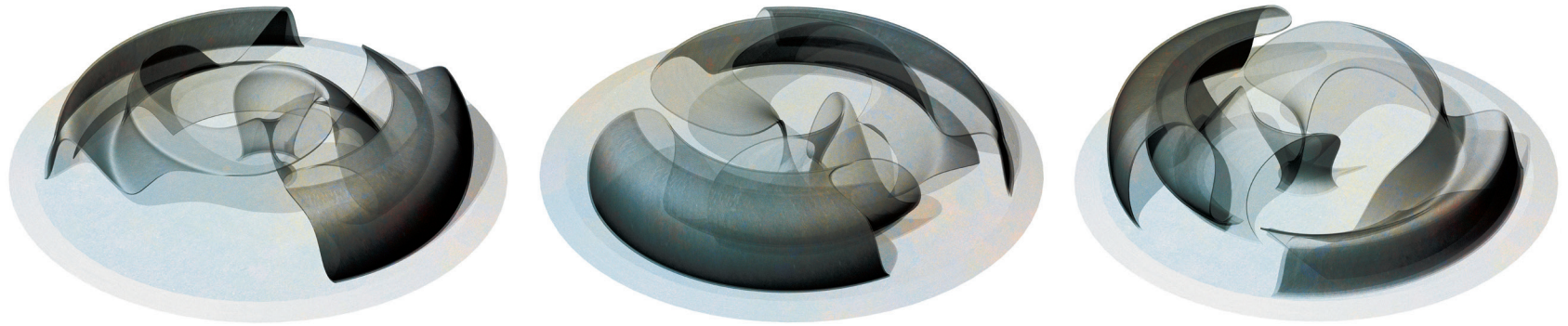
assimilate their loss; and so, bereavement is a shared experience and funerary value can only be restored by maximizing participation. Funerary space must reclaim its previous significance so that it may progress with society, rather than remaining a stale vestige of Victorian-era deprivation.

Due to their ancestors' intention, the typical, Victorian-style funeral home is coldly impersonal. This space exists as an effort to screen a bereaved family from the community, to privatize the funeral, which carries the implication that the surrounding community is unable or unwilling to accept and share in the mourner's feelings. If instead, architecture could operate in multiple states and as a responsive morphology of structure, funerary spaces could be much more appropriate for the tasks that must be accommodated and the social implications that must be addressed. Authentic emotions are simmering in the hearts of all the bereaved, whether from overwhelming grief for loss, or sympathy for loved ones who hurt, or simply the prospects of coping with mortality.

Conventional funeral homes majorly fail within their response to pluralism—the diversity of mourners in not only their cultural identities, but their own, personally perceived identities of themselves and to the decedent and other mourners. Mourners have a certain capacity for the reception of meanings and so it is up to the design to

- *Using architectural modeling software (Rhino5), an arbitrary spline was drawn which was then revolved around an arbitrary center. These forms are not thoroughly designed structures but their methods of digital construction speaks to the empowerment that transient architecture can provide for societal rites once the form has been freed from historical prescribed, “comfortable,” archetypes.*



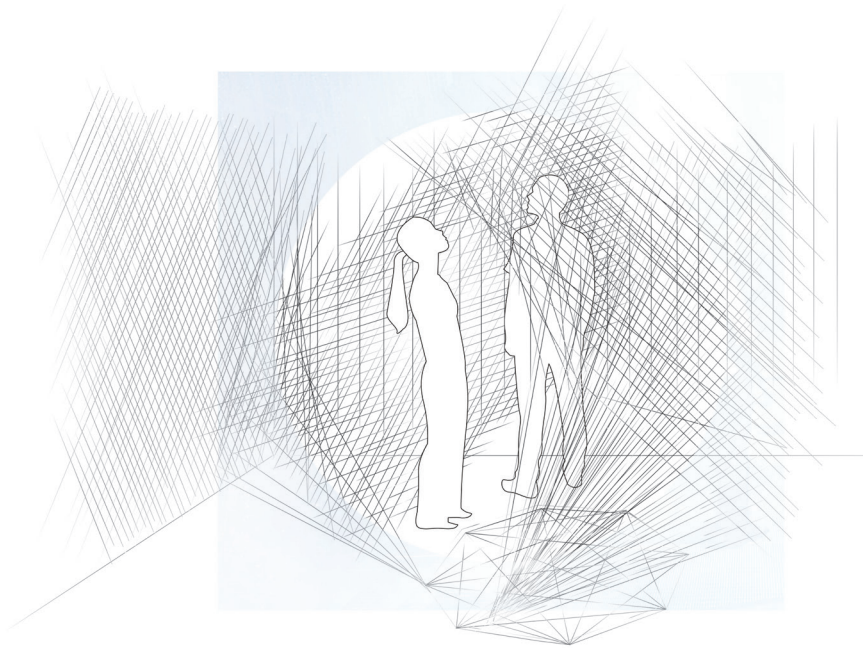


convey meaning effectively for universal and individual needs. Funerary architecture should move away from expressions of monumental rigidity and instead indicate to each of its users their capacities as an architect of their own experiences: an undetermined, alternative form of environmental situation is envisioned which depends its life and forms on participant action and invention. Art is healing and self-regulating, and demonstrates the capacity of the human mind to give form to an exemplary system of value. Especially within funerary space, the hearts and imaginations of the people will do far more than the physical materials.

- ▲ *Technology as an open resource for the extraordinary: Funeral services and architects can recruit technology in such a way that presents anchored demonstrations of technological applications as an alternative to the prescribed funerary program institutionalized program. Such an open-ended exploitation of technology's resources would provide evidence to a congregation that the space and event is actually an extension of their own individual wills and freedom*

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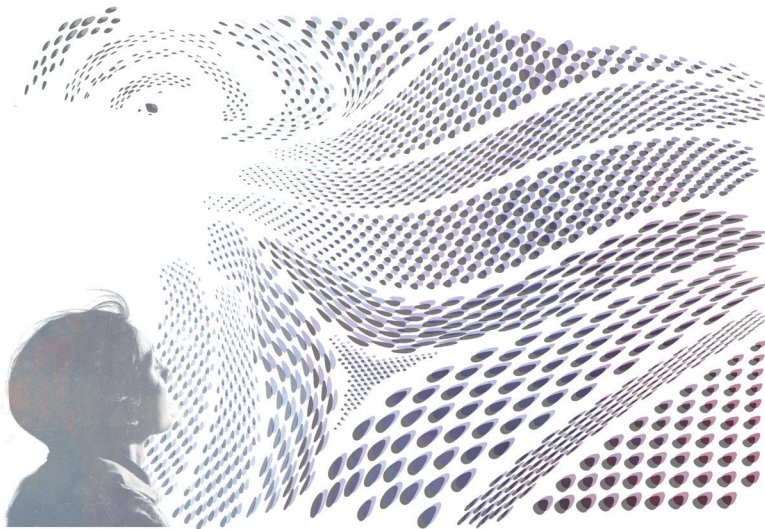


## Section 8: Collaborative Spectacle

*“Spectacle indicates the dynamic proportions by which the individual can mold his environment; it is the symbolic scale of excitement towards which the everyday yearns. Yet institutionalized spectacles (parades, festivals, displays etc.) fail because they are carefully circumscribed so as to disallow any inference or interference with the workday routine. The event is out of reach of the people’s grasp; the role given them is that of passive consumer without identity.*

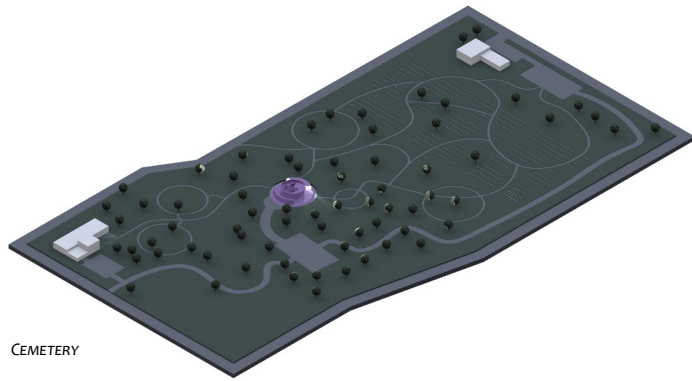
*The problem now is to realize those new forms of spectacle which are non-alienated, reaching the individual and embedding that scale of excitement which puts in his grasp an expanded territory to act in.”*

*-Concepts of an Operational Art (1969)*



The spectacle is a model of vitality for every day, meaning it indicates the dynamic parameters by which an individual may shape his/her environment. As it should be with most architectural endeavors, the design of a funeral home would, in its highest potential, yield a facility that inspires visitors and results in a positive and memorable experience.

