

My name is Kelsey Buzzell and my Masters of Interior Architecture thesis project is Barrow House, an urban mausoleum and grief center in Portland Oregon. Barrow House combines a funeral home, mausoleum, and a grief-counseling center, and presents the idea that a place for sadness and grief can also be a place for happiness and remembrance. This project is personal and was inspired by my younger brothers death last May – a disjointed series of experiences which led me to question how our society views death and grieving processes.

In traditional society, especially in the US, we tend to bury our dead on the outskirts of our cities - in cemeteries and large mausoleums - removing death from our daily lives. This separation between the dead and living represents a shortcoming of modern society: specifically our inability to accept and normalize death. Our fear of death or dying is a direct result of distance from and unfamiliarity with processes of death. From my personal experience, I was inspired to create a place where the cycles of death could take place in one location. Barrow House's program includes traditional funerary services, such as funeral planning, cremation and mausoleum sales, as well as a grief center, mausoleum, visitation and gathering spaces. The benefits of the combination come from creating a place that is a single, stable, and contemplative environment for users throughout death and grieving processes.

I chose to place Barrow House in a prominent location in downtown Portland, to challenge how our society views death and reflect a modern view of burial vs. the traditional cemetery burial. By placing Barrow House downtown, it will be more accessible physically and representationally, and can serve as a symbol of a modernized attitude towards life and death. It asks people to confront, embrace and celebrate death as part of the everyday. The building I have chosen, sits on Burnside, a main avenue next to many destina-

tion places like Powell's, the Ace Hotel and Living Room Theaters. The site and structure – a 5 story concrete building with two glazed facades - helps to uphold a modernized view of death by focusing on how light, transparency and location can assist in creating familiarity.

My scheme, death as a celebration or spectacle, organizes main program spaces between two avenues of circulation and places the experience of death and grieving in a more public arena. There are three zones: the more enclosed, north circulation zone, which contains contemplation spaces, two egress stairs and restrooms, and then a vertical opening that connects all the floors; then middle "celebration" zone, which contains core elements of the program like niche, gathering spaces and offices and then a south circulation zone, which includes an open, shifting staircase, seating alcoves and a movable screen element. The layered organization of the scheme places the more active zones on the south façade, maximizes use of natural daylight and places emphasis on procession and journey.

The program elements are organized vertically, in layers, so that elements can function both separately and jointly. Funeral offices in the basement, or grief center offices on the second floor can be closed down, while the entry, gathering spaces and the mausoleum can remain open. Because some people prefer to mourn alone, while others prefer to be part of the collective, Barrow House provides a variety of spaces: public, private, enclosed, open, light, dark, neutral and colorful to allow for diverse, individual needs and experiences.

To further emphasize my scheme and present a more modern attitude towards death, I have chosen materials that are light and natural instead of dark and somber and utilize layering and the concept of inside vs. outside. While the majority of materials are neutral, like light maple, white granite, light terrazzo tile, and copper, where pops of color are used, the palette reflects heal-

ing and stress-reduction, utilizing blues, purples and yellows which all have calming effects. The niche spaces are designed as a kind of geode: with an outer wood shell and sparkling interior where variety is created from the individual niche-boxes, some of which you can see urns inside and others which are plain or etched.

The materials also represent the passage of time and memory. Copper screen elements, that act as a memory wall for visitors to place photos or letters on, will be shifted every few months and will patina over time. At night, the façade will light up in seemingly random patterns to further represent the concept of iconography and celebration. This will change daily as a memorial to the remains housed inside – a specific portion of the façade will light on a specific day for each individual's remains.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the four main goals of my project:

First, To challenge traditional contexts of death by utilizing an urban location to create awareness.

Second, To modernize our perception of death by utilizing light, transparency and color to emphasize celebration.

Third, To embrace diversity of belief and grieving processes by providing a variety of spaces for both individual and collective mourning.

And finally, to represent different stages of grieving through vertical procession and a combination of program elements.