

Finale

The inspiration behind this project was the passing of my granddad during lockdown. Due to the restrictions surrounding care homes, we weren't able to see him before his passing and we also weren't allowed a funeral afterward. Not being allowed to participate in or hold such an important event puts into perspective the importance of these types of spaces.

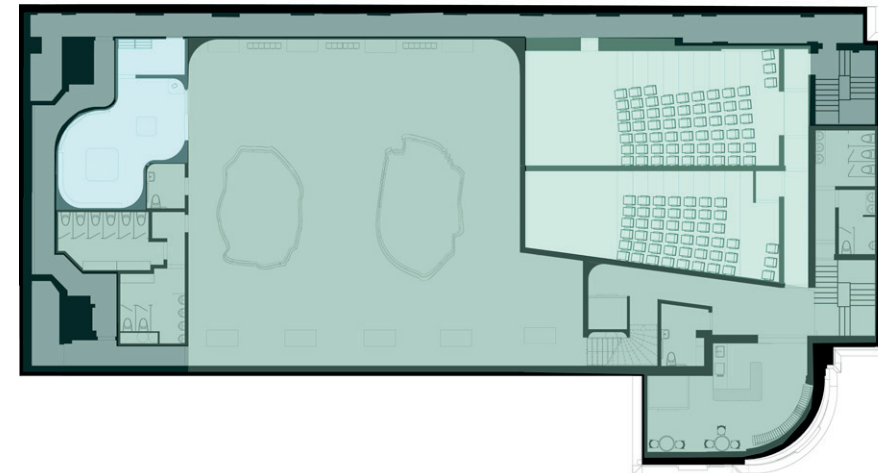
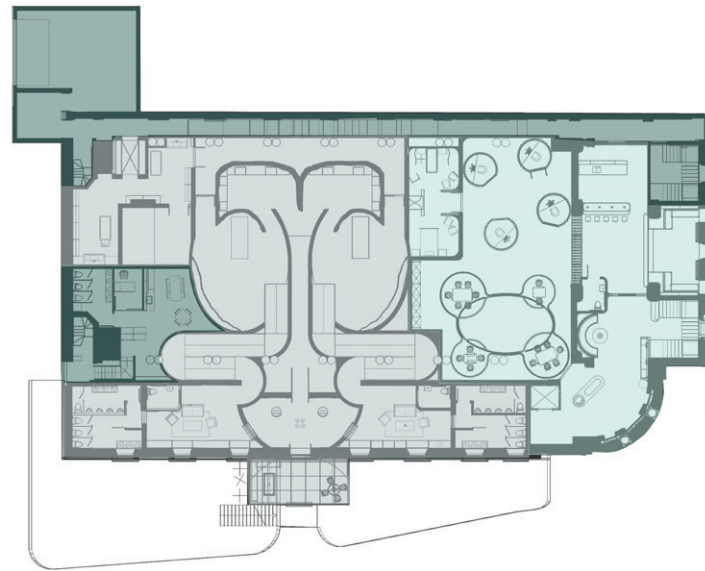
I feel we in Western society have an outdated and rigid way of looking at death, it is still very much a taboo subject, perpetuated by the funeral industry which works in a profit focused business model. I wanted my space to be one modelled around empathy, compassion and environmentalism; to be its own Memento Mori and 'remember death' in a positive way. From this experience, 'FINALE' was born, an open and safe death positive space.

The name 'FINALE' ties in with the history of the building, a purpose built cinema build in 1922. A finale is a term given to the ending of something often exciting or spectacular. I think we could benefit from viewing death more as a finale, a celebration of someones life rather than the loss of it.

The building features multiple levels and zones focusing on the many aspects of death. Each zone allows people to come to terms with their own morality in different ways, no matter what stage in life they are at.



GROUND FLOOR PLANS



DEATH DOULA

I feel there is a misconception surrounding death and grief that it begins after the person has passed. During my own experiences of grief, I realised that it began as soon as I acknowledged my grandad was seriously unwell. Months went by from that moment to his eventual passing where I was both experiencing grief and anticipating it. My research discovered that 40% of women found the pre-loss stage to be more stressful than the post-loss stage. This lack of support during that period led me to research Death doulas. These individuals provide non medical care and support for the person and their family before, during and after their death. Everything from where they envision themselves resting to what music or poems they want recited. Throughout the dying process, they check in with family members to alleviate their stress and once the individual has died, they guide the surviving members through the grieving process. **Including a Death doula space in my building not only empowers the dying to take control of their last moments but it also allows the deceased's family the time and energy to properly grieve.** The death doula zone has an indoor garden and kitchen area where users of this space can spend time independently.