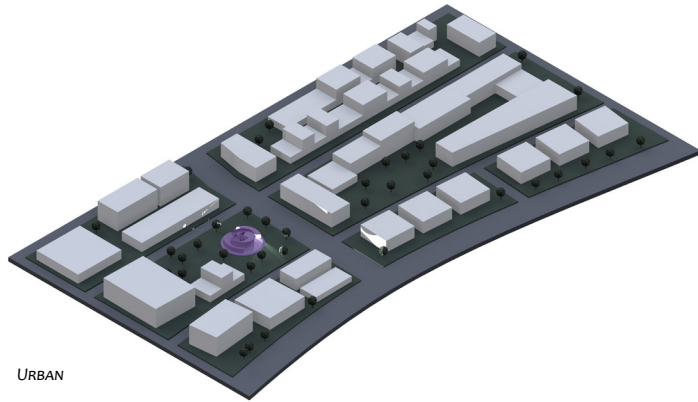




CEMETERY



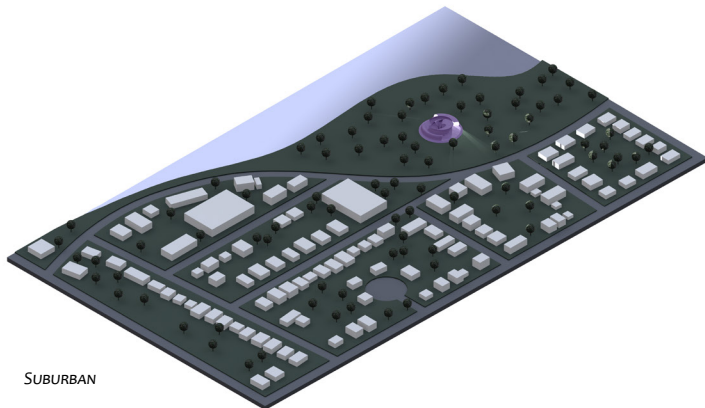
In this “post-modern” age of funeral services, society exhibits a disconnection from spatial rituals which has developed over centuries of attempting to sterilize grief. To move away from conventional and scripted forms, funerary architecture could depend its vitality on participation and invention, allowing mourners to embed their own scale of grief into an expanded funerary territory.



URBAN



The “expected” context of a funeral is the conventional, Victorian-style home, often disconnected from its cultural context. This context (or lack thereof) places incredibly negative restrictions on a “post-modern” funeral and its goers. Progressive funeral spaces can be made with the realistic intent to associate itself with conventional services and facilities, but the optimal design would seek to replace the “three-part” funeral altogether.

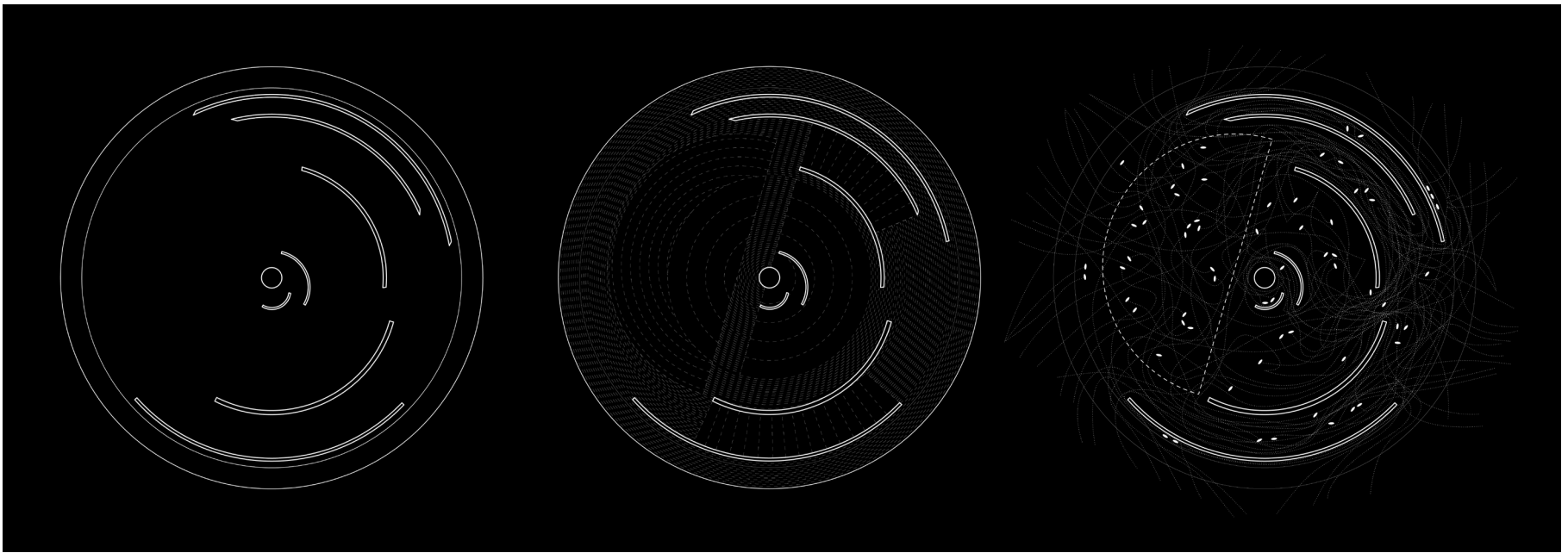


SUBURBAN



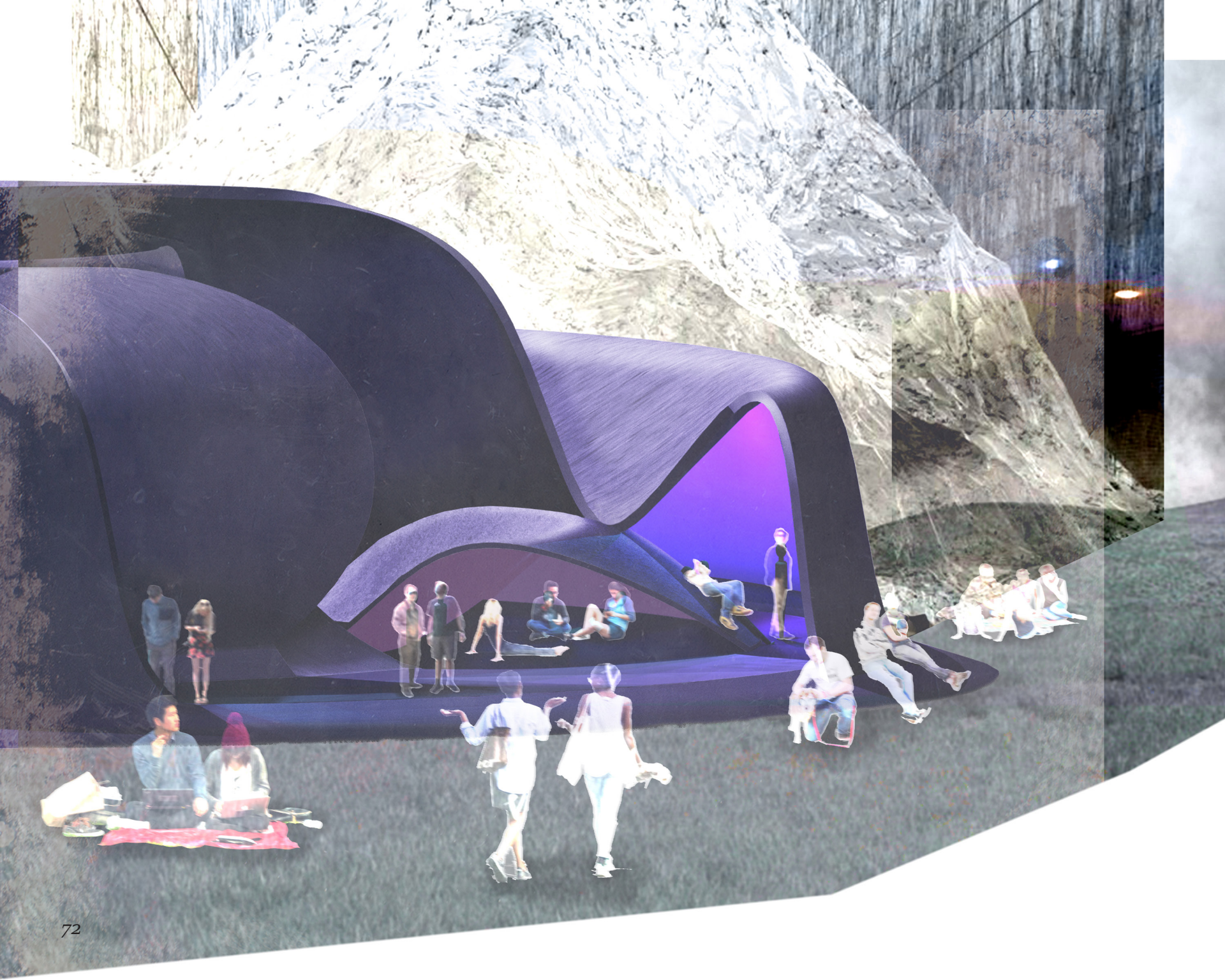
Funerary space should dissociate from this unresonant context and, once again, insert itself into potent, cultural centers. User-participation would be maximized and perhaps low-context cultural perceptions of death and funerals would heal and progress alongside other social gains.

