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FUNERAL MONOLOGUE -A RECORD OF THE DESIGNER'S JOURNEY OF SELFRESCUE

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT

Have you ever thought about the sudden death of your significant other?

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

If such a tragedy were to happen one day, how would you face it?

The beginning of this story originates from grief. On an unsuspecting morning, I received a distressing call. Since then, my best friend and I have been in different worlds. Throughout this three-year sorrowful journey. I began my master's studies and my first project's topic is also talking about grief. Therefore I was also considering other themes for my final project, but aligning with my inner self is my expectation for this master's journey. So, I had to face this fact—the memories sealed away, the soul trapped, a story kept haunting back. I reopened this storybook I thought I had finished, diving deeper even as tears flowed.

If my first project was about disinfecting wounds, then this time it's about debridement. Those lingering and inappropriate beliefs are like necrotic tissue that needs to be removed from my body. To complete this project, I scanned my grief, integrating my cultural background. I created six characters to express my inner sorrow, replicating familiar patterns and creating a fictional scenario. If had the chance, I would hold another funeral for you, where I could say everything was left unsaid. I owe you a monologue.

I view this process as documentation—a record of how a creator copes with grief, reconstructs, rebuilds the bridge from self-isolation, and reconnects with the public.

It's a designer's journey of self-rescue.

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PROJECT BACKGROUD

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

October 31, 2020, was the day my dear friend departed from this earth. This fact pushed me to start a long journey, perhaps this journey will last a lifetime. Some say grief is like ocean waves, with the intervals between waves growing longer as time passes, making it impossible to predict when the next wave will hit. But I feel that my grief is more like riding a merry-go-round; as time goes by, we continually switch to larger and larger merry-go-round. Life's sceneries resemble being on this giant merry-go-round, where we repeatedly engage in certain activities and experiences. When we return to the same corner, we once again feel the collapse and sorrow. Through the experience of confronting grief over these years, I deeply understand that the scars on the soul can never fully heal. Although with time and adjustments in mindset, the wound may gradually heal, it will ultimately remain scarred, never truly healed.

During the self-healing process, I bought lots of books related to grief, from psychology to spiritual healing to understand my mood and the situations I might face. I remember that I felt grateful that I got some books telling you "It's OKAY to cry and be like this" and due to the knowledge I gained from books, makes it more positive to face this whole self-healing journey. During the process of healing, I bought relevant books to try to understand my emotions and the states I might be facing. I remember feeling grateful at the time to have these books to guide me. It's normal to have such emotions. I recall that because I read a lot of books, I managed to avoid tendencies towards depression. Through reading, I also became familiar with the five stages of grief, introduced by Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book On Death and Dying. The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I recognize that I have been looping between depression and acceptance, like a broken record replaying a certain piece of music. This state has also affected my master's thesis topic. I once thought that my project shouldn't discuss grief again, especially since I had already done a project in studio 1 to mourn a dear friend. But there was always this thought lingering in my mind, that it wasn't finished yet, that there was more to do. Eventually, I decided to accept this thought and act on it. I believe that creation is about expressing the desires of the heart.

"Art is the desire of a man to express himself, to record the reactions of his personality to the world he lives in."

- Amy Lowell, American poet.

There are many things I want to say from my heart. I want to talk to you again and tell you all the things I regret not saying to you. Perhaps by doing so, I can detach myself a little from the sadness.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

The essence of this project is the process of grieving for my best friend.

This was the original idea, but I found the goal changed a little bit, I would say this is the project about me, recording how I have been through this process.

Through the act of programming knitting patterns, sorrow is transformed into knitwear. In this journey, I've come to realize that this grief cannot be easily gotten rid of. Just when I thought the pain was fading, grief would unexpectedly resurface, leaving me feeling trapped and unable to escape its grasp. Despite the saying that time heals all wounds, I felt it was not the case for me. When I recall memories of moments shared with my friend, it continues to make me cry. I've come to accept that this wound will never fully heal; I must learn to coexist with the sadness, acknowledging its presence.

