WINNERS OF
DESIGN FOR DEATH

JUNE 2013
EMERGENCE
PIERRE RIVIÈRE AND ENZO PASCUAL
France

Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed.

This project aims to make the cemetery a reservoir of life, a place of peace and a place of worship for the families and friends of the deceased. The concept consists of two parts. The underground section comprises a highly biodegradable coffin or urn. The upper part comprises a reservoir of life in direct connection with the coffin or urn and a seat for visitors to sit and meditate. These two modules are produced with biological concrete, improving the growth of micro-organisms and absorbing some of the atmospheric CO2. The plant produce electricity and thus light. This method works 24 hours regardless of sun or wind, thanks to the plants. This technology is also CO2 neutral, quiet, clean and efficient.
Cemeteries used to be our parks and they have the potential to become even more than that: a place where people of all ages find inspiration for life and prepare for death, where healing is not a mere suppression of emotion but a process that engages body, soul and spirit. Storage places for the dead can be combined with complementary uses to not only save space, but also bring about emotional and spiritual benefits for visitors. Clustering these landscapes with other complementary uses and around transport nodes will make them more accessible and attractive to various users.

The dead are memorialised and their remains stored in beautiful ways and pleasing settings. Visitors and passersby are presented with a familiar environment where they can share their feelings, thoughts and uncertainties about life and death. Suggested activities that can be combined with such landscapes, and hypothetically explored in the sketch plan, include:

- Early Childhood Development Centres
- Therapist consultation rooms
- Transport related facilities
- Place for ritual cleansing
- Oratory (small chapel for private worship)
- Baptism pool
- Public spaces, including green spaces
- Self-service kiosks
- Coffee shops, restaurants and tea houses
- Yoga studio
Cloud seeding is a way to intentionally modify weather, by triggering precipitation from clouds. Rain is catalysed this way, as water vapour condenses around either ash or silver nitrate particles dispersed within a cloud. We imagine that a person will have the option in their will to radically and ambitiously transform their body after their death into rain using cloud seeding. Following a funeral and cremation of a body, the crematorium will give the bereaved an aluminium vessel that contains their loved one’s remains and a dormant aerostat. Grief goes through several stages and the vessel is designed to be activated whenever the bereaved is ready. At that point, they simply turn the top segment, opening a valve to a helium tank which fills a weather balloon with the buoyant gas. As the sealed capsule ascends and fades out of sight, it becomes increasingly pressurised. At the point it reaches the troposphere, the highest point at which clouds form, the capsule bursts, dispersing the ashes into the clouds below.
Family Tree is a cluster of honeycomb-shaped urn vaults that serve as a final resting place for families. Each honeycomb belongs to a deceased family member, and combined together, they form the Family Tree. The tree ensures that the love the deceased share for each other in life will continue in eternity. The urn vault is made from wood, while the cap is an OLED display. The display emits a serene, pulsing light that conveys spirituality.
URN FOR WATER MEMORIAL CEREMONY

AGNES HEGEDUS
Hungary

In the 21st century, the number of cremations is increasing because cremation offers a cheaper and more environmentally friendly solution. My project gives the deceased a watery place to rest. I combined several types of clay and natural or recycled materials. With a little bit of water, I can glue the parts together, so I do not use any synthetic ingredients. The components are easily available everywhere and the production price is just a few euros. The prototype was fired at low temperature to give it strength, but also to make it porous. Due to the form and the material, it slowly sinks in minutes, as part of the ceremony.
WHY SHOULD WE KEEP THE DECEASED AWAY FROM OUR EYES? WHY SHOULD WE REDUCE THE DECEASED TO SILENCE? THE SOUVENAIR, SMALL IN SIZE BUT CLEARLY VISIBLE, CAN BE HUNG AT HOME OR IN A PUBLIC PLACE. THE WIND CHIME RECALLS THE PRESENCE OF A LOVED ONE WHENEVER A WIND BLOWS.

Its tiny and appeasing "ding" recalls the presence of the loved ones when breeze passes.
MUSHROOM DEATH SUIT

JAE RHIM LEE
USA

The Mushroom Death Suit is green couture for the modern and futuristic postmortem body. Over a lifetime, we consume energy and resources such that our bodies accumulate up to 219 toxic pollutants. The Mushroom Death Suit facilitates the decomposition and partial toxin cleaning of bodies using a collection of fungi, 'Infinity Mushrooms,' which are known to remediate toxins such as methyl mercury, dioxins and furans, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), among others. These environmental benefits go hand in hand with the return of the body to the earth and taking responsibility for our own pollution of the earth.

