

CROSSROADS OF EX-ISTENCE

Performing object-events toward an unconditional ethos of death

SARAH JENNINGS

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Art and Design.

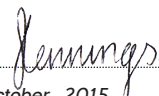
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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: 
Date: 7 October, 2015

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Fig. 1.

ABSTRACT

Research Questions: How might an object-event (object-life) perform a vivifying ethos for participants in relation to conditions of death as everyday? As a spatial design ethic how might this research deepen our perception of death-related everyday experience whereby an unconditional mode of living expresses something fundamental to being human?

This Spatial Design Masters project works toward an ethos of death as life-giving that is takes from social and cultural differences of death rites. It then moves toward a far more primordial unconditional experience of life-death continuum to explore how spatial design relational installation practices can produce effective earning experiences that operate within existential living. The practice seeks to learn from cultural differences but in order to work into the concept of Jacques Derrida's unconditional experience as the gift of death — it works simply at a base human level (that is more than fathomable). Whether we can know the certainty of being mortal is not the question here — rather this work is underpinned by philosophical and design questions around existence to reveal that we are nothing but uncertain and mysterious creatures. The philosophical work is largely framed by Jacques Derrida's concept of 'the gift' with particular relation to his writing on the gift of death. It takes also from Marcel Mauss' work on the gift as that operating within an exchange or return cultural framework. The two interrelating positions are composed within my spatial design research as a way of moving from specific cultural, social and political life (as exchange conditions) toward an ethos of death as an unconditional gift for bringing us closer to more profound ways for considering our existence. It is a philosophical enquiry into how conditions of death and values of contemporary capitalist modes of living symptomatically produce a problematic ethical experience with respect to how death is treated as something to be harshly separated from living. This project attempts what it calls an ethic or ethos toward death in its attempt to express death as another form of living. It also takes inspiration from everyday artistic modes and expressions of novels and films that provide me with cues or narratives that exist out there, influencing and reflecting our popular perceptions for what it means to be human.

These different narratives provide me with insights into how there is an advanced repression in our encounters with death in our current and increasingly globalised cultural life world. My own material responses for this Masters comes through a process of locating everyday discarded architectural infra-structural objects, which in their abandoned and ruined state produce great potential for new life through my own encounter and collection of them; in bringing them 'back' into our everyday perception they offer points of revivification to correspond object and human relations. In this process of resuscitating the object-becomes-event (object-life) as a trace marking of still life, living on. In this sense, my practice is one of response and responsibility to a special kind of listening to the mysterious lives of others (human and non).

In making strange, uncanny or 'new' the association with these found-objects, my practice narratives multiple possible readings of living on. Each new reading gives life to the way these objects may have been located in history, but also how they live-on through a new kind of living archive, which my practice installs. Ultimately, they are both allegorical and literal objects that event relations of life and death.

The 'final' presentation or installation aims to show a kind of paradox in the works; a paradox that insists on two directions of death; its clinical and repressed condition (as marked by an overt install of a fourth wall) that then also deconstructs to invite another encounter of death as an existential teacher on how we live relationally with other beings that perform our vital expression. This paradox opens up the possibility of the unconditional and is provided its strategic approach through deconstruction as an initiator of moving outside neat binary attitudes of either/or — here the deconstruction of the 'back-slash' simplicity of life/death marks instead the spatial everyday continuum of life and death eventing, breaking free from the mastery of subject/ object relations.

INTRODUCTION

In order to research contemporary experiences of death my research finds a tangent that explores questions of cultural difference in order to locate a better understanding of global realities¹. It starts with an assumption that contemporary late-capitalist Western frameworks produce death as a taboo condition and has subsequently accelerated conditions for dealing with death rites — a condition that seeks to rid our global cultures of any imagery, treatment or concern for death in an expedient and masked process. There are many examples of how death is dressed up sensationally in ways I would assess as masking more primordial and profound teachings between life-death continuum². Within contemporary Western society death is treated as a taboo condition that often lacks deeper contemplation and subsequently creates a fear of death and a fear of aging. The simplicity of our mortality i.e. that we are human-beings that are mortal and born to die, is subconsciously rejected through popular cultural values and through this action, we are detaching ourselves from more profound experiences as mortal beings. My contention is that death when confronted with care (or ethics) can produce a profound and complex ethical experiences. It is through philosophical enquiries in conversation with my material making practice that this project implicitly (in its underlying affects) questions the values of contemporary Western capitalist (and late-capitalist) modes of living with respect to death rites and rituals. Other less-popular encounters with death (housed in more traditional outmoded ways) act in this research to reveal ways of being that extend death into realms of less-(capital) materialistic values and more community based involvements. For example, the celebration of aging as indicated in the cultural life worlds of the Inuit³, is seen as growth; as life — it reflects on how we gain more from this growth than we do from material possessions — the latter has a less profound and a more pathologically destructive existence in the understanding of how identities are ‘known’.

The research is structured on two overlapping points; One is the crossroads of a paradigmatic shift from human death as a subjective condition to be ritualised, revered and made sacred; and the other is a more techno-scientific attitude that trivialises subjective living-dying by turning humans into standing-reserve

1. *As the research appeared initially to be delving into the disciplinary terrain of cultural anthropology — a disciplinary frame that is outside of my training — much of this foundational data has been arranged as an archive and appendix; its ultimate design is to aid the reader (including myself), a bridging-condition across the exegesis proper and the material manifestations as further living-archives situated in the final exhibition of installed work.*

2. *Hollywood films within genres of horror, vampire, slasher, and sci-fantasy are just one example of multiple popular imagination genres for dealing with death in a slight and comic manner.*

3. *Unlike death within a contemporary increasingly globalised world that is seen the ultimate end, the Inuit belief is that birth and death are more episodes of life. Perhaps it is that death seems less final, more episodic to people whose life is always on the line whilst living in such harsh conditions. Their belief is that everything (living and non-living) has a spirit, when this spirit dies it continues living in the spirit world to be reborn once again in another form. This journey is celebrated and honoured through rituals and customs held by the community where every-day life comes to a halt as each member is appointed some form of responsibility.*

with a useful or useless productive use-by-date. Continuously my cultural anthropological research pointed to an increase in treatment of death rituals as an expedient and manufactured process⁴. In my research thesis, I aim to show that our promixity to death is a profound teacher and that we are close to death all the time. It mines this site of paradoxical spatial proximity and temporality through intersecting cross-roads of existence between the materialistic route and its rejection.

Symptoms of the more material route manifest in the fear, denial, taboo and repression of mortality as created in things like preserving ourselves through plastic surgery and artificial aging products, veiling ourselves in make-up and constantly trying to stay young. Other symptoms include ongoing need for possessing materialistic objects as a way to map our identities onto externalised and supplementary supports (I discuss this later in psychoanalytic terms in view of my material approach to the installation). But how do we shift this dominant attitude toward living and dying? Taking a cue from Martin Heidegger's philosophy (as referenced above via the standing reserve of living, see corresponding footnote), he suggests that our human perceptions shift in revealing the domination at work as a normalising trait — in recognising how our attitudes are tied to our more profound existential ways, he suggests we learn more to engage more profoundly in dwelling as mortal subjectivities⁵. In recognising difference in the more marginal worlds (such as the aged; the poor; the diasporic and displaced peoples; and the very young) we locate a kind of 'rejection' of this materialistic route; offering in difference a more rewarding relationship with others that provides living with care and support upon less-individualistic (me-centred) living and embraces a stronger infrastructural attitude of being-with.

This project aims to reveal this kind of 'community' of support through the curious manifestation of displaced objects that are given new community life through different associations, arrangements and manifestations of states of being in my final installation. The work attempts to reveal their belonging together both in terms of a language of tradition (that also masters them) as well as a more open reading that allows the objects support

4. *Martin Heidegger claims as cautionary thinking that we will "get" technology "intelligently in hand". We will master it. He posits terms like 'enframing', 'standing-reserve' and 'challenging forth' as characteristics of human desire to master. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent as more technology threatens to slip from human control. Heidegger's work on the human attitude residing within the epoch of technicity or techno-sciences is revealed in his seminal essay "The Question Concerning Technology" is significant to this project, it reveals a way forward in facing the dominant epochal attitude and, in this understanding, a possible shift in perception exists i.e. one where moving away from today's technocratic epoch of mastery where he sees human relation to its environment; to each other; to community; as hovering on an abyss. Heidegger offers philosophically that the saving power has a poetic contemplative agency by evoking the (paradoxical) poetic words of the German poet Hölderlin: "But where danger is, grows / the saving power also" (1977: 313). He names this poetic attitude as a 'bringing-forth', evoking ancient know-how (techne) as a way (poiesis) of co-operation, as distinct from modern life that challenges (masters) our relation to our environment; our communities; to each other. For further reading see: Heidegger, Martin, *Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 313.*

5. *While I looked deeply into Martin Heidegger's work on dwelling and existence, particularly his concept of being-toward-death and his discussions of the difference between an object and thing — it was the work of Jacques Derrida and deconstruction that became more 'central' for my work. In a sense Derrida's work continues Heidegger's deconstruction or destruction and so my work acknowledges the bridge across Derrida-Heidegger thinking. Being-toward-death finds mention even so— throughout this exegesis through correspondence to deconstruction and Derrida's gift of death concept. For*

Heidegger, an essential feature of Daseins (i.e. the 'being there' of human beings existential difference to other beings) is that they can foresee their death, as, according to him, animals cannot. Sein zum Tode, being toward death since therefore what Daseins are. We are shaped profoundly, ontologically, by the foreseeable nature of our mortality. It is important to note that Heidegger is not speaking 'ontically' about the obvious presentation and knowledge that we die, rather he is suggesting a profound existential way of being that manifests in all kinds of world-making and mastery attitudes and symptoms with respect to this primordial structure for being.

6. The concept of the living archive is taken from Walter Benjamin's approach to history in relation to Historical Materialism. While this thesis works with other theorists and Benjamin's work is secondary for the aims of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge some understanding of his approach to history and things. Walter Benjamin's notion of historical materialism is adapted from Marxist origins, except that he presents us with a theological counterpart that is represented by the image of the disguised automaton playing chess in the introduction to Benjamin's "Thesis on the Philosophy of History". This puppet dressed in Turkish attire named "historical materialism" is being controlled by an expert chess-playing hunchback sitting inside, guiding the puppet's hands by use of strings. The hunchback, who is the puppet's theological counterpart, possesses the required mystic powers to win every game of chess, and yet he must stow himself from sight. This image of the automaton demonstrates Benjamin's incorporation of separate official schools of thought. He believes they often have much in common and much assistance to offer one another. The historical materialist understands history as belonging to heterogeneous time where he or she encounters a historical subject dialectically in the form of a monad. A monad, for Benjamin, is formed in

through celebrating different ways in which associations of belonging materialise through different readers and readings. These objects — 'dead-objects' were originally located by myself at a demolition site (in my home town of Pukekohe); they belong dead in that they are all from architectural origins (some domestic, some otherwise). The term 'dead-object' arises through the fact that their destiny was seemingly at the ends of functional, utilitarian or productive exchange. Through my practice these objects are brought back into circulation; given new prospects of being as facilitators of multiple narratives in this research. They are classified now as a living archive⁶ and bring with them histories and futures in the multiple juxtapositioning of how they work alongside my community of other objects and assemblages.

So, if the first cross-roads is a temporal epochal shift toward techno-scientific attitudes that valorises youth; new production; efficient means and design for obsolescence — it bears witness, in this research, most crucially in the medicalisation of death and its rites. The second overlapping cross-roads that death stands at here is a spatialised condition of subject-object relations. The project works through another kind of materialistic matrix offered by some philosophical questions circulating around the gift economy. The aim is to see if an unconditional attitude can exist through a deconstruction of subject-object binary thinking.

Chapter one starts off this enquiry working through some general cultural research findings in order to contextualise 'death' and death rites travelling through some discrete cultural life worlds. It then moves into the deconstructive ideas of Jacques Derrida and his work on the gift as an unconditional experience that leaves experiences of death as wholly otherwise. Later it will work into the discussion Martin Heidegger's thinking on the difference between an *object* and a *thing* that cross-references later into Timothy Morton's take on dark tourism. It does so to reveal that death attaches itself to objects that form attitudes of subject/object binaries but also in these things there is an ontological difference that escapes more primordially into the reaches of mysterious being that cannot be calculable. The research question is brought to the fore through the differences of thinking on the gift through Marcel Mauss (as exchange values) and Jacques Derrida (unconditional). The ultimate aim is to position my material investigation into object-event making as a

performative installation, utilising three major infrastructural elements: A Wall; A Floor; An Object-Thing. It arrives at these key relational elements through object collection, image production and installation as a dialogue of affects — these affective states act performative rituals with embodied states as we are invited into the work with the potential offer for teaching or learning to live with death unconditionally.

the moment “ where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which is crystalizes into a monad.” This heterogeneous configuration (like a constellation) presents us with a dialectical image, which Benjamin argues is the true picture of the past that flits by in a moment of danger, and this danger never ceases to loom over us. Benjamin iterates that “ In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.” For further reading please see Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” — what is significant here in terms of the living archive concept and the way I have collected these objects and brought them together is the spatial and temporal revivification relations whereby their identity formation exists due to the others that surround them. In this sense a living archive tells us something about the present in the constellation of past-ness and futurity that arrives at any one ‘shocking’ collective moment. The living archive is pregnant with tensions and here it is the tension of a deconstruction of life/death; subject/object.

CHAPTER 1:

THE GIFT OF DEATH

This chapter examines the philosophical enquiry of death revealing its paradoxical ethos in relation to how living-on closes itself off to death (socially, for instance) and yet, in these repressed remains a strangeness of being stays more alive than ever. The analytical intent of this research encompasses an investigation into how Derrida's gift of death suggests an unconditional experience of another form of living and how the spatial conditions of an object can be examined through Heidegger's notion of the *thing* to discover the relationship between object making and events and/or events expressed in artefacts and how an object may possess and/or communicate a life-force. In relation to my spatial design work, this chapter discusses two prominent critical and theoretical investigations: i) Death and ii) Gift-Giving

1.1 DEATH: FRAMING SOME CULTURAL REALITIES

i) Deaths customs and rituals

My project works within an ethics toward death through questioning existentially the objects that express different death rites. The passages of death-rites shift according to different cultural, social and economic lived realities. This project focuses in on the conditions of death-rites in relation to values of contemporary capitalist modes of living. The project has observed and collected data from a range of different cultural perspectives and concentrates this difference toward my own lifeworld of Aotearoa, New Zealand. In order to understand my own culture (New Zealand European) and the gift of death and to think through my research question structured on how death has become de-ritualised and less sacred, where we spend less time with the dead or with death and how death is therefore covered over. I became an investigator, or what I later term as a pseudo-anthropologist and pseudo-archeologist⁷, without immediate knowledge of the act, (without knowing what anthropology is, without any precise academic methods that come with the disciplines of cultural or social anthropology, or even visual anthropology) but with an instinct that I wanted to learn about the cultures of others in order to follow up on my impulse that death has been covered over. The research took me into five distinct cultures including my subjective culture of New Zealand Pakeha (European) alongside; the Japanese, Australian aboriginal, Inuit aboriginal and to understand the bicultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand further, via the Maori through organising the material and data gathered on death customs and how they work across traditional processes of death rites and in the contemporary world. It became clear that a pattern emerges in all five diverse cultures, where death has become clinically, objectively, quickly, scientifically, and efficiently placed in a (late)-capitalist mode of production. The gift of death has been masked through the processes of contemporary death rites⁸.

Death is perhaps the most difficult and traumatic of human passages, not only for the person approaching death but also for those who survive. The challenges death poses to human un-

7. The term *pseudo* is appropriate here as it gives the suggestion of someone who is faking it or a forger; a charlatan would be an outmoded term but one that I like as it holds onto a kind of lightness with living life. While my research is serious and I have attempted to be rigorous with the key concepts and process of my spatial design making, the charlatan spirit here is to reveal that any disciplinary know-how is reflective for teaching us about ourselves. In this sense, the way I have started this research, viewing other cultural life-worlds in relation to death, has enabled me to get closer to my own attitudes; to my own surrounding world and to locate a stronger sense of belonging with my practice and nominated site (with the demolition yard in Pukekohe).

8. Please refer to the Appendices at the end of this exegesis to access a comprehensive archive of datagathering around the four cultural life worlds in relation to death rites and the shifting impact, due to globalization and post-industrialisation culminating in WWII, on their individual processes for treating humans through their stages of life-death.

derstanding are many. What happens to the deceased? What will life be like without our loved ones? What will the experience be like for ourselves? Does life continue in some form after death? These questions have probed human existence since the beginning and are impossible to answer with any rational certainty. While we cannot answer these questions with any kind of one-size-fits-all certainty, death is a universal human experience, which has inspired rituals and customs in cultures around the world. As inspiration it is a life teacher or teacher for living. Cultures perform rituals with a belief that they can prepare us for acts of death experience and ease us through the process of mourning; for surviving death for a time and space. Death rites go back to the very beginnings of human existence; archaeologists have discovered ancient cemeteries where there is evidence of such customs found, like burying gifts with the dead, arranging the body into a specific position, preparing or decorating the body and leaving offerings around the grave. It comes as no surprise then that death has inspired some well-known artistic expressions, from poetry and music compositions to sculptures, painters and filmmakers. Death as the ultimate human experience is possibly the most challenging artistic subject and it is the ceremonies and customs surrounding death that are the most fascinating aspects of human culture.

9. " *The Egyptians, like many early peoples, put grave goods in their tombs, so that the deceased had everything they needed in the next world. Medieval Christians also saw the funeral service as an entry into the afterlife* ". Ingpen, Robert and Wilkinson, Philip. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* (Dragons World Ltd. 1994). 99.

10. " *Egyptians, for example, believed that the dead person had to go through an elaborate ritual at the entrance to the next world. The heart, which contained a record of all the persons past deeds, would be weighed. Assessor gods would interrogate the dead person, accusing him or her of numerous crimes, which the person would deny. If the deceased told the truth, Thoth, the Ibis-headed god of wisdom, would declare that the person was 'true of voice' and he or she would pass through into the kingdom of Osiris. For the untruthful, there was the awful fate of having one's heart devoured by the goddess called the " Devourer of the Dead* ". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* 99-100.

Many people in the western world today are used to thinking of death as the ultimate end, as a personal extinction. However, many other cultures commonly believe that death brings on the beginning of a new phase of existence. They may not know precisely what this new stage is but, through their customs and rituals they believe that their actions will help the deceased travel safely to the other side, as well as help those who remain. From ancient cultures to the modern, people have always believed in some form of afterlife, or the complete lack of one, and it is these beliefs that have made the last rites some of the most important of social rituals. For many cultures, the idea of the soul passing to the next world is a powerful way of explaining what happens to us after we die⁹. For many, tools, belongings, coins and food could be left beside the dead, implying that the dead live on and that they would need these objects in the afterlife, while other cultures subjected the deceased to trials as the admittance to the afterlife is not always automatic¹⁰. Even today for those who those who may not believe in another life after death,



Fig. 2.

11. "In some parts of India, for example, it is traditional for elderly people to give up their possessions and live the last of their years or months in poverty. When death seems so close, Muslims are traditionally placed so that they face Mecca. Catholic Christians confess their sins and, on receiving absolution, are anointed with consecrated oil. The tradition in China was to help the dying person into a sitting position, which was held to make it easier for the soul to leave the body ... And the Murngin of Arnhem Land in Northern Australia help the dying person into the land of the dead with songs invoking their ancestors". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* 100.

12. "In Micronesia, for example, the Ulithian's gather around the dying man to hear him declare who will receive his goods when he dies". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* 101-102.

13. Customs that were once widespread in various parts of Europe, such as removing a tile from the roof or emptying all the water vessels in the house, seem to belong to this category. So too does the tradition, observed in some European countries of stopping all the clocks in the house at the time of death.