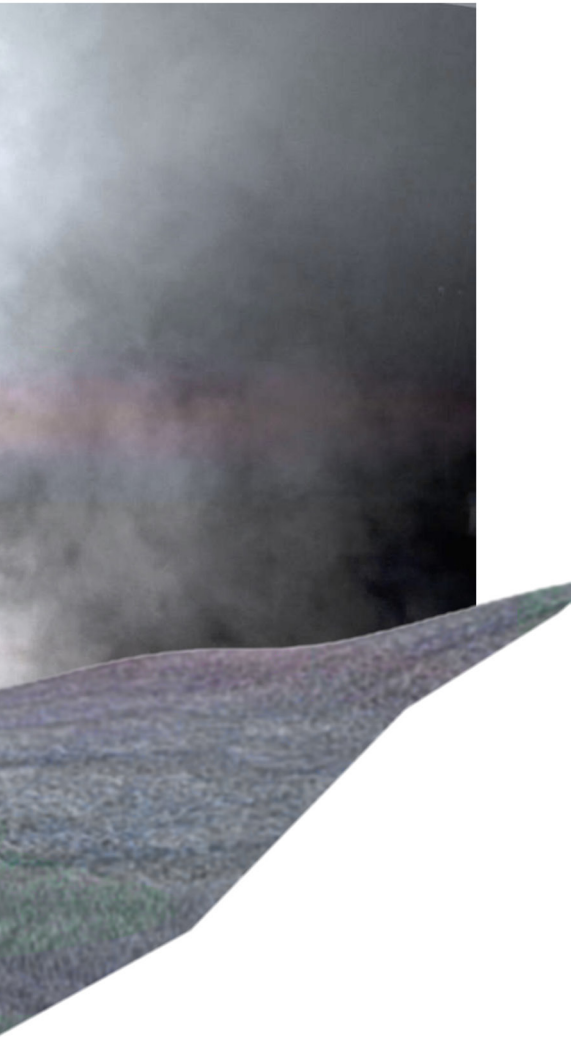




- ▲ *This particular concept can be approached from all sides, with two main entryways, one towards a communal “performance space” and one that frames entry to two corridors that utilize projection mapping.*

*The “performance” area is essentially a multi-use demonstration space where mourners may prepare an activity that activates memories and the livings’ relationship to the deceased. This could be a space for woodworking, painting, instrument-playing, playing a favorite band/music genre, or any hobby that interested the decedent. It isn’t necessarily the funeral director or architect’s job to tell the client their desires, but it is crucially important to present options and encourage individuality amongst those involved in the planning process. In reality, the space could be used for absolutely any purpose, but the ultimate goal of such a funerary act is to interact with legacy of the deceased.*





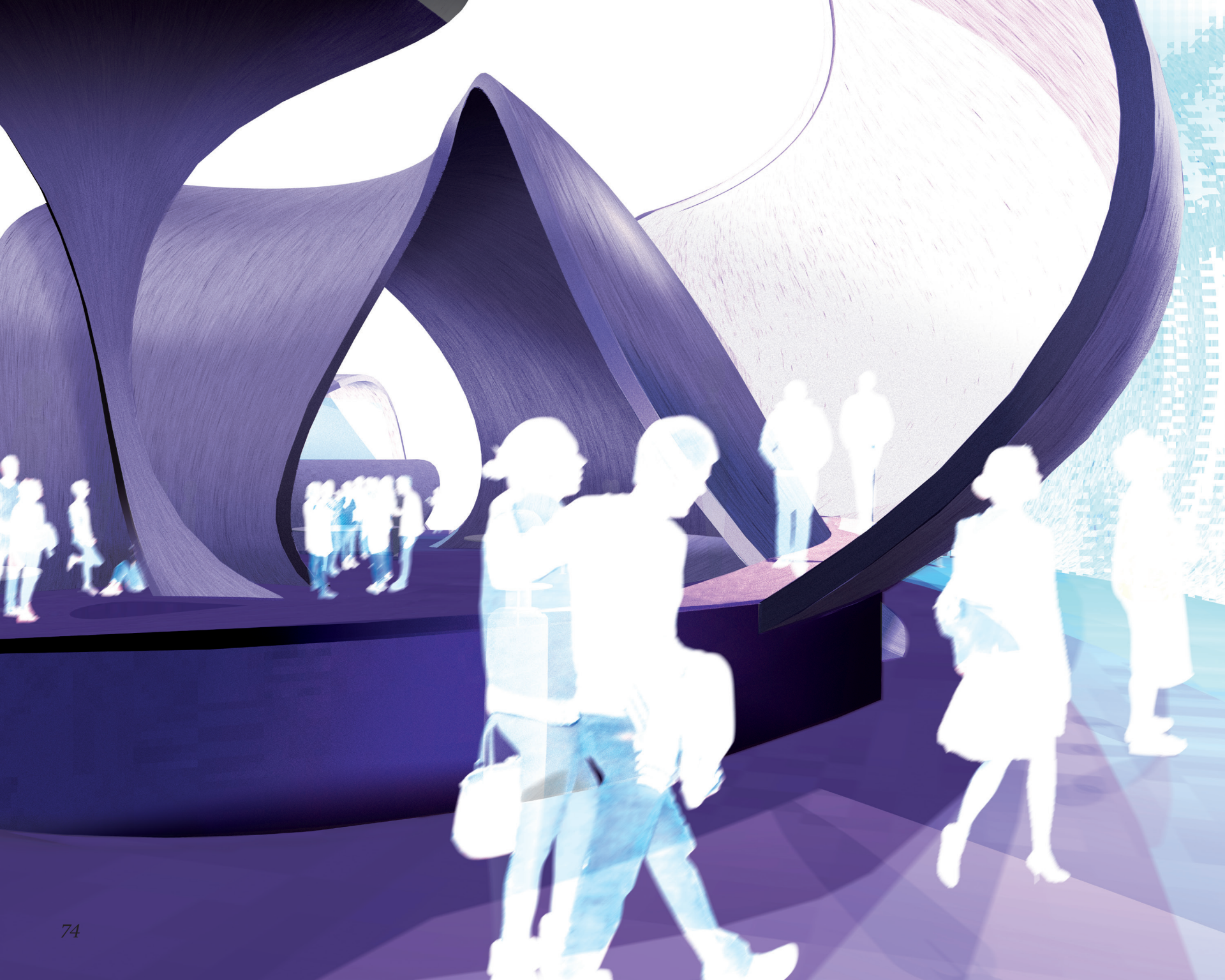
By removing unnecessary uses of space that are otherwise standard in funeral homes (the casket selection room, embalming room, etc.), circulation becomes soluble which more readily encourages active memorialization. Circumambulation has positive meditative effects and provides only one example of simple architectural interventions that could allow the funeral space to take momentous strides.

Another interesting prospect of the funeral's future is the ever-increasing absence of the corpse to receive traditional death rites. This could be due to psychological preferences of the family or choices of the decedent, such as donation to science, cremation, or unforeseen circumstances; further, this indicates a dwindling reverence for traditional death rites and officiation. This prospect may alleviate the time restraints that once hung above the services as a constant pressure.