The Mushroom Death Suit consists of a base layer of organic cotton that allows easy dressing and undressing of a still body. The upper layer consists of netting embedded with Infinity Mushroom spores and mycelium (the "roots" of mushrooms), which allows the Infinity Mushrooms to grow and spread across the body. The Mushroom Death Suit addresses current social, environmental, and economic needs – for low-impact funeral options, the increasing scarcity of land and resources, the growing toxicity of our land, air, and water, and the desire for a more holistic relationship with nature.
WINNERS’ RESPONSES
&
SHORTLISTED ENTRIES FROM SINGAPORE

11 June 2013
WINNERS’ RESPONSES

EMERGENCE
1st prize, ECO/Green Deathcare

Pierre Rivière and Enzo Pascual
27 years & 25 years respectively
France

(left to right: Pierre Rivière, Enzo Pascual)
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
Yes, this is the first time we are participating in a contest on designboom.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
No, we had no experience with deathcare.

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
We chose to participate in this contest because the increase in world population and the management of our dead today has become an important issue. Spiritual and environmental dimensions were our main motivations for participating in this contest.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
The inspiration came from an analysis and research on the relationship that unites life and death. According to the maxim attributed to Lavoisier "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed." We wanted to preserve the balance between nature and man even after his death. The ‘watchwords’ for the project was "respect." Thus emergence appeared to our eyes as respect for the dead, the family, the environment and future generations.
DESIGN FOR DEATH (& LIVING)
2nd prize, ECO/Green Deathcare

Ancunel Steyn
29 years
South Africa
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
Yes.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
I did my Master in Landscape Architecture thesis on the Sepulchre Landscape.

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
To promote an alternative planning and design approach to burials. I described the approach in quite a bit of detail in the application.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
My grandmother passed away just before I started with my thesis. I drew a lot of inspiration from the poems I wrote to her and around the event for inspiration. It helped me be sensitive to the way those who have lost a person dear to them would grieve, want to speak to the person when no-one listens, want to visit them often, want to hear their voice and see their image before them and how they would want nature and architecture to express these changes through seasons and decay.
I WISH TO BE RAIN
3rd prize, ECO/Green Deathcare

Harry Trimble and Patrick Stevenson-Keating
Both 24 years
Britain

(Left to right: Harry Trimble, Patrick Stevenson-Keating)
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
Yes, this is the first time. Designboom’s competitions are entered by huge numbers of people, from right across the world. So the chances of our work being picked out of hundreds of designs seemed small. I guess with the ‘Design for Death’ brief we felt we had something really clear to say in response to it and that being the difference in deciding to enter or not.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
Death can be a hard thing to talk about and neither of us has had the opportunity in our design work to explore it in the depth and sensitivity it requires. That said, our previous work is very much interested in wellbeing and the human condition, which are integral to the notion of death for most people. Dying is just part of an experience. What we think matters is you, and the ones around you, being comfortable in this process.

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
We were interested in the way the idea of death is communicated in our society and particularly the scientific process of dying, as this is the only area of death we have any degree of certainty of. What excited us was exploring the idea of the body as a catalyst for a positive effect beyond life. Seeing technology and science as a means to re-imagine death and deathcare in a subtle and engaging way.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
The transformation of the body as something to be celebrated, not feared. Thinking about your body having a physical effect of the earth/environment after you die. When you see an animal die on a nature programme, it is still sad yes, but somehow not scary. This we reckon is due to death being presented as natural, scientific process, which part of a larger, cyclical system. As Dr Claire Gerada has said "a good death is like a good birth - it is a beautiful event". Taking these ideas forward, we were already interested in the idea of cloud seeding, but the dispersion of ashes gave it a new context. We both take the view that almost every other aspect of western life has been revolutionised by technology and science - why not deathcare?
MUSHROOM DEATH SUIT
Special Jury prize, ECO/Green Deathcare

Jae Rhim Lee
37 years
U.S.A.
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
Yes.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to deathcare?
For the past four years, I have been developing the Infinity Burial Project, a transdisciplinary art/design/public engagement project which proposes alternatives for the postmortem body that promote and facilitate an individual engagement with the process of decomposition.

The Project features the development of a unique strain of mushroom that decomposes and remediates toxins in human tissue, the development of a decomposition ‘kit’, burial suits embedded with decomposition activators, and a membership society devoted to the promotion of death awareness and acceptance and the practice of decompiculture (the cultivation of decomposing organisms).

3. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
In my work I explore the relationship between the body, the conception of self, and the environment. I'm interested in the possibility that death and the awareness of death can be an invitation and call to take responsibility for our (mostly negative) impact on the environment. After I learnt from mycologist Paul Stamets that mushrooms remEDIATE toxins in the soil and are the 'master decomposers of the earth', I became interested in how mushrooms can facilitate our acceptance of death and reconciliation with the environment.
FAMILY TREE
1st prize, Wrappings of Mortality

Asta Sadauskaite and Loucas Papantoniou
26 years and 30 years respectively
Lithuania and Greece

Asta Sadauskaite  
Loucas Papantoniou
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
Yes

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
No

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
Death is a taboo. People don't want to talk or think about death. The unknown scares us. However, death is the only certainty in life.

We owe respect to death as much as we owe to life. For designers, death is a very challenging theme, yet it still remains somewhat undiscovered and marginalized. There is plenty of room for rethinking the practices of death-care and designing for them.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
We did research on archetypal images of death to discover the universality of death across different cultures, and we talked to friends and family about the theme.

What we discovered is that love is what makes death so special. We want to ensure that the love we share for each other in life will continue to eternity. For instance, the recent discovered Roman grave of two skeletons holding hands for 1,500 years is a great example of eternal love (source http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2057415/Together-forever--lovers-holding-hands-1-500-years-discovered-Rome-grave.html).

Likewise, the practice of booking in advance a place for the whole family to be buried. These are signs of love, which inspired us for designing the 'family tree'. A modular system of urn vaults, which serves as a final resting place for families.
URN FOR WATER MEMORIAL CEREMONY
2nd prize, Wrappings of Mortality

Ágnes Hegedűs
28 years
Hungary
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
   Yes, it is.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to deathcare?
   Yes, I do. A few years ago at the university, I had a project, where my job was to create an alternative urn form. My basic inspiration was, that we close an urn only just one time. I wanted to translate this moment into the urn form. The materials are ceramic and concrete. When we close the urn, we sink the concrete around the ceramic urn body. The concrete frames the ceramic urn body. Since this project I have been thinking of and designing around this topic.

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
   We have a huge problem with deathcare all around the world. Most people don’t have the opportunity to say goodbye as they would have wanted to. The memorial ceremony is expensive and it’s not always really connected to the related people, it’s rather a routine.

   My aim was to create a material, which is economical and cheap, and shows an alternative way to say goodbye. This method is devoid every swallow solutions. It’s only about You and your loved ones. The material is also able to be used for burying in the earth.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
   I wanted to know, if I feel right about this problem and I was curious, that my project is good enough to be produced and put it on the market. I hope that this application is a sign that this solution could be a new option for the people all around the world, mainly for those, who are looking for an alternative way to bury their loved ones.
SOUVENAIR
3rd prize, Wrappings of Mortality

Chen Jia Shan
30 years
Taiwanese in France
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
   It is the second time I participate in the competition of designboom.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to deathcare?
   I have no work experience in deathcare.

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
   It happened that someone I knew died. I realized how terrified I was to say goodbye. I understood that death was something I was, like many of us, too afraid to talk about. Even when people say "death is part of life" they are mostly claiming they accept the death of others, not their own death. "Design for death" made me think that we should not ignore the fact we will die one day and that death is about a circle of life.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
   A song by an old French singer, Brassens, about the "funerals of yesterday" made me think of this quite recent attempt to hide entirely the funerals...
SHORTLISTED ENTRIES
FROM
SINGAPORE
THE LAST GIFT

Shortlisted entry, Wrappings of Mortality

Raymond Hon, Industrial Design student
Singapore

3D-printed from the cremated remains of the departed, the last gift for the living. A gift that reminds. A gift that takes away loneliness. A gift of acceptance and closure. A gift that offers a fleeting moment of familiarity yet at the same time informs the fact that some things are ephemeral and are lost forever no matter how hard one tries to hang on to. Manufacturing Processes: 3D printing of cremated remains(calcium phosphate) Casting of copper components Extrusion of copper wind chime pipes As cremation of deceased becomes an increasingly common practice, many still find it awkward to display an urn of cremated remains in their house but at the same time, find it a pity to just leave what's left of their loved ones in a columbarium, only to be forgotten about over time.