14. "Muslim women in Indonesia wear white veils for funerals ... Andaman islander's paint their bodies with yellow ochre and olive green clay, using different patterns of strips to show their relationship to the deceased. Bones were also traditionally worn in memory of the deceased. The Tiwi people of Bathurst Island off the Northern Australian coast also use body paint. In this case it is considered to be a form of disguise. The dead are thought to return to take their friends and relatives away with them. Mourners are therefore in danger and need to cover up their identity". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* 104-105.

these rites remain as a vital part of coping with death. Many cultures set great store by correct preparation for death, and differ greatly from one another¹¹. They help the ones left behind to confront the loss of their loved one in the knowledge that the deceased will have a safe passage. Also, in preparing for death the dying and their relatives are required to make social and financial arrangements, which can be a ritual in itself, bringing the circumstances of death to the foreground¹².

The period immediately after death carries its own specific customs and practices. Some of these are mysterious in their origins and purposes and are used as signifiers to mark the moment of death. In addition to these commemorative rites, there is an emphasis in different cultures on how the body is prepared for the funeral. Traditionally the closing of the eyes, embalming, washing and grooming the dead are common in many societies, while each culture has its specific way of decorating the body with clothing, dyes, make-up and accessories. Alongside this preparation the deceased persons family and friends become mourners and develop their own rituals for processing this death. There is often something more unrestrained about mourning compared to the way in which the body is treated. These traditions are an acknowledgement of the overwhelming emotions that the bereaved experience. The common ritual of weeping is a way of venting their realisation of shock, pain and grief in tears. Across cultures there are different ways in which the bereaved can express their grief, the most common is by changing their outward appearance. A special funeral garb is often prescribed. The most well-known is the wearing of black garments at the funeral and in some cases, for a period of time afterwards. In some cultures it is customary to wear a veil, while in others where clothing does not carry such a message, body paint can do so¹⁴. The bereaved in many traditions live a more self-denying life than normal. It is common to go without certain foods and restrain from selected daily actions. Food can also have a special significance attached to the funerary rites, whether this is gifting food to the body, sin-eating or to completely go without¹⁵. Within the diverse customs, mourning in which the bereaved are bound to traditions that signify how one behaves for a particular amount of time, helps the bereaved come to terms with their loss and indicates the point at which their mourning period is over and they can resume a normal role in the community.

In many cultures it is tradition to keep a vigil over the body of the deceased. This can have several social uses. It can be seen as a commemoration of the deceased, a chance to say goodbye, and basically a way of making public the fact that the person is truly dead. For many cultures it is thought necessary to guard the body at all times, to either protect the body from the spirits or to help the soul recover from the shock of death. The body also is to be guarded from other living human beings. The vigil is valuable as it helps to accustom the survivors to the realities of death. There is nothing seen as more frightening than the unknown, and death is the ultimate mystery. By being close to the physical presence of death it helps to remind and to reassure those left behind about their own upcoming death¹⁶.

From ancient times burying the dead within the ground seems to have been one of the most universally used methods of disposing of the body and currently continues to be practised all over the world. The original reason for this no one knows but it has been so long-lasting that it is seen to be the expected process. Many cultures have their ecological and symbolic reasons for burying the dead, the most significant is to return the dead to the earth that sustains life. Burial also allows for no 'resurrection' and gives a site to which the bereaved can visit and mourn¹⁷. Cremation is now widely practiced within contemporary society. However, cremation is also an ancient ritual by many cultures who are known to travel and do not want to leave their dead behind. In some cultures it is also seen as a way to help the soul to escape from the body so that it can travel to the afterlife or be reincarnated as another being¹⁸. Different cultures also have different ways in which they deal with the ashes, some are collected and kept at the family home, while others are scattered at a place of remembrance.

Death is seen as one of the most fearful experiences, for not only those approaching death but also for those left behind. However, human beings regard death as universal through all cultures and within a culture that the deceased lived by there is a need for a form of ritual, some marking of the passing of a person from the world, some focus for the grief of the survivors, and a meeting place for those people to share their memories of the deceased.

15. "There was a custom in Bavaria, for example, in which cakes were left on the dead body before they were baked. Those who ate the cakes were held to have absorbed some of the virtues of the deceased". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 105.

16. "In some places in Northern England, the custom of touching the dead has survived. Some have interpreted it as protecting the toucher from haunting, others see it as a mark of respect for the deceased. In the latter form it may be related to the old belief that a corpse will bleed if it is touched by its murderer". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 107.

17. "The site of burial is often important. In the Christian West people are familiar with the concept of consecrated ground. In other societies, such as in some traditional cultures in Western Africa, people might be buried beneath the floors of their homes". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 08.

18. "Cremation is an essential ritual of Hinduism. Hindus believe in reincarnation and that the soul passes through various, not necessarily human, bodies. The body that the soul occupies is influenced by conduct in the previous life. At the time of death the soul is considered to be trapped inside the skull. It must therefore be released with the aid of a sacred fire in the ceremony of cremation". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 110.

ii) Death as the ultimate gift

‘The Gift of Death’ by Jacques Derrida examines death as the ultimate gift of all where the gift economy is unconditional and that there is another way of living, of being, that we have forgotten¹⁹. It is through this mystery of death that we will find the most profound way of living and we can recalibrate our attitudes towards life. In Derrida’s notion of the pure gift, death in the first instant resists materialism. Where death can arrive at any time, as an experience in some form, initiates a sense of something beyond ourselves in this very materialistic world. As suggested in the Introduction, I have found it useful to conceive of popular attitudes to death through surveying contemporary popular artistic expressions in film and novels and have attempted to read closely Derrida’s Gift as unconditional experience within each of them. In what follows I rehearse some of my readings in order to get closer to this complex yet profound philosophical concept bringing me closer to what I term as an ethic (or ethos) of death.

Within the novel and subsequent film adaptation of ‘Tuesdays with Morrie’ therein lies the expression of a kind of shame of aging²⁰. Shame of becoming less independent and that the core of this shame may lie around placing a demand on another. In our contemporary society, independence is seen as an ultimate goal where being dependant on others is seen as being weak. Derrida, however, holds a very different understanding that contradicts Morrie’s point of view. Derrida explores the ultimate gift of death, when you are dying for the other is that you are not making any demand on them, because the ultimate gift to the other is only temporary. Derrida talks of the gift not as a material object but as goodness, the action of giving or donating that which becomes forgotten and unobtainable by the giver. Here, with regards to death and the idea that our death is “in every case mine”, singular to ourselves, Derrida exposes the gift of death to be that of a sacrifice²¹. Sacrifice, Derrida defends is the act of “dying for the other” and not “dying in the place of the other”²². The word ‘for’ is not to be defined as a substitution of one for another, but as a gift that is given for the other. One singular, irreplaceable life is given for another singular, irreplaceable life. And, in the way of the gift, there is no reciprocal sacrifice, only to die for the other without the expectation of an exchange.

19. Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

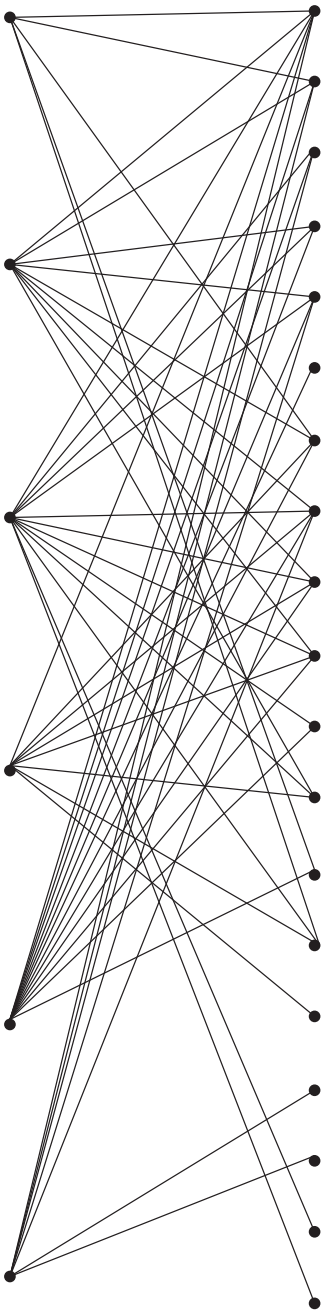
20. Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson*. Sphere, 2014 reprint.

21. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*. 42.

22. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*. 43.

Diagram 1.

- THE GIFT OF DEATH
- JINDABYNE
- DEPARTURES
- THE MESSENGER
- TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE
- THE MUTANT MESSENGER



THE ETHICS OF DEATH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALL of these 'Readings' work within an ethics of death with philosophical questions around existence via questions of death.
MYSTERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The Gift of Death'</i> - Death as the reception of the unknown, singular death is a mystery to those living and can never be understood. • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - Unknown landscape - strange, forbidden, landscape pools us together. Feared Landscape. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Mystery of death=fear=veil with material stuff. • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Stepping into the unknown. Mystery of self-discovery, of landscape, of time and perception.
CONTEMPORARY FORCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Departures'</i> - commercial attitude towards traditional customs - unnecessary • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Material possessions/obsessions, popular cultural values • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - material possessions - no need for them. Icing & gravy - allegorical notion on how we fill ourselves up unnecessarily
TABOO OF DEATH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - death becomes a secret , something not to be discussed or addressed. • <i>'Departures'</i> - Fear of death, death seen as a pollution/unclean. Aversion to touching the dead. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - We fear death. Fear = taboo
CULTURAL DIFFERENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - division between Aboriginal and white Australians, genders, humans and the landscape • <i>'Departures'</i> - Japanese customs of death conditions vs western cultures • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - Difference between army life/civilian life and conditions of death • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - how death transcends all difference - death as an equalizer • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Difference between Aboriginals and a white american woman -perceptions of being/ of living. • <i>'Departures'</i> - The struggle of life that comes with aging - bathhouse owner. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - We fear aging. Try to cover it up with material obsessions and artifical aging products. Aging as growth.
PARADOX OF RELATIONS (TO THE OTHER)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The Gift of Death'</i> - Dying for the other. Sacrific - no expectation from the other. Time - temporary prolonging/Reminder of mortality. • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - secret paradox created through the lack of conideration to the aboriginal dead girls body. • <i>'Departures'</i> - Relations between the living and the dead • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Student/professor. Living/dying.
RITUALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - Rituals of an Aboriginal funeral service • <i>'Departures'</i> - Traditional Japanese customs of preparing the dead body for cremation. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Meeting every tuesday as student and professor. Ritual of 'being-with'. • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Rituals of the aboriginals (meals, healing...)
SHAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - Shame created by and directed towards the men's inconsiderate actions towards the dead. • <i>'Departures'</i> - initial shame of the profession - and wife's shame of his daling with the dead. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - loss of independance is seen negatively in our society. A shame to be dependant on others.
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - Fear of the landscape, fear of loss • <i>'Departures'</i> - Fear of facing and being with the dead - unclean/shunned by friends/family • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - The messenger invites fear - uniform signals death -death signals fear/trauma • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - people act like death is contagious. taboo condition. fear without understanding • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Fear of stepping into the unknown without the famillar
VEILING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Departures'</i> - covering/dressing/preparing the dead - veiling of the body so they are seen as they were - alive • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - Use the script as a veil for the messy/emotional - to keep an emotional distance. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Veiling of age though material possessions and artifical products - aging = growth
GRIEVING PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - wife uses healing process of mourning the girls death as an 'alibi' to death with her own struggles with her life/husband. • <i>'Departures'</i> - The performance of the nokanshi acts a way of mourning for the bereaved - final goodbyes • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - reflects different grieving processes/actions. No one is the same - they respond to the call of death. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Grieving through shared life lessons and relations of being-with (living funeral)
SACRIFICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The Gift of Death'</i> - Sacrifice for the other: death as a surrender to the unknown. unconditional - complete releasement. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - To sacrific/detach through total acceptance • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Scarifice of all material possessions and cultural perceptions.
RESPONCIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The Gift of Death'</i> - Responsibility of responsibility - responsibility of birth /death - not a responsibility of exchange/not a conditional 'for'. • <i>'Departures'</i> - Responsibility of caring for the bodies the dead to the standards held by the family. Responsibility of practice. • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - Responsibility of the job to deliver the news - to stick to the script. Responsibility of representation. • <i>'Tuesday's with Morrie'</i> - Morrie holds the responsibility of a Mentor, a professor - the responsibility of sharing knowledge
STABILITY/INSTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The Messenger'</i> - conflict between job and being human. The regulated/scripted vs the messy and emotional.
TOTEMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - no belief in animism but in the totemic being - reincarnation of the spirit through objects. reminders of ancestry. help identify a persons relations and origins to the world.
SPIRITUAL BEYOND THE PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Mutant Messenger'</i> - Aboriginals connection to the spiritual life beyond the physical - sharing of knowledge & self-discovery.
CARE & RESPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Jindabyne'</i> - Lack of care & respect for not only the girl's dead body but also towards each others culture. • <i>'Departures'</i> - Respect and care when dealing with the preparation of the dead body - slowness, beauty and dignity.
MEDICALIZATION TO THE BODY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Departures'</i> - Japanese tradition of preparing the dead body for cremation

" I can give my whole life for another, I can offer my death to the other, but in doing this I will only be replacing or saving something partial in a particular situation ".²³

Partiality becomes a lead inspiration in the way I have designed my final installation and I speak to this in the 'design of study' chapter that concludes this exegesis. What is important to remember is that the partiality for which we can have a full experience of death (ours, others) is impossible and is signified and performed in the floor-wall relation for viewing the final work.

As we a mortal beings we can only sacrifice with the thought that we will only temporarily prolong the other's life, as death is ultimately unavoidable and so our sacrifice is to *" give the other everything except immortality "* — provisionally we only release the other from their death now in that present moment²⁴. This sacrifice is a reminder to ourselves that we are all dying, but also about how death is only an experience for you (singular), a unique thing, but the uniqueness about it is a total mystery. It is this notion of mystery that cannot be recouped. I have worked with this mysterious element in terms of what is described in my practice and its design later with respect to the Object X. When things are mysterious and strange we don't know how to calculate them, and this creates fear²⁵. The idea of fear, the symptomatics of fear in the western culture is to store it up and veil it, as Morrie (the male lead protagonist) states *" once you learn how to die, you learn how to live "*²⁶. Derrida, however, reasons that actually it is the mystery and the letting go, the surrendering to that mystery, which is the ultimate unconditional experience. You cannot reciprocate that, and you cannot say you understand it. Derrida's gift is another economy, one that is beyond the economy of exchange and conceived most aptly in the term " the unconditional."

It is within the film *'The Messenger'* that we can see the paradox of a complicated relationship between the conditional and the unconditional experiences of two men and, thereby, how these phenomena dialogue and provide tension points within one another²⁷. In one way, on the surface these two US Army Casualty Notification Officers (who notify the public of the loss of their relatives during the latest Iraq war) - see figure 5- have no expectation for reciprocation of a reward, of compassion for

23. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*. 42.

24. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*. 43.

25. *Philosophical and aesthetical work on the Sublime has attempted to conceive of the ways in which we attempt to rationalise what is simply overwhelming — although, I do not focus my reading here using this concept.*

26. Albom. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. 82.

27. *The Messenger*. Film. 2009. Oren Moverman. USA.

Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



the job. No one gives to them, and no one protects them from the harsh reality. They go into each situation with no expectation, with no thought of what they get out of the transaction. So, in a way, their actions are unconditional, however at the same time this, is their job and they are getting paid to do it, they have to do it. In this sense it is completely conditional to army protocol. This suggests the bigger question of the unconditionality of war and being a soldier for the greater good of the country. Within army protocol, it is conditional that there is an outside stereotype and impression of a hardened soldier that doesn't let pain in, and as a result they have to deal with the tough conditions of their job through the most excessive ways. Unconditionally we place a huge demand upon soldiers. They go to war, to fight and they don't know what to expect, they have put their individual lives completely on hold because they have to put them on the line. Ultimately, soldiers are unconditional human labour.

However, Derrida's ethics of the gift is purely unconditional, is a purely unconditional giving, a giving without any return. Within the contemporary world we are always giving with a condition, and, whether we know it or not, it always feels like there are conditions which raise a significant problem of how we actually get to that point of unconditionality. Within the Australian film *'Jindabyne'*, (refer to diagram 1) I have interpreted the ultimate gift of death that allows a woman to discover how she genuinely exists within the contemporary social and cultural fabric of a complex geopolitical site (Australia)²⁸. A white woman uses the death of an aboriginal girl to subconsciously work out her own problems of dislocation through patriarchal repression within her own marriage. It is not until she is stripped right back in terms of how another life world is not yours for the appropriating and, in her context, for the emotional appropriation for your own restoration — in realising this non-availability of an other's death, she learns how to live again reaching the destitution of her own genuine place of displacement and redemption. It is only through the rejection of the aboriginal people of her that she is able to confront her own self. They are gifting via an unconditional refusal. Their rejection invites her to face the unconditional truth of the matter and not hook it onto some other context that will prop up her life. This is an uncanny ethical moment, that can be hard to recognise because

28. *Jindabyne*. Film. 2007. Ray Lawrence. USA.

it is often too hard to face, however, in facing its unrecognizability, one recognises a possible transformative experience. For Derrida this 'ultimate' unconditionality is gifted in our confrontation with death. It is not that we, as human beings, give this gift but rather death gives it to us in unexpected, untimely and in (rationally) unknowable ways. The concept of the gift of death runs through this research to enable a work that creates some kind of response to this concept; a response that aims to reveal death as a way for living more fully without struggle in the face of our mortal subjective states. Because we will never know what it is to experience our own death until we go through it — and, to go through it may even be something as simple as the day-to-day everyday passing of our lives as we grow, into the more frightening experience of being told our singular life is about to end (through such things as disease or more devastating events that take our lives). Yet, the knowing of death, even as we are on the last threshold moment of breathing our last breath, may still be unknowable — or to put it far more profoundly, the knowing will be a surrender to the mysterious incompleteness of life.

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This mysterious experience signifies and actualises an unconditional experience, as it can never be recouped. Your (singular) death can never be the same as the other, no one can compare experience because you are already gone. “ *The sense of responsibility is in all cases defined as a mode of “ giving oneself death.” Once it is established that I cannot die for another (in his place) although I can die for him (by sacrificing myself for him or dying before his eyes), my own death becomes this irreplaceability that I must assume if I wish to have access to what is absolutely mine. My first and last responsibility, my first and last desire, is that responsibility of responsibility that relates me to what no one else can do in my place* ”²⁹.

This gift of death raises a profound notion of how this experience gives for the other. Death is a twofold experience. In sacrifice we only prolong the life of the other as one dies and therefore, remind the other of their own mortality. Derrida discusses the responsibility of responsibility, about how there are many forms of responsibility but the first responsibility of birth and death is the responsibility of responsibility par excellence because it isn't a responsibility of exchange. It is not a responsibility for, a

29. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*.⁴⁴.

conditional responsibility, but an act of complete release. When you die, you surrender yourself fully. As Derrida explains, it is not until you completely let go of your life that holds you, that you have not reached this responsibility of responsibility. Pure responsibility of responsibility is complete release without any expectations of what can happen. “ *The responsible life is itself conceived as the gift of something that, in the final analysis, while having the characteristics of the Good (that is, retaining, at the heart of the gift, the platonic agathon), also shows traits of something inaccessible to which one must permanently submit traits of a mystery that has the last word* ”³⁰.

Within the Japanese film ‘*Departures*’, this pure responsibility of responsibility can be seen as the man’s complete release, the death, of his first life, a musician, and used this death (subconsciously) as an opportunity to start again and live with purpose³¹. This is unconditional in terms of how his new job, his new purpose came to him. He walked into that job without knowing, he did not calculate what his purpose was; the purpose chose him. It was an unconditional gift, where you are open enough to allow something other than the familiar, to allow the unknown to come into your life and transform you. “ *It comes into being as such at the moment when the soul is not only gathering itself in preparation for death but when it is ready to receive death, giving it to itself even, in an acceptance that delivers it from the body, and at the same time delivers it from the demonic and the orgiastic. By means of the passage to death the soul attains its own freedom* ”³². Through understanding Derrida’s notion of the pure gift within other modes of expression, it is clear to see that the gift and its mystery can be experienced in a multitude of different ways and that the pure gift is a complex paradox where different cultural conditions can occupy different gradients within the threshold of the conditional and the unconditional.

30. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*.41.

31. *Departures*. Film, 2008. Yojiro Takita. Japan.

32. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*.41.

1.2 GIFT-GIVING

i) Customs and rituals of gift-giving

In almost all societies and cultures people give gifts. Gifts are a mark of important events within our lives, signifying anniversaries, festivals and rites of passage. However, each gift can vary dependant on culture and occasion. Gifts are given on all types of occasions in the contemporary industrialised societies. In western societies birthdays, naming ceremonies, weddings, anniversaries, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Valentine's day, Mother's day and Father's day are all occasions for gift giving. As well, occasions that signify special rites of initiation, such as your first day at school or graduation. Gift giving has become of very high economic importance within our modern society with the strength of the gift business being seen through an industry purely devoted to making and selling greeting cards for every foreseeable occasion³³.

The economy of the gift in the modern world surrounds a gift exchange. If you are to give a gift for someone's birthday, it is expected to receive a gift back on your own. A gift establishes and confirms a social obligation, a demand. The process of this exchange has grown so important that people are often concerned about the value of their gift. Is it valuable enough to please the recipient? Or is it too valuable? Will the recipient be able to send an equivalent gift back at a later stage? Does that value of the gift display how much you know the recipient, or the lack thereof. Within different cultures there can be elaborate rules that dictate how gifts should be exchanged and therefore gifts are seen as a hospitality, where parties are expected to reciprocate³⁴. Here, gift-giving resembles many other aspects of social life, which are also questions of exchange. Gift-giving is, therefore, a ritual embodiment of this process, helping to link together relationships and to even unify different societies. The reciprocating of a gift involves not only the obligation involved in the exchange process, but also the obligation of acceptance. It is seen as forbidden and impolite to deny a gift, as it is seen as an insult to the giver and a refusal to participate in the exchange. No one is free to refuse the gift that is offered but automatically entered into an exchange where everyone tries to exceed one another in generosity. The only exception to this

33. " Birthdays and Christmas or New Year are no longer enough from the card manufacturers, who actually promote what they call 'Special Days' for which card can be bought. Mothering Sunday has been joined by Father's Day, and even a special day for grandmothers, to ensure that the manufacturer have a steady income throughout the year ". Ingpen, Robert and Wilkinson, Philip. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.* (Dragons World Ltd. 1994).162.

34. " In Pakistan, and among Pakistani communities in England, there is a tradition called *lena-dena* ('taking-giving'), which governs presents given on special occasions such as a wedding or a child's first complete reading of the Qur'an. Under this system a gift is reciprocated with one worth slightly more. This in turn creates a further debt, which is repaid with a gift worth the difference between the first two, plus a little more, and so on ". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world.*164.

rule is the notion of a bribe, which is seen as an addition to the original gift above the normal payment for a service, and is frowned upon in some cultures and condoned in others where they are seen and accepted as a part of normal everyday life. Though where bribes are a part of everyday life they, too, are seen to be reciprocated in some form or another. If one is to give them, then one must be then entitled to expect something in return. There are some cultures whose entire social structure is based upon gift-giving, where a continuous exchange is made central to their living and acts as an effective social binding force³⁵.

Gifts also hold a significant role within religious rituals. Of not only making offerings to their gods but to support the notion that religion encourages the rich to give to the poor. This is more likely to be in the interests of the giver as of the recipient³⁶. The gift can also be given as a tribute, a gift given as an indication of loyalty. These traditions still continue in some cultures and signify a position of power. In show of the givers loyalty, the receiver offers protection, land and other such services. Similar to the tribute system is the custom that ambassadors bring gifts when visiting a foreign place. This however differs from the tribute rite of signifying power and is more projected at extending a relationship.

Gift-giving is more than a basic exchange, gifts can strengthen relationships and provide a way of communication between loved ones. The gift shows the recipient how much you care and how much you appreciate them in your life, that we are thinking of them and that we want to make that person feel special. Everybody wants to feel wanted, to be a part of a community, family, society or otherwise. Gifts are given to portray emotion, to say " I'm sorry ", and to " get well soon ". A lot of effort goes into finding a gift the recipient will enjoy and that we feel comfortable giving.

The gift is a way of sending out a message. Gifts can often have a spiritual dimension, where the gift was not only about making an economical sacrifice but also about the gift being a symbol of the giver. With a strong link between gift and giver, it is a surprise that the rules of exchange seen in so many cultures do not operate in this way. That we are not expected to give a

35. " The clearest example of this is the Trobriand ceremony called kula. In the kula, two types of article continually circulate through the islands, passing from continuous exchange. The male islanders (only men are involved) are eager to take part in the kula, to which is attached great importance by the Trobriand islanders. It is easy to see that this ceremony has a number of important and useful effects. First, many of the preparations are useful to the community, such as the building of sea-going canoes. Moreover, apart from the ritual exchanges of necklaces and bracelet, more ordinary trade is also carried out alongside the kula; one does not trade with one's kula partner but the kula opens the way up for trade in general. In addition, the institution embraces and links many islands, and binds together numerous tribes. People of the area can travel from Island to island confident that they will have friendly reception ". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 165-166.

36. " It is one fundamental duty of Islam, for example, to pay a special tax for charitable purposes. Christians, too, are encouraged to give to the poor. Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said that alms should be given discretely: the Christian's reward would come from God and not from any person who saw the gift being made". Ingpen and Wilkinson. *A celebration of Customs and Rituals of the world*. 168.

comparable gift in exchange, and to not be under any obligation to accept the gift in the first instance. As these gifts remain they retain and keep alive the memory of the event, of the giver and of the relationship held between giver and recipient. It is this emotional benefit of the gift-exchange that stands as reason for its continuance.

ii) The gift of giving, receiving and reciprocation

In 'The Gift', Mauss examines the economy of gift exchanges in multiple cultures and focuses on the give-and-take nature of gifts and the obligation of the receiver to repay the debt³⁷. Mauss focuses his inquiry primarily on the tribal customs of the peoples of Melanesia and Polynesia, and the American Pacific Northwest where, in contrast, the exchange market in modern societies is seen to be a separate domain of fully modernised activity, while the primitive exchange market encompasses economic, moral, aesthetic, and religious elements. Market exchanges are not only performed predominantly between individuals, like today, but between groups, such as families, clans, and tribes. Mauss explores the customs of the gift exchange through two main questions: What is the theory by which a gift received must be repaid, and what power is there in the thing given that compels the recipient to make a return?

Within Mauss' economy of gift exchange he describes three obligations (a) Giving: the first step in building social relationships (b) Receiving: accepting the social bond and (c) Reciprocating: demonstrating social integrity. To understand these three areas, we must first become familiar with the 'Potlatch', the system through which gifts are exchanged, encompassing these three acts. As Mauss states: *"The potlatch, so unique as a phenomenon, yet so typical of these tribes, [Melanesian and Polynesian] is really nothing other than gift exchange"*³⁸. This potlatch begins with the obligation to give. To give *"is the essence of potlatch. A chief must give a potlatch for himself, his son, his son-in-law or daughter and for the dead. He can keep his authority ... only if he can prove that he is favourably regarded by the spirits, that he possesses a fortune and that he is possessed by it"*³⁹. To gift is a demonstration not only of one's wealth expended upon others, but it is also a display of generosity. Mauss describes that there is no one time that one is not obliged to gift to another, especially to invite. Giving is an essential performance of public acknowledgement in every occasion of importance. To hold back an invitation can be seen as to lose face and *"to lose one's face is to lose ones spirit"*⁴⁰. To neglect the obligation of giving is seen to defy customs and to place not only your role of importance at risk but also your persona. To illustrate the moral balance characteristic of gift exchange, Mauss next discusses the delicate

37. Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Taylor & Francis, 2002.

38. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.33.

38. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.33.

39. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.37.

40. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.38.

issue of being obligated to accept a gift you fear being unable to match in reciprocation. Receiving a gift *"is no less constraining. One does not have the right to refuse a gift or a potlatch. To do so would show fear of having to repay, and of being abased by default. One would 'lose the weight' of one's name by admitting defeat in advance"*⁴¹. To be defeated by a gift is to show inferior wealth, and also inferior generosity by failure of appropriate reception. It is a recurring notion that *"it is not only the one that gives that is bound, but also the one who receives it"*⁴². Lastly Mauss explores the obligation to reciprocate the gift which was received in either equal or greater value than that which was given. Within every particular illustration of the different societal practices and rituals of gift-giving, where each practice of gift exchange and the reasons behind them may vary, Mauss emphasises the constant recurring notion of the obligation to reciprocate gifts. The value of the reciprocated gift is vital to sustaining agreements between different parties and partial contracts; giving in excess may invite as much offence to the recipient as returning goods or services with too little value. This is the danger of the gift exchange, of finding the balance between receiving and reciprocating that which was given without losing face or causing insult.

However, there is the noticeable conflicting matter of Mauss' principles, which can be seen as the dismissal of the unconditional gift, donation or sacrifice willingly given without the obligation of reciprocation. Mauss focuses on the gift exchange in terms of the concept of contracts and the significance of reciprocation that abolishes the symbolic character and pure intent of the gift. Derrida, in comparison, explores the conditions of the gift in order to follow some form of investigation, his most pressing condition being that the gift cannot be reciprocated at all⁴³. Derrida describes the gift as one that does not appear to be a gift, the donor not considering the gift as a gift, and where the recipient does not see the gift as a gift for themselves as a recipient. There is no reciprocal obligation of a return gift. To Mauss a reciprocated gift immediately establishes an economic system, where the only way to avoid this exchange would be to acknowledge Derrida's theory of not recognising the gift as a gift, therefore, holding no obligation of reciprocation. In his exploration of classical Hindu law, Mauss clearly explains the theory of belief that any gifts given in charity, as a donation,

41. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.39.

42. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.61.

43. Derrida. *The Gift of Death*.

as a sacrifice, are still given with the hope to be returned to the giver at some point: “ *The thing given brings return in this life and in the other* ” ⁴⁴.

As Mauss discusses the primitive etiquette of the gift giving economy he also recognises that although material objects of recognised value are often objects of primitive exchange, such exchange may additionally involve human beings (women and children), feasts, military aid or highly symbolic “goods” such as entertainment and performances. He defines this system of exchange as total prestation. However, he also discusses what power the gift, whatever it may be, holds that it can compel a reciprocation. He speaks in terms of the object, something material, which, when given, carries the identity of the giver, and, therefore the recipient receives not only the gift but also the association of that object with the identity of the donor. When the object takes on a persona Mauss refers to the Maori hau, the “ *spirit of things* ” ⁴⁵. The hau demands that the gift be returned to its owner. In Polynesia, failing to reciprocate means losing mana, the person’s spiritual source of authority and wealth. Gift-giving is thus a critical mechanism for creating social bonds. “ *Suppose you have some particular object, taonga, and you give it to me; you give it to me without a price. We do not bargain over it. Now I give you this thing to a third person who after time decides to give me something in repayment for it (utu), and he makes me a present of something (taonga). Now this taonga I receive from him is the spirit (hau) of the taonga which I receive on account of the taonga that came from you, I must return to you...If I were to keep this second taonga for myself I might become ill or even die. Such is hau, the hau of personal property, the hau of the taonga, the hau of the forest* ” ⁴⁶. Therefore, the obligation to the gift is never inert, and it always carries with it the persona of the giver even when passed onto another. The gift in itself creates a bond between two parties since the gift itself is a persona or a relation of one such party. Therefore, “ *it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself* ” ⁴⁷. This is what seems to compel the obligation of the gift-giving, receiving and reciprocation within Polynesia and Maori New Zealand.

Similarly, Elaine Scarry defines that it is the persona and reciprocal effect of the maker who gifts the object life⁴⁸. Scarry embraces all kinds of human artefacts, from collective domestic objects

44. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.54.

45. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.8.

46. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.8-9.

47. Mauss. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.10

48. Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1985.

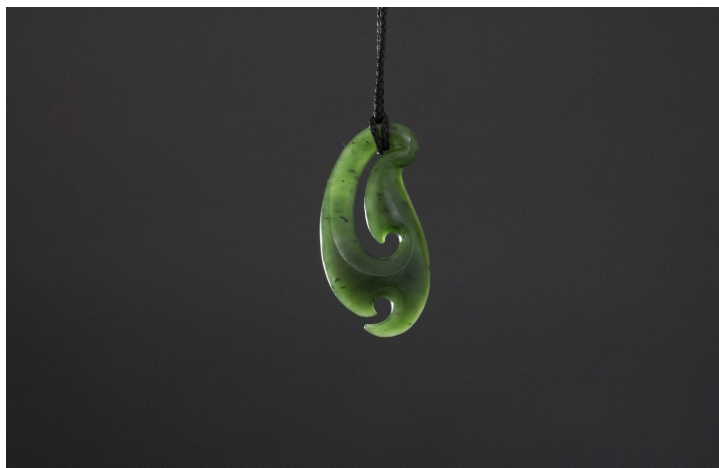


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

such as the clothespeg, the chair, the cloth, to the nation-state and even the Judeo-Christian God (an act of shared human imagining). However, it is made clear through all of these artefacts that material objects are attempts to hold and extend our sentience and that they are projections of those who make them which have a reciprocal effect, 'remaking' those who make them. This can be read within her discussion of the artefact as a lever that is carried out within her larger reflection on projection and reciprocation. On the one side we project human sentience into objects, an awareness, a knowledge of human needs, while on the other side is reciprocation, a sharing of our awareness. Both projection and reciprocation are distinguishable through their separate ideals while they are at the same time inseparable through their active relationship to one another. For example, the chair is projected as *"not the shape of the skeleton, the shape of body weight, nor even the shape of pain-perceived, but the shape of perceived-pain-wished-gone. The chair is, therefore, the materialized structure of a perception; it is sentient awareness materialized into a freestanding design ... what was originally an invisible aspect of consciousness (compassion) has now been translated into the realm of visible but disappearing action"*⁴⁹. The artefact is a lever that moves the power of creation back again from the external world to human beings, re-creating and re-making, extending our consciousness.

Heidegger considers this concern through the position of the two-fold, of taking and holding, that which gives the object life, that is what gives the thing its thingness⁵⁰. He explores this question through the exemplar of a ceramic jug. What is a jug? The jug as we use it, is an object, made from a specific ceramic material and has a form and function. But how do these qualities define the jug as a thing? A thing is derived from what Heidegger calls a fundamental 'thingness', and this thingness, is in fact, the void within the jug. The making of the jug shapes the void which in turn shapes the jug. The void allows the jug's basic function, to hold. This function become noticeable when we fill the jug. It is seen as the bottom and sides that perform the holding, the clay that shapes the jug. Heidegger argues that this is not true, that if you fill the jug with liquid is it these sides and bottom, the material that you are pouring into? No, what we are actually doing is pouring the liquid between the walls and over the bottom, into the void. It is the void that is holding the liquid.

49. Scarry. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. 290.

50. Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. HarperCollins, 2001.

51. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. 167.

“ The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as a holding vessel ”⁵¹. And what does this say about the potter? If the void does the holding, then the potter is not truly making the jug. He shapes the clay. The clay shapes the void wherein which the vessels thingness actually lies. This thingness is found in the jugs two-fold holding of taking and keeping. The jug “ holds by taking what is poured in. It holds by keeping and retaining what it took in ”⁵². The notion of hold consequently becomes ambiguous when the unification of the twofold is only identified by the outpouring. “ To pour from the jug is to give. The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring ... The nature of the holding void is gathered in the giving ”⁵³. Therefore the jug is a thing that gathers and gifts.

52-53. *Heidegger. Poetry, Language, Thought.* 169.



Fig. 7.

CHAPTER 2:

TWO GIFTS: WORKING CONCEPT AND MATERIAL PRACTICES INTO PROJECT-BEING

This chapter examines how my project responds to designing artefacts that express event-as-forces of life-death paradoxes: object-making as events and/or events expressed in artefacts. This chapter reveals the initial processes and aims to install a collection of these objects to communicate their life-force; a life-living, rather than 'dead' objects. In relation to my spatial design work, this chapter discusses the prominent critical investigations within the arrival of the taxonomy of object-events. However, it should be noted that the final chapter reveals my edited and final exhibition resolve and marks a sophisticated understanding of the deconstructive approach, critical concepts and design solutions. In this way, Chapter Three " design of study ", marks the conclusion point to this exegesis — it is important for me to express how this editing arrived through a prior discussion of process in line with philosophical concepts. This is to reveal how closely the making and concepts were infused to create a more rigorous and genuine approach to the research.

2.1 THE TAXONOMY OF OBJECT-EVENTS

Structured upon Mauss' philosophy of the gift exchange, my practice is a three-step economy of giving, receiving and reciprocation, translated into a series of methods that work collectively to demonstrate my spatial design research hypothesis that artefacts can express event-as-forces of life-death paradoxes. These artefacts become a part of a death rite exchange where they are operating as objects that say they are about death and that death has become an economic system. A fourth step demonstrates Derrida's ultimate gift of the unconditional death, through exploring various housing methods for each of the three stages of the gift economy. Each of these four stages draws on the philosophical principles of Timothy Morton⁵⁴ to aid my understanding of the translation between the theoretical notions of death and gift-giving to my practice of object-events. Spatial design becomes an inventive practice here as a translation mode from one relationship to another — questioning relational subjectivities through translation modes of collecting, casting, photography and installation practices. These strategies and methods are discussed below:

i) The Gift of Death

My practice began with the collection of dead objects, objects that have not been cared for, have not been given a proper death and have ended up in a junkyard of their kind, a site of ruin, abandonment, demolition and death. These dead objects are the ruins of my own archaeological site. My site of demolition and ruin holds a clinical aspect to it as it becomes the home for dead objects that are at the end of their days and no one really wants to hold onto them and care for them. As a way to determine if these things are truly 'dead' or not, they have to hold at least one of three attributes:

- 1) The object is unidentifiable, it cannot be named to be seen as being a particular object or hold a particular use;
- 2) The object holds no use value, it no longer holds properties that allow it to serve some human need or want;
- 3) The object may not hold any exchange value, it cannot be compared to any other object on the market that may hold equivalent value.

54. Timothy Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2013.



Fig. 8.

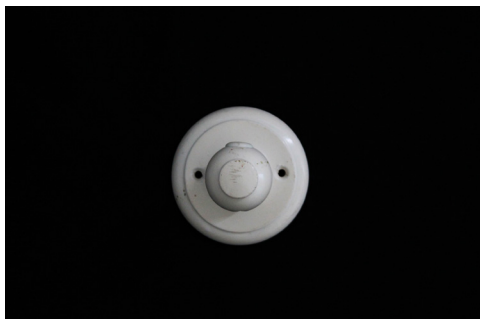


Fig. 9.



Fig. 10

While foraging for dead objects, with no real aim to collect anything in particular, it became clear that an archive of specific objects began to emerge; a taxonomy of domestic architectural objects. Domestic objects that are specific to my culture, my heritage and my neighbourhood. In a way I am exploring my own death through collecting ruins from my own spatial environment.

As previously discussed, Mauss' gift exchange begins with the obligation to give, that to give is not only a sign of generosity and an essential part of acknowledging an occasion but also that the gift given holds significant value and power where that often carries the identity of the donor. To translate this notion into a practice of making object-events, I have identified the dead artefacts as donors, and that their deaths are gifts of closure to their past life that allow themselves to be revived as another. As Morton explains "*Dying is a sensual event that occurs in an interobjective space. Closure demonstrates how when one object comes into phase with another, annihilation is near. Death is when a virus, for instance, starts to replicate itself in you genome, using your cells like a photocopying machine. If the cells do this efficiently, it is called death. Then your body disintegrates. Bacteria eat your rotting flesh. You become bacteria. The Bacteria bacteriomorph your body, translating you into bacteria*"⁵⁵. It is this notion of translating one object into another that my practice adopts. It is through the gifting of an anamorphic practice of translation and distortion that these objects have been revived⁵⁶. Each artefact has been revived through a process of latex casting that relies on the original to gift the new material its shape. However, it is the unique reception of this gift that defines the translation of the dead object into a new life force of distortion.

ii) Receiving the Gift of Death

The obligation to receive is just as important as the obligation to give. This can be seen in the response of the latex castings to the dead artefacts. While the 'dead' objects gift some form of talismanic say on the object that can be read differently in all the revived objects though colour, texture, shape, morphing and ambiguity, the process of the latex casting has made all of these domestic familiar everyday items unfamiliar and strange.

55. Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. 195.

56. *This giving can be identified through Morton's enquiry of an objects fragility, how fragility exposes a paradox of inconsistency of objects. " Beginnings are anamorphic, while endings are beautifully symmetrical. Life is distortion; death is peaceful ... to begin is to distort; to end is to become consistent ". Therefore, through the gift of death, my collection of dead objects would be at risk of becoming reduced to only memories and appearances if not for a mode of translation into another object. Morton. Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality. 199-200.*

As Morton explains, “ *there can be no perfect translation of an object, because the translator is also an (inconsistent) object. There would be no trace of a perfect translation. Thus there appear cinders, fragments and debris. New objects are uncanny reminders of broken objects. A culture of mourning might arise around them* ”⁵⁷. These forms have all come from the ‘dead’ objects but while some are more readable than others they have all become anonymous. While they are all still three dimensional, and are an exact cast of the ‘dead’ object, these translated forms are incredibly abstract, betraying the law of what the dead object is. For example, the latex cast of the can defies the original cans purpose and materiality, to be metal, strong and upright, the cast taking on a different life by reshaping itself through collapsing. The latex casts are a channelling of energy that not only exist in reality but pick up on trace elements of an object that no longer exists as “ *the more complete the translation, the more complete the death of the object* ”⁵⁸. The latex translation is not a replica or a replacement, but an uncanny object that holds the resemblance of the dead object as it acts as a “ *ghost of themselves* ”⁵⁹. These casts are a way of revivifying life, of tracing life and even though they morph into various forms, some more recognisable than others, the original artefact can still be seen to live on within them. Latex casting is a practice that can be seen as taking something ambiguous and translating it into something that is even more ambiguous. The ambiguous nature of the latex holds mystery as it can become something through ones imagination. The latex becomes animate, anthropomorphised, creating a life-force where we recognise human qualities. In this way the latex casts are giving the dead object life. Through this practise it is clear that death always lives on, that “ *nothing dies completely* ”, that it cannot be forgotten about as it always revives itself⁶⁰. These objects not only perform the act of receiving the gift of life through death but they also perform a remembrance economy. The qualities of the latex give the objects a certain aesthetic look that can be identified as belonging to an economy of architectural ruins. The casts begin to remember the spaces that they are from, signifying death in the form of memorial. My practice of revivifying these objects has given them an afterlife, a re-birth. Even if we can never determine the original objects context, or even if we did know, these objects no longer live like that anymore. They now live as another set of objects, with a different life-force, creating new relationships between themselves.

57. Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. 200.

58-60. Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. 196.



Fig. 11.

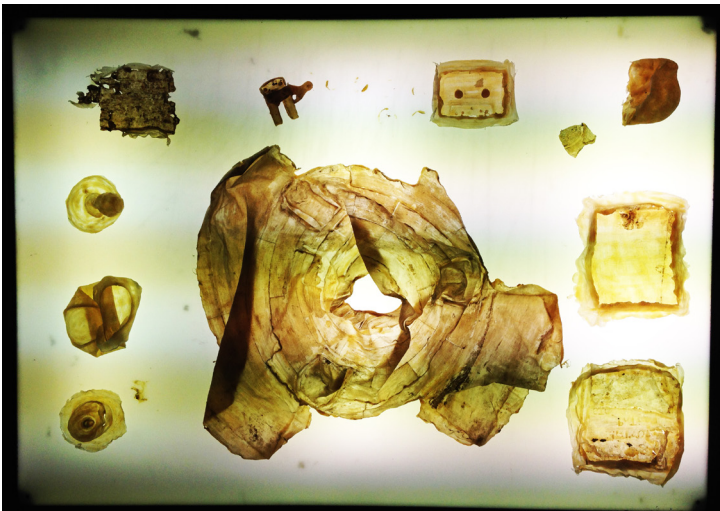


Fig. 12.



Fig. 13.

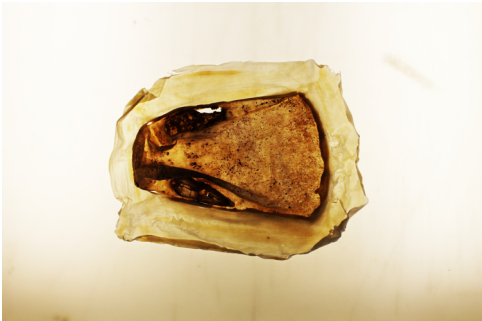
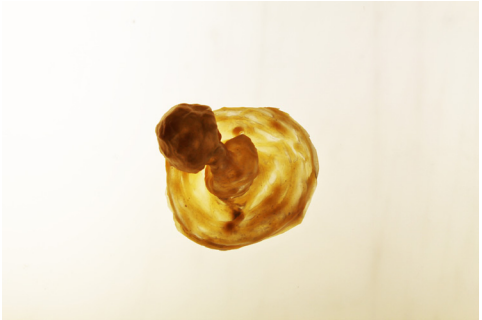


Fig. 14.

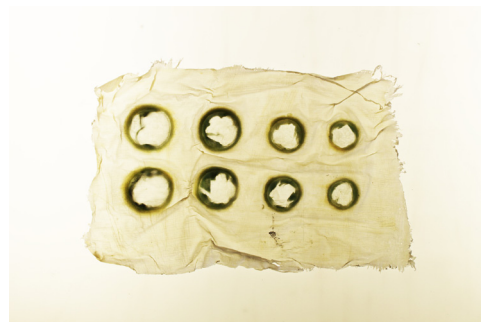


Fig. 15.

iii) Reciprocation through Photography

As Mauss previously states reciprocation is an essential phase of the gift economy. One thing about reciprocating is that it cannot be the same in order to give back, but neither can it be of excessively more or less value. Therefore, something within my practice of giving back to the original dead object must be the same while at the same time, something must also be different. Photography, I discovered, is a mode that performs in this way. The content stays the same through documenting the translation of the dead objects and latex casts themselves, while ultimately the practice itself changes from casting to photography. Photography is a way of documenting the “*culture of mourning*” that resulted through the giving-receiving translation of the dead object, and, therefore, a memorial act honouring the death of the object as well as its revival⁶¹. As Morton describes, memory is the prolonging existence of objects. My photographic practice becomes an allegorical mode of expression, a tool of recollection, a product of non-memory, used to fill in spaces of loss. Through these principles my work broadens and debates the condition of memory in relation to death to suggest that the psychic, physical and emotional worlding involving death and forgetting is complex. Further, the condition of forgetting in relation to photography as an act of memory is more complex than the perceptible paradox of remembering. The images depicting each stage of the gift emphasises the condition of the photograph, as not only an aid for conjuring death, loss and forgotten memories, but a tool that rewrites the previous image or photo through the spectator’s subjective interpretation, which subsequently replaces memory. These photographs are a device for remembering that which was defined dead. It is through these photographs that I give back to the original, reciprocating by acknowledging their gift of death, and how these gifts were received through the act of translation, ultimately revivifying the dead objects.

iv) Housing the Ultimate Gift of Death

Death is the ultimate gift. As previously explored, Derrida explains how the pure gift is unrecognisable. We cannot identify the gift as a gift, yet alone recognise that we are receiving something or made to reciprocate. The ultimate gift of death is outside of our recognition. We don’t even know what death is giving us and we cannot know where death begins and where

61. Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. 200.

it ends or how the living are still entwined with the dead. Unlike Mauss' gift exchange economy that influenced the first 3 stages of my practice, here the gift of death is an economic law that goes further beyond the exchange, one that is invisible to both parties. It is through Morton that my practice again translates the notion of the pure gift being unrecognisable into a spatial practice. As he states " *Closure is when the fourth wall dissolves: the aesthetic screen that separates the audience from the players* "62. The dissolving of the fourth wall is the perfect analogy of an act that is unrecognisable, one that is by the donor unknown, and never seen or understood by the recipient.

62. Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. 194.

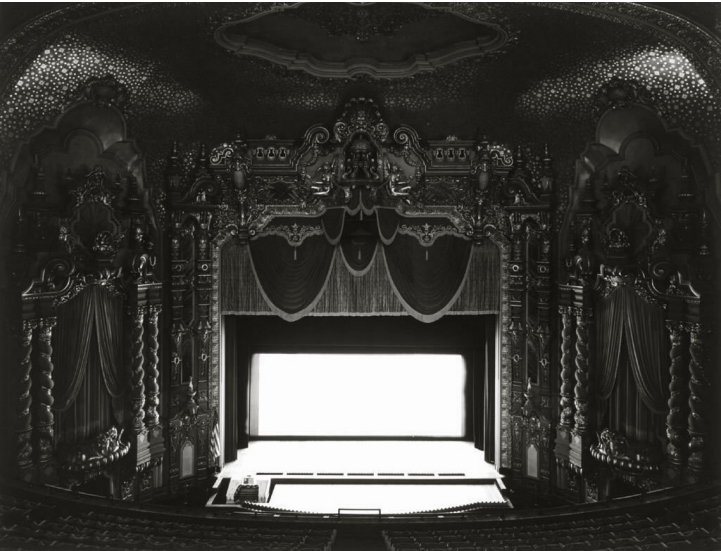


Fig. 16.

63. Derrida, Jacques. (1998). *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin* (P. Mensah, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press. 57.

64. The phase 'Deconstruction' is attributed to the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who through various philosophical works of deconstructive strategies exposes its double movement, the shifting from repression to freedom of otherness. Deconstruction performs what methodology does; it is a broad gathering of ways of practising with a philosophical ground underneath it to say this is the politics, the ethics, the philosophy, and the thinking which produces a way of opening up people's practices. As a practice that looks to interrupt current power relations, transgression and restoration perform in my work as an essential doubling for shifting two-fold conceptual-ity in regards to dialogues on marginal difference that emerge in governing procedures of language. There are two languages going on within us, we are born into language containing fixed ideas about who and what societal attitudes believe in and normalize without the realization of marginalizing other non-mastery ways of perceiving the world. Deconstruction follows the path of 'commentary' that imitates a governing interpretation in an act to determine what a set context means for a community of observers, echoes a marginal consensus regarding the accuracy of experience (I refer to this way in my final installation choices e.g. the fourth wall becomes both the consensus or hierarchical figure of power and commentary on death as taboo, but it also begins to 'break-down' this wall, allowing people into a non-mastery embodied state of being with death. For this reason an opening of a genuine interpretation of community to be implemented in the next movement is impossible without research ability in knowing and understanding the context of study, specifically without knowing the various contexts including politics, literacy, philosophy, history, and the like. As a Masters' project it is not my aim to overwhelm myself in these contexts but I have started to uncover the various contexts from where the project occurs as a

CHAPTER 3:

DESIGN OF STUDY: ULTIMATE GIFT ACTS AS THE FINAL DESIGN INSTALLATION

Jacques Derrida affirms modes of invention in order to go further than what has already been thought; "*invent in your language if you can or want to hear mine; invent if you can or want to give my language to be understood*"⁶³. Spatial design becomes an inventive practice here as a mode for deconstructing the binary of life/death and subject/object world ordering, moving instead into an everyday relationship to the otherness and mystery of death as imbued in living.

The ethical and political poststructuralist strategy of deconstruction that aids my approach escapes the label methodology that would normally be caused by preconceptions characteristic of permanency, objectivity and totality in its enquiry of study. Deconstruction takes on the task to philosophically think and actively 'write' through a two-fold understanding of subjectivity to unveil mainstream biases — in this context about life/death and subject/object⁶⁴.

3.1 HOUSING THE GIFT OF DEATH

Morrie

My leading inspiration and guiding star throughout this project is Morrie Schwartz⁶⁵, a man who saw his dying not as something that he should be ashamed of, but as an experience that would be of great value to others. He turned dying into his final project, offering his experience of the journey between life and death as a point of study for those still living but who will ultimately face death themselves. Through the narration of his death Morrie shared a profound teaching of life's greatest meaning,

*"Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live."*⁶⁶

The housing of my project will translate Morrie's teachings into an experience that attempts to encourage the audience to connect with my work in ways that are not instrumentally knowable to not only myself. Rather the affective nature of the work aims to trigger or hint at the arrival of an experience, which this project names 'the gift of death'. And, further, the strategic bet here, if this project proves affecting, is the possibility that the audience themselves may not even be able to rationally understand how the gift of death arrives. The design or concept for housing the gift of death works spatially as the notion of housing suggests. It does not produce symbols and objects associated with death as we know it terms of funerary rites. Rather, the housing is a figure both physical and metaphysical in its design. Housing is the ultimate gift here whereby I have attempted to install spatial relations with different objects and material affects that invite the audience to move through physical and metaphysical states of being through support layers. These layers provide partial views, abstract associations with objects in space and mysterious representations that provide hints at processes, programmes and pathways toward death as ultimately an unconditional and overwhelming condition. Death becomes never whole or fully knowable but only partial and this partiality opens up the gift sequencing of this installation. It provides a ritual toward the ultimate unconditional teaching of death as the gift of living. The project thus attempts a profound teaching, like Morrie's teaching via an unconditional offer to encounter the gift of death.

*multifaceted series of influences. This movement opens my work to a genuine interpretation exposing incentives performing as a context's ability for expression. Ultimately this project aims to uncover these moments of repression that relate to the status of life/death borders and subject/object border as subordinate in the constraints of mainstream attitudes and community life. Its deconstructive performance of a double movement questions diverse spatial experiences as an intervention to the philosophical grounding of how death is imbued as a profound learning experience for non-mastered way of living with others (including the wholly otherness of ourselves). For further reading on the ethics of deconstruction please see: Simon Critchely. (1999). *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Second edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.*

65. Morrie Schwartz's story can be encountered in both book and film versions of the same name: Algom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. Sphere, 2014 reprint.

Tuesdays with Morrie. 1999. Mick Jackson. USA.

66. Algom. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. 82.

The notion of promise is thus an offer that is unconditional; it, therefore, will not achieve this encounter in a direct manner but this is integral to Derrida's philosophical concept; that the gift of death arrives in the most unforeseen and untimely ways — Morrie arrived unconditionally into my life; without any suggestion that I needed him or his story, and yet his profound story has arrived to become the most significant catalyst for this project. The limits to this gift reach far beyond the borders of this project too.

The following exposition details the infrastructural housing of the final exhibition. It comprises three key elements: A mystery object; a wall and a floor. These three details aim to disclose a process of refinement and elimination in order to arrive at my final composition⁶⁷.

67. As I am aware that the reader will encounter this exegesis approximately one month before the final work is presented for exhibition, I envisage possible shifts in the final detailing of the work from that described in this text. However, I would also hope that the reader will recognise significant attributes with what I've detailed here and what they encounter on the examination date.

3.2 THE COLLECTION, A LIVING ARCHIVE - FALSE ENTRIES, ANGLES AND ELLIPTICAL GATHERINGS

Introduction

This project set up early parameters to collect and work with a series of found objects that had been discarded from everyday life. The desire was to see if I could install a spiritual or metaphysical life force into these 'dead objects' — thereby working with things that had absolutely no value or currency around them. My premise was that if the most random and discarded objects could be revived, then they would teach me something profound about the life-force and journey of existence; they would ultimately teach me about living. I initially nominated myself an archaeologist of dead objects and chose a site that seemed obviously a 'dead-end'. The site was local to me and I wished for it to have a reference to spatial design or architectural domestic reach so that there was a familiarity and closeness around those objects I collected.

54

A demolition yard in my home town Pukekohe seemed a good site for discovery. Over the course of a few months I collected random bits of domestic housing, flotsam and jetsam, nominating only those pieces that seemed the most isolated or on their own — this was a particular criteria for locating what I construed as the object being at the end of its life. In this process I realised that everything had belonged somewhere with other things and relations — which led me to believe that re-housing a series of objects, no matter how random their original associations might be (e.g. a light switch fitting with a piece of picket fence), in placing objects together some kind of relation existed. Since then my practice has focused on the relationality of the objects in and of themselves and in and of their associations with other objects. Further, I realised that objects, regardless of where they first originated from always referenced an earlier origin (a past) and a future indeterminable. For example, a light switch fitting may have originated in a factory along with many other mass-produced light-switch fittings of the same or similar mouldings each finding their destiny in different locales, houses, rooms or hands as the futuring of the fitting — its past is in reference to its materiality and design as that family of light fittings that came before it; each of us has a past and future according to historic

precedence and future potentiality.

As mortality in objects became clearer so did my reflections on the philosophical writings around the gift exchange (particularly as spoken of earlier in reference to my research on Mauss' work on the gift) as a relational activity as well as Derrida's unconditional concept of mortality and the gift of death (also referenced earlier) as both humans and objects live on in unexpected, unconditional ways. Here this practice attempts to revivify dead objects for an abstract and poetic spatial design project. What is key here is that I was starting to find correspondence between the spatial and temporal life of objects and humans. The following details my editing process and corresponding methods of working with these two concepts of the gift as exchange and unconditional; conceptual processes that I've discussed in terms of the literature field and theoretical positioning in my earlier chapter.