CURTAIN WORK SPACE

In order to adapt to the fluctuating amount of users in this space, I designed a curtain railing system that can accommodate four smaller tables in individual curtain pods or one large group in a singular pod. The stripes of sheer fabric allow for the curtains to create interesting patterns when crossing over.

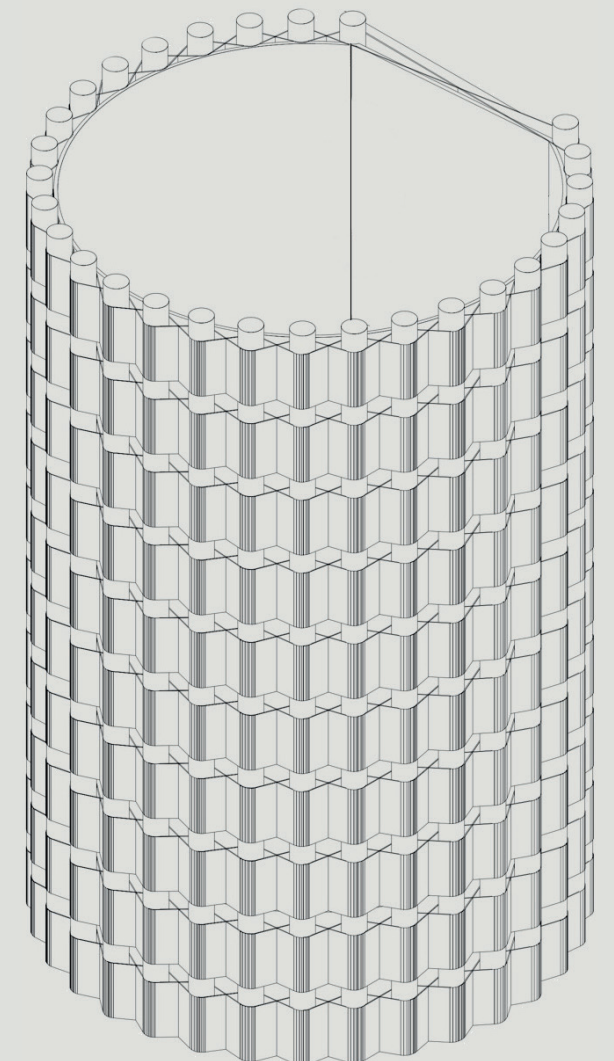
Curtain railing animation.



POD DETAILING

Our increasing digital presence is creating a shadow life, so it makes sense that once we pass, it is like a second death. Social media accounts become a source of communication about you after you die and acts as a powerful digital destination for grief.

Digital death acknowledges this fact and encourages people to organise their online information and assets and take control of their digital legacy. Digital death is incorporated into my space with individual pods. These glass pods are wrapped in wool felt which absorbs both high and low-frequency sound waves and the gaps maintain an open and airy feel. Users would enter this space to organise which accounts will be shared to a loved one to memorialise or manage, and which ones will be deleted after the user has passed.