Additionally, the absence of the body and disinterest for convention further indicates the general consumer's inability to relate to tradition, as well as their desire to seek out and accept alternatives. In typical funerals, the absence of the body can leave people quotably "gypped," understandable

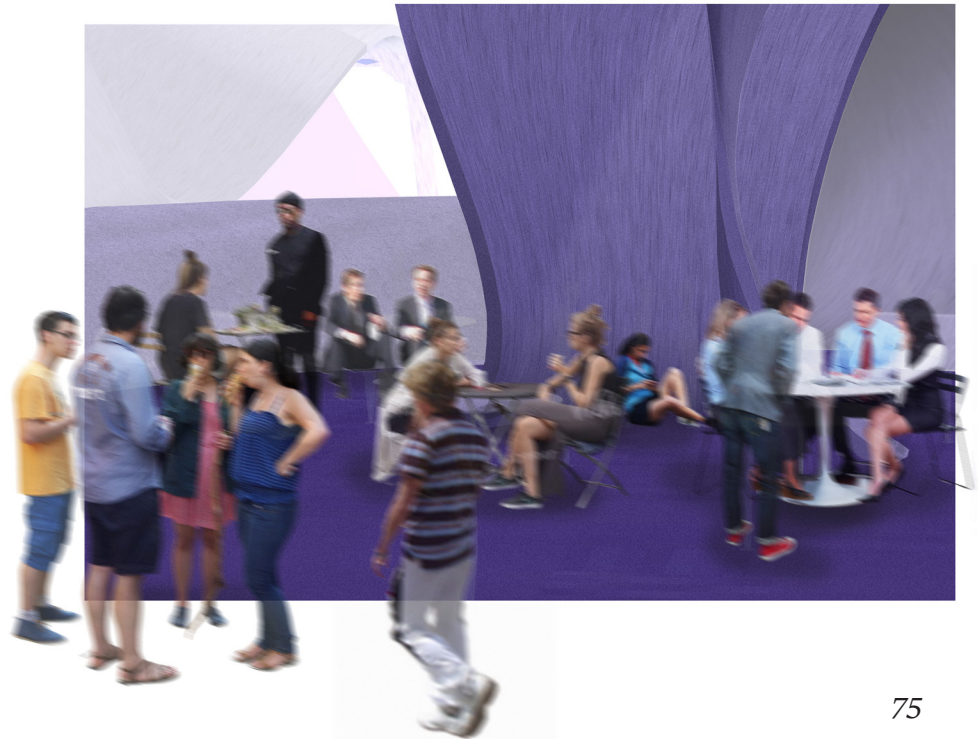
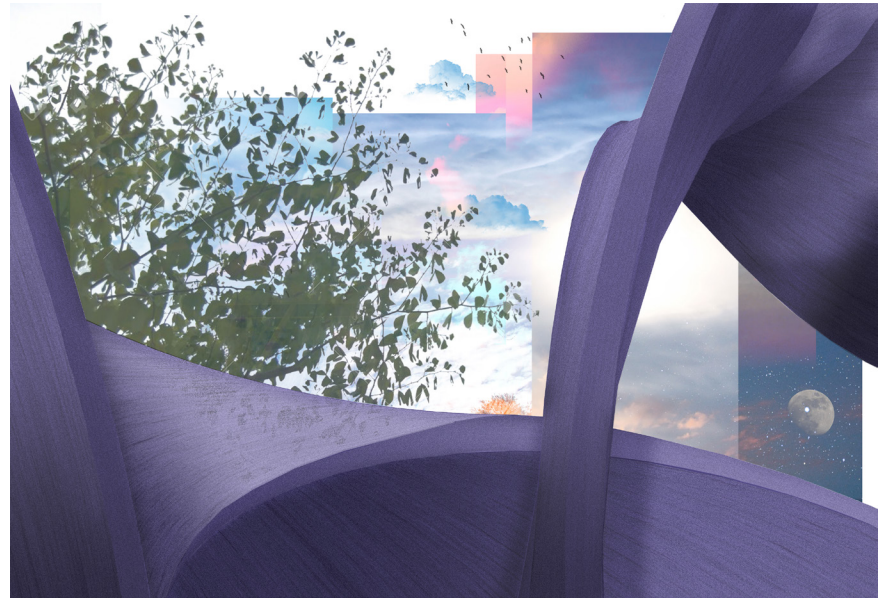
in a way considering there isn't anything else to "see" or "do." In departure for space that was inherently interactive, rather than intentionally suffocative, the funeral would need not worry to provide the distraction of a body, as the environment would provide far more stimulation and beneficial interactions.

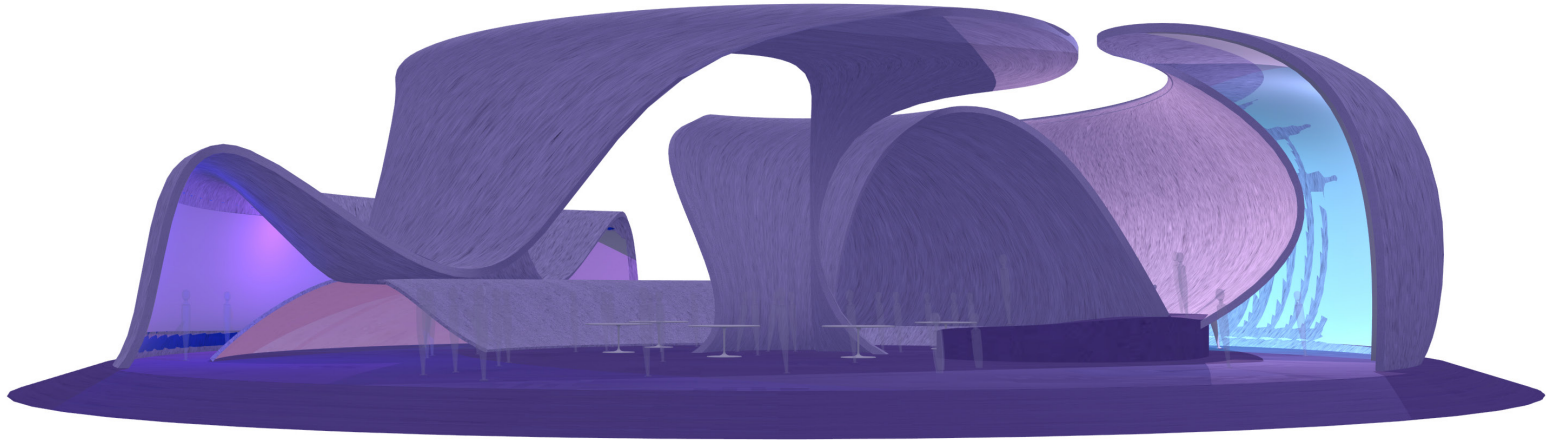
Through the use of projection mapping, elaborate digital artworks can be created and, better yet, curated by an entire network of bereaved individuals. Due to the increase of time that the absence of the body is beginning to accommodate, the "main event" of a funeral could be digital installation that is, in effect, a collaborative effort of the entire congregation. This could include the decedent's favorite media, such as film and video clips, photographs, music, or any other digital representations of the mourners' relationships with the dead. In this way, nobody would be left out in the therapeutic planning process and the outside community may feel more inclined to partake in a stranger's otherwise public gathering. Furthermore, countless invaluable relationships and memories could be rekindled or established in the preliminary curation process.



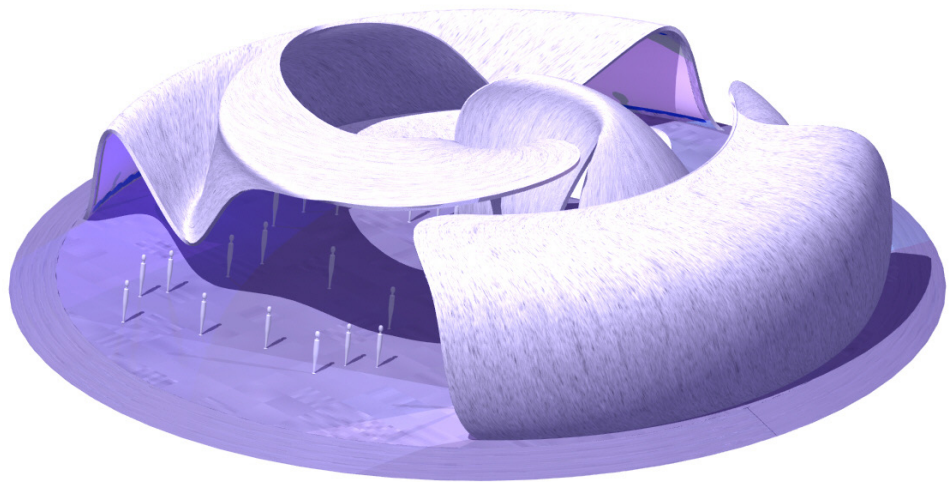
A presence in nature is becoming increasingly important to those tasked with planning a funeral. Many choose to have an emphasis on the cyclical nature of life, rather than focusing the event on casketed remains. Funeral services are still reflective of the decedent's personality, but immersion in nature offers a more elegant means of evoking social situations. An open-air structure, or otherwise extremely public and accessible, allows for more flexible use and prolonged duration of the funeral event.