Object (x)⁶⁸ — unconditional life

My practice work has grown and developed through the question of not only how to house my collection, but also the task of editing the collection of dead objects, latex casts and photographs themselves. As a result I challenged myself to create a collection that was not a mass of things, but a smaller, more singular collection that would speak with more volume than that of a large accumulation. In its simplicity the more abstract, edited down installation aims to hold more clarity to the essentiality that the larger body of work has generated. Embracing the idea that, as a pseudo-archaeologist on a dig in the demolition site, I could find one work that would be the gifted work; the work that is most revered and privileged, and to be re-housed in a very special museum. I decided to follow this impulse but work deconstructively through acknowledging an object that was the least identifiable and have the most abstracted history. While still holding onto the privileged position of the sole object as the chosen one over and above any other, this mystery object, in fact, deconstructs 'the one' by offering so many open-ended readings to its being. Myself, as a pseudo-archaeologist, works as only a pseudo or foreign act for the purpose of mimicking the act of an archaeologist who brings objects back to life through careful, painstaking patience within the guise of inspecting them to know them historically and accurately. Rather, the foreign nature of my

68. While this thesis does not rely on the psychoanalytic framework of Freudian psychoanalysis, I am aware of some lovely correspondences to it with respect to the mysterious aspects of death; the death drive and existence. For example, the Object X that I have named here finds interesting correspondences to Lacanian psychoanalysis (indebted to a Freudian legacy) with respect to the concept of the 'Objet Petit a'. This concept is a figure of how desire operates. In Lacan's view the small 'a' of the object petit a is the figure of the small other (autrè). This autre or small other is the figure of life as mysterious. According to Lacan our drives consistently aim for objects to fill up our desire relations — commodities are purchased in relation to firming out identities e.g. we buy a certain car or certain item of clothing because it corresponds to who we think we are or wish to be. However, we keep buying more and in this process we can interpret the small other as that fantasy object that we keep going after — the object, however, does not exist as a tangible objectifiable and knowable thing — rather it is the process of desire and our drives insatiable desire for living on. Here 'my' Object X corresponds to the movement of Lacan's objet petit a (the small other) — as mysterious, unfulfillable or inexhaustible in its ability to be productive and generative of life forces, partial and consistent to enigmatic non-totalizable rational knowing. For further reading on Lacan's 'objet petit a' please visit his text the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Seminar 11. or Anthony Wilden's book that discusses the 'objet petit a' in detail.

process desired to not look closely at a sole object to locate its historic accuracy but rather to locate and express its mystery; its unconditional qualities and move beyond the myopic gaze of certainty about life. The gift of death speaks to the foreign and strange aspects of living that make mortal beings desire to live in the past, live in the future and, most of all, distract themselves from the present state of their mortality. So, in its entirety the collection has been edited to consist of only one dead object; Object (x) that has been processed via its latex cast and its photographic reproducibility: one object and its three moments of exchange - see fig 17 - 18. Object (x) is the one subject that has most authentically located itself within the project's context, and by becoming the lead protagonist and the hero of my work. It has become my 'Morrie', but to name it is to destroy its mysterious power and so, for the sake of unconditionality, it will remain without proper name. This object has no identity except for non-identity; no use value, and no exchange value⁶⁹. Found at the local demolition yard I had no clue to what it was, the salesman had no idea, and those who originally left it there could also not identify it. This unknown object is "completely" dead and doesn't sit in any obvious category — yet in its escape from proper rationalisation, it has accrued another life of being wholly other; wholly strange. A profoundness surrounds the object, it has no history, it is an original without an origin, but it holds vast mystery. In my intention to re-cast the object through the two stages of the gift exchange process (as discussed earlier), object (x) became even more enigmatic. Its latex cast makes this some-thing, that is ambiguous, into something that is even more ambiguous. The nature of the cast holds mystery, becoming something through one's imagination. The photographic reproduction, even more so, takes the object away from our original origin of encounter and reproduces it by splitting its lineage so that it can be potentially read in a variety of contexts — perhaps, an ancient ruin; perhaps a metallic ancient (Roman or Greek) ruin; perhaps a historical material artefact for domestic purposes: eating; cooking; perhaps, a helmet or a wheel; what culture; what time; what scale is it; what material is it even made from — so many openings and there are no closings in clear attainable view. Projected at a large scale, the object comes alive in another way, it becomes an uncanny being, placed, facing me, the viewer, forming a relationship, but an abstracted one. The photographed latex holds a very translucent quality, there is so much light contained within the image that

69. *The origins of use value and exchange value come from Marxist thinking in relation to commodity culture and the production of labour: Use value refers to the utilitarian nature of a thing outside of the exchange of commodity fetishism and exchange value is the surplus value that things are given when they become objectified into the market economy via such systems as advertising and marketing. For further reading see: Ref. Derrida, Jacques. Specters of Marx. New York: Routledge, 1993.*



Fig. 17

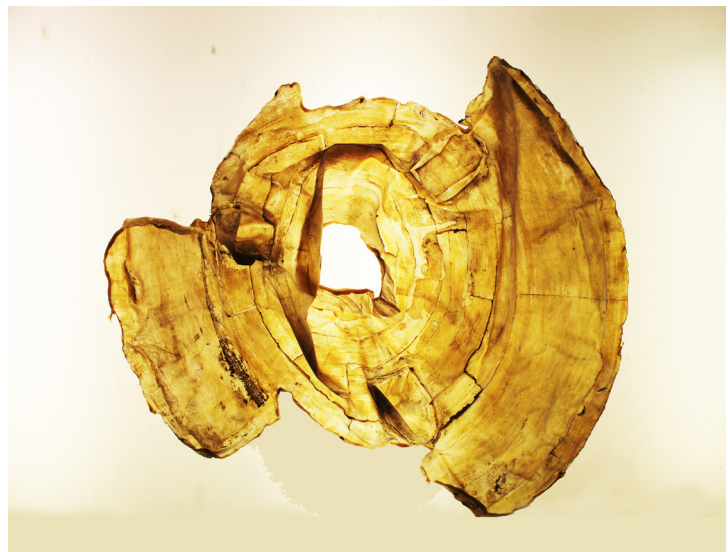


Fig. 18.



Fig. 19.



Fig. 20.

through projection the image is materialised even more. The hovering surface of the projection deconstructs the notion of a foreground and background, what we are looking at and what the object is. By looking at this projected image we gain even more mystery with which it has been meshed. It becomes even more mysterious because it lies upon a surface that makes things more questionable (less depth, less time or historical context background). In the same sense the scale of the photograph is enigmatic; it has you asking: what it is; where might it belong; It doesn't avail an answer and, through this ongoing process of identity speculation, we become increasingly frustrated with the need to know for certain – here an activity or desire is frustrated, pointing to the human condition for searching out the mystery of life in order to secure ourselves to the existential ground of being mortal. In this a profound teaching exists and gets me closer to the understanding of what Derrida, via Martin Heidegger's 'being for death'⁷⁰, alludes to: This is the unconditional gift, there is something so profound about the gift of death that you will never quite find the answer but, at the same time death will never be done with you. Herein lies the paradox of death, death being a life-long lesson on living.

The Fourth Wall – non-mastering of existence

Death enters through the most unexpected ways. While we know that ultimately death will enter our lives, there is no way we can calculate how and when. This is the paradox of the gift of death, of not knowing when it arrives, that there is something that cannot be known, the unconditional, but in this not knowing we are recognising it has a profound effect. In this way death is the breaking down of the fourth wall. But what do I mean by a fourth wall. This is a theatrical term used to denote the spatial relationality that separates the audience from the players. It is used as an artificial construct so that clearly demarcated roles are known through this spatial divide. In many theatrical practices today players, directors and designers attempt to break the fourth wall as it is seen in contemporary and experimental theatre as a hindrance to the more compelling and live nature of theatrical performance. The fourth wall concept can be easily appropriated as a concept overlaying how we view living in general; it makes its way into all kinds of power-knowledge scenes of being together; (cultural and social) anthropologists traditionally view other cultures in an observatory fashion keeping up a

70. For Heidegger, an essential feature of dasein (i.e. the 'being there' of human beings existential difference to other beings) is that they can foresee their death, since, according to him, animals cannot. *Sein zum Tode*, being toward death is, therefore, what dasein is. We are shaped profoundly, ontologically, by the foreseeable nature of our mortality. It is important to note that Heidegger is not speaking 'ontically' about the obvious presentation and knowledge that we die, rather he is suggesting a profound existential way of being that manifests in all kinds of world-making and mastery attitudes and symptoms with respect to this primordial structure for being.

clearly delineated line between the observer and observee; similarly, psychotherapeutic methods adopt this principle whereby a client and counsellor will be clearly demarcated in the spatial programmatics of any session; a university lecture or tutorial space will hold boundaries between a teacher and student; parents and children have fourth walls built into their social fabric and so, just about everywhere in life we have this invisible and many times visible demarcated fourth wall (if you can read the signs of its appearance that is).

In my own project I made a conscious decision to face the fourth wall head on when it came to the profound experience of death. We know that in many death rite scenarios fourth walls exist in multiple forms; the dead are increasingly kept at a clinical distance — my earlier research this year looking at Inuit, Australian Aboriginal, Maori and Japanese death rites showed that the practice of death rites has transformed from being very close to the dead physically and metaphysically, spending extended periods of time with them. It revealed that over time a globalised effect has created a bigger distance — a bigger fourth wall — through the assimilation of more clinical and westernised methods for treating bodies so that economic efficiency and more secular methods have become the normalising ways for encountering death⁷¹. The paradox of bringing the fourth wall so apparently in the face of this project is intended as a deconstructive strategy for revealing what my earlier research (on the cultural differences of death rites) revealed: Death is now an increasingly taboo topic; it is clinically treated and buried without care and consideration for the important value of experiencing grief as a life teacher.

My installation builds a fourth wall that is in the viewers' face literally, physically and profoundly, and yet, only discloses the rituals and rites of death as mysterious via a partial slit in its surface. By building a fourth wall that is a clear barrier I am consciously showing the complexity of the fourth wall, because there is no fourth wall when it comes to the personal, singular experiences of death — rather, death shakes us all to the core and Morrie teaches us (as does Derrida) to acknowledge this shaking as a giver or gifter. By making a fourth wall I am drawing attention to what lies behind the wall by keeping the viewer out — I'm revealing that death must be confronted with care and at a surprisingly physical and metaphysical angle. Within its barrier nature the wall also offers a small angle

71. For further inspection on my earlier research into these four cultural groups please see my appendices at the back of this thesis.



Fig. 21.

into the gift of death. The wall will have one discrete viewing slice, allowing viewers the potential to view the interior through only a few embodied positions (of their own free choosing) yet never allowing the viewer full disclosure. This comments on the impossibility for ever knowing death completely; forever understanding its complexity on our lives and its complex teachings. The slice lies low, just above the ground at a vantage height where the only way to see inside the exhibition is to lie, sit or kneel on the ground, activating the mysterious and elevating conditions of death. This grave positioning for viewing initiates a funerary gravitational perspective, beckoning or encouraging the viewer to take on the position of a prone body, or becoming at least humbled by the act of kneeling, bending, coming to its call — it is a deconstructive tactic that takes us out of our mastery position and places us at the site of vulnerability and care. A strangely uncomfortable position, while also still being comfortable, a paradox of relief and curiosity.

The Floor — learning to lie down

62

The final exhibition has been designed from the floor up — the register of the floor as the grave position or mortalities register for gravity has always been a key starting force for the design of the installation. It is the sacred plane in this work that holds or cradles the viewer or participant, inviting them to enter into the performative aspects of the work. It literally acts as a guide, guiding the movements of the viewer as they negotiate this terrain in relation to the desire to ‘view’. The paradox of the wall and floor relations is that of tension where the floor demarcates the ritualised site of an initiation to the work’s gateway — yet the gateway also acts as a select bordering cue. It programmes us to look away; to view without mastery of the all consuming gaze. As I spoke earlier about in terms of the collection of ‘dead’ objects, relationality was the key element in finding states of belonging regardless of use and exchange value. I knew that any relational condition would express certain states of belonging and exclusion. The floor-wall is related through the ‘viewing-slit’ — it holds us in certain ways and releases our gaze from that of mastery.

The design of the floor is a key component for entry and exit of the work, as well as the affective expression of holding, cradling and placing us at the foot of the site of death as a mysterious gift.



Fig. 22.

Initially, I had painted the floor and built up substantial layers of paint to make the ground appear incredibly sticky to touch; to walking; to standing. I was interested in experimenting with how mortality is a sticky subject — that it holds onto us in ways that make living somewhat overwhelming. That is, we are born into this world (Heidegger would suggest we are thrown) and in our thrown state we are given a body, historic time-frame, geographical and geopolitical life worlds. What haunts us through our lives is the fact that we are with the same body throughout — we cannot get outside of the singular body that we are. In this way I interpreted mortality to be a sticky and cloying state.

Life opened us to mysterious desires existentially due to the paradoxical sticky nature of living our singular life. In this sense living is sticky, which makes the material reality of death unknowable but we are never far (ontologically) from ‘knowing’ that death is all over us as we are mortal beings. It may be more or less sticky depending on who we are and our ways for negotiating living but, regardless, death refuses to let go. By activating the floor through a sticky condition that holds our bodies, the floor forms a casing that causes the viewer to feel more comfortable lowering themselves into a position of a prone body. The gravitational pull of the floor reminds us of our existence, of our individual, existential crisis — that we are mortal and that we die. We can never get away from the body that we are, we can never become anyone else, and we are held within this body, this life and in this time. There will never be another me, another you. We will live, die and be irreplaceable. It does not matter who you are, your religion, your age, or your occupation, there is always the question of existence at stake. This is the profound nature of the sticky floor, we cannot get away from our own mortality and, as much as we fantasise, we are always brought back to this reality.

Foaming the floor: presence and absence trace structures of being

After experiments with the sticky painted floor, I came to realise that it was performing too much; too hard. I was treating the gift of death like a message that we had to confront in a rather stern manner. This led me to experiment with different flooring materials that could have a more profound, subtler and caring nature.

72. Sigmund Freud's fort/da game here is very apposite as it is the ache-structural case in his writing about the development of human beings in relation to death i.e. his concept of the death drive. Freud observes his grandson playing in his cot with a string of cotton tied to its reel. The child rolls out the string to seek enjoyment at its full unraveling i.e. its full presence. He repeats the action watching repetitively the presencing and absencing of the string in relation to its reel. The real of the reel here, Freud suggests, is the structuration of repetition as the fundamental death drive in acknowledgement of our mortality. We seek the desire to see ourselves, actions, objects and associations arrive and disappear in order to exist with this knowledge of death; As Lacan writes following on the death drive and fort/da game: "The human being dedicates his time literally to the unfolding of this structural alternation in which presence and absence mutually invoke each other." See Jacques Lacan, "Introduction [to the seminar on E.A. Poe's 'Purloined Letter']," in *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 46.

At the time of writing this, while I'm not settled on the actual flooring material, I will be experimenting with different foams that ideally leave impressions of bodies as they come into the space. The indentation of our bodies leave trace structures of anonymous yet singular beings. We know what marks we make and the performative concept of the body kneeling, lying or sitting on the foam floor will hold the trace pattern of these bodies in a temporal and spatial manner. The temporality will last according to how the body holds itself in the space and for how long; the spatial will reveal the soft impression of the body after it has left the 'altar' site beside the wall. The overarching register here is for individuals to experience the appearance and disappearance of life forms⁷². Here, absence and presence are key relations performing in this space. The foam floor, while not obviously sticky, is a material that holds your body, impresses your body, leaving an imprint of the viewer's position on the ground that is slowly released after the weight is removed. The foam becomes an envelope of our bodies, mimicking the exchange process of Object (x) within the exhibit. Our bodies are the original, and we cast ourselves, the viewers themselves practising the gift exchange. The space becomes reciprocal installation on both sides of the wall. The impressionable floor is a constant throughout the space, a continuity between both sides of the wall. As a support system the floor is a real and symbolic exchange around the earth that holds us. In the first instance my research looked at cultural difference and what was a significantly common is the rituals between death and the ground. The earth is a primordial housing, a burial ground, where, regardless of what culture or religion we stem from, we all utilize the ground in some manner and hold spiritual connections to the earth. Within the exhibition space, the floor acts as a housing case for Object (x) and its latex cast. Object (x) due to its heavy materiality, sinks into the floor itself while its skin sits ethereally upon the surface. The latex seems to disappear into the floor through its weightlessness, bringing about questions of what it is. Only through the other two elements can clues be read of what it may be.

Spatial Illumination: White-Out; White-in — beyond the border post of life and death

The holistic (compositional) spatial atmosphere expressing genuine spiritual or metaphysical existential qualities was key for the overall design sequencing and material effectiveness. That is, my

intention for the overall aesthetic principles was to avoid reference to obvious tropes and signifiers of death. The overall affective nature was considered with respect to concepts of the gift as discussed as well as a certain ahistorical and acultural perception for the sake of releasing viewers or participants from the ‘fourth wall’ of social, cultural and historical readings. I desired that my participants could engage with the work at a more primordial level that I describe as metaphysical and, perhaps, poetic — this was the ethical intention of the work.

In order to achieve this ‘abstract’, poetic and metaphysical affectiveness, I explored two major design directions: i) darkness and ii) lightness. I have discussed earlier my considerations for processing the medium of light as both a material and immaterial affect for relocating and reciprocating the object within the gift-exchange economy. In consideration of a fully darkened space with possible low illumination of objects and floor — darkness that I had considered in the projection quality of Object X’s ‘background’ as a background that intended hovering, mystery and contextlessness — I was originally convinced that darkness was the best resolve. However, the more I dealt with issues of darkness as a literal condition, the more I felt or intuited that darkness had an overly clichéd or normalising reading of ‘death’ — I felt that this would become a cloying and heavy-handed resolve of the work and, thereby, betray its intentionality for a more open reading of death as a teacher for living. In this realisation, I immediately felt a need to explore illumination as a key element for the work — the work now moves to resolve illumination and lightness as an ethereal condition for what appears ‘behind’ or partially disclosed via the wall-floor ‘slit’ relation beyond. Rather than a black ‘background’ for Object X and its original material transformations now consider light housing, light plinths, light holders to present themselves to the public. The Object X projection is now suggesting foreground/background ambiguity by projecting on different possible light-illuminating surfaces. The Object X tripartite (or series of three) now appear all to be held by illuminating forces/casings. The original ‘Object X’ is now treated with whiteness in both its physical form (wood is sprayed with white powder coating) and sits quietly on the white painted floor surface; the second iteration of a latex skin cast from the original sits draped over a white plaster plinth that is designed through the original Object X mould (here a token nod to Rachel Whiteread’s treatment of negative space and yet



Fig. 23.

it is the positive space that performs as the plinth/holder of its cast-away skin; Object X as reciprocity via the projection now hovers in space without any obvious support mechanisms (projected onto a particular surface that assists this hovering quality⁷³. The flooring may appear another colour and so, in order to eliminate any inside/outside binary that suggests segregation from viewing platform to interior object state, I aim to respond through painting a gradient effect on the floor that moves from the tonal qualities of the foam floor toward a white-out effect as this tonal quality enters beyond the wall and into Object X space, giving careful attention to the relational qualities of the floor-wall-illuminated space beyond.

73. At the time of writing this exegesis, I am still exploring the actual possibilities for making Object X (reciprocal stage work) hover without any obvious physical supports. I am also exploring different possible projection surfaces. One idea or explorative track has been to build a curved wall to project onto, trapping light within it. Another is to project on a very tactile surface such as white feathers in order to bring a more material but evocatively abstract nature to the Object X figure. I desire that the viewer will be prompted to contemplate without making up their minds/putting the work into closure, so that it leaves them with more thinking processes rather than answers or solutions. This work is not meant to be heavy-handed or didactic about the concept of teaching (death as a teacher); the teaching is singular and invites only for viewers to be moved on their own terms, as abstract as those terms suggest.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The final installation acts as a gift to the viewer, performing a vivifying ethos for participants in relation to conditions of death and every day. A form of paradox can be seen within the exhibition through two directions of death; its clinical and repressed condition (as marked by an overt install of a fourth wall) that then also deconstructs to invite another encounter of death as a profound teacher and that we are close to death all the time. This paradox opens up the possibility of the unconditional and delivers a strategic approach of deconstructing neat binary attitudes (life-death and subject-object) revealing other relationships that are more potent to illustrate 'death as a gift' in order to reflect on questions of otherness and mystery as imbued in living. The installation engages in key relational elements of object collection, image production and installation that act as a dialogue of affects. Object-event making behaves as a performative installation utilising three major infrastructural elements: A Wall; A Floor; An Object-Thing.

Death enters through the most unforeseen ways. It is in the not knowing, the unconditional, that we recognise the death has a profound effect. In this way, death is the breaking down of the forth wall. My installation builds a forth wall that clearly delineates a line between the observer and observee. Physically and profoundly the wall discloses the rituals and rites of death as mysterious by means of a partial slice in its surface. The fourth wall draws attention to what lies behind the wall by keeping the viewer out. The effect being that as a viewer we are forever delayed from completely possessing the 'view of the other', becoming vulnerable and enlightened by the experience.

The final installation registers the floor as a sacred plane that holds and supports the viewer, inviting them to enter into the performative aspects of the work. The foam floor acts as a guide, leading the movements of the viewer as they negotiate the ground in relation to the desire to 'view'. The floor-wall is related through the partial slice, holding the viewer in ways that places us at the site of death as a mysterious gift. The required shifting of the body (and the observers gaze) from standing to prone heightens the vulnerability of the viewer and their participation.

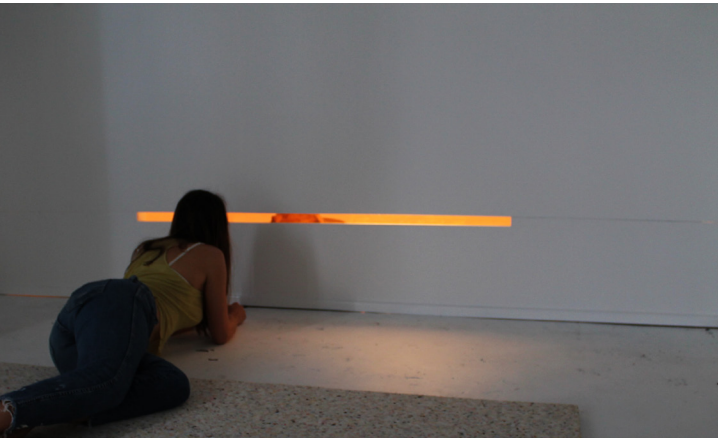
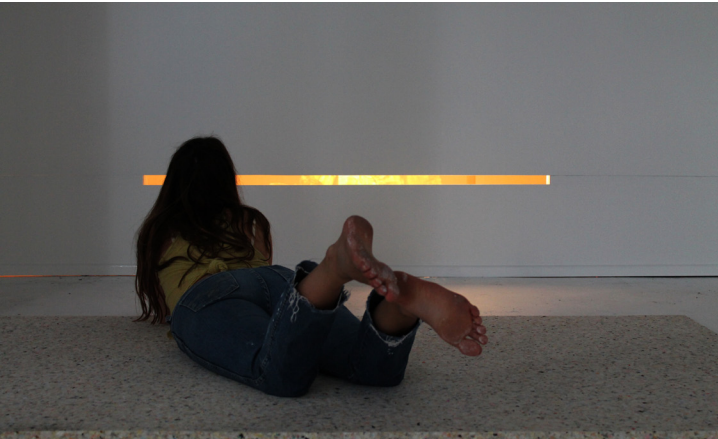


Fig. 24.