With advancement in technology, many things that was deem as impossible becomes reality. By creating a wind chime with components that is made out of the cremated remains of their loved ones, it is possible to aid in gaining acceptance and closure during the grieving process, and then serving as a reminder to the living of his/her existence.
An abstracted image of the departed is obtained by inputting a portrait into an algorithm in Grasshopper, a generative design plugin for Rhinoceros (a 3D visualization software). This abstracted images is then printed as negative spaces in the individual pieces of the wind chime. As the pieces aligns, the onlooker would be able to catch a glimpse of the image of the departed for a fleeting moment. At the same time, during the grieving process, one would try to align the pieces manually, only to realise that some things are ephemeral, and no matter how hard you try to hang on to it, it is lost forever.
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
No, I previously took part in a competition organized by Lexus.

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
My experience with deathcare is limited to loss of my loved ones

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
I was encouraged by my professor, Mr Ash Yeo to take part in the competition with the project I have done as part of the coursework

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
I started out this project by conducting interviews on many individuals of different race, religion and age group regarding their perception of death. After analyzing the information that I have collected, I realised that many people see dying as ceasing to exist. I also realised that the pain experienced during the loss of loved ones would cause one attempt to forget about the deceased, many even go the extend of pretending that this person does not exist by refusing to talk about them even long after their departure.

I feel that death is only a part of life, one that is inevitable. However, it is because of death that life becomes precious and the memories of someone left behind in the minds of his loved ones after death would be the proof that he existed. Perhaps life is not just about physical existence of the body, but also the little details that people remember about the deceased. It can be someone’s voice, action, or even some objects that is associated with this person.

On the other hand, I conducted another round of interview to find out about the things that people wish to do for their loved ones if they were to pass away. In summary, most would want to help their loved ones to get over their grief, and gain a sense of peace and closure. Some would also hope that their loved ones would remember them once in awhile, that he/she had been part of their lives.

My project is about a final gift that the deceased can give to their loved ones. Not just any objects that has sentimental value, but one that is created out of their remains.
In the Chinese culture, the process of honoring ancestors is an act of filial piety, a tradition that aligns oneself to something larger in the intangible context. However, this important tradition had taken its toll on the land scarce country and cities which are highly populated by ethnic Chinese. Public Columbarium had run out of niche space and potential land for development of columbarium, while niche spaces in private columbarium are too costly for the low to middle income group for an alternative option, not leaving out the sprouting of illegal columbarium in heartland area.

With the forecast of a surging death rate in the next few years, the development of more columbarium and cemetery do not seem to be an answer to the pressing issue. Tower Urn is an architecture-inspired modular containment of six or more individual space designed for placement in the house and columbarium. User could choose the different module to build a customized family urn.
The design calls for the community acceptance of a more collective and sustainable measure of handling cremain yet maintaining an honoring point. One of the many advantages of the tower urn is the consolidation of urns to form a single entity instead of the current practice where urns of the same family members are scatter thru out the columbarium or at most kept at 4 units.

The concept does not seek to replace existing measures implemented by the local authorities, but instead delay the handling of cremain to a later generation which would have little/zero attachment with the subject. It would have a big emotional distress if one is to scatter the cremain of parent into the sea due to high cost and shortage of niche space. An honoring point in the Chinese context is important to ease the emotional distress of individual and to show filial piety. Hypothetically this could be a main reason for low acceptance of sea scattering method in Hong Kong (5% of total death rate).

When the containment is stored with six cremain and a new death occurs, the urns in the top of the hierarchy would be dispose through different alternatives such as sea scattering, parkland burial, underwater burial, slingshot into space etc, or simply add in modules allowed until the maximum stated by a prefix regulation of maybe 10. However, the person disposing the cremain in most cases would be the great great-grand children of the cremain in the top hierarchy for whom had little to zero emotional attachment, the delay actually transfer the role to a later generation decreasing the emotional attachment substantially.
1. Is this the first time you have entered a designboom competition?
This is the second time I’m joining a designboom competition

2. Do you have any previous experience (personal or work) relating to death care?
No, it is totally new to me prior to this project, but it has been an area i would like to explore for quite some time

3. Why did you decide to join the Design For Death competition?
I'm researching on the notion of "death" particularly in the context of the Chinese Culture at that point of time, after having an in-depth understanding of the culture and social problem in Chinese populated countries, I felt that there’s a real problem and a feasible yet radical solution is needed to introduce a change to the perception of ancestor veneration.

4. How did you get the “inspiration” for your entry?
We often ask... where do people go after they had departed from this world, many answers heard was the relocation to another world, some say heaven, some say another paradise. What type of world would it be I ask myself? Probably a dimension that we all would be reunited as a single entity when we move on.

I started thinking how great it would be if we could have a mass customised family urn built up by different modules that might increase in its containment until a prefix volume. It represents a metaphor for a space of reunion with loved ones when one moves on in his/her life.