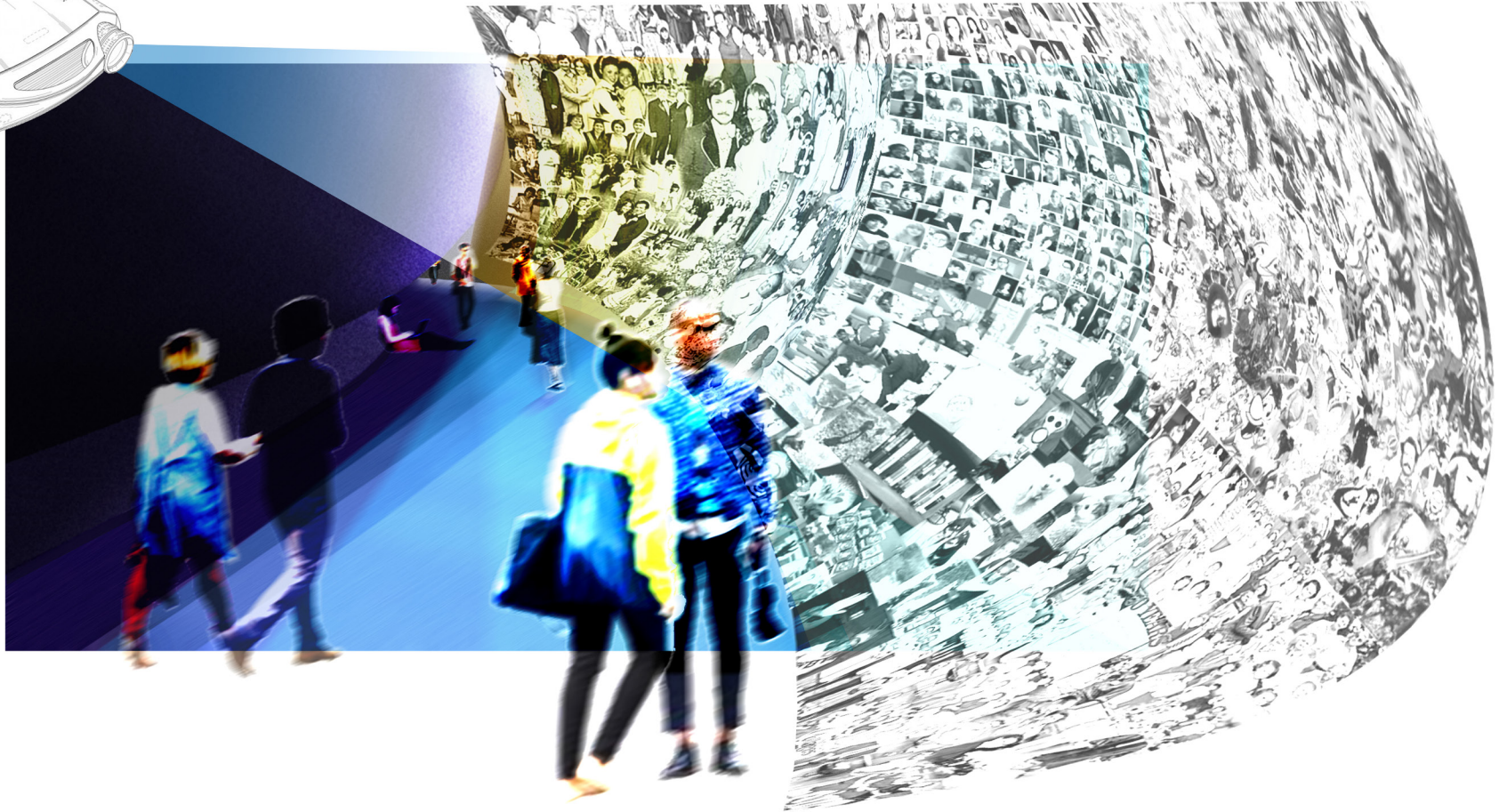
When digital projection technology is intertwined, the experience becomes only more accessible and useful to the larger public, meaning one digital funeral installation could be potentially experienced by strangers half-way across the country. As a thoughtful, loving collaboration, such an experience would be inherently interesting to strangers, as death is always provoking and the things we do in bereavement are consistently intriguing. The funeral was always meant to be a collaboration and to be shared with humanity.





The architect's goal is to design for the funeral which is not dedicated to the status quo but which seeks to preserve or restyle those elements that can be demonstrated to be consistent with the function of the funeral as a valuable means for helping the mourners. Presenting concepts of continuity and discontinuity, the funeral dramatizes the transitions associated with grief and affirms a finality, thus encouraging the performance of newly constructed rituals, inward and outward, amounting to a positively transforming and uplifting experience.









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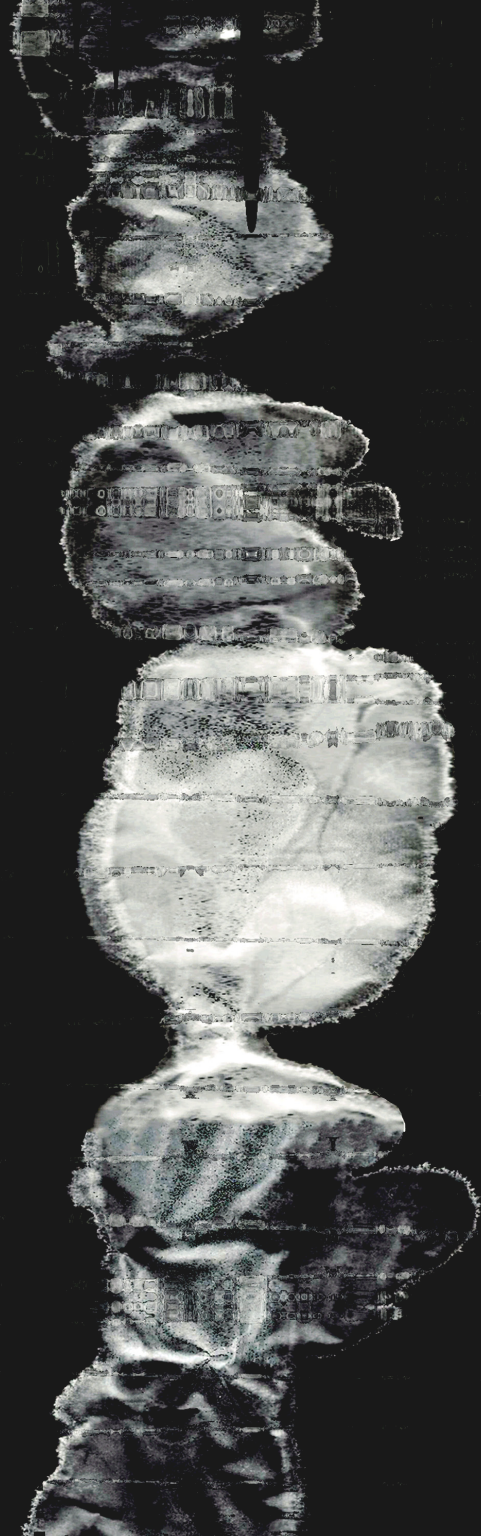
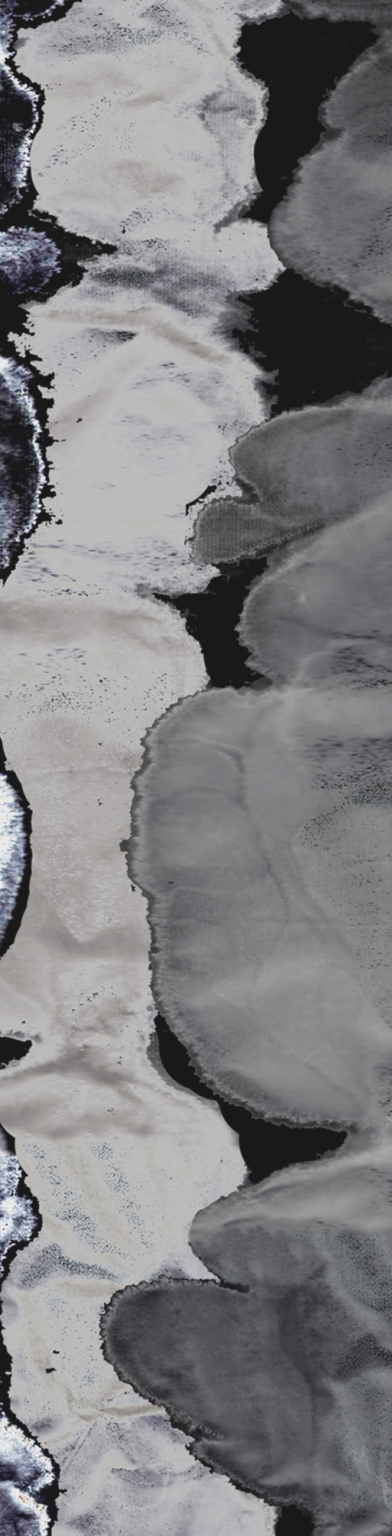
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## Appendix A:

Phenomenology of the Cemetery  
Written for Prof. Dr. David Koukal  
Special Problems in Architecture:  
Phenomenology (Fall 2016)

“Cemeteries serve both functional and emotional purposes. They provide for disposal of corpses and, far more important, provide a place where the living can communicate with the dead. They are -thus both sacred and profane, in the true sense of Eliade's concept.”