Within the exhibition space, a rock salt floor acts as a housing case for Object (x) and its latex cast. The care of Object (x) is brought into being and the contoured salt floor becomes celebrated for its fundamental support role. Object (x) sits quietly, sinking into the white salt floor, while the second iteration of a latex skin sits draped over the contoured surface, illustrating how death is supported by many unseen or subtle support mechanisms. Both objects are housed at a low prone-body position referencing the sacred funerary state of death. Object (x) as a reciprocity via the projection is now considered foreground/background ambiguity by projecting on different surfaces. The projection distorts in shape and quality as it warps down the wall and onto the salt floor. The illumination and lightness acts as an ethereal condition for what appears partially revealed by the viewing slice.

These key relational elements of the wall, the floor and Object (x) in its three forms, act as performative rituals with embodied states as we are invited into the work with the potential offer for teaching or learning to live with death unconditionally.

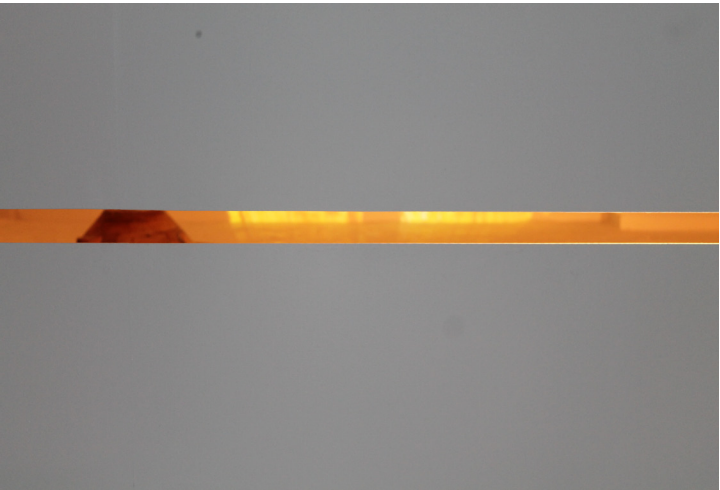


Fig. 25.



Fig. 26.

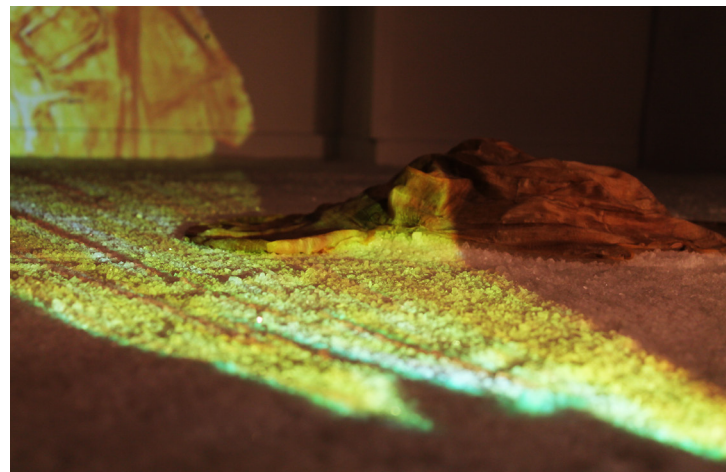


Fig. 27.

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APPENDICES

CULTURAL DEATH TAXOMONY

This collection of research supports how my project works within an ethics toward death through questioning existentially the objects that express different death rites. The passages of death rites shift according to different cultural, social and economic lived realities. This project focuses in on the conditions of death rites in relation to values of contemporary capitalist modes of living and through observing and collecting data from a range of different cultural perspectives and concentrates this difference toward my own lifeworld of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

APPENDIX 1:

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND EUROPEAN DEATH CUSTOMS

Traditional New Zealand European death customs in the past were religious events and affirmed the spiritual beliefs of the participants. Christianity was the predominant religion of the country, with the Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian churches all establishing themselves strongly where only religious figures like priests, ministers, or rabbis officiated at funerals. Traditionally while the family and church prepared the body, and organised the funeral, undertakers (often carpenters, builders or cabinet makers) would make the coffins, transporting the deceased and manage burials. Death became incredibly medicalised in the 20th century and responsibility for dying and disposal progressively became the realm of the expert. It was during this period where the establishment of the NZFD that the New Zealand Federation of Funeral Directors was established, where the aim was to promote a new role and a less stigmatised status for the funeral director and to distance the modern funeral director from the undertaker of the past. The term undertaker was condemned as objectionable and the notion of the funeral director was to manifest a practice of funeral directing that sought to attain a higher degree of status and prestige. Dead and decomposing bodies were identified as sites of disorder and disease during the 19th century, and with the new movement from undertaker to funeral director there was an appropriated discourse that emphasised the physical danger of the dead and the need for funeral directors to be able to contain the offensive conditions arose after death, to eliminate the risks of infection and contamination. Consequently embalming was introduced into the services provided by the funeral director, and the 'dirty work' was de-emphasised while focus was placed instead on the provision of services to the bereaved, accentuating the funeral director's role in society as indispensable.

The contemporary New Zealand way of organising death is a hybrid, it is religious and secular while commercial and municipal. However, the dominant modern ceremonies are generally life-centred and secular. New Zealand runs with the trend of celebrant-led funerals, where values and beliefs reflect those of the bereaved and his or her family, rather than of the funeral officiant. Funeral directors offer a variety of essential services, utilize specialised

funeral premises, and possess expert knowledge, which allow them to provide a greater comfort and service to the bereaved. New Zealanders have broad choices available for paying homage to the deceased and offering comfort to the bereaved. Mourners seek more choice, personalisation and freedom from religious conformity and municipal predictability. New knowledge and changing social norms have also opened up questions around environmental sustainability, leading funeral firms such as State of Grace and Natural Funeral Company to offer explicitly green funerals through using locally marketed, environmentally friendly funeral products.

These contemporary modes of death practices also provided a necessary and significant change in the temporal nature of death and the customs performed. Today the average interval between death and funeral is of 3 to 4 days. This extension from a traditional prompt burial is encouraged by families needing time to travel and the need for more time to prepare the personalisation of the funeral. New Zealand's contemporary life-based ceremonies are focused upon planning ceremonies around the character and life of the deceased where families' routinely personalise the ceremonies through the use of objects, personal tributes and photographs to display the person's identity, and to demonstrate their love and respect for the deceased. This ritual of personalisation often takes more time and care than the traditional conventional and generalised customs previously established. The following table explores traditional New Zealand European death customs before the 20th century, with a focus on religious services of Christianity and Catholicism, while the contemporary death customs of today target a more secular society.

TRADITIONAL: THE CONTEXT

- Before the 20th century New Zealand European death customs were religious and family orientated, with the assistance of only the church and an undertaker.

CONTEMPORARY: THE CONTEXT

- Modern New Zealand European death customs today are predominantly secular and are generally organised by a third party (funeral director and celebrant).
- There are a broad range of services available for ceremonies that can be personalised to the deceased and their family.

TRADITIONAL: THE CUSTOMS

Death and dying

- Most people died at home, cared for by family.
- Life expectancy began to rise as infectious diseases declined and a higher standard of living emerged. However, deaths caused by conditions associated with ageing or lifestyle, such as heart disease and lung cancer, increased.
- Death was advertised through a newspaper article.
- The church and undertaker are contacted to make arrangements.
- Christian beliefs – trust they will go to heaven to be with God once they have died and so in some respects a funeral is a time of joy, although also sadness as the person will be missed by those left behind. The church minister will visit the person and their family to discuss any concerns and to help the person to prepare for their death. The church minister will offer any comfort or assistance the family needs to help them cope and to help organise the funeral.
- Catholic beliefs – Catholics believe that there is an afterlife and that when a person dies they will see God face-to-face. If a person committed a grave offence and has not repented at the time of death then

CONTEMPORARY: THE CUSTOMS

Death and dying

- Death is more likely to occur in a hospital or rest home as medicalization has become involved, enhancing the lives of the terminally ill and providing appropriate pain relief.
- However, hospitals do support death at home by liaising with general practitioners and district nurses who take over care responsibilities.
- The death and funeral details are advertised in the local newspaper and, perhaps, in the person's home town, on internet sites and communicated through email or social media.
- Friends and family generally send flowers and gifts to the family's home, rather than to the funeral later.
- The family may also request charitable donations in lieu of flowers.
- The funeral director is called and arrangements are made.

Body preparation

- The body is removed by the funeral director who embalms (preserved through chemicals) the body and prepares it for viewing.
- The deceased is dressed in his or her own clothes, chosen by the family.

then that person would not enter into the full glory of heaven. The sick and elderly can receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on a regular basis if they wish too. When a person is close to death the family and friends ask a priest to come and pray with the sick and the Anointing of the Sick is administered. This includes anointing with holy oils and the reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Communion. After the person has past the priest comforts the family and helps prepare for the funeral.

Body Preparation

- This was done by a female relative who bathed and dressed the deceased in their best clothing or by the undertaker.
- A lid was put on the casket but nothing was done to counteract the decomposition of the body. If the body became offensive before burial, it was lifted out of the original casket and placed within a bigger one which was water proofed by pouring pitch around all the joints inside.
- The body was generally stored at the undertaker's premises before burial.

Funeral and Memorial Services

- The Funeral was conducted with the help of family members, members of the community, and churches.
- Christianity was the predominant religion of the Country.
- In the past the bereaved wore black when someone close to them died.
- Woman and children were often excluded from funerals in the late 19th Century.
- Christian Funeral Service - The ceremony will typically be held at the deceased person's church and conducted by the minister. The ceremony may involve hymns,

- The immediate family visit the body at the funeral directors and mourners may talk to the deceased, pray, sing or just with them.
- They may take the body home for the night before the funeral if requested.
- Before the coffin lid is closed family can place drawings, letters or mementos into the coffin.

Funeral and memorial service

- The funeral occurs soon after death with an average interval between death and funeral of 3 -4 days.
- The funeral takes place at the funeral directors or municipal crematorium chapel, or less commonly a church.
- Chapels have been built within funeral directors and crematoria meaning funerals and committal (disposal) ceremonies can be held in one location.
- The ceremony is led by a funeral celebrant or minister.
- The coffin is carried into the venue by family and friends; mixed gender or all pallbearer woman are not uncommon OR the coffin s already placed by the director before family and friends arrive.
- The coffin will be decorated with flowers, a photograph and personal items belonging to the person.
- A board of photographs may be displayed at the venue, which will be moved to the refreshments gathering afterwards.
- The dress code is informal, mourners may dress in anything from suits to jeans.
- Singing or live performances are relatively rare but music significant to the family or deceased is broadcasted.
- A slideshow of photographs can also be played in remembrance while the music is being played, and less commonly video

readings and prayer by both the minister and immediate family. The casket may be present during the ceremony and carried out by pallbearers.

- A Catholic funeral rite is called the Order of Christian funerals. Family and friends pray for the soul of the deceased person and ask God to receive their soul in eternal glory. The Vigil of the Deceased is held on the night before the funeral. On the day of the funeral a requiem mass for the deceased is celebrated. This includes scripture, prayers, and hymns.

Burials and cremation

- European settlers began the first cemeteries in the late 1830's next to churches or on public land where people of all faiths were buried together. In the 1850's local authorities designated land to establish cemeteries which were often divided into different faiths. Before this bodies were buried on private and public land.

- Sealers and whalers buried their dead at sea or around early whaling stations.

- Cremation was introduced in the 19th century – seen as a way of eliminating deadly diseases and utilising valuable land more effectively. Cremation was also promoted as a method of disposal, which precluded the idea of being buried alive.

- Tombstones were placed on the grave to record their place.

- A Christian may be either buried or cremated, depending on their preference.

- Catholic burial rites - at the grave or the place where the body has been entombed the Rite of Committal is celebrated. Family and friends once again pray along with the priest for the deceased as they commit the body to the final resting place. The gravesite is also blessed.

footage will be shown.

- A relative or funeral director can film the ceremony if requested.

- Eulogy by a family member or friend will be given while several family members, friends and work colleagues, including children and grandchildren, will have the option to talk about the person and give a reading. Generally this is 2 to 3 people but can be open to all who wish to speak.

- All mourners are invited to place something on the coffin in farewell, such as flowers and herbs.

- The coffin is either carried out or the mourners leave, so that the funeral directors remove the coffin for transport to the cemetery.

- Children may be given an activity to perform at the conclusion of the ceremony such as releasing a helium balloon.

- Mourners may sign a memorial book or register.

- The wake is often brought effectively into the funeral ceremony.

- The mourners have tea, coffee, sandwiches, savouries and cakes at a different room or venue.

- Close mourners return to the family's home, where further food and drink are served.

- Websites are often set up on which mourners can record tributes to the person who has died.

Burials and cremation

- New Zealand has a full range of common methods of disposing of a body including a traditional cemetery burial, burial at sea, donating to anatomy/medical research, cremation and natural burial opportunities.

- Traditionally, when buried, a headstone is placed over the grave.

- Cremation is the most favoured method within contemporary New Zealand.

In memory

- Christian – Family and friends may visit the grave on special occasions that marked the deceased life. (birthdays, Christmas, anniversary of the death).
- Catholic – A mass is often celebrated for the peace of the soul of the deceased within the year after death. On special occasions family and friends will often visit the grave.

- No mourners attend the cremation but may attend the burial.
- The family may pick up the ashes from the funeral director at a later date and ashes can be either scattered, buried or kept in an urn, or divided to scatter in several places. Ashes can also be stored in a piece of jewellery, placed in fireworks and buried in an artificial reef. Or often ashes are not collected.
- Lawns are provided for scattering ashes and memorial gardens have been established with plaques for those cremated.
- Often a tree is planted as a memorial for the deceased to give the mourners a place to visit in memory.
- Maintaining graves and headstones, bringing flowers are planting around a grave or memorial plaque is an important part of the grieving process for those left behind.
- Natural burial – the use of a shallow grave where the body is not embalmed and is placed in a shroud or cardboard, wicker or untreated timber casket.
- The plot is filled with organically active soil to aid decomposition.

Other services

- Support for the ones left behind is a very important stage of grief and contemporary means have been developed to offer such support – grief counselling, community organisations, hospices and funeral directors.

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APPENDIX 2:

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND MĀORI DEATH CUSTOMS: TANGIHANGA

Illness, dying, death and grieving are a central part of Māori life. They are instilled with tapu (sacredness) and kawa (ceremony). The formal rituals and practices are elaborate and the language, prayers and rituals are symbolic and poetic, encouraging emotions to be openly expressed. The contemporary Māori procedure of tangihanga is determined by the customs and traditions established long ago of the local iwi or hapu (tribal group). The tangi was, and is, a central ceremonial event in Māori culture and although much has changed it retains its importance in Māori culture today. These ceremonies can be clarified by local tribal leaders and elders, however, the general obligations and expectations associated with sickness, dying and grieving are similar throughout the Māori world. The sequence of events related to death can be understood by the Māori culture where all notions centre on unity and balance, where a person lives in harmony with all natural, physical and spiritual world. This balance is maintained through the laws of tapu, and the structures of customary practice and ritual. Many changes have been made to the traditional grieving process and mourning practices since the European settlement and the urbanisation of New Zealand. One significant change is that the whanau (family) is often fragmented and the increase in significant social and economic costs involved with maintaining traditional customs and community ties in the modern world. This became the most obvious with the development of big cities where young Maori have grown up without much knowledge of their heritage (tikanga) or experienced many traditional practices. Distance and cost have meant that many families are unable to return their dead to a traditional marae and urupa, therefore the deceased are buried within cemeteries closer to their relatives. The pressure of modern day jobs and family commitments may also interrupted the customary period of the tangihanga. The following table demonstrates two contexts of the tangihanga, one of traditional customs that were pieced together from early records made by early visitors to New Zealand (1800's – mid 1900's), and the other a summary of the protocol of a contemporary Maori tangihanga (based upon a 2001 paper).

TRADITIONAL: THE CONTEXT

- Tangihanga was to give proper burial for the deceased according to the prestige they had in life.
- Intended to offer comfort to the bereaved
- To control the danger arising from the state of ritual contamination (tapu) which death brought about.

CONTEMPORARY: THE CONTEXT

- Tangihanga is the Maori process of mourning where whanau, hapu and iwi come together in love, respect sorrow and grief.

TRADITIONAL: THE CUSTOMS**Final illness**

- Removed from their homes and into temporary structures so as to not contaminate the house concerned.
- Usually left with food and supplies – Others will go to great lengths to acquire food for the dying. (o matenga – death journey food).

The Last Words

- As death nears the last words of the deceased were anxiously awaited.
- Last words were often kept under secrecy and are seen as binding to the hearers and some as prophecy.

Farewell to the dead

- Maori belief held that the Wairua (spirit) left the body at death.
- Rites to assist the separation with the intention of sending the spirit on its journey to the after world were recorded as were farewells to the dying.
- Pathway (ara atua) was made by holding a piece of flax above the mouth of the dying. (Eastern tribes).
- OR spirit lingers in the body for 3 days. (northern tribes).

CONTEMPORARY: THE CUSTOMS**Te ohaki – Final words**

- Gathering of family and friends to the home/sickbed of the dying – varies in period (days, weeks, months).
- Karakia (prayers) made, asking for peace, mercy, spiritual strength and guidance.
- Dying seen to have access to both spiritual and physical world.
- Whanau carry out dying wishes – for example: food & drink.
- Whanau watch for tohu (signs or omens) of death or life.
- (not held with an unexpected death).

Tuku Wairua – Spirit Leaving Ceremony

- Daily sermons of religious value for those who have gathered – performed by a spiritual shepherd (acknowledged as this by the family).
- Tuku Wairua – purifies and cleanses the spirit, helps the spirit depart the body and take its place in the spirit world. Either by a priest as tradition or by family who know the ritual.
- OR a priest/minister is called for a blessing to suit the dying person's faith.
- Tuku meaning to return a gift of great value.

The notification of the dead

- Community was notified as soon as possible – by means of wailing, starting at the death house and carried from homestead to homestead.
- Muskets were adapted for this use when they came available.

The preparation of the body

- Was the duty of the nearest relations
- Body trussed in a sitting position with knees drawn up to the chin and their arms around them.
- Washed in shark oil and ornamented in red ochre paint (kookoowai), then dressed in elaborate traditional garments.

The display of the corpse

- The body of the deceased was known to be seated under temporary shelter, sat in a canoe, or laid on a platform.
- In some tribes it was customary to only show the head.
- The body was covered in fine cloaks, valuables, greenstone ornaments and gifts called 'coverings'.

The death ceremonies (tangihanga) – the welcome

- Karanga – welcome to the dead and the living, performed by an elderly woman, holding leaves. (followed by a musket shot)
- Welcome concluded with the haka by the men.

The Ceremonial Mourning

- Arriving visitors were bound to formal behaviour when entering the precinct of the deceased.
- Mourners start a ceremonial wail after which the chief mourner and the tribal chief press

Ko mate - Death

(4 changes of spiritual and physical experience.)