Within this exploration of memories shared with my best friend and the integration of personal cultural backgrounds, I've created a funeral procession. Each character within it embodies the confusion and eventual acceptance of death. Laden with blessings for my friend and an acknowledgment of the present reality.

The first farewell was when we looked upon your remains, knowing you were no longer in that old body. We bid farewell to your body.

The second farewell is now, with this funeral procession that I created, it's my funeral monologue, but I'm not ready to say goodbye to you yet. So this is the goodbye to my stuckness since 2020. It's time to let go of this feeling and embrace the transformation of the feelings. Not sure what it will become in the future, but I am looking forward to moving on to the next chapter.

"Hey,

It's been 1212 days since you left. I regret not being able to preserve certain parts of you that $% \left\{ 1,2,\ldots ,n\right\} =\left\{ 1,2,\ldots$

belonged to your body. I've been imagining dissecting your body, searching for the familiar parts of

you. Your cold body is like an unupdatable machine. At the moment of dissection, I already knew $\,$

you weren't there anymore because you I once knew existed in that stagnant time and space.

Hey,

blurry; you're like sand slipping through my fingers. I should find a container to hold you in.

Hey,

I will put you in my heart and then I won't forget you anymore.

Hey!!!!

I will see you later!"

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LITERATURE REUIEW-THEORIES OF GRIEF

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORIES OF GRIEF

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

GRIEF WORK THEORY BY SIGMUND FREUD

This theory is based on projection and attachment. Freud believed that people form attachments to the objects of their love as a manifestation of their libido. Individuals project their perceptions onto these attachment objects and internalize them as part of themselves. Consequently, the loss of an attachment object leads to profound pain as it threatens one's sense of wholeness. Freud further proposed a process for overcoming grief. Grievers must detach themselves from the attachment object, differentiate the lost parts in memories, align memories with reality, and accept that the attachment object no longer exists in the present reality. Only after breaking free from this attachment can grievers rediscover themselves and establish new attachment relationships. At this point, the love for the original attachment object transforms into memories, offering redemption through reminiscence. This marks the completion of grief work. However, Freud later discovered discrepancies between his own mourning experiences and the theory he proposed. He realized that new attachment objects often cannot replace the original ones, and the connection with the deceased does not simply vanish due to new relationships. As a result, Freud revised his theory in subsequent years but still laid the groundwork for the theory of mourning.

DUAL PROCESS MODEL

In 1995, Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut presented a paper titled "The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement" where they outlined their theory. The Dual Process Model (DPM) is conceptualized with three primary components: loss-oriented coping, restoration-oriented coping, and oscillation. Stroebe and Schut perceive bereavement stress as dual-fold, involving both the loss itself and the necessity to readjust and handle the practicalities of daily life following the loss of an attachment figure. Bereaved individuals navigate through these dual pressures, adapting over time. As time passes, loss-oriented responses gradually diminish while restoration-oriented responses escalate. Eventually, mourners find balance and are able to live stably even after the departure of the deceased.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORIES OF GRIEF

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MEANING RECONSTRUCTION

In 2015, Dr. Robert Neimeyer proposed a theory primarily originating from a constructivist and narrative perspective. During the period of grief, individuals strive to construct various perspectives to integrate the life experience with the deceased and assign it meaning, actively reconstructing the significance of this grief. This process aids grievers in moving forward.

In his main propositions, Neimeyer emphasizes the Meaning Reconstruction as a means to assist individuals experiencing bereavement in easing their grief. Meaning reconstruction primarily entails three activities: sense-making of loss, benefit finding, and identity change.