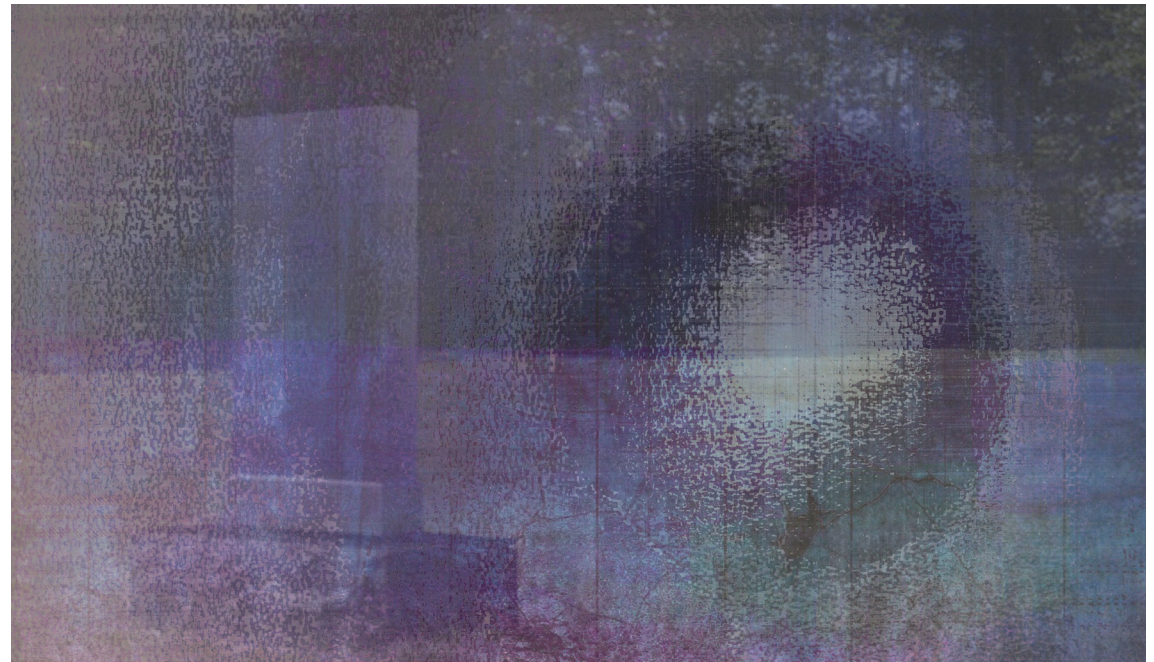
In another sense, cemeteries illuminate the impermanence of our lives and the solubility of our memories. The cemetery is an incredibly rich space, fascinatingly sharing across its population of the dead not a single appearance of truly identical spaces—a result of the individuality of life and the nuances of death.

Through a phenomenological approach this will be an examination of the cemetery, the public's most prominent and accessible deathscape, meaning they exist in vast numbers and typically requires only mobility to enter. The goal of phenomenology,

in brief, is the study of appearances and done by being mindfully open to an object's gestures in order to reach a description of the object's essence, or otherwise unstrippable qualities. As all studies, phenomenology is done through methods, my preferred being phenomenologist Samuel Mallin's body hermeneutics , which understands phenomena under categories of experience in socio-affectivity, motility, and perception. Aided by the parameters of these categories I am exploring the schema

of the cemetery as a cultural landscape and an architectural device of time which provides a cognitive framework for both archiving and retrieving memories.

Taking the architect's role in public service very seriously, I have a desire to explore architectural interventions involved with the process of death, and so the cemetery is an important space to study due to its accessibility to the general public. I want my description of the cemetery to come into fruition in



order to understand what essential qualities should remain, which can and should be abandoned due to incompatibility, and which should now evolve to resolve issues of contemporary death processes. In future design-endavors, I would like to devise which proportion of aforementioned qualities lead to a higher sense of commitment and appreciation to the consolidation and retrieval of memories offered by cemeteries, which I would hope leads to more positively transformative visitations.

A phenomenology of the cemetery could be done indirectly, meaning one could attempt to describe the essence of a cemetery without having visited one, and then one could do the phenomenology in a direct method, meaning it could be done in a manner highlighted by direct immersion. I found that the essence could best come forth through a direct phenomenological experience, having visited numerous cemeteries in the Midwest of the United States and being conscious of the methods I had at my disposal. Personally, I have

always been humbled and fascinated by my experiences, having reflected upon imposing circumstances, such as memorialized megaliths or a disorientating procession. Excessive political or social statements that exist in a cemetery's jurisdiction (i.e. domineering tombs, disproportionate plots, or immortalized memorials) can begin to blur the more profound gestures of equality and collectivity that the space can evoke—and by extension, the essence.

The cemetery rewards curiosity, offering the opportunities to unearth hidden moments from life and memory, thus encoding the landscape with the shades of our ancestors and reminding us of aspects of life that had in one moment deemed preservation. Whether a visitor has a lived relationship to an occupant, the cemetery and its community stirs recognition of equal and collective death that can be dampened or blurred by the presence of excessive political, familial, and social hierarchy. However, I will claim that these dimensions, portrayed through heterogeneous clusters of

graves and commemorative objects are still essential to the nuanced, cognitive journey that is invited through cemetery visitation.

On a cultural level, cemeteries become sub/urban uses of land, a “placedowntheroad,” meaning a place that is familiar to all of us. However, it is interesting to think they often were not planned or intended at all, being somewhat of an afterthought, highlighting a struggle a human struggle with a denial towards death. In America, cemeteries frequently appeared on the outskirts of town, only becoming incorporated through the annexation of further territory. Some cemeteries are planned, such as family burial plots and churchyard burials, however most that we are familiar with in America have formed more spontaneously, reinforcing the ephemeral representation of “where we may fall.” Like many mortuary regulations, the formation of cemeteries does stem from health and legal issues of the past; however, a phenomenon of spatial preference and result manifests from the location of the digging of the initiating grave.

This provides a direct example of cemeteries becoming geographically woven into the social fabric of a greater context.

Cemeteries have grown in a way that is gridded, centrifugal, concentric, asymmetric, in leeway to natural barriers, downward a slope, etc.... and so, nonetheless, a pattern persists. As stated by phenomenologist David Seamon, a powerful consequence of practicing phenomenology is “to become more sensitive to the lived world, probe aspects of daily living that were taken for granted and less noticed before.” As one traverses the grounds of a cemetery or scans the horizon, these patterns emerge within spatial and other-sensory rhythms. From the capabilities of our perceptions to these patterns and rhythms will grant further access to the archival cemetery.

As a gesture, the cemetery reaches out to its community, asking them to peruse its archives while providing spatial strategies to donate one-of-a-kind additions (a new memorial), and to retrieve intended

memories (such as returning to a loved one’s grave), but also to identify new mental images that are evoked by the presences of the unknown. Phenomenologist Jacques Derrida (b. 1930-2004) argued that the condition for possibility for the archive is to always exist, but to exist in a state of doubt involving both endless recovery and record, but also erasure and revision at the same time. This is where I draw my comparison, as the condition couldn’t be more true for the cemetery, being a deathscape constructed over time as a collection and record of the past that continues to resonate in the present. A grave may stand at threshold, stripped of yet brimming with identification, floating between the interests of the family and then those of the collective (unfamiliar visitors), the corpse and the corpus .

Phenomenologist and architect Juhani Pallasmaa (b. 1936) wrote in *Inhabiting Time*, “As deterioration, erosion and entropy are the unavoidable fate of all material constructions, the ideal of perfect and unchanging form is bound

to be a momentary illusion, and eventually a false ideal.” This, again, is evidentially potent in the cemetery, from cracked headstones and moss covered statues, holding on to a figment of eternity but nonetheless emitting a beauty of permanence through illusion. To receive the signals provided by the cemetery’s illusions, there is a performative aspect to the cemetery we must tap in to, solidifying that the dead exist whether or not they can be seen; we make judgments, whether we can help it or not, based on the little information and signs we may collect. This may be the simple dates and epitaphs, helping us discern age, genealogy, religious beliefs, or even senses of humor. At a cemetery, there are only few “tenants” that we can each relate to within us (i.e. a relative or friend), for unless we are extremely popular, the occupants of a cemetery more often relate to an infinite other.