- 1) Change to the Spirit – Wairua leaves the body at the moment of death, travels to its old haunts before entering the spiritual Pathway leading to Te Rerenga (at the top of New Zealand) to depart this earth. (Unexpected death - Spirit has left the body but they are seen to have an interrupted journey, therefore not at rest)
- 2) The body – always considered tapu (sacred) in a positive sense, now changes to a broader tapu where there are more sensitive and respectful elements involved. For example no more eating around the body, hands of the living must be washed after they have touched it.
- Body is removed from management (coroner) and the body is washed and dressed by the family or a funeral director is engaged and the tupapaku is embalmed and casketed.
- After preparation the body is taken to the marae for the rest of the ceremony. (Unexpected death - mandatory autopsy, therefore tapu is rarely acknowledged)
- 3) The family – the bereaved family undergo a status change through the accordance of extra respect through this time.
- Immediate family are not allowed to speak during the tangi and are expected to stay silent while the home kaumatua represents them, deals with visitors (manuhiri) and bodily claims (tono). (unexpected death – family accorded minimal status through colonial process – made to feel responsible for the death).
- 4) The place of death – death often means that tapu is placed upon the building or place where death occurred. The practice of rahui (restriction of a set time

noses (hongī).

- Grief could be expressed by shedding blood (haehae). Self-laceration was done with a piece of obsidian or a sharp shell, which became tapu from the use to which it was put. Mostly performed by woman.
- If the chief died – as a show of grief the wives were known to commit suicide and slaves were often sacrificed in an expression of mana. If the wife didn't commit suicide she was seen under restrictions and wore a distinctive badge and mourning cape.

The Liturgy

- Songs of mourning (waiata tangi) and dancing were performed (pihi).
- Speeches by visitors and mourners.

The disposal of the body

- The disposal was temporary – the bones later being cleaned and re-deposited.
- The body was deposited in a mortuary enclosure (waahi tapu). Earth burial was uncommon – the body was more often held within a canoe, chests, placed on a platform, or having been suspended until decay had taken place.
- However, in some areas (regional) the body was to be thrown into swamps, lagoons or sand hills.
- This ground was now considered taboo – houses that hold the bodies being left and not repaired.

The final mortuary ceremonies –

The display of the bones (hahunga)

- Ritual cleaning of the bones.
- A renewal of mourning with the depositing of the bones in a highly tapu burial ground.
- Used as an opportunity for large scale

period) is still imposed if death has occurred in a natural setting (in the bush, on a mountain, in the sea). (Unexpected death – place is considered a crime scene, no acknowledgement of tapu).

Tono – the claim for the body

- The request to take the body to be taken to a particular marae or buried in a certain urupa (cemetery). There can be multiple requests that are then negotiated between the families.
- Can take place on the arrival of guests at the marae or wherever the body lying.
- Made during speeches (whaikorero).
- Can be seen as a sign of love and respect held for the deceased as to how prolonged the process and how passionate each side gets.
- Negotiated with/by the kaumatua.

Powhiri – welcome

- The formal tangi begins.
- The funeral cortege arrives at the marae accompanying the body – amidst various welcoming practices.
- First voices heard - karanga (call) by elderly woman holding rourou (leaves) in their hands. Welcoming the body and spirits of the deceased and the living, and farewells the ancestors of the deceased. Mourning wreaths may be evident on their heads of the manuhiri and tangata whenua.
- Automatically followed by the speech of welcome to the manuhiri by the kaumatua.
- Once the body has been brought onto the marae and the coffin opened, the tangata whenua pay their respects to the deceased.
- Coffin arranged so that the whanau pani (bereaved family) can surround it while visitors can approach and hongī the body

feasts and social gathering which were often politically associated. Therefore it was not just about the exhumed bones.

- Tapu placed on those who prepare the bones
- Bones are placed in a hollow tree, fissure, can be burnt or elevated on a pole placed on a platform temporarily until final disposal. If hung on a house, this house was then under tapu and was left to fall into disrepair.

The final disposal of the bones

- No detailed account recording the rites of this event.
- However, it is believed that the final concealment was to be a secret to better preserve again desecration. Bone-hiding was seen as a universal rite.
- Bones were painted red, bundled together and placed (often in a cave) with the skull resting on top of them. Grave goods (clothes, combs, weapons, valuables) were placed with the bones.
- The burial of the bones established a burial place.
- 3 types of possible burial practices described: (i) Cenotaphs – grave markings and memorials to the dead – Canoe set upright; (ii) Mausoleums – mortuary house built to contain the body with bones scraped and placed into elevated boxes. – High rank only; (iii) Waahi tapu – repositories for garments and other tapu objects of the deceased (That were not include within the grave goods). These varied in form from boxes to big baskets and fenced-in areas.

to pay their respects.

- Speeches are directed at the deceased as if they were still alive – order of speakers varies from region to region.

Po Whakamutunga – final night

- Night preceding the burial.
- When the spirit will be sent on its way, until those in the afterlife see each other again.
- Whanau sing songs and tell stories in remembrance of the deceased.
- Coffin is normally closed before sunrise.

Ra whakamoemoea, nehunga, tanumia – funeral service and burial

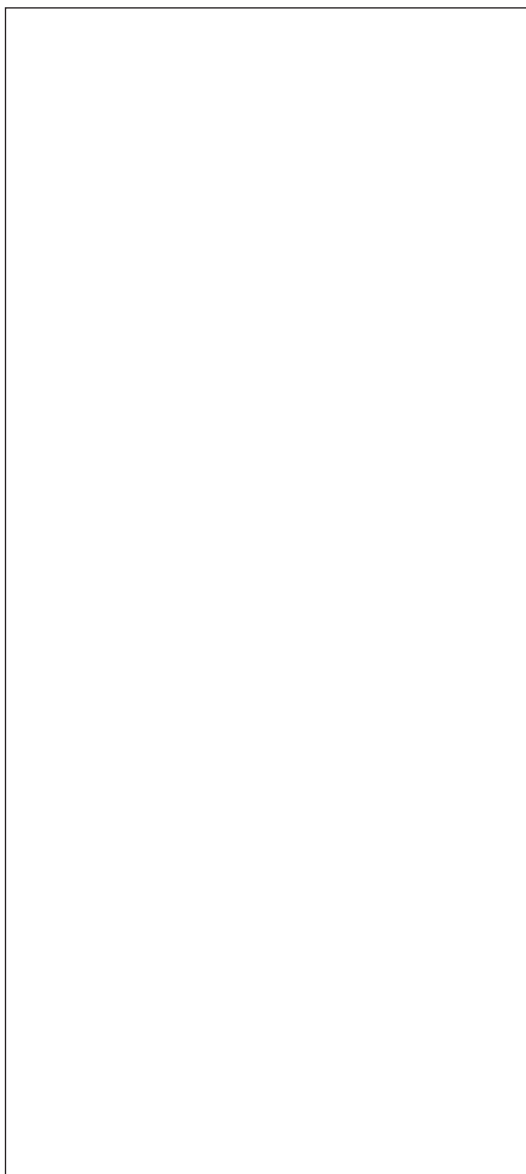
- Funeral service held at the marae or the deceased can take its final departure from the marae and be taken to either cemetery or to a church service, and then to the cemetery for burial.

The body is either placed in the ground or mausoleum, or it may be cremated with the ashes kept or disposed of in a place and manner of significance. Cremation is rare among Maori as burial is seen to be a returning of the body to Papatuanuku (mother earth).

- The service can follow one of many religions or be inter-denominational and altered as family wishes.
- During the kauhau (sermon), a eulogy is given, reassurances made and farewell speeches given.

Poroporoaki – conclusion

- On leaving the cemetery most will wash their hands as they are still under a form of tapu (restrictions).
- On returning to the marae the undergo processes to uplift these restrictions.



Hakari – thanksgiving meal

- This feast is important as it removes the last remains of the restrictive tapu from the people and makes them noa (free from the restrictions imposed by death).

Takahi whare – house blessing

- Blessing on the house where the deceased once lived and/or in which they had died.
- Immediately after burial or as soon as possible.
- Assurance that no disembodied spirit will come visiting.
- Clothing or other items of the deceased are given to those wanting a memoir.

Kawe mate – taking the dead persons memory home

- Memorial service held by request in places where the deceased held importance and love that is not at the marae of the tangi or burial ground.
- Gesture of respect and love.
- Practised when some family members cannot make the tangi.

Hura kohatu – unveiling the memorial

- After the person has been dead for over a year, the family will hold a hura kohatu (unveiling of a memorial stone) to remember him or her.
- A way to publically show their sorrow, releasing them from future obligations to the deceased other than remembrance.
- Concluded with a hakari – feast.

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APPENDIX 3:

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL DEATH CUSTOMS

Prior to colonization Aboriginal traditional cultures had well established beliefs and practices surrounding death that had been handed down through the generations. Some traditional groups shared similarities, reflecting their inter-tribal relations however in general most rituals differed. Traditionally, the Aboriginal believe that there are multiple human souls that fall under two categories - one that is egoist, a self-created, autonomous agency that accompanies the body and forms a person's identity and the other comes from Dreamtime (a period before living memory or experience - a time of creator ancestors and supernatural beings), an ancestral totemic. At death the two types of soul have different fates, the egoist soul becomes a dangerous spirit that remains near the deceased and their property, eventually passing into nonexistence. This passing is often marked by a series of rituals. The ancestral soul, however, is eternal and returns to the environment associated with their totemic beings.

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During the period of colonization Aboriginal cultures suffered great assault, traditional customs were suppressed and western cultural and religious lifestyles and practices were imposed. All traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture, inclusive of practices associated with death and dying, and the sharing and passing down of this knowledge were forbidden. However, with the increase of immigration, and Australia's influx of different cultures who arrived with their own beliefs and cultures, the inclusion of traditional beliefs and practices were reintroduced and are still being maintained and practised today as an essential part of life and death.

It has been established that the cultural differences between Anglo-Australian and the Aboriginal Australian groups are significant, particularly in the ways in which death and dying are dealt with. While the Aborigines primarily used their practices to prevent spirits from haunting the living, non-indigenous people use their customs in more of a commemorative manner. Since colonization death customs can be seen to have a mixture of both Christian and traditional beliefs juxtaposed together, where the beliefs of the Christian God and the notion of heaven sit alongside ideas of animal spirits and Dreamtime. Practices

surrounding death and dying have also developed with the advancement of medicalization, however, there is a common contrast between the meaning of health care and hospitals where, for the non-indigenous it is a place to heal, to fix a health problem, whereas for the Aboriginal it is a place where one goes to die. Below is a table charting out the differences between traditional and contemporary rites of death and dying within the Australian Aboriginal culture, investigating the Traditional Tiwi funeral ceremonies and the contemporary Aboriginal/Christian funeral rites:

TRADITIONAL: THE CONTEXT

- Aboriginal death customs pre-colonization and based upon the belief of animism – that everything has a spirit.
- Animal spirits are an important notion of tradition – their view of the spirit world with each person having a direct relation to their own animal spirit.
- In almost all Aboriginal belief systems, each person has three aspects which make up his or her whole being. Those are the body, the mind and the spirit.
- Operates in the context of the relations between man, the natural and supernatural worlds.

CONTEMPORARY: THE CONTEXT

- Post-settlement – when the Aboriginal customs developed with influences from the Western world, or example, Christianity. Rituals associated with dying refer to both Christian God and the notion of heaven alongside ideas of animal spirits and dreamtime.
- Finding a delicate balance between traditional belief and modern medicalization and care.

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TRADITIONAL: THE CUSTOMS

End of life

- Black magic / sorcery is a genuine cause of poor health to Aboriginal people.
- They will receive a special sign from their animal spirit to indicate their closeness to dying.
- A medicine man, traditional healer, is seen to have special powers and can tell the truth of what is inside that person – he searches for the cause of the illness through massage, body manipulation, dance and chants. He is specifically

CONTEMPORARY: THE CUSTOMS

End of life

- Slow deterioration of health and expected deaths are more readily accepted by aboriginal families than sudden deaths that can still be seen to be associated with sorcery and blame.
- However, today Metropolitan hospitals are referral hospitals for complicated medical care and many aboriginal patients are transferred from remote and regional locations to obtain 'appropriate' medical care.
- It is preferable to return to traditional

chosen and trained to remove the influence of sorcery and evil spirits and restore the well-being of the soul before they depart.

- In Aboriginal beliefs, if only the body is treated, then healing cannot take place properly. If the body becomes ill, then the spirit and mind also are affected.
- For the dying there is a 'death country', which is the place where they go to die – they believe that the spirit of the deceased can have a physical impact on the place or country connected with that person's spirit.

Preparing the body

- Customary practices following death surround two rituals:
- Sending the spirit onto the next world through a) the name of the deceased is not mentioned for a specific period of time so that the spirit is not held back or recalled b) A smoking ceremony is conducted – the smoking of the deceased's belongings and residence encourages the departure of the spirit.
- Identifying the cause of death – practised by elders where the cause in question is generally spiritual in nature. This process is likened to an autopsy in Western culture. Some groups practise the sample collection of the deceased person's hair – often in secret as are the practices following the collection. Some practices also include a search for unwanted objects within the body such as a stone or feather.

Burial

- Different Aboriginal groups apply different burial methods, which may include cremation, earth burial and mummification. However, the burial process was generally done in two stages:
- Primary burial – The deceased's body

homelands and to be with their family when they pass. This can be a complicated process if the patient is no longer able to travel. The main concern for the Aboriginal culture is to return to their land, whereas the main concern for the medical staff is the prolonging of life and treating their symptoms and pain.

- Black magic is still a genuine concern for health within this culture, however, Western perspectives can deem this as superstitious and invalid – as a result there can be a feeling of distrust of non-Aboriginal health staff.
- Others believe that if medical doctors are treating the person's body, then traditional Aboriginal healers can and must attend to the treatment of the person's mind and spirit.
- The medicine man may still be involved, if requested (within the hospital or at home). The medicine man commands greater authority than the non-indigenous health professional in the view of the Aboriginal.
- With the emergence of Christianity, the church minister may come and visit the person and their family to discuss any concerns and to help the person to prepare for their death. Depending on the form of Christianity (For example, Anglican or Presbyterian etc.) and the particular church, there may be slightly different customs that will be followed. The church minister will offer any comfort or assistance the family needs to help them cope with the death and to organise the funeral. Friends will often send their sympathies in the form of cards and /or flowers to the deceased's family.
- In preparation for death there is a gathering of immediate and extended family – a cultural practice to prepare the person for the next stage in their journey. The

is laid out on an elevated wooden platform, covered in leaves/ branches and left to rot until only bones remain.

- Secondary burial – bones are collected from the platform, painted with red ochre and can be dispersed in multiple ways
 - a) a relative may carry the bones with them;
 - b) the bones are wrapped in paper bark and deposited in a cave shelter or buried to disintegrate over time;
 - c) the bones are placed in a hollow log and left at a designated area of bush land. The hollow logs can also represent the deceased person — the designs on the log are the same as the designs painted on the body during the burial rites.
- As with bones, cremated ashes were often kept in small pouches to be worn as necklaces by close relatives.
- Sometimes the dead are buried in a sitting position, facing the sun.
- A person's possessions and weapons are often disposed of or buried with them during the ceremony
- Pending the smoking ceremony and investigations family can be relocated away from the deceased person's home – in some instances the family resides in 'sorry' camps some distance from amenities and services.
- The bereaved sit beside the grave to ensure that the deceased's spirit has gone to its spirit place for a certain period of time.
- A kopai ball (mixture of powdered kopai, sand and ashes) are placed upon the grave by the bereaved. (Grave gifts.)
- In many places mounds of dirt, bark, sticks and other natural objects were built between the grave and campsite to ensure that the bad spirits of the dead did not haunt the living.

gathering is a mark of respect.

- It is culturally inappropriate for non-indigenous health staff to contact and inform the next of kin – this responsibility falls to the in-law family members, who also speak on behalf of the family in regards to post-death decisions.
- If the deceased passed within the hospital then a family member is seen to be the most appropriate to escort the body back to their community.

Preparing the body

- Traditional customs are still practised here. However, within a hospital there can be restrictions to interfering with the deceased's body, which deems traditional investigations impossible.
- Family, however, can still request a lock of hair from the deceased – usually completed in private.
- When death occurs in a hospital, the medical staff will take care of the legal requirements. When an individual passes away at home a funeral director is required by law. Cause of death must be determined by a doctor or coroner.

Funeral rites - 'sorry business'

- Bereavement, known as "sorry business", is a very important part of Aboriginal culture. In some instances the entire community will shut down for mourning and "sorry business" takes precedence over all other matters.
- Occur within Aboriginal camps, houses as well as Christian Churches – many of the indigenous people have embraced Christianity and this is very apparent on the occasion of a funeral. A great number of these services are celebrated dually with

Common funeral rites - 'sorry business'

- The mourning process varies within different tribes and is also dependent on cause of death.
- Ceremonies last days, weeks and even months, depending upon the beliefs of the group.
- During these ceremonies often strict language rules apply, with close family members restricted to not being able to talk for the whole period of mourning. Members of the family with the same name as the deceased were required to change their names.
- The bereaved paint themselves white, and cut their own bodies with shells and stone knives to cause bleeding in a show of grief – the mourning period can sometimes be seen as over when these cuts are healed.
- Widows wear a kurno as a sign of mourning. Kurno – caps formed by moulding a mixture on powdered gypsum and water of the woman's head.
- A series of chants, songs, rituals and dances are performed to ensure the spirit leaves the area and returns to its birth place to later be reborn.

Pukumani (Tiwi mortuary ceremony)

- Performance of this ceremony ensures that the spirit of the dead person goes from the living world into the spirit world.
- The Pukumani is a public ceremony and provides a forum for artistic expression through song, dance, sculpture and body painting.
- Occurs approximately six months after the deceased has been buried.
- The dead person's existence in the living world is not finished until the completion of the ceremony.

the traditional Aboriginal service followed by the Christian service. The remarkable characteristic of these occasions is the similarity between both the sprinkling of the water and the smoking of the coffin.

- A Christian may be either buried or cremated, depending on their preference. The ceremony will typically be held at the deceased person's church and conducted by the minister, but it could also be held at a funeral home. The ceremony may involve hymns, readings and prayer by both the minister and the deceased's family and friends. The casket may be present in the room during the ceremony and carried out at the end by pallbearers – usually members of the deceased's immediate family. There is often the opportunity for people to view the deceased and to say their last goodbyes before the deceased is buried.
- The smoking ceremony, stylized wailing, chants and dance are still a common custom.
- Naming protocols differ from place to place and is often associated with personal decisions if names and images of the deceased can be spoken or published.
- Australian law does not require the use of a funeral director, although most Australians do chose to use one.

Burial

- The burial may require the presence of certain family members, until they are present the family will refuse to proceed to burial.
- Contemporary means of burial or cremation are the preferred option, among the non-indigenous population of Australia in modern times. If the deceased has been cremated the ashes may be scattered. Otherwise, the ashes or body will be

- There is usually one iliana (minor ceremony) at the time of death and then many months later the final Pukumani.
- The ceremony culminates in the erection of monumental carved and decorated Pukumani poles, which take many months to prepare and are impressive gifts to placate the spirit of the dead.
- These poles are placed around the burial site during the ceremony. They symbolise the status and prestige of the deceased.
- Participants in the ceremony are painted with natural ochre in many different designs, transforming the dancers and providing protection against recognition by the spirit of the deceased.
- Those participants closely related to the deceased wear decorated armbands (pamajini) during the performance. Pamajini are woven from the leaves of the pandanus or screw palm and are decorated with natural ochre and the feathers of the white cockatoo. The white cockatoo is believed to keep a sentinel eye on wayward spirits lost on route to the island of the dead.
- During all ceremonies a series of dances (yoi) are performed. Aside from creative and illustrative performances there are those that certain kin - such as the mother, father, sibling and widow - must dance.

buried in a cemetery and marked with a gravestone to remember the deceased.

- Graves are commonly gifted with flowers and the flags of the various tribes or, if in the Tiwi Islands, flowers and Pukumani poles.