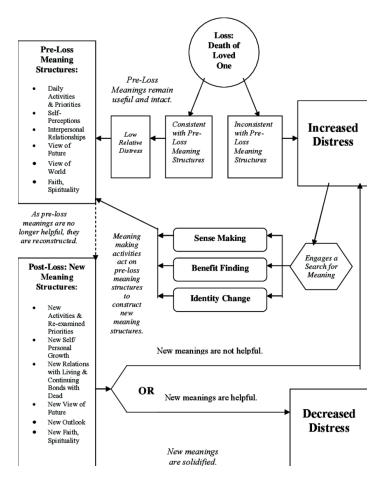
Having been through these three theories of grief and my own experience as a griever. Freud's initial concept of detachment, which my parents' generation commonly used, involved treating death as if it were a taboo, ignoring it as if nothing had happened. I remember when my friend passed away, my mother's comforting words were to not think about him and let time ease everything. At that moment, I couldn't understand how one could not think about it. But when my mother lost her own mother, did she also avoid thinking about her? On the other hand, my grandfather coped with his grief by occasionally replaying videos of my grandmother enjoying herself in Thailand. This seems to confirm part of Freud's theory, that we find salvation through memories.

Next is the Dual Process Model. I took a few days off from my previous job because I felt incapable of facing work with my emotions in chaos. When I returned, my colleagues advised me to focus on work and get back to "normal" life. I didn't understand what "normal" meant or why grief was considered abnormal. Why was there an expectation for someone to quickly recover from such emotions, even to conceal them and return to work? I felt the dual pressures mentioned in the Dual Process Model, trying to adjust myself between these two pressures to fit into their idea of "normal." But even now, I disagree with this usage of "normal."

Finally, in terms of meaning reconstruction, I believe this has been a repetitive theme throughout my MA journey. I continuously seek to rebuild my connection with my friend who passed away. This aligns with Neimeyer's concept of active mourning, rather than passively accepting or ignoring grief.

In the following discussion, I will explore Neimeyer's theory and compare it with my own experiences in my MA project.

The following introduces Dr. Robert Neimeyer's theory of meaning reconstruction, which involves three main activities. The diagram below illustrates the model proposed by the scholars Gillies & Neimeyer(2006). During the process of meaning reconstruction, it may be discovered that certain elements are not conducive to this process, thus requiring a reevaluation and completion of the entire process.



Gillies, James & Neimeyer, Robert. (2006). Model of meaning reconstruction pathways in response to loss of a loved one.

SENSE-MAKING OF LOSS: In grief, individuals constantly search for the predictability of life and try to avoid further pain by seeking reasons for the loss and repeatedly contemplating what led to the loss of their loved ones.

BENEFIT FINDING: After the event, individuals seek to identify the benefits that the event brings to the survivors, thereby adjusting to the grief.

IDENTITY CHANGE: Through the grieving process, individuals reconstruct the meaning of their lives, take on new roles, and may become more empathetic, leading to changes in social relationships.

Upon reflecting on my own experiences, I realized that I am currently undergoing the process of meaning reconstruction.

The comparison below outlines my experiences with the three major activities in the meaning reconstruction model:

SENSE-MAKING OF LOSS: At the sudden loss of my friend, I was unable to accept or contemplate the situation. I continuously pondered if there was something I had not done, why he had suddenly left, and what the reasons were. However, I could not find answers, and I realized my powerlessness in the situation. I could not truly find the right answers through this process.

BENEFIT FINDING: After the event, there is an undeniable significant change within myself. I am more empathetic. I can empathize with the feelings of those who have experienced similar situations. Additionally, I have come to realize the fragility of life and the importance of seizing the moment to pursue our greatest happiness and cherish the present.

IDENTITY CHANGE: This is the current state I am experiencing. My perception of the world and my deceased friend is changing. I am in the process of reconstructing and rebuilding myself, which is also the bridge I am attempting to build through my MA project to reconnect with the world and my departed friend.

THE THREE R'S OF PROCESSING GRIEF

In addition to meaning reconstruction, Neimeyer also proposed "The Three R's of Processing Grief," which help us navigate through the land of loss. These actions include Retelling, Rebuilding, and Reinventing. I believe this is a simpler and more understandable version.