Signs and traces lie also in the materiality of the space, the illusions of the cemetery, but also the memories of the deceased, are transformed



into a representation of space, many times becoming literal components of space-perception, like a plot in a cemetery, a plaque at memorial, or an urn in a mausoleum... Again, the imagery becomes speculative but the essential quality here is that the cemetery is always a collection of artefacts, signs, sedimented patterns of activity and practices embedded in the fabric of the built environment . The cemetery teases with total recall, but never fully delivers it and, just like Derrida's archive, becomes a culturally compelling fantasy, but nonetheless a multiplicit record that can reveal not just voices that may otherwise be unheard, but the soundings of memory.

There exists an interest amongst the public to maintain a collective ownership of cemeteries, viewing them as crucial open spaces. Collective ownership may encompass respect to a certain degree, however I think it more lends to an idea of defending a sense of serenity within community. A sense of community can diminish through the erection of a domineering fence, barbed wires,

or single fortress-like entrances, but these are variant and political statements and yet again smudge the phenomenological lens, ever striving towards the elusive essence. Still, however diminished, the phenomena persist of the spatiality within the borders, however diminished for the perceivers on the outside.

Through perception (back in regards to body hermeneutics), I'll claim that an essential quality of cemeteries is to possess a set of topographic parameters, whether as explicit as a road or a lake, or as ambiguous as the scattering of the last outlying graves. Now we're here, within these limits. Some parameters are tight, while others allow for complete immersion and disorientation. Cemeteries are an ironic reflection of the towns they are situated in, embodying a microcosm of social values, representing, to an almost humorous degree, 'good' and 'bad' neighborhoods (through love or abandonment), zoning influences (through structured or loose organization), and suburban vs. urban tastes (such as familial

segregation or intermingled dispersal). Though phenomenology seeks to find the bare, essential qualities that describe an object, the process must, too, seek out the inessential. The cultural reflections in cemeteries should be bracketed, or set aside, and at this distance did I see that the essential quality at stake is that this 'cultural reflection' occurs in every instance of a cemetery, whether descriptively or vague. Zooming out just to the borders, the necrogeography of cemeteries often exist as stark contrast to their surrounding context, the phenomenology here is concerned with both singular and repetitious death and to those who may reckon with the surrounding questions.

As history generally tells us, the church originally had the body, but as odors began emitting from the floor the bodies were moved to the cemetery, denoting an intentional demarcation of space for the dead from the living. Intended as a protection for us, the cemetery is better described as protection for them, the dead. Now that we come

to their realm, our defenses now lie in not being overcome by the gaze of otherness. As we become more alert toward temporal rhythms, the cemetery appears as an integrated landscape, encoded with traces of unity, sacrifice, longevity, early demise, love and abandonment. A visitor may become overwhelmed by the multiplicity of forms and residues, as memory competes with visual stimuli to evoke a certain experience across a topographic reality of mourning and remembrance of not only the dead but of the past, as well as a vision toward the future with the demised.

Pallasmaa continued in *Inhibiting Time* that “Architecture articulates our experiences of time as much as of space, though we are often not conscious of it. There are slow and patient spaces as well as hurried ones.” I assert that a cemetery is a patient one, “unaffected by the nervous rush of the contemporary world.” Holding passing impressions but constructed within a work of time, the movement through a cemetery is a slowed down experience, and

possesses an essence of permanence and encountered as a tranquil duration. The necrogeography folds and unfolds time, as the act of the present (i.e. the funeral ritual)

brings the cemetery back from its place in history. A cemetery truly does hold a population, molding the deceased into a community as shown through a familial bonding



of clustered graves or the fraternity of a mass military interment, also mingling amongst single narratives embodied by structures (such as lone plots). Cemeteries reduce the dead to images or traces, built off of the dead that exist in our imagination and constructed memories of a collective past.

The cemetery accommodates the beautiful death, the remembered death, as well as the neutral death, but rarely does a cemetery provide traces of a tragic death in which the body's overseers condemned that their memory wasn't worthy of integration into the deathscape (i.e. criminals). In a pessimistic excerpt about "using heritage as a part of urban regeneration," the author Kevin Hetherington describes that "the presentation of history as heritage is part of a culture industry that rather than helping us to remember the past actually produces a form of amnesia and forgetfulness in which above all the history of practice becomes reified in monumental geographical sites ." In relation to the archival cemetery

I would agree with this statement but, whether or not the cemetery is viewed as propagandized "amnesia," providing access for remembering the beautiful deaths is simply a part of the cemeteries essence...

Commenting from Jorge Luis Borges remark that 'There is an eternity in beauty,' Pallasmaa provides insight again who shares, "Beauty is a promise; the experience of beauty evokes the presence of apparently permanent qualities and values – an illusion, no doubt, but mentally an important one. " In contemporary society, the essence of the cemetery appears even more readily than in the past, as the true venture of landscapes have only become more visible with time. This is assuming there are more "old" cemeteries than new, meaning the cemetery I am familiar with in my imagination has already receded back to nature. Cemeteries, when kept in a lush state or unkempt and overgrown, may stir thoughts of regeneration, fertility, and abundance—an obviously ironic perspective to have when traversing through a space populated by the dead.

Many are enthusiastically drawn to cemeteries as objects of geographical study but may form impressions on a more subconscious level, especially, of course, when studied through a phenomenological lens. It has been hopefully made clear that this space is not just a graveyard—simply a place to leave dead bodies. The cemetery is a multi-use landscape, providing natural formations of viewing corridors—such as peering through lines of trees or down a main pathway toward a skyline of monuments and headstones). The space welcomes repositories of natural diversity, as cemeteries tend to serve as refuges for wild or nearly wild fauna of the vicinity and often become important sites for individual and social recreation . It becomes easy to compare a cemetery to a 'contemplative' park: we move through it almost the same as we go through motions of jogging, bird watching, hunting for lichens, or in idly walking, treating the space like an outdoor historical installation, moving as an outside intervention on this social record.

Furthermore, in comparison of cemeteries to parks, they both possess an intermingling sense of community with social ritual and possess sometimes ambiguous or explicit demarcation of individual, mass, public, and private importance. The description of the cemetery is not as simple as ‘a park with an added use of body depository,’ because unlike a park there is a heightened sense of sensitivity, exhibited by unplanned footpaths having been eroded away with care and through areas that don’t desecrate the inhabitants’ space. Our sensitivities to death are heightened, striking in the human of us powerful feelings and deep reflections. We know that it is here within the parameters of the cemetery that we are allowed to express lamentation, and whether or not the provided symbols are used for their ‘historical’ intended purpose, the cemetery provides literal topographical grounds for constructing meaning within this life. Though activated by our presence, we almost want to paradoxically preserve the cemetery’s underutilization, recognizing and

wanting to maintain this spatial bridge between consciousness and unconsciousness in a state of undisturbedness, as we may not be so ready to delve across.

A cemetery’s mission is inherently, delicately balanced, hovering in a threshold between honor and trauma, creating sensitivities towards ‘memories-halted’ due to loss and ‘memories-gained’ due to traces of mental images ingrained into the topography. The architectural ‘success’ of cemeteries should not be based off economic measures, but rather how well they present and collect the memories and emotive defenses against loss—a similar model for successful archives. Mourning is ambiguous, we don’t know for fact what we have lost but try to make sense of it through ritual and ceremony in search of closure and the cemetery gestures to us to do just that. Accordingly, this space very often reveals a somber song; however, the attuned listener may become uplifted and humbled by the softly intertwined notes of life, from the birds and squirrels to the flowers

and sculptures that demarcate care for plots and the grounds in general. A phenomenological ability of the cemetery is to incorporate the dead into a state of body politics that possess an infinite influence on the living, being dormant to some or activated in others, but essential to the cemetery’s description. Additionally, they provide space for permanent memorial and have become a model for honoring the dead; furthermore, cemeteries open a dialogue with the past, and offer strategies for the consolidating and retrieving of memories through providing a civic, spiritual, and cognitive framework. Beliefs in imminence and transcendence can be both satisfied with an attuned intent, as we become reminded through the cyclical nature of the cemetery’s display of growth, decay, regeneration, and embodiment of social attitudes of love and interest, folded into the landscape one patch at a time, waiting patiently for recovery.

