

# 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

PRESS RELEASE

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In dense cities, death is both personal and infrastructural. Alternative methods of disposition respond to the constraints of ecology, time, and urban burial space. Innovative design reweaves the cycles of life and death into the metropolis to augment civic space, respect the environment, and elegantly honor the deceased. We are changing how we live with death in the city. What we do with the remains of our dead reflects the character of the living—affecting both the environment and experience of the metropolis.



## DeathLAB: Democratizing Death

2018.7.7 (Sat) -  
2019.3.24 (Mon)

**The third edition in our <lab> series presents DeathLAB, a prescient laboratory of death. Making “light of death,” the exhibition explores new forms of memorializing the dead that transcend religion, ethnic group and family.**

Exhibition Title	lab.3 DeathLAB: Democratizing Death
Period	Saturday, July 7, 2018 – Sunday, March 24
Hours	10:00-18:00 (until 20:00 on Fridays and Saturdays)
Venue	Design Gallery, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
Closed	Mondays (except Jul 16, Aug 13, Sep 17, Sep 24, Oct 8, Oct 29, Dec 24, Jan 14, Feb 11), and Jul 17 (Tue), Sep 18 (Tue), Sep 25 (Tue), Oct 9 (Tue), Dec 25 (Tue), Dec 29 (Sat) – Jan 1 (Tue), Jan 15 (Tue), Feb 12 (Tue)
Admission	Free
Inquiries	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa Tel: +81-(0)76-220-2800
Organized by	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Kanazawa Art Promotion and Development Foundation)
Sponsored by	I-O DATA DEVICE, INC., HASEGAWA Co., Ltd.
Supported by	Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, DMM.make

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### About the Exhibition

Given the various problems surrounding “death” in the city—population concentration and the resultant severe shortage of burial space, declining birthrates with an aging society, the increase in the number of people who support secularism, and the impact on the environment of carbon emissions from cremations—alternative methods of dealing with the remains of our dead may be inevitable. Columbia University’s DeathLAB is attracting attention around the world as a prescient “laboratory of death” that is addressing these issues head on and is exploring across a range of disciplines (including religious studies, architecture, environmental engineering and biology) ways of dealing with the future of “death” that can accommodate the various constraints of urban life in terms of the environment, time and space. At this exhibition, together with DeathLAB Director and Columbia University GSAPP Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture Karla Rothstein, we will present through architectural models and video installation a range of innovative solutions to such questions as “How might we once again reincorporate ‘death,’ long alienated to the suburbs, as a visible and living part of the city?” “How might we achieve a more cogent expression of ‘the life and death cycle’ suited to modern urban culture?” and “How might we realize the kinds of public spaces that can serve as both urban infrastructure and spaces where individuals can mourn the dead?”



(Constellation Park) 2014  
©LATENT Productions and Columbia GSAPP DeathLAB

### About DeathLAB

Ways of mourning people’s deaths and honoring their lives vary widely from religion to religion and country to country. The subject of this exhibition, DeathLAB, is a “laboratory of death” that proposes new funerary rituals that are different from existing rituals, such as cremation, natural burials and space burials. With architect Karla Rothstein as its director, DeathLAB was established in 2013 within the Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in the U.S. Following the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, how to memorialize the approximately 3000 victims became a matter of intense debate. DeathLAB’s interdisciplinary research into methods of dealing with the remains of the dead, such as these, that transcend religious and ethnic boundaries engages diverse academic fields including architecture, religious studies, environmental engineering and biology.

## About the Exhibits

### A 3D-printed architectural model of Constellation Park (2014), a proposal for the future of death that involved suspending vessels of light underneath New York’s Manhattan Bridge

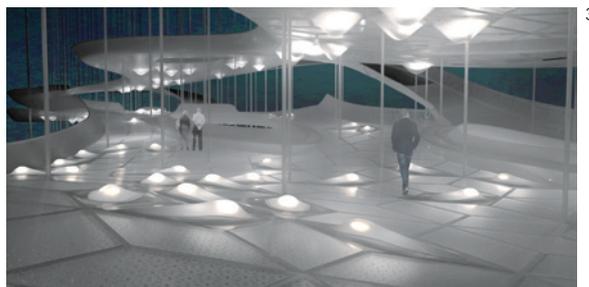
Conceived as a public memorial, the project proposed nesting thousands of light-emitting “memorial vessels” underneath New York’s Manhattan Bridge, connecting Manhattan and Brooklyn. The memorial vessels would be populated with microbial colonies to gradually decompose corpses over the course of a year, generating methane that would in turn be used to illuminate the vessel network in a dazzling constellation of “mourning lights.” The light would gently dim in tandem with the decomposition process, and upon year’s end, contingent members of the constellation would be replenished anew.



(Constellation Park) 2014 ©LATENT Productions and Columbia GSAPP DeathLAB

### A video introducing the “laboratory of death” projected onto a giant 240-inch screen in 4K resolution

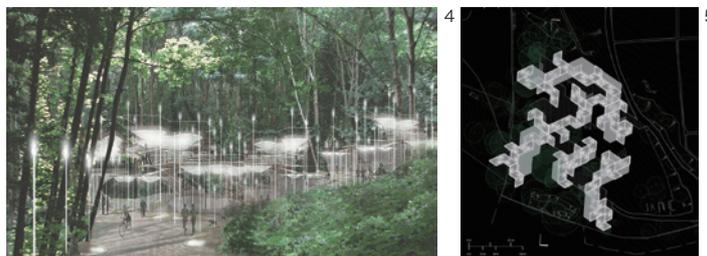
In addition to a selection of architectural models, visitors will have the opportunity to view a three-part video installation. The first act introduces DeathLAB’s background and mission, while the second segment presents the team’s design and studio work. The third installment consists of a “dialogue on death” centered on interviews with experts in areas ranging from philosophy to religion, architecture, environmental studies and historic preservation.



(Constellation Park) 2014 ©LATENT Productions and Columbia GSAPP DeathLAB

**Watch interviews with experts in the fields of philosophy, religion, architecture, environmental studies and historic preservation in the U.S. and ponder “the essence of death” in the future to come**

The third part of the video installation focuses on DeathLAB’s research into contemporary problems concerning death, such as “How might our rapidly advancing medical science change the culture surrounding death?” “What forms should mourning for secular people take?” and “What meaning might the sharing of death via the Internet and social media have?” Through interviews with various experts, viewers will have the opportunity both to learn about contemporary views of death in the U.S. and to think about their own inevitable death and how they might be memorialized.



SYLVAN CONSTELLATION ©LATENT Productions and Columbia GSAPP DeathLAB

**Profile**

**Karla Maria Rothstein**

Architect/educator. Adjunct associate professor, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Co-founder of Latent Productions. In addition to teaching at Columbia University for over 20 years, she is director of DeathLAB, which she founded in 2013. She is known for her research into redefining urban spaces of death, sanctuary and remembrance. Winner of the “First Future Cemetery” competition in 2016 (Bristol, England), she was also recognized with an AIANY Honor Award in 2014, and as a finalist for Columbia University’s Presidential Teaching Award in 2013. She has published widely on NPR, WIRED.jp, OZY and Uncube, with her essay “Making Light of Death” featured in the Spring 2016 issue of Columbia Magazine, and “Reconfiguring Urban Spaces of Disposal, Sanctuary and Remembrance” in *Our Changing Journey to the End: The New Realities and Controversies of Dying in America* (2013).



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