The wake

- Usually, after burial, there is a wake where relatives and friends celebrate the life of the lost one. Exactly as most Australian funerals are conducted.

Memorial services

- Christian memorial services: On special occasions such as the deceased's birthday, Christmas or anniversary of the death, family and friends may come and visit the grave. Often, flowers or other objects to remember the deceased will be placed on the grave as a sign of respect.
- The Pukumani is still performed to this day on Tiwi Islands and occurs 6 months after the deceased has been buried.

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APPENDIX 4: JAPANESE DEATH CUSTOMS

As a result of the great change in the process of dying and the funeral practices in Japan, there has been a resulting change in the thinking and the values surrounding death. After World War Two there was a large shift in the treatment of the deceased and how the structure of funerals were performed. What is known as a funeral ritual (community ritual) has now become un-thought of and unfamiliar to the younger generations as the development of Funeral ceremonies (commercial funeral) became available. Post World War Two there was a significant change from family orientated funerals to the introduction of third parties (medical professionals, funeral services) in a convenience-driven society. As society and culture has modernised and moved forward so did the procedures of dying. It has become the norm for the dying to spend their last moments at a hospital, medical professionals trying to prolong their lives as much as possible. There has been a shift to prolonging care and less on terminal care. The values surrounding death therefore changed from being based around superstition and purifying the deceased and also the community of ‘death pollution’, but to being based upon the celebration of life and death, and the relations between the living and the deceased. Below a table shows the changes between a funeral ritual and a funeral ceremony:

TRADITIONAL: THE CONTEXT

- A community ritual pre- World War Two held by the family of the deceased.
- To perform the transition of the deceased's spirit from malevolent to peaceful, or a shift from an impure to a pure state free of death pollution.
- To protect the living from death pollution – a superstitious ritual.

TRADITIONAL: THE CUSTOMS

Death Rituals - Four types of rites:

(a) the rites of attempted resuscitation,
(b) the rites of breaking bonds.

- When a person is dying.
- Giving of the 'last water' – wetting the deceased's lips.
- Family prepares the body. (Closing their eyes, placing their hands in prayer posture, face covered with white cloth and turned west/upwards. Head faces north. Razor or sword placed beside body) – to differentiate between the 'times' – (life and death).
- Announcements made to community.
- Tasks designated by community head. (food preparation, vegetarian (to purify), digging the grave, making the death flower, box roof, dragons, six candle holder, and the funeral alter).

Bathing ritual:

- Performed by the family at home.
- Bathed by hand, the deceased's head is shaved (to cleanse of impurity/safe guard the living).
- Deceased is dressed in a white death robe (hand-made by women), a head cloth, hand and knee guards, and Japanese styled socks. (To symbolise difference between life and death).

CONTEMPORARY: THE CONTEXT

- A Funeral held by a third party post-World War Two.
- Based upon the beautification of the deceased life and memories.
- Performed as if the deceased is still 'alive', not accepted as passed until cremation.

CONTEMPORARY: THE CUSTOMS

Encoffining – transport – consult:

- After death – instantly call funeral company.
- Determine funeral materials and services (over phone).
- Funeral staff pick up the body from the hospital 'room for souls'. Introduced to family.
- The body has already been covered by medical professionals – face covered with white cloth.
- Funeral family, then staff, present incense to the deceased.
- Deceased dressed in white death garment.
- Hands are arranged in prayer position.
- Face is now uncovered.
- Placed in coffin for transportation to the family home or funeral hall.
- Consultation (decisions are made by family. Flowers, alters, ash pot, gift items).

Bathing ceremony:

- Third party (bathing ceremony companies).
- Only when family has verbally agreed.
- Based upon highlighting the joy of bathing and nurturing the sense of belonging.
- Modern technology allows a portable bath

- The deceased is sat in a cask-like coffin.
- The deceased's kimono is hung, drenched in water outside the home facing north for 7 days as a sign of their spirit crossing the river. On the 8th day they have passed over.

Wake

- Performed after sunset.
- Priest performs sutra.
- Incense offering made by family and relatives.
- Tea and sweets served.
- Woman leave to prepare vegetarian meal for the funeral.
- Men stay late and drink sake and tell stories.
- The family stay overnight, keeping vigil against malevolent spirits – lighting candles and incense.
- Funeral and announcement-of-leave taking ceremony.
- Family wear white, relatives/neighbours wear black. (To distinguish contamination).
- At noon the bereaved partake in the 'departure meal'. The vegetarian meal is served – offered to the deceased as well.
- Drink sake for farewell and to purify from death pollution.
- Condolence gifts are given by guests to bereaved.
- Funeral begins late afternoon.
- Hierarchical seating placement relevant to deceased.
- Sutra recitation.
- Coffin opened to allow last goodbyes and gift offerings (food, razor, coins)
- Coffin nailed shut to keep the deceased separate from the living.
- All members walk in procession to the burial site in hierarchical order (men, family, relatives, friends, and women).

to be on site.

- Deceased is showered, hair blow-waved, face shaved, make-up applied (as if they are still alive).

Wake

- Performed evening of the death.
- Family is instructed through steps by the funeral staff.
- Monetary donation made to the priest
- Priest arrives – can have no former affiliation with the deceased.
- Accept condolence money from guests.
- Priest starts chanting sutra.
- Offering of incense by priest.
- Priest leaves – wake ends.
- Family partake in a vegetarian meal – supplied.
- Woman leave.
- Men stay late and drink sake and tell stories.
- All leave the deceased (and are not ashamed to do so.)

Funeral

- Day starts with serving the deceased rice
- Family all dressed in black.
- Lunch offered to family as well as the deceased – a farewell meal.
- Coffin brought into the funeral hall.
- Family are taken through a ceremonial rehearsal – learning the steps and appropriate manners.
- Family photo.
- Guests arrive – give incense money.
- Ceremony begins when priest arrives.
- Sutra chanting.
- Offering of incense of the priest.
- Memorial address.
- Appreciation speech.
- Incense offering by family and then guests.

Burial

- Coffin is lowered into grave by men of the community.
- Mourners shovel in a spade of dirt one at a time in hierarchy. (Family, relatives, friends).
- Progression turns home without looking back – only stopping to sprinkle salt on themselves to cleanse from death pollution.
- Men fill in the grave and add box roof, flowers, and memorial tablet.
- Community meal ends the day.

Memorial rituals

- Memorial services take place to the 49th day after death – proclaiming end of the mourning period.
- Family considered under death pollution until this time is up.
- This time is considered when the spirit of the deceased is transformed to an ancestral spirit.
- Spirit is judged every 7 days.
- Memorial rites can be for the individual or as a collective.
- Individual rites are annual/monthly/anniversary. Death rites - every 7 years until the 50th anniversary.
- Collective rites are mostly celebrated during the festival of the dead (Aug 13-15).

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- Priest leaves
- Casket is opened to say goodbyes and for gift giving (flowers, food, personal items).
- Procession follows the casket to the hearse.
- Hearse leaves for crematorium, followed by family.

Cremation

- Money gift given to cremator – to ensure no mistreatment of the body and therefore spirit.
- Family gather at the crematorium around the deceased set by a specific incinerator.
- Final incense and gifts offered to the deceased.
- All encircle the coffin while it is rolled into the incinerator.
- Chief mourner ignites the incinerator – this is the stage where the family accept the death.
- Cremation is where they are seen as being between life and death.
- Only stage of a commercial funeral where the deceased is seen as impure.
- Family wait while body is cremated.
- Afterwards they are then instructed to place bones, using chopsticks, into the ash pot. (Feet-to-head).
- Ashes can be buried, or secured in purchased alters provided by temples, or scattered.

Memorial services:

- 7 days – mourning period (modern families think it is too difficult to gather again on the 49th day).
- Family gathering on the annual first year memorial.
- Memorials are annual/monthly/ final rite – 50th anniversary.

APPENDIX 5:

INUIT DEATH CUSTOMS

The Inuit (meaning ‘the people’) are an arctic people indigenous to the tundra regions of Alaska, Northern Canada, and Greenland. Birth and death in Inuit custom are less a beginning and an end but more episodes of life. Perhaps it is that death seems less final, more episodic to people whose life is always on the line whilst living in such harsh conditions. Their belief is that everything living and non-living had a spirit (animism). Whenever a spirit died it continued to live in the spirit world to be reborn again in another form. However, this traditional belief of animism about life, death and the after world have been replaced by an array of Christian beliefs. World War Two marked the start of a new phase for the Inuit experience. During the war the American Air Force established bases in the Canadian Arctic to resupply war air crafts and ships bound for Europe. As a response the Canadian Government themselves recognising the need to establish sovereignty over the arctic expanded its role and between 1955 - 1965, began moving Inuit families off the land and into permanent centralised settlements. It is here that the Inuit customs and rituals of animism did not diminish but simply adapted and changed with outside influences such as Christianity. As a result Inuit across the Northern American Arctic continue to share many cultural attributes but there are also regional and national differences in the way Inuit culture is expressed. In the following table a summary of traditional and contemporary rituals shows the significant change after settlement. However, it is to be noted that in a culture with an oral history, elders are the keepers of communal knowledge and, as such, there are various opinions and theories on what the true traditional death practices of the Inuit may be. The contemporary death rite summary is based upon the practices of the Yup’ik Inuit of Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska where death is not viewed as the end of life, since some spiritual aspects of each man and animal are believed to be reborn in the following generation. The traditional Yup’ik eskimos also believed in a Skyland as well as an underworld Land of the Dead, both of which housed the souls of dead humans and animals.

TRADITIONAL: THE CONTEXT

- Inuit death customs pre-settlement and based upon the belief of animism – that everything has a spirit.
- Death is seen as a journey, not an end but a new beginning.

CONTEMPORARY: THE CONTEXT

- Post-Settlement – when the Inuit customs developed with influences from the Western world, for example, Christianity.
- Summary based upon the Yup'ik Inuit of Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska
- Death is seen as a journey, not an end but a new beginning.

TRADITIONAL: THE CUSTOMS

Death

- The dying person may not take his last breath in his hut otherwise the home must be abandoned.
- The living undergo a series of rituals including abstaining from touching the corpse.
- Men would mourn for the deceased every morning and evening and perform a series of purifying processes before returning to hunting.
- Women were considered unclean and would be forbidden to lift her eyes to the sky, to look over the sea, to mention the names of animals of the hunt, smile or speak above a whisper.
- The dead were honoured with feasts and gifts to ensure that the deceased will have a happy existence and that the living will continue to have good hunting.
- For 4 days after the death, woman do not sew and for 5 days after, the men do not cut wood with an axe.
- No mourning is worn or indicated, except by the cutting of hair.
- Woman sit and watch the body, chanting until the deceased is buried.

Body Preparation

CONTEMPORARY: THE CUSTOMS

End of Life

- End of life care is preferred in the home where the family and community are responsible for the customs associated with death. (There is no delineation between family and community, everybody is family)
- The end of life customs are seen as a great responsibility to the family and a dis-honour to delegate care.
- 'Getting-dressed' or getting ready to go refers to the preparations being made for death. A significant part of this is surrounded by the sharing of wisdom and forgiveness.
- 'Laying out' is a period of time where clothes food and after death rituals are discussed. This ritual provides a time where people can come and pay their respects. This can last for days or weeks.
- A traditional healer is often a part of the end of life rituals where they can 'cure the soul'.
- However, because of the introduction of modern medical facilities it is often the case that the sick and dying are sent to hospital. As there are only clinics that serve as health aids available within the community, any additional care is only available through air transport. In this way it is seen

- The women in camp wash the body and adjust the hair – on a woman they braided the hair starting at the forehead.

Burial

- The body of the deceased is taken far from the village into the tundra.
- There are no cemeteries or tombstones when living as nomads.

• There are various amount of burial options suggested by research – as a rule the Inuit do not bury their dead within the earth:

(a) The deceased were laid upon the ground, with their body surrounded with ice and rocks. Bodies were often covered with seal skins or were wrapped in a blanket of caribou hide or wool.

(b) The dead were entombed within caves.

(c) The body is doubled up and placed on its side in a plank box which is elevated 3-4 feet above the ground and supported by 4 posts. This grave box is often covered with painted figures of birds, fishs, animals and often a description of their profession. For example, fur animals – the person was a good trapper, seal or deer skin – proficiency as a hunter.

(d) wrapped in skins and placed upon an elevated frame.

- In all of the above the deceased are 'buried' with their possessions (weapons, tools, clothing, and domestic utensils) unless there are multiple deaths then everything is destroyed.
- There is no distinction between sexes in method of burial.

Post Burial Customs

- The Inuit would name their children after the deceased family members - as a form of reincarnation. The child is seen to inherit

that a) the sick and dying are taken away from the familiarity and comforts of family and community – going against their beliefs b) the hospitals often cannot or do not accommodate their customs and c) it has been said that the health care provider can bring a heaviness to their end of life experience through their accumulated emotions – which again goes against the belief that the end of life care should be gentle.

Body/burial preparation

- When someone dies, the life of the village comes nearly to a halt.
- There is no "funeral industry" in any village, or in Bethel (Alaska). No funeral homes, no undertakers, no hearses, no grave-digging services and no florists until that person is buried.
- If there is no suspicion of foul play, then no autopsy will be done, and the body of the deceased will remain at home.
- Family members will wash and dress the body (gender specific; men will wash the men who die, women will wash the women).
- Some of the men in the village will build a box to be the coffin, and the women will line it with the nicest fabric they have.
- Several men with shovels and pick axes will dig the grave; in the winter it may take two to three days to dig a hole deep enough.
- The coffin with its occupant will lie in state in his or her home for two days.
- Candles will burn constantly and the family will keep a vigil the entire time. Villagers will come and go, bringing food, offering comfort, praying, frequently kissing the deceased.
- On the day before the funeral, the coffin

qualities of the deceased.

- Generally furs, possessions and clothing were divided (except such that had been worn) among the nearest relatives of the deceased, or remain in possession of their family (if they have one).
- If they died within the house it is deserted and usually destroyed - so in avoidance of this the dying are placed within a temporary shelter, such as a tent.
- A year after the death, a festival is given, the period of mourning is over and, if necessary, gifts are given to those who helped in making the plank box (coffin).

is moved to the church and placed in the centre of the sanctuary.

- The vigil is maintained by extended family and friends, and the deceased is never left alone.

Funeral

- The funeral is held on the third day after death, and most of the village attends, regardless of faith; half the village is Catholic and half is Russian Orthodox.
- The service is relevant to the specific religion. For example the funeral of the Orthodox consists of a long service with the congregation standing for the whole ceremony (minus the elders). The congregation is gender segregated, men stand on the right and women stand on the left. Almost the entire service consisted of prayers chanted/sung by the village priest, two assistant priests, and the lay reader. The congregation occasionally sing in response and frequently made the sign of the cross upon themselves, but there is no kneeling and no sitting. When prayers were done, the entire congregation is led by the priests and then the widow, or widower, and then the immediate family to file past the coffin one by one and kiss the deceased's forehead, his lips, and the icon image propped on his chest. Small children were lifted up by their parents to kiss the deceased. Another prayer ends the service, and eight men carry the coffin out to the graveyard generally found behind the church.

Burial (Based on the Orthodox Religion)

- At the graveside more prayers were said.
- The eight men used ropes to lower the coffin into the grave.
- A plywood box covered in plastic sheeting had been constructed to fit over the

A Village Funeral. 2006. Retrieved from http://tundramedicinedreams.blogspot.co.nz/2006/10/village-funeral_21.html on May 15 2015.

Embler, Pamela J. End-of-Life Culture Car expressions, meanings, patterns, and practices among Yup'ik Eskimo. 2012. Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2422&context=utk_graddiss. On May 12, 2015.

Yarrow, H. C. To the study of the mortuary customs of the North American Indians. Retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32938/32938-h/mortuary.html>.

coffin as protection.

- The eight men use shovels with a load of dirt and walk around the grave offering anyone who wanted to take a handful of dirt and throw it into the grave.
- The congregation and the priests remained at the graveside until the shovelling was done and the grave was filled. Only then was the funeral concluded.

Memorial services

- A feast is then held afterward.
- A ritual was involved here too. A table is placed in the centre of the main room where his coffin had been before it went to the church. A table has eight chairs around it. The priest leads a blessing, then the three priests seated themselves at the table with the oldest men present. Food is served, no one speaks. After they had eaten, all eight men stood up as one and left the table. The next 8 come forward. And so forth until everyone has eaten.
- The cultural expectation at a feast is to come in, eat and leave. Houses are small, and once you have eaten you need to clear out and make room for the next person.
- The family will feed the village twice more in the upcoming weeks, at a 20-day feast and a 40-day feast. Forever after, they will hold an annual feast on the anniversary of the death.
- It is common for the name of the deceased to be passed down to the next born relative.

APPENDIX 6:

A FIELD OF ARTIST PRACTITIONERS INSPIRING THIS RESEARCH

Many different film makers, sculptural, photographic, architectural and installation artists shaped my thinking through this research. Some of their work is peppered throughout this exegesis in image form. Some of the ideas behind this research went into different tangents for developing the final installation – tangents that never fully developed into the final exhibition/installation. For example, when working with the ideas of Rachel Whiteread's practice, I was thinking very much about the notion of housing and how I could deconstruct the binary for a plinth being the secondary infrastructural support for a precious object. This was my line of thinking at that time:

Journal Entry, 28th August 2015. There are two major axis points developing in this research to date. The first is the gift and its four stages that move from Mauss' to Derrida's unconditional gift: the four stages of the gift find themselves manifesting in the four different manifestations of my practice. Further, these four different manifestations each work to consider three main elements: light, scale and housing-casing. These are, to date, my three main elements and my task is to think of how they gift a relationship to the four stages of the gift. For instance, the material effects are ultimately materials that each respond differently to light and scale.

At present I am most excited now about the third element: housing-casing. In working alongside the spatial artistic practice of Rachel Whiteread I have begun to investigate the following:

- i) the pinth as a housing-casing infrastructure. Normally, plinths are the secondary object that house and celebrate the 'precious' object on display. One looks at the object and not the plinth normally in exhibition display. Here the aim would be to invert this logic, deconstructing the binary of 'precious' object on display and its housing. This would be a deconstructive movement that celebrates the possible breaking of the fourth wall. In this, the plinth becomes celebrated for its fundamental support role. Here the care of the object is brought into being and we start to perceive this as important. Here, I am thinking of how death is supported by many unseen or subtle support mechanisms. Further, death as the major thesis/hypothesis becomes

the support for living. It is the teacher - if we learn how to 'live finally', to confront death without repressing it, our lives become enriched. Here I am seeing this as the role of the plinth (that could be both made into furniture for sitting on, as well as a plinth for holding my other objects from phases 1 to 3 (out of 4) of the gift process. This would also mean that the participant's body/audience body becomes interactive with the work. More so, it enables me to set up a more contemplative slow space for encountering the work.

ii) The plinth I see as human body-scale. That is, for housing a body to sit on AND to view the other objects on the other plinths at a low angle – the body has to bend down; to appreciate the effort of viewing it and possibly handling it. I also believe that all the plinths (regardless of whether they are seats or actual plinths for housing/holding the other objects) are the SAME SCALE. I am thinking of scale in this uniform way as it may suggest a kind of measured contemplative feel with almost all the objects being housed at a similar LOW down prone-body affective state/feeling. This would give gravity to my installation and would also reference more so the sacred funerary state of death. I think the sacred is an important ambience to install in my work.

iii) Finally, I am also imagining that the plinths are made out of the same material – what material I am not sure? Maybe a coloured earthen plaster? I need to contemplate this more carefully in relation to the other elements and spatial programmatic of the installation. Maybe a resin amber-colored material? The latter would look stunning but might be a costly process. I am not sure?

iv) I am still thinking that the projection works are LARGE scale – these are looking great so far ... I think they could make a certain 'wall paper effect' – maybe even projected onto the ceiling or floors and I will definitely experiment with other fabrics/materials for projecting on to. So while different scales will play through the final installation/exhibition; the main HEIGHT register could be drawn at the height of the uniform plinths.

DATABASE OF IMAGES

CULTURAL DEATH TAXOMONY