## ENDNOTES

- 1: From Francaviglia, Richard V. "The Cemetery as an Evolving Cultural Landscape." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 61, no. 3, 1971, pg. 501. Web.
- 2: From Samuel Mallin, "An Unpublished Manuscript on the Method of Body Hermeneutics," with a brief forward by Astrida Neimanis; edited by D.R. Koukal. I also want to point out that a bounded imagination is particularly useful in phenomenology, but that the method, like all, should be used cautiously but I find it as a preferred choice as its useful for structure and clarification.
- 3: From Pallasmaa, Juhani. "Inhabiting Time." *Architectural Design* 86.1 (2016): 57. Web. "Historical settings connect us directly with time and the past: the layering of styles and the juxtaposition of different uses and activities – commonplace and ceremonial, utilitarian and symbolic – place us comfortably in the continuum of lives through centuries."
- 4: "Toward a Phenomenology of the Public Cemetery." *World History*. N.p., 14 July 2015. Web.
- 5: Read further from Harvey, Thomas. "Sacred Spaces, Common Places: The Cemetery in the Contemporary American City." *Geographical Review*, vol. 96, no. 2, 2006, pp. 295–312. Web. 07 Dec. 2016. He provides this internal reference "Nineteenth-century Romantic "rural cemeteries," long engulfed by urbanization, are no longer highly popular country retreats. Desires for more active recreation spaces have generated new types of parks, and widespread automobile ownership has made the countryside more accessible. The type and degree of passive recreation that once took place in cemeteries like River View is not as popular as it once was (Schuyler and O'Donnell 2000).
- 6: Seamon, David. *A Geography of the Lifeworld*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1979.
- 7: Naas, Michael. "History's Remains: Of Memory, Mourning, and the Event." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 33, 2003, from abstract. Web.
- 8: "Toward a Phenomenology of the Public Cemetery." *World History*. N.p., 14 July 2015. Web.
- 9: From Pallasmaa, Juhani. "Inhabiting Time." *Architectural Design* 86.1 (2016): 57. Web. 07 Dec. 2016
- 10: Hetherington, Kevin. "Rhythm and Noise: The City, Memory and the Archive." *The Sociological Review* 61 (2013): pg. 17. Web. 07 Dec. 2016.
- 11: *Necrogeography is the geography of burial practices*. (GIS Lounge)
- 12: Read further from Derrida, J., (1994), *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, New York: Routledge. Derrida continues his long meditation on the nature of the other and the gaze of the other from Husserl to

Levinas by suggesting that mourning has to do with incorporating not just the deceased, but their gaze, a gaze that makes us responsible before the deceased and that can be responded to only as a kind of absolute imperative. It is this gaze that makes all mourning, according to Derrida, at once necessary and impossible, necessary insofar as the work of mourning involves incorporating the friend, coming to terms with his or her death within ourselves, and impossible insofar as the singularity of the friend, that which must be incorporated, that gaze that . rst calls us to be responsible, always exceeds our subjectivity and our capacity to make the other— here, the deceased other— our own. Hence mourning is always related to the impossible incorporation of a gaze that constitutes for us an infinite demand, a gaze that always hovers between someone and something, the completely identified and the unidentifiable, the knowable and the unknown.

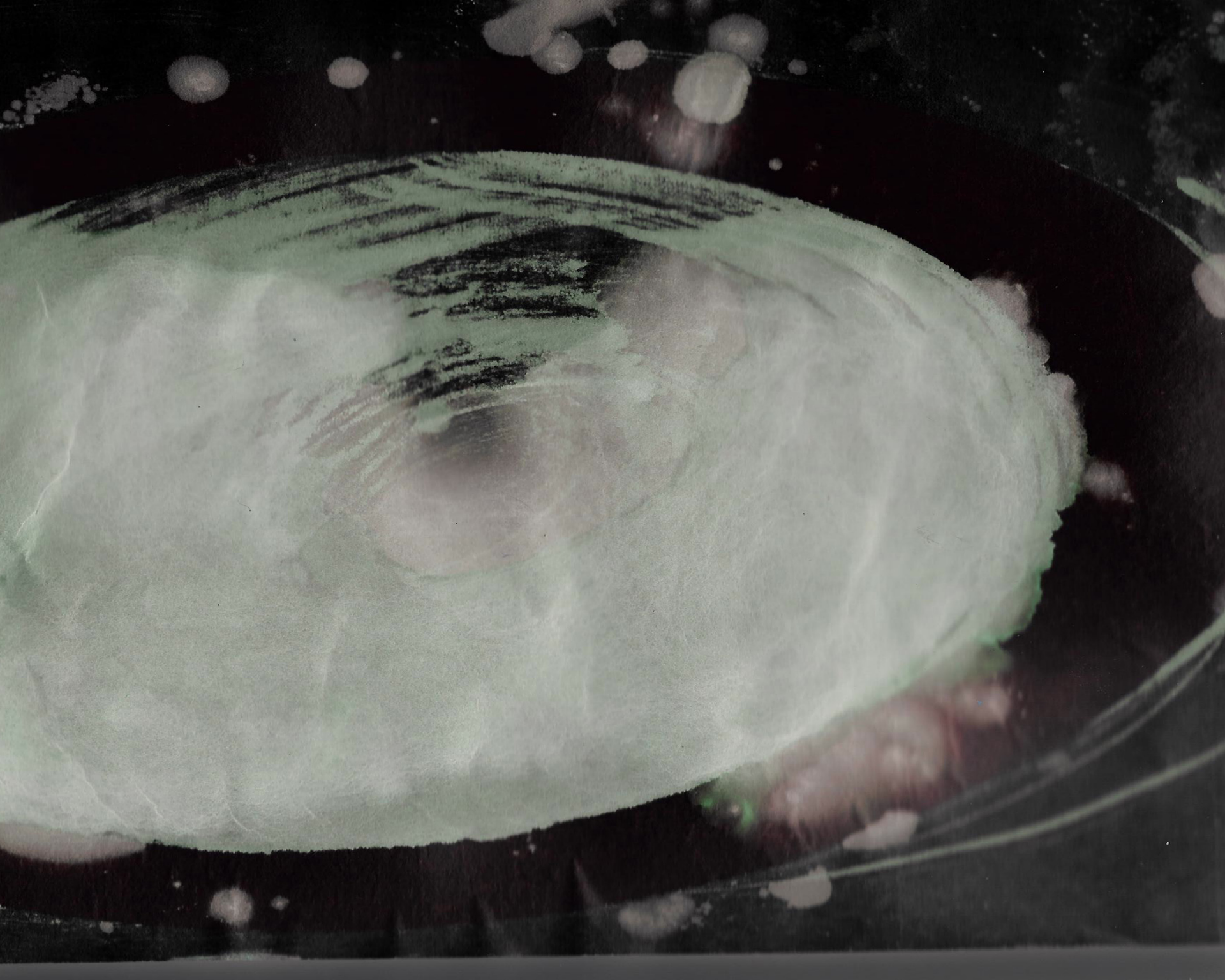
- 13: From Hetherington, Kevin. "Rhythm and Noise: The City, Memory and the Archive." *The Sociological Review* 61 (2013): pg. 18. Web. 07 Dec. 2016.
- 14: From Pallasmaa, Juhani. "Inhabiting Time." *Architectural Design* 86.1 (2016): 54. Web.
- 15: From Harvey, Thomas. "Sacred Spaces, Common Places: The Cemetery in the Contemporary American City." *Geographical Review*, vol. 96, no. 2, 2006, pp. 295–312. Web. "The authors of a British study noted: "But not every cemetery visit is to attend a particular grave. Where it has become more of an historic site than an active cemetery, people comment upon the special qualities which are unique to such a place, emphatic that cemetery and park experiences are quite different" sacred space, Francis, Kellaher, and Neophytou 2000,39). It was also noted that "Cemeteries across the nation have taken on new meanings and are being used for purposes other than as grave sites. As cemetery space is filled, new burials decline, and neighborhoods change, many cemeteries have lost their traditional social connection with nearby neighborhoods."
- 16: Read further: Tainter, Joseph A. "Spatial Organisation and Social Patterning in the Kaloko Cemetery, North Kona, Hawaii." *Archaeology & Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1976, pg. 91. "Mortuary ritual involves an interaction between the social personality of the deceased individual and the social personalities of the living participants (Saxe, 1970). Since ritualized behavior reflects the social relationships between the deceased and the living is commonly engaged in upon the death of a member of a community, and since much of this ritualized behavior finds an expression in the archaeological record, mortuary data may potentially reflect the range of social personalities occurring in past societies."

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