

**BA Furniture and Product Design  
Level One  
3D Design Module 2: PM 1080C  
Project 4  
Semester 2: 2008**

# DEATH

This project will explore the events, rituals and traditions that occur when someone dies, leading to the design of a functional or memorial object(s)

Death is a neglected subject in design and little has changed since Victorian times with archaic traditions dominating. There are few options to influence our treatment of the deceased in our society and how we might remember or cherish their memory.

You are asked to consider alternative ways that would challenge our existing belief systems and reflect on a more contemporary or radical approach. How can design influence this? What aspects would you want to modernise? Is the use of hearses, Victorian 'top hat and tail' undertaker garments or clinical funeral 'parlours' relevant today? Consider also the traditions behind the use of tombstones, floral wreaths and urns for example.

What should happen to the body? Are cremations or burials (land or sea) the only choices? Do rigid coffins serve their purpose well for containing and moving the deceased body? What alternatives (or secondary functions) could be developed? (see William Warren's Shelves for Life)

Is the colour black most suitable? (refer to White Funeral Lunch, a project by Dutch designer Marije Vogelzang)

What role does nature have? Look at the traditions behind planting trees and placing plaques on favourite outdoor benches. (Also see the work of Nadine Jarvis, especially her Bird Feeders) Can the elements such as water, fire or the wind inform your design? (I mixed my mum's ashes with the explosives in a firework rocket to scatter them in the sky)

The post funeral gathering is often an event for remembering the deceased, a place to exchange stories verbally. Could these be visualised and recorded or is some kind of timeline object depicting the deceased life appropriate?

How best can we relate to the physical remains of a deceased loved one-can memorial objects play a role?

You will need to research how different religions and cultures deal with dying and also the humanist and secular approach. By defining a particular context, illustrate the sequence of events that would occur when someone dies and draw mind maps to show how your ideas develop related to existing traditions.

## Things to look up

[www.welcomecollection.org](http://www.welcomecollection.org) (Life before Death Exhibition info)

[www.thelancet.com/collections/series/endoflife](http://www.thelancet.com/collections/series/endoflife) (texts relating to Humanist, Catholic, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu views)

[www.designmuseum.org/design/nadine-jarvis](http://www.designmuseum.org/design/nadine-jarvis) (esp. Bird Feeders)

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/jcamd/research](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/jcamd/research) (William Warrens Shelves for Life)

You Tube: 'Rest in Pieces' video by Roma Levin at Room Eleven

[www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

[www.deadgoodguides.com](http://www.deadgoodguides.com)

[www.memorialsbyartists.com](http://www.memorialsbyartists.com)

Book: The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion (also interview with Susan Stamberg at [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org))

## Exhibitions

Life before Death 9 April to 18 May (closed Mons) Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road, Euston

Living and Dying Exhibition The British Museum, Gt Russell St, Bloomsbury  
(also Egyptian mummy galleries)

Hunterian Museum Royal College of Surgeons, 34-43 Lincolns Inn Fields, WC2

## Minimum Requirements

A3 size book

To show:

Research, progression of ideas to final outcome, storyboard relating designed object(s) to context, mind maps and any material and processes research.

A full size mock up

## Assessment criteria for this project are as follows:

research

concept formulation

process and project management

outcome and presentation

## **Time Schedule 2pm in studio**

Thursday 17 April  
Intro to project

### **Week 1**

Thursday 24 April  
Presentation of research

### **Week 2**

Thursday 2 May  
Have 3 developed concepts to discuss

### **Week 3**

Thursday 8 May  
Tutorials

### **Week 4**

Thursday 15 May  
Final presentation

## **Trip to Wellcome Collection Exhibition**

Thursday 24 April. Meet in foyer at 10am Entrance near Euston Square tube on Euston Road