RETELLING - Sharing memories and retelling your loved one's story and try to look for the new openings and new chapter, possibilities that include the loss but also extend beyond it.

REBUILDING - Figuring out how to rebuild the bond with our loved ones, find a new way to hold on to conserve the connection of love with our loved ones, and move forward with our loved ones.

REINJENTING - After the loss, people become not the same as before, so need to change, and reinvent our lives in the context of our lives. And learning how to incorporate the love you feel for your loved one into the person you have become as a result of their loss so that you can move forward

In the next step, I will demonstrate how I am rebuilding the bridge to reconnect the external $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) +\left(1$

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COLLECTION

COLLECTION

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

When conceptualizing my theme, I chose digital knitting, which I am most familiar with. I also considered adding other elements besides knitting, but upon reflection, I realized that if I were to rebuild all the bridges, I must also consider the connections and scenes in the past with my friend. During my BA exhibition, as a major in knitwear design, my friend came to my home to help with processing and production. Therefore, for my current MA project, I must also make a whole collection of knitwear, turning grief into the motivation for artistic creation. Many artists in the past have taken the same path but with different approaches and landscapes. Through this process, I believe this is a record of how I saved myself. Perhaps others undergoing a similar process can understand that grief can manifest in various forms. My approach is to recreate a scenario that I care about the most.I want to bid farewell to my friend properly, express many words to him, and also give many blessings to him. How can I share my story with the public? I think maybe it's through storytelling. I will transform my expectations and personal story into a narrative. Every character will be a metaphor in the story to embody my beliefs, which I aim to convey to everyone.

Therefore, I have constructed a background story for my collection

COLLECTION

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

STORY:

In the early morning, along the path to the forest, there arose the sound of bells, sometimes distant, sometimes near. In this village, upon hearing this sound, everyone knew that someone was about to embark on the next journey. A little girl followed the sound. She saw a white figure, unable to discern its appearance, only the staff it held, emitting a clear ringing sound. The sound seemed to summon something, and shortly after, the white figure was joined by many shadows. Following the white figure, they proceeded until disappearing into the depths of the path. After a while, the girl heard her mother's call and hurried back home, recounting what she had seen. Her mother said that she was fortunate to witness such an event, as it was a transition of forms that everyone undergoes.

The girl immediately asked, "What about the ones left behind? Won't they feel lonely?"

Her mother replied, "No, people have simply grown accustomed to such modes of companionship and don't feel the typical loneliness. But in reality, no matter what form we take, we are all connected. So when that day comes, don't cry, for we will meet again."

The girl asked, "Why a blessing?"

Her mother answered, "Because the blessed souls have finally returned home."

WHY FUNERAL PROCESSION?

BECAUSE I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING MORE TO YOU AT YOUR FUNERAL

"I MISS YOU SO MUCH, PLEASE DON'T GO."

I KNOW I CAN'T KEEP YOU HERE, SO I HAVE TO LET YOU GO

BLESS YOU AND BLESS ME,

BOTH OF US ARE GOING TO START A NEW JOURNEY.

FUNERAL PROCESSION

When speaking of funerals and recalling my memories, I attended some traditional funerals and most of the vibe was extremely heavy and strict to the rules that some behaviors are banned. I always remember that I attended my best friend's funeral, though the family wanted to hold it more modern and personally, I still felt it was not my friend's style, and I started to think about how I wanted my funeral to look. And this became the origin of my collection, I tried to blend myself and my friend into this creative brainstorming.

IF I CAN BID FAREWELL TO YOU AGAIN, HOW WOULD I LIKE TO DO IT? WHAT WOULD I BE SAYING GOODBYE TO THIS TIME? WHAT FUNERAL MONOLOGUE I WOULD LIKE TO SAY AT THIS TIME?

