

## Design for Death competition unveils future trends and ideas of how the dead will be treated and remembered

***Themes emerging include biodegradable caskets, home memorials and the use of technology***

***The initiative by Singapore philanthropic organizations - Lien Foundation, ACM Foundation and USA National Funeral Directors' Association (NFDA) is a first of its kind in the world***

Singapore, 11 June 2013

If over 700 designers worldwide, including Singapore, have their way, funerals of the future will look and feel very different.

Imagine capturing Grandma's familiar scent for eternity. A micro airship designed to transform people into gentle rain after they die. Or going off in a 'mushroom suit' – where the body is biodegraded naturally by mushrooms. These are just a few of the many ideas revealed by results of the Design for Death competition aimed to re-imagine deathcare<sup>1</sup>

"Death is central to human existence but we live in a culture estranged from it," said Mr Lee Poh Wah, Chief Executive Officer of Lien Foundation, a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its efforts in advancing care for the dying. "The competition challenges designers to develop new products and experiences that create new meaning, interactions and conversations about death. The entries received range from the elegant and sublime, to the thought-provoking and avant-garde. They give Death a modern twist and makeover, reducing the fear factor."

### ***Designers celebrate life and love in deathcare***

A heightened sense of end-of-life matters was evident from the submitted entries, as designers made sensitive interpretations of life and death, grief, relationships and memories - intertwined with the thoughtful use of function, style, aesthetics and environmental sustainability. The winner of the 'Eco/Green Deathcare' category is France's Mr Pierre Rivière and Mr Enzo Pascual,

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<sup>1</sup> Deathcare refers to services and products related to death, funerals, cremations, burials and memorials.

with his entry called “Emergence”, where a cemetery is envisaged to be a reservoir of life - made of biological concrete to absorb carbon dioxide and give electricity, and where the departed rest in highly biodegradable urns or coffins that can eventually revitalize the earth through their remains. Under the ‘Wrappings of Mortality’ category, winners Ms Asta Sadauskaite and Mr Loucas Papantoniou from Lithuania and Greece respectively, impressed the jury with the simple but powerful “Family Tree” - a cluster of honeycomb-shaped urn vaults with OLED (organic light-emitting diode) covers that serve as a final resting place for families. Refer to the annex for more about the other winners.

### ***Uplifting the deathcare sector***

Founder of ACM Foundation, Mr Ang Ziqian shared what the competition aims to do as part of the Foundation’s mission to uplift the deathcare sector, “Through the innovations that have emerged from the competition, we hope to refresh and change current mindsets in the deathcare industry. There are new areas of possibilities to be explored, creative concepts and solutions to be reviewed as deathcare practitioners seek to make caring for dead and their families a profession welcomed and well regarded by all.” Mr Ang also announced the competition’s second call for entry to redesign deathcare spaces such as columbariums, funeral or memorial halls and places of remembrances. Details of this second and final phase of Design for Death will be on [www.designboom.com](http://www.designboom.com), the competition’s administrator.

### ***Ideas challenge deathcare profession***

All Design for Death winners will go to Austin, Texas and have their work showcased at the annual *2013 NFDA International Convention & Expo* from 20-23 October 2013, the pinnacle event for the deathcare industry that draws thousands of participants from all over the world each year. In response to the successful first phase of the competition, NFDA’s CEO Ms Christine Pepper said, “The many entries we received from designers around the world show that innovation in deathcare doesn’t have to come from funeral directors. Ideas for how families honor and remember their loved ones can come from anyone and anywhere. The ideas and innovations presented by the designers who participated in this contest bring fresh perspectives to our profession and challenge funeral directors to think about the services and products they offer to families in new ways.”

### ***Deathcare in the future***

To the question of what deathcare could be like in the future, Designboom’s Editor and judge in the competition, Ms Birgit Lohmann said, “Undeniably, deathcare will be questioned by the age

of information. However, as death is a universal stage of life, perceptions of correctness, ritual and honor will continue to remain important to preserve. As the characteristically rapid growth of technology confronts the unchangeably slow process of mourning and the often fear-inducing reality of death, my hope is that ownership, knowledge and choice will democratize and evolve deathcare into a more comfortable and accepted part of the human experience.”

### ***Using design and art to raise end-of-life consciousness***

Design for Death is the first of three joint initiatives between Lien Foundation and ACM Foundation that seek to bring end-of-life matters and deathcare to the forefront of public awareness and appreciation. In the pipeline are plans to redesign a hospice and launch a community arts engagement programme in a Singapore hospital.

#### Annex:

- Winners of Design For Death 2013 (Call for Entry 1)
- Winners’ Responses and Shortlisted Entries from Singapore

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#### **About the Lien Foundation**

**[www.lienfoundation.org](http://www.lienfoundation.org)**

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action on social and environmental challenges. The Foundation seeks to foster exemplary early childhood education, excellence in eldercare and effective environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

In its mission to advance eldercare, the Foundation advocates better care of the dying. One of its flagship programmes, the [Life Before Death](#) initiative, was first conceived in 2006 to create greater public awareness about end-of-life issues in Singapore. It sought to de-stigmatise death and dying by spurring various ‘die-logues’ with the use of social media, art, films and photography and advocacy through research. The initiative has since gone beyond Singapore. In 2010, the Foundation commissioned the first-ever global Quality of Death index ranking 40 countries on their provision of end-of-life care.

#### **About ACM Foundation**

**[www.acmfoundation.sg](http://www.acmfoundation.sg)**

The ACM Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation formed by Ang Chin Moh Casket in commemoration of its 100-year heritage. The Foundation aims to enhance the perception of death and bereavement among the public, uplift the deathcare profession with professional training and education, and advance philanthropy in this area. The ACM Foundation will also champion and preserve the heritage of funeral and bereavement services in Singapore.

#### **About NFDA**

**[www.nfda.org](http://www.nfda.org)**

The **National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA)** is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, serving 19,700 individual members who represent more than 10,000 funeral homes in the United States and 39 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. A worldwide source of expertise and professional resources for all facets of funeral service, NFDA is dedicated to supporting members in their mission to provide families with meaningful end-of-life services at the highest levels of excellence and integrity.

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