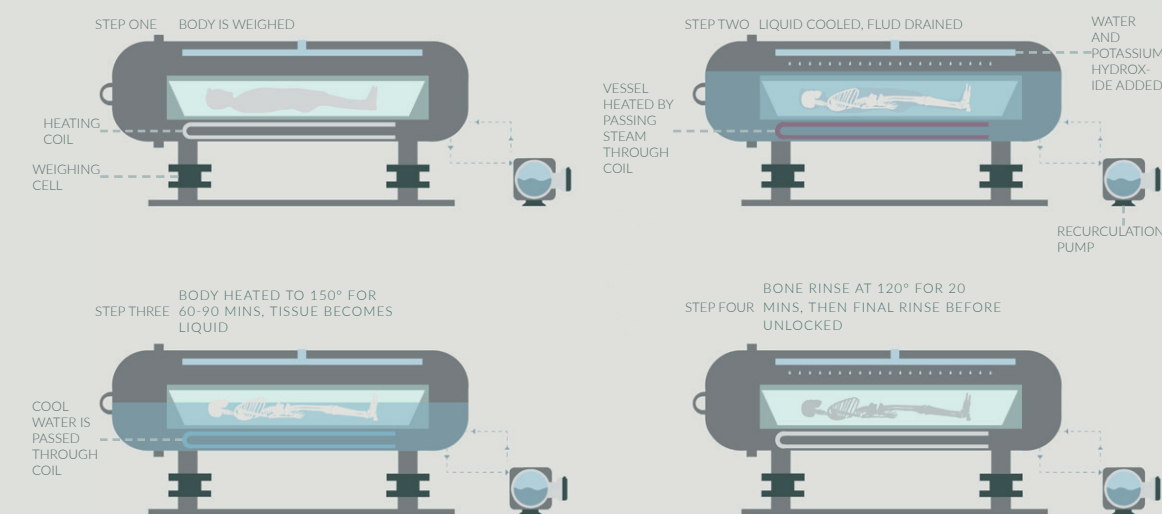
WATER CREMATION

The death industry has a lack of sustainable death options.

The funeral industry in the UK is estimated to be worth around £1 billion annually with over 600,000 funerals taking place each year. Many of the practices upheld by this industry are not only damaging to our relationships with death but also have a massive environmental impact. **In one year globally, the funeral industry uses 4 million acres of forest for caskets, 2 million tons of concrete for burial vaults and 800,000 gallons of Formaldehyde for embalming. Formaldehyde is considered to be in the top 10% of the Environmental Agency's most hazardous and damaging chemicals, it is also known to cause cancer.** Moreover, our current use of cremation also releases mercury vapour, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and carcinogens. I have swapped fire for water cremation. This is an environmentally friendly alternative where the process of alkaline hydrolysis is harnessed to break a body down into its chemical components. The resulting liquid contains amino acids, sugars and salts and can be used as plant fertiliser. **When compared to traditional cremation, alkaline hydrolysis uses 1/8th of the energy and leaves less than 1/4th of the carbon footprint.** Water cremation drastically reduces the greenhouse gas emissions and the water used to reduce the body is less than the average person would consume in 3 days of life.



Water Cremation Reception



Function Room

FUNCTION ROOMS

The water cremation space holds witness cremations which means once the bereaved enter the space they will be able to dress the casket, normally with flowers or pictures, and then view the cremation. Viewing a body has many benefits to the bereaved, a chance for final recognition and a time for everyone to personally say goodbye. I also wanted the option to open this intimate space to the public in a controlled and educational way. The ceiling of the function room is actually a void space which has a curtain that can be opened or closed to allow complete privacy.

COMMUNITY AREA

The 'Dual Process Model of Bereavement' suggests that there are two types of stressors that are associated with grieving: loss-oriented stressors and restoration-oriented stressors. Healthy grieving means engaging in a dynamic process of oscillating between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping. A griever will oscillate between confronting the loss and avoiding the loss. My aim for this space is for it to embody the restoration-oriented stage of grief. This community space will be open at night after the crematorium has closed. This is an open and airy space that aims to help the grieving try new things, form new relationships, and reconnect with the world after their loss.



EVENT SPACE

77% of Britons find it hard to talk about death. This space aims to shift this cultural narrative that talking about death is taboo or uncomfortable by providing a multi-functional space that educates, supports, and connects the surrounding community to the subject of death. During the day this space will be used by families who are wishing to rewatch family videos to remember the bereaved. This allows families to re-connect with their shared grief in a safe environment and also celebrate their deceased loved one. Users of the digital death pods can also select videos and photos that they want to share with their family for this experience. At night it is a death education space, working to educate people on wider death culture, from art to science, this space connects wider topics such as race, gender, and class to death and death culture.



DEATH DESIGN SHOP

The death design space showcases contemporary designers who are re-designing urns, coffins, and caskets to make them more sustainable. These objects challenge the somber and 'taboo' feeling surrounding death by introducing objects in domestic settings with bright colours and sleek designs. This space functions like any store where people can come and purchase sustainable death designs which can be kept in their home as decor until they pass. By interacting with these products during the users' lifetime, they are encouraged to reflect and familiarise themselves with their mortality in a setting that feels safe to them.