These are the main questions I asked myself during this process. My collection is inspired by the funeral procession. In my home country, Taiwan, We have the traditional funeral procession, The typical members of the traditional funeral procession are the one who hold the portrait, coffin, banner bearer, incense bearer, mourning attire relatives, relatives, and funeral attendees.

SO HOW TO BRING THIS MODEL OF A FUNERAL PROCESSION INTO MY COLLECTION?

WHO WILL BE IN THIS FUNERAL PROCESSION?
WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?



Traditional Taiwanese Funeral Custom: Coffin Carrying.

So these characters were born.

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CHARACTERS

CHARACTERS

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Navigator:

This character leads souls towards the light. The cane she holds is a summoning bell. Her responsibility is to prevent souls from wandering and to serve as a guide, providing comfort and a sacred presence.

Portrait:

A character announcing the arrival of the deceased. Holding the portrait of the deceased, she informs all beings that the deceased is prepared to depart for the next journey and warns not to block the procession.

Collector:

This character is responsible for gathering the fragments of the soul left behind by the deceased in the world. These soul fragments are taken by grieving family members. When all the fragments are collected, it symbolizes the soul's return to completeness.

Deceased:

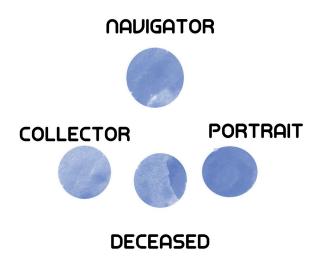
The soul of the deceased.

Human (Me):

As a living relative, it symbolizes my existence. I participate in this procession while grieving the departure of the deceased and also give blessings to the deceased.

Blessing:

At the end of the farewell procession, blessings are left behind. It is believed that happiness will return someday.



Left Line Arrangement

Right Concept Moodboard

Left bottom Character Moodboard

Right bottom Character Moodboard

















Left Navigator Right

Bottom Collector

Deceased





Left Portrait

Right Human

Bottom Blessing





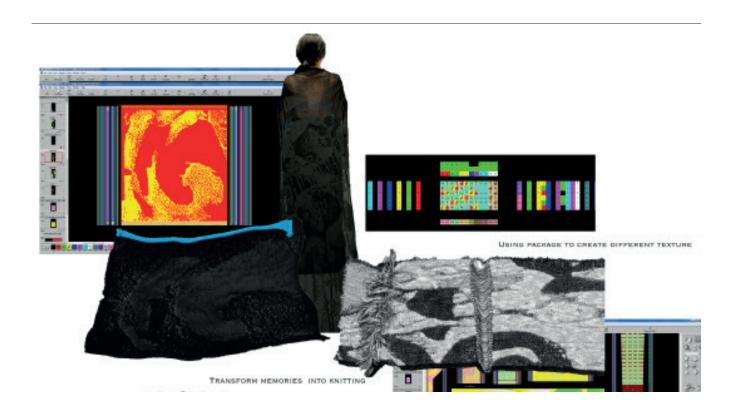
PROCESS

PROCESS

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

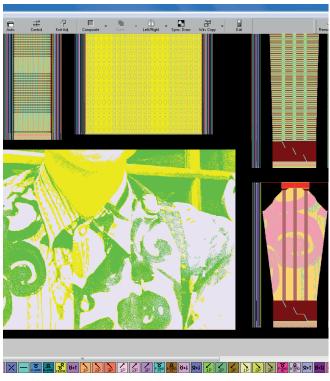
In the initial choice of material, my primary consideration was how the pairing of yarn could showcase the most beautiful textile designs. Therefore, I did not limit myself to using only natural materials. In the selection of fabric structures, most designs were based on patterns from shirts worn by my friend who passed away. I transformed the pattern into a jacquard with transfer stitch and all knit mixed with plain, creating a lace-like effect.

I aimed to incorporate the clothing with his traces as much as possible. As for the silhouettes, I used a dripping to consider the suitable combinations and patterns for each fabric panel, experimenting with different combinations from before. Additionally, I made masks for each outfit, matching the same color system as the clothing. I used main yarns paired with fusible yarns, followed by a steam setting, for both the masks and pleats. I enjoyed the stage of creating and testing fabric possibilities because they often brought me surprises. I also loved experimenting with different yarns for the same structure. Different yarns can evoke different vibes. In this collection, many garments were created using the same structure but knitted with different yarns.







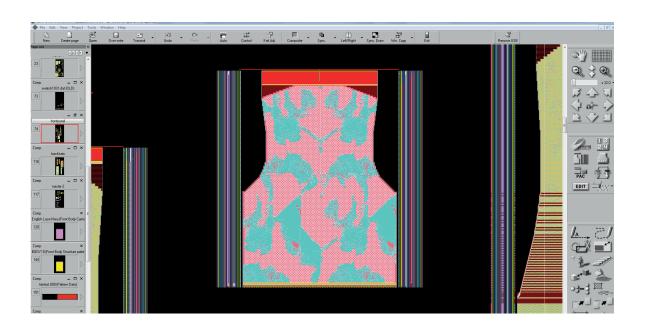






Programming and Draping











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SELF ASSESSMENT LEARNING OUTCOME

SELF ASSESSMENT LEARNING OUTCOME

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THE GOAL

Rebuilding the bridge with departed loved ones in a different form

Turning grief into artistic creation□grief can be in different forms)

Openly discussing grief

CHALLENGES

Feeling stuck in emotions

There are no rules to follow

Facing my weaknesses is difficult, especially when it comes to grief. When I started knitting, I felt like I was drowning in a whirlpool of sorrow. I didn't know which way to go, and I felt lost and questioned whether I should continue. Facing this is almost like tearing your heart apart. In this vast map of grief, I feel lost. I'm not sure if I can find a way out, or if I even want to immerse myself in it.

DID I REACH MY GOALS?

Initially, the goal of this project was quite small. My aim was simply to find a glimmer of hope and an exit from grief. However, as the production process continued, doubts about aesthetics and who I was doing this for arose. Who is my audience? Is this clothing or costume design? How do I define the series I'm making? Can my work serve a wider audience? These questions kept coming up, and along with them, I found my emotions sinking lower and lower. I couldn't face my work. Was my pursuit really that broad?

Throughout the process, I felt like I was constantly seeking balance, much like the two roles within me: the designer and the technician. I often felt torn between these two. So, I changed my approach to design. Instead of starting with sketches, I challenged myself to let the fabric dictate the patterns. This process of letting go of control was very difficult for me. I often felt anxious because I didn't have sketches to follow, unsure of what to do next. I felt like a trained horse, released from the reins but still unsure of what freedom meant, afraid to start running freely.

SELF ASSESSMENT LEARNING OUTCOME

Funeral Monologue-a record of the designer's journey of self-rescue

I also pondered why I desired a sense of security in my designs. I wanted to control every detail. This seemed contradictory to my theme of grief, but I think it reflects the process of grief. I can't control life and death, but I try to control the other elements because I'm trying to regain some sense of control over my life.

In the later stages of creating the collection, I realized that besides consciously carrying out meaning reconstruction, I was also learning this through my design methods. I was seeking new connections with my original design methods. Although I haven't determined what these new connections or meanings are yet, it moves me because, in any case, we can reconnect with things we thought were lost or no longer belong to us in new ways. Meaning reconstruction involves constantly retelling stories, rebuilding bonds, and ultimately reinventing love.

On the path of mourning, I know I haven't finished the whole journey. On this path the more I explore inwardly, the more it's like peeling an onion, crying while peeling layer by layer. Eventually, I will find that the things I love are still there, the bond has always been there. You just have to go through that pain to slowly find new perspectives, and new openings, and then you'll find out from which side the bridge should extend.

Self-Rescue 101

Lesson One,

STAY TRUE

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For my invisible friend, Phil

TAHNK YOU

STAY TRUE